



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 31, 2018

## THE NEWS & OBSERVER

### Jordan Staal will be a leader for the Hurricanes, with or without a “C”

By Chip Alexander

Since the end of last season, the Carolina Hurricanes have named a new coach and general manager.

The Canes have a new alternate jersey, goal song and marketing slogan: “Take Warning.”

Tom Dundon now wants a new third logo to go with it. The Canes owner tweeted this week that he’d like fans to send in suggestions for the logo.

Into all the off-ice swirl have come the players, heading back into town, getting settled, getting in skates at Raleigh Center Ice and preparing for the start of training camp on Sept. 13. Once in PNC Arena, they’ll see something new: an enlarged and renovated weight-room area and players lounge.

Jordan Staal joined the RCI group this week for informal workouts as the center prepares for his seventh season with the Canes, aware the team’s player mix has changed considerably since he left.

“A lot of new faces,” Staal said. “Obviously when things don’t work, things get changed. It will be new, fresh and we’ll be grittier, I think. And with some good players. We’re going to be tough to play against.”

That’s what Rod Brind’Amour wants as a head coach. Dundon wants it.

Fewer are tougher to play against than Staal, one of the biggest and best checking forwards in the NHL. He has that reputation and respect, and former Canes coach Bill Peters named him a co-captain, with defenseman Justin Faulk, last season.

Brind’Amour has said the team would have one captain this year, one player wearing the “C,” and Staal said that’s probably the best way to go.

“That’s your typical setup,” he said. “As I said before, with co-captains, there’s always a group of guys that lead a group.

“For me, it personally doesn’t really matter if I’ve got the C’ or an ‘A’ (alternate captain). I know where I’m at in the room and what I bring to the team. It’s always a little icing on the cake but it’s never been my style. I think the one ‘C’ will work fine.”

Two constants in Staal’s six years with the Canes have been veteran goalie Cam Ward and forward Jeff Skinner, a three-time 30-plus goal scorer.

Ward, after 13 seasons with Carolina, after a Stanley Cup, left in free agency, signing with Chicago. Skinner also is gone, traded to Buffalo after eight seasons.

“Wardo leaving was tough,” Staal said. “He’s a close friend and a face of the franchise for a long time. Everyone loved him in the room and he was a tough guy to see go.

“(Skinner) has been there since day one for me and obviously it’s another big change and a big face who moved on. I think the way it was going, a fresh start for him will be good and I wish him the best.”

The Skinner trade has been mostly panned by NHL media types, with Matt Larkin of The Hockey News recently writing, “No team better embodies the shrug emoji right now.”

The Canes will rely on forwards Andrei Svechnikov and Martin Necas -- both first-round draft picks, both teenagers -- to provide offense. There’s risk involved, as with any rookies.

“With the young players, you really hope they can step up and bring some more offensive flair to the group,” Staal said. “And with the Finns and the year they had, you hope they can continue to go where they were headed and see them take off to maybe a different status.”

That would be Sebastian Aho and Teuvo Teravainen. The Finnish forwards combined for 52 goals and 129 points last season, Aho scoring 29 goals in his second NHL season.

Defenseman Dougie Hamilton, obtained in the June trade with Calgary, had 17 goals last season. When the Canes then signed defenseman Calvin de Haan in free agency, it appeared to clear the way for a possible Faulk trade -- a notion general manager Don Waddell has disputed.

With the start of camp two weeks away, Waddell said the Canes’ group is set. There will be seven D-men -- Jaccob Slavin, Brett Pesce, Hamilton, de Haan, Faulk, Trevor van Riemsdyk and Haydn Fleury -- competing for spots in the three pairings. Others, including former first-rounder Jake Bean, also want in.

Fleury, 22, is in the final year of his entry level contract and can be assigned to the Charlotte Checkers of the AHL without waivers, but Waddell said his contract status won’t work against him. Fleury played 67 games last season.

For Staal, the new season will offer a degree of normalcy. Staal dealt last season with a family tragedy -- an infant daughter, Hannah, had a terminal birth defect -- that he and his wife, Heather, kept private until Hannah’s passing in February.

“Any time those things happen, when it affects you and your family, it’s unbelievably hard to deal with,” Waddell said. “But I think Jordan’s had a good summer working out and is anxious to get back at it,”

The team goal remains a simple one: reach the Stanley Cup playoffs for the first time since 2009.

“You always step into a season truly believing you can do great things,” Staal said. “I really do believe it. I’d love to see it, as well. It’s been a long time for myself to get over the hump and I want to be a part of it when it does happen.”



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## THE ATHLETIC

### NHL team tiers: A player, coach, executive and scout project the 31 teams

By Craig Custance

It's fascinating how the NHL is set up right now. The past three Stanley Cup champions have come from the East, and both Washington and Pittsburgh are capable of winning it again. The Tampa Bay Lightning might be the biggest favorite to win it all right now. There's not much wrong with that team. The Toronto Maple Leafs are the franchise on the rise you can feel confident saying is going to have a say in a Stanley Cup at some point in the next few years.

But the West? Oh man, it's going to be an absolute slugfest.

"The separation is so tight it's going to be so hard to separate yourself," said one NHL coach. "In the West, you might only need 93 or 94 points to get in but, fuck, everybody is going to have it. Everybody is going to have 93. The 94th gets you in. That's my prediction."

It's what makes projecting the NHL so challenging this season. So to help the cause for this project, one that attempts to sort every NHL team into tiers of contention for this season, five panelists with different viewpoints (NHL coach, executive, player, scout and media member) were asked to assign a numerical value to every NHL team broken down like this:

- 1 – A legit Stanley Cup contender
- 2 – In the Cup conversation
- 3 – Playoff-caliber
- 4 – Just outside the bubble
- 5 – Lottery lock

All panelists were granted anonymity to ensure honesty and frankness. I mean, everybody but the media member. That's me. Every rating was entered into a spreadsheet and the totals averaged out. Here are the results:

#### TIER 1: THE LEGIT CUP FAVORITES

Tampa Bay Lightning  
Average rating: 1

The Lightning are the only team in the league to get five unanimous one votes. There's so much to like about this team. It has playoff experience. There is serious firepower up front with Steven Stamkos and Nikita Kucherov. Victor Hedman can play all game. The goalie is great. Jon Cooper has guided this team through long playoff runs in the past, and there's a GM who will relentlessly look to add to the mix.

"They're just so deep," said the executive. "They have every weapon in the arsenal. They move the puck well. They play fast. They have good goaltenders. They have everything."

Nashville Predators  
Average rating: 1.3

The Predators will be a popular preseason Cup pick and for good reason. Nashville has the league's best defense and is strong down the middle. Filip Forsberg isn't so bad either.

The challenge, like the other contenders in the division, is getting out of the Central.

"They're a great team, I just don't know what they have on the bottom side of the lineup," said the player. "Their top-end talent is great but I don't know about the bottom. I don't know. They're good enough and Pekka Rinne is going to bounce back in the playoffs. I just don't know. I don't think they're a lock. I think there's better teams in the West."

In handing out an easy one, the NHL scout pointed to the defense: "Their defense is better than any team in the league."

Washington Capitals  
Average rating: 1.3

Voters tended to give the Capitals the benefit of the doubt. They won the Stanley Cup and they're returning just about everybody. But there wasn't universal love for the Capitals' repeat chances.

"They had a wonderful run. But trying to duplicate that? Pittsburgh had more going for them to allow them to double up than Washington," the scout said. "Things went generally pretty right for Washington last year. You have to have a lot of stuff line up to make it where they made it. Trying to get that to line up two times in a row when there's 30 other teams trying to unline you? It's tough."

Winnipeg Jets  
Average rating: 1.3

Despite playing in the impossible Central, this team is built to win it. The Jets are set up and got a no-brainer one vote from the player.

"They're hard to play against," he said. "They ran into a hot team in Vegas, and Nashville was a hard series for them."

It's not going to get any easier this season to navigate the postseason, with the opponents the Jets' have to go through to get to a Stanley Cup final being arguably their biggest hurdle. Still, the executive suggested there are other reasons for concern.

"I just don't know what's going to happen with Jacob Trouba, how that gets reconciled," he said of the Jets defenseman who got a one-year deal after a six-hour arbitration hearing. "I'm not 100 percent sold on their goaltending. People are high on (Connor) Hellebuyck. He had a great season. But until a goalie has done it, he hasn't done it."

#### TIER TWO: IN THE CUP CONVERSATION

Toronto Maple Leafs  
Average rating: 1.8

The John Tavares addition had the panel very excited about the Maple Leafs' chances. They typically got a rating of two but a one from the coach, an Eastern Conference rival, moved them to the top of this tier.



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The concerns mostly centered on the defense, although the belief was that the defense in place now probably isn't going to be the one we see after the trade deadline.

"It's going to be, can they stop being the team that says 'We're going to beat you 7-6?' Can they hunker down? They have a great goaltender in Frederik Andersen," said the player. "Their D — hopefully they can get some guys to step up and play better and be more cohesive there. That's the only issue they have. Offensively, when you're playing against them, it's impressive how dangerous they can be. But you can play in their end awhile because they don't want to play there."

Boston Bruins  
Average rating: 1.9

People really like the Bruins. The young players are coming into their own and the veterans are still young enough to be effective.

"Their veterans are still strong. (Patrice) Bergeron, (Brad) Marchand and even watching (Zdeno) Chara — I think he's going to be better," said the executive. "I like their goaltending and they've got good young players getting better like the McAvoy's and DeBrusk's."

Pittsburgh Penguins  
Average rating: 1.9

As long as Sidney Crosby and Evgeni Malkin are around, this is a team that will believe it can win a Stanley Cup. The defense isn't perfect, but it wasn't when they won either.

Are they as good now as they were when they went back-to-back?

"That's a good question," answered the coach. "It's about their big boys. And Phil Kessel — how happy is he? I still think they have a real chance. There's enough fabric there still from the team that won twice. When you do that, there's an undying belief — you just walk different, you feel different. I think that heartbeat is still there."

St. Louis Blues  
Average rating: 2.1

GM Doug Armstrong may have won the offseason but now his players have to convert the additions of Ryan O'Reilly, Tyler Bozak, David Perron and Patrick Maroon into a long playoff run. This is now a deep, talented, multi-dimensional forward group that can play with anyone. There is strength down the middle that didn't always exist in St. Louis.

"I like their forward group. I'm not crazy about their defensemen," said the coach. "I'm also not convinced about their goalie. You like their D about three deep. Jay Bouwmeester, some of the tread is worn off. But I like their forward group. They have young studs, (Robby) Fabbrì is back there and if (Jaden) Schwartz could ever stay healthy ... they're going to have to run five forwards on the power play to keep that group happy. That's a talented group of forwards."

Columbus Blue Jackets  
Average rating: 2.4

Was this story rushed to print so it could get out before a possible Artemi Panarin trade so we wouldn't have to re-vote? Possibly. But it's not just Panarin who faces uncertainty in Columbus. Goalie Sergei Bobrovsky is entering the last year of his contract and there's still convincing to be done that he can win in the playoffs.

"The unknown is that on deadline day they could look a hell of a lot different," said the coach. "I can't imagine they would take either one of those guys past the deadline just to get a Cup run out of them. I don't think they can afford that. That to me is such an unknown. That'll be an interesting one to watch. That one is headed into a roundabout and I'm not sure which exit it's going to get off."

San Jose Sharks  
Average rating: 2.3

Man, does this comment from the coach sum up the Sharks well: "I always discount San Jose and they're always right there."

They are.

They didn't land Tavares or any other big name this summer, but as long as Joe Thornton keeps going, this team has a fighting chance. He's such a presence for the Sharks. The challenge for San Jose is going to be separating itself from the other Pacific teams. That division is going to be a dogfight.

"I gotta say, L.A. and San Jose are close. I think Calgary is right there," said the coach. "Vegas is going to find a way to be right there. That's your top tier in the division, and then it's Anaheim and Edmonton. I don't know if Arizona can hang in there long enough."

## TIER THREE: IN THE PLAYOFF MIX

Vegas Golden Knights  
Average rating: 2.6

The reasons for discounting the Golden Knights are numerous. The adrenaline from year one is gone. So are James Neal and David Perron. Marc-Andre Fleury is a year older and has a new contract. Vegas is going to be a popular pick for regression and this panel was no different.

"You're going to get some reality. Everyone was on a one-year contract," said the player.

Those short-term contracts have now become long-term contracts. That often comes with contentment rather than the chip-on-the-shoulder that drove Vegas last year. And the player said the novelty of playing in Vegas will wear off for opposing players.

"(Playing in Vegas) had an awe factor," he said. "We're all competitive. We're still going to enjoy ourselves but you're not going to have the 'wow factor.' I'm not discounting them completely, they'll be OK."

Calgary Flames  
Average rating: 2.7

GM Brad Treliving shook up the Flames roster after last season's disappointment and this is a big season for Calgary. The panel was mixed on how it's going to play out.



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"I still think there's something not quite right for them," said the scout, unable to quite pinpoint his issue. "I don't know what it is. People I hang with tend to think they're better than I think they are. I probably underrate them. I have a hard time getting excited about them."

The coach expects Calgary to come in focused and use last season's struggles as fuel this year.

"It's kind of like wake-up call time for these guys," he said. "They've got a real solid group of defensemen. Dougie Hamilton leaving is a positive. I get a sense there's motivation there, the team was not far off last year. They have special players that I'm anticipating have grown up a little bit over the last year. What are they missing?"

Los Angeles Kings  
Average rating: 2.8

This team is fascinating. They're going to be a mess in a couple years. They're a bit old and slow. But there's still a Stanley Cup DNA, a lot of talent in the right positions and a complete wild card in Ilya Kovalchuk.

"And with (Jonathan) Quick in goal, they're hard to play against," the player said. "They're big. Kovalchuk is another threat. I'm not 100 percent sold, but you have (Drew) Doughty back there who can play 30 minutes and it doesn't faze him. And the resurgence of Dustin Brown, we'll see if he can do it again. I know he's pissed off about losing the captaincy, maybe that sparked him. (Anze) Kopitar. Brown. (Jeff) Carter. Kovalchuk. You can't say they're going to be a bad team."

Said the coach: "They could win the division. They could finish sixth."

Dallas Stars  
Average rating: 2.9

It seems like there's always something with the Stars. Crushing injuries to start the season. A goalie that can't consistently stop the puck. A contract negotiation that threatens to be a dark cloud over an entire season. Another new coach.

There's plenty of talent but there's also unanswered questions.

"Their back end and keeping the puck out of the net concerns me," said the coach. "(John) Klingberg is so talented, but he's still a wild card based on the way he plays. I'm not sure he's grown up beyond that. Every time they would go on a run last year, it kind of fizzled. There's that cloud of uncertainty."

Florida Panthers  
Average rating: 2.9

This team could be sneaky good. I liked them better than the field, giving them a 2.5 to everybody else's three. But essentially the consensus was they could be good if things come together.

Mike Hoffman adds a much-needed scorer on the wing, and at some point, we'll all realize just how good Aleksander Barkov is for the Panthers.

"They have the horses, they just need goaltending," said the player.

Edmonton Oilers  
Average rating: 3.1

For a team that finished with just 78 points last season, there seemed to be a surprising air of optimism when discussing the Oilers.

"I think when you get kicked in the teeth like they did, there's a bounce back," said the player. "They're going to rally around that. With the offensive power they have — you just can't discount Connor McDavid and what he can do. There's a lot of guys on that team that underachieved and usually they come in with something to prove."

Colorado Avalanche  
Average rating: 3.2

For a team that made the playoffs, there wasn't a ton of faith in Colorado's ability to repeat it. They appear to be a strong candidate to be a young team that takes a step back before charging forward, similar to what Winnipeg and Calgary went through in recent years.

"I don't know. Their goaltending is hot or cold or non-existent," said the scout. "I just don't have a lot of trust there."

Philadelphia Flyers  
Average rating: 3.2

There's a lot to like about the Flyers, from the addition of James van Riemsdyk to the emergence of Nolan Patrick down the stretch last season. The defense is young but developing. But there's still the big unknown.

"Goaltending. Goaltending," said the NHL scout. "I like some of their players, but I don't think they're quite there yet. JVR is going to get his points, especially on the power play, but I don't know if that's going to push them over the top."

Minnesota Wild  
Average rating: 3.4

The Wild seem to be evolving from a team that you felt comfortable penciling in as a playoff team to one in which a slide just outside the playoffs seems inevitable. Everyone seems OK with the Wild. Nobody really loves them either.

"They confuse me," said the player. "They're a weird team. I like them. I don't know. I think they need a lot of things to go right to win. And is Eric Staal going to do what he did last year?"

It's a fair question.

"I think they have a lot of good pieces," said the coach. "I don't get a real good feel for the temperature of that room. I don't get a real good sense there's the tightness that other teams have out there. It doesn't seem like a mix of players that have fallen in love with each other."

New Jersey Devils  
Average rating: 3.4

The Devils were one of the NHL's biggest surprises last year. As often is the case when that happens, there's a healthy skepticism that it can be repeated. New Jersey is firmly in the



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Colorado category: a good, young team that may be on the verge of a step backward before taking another step forward.

"It's almost like this past year was what's supposed to be this year and this year will be what's supposed to be last year," said the coach. "When you exceed expectations, the whole picture changes. It's going to be really hard for Taylor Hall to surprise everybody when they really see you coming. For the first 20 games, they probably surprised everybody. They did a good job of becoming the team they want to become. Now, everybody knows who is coming through the door."

Anaheim Ducks  
Average rating: 3.5

This seems low to me but the panel wasn't crazy about the Ducks.

"I think they're easy to play against," said the player. "They don't scare me. They have good players but they're on the other side. I don't see the same speed and compete level out of (Corey) Perry. There's going to be a changing of the guard there."

Chicago Blackhawks  
Average rating: 3.5

You can hear the respect in the voices of panelists talking about the Blackhawks but there is also legitimate concern. Is there enough depth beyond the stars? What's the deal with Corey Crawford? And what is the defense going to look like?

"They could be right there or they could be ...," said the coach, trailing off. "They know what they're doing. They know how to win. But you can only pull so much in this league with a few horses. You have to be good deep. I don't know if they're good deep enough. They're not a playoff team."

The concerns over Crawford are legitimate and the Cam Ward signing didn't appear to calm any nerves on that front.

"Goaltending, I don't know what's going on there," said the scout. "Nothing I've heard is positive, I'll tell you that. They're in a tough spot. They need masterful stuff from Mr. Kane and Mr. Toews, and I'm not sure they can get it. Their defense is starting to be in trouble."

## TIER FOUR: JUST OUTSIDE THE BUBBLE

Carolina Hurricanes  
Average rating: 4

They're bringing in a top pair defenseman in Dougie Hamilton and a potential superstar winger in Andrei Svechnikov but there still was not a lot of love for their playoff chances at this point from the panel.

"They can't score and they don't have a goalie. That's two big obstacles," said the NHL scout. "You're allowed one obstacle but not two."

Arizona Coyotes  
Average rating: 4

This is a young team headed in the right direction that should be showing signs of progress in their rebuild. Still, the consensus is that it's not quite ready for the playoffs, even if there's optimism in the desert right now.

"They haven't shown me enough yet to get me to jump on the bandwagon," said the scout.

Added the executive: "They've bottomed out but they're on the way back up. They may not be at the absolute bottom of the league. They're moving in the right direction."

New York Islanders  
Average rating: 4.1

This seems about right for a team that didn't make the playoffs last season with Tavares and now is trying to figure out what life in the post-Tavares era looks like. The additions of Leo Komarov, Valtteri Filppula and Matt Martin continue the Islanders' odd trend of spending down the lineup. There are some great young players in that organization and the Islanders had a great 2018 draft. The fastest path back might be a drop to the bottom of the standings for one season to add another foundational piece.

New York Rangers  
Average rating: 4.2

For a team that is firmly in rebuilding mode there was still a sense that the Rangers could have a chance to be competitive this season.

"With Henrik Lundqvist they do," said the executive, who rated them a 3.5. "That's why I put them where they are. Can they win the Cup? No. Do I think they might surprise people? Yes."

Buffalo Sabres  
Average rating: 4.5

The Sabres hit it big in the draft lottery with the addition of defenseman Rasmus Dahlin, but panelists don't see that as an automatic push into playoff contention. The heavy lifting surrounding the rebuild in Buffalo is over but there's still work to be done as this young team learns how to win.

"It's a feeling out process there. They all think they're great players. That's wonderful. Dahlin, you think he's great but he doesn't know the league," said the player. "You have to have people around him to pull through. Are guys going to help (Jack) Eichel pull through? It's not a knock on them, it's where they're starting. And I don't think they have the goaltending."

## TIER 5: LOSE FOR HUGHES

Detroit Red Wings  
Average rating: 4.7

The polling came as the seriousness of Henrik Zetterberg's back injury surfaced, revealing that he won't be playing in training camp and is out to start the season. Chances are, unless there's a miraculous medical turn, he's done playing. Factor in the loss of the captain, a suspect defense where the youngest players aren't quite ready and one of the league's oldest rosters, and it could be a long season in Detroit.

The Red Wings got fives across the board, with only the player giving them a 3.5 because he likes Dylan Larkin.

"They're bottoming out this year," said the executive. "I don't think they have a chance of winning. They're going to be picking in the bottom three or four."



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Montreal Canadiens  
Average rating: 4.8

Shea Weber is out. The Max Pacioretty drama appears to be an issue that's going to cause a distraction until he's traded. There are good, young players on the way, but it's going to take time for them to make an impact at the NHL level. If there's going to be any success in Montreal this season, it'll likely be for one reason only.

"People forget about Carey Price. That's the only thing," said the NHL scout. "I think they're in trouble, but Carey Price can cover up a lot of freaking mistakes. Him alone can put them in the playoffs, he's done it before."

"There's so many moving parts and a lot of question marks," said the player. "The way they've treated Pacioretty, it's such a weird culture there. Weber is out. I'm never going to discount Carey Price, he can win you games. And they may be hard to play against. I just don't think they're going to have the firepower to score goals. There's some good pieces there, I just don't know if they even know what they have there either."

Ottawa Senators  
Average rating: 5

At this point, there's no sense piling on the Senators who seem destined to send a really good pick to the Avalanche (as part of the Matt Duchene trade).

"That's a mess," said the player.

Vancouver Canucks  
Average rating: 5

The Canucks may believe they're closer to playoff contention but there wasn't anyone on the panel willing to give them anything better than a five.

"I feel bad," said the player. "Without the Sedins, I don't know where that's going to go. There's going to be a battle for hierarchy. Who is going to be the face of that team?"

The executive felt confident projecting another bottom finish for the Canucks.

"The bottom three teams in the league are going to be the Canucks, Ottawa and Detroit," he said.

And lastly, some thoughts from the coach on Vancouver: "They're going to get the shit kicked out of them in the division."

## TODAY'S LINKS

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# SportScan

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

1103334 Carolina Hurricanes

Jordan Staal will be a leader for the Hurricanes, with or without a "C"

BY CHIP ALEXANDER

August 30, 2018 02:26 PM

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Tom Dundon now wants a new third logo to go with it. The Canes owner tweeted this week that he'd like fans to send in suggestions for the logo.

Hey Canes fans, I think we need a third logo. We'd love to see it on a shirt this year. Tweet me your ideas.

— Tom Dundon (@TDCanes) August 28, 2018

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That's what Rod Brind'Amour wants as a head coach. Dundon wants it.

Fewer are tougher to play against than Staal, one of the biggest and best checking forwards in the NHL. He has that reputation and respect, and former Canes coach Bill Peters named him a co-captain, with defenseman Justin Faulk, last season.

Brind'Amour has said the team would have one captain this year, one player wearing the "C," and Staal said that's probably the best way to go.

The Carolina Hurricanes Jordan Staal said the team lacked the effort needed to win as they lost to the Edmonton Oilers in NHL action in Raleigh on March 20, 2018.



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"That's your typical setup," he said. "As I said before, with co-captains, there's always a group of guys that lead a group."

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The Canes will rely on forwards Andrei Svechnikov and Martin Necas -- both first-round draft picks, both teenagers -- to provide offense. There's risk involved, as with any rookies.

The News & Observer has launched a sports-only digital subscription for those of you who want to stay up to date on everything from the North Carolina sports scene. Go to [nando.com/sportspass](http://nando.com/sportspass) to learn more.

"With the young players, you really hope they can step up and bring some more offensive flair to the group," Staal said. "And with the Finns and the year they had, you hope they can continue to go where they were headed and see them take off to maybe a different status."

That would be Sebastian Aho and Teuvo Teravainen. The Finnish forwards combined for 52 goals and 129 points last season, Aho scoring 29 goals in his second NHL season.

Defenseman Dougie Hamilton, obtained in the June trade with Calgary, had 17 goals last season. When the Canes then signed defenseman Calvin de Haan in free agency, it appeared to clear the way for a possible Faulk trade -- a notion general manager Don Waddell has disputed.

With the start of camp two weeks away, Waddell said the Canes' group is set. There will be seven D-men -- Jaccob Slavin, Brett Pesce, Hamilton, de Haan, Faulk, Trevor van Riemsdyk and Haydn Fleury -- competing for spots in the three pairings. Others, including former first-rounder Jake Bean, also want in.

Fleury, 22, is in the final year of his entry level contract and can be assigned to the Charlotte Checkers of the AHL without waivers, but Waddell said his contract status won't work against him. Fleury played 67 games last season.

For Staal, the new season will offer a degree of normalcy. Staal dealt last season with a family tragedy -- an infant daughter, Hannah, had a terminal birth defect -- that he and his wife, Heather, kept private until Hannah's passing in February.

"Any time those things happen, when it affects you and your family, it's unbelievably hard to deal with," Waddell said. "But I think Jordan's had a good summer working out and is anxious to get back at it,"

The team goal remains a simple one: reach the Stanley Cup playoffs for the first time since 2009.

"You always step into a season truly believing you can do great things," Staal said. "I really do believe it. I'd love to see it, as well. It's been a long

time for myself to get over the hump and I want to be a part of it when it does happen."

News Observer LOADED: 08.31.2018

1103353 NHL

Final environmental report on \$700 million KeyArena renovation looks to head off appeals that could derail NHL plans

Originally published August 30, 2018 at 4:25 pm Updated August 30, 2018 at 7:01 PM

Geoff Baker

An environmental impact report released Thursday on the \$700 million renovation of KeyArena references additional mitigation measures aimed at heading off legal challenges that might delay construction and the arrival of a National Hockey League expansion team.

Based on more than 440 public comments received from local stakeholders during a mandated 45-day springtime period -- some of which were filed by attorneys -- the Los Angeles based Oak View Group (OVG) developer will partake in steps to lessen potential disruptions, including construction noise, vibration and adverse traffic and parking conditions in the surrounding area. The 379-page final environmental impact statement (FEIS), required by state law, will help the City of Seattle and OVG finalize a development agreement that must be approved by a mid-September city council vote before an estimated 24-month construction period could begin in October.

"Controversy around the Seattle Center Arena Renovation Project has focused largely on the potential for significant traffic and parking impacts in an already congested area," states the report prepared by the Environmental Science Associates firm, with traffic analysis by Fehr & Peers, for the city's Department of Construction and Inspections. The report adds that additional concerns expressed include "direct and indirect impacts during construction, including noise/vibration, congestion related inconvenience and disruption and the effects on access to recreational programming at Seattle Center."

Any appeals of the FEIS must be filed within a 14-day period ending September 13.

Heading off such appeals is critical for OVG if the arena is to be completed by the October 2020 start of that year's NHL season. The NHL executive committee is to meet in New York in early October to hear a presentation by the NHL Seattle group -- headed by president and CEO Tod Leiweke and future hockey franchise owners David Bonderman and Jerry Bruckheimer -- seeking an expansion team to begin play during the 2020-21 campaign.

That October meeting would only take place if no FEIS appeals get filed. Any appeal would take at least three months to be adjudicated by a city examiner and likely delay completing the renovation in time for an NHL team to begin by 2020.

If no appeals are filed and the league's executive committee gives thumbs-up in October, a full NHL board of governors vote on approving a Seattle expansion franchise for a \$650 million fee would likely occur in early December in Florida.

Both Leiweke brothers -- OVG head Tim and NHL Seattle honcho Tod -- and their representatives have spent months meeting with KeyArena neighborhood stakeholders that expressed concerns following the release of a draft EIS back in April. Among top priorities was dealing with a lengthy joint comment submission by representatives of the Expo and Astro apartment complexes adjacent KeyArena, which expressed concerns about construction noise, vibration and broader issues that sometimes had little to do with the buildings themselves.



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The submission was sent in a 17-page letter signed by Seattle land use attorney Courtney Kaylor of the McCullough Hill Leary firm. Jack McCullough, one of the city's foremost land attorneys, is a named partner at the firm and has long represented San Francisco-based entrepreneur Chris Hansen in his stalled bid to build a brand new arena in the city's Sodo District.

Hansen's representatives have denied his group had anything to do with the letter. Among the arguments Kaylor used was that the proposed renovation is a "public project" and the draft EIS should be redone and study alternative arena sites – a step that would delay the renovation by several months.

But the FEIS released Thursday continues to treat the renovation as a "private" project – given construction is privately funded – and addressed the Sodo issue only by stating: "Some commenters stated that the South of Downtown (SoDo) area was preferable for an arena because they believe that area does not have the same congestion concerns, and some commenters asked that an off-site location be considered as an alternative. Because the objective of the project is the renovation of KeyArena, an off-site location is not evaluated in the EIS."

Instead, the FEIS studied the environmental impacts of three scenarios: around-the-clock construction, only daytime work, or leaving KeyArena as-is. Only with the day-and-night construction would the arena be done by October 2020, with the restricted daytime-only version causing a delay of at least six months.

As for the two apartments, the FEIS conducted noise studies in May, June and July – including during a recent Paul Simon concert — from the rooftops of both and concluded they won't be adversely impacted by major KeyArena events.

As for future construction, studied with three-dimensional noise modeling, the FEIS determined that daytime work also would have no significant impact, but that some nighttime work – especially from truck loading — would cause adverse noise and potential sleep disruption for residents. The FEIS also says the noise could impact non-residential nighttime operations at KEXP radio, SIFF Film Center and The Vera Project.

OVG has since agreed to a mitigation plan and will install a temporary, 12-foot noise deflection barrier as a construction fence on three sides of the project's perimeter. The developer will also use conveyors to load materials for transport, operate certain trucks and cranes in areas further away from the buildings, prohibit jackhammers, concrete saws and similarly noisy tools from operating at night and use strobe lights and flaggers as opposed to backup alarms on mobile equipment.

The study found the Expo and Astro apartments won't be impacted by excessive vibration caused by construction, but that KEXP, SIFF and The Vera Project – which use sensitive equipment – likely will. It says the city can mitigate this by mandating OVG use certain equipment to lessen vibration, warn tenants ahead of time of any "impact equipment operations" and stabilize and repair any structures sensitive to vibration.

On traffic and parking disruptions caused by its work, OVG would impose time limits on "haul routes" through vacated 2ndAve. N. and Harrison St. running through the Seattle Center campus. It would also post flaggers to help guide pedestrians across the haul routes when in use.

Truck trips would also not occur through other haul routes in the surrounding neighborhood – except for during continuous concrete pours – during the peak morning and afternoon rush hours.

Once the arena reopens, the FEIS says the addition by 2025 of Link Light Rail extensions from Eastside communities to Westlake station could significantly reduce vehicles driving to the venue. It also says an upgraded Monorail could lure more users right away and after light rail expansion to complete the "last mile" journey from Westlake to the arena.

The FEIS estimates that, under current conditions, users postgame might wait 20 minutes for a Monorail ride. But it notes that a June report prepared for Seattle Center by Via Architecture estimates hourly Monorail ridership capacity could double to 6,000 in each direction by expanding

station platforms, using automated ticket windows and an integrated fare card.

And it seems to suggest OVG might help pay as a "partner" to implement those upgrades. On all other transportation issues, the FEIS states OVG will "work with" the city on improvements.

"OVG would partner with Seattle Center and Seattle Monorail Services to implement high priority

Monorail improvements recommended in the (Via Architecture report)," the FEIS states. "These recommendations would improve the boarding and egress experience at both stations...and increase the Monorail's capacity. Coupled with a program to encourage parking around Westlake Center, these improvements would help mitigate traffic operations and parking impacts of the arena by providing a convenient last mile connection."

OVG officials could not immediately be reached to comment on whether they've committed to pay for any Monorail work.

Seattle Times LOADED: 08.31.2018

1103375 Websites

The Athletic / State of the Franchise: Uncertainty of Bobrovsky, Panarin futures casts a pall on Blue Jackets

By Aaron Portzline Aug 30, 2018

The Blue Jackets began arranging the finances and shedding dead salary more than a year ago in anticipation of July 2018. Two of the best players in the franchise's history — left winger Artemi Panarin and goaltender Sergei Bobrovsky — were heading into the final seasons of their contracts, and management needed room to write two massive checks.

The summer was expected to be reaffirming on many counts. If Panarin and Bobrovsky signed long term, it would signal that Columbus was deemed a worthwhile landing spot, not just an NHL flyover city. And if a point-a-game forward and two-time Vezina Trophy-winning goaltender were staying put, it would mean the Blue Jackets' trajectory as a Stanley Cup challenger could be sustained.

But the Summer of Signings has turned into central Ohio's own Cold War with its two Russian superstars.

Panarin won't even come to the table, saying he's not ready — "at this time" — to sign a long-term extension in Columbus, that the Blue Jackets should consider trading him to avoid losing him for nothing, and that, oh-by-the-way, they'd better do it before Sept. 13, so that training camp isn't messy and distracting for him.

Bobrovsky's situation appears slightly different. He and his agent, Paul Theofanous, have negotiated with the Blue Jackets, but that has gone so poorly — the initial offers from both sides had a huge gulf — that there have been very few talks.

It appears both Panarin and Bobrovsky will head into 2018-19 with unrestricted free agency looming next summer, so the story that stained the summer now threatens to swallow the season, too, unless general manager Jarmo Kekalainen pulls a rabbit out of his pipo.

So you want to be an NHL GM? Try on Kekalainen's shoes for just a moment. Trading one or both of Panarin and Bobrovsky would likely submarine the Blue Jackets' season. Letting both of them walk via free agency next summer with no return would likely submarine the Blue Jackets' next few seasons.



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But, barring a change of heart by Panarin or a lessening of contract demands by Bobrovsky, those are the no-win options in front of Kekalainen. This should be a fascinating year in Columbus.

The Blue Jackets did not make significant changes this summer in an attempt to close the gap between themselves and the two Metropolitan Division behemoths, Pittsburgh and Washington.

Veteran forwards Matt Calvert, Thomas Vanek and Mark Letestu, and veteran defensemen Ian Cole and Jack Johnson, were allowed to walk via free agency. That's a big hit to the roster depth that once was seen as the best hope to jump the Penguins or Capitals.

The only major signing by the Blue Jackets was center Riley Nash, who solidified his standing as a second- or third-line center over the last two seasons in Boston. Nash will give the Jackets stability down the spine, something they lacked most of last season.

### Biggest on-ice question

It's hard to argue with any defensive core that lists Seth Jones and Zach Werenski, in some order, at the top of the lineup. An ongoing barstool debate in Columbus: Who will win the Norris Trophy first, Jones or Werenski?

But the depth of talent that made the Blue Jackets' blue line the envy of most other franchises has taken a hit.

Cole slotted in with David Savard on the second pair late last season and the two clicked immediately. Johnson held that spot previously, forming a shutdown pair with Savard.

The Blue Jackets might learn this season what a luxury it was to have two powerful pairings, one that can play in any setting (Werenski – Jones) and another (Cole – Savard) that could be used to stifle and pound the opposition's top line.

Now the job will fall to Ryan Murray, who has had trouble staying in the lineup due to injuries, or Markus Nutivaara, an up-and-coming puck-mover.

But the days of assistant coach Brad Shaw simply rolling his pairs, without deep concern for matchups, are likely finished, and the second and third pairs could be in flux all season.

It could prompt a move that coach John Tortorella has resisted during the last two seasons: putting Jones and Werenski on separate pairings to spread their talents across more of the 60 minutes.

### Biggest off-ice question

Well, here they are again, Panarin and Bobrovsky. It's the cloud that hangs over the franchise.

Panarin alerted the Blue Jackets before the June draft that he wasn't willing to negotiate a contract extension. The list of his preferred destinations that surfaced at the draft — New York Rangers, New York Islanders, Los Angeles, Tampa Bay, Florida and Dallas — apparently still applies, but NHL sources have told The Athletic that the Rangers are Panarin's first choice.

The Blue Jackets have fielded trade offers for the dynamic winger, but every offer has been for prospects and high-round draft picks — nothing that would help ease the absence of Panarin from the 2018-19 roster.

If the league believes the Rangers are his target, the trade offers won't likely improve. The pill of not just losing Panarin, but also losing him to a Metro rival, would be bitter indeed.

Kekalainen might be headed for the toughest decision of his managerial career if he carries Panarin on the roster deep into the season. Imagine if the Blue Jackets are thriving near the trade deadline — say, first or second place in the Metro — and he's forced to trade him?

The Blue Jackets seem less worried about Bobrovsky's situation. Yes, he's the only active two-time Vezina winner, and he's been the franchise's backbone since coming over from Philadelphia in 2012.

But how many clubs: a) need a No. 1 goaltender, and b) have the appetite or salary-cap room to pay that goaltender more than \$10 million per season? The market won't be nearly as open for Bobrovsky as it is for Panarin, giving the club at least some semblance of leverage.

It's unclear what Bobrovsky has asked for salary-wise with his next contract, but it's hard to imagine him expecting less than Montreal's Carey Price, who is making \$10.5 million per season.

### Depth chart analysis

**Center:** This position was in crisis mode much of last season. Alexander Wennberg fought injuries and watched his production plummet after he signed a big contract. Brandon Dubinsky, always the emotional leader of the club, saw his career veer wildly off course. It got so bad that left winger Nick Foligno, ever the good soldier, moved to the middle as a stopgap.

Making it all sting a little more was the explosion of William Karlsson, who went to Vegas in the expansion draft and became a 40-goal scorer and an MVP candidate.

If not for the surprising emergence of rookie Pierre-Luc Dubois, the Blue Jackets' struggles at center ice would have been their undoing in 2017-18. He was a formidable two-way player who thrived with Panarin on his left and showed more offensive acumen than most expected.

Dubois returns as the presumed No. 1 center, but the Blue Jackets would like Wennberg to at least put up a fight for the top spot during training camp and the preseason.

The Jackets are hoping Dubinsky can bounce back and become an impact player in the bottom six, but his job as the Blue Jackets' third-line center is hardly secure after the Nash signing. He could start the season as the fourth-line center.

What intrigues the Blue Jackets most about Nash is how he played in Patrice Bergeron's injury absence last season in Boston. In 13 games between Brad Marchand and David Pastrnak, Nash had 5-8-13 and a plus-six rating.

To be clear, Nash is not viewed as a top-six offensive player in Columbus. But if it comes to that — he would have come in handy last season — they won't be exposed this time around.

Lukas Sedlak may not be a lineup regular this season, but is a solid depth player. He can play on both wings, too.

### Left wing

As long as Panarin has a Columbus address, he's the focal point of the offense and the anchor of the left side. Tortorella loves the intensity with which Panarin plays, so he never hesitates to use him in all situations.

Panarin, 26, established career highs and franchise records in assists (55) and points (82), despite playing mostly with a rookie center (Dubois) and a right wing (Cam Atkinson) who struggled mightily for the first four months of the season.

It's not crazy to think Panarin, if the Blue Jackets' power play awakens in 2018-19, could approach 100 points.

If Foligno follows the rhythm of his last few seasons, it should be a productive season for him. He went from 31 goals in 2014-15 to 12 goals in 2015-16, then back up to 26 goals in 2016-17 and back down to 15 last season.

Boone Jenner needs a bounce-back season, too. After surprising with 30 goals in 2015-16, he's scored 18 and 13 the last two seasons. Depending on how the lines are sorted, he could shift to the right side, as could Foligno.



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Two wild cards are vying for duty on the left side of the fourth line.

Anthony Duclair was signed as a free agent after flaming out with Arizona and Chicago. His agent steered Duclair toward Columbus believing that the hard-driven style of Tortorella was just the wake-up call he needed.

Sonny Milano finally earned a regular spot in 2017-18, playing 55 games, but he remains a puzzle. The offense he generates (14 goals) can only offset the lack of structure in his game for so long.

Right wing

Atkinson has said he was too busy between the ears last season — trying to play a certain way on Panarin's opposite wing, worrying about his contract status, then trying to justify the big-ticket (seven years, \$41.25 million) he signed to stay in Columbus.

When Atkinson broke his foot Dec. 23, he needed a reset for more than just the bones in his lower extremities. Atkinson had 18-15-33 in the final 33 games of the season, finding a way to play with Panarin and Dubois and reminding the Blue Jackets that Panarin isn't the only player on the club with point-a-game talent.

Oliver Bjorkstrand should get a chance to play higher in the lineup. He's demanded as much with his play. Bjorkstrand was fourth among forwards in points (40), but only 10th among forwards in ice time (14:18), meaning Tortorella has to find more ways to use him.

Expect Bjorkstrand and Josh Anderson to battle for ice time on the second and third lines, though they are vastly different players.

Bjorkstrand is a slippery skater with a laser-point wrist. Anderson is a Denali on skates, the rare player with the size to play 1980s-style hockey at the speed today's game demands.

The fourth line right winger is anybody's guess. Markus Hannikainen would appear the likely candidate, because he's a good penalty killer. The club will need somebody to fill Matt Calvert's role on the PK.

Left defense

Werenski is two years deep into his career, and he's off to a magnificent start, with 27-57-84 and a plus-25 rating. Only five defensemen have scored more goals than Werenski during that span, and he's fought through significant injuries in each season.

Last season, Werenski suffered through a torn labrum in his shoulder, leaving him unable to defend, essentially, with his left arm for the final 60 games. He couldn't let loose a slap shot, either.

Werenski had offseason surgery and could be delayed at the start of the season, but the Blue Jackets can't wait to see him 100 percent healthy. They're enthralled with his skills and his game sense, not to mention his maturity. Expect Werenski to start drawing 25 minutes per night with regularity.

The other two spots on the left side will likely be filled with Murray and Nutivaara, two players who meet the modern NHL's requirement that blue-liners be puck-movers.

Murray is an all-around smooth player, but the offensive side of his game hasn't yet bloomed as expected when he was a No. 2 overall draft pick in 2012. Nutivaara, meanwhile, is master of the stretch pass and makes quick decisions coming out of the defensive end, a trait that Tortorella in particular admires.

Whichever of them works best with Savard will join the No. 2 pair, but neither Murray nor Nutivaara have a physical edge to their game like Cole or Johnson in previous seasons.

The other will slide to the third pair, which will likely play significantly less in 2018-19.

The Blue Jackets were high on Gabriel Carlsson in 2016-17, but seemed less so last season. Still, he has size (6-foot-4, 200 pounds) and potential to work his way into the mix should injuries occur.

Right defense

Jones had an excellent 2017-18 season, finishing fourth in the Norris Trophy voting. Truth be told, he probably should have finished higher. He set career highs across the board — 16-41-57, plus-10 — and carried himself with the calm and confidence of a future captain.

The Blue Jackets have not a shred of regret about trading center Ryan Johansen to Nashville for Jones three seasons ago. They'd do it again in a heartbeat, even though the center position has been unsettled since the trade.

Jones has a quiet personality, but he has almost a gravitational pull in the dressing room. Even older players are drawn to him and take their cues from him.

Savard's game has been well-defined by Tortorella — shutdown defenseman with a physical edge — and it's helped him elevate. His lack of foot speed has always been a challenge, so having a mobile player with puck-moving skills next to him (Murray, Nutivaara) could be a benefit.

Scott Harrington and Dean Kukan have one-way NHL contracts, so give one of them the edge to be a regular on the right side of the third pair. Still, management hedged its bets by loading up with AHL/NHL types on two-way contracts. Adam Clendening is the one with the most experience.

Goaltender

Bobrovsky will once again be the Blue Jackets' undisputed No. 1, and he has little left to prove in the regular season. Since he's shaken the string of groin injuries earlier in his career, he's been a lock to play 60-plus games, including long stretches in which he can carry the club.

The last hurdle for Bobrovsky to clear — one that would make him the undisputed best goaltender in the game — is to finally excel in the postseason. He's 5-14 in the playoffs. Among the 53 goaltenders with 20 or more playoff games since 2000, Bobrovsky's 3.49 goals-against average ranks No. 53. His save percentage (.891) ranks 52nd, ahead of only Dan Cloutier.

Whatever Bobrovsky has demanded in his next contract — \$11 million? \$12 million? — the Blue Jackets would be much looser with the paycheck if he'd carried them beyond April.

And the reality that Bobrovsky may be moving on after this season could prompt the Blue Jackets to let Joonas Korpisalo carry the nets a little bit longer if he gets hot. The young Finn now needs to clear waivers to head to the AHL, meaning Cleveland can't be used for spot starts to keep Korpisalo fresh.

Bobrovsky will play a heavy share of the load, of course, especially if the Blue Jackets are in a fight for the playoffs. But they have to prepare Korpisalo — and the rest of the club — for life after Bobrovsky, should it come to that.

The Blue Jackets signed Jean-Francois Berube as their No. 3. He has a career .898 save percentage in NHL stops with the New York Islanders and Chicago.

Power play

Nothing quite erodes a club's offensive confidence like a flaccid power play, and the Blue Jackets were a monumental flop with the man-advantage for the first three months of last season.

There's no excuse for a club that can roll out Werenski, Jones, Panarin, Atkinson, etc., to be so miserable. But with the unit struggling to get over 10 percent — it was threatening to be historically bad by late January — the coaching staff finally figured it out.

Wennberg, just back from an injury, was moved from the half-wall to net-front, allowing him to distribute the puck in tight spaces and freeing Atkinson and Panarin to man their natural half-walls.



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Over the final 38 games, the Jackets' power play fired at 23.7 percent, a top-10 unit in the NHL during that span. That's more like it.

The Blue Jackets didn't make any personnel changes that will likely have an impact on their power play, but they hope the pains of last season will lead to a full season of answers this time.

Werenski was limited with his shoulder injury, so he lost his grip on the No. 1 power play unit to Jones. Now that he's healthy, it'll be interesting to see who gets to run with the top unit this season.

### Penalty kill

The Blue Jackets' penalty kill was 27th overall in the league (76.2 percent) last season, including 30th (70.6) on the road. Now take Calvert, Johnson and Cole out of the equation, and fans would be right to be worried.

Calvert was quick and scrappy and took pride in penalty-killing, earning a short-handed scoring chance, it seemed, about every third game. He's in Colorado now, and the Blue Jackets don't appear to have an ideal replacement.

Cole, who joined Calvert in Colorado, and Johnson, who signed with rival Pittsburgh, were fearless shot blockers on the penalty kill. That won't be easy to replace, either.

### In the pipeline

#### Center

The organization has touted Jonathan Davidsson, a sixth-round pick in 2017, as being a sleeper to make the club out of training camp, but that's hard to imagine with all of the one-way deals ahead of him on the depth chart. He needs to prove himself in the AHL first, and he'll get that chance. Sam Vigneault had ups and downs in the AHL last season, but he could earn a call-up if injuries hit. So could Kevin Stenlund. The real difference-makers at center are still a couple of seasons away: Alexandre Texier will remain in Europe for another season, and Liam Foudy is expected to return to OHL London for more seasoning.

#### Left wing

Vitaly Abramov will get a long look in training camp and the exhibition season again this fall. He's been tearing up the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League for three seasons now, and it's time for a new challenge. Can the Blue Jackets give him the top-six ice time his skill will require? That's hard to envision this season, but if Panarin is moved along, they'll have a desperate need for speed and skill. That's Abramov's game. Eric Robinson, Calvin Thurkauf and Paul Bittner are depth guys in AHL Cleveland.

#### Right wing

The Blue Jackets were delighted to sign Maxime Fortier last season after he made it through three drafts without getting picked. He's a hard worker with more than a little skill, so he could absolutely push Hannikainen and others in camp. The long-range difference-maker here is Kirill Marchenko, a second-round pick this summer. He's not ready yet, and he's apparently planning to spend a few seasons in Russia's KHL.

#### Defense

In 2017, Vladislav Gavrikov was forced to sign a two-year deal with his KHL club if he wanted to play in the 2018 Olympics. He got his wish and won a gold medal. He's bound for one year in Russia, then he's expected to step into the Blue Jackets' lineup in 2019-20. Kukan will likely stick in Columbus this season after signing a one-way deal. Carlsson may have taken a step back, but he's too damn big and has too much potential to count out yet.

#### Goaltender

The Blue Jackets, wisely, have selected a goaltender in four of the last five drafts. They've also signed a prospect, Matiss Kivlenieks, out of the USHL. Now the wait is underway to see who emerges. Elvis Merzlikins

has been an elite goaltender in Switzerland the past couple of seasons, but he'll likely make his arrival in North America in 2019. Other names to keep in mind (and learn to spell) are Daniil Tarasov, Veini Vehvilainen, Kivlenieks and Peter Thome, currently at University of North Dakota.

#### Salary cap watch

The Blue Jackets began preparing for massive contract extensions with Bobrovsky and Panarin more than a year ago. It played a huge part in their blockbuster trade with Vegas in advance of the expansion draft last summer.

Management insisted they could sign both Panarin and Bobrovsky and still keep together the rest of the core of the team. But now, if both of them move on as free agents next summer, the Jackets would be clearing \$13.425 million off the books.

Part of that will go to Werenski, who could have signed an extension this summer — he's an RFA in 2019 — but wanted to come to the table off a season in which he was 100 percent healthy. He'll get a long-term deal, most likely, not a bridge.

The Blue Jackets project to open the season roughly \$5 million under the salary cap.

#### Final assessment

The situation with Bobrovsky and Panarin threatens to cast a pall over the season for the Blue Jackets. Losing either of them would be hard to swallow; losing both of them for no return is positively untenable.

The best hope for the Blue Jackets is that Panarin will have a change of heart when he gets back to Columbus, that looking his teammates in the eye and hearing their pleas will convince him to stay. That seems unlikely, but it might be all they have.

As for Bobrovsky, expect the Blue Jackets to lean hard on his legacy. If he finishes his career in Columbus, his sweater could be lifted into the rafters. If he carries this club on long playoff runs, a statue could be situated at Front and Nationwide when he hangs up the skates.

There is a growing sense among the fan base that the Blue Jackets should "go for it" this season. That is, keep Panarin and Bobrovsky through the trade deadline, put all your cards on the table in 2018-19 and see whether the Jackets can finally fashion a playoff run.

It's a tempting notion unless you're an NHL GM, charged with building a winner. To lose those two will be devastating, sure. To lose those two with no return could cripple the franchise for a few years.

But the 2018-19 Blue Jackets are a playoff team. It might be best for Blue Jackets fans to deal in the here and now, because storm clouds are gathering on the horizon.

The Athletic LOADED: 08.31.2018

1103376 Websites

The Athletic / Martin Brodeur's unique path leads him home to the Devils, with a number of options in front of him

By Corey Masisak Aug 30, 2018

When Martin Brodeur was a stand-up goaltender in a butterfly world, he continued to do his thing his way.

Sure, he evolved, and incorporated some of the techniques that came to dominate his craft. But Brodeur became the most accomplished goalie in NHL history by charting his own path, and that seems to be the modus operandi guiding his post-playing career.



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Brodeur is returning to the Devils, the organization for which he won 691 regular-season games, the Vezina Trophy four times and three NHL championships. The 2018-19 season was already going to include plenty of celebration about Brodeur's transcendent career, because he'll be inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame in November. Now he's going to be around a little more.

After three years as an assistant general manager for the St. Louis Blues, Brodeur's next step with the Devils will be on the business side of the sport. His official title will be executive vice president of business development.

His actual day-to-day focus and responsibilities ... that remains to be determined.

"It's definitely something that is going to be new to me," Brodeur said. "The conversation I had with (Devils president Hugh Weber) and (CEO) Scott O'Neil were really good. They are willing to help out with getting my feet wet in the organization. I want to get to know people first and then figure out which direction in the business I want to take. For me, it's a great opportunity to learn.

"I think it's going to be a lot different. There's going to be a lot of communication with people that I'm not used to. For me, I don't want to jump to any conclusions about what I'm going to do. I want to make sure touch everything a little bit to see what I'm comfortable with. I think Hugh and Scott made me comfortable with knowing that we're going to take our time and make the best out of the situation."

It's an obvious victory for the Devils, who get to welcome a franchise icon back into the fold. There won't be the day-to-day pressure from the public that comes with a job like general manager or coach. Brodeur will have time to learn and grow into whatever role he and the Devils decide is best, and his presence alone will bring a surge of positive public relations.

Taking a job on the business side after three years in hockey ops with the Blues is a pretty unique move. Former NHL players become coaches and management types, in part because they still want to be directly involved in trying to win games and championships.

Brodeur made two things clear:

1. He has always been interested in the business end of the sport.

"I've always been intrigued by the business part, and how the money is coming in, coming out of an organization. As a player, you get paid a lot of money and you just don't see the background a lot. It always intrigued me and I asked a lot of questions, especially when I was in St. Louis. I was in the office and able to pick the brains of a few people.

"As a player, I didn't know how the draft worked. Like, how do you make the list for the NHL draft? How do you execute it? These were things that every single day working with the Blues, I was gaining tons of experience on the hockey side. I'm looking forward to doing the same on the business part here."

2. He wants to stay in hockey, but also spend more time with his family. Brodeur and his family will continue to live in St. Louis for now, and he'll commute to Newark.

"The part that really drove me to come in here also was the kind of time commitment," he said. "I know when I'm going to be coming here, I know the type of schedule that I'm going to have and it's not going to be like the hockey part where you're thrown away a little bit left and right, a lot of travel. It will be a little bit more stability for my young family and my little 8-year-old at home that's missed me a lot in the last three years when I was trying to figure out what I wanted to do.

"I think it started in the middle of last year, that I was thinking I wanted to ease up on my schedule a little bit because of my young son at home. When I didn't come to an agreement with St. Louis to continue since they needed a little more time from me than I was willing to give, that's when I reached out to (Weber) and he was definitely excited that I did," Brodeur said. "We came up with a plan and today we're moving forward with it."

Where Brodeur's post-playing career goes from here will be fascinating to see. He has three years of experience as an NHL assistant GM. He also spent part of a season in charge of the Blues' goaltending, but unless something changes in the future, another coaching job doesn't seem likely to be part of his.

He also helped put together the Canadian entry in the 2018 world championships as co-GM. Now he's going to spend some time learning about the business of hockey.

That's a lot of experience doing different things, and some high-level apprenticeship. If Brodeur wants to do something big in the future, he's probably going to have the opportunity.

Maybe there'll be a day in the coming years where he decides that being an NHL GM is his goal, but this move with the Devils suggests he could end up doing something else, like become a team president.

There are several famous former players who became the president of an NHL organization. Maybe the best comparison is Brendan Shanahan, another Hall of Fame player and Devils draft pick. Shanahan went to work for the NHL, and his first job was vice president of hockey and business development. Not only does that job title sound familiar, he was in a similar spot when he started out — Shanahan's early days with the league were a learning and feeling out process before he settled in as the discipline czar and then later as the president of the Toronto Maple Leafs.

Cam Neely spent three years as a vice president for the Boston Bruins before taking over the president role. Trevor Linden didn't have the experience that guys like Shanahan and Neely had when the Vancouver Canucks installed him as president four years ago, but neither did Luc Robataille when the Los Angeles Kings named him president of business operations shortly after he retired in 2007.

Robataille, who Brodeur has talked with many times about life as an NHL executive, according to NJ.com, has been a big success story, helping the Kings organization thrive off the ice over the past decade.

Steve Yzerman went the GM route, but he also spent time with the Detroit Red Wings after he retired learning from Ken Holland, Jim Nill and the rest of the organization's leaders. He also earned some GM experience through Hockey Canada.

If there's one thing that links players like Shanahan, Yzerman and Brodeur, it's not just their immense talents. It's also their desire to learn.

Predicting that Martin Brodeur will eventually be X for the Devils in Y years at this point is silly. In the short-term, he is probably going to help the organization in its continually increasing efforts to bolster relations with the city of Newark, with local businesses around the Garden State and help further connect the franchise's prolific past to its promising future.

Where his journey goes from there is tough to project. He's amassing a resume that could lead him in a lot of different directions. The Devils are ecstatic that it led him back to New Jersey.

The Athletic LOADED: 08.31.2018

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The Athletic / NHL farm system rankings: No. 1 Buffalo Sabres

By Corey Pronman Aug 30, 2018

Corey Pronman's deep dive into the farm system of every NHL organization includes a ranking of all of the team's prospects, broken into tiers based on their projection; the impact on the upcoming season and



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an overall ranking of all players under 23. Further explanation of Pronman's system and the complete ranking of all 31 teams can be found here.

Buffalo has the top farm system and it isn't really close. There are two reasons for that: 1. Rasmus Dahlin and 2. Casey Mittelstadt. Those are two pillar type talents you can build a franchise with, and along with Jack Eichel, Rasmus Ristolainen and Sam Reinhart you're starting to see a future in Buffalo that looks the opposite of bleak.

Down the farm system, the Sabres have good depth, at the pro level particularly, but nobody that wows you, with those two top prospects carrying the bulk of value in this system. Rochester should be an interesting team to monitor next season though, as they have a few names Buffalo could be looking to as they try to turn a corner as an organization.

A No. 1 farm system is no guarantee of success. The Atlantic is very competitive, and Buffalo needs guys to develop well, while continuing to add talent. But in terms of adding value to their team from players who didn't play in the NHL last season, nobody is in better shape to do that than the Sabres.

Team's 2017 ranking\*: No. 11

Prospect Rankings

### SPECIAL PROSPECT

#### 1. Rasmus Dahlin, D, Frolunda-SHL

Dahlin is one of the best defense prospects of the modern era as a first-year draft-eligible player. His skill and IQ ranked among the very best in the class. He can play at such a quick pace and make highly creative plays versus pros, which at his age is unusual. What stands out to me is not his elite skill but his elite awareness. He understands how to attack defenses so well and attempts things I don't see players his age try. He sees gaps in coverage before they develop, makes great feeds, knows how to angle guys out and when to go for a risky play. He also has a low panic threshold and doesn't tend to force plays. He's a very good skater who, while not exceptionally fast, has good speed and is very agile for a player his size. His offense drives his value, but he is quite good defensively, as he battles hard, is physical and plays a quiet position game. He has the potential to be a franchise defenseman.

### ELITE NHL PROSPECT

#### 2. Casey Mittelstadt, C, Minnesota-Big Ten

Mittelstadt was the MVP of the World Juniors and had a decent initial showing with the Sabres as a teenager. He's a player who stands out due to his elite offensive abilities. There are very few players outside the NHL who can create offense like he can and often he can bring fans out of their seats. He skates well, has arguably the best set of hands outside the league, and has great overall offensive instincts as a playmaker. Off the puck he's not the best. Despite having fine size he isn't going to be a high-end physical player and needs work defensively. However, he shields pucks fine and, given his size and elite skill package, he still has the potential to be a star in the league. I have small reservations about his production at various levels relative to his age that raises a tiny alarm in my brain, but I've watched him so much and see a consistently high-end guy that I'm not too concerned.

### LEGIT NHL PROSPECT

#### 3. Alexander Nylander, LW, Rochester-AHL

Nylander is a tough player to evaluate. He's had a tough go at it in the pro level the last two seasons, with the pace of the game and the work off the puck being issues for him. He's done much better when playing against his peer group at the U20 level. He has moments where he shows why he was a top-10 pick. He has great hands and vision and can be a driving force for an offense. I think he skates fine but often I find he plays too slow, meaning he doesn't hit the blueline with speed and can

struggle to play a game at the pro pace. He has a lot of work to do, but there's so much potential in his game.

#### 4. Brendan Guhle, D, Rochester-AHL

Guhle had a fantastic 2017-18. He changed my impression – and other NHL scouts who I also knew were skeptical of his upside – of his NHL projection. His calling card is his skating, as Guhle is an incredibly fluid skater for a big man who can close gaps quickly and transition on the rush well due to his feet. I liked how he showed more confidence carrying the puck this season, and while his skill isn't great, he moved the puck well and was a useful power play guy. Guhle was also a go-to defender for his team, playing a lot of tough minutes and being an important part of one of the best teams in the AHL.

### HAVE A CHANCE

#### 5. Rasmus Asplund, C, Farjestad-SHL

Asplund is never going to 'wow' you with an end-to-end rush, but he's valuable as a player due to how smart he is. "He's an ideal center," said one NHL scout referencing the way he sees the ice as a playmaker and how he plays a reliable two-way game. There is ability to Asplund's game too. He has decent speed and good puck skills, but he prefers to make a play. He works hard, and takes care of his checks despite being an undersized player. He likely projects as a third-line forward in the NHL but he has a mild chance of being something better.

#### 6. Marcus Davidsson, C, Djurgardens-SHL

Davidsson was a solid regular in the SHL as a teenager and had a good World Juniors as well. He isn't a game-breaker by any means, but I really like his skating, he has some skill, is an intelligent two-way forward and works hard. I'm skeptical he has top-six potential, but he could be a real nice third-line type of forward.

#### 7. Oskari Laaksonen, D, Ilves-Liiga

I caught Laaksonen at a U19 tournament in the second half and was really impressed by what I saw. He was an intriguing pick by Buffalo last summer after a growth spurt. He's 6-foot-2 now, skates well, and moves the puck well. He's got a lot of maturing to do physically and in his defensive play, but I see promise in his game. I expect he'll be part of Finland's U20 team next season and if he continues to develop at the same pace he could play a noteworthy role.

#### 8. Linus Ullmark, G, Rochester-AHL

Ullmark was one of the top goalies in the AHL this season. He's a technically sound goalie, who is smart and squares up a lot of pucks without making it seem like he's putting forth much effort. He's reasonably athletic and can make some tough saves but relies on his brain to make most of his stops. He's developed well lately, and could be in the mix for NHL time next season.

#### 9. Victor Olofsson, LW, Frolunda-SHL

Olofsson had a monster season in Sweden, leading the SHL in goals. He has a great shot and can score from a distance. He has nice skills and speed, but I'm not sure if his talent level or instincts are high-end enough for a small guy to create enough chances for himself at the NHL level. He can make a living on the power play though.

#### 10. Mattias Samuelsson, D, USNTDP-USHL

Samuelsson was the tough-minutes defenseman for the USNTDP this season. He's a big, tough, strong defenseman who skates well for his size and works his butt off. Samuelsson is willing to sacrifice his body and battle hard every shift. He's a smart defender and he has enough vision to get the transition game going. With Samuelsson, there is a question of how much of an impact he can make, as he does have a safe player feel to him. His skill level is subpar.

#### 11. Lawrence Pilut, D, HV71-SHL



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Pilut was signed as a free agent after a strong season in the SHL where he was named the top defenseman in the league. He's not a super flashy player, but he's quite smart with a reasonably solid skill set in terms of his mobility/hands to be an offensive player as a pro. I have some upside questions with him, but I do see the high-end vision and playmaking to where he has a chance. The big hurdle for him in the NHL will be whether he can defend at his size without exceptional speed.

12. Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen, G, Leki-Mestis

Luukkonen had an OK season between junior and pro. He's a physically towering netminder. He can get across the crease when he needs to, with solid power from his legs, and can make the occasional highlight-reel type of play. When he's on and making good reads he can be a wall in net due to his size and athleticism and the aggressiveness he plays with. There are moments he has mental lapses though and can be a little all over the place.

13. Daniel O'Regan, C, Rochester-AHL

O'Regan has been very good at the AHL level for the last two seasons but hasn't broken through in the NHL. He's a very gifted playmaker who processes the game quickly and can make skilled plays. O'Regan doesn't possess blazing speed for a small guy, though I think overall he's a fine skater. He's also not great off the puck.

14. C.J. Smith, LW, Rochester-AHL

Smith had solid production in the AHL this past season as a 23-year-old rookie and was an All-Star. Signed out of UMass-Lowell late last season, Smith is a very gifted playmaker who was an important part of Rochester's power play but I'm not sure he's dynamic. He skates fine but not very fast for a small guy. So far he's shown he has some real NHL potential particularly if he gets better off the puck.

15. Jacob Bryson, D, Providence-Hockey East

Bryson was one of the top defenders in college hockey this past season, being named a second-team All-American. He's a very crafty puck mover. His hockey IQ is high-end and he's got good puck skills and skates well. He doesn't seem flashy, but when he was on the ice for Providence the puck was moving in the right direction and he was consistently one of their best players. He's a tiny defender though and not super-fast or skilled for his size.

### DEPTH NOTES

16. Matej Pekar, C, Muskegon-USHL: Pekar is a good skater who plays hard and has a pest element to his game. His skills aren't standout, but he's average with the puck and can make the odd play.

17. Will Borgen, D, St. Cloud State-NCHC: Borgen can really skate for a 6-foot-2 player, is strong and displays a great physical game, winning battles and separating players from pucks. He moves the puck decent, but he won't be a power play guy at the top level. College scouts rave about his shutdown ability and character.

18. Casey Fitzgerald, D, Boston College-Hockey East: Fitzgerald was up and down this season. He's has a few too many mental lapses defensively (although he was still named the top defensive defenseman in the conference), but when he gets the puck his skating and his IQ shine offensively. Being a little more consistent will go a long way for him, as small defensemen can't afford many mistakes.

19. Andrew Oglevie, C, Notre Dame-Big Ten: Oglevie showed me nice flashes of ability when I watched Notre Dame. I don't think he's a game breaker and he's not that big, but he has skill, plays with pace and works hard.

20. Justin Bailey, RW, Rochester-AHL: It's hard for me to still list Bailey. I don't think his hockey sense is good enough, but he has size, speed and skill so he's at the very least a long-shot still.

2018-19 Impact

There are roster spots to be had in Buffalo and I expect a very competitive and interesting training camp. Dahlin slots into the top-four and on a power play unit. Mittelstadt should go into the top of the lineup and on the power play as well. Ullmark should be on the roster. Guhle should be a candidate for a D spot as well. After that it gets less clear. Guys like Asplund, Olofsson, Pilut, O'Regan and Smith should all be in the mix during camp but a large chunk of them will go back to Rochester.

Organizational Top 10 (23 and Under)

Jack Eichel, C

Rasmus Dahlin, D

Casey Mittelstadt, C

Rasmus Ristolainen, D

Sam Reinhart, RW

Alexander Nylander, LW

Tage Thompson, RW

Brendan Guhle, D

Rasmus Asplund, C

Marcus Davidsson, C

Eichel is one of the best young players in the game. He's a franchise center type of talent, with the speed, skills, playmaking and shot to be a consistent impact player. Ristolainen is often the butt of many jokes. He's overused in Buffalo, he's not a No. 1 defenseman – as he's been deployed – but I still do think he's a very good two/three type of defender on a good team. Reinhart is a very smart player who may not blow you away with speed and skill but makes plays. He seemed to settle into a role last season and got a lot of work done on the power play. Thompson has incredible skills for a guy his size and a big shot as well. He needs to compete harder and play with more pace to have success in the NHL, but he has a ton of upside.

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Sportsnet.ca / Top 100 NHL players of 2018–19: 10–1

Sportsnet Staff | @Sportsnet August 30, 2018

Welcome to the culmination of Sportsnet's top 100 NHL players of the 2018–19 season.

We didn't arrive at this list overnight. In fact, we started work as soon as the Washington Capitals lifted the Stanley Cup in June. First, we asked 16 of our NHL insiders to rank the top 100 players in the league at this exact moment, and then we combined their individual lists to create a definitive master ranking.

The exact formula for what makes an NHLer great — or, more importantly, greater than another — is subjective, and everyone's top-100 list looks different. But let's make one key criteria clear: This list is about the 2018–19 season, not last season or the next five years. It's about who's the best right now.

Earlier this week we gave you the first 50, No. 50 to 31 and No. 30 to 11. Today, at long last, we offer up the top 10 NHL players of the 2018–19 season. See below for the cream of the crop.

10. Nikita Kucherov, RW, Tampa Bay Lightning



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Kucherov has seemingly improved with each passing season. The Russian winger reached the 100-point mark for the first time in 2017–18, notching 39 goals and emerging as a dark-horse Hart Trophy candidate.

There's not much on the ice that Kucherov can't do, and after breaking out as a member of the Triplets Line with Tyler Johnson and Ondrej Palat in 2014–15, Kucherov is now firmly on Tampa's top unit with Steven Stamkos. The duo was perhaps the NHL's most lethal this past season, and will be filling nets for years to come.

The second-round pick from 2011 didn't enter the league with as much fanfare as superstar teammates Stamkos and Victor Hedman, but make no mistake — Kucherov is among the very best in the NHL.

### 9. Drew Doughty, D, Los Angeles Kings

Had Doughty not signed his eight-year extension, and had the Kings star decided to retire on the spot instead, he'd still warrant a spot in the Hockey Hall of Fame for everything he's accomplished by age 28. The two-time Stanley Cup champ and two-time Olympic gold medalist has finished top 10 in Norris voting in eight of his 10 NHL seasons; he's been a runner-up twice and won in 2016.

Doughty does it all. He can spring his forwards with crisp outlets passes but loves to jump up into the rush as well. He's as smooth a skater as you're likely to find — specifically pivoting from forwards to backwards and vice versa — yet he also plays with a physical edge even though he's undersized compared to most of his peers. He cuts off angles well, blocks shots, intercepts passes and makes an impact playing on either side of the ice.

Dubbing Doughty the best defenceman of his era shouldn't be considered hyperbole.

### 8. Alex Ovechkin, LW, Washington Capitals

What a season it was for the Great Eight. He scored his 600th goal, vaulting all the way to 19th on the all-time list. He won his seventh Rocket Richard Trophy. Oh, and, in case you somehow forgot, he finally claimed that elusive first Stanley Cup while leading all playoff performers with 15 markers.

After he and his teammates recover from what'll undoubtedly be a wicked hangover, Ovechkin will be expected to prove this last season was no fluke.

Now on the back half of his career, the soon-to-be 33-year-old is showing no signs of slowing down offensively. But he's demonstrating he can bring play at both ends of the ice, too. That bodes well for the Caps.

A weekly deep dive into the biggest hockey news in the world with hosts Eliotte Friedman and Jeff Marek. New episodes every Thursday.

### 7. Anze Kopitar, C, Los Angeles Kings

All the Kings captain did after his worst regular season as an NHLer was respond with his best. Year over year, Kopitar spun 12 goals into a career-high 35, and 52 points into 92. He won the Selke and finished third in Hart voting, and may have fetched even more votes — West Coast fans believe — if more members of the hockey media were on Pacific Time.

The two-time Cup champ made 2016–17's seeming downward trend instead look like an aberration. At 30, Kopitar is the all-situations centre youngsters should aspire to be.

This summer, L.A. doubled down on veteran talent — welcome back, Ilya Kovalchuk! — underscoring management's belief that the championship window for the Kopitar-Doughty-Quick era is alive and well.

### 6. Erik Karlsson, D, Ottawa Senators

You won't find a more intriguing player in the NHL this year. Karlsson has a surgically repaired ankle he describes as feeling "110" per cent (not too shabby), other-worldly skill, and one year remaining on his contract with the Senators.

After trade rumours swirled much of last season, Karlsson remains the Senators captain, but he'll be the talk of the league again until he either re-signs, is traded elsewhere, or tests the open market come season's end (at which point, teams will be licking their chops).

Karlsson's passing and play-making ability are second to none among blue-liners. He's fast, he's shifty and he's a one-man breakout. At 28, he has a string of all-star years ahead — no matter where he ends up playing.

### 5. Nathan MacKinnon, C, Colorado Avalanche

Up until last season, MacKinnon's first year in the NHL was also his best — Cole Harbour's second son tallied 24 goals and 63 points in 2013–14 to etch his name onto the Calder Trophy and get his first taste of playoff hockey.

In 2017–18, though, he didn't just top his rookie totals; he crushed them by a 34-point margin. His newfound chemistry with linemate Mikko Rantanen was a treat for hockey fans and a nightmare for opposing goalies as MacKinnon found the back of the net 39 times. The smooth-skating centreman almost added to his trophy cabinet, too, with his name in the MVP conversation all year long.

MacKinnon plays with a maturity that makes it easy to forget he's only 22 and not even in his prime yet. In other words, something tells us it won't be long before he's back in that MVP conversation once again.

### 4. Victor Hedman, D, Tampa Bay Lightning

After a steady half-decade of ascension, Tampa Bay's blue-line anchor has spent the past few seasons entrenching himself among the elite. The smooth-skating Swede has amassed 33 goals and 135 points for the offensively inclined Bolts over his last two campaigns, that latter mark ranking as the second-highest among all defencemen in that span, and 29th-best among all NHLers.

A dominant blend of offensive acumen, physicality and sound defensive play, the reigning Norris Trophy champ continues to push his name further up the list of the game's best defenders as he enters his prime. Not coincidentally, his Lightning have made a similar recent push for greatness. How far they get in that effort depends on Hedman's ability to remain in top form, and perhaps reach even higher.

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.

### 3. Evgeni Malkin, C, Pittsburgh Penguins

While Sidney Crosby gets the lion's share of credit for Pittsburgh's success, Malkin has been just as integral to the Penguins' three Stanley Cups since 2009. While somewhat lax defensively, Malkin is a pure terror on offence and comes up big when it matters.

Malkin led the Penguins in scoring through the 2017 playoffs, and accumulated a total of 46 during Pittsburgh's repeat runs — exactly the same number as his more-heralded teammate. He now has 62 goals and 165 career points in the post-season.

He's missed significant time to injuries over the years, but when healthy Malkin remains one of the most dangerous players in the game — and the future Hall of Famer shows no signs of slowing down.

### 2. Sidney Crosby, C, Pittsburgh Penguins

At 30 years old and with every trophy and medal under the sun already on his resumé, Crosby still managed to break new ground last year — he played a full 82 games for the first time in his 13-year career.

Crosby hasn't produced a 100-point campaign in four seasons, but the furious worker continues to refine all aspects of his game. And it's not like the offence has dried up. In fact, the only players with more even-strength points than Crosby in the past three seasons are Connor McDavid and Patrick Kane. Crosby's shooting percentage was also the second-worst of his NHL tenure last year, meaning there's reason to



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believe he can get closer to the league-best 44 goals he posted in 2016–17.

Winning back-to-back Cups (and Conn Smythe Trophies) in 2016 and 2017 surely took a physical toll on the Penguins captain, so maybe last spring's relatively early second-round exit will mean he has a little more gas — and motivation, if that's possible — in the tank come October.

1. Connor McDavid, C, Edmonton Oilers

It's not McDavid's cross to bear alone. Last season wasn't the first time the league's most gifted player lacked the support around him to make it into the playoffs. (Think of Mario back when.) Bad stuff sometimes happens to the greatest players and, if you lead the league in scoring with 100-plus-point seasons and are still only 21, greatness is sort of beyond much debate.

There's no reason to believe that McDavid is a case of too-much-too-soon. Far more likely is the idea that he's a good long way from his peak, injuries notwithstanding.

When the Oilers fell just short of the conference final in the spring of 2017, you thought they were really onto something with Leon Draisaitl being a complement to McDavid — whether as his right winger or as centre on the second line. Maybe one or the other could still work, but a bit of both — as they tried last season — isn't a formula for team success.

McDavid needs someone to skate with better than the likes of Milan Lucic, Patrick Maroon or Jesse Puljujarvi. Which only makes his Art Ross Trophy seem all the more remarkable.

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Sportsnet.ca / Team Seguin defeats Connor McDavid & Co. in Ray Emery Cup thriller

Luke Fox | August 30, 2018

TORONTO — Connor McDavid may still be the consensus best hockey player on the planet, but on a college rink in late August, his team came up painfully short to BioSteel nemesis Tyler Seguin, who wore the hats of captain, coach and GM.

In about as thrilling a 20-minute game of four-on-four non-contact summertime shinny in a small barn can get, Team Seguin defeated Team Nurse 4-3, marking the fourth time in the past five BioSteel Camps that a Seguin-led squad hoisted the chalice.

Seguin himself opened the scoring for a side that included St. Louis's Ryan O'Reilly and Robby Fabbri, and Anaheim's Brandon Montour and jumped to an early 3-0 lead. But Darnell Nurse's group — which featured Oilers teammate McDavid, Montreal's Max Domi, and Washington's Brett Connolly — showed heart with three unanswered tallies.

O'Reilly beat a back-checking McDavid in the crease to snipe the clincher with just 21 ticks left on the St. Michael's College Arena clock.

Smiling post-victory, Seguin — who drafted his squad, brainstormed lines on his drive in, and adjusted his lines on the fly — was not disappointed with the result.

"Grind. The boys grinded," Seguin grinned.

"I'm hearing about it now because O'Reilly wasn't in our draft. I left three spots open because he wasn't in our draft, then he ends up getting the game-winning goal. What I have to remind the other captain is, I let

McDavid go first overall. A couple years ago I let [Taylor Hall] go first overall, so I didn't take them. They can't fully get mad at me, but I'll hear chirps the rest of the afternoon."

Run by Matt Nichol — one of the hockey's most respected trainers and co-founder of BioSteel, the pink sports nutrition drink — the friendly, yet intense, four-day pre-NHL-training-camp culminated Thursday with a round-robin tournament that pitted the four workout squads (Tom Wilson and Michael Del Zotto led the others) against each other.

"Everybody's real close," said Maple Leafs prospect Jordan Subban, a Camp regular. "You can ask anybody questions and they're happy to give you feedback."

Bragging rights got real.

Furious that prospect Matt Luff was granted a penalty shot during a sudden-death elimination game, Wilson threw a bottle of the pink stuff at a referee in dispute. Josh Ho-Sang chewed out a linesman over a perceived blown off-side call. We saw animated pleas for a puck-over-glass call and a towel thrown on the ice in frustration.

But the competition ends with autographs for kids and friendly farewells.

Unanimously, the campers decided to change the name of the trophy from the BioSteel Cup to the Ray Emery Cup in honour of the longtime camper and NHL goaltender who died in nearby Hamilton, Ont., on July 15. He was only 35.

"Put everything aside. It doesn't matter who wins. That being the title of the Cup makes it that much better. He left his mark on all of us," Seguin said.

"He was a guy you always knew was in the room. He had that demeanour. He was a leader. He was a guy who, at first, I was intimidated by. He kinda game-faced me the first couple times when I was a young rookie."

Nurse calls "Razor" a special character.

"Always the life of the party, the life of the room, always has a smile on his face," Nurse said.

"I got to see him at a charity event not long before everything happened, so it's sad. It's good we have an opportunity to honour him here. He's definitely a guy that a lot of guys will miss."

McDavid describes BioSteel as a chance for the "best players around the city" to prepare together, to push each other — sometimes even harder than the actual club-run training camps. As the camp's reputation has grown, out-of-towners like Vancouver defenceman Erik Gudbranson travel to Toronto to train under Nichol.

"Guys had fun. I think it'll take maybe an hour for some guys to get over [the loss], then we'll all go meet up and say our goodbyes and hang out for the last day and night of the summer, then everyone will go back to work," Seguin said.

Then, referencing his shrewd O'Reilly pickup, Seguin added this:

"I signed a free agent. I'm just being the best GM I can."

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Sportsnet.ca / Shane Doan reflects on friendship with Sen. John McCain

Emily Sadler | August 30, 2018, 10:40 PM



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What began as a short meet-and-greet at the rink in Arizona turned into a cherished friendship between Shane Doan and the late Senator John McCain.

During a Prime Time Sports appearance on Thursday, the former 21-year NHL veteran shared the story of his relationship with McCain, who died Saturday of brain cancer at age 81.

"He came down into the dressing room, probably about 10 years ago and I got an opportunity to shake his hand and meet him, and we talked for about four or five minutes," Doan said. "Obviously, anyone that's ever heard his story is impacted by the things that he's done and the life that he's lived. I mean, it's more than a Hollywood story. It's just incredible, you wouldn't even believe it, everything that he went through."

From there, the two stayed in touch and Doan was even asked to attend his leadership forum in Sedona.

"The people that were there, were a little out of my league, obviously — it was Prime Minister Tony Blair from Great Britain, Elon Musk, Carlos Slim, some of the most influential people in the world," said the ex-Arizona Coyotes star.

"And for some reason, him and I kind of hit it off. He has a ranch up in Sedona and I went up there probably seven or eight times, my wife and I went up there and stayed over a couple times, and just hung out with him. I became, each time I was around him, probably more impressed with the man than I was before. We became pretty good friends and that's how it kind of came about. I was very fortunate that it happened."

McCain's legacy goes far beyond politics. The military officer and war veteran also had a strong passion for sports, and established friendships with other Arizona-based professional athletes including Cardinals receiver Larry Fitzgerald and Diamondbacks outfielder Luis Gonzalez.

All three were part of Thursday's memorial service for McCain — Doan and Gonzalez served as pallbearers while Fitzgerald spoke during the Phoenix service.

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Sportsnet.ca / Henrik Sedin discusses how different pre-season is as retired NHL player

Rory Boylen | August 30, 2018, 1:00 PM

For the first time in 18 years, Daniel and Henrik Sedin aren't preparing for the start of an NHL training camp. It's been even longer since the last time they weren't tuning up for a professional hockey season.

But if the twins showed up to Canucks training camp in two weeks they wouldn't be out of shape.

"We've done a few races," Henrik told Perry Solkowski and Dan Murphy on Sportsnet 650 in Vancouver. "We've done a bike race in Sweden and about another half-marathon trail run in Sweden so cardio-wise I think it's as good as it's ever been. But I think we lost a few pounds of muscle mass so that might be the problem."

The twins broke into the league all the way back in 2000 and had careers that will likely lead them to the Hall of Fame in a few years.

The two highest-scoring Canucks in team history (and only players to surpass 1,000 points) have already been back to the rink to see some of their former teammates, but are cherishing the opportunity they now have to spend time with their families. And though their competitive sides

might miss the NHL life at points this season, Henrik said he doesn't think he or his brother will regret the decision to retire now.

"Right now it feels like it won't be (tough to be away from the team)," Henrik said. "But who knows once the season starts? You never know what's going to happen. I've said all summer to people who asked that we did it on our terms, we walked away when we wanted to. We had no injuries the team didn't force us to quit. We felt we could still play, so it was good that way."

Like most retired players, the biggest thing Henrik said he'll miss in retirement is just being around the players and talking with teammates. The two still reside in Vancouver, though, so the rink is just a short trip away. But while we expect to see the twins at Rogers Arena through the season, Henrik insists it won't be every game or practice.

He thinks the team needs to have a chance to transition on its own.

"It's important too that you let the team just be. You can't be around them every day," Henrik said. "That's the good part about staying here, too. I think a lot of guys that retire they move away from the city, but we can still go down and talk to the guys. It might be once or twice a week. More than that I think might be too much."

The other obvious bonus of retirement is they now have the freedom to do and see things they couldn't when hockey was a full-time job — among them a ski trip in Whistler this winter.

They haven't even waited for hockey season to attend some events they didn't have the time to in the past — Henrik has already made the trip to Seattle to watch a Seahawks game.

"We actually stopped in London on the way over to watch the London derby — Chelsea-Arsenal — and that was a great experience. Just to be able to see other sports. Kentucky Derby is on the bucket list. Who knows, maybe the Masters? We'll see. There's a lot of things you want to be able to do."

So while the Canucks are going through their own changes, moving to a more youthful roster now led by Brock Boeser and Bo Horvat — soon to be joined by Elias Pettersson — the Sedin twins are experiencing a transition period of their own.

"Before we trained every day to get better," Henrik said. "Now I think we train so we can eat whatever we want."

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TSN.CA / Patient Lindholm ready to compete for NHL spot with Leafs

Kristen Shilton

TORONTO — As a rule, hockey players can't wait to jump at their first shot to earn a spot in the NHL. Par Lindholm is the rare exception.

The Kusmark, Sweden, native waited until last spring, at the age of 26, to sign a one-year, two-way, \$1.775 million entry-level contract with the Maple Leafs. The centreman had at least one NHL offer on the table the spring before, but turned it down to stay in the Swedish Hockey League and work on his game.

Lindholm's career so far has been a decidedly slow build, to the point he never counted on playing in the NHL.

"To be honest, I wasn't that good when I was younger," Lindholm said this week at MasterCard Centre. "The last couple of years, I started playing good. I think last year was kind of a breakout season for me and



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when teams started calling, it felt right. Last year I had a couple options too, but I wasn't ready for it yet."

Patience has been a hallmark of Lindholm's circuitous route to the Leafs. After playing from 2009-11 with Skelleftea AIK's junior team, Lindholm failed to make the team's next level and was loaned to Sundsvall IF and Karlskrona HK of Sweden's lower-tier Division 1 league for four seasons.

The demotion gave Lindholm a chance to reshape his game and become a bigger contributor in more areas. By 2013-14 with Karlskrona, Lindholm had put up strong numbers (13 goals, 29 assists in 52 games) and advanced to Skelleftea's SHL club, where he remained for four more seasons.

"When [Par] was young, he wasn't the fastest guy on the ice. He played mostly on the penalty kill and more in the defensive zone," said Skelleftea coach Stefan Klockare. "He wasn't the most skilled player, but he was a smart guy on the ice. When he was gone he worked on his stickhandling and his shot, so when he came back to the elite team we could use him in both ends."

Lindholm grew into one of the SHL's most dominant players. In 2017-18, he played on the widely regarded best line in Sweden, centering Joakim Lindstrom and Oscar Moller. That line even remained intact when all three players represented Sweden at the Pyeongchang Olympics.

Lindholm's 47 points in 49 games for Skelleftea last season was fourth-best in the SHL, and while the Olympic run was poor (one point in four games), Lindholm's former opponents can see he's ready to test the NHL.

"He doesn't take a lot of chances but he knows where to go. He's one of those guys you have to watch to appreciate," said Rickard Wallin, a one-time Leafs' centre who played against Lindholm in the SHL from 2014 through 2016.

"It's not like he's going to skate from end to end and create offence, but he's really good at reading teammates. He's not the first guy that pops out, but if you keep watching you see he's doing a lot of things right for his team."

When the time came for Lindholm to consider his options across the pond, the Leafs were at the top of his list. Raised in northern Sweden, Toronto was one of the few clubs Lindholm knew, and their current trajectory is undeniably appealing.

"I had quite a few teams I talked to. But from the start, I wanted to play in Toronto and nothing else came near," Lindholm said. "Playing for a [classic] team [was important], and it's a team that's probably going to be one of the best in the league in the coming years. If I make the team, I want to be a big part of what [we] do."

John Tavares, Auston Matthews and Nazem Kadri are lined up as the Leafs' top three centres, putting Lindholm in the mix for the fourth-line spot – especially with his ability to kill penalties. Veteran NHL centre Dominic Moore wasn't re-signed by the Leafs this off-season and head coach Mike Babcock said in June that prospect Miro Aaltonen decided to return to the Kontinental Hockey League after one AHL campaign.

That leaves Josh Jooris and Frederik Gauthier to push Lindholm in camp. To win the role, he'll have to make adjustments to his game after predominantly playing on the first line with Skelleftea.

"He has to bring something [similar] with less ice time," said Wallin. "He's has to find a balance without losing the game that made him successful here. Coming over from being the top guy on the team to not being counted on for power-play time for example, that can take it out of your confidence."

Lindholm isn't thinking that far ahead yet. He came into town early just to get acclimated to the Leafs' "great players and trainers" before training camp, where he'll wear number 26. And no, the smaller North American ice doesn't faze him ("It feels good when I'm practising here, I like the intensity").

After all, with so much deliberation having gone into Lindholm's NHL decision, it's no surprise he's already looked comfortable. Now he just needs to earn the job.

"Last summer when he got the NHL offer we discussed he'd have more of a chance [to succeed] after another SHL year," Klockare said. "He is better prepared now, and he said at the end of the season he was glad he stayed. He has worked so hard and I think he's prepared to try and lead the fourth line. He has to take his game to a higher level now."

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TSN.CA / The evolution of Ryan Johansen

Travis Yost

The hockey world was stunned by a blockbuster trade in January of 2016 between the Columbus Blue Jackets and Nashville Predators.

Columbus, in the market for a defenceman, swapped star centre Ryan Johansen for talented blueliner Seth Jones. Nashville was the perfect trading partner – a team with a surplus of talented defencemen but a need for playmaking and attacking capabilities up front.

Johansen had only a few seasons under his belt at the time but he was already emerging as one of the league's preeminent goal scorers. Johansen scored 33 goals in his 21-year-old season (2013-14), and then followed that up with 26 more goals in 2014-15. Only 12 skaters would end up scoring more goals than Johansen over that two-year interval. His assist rates were quality, but not nearly as impressive – his 75 total over that two-year stretch was 33rd best in the NHL. Adjusted for ice time, he was 43rd in the league.

At the time of the trade, Nashville GM David Poile mentioned how much the organization coveted a No.1 centre and how they felt the addition of such a player would help their middling offensive production. Johansen surely had growing playmaking capabilities, but Nashville had to have been enchanted by his lofty goal-scoring numbers.

This is where the trade gets fascinating.

Johansen has been a fantastic fit in Nashville and one of the key reasons why the Predators have evolved into a Western Conference superpower. But he has also really evolved his game. Where the early days of Johansen saw him hunting a bit for individual offence, he has since transitioned into one of the league's preeminent passers and playmakers – a different type of player than the one Columbus saw a few seasons ago.

Point totals tell a very simple and straightforward story – he's scoring fewer goals, compiling a ton of assists, and, at aggregate, is scoring more frequently than he did in prior years.

This graph would certainly suggest that Johansen started his transition into more of a playmaker, less of a goal scorer right around the time of the trade. Both his goal and assist rates have been flat over the last three seasons – three seasons all spent with the Nashville Predators.

But scoring can be finicky. After all, what if Johansen simply wasn't having a lot of shooting luck and his teammates were? That would indicate that the player really hadn't changed his attacking style, and, more specifically, that randomness has shaped his point totals.

So let's go a little deeper. Let's look at the way Johansen generated shots at the individual level over the same timeframe, and at the rate at which his teammates generated shots over the same interval. If the idea



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is that Johansen has become more of a distributor, we would expect to see him taking a smaller percentage of total shots when on the ice.

Here is what that looks like:

For a frame of reference, the average forward around the league takes about 22 per cent of the shots available. What's interesting here is that Johansen's shot rate really peaked in those two years where he generated big goal numbers. In those years he took 26.7 and 23.1 per cent of the shots available to his five-man unit, respectively. But the 2013-14 season would also act as a high-water mark. Since then, Johansen has seen fewer and fewer shots every year. In 2017-18, Johansen took just 14.0 per cent of shots available to his five-man unit – by far the lowest percentage of his career.

Knowing that Johansen's assist rates are way up and that his shot totals are way down, it's reasonable to infer that Johansen is just as active in the offensive zone. This type of data can act pretty well as a proxy for on-stick possession time or individual puck touches, and will generally correlate to the end result data we have access to, like shots on target or goals.

The last question we haven't answered though is whether or not Johansen's evolution as a player benefits the team. Has Nashville benefitted from Johansen's transition as a player?

This is the money graph. There's no doubt that Johansen has been less of a goal scorer over time, but he has done so to create significant opportunity for his teammates. That's had a tangible and positive effect on team performance – one that doesn't require Johansen to shoulder significant portions of the goal-scoring burden, and one that doesn't require Johansen to sustain lofty shooting percentages in order to have an impact.

Part of this requires a player like Johansen to have trust in his teammates. It also puts a lot of burden on the front office to build competent scoring depth around a player of his skillset. But when it comes together, as it has in Nashville, you create a team that's much more difficult to defend.

It's one of many reasons why the Predators remain a Stanley Cup contender heading into 2018-19.

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