



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 21, 2020

THE ATHLETIC

With less wiggle room, how could the Hurricanes navigate this offseason?

By Sara Civian

Hurricanes general manager Don Waddell made it clear a few weeks ago that this offseason probably won't be too dramatic in CanesLand.

"Rod (Brind'Amour) and I have talked about it," he said. "We made a few changes last year and the one thing you want to be careful of is always chasing something that might not be there. We've got a good group of guys here. They went through it last year and took another step this year, so you want to be careful. If we can upgrade our team at any position, we certainly will look at it, but we aren't out here saying we have to make wholesale changes with our lineup."

The Hurricanes have already committed to a 17-man roster of 10 forwards, five defensemen and two goalies in 2020-21. CapFriendly has their projected cap space at \$7,782,261. Trading the rights to unrestricted free agent Joel Edmundson on Saturday didn't move that needle considering the Canes only had him on the books for 2019-20, but it was the first of several housekeeping steps to deal with, whether or not they try to expand their cap space.

What else *must* the Hurricanes take care of?

In-house free agents

- [D Edmundson, UFA](#) (traded to the Canadiens for a 2020 fifth-round pick)
- D Sami Vatanen, UFA
- D Trevor van Riemsdyk, UFA
- D Haydn Fleury, RFA
- F Warren Foegele, RFA
- F Justin Williams, UFA

The Hurricanes have five NHL defensemen already on contract in Jacob Slavin, Dougie Hamilton, Brady Skjei, Brett Pesce and Jake Gardiner, along with two intriguing prospects in Jake Bean and Joey Keane. This means they probably sign Fleury — who took a huge step in the 2020 playoffs — to a reasonable bridge deal and let Vatanen and van Riemsdyk walk. Or Waddell could pull something similar to last season when he signed Gardiner and held off on trading Justin Faulk until training camp.

Like a possible Fleury deal, I don't anticipate Foegele's contract causing a huge fuss. I'd estimate that at the most these contracts get done in the \$2-3 million range, and that leaves the Canes flying close to the cap.

As for Williams, Good Willy Hunting II has officially commenced. No matter his decision going forward, though, you know he's not going to put the team in financial jeopardy.

Wish list

Imagine the Hurricanes were approaching this offseason with all the cap space in the world. What could improve this team, even if it'd be a luxury?

It's probably not a great sign that Andrei Svechnikov only played six of eight postseason games and still led the Canes with four goals — especially when we remember three of those goals occurred in one game. It's equally not great that after the first line of Svechnikov, Sebastian Aho and Teuvo Teravainen, Fleury and Jordan Martinook were Carolina's only skaters with two goals apiece.

Vincent Trocheck was supremely unlucky and deserved better. There's an argument that Ryan Dzingel deserved more ice time and you assume Martin Necas grows from his rookie playoff experience. But in a perfect world, it wouldn't hurt to add some help up front. In this quasi-fantasy world, a UFA like Mikael Granlund (where Svech learned The Svech!), Tyler Toffoli or Evgenii Dadanov would be perfect targets.

In the real world, there are still some solid options. Generally effective depth scorers like Jesper Fast (12 goals, 17 assists in 69 games) or Derick Brassard (10 goals, 22 assists in 66 games) could be fun to explore.

There's always the trade route, too, which Waddell has proved unafraid to maneuver. But if the Hurricanes are going to trade an asset, I have a hunch the return would be between the net.

About that ...

Petr Mrazek, James Reimer and Alex Nedeljkovic are all under contract for the upcoming season, but is that really the trio to win you the Stanley Cup? This warrants an article of its own, but at the very least we can agree the goalie market is worth exploring this offseason. If the Hurricanes were to clear some cap space, there are some enticing free agents on the market.

Vegas' Robin Lehner is someone the Canes have expressed interest in before, and his stellar postseason performance should only enhance that interest. Jacob Markstrom and the Canucks have reportedly begun working on contract negotiations before he hits the market, but hey, you never know. The thought of an Anton Khudobin encore with the Hurricanes is suddenly more appealing than ever, but I wouldn't expect that to happen.

If the Canes don't hit the market looking for a goalie or they can't muster up the cap space, a trade is obviously possible. Lehner recently denied a report that he and Vegas have a handshake re-signing deal in place, but if Vegas ends up re-signing him anyway, the Canes might want to look into what a trade for Marc-Andre Fleury would cost. A short-term Fleury/Mrazek tandem could work, no? It's also looking like a real possibility the Penguins trade Matt Murray. We've seen how well Murray and Fleury worked in a tandem (with none



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 21, 2020

other than each other), and a tandem situation might be ideal for Mrazek, who hasn't been awful by any means but shows most signs of success when sharing the net.

The question becomes, what are the Hurricanes willing to part with in a trade for a goaltender?

Slavin is off limits, as likely is the whole top line. They do not, I repeat they do not, want to trade Pesce or Necas. The Canes are historically fond of the contract year trade, but I

have a very hard time imagining they'd do anything with Hamilton other than sign him to a long-term extension.

This Hurricanes' offseason has less wiggle room than we're used to because the team on the ice is growing into a contender right in front of our eyes. It'll be interesting to see if Waddell and the brass stand pat or manage to finesse a good deal or two while this close to the ceiling.

The New York Times

A Black Fan Club Sought to Diversify N.H.L. Stands. Now They're Aiming at Its C-Suites.

by Gary Santaniello

When the idea to create the Black Girl Hockey Club hit Renee Hess almost two years ago, she couldn't have foreseen the degree to which it has insinuated itself into hockey culture in the United States and Canada.

From the first handful of respondents to her social media query in October 2018 asking if other women of color loved hockey but felt uncomfortable attending N.H.L. games because of gender- and race-based comments directed at them, the Black Girl Hockey Club now has more than 16,000 Twitter followers. And perhaps more significantly, it has the ear of the N.H.L. executive suites and its member clubs.

Hess, an associate director of community engagement and an adjunct professor at La Sierra University in Riverside, Calif., last year participated in a call with league executives on how the N.H.L. can improve its diversity efforts and engage more fans of color. Kim Davis, an N.H.L. executive vice president who works on social impact and growth, and is Black, credited Hess, 40, with "bringing a new perspective to all dimensions of our inclusion efforts."

"I can't say I saw our community growing to this magnitude, but our country is in crisis and Black women have historically led the way toward social change," Hess said. "I believe we can lead the way in hockey, too."

The N.H.L. announced earlier this month a wide-ranging set of initiatives to combat racism and promote diversity in hockey, many in conjunction with the players' union. Players will attend mandatory inclusion and diversity training during training camp and into the beginning of next season, and all league executives will receive similar training. Additionally, an Executive Inclusion Committee will identify opportunities for change throughout hockey, and three committees will address issues specific to players, fans and youth programs.

Hess applauded the league, but said there needs to be additional representation from people of color on the new committees "so that true change can happen."

Hess added that she also wants the N.H.L. to take a "clear stance" and a leading position in their teams' communities on the many social, economic and cultural issues raised this summer, sparked by the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis in May.

Racist acts have plagued hockey and have prompted new outrage since last November, when Canadian broadcaster Sportsnet dismissed the longtime commentator Don Cherry for making derogatory comments about immigrants on "Hockey Night in Canada" and Calgary Flames Coach Bill Peters resigned after a former minor-league player accused him of directing racial slurs at him. In January, the American Hockey League suspended Bakersfield's Brandon Manning for five games for directing a racial slur at Ontario's Bokondji Imama, and in April someone hacked into a New York Rangers-sponsored video chat and posted slurs against prospect K'Andre Miller, who is Black.

Saroya Tinker of Canada played four years of hockey at Yale and in April was drafted fourth over all by the National Women's Hockey League's Metropolitan Riveters. She remembers being called the n-word on the ice growing up in Ontario, and during her college years hearing racist comments from players, coaches and even teammates as the first Black skater at Yale.

"Because it's such a white space, the hockey culture is hard to walk into," she said. "It's very hesitant to change its ways, but it's important to recognize something needs to be done."

All these events, including when N.H.L. and other pro sports teams boycotted games last month after the police shooting of Jacob Blake in Wisconsin, highlighted what Hess considers a crucial hurdle to effecting social change in hockey: addressing hiring disparities throughout hockey organizations, particularly where they can have the most impact.

"As a fan maybe I'm unique, but I have more expectations of executives and the people in power," she said. "One thing we're preaching to front offices is to hire more Black women, people of color, and L.G.B.T. people. If you want to get into the Black community, hire Black people. Nothing works better than having someone from the community doing that work."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 21, 2020

Participating with Hess and Davis in a panel discussion last month on diversity in sports hosted by She's4Sports, a network of women pushing for a larger voice, the Canadian activist and writer Shireen Ahmed challenged the N.H.L. and its teams to hire those most invested in effecting change.

"At the end of the day, power and privilege rises to the top," Ahmed said. "I've always found that people who are decision makers, unless they are impacted personally by anti-Blackness or oppression won't change, because why should they have to?"

Even within the league itself, there are voices are pressing for more change. On that panel, Davis made clear the N.H.L. must go beyond "marketing trappings" to focus attention on the pervasive inequalities facing people of color in the sport and those who want to play it.

"How many season ticket holders are we willing to lose because we stand for something different than what we've articulated in the past? This is the training we're having with our clubs," she said.

In addition to the league's diversity initiatives announced last week, individual clubs have also made headway. Most visibly, the expansion Seattle Kraken, who start play in the 2021-22 season, hired two people of color among their 11 vice presidents. Six of those executives are women.

The team also hired Everett Fitzhugh, 31, as the first Black team play-by-play broadcaster in the N.H.L., and siblings Kyle Boyd and Kendall Boyd-Tyson were hired as the director of youth and community development and vice president for strategy and analytics. Their father, Dr. Joel Boyd, is the team physician for the Minnesota Wild and was the N.H.L.'s first Black team doctor.

"That is an important step toward a culture shift in that specific club," Hess said, adding that she's looking for continued progress from the league.

"If hockey truly is for everyone," she said, referring to a league diversity and inclusion initiative, "then the N.H.L. needs to stop telling us and start showing us."

Hess said her initial idea for the B.G.H.C. was merely to create a support network for women of color who are hockey fans. "Now," she said, "it's more than just a fan club. We've been able to have an impact on the hockey community because we've learned we're stronger together. We're trying to gather enough voices so we can be loud enough to be heard, and focus on initiatives to advance social change."

Floyd's death and the police shooting of Blake have intensified B.G.H.C.'s activism. Hess said the B.G.H.C. will announce specific initiatives in the coming weeks to address hiring disparities and financial barriers that inhibit diversity in hockey.

"More important" she said, "we want to make sure that those who are feeling marginalized know that at least there's this space for us."

As interest in B.G.H.C. grew during the 2018-19 season, Hess began convening meet-ups at N.H.L. arenas so Black women could attend games comfortably as a group. Their first was a Washington Capitals game on Dec. 15, 2018, attended by Hess and about 40 others, many with hockey-playing daughters in tow.

The Caps, chosen because the team had two Black players at the time and two African-Americans are part of the franchise's ownership group, arranged for a special tour of the National Capitol and the National Museum of African History and Culture, as well as a visit with four players after the game.

The last of seven meet-ups this season was a Carolina Hurricanes game on Feb. 16. Two local groups invited the B.G.H.C. members and their friends for a tailgate in the parking lot, the Hurricanes provided a tour of PNC Arena, and with help from the Hess, Carolina invited representatives from two local historically Black colleges, North Carolina Central University and North Carolina A&T State University, to attend as part of its College Colors campaign.

"You don't have to be a Black woman to be a part of our space," Hess said. "If you're here, you're an ally. We can't do it on our own."

Inclusiveness was evident at that February gathering in Raleigh, N.C. Among those attending were Melissa Royal-Martinez, her husband and their three children. Her 9-year-old daughter, Ripley, who is white and Hispanic, learned to skate a year ago through Carolina's First Goal program, which introduces boys and girls ages 5 to 9 to hockey and provides them with hockey equipment.

"She's at an age where she already notices inequalities, so it's important for her to see Black women out there advocating, to see those role models in person," Royal-Martinez said.

Because the pandemic has, for now, forced games to continue without fans, meet-ups like the one in Carolina are on hold. But the club is still active. Now a certified nonprofit organization, B.G.H.C. is raising money for diversity education, hockey skills training and virtual events. Earlier this year it awarded its first scholarship to 11-year-old Talia Rose of Ontario, Canada, to pay for goalie equipment.

Since her idea for the club took hold, Hess recognizes progress, but also realizes how embedded racism remains in hockey.

"Of course, I vacillate between hopefulness and hopelessness when I continue to see the blind spots," she said. "It's frustrating and it's tiresome, but that's why we keep pushing, to make sure those who are feeling marginalized know at least there's this space for us. We should definitely criticize and make better something we love, whether it's the sport or our country."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 21, 2020

SportScan

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

Sportsnet.ca / Gary Bettman short on specifics ahead of 2020-21 NHL season

Mark Spector | @sportsnetspec

September 19, 2020, 6:36 PM

EDMONTON — The elephant in the room might as well have been sitting next to the NHL commissioner with a name card and a microphone, as Gary Bettman sat down for his annual State of the Union address with no real answers to the only question that truly matters.

Is the league really going to start next season on Dec. 1 — with training camps opening in mid-November — the way they have modelled the opening of the 2020-21 season? Will there be a season next year at all?

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

"There is still too much we don't know," Bettman admitted. "Anything that anybody suggests, reads, writes or commentates about next season is nothing but speculation.

"December first has always been a notional date. I wouldn't be surprised if it slips into later December. Could slip into January."

Truly, how do we know what the state of the Canada/U.S. border will be two-and-half months from now? Who knows if fans will be allowed to attend games, or if different jurisdictions will maintain different rules regarding crowds and gatherings?

Where is COVID-19 going to be on Dec. 1?

All of it left Bettman very noncommittal ahead of Game 1 of the Stanley Cup Final, on a September evening normally reserved for NHL preseason games.

But he did hint that the league will be nimble.

"How we start doesn't necessarily relate to how we're going to finish," Bettman allowed. "This is pure speculation ... (but) it's conceivable that we start without fans, and we move to socially distant fans at some point. And by some point in time maybe our buildings are open.

"There's full, there's empty and there's a combination. How we start doesn't necessarily mean that's how we have to finish."

Bettman poo-hooed the oft rumoured possibility of an All-Canadian division next season, should border crossings still be troublesome. "If there is an option to consider, believe me, we're considering it." He said they would rather finish next season prior to the end of June, while scrapping the entire season and simply waiting for the end of the pandemic does not appear to be an option.

"I anticipate playing a full season next season — 82 games, full playoffs," he said. "How and when we do that is something that we don't all have enough information to make any decisions. Anything would be sheer speculation.

"Our goal is to get back to as great a sense of normalcy as possible under whatever circumstances are presented."

As usual, the NHL commissioner ran through the gamut of questions from reporters, covering all things NHL. Here are a few of the highlights:

- On the stress of pulling off these playoffs:

"Everything keeps me up at night. There are no victory laps," Bettman said. In every discussion about restarting the NHL, Bettman said, there were people who believed that "how hard we planned and how creative we were, we might not be able to pull this off.

"We had to try."

- On whether this season's playoff expansion to 24 teams will remain:

"I've never been a fan of expanding the playoffs. When this is all over and I have a chance to really digest and debrief ... it will take a fair amount of convincing, to me at least, that we need a change. What we did this year we needed to do to be fair to teams that were on the bubble of making the playoffs. We did the right thing in that regard, but I don't think that is necessarily a prototype for the future. I still believe that what we have in a normal year is the right way to go."

- On the fiscal health of the NHL through this pandemic:

"The only good news in this context is that the ownership of the ... NHL franchises has never been stronger and healthier. While nobody has revenue coming in right now, and owners are writing checks to cover overhead and expenses, our franchises will get through this.

"Yes, there will be a revenue hit," said Bettman, who stressed that attendance impacts at least 50 per cent of NHL revenues. "We know (attendance) will be less, I am confident that our franchises will be strong enough to weather this."

- On media policies and Zoom calls

"We're not looking to long-term deprive the media of the access that you've historically had. When things get back to normal, our media policies and access will get back to normal as well."

- On scheduling back to back games in the Final:

Deputy commissioner Bill Daly answered this question: "We used the back to back in every round of these playoffs — one of the benefits of bubble hockey is less travel, wear and tear on the players. We felt we wanted to, and we heard from the players on this, move this tournament as quickly as we could, without putting players in danger. That's how we've scheduled. A single back to back ... we didn't think was a hardship for the players."

- On the chronically troubled Arizona Coyotes:

"The Arizona franchise is under the strongest ownership it's (ever been) under as long as I can remember," Bettman said. "I think they'll be fine."

Bettman would not say whether the Winter Classic, set for Minnesota on New Year's Day, would be cancelled. He also promised that the pandemic would not alter the 2021-22 start date for the expansion Seattle Kraken.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 21, 2020

The Athletic / Duhatschek Notebook: A look ahead to the 2020 goaltending musical chairs

By Eric Duhatschek

Sep 18, 2020

Just about every NHL offseason, there is a game of goaltending musical chairs played on some level.

It's as much about the position as anything else. Most teams carry 20 position players on the roster, but only two goalies – a starter and a backup, so 62 jobs in all at the NHL level.

Teams need to make room for youngsters coming through the ranks and also to account for the handful of netminders that annually age out of the game. It means some churn is a normal part of everyday NHL goaltending life.

But this season, the turnover could be the most significant in history.

It started already, with the St. Louis Blues trading back-up goalie Jake Allen to the Montreal Canadiens to take some of the day-to-day pressure off Carey Price. By the time the smoke clears sometime after the 2020 free agency market wraps up virtually half the teams in the league could have a new face between the pipes.

There are five premium netminders reaching unrestricted free agent status this summer: Robin Lehner, Jacob Markstrom, Braden Holtby, Corey Crawford and based on his work in these playoffs, Anton Khudobin.

In addition, there are probably eight additional pending UFAs who will attract some level of interest: Thomas Greiss, Cam Talbot, Brian Elliott, Aaron Dell, Jimmy Howard, Craig Anderson and Laurent Brossoit.

Beyond the goalies available strictly for the cost of a new contract, you then also have the trade-bait category. That starts with Darcy Kuemper in Arizona but also included Matt Murray in Pittsburgh, Marc-Andre Fleury in Vegas, Frederik Andersen in Toronto and Henrik Lundqvist in New York. If anyone were interested, they could easily pry Martin Jones out of San Jose too, though his salary and term combined with his recent level of performance make that move a virtual non-starter.

But if you believe the presence of a difference-maker in goal can lead your team to the next level, the potential for a massive offseason shuffle is enormous and all of this will unfold against the backdrop of a flat-salary cap that adds another wrinkle.

Let's start with where we expect to see the second domino fall after the Allen-to-Montreal trade.

With Vegas out, chances are the Golden Knights will soon announce signed Lehner to an extension that will pay him somewhere in the neighborhood of \$5 million per season over the next five years. Lehner, who has moved from Ottawa to Buffalo to the Islanders to Chicago all since the 2015 offseason, wants some stability.

Of course, if Lehner signs, the Golden Knights will almost certainly have to make a decision about Fleury's future. He's scheduled to earn \$7 million against the salary cap over the next two years, though the actual compensation drops to \$6.5 million next year and \$6 million the year after that. Fleury has some control over where he might go thanks to a modified no-trade clause in his contract. But based on that Twitter message from his agent, Allen Walsh, it's hard to imagine a reconciliation there.

But Fleury is 35 and at the point in his career where he'd almost certainly want to go to a contender.

What about Pittsburgh?

Well, if the Penguins can trade Murray, and if the Golden Knights absorb a portion of Fleury's contract for the final two years, that seems like a logical solution. Fleury would be a perfect complement to Tristan Jarry as he tries to take the next step to regular duty as an NHL starter.

Jarry is a restricted free agent, who had a good season, but doesn't have a large-enough body of work to command major dollars. On a Pittsburgh team trying to win it all over the next two seasons, that seems like a natural partnership.

ALSO: Next year, teams will be forced to put a higher priority than ever before on their so-called backup goalie. Officially, the NHL wants to play a full 82-game schedule, but the reality is, they may have to scale down those expectations in time, as they search out a path to a "return to fans."

If there's a compressed schedule and they are not playing hockey in a bubble, then the need for two goaltenders who can get you wins will become absolutely acute.

The days of riding a single bell-cow netminder may eventually return, but it's unlikely to be a consideration next year. And so, finding a goalie to come off the bench and win behind your nominal starter will be critical.

It's why someone such as Lundqvist could be attractive.

The Rangers will try to do the right thing by him, but they have two young goalies (Igor Shesterkin and Alexandar Georgiev) in the system and ideally would like to keep both. If the Rangers took on half or a third of Lundqvist's contract and you're a Stanley Cup contender, why wouldn't you add him for the year that lies ahead – assuming the weirdness of it all doesn't cause him or other veteran players to simply opt out, which shouldn't be overlooked as an option either.

Among the UFA goalies not named Lehner, Holtby and Markstrom are probably ranked 1-2 on the available list, Holtby because he's won a Stanley Cup in past, Markstrom because he was a difference-maker on a Canucks team that made strides this year, largely because of how well he held the fort in games when they were the second-best team on the ice.

Murray and Andersen may well be equally attractive as candidates, but the difference is, there'll be an acquisition cost to pry one or the other loose from their current teams.

How many teams will be bidding aggressively this summer? Not as many as usual. And if the agents cannot get a bidding war going, that will keep the price down.

And of course, everything that happens this summer will be against the backdrop of the 2021 expansion draft, where teams can only protect a single goalie and have to make a second goaltender available with a minimum experience level.

Vegas selected only three goalies in its expansion draft because it wasn't sure what to do with the extras. But if Seattle finds a lot of quality young goalies at its disposal, might they not stockpile a few and then flip them to teams that suddenly find themselves stripped thin at the position? It's a strategy to consider.

Most GMs believe the era of the flat-cap could extend beyond two years until some new level of normalcy returns, and that means even the teams will salary-cap room to maneuver now may sit on their wallets knowing that a further financial day of reckoning could come next year or the year after.

So, let's probe this question more deeply with a couple of specific examples.

Arizona the wild card

Whenever you speak about a further day of financial reckoning in the NHL, you almost always have to start with the Coyotes who, as of Thursday, have a new general manager in place in Bill Armstrong.

Let's recap what happened before Armstrong arrived on the scene: They gave up future assets to acquire Taylor Hall as a rental from the New



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 21, 2020

Jersey Devils in December and are hoping to sign him to a contract extension. But the Coyotes were stripped of two future draft choices for contravening NHL bylaws by interviewing draft-eligible prospects and then their GM, John Chayka, abruptly resigned just before NHL bubble life began in August.

It will be up to Armstrong to chart a course going forward. But even before he came aboard, the Coyotes signed their No. 3 goalie, Adin Hill, to a one-year, one-way contract extension that pretty much signalled they are now prepared to part with either Kuemper or Antti Raanta in a trade. The expectation there is that organizationally, they may have to take a step or two backwards after the draft-choice penalties were imposed and thus want to recoup some of those in trades.

Realistically, they may have to turn to the Senators' model – strip it down, to build it back up – which you can probably do a little faster in a cap era than in an unlimited spending era.

Kuemper has been an excellent goalie the last couple of years and is considered low mileage around the NHL. He may be in the same essential class as Markstrom – a goalie that took years to find his NHL footing, but now look to have some good years going forward.

But if Markstrom is a UFA and Arizona is asking for a big return on Kuemper, what do you do? At some point, the asking price may eventually be met but maybe not until after the free-agent dust clears.

The primary difference is that Kuemper's costs are controlled over the next two years (\$4.5 million AAV) which is attractive in the short term. But eventually, if he performs, he'll have to be paid too.

Arizona represents a daunting managerial task – a team that at the moment is No. 2 in payroll on Capfriendly.com, trailing only the Anaheim Ducks. Two contracts that are largely unmovable will come off the books following next season (Derek Stepan at \$6.5 million; Michael Grabner at \$3.35).

The Coyotes also have a lot of dollars tied up in four veteran defenceman (Oliver Ekman-Larsson, Jason Demers, Nikla Hjalmarsson and Alex Goligoski, but for the latter three, they too are on contracts that expire a year from now). Ekman-Larsson has a daunting number – seven years to go on a contract that averages \$8.25 million, but he is 29, and can play as a defined 1-2 defenceman, the sort that doesn't grow on trees. So that'll cost you assets to bid for Ekman-Larsson and assets to bid for Kuemper. Just what they might receive in return is opaque at the moment.

What about Freddie?

Is Andersen truly in play in Toronto? Doesn't seem logical. He's one year away from being a UFA and there had been talk that if the Leafs could get Murray out of Pittsburgh, they would do so and then turn around and trade Andersen.

This has all the makings of a complicated three-way deal, which excites writers and other analysts, but sadly, almost never happens in the NHL. If Murray went to Toronto, could you then flip Andersen to Calgary and if so, would the Flames give up a first-rounder to Pittsburgh to complete the circle? Answer: Unlikely, trending heavily towards no. At one point, when Andersen was first traded to Toronto by Anaheim, the Flames were prepared to consider it. But now? With more miles on Andersen and the possibility that they couldn't re-sign him after a single season, it might be too high a price to pay.

The other question for the Leafs to ponder (which makes me think this an idea they'd consider but eventually reject) is: Does Murray represent a clear upgrade over Andersen? Answer: No. If anything, he might be a downgrade at his current level of performance. So why would you consider that sort of a sideways move which could come back and make things worse, not better?

Unless you're getting a clear upgrade, why would you do it? Andersen is an upper-echelon goalie; if you bring in Murray to replace him, you might be different at the position, but you not might be any better.

One way or another, GMs and agents both believe there's going to be more goalies available this offseason than there are jobs at the NHL level – and when the music stops, a handful of them will be left without a chair.

It means, if a team plays it right, they might just get a bargain find that pays big dividends down the road – the way Kuemper did for Arizona.

The delay of game conundrum

Vegas was eliminated earlier this week on a tough play – an overtime goal by Dallas's Denis Gurianov that came with Golden Knights rookie defenceman Zach Whitecloud in the penalty box serving a delay-of-game penalty for lifting the puck over the glass. For Vegas, it's was a tough way to exit a playoff series.

So, what's the solution, if indeed there is a solution that makes more sense? Well, if you amended the rule and left it to the discretion of the referees, you could almost guarantee a vast increase in the number of pucks that go over the boards. Coaches and players are crafty. In the same way players crash the goal crease and then express outrage when goalie interference is called, they would soon find a way to lift the puck over the glass, without being too obvious about it.

In short, it would open up a new can of worms and potentially make things worse, not better.

There is a thought that you could find a compromise solution: Treat a puck over the glass the same way you currently deal with icing and not let the defending team change personnel after a stoppage in play. In theory, making it subject to video review would help get clarity, but the chances of the nightly five-to-10 additional reviews you'd probably need is just a complete non-starter. Making puck-over-the-glass a discretionary call may sound good in theory, but in practice, it would result in more stoppages, more controversial officiating decisions and ultimately, more unhappy players, coaches, fans and officials.

Sometimes, the status quo is the right answer.

Is status quo the answer?

When I typed that last sentence, and then reread it, my first thought was, that's going to make some readers unhappy. Let's face it, lots of people don't want to consider status quo or stay-the-course as a possible answer because it implies inertia or stasis – and isn't very sexy.

Change is.

Former NHL president John Ziegler used to get mocked every time he trotted out his favorite saying – 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it' – which he used to constantly defend the relatively glacial pace at which the NHL changed course, when other leagues were in ascension. Eventually, NHL owners got tired of that and brought in Gary Bettman as the league's commissioner because they saw him as more progressive.

But sometimes change creates unintended future consequences that make things better, not worse. Tampa, after the opening round of 2019, was under massive pressure to make immediate changes. Instead, the Lightning took time, and mostly stayed the course until closer to the trade deadline and then made a couple of judicious adds – Blake Coleman and Barclay Goodrow – that helped them navigate their way to the Stanley Cup Final.

Sometimes, it requires patience to get the timing of a change correct and not just do it hurly burly, as soon as a year ends, but carefully parse through the available options and then pounce when the opportunity is ripe.

My hunch: The goalie market this offseason is set up to reward teams that show a similar level of patience. Markstrom will get paid, if the Canucks cannot get him signed to an extension. But he may be the only one.

Peter Laviolette on the hill

In an NHL coaching career that began with the 2001-02 Islanders, Peter Laviolette has always seemed to make his mark early in his tenure with a



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 21, 2020

team. For example, Laviolette took over the Hurricanes 30 games into the 2003-04 season, but the next year, in his first full season behind the Hurricanes bench, guided them to a Stanley Cup championship and a 16-9 playoff record.

After parts of six years in Carolina, Laviolette moved on to Philadelphia 25 games into the 2009-10 season and took that team to the Stanley Cup final (14-9 playoff record). And while it took a little longer to have playoff success in Nashville – his third year there, the Preds went to the final and played 22 games, going 14-8 – Laviolette was an early success story there too, with a 47-25-10 record in his first full regular season behind the bench.

That's really what the Capitals are counting on now – for him to come in as Todd Reirden's replacement and make an immediate difference on a team that failed to get out of the opening round in consecutive years after winning the Stanley Cup in 2018.

With the years clicking off on both Alex Ovechkin and Nicklas Backstrom, the championship window in Washington is shrinking, but it hasn't closed yet.

Laviolette tends to be a no-nonsense, all-business sort of coach. How Ovechkin responds to him will, in large part, determine the success or failure of this hire. It looked as if the Caps needed a firmer hand on the tiller in these playoffs, though making any sort of decision based on bubble life seems a little fraught. The Capitals were third in the Eastern Conference standings at the pause but just couldn't get it together in August. If Holtby moves on, which seems likely now, it'll be up to Ilya Samsonov to carry a heavier goaltending load, with perhaps someone like Greiss or Elliott signed as back-up/mentor.

In the end, the Capitals probably would have been better off giving Barry Trotz that five-year contract he was seeking after they won the Stanley Cup in 2018. As it is, they got two years of Reirden at a relative discount and now they've signed Laviolette for three years.

In the end, the dollar savings – averaged over a five-year period – are going to be minuscule.

But again, status quo – not sexy. Sometimes practical though.

One random thought

Every year, there's a bit of a discussion about whether or not it matters if a team is playing well down the stretch and into the playoffs – or if it's really a non-factor. This year, of course, it doesn't matter, because of the March-to-July pause. But as I was rechecking the NHL standings, I did note that Tampa, in its final 10 regular-season games, was 3-6-1 and Dallas, in its final 10 regular-season games, was 3-5-2. Make of that what you will.

Sportsnet.ca / 31 Thoughts: Is Matt Dumba next up on the Wild trade block?

Elliotte Friedman

- With Staal moving to Buffalo, is Dumba next on the block?
- Canucks looking to overhaul blue line
- Dubas has received interest on Andersen

If every GM were Bill Guerin or Jim Rutherford, our lives would never be boring.

Rutherford's way is simple: I know what I want, and once I get it, I'm making the move. Meanwhile, Guerin's boldness and confidence have

transferred from the ice to the office. It doesn't hurt that he was Rutherford's understudy in Pittsburgh, re-inforcing this philosophy.

Wednesday was supposed to be a quiet night. Guerin neutralized that idea with a Zeus-like thunderbolt, trading Eric Staal to Buffalo for Marcus Johansson.

"We're trying to build a better team, and sometimes you have to take some drastic measures," Guerin said. "If I don't make moves, nothing will happen. We'll just stay the same, and that's not the idea."

It is not a secret that the Wild are looking to acquire a first- or second-line centre, which added to the surprise level of moving Staal. But a couple of other executives said the above quote is definitely not fiction — that Guerin has made it clear he wants to toss a grenade into what is too comfortable a room.

No one on that roster should feel comfortable, unless they have full protection. If Staal can go, anyone can.

Johansson will get a chance to play in the middle, although reviews from his previous attempts are mixed. (Minnesota coach Dean Evason knows the player well from their days in Washington. Guerin said Evason endorsed the idea.) On his post-trade media call, Guerin was asked he would still prioritize the middle. He answered No. 1 centres are hard to get, and he was prepared to attack things committee-style if he couldn't add anyone.

His current crop includes Johansson, Joel Eriksson Ek, Nick Bjugstad, Ryan Donato, Nico Sturm and Victor Rask. It was interesting that Guerin specifically mentioned Rask as someone who needs to play. To me, that's smart. It's always better to try to fix your problem rather than accept a loss on it.

But it also tells me he's going to continue trying. Which brings us to Matt Dumba.

Last season, when the Wild started poorly, Dumba's name got out there. So did Jonas Brodin's. Guerin made one thing very clear: He had a specific price, and nothing was going to happen until he got it. Brodin's now extended and isn't going anywhere. Dumba is a good player signed to a good contract. Of course there's interest, especially since there's a Seattle expansion situation that will, eventually, force the Wild to make difficult decisions.

Guerin was asked if he had reached out to Dumba after the Brodin contract was announced. The answer was no.

"I know the business well enough from a player side, and I wouldn't want to make an empty promise. I don't have to rush," Guerin said. "We can play all year with him. We like Matt Dumba. He's a heck of a player. He's a great kid. We're very happy with him, and we think our top four will go up against anybody. I'm confident in that."

The most obvious interest (to me, anyways) would come from Winnipeg. The Jets are screaming for a right-shot defender. He fits their mold: cost-controlled with term. But barring the involvement of another team, they can't do it for a centre. Would Minnesota be tempted by a skilled winger, instead? Same with Vancouver. Dumba fits the idea of what the Canucks are looking for, but, again, a centre in return would not be an option and I'm not convinced they want to do a Brock Boeser deal. Calgary could do it. When Paul Fenton was Minnesota's GM, he pursued William Nylander hard (this was before Nylander signed), but the Maple Leafs weren't inclined to do it then, and I'm not convinced that's changed.

Guerin's been steadfast and patient. Everyone knows what he wants. Now the expansion clock is ticking. The antes are in the middle and the poker game is under way.

31 THOUGHTS

1. It was a smart move by Buffalo, although Staal, who is building a retirement home in Minnesota, was completely caught by surprise — and disappointed he found out when his phone blew up. (In case anyone was worried he wouldn't report, I'm told that's not happening — he's going to



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 21, 2020

play.) The Sabres were not on his 10-team no-trade list, I think, because he didn't expect them to be a pursuer. Staal turned down multiple trade ideas in the past two seasons (Boston was one), all from contenders. Buffalo didn't fit the mold of teams eying him, but he's exactly what the Sabres need. A No. 2 centre and some support for Jack Eichel, who can't be thrilled with reports of a \$70-million payroll. Buffalo is also investigating upgrading its goalie options.

2. Once eliminated, Canucks GM Jim Benning began making his due-diligence calls around the NHL. My sense is he's trying to see if he can sign his UFAs and work backwards from there. There's a desire for all of Jacob Markstrom, Christopher Tanev and Tyler Toffoli to return, but there are challenges (although there's some positivity this week with Toffoli). The Canucks will want flexibility into the expansion draft with Markstrom and Thatcher Demko. My sense is Markstrom would consider movement protection after Seattle makes its picks, but could want contract concessions in return. Vancouver has a number it won't go past. The challenging thing for everyone involved is that I'm hearing the market for Markstrom is strong.

3. As part of this, the Canucks want to begin an overhaul of their blue line. One coach said it was noticeable how differently Dallas could handle Vegas as opposed to Vancouver. The Stars have a big, strong, mobile defence that consistently broke down the Golden Knights' offence. After he said this, I spent some time re-watching the games, and you can definitely see it. The Canucks clearly felt they had to pack in the middle and defend from there, while Dallas felt very comfortable aggressively challenging Vegas and were successful doing it. The contracts and free agency get the headlines, but this will be a critical part of Vancouver's planning. (This coach, by the way, also said another difference between Dallas and Vancouver was the Stars sustained pressure in the offensive zone, which forced Vegas's best forwards to change instead of rushing the puck up ice. Small thing, but a big thing.)

4. Got some spare time? Go and figure out what players have been paid their bonuses and have low salaries remaining for this year. That's attractive. Frederik Andersen is one, for example. So is Derek Stepan. And P.K. Subban, although he does have one additional season remaining.

5. Toronto GM Kyle Dubas has reached out to Andersen at least twice to tell the goaltender other teams are interested. Dubas has said he's not actively shopping Andersen, and is not interested in anything that he doesn't see as an improvement.

6. Peter Laviolette, who guested on the 31 Thoughts podcast this week, had a 30-minute conversation with Washington captain Alex Ovechkin on Wednesday.

"I've coached against him so long and he's played against the teams I've coached for so long, it was almost like, 'Well, we finally get to work together,'" Laviolette said. "He's disappointed about not going further in the playoffs."

One Capital said he knew right when the team came back from the pause that it wasn't going to work. The spark was missing. How will Laviolette re-ignite it?

"It's not like you have to go in and build this from nothing, or from no success, or very little success. That's what's exciting.... Just add a layer. Not reinvent the wheel, but somehow add a layer and push and motivate, get these guys to climb the ladder just a little bit higher."

One thing I heard Washington wanted to address: Their defence corps was "off" last season. The group just didn't work well together. That unit flourished under Laviolette in Nashville. The Capitals watched Andre Burakovsky and Chandler Stephenson blossom elsewhere, so trying a new approach was the preference.

7. The moment the Capitals committed to a coaching change, word filtered that Laviolette was the favourite. During the hiring's media conference, GM Brian MacLellan said there were two in-person interviews. Those were Laviolette and Mike Babcock. There was a

conversation with Bruce Boudreau, but it didn't go far. There was a zoom connection with Gerard Gallant, but border quarantines affected his candidacy. Because MacLellan was in the U.S. and Gallant in Atlantic Canada, face-to-face meetings were logistically challenging.

Babcock's interview apparently came during some kind of socially distanced family dinner/cookout, and there was some buzz it went so well it tightened the race. (MacLellan would not comment.)

In the end, I think Laviolette was the choice anyway. However, another coach told me that he believed Washington was a little concerned about the "noise" around Babcock, especially since we don't know when next year will begin. Without games, the focus is on the past, not the present or future. To be honest, I'm not sure Babcock would be crazy about that reality either. For the time being, he remains a guest coach at NCAA Vermont, helping the Catamounts prepare for their season.

8. Great, great to see Jim Montgomery back on a bench. If Babcock had gone to Washington, Montgomery may have ended up there. All the best to him, Emily and their family. One day at a time.

9. Toronto wasn't the only team that asked for permission on Manny Malhotra. Vancouver wasn't going to stand in the way of a promotion.

10. If there was one thing that surprised Florida GM Bill Zito in our conversation, it was that I'd heard Panthers' ownership wished to cut payroll.

"No one said that me," he said after a pause. "That's news to me."

What is the mandate, then?

"Moving forward as if they had just acquired the franchise. Make the best, most prudent decision you can for the benefit of the franchise. Not necessarily for tonight, but for the best interests of the franchise. We're there with you, and we're going to support you."

(One GM said the Panthers have said they don't want to make ridiculous deals to simply cut cash, that their moves will have "purpose" to them.)

11. Existing hockey operations staff were frustrated with being kept in the dark while Zito assembled his cabinet, bringing in Rick Dudley, Paul Fenton, PJ Fenton, Gregory Campbell and Blake Geoffrion. There's definitely more change coming, although Zito said he wanted to "assess what's going on without being knee-jerk and thinking I have all the answers."

He's met with players who live in the area, spoken to captain Aleksander Barkov and a certain goaltender he knows from Columbus. Zito believes in Sergei Bobrovsky, the goalie coach (Rob Tallas) and the need for greater consistency in front of Bobrovsky on the ice.

"Cut the guy a little slack," the GM added. "It's a new environment, different structure, a different team, different system. If I'm going to bet on anybody to right the ship, to figure out what he needs to do to improve himself, it's that guy. Whatever it is he can do on his own, he's doing it. I'm non-plussed. Bob will be fine."

12. What's next?

"We have to attack the roster," Zito answered. "Who can grow, what we have to address. We have to build towards a consistent, concerted effort. Look at the Islanders — they do it the best. Columbus does a pretty good job of it. Can we follow that pattern? Then we're off in the right direction."

(Zito then challenged me to say "consistent, concerted effort" without tripping during an on-air segment.)

In one of his local interviews, Zito talked about creating the "value sheet" the Blue Jackets did in Columbus. What is that?

"Years ago, we sat with the leadership group and said, 'What do we stand for? What are we all about?' Blue Jackets' values. It was something the players were proud of. Credit to (captain) Nick Foligno and the leadership group, because it did become what we were about. I look



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 21, 2020

forward to doing it here. What is it we're about, what do we want to be, what's important to us?"

Is there anything from those values you'll want to bring?

"I don't want to share too much of that.... It's not my place. But, also, I don't want anyone to hear (something) and say it. I want it to be organic and real. What do they think? Because it's their thing that, at the end of the day, is our thing. It pulls everyone together. I'm in. I'm going to do everything I can to help (the players). But what do you think you guys are all about?"

13. My guess: Zito's going to be asked about Barkov (no chance), Aaron Ekblad and Jonathan Huberdeau. He's going to explore moving one of the big tickets on his blue line to create flexibility. All he would answer is, "I'm going to listen to anything. But I'm going to say no to most things."

14. Finally, from Zito: It's been a hard few years, not only on the ice, but off. Differing factions with bad blood between them. Some employees may not leave quietly, especially since they feel left in the dark at this time. Former GM Dale Tallon is under league investigation for use of a racial slur, which he denies. Assistant coach Mike Kitchen was let go this week during an investigation into a physical altercation with a player after a water bottle was accidentally spilled on the coach. (The player has asked for privacy, choosing not to comment.) Kitchen, also choosing not to comment, denied anything happened that was over the line, but a teammate did back the accuser. This predates Zito, but it could affect what happens.

"I can only control what I have control over," he said. "Every day I will do what I can to move the organization forward."

15. Didn't specifically ask Zito about him, but I think Florida is a potential Mark Borowiecki landing spot.

16. Florida interviewed Garth Snow as part of its search process. The ex-Islanders GM clearly wants to get back in, and this Final Four run can't hurt. The Panthers also asked to speak to Hockey Hall of Famer Angela Ruggiero. This is an interesting one because it won't be the last time we hear her name. Cassie Campbell-Pascall said last weekend she could see the four-time U.S. Olympian as commissioner of a WNHL (should it ever happen), and, apparently, the NHL thinks very highly of her. Ruggiero worked for one season in the Islanders' business-side operations around 13 years ago, got her MBA at Harvard and is now CEO and co-founder of Sports Innovation Lab. When she received this call from Florida, Ruggiero asked for a few days to think about it. By the time she was willing to say yes, they had decided on Zito.

17. Arizona informed its staff Wednesday that Bill Armstrong would leave St. Louis to become its new general manager, although final signing of the contract remains. The Coyotes locked in on the Blues' assistant GM last weekend. This is a challenging time in franchise history, and Armstrong prepared a massive presentation outlining what he'd like to do. Steve Sullivan, who was working in the interim, collected a ton of information on the value of Arizona's players, and it will be Armstrong's decision on how to proceed.

Calgary, Carolina, Chicago, Edmonton and San Jose are among the teams who have asked about Darcy Kuemper. Boston, Calgary and Edmonton have checked in on Oliver Ekman-Larsson (there undoubtedly are more), and Colorado on Niklas Hjalmarsson (again, probably more). Rick Tocchet has one year remaining as head coach. Armstrong would have a lot of intel from Craig Berube, one of Tocchet's closest friends (and, apparently, a morning coffee buddy in the bubble).

18. These jobs are coveted, but Arizona's situation scared some candidates. The late per diems during the playoffs. Delayed bonuses. (Some clarity here: Instead of direct deposit, the Coyotes asked players for addresses to mail the cheques. That wasn't received very well, seen as a pure delay tactic, with the NHL/NHLPA eventually stepping in.) That situation didn't get attention until Sept. 1, when several NHLers were affected, but it first came up in July when the organization was late with a \$45,000 bonus due to AHLer Tyler Steenbergen. Originally, he was told

the cheque had been mailed, before the money was deposited two weeks later. Last week came an arena lease dispute with ASM, which manages the facility. It claims the Coyotes owe rent, although a couple of sources indicate the team wants to either re-negotiate the lease or wait until closer to next season to pay. Whatever the case, it's a lot to absorb. Armstrong, however, was not deterred. He refused to back away from the challenge.

19. Geoff Ward's head-coaching contract in Calgary is for two seasons. Ward went on Hockey Central this week and talked up Johnny Gaudreau. He refused to place any blame on Cam Talbot for leaving the bench in the emotional aftermath of the playoff defeat to Dallas. I like that about him. You have to be careful throwing gasoline on the fire, especially in Canada.

20. With the free-agent courting period kiboshed, will more teams follow Montreal's lead by trading low-round draft picks for targets like Joel Edmundson? Conditional picks based on a player signing are no longer allowed, so the Canadiens had to risk it, but it's clear they had a goal and aggressively pursued, closing a four-year, \$14-million contract. GM Marc Bergevin made it clear he wanted a left-shot defender during talks with teams last week.

21. The Phillip Danault situation is interesting. His name is "out there," and there definitely is interest, but opposing GMs aren't truly certain Bergevin wants to do it. He's a good two-way centre possibly asking for a bit more in free agency (after next season) than Montreal wants to do. Does Danault want to stay or go? And will the rumours alter his approach?

22. The Canadiens considered Devan Dubnyk before acquiring Jake Allen.

23. Initially, Chicago and Corey Crawford were not seeing eye to eye on the dollar value of an extension. Crawford knew there would be a cut. How much was the issue.

24. It would take a buyout, which I'm not sure Vegas wants to do in this economy, but would anyone really be surprised to see a Marc-Andre Fleury/Tristan Jarry tandem in Pittsburgh?

25. I think there will be teams who wait to see what Tampa Bay does to be cap compliant.

26. Colorado is the team to watch. Next year is an "all in" year before they have to re-sign Gabriel Landeskog and Cale Makar. Loved Landeskog sitting on the bench to encourage his teammates after suffering his season-ending injury in Game 6 versus Dallas. Reminded me of Zdeno Chara doing it in last year's Cup Final.

27. Jamie Benn on Rick Bowness: "He's the best coach I've ever played for."

Why is that?

"Great person who really cares about you. He's fun."

Benn pauses to chuckle a little.

"You hear him hooting and hollering... and you know outside of hockey he's there for you."

28. When the Stars re-convened for July training camp, Bowness tinkered with their offensive system.

"We put the first three days of our camp strictly on offence in terms of breakouts, in terms of net-front, weak-side D joining the rush, in terms of cycling the puck, using our D more, getting them rotating along the blue line. Those first three days we put a lot of work into our defence joining the rush, spending a little more time in the offensive zone. And, also, putting more pucks on the net.... We just want to do a little more with the puck, and hang onto it a bit longer."

Only three times all season did they have three or more goals in a 6:30 span. They did it four times in five games during the Calgary and Colorado series.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 21, 2020

29. Benn, in particular, has been a beast. The better he plays, the more he has to answer questions about his least favourite topic: himself.

"We'll see about that," he replied.

A few players on different teams have indicated that the Conference Finals have stoked their juices because you know the real prize is getting close.

"That's definitely true," Benn said. "You can smell it."

Benn is running over people and turning away, not getting goaded into silly penalties or scrums. There was one versus Vegas where he gave a hard bump to Paul Stastny at the end of a period, and skated away as Stastny tried to engage.

"The period was over," he said dryly. "I figured I should get off the ice."

Did Benn ever worry, when this season started 1-7-1, that things weren't going to work?

"No, not a single thought about it. I remember having some chats with (GM) Jim Nill, talking with him, 'We're fine, we'll get through it.' No panic."

Benn pointed to their 10th game, a 4-1 win in Philadelphia as "the night things started to change."

They remind me a lot of St. Louis last season, right down to the shocking goalie run out of nowhere, and Benn says the Blues were top of mind for the organization.

"We knew we'd have to get through them, and we added pieces to address it."

Benn also credited those pieces (Joe Pavelski, Corey Perry and Andrej Sekera) for reminding them how hard it is to win. All three have been very good.

30. The most impressive thing about Anton Khudobin's performance? At 34, he's played 19 games in 40 days. He's never before done that in his NHL career. His heaviest stretch to date was 17 in 37, for the 2013-14 Carolina Hurricanes. There's not much else even close. He joined Johnny Bower (1963), Gump Worsley (1965), Eddie Johnston (1972), Arturs Irbe (2002), Dwayne Roloson (2006), Tim Thomas (2009) and Thomas Greiss (also this year) as goalies who got their first-ever playoff shutout after their 34th birthday. What an incredible run.

31. Victor Hedman's eight goals are the most by a defenceman in any playoff year since Brian Leetch had 11 in his 1994 Conn Smythe season. Most impressively, Hedman didn't waste any of them in the round robin. Paul Coffey set the record — 12 — in 1985. That was in 18 games; Game 5 against the Islanders was Hedman's 18th. It's also not unusual to Hedman to play at least one shift with the six other defencemen Jon Cooper dresses every night.

BONUS THOUGHTS

32. I don't really have anything super-insightful to add here, except to say that Adam Pelech and Ryan Pullock are incredibly under-appreciated. So is Brock Nelson.

33. Looking back at the final few moments of Game 2, I wondered if Casey Cizikas's injury (rumoured to be a detached retina) contributed to Nikita Kucherov's game-winning goal with nine seconds remaining. Cizikas took a big hit from Luke Schenn on his final shift. Coach Barry Trotz then went with the Mathew Barzal line, followed by Brock Nelson's. So, next had to be Cizikas (who was hurt) or Jean-Gabriel Pageau, with Leo Komarov and Andrew Ladd. It was a tough spot for Ladd, who hadn't played in six months. If Cizikas is healthy, is there a different group on the ice? Kucherov's score put the Lightning up 2-0 in the series.

34. The Big Ten's decision to bring back college football has led to rumblings that Midwestern/West NCAA teams may consider a "pod-like" system for this season. It would be a true bubble (sealed off from the rest of the world), but something where a group of teams could play in the same place. One suggestion I heard was an American Thanksgiving to

Christmas schedule at somewhere like, say, Notre Dame. Intriguing idea and we will see.

35. Yeah, I don't get the Kawhi Leonard hate. Guy brought Toronto (and Canada) an NBA title, which seemed impossible before he arrived. He could drive around my neighbourhood with the Larry O'Brien Trophy dragging from his car à la George Costanza and I'd say, "You won, do what you want."

Sportsnet.ca / Canadiens' addition of Edmundson brings balance to blue line at fair value

Eric Engels | @EricEngels

September 18, 2020, 10:33 AM

MONTREAL — The text that came in from a Western Conference executive was a balanced and informed assessment of Marc Bergevin's decision to trade for and sign Joel Edmundson.

"Good deal," the executive said of the four-year, \$14-million contract Edmundson signed with the Montreal Canadiens on Wednesday. "They're going to like him. Great team player, according to people who know him well. Not fun to play against. Good complement to skill D. He's a 4-5, so slightly overpaid for where he slots.

"But term is good, and that's better than what Montreal would've paid in [the] UFA market. He was going to be in demand."

Even with a global pandemic putting a dent in hockey-related revenue — ensuring the upper limit of the salary cap will remain stagnant for the next two seasons — six-foot-four, 215-pound defencemen who skate reasonably well and chip in a bit of offence will always be valuable commodities on the open market.

It's not hard to figure out why the Canadiens were compelled by the possibility of adding one to their mix, or why they traded a 2020 fifth-round pick to the Carolina Hurricanes to obtain Edmundson's exclusive negotiation rights three weeks ahead of free agency.

They watched their top three defencemen — all of them large, physical and mobile — hold the most offensively potent Pittsburgh Penguins and Philadelphia Flyers forwards largely in check over their 10 games in the Stanley Cup Playoffs and thought it probably wouldn't hurt to get another such player.

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

And yeah, maybe Edmundson doesn't quite shoot like Shea Weber, or skate and pass like Jeff Petry, but there's hope he can be as effective as Ben Chiarot proved to be in his first year of a near-identical deal he signed last summer with the Canadiens.

The analytics suggest that's anything but guaranteed, but that's fine by Edmundson.

"I don't really pay attention to that at all," the B.C. native said during a conference call Thursday. "But if people are saying I got 20 points (in 2019-20) because it's a fast-moving Carolina team, I think the Canadiens are just as fast and just as skilled. So I'm definitely not worried about that. For myself, I don't really look at analytics at all. I know a lot of people really dig into that ... Just going out there and being physical, just being that presence that you won't find in the analytics, it's something that stats don't really show what I can bring to the team."

I'd suggest what he's bringing — outside of size, physicality experience, a decent skating stride and a reputation for being a good teammate — is



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 21, 2020

stability next to Petry and balance to the rest of the Montreal blue line, provided he plays close to his potential.

The options weren't limitless for a Canadiens team that's had little success in free agency in recent years. Heck, they've had virtually no success in it with the top dogs, so if you were holding your breath for the Boston Bruins' Torey Krug...

Still, the Canadiens filled a need here. Maybe they'd have done it with Marco Scandella, had they retained him after trading for him in January. Instead, they moved Scandella to the St. Louis Blues in February and were left with the same hole they had prior to acquiring him for a fourth-round pick from the Buffalo Sabres.

The Montreal native is a player the Canadiens could've used in the playoff games they were gifted by the NHL/NHLPA return-to-play format. Scandella, 30, had four goals and 13 points and averaged 17:35 per game over the 62 he played this season. The six-foot-three, 212-pounder had a 51.5 per-cent corsi rating starting 50 per cent of his shifts in the offensive zone. He signed a four-year, \$13.1-million deal to stay with the Blues.

Edmundson, 27, had seven goals and 20 points and averaged 18:27 per game over his 68 with Carolina — and he had a 50.8 per-cent corsi for starting 45 per cent of his shifts in the offensive zone.

Both players got limited no-trade clauses, and Edmundson got \$5 million in signing bonuses — the bulk of which will be paid over the final two seasons of his deal, when escrow will go from being capped between 14-18 per cent to 10 per cent in 2023 and six per cent in 2024.

That was a cookie for Edmundson for skirting free agency and taking a marginally better deal than Scandella's. A fair compromise, especially considering Edmundson is four years younger and was markedly more impactful (in every traditional statistic category) in the playoffs for Carolina than Scandella was for St. Louis.

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.

All to say, we may never know what Edmundson would've gotten had he gone to free agency, but the Canadiens fairly assessed his potential market value and, as the executive quoted up top suggested, might have even gotten a bargain.

Now here's what they bought: a player that helps gives their blue line a similar look to the one the Blues had when they won the 2019 Stanley Cup with Edmundson among their top six.

"We had size in St. Louis, but we also played physical and, at the same time, we could all skate and keep up with the faster forwards," said Edmundson. "Our goal was to wear down the other team. I think we broke down a lot of teams. I like the way [the Canadiens] are built. It's a young team with a lot of speed. With the addition of me on the back end, Shea, Chiarot and Petry, you have size and we can all skate."

Brett Kulak and Victor Mete bring speed and puck-moving to the equation and, provided he's capable of being impactful as a rookie, Alexander Romanov is a Swiss Army knife type. There's some young, talented depth in Cale Fleury, Noah Juulsen and Gustav Olofsson, and Xavier Ouellet proved serviceable in the playoffs.

Edmundson thought about all of that, and about how the Canadiens clearly wanted him and were willing to give him fair value and good term in these most uncertain times, and he signed.

Senior Writer Ryan Dixon and NHL Editor Rory Boylen always give it 110%, but never rely on clichés when it comes to podcasting. Instead, they use a mix of facts, fun and a varied group of hockey voices to cover Canada's most beloved game.

They're happy he did, and he said he couldn't be happier.

"It's been one my family's favourite teams for their whole lives," Edmundson said. "My dad's side of the family is French and that whole side of the family loves the Canadiens. It's not only a dream come true for me, but I know my dad's super excited."

One would think Carey Price and Weber, who have spent the last three off-seasons skating with Edmundson in Kelowna, are also enthused.

"When I got traded here, Shea reached out and shot me a message," Edmundson said. "It's nice that I know them going into Montreal. They always say nothing but good things about Montreal, so I'm very excited to join them."

Edmundson also said he's prepared for everything else that comes with wearing a Canadiens uniform.

"All that pressure doesn't really matter to me; I feel like I play well under pressure," he said. "I feel like every year of my career so far in playoffs, where obviously there's the most pressure on you, that's where I perform at my best. It'll be a lot different, but I'm looking forward to it, that's for sure."

The Athletic / When will the 2020-21 NHL season start? All the options the league is considering

By Scott Burnside Sep 18, 2020

It's still something to marvel at on the eve of the Stanley Cup Final.

Twenty-four NHL teams in two bubble cities competing for the most difficult trophy in sport in the midst of a global pandemic.

Remarkable.

A testament to the willingness to make sacrifices and think truly outside the box from everyone who walked through the doors in Edmonton and Toronto.

But against such a backdrop is the sobering reality that this exercise was a walk in the park compared to what comes next for the NHL in trying to mount a 2020-21 season.

"Starting to be concerned there might not be a season," one NHL GM wrote this week.

He was not being alarmist but merely reflecting the enormity of what confronts the league and its players as they prepare to move to next season almost without pause after the awarding of a Stanley Cup a virtual draft on Oct. 6-7 and free agency starting at noon ET on Oct. 9.

"Anyone that thinks they know what's going to happen is delusional," offered one team president this week.

He's right.

Early in the return to play proceedings the NHL and NHL Players' Association tentatively penciled in a Nov. 17 start for training camp and a Dec. 1 start date for a traditional 82-game schedule for the 2020-21 season.

But when NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly appeared on the Two Man Advantage podcast recently he admitted that there were so many variables that those dates were in essence very fluid.

"If I had to handicap it today, it's probably less likely than more that we would start on Dec. 1. But that's not set in stone by any means," Daly said.

Others have been less equivocal.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 21, 2020

"There is no scenario in the world where I see that happening," one team president said.

Multiple sources at various levels and positions in hockey told The Athletic they believe it's much more likely the start of next season is pushed back to, at the very earliest, early January 2021 – and even that is marked by a host of qualifiers.

What we do know is that the NHL and NHLPA will continue to work in lockstep as they did in forming a Return to Play committee that was instrumental in building the framework for the playoff tournament this summer and the new collective bargaining agreement.

The NHLPA is in the process of identifying a new committee of players that will work through the issues surrounding a return to play in 2020-21. Players are now being contacted about taking part in that committee. And while the focus has been on the completion of the playoffs in the Edmonton bubble, sources indicate that the player committee will be struck shortly and the two sides will pivot very quickly to address next season with remote meetings possibly beginning as early as next week.

That working relationship will be critical to finding a workable plan to get the next season underway because the challenge of putting on a regular season in the time of COVID-19 is perhaps a more daunting challenge than the building of a playoff format.

"When I go to sleep at night, I don't know what next season is going to look like," a candid Daly told Two Man Advantage. "And I don't know what the best answer for that is right now. I do believe we're going to have a season, I just can't tell you what it looks like right now."

There are myriad issues and many are interconnected.

Start with the critical issue of the border between Canada and the United States, which has been closed to all but essential travel.

There is no indication when that border might open, which would be critical to planning a schedule for the NHL's 31 teams, seven of which are based in Canada. Many hockey officials think it's entirely possible the Canada/U.S. border could remain closed until at least the start of 2021 given the ongoing spikes in the coronavirus transmission in various parts of the U.S.

In the summer, the Return To Play committee worked closely with Health Canada, the federal health organization in Canada, and provincial counterparts in setting up protocols for teams and league officials to enter the country and then the bubbles for the playoffs. Daly said there have not been any discussions with Canadian officials at this stage on what a new season might look like vis a vis U.S. teams playing in Canada.

If the U.S./Canada border remains closed beyond the time when the NHL is ready to begin next season, it's possible a one-time, all-Canadian division would be an option or at least beginning play with the Canadian teams playing only in Canada.

But that presumes that the remaining 24 U.S.-based teams are able to play in the U.S.

A number of team executives believe that one option, especially if the Canadian teams are grouped together, will be to start play along geographic lines, even if it means mixing up the current division and conference alignments.

In the northeast where teams are more densely clustered, many teams would in theory be able to travel by ground transport to opponents instead of flying, which could save millions of dollars, one senior executive noted.

Baseball returned to action this summer with teams traveling city to city and hit some embarrassing snags before finding its footing. Worth noting that as MLB approaches the playoffs of its shortened season, it will move to a bubble setup with teams gathering in Texas and California.

An extension of the idea of grouping teams geographically has been a widely-discussed notion of at least starting the season with multiple bubbles. It is not a long-term option, but it might be a way to walk through the door to a new season.

Daly made it clear that going into a bubble setting for an entire season isn't doable.

"That does not present a model for a full regular season. By any stretch," Daly said. "So that's why when I said before, what we're facing with respect to how we construct next season and what it looks like, is a totally different challenge to what we constructed for the completion of the 2019-20 season, and it's going to look a lot different."

Another team president echoed those sentiments.

"Maybe as a starting point but the financial ramifications are pretty steep unless the players are going to allow their pay to drop," he said. "I don't think the owners will go for it long-term. That's my guess. Not sure the players will be for more bubbles either, long-term."

Players, especially those whose teams had at least some success in this summer's playoffs, won't be eager to get back into an environment where they are shut off from the world and especially shut off from their families. And it's not just the players but the team staff and support staff who put their lives on hold this summer.

Several team executives suggested the bubble idea might work as a stop-gap until fans are allowed back in buildings only if teams come in and out. For instance, if you had three bubble cities in the U.S. where eight teams played, maybe four teams are in at a time playing each other for several weeks and then are allowed to go home for a period of time while other teams rotate in.

That would seem to be a critical element from the players' perspective.

The bottom line when it comes to the idea of playing in a bubble is that the experiences in Edmonton and Toronto give you a blueprint for putting similar plans in place in other cities, one longtime executive who was in one of the bubbles said.

"I know you could make them work because we've made them work," he said.

It's just a question of whether it works from a personal standpoint for the players and staff required to operate multiple bubbles and from a financial standpoint for the league and players.

"Just like going into this current bubble scenario that we're in now, there's no one that knows what's going to happen," one league governor said.

If there aren't bubbles and teams are flying from city to city a la Major League Baseball, there are some lessons from that model.

For instance, one facilities expert said, NHL teams could all use the same hotels in a given city to establish protocol for check-ins, cleaning, etc.

Take it a step further, he suggested, restaurants could be designated in those cities where teams would congregate to help reduce the risk of exposure to COVID. Or teams simply agree to eat all their meals in the team rooms in the hotels.

If the teams are traveling from city to city, one team president suggested the baseball model of playing three or four games against the same opponent to try and cut down on the amount of travel, thus reducing costs and the risk of the virus's spread.

Most sources agreed that the key to whatever form and shape the 2020-21 season takes involves getting fans in NHL arenas.

And that's why so much of this is outside the league's hands.

What is the status of the spread of COVID and will it spike through late fall and early winter?



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 21, 2020

What is the status of a vaccine or rapid response testing that would allow fans to enter arenas?

"We can't play without fans," one president noted. "That's why I think there needs to be a vaccine. I think our season is completely dependent on a vaccine or a medicine that reduces the severity of the disease."

The league will be watching closely how other leagues handle a return to regular schedules – including the NFL, where a handful of teams are allowing a small percentage of fans to enter stadiums.

Some European hockey leagues are returning to play and Daly indicated they will be studying those protocols and plans, as well as watching how college sports handle a possible return.

NHL arenas, though, present a certain set of circumstances that will have to be dealt with for fans to be allowed to return.

Air ventilation systems will in some cases need to be upgraded to improve the filtration of air.

One team is looking at installing technology with ultraviolet lighting in handrails on escalators and in other areas.

Plus cleaning protocols will be introduced to try and keep common areas disinfected.

Regardless, teams will need to plan for whatever testing process will be in place, whether it's rapid testing, temperature checking or a combination. That may mean allowing fans in through limited gates, which means lineups and special precautions for staff in screening fans.

If fans are socially distanced in the arena, how do you plan an exit strategy that allows that same social distancing? Is it workable to expect fans to wait for an appointed time to leave?

What about privacy issues if someone fails a temperature check, or the risk to staff taking temperatures, asked one facilities expert.

Perhaps with testing more widely available and with shorter turnarounds for results – at least in some areas – fans will need to present proof of a negative COVID-19 test to gain admittance to an arena.

In the end, the better question might be: does it even work economically to have say 6,000 fans in an 18,000 building if restrictions keep occupancy at 25 or 30 percent?

A number of executives and industry observers suggest it does not and that at least 10,000 fans would be needed for teams to break even on costs.

This is the critical area for the league and the players to consider, then.

How long do you wait to start a 2020-21 season if you're looking at getting a maximum number of fans back into your building?

Many team executives are preparing models that include everything from 82 games with full arenas to fewer games with smaller percentages of fans.

One of the models is a full schedule but with no fans.

"That's not a fun one to look at," the executive said. "You look at that one and think, yeah, that one can't happen. Because I think Major League Baseball has shown us that if you're going to play in front of empty stadiums and travel your guys, you're going to have a lot of canceled games."

Daly remains unequivocal about the league's desire to mount a traditional 82-game schedule in 2020-21. If you started games in January and eliminated the bye weeks and the All-Star break, could you get a regular season done by late May?

The 2021 playoffs will be hampered on one level by the fact the league and its national broadcasters (NBC in the United States and Sportsnet in Canada) do not have an unlimited runway for broadcasting the postseason as they did this summer.

The Tokyo Olympics, pushed to the summer of 2021 from this summer, are slated to begin July 23.

So in some ways, one executive suggested, you need to work back from what you know and that means the Stanley Cup has to be awarded before the Olympics.

One president wondered aloud whether playing 64 or 72 games and then adding another layer of playoffs with more teams, as we saw this summer with eight best-of-five qualifying rounds, might be a consideration in terms of fan interest and generating revenue – and maybe not just for the coming season but moving forward with the regular start date for the NHL season pushed back into November, something many U.S.-based teams have long desired.

"Change isn't always bad," he said.

There is a ripple or domino effect to all of this so it's not just the 2020-21 schedule that confronts the NHL and NHLPA; it's what happens after that.

Seattle's ownership group has paid \$650 million for the privilege of becoming the NHL's 32nd team. It is set to begin play in 2021-22 and presumably hopes to play a normal 82-game schedule in its inaugural season.

Well, on Feb. 4, 2022, the Winter Olympics are scheduled to begin in Beijing, and provided the NHL and NHLPA can come to an agreement with the International Olympic Committee on travel and insurance costs and use of images and content from the Olympics, NHL players will be returning to the Olympic stage. This means another compacted and possibly elongated season.

The financial repercussions for all of this are potentially enormous and certainly widespread. Not playing 82 games in 2020-21 is part of that equation.

A senior executive with a top team said they could miss 10 or so home games and still break even given other revenue streams. Not all teams could afford that kind of hit, though.

There's also the issue of television revenue, which would be impacted with a reduced 2020-21 slate of games and would by extension impact the possible value of a new television contract the NHL expects to be negotiating with providers after next season.

One longtime broadcaster in the United States suggested the big payday that owners have been expecting vis a vis a new deal that might see ESPN pick up a portion of NHL games won't be happening.

"Safe to say there will be no fans in buildings for a long time," the source predicted. "Nor will they get big TV money in the next deal. Lots of franchises will face serious issues."

Many owners whose business interests have been especially hard hit during the pandemic are already looking at cutting costs with their hockey teams. Teams are already bracing for severe fallout from the pandemic.

TSN's Frank Seravalli reported at least 17 NHL teams have reduced salary of hockey operations staffers and multiple sources indicate budgets are being tightened around the NHL, and not just in terms of what teams are willing to spend against the \$81.5 million salary cap but across the board.

Those close to the coaching community believe the squeeze is already being felt on coaching staffs around the league both in terms of salaries and the numbers of coaches that will be employed. There are a lot of good, smart coaches out there, one GM said. If they won't work within the budget he's been given, he'll find someone who is willing to work within that framework, he said.

Scouting staffs, video staff, minor league staff. All could face cash crunches if not outright loss of jobs.

But against the backdrop of the great unknown, there is almost unanimous belief around the NHL that the 2020-21 season will move



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 21, 2020

forward in some shape or form. Or more to the point, it must move forward.

With the NFL underway and baseball about to head into playoffs, “the NBA and the NHL can’t just go away,” one longtime senior NHL executive said. “They just can’t.

“It’s going to have to happen in some form or fashion.”

The Athletic / Pronman: Even with world juniors, scouting for 2021 NHL Draft is an arduous task

By Corey Pronman Sep 17, 2020

After leagues paused or ended their season in the spring, NHL teams turned their attention to the 2020 NHL Draft. Stories emerged from scouts and executives about the difficulties of losing the postseason, the U18 World Championship and the Draft Combine, and instead doing interviews over Zoom.

But the difficulties of evaluating the 2021 NHL Draft look far more challenging.

The hockey world has embraced the pandemic realities along with the rest of the world. Temperature checks, masks and increased spacing between seats are among the usual policies for rinks. Paper rosters and line sheets, a hallmark of the scout room at junior rinks, are being replaced by pregame tweets showing the lines at QMJHL games.

Minnesota high school’s elite league has told NHL teams they can only send one scout to their event at a time to keep capacity low. The Swedish Hockey League will begin its season soon, but scouts aren’t allowed in the building. One scout per team is allowed in Sweden’s J20 league, though. NHL scouts from the Montreal and Toronto areas are allowed to scout QMJHL games in Quebec, but have to quarantine if they want to scout QMJHL games in Nova Scotia.

The entire hockey world is preparing for schedule and league formats that would cut down on travel, creating competitive environments where teams repeatedly play in a small group, making evaluation more difficult given how variable the strength of a division or conference could be.

We’ve seen European club teams in the season’s opening weeks have outbreaks that result in postponed games. The Czech Republic had several positive tests among some of their national junior players after some international games, resulting in international games being canceled. Scouts are being advised to regularly check schedules to make sure games they plan to attend will actually occur.

Due to the various laws and regulations from governments, NHL scouts – an industry that lives and breathes by the motto of “I have to be in the rinks” – are embracing a reality that their travel budget, policies and schedules are going to look a lot different this coming season.

“Are they streaming it?” is a much more common text I’m getting from NHL scouts than at any time beforehand.

As someone who holds himself out as an evaluator of players, I am stressed about the massive challenges the oncoming hockey year poses for being able to evaluate players and communicate to our readers what’s going on in the world of NHL prospects. Important and significant evaluation events have tumbled as the weeks went by this year. Tough discussions about quarantining have become routine for prospective international travel. Contingency plans and changing variables with schedules and events for the 2021 season are weekly discussions.

Among the major events lost that would be crucial evaluation points for prospects for the 2021 NHL Draft were the 2020 junior postseasons, the

2020 IIHF Under-18 World Championship, the Hlinka Gretzky Memorial and the World Jr. A Challenge.

The IIHF canceled all lower division tournaments in the men’s U20 category. The 2021 U18 men’s championship remains on the calendar, with a tournament status update expected in November.

If a CHL and All-American Top Prospects game were to take place for the 2021 draft, it’s expected to be later than usual, possibly into the spring.

The news Thursday that Hockey Canada and the IIHF will proceed with the World Junior Championship this winter in a bubble in Edmonton, leaving it one of the few major international events on the schedule, provides a significant opportunity to evaluate some of the best draft-eligible and drafted junior hockey players.

Some people may argue this major showcase and international events, in general, get overrated. In isolation, I can buy those arguments. But when you start adding up the total effect, it gets pretty significant and leads to a lot of important information that is lost.

A lot of NHL scouts like to use the summer camps and early summer and fall events to identify players for the upcoming draft; not to build their list off it, but to get a framework of who is in the mix and roughly in what range.

Even if the rest of the calendar remains mostly untouched and leagues play a season to completion, we will still likely go into the 2021 NHL Draft with a lot less information than usual, due to not being able to see players in different contexts over the past two years – an opinion shared by some but not all NHL scouts.

These challenges are not insurmountable. NHL scouts were in the rinks across North America and Europe this past weekend watching players. Top prospects will likely have a lot of games under their belts over a several year span to evaluate them by.

Things will be different, though. You will have fewer opportunities to evaluate players from different leagues and countries against each other. Scouts will be tested on how well they can utilize video to make decisions and compare players.

For those in the business of evaluating hockey players, this coming season could be one of the greatest challenges of their careers.

The Athletic / NHL Trade Big Board: 22 players who could be on the move this offseason

Craig Custance Sep 17, 2020

It’s a bit weird to be talking trades before the start of the Stanley Cup Final. In September. But after months of inaction on the roster-building front, things are heating up. Penguins GM Jim Rutherford already has one major trade under his belt. His protege in Minnesota, Bill Guerin, is taking care of business in getting Jonas Brodin locked up to a long-term extension and trading Eric Staal to Buffalo. This work can’t wait. Not with the draft barreling down on us. And neither can our annual Trade Big Board.

Let’s dive in:

1. Patrik Laine, Winnipeg Jets: There’s a strong belief from other teams that Jets GM Kevin Cheveldayoff would really like to give his top-six forwards a different look. “The only untouchables up front are (Mark) Scheifele and (Blake) Wheeler,” suggested one NHL source. Laine is a fascinating option. There’s no doubting his talent and he’s a bona fide game-breaker. But he’s also not universally loved. “He seems



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 21, 2020

disinterested at times," said one exec of Laine. It would have to take a monster offer to pry Laine away from the Jets, but they need a No. 2 center along with a top-four defenseman and are loaded on the wing. They'd be dealing from a position of strength here.

2. Oliver Ekman-Larsson, Arizona Coyotes: There are executives outside Arizona who believe the Coyotes are open to moving just about any player over 25 years old, which makes the Coyotes roster an interesting place to look to improve your team. While new GM Bill Armstrong might have other plans, Ekman-Larsson's patience with the rebuilding in the desert could be running thin. The problem here is that his contract is rich even for a player of his caliber, with seven years remaining on a deal that averages \$8.25 million. "It's pricey and long," said one exec. "That's a big bite."

3. Matt Dumba, Minnesota Wild: There are teams who would have been very interested in Jonas Brodin if the Wild weren't able to get that deal done, but with Brodin locked up long term, Dumba is now one of the most appealing defensemen on the market. Colleague Mike Russo broke down the expansion draft complications that make a Dumba trade a real possibility and it would take a player like Dumba to get the center the Wild are seeking, according to other teams. "Billy wants a centerman somehow," said one NHL executive. "(Dumba) is dynamic and right-shot defensemen are a premium."

4. Matt Murray, Pittsburgh Penguins: There's no doubt Murray struggled this year, and he has a .909 save percentage over the last three regular seasons. That takes the shine off a goalie who had two Stanley Cups before he was 23. But we all know hockey executives love goalies who have proven they can win under the highest stakes. "You like the fact that he's won two Cups," said an exec. "You'd have to hope there's a return to that." A team like Edmonton might make sense here but signability is key. If he's willing to take a short-term deal to rebuild his value, the options open up. If he wants, say, John Gibson money (\$6.4 million per) it'll make finding a fit more challenging.

5. Frederik Andersen, Toronto Maple Leafs: After the Maple Leafs traded Kasperii Kapanen, colleague James Mirtle reported that Andersen was being shopped as well. The appeal here, besides Andersen being a legit starting goalie, is that his actual salary next season is \$1 million now that his bonus has been paid. For as much talk as has been made about the flat cap, the bigger issue is going to be self-imposed budgets, so Andersen has appeal for teams looking to upgrade in goal without a lot of out-of-pocket expense.

6. Kyle Palmieri, New Jersey Devils: There has been some conversation on what an extension looks like between the Devils and Palmieri, so if that gets done the trade speculation can disappear. But GM Tom Fitzgerald did really well at the trade deadline and he did so in part because Blake Coleman had term and the Devils had leverage. One source on a potentially interested team said the price on Palmieri is high in part because the Devils are in no rush at this point. "(The Devils) got a lot for Coleman and (Taylor) Hall," said the executive. "I don't think this market is reflective of deadline pricing because you're only getting one playoff run (out of Palmieri)."

7. Max Domi, Montreal Canadiens: While Domi's name has been attached to trade rumors, the reality is that this probably isn't the time to maximize his trade value. GM Marc Bergevin would be selling low. Domi really likes playing in Montreal and wants to stay. According to an NHL source, contract talks are ongoing. Maybe the better question is just how much do the Canadiens see Domi in their long-term plans? "They want to see more consistency from him," said one NHL source. Another player to watch is Phillip Danault. If contract talks with him stall, he would draw trade interest.

8. Marc-Andre Fleury, Vegas Golden Knights: There doesn't seem to be a lot of doubt that Vegas is going to find a way to keep Robin Lehner around long term. The unanswered question is if Fleury would then want out or if he would make life in Vegas difficult by using his partial no-trade clause to prevent GM Kelly McCrimmon from dealing him. If Vegas retains money, he'd be an interesting fit in Colorado, a team some

believe would like to upgrade their goaltending situation if the right opportunity presented itself.

9. Kris Letang, Pittsburgh Penguins: It's hard to imagine a scenario where the Penguins move Letang and are better for it in the short term. But this piece from colleague Rob Rossi does a great job of examining the Letang situation and reports that Letang believes a trade now or before next season is expected. The talk around Letang may just be Rutherford getting a feel for what his options are as he makes another push.

10. Nik Ehlers, Winnipeg Jets: If you're moving one of either Laine or Ehlers, Ehlers might be the Jets forward most appealing for teams looking to make a big deal with the Jets. He's still young, he's going to score in the neighborhood of 30 goals and he comes with cost certainty. Teams definitely noticed that Ehlers looked like a different player in the postseason this year, which might actually make the Jets less eager to trade him. "Not only did he score, he went after guys physically," said a rival talent evaluator. "That might have moved the pendulum in his favor."

11. Andreas Johnsson, Toronto Maple Leafs: It could also be Alexander Kerfoot in this spot but as the Maple Leafs look to retool their team, there are people around the league who believe Johnsson is the player they'd prefer to trade and where talks have centered even if they'd be selling low. He's 25 years old with a 20-goal season under his belt so there's value, but removing his \$3.5 million cap hit from the equation would give GM Kyle Dubas more flexibility to make upgrades.

12. Brady Skjei, Carolina Hurricanes: Carolina acquired Skjei at the deadline and are getting numerous calls from teams looking to see if they'd be willing to spin him again. The Hurricanes aren't against it, but it would have to take a no-brainer to make it happen.

13. Darcy Kuemper, Arizona Coyotes: The Coyotes recently signed goalie Adin Hill to a one-way contract, which supports the belief from other teams that they're looking to trade one of their goalies, either Kuemper or Antti Raanta. Raanta has been great for the Coyotes (.924 save percentage in 92 games), he just can't stay on the ice. So the bigger return would be for Kuemper. One source suggested that the asking price on Kuemper is a first-round pick. "And it's probably worth it if you're in the hunt," he said. San Jose and Carolina could be options here.

14. Josh Anderson, Columbus Blue Jackets: Anderson has been on this list before and teams love what he brings to the table. But at this point, an extension in Columbus remains a possibility. One NHL source described contract talks between Anderson and the Blue Jackets as "fruitful" for the restricted free agent. One executive expressed concerns about what a trade for Anderson, who played just 26 games last season, might cost both in assets and in a long-term contract. "If he's healthy, he's a beast," he said. "The problem is, if they want a big asset, you can't do that. You can't give a first-rounder for one year of a guy and then try to get him signed before UFA. (Agent Darren Ferris) is going to ask for seven times six and he had one fucking goal last year."

15. Nikita Zadorov, Colorado Avalanche: Zadorov was quietly playing in the playoffs with an injured wrist and had surgery last week to repair it, with an expected five-week recovery before he's 100 percent. Zadorov loves Colorado. He also sees what's coming with Colorado's loaded defense and may end up pushing hard for a trade if he doesn't anticipate getting the opportunity to play the role he expects. "Something needs to happen there," said one NHL source.

16. The negotiating rights to Taylor Hall: According to a source, the Coyotes have made multiple attempts to sign Hall and the expectation is that they won't give up on that front. But as of right now, Hall plans on testing unrestricted free agency. Without the interview window, there's an advantage to be had for teams to try and get a head start and it would make sense for Arizona to try to get an asset back for numerous reasons. "They're trying to get back the picks they've lost," said one executive of the Coyotes, referencing the league's punishment for Arizona's scouting violations.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 21, 2020

17. Erik Johnson, Colorado Avalanche: Teams believe the Avalanche are open to moving Johnson and it makes sense, as much as the Avalanche like him both on defense and in that room. He's 32 years old. He's owed \$6 million for the next two seasons and Cale Makar's next contract is going to be a significant raise. Colorado might want to get out front of any future cap issues, although Johnson would have a say because of a modified no-trade clause that allows him to choose 19 teams to which he can be traded, an NHL source confirmed. "I don't know if (a Johnson) trade is this year, they only need to make a couple tweaks," said one executive. "But they've got D coming."

18. Noah Hanifin, Calgary Flames: It might be more exciting to talk about moving Johnny Gaudreau or Sean Monahan but that doesn't appear to be a priority for GM Brad Treliving at this moment. That said, there are definitely people around the league who see Calgary as a team to watch in the next month for something major. "I just think that Calgary's results might be putting a bit of urgency there in some fashion," said one team executive. The Calgary defense is loaded with potential unrestricted free agents so it's certainly a fluid situation. But if the Flames can re-sign TJ Brodie, with Juuso Valimaki coming back, there's flexibility to use Hanifin as a chip to get better. "Hanifin is at \$5 million. This is one area where they can potentially go to a cheaper guy and spend money elsewhere," suggested one NHL source.

19. Brandon Carlo, Boston Bruins: This is admittedly a bit of a longshot. He's 23 years old and a right-shot top-four defenseman. Those players are at a premium. The Bruins are getting calls on him but aren't actively looking to move him. If he gets traded, it's part of a major deal that brings a legitimate top-six forward back or a similarly talented (and aged) left-shot defenseman. Those aren't easy deals to make. "I'd be shocked (if they traded Carlo)," said a rival executive. "They're going to be fascinating to watch. They're going for it for one more year and they're going to take some aggressive risks." Even though they'd like to bring him back at the right price, the Bruins would also listen to offers for Torey Krug's negotiating rights.

20. James Reimer, Carolina Hurricanes: The belief is that the Hurricanes are going to move one of their goalies this offseason and Reimer is an interesting option because his actual salary is just \$850,000 next year, as colleague Pierre LeBrun reported on Insider Trading. That may explain the strong interest in Reimer so far from GMs looking for help in goal.

21. Justin Faulk, St. Louis Blues: If the Blues are going to sign Alex Pietrangelo, they're going to have to move some salary to make it happen. So this is more of a placeholder for that move. Trading Faulk would make sense as a solution, but his contract makes him tough to move. Same for Tyler Bozak. The prize would be Colton Parayko and if the Blues are desperate to clear money, they may have to listen on Parayko.

22. Andreas Athanasiou, Edmonton Oilers: GM Ken Holland liked Athanasiou enough to trade for him at the deadline, despite being very familiar with both his flaws and pluses. But his coach played him sparingly, which makes the \$3 million qualifying offer on Athanasiou a bit rich. The problem here is that other teams know this so they might prefer to see if the Oilers decline to qualify him and pursue him as an unrestricted free agent instead.

Sportsnet.ca / NHL's top 20 UFAs of 2020: Latest rumours, reports

Emily Sadler | September 17, 2020, 4:00 PM

Over the weekend, the Montreal Canadiens sent a fifth-round pick to the Carolina Hurricanes in exchange for the negotiating rights to defenceman Joel Edmundson.

Their gamble worked — the club signed Edmundson, who was scheduled to hit unrestricted free agency, to a four-year pact worth \$14-million earlier this week — and it's worth wondering if we'll see more of these kinds of deals between now and the beginning of October as free agency officially heats up and more teams map out what will surely be one of the strangest off-seasons on record.

Normally, there's a crucial period right before free agency officially opens that allows teams to talk to pending UFAs. This courting period has been nixed this year to accommodate a shortened off-season, which means teams may need to be extra strategic about how they're pursuing players, including tossing a draft pick in the ring like Montreal did for a possible payoff in the form of a free agent signing.

As we near the Oct. 9 opening of free agency, here's an updated look at the biggest names looking to sign on the dotted line this fall...

1. Alex Pietrangelo, D, St. Louis Blues

Age: 30

2019-20 cap hit: \$6.5 million

Both Pietrangelo and general manager Doug Armstrong have made it clear they'd like to get a deal done, and time is on their side — but the math complicates it.

Armstrong cleared up \$4.35 million earlier this month when he dealt goaltender Jake Allen to the Montreal Canadiens, paving the way for Ville Husso (and his affordable \$750,000 cap hit) to step into the backup role behind Jordan Binnington.

"At the end of the day, it's a math equation," Armstrong told reporters upon moving Allen, when asked about what this means for being able to lock up his captain.

So, math-wise, where does that leave the Blues in a flat-cap landscape? Looking ahead to next season, CapFriendly shows St. Louis with about \$69.8 million invested in 14 forwards, five defencemen and one goaltender.

Armstrong will also need to address pending RFA defenceman Vince Dunn, after looking after his other would-be RFAs like Sammy Blais and Marco Scandella this past spring.

That leaves the captain, who's expected to garner between \$8 million and \$9 million per year on a long-term deal — a fair price when you look at his performance over the course of this season and his importance to the Blues franchise as a whole.

"Obviously, I want to stay a Blue. Of course I do," Pietrangelo told reporters last month, during his end-of-season availability via Zoom following the Blues' first-round loss to the Vancouver Canucks. "It's the only place I've known professional hockey."

2. Taylor Hall, LW, Arizona Coyotes

Age: 28

2019-20 cap hit: \$6 million

Ten seasons into his NHL career with just two short playoff stints to show for it, Hall's priority heading into the biggest decision of his career is no surprise.

"I think honestly it's probably all winning," Hall told reporters in August, following his Arizona Coyotes' Round 1 loss to the Colorado Avalanche. "Any player at this stage in their career who's had the career I've had, 10 seasons only making the playoffs twice, that's really what I'm after. We'll see what happens there."

So, can the Coyotes win? That will be just one of the many questions hovering of the franchise this off-season, along with who will be their general manager, how they'll recover from the harsh punishment handed down for violating the league's combine testing policy and whether captain and top defenceman Oliver Ekman-Larsson is in fact on the trade



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 21, 2020

block. That's a lot of major questions for one team to handle, and that's in addition to navigating the salary cap.

Sportsnet's Rory Boylen looked at a handful of teams that could potentially land the top forward of the 2020 class, with the on-the-rise Montreal Canadiens (\$18.5 million in projected cap space) and Colorado Avalanche (about \$22.3 million) particularly intriguing.

In 30 games with the Devils plus 35 with the Coyotes upon being dealt to the desert, Hall tallied a combined 16 goals and 36 assists for 52 points through 65 regular season games in 2019-20 – a far cry from his 39-goal, 93-point Hart-winning campaign with New Jersey in 2017-18, but a good sign that he's getting back on track after two years of injuries and trade rumours.

Through nine post-season games with Arizona, the Calgary native had a pair of goals and six points, matching his previous playoff totals from 2017-18 in a five-game run with New Jersey.

Hall acknowledged the current financial landscape of the league due to COVID-19.

"I don't think the money is going to be what it was before COVID or before this season, but that's fine," he said. "I think we get paid a lot of money to play a game and we'll see what happens."

3. Torey Krug, D, Boston Bruins

Age: 28

2019-20 cap hit: \$5.25 million

Both Krug and Bruins general manager Don Sweeney have expressed a desire to extend this relationship, and while Sweeney told reporters earlier this month he plans to begin those talks now that Boston's season is over, there's plenty of uncertainty about whether the two sides will be able to work something out while also keeping room for pending RFAs Matt Grzelcyk and Jake DeBrusk.

Krug has spent his entire NHL career to date with the Bruins – first on back-to-back one-year bridge deals, followed by the four-year pact that's expiring now – and is looking for a long-term commitment. He'd like that to be with Boston, but made it clear he won't be signing another short-term deal to stay.

"I'm very opposed to that," he told reporters earlier in September. "I've bet on myself. I've taken shorter-term deals, less amount of money my whole career now. This is my time in terms of my value at its peak. I have the ability, I'm in a position now where I need to make the most of it."

4. Robin Lehner, G, Vegas Golden Knights

Age: 29

2019-20 cap hit: \$5 million

Goaltending was the biggest storyline for the Golden Knights this post-season – having two starting netminders will do that — so it's no surprise that the club's crease remains in the spotlight as they stare down the off-season after being ousted from contention by the Dallas Stars in the Western Conference Final.

"We don't have those answers for you right now," general manager Kelly McCrimmon told reporters on Wednesday, addressing goaltending. "But [the] first order of business, I think, in many respects, is to sort that out."

Two one-year deals and a deadline trade have seen Lehner suit up for three different teams in the past two seasons, and he's thrived with all of them. His dominance this post-season (9-4 record, 1.84 goals-against average, .924 save percentage and four shutouts) has ultimately hoisted him from popular UFA-to-be to the hottest goaltender on the market.

That is, if he even makes it to free agency. As his incredible playoff numbers indicate, Lehner looks right at home in the Golden Knights crease and after all signs initially pointed to the 29-year-old being a short-

term rental for a long post-season run, it sounds like both team and player are looking to keep this relationship going.

Golden Knights reporter Jesse Granger of The Athletic wrote last week he believes the team is planning to lock up Lehner with a long-term contract extension, and wrote that those talks may already be underway.

This could get complicated, though, as starter-turned-backup (and fan favourite) Marc-Andre Fleury still has two more seasons remaining on the three-year extension he signed with the club back in 2018, coming in at \$7 million per season.

5. Tyson Barrie, D, Toronto Maple Leafs

Age: 29

2019-20 cap hit: \$5.5 million (this AAV is split between Colorado and Toronto)

Barrie's time in Toronto didn't go how he or the Maple Leafs expected, making a clean split in free agency a certainty for the two sides.

"I wish I would've left a little more of a stamp on the series," Barrie, who didn't register on the scoresheet through all five games of the qualifying round against the Columbus Blue Jackets, said in August following the conclusion of Toronto's season.

Asked about where he might land and what kind of contract he's looking for going forward, Barrie said, "at this point I have no idea what the future holds."

It's safe to say he will be prioritizing chemistry and opportunity in an effort to regain his game with another squad.

The Maple Leafs have already made a few moves this off-season, sending Kasper Kapanen to the Penguins, and will reportedly let forward Kyle Clifford walk in free agency.

Kyle Clifford will be exploring the open market, his agent, Todd Reynolds, tells me. "He's heading for free agency. The #Leafs are aware of that." TOR's financial situation has forced the issue.

— Terry Koshan (@koshtorontosun) September 16, 2020

6. Jacob Markstrom, G, Vancouver Canucks

Age: 30

2019-20 cap hit: \$3.67 million

In less than a week, the Hockey Twitter tide shifted from an urgent call to re-sign Markstrom to a sudden consensus that Thatcher Demko's the guy after the rookie broke out in the playoffs and nearly broke the Golden Knights in the process. But for general manager Jim Benning, this isn't a one-or-the-other decision.

"[Coach Travis Green] is a big believer in having two good goalies," Benning told reporters during his end-of-season availability earlier this month. "With the travel schedule we have during the regular season, I believe we need to have two good goalies."

Benning told reporters that Demko's emergence doesn't change the team's motivation to sign Markstrom, who is expected to earn a nice raise to the tune of around \$6 million per year, and indicated that those negotiations to bring back the veteran will start this week.

"Jacob is an important guy in our group," Benning explained. "He's a leader and he was our MVP over the regular season, so we're going to try to figure out a way that makes sense for us and that makes Jacob and his agent happy, to try to figure out a deal to get him signed."

Staying the course and re-signing the veteran goalie, who is without a doubt the Canucks' MVP of 2019-20, would pave the way for one heck of a fine goalie tandem in Vancouver with starts split down the middle, but it could also set the team up for trouble when it's time to start handing out protected roster spots ahead of the Seattle expansion draft as every team is only able to protect one netminder.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 21, 2020

Sportsnet's Elliotte Friedman touched on the topic in his latest edition of 31 Thoughts:

Once eliminated, Canucks GM Jim Benning began making his due-diligence calls around the NHL. My sense is he's trying to see if he can sign his UFAs and work backwards from there. There's a desire for all of Jacob Markstrom, Christopher Tanev and Tyler Toffoli to return, but there are challenges (although there's some positivity this week with Toffoli). The Canucks will want flexibility into the expansion draft with Markstrom and Thatcher Demko. My sense is Markstrom would consider movement protection after Seattle makes its picks, but could want contract concessions in return. Vancouver has a number it won't go past. The challenging thing for everyone involved is that I'm hearing the market for Markstrom is strong. – Elliotte Friedman, 31 Thoughts

7. Mike Hoffman, RW/LW, Florida Panthers

Age: 30

2019-20 cap hit: \$5.1875 million

Florida's got a lot of question marks right now. The team parted ways with general manager Dale Tallon following its qualifying-round loss to the Islanders last month, and it's safe to say plenty more changes will be on the way now that new GM Bill Zito takes over and puts his own stamp on the club.

Hoffman looked like a sure rental candidate at the deadline but ultimately wasn't moved. His strong performance through four games against the Islanders – three goals and five points – should make him a popular player among teams looking for another scorer to contend.

8. Braden Holtby, G, Washington Capitals

Age: 30

2019-20 cap hit: \$6.1 million

At the beginning of the season, Holtby was a no-brainer as the top goaltender on the list of pending UFAs at his position, but the stand-out play of peers Lehner and Markstrom have seen the spotlight shift. Holtby's own struggles this year have complicated his future outlook, and back-to-back early playoff exits for the 2018 Cup champs have made the Capitals' next moves tough to predict.

It's now looking more and more likely that we've seen the last of Holtby in All Caps, as Washington general manager Brian MacLellan told reporters on Tuesday that he expects Holtby to reach free agency.

"I'd expect him to go to free agency. The goalie market is unusually deep this year," MacLellan said during a Zoom call, after the team announced the hiring of Peter Laviolette as head coach. "I talked to his agent last week briefly about where he's at and the kind of opportunities he's looking for.

"I would assume he goes to free agency and we'll keep in contact with him throughout the free agency period and see if he's getting what he wants."

Holtby struggled to find consistency this past season, and the emergence of rookie netminder Ilya Samsonov brought added urgency to Washington's decision, especially when you consider the upcoming expansion draft next year. That Stanley Cup on his resume, however, should see him land a decent deal — wherever that may be.

9. Evgenii Dadonov, RW, Florida Panthers

Age: 30

2019-20 cap hit: \$4 million

Another question mark for Florida.

Dadonov quietly put up back-to-back 28-goal campaigns down in Florida, tallying 65 and 70 points in his past two seasons, and a scoring spree in January had him just three goals shy of that total through 69 games this season. A quiet post-season didn't do his stock any favours, but he's one

of the more low-key intriguing names to watch as one of the league's most underrated sharpshooters.

10. Tyler Toffoli, RW/LW, Vancouver Canucks

Age: 27

2019-20 cap hit: \$4.6 million

After a down year in 2018-19 with 13 goals and 34 points on a floundering Kings squad, Toffoli got off to a strong start in Vancouver upon being traded in February.

An injury early in the playoffs had us wondering if we'd seen the last of him this year, but the 28-year-old came out flying upon his return in Game 2 of the second round against Vegas. His seamless fit with the Canucks makes him a priority for Benning in what's shaping up to be a busy off-season in Vancouver with defenceman Chris Tanev also seeking a new deal.

11. Mikael Granlund, C/RW, Nashville Predators

Age: 27

2019-20 cap hit: \$5.75 million

With GM David Poile promising changes ahead, there's really no question that Granlund will be wearing a different sweater come 2020-21. With a flat cap and a down year on the stat sheet, Granlund could be a strong candidate for a short-term deal somewhere to get him back to his playmaking ways.

12. T.J. Brodie, D, Calgary Flames

Age: 29

2019-20 cap hit: \$4.65 million

Flames GM Brad Treliving said in the spring he wanted to bring both Brodie and fellow rearguard Travis Hamonic back into the fold. But with the flat cap, will he be able to?

As the more offensively gifted of the Flames' two pending UFA d-men, Brodie could be the more likely — but less affordable — signee in Calgary.

Brodie's name has been in trade rumours before. Now, with another disappointing post-season in the books, the question in Calgary is whether (or maybe how much) Treliving will opt to split up his core and revamp his roster.

13. Travis Hamonic, D, Calgary Flames

Age: 29

2019-20 cap hit: \$3.857 million

Hamonic, who made the decision to opt out of the NHL's restart this summer to be with his family, has been a steady presence in Calgary and would no doubt be a smart signing for Treliving to make. The GM has a little more cap flexibility than some of his NHL peers, but how much will he devote to his blue line?

14. Sami Vatanen, D, Carolina Hurricanes

Age: 28

2019-20 cap hit: \$4.875 million

Vatanen had to wait a while to suit up for a game with the Hurricanes, the team that acquired him from the Devils at the deadline, due to the lower-body injury that had him sidelined at the time of the league hiatus. Considering how little he played with his new teammates, Vatanen fit in well with the Hurricanes. The club's depth at the position makes them unlikely to bring him back, however.

Injuries have prevented the rearguard from ever being able to play a full season, which will factor into his next deal.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 21, 2020

15. Anton Khudobin, G, Dallas Stars

Age: 34

2019-20 cap hit: \$2.5 million

Every post-season, we re-learn the importance of having not just one solid goaltender but two. This year's lesson comes from Khudobin. The veteran netminder has started almost every single one of the Stars' 21 games this summer as No. 1 netminder Ben Bishop has been sidelined as "unfit to play."

Lehner, Markstrom and Holtby are the biggest names on the goalie market, but Khudobin will be a popular name, too, for contenders looking for an insurance policy – that is, if the Stanley Cup Final-bound Stars dare let him go.

16. Corey Crawford, G, Chicago Blackhawks

Age: 35

2019-20 cap hit: \$6 million

Like Khudobin, Crawford could be a solid backup/1B option on a short-term deal for a contender going forward should he part ways with the Blackhawks.

While his \$6-million seasons are over, his career isn't. We haven't had many opportunities to see Playoff Crawford of late, but we got a pretty decent show this summer when the veteran netminder backstopped Chicago to an upset victory over the Edmonton Oilers in the qualifiers and kept the club alive in Game 4 of Round 1 against the Vegas Golden Knights.

17. Ilya Kovalchuk, LW, Washington Capitals

Age: 36

2019-20 cap hit: \$700,000

Montreal's Kovalchuk experiment got off to a great start — the veteran proved he's still got a little magic left in him, and his success looked even better with a \$700,000 price tag attached — and saw the club flip him to the contending Capitals for a profit at the deadline. He fell flat in the playoffs with Washington, but it feels likely this wasn't the last we've seen of Kovalchuk in le bleu, blanc et rouge. He's a strong candidate to return to Montreal as a free agent on another low-cost contract.

18. Erik Haula, LW, Florida Panthers

Age: 28

2019-20 cap hit: \$2.75 million

A string of injuries has hindered Haula's ability to match the success he had with the Golden Knights in 2017-18, and he wasn't able to strike up any chemistry with the Panthers upon being traded to Florida at the deadline. There's no doubt he's been a much-loved and valuable member of each team he's played on, but durability will factor into his next deal.

19. Wayne Simmonds, RW, Buffalo Sabres

Age: 31

2019-20 cap hit: \$5 million

Simmonds has struggled to find his stride since landing in Nashville at the 2018-19 deadline. Since then, he's scored just nine goals and 28 points in 85 games split between the Predators, Devils and Sabres. He's just three seasons removed from back-to-back 30-plus-goal campaigns and should be a top candidate for a short-term deal on a team that can help revive his career.

20. Kevin Shattenkirk, D, Tampa Bay Lightning

Age: 31

2019-20 cap hit: \$1.75 million

He's not the top UFA candidate he was just a few years ago, but Shattenkirk's impact on Tampa Bay's blue line – both in leadership and playmaking — should put him among a number of strong blue-liners ready to sign quickly if he hits the open market.

Other notable pending UFAs to keep an eye on: Joe Thornton (SJ), Zdeno Chara (BOS), Chris Tanev (VAN), Alex Galchenyuk (MIN), Thomas Greiss (NYI), Cody Eakin (VGK), Cody Ceci (TOR), Justin Schultz (PIT), Michael Frolik (CGY), Vladislav Namestnikov (OTT), Erik Gustafsson (CHI), Pat Maroon (TB), Zach Bogosian (TB), Kyle Clifford (TOR), Radko Gudas (WSH), Justin Williams (CAR), Dustin Byfuglien

TSN.CA / Trade Bait: 10 contracts potentially on the move this off-season

Frank Seravalli

Last week's Nick Bjugstad trade sent an important notice around the NHL about just how incredibly difficult it will be to move money in hockey's current climate.

A frozen \$81.5 million salary cap, plus a multitude of internal team budgets and caps, coupled with an uncertain season ahead, has the bean counters keeping a close eye on salaries.

The Penguins not only retained half of Bjugstad's \$5.25 million real salary for the season, they received just a conditional seventh-round pick that may not even transfer, just to move him off their books.

It's a trend that bears watching in the coming weeks leading until Oct. 9's Free Agent Frenzy.

Here are 10 other names and contracts that could well be in play, given the financial or salary cap implications their teams are facing:

1. PHIL KESSEL

Arizona Coyotes

Position: Right Wing

Age: 32

Stats: 70 games, 14 goals, 24 assists, 38 points

Contract: Two years at \$6.8 million AAV

Scoop: There is no doubt that the Coyotes will be looking to shave salary to fit an internal budget under new GM Bill Armstrong. Other 'Yotes players north of 30, like Niklas Hjalmarsson, Derek Stepan and Michael Grabner should be on this list. But Kessel has to be an attractive option. The Coyotes and Maple Leafs jointly paid him a \$5 million signing bonus on July 1. That means he is owed just \$5.95 million in total in real dollars for the next two seasons. He wasn't a fit in the desert last season. But surely some teams are thinking that the decline from 92- and 82-point seasons all the way down to 38 last season was far too sharp to be purely physical. A re-energized Phil could be a game changer for a Cup contender.

2. TYLER BOZAK

St. Louis Blues

Position: Centre

Age: 34

Stats: 67 games, 13 goals, 16 assists, 29 points

Contract: One year at \$5 million AAV



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 21, 2020

Scoop: Bozak helped the Blues to the Stanley Cup in 2019, but if St. Louis needs to clear out cap space in order to keep captain Alex Pietrangolo on the backend, Bozak is certainly a candidate to go in a retained salary transaction. Bozak saw career-low ice time last season (15:19) but he is probably an ideal third-line centre at the right price on the right team, given his experience and elite ability to win draws, and the dearth of centres on the free agent market this off-season.

3. ANDREAS ATHANASIOU

Edmonton Oilers

Position: Left Wing

Age: 26

Stats: 45 games, 11 goals, 15 assists, 26 points

Contract: Restricted Free Agent

Scoop: The Oilers are seeking to move Athanasiou before he is due a \$3 million qualifying offer by Oct. 7 at 5 p.m. ET – a minimum price that Edmonton cannot afford to pay. Athanasiou is always intriguing because of both his speed and his 30-goal season, but he certainly didn't produce for the Oilers in a limited 13-game showing (including a qualifying-series loss). Oilers GM Ken Holland is between a rock and a hard place on this one. Holland gave up two second-round picks for Athanasiou at the deadline. Now, teams are thinking he'll let Athanasiou walk for nothing in the absence of a QO, limiting the return on a trade for his rights.

4. TROY STECHER

Vancouver Canucks

Position: Right Defence

Age: 26

Stats: 69 games, 5 goals, 12 assists, 17 points

Contract: Restricted Free Agent

Scoop: Stecher falls into a very similar category as Athanasiou in that he's due a \$2.325 million qualifying offer from the Canucks as a restricted free agent. Without one, he will become an unrestricted free agent. The difference is that the Canucks like Stecher and would like to find a way to keep him, but a longer-term commitment might not be in the cards with their other salary cap constraints and the pipeline of young defencemen that will be knocking on the door for roster spots in training camp on cheaper, entry-level deals. There is also some question as to whether GM Jim Benning may be asked by ownership to field a team at a lower internal budget number.

5. BRANDON SUTTER

Vancouver Canucks

Position: Centre/Right Wing

Age: 31

Stats: 44 games, 8 goals, 9 assists, 17 points

Contract: One year at \$4.375 million

Scoop: Loui Eriksson has put a stranglehold on the Canucks' cap situation as their highest-paid forward, at least until Elias Pettersson inks his well-deserved second contract. Eriksson is a candidate to be dealt, owed just \$5 million in real dollars over the next two years. But Sutter is also a distinct possibility and could be an easier route to move money if the Canucks can stomach retaining a bit of salary. Sutter's offensive production has plummeted, and he's struggled to stay healthy, but he plays a playoff-style grinding game and Vancouver could find a suitor for that.

6. PATRIC HORNQVIST

Pittsburgh Penguins

Position: Winger

Age: 33

Stats: 52 games, 17 goals, 15 assists, 32 points

Contract: Three years at \$5.3 million

Scoop: Penguins GM Jim Rutherford said he would continue to attempt to move money – to both make an internal budget work and be able to go after free agents on Oct. 9. Hornqvist would seem to be the odd man out as a \$5.3 million third-line winger. The 2017 Stanley Cup-clinching scorer is a legit 20-goal candidate and still skates well. The issue will be the term remaining on his deal at three years. The Pens have been willing to retain salary to move players and that might need to be the case again.

7. BEN BISHOP

Dallas Stars

Position: Goaltender

Age: 33

Stats: 44 games, 2.50 GAA, .920 SV%

Contract: Three years at \$4.92 million AAV

Scoop: Bishop could be an interesting addition to the NHL's game of goaltending musical chairs this off-season. The Stars need to re-sign Denis Gurianov, Roope Hintz and Radek Faksa, a mega extension looms for Miro Heiskanen, plus GM Jim Nill has expressed his affinity to re-sign playoff hero Anton Khudobin. Where does that leave Bishop? Two years ago, he was the runner-up for the Vezina. He is a three-time finalist, one of the best regular-season goalies in the last decade. But he also seems to be injured when it matters most. The Stars should be able to find a taker with just \$8 million owed in real cash over the next three seasons if they are interested in rebooting in net.

8. TYLER JOHNSON

Tampa Bay Lightning

Position: Centre/Winger

Age: 30

Stats: 65 games, 14 goals, 17 assists, 31 points

Contract: Four years at \$5 million AAV

Scoop: Pick one, whether it's Johnson, Alex Killorn, Ondrej Palat or maybe even Yanni Gourde. One of the Bolts' high-priced forwards has to go. They can't afford to keep them all. Johnson has been in this position before and J.T. Miller was the one outbound. Johnson has a full no-trade clause, but he has some cost certainty for the next four seasons and can make another team better.

9. BRANDON SAAD

Chicago Blackhawks

Position: Right Wing

Age: 27

Stats: 58 games, 21 goals, 12 assists, 33 points

Contract: One year at \$6 million AAV

Scoop: Saad has produced goals at almost exactly the same rate as in his first stint in Chicago, when he helped the Hawks to two Stanley Cups. But it doesn't seem like necessarily the same juice is there after returning from Columbus. Chicago also has \$73 million committed already to next year's salary cap and they need a starting goalie, plus new deals for Dominik Kubalik and Dylan Strome. That doesn't leave a lot of wiggle room, unless Saad's \$6 million hit can be moved. If he's a player the Hawks decide they are not re-signing anyway, now would be the time.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • September 21, 2020

10. BRANDON DUBINSKY

Columbus Blue Jackets

Position: Centre

Age: 34

Stats: Zero games

Contract: One year at \$5.85 million AAV

Scoop: Dubinsky's career is likely over due to a chronic wrist injury, but that hasn't stopped teams from inquiring with the Blue Jackets about his contract. His contract is covered by insurance, so the \$5.85 million he is due in real salary will require no financial outlay. His contract could be of value in three ways: to a team looking to get to the salary cap floor, to a team looking to manipulate the cap using LTIR, or to a team with extra space looking for a draft pick if the Blue Jackets want to clear space and not use LTIR.