



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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THE NEWS & OBSERVER

Want to watch the Canes' preseason games? Here's how

By Chip Alexander

Carolina Hurricanes fans will be able to watch five of the Canes' six preseason exhibition games.

Four of the broadcasts will be video streamed on the Hurricanes web site (CarolinaHurricanes.com) and the Fox Sports GO app. The fifth will be the Sept. 25 game at Nashville, which will be shown by Fox Sports Carolinas.

The games that will be streamed are: the Tuesday, Sept. 17 game at Tampa Bay (7 pm); the Wednesday, Sept. 18 game against Tampa Bay at PNC Arena (7 pm); the Sept. 27 game against Nashville at PNC

Arena (7:30 pm), and the Sept. 29 game against Washington at PNC Arena (1:30 pm).

Coverage of the Canes-Caps game on Saturday in Washington (7 pm) will be an audio feed on WRALSportsFan.com, which will have the audio feeds from all six games.

John Forslund will handle the play-by-play and Tripp Tracy the analysis for the video streaming and audio feeds. Mike Maniscalco will join Forslund and Tracy as the rinkside reporter for the Sept. 25 game on Fox Sports Carolinas.

Canes sign defenseman Fredrik Claesson to one-year contract

By Chip Alexander

The Carolina Hurricanes added to their defensive depth Tuesday, signing defenseman Fredrik Claesson to a one-year, two-way contract for the 2019-20 season.

Claesson, 26, will be paid \$700,000 at the NHL level and \$100,000 at the AHL level. He received a \$200,000 guarantee.

"It took a long time into the summer and couple days into training camp, but now that I get to be here for this year feels really good," Claesson said Tuesday. "It's really good competition, too, so it will be fun."

Claesson, a native of Stockholm, Sweden, played 37 games with the New York Rangers last season, finishing with two goals and four assists. Listed at 6-1 and 196 pounds, he has 150 games of NHL experience with the Rangers and Ottawa Senators.

"You can't have enough good defenders," Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said Tuesday when asked about the signing. "Good experience there. Hard

worker. I like what he brings in that department. And he's tough to play against. He's that kind of player."

Claesson came to Canes camp on a professional tryout contract (PTO). With defenseman Trevor van Riemsdyk still recovering from shoulder surgery, the Canes looked to add to their depth and give coach Rod Brind'Amour another option on the blue line.

"You're talking to your agent the whole summer and he's telling you to be patient but then you just want something to be done," Claesson said. "It's tough. Family friends and members are asking, too, 'Where you going next year?' and you keep telling them the same thing, that you don't know. But I'm really happy to be here."

Claesson also has played 285 career AHL games. Before coming to North America, he played in the Swedish Hockey League games with Djurgardens IF.

Claesson won a gold medal with Sweden in the 2012 IIHF World Junior Championship. He was a fifth-round draft pick by Ottawa in 2011.



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Canes' youthful lineup makes good impression in 3-0 preseason win

By Chip Alexander

Jesper Sellgren is a small guy at a stacked position in the Carolina Hurricanes' training camp.

And, it appears, catching the eye of Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour and others at times.

Sellgren, 21, has done what so many came to camp to do -- make a favorable impression. The Swedish defenseman has made the most of his chances for a player whose only North American hockey experience is 11 playoff games last season in the American Hockey League.

"I like the way he thinks the game," Brind'Amour said Tuesday. "He's got that smooth, silky way he moves around. That's today's game. It's important."

A year ago, Sellgren was preparing for a season with Lulea HF in the Swedish Hockey League. On Tuesday, he appeared in his first game against NHL competition as the Canes faced the Tampa Bay Lightning in the first of six preseason exhibition games. That's coming a long way in a short time.

The Canes took a 3-0 victory as goalies James Reimer and Anton Forsberg split the time in net, stopping 15 shots. Lucas Wallmark, Max McCormick and Colin Markison supplied the goals -- McCormick scoring 30 seconds into the game and Wallmark and Markison getting third-period scores at Amalie Arena in Tampa, Fla.

It was a game in which Brind'Amour filled the lineup with several young guys like Sellgren for a better evaluation. That will change Wednesday when the Canes and Lightning play again at PNC Arena, the lineups having a more veteran look and Brind'Amour noting, "I want to see the same effort."

Sellgren had 19:40 in ice time and was active defensively, making smart plays. He was used on the power play and the penalty kill. He had four shots, picking his spots. During the second period, he found himself battling Tampa Bay's Steven Stamkos in front of the net, standing his ground against one of the league's best forwards, who did not have a shot on net in the game.

After Tuesday's morning skate at PNC Arena, Sellgren tried to downplay the game as best he could.

"I don't want to make too big a deal out of it," Sellgren said in an N&O interview. "I just want to go out there, play some hockey and have some fun, to really show myself to the coaches and for everyone around."

It could have been even more memorable. The Lightning's Victor Hedman could have been on the

ice. But the Norris Trophy winner in 2018 as the league's best defenseman did not dress for the game.

"He's a really big name back home and just a great example to look up to and try and follow in his footsteps," Sellgren said.

By "home," Sellgren meant their hometown -- Ornskoldsvik. A city of 33,000 north of Stockholm, it has produced such NHL stars as Peter Forsberg, Markus Naslund, Hedman and the Sedin brothers, Henrik and Daniel.

"Must be something in the water," Sellgren said, smiling. "We have a great hockey culture there."

At 5-11 and 169 pounds, Sellgren is seven inches shorter and 54 pounds lighter than the imposing Hedman. He's also the smallest of the 15 defensemen in Canes' camp -- his defensive partner Tuesday, Kyle Wood, is 6-7 and 235.

The Canes' European scouts liked what they saw of Sellgren, a mobile type with strong puck-handling skills and a good head for the game. Carolina was able to get him in the sixth round of the 2018 NHL Draft, the 166th player picked.

After watching his solid play for Lulea last season, in the regular season and then the SHL playoffs, the Canes contacted him and asked that he join the Charlotte Checkers, their AHL affiliate, on a professional tryout. He didn't hesitate.

"It was an easy decision to come over and play more hockey," he said. "It was one and a half more months, definitely more hockey,"

Talk about timing. Sellgren soon was thrust into the Calder Cup playoffs, getting in 11 games in the Checkers' championship run. In the midst of that, he signed a three-year entry level contract with the Hurricanes.

"We had such a good team and it was so much fun to come and play," Sellgren said.

Sellgren competed for the Canes in the Nashville Prospects Showcase this month, then took the next step by earning an invite to team's NHL training camp.

"I didn't have too much expectations," he said of camp. "I didn't want to have too much expectations. Just come here, do the best I can, show my skills and what I can contribute to the team. I want to go with the flow."

It's possible Sellgren could spend this season in Charlotte with the Checkers. He could head back to Lulea for another season in the SHL. But he's done what he can to be noticed.



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THE ATHLETIC

The Gifted: Breaking down Hurricanes prospect Martin Necas' stylish pass-first game

By Scott Wheeler

When beginning each installment in “The Gifted” I try to ask myself one question: Is the skill that I’ve identified as being the skill that the prospect has built his game around one that can propel a standout NHL player?

If the answer is yes, is the prospect proficient enough in that skill to be one of the rare case studies in single-skill dominance? If no, has the prospect built the rest of his game around that skill in order to find success in a unique way?

Sometimes, the answer to the first question is simply no. World-class speed is no longer enough to make an NHL player. Otherwise, players like Michael McLeod would have figured it out. If an elite shot were enough, players like Owen Tippett would progress more seamlessly than they do. Unbelievable puck skill doesn’t automatically equate to NHL offence either. If it did, Vitalii Abramov would have figured it out by now.

But sometimes, the answer is yes. Adam Boqvist’s ability to score from the blueline will make him a very good NHL defenceman, because it will open up the rest of the game for him, even if he lacks defensive skills that you might otherwise think are necessary for a top-of-the-lineup player. Adam Fox’s power play ability is so advanced that even if he didn’t have some other key skills, it would make him a valuable piece to just about any team.

Sometimes, it goes the other way and a player has built a game around one of their weakest — instead of their strongest — skills but the result is the same: a prospect so unique that he defies the expectation of what a player with that skill proficiency (or in this case deficiency) might become. Think of the way defenceman Evan Bouchard and centre Dylan Strome have crafted star-level packages despite lacking the skating you’d want out of a top-10 pick at either position.

And other times, a player is unique by virtue of the way their skills work together. This year, I examined how Cale Makar layered his skills to become unlike any other prospect in hockey or how Aleksii Heponiemi dominates everywhere he goes despite being historically light.

Here, I’ll detail how I navigated the complex game of Hurricanes prospect Martin Necas to come to the conclusion that his game is somewhere in between single-skill dominance and fatal-flaw adaptability.

With Necas, my hypothesis stems from the following question:

Can a forward become a star with a pass-only mentality?

The answer must be yes (or close to it) because Henrik Sedin and Joe Thornton both made careers out of executing passes even when everyone on the ice knew they were coming.

But pinpoint passing isn’t all that Sedin and Thornton did. Thornton played at a near-40 goal pace in several of his NHL seasons and made himself a threat to score with his size and control. And we never really found out if Sedin could shoot it, partly because half of his shots were intended to create rebounds for his brother, who could find them better than anyone else. Sedin rarely shot with the intention of scoring.

In order to understand what makes Martin Necas one of the top prospects in hockey, you have to understand the role his approach has played in elevating the rest of his game.

Note: The following clips are from a review of all of Necas’ 18 playoff games with the Charlotte Checkers last season. Necas wears No. 88.

First, let’s talk about that pass-first mentality I hinted at because the numbers don’t tell the full story.

Last season, as an AHL rookie, Necas finished the year with 65 points (21 goals and 44 assists) in 82 combined regular season and playoff games. From the outside looking in, while those numbers clearly indicate that he’s more of a playmaker than a scorer, 21 goals as a rookie isn’t too shabby (his 16 regular season goals was seventh on the team) and his 115 shots on goal finished fifth among all Checkers in the regular season, while his 40 playoff shots finished second.

On that basis, I wouldn’t blame you for questioning why I call him a pass-first player.

His 21 goals also came on 13.5 percent shooting, which suggests he’s actually a pretty proficient finisher.



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But Necas generates shots because he has the puck all the time and he scores occasionally because he's selective about when he shoots and he plays on his off-wing on the power play which makes him a shot option by default (nine of Necas' 21 goals came with the man advantage, or into an empty net).

If you watch Necas for long enough, you quickly learn that scoring isn't the first, second or even third thought that enters his mind when he has the puck on his stick.

Necas tends to shoot only when it's the clear choice.

This sequence is a perfect example of that. I'll let you watch it, before I dive into why:

Nice shot, right? Sure, but what happened before that shot? Two things:

1. Necas tried a hard pass to the back post for a redirect.
2. Necas pointed with his stick to the point right before he was passed the puck, telling his teammate to pass high instead of to him — and then literally laughed when he got the puck and scored because he didn't want it. When his teammate looks off Necas directing him to the point and gives it to him anyway, Necas knows he must be wide open and lets it rip.

That's true on this sequence too. Watch how Necas' head doesn't even look at the net when he gets the puck on the right wing:

Necas' head is up the whole way and he tries to feather the original pass through traffic to a teammate by waiting for the seam to open. It's only after the Bears do a nice job and deflect his pass that his mentality changes and he's thinking shot when the puck gets back to him.

In almost every scenario when Necas has the puck, he's thinking one thing: pass.

And his entire skill set has been built around that approach to the game.

There are three layers:

1. The actual skill as a passer to regularly hit seams and place the puck in his teammates' sweet spots.
2. The bursts of speed that all good give-and-go players need.
3. The puck-handling skills needed to draw attention and hang onto it, thus giving others the opportunity to get open, when the quick give-and-go plays aren't there.

Necas has mastered all of these things.

Watch below the way Necas accelerates after giving the puck in the neutral zone so that he can get back open to get it back:

There, Necas is playing catch with himself and his teammates are merely the conduit. It's about quick passes and the little accelerations needed to remain involved. He passes, he hits a hole, he gets the puck back, he passes again (this time high to the point). Even though it may look like Necas didn't directly contribute to the goal that was scored moments later, he gets an assist on the play and it's deserved because he started the play as a passer (twice).

And watch the way that approach created an empty net goal against the Wolves below. Here, there are a lot of players who get that puck high in the zone and their goal is to try to beat the defender 1-on-1 so that they can score. Necas scores, but that wasn't his goal. His goal was to make the right play as a passer (which he does). The goal is the byproduct of that initial pass and ... you guessed it ... the burst of speed.

It's not as though Necas is a high-end top speed guy, either. He's not the type to burn a defender wide. The strength of his skating isn't that he's fast, it's that he's quick.

Here, after entering the zone with speed, Necas could try to drive the middle or shoot from the high slot. Instead, he's thinking pass, makes the lateral play to his teammate, takes a shot that's given to him (key word: given), and collects another assist from a sequence that didn't necessarily end with him but began with a decision not to shoot:

Notice the attention his skating draws, thus benefiting his passing. Here's a still of what that looks like:

That's three (!) guys in maroon converging on him, opening up space for the guys in white and red:

When you put all of these skills together, it can create an electric, dominant player who doesn't need to threaten as a shooter to create goals.

Watch the way he gives and goes (again) to burst into the zone at the start of this sequence, stops up with those puck skills, executes a high-end pass to a teammate for a Grade A scoring chance, uses his speed to get the puck back when it doesn't go in, and makes a second pass to set up a goal in front.

Not once during the above play does Necas look shot but he's the lone reason the goal is scored anyway.

Despite the fact that the second pass is the play that leads to the goal, it's the first cross-ice pass that highlights Necas' skill level as a playmaker.



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On the following play, watch Necas' line of sight (a lot like on a couple of the plays above) and you'll notice that he's not hiding the fact that he's looking pass.

There, once again, he never really looks at the net for the shot. The opposing defenders know he's looking pass, they know he's looking cross-ice, and he still manages to place the puck through them for the scoring chance, which goes off the post but ultimately leads to a goal and another assist for Necas.

Perhaps no play from the Checkers' playoff run best exemplifies Necas' talent as a pass-first player than the secondary assist below, though.

At first glance, it appears unspectacular (especially side-by-side some of the highlight reel plays I've touched on above).

But watch Necas' line of sight before he makes his short pass down low:

There, Necas is playing the entire play one step ahead. When he makes his otherwise unremarkable short pass down low, he's doing it while looking at the backdoor option (and waiting for him to get into scoring position), knowing that if he times his pass down low with the shot option at the far post that his pass is just the first step to a wide-open chance. The Checkers score on that wide open chance because Necas sees it before it's there:

None of this is to say that Necas doesn't have other elements of his game that make him dangerous, beyond his passing or the way his skating works to complement his passing.

He does. I touched on that puck skill off the top. That skill created this goal:

But it's his skating and his execution of a tough pass that creates this goal:

And it's definitely his passing that creates this one:

To understand Necas, we must understand that.

Because while Necas will chip in with the occasional goal, it's everything else that makes him special.

Those skills contribute to this brilliant 30-second sequence, which features, in order:

1. A Necas entry with speed.
2. A Necas pass when he draws the defenders.
3. A Necas burst through the hole as soon as that pass is made to complete the give-and-go with a chance in front.
4. A Necas burst up the wall with the puck, with a display of his handling ability to stop up, curl, and leave the pass a teammate after drawing attention.
5. A Necas burst of speed back down the wall and a cut to set up ...
6. A Necas cross-ice pass.

You get the idea.

Is Necas ever going to be a dominant scorer? Nope. Will that hold him back like it sometimes holds other pass-first players back (Jeremy Bracco comes to mind)? Nope.

You don't have to want to be a scorer if you can find other ways to contribute to a lot of scoring. And while that's easier said than done, Necas has it figured out.

Breaking down the 50-car pileup that is the Hurricanes' blue line

By Sara Civian

Head coach Rod Brind'Amour has been knowingly curt about the 50-car pile up on the Hurricanes' blue line through the first week of training camp.

"Can never have too many good defensemen," he said Tuesday, after Carolina signed camp invite Fredrik Claesson to a one-year, two-way deal.

He'd said the same exact thing two days ago about his group before that deal.

Claesson, 26, has logged 150 NHL games between the Senators and the Rangers, and put up six points (two goals, four assists) in 37 games with the Rangers last season. That he'd been available for the Canes to sign to a PTO in the first place was a bit surprising, then he fit right in at camp, so what's one more defenseman to GM Don Waddell (who was — you guessed it — a defenseman).

"I want to play the best (defensemen)," Brind'Amour said on the first day of camp at PNC Arena. "It's a pretty good group, obviously, then we added to it to make it even better. If you want to fast forward to the start of the season, I'm looking to see who plays well with who, what the best pairs are. Got a lot of options there. On paper, it's easy to say 'this guy' or 'that guy', but it doesn't always work out that way."

Even if Justin Faulk isn't the odd man out, it's more likely than not that the Hurricanes will still end up trading a defenseman for help up front in the next few months. The NHL-caliber talent with waiver eligibility will defer to the NHL-caliber talent without waiver eligibility, but that doesn't mean those players will be stewing in the AHL. Any of them could be involved in deals that will bolster the forward group.

Something absolutely has to give. But for now, the Hurricanes are indulging in the luxury.



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You can pencil six defensemen into the regular Hurricanes lineup: Jaccob Slavin, Dougie Hamilton, Brett Pesce, Jake Gardiner, Trevor van Riemsdyk and Faulk if he's still around.

What if Faulk gets traded, van Riemsdyk's recovery takes more time and/or the Canes want to carry more defensemen to give promising players a chance?

Meet the contenders:

Haydn Fleury

Vitals: Left-shot, 23-year-old defenseman. 6-foot-3, 208 pounds. Hurricanes seventh overall draft pick in 2014.

Fleury is the most likely next man up, as he can no longer pass through waivers, he's been a victim of the logjam the longest, he's familiar with the systems and he has the most experience in a Hurricanes jersey. Brind'Amour is amused that he's changing his demeanor and frankly he's looked great at camp.

Season projection: Actual minutes on the third pairing, for real this time

It's a mutual understanding with the organization and Fleury that this is pretty much it. I felt for him last season — he'd play just enough to garner expectations but not nearly enough to actually get a feel for what his role should be. He'd told me once he just always kept a suitcase packed, and the "will-they-won't-they" thing hurts most for the subject.

What needs work: Circumstances aside, it's tough to ignore that the Hurricanes took Fleury seventh overall five years ago and he still has not made any sort of impact in the NHL. That's the kind of thing that will make Canes owner Tom Dundon promise to never take a defenseman in the first round ever again.

But ...

Instead of just accepting how things have gone, Fleury is trying to adapt to what the Canes need right now — a snarly Calvin de Haan replacement. He's fine with penalty kill shifts, he threw his body around considerably more than usual during the Calder Cup run and clearly he's in the right headspace.

Usually, when you ask someone how they're approaching the upcoming season, they respond with an equally cliché answer or just say same as always. Fleury is on a mission to be different. This is his chance to get real NHL minutes, and I think he just might change Dundon's mind.

Why you'll like him: You know him by now, but this is the prospect feature format I like and we're sticking with it. And guess what, y'all, he has the best dog (on the left).

He also calls himself a "happy-go-lucky kid," and it's honestly tough not to root for someone who has to actively try to smile less.

Gustav Forsling

Vitals: Left-shot, 23-year-old defenseman (there's dozens of us!). 6-foot-nothing, 186 pounds. Acquired in the post-draft de Haan trade.

This is a tough one, a random return in a random trade. His stats are not great, but he can play in the NHL. He needs to prove that he isn't just a "can play in the NHL" sort of person on a roster trying to contend for a Cup. The Canes obviously traded for him needing to get rid of one contract and assuming another defenseman was on the move, but here we are.

Season projection: Claimed off waivers by the Oilers or something, but I'm being so rude that I think he might actually make an impact.

Why you'll like him: You'll feel guilty because you keep mixing up the eerily similar names involved in the return for de Haan. Anton Forsberg? Gustav Forsling? John Forslund? Or is that just me?

Real talk, I'm sure he's lovely, and I'm sure he hates being an afterthought. But I'm struggling hard to find a reason for him to be on the roster when there are high upsides to explore.

Jake Bean

Vitals: Left-shot, 21-year-old defenseman. 6-foot-1, 186 pounds. Hurricanes drafted him 13th overall in 2016.

What needs work: Speaking of high upsides, Bean is one of those people that could have a power play "office," if only he can improve in literally every other aspect of his game. If Fleury is who turned Dundon off to first-round defensemen, Bean made him double down when I gave him a chance to take it back. Bean does look a little harder on the puck at camp, though, and former Checkers head coach Mike Vellucci had an impact on his two-way game. It's tough to get past the play away from the puck when someone like Brind'Amour is the coach, though.

Why you'll like him: Super nice person, but he has resting Jerk face. Dedication to the theme.

He also had one of my favorite quotes of the season when I asked him what it is about the Checkers that would end up winning a championship.

"I don't know, it's weird. We just win every game. I think there's something about us, when it comes down to it in the third period and we need a goal, we have guys stepping up for us up and down the lineup. I think the best teams in the NHL are the teams that can play when they're down a goal or



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when they're up a goal. To have that experience at this level is only going to help."

Darkhorse potential: Fredrik Claesson, Chase Priskie, Jesper Sellgren

It bites that Priskie got hurt at camp and is now week-to-week, and it equally bites that the logjam is so

severe that Sellgren is buried. Both have legitimate NHL potential.

That could mean a trade for a more urgent Canes need down the road. It probably will.



Preseason Preview: Hurricanes at Lightning

Canes open six-game preseason slate in Tampa

by Michael Smith

It's not quite October yet, but Carolina Hurricanes hockey is back.

The Hurricanes open their six-game preseason schedule with a home-and-home, back-to-back set against the Tampa Bay Lightning that begins on Tuesday night in Tampa.

"It's fun to start playing games now," Lucas Wallmark said. "We've been waiting for a couple weeks to just play some games. It's just going to be fun to play a game, see where we are and get back into it."

After four mornings of on-ice work in training camp, the Canes - both the players and the coaches - are ready to drop the puck. Even if it's exhibition action, it's impossible to simulate game action in a training camp practice.

"There's a lot of work still to be done ... but guys want to play," head coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "That's where they know they're getting judged. They want as many cracks at it as they can get."

The Canes will send a rather inexperienced crew to Tampa. The trio of Jordan Martinook, Wallmark and Brock McGinn - perhaps the team's fourth line come Opening Night - headlines the group of forwards.

"I'm just going to try to play my game out there," Wallmark said. "I want to build on last year and take another step."

"This is a way to get their feet wet," Brind'Amour said. "There are definitely certain guys we're looking at. We'll give them an opportunity and see what happens."

The forward line of Janne Kuokkanen, Eetu Luostarinen and Julien Gauthier is an intriguing trio, one that could perhaps be a dangerous weapon in Charlotte, unless one cracks the Canes' roster out of camp.

"We need to put them in situations and see how they perform," Brind'Amour said. "Go earn it. That's the message. They need to get out there."

James Reimer will make his first appearance for the Hurricanes in net. Anton Forsberg will serve as the back-up and may seem some time in the crease, as well.

"The plan right now is probably to split them, but we'll see," Brind'Amour said.

Hurricanes Lineup

Martinook-Wallmark-McGinn
Pritchard-Geekie-Markison
Kuokkanen-Luostarinen-Gauthier
McCormick-Suzuki-Gibbons

Fleury-McKeown
Bean-Pesce
Sellgren-Wood

Reimer
Forsberg



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Preseason Recap: Canes Blank Lightning

Reimer, Forsberg combine for 15-save shutout

by Michael Smith

TAMPA - The Carolina Hurricanes opened their six-game preseason schedule with a 3-0 win over the Tampa Bay Lightning on Tuesday in Tampa.

Max McCormick, Lucas Wallmark and Colin Markison tallied for the Hurricanes, while James Reimer and Anton Forsberg combined for the 15-save shutout.

Here are five takeaways from the preseason opener.

1. The Process

The preseason, like training camp, is all about the process, the process of coming together as a team and establishing an identity in time for the 82-game marathon of the regular season.

Last season, under first-year head coach Rod Brind'Amour, the Hurricanes were known to be a hard-working bunch. That identity did not fade in this first game of the preseason.

"I've got to be honest with you, that's one of the better preseason games I've been a part of," Brind'Amour said. "Guys were committed. They did a nice job, top to bottom. It was tough to find a guy you would say didn't contribute. That's pretty good."

Despite icing a rather inexperienced lineup, the Hurricanes were far and away the better team, due in large part to their stout work ethic.

"You can be in every game if you play hard away from the puck. If you eliminate their scoring chances, you've got a chance every night. That's what happened tonight," Brind'Amour said. "It's a preseason game and it counts for nothing, but the process of how we want is what's important."

Wins and losses are ultimately irrelevant in the preseason, but a victory is certainly better the alternative, no matter the time of year.

"It doesn't matter if it's preseason, Game 7, the regular season or if you're just playing shinny, you want to win. It feels good to win," James Reimer said. "You want to shake the rust off, too, and be ready when it matters."

2. Reimer Starts Strong

James Reimer faced just eight shots in nearly 33 minutes of game action, but when tested, the newest Hurricanes' netminder was sharp.

"A lot of rust on there from the summer. You want to come out there, work hard, work on your game and be good," he said. "You want to start getting into that rhythm, seeing the puck, reading plays and talking.

It's always nice when you don't let any in. The guys played great."

The lack of work for Reimer is a testament to the Canes' worth ethic, especially away from the puck in limiting opportunities for a Tampa Bay lineup that included Steven Stamkos.

"You don't mind seeing only a few shots if they're not grade A opportunities. We handled them pretty well," Reimer said. "I thought the guys worked incredibly hard. They were dialed in, battling, skating and hustling."

3. Forsberg Finishes It Off

Anton Forsberg relieved Reimer in net just past the midway point of the second period, and though he entered the game cold, he turned away all seven shots he faced (all at even-strength) to complete the team's shutout.

"When we had our breakdowns, they were there. That's what you need in goalies," Brind'Amour said. "Both of them played really well."

"Both of them had a great game," Wallmark said. "It's not easy when you don't have so many shots on you, but they both looked good."

4. McCormick Nets the First

It didn't take long for a pair of new faces to make an impact in the preseason for the Hurricanes.

Max McCormick crashed the net to deposit a rebound off a Brian Gibbons shot just 79 seconds into the game. Either of those players figures to be high in the mix of forwards competing to be just outside of the top 12 on the depth chart.

"They were buzzing. That's what they're known to do," Brind'Amour said. "You could tell they brought a little energy for us, and it was nice they contributed."

5. Tic Tac Power-Play Goal

In preseason game No. 1, the Canes' top forward line consisted of Jordan Martinook, Wallmark and Brock McGinn, a trio that was also prominently featured on the power play.

On a third period man advantage, the Canes moved the puck up the ice with speed. Martinook fed McGinn, who drove the middle of the ice. As he attracted a pair of defenders, McGinn laid the puck off for Wallmark, who scored on a quick snap shot.

"We had a good breakout. We created a good opportunity, and it was nice to score," Wallmark said. "Our line had some good chances during the game. It was a fun goal."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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"What liked about that was we said, 'They're going to pressure us. Let's move it up quick.' We did. We caught an odd-man rush, and we scored," Brind'Amour said. "It's about the process. The guys made some adjustments and played hard. I liked it."

Up Next

The Lightning and Hurricanes will square off again back in Raleigh on Wednesday night.

"We can build a lot on this. We are trying to build on last year and take another step," Wallmark said. "This game showed that we're going in the right direction right away."

"I want to see the same effort. That's the key. It's about the process and how to play," Brind'Amour said. "Now, you're not so concerned with the end result, but it's about how you get to it is what we're all about."



Reimer, Forsberg lead Hurricanes in pre-season shutout of Lightning

James Reimer and Anton Forsberg combined for a shutout as the Carolina Hurricanes beat the Tampa Bay Lightning 3-0 in an NHL preseason game in Tampa, Florida, on Tuesday night.

Reimer and Forsberg each played half the game for the Hurricanes, who reached the Eastern Conference final last spring after missing the playoffs for nine straight years. Reimer started and made eight saves before being replaced by Forsberg, who had seven saves.

Max McCormick, Lucas Wallmark and Colin Markison scored for Carolina.

Scott Wedgewood played the entire game in goal for the Lightning and had 34 saves.

BLUE JACKETS ROLL PAST SABRES

In Columbus, Ohio, Emil Bemstrom had a goal and an assist to lift the Blue Jackets to a 4-1 win over the Buffalo Sabres.

Kole Sherwood, Sonny Milano and Zac Dalpe also scored for the Blue Jackets. Sherwood's goal, with 4:12 left in the second was the game-winner.

Joonas Korpisalo started in goal for Columbus, and stopped all 12 shots he faced before being replaced by Matiss Kivlenieks, who made 16 saves and was credited with the win.

Jake McCabe scored Buffalo's lone goal. Sabres starter Linus Korpisalo made 18 saves in his half of the game, while Andrew Hammond took the loss after allowing two goals on 13 shots.

ISLANDERS STUN FLYERS IN OT

In Uniondale, New York, Mason Jobst scored with 53 seconds left in overtime to help the Islanders rally for a 3-2 victory over the Philadelphia Flyers.

Derick Brassard and Jordan Eberle also scored for the Islanders. Eberle's goal with 1:34 left in regulation tied the score 2-2.

Jared Coreau made 10 saves in the second, third and overtime periods to get the win. Coreau replaced starter Thomas Greiss, who started the game and made 14 saves.

Michael Raffl and Chris Bigras scored for Philadelphia.

Carter Hart started the game for the Flyers, and made 14 saves before giving way to J.F. Berube midway through the game. Berube allowed three goals on 23 shots against his former team.

SCHERWEY LEADS SENATORS PAST MAPLE LEAFS

In St. John's, Newfoundland, Tristan Scherwey had a goal and an assist to help the Ottawa Senators beat the Toronto Maple Leafs 3-1.

Scherwey, a training-camp invitee who has spent the last 10 seasons playing for SC Bern in Switzerland, jumped on a loose puck on a Toronto power play and fired it past Kasimir Kaskisuo to give Ottawa a 2-1 lead at 9:45 of the third period.

Max Lajoie and Anthony Duclair also scored for the Senators. Anders Nilsson stopped all 13 shots he faced through the first two periods for Ottawa. Marcus Hogburg had 11 saves in the third.

Kasperii Kapanen scored the lone goal for the Maple Leafs to tie the game early in the third. Mitch Marner,



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who had missed the opening of training camp before signing a six-year, \$65.358 million deal last Friday, had an assist on the play.

Frederik Andersen started in goal for Toronto and stopped 12 shots through the first 40 minutes, before Kaskisuo allowed two goals on five shots in the third.

RASMUSSEN HELPS RED WINGS BEAT BLACKHAWKS

In Detroit, Michael Rasmussen's tiebreaking goal with 4:37 left pushed the Red Wings to a 5-3 win over the Chicago Blackhawks.

Matt Puempel, Matthew Ford, Chris Terry and Luke Glendening also scored for Detroit.

Jimmy Howard and Calvin Pickard each played half the game in goal for the Red Wings. Howard started and stopped seven of eight shots, while Pickard made 15 saves.

Dominik Kubalik scored twice, and Philip Holm added a goal for the Blackhawks.

Robin Lehner and Kevin Lankinen each played half the game in goal for Chicago. Lehner started and allowed two goals on 17 shots before being replaced by Lankinen, who stopped 19 of 21 shots.

STARS BEAT WILD IN OT

In St. Paul, Minnesota, Justin Dowling's goal with 1:25 left in overtime lifted the Dallas Stars to a 2-1 win over the Wild.

Roope Hintz also scored for Dallas, which had Landon Bow and Colton Point split time in goal. Bow started and stopped 18 of 19 shots in the first two periods, while Point turned away all 13 shots he faced in the third period and overtime.

Ryan Hartman scored for the Wild, while Alex Stalock made 19 saves.

GOLDEN KNIGHTS SHUT OUT AVALANCHE

In Denver, Brandon Pirri scored twice and added an assist as the Vegas Golden Knights beat the Colorado Avalanche 5-0.

Valentin Zykov, Nicolas Hague and Nicolas Roy also scored for Vegas, which had nine players record at least one point. Pirri led the way, followed by Zykov (goal and an assist) and Tomas Nosek, who had two points each.

Garret Sparks stopped 23 shots for the Golden Knights.

Adam Werner and Hunter Miska split time in goal for the Avalanche. Werner started and made 11 saves on 13 shots before giving way to Miska, who stopped 13 of 16 shots he faced.

JONES SCORES IN 3RD PERIOD AS DUCKS TOP SHARKS

In San Jose, California, Max Jones' tiebreaking goal 6:43 into the third period lifted the Anaheim Ducks to a 4-3 win over the Sharks.

Devin Shore, Nicolas Deslauriers and Adam Henrique also scored for the Ducks.

Ryan Miller and Anthony Stolarz split time in goal for Anaheim. Miller started and allowed two goals on 11 shots in the opening half of the game. Stolarz was credited with the win after making 14 saves on 15 shots.

Timo Meier, Jonny Brodzinski and Joachim Blichfeld scored for the Sharks. Aaron Dell started in goal for San Jose and made 11 saves on 12 shots in the first half of the game. Dell was replaced by Josef Korenar, who was charged with the loss after allowing three goals on 13 shots.

SUTTER SCORES TWO TO LIFT CANUCKS PAST OILERS

In Vancouver, British Columbia, Brandon Sutter scored twice to help the Canucks beat the Edmonton Oilers 4-2.

Tanner Pearson and Elias Pettersson also scored for the Canucks. Thatcher Demko finished with 34 saves.

Patrick Russell and Tomas Jurco scored for Edmonton, and Cooper Marody had two assists. Shane Starrett had 21 saves for the Oilers, who played without stars Connor McDavid, Ryan Nugent-Hopkins and Leon Draisaitl.

COYOTES, KINGS SPLIT HOME-AND-HOME

In Los Angeles, Conor Garland had two goals and an assist to help the Arizona Coyotes beat the Los Angeles Kings 5-0 in one of two matchups between the teams' split squads.

Clayton Keller, Christian Dvorak and Jordan Gross scored for the Coyotes, which had seven players record a point. Garland and Dvorak finished with three points each, and Keller and Gross recorded two points apiece.

Arizona had Darcy Kuemper and Adin Hill split time in goal. Kuemper started and made 16 saves in the first two periods, and Hill stopped 10 in the third.

Jonathan Quick allowed three goals on 10 shots in the opening half of the game for Los Angeles, while Calvin Petersen gave up two goals on 15 shots.

In Glendale, Arizona, Akil Thomas had a goal and an assist to lift the Kings a 4-1 win.

Michael Anderson, Michael Amadio and Samuel Fagemo also scored for the Kings. Thomas, Amadio



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and Fagemo scored in an eight-minute span of the second period to turn a 1-1 game into a 4-1 lead.

Derek Stepan scored Arizona's lone goal.



Hurricanes ink Claesson to 1-year, 2-way deal

The Carolina Hurricanes have signed defenceman Fredrik Claesson to a one-year, two-way deal, the team announced Tuesday. The contract will be worth \$700,000 at the NHL level and \$100,000 at the AHL level with a \$200,000 guarantee.

"Fredrik adds a veteran presence to our blue line," said general manager Don Waddell in a news release. "This signing helps improve our defensive depth."

The 26-year-old registered six points (two goals, four assists) in 37 games at the NHL level last season for the New York Rangers.

Claesson spent the first three seasons of his career in Ottawa with the Senators. He was selected in the fifth round (No. 126 overall) by the Sens in the 2011 NHL Draft.



SB NATION
CANES COUNTRY

Hurricanes sign Fredrik Claesson to one-year, two-way contract

The former Rangers and Senators defenseman agrees to a deal after spending the first four days in camp on a PTO.

By Zeke Lukow

On Tuesday the Carolina Hurricanes announced that they have signed defenseman Fredrik Claesson to a one-year, two-way contract. The defenseman was originally brought into camp on a PTO the day camp opened. The contract pays him \$700,000 at the NHL level and \$100,000 at the AHL level, with \$200,000 guaranteed.

The 26 year-old Swede has played seven professional seasons including four in the NHL with the Ottawa Senators and most recently with the New York Rangers. In this time he has amassed 150 games played with six career goals and 20 career assists.

He is the third free agent defenseman to join the organization this offseason, joining Jake Gardiner and

Chase Priskie. He now joins a crowded group of blueliners looking to crack the NHL roster which also includes Jake Bean, Haydn Fleury, and Roland McKeown. He will likely factor in as a depth defenseman that can be called up to the NHL in a moments notice and plug into the lineup.

He is the latest to be signed off of a PTO for the Hurricanes. Last season after Michal Cajkovsky impressed in camp and in preseason he was signed to a one-year deal, although he quickly jumped to the KHL in December after spending three months in Charlotte. This is further proving that the Canes want competition from top to bottom and they reward a good effort in camp and preseason.

He will not factor into the starting line up of the first pre-season game, but is likely to see significant action in the preseason. The release from the team is below.

CANES SIGN CLAESSION TO ONE-YEAR, TWO-WAY DEAL



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Defenseman tallied six points in 37 NHL games with the Rangers in 2018-19

Don Waddell, President and General Manager of the National Hockey League's Carolina Hurricanes, today announced that the team has signed defenseman Fredrik Claesson (KLAY-suhn) to a one-year, two-way contract for the 2019-20 season. The contract will pay Claesson \$700,000 at the NHL level and \$100,000 at the AHL level with a \$200,000 guarantee.

"Fredrik adds a veteran presence to our blue line," said Waddell. "This signing helps improve our defensive depth."

Claesson, 26, registered six points (2g, 4a) in 37 NHL games with the New York Rangers last season. The 6'1", 196-pound defenseman has posted 26 points (6g, 20a) in 150 career NHL games with the Rangers and Senators. Claesson has also skated in 285 career AHL games, all with Binghamton, recording 70 points (13g, 57a). Before coming to North America, he tallied nine points (3g, 6a) in 82 Swedish Hockey League games with Djurgardens IF. The Stockholm, Sweden, native won a gold medal representing his home country at the 2012 IIHF World Junior Championship. Claesson was drafted by the Senators in the fifth round, 126th overall, of the 2011 NHL Draft.

Carolina Hurricanes at Tampa Bay Lightning: Preseason Preview, Game Notes, Discussion

The Hurricanes take on old friend Curtis McElhinney and the Lightning tonight in Tampa Bay in the first game of the preseason.

By Andrew Ahr

And just like that, hockey is back. After a shorter summer than usual, the Hurricanes are back in action tonight as they kick off a six game preseason schedule.

Carolina Hurricanes at Tampa Bay Lightning

Tuesday, Sep. 17, 2019 - 7:00 p.m. ET

Amalie Arena - Tampa, FL

Stream: Hurricanes.com (Region Restricted)

Last season, the Hurricanes went 5-0-1 in the preseason, including a home-and-home sweep against the Lightning. They'll try to match that record this year, beginning tonight.

Here's how the Hurricanes will line up tonight against the defending Presidents' Trophy champions:

Jordan Martinook - Lucas Wallmark - Brock McGinn
Jacob Pritchard - Morgan Geekie - Colin Markison
Janne Kuokkanen - Eetu Luostarinen - Julien Gauthier
Max McCormick - Ryan Suzuki - Brian Gibbons

Haydn Fleury - Roland McKeown
Jake Bean - Brett Pesce
Jesper Sellgren - Kyle Wood

James Reimer
Anton Forsberg

This lineup is stacked with NHL potential and features a few of Carolina's top prospects at both the forward and defensive positions.

And here's how the Bolts will line up tonight. Check out who's expected to start in net!



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Hurricanes Blank Lightning 3-0 in Preseason Opener

The goaltending pair of Anton Forsberg and James Reimer combine for a shutout, stopping 15 shots.

By Andy House

The Carolina Hurricanes saw the 2019 preseason get underway on Tuesday night with a 3-0 shutout of the Tampa Bay Lightning in Tampa. James Reimer and Anton Forsberg each made their Canes debut as they combined to stop all 15 shots they faced.

The Canes iced a nice mix of veterans and young talent, some of who are experiencing their first NHL camps. As such, let the record show that the first tally of the season by a Carolina Hurricane was notched by Max McCormick, with an assist from Brian Gibbons, as the two journeymen got the Canes off and running just over a minute into the contest. Competing in the early going against Curtis McElhinney in his debut with the Bolts, the Canes doubled up Tampa in shots in a first period that featured a pair of Carolina powerplays.

Reimer made his Canes debut as the starter in net, followed just after the midpoint of the contest by Forsberg. Reimer put together an unblemished night

stopping all eight shots he faced, while Forsberg finished with seven saves.

The Canes iced one line of regulars as Brock McGinn, Lucas Wallmark, and Jordan Martinook combined to form the de facto top line on Tuesday, while the blue line featured the pairing of Haydn Fleury and Brett Pesce. Pesce saw significant play on the man advantage and was able to get a team-high five shots on net over the course of the night.

If there was an unwelcome trend for even the first preseason game, it was the 0 for 4 that the Canes produced on their first four power plays, but on their fifth, Lucas Wallmark snapped a wrist from the slot over the right shoulder of Scott Wedgewood in net to extend the Canes lead to 2-0. The Canes followed that goal up shortly after with a two-on-one that resulted in a Colin Markison put back of a Morgan Geekie shot to push the lead to three. Despite taking a pair of penalties in the final 10 minutes, the Canes were able to maintain a clean sheet thanks to some solid penalty killing and a rusty Bolts man advantage.

The two teams will square off again, likely with totally different rosters on both sides, on Wednesday night in the PNC Arena preseason opener.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Canes Sign Fredrik Claesson To Two-Way Contract

By Nicholas Niedzielski

After bringing him into their training camp on a professional tryout, the Hurricanes have signed Fredrik Claesson to a one-year, two-way contract for the upcoming season.

"Fredrik adds a veteran presence to our blue line," said Carolina President and GM Don Waddell in a team release. "This signing helps improve our defensive depth."

The 26-year-old defenseman was selected in the fifth round of the 2011 draft by Ottawa and has logged 150 career NHL games with the Senators and the New York Rangers over the last four seasons. Claesson also spent five seasons with the Binghamton Senators, putting up 70 points (13g, 57a) in 285 AHL games from 2012-17.

Prior to making the jump to North America, Claesson played two seasons in the top league of his home country of Sweden for Djurgardens and recorded nine points (3g, 6a) in 82 games.

TODAY'S LINKS

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<http://gocheckers.com/articles/transactions/canes-sign-fredrik-claesson-to-two-way-contract>



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SportScan

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

1108059 Carolina Hurricanes

Want to watch the Canes' preseason games? Here's how

BY CHIP ALEXANDER

SEPTEMBER 17, 2019 04:08 PM

Carolina Hurricanes fans will be able to watch five of the Canes' six preseason exhibition games.

Four of the broadcasts will be video streamed on the Hurricanes web site (CarolinaHurricanes.com) and the Fox Sports GO app. The fifth will be the Sept. 25 game at Nashville, which will be shown by Fox Sports Carolinas.

The games that will be streamed are: the Tuesday, Sept 17 game at Tampa Bay (7 pm); the Wednesday, Sept. 18 game against Tampa Bay at PNC Arena (7 pm); the Sept. 27 game against Nashville at PNC Arena (7:30 pm), and the Sept. 29 game against Washington at PNC Arena (1:30 pm).

Coverage of the Canes-Caps game on Saturday in Washington (7 pm) will be an audio feed on WRALSportsFan.com, which will have the audio feeds from all six games.

John Forslund will handle the play-by-play and Tripp Tracy the analysis for the video streaming and audio feeds. Mike Maniscalco will join Forslund and Tracy as the rinkside reporter for the Sept. 25 game on Fox Sports Carolinas.

News Observer LOADED: 09.18.2019

1108060 Carolina Hurricanes

Canes sign defenseman Fredrik Claesson to one-year contract

BY CHIP ALEXANDER

SEPTEMBER 17, 2019 11:59 AM

RALEIGH

The Carolina Hurricanes added to their defensive depth Tuesday, signing defenseman Fredrik Claesson to a one-year, two-way contract for the 2019-20 season.

Claesson, 26, will be paid \$700,000 at the NHL level and \$100,000 at the AHL level. He received a \$200,000 guarantee.

"It took a long time into the summer and couple days into training camp, but now that I get to be here for this year feels really good," Claesson said Tuesday. "It's really good competition, too, so it will be fun."

Claesson, a native of Stockholm, Sweden, played 37 games with the New York Rangers last season, finishing with two goals and four assists. Listed at 6-1 and 196 pounds, he has 150 games of NHL experience with the Rangers and Ottawa Senators.

"You can't have enough good defenders," Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said Tuesday when asked about the signing. "Good experience there. Hard worker. I like what he brings in that department. And he's tough to play against. He's that kind of player."

Claesson came to Canes camp on a professional tryout contract (PTO). With defenseman Trevor van Riemsdyk still recovering from shoulder surgery, the Canes looked to add to their depth and give coach Rod Brind'Amour another option on the blue line.

"You're talking to your agent the whole summer and he's telling you to be patient but then you just want something to be done," Claesson said. "It's tough. Family friends and members are asking, too, 'Where you going next year?' and you keep telling them the same thing, that you don't know. But I'm really happy to be here."

Claesson also has played 285 career AHL games. Before coming to North America, he played in the Swedish Hockey League games with Djurgardens IF.

Claesson won a gold medal with Sweden in the 2012 IIHF World Junior Championship. He was a fifth-round draft pick by Ottawa in 2011.

News Observer LOADED: 09.18.2019

1108061 Carolina Hurricanes

Reimer, Forsberg lead Hurricanes in shutout of Lightning

Staff Report

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SEPTEMBER 18, 2019 01:36 AM

James Reimer and Anton Forsberg combined for a shutout as the Carolina Hurricanes beat the Tampa Bay Lightning 3-0 in an NHL preseason game in Tampa, Florida, on Tuesday night.

Reimer and Forsberg each played half the game for the Hurricanes, who reached the Eastern Conference final last



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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spring after missing the playoffs for nine straight years. Reimer started and made eight saves before being replaced by Forsberg, who had seven saves.

Max McCormick, Lucas Wallmark and Colin Markison scored for Carolina.

Scott Wedgewood played the entire game in goal for the Lightning and had 34 saves.

In Columbus, Ohio, Emil Bemstrom had a goal and an assist to lift the Blue Jackets to a 4-1 win over the Buffalo Sabres.

Kole Sherwood, Sonny Milano and Zac Dalpe also scored for the Blue Jackets. Sherwood's goal, with 4:12 left in the second was the game-winner.

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In Uniondale, New York, Mason Jobst scored with 53 seconds left in overtime to help the Islanders rally for a 3-2 victory over the Philadelphia Flyers.

Derick Brassard and Jordan Eberle also scored for the Islanders. Eberle's goal with 1:34 left in regulation tied the score 2-2.

Jared Coreau made 10 saves in the second, third and overtime periods to get the win. Coreau replaced starter Thomas Greiss, who started the game and made 14 saves.

Michael Raffl and Chris Bigras scored for Philadelphia.

Carter Hart started the game for the Flyers, and made 14 saves before giving way to J.F. Berube midway through the game. Berube allowed three goals on 23 shots against his former team.

In St. John's, Newfoundland, Tristan Scherwey had a goal and an assist to help the Ottawa Senators beat the Toronto Maple Leafs 3-1.

Scherwey, a training-camp invitee who has spent the last 10 seasons playing for SC Bern in Switzerland, jumped on a loose puck on a Toronto power play and fired it past Kasimir Kaskisuo to give Ottawa a 2-1 lead at 9:45 of the third period.

Max Lajoie and Anthony Duclair also scored for the Senators. Anders Nilsson stopped all 13 shots he faced through the first two periods for Ottawa. Marcus Hogburg had 11 saves in the third.

Kasperii Kapanen scored the lone goal for the Maple Leafs to tie the game early in the third. Mitch Marner, who had missed the opening of training camp before signing a six-year, \$65.358 million deal last Friday, had an assist on the play.

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Matt Puempel, Matthew Ford, Chris Terry and Luke Glendening also scored for Detroit.

Jimmy Howard and Calvin Pickard each played half the game in goal for the Red Wings. Howard started and stopped seven of eight shots, while Pickard made 15 saves.

Dominik Kubalik scored twice, and Philip Holm added a goal for the Blackhawks.

Robin Lehner and Kevin Lankinen each played half the game in goal for Chicago. Lehner started and allowed two goals on 17 shots before being replaced by Lankinen, who stopped 19 of 21 shots.

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Roope Hintz also scored for Dallas, which had Landon Bow and Colton Point split time in goal. Bow started and stopped 18 of 19 shots in the first two periods, while Point turned away all 13 shots he faced in the third period and overtime.

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Clayton Keller, Christian Dvorak and Jordan Gross scored for the Coyotes, which had seven players record a point. Garland and



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 18, 2019

Dvorak finished with three points each, and Keller and Gross recorded two points apiece.

Arizona had Darcy Kuemper and Adin Hill split time in goal. Kuemper started and made 16 saves in the first two periods, and Hill stopped 10 in the third.

Jonathan Quick allowed three goals on 10 shots in the opening half of the game for Los Angeles, while Calvin Petersen gave up two goals on 15 shots.

In Glendale, Arizona, Akil Thomas had a goal and an assist to lift the Kings a 4-1 win.

Michael Anderson, Michael Amadio and Samuel Fagemo also scored for the Kings. Thomas, Amadio and Fagemo scored in an eight-minute span of the second period to turn a 1-1 game into a 4-1 lead.

Derek Stepan scored Arizona's lone goal.

News Observer LOADED: 09.18.2019

1108062 Carolina Hurricanes

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BY CHIP ALEXANDER

SEPTEMBER 17, 2019 04:08 PM

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News Observer LOADED: 09.18.2019

1108228 Websites

The Athletic / LeBrun: NHL owners ecstatic over the rare forecast for CBA peace

By Pierre LeBrun

Sep 17, 2019 7

NEW YORK – Gary Bettman had two different speeches ready for Tuesday's Board of Governors meeting.

The NHL commissioner got to use the one he most definitely wanted to deliver.

A day after the NHL Players' Association announced it wasn't opting out of the CBA next year, providing at least three years of labour peace, the mood in the room full of NHL owners and team executives was a mix of ecstatic, blended with a touch of relief.

"Very important, hugely important," Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment chairman Larry Tanenbaum beamed after the three-hour meeting wrapped up. "I must tell you, it was the right thing to do for both sides. I couldn't be happier. Let's play hockey."

That the owners announced a similar decision earlier this month was a no-brainer, it's the players that had everyone in the game on pins and needles because it wasn't nearly as obvious a decision.

But in the end, the players decided to believe in the current process, and it was welcome news from the men in suits signing their paycheques.

"I think it was a wise decision," Jeremy Jacobs, the Boston Bruins owner who remains chairman of the Board of Governors, said afterward. "I think all of us will profit from it."

Jacobs meant player and owners would profit, in case that wasn't obvious. I'm not kidding when I say both Jacobs and Tanenbaum, two of the most influential owners in hockey, had genuine excitement in their faces. These weren't cliches they were throwing at me, it was a bonafide feeling – and a rare one – of labour peace.

Jacobs, for one, hasn't been present in the CBA sessions between the NHL and NHLPA, no owner has yet, frankly a welcome reality from the players' perspective. Had the players opted out of the CBA, you had to wonder how the tone of these negotiations might have changed, particular if Jacobs and a few other hard-line owners suddenly entered the negotiation room.

All of which weighed on the players at least to some degree, I think, before their decision Monday, even if it wasn't the main factor. As I've said before, the idea not poking the bear – or the owner of the Bruins – well, you can't discount that.

Time will tell, of course, but the players made the assessment that negotiating concessions and changes with Bettman and Daly, and without Jacobs and other owners in the room, was the right path to stay on.

The players' decision was tremendously welcomed by the Board of Governors, who can now stay focused on selling the game.

"Frankly, I think we all think the game is on a rocket ship," said Vegas Golden Knights president George McPhee.

For a market like Las Vegas, which has taken the NHL by storm, a work stoppage next year would have been harmful to that momentum. Instead, McPhee was delighted with the players' decision.

"Really satisfying, it's great for the game, it's great for everyone in the game, and everyone that watches it, to have the stability and continuity," he said.

"The game is in a really good place, and growing in popularity. High hopes for continued discussions regarding the CBA."



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Think of Carolina, too, a market that came alive again last season.

"I think it's good for all markets," said Hurricanes owner Tom Dundon when asked about labour peace.

Is it perfect? Of course not. There are owners who would like to see certain changes to the CBA.

"Peace is good, but we have lots to fix," said one NHL owner who requested anonymity.

But the CBA negotiations to date have really been more about the league trying to appease the NHLPA, which conceded a lot in 2004-05 and 2012-13.

The risk, of course, from the players' perspective is that they lost their biggest leverage point by not opting out. It didn't take long for Monday's announcement to come out before some nay-sayers wondered what exactly the motivation was for the NHL to push ahead in CBA talks with the same urgency. A narrative that I put to Bettman on Tuesday.

"I don't think that's a fair characterization, that sounds like yours, it doesn't sound like any credible source," the commissioner responded in a jousting mood. "But no, seriously, we have the same interest that the players do. And that's to make sure that the game is good for all stakeholders especially and including our fans."

Talks are scheduled to continue, and sources suggest if all goes well – if all goes well – there would even be a tentative CBA extension in place within two months, if not sooner.

Imagine that for a moment, a CBA extension two and a half years ahead of expiry.

That's if this thing doesn't go off the rails, which well, you have to always allow as a possibility given the history between the two parties.

But the league's interest in labour peace does seem real, more so than I've ever seen in some 25 years covering the NHL.

And it made me wonder about Bettman's own legacy, about perhaps wanting his final years at the helm of the NHL to be punctuated without a labour fight.

I put that angle to him on Tuesday, and he waived me off immediately. He's not thinking about that at all, the commissioner insisted.

Besides, he added, when I referred to this being his last CBA: "Who says it's my last?" he smiled.

Such as it is.

"There's no update on that, we talk regularly," said veteran Nashville GM David Poile after the Board of Governors meeting.

I do think a new contract for Predators captain Roman Josi will get done, but I'm always intrigued by negotiations with pending UFAs on the Predators ever since the day Ryan Suter left town. I just know that Poile vowed to himself he would never lose a player of that magnitude for nothing again.

So there is a time element to all this even if we're far away from having to make that kind of drastic decision. The Predators' only focus is getting Josi signed and there's been much effort all summer on doing that.

"We haven't even started the season," Poile said to all that. "We both have the right intentions. We've both said all the right things to each other. We just haven't agreed to the number. That's really where we are."

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The Athletic / How much should you read into preseason lineups, games and results?

By Justin Bourne

Sep 17, 2019

On Monday, Sept. 16, 2019, a crazy thing happened. By god, 18 real NHL teams dressed players in their teams' real equipment and actual colours and damned if they didn't face off against one another in nine separate hockey matches.

Sort of.

If you wanna get technical, all of the Predators, Panthers, Devils, Canucks and Flames had their players divided to make two split-squad teams, so all told it was more like 13 teams that threw players over the boards to create nine games. So things aren't quite normal yet, but dammit, there was hockey, and hockey is entertaining as hell. It also gives us our first chances at answering questions we have about what teams really are, where individual players are at and who we get to make fun of most on social media. (My goal is to cut the Sens some slack this year, if – and this is a pretty sizeable if – Eugene Melnyk will only let me. I'd bet against that happening.)

The question we all have with hockey this time of year, or at least should have if we're trying to be savvy hockey taker-inners is, "how much do these current results matter?" What from this week's outcomes tell us anything at all? Because frankly, it's very easy to look at those games and disregard just about everything that isn't "Player X scored a few, Goalie Y let a few in."

There's minor leaguers out there. Few have skated in a meaningfully competitive game in 3-5 months. Even fewer are on the same page with systems, there's little chemistry anywhere and the varying amounts of pressure on players – from near-zero for some to soaring amounts for others – all combine to make it seem impossible to know which grains of information actually point us in the right direction.

Fans have the luxury of being preseason nihilists. Teams don't, and finding the signals in the noise is harder now than ever for them.

So that's what teams are doing every day right now – scrutinizing the context around the results like the ones we were given last night, to determine what's worth weight. That's what I want to do here today – help you scrutinize the context of the information that's starting to pour in.

Did the guy who scored a couple times in preseason get lucky or did he make that luck? Did the defenseman who played error-free hockey just have chance on his side, dealing him an easy hand? Or was he with a great partner who made it easy?

As an evaluator, you're basically trying to process "results rel," a not-at-all-real stat I just made up that refers to success/failure of results relative to the opportunity that player was given. It's a lot easier to score the OT winner when you're actually put on the ice in overtime, and with good players. It's pretty hard to get points alongside pure grinders. Small samples are tortuously misleading in hockey, yet preseason games can have life-altering consequences for fringe players.



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So without further ado, to help with your own interpretations of “is that something or is that nothing?” with the mountains of preseason information we’re getting right now, here’s five pieces of context to help you sift through it all. I’ve picked these things up over my years as a player, on a coaching staff in the AHL and as a member of the media.

Many teams started training camp with something like 70-plus players before cutting that down fairly quickly to a number somewhere closer to 40. It’s at that point that some people start to think “Boy, they kept Tim Timmersley, hey? They must like him more than I expected.” Or they think, “Whoa, they kept Timmersley, but not Frank Frankerson. I thought they’d have liked Frankerson more for sure.”

Don’t ... don’t have those thoughts. Frankerson, Timmersley or whoever else at the fringes of the 40-plus skaters? There’s very little to be learned by when those guys get sent away. A lot of those moves are just scheduling convenience.

Among those players that are clearly not going to be on the team, first cuts are generally made with one goal in mind: having two functional practice groups. That means the priorities are having the right amount of LWs and Cs and RWs, and at least three (maybe four) D pairs per group. You need enough guys to do drills without bagging everyone (fewer guys means once you’re done a drill you’re right back up, so more reps, so every drill becomes a bag skate), and not so many that the ice isn’t a clogged-up shitshow with inactive bodies standing all over the rink. (Preseason means WAY too many coaches on the ice as is. I was the AHL video coach and I was on the ice for a number of Leafs preseason skates. The more, in these cases, is not actually the merrier, as much as I enjoyed it.)

So yes, the roster trims are just about making functional groups, which is often awkward when there aren’t clean talent tiers that break off as tidy as you’d like. Sometimes a player you like as much as the next guy has to go, sometimes you’re keeping players that can barely keep up just to have enough bodies. But the comfort of having proper numbers trumps other considerations here.

Lineup composition shouldn’t be as quickly written off as I’ve seen some on social media suggest it should. The obvious caveat I keep seeing is that “it’s preseason,” and that’s fair. Sometimes weird numbers means a seemingly random skater is handed legit star linemates. Sometimes a penned-in NHLer has to skate with obvious minor leaguers. Sometimes a past AHLer that might make the NHL club is written in on the fifth line because of some subjective decision by who wrote the lines (the drama with how you list the lines is a fascinating thing behind the scenes). But in the end practice time is scarce and valued, particularly in the early season, and so teams generally don’t start the year all fun and experimental. Most want the guys who are going to be playing together to play together. They want to test their theories. These are our first real looks, at least at the top part of the rosters, of what each team’s coaching staff has in mind.

Something to remember about how these decisions all work: an NHL team is made up of 20-plus different individual stories, and the more people you can put in a position to succeed, the better. Obviously. So teams set out a plan early in the year for how to get the most out of the most people, with the priority being getting the most out of the players who matter most. Picking apart roster construction will probably yield more about how a team is thinking than any preseason game possibly could.

Within each game, it’s impossible to keep track of each player and to tally up some sort of mental performance score for everyone. Going into each season, most teams have relative certainty around what their team will look like, some sort of “if no one changes our mind, this is what we’ve got” roster. Sometimes

they’ll have two guys pencilled in for the same spot, otherwise, their team is mostly set in their heads.

So what you’re looking for is things that are unusually good or bad, and I don’t mean goals or points. I mean the fifth year NHLer who shows a speed burst he hasn’t shown in the past. The second year player who outmuscles someone for the first time ever. The aging vet who gets walked wide by the 19-year-old rookie. And the player whose linemates get noticeably better or worse as camp goes on as a result of these things. That’s where you’ll find the good stuff.

As nothing happens, the preseason vision comes closer to fruition. To change that vision, players have to show something beyond (or below) what’s expected. (Which is another reason preseason hockey looks different – individual goals put “winning the game” near the bottom of the priority totem pole, well below “demonstrating skill.”)

In practice, teams can build the drills to test the questions they need answered. If they want to know how their defenders stack up, they can play even-man (2-on-2 or 3-on-3) below the tops of the circles for 20 minutes. They can run full-ice rush drills. They can spend as much time as they want getting a feel for what players did with their offseasons much better than they can over 17 minutes of shifts when a player might have been involved in five meaningful moments. They can create 10 of those in practice immediately. That’s probably worth noting for beat writers. What they’re working on in practices might not be for the player’s education so much as for those of the evaluators.)

And finally ...

You can be terrible at blackjack, but sometimes you’re just dealt 21. Likewise, you can name some pretty not-great NHLers who’ve scored NHL goals. Sometimes the cards just go your way. And BOY, are you hoping to get dealt some cards in preseason.

Because there are so few hard stats in hockey that are readily available, goals and assists will always be more valuable than a great backcheck or a great breakout pass or anything like that. Nobody misses those moments. If a roster race is close between two players, the guy with the raw numbers will always have the leg up.

As great as it is to have on-ice puck back, that’s not the part that intrigues me most. It’s how a team’s lineups change as they go on, it’s which players earn more opportunity or less, it’s how the chaos shakes out into clean opening night lineups. Information on what we can expect to see this season is starting to trickle in – filtered through enough layers of context, the start of the season picture can start to emerge.

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The Athletic / Down Goes Brown: Looking back on the Western Conference offseason with the Bizarro-meter

By Sean McIndoe

Sep 17, 2019

Yesterday, we fired up the Bizarro-meter for our annual rundown of the offseason’s strangest moves, starting with the Eastern Conference. It barely registered a reading for the Capitals and Bruins, beeped a few times for the Islanders and Red Wings and



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was actually starting to smoke by the time we got to the Habs and Hurricanes.

Today, we move on to the Western Conference. Will anyone top Carolina's East-leading score of 9.1? Let's find out.

Pacific Division

Anaheim Ducks

The offseason so far: They didn't add much to a roster that missed the playoffs. But they did subtract — getting younger in the process — by using a buyout on Corey Perry and preparing for a future without injured veterans Ryan Kesler and Patrick Eaves.

But their strangest story was: They made the expected choice behind the bench when they hired Dallas Eakins as coach, although it took long enough that by the time they actually announced it you went "Wait, didn't that already happen a month ago?"

Bizarro-meter ranking: 3.5/10. The Eakins hiring took longer than it should have and the Perry move was jarring, but both made sense.

Arizona Coyotes

The offseason so far: They added Carl Soderberg and hired former Sabres coach Phil Housley as an assistant. But their biggest move was a blockbuster trade that brought in Phil Kessel, who should address their lack of scoring right up until Rick Tocchet strangles him. So, mid-October.

But their strangest story was: Signing Clayton Keller to an eight-year, \$57.2-million extension that everyone agrees was either way too much money or a brilliant bargain.

Bizarro-meter ranking: 3.8/10. The Kessel deal, while big and not without some risk, fit where this team is at right now, and locking up a young star long-term usually works out. But I did award a few bonus points for this quote.

Los Angeles Kings

The offseason so far: The big news was the hiring of Todd McLellan, who replaces interim boss Willie Desjardins. They also bought out veteran Dion Phaneuf.

But their strangest story was: Not really doing anything else aside from a few extensions. You might figure that a team that just finished 30th overall would do more to reshape the roster, but the Kings pretty much stood pat.

Bizarro-meter ranking: 4.2/10. A little bit of patience with a rebuild isn't necessarily a bad thing, especially if the alternative is throwing money at bad-fit veterans. Still, you'd typically see a bit more turnover from a last-place team.

Seattle Something-or-Others

The offseason so far: They hired Ron Francis as the team's first GM, and started filling out the front office. That included hiring analytics guru Alexandra Mandrycky away from the Wild, having her sit in on the hiring process for the new GM, and declaring that analytics is going to be "a way of life." Uh oh, this team doesn't even have a name yet and it's already smarter than most of the competition.

But their strangest story was: Existing.

Bizarro-meter ranking: 4.5/10. How many times do you think Francis has already called Dale Tallon, just to mess with him?

Calgary Flames

The offseason so far: They looked at last year's Oilers and said: "Let's be more like them."

But their strangest story was: Gambling on Cam Talbot to rebound enough to be an upgrade over Mike Smith seems reasonable. But the Milan Lucic trade was a head-scratcher, as they took a mistake in the James Neal contract and flipped it into something worse.

Bizarro-meter ranking: 5.4/10. We're having some fun with the Oiler stuff, but for the most part, the Flames are a good team who didn't change much, and that makes sense. Like a few other teams, their grade is subject to change based on how their ongoing RFA drama plays out, but unless the Matthew Tkachuk situation gets crazy then the Flames will stay near the middle-of-the-pack.

Oh hey, speaking of Edmonton ...

Edmonton Oilers

The offseason so far: They found their new GM in Ken Holland and a new coach in Dave Tippett. They also did the seemingly impossible by trading Lucic and brought in a veteran goaltender in Smith.

But their strangest story was: Once again not doing all that much to improve the forward group around Connor McDavid and Leon Draisaitl. They were limited in what they could do, of course, both by cap constraints and a lack of desirable assets to trade with. With a new brain trust having just been installed, expecting a massive overhaul was probably a pipe dream; Holland may be a veteran and a Cup winner, but he's not a miracle worker. Still, the roster that will be taking the ice on opening night looks a lot like the one that finished last year, which doesn't inspire much optimism.

Bizarro-meter ranking: 5.5/10. Maybe they can go into the options menu and turn line changes off.

San Jose Sharks

The offseason so far: They re-signed Erik Karlsson before free agency and re-signed Joe Thornton two months into it. But they watched their captain, Joe Pavelski, walk in free agency. And while everyone assumed they'd bring back ex-captain Patrick Marleau for an inexpensive feel-good reunion, that never happened.

But their strangest story was: Re-signing RFA Kevin Labanc to a dirt-cheap deal that stands as the strangest extension of the offseason.

Bizarro-meter ranking: 7.1/10. You can understand the Pavelski and Marleau stories because this is a business and sometimes tough decisions come before sentiment. As for the Labanc contract, um, I'm still working on that one.

Vegas Golden Knights

The offseason so far: They stayed active on the trade front, moving Colin Miller to the Sabres and sending the unsigned Nikita Gusev to the Devils, both for picks. They also traded David Clarkson back to the Maple Leafs, which confused the hell out of everyone.

But their strangest story was: GM George McPhee stepping down so that Kelly McCrimmon could take the job. That made a certain amount of sense since McCrimmon had been rumored for the top job in Edmonton, as well as expansion Seattle. But McPhee had just had the two best years of any GM in recent memory, so it's very weird to see him no longer in charge. Unless he still is in charge, which is what everyone seems to assume.

Bizarro-meter ranking: 7.3/10. You have to hand it to them, in the entire history of the franchise, the Knights have never been boring.

Vancouver Canucks



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The offseason so far: The big news came last night, as they got RFA Brock Boeser signed to a three-year bridge deal. Beyond that, they added a bunch of veteran talent, including Tyler Myers via free agency (with a contract nobody liked) and J.T. Miller via trade (for a price nobody liked). They also landed Micheal Ferland on a decent deal and re-upped Alex Edler. The team should be better, even as they're older and facing a cap crunch down the road once Elias Pettersson comes off his entry deal. Still, you do what you have to do when your GM very obviously needs to make the playoffs to get an extension.

But their strangest story was: Giving Jim Benning an extension. Oh. OK then.

Bizarro-meter ranking: 7.5/10. The pre-emptive Benning extension was hard to figure out. But if it's any consolation, hey, it was nowhere near the worst contract he's been involved in signing in Vancouver.

Central Division

St. Louis Blues

The offseason so far: Lots and lots of parties. Other than that, not all that much.

But their strangest story was: The several days of offseason that went by before Craig Berube was officially named permanent head coach. But that was about it. Even the Jordan Binnington contract, which had the potential to get strange, ended up with a pretty reasonable deal all around.

Bizarro-meter ranking: 1.5/10. We'll give them a few pity points for letting hometown hero Patrick Maroon leave, which wasn't bizarre but was at least mildly disappointing. Beyond that, the champs kept the band together as you'd expect, registering the lowest Bizarro-meter rating in the league.

Colorado Avalanche

The offseason so far: They made a nice trade with the Leafs to land Nazem Kadri and drafted yet another future stud for the blue line. They also haven't signed their star RFA yet, which in today's NHL isn't all that weird.

But their strangest story was: Letting Semyon Varlamov walk without adding any veteran insurance to back up Philipp Grubauer, I guess?

Bizarro-meter ranking: 3.2/10. Joe Sakic and friends were busy, but nothing was especially odd.

Dallas Stars

The offseason so far: They needed scoring, so they went out and got Corey Perry, who came cheap, and Joe Pavelski, who did not. They also added former Oiler Andrej Sekera as blue line depth but might lose Julius Honka, who has asked for a trade.

But their strangest story was: Their late-June trade for Ryan Hartman, who a.) they did not bother re-signing and b.) initially may not have known he'd been traded.

Bizarro-meter ranking: 3.8/10. Seeing both Pavelski and Perry in different uniforms is going to take some getting used to, but for the most part, the Stars are another example of a Central team having an offseason that was newsworthy and quite possibly important, but not all that bizarre. They're a good team that needed offensive help and they bought some. Makes sense to me.

Winnipeg Jets

The offseason so far: It's been mostly about who won't be there as camp opens. They lost Tyler Myers, Ben Chiarot and Brandon Tanev to free agency and Jacob Trouba to a trade they had to make and didn't replace any of them.

But their strangest story was: The ongoing Patrik Laine and Kyle Connor negotiations. Having a star RFA still unsigned heading into camp was part for the course this year, but having two puts the Jets in a unique position.

Bizarro-meter ranking: 4.4/10. The offseason hasn't been great. But bizarre? Only mildly. We knew Myers was leaving and the Trouba situation was always likely to end with a trade. Even the Laine and Connor RFA standoffs make sense given how the summer went around the league, although we'd expect something to happen soon now that the market is moving again.

Nashville Predators

The offseason so far: You know those movies where there's a couple you just know is going to wind up together but life keeps throwing obstacles in their way. They move on, find a new partner and just when you're about to give up, they find each other? That's Matt Duchene and David Poile.

But their strangest story was: Trading P.K. Subban for a handful of magic beans to clear the cap room to make Duchene happen.

Bizarro-meter ranking: 6.2/10. The Subban trade was a jaw-dropper at the draft, but with some benefit of hindsight, it doesn't seem quite as surprising as it did in the moment. The Preds needed the cap space, not just for Duchene but for new deals for Colton Sissons and (eventually) Roman Josi. I'm a Subban guy and I'm far from sold on the Duchene signing, and there's a strong possibility that Preds fans eventually look back on this summer with regret. But as newsworthy as the Predators' offseason became, at least some of it felt inevitable all along.

Chicago Blackhawks

The offseason so far: They focused on upgrading the blue line, although time will tell whether they did enough. Still, adding Olli Maatta and Calvin de Haan should help. They also traded for Zack Smith and Alexander Nylander, so you can't say Stan Bowman took the summer off. And they raised a few eyebrows with the third overall pick by grabbing Kirby Dach over Alex Turcotte or Bowen Byram.

But their strangest story was: Landing reigning Jennings co-winner Robin Lehner in free agency to replace Cam Ward, with the strange part being that a guy coming off that kind of season was available in the first place.

Bizarro-meter ranking: 6.8/10. They certainly kept us on our toes.

The offseason so far: They had a draft where their GM was impressed by tall people. Then they signed Mats Zuccarello because their GM thought he looked like a lizard. Then we all started to side-eye each other and wonder if their GM was a little bit off. Then they fired that GM at the end of July, the way nobody does. Then we found out that this franchise has apparently been a madhouse for the last year or so.

That led to a bizarre late-summer search that somehow included another team's current GM, plus just about every assistant in the league. They eventually settled on Bill Guerin, which seemed like a pretty reasonable choice, forcing the team to find the weirdest possible photo of him for the announcement to make up for it.

Also, they might have tried to offer sheet Mitch Marner. What would that have looked like? The mind boggles.

But their strangest story was: Guerin's first major move was to give Jared Spurgeon a new deal, which was probably too many years but otherwise fine and nobody got called a lizard. Given how everything else went this summer, seeing the Wild do something normal felt weird.

Bizarro-meter ranking: 9.2/10. Every offseason features stories that are weird and stories that are important, but it's been years since one of them checked both boxes as well as the Wild's



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midsummer GM drama. This team might not win very much this year or in the near future, but at least now they can raise a Bizarro-meter banner on opening night.

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The Athletic / The reality of attending an NHL training camp on a tryout

By Scott Burnside

Sep 17, 2019

PHILADELPHIA – Chris Stewart is a few minutes late for our chat at a modest suburban hotel a few hundred meters from the Philadelphia Flyers' practice facility in Voorhees, New Jersey.

His explanation is in the shopping bag he holds in his hand with a just-purchased adult-sized ninja costume for Halloween.

Stewart already purchased matching ninja outfits for his 5-year-old twin sons, who are at home with their 2-year-old brother in Pickering, Ontario, just east of Toronto. Not only did the twins insist Stewart buy a ninja outfit, but he needed to model it for them via Facetime, which is part of their daily routine with dad right now.

"The last three days they've been calling me saying, 'hey, dad, put it on, we want to see it,'" Stewart said Sunday with a laugh. "So they gave me an ultimatum. Tonight I have to put it on so I had to run back to the store and pick it up."

For the record, the costume was a big hit.

For a man whose NHL career hangs in the balance as he tries to make the Flyers by virtue of a professional tryout invite from Philadelphia GM Chuck Fletcher, Stewart seems pretty zen about the whole thing.

The reality is that a PTO isn't something that every player can wrap their head around.

Stewart couldn't a year ago when, about to turn 31 and with 652 NHL regular season games to his credit, he was offered a couple of tryout opportunities but no guaranteed contract.

"I had a couple of PTO options and mentally I wasn't there. You know how it is," Stewart said relaxing in the hotel lobby after a morning on-ice session in advance of the team's first preseason game.

"I've played a decade and I thought, definitely thought I deserved a lot more respect. Not to say I'm looking down at a tryout, but the perception at that point I thought I was at least worth a minimal contract to come to camp.

"Obviously you're afraid of getting cut, too. I didn't want to get cut. That's pride. I definitely didn't want to go out on a low. Obviously a year later my perception's changed a hundred percent. The difference between this year and last year, I believe I'm an NHLer and the difference is I'm willing to prove it this year."

The PTO is the ultimate in playing without a safety net in the NHL.

No security. No guarantees. Nothing but per diem, a hotel room and faith.

One veteran agent said this week that he doesn't like to send his clients to NHL camps on a PTO because of the impression that they're on the outside trying to bang back into gainful NHL employment.

Even Fletcher doesn't like them as a team-building tool unless there is a very specific need to be filled.

"I'm not a big fan of PTOs unless you have a legitimate opportunity," Fletcher said. "Especially with veteran players that have played in the league for a while. To bring them in just to cut them is not a lot of fun, and it's not really fair to them, so I've always felt that, if there was a legitimate opportunity, then why not."

Around the NHL there are a handful of dramas similar to the one playing out with Stewart and the Flyers.

The Calgary Flames have six players on PTOs.

The Leafs are auditioning Michal Neuvirth, and he could end up being the backup to Frederik Andersen.

Drew Stafford is getting good reps in Minnesota with Kevin Fiala figuring out visa issues after signing a new deal.

Troy Brouwer has a shot in Florida where he played last season.

And Stefan Noesen could stick with the Stars.

But the reality is that with the salary cap and the emphasis on younger, faster players, the PTO is often a last-ditch opportunity for a player looking to hang onto the NHL dream. For teams there is little ventured but realistically little to be gained from the process.

"It's sort of like no harm, no foul," said Nashville Predators GM David Poile.

GMs and coaches will look at players on tryouts wondering if they can play at their previous levels and whether it's worth keeping that player ahead of a younger player. A team's overall depth and, specifically, depth at a given position or skill set also factors in, but the odds all conspire against the player on the PTO.

"I would say 90 percent of the PTOs just go away," Poile said. "But every once in a while you get lucky."

Like Poile and the Predators did coming out of the 2004-05 lockout.

When the lockout ended in the summer of 2005, Yanic Perreault was an aging player with modest foot speed and no contract, wondering if his career was over. He had several tryout opportunities as teams began assembling but ended up in Nashville where the Predators were looking to add some center depth.

"Obviously you know your back is a little bit against the wall and you're in a bit of survival mode," Perreault said. "It's a different kind of pressure. Every practice would count. I was ready for the preseason games like it was a playoff game."

At the same time, Perreault felt there was a kind of narrowing of focus in knowing what was at stake.

"You're at peace," he said. "You take one day at a time and you stay at peace. At the end of the day, you're going to leave everything on the table. You're happy that you've tried and you have no regrets at the end of the day."

The only thing Perreault asked of the Predators was that he have his own room during camp so he could get a good night's sleep and be at his best for the daily tests that he was facing.

Perreault impressed the Predators with his veteran presence in the room and his uncanny work in the faceoff circle, and he was



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offered a one-year deal. He proceeded to record a career-best 57 points. He signed in Arizona the next summer and played in the NHL All-Star Game. In all, Perreault played two more seasons after the Nashville PTO experiment, finishing up in Chicago where he currently works as a development coach.

Stewart, the 18th-overall pick in the 2006 NHL Draft, certainly seems to have taken a page from the Perreault PTO playbook in terms of his approach to this opportunity.

Stewart knows that a decade of NHL play is a formidable feat, especially growing up in Toronto with a large family that didn't have a lot of resources to spend on extracurricular activities like hockey.

"I'd give anything for the 11th year, but am I going to feel any less complete or is my legacy going to be any tarnished because I played a decade, not 11 years?" Stewart said. "It took a while for that to sink in. It took a hard three months to come around and turn that page, but it was needed, it was part of the process."

Heading into the 2018-19 season, Stewart initially agreed to play in the KHL with the team based in Bratislava. But he felt in his heart that it was not the right move and decided not to go. Something got lost in translation, however, and the team purchased a ticket for Stewart and when he didn't show up at training camp local reporters were told he was "missing."

"Now everyone in my family's reaching out to me and saying 'hey, is everything OK? Are you missing?'" Stewart said. "I said what, I just dropped the kids off at school. I'm not missing. Did you check my house? I'm at home."

For a time this looked like it might be it for Stewart, who will turn 32 at the end of October.

He stepped away from the game. The family went on vacation to Jamaica. But there was still something that kept him going back to check what was happening in the hockey world.

"My wife is calling me crazy because you say you're done with hockey and what's the first thing I do? I turn on the hockey game and I'm watching the game. So she knows me. She's letting me go through my process. She knows I'm not done," Stewart said.

At the suggestion of his brother Anthony, the 25th-overall pick in the 2003 NHL Draft, Stewart ended up playing 23 games last season for the Nottingham Panthers in the British Elite League – because Chris wanted to play where English is the main language and "he's a picky eater," according to Anthony. This reignited Chris' desire to give the NHL one more shot. And he spent this past summer working out with Matt Nichol, who runs the highly regarded BioSteel program in Toronto.

It was while he was in England with his family that Stewart took note of the changing of the guard in Philadelphia.

He is best pals with former Flyers power forward Wayne Simmonds, who was sent to Nashville at the trade deadline last season. The Flyers also parted ways with Dale Weise and bruising defenseman Radko Gudas.

Before the free agency period began in July, Stewart had his agent, Eustace King, contact Fletcher to let him know of Stewart's interest in trying to revive his NHL career.

Fletcher was certainly cognizant of the potential size and physicality void that had been created by the offseason moves and made an effort to bring in players with good size.

The fact that Fletcher twice acquired Stewart during Fletcher's tenure as GM in Minnesota was also a factor in extending an invite to camp.

"In our case, we're a little thin up-front. We have a lot of young players coming into camp. Many of them first- and second-year pros, and they may or may not be ready," Fletcher said. "Coming

into the season we felt we had 11 legitimate returning NHL forwards and so when we looked at Chris, he's a right shot, right wing, which we're a little thin on. He brings a physical presence, and he's had a good career, so we felt there certainly was opportunity in our roster, and Chris brings some of the attributes we're looking for."

The fact that Stewart was all the way out of the league a year ago likely gives him a different perspective on the opportunity with the Flyers.

"I think he came to realize he really wants one more crack at the NHL and so I think he has that mindset where he's coming in probably understanding the odds are never really, really in your favor, but this is something that is worthwhile to him to make an attempt," Fletcher said.

If there were concerns that it might be awkward coming to camp as a PTO, they were quickly dispelled.

Captain Claude Giroux reached out to Stewart shortly after the invitation was made public. The training staff and coaches have been supportive, with Stewart's gear arriving well ahead of formal workouts.

He feels like he's been embraced, but Stewart is likewise taking nothing for granted.

"You've got to live in the moment. If there's one thing I know right off the bat, I'm going to be given a legit shot here. As an athlete, as a player, that's all you can ask for. Let the cards fall where they're going to fall," Stewart said.

"You look at one of my good friends, Joel Ward, he goes into Montreal last year, he plays one exhibition game, he gets an assist, plays well and gets cut the next day, so it's like you know he didn't have a sniff from the jump."

With Tyler Pitlick injured, there are obvious opportunities beyond simply being a big body. Early in camp, Stewart skated alongside experienced NHLers Scott Laughton and Michael Raffl. In the first preseason game, Stewart played with Oskar Lindblom and German Rubtsov. Stewart endeared himself to the Flyer faithful by fighting Islanders defenseman Kyle Burroughs after Burroughs stood Stewart up at the blue line with a hard check.

"As nerve-wracking as it is, the upside's there too," Stewart concluded. "You just got to be you. I think I can write my way onto this team. I think it's there. But it's on me, it's on my shoulders. That's a good position to be in."

The Athletic LOADED: 09.18.2019

1108232 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Pettersson still dropping jaws ahead of second year with Canucks

Iain MacIntyre | @imacSportsnet

September 18, 2019, 1:53 AM

VANCOUVER – It was slick, it was sick, it was effortless, and it wasn't even Elias Pettersson.

Brandon Sutter, an older checking centre who is so not Pettersson, scored on a beautiful penalty shot Tuesday, fluidly pulling the puck to his backhand, and patiently gliding past the goalie before lifting the puck into the net to open the scoring for



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the Vancouver Canucks in their 4-2 pre-season win against the Edmonton Oilers.

It was a wonderful piece of National Hockey League tradecraft by a veteran shutdown guy who is highly respected by teammates, scorned by the analytics community and largely tolerated by everyone else. Sutter's goal earned applause.

Had Pettersson pulled it off – and of course he would have – Rogers Arena would have shaken. Fans would be lining up in the morning for tattoos. But that's the hockey world on the West Coast these days.

Almost everything Pettersson does thrills and amazes, which in itself is remarkable since so much is expected of last season's Calder Trophy winner and one of the National Hockey League's greatest young talents.

Tuesday's game was probably Pettersson's quietest day since the Canucks opened training camp Friday in Victoria, although his third-period rebound goal tied the game 2-2 and started Vancouver's late surge. Sutter tapped in the game-winner on a terrific goal-side pass from Alex Edler.

We could speculate that Pettersson, expected to drive the team this season toward its first playoff appearance in five years, may be saving himself for more meaningful games or at least the arrival Wednesday of a friend and linemate Brock Boeser in his new armored car.

But that's not Pettersson, who seems to seize every day as if it might be his last in hockey. He is 20 years old.

On the opening day of camp in Victoria, Pettersson not only survived coach Travis Green's infamous conditioning skate, but dusted his group – unheard of for a second-year player.

The next day, the Swedish centre won the scrimmage in a shootout, using his reach to finesse the puck one-handed around the goalie like Peter Forsberg at the 1994 Olympics. Sweden made a stamp of that one. The City of Victoria may settle for a statue.

Then, Pettersson spent nearly an hour signing autographs for fans, turning no one away.

"The conditioning skate, he was on before me," Canucks defenceman Troy Stecher said. "But we were all watching him from the stairs. He was leaps and bounds ahead of everyone. It's insane.

"I was joking with some guys that he has perfected the Forsberg move better than Forsberg, he throws better dime passes than Tom Brady and he's just insane to watch. He throws that flip pass to guys over their shoulder and it lands flat. It's crazy. This guy is just a special talent."

Pettersson reported to camp noticeably thicker, stronger and quicker – and maybe even an inch taller – than he was last season when he played at 176 pounds.

"I feel much better," he said after the game. "Apart from conditioning, I feel much more balanced when I'm shooting. I feel like I can shoot a little harder and I feel like I have more control of everything. It feels good out there, even though I was a little tired today after training camp."

Jeff Marek and Elliott 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.

Canucks veterans such as Jay Beagle have a hard time believing how "professional" Pettersson is already.

"I definitely wasn't ready when I was that young," Beagle said.

"This summer was a big summer for him and it was nice to see that he came in bigger, stronger, faster and he continues to work to build his game into an even better player. That's an incredible quality. It's awesome to see when you have a young guy come in and he has not only have the talent and skill and the work ethic on the ice, which in itself is impressive, but also off the ice."

"He's just driven," Green told reporters at camp. "There are certain players that you get to coach every once in a while that you don't feel you have to worry about. How he thinks about the game, and not just the game but about winning, I don't worry about him."

If there is a concern, it's that so much so soon is expected from Pettersson after he led the Canucks with 66 points in 71 games as a rookie. He is already Vancouver's best player, and as we saw at training camp, quickly becoming a leader in other senses, too.

"I know the expectations are higher for me, but I'm the one who puts the highest expectations for myself," Pettersson said. "I don't think (about) what other people want to see from me. I try to play my best hockey every day."

There was one ripple of concern for Vancouver after Tuesday's win: outstanding rookie Quinn Hughes left the game with 12 minutes remaining, two periods after losing a couple of teeth after getting high-sticked by Oiler Cameron Hebig. Hughes missed most of the first period, but played the entire second and looked excellent.

"Precautionary," Green said. "I'm not sure where it's at but from what I hear, it's nothing major."

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Sportsnet.ca / Maple Leafs' Jason Spezza still chasing Stanley Cup as career slows down

Chris Johnston | @reporterchris

September 17, 2019, 1:43 PM

ST. JOHN'S, N.L. — Deep down, Jason Spezza knows this could be it.

There's a chance this is his final season in professional hockey.

The biggest reason he's here in training camp with the Toronto Maple Leafs — playing on a league-minimum \$700,000 contract near the end of a career that's netted him almost \$90-million — is because the game has left him with some unfinished business.

"There's one thing missing from my career and it's winning a Cup," said Spezza. "I feel like this team has a great chance to do it."

That and that alone is how he'll measure the success of this season, the 17th where he's pulled on a NHL sweater.

On a personal level, he's trying to delay the inevitable.

Spezza, at age 36, is now the fourth-oldest forward under contract to an NHL team. Last season he was the 14th-oldest forward to play in the league.

These are stats he's aware of and help explain the urgency he feels to carve out his specific niche with the Leafs. The clock is ticking. He views himself as a potential "Swiss Army Knife" for



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head coach Mike Babcock — a veteran who can win key faceoffs, distribute on the power play, kill penalties, move up the lineup when injuries hit and help mentor those around him.

"I hope to have a good year and be a part of the team here and grow with some of these guys," said Spezza. "If I keep feeling the way I feel physically I think there's a job for me and I'd like it to be here for a little bit. I don't plan on bouncing around too much.

"I'm not trying to break the bank at this point of my career, I'm just trying to play on a good team and be a part of something kind of cool.

"I don't think it's my last year."

Spezza wants to make a strong first impression by dialling in his special teams assignments early in pre-season and had some encouraging moments in Tuesday's 3-1 loss to the Ottawa Senators at Mile One Centre.

He saw time on both the power play and penalty kill, and had a hand in creating a couple scoring chances at even strength.

Even with his credentials as a former No. 2 overall pick and a longtime No. 1 centre, Spezza still has something to prove in the coming weeks.

There were candid conversations with Babcock and general manager Kyle Dubas about expectations before he signed in Toronto on July 1 and he'll need to demonstrate he can meet them.

"There's a role here for him but he's got to be able to do it," said Babcock. "And so we're going to see over exhibition whether he likes it, whether he wants to do it and go [from there]. So we're just in the process of feeling him out and he's feeling us out right now."

The father of four daughters seems like an ideal role model to throw into a young dressing room, especially with the departures of trusted voices Patrick Marleau and Ron Hainsey over the summer.

Spezza has seen it all.

He understands the demands and expectations Auston Matthews and Mitch Marner are shouldering. He can speak with authority about the importance of seizing on opportunities like the one the Leafs have this season. He is also a hockey encyclopedia who, according to former teammate Ben Bishop, watches as many games in his down time as any active player in the league.

"He's a really smart hockey mind. He's one of the most caring guys you'll meet," Bishop told Sportsnet during a recent interview. "If there's a rookie that comes up from the minors, Spezz is the first one to go sit next to him and talk hockey. Just a contagious personality you want to be around."

The love for the game has never left him. He's even learned how to embrace the challenging days that come along with the job.

"I love the intensity of it, I love the challenge of trying to get ready, I love the challenge of being 36 and trying to reinvent myself a little bit," said Spezza. "I like hanging out with the guys, the banter in the room, the practices. I don't know if I'm a little bit crazy, but I like the grind of it.

"I kind of appreciate the grind."

This will be its own unique challenge.

Coming to play close to home in what will almost certainly be a limited role and trying to be a good influence on a group looking to win a Stanley Cup despite not previously having even won a playoff series.

"You have to not ride the roller-coaster so much when you're one of those teams. You need to try to be steady," said Spezza.

"Really you're just going to get judged on the success you have in the playoffs. You have to make sure that you're playing good hockey and creating good habits."

There is still some regret about the way everything played out way back when in Ottawa, where Spezza centred one of the best lines in the league with Daniel Alfredsson and Dany Heatley for three years coming out of the 2004-05 lockout but couldn't get the Senators to the top of the mountain.

He still thinks about the loss to Anaheim in the 2007 Stanley Cup Final "all the time." It's part of what keeps him going today.

"Those three years we had there, we were knocking on the door and probably should have won," said Spezza. "We were a perennial powerhouse for a few years and didn't get it done.

"You don't want to see that happen again."

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Sportsnet.ca / With Oilers focused on results, Bouchard must turn potential into reality

Mark Spector | @sportsnetspec

September 17, 2019, 6:45 PM

EDMONTON — Evan Bouchard came to training camp more fit than ever, testing right near the top of all rookies. A nice show of commitment for a first-round draft pick who turns pro this season, right?

"You know, I've seen lots of guys who are amazing in the gym who aren't good on the ice. And I've seen guys that are terrible in the gym who are real good on the ice," said a dismissive Oilers captain Connor McDavid. "It doesn't really matter. You want to be in good shape, but I think all of us are in pretty good shape.

"Good for him for coming in and having good fitness testing. But he's got to have a good camp on the ice."

That, in a nutshell, sums up the collective attitude of anyone who has spent any time around these Oilers. Stats are nice, being in shape is great, and potential is also a handy attribute.

But it's about winning, and winning now. Bring it on the ice, or don't bring it all, is what McDavid is saying.

Harsh? Maybe.

Realistic? Absolutely.

Then there was this clinical observation from Dave Tippett, a head coach who sees a top pairing defenceman in Bouchard — once the prospect figures out that the NHL game is played with urgency. Not at the comfortable pace that Bouchard mastered as an Ontario Hockey League all-star in London.

"He's a smart enough kid that he knows what he has to do to (make the NHL)," Tippett said. "Once you get to the NHL level, if you don't go back and get those pucks you're not going to have the time you need to make those plays.

"He's going from a junior mentality, where he can really just do whatever he wants, to an NHL mentality where you're going to



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have a lot more pressure. But he's still got to make those plays that are at the essence of his game."

Here's what Bouchard can do: He is that patient holder of the puck with the panic level that is higher than most. That player whose threshold for divesting himself of the puck is elite — even at the NHL level — so it is important that he have the puck, with time to make use of his considerable puck-moving skills.

"Retrieval. Getting to pucks quicker. Skating," Bouchard said. "It all ties in to wanting to spend more time with the puck, and less time chasing it. Raise your intensity every time you're out there."

Bouchard is, as a human being, somewhat of a slow-twitch guy. He thinks before he speaks. He considers before he moves. Whatever a guy like McDavid — who does everything at warp speed — is, Bouchard is the opposite.

"He's got ice in his veins, watching everyone fly around, and he's just standing there and movin' the puck," marvelled Tippett. "He's got to get to the puck quicker, to make sure he's got the puck more. Bouchard, the more he has the puck, the more good things are going to happen. So, go get it. And sometimes you have to go quicker to get it."

"It doesn't have to change too much," said Bouchard, who is still over a month away from his 20th birthday. "There are places where you have to have more of a jump, but I don't think it's about changing it. It's about adding it into my game."

"The one thing I did work on this summer is hustling back for pucks. That's the main thing for me: Do you want to have the puck, or chase the puck? You want to have time with it once you get it, rather than coast back and (have to) make a quick play."

Do you want to be first in fitness testing? Or on the first power-play unit?

Do it on the ice, kid. The captain said so.

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Sportsnet.ca / Agent explains why Boeser, Canucks went with bridge deal

Mike Johnston | @MikeyJ_MMA

September 17, 2019, 5:07 PM

The Vancouver Canucks ended a potential lingering distraction by signing forward Brock Boeser to a three-year, \$17.6-million contract Monday.

"I'm relieved, Brock is more relieved, and the fans are most relieved," Boeser's agent Ben Hankinson told Sportsnet 650 on Tuesday.

As Hankinson explained, negotiations had been ongoing and both sides were left slightly disappointed — which often means a fair deal was reached.

"At the end of the day we compromised, both sides, and did a fair deal," Hankinson said. "They were stuck on an offer that they hadn't moved from in a long time and so were we. They thought their offer was fair. I obviously didn't think so. I thought our deal was fair and Jim (Benning), on Sunday night, we kind of huddled with the owner and Chris Gear (the team's vice president and general counsel) and his group.

"We kind of met in the middle, basically. (Benning) wasn't happy, I certainly wasn't happy with where he got to and that's usually a good sign. We swore at each other a little bit and got the deal done."

Boeser will be 25 and a restricted free agent when this deal expires in 2022. When asked why a long-term deal wasn't reached, Hankinson said the two parties were initially headed down that road.

"We started over a year ago, in August, going through long-term options and we sat down and huddled and going into his last season (of his entry-level contract) last year we had seven-year deal options, six-year deal options," Hankinson said. "It wasn't where we thought it should be. The market obviously changed, so we're happy we didn't sign what the numbers were back then."

Prior to this past June's NHL Draft, the Canucks reportedly had a lucrative offer on the table but nothing came to fruition.

"There were some rumblings that there was a \$7-million offer at the draft and that's fairly accurate, and at that point we were really close to getting a long-term deal done," Hankinson added. "We weren't there yet and if I look back I'm still happy we didn't do that deal, but it was getting in the 'take it' zone right about then."

Around that same time, though, the Canucks traded for J.T. Miller (\$5.25-million average annual value), re-signed Alex Edler (\$6-million average annual value), signed Tyler Myers (\$6-million average annual value), Roberto Luongo retired, adding an annual recapture penalty of \$3,033,206 to the cap and all of a sudden the team had some cap issues to manage.

Negotiations were pushed back as the two sides regrouped before they ultimately settled on three years and a \$5.875-million cap hit.

Boeser leads all Canucks players in goals and points over the past two seasons, despite some injury problems, and Hankinson said the Burnsville, Minn., native is coming into the 2019-20 season "fully healthy, fully ready to go."

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Sportsnet.ca / Why Patrik Laine's desire for first line role won't surprise Winnipeg Jets

Sean Reynolds

September 17, 2019, 3:55 PM

On a day like today the saying "no news is good news" applies for Winnipeg Jets fans. Especially when the alternative is an unsigned RFA venting about his playing situation.

That's what the hockey world woke to on Tuesday as an interview by Finnish journalist Pekka Jalonen revealed a frustrated Patrik Laine, who said he thinks he should be surrounded by better linemates than the ones coach Paul Maurice has provided.

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"In contract negotiations, one thing always is who you are playing with," Laine told Jalonen in Finnish. "With the merits I have, somewhere else I'd have an opportunity to play with the best players. Everyone who understands hockey should know that."

But if there's worry that Laine's comments will create a wedge between himself and his Jets teammates, captain Blake Wheeler wants to make it clear that won't be the case.

"It's a non-issue today. I mean none whatsoever," Wheeler said.

At the same time, Wheeler wasn't buying into Laine's premise of playing with better players.

"We're top five in the league (on the power play) the last couple of years. (That's) a big part of what Patty does," said Wheeler. "He's definitely not doing it himself I can guarantee you that."

The fact Laine is bringing up his beef about desiring better linemates in the context of his current contract negotiations is telling. Multiple reports (including information from Sportsnet's Elliotte Friedman) suggest Laine and the Jets are looking at a bridge deal, which would provide Laine a chance to bet on himself after a down season. The problem is, you can't bet on yourself without also betting on your situation, and Laine clearly has issues with his.

Jets management and Maurice would never tell you second line centre Bryan Little isn't up to the task, but actions speak louder than words — and there has been no shortage of action on this file. GM Kevin Cheveldayoff has traded his first round pick at two consecutive trade deadlines to bring in a new second line centre (Paul Stastny in 2018 and Kevin Hayes in 2019). Cheveldayoff also pushed hard to keep Stastny in the summer of 2018, going as far as saying he may have overextended financially with a contract pitch. It was ultimately turned down, though, and Stastny left for the Golden Knights in Vegas.

These moves should tell you that the Jets organization is seeing the same thing a lot of fans are: Little is a great hockey player as is Laine, but the pair have shown very little chemistry together.

Go back two seasons to Laine's finest goal scoring campaign, when he netted 44 goals and finished second in the league behind Alex Ovechkin. Of those 44 goals, Little assisted on just six. Last season, Little assisted on only nine of Laine's 30 goals. All together, just over 20 per cent of Laine's goals from the past two seasons were set up by his primary centreman. For a little context, Wheeler assisted on 58 per cent of Mark Scheifele's goals.

Pressed on the usage of his young sniper on Tuesday, Maurice preached patience with Laine.

"I'd like to play with Sidney Crosby if I'm a player," Maurice said. "I'd really like to. But Phil (Kessel) didn't play there and neither does Evgeni (Malkin). Patty Kane doesn't play with Jonathan (Toews) consistently.

"I'll use my driver's license analogy. Nobody gets the keys at 14."

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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."

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.



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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 / At age 34, Alex Ovechkin still has time to break Gretzky's goal record

Josh Beneteau | @jbenny15

September 17, 2019, 10:15 AM

As the NHL trends younger, it's noteworthy that Alex Ovechkin turns 34 today, Sept. 17. At an age when most players begin their decline, the Capitals' captain doesn't appear to be slowing down.

Ovechkin has accomplished virtually everything in his career, but there is still one summit left for him to conquer: Wayne Gretzky's all-time goals record. In this context, at only 34 years old time is on Ovechkin's side.

"The most important thing is (to be) healthy. If you're healthy, you can still play the game the way you want to play," Ovechkin said in a recent interview on the 31 Thoughts podcast. "Of

course (the record) matters, but like I said, I'm not going to score 300 goals in two years. It's going to take five or six years. I have to be healthy enough to do that."

With 658 goals, Ovechkin enters this season ranked 13th all-time and 237 away from passing Gretzky. The eight-time Rocket Richard Trophy winner has been scoring at a nearly unprecedented rate for his entire career and he could very well surpass 700 goals by the end of the season. If he does that, he will become only the eighth player ever to hit the milestone.

Player	Total Goals	Total Games Played	Goals at Retirement Age
34*	Games Played at 34*		
Wayne Gretzky 38	894	1487	805 1129
Gordie Howe 52	801	1767	502 1050
Jaromir Jagr 45	766	1733	577 1085
Brett Hull 741	1269	554	801 41
Marcel Dionne 37	731	1348	629 1083
Phil Esposito 38	717	1282	553 902
Mike Gartner 38	708	1432	589 1100
Alex Ovechkin NA	658	1084	658 1084

*Numbers from the day player turned 34.

The list of 700 goal scorers is impressive, but what Ovechkin has done to this point in his career is better than almost all of them. Gretzky is the outlier of course, but Ovechkin is far ahead of where the six others on the list were by their 34th birthdays, and he should hit 700 faster than any of them too.

In other words, it's safe to say that Ovechkin has a better chance than anyone else ever has to break Gretzky's record.

"It was always the goal to score as many goals as I can," Ovechkin said in Chicago. "But every year is harder and harder."

Gretzky retired at age 38 but Ovechkin will likely need to play past that to have a chance at breaking the record. His desire to play into his 40s is questionable — especially once his current contract expires in two years — but his durability shouldn't be a problem. Ovechkin has missed a combined 30 games over his entire 14-year career (not including lockouts), and only one in the last three seasons — a suspension for skipping the all-star game.

That near perfect bill of health is why the entire hockey world took notice when he went down briefly in a pre-camp skate earlier this month. While the injury wasn't serious, the incident showed how quickly things can change for even the healthiest players.

Still, to forecast how Ovechkin can break the goals record, we'll assume his healthy streak will continue for a little while longer. If it doesn't, the record will be safe.

Ovechkin is scoring at a 0.61 goals per game average (or 50.2 goals per 82 games) for his career, which is second behind only Mario Lemieux among players with 600 goals. If he stays on that pace, and plays 82 games a season, Ovechkin could catch Gretzky in 389 games. That's four seasons and 61 games, when Ovechkin will be only 38.



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Of course, the chances are slim that he'll be able to score 50 goals deep into his 30s, and appear in all 82 games every year. More likely, he'll mix in some 30- and 40-goal seasons, which bumps the timeline to just under seven seasons or around 550 games. That puts Ovechkin at age 41.

As we said at the top, time is the key and Ovechkin as a ton of it at his disposal. If he wants it.

"I don't want to play just for that record," Ovechkin said. "I want to be healthy, I want to have fun, I want to enjoy the moment when I'm on the ice."

The clock is ticking.

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

Mark Spector | @sportsnetspec

September 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."

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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TSN.CA / Five Takeaways: Canucks vs Oilers



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Jeff Paterson

TAKEAWAYS

1) Brandon Sutter scored just four goals in the 26 games he appeared in last season. On Tuesday night, he scored twice to lead the Canucks to a 4-2 win over a youthful group of Edmonton Oilers. More than the goals, though, Sutter appears to be fully recovered from the abdominal injuries that have plagued him the past two seasons. His first goal came on a first period penalty shot. The goal was good. The play to draw the penalty shot was better. For a guy who has had issues with his explosiveness due to injury, Sutter broke away and gained a step on the Oilers defense and forced Dmitri Samorukov to haul him down with a hook. There were times last year Sutter would not have been able to separate from the defense like he did on Tuesday night. The fact he had that extra gear to go to -- even if it was against non-NHL competition -- should serve him well in the confidence department as he works his way to the start of the regular season.

2) Thatcher Demko was terrific on Tuesday. He was thrust into the fire early during a 1:15 two-man advantage for the Oilers with Vincent Arsenneau and Tyler Myers in the penalty box. Demko stopped all 14 first period shots he faced and made 35 saves on the night. He was aided by a pair of goalposts in the third period including Oilers forward Ryan McLeod missing what looked like an empty net which would have extended Edmonton's lead to 3-1 at the time. Demko looks like he has found a comfort level knowing that his job in the NHL is secure for the first time in his career. Last year at this time, he suffered a concussion that derailed the first half of his season. When he finally got a look late in the year he was able to amass a body of work in the NHL that gave him a baseline of things to work on over the off-season. He looked focussed and determined on Tuesday night and opened his preseason in style.

3) We all saw it on many nights last season, but there's no question Elias Pettersson is a showman. Like so many great performers, he simply refuses to take nights off -- even in the first week of preseason. Pettersson crushed his group in the bag skate on the first day of training camp in Victoria. He opened the camp scoring in Saturday's scrimmage and then wowed Island hockey fans with a spectacular shootout goal on Sunday. Tuesday had its moments of Pettersson doing his dekes and controlling play and then when the Canucks needed something good to happen, the Alien landed. Down 2-1 midway through the third, Pettersson pounced on a rebound of a Micheal Ferland shot and beat Oiler netminder Shane Starrett through the five-hole. It sparked a Canuck comeback with Brandon Sutter putting the team in front for good just 1:19 later. Every time he's hit the ice since the first day of camp, Pettersson has given fans a moment -- something that makes you sit up and take notice. And the exciting part is that he's just getting warmed up and will soon have his buddy Brock Boeser back beside him.

4) Olli Juolevi's past two weeks have been a roller coaster. From the positives of looking good and participating in all three days of Canucks development camp to what appeared to be some kind of set back on the first day of main camp in Victoria to now being nowhere to be seen through three preseason games. Juolevi and Jacob Markstrom are the only two main camp attendees who have yet to appear in game action. The young defenseman struggled with the heavy skate at the end of Friday's first day of main camp last weekend. On Saturday, he was assigned to skate with the Utica group but returned to the main group Sunday and participated fully in scrimmage action. Which brings us to the second day of the preseason and the fact that Juolevi still hasn't suited up for an exhibition contest and following Tuesday's game Travis Green seemed to hint that the Finnish

blueliner quite possibly won't get the chance: "I'm not sure if we'll see him before the end of camp." When pressed if the absence is due to injury, the coach said no: "He's good". It's been a tough year for Juolevi since injuring his knee last November in Utica and requiring surgery just prior to Christmas. The kid deserves a break, but just can't seem to catch one.

5) The Canucks reduced their roster to 46 skaters prior to Tuesday's game against Edmonton. And it sounds like more cuts re coming. Green said after the game that the team would likely pare its roster further before Thursday's rematch in the Alberta capital. With just four games remaining on the preseason schedule, it would serve the Canucks well to get down to manageable numbers as quickly as possible. With the return of Brock Boeser, Travis Green hinted that he and his coaching staff would likely start to work with the power play groupings -- something they haven't done to this point in camp save for a few brief line rushes during Monday's morning skates. On Tuesday, the power play featured Pettersson, Ferland, Nikolay Goldobin, Tanner Pearson and Quinn Hughes at one point in the second period. They stormed the Oilers net and did everything but score. It's hard to get worked up about a lack of power play proficiency in the first week of exhibition action, but the countdown to the team's October 2nd opening night is on and with Boeser back in the fold, it's time the Canucks get down to special teams business.

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TSN.CA / Tavares treating preseason as crucial preparation

Mark Masters

TSN Toronto reporter Mark Masters checks in daily with news and notes on the Maple Leafs, who held a morning skate and practice (non-playing group) on Tuesday at Mile One Centre in St. John's, NL.

As he starts his 11th NHL season, it was suggested to John Tavares that some veterans see the exhibition schedule as a bit of a drag. Wouldn't it be nice to fast forward to opening night?

But Tavares doesn't see it that way at all.

"I mean, these games are crucial to get ready to play," said Tavares, who turns 29 later this week. "You see guys that don't play in many exhibition games or miss time in camp; it takes time to get that rhythm back. You haven't played in four, five months. It's a long time so it's a way to get back into that routine, that feeling. All those things, as best as you can mimic them in training camp and practice or preparing in the off-season, there's nothing like playing in a real game and what that type of environment is, so they're crucial."

Toronto's top players are scheduled to suit up in four of the eight preseason games, two this week and two next week. The two next week against Montreal and Detroit will feature the NHL lineup.

"You're playing in the greatest league in the world, at this level you never take any [games] for granted, whether they matter or they don't," Tavares said.

After a strong first season in Toronto while playing with Mitch Marner, Tavares isn't about to rest on his laurels.



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"With the chemistry we were able to develop and the success we had, it just leaves you hungry for more," said Tavares. "It doesn't change the feeling or make you feel relaxed. I think it just continues to fuel the drive that we want to continue to get better."

Tickets for tonight's tilt on The Rock sold out in mere minutes and the anticipation has been building in the Newfoundland and Labrador capital since the Leafs landed here Thursday night.

"It's been amazing just the buzz around town," said Tavares, who was sporting a Danny Cleary Hockey School hat during his media session, "us going out to eat and even just walking around, the amount of people that recognize us and are so passionate about the team ... it's not every day we come out here so it's a big deal [and] looking forward to it. It should be a great atmosphere and obviously want to go out and play well and put on a good game."

You can understand why Tavares is placing so much emphasis on the exhibition season. He and Marner have a new linemate to build chemistry with in Kasperii Kapanen. Tavares will also have a new role on the power play as he shifts to the bumper/middle spot vacated by Nazem Kadri.

"Obviously, some guys who were in that role aren't here this year, so we talked about me being in there and thought it was a good spot to try out and felt I could be good in that role," Tavares explained. "I try to be as versatile as I can be and play wherever the team needs me and try to be effective there and productive. I played quite a bit there my last year in New York so I have some familiarity in that spot."

Tavares scored 10 of his 47 goals on the power play last season while playing primarily as the net-front presence and a bit on the flank.

John Tavares will be given the opportunity to fill Nazem Kadri's old spot centering the team's top power play unit tonight when the Leafs face the Sens in pre-season action, and it's a role he's familiar with from his last season playing in New York. Mark Masters has more.

Toronto's top unit at the morning skate featured Tavares, Marner on the left flank, Tyson Barrie at the point, Jeremy Bracco on the right flank with Egor Korshkov in front.

"It's a pretty good unit," Bracco said with a big smile. "There's a lot of money on that unit. When those guys talk you be quiet and listen, for sure."

While training camp is "crucial" for Tavares, it's arguably even more important for someone like Bracco, who is facing an uphill battle to snag a job despite racking up 79 points in 75 games with the Marlies last season and finishing second in AHL scoring.

"To be honest, I think he's probably one of the better passers on our team," said Kapanen, who was on a line with Bracco the first two days of camp before Tavares and Marner arrived. "He just sees the ice really well. His skating isn't [pause, smile] the best we've ever seen, but his vision is something else, for sure. Just looking at all the plays he makes you kind of envy him."

Bracco worked hard this summer with skating consultant Barb Underhill to try and improve his stride.

"She tries to get me to skate forward instead of sideways and we're still working on that," the 22-year-old said.

After posting 79 points in 75 games with the Marlies in the AHL, Jeremy Bracco is out to prove he's ready to make the jump to the NHL. The 22-year-old winger scored a goal during scrimmage at Monday's informal skate, but says he's more eager to show off his defensive improvements once camp opens.

While Bracco is on the outside looking in right now, Trevor Moore is trying to maintain his spot. The winger made his NHL

debut with the Leafs last year, playing 25 games in the regular season and not looking out of place while suiting up in all seven playoff games against Boston.

"When you're in the American League you're not always sure. You have the confidence that you can play at this level, but you don't know that you can play at this level," the undrafted 24-year-old said. "Being able to come here I gained the confidence that I belong and now it's about building on that."

Much like last year with Andreas Johnsson and Travis Dermott, Babcock sent out a warning that nothing will be guaranteed for Moore.

"He's like the other guys. There's eight games right here, it's competitive, you gotta show," the coach said. "I think initially you get in and you think you're in for life. The great thing about the National Hockey League is you're in for that year and you got to keep going. Now, there are a few guys who are just that good, but the rest of us are on a tryout."

Moore worked on getting a bit faster during the summer and has no intention of taking a backseat in tonight's game.

"For me, I'm not going to get out there and try and feel it out," he vowed. "I want to get out there and prove I belong here and make an impact."

Moore hoping to prove in pre-season he belongs with Leafs

Trevor Moore says he's focused on proving in the pre-season that he belongs with the Leafs this season, and explains that despite the competition the team added in the off-season, it's up to him to secure a spot with the big club. Meanwhile, Mike Babcock discusses what the next step is for Moore.

Moore will be skating on a line with Jason Spezza, who is starting his 17th NHL season.

"You're pretty fortunate to come in here and play on a team lower in the lineup and get to play with a guy like that," Moore said. "I mean, his knowledge of the game and the way he approaches it is, I got to think, second to none."

Moore is still getting used to playing alongside the 36-year-old centre, but even at the morning skate found a reason to be impressed noting Spezza threaded the needle to fellow linemate Pierre Engvall for a backdoor tap-in on a three-on-two rush.

However, Babcock has made it clear that Spezza's veteran status doesn't mean he's immune from the same training camp pressure guys like Moore face.

"There's a role here for him, but he's got to be able to do it," Babcock said in response to a question about Spezza being a good role model for younger players. "And, so, we'll see over exhibition whether he likes it and whether he wants to do it. So we're just in the process of feeling him out and he's feeling us out right now so it's probably a different camp that way for him. But, he loves hockey."

Spezza, who averaged 13:16 of ice time in 76 games with Dallas last season, insists he's ready to fully embrace whatever the Leafs ask of him. He's already made the transition to a bottom-six mindset in recent years.

"I've produced my whole life and you have a high expectation of where you're at and where you should be in the lineup so, yeah, the first maybe year or a little bit of transition was tougher than others, but now I've played that role for a couple years so I feel comfortable doing it and I know what it has to look like and what you have to do," he said.

"You become a little more of a specialist. You play on special teams, you plan on taking faceoffs and when guys go down with injuries you have to move up and down the lineup. You have new linemates all the time, instead of when you're the top guys



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you kind of have the set lines so there's some different challenges. Basically, it comes down to, do you want to keep playing or do you want to hold on to the old days and I want to keep playing."

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TSN.CA / Barrie feeling anxious ahead of Leafs debut

Kristen Shilton

St. John's, N.L. – Meaningless preseason games don't tend to intimidate NHL veterans, but Tyson Barrie couldn't quell some unexpected butterflies before his first outing as a Maple Leaf on Tuesday.

"It's probably the first preseason game I've played in a while where I'm a little nervous, a little anxious," Barrie said ahead of Toronto's exhibition matchup against Ottawa at Mile One Centre. "It's kind of a crazy experience getting traded and this is the first real crack I have at a game where I get to put that uniform on. I'm looking forward to it."

It's been months since the Colorado Avalanche sent Barrie and Alexander Kerfoot to the Leafs in exchange for Nazem Kadri and Calle Rosen on July 1, but in some ways the trade is still sinking in. Barrie had spent his entire eight-year professional career in the Avalanche organization, producing 307 points (75 goals, 232 assists) in 484 NHL games.

He's emerged as one of the league's top offensive defencemen in recent seasons, posting 154 points (35 goals, 119 assists) in 220 games since 2016-17 – the ninth-most among defencemen in that stretch. But playing in the Western Conference meant Barrie wasn't as scrutinized as he's expecting to be with the Leafs. That will come with its own challenges, particularly in fending off criticism that he's not consistent enough in the defensive zone.

"It's up to me to come as advertised and play well," Barrie said. "Whatever the pundits think, if [they think] I'm good, that's great. And hopefully I'm not in the spotlight for the wrong reason."

Fortunately for Barrie, he landed not only on the same roster as his good friend Jake Muzzin, he's also been paired with him so far at Toronto's training camp. The two blueliners won gold together playing for Team Canada at the World Championship in 2015, and it was a no-brainer for head coach Mike Babcock to try them together out of the gate in Toronto.

"I think they complement each other," Babcock said. "Muz's intelligence in the game and his experience is really, really good and he's a calming force. Barrie is a confident guy who has a high skill set who I think is just scratching the surface. I think he can get way better. I think he wants that, and we're looking forward to that."

Being able to lean on Muzzin and their close off-ice relationship has made all the difference for Barrie, especially during Babcock's up-tempo practices.

"It's nice to have him guiding me around and showing me the ropes on the drills," Barrie said. "There are so many things you become accustomed to on one team when you're there for so long, and to switch it up when things are moving fast, I'm always checking in with Muz like, 'Hey, what do we do? What do I do here? What do I do there?' He's been great with me."

Having already spent two seasons with Barrie in Colorado prior to the trade, Kerfoot doesn't think his teammate will need too much help finding his way with the Leafs and duplicating the success he had out west.

"You just see him around the rink, on the ice; he just has that attitude about him. He knows he's a good player," Kerfoot said. "It's not cockiness by any means, but he's got confidence on the ice. He's got confidence to make plays and he's confident when he's playing with good players."

That's what Barrie sees when he looks at Toronto's defence, despite knowing how maligned the blueline has been the past few seasons. Barrie remembers well how former Leaf Jake Gardiner was booed on home ice during the Avalanche's 6-3 win over the Leafs last January and feels strongly there won't be any need for such reaction this season.

"I didn't like seeing [Gardiner booed] because I think Gards is a great guy and a great player, so it can be a tough place to play if you get the fans against you," Barrie said. "But it can also be an amazing place to play. Our d-corps is mobile and we've got some guys with a lot of games back there, so we shouldn't have any issues."

Given the enthusiastic reception Toronto's players have received in Newfoundland, it's unlikely there will be any boo birds coming out on Tuesday. And if those lingering nerves don't subside, maybe it's for the best that Barrie makes his anticipated debut on the road.

"To play my first exhibition game outside [Toronto] might actually take a little pressure off," he said with a laugh. "It's been kind of a crazy experience in itself [in St. John's]. But to get out of the city and settle in with the team a little bit before we go back to Toronto has been nice."

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YAHOO SPORTS / Some NHL defencemen don't deserve their big minutes

Ryan Lambert Yahoo Sports Canada

Sep. 17, 2019, 4:11 p.m.

With training camps opening last week, we got to hear two different mind-bending quotes that defy all logic.

Both related to long-time players who are known quantities in this league, and the continued justification of their use in high-end situations.

First was Rasmus Ristolainen, one of the worst dollar-for-dollar blue-line values in the league, talking about the rumours that he had requested a trade out of Buffalo. Asked about his decision to vent to the media in his native Finland, he told the Buffalo press, "I was just explaining, personally, how I felt and when you have rough years like I've had here the past six years and you don't win much, that's what you want."

The other was from Mike Babcock, in revealing that he would at least start camp with a top pair of Morgan Rielly (great) and Cody Ceci (maybe the worst defender in the league). Of the latter player, acquired from Ottawa where he anchored the Senators blue line — that is, weighed down to the point it was



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never going to go anywhere — Babcock said, “We think there’s growth potential there for sure.”

In both cases, we of course have long, long track records of these players proving time and again that they are not what everyone thinks they are. Imagine having a six-year NHL career, looking back and saying, “Well, I’ve had six rough years, I know I can be better.” At some point, how is a six-year period not representative of what a player is? What are the Sabres, or anyone else for that matter, going to be able to do to get more value out of him, besides shuffle him way down the lineup to the point where you basically have a third-pair power-play specialist who costs \$5.4 million?

Ristolainen had 31 points in the final year of his ELC while getting north of 25(!!!) minutes a night, and that number got bigger in each of the following two years before falling back to 24:38 last season. He’s been great on the power play and absolutely abysmal at full strength for years, but this has not deterred any of Buffalo’s coaches in that time to actually throttle back his minutes.

The same is true of Ceci. He had one year where he scored 10 goals and that alone was enough to make everyone think this guy was the defenceman of the future. He went from playing 19 minutes a night to 22 or 23. He has been predictably below replacement level at 5-on-5 ever since.

Another guy who falls into this category, and who just signed a good-sized contract for the next six years, is Ivan Provorov. He went from about 22 minutes as a rookie to 24-plus and then more than 25 in the following two seasons, respectively.

Here, too, we’re dealing with a player who has shown a lot offensively on occasion (he had 17 goals in 2017-18 but only 13 in his other two seasons combined) and has been reliable defensively, but is otherwise such a drag on his team that you have to use him somewhat selectively. It’s a big bet that he’ll be worth anything close to the money he got without another goal-scoring binge, which might require a big runout at 5-on-5, which would probably not go well for the Flyers overall even if the goals do arrive.

Would it surprise you at all to learn Ristolainen, Provorov, and Ceci are first, second, and third in on-ice goals against in all situations over the last three seasons? Because Ristolainen at least drives offence, he’s “only” minus-52. Provorov and Ceci are worse: minus-80 and minus-124(???), respectively. And yet, they’re three of just 37 defencemen to play at least 5,000 minutes in that stretch.

This is an issue, then, of misappropriation of talent. Just because a guy has played big minutes doesn’t mean he should. Babcock putting Ceci in a position to play 22-plus minutes a night alongside Rielly is asking for trouble, but you gotta put a \$4.5-million defenceman somewhere, and it can’t be “in the press box” even if it probably should.

Ralph Krueger seems like a smart guy and the long-overdue, broad acknowledgement that Ristolainen’s been bad for years might be enough to finally get him, mercifully, shuffled down the lineup. That effort would be helped by all the adds they’ve made on the blue line in recent months.

As for Provorov, well, Alain Vigneault has never seen an overrated, overpaid defenceman he didn’t want to overplay, so take that for what you will.

Now, I’ve seen people defend these guys, trying to justify their ongoing use in roles for which they simply do not fit. “Look how bad their teams were, look how much coaching turnover they’ve had, look how thin their rosters were.” But it seems logical to conclude that their teams were bad specifically because of the runout they received, and their play is generally the kind of thing that gets coaches fired (especially because those guys keep

getting big minutes, and they have largely been as bad as just about any defenceman in the league would be in a similar role).

The NHL is still inefficient enough that guys get minutes allocated to them based on their salaries rather than their capabilities, and that will likely be the case with all of them again this season. And when things go sideways, you can’t say you weren’t warned.

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YAHOO SPORTS / Report: Patrik Laine isn't happy with his usage, linemates

Kyle Cantlon Yahoo Sports Canada

September 17, 2019

As the NHL’s RFA dominos begin to really fall into place after the Toronto Maple Leafs’ signing of Mitch Marner, one of the league’s marquee shooters seems to be getting further and further away from a resolution to his standoff.

Just days after heading to Switzerland to join club SC Bern to prepare for the upcoming NHL season while his contract gets sorted out with the Winnipeg Jets, Patrik Laine opened up about what he feels has been a lack of support in regards to his ice time and usage.

In a recent interview with Pekka Jalonen, a sportswriter with Finnish outlet Iltalehti who has been following Laine his entire career, the 21-year-old lamented his middle-six role and the linemates he’s been skating alongside for the past three seasons, particularly down the middle.

“When you’re having contract negotiations, one thing always is who are you playing with. With the merits I have, somewhere else I’d have an opportunity to play with the best players. Everybody who understands hockey knows that,” Laine explained, as translated by Jalonen.

“There are top lines and then there is our line. But I play with the guys I’m told to play.”

This sure sounds like a guy who feels he should be playing with Mark Scheifele on the Jets’ top line, rather than alongside centres Bryan Little, Andrew Copp or Adam Lowry in the team’s middle-six like he has for much of his first three NHL campaigns.

Jalonen noted that the Jets appear to understand their problem at the 2C slot — and have for some time — with the team’s recent history of personnel moves a clear indication.

“I have never heard him speak like this before in public. I’m not sure if the Jets have to be concerned about this because of course, this can make some bad blood between the two sides,” Jalonen said.

“But the Jets know the situation. They need a second-line centre. They have traded two first-round picks to get a second-line centre, so they know what the problem is there.”

Winnipeg traded for two big-name pivots the past two campaigns, but both Paul Stastny and Kevin Hayes were essentially playoff rentals and neither a long-term solution on Laine’s unit.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 18, 2019

Things have seemed a little contentious between Laine and the Jets this summer as both try to work out a new contract extension. In mid-August, Laine raised some eyebrows and had many questioning how invested he was in the city of Winnipeg.

"You never know where you're going to play next year so I'm just prepared for anything," he said to Sportsnet's Chris Johnston before the conversation shifted to the city of Winnipeg itself.

"Well I've got nothing bad to say about Winnipeg, you know? It's been good so far. But you never know."

Laine posted the worst season production-wise of his young career in 2018-19, scoring 30 goals and adding 20 assists — a 14-goal and 20-point drop from the previous campaign.

He's averaged 17:11 of TOI over his first three NHL seasons.

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