



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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THE ATHLETIC

2019-20 NHL Best Bets: Which teams to put your money on

By Dom Luszczyszyn

Before every season, oddsmakers set lines on which teams are likely to make the playoffs, and how many points they'll get. With the NHL being a very random league, it presents a lot of opportunities to make some good coin in places where it is legal to do so.

I've been doing this feature for two seasons now and after starting hot in 2017-18, there was some regression to the mean last year – though it came from the three bets I had listed as honorable mentions. I did say it would be a tougher year! In terms of main bets, my model (which is how I decide which lines offer value) is 14-4 over the last two seasons and 4-3 in "bets also worth considering" so maybe it's time to just stick to the main bets.

2017-18 Record: 8-2 (4-0 with honorable mentions)

2018-19 Record: 6-2 (0-3 with honorable mentions)

As already mentioned, last season was a tough one as NHL oddsmakers have sharpened up on their point total game. It looks to be a similar story this season as there are 13 lines within 2.5 points of my projections and only three where the difference is greater than five points. Not a lot to work with there.

But while bookmakers have become sharper with their point totals, their playoff odds look downright wacky and that could be the new avenue to finding value in the NHL market. Playoff lines weren't on the menu in this series over the last two seasons, but they'll be added this year because there's too much value to pass up.

Here's where I'm placing my money for the 2019-20 season, sorted by the confidence I have in each bet.

Lines are courtesy of Bodog and are subject to change after publication.

Point Totals

Anaheim Ducks: (Over 81.5)

As many of you saw in the season preview series, my model is higher on the Ducks than most and is well off the market here. While it may not be completely justified, I think this line is still far too low and should improve off a nightmare-ish 80-point campaign. Everything went wrong last year, there were several lengthy losing streaks, plus the team suffered through plenty of injuries. Better health, a new coach and a

youth movement should all equal improvement next season. Plus, they have the best goalie in hockey.

Minnesota Wild: (Over 87.5)

We shockingly haven't seen the Wild's season preview yet and it's because of my model's switch to expected goals, with more emphasis on defense, has found a kindred spirit in the much-derided team from the state of hockey. Regardless, I do think they're hugely underrated due to the front office turmoil and also because their strength is on defense, which isn't the sexiest skill. Strong defensive teams are still a market inefficiency and the Wild certainly qualify as one of the league's stingiest teams. As long as they're not undone by goaltending, they should be in the playoff mix.

Carolina Hurricanes: (Over 95.5)

The Hurricanes sailed past this number last year despite being largely mediocre for half the season. In the other half, they were one of the best teams in hockey. They have confidence now, their young players are only getting stronger and this number feels very low for the talent and depth they seem to have. Goaltending is always a concern, but this team should be competing for the division, not for the playoffs.

St. Louis Blues: (96.5)

Like Carolina, the Blues also surged after a lackluster start with one of the best records in hockey in the second half. The difference: they won the Stanley Cup, so I'm a bit shocked by their low valuation. Like the Wild, I think the Blues are getting underrated because their biggest strength lies in their own end. Goaltending is a wildcard here because of Jordan Binnington's small sample, but it's hard not to see the Blues improving over last year's total with a full year of him and coach Craig Berube.

Los Angeles Kings: (Over 74.5)

Same effect as the Ducks, just with less confidence that they'll be any good. I think the Kings are one of the weakest teams in the league, but 74.5 points feels too low. They have a strong chance to bounce-back after last season and they still have some players with an elite reputation that are motivated to prove they're not washed up. A resurgence feels likely, even if it's only to around 80 points.



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New York Rangers: (Under 88.5)

Everything depends on how the young kids fit and develop, but for now, this appears to be way too high for a team coming in with a lot of offseason hype, but likely isn't ready for primetime just yet. While many are adding their offseason haul to their final point total, that total was achieved with Mats Zuccarello and Kevin Hayes on the team. Without them, the Rangers were brutal and that's the team the new guys are being added too, which mitigates their value.

Columbus Blue Jackets: (Over 83.5)

I'm not as confident in this one as the rest, given what they've lost, but there's still value here as there was a strong foundation laid out aside from Artemi Panarin and Sergei Bobrovsky. This team has depth and a strong blue line, it's just a matter of whether the unproven goaltending can hold up over a full season. I'm not holding my breath, but I still believe there's enough here for a point total in the mid-to-high 80's, rather than the lower range.

Playoff Chances

Slam Dunks

The best value on the board.

Carolina Hurricanes: (YES -140)

Arizona Coyotes: (NO +115)

New York Rangers: (NO -125)

At around 11 a.m. on Monday, I tweeted that the Hurricanes line to make the playoffs was one of the worst I had ever seen at nearly even odds. Since then, it's already gone up to -140 and that's still way too low. It's an implied probability of 58 percent which is significantly lower than it should be.

For Arizona and New York, it's a matter of both teams being far too close to 50 percent with the Coyotes actually being favored to make the playoffs. I don't buy that with their current team. For the Rangers, as mentioned above, they're not ready for primetime yet and it would take a lot of internal improvement for them to make it in a tough East. The line suggests they miss 56 percent of the time, but my model thinks it's closer to 82 percent – a huge chasm.

Underrated

Teams not getting enough credit going into the season.

Minnesota Wild: (YES +145)

Anaheim Ducks: (YES +220)

No one likes either of these teams which is why I love them. I don't think either makes the playoffs personally, but the lines are too good not to take given how close they are, likely much closer than

they're currently being given credit for. I suspect both will be on the bubble.

Overhyped

Teams getting too much credit going into the season.

Winnipeg Jets: (NO +200)

Florida Panthers: (NO +200)

Colorado Avalanche: (NO +240)

It's not that I hate any of these teams, it's that I don't think they deserve their current standing. The Jets lost a lot of wins and are closer to an average team than a contender in my opinion. They don't deserve the reverence they're getting here. Ditto the Avalanche who are stronger, but are being treated like a Cup contender when they haven't earned that badge yet – the team still has a lot of depth issues. And while Florida solved its biggest problem this summer in adding coach Joel Quenneville and goalie Sergei Bobrovsky, their line is similarly getting out of hand. They'll likely be getting closer to the bubble too.

Conservative Lines

Lines that oversell the uncertainty of an NHL season.

Nashville Predators: (YES -205)

Edmonton Oilers: (NO -190)

Buffalo Sabres: (NO -210)

St. Louis Blues: (YES -260)

Tampa Bay Lightning: (YES -400)

Toronto Maple Leafs: (YES -325)

Pittsburgh Penguins: (YES -205)

These lines come with a lot of juice attached to them, but arguably nowhere close to enough. The lines are far too conservative given the talent or lack-of, and the likelihood they'll make the playoffs as a result. It means putting down more money to win a little less, but in these cases, it might be worth it. Another way to look at the is by translating the above to the implied playoff probability for each team.

Nashville Predators: 67 percent

Edmonton Oilers: 34 percent

Buffalo Sabres: 32 percent

St. Louis Blues: 72 percent

Tampa Bay Lightning: 80 percent

Toronto Maple Leafs: 77 percent

Pittsburgh Penguins: 67 percent

Seeing the Lightning at 80 percent is all you need to know. I'll take that bet any day of the week and the rest here are just as bad. It doesn't jive at all with their



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point totals as I'm not sure on what planet a true talent 108.5 point team only makes the playoffs four

out of five times. Whatever, their loss, our gain. Probably.

LeBrun: What the Jake Gardiner contract means for next year's crop of UFA defensemen

By Pierre LeBrun

It is probably wishful thinking on the part of GMs rather than reality, but one comment from a team executive in the wake of Jake Gardiner's contract in Carolina last week certainly made me think.

Does the deal help re-set the UFA defenseman market in any way?

Gardiner, who spent the whole summer on the UFA market, signed a four-year deal for just over \$4-million a year AAV and was certainly a bargain for Carolina for a quality, top-four, puck-moving D.

Six months ago, I would have pegged Gardiner's deal somewhere in the \$6-million a season range on the open market. And that would have been a conservative estimation.

It was a result of some market circumstances playing out rather unfortunately for Gardiner rather than perhaps a true reflection of the worth of such a player, although his back injury last season played a factor, too.

The reality is that he could have got more than \$5 million on a one-year deal somewhere else as late as last week, I'm told, but chose to take the security of the term in Carolina instead. And who can blame him?

But it bookends a rather intriguing offseason for top-four, UFA D going back to the start when superstar Erik Karlsson stayed put in San Jose for a whopping \$11.5-million AAV on a max term deal.

When the deal was signed in June, some agents were rather giddy about seeing how the Karlsson deal might help drag the market north for defensemen negotiating contracts, although the less-than-anticipated rise in salary cap helped quiet that to some degree.

Still, I think of Jacob Trouba, for example, signing for \$8-million AAV over seven years with the New Rangers. I believe the Karlsson deal had some impact there.

And so somewhere between the high water mark with Karlsson and now the lower end with Gardiner, you've got much to contemplate for next year's UFA D market.

There's a quality list of top-four D entering camp on the final year of their deals before become UFA: the likes of Torey Krug, Roman Josi, Alex Pietrangelo,

Justin Schultz, Tyson Barrie, Jared Spurgeon, Sami Vatanen, Zach Bogosian, Chris Tanev, Jake Muzzin, T.J. Brodie, Travis Hamonic and yes, Justin Faulk, among others.

Faulk may be the odd man out now that the Hurricanes have signed Gardiner. Sources confirm Carolina has been exploring the trade market for Faulk and even allowing teams to directly communicate with the player's camp about a contract extension because that would augment the return in a trade. The 'Canes and Faulk's camp, led by agent Brian Bartlett, haven't really talked extension since a June draft meeting in Vancouver went sideways.

There have been contract talks throughout the summer between the Predators and Josi's camp but still no deal. We all know by now about "Nashville dollars" and how the Predators have successfully handled their payroll over the past several years but this is a very special player, their captain, and it will be intriguing to see where his extension ends up. I would have to think it'll be anywhere from \$8-million a year to \$9.5-million on a long-term deal.

Two blueliners who had dynamic Stanley Cup playoffs also need extensions in Pietrangelo and Krug. The latter is entering the final season of a four-year deal carrying a \$5.25-million AAV. The Bruins have some bargain deals on their payroll, David Krejci leads the team with a \$7.25-million AAV. Krug is worth more than that on the open market, at least \$8-million AAV in my mind — he was unbelievable in the playoffs. But what makes sense cap-wise in Boston? Add in the fact, the Bruins must first re-sign RFAs Charlie McAvoy and Brandon Carlo. Which is why it's not surprising to hear from Krug's agent Lewis Gross on Monday morning saying that there haven't really been any contract talks with the Bruins just yet.

"It's not me waiting, it's not really having a choice to wait," Krug told The Athletic last week at the Player Tour in Chicago when asked about his extension not being done yet. "And I get it, I know there are unknowns with Charlie and even Brandon, those are two big parts of the Bruins' future. We don't know how much they're going to cost, so how can you and go and move on to a different guy. But I'd like to think I'm a big part of the future as well. I've earned it. I hope it ends up that way."

Honestly, I wondered if Krug might get dealt this summer in a pre-emptive strike by Don Sweeney to get better value on an expiring deal if the Bruins GM thought he couldn't get Krug signed. But here we are



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on the eve of camp and Krug is very much still a Bruin. Maybe Boston decides to go for another Cup run and just let Krug walk out the door on July 1 if they can't sign him.

Not that Krug doesn't realize a trade is still a possibility at some point this year depending on how things go.

"I get the business side of it, so I'm not freaking out," Krug said. "I don't take anything personally. I am aware that I could get traded. If it made sense to them, then that's what they have to live with and I'll go on my way and I'll continue to be the player that I am. But I understand why the rumors are circling and why they would come out. Just because of the nature of the situation."

Krug also knows in a place like Boston there will be questions from the local media all year long if his situation remains unsettled.

"I realize questions are coming my way and they're going to continue," he said. "I've played on consecutive one-year deals so that pressure part of it or those questions are not necessarily new to me, but I guess it is because I dictate a little bit more of where I could be. But I'm ready for it. I know it's coming. I've played in Boston for seven years. It's a tough market, it's fun, it's why you want to be there because it pushes you to your potential."

Pietrangelo is entering the final season of a seven-year deal carrying a \$6.5-million AAV. Colleague Jeremy Rutherford in his Blues mailbag over the weekend touched on the Pietrangelo situation. As Jeremy wrote, Pietrangelo is worth \$8-million or more a year in a new deal but what kind of term would the Blues be comfortable with for the 29-year-old?

Re-signing Spurgeon is the top priority for new Wild GM Bill Guerin, as colleague Michael Russo explained last week.

I suppose what will be interesting there is if contract talks drag on too long into the season and the team is struggling, is the better idea to sign him or make him a valuable trade chip? It would seem the Wild would rather sign him at this point.

Schultz will be an interesting one, too, in Pittsburgh. The Penguins are always juggling salary cap space. My sense is there haven't been any conversations this summer about an extension for the offensive blueliner. I think the Penguins like Schultz, both as a player and as a person, but have decided to have a wait-and-see approach as far as letting the season play out for a bit before looking at that situation. Do they circle back in January or wait until after the season? Both are possible. What's rather obvious though is that given the Pens' cap situation, Schultz would have to take less to stay on compared to what the market would likely offer next July 1.

What all these blueliners on expiring deals also have to contemplate over the next 12 months is how the so-called "flat-cap" environment factors into their decision-making. The NHL and NHL Players' Association had another CBA session on Monday in New York ahead of the players' re-opener decision ahead of Sunday's deadline and whatever comes of the next CBA, the idea of limiting the rise of the salary cap to some degree to help mitigate escrow seems inevitable no matter what happens.

Which no doubt will seep into how teams and players negotiate future contracts over the next year.



Suzuki Impresses in Second Game of Prospects Showcase

First-round pick bounces back with five-point (1g, 4a) night

by Michael Smith

NASHVILLE - The morning after the Carolina Hurricanes were thwacked 10-3 by the Washington Capitals in the opening game of the 2019 NHL Prospects Showcase, a pair of Ryans - Suzuki, the Canes' 28th overall selection from this summer, and

Warsofsky, the head coach of the prospect team - sat down to digest video.

The first game of the Showcase was eye-opening for Suzuki and much of the young, invite-heavy Hurricanes prospect team. This was a new, more advanced level of quicker, more physical hockey, and they were facing a veteran Capitals squad.

Suzuki didn't have his best game - and neither did the team at large, outside of the handful of players who



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had professional experience to their name already - but for an 18-year-old dipping his toes into the water at this level, it wasn't all that surprising and certainly not unprecedented.

"He was shocked by it and surprised by it," Warsofsky said. "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. He's a young kid who is learning. He's going to get better and better every day."

What mattered more than Suzuki's performance in the first game was how he would respond the very next day against the Tampa Bay Lightning.

"We're going to dive into the video and try to teach these kids," Warsofsky said after the first game. "Some of these kids haven't been taught the right way to play pro hockey. It takes some time."

Forget dipping his toes. Suzuki jumped right in and swam, leading the way offensively for the Hurricanes with a game-high five points (1g, 4a) in a 7-4 victory. As much as the first game was eye-opening for Suzuki, the second game was just as so because of him.

[GAME 2 RECAP](#) | [GAME 1 RECAP](#) | [SHOWCASE PRIMER](#) | [ROSTER \(PDF\)](#)

"I felt a lot better," he said. "The biggest thing for me was I just had to have a good start. 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. I think the whole game I just tried to move my feet as much as I could. Everything just clicked."

From the final whistle on Saturday to the drop of the puck on Sunday, Suzuki elevated his game and flaunted his elite, playmaking skillset that the Hurricanes coveted when they had him ranked just a few spots out of the top 10 on their master draft list.

He played with speed. He played with skill. And, he was rewarded for it.

"He understood what it takes to play at this level," Warsofsky said. "He was proactive with his feet and got going a little bit quicker."

Suzuki used his quick feet to get to a loose puck at the top of the crease in the first period, which opened the scoring in the game. He capped his performance with a trio of assists in the third period.

In the five-player postgame shootout, a confident Suzuki scored on a smooth forehand-backhand move to add to his impressive evening.

In addition to totaling five points (1g, 4a), Ryan Suzuki scored on this nifty backhand in the postgame funsies shootout.

His performance was illustrative of his abilities that made him a first-round pick.

"The definition of speed and skill," Director of Player Personnel Darren Yorke said in Vancouver this summer. "You look at a guy who can really drive possession and carry the puck into the offensive zone. He can make plays on both sides of the puck. He's really the definition of the playmaking center that you really covet."

A talented (and 2-0) Nashville Predators prospect squad is up next.

This time, though, Suzuki has a better idea of what to expect and what it will take to be competitive at a higher level.

"The biggest thing is consistency," he said. "You have to work for every puck, every inch you're given out there. I've learned a lot already, and it's only been two days."



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Training Camp Buzz: Suzuki gets five points for Hurricanes

Holmstrom hurt, misses start of Islanders rookie camp
NHL.com

Welcome to the 2019 preseason! Rookie camps opened across North America on Friday and Saturday. Veterans report this week, for the most part hitting the ice Sept. 13. This is a busy time, with rookies looking to make a name for themselves and veterans looking to lock down roster spots. Each day, we will have all the updates of note right here.

Here is the training camp news for Sunday:

Suzuki has big night in Hurricanes win

The Carolina Hurricanes were happy when center Ryan Suzuki was available to be selected by them with the No. 28 pick in the 2019 NHL Draft. He showed why by scoring one goal and adding four assists in a 7-4 win against the Tampa Bay Lightning at the 2019 NHL Prospects Showcase in Nashville.

"The puck was just following me around tonight," Suzuki told the Hurricanes website. "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 jammed in a rebound from the top of the crease. Three of his four assists came in the third period.

"He was engaged," said Ryan Warsofsky, coach of Carolina's American Hockey League affiliate in Charlotte. "He was proactive with his feet and got going a little bit quicker. I thought he did a nice job of that."

Holmstrom, Wilde not ready for start of Islanders rookie camp

Simon Holmstrom, who was selected in the first round (No. 23) of the 2019 NHL Draft by the New York Islanders, was not on the ice Sunday for the first day of rookie camp.

The 18-year-old forward is day-to-day with a lower-body injury sustained recently while blocking a shot back home in Sweden.

Holmstrom was joined on the sidelines by defenseman prospect Bode Wilde, the No. 41 pick in the 2018 NHL Draft who has a sprained ankle. The 19-year-old was wearing a walking boot on his right ankle at the Islanders' practice facility earlier in the week.

Robert Carpenter, who agreed to a two-year contract with the Islanders on March 26 after completing his senior season at Boston University where he was captain, also missed Sunday's on-ice session following offseason shoulder surgery. The 23-year-old forward is the son of former NHL player Bobby Carpenter, the No. 3 pick in the 1981 NHL Draft by the Washington Capitals who won the Stanley Cup in 1995 with the New Jersey Devils.

Anderson practices with Devils after injury scare

Joey Anderson was a full participant at practice for the New Jersey Devils on Sunday after sustaining a left leg cramp in the third period of a 2-1 loss to the Boston Bruins at the 2019 Prospects Challenge at HarborCenter on Saturday.

"I'm feeling a lot better, just a little sore," the 21-year-old right wing said. "My leg completely locked up and I couldn't bend it at all. I got off and just tried to start moving it again. It took about a half-hour before I was able to start moving it again and walking on it. It's much better, I skated (Sunday) morning and it feels good."

Anderson, who slid hard into the boards five minutes into the third and did not return to the game, is expected to challenge for a bottom-six role out of training camp after playing 34 games with New Jersey last season. He missed 33 games because of a broken right ankle, but when healthy is capable of helping the power play, penalty kill, and the net-front.

The Devils will play the Pittsburgh Penguins prospects in their final game of the tournament on Monday (9:30 a.m. ET).

-- Mike G. Morreale



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Hurricanes, Ducks 'intensely' discussing Justin Faulk trade

Sportsnet Staff

The Jake Gardiner signing appears to have had a domino effect in Raleigh.

The Carolina Hurricanes and the Anaheim Ducks have had ongoing conversations about a Justin Faulk trade, according to Sportsnet's Elliotte Friedman.

Friedman added that the swap for the 27-year-old rearguard has been "intensely discussed," although his contract includes a partial no-trade clause listing the Ducks.

Anaheim also wants to pursue an extension with Faulk, whose six-year, \$29-million contract expires next summer.

Faulk had 35 points in 82 games last season. He has recorded at least 30 points in six-straight campaigns and has 258 career points in 559 NHL games.

The Hurricanes added to their already loaded D-corps last week, signing Gardiner, a longtime Toronto Maple Leaf, to a four-year deal.



Report: Faulk wants extension to approve trade to Ducks

While the Anaheim Ducks are discussing a trade for Carolina Hurricanes defenceman Justin Faulk, a deal is contingent on the 27-year-old receiving a contract extension, Elliott Teaford of the Orange County Register reports. According to Teaford, the Ducks are not on Faulk's 15-team approved trade list.

TSN.ca Staff

While the Anaheim Ducks are discussing a trade for Carolina Hurricanes defenceman Justin Faulk, a deal is contingent on the 27-year-old receiving a contract extension, Elliott Teaford of the Orange County Register reports.

According to Teaford, the Ducks are not on Faulk's 15-team approved trade list and the eight-year veteran wants an extension in place before waiving his no-trade clause to join Anaheim.

Faulk, who scored 11 goals and posted 35 points in 82 games last season, is entering the final year of his

current contract and carries a \$4.83 million cap hit for this season. He is scheduled to become an unrestricted free agent next July.

Teaford notes Faulk would fill a need for the Ducks, who currently have just one right-handed shot on their blueline in Josh Manson.

Luke DeCock of The News and Observer reported Thursday that the Hurricanes have had "longstanding interest" in Ducks winger Ondrej Kase and added he would be surprised if 23-year-old isn't involved in a deal between the two sides.

Kase, a seventh-round pick in 2014, was limited to 30 games due to a shoulder injury last season, posting 11 goals and 20 points. He had 20 goals and 38 points in 66 games during the 2017-18 season.

Faulk's name began to emerge in the rumour mill last week after the Hurricanes signed defenceman Jake Gardiner to a four-year, \$16.2 million contract.



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Potential Faulk trade wouldn't solve Ducks' problems

By Adam Gretz

As soon as the Carolina Hurricanes signed Jake Gardiner to a four-year contract it seemed to be a matter of when, and not if, they made a move involving defender Justin Faulk.

Faulk's name has been mentioned in trade speculation for years now, and with his contract up after this season and the Hurricanes suddenly having an even bigger log-jam on defense the time seems right for that long-rumored trade to finally go through.

According to multiple reports on Monday, the Anaheim Ducks may be the team emerging as the favorite to land him.

Elliott Friedman reported that the Ducks and Hurricanes were having intense trade talks and that a potential deal would depend on Faulk's willingness to waive his no-trade clause to play in Anaheim. The Ducks are one of the teams listed on his limited no-trade clause. After spending almost his entire career playing on a losing, rebuilding team and finally getting a taste of success this past season it might be awfully difficult to give that up to go to a team that was one of the league's worst a year ago.

Friedman's report was followed by Luke DeCock of the News & Observer Tweeting that he believes there is a deal between the two teams in place and that it wouldn't be a surprise if Anaheim's Ondrej Kase — a player the Hurricanes have long been interested in — was one of the players going the other way.

That would be a fairly significant score for the Hurricanes. Faulk is an unrestricted free agent after this season and might be a luxury they don't really need. If there is a deal to be made that can improve the forwards, it would make sense to pursue it. Kase, 23, has been limited by injury the past two years but has shown 25-goal potential, posted outstanding underlying numbers, and would be a great fit to a rapidly improving group of forwards.

As for the Ducks ... well. It's hard to see the motivation here. Faulk is a fine player and brings plenty of positives to any team he would play for. But the Ducks aren't a Justin Faulk away from being good again. This is a team that pretty badly needs to overhaul its roster and get younger with an eye toward the future, while also finding a way to add more young, skilled forwards. Not subtract them.

The Ducks already have a lot of money tied up in Cam Fowler, Hampus Lindholm, and Josh Manson on defense, a core that hasn't really done a good enough job insulating their goalies from shots. Will Faulk be good enough to drastically improve that? He is known more for his ability to provide offense than his ability to suppress shots.

Given where the Ducks organization is right now Kase just seems to be the type of player that would have more long-term value to them as a young, still cheap, potential top-six forward. The recent injury history is a concern, but this team needs someone that can score goals up front more than it needs another late 20s defender that may not fix their actual defensive woes.

NHL Power Rankings: Biggest stories of the offseason

By Adam Gretz

With NHL training camps set to begin and the 2019-20 season just around the corner, this week's NHL Power Rankings will be taking a look back at the biggest storylines of the offseason.

Offer sheets, restricted free agents, a Metropolitan Division arms race, the general manager and

coaching carousel in full swing, and even a few oddities.

What were the biggest stories of the summer? To the rankings!

The big stories

1. The rise and fall of Paul Fenton. Simply the most stunning story of the offseason. After one mostly



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disastrous season in charge of the Minnesota Wild, Fenton was fired this offseason and replaced by Bill Guerin. It's not just that he was fired after a year, but that the Wild waited until after the draft and free agency to make the move.

2. Sebastian Aho's offer sheet. It had been six years since a restricted free agent signed an offer sheet with another team, and it was starting to feel like it was never going to happen again. Then Aho and the Montreal Canadiens actually went through with the process. Only problem was the Canadiens made it a contract that was ridiculously easy for the Carolina Hurricanes to match.

3. Unsigned RFAs. With the start of training camp just days away almost all of the top RFAs remain unsigned. Mitch Marner, Patrik Laine, Mikko Rantanen, Brayden Point, Kyle Connor, Charlie McAvoy, Ivan Provorov, Brock Boeser. It is unprecedented to have this many top-tier RFAs still unsigned this late in the summer. Many of these negotiations will continue throughout training camp and the preseason, but how many will spill over to the regular season?

4. Evgeny Kuznetsov's IIHF suspension. Three months after a social media video surfaced of Washington Capitals star Evgeny Kuznetsov in a room with white powder on a table, he was handed a four-year suspension by the IIHF due to a positive cocaine test in May. Kuznetsov voluntarily sought help through the NHL's education and counseling program and is expected to meet with commissioner Gary Bettman before training camp.

5. Metropolitan Division madness. The Devils and Rangers re-ignited their rivalry with big offseasons that saw them land the top two picks in the draft and acquire some big name veterans, the Flyers overhauled their defense and gave Kevin Hayes a ton of money, the Blue Jackets lost several key players, the Penguins traded Phil Kessel and Olli Maatta, and the Hurricanes added to an already outstanding defense.

6. Florida goes all in Bob. The worst kept secret at the start of the summer was Sergei Bobrovsky going to the Florida Panthers. He fills their biggest need and could be the piece they need to get back in the playoffs, especially after hiring Joel Quenneville as head coach in April.

7. The GM and coaching carousel. Decades after he revived the Red Wings as a player, Steve Yzerman returns to Detroit to try and do the same as the general manager. That paved the way for Ken Holland to leave Detroit to try and rebuild the charred remains of the Peter Chiarelli era in Edmonton. Behind the benches, six teams will have new coaches as Quenneville (Florida), Alain Vigneault

(Philadelphia), Todd McLellan (Los Angeles), Ralph Krueger (Buffalo), D.J. Smith (Ottawa), Dave Tippett (Edmonton), and Dallas Eakins (Anaheim) get their chances. For many, it is a second (or third) chance behind an NHL bench.

8. Nashville's big change. The Predators needed another game-breaking forward to help fix a dreadful power play that failed them all year. They hope to have found that in Matt Duchene. To make room for him they had to deal from their depth on defense and dump P.K. Subban's salary. Are they a better team with Duchene over Subban? David Poile is taking a big gamble that they are.

9. Ron Francis takes over Seattle. This is going to be a tough job, not only because he is starting an organization from scratch, but because expectations will be almost unreachable given what happened with the Vegas Golden Knights.

10. New rules. Video review is being expanded to cover major and match penalties, as well as goals scored as the result of a hand pass, high stick on the puck, or pucks that should have been whistled for being out of play. There are also some new player safety rules in place. Read all about them here.

The oddities

11. Robin Lehner's New York "Rangers" Masterton Trophy. Lehner won the 2018-19 Masterton Trophy, awarded annually to the player that shows perseverance and dedication to hockey, and gave an inspiring speech at the awards ceremony. When he actually received the physical trophy it had him playing for the New York Rangers. He played the 2018-19 season for the New York Islanders. Fans of those teams do not like being confused for the other.

12. NJ Devil goes through the glass. What was the mascot trying to accomplish? No one knows, but it spoiled a child's birthday party by running through a giant glass window.

13. Connor McDavid's skate lace belt. Not really sure what else to say here, other than when you are the best in the world you can dress however you want.

14. Phil Kessel's one-room theatre. After putting his Pittsburgh home on the market, the Internet pounced on a random photo of what looked to be the loneliest movie theatre room in the world ... a single desk chair in front of a big screen TV. Kessel said he never actually used the room, it had been empty, and his realtor thought they should put a chair in it to give the feel of a theatre. It was still fun while it lasted.

15. Andrei Vasilevskiy's reaction to Keenan Thompson's Lightning joke. He did not find it amusing (Victor Hedman, however, cracked a smile).



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SB NATION
CANES COUNTRY

Hurricanes tickets going all-mobile this season

Smartphones will be the way to go at the PNC Arena gate this season.

By Brian LeBlanc

Carolina Hurricanes season ticket members began receiving their packages last week. Included in the box were the usual assortment of tchotchkes, discount cards and the like.

One thing that wasn't included? Actual tickets.

Two seasons after making the move to electronic tickets at PNC Arena, the Hurricanes will distribute tickets almost exclusively via mobile this season, the team confirmed to Canes Country last week. That means fans who either do not own a smartphone or prefer not to bring it with them to a game will need to plan in advance to avoid hurdles at the admission gate.

Unlike in the previous two seasons, when the STM identification card did double duty for both game admission and discounts on merchandise, food and beverages, this season it will solely be a discount card. It comes pre-loaded with the appropriate merchandise discount and food & beverage credit, as in years past, but will not be loaded with game tickets.

Hurricanes vice president of ticket sales Sara Daniel told Canes Country that PNC Arena upgraded to the Ticketmaster Presence system in the offseason, and the new system operates on a near-field communication, or NFC, platform. That means instead of scanning a barcode, fans will tap their device against a reader at the gate, similar to mobile pay and mobile keycards at hotels. The same system

is in use at all NFL stadiums and in most NBA and NHL arenas, with the remainder planning to convert sometime in the next two seasons.

Full- and partial-season STMs may still request paper tickets by contacting their account rep, but unlike in past seasons when full STMs received their tickets in hard copy by default (usually on the card), paper tickets will now be made available by request only.

In addition, tickets sold at the arena box office will be delivered via mobile as well, unless a paper ticket is specifically requested by the purchaser.

Purchased mobile tickets can be accessed through the Hurricanes mobile app or, if they have been loaded there beforehand, from a device's mobile wallet. If the tickets are in a mobile wallet, they will be accessible even in an area of poor service connectivity, which could alleviate problems with poor connections complicating access to tickets in the mobile app.

As in the past two years, ticket transfers will need to be handled through the Caniac Account Manager. Ticket PDFs will not work for admission because the ticket takers will not have anything to scan a QR code. Paper tickets, either from box office purchases or from the ticket office for STMs who requested them, will have a chip embedded in the tickets to tap on the reader at the gate for admission.

The Hurricanes said that 87% of tickets used in the playoffs last season were scanned from mobile devices using QR codes. For the other 13%, now is the time to prepare and plan ahead so that you are not left out once the season gets underway.



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SportScan

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

1152253 NHL

NHL Seattle holds breath as league and players try to avoid potential 2020 labor stoppage

Geoff Baker

A major area newly hired NHL Seattle assistant general manager Ricky Olczyk will oversee on the team's behalf is the collective-bargaining agreement (CBA) between players and team owners.

For this week, though, that's on hold as Olczyk and the rest of the National Hockey League wait to see whether players utilize a clause allowing them to opt out of the current CBA two years ahead of schedule. The NHL Players Association (NHLPA) has until Sept. 15 to give owners a mandated 12 months' advance notice it intends to terminate the CBA next fall rather than letting it run its course through September 2022.

The year of forewarning allows both sides to reach a new deal in time to prevent a work stoppage during the 2020-21 season. But avoiding even the triggering of that one-year countdown and resolving any CBA impasse right now best serves NHL Seattle.

And the only way that happens is if the NHL changes the rules surrounding an "escrow" system that sees the league annually withhold 10% to 15% of player salaries to balance revenue-sharing requirements.

More on escrow in a moment.

For now, there was optimistic talk last week a deal was close enough to possibly extend the opt-out deadline beyond next week and ultimately prolong the CBA through 2024-25. That would delight NHL Seattle, since any work stoppage next fall would hamper efforts to generate local excitement in the year leading up to its expansion team's October 2021 debut.

Also, it's tough for NHL Seattle to plan for a June 2021 expansion draft when there's no guarantee it would take place if players are locked out. Not to mention, planning future payroll, player signings and contract workings would be nearly impossible without knowing what the league's CBA landscape will look like beyond this coming season.

So, it's better for NHL Seattle if players and owners resolve their issues. It's especially beneficial to Seattle's team planning if the CBA gets extended and provides cost certainty for several more years.

One positive development occurred Aug. 30, when NHL commissioner Gary Bettman announced owners wouldn't exercise their own option to terminate the CBA early.

That wasn't surprising, with \$650 million incoming from Seattle franchise fees and perhaps billions more from sports-gaming deals and a looming new U.S. television contract. Owners have a good thing going and don't want it to stop.

But with players, well, mention "escrow" and you're likely to have a hockey stick swung at your head.

The current CBA, negotiated in 2013, calls for a 50-50 revenue split between players and owners. If combined salaries paid players is greater than their due half-share of revenue, a portion of annually withheld escrow money goes to owners to make up the difference.



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Any leftover escrow money after that is refunded to players, though lately they've received little back. They had 15.5% withheld in 2016-17 and 2.8% returned, while final figures for 2017-18 and 2018-19 — when they had 11.5% and 12.91% withheld, respectively — aren't yet in.

Escrow infuriates players, some likening it to signing a contract that isn't honored for the full amount.

In years when player salaries fall short of their 50% revenue share, owners are supposed to pay them bonuses. But that scenario has never actually unfolded and it has contributed to a sense by players the escrow system is stacked against them.

Still, there's a reason it's always the players giving up escrow money rather than the other way around.

The NHL employs a salary cap with minimum and maximum spending thresholds. Each year, the league sets a revenue projection based off the prior season's actual intake. The salary-cap maximum is set 15% above that revenue projection while the spending floor is 15% below.

Obviously, players in general want teams spending more on salaries. They can even trigger an "escalator clause" within the CBA allowing the cap threshold to be pushed up to 5% higher for any given season.

Teams also tend to spend toward upper cap limits, given they're competitive by nature and usually trying to win.

But spending more on salaries also pushes the player money intake further beyond league revenue projections and usually increases the escrow amount withheld. The league calculates the exact amount of escrow withholding four times per season based on how revenue intake is progressing.

No other league operates this way. The NBA has a similar system but it sets a fixed amount of withholding each year that doesn't change.

NHL players complain not only about withheld salary, but that the changing amount makes financial planning difficult. With players also paying income taxes at high levels, agent fees and union dues, some lose more than half their paycheck once escrow is factored in.

Also, the system can pit player against player, with those poised for a new contract wanting salary thresholds to increase while others on multiyear deals want escrow withholding kept as low as possible.

Proposed solutions include the NHL lowering the maximum salary threshold, or eliminating the 5% escalator clause. Others involve setting a fixed escrow amount rather than revising it. Or, changing the definition of "hockey related income" counted as revenue — such as league contributions to player benefit packages.

Some proposed changes might not even benefit players long term. After all, they'll always wind up splitting revenue 50-50 — it's just the mechanism for it being argued — and some player agents suggest they'd be better off keeping the current system and negotiating stronger deals in other CBA areas.

No matter. Despite other hot-button issues, such as NHL participation in the next Winter Olympics, escrow is the hill these players have apparently chosen to die on.

And that's no idle threat in a league with three work stoppages since 1994-95. So, both sides will have to keep working toward a new escrow system in coming weeks and months — preferably making enough progress to delay next week's CBA opt-out deadline.

Otherwise, those willing-to-die players, by this time next year, might be taking a piece of NHL Seattle along with them.

Seattle Times LOADED: 09.10.2019

1152254 NHL

Dom Amore: Ron Francis' new mission is building a NHL franchise from scratch in Seattle

BY DOM AMORE

SEPTEMBER 10, 2019 01:00 AM,

After 40 or so years, Ron Francis began to believe he finally had enough of hockey. Let go by the Hurricanes in April 2018, his three children grown, he tried something new.

"I went and got my real estate license and was kind of doing that," Francis says, as he waits on a flight from Raleigh, N.C., to Nashville, Tenn. "Then Hockey Canada asked me to co-manage their Spangler Cup team, then they asked me to be part of their management team for the world championships in Slovakia. I did that, and that one kind of got to me a little bit. You kind of got the urge again, saying, 'This is what I've done my whole life. This is what I like to do. Maybe I should rethink this.'"

So to borrow a memorable line from a forgettable film, just when Ron Francis thought he was out, they pulled him back in.

"You don't get a chance to build a professional franchise from the ground up very often," he says. "On one hand, it's daunting. On the other, it's a unique opportunity I'm excited to take on. You get to hire the people you want to work with, create the culture you want to create."

The NHL's 32nd franchise does not yet have a name, colors, an arena, practice facility, coach or player, but it will start in Seattle two years from now, and Francis, 56, once the sturdy cornerstone of your Hartford Whalers, will be its architect and builder.

"The people involved, from the ownership I met to the people in the organization, it's just a great group," says Francis, who was introduced as GM in Seattle on July 18. "Very classy, want to do things right. There's just a great energy here, and it's fun to be a part of."

Francis plans to relocate permanently from Raleigh, where they like to think they own a piece of him, to Seattle early next year. This fall, he's in airports a lot, traveling the continent to watch players at prospect tournaments, for meetings involving everything from construction to naming rights to league labor matters. His office is in an old brick building in Seattle that used to house an auto garage, and



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he's sifting through hundreds of resumes, he estimates 300 texts, calls or emails a day. Francis hired Ricky Olczyk to be his assistant GM last week; his next order of business is building out a pro scouting department. And he has to establish an AHL franchise.

In 2018, Las Vegas reached the Stanley Cup Finals in the Golden Knights' first year of existence, so there's an example that success can be achieved quickly, and perhaps a little pressure to do just that in Seattle.

"Certainly, what Vegas did was very special and very unique," Francis says. "If you go back and read some of the articles, their plan was to draft, develop and be patient, almost like a five-year plan. And then things turned for them. I used to joke, you'd want to be the second GM in Seattle because of the expectations that Vegas put on you. But you look at it and you say, 'This is the challenge, but it's not about Vegas. It's about Seattle.' With two years, we have a long runway, and we want to take advantage of all of it and not rush into anything."

The Whalers were still fairly new to the NHL when they picked Francis fourth overall in the NHL draft in 1981, and through the next decade, he became a prolific scorer, consistent presence and captain on a team that has spawned a long list of successful coaches and executives. In NHL circles, they refer to the "Whalers Tree."

Joel Quenneville coached the Blackhawks to three Stanley Cup titles and is now with the Panthers. Dave Tippett is coaching Edmonton, Kevin Dineen, Dean Evason, Ulf Samuelsson, Doug Jarvis, Steve Weeks, John Anderson, Brad Shaw and Paul Fenton are among the ex-Whalers teammates who have found long post-playing careers.

"I think it's pretty remarkable," Francis says, "the amount of guys who played in Hartford in the '80s that got into management, coaching, broadcasting, the agent business, you name it, and more impressive just how long they've lasted. We were growing up together during those days in Hartford, and there were times after practices we'd go up to Chuck's in the mall and have lunch together or talk about hockey. Or after a game, we'd head up to Chuck's and get a back room and get a bite to eat and talk about hockey. It was a unique group and a special group and growing up together and talking hockey, we wanted to stay a part of it."

Francis, who met and married his wife, Mary Lou, while playing in Hartford, was sent away to Pittsburgh, where he helped win two championships – yes, they also like to think they own a piece of him – in that core-shaking 1991 trade. He later rejoined the franchise in Carolina, helping to reach the Finals in 2002, and ended up playing 23 seasons, piling up numbers that put him among the all-time greats, second only to Wayne Gretzky with 1,249 assists, and ultimately in the Hall of Fame in 2007. He joined the Hurricanes' front office in 2011 and became GM in 2014.

There's a street named for Francis in his hometown, Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. And if he succeeds in Seattle, still another place may come to feel it owns a piece of him. But there is a reason Ronnie Franchise's sweater No. 10 still hangs in the rafters at Main and Trumbull.

"There was a lot of passion for the team," Francis says, "and it was a great relationship between the players and the community. It was certainly a sad day when the franchise left, and a lot of people are hoping at some point they get one back. The logo itself was one of the coolest logos with

the 'H' kind of hidden in the tail. Normally, you would think things would fade over time, but I guess I'm not surprised that in that market people are still passionate about it. ... I enjoyed my time playing there, made a lot of great friends, still stay in touch with people from that era. It's always a special place for me, and if there was a chance of them getting (a franchise), I'd certainly root hard for them."

News Tribune LOADED: 09.10.2019

1152308 Websites

The Athletic / Q&A: How former NHLer Tom Laidlaw landed a spot on 'Survivor' and a look at his reality TV experience

By Scott Wheeler Sep 9, 2019

Tom Laidlaw's bio is about to change.

Until now, it predominantly featured the following bullet points: The New York Rangers' 93rd overall pick in the 1978 NHL draft. A veteran of 774 NHL games as a punishing defenseman who amassed 185 points and 795 penalty minutes across 11 seasons in New York and Los Angeles. Named the 87th greatest Ranger in "100 Ranger Greats: Superstars, Unsung Heroes and Colorful Characters."

At 8 p.m. ET on Wednesday, September 25, it will include a new line: "Survivor's" first Canadian contestant.

A few weeks before CBS announced the cast of its 39th season, entitled *Island of the Idols*, Laidlaw spoke with The Athletic for a wide-ranging Q&A on everything from how contestants get outfitted in their tribe's colours to how he prepared for a month of sleeping on bamboo with 19 strangers in Fiji.

How does a 61-year-old Tom Laidlaw get cast on *Survivor*?

It's funny, I even think that myself sometimes. I remember when it got going I was "OK, this is fun" and then when I finally got to the island I was like "OK, I can't believe I'm actually doing this."

It started probably I guess two years ago. Mr. Jerry Bruckheimer, who owns – I don't know if that's the right word – *Big Brother*, *The Amazing Race*, and *Survivor*, he's a huge hockey fan so he reached out to the NHL and asked about getting a couple of former players on *The Amazing Race*. And so the NHL reached out to the Rangers and I'm here locally and I'm into fitness and have this company called the *True Grit Life* and all this stuff so they reached out to me thinking I'd be the perfect guy to do it. The problem at that point though was that they wanted to have a former teammate of mine that I was friends with that would go out but most of the guys my age, they're all fat and out of shape and smoking cigarettes (laughs).

So we couldn't find anyone to do it. It was kind of funny going through the process because it was like "Oh, this guy's a laugh but he can't do it because he just got his hip replaced." So that got tabled and then it was like "Well how about *Survivor*?" and we reached out to the talent agent who covers all of those shows and put together a video and then



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they flew me out to L.A. in October for casting for a week and after that it all fell into place.

(Robert Voets / CBS Entertainment)

What did your video look like?

I watched some other audition tapes because Jeff Kent, the former baseball player, was on and his tape gave me a good idea of what they were looking for. It was actually a pretty good pump-up tape and we put some music to it and it showed some old fights and hits and highlights.

I've done TV work in the past and broadcasting. When I retired I did radio work with the Kings and the first season of the Sharks they needed colour commentating so I did that. And I do public speaking and podcasting now.

So when I went out there for casting, I was borderline cocky (laughs). We had a whole series of meetings with Jeff Probst and the lead producer and a couple of women from CBS and during the meeting he turned to them and said "Well what do you think of him?" right in front of me and one woman said "Well, I like him, he's confident," and the other woman said "No, no, no, he's totally cocky." Because I was older and I felt comfortable in front of the camera, I kind of just let it loose and let my personality come out.

How familiar were you with the show? Had you watched Survivor or was this a relatively new thing for you?

I knew roughly what the strategy was and everything but when I went out on the show there were two of us that were recruited, one was an Olympic swimmer and myself and the rest of them were all diehard fans. Like they knew everybody who had ever played the game, all the strategies, everything that had happened.

I knew I needed to watch the show before I went on though so I started at season 25 when Kent was on and I watched all the shows and I was really glad I did because I watched and saw how the show really evolved with strategies, how acceptable it was to be looking for idols, blindsides, and all that stuff. So when I got out on the island I felt pretty comfortable that I understood the game. I understood that there are a lot of different ways to play the game. A lot of people have been very successful and have been very good players but have never won, whereas now they're going after the stronger players and trying to get them out earlier.

I remember reading a story about the few days before the contestants are dropped on the ship, and sleeping in tents, and getting fitted for clothing. What was that process like, before the game actually begins?

It's funny. The whole clothing thing happens months before. You send them clothes that you would want to wear on the island and you get pictures taken and then they send you back stuff that is acceptable and you get on Amazon and tell them stuff that you think would work and they say yes or no. And then the first time they send you a cheque is to buy your clothes. And they kind of know what tribe you're going to be on, so the colours they want you to wear. It was funny, they want you to have something to wear at night because it gets cool so the girl sent me a note saying "We want you to have a cardigan" and I said "A cardigan!?" I grew up on a friggling farm, I'm a hockey player, what's a cardigan (laughs)?

The five days before, to be honest you, I didn't know about that. I was really kind of naïve about that part. I kind of

thought that we were just going to get there and maybe have one day and then get going.

All the time during casting in L.A. and those five days at what they call Ponderosa, we're not allowed to speak to the other players at all because they want all the interaction and all of the bonding to happen in front of the camera. So that five days, you're sitting there, it's Fiji, there's no air conditioning, and everybody's sizing everybody else up. Like I'm in shape, I've got the short hair, I've kind of got the marine look going. And I was actually reading a book by a former Navy Seal called You Can't Hurt Me so I'm reading this book and everyone is looking at you thinking "What are they reading, what are they wearing?" You can see that everybody is forming opinions of everybody else.

Did you have an approach that you wanted to take going in? What was your plan for things like shelter building? Was Tom Laidlaw going to be a leader or sit back?

Well, True Grit Life is all about discipline, devotion, dedication, and passion. Living life all out. And I told them when I went to California for casting, I said "Listen, this is the way I live my life: I'm out of bed at 3:30 a.m., I make my bed perfect, I'm out the door at 4 a.m., I march, I weigh all my food. That's how I'm going to act when I go out on the show. I'm going to live my life."

I tried to be careful with challenges to not dominate or be a leader too much. They wanted me to take a lead in stuff when you do a little preparation thing before each challenge and they wanted me to lead but then everybody gets so excited that they start talking over me and everyone else. I realized that I shouldn't push it and if you're going to be a real hard-ass they'll go after you.

Because of my experience in hockey, I've played thousands of games and I felt good about how to prepare and control yourself during the challenges but even myself, it's a whole different world.

Did you ever feel like experiences from your NHL career played into your approach? Were there skills you could use out there?

I think the leadership part really helped me. I think my age and conditioning helped. The other people looked at me and they respected me as this guy that was imposing and I spoke openly about how I lived my life and True Grit Life and I think they kind of admired that.

Plus the preparation part helped me. I was physically in shape but it was the mental preparation I did. Even being able to just socialize when you're sitting around camp because I'm 61 and a lot of these kids are in their 20s and 30s and it's a whole different world. There were a couple of times when I would joke around and just say "Get me a gun and shoot me" but I made sure I said it in a joking way so that they knew I wasn't picking on them. I knew I had to be prepared mentally so that I didn't let that stuff wear on me.

And that's another thing, is there's so much down time too, where you're just sitting around. And sometimes people are playing mind games, sometimes it's just who they are, so I really did a lot of training.

I've got an excellent trainer on the mental part of things and we would do things like were I would memorize a poem and have it nailed down so I knew it word-for-word and then I would go exercise to get my heart rate up and I would go back and try to say the full thing again and I realized when I



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got wound up that I couldn't remember the poem as well as I could before. So we would try to figure out what makes Tom settle down. It may be different for you than it is for me. What process do I have to go through to calm myself down so that I can concentrate? That starts with breathing deep and that really helped me a lot.

Because you're out there and you're playing the game 24/7. People are up in the middle of the night, they're strategizing, they're looking for idols, sometimes it rained in the middle of the night and people get up and gather around the fire because you can't lay there anymore.

What was the weather like in Fiji? I know that some seasons it's particularly bad depending on when you're filming.

It was, for the most part, good. We got rain but it seemed like it always rained at night. There was one night where we got rained on for a couple of hours but for the rest of the time it really just rained for 15 minutes.

We always watch them build these forts with bamboo and everything so we did that and it was awful, we couldn't sleep on it. So we ended up actually sleeping in the dirt and you do your best to build a roof with the leaves that is waterproof. If it's only raining for 15 minutes, typically you're OK. When it rained any longer than that, it leaked through and you got wet.

It's funny that the things you think about right now that are a big deal to you, once you're out there for a while you realize "OK, I've got dirt everywhere, I haven't brushed my teeth, I'm filthy" and then it becomes "Well that's just the way life is" and you don't even worry about it. It's aggravating when it's the middle of the night and you're trying to go to sleep when it's wet, but it stops raining and then you fall asleep in the dirt. We would try to go down and sleep on the beach sometimes because it was beautiful but in the morning it would get pretty cold with the wind blowing off the water.

How was the food side of things? You're a bigger guy, I imagine that's a challenge.

Typically, I'm really strict with my diet and I chart all of my foods and I take in anywhere from 3,000 to 3,500 calories a day and out there they tell us between rice and coconuts that we're getting roughly 300 calories a day.

Whew.

And you're moving all the time too. You don't want to sit around because then you're missing out on the game. So you're burning a lot of calories. But again, it's just one of those things you learn to deal with. I thought it was going to be a bigger deal but it really wasn't. There was never a time where I felt like I was totally drained. I just adapted to it.

What did your friends and family think about it — and what was it like to be away from them? Soon you'll get to watch it back with them and share that experience with them all over again.

It was good and bad. There's no phone or nothing so my fiancée dropped me off at the airport and she was happy for me that I got this opportunity but we were pretty close and now it's gone. And I mean gone. There was nothing. And the last few seasons have been in Fiji but we didn't even know it was in Fiji when I left. Like there was nothing. That part was tough.

My kids were happy for me. (My fiancée) was very happy too but taking off for that length of time with no contact was

tough. I really looked at it as a challenge because I wanted to go out there and show myself and other people that at 60 years old you can do anything. Like I didn't want to play like a 60-year-old, I wanted to play like a player. But I also looked at it like free advertising on national TV for True Grit Life. Like I live that True Grit Life, that's how I am, and I wanted people to see that. It was great.

It was one of those deals where it was like "How many people would ever think of doing it, right?" But I can tell you that when I was finally done the game it was like "Wow, that was really something." Like I was really proud of the way I played, the way I carried myself.

They've got to edit it so we'll see how it comes out. That's the one thing I'm nervous about is how I'll come across because you never know!

The Athletic LOADED: 09.10.2019

1152309 Websites

The Athletic / What the Jake Gardiner contract means for next year's crop of UFA defensemen

By Pierre LeBrun Sep 9, 2019

It is probably wishful thinking on the part of GMs rather than reality, but one comment from a team executive in the wake of Jake Gardiner's contract in Carolina last week certainly made me think.

Does the deal help re-set the UFA defenseman market in any way?

Gardiner, who spent the whole summer on the UFA market, signed a four-year deal for just over \$4-million a year AAV and was certainly a bargain for Carolina for a quality, top-four, puck-moving D.

Six months ago, I would have pegged Gardiner's deal somewhere in the \$6-million a season range on the open market. And that would have been a conservative estimation.

It was a result of some market circumstances playing out rather unfortunately for Gardiner rather than perhaps a true reflection of the worth of such a player, although his back injury last season played a factor, too.

The reality is that he could have got more than \$5 million on a one-year deal somewhere else as late as last week, I'm told, but chose to take the security of the term in Carolina instead. And who can blame him?

But it bookends a rather intriguing offseason for top-four, UFA D going back to the start when superstar Erik Karlsson stayed put in San Jose for a whopping \$11.5-million AAV on a max term deal.

When the deal was signed in June, some agents were rather giddy about seeing how the Karlsson deal might help drag the market north for defensemen negotiating contracts, although the less-than-anticipated rise in salary cap helped quiet that to some degree.



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Still, I think of Jacob Trouba, for example, signing for \$8-million AAV over seven years with the New Rangers. I believe the Karlsson deal had some impact there.

And so somewhere between the high water mark with Karlsson and now the lower end with Gardiner, you've got much to contemplate for next year's UFA D market.

There's a quality list of top-four D entering camp on the final year of their deals before become UFA: the likes of Torey Krug, Roman Josi, Alex Pietrangelo, Justin Schultz, Tyson Barrie, Jared Spurgeon, Sami Vatanen, Zach Bogosian, Chris Tanev, Jake Muzzin, T.J. Brodie, Travis Hamonic and yes, Justin Faulk, among others.

Faulk may be the odd man out now that the Hurricanes have signed Gardiner. Sources confirm Carolina has been exploring the trade market for Faulk and even allowing teams to directly communicate with the player's camp about a contract extension because that would augment the return in a trade. The Canes and Faulk's camp, led by agent Brian Bartlett, haven't really talked extension since a June draft meeting in Vancouver went sideways.

There have been contract talks throughout the summer between the Predators and Josi's camp but still no deal. We all know by now about "Nashville dollars" and how the Predators have successfully handled their payroll over the past several years but this is a very special player, their captain, and it will be intriguing to see where his extension ends up. I would have to think it'll be anywhere from \$8-million a year to \$9.5-million on a long-term deal.

Two blueliners who had dynamic Stanley Cup playoffs also need extensions in Pietrangelo and Krug. The latter is entering the final season of a four-year deal carrying a \$5.25-million AAV. The Bruins have some bargain deals on their payroll, David Krejci leads the team with a \$7.25-million AAV. Krug is worth more than that on the open market, at least \$8-million AAV in my mind — he was unbelievable in the playoffs. But what makes sense cap-wise in Boston? Add in the fact, the Bruins must first re-sign RFAs Charlie McAvoy and Brandon Carlo. Which is why it's not surprising to hear from Krug's agent Lewis Gross on Monday morning saying that there haven't really been any contract talks with the Bruins just yet.

"It's not me waiting, it's not really having a choice to wait," Krug told The Athletic last week at the Player Tour in Chicago when asked about his extension not being done yet. "And I get it, I know there are unknowns with Charlie and even Brandon, those are two big parts of the Bruins' future. We don't know how much they're going to cost, so how can you and go and move on to a different guy. But I'd like to think I'm a big part of the future as well. I've earned it. I hope it ends up that way."

Honestly, I wondered if Krug might get dealt this summer in a pre-emptive strike by Don Sweeney to get better value on an expiring deal if the Bruins GM thought he couldn't get Krug signed. But here we are on the eve of camp and Krug is very much still a Bruin. Maybe Boston decides to go for another Cup run and just let Krug walk out the door on July 1 if they can't sign him.

Not that Krug doesn't realize a trade is still a possibility at some point this year depending on how things go.

"I get the business side of it, so I'm not freaking out," Krug said. "I don't take anything personally. I am aware that I could get traded. If it made sense to them, then that's what

they have to live with and I'll go on my way and I'll continue to be the player that I am. But I understand why the rumors are circling and why they would come out. Just because of the nature of the situation."

Krug also knows in a place like Boston there will be questions from the local media all year long if his situation remains unsettled.

"I realize questions are coming my way and they're going to continue," he said. "I've played on consecutive one-year deals so that pressure part of it or those questions are not necessarily new to me, but I guess it is because I dictate a little bit more of where I could be. But I'm ready for it. I know it's coming. I've played in Boston for seven years. It's a tough market, it's fun, it's why you want to be there because it pushes you to your potential."

Pietrangelo is entering the final season of a seven-year deal carrying a \$6.5-million AAV. Colleague Jeremy Rutherford in his Blues mailbag over the weekend touched on the Pietrangelo situation. As Jeremy wrote, Pietrangelo is worth \$8-million or more a year in a new deal but what kind of term would the Blues be comfortable with for the 29-year-old?

Re-signing Spurgeon is the top priority for new Wild GM Bill Guerin, as colleague Michael Russo explained last week.

I suppose what will be interesting there is if contract talks drag on too long into the season and the team is struggling, is the better idea to sign him or make him a valuable trade chip? It would seem the Wild would rather sign him at this point.

Schultz will be an interesting one, too, in Pittsburgh. The Penguins are always juggling salary cap space. My sense is there haven't been any conversations this summer about an extension for the offensive blueliner. I think the Penguins like Schultz, both as a player and as a person, but have decided to have a wait-and-see approach as far as letting the season play out for a bit before looking at that situation. Do they circle back in January or wait until after the season? Both are possible. What's rather obvious though is that given the Pens' cap situation, Schultz would have to take less to stay on compared to what the market would likely offer next July 1.

What all these blueliners on expiring deals also have to contemplate over the next 12 months is how the so-called "flat-cap" environment factors into their decision-making. The NHL and NHL Players' Association had another CBA session on Monday in New York ahead of the players' re-opener decision ahead of Sunday's deadline and whatever comes of the next CBA, the idea of limiting the rise of the salary cap to some degree to help mitigate escrow seems inevitable no matter what happens.

Which no doubt will seep into how teams and players negotiate future contracts over the next year.

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The Athletic / Q&A with the NWHL's Dani Rylan: 'It's hurtful to know there are some players who are advocates for our destruction'



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By Hailey Salvian Sep 9, 2019

It's been a tumultuous offseason for the National Women's Hockey League.

It has faced a boycott from more than 150 of the top professional women's players. NHL partners like the New Jersey Devils and Pegula Sports and Entertainment — which owns the Buffalo Sabres — have also walked away from the league.

Despite the ups and downs, league commissioner Dani Rylan keeps trucking on, willing the league she founded in 2015 to continue. This season, which will be its fifth, the NWHL will have an extended 24-game schedule and a new streaming deal with Twitch, a popular live-streaming platform for video games, as well as a number of new league partners like Chipwitch, an ice cream sandwich company.

Before the puck drops on Oct. 5, Rylan spoke with The Athletic about navigating the difficult offseason, the upcoming NWHL season and the future of women's hockey.

The NWHL has faced a number of roadblocks since the boycott announcement in early May. How did you and your staff navigate everything?

I mean, it's easy to stay motivated when you believe in what you're building and when you're surrounded by really great people building alongside you. It's had some ups and downs and some challenges, but we've kind of kept our eyes on the North Star and know that what we're doing is objectively good. We're providing opportunities for women to play professional hockey after their collegiate careers. We've paid women over \$3 million to date to play pro hockey, and there isn't another organization in the world that can say that. So, we're not slowing down, we're going to continue to do that and we welcome any and all who want to do that with us.

You've announced a number of new partnerships this offseason. I'm curious, with what is going on in the game right now, did you find it more challenging to get sponsors or did you find more people were willing to come to the table to help?

I think this season was unique for sure. You know, when the CWHL folded on March 31, and before the boycott started in early May, we actually had the best four weeks of business in our young history. And I think part of that was because we provided so much clarity to the market. There was one league for brands, players, investors, supporters and fans to commit to, so there was an influx of interest that presented itself after the CWHL folded. But it definitely slowed things down when the boycott was launched, because it provided that uncertainty that existed before when there were two leagues, and it re-fragmented the market. So, I would say it's a challenge that we're used to, because we dealt with that in sales when the CWHL existed, but it's one that is still considered a challenge. We lost opportunities, we had to renegotiate other opportunities, but we build and we're unbelievably grateful for the partners who have stayed with us through thick and thin and see the opportunity of continuing to support us.

One of the most exciting things with all these partners who are backing us is the fact that we have a 50-50 revenue share with our players now. And so, 50 percent of all league-

wide sponsorship and media dollars go directly to increasing the player salary cap. And to date, the players' salary caps already increased 26 percent, just based on deals that we've closed this offseason.

You announced a broadcast deal with Twitch last Thursday. How big is that deal for you and the league this season?

Oh, it's unbelievable. And not only is every game going to be streamed on the largest streaming platform in the world, and a subsidiary of Amazon, but also the innovation that's going through that company is a lot of fun. We're excited to have fun on Twitch and introduce pro women's hockey to an incredibly new fan base, you know, maybe the demographic that is tuned in to Twitch right now, and then also introduce our current fans to Twitch if they're not current users. The options for fan engagement, for building a community, for connecting our broadcasters with our players and with the fans, and the fans with each other is going to be really fun to watch that all evolve.

You have 80 players and growing signed for the season, but some of the best players in the world are not going to be playing, which changes the product a little bit. What is your response to people who say the product on the ice won't be elite this season?

I think this has proven how deep the talent pool is in women's hockey. There are a lot of players who are going to be great stars in our league this year, and our focus this year is on those players and the fans who believe in the NWHL and what we're building and want to advance the game alongside us. When you look at some of the rosters, I mean, we have Nicole Schammel in Minnesota, who was runner-up for the Patty Kazmaier Award (the trophy for the top female college player), who is an unbelievable player who's just going to come to life in the pro game.

We're also not unfamiliar with not having a couple of national team players in the league. As you know, during the centralization years for the two pro leagues that existed before, we didn't have the players during Olympic years. We would love for every top player in the world to see the NWHL as the league that they want to play in, but until then, the depth of talent in the women's game is definitely putting together a great product for us this year.

You have signed a player from Kazakhstan and other international players and some NCAA graduates. What kind of recruitment have you guys done this offseason to fill rosters?

Even before the boycott, we actually decided to hire general managers and grow the infrastructure within our local markets. So we have unbelievable leaders in each market who, led by Hayley Moore, our deputy commissioner, have been unbelievable with filling in these rosters, and the coaches have, too. But at the end of the day, these players want to play hockey, and some of them might have been boycotters at first, but then after learning that we're expanding our schedule, we've increased our salaries, we have a sustainable formula to continue to increase our salaries and we want them to be successful both on and off the ice. I think that that helped change a lot of opinions, and those conversations were had by our GMs and our coaches, and they did an unbelievable job of communicating that to the players and making sure that those players knew about the opportunity that existed here.



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Last year, the conversation was about “One League” then the “The Right League” with the CWHL folding, and now it’s the “For the Game” movement. From your perspective, how did the game get from Point A to Point B?

Well, I kind of like that “For the Game” hashtag because we’re all for the game. Literally everything that we’ve done and everything that we continue to do moving forward is for the game.

But it’s definitely disappointing that the players believe that they need to destroy the one business that exists to hope that there’s another business that can start and replace us. I mean, just speaking for women’s sports in general, you never want to see a women’s sports league fail. So, it is hurtful to know that there are some players who are advocates for our destruction and our failure. Like I said at the beginning, we’re committed to the players who believe in this, and we’re going to keep building for those players, and we’re not going anywhere.

You and Hayley and your investors said in a release in May that you will always do what is best for the game. What do you think is best for the game?

Just continuing to grow the business and showing the value in professional women’s hockey. I mean, this deal with Twitch is our most recent data point on what that means and the opportunities that exist. And it’s all about exposure, it’s all about growing the business to then grow player salaries. We want this to be the one and only job for women, and we have to earn it, we have to fight for that, and we have to build that. And as business leaders here, we are committed to that, and we’re not slowing down. I think it’s sad that some people look to the NHL or NHL teams to be the solution to make women’s sports viable. I really feel that a women’s professional league should prove that it’s viable on its own and develop its league, its teams, their brands, the fans, and that’s what we’ve done and that’s what we are going to continue to do.

That release also said your door is open for talks, and you talked about how you’d be ecstatic to talk about partnerships or passing the torch. Have there been any talks of that nature?

There have not been talks about that. And we stand by that statement that we made in May. We’re willing to have those conversations with anyone and do what is best for the game.

Since the boycott announcement was made and the CWHL folded, there’s been a focus on looking for a viable and sustainable model to grow the game. The players who are sitting out feel the NWHL is not sustainable for the future. So why do you think the NWHL is the sustainable option?

We’re coming off our fourth season, which is our most successful yet. Even with all the turbulence this offseason, we’ve closed significant deals, increased player salaries and the 50-50 revenue share with the players, we believe is a sustainable, fair, viable formula that will allow us to grow at a smart rate, and is continuing to provide opportunity for those players and our fans to watch hockey. I mean, we have to make sure that things make economic sense. And so, if the business doesn’t grow, salaries can grow and to connect those two with this growth formula, we believe is the smartest way forward and sustainable. Alongside that, we also have other growth opportunities. We’re still exploring expansion, we were still having really great meetings on the

business side to continue to grow outside of just the sponsorship and the media dollars.

Do you think there is a realistic path for the game to be unified again?

Of course, we want to bring everyone together, we want every stakeholder who believes that there should be an opportunity for women after college to play professionally to sit around at a table and figure this out and figure out a way to work together. We met with Billie Jean King’s group, led by Illana Kloss, a couple of months ago, and they believed that they were able to broker a meeting between us and the leaders of the PWHPA. And they came back to us a couple weeks later saying that the PWHPA does not want to meet with us. And not only not meet with us, but not talk to us, not engage in conversation, not collaborate on the future in ways that we can work together. And so that’s tough, because we want to want to work with anyone who has the same end goal. So, we’ll continue to reach out, and we have many times. They know that we’re always available to have a conversation, but until then we’re going to keep growing our business.

Some players have left the PWHPA to join or re-join the NWHL. What have they said to you as to why they changed their mind?

It varies player to player, I would say, and I don’t want to speak for them and their personal decisions. But I will say that a lot the players who were original boycotters, who have now signed with the league, or women who are currently boycotting and are having conversations with our general managers right now, they’re torn. It’s a tough decision. There’s a personal tie to a lot of their friends who might be boycotting, but also a personal tie to the league and what we’re building and the opportunity that exists by playing 24 games and seeing a little girls at the rink every game. And so, I think those decisions are tough on a personal level for each player. And it’s been challenging for our general managers as well, navigating those conversations knowing that we need to fill roster spots, but we also have a lot of players on the sidelines who are currently boycotting but want to maybe play in the league. So, it’s a delicate balance that has been challenging for our local team staff.

Mallory Souliotis told me that when she left the PWHPA for the NWHL that it seemed their plan was to try to make the NWHL fold so the NHL could create a league. The NHL hasn’t outwardly said it will do anything, but from a business perspective, how does that make you feel?

I mean, I love the NHL, they have been good to us, but I just don’t understand why the message is we need to put this all on the NHL, all on Gary Bettman and his team owners. I just really feel like women’s professional sports and leagues and our league should prove that we’re viable on our own. And develop a league and a fan base and content and a broadcast and develop our players like we have the last four years and continue to grow our business the way that we have. Like I said before, just the thought of destroying a women’s league to then start another women’s league, I don’t think is the best thing for sport, period. And there should be a way to collaborate and work together.

Would you ever consider folding your league to let the NHL step in?

Why would we do that? Why would we fold for a hypothetical? Why would I think about that? I wake up every



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day trying to build and grow this business, not consider dissolving it for a hope or for the triumph of hope over reality. It's not how anyone here at the league is wired, including the players who decided to back us and support us and grow with us this year.

As a final note, is there anything new coming up that NWHL fans or people paying attention to the climate in the game should know?

Yes! So, we're working alongside The Sports Advisory Group, which has negotiated quite a few minor-league deals in hockey and baseball, to identify owners for our teams. And we believe those owners are committed to the market, they are committed to women's hockey, and they genuinely believe in the business of women's sports. And they're investing in it for the right reasons.

Is that something that realistically you think can happen this year?

I think so, for sure. I mean, we've created really great brands and businesses in all of our markets. I know for sure, just based on the last couple of months working with the sports advisory group, that there's a lot of interest in these properties. All deals take time, but I'm very confident that we'll be able to move at least one team this year.

The Athletic LOADED: 09.10.2019

1152311 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Three biggest questions facing Maple Leafs entering training camp

Luke Fox | September 9, 2019, 11:40 AM

"Hey, you know who any of these guys are?"

Mike Babcock is hanging over the railing at the Toronto Maple Leafs' practice facility motioning to the dozens of blue and white skaters buzzing around the ice during a pre-camp practice. He flashes a smile.

The head coach is joking but only half.

Kyle Dubas put in some serious work this off-season, refurbishing the top of the defence and the fringes of everything else, including the men joining Babcock on the bench.

Energy, excitement and introductions are the order of the day as another high-expectations, high-paced campaign gets underway. Jobs and raises, legacies and demotions—it's all on the line. (By the way, anyone seen that Marner kid lately?)

"New faces in. You get to be around some old ones. It's just good energy. Guys are excited," says Morgan Rielly, suddenly one of the old guys, at age 25. "We're in a good place, and you can tell guys worked hard this summer. They're all happy to be back. It's just about the energy and the excitement, and we're looking forward to getting going."

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But with so much turnover, so much talent joining the Atlantic (hiya, Florida!), and so many familiar characters — Nazem Kadri, Patrick Marleau, Jake Gardiner, Ron Hainsey — continuing their journey elsewhere, have the Maple Leafs actually improved?

"It's a tough question," considers goalie Frederik Andersen. "We'll find out sooner rather than later."

Here are three more questions we're eager to learn the answers to...

Current cap space: \$0

GM: Kyle Dubas

Head coach: Mike Babcock

Assistants: Dave Hakstol, Paul McFarland

Unsigned player: Mitchell Marner

1. When will Mitch Marner join the Maple Leafs?

Dubas doesn't want Leafs Nation to fret about that big doughnut you see to the right of the club's "current cap space." Math wizard Brendan Pridham has a mapped a plan to squeeze the Maple Leafs' leading scorer — when/if he signs his second contract — under the ceiling, be it short- or long-term.

Injuries to regulars Zach Hyman (knee) and Travis Dermott (shoulder), who will start the season on injured reserve, and heavy use of LTIR (Nathan Horton, David Clarkson) will permit the Leafs with enough wiggle room for their star winger, whether he signs on Sept. 12 or Dec. 1.

As concerning as the Marner stalemate may be and as large as the gap is believed to be — Marner's camp preferring a commitment in Auston Matthews's ballpark (five years at \$11.6 million); Dubas thrilled if he could keep this thing to seven digits — there are good reasons to not lose sleep over this sticky bit of business:

1. Marner is but one of several high-profile young stars trying to move the goalposts coming out his entry-level deal.

2. An offer sheet, despite rampant rumour and speculation, never materialized.

3. Neither side is exploring the trade route, and neither is bashing the other in the press.

4. Toronto is a rare club with enough offence, power-play weapons and winger depth to survive a few weeks without an elite player like Marner.

5. Marner's greatest chance to be paired with a centre that compliments his game and lift a Stanley Cup is right here in his hometown. No offence to the Zurich Lions.

Beginning of dialog window. Escape will cancel and close the window.

That said, Marner's agent, Darren Ferris, has a track record of dragging these things out longer than necessary. And, thanks to the great William Nylander fiasco of 2018, so too does Dubas.

Who blinks first? How much of a toll could a prolonged absence take on Marner's season? Who steals that coveted



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spot on John Tavares's right side in the meantime? Will the Marner deal bulldoze a new standard for RFA wingers?

The intrigue might kill Leafs fans before the salary cap does.

2. How will Toronto fill the holes opened by injury?

Since Dubas joined the franchise, there has never been a camp as bustling with so many unknowns as 2019's. Marner's standoff and Hyman's rehab (a return to action at any point in October means a speedy recovery) results in Tavares taking faceoffs on opening night between two fresh faces. Patrick Marleau is gone.

Top-six slots on the NHL's fourth-most-prolific offence are ripe for the taking. Special teams time has presented itself as well.

Auston Matthews, William Nylander and Tavares needn't worry; Andreas Johnsson and Kasper Kapanen, given nice raises in the summer, represent the next tier. But there is space for a prized and patient farm-system product like Trevor Moore or Jeremy Bracco — or stud KHL import Ilya Mikheyev, 24 — to make some noise during the more creative shifts.

"[Hyman's injury] opens opportunities to move up the lineup. Us guys who want to make the team have to be ready because it might be your best opportunity right out the gate here," says Moore. "The biggest thing with Hym's being out is the penalty kill. I hope I can make an impression there."

On the back end, newbies Cody Ceci and Tyson Barrie supplant the minutes-munching Ron Hainsey and Nikita Zaitsev (both off to Ottawa) on the right side of the top four, but Dermott's delay creates a wide-open contest for the blue line's third pairing.

The fate of first-rounders Rasmus Sandin and Timothy Liljegren should create headlines either way as we debate whether the kids have been given enough time to develop or management is preventing its best talent from rising to the top.

While low-risk acquisitions, Ben Harpur and Jordan Schmaltz, arrive hungry to stick with their second big-league franchise, others like Justin Holl and Martin Marincin strive to keep their NHL dreams afloat.

Earn your ice, fellas.

3. Is this the year the Leafs finally name a captain?

Our guess: Yes, it is.

Why else would Dubas, a month ahead of puck drop, publicly announce he's "a lot more close" to slapping a C on one of his players' sweaters than he used to be. Surely, he doesn't want to fuel more debate around a topic that has long grown wearisome 42 months after Dion Phaneuf left town.

Beginning of dialog window. Escape will cancel and close the window.

There is truth to the theory Babcock has essentially been captain as well as coach. It's time for the players to take more on themselves.

Very telling was Frederik Andersen's choice to answer an on-ice question last week — In which area do you see the most improvement from September of 2018? — by invoking something less tangible.

"Mostly off the ice," Andersen said, "the leadership of the group that's been here for a while now has been growing a bit."

More interesting than the symbolism of the extra letter is the actual leadership dynamic at play in a dressing room that has now shed the last of the old guard (Nazem Kadri and Jake Gardiner) and whose core revolves around one goalie, just one defenceman, and seven solid forwards — each capable of 20 goals.

Rielly (longest serving), Tavares (most accomplished) and Matthews (highest paid, greatest ceiling) — the three finalists for the honour — are all in their prime, all devoted to their craft and the organization. All go about their business a little differently, however, and they have one NHL playoff series victory between them.

If management elevates one top dog in the room, how does that shape the egos and atmosphere behind the doors?

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1152312 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / John Tavares breaks down Maple Leafs' captain candidates

Luke Fox | September 9, 2019, 2:56 PM

TORONTO — The topic of the Toronto Maple Leafs' vacant C — an enduring discussion now choked to the point of exhaustion since Dion Phaneuf left the building — has gathered its second (third?) wind this fall.

Once general manager Kyle Dubas announced last week that he was much closer to naming the club's 18th captain than he was at the outset of 2018's training camp, the bar room and talk radio debates re-stirred.

While it was reasonable and easy to delay the captaincy last autumn, especially with Auston Matthews' contract a mystery and John Tavares still unpacking his belongings, the void has now reached 1,309 days and counting.

The contending core has been identified. Pick a player. It feels like time.

And, listening to those involved, it sounds like time. Delay the captaincy for another year, and the lingering uncertainty risks swelling into a distraction.

Matthews, the franchise-altering 22-year-old centre, spoke (again) politely this summer of what an honour such a thing would be, noting that an extra letter wouldn't change his drive or alter his work ethic.

Monday — following a high-tempo, blue-versus-white scrimmage at the Leafs' practice facility — it was fellow candidate Tavares's turn to express that he, too, is ready to embrace the role. Qualifying that he would also conduct himself as the consummate pro were he to be passed over for one of his younger mates.



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

What is most telling, however, is just how much thought Tavares — who served as the New York Islanders' captain for five seasons, starting at age 23 — has devoted to the topic.

"No question, it would be a very special honour," said Tavares as he prepares for his 11th NHL season.

"You just don't take something like that for granted. There's only so many in the league, and certainly for a franchise here like the Maple Leafs with its history and tradition, I don't want to look at things differently just because you're given a responsibility. You're given that responsibility because of who you are and the way you've carried yourself to that point.

"You don't let something like that change you. You want to be yourself, go out and play your game, do what you do. I know we're gonna have a great one, whoever it is. I'll support whoever it is."

If Tavares — at 28, the eldest member of the core, and the Leaf with the longest contract — is the chosen one, he conceded that he "may address things differently" in Toronto than he did on the Island, in light of the market's scrutiny, but his mindset wouldn't waver.

Tavares's most critical takeaway from his half-decade of captaincy in New York is that just because you're the one wearing the responsibility doesn't mean you have to be the only one shouldering it. A smart captain leans on his teammates just as they lean on him.

"You realize how important the people around you are. You don't have all the answers," he explained. "You've got all those guys around you to lift you up and help you when things aren't going well.

"You need so much leadership throughout the locker room."

Ryan Dixon and Rory Boylen go deep on pucks with a mix of facts and fun, leaning on a varied group of hockey voices to give their take on the country's most beloved game.

So while veterans like Jake Muzzin and Jason Spezza, both on expiring contracts, won't be in the "C"-onversation, their wisdom and steadiness will be invaluable to the young group, especially with Patrick Marleau and Ron Hainsey gone.

Tavares isn't lying when he tells you he was still living out of boxes when Leafs training camp opened up at this time last year, but one roller-coaster winter in Leafland allows him to break down the principal leaders of the 2019-20 squad.

"We just have a lot of great people, and they're all different in their own way," Tavares began.

"Morgan [Rielly], being here for as long as he has and his maturity level, you can see it in his game and how he carries himself off the ice — just very level-headed. Especially as a defenceman, a very tough position to play and the amount of load he carries.

"Auston's presence, his talent, his ability, his drive to be one of the best players in the league is incredible.

"A guy like Mitchy [Marner] has an incredible energy about him. Just brings the room to life. And the way he impacts the

game in so many different areas and the way he plays it is so unique and pretty incredible."

Despite the mystery surrounding good friend Marner's contract and the rehabilitation of Zach Hyman (knee), Tavares feels an increased comfort level this September, with management and his peers.

Tavares is just as eager as you are to find out which wingers will join him in the top six on opening night.

"The feeling is always the same — the butterflies, the excitement, the buildup, all the hard work you put in over summer to prove yourself," Tavares said. "You really try to turn the page and realize that whatever happened last year, good or bad, you have to go out there and prove yourself again every season."

John Tavares has been speaking with "good friend" and linemate Mitch Marner throughout the summer: "I know he's just trying to prepare and be ready. I know he wants to be here. Hopefully it gets done here in the next couple days."

— luke fox (@lukefoxjukebox) September 9, 2019

Tavares's consistent support of his teammates and belief in the process do not go unnoticed. Depth defenceman Ben Harpur was quickly welcomed by a Tavares text after being acquired from Ottawa on July 1. Ex-Leaf Jake Gardiner received a congratulatory message from him upon signing in Carolina Friday. ("I know how much guys still care about him. It would've been great to have him back. Fun to be around," Tavares said. "Great for him and his family.")

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Dubas said he's looking for "a calming presence" to lead this room. You can throw plastic rats at Tavares and not make him flinch. The 47 goals and 88 points pop off the page, but it's the player's consistency on ice and off that is most remarkable, in the most understated way.

"Just his work ethic. He's a top-five player in the league already, and he drives to be the best every day and doesn't take a day off, a session off," said Jeremy Bracco, who is hoping to take advantage of those openings at wing.

"He always asks questions and always wants to be better. To see a guy that's already making millions wanting to be better, it just shows the level of commitment it takes to make the league and stay in it."

If leadership is a team sport, does naming a single Maple Leafs captain actually matter? Can four alternates — say, Tavares, Matthews, Rielly and Marner — simply share the gig?

"That's a hard thing to say. Does it make the difference between winning and losing? Really, no. It's about the team that goes out there and works as a unit," said Tavares.

"But when you do have a captain, you have someone everyone kinda looks to and sets the tone."

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CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 10, 2019

Sportsnet.ca / Montreal Canadiens' Marc Bergevin in position to improve team through trade

Eric Engels September 9, 2019, 4:32 PM

LAVAL-SUR-LE-LAC, Que.— “We’re pretty happy with our summer,” said Montreal Canadiens general manager Marc Bergevin.

But we doubt he and Canadiens owner Geoff Molson were altogether enthralled with it. Staring down the prospect of missing the Stanley Cup Playoffs for a third consecutive season, which is something that’s happened only twice in their history, Montreal tried to make big changes but only managed minor tweaks between April and September.

Now you have to wonder what they’ll do next. It’s a pertinent question to ask because the club is better positioned to improve its roster through trade than it has been at any other time over Bergevin’s seven years as GM.

The Canadiens are, by consensus, in possession of one of the best and deepest prospect pools in the National Hockey League. They also have 12 picks in the upcoming draft, and they’ll have upwards of \$7 million of cap space to play with once players who don’t make their 23-man roster are sent to the American Hockey League, or waived, or traded. That’s a good hand to be playing.

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Knowing that, isn’t it time Bergevin pulled the trigger on the kind of deal that not only significantly boosts Montreal’s chances of making the playoffs but puts them in contention for the Stanley Cup?

“I wouldn’t say it’s a priority,” Bergevin said from the Canadiens annual golf tournament on Monday. “I would say it’s an option that, if it’s available, we’ll surely look into it.”

It’s hard to imagine he’s fully satisfied with what he’s got after he made a play for top unrestricted free agent Matt Duchene, who preferred to sign with the Nashville Predators.

If Bergevin was so pleased with what the team possessed upfront, we doubt he’d have signed Carolina Hurricanes forward Sebastian Aho to a five-year, \$42.5-million offer sheet on July 1. And if he loved what he had on defence, he wouldn’t have bothered submitting an offer to puck-moving defenceman Jake Gardiner.

“We tried pretty hard to do a lot of things and we did some of the things that we wanted to accomplish. Not all, but that’s normal for every team,” said Molson. “Every opportunity is a two-way street. The desire on our part to do something has to be a desire on the other party’s part as well and we’ll continue to try to make the team better.”

It’s not like the Canadiens completely failed at that task over the summer months. In signing 28-year-old Ben Chiarot to a three-year contract Bergevin may have found a stabilizing force for the left side of the Canadiens’ defence. Adding a 6-foot-3, 220-pounder who can complement an offensive-minded partner like Jeff Petry can’t hurt.

In signing goaltender Keith Kinkaid to a one-year, \$1.75-million contract Bergevin probably opened up the possibility for starter Carey Price to get a bit more rest this season. Knowing how crucial Price is to the team’s success that has to help. And there’s a chance incoming forward Nick Cousins can do his part to at least partially supplant some of the grit and scoring lost in the cap-clearing June trade that sent forward Andrew Shaw back to the Chicago Blackhawks.

But to rest on all of that seems like a riskier gamble than sacrificing a bit of the future for the present.

On Monday, Bergevin and Molson talked about the chemistry and stability of their roster, and they spoke enthusiastically about the growth of their young players who gained valuable experience down the stretch last season as the team fought to the bitter end before falling just two points shy of a playoff berth. They expressed that those elements should allow the team to continue progressing.

They also assured that the coaches did an autopsy on the 30th-ranked power play and came away with ideas that should lead to considerable improvements. And they spoke glowingly about the prospects who appear poised to earn positions with the team.

“We have some kids pushing,” Bergevin said before adding, “I want to give them a chance.”

Nick Suzuki and Ryan Poehling, 20-year-olds respectively chosen 13th and 25th in the 2017 draft, had better seize it. If either player is prepared to make an impact immediately, it will alleviate much of the pressure Bergevin’s under to improve his roster before the season gets underway.

But even if both players are ready to join the Canadiens this fall, Bergevin still has an opportunity—and the incentive—to make a move that can push his team over the top.

Molson clearly sees it.

“Marc and I are on the phone every day and you never know what can happen moving forward,” the owner said. “The general managers across this league never stop talking to each other about opportunities and if there’s a good one for us to make our team better then we would do it.”

A few opportunities might come about over the next few days as teams scramble to get the remaining restricted free agents in the market signed to new contracts. Bank-breaking deals for some of these elite players—think Toronto’s Mitch Marner, or Calgary’s Matthew Tkachuk, or Winnipeg’s Patrik Laine—could force teams to make cap room in a hurry by dealing other players. And if some of these stalemates extend beyond the start of training camp, it could push a team or two into exploring what they could get for their player in a trade.

Bergevin will have to wait to see what develops. But whether it’s a few days from now, or a few weeks from now, or halfway through the season, or right at the trade deadline, he has to have his eye on the type of move that can get the Canadiens to the next level.

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CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 10, 2019

Sportsnet.ca / Three biggest questions facing Oilers entering training camp

Mark Spector | September 9, 2019, 3:57 PM

EDMONTON — The Edmonton Oilers are on the precipice of history, and it's not the kind of record anyone wants to be known for.

This franchise has missed the National Hockey League playoffs for 12 of the past 13 seasons. No team has ever missed the NHL post-season 13 times in a 14-year span.

But if the historical backdrop seems bleak, the here and now is anything but, with captain Connor McDavid the leading contender for Best Player in the World, Leon Draisaitl coming off a season in which he was the NHL's only 50-goal, 100-point player, and a farm system that finally appears to be delivering enough quality players to surround the stars with a playoff-calibre team.

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As has become seemingly a biennial occurrence, the Oilers cleaned house this summer and brought in much experience in general manager Ken Holland and head coach Dave Tippett. It's now their turn to do what numerous management teams have failed to conquer over the past decade-plus in Edmonton — stabilize a franchise, and give a historically great Canadian hockey market a properly built team that can compete.

And while they're at it, give McDavid some playoff games and realistic Stanley Cup hopes, so the Toronto media can shut up about the Oilers captain wanting out.

Here are three questions that need to be successfully answered before any of the above can occur:

Current cap space: \$1,553,001

GM: Ken Holland

Head coach: Dave Tippett

Assistants: Jim Playfair, Glen Gulutzan, Brian Wiseman

Unsigned players: Jesse Puljujarvi

Can Holland stabilize this franchise in the long-term, and produce a playoff team in the short term?

The first part should be easy. The second part...?

Ryan Nugent-Hopkins has played nine NHL seasons, and counting a couple of interim coaches he has played under nine head coaches. Fixing that should be easy, shouldn't it?

Holland has used the word "stability" ad nauseum since being hired in May, and that covers everything from stopping the coaching carousel, to letting Jay Woodcroft build something that can last down in AHL Bakersfield, to piecing together a scouting staff under new Director of Amateur Scouting Tyler Wright that gives Woodcroft something legit to develop.

Making the playoffs while ceasing the circus-like atmosphere in Edmonton could be a tall order, however. At least in Year 1.

Although Edmonton's farm system has not been this healthy in ages, Holland inherited a mess from deposed GM Peter Chiarelli when it comes to the NHL roster and its requisite salary cap situation. He moved out Milan Lucic, bought out Andrej Sekera, and spend his meagre cap space mostly on a handful of bottom six forwards — hoping that improved depth combined with his top-end talent might allow Edmonton to surprise this season.

They are a long shot to make the playoffs, for sure. But if we are no longer saying that 12 months from now — and for the foreseeable future after that — then Holland will have done his job.

Is the tandem of Mikko Koskinen and Mike Smith good enough?

Koskinen was Chiarelli's parting gift to Oilers fans, and this season will open the ill-advised three-year, \$13.5 million deal gifted him by Chiarelli after having played less than 50 NHL games. The six-foot-seven Finn — nicknamed "The Three Metres of Koskinen" back home — is thus far simply an OK NHL goalie, with a suspect glove hand.

Now, a goalie should be able to improve in his second NHL season, sure. Koskinen worked out with Kobe Bryant's old trainer over the summer, and has every intention of being better than the 2.93 GAA, .906 saves percentage netminder he was a season ago. But the book on Koskinen is out: His glove hand is suspect.

Fix that and there may be a starter here. But if we're still saying that by Christmas, then the No. 1 job will fall to the 37-year-old Smith. With his injury history, that's probably more than he can handle, long-term.

Can James Neal become a 20-goal winger again? Or maybe more, playing with McDavid or Nugent-Hopkins?

He had better.

It's been a long time since the Oilers can say they decisively won a trade, a pox that goes back to Taylor Hall for Adam Larsson, a transaction that still irks folks in these parts. But Holland has a real chance to scratch two itches with this deal, moving out a malcontent Lucic, whose game has severely eroded, for a player who has scored 21 goals or more in every NHL season except for the 2018-19 campaign in Calgary.

Neal just never worked in Calgary, coming off back to back trips to the Stanley Cup Final in Nashville and Vegas. In Edmonton he will play, at worst, with Nugent-Hopkins, and at best with McDavid. If Neal can not find his usual 20 goals with centremen as slick as those two, then Holland will be considering a buy out next summer.

If he does rejuvenate, why stop at 20 goals? If Neal can help Edmonton to have a second line that is productive, while pushing either Zack Kassian or Alex Chiasson down to third-line right wing, then suddenly the Oilers have some depth and balance.

With improved forward depth, some goaltending and a defence that can help get the goals against down, this could be a team that is still competing for a playoff spot come March 15.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 10, 2019

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Sportsnet.ca / Doughty, Kadri remember Brad Ostrom's irreplaceable impact on London hockey

Luke Fox | September 9, 2019, 5:12 PM

Drew Doughty calls Brad Ostrom his favourite coach.

Logan Couture calls Ostrom the Brian Kilrea of London, Ont.

Nazem Kadri simply calls Ostrom ahead of his time.

"Brad? He's The Man. He's The Guy. You hear the name Brad Ostrom, and your ears perk up. Every time he had a team, it would always win the league," says Dylan DeMelo. "He's definitely known and will forever be known in the Junior Knights ranks as one of the best."

After devoting more than 40 years of his life to coaching minor hockey, propelling more than 100 to the Ontario Hockey League and several to the professional ranks, Brad Ostrom died Monday morning at St. Joseph's Hospice in London of esophageal cancer, his family informed Sportsnet.

He was 66.

Ostrom is survived by his wife, Becky, and sons Andrew and Sean.

Minor hockey in the London area won't be the same without him — it wouldn't have grown into the talent hotbed it is now without him.

For decades, Ostrom poured any spare time his accounting job would allow into working with young hockey players, moulding them into teammates first, winners next.

"He's my favourite coach," Doughty said recently, after paying Ostrom an off-season visit at his home. "It sucks that things like that have to happen. It's so sad, I don't know what to say. You never want to see anyone go — [especially] a good man like that who helped so many people around him and touched so many people around him."

Ostrom, most notably, was the man who forced Doughty to switch from forward to defence at age 12. The coach had done the same with NHLer Mike Van Ryn and would later convert power forward Josh Brown, who cracked the Florida Panthers' blue line this past season.

"He's meant a ton. He took so much pride in coaching," said Doughty, a Norris Trophy winner and two-time Stanley Cup champion with the L.A. Kings. "He had his team on the ice more than any other coach in London. Some people thought it was too much — but look at all the guys he developed into OHL stars and future NHLers."

Ostrom had a reputation for getting parents to track extra statistics for his teams, the most important category being passes. He would reward the player who delivered the most passes with a pack of hockey cards following the game.

He also was known as prepared, demanding and non-nonsense. There was a deep love for the game, for his pupils, and for his own role in developing young men — but it was a tough love.

"My philosophy's always been: If you do something good, I'll tell ya'. If you do something bad, I'll tell ya'," Ostrom said during an interview last month. "If you're out there doing stuff that cheats your teammates, why should you play with them?"

Ostrom would cut a 50-goal scorer if the young player refused to be a good teammate, or force the entire team to play with wood sticks and leave their composites at home.

"Brad always took it serious. He knew exactly what he was doing," Kadri says. "He was known for his toughness and his hard practices. I remember he used to make us do a crabwalk. You'd crawl the length of the ice on your hands and feet, basically like you were a crab."

"He understood how the game worked and where it was going. He was known as one of those coaches who might be able to get you to the next level."

When Ostrom was diagnosed during 2018-19, his final season behind the bench of the Minor Peewee AAA Elgin-Middlesex Chiefs, his players began sporting orange decals on their helmets that read: "B STRONG B POSITIVE B LIEVE."

At the Shanahan International tournament in Toronto this past winter, the final group of kids Ostrom coached went head-to-head with a Boston side coached by Jarome Iginla. A championship hanging in the balance, the Chiefs stormed to a commanding lead, 5-2. Some of the Boston players began hacking away. There was a risk of things turning ugly.

"Iginla called his team over and said, 'We don't do that s—', " Ostrom recalled. "That's the difference between the guys who played the game and a coach who's just a recruiter."

There is a mutual respect among those who have given so much of themselves to the game that can transcend age and fame, life and death.

"Iginla? He's a nice guy," Ostrom said. "Autographed the bottom of the trophy for me."

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1152316 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / P.K. Subban ready to answer critics after trade to Devils

Chris Johnston | September 9, 2019, 10:53 AM

CHICAGO — In hockey's court of public opinion, P.K. Subban is preparing his on-ice rebuttal.

Described by some as damaged goods following a season where he played games while barely able to lift his foot in the air, the newest New Jersey Devil intends to deliver the next statement in this ongoing conversation.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 10, 2019

What, you forgot about the real P.K.?

"I feel like, man, I get banged up a couple times and everybody's ready to write me off," Subban told Sportsnet.

"I hear a lot of people talking about me losing a step or not being the same player and it's like 'I don't know, man. It's not too long ago I was up for a Norris [Trophy], so ...'

"I feel like I'll be right back where I need to be. All I've got to do is stay on the ice and I'm confident in that."

Subban is thrilled about the draft-day trade that brought him to New Jersey and the prospect of playing a more prime-time role than he had on the defensively stacked Nashville Predators.

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

He's also ready to put a challenging 2018-19 campaign behind him — a season defined by the mysterious back injury that kept him off skates for six weeks in November and December, and dragged his production back to levels not seen since his early days as a NHL player in Montreal.

"When you miss a quarter of the season, I don't care who you are, it's really tough to come back in this NHL and be a dominant player," Subban said during the recent NHL/NHLPA player media tour.

"Last year it was a nerve injury. It's a nerve. It's not muscular, it's not structural, it's not a disc. It's a nerve. You don't control that, you know? You've got to literally wait for it to cool down and to this day we still don't know how it got irritated. But that's what it was.

"I literally had drop foot from a nerve that was like pinched and I came back from that and played. Like I couldn't lift my foot at one moment. To think about that, coming back from that, playing part of the season and then playing in the playoffs, I mean I probably shouldn't have.

"I'm proud of the fact that I worked hard to come back and play and now I feel great."

The Devils bought low on Subban — well as low as you can buy on a \$9-million star who finished third in Norris Trophy voting 15 months ago. They got him for two second-round draft picks and two young defencemen with modest upside (Steven Santini and Jeremy Davies), which will look like a steal if he returns to full health and top form as a play-driver who soaks up tough minutes.

Unlike the June 2016 trade that sent Subban from Montreal to Nashville, this one didn't sting.

He knew he was a likely target given the Predators' desire to redistribute their cap allocation and spend more on forwards. He also felt good about his contributions during a three-year run with the organization that included a trip to the 2017 Stanley Cup Final and a Presidents' Trophy in 2018.

"It was just a great time for me," said Subban.

"I really felt that aside from winning the Cup that I fulfilled almost everything that I probably wanted to do there, you know? Come in, be a part of the team, kind of fill my role, maybe bring some spice to the team and to the organization, and I really felt we did that."

When Predators general manager David Poile phoned Subban to inform him of the trade, the two shared a nice trip down memory lane together. They reflected on the defenceman's time in Nashville and brought a cordial ending to their business relationship.

If there was any hint of impatience, it came from Subban's end of the line. He enjoyed the conversation, but it delayed the news of where he'd been dealt.

"When I heard New Jersey I literally jumped over the counter. Like almost right over the counter," said Subban. "I was really excited and they've got such good young players. I'm an energy guy and it's great to be able to feed off of other young guys' energy. Coming to the rink and watching them.

"It's going to be great to see (No. 1 overall pick) Jack Hughes's eyes every night light up before a game and excited to play. I'm excited for that."

Ryan Dixon and Rory Boylen go deep on pucks with a mix of facts and fun, leaning on a varied group of hockey voices to give their take on the country's most beloved game.

That Energizer Bunny enthusiasm is part of what attracted Subban to the Devils in the first place. In addition to highlighting his abilities as a player, general manager Ray Shero pointed to Subban's value as someone who ups the entertainment value around the team when offering his rationale for the move.

It all hinges on what version of P.K. they get.

Taken as a whole, he's been durable throughout a 10-year career that included a 273-game Ironman streak with the Canadiens. However, Subban dealt with a herniated disc in his back during his first season in Nashville and then had the nerve issue last year.

He believes it's been remedied with rest, rehab and his work in the gym.

This has been a big summer for Subban with the trade and his engagement to partner Lindsey Vonn — the pair made a cameo during the men's final at the U.S. Open on Sunday night — and he's ready now to start answering critics with training camp opening later this week.

Someone has to keep her in line! Congrats to both of these guys! #beastmode @DaniilMedwed @RafaelNadal <https://t.co/dd2mG3FHPV>

— P.K. Subban (@PKSubban1) September 9, 2019

"It's a part of it," said Subban. "As your career goes on, I guess that's the normal part is people try to pick your game apart. I guess you could say I'm used to it — people have been doing that my whole career, you know? Whether I'm having a good season or a bad season, there always seems to be people that want to pick it apart."

To the doubters, he's got a message.

"I think legacy's really, really important," said Subban.

"You know, I'm 30 years old, and hope to play another eight to 10 years in the league."

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CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 10, 2019

TSN.CA / Structure of Werenski deal could be a blueprint for remaining RFAs

Frank Seravalli

Temperatures are rising after a summer of standoffs.

With players due to report to training camps on Thursday for medical evaluations, and William Nylander's withholding of services last season serving as a cautionary tale, the first pressure point in negotiations is here for this talented crop of restricted free agents.

On Monday, Zach Werenski provided hope – if not a path forward – that all can be resolved on time, at least for the big-name RFA defencemen still unsigned.

The forwards such as Mitch Marner, Brayden Point, Mikko Rantanen and Matthew Tkachuk? They're another matter of finance entirely. But the structure of Werenski's deal may have given all a reason to raise an eyebrow.

Werenski, 22, signed a three-year, \$15 million deal with the Columbus Blue Jackets. He was arguably the price-setter for the RFA market on defence, the leading comparable for both Philadelphia's Ivan Provorov and Boston's Charlie McAvoy.

What's interesting is Werenski is scheduled to earn \$4 million in each of the next two seasons, followed by \$7 million in the last year of the deal in 2021-22.

That means that the Blue Jackets must offer Werenski a qualifying offer of at least \$7 million to retain his rights into 2022-23 as a restricted free agent.

Clearly, both sides would like to find a way to agree on a longer-term extension before getting to that point in 2022. But if Werenski is to remain a Blue Jacket in 2022-23, the contract he signed on Monday will be no worse than a four-year deal worth \$22 million.

That's a style that the RFA forwards could copy, a wrinkle that may make a shorter-term deal more palatable for both sides.

Three years isn't quite a bridge deal, but it certainly isn't the longer-term contract (five or six years) that most of these players have been seeking.

The key moving forward in a three-year term contract is the negotiated final year of the deal. A three-year deal for Marner with a salary cap hit of \$9 million, but including a \$12 million salary in the final year, could really become a four-year, \$39 million deal (\$9.75 million AAV). That would also walk Marner to the brink of unrestricted free agency.

The expectation is talks will heat up on Provorov and McAvoy considerably over the next couple days. Provorov's agent, Mark Gandler of International Sports Advisers, said he has been in "active conversation" with the Flyers.

Werenski's 38 goals rank ninth and his 128 points over three NHL seasons rank 21st among all NHL defencemen since he entered the league in 2016-17 – not just RFA defencemen.

So for Columbus to get him locked up in the short-term at a \$5 million salary cap hit that won't break the bank is a coup

for GM Jarmo Kekalainen. The leverage was on Columbus' side, with no real market set and no arbitration rights for Werenski.

"Zach Werenski is one of the best young defencemen in the National Hockey League and we couldn't be happier that he will continue to be a foundational player for the Columbus Blue Jackets," Kekalainen said in a statement. "He is a gifted offensive player that has continued to improve in all facets of the game and will be an elite player for many years."

Provorov's camp was originally believed to be set on a long-term deal. Monday's development may have changed that notion. Provorov has eight fewer goals and 31 fewer points than Werenski over the course of his career, but is coming off a rollercoaster season. He scored 17 goals two seasons ago as a 21-year-old. Provorov also averaged 25:07 of ice time last year in Philadelphia, more than two minutes more per game than Werenski.

When healthy, McAvoy's numbers compute to an average of nine goals and 43 points over an 82-game season, but he has missed 47 games over the last two years.

Werenski deal could be a catalyst for McAvoy and Provorov, but no guarantee either. Of the two big RFA D, McAvoy has proclaimed his love for BOS and it would appear he's much more inclined to want to a longer-term deal (6, 7 or 8?) than a bridge (2 or 3).

— Bob McKenzie (@TSNBobMcKenzie) September 9, 2019

The clock is ticking to get creative.

As one agent told TSN Hockey Insider Bob McKenzie on Monday: "We're going to try to do in two or three days what we haven't been able to do in two or three months."

TSN.CA LOADED: 09.10.2019

1152318 Websites

TSN.CA / Tavares says Leafs have many qualified candidates for captaincy

Kristen Shilton

TORONTO – The Maple Leafs haven't designated a captain in more than three years, but with a new season looming, John Tavares sees plenty of qualified candidates among his teammates.

"I think Morgan [Rielly] being here for as long as he has and his maturity level, you can see it in his game and how he carries himself off the ice, very level-headed," Tavares said after the Leafs' informal skate at Ford Performance Centre on Monday.

"Obviously Auston [Matthews'] presence, his talent, his ability, his drive to be one of the best players in this league is incredible. A guy like Mitch [Marner] has an incredible energy about him, just brings the room to life and the way he impacts the game in so many different areas and the way he plays it is so unique."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 10, 2019

Tavares is also in the mix for the Leafs' captaincy, and unlike almost anyone else in Toronto's dressing room, he has on-the-job experience.

Prior to signing a blockbuster seven-year, \$77 million free agent contract with the Leafs last July 1, Tavares spent nine seasons with the New York Islanders, including five as the team's captain.

The Leafs have been relying on a collection of alternate captains – Tavares was one last year – to comprise its leadership group since their last captain, Dion Phaneuf, was traded to Ottawa in February 2016. But while the demands of a captaincy in Toronto may be greater than they were on Long Island, the idea of filling Phaneuf's vacated spot is hardly intimidating to Tavares.

"If I had that opportunity, I wouldn't look at it [as more pressure]," Tavares said. "You just don't take something like that for granted. There's only so many [captains] in the league and certainly for a franchise here like the Maple Leafs, with [its] history and tradition [is special]. I don't want to look at things differently just because you're given a responsibility."

Tavares readily accepted his role as an alternate last fall (along with Rielly, Patrick Marleau and Ron Hainsey), and discovered a happy balance of players willing to step up to take the lead in his new team's dressing room as he put together a career-best 47-goal, 88-point effort on the ice.

Even if a team captain were to be named outright this fall, Tavares is adamant the Leafs shouldn't abandon their leadership-by-committee approach all together.

"No question [the captaincy] would be a very special honour," Tavares said. "[But] I know from my time of being a captain, you realize how important the people are around you. You don't have all the answers, and [need] to lean on your teammates. When you have so many great players, great people, guys that are leaders...you can lean on everyone else to lift you up and help you when things aren't going well."

That multiple Leafs could be capable of handling the captaincy is part of what's made general manager Kyle Dubas so patient in bestowing the letter. After being promoted into the GM role last May, Dubas used the entire next season to get to know players from a new vantage point and assess the team dynamics.

Dubas told TSN Hockey Insider Bob McKenzie last week that he is "a lot more close to saying yes" to naming the franchise's 19th captain, and revealed what he's looking for in that person.

"I think [we need] somebody who is calm and stoic and ready at all times," Dubas said. "We've got some great candidates in there and I think that's the second part of it. Once accepting that you do want to have a captain, we're fortunate that we have a few players that can fill that void and then it's trying to determine what's best for the future of those players and for the group."

Calm and stoic are attributes easily attributed to Tavares, and also to Rielly, who has served as an alternate captain for three seasons. With training camp now set to open for Toronto on Thursday, an announcement on whether either of them, or someone else, has finally won Dubas over and captured the captaincy could be forthcoming.

"Whatever happens, I know we're going to have a great [captain] whoever it is," Tavares said. "And we all want to support whoever it is and go out there as a group and have success as a team. ...[There's] no question, being a Maple Leaf and the history and what it means, the tradition, the connection to the fan base, the city, it's a big deal."

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TSN.CA / Matthews the best bet to unseat Ovechkin for Rocket Richard Trophy

Travis Yost

There was an interesting article over at The Hockey News last week identifying the top candidates to win the Rocket Richard Trophy this season.

The favourite, until proven otherwise, will remain Washington Capitals winger Alexander Ovechkin. Ovechkin has been the league's top goal scorer in six of the last seven years. And unlike virtually all of his peers, it doesn't appear that the age regression bug is set to bite anytime soon. In some ways it reminds me of Tom Brady and the New England Patriots. What is true for the vast majority of the playing population may not be true for one individual player, especially when that player is a bona fide superstar.

So bet against Ovechkin at your own peril. It does raise an interesting question, though: if not Ovechkin, then who?

My short answer is Toronto's Auston Matthews, followed closely by Edmonton's Connor McDavid. (McDavid is indisputably the best player in the world, but there is a significant team talent advantage in favour of the Leafs centre.)

The argument in support of Matthews is relatively straightforward. From 2016-17 through the 2018-19 regular season, no player has been more effective at scoring even-strength goals on a rate basis than Matthews, and it isn't particularly close. For every 60 minutes of hockey, Matthews scores 1.55 goals. That's 16 per cent better than second place, owned by Nashville's Viktor Arvidsson (1.33). Matthews and Arvidsson, statistically speaking, are the only two outliers across 281 regular NHL forwards in the three-year period.

On a mere effectivity argument, Matthews might be the most logical candidate – even ahead of the aforementioned Ovechkin. Consider his percentiles relative to a player like Ovechkin, who not only has won top goal-scoring honours nearly every season, but will likely retire as one of the two best goal scorers ever:

Matthews and Ovechkin look identical. They both play a lot of minutes, which is important for both opportunity and volume. They both take an incredible amount of shots, and from those shots, generate more goals than just about every other regular forward in the league.

The one differentiating factor is that Matthews is probably a bit more selective – or Ovechkin is a bit less selective, or



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both – when it comes to converting on scoring opportunities. Matthews not only carries incredible offensive volume, he does so while maintaining a sterling 15 per cent shooting percentage. Ovechkin, on the other hand, sits just over 11 per cent.

If Matthews can stay healthy, his even-strength argument alone might propel him to the top of the candidacy. But even strength isn't the only game state that matters. Part of what has made Ovechkin so impossible to dethrone as a regular Rocket Richard candidate is the fact he may be the most lethal power-play goal scorer in NHL history. That's becoming even more meaningful with power-play efficiency increasing in recent years.

It's also where Matthews sags a bit in performance. If we juxtapose Ovechkin and Matthews' percentiles again, but this time with a focus on power play performance, you can see an obvious shortfall:

The data bears out what we see with Washington's power play and their usage of Ovechkin as the first unit (and, sometimes the second unit as well) trigger man. What Washington figured out very early in Ovechkin's career is that playing him as much as possible in those 5-on-4 and 5-on-3 situations was hugely advantageous. (To his credit, Ovechkin over the years has become brilliant at playing extended power-play shifts while only exerting significant energy in spots.)

This is where the uphill climb begins for Matthews. Even assuming Matthews outscores Ovechkin at even strength, he's going to give a lot of it back here. Not only is he a less effective power-play scorer head-to-head, but there is a significant usage gap. Over the last three years, Ovechkin is averaging more than four minutes of power-play ice time a night. Matthews is a little over two minutes.

Toronto head coach Mike Babcock has always been militaristic about balancing ice time, but I do wonder if that's disadvantageous when it comes to the power play usage tree. If Matthews is one of the league's best goal scorers, should he be seeing more usage than players like Gustav Nyquist and Alexander Steen? I think the answer is yes, even while recognizing that Toronto's forward group is incredibly deep and that the power play protection allows Babcock to use him marginally more at even strength.

That said, I do think they'll look to get him more power-play ice time this season. Mitch Marner, the team's second most utilized power-play forward, may not be available to start the season. Nazem Kadri, the team's third most utilized power-play forward, is in Colorado. Patrick Marleau, who was No. 5 from last season is also gone. That should mean more minutes marginally for the team's top power-play unit, including Matthews.

So no, I'm still not going to bet against Ovechkin. But if you asked me to pick one player who has a serious shot at taking the Russian sniper down this season, it's Matthews.

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USA TODAY / Rangers first-round pick Kaapo Kakko scores stunning overtime goal at prospects tournament

Vincent Z. Mercogliano, NHL writer Published 6:05 p.m. ET Sept. 9, 2019 | Updated 6:36 p.m. ET Sept. 9, 2019

The hype surrounding the 2019 Traverse City prospect tournament was at an all-time high for the New York Rangers, with fans left disappointed after top draft choice Kaapo Kakko sat out the first two games because of illness.

It turned out the No. 2 overall pick's debut was worth the wait.

Kakko took the ice for the first time Monday and provided the type of drama that will only enhance his status as a folk hero. After a slow start for the Finnish star and the rest of the Blueshirts' prospects, Kakko assisted on all three third-period goals and finished off the Minnesota Wild with an unforgettable overtime goal for a 4-3 win.

The game-ending play included two circles around the Minnesota goal — almost as if he was toying with the Wild defense — and ended with a wrap-around shot that goalie Hunter Jones never had a chance at stopping.

It's worth a few watches:

Kaapo KakkOT. #NYRpic.twitter.com/jL0fkglmOw

— New York Rangers (@NYRangers) September 9, 2019

DRAFT: Hughes, Kakko could fit in well among great No. 1-No. 2 draft duos

SUPPORT: Ovechkin backs Kuznetsov after IIHF suspension for cocaine

LABOR TALKS: NHL players optimistic as key deadline approaches

Before the highlight-reel goal, Kakko assisted on both goals from another highly touted prospect — Vitali Kravtsov — as well as the game-tying goal from Patrick Newell with about a minute left in regulation.

Kakko finished with four points (one goal, three assists) in a debut that has Twitter buzzing.

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USA TODAY / NJ Devils' Pavel Zacha may be headed to KHL, report says

Abbey Mastracco, NHL writer Published 12:06 p.m. ET Sept. 9, 2019 | Updated 2:31 p.m. ET Sept. 9, 2019

The New Jersey Devils have yet to sign their last remaining restricted free agent Pavel Zacha this summer and it appears the former first-round pick may be on his way out of the NHL as a result.

A source confirmed a report by Sport Express' Egor Eronko saying Zacha has agreed to terms on a contract with Avangard Omsk of the KHL, however, neither the Devils nor



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Avangard have confirmed the signing. New Jersey presented their 2015 first-round selection with a qualifying offer prior to the June 25th deadline, so the Devils would retain Zacha's NHL rights and he would remain on the reserve list should he leave North America for the KHL.

Per @Boogaard_2 Pavel Zacha agreed to terms with Avangard of the #KHL#NJDevils

— Igor Eronko (@IgorEronko) September 9, 2019

The KHL does not allow NHL out clauses in their contracts, so if the 22-year-old Zacha does sign that deal, he'll be playing in Russia next season. He would not be eligible for a midseason NHL return.

Devils general manager Ray Shero told the Associated Press he is still hopefully to get a deal done but "doesn't care" if Zacha signs with the KHL or even Brampton of the ECHL. Zacha's agent, Patrik Stefan, brought up the scenario recently but it's not what Shero would advise.

"It's a long road back to the NHL," Shero told the AP.

Messages to Stefan were not returned.

A big (6-foot-3), speedy center out of the Czech Republic, Zacha grew up idolizing former Devils' great Patrik Elias and has memories of Elias bringing the cup back to his hometown of Třebíč, which isn't far from Zacha's hometown of Brno. He came to North America in 2014 and played two seasons for Sarnia of the Ontario Hockey League, scoring 28 goals and assisting on 36 (64 points) in his draft season.

Feb 9, 2019; Newark, NJ, USA; New Jersey Devils center Pavel Zacha (37) skates with the puck during the second period against the Minnesota Wild at Prudential Center.

Presiding over his final draft with New Jersey, former general manager Lou Lamoriello, along with Shero, selected Zacha with the sixth overall pick. He was an offensive force with tremendous speed and a booming shot and the club hoped he would blossom into the second-line center he was projected to become at the time he was drafted. But it took Zacha three seasons to find any sort of consistency at the NHL level and he was looking at a bottom-six role coming into this season.

Zacha talked about troubles putting the defensive and offensive parts of his game together, at times focusing more on one aspect than the other. He was demoted to the American Hockey League early last season. The demotion proved beneficial as he scored a career-high 13 goals last season. He put up 25 points for the second straight season, edging his mark of 24 from his rookie season, owned a 46.3 percent Corsi and won 48.9 percent of faceoffs in 2018-19.

With the new additions to the Devils roster for the upcoming season, Zacha's role was unclear. Nico Hischier and Jack Hughes are expected to have the top two center spots locked up. Travis Zajac will once again center a checking line. That left a fourth-role line. Zacha would be competing with Kevin Rooney and possibly even Michael McLeod. There was talk of moving one of them to the wing, but regardless, Zacha's skill set doesn't really fit on the fourth line.

Zacha has 201 NHL games to his name is not eligible for arbitration.

Dec 29, 2018; Newark, NJ, USA; New Jersey Devils center Pavel Zacha (37) celebrates his goal with New Jersey Devils

center Brian Boyle (11) during the second period of their game against the Carolina Hurricanes at Prudential Center.

While Zacha has trained in New Jersey in past summers, this year he moved his offseason training up to Boston to join a larger group of NHL players, including former New Jersey center Brian Boyle.

The situation could change and Zacha has until December 1 to sign a contract with the Devils. This could just be a way to speed negotiations along or it could be a way for him to get his game going again.

USA TODAY LOADED: 09.10.2019

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YAHOO SPORTS / Ovechkin suffers injury scare during scrimmage, returns without incident

Steven Psihogios Yahoo Sports Canada September 10, 2019

The worst-case scenario for the Washington Capitals would surely involve Alexander Ovechkin getting hurt before the 2019-20 season even started.

So when Ovechkin went down with an apparent leg injury at a team scrimmage, according to Tom Gulitti of NHL.com, Capitals fans were forced to live through a nightmare.

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But as we learned, Ovechkin doesn't get injuries, he laughs at them.

Just checked with Ovechkin after he came off the ice. He's says his leg is "okay"...which is better than his nose, chin and eyebrow, which he injured in a bicycle accident last night. "Shit happens," he cracked. #Caps
pic.twitter.com/yi4tiStDDt

— Tarik El-Bashir (@Tarik_ElBashir) September 9, 2019

After immediately stating that his leg was fine, Ovi explained that he fell off his bike Sunday night, and that's why there is a cut on the bridge of his nose.

You have to applaud No. 8's durability. For someone who has played 14 years in the NHL, he has yet to miss more than 10 games in a single season. That's pretty incredible.

Ovechkin, though, may want to take it easy on these bike rides to prevent scuffing up his face further.

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YAHOO SPORTS / John Tavares reflects on potential Maple Leafs captaincy



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Arun Srinivasan Yahoo Sports Canada September 9, 2019

YAHOO.COM LOADED: 09.10.2019

The coveted position of Toronto Maple Leafs captain remains open and John Tavares is well aware of the weight it carries.

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Since Tavares signed a seven-year deal with the Maple Leafs in July 2018, he's been considered a prime candidate to wear the 'C' and represent the Stanley Cup ambitions this iteration of the team holds.

YAHOO SPORTS / 31 Takes: Can anyone on a PTO actually make their teams?

Tavares spoke about what the captaincy would mean to him and how he would try to be relatively unaffected by the additional accountability.

Ryan Lambert

"You just don't take something like that for granted," Tavares said to Sportsnet's Luke Fox. "There's only so many in the league, and certainly for a franchise here like the Maple Leafs with its history and tradition, I don't want to look at things differently just because you're given a responsibility. You're given that responsibility because of who you are and the way you've carried yourself to that point.

Now is the time of year when NHL teams start extending professional tryout offers to long-time veterans en masse. And for good reason.

"You don't let something like that change you. You want to be yourself, go out and play your game, do what you do. I know we're gonna have a great one, whoever it is. I'll support whoever it is."

League rules dictate that you have to have at least eight "veterans" on your roster for any given preseason game. A veteran in this context is a skater who played at least 30 NHL games the previous season, a goaltender who dressed for at least 50 or played in at least 30, a player who has at least 100 NHL games in his career, or a first-round pick from the most recent draft.

Prior to joining the Maple Leafs, Tavares was the captain of the New York Islanders for five seasons and served as the face of the franchise. Tavares said that he learned that leadership comes in several forms, and relying on your teammates is still an integral function of being a good captain.

Not sure how the last of those constitutes a veteran, but okay.

The star center also made the case for Auston Matthews and Morgan Rielly - both of whom are also considered leading candidates - as well as an argument for Mitch Marner, who remains unsigned as a restricted free agent.

A PTO, then, allows NHL players to bring in guys who fit the various definitions of "veterans" outlined above but who have little to no chance of actually making the roster once the season begins. To date, 16 players have been signed to PTOs, of which 10 actually played in the NHL last season, and only one (Troy Brouwer) played more than 70 games.

"Morgan [Rielly], being here for as long as he has and his maturity level, you can see it in his game and how he carries himself off the ice — just very level-headed. Especially as a defenceman, a very tough position to play and the amount of load he carries.

More PTOs have likely been agreed to but not announced. Currently, just three teams have locked in 10 of the 16 tryout deals: Toronto with two, Dallas with three, and Calgary with a whopping five. Six other teams have one guy each who hope they can impress enough to lock in a contract for the coming season.

"Auston's presence, his talent, his ability, his drive to be one of the best players in the league is incredible.

The two questions for any of these teams is whether the PTOs are being extended merely to fill out preseason rosters — and thus reduce the risk of injury to players they actually want on the big club roster when the season begins — and whether any of these guys could actually be of use as a fringe contributor.

"A guy like Mitchy has an incredible energy about him. Just brings the room to life. And the way he impacts the game in so many different areas and the way he plays it is so unique and pretty incredible."

For the most part, it would appear as though the answer is a firm "no." Of those 16 guys, only 10 even played in the NHL last season. Those who didn't are at least recognizable names like Chris Stewart (last seen as a middle-six forward, at best, for the third-best team in the UK's Elite league) or Scottie Upshall, who did not play professional hockey last season. Those guys got a shot in Philadelphia and Dallas, respectively, and would have been in tough to make the roster even if those teams didn't have decent forward groups.

Tavares appears to be relatively unconcerned one way or another, and asked if he'd like to split the leadership duties with four assistants, as the Maple Leafs did in 2018-19, he provided his most compelling answer yet.

"That's a hard thing to say. Does it make the difference between winning and losing? Really, no. It's about the team that goes out there and works as a unit," said Tavares.

Other guys who did play in the NHL, like Zac Rinaldo (trying out in Calgary), Matt Read (Toronto), and Drew Stafford (Minnesota) are more or less replacement-level players who would do in a pinch. However, most teams would be better served rostering their top forward from the AHL rather than sign these guys.

"But when you do have a captain, you have someone everyone kinda looks to and sets the tone."

It doesn't appear that the Maple Leafs will be making a decision anytime soon, but Tavares seems ready to answer the call, or handle the season per usual, regardless of what management decides.

There are, however, a few guys who might be worth a shot in a specific circumstance, but they may surprise you. One is



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Stefan Noesen, who is trying out in Dallas and had a rotten season in New Jersey by any standard, but who was also quite good (relative to most of these other PTOers) as recently as 2017-18. If the Stars add him as a bottom-six guy and put him with talent, there's little reason he wouldn't be worth a shade under \$1 million on an actual contract.

Another is Andrew MacDonald, who's one of five players on a PTO with Calgary, but the only defenseman. He was never worth his contract and definitely not a fit for his role in Philly, but he can be put in a position to succeed farther down the lineup. He'll likely also get plenty of opportunity to actually make the team, since Juuso Valimaki is likely to miss a lot of time to start the year. As a bottom-pair defender, he likely still has some utility.

Even Brouwer, who's on a PTO with the Panthers (the club that employed him last year) could be a contributor at the bottom of that forward group. He would know Joel Quenneville well enough from their time together in Chicago, but he scored 12 goals last season in a very limited role and also played a solid defensive role. There might be something there.

Other than that, there aren't many legit options for NHL teams. You never want to count guys out. Some may have great camps overall, and certainly a few have legitimate arguments that they deserve NHL deals.

But if you want to call those teams' use of players almost entirely to fill out preseason rosters cynical, it's tough to find fault with that.

31 Takes

Anaheim Ducks: What's a guy gotta do to get an A+ around here?

Arizona Coyotes: "Trying hard isn't good enough any longer. It's time to win something besides the off-season news conference." Hoo boy.

Boston Bruins: Unfortunately the answer to this question is "no" and everyone from last year's Bruins team will go to their graves with regret.

Buffalo Sabres: I love to get excited about players' performance in rookie tournaments.

Calgary Flames: Oh jeez, our little guy is growing up.

Carolina Hurricanes: I bet you can get a real nice forward for Justin Faulk.

Chicago: Kirby Dach is learning.

Colorado Avalanche: I'm seriously excited for this.

Columbus Blue Jackets: Okay, cool.

Dallas Stars: Joe Pavelski is very good but this team made the playoffs with barely over 200 goals. Even with the amount of offense Pavelski adds, things seem a bit dicey to me.

Detroit Red Wings: A kid on Detroit's Traverse City roster had a Gordie Howe hat trick the other night. Why on earth do they still allow fighting in rookie tournaments? Good lord.

Edmonton Oilers: Context matters here, but far as bleak headlines go, this is way up there.

Florida Panthers: Yes, there is basically no way to accept anything short of a playoff appearance for these guys after the summer they had. And yet, it's the Panthers, so...

Los Angeles Kings: Tidy little bit of business to re-sign Jack Campbell. This deal could work out quite well for LA.

Minnesota Wild: All the Wild have to do to improve is wait out their cap situation for the next two seasons. Very easy!

Montreal Canadiens: I think this is very fair but I'm sure the fans in Montreal will have an even more rational and extremely normal reaction.

Nashville Predators: The Preds can't re-sign Roman Josi yet because they think the big RFAs will significantly change the market. They're probably right.

New Jersey Devils: Should be: Will Butcher. Will be: Sami Vatanen.

New York Islanders: Mat Barzal said he's not worried about the money on his next contract, presumably while winking a lot.

New York Rangers: Okay and is five points good?

Ottawa Senators: Good news, Logan: Ottawa almost fits that definition.

Philadelphia Flyers: Man they really are already on Carter Hart's case.

Pittsburgh Penguins: Not talked about much but the local media acts like Marcus Pettersson was the reason Jack Johnson and Erik Gudbranson weren't a complete disaster down the stretch. He doesn't have a contract yet.

San Jose Sharks: I simply love Joe Thornton.

St. Louis Blues: The only jersey the Blues should ever wear are the powder blue ones they brought back already. Don't overthink this.

Tampa Bay Lightning: Sounds like a nice summer for Mikhail Sergachev.

Toronto Maple Leafs: Ah, ah jeez.

Vancouver Canucks: First time he turns the puck over at the attacking blue line for a breakaway, the local media is gonna go in on Quinn Hughes so hard he'll want to retire.

Vegas Golden Knights: I also believe this of Cody Glass.

Washington Capitals: People love to talk about this thing that is almost certainly not going to happen.

Winnipeg Jets: This take is really smart.

Gold Star Award

I'm so happy Joe Thornton is back again. Hooray hooray.

Minus of the Weekend

A billion thumbs down emoji on this one.

Perfect HFBoards Trade Proposal of the Week

User "Sick Nuzuki" is connecting the dots.

To Winnipeg:

Hamilton



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A top pairing defenceman to help stabilize the weakened d, helps maintain 34 year old Buff's minutes to keep him at a high level during Winnipeg's current win now window

Toronto's conditional 1st to offset the contract lengths

To Carolina

Connor

30+ goal scorer to help turn Carolina closer to being a contender.

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