



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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THE ATHLETIC

Hurricanes training camp Day 1: Justin Faulk speaks, Petr Mrazek comes bearing hats

By Sara Civian

Justin Faulk has no idea where he might end up by July, or maybe it'll happen in December, or possibly even this time next week.

Being a Carolina Hurricane is all he's known for eight NHL seasons. For the record, he says he has no bad feelings about that — even in the “dog days.”

“I like it here, I've been here a long time, obviously we all know about the dog days there for a little bit,” Faulk said Friday as training camp opened at PNC Arena. “But last year was fun, we had a good run and the team is getting better. I am more than happy to stay here. I haven't asked for a trade or anything like that, I have no objection to staying here after this year, either.”

He's referencing the potential trade that surfaced earlier this week involving him on the move to Anaheim, a team on his partial No-Trade list. It's looking less likely that he'll waive the clause by the minute — and that's his right. But now other teams that might not be on the list have called the Hurricanes about the offensive-minded defenseman in the final year of his contract.

So while nothing's imminent, it's still a maybe July, maybe December, maybe next week mentality for Faulk.

If that bothers him, he didn't show it at all on Day 1 of training camp. He was buzzing through drills fast enough to earn a coveted Rod Brind'Amour stick tap (“He always does that,” said Brind'Amour), joked around with everyone as he usually does, even made light of the whole situation in his interview.

“Still gotta show up, right? I'm still part of this team,” he said. “It happens, I'm not the first person in the league to have their name thrown out there. I'm still here and ready to work, trying to do my thing.”

When the media paused before the next question, he jokingly got up.

“OK, well, good talk.”

Same, old Justin Faulk. I've got a feeling that won't change.

- Sebastian Aho told me that he hasn't bought anything “too fancy” with his signing bonus, but he did buy a car right before signing it.

Now that that's out of the way, his focus has shifted to the ice.

“I want to be a better hockey player, I don't have any goals (in terms of) points, just be a better player overall,” he said.

“There are a lot of details in my game that I know can be better.”

Oh yeah, and while he was gone the Finnish invasion expanded to include his World Cup teammate Erik Haula. Haula took a more North American route, playing high school hockey at the famous Shattuck St. Mary's (Faribault, Minn.), the USHL's Lancers, then three seasons at Minnesota. Still, a Finn is a Finn.

“I knew him before, but not that well,” Aho said of his countryman. “We played in the World Cup together, but he's been in the U.S. forever now. He's a good guy and it's obviously nice to have another Finn here.”

Smirks

One thing that caught my attention Friday is how well the new guys seemed to fit in already. Culture is important for the Hurricanes because it has to be. I found it interesting that Haula said it's all English, all the time when the Canes are together despite so many Finns.

“I'm not used to so many Finns, it is kind of a challenge to keep it in English, but I know they want to do that here,” Haula said. “(We'll) keep the Finnish hush-hush (joking).”

Welcome to Raleigh, Finland South.

- Chase Priskie left the ice Friday and went to the doctor for further evaluation. Didn't catch what happened, but Brind'Amour called the trip to the doctor “not a good sign,” adding there's obviously no update until the results come back.
- Trevor van Riemsdyk's opening day status is still “up in the air,” according to Brind'Amour, but the team isn't going to rush a return. Especially with so many options on the blue line.
- Petr Mrazek bought everyone hats. That's it, that's the sentence. “I saw the hat in Czech, I just liked the idea,” he told me. “One guy makes them, I wanted to bring them for the guys.”
- It's been a long-running joke that Hadyn Fleury's elusive first NHL goal is a monkey-on-back situation, but on Friday Dougie Hamilton missed two penalty shots, Andrei Svechnikov missed one, then Fleury nailed his. The stars are aligning, folks.
- Is it cool if I do this sort of thing every day-ish during training camp and ease up on the Twitter updates?



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As the Ducks' Ondrej Kase deals with trade rumors, he keeps the focus on where he is now

By Eric Stephens

IRVINE, Calif. — Very little is needed for Ondrej Kase to break into a smile. A well-placed shot that beats a goalie. A friendly jab from a teammate, whether verbal or physical. Even bracing himself to answer questions from reporters with the knowledge that a touchy subject will be broached.

There was business to do on the ice. There has been business to deal with off it.

It is the business side of hockey that Kase has witnessed over the past few days. Signing a three-year contract extension last year with the Ducks, the team that invested in a seventh-round draft pick and helped groom him into a blossoming goal scorer? That was no problem. Learning that your team recently made you a central piece in trade talks for a certain Carolina Hurricanes defenseman? That can be a bit unnerving.

A lot of that business, as Kase simply calls it, gets revealed on social media. The specifics in his case were the possibility of being sent to Carolina for Justin Faulk. They still might be. The Ducks have (or had) been poised to do the deal if they and Faulk's camp could agree on a long-term extension.

Which hasn't happened. As more days pass, the likelihood seems to diminish. Faulk was in Raleigh on Friday for the start of Hurricanes' training camp. Kase was at Great Park Ice as the Ducks fired up their season with sessions broken up into three groups.

Nothing has changed.

"It's just a rumor," Kase said. "I'm right here. And it's good to be here."

The 23-year-old right wing will seemingly keep a place with the Ducks as long as an extension with Faulk can't be worked out. Faulk, entering the final year of his contract with the Hurricanes, reportedly agreed to waive his no-trade clause for a move to Anaheim only if he gets a fat new contract.

Kase has been left in the somewhat awkward position of grappling with his name being bandied about in the hockey universe. Few at Great Park wanted to get into the specifics of the winger handling the very real prospect that his team intended to trade him, even if it was for a potentially significant upgrade in a defensive corps whose depth has been whittled away.

Ducks general manager Bob Murray didn't deny there have been talks to bring in Faulk, whose future with the Hurricanes was thrown into further doubt by their addition of free agent Jake Gardiner to an already deep blue line. Though Murray didn't mention Faulk by name, he did reaffirm his openness to obtaining a right-shot defender even as he noted how some of his left-handed shooters can play the right side.

Players must deal with trade speculation. The way it was handled in this case bothers Murray. Raleigh News & Observer columnist Luke DeCock was the first to report that Kase was the return piece in the Faulk talks. Murray, who has long been effective at keeping his dealings close to the vest, didn't like his player being outed.

"It happens to all of us," Murray said. "It happened in my career. As a player, this is the life we live. If you're going to be a professional athlete, things are going to happen. Your name's going to go out there. That is part one of that. That's something we live with and have to — you just got to move on. Whether it's out there or not.

"The second part of that, which is the disturbing part for me, is when things are out there — when things haven't happened and some owner or whatever decides he's going to garner some friendship with media and he's going to get close to the media. He puts things out there ... some of these people, I wish they were players at one point in their life. Obviously, they weren't."

Clearly, Murray had Tom Dundon in mind with his pointed comments. It isn't known if the Carolina owner was the source, but Dundon does tend to follow his own impulses. So, is one of the NHL's longest-serving GMs right to be upset? Perhaps it is simply the case of an executive's feathers being ruffled when someone else airs dealings that were meant to be kept under wraps.

But in a league he's been involved with for over four decades, Murray makes no bones about the cloth he's been cut from.

"Because I am very old-school," Murray continued, responding to a question about his players reacting to trade speculation. "I hate the trade deadline when things get reported before you get a chance to tell your player. Sorry, I'm old-school. I think that's all wrong that something gets out before you get to talk to your player.

"That's just how I am, and I think there's a few other GMs that agree with me."

On Friday, Dallas Eakins was formally opening his first training camp with the Ducks. Hired as the 10th coach in franchise history, Eakins spent a good part of his summer building relationships with players he wasn't as familiar with as those he led in San Diego with the AHL's Gulls.

Easing concerns over a talented young winger and his immediate future wasn't part of the plan.

"Sometimes it's total bullshit," Eakins said. "I've seen it so many times. Guys' names get floated and they're not in play at all. In free agency, you see that a lot. But for me as the coach, all of that is white noise. It should be white noise to the players. It's part of our business. We've grown up in it. Hey, your name is going to be out there truthfully sometimes, and other times it's going to be total bullshit.

"My job is I try to keep an eye on the player. And if I see that I think it's visibly affecting him, then I'm going to grab him and remind him — we sit, and we have a little chat about it. It's always a reminder that this is the business we're in. And those things happen."

Cam Fowler can relate. In a Ducks career moving into its 10th season, Fowler has routinely seen his name pop up in trade rumors. Some of those had legitimacy. Others were fanciful musings with zero substance.



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Ignoring them has become more challenging. Information spreads instantly.

"I think it's a lot more difficult now than it was even five, six years ago," Fowler said. "Just because there's so many outlets now. Once a story hit, you see it on Twitter. You see it on TSN. ... You can type in anything. You can click a couple buttons and you see these things. So that makes it difficult."

Much of the trade talk that surrounded Fowler has ceased since he signed his eight-year contract with Anaheim. But the defenseman acknowledged he didn't handle the rumors all that well. His way of dealing with them was to lean on his family and friends for support.

Now 27, Fowler has come to understand that "it's part of the territory" of playing in the NHL, especially in the era of a hard salary cap. Trade chatter is part of the normal discourse over the long grind of a season. "For the most part, most guys go through it at least one point in their career," he said. "Maybe multiple times."

He has spoken with Kase and will do so again if he feels it is needed. But he also wants to tread lightly.

"It's a delicate situation, right?" Fowler said. "Ondrej's a great kid. He's a quiet kid. If he doesn't want to think about it, I don't want to be someone to go and talk to him and bring it up. I hope he knows any of us would do anything for him if he's struggling with it."

"At the end of the day, he's going to go to work here. He's a Duck, and that's all that matters. That's all you can control. At the end of the day, if something happens, as players it's totally out of our control. Just part of the business."

On Friday, Kase was the only one wearing a yellow jersey while the rest of the forwards were dressed in red, white, blue and gray. He also wore a different color than his teammates in other earlier informal, highly populated skates before camp opened.

Though it might have had the look of protecting an asset who could be changing locales, Murray said it was about being careful with Kase as he comes back from surgery to repair a torn labrum that ended his 2018-19 season in January. He said the winger is ahead of schedule and on track to start the regular season.

"The doctors are happy," Murray said. "The doctors are not worried. They just don't feel he needs contact quite yet. I am sure he's going to be playing in exhibition games and we'll go from there. He's done very well."

Kase is hopeful of participating in the preseason. Injuries in each of his three NHL seasons have kept him from realizing

all of his potential. He had 20 goals in 66 games two seasons ago, and his 11 in just 30 games a year ago put him on a 30-goal pace over a full slate. He wants to prove that he can play in all 82 games. And he said a full range of movement came back "a while ago."

"But the (shooting) and stuff, I think a month ago," Kase said. "It's how I make the little steps."

Before the shoulder problem, it was concussions. As for the frustration of missing stretches of every season, he said, "It's a tough question. Nobody wants to be injured. Everybody wants to play 82 games. Sometimes shit happens."

Indeed. But Kase simply went about his business Friday, often handling it with a smile. There is no need to dig into what's real or false about playing in Anaheim or elsewhere, and he has no wish to discuss that with his general manager, who wants to keep the trust factor intact.

"All I can promise my players is that nothing will ever get out from this organization," Murray said. "And if anything ever does get out, I will find out how it got out and that person will no longer be with us. That's all I can promise my players."

Notes

It did not come as a surprise, but Murray indicated that Ryan Kesler and Patrick Eaves will not play this season. Kesler had his right hip resurfaced on May 9 — the second major procedure on the troublesome joint in two years — to relieve chronic pain. Eaves has had a recurrence of the muscle-weakening disorder that has limited him to just nine games with the Ducks over the past two seasons.

Murray was careful to not say whether the playing days of both players are over. Kesler has returned to Michigan with his family, and the GM suggested that the center and 2011 Selke Trophy winner is in good spirits. "He's doing really well," Murray said. "The resurfacing has worked. I'm not going to comment on the rest of his career, but that's very doubtful at this point."

As for Eaves, Murray said, "I won't say he's retiring, but he's out for the year. Whatever you want to call what he had keeps resurfacing. He's tried a couple of times. And him and his wife have just decided that's enough for right now. I totally agree with that at this point in time."

The Ducks will still have to pay the salaries of both, but they can gain significant flexibility under the salary cap by freeing up an additional \$10 million for 2019-20 by putting them on long-term injured reserve. Cap Friendly has the Ducks with \$8.5 million available without putting Kesler and Eaves on the long-term list.



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Category 5: Notes from the start of Hurricanes camp

Trade rumors surrounding defenseman Justin Faulk created the biggest buzz on Friday

By Cory Lavalette

RALEIGH — What better way to start the 2019-20 NHL season than a quick Category 5 after the Hurricanes hit the ice Friday for the first time to truly start training camp. As Tone Loc would say:

Category 1: The biggest story to start camp is the future of Justin Faulk. The Ducks and Hurricanes have had a trade in place since last week, but Anaheim was among the teams on Faulk's no-trade list and the 27-year-old defenseman had not cleared the way for the deal. That's probably because Faulk, an unrestricted free agent after this coming season, would like a contract extension in place in order to waive his NTC. That hasn't happened, and it's sounding less and less likely Faulk will be joining Charlie Conway, Fulton Reed, Adam Banks and Gordon Bombay in Orange County.

"I'm still here and ready to work, show up and do my thing," Faulk said Friday following session two of practice (Team Pride, not to be confused with session one's Team Passion).

Faulk declined to talk about any potential Anaheim trade, but he did answer whether or not he wanted to stay in Raleigh.

"Yeah, I like it here. I've been here a long time," Faulk said. "Obviously, we know about the dog days there for a little bit, but last year was fun.

"We had a good run and the team's getting better. (I'm) more than happy to stay here — haven't asked for a trade or anything like that. I'm happy to stay here, and I have no objections staying here after this year either."

For now, Faulk is part of the Hurricanes, and coach Rod Brind'Amour is preparing as if the Minnesota native will be in the lineup on opening night.

"I understand the buzz around him and all of that, but (it's) business as usual for us," Brind'Amour said. "He's here, and I'm looking for a big year out of him."

Category 2: It's been reported that free agent college defenseman Chase Priskie chose to sign with Carolina this summer in part because he was told, despite the team's glut of D-men, there would be room for him in the near future — another reason a Faulk trade seems more likely than not.

But Priskie — who led all NCAA blueliners with 17 goals last season and had 39 goals, 77 assists and 116 points in four years at Quinnipiac — left Friday's practice with an undisclosed injury, and Brind'Amour didn't sound particularly optimistic.

"Priskie went off, and we're sending him to the doctor right now," the coach said. "So that's not a good sign." Brind'Amour added there was no update on his condition.

The Hurricanes' blue line depth is well-documented, but you can never be too deep — especially with Trevor van Riemsdyk still recovering from spring shoulder surgery (he and Spencer Smallman, also working his way back from injury, worked on the ice after the two main practices with coaches).

Jake Bean, Gustav Forsling and Roland McKeown all have some NHL experience, but the team also added Frederik Claesson to its training camp roster at the last minute. Claesson did not practice Friday and will have an uphill climb to earn a contract, but the 26-year-old Swede has 150 NHL games under his belt and could add some experience, particularly if a trade is made.

Category 3: It's been a shorter-than-usual offseason for the Hurricanes thanks to their return to the postseason and trip to the Eastern Conference Final, but Brind'Amour is making sure his team is neither looking back nor looking too far ahead.

That includes making it clear (again) that Justin Williams is not part of this year's group while also not hinting who might succeed him wearing the C.

"We're not even really dealing with that right now, I'll be honest with you," Brind'Amour said about potentially naming a new captain. "We're going to get through training camp before we make any decisions on that kind of thing. We've got great leaders in there. We're in a good spot; (Williams) left us in a real good spot in that regard."

Brind'Amour also admitted to having a little more confidence on Day 1 of Year 2 vs. his initial time running camp last season.

"I definitely feel a little different standing here now vs. last year. ... But it's all about we've gotta find those eight extra wins," Brind'Amour said, referencing how the team only got half of the 16 postseason wins required to earn the Stanley Cup last year.

But the coach did get a bit ahead of himself once Friday with the first group.

"The first drill today, I forgot to go to the board to describe it," he said. "And I just kind of blew the whistle and went, 'Uh oh, I forgot.' We have a lot of guys back, and they just picked it up, and then the other guys followed through. So I was like, that was good. I messed up, but they covered for me."

Category 4: The only thing returning from last year's goalie mix is veteran Petr Mrazek, armed with a new two-year contract and ... hats?



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The Czech goalie had these custom hats — which can best be described as a paint splatter-style that you might find in a late '80s rap video or at your favorite state fair airbrush kiosk — made in the Czech Republic for the players with their numbers and initials on them.

Behind Mrazek, James Reimer, Alex Nedeljkovic and Anton Forsberg will battle for the No. 2 spot, and there's also a new goalie coach in former NHLer Jason Muzzatti.

Muzzatti played professionally for 16 seasons, including two years in Calgary and Hartford, brief stints with the Rangers and Sharks, AHL, IHL and UHL time, and overseas experience in Germany, Finland and Italy. Perhaps most notably, he was a teammate of Brind'Amour's at Michigan State for the 1988-89 season. He was goalie coach with the Spartans the past four seasons before taking the job with the Hurricanes.

Last year, Brind'Amour said then-goalie coach Mike Bales — who left for an expanded role with the Sabres where he will be both an assistant coach and work with the goalies — carried a lot of weight in deciding who would play each night, building a trust that the coach already has with his former college teammate.

"That was part of the hire," Brind'Amour said of his familiarity with Muzzatti. "You want to make sure, No. 1, you get a good person in there, and I know what Muzz is about as far as that goes."

Category 5: The three biggest additions to Carolina's roster this offseason were center Erik Haula, forward Ryan Dzingel and Gardiner.

Haula, acquired in a trade with Vegas, was the only one of the three who didn't have a choice in coming to Raleigh, but he seemed excited about the opportunity. He got into town a week early for informal skates to get to know some of his new

teammates before the start of camp, and it also helps to have countrymen Sebastian Aho and Teuvo Teravainen, along with former Wild teammate Nino Niederreiter on the roster.

"There's a lot of familiar faces, so that was no problem," Haula said. "I wasn't concerned about it. And just the rest of the group, I want to come in and not disturb anything that they had going on. They had a good family environment, it seems, last year, so I'm just going to jump into that."

It's Haula's third stop in the NHL. He started in chilly Minnesota, then went to arid Las Vegas. And Raleigh?

"It's a little sweatier, but it's been good — no snow, so I'm happy about that."

Dzingel, who was drafted by Ottawa in 2011 and was with the Senators until he was dealt to Columbus at last year's trade deadline, has been very vocal about wanting to make Raleigh his longtime home. With a two-year deal in place, the 27-year-old has made it clear he needs to produce with the Hurricanes to stay beyond the length of his contract.

As for Gardiner, his addition is perhaps a little awkward given that it makes a Faulk trade more likely, but the longtime Leafs defenseman is in no way going to be intimidated by the relatively tame Triangle media after spending eight years in Toronto under the microscope.

A side note on Gardiner: After having doppelgängers Warren Foegele and Josh Wesley in camps together the past couple years, I couldn't help but notice that the Minnesota-born defenseman has a strong resemblance to currently unsigned restricted free agent Saku Maenalanen, right down to the steely blue eyes.

Perhaps if a deal with Maenalanen gets hammered out, we could get another photo like this one of Foegele and Wesley from a couple of years ago.



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Faulk's answers definitely in demand

By Adam Gold

Well, here we are again. Back at PNC Arena where the Jumbotron has clearly spent the summer in the gym as the Carolina Hurricanes hit the ice for the opening of training camp. And, like last year, Canes defenseman Justin Faulk's name continues to be churning through the rumor mill as the organization has been reportedly shopping the 7-year veteran entering the final year of his contract.

For his part, Faulk, a player and person not given to emotional extremes, has been largely meh about all of this. "Still gotta show up, right?" Faulk joked after completing his first official workout of the preseason. "I'm still here, I'm ready to work and just do my thing." Faulk dealt with trade rumors a year ago as both he and fellow 2010 draftee Jeff Skinner were said to be on the move. Yet, only Skinner, the 1st round pick in that draft actually called the movers, heading to Buffalo for a relatively underwhelming return.

Meanwhile, Faulk stayed put, and posted his best overall season in the NHL. Yes, the numbers were down, offensively. But, without question, he enjoyed his finest season on the defensive side of the puck, at times drawing the most important assignments and earning the trust of his head coach. "I understand the buzz around him and all that", Rod Brind'Amour said between practice groups. "But, like last year, it's business as usual, and we're looking for a big year out of him."

Faulk is entering into the final year of his contract and without assurances that he'll agree to a long-term deal, the team has been actively pursuing their options in the market. "Any time guys are in the last year of their deal they're going to be asked about it", as Faulk shrugged off questions about the trade chatter. "It's not my first time dealing with it, but it happens to everyone in the league at some point."

Faulk signed a 6-year contract in 2014 that comes to an end after the season and negotiations on an extension have not proven fruitful. The team isn't opposed to keeping the 27-year old Minnesotan. But, with Jaccob Slavin, Brett Pesce, and the newly signed Jake Gardiner all under contract for next four years — at least — and Dougie Hamilton signed through 2021, the deal will have to be something that fits into the team-friendly category.

Now, factor in the pending raise for the likes of Andrei Svechnikov in a couple of years and we see how the money adds up. In fact, as we sit here, the Canes are actually over the salary cap, though not so much so that they couldn't squeeze under the number with some procedural moves at the end of training camp. A nip here and a tuck there is likely all that's needed to wriggle into compliance.

But, while the notion of adding another high-end offensive weapon to the already loaded arsenal of Sebastian Aho, Teuvo Teravainen, Svechnikov and the newly acquired Erik Haula, is enticing, it's not always wise to deal from the blue line. You can never have enough pitching, goes the old saying in baseball. Well, the hockey equivalent is "You can never have enough defensemen."

Talented, blueliners who can play both sides of the puck don't fall off trees. It would not be easy to replace Faulk. In fact, considering the workload he put in last year and the amount of time he spent on the penalty kill a year ago, losing Faulk would likely demand significant contributions throughout the defensive corps. It's also not terrible to have said player going about his business with the motivation of free agency acting as the carrot.

But, there's more to it than just what we read on an "Event Summary". Faulk is part of a leadership group that is already without the Captain, now that Justin Williams has opted to step away from hockey. While some might scoff at that reminder, his leadership within the locker room is real. And then there's the fact that Faulk, after a half dozen years of nothing, finally reached the post season, and things like that have a way of softening your negotiating stance.

"We all know about the dog days, but last year was fun and the team's getting better", Faulk said. "I haven't asked for a trade and I have no objections to staying here after this season either."

Personally, I would also have no objections to exchanging vows with Faulk and keeping him around for the next several as well. After all, with 27 in the line up, the Canes just might have the best collection of defensemen in the NHL.

That, not to mention getting into the postseason, something that hasn't happened in successive years in Raleigh since 2002, is worth something. Maybe even a long term contract.



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Canes Open Training Camp With Renewed Expectations

Five takeaways from the first day of on-ice activity

by Michael Smith

At a quarter to nine on Friday morning, half of the Carolina Hurricanes' training camp roster, designated as Team Pride, filed out of the locker room at PNC Arena.

Newly sharpened skates carved into the fresh sheet of ice. Pucks tickled twine and clacked off the glass. Some light chatter, some laughter. A mammoth, new video board loomed overhead. Then, a whistle, and with that, training camp was officially underway.

Here are five takeaways from the first day of on-ice activity.

1. New Year, New Canes

The Hurricanes' 2018-19 season was a lot of things: special, exhilarating, memorable, unbelievable, unforgettable are a few words that come to mind.

But, each September, a season begins anew. A clean slate. A fresh start. A chance for the Hurricanes to build upon the momentum and the culture they established last season.

"That was the goal, to get back to relevancy. We want to be talked about. We want to be a team that teams are worried about when they come into our building and are afraid to come here," Jordan Staal said. "We've got to show it all over again and do it all over again. That's what good teams do. They do it on a consistent basis every year, every game, every day. That's what we strive to do around here."

With success come expectations, though, to be fair, the Hurricanes' expectation last season was to be the best team in the league. They fell eight wins short of that goal, and now the challenge is to do it all over again - and be even better.

"It feels different. It's a whole new year. What's done is done. You've got to move on, and we've got to find a way to get that much better," head coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "I definitely feel a little different standing here now versus last year, but it's all about finding those eight extra wins."

2. Year Two for Brind'Amour

In June, I asked Brind'Amour if his second year as the Hurricanes' bench boss would be any easier, given what he learned and experienced in year one.

"I'm not sure it will ever be easy. The only thing that will be easier maybe is on some of the guys that have been here now to know what's expected," he mused. "They know what we expect, so that might be easier, but if there's one thing I've learned from being around this game forever, it's even harder now. It never gets easy. You've got 31 teams. They're all going to be good next year."

Returning players do indeed know what to expect from their head coach.

"I know this is kind of cliché, but Roddy expects everyone to just work as hard as they can," Sebastian Aho said.

And, they even lend a helping hand on the ice, too.

"The first drill today, I forgot to go to the board to describe it. I just kind of blew the whistle and went, 'Uh oh. I forgot we have a lot of [new] guys,' but they just picked it up. That was good. I messed up, but they covered for me," Brind'Amour explained. "With something like that, it's nice that you have the bulk of the group back. It's the NHL. We're always changing. It's hard to keep your group together. I feel really good that management did everything they could to keep the guys together. That's a positive."

3. New Faces

With a new season, of course, brings new faces.

Defenseman Jake Gardiner, signed to a four-year, \$16.2 million contract a week ago, is the newest of those faces.

"We felt Carolina was the best fit. Really warm weather, and a really, really good team," he said. "I want to win a Stanley Cup, and I thought this was my best chance to do it."

Forwards Ryan Dzingel and Erik Haula and goaltender James Reimer are some other noteworthy new additions that help bolster a largely otherwise unchanged lineup that advanced to the Eastern Conference Final just four months ago.

"Great guys that will fit in well in the room," Staal said of the newcomers. "I've played against them, and I know they're great players. They will be great additions to the team."

4. Filling a Hole

The stall at the center of the back wall in the Hurricanes' locker room, typically reserved for the captain of the team, sat vacant on Friday and will continue to for the foreseeable future.

On Sept. 2, Justin Williams announced he was taking a break from the NHL; it wasn't a full-fledged declaration of retirement, but, for an indefinite amount of time, Williams is stepping away from hockey.

"I'm sure he's enjoying himself and happy not to grind it out right now," Brind'Amour said. "We've moved on from it. That's the way I'm approaching it. If he comes knocking on the door and says, 'Hey, you know what? I'm going to try it again,' then we'll put him out there. It's not like he's just going to jump into the game. He's going to need time to get going. We'll have lots of time to prepare for that."



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As it stands, the Hurricanes have to assume that moment won't come, in which case, they are operating in a post-Williams era, leaving a void both on and off the ice.

"It can't be just one guy who fills Willy's [spot]," Aho said. "He's such a great leader, so it has to be a bunch of different guys who step up. I want to be one of those guys."

"A big hole in the leadership area on and off the ice, and a big hole on the ice with his play. Every year you may lose guys, and things change. We'd love to have him back, but right now, we have to move forward and find ways to fill that hole," Staal said. "I know a lot of great leaders in this room and a lot of great players who can step up, take that ice and do a lot of good things with it."

Don't expect to hear news on a new captain, either, at least for a few weeks.

"We'll get through training camp before we make any decisions on that kind of thing," Brind'Amour said. "We've got great leaders in there. He left us in a real good spot in that regard."

5. "I'm Still Here"

After Team Passion left the ice, the media circled around Justin Faulk's locker stall. Brett Pesce, seated to Faulk's left, sought asylum on the other side of the room.

Everyone knew what was coming. Faulk's name has been in the news for a week now, as rumors swirl about his future with the Hurricanes.

"Still got to show up, right? Still part of this team. It happens," he said. "I'm not the first person in the league to ever say their

name's thrown out there or have something going on. I'm still here, ready to work, show up and do my thing."

A pause.

Faulk looked around, smiled and clapped his hands.

"All right, well, good talk!" he joked.

The 27-year-old defenseman is entering the final year of a six-year contract extension he signed in March 2014. Faulk has played in 559 regular-season games in the NHL - all with the Hurricanes - and has totaled 258 points (85g, 173a) in that time. He made his first playoff appearance with the club in the spring and recorded eight points (1g, 7a) in 15 games.

"I like it here. I've been here for a long time. Obviously, we all know about the dog days there for a little bit, but last year was fun. We had a good run. The team is getting better," he said. "I'm more than happy to stay here. I haven't asked for a trade or anything like that. I'm happy to stay here. I have no objections to staying here after this year, either. Whatever happens will play itself out, whether it's in the near future or in July or anytime in between. I've got no bad feelings about this place, and I'm more than happy to keep playing here."

Up Next

The Hurricanes are back on the ice Saturday morning, with Team Pride taking the ice at 8:45 a.m. followed by Team Passion at 10:45 a.m. As always (unless otherwise noted, typically due to an arena event), practices are open to the public. And, for those who can't make it, we'll have a live stream available on Twitter.



After short summer, Hurricanes optimistic to start camp

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Defenseman Brett Pesce and the Carolina Hurricanes zipped up and down the ice again, less than four months after wrapping up last season way later than usual.

For a team that suffered through plenty of long summers, they can get used to these quick turnarounds.

The Hurricanes opened preseason camp Friday looking to build off the momentum they generated during last season's run to the Eastern Conference final — their first playoff appearance since 2009.

All those years of missing the postseason meant plenty of Aprils and Mays away from the rink. But of course, they're happy to trade that extra recovery time for deep playoff runs.

"You play the game not to have long summers, right?" Pesce asked.

The Hurricanes are hoping a few changes lead to even better results.

"We've got to find those eight extra wins," second-year coach Rod Brind'Amour said.

Carolina, one of the NHL's hottest teams during the second half of last season, upset Washington in a seven-game series and swept the New York Islanders in the second round before the Hurricanes themselves were swept by Boston in the conference final series.

"It was a good experience for all of us to get the playoff run and to get close to doing something special," forward Teuvo Teravainen said. "I like this team a lot, so I feel like even with a shorter summer, the guys are pretty young — a lot of young players who have taken care of their bodies and are ready for this year."

Sebastian Aho was here — and the 22-year-old forward probably will be here for a while after the Hurricanes matched the \$42 million offer sheet extended to him by Montreal. So was veteran defenseman Jake Gardiner, who last week signed with Carolina for four years after spending much of the summer looking for a deal.

"Another great piece to our club," Brind'Amour said. "The sooner he can feel comfortable, then he's going to be at his best."



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Defenseman Justin Faulk was there, too, once again as the subject of trade speculation brought about by the acquisition of Gardiner and the salary cap concerns it created. Faulk said his preference is to stay with the Hurricanes.

"It happens. I'm not the first person in the league to see their name's thrown out there," Faulk said. "I'm still here and ready to work and show up and do my thing."

The most noticeable absence: Justin Williams. The captain of last year's group drug out his decision for this season into September before deciding to "step away" from the sport to

start the year, leaving the door open to a possible return eventually. The move could leave a leadership void in a still-young dressing room.

While players and coaches have insisted they're proceeding as though Williams won't be back, reminders of him remain at PNC Arena: A larger-than-life photo of Williams remains affixed to the glass outside one entrance.

"I'm sure he's enjoying himself," Brind'Amour said with a smile, "and happy not to have to grind it out right now."



Training Camp Notebook: First Day of Hurricanes Camp, 2019

Justin Faulk trade rumors dominated day one of Carolina's training camp.

By Brett Finger

RALEIGH — It's finally here.

Teams Pride and Passion took the ice on Friday morning, thus marking the official start of 2019 Carolina Hurricanes training camp.

PNC Arena was cold, the sounds of hockey were back, and the drama that had been happening away from the ice for Justin Faulk and the Hurricanes found its way inside the building.

There were two one-hour sessions, one for each half of the roster. Here's a list of happenings from day one of camp and notable quotes from players and Rod Brind'Amour:

- Line combinations on the first day of training camp are as close to insignificant as you can get, but Ryan Dzingel lined up with Sebastian Aho and Nino Niederreiter during the first session. Teuvo Teravainen skated with the second group and was on a line with Jordan Staal and Andrei Svechnikov.
- Also a grouping: Julien Gauthier, Janne Kuokkanen, and Eetu Luostarinen. That could be a Charlotte Checkers preview.
- In a somewhat surprising development, Swedish defenseman Fredrik Claesson was added to the training camp roster and is on a PTO deal with the Hurricanes. Claesson, 26, played the 2018-19 season as a 6th/7th defenseman for the New York Rangers. In 150 NHL games, he has logged 26 points. He suited up for 14 games during the Ottawa Senators' surprising Eastern Conference Final run in 2017. It'll be a long-shot for him to make the team, but he'll fight for an opportunity to do so.
- Newcomer Erik Haula certainly looked healthy coming off of his season-ending knee injury. He flew up and down the ice during the first session and

seemed very comfortable both on and off the ice. He noted his excitement about playing with a lot of fellow Finns.

- Jordan Martinook looked like his normal self, which is a great sign after all the pain he played through in the postseason. He scored a goal on a rush drill, let out a celebratory yelp, and holstered his stick. He's certainly in midseason "Marty Party" form. He took a somewhat awkward fall into the boards at one point, but he ended up being alright. He plays at one speed: all out. Even in training camp.
- Andrei Svechnikov looked great. He scored a shootout goal on a slick move to the backhand and you could see how confident he is now after his great rookie season.
- Haydn Fleury also scored a shootout goal. He'll look to replicate that in an NHL game... Hopefully.
- After the first session, Jake Gardiner expanded on why he felt like Carolina was the best option for him: "We just felt like Carolina was the best fit. Really warm weather and a really, really good team. I want to win a Stanley Cup, and I thought this was my best chance to do it."
- Justin Faulk's name has been deep in the trade rumor waters as of late, with reports saying that the Anaheim Ducks were trying to acquire him and negotiate a contract extension. Faulk had no comments on the specifics, but he did make his mindset very clear.
- Here's what Faulk had to say:

"You still gotta show up, right? I'm still a part of this team. I'm not the first person in this league to have his name thrown out there or have something going on (behind the scenes). I'm still here and ready to work. I'm gonna keep showing up and doing my thing.

... Any time a guy on the last year of his deal comes into training camp, I'm pretty sure most of them get asked about it.



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I know I have unrestricted free agency at the end of (this season), but it's not my first time coming through and playing on a contract year.

... I'd be more than happy to stay here. I haven't asked for a trade or anything. I'd be happy to stay here and have no objections to staying here after this year, either. Whatever happens will play itself out and we'll see whether it's in the near future or in July or anytime in between what's gonna happen. I have no bad feelings, really, about this place. I'd be more than happy to keep playing here and stay right where I'm at."

- All the trade rumors aside, Faulk looked very good on Friday. He seems motivated. He crushed all the drills and even earned praise from Brind'Amour after the end-of-session conditioning. He said he's ready to work and have a good year, and I believe him.
- Rod Brind'Amour confirmed that Chase Priskie got injured during the first session on Friday. He didn't have an update, but Priskie saw the doctor today and we will learn more soon.
- On his defensemen, Brind'Amour said that his top-six will consist of the best performers from training camp and the preseason. Those last couple of spots are up for grabs for everyone.
- New goalie coach Jason Muzzatti has Rod Brind'Amour's vote of confidence entering his first season with the Hurricanes. "You want to make sure, number one, that you get a good person, and I know

what Muzz(atti) is about, as far as that goes," said Brind'Amour, who was a teammate of his at Michigan State. "That relationship with the goalies will take some times, like it always does when you bring in somebody new, and that's what training camp is for - to create that relationship with the goalies."

- One last quote on Justin Williams (for now): "We've moved on from it," said Brind'Amour. "That's the way I'm approaching it. Like I said, if he comes knocking on the door and says, 'hey, you know what, I'm gonna try it again', we'll put him out there. It's not like he's going to jump right into the game. So, we'll have lots of time to prepare for that."
- Trevor van Riemsdyk didn't skate in either group, as he is still recovering from shoulder surgery, but he did skate afterwards with Spencer Smallman, Checkers head coach Ryan Warsofsky, and Tim Gleason. It's still up in the air on whether or not TvR will be ready for the start of the season. They won't rush him back.
- On a more heart-warming note, goalie Petr Mrazek brought custom hats for his teammates. Each teammate's hat has their number on it. (You can see Martin Necas' hat in the background of Mark Armstrong's picture.)
- Day two of on-ice work will come tomorrow, Saturday, at the same times - 8:45 a.m. and 10:45 a.m. Those sessions are open to the public at PNC Arena.

TODAY'S LINKS

<https://theathletic.com/1209433/2019/09/13/hurricanes-training-camp-day-1-justin-faulk-speaks-petr-mrazek-comes-bearing-hats/>

<https://theathletic.com/1210398/2019/09/14/as-the-ducks-ondrej-kase-deals-with-trade-rumors-he-keeps-the-focus-on-where-he-is-now/>

<https://nsionline.com/article/2019/09/category-5-notes-from-the-start-of-hurricanes-camp/>

<https://www.wralsportsfan.com/faulk-s-answers-definitely-in-demand/18634845/>

<https://www.nhl.com/hurricanes/news/canes-open-training-camp-with-renewed-expectations/c-309120614>

<https://nhl.nbcsports.com/2019/09/14/after-short-summer-hurricanes-optimistic-to-start-camp/>

<https://www.canescountry.com/2019/9/13/20864232/training-camp-notebook-first-day-carolina-hurricanes-camp-2019-justin-faulk-rod-brindamour-gardiner>



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SportScan

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

1152543 Carolina Hurricanes

Brind'Amour, Canes back on the ice. It's that time again.

BY CHIP ALEXANDER SEPTEMBER 13, 2019 06:53 AM

RALEIGH—Rod Brind'Amour took to the ice Friday morning to begin training camp, intense as usual, eyes straight ahead, ready to start preparing the Carolina Hurricanes for a new season.

Last season? A memory, albeit a good one for the Canes. For Brind'Amour, it was his first as an NHL head coach and it was rewarding. It ended in the Stanley Cup playoffs, in the Eastern Conference finals, with a franchise re-energized and hockey again the talk of the town in the springtime.

"It's a whole new year and what's done is done, and you've got to move on and we've got to find a way to get that much better," Brind'Amour said Friday in a press conference after the two on-ice sessions.

For Brind'Amour, who turned 49 last month, there is much to build on and a certain peace of mind, even for a coach. A year ago, much was different. He had been an assistant coach with the Canes but never the one who had to answer -- to team owner Tom Dundon, to president and general manager Don Waddell, to Canes fans, to the media. To his players.

"You're prepared but then you never know if you're prepared, you know, because you haven't done it," Brind'Amour said in a recent N&O interview. "Have we got everything figured out organization-wise? Then you get through it and now it's, 'OK, that was fine.' So at least you have a template for this year. You know if you stick with this plan it will work."

The Canes began camp Friday with 51 players on the roster after adding defenseman Fredrik Claesson on a professional tryout contract. They soon were down a defenseman as Chase Priskie, the former college standout the Canes signed as a free agent out of Quinnipiac, left the first session with an unspecified injury.

Brind'Amour's first impressions of the start of camp?

"Smoother than last year," he said Friday. "I liked it. Day one is kind of an introductory day for everybody, in a lot of ways. The first few days are a little bit generic but I thought the work ethic was good."

Justin Faulk was one of the hardest workers, pushing himself in grueling skating drills that ended his session. The veteran defenseman has been the source of trade speculation this week, with various reports linking him to a deal involving the Anaheim Ducks.

The Canes have an oversupply of defensemen and Faulk is entering the final year of his contract before becoming an unrestricted free agent. With the team and player as yet unable to agree on a contract extension, Faulk's name is being mentioned in trade scuttlebutt.

The Carolina Hurricanes opened preseason training camp at PNC Arena on Sept. 13, 2019, and veteran defenseman Justin Faulk addressed the constant trade speculation swirling around him as he tries to prepare for the season.

"It happens to pretty much everybody in the league at some point," Faulk said, although again not commenting on the Anaheim reports. "You've still got to show up, right? I'm still part of this team."

Brind'Amour gave Faulk an appreciative slap on the pads with his stick after the session.

"I didn't expect anything different," Brind'Amour said. "I understand the buzz around him but it's business as usual for us. He's here and I'm looking for a big year out of him. He's come in here and done everything he's supposed to do."

Brind'Amour said being named the Canes coach in early May 2018 allowed him ample time to hire a staff, analyze players, sort through his lineup and fully gear up for the 2018-19 season. His easiest decision: making Justin Williams the team captain.

"I got lucky in that sense," Brind'Amour said of the timing. "That's really important for a coach, to get everything lined up. Now that I've gotten through it once, I know what to do a little different and what works."

Brind'Amour's system, which the Canes doggedly stuck to last season, worked. Carolina finished with 99 points, ending a frustrating playoff drought that stretched back to 2009 and was the longest in the league. The question now: can they make it back-to-back playoff years for the first time since 2001 and 2002?

As Brind'Amour noted, "The NHL is probably the tightest it's ever been."

While the Canes made some key offseason moves -- adding free-agent defenseman Jake Gardiner a week ago Friday -- other teams in the Eastern Conference did the same.

The New Jersey Devils won the draft lottery and the No. 1 overall pick in the 2019 NHL draft, taking highly skilled forward Jack Hughes. They traded for defenseman P.K. Subban and signed veteran forward Wayne Simmonds.

"We saw last year what can happen when you get a lottery pick," Brind'Amour said, noting the Canes winning the No. 2 pick in the 2018 draft and taking forward Andrei Svechnikov. "Those things can instantly make your team better."

When Brind'Amour looks at his roster, he sees a team with few open spots available as training camp began. Which is a good thing.



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"The better you get as an organization the tougher it is to say jobs are open, because guys have already proven themselves," Brind'Amour said. "Last year we had some open. This year it's tighter."

Williams, at 37, has "stepped away" from hockey and is not with the team, leaving a top-six forward slot to be won. Defenseman Trevor van Riemsdyk, after shoulder surgery, may not be ready for game action until early in the regular season. And there's the competition at goaltender.

"The goalie situation will be the biggest thing we look at," Brind'Amour said.

Canes center Jordan Staal said he didn't expect Brind'Amour's approach to change in his second year as head coach.

"We're going to be one of the hardest working teams and we're going to give it everything we've got every game," Staal said. "That's what Roddy wants. He demands that for sure."

News Observer LOADED: 09.14.2019

1152544 Carolina Hurricanes

Hurricanes training camp Day 1: Justin Faulk speaks, Petr Mrazek comes bearing hats

By Sara Civian Sep 13, 2019

Justin Faulk has no idea where he might end up by July, or maybe it'll happen in December, or possibly even this time next week.

Being a Carolina Hurricane is all he's known for eight NHL seasons. For the record, he says he has no bad feelings about that — even in the "dog days."

"I like it here, I've been here a long time, obviously we all know about the dog days there for a little bit," Faulk said Friday as training camp opened at PNC Arena. "But last year was fun, we had a good run and the team is getting better. I am more than happy to stay here. I haven't asked for a trade or anything like that, I have no objection to staying here after this year, either."

He's referencing the potential trade that surfaced earlier this week involving him on the move to Anaheim, a team on his partial No-Trade list. It's looking less likely that he'll waive the clause by the minute — and that's his right. But now other teams that might not be on the list have called the Hurricanes about the offensive-minded defenseman in the final year of his contract.

So while nothing's imminent, it's still a maybe July, maybe December, maybe next week mentality for Faulk.

If that bothers him, he didn't show it at all on Day 1 of training camp. He was buzzing through drills fast enough to earn a coveted Rod Brind'Amour stick tap ("He always does that," said Brind'Amour), joked around with everyone as he usually does, even made light of the whole situation in his interview.

"Still gotta show up, right? I'm still part of this team," he said. "It happens, I'm not the first person in the league to have their name thrown out there. I'm still here and ready to work, trying to do my thing."

When the media paused before the next question, he jokingly got up.

"OK, well, good talk."

Same, old Justin Faulk. I've got a feeling that won't change.

Sebastian Aho told me that he hasn't bought anything "too fancy" with his signing bonus, but he did buy a car right before signing it.

I THINK HE SAID THE SAME THING WHEN THAT SIGNING BONUS DIRECT DEPOSIT HIT [HTTPS://T.CO/OJTCWD2YSM](https://t.co/OJTCWD2YSM)

— SARA CIV (@SARACIVIAN) SEPTEMBER 10, 2019

Now that that's out of the way, his focus has shifted to the ice.

"I want to be a better hockey player, I don't have any goals (in terms of) points, just be a better player overall," he said. "There are a lot of details in my game that I know can be better."

Oh yeah, and while he was gone the Finnish invasion expanded to include his World Cup teammate Erik Haula. Haula took a more North American route, playing high school hockey at the famous Shattuck St. Mary's (Faribault, Minn.), the USHL's Lancers, then three seasons at Minnesota. Still, a Finn is a Finn.

"I knew him before, but not that well," Aho said of his countryman. "We played in the World Cup together, but he's been in the U.S. forever now. He's a good guy and it's obviously nice to have another Finn here."

Smirks

One thing that caught my attention Friday is how well the new guys seemed to fit in already. Culture is important for the Hurricanes because it has to be. I found it interesting that Haula said it's all English, all the time when the Canes are together despite so many Finns.

"I'm not used to so many Finns, it is kind of a challenge to keep it in English, but I know they want to do that here," Haula said. "(We'll) keep the Finnish hush-hush (joking)."

Welcome to Raleigh, Finland South.

Chase Priskie left the ice Friday and went to the doctor for further evaluation. Didn't catch what happened, but Brind'Amour called the trip to the doctor "not a good sign," adding there's obviously no update until the results come back.

Trevor van Riemsdyk's opening day status is still "up in the air," according to Brind'Amour, but the team isn't going to rush a return. Especially with so many options on the blue line.

Petr Mrazek bought everyone hats. That's it, that's the sentence. "I saw the hat in Czech, I just liked the idea," he told me. "One guy makes them, I wanted to bring them for the guys."

It's been a long-running joke that Hadyn Fleury's elusive first NHL goal is a monkey-on-back situation, but on Friday Dougie Hamilton missed two penalty shots, Andrei Svechnikov missed one, then Fleury nailed his. The stars are aligning, folks.

Is it cool if I do this sort of thing every day-ish during training camp and ease up on the Twitter updates?

The Athletic LOADED: 09.14.2019

1152625 NHL



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4 Nations tournament canceled because of Swedish boycott

Associated Press SEPTEMBER 13, 2019 — 11:10AM

STOCKHOLM — The Swedish Ice Hockey Federation has canceled the Four Nations women's hockey tournament in November because it can't guarantee its players' participation due to an ongoing pay dispute.

The federation announced the decision Friday and noted the uncertainty regarding their players' status has made it difficult for the three other competing nations to make travel plans. The tournament was scheduled to feature teams from Finland, the United States and Canada.

Sweden's top players are boycotting their national team because they are unhappy over pay and working conditions.

The players skipped a Five Nations tournament held in Finland in August because of the strike, and have yet to agree a new contract with the federation. They have also formed a union and raised numerous complaints over their previous deal, which expired in April. Players are unhappy over their compensation, while also having to fit work and family schedules around national team requirements.

Other complaints included travel conditions and schedules, the short and long-term vision for women's hockey in Sweden and a perceived lack of respect.

The Swedish players are following in the steps of U.S. women's national team members who were successful in landing better compensation after threatening to boycott the 2017 World Championships being held on American soil.

In May, more than 200 of the world's top players pledged to boycott playing in North America this season in a push to establish a women's professional league with what they say must be a sustainable economic model. They have since formed a union, the Professional Women's Hockey Players' Association, to represent them.

The Swedish players have the PWHPA's support.

"It's tough to see, for sure, but I think it really speaks to the fact that we are all only as strong as our weakest link," PWHPA board member Liz Knox wrote in a text to The Associated Press. "We support them striving for better because in the end, women's hockey as a whole will be the better for it."

Anders Larsson, chairman of the Swedish Ice Hockey Federation, last month said the boycott is damaging the brand of the country's hockey team and is a failure for both the federation and the Swedish team.

LOADED: 09.14.2019

1152710 Websites

The Athletic / Key issues in on-going CBA talks as NHLPA faces deadline this weekend

By Katie Strang

Sept 13, 2019

The NHL and NHLPA will resume collective bargaining discussions in Toronto on Friday, the sixth consecutive business day the two sides will meet in an attempt to find common ground on key issues heading into the weekend.

It is entirely possible these talks will continue through the weekend, with a big decision still facing the NHLPA, which has until Sunday to decide whether to opt-out of the current CBA (which would then expire in 2020). The league was faced with the same decision earlier this month and decided not to opt-out, with commissioner Gary Bettman saying in a statement that "our hope that a continued, sustained period of labor peace will enable us to further grow the game and benefit all constituent groups: NHL Players, Clubs, our business partners and, most important, our fans."

Thus far, the talks have been decidedly less rancorous than those during the last labor dispute, a 113-day lockout that impacted the 2012-13 NHL season. That the two sides have been working doggedly in advance of the NHLPA's deadline to make a decision, with little to no public broadsides, can be seen as a reason for optimism.

However, there's no telling how quickly things could go sideways if the NHL and NHLPA can't agree on certain fundamental concepts that are priorities to each camp in an extension of the current agreement.

As it stands, there are four ways things can go from here:

The NHLPA can decide to not opt-out and the two sides can continue to negotiate.

The NHLPA can decide to opt-out and the two sides can continue to negotiate.

The NHL and NHLPA can reach a memorandum of understanding that reflects a new agreement on the CBA.

Talks can fall apart.

Those involved with the discussions have indicated that the first two options are the most likely at the moment – the second would represent a significant show of good faith that there is enough momentum to come to an agreement without major issues. Both sides have been tight-lipped in an effort to keep the momentum going and avoid getting into a PR battle.

The NHLPA's executive board will make the decision in terms of which route to take on Sunday, and there are expected to be multiple conference calls in the interim to discuss the takeaways from negotiations and options that lie ahead.

And although both sides have been reluctant to publicly discuss specifics of what a potential deal could look like, there are a few things that have been established.

Escrow remains a top concern for players, as evidenced by Jonathan Toews' comments made at the end of last season:

"I'm no financial expert," the Blackhawks' captain said in an interview with Chicago's Daily Herald, which was published earlier this month. "All I see is that I've signed a contract and to me it's not exactly being honored. So I don't care what business you're in – to me that's kind of ridiculous."

And while escrow is, at its heart, a conceptual issue and an accounting mechanism that provides cost certainty — money subtracted from players' paychecks is set aside to resolve discrepancies between projected revenues and actual revenues — it



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is tied to a more fundamental question of the league's revenue projections and growth.

"Without getting into specifics, when you look at escrow, what you're looking at is the relative growth of the face value of player contracts to the relative growth rate of revenues, and we would all like that to be significantly higher," NHLPA executive director Don Fehr said last week in Chicago at the NHL's annual player media tour. "But, you know, the world is as it is."

Asked what can be done to further grow revenue, Fehr declined to further engage on that topic: "I don't want to get into that now. That's a longer conversation than we have time for tonight."

In an interview with The Athletic last week, Bettman was asked to assess the league's growth in recent years. He estimated that the league has grown, over the past decade, on average, about 6 percent annually in an inflationary economy of 1 or 2 percent. When pressed to compare the league's growth with, say, the NBA, Bettman pointed out the monster television deal recently brokered by the NBA.

Bettman emphasized that the NHL is on the precipice of negotiating its own new television deal with the U.S. television rights coming up soon (the current deal expires in 2021), and that this deal will also reflect the changing media landscape that includes streaming services as another huge potential revenue stream.

"Our time is coming," Bettman said. "We haven't had the negotiation yet in this environment and we're about to."

Bettman also said "the escrow issue is wildly misunderstood" and that the system was designed in a way that left open both the possibility and probability that contracts being issued would exceed the 50 percent players' share of hockey-related revenue. He said two factors have exacerbated escrow: the changes to the formula in calculating the upper and lower limits of the salary cap (instead of adding and subtracting \$8 million from the midpoint, limits are now calculated by adding and subtracting by 15 percent under the current CBA) and the impact of front-loaded contracts, which are calculated as "cash over cap" rather than on average annual value.

(It should be noted that the lack of more robust revenue growth and a weak Canadian dollar are also significant factors in escrow).

"We could put an end to escrow tomorrow if you decide to slam the cap down. We're happy to write the check if that makes the system work better," Bettman said, indicating that the league is open to discussing the computation of the cap and the way that contracts are currently structured.

Multiple sources have confirmed that there have been discussions centered around how to calculate the cap in the future, and whether there is a way to do this that could alleviate the escrow concern.

Sources have also confirmed that the NHL would like to address signing bonuses and front-loaded contracts, which the league feels offers a competitive advantage to big-market or big-budget teams. These big-budget teams, some of which live in areas of high tax rates, would respond that this is how they are able to compete for top talent when they can't offer them the same dollar-for-dollar net as a place with more player-friendly tax advantages.

Just recently, Flyers restricted free agent defenseman Ivan Provorov inked a six-year, \$40.5 million deal worth an average of \$6.75 million, which, according to The Athletic's Pierre LeBrun, also includes \$12 million in signing bonus money.

Whether signing bonuses and front-loaded contracts become a sticking point for the league is not immediately known, nor is it clear

if that's something that the NHLPA would be willing to bend on in return for other compensatory benefits, such as post-career health care, which is believed to be a priority.

What is obvious heading into the weekend is that the current state of negotiations is at a delicate juncture, with both sides reluctant to jeopardize any of the progress forged thus far.

"I don't know how they prioritize the things we've been discussing and I certainly wouldn't want to discuss those publicly because, frankly, I don't want to say anything that might impact their decision-making process," Bettman said. "But at the end of the day, both sides will have to have balanced whether or not the things they want are worth it in the short term. And long-term — listen, this is a relationship that transcends the collective bargaining agreement and so we're going to live together long-term and figure out how to do that moving forward whether or not they (re-open or not)."

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The Athletic / NHL players, young and old, watching the RFA standoff: 'I hope somebody shakes up the league'

By Craig Custance

Sep 13, 2019

It's hard to say it was perfect timing because that makes it sound like it was a positive. For Torey Krug, his timing wasn't a positive. But it was certainly something. His career arc has come at an interesting time in the lifecycle of this collective bargaining agreement and the strategies NHL GMs are implementing on how they spend cap space.

When Krug broke into the league, young players, especially those without leverage, had to wait their turn to get paid. That's not to say it was right or wrong, it just was. When he was coming out of his entry-level deal after the 2013-14 season, Krug had a 40-point season on his resume. It didn't matter. He got what was left under the Bruins cap — \$1.4 million on a one-year deal, to be exact.

"Completely squeezed," Krug said. "Missed two weeks of camp just for that."

He operated in a system where he had to wait his turn. Station to station. His next deal was another one-year contract, with the money creeping up to \$3.4 million. Then came his most recent contract, a four-year contract worth \$5.25 million that takes him to unrestricted free agency after this season. That's the good news. The bad news? UFAs are out. Paying the young players is in. And now, Krug has no idea what his future looks like.

"Now I'm about to finally get to UFA and it's like, 'We want to give all the money to the young guys who have the two years (of service),' " Krug said. "So, I don't know. I'm torn. I get it."

It's the flip side to the RFA standoff going on right now. As training camps have opened around the league, there are still a number of high profile young players without contracts. At this point, you know who they are. Some deals are getting done, but the deals getting done are the ones that look an awfully like ones signed previously.



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There are still plenty of other high-profile players unsigned who could change the salary structure around the league. And, when you talk to the young players, it's easy to see why they're demanding it. Teams are asking more of their young players than ever. This is their prime. This is also when the investment makes the most sense.

"It's pretty simple, to be honest," said Canadiens forward Max Domi, a restricted free agent after this season. "Not to disrespect the past or the younger players coming into the league in that era, but you never used to see an 18-year-old kid come in and be good enough to be on your first unit power play, play in your top six, shut down D, starting goalie – you never used to see this. Now, kids are so good, the league has gotten so much younger, it's a fact. Just look at it. It's pretty self-explanatory. These guys are playing roles they never used to have to play. You get paid off the role you play. If you're successful at it, you're going to get paid. It's simple."

It's simple, in theory. But it doesn't come without resistance. Teams are built around young players. They're asking them to be the face of the franchise. But the system in place, and previous salaries already on the books, typically reward the players based on leverage and how close they are to their UFA years.

It takes a different mentality from the next generation to change that system. A mentality, that sounds a little something like this observation from Mathew Barzal, another 2020 restricted free agent.

"I don't like the thought that because a player is young, he doesn't deserve to get paid as much as someone who is 28 or 29. Talent is talent, at the end of the day. Value to a team is the same thing," Barzal said. "Young guys are so good and skilled nowadays, they probably deserve the money."

For the record, Barzal appears to very much be on Team Chaos. He's somebody who is going to be directly impacted by the contracts signed over the next few weeks, assuming they get done. The deals for Mitch Marner, Patrik Laine, Mikko Rantanen – they immediately become the contracts CAA and the Islanders will work off when it comes time to do Barzal's deal.

So yeah, he's watching.

"It's going to be fun to see how it shakes out," Barzal said. "I hope somebody shakes up the league and throws a couple offer sheets out there. I think that would be fun to see. I think the NHL needs that ... in the NHL, no one moves. It's so hard to move in the NHL. Whereas, the NBA and NFL, these guys are all over the place all the time. I don't see why not while you're young. I feel like that is something they need to look at."

That's the one thing we haven't seen yet with these young players. Movement from team to team. Sebastian Aho's offer sheet was a flop for Montreal ("I was like, 'Oh, this could be really good,' It's unfortunate," Domi said of the Aho offer sheet. "I'm happy for him. He got paid a lot of money upfront.").

According to an NHL source, two teams presented serious offers to Mitch Marner earlier this summer for an offer sheet, obviously without success. But when you talk to agents, they suggest that the best time for an offer sheet is still to come. If players are willing to sit out all of training camp and teams lose their cushion once the season starts, that opens a potentially fruitful window on the offer sheet front on Oct. 2. One veteran agent predicted that we'll see at least one offer sheet once the season starts.

"July 1 is not when you make an offer sheet," he said. "The club has a 10 percent cushion above where they need to finish."

"That's what I hear too," Barzal said. "I think that's why it's slow right now. It would be fun to see somebody move around. I think it would be good to see."

Certainly, if you're Barzal it's good to see.

It's not great if you're a GM trying to straddle two different systems – the old one where veteran players got the big salaries and the emerging system where young players make the most. It becomes especially problematic to those teams that have big contracts for players over 30 with future stars on entry-level deals. It's led to some grumbling from executives frustrated with the ballooning second contracts, but from a macro level, the league ultimately doesn't care how the money is divided up.

Teams have to figure out the best path to winning. If it's paying young players, it's paying young players. That is still to be determined.

"The fact is, the players get 50 percent of the revenues. If you're operating in this system, you have to decide how to best allocate your resources. If the game appears to be getting younger and that's what's winning it for teams, I'm fine with that. That's an individual club decision," NHL commissioner Gary Bettman told The Athletic. "The teams that are successful figure out how to operate within the system, right?"

Really, that's the debate. Bringing it back to Krug and the Bruins, if paying Brandon Carlo and Charlie McAvoy the new market rate costs them Krug, is that the best path to winning? Does it have to be either or? That's what is on the line as these negotiations reach their apex.

"You're just so curious as to what's going to happen," Krug said. "Maybe three years ago, I'm sitting here laughing, knowing what's coming my way and I'm like, 'This is probably what's happening.' Today, I have no idea."

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1152712 Websites

The Athletic / Pronman: Top goalie prospects entering the 2019-20 season

By Corey Pronman

Sep 13, 2019

What follows are my rankings of the best goaltending prospects outside the NHL, serving as a conclusion to the summer series looking at the talent in each NHL organization. This is a ranking of all the goalie prospects who I think will become full-time NHL players. I ranked the top skaters separately.

Here I re-introduce tools grades on the 20-80 scale that were not present in the farm rankings. In this scale, 50 projects as pro average, 55 as above-average, 60 top third, 70 as elite and 80 as among the very best; 45 is below-average and 40 is fringe pro quality.

The tiers and analysis did not change much from what I wrote in the team rankings this summer, with slight modifications accounting for



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any games that took place in the past month, in NHL camps and in preseason overseas.

The previous ranking refers to how I ranked the prospects at the start of the 2018-19 season, as I think it is a better comparable than the midseason ranking.

Very Good NHL Prospect

Thatcher Demko, Vancouver

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

Drafted: 36th-overall (2014)

Previous ranking: No. 2

Athleticism: 60

Hockey Sense: 60

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

Spencer Knight, Florida

April 19, 2001 | 6-foot-3 | 192 pounds

Drafted: 13th-overall (2019)

Previous ranking: N/A

Athleticism: 60

Hockey Sense: 65

Knight has been a top prospect for years. He didn't have the dominant season many expected, but he was still quite good for most of the season and finished strong with a fantastic U18 tournament. Knight is a super smart goalie without any extra movement in his game than he needs to square up a puck. There's no panic in the way he plays, yet he can move quickly to get to pucks. When a tough save needs to be made, he's there, square, in perfect form even if it requires him to move to get there. He has very powerful legs to get across his crease. Knight likes to play the puck and is very good at doing so. One nitpick of his game is he doesn't often make the spectacular save, but scouts will argue it's because he is never out of position. As a 6-foot-3 goalie with his athleticism and IQ, he projects to start in the NHL.

Igor Shesterkin, New York Rangers

Dec. 30, 1995 | 6-foot-1 | 183 pounds

Drafted: 118th-overall (2014)

Previous ranking: No. 4

Athleticism: 65

Hockey Sense: 60

Shesterkin had a great season, leading the KHL with a .953 save percentage. What makes him such a great goalie is his quickness. He has elite lateral agility and makes highlight reel saves with frequency. Because of his quickness it may seem like his game is chaotic and at his size that would be concerning, but it's controlled chaos. He's not over sliding pucks nor is he ever wildly out of

position. I think his sense is high-end. He anticipates plays very well and his brain operates almost as quickly as his feet. Shesterkin's 6-foot-1 frame is his main weakness. You see occasional pucks leak through him and wonder if he was a bit bigger if that would happen. He's not a perfect player with a perfect track record, but he has that game-stealing ability and a record of stealing many games, which are very hard to find.

Cayden Primeau, Montreal

Aug. 11, 1999 | 6-foot-3 | 198 pounds

Drafted: 199th-overall (2017)

Previous ranking: No. 9

Athleticism: 55

Hockey Sense: 60

Primeau had a great season, was named the top goalie in college hockey and played great at the world juniors. Northeastern was a good team last season, and Primeau was a giant reason why. What I like about Primeau are how many dimensions his game has. He can play the steady goalie with low movement, and he's quick enough to get to tough pucks (although his quickness isn't elite). He reads plays very well and often is square with pucks, but he's also great at improvising when he gets a bad bounce or he gets faked out. Sometimes Primeau can be too aggressive with his slides and positional play, but often he makes a ton of tough stops.

Very Good/Legit Bubble

Ilya Samsonov, Washington

Feb. 22, 1997 | 6-foot-3 | 205 pounds

Drafted: 22nd-overall (2015)

Previous ranking: No. 1

Athleticism: 65

Hockey Sense: 55

Samsonov had a tough first pro season in North America as he adjusted to playing goal on the smaller ice at the AHL level. I believe in the toolkit a lot and have always been impressed over the years, so despite his .898 save percentage as a 21-year-old, I still have hope. Scouts who watched him this season still seem optimistic too. His athleticism is elite, he can make spectacular saves, especially as a 6-foot-3 goalie, and had quite a few highlight reel moments this season. I think he's a smart and technically sound goalie; and when he's locked in, he squares everything. However, I also saw moments last season where he didn't track the play that well, or his positioning was a bit off.

Jake Oettinger, Dallas

Dec. 18, 1998 | 6-foot-4 | 212 pounds

Drafted: 26th-overall (2017)

Previous ranking: No. 12

Athleticism: 60

Hockey Sense: 60

Oettinger was very good in his junior season, as an important part of BU's team. The athletic tools are fantastic. He's 6-foot-4 and has high-end quickness. He regularly made saves of high difficulty, and with how big he is and his ability to quickly move, he can take away space to shoot very well. His game can have some chaos in it, but I



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like his hockey sense and reads a lot, even if he gets too cute at times with high challenges and over aggressive play. He stays with most pucks, and when he is caught out of position, it's usually because he made a calculated gamble. I like where his game is at right now.

Ilya Sorokin, New York Islanders

Aug. 4, 1995 | 6-foot-2 | 176 pounds

Drafted: 78th-overall (2014)

Previous ranking: No. 3

Athleticism: 55

Hockey Sense: 65

Sorokin was dominant in the KHL, clearing a .940 save percentage between the season and playoffs, and being the main reason why CSKA won the league. There is an effortlessness to his game. Sorokin has good quickness and can make tough saves, but he always seems to be square to pucks. He reads opponents plays so well and is always set to make stops. He's not the biggest at 6-foot-2, but he's aggressive with his angles and forwards never seem to have a lot of net to shoot at. He's proven all he can at the KHL level, all that's left for the 23-year-old is to cross the pond. His deal with CSKA expires after the 2019-20 season.

Daniil Tarasov, Columbus

March 27, 1999 | 6-foot-5 | 185 pounds

Drafted: 86th-overall (2017)

Previous ranking: NR

Athleticism: 55

Hockey Sense: 60

I remember seeing Tarasov as an underage player in North Dakota in the spring of 2016 carry Russia at the IIHF U18s, as that was the year the entire team had to be replaced due to disqualification. He suffered a knee injury in his draft season, but I never forgot the dominant prospect I saw in Grand Forks. Since then I've remained on the Tarasov bandwagon and he continues to get better, being a solid goalie in Russia's second tier pro league and a top one in the postseason. He's a 6-foot-5 goalie who covers up the entire lower half of the net when he's in the butterfly stance. Tarasov moves very well for a big goalie, often making second stops and highly acrobatic stops. He reads the game well, never usually out of position and with his big frame he often doesn't have to move much once he's square. You don't say this about 6-foot-5 goalies, but sometimes he's too active and quick in net, trying to challenge or poke check pucks, but generally he's not burned by that. He'll play next season in Finland after signing with Columbus.

Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen, Buffalo

March 9, 1999 | 6-foot-4 | 196 pounds

Drafted: 54th-overall (2017)

Previous ranking: NR

Athleticism: 55

Hockey Sense: 60

Luukkonen was the best player in the OHL and a top player at the world juniors. He often stole games for Sudbury and was a big reason why it was a top team. I'm very conservative about tabbing goalies as projected No. 1s, but as one NHL scout put it this season,

"If (Luukkonen)'s not a No. 1, what exactly does one look like?" He has all the tools between the size, IQ and athleticism. He moves very well for a big goalie. He can get across to pucks, challenge high and recover fine. He squares up a ton of pucks. Opponents rarely fool him with their puck-movement and he can improvise when needed. I found that even when he was in the right spot a lot and with his big frame, pucks would leak through his technique a bit more than they should, but that may be a nitpick.

Samuel Ersson, Philadelphia

Oct. 20, 1999 | 6-foot-2 | 176 pounds

Drafted: 143rd-overall (2018)

Previous ranking: NR

Athleticism: 55

Hockey Sense: 65

Ersson was a rock all last season between his pro team in Sweden's tier-2 pro league and at the world juniors for Sweden. His hockey sense is fantastic. There is no stress in his game. He tracks pucks at an elite level. He always seems in a great position to take away a shooter's angle. He has good quickness in his game, with a sharp glove and strong legs to make tough saves, but he often doesn't need to lean on those elements because of how good his sense is. He's not the biggest goalie at 6-foot-2, but that's really the only criticism I could make of his game. I see Ersson on a sharp upward trajectory right now.

Joseph Woll, Toronto

July 12, 1998 | 6-foot-3 | 203 pounds

Drafted: 62nd-overall (2016)

Previous ranking: No. 10

Athleticism: 65

Hockey Sense: 55

Woll had a good season for BC, as one of the top goalies in his conference, and signed with the Leafs after the season. "His athleticism stands out, he's extremely quick goalpost to goalpost," Boston College coach Jerry York said. Woll has a long highlight reel. He can make difficult saves consistently because of his 6-foot-3 frame and how incredibly quick he is. I like his game a lot for those reasons. On his best nights, he's robbing goals with his elite lateral quickness and making great reads on how to use his quickness to be aggressive on shooters. However, other times he's sprawling around his crease and not reading shots that well. He's not perfect, but he's a very good goalie who has always impressed me, even if his numbers haven't always shown a true top prospect.

Michael DiPietro, Vancouver

June 9, 1999 | six-foot | 201 pounds

Drafted: 64th-overall (2017)

Previous ranking: No. 8

Athleticism: 65

Hockey Sense: 60

DiPietro has been a top goalie in junior hockey for the past few years, even though his save percentage numbers have never been dazzling. He's a show stealer in net. DiPietro has elite athleticism and is good for an elite save or two a night. He is lightning quick, but he's also a very smart goaltender. He challenges shooters very well,



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is rarely out of position and anticipates the opposing team's plays at a high level. He needs that quickness and intelligence because he is six-foot. There are times pucks get past him where you think, if he was two inches taller, those don't happen. You just hope there's enough of the other good stuff to balance that out, which I believe is the case.

Legit NHL Prospect

Kyle Keyser, Boston

March 8, 1999 | 6-foot-2 | 179 pounds

Drafted: Undrafted

Previous ranking: NR

Athleticism: 65

Hockey Sense: 60

After going undrafted and being signed as a major junior free agent, Keyser has steadily developed into a great goalie prospect and was one of the best in the OHL. His quickness in goal is elite, he's not small at 6-foot-2 and that allows him to steal games. Keyser is lightning fast in the net, getting to tough pucks easily, but I love his athletic ability combined with his hockey sense. His anticipation and legs always allow him to move with the puck at all times. He's very brave and aggressive in the net with his challenges. One nitpick is that he seems to be moving too much at times, but I think that's just due to how quick he is. I think he's an NHL goaltender.

Elvis Merzlikins, Columbus

April 13, 1994 | 6-foot-3 | 192 pounds

Drafted: 76th-overall (2014)

Previous ranking: NR

Athleticism: 60

Hockey Sense: 55

Merzlikins, who I will refer to as Elvis for the duration of this profile because I can, has been a top goalie at the NLA and in international play for the past few years. He can dazzle and has a swagger in the net. He's a 6-foot-3 goalie who is very quick. I've seen Elvis get to pucks he had no business getting to, or snag a puck out of mid-air while jumping across the crease. He's got that ability to steal a game. With that said, his game has a bit of chaos in it too. There are plenty of times I see him over slide pucks or caught wildly out of position. At his best, Elvis tracks pucks very well, being calm when needed and aggressive when needed. At his worst, he loses focus, making bad reads or having a lot of extra movement in his game. I think the natural tools make him an NHL goalie, but he may have some severe peaks and valleys in the league.

Alex Nedeljkovic, Carolina

Jan. 7, 1996 | six-foot | 190 pounds

Drafted: 37th-overall (2014)

Previous ranking: NR

Athleticism: 60

Hockey Sense: 65

When I saw Nedeljkovic early last season, he was all over the place. His play looked like a carbon copy of past pro seasons where he had flashes but made too many errors, particularly for a smaller goalie. Right after that it seemed like a switch flipped, as Nedeljkovic tore up

the AHL and was named goalie of the year. His puck tracking improved a lot this season. He never lost the puck in the second half and was seemingly always square to the puck. You add in his elite athleticism and you have a very good goaltender. His six-foot frame won't inspire confidence, and he can still be a bit erratic in the crease with his movements, but he seems very much back on track.

Pyotr Kochetkov, Carolina

June 25, 1999 | 6-foot-3 | 205 pounds

Drafted: 36th-overall (2019)

Previous ranking: N/A

Athleticism: 55

Hockey Sense: 60

Kochetkov is a late-blooming prospect who had a great year versus men at the second division pro level in Russia. He was dominant versus his peers when he played international hockey, including being named best goaltender at the world juniors. Kochetkov is a 6-foot-3 goalie who moves well, if not very well for a goalie his size. He gets post-to-post effectively while maintaining his technique. His lower half covers up the net very well. His hockey sense is high-end. He anticipates passes and plays at a top level, tracks the puck very well, and squares up pucks at a high frequency. Kochetkov can get a little over aggressive, which I like, but even when he loses the puck and must break from his technique, he's quick and smart enough to make the desperation saves frequently. He has all the tools to be an NHL goalie.

Ian Scott, Toronto

Jan. 11, 1999 | 6-foot-3 | 183 pounds

Drafted: 110th-overall (2017)

Previous ranking: NR

Athleticism: 60

Hockey Sense: 60

Scott had a great season, earning all kinds of accolades, such as WHL playoff MVP and CHL top goaltender. Scott has always been an interesting athlete but never had the performance to match it before his 19-year-old season (2018-19) where he showed real growth in his game. "He has great quickness side to side, he can get to the backdoor plays very well. His biggest growth has been in his decision making. He manages games better, he tracks pucks better," said Prince Albert GM Curtis Hunt. Scott, with his 6-foot-3 frame and great quickness, can make the highlight reel save, but he never seems out of control. His positioning is solid, he doesn't move when he doesn't need to, and he challenges shooters well.

Mads Søgaard, Ottawa

Dec. 13, 2000 | 6-foot-7 | 196 pounds

Drafted: 37th-overall (2019)

Previous ranking: N/A

Athleticism: 55

Hockey Sense: 55

Søgaard was one of the top goaltenders in the WHL in his first season in the league. The appealing thing about him is his athletic toolkit. He's a legit 6-foot-7 with plenty of room left to fill out his frame, and he moves very well for his size. I wouldn't call his side-to-side movements dynamic, but he gets between posts well and



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doesn't need to move much to take away shooting lanes. Søgaard tends to square up pucks, and he doesn't play that deep in the net. I'd rate his hockey sense as above-average, but he has moments where he makes the wrong read or makes a questionable decision. He also has moments where he makes wow-level saves and dominates games; and when the play breaks down and he starts to scramble, his massive frame allows him to stop pucks other goalies wouldn't be able to.

Lukas Dostal, Anaheim

June 22, 2000 | 6-foot-1 | 168 pounds

Drafted: 85th-overall (2018)

Previous ranking: No. 17

Athleticism: 55

Hockey Sense: 65

Dostal has consistently impressed me whenever I've watched him for the past two seasons. He bounced around between a few pro teams this season, generally performing well, and was great internationally for the Czech Republic. Other than his size at around 6-foot-1 everything about Dostal's game looks good. He's a very smart goaltender who reads plays very well and squares up a ton of pucks. He's aggressive with his positioning but never seems to be out of position. He moves well. It's not elite athleticism for a goalie his size, but he can make tough saves.

Akira Schmid, New Jersey

May 12, 2000 | 6-foot-5 | 205 pounds

Drafted: 136th-overall (2018)

Previous ranking: NR

Athleticism: 60

Hockey Sense: 55

Schmid started the season in the WHL, which had a roster crunch, before eventually ending up in the USHL, where he was dominant, led the league in save percentage and often stole games for Omaha. Schmid checks off all the boxes. He's 6-foot-5, moves very well, and his game doesn't break down with a lot of extra movement or losing his technique. His athleticism for his size and ability to make unorthodox saves stands out. I've seen the odd bad goal slip by him at the major events and his international track record is so-so, but it's hard to ignore how he looked in the USHL.

Joey Daccord, Ottawa

Aug. 19, 1996 | 6-foot-2 | 196 pounds

Drafted: 199th-overall (2015)

Previous ranking: NR

Athleticism: 60

Hockey Sense: 60

Arizona State's successful season was a big story, and Daccord's play was a big reason why it was such a good team. He's a goalie with high-end athleticism and hockey sense. He has the lateral explosiveness to make tough saves, and he did so consistently through the season. His sense and puck tracking stood out often. He typically stayed with pucks, was aggressive at the right moments and showed good creativity when he was in a bad spot. His positioning and decision-making weren't perfect, which isn't ideal for a 6-foot-2 goalie, but he also showed elite sense in other moments.

Arizona State coach Greg Powers had high praised Daccord's puck playing ability.

Ilya Konovalov, Edmonton

July 13, 1998 | six-foot | 194 pounds

Drafted: 85th-overall (2019)

Previous ranking: N/A

Athleticism: 55

Hockey Sense: 65

Konovalov had a great season. He was an above-average starting goalie in the KHL and is a player who will be looked to for the Russian national team in the future. He's six-foot with good but not great athleticism, so I was initially quite skeptical. Konovalov's hockey sense is outstanding, though, and he won me over. His eyes seem magnetically attracted to the puck. He's never fooled by reverse passes from behind the net or centering plays, and he stays in position even when the puck is bouncing around the crease. He has that very low panic threshold you want in a goalie. He may never make the spectacular diving save, but he often never needs to. His movements are quick and smooth enough that he squares up most pucks. It's not easy making the NHL at six-foot, but Konovalov might just have what it takes.

Mikhail Berdin, Winnipeg

March 1, 1998 | 6-foot-2 | 163 pounds

Drafted: 157th-overall (2016)

Previous ranking: NR

Athleticism: 60

Hockey Sense: 55

Berdin started the season in the ECHL before a midseason callup to Manitoba, and he was excellent in the second half. When you think of a calm, quiet goalie without much movement, Berdin isn't that. His game is very active. He's got high-end quickness and reactions. He's very aggressive with his positional play, he moves around a lot and he shows no fear to play very high in his crease. He can hurt himself with his reads, such as being way too aggressive on a challenge or a bad puck play behind his net. However, when his reads are on he can make very difficult saves consistently, as he did throughout his time in the AHL.

Andrew Shortridge, San Jose

April 26, 1995 | 6-foot-4 | 185 pounds

Drafted: Undrafted

Previous ranking: N/A

Athleticism: 60

Hockey Sense: 55

Shortridge was dominant in the ECAC this season and overall was one of the best goalies in college hockey. He's immediately appealing projecting to the pro level because of his big frame at 6-foot-4 and high-end athleticism. He can make the tough saves to steal a game. His decision making and positional play give me cause for concern at time, and there may be an adjustment period when he hits the pros and mistakes are exploited more often, but I do like his upside.

Filip Larsson, Detroit



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 14, 2019

Aug. 17, 1998 | 6-foot-2 | 181 pounds

Drafted: 167th-overall (2016)

Previous ranking: HM

Athleticism: 50

Hockey Sense: 65

Larsson was a top goalie in the NCHC last season, posting a .932 save percentage for Denver and signing with Detroit after the season. His size is average at 6-foot-2, and while he moves fine, his lateral quickness isn't anything special. What makes Larsson an NHL prospect is his hockey sense. He tracks pucks very well and I'm a big fan of his positional play in net. He always seems to be moving with the puck without extra effort, and even when he loses it he finds it very quickly. He's not a huge goalie, but he's aggressive with his challenges. Sometimes he's a little over aggressive, but he doesn't usually get burned by it.

Ryan Bednard, Florida

March 31, 1997 | 6-foot-5 | 201 pounds

Drafted: 206th-overall (2015)

Previous ranking: NR

Athleticism: 50

Hockey Sense: 60

Bednard was a top goalie in the WCHA and signed following his junior season at Bowling Green. He's a very large goalie at 6-foot-5, his frame has filled out, and he takes up large chunks of the net even when on the goal line and in his butterfly. I like his hockey sense a lot. He reads plays very well. He's aggressive when he needs to and never seems that out of position. He reads shots very well and isn't an automatic into a butterfly on high shots, which is imposing at his size. His lateral agility is OK. For a big man he moves fine with the occasional high-level save, but I've also seen him caught because of his lack of top-end quickness.

Erik Portillo, Buffalo

Sept. 3, 2000 | 6-foot-6 | 209 pounds

Drafted: 67th-overall (2019)

Previous ranking: N/A

Athleticism: 55

Hockey Sense: 55

I didn't know Portillo that well going into the draft, but after seeing him in the summer and being intrigued, I went back, talked to sources and did video work on him. There's a player there. Portillo is a huge 6-foot-6 goalie who had a great season in Sweden. His quickness isn't anything amazing, but for a goalie his size he moves very well. He can get to pucks moving across the crease fine and has a decent glove hand. He has above-average hockey sense. There are times I see Portillo calmly moving around the crease, but I've also seen no hesitation from him to challenge shooters and play high in his crease. Occasionally I see him get beat by a puck he didn't track well or some extra movement, but in general I like his sense. He ticks off a lot of boxes. He's going to the USHL next season.

Dustin Wolf, Calgary

April 16, 2001 | six-foot | 161 pounds

Drafted: 214th-overall (2019)

Previous ranking: N/A

Athleticism: 60

Hockey Sense: 60

Wolf had a fantastic season in the WHL, clearing a .935 save percentage as a U18 and named runner-up for goalie of the year. The next highest save percentage ever among a goalie with 40-plus games at the same age was Leland Irving in 2006, with a .925. Wolf has an obvious issue. His size. He's just under six-foot, and that's a significant problem in his pro projection. Aside from his frame, he checks off all the boxes you want in a goalie. He's very athletic, he doesn't let in bad goals, he anticipates the play very well and he stops a lot of pucks. Some days I would say he's a very poised, calm goalie. Other days I see him playing very aggressive and doing the best he can to not make his height an issue with his angles. I do think for a guy his size there are too many moments where he's sprawling around the crease for my liking, but it's a nitpick. Some scouts have huge reservations on him because they don't think he will translate to the NHL, and it's a very fair criticism, but to date, he hasn't done much to give pause.

Player Eligibility:

A skater no longer qualifies as an NHL prospect if he has played 25 games in the NHL in any campaign, regular season and playoffs combined, or 50 games total; or reaches age 27 by Sept. 15.

A goalie no longer qualifies as an NHL prospect if he has played 10 games in the NHL in any campaign, regular season and playoffs combined, or 25 games total; or reaches age 27 by Sept. 15.

Tier Definitions:

Special NHL prospect: Projects as a true NHL star, someone who is among the best players in the league.

Elite NHL prospect: Projects as an impact player, someone who is top 10-15 percent in the NHL at his position.

High-end NHL prospect: Projects as a first-line forward or a top-pair defenseman.

Very good NHL prospect: Projects as a top-six forward, top-four defenseman or starting goaltender in the NHL.

Legit NHL prospect: Projects to be a full-time NHL player in the bottom half of a roster.

Has a chance: The prospect has a chance to make it as a full-time player if some improvements are made.

Depth Players: These are prospects who do not have NHL toolkits, but could be good AHL players and provide depth to an organization.

The Athletic LOADED: 09.14.2019

1152713 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / With Marnier signed, Maple Leafs' Cup window open until further notice

Chris Johnston | @reporterchris



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 14, 2019

September 13, 2019, 9:29 PM

ST. JOHN'S, N.L. — The first thought for anyone with a vested stake in the Toronto Maple Leafs should be 'Thank God.'

Thank God Mitch Marner's contract stalemate ended before it went right off the rails. Thank God the 22-year-old winger will be able to join his teammates with plenty of time still left in training camp. Thank God the front office made good on Kyle Dubas's promise to keep all of the young stars in the fold.

Elsewhere, there will be plenty of barely-muffled complaints.

Not only does Marner's market-resetting \$65.358-million, six-year extension instantly complicate life for other teams still negotiating with restricted free agents (hello Mikko Rantanen!), it marks the third straight major contract where Toronto stretched itself to the limit to get things done.

They've done it because they believe a core built around Marner, Auston Matthews, William Nylander, John Tavares and Morgan Rielly is good enough to compete for the Stanley Cup. The Leafs made the final push to sign Marner on Friday because this is clearly an all-or-nothing season and it didn't serve anyone's interests to have the standoff drag on any longer.

Toronto now carries three of the seven highest cap hits in the league — with Matthews (No. 3, \$11.634M), Tavares (No. 5, \$11M) and Marner (No. 7, \$10.893M) — and it has to hope the incoming U.S. television deals and the arrival of an expansion franchise in Seattle help fuel more league-wide growth in the years to come.

If that happens and young stars continue breaking the bank on their second contracts, these deals may come to look less onerous from a cap perspective.

The compromise in the Marner contract came on the length of the agreement. The player's camp had wanted to keep it to a three-year deal, but wound up seeing him become the NHL's second-highest paid winger behind Artemi Panarin when it eventually accepted a six-year term instead.

That buys two seasons of unrestricted free agency and clearly establishes the window this organization has to compete for a championship with Matthews and Nylander due for new deals in 2024 and Marner and Tavares signed through 2025.

This year may be their best chance of all. Tyson Barrie, Jake Muzzin and Cody Ceci are all playing on expiring deals and will fill three of Toronto's top four spots on the blue line. They've got improved depth at every position.

"We also think we've really taken a step internally," head coach Mike Babcock said Thursday. "What I mean by that is a lot of our core players have gotten substantially better. We've gotten older. They're more comfortable with themselves and they're more comfortable on the ice both offensively and defensively."

They should certainly be able to count on more growth from Marner and he's already been their top point producer for two seasons running. He had a career-best 94 points last year while also effectively adding penalty killing duties to his repertoire.

At even strength, Marner was the heartbeat of a lethal line with Tavares and Zach Hyman and led the league in primary assists. Expect that trio to be reunited once Hyman is ready to return from off-season surgery on his ACL at some point in November.

Their other top line is built around Matthews and Nylander, with Alex Kerfoot and Kasper Kapanen expected to form two-thirds of the third unit. At full health and with everyone performing, they'll be a handful to match up against.

"Let's be honest: I mean we're a good, good team in the National Hockey League," said Babcock. "It's taken some time to get here, but now we're a team that we feel like we have an opportunity each year. ..."

"We didn't have an opportunity in the past."

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

They've arrived here through a patient build that landed Nylander (No. 8 in 2014), Marner (No. 4 in 2015) and Matthews (No. 1 in 2016) with high picks in consecutive drafts. Now that each of those players has graduated from the entry-level contract system and is getting paid commensurate with his performance, the pressure shifts to management to find creative ways to keep building a competitive team around them.

The biggest challenge down the road will be properly staffing the blue line — the development of prospects Rasmus Sandin and Timothy Liljegren is more important than ever — while determining how to proceed when No. 1 goaltender Frederik Andersen's contract expires in 2021.

However, those are worries for another day.

The organization had once hoped their young stars might take a discount to stay together, but that never materialized. Still, part of president Brendan Shanahan's message from last October rings true today.

"What I hope they can look back on 20 years, 30 years down the road, what's going to be most important to them is whether or not they maxed out as an individual and as a team and have championships to look back on and remember forever," said Shanahan.

That's still possible.

The window isn't as wide as it might have been, but it's cranked open until further notice.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 09.14.2019

1152714 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Why Marner's contract raises questions about Maple Leafs' defence

Luke Fox | @lukefoxjukebox

September 14, 2019, 12:15 AM

The Michell Marner contract—rich, long and market-rocking—is a win for restricted free agents.

It's a win for wingers who drive play.

It's a win for negotiations as long as those engagements that might not end with marriage.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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It's a win for primary assists and tap-ins and young superstars who've never actually been NHL all-stars but are now top-seven in average annual salary (and top two among wings).

It's a win for lifelong winners who quarterback power plays and murder penalties and hug mascots and fling hockey sticks to kids and avoid checks like taxes.

It's a win for the small kid who hustles every shift like his chance depends on it.

Zooming all the way out, it's also a win for the rather tenuous but enticing theory that offence wins championships, which is essentially what Kyle "We Can, We Will" Dubas is banking on here.

Damn the clichés. Long live red lamps and 5-4 river hockey.

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Barring a blockbuster trade, the Toronto Maple Leafs will be pouring \$40.49 million of their precious salary cap into just four forwards—Auston Matthews, John Tavares, Marner and William Nylander—in each of the next five seasons.

There's your window, Leaf Nation.

There's your legacy, Mr. Dubas.

The good news: They're all young enough that it's not only believable but probable that their best hockey games are ahead of them.

A single Stanley Cup will make any agony Leafs fans feel over the lack of "hometown" discounts totally worth it. (Even the staunchest Raptors fans find it difficult to argue a grudge against Kawhi underneath their flat-brimmed 2019 NBA champions caps.) Plus, the salary ceiling is projected to go up, right? Right?!

The bad—or, at least, sobering—news: Toronto's defence during that window may never be as dynamic as it is today.

Dubas has boldly waded into uncharted waters here, banking his club's success on three forwards raking in eight figures.

It's a first. But if it works, it may not be the last.

In a cap world, the slivers of pie left over for the blue-line must be sliced thin.

Morgan Rielly—a 25-year-old coming hot off a 20-goal, 72-point campaign—has rapidly become one of the league's greatest bargains at \$5 million for the next three seasons. (Take a bow, Lou Lamoriello.)

But Rielly is the only roster defenceman under contract beyond this spring.

Think about that for a second.

If the Leafs are any good this year—and, boy, they better be—defencemen Cody Ceci, Jake Muzzin, Tyson Barrie, and Travis Dermott will all demand raises so large that it'll be difficult retaining more than two of them.

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

Dermott (RFA 2020), whom the Leafs smartly drafted and patiently developed, should be the easiest to re-sign and must establish himself as a top four defenceman. Maybe a stay-at-home guy like Ceci will settle because he likes his new niche.

Regardless, pressure will shift swiftly to prized prospects Rasmus Sandin and Timothy Liljegren, first-rounders who could find themselves logging heavy minutes on their entry-level deals, and on Dubas to find cheap labour via free agency or trade that can hold the fort in the Leafs' back end.

"One of the things we have to improve the most is playing in our own zone," coach Mike Babcock said at the outset of camp. "Last year, when we lost D [Dermott and Jake Gardiner to injury], we didn't maintain winning. We played tight and we were in it, but we didn't maintain winning."

That task will only get tougher when Barrie (a steal at \$2.75 million) and Muzzin (underpaid at \$4 million) command raises next summer the Leafs—so pot-committed up front—can no longer afford.

So as a proliferation of defensive depth recently boosted St. Louis and Washington to the promised land in cap-strained circumstances, Toronto—with its Marner payday the latest example—is out to prove there is whole other way to solve the equation.

He's banking, quite literally, that an onslaught of skill upfront is enough to back a team up.

As risky as it is to fly against the grain like this, hockey, which should welcome more goals, could be the greatest beneficiary if Dubas, somehow, pulls this off.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 09.14.2019

1152715 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Cap comparables: Mitch Marner contract resets the RFA market

Rory Boylen | @RoryBoylen

September 13, 2019, 10:00 PM

The wait is over.

And maybe now the dam will break on the RFA market.

On Friday evening, the Toronto Maple Leafs and Mitch Marner put pen to paper on a new six-year, \$65.358 million deal. For those counting (and I know you all are), that's a \$10.893 million cap hit.

Between Auston Matthews (\$11.634 million), John Tavares (\$11 million) and now Marner, the Maple Leafs hold three of the seven most expensive cap hits in the NHL. Add in William Nylander's \$6.962 million from his prolonged negotiation that came right down to the Dec. 1 deadline last season and those four players will now account for a combined \$40.489 million against an \$81.5 million cap.

It's worth noting that with a new U.S. TV deal on the horizon in two years and revenues on the way from a 32nd franchise that will land in Seattle for the 2021-22 season, it can reasonably be expected the cap will increase before long. But for now, the Leafs will have to walk a tight rope because Marner's contract sets a new precedent for RFAs — especially those coming off an entry-level contract.

Marner instantly becomes the second-highest paid winger in the NHL, behind only Artemi Panarin who counts for \$11.643 million against the New York Rangers' cap from a deal he signed this



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summer as the most sought-after UFA on the market. But as we know, with a cap that has risen many times over the years, the percentage of an AAV at the time of signing is the best way to compare deals across seasons.

Even there, Marner sticks out.

Among all active contracts, only three RFAs have signed for more than Marner's 13.4 per cent of the salary cap. Centre Auston Matthews (14.6 per cent) is third on the list for his contract signed on Feb. 5 last season. Centre Connor McDavid (16.7) is second for a contract signed by the arguable world's best player in July of 2017. And leading the way is Alex Ovechkin (16.8), the player who may one day pass Wayne Gretzky's all-time goal record, for a 13-year deal he signed all the way back in 2008 that was done under a different CBA and would be illegal today. In other words, under the current agreement, Marner's new contract is the richest given to an RFA winger.

So using cap percentage rather than AAV, here are comparable RFA deals to Marner — but in truth, his stands on its own.

For this purpose, we will not include William Nylander's 12.9 cap hit percentage at the time of signing, since Year 1 of the deal was inflated due to how late it was signed in-season. His actual percentage for the first full year of the contract is 8.54 per cent.

Claude Giroux: 12.9 per cent of the cap at time of signing (July 4, 2013)

Contract: Eight years, \$8.275 million AAV

The most significant difference between Giroux's contract and Marner's is that this was his third deal. In between Giroux's ELC and long-term extension, he and the Flyers signed a three-year bridge deal. The eight-year commitment was also signed a year before the bridge deal expired and after three consecutive seasons in which Giroux averaged 0.93 points per game.

Nikita Kucherov: 11.9 per cent of the cap at time of signing (July 10, 2018)

Contract: Eight years, \$9.5 million AAV

In terms of recency, this is the best comparable for Marner and really shows how unprecedented his contract is for wingers. But even still, Kucherov and the Lightning had previously signed a three-year bridge contract before this long-term extension. This eight-year deal was also signed a year before the bridge contract expired and after two incredible seasons of production: Kucherov had just finished posting 100 points when he agreed to this contract, which followed an 85-point campaign. The coming 2019-20 season will therefore be the first of Kucherov's eight-year pact with the Lightning and it already looks like a steal. Keep in mind, the tax rate in Florida was a factor into keeping this AAV low.

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Patrick Kane: 11.09 per cent of the cap at time of signing (Dec. 2, 2009)

Contract: Five years, \$6.3 million

Though this contract is no longer active, it is a true comparable and again expresses how much Marner's contract stands out. Signed midway through the final season of his three-year entry-level contract, Kane's five-year deal was a precursor to the contract he's currently on that made him the highest-paid winger in the game for

four years until Panarin (and now Marner) signed. Over the life of this five-year pact, Kane and the Blackhawks won two Stanley Cups, but they have only won three playoff games since his cap hit was upped to its current \$10.5 million. In his first three NHL seasons leading up to his first post-ELC contract, Kane scored 72, 70 and 88 points and won the Calder Trophy.

THE RFA QUESTION

The only thing left to discover now is just what impact Marner's contract will have on the rest of this RFA class. So far, Sebastian Aho is the lone big-name RFA forward to get a deal done this summer, and it took an offer sheet from Montreal to accomplish. His deal was much more in line with the market, a five-year pact with a \$8.454 million AAV that comes in at 10.37 per cent of the cap. He's also a centre, and centres tend to get paid the most of any position.

But there are an awful lot of wingers remaining out there. There is Patrik Laine, who is rumoured to want a deal with shorter term and Kyle Connor, who reportedly wants security. Matthew Tkachuk is still missing from Flames camp, as is Mikko Rantanen from Colorado's. And then there's Brock Boeser, who has 59 goals in 140 NHL games, but doesn't have the leverage of being able to sign an offer sheet.

The thought was always that everyone was waiting for Marner to set the tone, but now that it's been done will it really hurry up the rest of this class? Or will Marner's supposed market-setting contract make these other negotiations more difficult?

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 09.14.2019

1152716 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Flames' Bennett prepared to roll with punches amid Tkachuk RFA stalemate

Eric Francis | @EricFrancis

September 13, 2019, 7:32 PM

CALGARY – When training camp opened last year, all talk of Sam Bennett revolved around the bushy beard he showed up with.

This fall that honour goes to Johnny Gaudreau.

"I certainly hope I didn't look like that," chuckled Bennett of the Keanu Reeves patch-job no. 13 elected to show up with.

This year the banter around Bennett revolves around his opening day placement Friday on the second line. Yes, the same spot alongside Mikael Backlund and Michael Frolik previously occupied by Matthew Tkachuk.

With Tkachuk's contract situation predictably dragging into camp, all eyes were on who coach Bill Peters would plug into the left side of the 3M Line. It's telling that after a summer of contemplation, Bennett is his go-to guy to round out the top six.

For now anyways.

"I definitely saw an opportunity for myself coming to camp this year and I hope I can make that jump and make it a permanent thing,"



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 14, 2019

said Bennett, 23, who admitted he was hoping Peters would give him an opening look-see there.

"You never really know until you get here. Things can change. There's a business side of it and things happen throughout the year, so you've always got to be prepared to step in and now's a time for guys to step up and I could be one of those guys."

Sure could. He has the junior numbers that suggest he can certainly step up his game offensively. But can he gain the coach's trust that he's capable of the defensive responsibilities such an assignment entails?

"First and foremost it's definitely a defensive role because that line plays against the other teams' top players," said Bennett, who has largely had third and fourth line gigs since being drafted by the Flames fourth overall in 2014.

"If I'm not responsible then I'm not going to play there. But obviously there's the offensive side as well."

In his four seasons in Calgary he's scored between 11 and 18 goals annually, including 13 last season. Far below what anyone expected.

But long gone are the days he'd peg his performances on points alone, as the junior sniper has done well to prove he understands there are many ways to contribute to a team's success.

"I can tell you early on in his career he'd be driving home after games and if he didn't have any points he felt he didn't have any contribution," said Flames GM Brad Treliving, who watched Bennett play a more physical game last season, by design.

"As a guy that's been through the league now, he knows he can impact the game in other ways. I still think there's more offence there, but he's been able to impact games other than goals and assists."

Last year he proved that with his fists, stepping up to defend teammates to the tune of five fights – one less than the NHL lead in that category.

It was an impressive show of maturity and understanding of the game that belied his 6-foot-1, 195-pound frame. Thanks to the acquisition of Milan Lucic this summer, it's a task he might not be called upon to do as much.

"I love it," he said of the addition while wearing a massive grin underneath his mustache. "He's one of the biggest and toughest guys in the league."

To have a guy having your back on the ice, you're going to feel that much bigger and that much stronger. It's a great feeling having him on our side."

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

Drafted as a centre but used largely on the wing as a Flame, the left-shooting Bennett now sure seems to have a solid grasp on what it takes to be successful in today's game.

That also means rolling with the punches sure to come as Peters tries different players on the second line before eventually having the luxury of returning Tkachuk to his previous spot.

"I just look at it as just another day," he said of the Day 1 assignment.

"Things move around all the time during the year. It's a good starting point for me. I know there's an opportunity there for me there this

year, so I've just got to go out and earn it. That's my goal. The main thing is consistency in my game. I've got to play hard and I've got to do it every game. You can't take games off or things are going to move around, so that's the main thing I've got to work on."

If only he could convince Gaudreau to end the beard experiment, like he did.

"He loves it, but I'm telling him to shave it and just keep the 'stache," said Bennett.

"I don't know if I can convince him, but I'll keep working on him."

Following conversations with various people he is close to in the organization, Sportsnet.ca has learned restricted free agent Andrew Mangiapane has dropped his asking price to \$850,000 on a one-way contract and \$875,000 on a two-way deal.

It's a \$200,000 reduction from his initial salary request, bringing the two sides closer to a potential resolution to get the 23-year-old winger into camp.

The team is standing by its qualifying offer of \$715,000 on a two-way deal, which is their prerogative given the fact the eight-goal scorer (in 54 NHL games) has no arbitration rights and his sample size is small.

Although it's still early in camp, it's a regrettable impasse given the opportunity that could be afforded the junior scoring star on the left side.

A prolonged absence from camp threatens to stymie the momentum he built late last year when he established himself as an everyday NHLer by scoring eight goals in his last 28 games, not to mention a key playoff goal.

The debate over a one-way or two-way deal is moot given any attempt to demote him this year would result in him being snapped up by any number of NHL teams happy to employ him.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 09.14.2019

1152717 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Unlikely path leads Joel Persson to chance at vital role with Oilers

Mark Spector | @sportsnetspec

September 13, 2019, 6:58 PM

"Finally," Joel Persson said, "I am here."

This is the story of a small town Swede who found himself on a one-way deal, when even the people who watched him play back home thought there was no way he'd ever make it to the bright lights of the National Hockey League.

"When I was in my younger 20s, I didn't think I'd be here today. I was almost working a full-time job at a school for five years. As a teacher and assistant teacher," said Persson, 25, who worked with special needs kids. "In my mind I was seeing myself as a teacher. Looks like it's far from teacher now."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 14, 2019

As Oilers camp opened with the debut of Adam Larsson and Darnell Nurse as Edmonton's new "shutdown pair," Oscar Klefbom emerged with the right-shot Persson, a lefty-righty pairing that would really be a godsend for the Oilers — assuming the new guy can play.

"Another Swede," smiled Klefbom, the Oilers team leader in ice time last season who has partnered the past few years with Larsson. "(Persson has a) good shot, good mobility... What I've heard from guys back home is that he has some really good qualities that are going to help us this year."

Of course, those "guys back home" were talking about the Joel Persson who played in the Swedish Elite League with Vaxjo the past two seasons. Not the "missing Persson" who plundered through Sweden's lower leagues in search of some semblance of a game that would get him noticed by NHL scouts.

"I played in the third league in juniors back home," said Persson, the son of a senior care worker and a door installation man in the tiny municipality of Osby, the rare Swedish town that has never produced an NHL player. "I was in the third league in men's team, back home, couldn't get it going, didn't play a lot. So I went down to the fourth tier to get a bigger role, to play a lot. We almost went down to the fifth tier, actually. We played in a relegation (series) and we turned it around in the last game so we could stay in the fourth tier."

At six-foot-one, 190 pounds, Persson is simply a late bloomer whose game finally arrived in his early 20s. After a couple of years as a puck-moving, power-play defenceman with Vaxjo, Persson signed a one-year, one-way contract last January with the former management regime in Edmonton. From there, he made the Swedish national team for last year's world championships.

"Obviously, I didn't think I would be here one day," said Persson, who figures to have a few interested followers back in Sverige. "Well, I played in every league back home. I have a lot of friends at every level, so hopefully lots of people (are watching). Back home, when I made it to the SHL it was a big story back there. People were surprised back home when I made that step. Hopefully I can make this step too."

It would be found money for Edmonton if Persson can hang in for 17 or 18 minutes a game with Klefbom, allowing the veteran to make up his other five minutes a night on special teams. Persson ran power plays in Vaxjo, counting 53 assists in 101 games over the past two seasons. He'll have to start by making the team here before head coach Dave Tippett entertains the notion of stationing Persson atop the second power-play unit.

How will Tippett figure that out?

"Play the heck out of him," he said. "The biggest adjustment for him is going to be the size of the rink. Things happen quick. Players are on you very quickly, so those are adjustments."

Tippett could see a player who had heeded that advice in his first day at Oilers camp, as Persson hustled back for pucks.

"Every race that he went back for a puck," Tippett noticed. "On the big ice, a lot of times when you've got a lot of room you can kind of saunter back there. There's no sauntering here."

"He's like about seven or eight other players on our team," the coach said. "We're going to play the heck out of them at training camp and see where it goes."

In Klefbom, Persson has a mentor who can help him through the process of the smaller ice, the new country and the quicker, bigger opponent.

"I'm 26 now. A lot older, a lot wiser," Klefbom joked. "I know how important it is to have someone on your side who knows the game here. It's not easy to come over from Europe — adapt to the smaller ice, get used to the pace and the players in this league."

"It's going to be interesting to see how I can adapt my game, so he can be the player he can be."

The right-shot position next to Klefbom is crucial, and will be contested by Ethan Bear and Evan Bouchard.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 09.14.2019

1152718 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Virtanen demoted to final group of skaters to open Canucks camp

Iain MacIntyre | @imacSportsnet

September 13, 2019, 5:42 PM

VICTORIA, B.C. — On the first day of training camp, Vancouver Canucks coach Travis Green built a bomb. Winger Jake Virtanen disarmed it.

As punishment for Virtanen failing to meet unspecified summer training "goals," Green deployed the fifth-year pro in the third and final practice group on Friday, essentially banishing the Canuck from the grown-ups' table.

So while Brock Boeser's coveted spot alongside star centre Elias Pettersson was filled by journeyman Reid Boucher in Group 1, Virtanen, a 2014 first-round pick who scored 15 goals last season, skated beside Utica Comets Carter Bancks and Wacey Hamilton and other members of the Canucks' AHL affiliate. The sparse group was filled out by two players on tryouts and entry-level goalie Michael DiPietro.

"Jake and I have had lots of conversations over the years," Green told reporters before Virtanen practised in the final group. "There are certain expectations he wanted to reach and I wanted him to reach, and we both agreed that there were goals that had to be met, and if he didn't reach them he probably wouldn't be with the first two groups on the first day of camp. I'm not going to get into it any more than that."

Green actually warned the media not to make too much of his first-day practice groups, knowing that deploying Virtanen with minor-leaguers put a spotlight and bullseye on the 23-year-old.

But Virtanen defused the story as much as he could.

"We talked," the winger explained. "It's not like I was far off from that (conditioning goal); I was pretty close. I'm right there. This is obviously the consequence of that. I'm not going to be mad about it; I'm just going to be putting my head down and grinding and working hard."

"I'm frustrated at myself. I think anyone would (be). I was right there. Like I said, I'm not going to be all pissy about it. It is what it is. I'm just going to work hard, and Travis knows. I told him I was going to work hard to get back to camp and be ready for it."



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Green insisted Virtanen is “a big part of our team, I think he’s a big part of future.” But it was impossible to overlook the message in the demotion of Virtanen to start camp.

“He’s a young, big body that gets around the ice well,” Green said. “He’s got to be able to do it on a nightly basis. (Out of) 82 games – Jake and I talked about it – we probably got 40 real good ones or something along those lines (last season). We want to get 80 or 70.”

Virtanen has made progress, albeit sporadically, since the Canucks drafted him sixth overall five years ago. Conditioning has been a constant challenge for Virtanen, who is six-foot-one and naturally big. He was listed last season at 226 pounds. He has said he can’t walk past a hot dog stand without gaining weight. Not that Virtanen eats hot dogs.

Green’s tough-love approach worked on Virtanen when player and coach were together in the AHL for most of the 2016-17 season.

There are lots of ways a coach can handle a player’s failure to meet expectations on summer conditioning. Green’s was public and direct. Was he trying to embarrass Virtanen?

“Not at all,” Virtanen said. “He wants his players to be the best that they can be. He’s like that with everybody. He wants everyone to be better, and he’ll tell you. I think you’ve got to like a coach like that. He’s honest; he just sticks to his word.”

“Every year, Greener’s always pushing me to get better. It started in Utica. Every year I want to get better. He sets new goals for me, and I was right there. I think that’s just him pushing me to be a better player. That’s something you’ve got to like in a coach.”

Virtanen said his goal this season is to score “20-plus” goals.

Whatever Green does with his forward group during training camp and the pre-season is going to be micro-analyzed. The Canucks have 15 NHL forwards under contract – not including Boeser, the unsigned restricted free agent – and will be demoting at least a couple of them to Utica before Vancouver’s opening game in Edmonton on Oct. 2.

There are going to be losers in September, and on Friday, Virtanen was marched to the back of the pack.

“We talked to our group yesterday; you can’t wait,” Green said, speaking about his team and not Virtanen. “We don’t have time to wait for guys and they don’t have time not to get going right away. We have questions that need to be answered. I like our group, but we have to get down to our group, too.”

“You’ve got to play your best; you really do.”

For the first time in memory, the Canucks did not provide practice lineups to the media at the start of training camp. Instead, the pairings were posted on the scoreboard only as each group went on the ice. It was as if the Canucks were trying to hide something. Or someone.

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1152719 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Ben Chiarot's physicality a highlight on Day 1 of Canadiens camp

Eric Engels

September 13, 2019, 5:16 PM

BROSSARD, Que. — It’s just a practice drill but don’t tell that to Ben Chiarot, who finishes it off with a crosscheck to Phillip Danault’s chest.

A few minutes earlier, in his first on-ice session as a Montreal Canadien, the 6-foot-3, 225-pound defenceman was engaged in a one-on-one battle with 5-foot-9, 163-pound speedster Paul Byron. Chiarot picked up the puck in the corner, pushed his shoulder into Byron’s chest, backed the diminutive winger into the crease and threw a spin-around wrist shot into Charlie Lindgren’s net. Then, as possession changed, Chiarot stiff-armed Byron, threw him off the puck and poke-checked it to centre ice.

It was just before crosschecking Danault in the next drill that he sent Brendan Gallagher flying with a hard bump. Then the big man slashed Gallagher in the shin when the plucky forward bounced back up and charged at him.

This is Ben Chiarot as advertised. The 28-year-old was signed to a three-year, \$10.5-million contract on July 1 to bring this type of nasty to a Canadiens blue line that, outside of Shea Weber, didn’t really have it last season. It’s the style he honed as part of a heavy Winnipeg Jets team over the last five seasons, and a style that should complement new partner Jeff Petry’s game perfectly.

“Just in talking with him, he’s a guy that I guess he’s more on the defensive side,” said Petry on Thursday. “I had a chat with him, and he said if we do play together, I’d have the green light to do my thing, to skate the puck and do my thing and know that he’ll be back there to support me.”

The expectation is that Chiarot will be able to do that—and much more for the Canadiens this season. As former teammate with the Jets and new teammate with the Canadiens Joel Armia put it on Friday, Chiarot will give this crew’s backend everything it needs.

“I think we need a strong, fast, left-handed defenceman, and he’s all of that,” Armia said. “He’s really good on his skates for his size, he’s got a really good shot, and he’s got surprisingly good hands. I think he’s going to be really good for us.”

Chiarot, who hails from Hamilton, Ont., was certainly that for the Jets last season. He ranked second on the team in blocked shots (139), third in hits (171) and he put up career highs in goals (five), assists (15) and points (20) over his 78 games. He also averaged over 18-and-a-half minutes of ice time per game and played a key role on the penalty kill.

Those are all things Chiarot hopes to build on with the Canadiens this season, but it’s that physical dimension he brings that had such appeal to general manager Marc Bergevin and head coach Claude Julien.

“We’re trying to balance things out,” Julien said after pushing his charges through practice on Friday. It’s something they’re unquestionably better-equipped to do with Chiarot now in the fold.

The 5-foot-9, 183-pound, smooth-skating Victor Mete opened camp on a pairing with Weber, and puck-mover Brett Kulak found himself removed from one with Petry and placed on one with emerging 6-foot-1 prospect Josh Brook. With 6-foot-3 Swede Christian Folin and 6-foot-2 bruiser Noah Juulsen also in the mix for that spot next to Kulak, you can see the dynamic Julien is looking for on his defence.

Chiarot knows his toolkit will help his coach establish it.



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"I've always been a more physical player," he said after practice. "Just by my size and skating, that's kind of how I got drafted. How I got into the NHL was being a big, physical defenceman and a guy that's hard to play against. It's been refined over the years to certain areas where I can be physical, and that just takes experience. Over the last couple of years, I've taken a big step in becoming that shutdown defenceman that I've always wanted to be, and I think I certainly have some room to grow. But I'm getting pretty close to the player I that I want to be."

Chiarot's also a player who's thrilled to be in Montreal.

"To be part of an organization that's been around for so long, I mean; this is kind of the core of what hockey is. It's being a Montreal Canadien," he said. "So it's kind of surreal when you're in the city and around the team and putting the jersey on. Just to take pictures today having it on for the first time it's a definitely a cool feeling. Definitely excited to be here."

It showed in the way Chiarot approached his first day in a Canadiens uniform. He was energetic, engaged, and yeah—he was ruthless.

He didn't just make Friday's session a tough one for Byron, Danault and Gallagher; he was a force to reckon with for just about every player he matched up against.

Armia suggested it's something Canadiens followers should get used to.

"I think you're going to see that he can really destroy guys when he gets the chance," Armia said. "He's really physical. He has really good size, and he's really strong. He's not fun to play against in practice."

So long as that proves to be the case in games, the Canadiens will be better off with him Chiarot in the fold.

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1152720 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / NHL Training Camp Blog: Teams return to the ice minus key RFAs

Mike Johnston | @MikeyJ_MMA

September 13, 2019, 11:00 AM

Last Update: 12 hours ago

Time to put on those MTTGA hats, Kings fans. Drew Doughty wants to "make this team great again" as he explained at Kings camp Friday. Doughty was his typical candid self, detailing the frustrations he's felt in recent years as his Kings team has struggled and reshaped its roster.

The Kings have won only a single playoff game in two post-season appearances since they last hoisted the Stanley Cup in 2014 despite Doughty not missing a single regular-season contest in the past five seasons.

L.A. finished dead last in the Western Conference in 2018-19 and Doughty finished a career-worst minus-34 while adding 45 points. It

was the first time in eight years in which Doughty didn't register any Norris Trophy votes.

Is Jake Virtanen's conditioning an issue?

The fifth-year winger is coming off his best season as a pro, scoring 15 goals and averaging 14:49 in ice-time in 70 games. Canucks fans have often been frustrated with Virtanen's slow growth at the NHL level ever since he was taken sixth overall in the 2014 draft.

On Friday he skated with Vancouver's third practice group, which featured many players not expected to make the final roster. Virtanen is slated to be an RFA following the season.

Ryan Kesler underwent right hip resurfacing surgery in May. "The pain I was suffering has been greatly reduced since the procedure, and I'm grateful for that," the five-time Selke finalist (who won it in 2011) said at the time. "While my playing future is unknown, I'm in a good place."

Kesler made it through 60 games with the Ducks one season ago, scoring just eight points and going minus-19 in what was the worst season of his 19-year NHL career.

Meanwhile, Eaves has played a total of nine games over the past two seasons due to injuries and illness.

Travis Konecny is among the remaining RFAs needing a new contract and head coach Alain Vigneault was hoping he'd be available for the start of camp.

In other Flyers news, Nolan Patrick is out with what the team is calling an upper-body injury and hasn't yet been cleared for camp.

The eight-year, \$66-million contract extension Oliver Ekman-Larsson signed with the Arizona Coyotes in 2018 kicks in this season. Since the lockout-shortened 2012-13 season, Ekman-Larsson has played more games than all but seven defencemen and he also ranks eighth in average ice-time among defenders.

Maple Leafs planning captaincy announcement?

The Sharks named Logan Couture their new captain. The Red Wings decided to forgo the 'C' this season. The Toronto Maple Leafs haven't made a decision one way or another yet, however Mike Babcock said an announcement could be coming soon.

Auston Matthews would appear to be the frontrunner with John Tavares and Morgan Rielly among the other contenders.

The Maple Leafs haven't had a captain since trading away Dion Phaneuf in 2016.

St. Louis Blues prospect Erik Foley failed his physical, GM Doug Armstrong informed reporters. Foley sat out the entire 2018-19 season after three years at Providence College. Foley, 22, was selected by the Jets in the third round of the 2015 NHL Draft.

The Oilers have said they plan on being conservative with Connor McDavid's left knee. The team might hold No. 97 out of the pre-season entirely. That he was out on the ice with his teammates Friday surely is a positive sign.

Lightning GM talks Brayden Point contract situation

The Tampa Bay Lightning are all in on the 2019-20 season but they opened camp minus an integral part of their top-six. RFA centre Brayden Point needs a new deal. Point has finished top-10 in Selke voting the past two seasons while also finishing 2018-19 with a career high 41 goals and 92 points in 79 games.



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Sportsnet.ca / Ducks' Ryan Kesler, Patrick Eaves to miss entire 2019-20 season

Emily Sadler | @EmmySadler

September 13, 2019, 4:59 PM

The Anaheim Ducks will be without two veterans forwards this upcoming season.

The club announced on Friday that both Patrick Eaves and Ryan Kesler have been placed on injured reserve and will miss the entire 2019-20 campaign.

Both players have dealt with serious health and injury issues over the past few years.

Eaves, 35, has skated in just 29 games for the Ducks over the past three seasons, having dealt with various injuries and health issues. The winger was diagnosed with Guillain-Barre syndrome, a rare disorder where the immune system attacks the peripheral nervous system. He's under contract for one more season.

Kesler, also 35, underwent right hip resurfacing surgery back in May. At the time of the procedure — his second hip surgery, having also undergone a procedure in 2017 — it was expected that the winger would be sidelined for the upcoming season while recovering.

"At this point in my career, this surgery was the best option for my quality of life," Kesler said in a statement at the time of the surgery. "The pain I was suffering has been greatly reduced since the procedure, and I'm grateful for that. While my playing future is unknown, I'm in a good place."

Kesler tallied five goals and eight points in 60 games with the Ducks last season, his fifth in Anaheim. He is under contract with the Ducks for three more seasons.

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TSN.CA / Hockey Hall of Famer Stan Mikita suffered from CTE, researcher says

Rick Westhead

Former Chicago Blackhawks legend and Hockey Hall of Fame member Stan Mikita tested positive for chronic traumatic encephalopathy, or CTE, the brain-withering disease linked to repetitive brain trauma in contact sports, researchers and his family announced Friday night in Chicago.

Mikita becomes the 11th known former NHL player, and the first member of the Hall of Fame, to have tested positive for CTE.

Dr. Ann McKee, director of the BU CTE Center, VA-BU-CLF Brain Bank, and chief of neuropathology for the VA Boston Healthcare System, discussed the findings Friday night as requested by Mikita's family during the Concussion Legacy Foundation's Chicago Honors dinner.

"Stan Mikita was diagnosed with [two] neurodegenerative diseases that our research has shown are associated with a long career in contact sports such as ice hockey: CTE and Lewy Body Disease," said Dr. McKee.

Mikita had visited the research team in Boston and then decided to pledge his brain to support research.

"We hope Stan Mikita's pledge and CTE diagnosis will inspire greater participation in research from the hockey community," said Chris Nowinski, Ph.D, co-founder and CEO of the Concussion Legacy Foundation, who helped facilitate Mikita's brain pledge. "Without greater participation from the hockey community, we have little hope for treating or preventing CTE within our lifetime."

In January 2015, Mikita's family said he was diagnosed with Lewy body dementia, a disorder with symptoms comparable to those of Parkinson's and Alzheimer's. He died at the age of 78 on Aug. 7, 2018.

As a child, Mikita moved to Canada from the small town of Sokolce, in what was then Czechoslovakia. He joined the Blackhawks in 1958 at the age of 18 and played his entire professional career in Chicago, where he is revered as a sports icon.

Mikita quickly developed into one of the NHL's top scorers, but he also racked up at least 100 penalty minutes, or close to it, in five of his first six seasons. According to hockeyfacts.com, Mikita had 13 fights in his first five seasons and 26 over his entire career.

Mikita played in 1,396 regular-season games, compiling 1,467 points and 926 assists — all franchise records — and 1,270 penalty minutes during his 21 seasons with the Blackhawks. His 541 goals rank second behind former teammate Bobby Hull's 604.

A nine-time all-star, Mikita was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame in 1983, the same year as Hull. He won the Art Ross Trophy as the NHL's leading point getter four times. In both 1967 and 1968, he won the Art Ross, the Hart Memorial Trophy as NHL most valuable player, and the Lady Byng Memorial Trophy for gentlemanly play.

He is widely credited as being the first player to begin using a stick with a curved blade. He was also one of the first NHLers to wear a helmet full-time.

Other NHL players who have been diagnosed with CTE include Bob Probert, Derek Boogaard, Jeff Parker, Wade Belak, Larry Zeidel, Reggie Fleming, Rick Martin, Steve Montador, Zarley Zalapski, Todd Ewen and Dan Maloney. Four former junior hockey players, who all died of suicide before the age of 30, have also tested positive for the disease.

While the NFL admitted in 2016 that a link exists between repeated brain trauma and long-term neurological disorders, the NHL has rejected the connection.

On May 1 in Ottawa, NHL commissioner Gary Bettman told a Canadian parliamentary committee studying concussions in sports that no such association has been established.



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"Other than some anecdotal evidence, there has not been that conclusive link... there has not been conclusive determinations," Bettman testified.

The NHLPA issued a statement to TSN a week later rejecting Bettman's stance.

"It goes without saying that trauma to the brain can be harmful and we recognize, as the [U.S.] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has cited, that the research to date suggests that CTE is caused by repeated trauma to the brain, including concussions and sub-concussive events," the players union wrote.

The NHL last summer settled a concussion-related lawsuit filed by more than 100 former players after a judge refused to approve the case to move forward as a class action. Several former players – including Dan Carcillo and Nick Boynton, as well as Montador's family and Ewen's widow, Kelli – are continuing to pursue individual lawsuits against the league.

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TSN.CA / Babcock looking for Kawhi-esque Maple Leafs captain

Mark Masters

TSN Toronto reporter Mark Masters checks in daily with news and notes on the Maple Leafs, who held a practice and two scrimmages on Friday at the Paradise Double Ice Complex in Paradise, NL.

Who will be the next captain of the Toronto Maple Leafs?

"We'll announce our decision here coming up and end the speculation," head coach Mike Babcock promised following the first on-ice workouts of training camp.

The top candidates appear to be obvious: Auston Matthews, John Tavares and Morgan Rielly.

"Great leaders in different aspects," observed Jason Spezza, who served as the Ottawa Senators captain in the 2013-14 season. "Morgan's been here for a long time, he knows how to deal with playing in Toronto, he's produced for a long time. Auston's just a flat-out superstar that is going to get better and better and get more mature as the years go on, he's in a great place and Johnny's just a consummate pro. Those three guys are all capable of being leaders and regardless of who they name captain I think they're always going to have to have each other to lean on and they'll all be here for a while together."

Babcock has coached some of the greatest leaders in this generation of hockey, but when asked what he's looking for from the next Leafs captain, the veteran bench boss highlighted an example in a different spot: Kawhi Leonard, who led the Raptors to their first NBA title in June.

"He came into town and he changed things overnight with an unbelievable demeanour, with stick-to-itiveness like I haven't seen," Babcock gushed, "with a competitive edge, not bothered by much, left all his talking to his play and they end up winning the championship and I thought he made the team better around him

and, to me, that's leadership. That's what you do and you bring it every day.

"The determination, the love of being a Leaf, the love of the city, the love of your teammates, the willingness to share yourself are all critical parts of being a captain. I'm not a huge basketball (fan), but when I went to those games during the year I was so impressed with Kawhi it's not even funny. His competitiveness, he dragged other guys into battle. It was something to watch and I think we have people capable of doing that."

Andersen on Matthews' leadership: He demands, deserves a lot of respect

Frederik Andersen and Kasper Kapanen discuss how they think naming a captain this season would affect the dynamic in the room and share their thoughts on Auston Matthews possibly filling the role.

Toronto Sun columnist Steve Simmons expects Matthews, the first overall pick in the 2016 NHL draft, to be named captain once the team returns home. The Arizona product seems to be the logical choice for many based on his face-of-the-franchise status and the productive start to his NHL career.

"Definitely Auston's been more and more vocal," said goalie Frederik Andersen. "He's a guy that demands and deserves a lot of respect in the room and I think you see it around the team that guys respect him a lot ... He demands the puck a lot and demands to score. When he's on the ice it's almost like it's his puck sometimes and he wants it to be in their net so not a lot of players can be like that."

Matthews has also grown more comfortable expressing himself off the ice. His new moustache, for example, created waves and he isn't shy talking about it.

"Everyone keeps asking me if I'm keeping it and I just tell them, 'For now I am,'" he said with a grin.

"It looks good on him," a chuckling Andersen said. "Obviously, he loves being a little bit different and standing out a little bit so it's fun having something extra to talk about."

Matthews brings a certain swagger to the team and has made no secret that he feels ready for a bigger leadership responsibility. Spezza outlined the challenge Matthews or anyone else would face in taking over the role.

"There's a big responsibility," the 36-year-old centre said. "You have to be maybe a little more aware of all the other guys in the room and how they're feeling, you can't just always think about how you're playing, how you're feeling, you have to look around the room and pick guys up when they're down and help guys out, but other than that you don't change too much. You rely on a leadership group to kind of get things done ... and then there's a relationship with the coach and you have to be able to carry the coach's message to the room."

"A lot of teams go to leadership groups now where you still have a captain and assistants, but the whole group is in there at the same time talking a lot ... I'd say times have changed a little bit with a lot of younger captains in the league now."

Matthews, who will turn 22 next week, isn't worried about any added pressure that may come with the 'C' noting the team handles issues as a leadership group. So, how would he describe his leadership style?

"I just go about my business and let my play and my actions do the talking," Matthews said in Kawhi-esque fashion.

Simmons believes Matthews will be named Leafs captain



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Steve Simmons thinks the Maple Leafs will name Auston Matthews as their next captain but explains why he would go with John Tavares. Simmons also discusses why he thinks the Leafs are holding off on the announcement.

Matthews skated with Andreas Johnsson and William Nylander on Friday. He likes what he sees from Nylander, who missed last year's camp due to a contract dispute.

"It's no secret, the whole fiasco last year and then obviously coming in late," Matthews said, "so I definitely see motivation and kind of a hunger in his attitude and his confidence. He's a confident person to begin with, but coming in this summer and this training camp he looks really good out there and seems extremely hungry."

"It's great to be here," Nylander said. "You get into the rhythm of the game, the systems and you're playing [pre-season] games here. And then you're going right into the season [ready]."

TSN's Kristen Shilton has more on Nylander's plans to dominate this season here:

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1152724 Websites

TSN.CA / Confident Nylander ready to silence critics

Kristen Shilton

Paradise, N.L. – If you thought enduring a career-worst season and months of criticism might splinter William Nylander's confidence in his game, well, guess again.

"There is no jump I have to make," the Maple Leafs winger said defiantly on Friday, after the team's first day of on-ice training camp sessions at Paradise Ice Complex. "I know what I'm capable of. We'll see during the year."

This time around, Nylander is at least giving himself a fighting chance to succeed. The 23-year-old missed all of the Leafs' 2018 training camp and the first two months of the regular season in a protracted contract stalemate, which eventually ended in a six-year, \$45 million extension with the club.

Nylander's highly anticipated return to the ice in early December quickly became nightmarish as he managed to score only one goal in his first 23 games. By the end of the year, Nylander hadn't even cracked double digits, ending his 58-game season with seven goals and 20 assists. Nylander added one more goal and two assists in seven playoff games.

Before breaking for the off-season, Nylander admitted he'd have to prove any detractors wrong, saying after last season's performance, "I have to change their opinion and play the way I know I can." He's come to camp with renewed energy to do just that.

"I was joking around with him and said it must be nice to be back to about 196 pounds instead of about 5,500 like he was last year, when you're carrying the weight of the world around on your back," head coach Mike Babcock said Friday. "You're a proud guy and you think that you're good, and you want to be good but it isn't going good and there's nowhere to hide, so it's tough."

Babcock put Nylander back with his previous linemate Auston Matthews immediately last December, but the two failed to click like before, and Nylander was eventually shuffled into the team's bottom six.

Babcock has Nylander back on Matthews' flank to open camp this year, and the centre couldn't be happier with what he's seen so far.

"You definitely see a hunger and a motivation in his attitude and his confidence," Matthews said. "He's a confident person to begin with, but obviously coming in this summer to training camp, he looks really good out there and seems like he's extremely hungry."

With Andreas Johnsson rounding out the Matthews line, expectations are already high internally for what that trio can accomplish out of the gate. Living up to those expectations will start with learning from past mistakes.

"We have another level for sure," Matthews said of his chemistry with Nylander. "Our first two years together, we had some really good segments and were playing really well and had times where we weren't playing well. So for us, it's that consistency, and making sure that every night we're coming and we're showing up and we're bringing our A-game."

Nylander breezily describes what his top-level play looks like – "it's dominating on the ice." He hasn't hesitated in throwing around that word with anyone who needs to hear it either, whether it be in the media or right to his coach.

"He said that to me the other day. He said, 'I was dominant out there,'" Babcock said. "I said, 'That's great.' I hope he's dominant when it drops on [our season opener] Oct. 2. I don't mind watching dominant."

With a clearly established goal in mind for his on-ice performance, Nylander has also taken some time out to cultivate a mentoring role with some of the Leafs' younger players, most specifically defenceman Rasmus Sandin.

The two Swedes have been inseparable since the Leafs' informal workouts began in the lead up to camp, often staying out after scrimmages for more individual work.

"Sandin was skating with me in the summer [back home] and I've been his driver in Toronto," Nylander said. "So I've been taking care of him a bit."

Next on Nylander's agenda will be taking care of business on the ice, and re-establishing the player he, and the Leafs, believe him to be.

"It's great to be here," Nylander said, surveying all that he missed from the training camp scene a year ago. "You get into the rhythm of the game, the systems and you're playing [preseason] games here. And then you're going right into the season [ready]."

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1152725 Websites

TSN.CA / Ehlers turns focus inward in bid for bounce-back season

Frank Seravalli



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 14, 2019

Take a look at the Winnipeg Jets' depth chart without Patrik Laine and Kyle Connor on the wings.

The first word that may come to mind is "thin" – a term no one would have used to describe the Jets' firepower over the past two seasons.

It's not difficult to envision, then, why Nikolaj Ehlers will be a critical piece to the Jets' upcoming season – no matter how much time (if any) his two higher-profile teammates miss.

Ehlers said he can't put himself in the shoes of either of his restricted free agent teammates. Ehlers said the seven-year, \$42-million extension he signed two years ago came together in all of three days.

"It's hockey. They're not the only two players without a contract right now," Ehlers said last week at the NHL Player Media Tour in Chicago. "Would it be better if they were at the first day of camp, if they were in Winnipeg? One hundred per cent. Everyone wants them to be back, but right now we need to focus on what we do have to try to create something off that."

That's exactly what Ehlers did this summer back home in Denmark. He focused on himself.

When we think of summer training for hockey players we envision barbells clanging in the gym, uphill sprints and hours of skating on the ice.

Ehlers, 23, did all of that, but he also turned the focus inward. He said he watched every single shift of the 62 games he played with the Jets last year.

"In the summer, what else are you going to do? I play golf, I play tennis, hangout with my family and my friends, but you can't do that for 24 hours a day," Ehlers said. "I work out, I practise on the ice, and when I go to bed, I watch one or two games.

"Think about this stuff, wake up, next practice, see how it goes."

What Ehlers said he found out was the 90 per cent of his mistakes were repetitive.

"I'd watch and see 'Okay, you're doing it again,'" Ehlers said.

The mistakes are "a lot of small details" but Ehlers says if he changes them that "wow, this can make a difference."

He watched so many games that Ehlers was able to quickly rattle off what he was watching.

Stick position on the forecheck. Stops and starts. Shoot the puck more. Don't panic, don't throw the puck away. Defensive positioning.

Ehlers said Jets head coach Paul Maurice had been preaching some of those details to him in the past. It might have taken time to sink in, for Ehlers to see over and over again with his own eyes for it to internalize. He said he is "ready to work" on those things now.

There is no question that last season was a disappointing one for Ehlers.

He missed a quarter of the season with injury. When he was on the ice, Ehlers collected goals at above his career average rate (0.34 per game), but his point production dipped, particularly collecting even-strength assists. He finished with 21 goals and 16 assists for 37 points in 62 games. That's a 49-point pace over 82 games, well below the 60-point threshold he hit in each of his previous two seasons.

What stung the most, Ehlers admitted, was going through a second straight playoffs without a goal.

Ehlers has a doughnut – zero goals – in 21 career Stanley Cup playoff games with the Jets. Maurice cut his ice time three minutes per game from the regular season in that first-round series with St. Louis.

"I'd be lying if it didn't touch [a nerve] with me at all," Ehlers said. "Not scoring in the playoffs sucked. There's no other word for it. It sucks, but it's not like I get to the playoffs and I just shut myself down. I work as hard as I can to help this team win every single day.

"I wasn't happy with my season last year because of injuries. It wasn't going the way I wanted to, but it is a new season. I'm happy with where I am at right now."

That's why Ehlers said he "doesn't care" about what the expectations are for the Jets this season.

"We have lost some players, but we've also got some pretty good players," Ehlers said. "We have to focus on us as a group. We've got to do that as soon as camp starts. I am sure that I know that we have the team that can do some good things. I hope it happens."

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TSN.CA / Norris, Brown likely battling for one open spot with Senators

Ian Mendes

On his very first day at an NHL training camp, Josh Norris decided to have a little bit of fun with the media.

"Bonjour," Norris said loudly as he walked onto the podium to greet cameras and reporters.

His French greeting certainly caught the attention of the media in a bilingual market.

"I'd better stop there," Norris quickly said with a laugh. "That's the only word I know."

Norris appeared at ease in the spotlight on Day 1 of Senators training camp, which is probably a good thing for the 20-year-old because he's likely going to be attracting a lot of attention in the weeks ahead.

Exactly one year ago – on Sept. 13, 2018 – Norris was one of the centrepieces coming back to Ottawa from San Jose in the blockbuster trade for Erik Karlsson.

A first-round pick by the Sharks in 2017, Norris decided to forgo his final two seasons at the University of Michigan in May because he saw a legitimate opportunity to make the Senators opening-night roster this fall. Now that opening is sitting right in front of him, as there appears to be a need for a high-end centreman in Ottawa.

"I thought, if I'm leaving I'm going to do my best to make the Ottawa Senators roster this season and stick," Norris said. "That's just kind of how I'm wired."



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But Norris isn't the only former first-round pick looking to make the NHL club as a centre in training camp. Logan Brown – who the Senators traded up for to take 11th overall in the 2016 draft – also believes he's on the cusp of making the final cut.

"I have to beat somebody out of their job – that's kind of my mindset," explained Brown. "Showing them that I'm ready to go now, rather than halfway through the year."

Realistically, there appears to only be room for one of these talented young centres to start the season in the NHL – and there is a scenario where they could both be in Belleville.

Colin White, freshly signed to a six-year contract extension, certainly has the inside track as one of the top two centres to start the season. The fact that White was paired with Brady Tkachuk and Connor Brown on the first day of training camp was a clear indication of his place on the depth chart.

Beyond that, it appears as though Artem Anisimov, Jean-Gabriel Pageau and Chris Tierney would slot into roles as centres – although nothing has been promised to anybody under new head coach D.J. Smith.

When asked about the competition around the No. 1 centre job in training camp, the 31-year-old Anisimov indicated that he felt the position was completely up for grabs.

"The spot is available and it's going to be a fight for it during training camp," Anisimov said. "Whoever plays the best is going to take over that spot."

It's clear that if Norris or Brown elevates their game in training camp, a spot will be made available for them as the organization embraces a commitment to a younger roster.

"That's something that the staff has mentioned, that there's lots of opportunity here. You definitely want to take advantage of it," says Norris. "There are a lot of great players going for the same spot, so it's going to get competitive. I'm looking forward to the challenge."

"I think if you look at it, there are four established NHL centres there," added Brown. "For me, it's coming and proving to the coaching staff that I deserve one of those spots."

For the 21-year-old Brown, the coming season is a crucial one in his development. The Senators brass has been extremely patient with the towering 6-foot-6 centre as he toggles the fine line between a bona-fide prospect and a long-term project.

Brown is viewed as having all the raw skills – size, vision and soft hands – that are often required of a legitimate No. 1 centreman. However, injuries and inconsistency have been the hallmark of his time in the Ottawa organization, leaving some to question if he will ever put it all together.

If Brown does have one advantage over Norris in this situation, it's that he already has one year of professional hockey under his belt. He collected 42 points in 56 games with Belleville in the American Hockey League last season.

"My game grew a lot," Brown said of his rookie season in the AHL. "I learned how to be successful at the pro level and my confidence really grew there. Coming in here, it's the most confident I've been in making the NHL."

Brown centred Belleville's top line with Drake Batherson and Nick Paul for a large portion of the second half of the 2018-19 AHL campaign. The trio was the club's most lethal combination and Brown was reunited on a line with Paul on the first day of Sens

training camp on Friday, although it was Max Veronneau on his right wing instead of Batherson.

Brown is hoping there is a chance the line could rekindle its AHL magic at the NHL level at some point this season.

"I think that would be cool if we got that chance. I loved playing with Drake and Paulie," Brown said. "I think we all complement each other well. It was the American League where we had all of our success, but if we keep playing together, we can do a lot more."

While Brown has battled injuries in the three years since he's been drafted by Ottawa, Norris suffered a season-ending shoulder injury during the 2019 IIHF World Junior Championships that required surgery and cut his sophomore season at Michigan short.

"It's never easy getting hurt. I watched a lot of hockey games in the second half of the year, but at the same time I learned a lot. I benefited in some way from watching," Norris said. "Obviously, it's a process with rehab and trying to get back into shape. I think I did a good job of that this summer and came back into camp in really good shape and tested well. Now I just have to go out and play."

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YAHOO SPORTS / Plenty of reasons to be down on the Blackhawks in 2019-20

Ryan Lambert Yahoo Sports Canada

Sep. 13, 2019, 6:10 p.m.

At this time of year, many teams are in the business of selling hope they have no real business selling. The Chicago Blackhawks appear to be one of them.

It was a virtual lock that any potential two-years-missing-the-playoffs scenario would lead to a coaching change and media members who remember the dynasty years a little too fondly making excuses. The coaching change came earlier than many might have expected, after last season's slow start, but the new guy, Jeremy Colliton, didn't improve all that much in the team's processes.

But the team changed coaches pretty early in the season, after just 15 games, rather than over the summer or later in the year when more people might have been inclined to write off the last few months as a wash. As such, we're now getting assurances that all that may be separating Chicago from its first playoff appearance since 2017 (a humiliating sweep at the hands of the Nashville Predators) is a full camp learning Colliton's system from the ground up and some key additions this summer.

Those additions were positive in the aggregate. Last year's goaltending was a mess, with Cam Ward inevitably imploding, Collin Delia proving little better, and Corey Crawford missing the entire stretch from mid-December to late February. The take here, then, is that the goaltending is stabilized now, through adding Robin Lehner as the 1a or 1b (depending on your feelings about Crawford's health) to the battery and keeping Crawford. The former was a legit Vezina contender last season and always played well behind bad teams with worse defences, while the latter went .919 in his



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appearances post-injury, though that was effectively garbage time for the entire team and the schedule was pretty soft.

Crawford, though, will be 35 on New Year's Eve and he's played just 67 games in the past two seasons, so this is a load-sharing partnership at the very least.

The other assurances we're getting these days about how this team could be Officially Back without a serious PDO bender is that Stan Bowman rejiggered the defence. Now, to be fair, that defence needed rejiggering in a very bad way: Collectively, the team was one of the worst in the league by expected-goals against, not only unable to limit quality, but also unable to kill penalties more than 73 per cent of the time.

The big reason why was Duncan Keith's ever-quickenning decline as he reached his mid-30s. He turned 36 over the summer, and Brent Seabrook (who's 34) has been washed for even longer. That Connor Murphy trade simply hasn't worked out; most teams have defenders in the AHL who would be just as effective in his role as he was last season. Erik Gustafsson put up points on the cheap last year, but that was so far outside his previous production at literally any level that you'd be skeptical.

The big additions, then, need to be extremely reliable guys who can straighten things out for their aging pairing partners. And boy, if you ever needed a reliable defenceman, why wouldn't you go out and get Calvin de Haan (a perfectly-acceptable-and-that's-it middle-pairing defenceman who wasn't particularly effective for one of the best possession teams of the era last year) and..... Olli Maatta? Both are guys who can succeed if you kind of hide them deeper down the lineup, but how many defencemen on this roster is Colliton even capable of hiding, mathematically?

As for the offence, which was predictably above-average last season, you can probably forecast more of the same. Patrick Kane and Alex DeBrincat are going to produce, and the hope is to get more out of a full season from Dylan Strome after a great start with the organization. Maybe Drake Caggiula can be a decent bottom-six forward, but that's about it. But bringing back Andrew Shaw and giving Zack Smith a shot is not going to go particularly well.

Moreover, to expect another big offensive season from Jonathan Toews is all well and good, but why put that on a guy who, at 30 years old, went from three straight seasons under 60 points to 81? Not to say he can't be valuable, because he obviously can, but he'd need a lot of help to replicate that success. Players tend to be who they tell us they are over the long haul, and letting their most recent results cloud your reasonable expectations is a good way to end up disappointed.

Is there reason to believe the team will be better than it was last year? Of course. The addition of Lehner alone all but assures more points coming their way. But almost everyone else in the division also improved to one extent or another over the summer, and this team ended the year at a minus-22 goal difference. It's hard to see where they added 20-plus goals to their total, when we account for the potential for a step back by the offence in particular.

You always had to assume this team would continue to get the benefit of the doubt from observers who remember the glory days as being more recent than they actually were. But now, with two straight years of no playoffs and just three wins in their last 11 post-season games, that much leeway based on who they were five seasons ago all seems a bit much.

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YAHOO SPORTS / Maple Leafs' Dubas, Babcock facing as many challenges as ever

Justin Cuthbert Yahoo Sports Canada

Sep. 13, 2019, 1:49 p.m.

TORONTO — It seems introspective summers have inspired new perspectives.

Intentions fine-tuned and messages re-shaped, Kyle Dubas and Mike Babcock, both perhaps humbled recently by individual difficulties impacting the Toronto Maple Leafs, presented distinctly different fronts as the team's training camp officially opened on Thursday at the Ford Performance Centre. This is at least compared to the messages delivered the last time each spoke in a podium setting.

Where Dubas welcomed the burden after the Leafs were once again eliminated in seven games at the hands of the Boston Bruins, Babcock seemed to disassociate himself from it.

Nearly five months later, and following an off-season that brought both significant challenges and widespread change to a roster destined to be ceaselessly threatened by the pressures of the salary cap, the messages from coach and GM had changed.

Comparatively, Dubas and Babcock's tones once again didn't exactly mesh, but there was one important intersection woven through their answers: they both see an opportunity here.

The words came across as a particularly stark contrast for Babcock, who seemed to point at the roster before looking at himself after the Leafs suffered their third first-round exit in as many seasons.

Those expecting a coach antagonized by blows to the roster's leadership, depth and total team toughness were surprised by one invigorated by a new assembly of talent.

The first real speculation concerning Babcock's job security could certainly be a contributing factor to his glowing review of the roster construction.

Though it glowed nonetheless.

"To be honest I'm really excited about our group," Babcock said.

"We have had a lot of change this summer. Our staff has done a really nice job. And we have a really big job here." he added, suggesting that the onus is now on himself and his new-look coaching staff. "This is as much change as I've seen since I've been in the National Hockey League. So we have to get up and running and that's what we're excited about doing."

Speaking to that change, the biggest has come to the Maple Leafs' blue line.

With Ron Hainsey and Nikita Zaitsev now with the Ottawa Senators, and Jake Gardiner signing a free-agent contract with the Carolina Hurricanes, the Leafs won't return a single defensive combination from last season.

Though trusted former members of the team are no longer at his disposal, Babcock believes that Dubas brought in two players that



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are not just talented enough to fill the void, but are ready to offer more.

"We believe that (Cody Ceci) is just scratching the surface. We think the same about (Tyson) Barrie. We think there's growth potential there for sure," he said.

"Sometimes just the change of scenery — to me it's invigorating, it's a new challenge. Instead of coming into training camp relaxed, they are a little antsy. Even though they are veterans, there is more tension. Why? They don't know what the coach is going to do, what the manager is going to do, their teammates. I think that leads to excitement but also growth opportunities."

While confident Toronto can organize an improved blue line despite changes to the unit, what will ultimately push the team beyond its ceiling is continued growth from the collection of young stars that inhabit the roster.

Above all, Babcock sees this as the main reason the Maple Leafs should improve on last season.

"We think we're going to take a step internally," Babcock said. "And what I mean by that, I believe a lot of our core players have gotten substantially better. They've gotten older, they are more comfortable with themselves and they are more comfortable on the ice both offensively and defensively."

Of course, receiving net improvements from the collection of players that have claimed ownership to large percentages of the salary cap hinges on restricted free agent Mitch Marner finally agreeing to his second contract with the Leafs.

Maybe that's why things seemed to weigh heavier on Dubas than they were with Babcock.

Marner will not travel to Newfoundland to make at least the first on-ice session at Leafs training camp. The dynamic winger's hard-line stance in negotiation, and the stress it's put on the organization, should be as significant a factor as any when considering Dubas's less assertive media day demeanour.

It's now two summers in a row that the young executive's negotiating tactics have come under question. Last season William Nylander fought for dollars and assurances deep into the fall — only to turn in the least productive of his four seasons.

We're at the point now where there are concerns over the repeated consequences of the to-this-point-failed negotiations regardless of when Marner actually signs, and Dubas will have to wear that.

It's pretty apparent that he's still searching for the answer.

"I think in every negotiation everybody thinks on their side they're being reasonable," Dubas said about the current give and take with Marner. "Then the major argument then comes down to, 'Who's more reasonable than the other, right?'"

To his credit, Dubas did a pretty remarkable job working the pieces around to not just accommodate the expanding Marner number, but to improve the roster in the process of clearing out money.

Babcock has legitimate reason to be that excited.

In the event Marner signs, the Leafs host one of the most talented rosters in the league, and one with improved balance and optimization when compared to last season. However, for Dubas, that modest approach to briefing the media will include no bold proclamations.

"I know it disappoints a lot of people," he said when asked if he's built a championship-calibre roster for his coach. "But I don't ever

look at it as 'Can this roster do X?' It's really, 'Can this roster give us chances to accomplish those types of things?'

"Hopefully we get some fortune and we step up in key moments and it results in success."

For Dubas and Babcock, time was always going to help normalize perspectives in the aftermath of another devastating loss to Boston.

But as one grapples with a negotiation threatening bold claims made previously, while the other aims to prove that he's still one of the league's best coaches, they seem to have acknowledged one very important aspect as the organization moves forward.

They're going to need each other to have success.

Dubas and Babcock both spoke positively about their relationship and its continued growth over the summer months.

And like their approaches to media day, that was a bit of a change-up, too.

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