



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 14, 2020

## THE NEWS & OBSERVER

### Carolina Hurricanes trade Joel Edmundson to Montreal

BY STAFF REPORTS

The NHL Draft is Oct. 6 and 7 this season.

The Carolina Hurricanes have traded defenseman Joel Edmundson to the Montreal Canadiens for a fifth-round pick in the year's draft.

Edmundson recorded 20 points, including seven goals and 13 assists, in 68 games last season. The 27-year-old has scored 72 points, including 20 goals, in 337 career games with the Hurricanes and St. Louis.

### Hurricanes sign 3-year AHL affiliation with Chicago Wolves

BY CHIP ALEXANDER

Charlotte Checkers center Steven Lorentz, right, fights to maintain control of the puck while battling Chicago Wolves Griffin Reinhart, left, during first period action on Sunday, June 2, 2019 at Bojangles' Coliseum in Charlotte, NC.

Until January, all seemed well with the American Hockey League affiliation between the Carolina Hurricanes and the Charlotte Checkers.

The Checkers had won the Calder Cup championship in 2019. Nothing seemed amiss between the NHL team and its top minor-league affiliate.

Then, as Don Waddell said Thursday, "Things fell apart."

Waddell, the Canes' president and general manager, was not specific in explaining how the relationship with Charlotte reached a breaking point. An announcement was made Thursday that the Canes had reached a three-year agreement with the Chicago Wolves to be their new AHL affiliate.

"We were trying to make a deal to move this forward but it wasn't there to be, from either side, at that point," Waddell said in a media call. "Then the season as it dragged on, we reached the virus and we got to a point where we had to look at our other options. And obviously we knew Chicago was going to be an option.

"It was a business decision we eventually had to make."

As for the Checkers, they also have a new affiliation -- with the Florida Panthers. That also was announced Thursday although the Panthers' new general manager, Bill Zito, said last week that Charlotte would be their new AHL base beginning in 2020-21.

"I'm not here to knock anything," Waddell said. "We've been with Charlotte for a long time and won a championship last year. Every relationship has ups and downs in it and this one got to a point where it was time for us to move on.

"I can't pinpoint anything or say Charlotte did anything wrong. They run a very good organization there."

What factored into the Canes' move? Dollars certainly did. Waddell didn't say how much money was involved, saying much of the difference would be used in signing some veteran players for the Wolves to help in developing younger player.

"Financially the Wolves have stepped up and they share those costs with veteran players," Waddell said.

There also is a longstanding business relationship between Waddell and Don Levin, the Wolves' chairman and governor. The Wolves once were the AHL affiliate of the Atlanta Thrashers when Waddell was the Thrashers' GM, winning Calder Cup titles.

"When you work with people in the past you know you have a good relationship and it's worked in the past," Waddell said. "I think that's the first thing you have to look at.

"Money is great but if you can't work with somebody and it's not going to be a good spot for your players then you can have all the money in the world. What we're talking about is small peanuts when you talk about developing players for your National Hockey League team. So I think the part about financially, yes, there is more money and it's not coming to us. It's going out to pay the players to get there, the veteran players that they're willing to step up and pay.

"Most importantly we think it's a great opportunity for our players to be playing with those type of veterans and continue to mature not only as people but as players. So the working relationship, to me, is first and foremost, that's for sure."

The Canes moved their AHL affiliate from Albany, NY, to Charlotte in 2010 and stressed the importance of extending their hockey "footprint" in the state. Some of the Canes players who came through Charlotte, including forward Warren Foegele and defenseman Haydn Fleury, have been a part of Canes playoff teams the past two years

Checkers owner and CEO Michael Kahn, in a letter Thursday to Checkers fans, said the team "hoped to continue our affiliation with the Hurricanes."

But Checkers' COO Tera Black, speaking to the media Thursday, downplayed any contentious falling out with the Canes.

"I'm not really aware of any falling out. AHL affiliations can change rather quickly," she said. "It's been a great run, and we've enjoyed our relationship with the Carolina Hurricanes. But we're going to focus on the future."

The ease of movement for AHL player callups -- Fleury has said he made 12 round trips -- was easy enough. Jump in a car and drive to Raleigh.

But Waddell said enough non-stop flights to Raleigh are available -- although not as many as before the pandemic -- in and out of Chicago. And if the Canes are on the road, it could be easier to fly out of Chicago, he said.

"That isn't an issue whatsoever," he said of the travel.

The Wolves, who play their home games at Allstate Arena in Rosemont, were affiliated with the Vegas Golden Knights the past three years. They



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advanced to the Calder Cup finals last year before losing to the Checkers.

Ryan Warsofsky, the Checkers' head coach in 2019-20, will continue to coach the team in Chicago, it was announced Thursday. Pat Dwyer, a former Canes forward, will continue as an assistant coach. Bob Nardella,

a Wolves assistant coach the past three seasons, will remain with the team.

Because of the pandemic, the start of the AHL 2020-21 season is scheduled for Dec. 4. But like the NHL's plans, that could change.

## For Hurricanes' Sebastian Aho, the year 2020 has been more than about hockey

BY CHIP ALEXANDER

SEPTEMBER 04, 2020 12:16 PM ,

Playing professional sports at the highest level is all about growing as a player, maturing your game and, if you're good enough, dedicated enough, becoming a star.

Sebastian Aho has done that in his first four seasons in the NHL with the Carolina Hurricanes. The Finnish center has been an NHL All-Star, twice taken his team to the playoffs, increased his goal production every year. He's competitive, driven.

On a team that has no real superstars, Aho is the Canes' leading star.

But the year 2020 has been like no other for Aho. It has brought about personal introspection at age 23. There has been the coronavirus pandemic, with all its challenges, with playing hockey in a bubble. Aho is aware of the social unrest in the U.S. and the issues — and deep fissures — brought about the past few months.

"I mean, I've learned a lot," Aho said Friday on a media call. "You have to adjust to different things, especially this year when everything is being kind of unstable. Things have changed really quick and you just have to adjust on things and not just sit back. You have to move forward.

"It's been a good year in that way for me, just learning a lot about myself."

The NHL will help him continue to learn. The league will conduct inclusion and diversity training sessions for its players during training camp and the early part of the 2020-21 season.

On the hockey side, many around the NHL still are learning just how well Aho can play. He scored a career-high 38 goals in 68 games before the NHL paused the season in March because of the pandemic. Many believe he was the best player in the NHL playoff qualifying rounds once the league returned to play in Toronto.

Carolina Hurricanes center Sebastian Aho (20) is congratulated by teammates Joel Edmundson (6), Warren Foegele (13), Jordan Martinook (48), Vincent Trocheck (16) and Brock McGinn (23) after scoring against the New York Rangers during the third period of an NHL hockey playoff game Tuesday, Aug. 4, 2020

Did you see that move against the New York Rangers? You know the one. Aho first stripped the puck along the boards from defenseman Jacob Trouba, then undressed defenseman Tony DeAngelo with a quick, filthy move to the backhand, lifting a shot to beat goalie Igor Shesterkin.

Game 3 of the qualifier was over at that point. So was the series, a three-game sweep for the Canes.

The loss in five games to the Boston Bruins, in the first round of the Stanley Cup playoffs, was a downer for everyone. Aho, who had three goals and five assists against the Rangers, did not score against Boston.

"Especially seeing Sebastian after we were done, it's the look on his face of pure devastation," Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said recently. "This guy wants to win. Everybody wants to win but not everybody wants to do what it takes."

Aho does. He has returned to Finland determined to make the most of the next few months even as he must guess — like the rest of the NHL players — about a starting date for training camps, for the regular season.

And once the season does begin, hopefully in December?

"The next step for me is to be the best team in the league and obviously win the Stanley Cup," Aho said. "We showed everyone that we can play good hockey and we're a confident team but it's not good enough to get to the playoffs. Everyone on our team feels the same way, that we can raise the bar."

Carolina center Sebastian Aho (20) gets around Jake Gardiner (51) during the Carolina Hurricanes' on-ice workouts at PNC Arena in Raleigh, N.C., Monday, July 13, 2020

A year ago this time, Aho was just getting back to Raleigh for training camp. After the offer-sheet drama during the summer of 2019, he had a new five-year contract that would pay him \$8.454 million a season, the highest on the team, and was loaded with bonus money. He also had a slow start to the season.

"Even though I had a really bad start personally I battled through it," Aho said. "I felt like that was a good thing to learn, that though you have a bad start you can still have a good season. It's not always going your way and it's just staying with it."

And that's the plan for the Hurricanes: staying with it. Carolina unexpectedly reached the Eastern Conference finals in 2019 and were a playoff team again in 2020. Brind'Amour and general manager Don Waddell believe with a few additions and the continued maturation of such younger players as Aho and Andrei Svechnikov, the team can take the next step in the playoffs.

"We're not talking about this team just making the playoffs anymore, we're talking about how we're going to build a team that will go deep into the playoffs and eventually will win a Stanley Cup," Waddell said recently. "Every step is difficult. There is no easy step."

Aho has taken steps each season, from being a second-round draft pick — how many teams are kicking themselves over that? — to being moved from wing to center to becoming an All-Star and one of the league's most productive players.

But Aho is more interested in his team winning that adding to his personal accolades. The Canes have been in wild-card playoff position the past two seasons but want better finishes in the ultra-competitive Metropolitan Division to improve their playoff seeding.

"We're still a pretty young team and I think our guys still have more to come," Aho said. "I'm pretty excited about our team and getting a little better every year and hopefully next year we'll take the next step."



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## THE ATHLETIC

### For Hurricanes, trading pending UFA Joel Edmundson was a no-brainer

By Sara Civian

Sep 12, 2020

In an unsurprising and somewhat inevitable move, the Hurricanes traded the rights to pending unrestricted free agent Joel Edmundson for Montreal's 2020 fifth-round pick on Saturday.

Acquired during the preseason in the trade that sent Justin Faulk to St. Louis, Edmundson had a strong start to his Hurricanes career. But some inconsistencies along the way amounted in 20 points (7 goals, 13 assists) in 68 regular-season games overall. Edmundson, who was on a one-year, \$3.1 million contract, had an equally strong performance in the four postseason games he played for the Hurricanes, including one big goal, while being plus-four with 16 (!) shots.

This strong finish had some (read: me) convinced the Canes should resign him above any other in-house UFAs, but that was equal parts recency bias and wishful thinking. Evolving-Hockey's model predicts his next contract will be in the ballpark of three years with a \$3.9 million cap hit. Going through with the trade is one less thing for the Hurricanes to deal with on their quest to grow their \$7,782,261 projected cap space.

There's also this...

Edmundson's M.O. is providing a tough presence and size, which the Canes showed they lacked in the postseason, especially when he was out of the lineup. And that is something the Canes will need to figure out elsewhere.

But here's the deal: The Canes already have five NHL-regular defensemen on contract for next season: Dougie Hamilton, Jaccob Slavin, Brett Pesce, Jake Gardiner and Brady Skjei. Restricted free agent Haydn Fleury finally looked like the player the Hurricanes drafted in the

first round; they'll figure that contract out. Promising prospects Jake Bean and Joey Keane have been waiting for an opportunity.

It was always likely the Canes would let at least two of the three pending UFA defensemen – Edmundson, Trevor van Riemsdyk and Sami Vatanen – walk. Squeezing a draft pick out of that situation is a no-brainer.

The brass and head coach Rod Brind'Amour were particularly impressed with Vatanen, by the way. I would err on the side of caution and assume they let van Riemsdyk and Vatanen walk or finesse another trade, but there's a chance they at least attempt to see Vatanen back.

The Canes gave up their own first-rounder in the Skjei trade, so the Rangers got the No. 22-overall pick from Carolina.

They still have eight picks and a lot to look forward to in the upcoming draft, and they built on that today in what appears to be a no-risk situation.

1. No. 13 overall, acquired from Toronto in the Patrick Marleau trade
2. Their own second-rounder
3. Rangers' second-rounder
4. Sabres' third-rounder
5. Their own fourth-rounder
6. Canadiens' fifth-rounder
7. Their own seventh-rounder
8. Maple Leafs' seventh-rounder

For more offseason news, check out The Athletic's NHL trade and free agency tracker.

### Dissecting the Carolina Hurricanes and Charlotte Checkers parting ways

By Sara Civian

The Hurricanes and the AHL's Chicago Wolves officially announced a three-year partnership agreement Thursday, putting to rest a four-month separation saga with the Charlotte Checkers, their now former affiliate.

To be clear, the Hurricanes' prospects are still the Hurricanes' prospects. Head coach Ryan Warsofsky is still their coach, and his coaching staff is still his coaching staff. The front-office staff — including PR and media personnel — will remain Checkers employees. The Wolves were most recently affiliated with the Vegas Golden Knights.

"I think they're all excited," Hurricanes president and general manager Don Waddell said. "Ryan's actually very familiar with the situation there. He knows it's gonna be an attraction. I actually spoke to him this morning, he's getting a lot of calls already from players that want to be there. So I think from a staff standpoint it's worked out real well. I haven't heard one negative thing at all. You're going into a place that treats people really good — they have their own practice facility. Everyone is excited about this opportunity."

Rumors that the Hurricanes and the Checkers were parting ways came to a head in late April with a statement from the Checkers calling out the Hurricanes for pushing forward with Chicago.

"While we are aware that the Carolina Hurricanes are nearing an affiliation agreement with the AHL's Chicago Wolves, the Hurricanes have had little dialogue with us regarding this matter," a Checkers spokesperson said April 29. "In an era when NHL teams are placing great value on affiliations with closer proximity between the two clubs, we understand the confusion that such a move would cause. We will explore other options for our affiliation and look forward to continuing in the American Hockey League when play resumes."

A statement like this is unusual in the world of hockey PR, so before we even get into negotiations with the Wolves, I asked Waddell if he knows what might've prompted it.

"I don't," he said Thursday. "We thought everything was good, there, until January or so — then things fell apart. I can't say what they're thinking, obviously we've been there almost 10 years (since 2010-11), we enjoyed ourselves there. We thank them for taking care of our players and obviously winning the (Calder) Cup last year. I can't speak for them, but it was a business decision that we eventually had to make."

OK, so what exactly fell apart — and why? And how did dropping an in-state affiliate hot off a 2019 Calder Cup championship become an essential business decision? The Checkers will now be the affiliate of the Florida Panthers. Waddell said Thursday the move had to do with finances and working relationship.



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"It's a combination, when you've worked with people in the past and you know you have a good relationship that's worked in the past, that's the first thing you look at," he said. "Money is great, but if it's not going to be a good spot for your players, you can have all the money in the world, but what we're talking about is small peanuts when you're talking about developing players for your National Hockey League team. So financially, yes there is more money and it's not coming to us it's going to the players, but most importantly it's a great opportunity for our players ... the working relationship is first and foremost."

When pressed again about the Checkers specifically, he implied that the relationship was struggling.

"I'm not here to knock anything ... every relationship has bumps and ups and downs," he said. "But this one just got to a point where it was time to move on."

Waddell and Wolves GM Don Levin have known each other since 2001, when the Wolves and the Thrashers (Waddell's former team) had a 10-season affiliation. The familiarity with Levin helped when forming this business partnership.

"We won a championship in Charlotte last year, and all was good. We sat down in January and tried to make a deal to move this forward and it wasn't there to be, for me at this point," Waddell said. "Then the season dragged on, and then (the season paused because of COVID-19), it got to a point where we had to look at our other options — we knew Chicago would be an option, so we started talking with them ... Don and I started talking shortly after the whole virus started, just about what was going to happen in hockey in general. That continued on and we realized this made a lot of sense to pursue."

If we can't get the exact official clarification we so crave we can try to connect the dots based on what we do know.

I once took a class on logic meant for law students because it filled a math credit and I wanted to avoid actual math at all costs. I dropped it one month in but I did learn to lay my opinions out very specifically, in a series of bullet points to see if they are logically consistent. So here we go.

From a financial standpoint, it makes sense for an affiliated team that just won a championship to ask for more money.

It also makes sense for a team with contract negotiations with stars like Andrei Svechnikov and Dougie Hamilton coming up to push back. It's

entirely reasonable to assume the Canes will be dishing out a ballpark of \$9 million average annual value each for Svechnikov and Hamilton. We aren't exactly aware of how much money the Hurricanes or owner Tom Dundon have lost due to the fallout from COVID-19, but it's safe to assume it's a non-zero number, and they're also looking out for what they could lose in the future, should fans not be able to attend games in 2020-21, etc.

It makes sense for both sides to seek stability amidst a situation in which we aren't sure if minor league sports will be played at all in the upcoming season. I have reached out to a few neutral league sources asking for their opinions on the Hurricanes-Wolves affiliation and I'm being met with a lot of "... assuming the AHL has a season" caveats. Folks are operating as if it's going to happen, but aren't treating it as a definite. It's fair to wonder.

Speaking of neutral league sources, those are the ones who are first to knock the Hurricanes for being cheap about things. So when they see the Hurricanes' side, it means they understand where the franchise is coming from in changing affiliations.

Can we agree and/or understand that negotiations take two sides to work? So this wasn't exclusively the Hurricanes screaming "NO DEAL!" like Howie Mandel.

Can we agree that the Checkers announcing to the public that they haven't had communication with the Canes is odd but doesn't necessarily mean they're in the right?

Court is adjourned!

Many of y'all on Twitter were asking me what to think of this and how to feel. You should feel your feelings about it! It was special and cool to have a #OneCarolina type situation going on with the pro hockey in this state, especially since it's basically Carolina vs. The World in terms of that mindset.

If you're a Canes fan in Charlotte, it obviously stinks to have this taken away. You're allowed to be mad about that.

But, I'd implore you to ask yourself who you're mad at and why. I'd also ask you to consider how often minor league affiliations change and why. You could finally ask yourself if this is worth losing Svechnikov or Hamilton over.

## 2020 NHL organizational rankings: No. 6 Carolina Hurricanes

By Corey Pronman

Sep 9, 2020

Corey Pronman's annual deep dive into the farm system of every NHL organization will be slightly different this year. First, it is occurring before the draft because of the change in schedule this season. But this allows you to see where teams stand going into the draft, and Pronman will update the rankings after the draft. Second, it will include all skaters in the organization who are 22 or younger as of Sept. 15, 2020

, regardless of how many NHL games they've played. This allowed us to incorporate a lot of great young players who were on the fringe of graduating based on our old definition. Check out the full explanation of Pronman's eligibility and the full ranking of all 31 systems here.

I've liked a lot of the Hurricanes' moves of late in how they've targeted high-end skill and filled their prospect pool. They have a number of players I think will help the team and several who I think can play important roles on the team. The direction of the team's future changed when they won the second pick at the 2018 NHL Draft and picked Andrei

Svechnikov, who has emerged as one of the best young players in the game. The combination of a star plus depth equals a strong young foundation of talent.

Key graduates: Sebastian Aho

2019 ranking: No. 8

Player Ranking

1. Andrei Svechnikov, RW, Carolina-NHL

March 26, 2000 | 6-foot-2 | 194 pounds

Tier: Special/Elite bubble

Skating: 55

Puck Skills: 65

Physical Game: 60

Hockey Sense: 60

Shot: 60



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Svechnikov has looked of late like a legit second-overall pick and showing the promise he's excited scouts with since he was a young teenager. He's a complete hockey player. Svechnikov is an extremely skilled forward who can beat NHL defensemen clean with his hands. He's a very creative handler and passer who can make elite plays with the puck. He's a great passer and finisher, with a shot that can score goals from the dots. He's a good skater with NHL caliber speed, but lacks the explosiveness to pull away from guys, using his strength and frame to power his way to the net rather than jet around defenders. He attacks the middle of the ice effectively, shows no fear of playing a physical game and can overpower opponents. He looks like a true star.

2. Martin Necas, RW, Carolina-NHL

Jan. 15, 1999 | 6-foot-2 | 190 pounds

Tier: High-end NHL player

Skating: 60

Puck Skills: 60

Physical Game: 45

Hockey Sense: 60

Shot: 60

Necas had a successful rookie NHL season, scoring over half a point per game and could have hit 20 goals in a full season. He's easy to spot on the ice as Necas' game is full of speed and skill. His skating stride is easy and explosive with the ability to turn around NHL defenders. He can make highly-skilled plays at full speed. Necas is a great passer and shooter, which is why Carolina used him on the flank on the power play. All these elements in his game make him a dynamic player with the ability to break open a game on any given shift. His main weakness would be the fact he can be a bit of a perimeter player, instead of using his skating to get to the net and he could improve his play off the puck.

3. Jake Bean, D, Charlotte-AHL

June 9, 1998 | 6-foot-1 | 187 pounds

Tier: High-end/very good bubble

Skating: 55

Puck Skills: 55

Physical Game: 50

Hockey Sense: 60

Bean led all defensemen in scoring in the AHL and was one of the best overall defensemen in the league as a 21 year old. He's a very smart puck-mover who makes great outlets and shows a high level of poise from the offensive blue line. Bean is a good, not amazing, skater who will be able to skate at the NHL level. He has the speed and edgework to make a lot of the plays defensemen need to make. Defensively Bean took on a lot more responsibility in 2019-20, playing big minutes for Charlotte and showing he could kill penalties at the pro level. He's taken time but the 2016 13th-overall pick looks on track to become a top-four defenseman in the NHL.

4. Ryan Suzuki, C, Saginaw-OHL

May 28, 2001 | six-foot | 181 pounds

Tier: Very good NHL player

Skating: 55

Puck Skills: 60

Physical Game: 45

Hockey Sense: 60

Suzuki had a tough start to the season, with slow production in Barrie and a scary eye injury that he recovered from. Upon being traded to Saginaw he started to roll. Suzuki's talent stands out whenever he has the puck on his stick. He's a highly-skilled player who can beat defenders with his hands and is a better passer than he is a puckhandler. He makes quick, creative passes with consistency and can run a power play off the flank. He makes high-difficulty plays while moving quickly, showing a good skating stride that will translate to the next level. Suzuki isn't a physical player but he works hard and is responsible defensively.

5. Dominik Bokk, RW, Rogle-SHL

Feb. 3, 2000 | 6-foot-2 | 187 pounds

Tier: Very good NHL player

Skating: 55

Puck Skills: 60

Physical Game: 40

Hockey Sense: 60

Shot: 60

Bokk started off the season slowly, but had a very good world juniors and had a great second half in the SHL. His talent jumps out to you when you watch him. Bokk is highly skilled, quick, and makes difficult offensive plays at a pro pace. He's a highly creative playmaker who makes unique plays with the puck. He's a great passer and shooter, who can score from range with a hard, accurate shot. Bokk's talent has never been in doubt, but he plays on the perimeter a bit too much, needs to be better off the puck and his overall consistency needs to improve.

6. Patrik Puistola, LW, Tapaara-Liiga

Jan. 11, 2001 | six-foot | 165 pounds

Tier: Legit NHL player

Skating: 50

Puck Skills: 60

Physical Game: 45

Hockey Sense: 60

Puistola bounced around between four pro clubs in Finland. He was just OK at the Liiga level, showing great flashes. His skill and goal-scoring ability define him. Puistola can make pro defenders miss with his great hands and is always a second away from a highlight-reel play. He's not a very physical player, but he scores a lot by going to the net and showing great ability to knock in shots and second chances. He can score, but he also makes top-end passes frequently and his creative puck game translates to his playmaking. Puistola's main hangup is his mediocre stride which has led to his struggles at the top Finnish level where he can't get around defenders like he can at the junior level.

7. Morgan Geekie, C, Charlotte-AHL

July 20, 1998 | 6-foot-3 | 192 pounds

Tier: Legit NHL player

Skating: 45

Puck Skills: 55

Physical Game: 55

Hockey Sense: 60

Shot: 60

Geekie had another great season in the AHL, including a successful brief call-up to Carolina and appearing in eight postseason games. Geekie is a forward with size who can make plays and finish them at a high level. He



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has a hard shot that can score from mid-range. He has the patience and vision to find seams in the offensive zone. He works hard to win pucks and makes plays in the hard areas. A lot of things about his game are impressive except for his skating. His stride has good flashes but there are also times it breaks down and looks slow. I think despite the skating he can make it because he has so many other positive elements, but the pace of the NHL will be a challenge.

8. Jamieson Rees, C, Sarnia-OHL

Feb. 26, 2001 | 5-foot-11 | 172 pounds

Tier: Legit NHL player

Skating: 50

Puck Skills: 60

Physical Game: 45

Hockey Sense: 60

Rees was one of the top scorers in the OHL on a per game basis, being a driving player for Sarnia. He's a very entertaining player to watch. Rees is full of skill and energy. He will embarrass defenders with a deke through them, and then carry them on his back as he drives to the net. He plays physically, arguably too physically at times as he's been suspended several times for crossing the line. Rees is a very creative offensive player who makes tough, unique plays frequently and makes a lot of great plays around the tough areas of the ice. Rees' drawbacks are his size and skating. For a smaller player, he lacks the ability to pull away from checks at the NHL level.

9. Anttoni Honka, D, JYP-Liiga

Oct. 5, 2000 | 5-foot-10 | 179 pounds

Tier: Legit NHL player

Skating: 60

Puck Skills: 60

Physical Game: 30

Hockey Sense: 60

Honka was a solid player in Liiga and a top defenseman for Finland's U20 team. With the puck on his stick, his talent is evident. Honka is a very slick puckhandler. His passing is excellent, showing great poise and creativity from the offensive blue line and he makes a ton of great outlets. He's not extremely fast, but he's quick and elusive, showing great edges and ability to control possession with his skating and skill. Honka's main downside is his defensive play. He has a tough time defending size and speed, and can at times be too risky with the puck in his own end.

10. Joey Keane, D, Charlotte-AHL

July 2, 1999 | six-foot | 185 pounds

Tier: Legit NHL player

Skating: 55

Puck Skills: 55

Physical Game: 45

Hockey Sense: 60

Keane was an AHL All-Star as a rookie pro for Hartford before being traded to Carolina. He's shown excellent puck-moving skill at the pro level. His offensive IQ is very high, and he has the ability to play with pace. He's a good skater and will be able to handle the NHL speed. His defensive play was just OK as a rookie pro. I liked his compete and defensive play in junior so I think that aspect will come along with time and he will become a solid two-way defenseman at the pro level.

11. David Cotton, LW, Boston College-Hockey East

July 9, 1997 | 6-foot-2 | 201 pounds

Tier: Legit NHL player

Skating: 50

Puck Skills: 55

Physical Game: 60

Hockey Sense: 60

Cotton has been a top player in his conference the past two seasons and was a leading player on a top Boston College team this past season. He is a big-body forward with pretty good skill and sense who makes a lot of plays around the net. The knock on his game has always been his heavy feet, which I don't think have improved a ton but are good enough to handle the pro level given his other plus-attributes. He has the skill, the size and he has the work ethic, so there's a lot of reasons to think he could play NHL games even as an older college prospect.

12. Jack Drury, C, Harvard-ECAC

Feb. 3, 2000 | six-foot | 185 pounds

Tier: Legit NHL player

Skating: 50

Puck Skills: 55

Physical Game: 50

Hockey Sense: 60

Drury was a top player in the ECAC, scoring 20 goals and playing all situations for Harvard. He didn't score all those goals because of a great shot, but because Drury works very hard and is great around the net. There's not a lot of flash to Drury's game. He doesn't go end-to-end or dangle through defenders and his skating could use an extra gear. He's very competitive and smart, though. He's reliable off the puck, kills penalties well, and shows great vision to make tough plays at a quick pace.

NHL potential

Pyotr Kochetkov, G, Podolsk-KHL: Kochetkov had a bumpy season, where it looked early on like he could be a go-to player in net for SKA. But he struggled and was traded and never really got into a long, consistent stretch of good performance. He has all the tools you want in a pro goalie between his size, quickness, intelligence and competitiveness. He reads tough passing plays very well. He makes tough saves consistently, showing the ability to keep pucks out you are sure are going in. He'll need to be more consistent, let in fewer long-range shots and put together a full season at the KHL level.

Tuukka Tiekola, RW, Karpat-Jr. A Liiga: Tiekola had a great season at the Finnish junior level, with his great skating and playmaking on display consistently. He's an intriguing undersized forward due to his talent level. He will have to get it done at a higher level to really be on the NHL radar, but he did look good at a U19 international tournament late in the season.

Dominick Fensore, D, Boston University-Hockey East: Fensore is a tremendous skater who has skill and moves the puck very well. He's super tiny though (5-foot-7, 150 pounds) and while the offense is good, I question if it's so good that it'll overcome his likely defensive deficiencies at the pro level.

Jesper Sellgren, D, Lulea-SHL: Sellgren is a highly-mobile and intelligent two-way defenseman who helped Lulea be a top team in the SHL. He's small and lacks a real "wow" factor to his game offensively, making me wonder what his NHL role would be.

Stelio Mattheos, RW, Charlotte-AHL: Mattheos missed most of the season after being treated for testicular cancer. He did return in January



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and held his own at the pro level. He has an intriguing combination of size, sense, speed and goal-scoring ability.

#### Player Eligibility:

All skaters who are 22 years old or younger as of Sept. 15, 2020

#### Previous ranking:

There is more fluctuation from last year's ranking to this year's because now all skaters in the organization under age 22 are factored into the ranking to account for the entire picture of the organization's young players, not just those outside of the NHL.

#### Tool grades:

Tool grades are based on the 20-80 scale. 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 shot is only graded if it is notably good.

#### 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.

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

## NORTH STATE JOURNAL

### Report: Checkers, Hurricanes will end affiliation

By Cory Lavalette

The Charlotte Checkers' 10-year run of being the top affiliate for the cross-state Carolina Hurricanes is apparently over.

During calls with reporters Thursday, new Florida Panthers GM Bill Zito and coach Joel Quenneville both mentioned Charlotte in reference to developing the team's prospects, FloridaHockeyNow's [George Richards reported](#), seemingly confirming a months-long rumor that the Checkers would no longer be the Hurricanes' American Hockey League affiliate.

Reports of the Checkers becoming Florida's affiliate and Carolina moving its prospects to the Chicago Wolves started in March when the St. Louis Blues inked an affiliation deal with the Springfield Thunderbirds, who had been the Panthers' affiliate. Neither the Checkers' affiliation with Florida nor the Wolves' with Carolina has been officially announced.

The Checkers moved from the ECHL to the AHL for the 2010-11 season, taking over for the Albany River Rats in becoming the Hurricanes' top affiliate. The partnership was ideal for both sides in building a statewide network of hockey fans. Carolina benefited by having its top prospects a brief car ride away for both the purposes of evaluation and call-ups, while the Checkers had their parent team — and its fans — nearby.

Last year, the Hurricanes reached an agreement with the Greenville (S.C.) Swamp Rabbits to be its ECHL affiliate, a move placed the team's two minor league teams in close proximity.

The partnership between Carolina and Charlotte peaked last season when the Checkers won the Calder Cup. The coach of that team, Mike Vellucci — who had a longtime affiliation with former Hurricanes owner Peter Karmanos — did not come to a contract extension agreement to stay with the Checkers and was hired to coach the AHL's Wilkes-Barre Scranton Penguins by former Hurricanes GM and current Pittsburgh GM Jim Rutherford. Vellucci was named an NHL assistant on Pittsburgh coach Mike Sullivan's staff Wednesday.

Checkers assistant coach Ryan Warsofsky was promoted to head coach, and he had led Charlotte to a 34-22-0-5 record this season when the season was paused and later canceled.

The coaching staff, which this past season also included former Hurricanes forward Patrick Dwyer, is employed by Carolina and would relocate with the Hurricanes' prospects to its new affiliate.

Hurricanes GM Don Waddell — who was general manager of the Atlanta Thrashers when the now-defunct team's AHL affiliate was the Wolves — has said multiple times in recent months that an announcement would be coming soon regarding the organization's AHL affiliation.

When reached Wednesday, the Hurricanes had no statement regarding the comments made by Florida's Zito and Quenneville. The Checkers have not responded to an email requesting comment on the news.

During the team's time in the AHL, the Checkers have become one of the most respected franchises in the league. On top of the Calder Cup



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championship last season, the Checkers are three-time winners of the AHL's Award of Excellence in Community Service.

Tera Black, the team's COO, was the [lone woman named to the AHL's Return to Play task force](#), joining five NHL GMs — including Steve

Yzerman, Ken Holland and David Poile — and seven others on the 13-person committee.

In late June, Black referred all questions regarding the Checkers' affiliation negotiations with Carolina to the Hurricanes.



## Q&A with Don Waddell on New Affiliation Agreement

The Carolina Hurricanes today made official the news of a new [three-year affiliation agreement with the Chicago Wolves](#) of the American Hockey League.

Hurricanes President and General Manager Don Waddell has a long-standing history with the Wolves organization, and he sat down to answer some questions about the new agreement.

What are the benefits of partnering with the Chicago Wolves?

Waddell: Chicago runs a very first-class organization, and they run it like an NHL team. They have great amenities and their own practice facility, and the arena is less than a mile from the airport. Players want to play for that organization. The Wolves have built a reputation where players know they will be treated well. They want to be there. I can speak from first-hand knowledge and have a lot of history with their owner, Don Levin and GM Wendell Young. We won championships there while developing players, and I think those two go hand-in-hand.

How does this make the Carolina Hurricanes better as an organization?

Waddell: The Wolves are willing to invest in players with us. From that standpoint, we'll be able to do more with our players for less cost. Some of the players we've brought in - what I would call our depth, veteran NHL players - we'll still need to sign those players, and we have a partner that realizes the importance of that and is willing to help financially support bringing in those quality veterans. The Wolves will be a partner, and we appreciate that they are an attractive destination as an organization. These last few weeks with the rumors out there, we're starting to get a lot more calls from agents about placing their players with us knowing that we will be in Chicago.

What does this new affiliation agreement mean for player development, and how does the location impact player call-ups?

Waddell: Our development coaches like Sergei Samsonov, Tim Gleason, Paul Schonfelder and Peter Harrold all have previously spent time in Charlotte to help develop our young players, so this does not change much. If anything, it enhances it. Chicago is a major hub city to fly in and out of for everybody. Before the pandemic started, there were 13 or 14 flights a day from Raleigh to Chicago. It does not matter what part of the country you are in, getting in and out of Chicago is very easy to do.

What type of investments have the Hurricanes made in player development?

Waddell: It all starts with drafting. Darren Yorke oversees our amateur draft. We've changed a lot of the way we approach the draft and assets since Tom Dundon took over as owner of the team. We changed how we move draft picks around to get more assets, and the more assets you have, the better chance you have of players reaching the next level. Once we draft a player, that day is over and then it becomes all about spending the time to develop them. After the draft, we bring in our players to meet with the developmental staff and Bill Burniston, our head strength and conditioning coach, and by the time they leave here, every player has a custom program. Some players need to work on foot speed, some need to work on strength, so Bill and our staff make sure that what each player is focused on will improve them as a hockey player. It's not all about physical fitness, but they all have custom, individual programs they can focus on to help each player become a better hockey player and hopefully a Carolina Hurricane.



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## SportScan

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

A behind-the-scenes look at how Julien BriseBois 'transformed' Lightning

By Joe Smith

Sep 13, 2020

Doug Wilson woke up in the Ritz Carlton in Philadelphia on the morning of the Feb. 24 trade deadline not knowing what to expect.

The Sharks general manager had a few players who were likely to move, such as Patrick Marleau. Wilson did not want to trade Barclay Goodrow. He wasn't shopping him. But Lightning general manager Julien BriseBois had been persistent about the Sharks center for the previous month, sparking more than a dozen phone calls between him and Wilson about a potential deal.

Wilson drew a line in the sand: The only way Goodrow was getting dealt was if the Lightning would send the Sharks a first-round pick. It might have sounded steep, especially with Tampa Bay having already dealt a first-rounder and top prospect Nolan Foote to the Devils a week earlier for Blake Coleman.

But Coleman, 28, and Goodrow, 27, had been BriseBois' top targets since the organization's January meetings at Amalie Arena. They were two forwards who could add needed snarl and sandpaper to a skilled lineup. They were hard to play against and would make the Lightning a harder out in the playoffs. They were also hard to get, with both boasting team-friendly contracts for another year. BriseBois, who had watched Goodrow's final 20 games with the Sharks, either on TV or computer, needed to be "really aggressive."

With the deadline approaching, BriseBois told Wilson he'd give up the first-round pick. The deal got done around 2:37 p.m., just before the 3 p.m. deadline.

"You have to know your team, the phase they're in, and you swing when you're in that position," Wilson told The Athletic. "And Julien took a swing. It was not an easy deal for me to make, and probably wasn't an easy deal for him to make, either. Those are the right type of deals."

BriseBois finished runner-up for the NHL's GM of the Year Award on Saturday, finishing behind Islanders' Lou Lamoriello in an honor voted on by fellow GMs and a panel of executives and media. It wasn't just because of BriseBois' bold moves at the deadline — taking the "damned if you do approach" — to bolster his team. It was the things he didn't do, vowing not to "blow up" his roster or fire coach Jon Cooper after his team's historic and humbling loss to the Blue Jackets in the first round last spring. It took patience, resolve and persistence, with BriseBois adding seven new players to the team without breaking up his core. No general manager has ever had to try to pick up the pieces from a Presidents' Trophy team that had just been swept in the first round. And here was BriseBois, entering his second year as GM, charged with that task.

This wasn't a one-man show, with BriseBois calling it a team effort. But if you go behind the scenes of the past 14 months, you learn a lot about the man who took a self-described "serendipitous" route to the job.

"When you're trying to take your team to that championship-caliber level, you can't do that if you don't have the high-end talent," said former NHL GM Craig Button. "You can't do it unless you have essential pieces. They had (Nikita) Kucherov, they had (Victor) Hedman, and (Andrei Vasilevskiy).

"But it's about what you do on the edges. You can have this great painting, but what makes the painting beautiful is framing. Julien framed the painting, and it's a perfect framing. That's a manager's job."

The summer

The low point for BriseBois likely came in the bowels of Nationwide Arena around midnight on April 15, 2019.

Players had just slumped in their stalls, shell-shocked after being swept by Columbus, an unthinkable end to a 62-win season. BriseBois sat in an adjacent room with Steve Yzerman. They had built this team together over the previous decade believing they would win a Cup (maybe more than one). But as Yzerman would soon depart to take over as GM of the Red Wings, this was a bitter ending, something neither of them ever envisioned.

"I'm sorry we didn't win a Cup together," BriseBois recalled saying that night.

A few days later, BriseBois had a major meeting scheduled. He headed over to owner Jeff Vinik's sprawling South Tampa home for an end-of-season talk, which would last around two hours. There was much to discuss and digest, from what had just happened to what the team should do next. This would set the tone for the club's summer, its next chapter. They sat together in Vinik's "TV room," with one sitting in a lounge chair, the other on the couch.

Vinik recalls that BriseBois was strong in his opinions. Methodical. Confident.

"We weren't going to make any rash decisions," Vinik said in a phone interview Saturday. "He wanted to take his time, examine what happened during that season and why it had such a tough ending, and what to do about it — if anything. It was clear to him, and I agreed, that we have a really good core, we have really good players overall, who disappointed last year. But blowing up this team was not an option for either of us.

"It'd be a panic move."

Coach Jon Cooper had just signed a three-year extension a few weeks before the playoffs, and they decided he wasn't going anywhere. As BriseBois told the media that week, "No point in looking for the next Coop when I have the original. I like the original."

"He gets the blame for the performance, the players do, the managers do, so does the owner," Vinik said. "We all share the blame. It wasn't a reason to make an impulsive decision and get rid of the longest-tenured coach in the NHL. Clearly, he was one of the best coaches and despite the disappointment, I think we've won more playoff series than any other team the last six, seven years. We've got to win the big prize and we're getting close, but none of that to me says, 'Fire the coach.' All it says to me is that the coach is going to continue to get better and this will be a learning experience."

Former NHL GM Neil Smith, who won a Cup with the Rangers, said keeping Cooper was BriseBois' smartest move. Smith said it's important



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to ignore the outside noise — the fans, the media — when making these types of decisions. It helps to have a supportive owner such as Vinik, he said, as the absence of that steadiness can throw a wrench into your plan.

Smith pointed to many of the Cup teams over the past few decades, from his 1994 Rangers to the mid-1990s Red Wings to the Penguins and Kings. They all had to go through heartbreak first. The scars were almost a precursor to the Cup, a rite of passage of sorts.

“You can’t let people on the outside tell you ‘you’ve got to blow this up’ or ‘you’ve got to do this.’ You have to do what you think is right. The thing everyone is concerned with is, ‘Am I going to lose my job over this?’ You’ve got to put that out of your mind and think about what’s best for the organization. And if it turns out I lose my job because I did what I thought was right, then so be it.”

Former Lightning general manager Jay Feaster and Smith said an executive has to take the emotion out of decisions, whether personal feelings about players or how much was given up for them in the draft or trades. That can make for a hard, honest assessment of core players. And in the Lightning’s case, BriseBois didn’t want to break up any of his core as long as the cap allowed him to stay the course.

The fact that veteran Ryan Callahan was told he could no longer play because of degenerative back issues meant that he could be put on long-term injured reserve, though BriseBois was able to move his \$5.8 million AAV in a trade with Ottawa. That was an underrated but important move to clear space for the deadline moves he’d eventually make.

The Lightning didn’t make a big splash at the deadline, instead swapping out backup goalies (in Curtis McElhinney, out Louis Domingue) and adding depth right-shot defenseman Luke Schenn. McElhinney provided a stable veteran who was comfortable in the role and was under contract for the following season.

BriseBois didn’t expect veterans Pat Maroon and Kevin Shattenkirk (bought out by the Rangers) to be available in August, but when they were, he pounced, signing both to team-friendly, one-year deals (Maroon for \$900,000, Shattenkirk for \$1.75 million). He saw Maroon’s impact in the room, as Cooper could vouch for in their experiences together. Shattenkirk’s puck-moving ability fit perfectly with Tampa Bay’s style, as did the chip on his shoulder from how his time ended in New York.

“Knowing what he did with the core group of guys and having that winning mentality and having that one goal to win, he wanted to change the locker room a bit,” Maroon said. “He brought in new faces, he wanted to adapt the room a little bit. Hats off to him. We still have some unfinished business, we’re happy for him and hope we can get him back here.”

There was no major makeover in the offseason, just subtle tweaks.

“The general manager’s job is to see the team as it is, not as you thought it would be, not as you hoped it would have been, but in clear reality,” said Button, who won a Cup as an executive with the Stars in 1999. “You have to have the clarity of what your team is. That’s the No. 1 essential quality of a GM.

“What Julien saw clearly is a team that had challenges in certain type of games when a game got pushed in a different direction, where the team needed more help.”

The needs

The Lightning pro scouting staff, executives and BriseBois got together in January at Amalie Arena for their annual pre-deadline meetings. Coaches were involved, too, with their input.

“What do we need?”

Cooper said the focus was not on adding to the top six, as they felt they had enough firepower up front (and, at that time, they still had captain Steven Stamkos). They needed a couple of forwards to add to their group, guys with “dirt under their fingernails,” as Cooper put it. BriseBois

said one of the forwards needed to be a big, heavy center who could play in the bottom six.

The two names atop the Lightning board: Blake Coleman and Barclay Goodrow.

There was also a potential need on defense, with Jan Rutta and Ryan McDonagh suffering lower-body injuries. This is where the collaboration and communication between the GM and the coach are so important. “I made 100 deals in my career,” Smith said. “You have to stay close to your coach and be constantly talking and feeling him out. He’s the jockey on the horse. If you tell the jockey, ‘I’m going to tell you what horse you’re riding no matter what,’ you can’t expect to get the results.”

Smith said then-Rangers coach Mike Keenan kept pushing to trade Tony Amonte for Stephane Matteau, and Smith eventually did, also adding Glenn Anderson and Craig McTavish. He didn’t disrupt his core, which included Mark Messier, Mark Richter, Adam Graves and Brian Leetch, but he added around the edges.

Feaster will always be remembered for his deadline deal in 2004 to add veteran defenseman Darryl Sydor from Columbus. He traded Alexander Svitov and the team’s third-round pick that year to get Sydor and a fourth-round pick. Feaster got the ultimate validation when he boarded the team bus the day of the trade and captain Dave Andreychuk squeezed his shoulder and nodded as Feaster passed by. “You can’t fool the players,” Feaster said. “They know what you need.”

So does the coach.

“When you’re in a position like that, you have to make tough decisions,” Cooper said. “There’s no standing on the fence, and Julien doesn’t stand on the fence. He listens, takes in information and makes decisions. I don’t think you can ever second-guess what that guy does. Maybe you can over time say that decision wasn’t right. But he makes a decision, and he doesn’t do it by the seat of his pants. He does it with information, and it’s calculated. He doesn’t BS you. He’s upfront and will tell you like it is.

“We’ve always been honest with each other. Sometimes the conversations aren’t always the easiest. But we trust each other. I trust everything he does.”

BriseBois knew it would take a hefty price to acquire Coleman and/or Goodrow. He checked in with Vinik weeks ahead of the deadline with the plan. Vinik has said he’ll never be the one to make hockey-related decisions — “I let the coach coach and GM manage.” But BriseBois and, before him, Yzerman would always discuss big philosophical moves, ones that include spending extra money or assets.

Vinik’s first question is always this: Are we a serious contender for the Stanley Cup? If the Lightning aren’t, they shouldn’t give up too many future assets. Vinik’s goal is to win the Cup now and 10 years from now without taking a big dip. Even to him, it’s “painful” to move top prospects such as Nolan Foote or, in the Ryan McDonagh deal with the Rangers a couple of years ago, Brett Howden and Libor Hajek.

BriseBois told Vinik the best-case plan would “address some weaknesses” with players who weren’t rentals, as Coleman and Goodrow were under contract for another year at \$2.7 million combined.

“His strategy was that we had a really good team and a really good shot,” Vinik recalled. “There’s no guarantees. But this is as good a time as any to put all the chips in and after some players who can make a huge difference to our team this year.”

The Coleman deal

Tom Fitzgerald knew he’d be busy at the trade deadline.

The interim Devils general manager had several players who were likely to move on from a team headed for the lottery. Veteran defenseman Andy Greene got dealt to the Islanders, for example. But Fitzgerald kept getting calls about the 28-year-old Coleman, an “identity” player who was



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versatile, a 20-goal scorer who could be a difference-maker on the penalty kill, too.

"My phone was ringing a lot," Fitzgerald said.

Fitzgerald said top teams were telling him they felt Coleman could "help them get over the top." It was an attractive contract, just \$1.8 million AAV for 2020-21. "You get the best return when there's a bidding war, and I had multiple teams offering similar packages," Fitzgerald said.

Fitzgerald said BriseBois was the first GM to offer something substantial, telling him during the early February Beanpot Tournament in Boston that he'd be willing to give up the first-round pick for Coleman. BriseBois had two first-rounders, the Lightning's pick and the conditional first they received from Vancouver in the J.T. Miller deal the previous summer.

But the Devils, who had leverage, wanted more. Fitzgerald asked for forward Foote, whom the Lightning had just taken 27th overall in the 2019 NHL Draft. This was a tough one. Foote, the brother of Cal Foote, another one-time Lightning first-rounder, was Tampa Bay's top prospect in their system. They didn't have many blue-chip-caliber players up front. Losing Foote would leave a hole.

Blake Coleman (John E. Sokolowski / USA Today)

It was only when BriseBois agreed to include Foote that the Coleman deal got finalized on Feb. 16, eight days before the deadline. The Lightning agreed to send New Jersey the first-rounder they got from Vancouver, whether it would be this year (if the Canucks made the playoffs) or next year.

"(Foote) was the guy that I asked for," Fitzgerald said. "Julien wants to win the Stanley Cup. This is their year. You can see it with the way they're playing. What's the value of winning a Cup? I don't know. I'm not there yet. But I hope to get there, to where I can parlay a top prospect and a first-round pick because we are on the verge of winning a Cup. I tip my hat to Julien. He's a good businessman and a passionate general manager who wants to win. I think he showed his fan base and his team that he's all-in."

For the previous month or so, Coleman's agents — Brian and Stephen Bartlett — were told he wasn't being shopped but that the Devils would at least be listening. Some teams are more forthright than others. Brian Bartlett recalled a couple of deadlines earlier, when he asked the Rangers at 2:57 p.m. if Miller was getting moved. They said no. Shortly after the 3 p.m. deadline, while Miller was on a plane to Vancouver, he got dealt with McDonagh to the Lightning.

No matter the notice, a trade would have rattled Coleman, whose wife, Jordan, was about nine months pregnant. She could give birth at any time. So when Coleman was told he was pulled from the lineup around 5 p.m. that Sunday, it got stressful. His dad, Rusty, was in town from Texas for the game and the upcoming "Dads Trip." Blake called Jordan.

"We've been traded," he told her.

Jordan said she broke down. "Where are we going?"

"I don't know."

They had heard rumors of different teams, from Edmonton to Boston, but nobody knew. Coleman left the Prudential Center and went home with his dad. They cracked open a beer and waited, starting to watch the Devils' game. Fitzgerald called, telling Coleman it was strictly business, that the Lightning had given an offer "I couldn't refuse."

"You're going to win a Cup — if it's not this year, it's next year," Fitzgerald told Coleman.

Not too long after, BriseBois called Coleman. Jordan Coleman will never forget what he said.

"I'm so fucking excited about this."

The Goodrow trade

Goodrow got a knock on the door of his hotel room at the Ritz in Philly on deadline day and figured something was up.

He had never been traded in his career, remaining on the same junior team (Brampton in OHL) for five years, and then the next six in San Jose after signing as an undrafted free agent. Goodrow didn't think he'd get moved, but he had heard some rumors. Marleau was likely leaving, and maybe Joe Thornton was, too.

Goodrow looked through the peephole and saw his GM, Wilson, in the hall.

Then came the awkwardness. Wilson was actually looking for Marleau, who had just been dealt to the Penguins. But Goodrow's and Marleau's room numbers on the team's sheet were mixed up.

"I'm like, what are the odds of that?" Wilson recalled, laughing.

The truth was, Wilson was in talks with the Lightning about Goodrow but wasn't sure if a trade would get done. As with Coleman, BriseBois had been aggressive in pursuing Goodrow. They had more than a dozen calls on the subject for the preceding month. Wilson was hesitant to trade Goodrow, a heart-and-soul type of player who was versatile and had grown up in the organization.

"I was not shopping him at all," Wilson said. "But Julien aggressively came after him."

Barclay Goodrow (John E. Sokolowski / USA Today)

BriseBois had been with his staff all weekend at Amalie Arena, bouncing between the conference room and his office. Usually in attendance were his pro scouts and fellow execs such as Mathieu Darche, Jamie Pushor and Stacy Roest. Also, there was director of analytics Mike Peterson, not to mention scouting director Al Murray, who is helpful when picks or prospects are involved in a deal. They had conversations about multiple players at multiple positions, including defense, which they eventually addressed the night before by signing veteran Zach Bogosian to a one-year deal. Bogosian, who had been waived by Buffalo after a contentious year, was sold on the Lightning over other suitors after talks with BriseBois and Cooper, who discussed his role on a Cup-contending team.

"It was too good to pass up," Bogosian said.

Now that they had defensive help, the Lightning kept their focus on Goodrow. Wilson insisted he needed a first-round pick in return. That was the Lightning's decision, whether to ante up or use that first-round pick on another player/position. BriseBois ultimately told Wilson they'd deal their second first-round pick in a week.

For the second time that day, Wilson knocked on Goodrow's door. This time, it was for him.

"At the deadline, when you're a buyer, you're damned if you do and damned if you don't," BriseBois said that day. "I decided I was going to take the risk of being damned if I do, and I did."

Wilson has been in BriseBois' shoes before. There was even a time years ago when he chatted with Red Wings executive and former GM Jimmy Devellano about whether he should consider breaking up his core after several playoff exits. "He was under a lot of stress, more from the fans via the media, that they should blow up their team," Devellano said. "I said, 'Don't do it. Don't do it.'"

"I said, 'Look, Doug, what, you going to get rid of the good players? You're going to have to tweak it up, shake it up or give them shit. But you're not going to get rid of Marleau, Thornton.' At the end of the day, that's what makes it so hard. There's only one parade."

Wilson has made deadline or summer moves to add to his core, but now that his Sharks knew they wouldn't be in the playoffs, he found himself in another position.

"You don't worry about the outside world, you do what's right for your team," Wilson said. "I've done it many times. You got to balance the



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present with the future and take a look at where your team is at, what ingredients you need, what it might cost. If it makes sense, you go for it. I admire and respect Julien for going and getting the pieces he needed.”

Button said it reminded him of when the Stars, after an exit in the 1998 playoffs, decided they needed more of a scoring punch. They signed Brett Hull and won a title a year later. Button remembered that the Stars didn't want to trade Jarome Iginla, then a prized prospect, to Calgary in 1995, but they felt they were a championship-caliber team and needed Joe Nieuwendyk. Iginla, and Nieuwendyk, are Hall of Famers, but the Stars won a Cup.

Vinik believed all the Lightning's moves — the seven new players — “transformed our team.” He brought up a quote by a Bruins player during the playoffs about how Tampa Bay was tough to play against. “That's the Bruins saying that to us,” Vinik said. “It's usually the reverse.”

“Julien and his group clearly saw what they needed,” Button said. “That's the essence of managing. It's not to panic or make changes for changes' sake.

“There's not a person on the planet that's going to tell you, ‘Oh, geez, Shattenkirk, Bogosian, Maroon and Coleman are the answers to the problem.’ But guess what: They are.”

Sportsnet.ca / How the Stanley Cup quietly entered the NHL bubble

Chris Johnston | September 11, 2020, 2:15 PM

EDMONTON — The Stanley Cup was scheduled to fly to Vancouver on March 12 for a Rogers Hometown Hockey event that got wiped out by the pandemic.

The most well-travelled trophy in sports then remained grounded until taking Air Canada flight 171 here on Monday night — by far the longest stretch it had gone without a road trip in the 32 years Phil Pritchard has been serving as Keeper of the Cup.

Pritchard quietly entered the NHL bubble with four pieces of precious cargo: The Stanley Cup; the Conn Smythe Trophy, awarded to the playoff MVP; the Prince of Wales Trophy, awarded to the Eastern Conference champions; and the Clarence S. Campbell Bowl, awarded to the Western Conference champions.

From the Stanley Cup Qualifiers to the Stanley Cup Final, livestream every game of the 2020 Stanley Cup Playoffs, blackout-free, on Sportsnet NOW.

Each will be presented on the ice at Rogers Place over the course of the next few weeks.

Pritchard arrived at the Delta Hotel while Game 1 of the Eastern Conference Final was being played between the Tampa Bay Lightning and New York Islanders. It was an off night for the Dallas Stars and Vegas Golden Knights — the only other teams still occupying the bubble — but he managed to check in without raising any alarm.

“They dropped me off right out front and there's a place there where I guess deliveries come or couriers come,” Pritchard said Friday morning. “One of the NHL security people met me there and then we went into the hotel and I had to do a COVID test there and checked in and then went to my room.

“It was very limited people that saw me: The nurse, the counter, security. The street was empty, the hotel lobby was empty.”

Pritchard has been serving quarantine in his hotel room ever since. He gets a test administered each day — it alternates between a nasal swab and throat swab — and should be cleared for official entry into the bubble by Saturday.

The COVID-19 pandemic helped create this unique playoff tournament, but some traditions remain unchanged. Deputy commissioner Bill Daly is slated to crown the conference champions while NHL commissioner Gary Bettman is expected to award the Stanley Cup after Pritchard and Craig Campbell parade it onto the ice.

However, what happens after that point is still being worked out, according to Pritchard.

Typically the players pass it between each other, while kissing it, hoisting it and drinking from it. Teams winning on the road usually fly directly back to their playing city for more parties and a parade. In the weeks that follow, every member of the team then gets to spend a day with the Cup in a place of their choosing.

Restrictions on travel or COVID-related health concerns would seem to present challenges to each of those traditions.

“We've still got two and a half weeks [to finalize a plan] and in the last two and a half weeks it's changed a lot,” said Pritchard. “It's really too early to tell what is happening. We're pretty sure there's going to be a Stanley Cup champion, there's going to be some type of celebration and it's going to be unique.

“What that consists of, that we don't know yet.”

It is 2020 after all.

While serving his quarantine, Pritchard has managed to watch each of the conference final games on television. And despite the unique circumstances, he sees the same level of intensity and competitiveness required of every past champion.

“It's a true team event,” said Pritchard. “The team inside this bubble [that's going to win], they're pretty tight right now, I'm sure. And whatever that champion's going to be, it's going to be special.”

When the NHL and NHL Players' Association were working through the return-to-play planning in the spring, there was never a question of whether he'd be here to help crown the champion.

“If you've got a Stanley Cup winner, you've got to have the Stanley Cup there,” said Pritchard.