



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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THE NEWS & OBSERVER

Carolina Hurricanes hire Rod Brind'Amour's former teammate as its goaltending coach

The Carolina Hurricanes have a new coach, and he's someone who's played with head coach Rod Brind'Amour before.

Jason Muzzatti, who was a goalie for Michigan State when Brind'Amour was a center there in the late 1980s, was hired by the Canes as its goaltending coach, the organization announced Tuesday.

Muzzatti helped lead the Spartans to two Central Collegiate Hockey Association titles, three NCAA tournaments and the NCAA hockey championship, according to the Hurricanes. He

has been a goaltending coach at Michigan State for the past four seasons.

Muzzatti, 49, was drafted by the Calgary Flames in the 1988 NHL draft as the 21st overall pick, and played in 61 games in the league. He had a 18-15-6 career record with the Flames, Hartford Whalers, San Jose Sharks and the New York Rangers, according to the Canes.

He replaces Mike Bales, the Canes former goaltending coach who resigned from the organization in June.

THE ATHLETIC

What does an NHL coach do in the offseason?

By Scott Burnside

Bruce Boudreau is where he always is at this time of the year, waiting for the kids to show up.

Not necessarily his own kids, his three sons and daughter are all grown, although they will be on hand, as always. But the other kids. Kids from South Africa, Australia, all over the United States and Canada who descend every August for Boudreau's annual summer hockey camp.

He checked with his son Ben and confirmed this was the 37th year of the Golden Horseshoe Hockey School.

And in those years it went from a vital part of putting food on the table for Boudreau to a kind of institution, one that allows Boudreau to play a little summer Santa Claus for campers as he bestows literally hundreds of signed jerseys, sticks and paraphernalia gathered during the hockey season all with the express purpose of making the camp more than just learning edges and crossovers, but a celebration of summer and the game.

The hockey school, now run almost entirely by his sons Ben and Andy, with a strong helping hand from youngest son Brady, remains a touchstone for Boudreau.

It is also a reminder of Boudreau's own journey from longtime mostly minor pro player to longtime mostly minor pro coach to one of the most successful regular season coaches in the NHL. Boudreau ranks second in winning percentage among coaches with at least 200 games coached. He is 10th among all active coaches with 503 wins and is poised to reach the 1,000-games coached plateau late in the coming season, although no coach ever presumes anything.

The idea to work up a hockey school came in the early 1980s, long before multi-million dollar contracts were the norm, when

many pro players held camps as a way of staying on the ice and putting some more money in their pockets.

Boudreau, a Toronto draft pick in 1975, and Maple Leaf forward Rocky Saganiuk were with the Leafs organization when the team moved its top farm team to St. Catharines, Ontario. So the two decided it would be a good idea to run a summer school in the town between Toronto and Buffalo.

"We didn't have a clue what we were doing," Boudreau said.

A week before the first camp, Boudreau realized they had one counselor for 160 kids. That coach was Brian Papineau, who would go on to become the longtime equipment manager for the Maple Leafs.

Papineau, known universally as "Pappy," found some buddies to help out and in the end there were eight counselors for the four groups of kids.

Now there are some 50 counselors or five per group for the 240 or so campers who hit the ice at the Seymour-Hannah Sports and Entertainment Center.

Early on Boudreau was billeting four or five campers at his own home to ensure that the campers had a place to stay and, more importantly, to ensure that paying campers were in town to attend the school.

About a decade into the life of the camp, Boudreau took a job with the San Francisco Spiders of the now-defunct International Hockey League. The day after marrying his wife Crystal, they drove 36 straight hours to get to San Francisco in time for a player draft.

Jean Perron, who coached Montreal to a Stanley Cup in 1986, was coach and GM. The expectation was Boudreau would start as an assistant and then take over as head coach. But



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the whole San Francisco experience didn't last long, just three games.

Boudreau recalls Perron telling him one morning at about 7 a.m. that he should stop coming to work.

The reason given? Boudreau didn't like the trap, according to the Wild coach.

Boudreau ultimately took the team to court to recover payments but the team went into bankruptcy.

Crystal took a job in a bank immediately after Boudreau was fired and then the couple drove back to St. Catharines.

"We didn't know where we were going to stay," he recalled. "We ended up in St. Catharines only so we could promote the hockey school in February. We were hoping we had enough money to pay the bills to the end of the year."

The down payments made by camper's families kept them afloat.

"That's what we lived on until we went to Mississippi (the next season)," Boudreau added.

In recent years, Boudreau hasn't had to worry about making ends meet, but it hasn't lessened his enthusiasm for the summer gathering of old friends and new campers.

He has done less and less of the on-ice instructing and operation of the camp, handing over those duties to Ben and Andy.

"I'm there pushing the juice boxes all over the place," Boudreau said of his current role, which also includes the job of guest referee for some of the afternoon games that are one of the highlights of the camp.

The camp continues to bind the extended Boudreau family together – there are now three grandchildren in the fold –and those bonds extended to the campers themselves. There are children of former campers and grandchildren of old friends who make their way to the multi-pad complex not far from downtown.

Over time – and certainly since Boudreau made the jump from minor pro head coach to NHL head coach back in 2007 – people have asked, why keep doing the camp?

But regardless of his change in status, cementing his position as an NHL coach only served to heighten Boudreau's desire to keep on with the summer program.

No matter what happened in the previous season, a trip to the playoffs, missing the playoffs or even those summers when he was fired, the camp remained a constant, a touchstone, a chance to bore down to the game's most elemental qualities.

"It's more an act of love," Boudreau said. "Everybody from my ex(-wife)'s side of the family comes in, Crystal comes in, it's like a whole family affair."

And of course the boys.

"They grew up with it. They did every job there could be," Boudreau said.

From students to junior counselors to instructors to lunch maids.

"When they took over, they knew what they had to do. They knew the work that they had to put into it and the love they needed to have for it," Boudreau said.

Next season, all four Boudreau men will be standing behind benches. Brady, a former goaltender, is an assistant coach with the Blue Ox, a junior team owned by Crystal and Bruce in Coon Rapids, Minn., that Brady played for in the past.

Andy is the head coach at the Banff Hockey Academy in Banff, Alberta. And Ben is the head coach of the Fort Wayne Komets of the ECHL, working for the same owners who ran the team when Boudreau was first a player and then a coach.

So, while Boudreau prepares to hand out some of the dozens of jerseys, sticks and other odds and ends he's collected over the months to his happy campers, what are his peers doing?

The men who create the game plans in 31 different NHL cities have to find that balance of refreshing and staying on top of their hockey game.

Barry Trotz, New York Islanders

A year ago, Trotz was transitioning from coaching the Stanley Cup champion Washington Capitals to coaching the Islanders. He would lead his Isles to the best defensive record in the NHL and a berth in the second round of the playoffs, while walking away with his second Jack Adams Trophy.

Trotz has been an NHL head coach continuously since 1998 when he took the expansion Nashville coaching job.

"I found that when I was younger, I used to coach and then you get knocked out or whatever and I would just stop and take a couple of weeks off," Trotz explained. "But I had trouble getting ramped up because you crash. I would have an adrenaline crash because you're on adrenaline the whole time, the whole season, you're just going, going and then you just crash. And I felt like had mono all the time."

So Trotz learned the fine art of pacing himself when it comes to the summer, going from office time every day to fewer and fewer hours before letting go completely.

"What I've done is I've done training camp, I do everything that I need to do. Like we could start training camp tomorrow. I'm ready," he said. "I will have every player that's in practice, every group. Everything'll be done. It's done. I just have to walk in and here's, you want the first day? These are the guys that are in each group, these are the lines, I've got it all done. When I get there I want to re-invest my time to getting to know the players again. Rather than doing work."

In terms of his time away from routine, Trotz and his family always head back to Western Canada and that usually means running into a few colleagues from the coaching fraternity, including longtime pal and mentor Ken Hitchcock. In what has become a summer tradition, Trotz, Hitchcock and whoever else is in the area gather for coffee to kick around trends in the game, what works, what doesn't and basically share experiences.

Hitchcock, who is protective of the anonymity of the group and their meeting places, which have to be convenient for all who participate, said they haven't decided on this summer's location but added there are more and more coaches who seem to end up in the area in the summer.



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Trotz recalled making a bit of a stir in a small mountain town a few years back.

“One time we were sitting there just chatting and we had our computers out and just going over little things in the game that are happening, I think this whole bus came in and all these people, there were some bikers, older bikers, coming in a group of about 40 and we’re in this little town and maybe 200 in the town and they’re walking by us to go to breakfast and they’re, ‘hey, is that Barry Trotz? What are you guys doing here?’” Trotz said with a laugh.

The gathering is a reminder that, while it’s good to decompress, it’s also important to have people who understand what you’ve gone through and how to navigate some of the issues that confront them – no different than players who gather in the offseason.

“It is important to have friends in this business because you learn. You learn from each other. You learn from experiences. You just do,” Trotz explained. “Everybody in this game has different twists and turns. We all get to those different twists and turns at different times. So when I go through it, I can maybe help a guy out or vice versa.

“And usually, I live in an area where there’s myself, Billy Peters I think is living on my lake this year, Hitch, Ryan Huska, (a member of Peters’ staff in Calgary). ... We talk about the game, not necessarily asking about each other’s teams or players. It’s about ideas or where the game’s going. And getting better.”

Trotz grew up as a coach learning from the late Wayne Fleming, Dave King and George Kingston.

“Now it’s Babs (Toronto head coach Mike Babcock) and the next group of guys. We’re now the older guys and guys are coming to us, the players that we’ve coached are now coaching and they’re now asking different things. We’re the next group of mentors, guys like Hitch who’s so good at talking the game to young guys and encouraging them and keeping them on track and giving them ideas in terms of approaches. Because we all get stuck in our own way and when you’re young what I found is you thought you know the game and you held everything, everything was a secret. What you’re finding out is it’s not a secret.

“Everybody has the same game it’s how you are able to communicate that game or navigate through situations out of the game. And they’re not always on the ice, they’re dressing room, they’re all over, social, they’re wives, they’re everything. Social media. Whatever. Contract status all that stuff. And navigating through that a little bit so you can have success. All us older guys are preaching it’s OK to help each other.”

Rod Brind’Amour, Carolina Hurricanes

Brind’Amour, fresh from his first season as head coach in Carolina, couldn’t understand when he was a player why coaches talked about needing to get away after the season.

What do they need to get away from? They’re not playing. Not taking shots in the shins or elbows to the face.

Now Brind’Amour gets it, even if he has struggled to find the right rhythm. As of recently, he’d been to his office at PNC

Arena every day since the Canes were swept out of the Eastern Conference final.

He did a masterful job as the Hurricanes made the playoffs for the first time since 2009. The challenge for Brind’Amour is how he follows that up.

“I got to figure that out. What’s the strategy?” Brind’Amour said. “Because I had a good one coming in (the first season) I felt. The message and everything. And now this is what coaching really is I think, how do you say the same thing but different, make it better, make it stick. That’s what I’m struggling with right now, but hopefully it’ll come together.”

Brind’Amour is refreshingly candid. He doesn’t have a summer home. Raleigh is his home. Has been for years. His in-laws have a place at the beach a few hours away, but he is rooted in Raleigh and he now understands why veteran coaches have said for years that it’s important to take time away. Part of his summer plans involved schlepping family around, like his son Skyler, who will be playing hockey at Quinnipiac College in the fall. His son Reece will be attending college in the New York area, so there was more moving on tap there.

“The big guys get it,” Brind’Amour said of veteran NHL coaches. “They take their months at their cottages and I’m like, ‘I don’t know how.’ But I get why they do it. And I’ve got to figure that out.”

One thing he won’t have to figure out is how to listen to his own heartbeat when it comes to coaching. That, he said, was the top lesson he learned in what was a breakout year.

“Just trust your instincts. I get around all these guys sometimes (other coaches) and I hear how they talk the game and I’m like, ‘oh man, that’s not me.’ And you get a little worried. But you’ve got to pull yourself back and trust what you feel and what you know and then go with it. And that’s kind of what I learned. And thankfully I kind of think I did it that way. At least now I know we had some success so I know that that works, it can work. If it didn’t I’d be really questioning right now, like holy shit, I better get on their page. But I think it can work this way.”

Jim Montgomery, Dallas Stars

Montgomery is another coach coming off a stellar rookie NHL campaign.

In his first year in Dallas, Montgomery brought the Stars within a goal of advancing to the Western Conference final, dropping Game 7 to eventual Stanley Cup champion St. Louis in double overtime.

Montgomery admitted he needed a week at the end of the season to get back into a groove.

“I was just emotionally drained,” Montgomery said.

After exit meetings he spent time at home in Dallas with his family and indulged one of his passions. He went through the books “Good to Great” by James Collins and “The Culture Code” by Daniel Coyle.

“My mind wanted to get away,” Montgomery said.

The family also planned a getaway to the Florida Panhandle.



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In terms of hockey, Montgomery gave his coaching staff summer projects that they will put together into a cohesive game plan when they reconvene in advance of training camp later in August.

He paused when asked the biggest lesson he learned.

"I had a lot of lessons that reaffirmed my beliefs, my core values," Montgomery said. "But I guess the biggest lesson was, especially the first 20 games, was time management. Making sure you're getting sleep. You're not trying to do too much. I wasn't getting enough sleep. That's something I learned. You have great assistants for a reason.

"I think I have a clearer vision of what's important, didn't know that for sure last year. You kind of guess at it and you hope that you're right and you find out a lot of the things you did were kind of needless. I think I have a better idea of how training camp needs to go and what we're going to do in the exhibition season, and things that we'll do as team bonding events that we can do and we have the time to do now before the season starts. And then the season, I'm looking forward to doing a lot of stuff with more pace because now we should have 85 percent of our team back so the language and getting to know each other and how we want to play should be kind of seamless, so we're going to be able to do more."

Jeff Blashill, Detroit Red Wings

The Red Wings coach would rather not be available to coach at the world championships, but such is life when your NHL squad is in the midst of a reboot that has seen them miss the postseason three straight years.

Blashill is coming off a third straight gig as head coach of Team USA at the worlds, and he has used that experience to try and add to his own bank of knowledge about how different coaches coach and players play. He's also never been afraid to look outside his own comfort zone to talk to people who might help him in that pursuit.

"I also think it's a discovery process in you can do some research projects on other teams. Teams that play similar to you. What do they do a little different? Where maybe we can steal some ideas," Blashill said. "The other thing that I try to spend those months doing is talking to other coaches. Other coaches in the NHL, other coaches in different levels. I've done a thing with a small coaching development group where we have a good sharing of ideas. I've brought coaches into Detroit and had one- or two-day sessions with them, what they're good at. If I see something in college, maybe someone's got a great power play, I want to bring them in and learn from them. I try to go and spend time with professional coaches in other sports when I can, specifically I've done that a little bit with the Lions. And it's that discovery process."

It might seem strange for coaches to share information given the need to maintain a competitive edge in the business but

Blashill said that as long as there is give and take it's a good way to get better.

"I think there's a balance to it. Certainly I think there's always a worry sharing ideas with other coaches having success, especially with direct competitors. But some of it's relationship-based, and some of it's where each team's at," Blashill said. "I've been somebody I haven't been afraid to share ideas. As long as I'm getting ideas shared back. I'm a huge believer in never copying and paste. You don't take what somebody else does and say it's got to work for us. You take what they do ... and now I say, OK, now can I apply some of that to my own style?"

He also learned from his old boss and longtime mentor, Mike Babcock, that there is a time to put the coaching stuff away.

"When development camp's over I try to get away for a bit," Blashill said. "Mike Babcock said to me a long time ago and Scotty Bowman said to him the same thing, you have to get away. You have to get away. You have to get refreshed. The grind is the grind. And it's a great grind, but it's a hard grind. So you have to be refreshed."

Todd Reirden, Washington Capitals

A season that saw lots of ups and downs but ultimately a Metropolitan Division crown followed by an excruciating seven-game first-round series loss to Carolina left Reirden with a different approach to this offseason.

"Being able to have a chance to step away after a disappointing loss in the first round that I've been able to re-look at things and come up with a pretty decent plan where there are some adjustments we want to make," Reirden said.

He's given each member of his staff an area to examine, areas that appeal to their expertise or special interest, whether it's neutral zone play, breakouts or special teams.

"It's something that last year we didn't do it and I can tell you we didn't do it because we were using the same exact stuff that we had done," Reirden said. "I was going through a phase of the summer of just teaching the new members of my staff and new members in Hershey how Washington Capitals hockey looks and how we had success and how we won the Stanley Cup. I still think we'll keep to many of those things but there are things that we want to get better at and we need to improve on and so those are things."

On a personal level, Reirden was planning to return to a summer home on Lake Michigan. His son Travis has battled health problems related to immune deficiency issues and the offseason is a chance for Reirden to reconnect with family given the travel and commitments during the season.

"So this summer's been a lot slower and it's allowed me to take a step away and I think it's going to make me a better coach down the road," Reirden said.



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NHL Power Rankings: Rating every team heading into 2019-20

By Emily Kaplan

It's about that point in the summer when the NHL goes into hibernation; yes, it's cottage season. With the dust (mostly) settled on the draft and free agency, here's our rundown of where things stand a little more than two months before the 2019-20 season.

How we rank: The ESPN hockey editorial staff submits polls ranking teams 1-31, and those results are tabulated to the list featured here. For this edition, we're projecting how we think the teams will be rated heading into next season, taking into account recent success and other factors, such as the players added via the draft, free agency and trades. The "previous ranking" for each team refers to the club's spot in our way-too-early Power Rankings published right after the Stanley Cup Final.

Note: Stanley Cup odds are courtesy of Caesars sportsbook.

1. Tampa Bay Lightning

Previous ranking: 1

Stanley Cup odds: 7-1

The Lightning were a regular-season juggernaut who flamed out in the playoffs. They're banking on not letting that mistake happen again, returning with essentially the same roster for 2019-20. But before the season, they need to ink ascending star forward Brayden Point, a restricted free agent, to a new deal.

2. Boston Bruins

Previous ranking: 2

Stanley Cup odds: 12-1

Boston's big focus right now is working on new deals for its young RFA defensemen: Brandon Carlo and Charlie McAvoy. There hasn't been much change to last year's Stanley Cup runner-up roster. That said, GM Don Sweeney is still poised to make in-season adjustments, especially around the trade deadline.

3. Toronto Maple Leafs

Previous ranking: 5

Stanley Cup odds: 10-1

Do things ever go quiet in the Maple Leafs' world these days? Their offseason so far included a massive trade with the Avs (Nazem Kadri is out, while Alexander Kerfoot and Tyson Barrie are in) plus a defenseman swap with the Senators. But the big summer drama revolves around RFA Mitch Marner. By all accounts, negotiations are tense -- and the sides are quite far apart.

4. Vegas Golden Knights

Previous ranking: 11

Stanley Cup odds: 10-1

The Golden Knights said goodbye to some regulars (penalty-killing extraordinaire Pierre-Edouard Bellemare, fourth-liner Ryan Carpenter, defenseman Colin Miller and middle-six winger Erik Haula) to shed cap space for their now-pricy roster. The big question hovering: Do they unload Nikita Gusev before the season?

5. Nashville Predators

Previous ranking: 12

Stanley Cup odds: 20-1

The Preds needed a shake-up after back-to-back years of playoff disappointment. So they took from an area of surplus (the blue line) and added to their biggest area of need (talented forwards outside the top line). The offseason could be summed up as thus: P.K. Subban is out, Matt Duchene is in.

6. St. Louis Blues

Previous ranking: 6

Stanley Cup odds: 14-1

The defending Stanley Cup champs are probably getting a bit disrespected because we all know how hard it is to repeat. With a bunch of RFAs to take care of, St. Louis hasn't made any seismic (or really any) changes to the roster so far this summer. Should be essentially the same cast returning, including coach Craig Berube, who finally shed the interim tag.

7. Washington Capitals

Previous ranking: 4

Stanley Cup odds: 22-1

After spending the summer of 2018 partying and keeping the band together, the Capitals finally had to say goodbye to five regulars from their Stanley Cup-winning team. The Caps are in maintenance mode, knowing they need to shell out big new contracts for Braden Holtby and Nicklas Backstrom next summer.

8. San Jose Sharks

Previous ranking: 8

Stanley Cup odds: 15-1

San Jose leaned into its bet on Erik Karlsson, inking the defenseman to an expensive, long-term deal. GM Doug Wilson had better be right about him. The collateral damage for the signing wasn't insignificant: Captain Joe Pavelski is gone, getting the term and money he wanted in Dallas.

9. Calgary Flames

Previous ranking: 3



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Stanley Cup odds: 25-1

Everything was status quo for the Flames, a very good regular-season team in 2018-19. Then they made the curious move of swapping James Neal for Milan Lucic, one-for-one. Sure, Neal had a rough go during his first campaign in Calgary (buoyed by a very low shooting percentage), but this trade just felt drastic.

10. Colorado Avalanche

Previous ranking: 14

Stanley Cup odds: 10-1

It feels like the Avs can do no wrong these days. Their loaded defensive prospect pool means they could part with Tyson Barrie to land a terrific second-line center in Nazem Kadri. Trade acquisition Andre Burakovsky and free-agent signing Pierre Edouard-Bellemare fortify the bottom nine.

11. Winnipeg Jets

Previous ranking: 10

Stanley Cup odds: 22-1

It's been an interesting offseason for the Jets, who are strapped by the cap and have to sign two big RFAs to new deals: Patrik Laine and Kyle Connor. In the process, Winnipeg's blue line got worse, as it parted with defensemen Jacob Trouba via trade and Tyler Myers via free agency.

12. Carolina Hurricanes

Previous ranking: 15

Stanley Cup odds: 22-1

After a surprise run to the Eastern Conference final, the Canes inked franchise player Sebastian Aho to a new deal -- thanks, Montreal, for setting the terms! -- then doubled down on middle-six depth with Ryan Dzingel and Erik Haula.

13. Dallas Stars

Previous ranking: 13

Stanley Cup odds: 14-1

It was a sneaky-good offseason for the Stars. Signing Corey Perry (who was bought out by Anaheim) is a low-risk, high-reward move. Adding Joe Pavelski -- who'll potentially skate on the first line alongside Jamie Benn and Tyler Seguin-- could be what transforms this team into a true contender.

14. New York Rangers

Previous ranking: 25

Stanley Cup odds: 22-1

Everyone in the NHL is gushing about the Rangers, who entered and exited rebuild mode in record time. Star Artemi Panarin changes the complexion of the franchise (and he's now the highest-paid winger in the league), but Kaapo Kakko and Jacob Trouba will also make huge impacts. New York just needs to clear a little more cap space before October.

15. Pittsburgh Penguins

Previous ranking: 9

Stanley Cup odds: 22-1

Ever since Pittsburgh won back-to-back Cups, it feels like GM Jim Rutherford has been constantly tweaking his roster. The Phil Kessel era (and saga) is over. Alex Galchenyuk, Dominik Kahun and Brandon Tanev (with a questionably long contract term) are the newest depth forwards who get a chance to shine on Sidney Crosby's roster.

16. Florida Panthers

Previous ranking: 18

Stanley Cup odds: 22-1

The Panthers enter 2019-20 with two new faces of the franchise: coach Joel Quenneville and goalie Sergei Bobrovsky. Although they didn't land Artemi Panarin, GM Dale Tallon spent the rest of his ample cap space adding role players who could help make the Panthers a playoff team. That list includes Brett Connolly, Noel Acciari and Anton Stralman.

17. Montreal Canadiens

Previous ranking: 17

Stanley Cup odds: 40-1

This was supposed to be the summer of the offer sheet; thankfully (for fans, at least) Habs GM Marc Bergevin delivered. Not thankfully (for the Canadiens) his bid for Sebastian Aho was easily matched by the Hurricanes. But Bergevin might have been doing the rest of the league a favor, testing the limits of Canes owner (and new league wild card) Tom Dundon.

18. New York Islanders

Previous ranking: 7

Stanley Cup odds: 40-1

The Isles took a swing for Artemi Panarin and Sergei Bobrovsky and whiffed on both. Lou Lamoriello's contingency plan: tapping Semyon Varlamov as their new goalie (over Robin Lehner, a 2019 Vezina Trophy finalist) and re-signing captain Anders Lee. In fairness, we were skeptical of Lamorello's offseason moves in 2018 also, and it all turned out OK.

19. Arizona Coyotes

Previous ranking: 20

Stanley Cup odds: 25-1

The Yotes almost made the playoffs last season, after a boatload of injuries and a strong late push. They'll look for a better start in 2019-20, and have reinforcements to do so. The big addition is top-line winger Phil Kessel, who gets to reunite with one of his favorite coaches, Rick Tocchet, and should boost the scoring at both even strength and on the power play.

20. Philadelphia Flyers

Previous ranking: 19

Stanley Cup odds: 30-1



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Now that Philly has its goaltending solidified (the Carter Hart era is here, in earnest!), GM Chuck Fletcher is beginning to put his stamp on the roster. The big move was a mega contract for second-line forward Kevin Hayes. Fletcher made adjustments to the defense, too, adding Matt Niskanen and Justin Braun.

21. Chicago Blackhawks

Previous ranking: 22

Stanley Cup odds: 35-1

The Blackhawks' biggest issues last season involved a leaky defense. Chicago made improvements, adding Calvin de Haan and Olli Maatta (while also parting with a top defensive prospect, Henri Jokiharju). Chicago also made one of the best free-agency signings of the summer: goalie Robin Lehner on a one-year, \$5 million deal.

22. Columbus Blue Jackets

Previous ranking: 16

Stanley Cup odds: 65-1

We knew the Blue Jackets would have a rough offseason since Artemi Panarin and Sergei Bobrovsky -- two of the best players in franchise history -- telegraphed their exit months ago. Adding Gustav Nyquist (new top-line winger?) is the consolation, and we'll likely get a healthy look at many of the Blue Jackets' young prospects this season as well.

23. New Jersey Devils

Previous ranking: 30

Stanley Cup odds: 28-1

After winning the draft lottery and selecting top American center Jack Hughes, the Devils accelerated their build. They made a splash acquiring new franchise defenseman P.K. Subban, added veteran leader Wayne Simmonds for a year, and are making their best case to 2018 MVP Taylor Hall to sign long-term. The Trans-Hudson rivalry is back!

24. Vancouver Canucks

Previous ranking: 24

Stanley Cup odds: 60-1

With Elias Pettersson changing the complexion of the franchise, the Canucks filled a big area of need (right-side defense) with an expensive contact for Tyler Myers. Vancouver also paid a big price to get J.T. Miller to supplement the top six.

25. Minnesota Wild

Previous ranking: 21

Stanley Cup odds: 70-1

GM Paul Fenton inherited a roster saddled with big, aging contracts. He added one more, inking soon-to-be 32-year-old Mats Zuccarello to a five-year deal. The speedy Norwegian will help right away, but in the long range? That term raises eyebrows.

26. Edmonton Oilers

Previous ranking: 23

Stanley Cup odds: 40-1

GM Ken Holland is in charge now, meaning the Oilers' long-term prospects are already looking up. The priority for Edmonton is still drafting and developing players, although the James Neal addition instantly makes the top six better.

27. Buffalo Sabres

Previous ranking: 29

Stanley Cup odds: 75-1

The Sabres have a new coach in Ralph Krueger, and they desperately needed more roster depth heading into free agency. They sure got it, adding Marcus Johansson, Jimmy Vesey, Colin Miller and Henri Jokiharju. Adding Mike Bales (formerly of the Canes) as goaltending coach is a sneaky big hire.

28. Anaheim Ducks

Previous ranking: 26

Stanley Cup odds: 75-1

The big three era is officially over, with Corey Perry being bought out and Ryan Kesler likely missing the entire 2019-20 season. After a prolonged search, Dallas Eakins was finally tabbed as the new coach. Anaheim will still try to get younger and faster. Perhaps its most interesting offseason addition: Darryl Sutter as a "consultant."

29. Detroit Red Wings

Previous ranking: 27

Stanley Cup odds: 150-1

After months of speculation, the Steve Yzerman era has begun in the Red Wings' front office. But he'll need to wait a little longer to truly shape this roster into a contender. The Red Wings are still shedding bad contracts and waiting for their prospect system to develop.

30. Los Angeles Kings

Previous ranking: 28

Stanley Cup odds: 125-1

The Kings are stuck in rebuild purgatory. They'd like to get younger and faster -- much like the rival Ducks -- but they're strapped by big contracts still on the books. And thus, it's probably another long season for the Kings.

31. Ottawa Senators

Previous ranking: 31

Stanley Cup odds: 400-1

There's no other way to put this: It's going to be another long season in Ottawa. This roster could use an injection of talent. The Senators' summer plan included snatching up a bunch of extraneous Maple Leafs: assistant DJ Smith (the Sens' new coach), defensemen Ron Hainsey and Nikita Zaitsev, plus fourth-liner Tyler Ennis.



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Hurricanes Name Jason Muzzatti Goaltending Coach

The 49-year-old spent the past four seasons as goaltending coach at Michigan State.

By Jake Lerch

The Carolina Hurricanes have a new goalie coach. Jason Muzzatti was announced Tuesday as the Canes' goaltending coach for the upcoming 2019-2020 season. He replaces Mike Bales, who moved on to the same position with the Buffalo Sabres back in June.

Muzzatti, 49, joins the Canes after spending the last four years as goaltending coach at Michigan State. Prior to coaching there, Muzzatti was a standout goaltender with the Spartans, where he also played alongside another famous Spartan: Rod Brind'Amour. The two were teammates during the 1988-89 season.

Muzzatti was drafted by the Calgary Flames 21st overall in the 1988 NHL draft. He spent 16 years as a professional goalie in different leagues - NHL, AHL, IHL, as well as stints in Germany, Finland, even Italy, where he also competed on the national team. Muzzatti was named the 2010 IHL Coach of the Year when his Flint Generals were the league runners-up.

Based on his proclivity to delegate - in particular to Bales' suggestions on who should start in net last year - it seems reasonable to assume Brind'Amour wanted someone he could trust to fill the role of goalie coach. It appears that in Muzzatti, the coach has exactly that.

The release from the team is below.

MUZZATTI NAMED HURRICANES GOALTENDING COACH

Most recently served in the same capacity at Michigan State

Don Waddell, President and General Manager of the National Hockey League's Carolina Hurricanes, today announced that the team has hired former NHL goalie Jason Muzzatti as its goaltending coach.

"Jason brings a wealth of experience as a former NHL goaltender and a coach at multiple levels," said Waddell. "We believe he will fit in well in our coaches' office and form strong relationships with our netminders."

Muzzatti, 49, spent the past four seasons as goaltending coach for his alma mater, Michigan State University. Previously, the Toronto, Ont., native had coached for two seasons in the International Hockey League (IHL), serving as assistant coach and then head coach for the Flint Generals. In 2009-10, he led the Generals to the IHL Finals, earning league coach of the year honors. Muzzatti also co-founded the highly-successful "Just Goalies" camps in 1999, and continues to operate the camps in East Lansing, Mich., and Indianapolis, Ind.

Selected by the Calgary Flames in the first round, 21st overall, of the 1988 NHL Draft, Muzzatti played 16 seasons of professional hockey in the NHL, IHL, American Hockey League (AHL) and European leagues in Germany, Finland and Italy. He appeared in 61 career NHL games with Calgary, Hartford, San Jose and the New York Rangers, posting an 18-15-6 record with a 3.34 goals-against average. Prior to turning professional, he established himself as one of the greatest netminders in Michigan State history, helping the Spartans to two CCHA championships, three NCAA appearances and a Frozen Four, and ranking second in school history in wins (83). Muzzatti was teammates with current Hurricanes Head Coach Rod Brind'Amour during the 1988-89 season at Michigan State.



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Carolina Hurricanes History: Artūrs Irbe Brought Success and Stability

By Mark Shiver

Artūrs Irbe was loved by fans of the Carolina Hurricanes. Moving what were the Hartford Whalers to North Carolina by then owner, Peter Karmanos, was at the very least a gamble. Hockey in North Carolina was not guaranteed to be successful, especially trying to get established in the proximity of Tobacco Road, the mecca of college basketball. Would a professional sports played on ice succeed in a place where it barely snowed in the winter?

Hurricanes Form in NC

The first year in North Carolina saw games played in Greensboro, with a crew of goaltenders. Five different goaltenders saw playing time, with Trevor Kidd and Sean Burke carrying most of the load. The next season, 1998-99, Irbe became the starting goaltender. The NHL had restructured the divisions, and the Hurricanes won the newly created Southeast Division. They qualified for the playoffs, losing two games to four to the Boston Bruins.

Irbe started 67 games that season and was cemented as the starter. His 2.22 goals against average and save percentage of .923 were respectable, and more importantly, the team had a goalie between the pipes that their fans could rally around. The expression, "Irbe says no!" whenever he made a particularly difficult save became a staple when listening to the games.

Irbe became a fan favorite, and making the playoffs so quickly after moving to North Carolina gave the Hurricanes credibility as a legitimate NHL team. Sure they had been the Whalers for years, but this team was now the Hurricanes, struggling to make it in the South. Irbe was one of a stable of players like Ron Francis and Keith Primeau, Glen Wesley and Jeff O'Neill who would help ensure that the Hurricanes would not only make it in North Carolina, but be successful, too.

Irbe the Man

Many may have forgotten the stranglehold that communism had on many Eastern European countries. Irbe was from Latvia, and was not allowed to leave the country and even consider playing in the NHL until 1991, when he was selected by the expansion San Jose Sharks in the Dispersal Draft. He had been originally drafted 196th by the Minnesota North Stars in 1989, but did not play for them as he remained in Latvia.

After a year in the minors, Irbe became the Sharks' starting goalie in the 1993-94 season. He played 74 games, went 30-28-16, and led the Sharks to the playoffs. They eliminated the

Detroit Red Wings and almost beat the Toronto Maple Leafs, but lost in seven games. Things were looking good for Irbe.

Then things changed for him in a bad way. Quoting from Legends of Hockey, "The summer of 1994 saw near tragedy visit Irbe. Back home in Riga he was doing sit-ups one day next to his sleeping dog. At one point he nudged the animal, which woke up and went berserk, tearing and ravaging Irbe's hands and forcing him to go to the hospital. He suffered extensive damage to the tendons and nerves in his hands, and his career was threatened."

Irbe was not extremely tall at five-foot-eight and was a reflex-centric goalie. His injuries slowed him down a bit and he ended up moving from the Sharks to the Dallas Stars and Vancouver Canucks. Things did not go extremely well in either venue, and he wound up in Carolina. He was able to return to form and not only lead the team to the playoffs in 1999, and 2001, but was a key part the team making it to the Stanley Cup Finals in 2002.

This relocated franchise was having early success that some teams would love to have had at any point. The Hurricanes eventually lost to the Red Wings, but the stage was set for hockey to thrive in North Carolina. Irbe was the starter for four of the six seasons he was with the 'Canes, and is an undisputed part of the success the team has enjoyed. That success so early may have spoiled the fan base, which until last season had not seen the team in the playoffs since 2009.

Irbe's tenure was on the decline, eventually giving way to Kevin Weekes. Irbe eventually cleared waivers with the Hurricanes and wound up a year later with the Columbus Blue Jackets, where his NHL career ended. Irbe did play with his home Latvia in the World Cup many times, and also on their team in the Olympics.

Weekes gave way to Martin Gerber and eventually a rookie who, much like Irbe, would put the team on his back and this time, win the Stanley Cup. Cam Ward was the Hurricanes goaltender ever since that run in 2006, and was replaced as the starter in 2017 by Scott Darling, but not really. Darling's well-documented problems gave way to Petr Mrazek and Curtis McElhinney working together to backstop the Hurricanes' playoff run to the Eastern Conference Final

The fans of the Hurricanes will point to O'Neill, Francis, Rod Brind'Amour, and a host of others as former greats that helped the team stabilize and mature in North Carolina. But, if they had not had the gritty, determined play of Irbe, their history would not be nearly as great as it has been. The small, determined Latvian made a hockey team in North Carolina a great, and stabilized them with success in the early going.



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

1107653 Carolina Hurricanes

Carolina Hurricanes hire Rod Brind'Amour's former teammate as its goaltending coach

BY STAFF REPORTS AUGUST 13, 2019 12:11 PM

The Carolina Hurricanes have a new coach, and he's someone who's played with head coach Rod Brind'Amour before.

Jason Muzzatti, who was a goalie for Michigan State when Brind'Amour was a center there in the late 1980s, was hired by the Canes as its goaltending coach, the organization announced Tuesday.

Muzzatti helped lead the Spartans to two Central Collegiate Hockey Association titles, three NCAA tournaments and the NCAA hockey championship, according to the Hurricanes. He has been a goaltending coach at Michigan State for the past four seasons.

Muzzatti, 49, was drafted by the Calgary Flames in the 1988 NHL draft as the 21st overall pick, and played in 61 games in the league. He had a 18-15-6 career record with the Flames, Hartford Whalers, San Jose Sharks and the New York Rangers, according to the Canes.

He replaces Mike Bales, the Canes former goaltending coach who resigned from the organization in June.

News Observer LOADED: 08.14.2019

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The Athletic / Breaking down an NHL salary: The numbers aren't as big as you think

By Sean Gordon

Aug 13, 2019

You are a teenager from Montreal's working-class west end and you have just signed your first NHL contract. Congratulations on that, by the way.

The numbers look huge to a kid whose main source of income in the previous three or four summers is washing dishes in a relative's restaurant for \$8 an hour: \$643,000 (all figures U.S.) to play in the big league, \$65,000 to play in the minors. The deal includes a signing bonus of about \$260,000, which in this case is paid out in six equal installments over the three years of the entry-level contract.

So what's the first thing you do when you're 19 and that first check arrives?

"I bought a Lexus ISF," Buffalo Sabres defenceman Marco Scandella said. "It was a good life lesson."

Scandella, by his own admission, is an obsessive gear-head, a bona fide car freak. It was a slick ride, but awfully expensive (the retail price in 2010 was north of \$50,000) for a guy who spent the bulk of his rookie season in 2010-11 playing in the AHL.

"That first year, I was like 'oh man, am I going to be able to make the payments here?'," Scandella said. "So I sold that car after a year. I couldn't really afford it, but when you have no understanding of the value of a dollar you're going to make those mistakes. I'm happy it happened at 19 and not at 25."

It happens. A lot.

Young men who acquire sudden riches aren't exactly known for their financial restraint. As the Sabres defenceman embarks on his 10th full professional season, he can afford to look back and laugh – metaphorically and literally.

And as a relatively old guy by NHL standards (he'll turn 30 in February), Scandella considers it an obligation of sorts to speak out about financial literacy in the game. Or more to the point, the shocking lack of same.

Some players are lucky enough to have agents, advisers, family members or friends who save them from themselves. Scandella's reps let him have that initial check to see what he'd do with it; by the time he'd finished his entry-level deal, he'd managed to save what he thought was a respectable chunk of money.

And that's when he turned to his pal Matthew Shannon. The two played Midget AAA hockey together ("I got cut after six games," Shannon says) and had become fast friends in the process. While Scandella scaled the hockey ladder to the NHL, Shannon graduated



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university and was working as a corporate and investment banker on Bay Street, picking up a CFA designation along the way.

"It was hilarious, he came to my parents' backyard ... he had about \$300,000 saved up, I asked him what it's invested in, do you like how they're investing it?" Shannon said, who now runs Fortra V, a sports management consultancy that works with more than a dozen hockey players. "And he was like, 'what do you mean?' Well, what stocks do you own, do you have any ETFs and he's looking at me like I'm speaking a different language."

After fumbling around trying to find his various online passwords, Scandella was able to locate the account with his nest egg. It was a chequing account, earning peanuts – little tiny ones at that. When Shannon asked about estate planning, disability insurance, tax strategies, health proxies and the like, he was met with blank stares.

"I had no idea what I was doing," Scandella said.

Now he does. This is the story about one NHLer's education in all matters fiscal, a tale he hopes will demystify what remains a taboo subject in most dressing rooms and – why not? – maybe even help others avoid his mistakes.

An NHL player is paid between Oct. 15 and Apr. 15, based on a payment schedule that runs between 186 and 192 days; not every team plays 82 games in the same number of days.

The checks typically arrive on the 15th and the last day of the month.

Some players have bonuses built into their contract; in fact, all entry-level deals come with those bonuses specified ahead of time. Veterans will often negotiate summer bonuses, which serve a couple of purposes: they're generally treated differently from regular income for tax purposes and they ensure summertime cash flow.

If you're fortunate, you'll sign a one-way deal that pays the same in the minors as it does in the show. Most players aren't that lucky.

According to Spotrac.com, the median salary last year in the NHL was \$2,875,000. But 193 NHL players earned \$1 million or less. Fully 100 of them made under \$800,000.

This is not intended to provoke pity – hockey players are firmly entrenched in the one percent – but it's a fact that NHL players are underpaid relative to the other major professional sports. And they're probably not taking home as much money as you think.

Oh, and they don't play for very long. Estimates vary, but there seems to be an informal consensus that five years is a good guesstimate of the average career length. More than half of the people who play in the NHL suit up for fewer than 100 games. It's not quite NFL running back short, but it's no kind of security.

Most of these players will have only one chance to accumulate enough wealth to ensure their financial independence. Not all of them will make the most of it.

In November of 2014, Scandella signed a five-year contract that pays him an average of \$4-million per season. It was back-loaded, so this upcoming year he's slated to make \$4.75 million in actual salary.

He and Shannon recently walked The Athletic through what that represents.

First thing: roughly \$641,000 will be returned to the league via the escrow mechanism in the collective bargaining agreement between the owners and the NHLPA. Hockey players are employees of their respective teams and it's a union shop; their income taxes are deducted at the source, the same is true for things like escrow.

So \$4.75 million is de facto \$4.109 million after escrow.

Because Scandella plays in the U.S., he is eligible to contribute to a 401(k) retirement account; the maximum contribution limit for 2019 is \$19,000. Thus, the overall number drops to \$4.090 million.

The U.S. federal marginal tax rate is 37 percent, according to Shannon's estimations a player making \$4.75 million can expect to pay roughly \$1.84 million in income tax. Players also pay between zero percent (in Texas, Nevada, Tennessee, Florida and, soon, Washington) and 13.35 percent (California) in state tax. Canadian-born players who play in their home country can expect to be dinged for average combined tax rates that range from 47.2 percent in Alberta to 52.73 in Ontario.

So budget another few hundred thousand for provincial or state taxes, although those calculations can get complicated (you can play around with the math here, if that's your thing). Depending on where a player plies his trade, he may file up to 18 different tax returns. Also, a player may have options to defer tax depending on where he chooses to retire.

But between now and then, you have to live.

Based on a gross salary of \$4.75 million, Shannon estimates household expenses (rent, property taxes, fees for upkeep, etc.) would run in the order of \$50,000. Budget another \$12,000 for car repairs, gas, license plate registrations, parking, detailing and so forth.

Those are expenses everyone pays, adjusted to their means. Some hockey players will spend more, others less, these are ballpark numbers.

Being in the NHL also means incurring expenses that are unique to pro sports.

If you want to sign a contract, you're going to need to hire an agent (well, unless you're Drew Doughty). That agent is going to charge you a commission that typically ranges from three to five percent. And those fees will be calculated as a function of gross salary minus escrow.

For a player making \$4.75 million, agency fees will cost in the area of \$130,000. The rules prohibit certified agents from collecting commissions on revenue that hasn't been earned, so generally players will get a hefty invoice from their representative at the end of the season. For people who don't generally earn any income between mid-April and mid-October, that can require some financial gymnastics.

Shannon typically tries to put his clients on a monthly payment plan for simplicity's sake.

There are other professional fees to consider. Nutritionists, strength coaches, skills coaches. For the typical NHLer, it can run into the tens of thousands. Shannon typically budgets \$10,000. That's about the same amount a player will pay someone to handle their finances, plus another \$4,000 or so for tax preparation and perhaps \$5,000 for legal representation.

Add it up, and you're left with roughly \$150,000 in professional costs and fees. Those used to be deductible expenses under the U.S. tax code, but no longer. Same goes for mortgage interest, which was fully deductible for approved loans but will be capped at \$750,000 in 2019.

At one point, Scandella owned a home in Minnesota; it didn't turn out to be a profitable decision.



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"I had no idea how high taxes were and condo fees," he said. "It was like paying rent on a place I owned. I had just signed a five-year deal, I just felt really good about playing the rest of my career in that city and with that organization. That was another good life lesson."

The lesson here: In most cases, rent, don't buy.

You've paid your work-related expenses but now you're going to need insurance.

The NHL group plan covers general health care costs for players and their dependents, and if a player needs a torn labrum repaired or a knee scoped he generally won't find himself out of pocket (although some players do seek out multiple medical opinions, which is usually offset by the NHLPA, but sometimes not).

You may have heard hockey is a violent game, so people like Shannon advise their players to take out disability and life insurance.

"Depends on the player and what they want to do, but I typically suggest off-ice coverage throughout the deal and in the last year we switch to 24-hour (the athlete is covered both on and off the ice) to almost protect the future contract," Shannon said.

That sometimes runs into the hundreds of thousands of dollars. It can cost \$7,000 up front per million insured. For example, if Scandella decides to insure himself for \$15 million in his contract year (or a figure akin to what he hopes will be the value of his next contract), he's looking at \$105,000 for disability insurance. Life insurance comes in addition to that.

Shannon estimates an NHLer making in the area of \$5 million who follows his recommendations can expect to pay \$130,000 for insurance, perhaps more in a contract year.

Then, there's what Scandella calls 'sneaky expenses' – the stuff no one tells you about before you play in the NHL. For example, tips paid to trainers, equipment staff, physios, massage therapists and everybody else who keeps the engine of a hockey team chugging.

Support staff for NHL teams are overworked and underpaid; the gratuities punted their way by their millionaire charges helps narrow the income gap at least a little bit. For a veteran player on a long-term deal, it's an annual expense that can rise to the tens of thousands of dollars.

"I mean, they work," Scandella said. "You have to look after those guys, they do everything."

Now, it's time to account for fun money. Scandella learned relatively early in his career that if he was going to put funds aside for his post-playing days, he had to learn to live on a budget.

"I was spending more in places that I didn't even realize I was bleeding money," he said. "I used to like to modify my cars, it was easy for me to say 'ah, \$2,000 on that.' I was playing up and down (between the AHL and NHL), I didn't understand what I was making and how much I had."

Pro sports being pro sports, players are expected to live in appropriately glamorous surroundings. They rent or buy fancy places, drive fancy cars and eat fancy food (Scandella estimates he spends \$500 per week on the finer things like organic meats and produce).

Peer pressure is a reality in all walks of life, but most of us can't fathom what it's like to experience it as a young, seemingly invincible, millionaire pro athlete. The reality of the NHL player is not one most of us can easily relate to. That doesn't make it any less real.

And not only is there an expectation attached to how an NHLer should live, but it's also integral to the dream these young men have pursued all their lives. The headlong rush to achieve it is followed by a different kind of rush: that associated with buying a Rolex or a new Lexus.

Scandella, parenthetically, learned from his initial missteps; he managed to make himself wait eight years to buy his first proper luxury timepiece and nine to buy his six-figure dream car (a Porsche 911 GT3).

"I feel like there is pressure (to spend)," he said. "You need a nice suit ... actually, you probably need three nice ones, to start. You can't live in an apartment that's \$2,500 or less – in the NHL, like there's a certain standard in the league. You're shopping at Whole Foods, you're living this lifestyle where you need to spend money taking care of your body; nutrition is huge. I feel like if you're out with the guys, everybody makes good money so you're going out to really nice restaurants. This is just the NHL standard, it's what it is. As a young guy coming in and making \$600,000 and you're probably keeping \$280,000 out of that – you're spending money and when you look at how much is left at the end of the year ... it's not that easy to save. And careers are short."

Shannon said that for a player making \$4.75 million, he would try and limit "fun money" spending on restaurants, All-Star break and summer travel, clothes and other conspicuous consumption to \$180,000. That's still a colossal amount of money (\$15,000 a month), but given the total salary being earned, it seems almost quaint.

"There's one number you need to understand: a guy making \$4.75 million who's only spending \$180,000 in disposable income, fun money, is only left with \$1.7 million," Shannon said. "It's nuts."

That's \$1.7 million minus unbudgeted expenses and without considering state taxes for U.S.-based players and provincial taxes for Canadians.

And again, nearly a third of the league makes less than \$1-million per season.

Many hundreds of pro hockey players won't ever see even that much.

Here's a story about the minors: when Scandella was playing in Houston, where the Wild's AHL affiliate was then located, one of his teammates got called up to the NHL in recognition of a great season at the minor league level.

As it happens, the game was in Nashville, which at that time had a so-called "jock tax" of \$2,500 for visiting NHL players.

"It cost him money to play in that game," Scandella said.

The difficulty, of course, is a lot of players in the minors want very badly to play in the NHL and many of them have two-way NHL contracts. That means they're facing similar levels of expenditures for things like off-ice training and eating right.

"Guys are making between \$60,000 and \$80,000, taxed, you're paying for housing, food, car; some guys have girlfriends or wives, in the offseason some guys have (second) jobs," he said, "It's ... not easy. It's a grind."

Just ask Tampa Bay Lightning forward Yanni Gourde about that. He didn't become a full-time NHL player until the season he turned 26 and earned his first one-way deal the year after that.

Gourde spent the better part of seven seasons in the minors, split between the ECHL and the AHL. In the former, players often play for



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less than \$1,000 a week. In the latter, he was guaranteed between \$60,000 and \$100,000 – a good salary to be sure, but not entirely out of whack with what workaday folk might take in.

Last November, he hit the jackpot: a six-year, \$31 million contract. It's been an incredible slog to get to this point and Gourde said it's probably the best thing that could have happened to him. As a player in his late 20s, he feels adequately prepared and well enough informed to deal with what comes next.

"I've matured a lot since the beginning of my career, I know what it's like to live on a pretty minimal salary; I mean the salaries in the East Coast aren't the same as (the NHL), you don't play for the money," he said in a recent interview. "I'm ready for this now, I'm not going to change anything about the way I live. I'm happy, but it's not going to change my life.

"I've never been a fancy car guy or anything like that. I'm aware of the value of a dollar, I've worked since I was a little kid; I bagged groceries at my dad's store (in Saint-Narcisse, Que.), I worked on a farm, I paid for my first car on my own. I had to work. I've always had to work."

But work ethic alone isn't enough when it comes to wealth management.

Today's players tend to have more formal education than past generations of NHLers – due in no small part to the growing influx of NCAA players. As Vancouver Canucks defenceman Jordie Benn, then of the Canadiens, said at the end of last season when asked about his knowledge of financial matters, "if I have questions I usually just ask one of the college guys."

As for his own investments?

"I know nothing, I have someone who takes care of that."

Variations of that answer tend to pop up when talking to players about the subject.

Financial adviser Chris Moynes, who works with roughly 70 NHL clients as part of his financial consulting practice at ONE Sports + Entertainment Group and Aligned Capital Partners Inc., said the I-hire-experts-for-that approach may, paradoxically, be making the league less financially literate on aggregate.

It can sound strange coming from one of the handful of people who work in the hockey player personal finance area (former NHL player Stewart Gavin is another) to say that, but facts are facts.

"It's not rocket science, but you do have to be engaged in the process," Moynes said. "The sport doesn't lend itself to providing these kids with education on finances, or anything really. Pro sports, in general, doesn't."

It's not that resources don't exist, they do, but one has to seek them out. And not everyone does. Nor are investment strategies or the imperatives of budgeting regular themes in the dressing room.

"It's a taboo topic," Scandella said.

Generally, he continued, you only hear about wins with this or that investment. Sports is a competitive business after all.

At the same time, people like Moynes and Shannon will tell you the bulk of their business is generated by word of mouth. It's another paradox, albeit fairly easily explained.

"It's a trust thing with us, hockey players, it's all about trust," Scandella said. "Most guys come from pretty humble beginnings, family-oriented ... you come into money and you don't know who to trust. When I had that \$300,000 in my chequing account I'd be

getting phone calls weekly from people just begging me to let them invest my money. And I'm like, 'I don't know you, I'm not trusting you with this huge amount of money'. I don't even know how people got my number. Then you get friends of friends who start to call, 'I heard he doesn't have anyone managing his money,' it's ... yeah."

A decade on, he knows how compound interest works. He understands risk allocation and the need to plan for a future after the game (yes, he fully appreciates the fact he can do so is the greatest luxury of all).

Scandella has come a long way from the kid who had only a flimsy grasp on how checks worked. True story.

"My first year in the league, I was getting actual checks," he said. "And I would go deposit them with the cashier, here you go. I'm 19, 20 years old and I'd throw the check on the table, this one's \$25,000, that one's \$30,000, everyone's freaking out in there ... I didn't even have direct deposit set up, that's how little I knew. I mean, I didn't realize you could re-issue a check, I thought – I was walking around like, 'what if someone steals this'. I thought I had \$30,000 in my pocket. I was holding on to the check and thinking if anyone tries to steal this check I'm fighting them to the death. I had no idea. Guys don't know ... how do they not teach kids in high school how to budget? Or how investments work?"

For a guy who knew nothing, Scandella has done well, thanks to a little help from his friends. He and Shannon have a number in mind – an asset base that will ensure Scandella's future and those of the people he cares about.

They're nearly there. Scandella is accustomed to needling over his budget-consciousness.

"Some guys will be 'ah, you're being a little tight,' but at the end of the day I still do everything I want, we still go on great trips, but it's those \$20,000 out of nowhere that I don't do," he said. "You don't need to go on that crazy trip on the P.J. (private jet), just get a business class or first-class ticket. It's the same. Those things make a huge difference."

And in the end, he says, it's definitely worth it.

"I'm going into year 10, and having invested and watching my savings make a substantial amount of money, that's where the fun is: watching money do what it's supposed to do ... I had the discipline to listen," he said. "It's actually happening and that's what I'm proud of. We made this work."

The Athletic LOADED: 08.14.2019

1107678 Websites

The Athletic / Why today's NHL stars look far different than those that dominated decades ago

By Justin Bourne

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Next week here at The Athletic I'll start rolling out a series of posts that plays pretty well to my strengths in player analysis. They'll look at the best isolated individual skills around the NHL while comparing



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the elite to the other elites. Some of those will be looking at the classics, so to speak – who is the fastest skater when it comes to straightaway speed, who's got the hardest shot and all the rest – while a couple of others will look at who has the most unique NHL trait, who's the most deceptive laterally and more.

To make sure I didn't overlook anyone, and to give readers a more comprehensive look around the league, I enlisted the help of most of our beat writers to weigh in on their own teams. Given that I write on the Leafs a little more regularly than other teams, I filled in the questionnaire for Toronto, which brings me to a meta-point about NHL hockey today that's a reality but not often acknowledged.

The skill sets that makeup star players in the NHL today would be borderline unrecognizable to those who marveled at the speed of a Guy Lafleur, the cannon shot of an Al MacInnis or the brawn of a Clark Gillies. It's extremely rare today that one player is good enough at one thing, or even two things, to where it allows us to say "that's the one raw ability that makes that player better than everyone else." There are exceptions, but they're few. The full list: McDavid's speed, Ovechkin's one-timer, maybe Shea Weber or Zdeno Chara's shot, though I'd argue their shots weren't even considered their most important attributes for their given teams during their prime years. Every player today is so good at everything, that being elite in one or two of the basics of the game is no longer enough to earn status as an elite player.

To put it somewhat strangely, today's stars have to be physical liars. Seemingly nothing they do, and nothing they advertise themselves to be doing next, ends up being the truth. They're changing angles, altering release points and pushing their arms out on simple passes before changing that pass direction at the last second with their wrists. The speed they're moving at now will not be the speed they're skating at in a second, and it may not be because they're about to go faster. It's so rare to be good enough at any one thing that you can deploy it honestly and have it consistently best your opponents.

The American Hockey League and overseas are littered with players that you could say this about: "My god, with the way he skates there's no way he should be in the minors." You may think it about a dozen different guys and a dozen different abilities over the course of a single game. The AHL's fastest skater contest was won by Anthony Greco, whose time was faster than McDavid's by a blink. The hardest shot contest was won by Greg Carey, whose 100.4 MPH slapper would've been harder than five of the eight attempts taken in the NHL skills affair. If you want to stretch it far back enough, I myself once went four for four in an All-Star game accuracy shooting contest. You get the idea – elite individual abilities do not an NHL All-Star make.

I mention that this came up when I was looking at the Leafs roster when I had this epiphany, because, well, you try it, and let's see where that takes us: who on the Toronto Maple Leafs has the hardest shot?

Yeah, that's kinda where I was too. No idea.

I don't mean who has the best shot – that's another question entirely, and one that'll be included in my upcoming "best raw skills" series – I mean who cranks that thing up to the highest MPH on the team? That led me directly to the question "who even takes slap shots on the Leafs?" The answer is somewhat irrelevant, as the point here is that asking that question is something that legitimately comes up when you consider hardest shot on the Leafs. But for trivia sake, last year's leader was Ron Hainsey, who took 31 all season – good for 103rd most in the NHL.

Staying with the trivia portion for a second here, the Leafs top five was Hainsey (gone), Jake Gardiner with 19 (gone), Morgan Rielly with 19, Jake Muzzin with 15 (38 all season, LA combined), and Nikita Zaitsev with 15 (gone). Among forwards, only three guys took double digits all year. Marner attempted 12, Matthews 11, Nylander 10.

In conclusion, only Muzzin utilizes the slap shot as part of his arsenal at all, and even then, he uses it less than every other game. So ... I guess he has the hardest shot on the team? Unless Matthews or Nylander's wristy/snap shots are outpacing him, I guess nobody really has a traditional "hard" shot on the Leafs? The heavy slap shot – what was once a highly prized NHL raw ability – basically just ... isn't, anymore.

That's a bit of a strange concept for someone who remembers it being so revered back when I was a kid.

One of the other Leafs questions was who's the hardest hitter on the team? Well, that would be ... well, damn, again. Who even hits anyone on that team? By hits-per-game, we're again looking at Muzzin, who averaged two per night as a Maple Leaf. Other competitors for the title, well ... you're tempted to say Zach Hyman, because he actually runs into people, but that's not the right answer. He hits with a purpose, he's a puck separator, he rarely puts anyone on their backside. The other leaders by hits-per-game are Zaitsev – gone, and not a hard hitter anyway – Travis Dermott, who hits only strategically and Freddy the Goat, who hits with all the gusto of a gentle breeze off a pond on a cool spring morning (comparatively speaking, of course). Kasperii Kapanen bumps some people too, but yeah ... you get the idea. The league itself is low on bone-rattlers these days, and the Leafs are on the extreme side in their total absence. Therefore, I guess you'd answer Muzzin here, who claims the title almost by default.

This is a chart from an article I wrote last year on the decline of hitting in general (and why it's not important that Auston Matthews do it), showing the team who led the league in hits by year. It shows a decline in hits by the league leader of over six hundred in just six seasons.

The tool of straight-up hitting is fading away, as players use contact as more of a means of puck acquisition than intimidation and aggression.

It's easy to read about the Leafs not taking slapshots and not really hitting anyone as an indictment, but Toronto has proven that their core is, at worst, quite good. They've hit 100 points two seasons in a row, have made the playoffs each of the last three and nobody out there is thinking they're going to miss Hainsey's slapshots all that much on their quest to get back to that level. They're just playing a game that's closer to how hockey looks today in the big picture and doing it quite well.

The advantage of having a guy with a cannon shot is so small in today's game most players don't bother winding up. The advantage of mowing over opponents in today's game is so small that most players don't bother chasing others down. And, most teams certainly don't bother having those type of players around just because they do those niche things very well.

This difficult point that this speaks to, for hockey, is that the game has a problem on its hands. Hockey was already one of the fastest moving games not just in North America, but one of the fastest moving games, period. That made it hard to understand for potential new fans, and really only those who grew up watching or playing it were really adept at following what was happening. It was a tough game to sit down and understand without real effort, which is why it was great for those fans to at least be able to plainly see the contrast



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between the elite talents and everyone else. But it's getting even harder for the newbie fan to do that.

The stars of today, as I mentioned earlier in this piece, are making it such a challenge to tell who's good and who isn't because "the little things" coaches reference all the time have gotten even littler. It seems like everyone can skate like the wind because the overall level of everyone's skating is so high. Those of us who are around the game daily know there are a handful of players who are truly special in this specific category, but the gap between the Kasperis, Kapanens and league average is not what the gap was between Guy Lafleur and the then league average. You have to know what you're looking for to find it now and this is true for more than just raw speed. Explaining to someone why a great young player is great can rarely be done with simple terms like "size" or "speed" or "great shot."

I find with most things in life, the deeper you go into your understanding, the more enjoyable it becomes (save for maybe politics). For example, the more I learn about astronomy, the more I enjoy learning about astronomy. Hockey (again, save for its politics) is like that. For us diehard fans, we love that the best players of today do what they do via deception. I get legitimately delighted when an offensive player lies to a defender about what he's going to do next and the guy bites.

Below is maybe my favourite video I've made during my time with The Athletic (from this piece, also on deception), purely because I love the Ryan Johansen' seemingly unimpressive wrist roll so much.

That to me is art, that's talent, that's special. The average level of player is so good today that the game's stars have to specialize in speedy subtlety. What's great just looks so far different from the greatness of yore.

There are still extremely rare exceptions to what we're talking about here, as I mentioned in the intro, but grouping players by individual skills is harder than ever. On the whole, the game of hockey has changed, and as a result, the tools players use to become stars have moved towards blending skills, improvisation and deception over great single weapons.

Whether it's a good thing or not, the marveling over today's players is less "did you see what they just did" and more "what did they just do?"

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