



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Sept. 8, 2017



Canes Aim to Defend Title in Traverse City

NHL Prospects Tournament gets underway on Friday

by Michael Smith [@MSmithCanes](#) / CarolinaHurricanes.com

September 7th, 2017

TRAVERSE CITY, Mich. - Soon after the Labor Day weekend, as the temperature drops and pops of red and orange dot the green landscape, Traverse City begins to drift off into a seasonal slumber.

It's not all quiet, though, as the quaint lake town trades tourists for hockey with the annual NHL Prospects Tournament, which begins Friday, Sept. 8 and runs through Tuesday, Sept. 12. The Carolina Hurricanes return to the tournament for the eighth year, and they're looking to defend their perfect 4-0 championship title from a year ago.

"We're looking to play fast-paced. We want to make sure we represent our organization well," said Mike Vellucci, head coach of this prospects team and the Charlotte Checkers. "I want the guys to show their skill, show what it took to get here, play the game the right way and win games."

Repeating is not an easy task - in a short tournament with three round-robin games and one final match-up, virtually anything can happen - but the Hurricanes have assembled a talented squad more than capable of claiming the team's third title in Traverse City.

The Canes' roster features four first-round picks, including this year's 12th overall pick [Martin Necas](#), who today centered a line with [Warren Foegele](#) and camp invitee Nick Schilkey.

"I'm really looking forward to it. I'm glad to be here with the guys," Necas said. "I will enjoy it."

"His speed, skill and vision out there already is quite encouraging," Vellucci said. "A player like that is just going to get better and better as the tournament goes on."

Other first-rounders include tournament veteran [Haydn Fleury](#), who is making his fourth appearance in Traverse City, and sophomores [Jake Bean](#) and [Julien Gauthier](#).

"You can see their leadership already in practice. They're jumping to the front of the lines instead of hiding in the back," Vellucci said of Bean and Gauthier. "They're both great kids and great talents. I think they feel way more comfortable right now."

To help guide the tournament newcomers and provide a blueprint for success, the Hurricanes will look to the veteran leadership of guys like Fleury, [Roland McKeown](#), [Josh Wesley](#) and [Andrew Poturalski](#), who have both prior tournament and professional experience under their belts.

"It's a very good opportunity to show what we've got as individuals and a team," McKeown said. "You basically have to go 4-0 to win this tournament. You've got to bear down and be ready to go from game one because if you get behind early, it's tough to get back."

"I give those guys credit. They want to be here, and they're excited to be here," Vellucci said. "They want to win and get better and be ready for the NHL camp."

The Hurricanes were on the ice for over an hour on Thursday for the first and likely only formal practice (aside from morning skates, of course) of the week. Because instructional time is so limited, Vellucci and his staff constructed a high-paced, three-part skate that first got the group back skating and feeling the puck on their sticks, then hopped into more structural elements before finishing on special teams work.

"You want to make sure everyone is on the same page," Vellucci said. "You have to get off to a good start. You have to be ready and prepared. We had a great practice today."

"We had good pace today. It was a hard practice with good tempo," McKeown said. "It looked like everyone was sharp and ready to go, and that's a good sign."

While wins and losses are one measurable aspect of this tournament, the developmental facets are just as important. For this group of 23 players, this week can serve as a springboard heading into Hurricanes training camp next week.

"It's a fine line between developing and winning, and we want to make sure we cover both," Vellucci said. "I'm excited to get to know the guys a little bit better."

"None of us are in the NHL, so you've got to feel uncomfortable to get better," McKeown said. "All of our focus coming into this is to make an impression and make the Hurricanes. As a unit, we all have the same goal in mind."

The Canes join the Chicago Blackhawks, New York Rangers and host Detroit Red Wings in the Gordie Howe Division, opposite the Columbus Blue Jackets, Dallas Stars, Minnesota Wild and St. Louis Blues in the Ted Lindsay Division.



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Carolina opens its three-game round-robin slate on Friday at 7:30 p.m. against Detroit. The Canes then face New York at 3:30 p.m. on Saturday and Chicago at 6:30 p.m. on Monday. The tournament concludes on Tuesday as the teams cross divisions to play their standings' equal; the two first-place teams will face off for the Matthew Wuest Memorial Cup at 7:00 p.m.

CarolinaHurricanes.com will have complete tournament coverage in Traverse City, and live streams of each game will be available both on CarolinaHurricanes.com and through the [FOX Sports GO app](#).



Amid raised expectations, Hurricanes prepare for season

- Andrew Schnittker, Sports Editor
- Sep 6, 2017

The start of a new season is a time for optimism for any professional sports team. It's the first chance to see new players suit up, for returners to put into practice what they've worked on to improve from the [previous season](#) and for many teams and fanbases, there appears to be a feeling that the sky is the limit this time of year.

That preseason optimism seems to be at an all-time high for the Carolina Hurricanes this year. Going into year four under general manager Ron Francis and head coach Bill Peters, with the team's young, talented core another year older and wiser, and the moves management has made this summer, Canes fans have a [strong belief](#) this is the year the team's eight-year playoff drought will end. The national media has jumped in on the fun as well. The Hockey News magazine picked the Canes to make the Eastern Conference playoffs as a wildcard this year, and rare is the "teams that improved most this offseason" article that does not include Carolina.

Count the Hurricanes' [returning players](#) among the group that believes this is their time. Forward and alternate captain Jordan Staal has been with the team for five years, and has not seen the postseason in a Carolina sweater. He believes that will change this year.

"I would think so," Staal said. "It was a good summer. I think we brought in a few guys that can complement the young group that we already had, and last year we took steps. We've been in the rebuilding stage where we've continued to take steps. With the couple extra pieces that we've brought in, I'm really excited to see how this year unfolds."

The players have certainly not been sheltered from the buzz around the team this offseason. For forward Jeff Skinner, last year's leading scorer with a career-high 37 goals, hearing what media and opposing players alike have had to say

about the Canes only adds to the anticipation of a new season.

"It's pretty exciting; I think that's probably the best word to describe it," Skinner said. "There's always a lot of buzz, obviously around the draft and free agency. ... To see it all sort of come to fruition in what moves we made was pretty exciting. I think there's been a lot of buzz in media in other cities and players that you train with from other teams. Everyone's comments are all the same, it's all positive things and that's the kind of things you want to here. ... Now it's up to us to get started and get off on the right foot at the start of the season."

At the end of last season, head coach Bill Peters was clamoring for management to have an active summer to fill holes in his lineup. After the offseason moves to acquire goaltender Scott Darling, [defenseman](#) Trevor van Riemsdyk and forwards Justin Williams, Marcus Kruger and Josh Jooris, Peters is very happy with the additions he's been given and ready to get going with his new and improved roster.

"[General manager Ron Francis] did a lot," Peters said. "He moved a lot of pieces, I thought, and did a great job restocking the shelves. I thought our management group did a fantastic job addressing some needs that we had and I'm looking forward to the season."

Those additions are excited about getting started with the Hurricanes as well. For Williams, a new/old face who was part of the Canes' 2006 Stanley Cup Championship team, and someone who has seen a lot of Carolina the past two seasons as a member of the Washington Capitals, he knows this is a team on the rise. He believes he's joined the team at the perfect time, as it prepares to reap the benefits of its growth process.

"Just from what I've seen the past couple years," Williams said. "Every now and then, you need to make that next step."



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Carolina is certainly ready to make that next step. I'm not backing off any of my comments I made earlier. This is a playoff team; we expect to be there."

Some might think all of this talk of postseason aspirations and higher expectations might put undue pressure on a team that is still largely so young. Not according to one of those strong young players, defenseman Jaccob Slavin. As far as he's concerned, the raised expectations for this group will provide a boost this season.

"Opportunity for sure," Slavin said. "I wouldn't say pressure. I think as a group of guys, we know what needs to get done

this year, and within our locker room I think it's all excitement and just ready to go, ready to prove to everybody that we can get back to the postseason."

While a lot can happen over the course of a long NHL season, this Hurricanes team appears poised to do something special this year. If the attitudes of the playoffs are anything to judge by, there's certainly a strong possibility playoff hockey returns to Raleigh for the first time since 2009.



2017 Traverse City Tournament Preview

Written by Nicholas Niedzielski

Published: September 07, 2017

The Carolina Hurricanes are once again sending a team to the annual Traverse City Prospect Tournament. After capturing the tournament championship a year ago, the Carolina squad is similarly stacked with young talent, many of whom will don a Checkers sweater this coming season.

Here are some key things to watch for over the course of the tournament.

The "Veterans"

After turning in impressive first-year campaigns in the AHL, Haydn Fleury and Andrew Poturalski should be poised for strong tournaments. Traverse City is mainly for younger prospects to get the experience, but each team is allotted a number of roster spots for players with one pro season under their belts. Poturalski's offensive abilities carried him to the Checkers' scoring title in 2016-17, creating high expectations for his output as he heads into a tournament against less-experienced players. Fleury became one of the Checkers' most reliable forces on the blue line down the stretch and has positioned himself to compete for a full-time NHL job coming out of [training](#) camp. A strong performance at this tournament could be a nice spring board to that run.

Roland McKeown joins Fleury and Poturalski as the three skaters on Carolina's roster with a full AHL season of experience. The 21-year-old blue liner couldn't necessarily replicate his offensive success from the junior level to the pros, but he grew as a player throughout his rookie season and becoming a steady piece for the Checkers' postseason

run. His return to Traverse City, where he served as [team captain](#) a year ago, presents a chance for him to keep that positive momentum rolling into his sophomore season. Josh Wesley, on the other hand, only spent nine games up with the Checkers but turned in a strong first pro season with the ECHL's Florida Everblades. With an abundance of new defensemen battling for spots on the Charlotte blue line, Wesley could also benefit from the bit of a head start.

Booth Between The Pipes

The Traverse City Tournament will be a kick off of sorts to the pro career of Callum Booth, who is expected to compete among a tight field for a spot in the Charlotte crease. Veteran Jeremy Smith is likely set to take one of those spots as the organization's number three netminder, but the other slot could be up for grabs between Booth, second-year-pro Alex Nedeljkovic and incoming free agent Martin Ouellette. The 20-year-old Booth could use the tournament as a means of getting some momentum behind him before entering the goaltending competition at training camp, and to get a familiarity with what would be his coaching staff in Charlotte. Speaking of...

New Bench Boss

As per usual the Hurricanes' squad in Traverse City will be helmed by the Charlotte Checkers coaching staff, meaning this will be new head coach Mike Vellucci's debut. Unlike the previous two new head coaches to man the bench at Traverse City, Vellucci has more than a passing familiarity with the players on his team. Heading into his fourth year as Carolina's assistant general manager, Vellucci has had a hand in nearly all of the players' development, but the tournament will offer him a chance to become re-acclimated with head coaching, something he hasn't done since 2014.



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New Blood

It appears that this season's iteration of the Checkers could be loaded with high-end rookie talent, and the Traverse City Tournament is a showcase of those incoming players. Nicolas Roy and Julien Gauthier headline the group as touted prospects who physically appear ready to contribute at the pro level, and this tournament will be a nice chance for the duo to separate themselves from other rookies around the league. Warren Foegele is another skilled scorer who broke out last season in the OHL and will be looking to convert his offensive prowess to the next level with Charlotte this season, while Janne Kuokkanen will look to build off his late stint with the Checkers during last season's playoff run.

As two of the older incoming rookies, Spencer Smallman and Steven Lorentz will have a chance to catch the Charlotte coaching staff's eyes heading into training camp as they look to lock up spots on the roster, while camp invitee Nick

Schilkey will look to make an impact after signing a two-way deal with Charlotte this offseason.

Going Back To Back

In the grand scheme of things, wins and losses at a preseason prospect tournament don't carry much weight. But something can be said for the young players joining the pro ranks enjoying some success right off the bat. Last year's squad that captured the Traverse [City championship](#) kicked off their campaign on a high note and those skaters who joined the Checkers rode that wave to a playoff berth. A title defense this season could provide a similar spark.

The Hurricanes open tournament play of Friday, Sep. 8 at 7:30 p.m. against the Red Wings, take on the Rangers on Saturday, Sep. 9 at 3:30 p.m., and wrap up the round robin by facing off with the Blackhawks on Monday, Sep. 11 at 6:30 p.m. They will then play a final game on Tuesday, Sep. 12.

TODAY'S LINKS

<https://www.nhl.com/hurricanes/news/hurricanes-aim-to-defend-traverse-city-title/c-290905284>
http://www.technicianonline.com/sports/article_6bf0b5e4-9373-11e7-8128-2fd2e1fd4ab7.html
<http://gocheckers.com/articles/features/2017-traverse-city-tournament-preview>

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

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CNN/Sports Illustrated / Q&A: New Coyotes Coach Rick Tocchet on a Young Franchise and Lessons From Pittsburgh

ALEX PREWITT

Thursday September 7th, 2017

As his 17-year-old son steered from campus to campus on their summer college tour, Rick Tocchet sat shotgun and went to work. With hours to kill and a new roster to learn, he fired off calls and texts from the open highway, introducing himself to players, setting expectations for his first season coaching the Arizona Coyotes. Upon hanging up from one such chat, Tocchet heard some helpful advice from behind the wheel. "Dad," explained Trevor Tocchet, "just tell them what you like. You don't have to keep mentioning Pittsburgh."

The kid was correct, of course. "Sometimes you forget you keep saying the same thing," Tocchet admits with a laugh. But he simply couldn't help himself. After three seasons and two Stanley Cups as an assistant on the Penguins' bench, Tocchet had gathered a wealth of systematic knowledge and inspiration for what he now plans to implement in Arizona. It was only natural that he draw upon recent experience. "In Pittsburgh, there was a no-excuses kind of thing," he says. "When a player got to the rink, the organization gave that player every opportunity to succeed. I love that. I want to supply that here."

A long road separates Tocchet from replicating what his former team has accomplished in recent years. Last season the Coyotes finished with a 30-42-10 record and 70 points—third-to-last in the Western Conference, third-to-last in the NHL, third-to-last in goals allowed, fourth-to-last in goals scored. But there is hope on the horizon. Under normal circumstances, Max Domi (22 years old), Christian Dvorak (21), Dylan

Strome (20), Clayton Keller (19) and Jakob Chychrun (19) might be attending the same colleges that Tocchet and Trevor toured; instead, they are core members of the rebuild. Goalie Antti Raanta and center Derek Stepan arrived via trade from the Rangers this offseason, while defenseman Oliver Ekman-Larsson remains one of the league's most hidden gems. There is speed, and there is youth. In Tocchet's eyes, this makes his role glaringly obvious.

"Listen, I get it," he says. "We have a lot of youth. We're an inexperienced team. But you've got to let these guys spread their wings and grow. There are going to be mistakes. Absolutely. But if the mistakes are hard-working mistakes, or their hearts are in the right place when they make a mistake, that's fine. I've got no problem with it.

"The way this team is built with youth and speed on the wings, we have to pick the pace up. We've got to be relentless on the puck if we're going to be relevant in the league. A lot of stuff I do is puck possession, a lot of onus on the puck carrier. I'm a big believer in that. When the puck carrier goes, I want everybody to go. I think if you give that latitude to the puck carrier in September, October, he's going to make better decisions as the season goes on, and the skill level of making those plays will get better by putting this guy under pressure."

Pressure? Tocchet knows plenty about that. As a player he won the 1992 Stanley Cup with Pittsburgh and appeared in two more Cup Finals for Philadelphia in the mid-1980s. He was an assistant under Wayne Gretzky in Arizona, a midseason hire as Tampa Bay's head coach in '08-'09, and most recently became a trusted voice for the likes of Phil Kessel and Sidney Crosby in Pittsburgh. And so, less than two weeks before the Coyotes open their inaugural training camp with Tocchet at the helm, he spoke with SI.com about returning to the desert, fielding late-night calls from a future Hall of Famer, and a YouTube video that will haunt him forever.

Sports Illustrated: As you're cruising from college to college, talking and texting your new players, what's the reaction on the other end of the line? What are they telling you?



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Rick Tocchet: Everybody's excited. Obviously I'm excited, the players are excited. I've got young guys. Everybody's going to say the right thing. Even I'm going to say the right thing. Now it's about action—for me, too. If I'm going to preach what kind of coach I'm going to be, the way I want us to play, I have to make sure I'm diligent and doing the proper things to teach these players. It's the same thing. You're telling players I'm excited, I can't wait to do this, do that...well that's great. But it's about action.

Another thing is that there's a lot of anxiety. Imagine: You're 20 or 21, in the best league in the world, there's pressure to stay in the league, let alone compete. So I want to make sure, how can I use that pressure? That's going to be one of my goals early, to try to take the pressure off these kids, that high anxiety. How can I help so they're more at ease, so they're more relaxed? That's going to be a big challenge for me.

SI: How do you do that?

RT: Communication, right off the bat. You've got to let them know where they stand. Maybe one day, it's just about talking, what did you do last night? Watch TV? What'd you watch? Doesn't have to always be about hockey. I think that can ease a player. Just trying to create an ease for the player by that.

SI: Do you think you could coach someone in 2017 the way you were coached when you played? In other words, has the way that coaches individually manage players changed?

RT: I don't want to throw other coaches under the bus back in the day, because I had some great coaches when I played, but I'm not sure that style of coaching could work in today's game. I don't think you can be a real hardass, my-way-or-the-highway, you-better-do-this-or-you're-not-going-to-play type of coach these days.

Players today are smart. They're young, they're smart, they're in shape, they want to do the right thing, but they want answers. They want to know why. Back then, we didn't really ask why sometimes. You just did it. Players today will do it, but you better have a good answer for why we're doing it and you better communicate it with them. If you don't, I don't know if you're going to get the maximum out of that player.

SI: That's been your reputation, that you form personal relationships with players. But now you have an entire roster to learn, and in short order.

RT: Process is the biggest word in sports. Everyone uses it. Process, process, process. And I agree with it. You can't hurry up the process because things aren't going well at the start, or things aren't successful. I think you still have to stick to that process and believe in it. Look at some of the teams in the NHL.

Look at Toronto, two years ago. They didn't win, but they believed in what they were doing, they stayed with the process, and they had a really good year last year. I think those types of teams that have the...god, what's the word...I don't want to say balls...but when you really believe in what you're doing, if things don't go well, there are going to be naysayers and outside pressure on you, but you've got to stick to what you believe in to weather the storm. I think that's something we're going to have to do.

SI: What's it like working for the youngest GM in NHL history [John Chayka]?

RT: He's an outside-the-box thinker, which I like, always trying to push the limits. The way you train, the way you practice. I'm always thinking of different ways to practice. You want your assistant coaches to challenge that out-of-the-box thinking too. Even the way you play. Hey, why not put a defenseman in this situation up here? No one's ever done that before, why not us?

He obviously agrees with what I think system-wise and how to approach these players, especially with communication. As much as systems and X's and O's, maybe 85 percent of the teams do the same thing. It's that 15 percent you want to be different, whether it's out-of-the-box thinking, or how you tweak the neutral zone, or where you want this defenseman to play, or how you want him to defend. Some teams have different ways of implementing things, like how a defenseman plays a puck in the corner. I know some organizations teach different than others. That's the 15 percent difference.

SI: What's an example of an out-of-the-box idea you've been tossing around?

RT: Not to get specific, but the way your defensemen play, the way they defend or the way they join the rush. I think in Pittsburgh, our staff, we had a little different way of playing in the offensive zone, the way our defense were positioned and the way our forwards were positioned on battles in the corner. Especially when [head coach Mike Sullivan] came aboard, as a staff we implemented a system that I didn't see any teams do it early on. Now a lot of teams do it.

SI: What was the latest that Sid ever called you at night to talk?

RT: He would text and say, "You up?" And it'd be 10 o'clock. I'd do the same to him. Whatever the topic, 10 o'clock, 10:30, things like that. He's always thinking hockey, that kid. And that's why I love him. But it wasn't always hockey too. He made me a better coach, and a lot of those phone calls or texts really helped me, for sure.

SI: How come?

RT: Because he keeps you on your toes. "Hey, did you see that in this game tonight, the way this team ran a faceoff on the power play? What do you think?" I'd go, "Shoot, I didn't even see the game," so I'd take a look at the game, come in around nine in the morning and we'd take a look at it together. So I better have some good answers for him or analyze some good stuff with him. It made me a harder-working coach.

SI: You've been in close proximity to some legends over the years. Do you draw on that, things you can take from Wayne Gretzky or Mario Lemieux or Sid, just from being in their orbit?

RT: Mario and Wayne's calmness in high-pressure situations, and the way they react to them is something I've learned over the 20-something years I've been involved in hockey. Or the hockey IQ of Sidney Crosby, watching him ask a question to one of the coaches, or say something in a meeting, or analyze something with the team, his hockey IQ is outstanding. There's a lot of players I've learned over the years with work ethic, leaders in the room, but those three guys have special gifts. To be around those three guys, you can pick out some stuff and learn and implement it, for sure. I'm very lucky.

SI: Do you plan to, for instance, show video of Sid to your younger players in Arizona? How much do you think you'll draw on your Pittsburgh time?

RT: It's going to be a lot early, because the system that I do isn't letter-for-letter to what we did in Pittsburgh, but it's pretty damn close. If I'm going to show players how I want them to defend, I kind of have to show Pittsburgh, right? But I want to gather a library of all good stuff when we start to play and we start getting some good clips of the way we play. Then I'm going to erase those clips and put Arizona Coyotes in. But don't get me wrong, when I watch Arizona, there's a lot of good stuff there too. I think Dave Tippett's a great coach. There's some stuff there I don't even want to change, because they did a hell of a job.

SI: I'm sure plenty of things have changed since your last time in Arizona. What's the same?

CNN/Sports Illustrated LOADED: 09.08.2017

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Sportsnet.ca / Maple Leafs' William Nylander is about to have his price go up

Luke Fox

@lukefoxjukebox

September 7, 2017, 4:33 PM

TORONTO – Watch it again.

Do it.

It's worth another 10 seconds of your life.



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NEWS CLIPPINGS • Sept. 8, 2017

There's this wonderfully fast and warmly paternal snippet from Team Sweden's journey to world championship gold in Cologne this past May.

William Nylander's off-balance, bar-down, bottle-popping snipe past a hapless German netminder and Maple Leafs coach Mike Babcock's priceless reaction to his charge's goal from the bleachers simultaneously encapsulates the sniper's talent and just how pleased the club that drafted him eighth overall must be with his spiking progress.

Hopping from the right side of one elite centre (Auston Matthews) to another (countryman and childhood idol Nicklas Backstrom), Nylander is having himself one helluva 2017.

Since Jan. 1, the artist formerly known as "Snizzbone" has exploded for 37 points in 47 regular-season games; another four points in his first NHL playoff series, a six-game, six-overtimes epic versus Backstrom's Capitals; then, as an encore, an MVP performance for the gold-medal-winning Tre Kronor at the worlds, where he exploded for 10 points in six games.

"You got the feeling of how it is to win. That's lots of fun. I want to do it again," Nylander said Thursday following an informal team practice at MasterCard Centre. His confidence was boosted by the experience.

"[Backstrom is] one of the best passers in the league. It was amazing to get to play with him. He was one of the players I looked up to growing up. It was surreal."

Very real is the dance GM Lou Lamoriello and the Maple Leafs brass have already begun with Nylander's agents at Sports Professional Management.

The 21-year-old is set to become a restricted free agent on July 1. The sides could have theoretically agreed to an extension two months ago, but it's in the player's best interest not to rush.

"They've talked a little bit. We'll see what happens," Nylander said. "I'm just focused on the season right now and want to be prepared for when the season starts."

It's virtually impossible to discuss Nylander's contractual future this summer without pointing westward to Edmonton's Leon Draisaitl, selected five spots ahead of the Swede at the 2014 draft. The Oilers forward leaped from 51 points in his first full NHL campaign to 77 points as a sophomore, earning a massive eight-year, \$68-million extension this summer.

In hindsight, Peter Chiarelli may have wished to haggle that extension about nine months earlier.

As a rookie, Nylander finished sixth in Calder voting and racked up 61 points. With the improvement he flexed in 2016-17's second half, the dominance he displayed at the worlds, and the possible distraction of a second finisher, Patrick Marleau, on Matthews' left side, who's to say 30 goals and 77 points is out of reach for him as a sophomore?

If he stays healthy and dangerous, Nylander's price tag is only going up, which is partly why Lamoriello did well to keep this summer's RFA, Connor Brown, at a \$2.1-million cap hit.

We asked Leafs backup Curtis McElhinney to name the club's most deceptive shooter. Nylander's name was the first to pop out of his mouth.

"Willie's got a great shot," McElhinney says. "It's a combination of stuff: his release, how fast he gets it off, it's hard, it's accurate, and it's not always in the same spot. Some guys have a tendency to shoot in the same spot and you get used to it. He mixes it up."

Like Draisaitl, Nylander was groomed to play the middle but, in Matthews, has drummed up undeniable chemistry skating on the wing of a generational centreman even younger than him.

Babcock thinks of his forwards more in terms of pairs than trios, and with Nylander-Matthews humming as smoothly as a fidget spinner, the coach has shut down the notion of Nylander shifting to centre this October.

But with Tyler Bozak destined for free agency and a 2018 payday unlikely to jibe with the pending Nylander, Marnier and Matthews extensions, it's possible Nylander's defensive game improves to the point where he can drive a scoring line of his own. (Once again: Like Draisaitl.)

As with every good young Maple Leaf under the current regime, Nylander steers conversation about his personal life — summer was simply a

relaxing time back home in Sweden with friends and family — and his individual aspirations toward the common cause.

The sophomore says he "can improve every aspect" of his game. He learned a ton from simply observing the best this past spring at the worlds and plans to channel that into a Leafs campaign as much fraught with anticipation as hope.

"People didn't know much about us last year, so this year we have to be ready. Every game they're gonna be coming for us, so we have to be on our toes," Nylander said.

"We have expectations of our own. We want to go just as far as the fans do."

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Sportsnet.ca / Patrick Marleau takes first strides with Leafs: 'I'm going in blind'

Luke Fox

@lukefoxjukebox

September 6, 2017, 3:16 PM

TORONTO — A joyous, singular "Whoooooop!" erupted from the north end of the Toronto Maple Leafs practice pad.

A smattering of local reporters and members of the franchise's brass — arms hanging over the upper-deck guardrail, eyes affixed on the blue-versus-white scrimmage — were the only ones around to hear the first of many (it better be) goal celebrations for Patrick Marleau, Toronto Maple Leafs left wing.

The greatest shooter in San Jose Sharks history and the NHL's freshest inductee into the 500-goal club had taken a feed from pivot Nazem Kadri off the rush and beat his new No. 1 goalie and former California rival Frederik Andersen high and clean.

"Being the first time, it was a little jittery, but it was fun. It was good to get out there and skate with the guys and finally put some names to some faces. A great bunch of guys," Marleau said Wednesday after his maiden tour with the team that pried him from the only NHL city he'd ever known. "They're going at a good clip already."

The guarantee of a buyout-proof \$18.75 million — including a whoop!-worthy \$7-million Year 1 signing bonus — for playing hockey at ages 38, 39 and 40 helped sway Marleau to move after 1,493 games in teal, but his reasons for joining Toronto aren't strictly financial.

(Although that third year of security, a potential cap-cruncher that Sharks GM Doug Wilson was hesitant to offer, was critical to the player. "That was extremely important. I was looking for it right from the start," Marleau said.)

Marleau's relationship with head coach Mike Babcock (a fellow Saskatchewanian who also made his "informal" skate debut Wednesday, from the stands) stretches all the way back to an all-star game in junior and sparkles with gold-tinged Olympic memories. And the call for Canadians to represent a native city is so real, Marleau couldn't erase the smile off his face when he pulled a Maple Leafs road sweater over his head for the first time this summer.

"It was a combination of a lot of things: the way I look at this team, the way management sees this team going, an opportunity to play with some highly skilled players," said Marleau.

"I haven't won a Cup, so I'm still looking for it — and I'd love to do it with these guys right here."

But which guys exactly?



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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That's the good problem facing high-flying, winger-flush Toronto as training camp officially opens in a little more than a week's time.

Unlike Todd McLellan and Peter DeBoer, Marleau's most recent bench bosses in San Jose, Babcock seldom juggled his top nine through an abnormally healthy 2016-17 campaign.

There's no reason to forecast a JVR-Bozak-Marner breakup, so it's likely we'll see the Leafs' highest-paid forward tried out on the left side of Auston Matthews and William Nylander, Zach Hyman's former spot.

Matthews, who pulled out of an NHL-NHLPA media appearance in New York City with the flu, was absent from Wednesday's scrimmage, and Marleau saw his most ice flanking Kadri and Leo Komarov.

Babcock has ideas but is keeping mum for now. Marleau says he doesn't have a clue who his linemates will be. Seeing as how all three of the Leafs' top centres can make plays and are coming off career years, production-wise, the skill will be difficult to avoid.

"I'm going in blind. I don't know what to expect. I'm going to go in, do my job, work hard, and whatever happens, happens," Marleau said. "When you have the puck and [are] not chasing it, that's when hockey's fun.

"Obviously with Auston, he can score goals. So if you give him the puck, there's a good chance it ends up in the back of the net."

And vice versa.

Despite Marleau's advanced age — the starting and finishing point of all criticisms levied at the UFA signing — he hasn't missed a game in nine seasons and his goal total has climbed in each of the past two.

With a Matthews and/or Kadri feeding him the biscuit (plus time on the NHL's second-best power play), the 30-goal mark he's hit seven times, most recently in 2013-14, hardly seems out of reach.

Off the ice, Marleau's life has been hectic since he wore out a carpet on July 1 and, ultimately, bet on blue, on Lou, on Babcock, on Matthews, on Morgan Rielly — the first Leafs player to call him up and welcome him aboard — and the other names he was matching to faces Wednesday.

His wife, Christina, "bawled like a baby" when she saw her husband in what was supposed to remain an enemy jersey. Three of his four sons started at new school in a new country yesterday, and he's still finding his bearings around his North York home.

"It's all new and exciting and a little stressful," Marleau said, "not knowing where to go or where to get things."

On Etobicoke ice Wednesday, surrounded by and chatting with welcoming teammates, the air felt new and exciting. But stressful?

Whoop no.

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Sportsnet.ca / Erik Karlsson talks injury, Olympics, and missing Marc Methot

Emily Sadler

@EmmySadler

September 7, 2017, 8:27 PM

When the 2017-18 NHL season starts on Oct. 4, so too will Karlsson-Watch as the Ottawa Senators anticipate the return of their captain following off-season foot surgery.

Erik Karlsson joined Tim & Sid on Thursday to shed some light on his health status and said he believes he'll be back in the lineup in October — though it's still too soon to circle a date on the calendar.

"Hopefully I can skate in the near future here and once I do that, we'll have more of a timeline on where things actually are at," explained Karlsson, who underwent a procedure to repair tendons in his left foot in June.

"At the end of the day, it's something I'm not going to rush," he said of his rehabilitation. "I'm going to make sure that when I do come back, I'm going to be 100 per cent and it's not going to affect me moving forward in my career."

Karlsson played through foot fractures (stemming from a blocked shot against the Flyers on March 28) and torn tendons this past spring, helping the Senators reach Game 7 of the Eastern Conference Final against the Pittsburgh Penguins.

"I think I'll be back in October sometime. Whether it's October 4 or if it's October 24, I'm not sure. We're not sure," he said. "But it's coming along and we haven't run into anything unexpectedly from my rehab, so it's all going according to the way we set it up to go."

The 27-year-old is no stranger to injury and the frustrations that can come with a long rehabilitation process. He missed more than two months of action when he underwent surgery to repair a 70 per cent tear in his Achilles tendon in February 2013. (His initial diagnosis indicated he would miss three to four months.)

"When I look back now, my Achilles rehab and injury was only a fraction of what I'm going through right now. This is 10 times worse, just in terms of things I can't do and things I'm going to have to do," Karlsson explained. "I think with the Achilles, I got a little bit lucky somehow that I was able to play as fast as I was. Unfortunately, I came back a little bit too quick probably and I had to deal with it for a year after instead of probably waiting another month and then not having to deal with it for ... 12 months after that."

Karlsson, who has yet to put on skates as his foot continues to heal, said he won't be making that mistake again.

"I'm going to make sure I take my time and not rush things and actually make sure that when I do come back, I'm not going to have to look after it the same way I had to look after my Achilles," he said. "So that's probably why I'm not going to be back as quick as people probably think I will."

Despite his various ailments, Karlsson still managed two goals and 16 assists (some of which were really pretty) as the Senators surged through the post-season.

"I was so caught up in the moment and I didn't really have time to think about what I went through," Karlsson said. "I wanted to play, I wanted to make sure I could play, and I was fortunate enough to be able to play every game and do so well enough to help the team, which was my only concern."

In the interview, which you can watch in full at the top of this post, Karlsson also talked about losing Marc Methot in the expansion draft, his frustration with the NHL's Olympic decision, and how the post-season might have played out differently had he not been injured.

Here are some excerpts:

On missing his friend and defence partner Marc Methot, who was traded to Dallas after being selected by the Vegas Golden Knights in the expansion draft:

"It's going to be extremely different to not have him, not only on the ice but in the locker-room and around the city.

"As sad as I am to see him go ... I wish him all the best in Dallas and I know he's going to do great there and the guys are going to love him there and I'm going to be jealous that they're going to be able to spend more time with him than I will."

On Methot's value and what he brings to his team:

"Being the type of player and the style of hockey that he plays on a nightly basis and having the experience that he does because he's been in the league for such a long time, is something that's very underrated and why he's so highly sought-after from other teams. Because you know how much he means to the team itself even though outwards, or in the media, he might not be the guy that gets the most coverage or the respect and things like that that he actually deserves.



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It's definitely a big loss for us and someone that we're going to miss. I think that we're going to have guys that step up and fill his shoes eventually, but a player like him and the style of play that he plays and being as experienced as he is, I think is hard for people to understand. It's not like he's going to go out there one night and not be good. He's always going to do the things he does to the best of his ability — and to a team, that is invaluable."

On the NHL's Olympic decision, and whether or not the door is really closed:

"Yeah. It's closed. It's over. There's no way we're going to be able to go, unfortunately.

"I think it is a bad decision made by someone that obviously doesn't know the magnitude of how much it actually means for the world of hockey and for the players that actually get the ability to go and play in the Olympics. You can have guys go and ask their owners if they can go and play ... would I like to do that? Yeah, I would like to go and play in the Olympics. Am I going to? I'm not. I'm not going to leave in the middle of February, leave my teammates, go and ask if I can go and do something on my own. So yeah, the door is completely shut, unfortunately, for NHL players to go and play in the Olympics."

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Sportsnet.ca / Paul Maurice says Mark Scheifele will be Jets' captain someday

Emily Sadler

@EmmySadler

September 7, 2017, 11:30 PM

Paul Maurice believes the Winnipeg Jets are heading in the right direction, and Blake Wheeler and Mark Scheifele are two major reasons why.

Fresh off signing an extension to remain behind the bench in Winnipeg, Maurice spoke highly of his club's leadership core — both right now with Wheeler as captain and in the future, with Scheifele at the helm.

"Mark Scheifele is going to be the captain of this hockey team at some point in his career for sure," said Maurice on Prime Time Sports Thursday. "He is, in so many ways, the driver of that offence. Blake is a big part of it; Mark, as a centreman, certainly drives it."

Maurice recognizes the positive influence Wheeler, who was given the "C" last summer after the departure of Andrew Ladd, has had on the young club's locker-room and put him in some pretty elite company.

"Blake Wheeler is absolutely the right guy, and I could talk to you for an hour about this guy," Maurice said before going on to compare the winger to two of the most respected NHL captains he has coached over the years: Ron Francis and Mats Sundin.

"I know that Blake doesn't necessarily put the numbers up of those guys, but in terms of a quality and consistency of man," said Maurice. "There's a level of consistency that these elite guys have, and Blake Wheeler has that. He's special."

Wheeler, 31, has posted consistent numbers over the course of his six full seasons in Winnipeg. He has scored 26 goals — the same number he sports on his sweater, of course — in each of the past three seasons and followed up a career-high 78 points in 2015-16 with an impressive 74 points in 2016-17.

Scheifele, on the other hand, has consistently improved over the course of his young career. In 79 games in 2016-17, the centreman registered a career-high 32 goals and 50 assists for 82 points.

"If you get a chance to spend some time with this guy, this is the guy you want your kids to grow up to be — he is that good a person," Maurice

said of Scheifele. "He does everything he possibly can to become a better hockey player and then does it with a smile on his face. There's lots of those guys who grind through their life and kind of grumble about how hard they've got to work — Mark does all that, and enjoys every minute of it."

Scheifele served as an alternate captain this past season, along with Dustin Byfuglien.

"It's really refreshing in sport to see somebody that young, that mature, that grounded, who can have fun and drive himself every single day," Maurice continued. "You don't have to ask him to get off the couch and take the garbage out — it's out, it's done, he's washed your car, and he's ready to go to work. And he's done it at a young age. He's just great to be around."

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Sportsnet.ca / Canadiens prospect Martin Reway thankful to be playing hockey again

Eric Engels

September 7, 2017, 4:44 PM

BROSSARD, Que. — We asked Martin Reway what it means to him to be resuming his hockey career after an illness put his life in jeopardy and sidelined him for the entirety of the 2016-17 season.

"Everything," he responded. "It means everything."

There was no guarantee this day would come.

It was in preparation for last year's rookie camp that Reway woke up feeling sick, visited with doctors, and was promptly told he had inflammation of the heart. He then spent the next two months in a hospital bed, wondering whether or not he'd ever be able to return to the sport he had dedicated his life to.

So you can only imagine how it must have felt for him to be stepping on the ice exactly one year later as one of 23 hopefuls at Montreal Canadiens rookie camp, which kicked off on Thursday.

"It was nice to be back—even in the dressing room with the boys," Reway said. "[I appreciate] simple things I didn't think about when I was able to be part of a team. Now I'm more excited to have the opportunity to be on the ice and make jokes in the locker-room. It's a simple thing that makes me happy now."

Call it a dose of perspective for a 22-year-old who had everything going for him before real life got in the way.

The five-foot-eight Slovakian, who was a fourth-round pick of the Canadiens in 2013, had shown much promise as a junior. He put up 112 points in 90 games playing for the QMJHL's Gatineau Olympiques and he brought fans out of their seats with his impeccable hand skills and his playmaking ability at the world junior championship.

Reway's first professional experience was a hit, too. He put up 37 points in 34 games in the Czech league, and he followed it up with 15 points in 14 games to begin the 2015-16 campaign before moving to the Swiss league and putting up 21 points in 19 games with the Fribourg Hockey Club.

The Canadiens were impressed, locking him into a three-year contract and giving him hope that he could arrive at training camp last fall and potentially win a spot on the team.

Reway put all the necessary work into his off-season, made all the preparations for a move to Montreal, and just as he was set to depart he noticed something was off.

"A week before camp I started feeling high fever," he said.



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His diagnosis, which came in short order, was grim.

"Some people fight through this, some don't," Reway said.

It took time—Reway said he went four months without being able to do any sort of physical activity—but his body responded to prescribed rest.

The mental strain of dealing with the illness was just as challenging to overcome.

He said he thought about what he might do if hockey was no longer an option, he even took to studying economics, but he refused to entertain the possibility that he wouldn't be able to play again.

As Reway gradually returned to health, doctors confirmed he was no longer at risk.

Then came the challenge of getting back on the ice.

"I was surprised that my hands weren't as bad as I expected," he said of the experience, which took place only five weeks ago. "The legs and the cardio wasn't that good, but that's understandable after a year of not playing. I think it's getting better every day."

It might be a long shot to push Reway onto the Canadiens roster come October, but don't tell him that.

When Reway was asked what he'd say to those who doubt he can ascend to hockey's highest rank this fall, he said: "They will see. I'm pretty sure."

"I'm being given the opportunity to show that I can play with them and to be part of the team," Reway added. "But I don't want to be there just because of what happened and [because] it's a good story or something. I want to deserve my place there."

It'll be a considerable challenge for Reway to prove he belongs, but it's a challenge that pales in comparison to what he's already faced.

He doesn't seem altogether concerned about it.

"I'm just more excited to be on the ice every day," he said. "It's really good for me."

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1073144 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Top 10 Calder Trophy candidates to watch in 2017-18

Rory Boylen

@RoryBoylen

September 7, 2017, 4:37 PM

Beginning today, you're going to start seeing various NHL rookie camps opening, with tournaments set to go in Penticton, B.C., Traverse City, Mich., Toronto and more this weekend.

It's the first glimpse we'll get at some of the top new faces who could take to NHL ice this winter.

With an eye to the future of the league, we're going to take a look at some of the early favourites for the Calder Trophy. You'll be able to see most of these guys in rookie camps, while others have gotten a small taste of the NHL game already.

After posting 94 points in 74 games with the University of North Dakota over two years, Boeser made the jump to the NHL at the end of last season. In nine games he showed well, scoring four times and adding an assist.

The Canucks aren't expected to be a playoff team or anything, but the veteran signings made should at least surround Boeser with players who will help get him an opportunity to put up points, assuming he makes the team out of camp. Some of those veterans have spoken recently about

how impressed they've been with the 20-year-old, including the newly signed Thomas Vanek.

"Brock is awesome," Vanek told NHL.com's Kevin Woodley. "I skated with him quite a bit this summer and told him (Friday) morning, 'You know I might be joining you,' and he seemed fairly excited. ... He's a great kid. What I like about him is even in summer hockey or shinny hockey, if you tell him a little tip here or there, he is the type of kid who will listen and doesn't just shake his head and say, 'I know it better anyways.'"

"He's very impressive."

The Playbook

Daniel Sedin: Coach said Henrik & I weren't good enough last year

Originally aired September 04 2017

There's a chance these signings push Boeser to the AHL at the start of the season, but at some point Vancouver needs to test the players they'll be moving into the future with. And besides, with what little we've seen of Boeser in the NHL so far, he'll be a hard player to keep off the roster.

The MVP of last year's world junior hockey championship, Chabot is a big offensive defenceman with a shot to make the Senators out of camp, especially if Erik Karlsson misses time.

With Karlsson's former defence partner Marc Methot no longer around, if Chabot lands that plum spot alongside the league's most dangerous defenceman it would only boost his Calder outlook.

Last year, Columbus's Zach Werenski was the top rookie candidate from the blue line and he put up 11 goals and 47 points. Could Chabot reach those totals? While Werenski wasn't really a threat to win the award with those numbers, consider that this rookie class is unlikely to have somebody put up 40 goals as Toronto's Auston Matthews did.

With Chabot, there is also a chance the Senators send him to the AHL to develop for most or all of 2017-18. The team currently has seven NHL defencemen under contract and Chabot would benefit more from playing a considerable role for Binghamton instead of third-pair minutes with the Senators. Still, Chabot's upside is considerably higher than most of Ottawa's current blue line.

Whenever he makes the jump, the offensive upside Chabot has will make him an instant contender for rookie of the year.

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.

After going through last season (and the one before) as the top-ranked prospect in his class, Nolan Patrick ended up going No. 2 to Philadelphia behind Nico Hischier. Injuries have been a major concern around Patrick, but when he's healthy he's a terrific two-way centre. A year before he was draft eligible, Patrick put up 102 points in 72 games for the WHL's Brandon Wheat Kings.

Recently, the top two picks in a draft have been favoured in any Calder Trophy talk ahead of their rookie seasons, but it's not so clear cut this year, especially with Patrick. Not only are injuries a factor, but GM Ron Hextall has opened up the possibility that Patrick goes back to junior in 2017-18, to star for Brandon and get a shot with Canada at the WJC.

"He's got to do the same thing as all the other kids. He's got to come in and show us that he can help make us a better team and that it's the right thing for us," Hextall told Sam Carchidi of Philly.com. "It's truly that simple. We've got numbers. We don't have to have him. We've got other kids who can play and we have veterans, so we're in a good position with him."

The good news is if Patrick does earn a spot on the team in October, he'll get plenty of opportunity and have solid producers around him. Remember, although Philadelphia picked second overall, they missed the playoffs by just seven points and finished 19th overall in the league. Patrick could end up playing with the likes of Wayne Simmonds, Travis Konecny or Valtteri Filppula. He could see a good amount of minutes, have an outside shot at penalty kill time and put up enough points to make a really well-rounded case.

He may not have gone first overall, but there's a very good reason why the hype followed him for years leading up to last June's draft.



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Prior to last year's WJC, Hischier was floating around the middle of first-round draft predictions, but his performance for Switzerland shot him up the charts, and follow-up performances in the 'Q' backed it all up.

The Devils scored just 180 goals last season, which landed them 28th in the NHL, so they'll be looking for any way to bring a little more punch. And with Travis Zajac out for the next four-to-six months, there's an opening in the top six that Hischier is a natural fit for.

Imagine a world in which Hischier centres Taylor Hall and you can see the kind of opportunity that may be in front of the rookie. If that doesn't happen, then having Marcus Johansson fresh off a breakout 58-point season isn't bad either.

The worst-case scenario for Hischier's Calder outlook might be that he ends up on the third line and doesn't get as many minutes as he otherwise could.

Don't sleep on the seventh overall pick from the 2016 NHL Draft.

Keller is a dynamic scorer who led the USA with 11 points in seven games at the WJC last season and posted 45 points in 31 games as a Boston University freshman. He even got a taste of the NHL in three games at the end of last season, posting two assists.

"Definitely, there's no other option for me. I'm going to play with the big club," Keller told NHL.com. "That's what I worked for all summer, I just have to go out there now and do what I do. I want to have an impact right away. I don't want to just be there to be there. I want to have an impact right away, so that's one of my goals."

While the Coyotes are building with youth and speed, the team also made some noticeable additions this summer that should move the needle at least a little this season. By adding Keller to the mix, the offence should see a boost as Arizona trots out a pretty exciting young core that could push the pace.

"He's a guy we wanted all along," GM John Chayka told AZCentral.com after picking Keller in 2016. "It's no secret we're trying to build our team with speed ... and he's an exciting player, a dynamic player. He's smart, creative. He's going to be a real joy for our fans for a long time."

Picked three slots behind Keller in 2016, Jost is another dynamic, speedy scorer coming out of college. The University of North Dakota alum got in six NHL games at the end of last season, scoring a goal.

Now, the Avs were the worst team of the salary cap era just last season and while their outlook remains grim in 2017-18, we should be looking for some kind of bounce-back from the offence. As poor and thin as the team is on the blue line and in net, the forward unit is still largely made up of high first-round draft picks with significant offensive upside.

Jost has a chance to play with the likes of Mikko Rantanen, Gabriel Landeskog or maybe even Nathan MacKinnon. If he slots in as the second-line centre, it could be just the right mix for Jost to take off in his rookie season. And if the team ever does trade away Matt Duchene, it could provide him an opportunity to move up even higher.

The thing about Barzal is that he's not a scorer, so his Calder case almost relies on having one or two good wingers who can score beside him. Is that Andrew Ladd? Is it Josh Bailey? Is it fellow rookie and Calder candidate Josh Ho-Sang?

Barzal scored a mere 10 goals in junior last season, but added 69 assists in just 41 games so he sees the ice extremely well and he dominated junior hockey. Making that next step to the NHL as a passer isn't an easy thing to do and his production will depend on the situation. If Barzal is the team's second-line centre and New York gets back to the playoffs in this all-important John Tavares contract year, you can bet Barzal would have had a strong rookie year.

"I think I'm ready to come in and be an impact player in the NHL," Ho-Sang told Tim and Sid on Sportsnet. "I want to go up against the best players in the league every night."

When rookies hit the NHL for the first time, one of the biggest challenges is maintaining their confidence over the grind of an 82-game season. All the ups and the downs and the pressure around them can take its toll mentally on a player and affect his play on the ice and in the box scores. But if there's one thing you can say for sure about Ho-Sang, it's that he's full of confidence, so don't expect that to be a problem for him.

Ho-Sang played 21 NHL games last season, four games short of qualifying for his rookie season. He posted four goals and 10 points,

which is about a 40-point pace and could be enough to put him in the conversation. And if you consider that experience should help give him a boost in 2017-18, there's little reason to doubt his inclusion here.

Ho-Sang is fast and creative, which makes him a candidate for the second line behind Jordan Eberle and therefore secondary defensive matchups. And if there is any chance at all that he would see time with Tavares, his Calder case would obviously get a major boost.

But this candidate is driven to prove all his doubters wrong and to make the players around him better. He has the raw skill to excel and a positive, determined mindset, which all makes Ho-Sang an intriguing pre-season Calder candidate.

"If your team hasn't made the playoffs and you change that — like Connor — that's greatness," Ho-Sang told Sportsnet's Luke Fox. "His team hadn't made the playoffs in [10] years and he goes to the team. His first full season, they make the playoffs. That, in my eyes, is greatness. That's what I'm chasing. I want to win as many Stanley Cups as I can. That's my focus. If individual trophies come along, it's nice. But if I can be a winner my whole career, it's a better life to live."

Here comes another dynamic forward with explosive speed, who could walk into a prime position with a team on the upswing.

Connor was the 17th overall pick in 2015 and proceeded to tear up the competition at the University of Michigan with 71 points in 38 games. Last season, he left college to join the pro ranks and when he wasn't quite ready for the NHL jump after posting five points in 20 games, the Jets sent him to AHL Manitoba where he scored 44 points in 52 games to finish as the team's second-highest scorer.

Will say, I liked some of their prospects, Kyle Connor most of all. Jack Roslovic looked good, Petan looked good.

The 20-year-old has been a scorer at every level and played a few minor hockey years with Detroit's Dylan Larkin, who he outscored with Belle Tire despite being younger. Now, he could step into a top-six role with the Jets, who again come into a season with heightened expectations. Team captain Blake Wheeler talked openly about this needing to be a playoff year for Winnipeg.

Connor has a shot to play with the likes of Wheeler and Bryan Little, and perhaps even Mark Scheifele somewhere along the way. With his skill set and situation, he could hit big in his rookie season.

CHARLIE MCAVOY, BOSTON BRUINS

With Zdeno Chara entering his age 40 season and not as effective as he was in his prime anymore, the Bruins need to find the next group of blueliners who will take over so the team can keep making playoff pushes, and maybe even get back into that Cup contender status.

As we saw with Brandon Carlo during last regular season, the team isn't shy to give a worthy rookie opportunity and tons of minutes. Carlo was third on the team with an average of 20:38 per game as he played a big role.

In the playoffs, with Carlo and Torey Krug out with injuries, 19-year-old Charlie McAvoy stepped up and averaged 26:11 per game. He played all six games of Boston's series with Ottawa, which was also his first taste of NHL action.

The Boston University alum scored three points in the series and burst onto the Bruins scene much the same way Krug did in 2013. He used that playoff run as a launch point for his career and has been the team's go-to defender virtually ever since. Can McAvoy fill a similar role?

In two years at BU, McAvoy notched 51 points in 75 games so he brings that offensive upside needed for a defenceman to get into the Calder discussion. Still, it's not often someone from this position ends up winning the award, so minutes also end up being a huge factor. McAvoy is a lock to make the Bruins out of camp, but his role is a little less certain. One thing he does have going for him, though, is having a leader like Chara in his corner.

"He sat next to me in the locker room at practice, on the road at games, everywhere I was, he was right next to me," McAvoy said of Chara. "Getting to play with him, I can't even find the words. To play next to a guy like that, I can probably credit him for the success that I've had."

McAvoy may face more of an uphill battle for the Calder than some of the scoring forwards on this list, but his potential opportunity makes him a



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candidate. Even if he doesn't win it, the Bruins will be getting another exciting young player this season.

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1073145 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Time is now for Jets to prove patience pays off

Mark Spector

@sportsnetspec

September 7, 2017, 11:42 AM

PENTICTON, B.C. — Patience. In life, it is a sought after quality.

Same thing in sports — unless you become too patient. Then it appears that an organization might not be doing enough to get better. That it has fallen in love with a bad hand, or the wrong people.

Both sides of that theory are being discussed at length in Winnipeg today, where the National Hockey League's Jets announced multi-year contract extensions for both general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff and head coach Paul Maurice.

The press release had been expected for months. It is how the Jets operate, so really, nobody will be surprised by the news.

And thus the discussion.

It is fair to question whether the Jets are that rare wise and patient organization in a world of teams that fire coaches and front office people after only a hint of failure. Or is owner Mark Chipman married to these men on a personal level, and allowing himself to overlook an overt lack of success since the Jets set up shop in Winnipeg after arriving from Atlanta six seasons ago?

Let's face it, one playoff season in six years for the only GM these Winnipeg Jets have ever known is not the definition of success. And even though it is clear the Jets are trending in the right direction, are both men not in that territory that another blah season like the 2016-17 campaign should cost them their job?

This will be Maurice's fourth full season behind the Jets bench. He's got a playoff worthy team in front of him now, with (hopefully) enough goaltending that the Jets' Achilles heel will not show itself again this season.

But what if the Jets miss again? Surely, one playoff year in four seasons, with two under-achieving seasons on the back end would be enough to cost almost any head coach in the NHL his gig. Would it not?

But in Winnipeg, Maurice will have just completed the first of a multi-year extension.

"I wasn't really surprised (about the signings)," Jets centre Bryan Little told the Winnipeg Sun on Wednesday. "The organization feels they're part of the future and everyone's happy with the way things are going and the direction the team's going.

"It's one thing if you're on a decline and things aren't looking up and everyone's struggling and it's not a good situation to be in," he added. "But that's far from what's going on here. Everyone's looking towards the future and this team's only going to get better and better.

"Those are guys you want to have behind your bench and in your office, working for you, when that's going on."

It cannot be denied that the Jets are on the come. But haven't we been saying that for a few seasons now?

Well, that's the other side of the coin, isn't it?

After allowing Cheveldayoff and Maurice to brew this broth for a long as they have, would it be foolhardy to walk into the kitchen and replace the two chief cooks? It does seem so.

There isn't a more homegrown, patient organization in the NHL than Winnipeg, a team that has drafted exceptionally well, kept the core of its front office together, and for a long while would not even pull off a trade of NHL players, so cautious was Cheveldayoff in the GM's chair.

So let's settle at this: Patience, thus far, has been a strong quality for the Jets. But they are 'here' now; a genuine contender in the Central Division, if only on paper. The time has arrived when Winnipeggers will see some payback for all of this careful and coddling development.

The success must materialize on the ice and in the standings, however, now. This season. Not next year, or the year after.

If the Jets don't make the playoffs and compete in Round 1 — they were swept by Anaheim in their only playoff appearance in the spring of 2015 — then extensions be damned. It's time for change in Winnipeg, regardless of who has how many years left on their contracts.

The Jets have potential, but you know what they say about potential. It means you haven't done anything yet.

It's time for the Winnipeg Jets — for Kevin Cheveldayoff and Paul Maurice — to do something.

Not later.

Now.

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Sportsnet.ca / Senators' Erik Karlsson on return date: 'I'm not really sure'

Sportsnet Staff

@Sportsnet

September 7, 2017, 1:10 PM

Ottawa Senators captain Erik Karlsson is not skating at the moment and says he doesn't have a timetable for a return to the ice following off-season foot surgery.

Karlsson, who was a finalist for the Norris Trophy as the NHL's top defenceman this past season, underwent a procedure in June to repair tendons in his left foot. He's reluctant to say exactly when he'll return to game action.

"I'm not really sure," Karlsson told Sportsnet's Tim & Sid during an interview that will air Thursday at 5 p.m ET. "Hopefully I can skate in the near future. Once I do that, we'll have more of a timeline on where things actually are at. But at the end of the day, it's something I'm not going to rush.

"I'm going to make sure when I do come back, I'm going to be 100 per cent and it's not going to affect me going forward in my career."

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Sportsnet.ca / 2017-18 NHL Team Preview: St. Louis Blues

Luke Fox

@lukefoxjukebox

September 7, 2017, 10:00 AM



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Sept. 8, 2017

The St. Louis Blues' 2017 off-season began way back on Feb. 27, when GM Doug Armstrong dealt point-producing defenceman Kevin Shattenkirk to Washington.

A playoff team selling off a chunk of its core signaled a new approach in St. Louis: Yes, we want the Cup now, but we're keeping one eye on the future!

The Blues made more racket on draft night, trading pricey defensive centre Jori Lehtera to Philly for the younger, more dynamic Brayden Schenn, then parting with loveable tough guy Ryan Reaves in order to scoop hotly tipped Russian prospect Klim Kostin in the first round.

In order to lock up top-pair D-man Colton Parayko in contract negotiations, the Blues essentially stood pat on July 1, and the loss of David Perron (via expansion), Patrik Berglund (shoulder surgery) and Nail Yakupov (unqualified) raises questions about their wing depth come puck-drop.

The greatest shift will be behind the bench. Mike Yeo takes over his first training camp after a bizarre transitional experiment that ended early with the mid-season dismissal of long-serving Ken Hitchcock. (Yeo guided the club to an impressive 22-8-2 record once he took sole control.)

Craig Berube, Steve Ott, Darryl Sydor, David Alexander, Daniel Tkaczuk, and Barret Jackman all join an overhauled coaching staff that saw five hockey men lose their jobs.

The new faces inherit an old mission: Stop being the oldest active NHL franchise to never have lifted the Stanley Cup.

UP-AND-COMING PLAYER TO WATCH

A fun game to play is, "Who will be this season's Leon Draisaitl? Or David Pastrnak?" A young forward in his second or third season is bound to put it all together make the leap from good to great.

You could do worse than bet on Robby Fabbri.

The 21-year-old blew out his left ACL in February and was shut down after scoring 11 goals and 29 points in 51 games. Yeo plans to test Fabbri, a dangerous playmaker off the left flank, at centre. If he can stay healthy, the Mississauga, Ont., native could cruise past the 20-goal and 50-point marks and emerge as the heir apparent to Paul Stastny, who's 31 years old entering a critical contract year and may face competition this season for the 1C spot.

Fabbri is the youngest Blue guaranteed to be on the opening-night roster. Just in case he needed extra motivation, Fabbri is entering the final year on his entry-level deal and his performance this season should directly impact his slice of St. Louis's salary-cap pie going forward.

The legion of Blues aged 30 and over — Stastny, Alexander Steen, Vladimir Sobotka, Kyle Brodziak, Chris Thorburn, Jay Bouwmeester, Carl Gunnarsson — stiff-arm Father Time, continue contributing to a tough Central Division outfit, and allow the next wave of St. Louis hockey — Kostin, Jordan Kyrou, Tage Thompson, Jordan Schmaltz — more time to develop in the minors.

Yeo and his staff implement a quick-strike offence and generate more than 2016-17's 28.4 shots per game (26th overall) while maintaining top-10 special teams (sans Shattenkirk) and a nasty, defence-first edge.

The club maintains pace with Nashville, Chicago and Minnesota in what should be an airtight Central race until Berglund returns in December to deliver a boost, heads into the playoffs healthy and, after years of being taken for granted, plays spoiler.

Will the real Jake Allen please stand up?

Let's be honest. Yeo's new staff could implement a speedier transition game, the Blues could enjoy the fruits of three 20-goal scorers, Tarasenko could squeak into the Hart conversation, Parayko could earn every penny of his \$5.5 million cap hit, but if Allen can't stop the puck, it will all be for naught.

Allen, 27, buckled under the pressure of his first season as the undisputed No. 1 goalie in Missouri — to the point where he sat at home during a road trip to gather his composure and sought the counsel of Martin Brodeur. It would be difficult to argue that the defence in front of Allen improved in 2017, with the departure of Shattenkirk and a reliable but heavy-mileage Bouwmeester now 33 years and 1,071 NHL games old.

But the Allen we saw in the post-season (1.96 goals-against average, .935 save percentage) looked like a man reformed. If Jake the Snake refuses to shed the thick skin he sported in April, we're not only talking playoffs but Cup contender.

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1073148 Websites

TSN.CA / Sens reduce arena capacity in attempt to change perception around club

By Ian Mendes

Fresh off one of the most successful seasons in franchise history, the Ottawa Senators are making a significant change to their home arena this fall.

On Thursday, the club announced it was reducing the seating capacity inside Canadian Tire Centre by eliminating roughly 1,500 seats. Senators' officials are hoping that by lowering the seating capacity to approximately 17,000, they will create more of a demand for tickets in the marketplace.

"Our building is too big for the market," said Senators president Tom Anselmi. "Our upper bowl is way bigger than people are building nowadays. That's what drove the thinking. How do we create scarcity? How do we make it a little smaller and how do we make it a little easier to fill the place?"

The new look inside the Canadian Tire Centre has the top six rows in the upper bowl behind each net marked off with black draping.

"They are permanently out of the manifest," Anselmi said. "They are the cheapest seats in the building and they were the ones that weren't selling."

Ian Mendes talks to Ottawa Senators President and CEO Tom Anselmi to talk about removing 1500 seats at the Canadian Tire Centre.

The Senators created headlines during their run to the Eastern Conference Final in the spring when they struggled to host sellout crowds during multiple home games. The club became a punchline across the country as hockey fans couldn't understand how a Canadian NHL team could have attendance issues deep into the Stanley Cup playoffs.

Anselmi insists the idea to reduce the seating capacity was not a direct response to the disappointing ticket sales in the playoffs. The club president pointed out the Senators had more fans attending their third-round games than the Nashville Predators — who were generating nationwide headlines in a positive way because of their boisterous home crowds. An official sellout at the Bridgestone Arena in Nashville during the playoffs last year was just over 17,300 fans. Meanwhile, in Ottawa, the Senators drew plenty of criticism after 18,111 showed up to Game 6 against the Pittsburgh Penguins — which was a few hundred shy of an official sellout.

"People want to be part of a full house. People don't want to be part of something that has one thousand seats available," said Anselmi. "They want to be part of something that is full."

By lowering the number of seats inside the building, the Senators are hoping to erase the perception that they don't have enough fans in this market.

"If you've got less product to sell, it's easier to sell," Anselmi said. "If people think there is a sellout, there's more demand. It's all about supply and demand."

The plan is still in place for the team to move to a downtown location at LeBreton Flats around 2021, although there are still significant hurdles to clear on that front. But one thing the club is sure about is the new arena will have a smaller seating capacity than Canadian Tire Centre — maybe in the range of 16,500 — so that it aligns better with the size of this



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Sept. 8, 2017

marketplace. Reducing the number of available seats at the current arena will serve as a good test drive for the new facility.

The Senators declined to confirm their actual season ticket base for the 2017-18 season, but it's believed the club has the smallest base of any team in Canada by a wide margin. Some estimates pegged the number at fewer than 8,000 season ticket holders last season, which meant it wasn't uncommon for the Senators to be left with an inventory of 10,000 seats to try and sell on a per-game basis.

"When your season ticket base is so small, you've got so many single tickets to sell and it's just difficult to do," added Anselmi. "If the venue is too big for the market, then we have to make it easier for the market to fill it."

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TSN.CA / Senators remove 1,500 seats from arena

TSN.ca Staff

The Ottawa Senators have removed approximately 1,500 seats from the Canadian Tire Centre in order to drive demand in season ticket sales according to Brett Wallace. They have one of the lowest season ticket bases in the NHL.

The Sens says they want fewer seats to help drive demand and increase season tickets. Sens have one of the lowest season ticket bases in NHL

The change will be seen at the top of both ends.

In 2016-17, the Sens sat at No. 21 overall in attendance, with an average of 16,744 per game. That was slightly down from their numbers a season before, ranking 17th at 18,084. The team also had close to 2,000 seats left empty for a second-round playoff game.

The Senators also renovated some of the banners hanging in their arena in an effort to "reflect the appropriate look and feel of those teams."

Ottawa is set to open the season at home against the Washington Capitals on Thursday, Oct. 5.

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TSN.CA / Bennett deal buys Flames a bit more time

By Travis Yost

The Calgary Flames and restricted free-agent forward Sam Bennett agreed to a two-year deal with an annual average value of \$1.95 million on Wednesday afternoon, ending one of the longer contract negotiations of the off-season.

Contractually speaking, Bennett has an interesting profile. On the positive side of the ledger, he's a former fourth-overall pick with obvious draft pedigree, is still just 21, and has already had reasonable success at the NHL level. However, I think what might have held him back in his first negotiation go-around – and why he ultimately signed a bridge deal – are his scoring rates.

There are obvious point production expectations put on forwards taken that high in the draft. In Bennett's case, the scoring hasn't materialized the way Calgary likely envisioned. His rookie campaign saw a solid 18 goals and 18 assists (in 77 games played), but his sophomore year

ended with a bit of a whimper (13 goals and 13 assists in 81 games played).

Bennett's role, it should be noted, did change a bit in year two. He was dropped into more of a defensive depth role without a ton of help. His most common wingers last season were Alex Chiasson, Kris Versteeg, and Troy Brouwer, and most of his defensive support came from Deryk Engelland and T.J. Brodie. It goes without saying that this isn't exactly a Murderers' Row of offensive weaponry, so perhaps it's understandable that his scoring hasn't picked up as quickly as some would have anticipated.

But scoring is just one piece of a player's overall game. Although it's the biggest driver of where contracts tend to end up, it doesn't really give us the full story of where a player's game is (or isn't).

The key question facing the Flames: What kind of player is Sam Bennett right now and what reasonable forecast can we draw up based on the 159 games of NHL experience he has accumulated? The bridge deal buys the team more time to figure out what they have, but the clock is now effectively ticking.

One of the ways I like to highlight a player's strengths and weaknesses is to compare his player profile to every other player at his situation. Below, I've pulled out 12 key performance indicators to measure Bennett's career. The percentages simply show how many players Bennett grades out better than over the two-year interval. I like to think of the percentage marks as quarter markers – a player better than 25 per cent of forwards might be a solid depth option, a player better than 50 per cent of forwards might be a middle-six option, and a player better than 75 per cent of forwards could be knocking on first/second-line duties.

Here's what Bennett looks like:

The encouraging piece here is that Bennett – who has played some pretty tough, defence-oriented minutes – has been able to slow down opposing attackers. The rate at which he suppresses shot attempts versus other forwards (CA60) or even his own teammates (CA60 RelTm) is where he grades out pretty well. (It's worth noting his goal against numbers pale in comparison – at least some of this can be attributed to the fact that Flames goaltenders have been hit-or-miss at best in stopping shots.)

Outside of those numbers, Bennett comes off a bit underwhelming. His scoring rates are that of a middle-six forward. He doesn't generate a lot of shots. He also doesn't appear to be much of a play-driver or playmaker for his teammates – Calgary's on-ice goal rates with Bennett on the ice are appallingly low for a player who once scored 91 points in 57 games with the OHL's Kingston Frontenacs. It's worth repeating Bennett hasn't played many minutes with high-end, dynamic snipers – they, to some degree anyway, are probably responsible for the lack of offence.

Calgary needs to figure out how big a role Bennett's linemates have played. Bennett has probably been the best player on his line on many occasions, which is never an ideal situation for a young forward. But Bennett's also been shielded from playing a ton of minutes and playing consistently against the other team's best forwards. In a role where Bennett has been given the keys to drive his teammates around, he's been unspectacular.

It will be interesting to see over the next two seasons if Calgary tries to move Bennett up the lineup to see what they truly have in the kid, or if they are content with him working consistent third-line duty in a role filled with checking wingers. To me, bridge deals make sense when there is a great unknown. In Calgary's case, you have the ultimate unknown, reconciling unimpressive numbers against a tough environment without a lot of teammate help.

If Calgary chooses the latter option, though, you do have to wonder if Bennett remains a viable trade piece. This is a Flames organization that believes it can compete now, and Bennett – a young player with tremendous draft pedigree – could be a desirable piece for another team, especially on a cap-friendly contract.

At some point in the not-so-distant future, Calgary will have to make a final decision on what they have in Bennett. Keep an eye on this situation, especially as we approach next year's trade deadline.

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CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Sept. 8, 2017

1073151 Websites

TSN.CA / Flames sign Bennett to two-year, \$3.9 million deal

Staff Report

The Canadian Press

CALGARY — The Calgary Flames signed forward Sam Bennett to a two-year contract on Wednesday with an annual average value of \$1.95 million.

Bennett played 81 games with Calgary last season, recording 13 goals and 13 assists for 26 points along with 75 penalty minutes in the regular season. He also had a pair of goals in four playoff games.

The 21-year-old Bennett has played in 159 career NHL games, scoring 31 goals and adding 32 assists while accumulating 112 penalty minutes.

Bennett was Calgary's first-round pick in the 2014 NHL draft.

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1073152 Websites

USA TODAY / Hurricane Irma: Panthers to evacuate area; other NHL players make plans with storm approaching

Kevin Allen, USA TODAY Sports Published 3:51 p.m. ET Sept. 7, 2017 | Updated 3:52 p.m. ET Sept. 7, 2017

NEW YORK — Florida Panthers owners have chartered a plane to fly 90 employees, players and family members from south Florida to the Boston area on Friday to escape the anticipated weekend arrival of Hurricane Irma.

"Scary time in South Florida," Panthers center Vincent Trocheck said on Twitter, thanking owners Vincent Viola and Doug Cifu for taking care of the Panthers' group.

Panthers Director of Communications Adelyn Biedenbach said as many as 20 pets could also with the group.

"I feel sorry for everyone," Panthers winger Jonathan Huberdeau told USA TODAY Sports at the NHL/NHL Players' Association player media tour in New York. "I hope everyone stays safe and I hope it changes direction at the last minute."

Huberdeau has changed his plans to fly to Florida this weekend to prepare for training camp.

"I think everyone (on the Panthers) is leaving (Florida)," Huberdeau said.

Biedenbach said it's possible the Panthers could start training camp in Massachusetts, depending upon what happens. "Nothing has been decided," Biedenbach said.

Philadelphia Flyers defenseman Shayne Gostisbehere is from Florida, and he said at the media tour that he is paying to have his parents, grandparents, an aunt and uncle and their five dogs fly out of Florida. They are from Pembroke Pines.

"Just got them out of there," Gostisbehere said. "Had to do it."

Tampa Bay Lightning center Tyler Johnson was at the player media tour, but left early to return home to prepare for the hurricane.

USA TODAY LOADED: 09.08.2017