



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Sept. 13, 2017

THE NEWS & OBSERVER

If Canes really are a top-line center away from making the playoffs, is this the guy?

By Chip Alexander

calexander@newsobserver.com

September 12, 2017 12:16 PM

Several NHL prognosticators believe the Carolina Hurricanes are a top-line center away from being a playoff team.

Victor Rask might consider that an affront – or *forolampa*, in Swedish.

At 24, Rask is entering his fourth NHL season. He has scored 20-plus goals before in a season, is a dependable playmaker, sound defensively and has good size at 6-2 and 200 pounds.

Asked if he could develop into a top-line center man, the Swede replied, "Yeah, for sure. I want to be a very good player, so that's something that I strive for, to become."

Jordan Staal is unarguably the Canes' best checking center. He's their biggest, strongest player and a load for any opposing forward.

Rask appeared on the cusp of becoming an elite offensive center in 2015-16, putting together a 21-goal, 27-assist season. That earned him a six-year, \$24 million contract extension – a sizable [investment](#) and commitment by the Hurricanes.

But Rask had shoulder surgery after that season, disrupting his offseason workouts, and never hit a consistent stride in 2016-17. He took a step back, not forward, in a season when he served as an alternate captain for the first time.

"I didn't think I played too good last season," Rask said. "I started off good, then had a little slump, then I came back again I thought."

The good: eight goals and seven assists in the first 17 games.

The slump: 14 consecutive games without a point beginning in mid-January as the Canes went 4-9-1.

Some of Rask's numbers and other metrics dipped last season. He had 16 goals. His faceoff percentage dropped below 50 percent.

The Canes need a lot more from No. 49. They'll need it this season to end an eight-year playoff drought that is the longest in the NHL.

General manager Ron Francis believes Rask has it in him.

"A big part of that is being able to understand the game and he certainly has great hockey sense and understands it a lot," Francis said. "The second thing is the work ethic, to

make yourself better each year, and Victor has always had that drive and passion to make himself better.

"He went home a couple of summers ago and wanted to get stronger and came back stronger. This summer he went home and wanted to work on his leg strength and maybe try to improve his skating. So he has the potential to get to where he wants to get to, absolutely."

Rask headed to the 2017 World Championship after last season, competing for Sweden with Canes teammates Elias Lindholm and Joakim [Nordstrom](#), and then-teammate Eddie Lack. He centered a line with wingers Gabriel Landeskog of the Colorado Avalanche and Lindholm.

"I thought Victor was outstanding at the World Championship," Canes coach Bill Peters said. "That line was a very good one."

And Sweden too good. The Swedes won the gold medal and then staged a raucous celebration once back in Stockholm, the players donning golden helmets as they took the stage.

As Rask said, "To win a gold medal and World Championship is huge for our country."

Rask did take a short break from hockey. He went to Spain to celebrate his father's 50th birthday. There was Lack's wedding to attend in Greece.

Francis noted that one summer Rask's parents had to "drag him on vacation" because he didn't want to interrupt his [training](#). He said while Rask was playing junior hockey for the Calgary Hitmen in the Western Hockey League, the coaches said he was a nonstop worker.

"He's very determined and competitive," Francis said. "He may not show that outwardly but certainly inside he has the fire to be one of the best."

Some answers on Rask should come this season – good, bad or indifferent.

Peters said he expects Rask to be one of the team's top six forwards in terms of production. He'll have good wingers, Peters said. The opportunity will be there.

"We haven't seen the best of him yet," Peters said.

There was speculation in the offseason the Canes might have interest in trading for Avs center Matt Duchene to be their top-line guy, although Francis has quashed talk about Duchene.

The Canes' Sebastian Aho might be an elite center in time, but Peters said the Finnish forward needs at least another year on the wing in the NHL.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Sept. 13, 2017

For now, it's up to Rask to deliver. There's pressure on him to perform.

"Last year he was coming back from shoulder surgery, but everyone saw the year before how good he was when he

scored the 21 goals," Lindholm said. "He can be that guy, be that top-line center. Hopefully he can take a step like everyone else this season and we can be in the playoffs."



Prospects Gameday: Hurricanes vs. Wild

Canes cap NHL Prospects Tournament with third-place game

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

September 12th, 2017

TRAVERSE CITY, Mich. - It's not the game in which they wanted to compete tonight, but that's all a part of the learning process.

The Carolina Hurricanes will face off with the Minnesota Wild in Tuesday's NHL Prospects Tournament third-place game. The Canes finished 2-1 in round-robin play, and it's a bounce-back effort they're in search of. After winning the first two games of the tournament, the Hurricanes were defeated 9-2 by the Chicago Blackhawks on Monday night, denied their second consecutive berth in the championship match.

"We didn't compete enough last night. They outplayed us in all areas of the game. They worked harder than we did," head coach Mike Vellucci said. "We didn't have any attention to detail. That's what we talked about today."

In the grand scheme of wins and losses, tonight's game is rather negligible. What is on the line is a final chance for this group of 20-plus to impress the coaching staff and front office before Hurricanes training camp begins later this week.

"Bounce back. We had a horrible game last night, a really tough game, so how do you respond? What are you going to do?" Vellucci said. "Are you going to work harder, compete harder and do the things it takes to win, or are you going to

go back to the way you played the other night? We'll be taking into account who comes to play tonight."

Forward [Steven Lorentz](#) and defenseman Adam Thilander will re-enter the lineup tonight. Additionally, Vellucci and his staff will get a glimpse at some new-look lines tonight. [Warren Foegele](#), [Martin Necas](#) and [Janne Kuokkanen](#) comprise the team's top line. Size reigns on the second line with [Spencer Smallman](#) (6-foot-1, 200 pounds), Roy (6-foot-4, 208 pounds) and Gauthier (6-foot-4, 225 pounds). On the back-end, [Haydn Fleury](#) will skate alongside [Roland McKeown](#), a familiar pair. And in net, the Canes will turn back to [Callum Booth](#).

"The size, skill and speed is very, very good," Vellucci said. "Now we need to teach them the game. It's a growing experience with a young team and young guys. Hopefully they can take some bits and pieces from this tournament and turn it into a great training camp for themselves."

Tonight's NHL Prospects Tournament finale will be streamed live on [FOX Sports GO](#), and we'll be rinkside at Centre Ice Arena one last time to provide in-game updates on [@CanesTracking](#).

Foegele-Necas-Kuokkanen
Smallman-Roy-Gauthier
Elynuik-Poturalski-Schilkey
Lorentz-Geekie-Mattheos

Fleury-McKeown
Bean-Wesley
Carroll-Thilander

Booth
Helvig

Scratches: Boka, De Jong, Hollowell



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Sept. 13, 2017



THE STUDENT NEWSPAPER OF NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY SINCE 1920

TECHNICIAN

techniciannews.com

Raleigh, North Carolina

Five questions facing the Hurricanes ahead of training camp

On Friday, with the start of training camp, the Carolina Hurricanes will officially embark on their fourth season under general manager Ron Francis and head coach Bill Peters. There is an expectation that with four years for a young core to grow, and the additions Francis made this summer, this team will make a strong push to snap its eight-year playoff drought.

As with any team, however, there are a few [questions surrounding](#) the team as the season draws near. Before camp starts, let's take a look at a few key ones facing the Canes in 2017-18.

1. Is Scott Darling a starting goaltender? This is by far the most important question for the Canes this season, and the one that will go the furthest in [determining](#) whether or not the team will play more than 82 games. The Canes have been bottom-five in team save percentage each of the last three years, and poor performances from Cam Ward and Eddie Lack cost Carolina many a game last year. Carolina finished tied for the fifth-worst team save percentage in the league last year at .901, costing the team a playoff berth as it missed the big dance by 8 points.

To remedy this, Francis traded a third-round pick to the Chicago Blackhawks for the negotiating rights to goaltender Scott Darling, and then signed him to a four-year extension. Darling has performed well as Chicago's backup, going 18-5-0 with a .924 save percentage and 2.38 goals-against average. The hope is that he can emulate fellow starters-turned-backups Martin Jones, Cam Talbot and Cory Schneider, and transition into a strong starter with a bigger workload; as even a modest dip from those numbers would be a massive improvement for the Canes and give the team the league-average goaltending it needs.

Carolina will need better goaltending from Darling, and Ward as his backup, than it received last year to bring playoff hockey to Raleigh for the first time since 2009.

2. Did the team add enough talent at forward? Struggles finding the back of the net played a role in the Canes' long summer as well, as the team ranked 20th with 2.59 goals per game last year. Francis went into the offseason needing to find an upgrade or two for an underrated forward corps that lacked punch beyond Jeff Skinner's career-high 37 goals and

Sebastian Aho's breakout rookie season. While Francis could not find the top-six center the team still needs, he did make a very smart add in former Hurricane Justin Williams, a member of the 2006 Stanley Cup Championship team.

Williams adds a still-productive player at the age of 35, as he scored 24 goals for the Washington Capitals last year, and some much-needed leadership to a young group. Francis also brought in shutdown center Marcus Kruger to anchor the team's fourth line, and Josh Jooris for depth. The team will need to boost its goal total into the top half of the league to fight for a playoff spot this year.

3. Who gets the C? After shipping out longtime captain and face of the franchise Eric Staal at the trade deadline, the Canes played all of last season without a captain. That will change this year as Peters confirmed at media day last week that the team will hand out the C prior to this year. We took a look at [candidates for the captaincy](#) this summer, with Skinner, Williams, forward Jordan Staal and defensemen Justin Faulk and Jacob Slavin all being strong candidates. Choosing one voice to lead this young group is a [big decision](#), one that will impact the team not just in its playoff quest this year but for many seasons to come.

4. Who's the sixth defenseman? The third pairing on defense was an issue for Carolina last season, as the team struggled to find a consistent combo. Francis already added Trevor van Riemsdyk from the Vegas Golden Knights to back up the presumed top four of Slavin, Faulk, Brett Pesce and Noah Hanifin, and left the sixth spot open for competition. Rookie Haydn Fleury seems to be the favorite, but he will have to fight off incumbent Klas Dahlbeck and fellow young guns Roland McKeown, Trevor Carrick and Jake Bean.

5. Is this the year? It's been a long eight years for Hurricanes fans, as the team has not played in the Stanley Cup Playoffs since the first term of Barack Obama's presidency. The answers to the first four questions will ultimately determine the answer to this one: if the longest active playoff drought in the NHL will end. If the Canes can get improved goaltending, scoring and find a consistent third pair on defense, the team should find itself playing past April for the first time this decade.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Sept. 13, 2017



SB NATION
CANES COUNTRY

Meet the New Guys: Marcus Kruger

The Hurricanes bolstered their fourth line and penalty killing unit by acquiring the Swedish pivot.

by [Kyle Morton@k.morton9](mailto:Kyle.Morton@k.morton9) Sep 12, 2017, 11:00am EDT

One sore spot for the [Carolina Hurricanes](#) in recent years has been the play of their fourth line. Past holders of the center role with that unit such as [Jay McClement](#) and [Manny Malhotra](#) have brought purported face-off and penalty killing ability to the team, but their results at even strength have led to the 'Canes regularly finding themselves on the losing end of fourth line battles.

Enter Marcus Kruger, whose excellence in that role in [Chicago](#) played a part in two of the [Blackhawks'](#) Stanley [Cup championships](#), in 2013 and 2015.

Kruger in Chicago

As alluded to previously, Kruger was a considerable part of two Stanley Cup championships during his time with the Blackhawks. Chicago made Kruger their 5th round pick in the 2009 entry draft, so the Swede faced considerable odds to even make it to the NHL at the time.

His first full season came in 2011-2012, when he posted 26 points in 71 games. His career high in points came two years later when he put up a total of 28 in 81 games.

But do not fret, offensive production is far from Kruger's calling card. Since he entered the league, Kruger has a 200 minute lead on every other Blackhawks forward in terms of time on the ice while [shorthanded](#).

He's also a career 50.5% in the face-off circle, if that's something that you place value on. Kruger's usage was unique in that he was often absolutely buried by his former bench boss Joel Quenneville in terms of zone starts. According to hockey reference, Kruger started more than 75% of his shifts that began with faceoffs in either the offensive or defensive zone in the d-zone for the last four consecutive years.

Simply put, Kruger is a defensive specialist at center. He's above average in that role due in large part to his ability to drive possession positively anyway.

Kruger in Vegas

Haha, just kidding.

Kruger in Carolina

Perhaps the most exciting possibility of Kruger's addition to the team will be the flexibility that he provides head coach Bill Peters.

For many years, [Jordan Staal](#) has taken on every single tough matchup that could possibly be thrown at him due to the lack of options at his disposal.

With Kruger, things change a little bit. Peters will be able to deploy Staal in a role that will be much more conducive to offensive production. Not so much at the end of last year, but there have been times when Staal's status as the only shutdown forward on the team dictated that his linemates would be defensively-oriented forwards.

Hearken back to the days of [Nathan Gerbe](#) and Pat Dwyer, or more recently [Joakim Nordstrom](#) and [Andrej Nestrasil](#), being seen as the best possible fits to play with Staal, and you'll quickly see why the move to bring in Kruger makes a ton of sense.

With Kruger taking the designation of being the team's lead shutdown center, Peters can play Staal with some of the bigger offensive threats on the roster, as we started to see at times last year. I could easily [envision](#) Staal starting the season with [Sebastian Aho](#) and [Elias Lindholm](#) as his wingers.

As for Kruger, he'll almost assuredly stay on the fourth line for most of the season, barring a rash of injuries. He'll also serve as a huge boon to Carolina's penalty killing unit, which was already one of the best in the league to begin with. It's another area in which he certainly represents an upgrade over McClement

Carolina Hurricanes vs. Minnesota Wild: Traverse City Prospect Tournament Game Preview and How to Watch

A disappointing outing in their final round-robin contest has sent the Canes to the 3rd place game.

by [Peter Dewar@pdewar18](mailto:Peter.Dewar@pdewar18) Sep 12, 2017, 5:45pm EDT

[Carolina Hurricanes](#) (2-1) vs. [Minnesota Wild](#) (2-1)

Traverse City Prospect Tournament - Game 4

September 12, 2017 - 6:30 p.m. ET

Watch: CarolinaHurricanes.com - [FOX Sports GO app](#)



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Sept. 13, 2017

So...yesterday didn't go as planned. After dominating competition through the first two games (and giving up a tournament-low two total goals), the #CanesProspects got a wake-up call from the [Chicago Blackhawks](#). Despite their early success, a 9-2 loss to [Luc Snuggerud](#), [Alex DeBrincat](#) and company cost Carolina a shot at the championship, and today they face a Wild team who probably feel like they belong in the later game as well.

The good news for [the young](#) Hurricanes is that they have a chance to show the coaching staff how they respond to defeat and adversity; a strong performance in this final game would be a great [sign](#) of maturity and hunger to win in every situation, two traits crucial to making an NHL roster.

Things generally look the same on the roster (including in net, where [Callum Booth](#) gets the call again), with only one

change - Adam Thilander returns, replacing Luke Boka - but who plays where is going to look a whole lot different:

[Warren Foegele](#) - Martin Necas - [Janne Kuokkanen](#)
[Spencer Smallman](#) - [Nicolas Roy](#) - [Julien Gauthier](#)
[Hudson Elynuik](#) - [Andrew Poturalski](#) - Nick Schilkey
[Steven Lorentz](#) - Morgan Geekie - Stelio Mattheos

[Haydn Fleury](#) - [Roland McKeown](#)
[Jake Bean](#) - [Josh Wesley](#)
[Noah Carroll](#) - Adam Thilander

Callum Booth
[Jeremy Helvig](#)

Scratches: Luke Boka, Brendan De Jong, Mac Hollowell



Atlantic Division Preview: Springfield Falcons

Written by Nicholas Niedzielski

Published: September 12, 2017

The 2017-18 season is creeping [closer and](#) closer, and the Checkers' move to the Eastern Conference means a whole new slate of opponents. For the new few weeks, we'll take a look at each of Charlotte's new Atlantic Division rivals!

Overview

The Thunderbirds' first season in Springfield, led by longtime Checkers assistant coach Geordie Kinnear, was a tough one, with the new club falling out of playoff position in the tightly contested Atlantic Division. The team's struggling [power play](#) (third-worst in the AHL) contributed to their deficiencies on offense, which ranked in the bottom 10 in terms of goals per game, but the Thunderbirds thrived defensively, tying for the ninth-best goals-against per game in the league. They'll have to rebuild between the pipes, however, as all four netminders who appeared last season – Sam Brittain, Reto Berra, Adam Wilcox and Mike McKenna – have all moved on from the organization.

Key Departures

Paul Thompson

Former AHL All-Star set career high in helpers, ranked second on Springfield in scoring and appeared in 21 [NHL games](#) before inking a deal with Vegas during the offseason

Brody Sutter

Longtime Checker inked a new deal with Manitoba after injuries limited him to just 19 games with Springfield last season

Key RETURNING

Chase Balisy

Alternate captain set career highs in assists and points in his first campaign in the Florida organization, leading the Thunderbirds in both categories as well

Mackenzie Weegar

23-year-old blue liner tied for seventh among league defensemen with 14 goals, also set career highs in assists and points while finishing third on the Thunderbirds in scoring and making his NHL debut with Florida Danny Baxter

Key ADDITIONS

Alexandre Grenier

Winger registered his third consecutive 40-point season a year ago with Utica, ranking second on the team in goals and third in scoring

Curtis Valk



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Sept. 13, 2017

Another addition from Utica led the Comets in helpers during his first full AHL campaign, ranking second on the team in scoring



Eastern Conference training camp storylines

NHL.com breaks down biggest questions for all 16 teams heading into preseason

by Dan Rosen [@drosennhl](#) / NHL.com Senior Writer

12:00 AM

It's that terrific time of the year again, when each of the 31 NHL teams is undefeated, filled with hope and fueled by the opportunity a new season presents.

With training camps officially opening this week, NHL.com will look at the biggest storyline to watch for each team going into camp.

Below are the 16 teams in the Eastern Conference, listed alphabetically by division. A breakdown for the 15 Western Conference teams will follow Thursday.

METROPOLITAN DIVISION

CAROLINA HURRICANES

First practice: Friday; PNC Arena, Raleigh, N.C.

First preseason game: Sept. 18 at Buffalo Sabres

[Justin Williams](#) is the new addition to the forward group, and he's expected to play on one of the top two lines. A key part of camp for coach Bill Peters will be figuring out the best center to play with him. The leading candidates are [Victor Rask](#) and [Jordan Staal](#). Williams may play two preseason games with each player to give Peters a better handle on the fit for Williams.

COLUMBUS BLUE JACKETS

First practice: Friday; Nationwide Arena, Columbus

First preseason game: Sept. 19 vs. Chicago Blackhawks

Forward [Artemi Panarin](#) was the big addition in the offseason, giving the Blue Jackets a much-needed dynamic playmaker and goal-scorer. They traded forward [Brandon Saad](#) to the Chicago Blackhawks to get Panarin. Coach John Tortorella must figure out who will play with Panarin, who found instant chemistry as a rookie in Chicago two seasons ago with [Patrick Kane](#) and [Artem Anisimov](#), his linemates for most of his time there. Center [Alexander Wennberg](#) likely will get first crack in Columbus.

NEW JERSEY DEVILS

First practice: Friday; Prudential Center, Newark, N.J.

First preseason game: Sept. 18 vs. Washington Capitals

All eyes will be on center Nico Hischier, the No. 1 pick in the 2017 NHL Draft. The importance of Hischier being an impactful player immediately intensified Aug. 17, when center [Travis Zajac](#) had surgery to repair a torn left pectoral muscle. Zajac will miss at least the first two months of the season and possibly more.

NEW YORK ISLANDERS

First practice: Friday; Northwell Health Ice Center, East Meadow, N.Y.

First preseason game: Sept. 17 vs. Philadelphia Flyers (Nassau Coliseum)

Defenseman [Ryan Pullock](#) figures to get his chance to make the Islanders' top-six defense group and to play on the first power play. Pullock had 46 points (15 goals, 31 assists), including five power-play goals, in 55 games for Bridgeport of the American Hockey League last season. The Islanders need him to be a regular on defense after trading [Travis Hamonic](#) to the Calgary Flames.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Sept. 13, 2017

NEW YORK RANGERS

First practice: Friday; Madison Square Garden Training Center, Greenburgh, N.Y.

First preseason game: Sept. 18 vs. Islanders

The Rangers are prepared to go into the season with [Mika Zibanejad](#) and [Kevin Hayes](#) as their top two centers, pushing each player up a spot on the depth chart from where they were last season. It's unclear how it shakes out behind them. Rookie Lias Andersson, the No. 7 pick in the 2017 draft, could emerge as a viable third center option or he could play this season in Sweden. New York also has [David Desharnais](#) and rookie Cristoval Nieves. [J.T. Miller](#) is a last-resort option because coach Alain Vigneault prefers that he play on the wing.

PHILADELPHIA FLYERS

First practice: Friday; Flyers Skate Zone, Voorhees, N.J.

First preseason game: Sept. 17 at Islanders (Nassau Coliseum)

Rookie center Nolan Patrick, the No. 2 pick in the 2017 draft, has a chance to be Philadelphia's No. 2 center behind [Claude Giroux](#). Patrick insists he's fully recovered from abdominal surgery he had June 13. Injuries plagued him last season, when he was limited to 33 games for Brandon of the Western Hockey League.

PITTSBURGH PENGUINS

First practice: Friday; UPMC Lemieux Sports Complex, Cranberry, Pa.

First preseason game: Sept. 19 vs. Sabres (Pegula Ice Arena, Penn State University)

It's unclear how the Penguins will fill out their center depth behind [Sidney Crosby](#) and [Evgeni Malkin](#). It likely will be a daily story until two players emerge to replace third-line center [Nick Bonino](#) (signed with Nashville Predators) and fourth-line center [Matt Cullen](#) (signed with Minnesota Wild), who each capably handled his role for Pittsburgh the past two seasons.

WASHINGTON CAPITALS

First practice: Friday; Kettler Capitals Iceplex, Arlington, Va.

First preseason game: Sept. 18 at Devils

The Capitals have three openings on defense following the departures of [Karl Alzner](#) (Montreal Canadiens), [Kevin Shattenkirk](#) (Rangers) and [Nate Schmidt](#) (Vegas Golden Knights). Madison Bowey and [Christian Djooos](#), who was third among AHL defensemen with 58 points (13 goals, 45 assists) in 66 games last season, appear to be front-runners for two of the spots. Washington also has veterans [Taylor Chorney](#) and [Aaron Ness](#), and Jyrki Jokipakka will be in camp on a professional tryout contract.

ATLANTIC DIVISION

BOSTON BRUINS

First practice: Friday; Warrior Ice Arena, Boston

First preseason game: Sept. 18 vs. Montreal Canadiens (Centre Videotron, Quebec City)

Restricted free agent forward [David Pastrnak](#), who had 70 points (34 goals, 36 assists) last season, is unsigned. All storylines in Bruins camp will be secondary to the Pastrnak angle until it gets resolved. Potentially linked to Pastrnak is the question of who will play on the wing with center [David Krejci](#).

BUFFALO SABRES

First practice: Friday; HarborCenter, Buffalo

First preseason game: Sept. 18 vs. Hurricanes

New coach Phil Housley will be looking to put his imprint on the Sabres. He spent the past four seasons as a Nashville Predators assistant coach, helping develop their vaunted top-four defense group of [Roman Josi](#), [Ryan Ellis](#), [Mattias Ekholm](#) and [P.K. Subban](#). He'll be looking to do something similar in Buffalo.

DETROIT RED WINGS

First practice: Friday; Centre Ice Arena, Traverse City, Mich.

First preseason game: Sept. 19 at Bruins

Will restricted free agent forward [Andreas Athanasiou](#) re-sign or leave Detroit to play overseas? Athanasiou reportedly has had a contract offer from Ak Bars in the Kontinental Hockey League for two weeks. The Red Wings need him because he can be a dynamic scorer on a team that is expected to have scoring problems. He had 18 goals in 64 games last season, his second in the League. However, Detroit is in a salary cap crunch and doesn't appear willing to budge from its offer of a two-year contract worth \$1.9 million annually, according to the Detroit Free Press.

FLORIDA PANTHERS

First practice: Friday; Florida Panthers IceDen, Coral Springs, Fla.

First preseason game: Sept. 19 at Predators (doubleheader)

Coach Bob Boughner will be running his first NHL training camp after spending the past two seasons as an assistant with the San Jose Sharks. Boughner was a successful coach with Windsor of the Ontario Hockey League, winning the Memorial Cup and OHL coach of the year award twice each. He needs to put together the pieces of a team that was decimated by injury last season.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Sept. 13, 2017

MONTREAL CANADIENS

First practice: Friday; Bell Sports Complex, Brossard, Quebec

First preseason game: Sept. 18 vs. Bruins (Centre Videotron, Quebec City)

[Jonathan Drouin](#)'s progress as the Canadiens' No. 1 center, a position he has never played regularly in the NHL, will be closely monitored. However, perhaps the more important storyline will be the battle to be [Shea Weber](#)'s defense partner. Weber played primarily with Andrei Markov last season, and they were a dynamic pair. Markov left to go play in the KHL, and Weber needs a new partner. In addition, general manager Marc Bergevin has approximately \$8.4 million in salary cap space, according to CapFriendly.com. Will he use some of it before the season starts?

OTTAWA SENATORS

First practice: Friday; Bell Sensplex, Kanata, Ontario

First preseason game: Sept. 18 vs. Toronto Maple Leafs

The Senators may start the season without each player from last season's top defense pair. Captain [Erik Karlsson](#), the runner-up for the Norris Trophy last season, is recovering from surgery to repair tendons in his left foot. He plans to play in October and resume skating in 2-3 weeks. [Marc Methot](#) is playing for the Dallas Stars. That puts the spotlight on rookie Thomas Chabot, who will enter camp with an opportunity to get significant ice time right away.

TAMPA BAY LIGHTNING

First practice: Friday; Ice Sports Forum, Brandon, Fla.

First preseason game: Sept. 19 vs. Hurricanes

Forward Steven Stamkos is back after missing the final 65 games of last season because of a knee injury. The captain's health will always be a big storyline in Tampa Bay. However, defense is the area to watch for the Lightning, who added veteran [Dan Girardi](#) and rookie Mikhail Sergachev in the offseason. Girardi is expected to be a third-pair defenseman tasked with blocking shots and killing penalties. Sergachev has the chance to be special, but at 19 years old and with veterans on the roster, he will have to earn his spot.

TORONTO MAPLE LEAFS

First practice: Friday; Gale Centre Arena, Niagara Falls, Ontario

First preseason game: Sept. 18 at Senators

Veteran forward [Patrick Marleau](#) could play on a line with [Auston Matthews](#), the 2017 Calder Trophy winner, and [William Nylander](#). That likely means [Nazem Kadri](#) or [Tyler Bozak](#) would center a line with [James van Riemsdyk](#) and [Mitchell Marner](#), and the other would center a line with [Connor Brown](#) and [Zach Hyman](#). Where Marleau fits will determine how the rest of the lineup shakes out. Kasper Kapanen, [Josh Leivo](#) and [Nikita Soshnikov](#) might impact coach Mike Babcock's decision-making.

TODAY'S LINKS

- <http://www.newsobserver.com/sports/nhl/carolina-hurricanes/article172834531.html>
- <https://www.nhl.com/hurricanes/news/prospects-gameday-preview-hurricanes-wild/c-291016230>
- http://www.technicianonline.com/sports/article_ddc109a8-982d-11e7-ab3d-9756fc1eaf36.html
- <https://www.canescountry.com/2017/9/12/16294186/carolina-hurricanes-marcus-kruger-chicago-blackhawks-nhl>
- <https://www.canescountry.com/2017/9/12/16291056/carolina-hurricanes-minnesota-wild-traverse-city-prospect-tournament-preview-and-how-to-watch>
- <http://gocheckers.com/articles/features/atlantic-division-preview-springfield-falcons>
- <https://www.nhl.com/news/nhl-eastern-conference-training-camp-storylines/c-291017576>

SportScan

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

1073605 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / 31 Thoughts: Making sense of Matt Duchene's situation

Elliott Friedman

September 12, 2017, 1:31 PM

As we inch closer to the official opening of NHL training camps later this week, all eyes are on the Colorado Avalanche and Matt Duchene.

There is uncertainty about his arrival date. The five-time 20-goal scorer went into the cone of silence after an early August interview was picked apart over a comment about "identity."

"My identity will be with a team come training camp," Duchene said then. "I don't know what team that is yet, but my identity right now needs to be strong in myself and belief in myself."

The Avalanche weren't thrilled Duchene didn't link himself with the organization, since he is still part of their team. But, after perusing all of the quotes, Duchene's thoughts aren't as malicious as portrayed. Even though he was warned after July 1 that there was a chance Colorado would not trade him and he'd start the season in Denver, I don't think he ever believed it. And, he wasn't the only one.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Sept. 13, 2017

So, when he said he didn't identify with anyone, I think he was being honest.

The true money quote from Duchene was this one: "Whatever jersey I'll be wearing come training camp I'll be wearing, and I'll be the best I can be for that team."

That's the only sensible attitude, especially if nothing materializes in the next few days. He can't like the idea of reporting, but the Avalanche have made one thing clear: they will make this trade on their schedule.

The better Duchene plays, the easier for the Avalanche to get what it wants.

As frustrated as he is, this is a deal Colorado must get right. JT Compher was one of the rare reasons for optimism in an otherwise tortuous winter, but, as it stands now, he's the brightest return from the Ryan O'Reilly trade. As the Avalanche sell their recovery through Nathan MacKinnon, Tyson Jost and Mikko Rantanen, they need a boost from whatever comes for Duchene.

So, what is that?

It seems certain Colorado could make a deal with Columbus very quickly. The Blue Jackets have been in this for a while, and it is believed they thought they were close to getting Duchene a couple of times. Sakic knows what Columbus is willing to offer, but they don't like it enough.

Duchene would love to go to Nashville, and the Predators have been a legit pursuer. In fact, a couple of players said they heard this summer about rumours of a Duchene for PK Subban deal. Neither GM would comment, but before everyone goes insane, let's go through a couple things. First, with Ryan Ellis out until Christmas, the Predators are not dealing any of their other elite defenders. Second, from what I understand, it's entirely possible Colorado inquired about all four of Ellis, Subban, Mattias Ekholm and Roman Josi. It's Nashville's biggest strength, and you can't blame the Avalanche for asking. Asking, however, is a lot different than acquiring. The defending Western Conference champions won't gut themselves to get him.

This is my opinion, but the kind of player Colorado covets is Carolina's Noah Hanifin. Hurricanes GM Ron Francis has made it clear he doesn't like the idea of trading for two years of Duchene if Hanifin is the price, but there comes a time a GM must gamble.

The Hurricanes are doing the right things — building, trending in a good direction. You see it coming. Their window to chase a playoff berth is opening. They are deep on the blue line, but need scoring. In hockey's toughest division, your flaws are even more exposed. Would it surprise you if Sakic is looking at his fellow Hall of Famer, thinking Francis is ready to play the final card for a big pot?

1. The good news for Colorado as it waits for L'Affaire Duchene to sort itself out? At the NHL media tour last week in Manhattan, MacKinnon said, "It's funny. More than ever, I want to be part of the Avs right now, because to be where we were and then to win would be unbelievable."

He is one of several players who admitted they needed a mental adjustment after 2016-17, a better way of handling losing. "I learned a lot," he added. "You could handle it a lot of different ways. I was frustrated, not my best self. I will admit that...It snowballs. You lose two, lose five, you're down 5-1, become negative, come to the rink negative, go home negative, no one's confident, your power play sucks, your penalty kill sucks, it's tough. You don't really have time to regroup, playing Thursday, playing Friday, flying two hours, getting home at three a.m....never taking a week off, no time to start over. It's on us...You have to handle it better, get out of the funk before it catches up to you. But I'm definitely not a quitter." Told the fans would love the message, he replied, "I'm not just trying to impress the fans, it's not like that...We have good players, we're going to surprise people this season. Everyone has a chip on their shoulder."

2. Two others with a new attitude: Jamie Benn and Tyler Seguin. Benn looked refreshed, and attended the highly regarded early September Andy O'Brien workout camp in Vail, CO. Dallas's captain sounded a lot like MacKinnon. "The bigger thing for myself is keeping a positive mindset. When things get bad, the more you think about how bad it is, the worse it will probably get. Changing your mindset for the better, and really knowing that things will get better...you have to find ways of how to do that."

As for Seguin, "It was the first year where I really took things home with me. In the past, I found a way to separate from hockey, just be a person.

But I couldn't leave it at the rink. It took the summer to get over it." What made it worse for him was feeling great before the season, then suffering a hairline fracture at the World Cup. "Nothing was going right. Being done your season with 15 games left in the year, I'd never been through it before."

3. No doubt many of you are familiar with the "shuttle run," that heinous gym-class torture test. (Even the flexed-arm hang wasn't as bad as the shuttle run.) But you know who loves it? Seguin. He was able to do it for the first time in two years, as previous injuries kept him from the activity. "I got a step back that I lost. I look forward to starting."

4. Great summer rumour that was confirmed last week: the morning after Connor McDavid signed his \$100 million contract, he took the earliest flight back to Toronto so he didn't miss a workout with Gary Roberts. "We spent the night in Edmonton, so with the time difference, it was a little tricky," the Oilers captain said. You went right from the airport to go see Roberts? "Yes. Absolutely nothing has changed. I would have done it playing in junior, so it's still what I do now."

5. Did McDavid watch the playoffs after Edmonton was eliminated? "I did not, no," he replied. "I took a little trip, got away from it. If we didn't win I didn't care who won. I got a lot of questions, (asking) who I was cheering for. For me it didn't matter at all. If not the Oilers, I don't care who wins." Competitive guy. Bodes very well for the organization.

6. We'll do more stuff from the media tour in a little bit, but let's look at some of the other current storylines. Sounds like Pittsburgh has re-ignited its search for another centre. Not sure about names. Have heard rumblings about Detroit's Riley Sheahan, but not specific to the Penguins.

7. Vegas has 11 defencemen on one-way contracts. The Golden Knights are an ideal trade partner, but it's a bit of poker — other clubs might wait until waivers become a factor. Vegas had the hammer around the expansion draft and wielded it. Now, it's the reverse.

8. When I was a teenager, my father used to get really frustrated at me. He'd say, "You're really stubborn. It's your best and worst quality." (Sorry dad, nothing has changed.) Andreas Athanasiou is cut from similar cloth. Very determined, very rigid in his way. If anyone who is threatening to go overseas actually does it, he's my bet.

It's been reported Detroit is offering just under \$4 million (combined) on a two-year deal, but word is the one-year offer is significantly lower. What gives the Red Wings hope is that this has been out there for weeks, but he hasn't jumped. I wouldn't be shocked if he's heard from Team Canada. If he's in Russia, he's got a spot in South Korea.

9. I think Arizona is one of the teams that contacted Jaromir Jagr. In a recent Czech TV interview, he indicated that he didn't like the idea of not controlling his destiny (i.e. an in-season trade). Teams who have dealt with him in the past say that is very true. It's why no one would be surprised if he started the season overseas, played in the Olympics, then picked an NHL club. One GM who said he thought about it, then didn't contact Jagr, decided it didn't make sense for his team because the 1,900-point scorer wouldn't get much power play time.

10. It's grind time for the Boston Bruins and David Pastrnak. Brad Marchand did his teammate a favour on Monday, telling reporter Matt Kalman there is no need for the organization to worry about financial jealousy. "We'll be very happy for him with whatever he ends up getting," said the winger, who signed for \$6.125 million per season last fall.

Plugging Pastrnak's 20-year-old season into Hockey Reference's Play Index comes up with three 34-goal, 70-point 21st-century comparables: Ilya Kovalchuk, Alexander Ovechkin and Steven Stamkos. Pastrnak wasn't quite in the same stratosphere, seven goals and 17 points away from the closest of them, but that's nice company. Leon Draisaitl also flourished in Year 3, and is seven months older. Between that and the "McDavid bump," it's not hard to figure out the negotiating positions.

11. Some players are insecure about entering the last season of their contracts. It's clear Jack Eichel isn't one. Even if there is no extension at the start of the season, both sides know he is going to be a Buffalo Sabre for a long time. Eichel is relaxed, very confident about what he is going to do.

12. T.J. Oshie's quotes about wanting to stay in Washington are very similar to the ones last spring from James van Riemsdyk about Toronto. Chatting with Oshie last week, I wondered if his eight-year, \$46 million extension becomes a template for what the Maple Leafs try to make this



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Sept. 13, 2017

work. Van Riemsdyk is two years younger, and I'm not convinced they are eager to trade him.

13. No NHL home yet for Russian free agent Danis Zaripov. There are concerns about a 36-year-old who has never played in North America and doesn't speak English, but word is teams have been told that Zaripov isn't interested in holding them hostage. If he signs a contract and it doesn't work, he is prepared to walk away.

14. Montreal owner Geoff Molson mentioning John Tavares is a perfect illustration of the pressure felt by the Canadiens organization.

15. There will be at least one more Player Safety hire underneath George Parros, replacing Chris Pronger alongside Patrick Burke and Damian Echevarrieta. Last week, I mentioned Shane Doan as a possibility, but, if he joins the NHL (and there is interest from the league) it will likely be in a different role.

What is Parros looking for? "I think it's important to have different viewpoints. I look at positions and I look at skill level and the type of player, maybe even where they're from. I'd certainly like to have someone that's an offensive type of player, has a lot of points on the board, a long career obviously always helps. Someone that the people would consider skilled so they're not just saying, 'Oh George is here and he's going to judge it a certain way or whatever,' which I don't buy into. Perception's important and viewpoints are important."

You always look for connections. Parros played with Teemu Selanne, who would be a great fit. He didn't play with Paul Kariya, but I would love to see that. Kariya's maintained an arm's-length relationship with the NHL since his career came to a premature end. He's begun to do events with Anaheim, and it would be fantastic to have him more involved, especially as he enters the Hall of Fame. If Parros wants a different view into injuries and safety, Kariya — understated, but never shy with his opinions — could be excellent. Another name that fits the criteria? Jarome Iginla, assuming he doesn't play.

16. Parros indicated a dislike for certain retaliatory or intent-to-injure offences. "If you can tell that something was done on purpose and it has nothing to do with the play...whether it's stickwork into a guy's face or something like that; these non-hockey types of plays, these major incidents that don't happen too often...I'd like to come down harder on those." Examples? Two six-game suspensions: Duncan Keith's March 2016 ban for high-sticking Charlie Coyle and Gustav Nyquist's enforced rest last February for a similar shot to Jared Spurgeon.

17. The only idea of Parros's that received pushback (to me, anyways) was his desire to change behaviour along the boards. "The overwhelming majority of our injuries in this game, suspension or not, they happen in and around the boards. We need guys to understand that if they're going to be cutting back quick against the flow, last-minute turns, if they know someone's coming down on them, you need to brace yourself. Maybe you can't make that perfect play anymore...Maybe you protect yourself a little bit, maybe you have more of an idea of when you're going to get hit, if you're going to get, who that player might even be." One of the clips he has used to illustrate that was Radko Gudas on Jimmy Vesey, a hit that saw Gudas ejected from a game last October.

Even people who agreed that players shouldn't "turn" from defenders at the boards didn't like that it exonerated Gudas. "We're always going to protect guys if they're taken advantage of and they're in a vulnerable position and someone hits them from behind," Parros said. "We're going to take care of them. But if you put yourself into a vulnerable position at the last minute, there's not much we can do. We've got to take that into account. A guy's bearing down on you, has you lined up for a legal hit and all of a sudden you change your position last second, that's going to be tough. So we need to make sure guys understand this. We've got a whole presentation. It's tricky, but it's something we've seen a lot of. Education is a huge part of what we do...I didn't know that we do so much education, and we're going to try and do more of it."

Parros added he wanted to introduce this initiative at younger levels, through Hockey Canada and USA Hockey.

18. Best line about Parros? There were two people who didn't believe he would take the job, "because there is no way he's leaving Las Vegas for New York."

19. Anaheim's Ryan Getzlaf was outstanding in the post-season, saying it was the best he'd felt in almost a decade and "it showed on the ice." Some NBA stars (LeBron James among them) were rested last season due to the gruelling nature of the schedule. Basketball's physicality is

underrated, and hockey's is off the charts. Have Getzlaf and the Ducks talked about it?

"About a month ago, we did have that conversation," he answered. "We didn't dig into it by any means...just what are (Anaheim's) feelings, how the league looks at it. And it's something to look at for sure, with the length of the season and the way things are, a lot of those back-to-back games, they're hard on your body and you feel the effects later on...As the years have gone by, it's about looking at the big picture and understanding the ultimate goal. You look at the teams who are winning and what they have done, a lot of times they haven't had their lines the whole year."

Getzlaf pointed to the 2007 Stanley Cup champion Ducks, as Francois Beauchemin, Todd Marchant and Chris Pronger all missed time. "It allowed our teams to develop and to have trust with our younger guys. There's something to be said for doing stuff like that." As Getzlaf said, there is still plenty to be discussed, including how other clubs might feel about Anaheim not icing its best roster in playoff races or, very importantly, how the ticket-buying public would react. NBA commissioner Adam Silver took a proactive view, extending the 2017-18 season by seven days to ease wear-and-tear.

20. Entering the 2017 playoffs, Braden Holtby's post-season numbers were spectacular — a 1.87 goals-against average and .937 save percentage in 46 games. Then came Toronto, where he was beaten by several strange ones. Another NHL goalie called the Maple Leafs' goals "some of the weirdest" he'd ever seen.

There were reports Washington considered pulling Holtby and he admitted it bothered him. "(It was) completely bizarre, the bounces and things that were happening. Fortunately, we won, but the thing I've worked on is not letting it affect me in the next series, getting over that mental hurdle — the feeling of things not going your way. That was the most I've been challenged in my career in terms of uncontrollable things that just happen. It's good to go through because it will help our team in the future, and also myself. It was difficult."

21. The Washington players no doubt get tired of answering the same pre-season questions, but I loved listening to Oshie about it. "Maybe it's just the way I'm wired, but I get excited to be back in the challenge of ending the story, the disappointment. Obviously it's going to be a hard challenge. The league gets better and better, we have a tough division. But I see a lot of fun in the process, in finding a way to get over the hump. I guess I don't really know any other way. I'm not a guy who gets too stressed. I don't see how it would be fun living your life. Especially doing something that you love, why you would approach that in a negative way?"

Holtby was more businesslike, but didn't disagree. "The mentality and end goal don't change," he said. "Changes to our roster mean the approach might be different...The frustrating part is we are better than what we showed. We tried to make sure all year that didn't happen, sometimes it just does. It's been a long summer thinking about things, but that frustration can feed in the right direction."

22. Oshie will be 38 when his extension expires. Did he sign the last contract of his career? Not the way he thinks about it. "I understand that it seems like it's getting harder and harder for players to (play longer). I do realize the possibilities with my style of play and sometimes being a little reckless that your body could wear down. But I think I've set myself up with my training and how responsible I've gotten with nutrition and stuff off the ice. I haven't seen the light at the end of the tunnel. The worst thing you would ever hear is the Zamboni coming out and the driver opening up the doors. I'll stay out there as long as I can. They will have to kick me off."

23. Mark Scheifele with some great insight into Sidney Crosby and how that affects Scheifele's own approach. "Sid does it consistently. He makes the same play over-and-over again. He creates so many chances by being consistent for his linemates." What does "being consistent for your linemates" mean?

"Obviously Sid likes certain areas on the ice. He likes that back post, clearly guys know he's there. Through the neutral zone, he does certain things over and over. They know where he's going, they know his reads. That's what chemistry is. They know his reads, they know what he's thinking. Obviously, Sid is at a different level the way he thinks the game, but being consistent for everyone around you helps everyone be the best player that they can. When they get stuck in a situation it's not like, 'Where is everyone?' It's like, 'Sid's right there.'"



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Sept. 13, 2017

24. Johnny Gaudreau was in a great mood, until he was asked if he's re-watched last season's series loss to Anaheim. "I did that my first playoffs, last year not so much. I was frustrated with how it turned out. The first game in Anaheim, I had a chance to tie it with 30 seconds left." You could see him replaying it in his head as he discussed it. "I brought it to my backhand and all I had to do was lift it up...had an empty net. And (John) Gibson stuck his leg out and saved it. I just look back at it and it could have been a difference-maker."

What made it worse for Gaudreau is he liked the way Calgary was playing down the stretch. "I was excited to play the Ducks, we were finally going to win in Anaheim. Frustrating." Gaudreau added he expects to be better in the defensive zone. "I was not as good as I could be...I want to be on the ice in the last two-or-three minutes, a guy (the Flames) rely on."

25. One of my favourite interviews was with Drew Doughty in Sochi in 2014, where he admitted it bothered him he'd never won a Norris Trophy. (He got his first in 2016.) It's something I ask from time-to-time, if awards are a goal. Columbus defenceman Seth Jones admits he also thinks about the Norris. "I do. That's the goal. I think I have the capability to win one. I hope I'm just starting to grow into the player I'm going to be."

The Blue Jackets are all-in for 2017, and Jones said he understands the next level for him is being a difference-maker every single night. He believes the young players on the roster learned a valuable lesson in the first-round defeat to Pittsburgh. "We caught people off-guard last year. It was the tip of the iceberg for what we can do. But there's not a Crosby stopper, there's not a Malkin stopper. What they do is make the timely plays that are the momentum changers in a series. A lot of our guys had no playoff games. I had one series. What we saw is we have to be able to make the plays when needed under the pressure...In the big moment, that's where the best players come out, and hopefully we find ourselves in the situation, where, in the big moment, we come out on top."

26. Taylor Hall made three significant changes to his off-season preparation. First, he returned to the ice two months earlier than normal, in June instead of August. Second, "I wanted to become a better skater. I took power skating for the first time," working with the respected Dawn Braid, who has a relationship with both John Tavares and the Arizona Coyotes. Third, "I moved to Toronto this summer for the first time in my life, to skate with NHL guys." His peers included Tavares, Jason Spezza, Jeff Skinner and Sam Gagner.

Hall chose not to live downtown, going to a quieter area in the west end. "It was really easy to get to my gym. My dad trained me my whole life, taught a lot of speed, athletics. It was either Matt Nichol, Andy O'Brien or Gary Roberts. I went with Andy, and he helped me get a bit stronger, a bit more balanced."

27. Hall had a ton of praise for the Islanders' captain. "After skating with Tavares all summer... not that I didn't respect him before, but he's World Class. I always knew that, but his preparation, he's a professional, the stuff he does on the ice...It's fun to surround yourself with people like that because it just forces you to raise your game. Even though you're skating at a community rink at 11 o'clock on a Wednesday, you're still like, 'Okay this guy is working on his game and he's top 10 in the world, I should be there, too.'"

28. Jordan Eberle said he talked to Hall about going from the white-hot spotlight of Edmonton to a quieter locale. "He says it's a change, but a lot of it is for the good. I've been in Edmonton for so long, you get...maybe comfortable is the word. I think it's good to feel out of that."

29. Kevin Shattenkirk on the free-agency window: "There's more gamesmanship than you can prepare yourself for. Teams don't want to show their cards, and you don't want to do the same. Playing that game was kind of stressful...The craziest thing was, from the draft leading up (to July 1), I assumed, 'You're going to get all these phone calls.' And, Monday went and Tuesday went and no phone calls." No one called you? "No one called. Not having gone through this before, there was a little panic. Looking back on it, you understand what teams are trying to do. Make you sweat it out and call them."

It wasn't a secret that Shattenkirk wanted to play for the Rangers, but he had to bend to make it work. When did it hit him that his dream was real? Not until after his introductory media conference. "They let me keep the jersey, and I took it to my parents house. My dad came in, saw it and said, 'Wow, that's pretty cool.' We sat there and chatted about it...To see the emotions on their face, being able to give them that feeling and emotion really touched me."

30. Parker Gahagen made 32 saves for San Jose in a 7-4 rookie-game victory over Colorado Sunday night. He's an interesting story, caught in a bit of limbo after finishing his NCAA career at Army. There were rumours he was going to sign with the Sharks last spring, but uncertainty about his military status prevented anything official. Gahagen is attempting to be entered into the US Army World Class Athlete Program, which supports soldiers who are good enough to compete on the American Olympic Team. A major hangup is that usually means individual competitors (like Paul Chelimo, who won a silver medal in 5,000-metres at the 2016 Games), not team athletes. Gahagen is hoping to get the clearance, because he's on the US radar for February. He's a solid prospect, and the Sharks seem content to let it play out.

31. Covered a lot of the Capitals over the years, and became familiar with Jill Sorenson's work on CSN Mid-Atlantic. We didn't talk much, but I've always thought her approach was very professional. I'd turn on CSN's shows during playoff series to see if I'd missed anything, and you knew when her reports came on they'd be understated, but thorough. It's the business these days, but not having her on the beat is a loss.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 09.13.2017

1073606 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Analyzing five potential trade destinations for Matt Duchene

Rory Boylen

@RoryBoylen

September 11, 2017, 1:58 PM

What are you expecting to get from Matt Duchene if you trade for him?

A Calder Trophy finalist in his rookie season, Duchene's production has been all over the map in his eight-season career. Peaking as nearly a point-per-game player in 2012-13 and 2013-14 (43 points in 47 games and 70 in 71 respectively), his totals have tumbled since. For two years Duchene dipped into the 55-point range, totals that equate to his rookie production — notably he reached 30 goals in one of those seasons. In 2016-17 he put up 41 points for the worst mark of his career over a full schedule. So although the Avalanche probably should be looking to move him for some young assets or at least help on defence while Duchene is still two years away from unrestricted free agency, his value may be at the lowest point of his career.

The Avalanche had the worst season of any NHL team in the salary cap era, so the pressure is on to win any Duchene trade. The whiffed on the return for Ryan O'Reilly in 2015 and can't afford a similar result here. The reported asking price is high, which hasn't squared with how interested teams view Duchene fitting into their lineup.

"People look at him as a complementary No. 2 as opposed to a No. 1 cornerstone," Elliotte Friedman said on Prime Time Sports this summer.

Last week, trade rumours around Duchene ramped up again when he was absent from the team's pre-training camp, an informal skate that was in no way mandatory.

Nonetheless, since he was only one of two who wasn't there — and Nathan MacKinnon had a league media obligation in New York to attend — there has been follow-up speculation about whether or not Duchene will attend formal camp which opens on Thursday. BSN Denver reporter Adrian Dater asked the question to Duchene's agent Pat Brisson, who simply said "I don't have much to say at this point."

For Sakic's part, the Avalanche GM expects Duchene at camp since he's a player under contract.

"He's under contract and I expect him to be here on the 14th," Sakic said. "He doesn't have to be here until the 14th. Not everybody always come to camp early. It's not for me to (say), but I assume on the 14th, he'll be here."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Sept. 13, 2017

Throwing his trade value further into question is Duchene's contract, which doesn't come with an unreasonable cap hit at \$6 million, but the issue is term. The 26-year-old would head to any acquiring team just two years away from unrestricted free agency so he's not a very controllable asset.

So here we have a player who has under-performed with a short-term contract, and a team that has to come out of any trade as a no-doubt winner. There is no clear and easy path to a resolution here.

Who are the teams Duchene could still end up on? We take a crack and break down five of them:

New York Islanders

The Islanders may not exactly fall into the category of "contender" but they are a team that needs to have more of an interest in improving in the short-term. John Tavares is entering the final season of his contract before he'll become UFA eligible, and he'll want to see the team make positive strides before re-upping for the long haul. The Isles have made three playoff appearances and have won one series in his eight years with the team.

GM Garth Snow has already brought in Jordan Eberle, presumably to play on Tavares' wing. Ideally, the team would have done more over the summer, and after Snow picked up first- and second-round picks in the Travis Hamonic trade he has a couple valuable assets to move to help the right now. In this sense, Duchene could be a nice fit as a complementary piece on the Islanders playing No. 2 centre behind Tavares.

What could the Islanders offer: Remember, they already offered Hamonic and a first-rounder and were turned down.

Mathew Barzal is the easiest name to connect in a potential trade since he's the Islanders' best prospect. That, however, could be too rich for Snow considering the prolific junior scorer could crack the NHL roster this season. A more palatable trade option from Snow's side might be Brock Nelson, who filled the No. 2 centre role last season, scoring 20 goals and 45 points. Neither of these players fills Colorado's biggest need for a defenceman, though.

The last time the Islanders drafted a blueliner in the first round was Ryan Pulock 15th overall in 2013. Pulock will be 23 when the 2017-18 season starts and although he hasn't stuck in the NHL yet, he was eighth in AHL scoring at his position with 46 points in just 55 games. Still, Pulock isn't a home run pick up, so the first-rounders or more may have to come into play.

Los Angeles Kings

With a new GM in Rob Blake and a new coach (promoted from an assistant) in John Stevens, the Kings are trying to figure out why their dominant possession team has been in the bottom half of the league in goals two of the past three seasons.

While Duchene only had 18 goals in 2016-17, his 11.3 shooting percentage would have been behind only Jeff Carter and Tanner Pearson, the Kings' two highest goal scorers. On a team that has the puck more often than the Avs, Duchene could theoretically shoot the puck more and in turn, put more goals on the board.

The Kings would also do well to add more speed to the lineup and turn a little away from their heavy hockey style. Put Duchene with Tyler Toffoli, another player coming off a down season, and both players could work off each other to raise their totals.

And of course, Los Angeles is another destination where Duchene slides in as a No. 2, this time behind Anze Kopitar.

What could the Kings offer: As far as defencemen go, Los Angeles doesn't have a home run pickup for the Avs either. Derek Forbort was the last defenceman they took in Round 1 and that was all the way back in 2010. Forbort, 25, is just now coming off his first full season.

As far as 'D' prospects go, Kale Clague, a 2016 second-rounder, may be the best and certainly the most long-term play. Paul LaDue, 24, also got 22 games of NHL action in his first year out of NCAA hockey, but that's a low-end return for Duchene and would require some other significant parts.

The 11th overall pick from this year's draft, Gabe Vilardi, might have to be on the table for the Avs, and considering skating is the biggest knock on him and the Kings need to focus a bit more on speed right now, it's

not inconceivable. The biggest issue in any Kings deal is who the defenceman (men?) going to Colorado is.

If you wonder whether or not the Kings would be motivated to make a bold move for an instant boost instead of slowing down and guarding the future, consider Drew Doughty's recent comment about chasing Stanley Cups. He's two years out from unrestricted free agency.

The Blue Jackets surprised everyone with their 108-point season and they are now in a frame of mind where adding to win now is a priority. Soon enough, Cam Atkinson and Zach Werenski will be looking for big raises.

They were in the Ilya Kovalchuk sweepstakes before he decided to stay in Russia, and swapped 200-foot player Brandon Saad for the offensive upside of Artemi Panarin. Duchene is a target they're chasing as well.

"I think Columbus has been pretty aggressive," Friedman said on The Fan 960 in Calgary. "I think they're a team that would really like to do this. Columbus is all-in this year. But Colorado is saying, 'If we don't get our price, we're not going to do it.'"

The difference here is Duchene wouldn't be such a clear No. 2 in Columbus, where he'd be a more key player. Alexander Wennberg broke out with 59 points last season and was rewarded with a six-year extension, but it's not clear who's ceiling would be higher in a premium role.

Between Atkinson, Panarin, Josh Anderson, Nick Foligno, Boone Jenner and a fast-charging 22-year-old Oliver Bjorkstrand, there is a good amount of scoring punch on Columbus' wings — if they can add another top-six centre it would lock in a pretty quick lineup with lots of potential to keep the flow from 2016-17.

Early in the summer, all indications had the Blue Jackets pushing hard for Duchene, but more recently that interest may have cooled.

What could the Blue Jackets offer: Here's a case of a team that could give the Avalanche back an NHL defenceman in Ryan Murray. As poor as Colorado was last season, there is interesting talent still there such as Nathan MacKinnon, Gabriel Landeskog and Tyson Barrie. There is some interest to try and get better now.

Murray, 23, was the second overall pick from 2012 and might be a nice complement to the smaller, more offensively inclined Barrie on the back end. Murray is on the last year of his contract after which he'll become an RFA and is still three seasons away from being UFA eligible.

Based on the asking price buzz, the Avs wouldn't likely do a one-for-one here, so Columbus would have to be open for more. Maybe Colorado would be after one of those aforementioned wingers, with Bjorkstrand the youngest of them all and someone who could be a top-six winger as soon as this season. It really comes down to how aggressive the Blue Jackets will be versus how content they are with the pieces and development curves already in place.

Carolina Hurricanes

With a fully-stocked cupboard of defencemen, one of the most-connected teams to Duchene is the Carolina Hurricanes, who themselves have a need for scoring up front they've tried to address with depth pickups Marcus Kruger and Justin Williams this summer. They still don't have that game-breaker though.

The Canes figure to have the defencemen to offer up to the Avs and on this roster he would be a No. 1 pivot, which may not be the ideal place for him right now. Victor Rask had another pretty good 45-point season, but is not a lead guy — if the Hurricanes pick up Duchene, they'd be expecting him to get up to at least 60 again. Acquiring Duchene would either move Jordan Staal to the third line, Rask to the wing, or perhaps Rask is involved in the trade going the other way.

What could the Hurricanes offer: Jaccob Slavin and Brett Pesce are likely out of the question with their big extensions. What's interesting is that Noah Hanifin will get his post-ELC contract after this season, so would Carolina be open to moving him, or maybe even long-time leader Justin Faulk? If Carolina extends Hanifin, they might be just fine moving forward with the young blue line corps they have, and confident it gives them the leeway to move Faulk.

But, especially if they land Duchene, the Canes are going to be a team looking at making some progress right now, so a better fit in a trade here could be 19-year-old Jake Bean, who Carolina drafted 13th overall in



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Sept. 13, 2017

2016. Bean posted more than a point per game in the WHL last season in 43 games and is the kind of player Colorado could use in the pipeline. The Canes also have 2014 seventh overall pick Haydn Fleury coming off his first pro season in the AHL.

There's a lot to choose from here for the Avs, but the bigger question is how Duchene fits into Carolina's roster and what he'll bring for the price being asked. The fact he's two years away from being a UFA could also freak out a team that's already paying Staal \$6 million per for the long term, has committed big dollars to its prized defence corps, and also has Jeff Skinner hitting UFA status after 2018-19.

The Canadiens could still use a top line centre, although it seems as though Jonathan Drouin will be given a shot there. Alex Galchenyuk could still work his way back towards that role, but it seems less likely than ever he'll get there.

Enter Duchene, who would immediately fill the top job and add considerable speed and upside. There is some risk here, though, in that if Duchene doesn't recapture his 70-point ceiling ever, the Habs would have gone all-in for an underwhelming player.

After last season, former Avs assistant coach Tim Army said that Duchene just needed to "forget about hockey for a little while" following the nightmare season. But as a Montreal Canadian, that would be especially hard to do so any pressure Duchene would feel after a sub-par season would be magnified even more.

What could the Canadiens offer: It's not clear whether Montreal holds the necessary package anymore. Mikhail Sergachev was their blue chip defender, but he was used to land Drouin. Noah Juulsen may be the next up, but he's in a tier or two below Sergachev and not the can't-miss kind of player Colorado really needs to get in return.

If the Habs did get Duchene, you wonder if Galchenyuk would go the other way. Since the team seems intent on using him at wing instead of his natural centre, Montreal may have more of a use and interest in Duchene. Galchenyuk is signed for just one year longer than Duchene before he becomes UFA eligible, so the window wouldn't necessarily shorten for Montreal.

The Habs are clearly making a push for the Cup over the next couple years and if they feel Duchene gives them enough of a boost and is that much better of a fit than Galchenyuk, it could be worth considering. But we come back to Colorado's real need for a defenceman. The Habs' lack of depth in that position may preclude them from getting into this.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 09.13.2017

1073607 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Sedins' legacy extends to young Canucks twins helped develop

Iain MacIntyre

September 12, 2017, 8:04 PM

VANCOUVER — Two years ago, when Bo Horvat was getting crushed by a 27-game goalless drought early in his second season with the Vancouver Canucks, he was gliding alone and joyless around the ice in Philadelphia before a morning skate when Henrik Sedin skated alongside.

Over the course of a couple of laps, Sedin convinced Horvat that the second-year centre had not, in fact, forgotten how to play hockey, that all players, including Hank and his brother Daniel, struggle and that Horvat just needed to stay positive and everything would be OK.

Apparently it was, because Horvat, after surpassing the Sedins as the Canucks' best player last season, just signed a six-year, \$33-million contract and will likely succeed Henrik as captain when the twins retire.

"Over these last three years," Horvat said Tuesday, "just watching them every day and how they conduct themselves... on the ice and off the ice,

they're pros. For me to be a young guy coming in and just watching them every single day, and taking it all in like that has definitely grown my game."

Horvat will be part of the Sedins' legacy.

So will be winger Sven Baertschi.

"You don't have to do a whole lot; just watch them and learn," Baertschi said as the Canucks prepared to open training camp ahead of historic pre-season games next week in China against the Los Angeles Kings. "We're lucky to have them in our locker-room. It's a great time for us to step up as younger players and follow their lead and learn from them.

"They're two phenomenal people, not just hockey players but as guys. The way they care about our team is pretty amazing."

And this is why, despite the diminishing number of goals they generate, the Sedins are still invaluable to the Canucks.

Former Canucks coach Alain Vigneault elevated the Sedins to first-liners in 2006 and since then not one player has walked through the dressing room doors at Rogers Arena and not felt their presence, noticed the standard they set.

"That presence in the dressing room is there not because of their accomplishments, but because of the way they approach the game every day," Canucks director of player development Ryan Johnson, who arrived in Vancouver as a player in 2008, explained when asked about the twins' impact. "The way they approach the game is what you hope young players learn and understand."

Johnson played on five NHL teams and said the player nearest the Sedins in leadership was Chicago Blackhawks captain Jonathan Toews — not for what he said or accomplished on the ice, but for how he prepared and competed every day, practice or game.

"If the best players on your team approach a Monday practice — and you don't play until Friday — the way Danny and Hank do, everybody else on the team can surely do that," Johnson said. "It forces guys to get on board with them when they conduct themselves that way on a daily basis.

"Knowing them, it's not a surprise to me that they are concerned about what will happen to this team after they are gone. These (final) years for them are just as important to them as any other years in their career because they see the young group we have, know the influence they can have on them, and affect the culture on this team for a very long time."

The Sedins said Tuesday that they'll conduct self-assessments at the end of this season, when their identical four-year, \$28-million contracts expire, and decide if they'd like to play another year.

"We're only 36," Henrik said. "We're not 42. This is not a farewell tour."

Still, there is no guarantee of another season for the Sedins after this one. The twins turn 37 in two weeks and the Canucks, out of necessity following a prolonged run of excellent play and appalling player development, have gathered a pile of prospects who will be pushing for NHL jobs over the next few years.

"I'm excited to get a chance to learn from them," experienced forward Sam Gagner, signed as a free agent on July 1, said. "They definitely have an aura about them. I saw first-hand coming in here with Edmonton a bunch of times, and those were never fun nights playing against them. They're guys who have the respect of, really, everyone in the league the way they're able to prepare and the condition they're in."

"Anytime you have a question on something or are trying to figure something out, we go through Hank and Danny for stuff," centre Brandon Sutter said. "They took a lot of heat last year for not having their normal point totals. But in terms of the dressing room and their leadership on and off the ice, nothing has changed there."

It hasn't changed since before Manny Malhotra, now a Canucks assistant coach, turned up in Vancouver as a player in 2010.

"There's a level of accountability," Malhotra said. "You have to remember there was a process to their career as well. They didn't come in and instantly become 80-point guys in the NHL. They had to find their way and develop their professionalism. And when you look at their process, how they came in and where they got to, that's a great example to our younger players."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Sept. 13, 2017

"It's about trying to attain their level of professionalism, their level of consistency. Those guys exude it, they live it. And it's incumbent upon everyone else on the team to follow that positive lead."

As long as possible.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 09.13.2017

1073608 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Brendan Shanahan hesitant to buy into hype surrounding Leafs

Chris Johnston

@reporterchris

September 12, 2017, 5:24 PM

TORONTO – Brendan Shanahan was at a hospital fundraiser last week and heard one of the other dignitaries in attendance suggest that the Maple Leafs were finally in position to win a Stanley Cup during his lifetime.

That's when Toronto mayor John Tory stepped in.

"I corrected him and said that the Toronto Maple Leafs were going to win the Stanley Cup within the period of time that I am the mayor," Tory recalled Tuesday. "I hope I'll get a second term (in office), so that means you have five years.

"But I know – I know it's going to happen."

On this issue, the mayor seems to be aligned with a healthy majority of his electorate. This Leafs season is arriving with more optimism and excitement than any other in a decade, if not longer.

It's a strange spot for Shanahan, who started from the bottom and is suddenly here.

The team president is paid not to stray from the process. It's been less than 30 months since he embarked on a patient teardown project that became known as the "Shanaplan." He saw the same promise as everyone else last season, but seems to have interpreted it a little differently than many around him.

"I'm a little hesitant," said Shanahan. "At the end of the day we got into the playoffs in our 81st game, we didn't get past the first round and yet still there was a lot of happiness and joy and optimism about where we can go.

"You know, you have to do it, and we understand that there's a lot of work ahead of us."

It could make for a strange season ahead. Success rarely comes without a few bumps along the way, and there weren't many to speak of for Auston Matthews and Co. during their first spin around the NHL.

The Leafs will be turned over even more to that young core in the weeks ahead – both literally and figuratively – with the organization unveiling plans for a Dec. 19 meeting against Carolina dubbed the "Next Century Game."

It will be played at 2 p.m. ET on a Tuesday afternoon – exactly 100 years from the debut of the Toronto Arenas. Replicas of the original blue sweaters are slated to be worn by the home side.

The occasion will also serve as an opportunity to turn the page on the organization's centennial season and place the focus back on a group expected to deliver a bright future. As Shanahan and Tory spoke about the game in front of a group of schoolkids on Tuesday afternoon, the mayor remarked: "We've got a good feeling about the team."

This is the new reality for a group scheduled to report for medicals on Thursday morning.

You can be sure the players have heard the same types of things as Shanahan these last few weeks. Most of them have been back in the city for a couple weeks at least now and are pretty plugged in on social media.

The expectations themselves aren't the issue as much as what happens at points where things veer off-course. When the excitement is replaced by frustration. When the storylines turn negative.

As much as things have changed, this remains an organization that hasn't won a playoff series since 2004 or a Stanley Cup since 1967. In the eyes of Shanahan, they're still trying to win back a lost generation of fans.

"Now there's thousands of channels, kids have choices (and) different ways to watch games," he said. "And so there's a generation of young hockey fans that maybe are wearing Penguin hats or Chicago Blackhawks hats or L.A. Kings hats and that wouldn't have happened in Toronto a couple decades ago. You have to earn that back and I think that's something our team and our players are committed to doing.

"It's not something that we're entitled to; it's something that we want to earn back. That love and passion from this city."

They began to see some overwhelmingly positive returns during a first-round series with Washington last spring. Thousands packed Maple Leaf Square outside Air Canada Centre and created a frenzied atmosphere around three home dates against the Capitals.

That's the sort of thing Shanahan had in mind back in April 2015 when he spoke of building a team full of players willing to embrace the positive aspects of being here.

"I think that our fans like our players and I think our players like our fans," said Shanahan. "(The players) enjoy being Maple Leafs, they love what's happening in the city. But they're also smart enough to know – which is incredible because it's still a very young, inexperienced team – they seem to understand that they are just getting started."

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 09.13.2017

1073609 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Shanahan: Babcock was big motivator in Marleau signing with Leafs

Emily Sadler

@EmmySadler

September 12, 2017, 7:40 PM

The Toronto Maple Leafs surprised a lot of people last season when they put together an impressive campaign to grab hold of a playoff berth.

Then came another surprise in the off-season, when the team landed one of the biggest free agents in Patrick Marleau.

Signing the veteran out of San Jose to a three-year, \$18.75-million deal signalled a shift in the free-agency landscape and sent a message to players around the league that Toronto is shaping up to be a desirable destination to play.

"I think that it excited our players — and when I say our young players, they're all younger than Patrick, so it excited our veteran guys who are Nazem [Kadri] and Morgan [Rielly] and Jake [Gardiner], it excited them as well that a player of his calibre would choose Toronto and say 'I want to come be a part of this,'" Leafs president Brendan Shanahan said during an appearance on Sportsnet 590 The FAN. "I give the players the credit. It doesn't matter at this point what I say or even [what Leafs general manager Lou Lamoriello] says — the biggest influence that we have and the biggest attraction that we have to other players are the players in the dressing room and on the ice."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Sept. 13, 2017

"They did a great job last year and they put the work in and they looked like they were enjoying it. So I think that's how you start to change the perception."

Marleau, 37, won't be the only new veteran in the locker-room this season. The Leafs also signed Dominic Moore and Ron Hainsey (fresh off a Stanley Cup victory with the Penguins) to ensure the youthful team has some extra wisdom to guide it through the much-anticipated sophomore season.

In the case of Marleau, it also came down to the coach.

"I think that, in talking to Patrick afterwards, I think that Mike Babcock was a real motivating force for him to come here as well," said Shanahan. "He's had a lot of success with him at Olympics, and Mike was very enthusiastic about what he has thought would be a real good role for Patrick. And so I think that that was probably it, more than anything, and the comfort with Mike and just the young players and the direction of the team."

Babcock and Marleau won consecutive Olympic gold medals together in 2010 and 2014. The excitement goes both ways, as Babcock expressed his enthusiasm about bringing in the veteran back when the signing was made official.

"We think it's an unbelievable situation because of the skill level we have already and the youth we have. I think it's going to be the fountain of youth for him," Babcock told NHL.com's Nick Cotsonika back in July. "He's going to arrive here and be energized by all these kids. He won't even believe how young they are, for crying out loud."

Shanahan, of course, knows first-hand what it's like to play under the guidance of Babcock from his time in Detroit.

"Mike is the kind of guy, regardless of whether we win or lose the night before... he shakes whatever happened the night before off and he shows up the next morning with this sort of brand new attitude that today is the most important day in your life," Shanahan said. "And that's really an amazing gift that he has as a coach."

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 09.13.2017

1073610 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Marc-Andre Fleury would have waived no-trade for the Flames

Eric Francis

@EricFrancis

September 12, 2017, 9:58 AM

NEW YORK – Marc-Andre Fleury can admit now he was preparing for the possibility of becoming a Calgary Flame.

He'll even go as far as to say that had Pittsburgh Penguins GM Jim Rutherford crafted a deal to send Fleury to the Flames at last season's trade deadline, the 32-year-old goaltender would likely have waived the no-trade clause he has in his contract.

"I think so," said Fleury while in New York for league meetings.

"I think Calgary is a great town and a great hockey team too. I think they'll be very good again this year. But here I am."

In Vegas.

"I heard all the rumours – Winnipeg, Calgary and Vegas," said Fleury of the trade deadline talk.

"I didn't know what was going to happen. At the trade deadline I couldn't sleep that night, wondering, 'where am I going?'"

The longtime Penguins goalie had informed Rutherford he wanted to stay in Pittsburgh for the remainder of the season.

However, his limited no-trade clause kept the door open for Rutherford to peddle him.

Fleury knew he could be asked to go to a team he didn't have listed, and shrugged off such parameters as if to say they could easily be overcome if a deal was put in place and management wanted him to move on.

"(On deadline day) Mr. Rutherford said, 'go take a nap, you're not going anywhere,'" said Fleury, flashing the grin that will be plastered all over Vegas as their cornerstone player.

"I'm fine with the decision."

Fact is, while many saw Fleury as a logical fit for the Flames in the off-season, the club was happy with a surging Brian Elliott at the trade deadline and weren't embroiled in serious trade talks with the Penguins at the time.

It was only after Elliott's playoff performance the Flames became a logical fit for Fleury. By that time it had essentially been predetermined Fleury was Vegas bound, as per an agreement between the Pens and the Golden Knights.

Given the reality the Penguins would be using Matt Murray as their netminder this year and would risk losing Fleury in the Vegas expansion draft, did the veteran figure the odds favoured him to become a Golden Knight?

"I kind of knew I was coming here," he said.

"I didn't want to just leave midway through the season. I thought we had a great team in Pittsburgh again and the team was fine with the cap.

"I thought, it's another shot at winning and I'd rather leave at the end of the season than midway. I've been there 14 years and I wanted to make it right. It was a big decision."

The right one too, given the fact his last time on skates as a Penguin he skated around Bridgestone Arena in Nashville hoisting his third Stanley Cup.

Asked if he was comfortable being the ambassador and face of the Vegas franchise, the soft-spoken first pick overall in 2003 chuckled.

"Usually Sid does all that stuff – maybe I should ask him," laughed Fleury.

"It's not something I asked for or something I even had to think about.

"I just want to play the game. I love this game still. I want to share my passion with the kids around town and teach them hockey. I want to try to help grow the game in that area, but my focus will be the team and winning games.

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.

"It's just another good challenge. I don't think I'm the most vocal guy, but I can show how to be a professional on and off the ice and how to act. I think we have a good group of veterans who can lead all together."

Fleury moved into his Vegas home earlier this month and said he's already being recognized.

"It's all so crazy because you wouldn't expect much hockey knowledge but the Uber drivers, the movers and the car rental guy all wanted to talk about the team," he said.

"They're excited about it."

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 09.13.2017

1073611 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Who is Travis Dermott and can he crack the Maple Leafs' roster?

Rory Boylen



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Sept. 13, 2017

@RoryBoylen

September 12, 2017, 1:24 PM

At Toronto Maple Leafs rookie camp over the weekend, most fans wanted to get a close look at Timothy Liljegren, their steal of a first-round pick. But another slightly older defenceman made his first pitch for a roster spot.

Travis Dermott, 20, the most NHL-ready blue line prospect in the Leafs' system, generated some buzz in Leaf Land over the weekend. He wasn't available for the start of rookie camp because of an illness, but Dermott's showing against the Ottawa Senators, a 4-3 loss in which Toronto blew a three-goal lead, had everyone talking.

"You look at the lineup and you say 'OK, where are the positions that are open and is there someone in these rookie camps that can fill that spot?'" Jeff Marek explained on the Jeff Blair Show.

"When you start to slot players, assuming everyone's going to stay healthy, you really say, 'Well, there's only one position up for grabs and it's bottom pairing defenceman.' Is that the place where Travis Dermott, with a good rookie camp and then a good main camp, can he distinguish himself and grab that position?"

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

After adding a few high-end rookies in Auston Matthews, Mitchell Marner and William Nylander to last year's lineup, the Leafs won't come into 2017-18 with that many first-timers again. Even if Dermott does crack the opening night roster, he won't come with the same rich pedigree and Toronto fans likely aren't looking at another Calder Trophy candidate.

So where did Dermott come from and what kind of game would he bring to the Leafs? A second-rounder (34th overall) in 2015, Dermott played on two Connor McDavid Erie Otters teams and one with current Leafs teammate Connor Brown. His point-per-game averages in junior consistently rose year over year. In his first pro season with the Marlies in 2016-17, Dermott put up a solid 24 points in 59 games, a year interrupted by a late-October injury and tested by a more physical and mature league.

Dermott is strong for his listed five-foot-11, 207-pound frame as Senators prospect Gabriel Gagne found out when he was on the wrong side of a hip check at the rookie tournament — the kind of hit Dermott's thrown a couple of times in his young career. In 2016, Dermott was suspended five games for a head check on Owen Tippett in the OHL — he can bring that kind of edge to his game, but with a high of 65 penalty minutes in junior, he's not a liability or a regular topic for league disciplinary committees.

Dermott has shown he has the strength to compete, but what about the skill? Not to worry there either. He may not have the offensive upside to be a top-pair defender, but Dermott is an excellent skater and when you have that attribute and the smarts to use it efficiently, there's a better-than-average chance you can reach the NHL.

"He has a lot of great abilities and assets that allow him to play the way the Maple Leafs want to play and the way the NHL is going in terms of his ability to skate that helps him offensively and defensively," Marlies head coach Sheldon Keefe said on Sportsnet 590 The Fan. "He's really good at breaking the puck out and getting things moving out of his own zone so he's got a lot of positive things going, but he's still a very young player and it's a deep group. So I think any player knows what they're in for, it's up to him to go in and earn his way."

In May, Lamoriello talked about "one (Marlies defenceman) in particular" they were looking at to make the 2017-18 roster. There was no confusing he was talking about Dermott, so when a player gets that kind of mention from the legendary GM there's something worth watching.

But even with that praise in his pocket, if Dermott is going to make the Maple Leafs he's going to have to beat out the likes of Calle Rosen and Andreas Borgman, a pair of early-20s blue-liners in their first North American seasons but with pro experience in Sweden. Left-shot Martin Marincin is still in consideration as a 6-7 option, but Dermott (also a left shot) has the higher ceiling and could be the safer pick.

Rookie camp aside, Dermott still needs to have a strong main camp, which opens later this week. There he will compete against established players and the defenders he's in direct competition with. At the very least, he'd be a candidate for an early call-up when the first injury hits. It wouldn't be a knock on Dermott if he's sent back to the AHL to start the season, because his role would expand and confidence grow. It's not often a player's development is ruined by being cautious and bringing him along slowly.

Dermott's personal goal is clear, but there's almost nothing for him to lose at this year's training camp.

"With any player you try to make sure they remain focused on what they can control," Keefe said. "And in any player's case that's how you prepare off the ice; how you take care of yourself, how you work in the gym, how you work in practice, how you pay attention in meetings, and how you go out and execute those are the things you can control and anything else is outside of your ability to make any change. So you focus on that and your ability should speak for itself and that's the road Travis has taken and we encourage all our players to take."

"If you're good enough, good things end up happening."

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 09.13.2017

1073612 Websites

TSN.CA / Shanahan eyes more work ahead for Leafs amid hype

By Kristen Shilton

TORONTO — How much can change for an NHL team in less than two seasons? If you're the Toronto Maple Leafs, quite a lot.

Less than 18 months ago, the Maple Leafs finished dead-last in the NHL standings, the culmination of many first steps on the path of what was predicted to be a painful rebuild.

Fast-forward to Tuesday, and Toronto Mayor John Tory is publicly proclaiming at the Leafs' unveiling of their Next Century Game (Dec. 19) plans that he expected Toronto to win a Stanley Cup while he was still in office — although he smartly added the caveat, "I hope to get a second term."

That would push the Leafs' window out to five years, and with hope springing more eternal than ever after their success last season, few would balk at Tory's optimism. With weeks to go until a new season begins, hype is at an all-time high for the club helmed by head coach Mike Babcock, general manager Lou Lamoriello and President and Alternate Governor Brendan Shanahan — they just have no interest in feeding it further.

"You can't be a champion in any sport unless you know how to deal with expectations and pressure. I think we've got a lot of people that embrace that," Shanahan said Tuesday. "Mike keeps [the players] grounded each and every day they go on the ice; they know what their job is."

"Optimism is certainly a nice thing, but I think for the people who are with the team — our players and our management — we're focused on all the little things we have to do...we know how much work still has to go into this."

With training camp opening later this week, and the preseason beginning Monday, the Leafs' quest to continue writing a new chapter in their franchise history comes right on the heels of their Centennial Season. Shanahan was at MLSE Launch Pad Tuesday with Tory and representatives from Scotiabank to talk about what the team has planned to continue celebrating the more storied points of its history.

That begins with the Next Century Game honouring the Toronto Arenas on Dec. 19, the very day the Arenas played the franchise's first ever game exactly 100 years ago. Just like they did with the St. Pat's game last March, the Leafs will wear commemorative jerseys to mark the occasion.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Sept. 13, 2017

The matchup against the Carolina Hurricanes will be a Tuesday afternoon (2 p.m.) puck drop, so the Leafs are hoping as many students and pre-schoolers as possible will be able to attend. They're encouraging anyone who can't use their ticket to the game to either give it to a kid, or donate it back to the team so they can distribute it to a youngster.

In the ever-changing sports landscape, Shanahan knows continued support of the Leafs by the next wave of fans is anything but guaranteed.

"It's apparent there are other choices nowadays," Shanahan said. "Now there's a generation of hockey fans that are maybe wearing [Pittsburgh] Penguins hats or Chicago Blackhawks hats or L.A. Kings hats and that wouldn't have happened in Toronto a couple decades ago. You have to earn that back. I think that's something our team and our players are committed to doing; it's not something we're entitled to. It's something they want to earn back, that love and passion from this city."

A playoff run at the end of a season that already saw the emphatic emergence of rookies Auston Matthews, Mitch Marner and William Nylander was a good step towards rebuilding a relationship with fans. The Leafs' front office pledged to grow from within, even if it took more time, and Shanahan at least isn't prepared to pat himself on the back yet just for their five-year "Shanaplan" being seemingly ahead of schedule.

"At the end of the day, we got into the playoffs in our 81st game, we didn't get past the first round," he said, "yet there was still a lot of happiness and joy and optimism about where we can go. But we have to do it. We're pleased with the work the players have put in, our coaching staff and our management have been phenomenal, very dedicated. [But our players] are also smart enough to know – which is incredible because it's still a very young, inexperienced team – they seem to understand that they are just getting started."

To that end, Shanahan was adamant the addition of 37-year-old forward Patrick Marleau in the off-season wasn't management's way of sending a message to players about an expectation to win it all in the next couple of years. Calling Marleau "an excellent hockey player," Shanahan also reiterated he's a "great ambassador" for the team's young players, who may not have an official captain among them for the second straight season.

What remains the top priority for the Leafs' brass is building a franchise that can not only attain success, but sustain it for a long period.

"For us, it's always going to be about having as many leaders as possible, and when Mike and Lou and our staff decide that it's time and that it's the right move, they'll [name a captain]," Shanahan said. "But, for me, there are more important things that are going into the process. What I like about our team is just how it seems they really like each other, they really support each other and a lot of them in different ways (are) showing leadership."

TSN.CA LOADED: 09.13.2017

1073613 Websites

TSN.CA / Scheifele: We need to make the playoffs

By Frank Seravalli

The NHL's annual preseason media tour in New York is nicknamed the "car wash," because it's a steady lineup of stars moving from one room to the next at league headquarters answering questions.

The questions range from silly to serious. One favourite: "When was the last time you cried?"

Winnipeg Jets centre Mark Scheifele was not asked that question, but he wasn't all business in his wide-ranging chat with TSN and ESPN last week following his breakout season:

Q: If you were Commissioner Bettman and you could make one rule change to better the game, what would it be?

Scheifele: "Go to the Olympics, I would say. I know I was definitely disappointed with the news last year about the Olympics."

Q: Why are the Olympics so important to you?

Scheifele: "It's like the next best thing. We all dream of winning the Stanley Cup, but right there is winning a gold medal, playing for Team Canada in the Olympics. It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I think when you have even the slightest chance of making the team you want to have that opportunity to play."

Q: Coming off last season, there has been a significant increase in expectations in Winnipeg. Do you sense that?

Scheifele: "I mean, we scored a lot of goals last year. With the buzz around [Patrik] Laine, a kid like [Nik] Ehlers, then we make pickups like [Steve] Mason and [Dmitry] Kulikov. We have a little bit of buzz around us, maybe a lot more in Winnipeg than around the hockey world, but we all feel those expectations every year."

We know that we've got to make the playoffs. It's not we hope to make the playoffs; we need to make the playoffs. I know I want to be in the playoffs. I want to go on a long run. There's nothing more fun than winning. But I think we're all feeling that pressure to do some big things this year."

Q: What do you think held the Jets back last year?

Scheifele: "Our whole team just didn't click. One game we'd be great defensively, but we couldn't score. The next game we'd score, but we'd be terrible defensively. We have to be consistent each and every night."

We do have the firepower to score. We have the horses on the back end, and we've got good goaltending that's going to keep the puck out of the net. That's a big thing for us – just finding that consistency together. Not half the time, all the time. Every game we have to know what we're getting out of each other."

It's an exciting time for us. Hopefully we start to make some more waves, start to make the playoffs and make the Stanley Cup. Hopefully we're right up there."

Q: What's it like having a 19-year-old celebrity in your dressing room?

Scheifele: "We always give it to him; tell him he's a god in Finland."

Q: Tuukka Rask was just here and he said Laine and Teemu Selanne are the two biggest names back home. He's almost like Teemu Jr.

Scheifele: "Honestly, it's crazy though. We don't think of it because we're in Canada and we don't see a lot of it, but this year with the media attention he had and the stardom he has, it is crazy. There was Finnish media there every day."

I was like, 'Give this guy a break, he's 18 years old. Let's get him a day off.'"

Q: If we didn't know Laine, how would you describe him?

Scheifele: "He's pretty quiet, actually. He's a pretty humble guy. Pretty soft spoken. He's not talking your ear off, that's for sure. I know in the media he got a [reputation] for being a little too confident, but he's literally the opposite if you were to talk to him outside of the rink."

Q: Do you think any of that "confidence" is a language barrier?

Scheifele: "A little bit, but I think he also knows he is good. He's a really talented hockey player. If he gets asked a question, he is going to answer it honestly. But if you talk to him off the ice, he's humble. He wants to do the best for his linemates. He wants the best for everyone. It's not, 'I'm the best. I'm the greatest.' It's something that before I met him I probably never would have thought, listening to the media interviews before the draft. The humility and quietness that comes with him was a little bit of a shock."

Q: How do you pass time on the plane?

Scheifele: "I watch shows and movies. I either sit with [Julian] Melchiori or [Michael] Hutchinson, which is tough because I don't know if either of them will be there this year. I might need to find new buddies. We'll rent a movie or buy a movie or show. I have a splitter so we can both put our headphones in. I watched The OC last year with Hutch. Great show."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Sept. 13, 2017

With Melchiori, we'd talk the night before and figure out what movie we should watch. We usually pick stupid comedies, but I never saw Inception before this year. I was like, 'This is awesome.' Mind blown.

It's a good way to decompress. I don't like to think a lot. On the plane, it's like the one time you're not on your phone. You can watch a mindless show or good movie and relax."

Q: What do you know about Steve Mason?

Scheifele: "Calder Trophy winner. Good goalie. Obviously a little different style [Mason catches with his right hand], though we were kind of used to it with Hutch a little bit. We all know he is a solid goaltender and we're hoping that he continues to progress his game. I read in some interviews he said he's feeling the best he's ever felt in his career. Hopefully he's a good fit with our team and our system."

Q: What's the feeling going into the season with a new face in net? Would it be nice to not have to answer questions about goaltending anymore?

Scheifele: "I think excitement. We know we have a solidified NHL goaltender. There were always questions: Is it a young guy? Is it Hellebuyck or Hutch? Is it Pav [Ondrej Pavelec]? Obviously, Hellebuyck is an unbelievable goaltender and he's only getting better because he's young - goalies don't reach their peak until a little bit later. He can come in and take the starting job. But I think it's always comforting when you have a veteran, solidified goaltender in net."

Q: You've made consecutive jumps of 15, 12 and last year 21 points - netting a career-high 82 points last year. What's next? How do you improve on an already good year?

Scheifele: "Everything I worked on this summer. I had a pretty good plan in mind of things I needed to work on. I'm a pretty hard-working guy. I don't want to just be seventh in the league in scoring; I want to be at the top. That's something I can push for, whether it's in the gym or on the ice. No matter what it is, I want to be the best. I try to work harder than any other guy in the league. It's a tough thing to do but you've got to make some sacrifices to do that. I'm definitely willing to put them in."

TSN.CA LOADED: 09.13.2017

1073614 Websites

TSN.CA / Welcome to a new age of Canadian hockey optimism

By Frank Seravalli

The exercise was simple in nature, but proved difficult in practice. We asked five stars at this week's NHL-NHLPA Player Media Tour to anonymously rank the seven Canadian teams in projected order of finish for the upcoming season.

Three had skin in the game. Two did not. They answered honestly anyway, some not picking their own team as No. 1.

The result: four different first-place predictions. The only common thread was that all five players picked the Vancouver Canucks to finish seventh.

"Jeez, it's tough. It's a tough question," Nathan MacKinnon said. "It sounds funny, but I think they're all kind of equal. Every team has their own star. I can't believe it was only two years ago [that] all seven missed the playoffs."

Yet, here we are, from Canada's Lotto 7 to the brink of the next golden age of Canadian hockey in the NHL.

"It looks like it," Mark Scheifele said. "It's an exciting time for us."

"It is," Jonathan Drouin concurred. "The Canadian teams are good. All around the league there are good players, but the Canadians - there are great players on every team."

Think about it: When was the last time you could go into a season saying it's not inconceivable for three of the four conference finalists to be

Canadian? It's never happened, and the last all-Canadian Stanley Cup matchup was the Flames versus the Canadiens in 1989.

Thank the Lord (Stanley) for ping pong balls and prodigious young talent.

Connor McDavid wants to see some silverware before he's willing to put such a lofty title on this next handful of years. That the brake pumping is coming from the player who said again Wednesday he's not the best hockey player in the world maybe shouldn't be all that surprising.

"It's tough to call it the golden age at all," McDavid said Wednesday. "I think back to the Oiler era, the big rivalries with Calgary and Winnipeg. Hard to say. But there's a lot of talent in the Canadian cities."

McDavid isn't wrong though: 2018 will in fact mark 25 years since Stanley last resided in his home and native land.

So, this season may not yet be the dawn of the next golden age, but it is definitely the golden age of Canadian optimism.

"It will be fun to watch," McDavid said. "Look at the Battle of Alberta. It's definitely picked up, and Calgary added a bunch of new pieces. It will definitely be a good test for us."

The reasons for optimism are almost boundless. Consider that arguably the best player at all three positions calls Canada home: Carey Price, Erik Karlsson and McDavid.

Canada has the arguably best one-two scoring punch (McDavid and Leon Draisaitl), the best blueline (Calgary), the best blossoming star (Auston Matthews) and maybe even the best pure goal scorer (Patrik Laine) in the league. It might even have the best lottery odds (Canucks).

Perhaps the biggest reason for a sunny outlook is that the cores of the Canadian-based teams are mostly all between the ages of 20-24. They're probably going to be good for a while.

One player (from an American team) in an anonymous ESPN.com poll projected Matthews will be the best player in the NHL within the next four years, surpassing McDavid. The Maple Leafs received multiple votes as a team "ready to surprise," as if they didn't surprise enough last year.

In two short years, the dynamic has changed dramatically in most divisions.

"You're not looking at the Kings and Ducks being No. 1 or No. 2 anymore," Johnny Gaudreau said of the Pacific. "It's Calgary and Edmonton, hopefully. You see the Canadian teams, the playoffs and the pushes they're making. It's great for the sport."

Even in a city like Winnipeg, one of two Canadian teams to miss the postseason last spring, the optimism is off the charts. The Jets had two players inside the Top 12 in league scoring - and that didn't include Laine or Nik Ehlers, who are knocking at that door.

"I don't want to just be No. 7 in scoring," Scheifele said. "I want to be at the top."

The Winnipeg centre said the Jets are "right up there."

"We have some buzz around us - maybe a lot more in Winnipeg than around the hockey world. I think we're all feeling that pressure to do some big things this year," Scheifele said. "We know that we've got to make the playoffs. It's not that we hope to make the playoffs; we need to make the playoffs."

If the Jets can do that, it is not unreasonable to imagine the Stanley Cup bracket to be filled out with six Canadian teams among the 16 playing for the prize.

Any myriad of things can happen over a 1,230-game slog that lasts six months with 31 teams logging nearly 1.4 million miles in the air. But the future maybe hasn't looked this bright since the Stanley Cup stayed in Canada consecutively from 1984 through 1990.

"It's exciting," former Oiler Jordan Eberle said. "As a Canadian, there's definitely a lot of excitement around the possibility of bringing the Cup to Canada. It's just good for hockey that Canadian teams are starting to be good again."

TSN.CA LOADED: 09.13.2017



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Sept. 13, 2017

1073615 Websites

USA TODAY / NHL players survey: 21 of 31 say Quebec City should be next for expansion

Kevin Allen, USA TODAY Sports Published 3:39 p.m. ET Sept. 11, 2017 | Updated 8:20 p.m. ET Sept. 11, 2017

USA TODAY Sports polled 31 high-profile players at the NHL/NHL Players' Association media tour and 21 (67.7%) chose Quebec as the venue the league should next embrace.

Seattle finished second in the survey with nine votes, and Houston totaled one vote.

Previously Quebec had been the home to the NHL's Quebec Nordiques (1979-95) before the franchise was sold and moved to Colorado. The NHL economic scheme is far different today, and it is presumed a new Quebec franchise would have a much easier time being a financial success.

The lure of Seattle is that it would be a natural fit in a Western Conference that currently only has 15 teams after the addition of the expansion Vegas Golden Knights, who are set to play their first season. The Eastern Conference has 16 teams.

Other survey results:

► More than 90% of players polled said they believe that NHL players' right to compete in the Olympics should be included in the next collective bargaining agreement (CBA).

Twenty-eight of the 31 players vote "yes" on that question. One voted "no," and two were undecided. One of the undecideds said it would be dependent upon what players would have to give up to achieve Olympic participation.

► With NHL players unable to compete in the 2018 Olympics, players involved in the survey made Russia the slight favorite to win the gold in South Korea.

But our tally suggests players believe it is a wide open tournament. Only 12 (38.7%) chose Russia, 10 picked Canada and seven took the United States. Finland and Switzerland also received a vote.

► Players also made it clear that they believe there is parity in the NHL. They were asked to pick a team flying under the radar that could win the Stanley Cup, and they voted for 14 different teams.

The Stars were the top choice with five votes. The Columbus Blue Jackets, Edmonton Oilers and Toronto Maple Leafs had four votes each and Nashville Predators had three. The Carolina Hurricanes and Tampa Bay Lightning received two votes apiece, while the Boston Bruins, Ottawa Senators, Los Angeles Kings, San Jose Sharks, Minnesota Wild, Calgary Flames and Winnipeg Jets had one vote each.

Players were not allowed to select their own team as the answer to this question.

The 31 players polled came from 28 different NHL teams.

USA TODAY LOADED: 09.13.2017

1073616 Websites

USA Today / Tony Robbins shines a light on sports psychology and athletes listen

Martin Rogers, USA TODAY Sports

NEWARK — At the home of the New Jersey Devils, the crowd is on its feet, jumping and cheering, whooping with delight. The Jumbotron is blasting out the action. Cheerleaders are dancing. It feels like Game 7 is about to start.

But the Prudential Center is not hosting a sporting event. The main attraction on a Thursday at lunchtime is not an athlete, even though he is built like one.

He is Tony Robbins, venerable life coach and strategist, whose lessons on using the power of the mind and positive thought have earned him an army of disciples and turned his business into a multimillion-dollar operation.

Robbins' followers include salespeople, real estate agents and business leaders. But for more than 30 years, his roster has also featured many of the sports world's most successful athletes and coaches.

Tony Robbins believes there are certain traits that all elite athletes have in common.

Pat Riley. Andre Agassi. Michael Jordan. Wayne Gretzky. Chuck Liddell. Serena Williams. Tom Brady. And now Golden State Warriors owner Peter Guber, coach Steve Kerr and star forward Draymond Green.

Robbins' contributions to the Warriors, Riley's Miami Heat and Rick Carlisle's Dallas Mavericks have earned him more than testimonials. The man with a wildly popular Netflix documentary (I Am Not Your Guru), a multitude of behavioral strategy products and 3 million Twitter followers is also the owner of three NBA championship rings.

"When I started producing results in the sports environment, it was not only fun and fulfilling, but it is also relatively easy to demonstrate the results," Robbins says in a thousand-word-a-minute booming voice. "And when you get results you have a whole community that's interested. Showing results in sports has helped me reach more business people. It's helped me reach the general population."

On this day, he is reaching thousands of people who have paid four-figure ticket fees to attend his four-day seminar Unleash The Power Within. During the first night, as midnight approaches, his flock strides outside and fearlessly crosses a fiery coal pit. Young and old, they scream unabashed with triumph upon its completion, then skip back inside the arena, emboldened.

Robbins is all about changing behavior, building mental memory. Sometimes improvement clicks instantly; sometimes it takes repetition.

"I turned (Agassi) around, and he won every weekend, four weekends in a row," Robbins says of one of his early successes with an athlete from the 1990s. "Agassi gave me unbelievable credit for his return back to No. 1, maybe too much credit, maybe not. When I started doing that, it actually reached people that thought I was just some weirdo."

Indeed sports has played a critical role in transforming Robbins from "the infomercial guy" to a high-energy inspirational life coach who appeals to the mainstream.

"He picked out five things that were holding me back," Liddell says via telephone while in Peru. "He made it like two friends talking, but he knows how to control the conversation and he has that charisma behind him that makes you want to try what he suggests."

Robbins has also worked with Princess Diana, Nelson Mandela, Bill Clinton and Mother Teresa. He's now 57, and once he reaches the arena it is all intensity and high-octane encouragement.

On stage, Robbins bangs two wooden sticks together to get the audience pumped up, so pumped that it is a mix of a rock concert and a championship game. It'll continue that way for much of the next four days.

Robbins' voice is gravelly as he talks while in a limo from Manhattan back to Newark for Day Two. He's arriving later in the day because doctors have advised him to rest his weary vocal cords after his frenetic opening-night performance.

His seminars share another similarity to a sporting event in that Robbins tries to replicate the energy he loves in those games.

"I love the unity behind a sports team. I love the challenge. I love everything about sports," he says.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Sept. 13, 2017

Like so many youngsters, teenage Robbins had dreams of a baseball scholarship and a big-league career, which were halted abruptly when he got kicked off his high school team because his hair was too long.

So Robbins tried to become a sportscaster and sportswriter, penning articles for local outlets at 14, then persuading legendary sportscaster Howard Cosell to meet with him and pass on wisdom.

"Back then I thought, 'If I really don't have the talent, I am going to wake the hell up and figure out how to still be involved,'" he says.

He had business cards printed proclaiming himself as a sportswriter, despite having little experience, and attacked his new calling, taking buses to cover high school games and filing stories by telephone. He tracked down big names, getting interviews with Ohio State football coach Woody Hayes and baseball Hall of Famers Tommy Lasorda and Leo Durocher.

His plentiful confidence eventually led him to the self-help sphere, but Robbins was determined to maintain a connection with sports. He eventually saw his chance as the psychological aspects of sports science evolved.

"These athletes are the best in the world," Robbins says. "They have the skill sets. Once they're in a slump, what is it? It's not a skill-set problem, it's a psychological problem."

The principles Robbins employs with athletes are not so different from what he might use with the CEO of a Fortune 500 company, some of whom pay him more than \$1 million a year for guidance. He encourages prioritization and perspective, helping individuals understand how much of their satisfaction comes from recognition and how much from other intangibles, such as personal happiness and relationships. Such things can ease pressure on a performer.

Some of the experiences with athletes, Robbins says, are among his most rewarding, or at least his most memorable. Like chats with Jordan and Brady. Or the time when Mike Tyson quoted the Bible and Ralph Waldo Emerson, then said that if he could push a button and blow up the planet, he'd do it.

'A life-changer'

Getting high-profile athletes or celebrities to answer their phone or respond to messages is one of the frustrations of being a reporter. When you have Robbins and his team making the introduction, however, the wheels turn quicker.

It's a weekend afternoon when Riley calls in from the French Riviera, full of the joys of a well-earned break and ready to talk. Speaking to a journalist would typically be the last thing he'd have on the agenda while on vacation with wife Chris, but when he learned that his friend Robbins was to be the subject of discussion he made swift contact.

From the start of his time as Los Angeles Lakers coach during the 1980s, Riley plowed through books on self-help, leadership and communication. Yet it was Robbins' message, years later, that stuck with him the most.

"He has these deep thoughts on how to instill confidence, and that is something that was vital to me," Riley says. "In sports, coaching it is so huge. You can have all this great physical ability and talent at your disposal, but if you can't get your words across and get others to buy into what you are doing it is worthless."

Riley and Robbins forged a close friendship, and after the Heat won the 2006 NBA title, Riley and Chris attended a Robbins workshop in Fiji, describing it as "very profound."

"There is just a deep reservoir of knowledge within him about how and why people do what they do," Riley added. "I don't call him a motivational speaker, I call him a life-changer, and I think he can help anyone. But in the kind of team sports setting I am used to, that kind of ability to maximize your mental power is only going to get more important."

At first, Liddell, the Ultimate Fighting Championship legend, knew Robbins from his role in the 2001 film *Shallow Hal*, in which Robbins plays himself and helps Jack Black's initially oafish title character appreciate inner beauty. When Liddell's advisers arranged a meeting with Robbins in 2007, he was highly skeptical.

"It was all about finding what I wanted from my life and my career," he says. "Once we established that, we got into what I was prepared to do to achieve it. Those things have stayed with me ever since. Even now I think back and remind myself I need a kick in the ass."

Since their initial meeting Liddell and Robbins have remained in contact, and the retired mixed martial artist has attended an Unleash the Power Within event.

So, too, has Carlisle, who chatted with USA TODAY Sports by text during some Summer League downtime. Carlisle was introduced to Robbins' methods by a friend, billionaire investor Paul Tudor Jones, in 2010. Less than a year later, the Mavs upset LeBron James' Heat to win the franchise's first and only championship.

"Tony is a strategist who helps people learn who they are and why they function the way they do," Carlisle wrote. "Then, most importantly, he teaches the steps necessary for lasting change. He has positively impacted every facet of my life."

Carlisle has attended Robbins' seminar and even completed the fire walk, yelling with delight afterward.

Kevin Durant's mother, Wanda, is in the crowd at Newark in a section reserved for Robbins' personal guests, close to Natasha Sen Fizdale, wife of Memphis Grizzlies head coach David Fizdale.

"It is the ultimate coaching environment," Carlisle says of his trip to a Robbins event. "High energy, purposeful and non-stop."

'It is not about working miracles'

Robbins has no way of knowing what his batting average is in terms of the people he has helped, but his longevity suggests it is in healthy shape. He knows there is always an element of skepticism aimed at his line of work, and he doesn't try to fight it.

The fact that his events have grown from conference rooms to ballrooms to small theaters and now sports arenas indicates that enough people like what they're getting.

"It is not about working miracles or doing the impossible," Riley says. "But if someone is looking for a push and a way to better themselves, then it might just need a little tweak in the right direction. He has a knack of finding what tweaking is needed or helping you find it."

It is a strange feeling to have a personal audience with Robbins, to sit in his limo so soon after seeing thousands hang on each word and hope to be picked for an "intervention" – a part of the event where Robbins works individually with an attendee.

The limo ride takes an hour from midtown to Newark, and it is quite a trip because Robbins is quite the personality, coach to coaches who win championships, source of inspiration to those who inspire us with their athletic deeds.

Tony Robbins might not be your guru, and he's not a magician. He's a man who believes that the human mind is the mightiest piece of technology there has ever been, capable of being harnessed to provide fulfillment and focus.

And, in sports, victory.

USA Today LOADED: 09.13.2017