



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 17, 2019

## THE NEWS & OBSERVER

### 'I feel ready.' Is this the season Martin Necas sticks with the Hurricanes?

By Chip Alexander

Raleigh

Is this the year for Martin Necas?

Is this the year the Carolina Hurricanes forward, a former first-round draft pick, finally combines his offensive cleverness and creativity, his slick hands and his innate speed with some dogged 200-foot intensity and determination all over the ice to make himself a full-time NHL player?

Necas would like to think so. He's 20. He has had a taste of the NHL, brief as it was. He wants more.

"I feel pretty good on the ice," he said in an N&O interview Monday. "I feel like I'm a little stronger than last year. I feel ready but now I have to show it in the game, on the ice."

Show it to Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour. While admiring the speed and skill that Necas can bring to the game, Brind'Amour wants a better-rounded player willing to do the dirty work on the ice as well as score pretty goals.

Asked Monday if he liked what he has seen out of Necas in the first four days of training camp, Brind'Amour said, "No."

Brind'Amour didn't elaborate and then said more good things than bad about Necas, the 12th overall pick in the 2017 NHL Entry Draft.

"He looks like he's more mature," Brind'Amour said Monday during his camp press conference. "He's certainly more mature than he was last year on the ice. And off the ice he's physically more mature. But again, we'll see how it all comes together when he starts playing for real."

Necas tries to stay patient

The Canes play their first preseason exhibition games this week -- at Tampa Bay on Tuesday, against Tampa Bay in Raleigh on Wednesday and then at the Washington Capitals on Saturday. Necas has been used on the right wing on Erik Haula's line in camp opposite winger Warren Foegele, and the three could be used as a line in an exhibition game or two.

Necas made the Canes' opening-night roster each of the past two seasons. He had a one-game cameo in 2017-18, making his NHL debut at Edmonton early in

the season before returning to HC Kometa Brno in his native Czech Republic to finish out the season, also competing in the World Junior Championship and later the World Championship for the Czechs.

A year ago, he put in a full season on North American rinks that are smaller than the European ice. Again, he made the Canes' opening-night roster. Again, he did not stick with the big team. After seven games, he was sent to the Charlotte Checkers, the Canes' American Hockey League affiliate.

Necas expected to be recalled by the Canes last season. He tried to stay patient. That call never came.

"It was tough," he said. "Some (Canes) guys are injured and sometimes you're waiting (for) the call up and you're feeling good on the ice but it doesn't come. But that's hockey. That's hockey in the NHL."

Necas tried to make the most of his time with the Checkers. Drafted as a center, he spent most of the season on the wing. He adjusted to the more confined rinks, which call for quick plays in tight spaces, finishing the regular season with 16 goals and 52 points in 64 games.

"The biggest thing was probably those little battles around the net, around the corners, and play more defensively," Necas said. "It was hard the first couple of months but then I get used to it and I felt pretty good out there."

And won a championship. The Checkers swept through the Calder Cup playoffs for the first AHL title in franchise history, beating the Chicago Wolves in the Cup finals. Necas had five goals and 13 points in 18 playoff games, including a team-high three power-play goals.

"It was a great run for us in the playoffs," he said. "We had a really good team on the ice but also off the ice, which is really important, especially in the playoffs. That was cool. I really enjoyed it. It was great to win it."

But that was last year. What Necas wants is to spend a full season with the Canes in the NHL.

Beneficial on the power play

When Carolina reached the Stanley Cup playoffs last season, Necas could only watch as a few of his Checkers teammates —Greg McKeeg, Saku



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Maenalanen, Clark Bishop — all got their chances in the Canes' lineup, in playoff games. The Checkers' Calder Cup run didn't end until early June, cutting into his offseason recovery time in the Czech Republic.

But Necas again threw himself in his conditioning workouts. He said he reported to camp at 195 pounds, about 20 pounds heavier than he was two years ago when the 6-2 forward was so slender, all arms and legs.

The Canes are overloaded with left-handed shooting forwards and Necas would give Brind'Amour a right-hander in the lineup. That also could be beneficial on the power play.

Necas scored his first NHL goal on Oct. 16, 2018 against Tampa Bay, with a one-timer off a Foegele pass, the force of his shooting motion causing him to pitch forward on the ice. The Canes lost 4-2 and Necas did not play another game for Carolina, being sent down to Charlotte the next day.

And this year?

"I want to spend the whole season here," Necas said.

In Raleigh, with the Hurricanes, showing why Carolina made him a first-round pick.

## THE ATHLETIC

### Training camp Day 4: The Hurricanes look as fast as advertised, but we're still 'talkin' practice'

By Sara Civian

It's Day 4 of Hurricanes training camp, so while the lines still don't technically matter, they matter slightly more than they did the day before. And the so-called "Top Six" in session two Monday — Ryan Dzingel, Sebastian Aho, Nino Niederreiter, Erik Haula, Martin Necas, Warren Foegele — was flying.

It was hard to temper training camp expectations.

"Well, I don't know about (flying)," Dzingel contested, laughing.

But he fits right in, huh?

"Yeah, for sure, that's how we want to play," he said. "And that's part of the reason I chose here, that's how Coach wants us to play and it's my style. Playing with Aho and Nino, you've gotta use your speed and get open for them. That's what I'm trying to do."

Head coach Rod Brind'Amour has a way of bringing you right back down to Earth.

"I hope we're fast, but there's a lot that goes into it," he said. "People said we were fast in years past, and we actually weren't very fast. It's how you play. You can have a lot of guys that fly around, but if the puck's not moving and you're not in the right places, it doesn't work."

If "expect to win" was last season's mantra, "expect to be really, really, ridiculously fast," might be in the running this year.

"What, you mean in practice?" Brind'Amour channeled Allen Iverson again when I asked if he likes what he sees. "We talkin' practice again? I don't

know, it's hard to say. I'm hoping that when we get in the games I get a better feel for it. They're our best players, they should look good out there. It's funny, right? You have those guys and then there's a certain drop-off. So they should look like our best guys out there. It'll all come in the games. We'll see."

What about chemistry?

"We're not doing anything enough to say, 'Oh, there's chemistry there.' We're doing a lot of five-on-0 stuff so if we don't have chemistry in there then that's a problem."

OK, fine, he's absolutely right. But trust me, those guys were flying.

I'm starting to think Andrei Svechnikov actually lives at PNC Arena. He was on the ice so long Monday after his group's session that he started to collect a pile of ice chips, so he got the broom and swept them away himself. Brind'Amour had to coax him off the ice so the next session could begin. He's a special kid. Last season when he messed up a drill, he'd sort of beat himself up. This year, he's laughing a bit more. That's good.

You know what definitely doesn't live at PNC Arena anymore? The Justin Williams mural. He very well may be coming back, but for now, it's time to move on. The sense around the room is that obviously no one is going to replace Williams, but a few leaders will need to step up and do it their way for now.

There frankly wasn't much going on Monday and Brind'Amour basically told me to relax, but I figured I wouldn't quit on my training camp mission. Not sure if anyone could sum up the first few days of training



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camp quite like Brind'Amour: "Ask me all these questions later."

Finally. Sort of real hockey Tuesday. Will post lines.

## Down Goes Brown: The Bizarro-meter looks back on the Eastern Conference offseason

By Sean McIndoe

We made it. With training camps now in full swing around the league, the NHL offseason is officially over. Teams had their chance to remake their rosters, hire new people and set a course for the upcoming season. Now, that season is here. Pencils down, everyone. (Not you, teams with unsigned RFAs. You still have work to do.)

Looking back on the last few months, some teams did well. Some teams came up empty. And some teams, well, they just got weird. Those are the teams I'm interested in. As a diehard fan of Team Chaos, I'm always happy to see a team do things that confuse the rest of us. And that's where the Bizarro-meter comes in.

I wrote my first Bizarro-meter column way back in 2013 when I was trying to make sense of the infamous Maple Leafs offseason that saw them make a series of truly confusing moves. Did it work? It did not. To this day, nobody has been able to figure out what the Leafs thought they were doing that summer. But the concept was fun and morphed into an annual league-wide ranking. And now it's time to blow the dust off of the Bizarro-meter, plug it in and spit out some 2019 ratings.

As always, remember that a bizarre offseason is not necessarily bad. Sometimes, the decisions that leave everyone scratching their heads are the ones that work out the best. And often, a safe, by-the-numbers approach is exactly the wrong choice for a team that needs a more creative approach. This isn't about picking winners and losers. It's about recognizing those teams who failed at the NHL's prime directive of being dull and predictable.

We'll do this by division, starting with the Atlantic and Metro today and wrapping with the Pacific and Central tomorrow. As always, we'll work our way up the scale as we go.

Atlantic Division

Boston Bruins

The offseason so far: They didn't do much, which was no surprise. They're already good, the cap situation is manageable and Don Sweeney never makes trades during the summer and we've all just apparently decided to act like that's not weird. Their biggest story was probably yesterday's Charlie McAvoy signing to a thoroughly team-friendly deal, which might have been surprising from another team but was par for the course for the Bruins.

But their strangest story was: Jeremy Jacobs not being the owner anymore. He's keeping the team in the family, handing it over to his six children, and will presumably still have an important voice in guiding the franchise. But one of the most influential names in modern NHL history will be stepping back, which will take some getting used to.

Bizarro-meter ranking: 3.2/10. I guess Jacobs felt it was important to make his exit at the right time. Maybe now he can explain the concept to Brad Marchand.

Buffalo Sabres

The offseason so far: They didn't make any blockbusters like last year's Ryan O'Reilly or Jeff Skinner moves, but they did add Marcus Johansson in free agency and swung deals for Colin Miller, Jimmy Vesey and Henri Jokiharju. The bigger move was bringing in Ralph Krueger to replace Phil Housley behind the bench.

But their strangest story was: Not really addressing the goaltending. It's back to the tandem of Carter Hutton and Linus Ullmark, which was a bust last year (especially in the second half). There's something to be said for consistency and not just chasing last year's hot hand, but the status quo is a gamble.

Bizarro-meter ranking: 4.1/10. They were busy. But given the pressure on Jason Botterill and company to finally breakthrough, you wonder if they were busy enough.

Tampa Bay Lightning

The offseason so far: The first real offseason of the Julien BriseBois era didn't produce many big headlines. Unloading Ryan Callahan's deal helped, and they did well on the J.T. Miller trade. Their main goal was to clear out some cap deadwood, and they did it well.

But their strangest story was: The fact that their offseason started in April, not June. But mainly the lack of a Brayden Point deal, largely because we all assumed he was going to sign some ridiculously team-friendly contract that would make fans of every other team tear their hair out. And he still might, at least if the Lightning get their way. It's just taking longer than we thought.

Bizarro-meter ranking: 4.5/10 for now, pending whatever happens with Point.

Florida Panthers



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The offseason so far: They upgraded on and off the ice, landing two of the biggest free agents in the sport in Joel Quenneville and Sergei Bobrovsky. They also added Anton Stralman and Brett Connolly.

But their strangest story was: Roberto Luongo announcing his retirement. Wait, players can do that? They don't just have to come up with a suspicious "injury" and finish their career on the LTIR?

Bizarro-meter ranking: 4.8/10. The Panthers were certainly among the biggest newsmakers of the offseason. But it feels like we had Quenneville and Bobrovsky penciled in here since January, so nothing they did felt all that surprising.

## Ottawa Senators

The offseason so far: Their biggest move was hiring former Leafs' assistant D.J. Smith as their head coach, one of several ex-Leafs they loaded up on. They also traded Zack Smith for Artem Anisimov and acquired Ryan Callahan's LTIR charge. But apart from that, and a new deal for Colin White, it was relatively quiet. No new deal for Thomas Chabot yet, no major additions and no reason to think they won't endure another tough season.

But their strangest story was: A team that's notoriously frugal going out and trading for one of the worst contracts in the league. Nikita Zaitsev can eat minutes, and the Sens have to spend on somebody to get to the floor. But they say they expect to contend again in a few years, and having Zaitsev still on the books might be an issue by then.

Bizarro-meter ranking: 5.1/10. One year after earning the ultra-rare 10/10 rating, they almost made it through the entire offseason before hitting their first off-ice embarrassment. I'm guessing Senators fans will happily take it.

## Detroit Red Wings

The offseason so far: The Wings didn't do much to remake the roster, bringing back Valtteri Filppula and saying goodbye to the retiring Niklas Kronwall. None of that really matters all that much, because the big news is that Steve Yzerman is back and ready to use his Jedi skills to rebuild the roster.

But their strangest story was: Taking Moritz Seider a dozen or two spots ahead of where most of the draft boards had him, in what was easily the biggest surprise of the first round. Nice bow tie, though.

Bizarro-meter ranking: 6.1/10. After two decades, it's going to take some time getting used to talking about the Red Wings without mentioning Ken Holland. But Yzerman's return just feels right.

## Toronto Maple Leafs

The offseason so far: Kyle Dubas remade a big chunk of the roster. He traded Nazem Kadri for Tyson

Barrie, shipped Patrick Marleau's albatross of a contract to the Hurricanes at the cost of a first-round pick and signed veteran Jason Spezza to take over fourth-line duties. He re-signed Andreas Johnsson and Kasper Kapanen to reasonable deals, which was good, and dumped Nikita Zaitsev, which was great, and acquired Cody Ceci, which was acquiring Cody Ceci.

Oh, they also brought back David Clarkson. Everyone mumbled about LTIR and cap rules and pretended like we understood what that was all about.

But their strangest story was: The Mitch Marner saga, which ended on Friday with a massive six-year, \$65-million deal that sure feels like an overpay. Marner's a great young player coming off a career year who wanted to reset the RFA market, and the Leafs let him do it rather than digging in for an extended fight. Now we see if the rest of the league follows along, or if this deal ends up being an outlier that ages badly.

Bizarro-meter ranking: 10.893/10. Just kidding, that would be way too high. Let's give them a 7/10.

## Montreal Canadiens

The offseason so far: The roster looks pretty much the same. There's a new backup in Keith Kincaid and a handful of depth pieces moving in and out, but this is basically the same core that put up 96 points and barely missed the playoffs last year.

But their strangest story was: The Sebastian Aho offer sheet drama, in which Marc Bergevin and the Habs apparently decided that the best way to land a young franchise player was to offer him less money than everyone assumed he could get.

Bizarro-meter ranking: 8.3/10. While a big part of me was just happy to see an NHL front office remember that offer sheets exist, I still don't understand what the Habs thought they were accomplishing here. Sure, it's the Hurricanes, who in theory could be susceptible to a front-loaded contract. But when that contract is also a certifiable bargain, what do you realistically think is going to happen? Pretty much exactly what did. Good try, I guess.

## Metropolitan Division

### Washington Capitals

The offseason so far: It's mostly been about tinkering around the edges. They traded Matt Niskanen for Radko Gudas. They re-signed Jakub Vrana. They signed Carl Hagelin and Richard Panik and traded Andre Burakovsky. That was about it.

But their strangest story was: Evgeny Kuznetsov testing positive for cocaine at the Worlds, which will earn him a brief NHL suspension.

Bizarro-meter ranking: 3.7/10. Was it a good offseason? I'm not blown away, even as others seem



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to like it. But putting aside Kuznetsov's off-ice troubles, there wasn't much here to wonder about.

## New York Rangers

The offseason so far: They won a share of the lottery and drafted Kaapo Kakko, then landed the top UFA of the summer by signing Artemi Panarin. They also squeezed the Hurricanes in the Adam Fox deal and lured John Davidson away from Columbus to become the team's president.

But their strangest story was: Trading for Jacob Trouba, and then giving him a seven-year, \$56 million contract. The trade itself came dirt cheap, but the contract carries some risk and basically forced the Kevin Shattenkirk buyout. Still, as gambles go, this one felt worthwhile.

Bizarro-meter ranking: 4.8/10. The Rangers were busy, dominating the headlines through early July. But for the most part, everything they did made sense.

## Philadelphia Flyers

The offseason so far: They hired Alain Vigneault as their head coach, traded for Justin Braun, bought out Andrew MacDonald and jumped the free agency line to land Kevin Hayes on a deal that will carry a cap hit north of \$7 million. And last week, they checked the last box on their to-do list by getting the Ivan Provorov deal done.

But their strangest story was: Trading Gudas to the Caps for Niskanen in a deal that many saw as acquiring the guy who made more money and was worse.

Bizarro-meter ranking: 5.0/10. The Niskanen deal may not work out, but it's not going to be a disaster. The Hayes contract is expensive enough that it could be, but it gives the team some top-six options as they face an uphill path back to the playoffs.

## New York Islanders

The offseason so far: They reportedly went hard after Panarin and Bobrovsky but whiffed on both once the market opened on July 1. Then they re-signed Anders Lee while swearing he was never Plan B and everyone just kind of agreed to pretend to believe them. It was part of an offseason theme of keeping the band together, as they also re-signed Brock Nelson and Jordan Eberle.

But their strangest story was: Parting ways with Robin Lehner after a career year and instead, signing Semyon Varlamov to a four-year deal that carried the same \$5 million cap hit that Lehner eventually got from Chicago. Maybe Varlamov is the better goalie. Or maybe he'll be a better mentor for eventual starter Ilya Sorokin. Still, Lehner was a key to last year's turnaround and said he wanted to stay, and it's rare to

see a team let a goaltender walk after a year like he just had.

Bizarro-meter ranking: 6.1/10. Losing arguably their most important player to free agency? Clearly, the Islanders are doomed!

## New Jersey Devils

The offseason so far: They won the lottery and drafted Jack Hughes, traded for P.K. Subban without giving up much of anything, snagged KHL star Nikita Gusev from the cap-strapped Knights, got Wayne Simmonds on a low-risk one-year deal and locked in Pavel Zacha after a brief war of words. Other than that, not much.

But their strangest story was: The lack of progress on a Taylor Hall extension – or really, the apparent lack of any real effort at progress.

Bizarro-meter ranking: 6.3/10. It's rare to see a team add this much talent in one offseason. Is it enough to make up the 26 points they missed the playoffs by last year? Some Devils fans seem pretty sure that it will be. I'm not as confident, but I've been wrong before.

## Columbus Blue Jackets

The offseason so far: As expected, they lost three of their best players to free agency, as Panarin, Bobrovsky and Matt Duchene all left. Does the addition of Gustav Nyquist make up the difference? (Takes long swig from a water bottle.) Not really.

But their strangest story was: Not being more aggressive in free agency apart from Nyquist. They weren't going to find another Panarin, but you might have expected them to use that cap space on more veteran depth, especially in goal.

Bizarro-meter ranking: 6.8/10. The Blue Jackets are a tough team to rate. On the one hand, pretty much everything that happened to them this summer was something we already expected, so none of it seemed all that strange. On the other, it's almost unheard of to see a team decimated by free agency like this. Just because we knew it was coming doesn't make it normal.

## Pittsburgh Penguins

The offseason so far: They finally pulled the trigger on the long-rumored Phil Kessel trade, sending him to the Coyotes in a deal that saw Alex Galchenyuk come back the other way. Kessel always wears out his welcome eventually, but it was fun while it lasted.

But their strangest story was: The absolutely mind-boggling Brandon Tanev signing. Seriously, there may not have been an offseason move that was more widely criticized. Oh wait, I wrote that exact same sentence about last year's Jack Johnson deal. Maybe free agency just isn't this team's thing.



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Bizarro-meter ranking: 7.1/10. Six years! For a depth forward! I am using exclamation points!

Carolina Hurricanes

The offseason so far: It's been busy, and all over the map. They managed to avoid the RFA headaches that have hit just about everyone else, thanks to Montreal's failed offer sheet on Aho. That locked in their franchise player at what's already become below-market value, so even if the contract was shorter than the Hurricanes would have preferred, it's a win. But it's also weird that the situation even got to that point; when your franchise player is signing an offer sheet on Day 1 of free agency, something has gone wrong somewhere in the relationship, and all the spin in the world won't disguise that.

On top of all of that, they lost Micheal Ferland, Adam Fox and, at least temporarily, heart-and-soul leader Justin Williams. But they also signed Ryan Dzingel, then landed Jake Gardiner on what may have been

the most team-friendly UFA deal of the offseason. Oh, and they spent millions on a Patrick Marleau buyout in a deal that saw them essentially buy the Leafs' first-round pick. One way or another, just about everything they do makes you go "huh, that's interesting".

But their strangest story was: When we found out their GM, Don Waddell, didn't have a contract because their owner didn't think he needed one. We learned this because Waddell, who I again remind you was the Hurricanes' GM at the time, was interviewing for the same job with another team. That's not how any of this is supposed to work.

Bizarro-meter ranking: 9.1/10. I can't figure the Hurricanes out, and I acknowledge that there's a non-zero chance that the problem is that they're just way smarter than me. But it would be nice if they could go a few weeks without being in the middle of something that feels like some sort of glitch in the AI for NHL 20.



## Hurricanes season preview: Aho, veterans look to build on playoff success

Carolina counting on emerging center, defense after run to Eastern Conference Final

by Tom Gulitti

Coach: Rod Brind'Amour (second season)

Last season: 46-29-7; fourth place Metropolitan Division, lost to Boston Bruins in Eastern Conference Final

5 KEYS

### 1. Don't be satisfied

The Hurricanes had a lot to be happy about last season, qualifying for the Stanley Cup Playoffs for the first time since 2009 and advancing to the conference final before they were swept by the Bruins. As fun as that was, they'll need to remember the level of commitment and hard work it took for them to get back to the postseason and sustain their success.

Other teams who recently ended long playoff droughts (the Edmonton Oilers in 2017 and the New

Jersey Devils in 2018) were unable to do that and returned to being postseason spectators the following season. After reviving fan interest in their market, the Hurricanes are determined not to take a similar step back.

### 2. Replace Williams' leadership

Named captain before last season, Justin Williams teamed with Brind'Amour to change the culture and raise expectations in Carolina. But the forward, who turns 38 on Oct. 4, is taking some time away from the game to decide if he wants to resume playing or retire.

Without Williams for at least the start of the season, the Hurricanes will need others to step up as leaders and maintain the accountability the three-time Stanley Cup winner helped foster. Center Jordan Staal, who was co-captain with defenseman Justin Faulk two seasons ago, is a leading candidate to succeed Williams as captain, with center Sebastian Aho possibly ready to take on a bigger leadership role.



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### 3. Aho's emergence

Aho led Carolina with an NHL career-high 30 goals and 83 points last season. On his way to being one of the elite players in the NHL, the center will get more attention this season, particularly after signing a five-year, \$42.27 million restricted free agent offer sheet with the Montreal Canadiens on July 1 that the Hurricanes matched.

Aho said he signed the offer sheet with the hope that the Hurricanes would match it so he'd avoid missing the start of training camp like some other restricted free agents. Now he'll face pressure to live up to the contract, which carries a Carolina-high annual average value of \$8.454 million, in addition to opponents focusing on containing him.

### 4. Goaltending

The Hurricanes got what they needed in net last season from the combination of Petr Mrazek and Curtis McElhinney. They'll go with a similar tag-team effort this season, though with a slightly different look.

Mrazek (23-14-3 with a 2.39 goals-against average, a .914 save percentage and four shutouts last season) returns after signing a two-year contract July 1. With McElhinney (20-11-2 with a 2.58 GAA, a .912 save percentage and two shutouts last season) gone after signing with the Tampa Bay Lightning, James Reimer, Alex Nedeljkovic and Anton Forsberg will compete for the second goalie job in camp.

Reimer, who was acquired in a trade from the Florida Panthers on June 30, is a veteran of nine NHL seasons and would appear to have the inside track, but he will have to rebound from going 13-12-5 with a 3.09 GAA and .900 save percentage last season.

### 5. Resolving Faulk's future

The writing appears to be on the wall that Faulk will be traded after the Hurricanes signed unrestricted free agent defenseman Jake Gardiner to a four-year contract Sept. 6. There have been numerous reports of trade talks involving Faulk since, but the 27-year-old remains on Carolina's roster for now.

Faulk, who can become an unrestricted free agent after this season, is a respected leader in the Hurricanes locker room, but his situation could become a distraction if it lingers into the regular season without resolution -- a trade, new contract or management stating it intends to keep him.

### ROSTER RUNDOWN

#### Making the cut

Even with Trevor van Riemsdyk likely to miss the start of the season following left shoulder surgery, the roster is crowded at defenseman with Haydn Fleury, Gustav Forsling, tryout Fredrik Claesson and rookies Jake Bean and Chase Priskie (out week to week with

an undisclosed injury) in contention for the sixth and seventh spots behind Jaccob Slavin, Dougie Hamilton, Brett Pesce, Gardiner and Faulk. If Faulk or another defenseman is traded, that would open another spot.

In goal, Nedeljkovic will get an opportunity to beat out Reimer. Carolina sent veteran Scott Darling to Charlotte of the American Hockey League last season after McElhinney emerged as the No. 2 goalie and is prepared to do the same with Reimer if Nedeljkovic proves he's ready. The 23-year-old rookie was named the top goalie in the AHL last season, when he went 34-14-1 with a 2.26 GAA, a .916 save percentage and four shutouts before helping Charlotte to the Calder Cup championship.

#### Most intriguing addition

Now healthy, Erik Haula, who was acquired in a trade from the Vegas Golden Knights on June 27, should strengthen Carolina's depth at center behind Aho and Staal. The 28-year-old had 55 points (29 goals, 26 assists) in 76 games with Vegas in 2017-18 before sustaining a right-knee injury Nov. 6 that ended his 2018-19 season after 15 games.

#### Biggest potential surprise

Eetu Luostarinen, a second-round pick (No. 42) in the 2017 NHL Draft, has the potential to play for Carolina at some point this season after the 21-year-old forward tied for the team lead with 15 goals for KalPA in Finland's Liiga last season. Luostarinen (6-foot-3, 184 pounds) impressed at the NHL Prospects Showcase in Nashville with four points (two goals, two assists) in three games.

#### Ready to break through

Martin Necas, the No. 12 pick in the 2017 NHL Draft, made the opening night roster last season but was sent to Charlotte after seven games and spent the rest of the season in the AHL, where he had 52 points (16 goals, 36 assists) in 64 games. A shift from center to right wing will help him simplify his game and give him a better opportunity to play regularly in the NHL.

#### Fantasy sleeper

Nedeljkovic (average draft position: N/A) won his only NHL start (24 saves on 26 shots faced Jan. 23 at the Vancouver Canucks) and could compete with Mrazek and/or Reimer with a ceiling of being the biggest rookie goalie steal in fantasy. -- Pete Jensen

### PROJECTED LINEUP

Nino Niederreiter -- Sebastian Aho -- Ryan Dzingel

Andrei Svechnikov -- Jordan Staal -- Teuvo Teravainen

Warren Foegele -- Erik Haula -- Martin Necas

Jordan Martinook -- Lucas Wallmark -- Brock McGinn



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Jacob Slavin -- Dougie Hamilton

Jake Gardiner -- Brett Pesce

Haydn Fleury -- Justin Faulk

Petr Mrazek

James Reimer



## Fans in North Carolina really can like both hockey and NASCAR - just ask Ty Dillon

The third-generation stock car racer recently spoke with Canes Country about his intense Hurricanes fandom - and disproves some traditional dismissive talking points in the process.

By Brian LeBlanc

Carolina Hurricanes fans have long endured potshots from fans of other teams, bemoaning the lack of hockey history in the southern United States, dismissing them as unworthy and unable to appreciate the complexity and long history of hockey in general and the NHL in particular, and suggesting that they have better things to do and should go enjoy college basketball and NASCAR while leaving the fastest game on ice to the True Fans.

But what if I told you that counted among those fans of the Hurricanes were...wait for it...actual NASCAR drivers and crew members?

Ty Dillon is a name you may not know. You might know his older brother, Austin. You have almost certainly heard of his grandfather, Richard Childress. And you are undoubtedly familiar with the most famous driver ever in the Childress stable, the late Dale Earnhardt. Suffice it to say, Dillon, a third-generation stock car racer and a native of Lewisville, near Winston-Salem, is as NASCAR as one can get.

And yet, his free time is largely spent keeping tabs on the Hurricanes, who moved to North Carolina when Dillon was five years old. He might have been too young to remember Richard Petty driving a Zamboni down I-40 in 1997 to promote the arrival of the team, but he's been a fan for many years. First becoming a fan of the team in 2006, when he was in high school and became wrapped up in the Canes' run to the Stanley Cup, the team's success last season crystallized Dillon's love for the Hurricanes and his appreciation for hockey.

Canes Country recently caught up with Dillon, who will be in Richmond next week driving the number 13 Chevrolet for Germain Racing - and might just be

keeping an eye on the Canes' preseason game at Washington that night while racing.

CC: What was it that got you interested in the Hurricanes?

TD: I remember when they won the Stanley Cup, I was really young, but my fandom really grew this year. We got invited to come to a game and maybe sound the [siren] but some things got crossed up, but we came to the game anyway, my wife and I, and we just had a blast. It was a playoff game against the Capitals, and we just had a blast at the game. Now we're both hooked and big time fans.

CC: What was it that hooked you on it? What did you really enjoy about it that got you interested?

TD: Just the atmosphere, the fans and the intensity, it's an awesome sport and a great team. We had a great time. I don't think we sat down once during the game. For them to have such a young team do so well, it was really fun to watch. I know we're going to be hooked in this year, watching a lot of games and cheering them on, trying to make it out to some more games.

CC: What's the most difficult thing about trying to follow the Hurricanes when you're on the road as much as you are?

TD: Probably just getting the time to watch the games. I keep up with the scores on my phone quite a bit, but actually getting time to sit down and watch a game is kind of few and far between. But when I do, I really enjoy it. It was a fun date for my wife and I. We have a really busy schedule, and our daughter [makes it busier] too, so it's always a little hard to watch the games, but we have a lot of fun when we get to.

CC: Is there anyone else in the garage who is a Hurricanes fan?

TD: There's a lot of crew members, friends of ours, guys on my race team. I don't know any certain



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drivers, but guys on our team are big fans. Our PR rep is a huge fan of the Hurricanes and the Checkers. Our tire guy's a big fan. So we all kind of group together and talk about them. We have a nice little group that follows [the Canes].

CC: Do you remember anything about the 2006 Stanley Cup run, or was that a little early?

TD: I was probably 15, so I was really young. I just remember that it was really fun to watch, and I remember some of the names, but now it would mean a whole lot more because I've paying attention to it and following them. I'm looking forward to them maybe going back and doing it again.

CC: Going to put you on the spot here: who's your favorite player?

TD: I like Sebastian Aho and Teuvo Teravainen, those are probably my two favorites right now. I've got an Aho jersey at home.

Our thanks to Ty Dillon for chatting with us and giving us some insight into life as a Hurricanes fan while also handling his own career in professional sports! You can follow Ty on Twitter at @tydillon and on Instagram at @ty\_dillon, and the next time you find yourself watching a NASCAR race, keep your eye out for the #13 Chevy that might just have a familiar logo somewhere in the forest of sponsor decals.

## Training Camp Notebook: Fredrik Claesson feels at home, the Canes are flying, and Ryan Dzingel really likes Raleigh

Day 4 of Canes camp featured players starting to separate themselves from the pack, and a reminder from the coach that being fast doesn't always mean being fast.

By Brian LeBlanc

RALEIGH — Fredrik Claesson arrived at Carolina Hurricanes training camp at the last minute, on a tryout deal signed the day camp opened, and had to take his fitness and skating test on the second day of camp with his teammates, the media, and some fans watching.

It was perhaps a rather unusual start to his Hurricanes career, but it's one he doesn't mind. After spending all summer wondering where his career would take him, he's here now, and he hopes to stay in a locker room that he said felt right at home from day 1 - or, more exactly, day 2. "They all started talking to me right away, wanting to show me [around]. I did all the tests and they were cheering me on, so that was kind of nice."

Claesson, who spent last season with the New York Rangers following three years with the Ottawa Senators, was helped by the number of familiar faces in the Canes' locker room. The world of NHL players is generally pretty small, and Claesson is far from alone in having connections in almost every room in the league - including the one at PNC Arena. Ryan Dzingel and Max McCormick were teammates of Claesson's in Ottawa, and he's one of five Swedes currently in camp, joining Anton Forsberg, Lucas Wallmark, Jesper Sellgren, and the man whose locker stall is next to his, Gustav Forsling.

"After the first day, you feel like you're in the group after the first practice, so slowly you're getting there, but it's pretty easy here," said Claesson of the bond that's formed over his three days in camp.

There's still a feeling-out process ongoing between Claesson and Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour,

understandable given they've known each other for all of three days. However, Claesson's perception of his new coach, which sounds awfully familiar, is a clue that Brind'Amour's coaching reputation is beginning to take root around the league.

"What I've picked up from these couple of days is that he's very firm, [but] he can be a guy that you can talk to about anything," said Claesson. "As long as you're working hard and do your best, he can be very appreciative about what you're doing."

Claesson knows that he still needs to not only earn a spot on the roster, but also sign a contract, if he wants a job with the Hurricanes. But his first impressions have been good, and he's certainly motivated to give Brind'Amour and Don Waddell a decision to make. "They're on the [upswing] now, you can see from last year too," said Claesson. "They did really well and I feel like, now that I've been here a couple days, everyone is so welcoming and [they're] good guys."

Notes from Monday's camp sessions

I know you'll hear this a lot, but Erik Haula is fast. He doesn't look like he missed a beat following his leg injury last season. If he ever gets bumped to the wing and skates with Sebastian Aho, good luck keeping up with them.

Brind'Amour had a really astute point about the Canes' speed in talking to us after camp was done for the day that is worth sharing:

I hope we're fast, but there's a lot that goes into it. People said we were fast in years past, and we actually weren't very fast. It's how you play. You can have a lot of guys that fly around, but if the puck's not moving and you're not in the right places, it doesn't work. And on the flip side, you don't have to have a bunch of fast skaters to actually play fast. It's nice to have both, let's put it that way, and that's what we're hoping to have.



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Necas had a beautiful move when they were playing a short-ice 3-on-3 drill late in the second session, stopping and starting on a dime. That said, he seemed to be a half step behind a decent bit, not enough to be concerned but enough to notice.

I'm still not convinced that Brind'Amour thinks Necas is totally up to speed yet, although the coach did say that he seems "more mature on the ice" this year at camp. I don't think it's a slam dunk he makes the opening night roster, although I'd probably put the odds at about 65-70%.

Dzingel, who is playing right wing next to Aho and Nino Niederreiter, is going to make everyone forget about Micheal Ferland real quick. He's a considerably better passer than Ferland, and while he's not going to necessarily serve as a physical deterrent the way Ferland did on his best days, Dzingel has an edge to his game.

Plus, Dzingel is about the most engaging person in the locker room. I needled him for his Chamber of Commerce-style sales job on Raleigh as a market that he shared on his introductory conference call, and he responded with continued amazement that the league doesn't realize how great this area is to live in. One wonders when the word's going to get out, but Dzingel for one is a true believer.

The Canes game group will practice tomorrow morning before flying to Tampa for the game tomorrow night. With 48 players on the training camp roster, every player should get a shot in one of the next two games, although Brind'Amour tongue-in-cheek cautioned everyone to not expect the Canes' best lineup on the ice against the Lightning tomorrow night.

## TriangleSportsNetwork

### Canes' Foegele comes to camp bigger, stronger, faster

Continuing to work with Gary Roberts, training alongside the likes of McDavid, Stamkos should produce results

Peter Koutroumpis

RALEIGH, N.C. – Though it was just following the first on-ice session of training camp, Carolina Hurricanes forward Warren Foegele looked as though he was still in postseason mode.

Finishing his rookie season as part of a group that helped the Hurricanes make the playoffs for the first time in 10 years, his attitude and mindset was laser-focused to do his part to help the team repeat the feat this season.

Expect to see Foegele look bigger, stronger and faster.

Most players talk about working on one or two areas of their game during the offseason.

He went into detail talking about multiple, thanks to productive time spent working out with high quality NHL talent this past summer.

With former Hurricanes forward Gary Roberts, an NHL All-Star and Stanley Cup champion, holding his training programs at Foegele's former prep school arena (St. Andrews College) in Aurora, Ontario, the familiar surroundings enhanced his training environment.

The company he kept on and off the ice provided a lot of incentive to get better every day, a tenet of head coach Rod Brind'Amour's philosophy.

"It was a short summer, but that's a good thing," Foegele pointed out.

"There was a bunch of us (training with Roberts) – McDavid, Kessel, Stamkos, Tanev brothers, James Neal, Tkachuk brothers. I was there full-time; it was a great group of guys. The pace there's pretty high and we're all competitive, and we push as hard as we can. We're out there to get better, have fun and compete."

Making strides

Foegele's skating power and speed to go with his six-foot, two-inch frame is a strength he's possessed since his prep school days and was a major reason then-GM Ron Francis selected him in the third round (67<sup>th</sup> overall) of the 2014 NHL Draft.

On Friday and throughout the weekend, he looked impressive skating alongside newly acquired forward Eric Haula and prospect Martin Necas.

"I used the same skating coaches as last year," he said.

"Just tried to get quicker and worked on my lateral movement. I feel pretty confident (in my skating), but you're always trying to improve. Every year you wanna get better."



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## Beefing up

Still growing physically into his adult body at 23 years old, he looked like he added some weight in the offseason.

"I tried to get bigger which I think I did," Foegele said.

"Much more muscle mass than last year."

## How much bigger?

Smiling, he said, "I don't know, I just keep hearin' that I'm a lot bigger than last year, so I'll take that as a compliment."

## Taking aim

While challenging opposing defenders to slow him down, Foegele expects to produce offensively in his role to battle for pucks and create and finish plays.

He's worked on his shooting, seeking to at least match and improve upon a 10-goal, 15-point regular season that was followed up by a five-goal, nine-point playoff finish, and tallying four game-winners throughout the year.

On the surface, not high quantitative totals, but qualitative ones that made a difference.

"I worked on different releases and stuff like that," Foegele noted.

"That's starting to pay dividends it looks like in scrimmages here. And obviously work on breakaways here and hopefully I can cash in on more of those this year."

## Pushing forward

Feeling nervous to fully begin his NHL career after four years of working to earn a roster spot following camp last year, Foegele allows himself to feel a similar twinge, readying to embark on another season – just to keep things fresh.

"I think you're always nervous the first day of camp," he concluded.

"It's the first day you're out (on the ice) with the boys and the grind officially starts as a team, so a little bit nervous. But I'm excited for this year and I just want to keep pushing forward and trying to get better."



## Checkers Sign Dave Gust To AHL Deal

Written by Nicholas Niedzielski

Ahead of the opening of their training camp, the Checkers have signed forward Dave Gust to an AHL contract.

The undrafted 25-year-old is heading into his third pro season after spending two campaigns with the Bakersfield Condors, including tying for fourth on the team with 18 goals a season ago. Overall Gust has logged 57 points (31g, 26a) in 112 AHL games, all

with the Condors.

Prior to turning pro, Gust spent four years at Ohio State University and put up 94 points (37g, 57a) in 126 games for the Buckeyes, at times playing alongside current Hurricanes Ryan Dzingel and Max McCormick. The Illinois native also played for two seasons for the Fargo Force in the USHL before heading to college and notched 79 points (35g, 44a) over 107 games.



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## TODAY'S LINKS

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# SportScan

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

1153046 Carolina Hurricanes

'I feel ready.' Is this the season Martin Necas sticks with the Hurricanes?

BY CHIP ALEXANDER SEPTEMBER 16, 2019 03:43 PM

RALEIGH-Is this the year for Martin Necas?

Is this the year the Carolina Hurricanes forward, a former first-round draft pick, finally combines his offensive cleverness and creativity, his slick hands and his innate speed with some dogged 200-foot intensity and determination all over the ice to make himself a full-time NHL player?

Necas would like to think so. He's 20. He has had a taste of the NHL, brief as it was. He wants more.

"I feel pretty good on the ice," he said in an N&O interview Monday. "I feel like I'm a little stronger than last year. I feel ready but now I have to show it in the game, on the ice."

Show it to Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour. While admiring the speed and skill that Necas can bring to the game, Brind'Amour wants a better-rounded player willing to do the dirty work on the ice as well as score pretty goals.

Asked Monday if he liked what he has seen out of Necas in the first four days of training camp, Brind'Amour said, "No."

Brind'Amour didn't elaborate and then said more good things than bad about Necas, the 12th overall pick in the 2017 NHL Entry Draft.

"He looks like he's more mature," Brind'Amour said Monday during his camp press conference. "He's certainly more

mature than he was last year on the ice. And off the ice he's physically more mature. But again, we'll see how it all comes together when he starts playing for real."

NECAS TRIES TO STAY PATIENT

The Canes play their first preseason exhibition games this week -- at Tampa Bay on Tuesday, against Tampa Bay in Raleigh on Wednesday and then at the Washington Capitals on Saturday. Necas has been used on the right wing on Erik Haula's line in camp opposite winger Warren Foegele, and the three could be used as a line in an exhibition game or two.

Necas made the Canes' opening-night roster each of the past two seasons. He had a one-game cameo in 2017-18, making his NHL debut at Edmonton early in the season before returning to HC Kometa Brno in his native Czech Republic to finish out the season, also competing in the World Junior Championship and later the World Championship for the Czechs.

A year ago, he put in a full season on North American rinks that are smaller than the European ice. Again, he made the Canes' opening-night roster. Again, he did not stick with the big team. After seven games, he was sent to the Charlotte Checkers, the Canes' American Hockey League affiliate.

Necas expected to be recalled by the Canes last season. He tried to stay patient. That call never came.

"It was tough," he said. "Some (Canes) guys are injured and sometimes you're waiting (for) the call up and you're feeling good on the ice but it doesn't come. But that's hockey. That's hockey in the NHL."

Necas tried to make the most of his time with the Checkers. Drafted as a center, he spent most of the season on the wing. He adjusted to the more confined rinks, which call for quick plays in tight spaces, finishing the regular season with 16 goals and 52 points in 64 games.



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"The biggest thing was probably those little battles around the net, around the corners, and play more defensively," Necas said. "It was hard the first couple of months but then I get used to it and I felt pretty good out there."

And won a championship. The Checkers swept through the Calder Cup playoffs for the first AHL title in franchise history, beating the Chicago Wolves in the Cup finals. Necas had five goals and 13 points in 18 playoff games, including a team-high three power-play goals.

"It was a great run for us in the playoffs," he said. "We had a really good team on the ice but also off the ice, which is really important, especially in the playoffs. That was cool. I really enjoyed it. It was great to win it."

But that was last year. What Necas wants is to spend a full season with the Canes in the NHL.

### BENEFICIAL ON THE POWER PLAY

When Carolina reached the Stanley Cup playoffs last season, Necas could only watch as a few of his Checkers teammates —Greg McKeeg, Saku Maenalanen, Clark Bishop — all got their chances in the Canes' lineup, in playoff games. The Checkers' Calder Cup run didn't end until early June, cutting into his offseason recovery time in the Czech Republic.

But Necas again threw himself in his conditioning workouts. He said he reported to camp at 195 pounds, about 20 pounds heavier than he was two years ago when the 6-2 forward was so slender, all arms and legs.

The Canes are overloaded with left-handed shooting forwards and Necas would give Brind'Amour a right-hander in the lineup. That also could be beneficial on the power play.

Necas scored his first NHL goal on Oct. 16, 2018 against Tampa Bay, with a one-timer off a Foegele pass, the force of his shooting motion causing him to pitch forward on the ice. The Canes lost 4-2 and Necas did not play another game for Carolina, being sent down to Charlotte the next day.

And this year?

"I want to spend the whole season here," Necas said.

In Raleigh, with the Hurricanes, showing why Carolina made him a first-round pick.

Carolina Hurricanes forward Andrei Svechnikov says he has added confidence in his second preseason training camp.

News Observer LOADED: 09.17.2019

1153047 Carolina Hurricanes

Training camp Day 4: The Hurricanes look as fast as advertised, but we're still 'talkin' practice'

By Sara Civian Sep 16, 2019

It's Day 4 of Hurricanes training camp, so while the lines still don't technically matter, they matter slightly more than they did the day before. And the so-called "Top Six" in session

two Monday — Ryan Dzingel, Sebastian Aho, Nino Niederreiter, Erik Haula, Martin Necas, Warren Foegele — was flying.

It was hard to temper training camp expectations.

"Well, I don't know about (flying)," Dzingel contested, laughing.

But he fits right in, huh?

"Yeah, for sure, that's how we want to play," he said. "And that's part of the reason I chose here, that's how Coach wants us to play and it's my style. Playing with Aho and Nino, you've gotta use your speed and get open for them. That's what I'm trying to do."

Head coach Rod Brind'Amour has a way of bringing you right back down to Earth.

"I hope we're fast, but there's a lot that goes into it," he said. "People said we were fast in years past, and we actually weren't very fast. It's how you play. You can have a lot of guys that fly around, but if the puck's not moving and you're not in the right places, it doesn't work."

If "expect to win" was last season's mantra, "expect to be really, really, ridiculously fast," might be in the running this year.

"What, you mean in practice?" Brind'Amour channeled Allen Iverson again when I asked if he likes what he sees. "We talkin' practice again? I don't know, it's hard to say. I'm hoping that when we get in the games I get a better feel for it. They're our best players, they should look good out there. It's funny, right? You have those guys and then there's a certain drop-off. So they should look like our best guys out there. It'll all come in the games. We'll see."

What about chemistry?

"We're not doing anything enough to say, 'Oh, there's chemistry there.' We're doing a lot of five-on-0 stuff so if we don't have chemistry in there then that's a problem."

OK, fine, he's absolutely right. But trust me, those guys were flying.

I'm starting to think Andrei Svechnikov actually lives at PNC Arena. He was on the ice so long Monday after his group's session that he started to collect a pile of ice chips, so he got the broom and swept them away himself. Brind'Amour had to coax him off the ice so the next session could begin. He's a special kid. Last season when he messed up a drill, he'd sort of beat himself up. This year, he's laughing a bit more. That's good.

You know what definitely doesn't live at PNC Arena anymore? The Justin Williams mural. He very well may be coming back, but for now, it's time to move on. The sense around the room is that obviously no one is going to replace Williams, but a few leaders will need to step up and do it their way for now.

There frankly wasn't much going on Monday and Brind'Amour basically told me to relax, but I figured I wouldn't quit on my training camp mission. Not sure if anyone could sum up the first few days of training camp quite like Brind'Amour: "Ask me all these questions later."

Finally. Sort of real hockey Tuesday. Will post lines.

The Athletic LOADED: 09.17.2019



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## NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 17, 2019

1153114 NHL

KeyArena interior completely gutted as officials prepare for final excavation work ahead of rebuild

Sep. 16, 2019 at 12:31 pm Updated Sep. 16, 2019 at 2:57 PM

By Geoff Baker

KeyArena has been completely gutted beneath its 44-million-pound roof, which is currently being held up by dozens of steel supports ahead of a planned rebuild to double its square footage.

That was the takeaway from a Monday media tour of the facility, which the Los Angeles-based Oak View Group (OVG) is rebuilding for a current price tag of \$930 million ahead of the October 2021 arrival of a National Hockey League expansion franchise. Construction officials said the project is still on track for a "summer 2021" completion but will not be more specific until next year.

"We're going to set that in early spring," OVG construction executive Ken Johnsen told reporters after the tour. "You just walked through that building with us. There's work to be done to get all the way down to the bottom. Once in early spring we see where we are and everything's on-track with that we can set a target date."

The building would need to be ready by June 2021 for the Seattle Storm to begin their regular season there on time and also to play host to the NHL draft. The league is prepared to wait until next June to make a final call on that.

The interior grandstands within the arena as well as adjacent smaller buildings have now been demolished as crews continue pushing back several tons of dirt ahead of further excavation. The plan is to dig an additional 15 feet below the current arena floor — roughly 60 feet below street level — and then spread the base of the arena wider to encompass more than 800,000 square feet.

For now, the 44-million-pound roof is being held up by a series of temporary steel support beams along the outer rim and a larger steel shoring beam directly in its center. All told, about half the 72 support beams needed for the project are currently in place while the remainder are expected to be in by year's end.

The beams are nearly completed on the north side of the building, meaning excavation can start there shortly. Once all of the beams are in, the remaining dig work can take place.

"By Christmas, we'll be standing 60 feet below here pouring our first foundation," said Greg Huber, project executive for Mortenson, which is serving as general contractor on the rebuild.

Huber said the steel support beams alone will tally 4,500 tons, which is more than all the steel Mortenson used to build the Allianz Field soccer stadium in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Mortenson took over the project from Skanska Hunt earlier this year as OVG sought maximum price guarantees to prevent further cost overruns on the privately-financed

project. Initially pegged at just under \$600 million when OVG was awarded the renovation contract by the City of Seattle, the price soared beyond \$900 million earlier this spring due to planned upgrades and rising materials costs.

Taxpayers are not on-the-hook for any of the construction costs. Johnsen said the project remains on-pace for the \$930 million amount OVG and NHL Seattle made public last April.

Seattle Times LOADED: 09.17.2019

1153115 NHL

New Seattle NHL arena remains on schedule for summer of 2021

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SEPTEMBER 16, 2019 02:42 PM, UPDATED SEPTEMBER 16, 2019 02:43 PM

The arena for Seattle's NHL expansion franchise remains on track to open sometime in the summer of 2021.

Construction officials said Monday that the entire bowl of the former KeyArena has been demolished and excavation work is ongoing. Officials hope to begin digging down 15 feet from the current floor by year's end and to spend most of 2020 constructing the new seating bowl from the bottom up.

Ken Johnsen, who is overseeing the construction project for Oak View Group and the NHL franchise, says the most challenge part so far has been putting in supports to take on the weight of the 44 million-pound roof, which is staying in place. The new arena is being built under the roof, which has historical landmark status.

Johnsen says the budget for the project remains around \$930 million.

News Tribune LOADED: 09.17.2019

1153152 Tampa Bay Lightning

Lightning's Maroon brings Stanley Cup full of grit

By Martin Fennelly

Published Yesterday

Updated Earlier today

BRANDON — In the dream, which wasn't a dream at all, at least not for him, Pat Maroon gets up on a mid-June morning and comes down to breakfast in his St. Louis home.

His son, Anthony, 10 at the time, joins him. They have their usual cereal.

"Cinnamon Toast Crunch," Maroon said.



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But they were out of bowls. On purpose.

"We ate out of the Cup," Maroon said with smile.

The Stanley Cup.

Food for thought.

Maroon, with his St. Louis Blues teammates, lived that dream last season, winning it all for his hometown and the team he rooted for growing up.

He will always be a Stanley Cup winner, part of St. Louis' remarkable worst-to-first 2018-19 season that ended with the first Cup in 52 years of Blues history.

But did he save some grit and pixie dust?

The Lightning might have that question in the back of their minds after bringing in the 31-year-old Maroon on a one-year deal for \$900,000, a song by today's standards. Tampa Bay gets a rough, tough 6-2, 236-pound left winger with a scoring touch. It gets a big man, just the type to go into the boards, to track down beastly opponents for righteous toe-to-toe.

Just as important, the Lightning, whose record-setting season and Cup dreams were swept out of existence, get someone who knows that championship beat, one that played out across two months of playoffs, with Maroon hoisting the Cup in Boston after a Game 7 win over the Bruins.

Maroon's mother and father and fiancée watched on the ice. So did Anthony. Everybody cried. You never know the tune until you're the only one left singing.

"It's a feeling you'll know the rest of your life," Maroon said.

The unquestionably talented Lightning yearn for such memories. They have come close and they have come not so close. Comes now Maroon, who has been there, won that, going so far as to knock home a Game 7 overtime winner in the second round last May.

It seems like more than a coincidence that in the last quarter century, no NHL team has won a Stanley Cup without having at least one player who had previously held Stanley aloft. The Lightning had no such person on the roster as they nose-dived against Columbus.

Mind you, the formula is not full-proof. The 2017-18 Lightning had four-time Cup winner Chris Kunitz and his sage experience couldn't help them out of the Eastern Conference final against eventual Cup winner Washington.

"I'd rather have a guy like (Maroon) than not have a guy like him," Lightning defenseman Ryan McDonagh said. "He brings that experience. He has been through all you go through to get what you want."

"I'm a believer that experience helps, that guys who've been there before matter," said Lightning coach Jon Cooper, who hasn't won a Cup either. Cooper goes way back with Maroon, having coached him in junior hockey with the North American Hockey League St. Louis Bandits in 2006-07. "He barely had hair on his face then."

Cut to Maroon's woolly playoff beard.

"There are a few guys in (our) room who have played in the Stanley Cup finals but not been able to get it across the finish line," Cooper said. "Pat's one of those guys who did

get it across the finish line, and was a big contributor, scored some big goals for them on their way."

Maroon isn't here to tell his new teammates playoff stories by the campfire. He is here to bring what he can, including a net presence the Lightning haven't really had since Brian Boyle was parked in front.

"I can bring skill," Maroon said. "A lot of people don't understand, but I have good hands below the top of the circles. I can create space for my teammates. I can stick up for my teammates. I can be a good presence in the room. I can make guys loose, joke around a little bit."

That might come in handy as the Lightning try to get up off the canvas after the nightmare end to last season.

"The last thing you want is them going into a season gripping their sticks tight, putting pressure on yourself," Maroon said.

The Blues began the 2019 calendar year dead last in the NHL. Coach Mike Yeo was fired in November after the team's sluggish start. Who knew what would happen next? Lesson: You don't know until you know.

"Sometimes it just comes together," Maroon said.

For the Blues, it came together during a franchise-record 11-game win streak after the All-Star break, which included a Florida swing punctuated by a shutout win over the Lightning at Amalie Arena.

"When we came back and beat the Panthers from a 2-0 deficit, and then we came in here and won 1-0, we kind of looked around the room and thought 'We're a good hockey team,'" Maroon said. "It was just a matter of showing everyone."

The Blues grinded past Winnipeg in the first round of the playoffs, then Dallas. They overcame a controversial Game 3 overtime loss on an illegal hand pass to beat San Jose to win the Western Conference final and reach the franchise's first Cup final in 49 years. The Bruins followed.

"We just played a style as a team, we just wore guys down, we just wore teams out," Maroon said. "The deeper it got into a series, we knew there would be more grind time and we knew we had the toughness."

"You just start to get that feeling. In the San Jose series, they took it to us the first game, but after the hand-pass game, we took it to them, just wore them down. We got pucks in and went after them. It's all mental. You make them frustrated. When they go back for the puck, they're breathing heavy, thinking 'Here we go again.' You want that. We did that."

That doesn't sound like the 2018-19 Lightning.

Maybe it will be different this time around.

Maroon can tell you: it's worth it.

"Seeing my son and mom and dad and fiancée, giving them hugs and saying we did it, we did it, over and over again," he said. "Some guys play 20 years and never get their hands on a Stanley Cup. My dad had been a Blues fan his whole life. I'll never forget it."

The parade was in downtown St. Louis. The bar was open.



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"We got off the floats with the Cup," Maroon said. "We made sure the fans were part of it because they'd waited 52 years."

On his day with the Cup, Maroon took the trophy to the St. Louis arenas he grew up in, including his uncles' roller rink. He took the Cup to the Italian restaurant owned by his fiancée's family. He took Stanley swimming and tubing. Everyone ate ice cream out of Stanley.

"To do it in my hometown, in front of my family, it was just truly amazing, especially with the team I grew up watching my whole life," Maroon said.

"It was a special group of guys. Just like here. They're searching for their first one here. They've been so close. They've been to conference finals, losing Game 6s and 7s, but they came up a little short. This isn't easy. No one ever said it was. It isn't supposed to be."

Meet a guy who lived it.

"I can't really put it into words," Maroon said.

Try these:

Cinnamon Toast Crunch.

Tampa Bay Times LOADED: 09.17.2019

1153153 Tampa Bay Lightning

Q&A with Julien BriseBois: Assessing his first year as Lightning general manager

By Joe Smith Sep 16, 2019

BRANDON, Fla. — Between all of his team's summer moves, Lightning general manager Julien BriseBois squeezed in some time for his passions.

He traveled, taking his family to Europe, where his sons, Justin, 12, and Jacob, 10, enjoyed hiking around the Austrian Alps. BriseBois breezed through a half-dozen books, including "Howard Stern Comes Again," the autobiography of Nike founder Phil Knight, "Success Equation: Untangling Luck in Business, Sports and Investing" and "MVP Machine," which details the use of technology in baseball.

"It opens your mind to new possibilities and ideas," he said.

Then BriseBois opened his mail. He found handwritten letters from Lightning fans thanking him for the NHL-record tying 62-win season, the one that finished in a stunning first-round collapse in the playoffs.

"Considering how our season ended, I didn't expect that," BriseBois said. "But I really appreciated it. I got a few (negative) ones. I don't know what the ratio was, but it was substantially more positive than negative."

That's how BriseBois, 42, evaluated his first year as Lightning general manager. Since Steve Yzerman shocked the hockey world by stepping down last September, BriseBois made what he labeled a "seamless" transition after a serendipitous rise to his dream job.

"That was my hope, that was the plan, and it was somewhat by design," BriseBois said. "There was no bump in the road because we switched from Steve to me being the GM. We kept humming and kept our standards high. Over the course of this year, there wasn't a day where I said, 'Wow I didn't know being a GM involved this. I can't ask for more than what (owner Jeff) Vinik provides me and our organization as a whole, the vision for how you're going to do things and hire really good people.'"

In our summer sit-down, Vinik was bullish on his support of BriseBois, saying, "I have all the confidence in the world (in him)."

"He's not Steve Yzerman," Vinik continued. "He's different from Steve Yzerman. He's Julien BriseBois. He came in and he's confident. He knew he wanted to do the job."

Agents and coaches say there are a lot of similarities between Yzerman and BriseBois, including how the new GM flew to Stuart, Fla., from Montreal to put the finishing touches on Andrei Vasilevskiy's eight-year extension. "Stevie did the same thing for (Nikita Kucherov)," said agent Dan Milstein, who represents both players. "They're very similar. Always available by phone and work well."

BriseBois made a ton of trips to AHL Syracuse, where I spent a game discussing his development philosophies. He went the extra mile in December to seal the deal on signing coveted free agent Jimmy Huntington, attending one of the forward prospect's games in Rimouski, Quebec.

"There was a team that was very, very close to signing him, and Julien did what he is good at — be professional and do whatever it takes," Rimouski GM and coach Serge Beausoleil told The Athletic. "It's really rare that the GM himself would take the time to spend time with you, make sure that the guy has what he needs. Honestly, Julien is unique."

BriseBois has said building a team is like "putting together a puzzle," and now his challenge is to bring the Lightning a Stanley Cup. With BriseBois hitting the one-year mark as GM last week, The Athletic sat down with him to get his thoughts on an array of subjects, from making culture-based moves to resolving Brayden Point's contract situation and whether coach Jon Cooper should worry about his seat getting warm.

I know you said nothing really surprised you in this job, but is there something you learned in the last year?

There was no moment like, "Wow, I didn't see that coming." ... Well, I didn't see us getting swept in the first round. But I don't know if that was because I was a first-year GM. It was just considering how our team performed all season and had problem-solved all year. They found a way to win, and I expected that to carry us beyond the first round. We knew Columbus was going to be a good team and they could quite possibly beat us. I didn't anticipate us getting swept.

A lot of people say there are similarities with how you and Yzerman run the team, and it makes sense since you worked side-by-side for so long. But are there ways you've made your own mark, made this your job?

Responsibilities have been re-allocated between our hockey-ops team. New people have been brought in like Mathieu Darche. He'll do a lot of the things I used to do (as assistant GM). The way I put it, it's my job to help everyone in the hockey-ops side. Jamie Pushor was elevated to oversee



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player personnel. Al Murray is more involved in day-to-day activities and the grand scheme of what we're trying to do.

There's a really positive vibe around the whole management team — a lot of new ideas and questioning why we do the things we do and (asking) is there a way for us to do it better. It's a very stimulating environment.

One of your early moves as GM was terminating the contract of defenseman Jake Dotchin (which could have been precedent setting). I know you've declined to discuss the specifics of that situation (which was resolved this summer in an undisclosed settlement). But, in general, are there moves you've made with the big picture in mind that revolve around culture and standards that could have a ripple effect?

I wanted the transition to be seamless. I wanted to make sure our standards weren't going to slip. And our vision for our team wasn't going to change either. I was involved with Steve in coming up with this vision, coming up with these standards — and good organizations, they keep elevating the standards. You can never take a step back. As a GM, one of the important roles I had is ensuring our standards are high and (that) we don't let them slip. So along the way, did I have to make decisions that reinforced that vision I had for our hockey-ops department? I'm sure I have. But they weren't hard decisions to make because I believe in what we're trying to do here.

Do you have any regrets over moves you made or didn't make this season?

Hindsight is always 20-20. But I can't say that there was a situation where there was an opportunity for me to improve our chances of winning the Stanley Cup and I passed on it. Every opportunity I could take advantage of to move us forward, I think I did. So there was not one thing where I'm like, "I wish I would have done that." Not in those types of decisions. On a day-to-day basis, I'm sure. None pop into my mind. But now that I've been a GM for a year, am I better than I was a year ago? I sure hope so. I think that comes with experience.

When Yzerman was here, he said he didn't tell coaches who to play or tinker with the lineups because once he did that, he knew he'd need a new coach. What's your approach?

I agree with that. Managers manage and coaches coach. We work together, he helps me manage, I help him coach. But there are some decisions that are general manager decisions and some decisions that are coaches' decisions. We have a really good understanding of where that line lies.

There's a mutual respect there. I enjoy working with Coop a lot. I get a sense he enjoys working with me. We appreciate that we don't agree all the time and can have honest, candid and frank conversations about our different views and it comes down to the best decision for the group. Sometimes we make it together, sometimes it ends up being a GM decision and I make it and Coop lives with it, and sometimes it's a decision that's best made by the head coach. Coop makes those decisions and I support him and we move on.

BriseBois, right, hoped to make as seamless a transition as possible to the GM role after Steve Yzerman stepped down. (Tampa Bay Lightning / Scott Audette)

You were pretty bullish on (Cooper) and his future after the season, and Vinik told me that you guys would have signed him to his three-year extension even after the first-round sweep. But is there any added pressure on Cooper this year

where the proverbial hot seat could come into play with another disappointing ending?

I wouldn't consider his seat very warm in terms of job security at all. He, myself, the players, we all know we have the opportunity here to have a really good year, have a special season and contend for the Cup — but it's not going to be easy. It will never be a harder year to make the NHL playoffs than this year. But, for every team, the parity is unprecedented, maybe in any of the professional sports leagues. The talent re-distribution that's happening this offseason, I don't remember seeing that where so many good players ended up on teams that didn't make the playoffs. It really levels the playing field.

It's going to be really hard for the 16 teams to make the playoffs, and we can't take for granted we'll be one of them. I like our chances, and I'm very optimistic. I sure as heck hope we'll be one of them, but I have no guarantees. It's that close.

How much do you use analytics as an organization?

We have a staff whose job it is to gather information, gather data, collate data and present that to us, so we definitely use it. I'm not privy to what other organizations do, so it's relative. Are we at the forefront? I would hope so. That's the mandate I'm giving our staff. We want to be at the forefront in every area.

How much do you factor in chemistry or personality when building a team, and how do you identify that?

Intangibles are very important over the course of an 82-game season. Guys having the right mindset, I think, is critical for team success. Because, on paper, we look at everyone's roster and they're really close. I know it makes for a better narrative when you say, "This team is historic" or "This team is bad," but, in reality, we are closer to the middle at both ends of the spectrum.

You have been pretty transparent in your summer sessions with the media on several topics, from Louis Domingue's status to the goalie situation and Ryan Callahan. What is your philosophy on communicating with your fan base?

Our fans have questions, and I hope they have a lot of questions because that means they care. Part of my job as GM is to answer their questions, and your job as a media member is to ask those questions on behalf of the fan — kind of the middle guy. You ask a question (that is) on fans' minds, and part of my job is to provide them with information. I think it's a question of respecting the fans.

Still, there's going to be occasions knowing the best interest of the organization is (to keep) things (quiet). Taking about the details of Brayden Point's contract negotiations will hurt the process. I don't know if fans care about the process as much as the result. As long as it doesn't negatively impact our team's chances of being successful, I don't know why we'd hide anything from our fans.

Do you get noticed more or approached by fans around town? I know Steve was more recognizable.

He was more so than I am, I'm sure. My life is pretty predictable. I'm either at the rink with the NHL team, at the rink with one of my boys or at home. I don't really go outside of those areas, and yes I will hit a few gyms in town depending on what I'm doing, some tennis courts. But I don't go out and about much.



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Do you still speak much with Steve (Yzerman)?

I do, (but) nowhere near as much as before. Not a daily thing, not a weekly thing. We're so busy focusing on the task at hand. You don't have the time. I did text him: "Enjoy your first day, first camp as GM of the Red Wings." We had a back and forth: "How is the family? How are the girls doing, my boys doing?" We did the Adam Erne trade. We talk quite a bit.

It's a small community. There are 32 GMs, (so) we pick each other's brains, and you have some relationships that are stronger than others.

But I'm sure it's harder for a guy like Yzerman to give you tips or insight.

You still can. The camaraderie among all GMs is pretty impressive. I knew that already from my time in the AHL: There's a lot of good people working in this game. We compete against each other, but there's also an exchange of ideas, (like) "Why did you make this decision?" You learn from each other.

You weren't surprised when Yzerman left (for the Red Wings)? I know you said all year you held out hope he'd like his senior advisor role and stay.

I wasn't surprised, no. I'm happy for him. He got to be an NHL GM and live in Detroit. It checks both boxes. Good for him.

And I get this job. So it works out for me pretty well.

The Athletic LOADED: 09.17.2019

1153172 Washington Capitals

Capital One Arena revises bag policy to ban backpacks of all sizes

By Scott Allen September 16 at 2:03 PM

Capital One Arena, home of the Capitals, Wizards and Georgetown men's basketball, is the latest venue to ban backpacks of all sizes. A Monumental Sports and Entertainment spokeswoman said the revised bag policy, which will take effect when the Capitals host the Chicago Blackhawks in their preseason opener Monday, was mandated by both the NHL and NBA.

In addition to backpacks and backpack-style bags, such as drawstring bags, luggage bags, roller bags, hard-sided bags and briefcases of all sizes are prohibited inside Capital One Arena, as are bags larger than 14 inches long, 14 inches tall and 6 inches wide. All of those restrictions were in place last season. Adults accompanied by small children are permitted to bring diaper bags into the arena, and exceptions will also be made for fans who use backpacks or other types of bags for medical reasons.

Baggage restrictions have tightened at sports venues in recent years, with the NFL introducing a clear bag policy in 2018. The San Jose Sharks, Carolina Hurricanes and St. Louis Blues are among the NHL teams going one step further than teams like the Capitals, by implementing clear bag policies at their arenas for the coming season. Bans on

backpacks, regardless of size, are increasingly common. Citing safety concerns, the Nationals joined a handful of MLB teams in banning backpacks at Nationals Park this year. Scott Fear, the Nationals' VP of public safety and security, said the ban would "make the stadium safer and much more secure, by prohibiting the bag that has the most compartments." The Nationals have continued to allow drawstring bags since implementing their backpack ban.

There are no plans to have temporary storage lockers installed outside Capital One Arena on game nights, as is the case at Nationals Park and D.C. United's Audi Field. In hopes of expediting the entry process, which requires all guests to walk through a metal detector, Capital One Arena will introduce "No Bag/Express Lines" at the F Street Entrance for fans without bags or bags smaller than 4.5 inches by 6.5 inches.

The backpack ban isn't the only change at Capital One Arena this season. Monumental Sports and Entertainment announced Monday that the second phase of renovations to the 22-year-old venue are on track to be completed by the Capitals' regular season home opener on Oct. 5. While the full capabilities of the new center-hung scoreboard will not be on display during the preseason, Monday's game should provide fans a first look at the behemoth's 360-degree continuous video screen and 7,000 total square feet of LED display across eight distinct display areas.

Phase II of renovations at @CapitalOneArena are slated for completion for the @Capitals season opener Oct. 5.

Washington Post LOADED: 09.17.2019

1153173 Washington Capitals

Brendan Leipsic, on his fifth team since 2015-16, hopes to find a home with the Capitals

By Samantha Pell September 16 at 1:14 PM

At 25 years old, Brendan Leipsic has already had a long, winding journey in the NHL. The left winger has been traded twice, selected in the expansion draft, waived, claimed off waivers and finally this summer became an unrestricted free agent after not being offered a contract. For some teams, Leipsic's inability to stick with one club would be a red flag. The Washington Capitals see it as an opportunity.

The Capitals have had success with low-risk, inexpensive reclamation projects in recent years — notably forwards Brett Connolly and Devante Smith-Pelly. And while the organization knows taking a chance won't always work out, Leipsic could be the Capitals' next successful addition.

The 5-foot-10, 182-pound forward, who signed a one-year, \$700,000 contract in July, made his debut with Washington in the team's 4-3 overtime win against the Chicago Blackhawks in its preseason opener Monday at Capital One Arena. In a game featuring mostly prospects, Leipsic skated on a line with forward Tom Wilson and center Travis Boyd. Wilson scored the game-winning goal.



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"It's not easy," Leipsic said of his constant bouncing around. "You want to stay in one place and get some traction, and hopefully this can be the spot."

Leipsic, a Winnipeg native, is on his fifth team since making his NHL debut with Toronto during the 2015-16 season. Vegas selected him in the 2017 expansion draft, then traded him in February 2018 to Vancouver. After getting waived by the Canucks, he was picked up by the Los Angeles Kings in December.

He set career highs with seven goals and 23 points in 62 games last season with the Canucks and the Kings. The year after he was drafted by Nashville in 2012, he tied for the Canadian Hockey League lead with 120 points for the Portland Winterhawks (49 goals, 71 assists), so he has an offensive pedigree.

The Capitals' turnover among their bottom-six forwards has been one of the major story lines entering the season after a first-round exit against Carolina in last season's playoffs exposed a lack of depth. Leipsic, along with Garnet Hathaway and Richard Panik, were the organization's free agent forward additions this offseason.

Leipsic is the biggest question mark of the group. He will be the favorite to win the left wing job on the fourth line but will face competition from Boyd, Chandler Stephenson and other top organizational prospects.

"We're going to be open to evaluating performance," General Manager Brian MacLellan said. "There's certain things we're looking for in our bottom six, and hopefully some guys are going to provide that."

Capitals Coach Todd Reirden said he envisions Leipsic as a player who can be moved up and down the lineup if the team has injuries or other extenuating circumstances in the top six. Carl Hagelin, also known for his fast skating, played a similar role last season. The Capitals also used Connolly and Smith-Pelly in similar capacities during their time in Washington.

"When we were evaluating [Leipsic], we liked a lot of things that he did in L.A.," Reirden said. "He was able to slot up in their lineup and make some plays with some pretty good players. He doesn't really feel out of place with the higher-end guys, and they have some there in L.A."

Leipsic can't pinpoint exactly what went wrong during his other stops, but when he was searching for the right organization this summer, he was drawn to the Capitals' team culture and their up-tempo, physical style.

"There were some spots where I was trying to be a part of the youth movement, and it just didn't work out," Leipsic said. "I think I had a good run in L.A. last year, but they just sort of went in a different direction, so here I am in Washington and hopefully I should have a fresh start and make a really good first impression."

With any move there is an adjustment period, but Wilson, who knows Leipsic from playing with and against him in camps when the two were growing up in Canada, believes the dressing room in Washington is different. Players who have bounced around the league find a sense of comfort and "feeling at home" in D.C.

"A guy like Brett Connolly, a good buddy of mine, he said it was so easy to just worry about playing hockey because the off-ice stuff was just not a big deal," Wilson said. "And that is

the mentality that I think the leadership group here has had for a long time."

Leipsic said the transition has been good so far. He is staying in a hotel until he is able to find a more permanent place in the area. But as far as the on-ice stuff goes, he feels ready to show he is able to slot into the lineup every day and gain the trust in the coaching staff.

"I'm just coming in here and still trying to prove myself as an NHL player," he said.

Washington Post LOADED: 09.17.2019

1153174 Washington Capitals

3 Caps who impressed in the preseason opener vs. Chicago: Take a bow, Aliaksei Protas

By J.J. Regan September 16, 2019 9:37 PM

WASHINGTON -- Hockey made its long-awaited return to Capital One Arena on Monday as the Capitals opened their preseason slate with a 4-3 overtime win over the Chicago Blackhawks. Tom Wilson was the best player on either bare-bones roster and he scored the overtime winner.

Besides Wilson, here are the players who impressed on Monday.

Aliaksei Protas

Protas already stands out because of his size at 6-foot-6. It was his play that stood out during the game, however, as Protas was the best player of the night for Washington.

Playing in the high slot on the power play, Protas took a pass from Christian Djoos. Chicago's penalty kill box collapsed around him and he calmly backhanded a pass to a wide-open Travis Boyd who ripped the shot past goalie Collin Delia.

Less than two minutes later, Protas took the puck from behind the Caps' net and started the breakout. He passed off the puck then made a beeline down the ice. When he saw Beck Malenstyn grab the puck along the boards, he headed to the front of the net and was there when Delia lost control of the puck to get the goal.

In addition, Protas recorded an assist on the overtime winner and was impressive for his all-around play. He forced Chicago to the neutral zone with a poke check on the blue line out of the defensive zone and he recorded two blocked shots.

Christian Djoos

The Capitals will need to cut salary early in the season to get under the salary cap and to many, Djoos looked like a possible candidate to be headed out of Washington. He did what he could on Monday, however, to show he should stick around.

Djoos does not typically get much power-play time during the regular season -- he had a grand total of 3:15 power-play TOI in 45 games last season -- but he got plenty of it on



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Monday and he looked right at home. He was good holding the blue line with the extra man and distributed the puck well from the point. He was rewarded with a secondary assist when he fed Protas in the high-slot in the second period.

Djoos, however, needed to show more than his prowess on the power play -- where he likely will not get much time again this season -- and he did that with an overall solid effort on defense. He outplayed his counterpart, Jonas Siegenthaler, whose place on the team seems all but assured. The only of Chicago's three goals Djoos was on the ice for was Adam Boqvist's wicked shot off the post and in and there was nothing anyone could do about that one whether it was Djoos, John Carlson or Bobby Orr.

Beck Malenstyn

If Malenstyn has a future in the NHL, it will be as a fourth-liner. He gave a glimpse of what he had to offer at that NHL level in this game with his high-energy play.

Malenstyn was relentless on the forecheck and looked like he was in constant search of something to hit every time he was on the ice. He was also great on the penalty kill and recorded an assist on Protas' goal when he flung the puck at the net from the sideboards.

Malenstyn is not going to be a top-six NHL player. He's not going to put up 20-30 goals. What he can provide, he showed on Monday and it was exactly what you want from a fourth-liner.

Honorable mention: Connor McMichael had the play of the game with his no-look backhand pass to set-up Damien Riat for Washington's first goal for the game. His overall game was solid with one assist, two shots on goal and another two attempts blocked.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 09.17.2019

1153175 Washington Capitals

The NHLPA won't reopen the CBA, what does this mean for the 2022 Olympics?

By J.J. Regan September 16, 2019 10:40 PM

The NHL Players' Association elected Monday not to exercise its right to reopen the Collective Bargaining Agreement with the NHL. The deadline for the NHLPA's decision was Sept. 15, but, as that date fell on a Sunday, an exception allowed for the deadline to be extended to Monday, the next business day.

"While players have concerns with the current CBA, we agree with the League that working together to address those concerns is the preferred course of action instead of terminating the agreement following this season," NHLPA executive director Don Fehr said via a statement. "We have been having discussions with the League about an extension of the CBA and expect that those talks will continue."

The NHL also had the option of reopening the CBA, but like the NHLPA elected to keep the current CBA in place. The league's deadline was Sept. 1.

What this means is the current CBA will remain in place until Sept. 15, 2022 ensuring an additional three years of labor peace. That is significant news for a league that has experienced two work stoppages in the last 15 years.

That's the good news. The potential bad news is what this could mean for Olympic participation.

The next winter Olympic Games will be held in Beijing in 2022 months before the current CBA will officially expire. Olympic participation is not guaranteed under the current CBA and the players were not allowed to participate in the PyeongChang games in 2018.

Every issue the league had with PyeongChang in terms of having to pause the regular season to participate and the time difference restricting viewership and interest will still be present in the 2022 games.

You have to wonder how that may impact the future of Alex Ovechkin. Ovechkin takes Olympic participation very seriously and 2022 will likely be the last time for him to represent his native Russia in the Olympics and compete at a high level. If there is no sense that the NHL will allow its players to participate, does that affect Ovechkin's future plans when his current contract expires in 2021?

Having said that, the league has made a concerted effort of growing interest in China. Recent years have seen preseason games played there and Ovechkin took a tour through China during the offseason as an NHL ambassador. It seems likely the NHL would be much more interested in participating in Beijing than they would have been in PyeongChang.

To reopen the CBA for the Olympics and its other concerns, however, would have been too much of a gamble. The league has shown its willingness to miss games in order to get a favorable CBA in the past and there is no reason to think that option would not be on the table in 2020.

The NHLPA's decision on Monday ensures we will see hockey through the 2021-22 season and that's good for everyone.

"We are pleased with the NHL Players' Association's decision not to reopen the Collective Bargaining Agreement," NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman said in a statement. "We look forward to continuing to work with the NHLPA for the benefit of all stakeholders, especially our fans."

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 09.17.2019

1153176 Washington Capitals

Capital One Arena has a new bag policy. Here's what you need to know

By Julia Karron September 16, 2019 2:17 PM

Capital One Arena announced Friday they have initiated a new bag policy for the upcoming Capitals and Georgetown basketball season.

The biggest change includes a firm no backpacks policy. No matter the size, any kind of backpack will not be allowed in



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the arena, and luggage, roller bags, hard-sided bags/briefcases and bags larger than 14" long, 14" tall, and 6" wide are still prohibited.

Diaper bags and medical bags will be allowed into the arena but will need to be searched first.

Additionally, the arena will now have a no bags and express line at the F Street entrance for guests who are not carrying bags or are carrying a clutch or purse smaller than 4.5"x 6.5".

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 09.17.2019

1153177 Washington Capitals

Brian MacLellan wants to re-sign both Holtby and Backstrom, but is that realistic?

By J.J. Regan September 16, 2019 12:37 PM

As the Capitals prepare for the upcoming season, talk of next season is already starting to take over due to the uncertainty surrounding Braden Holtby and Nicklas Backstrom's future. Both players are in need of new contracts and, not surprisingly, general manager Brian MacLellan would like to keep both.

"We're going to communicate with both players," MacLellan said at media day. "Both guys have been a big part of our organization, big part of our success. We'd love to keep both. We're going to play it out until the end here."

But is it realistic to keep both players? The unfortunate reality is that it's not.

First, we have to project how much Holtby and Backstrom could sign for.

Holtby has a very close comparable with Sergei Bobrovsky who just signed a seven-year, \$70 million contract. Holtby and Bobrovsky's regular season stats are almost identical while Holtby has enjoyed much more playoff success. That means the Caps would be looking at a cap hit somewhere in the \$10 million range.

For Backstrom, a player of his caliber will be able to command a sizable contract from around the league even at 32 which he will be when he hits free agency. A 34-year-old Joe Pavelski just got a contract from the Dallas Stars with a \$7 million cap hit. I view Backstrom's range to be about \$7 to 8.5 million, but \$7 million at an absolute minimum.

Basically, to re-sign Holtby and Backstrom will cost the team about \$17 million in cap space per year at a minimum.

But wait, those guys want to stay in Washington, right? So they definitely will be willing to take less!

Don't count on it.

"There's always that area where you can work with, but at the same time you have a responsibility to the other players in the league too," Holtby said at media day when asked about taking less money to stay with the Caps.

As for Backstrom, he has played the last 10 years with a cap hit of \$6.7 million which is an absolute steal. Why would he take less now when he has already been taking less for a decade?

Let's ignore the discussion of whether it is worth committing that much money to two players who are over 30 on an aging roster. The question is if the Caps have room under the cap for \$17 million?

Alex Ovechkin, Evgeny Kuznetsov, T.J. Oshie, Tom Wilson, Lars Eller, Jakub Vrana, Carl Hagelin, Richard Panik, Garnet Hathaway, Nic Dowd, John Carlson, Dmitry Orlov, Michal Kempny, Nick Jensen and Pheonix Copley are all under contract for the 2020-21 season. That's just over \$62 million in cap space committed to 10 forwards, four defensemen and one goalie. Add in Backstrom and Holtby and their potential \$17 million hit and you have a cap hit of over \$79 million for 11 forwards, four defensemen and two goalies. The team will still need to sign two more forwards and three more defensemen.

We do not know what the cap ceiling will be for next season, but it is not expected to climb significantly. Let's say it goes up to \$83 million. That means the Caps will have less than \$4 million to sign another five players. The minimum NHL salary for next season will be \$700,000. If the Caps add five players at the league minimum, they can just barely fit under the ceiling, but that obviously is not a realistic scenario for how to build a competitive roster. Anything above the league minimum the team will not be able to afford and there are only two players in the entire organization, including prospects, who will carry a cap hit of \$700,000 in the 2020-21 season.

Now that is just a projection, we ultimately do not know if the salary cap could go up more, but this projection also does not take into account any of the team's RFAs including Jonas Siegenthaler who by that point will be due a significant raise.

The bottom line is that there is no way for the Caps to afford both Holtby and Backstrom without a significant trade to free up salary. Even then, whatever extra cap room the team gains from such a trade, much of it will go to RFAs, prospects and other UFAs the team may pursue.

An extension for Holtby and Backstrom handcuffs the entire offseason and would not allow Washington to do pretty much anything else. Whatever other needs the team may have, MacLellan would not be able to afford to address.

That's not a recipe for success.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 09.17.2019

1153178 Washington Capitals

Kuznetsov's teammates are supportive but in tough spot after suspension

By J.J. Regan September 16, 2019 11:03 AM

ARLINGTON, Va. -- In a team sport, every mistake a player makes affects the team. On Saturday, the news came out



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that Evgeny Kuznetsov misleading the NHL about cocaine usage and his subsequent failed IIHF drug test will now cost the Capitals one of their top centers for the first three games of the season. It is a tough blow for a team in a highly competitive division facing a brutal October schedule.

Kuznetsov's actions have put the team at a disadvantage to start the season, but despite that, his teammates remain unwaveringly supportive.

"It's not easy moment for him and for his family, but it is what it is right now," Dmitry Orlov said of Kuznetsov's suspension. "He cannot do anything about that now. He's going to sit for three games and then come back and we're going to help him and support him. He's still our friend, our teammate. He should move forward past that, forget it and just focus on this season."

With the support, however, also comes the reality that the team is going to have to find a way to win without him.

"The team has kind of accepted that and it's going to be a huge loss for us through the first three games," Chandler Stephenson said.

The schedule makers did Washington no favors with their first three games as the Caps start on the road in St. Louis where the Blues will raise their Stanley Cup banner, then play in New York for the Islanders' home-opener before the home-opener in Washington on the second night of the back-to-back.

Those are three tough games in a schedule that is not advantageous for Washington and now they have to navigate it without Kuznetsov.

"You never want to lose a player like [Kuznetsov] out of your lineup, whether it's the positive light that he brings to the rink or his skill and ability to take over games," T.J. Oshie said. "But we've got some guys that'll step in and try to do a good job and try to get some wins without him."

"I think we're comfortable with whoever's in there," Oshie added, "So for those three games whoever happens to be in there whether it's Lars or whoever they slot in there, we'll be comfortable with it, but we'll always miss Kuzy being in the middle."

With Kuznetsov out, Lars Eller will move up to the second line. The major question mark now is who centers the third line for those three games? The likely candidate is Travis Boyd who entered the league as a center before being used primarily as a winger. With all the offseason acquisitions, Boyd is considered someone who has to re-earn his spot in training camp.

The extra cap space the team has with Kuznetsov out the first week could also potentially open up some possibilities for younger players the team otherwise would not have been able to afford, guys like Connor McMichael.

With all due respect, losing Kuznetsov and gaining a player who is fighting to stay on the NHL roster or an 18-year-old prospect is a pretty dramatic drop-off.

Even if those first three games are a struggle, however, the team is not focusing on that. The players are ready to get through those three games, move on and support their teammate.

"It's unfortunate for us," Oshie said. "I'm sure he's pretty upset about it. We'll get through the three games and welcome him back with open arms."

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1153096 Nashville Predators

Roman Josi contract extension most likely more a matter of when, not if

Paul Skrbina, Nashville TennesseanPublished 5:00 a.m. CT Sept. 16, 2019

Roman Josi's "how I spent my summer vacation" includes getting married at Reba McEntire's former estate to Ellie Ottaway and spending two weeks with her and the lions in Africa.

And not much hockey.

What the Predators captain's extended break didn't include is a contract extension. The waiting game didn't surprise Josi, given his schedule after the Predators were eliminated in the first round of the playoffs in April.

Still, according to Josi and general manager David Poile, the "when" far outweighs any "ifs" about whether an extension will be signed.

"Every negotiation is different," Josi said Thursday, when he reported for training camp. "They had stuff going on; I had stuff going on this summer. All I can do is get ready for the season and prepare for training camp."

"I understand ... it's a topic. You knew the longer the summer goes the more it becomes a topic. That's just part of it."

Josi, whose seven-year, \$28 million contract expires after this season, anticipates he will stay with the Predators. He's been eligible to sign a contract extension, which could land in the \$9 million-plus per year range, since July 1.

Poile believes a deal is inevitable, too. He said the team has been talking with Josi's representatives for more than a year and said the No. 1 priority remains signing Josi to a deal.

Last year, the Predators extended defenseman Ryan Ellis' contract eight years and \$50 million by mid-August.

So, what's the holdup with Josi?

"He was gone almost a month, not any communication," said Poile, who added that talks are ongoing between the two. "Could we blame him? He just went on his honeymoon."

"There are a lot of guys who are unsigned this year, RFAs (restricted free agents), what have you, you could say is a factor. There's (a) lot of different things."

Josi had 274 points (70 goals, 204 assists) during the past five regular seasons, which tied him for third with the Lightning's Victor Hedman among defensemen. His 0.7 points per game are sixth in the span, while his 25 power-play goals are fourth.

He also has 1,143 shots on goal, second-most, to go with 15 game-winning goals during that span.



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Goalie Pekka Rinne called Josi the team's best player.

Josi made no bones about where he'd like to be beyond this season.

"I love it here," Josi said after last season ended. "I love the city. I love the team. It's the only team I've ever played for. Definitely want to be here."

His second big commitment this summer, after his marriage, seems imminent.

Tennessean LOADED: 09.17.2019

1153097 Nashville Predators

Let's play two: 6 observations from the Predators' preseason doubleheader

By Adam Vingan Sep 16, 2019

It's a tradition unlike any other.

Every September, the Predators and Florida Panthers open their preseasons with a doubleheader. It's an opportunity for the decision-makers from both teams to evaluate a large number of players in a short period of time.

The Predators won both games, but similar to an episode of "Whose Line Is It Anyway?" the points don't matter. Here are a few things that could, though:

First, the lineups ...

Game 1

Rem Pitlick — Colton Sissons — Calle Jarnkrok

Yakov Trenin — Nick Bonino — Austin Watson

Rocco Grimaldi — Philip Tomasino — Anthony Richard

Tanner Jeannot — Thomas Novak — Colin Blackwell

Mattias Ekholm — Steven Santini

Jarred Tinordi — Yannick Weber

Matt Irwin — Frederic Allard

Troy Grosenick

Connor Ingram

Game 2

Eeli Tolvanen — Kyle Turris — Craig Smith

Daniel Carr — Josh Wilkins — Mikael Granlund

Egor Afanasyev — Freddy Gaudreau — Lukas Craggs

Miikka Salomaki — Laurent Dauphin — Mathieu Olivier

Matt Donovan — Ryan Ellis

Dan Hamhuis — Alexandre Carrier

Jeremy Davies — Dante Fabbro

Juuse Saros

Ken Appleby

Who could be on the power play?

If you were hoping for immediate improvement from the Predators' power play, then you were left disappointed Monday. The Predators went a combined 0-for-10 against the Panthers, though, to be fair, they're just starting to implement new assistant coach Dan Lambert's system.

"Obviously, we weren't happy with the way things were on the power play last year," Sissons said. "We're feeling optimistic about (Lambert) taking that over and trying to turn things around for us. It's more just the mentality of us attacking the power play and just hunting pucks, getting pucks on the net. It's really simple right now."

Courtesy of Natural Stat Trick, here are the power play heat maps from each game:

The Predators were better at generating scoring opportunities from high-danger areas during the second game, totaling eight such attempts on the power play. To put that into context, the Predators' single-game high last season was seven.

After the second game, Predators coach Peter Laviolette hinted at what his main power-play units could be.

"There's one unit that we've been working with, those players didn't play tonight," he said. "There was one unit in the second game that we've been working with, but we only got to work with them one time. ... I think once we get the unit that didn't play tonight and this other unit a little bit more ice time, the unit that didn't play tonight, they had two really good sessions for an hour each (Sunday) and (Monday). That was on purpose to keep them out of the lineup just to work on it, and I thought it was really good (Monday) morning. We'll see that at some point during camp."

By process of elimination, the group that didn't play Monday consists of Filip Forsberg, Ryan Johansen, Viktor Arvidsson, Matt Duchene and Roman Josi. The one that did featured Turris, Smith, Granlund, Carr and Ellis.

Steven Santini's uninspiring debut

Santini, acquired as part of the P.K. Subban trade with the New Jersey Devils, did not have a strong first showing, with the Panthers finishing with a 14-5 advantage in shot attempts when he and Ekholm were on the ice at five-on-five. They started 55.56 of their shifts in the offensive zone and weren't matched against tough competition, as the Panthers dressed few of their regulars.

Santini's 36.99 offensive zone start percentage between 2016-19 was the lowest in the league among defensemen with at least 1,500 minutes of ice time, but he's not cut out for tough defensive assignments. The Predators won't lean on Santini as much as the Devils did in those situations, though.

"I love to play those hard minutes against top lines and defend and PK," Santini said. "Guys like Ellis and Josi, they can have the offensive-zone draws, and that will help us as a team. If I can take any of those (hard) minutes off them and just help this team in any way I can, that'd be great."

Rem Pitlick stands out again



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Pitlick continues to impress as he competes for a roster spot. In the first game, he drove hard to the net and successfully redirected Sissons' centering pass.

Pitlick's time around the team last season after turning pro is having a positive effect, according to Laviolette.

"The rookie tournament, I thought he played great," he said. "He's had a strong camp so far. I do think when you come into an NHL locker room with some pretty good players and some pretty good talent, when you get in there and you actually go to work with them for a week, you find out they're just hockey players. They're just good guys and good people to hang out with. Our guys really do a good job taking care of the young players, so when you get here and get to be here for two weeks, a month, a month and a half and work with these guys every day, I think it does a lot for confidence. It does have an impact."

What position will Kyle Turris play?

As previously noted, Turris practiced at left wing on a line with Johansen and Arvidsson on Saturday. He returned to his natural position Monday, and it's possible he does the same once the regular season starts.

"We could be dynamite with three lines with Kyle being one of the three centers," Predators general manager David Poile said Sunday. "We haven't had three centers like that with (those) offensive capabilities. On the other hand, that's a very coveted spot to play on the left wing with (Johansen) and (Arvidsson) if Peter decides to play (Forsberg) with Duchene like he had in practice (Saturday). I think it's a new opportunity for Kyle, and I think this experimentation is just going to be part of training camp."

DM-Ex

The Predators appear to have replaced DMX's "Party Up (Up In Here)" as the song they play before each power play. The musical selections Monday included "5-1-5-0" by Dierks Bentley, "Let's Go" by Trick Daddy (feat. Twista and Lil Jon), "Danza Kuduro" by Lucenzo (feat. Don Omar) and "The Next Episode" by Dr. Dre and Snoop Dogg. My suggestion would've been the more accurate "Another One Bites the Dust." (This entire note was just a setup for that joke.)

The Athletic LOADED: 09.17.2019

1153098 Nashville Predators

Five noteworthy quotes from the first four days of Predators training camp

By Adam Vingan Sep 16, 2019

It's easy to overreact to what we see during the first days of training camp.

After a long summer, the very sight of hockey practice is enough to make our minds race with possibilities. But as players, coaches and executives are quick to point out, it's too early to draw meaningful conclusions.

"I wouldn't take out a pen and write anything down today," Predators coach Peter Laviolette said Saturday.

Laviolette is right. There's little to glean from one practice and a scrimmage that didn't include most of the team's veteran players. Of course, that's not going to stop us from trying to do just that.

In a nod to colleague Justin Bourne's "Thoughts on Thoughts" column, here's a collection of the more interesting sound bites through four days of camp:

"It's exciting. They're great players. Having the opportunity to line up on (Ryan Johansen's) wing with (Viktor Arvidsson) is lots of fun. Just trying to gain some chemistry." — Kyle Turris

The most intriguing development over the weekend was Turris switching positions. It'd be difficult not to produce on a line with Johansen and Arvidsson, so if Turris were to stick there, it could be just what he needs to regain his form.

Although he hasn't shown it much since being traded to the Predators, Turris possesses strong shooting ability, and playing on the wing would free him to put it to use more often. Laviolette also prefers to have two forwards with experience at center on each line, so Turris playing with Johansen would check that box.

"Ottawa, when I got traded there, and then Columbus, it can take like 20 games (to adjust). I don't expect it to be the same with this situation because I'm coming in in camp right off the bat, so you get a month where you can get used to it, which is nice. I'm expecting a quicker turnaround. I've been through it a few times now, so I know what to expect." — Matt Duchene

To put it lightly, the past two years of Duchene's career have been hectic. On his fourth team since the start of the 2017-18 season, Duchene is relieved to have stability after signing a seven-year, \$56 million contract with the Predators in free agency. Duchene centered Mikael Granlund and Filip Forsberg during Saturday's practice, an appealing combination based on their complementary skill sets. (The Predators' first preseason games are Monday against the Florida Panthers in their annual doubleheader, which will give us a better glimpse of what the coaching staff is thinking.)

Nobody wakes up in the morning when they're 6 years old and dreams of playing in the American Hockey League." — Daniel Carr

Kudos to Carr for keeping it real. As the reigning AHL MVP, Carr is ready to earn a steady role in the NHL, which he hasn't been able to do over the past four seasons. Carr sounds a lot like Rocco Grimaldi, who was in a similar position last season. The Predators didn't sign Carr, 27, to bury him on the depth chart, so he is among the players to watch closely once the preseason schedule starts.

"I don't want to make change for the sake of making changes. I want to make changes for getting better. That's really what I told the players when we started training camp. A lot of the decisions that we're going to make at training camp will be with an eye towards offense." — David Poile

Over the past few years, the Predators' preference has been to carry eight defensemen, which they might do again this season when they submit their opening-night roster. Poile's comments, though, suggest a possible change in thinking. That seems to bode well for the offensive-minded bubble forwards in camp, like Carr, Eeli Tolvanen and Rem Pitlick. Of course, they have to earn their spots. And what could that



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mean for Miikka Salomaki and Freddy Gaudreau, who haven't proven to be scorers at the NHL level?

"I feel like I'm going to have the year of my life and help the team as much as I can. I can't see any reason why that can't be done and why I couldn't play my best hockey this upcoming season. But I also know that any amount of games (I play), I've got to earn it. Juuse Saros is more than ready to play games, and he's more than ready to be a No. 1 goalie in this league. He's shown that time and time again. But it's a healthy situation for myself. He really pushes me, and I feel like I have something to give to him." — Pekka Rinne

Last season at five-on-five, Rinne had a goals saved above average of 13.54, .875 high-danger save percentage and .930 overall save percentage, all of which were among the best marks in the league among starting goaltenders. The 36-year-old, who turns 37 on Nov. 3, has aged gracefully.

Rinne will continue to be the Predators' starter until he retires or his play deteriorates, whichever comes first. Now is the time, though, to start preparing Saros for the future. The 24-year-old started 27 games last season, and it'll be interesting to see how the Predators manage his workload as he continues to be groomed as Rinne's successor.

The Athletic LOADED: 09.17.2019

1153188 Websites

The Athletic / Five takeaways from the NHLPA not opting out of the current CBA

By Katie Strang Sep 16, 2019

After months of tempering every sense of positivity emanating from collective bargaining agreement talks between the NHL and NHL Players' Association, and offering caveats with each tidbit of progress, it now seems that the optimism about avoiding another labor dispute, at least in the immediate future, was genuine after all.

I'll readily admit that I was definitely in the pumping-the-brakes camp, not quite believing the level of cordiality between the two sides would be sustainable as the deadline on an opt-out decision drew near.

And yet here we are, with the NHLPA announcing on Monday that the executive board decided not to reopen the current CBA in 2020, which means the current agreement will not expire until the end of the 2021-22 season.

"While players have concerns with the current CBA, we agree with the league that working together to address those concerns is the preferred course of action instead of terminating the agreement following this season," NHLPA Executive Director Don Fehr said in a statement.

The NHL notified the NHLPA of its intention not to opt-out of the agreement before the league's Sept. 1 deadline. So what does it all mean?

Here are five takeaways from that decision, and what it will ultimately mean for NHL fans in the future:

## 1. Immediate Labor Peace

In the most immediate sense, the NHL will not have the same sort of looming cloud of uncertainty that has cast a pall on previous seasons. Rather, this decision assures that there will be no interruption to play next season and that the gulf between the two sides in brokering a new deal must at least seem manageable for the union to eschew its right to opt-out of the CBA next year. This decision instead means that this season, and potentially the following two, will be played under the parameters of the current CBA, though the two sides can always mutually agree upon amendments and modifications to be addressed in an a la carte fashion or as part of a jointly-brokered agreement on a new CBA.

It is not believed that the two sides have gotten down to the true nitty, gritty details as of yet, though Monday's decision by the NHLPA indicates a willingness on both sides to keep at it on the negotiating front. There certainly does not seem to be the appetite from within either camp to force the issue or go looking for a fight.

From a 30,000-foot view, the entry of an NHL team in Seattle and the impending U.S. television rights deal are both likely impacting the tenor of talks, with both sides hoping that this tandem of developments helps foster revenue growth for the future, a fundamental issue that is at the heart of one of the CBA's thornier issues (See: Takeaway No. 3).

## 2. Then vs. Now

Even if the NHLPA isn't crazy about some of the terms of the current CBA (the union acknowledged as much in its statement announcing the decision), the decision not to reopen is one that displays a level of trust and good faith that was conspicuously absent from similar talks prior to the 113-day lockout that impacted the 2012-13 season. In those discussions, and in previous labor standoffs, talks appeared much more rancorous, and often devolved as both sides aired their grievances and plead their cases through the media. This time around both sides were relatively tight-lipped in what was revealed publicly and the same level of enmity just didn't seem to exist. Fehr even described talks as "pleasant" during a press briefing earlier this month. It's hard to know what to make of that, especially since so much was made of the tete-a-tete between Don Fehr and NHL commissioner Gary Bettman, Round 1, and the personalities at the head of the discussions haven't changed.

Perhaps what has changed, rather, is that the owners did not want to see their business impacted and players didn't feel like the issues they had with the CBA were enough to stomach sitting out games and sacrificing paychecks.

And if there was progress on a major issue, like escrow, it's probable that the two sides were wary of losing momentum. Had the union utilized the opener, that could have widened a chasm between the NHL and NHLPA, and forced both camps to become further entrenched in their positions rather than willing to find middle ground.

Had the re-opener been triggered, we may have seen the gloves come off, with owners taking on a more active role in talks, and the ensuing effect that may have had on the players. That still may happen down the road, but it's not on the immediate horizon, at least.

## 3. What Happens Now?

The fact that the NHLPA made this decision means that there is a possibility (if not a likelihood, depending on who you ask) that the two sides can come to an agreement on an extension to the current CBA. And by all indications, that is



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what the two sides will aim for as they continue to discuss matters in the weeks to come. However, it shouldn't be taken as a given simply because the NHLPA passed up on the opportunity to opt-out. Within the rank-and-file, a new CBA is not seen as a *fait accompli*.

However, multiple people with knowledge of the discussions have indicated that a new agreement that would extend two or three years beyond the current CBA, which is set to expire at the end of the 2021-22 season, would be the most likely scenario if the two sides are able to iron out a deal.

You have to imagine that the league is breathing a huge sigh of relief here, for a number of different reasons.

For one, the league is set to welcome its 32nd franchise with Seattle slated to begin play in the 2021-22 season. Additionally, the NHL is on the cusp of negotiating a new television/media deal with the U.S. television rights up in 2021, a deal that the league is expecting to be a financial boon and its first real crack at landing a significant deal within the new streaming rights landscape.

Additionally, the legalization of sports gambling will add another wrinkle into the revenue stream discussions, particularly if the NHL believes there is potential to be captured by way of a sports betting "integrity fee" (more or less a royalty tax).

#### 4. Issues that remain

The players hate escrow, that much is clear. We've written extensively about why that is the case, and why that is hard to reconcile when the league's economics function as they do. However, both sides indicated that they have discussed ways to compute the salary cap in a way that can at least mitigate the percentages of escrow.

That will likely be a big issue as talks continue. If there is a way to diminish the escrow rates, that may feel like a coup for the players; but it's hard to imagine that happening in a way that doesn't include lowering the cap to bring contracts better in line with growth projections and revenue.

The league addressed its distaste for front-loaded contracts and deals that are particularly heavy with signing bonus money. Bettman told *The Athletic* last week that the league feels that calculating those "cash over cap" deals inflates the escrow players see taken out of their paychecks.

Since the last CBA, players have also made an effort to push for better post-career health care, which feels like a compensatory benefit the league would yield on and would be impactful. Remember that not all players will be impacted by some of the "sticking points" of the current CBA talks — i.e. signing bonuses, front-loaded contracts, etc — but all players will have to grapple with post-retirement health care. As awareness grows about the effects of playing the game and the potential post-career health risks that lie ahead, players are likely thinking of that as a bigger priority at the bargaining table.

#### 5. International calendar

One non-monetary issue that remains important to players is Olympic participation, and the NHL has been rather bearish on this in recent years. The league did not participate in the 2018 Olympics in PyeongChang, and Bettman affirmed his stance recently as not just a matter of agreement between the NHL and NHLPA, but also one that is complicated by some of the issues that have arisen in trying to work with the

International Olympic Committee. Bettman said the ability to promote the league at the Olympics in the past has been "non-existent," the IOC has been "completely inflexible on that" and, in discussions before the last Olympics, the IOC "didn't even want to pay the cost of us going."

"I think international (play) is a wonderful opportunity for us as a game and as a league, not just as revenue-wise but 25 percent of our players come from outside of North America, and we want to continue to encourage the development of world-class hockey players," Bettman said, citing the exhibition and regular-season games played overseas. "All that's good. International competition is great. Do I regret not going to South Korea Olympics? Not one bit because, at the end of the day, that was a terrific season that wasn't disrupted; and how much any of you think Olympics is a good or a bad thing, it does disrupt our season in a whole host of ways."

Also on the international calendar front, the two sides recently indicated hope for staging a World Cup of Hockey in 2021, provided that the then-promising CBA talks continued in earnest. Recent developments would then indicate that such a tournament could occur, with the possibility of an in-season format replacing the annual All-Star Game. So if talks continue to go well, expect a firmer international calendar to take shape soon.

"The fact is we do this jointly with the Players' Association and we can't move forward unilaterally, and there's been lots of other things to discuss," Bettman said earlier this month.

The Athletic LOADED: 09.17.2019

1153189 Websites

The Athletic / Down Goes Brown: The Bizarro-meter looks back on the Eastern Conference offseason

By Sean McIndoe Sep 16, 2019

We made it. With training camps now in full swing around the league, the NHL offseason is officially over. Teams had their chance to remake their rosters, hire new people and set a course for the upcoming season. Now, that season is here. Pencils down, everyone. (Not you, teams with unsigned RFAs. You still have work to do.)

Looking back on the last few months, some teams did well. Some teams came up empty. And some teams, well, they just got weird. Those are the teams I'm interested in. As a diehard fan of Team Chaos, I'm always happy to see a team do things that confuse the rest of us. And that's where the Bizarro-meter comes in.

I wrote my first Bizarro-meter column way back in 2013 when I was trying to make sense of the infamous Maple Leafs offseason that saw them make a series of truly confusing moves. Did it work? It did not. To this day, nobody has been able to figure out what the Leafs thought they were doing that summer. But the concept was fun and morphed into an annual league-wide ranking. And now it's time to blow the dust off of the Bizarro-meter, plug it in and spit out some 2019 ratings.



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As always, remember that a bizarre offseason is not necessarily bad. Sometimes, the decisions that leave everyone scratching their heads are the ones that work out the best. And often, a safe, by-the-numbers approach is exactly the wrong choice for a team that needs a more creative approach. This isn't about picking winners and losers. It's about recognizing those teams who failed at the NHL's prime directive of being dull and predictable.

We'll do this by division, starting with the Atlantic and Metro today and wrapping with the Pacific and Central tomorrow. As always, we'll work our way up the scale as we go.

## Atlantic Division

### Boston Bruins

The offseason so far: They didn't do much, which was no surprise. They're already good, the cap situation is manageable and Don Sweeney never makes trades during the summer and we've all just apparently decided to act like that's not weird. Their biggest story was probably yesterday's Charlie McAvoy signing to a thoroughly team-friendly deal, which might have been surprising from another team but was par for the course for the Bruins.

But their strangest story was: Jeremy Jacobs not being the owner anymore. He's keeping the team in the family, handing it over to his six children, and will presumably still have an important voice in guiding the franchise. But one of the most influential names in modern NHL history will be stepping back, which will take some getting used to.

Bizarro-meter ranking: 3.2/10. I guess Jacobs felt it was important to make his exit at the right time. Maybe now he can explain the concept to Brad Marchand.

### Buffalo Sabres

The offseason so far: They didn't make any blockbusters like last year's Ryan O'Reilly or Jeff Skinner moves, but they did add Marcus Johansson in free agency and swung deals for Colin Miller, Jimmy Vesey and Henri Jokiharju. The bigger move was bringing in Ralph Krueger to replace Phil Housley behind the bench.

But their strangest story was: Not really addressing the goaltending. It's back to the tandem of Carter Hutton and Linus Ullmark, which was a bust last year (especially in the second half). There's something to be said for consistency and not just chasing last year's hot hand, but the status quo is a gamble.

Bizarro-meter ranking: 4.1/10. They were busy. But given the pressure on Jason Botterill and company to finally breakthrough, you wonder if they were busy enough.

### Tampa Bay Lightning

The offseason so far: The first real offseason of the Julien BriseBois era didn't produce many big headlines. Unloading Ryan Callahan's deal helped, and they did well on the J.T. Miller trade. Their main goal was to clear out some cap deadwood, and they did it well.

But their strangest story was: The fact that their offseason started in April, not June. But mainly the lack of a Brayden Point deal, largely because we all assumed he was going to sign some ridiculously team-friendly contract that would make fans of every other team tear their hair out. And he still might, at least if the Lightning get their way. It's just taking longer than we thought.

Bizarro-meter ranking: 4.5/10 for now, pending whatever happens with Point.

### Florida Panthers

The offseason so far: They upgraded on and off the ice, landing two of the biggest free agents in the sport in Joel Quenneville and Sergei Bobrovsky. They also added Anton Stralman and Brett Connolly.

But their strangest story was: Roberto Luongo announcing his retirement. Wait, players can do that? They don't just have to come up with a suspicious "injury" and finish their career on the LTIR?

Bizarro-meter ranking: 4.8/10. The Panthers were certainly among the biggest newsmakers of the offseason. But it feels like we had Quenneville and Bobrovsky penciled in here since January, so nothing they did felt all that surprising.

### Ottawa Senators

The offseason so far: Their biggest move was hiring former Leafs' assistant D.J. Smith as their head coach, one of several ex-Leafs they loaded up on. They also traded Zack Smith for Artem Anisimov and acquired Ryan Callahan's LTIR charge. But apart from that, and a new deal for Colin White, it was relatively quiet. No new deal for Thomas Chabot yet, no major additions and no reason to think they won't endure another tough season.

But their strangest story was: A team that's notoriously frugal going out and trading for one of the worst contracts in the league. Nikita Zaitsev can eat minutes, and the Sens have to spend on somebody to get to the floor. But they say they expect to contend again in a few years, and having Zaitsev still on the books might be an issue by then.

Bizarro-meter ranking: 5.1/10. One year after earning the ultra-rare 10/10 rating, they almost made it through the entire offseason before hitting their first off-ice embarrassment. I'm guessing Senators fans will happily take it.

### Detroit Red Wings

The offseason so far: The Wings didn't do much to remake the roster, bringing back Valtteri Filppula and saying goodbye to the retiring Niklas Kronwall. None of that really matters all that much, because the big news is that Steve Yzerman is back and ready to use his Jedi skills to rebuild the roster.

But their strangest story was: Taking Moritz Seider a dozen or two spots ahead of where most of the draft boards had him, in what was easily the biggest surprise of the first round. Nice bow tie, though.

Bizarro-meter ranking: 6.1/10. After two decades, it's going to take some time getting used to talking about the Red Wings without mentioning Ken Holland. But Yzerman's return just feels right.

### Toronto Maple Leafs

The offseason so far: Kyle Dubas remade a big chunk of the roster. He traded Nazem Kadri for Tyson Barrie, shipped Patrick Marleau's albatross of a contract to the Hurricanes at the cost of a first-round pick and signed veteran Jason Spezza to take over fourth-line duties. He re-signed Andreas Johnsson and Kasperii Kapanen to reasonable deals, which was good, and dumped Nikita Zaitsev, which was great, and acquired Cody Ceci, which was acquiring Cody Ceci.



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Oh, they also brought back David Clarkson. Everyone mumbled about LTIR and cap rules and pretended like we understood what that was all about.

But their strangest story was: The Mitch Marner saga, which ended on Friday with a massive six-year, \$65-million deal that sure feels like an overpay. Marner's a great young player coming off a career year who wanted to reset the RFA market, and the Leafs let him do it rather than digging in for an extended fight. Now we see if the rest of the league follows along, or if this deal ends up being an outlier that ages badly.

Bizarro-meter ranking: 10.893/10. Just kidding, that would be way too high. Let's give them a 7/10.

### Montreal Canadiens

The offseason so far: The roster looks pretty much the same. There's a new backup in Keith Kincaid and a handful of depth pieces moving in and out, but this is basically the same core that put up 96 points and barely missed the playoffs last year.

But their strangest story was: The Sebastian Aho offer sheet drama, in which Marc Bergevin and the Habs apparently decided that the best way to land a young franchise player was to offer him less money than everyone assumed he could get.

Bizarro-meter ranking: 8.3/10. While a big part of me was just happy to see an NHL front office remember that offer sheets exist, I still don't understand what the Habs thought they were accomplishing here. Sure, it's the Hurricanes, who in theory could be susceptible to a front-loaded contract. But when that contract is also a certifiable bargain, what do you realistically think is going to happen? Pretty much exactly what did. Good try, I guess.

### Metropolitan Division

#### Washington Capitals

The offseason so far: It's mostly been about tinkering around the edges. They traded Matt Niskanen for Radko Gudas. They re-signed Jakub Vrana. They signed Carl Hagelin and Richard Panik and traded Andre Burakovsky. That was about it.

But their strangest story was: Evgeny Kuznetsov testing positive for cocaine at the Worlds, which will earn him a brief NHL suspension.

Bizarro-meter ranking: 3.7/10. Was it a good offseason? I'm not blown away, even as others seem to like it. But putting aside Kuznetsov's off-ice troubles, there wasn't much here to wonder about.

#### New York Rangers

The offseason so far: They won a share of the lottery and drafted Kaapo Kakko, then landed the top UFA of the summer by signing Artemi Panarin. They also squeezed the Hurricanes in the Adam Fox deal and lured John Davidson away from Columbus to become the team's president.

But their strangest story was: Trading for Jacob Trouba, and then giving him a seven-year, \$56 million contract. The trade itself came dirt cheap, but the contract carries some risk and basically forced the Kevin Shattenkirk buyout. Still, as gambles go, this one felt worthwhile.

Bizarro-meter ranking: 4.8/10. The Rangers were busy, dominating the headlines through early July. But for the most part, everything they did made sense.

#### Philadelphia Flyers

The offseason so far: They hired Alain Vigneault as their head coach, traded for Justin Braun, bought out Andrew MacDonald and jumped the free agency line to land Kevin Hayes on a deal that will carry a cap hit north of \$7 million. And last week, they checked the last box on their to-do list by getting the Ivan Provorov deal done.

But their strangest story was: Trading Gudas to the Caps for Niskanen in a deal that many saw as acquiring the guy who made more money and was worse.

Bizarro-meter ranking: 5.0/10. The Niskanen deal may not work out, but it's not going to be a disaster. The Hayes contract is expensive enough that it could be, but it gives the team some top-six options as they face an uphill path back to the playoffs.

#### New York Islanders

The offseason so far: They reportedly went hard after Panarin and Bobrovsky but whiffed on both once the market opened on July 1. Then they re-signed Anders Lee while swearing he was never Plan B and everyone just kind of agreed to pretend to believe them. It was part of an offseason theme of keeping the band together, as they also re-signed Brock Nelson and Jordan Eberle.

But their strangest story was: Parting ways with Robin Lehner after a career year and instead, signing Semyon Varlamov to a four-year deal that carried the same \$5 million cap hit that Lehner eventually got from Chicago. Maybe Varlamov is the better goalie. Or maybe he'll be a better mentor for eventual starter Ilya Sorokin. Still, Lehner was a key to last year's turnaround and said he wanted to stay, and it's rare to see a team let a goaltender walk after a year like he just had.

Bizarro-meter ranking: 6.1/10. Losing arguably their most important player to free agency? Clearly, the Islanders are doomed!

#### New Jersey Devils

The offseason so far: They won the lottery and drafted Jack Hughes, traded for P.K. Subban without giving up much of anything, snagged KHL star Nikita Gusev from the cap-strapped Knights, got Wayne Simmonds on a low-risk one-year deal and locked in Pavel Zacha after a brief war of words. Other than that, not much.

But their strangest story was: The lack of progress on a Taylor Hall extension – or really, the apparent lack of any real effort at progress.

Bizarro-meter ranking: 6.3/10. It's rare to see a team add this much talent in one offseason. Is it enough to make up the 26 points they missed the playoffs by last year? Some Devils fans seem pretty sure that it will be. I'm not as confident, but I've been wrong before.

#### Columbus Blue Jackets

The offseason so far: As expected, they lost three of their best players to free agency, as Panarin, Bobrovsky and Matt Duchene all left. Does the addition of Gustav Nyquist make



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up the difference? (Takes long swig from a water bottle.) Not really.

But their strangest story was: Not being more aggressive in free agency apart from Nyquist. They weren't going to find another Panarin, but you might have expected them to use that cap space on more veteran depth, especially in goal.

Bizarro-meter ranking: 6.8/10. The Blue Jackets are a tough team to rate. On the one hand, pretty much everything that happened to them this summer was something we already expected, so none of it seemed all that strange. On the other, it's almost unheard of to see a team decimated by free agency like this. Just because we knew it was coming doesn't make it normal.

### Pittsburgh Penguins

The offseason so far: They finally pulled the trigger on the long-rumored Phil Kessel trade, sending him to the Coyotes in a deal that saw Alex Galchenyuk come back the other way. Kessel always wears out his welcome eventually, but it was fun while it lasted.

But their strangest story was: The absolutely mind-boggling Brandon Tanev signing. Seriously, there may not have been an offseason move that was more widely criticized. Oh wait, I wrote that exact same sentence about last year's Jack Johnson deal. Maybe free agency just isn't this team's thing.

Bizarro-meter ranking: 7.1/10. Six years! For a depth forward! I am using exclamation points!

### Carolina Hurricanes

The offseason so far: It's been busy, and all over the map. They managed to avoid the RFA headaches that have hit just about everyone else, thanks to Montreal's failed offer sheet on Aho. That locked in their franchise player at what's already become below-market value, so even if the contract was shorter than the Hurricanes would have preferred, it's a win. But it's also weird that the situation even got to that point; when your franchise player is signing an offer sheet on Day 1 of free agency, something has gone wrong somewhere in the relationship, and all the spin in the world won't disguise that.

On top of all of that, they lost Micheal Ferland, Adam Fox and, at least temporarily, heart-and-soul leader Justin Williams. But they also signed Ryan Dzingel, then landed Jake Gardiner on what may have been the most team-friendly UFA deal of the offseason. Oh, and they spent millions on a Patrick Marleau buyout in a deal that saw them essentially buy the Leafs' first-round pick. One way or another, just about everything they do makes you go "huh, that's interesting".

But their strangest story was: When we found out their GM, Don Waddell, didn't have a contract because their owner didn't think he needed one. We learned this because Waddell, who I again remind you was the Hurricanes' GM at the time, was interviewing for the same job with another team. That's not how any of this is supposed to work.

Bizarro-meter ranking: 9.1/10. I can't figure the Hurricanes out, and I acknowledge that there's a non-zero chance that the problem is that they're just way smarter than me. But it would be nice if they could go a few weeks without being in the middle of something that feels like some sort of glitch in the AI for NHL 20.

The Athletic LOADED: 09.17.2019

1153190 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Canucks, Boeser compromise, but difficult decisions could lie ahead

Iain MacIntyre

VICTORIA, B.C. – A match made in heaven? Ask Brock Boeser and the Vancouver Canucks in three years.

For now, the two sides badly needed each other, which is why the free-agent winger and National Hockey League club ended their standoff Monday and agreed to a three-year bridge deal for Boeser that averages US\$5.875 million.

The 22-year-old Minnesotan will rejoin the team Wednesday after missing the Canucks' three-day training camp and first three pre-season games. Boeser will have two weeks to get ready for Vancouver's season-opener Oct. 2 in Edmonton.

And general manager Jim Benning and his staff have about the same time to make the Canucks salary-cap compliant after Boeser's signing, which caps a hectic off-season for the team where Vancouver went \$1.72 million over the \$81.5-million limit.

"We want him up and going so he's ready for the start of the season," Benning told reporters Monday night before the Canucks and Calgary Flames opened the pre-season with split-squad games in Victoria and Calgary. "So it was important we get him done now.

"I talked to him this afternoon. Obviously, he's very excited. He's been talking to some of the guys and getting a feel for how camp is going and wanted to be here. He's happy (negotiations are) over."

Vancouver coach Travis Green said he always believed Boeser would re-sign.

"I don't think Brock wanted to be out and we definitely wanted him to be here, so we had those two elements," Green said after his team in Victoria fell behind by four goals before losing 4-3 to the Flames.

"As coach, you're always trying to plan your lineup and trying to look ahead. And in the back of your mind, you're wondering: Is Brock going to be here or not? So I'm definitely happy he's signed now and will be in town soon."

Green said he hadn't decided if Boeser will have to do the gruelling skating test teammates endured on the first day of training camp.

"Oh, yeah," Canucks centre Bo Horvat said. "He's coming back, he's going to have to do it. We're going to make him. He's not going to get off that easy.

"He kept saying he wants to be here with us and he wants to be with the team. I'm glad they finally got it done.

"I couldn't be happier for him and I couldn't be happier to have him back in our lineup. I'm really happy he's going to start the season with us because we definitely need him."



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In two-plus NHL seasons, Boeser has 59 goals in 140 games despite serious injuries that ended his rookie campaign and slowed the start to his sophomore season. At this point, his offensive ceiling is unlimited.

But he needs to play. Ineligible for free-agent offers from other NHL teams, his value to Vancouver – as well as his conditioning – wasn't likely to improve while sitting out. But the Canucks also could not afford to proceed without him.

Adding wingers Micheal Ferland and J.T. Miller, and defencemen Tyler Myers and Jordie Benn make the Canucks a better team. But the organization is far from talented enough to lose one of its best young players without it diminishing the Canucks' playoff hopes.

An extended standoff looked like a huge lose-lose.

Benning and agent Ben Hankinson never got close to an agreement on a long-term deal, and focused for much of the summer on a bridge contract for Boeser.

Even on a short-term deal, it's believed Boeser wanted in excess of \$6 million annually, while the Canucks were wary of paying more than the \$5.5 million Horvat accepted on a six-year-deal signed before the 2017-18 season.

The sides finally reached a compromise late Sunday, Benning said.

Boeser's average salary is behind only the \$6 million the Canucks are paying to Myers, Alex Edler and Loui Eriksson – all of whom leveraged their deals through unrestricted free agency.

With 26 NHL players on its pre-season roster – three over the regular-season limit – ducking under the salary cap shouldn't be a problem for Benning. And the inflated salary of \$7.5 million for Boeser in Year 3, which will be the launch point on his next contract negotiations, should also be manageable for the Canucks. If Boeser continues to improve.

But there is also an uncomfortable truth after these negotiations: if the Canucks were convinced that Boeser is a long-term cornerstone, they'd have found a way to pay him now on a six- or seven-year deal.

But Vancouver has Horvat, 24, Pettersson, 20, and defenceman Quinn Hughes, 19, to build around, too, and management will have to make difficult value choices in the future. They are not wed to Boeser.

That freedom, however, works both ways. In five years, Boeser becomes eligible for unrestricted free agency, so the three-year bridge deal tees him up for a potentially huge payday.

"We looked at trying to do a longer-term deal," Benning said. "At the end of the day, I guess doing a shorter-term deal puts some responsibility back on him now to come in and have three good years and then try to sign long-term after that.

"He's one of our core, young players that we want to build the team around."

Yes, but will they?

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Sportsnet.ca / Canadiens' win caps off magical night for Primeau family in Cayden's debut

Eric Engels September 17, 2019, 12:43 AM

MONTREAL— Picture this if you can: Keith and Lisa Primeau step through the entrance of section 114 at the Bell Centre and as they make the walk down to their seats warmup is just getting underway, the Montreal Canadiens are taking to the ice, and their son Cayden, wearing that prestigious uniform, is skating over to the boards by the penalty box.

The kid, who's appearing in his first-ever NHL game, is just 50 feet away from his parents, hunched over in a full stretch. They're standing at their seats, snapping pictures and shooting them off to the rest of the family via group text when suddenly he pops up and heads to his net. They look at each other and shake their heads in unison.

The Primeaus had an inclination Cayden would be making his NHL debut on Monday when they got a text from him at 4:45 p.m. ET on Sunday.

"I'm dressing tomorrow but I'm not playing, he said," explained Keith, who split 15 years in the NHL between the Detroit Red Wings and Philadelphia Flyers—appearing in over 900 games and registering over 600 points over his career. "I said, 'That's great, that's awesome. Congratulations. Who's playing?' And he's like, 'Carey (Price).' So now it's like, 'Are we going to go up? Are we going to fly? He's not playing but he's dressing.' And then I think, 'Wait a minute...'

"I text Cayden and say, 'How did they tell you? Did they say Carey's playing and you're backing up?' He says, 'Nono. It was just Price and Primeau on the board.'

"So I started thinking, when I played early exhibition games they split goalies. And I went back and looked at last year's early exhibition games and the Habs split the goalies. So I didn't even tell him, I just told Lisa that he was going to go in and I felt confident he was going to get some time. So we packed up in like 45 minutes and we were in the car by 6:00 p.m. and on our way and we pulled into Montreal at 3:00 a.m. this morning."

It was a tense day for all three of them. Keith, who's a part owner in a Montreal-based company that sells recycled cardboard boxes, spent it at the office keeping his mind occupied as best he could. Cayden tried to treat it like it was just any other gameday when it was anything but that.

And then there was Lisa, who was left to her own devices.

"She was a basket of nerves and she said she almost felt like throwing up and that she had tears in her eyes all day," said Keith.

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In Lisa's mind, the moment she was preparing to witness later in the day was 20 years in the making.



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"I don't want to sound like that mom," she said moments before getting to her seat at the Bell Centre. "But I saw how hard he worked for this. I couldn't imagine that he wouldn't achieve it. I always knew he would."

It was anything but guaranteed. It wasn't that long ago that Primeau and his parents were sitting in Chicago's United Center, waiting to hear Cayden's name called at the NHL Draft. They thought he'd probably go in the fourth round, and then it seemed like he wasn't going to go at all.

Relief came for the family when the Canadiens made a trade with the Flyers for a seventh-round pick and finally selected Cayden 199th overall.

His rise since that June day in 2017 has been meteoric. First it was on to Northeastern University, where he stole the net from the starting goaltender within a month of being there. He authored a remarkable rookie season and then followed it up with an even better sophomore year.

At the end of it, Primeau signed his entry-level contract with the Canadiens. Thirteen days later he took home the Mike Richter Award as the NCAA's best goaltender. Then it was off to the world championships with Team USA.

Before he knew it, he was back in Montreal.

On Monday, Primeau watched from the bench as Price made eight saves to help the Canadiens preserve a 2-1 lead through the first 30 minutes of their game against the New Jersey Devils.

"I was just trying to take it all in," he said. "It was my first time experiencing something like this."

His parents were on pins and needles.

"He just needs to feel the puck early," Keith said moments before Cayden took off his baseball hat, pulled on his mask and skated into the action.

Seconds later, Devils superstar Nico Hischier came streaking down the left side of the Canadiens zone on a 2-on-1 break with Blake Coleman. Hischier waited for the opening, put a perfect pass on Coleman's stick, and Coleman ripped a shot at what he thought was an open net.

That's when Cayden slid across his crease and stuffed Coleman's shot with his left pad. The crowd roared, "Primeau! Primeau! Primeau!"

"I was just trying not to cry," said Lisa.

"That's not what I meant when I said he just needs to feel the puck early," said Keith.

They were beaming with pride.

"His first game for the most storied franchise ever? It's surreal," said Keith. "Right from the first day I saw him play goal, he could stop a puck. I said, 'He's a good seven-year-old,' and my friends agreed. And then it was, 'He's a good 12-year-old, and he's a good 15-year-old, and he's a good 18-year-old, and now he's a good 20-year-old.' For me, that's all it's ever been."

In the third period, Cayden made 11 more saves. His best one came on a half-break for Kyle Palmieri, who shifted quickly from forehand to backhand and tried to beat him on the blocker side. This came just a few minutes after he had scrambled out of his net to stop a rim-around on the glass

and the puck had taken a horrible bounce to the slot to give Mike McLeod an easy goal to tie the game 2-2.

"There's bounces here and there and sometimes you're on the right side and sometimes you're on the wrong side," Cayden said. "It's part of the game."

He shrugged it off and kept the Canadiens in the game before Jake Evans scored a short-handed goal to put them up 3-2.

Nick Cousins added one to secure the 4-2 win for Montreal.

Afterwards, Cayden was all smiles.

"This was pretty special," he said.

Then Cayden showered up, put on his suit, and walked past security to find Keith and Lisa.

Lisa hugged him tight. He shared a laugh with off-season goaltending coach Chris Kanaly, who grabbed a 3:00 p.m. flight from Philadelphia just to be there, and he embraced Keith's partner Brian Young.

And then it was a high-five and a big hug from Keith.

"You can always dream, but that was something special," Cayden said.

It was all that and more for his 31-year-old brother Corey, his 24-year-old sister Kylie and his 22-year-old brother Chayse, who all found a way to watch from home.

It was pure magic for Keith and Lisa to witness it live in person.

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Sportsnet.ca / Nygard's patient pursuit of NHL dream leads to golden Oilers' opportunity

Mark Spector | eptember 17, 2019, 12:10 AM

EDMONTON — Joakim Nygard isn't like every other Swede who comes West searching for a National Hockey League job. First of all, he is 26 years old. And something else, he and girlfriend Lisa named their recently-born son Todd.

Ever meet a Swede named Todd? Neither had they.

"Only 32 persons in Sweden with that name," said Joakim Nygard. "I looked on Google."

The good news for Nygard Jr.? He won't have his first name mispronounced nearly as much as his last name. Pronounced "YO-akim NIGH-gard," Todd's old man is finally ready to test the waters here in North America, after playing a full six seasons in the top Swedish League with Oscar Klefbom's old team, Farjestads.

"Of course it was always a dream to come over, but when I was 20, 21, 22, I wasn't good enough to come here," he said. "And it's a big change: New country, new language... Everything is new."



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His agent told him a year ago that he could find Nygard an NHL deal, but the left winger backed off. "I wasn't ready. I wanted to stay in Sweden for one more year, to develop me as a hockey player even more."

So he went out and finished second in goals in the SHL, scoring 21 times in 21 different games. He didn't have a two-goal game, sniping in 21 of his club's 52 games. "I had twice, like, seven games in a row where I scored a goal."

In his first pre-season action Monday night, he showed flashes of what the Oilers hope to see, in a 2-0 Oilers win over the Winnipeg Jets. There is speed and there are hands, but the two did not always intersect in a scrumbly affair that opened the pre-season.

"I've always been pretty fast," Nygard said. "I can jump high, jump long. I never competed in (track and field), but I was the best one in school. I have always been a fast skater."

In today's game, that is an entry point. Coming over at 26, from the ultra-defensive Swedish league, we'll assume Nygard knows how to defend. Now, can he give the Oilers 10-15 goals coming off the left side? That would be gold, Jerry.

"I don't think he understands how fast he is," said Klefbom, who skated with Nygard back home this past summer." He is something else. Crazy fast — really explosive. He will create a lot, and not only for himself. But for all our guys.

"Time will be the biggest difference for him. I know what it's like over there, where you can create your own time, because you have three seconds. Here, people are on you."

Nygard is the son of a realtor and a mother who is a maternity ward nurse, and his delivery to the NHL comes at a time when a swift Euro can come in handy for Edmonton. In fact, the new NHL might be a better place for speed and skill than the Swedish League, where the big ice and strict defensive systems rule the day.

"You come here, you beat a guy coming out of the corner, you have a scoring chance. You beat a guy in the corner in Sweden, and you have two more guys to beat," he said. "I am good in one-on-one situations, so hopefully I can create a lot of chances here too."

Nygard hopped inside to create an excellent chance in the third period, perhaps a flash of what's to come. With Leon Draisaitl locked in at first-line left wing, Oilers head coach Dave Tippett would love some speed and skill at the second left wing, where he had Sam Gagner playing alongside Ryan Nugent-Hopkins and James Neal on Monday.

Jeff Marek and Elliotte Friedman talk to a lot of people around the hockey world, and then they tell listeners all about what they've heard and what they think about it.

Jujhar Khaira is in the mix, as is Tyler Benson and Gagner. But the job is open for the taking.

Wide open, really.

"(Nygard) is an interesting guy right now," said Tippett. "A really determined player right now. You watch him in that (Sunday intrasquad game), he was one of the best players out there. He's got a tenacity about him, he's got skill... He's a real player to watch for us. He looks good out there so far."

Left wing is a bit of a black hole in Edmonton, assuming Neal — who scored Monday — sets up shop on Nugent-Hopkins'

right side. Benson might be ready, but the fallback will be to give him some more time in AHL Bakersfield. Khaira is best suited as a bottom-six forward.

Nygard might be the man for the job, though walking right into an NHL top-six from Sweden is a mighty tall order.

"It is a different game," Klefbom said. "It's faster; it's more physical; it's tighter. But I think that's going to fit him well. The game over here, it is in his favour. He's really explosive, in his first couple of strides."

Nygard has already had his 'ah hah moment,' when he practiced with Connor McDavid for the first time.

"Oh my God. Unbelievable," he gushed. "I knew he was good, but when you see him on the ice live, you can't imagine how good he is. It's sick."

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Sportsnet.ca / 'Kill or be killed': Rinaldo fighting for his NHL career with Flames

Eric Francis September 17, 2019, 12:07 AM

CALGARY – The coach likes his speed.

The players like his energy.

The league likes suspending him.

Everyone is familiar with Calgary Flames hopeful Zac Rinaldo, who finds himself in the unfamiliar position of being one of six PTOs in camp.

Brought in to fight for his NHL career, not to mention his teammates, the 29-year-old native of Mississauga, Ont., has impressed early with a weapon few think of when they recall the man suspended five times.

"Rinaldo can fly – I didn't know he was this fast," said coach Bill Peters, who emphasized his team's desire to get quicker ahead of Monday's 3-2 split-squad exhibition overtime loss at the Saddledome against the Vancouver Canucks' youngsters.

"I've been impressed with his work ethic and his ability to forecheck. He understands how to track."

Jeff Marek and Elliotte Friedman talk to a lot of people around the hockey world, and then they tell listeners all about what they've heard and what they think about it.

Rinaldo also understands he'll need to focus on his main weakness, which is crossing the line.

"My mentality is kill or be killed – always has been," said Rinaldo, who played 23 games last season for the Nashville Predators, his fourth stop in an eight-year NHL career.

"You don't want to see me ramped up, I'm telling you right now. If I do get ramped up and I do go over the edge ... I've learned the hard way. You guys have seen that. I've been



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suspended here and suspended there and fines here. As long as I'm level headed I'm myself."

It's that sort of loose wire the Flames have been missing since Brian McGrattan was demoted more than four years ago, keeping the opposition honest when contemplating a slash to the wrist of Johnny Gaudreau.

However, with Milan Lucic in town to keep the order, there's risk involved in signing a five-foot-10, 193-pound pepper pot famous for being suspended by two leagues simultaneously.

After all, his next trip to Toronto for a hearing would likely net him at least eight or ten games – an absence the cap-strapped Flames could ill-afford.

- In 2017 he earned a six-game sit-down for a sucker punch on Samuel Girard.
- In 2016 he was handed five games for a check to the head of Cedric Paquette
- In 2015 he sat eight games for charging Kris Letang.

"I hated getting suspended – it's not cool," scoffed the affable winger.

"I lose money and I don't play hockey at the same time. It sucks. I don't regret anything I did – I don't at all. It comes with the game – it's part of the territory. It's how you overcome it and how you do learn from it then you're going the right way.

"If you don't learn from it and those bad habits are still there I'm probably out of the league. I know what I need to do."

He figures his task here is to prove he's a good teammate, a positive influence in the room and an energizer on the ice. So far, so good for a guy who has stood out with Tobias Rieder in a group of four PTO forwards that includes Devante Smith-Pelly and Alexandre Grenier.

"I'm leaving everything here on the ice, so I don't go home second-guessing my work ethic or what I should have done better here or there," he said.

Does he find the do-or-die nature of his tryout nerve-wracking?

"No, I live for this," smiled the former sixth-round pick.

"I thrive in these uncomfortable scenarios. I like where I am right now. The kill or be killed mentality is what I have lived by my whole life. Being drafted not in the top rounds and fighting my way through this and that. Because I don't have a contract it's a little more amplified."

On Monday, Rinaldo's speed was evident while playing alongside Glenn Gawdin and Smith-Pelly, forming the game's most menacing trio. Two of his game-high six hits were notable, including a solid unloading on Wacey Hamilton and another biggie that stunned Alex Biega.

"It's nice to hear, but it kind of goes in one ear and out the other because if I get too comfortable in these situations I get out of my character and my role as a player," said the owner of 15 goals and 719 penalty minutes in 351 NHL games when told of the coach's praise for his speed.

"I've never told myself I'm here to fight, but if I hit someone or there's an argument on the ice and someone doesn't like my teammate, or vice versa, that's part of the game and you fight. You're allowed to do that.

"I think the mentality of guys going out there just to fight has calmed down a lot, but fighting is part of the game and always will be, I hope. So, ya, I do that."

Fact is, the Flames may not be able to sign anyone to anything other than a two-way deal with the AHL's Stockton Heat in mind, thanks to their salary cap issues. The second-biggest hurdle for Rinaldo may just be overcoming his reputation.

"I didn't go out and say, 'I want a reputation of being so and so,' it just happened," he shrugged.

"I take it, but I don't care what people think of me as long as I'm true to myself."

OTHER STUFF: Johnny Gaudreau and Michael Frolik scored for the Flames only to see the Canucks score three on Cam Talbot, including an overtime winner from former Hitmen star Jake Virtanen (his second of the game) ... Flames registered 14 shots before the Canucks got their first against David Rittich with 7:31 left in the first. Rittich left 33 minutes into the game with a shutout on four (yep) shots. Cam Talbot mopped up, stopping six of the nine shots he faced ... Flames outshot the Canucks 38-13 ... First "Looch" bellow from the crowd came at the 9-minute mark of the game ... Andrew Mangiapane, who signed a one-year, two-way deal worth \$715,000 Sunday, did his physical Monday, will skate alone Wednesday (the team is off) and will join the lads for practice Wednesday ... At age 35 Mark Giordano topped all Flames in fitness testing results.

### FLAMES FORWARD LINES

Gaudreau, Monahan, Lindholm

Bennett, Backlund, Frolik

Lucic, Ryan, Pelletier

Smith-Pelly, Gawdin, Rinaldo

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 09.17.2019

1153194 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / NHLPA declining to re-open CBA a sign of hope for future labour peace

Chris Johnston | September 16, 2019, 5:55 PM

The NHL will enjoy labour peace for at least three more seasons.

That's the biggest takeaway from Monday's decision by the NHL Players' Association not to trigger an early end to the current agreement.

It should also raise hopes that an even longer extension might be in the offing, although the league and players now have until Sept. 15, 2022 before this deal expires. The sides met regularly throughout the summer and then from Monday to Friday last week and are believed to be making progress towards a potential three-year extension that would run through 2025.



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This is a welcome change for a league that has experienced three straight lockouts and saw the entire 2004-05 season shuttered before the salary cap was instituted. It's come about because the owners feel they have a fair system where revenues are split 50-50 and the cap is tied to the overall growth of the business.

So while there are tweaks to be made, they are not rebuilding the foundation. There's no reason to go to war.

"While players have concerns with the current CBA, we agree with the league that working together to address those concerns is the preferred course of action instead of terminating the agreement following this season," said NHLPA executive director Donald Fehr. "We have been having discussions with the league about an extension of the CBA and expect that those talks will continue."

The NHL had previously let its own deadline to re-open the CBA pass on Sept. 1.

Had the players decided to trigger a September 2020 end to the agreement, there was some fear that it might derail the positive bargaining that's already happened. Now the work can continue without the semi-imminent threat of a deadline.

At issue is making changes designed to limit the amount of escrow deducted from player salaries. There has been some talk about keeping the salary cap ceiling flat for the next two years until the league renegotiates national U.S. television deals that could be worth as much as eight times what they bring in now.

That kind of windfall would have a positive impact on the cap long term.

The players are also seeking to have a defined calendar of international events, starting with a World Cup in February 2021. The decision not to re-open the CBA will likely pave the way for that event to return as deputy commissioner Bill Daly told Sportsnet last month that they had already tentatively agreed on holding the next one in-season, pending the outcome of their CBA talks.

"It would be kind of a mini tournament about a week in length. Tack on a couple days to the typical all-star break and fit in an international event," said Daly. "So that's something I think we have an agreement that if we get past this phase we should work on."

For the first time since Gary Bettman was hired as commissioner more than a quarter century ago, there appears to be a spirit of cooperation in bargaining. That's quite the development in itself.

Let's hope it continues.

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1153195 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Mitch Marner's agent: Leafs forward received a couple of offer sheets

Sportsnet Staff | September 16, 2019, 9:58 AM

Mitch Marner's agent says his client received a couple of offer sheets while he was a restricted free agent but his goal all along was to stay with the Toronto Maple Leafs.

Darren Ferris says Maple Leafs general manager Kyle Dubas was aware of the offers although can't disclose which teams were involved.

"Mitch did not want to entertain them," Ferris said Monday morning on Sportsnet 650's Starting Lineup.

"Our goal, always, was to have Mitch play for the Maple Leafs and that's what he wanted," Ferris added.

Marner and the Maple Leafs agreed to a new contract on Friday night, a six-year deal with an average annual value of \$10.893 million. His contract negotiation was one of the most talked about stories in the NHL off-season with several storylines and information released along the way.

Ferris said 99 per cent of the rumours on social media were fabricated and there was a lot of numbers discussed between himself and Dubas.

One news item released was that Marner's camp had been in contact with the Zurich Lions of the Swiss League. Ferris said should negotiations have stretched out a long time, his client would have went there to train with the team.

Although Ferris said he can't comment on the cases of other restricted free agents such as Vancouver's Brock Boeser or Calgary's Matthew Tkachuk, he said he doesn't think the current NHL salary cap system works and that teams are handcuffed.

"Teams have to be able to secure their star players and keep them long term," Ferris said.

The 22-year-old star led Toronto in scoring for a second-straight season last year when he had 94 points, including 26 goals.

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TSN.CA / Andersen will not 'guarantee anything' on 2019-20 workload

Mark Masters

TSN Toronto reporter Mark Masters checks in daily with news and notes on the Maple Leafs, who practised in two groups at Mile One Centre, N.L., on Monday.

Frederik Andersen started 66 games in each of his first two seasons with the Leafs. Last season, he made 60 starts and that total would've been higher had he not missed three weeks with a groin injury. In an interview with The Athletic on Sunday, Andersen said the target for this season is lower.

"The ballpark probably would be mid-50s," Andersen told Jonas Siegel, "maybe go a little bit lower and see where that leads us."

On Monday, he back-pedalled, but only a bit.



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"That could be a number," he said when asked to expand. "I don't want to guarantee anything or lock us into anything, but if everything goes well and we're able to play well we can probably try to go a little bit lower than we have before."

Andersen will work with the coaching staff and sport science department as the season progresses to determine what makes sense. One thing is clear, this is not a topic Andersen or coach Mike Babcock likes to go in-depth on.

"I have some say, I'm sure, but I don't really want to go too far into what we talk about," Andersen said. "You'll see after 82 games how many games I'll be playing. We can talk about the number then."

Babcock outlined some preconditions that must exist before load management takes effect.

"You got to be in a good spot in the standings," he said. "No. 2, the guy you go to has to be able to play and have a chance to win so that's what we're looking for."

Is mid-50s the target for Andersen's workload?

Frederik Andersen wouldn't give an exact number but did admit that if the team plays well, he might be aiming for less starts than last year, which could put him somewhere in the mid-50s.

Toronto's goalie depth is a big question mark entering the season and another red flag popped up on Monday. Michal Neuvirth is at camp on a pro tryout, but after an injury-plagued run with the Flyers in Philadelphia he's already dealing with an issue this season and skated separately from the main groups.

"Obviously, it's not ideal for him," Babcock said. "If he wants to battle for a job he has to be in position to do that, but he also has to be healthy too."

That leaves Michael Hutchinson, who played just nine NHL games last year, as the frontrunner to win the backup job.

"Regardless how many (games I play) there will be good amount of games still to be played with the other goalie," said Andersen, "and it's important we, as a team, have the confidence in whoever gets the job there."

After playing five games for the Leafs last season and spending time around the team in the playoffs, Hutchinson insists he's ready for a bigger role.

"It's one of those things where the more often you play, the more comfortable your teammates feel in what you bring to the game," said the 29-year-old. "I definitely feel ready. As a goalie, the more you play the easier the game becomes and the more the game slows down."

After practising on his natural left side over the weekend, defenceman Rasmus Sandin skated on the right side with Ben Harpur on Monday.

"I played a little bit on the right side last year and played on the right side before that so I'm pretty comfortable on the right," Sandin said.

The 19-year-old is aiming to win a spot on Toronto's third blueline pair.

The competition is wide open, according to Babcock.

"I want someone to be better than someone else," the coach said. "I don't want to, at the end, have to decide. I want them to decide and I want it to be so obvious you all know, too."

Leafs Ice Chips: Does Sandin have the 'right' stuff to seize job?

Rasmus Sandin has been showing off his versatility so far at Leafs camp playing both the left and right sides on the blue line. Mark Masters has more on the Swedish defenceman and why Mike Babcock wants someone to separate themselves to earn one of their open jobs.

Lines at Monday's Leafs practice:

## GROUP 1

Playing Tuesday

Forwards

Kapanen-Tavares-Marner

Engvall-Spezza-Moore ... Baptiste rotating in

Marchment/Elynuik-Brooks-Bracco

Timashov-Gauthier-Korshkov

Defencemen

Muzzin-Barrie

Marincin-Schmaltz

Gravel-Holl

Duszak-Lindgren

Goaltenders

Andersen

Kaskisuo

Power play units:

Barrie

Marner-Tavares-Spezza

Korshkov

Schmaltz

Timashov-Brooks-Bracco

Marchment

## GROUP 2

Playing Wednesday

Forwards

Johnsson-Matthews-Nylander

Mikheyev-Kerfoot-Petan

Agostino-Gaudet-Read / Conrad

Aberg-Kossila-Shore / Clune

Defencemen

Rielly-Ceci

Harpur-Sandin

Kivihalme-Liljegren



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Rubins-Hollowell

Goaltenders

Hutchinson

Halverson

Power play units:

Rielly

Nylander-Petan-Matthews

Johnsson

Sandin

Aberg-Agostino-Kossila

Gaudet

TSN.CA LOADED: 09.17.2019

1153197 Websites

TSN.CA / Canucks vs Flames: Split squad game day preview

Jeff Paterson

At what point does an unsigned Brock Boeser become a villain to Canucks Nation?

Right now

Come opening night

Closer to December

Never

Total Results: 0

Loui Eriksson and Travis Green

After three solid days of training camp work, the Vancouver Canucks launch their 2019 National Hockey League preseason on two fronts tonight. The team will send a split squad to Calgary to face the Flames while icing a separate team for a game at Save-On Foods Memorial Centre in Victoria.

Hometown boy Jordie Benn, who had dinner at his parents place on Sunday night, will suit up as a Canuck for the first time since signing with the team as a free agent on July 1st. Fellow newcomer JT Miller will make his Canuck debut, as well. The Victoria group will feature veterans Bo Horvat, Loui Eriksson, Nikolay Goldobin, Chris Tanev and prospects Brogan Rafferty, Josh Teves, Kole Lind and Michael DiPietro who gets the start in goal.

The Calgary-bound group is led by veterans Jay Beagle, Jake Virtanen and Sven Baertschi who all have strong ties to the Foothills City. Beagle is from there, Virtanen was a star in the Western League while Baertschi broke into the NHL with the Flames. Other vets in the game in Calgary include Tim Schaller and Tyler Motte along with Troy Stecher and Alex Biega on defense. Prospects looking to make a name

for themselves at the Saddledome include Zack MacEwen, Ethan Keppen and Jett Woo, who will play for the Calgary Hitmen this upcoming WHL season. Jake Kielly and Richard Bachman will be the goaltenders on the road tonight.

Notables who will not appear in either game for the Canucks: Elias Pettersson, Quinn Hughes, Tyler Myers, Micheal Ferland, Alex Edler, Jacob Markstrom and Thatcher Demko. They are all likely to suit up for their first games of the preseason at Rogers Arena on Tuesday when the Canucks host Edmonton.

Assistant coach Nolan Baumgartner will join the Utica coaching staff to run the bench in Calgary while Comets assistant Gary Agnew will help out Travis Green, Manny Malhotra and Newell Brown in Victoria.

Face off tonight is at 6pm Pacific in Calgary and 7pm for the game in Victoria.

VICTORIA GAME GROUP

Goldobin-Horvat-Miller

Eriksson-Gaudette-Leivo

Boucher-Jasek-Lind

Gadjovich-Focht-Bailey

Benn-Chatfield

Brisebois-Tanev

Teves-Rafferty

DiPietro

McIntyre

TSN.CA LOADED: 09.17.2019

1153198 Websites

TSN.CA / WHL asks judge to toss minimum-wage lawsuit

Rick Westhead

The Western Hockey League has asked a Calgary judge to dismiss a class-action lawsuit filed by former players who are suing the league for back pay, alleging provincial governments have already weighed in on the matter, that players have had appropriate legal advice, and that much of the time players spend off the ice with their team is voluntary.

The WHL is among three major-junior leagues that have been battling minimum-wage lawsuits for the past five years.

Current and former players suing the leagues have argued the teams are for-profit businesses –some of which make millions of dollars in annual profits – and that players should enjoy protection under employment rights legislation. The lawsuit alleges players have been paid less than the minimum wage – as little as \$35 per week for between 40 to 65 hours of work. The leagues have countered that players are amateur student athletes and that they already have access to valuable educational scholarships.



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In its statement of defence, filed in court on Sept. 3, the WHL said the amount of time its players commit to games, practices and workouts is no different than university athletes.

"The hours of practice and play are similar to elite amateur athletes in other sport including those in Canadian university sport who play hockey, basketball or football," the WHL's lawyers wrote in the league's 28-page court filing. "Beyond practising and playing hockey, the plaintiffs' only other activities with their teams included attendance at community or team-building events, which were largely voluntary."

The WHL pointed to changes made recently by Canadian provinces and U.S. states that amend employment legislation and provide junior hockey teams with an exemption from paying major junior hockey players at least minimum wage.

"The defendants deny that they conspired or otherwise acted to breach the Employment Standards Acts," the league wrote. "Such legislations has never been determined to apply to the players, and the governments of eight of the nine provinces in this country in which players compete have expressly confirmed that it does not."

(Alberta is the only province host to Canadian Hockey League teams that has not yet weighed in on the question.)

The WHL also rejected claims that its teams have an unfair bargaining advantage over players such as former Saskatoon Blades forward Travis McEvoy and former Kootenay Ice forward Kyle O'Connor, who are both named plaintiffs in the class-action lawsuit.

"All of the [Standard Player Agreements] contain a schedule that allows players to negotiate certain benefits with their team," the WHL wrote in its filing. "When players are under the age of majority... the player's parents must sign the SPA as well. Travis and Kyle were represented by agents and were able to obtain legal advice before signing their SPAs. There was no imbalance in bargaining power."

Rather, the WHL said its teams' coaching staffs and trainers offered guidance to players regarding nutrition, hockey training, and their studies.

TSN.CA LOADED: 09.17.2019

1153199 Websites

TSN.CA / Neuvirth injury clouds Leafs backup goaltending picture

Kristen Shilton

St. John's, N.L. – Michal Neuvirth's bid to win the Maple Leafs' backup goalie spot took a hit over the weekend when he suffered an undisclosed injury during training camp activities.

"He wasn't feeling good body-wise [on Sunday], and we kept him off today," head coach Mike Babcock said after the Leafs' practices at Mile One Centre on Monday. "Obviously

it's not ideal for him. If he wants to battle for a job, he's got to be in a position to do that. But he's also got to be healthy."

Neuvirth wasn't part of either group practice on Monday, but did go out afterwards for some individual work with the Leafs' training staff. The 31-year-old is at Leafs' camp on a professional tryout, and was projected to be in the mix with Michael Hutchinson for the spot behind starter Frederik Andersen.

Babcock didn't have an updated timeline on when Neuvirth might be ready to return, so the Leafs have retained Brandon Halverson, also playing on a PTO, for the time being.

Neuvirth has a long history of injuries, most recently battling a lower-body injury that limited him to just seven games for the Philadelphia Flyers in 2018-19. His numbers were abysmal when he did play, finishing the shortened campaign with a 1-4-1 record with a .859 save percentage and a 4.27 goals-against average.

Despite his struggles, Neuvirth told the Czech Republic news outlet ISport in late July that he'd been talking to a few teams and had settled on a tryout with the Leafs.

Around the same time, Toronto announced its trade of last season's primary backup Garret Sparks to the Vegas Golden Knights, leaving Neuvirth to challenge Hutchinson for the backup role.

Hutchinson is still relatively new to the Leafs, traded to the team from Florida in December last year. He suited up in five games for Toronto right after while both Andersen and Sparks were injured, posting a 2-3-0 record with a .914 save percentage and 2.64 goals-against average.

After spending the end of the regular season with the American Hockey League's Toronto Marlies, and amassing a 14-7-1 record with .910 save percentage and 2.70 goals-against average, Hutchinson backed up in several games for Andersen during the Leafs' first-round playoff series against Boston.

"[He's] big, a good man. Likes hockey. Good, good person," Babcock said of Hutchinson. "Doesn't get in the way. Makes his teammates better. Good guy."

Whether he's the right guy for the Leafs remains to be seen, but with Neuvirth's status up in the air, Hutchinson could have the advantage in helping Andersen manage his workload this year.

Toronto's starter has played 60 or more games in each of the past three seasons, but looking ahead, Andersen told The Athletic in an interview on Sunday that somewhere in the mid-50s would be an ideal number of starts.

"That could be the number," Andersen confirmed on Monday. "I don't want to guarantee anything, or lock us into anything. But if everything goes well and we're able to play well, we could try and go a little bit lower than we have before."

Babcock's objective through the rest of camp will be determining the best backup to maximize Andersen's rest, without sacrificing wins.

"That's the great thing about managing his workload," Babcock said. "Number one, you've got to be in a spot to manage it – in other words you have to be in a good spot in the standings. Number two, the guy you go to has to be able



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to play, and have a chance to win. That's what we're looking for. We thought Hutch did a good job for us last year. He's here [again], and we brought in other guys for the same opportunity and we're going to watch and see what happens."

TSN.CA LOADED: 09.17.2019

1153200 Websites

TSN.CA / Marner confirms he received multiple offer sheets

Kristen Shilton

St. John's, N.L. – Mitch Marner has confirmed what his agent, Darren Ferris, told TSN1050's First Up on Monday, saying he received multiple offer sheets from other teams during his restricted free agent negotiations with the Maple Leafs this summer but wasn't interested in pursuing them.

"The whole goal of this was to be a Maple Leaf, so [the offer sheets weren't] in our head too much," Marner said on Monday from Leafs' training camp at Mile One Centre. "As soon as Darren mentioned [them], I told him right away I don't want to explore that option. But I didn't want to miss training camp, I didn't want to miss any games this season, so that's why I really forced the issue with [Leafs' general manager Kyle Dubas] to get something done and get me here. I'm happy it happened."

In revealing some inner workings of the negotiations with Toronto, Ferris said Marner's commitment to the team never wavered.

"He told me, 'Darren, I don't want to sign [the offer sheets], I want to be a Leaf,'" Ferris told First Up. "So we declined both of those opportunities and I know Kyle [Dubas] was aware of one them, the team had actually told him that they had made the overture to Mitch and there was a very strong likelihood there were more that would be presented once the season started. As you know, the cap number gets set and makes it more difficult for a team to match."

Marner demurred when asked about specific figures on the offer sheets, admitting, "I didn't really want them, so I didn't ask too many details about it." But regardless of the numbers, receiving outside interest didn't give Marner any extra validation.

"It was nice hearing other teams valued me, but I knew this team valued me too," Marner said. "In our four years being here, I knew how much faith they have in me. And that's another reason why I wanted to come back, to show them they made the right decision and I made the right decision staying here."

It was Marner's meeting with Dubas last Thursday that ultimately pushed talks over the finish line, culminating in the six-year, \$65.36 million contract Marner signed Friday night. The closer Marner came to missing time on the ice, the more he felt that dealing with Dubas directly was their best path towards a solution.

"I thought it was good it brought us face-to-face and expressed both of our feelings," Marner said. "The whole

waiting part and seeing what was going to happen, that's the part where you're sitting at home and you keep hearing the discussions between the two [sides], and I think that's why Kyle and I met – just to clear the air and make sure we're talking to each other and figuring it out."

Since the middle of last season, Marner had been steadfast in not wanting to know much about what transpired between Ferris and Dubas, hoping only to be informed about a deal when it was close. Marner says now that proved mostly impossible, and made the process more stressful than he anticipated.

"It's hard. I live there. You aren't getting away no matter who you talk to, family or friends," he said. "It's always in the back of your mind, but you just try to get away, down to the lake or out of the city a little bit and clear my head through that."

Now that Ferris has had his say publicly on the negotiation, Marner hopes attention turns to what he and the Leafs do on the ice.

"Since day one, I've been super happy being here, it's been great," Marner said. "And now I'm happy we got that deal done and we can get to work now. This team is together for a while now, so we have to make sure we make [these years] work."

TSN.CA LOADED: 09.17.2019

1153201 Websites

TSN.CA / Maple Leafs paid Marner because he makes others better

Travis Yost

What does the word playmaker mean to you?

It's not a trick question. I suppose if you ask 10 people, you will get 10 different answers. But broadly speaking, I've always classified it as an individual who is responsible for the initiation of offensive sequences.

In hockey terms, the league's most iconic playmakers – think Pittsburgh's Sidney Crosby, as one example – tend to have world-class vision and passing abilities in the offensive zone. They create lanes, break down the structure of opposition defences and open up scoring opportunities for themselves and their teammates.

That brings us to Mitch Marner, who signed a huge deal with the Toronto Maple Leafs on Friday afternoon. His six-year, \$65-million contract made him the second-highest paid winger in the league behind Artemi Panarin of the New York Rangers. With the hefty price tag come incredibly high expectations, and Toronto – considering their salary cap situation – will need him to continue his rise to stardom.

There is already plenty of debate as to whether or not Marner can meet the expectations of his contract. Wingers often get squeezed on contracts, relative to their centre counterparts, unless they are phenomenal goal scorers. But in Marner's first three years of his NHL career, he's



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averaged 0.94 goals per 60 minutes across all situations – 114th in the league amongst qualified forwards, trailing players like Jordan Eberle, Kevin Hayes, Brock Nelson, and even the recently departed Patrick Marleau.

But Marner is a bit of an oddball, and I mean that in the most complimentary way possible. He hasn't manifested into a high-end goal scorer quite yet, but he has dominated the assist category like few others. His primary assist rate (1.45 per-60 minutes) over the same interval is fifth in the entire league, and the names ahead of him – Connor McDavid, Blake Wheeler, Steven Stamkos and Nikita Kucherov – are of the superstar variety.

It's an important point, because the biggest argument in favour of signing Marner to such an expensive deal is that he elevates the goal-scoring abilities of his teammates. One of the most fascinating data points on this front is how his teammates tend to see big shooting percentage spikes when playing on lines with Marner – the reasonable inference being that Marner continuously opens up premium shooting lanes for his teammates through spacing and passing.

Consider the eight forwards who have played at least 100 minutes with Marner at 5-on-5 over the last three seasons. Below, you can see each player's shooting percentage with Marner, and each player's shooting percentage without Marner:

The majority of Marner's teammates – notably Tavares, his most common linemate during the 2018-19 regular season – saw substantial shooting percentage boosts playing with Marner. At aggregate, the group was about two percentage points better when skating with Marner. That's not insignificant, and it's one of the reasons Marner has carried lofty assist totals throughout his career. That's true whether you are looking at just primary assists or total assists in the given period.

Living up to the expectations of such a lucrative contract would be a challenge for anyone, let alone a winger who doesn't regularly fill up the goal column. But Marner's playmaking abilities are hugely valuable to the Maple Leafs organization, and it's one of the biggest reasons the team was ready to commit to him with such significant money and term.

It will create cap challenges, undoubtedly. No team will have more pressure to regularly deliver productive depth forwards and defencemen than the Maple Leafs, who simply will not be able to afford to spend at the margins for the next few years.

But with their core group in place, Toronto is going to remain a force for a considerable amount of time. And Marner will play a big role in determining just how successful this franchise will be for the foreseeable future.

TSN.CA LOADED: 09.17.2019