



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 9, 2019

## THE NEWS & OBSERVER

### Hurricanes sign defenseman Jake Gardiner to a four-year contract

By Luke DeCock

With an unexpected late-summer free agent signing that put them over the salary cap, for the moment, the Carolina Hurricanes' blue line got a lot better Friday.

And a lot more crowded.

The Hurricanes added Jake Gardiner, formerly of the Toronto Maple Leafs, on a four-year contract worth an average of \$4.05 million per season, a relative bargain for a top-two-pairing defenseman who can quarterback the power play.

"He's a top-four defenseman who gives us some flexibility," Hurricanes general manager Don Waddell said Friday in a telephone interview.

Gardiner, 29, had 30 points in 62 games for the Maple Leafs last season and as a left shot fills a void on a powerful defense that happens to be overloaded with right shots (Dougie Hamilton, Brett Pesce, Justin Faulk). Gardiner could be especially useful on the power play, where Hamilton, Faulk and Slavin never really clicked last season, about the Hurricanes' only weakness on the blue line.

"It's got to be one of the best (defenses) in the league already," Gardiner said on a teleconference Friday. "I can help a little bit, help on the power play if that's the way they see me. They're really good on the right side. Maybe I can help on the left."

The "flexibility" Waddell mentioned is critical because Faulk is entering the final year of his contract, and with five defensemen capable of playing on the top two pairings, the Hurricanes now have the security to trade Faulk at will if they can't re-sign him.

Of course, last summer's free-agent signing of Calvin de Haan was supposed to do the same thing, and Faulk ended up staying with the Hurricanes and

having a terrific season. He's still here, for now, while de Haan is not.

The Hurricanes had been talking with Gardiner all summer as the Maple Leafs continued to struggle with salary cap issues, especially with restricted free agent Mitch Marner unsigned, and couldn't bring Gardiner back. With training camp a week away, Gardiner's asking price dropped to the point where it became a no-brainer for the Hurricanes, who were willing to give him the longer-term deal other teams were not. While his wife worried that they might have to go to Russia as the season approached, Gardiner said he remained relaxed throughout the long summer.

"A lot of teams wanted to do a one-year or two-year deal," Gardiner said. "I didn't really feel like going through this again. It's a really good opportunity with a really good team."

The Hurricanes are now almost \$2 million over the salary cap, with restricted free agent Saku Maenalanen still unsigned, but have options. They could carry fewer than 23 players to start the season, shuttle backup goalie James Reimer and his \$3.13 million salary to and from the AHL, or make a trade — dispatching Faulk or an extra forward — before opening night to get under the cap.

But they also have Hamilton under contract for two more seasons, Gardiner for four, Pesce for five and Jacob Slavin for six, all for less than \$6 million per season each. They also added highly sought college free agent Chase Priskie this summer and traded de Haan for depth defenseman Gustav Forsling, to go with returnees Haydn Fleury and Trevor van Riemsdyk. With Faulk, that's essentially nine NHL defensemen, assuming Priskie is ready for the NHL by midseason or so.



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## THE ATHLETIC

### The Hurricanes add Jake Gardiner because they could and ... why not?

By Sara Civian

When a source told The Athletic this week that the Hurricanes were one of three teams in the final running for defenseman Jake Gardiner, the first question that came to mind has become a reflex:

Why?

The second, immediately after, is new:

Why the heck not?

And now that Gardiner, 29, signed a super reasonable four-year, \$4.05 million AAV deal with the Hurricanes on Friday, the second question might start coming before the first.

It's a phenomenon on the rise, bigger name NHL free agents coming to Raleigh.

It started last offseason with Calvin de Haan, who chose the Hurricanes for a solid four-year, \$4.55 million contract and vibes that reminded him of his friendly hometown. When the Canes unexpectedly traded him to the Blackhawks after the 2019 draft, though, some folks worried UFA interest around here was fragile enough to break.

Welp. Tell that to Chase Priskie, Ryan Dzingel and now Gardiner, who the Canes signed just because he's a good player and they could. The concept is obvious, but hasn't always been the protocol around here.

For all of the drama this Hurricanes offseason and Tom Dundon-led front office have weathered (or at times created) — the Sebastian Aho offer sheet, several lateral moves away from the organization, Don Waddell negotiating a contract via interviewing for the Wild GM position — the on-ice product has only improved.

Although they could easily adjust the roster and fix it, and although trades are still on the table, the Hurricanes are over the cap for the first time in the salary cap era.

Their commitment to spending on the roster, Rod Brind'Amour at the helm — and yeah, the nice weather — have attracted the free agents.

A source told The Athletic that the Canes initially checked in with Gardiner in June, then talks became serious over the past month. Gardiner said other

teams pursuing him wanted a one- or two-year deal and he wanted something more long term.

"I saw a team on the rise and a Cup contender for sure, my wife really liked the area, it just seemed like a really good fit," Gardiner said Friday. "The leadership too, with Brind'Amour as the coach and even Tom Dundon and Don Waddell, it just seemed like a great fit. ... The blueline's gotta be one of the best in the league already, hopefully I can help the power play out and I think I'll be able to help out the left side a bit."

The Canes have famously struggled on the power play, so they'll hope a mainstay on the Leafs power play, Erik Haula and Martin Necas can give them a boost next season.

Gardiner had 30 points (three goals, 27 assists including 13 primary) in 62 games with the Leafs last season. The prior season he had 5-47—52 in 82 games, but a back injury that kept him out of the lineup since Feb. 25 derailed him last season.

"That was an unfortunate injury last year but it healed on its own and I'm feeling 100 percent right now," he said. "I'm ready to get the season going."

The Hurricanes are big proponents of the stretch pass, something de Haan was going to be missed for on the blue line, but Gardiner ranks sixth among NHL defensemen for stretch passes, averaging 4.52 per game and completing 2.65 per game. (This stat seems extremely random, but it caught my attention when the excellent @ThePointHockey account tweeted it).

Gardiner took some heat as he shouldered a ton of responsibility on the Leafs' blue line through disappointing playoff runs, but underlying analytics say he could thrive with less pressure and a stronger supporting cast.

Now, this doesn't necessarily mean the Hurricanes are going to move perpetual trade bait Justin Faulk out of Raleigh like a hot potato. But as I reported in June, they aren't opposed to hearing teams out for offers in his contract year. While the de Haan trade became what was thought to be a Faulk trade at the time, the logjam has returned to Oak City.

As noted philosopher The Notorious B.I.G. once said, Mo Money Mo Problems.



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## NORTH STATE JOURNAL

### Hurricanes add more value, sign D Gardiner to 4-year deal

By Cory Lavalette

RALEIGH – During their more than two decades in Raleigh, the Carolina Hurricanes have been guilty of doing plenty of bargain shopping.

Filling out the forward ranks with training camp invitees or rounding out the defense with depth players of questionable talent was a standard practice of the thrifty Peter Karmanos Jr.-owned Hurricanes.

This offseason — the second under new owner Tom Dundon — has been rather different when it comes to value, and the latest addition solidifies Carolina's spot among the best defense corps in the NHL.

The Hurricanes signed veteran blueliner Jake Gardiner to a four-year, \$16.2 million deal Friday, bringing another left-handed defender into the fold and adding some top-end talent to their power play.

"I saw a team on the rise, a Cup contender for sure. ... It just seemed like a great fit," Gardiner said via conference call Friday afternoon.

The 29-year-old defenseman had 30 points (three goals, 27 assists) in 62 games in his eighth season in Toronto since being taken 17th overall by the Maple Leafs in 2008. He set career-highs in assists (47) and points (52) in 2017-18 and ranks 24th in points by defensemen (156) over the past four NHL seasons.

"Jake is a solid veteran blueliner with a proven history of contributing offensively, including on the power play," Hurricanes GM Don Waddell said in the press release announcing the signing. "He's had options this summer, but ultimately decided that Carolina is his best fit, and we're thrilled to have him here."

Gardiner was expected to be a hot commodity this offseason, but it took more than two months after free agency opened for the 6-foot-2, 203-pound to find his second NHL home.

"It was an interesting summer," Gardiner said. "I wasn't too stressed out just because I knew I believed in myself and know that something was going to work out. It was a lot harder on my wife than anyone. She was saying stuff like, 'Are we going to the KHL?' and all that kind of stuff. It was good to finally get done."

The addition of the Minnetonka, Minnesota, native fills a hole left when Calvin de Haan was traded to Chicago this offseason. Gardiner's four-year deal is \$500,000 less annually than de Haan is set to make over the next three seasons.

"The blue line, it's gotta be one of the best in the league I already, and I think I can help a little bit and hopefully help the power play out, if that's where they see me," said Gardiner, who has seven goals and 66 assists on the power play in his 551-game career.

While de Haan was in a third-pairing role with Carolina, Gardiner has averaged more than 21 minutes a game in his career and figures to play in the top four — opening the door for speculation that another trade could be in the works. Both Justin Faulk (\$4.83 million AAV) and Trevor van Riemsdyk (\$2.3 million AAV) will be unrestricted free agents after this season, and Haydn Fleury is on a one-way deal (\$850,000) while Jake Bean, Chase Priskie, Jesper Sellgren and others are waiting in the wings.

Faulk would seem like the most likely candidate to be moved, seeing that he makes the most money and offseason talks between his representation and the Hurricanes have gone nowhere.

The addition of Gardiner also pushes Carolina right up against the salary cap. According to CapFriendly.com, the Hurricanes are one of five teams (along with Toronto, Washington, Buffalo and Pittsburgh) currently over the \$81.5 million upper limit, though there is maneuvering that can be done ahead of the season. CapFriendly.com lists 14 forwards, eight defenseman and two goalies as currently being on Carolina's roster, surely more than the team would carry on opening night.

Gardiner spent three years at the University of Wisconsin before turning pro, and he has played all but 18 of his professional games in the NHL. His addition comes after Carolina made two other cash-smart moves this offseason.

First, the Hurricanes added depth down the middle by trading for center Eric Haula, a 29-goal scorer two seasons ago who will count only \$2.75 million against



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the cap this year before becoming an unrestricted free agent next summer.

The team then signed free agent Ryan Dzingel to a two-year, \$6.75 million deal — seemingly a bargain for a 27-year-old winger who has totaled 49 goals and 97 points over the past two seasons with the Senators and Blue Jackets.

The one question mark is the leadership void left when Justin Williams announced Monday he was

“stepping away” from hockey rather than making a concrete decision on if he will return to the ice or retire. The team also lost the 53 points Williams contributed in 2018-19 — production they hope can be replaced by the additions of Haula and Dzingel, and growth from former first round picks Andrei Svechnikov and Martin Necas. The Hurricanes could also add another forward in any defenseman trade they might execute before the season.



## Canes addition may lead to subtraction

By Adam Gold

Less than a week after Justin Williams announced he was stepping away from the NHL the Carolina Hurricanes took whatever monies were set aside for their former captain and added to an already formidable blue line by signing former Toronto defenseman Jake Gardiner.

The 29-year old, Minnesota native agreed to a 4-year, \$16.2 million contract on Friday, adding to an already stocked defensive corps. Gardiner spent eight years with the Leafs, scoring 45 goals and totaling 245 points over 551 games and gives the Canes another blue line option for the power play.

The move also put the Hurricanes over the salary cap, which will force the team to find room via trade or some creative roster machinations with the Charlotte Checkers. The latter issue, I honestly don't fully understand, but I'm told there are levers that can be manipulated to keep the Canes under the \$81 million cap. We'll see.

The former will come with some pain, as the Hurricanes aren't blessed with forward depth they're really anxious to deal — especially in light of the Williams faux retirement. Most assume that the pending free agency of Justin Faulk means that he'd be the obvious choice, but with a modified “no-trade” clause in his contract, it makes that possibility more complicated. Not to mention that a blue line with Gardiner in and Faulk out is a downgrade from how they were scheduled to line up prior to the deal.

This isn't meant as a shot at Gardiner, he's a bonafide, top-4 NHL defenseman. But, Faulk is more versatile, more physical, eats up a lot of penalty-kill TOI and has scored almost double the goals in almost

the identical games in the National Hockey League. I know many fans made up their minds on Faulk years ago. To be honest, I did, too. But, last year, his first under Rod Brind'Amour, we saw the Faulk we always thought we'd see eventually.

Faulk got off to a slow start, offensively, but it was his defensive attention to detail that impressed his head coach who told me early in the season that it was the best he'd ever seen in that regard from the team's 2011 second round pick. Eventually the offense came around as Faulk finished the year with 11 goals and 24 assists in 22:25 of ice time — second only on the team to Jacob Slavin. He piled up more than 141 minutes of time on the penalty kill and was one hit shy of matching his career high of 157 while playing in all 82 games.

Not to draw the comparison, but Gardiner just isn't that type of player. Jake is a highly skilled, puck moving defender, good on the breakout with excellent vision. But, he isn't going to be part of the penalty kill. In fact, in 62 games, Gardiner logged just 7:50 of short handed time. Or, just 58 seconds more than Haydn Fleury did for the Hurricanes in just 20 games. This team needs both players to be as good as it can be. They will not be better defensively without Faulk. At least last year's version of the St. Paul, Minnesota native.

I get the future salary implications. Faulk is headed into free agency at the end of the season and the price tag is conservatively in the \$7 million neighborhood for a player of his age and skillset. Budget wise, that's a tough ask for the Hurricanes knowing that Andrei Svechnikov will be due a raise in two years and the team will have a decision to make the following summer on fellow right-handed blue liner



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Dougie Hamilton. But, I'm less concerned with what's coming down the road than what is right around the corner.

Last year was great. A huge shot in the arm for the franchise and a starving-for-a-winner fanbase. But, I can't help but think that without a playoff bid, a lot of that fan capital will have been spent. This year is critical to the continued evolution of the Hurricanes.

Putting their best possible team on the ice, in a conference that has gotten significantly better the last four months, is job one.

I'm not sure how this is all going to work out. I'm not necessarily advocating for anyone to be traded, or sent to Charlotte. But, I am emphatically stating that if you're of the mind that the team is better off — or even as good — without Faulk you're wrong.



## 2019 NHL Prospects Showcase Primer

Canes head to Nashville for three-game round robin  
by Michael Smith

The sweet, melodic tunes of hockey will emanate from Music City this weekend when the Carolina Hurricanes, Washington Capitals, Tampa Bay Lightning and host Nashville Predators take part in the 2019 NHL Prospects Showcase.

After capturing two championships in nine years at the NHL Prospect Tournament in Traverse City, Mich., the Hurricanes join the four-team Prospects Showcase, which rotates host cities each year. Smaller in scope than the Traverse City tourney, the Prospects Showcase features three games for every team against each of their three opponents.

The Hurricanes' prospect roster is highlighted by nine players drafted by the team, including Ryan Suzuki, the team's first-round pick from this summer. Defenseman Jake Bean, selected 13th overall in the

2016 NHL Draft, is a late upgrade to the roster with defensive invite Merrick Rippon injured.

Forward Janne Kuokkanen, selected in the second round of the same draft, will return to game action following a March surgery that prematurely ended his season. Defenseman Chase Priskie, signed by the Canes as a free agent just a few weeks ago, will make his debut with the club in the Showcase.

The Hurricanes, led behind the bench by Charlotte Checkers head coach Ryan Warsofsky, open the Showcase against the Washington Capitals on Saturday, Sept. 7 at 2 p.m. ET. On Sunday, Sept. 8, the Canes will square off with the Tampa Bay Lightning at 5 p.m. ET. The Canes conclude the event with a 2 p.m. ET faceoff against the Nashville Predators on Tuesday, Sept. 10.

All three games will be available to stream live on Hurricanes.com, and I'll be on the ground in Nashville to bring you updates and recaps from the Showcase.



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## Prospects Showcase Preview: Hurricanes vs. Capitals

Canes prospects set for action in Nashville

by Michael Smith

NASHVILLE - The Carolina Hurricanes kick off the 2019 NHL Prospects Showcase with a match-up against the Washington Capitals.

The Saturday afternoon tilt, which features a 2 p.m. ET puck drop and will be streamed live on Hurricanes.com, is the first in this three-game round robin for the Canes' top prospects.

"We want to see guys who are competing at a Carolina Hurricanes level," said Charlotte Checkers head coach Ryan Warsofsky, who will be joined by assistant coach Patrick Dwyer behind the bench for this prospects squad. "Let's try to make some plays. Let's be confident. Let guys show off their skill and show what they can do at a high pace."

Defensively, the Canes' lineup is highlighted by the top pairing of Jake Bean and Chase Priskie. Bean, selected 13th overall in the 2016 NHL Draft, was a late addition to the roster, and Priskie, a Hobey Baker finalist, will make his debut with the club after signing as a free agent in late August.

"Both can skate pretty well and get up into the play," Warsofsky said. "They complement each other pretty well."

Janne Kuokkanen, a second-round pick from the 2016 NHL Draft, returns to game action after surgery prematurely ended his season in March. In addition to playing seven games with the Hurricanes last season, Kuokkanen totaled 38 points (12g, 26a) in 48 games with Charlotte.

"He's probably going to be a little rusty, but he looked really good in practice. He feels good," Warsofsky said. "He's a guy who should be confident. He's been in these tournaments before. He's playing with another Finn in Luostarinen, and hopefully he gets some chemistry going right off the hop."

Eetu Luostarinen, who signed his three-year, entry-level deal with the Canes in May, centers the first line with Kuokkanen on his left and Blake Murray, a 2019 draftee, on his right.

"Hopefully they can play with some pace, a lot of speed. Let's get going. We're not going to sit back," Warsofsky said. "It's a different style for Luostarinen, a little bit of a smaller rink. He's got to get used to that and the pace of the game, but he obviously has some skill and high hockey IQ. He's a guy I'm interested to see."

Ryan Suzuki, the Canes' 28th overall pick from the 2019 NHL Draft, centers Jamieson Rees, a fellow 2019 draftee, and showcase invite Martin Lang on the second line.

Hurricanes Lineup

Kuokkanen-Luostarinen-Murray  
Rees-Suzuki-Lang  
Pritchard-Henman-Mattson  
Crossman-Topping-Kielly

Bean-Priskie  
Sellgren-Bulych  
Hoefenmayer-Maier

Helvig  
Harvey



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## Prospects Showcase Recap: Canes Bested by Caps

Luostarinen, Priskie tally a goal and an assist each  
by Michael Smith

NASHVILLE - The Carolina Hurricanes suffered a lopsided 10-3 loss to the Washington Capitals in the first game of the 2019 NHL Prospects Showcase.

Forward Eetu Luostarinen and defenseman Chase Priskie led the Canes on the scoresheet with a goal and an assist each.

Here are five takeaways from Saturday afternoon's contest.

### 1. Team vs. Individual

The Hurricanes obviously didn't get the team result they set out to achieve, but there were certain positives to glean from the opening match of the Prospects Showcase. Namely, the players you expected to stand out did just that.

"We definitely saw some individual things we liked. I thought we got better as the game went on. Obviously, we gave up a lot of goals," head coach Ryan Warsofsky said. "You look at the box score, it doesn't look great, but there are some things that got better as the game went along. We saw some things from some guys, but certainly a lot of work to do."

### 2. Kuokkanen Returns

After tallying 38 points (12g, 26a) in 48 games with the Charlotte Checkers, Janne Kuokkanen's 2018-19 campaign came to a premature end when he had surgery in March.

Saturday's match marked his return to game action, and it looked as if the speedy, skilled Finnish forward, who has 11 games of NHL experience under his belt, hadn't missed a beat.

"I felt great," he said. "It's a shame that we lost, but I felt really good on the ice. I'm really happy to be back."

"Kuokks looked good coming off that surgery, so that was a positive," Warsofsky said. "His skating was good, and it looked like he got some speed back. He wasn't overthinking it. It was good to see."

### 3. Bean, Priskie Stand Out

There's a reason the Hurricanes selected Jake Bean with their 13th overall draft pick in 2016. He's a smooth skating defenseman who can move the puck up the ice with ease, and his skill was on display on Saturday, as he stood out from the competition.

During one sequence in the first period, Bean weaved his way through a pair of defenders into the slot, and though he didn't create a scoring opportunity, he dazzled with his ability to hit a seam and find open ice.

Bean's defensive partner, Chase Priskie, who joined the Hurricanes as a free agent after opting not to sign with Washington, was also an impactful player. He tallied a goal, a quick shot off an offensive zone faceoff win, and a primary assist, a shot off the end boards that bounced right to Eetu Luostarinen in front.

"[Priskie] has a great shot and gets up in the play to make things happens," Warsofsky said. "Beaner helps moves pucks, which we saw all last year. Those two were good."

### 4. Luostarinen Finds the Scoresheet

Joining Priskie on the scoresheet with two points was Luostarinen, who the Canes selected 42nd overall (second round) in 2017 and signed to his three-year, entry-level contract in May.

The Finnish center, listed at 6-foot-3 and 184 pounds, has a nose for the net.

"He goes to the dirty areas. Smart player," Warsofsky said. "He'll get used to the North American style. He's going to be a good player."

### 5. Get Better

The results of this three-game round robin are, without question, secondary to the larger picture of development, getting a feel for the talent in this organization and giving this group of players a jump start on preparation for training camp and the preseason.

The message is simple: Learn and get better.

"We've got to keep going here and get better, every meeting and every time we get on the ice," Warsofsky said. "We're going to dive into the video and try to teach these kids. Some of these kids haven't been taught the right way to play pro hockey. It takes some time. They're young, and we're probably the youngest team in this tournament, so we're going to have to break down the video and show them things in the right way."

### Up Next

The Hurricanes square off against the Tampa Bay Lightning at 5 p.m. ET on Sunday, and the game will be streamed live on Hurricanes.com.



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## Prospects Showcase Preview: Hurricanes vs. Lightning

Canes prospects eye improvement vs. Tampa Bay

by Michael Smith

NASHVILLE - The second game of the 2019 NHL Prospects Showcase pits the Carolina Hurricanes against the Tampa Bay Lightning in a 5 p.m. ET Sunday puck drop.

The Hurricanes will be looking for a more competitive match after being walloped 10-3 by the Washington Capitals on Saturday.

"We've got to clean up some things," head coach Ryan Warsofsky said after the Showcase opener. "We're going to dive into the video and try to teach these kids. Some of these kids haven't been taught the right way to play pro hockey. It takes some time. They're young, and we're probably the youngest team in this tournament, so we're going to have to break down the video and show them things in the right way."

The Hurricanes will make a few tweaks to their lineup heading into the second game. Luke Henman and Jamieson Rees will swap positions, with Henman sliding to the left wing and Rees centering the third line.

Jake Bean and Chase Priskie will be split up on the back end, with Bean pairing with Showcase invite Kaleb Bulych and Priskie alongside 2018 draft choice Jesper Sellgren.

Showcase invite Samuel Harvey will get the nod in net.

"The invites, this is a chance for them to make a name for themselves," Warsofsky said. "Whether it's us or one of the other National Hockey League teams, this is a time where you don't want to look back in five or seven years and be like, 'Man, I didn't get a chance,' because this is your chance. There's tons of opportunity. Guys are going to play, and we want to see some guys make a name for themselves."

Hurricanes Lineup

Kuokkanen-Luostarinen-Murray  
Henman-Suzuki-Pritchard  
Hutcheson-Rees-Kielly  
Crossman-Topping-Lang

Bean-Bulych  
Sellgren-Priskie  
Hoefenmayer-Pelletier

Harvey  
Helvig



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## Prospects Showcase Recap: Suzuki Leads Canes Past Bolts

Suzuki tallies five points (1g, 4a) in 7-4 win

by Michael Smith

NASHVILLE - The Carolina Hurricanes bounced back in the second game of the 2019 NHL Prospects Showcase with a 7-4 win over the Tampa Bay Lightning.

Ryan Suzuki tallied a game-high five points (1g, 4), while 10 other Hurricanes found the scoresheet.

Here are five takeaways from Sunday evening's tilt.

### 1. A Better All-Around Effort

After a lopsided 10-3 loss to the Washington Capitals in the opening game of the showcase, head coach Ryan Warsofsky's message was simple: Focus on getting better.

The Hurricanes did just that in virtually all facets of their second game. They controlled the pace of play from the drop of the puck, grabbed a lead and held onto that lead for the balance of the contest.

"100 percent. Way better. I thought our compete was good. I thought our desperation was better," Warsofsky said. "The one thing that was really lacking was our desperation, and that was really good tonight."

The message heading into a practice day on Monday and Tuesday's finale doesn't waver, especially as the team will look to clean up some mistakes in its own end.

"This is why they're here: to get better," Warsofsky said. "Tomorrow, we'll look to get better again. Every time we're in that room or on the ice, we have a chance to get better."

### 2. Suzuki Steps Up

When Ryan Suzuki was available for the taking at 28th overall in the 2019 NHL Draft, the Hurricanes were ecstatic. They had him ranked much higher on their draft board, and he showed why he possesses that first-round talent on Sunday.

Suzuki sparked the Hurricanes' offense with a goal and four assists.

"The puck was just following me around tonight," Suzuki said. "I think the whole game I just tried to move my feet as much as I could. Everything just clicked."

Suzuki opened the scoring in the first period when he located a rebound at the top of the crease and banged the puck in. He capped off a stellar performance with three assists in the third period.

"He was engaged," Warsofsky said. "He was proactive with his feet and got going a little bit quicker. I thought he did a nice job of that."

### 3. Shootout Prowess

At the end of each game in the Prospects Showcase, regardless of the score, a five-player shootout takes place. The Canes didn't have much luck in the skills competition on Saturday, but they scored on four of five shots in Sunday's shootout - not that it counts for anything.

Suzuki, in addition to what he did during the actual game, added another goal for good measure in the shootout.

### 4. Making Adjustments

Suzuki didn't have a great outing in the first game of the Showcase. Not many on the Hurricanes' roster did. There are perhaps a few reasons for that, one being that this is the first time a number of these players have been exposed to playing hockey at an elevated level. That game was eye-opening in a sense.

"[Suzuki] was shocked by it and surprised by it, but you saw tonight how good of a player he is," Warsofsky said.

Suzuki met with Warsofsky on Sunday morning to digest video from the first game. That meeting, he said, provided a springboard for his productive evening.

"The biggest thing for me was I just had to have a good start," he said. "You can't take a breath. That's what coach has been saying. You can't take a breath or they're just going to jump right on you."

"He's a first-rounder. He's expected to light up the scoresheet, and sometimes it doesn't go that way. It's not that easy," Warsofsky said. "He's a young kid who is learning. He's going to get better and better every day. We had a nice meeting this morning. He understood what it takes to play at this level."

### 5. Bean vs. Everyone

One player who is already comfortable at this level and playing head and shoulders above everyone else is defenseman Jake Bean, who played two games with the Hurricanes in addition to a full season with the Calder Cup champion Charlotte Checkers.

It might sound strange to call a 21-year-old a veteran, but that's what Bean is at this level. It's the little things that set him apart.

In a particular sequence in the second period, Bean skated behind the net to retrieve a puck. He got a Lightning attacker to bite hard on the rim. Instead,



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Bean settled the puck and skated it out of harm's way in open ice.

Later, he eyed Chase Priskie cutting toward the net and put a pass on his tape for an easy tap-in goal on the power play.

"He sees the ice at an extremely high level. One of the best we saw in the American League last year," Warsofsky said. "He's confident. He can make plays

at a high level and high speed. I think his vision really supports the rest of his game."

Up Next

The Hurricanes will close their three-game slate in the 2019 NHL Prospects Showcase when they face off with the host Nashville Predators on Tuesday at 2 p.m. (ET).



## Gardiner signs four-year contract with Hurricanes

Defenseman gets \$4.05 million annually, had 30 points with Maple Leafs last season

Jake Gardiner signed a four-year, \$16.2 million contract with the Carolina Hurricanes on Friday. It has an average annual value of \$4.05 million.

The 29-year-old defenseman, who became an unrestricted free agent July 1, had 30 points (three goals, 27 assists) in 62 regular-season games with the Toronto Maple Leafs last season and two assists in seven Stanley Cup Playoff games.

"I don't really feel like going through this again, and I thought this would be a really good opportunity with a really good team and a great place to live," Gardiner said. "It seemed like a great fit for me and my family.

"It was an interesting summer. I wasn't too stressed out just because I believed in myself and knew that something was going to work out. It was a lot harder on my wife than anyone. She was saying stuff like, 'Are we going to the KHL?' and all that kind of stuff. It was good to finally get done and hopefully find a place to live soon and put her mind at ease. ... I was pretty relaxed throughout the process, which I probably shouldn't have been, but that's just how it was, to be honest."

Gardiner said one reason he was drawn to the Hurricanes was their talent at defenseman.

"The blue line is probably ... it's got to be one of the best in the League already and I think I can help a

little bit and hopefully help the power play out if that's where they see me," he said. "They have a really good right side (Justin Faulk, Dougie Hamilton, Brett Pesce, Trevor van Riemsdyk) and I think I'll be able to help out the left side (Jaccob Slavin, Gustav Forsling, Haydn Fleury) a bit and help this team win."

The Hurricanes were 20th in the NHL last season on the power play (17.8 percent) and were 14th among 16 teams during the Stanley Cup Playoffs (9.6 percent). Gardiner has 73 power-play points in the NHL, including more than 10 in four of the past six seasons.

"We definitely talked about it. If that's where they see me, then great," Gardiner said. "But I guess we'll have to see when the season starts. I like playing on the power play and I think I can definitely help it out."

Selected by the Anaheim Ducks in the first round (No. 17) of the 2008 NHL Draft, Gardiner has 245 points (45 goals, 200 assists) in 551 NHL games, all with the Maple Leafs. He has 12 points (two goals, 10 assists) in 26 playoff games.

"Jake is a solid, veteran blueliner with a proven history of contributing offensively, including on the power play," Hurricanes general manager Don Waddell said. "He's had options this summer, but ultimately decided that Carolina is his best fit, and we're thrilled to have him here."



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## Gardiner's baby shows excitement for new Carolina home

Defenseman signed with Hurricanes, posted video of Henry cheering

by Cristina Ledra

When Jake Gardiner delivered the news to his son Henry that the family would be moving to North Carolina this season, the little guy almost tossed his cereal with happiness.

On Friday, Gardiner signed a four-year contract with the Carolina Hurricanes. He spent the first eight seasons of his career with the Toronto Maple Leafs.

The big news called for some festive headwear for Henry and an appropriately colored blanket.

Gardiner later posted a thank you message to the Maple Leafs and fans in Toronto.

## #NHLTopPlayers: Nos. 40-31

NHL Network reveals best of current crop

by David Satriano

40. Vladimir Tarasenko, RW, St. Louis Blues

One of two NHL players with at least 30 goals in each of the past five seasons (Alex Ovechkin, Washington Capitals), Tarasenko had 68 points (33 goals, 35 assists) last season. The 27-year-old had 22 points (11 goals, 11 assists) during a 12-game point streak from Jan. 19-Feb. 17 and helped St. Louis win the Stanley Cup for the first time with 17 points (11 goals, six assists) in 26 Stanley Cup Playoff games.

"This guy is a gamer come playoff time" NHL Network analyst Mike Rupp said. "He elevates ... he's a big reason why they hoisted the Cup. He's a gamer, and you can't give enough credit to guys like that."

39. Drew Doughty, D, Los Angeles Kings

Doughty finished second in ice time per game (26:36) and total ice time (2,180:48) last season after leading the NHL in total ice time the previous two seasons. He had 45 points (eight goals, 37 assists), including 24 on the power play. A four-time Norris Trophy finalist as the best defenseman in the NHL and the winner for 2015-16, the 29-year-old played all 82 games each of the past five seasons and has missed 16 games in his 11-season NHL career.

"Drew Doughty, to me, is still the [defensive] bar in this league," Rupp said. "I think that gap is switching, it's changing. You've got Roman Josi pushing that now. I think you're going to see Seth Jones be pushing that now, Victor Hedman, there's all these other defensemen. When you look [at] games-played leaders, he's always there to play. This guy is called upon to be the best offensively and defensively."

38. Roman Josi, D, Nashville Predators

Josi had 56 points (15 goals, 41 assists) last season, the fourth time in the past five seasons he had at least 53. He's scored at least 12 goals each of the past six

seasons and averaged 25:10 of ice time last season, fifth in the NHL and the fifth time in the past six seasons he averaged at least 25 minutes. The 29-year-old had a plus rating in four of the past five seasons, including an NHL career-high plus-24 in 2017-18.

"For me, he is the most complete defenseman in the National Hockey League," Rupp said. "... He first was known for his heavy shot when he came into the League, but now he's getting evolved with his legs. His legs are everything. The legs feed the wolf, we know this. Well listen, this guy's got that down, he's one of the best. Heavy, heavy shot, leader on this team, he's Mr. Everything."

37. Morgan Rielly, D, Toronto Maple Leafs

Rielly is coming off a breakout season when he led NHL defensemen with 20 goals and finished third with 72 points. He had a plus-24 rating, 21 power-play points and five game-winning goals, including two in overtime. The 25-year-old began 2018-19 with a six-game point streak (three goals, 10 assists), the longest to start a season in Toronto history, and his 12 points in the first five games are the most in NHL history by a defenseman, one more than Bobby Orr had for the Boston Bruins in 1973-74.

"He can transition the puck," NHL Network analyst Brian Lawton said. "[Toronto would] like to play a lot less time in their zone- that typically happens when Morgan Rielly is on the ice ... Offensively, he absolutely exploded last year and I love everything I've seen from him."

36. John Carlson, D, Washington Capitals

After leading NHL defensemen with 68 points (15 goals, 53 assists) in 2017-18, Carlson set a new NHL career high with 70 (13 goals, 57 assists) last season. He had 33 power-play points, second among NHL defensemen behind Keith Yandle of the Florida Panthers (39), and a plus-21 rating. His 25:04 of ice time per game was the highest average of his NHL



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career. The 29-year-old helped the Capitals win the Stanley Cup in 2018, when he had 20 points (five goals, 15 assists) and was plus-11 in 24 playoff games.

"This guy is something special," Rupp said. "He's a [power-play] specialist, he's an offensive specialist. He's all over the map in the offensive zone. He'll get involved, he can throw some hits, got a great shot, drives offense. And when you have skilled guys up front, you have to have guys like [Carlson]."

#### 35. Mark Stone, RW, Vegas Golden Knights

Stone had an NHL career-high 73 points (33 goals, 40 assists) with the Golden Knights and Ottawa Senators last season, including 11 (five goals, six assists) in 18 regular-season games after he was traded to Vegas, and had 12 points (six goals, six assists) in seven playoff games. It was the fifth straight season the 27-year-old scored at least 20 goals. Last season, he was a finalist for the Selke Trophy, awarded to the top defensive forward in the NHL, after leading the League in takeaways (122) for the fourth time in the past five seasons.

"I love his all-around game," Lawton said. "He's a guy that surprises me with his size, 6-foot-4, 220-plus pounds. He's just a little bit bigger than you think, and in a neutral zone, I really don't think there's any player better defensively at shutting plays down than Mark Stone."

#### 34. Sebastian Aho, C, Carolina Hurricanes

Aho is coming off a breakout season when he had 83 points (30 goals, 53 assists) to lead the Hurricanes. He also set NHL career highs in rating (plus-25), power-play points (24) and game-winning goals (seven) last season. The 22-year-old, who had a five-year offer sheet from the Montreal Canadiens matched by the Hurricanes on July 7, had 12 points (five goals, seven assists) in 15 playoff games to help Carolina advance to the 2019 Eastern Conference Final.

"He's got a very good shot," Rupp said. "He's not afraid, he's not a pass-first guy. Whatever opportunity you give him he's going to take. If you give him a shot, he's going to take a shot. If you give him a pass, he's going to make a ridiculous pass. If you're going to give him time, he's going to make you look silly."

#### 33. Ben Bishop, G, Dallas Stars

Bishop was the runner-up for the Vezina Trophy as best goalie in the NHL last season after leading the League in save percentage (.934), finishing second in

goals-against average (1.98), and going 27-15-2 with seven shutouts. He set a Stars record with an NHL career-long shutout streak of 233:04 from March 2-19, winning six straight games in that span. The 32-year-old is a three-time Vezina finalist.

"Ben Bishop kicked it up a notch," Rupp said. "...It's going to be very tough to beat him on your first shot. ... He's got a very solid glove hand. ... and he's very good at handling the puck. That is a very nice thing to have."

#### 32. Claude Giroux, LW, Philadelphia Flyers

Giroux had 85 points (22 goals, 63 assists) coming off an NHL career-high 102 (34 goals, 68 assists) in 2017-18 after moving from center to left wing in training camp. The 31-year-old played center at times last season and won 57.9 percent of his face-offs (674 of 1,164), fourth in the NHL among skaters with at least 500 draws. Giroux's 688 points since 2010-11 are third in the NHL behind Pittsburgh Penguins center Sidney Crosby (710) and Chicago Blackhawks forward Patrick Kane (708). Giroux has missed 10 games in the past 10 seasons, none in the past three.

"I love the adjustment [that] players make in their career, because Claude Giroux has been one of the best players our game has seen over the last 10-plus years," Rupp said. "When you look at him, he's had to make a little bit of an adjustment -- the team does -- they move him to wing. ... Now you've got this guy racking up points once again for the Philadelphia Flyers."

#### 31. Seth Jones, D, Columbus Blue Jackets

Jones was fourth in the NHL in ice time per game last season (25:49), his sixth in the League. He had 46 points (nine goals, 37 assists) in 75 games one season after he had an NHL career-high 57 (16 goals, 41 assists). Jones, who turns 25 on Oct. 3, scored four game-winning goals, including three in overtime, and had nine points (three goals, six assists) in 10 playoff games to help the Blue Jackets sweep the Presidents' Trophy-winning Tampa Bay Lightning in the first round last season to advance in the postseason for the first time in their history.

"[His] shot, I think it's dynamite," Lawton said. "It's a little bit deceptive. ... Three seasons in a row, 40-plus points. I see a guy that's ready to absolutely explode, potentially this season."



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## Carolina signs defenseman Jake Gardiner to 4-year deal

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — The Carolina Hurricanes have signed defenseman Jake Gardiner to a four-year contract.

Under terms of the deal announced Friday by Carolina general manager Don Waddell, Gardiner will make an average of \$4.05 million each season.

“He’s a great player. He’s a great skater,” Carolina defenseman Jaccob Slavin said. “He’s really solid at running the power play. That’s a great addition for our team. I think our blue line definitely just got stronger.”

The 29-year-old Gardiner had three goals and 27 assists while playing 62 regular-season games with Toronto last season, then added two assists in seven

playoff games. He has 45 goals and 200 assists during his eight-year NHL career.

“I didn’t really expect it to go this long, but in the end I think it worked out really well” for Gardiner, former Toronto teammate Auston Matthews said. “He’s going to a good organization, a good situation for him. I’m extremely happy for him.”

Waddell says Gardiner is “a solid veteran blueliner with a proven history of contributing offensively.”

This marks the second straight offseason the Hurricanes gave a four-year deal to a free-agent defenseman. Calvin de Haan signed one a year ago, but was traded to Chicago in June.



## Cap comparables: Is Gardiner contract a steal for Hurricanes?

Defenceman Jake Gardiner joined Good Show to talk about signing a four-year deal with the Carolina Hurricanes and his time with the Toronto Maple Leafs.

By Mike Johnston

If his back holds up, the four-year contract free agent Jake Gardiner signed with the Carolina Hurricanes on Friday could end up making general manager Don Waddell look like a genius.

Back in late June and early July, many prognosticators estimated Gardiner’s average annual value could end up being somewhere as high as in the \$6-7 million range, however the Hurricanes locked him up at \$4.05-million annually, which is identical to the price tag he carried the previous five years with the Toronto Maple Leafs.

“Jake is a solid veteran blueliner with a proven history of contributing offensively, including on the power play,” Waddell said in a press release. “He’s had options this summer, but ultimately decided that Carolina is his best fit, and we’re thrilled to have him here.”

The 29-year-old is coming off a down year during which he registered 30 points in 62 games with

lingering back issues preventing him from playing a full season.

Gardiner also frequently served as the whipping boy for Maple Leafs fans – especially in late April – for disappointing in Game 7 showdowns against the Boston Bruins two years in a row.

He went a combined minus-8 and had several egregious turnovers and misplays in those elimination games, leading him to say this following what turned out to be his final game in a Maple Leafs uniform: “It’s going to be a tough one to swallow, that’s for sure. I let a lot of people down. But you know what, hopefully I can come back better from it.”

If he does return to the ice an improved player, it’ll be Waddell and the Hurricanes who benefit.

The Hurricanes made a surprise trip to the Eastern Conference final in the spring and the addition of Gardiner, on paper at least, strengthens an already-promising roster.

The Minnetonka, Minn., native is the latest addition to a Hurricanes defence corps that already boasts Dougie Hamilton, Jaccob Slavin, Justin Faulk, Brett Pesce and Trevor van Riemsdyk — although



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Gardiner's deal could impact Faulk's future, according to Sportsnet's Elliott Friedman.

Over the past three seasons, Gardiner's 0.55 points per game puts him in the same production range as the likes of Ryan Ellis, Shea Weber, Rasmus Ristolainen, Matt Dumba, Jacob Trouba, Jared Spurgeon and new teammate Hamilton – all of whom have 2019-20 salary cap hits at least \$1 million more expensive than Gardiner's.

Of course, Gardiner is a riskier defensive liability than his peers mentioned above, which lowers his value slightly. Still, this deal screams bargain when you look at the lack of production from various blueliners making substantially more than Gardiner.

With that in mind, here are a handful of defencemen from around the league who in the past three years signed similar contracts to the one Gardiner just inked:

— Ben Chiarot: three years, \$10.5 million, \$3.5-million cap hit

— Ian Cole: three years, \$12.75 million, \$4.25-million cap hit

— Kris Russell: four years, \$16 million, \$4-million cap hit

— Josh Manson: four years, \$16.4 million, \$4.1-million cap hit

— Brendan Smith: four years, \$17.4 million, \$4.35-million cap hit

— Calvin De Haan: four years, \$18.2 million, \$4.55-million cap hit

— Karl Alzner: five years, \$23.125 million, \$4.625-million cap hit

— Jason Demers: five years, \$22.5 million, \$4.5-million cap hit

— Jack Johnson: five years, \$16.25 million, \$3.25-million cap hit



## Hurricanes sign D Gardiner to four-year deal

The Carolina Hurricanes have signed defenceman Jake Gardiner to a four-year, \$16.2 million contract.

The 29-year-old recorded 30 points in 62 games this past season with the Toronto Maple Leafs, missing significant time due to a back injury. He returned for the postseason, posting two assists in seven games.

Gardiner will carry a cap hit of \$4.05 million in each year of the contract.

"Jake is a solid veteran blueliner with a proven history of contributing offensively, including on the power play," Hurricanes general manager Don Waddell said. "He's had options this summer, but ultimately decided that Carolina is his best fit, and we're thrilled to have him here."

Gardiner was a first-round pick (17th overall) of the Anaheim Ducks at the 2008 NHL Draft. He was traded to the Maple Leafs along with Joffrey Lupul and a pick on Feb. 9, 2011 in exchange for defenceman Francois Beauchemin. He appeared in 551 games with the Maple Leafs upon making his NHL debut with the team in 2011 and posted 45 goals and 245 points.

"For always wearing the blue and white with passion and pride, thank you for everything, Jake," the Maple Leafs posted on Twitter Friday.

He is coming off a five-year, \$20.25 million deal, which also carried a \$4.05 million cap hit.



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## Hurricanes upgrade defense with stunning Gardiner bargain

By James O'Brien

Honestly, Jake Gardiner going into September without a contract made it feel like something fishy was going on. Were teams scared off by his back injury? Was he waiting for some contender, possibly even the Maple Leafs, to clear up some salary cap space, somehow?

Hmmm ... maybe not?

In surprising news, the Carolina Hurricanes signed Gardiner on Friday, and the deal is even more surprising: a four-year pact with a paltry \$4.05 million cap hit. Not only is that a stunning bargain, it's actually the same \$4.05M cap hit he carried on his last contract.

Few would have predicted that Gardiner, 29, would have signed for such a paltry sum. In fact, you could almost guarantee that the Maple Leafs were expecting him to command a higher salary, as remarkably, Gardiner is set to make less than Cody Ceci(!), who will cost \$4.5M in 2019-20.

While Gardiner presents some risks if that back issue persists, this is one heck of a value on paper for Carolina, considering how much teams paid for lesser defensemen, including Tyler Myers (who carries a bloated \$6M on a longer five-year contract with Vancouver). Gardiner isn't perfect, but he doesn't need to be on a Hurricanes defense that already ranked among the NHL's best.

You just don't get many cracks at a defenseman of Gardiner's caliber, so it remains surprising that this all came together ... unless he really just isn't healthy.

Carolina parted ways with Calvin de Haan this summer, but Gardiner represents an upgrade (again, "solid first or second pairing defender" is pretty nifty at \$4.05M). He joins Jaccob Slavin and Brett Pesce as Hurricanes defensemen with considerable term, while Dougie Hamilton and Justin Faulk are also prominent blueliners whose futures are currently unsettled.

Gardiner gets a measure of control over his future with a no-trade clause, but even then, Carolina has some flexibility:

This move makes a great defensive group even better, and may theoretically help them boost a power play that has struggled for quite a while with Faulk as its QB. (I've been shouting from rooftops about Hamilton being the better option than Faulk for almost a full year now, but if the team just doesn't want Dougie to run the point, now Gardiner gives them another option).

Either way, it's a head-shaker that other NHL teams didn't jump at the chance to sign Gardiner to this deal. It's a cap value, and the term is the perfect mix: covering a need for four years, while mitigating some of the risks that come with signing a 29-year-old player who might hit the aging curve soon.

Again, it's impossible to ignore Gardiner's back issues, but that's about the only part of this that isn't a huge win for Carolina.



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## Does Gardiner signing make Hurricanes the NHL's best defense?

By James O'Brien

Jake Gardiner's four-year deal with a \$4.05 million AAV is such a great bargain — health pending — that the rest of the NHL should almost feel robbed by the Carolina Hurricanes.

(It really is imperative to note the risks with his back before we pat the Hurricanes on their backs ... but that's exactly what is happening here.)

While Gardiner isn't getting any richer beyond a break in state taxes (he carried a bargain \$4.05M cap hit with the Maple Leafs, too), the overarching narrative is that the rich got richer. To be more direct: a Hurricanes defense that already ranked among the NHL's best in 2018-19 now enjoys an upgrade, as Gardiner is, for my money, even better than the underrated Calvin de Haan. He's also about \$500K cheaper.

So, yeah, the rich got richer.

It brings some interesting questions to mind, including: does this make the Hurricanes' defense the absolute best in the NHL?

Few can even compare to the Hurricanes from a value standpoint. Consider:

- Some expected Gardiner to make somewhere in the \$7M or \$8M range, so it must be stated again and again that this is a remarkable steal.
- The best bargain of this group might be Jacob Slavin, who has mostly been a strong top pairing guy (if not No. 1 defenseman) at \$5.3M, which is his rate through 2024-25. Then again, maybe you prefer Brett Pesce, another gem who costs just a \$4.025M cap hit through 2023-24. It's honestly ridiculous that the Hurricanes are getting four years or more of Gardiner, Slavin, and Pesce for about \$13.5M combined. Pesce and Slavin move the needle in a variety of ways, as you can see from this RAPM even-strength comparison for the last three seasons from Evolving Hockey.

- Infomercial voice: "But that's not all!"

While Gardiner, Pesce, and Slavin have contracts that indicate that they should be around for quite some time, the Hurricanes have two other prominent defensemen in less certain situations. Dougie Hamilton is a highly useful blueliner with significant offensive talent, and carries a reasonable \$5.75M cap hit for two more seasons. It's true that I'd argue Justin Faulk has sometimes been pressed into situations where he was a little over his head (Carolina should go with Hamilton or Gardiner as their power play QB, for example), he's quite useful, and cheap for one more season at \$4.833M.

The Hurricanes have already spoken about possibly embracing having a boatload of right-handed defensemen with Faulk, Hamilton, and Pesce battling for minutes, and Gardiner gives them a capable lefty to replace De Haan. This group might be so deep that it forces someone like Faulk out, but at the moment, those five defensemen at under \$25M is pretty absurd.

They have some interesting prospects to consider in Haydn Fleury (seventh overall pick in 2014) and Jake Bean (13th overall from 2016), so they may be able to counter trade-related losses or injuries. Naturally, Fleury and Bean are also cheap as they're currently on rookie contracts.

The Hurricanes have long been analytics darlings because they hog the puck like few other teams, only to see leaky goaltending let them down. That changed in 2018-19, as they got enough goaltending and scoring to supplement that sturdy defense, making it all the way to the 2019 Eastern Conference Final.

Gardiner is arguably a step behind De Haan defensively, but overall likely brings more value thanks to considerable offensive skills.

Carolina's defense seems well-suited to prop up Petr Mrazek or whoever else might be in net on a given night, and we'll see if this ends up being a winning formula. Let's ponder the question in a poll to wrap things up, then: does Carolina now have the NHL's best defense? Feel free to share arguments for other blueline groups in the comments.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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## Other NHL teams could learn from Hurricanes' great offseason

By James O'Brien

The Carolina Hurricanes aren't perfect (points to Petr Mrazek and James Reimer), but the rest of the NHL could learn a thing or two from their masterful offseason.

On the heels of signing Jake Gardiner at a surprising discount, let's take a look at some of the key decisions, and how other GMs and front offices can learn from Carolina's impressive blend of patience and opportunism.

The biggest job was done for them: While big names like Mitch Marner, Patrik Laine, and Brayden Point remain in contract limbo, the Hurricanes have Sebastian Aho locked down at what will almost certainly be a team-friendly rate of \$8.454 million per year, all thanks to Marc Bergevin's perplexingly modest offer sheet.

Hey, sometimes you just get flat-out lucky.

The power of patience: Instead of bidding on free agents on July 1, when asking prices are at their highest, the Hurricanes instead played hard to get, and remarkably found ways to potentially improve in areas of weakness.

It might be strange to view July 12 as exceedingly late, but it must have felt like an eternity for Ryan Dzingel, and the Hurricanes took advantage of a tepid market and that urgency to sign Dzingel for chump change (two years, \$3.375M cap hit). Dzingel isn't perfect, yet he could bring some finishing touch to Carolina, which is noteworthy because while the Hurricanes have a reputation for hogging the puck, they've sometimes lacked the sniping skills to put that puck in the net at the same rate as the NHL's deadliest teams.

Gardiner is the most obvious example of the Hurricanes being patient, as his contract situation somehow lingered into September, and the Hurricanes exploited that for big gains. Gardiner could provide a potential boost to one of the Hurricanes' other areas of concern, too: the power play.

Striking at the right moment: The Hurricanes weren't just playing hard to get. Sometimes they seized the moment, and the results were promising.

Carolina wisely took advantage of the Golden Knights' cap crunch to get Erik Haula for a pittance in a trade.

If Haula works out — there are some health concerns — then he's another forward who could help Carolina score goals, supplementing that sniping alongside Dzingel.

To be continued: It remains to be seen if Carolina was wise in taking on Patrick Marleau's contract in exchange for a first-round pick.

Either way, the Hurricanes deserve credit for being proactive in trying to identify value, and they really could have set a template for teams like the Red Wings and Senators to accrue assets. (Ottawa and Detroit did not get the memo, at least not yet.)

Valuing flexibility: The Hurricanes could have panicked and overpaid to feel more secure about their goaltending situation, but considering the very limited options on the market beyond Sergei Bobrovsky (and how expensive Bob ended up being), Carolina could have made a big blunder.

Instead, they played it safe, and found a way to move on from the Scott Darling era of errors.

Interestingly, while the Gardiner addition arguably gives Carolina the league's best defense, it's not certain that we're done seeing them make changes. Most pressingly, Justin Faulk is entering a contract year, and the Hurricanes may understandably go the trade route to solve that riddle.

Either way, the Hurricanes are in a position of rare luxury: they can do something there, but they don't *have* to. Oakland A's GM Billy Beane notes when you have to do something, "you're screwed." Other NHL teams know that pain all too well.

The Hurricanes are on a short list of the smartest NHL teams alongside the Sharks because they consistently find value in a variety of ways. They're patient when they should be, but not passive, showing the ability to jump on opportunities when other teams might get trigger shy.

Many other NHL teams are so behind the curve that they come across as downright dull, yet the Hurricanes look cutting edge. We'll see if that pays dividends with more big steps forward in 2019-20, but it's impressive stuff either way.

(Oh yeah, and their drafting also drew rave reviews. That team is just on fire lately.)



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## Hurricanes ink Gardiner to four-year deal – but what will be the corresponding move?

Jake Gardiner has inked a four-year, \$16.2-million deal with the Hurricanes, but the blueline logjam and the cap implications of the contract means Carolina has some work to do

By Jared Clinton

The Carolina Hurricanes have been busy throughout the off-season following their first trip to the post-season in a decade, a run that saw them earn a place in the Eastern Conference final.

Earlier this summer, Carolina shipped defenseman Calvin de Haan and prospect Aleksi Saarela to the Chicago Blackhawks for Gustav Forsling and Anton Forsberg. Days later, the Hurricanes moved prospect Nicolas Roy to the Vegas Golden Knights for winger Erik Haula. Then came the acquisition of goaltender James Reimer, which was followed by the notable free agent acquisition of winger Ryan Dzingel.

But the Hurricanes have saved their most notable move of the off-season – at least to date – for the final days of summer: on Friday, Carolina announced they have inked the top remaining unrestricted free agent, blueliner Jake Gardiner, to a four-year, \$16.2-million contract. Gardiner was considered the top defenseman of the UFA class entering July 1. The 29-year-old three goals and 30 points in 62 games last season with the Toronto Maple Leafs while averaging 21-plus minutes per contest.

Gardiner is no small addition for the Hurricanes, to be sure. While his own-zone ability has been scrutinized at times, he's sure to bring a boost to the middle of the blueline offensively and, given his three goals and 33 power play points over the past three seasons, his production with the extra skater stands to be a boon to the Hurricanes' special teams unit. That's not to mention the price tag is something of a coup. Heading into the open market, some believed the defenseman was in line for a pay day in the \$6-million range. Instead, his new deal carries a \$4.05-million cap hit, identical to what he was earning on his previous five-year pact with the Maple Leafs.

But the signing, impactful as it might be for the Hurricanes, does present some issues.

Already, the Hurricanes boasted a defense corps that featured Jacob Slavin, Brett Pesce, Justin Faulk and Dougie Hamilton, and the expectation was Forsling, Trevor van Riemsdyk, Haydn Fleury and prospect Jake Bean would battle for spots on the bottom pairing. It's that depth that made de Haan expendable earlier in the off-season. With Gardiner's addition, though, the defensive logjam is such that Paul

Bunyan would have trouble clearing it. But that's only one of the problems that Gardiner's signing presents.

The other, and possibly the more pressing, is that there's now some cap clearing necessary in Carolina. With the defender locked up at a hair over \$4-million per season, the Hurricanes' are operating some \$1.5 million over the spending limit. True, teams can exceed the salary cap by 10 percent in the off-season, which is to say the move is above board, but the need to become cap compliant by the beginning of the campaign will now put pressure on Hurricanes GM Don Waddell and Co. to cut salary one way or another.

One option is trimming of the fat from the roster and demoting fringe players who are unlikely to make an impact with the big club this season. For instance, Forsling and center Clark Bishop could be sent to the AHL's Charlotte Checkers to make room for Gardiner's salary. The combined \$1.57 million would be enough to make it work, too. The hangup there, though, is that neither are waiver exempt, opening up the possibility one or both could be plucked from the Hurricanes' roster without the organization receiving any return. And given that's not an ideal scenario, all signs point to Carolina exploring Option No. 2: shipping out another defenseman, thus giving the Hurricanes the ability to check both the logjam- and cap-clearing boxes in one fell swoop.

The Hurricanes trading a blueliner isn't an altogether novel idea. It has long been speculated that Carolina has considered making such a move, and two rearguards in particular – Faulk and Hamilton – have been the focus of the most trade chatter over the past year.

As he's in the final year of his contract, some believe Faulk as the most likely candidate to move. With his \$4.83-million cap hit, the 27-year-old would be a prime trade chip for a team looking to add a puck-moving, minute-logging blueliner, and the premium placed on right-handed defensemen could see the Hurricanes land themselves quite the return. The only caveat to that is Faulk's possession of a 15-team no-trade clause. That limits Carolina's trade options.

Hamilton, however, does not have a similar clause. In fact, he has no trade protection whatsoever. In addition, the 26-year-old, who has two years remaining on his contract at \$5.75-million per season, wasn't as integral to the Carolina blueline last season. Hamilton, who is also a right shot, was consistently fourth in average ice time among the top-four Hurricanes' defensemen and logged a full five minutes fewer per game during the post-season than



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Faulk. Moving Hamilton also frees up nearly \$1 million more than moving Faulk, albeit Carolina would sacrifice the security of the additional year on the contract and risk losing another blueline cog next summer.

One way or another, though, something has to give. Either the Hurricanes shuffle money to the minors and

enter the campaign with one of the league's most loaded defense corps or Carolina has to make a cap-clearing trade that will make them compliant come opening night. The only thing that's certain is that Gardiner's signing won't be the last time we're hearing from the Hurricanes this off-season.



### SB NATION CANES COUNTRY

### 2019 NHL Prospects Showcase: Preview, Roster, Players To Watch

Here's what to watch for as the 2019 prospects showcase kicks off this weekend in Tennessee.

By Justin Lape

The Hurricanes will mix it up a bit different this year, opting to play in the 2019 NHL Prospects Showcase in Antioch, Tennessee instead of playing in the Traverse City Prospect Tournament held in Michigan every year. The tournament begins tomorrow in Nashville and runs through Tuesday, September 10.

The Hurricanes will be joined by the host team Nashville Predators, the Washington Capitals and the Tampa Bay Lightning. Tampa, despite being one of the strongest teams in the NHL, still boasts an impressive amount of depth in their organization. The Predators are no slouch themselves with prospects like Eeli Tolvanen and Dante Fabbro. All eyes will be on Ilya Samsonov in net for the Capitals to see if the goaltender has made strides in his development after a rough rookie season with the Hershey Bears.

Here's a look at who the Hurricanes will have on their roster for the tournament:

#### 2019 Nashville Prospect Showcase Roster

Number	Player	Position	Acquired	18-19 Team	League
7	PRISKIE, Chase	D	Free Agent (8/19)	Quinnipiac	ECAC

Number	Player	Position	Acquired	18-19 Team	League
24	BEAN, Jake	D	Draft '16 (1-13-1)	Charlotte/Carolina	AHL/NHL
32	MATTSON, Leif	RW	Invite	Kelowna	WHL
36	PRITCHARD, Jacob	F	Free Agent (4/19)	UMass	Hockey East
38	CROSSMAN, Ethan	LW	Invite	Acadie-Bathurst/Baie-Comeau	QMJHL
41	LANG, Martin	RW	Invite	Kamloops	WHL
43	LUOSTARINEN, Eetu	C	Draft '17 (2-42-2)	KalPa	Liiga
52	HENMAN, Luke	C	Draft '18 (3-96-4)	Blainville-Boisbriand	QMJHL
58	SELLGREN, Jesper	D	Draft '18 (5-166-6)	Lulea	HF



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Number	Player	Position	Acquired	18-19 Team	League
59	KUOKKANEN, Janne	LW/C	Draft '16 (3-43-2)	Charlotte/Carolina	AHL/NHL
61	SUZUKI, Ryan	C	Draft '19 (1-28-1)	Barrie	OHL
65	BULYCH, Kaleb	D	Invitee	Vancouver	WHL
67	KIELLY, Kameron	C	Invitee	UPEI	USports
73	HUTCHESON, Nolan	LW	Invitee	Sudbury	OHL
76	PELLETIER, Thomas	D	Invitee	Drummondville	QMJHL
81	REES, Jamieson	C	Draft '19 (3-44-2)	Sarnia	OHL
82	MAIER, David	D	Invitee	North Bay	OHL
85	MURRAY, Blake	C	Draft '19 (11-183-6)	Sudbury	OHL
87	HOEFENMAYER, Noel	D	Invitee	Ottawa	OHL
91	TOPPING, Kyle	C	Invitee	Kelowna	WHL
49	HARVEY, Samuel	G	Invitee	Rouyn-Noranda	QMJHL
50	HELVIG, Jeremy	G	Draft '16 (8-	Florida/Charlotte	ECHL/AHL

Number	Player	Position	Acquired	18-19 Team	League
			134-5)		

### How And When To Watch

All six of games will be broadcast live on Hurricanes.com with commentary. The Hurricanes schedule will be:

- Washington vs. Carolina - Saturday, Sep. 7th - 2 p.m. ET
- Tampa Bay vs. Carolina - Sunday, Sep. 8th - 5 p.m. ET
- Nashville vs. Carolina - Tuesday, Sep. 10th - 2 p.m. ET

### What To Watch For

Despite the graduation of Martin Necas and Andrei Svechnikov from the prospect tournament roster, there will still be plenty of intrigue and eyes on this year's roster. Newly signed Chase Priskie will be one to watch as the Quinnipiac defenseman has an outside shot at making the Hurricanes roster on the bottom pair. If he has a strong tournament and strong training camp, it may be tough for head coach Rod Brind'Amour to send Priskie to Charlotte to start the season.

The Hurricanes' 2019 NHL Draft first round selection, Ryan Suzuki, will also be a main focal point for fans. The speedy center has all the time to develop and mature into a potential top-six forward for the Hurricanes within the next few seasons. This is the first chance to see how Suzuki stacks up against other teams' top prospects and even his own teammates.

Janne Kuokkanen's return should also be a focus point. The forward was knocked out of most of last season after suffering a major surgery. The Checkers were able to survive his absence and win the Calder Cup but this year's team is not even remotely as deep and Kuokkanen will need to step up to fill the void left behind by Andrew Poutralski and others. This is also another chance for him to prove he deserves a shot at filling a bottom six role for the Hurricanes, perhaps on a rotational basis or filling in the circumstance of injuries.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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## Hurricanes Sign Jake Gardiner to Four-Year Contract

The left-handed defenseman logged a career-high 52 points during the 2017-18 season.

By Brett Finger

The Carolina Hurricanes announced on Friday that the club has signed unrestricted free agent Jake Gardiner to a four-year, \$16.2 million contract. The defenseman will carry an AAV of \$4.05 million over the next four seasons.

Gardiner, 29, is coming off of a 30-point season in 62 games with the Toronto Maple Leafs. In the two seasons prior, Gardiner played in 82 games each and compiled 95 points. He logged a career-high 52 points in 2017-18. Since debuting in the NHL in 2011, he has logged 245 points in 551 games and emerged as one of the most productive offensive defensemen in the league.

Hurricanes general manager Don Waddell released the following statement with the news of the signing:

"Jake is a solid veteran blueliner with a proven history of contributing offensively, including on the power play. He's had options this summer, but ultimately decided that Carolina is his best fit, and we're thrilled to have him here."

Carolina now has five defensemen with an AAV north of \$4 million, just like they did last season before Calvin de Haan got traded over the summer.

The full news release from the team is below.

Don Waddell, President and General Manager of the National Hockey League's Carolina Hurricanes, today announced that the team has signed defenseman Jake Gardiner to a four-year contract. The deal pays Gardiner an average annual value (AAV) of \$4.05 million.

"Jake is a solid veteran blueliner with a proven history of contributing offensively, including on the power play," said Waddell. "He's had options this summer, but ultimately decided that Carolina is his best fit, and we're thrilled to have him here."

Gardiner, 29, totaled 30 points (3g, 27a) and ranked third among Toronto Maple Leafs defensemen in plus/minus (+19) in 62 regular-season games in 2018-19. The Minnetonka, Minn., native played his 500th NHL game on Oct. 27, 2018, against Winnipeg and registered his 200th NHL assist on Feb. 25, 2019, against the Islanders. Gardiner returned to action on April 4 after missing 18 games with a back injury, and played in all seven games of the Maple Leafs' opening-round loss to the Boston Bruins, earning two assists.

Anaheim's first-round selection, 17th overall, in the 2008 NHL Entry Draft, Gardiner has totaled 45 goals and 200 assists (245 points) and 185 penalty minutes in 551 career NHL regular-season games, all with Toronto. The 6'2", 203-pound defenseman was named to the NHL's All-Rookie Team in 2011-12, after leading rookie blueliners with 30 points (7g, 23a). Gardiner established career highs with 47 assists and 52 points during the 2017-18 season, ranking eighth among league defenseman in assists and tied for 15th in points.

Prior to turning professional, Gardiner spent three seasons at the University of Wisconsin, totaling 19 goals and 56 assists (75 points) in 121 collegiate games. He has represented the United States in international play three times, winning gold at the 2010 World Junior Championship and bronze at the 2015 IIHF World Championship.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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## **Nashville Prospect Showcase Day 2: Game Hub, Preview, How to Watch**

Carolina's prospects look to rebound from a day-one blowout loss.

By Brett Finger

at the hands of the Washington Capitals in game one of the prospect showcase, the Carolina Hurricanes' prospect team will look to bounce back today against the Tampa Bay Lightning.

Carolina Hurricanes vs. Tampa Bay Lightning

Sunday, September 8, 2019 - 5:00 PM ET  
Ford Ice Center - Antioch, TN

Stream: Hurricanes.com (home broadcast territory only)

Follow Canes Country on Social Media

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Instagram @canescountrypix

Carolina's lineup is comprised of about 50% roster invitees (the reason being that a large number of their prospects play college hockey or overseas in European professional leagues, thus rendering them unable to play in the tournament), and they certainly looked like it in game one.

It was a 10-3 final score against the Caps, who feasted on the Canes' rag-tag group and goalie Jeremy Helvig.

The good news was that Carolina's big names not only held their own, but actually stood out in a positive way. Jake Bean and Chase Priskie were electric with the puck, Janne Kuokkanen looked comfortable coming off of surgery that ended his 2018-19 season prematurely, and Eetu Luostarinen found the back of the net (off a primary assist from Priskie).

Obviously, this Canes group will look for a much better overall result on day two of the three-day showcase, though.

"We've got to keep going here and get better, every meeting and every time we get on the ice," Checkers first-year coach and prospect showcase bench boss Ryan Warsofsky said after game one. "We're going to dive into the video and try to teach these kids. Some of these kids haven't been taught the right way to play pro hockey. It takes some time. They're young, and we're probably the youngest team in this tournament, so we're going to have to break down the video and show them things in the right way."

How and When to Watch

The Hurricanes games will be streamed on Hurricanes.com but it is geo-restricted to users in the Hurricanes' broadcast market. (If you can get Canes games on Fox Sports Carolinas, you should be fine to watch the stream.)

Today's game will start at 5:00 pm Eastern.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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## Canes ink Jake Gardiner to four-year deal

By Ryan Henkel

Free agent defenseman Jake Gardiner has signed a four-year deal with the Carolina Hurricanes worth an average annual value of \$4.05 million.

The 29-year-old left-handed defenseman was selected by the Anaheim Ducks 17th overall in the 2008 NHL entry draft. However, he never laced up his skates for the Ducks. Instead Gardiner stayed on his college team, the University of Wisconsin, before being traded to the Toronto Maple Leafs in 2011, where he became a key contributor for eight seasons.

Gardiner has averaged just over 30 points per season throughout his career and is noted for his offensive potential and power-play specialty. Last season, Gardiner put up 30 points with three goals and 27 assists in only 62 games for the Maple Leafs, missing time due to a back injury which he says he has recovered from and feels "100%" right now in a media call.

"Jake is a solid veteran blueliner with a proven history of contributing offensively, including on the power play," said Hurricanes general manager Don Waddell in the Canes press release. "He's had options this summer, but ultimately decided that Carolina is his best fit, and we're thrilled to have him."

Gardiner will be slotting into the left side of the Hurricanes defense more than likely at the number two slot, behind defenseman Jaccob Slavin. Carolina has a surplus of right-handed defenseman, but adding the veteran blueliner will help ease the load on someone like other Carolina defenseman Brett Pesce who played the majority of last season on his offhand side.

With the addition of Gardiner, however, the Hurricanes now have eight defensemen on its NHL roster, with its two youngest members Haydn Fleury and Gustav Forsling requiring waivers to be moved down to the American Hockey League roster in Charlotte, creating quite a logjam at the blue line for the Canes.

Carolina's problem is not only with the surplus of contracts in the NHL, but also the rising talent already in the AHL like 2016 first-round pick Jake Bean and new college signee Chase Priskie who are both now finding no room to move up to the big club.

The Canes' position is not a weakness for them, but an opportunity where they can potentially put together an enticing package to sway a trade partner for another big piece. Carolina has need on the right-wing side and with the defensive logjam, the Hurricanes have the ability to go out and acquire a top-six forward if that is the direction it wishes to head.

With the moves that Carolina and Waddell have made in the last season and the current offseason alone, a big-ticket acquisition is not off the table as the new front office has proven that they can pull off major deals, like with forwards Nino Niederreiter and Eric Haula.

Time will tell what the Hurricanes ultimately decide to do, but for the first time in a while, Carolina is becoming a place free agents want to come and play, and the team is seemingly finally shifting out of its nearly decade-long rebuild and into the "win now" phase.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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## Hurricanes Add Gardiner to Talented Defense

By Greg Boysen

The best defenseman remaining in the pool of unrestricted free agents is now off the board. The Carolina Hurricanes announced on Friday that they have signed Jake Gardiner to a four-year contract worth a total of \$16.2 million. His salary-cap hit will be \$4.05 million per season, through the 2022-23 season.

### Hurricanes Swoop in on a Great Bargain

There were many who believed that Gardiner was waiting for the Toronto Maple Leafs to sign restricted free agent Mitch Marner first to see if they could afford to bring back the 29-year-old defender. Whether or not this was true, with just a week until training camp opens, the Hurricanes signed Gardiner to a very team-friendly deal.

"Jake is a solid veteran blueliner with a proven history of contributing offensively, including on the power play," Carolina general manager Don Waddell shortly after the deal was made official. "He's had options this summer, but ultimately decided that Carolina is his best fit, and we're thrilled to have him here."

Gardiner was originally drafted 17<sup>th</sup> overall by the Anaheim Ducks at the 2008 NHL Entry Draft. He was traded to Toronto on Feb. 9, 2011, along with Joffrey Lupul, for Francois Beauchemin. He played in 551 games for the Maple Leafs, scoring 45 goals and 200 points while putting up a plus-nine rating and averaging over 21 minutes per game. He is one of seven defensemen drafted in 2008 to pick up at least 200 assists.

### Another Move Likely Coming for Hurricanes

The Minnesota native joins a very talented defensive group in Carolina. The Hurricanes already have Dougie Hamilton, Jaccob Slavin and Justin Faulk already under contract; all making less than \$6 million per season. They also have youngsters Fleury Hayden and Jake Bean coming up through the organization.

Back in June, the Hurricanes traded defenseman Calvin de Haan to the Chicago Blackhawks to clear some salary-cap space. With today's addition of Gardiner's contract, the Hurricanes are currently about \$1.5 million over the league's hard salary cap. They will have until opening night to get under the \$81.5 million limit.

Waddell's work is far from over as he will have to make at least one more trade to become salary cap compliant before the Hurricanes open the regular season on Oct. 3 versus the Montreal Canadiens. There have been trade rumors surrounding Faulk for the past couple of seasons, so he could be the man on the move.

The Hurricanes are looking to build off their fantastic run to the Eastern Conference Finals last spring. Despite losing captain Justin Williams, Waddell has been very busy this offseason. In addition to bringing in Gardiner, he locked up Sebastian Aho to a long-term contract, as well as acquiring forward Erik Haula from the Vegas Golden Knights and signing free agents Ryan Dzingel and goaltender James Reimer.

Gardiner and the Hurricanes will play the Maple Leafs three times during the 2019-20 season. He will make his first trip back to Toronto on Dec. 23.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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## Hurricanes Sign Gardiner, Who's the Odd Man Out?

By Matt Cosman

The Carolina Hurricanes made another aggressive offseason move Friday when they bagged one of the top defenseman on the free agent market, Jake Gardiner. Carolina came to terms with the 29-year-old former Toronto Maple Leaf on a four-year, \$16.2-million contract.

The move had many in the hockey world scratching their heads. Although Carolina got a great defenseman on a favorable deal, the Hurricanes already boast one of the strongest defensive cores in the NHL. Not only are they overloaded at the position, the signing also puts Carolina above the salary cap for next season, which will force general manager Don Waddell to do more roster maneuvering in order to make the team cap-compliant.

Waddell wouldn't have made this addition if he didn't have a plan. And while the Hurricanes could make roster moves before the season starts to bury some contracts in the AHL and get underneath the cap ceiling, it doesn't make any sense to carry eight NHL-caliber defensemen into the season. With an abundance of valuable defensemen at Carolina's disposal, it appears a trade is looming in Raleigh. So, which player is the most expendable?

### Justin Faulk on the Hot Seat

The subject of many trade rumors this past year, longtime Hurricane Justin Faulk is now sitting in an even hotter seat after the Gardiner signing. Faulk, 27, is entering the final year of his contract with Carolina, and though Waddell has expressed interest in re-signing him this summer, there hasn't been much success in negotiating an extension. It's possible he'd rather explore free agency next summer after eight years in Carolina in which he only made the playoffs once.

Faulk finds himself the odd man out in an elite, well-rounded top-four of Jaccob Slavin, Dougie Hamilton, Brett Pesce, and now Gardiner. All four are also tenured past next season, at a combined cap hit of \$19.125 million. With Faulk's contract expiring, he'll be seeking a more lucrative contract than Gardiner, which Carolina simply can't afford.

Not only was Faulk's potential salary dished out to Gardiner, but his playing time could be too, should he start the season with the Hurricanes. Gardiner works with a toolkit similar to Faulk's – both are mobile defensemen who move the puck well and can work the power play from the back end. Though prone to defensive gaffes at times, they each possess a strong transition game.

However, they differ defensively. Faulk kills penalties and is overall more physical than Gardiner, who relies

more on his stick work and agility. Gardiner is also a left-handed shot, which is an asset for Carolina's right-handed-heavy blue line.

Though Faulk only has one year left on his contract, he would still net a good return for Carolina. The Hurricanes strengthened their depth up front by acquiring Erik Haula and Ryan Dzingel this summer, but trading Faulk for another top-six forward could give the Hurricanes the edge they need to make another playoff run. All the signs are pointing to a trade – one may even already be in the works.

### Do Other Defensemen Get Moved First?

Another soon-to-be unrestricted free agent (UFA) defenseman on Carolina's roster is Trevor van Riemsdyk. Van Riemsdyk, 28, has spent the last two seasons with the Hurricanes in a serviceable third-pairing role. But after undergoing offseason shoulder surgery, he may not be ready for opening night on Oct. 3. Returning to game shape after four-to-six months of recovery isn't easy, and that could also potentially hurt his trade value. Even without a trade, it's possible this could be his last year with the Hurricanes.

Waddell could also look to some of the younger players fighting for a spot on the roster, like Jake Bean or Gustav Forsling. Bean, a Hurricanes' 2016 first-round draft pick, enjoyed a strong year in the AHL last season and may be ready for a promotion. Forsling, recently acquired in a trade, has split time between the AHL and NHL the past three seasons in the Chicago Blackhawks organization.

Other fringe defensemen like Haydn Fleury and Chase Priskie recently signed contracts with Carolina. To move Fleury or Priskie now to accommodate Gardiner would be giving up on guys they just instilled belief in. If the team deals one of its budding defensemen, Forsling and Bean are the best options. Forsling is replaceable, and Bean holds good trade value.

Trading a prospect defenseman would keep the Hurricanes' current lineup intact, but if head coach Rod Brind'Amour and Waddell want to give their young players an opportunity to succeed, the two best trade chips are Faulk and van Riemsdyk.

### Clock Is Ticking for Faulk

Looking at the roster even without Faulk, Carolina's defense unit looks daunting. The offensive-minded Hamilton is complemented by the elite defensive specialist Slavin. Gardiner is free to skate and roam around on the second pairing, while anchored by the ever-reliable Pesce. That leaves the third-pairing spots to be wrestled over by players like Fleury, van Riemsdyk, Bean and Forsling.



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It shouldn't be a surprise if Waddell already has a loose arrangement in place to move Faulk. The Hurricanes' alternate captain has a modified no-trade clause (NTC) in his contract, which means he can submit a 15-team list of acceptable trade destinations. Waddell has had a long time to work out a potential deal for the American defenseman, so that NTC shouldn't be as big of a hindrance as it may seem. The only difficulty may be moving his \$4.83-million cap hit. Playoff-bound teams seeking depth on

defense should pursue Faulk, provided they have the appropriate cap space.

Since van Riemsdyk is still recovering from his shoulder surgery, Faulk will likely start the season on Carolina's blue line. But once van Riemsdyk is back to form and the young guys are ready to take over those minutes, the plan to move Faulk could be put into action. Trading their veteran defenseman for assets is Waddell's best play, and that move may just be one phone call away.

## Hurricanes' Gardiner "100 Percent and Ready"

By Mark Shiver

The Carolina Hurricanes announced Friday that they have inked former Toronto Maple Leafs defenseman Jake Gardiner to a four-year deal. The deal will pay him an average annual value (AAV) of \$4.05 million.

### Gardiner at a Glance

In the team's press release, president and general manager Don Waddell said, "Jake is a solid veteran blueliner with a proven history of contributing offensively, including on the power play. "He's had options this summer, but ultimately decided that Carolina is his best fit, and we're thrilled to have him here."

From all apparent angles, this is a fantastic move by the Hurricanes.

The team statement also noted that Gardiner, 29, totaled 30 points (3 goals, 27 assists) last season and ranked third among Toronto Maple Leafs defensemen in plus/minus (plus-19) in 62 regular-season games. He has been described as effortless when moving on the ice and if healthy, can be a fabulous addition to the Hurricanes' blue line.

### Welcome to Raleigh, Jake Gardiner

In a conference call with the media on Friday, Gardiner said of the Hurricanes, "I saw a team on the rise, a Cup contender for sure...Just a really good team, seemed like a really good fit. The leadership, too."

Having been a part of the Maple Leafs and their recent resurgence into a playoff team, he is well-suited to make his assessment of where the Hurricanes are as an organization.

This is not an average player that the 'Canes picked up off of waivers to fill a spot – Gardiner is an experienced, playoff defenseman. When paired with the already stout Hurricanes blue line, the team – on paper at least – is that much more formidable.

As an aside, a couple of Hurricanes fans texted me about the Gardiner deal right after it went down and

they both ironically said the same thing, "Well, that's a good use of Justin Williams' money." The mood at the team's media day, which was held Thursday, was, "We love Justin and he has a place here, but we're moving ahead."

With or without Williams, Gardiner makes this team better.

### Jake Gardiner Catches Heat

Last April, the Toronto Sun had a scathing article written by Michael Traikos in which he started out not mincing any words: "Once again Jake Gardiner cost the team the game. Cost them the season." (From "Jake Gardiner Crumbles Again for the Leafs," by Michael Traikos The Toronto Sun 4/23/19)

Traikos was just getting warmed up as he went on to write, "If there was any question whether the Leafs would get creative with the salary cap and re-sign Gardiner to another contract in the summer, the 28-year-old defenceman answered them with the type of performance that no team with Stanley Cup aspirations wants to touch."

Gardiner did not have his typical game during the playoffs and Traikos piled on, "This was another do-or-die game where Gardiner was wearing the goat horns, where he gave away the puck, caused a crucial goal and became hockey's version of Bill Buckner."

To be fair, losing to the Boston Bruins in Game 7 of the Quarterfinals of the Eastern Conference Playoffs was not all his fault. But, he has been the target of blame not only in that game but in two other playoff losses by the Leafs.

### How's the Back, Jake Gardiner?

I asked Gardiner directly during the media conference call about his back. He said, "I had an unfortunate injury last year. But it healed on its own and I'm feeling one hundred percent right now and ready to get the season going."

A healthy Gardiner at \$4.05 million per year is a coup that has to have Waddell glowing.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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## Gardiner Love and Hate

Maple Leafs media can be savage. They are of course frothing for the Cup to come back to Canada and more specifically to Toronto. For all of his skill and excellent play, he has gotten more of their vitriol than was justified. In January one of my colleagues with The Hockey Writers wrote, “the Maple Leaf fans have been unrelenting and unforgiving in their booing. Good hockey players – stars even – make mistakes.”

Not all of Toronto has been critical of Gardiner. James Tanner wrote for Fansided earlier this year, “Jake Gardiner isn’t just one of the Toronto Maple Leafs best players, and he isn’t just one of the best defensemen in the NHL – He is one of the best Toronto Maple Leafs of all time.”

High praise coming from one of the Maple Leafs’ writers who is candid and often scathing in his assessments.

At SBNation, Tyler Mair wrote in June, “An eight-year veteran, Gardiner has been a strong offensive defenseman for the Toronto Maple Leafs since day

one. He has scored at a pace of 40-plus points in each of his last three seasons, and at 28 years old he shouldn’t be slowing anytime soon. The man oozes offense when he’s on the ice...Make no mistake, though — Gardiner is no defensive slouch.”

The praise for him is not just painting him as an average guy but as one of the best defensemen around. The Hurricanes may just have pulled off the acquisition of the year.

The bottom line is that the Hurricanes got a premier defenseman for a bargain, likely because other teams were leery of the back issue. Gardiner told me he is ready to go and one has to think that Waddell and team owner Tom Dundon would not sign him to a four-year deal without serious due diligence.

Hurricanes fans should feel very good as training camp approaches. They have added key players who are putting the Williams summer-long play-or-retire scenario behind them. This is a preseason that is the first in a while where Hurricanes fans can be legitimately excited. Adding Gardiner is a big reason for that excitement.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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## Five Things to Watch at the 2019 NHL Prospects Showcase

By Nicholas Niedzielski

It's prospect tournament time around the NHL, signaling the unofficial start of a new year of hockey. With the Canes heading out to Nashville this weekend, here are five things to watch for.

### New Tourney

After several years of taking part in the Traverse City Prospect Tournament, the Hurricanes are switching things up this season. They'll be taking part in the NHL Prospects Showcase, a rotating-host tournament held in Nashville this year. There they will face a new slate of opponents with the Predators, Capitals and Lightning all sending teams.

### Coaching Staff

As is customary, the prospect team will be helmed by the Checkers' coaching staff, which means this will be the first time the duo of new head coach Ryan Warsofsky and new assistant coach Patrick Dwyer man the bench together. Warsofsky attended last year's prospect tournament alongside Mike Vellucci, but this will be the first time he'll run the show himself and be able to implement some of his head coaching ideas.

### Priskie Watch

The Canes won the Chase Priskie lottery earlier this offseason when the highly sought after blueliner signed an entry-level deal with them after declining to do so with the team that drafted him, Washington. Priskie was an offensive force at Quinnipiac, racking up 39 points in 36 games and getting the nod as a Hobey Baker finalist in his senior year, and this prospect tournament will be his first chance to throw on a Canes sweater and show what he can do. At 23 he's on the older side of the tournament participants,

with many of the prospects clocking in between the 18-20 range, so this could be a solid opportunity for the defenseman to take over games and assert himself ahead of training camp for a Canes team that is stacked with defensive prospects.

### Kuokkanen Returns

Janne Kuokkanen got off to a hot start in his sophomore season, rolling at a near point-per-game pace for Charlotte and earning an All-Star nod while logging call-up time with Carolina, but a nagging injury forced him to the sideline in January and ended his campaign prematurely. But the 21-year-old is back and making his return to "game" action with this prospect tourney. With the most pro experience on the team Kuokkanen should be able to stand out against the younger prospects and put up some impressive performances, but more importantly this tournament allows the young Finn to get his legs back under him and ramp himself up to training camp as he looks to pick up where he left off last season.

### Luostarinen Makes the Jump

A second-round pick in 2017, Eetu Luostarinen has been honing his game in his home country of Finland, but after a breakout season for KalPa the forward could be slated to make the jump to North America, having signed an entry-level deal with Carolina earlier this summer. Having already gained experience playing against men in Finland's top league, this tournament will be Luostarinen's first step toward acclimating himself to a North American sheet of ice. Listed at 6-foot-3, the 21-year-old has the combination of size and skill to make an impact wherever he plays, and this tournament could serve as a glimpse to one of Charlotte's more intriguing possible newcomers.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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## SportScan

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

1152168 Websites

YAHOO SPORTS / Canadiens GM Marc Bergevin not interested in signing Andrei Markov

Steven Psihogios

September 8, 2019

Despite Andrei Markov's desire to come back to the NHL and play for the Montreal Canadiens, general manager Marc Bergevin essentially put any hopes of a reunion to rest in a recent interview with RDS.

"Two years ago, his contract was due, we made an offer," Bergevin said. "Efforts were made to sign it and he chose another direction that was (the) KHL. It was two years ago.

"Since that time, things have changed. The player has aged. The organization has changed direction. We have a lot of young people growing up."

Bergevin expanded, mentioned players such as Noah Juulsen, Victor Mete, Josh Brook and Alexander Romanov as the ones he'd rather give opportunities to instead of the 40-year-old Markov.

The veteran blueliner has called upon the services of agent Allan Walsh to help resurrect his NHL career. Walsh recently said to NHL.com that numerous teams have inquired about Markov's services.

He also tweeted out a training video of his new client.

The rearguard is serious about making a comeback, but it seems pretty apparent it won't be with the Canadiens. Markov is 10 games away from reaching 1,000 NHL appearances.

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1152169 Websites

YAHOO SPORTS / Anze Kopitar says Kings 'have something to prove' after last season

Ailish Forfar

September 8, 2019

There's really nowhere but up for the LA Kings after finishing last in the Pacific Division and recording a league-worst goal differential of minus-60 last year.

A new season provides a much-needed fresh start, and Kings captain Anze Kopitar feels that their 2018-19 campaign provides ample motivation.

"The way [last season] went, nobody was happy about it from top to bottom, so we have something to prove right now," the centre told Tracey Myers of NHL.com. "If that's not motivation enough, I don't know what is."

Head coach Todd McLellan, who took over the reins in April, had a full off-season to prepare and shape a new perspective and direction for the Kings.

"Todd coming in is going to be somewhat of a fresh start, a new voice that we needed. And then it's the same thing: You have to have a good start to the season. That's what it is," added Kopitar.

A good start to the season is exactly what the four-time NHL All-Star, Lady Byng, and double Selke trophy winner needs. Kopitar led the Kings with 22 goals and 60 points last year, but it was still a big drop from the 92 points that put him in the Hart Trophy conversation the season before.

"Sometimes not having a good start to the season certainly affects everything," Kopitar said. "You're not feeling as good, you don't feel comfortable or confident or all of the above, and whether that's personal or team, things just didn't go right, and we could not get it going."

The 32-year-old has played his entire NHL tenure of more than 1,000 games as a member of the Kings, securing two Stanley Cups along the way. Kopitar knows first-hand what it will take to lead this team from worst to first.

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1152170 Websites

YAHOO SPORTS / Connor McDavid on skating with Oilers: 'It feels like nothing's changed'

Steven Psihogios

September 8, 2019

Few storylines for the upcoming NHL season are bigger than the one that surrounds Connor McDavid's health. And after No. 97

finished hitting the ice at Rogers Place on Saturday for the first time since suffering a posterior cruciate ligament tear on Apr. 6, the hockey world was given some encouraging news.

"It feels like nothing's changed," the talented forward said, according to Mark Spector of Sportsnet.

Phew. Seeing McDavid skate and hearing he is essentially as good as he was before the major knee injury is obviously good news. This, of course, isn't the first time he's suffered a setback due to health in his career. During his rookie campaign, the superstar was sidelined with a fractured clavicle. After the team skate on Saturday, he compared and contrasted the two injuries.

"You take it a little bit slower," he noted of his most recent rehab. "A collarbone is a bone — I wasn't afraid to push that. But ligaments, I've never dealt with that before. I didn't want to push too hard, but you have to push hard enough to make sure it's healing."

Asked ultimately if he'll be ready when the Oilers' opener against the Vancouver Canucks on Oct. 2, McDavid's response didn't offer any certainties.

"You're going to have to ask some guys who are a lot smarter than I am," he stated. "I'm supposed to play hockey, and I don't make those decisions. The doc will say when I'm good to go, and I'll go."

Entering his fifth year with Edmonton, the three-time all-star will be looking to put forward his fourth-straight 100-point season.

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