



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019

THE NEWS & OBSERVER

With Williams gone, who wears the 'C' for the Hurricanes?

By Chip Alexander

The subject was being the captain of the Carolina Hurricanes, of wearing the "C" and being the acknowledged team leader.

Jordan Staal shared the "C" with Justin Faulk two seasons again as co-captains. Last season, it was Justin Williams, alone.

For the third straight year, there will be a change. Williams on Monday announced he would "step away" from the NHL and would not be with the Hurricanes when they begin training camp this month or at the start of the 2019-2020 season. No official retirement announcement, but Williams' absence will be felt.

"He helped us believe how good we could be," Staal said of Williams in an interview last week. "The things he does are actually quite incredible."

Staal and Faulk both agreed that the co-captain approach, a decision made by former coach Bill Peters, did not go smoothly. Certainly not after Williams had signed a two-year free-agent contract and returned to the team he helped lead to the 2006 Stanley Cup before winning two more Cups with the Los Angeles Kings.

While Williams appeared to be the likely choice in 2017-18, Peters did not name him captain nor have him serve as an alternate captain. No letter, an obvious slight. Rod Brind'Amour, once named Peters' replacement as head coach, quickly remedied that, making Williams the captain and having Staal and Faulk wear "A's" last season as the alternates.

The Canes' Justin Williams, center, looks on as a well-wisher, left, congratulates Rod Brind'Amour, right, after Brind'Amour was named the new head coach of the Carolina Hurricanes NHL team during a press conference at PNC Arena in Raleigh, NC on May 9, 2018. Majority owner Tom Dundon also announced that Don Waddell would be the team's general manager, a position he has held in the interim since Ron Francis's departure several weeks ago. Williams and Brind'Amour were teammates on the ice when the team won the Stanley Cup in 2006. Chris Seward cseward@newsobserver.com

While Staal said having a "C" was an honor, Williams was an obvious choice given his depth of experience,

success and strong personality, allowing Staal more freedom to simply go out and play, be the strong center that Brind'Amour wants him to be. The Canes, with Williams the consummate leader, qualified for the Stanley Cup playoffs for the first time since 2009 and reached the Eastern Conference finals.

The Canes became relevant again in the NHL -- Williams' stated goal in coming back to Carolina in July 2017 -- and the captain made sure they had fun doing it, orchestrating the postgame Storm Surge celebrations that were zany at times but entertaining.

"Willy took a lot of stuff outside the rink on his shoulders, obviously a lot with the media and other stuff," Staal said. "I probably had a little less of that and that was nice. He took that day-to-day stuff and took it on himself. He obviously said the right things, whether it was being hard on guys or having that good feel for the room and knowing whose buttons to push and who needed a pat on the back. It was good leadership."

Williams, who will be 38 on Oct. 4, made it clear after the season that he would not make a decision to return unless he was completely committed to being back, mentally, physically and emotionally. Retirement would be mean more family time -- with his wife, Kelly, son Jaxon and daughter, Jade.

Now, Williams has both hinted at retirement while also leaving the door open to a possible return this season. The Canes appear to be on-board with that arrangement -- Williams' Wikipedia page now has his status listed as "semi-retired."

The question: who takes over as captain?

As he approaches his 31st birthday next week, Staal has played 893 regular-season games and is well-respected by everyone associated with the organization. Brind'Amour, for one, often has noted, "I don't know what more I can say about Jordan."

It could be that Brind'Amour turns to Faulk, who has played his entire career with the franchise, or another, younger defenseman, Jaccob Slavin.

Sebastian Aho might be the Canes' best player but is the center ready at 22 for the "C" and could the added responsibilities affect his play?



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019

There's veteran forward Jordan Martinook. In one year with the team he has established himself as a leader and mentor in the locker room, and his determination during the playoffs to be on the ice despite a painful injury inspired his teammates.

For Brind'Amour, making Williams the captain was a coaching no-brainer. More thought will go into this selection.

The fact the Canes made such a deep playoff run, playing until mid-May, reduced the players' recovery time in preparing for a new season.

"The hangover hung over for a while but we had so many great memories and a lot of fun," Staal said. "It was a good hangover, so to speak, and a good summer, getting away more mentally than physically."

For Williams, playing all 82 in the regular season and the 15 in the playoffs took a toll, especially with the

Canes in must-win mode down the stretch, battling the Columbus Blue Jackets and Montreal Canadiens for a wild-card playoff spot. The forward put so much into the season and his career numbers -- 1,244 regular-season games, 155 playoff games -- almost seem staggering.

Brind'Amour said late last week that the Canes have had to prepare for this season with the idea Williams would not be back as Williams pondered a decision. They have a full complement of forwards, having added Erik Haula and Ryan Dzingel in the offseason. Williams leaves a void, for sure, but Brind'Amour has options.

"We've added quality players and more importantly good people who will fit into what we're trying to do," Brind'Amour said last week. "But I think it's such a fine margin. You can have a great team and not do well. Things can happen."

Mr. Game 7 Justin Williams sends career decision to OT, leaving Canes captainless

By Luke DeCock

Leave it to Mr. Game 7 to send his career decision to overtime.

When the Carolina Hurricanes last month started to press Justin Williams for an answer on whether he intended to return or retire after a summer spent mulling, they weren't expecting "none of the above." That's exactly what Williams gave them Monday, 11 days before training camp physicals, with his decision to "step away" while still leaving the door open for a midseason comeback.

There's some precedent for that: Mike Fisher retired from the Nashville Predators in August of 2017, only to unretire six months later and rejoin the team for the final 28 regular-season and playoff games with limited success before re-retiring for good after the season. Fisher was 37. Williams turns 38 in October. Efforts to reach Williams for comment Monday were unsuccessful, but the wording of the release — "will not join team for start of 2019-20 season" — leaves it open to consideration.

Either way, it's an all-or-nothing decision Williams wasn't ready or willing to make, and it creates an odd set of circumstances for the team without him. While Williams said he wanted to "focus the attention" on the team, this unavoidably extends the summer will-he-or-won't-he debate into the fall. Indefinitely, even.

Until (or if) that changes, the Hurricanes will continue to operate, as they did all summer, as if Williams won't be back.

"We were prepared for this," Hurricanes owner Tom Dundon said Monday. "Although we're disappointed, we're excited about the opportunity it gives other people. We planned for this. This is what we expected."

On the ice, the team has been built as if Williams would not return, and the roster is now officially set for training camp. It would be better with Williams, who by all appearances still has something left to give, but it's not catastrophic.

Off the ice, it will be fascinating to see whether the Hurricanes name a new captain, although without an obvious successor there's no real hurry.

It only underlines Williams' value to the team that the Hurricanes were willing to let this linger even this long. Most teams would have closed the door on most players at this point. But Williams has earned this kind of respect, even if the situation is less than ideal. As an unrestricted free agent, there's really no contractual deadline for him to sign if he decides to step back in. This will continue to hang over the season as much as it hung over the offseason.

Where do the Hurricanes stand, sans Williams? Their top three lines are essentially set, with Sebastian Aho, Jordan Staal and Erik Haula down the middle; Nino Niederreiter, Ryan Dzingel and either Brock McGinn or Warren Foegele on the left; and Teuvo Teravainen, Andrei Svechnikov and Martin Necas on the right, although obviously many of those wings could swing back and forth.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019

The net effect: Williams' absence on the right leads to a reshuffling that indirectly opens a top-nine spot for McGinn or Foegele on the left while significantly reducing the odds either is traded prior to opening night.

There's not a gaping void, as long as Necas can handle the NHL this time around — and won't be asked to bear the additional responsibility of playing center — and either McGinn or Foegele can pick up where they left off in the postseason.

The Hurricanes have to replace the 40 goals of Williams and Micheal Ferland. The additions of Dzingel and Haula and the reasonable sophomore improvement of Svechnikov should more than cover

it, while Williams' departure opens a spot for the right-shot Necas on the power play.

Leadership remains the big question, and while it's hard to see Williams walking in off the street and resuming the captaincy after a half-season off, if that's the scenario, who else would wear it? Both Staal and Justin Faulk thrived when relieved of that co-responsibility, Aho isn't ready and Jordan Martinook doesn't have a big enough role, as good as he is in the dressing room.

That may be the toughest decision Rod Brind'Amour faces over the next month. Williams may not be making a decision right away, but Brind'Amour doesn't have that luxury.

Canes' captain Justin Williams to 'step away' from NHL

By Chip Alexander

Justin Williams isn't saying he's retiring from the NHL but the Carolina Hurricanes captain says he's "stepping away" from the NHL.

The Hurricanes announced Monday that Williams would not be with the team at the start of the 2019-2020 season.

"This is the first time in my life that I've felt unsure of my aspirations with regards to hockey," Williams said in a statement. "For as long as I can remember, my whole off-season until this point has been hockey and doing what was necessary to prepare for the upcoming season. Because of my current indecision, and without the type of mental and physical commitment that I'm accustomed to having, I've decided to step away from the game.

"It's important to me that the focus of attention is on the current, very talented group the Carolina Hurricanes have assembled, as they prepare to build on the momentum and growth we established last season."

More than three months after the Hurricanes bowed out of the Stanley Cup playoffs, after much reflection, Williams, 37, made his decision. Or signaled his indecision. He's stepping away but will he ever step back in?

"We appreciate Justin's honesty and openness throughout this process, and respect his decision," Hurricanes president and general manager Don Waddell said in a statement. "He's been an important part of our team, but we did prepare our roster with the understanding that he might step away. We are confident in the group we've assembled."

Williams' contributions as the captain last season, as the Canes returned to the playoffs for the first time since 2009, were immeasurable.

"Just the person he is, just the way he carries himself," defenseman Jaccob Slavin said in an N&O interview last week. "He's been in this league for a really long time and he knows what needs to be done, when it needs to be done and sometimes how it needs to be done. He carries himself in that way and I think it's contagious. Obviously with his personality, guys want to follow that."

Williams was a finalist for the 2019 Mark Messier Leadership Award, given to the player who sets a positive example on the ice, motivates his teammates and also contributes to the community and charitable causes.

"He did all those things on that list," Canes center Jordan Staal said last week. "For the most part, for me, what I saw was him grouping together a young team and helping us believe we can win every night and realize how good we could be and help us achieve that. And playing well himself."

Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour played golf with Williams last week and said he believed he knew where Williams' "heart is." He said Williams would make a "good decision" and that "it's going to be the right one, whatever it is."

As the weeks passed after the season, Waddell continued to say the team would have patience with Williams, giving the veteran winger the proper amount time to heal up after a long season and reach a decision.

"It's more about his commitment," Waddell said earlier in August. "Justin's not going to do something if he's not 100 percent (committed.) If Justin comes back it's a bonus."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019

Asked about any potential salary-cap concerns should Williams return, Waddell said that would not be a problem.

"He's a player age 35 and older, so we can give him bonuses and they can be whatever to get him to some type of guarantee," Waddell said a few weeks ago. "And if we end up over the cap this year, those bonuses get charged to next year."

In August 2017, Nashville Predators captain Mike Fisher officially retired from the NHL after the Preds had reached the Stanley Cup final. But Fisher, then 37, returned to the Predators in February 2018, completed the 2017-18 season and competed in the playoffs on a one-year, \$1 million contract.

Williams, who will be 38 in October, was a vital part of the Canes' Stanley Cup run in 2006, scoring in Game 7 of the Stanley Cup finals against the Edmonton Oilers. He later won two more with the Los Angeles Kings -- he was named the Conn Smythe winner as playoffs MVP in 2014 -- before signing as a free agent in 2015 with the Washington Capitals.

In July 2017, Williams signed a two-year, \$9 million free-agent contract with the Canes, coming back to Raleigh. Brind'Amour, a former teammate who had helped convince Williams to return to Carolina, became head coach before last season and quickly turned to Williams to be the captain.

Since season's end, the Canes have traded for forward Erik Haula and goalies James Reimer and Anton Forsberg while signing free-agent forward Ryan Dzingel. It was if the team was preparing for any Williams eventuality.

Williams arguably was the Canes' most valuable player as they ended nine years of frustration with their first playoff appearance since 2009.

He wore the "C" as captain for the first time in his career. He said and did the right things. He made sure the Canes not only won but had some fun doing it, introducing the Storm Surge post-game celebrations to home-ice wins at PNC Arena, drawing a lot more attention to the team and its success, its story.

Williams also was productive, playing every game, finishing with 23 goals and 30 assists in the regular season -- his 53-point total his highest since 2011-12 with the Los Angeles Kings.

The Canes shocked the Washington Capitals in the first round of the playoffs, Williams assisting on Brock McGinn's winning goal in the second overtime of Game 7. The Canes then swept the New York Islanders in the second round.

The Boston Bruins would sweep the Canes in the Eastern Conference finals, but that ending didn't tarnish what the Canes had accomplished this past season.

Williams, after the playoffs, said his return -- or retirement -- would be a family decision. He attended the NHL awards ceremony in Las Vegas and in July conducted his annual youth hockey camp in his hometown of Cobourg, Ontario.

Waddell recently said he and team owner Tom Dundon had talked to Williams. Brind'Amour had said he would lobby his friend and former teammate, if need be.

THE ATHLETIC

What does Justin Williams' break from the NHL mean for the Hurricanes?

By Sara Civian

It was Feb. 21, 2019, and things weren't going great for the Carolina Hurricanes in Florida. Despite a puck that bounced off captain Justin Williams' bloodied cheek into the net and an assist on Nino Niederreiter's 2-0 tally, the Canes would need a comeback rally in a game that felt eerily important for some reason.

So Williams scored again, the eventual game-winner, off a less PG body part.

When it was over the Hurricanes blasted "You're a Jerk" by New Boyz in the locker room, a cheeky nod to Don Cherry calling them "Bunch of Jerks" for the post-game Storm Surge that Williams spearheaded.

Then, Williams' dad walked into the locker room and gave his son a fist bump.

"That goal! With the face!" he gave a proud smile, "I love that!"

The next week in the same exact place in almost the same exact situation, the Hurricanes needed goaltender Petr Mrazek to perform in overtime.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019

When he flashed that crazy poke check, Brett Pesce heard Williams scream “This game is ours now!” on the bench.

“We can all get behind that,” Pesce said postgame.

Then the game was theirs.

It was the intermission before double overtime — Round 1, Game 7.

“Throughout that entire Game 7, Willy kept saying things like, ‘Hey, stay patient guys,’ so casually,” Warren Foegele told *The Athletic*. “I’m just thinking, like, ‘It’s Game 7, what is he talking about!?’ But that’s why he’s our leader. You just try to listen.”

The magical Hurricanes season that featured their first playoff appearance since 2009 and a fan base reinvigorated has Williams all over it. Every last inch.

Williams posted his highest single-season point total since 2011-12, and he was the oldest player in the league to score 20 goals and hit the 50-point mark last season. He was the oldest forward to record an average of 17:00 TOI.

It was everything he had.

When the Bruins swept the Hurricanes in the Eastern Conference Final, the blood on Williams’ cheek had scarred over. But it was still there, as was the mental and physical exhaustion of captaining a trip to the ECF and the weight of a franchise on a 37-year-old’s shoulders.

“I haven’t made a decision yet,” he said during locker room cleanout. “You don’t do those things irrationally. You put thought into it, perspective, you find out inside whether you have the full capabilities, emotionally and physically, to do it. I put everything I had into it this year, and if I have everything again then I’ll be here. But I haven’t gone that far yet. It’ll probably be a little ways down the road before that decision’s made.”

As a little ways down the road turned into a lot ways down the road, the likelihood of Williams’ return

decreased. After a summer full of thought and perspective, Williams announced Sept. 2 that he will not be joining the Hurricanes for training camp.

“This is the first time in my life that I’ve felt unsure of my aspirations with regards to hockey,” he said in a release. “For as long as I can remember, my whole off-season until this point has been hockey and doing what was necessary to prepare for the upcoming season. Because of my current indecision, and without the type of mental and physical commitment that I’m accustomed to having, I’ve decided to step away from the game.”

To be clear, this is not a retirement. Some sources already are entertaining the possibility of a Mike Fisher-esque return, though it’s all still very much up in the air. Williams primarily did not want to cause a distraction for the team heading into training camp, and he didn’t want any drama as he continues to soul search.

Now the obvious question is “Who gets the ‘C’?”

It’s safe to say Bill Peters’ co-captain experiment that previously had Jordan Staal and Justin Faulk splitting the captaincy will not be coming back. I would peg Staal as the guy so long as things wouldn’t get awkward. Jaccob Slavin could also make sense. Is Sebastian Aho ready?

What happens next is anyone’s guess, but you can bet the former captain will have a say. Rod Brind’Amour called him before he even took the Hurricanes head coaching job, after all.

Then your mind drifts to the actual on-ice product. GM Don Waddell isn’t lying when he says they’ve prepared for his absence. The Erik Haula trade and Ryan Dzingel acquisition fill some mid-roster holes. Martin Necas now has a real chance to compete for a full-time spot on the roster. Brock McGinn is obviously more than competent, and hey, maybe it’s Julien Gauthier season.

The Canes will probably be OK without Williams in the foreseeable future. But they will never be the same.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019



Williams, still undecided on future, will not start season with Hurricanes

Carolina captain says "current indecision" led to his decision to step away from the game

Cory Lavalette

Justin Williams, the Hurricanes forward who returned to Raleigh two years ago and captained the team to the Eastern Conference Final last season, announced Monday he is undecided on his future and will not start the NHL season in a training camp.

Williams, 37, is a free agent and has been weighing whether or not he would retire or return to the ice for a 19th season, a decision process that included playing a round of golf last Wednesday with recently retired former Hurricanes teammate Cam Ward and Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour.

"This is the first time in my life that I've felt unsure of my aspirations with regards to hockey," Williams said in a press release from the team. "For as long as I can remember, my whole off-season until this point has been hockey and doing what was necessary to prepare for the upcoming season. Because of my current indecision, and without the type of mental and physical commitment that I'm accustomed to having, I've decided to step away from the game."

Williams was the catalyst for Carolina's return to the playoffs after a nine-year absence, not only producing on the ice (23 goals and 30 assists while playing all 82 regular season games) but also providing leadership to a young roster that included many players that had never reached the postseason.

The three-time Stanley Cup winner won his first title in 2006 with the Hurricanes, often playing on a line with first-year captain Brind'Amour and scored a career-high 76 points. Williams was traded to Los Angeles in 2009 and won two more Cups with the Kings, winning the Conn Smythe Trophy as playoff MVP in 2013.

His clutch play earned him the nickname "Mr. Game 7," a reputation that started during his time in Carolina and carried throughout his career. He assisted on Brock McGinn's double-overtime goal in Game 7 of the Hurricanes' first-round series with the Washington

Capitals last season that knocked out the defending Stanley Cup champions, one of four teams Williams has played for during his career.

"We appreciate Justin's honesty and openness throughout this process, and respect his decision," Hurricanes President and General Manager Don Waddell said in the release. "He's been an important part of our team, but we did prepare our roster with the understanding that he might step away. We are confident in the group we've assembled."

Carolina bolstered its forward corps this offseason with the addition of Erik Haula and Ryan Dzingel, and the team also expects 2017 first round pick Martin Necas to be a significant contributor in 2019-20.

"It's important to me that the focus of attention is on the current, very talented group the Carolina Hurricanes have assembled, as they prepare to build on the momentum and growth we established last season," Williams said.

Williams' desire not to be a distraction is true to his leadership style as captain. While the veteran was always in his stall to answer difficult questions or after a tough loss, he would usually shun the spotlight when a teammate was deserving of recognition.

With the Hurricanes set to have their annual media day on Wednesday, Williams' decision will certainly be a focal point of players, staff and media. His indecision is likely to leave the team's captaincy vacant for the time being, as it was following Eric Staal's departure in February 2016. Jordan Staal, Eric's brother, and Justin Faulk — both still with the Hurricanes and alternate captains last season — were named co-captains in 2017 under Bill Peters,

but Brind'Amour gave Williams the captaincy before last season.

Williams, a native of Couberg, Ontario, who was a first round pick of the Flyers in 2000, has 312 goals and 474 assists for 786 points in 1,244 career games, but he's best known for his playoff heroics. In 11 postseasons, Williams had 54 points (22 goals and 32



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019

assists) in 73 career games, including four game-winning goals.

But where he really stood out was in winner-take-all games. In nine career Game 7s, Williams' teams were 8-1 and the winger is tied with Glenn Anderson for the

most goals in those games with seven. He also holds the mark for the most points in Game 7 matchups with 15. He scored the empty-net goal in Game 7 of the 2006 Stanley Cup Final to secure Carolina's only Stanley Cup.



Williams not retiring, but not playing yet either

By Adam Gold radio host 99.9 the Fan

"Because of my current indecision, and without the type of mental and physical commitment that I'm accustomed to having, I've decided to step away from the game."

Justin Williams is not retiring, at least not yet. But, the captain of the Carolina Hurricanes isn't yet ready to put his skates on the ice either. So, with his seat still firmly atop the fence, Williams has opted to simply take a break, leaving the door open for a return.

When the announcement came, just after noon on Labor Day, it struck me as odd. For my money, Williams, about to turn 38 (October 4), could easily announce his retirement and ride off into the next chapter of his life. A husband and father of two young kids, it's very possible that he's simply ready to be home. It also brought me back to the final night at PNC Arena, after the series-ending loss to the Boston Bruins, when Williams was still in his gear well after the game ended, surrounded by his son and daughter, helping each other through the pain of the end of the season.

At the time, I didn't see it as a career finale. And, to be honest, I still don't. But, in retrospect, people closer to Williams than I did feel that way. So, maybe that was the end. Either way, it brings up some questions about the 2019-20 Hurricanes. There are 53 points to be replaced with his absence. Remember, half of Williams' goals came in the 3rd period. He was second on the team in game-winning goals and second in power play markers. Those are significant contributions.

Oh, and who wears the "C"?

Let me just say that I'm going to reserve answers to those, and other matters of the roster makeup, for

another time. The short answers are, it's going to be a lot more difficult than you think to replace the production. As for the next captain. My feeling is that we're likely to see no one wear a "C" until Williams officially files retirement papers. Add an "A" to the sweater of Sebastian Aho or Jaccob Slavin — or maybe even Jordan Martinook — and move on. This would be far different than the indecision that marked the last half of the Bill Peters regime.

Over the last several weeks social media has been full of "it's time for Justin Williams to make a decision already", as though he owes the franchise, or the game, anything. Let me just point out that Williams has been a pro since he was 18. That's a lot of miles.

Including the post season, Williams has played in 1,399 games, scored 352 goals and amassed 887 points. He's won three Stanley Cups, one Conn Smythe award and garnered the nickname "Mr Game 7" for his career dominance in deciding games of post season series. More importantly, as it pertains to this franchise, where he won his first Cup almost a decade and a half ago, he returned to the Canes to accomplish something almost as difficult as winning a championship.

He helped restore credibility to an organization that had almost been forgotten. Before his return, Williams might have been more recognizable as a longtime member of the Los Angeles Kings. With two cups, including the MVP of the 2014 playoffs in his seven seasons in L-A, that was where he'd made his most lasting mark. But, it was with the Hurricanes that Williams was at his best as a player, recording his only two 30-plus goal seasons during his five years with the franchise.

After a few injuries, the trade to the Kings, the subsequent trophies and a two year stint in



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019

Washington, Williams came “home” with the goal of breathing life into the franchise — “his” franchise. Year one didn’t go as he had hoped as the Hurricanes missed the playoffs for the 9th consecutive season. And, after a first half that was long on effort and short on results, year two wasn’t shaping up any better.

But, Williams’ influence was showing. Finally named the captain under a new head coach — his longtime friend, Rod Brind’Amour — Justin’s personality was having an impact. He instituted the post game Storm Surge celebration that went viral across the NHL. He allowed veterans like Jordan Staal and Justin Faulk to be themselves without being tasked with the added responsibility of the “C”. Think there might have been a reason why each enjoyed his best season with the Canes? I do.

And, oh by the way, the old man, with the increasingly graying beard, proved he could still play.

Williams first half was fine, 7 goals and 20 points in 38 games. He certainly wasn’t the reason the Hurricanes were near the bottom of the Eastern Conference standings. The second half, however, was a renaissance to his glory days. 16 goals and 33 points in the 44 games played after New Year’s Day helped carry Carolina back to the playoffs for the first time in a decade. That was not a coincidence.

Williams has earned the right to run this race as he sees fit. It’s important to know that he didn’t retire Monday. He’s just “stepping aside”, as odd as that may seem. When/if the time comes, whenever that might be, there isn’t anyone in that locker room that won’t roll out a welcome mat for their leader.

And speaking of...

Leadership is showing up and doing your job every night. Williams didn’t miss a game in two seasons since his return.

Leadership is being at your best when the team needs you the most. 10 3rd period goals was second to Aho’s 15. His nine power play goals led the team. Only Aho had more than Williams’ five game-winning goals.

Leadership is sacrificing for the team. Williams scored a goal with his “junk” (he said it, I didn’t) and his face (Brett Pesce’s slap shot obviously needs work as Willie didn’t miss a game after redirecting his point drive with his cheek).

Leadership is standing up and taking the heat when things aren’t going well but letting others bask in the glow of success when they are. Justin stood in front of his locker after virtually every loss, but was often absent after wins.

Leadership is helping to create an environment in which everyone can be at their best. Anyone who was around the 2018-19 Carolina Hurricanes can vouch for that being the case.

Makes you wonder what the hell Peters was thinking two years ago, right?

Williams could come back in a month. He could be a great deadline acquisition for a team in need of a veteran forward for a playoff push. Or, he might never play again. And, if it’s the latter, Justin Williams still accomplished what his return was all about. The Carolina Hurricanes are relevant again.

And, for a guy who’s done so much during his career, the biggest feather in his proverbial cap just might be dragging this team, “his” team, back into the spotlight. I think that deserves some patience on our part.

If he decides that being Jaxon and Jade’s dad and Kelly’s husband is all he needs, then I applaud him. It would also explain that final scene in the Canes dressing room. After all, he’s not here for us, right?

As they say, Justin Williams gave at the office.

Justin Williams announces he's 'taking a break' from the NHL

Carolina Hurricanes forward Justin Williams today announced that he will step away from the National Hockey League ahead of the 2019-20 season.

"This is the first time in my life that I've felt unsure of my aspirations with regards to hockey," said Williams. "For as long as I can remember, my whole off-season until this point has been hockey and doing what was necessary to prepare for the upcoming season. Because of my current indecision, and without the type of mental and physical commitment that I'm accustomed to having, I've decided to step away from the game.

"It's important to me that the focus of attention is on the current, very talented group the Carolina Hurricanes have assembled, as they prepare to build on the momentum and growth we established last season."

Williams, 37, has recorded 786 points (312g, 474a) in 1,244 career NHL games with the Hurricanes, Flyers, Kings and Capitals. He is a three-time Stanley Cup Champion, winning titles with Carolina in 2006 and Los Angeles in 2012 and 2014 and winning the Conn Smythe Trophy in 2014. Williams has tallied 305 points (120g, 185a) in 429 career games with the Hurricanes, ranking seventh in team history (since



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019

relocation) in goals and assists and eighth in points. He is one of nine players in NHL history to score 100 goals and win the Stanley Cup with two different franchises.

"We appreciate Justin's honesty and openness throughout this process, and respect his decision," said Hurricanes President and General Manager Don Waddell. "He's been an important part of our team, but we did prepare our roster with the understanding that he might step away. We are confident in the group we've assembled."

The 6'1", 184-pound forward was named the 16th captain in franchise history on Sept. 13, 2018. During the 2018-19 regular season, he posted 53 points (23g, 30a) to help guide the Hurricanes to the Stanley Cup Playoffs for the first time since 2009. In the 2019 Stanley Cup Playoffs, Williams recorded seven points (4g, 3a) in 15 games as the Hurricanes advanced to the Eastern Conference Final. During the 2018-19

regular season, Williams posted his highest single-season point total since 2011-12 and scored 20 goals for the seventh time in his career. He was the oldest player in the NHL to score 20 goals and record 50 points this season, and he was the oldest NHL forward to average at least 17:00 of ice time in 2018-19. Williams became the third player in franchise history to score 20 goals in a season after turning 37, joining Ron Francis (three times) and Ray Whitney. Since turning 30 on Oct. 14, 2011, Williams has played in 619 of 622 possible regular season games.

Williams was selected by his teammates as the winner of the 2018-19 Steve Chiasson Award, presented annually to the Hurricanes player that best exemplifies determination and dedication while proving to be an inspiration to his teammates through his performance and approach to the game. Williams was also chosen by the Carolina chapter of the Professional Hockey Writers' Association (PHWA) as the winner of the 2018-19 Josef Vasicek Award for his cooperation with local media.



Williams steps away from NHL

Hurricanes captain was unsure of 'aspirations with regards to hockey'

NHL.com

Justin Williams announced on Monday that he will be taking some time away from the NHL.

The forward, who turns 38 on Oct. 4 and became an unrestricted free agent July 1, was captain of the Carolina Hurricanes last season, his 18th in the NHL. He had 53 points, including ranking second on Carolina with 23 goals, in 82 regular-season games and had seven points (four goals, three assists) in 15 Stanley Cup Playoff games to help the Hurricanes reach the Eastern Conference Final in their first postseason appearance since 2009.

"This is the first time in my life that I've felt unsure of my aspirations with regards to hockey," Williams told the Hurricanes website. "For as long as I can

remember, my whole offseason until this point has been hockey and doing what was necessary to prepare for the upcoming season. Because of my current indecision and without the type of mental and physical commitment that I'm accustomed to having, I've decided to step away from the game.

"It's important to me that the focus of attention is on the current, very talented group the Carolina Hurricanes have assembled as they prepare to build on the momentum and growth we established last season."

Selected by the Philadelphia Flyers in the first round (No. 28) of the 2000 NHL Draft, Williams has 786 points (312 goals, 474 assists) in 1,244 games with the Flyers, Hurricanes, Los Angeles Kings and Washington Capitals. He has 101 points (40 goals, 61 assists) in 155 NHL playoff games, winning the



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019

Stanley Cup with the Hurricanes in 2006 and the Kings in 2012 and 2014.

"We appreciate Justin's honesty and openness throughout this process and respect his decision," Hurricanes general manager Don Waddell said. "He's been an important part of our team, but we did prepare our roster with the understanding that he might step away. We are confident in the group we've assembled."

Speaking to NHL.com in June, Williams did not rule out playing for someone other than the Hurricanes if he returned this season, but also said he had built a house and did not want to move his family again.

"Listen, anything can happen," he said. "I've known that in this world, certainly the hockey world, you don't really make plans. You just live it."

Metropolitan Division's best team debated by NHL.com

Capitals, Penguins among contenders

NHL.com

It's never too early to take stock of where teams stand in the NHL. The 2019 NHL Draft has passed, and many of the big names in free agency have found a home for this season, so this is as good a time as any to look at the balance of power in the Metropolitan Division. We asked nine NHL.com staff writers for their opinions on which team will be the best in the division this season. Here are their thoughts:

Tim Campbell, staff writer

Pittsburgh Penguins: Swept by the New York Islanders in the Eastern Conference First Round in April, the Penguins may not be as popular a pick as they once were. It's hard to identify a runaway candidate to win this division, and the Penguins were a 100-point team last season, albeit not as impressive defensively as they once were. It's well within the realm of possibility that goalie Matt Murray is still maturing and improving, and that his best is yet to come. Pittsburgh could also be healthier this season; defensemen Kris Letang and Justin Schultz missed a combined 70 games last season, for instance. New chemistry at forward is also ahead as the Penguins try for another Stanley Cup with Sidney Crosby and Evgeni Malkin in their prime. With Phil Kessel traded to the Arizona Coyotes, Alex Galchenyuk, Nick Bjugstad and Brandon Tanev will change the group's makeup positively, in my opinion.

William Douglas, staff writer

Washington Capitals: With several key players approaching or past their 30th birthdays, the Capitals will be out to prove that they still have game in a division that features rising younger teams like the Carolina Hurricanes, Philadelphia Flyers and New York Rangers. Alex Ovechkin turns 34 on Sept. 17, Nicklas Backstrom will be 32 on Nov. 23, and T.J. Oshie turns 33 on Dec. 23. The team's core is aging but was still productive last season, and I see no reason why it won't be again. Who is going to bet

against a team led by Ovechkin, who scored an NHL-best 51 goals last season? Backstrom and goalie Braden Holtby each is in the final season of his contract, which will provide additional motivation.

Tom Gulitti, staff writer

Washington Capitals: There's no question the balance of power is on the verge of shifting in the division, and my answer might be different a year from now. The rest of the pack is coming for the Capitals and the Penguins, who combined to win the Stanley Cup in three straight seasons before the St. Louis Blues won last season. With Backstrom and Holtby each entering the final season of his contract, and with their core aging, this might be the last hurrah for the Capitals, but they have enough left to win their fifth straight division title. Ovechkin has led the NHL in goals in two straight seasons and six of the past seven. Backstrom remains one of the best playmakers and two-way centers in the NHL, and John Carlson has emerged as one of the best offensive defensemen.

Adam Kimelman, staff writer

Washington Capitals: The Capitals had a quiet offseason, but they didn't need to do much to remain the class of the division. Ovechkin shows no signs of slipping from the top goal-scorer in the NHL, and he's got two dynamic playmakers able to feed him the puck with Backstrom and Evgeny Kuznetsov. The depth might not be as great following the departures of forwards Brett Connolly and Andre Burakovsky, but with Oshie, Tom Wilson, Jakub Vrana and Lars Eller, they remain a top offensive team. Carlson anchors a strong group of defensemen, and Holtby is an elite goalie. Although the Rangers, Flyers and New Jersey Devils each made significant offseason moves to get better, and the Penguins still have two of the top five or six players in the NHL, there's no team in the division better than the Capitals.

Mike G. Morreale, staff writer



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019

Philadelphia Flyers: Coach Alain Vigneault takes over a team that has a nice blend of veterans, leaders and young players. Philadelphia needs a quick start to keep pace with division favorites Washington, Carolina and Pittsburgh, and it will, due in large part to finally having an established goaltending situation with veteran Brian Elliott and 21-year-old Carter Hart, who will prove to be one of the best at his position this season. The Flyers have nice depth at center with Sean Couturier, Kevin Hayes, Nolan Patrick and Scott Laughton, will get good production from the wings with Claude Giroux, Jakub Voracek, James van Riemsdyk, Travis Konecny and Oskar Lindblom, and have a good mix at defenseman with Ivan Provorov, Matt Niskanen, Shayne Gostisbehere and Travis Sanheim. Look for young forwards Joel Farabee (2018 NHL Draft, No. 14) and Morgan Frost (2017 NHL Draft, No. 27) to also earn roster spots out of training camp.

Tracey Myers, staff writer

Carolina Hurricanes: All fun and entertaining postgame celebrations aside, the Hurricanes had a nice team last season and will challenge for the division this season. Their young and talented group of forwards includes 22-year-old Sebastian Aho and Teuvo Teravainen, who turns 25 on Sept. 11. Justin Faulk, Trevor van Riemsdyk and Dougie Hamilton are part of a strong defenseman group that helped Carolina finish tied for seventh in the NHL in goals-against last season (221). And if goalie Petr Mrazek is as good at the start of this season as he was at the end of the previous one, the Hurricanes will be in very good shape. It's going to be a challenge in the division, but I think the Hurricanes are up to it.

Rob Reese, fantasy editor

Washington Capitals: The fantasy department has projected the Capitals to have a division-best 47 wins this season, five more than the No. 2 Penguins (42). Sure, the usual suspects among the Capitals forwards are in their 30s, but don't overlook Vrana, who quietly finished second behind Ovechkin on Washington with 23 even-strength goals. Vrana, 23, is on an upward trajectory and carries 30-goal potential and youthful

energy into the Capitals' top-six forward group. With a slightly retooled bottom six (Richard Panik, Garnet Hathaway) and Radko Gudas joining their defensemen, the Capitals additions will offset their offseason losses and they will win the division a fifth straight season.

Dave Stubbs, columnist

New York Islanders: A single point separated the Islanders from the division-champion Capitals in 2018-19, New York's 103-point season ranking them No. 4 in the Eastern Conference. The high-profile 2018 free agency loss of John Tavares to the Toronto Maple Leafs would become almost an asterisk, as the Islanders engineered a massive 23-point improvement from 2017-18. Gone is Robin Lehner, replaced by Semyon Varlamov, who will team with the returning Thomas Greiss. Offense should again be nicely balanced, putting the scoring eggs of Jack Adams Award-winning coach Barry Trotz in several baskets. I like the offensive potential of Mathew Barzal, the 2018 Calder Trophy winner voted as NHL rookie of the year. Will the Islanders again be the NHL's stingiest team defensively, their 191 goals-against last season making them the League's only team with fewer than 200 allowed? Even if they're not, I see Trotz, in his second year, working his magic to push his team over the top in the Metropolitan.

Mike Zeisberger, staff writer

Pittsburgh Penguins: At first blush, there is plenty to like about the Capitals, a season removed from a Stanley Cup title and with the core of the team intact. The Devils seem to be the up-and-coming flavor in the division with additions like P.K. Subban, Jack Hughes and Wayne Simmonds. Kaapo Kakko, Artemi Panarin and Jacob Trouba make the Rangers very intriguing. Then I remembered something Penguins forward Patric Hornqvist told me at the NHL European Player Media Tour in Stockholm two weeks ago. "Sid is as focused as I've ever seen him," he said of Crosby, adding the team will feed off the knowledge that some people are counting them out. One lesson we should have all learned long ago: Never count Sidney Crosby out. Never.

Must-watch storylines for season discussed by NHL.com

Lightning rebound, Hughes vs. Kakko, Panthers' rise among things to look for in 2019-20

NHL.com

With the 2019-20 season opener on Oct. 2 one month away, we interrupted the holiday plans of our writers to ask them to provide the storyline that most excites them about the upcoming season.

Here are their answers:

Tim Campbell, staff writer

The relevancy of Canada-based teams: The yearning for a Canadian team to win the Stanley Cup for the first time since the Montreal Canadiens in 1993 must be satisfied at some point. Can this be the season? Chances look like they're increasing. The Calgary



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019

Flames, Toronto Maple Leafs and Winnipeg Jets each made the Stanley Cup Playoffs last season, and there seems to be some foundation for hope for a return to the playoffs in Montreal and maybe even for the Vancouver Canucks. There's always debate about windows opening and closing, but there appear to be more opportunities north of the border this season.

Nick Cotsonika, columnist

The rise of the Florida Panthers: With Joel Quenneville in as coach and Sergei Bobrovsky in goal, the Panthers have a chance to take a huge step forward. Will Quenneville and Bobrovsky bring out the best in the talented core? Can the Panthers become contenders in the stacked Atlantic Division? Can they make the playoffs for the third time in 19 seasons?

William Douglas, staff writer

A full season of Carter Hart in goal for the Philadelphia Flyers: Inconsistency and injury have been hallmarks of Flyers goaltending for decades, and last season exemplified the situation. An NHL-record eight goalies started at least one game, including Hart, a goalie of the future who became the goalie of the present. Hart, selected in the second round (No. 48) of the 2016 NHL Draft, played well (16-13-1, 2.83 goals-against average, .917 save percentage) after joining the Flyers from Lehigh Valley of the American Hockey League on Dec. 17, 2018. It will be interesting to see how the 21-year-old develops during an entire NHL season.

Tom Gulitti, staff writer

The encore of the Carolina Hurricanes: The Hurricanes were the talk of the NHL last season with their Storm Surge celebrations after each home win during the regular season, including simulating baseball, basketball, bowling and a boxing match with Evander Holyfield. Not everyone was a fan, but they added to the buzz Carolina created on its way to returning to the playoffs for the first time since 2009 and advancing to the Eastern Conference Final before losing to the Boston Bruins. It remains to be seen if the Hurricanes will bring back the Storm Surge this season and what new ideas they can create. Regardless, the Hurricanes should be exciting to watch with most of their team returning and Sebastian Aho a year older following a breakout season when he set NHL career highs with 30 goals and 83 points.

Pete Jensen, senior fantasy editor

Arizona Coyotes ending long playoff drought: I'm ready to witness the revival of the Coyotes, who have missed the playoffs the past seven seasons, after the acquisition of right wing Phil Kessel. They haven't had a player with 80 points since Keith Tkachuk had 86 in 1996-97, the first season in Phoenix after moving

from Winnipeg. But now the Coyotes have more talent than they've had at any point in more than a decade. Bounce-back seasons from forwards Clayton Keller and Nick Schmaltz, defenseman Oliver Ekman-Larsson, and goalie Antti Raanta likely would lead the Coyotes back into the postseason, and it's worth noting they could have one of the best goalie situations in the NHL with Raanta and Darcy Kuemper. The desert should have a pretty cool winter with the Coyotes back in playoff contention, and it would be great to see another nontraditional market catch playoff hockey fever.

Adam Kimelman, deputy managing editor

The Central Division battle: Are the Stanley Cup champion St. Louis Blues the Central favorite? Or is it the Nashville Predators, with Ryan Johansen and newly signed Matt Duchene as their one-two punch through the middle? Or the Winnipeg Jets and their offensive firepower? What about the Colorado Avalanche with Nazem Kadri acquired to anchor a second line behind their super-charged top group of Nathan MacKinnon, Mikko Rantanen and Gabriel Landeskog? Or the Dallas Stars and Vezina Trophy candidate Ben Bishop? Whoever emerges from the division could be battle-tested enough to win the Stanley Cup.

Mike G. Morreale, staff writer

Jack Hughes vs. Kaapo Kakko : The Hudson River Rivalry got a much-needed adrenaline boost at the 2019 NHL Draft when the New Jersey Devils chose Hughes No. 1 and the New York Rangers selected Kakko second. Now it's time to sit back and appreciate the skill, desire and playmaking ability each forward has to offer. I expect at least 60-plus points from each rookie this season. Their first game, at Prudential Center in Newark on Oct. 17, will fuel what should prove to be a memorable rivalry for years to come.

Tracey Myers, staff writer

Jeremy Colliton's first full season in Chicago: The Chicago Blackhawks made a lot of changes this offseason, and I'm sure Colliton can't wait to put his stamp on this team from the start of training camp. Colliton did what he could in implementing his ideas after he was hired to replace Joel Quenneville on Nov. 6. By the end of the season, you saw the impact as the Blackhawks nearly made the playoffs. With a full season, could Colliton guide the Blackhawks to the playoffs after a two-season absence?

Rob Reese, fantasy editor

The Canadiens making playoff noise: Every season, there's a team that seems to defy odds and preseason critics to make the Stanley Cup Playoffs.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019

My bet is on the Canadiens this season, especially with captain Shea Weber and star goalie Carey Price expected to be healthy to start the season. Their young core formed chemistry last season, led by forward Max Domi, who had 72 points (28 goals, 44 assists) in 82 games, and right wing Brendan Gallagher, who scored an NHL career-high 33 goals. Don't be surprised when second-year forward Jesperi Kotkaniemi is among their leading scorers this season en route to a playoff berth.

Dave Stubbs, columnist

Rebound of the Tampa Bay Lightning: I bumped into Lightning coach Jon Cooper and his wife, Jessie, the night before the NHL Awards in Las Vegas in June and showed them a small button of Canadiens legend Jean Beliveau on my suit jacket. "I needed him in April," Cooper said. He was joking, of course. Like

everyone in hockey, Cooper still was trying to make sense of the Lightning's four-game loss to the Columbus Blue Jackets in the Eastern Conference First Round after their historic regular season. I can't wait to see how the heavily loaded Lightning will use that bitter disappointment for fuel this season.

Mike Zeisberger, staff writer

The P.K. Subban era in New Jersey: Subban started his career in Montreal, where you're a rock star if you're a Canadiens player. Then it was off to Nashville, where all the world's a musical stage (or seems like it). Now he's in New Jersey, part of the New York-area spotlight, where no personality is too big. Since coming to the Devils, Subban received a special Ric Flair-type robe during a fan event, got engaged to former Olympic skier Lindsey Vonn, and was a presenter at the MTV Video Music Awards at Prudential Center. I can't wait to see what's next.



Carolina's Williams to 'step away' from NHL to start season

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Carolina Hurricanes captain Justin Williams says he is taking a break from the NHL to start this season.

With the start of training camp looming later this month, the 37-year-old forward said Monday that he will "step away" from the sport.

"This is the first time in my life that I've felt unsure of my aspirations with regards to hockey," Williams said in a statement released by the team. "For as long as I can remember, my whole offseason until this point has been hockey and doing what was necessary to prepare for the upcoming season.

"Because of my current indecision, and without the type of mental and physical commitment that I'm accustomed to having, I've decided to step away from the game," he added.

Williams is an unrestricted free agent and three-time Stanley Cup champion whose two-year contract with Carolina expired after last season. He took over the team captaincy last year and led the Hurricanes to the Eastern Conference final in their first playoff berth since 2009.

Williams has 312 goals and 474 assists in his 18-year career with Carolina, Philadelphia, Los Angeles and Washington. He was a key member of the Hurricanes' 2006 Cup championship team and also won it twice with the Kings, earning the Conn Smythe Trophy as playoff MVP in 2014.

He had 23 goals and 30 assists while playing all 82 regular-season games last season, then had four goals and three assists during the Hurricanes' three playoff rounds.

General manager Don Waddell says the Hurricanes prepared for the possibility of not having Williams.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019



Justin Williams to 'step away' from NHL, will not play to start 2019-20

Sportsnet Staff

Justin Williams is taking an indefinite break from the NHL.

The 18-year veteran of the league announced via the Carolina Hurricanes on Monday that he is stepping away from the game ahead of the 2019-20 season.

"This is the first time in my life that I've felt unsure of my aspirations with regards to hockey," Williams said in a team press release.

"For as long as I can remember, my whole off-season until this point has been hockey and doing what was necessary to prepare for the upcoming season. Because of my current indecision, and without the type of mental and physical commitment that I'm accustomed to having, I've decided to step away from the game.

"It's important to me that the focus of attention is on the current, very talented group the Carolina Hurricanes have assembled, as they prepare to build on the momentum and growth we established last season."

The 37-year-old unrestricted free agent is coming off a two-year, \$9-million deal with the Hurricanes.

Williams has recorded 786 points across 1,244 games with the Hurricanes, Philadelphia Flyers, Los Angeles Kings and Washington Capitals. He won Stanley Cups with the Hurricanes (2006) and the Kings (2012, 2014).

Throughout his career, Williams became known for his clutch performances, earning the moniker Mr. Game 7 and winning the Conn Smythe Trophy in 2014. He has racked up seven goals and eight assists in nine career Game 7 appearances.

Williams, who helped captain the Hurricanes to the 2019 Eastern Conference finals, accrued 305 points in 429 games with the Hurricanes. The club's president and general manager, Don Waddell, said he appreciated Williams' "honesty" and "openness" throughout the process.

"He's been an important part of our team, but we did prepare our roster with the understanding that he might step away," said Waddell.

"We are confident in the group we've assembled."

Williams had 53 points in 82 games last season as the Hurricanes made their first playoff appearance since 2009. He added seven points in 15 post-season games.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019



Hurricanes announce Justin Williams is taking break from hockey

By Adam Gretz

It seemed likely that there were only two real possibilities for free agent forward Justin Williams at the start of the offseason: Either a return to the Carolina Hurricanes for another season, or retirement.

For now, he seems to have met in the middle.

The Hurricanes announced on Monday that Williams is "taking a break" from hockey and that he will not play at the start of the 2019-20 NHL season.

This is not a retirement announcement and does leave the door open for a potential return at some point, either with the Hurricanes or someone else.

"This is the first time in my life that I've felt unsure of my aspirations with regards to hockey," said Williams in a statement released by the Hurricanes. "For as long as I can remember, my whole off-season until this point has been hockey and doing what was necessary to prepare for the upcoming season. Because of my current indecision, and without the type of mental and physical commitment that I'm accustomed to having, I've decided to step away from the game.

"It's important to me that the focus of attention is on the current, very talented group the Carolina

Hurricanes have assembled, as they prepare to build on the momentum and growth we established last season."

Added general manager Don Waddell: "We appreciate Justin's honesty and openness throughout this process, and respect his decision. He's been an important part of our team, but we did prepare our roster with the understanding that he might step away. We are confident in the group we've assembled."

Williams, 37, was still an excellent player this past season with 20 goals and 53 total points in 82 games for a Hurricanes that went all the way to the Eastern Conference Final. Even as his career went deeper into his 30s he remained as reliable and durable (missing just three games over the past eight seasons) as any player in the league.

In 1,244 games over 18 seasons Williams has 312 goals and 786 total points for the Hurricanes, Philadelphia Flyers, Washington Capitals, and Los Angeles Kings.

He also owns three Stanley Cup rings, including one with the Hurricanes during the 2005-06 season, and has developed a reputation for being one of the best big-game players in the league.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019



Justin Williams announces he's taking a break from hockey, not officially retiring

'Mr. Game Seven' remains uncertain about his NHL future

by Pete Blackburn

Justin Williams won't be with an NHL team to start the upcoming season, but he's also not officially closing the door on his playing career just yet. Williams announced Monday that he will "step away from the game" ahead of the 2019-20 season, citing uncertainty about his commitment to hockey.

"This is the first time in my life that I've felt unsure of my aspirations with regards to hockey," Williams said in a press release. "For as long as I can remember, my whole offseason until this point has been hockey and doing what was necessary to prepare for the upcoming season. Because of my current indecision, and without the type of mental and physical commitment that I'm accustomed to having, I've decided to step away from the game.

"It's important to me that the focus of attention is on the current, very talented group the Carolina Hurricanes have assembled, as they prepare to build on the momentum and growth we established last season."

Williams, who will turn 38 in October, has spent the last two seasons serving as captain of the Hurricanes. The veteran winger played all 82 regular season games last year, scoring 23 goals and adding 30 assists up front for the Canes -- his highest single-

season point total since 2011-12. The team qualified for the playoffs for the first time in a decade before losing in the Eastern Conference Finals.

The star has spent 18 seasons in the NHL, playing for four different franchises -- the Hurricanes, Capitals, Kings and Flyers. He has tallied 312 goals and 786 points in 1,244 career regular season games while also establishing himself as a clutch performer in the postseason.

Not only has Williams raised the Stanley Cup three times (once with the Hurricanes in 2016 and twice with the Kings, in 2012 and 2014) but he also won the Conn Smythe in '14. He's earned the nickname "Mr. Game Seven" due to his timely performances in do-or-die playoff games, recording seven goals and 15 points in 15 career Game 7s.

Williams' contract with Carolina expired after last season and his future remained up in the air throughout the summer, though there seemed to be interest from Carolina in bringing him back for at least another season. The winger can clearly still produce at the NHL level, but he's also not ready to commit to another season just yet.

As such, he'll step away from hockey for the time being, but it certainly sounds like he may be open to a return down the line, whether it be during this upcoming season or ahead of next season.



NHL veteran Williams 'unsure' about hockey future, steps away

Reuters

NHL veteran Justin Williams announced Monday that he is stepping away from hockey.

Williams, 37, is an unrestricted free agent. He has played 18 seasons in the league, the past two years for the Carolina Hurricanes.

"This is the first time in my life that I've felt unsure of my aspirations with regards to hockey," Williams said in a statement. "For as long as I can remember, my whole offseason until this point has been hockey and doing what was necessary to prepare for the upcoming season. Because of my current indecision and without the type of mental and physical commitment that I'm accustomed to having, I've decided to step away from the game."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019

Williams joined the Hurricanes before the 2017-18 season and was named captain in September 2018. It was his second go-round with the franchise after spending parts of five seasons with the franchise in the mid-2000s.

During his first stint with Carolina, he was a member of the 2006 Stanley Cup-winning team.

Williams began his career with the Philadelphia Flyers in 2000-01 and also played for the Los Angeles Kings and Washington Capitals.

With the Kings, Williams was a member of Stanley Cup-winning teams in 2012 and 2014. Following the 2014 playoffs, he was awarded the Conn Smythe Award (playoff MVP) after scoring nine goals and 16

assists and posting a plus-13 rating in 26 postseason games.

For his career, Williams has 312 goals and 474 assists in 1,244 games.

Last season, he played in all 82 regular-season games, registering 53 points (23 goals, 30 assists).

"We appreciate Justin's honesty and openness throughout this process, and respect his decision," Hurricanes general manager Don Waddell said. "He's been an important part of our team, but we did prepare our roster with the understanding that he might step away. We are confident in the group we've assembled."

--Field Level Media

Hurricanes' Justin Williams: 'I've decided to step away from the game'

Ailish Forfar

Justin Williams has decided to step away from the game, as announced by the Carolina Hurricanes on Monday.

"This is the first time in my life that I've felt unsure of my aspirations with regards to hockey," said Williams. "For as long as I can remember, my whole off-season until this point has been hockey and doing what was necessary to prepare for the upcoming season. Because of my current indecision, and without the type of mental and physical commitment that I'm accustomed to having, I've decided to step away from the game."

This is not a formal retirement announcement from the 37-year-old captain, it does leave a door open for

the free-agent to return later this season to the Hurricanes or another team.

The three time Stanley Cup Champion has played over 1,200 NHL games with the Hurricanes, Philadelphia Flyers, Los Angeles Kings and Washington Capitals.

Hurricanes President and General Manager Don Waddell added, "We appreciate Justin's honesty and openness throughout this process, and respect his decision. He's been an important part of our team, but we did prepare our roster with the understanding that he might step away. We are confident in the group we've assembled."

Bob McKenzie hinted to the announcement explaining Williams' contemplation towards the upcoming season.

The Hockey News

Future Watch: The top rookie for every NHL team in 2019-20

Rookie tournament fever is heating up, and teams will look to see which youngsters are ready to make the jump to the NHL. We decided to take a look at a prospect from each team worth getting excited about this season.

By Steven Ellis

It's almost that time of year again. Rookie tournament's are in the offing, with the eight-team Traverse City competition set to kick off next week. With that in mind, we're taking a look at a prospect

from each team worth getting excited about this season:

Anaheim Ducks – Sam Steel, C, 21
Anaheim is on the verge of graduating multiple young talents to the NHL this season, but Steel is the name you're going to hear most. Ryan Kesler's hip surgery and placement on the long-term injured reserve will allow Steel to earn more ice time. After a superb 22-game stint with the Ducks last year, he'll be a bigger contributor this season for the rebuilding club.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019

Arizona Coyotes – Kyle Capobianco, D, 22
A leg injury kept Capobianco out of action for the second half of the season, but he was on track to finish as one of the top-scoring defensemen in the AHL. Expect him to start off with limited minutes, but it won't take him long to earn some top-four playing time.

Boston Bruins – Trent Frederic, C, 21
No stars heading to Boston this year as they continue with their core group. Frederic may get a few games along the way, but the Bruins are deep at center and Frederic is still another year or two away from a regular role.

Buffalo Sabres – Victor Olofsson, LW, 24
Henrik Jokiharju would have been the best option had he not skated in nearly 40 games last season in Chicago, but Olofsson isn't a bad choice, either. He had four points in six NHL games alongside Jack Eichel last season and was one of just six U-25 players to score 30 goals in the AHL. He's not big and his game doesn't suit the bottom six, but he'll battle for a spot in camp.

Calgary Flames – Dillon Dube, C, 21
Dube finished right at the 25-game mark last season, but should earn more opportunities in 2019-20. He has the makings of a top-six forward but needs as much ice time as possible to make that happen. If they can't give him a regular role, he'll make do in the AHL again.

Carolina Hurricanes – Martin Necas, RW, 20
Necas was one of the AHL's top rookies en route to Charlotte's Calder Cup victory last season. He'll start as a middle-six forward and should be a factor for 30-35 points this season.

Chicago Blackhawks – Alexander Nylander, RW, 21
The Blackhawks had to give up Jokiharju, a top defensive prospect, in order to get Nylander, so the gamble better pay off. A new home and a good group around him should elevate Nylander's game after a couple of rough seasons in the Sabres organization.

Colorado Avalanche – Cale Makar, D, 20
Makar made an incredible impression with the Avalanche during the playoffs last season and will be a game-changer for the playoff-bound club this season. A future Norris Trophy winner.

Columbus Blue Jackets – Alexandre Texier, LW, 19
Texier did everything right in the Finnish League and was impressive during a limited North American run to end the season. He's part of the future of Columbus' offense.

Dallas Stars – Jason Robertson, RW, 20
Robertson is coming off of a season that saw him lead all CHL players with 117 points. He has spent

time training with Gary Roberts to improve his fitness and strength and will be looking at a top-six spot before you know it.

Detroit Red Wings – Filip Zadina, RW, 19
Zadina's AHL numbers didn't blow anyone away, but he started to show improvements later in the season and had a couple of nice showings in the NHL. He's not a favorite for the Calder Trophy, but he knows how to score.

Edmonton Oilers – Evan Bouchard, D, 19
A well-rounded defender, Bouchard is the best blueline prospect the Oilers have had since Darnell Nurse. Bouchard was just OK in seven NHL games last year but lit the AHL up and was a point-per-game player in eight playoff contests.

Florida Panthers – Owen Tippett, RW, 20
There may have never been this much optimism in Florida ever. Tippett has found a way to round out his game nicely over the past few years and did everything he possibly could in junior to show he will be a top goal-scorer in the NHL someday. He'll be a consistent 30-goal guy in the future, and his NHL career is set to start now in Sunrise.

Los Angeles Kings – Carl Grundstrom, LW, 21
Grundstrom had a nice 15-game run with the Kings last season and a weak roster will allow him to play a pivotal role this season. Don't be surprised if he spends a significant chunk of the season on the second line.

Minnesota Wild – Louie Belpedio, D, 23
Belpedio has an outside shot at making the Wild this season after a head-turning rookie campaign with the AHL's Iowa Wild last season. He'll get some chance if injuries arise, but don't expect him to play more than 20 games at this point.

Montreal Canadiens – Ryan Poehling, C, 20
Last year it was Jesperi Kotkaniemi. Now, it's Poehling. His debut hat-trick last season may have given fans a bit too much optimism for this season, but if he can fill the third-line center role effectively and contribute 30-plus points, he'll be a major asset for the club.

Nashville Predators – Eeli Tolvanen, RW, 20
Forget the talk about Tolvanen being a bust. Sure, he didn't have a strong season in the AHL, but he chipped in two points in four NHL games and his defensive game has greatly improved. Give him something to work with and he'll do wonders.

New Jersey Devils – Nikita Gusev, LW, 27
Let's take this opportunity to look at someone other than Jack Hughes, even though, technically, Gusev doesn't qualify as a rookie. He's too old. That said,



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019

he's making his first foray into the NHL and coming off of one of the best KHL seasons ever.

New York Islanders – Sebastian Aho, D, 23

After a 23-game run in 2017-18, Aho spent the entire 2018-19 season in Bridgeport. The defense corps is a little crowded this season, but Aho isn't far off from cracking the lineup as a regular.

New York Rangers – Vitali Kravtsov, RW, 19

Kaapo Kakko isn't the only European winger the Rangers are excited about this season. Kravtsov, who stands 6-foot-4, is a big, skilled forward who is an absolute headache to play against. He'll be a top-six forward for the next decade.

Ottawa Senators – Drake Batherson, RW, 21

Erik Brannstrom is going to be a mighty fine defenseman one day, but all eyes are on Batherson this season. He had a solid nine-point run in 20 games with Ottawa last season and time on the top line isn't out of the question this season. Batherson is further proof that the Senators know what they're doing when it comes to prospects.

Philadelphia Flyers – Philippe Myers, D, 22

An undrafted gem, Myers is a big defenseman who'll play a shutdown role for Philadelphia this season. Justin Braun's acquisition will make staying up full-time challenging for Myers, but he's a contender.

Pittsburgh Penguins – Justin Almeida, C, 20

He's a bit of a long shot, but it's not out of the question to think Almeida gets a chance after two explosive seasons in the WHL. He may be small, but he brings a lot to the table and isn't afraid to grind things out.

San Jose Sharks – Dylan Gambrell, C, 23

Gambrell is still looking for his first NHL point after 11 games, but he had a great rookie campaign in the AHL last year. Joe Thornton is expected to be back, but Gambrell will battle for a depth role.

St Louis Blues – Jordan Kyrou, C, 21

Kyrou's 16-game stint was unspectacular in St. Louis but he had no problem lighting up the AHL. There might not be a full-time spot for him this year, but he'll get called up at some point.

Tampa Bay Lightning – Mitchell Stephens, C, 22

The Lightning could look to trade some expensive contracts this season, depending on what happens with Brayden Point. If so, Stephens may finally get his first shot at the NHL, but ice time won't come easy.

Toronto Maple Leafs – Ilya Mikheyev, LW, 24

Mikheyev has good size and a shot that terrorized KHL goaltenders for years. He'll have to fight to get top-six minutes, but he should have solid linemates to work with regardless.

Vancouver Canucks – Thatcher Demko, G, 23

Demko has the size and athleticism needed to thrive in today's NHL. He'll use this year to learn under Jacob Markstrom before likely taking the starting role in 2020-21. He has nothing left to prove in the AHL and he's the goalie of the future in Vancouver.

Vegas Golden Knights – Cody Glass, C, 20

Jonathan Toews 2.0? You bet. Glass is a smart, two-way center who rarely puts his team in a bad situation and handles the defensive game with aplomb. WHL goalies will be thanking their lucky stars that he's gone now.

Washington Capitals – Lucas Johansen, D, 21

Injuries limited his playing time in 2018-19, but he's reenergized and ready to go after showing promising signs in his second AHL campaign. He'll suit up for just a handful of games before being a true NHL fixture in 2020-21.

Winnipeg Jets – Kristian Vesalainen, LW, 20

After ending up in the minors last season, Vesalainen departed for the KHL to continue his development. He's back now and will fight for a roster spot and possibly even a place in the top six.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019



SB NATION
CANES COUNTRY

Justin Williams to “take a break”, will not start season with Hurricanes

We have our answer. Or do we?

By Brian LeBlanc

After all the hand-wringing, all the will-he-or-won't-he, all the breathless speculation surrounding the future of Justin Williams' NHL career, we finally have our answer.

Or do we?

The Carolina Hurricanes announced Monday that their captain will “take a break” from hockey and will not start the season with the Hurricanes while he continues to consider his future in the NHL.

“For as long as I can remember, my whole off-season until this point has been hockey and doing what was necessary to prepare for the upcoming season,” Williams said in a statement. “Because of my current indecision, and without the type of mental and physical commitment that I’m accustomed to having, I’ve decided to step away from the game.”

Williams, who will turn 38 the day after opening night, had his most productive season in years while helping the Hurricanes break a ten-year playoff drought in 2018-19. His 53 points were the most he'd posted in a single season since he scored 57 with the Los Angeles Kings in 2010-11, and he averaged nearly 17:30 of ice time while playing all 82 games, the most ice time he'd seen since the 2007-08 season with Carolina - eleven years prior.

Signed to a two-year, \$9 million deal on July 1, 2017 by former general manager Ron Francis, Williams was brought in specifically to serve as a core member of the leadership team. However, coach Bill Peters had other plans, designating Jordan Staal and Justin Faulk as co-captains and not giving Williams a letter of any sort. When Rod Brind'Amour replaced Peters behind the bench, he wasted little time rectifying that error, naming his former teammate the eighth captain in Hurricanes history and making Williams the heir to his own legacy.

The path that Williams has chosen does not answer all the questions surrounding his future. However, there is a precedent for this sort of decision, with another Sun Belt captain. Predators captain Mike

Fisher actually went as far as to retire from hockey in the 2017 offseason, only to reverse course and make a comeback late in the season. Williams' statement leaves that door even more open, and while no one can be sure of his future plans, it seems plausible if not somewhat anticipated that he will return toward the end of the season - coincidentally, and conveniently, when a new contract would cost less against the Hurricanes' salary cap.

The release from the team is below.

WILLIAMS ANNOUNCES BREAK FROM NHL

Hurricanes captain will not join team for start of 2019-20 season

Carolina Hurricanes forward Justin Williams today announced that he will step away from the National Hockey League ahead of the 2019-20 season.

“This is the first time in my life that I’ve felt unsure of my aspirations with regards to hockey,” said Williams. “For as long as I can remember, my whole off-season until this point has been hockey and doing what was necessary to prepare for the upcoming season. Because of my current indecision, and without the type of mental and physical commitment that I’m accustomed to having, I’ve decided to step away from the game.

“It’s important to me that the focus of attention is on the current, very talented group the Carolina Hurricanes have assembled, as they prepare to build on the momentum and growth we established last season.”

Williams, 37, has recorded 786 points (312g, 474a) in 1,244 career NHL games with the Hurricanes, Flyers, Kings and Capitals. He is a three-time Stanley Cup Champion, winning titles with Carolina in 2006 and Los Angeles in 2012 and 2014 and winning the Conn Smythe Trophy in 2014. Williams has tallied 305 points (120g, 185a) in 429 career games with the Hurricanes, ranking seventh in team history (since relocation) in goals and assists and eighth in points. He is one of nine players in NHL history to score 100 goals and win the Stanley Cup with two different franchises.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019

“We appreciate Justin’s honesty and openness throughout this process, and respect his decision,” said Hurricanes President and General Manager Don Waddell. “He’s been an important part of our team, but we did prepare our roster with the understanding that he might step away. We are confident in the group we’ve assembled.”

The 6’1”, 184-pound forward was named the 16th captain in franchise history on Sept. 13, 2018. During the 2018-19 regular season, he posted 53 points (23g, 30a) to help guide the Hurricanes to the Stanley Cup Playoffs for the first time since 2009. In the 2019 Stanley Cup Playoffs, Williams recorded seven points (4g, 3a) in 15 games as the Hurricanes advanced to the Eastern Conference Final. During the 2018-19 regular season, Williams posted his highest single-season point total since 2011-12 and scored 20 goals for the seventh time in his career. He was the oldest

player in the NHL to score 20 goals and record 50 points this season, and he was the oldest NHL

forward to average at least 17:00 of ice time in 2018-19. Williams became the third player in franchise history to score 20 goals in a season after turning 37, joining Ron Francis (three times) and Ray Whitney. Since turning 30 on Oct. 14, 2011, Williams has played in 619 of 622 possible regular season games.

Williams was selected by his teammates as the winner of the 2018-19 Steve Chiasson Award, presented annually to the Hurricanes player that best exemplifies determination and dedication while proving to be an inspiration to his teammates through his performance and approach to the game. Williams was also chosen by the Carolina chapter of the Professional Hockey Writers’ Association (PHWA) as the winner of the 2018-19 Josef Vasicek Award for his cooperation with local media.



Hurricanes will miss Williams’ ability to make other players better

With its captain not returning to begin the 2019-2020 season, Carolina has large void to fill

Peter Koutroumpis

RALEIGH, N.C. – The Carolina Hurricanes will begin the 2019-2020 campaign without a captain.

On Monday, Justin Williams, as announced by the team, was going to “step away from the National Hockey League”.

Following an exceptionally successful season that submerged Carolina into the NHL playoffs for the first time in 10 years, ending with a run to the Eastern Conference Final, the team’s 16th captain ended his term in leading the club.

Or, it could be termed suspended his term, less than a year from the Sept. 13, 2018 date the honor was bestowed on him.

The wait is over, or is it?

It was one of the final announcements the team had to make to give some sense of what to expect when training camp opens on that very same date, next Friday.

Waiting for so long for Williams to decide whether he would return, being an unrestricted free agent, it’s not known whether he had even been offered a deal to

return – no word has been spoken on any of that at all.

Sure, general manager Don Waddell and head coach Rod Brind’Amour indicated repeatedly that they would want the three-time Stanley Cup winner to return.

As the summer dragged on, they played along with Williams’ delay in making a definitive decision.

At some point, something had to be said from either side, so Williams complied.

“This is the first time in my life that I’ve felt unsure of my aspirations with regards to hockey,” Williams said.

“For as long as I can remember, my whole off-season until this point has been hockey and doing what was necessary to prepare for the upcoming season. Because of my current indecision, and without the type of mental and physical commitment that I’m accustomed to having, I’ve decided to step away from the game.

“It’s important to me that the focus of attention is on the current, very talented group the Carolina Hurricanes have assembled, as they prepare to build on the momentum and growth we established last season.”

Tough skates to fill



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019

Making a number of offseason moves, Carolina's roster has changed quite significantly in complexion, enough so that the lack of a captain and the experience Williams presents will impact this team.

The intangibles that he presented as the captain, the leader, were voiced and reinforced in many discussions with other players in the room throughout last season.

"The thing about being a leader is that the best ones aren't trying to be leaders, you don't have to be a leader, now-former forward and Charlotte Checkers captain Patrick Brown said following practice back in May following the team's second-round sweep of the New York Islanders.

"You just be yourself and be the best 'you' that you can be, and you'll fit in with any group of guys. I think that my transition from Charlotte to here has been great. In Charlotte, maybe I'm a bit more vocal and have a bit more responsibility in terms of ice time and things like that, but really I'm just the same person here, I'm just on a different line with a different amount of minutes. I'm just workin' as hard as I can and tryin' to fit in with the guys and be a good teammate."

Brown's words praising Williams' leadership style and impact were prophetic.

Not long after the Hurricanes were swept by the Boston Bruins, he returned to Charlotte and helped lead the Checkers to the AHL franchise's first-ever

Calder Cup championship, finishing with 10 points (5g, 5a) in 11 playoff games.

He preached the gospel of 'Willy' almost exactly to the word – "just be yourself and be the best you that you can be" – words and mindset the captain used when redirecting criticism of the Storm Surge during its infancy last November.

That's gonna leave a mark

Williams left his mark on Brown, an undrafted high-pedigreed college player, a former captain and NCAA champion at Boston College, who also became a free agent in the offseason.

Interestingly enough, he wasn't re-signed by the Hurricanes.

Instead, the Vegas Golden Knights recognized his utility and value and signed him to a two-year deal, and as a result Charlotte will also need to eventually fill its captain position.

Staying true and accurate to his word is a hallmark of Williams' persona, if you've been around him to see it in his eyes up close.

If he says he's undecided, he's undecided.

However, he's well thought out, and there are deeper reasons that he hasn't revealed yet for coming to and remaining at his current impasse.

You're in or you're out – not half-way.

Regardless, for the Carolina Hurricanes, he's out and there is a deep and critical void that must be filled as a result.



Hurricanes' Justin Williams Takes a Break

By Mark Shiver

It is the beginning of September and the Carolina Hurricanes are getting ready for the prospect tournament, training camp and life without Justin Williams. Time does not stand still and it won't in 2019 for the Hurricanes as today they announced Williams is taking a break from hockey. The word "retire" was absent from his statement, however.

In a statement released by the Hurricanes, Williams said, "This is the first time in my life that I've felt unsure of my aspirations with regards to hockey. For as long as I can remember, my whole off-season until this point has been hockey and doing what was necessary to prepare for the upcoming season. Because of my current indecision, and without the type of mental and physical commitment that I'm accustomed to having, I've decided to step away from the game."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019

Williams also said, "It's important to me that the focus of attention is on the current, very talented group the Carolina Hurricanes have assembled, as they prepare to build on the momentum and growth we established last season."

Waddell Weighs In

The Hurricanes' statement also quoted team President and General Manager Don Waddell: "We appreciate Justin's honesty and openness throughout this process and respect his decision. He's been an important part of our team, but we did prepare our roster with the understanding that he might step away. We are confident in the group we've assembled."

What Williams Said in May

After losing in the Eastern Conference Final to the Boston Bruins, the Hurricanes held their end-of-season interviews with the media on May 20. At the center of all of the activity was Williams, team captain, and at that time a soon-to-be unrestricted free agent. He was at the end of his two-year, \$9 million contract with the Hurricanes.

Holding court with the gathered media in front of his locker, Williams was asked directly if he had made any decisions regarding whether or not he would continue to play or retire. Williams paused and said,

I haven't made a decision, no. Yet. You don't do those things irrationally. You put thought into it, you put perspective. You find out inside whether you have the full capability emotionally and physically to do it.

Justin Williams to Step Away from the Game

By Greg Boysen

Carolina Hurricanes captain Justin Williams has accomplished just about everything one can in the National Hockey League. He has been a part of three Stanley Cup Championship teams while winning a Conn Smythe Trophy with the Los Angeles Kings in 2014 and earning the nickname "Mr. Game 7" for being clutch when the pressure is on.

Now, the 37-year-old needs to take some time away from the game as he announced he will not be joining the Hurricanes for the opening of their training camp later this month.

Williams Needs Personal Time Off the Ice

"This is the first time in my life that I've felt unsure of my aspirations with regards to hockey," said Williams in an official statement on Monday. "For as long as I can remember, my whole off-season until this point

Williams has always been known as an effective motivator as well as a somewhat cerebral character.

His answers to questions during postgame press conferences are typically thoughtful, more than the bullet-point type answers that often are given by players. Hockey does not encourage players going off-script when engaging the media.

Williams does not fit in that mold. He continued to answer the question about his future, saying,

I put everything I had into it this year. If I have everything again, then I'll be here. But, I haven't gotten that far yet. That'll probably be a little way down the road before that decision's made.

Translation: At season's end Williams was tired. He had left it all on the ice as the Hurricanes' captain and wanted some time to rest and reflect. And now, here in September, he has decided he just doesn't have enough left to keep going at the start of this season.

Williams has had quite a career. The team statement noted the following: Williams, 37, has recorded 786 points (312 goals, 474 assists) in 1,244 career NHL games with the Hurricanes, Flyers, Kings and Capitals. He is a three-time Stanley Cup Champion, winning titles with Carolina in 2006 and Los Angeles in 2012 and 2014 and winning the Conn Smythe Trophy in 2014.

Williams had 23 goals and 30 assists last season, and at age 37 has shown that he still has game. But, he currently does not have the heart for another season-long campaign. Looking between the lines the word "retire" is not in his announcement. Perhaps the Williams saga has not seen its final act.

has been hockey and doing what was necessary to prepare for the upcoming season. Because of my current indecision, and without the type of mental and physical commitment that I'm accustomed to having, I've decided to step away from the game.

"It's important to me that the focus of attention is on the current, very talented group the Carolina Hurricanes have assembled, as they prepare to build on the momentum and growth we established last season."

Williams has not missed a singled game during his second stint with the Hurricanes over the last two seasons. He has 39 goals and 104 points while playing in all 164 regular-season games. He had four goals and seven assists in Carolina's run to the Eastern Conference Finals this past spring.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019

His 305 points have him ranked seventh in Hurricanes team history (since they relocated from Hartford) in scoring. He is one of just nine players in NHL history to score 100 goals and win a Stanley Cup with two different franchise in his career.

The Hurricanes' front office is being very supportive of their veteran captain's decision.

"We appreciate Justin's honesty and openness throughout this process, and respect his decision," said Hurricanes President and General Manager Don Waddell. "He's been an important part of our team, but we did prepare our roster with the understanding that he might step away. We are confident in the group we've assembled."

Carolina Will Miss Their Veteran Leader

The Hurricanes will not only miss his offensive production on the ice, but they will also miss his

leadership skills as well. Williams won the Steve Chiasson Award for the 2018-19 season, which is awarded to the player "that best exemplifies determination and dedication while proving to be an inspiration to his teammates through his performance and approach to the game," as voted on by the team.

This news comes as a bit of a buzzkill after the season the Hurricanes are coming off of. They became the darling underdogs of the league thanks to their talented young core and their affection of postgame celebrations. They sold tens of thousands of "Bunch of Jerks" t-shirts after Don Cherry criticized their celebrations.

Today's announcement is not an official retirement, so the window is open for a return at some point down the road. With Williams currently without a contract, there is no guarantee that if and when he does decide to play again it will be with the Hurricanes.

TODAY'S LINKS

- <https://www.newsobserver.com/sports/nhl/carolina-hurricanes/canes-now/article234641732.html>
- <https://www.newsobserver.com/sports/spt-columns-blogs/luke-decock/article234637007.html>
- <https://www.newsobserver.com/sports/nhl/carolina-hurricanes/canes-now/article233984657.html>
- <https://theathletic.com/1179188/2019/09/02/what-does-justin-williams-break-from-the-nhl-mean-for-the-hurricanes/>
- <http://nsjonline.com/article/2019/09/williams-still-undecided-on-future-will-not-start-season-with-hurricanes/>
- <https://www.wralsportsfan.com/williams-not-retiring-but-not-playing-yet-either/18607350/>
- <https://www.wralsportsfan.com/justin-williams-announces-he-s-taking-a-break-from-the-nhl/18607008/>
- <https://www.nhl.com/news/carolina-hurricanes-captain-justin-williams-steps-away-from-nhl/c-308824326>
- <https://www.nhl.com/news/metropolitan-division-best-team-round-table/c-308760730>
- <https://www.nhl.com/news/nhl-storylines-for-2019-20-season/c-308776250>
- <https://apnews.com/7cfe0512a2a2426e8c83fc36d275d929>
- <https://www.sportsnet.ca/hockey/nhl/justin-williams-step-away-nhl-will-not-play-start-2019-20/>
- <https://nhl.nbcsports.com/2019/09/02/hurricanes-announce-justin-williams-is-taking-break-from-hockey/>
- <https://www.cbssports.com/nhl/news/justin-williams-announces-hes-taking-a-break-from-hockey-not-officially-retiring/>
- <https://sports.yahoo.com/nhl-veteran-williams-unsure-hockey-234225138.html>
- <https://sports.yahoo.com/hurricanes-justin-williams-ive-decided-to-step-away-from-the-game-161907762.html>
- <https://thehockeynews.com/news/article/future-watch-the-top-rookie-for-every-nhl-team-in-2019-20>
- <https://www.canescountry.com/2019/9/2/20813186/carolina-hurricanes-justin-williams-captain-nhl-free-agency-training-camp-break>
- <http://trianglesportsnet.com/carolina-hockey-network/hurricanes-will-miss-williams-ability-to-make-other-players-better/>
- <https://thehockeywriters.com/carolina-hurricanes-williams-takes-break/>
- <https://thehockeywriters.com/hurricanes-justin-williams-decision-stepping-away/>



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019

SportScan

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

1151589 Carolina Hurricanes

Mr. Game 7 Justin Williams sends career decision to OT, leaving Canes captainless

BY LUKE DECOCK SEPTEMBER 02, 2019 03:37 PM

Leave it to Mr. Game 7 to send his career decision to overtime.

When the Carolina Hurricanes last month started to press Justin Williams for an answer on whether he intended to return or retire after a summer spent mulling, they weren't expecting "none of the above." That's exactly what Williams gave them Monday, 11 days before training camp physicals, with his decision to "step away" while still leaving the door open for a midseason comeback.

There's some precedent for that: Mike Fisher retired from the Nashville Predators in August of 2017, only to unretire six months later and rejoin the team for the final 28 regular-season and playoff games with limited success before re-retiring for good after the season. Fisher was 37. Williams turns 38 in October. Efforts to reach Williams for comment Monday were unsuccessful, but the wording of the release — "will not join team for start of 2019-20 season" — leaves it open to consideration.

Either way, it's an all-or-nothing decision Williams wasn't ready or willing to make, and it creates an odd set of circumstances for the team without him. While Williams said he wanted to "focus the attention" on the team, this unavoidably extends the summer will-he-or-won't-he debate into the fall. Indefinitely, even.

Until (or if) that changes, the Hurricanes will continue to operate, as they did all summer, as if Williams won't be back.

"We were prepared for this," Hurricanes owner Tom Dundon said Monday. "Although we're disappointed, we're excited about the opportunity it gives other people. We planned for this. This is what we expected."

On the ice, the team has been built as if Williams would not return, and the roster is now officially set for training camp. It would be better with Williams, who by all appearances still has something left to give, but it's not catastrophic.

Off the ice, it will be fascinating to see whether the Hurricanes name a new captain, although without an obvious successor there's no real hurry.

It only underlines Williams' value to the team that the Hurricanes were willing to let this linger even this long. Most teams would have closed the door on most players at this point. But Williams has earned this kind of respect, even if the situation is less than ideal. As an unrestricted free agent, there's really no contractual deadline for him to sign if he decides to step back in. This will continue to hang over the season as much as it hung over the offseason.

Where do the Hurricanes stand, sans Williams? Their top three lines are essentially set, with Sebastian Aho, Jordan Staal and Erik Haula down the middle; Nino Niederreiter, Ryan Dzingel and either Brock McGinn or Warren Foegele on the left; and Teuvo Teravainen, Andrei Svechnikov and Martin Necas on the right, although obviously many of those wings could swing back and forth.

The net effect: Williams' absence on the right leads to a reshuffling that indirectly opens a top-nine spot for McGinn or Foegele on the left while significantly reducing the odds either is traded prior to opening night.

There's not a gaping void, as long as Necas can handle the NHL this time around — and won't be asked to bear the additional responsibility of playing center — and either McGinn or Foegele can pick up where they left off in the postseason.

The Hurricanes have to replace the 40 goals of Williams and Micheal Ferland. The additions of Dzingel and Haula and the reasonable sophomore improvement of Svechnikov should more than cover it, while Williams' departure opens a spot for the right-shot Necas on the power play.

Leadership remains the big question, and while it's hard to see Williams walking in off the street and resuming the captaincy after a half-season off, if that's the scenario, who else would wear it? Both Staal and Justin Faulk thrived when relieved of that co-responsibility, Aho isn't ready and Jordan Martinook doesn't have a big enough role, as good as he is in the dressing room.

That may be the toughest decision Rod Brind'Amour faces over the next month. Williams may not be making a decision right away, but Brind'Amour doesn't have that luxury.

News Observer LOADED: 09.03.2019

1151590 Carolina Hurricanes

Canes' captain Justin Williams to 'step away' from NHL



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019

BY CHIP ALEXANDER SEPTEMBER 02, 2019 12:16 PM

Justin Williams isn't saying he's retiring from the NHL but the Carolina Hurricanes captain says he's "stepping away" from the NHL.

The Hurricanes announced Monday that Williams would not be with the team at the start of the 2019-2020 season.

"This is the first time in my life that I've felt unsure of my aspirations with regards to hockey," Williams said in a statement. "For as long as I can remember, my whole off-season until this point has been hockey and doing what was necessary to prepare for the upcoming season. Because of my current indecision, and without the type of mental and physical commitment that I'm accustomed to having, I've decided to step away from the game."

"It's important to me that the focus of attention is on the current, very talented group the Carolina Hurricanes have assembled, as they prepare to build on the momentum and growth we established last season."

More than three months after the Hurricanes bowed out of the Stanley Cup playoffs, after much reflection, Williams, 37, made his decision. Or signaled his indecision. He's stepping away but will he ever step back in?

"We appreciate Justin's honesty and openness throughout this process, and respect his decision," Hurricanes president and general manager Don Waddell said in a statement. "He's been an important part of our team, but we did prepare our roster with the understanding that he might step away. We are confident in the group we've assembled."

Williams' contributions as the captain last season, as the Canes returned to the playoffs for the first time since 2009, were immeasurable.

"Just the person he is, just the way he carries himself," defenseman Jacob Slavin said in an N&O interview last week. "He's been in this league for a really long time and he knows what needs to be done, when it needs to be done and sometimes how it needs to be done. He carries himself in that way and I think it's contagious. Obviously with his personality, guys want to follow that."

Williams was a finalist for the 2019 Mark Messier Leadership Award, given to the player who sets a positive example on the ice, motivates his teammates and also contributes to the community and charitable causes.

"He did all those things on that list," Canes center Jordan Staal said last week. "For the most part, for me, what I saw was him grouping together a young team and helping us believe we can win every night and realize how good we could be and help us achieve that. And playing well himself."

Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour played golf with Williams last week and said he believed he knew where Williams' "heart is." He said Williams would make a "good decision" and that "it's going to be the right one, whatever it is."

As the weeks passed after the season, Waddell continued to say the team would have patience with Williams, giving the veteran winger the proper amount of time to heal up after a long season and reach a decision.

"It's more about his commitment," Waddell said earlier in August. "Justin's not going to do something if he's not 100 percent (committed.) If Justin comes back it's a bonus."

Asked about any potential salary-cap concerns should Williams return, Waddell said that would not be a problem.

"He's a player age 35 and older, so we can give him bonuses and they can be whatever to get him to some type of guarantee," Waddell said a few weeks ago. "And if we end up over the cap this year, those bonuses get charged to next year."

In August 2017, Nashville Predators captain Mike Fisher officially retired from the NHL after the Preds had reached the Stanley Cup final. But Fisher, then 37, returned to the Predators in February 2018, completed the 2017-18 season and competed in the playoffs on a one-year, \$1 million contract.

Williams, who will be 38 in October, was a vital part of the Canes' Stanley Cup run in 2006, scoring in Game 7 of the Stanley Cup finals against the Edmonton Oilers. He later won two more with the Los Angeles Kings -- he was named the Conn Smythe winner as playoffs MVP in 2014 -- before signing as a free agent in 2015 with the Washington Capitals.

In July 2017, Williams signed a two-year, \$9 million free-agent contract with the Canes, coming back to Raleigh. Brind'Amour, a former teammate who had helped convince Williams to return to Carolina, became head coach before last season and quickly turned to Williams to be the captain.

Since season's end, the Canes have traded for forward Erik Haula and goalies James Reimer and Anton Forsberg while signing free-agent forward Ryan Dzingel. It was if the team was preparing for any Williams eventuality.

Williams arguably was the Canes' most valuable player as they ended nine years of frustration with their first playoff appearance since 2009.

He wore the "C" as captain for the first time in his career. He said and did the right things. He made sure the Canes not only won but had some fun doing it, introducing the Storm Surge post-game celebrations to home-ice wins at PNC Arena, drawing a lot more attention to the team and its success, its story.

Williams also was productive, playing every game, finishing with 23 goals and 30 assists in the regular season -- his 53-point total his highest since 2011-12 with the Los Angeles Kings.

The Canes shocked the Washington Capitals in the first round of the playoffs, Williams assisting on Brock McGinn's winning goal in the second overtime of Game 7. The Canes then swept the New York Islanders in the second round.

The Boston Bruins would sweep the Canes in the Eastern Conference finals, but that ending didn't tarnish what the Canes had accomplished this past season.

Williams, after the playoffs, said his return -- or retirement -- would be a family decision. He attended the NHL awards ceremony in Las Vegas and in July conducted his annual youth hockey camp in his hometown of Cobourg, Ontario.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019

Waddell recently said he and team owner Tom Dundon had talked to Williams. Brind'Amour had said he would lobby his friend and former teammate, if need be.

News Observer LOADED: 09.03.2019

1151591 Carolina Hurricanes

What does Justin Williams' break from the NHL mean for the Hurricanes?

By Sara Civian Sep 2, 2019

It was Feb. 21, 2019, and things weren't going great for the Carolina Hurricanes in Florida. Despite a puck that bounced off captain Justin Williams' bloodied cheek into the net and an assist on Nino Niederreiter's 2-0 tally, the Canes would need a comeback rally in a game that felt eerily important for some reason.

So Williams scored again, the eventual game-winner, off a less PG body part.

When it was over the Hurricanes blasted "You're a Jerk" by New Boyz in the locker room, a cheeky nod to Don Cherry calling them "Bunch of Jerks" for the post-game Storm Surge that Williams spearheaded.

Then, Williams' dad walked into the locker room and gave his son a fist bump.

"That goal! With the face!" he gave a proud smile, "I love that!"

The next week in the same exact place in almost the same exact situation, the Hurricanes needed goaltender Petr Mrazek to perform in overtime.

When he flashed that crazy poke check, Brett Pesce heard Williams scream "This game is ours now!" on the bench.

"We can all get behind that," Pesce said postgame.

Then the game was theirs.

It was the intermission before double overtime — Round 1, Game 7.

"Throughout that entire Game 7, Willy kept saying things like, 'Hey, stay patient guys,' so casually," Warren Foegele told The Athletic. "I'm just thinking, like, 'It's Game 7, what is he talking about!?' But that's why he's our leader. You just try to listen."

The magical Hurricanes season that featured their first playoff appearance since 2009 and a fan base reinvigorated has Williams all over it. Every last inch.

Williams posted his highest single-season point total since 2011-12, and he was the oldest player in the league to score 20 goals and hit the 50-point mark last season. He was the oldest forward to record an average of 17:00 TOI.

It was everything he had.

When the Bruins swept the Hurricanes in the Eastern Conference Final, the blood on Williams' cheek had scarred over. But it was still there, as was the mental and physical exhaustion of captaining a trip to the ECF and the weight of a franchise on a 37-year-old's shoulders.

"I haven't made a decision yet," he said during locker room cleanout. "You don't do those things irrationally. You put thought into it, perspective, you find out inside whether you have the full capabilities, emotionally and physically, to do it. I put everything I had into it this year, and if I have everything again then I'll be here. But I haven't gone that far yet. It'll probably be a little ways down the road before that decision's made."

As a little ways down the road turned into a lot ways down the road, the likelihood of Williams' return decreased. After a summer full of thought and perspective, Williams announced Sept. 2 that he will not be joining the Hurricanes for training camp.

"This is the first time in my life that I've felt unsure of my aspirations with regards to hockey," he said in a release. "For as long as I can remember, my whole off-season until this point has been hockey and doing what was necessary to prepare for the upcoming season. Because of my current indecision, and without the type of mental and physical commitment that I'm accustomed to having, I've decided to step away from the game."

To be clear, this is not a retirement. Some sources already are entertaining the possibility of a Mike Fisher-esque return, though it's all still very much up in the air. Williams primarily did not want to cause a distraction for the team heading into training camp, and he didn't want any drama as he continues to soul search.

Now the obvious question is "Who gets the 'C'?"

It's safe to say Bill Peters' co-captain experiment that previously had Jordan Staal and Justin Faulk splitting the captaincy will not be coming back. I would peg Staal as the guy so long as things wouldn't get awkward. Jaccob Slavin could also make sense. Is Sebastian Aho ready?

What happens next is anyone's guess, but you can bet the former captain will have a say. Rod Brind'Amour called him before he even took the Hurricanes head coaching job, after all.

Then your mind drifts to the actual on-ice product. GM Don Waddell isn't lying when he says they've prepared for his absence. The Erik Haula trade and Ryan Dzingel acquisition fill some mid-roster holes. Martin Necas now has a real chance to compete for a full-time spot on the roster. Brock McGinn is obviously more than competent, and hey, maybe it's Julien Gauthier season.

The Canes will probably be OK without Williams in the foreseeable future. But they will never be the same.

The Athletic LOADED: 09.03.2019

1151589 Carolina Hurricanes

Mr. Game 7 Justin Williams sends career decision to OT, leaving Canes captainless



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019

BY LUKE DECOCK SEPTEMBER 02, 2019 03:37 PM

Leave it to Mr. Game 7 to send his career decision to overtime.

When the Carolina Hurricanes last month started to press Justin Williams for an answer on whether he intended to return or retire after a summer spent mulling, they weren't expecting "none of the above." That's exactly what Williams gave them Monday, 11 days before training camp physicals, with his decision to "step away" while still leaving the door open for a midseason comeback.

There's some precedent for that: Mike Fisher retired from the Nashville Predators in August of 2017, only to unretire six months later and rejoin the team for the final 28 regular-season and playoff games with limited success before re-retiring for good after the season. Fisher was 37. Williams turns 38 in October. Efforts to reach Williams for comment Monday were unsuccessful, but the wording of the release — "will not join team for start of 2019-20 season" — leaves it open to consideration.

Either way, it's an all-or-nothing decision Williams wasn't ready or willing to make, and it creates an odd set of circumstances for the team without him. While Williams said he wanted to "focus the attention" on the team, this unavoidably extends the summer will-he-or-won't-he debate into the fall. Indefinitely, even.

Until (or if) that changes, the Hurricanes will continue to operate, as they did all summer, as if Williams won't be back.

"We were prepared for this," Hurricanes owner Tom Dundon said Monday. "Although we're disappointed, we're excited about the opportunity it gives other people. We planned for this. This is what we expected."

On the ice, the team has been built as if Williams would not return, and the roster is now officially set for training camp. It would be better with Williams, who by all appearances still has something left to give, but it's not catastrophic.

Off the ice, it will be fascinating to see whether the Hurricanes name a new captain, although without an obvious successor there's no real hurry.

It only underlines Williams' value to the team that the Hurricanes were willing to let this linger even this long. Most teams would have closed the door on most players at this point. But Williams has earned this kind of respect, even if the situation is less than ideal. As an unrestricted free agent, there's really no contractual deadline for him to sign if he decides to step back in. This will continue to hang over the season as much as it hung over the offseason.

Where do the Hurricanes stand, sans Williams? Their top three lines are essentially set, with Sebastian Aho, Jordan Staal and Erik Haula down the middle; Nino Niederreiter, Ryan Dzingel and either Brock McGinn or Warren Foegele on the left; and Teuvo Teravainen, Andrei Svechnikov and Martin Necas on the right, although obviously many of those wings could swing back and forth.

The net effect: Williams' absence on the right leads to a reshuffling that indirectly opens a top-nine spot for McGinn or Foegele on the left while significantly reducing the odds either is traded prior to opening night.

There's not a gaping void, as long as Necas can handle the NHL this time around — and won't be asked to bear the additional responsibility of playing center — and either McGinn or Foegele can pick up where they left off in the postseason.

The Hurricanes have to replace the 40 goals of Williams and Micheal Ferland. The additions of Dzingel and Haula and the reasonable sophomore improvement of Svechnikov should more than cover it, while Williams' departure opens a spot for the right-shot Necas on the power play.

Leadership remains the big question, and while it's hard to see Williams walking in off the street and resuming the captaincy after a half-season off, if that's the scenario, who else would wear it? Both Staal and Justin Faulk thrived when relieved of that co-responsibility, Aho isn't ready and Jordan Martinook doesn't have a big enough role, as good as he is in the dressing room.

That may be the toughest decision Rod Brind'Amour faces over the next month. Williams may not be making a decision right away, but Brind'Amour doesn't have that luxury.

News Observer LOADED: 09.03.2019

1151590 Carolina Hurricanes

Canes' captain Justin Williams to 'step away' from NHL

BY CHIP ALEXANDER SEPTEMBER 02, 2019 12:16 PM

Justin Williams isn't saying he's retiring from the NHL but the Carolina Hurricanes captain says he's "stepping away" from the NHL.

The Hurricanes announced Monday that Williams would not be with the team at the start of the 2019-2020 season.

"This is the first time in my life that I've felt unsure of my aspirations with regards to hockey," Williams said in a statement. "For as long as I can remember, my whole off-season until this point has been hockey and doing what was necessary to prepare for the upcoming season. Because of my current indecision, and without the type of mental and physical commitment that I'm accustomed to having, I've decided to step away from the game."

"It's important to me that the focus of attention is on the current, very talented group the Carolina Hurricanes have assembled, as they prepare to build on the momentum and growth we established last season."

More than three months after the Hurricanes bowed out of the Stanley Cup playoffs, after much reflection, Williams, 37, made his decision. Or signaled his indecision. He's stepping away but will he ever step back in?

"We appreciate Justin's honesty and openness throughout this process, and respect his decision," Hurricanes president and general manager Don Waddell said in a statement. "He's been an important part of our team, but we did prepare our roster with the understanding that he might step away. We are confident in the group we've assembled."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019

Williams' contributions as the captain last season, as the Canes returned to the playoffs for the first time since 2009, were immeasurable.

"Just the person he is, just the way he carries himself," defenseman Jaccob Slavin said in an N&O interview last week. "He's been in this league for a really long time and he knows what needs to be done, when it needs to be done and sometimes how it needs to be done. He carries himself in that way and I think it's contagious. Obviously with his personality, guys want to follow that."

Williams was a finalist for the 2019 Mark Messier Leadership Award, given to the player who sets a positive example on the ice, motivates his teammates and also contributes to the community and charitable causes.

"He did all those things on that list," Canes center Jordan Staal said last week. "For the most part, for me, what I saw was him grouping together a young team and helping us believe we can win every night and realize how good we could be and help us achieve that. And playing well himself."

Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour played golf with Williams last week and said he believed he knew where Williams' "heart is." He said Williams would make a "good decision" and that "it's going to be the right one, whatever it is."

As the weeks passed after the season, Waddell continued to say the team would have patience with Williams, giving the veteran winger the proper amount of time to heal up after a long season and reach a decision.

"It's more about his commitment," Waddell said earlier in August. "Justin's not going to do something if he's not 100 percent (committed.) If Justin comes back it's a bonus."

Asked about any potential salary-cap concerns should Williams return, Waddell said that would not be a problem.

"He's a player age 35 and older, so we can give him bonuses and they can be whatever to get him to some type of guarantee," Waddell said a few weeks ago. "And if we end up over the cap this year, those bonuses get charged to next year."

In August 2017, Nashville Predators captain Mike Fisher officially retired from the NHL after the Preds had reached the Stanley Cup final. But Fisher, then 37, returned to the Predators in February 2018, completed the 2017-18 season and competed in the playoffs on a one-year, \$1 million contract.

Williams, who will be 38 in October, was a vital part of the Canes' Stanley Cup run in 2006, scoring in Game 7 of the Stanley Cup finals against the Edmonton Oilers. He later won two more with the Los Angeles Kings -- he was named the Conn Smythe winner as playoffs MVP in 2014 -- before signing as a free agent in 2015 with the Washington Capitals.

In July 2017, Williams signed a two-year, \$9 million free-agent contract with the Canes, coming back to Raleigh. Brind'Amour, a former teammate who had helped convince Williams to return to Carolina, became head coach before last season and quickly turned to Williams to be the captain.

Since season's end, the Canes have traded for forward Erik Haula and goalies James Reimer and Anton Forsberg while signing free-agent forward Ryan Dzingel. It was if the team was preparing for any Williams eventuality.

Williams arguably was the Canes' most valuable player as they ended nine years of frustration with their first playoff appearance since 2009.

He wore the "C" as captain for the first time in his career. He said and did the right things. He made sure the Canes not only won but had some fun doing it, introducing the Storm Surge post-game celebrations to home-ice wins at PNC Arena, drawing a lot more attention to the team and its success, its story.

Williams also was productive, playing every game, finishing with 23 goals and 30 assists in the regular season -- his 53-point total his highest since 2011-12 with the Los Angeles Kings.

The Canes shocked the Washington Capitals in the first round of the playoffs, Williams assisting on Brock McGinn's winning goal in the second overtime of Game 7. The Canes then swept the New York Islanders in the second round.

The Boston Bruins would sweep the Canes in the Eastern Conference finals, but that ending didn't tarnish what the Canes had accomplished this past season.

Williams, after the playoffs, said his return -- or retirement -- would be a family decision. He attended the NHL awards ceremony in Las Vegas and in July conducted his annual youth hockey camp in his hometown of Cobourg, Ontario.

Waddell recently said he and team owner Tom Dundon had talked to Williams. Brind'Amour had said he would lobby his friend and former teammate, if need be.

News Observer LOADED: 09.03.2019

1151591 Carolina Hurricanes

What does Justin Williams' break from the NHL mean for the Hurricanes?

By Sara Civian Sep 2, 2019

It was Feb. 21, 2019, and things weren't going great for the Carolina Hurricanes in Florida. Despite a puck that bounced off captain Justin Williams' bloodied cheek into the net and an assist on Nino Niederreiter's 2-0 tally, the Canes would need a comeback rally in a game that felt eerily important for some reason.

So Williams scored again, the eventual game-winner, off a less PG body part.

When it was over the Hurricanes blasted "You're a Jerk" by New Boyz in the locker room, a cheeky nod to Don Cherry calling them "Bunch of Jerks" for the post-game Storm Surge that Williams spearheaded.

Then, Williams' dad walked into the locker room and gave his son a fist bump.

"That goal! With the face!" he gave a proud smile, "I love that!"



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019

The next week in the same exact place in almost the same exact situation, the Hurricanes needed goaltender Petr Mrazek to perform in overtime.

When he flashed that crazy poke check, Brett Pesce heard Williams scream "This game is ours now!" on the bench.

"We can all get behind that," Pesce said postgame.

Then the game was theirs.

It was the intermission before double overtime — Round 1, Game 7.

"Throughout that entire Game 7, Willy kept saying things like, 'Hey, stay patient guys,' so casually," Warren Foegele told *The Athletic*. "I'm just thinking, like, 'It's Game 7, what is he talking about!?' But that's why he's our leader. You just try to listen."

The magical Hurricanes season that featured their first playoff appearance since 2009 and a fan base reinvigorated has Williams all over it. Every last inch.

Williams posted his highest single-season point total since 2011-12, and he was the oldest player in the league to score 20 goals and hit the 50-point mark last season. He was the oldest forward to record an average of 17:00 TOI.

It was everything he had.

When the Bruins swept the Hurricanes in the Eastern Conference Final, the blood on Williams' cheek had scarred over. But it was still there, as was the mental and physical exhaustion of captaining a trip to the ECF and the weight of a franchise on a 37-year-old's shoulders.

"I haven't made a decision yet," he said during locker room cleanout. "You don't do those things irrationally. You put thought into it, perspective, you find out inside whether you have the full capabilities, emotionally and physically, to do it. I put everything I had into it this year, and if I have everything again then I'll be here. But I haven't gone that far yet. It'll probably be a little ways down the road before that decision's made."

As a little ways down the road turned into a lot ways down the road, the likelihood of Williams' return decreased. After a summer full of thought and perspective, Williams announced Sept. 2 that he will not be joining the Hurricanes for training camp.

"This is the first time in my life that I've felt unsure of my aspirations with regards to hockey," he said in a release. "For as long as I can remember, my whole off-season until this point has been hockey and doing what was necessary to prepare for the upcoming season. Because of my current indecision, and without the type of mental and physical commitment that I'm accustomed to having, I've decided to step away from the game."

To be clear, this is not a retirement. Some sources already are entertaining the possibility of a Mike Fisher-esque return, though it's all still very much up in the air. Williams primarily did not want to cause a distraction for the team heading into training camp, and he didn't want any drama as he continues to soul search.

Now the obvious question is "Who gets the 'C'?"

It's safe to say Bill Peters' co-captain experiment that previously had Jordan Staal and Justin Faulk splitting the

captaincy will not be coming back. I would peg Staal as the guy so long as things wouldn't get awkward. Jacob Slavin could also make sense. Is Sebastian Aho ready?

What happens next is anyone's guess, but you can bet the former captain will have a say. Rod Brind'Amour called him before he even took the Hurricanes head coaching job, after all.

Then your mind drifts to the actual on-ice product. GM Don Waddell isn't lying when he says they've prepared for his absence. The Erik Haula trade and Ryan Dzingel acquisition fill some mid-roster holes. Martin Necas now has a real chance to compete for a full-time spot on the roster. Brock McGinn is obviously more than competent, and hey, maybe it's Julien Gauthier season.

The Canes will probably be OK without Williams in the foreseeable future. But they will never be the same.

The Athletic LOADED: 09.03.2019

1151602 NHL

Late-bloomers among several prospects from Seattle-area junior teams vying for NHL shot

By Geoff Baker

Self-motivation won't be a problem for late-blooming local junior players Matthew Wedman and Bryce Kindopp when they join NHL training camps this week.

Seattle Thunderbirds center Wedman, 20, wasn't picked by the Florida Panthers until the seventh and final round of the recent NHL Draft, while Everett Silvertips winger Kindopp, 20, didn't get chosen at all and had to score a camp invite after the fact from the Colorado Avalanche. Among the seven prospects from both junior teams trying to crack NHL rosters this month, the pair arguably have the most to prove and limited time to do that as both are entering their age-20 seasons.

Alberta native Wedman knew his draft status was so up in the air that he'd gone for a morning skate as earlier rounds unfolded. He got home during the seventh round and searched for the draft on television.

"Maybe two minutes after I turned it on, I saw my name pop up," said 40-goal scorer Wedman, chosen 199th overall out of 217 total draftees. "Me and my parents jumped up and we were all pretty excited."

There was no such joyous eruption for Kindopp, another native Albertan, who knew going into the draft he was on the bubble despite a 39-goal season with the Silvertips.

"I was watching towards the later rounds and I didn't get called," Kindopp said. "But then right after the draft, my agent phoned and said a few teams had interest but the Avalanche seemed the most interested."

Kindopp got invited to Colorado's prospect-development camp the following week and a strong showing there saw him asked back to the regular camp this month.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019

Others attending their first NHL camps this week include Silvertips defenseman Gianni Fairbrother, a third-round pick, with Montreal and goalie Dustin Wolf, a seventh-rounder, with Calgary. Thunderbirds hopefuls include winger Henrik Rybinski, a fifth-rounder joining Wedman in Florida's camp, and netminder Roddy Ross, a sixth-rounder in Philadelphia.

And then, there are holdover picks who have already attended camps in previous years but have yet to play professionally, like Silvertips forward Connor Dewar, a third-rounder from 2018 with the Minnesota Wild who just signed a three-year, entry-level contract. Technically, Dewar could still be returned to Everett for his age-20 season, though that is rare for players who sign pro deals. Chances are he'll begin in the American Hockey League if he doesn't make the big club.

Players are only eligible for the minor pro leagues once they turn 20 in a given year, or otherwise must be sent back to their junior teams if they fail to make the NHL. They can still be returned for an age-20 season, though junior teams are only allowed to keep three such players on their rosters.

There is, naturally, somewhat of a stigma attached to 20-year-olds being returned to junior rather than playing minor pro. It worked out well for the Thunderbirds in 2016-17, when they won their first WHL championship after star forward Ryan Gropp was surprisingly returned by the New York Rangers at age 20.

Still, rightly or wrongly, many players view an age-20 junior return as NHL teams telling them they aren't mature enough to cut it in pro hockey.

So, this will be a big upcoming camp for Lake Stevens native Wyattte Wylie, 19, a Silvertips defenseman picked in the fifth round last year by the Philadelphia Flyers. It's his second Flyers camp and – unlike Dewar in Minnesota – he's yet to be offered an entry-level pro deal and turns 20 in November.

Wylie undoubtedly wants to start his pro career with the Flyers or, more likely, their AHL affiliate in Lehigh Valley, Pa., than return to Everett for a final year.

For Wedman and Kindopp, though, the stigma of an age-20 return to their junior clubs likely wouldn't sting as much given how uncertain their NHL futures seemed on draft day. Their gradual progression is a prime example of how junior hockey can be used to develop players into pro-ready products.

"My first couple of years, I was more of a role player," said Wedman, adding he improved as a playmaker the past two seasons rather than simply dumping the puck in.

At 6 feet 3, 196 pounds, Wedman impressed the Panthers with his ability to utilize his size advantage. They've stressed to him how "puck possession" will be key to his development.

Among the more famous names he met at the development camp were new Panthers coach Joel Quenneville – second of all time in victories behind Scotty Bowman – and outgoing netminder Roberto Luongo. In fact, Luongo had just given his retirement news conference and was still hanging around the arena when Wedman was introduced to him.

"He wished me luck and told me he plans on sticking around the area for a while," Wedman said. "He had a lot of advice to offer about just staying focused and working hard. Just the

fact he'd take some time to speak to me on a day like that for him was something pretty special."

Kindopp had his own celebrity moment when Avalanche executive vice president Joe Sakic addressed his group of prospects at Colorado's development camp. Having watched Sakic as a Hall of Fame player, it was "cool to realize just how much closer I am to my NHL dream."

A dream that once seemed it might not even get this far. Kindopp scored only 31 goals his first two seasons with Everett before the 39 last season and a one-year increase of his points total from 36 to 73.

"I think maybe it was a mental thing for me," he said. "Maybe I don't have the confidence right away when I start at a new level."

Now that he has seen what he can do, he hopes it doesn't take as long to make a lasting impression at the next level.

"I still have a lot to prove," Kindopp said. "But they obviously saw something in me that they like and now I have to keep showing it to them."

Seattle Times LOADED: 09.03.2019

1151603 San Jose Sharks

Look who's featured in this new mural celebrating SAP Center

Hockey players, Olympic stars and music legends represent SAP Center's 25-year legacy

By SAL PIZARRO | PUBLISHED: August 31, 2019 at 7:00 am | UPDATED: September 2, 2019 at 3:38 am

It's hard to depict every major sports event and music legend that's been part of the 25-year history of SAP Center, even in a mural that's 270 feet wide like the one just completed on San Fernando Street in downtown San Jose.

"We work really hard to make sure we bring a wide variety of shows to SAP Center — and we live in an extremely diverse community so we need to have a diverse array of events," said Doug Bentz, SAP Center's vice president of marketing and digital. "So this mural really needed to represent that wide array of events."

There are, of course, San Jose Sharks, with a trio of hockey players who appear to be skating out the mouth of a real Great White. The mural also depicts figure skating champion Kristi Yamaguchi, Olympic gymnast Simone Biles, and huge musical acts Adele, E-40, and Elton John. James Hetfield of Metallica is depicted from the neck down, the assumption being that his guitar and stance would be more recognizable than his face.

And there's also a headless Norteño musician with a cowboy hat and an accordion. While this figure could be taken to represent San Jose's own Los Tigres del Norte, the art team said both the band and the genre is so popular they didn't want to depict any single member. There are also silhouettes of fans, an image of the arena itself, and a 747 jetliner flying



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019

overhead — a nod to SAP Center's location in the SJC flight path. Clouds, a few 1970s-looking shooting stars and "San Jose!" in a funky typeface complete the picture.

The work was done by Jeff McMillan and Gary Musgrave, a Southern California art team called The Draculas (true to their name, they did most of their work late at night over the past two weeks). McMillan grew up in San Jose and has fond memories of SAP Center, where his dad took him to see Eric Clapton when he was a teenager.

"I left San Jose in 1999 to go to Los Angeles for school," he said. "To come back 20 years later to do this thing is awesome. It's like full circle."

This mural is the second in recent weeks that SAP Center has sponsored, following Austrian artist Nychos' "Bleed Teal" mural on an apartment building near Whole Foods on The Alameda. Bentz, SAP Center's marketing vice president, says there are more artistic partnerships planned in the near future by the arena and the team, though this one is meant to cap off a yearlong celebration of SAP Center's silver anniversary, which concludes with a huge music festival Sept. 13-15 featuring Blake Shelton, Kings of the West and Maluma.

It was a real team effort for SAP, too. Empire Seven Studios brought in The Draculas, the Sobrato Organization provided space in the parking lot for the work and Digital Realty gave permission to use the wall, which runs the length of San Fernando between First and Second streets.

Ron Muriera, a member of the city of San Jose's arts commission, said it's refreshing to see the private sector contributing to the beautification of the city through art. "It's not just about celebrating the SAP Center's 25th anniversary, it's helping bring some vibrancy to the city and the downtown core," he said. "It makes me glad to see that there are other sectors that have been contributing to art in our public spaces."

DIFFERENT VIEW AT CEFCU: The crowd at San Jose State's football opener Thursday night — a 35-18 win over Northern Colorado — was announced at 13,000-plus (including former NFL wide receiver and Spartans alum James Jones walking the sideline). But it sure felt like more, probably because the bleachers on the east side of CEFCU Stadium have all been removed, leaving a huge expanse that's covered with turf in the center and dirt wings on either side.

One immediate benefit of having the "grassy knoll" instead of bleachers is that it puts the raucous student section on the same side as everyone else. And Thursday night that created an electric atmosphere that's been rare at the stadium in recent years. Of course, it helps when the home team, led by quarterback Josh Love, scores five touchdowns and has Krazy George there to rile up the crowd with his drum.

The remodeling is actually part of a huge project to add a Football Operations Center to the east side of the stadium, along with new seating for spectators. After the Spartans' 2019 season is over, the hill and scoreboard infrastructure will also be removed so construction can really start. Look for the whole project to wrap up in four or five years.

BIG DAY FOR CANCER CAREPOINT: Hats off to Cancer CAREpoint board member Sandi Frazer, auction chair Lynne Fisher and the rest of the volunteers who put together the

non-profit's annual Garden Party fundraiser on Aug. 25. A record turnout of 520 guests helped bring in more than \$1 million for its mission of providing free, non-medical support services for cancer patients and their families.

Held at the Monte Sereno home of Pamela and Stanford Atwood, the event included a sponsor reception with a keynote by Dick Levy, a 48-year veteran in the health care industry and former CEO of Varian Medical Systems.

CHOICE WORDS: Carole Holzgrafe of the American Association of University Women noted that my column on a women's equality rally in downtown San Jose on Monday used the term "suffragette."

"Please note that the respectful term for those brave souls who fought to win the right to vote for women is 'suffragist' not 'suffragette,'" she wrote. "The extension 'ette' often means small or less important and is seen by many as a term of denigration."

With the 100th anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment coming in 2020, she suggested I pass the advice around the newsroom for future stories, but I figured it's a good enough point to share with everyone.

San Jose Mercury News: LOADED: 09.03.2019

1151604 San Jose Sharks

Sharks goalie Aaron Dell's new 'Stealth Mode' pads will fire up fans

By NBC Sports Bay Area staff September 02, 2019 3:55 PM

Hockey season is inching closer.

While the hockey news at the moment is relatively scarce -- save for the Sharks releasing their list of giveaways for the upcoming season -- goaltender Aaron Dell thought he'd give the fans something to talk about.

The 30-year-old goalie recently released a photo of the alternate pads he'll sport this season when the Sharks are wearing their "Stealth Mode" sweaters, and they are straight fire.

View this post on Instagram

Here it is. The moment you've all been waiting for. #stealthmode @goaliesonly @visual_merc

A post shared by Aaron Dell (@adell32) on Aug 19, 2019 at 8:33am PDT

Very clean.

Dell made 25 starts last season for the Sharks, sporting a 3.17 goals against average and a .886 save percentage.

While the Sharks lost Joe Pavelski in the offseason, they still are loaded with talent and should be among the favorites to make it out of the Western Conference. But if they are going to get out of the rough and tumble West, Dell and Martin Jones both will have to take their games to the next level.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019

The new pads won't hurt because as they say: Look good, feel good. Feel good, play good.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 09.03.2019

1151605 St Louis Blues

Barbashev's deal means Cup champion Blues return almost everyone

By Jim Thomas St. Louis Post-Dispatch

With training camp just around the corner, the gang's all here for the Blues — or at least the gang's all under contract. That became so Sunday night when the team announced that forward Ivan Barbashev had agreed to terms on a two-year contract worth \$1.475 million per year.

With Barbashev in the fold, that means 22 of the 23 Blues who appeared in the Stanley Cup playoffs for the team this past season will be under contract for the 2019-20 campaign. And for a Stanley Cup championship team in the NHL's salary cap era that's unheard of.

The only defection was Oakville High's Pat Maroon, who signed with the Tampa Bay Lightning last week.

"We are pleased to have Ivan signed prior to our camp," Blues general manager Doug Armstrong told the Post-Dispatch on Sunday evening. "This signing will allow the team to have a singular focus on preparing for the season."

Barbashev, 23, is coming off a career year for the Blues with career bests in goals (14) and assists (12) during the regular season. Included in that goal total was his first NHL hat trick in a 5-2 Blues victory over Detroit on March 12.

Among his three playoff goals was an unassisted score 36 seconds into Game 4 of the Western Conference final against San Jose, a 2-1 Blues victory that tied the series at two games apiece.

Barbashev becomes the last of nine restricted free agents to re-sign with the Blues, seven of whom appeared in the playoffs. Barbashev, however, was not arbitration eligible, meaning he did not have much leverage in terms of contract negotiations.

But according to his agent, Dan Milstein, Barbashev was considering playing in the Kontinental Hockey League before re-upping with the Blues.

"Ivan is very happy to sign an extension with the Blues," Milstein told the Post-Dispatch. "While he had lucrative offers overseas, his priority was always to stay in the NHL."

"He loves the city and his teammates. He looks forward to defending the championship."

Barbashev had an extended role for the Blues during their Stanley Cup run. In addition to his usual spot on the fourth line, Barbashev saw extensive duty on the penalty kill unit for the first time in his three NHL seasons. Early in the season he explained that his new PK duties were simply a way to get on the ice more often.

Barbashev also stepped up his physical play in the postseason, leading the Blues with 87 hits.

With Barbashev's signing, the Blues are expected to have about \$1.2 million in salary cap space when all is said and done, giving them a bit of a cushion to replace injured players during the season.

St Louis Post Dispatch LOADED: 09.03.2019

1151606 Toronto Maple Leafs

Justin Williams to 'step away' from NHL

By The Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C.—Former Carolina Hurricanes captain Justin Williams says he is taking a break from the NHL to start this season.

With the start of training camp looming later this month, the 37-year-old forward said Monday that he will "step away" from the sport.

"This is the first time in my life that I've felt unsure of my aspirations with regards to hockey," Williams said in a statement released by the team. "For as long as I can remember, my whole off-season until this point has been hockey and doing what was necessary to prepare for the upcoming season."

"Because of my current indecision, and without the type of mental and physical commitment that I'm accustomed to having, I've decided to step away from the game," he added.

Williams is an unrestricted free agent and three-time Stanley Cup champion whose two-year contract with Carolina expired after last season. He took over the team captaincy last year and led the Hurricanes to the Eastern Conference final in their first playoff berth since 2009.

Williams has 312 goals and 474 assists in his 18-year career with Carolina, Philadelphia, Los Angeles and Washington. He was a key member of the Hurricanes' 2006 Cup championship team and also won it twice with the Kings, earning the Conn Smythe Trophy as playoff MVP in 2014.

He had 23 goals and 30 assists while playing all 82 regular-season games last season, then had four goals and three assists during the Hurricanes' three playoff rounds.

General manager Don Waddell says the Hurricanes prepared for the possibility of not having Williams.

Toronto Star LOADED: 09.03.2019

1151607 Washington Capitals

Former Capital Justin Williams to 'step away' from hockey but isn't retiring



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019

By Adam Zielonka

Monday, September 2, 2019

Carolina Hurricanes winger Justin Williams, who spent two seasons with the Washington Capitals, is stepping away from hockey for now but is not yet retiring from the NHL, the Hurricanes announced.

It is not clear how long Williams, 37, will be away, but the door is left open for him to return when he's ready.

"This is the first time in my life that I've felt unsure of my aspirations with regards to hockey," Williams said in a statement released by the team. "For as long as I can remember, my whole off-season until this point has been hockey and doing what was necessary to prepare for the upcoming season. Because of my current indecision, and without the type of mental and physical commitment that I'm accustomed to having, I've decided to step away from the game."

"It's important to me that the focus of attention is on the current, very talented group the Carolina Hurricanes have assembled, as they prepare to build on the momentum and growth we established last season."

Williams scored 46 regular-season goals and six playoff goals across the 2014-15 and 2015-16 seasons with Washington. He then rejoined Carolina, for whom he played earlier in his career, and as a team captain led the Hurricanes to the 2019 Stanley Cup Playoffs — including a first-round upset of the defending champion Capitals.

Nicknamed "Mr. Game 7," Williams holds the NHL record with 15 career points in Game 7 situations, and his teams are 8-1 in those games.

Hurricanes president and general manager Don Waddell implied the team was aware of Williams' uncertainty over the summer.

"We appreciate Justin's honesty and openness throughout this process, and respect his decision," Waddell said in a statement. "He's been an important part of our team, but we did prepare our roster with the understanding that he might step away. We are confident in the group we've assembled."

Washington Times LOADED: 09.03.2019

1151608 Washington Capitals

Former Capital Justin Williams announces he is stepping away from the NHL

By Tyler Byrum

September 02, 2019 12:11 PM

Former Washington Capital and current Carolina Hurricane Justin Williams announced on Monday that he will step away from hockey for the start of the 2019-20 NHL season.

"This is the first time in my life that I've felt unsure of my aspirations with regards to hockey," Williams said in a statement released by the Hurricanes. "For as long as I can remember, my whole off-season until this point has been hockey and doing what was necessary to prepare for the upcoming season. Because of my current indecision, and without the type of mental and physical commitment that I'm accustomed to having, I've decided to step away from the game."

This is not a retirement, nor does it indicate that Williams will miss the whole season. However, the 18-year NHL veteran is not under contract for the upcoming year. His two-year contract in Carolina expired after the past season, which ended in the Eastern Conference Final. He is currently a free agent.

Williams turns 38 during the first week of the NHL season. Despite his age in a physical sport, he proves still has it as he played all 82 games, recording 23 goals and 30 assists in 2018-19. He was the oldest player in the NHL to score 20 goals and record 50 points that season.

Prior to his arrival in Carolina, the right-winger did play two seasons with the Capitals from 2015-2017. Both years he helped that Capitals to back-to-back Second Round appearances before the team broke through to win the Stanley Cup the year after.

Williams is a three-time Stanley Cup Champion, winning two with the Los Angeles Kings (2012 and 2014) and one with his first stint playing with the Hurricanes (2006).

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 09.03.2019

1151609 Washington Capitals

Why hockey fans need to circle Sept. 15 in the calendar

By J.J. Regan

September 02, 2019 10:00 AM

A league that has seen two work stoppages since 2004 appeared to take a step in the right direction toward avoiding a third on Friday when the NHL announced it would not reopen the Collective Bargaining Agreement. The CBA is set to expire on Sept. 15, 2022, but the NHL had the option to opt-out of the final years and trigger a new expiration on Sept. 15, 2020.

By choosing to keep the CBA open, that seemingly paves the way for labor peace for an additional three years...or does it?

The league is happy with the current CBA, but that does not mean the players are. Like the NHL, the NHLPA also has the option to reopen the CBA and that's why hockey fans



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019

everywhere should have Sept. 15 circled in their calendars. If the NHLPA decides to opt-out, that is the deadline.

Which way the NHLPA may be leaning is unknown. On Friday, the NHLPA released a statement saying simply, "Today the NHL advised the NHLPA that the league will not exercise its early termination right under the CBA. The NHLPA now has the same option. We will continue to discuss this matter with players as our September 15 decision approaches."

Why would the players potentially choose to reopen the CBA and thus risk a work stoppage next year?

The Associated Press surveyed union representatives and found that escrow was a major concern for the players.

As the owners and the players share a 50/50 split of hockey-related revenue, a certain percentage of player salaries is withheld in escrow to make up for the difference.

Another issue that is perhaps more pressing given the timing is Olympic participation.

If the CBA remains open to September 2022, it would mean Olympic participation in the 2022 Beijing Olympics would not be guaranteed. It is not a right given to the players in the current CBA and the NHL elected not to allow players to participate in Pyeongchang in 2018.

While those are concerns the players may have regarding the current CBA, the question now is whether the NHLPA feels strongly enough about those issues to reopen the CBA three years early.

It is important to note that if the NHLPA elects not to reopen the CBA, it does not necessarily mean the players cannot participate in Beijing. It simply means it will not be guaranteed to them in the CBA. Will the threat of missing another Olympic tournament be enough for the players to risk a possible work stoppage? That is a question that will be decided by Sept. 15.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 09.03.2019

1151610 Vancouver Canucks

2019 NHL farm system rankings: No. 5 Vancouver Canucks

By Corey Pronman

Sep 2, 2019

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

The Canucks graduated the Calder trophy winner in Elias Pettersson but remain a top 5 system on the backs of two

strong draft classes in 2018 and 2019 – spearheaded by Quinn Hughes and Vasilii Podkolzin. They also are arguably the best system when it comes to goaltending due to Thatcher Demko and Michael DiPietro.

Key additions: Vasilii Podkolzin, Nils Hoglander

Key subtractions/graduations: Elias Pettersson, Adam Gaudette

2018 farm system ranking: No. 2

2019 draft grade: B-plus

Prospect Ranking

1. Quinn Hughes, D, Michigan-Big 10

Oct. 14, 1999 | 5-foot-10 | 170 pounds

Tier: Elite NHL prospect

Hughes was one of the top defensemen in college hockey and showed well in a brief NHL stint toward the end of the season. There is something unique about the way Hughes plays the game. He's got an elite combination of skating, skill and intelligence. His edges are special and he can skate pucks around the ice with ease. His touches are so smooth, and every time he gets the puck he looks like he's about to make a high-end play. He sees the ice at a very high level. There are times Hughes tries to do too much, but most of the time he makes a very good play. Defensively he'll likely never be elite because of his 5-foot-10 frame and lack of physicality, but with his skating and brain he'll make stops. He could work on his shot, too. I think he'll become a No. 1 defenseman in the NHL who will be a cornerstone player for the Canucks.

2. Vasilii Podkolzin, RW, SKA-MHL

June 24, 2001 | 6-foot-1 | 190 pounds

Tier: High-end NHL prospect

Podkolzin played a lot of hockey this season between multiple levels of junior, pro and international hockey, and he impressed almost every single time. He almost always seems to have an impact on a game. He's super talented but also an elite competitor. Podkolzin has the gamebreaking element to make the flashy plays to deke defenders, but he rarely does that off a standstill or along the walls. He has hard skill. Podkolzin is typically full speed ahead to the net; and if he needs to go around or through you, he will. He's also a very good playmaker and finisher who can take advantage of space by making a pass or sniping from a distance. Quite often he made passes last season that were elite, but he didn't rack up that many assists. The one thing that bugs me about him is his skating. His stride is a little awkward and inefficient, he's hunched over and kicks his heels out, but he generates decent speed and hustles so hard that any technical flaw isn't that exposed. He has two years left on his KHL contract with SKA and told The Athletic he intends to see that contract out.

3. Thatcher Demko, G, Vancouver-NHL

Dec. 8, 1995 | 6-foot-4 | 192 pounds

Tier: Very good NHL prospect

Demko is a player who checks off all the boxes you want in a goalie: A 6-foot-4 frame. High-end athleticism. High-end



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019

hockey sense. Ability to improvise and make the tough saves. Track record of stopping pro shooters. Great mental focus. He's proven himself at the pro level, has shown he is ready for full-time NHL duty at 23 years old. He's not 100 percent perfect, as I've seen him let in the odd goal he probably shouldn't let get past him, but generally I see a goalie who can steal a game and projects as an NHL starter. There aren't many 6-foot-4 goalies with his quickness and sense.

4. Olli Juolevi, D, Utica-AHL

May 5, 1998 | 6-foot-2 | 183 pounds

Tier: Very good NHL prospect

Juolevi was having a good start to the AHL season, scoring at near a point per game clip before a season-ending knee injury. Juolevi has a very good skill set, and he's played well versus men. If you are expecting him to live up to his fifth-overall pick, he likely doesn't have the upside or recent track record for that to be a realistic expectation. If you are expecting a second pair defenseman, that could be possible. He's 6-foot-2, skates well, moves the puck very well and has legit offensive upside. Sometimes Juolevi tries to do too much, but other times he makes high-end plays. I like his offense more than his defense, but he can make stops with his reach and mobility.

5. Tyler Madden, C, Northeastern-Hockey East

Nov. 9, 1999 | 5-foot-11 | 152 pounds

Tier: Very good NHL prospect

Madden was one of the biggest risers in the prospect world this past season, surprising me and some (but not all) NHL scouts with how good he looked between the NCAA and world juniors, as a top player at both levels. His 1-on-1 play is elite. Madden can inside-out, fake out and put pucks between defenders legs seemingly at will. He's also a very good passer who can make the tough passes to his teammates. He forces plays a bit at times, though. Madden went in the third round in 2018 because of his 5-foot-11 frame and average speed. The skating issues are still there, but the stride is technically fine. He also competes hard, has penalty kill ability and logged a lot of minutes.

6. Nils Hoglander, LW, Rogle-SHL

Dec. 20, 2000 | 5-foot-9 | 190 pounds

Tier: Very good NHL prospect

Hoglander had a quality first season in the SHL as a top-nine forward for Rogle who showed his high-skill game can translate versus men. He has truly elite hands. When he has the puck on his stick, he's trying to make a skilled play. His puck handling is lightning quick and he often leaves defenders in a knot with how he dangles while in stride. He's not a selfish dangler, though, as he's a great passer and looks for his teammates constantly. He's not the typical playmaker you see run a power play and hang around the half-wall hitting seam passes. He's always in motion and makes creative feeds. Hoglander isn't the biggest forward at 5-foot-9, but he plays with a lot of energy and engages well. He's got a bit of an edge to his game, too. He's a decent skater, more elusive than a burner with very good edges, but he can turn a corner when he needs to. I wish he had more of a dangerous top gear because versus men he got eliminated along walls quite often on zone entries.

7. Michael DiPietro, G, Ottawa-OHL

June 9, 1999 | six-foot | 201 pounds

Tier: Very good/legit bubble

DiPietro has been a top goalie in junior hockey for the past few years, even though his save percentage numbers have never been dazzling. He's a show stealer in net. DiPietro has elite athleticism and is good for an elite save or two a night. He is lightning quick, but he's also a very smart goaltender. He challenges shooters very well, is rarely out of position and anticipates the opposing team's plays at a high level. He needs that quickness and intelligence because he is six-foot. There are times pucks get past him where you think, if he was two inches taller, those don't happen. You just hope there's enough of the other good stuff to balance that out, which I believe is the case.

8. Jett Woo, D, Moose Jaw-WHL

July 27, 2000 | six-foot | 205 pounds

Tier: Very good/legit bubble

Woo had a great season, as one of the best defensemen in the WHL and logging big minutes for Moose Jaw in every situation. He has more offense than I thought he did in his draft season. He was a part of the very dangerous first power play unit for Moose Jaw. His puck skills are very average, but I underrated his vision. He showed the ability this past season to make difficult plays, make a good breakout feed and hit seam passes in the offensive zone. You add onto that offense good mobility and a defender who hits anything that moves, and he looks like a very solid prospect.

9. William Lockwood, RW, Michigan-Big 10

June 20, 1998 | 5-foot-11 | 172 pounds

Tier: Legit NHL prospect

Lockwood does not fit the traditional statistical profile of a player I think is going to make it. He's had a good collegiate career but hasn't been a true top player at any level or event for the past few years. He's also 5-foot-11. However, I've always had a soft spot for the way Lockwood plays the game. I think he has a ton of skill, and he combines that skill with a high compete level and good speed. I wouldn't call his quickness top-end, as you'd prefer at his size, but he can skate. I wish he produced a tad more, but I think he will score just enough to be a bottom-six type in the league who plays hard and chips in some offense.

10. Francis Perron, LW, San Jose-AHL

April 18, 1996 | six-foot | 165 pounds

Tier: Legit/chance bubble

Perron had an impressive season, as an all-star in the AHL in his third pro season. He was traded from the Sharks to the Canucks in part because he requires waivers next season. He may end up a quad-A type player, but I liked a lot of what I saw last season and think he's got a real chance to make the NHL. Perron is a highly skilled and intelligent player with a very good shot. Inside the offensive zone, he's very dangerous with the variety of ways he could attack a defense. He's got average size and speed, though, and isn't all that good off the puck, so his NHL deployment would need to be very specific.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019

11. Kole Lind, RW, Utica-AHL

Oct. 16, 1998 | 6-foot-1 | 179 pounds

Tier: Legit/chance bubble

Lind had a tough season. When he was playing, he had a real tough time getting adjusted to the pace of pro hockey, going lengthy stretches without generating a lot of offense and seeing his ice time cut down. He's a player who is still interesting because he has so many interesting attributes. He's 6-foot-1, he skates more than fine, he's got some skill, he has good hockey sense, he competes well and he has a bullet shot. He's never going to be a top-end driver of offense in the pros, but he should have been better than he was. I still think he's on the NHL radar because of what he did in junior and the toolkit, and he was one of the youngest players in the AHL, but he needs to score more next season.

12. Zack MacEwen, C, Utica-AHL

July 8, 1996 | 6-foot-4 | 205 pounds

Tier: Legit/chance bubble

MacEwen was one of Utica's top players and earned a brief call-up to the Canucks. When I went out to watch Utica last season, I was very impressed by MacEwen's skill level, as he showed flashes of legit high-end skill that I did not know he had in him. He can create a lot of offense at the AHL level due to his skill, sense and physicality. He's a 6-foot-4 forward who can win back pucks and make plays around the net. The only thing keeping MacEwen out of the NHL is his skating. I've seen instances where his stride stays clean and has OK speed, but for the most part he still needs work there.

13. Guillaume Brisebois, D, Utica-AHL

July 21, 1997 | 6-foot-2 | 174 pounds

Tier: Has a chance

Brisebois had a decent second pro season, and got some time up with the big club toward the end of the season. Brisebois has a chance to play in the NHL because he's 6-foot-2, skates rather well and has good hockey sense. On his best shifts, he's killing plays in the defensive half, and either launching a good breakout pass or skating pucks up. The main issue on his NHL projection is a lack of offensive upside. He flashes good vision and creativity inside the offensive zone but not consistently, and overall his puck game is average.

14. Lukas Jasek, RW, Utica-AHL

Aug. 28, 1997 | 5-foot-11 | 165 pounds

Tier: Has a chance

Jasek had a decent first season in the AHL and was a quality, albeit not a standout player for Utica. There were moments Jasek really intrigued me. I think he skates very well, he's got skill and at times he showed very good skill. He competes fine and gets to the net. I think he has some NHL attributes, but he did not produce consistently, which is concerning given he was 21 last season. He's talented, but he might just be AHL talented and not quite at the right level for the NHL.

15. Jack Rathbone, D, Harvard-ECAC

May 20, 1999 | 5-foot-10 | 176 pounds

Tier: Has a chance

Rathbone had a very good freshman season, logging a lot of minutes for Harvard. His skating is clearly at NHL level. He activates into rushes very well and his skating allows him to be useful defensively despite his 5-foot-10 frame. Rathbone is active off the offensive blue line. He walks the line so well because of his skating and skill, with a lot of fakes and skilled plays to generate lanes to the net. He makes plays, but I wouldn't call his puck-moving high-end. Because of that and his size, I don't know what his role would be in the NHL. With Adam Fox moving on, Rathbone will have more offensive opportunity next season at Harvard to show what he can do.

16. Petrus Palmu, LW, TPS-Liiga

July 16, 1997 | 5-foot-7 | 172 pounds

Tier: Has a chance

Palmu had a tough time in the AHL, failing to get it going at that level and ended up being loaned back to Finland. In Liiga and the OHL he has shown he can produce offense. There is no doubting he has some talent. He's got high-end skill, high-end vision and skates well. He's a legit 5-foot-7, though, and at the pro level has shown at times he struggles when it comes to winning battles and playing a harder game. The question for him then is whether he's talented enough to overcome his size.

17. Brogan Rafferty, D, Quinnipiac-ECAC

May 28, 1995 | 6-foot-2 | 192 pounds

Tier: Has a chance

Rafferty got attention as an NCAA free agent the past few seasons and signed with the Canucks after his junior campaign. He didn't put up huge numbers, but he played on a deep blue line and absolutely has some offensive tools. Rafferty is a mobile defenseman who can rush pucks up the ice and kill plays with his gap control. He has above-average puck skills and vision, and occasionally showed high-end vision. I could see him become an NHLer due to his skill set. Ideally he produces in Utica and shows he can be a top player at that level before I feel confident saying he will play.

18. Karel Plasek, RW, Brno-Czech Extraliga

July 28, 2000 | 5-foot-11 | 154 pounds

Tier: Has a chance

Plasek is a player I've had a soft spot for the past two seasons, even if he's just always missed my draft list. I see a player with some NHL attributes. He is a very smart forward with good playmaking and finishing skills. I've seen games where he's made some legit high-end plays. But he's 5-foot-11 and an average skater.

19. Artyom Manukyan, RW, Omsk-KHL

June 9, 1998 | 5-foot-7 | 139 pounds

Tier: Has a chance

Manukyan is a player I've followed for a few years and intrigued me with his skill set. He didn't have an amazing year in the KHL but looked like he belonged at that level. I appreciate his speed, skill and vision a lot. He can make



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019

plays with pace and has high-end offensive instincts. At 5-foot-7, he isn't dynamic enough for the NHL, but he's talented enough to keep monitoring.

20. Ethan Keppen, LW, Flint-OHL

March 20, 2001 | 6-foot-2 | 212 pounds

Tier: Has a chance

Keppen had a productive season on a weak Flint team. He has some interesting attributes. He's big, he skates fine – albeit not overly quick – he's smart and he competes. His skill is very average, and I don't see him as a driver at the pro level. A number of scouts who were big supporters, but I still want to see more of an impact from him before I'm more confident of his NHL projection.

21. Carson Focht, C, Calgary-WHL

Feb. 4, 2000 | six-foot | 181 pounds

Tier: Has a chance

Focht has a good skill level and a hard shot that he can finish chances on from mid-distance. He skates and competes fine, so there is no glaring flaw in his game, but there isn't a lot of high-end in his game. He was invited to Canada's World Junior camp this summer.

22. Jack Malone, RW, Youngstown-USHL

Oct. 13, 2000 | 6-foot-1 | 192 pounds

Tier: Has a chance

Malone had a productive season in the USHL. He is a skilled two-way forward with impressive vision and overall offensive IQ. He competes well and was on Youngstown's penalty kill. His skating is just OK, and I don't think he's a guy who can drive a line. He never blew me away, but he intrigued teams with his well-rounded play and production.

23. Arvid Costmar, C, Linkoping-J20 SuperElit

July 7, 2001 | 5-foot-11 | 181 pounds

Tier: Has a chance

Costmar is a player I appreciate. He skates fine, has good skill, sees the ice well and can play on both special teams. I left him off my final draft list because, for an undersized forward, there's nothing dynamic about him. But he has enough ability where I can see him becoming a player.

24. Jake Kielly, G, Clarkson-ECAC

Sept. 10, 1996 | 6-foot-2 | 201 pounds

Tier: Has a chance

Kielly was one of the top goalies in the ECAC and signed with the Canucks at the end of his junior season. He's got average size and quickness, but he's a very technically sound, smart goaltender. He tracks pucks well, he plays his angle effectively, he's aggressive when he needs to be and he makes tough stops even without top-end athletic traits.

Depth Players

Mitch Eliot, D, Sarnia-OHL (Age: 21): He's a good skater who is physical and has above-average sense, but his skill level is a question.

Jonah Gadjovich, LW, Utica-AHL (20): He's a big man with decent hands in small areas who can play in front of the net, but he lacks quickness and overall isn't a driver of offense.

Ashton Sautner, D, Vancouver-NHL (25): He's a good skater with above-average sense but little offensive ability. He played 17 games as a necessity call-up, but I don't see real NHL ability here unfortunately.

Josh Teves, D, Princeton-ECAC (24): Teves has good mobility and moves the puck well, but nothing about his game really jumps out to you in terms of NHL projection.

2019-20 Impact

Hughes will be in the opening day lineup and could be very good right away. Demko is ready, as well, and could be a very solid NHL goalie next season. Juolevi should play games and could be a useful NHL defenseman. Perron and MacEwen are also candidates for games.

Organizational Top 10 (23 and Under)

Elias Pettersson, C (20)

Brock Boeser, RW (22)

Quinn Hughes, D (19)

Vasili Podkolzin, RW (18)

Thatcher Demko, G (23)

Olli Juolevi, D (21)

Tyler Madden, C (19)

Jake Virtanen, RW (23)

Nils Hoglander, LW (18)

Nikolay Goldobin, RW (23)

Pettersson was everything the Canucks could have hoped for: an impact guy right out of the gates and emerging as one of the top young stars in the NHL. He has an elite stick, mind and shot, and his skating is a lot better than I thought it would be. Adam Gaudette is right outside the top 10. I like his hockey sense a lot, he competes hard and he's got some sneaky skill. He played well in the AHL, but his skating remains a concern when talking to scouts about his NHL projection. I could see him become a third-line center.

The Athletic LOADED: 09.03.2019

1151611 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Orange is the new black: Terry Ryan rocks the ball hockey nationals

Staff

Things are about to get loud inside dressing room No. 6 at Glacier Arena, where a full-blast dose of AC/DC serves as backup for the frontman of the moment. It's Day 1 of the Canadian Ball Hockey Association Nationals and Terry



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019

Ryan's Newfoundland and Labrador Black Horse are looking for their second victory in the span of about seven hours. Coach Ian Moores doesn't feel the need to bombard the boys with instructions, so he wastes little time before turning things over to Ryan with a simple, "Terry..."

The floor his, Ryan flips open the cover on his phone, fires up "Rock 'n' Roll Train" on a standalone speaker with a disco ball mounted on it and leaps off the top rope: "Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, welcome to beautiful Mount Pearl, Newfoundland, for Game 2 of the national baaaaaaaaaaaaalllllllll hockey championship! Tonight's game features the North York Hitmen and your Newfoundland Black Horse!"

Around the room, a group of men mainly in their 20s grin, clap and hoot, urging the 42-year-old to keep finding higher gears. "This should be a good one," Ryan continues, "featuring young prospects such as 'Michael-Michael Motorcycle' Dyke, Thomas 'Happy Hour' Hedges and Alex 'Pow-Pow Power Play' Powell!" Wearing a black tank top that gives his tattoos a chance to shine, Ryan rocks back and forth as he speaks, while his face contorts, fists clench and muscles pop. The routine has been a staple for years and always closes with roughly the same ending: "And ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls we have a treat for you tonight: 1996 WHL second-team all-star and 1991 elementary spelling bee champion in St. John's, Terry Ryan Jr., is back, and Ryan wants one more championship before he calls it a career!"

That Ryan is the epicenter of excitement before a game he isn't even playing in speaks to his unique standing on the team and within the ball hockey community. A long-ago first-round NHL draft pick, author and relatively recent addition to the film and television world, he has been a high-volume raconteur all the way through. For all the yarns he's spun and passions he professes, though, few topics are closer to Ryan's heart than the sport that helped get him back onto a positive life track when he was broken down and mad at the world in the aftermath of his NHL dreams evaporating. Ryan is one of many Newfoundlanders who embrace ball hockey, and the game has its own story to tell about relentlessness and teamwork.

Exploding to his feet, Ryan tees up the final burst. "Are you ready?" he howls. "Let's do it!"

The entire room knows it's time to join in. "Let's. Play. Hockeeyyyyyyy!"

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE ROCK

Even when he's not playing, Ryan is often the centre of attention before a game

The night before the tournament, Ryan is indulging one of his other loves while walking across Harbour Drive in the heart of St. John's. Music isn't just a tool to fire up the lads, it's something that saturates every corner of his life — he has The Beatles' logo tattooed on his right forearm and named his daughter Penny-Laine. A minute ago, Ryan was in the Mill Street Brew Pub, clanking glasses and reminiscing with a group of guys he won a world masters title with in 2018. Now, headed to the night's next stop, he's belting out Alanis Morissette's "You Oughta Know," a song that was just being performed with a touch more grace by a duo playing covers inside the bar.

On the walk, when he's not singing, Ryan recalls how his one-time Montreal Canadiens teammate, Mark Recchi, handed out mixtapes back in the mid-'90s, and how none of the younger Habs had the heart to tell him they had all moved on to CDs. Ryan also remembers being impressed that Recchi wasn't ashamed to declare his love for a young, female singer like Morissette in a dude-dominated setting.

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.

Boylen on Twitter

If the only thing you ever heard Ryan talk about was his time in The Show — eight games and 36 penalty minutes, all with the Habs — you might assume based on how spirited he gets that he's still stuck on being a never was. The reality, though, is that Ryan's rich voice becomes animated regardless of the topic, from acting gigs to things a visitor should experience in and around St. John's. Tipping one back at Yes B'y's, a cozy dive named for the famous local slang, Ryan relives the time in his life when it still seemed an NHL career was a real possibility. Whether in person or in the pages of his book, *Tales of a First-Round Nothing*, he's not afraid to say, "I know I f—ed up" here and there, especially in reference to his decision to hold out from training camp one September in the hopes of leveraging Montreal into dealing him.

It would have been nice to get that clean slate somewhere. Instead, 20 years before Michel Therrien seethed over the exuberance of P.K. Subban in Montreal, the then-fledgling pro coach bristled at Ryan's full-throttle approach to life at the American Hockey League level. It's too bad, because the relationship really could have been one made in hockey heaven. Ryan represented something precious in his heyday, a goal-scorer with an edgy streak to his game that was no less rugged than the stark, enchanting island he emerged from. The fights probably delighted Therrien; it was Ryan's emphatic fist-pumps and willingness to sport a blue mohawk that made the coach's brain smoke.

How Ryan's career could have worked out with the benefit of some different choices or coaches is impossible to know. Regardless, within five years of being picked eighth overall by Montreal, he was crashing out of minor-pro leagues, getting divorced and saddled with injuries, chiefly a high-ankle sprain that lingered for years and really hampered him. "Then I was old news," says Ryan, who remains the highest-drafted born-and-raised Newfoundlander. "Around here, I felt that. I don't know if I would have admitted that at the time or if I was even conscious of it, but everywhere you go, people [were] asking, 'What happened?'"

HAVING A BALL

Joining the national team on Gortsos's invitation, Ryan found ball hockey didn't aggravate the ankle injury that ended his career on the ice

A multi-sport star as a kid, Ryan had played high-level ball hockey dating back to his early teen years, but the game kind of popped in and out of his life and certainly wasn't top of mind when he found himself at the bottom of the mountain. George Gortsos, who was set to coach Canada's entry at the 2003 World Ball Hockey Championship, saw Ryan play at a national tournament and, knowing his extensive ice hockey background, made a last-second



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019

decision to offer the then-overweight ex-NHLer a spot on the squad. "Skating hurt [because of the sprain]," Ryan says. "But for whatever reason, when I put on a sneaker, it cut under my ankle so I didn't even feel the pain at all."

Ryan played only a single shift in the gold-medal game — won by Canada — at the '03 worlds in Switzerland. As always, though, he made an impression on people. Gortsos's first memory of Ryan is seeing him at Pearson Airport, completely consumed by a book about The Beatles. He also recalls Ryan, once the event got underway, showing his patriotism by stripping down to his Canada-themed boxers and jumping on stage to dance while a band wailed.

Gortsos, who's done it all in the sport and is now president of the International Street and Ball Hockey Federation, felt he understood the mould Ryan was cast from, that being the freewheeling NHLers Gortsos grew up loving in the '60s and '70s. "These guys were all renegades, but they came to play," he says, referencing characters like Johnny "Pie" McKenzie and Phil Esposito. "To me, Terry was one of those guys. I was quite comfortable with it."

In the NHL, with millions of dollars on the line, a coach might have a hard time just getting out of a player's way. Gortsos, though, gave Ryan some space, and the results followed. He started melting pounds and soon became one of the fittest players associated with the national program. The world championship is held every other year and Ryan was part of the 2005 champs (though he was sidelined by an injury) and an absolute stud on the crew that grabbed gold in 2007. "In the back of my mind — I don't know if I ever said it to anybody — but I'm like, 'I can be [one of] the best in the world at something,'" Ryan says. "So then it just became all about ball hockey."

FAMILY AFFAIR

Ryan's parents, Gail and Terry Sr., are among the loudest fans in the crowd at Glacier Arena

Terry Ryan Sr. estimates there are about a thousand albums in his basement collection. Somehow, though, with everything else happening in this space, a vinyl collection on that scale almost gets lost in the mix.

The Ryan family basement is a museum of music and hockey plastered with artifacts, and the curator, who everyone just calls "Senior," tops them all in terms of originality. Senior was a fine hockey player himself, a scorer who left Newfoundland to star in the Ontario major junior ranks. He was drafted by the NHL's Minnesota North Stars in 1972 and played one season for the World Hockey Association's Minnesota Fighting Saints, but wound up making his living as a French teacher. He retains a thick shock of grey hair with strands that shoot off in every direction; his crackling storytelling cadence follows similar trajectories.

Most of what populates the basement is jerseys and pictures and pucks and sticks from various portions of Ryan's long, winding hockey road. But there are also items from Senior's playing days, including a banana-blade Bobby Hull stick given to him and signed by King Slapshot himself. As Senior ping-pongs from one side of the room to the other, Ryan's mother, Gail, keeps reminding him they're going to be late for Terry's next game if they don't get moving.

Gail is a superstitious woman, so mom and dad — sometimes joined by Penny-Laine — always sit in the same

spot at Glacier. They are certainly among the most vocal supporters of the home side.

"I'm a goalie. That's why I can smoke."

An event like the CBHA Nationals exists in a wonderful space, somewhere underneath the high-stakes world of pro sports but significantly apart from pure recreational sport when it comes to intensity. Three different competitions are taking place in Newfoundland: The men's draw, the women's draw and the men's masters, comprised of players aged 40 and up. Not every province is represented; some send multiple teams in a single draw. Hosting this year, Newfoundland is in the multiple-teams camp, something that's not usually possible as travelling to most national competitions is a big, expensive deal thanks to simple geography.

Before any given men's game, the corridors are filled with NHL-worthy bodies — lots of these guys have junior, major junior or pro backgrounds — going through extensive stretching and warm-up routines. You might see someone on a table getting worked over by a masseuse. Outside, you can find competitors engaged in an exercise where they jump straight up in the air, then blast into a sprint the second their feet touch the ground. That exertion occurs one smoky exhale away from the spot where the odd masters competitor — many of whom have their own impressive ice and ball hockey resumes — puff cigarettes to close out the day. ("I'm a goalie," one says. "That's why I can smoke.")

Every contest at Glacier — the larger of two tourney venues — is available via webcast and regardless of which teams are on the floor, the blood certainly gets flowing. Talk to anyone about the differences between ball and ice hockey and the first thing that comes up is the fact there's no gliding on cement — if you want to get somewhere, you've got to pick up those sneakers and run. "I don't think there's better cardio you can do than ball hockey," says Zach O'Brien, a Black Horse centre and former Quebec Major Junior Hockey League star who just won the ECHL's Kelly Cup with his hometown St. John's Growlers in the spring.

AN ORIGINAL'S COLLECTION

Ask anyone in town: Terry Ryan Sr. is as unique as any of the music and memorabilia in the family basement

In terms of format, ball hockey features two stop-time periods of 20 minutes. It also has what's referred to as a "floating blue line" that allows teams to stretch the attacking zone by bringing the ball all the way back out to the red line once they've crossed the offensive blue line inside. All of a sudden, shots from the middle of the floor can be dangerous, both because players can shoot for a rebound and because the ball is prone to dipping and fluttering like an off-speed pitch.

There aren't a lot of one-on-one dangles because the ball is tougher to manoeuvre than a heavy, flat puck, sometimes getting topped by the blade and sort of wedged between the stick and ground. That makes teamwork all the more critical, and there are similarities to soccer in the sense a ball is often chipped into a space where someone else can burst onto it. There's no body checking, but all kinds of bruising contact, which sometimes leads to the same heated back-and-forths you get on the ice. Naturally, it's those encounters that further stir already-feisty members of the crowd. Ontario teams can definitely expect to hear derisive comments —



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019

“Go ride the subway!” — and anything that escalates to the level of pushing and shoving is probably going to bring calls of “Trow ‘im out, ref!”

That’s the 2019 version of the scene Ryan grew up in, when his Mount Pearl youth sports teams would come watch ball hockey action in the 1980s. “You could drink in there, you could smoke; it was a rowdy atmosphere, there were fights,” he says. “But that’s Newfoundland.”

The flag-bearers for the province in those days were the Best Western Travellers, who won back-to-back national titles with skill and four lines that were coming to get you. Their success allowed Newfoundlanders a rare and relished chance to thump their chests for a lightly-populated home province that was often outclassed at national gatherings. “By and large, we went to any sporting event on the mainland and we were always last or didn’t do very well,” says Paul Barron, one of the Newfoundland and Labrador Ball Hockey Association’s founding fathers. “For ball hockey, we started winning. We won a few championships and people said, ‘Hey, this is great stuff.’ So they started to support us.

“Any time Newfoundland plays against a team outside of their own province and plays well and can beat them, the fans just love it.”

One of the things that’s helped Newfoundland compete is the fact ice hockey players seem far more likely to cross over than in other parts of Canada. Moores grew up with former Detroit Red Wing Dan Cleary and both men played in ball hockey leagues from a young age. In 2010, when Newfoundland was in the midst of an extended dry spell on the national scene, Moores, Barron and Ryan were part of a small group that created Black Horse to resurrect the province’s chances.

The nationals were in St. John’s that summer as well, and Black Horse kicked off a now decade-long period of success by winning gold on home soil thanks in no small part to the participation of NHLers like Teddy Purcell and Adam Pardy. “We get our top hockey players, they actually play ball hockey,” says Steve Power, who has coached all kinds of teams in Newfoundland and is also president of the Canadian Ball Hockey Association. “And we also find a few diamonds in the rough, people who don’t play ice hockey. Frankly, they can’t afford to play ice hockey. It’s such a different game, ball hockey [versus] ice hockey, it’s so much cheaper: Helmet, gloves, stick and off you go.”

“As soon as you put ‘NL’ on your jersey, you just feel like you’re a hero.”

As such, for every high-profile participant, there are 50 whose talents are only known to their teammates, opponents and the people who pack the barn. Jeremy Bishop of Corner Brook is a sneaky, pint-sized scorer who was a staple on Black Horse for years before moving up with Ryan — his frequent linemate — to play at the masters level. On the women’s side Aprill Drake, Kristen Cooze and Dawn Tulk won gold with a Power-coached Canadian entry at the worlds in June in Slovakia. (Nowhere is ball hockey more popular than Slovakia and the Czech Republic.)

While all three gushed about that experience, you get the sense wearing their province’s colours provides an equal rush. “It’s a lot of pride,” says Tulk. “As soon as you put ‘NL’ on your jersey, you just feel like you’re a hero.

“For us, it’s been instilled that we’re always going to be the underdog, no matter where we are. We’re a little province with big hearts and I feel this is a way for us to be on the same playing field as everybody else.”

THE AMBASSADOR

Ryan’s younger than the average inductee, but the chance to enshrine him in the CBHA Hall of Fame on home soil was too perfect to pass up

Ryan was at the edge of a cliff on an unseasonably warm fall evening in Trinity — about three hours from St. John’s — when he heard footsteps behind him. It was the end of another long day on a film set and after doing all the stuff a “locations” person does — setting up cones for parking in the morning, making sure no cars or people pass through a shot, cleaning a toilet that overflows — Ryan had grabbed a half-consumed bottle of whiskey and a joint, and headed out to watch the sun set. He assumed whoever was approaching with the same idea likely held a similar post on the project. As it turned out, it was the male lead in the movie who plunked down. “He gets right in front of me and it’s Ethan Hawke,” Ryan says. “And he goes, ‘Is this spot taken?’”

A few days earlier, Ryan had broken with convention — people working on sets are usually discouraged from engaging the actors, especially genuine Hollywood stars — by tossing his book at Hawke and saying something along the lines of, “You won’t remember this, but we met over dinner one night in Montreal.” That original encounter had come when Ryan was still trying to make it with the Habs. Now that he was in Hawke’s company again on the cliffside, Ryan soon found himself in a discussion about the details of his more recent circumstances.

Around 2012, just for a laugh, Ryan had appeared as a background actor on the show Republic of Doyle, which starred a buddy of his, Allan Hawco. He was also just putting the finishing touches on a degree from Memorial University of Newfoundland majoring in folklore and minoring in English. His rough plan after graduating was to follow his father into teaching, but more than anything, he just wanted to make some money to help support Penny-Laine, his wife, Danielle, and his stepson, Tison.

After his twirl on Doyle, Ryan began getting work doing all the unglamorous things required to make a set run. Thanks to the disproportionately large arts scene in St. John’s, he kept stringing together decent-paying jobs, all while playing Sr. A hockey and working on his book. By the time he crossed paths with Hawke, he had spoken some lines on camera, done the odd stunt and made some connections with people in the industry. If you’re shooting in St. John’s, who better than Ryan to help you find a little fun for a night or two?

Hawke — who read Tales of a First-Round Nothing, partly because he couldn’t get much cell reception in Trinity — nudged Ryan toward seeking out more roles and a few months later he got real face time in the Netflix show Frontier, which stars Jason Momoa. The actor of Aquaman and Game of Thrones fame became a pal and Ryan took him to his first hockey game. He even tried to teach the big man how to skate at one of the oldest rinks in Newfoundland. Ryan later worked as a personal assistant for Momoa on a trip to England where he did whatever was required in the moment, from stunt work to fetching a 12-pack of Guinness for the star to enjoy after a long workday.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019

THE HORSE THEY RODE IN ON

Ryan was part of a small group that created Black Horse in 2010, sparking a now decade-long period of success

Ryan took a sales job with Mill Street Brewery just one week before nationals started, but he retains the flexibility to pursue work in the arts. He's a first-rate bad guy in a movie called *A Fire in the Cold Season* that's premiering in mid-September at Halifax's Atlantic International Film Festival; he's slated to play a hockey player (his first time acting in that tailor-made role) on the television show *Letterkenny* later this year; he's already released one short film and has designs on another; and he's chipping away at a second book. Certainly there are gaps between gigs, but Ryan — who also co-hosts a hockey podcast called *Third Man In* — believes the network he's building will help him continue to find new projects, big and small. Not that he's one for counting chickens. "If I've learned to do anything, it's take everything with a grain of salt and don't start thinking about tomorrow yet," he says.

There was a chance to reflect at Day 3 of the tournament, when Ryan was inducted into the Canadian Ball Hockey Association Hall of Fame. The other inductees over the course of the week tended to be much older than Ryan, but Power said the chance to honour him at home was too perfect to pass up. Ryan was ready to walk away from Black Horse after his last spin with the team, not wanting to take the spot of a young player who deserved it more. But when it was determined Mount Pearl would be hosting nationals, the boys told him he absolutely had to be there in some capacity.

"I can't say the name 'Terry Ryan' and not smile."

During the ceremony, Ryan stood on the home bench wearing a Black Horse jersey, his hands pressed down on the top of the boards while Power rhymed off his myriad achievements. There was no big speech from Ryan, but rather a rare moment of prolonged silence as he stared down at the floor and listened to Power. After receiving a plaque and taking a picture with his family, Ryan was soon back to his giddy self, fist-bumping with the Newfoundland women who were prepping for their game and taking close-range pictures of the plaque. Power is fond of saying it's Ryan's world and we're just living in it. "I can't say the name 'Terry Ryan' and not smile," he says.

That is a widely shared sentiment among friends, acquaintances and teammates who marvel at Ryan's loquacious energy and respond to his sincerity. Just seconds after finishing up a preliminary-round win with his masters team, NL Colonial Masters Selects, at Goulds Arena, Ryan hot-stepped off the floor saying, "I have to get the music ready for the [Black Horse] boys!" Moments later, still sweating and wearing shin pads, Ryan threw on his shades and a hat, chucked the disco speaker — a "Party Rocker" according to Best Buy — in the front seat of a Mazda 3 with a punctured exhaust and rumbled over to Glacier.

"I kind of forgot about it," says O'Brien, who's known Ryan for about a decade and sometimes works hockey camps with him, of the Party Rocker. "Before our first game, I was the first guy to walk in and Terry was just sitting in his stall and I see the disco ball going. Even if he's not playing, he's the first one here, has the music going for the first guy who walks in. You can bounce anything off Terry — whether it's

ball hockey or anything — and he's willing to talk and help you out."

READY, WILLING AND ABLE

Newfoundland's success in ball hockey is at least partially thanks to the willingness of the province's ice hockey players to cross over

Ryan did eventually see action with Black Horse, filling in for a player who fell ill. Though he was limited to a couple second-period shifts in the win, he was shirtless and beaming in the hallway after playing his third contest — two with Colonial, one with Black Horse — of the day. You take (and give) a lot of whacks in the course of that much ball hockey and Ryan was on the receiving end of a few more even after the action ended courtesy of Penny-Laine's plastic magic wand, the nine-year-old poking her dad as if to say, "Stop talking, it's time to go!"

That was on the second-last day of the event, when Colonial, Black Horse and NL United all punched tickets to gold-medal games. It was a Super Saturday of sorts at Glacier, with roughly 2,000 fans pouring in to see home teams gun for the top prize. This family-and-friends sport really takes on a different feel in Newfoundland. "The crowd is something we've never seen before," says Marc Petitpas, a veteran player and member of the Halton Leafs team that faced Colonial in the final. "Even at the masters level [here], we're playing in front of almost a full rink."

Unfortunately for the locals, the first two games went the way of the invaders, both from Ontario no less. Colonial fell to Halton 6–4 and NL United was blanked 4–0 by the Ottawa Capitals. Before Black Horse hit the floor, Ryan — who did not participate in the final contest — fired up the speaker once again. This time, though, he changed up the last line, deviating from the usual humorous Terry Ryan Jr. reference and instead shouting something about it taking all 20 guys in the room to win a championship.

They almost did, too, but a pair of late goals by the New Tecumseh Xtreme — another Ontario outfit — gave the visitors a 2–1 win over a Black Horse crew that carried the play most of the afternoon. As the Xtreme whooped it up, members of Black Horse slammed sticks before settling into a collective sag. The 1,000-yard stares lasted throughout most of the medal presentation, but started to break when the clubs shook hands and the moment came for the team to acknowledge the support of an equally appreciative crowd.

Fifteen minutes after the stinging loss, Ryan — still wearing a Black Horse jersey and sporting a silver medal around his neck — stood in front of the first row of seats with his back pressed up against the glass. Speaking with his signature gusto, he noted Black Horse has a history of getting to the gold-medal game, playing great but coming up just short, a fact that's easier to take when you've learned to appreciate what happens when things don't work out exactly as planned.

"The sun will come up tomorrow," Ryan says.

Yes b'y.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019

1151612 Websites

August 30, 2019

YAHOO SPORTS / Jonathan Toews wary of NHL making players look greedy in CBA talks

Arun Srinivasan

September 2, 2019

Ahead of a meeting Wednesday that could dictate the long-term future of the league, it's worth noting that Chicago Blackhawks captain Jonathan Toews is skeptical of the NHL's intentions as it relates to the collective bargaining agreement.

Earlier this week, the NHL opted out of its right to reopen the collective bargaining agreement (CBA) next year. If the NHLPA elects to opt out of the current CBA by Sept. 15, both parties have until the 2020-21 season to reach a new labour agreement, or the run risk of a lockout.

One of the contentious issues is the idea of escrow, with players upset that a portion of their salary goes into a pool that is eventually shared with the owners to create an even revenue split between players and owners.

Toews told reporters at the end of last season that he was not thrilled about the current setup and was wary of the league characterizing the players as greedy for wanting their full salary to remain intact without having to contribute to the escrow pool.

"There's obvious incentive for the NHL owners to have (escrow)," Toews said to John Dietz of The Daily Herald. "They get money back, depending on their performance. So now that responsibility falls on the player.

"I'm no financial expert. All I see is that I've signed a contract and to me it's not exactly being honored. So I don't care what business you're in -- to me that's kind of ridiculous.

"They've done a good job of making the players look like the greedy ones in the past several lockouts, and I wouldn't be surprised if they tried to do it again. To me it's pretty black and white."

The NHL and NHLPA are expected to meet Wednesday to discuss the impending CBA challenges, and count Toews to be among the loudest voices advocating for the erasure of an escrow system that takes money out of the players' pockets.

YAHOO.COM LOADED: 09.03.2019

1151613 Websites

YAHOO SPORTS / Oilers' Puljujarvi scores quick goal in first game with Finnish club

Steven Psihogios

The Edmonton Oilers may still have Jesse Puljujärvi's rights, but it's Finnish hockey team Oulun Kärpät of Liiga that has his talents.

On Friday, the fourth-overall selection of the 2016 NHL Draft sniped home his first goal since returning to play with Kärpät.

Welcome back to the CHL - Jesse Puljujärvi! What a goal for @OulunKarpatti! #ChampionsGoBeyond
pic.twitter.com/GVqj5IRwLG

— Champions Hockey League (@championshockey) August 30, 2019

It took the 21-year-old less than three minutes to notch his first-ever goal in the Champions Hockey League. He's played 17 games in the CHL throughout his career.

Puljujärvi recently signed a one-year deal with Kärpät that includes an NHL opt-out clause until Dec. 1. That date is the deadline in which he could sign and play in the NHL this season.

This isn't Puljujärvi's first stint in Liiga. He played for Kärpät prior to being drafted during the 2015-16 season. The winger suited up for 50 games, recording 13 goals and 28 points.

The Swedish-born forward has made it clear that he wants a new start in the NHL and it seems he's willing to hold out until Edmonton moves his rights.

Puljujärvi has tallied 17 goals and 37 points across 139 games with the Oilers.

YAHOO.COM LOADED: 09.03.2019

1151614 Websites

YAHOO SPORTS / Golden Knights' Reaves takes shot at Sharks' Kane at vow renewal

Steven Psihogios

September 2, 2019

Ever been at a vow renewal where the person officiating is an NHL player who starts throwing shade at another NHL player?

Neither have I, but this actually happened and I'm still wondering where my invitation was.

The top rivalry in today's NHL has to be the San Jose Sharks and Vegas Golden Knights given their recent playoff matchups. And one standoff that has emerged between the competitors in that duel is the feud shared by Evander Kane and Ryan Reaves.

Evander Kane and Ryan Reaves finally fight after chirping all night pic.twitter.com/Rla9W0ktX4



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019

— Pete Blackburn (@PeteBlackburn) April 15, 2019

Kane went on to say after the mix-up that Reaves' fighting style is similar to the "Muffin Man." But it's Reaves who has landed the most recent blow in this heated, yet comical, battle of words.

And he did it while officiating a vow renewal nonetheless.

Ryan Reaves has arrived, or as he dubs himself, "Kane's worst nightmare." #VegasBorn
pic.twitter.com/SOKKYVUUME

— Danny Webster (@DannyWebster21) September 1, 2019

That's right. The Vegas enforcer dubbed himself as "Kane's worst nightmare,"

My favourite part of the video is the guy wearing the Golden Knights' Mark Stone shirtsy. Any wedding or rededication of love which welcomes that kind of attire is the type of ceremony I am more than happy to attend.

Kane, however, didn't let this jab slide without a response.

Great example of trying to be relevant when you're not ☐☐
<https://t.co/aM8C053mhJ>

— Evander Kane (@evanderkane_9) September 2, 2019

The heat between these two has certainly not limited itself to the ice. But when they both lace 'em up and go head-to-head on Oct. 2, it'll be fun to watch considering the way last post-season's series between the clubs ended.

YAHOO.COM LOADED: 09.03.2019

1151615 Websites

YAHOO SPORTS / Devils' Simmonds on return to Philadelphia this season: 'I would be mad if they didn't boo me'

Steven Psihogios

CanadaAugust 30, 2019

Few players have embodied and embraced playing for the Philadelphia Flyers quite like Wayne Simmonds.

The team dubbed the 'Broad Street Bullies' is known for a physical style of play, which makes it no surprise that Simmonds - who has thrown more hits than any Flyers player over the last 20 years - was a fan favourite.

Now that the power forward plays for a divisional rival, the New Jersey Devils, he hopes that fans embrace his return to Wells Fargo Center the Philly way.

"To be honest," he told Luke Fox of Sportsnet, "I think I would be mad if they didn't boo me."

You have to respect someone who is not only hoping to get booed, but upset if anything else happens.

Philadelphia is known for having some of the hardest to please fans in any sport. If you give Philly sports fans a chance to boo you, they will be more than glad to take you up on that offer. Just ask Santa Clause if you don't believe me.

Considering Phillie fans booed Bryce Harper earlier this year for going hitless on Opening Day, I'd say there's a good chance Simmonds gets his wish when the Devils battle the Flyers in Philadelphia on Oct. 9.

YAHOO.COM LOADED: 09.03.2019

1151616 Websites

YAHOO SPORTS / Hall, O'Reilly, Subban highlight biggest NHL trades of past decade

Steven Psihogios

September 2, 2019

The National Hockey League has seen its fair share of player swaps over the past 10 years. Hence why events like the trade deadline and the opening day of free agency on July 1 have become televised spectacles.

And although not every trade is a blockbuster, it's the ones which are that can completely change the complexion of a franchise.

During the last decade, here are the three most impactful and star-studded trades to happen in the NHL.

New Jersey Devils trade Adam Larsson to the Edmonton Oilers for Taylor Hall - June 29, 2016

This 1-for-1 trade is maybe the most famous (or infamous depending on where your allegiances lie) of all-time.

The Oilers had just missed the playoffs for the 10th consecutive year and desperately needed help on defence. Unfortunately, it seems general manager Peter Chiarelli and co. were too determined to add a blue-liner that they didn't realize exactly what they were giving up.

And while Adam Larsson has been just merely serviceable in Edmonton, playing oftentimes in a top-pairing role not suited for him, what the club sent to the Devils has been game-changing.

It took Taylor Hall a season to catch on in New Jersey, but once he did, he proved to be unstoppable.

After somewhat of a lacklustre first season with the Devils, the winger went off during the 2017-18 campaign. His 39-goal, 93-point offensive outburst single-handedly secured the team a playoff spot. Additionally, Hall took home the Hart Memorial Trophy, proving to be the most valuable player from across the league.

And although Hall's latest season was hampered by a knee injury, he figures to play a very important role on a recently revamped New Jersey squad.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 3, 2019

Certainly a big trade, but not one that by any stretch can be considered fair.

Buffalo Sabres trade Ryan O'Reilly to the St. Louis Blues for Patrik Berglund, Vladimir Sobotka, Tage Thompson, 2019 1st round pick (Ryan Johnson) and 2021 2nd round pick - July 1, 2018

Pretty simply put: If the Blues did not go out and trade for Ryan O'Reilly, there is no worst-to-first Stanley Cup championship in 2019.

The only constant for St. Louis during its 2018-19 season was the impressive play of the native of Clinton, Ont. On Jan. 1, O'Reilly was the only Blues skater among the top-100 point scorers in the NHL. And while the club was tied for last in standings at that point, it could've been even worse had he not been on the club.

The 28-year-old wound up finishing the season with a career-best 77-points, and added 23 more points across 26 playoff games en route to leading the Blues to a Stanley Cup, while also receiving the Conn Smythe Trophy for post-season MVP. Later on at the NHL Awards, O'Reilly was awarded the first Frank J. Selke Trophy of his career for being the league's premiere two-way forward.

Not a bad addition at all.

And while it's still a little too soon to judge the Sabres on their return, the early reports aren't overly encouraging.

Tage Thompson is still only 22-years-old, but he failed to impress last season. The former first-round selection

recorded just seven goals and 12 points in 65 games with Buffalo last season.

Sobotka, 32, struggled mightily last year. In 69 contests, the centre notched only five goals and 13 points. Patrik Berglund, well, after 23 matches he just stopped reporting to the team citing overall unhappiness with regards to the club's situation.

Buffalo obviously ended up with a lower first-round pick than it had hoped for after St. Louis won the Cup, so it took Ryan Johnson from the University of Minnesota 31st overall in the 2019 NHL Draft. The organization also holds the Blues' second-round selection in 2021.

So there is a chance that the Sabres can maybe break-even, but it's going to take a lot to compete with the O'Reilly breakthrough in St. Louis.

Montreal Canadiens trade P.K. Subban to the Nashville Predators for Shea Weber - June 29, 2016

How bizarre is it that two of the biggest trades from the decade happened on the exact same day?

The NHL was really put into a blender near the end of June 2016, and it was another 1-for-1 deal that sent shockwaves around the league. Rarely do you see a pair of teams swap their No. 1 blue-liners, but that's exactly what happened here.

YAHOO.COM LOADED: 09.03.2019