



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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THE NEWS & OBSERVER

Hurricanes' Justin Williams announces he's retiring

BY CHIP ALEXANDER

Justin Williams is ending a hockey career that had him raise the Stanley Cup three times and bring an NHL championship to the Carolina Hurricanes, that one day could land him in the Hockey Hall of Fame.

Williams and the Hurricanes made the announcement on Thursday. Williams, who turned 39 on Sunday, was a member of the Hurricanes' 2006 Stanley Cup championship and later was twice on Cup winners with the Los Angeles Kings. He earned the ultimate moniker — "Mr. Game 7" — for his ability to deliver in the biggest of games on the biggest stage in the sport.

Williams returned to the Hurricanes as a free agent in 2017 and was an integral part of the team returning to the playoffs in 2018-19. He was the team captain for Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour, determined to provide leadership, and did. He was determined to make the team relevant again in the NHL and he did.

What made Williams special?

"He is who he is. You see what you get and get what you see," Brind'Amour said Thursday in an N&O interview. "For me it was just accountability, and coming every day and someone who does what he's supposed to do. Whether a preseason game or a Stanley Cup playoff Game 7, Willy plays the same way.

"Not many players can say they left everything on the ice when they walk away, that they have nothing left to prove and nothing left in the tank. He's had a great career."

Williams also was determined to make it fun for Canes fans and did that as an originator of the postgame Storm Surge that became so popular. He was a leading member of the so-called "Bunch of Jerks" that memorable season.

"It's his will to win," Brind'Amour said in 2019. "He may not be the most talented. He certainly doesn't skate the fastest or shoot the hardest. But there is that 'it' factor and he doesn't want to be denied. You can't teach it. You just have it."

Williams considered retirement after the 2018-19 season, after losing to the Boston Bruins in the Eastern Conference finals. Brind'Amour, his former teammate and close friend, as much as anyone wouldn't let him. Williams decided to return in January as the Canes again reached the postseason in a season shortened and delayed by the pandemic. The Canes again were eliminated by the Bruins.

"I've never once taken for granted the privilege it is to be able to play a game for a living," Williams said in his statement.

Williams was named the Canes captain soon after Brind'Amour was promoted to head coach in 2018 — Brind'Amour saying it was the easiest decision he would make as coach.

It was Williams who clinched the Cup in 2006, scoring the empty netter late in Game 7 of the Stanley Cup finals against the Edmonton Oilers. When the Canes returned to the playoffs in 2019, it was Williams who fought for the puck in Game 7 of the first-round series against the Washington Capitals, zipping it toward the net where it was batted in by Brock McGinn for a double-overtime victory.

Brind'Amour said Thursday that three moments in time will always be his lasting memories of Williams' playing career. The first was in winning the Cup together in 2006. The second came after the double overtime win in Washington.

"My favorite photo is me shaking his hand on the ice, me in my suit and he's in his jersey," Brind'Amour said. "That brings back the memory of him coming in the locker room after Game 7 and just exhausted."

The third was after Williams' last game, in the Toronto bubble. It was emotional time for both, Brind'Amour said.

Williams, in his statement, thanked many who have helped him along the way including former Canes majority owner Pete Karmanos and former general manager Ron Francis. He also thanked current majority owner Tom Dundon and Brind'Amour for "their leadership and trust in me as a player to bring me back this past year for one more run."

In the final tally, Williams 18 seasons and 1,264 career games with the Philadelphia Flyers, Hurricanes, Kings and Capitals. His Stanley Cup wins came in 2006, 2012 and 2014 and was the Conn Smythe Trophy winner as playoff MVP for the Kings in 2014.

Mister Game 7? Williams played in nine and was 8-1. He had seven goals and eight assists, and his 15 points are the most by an NHL player.

Williams also won gold medals for Canada in the 2004 and 2007 World Championships.

"Willy walks away having given all he could to the game and every organization he played for," Brind'Amour said Thursday. "Great pro, teammate and person. I'm proud to call him a friend and grateful to have the opportunity to play with him and coach him."

Williams, ending his statement, said: "My family has sacrificed a lot for me to be where I am, so I want to thank my mom and dad for being there for me every step of the way. My sister, Nikki, for being my biggest fan since day one. My wife, Kelly, and my kids Jaxon and Jade for embracing



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this journey with me. Life is so much better when you have people you love to share it with.”

NHL free agency begins Friday. What does that mean for the Hurricanes?

BY CHIP ALEXANDER

Jim Rutherford, to no one's surprise, got it started Wednesday by trading goalie Matt Murray to the Ottawa Senators.

For Rutherford, the Pittsburgh Penguins general manager, making a trade is like brushing his teeth. It's a habit and an old one.

Later Wednesday, as the 2020 NHL Draft was slowly grinding its way to completion, the Nashville Predators sent forward Nick Bonino to the Minnesota Wild for forward Luke Kunin. That small flurry of activity titillated those hockey fans always eager to see teams make moves and players change teams, sending social media into a stir.

And what now? The draft has ended and NHL free agency begins at noon Friday. How busy and noisy will things be during a coronavirus pandemic where the league's salary cap remains flat at \$81.5 million and next year's revenues are little more than a guess?

“In talking to my counterparts, no one really knows what to expect,” Don Waddell, the Carolina Hurricanes president and general manager, said in a recent N&O interview.

Certainly not a lot of free spending and long-term contracts, Waddell said,

“With the salary cap staying flat I don't think you'll see the term that you used to see in free agency,” he said. “I think there will be shorter deals made. Players have the right to get the term they really want but I think for most players you're going to see shorter-term contracts coming out of this free agency.

“There's going to be some high-end guys out there who always pretty much get what they're asking or close to it. There will be some guys in the middle who get a little bit of term. But in free agency you've always figured you'd have to give guys three to five years (in term) and I don't think that's going to be the case this year.”

The list of available goalies, if still unsigned Friday, could be a long one: Corey Crawford, Craig Anderson, Jacob Markstrom, Thomas Greiss. Also on the market could be Anton Khudobin, the former Canes goalie who helped the Dallas Stars reach the Stanley Cup finals this year.

Matt Larkin of The Hockey News, in an SI/THN podcast, said he could see Vancouver's Markstrom landing with the Canes, saying, “Carolina is on the cusp of being a real Cup contender but doesn't have reliable goaltending.”

Waddell was asked Wednesday night if the Canes would look to upgrade the position or stick with goalies Petr Mrazek and James Reimer next season, now targeted to begin on Jan. 1, 2021.

“We're very happy with the tandem we had,” Waddell said in a media call. “But my job as a general manager, if we can upgrade any position, we have to look at it. At the end of the day if we stay with Petr and 'Reims' we're perfectly good with that, and if there's an opportunity to upgrade we've got to look at it.

“We've got to look at what the cost is. We don't have a lot of money to spend under the cap and we've got to spend it wisely.”

The Canes have a projected cap space of roughly \$7.78 million according to CapFriendly, which tracks team contracts. A pressing matter is signing forward Andrei Svechnikov to a contract extension while also looking ahead to next year when the Canes should look to extend defenseman Dougie Hamilton.

“I think it's going to be hard to do stuff,” Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said Thursday. “I'd be happy if we come back with the same group.”

Forward Warren Foegele and defenseman Haydn Fleury are restricted free agents who were given qualifying offers Wednesday by the Canes. Both could soon be signed to new contracts, Waddell said.

The free agency pool grew Wednesday as teams made final qualifying offers to their restricted free agents. Left without offers, and becoming unrestricted free agents on Friday, were such players as Ottawa forward Anthony Duclair and Florida Panthers center Lucas Wallmark, who was traded by the Canes last season.

The Canes' unrestricted free agents include defensemen Trevor van Riemsdyk and Sami Vatanen, and Waddell said the Canes could circle back to one or both during free agency.

Waddell has mentioned adding scoring if possible in the offseason but it might take a trade, moving salary in and out, that gets it done rather than trying to sign a free agent at the right price and term,

“I think after free agency starts and people don't get what they need in free agency, I think you'll see more hockey trades made post free agency than you have in previous years,” Waddell said. “I think it's going to be slow in free agency right off the bat. There's some big guys out there who will go on day one but I really think free agency is going to play out over the next four or five days, not the first 48 hours like it usually does.”

A year ago, when free agency began on July 1, the first 48 hours for the Canes meant dealing with an offer sheet to center Sebastian Aho from the Montreal Canadiens. There shouldn't be as much drama this time.



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Canes' first-round pick Jarvis says he plays like Point. When will he be NHL ready?

By Chip Alexander

Seth Jarvis spent part of Tuesday looking at the 31 NHL hats and jerseys sent to him by the league, wondering which he would be putting on hours later when the 2020 NHL Draft began.

At some point, the Portland Winterhawks forward fingered the Carolina Hurricanes sweater and cap. The Canes had the 13th overall pick in the first round Tuesday and Jarvis had to believe that was a possibility.

"I kind of looked at the hats and which one I kind of looked best in," he said in a media call.

And now that he has officially been chosen by the Hurricanes in the first round? What does he do with the other 30 caps and jerseys?

"Maybe keep them as little bit of motivation?" Jarvis said.

At least 11 of them. Eleven teams passed on him in the first round (Ottawa had two picks in the top five), perhaps concerned about his size — he's listed at 5-10 and 176 pounds — if impressed by his skill.

But Jarvis, 18, said he models his play after that of forward Brayden Point of the Stanley Cup champion Tampa Bay Lightning.

"He's a smaller-body player who can have an impact on a team and on a game," Jarvis said.

Jarvis can score. He did it 42 times last season for the Winterhawks, closing third in the WHL in goals and finishing second with 98 points before the pandemic shut down the season. For him, size is not an issue. He made an impact.

"I don't like to compare players at this age but what he brings to the table our scouts really, really liked," Don Waddell, the Canes' president and general manager, said in on the media call. "He makes players around him better. When you look at these types of picks, especially the 13th pick, you want to make sure you get not only a highly skilled player but somebody who can drive the line. He can do that. We look for him to be a big point-getter as his career continues.

"We talk about players who have lots of tools but not the tool box. He's definitely got the mind to think the game and make the plays. His skating is unbelievable (and) his vision is outstanding."

At the same time, Waddell said Jarvis likely would spend another season in junior hockey and continue his development.

Jarvis, rated 11th among North America skaters by NHL Central Scouting, had to play the waiting game Tuesday.

A few minutes after NHL commissioner Gary Bettman said the league was targeting Jan. 1, 2021 as the starting date of the new season, the New York Rangers made the No. 1 pick of the draft.

The pick: forward Alexis Lafreniere of Rimouski of the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League. That was expected from the time the Rangers won the NHL draft lottery and landed the No. 1 overall pick.

There was some thought the Canes might try to select Russian goalie Yaroslav Askarov, but the Nashville Predators took him with the No. 11 pick. A few minutes later, Jarvis heard his name called by Waddell.

Jarvis already has some understanding of the team that drafted him and where he's headed. Seems he has an affinity for a local college team.

Jarvis, a native of Winnipeg, has Duke paraphernalia in his room at home. His family are "big" Blue Devils fans, he said. He's a big fan of college basketball and the Blue Devils have one of the best programs.

"Just seeing them always winning, when you're a little bit young you like the teams that are winning and Duke was definitely doing that," Jarvis said.

The 2020 draft continues Wednesday with the second through the seventh rounds, and the Canes will have seven total picks.

Something to consider: the Canes drafted center Sebastian Aho in the second round (2015), defenseman Brett Pesce in the third (2013) and defenseman Jaccob Slavin in the fourth round (2012). The three are a part of the youthful core that helped the Canes return to the playoffs the past two seasons.

While there have been successes, the draft also produces some choices that prove to be busts. In 2009, the Canes took forward Philippe Paradis with their first-round pick (27th) in June and had traded him by December. Paradis has never played in the NHL.

Lease extension for Hurricanes at PNC Arena moves closer to completion

By Chip Alexander

The Centennial Authority has received approval on financial funding from the city and county that was a stipulation in completing a new PNC Arena lease extension with the Carolina Hurricanes.

The authority, an appointed group that is the arena landlord, and the Hurricanes announced in May that a term sheet on a five-year lease extension had been agreed on by both sides. It would extend the Canes' lease, which was to expire in 2024, through July 1, 2029.



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But a requirement in that agreement was that the authority get approval from the City of Raleigh and Wake County that \$9 million a year through 2029 be provided through the Tri-Party Agreement, in which money annually is appropriated from the hotel and prepared food and beverage tax revenue.

The Wake County board of commissioners approved a Tri-Party amendment on Monday and the Raleigh City Council approved it unanimously at its meeting Tuesday.

The lease extension has been turned over to attorneys for the authority and the Hurricanes for final inspection and approval, authority executive director Jeff Merritt said Tuesday.

"This was a huge day. We've checked off a big box," Merritt said in an interview. "It took a lot of work by a lot of people to make that happen."

Hurricanes extend qualifying offers to eight restricted free agents

BY CHIP ALEXANDER

While the final rounds of the 2020 NHL Draft were being held Wednesday, the Carolina Hurricanes also took care of some other hockey business.

The Canes made qualifying offers to eight restricted free agents before the NHL deadline Wednesday. Forward Warren Foegele and defenseman Haydn Fleury received offers. Both hold arbitration rights by Canes president and general manager Don Waddell said he soon hopes to have new contracts completed with both players.

"We're talking to them every day and the sooner the better," Waddell said Wednesday in a media call. "That way we really lock in on what our numbers are with those guys. It will

The annual stipend of \$9 million will be used to assume part of the arena operating expenses detailed in the lease extension and for other purposes including enhancement of the arena, which opened in 1999 and hosts Canes games, N.C. State men's basketball games and other major events and concerts.

As part of the lease agreement, the authority will pay 50 percent of the arena operating costs each year up to \$3.885 million. The authority also agreed to a reduction of the rent for fiscal 2020 of \$1.78 million and no rent in the following years.

Authority chairman Tom McCormick said in May that a goal of the negotiations was that the Hurricanes "be in an average lease situation" with the other NHL teams.

"They clearly have one of the worst leases in the league," McCormick said in May.

tell us how much money we can spend on free agents if we choose to go that route. So we'd like to get it done as soon as possible and hopefully that's over the next few days."

The other RFA's given offers were: forwards Steven Lorentz, Clark Bishop and Spencer Smallman; and defensemen Gustav Forsling, Oliwer Kaski and Roland McKeown.

Among the RFAs not receiving a qualifying offer was goalie Callum Booth, a fourth-round draft pick in 2015. Booth becomes an unrestricted free agent on Friday, when NHL free agency begins.

The Canes' pending UFA's include forward Justin Williams and defensemen Trevor van Riemsdyk and Sami Vatanen.

The Canes add more offensive players in the NHL Draft. Who did they pick?

BY CHIP ALEXANDER

The Carolina Hurricanes went into the 2020 NHL Draft looking for more offense and got it, using their first three picks on forwards and taking six in all.

A day after making Seth Jarvis of the Portland Winterhawks their first-round selection, the Canes on Wednesday chose forwards Noel Gunler of Sweden and Vasilii Ponomarev of Russia with their two second-round picks.

The Canes had eight total selections in the 2020 draft, held remotely this year because of the pandemic. The second through seventh rounds were held Wednesday in what became a marathon session lasting almost eight hours.

"It has been a long day," Canes president and general manager Don Waddell said in a media call. "One of the GMs sent a text that once this draft is over some of these players will be retired. But this is our job. This is what we live for and what our scouts work all year for."

The Canes took another Swedish forward, 5-6 Zion Nybeck, in the fourth round. That came after using their third-round pick on another Russian, defenseman Alexander Nikishin. So it went as the Canes closed the 2020 draft with six forwards and two defensemen.

It was a memorable day for Gunler, who said he got little sleep after staying up late Tuesday to see the draft in Sweden and then having an early morning hockey practice Wednesday. One PLUS: he saw his name called by the Hurricanes on his 19th birthday.

"I got a pretty good birthday gift and I'm so happy and proud to be picked by the Carolina Hurricanes," Gunler said in a media call. "I couldn't be happier."

NOEL GUNLER'S ATTITUDE AND WORK ETHIC?

Gunler, the 41st overall pick, has spent part of the past two seasons with Lulea HF of the Swedish Hockey League and has begun the 2020-21 season. While he excelled with the



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Lulea junior team, he got in 45 games with the men's team last season, finishing with four goals and 13 points.

"I'm a guy who can shoot the puck and score goals," he said in describing himself. "I will do everything for the organization to help them win."

Some reviews on Gunler have been mixed. His attitude and work ethic have raised some questions by some observers while others say the criticism is unwarranted.

"I think I'm a pretty good two-way player," said Gunler, a right-hand shot.

Darren Yorke, who oversees the Canes' amateur scouting, said the team did not see a problem after evaluating Gunler. He noted that Canes defensive prospect Jesper Sellgren has played with Gunler and was supportive of the choice.

"We've done our research and are thrilled to have him. We don't think any of those reports or anything like that are justified," Yorke, the team's director of player personnel, said on a media call.

Ponomarev, 18, came to North America last season to play for the Shawinigan Cataractes of the Quebec Junior Major Hockey League and adjust to the smaller North America rinks — his father, a skills coach, also joined the team. A left-handed shooter, Ponomarev had 18 goals and 49 points in 57 games while also playing for Russia's U18 team internationally.

Ponomarev, rated 48th among European skaters by NHL Central Scouting, has been called a strong competitor who is good at back pressure and a battler in corner battles. That toughness belies his size — he is listed at 5-10 and 180 pounds but was described Wednesday by one TV analyst as a "small beer fridge." In other words, hard to budge.

"I'm a hard worker and I'll help you to win the Stanley Cup," Ponomarev said, words sure to be liked by Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour, who did both. "I think I have good hockey vision and good stickhandling and shot. I make good connections with the D-men. I'll help in the defensive zone and I'll find solutions in the offensive zone."

Ponomarev, taken with the No. 53 pick, called the selection a "dream come true" and said he liked being taken by Carolina in that former Canes forward Sergei Samsonov was from his hometown of Zelenograd, Russia.

"I know him a little bit and I think it's going to be perfect," he said.

Ponomarev said he has not met the Canes' Andrei Svechnikov. His goal: to meet him soon.

Nikishin, who has played games in the KHL for Spartak Moskva, has been called a big hitter who can move the puck and enjoys joining the rush into the offensive zone. At 6-3 and almost 200 pounds, he offers some size on the back end and is a banger.

Nybeck can play either wing was rated 29th among European skaters by NHL Central Scouting. Called a "wrecking ball" on the forecheck, he is said to be a

playmaker who also is adept in getting around the net and getting off his shot despite his small frame.

"I'm a small player on the ice but I think I am growing more and more with my game," Nybeck said on a media call. "I give 100 percent all the time on the ice."

The Canes made one minor trade during the draft, sending their fifth-round pick (No. 140) to the Los Angeles Kings for the 159th pick and a seventh-round pick in 2021. The Canes then took forward Lucas Mercuri in the sixth round.

The Canes had two seventh-round picks, using them on forward Alexander Pashin of Russia and defenseman Ronan Seeley.

Yorke said he was appreciative of all that went into preparing for this draft in the pandemic, noting. "This took a lot of people to get to where we are that don't get the credit they deserve."

ASSESSING THE CANES DRAFT PICKS

Darren Yorke, the Carolina Hurricanes' director of player personnel, oversees the team's amateur scouting. Here are some of Yorke's thoughts on the eight draft selections:

(Draft rounds and selection number)

FIRST ROUND

No. 13: Seth Jarvis, forward, Portland Winterhawks, WHL

Yorke: "The best thing about Seth is his hockey sense. It is harder to do anything better in the last two years than what Seth has accomplished and it's because of how smart he is. He makes other people better. He can score. There are so many layers to his game that it really is special. It's just a high-end offensive talent."

SECOND ROUND

No. 41: Noel Gunler, forward, Lulea, SHL

Yorke: "For us to get a player who has the speed and skill and hockey sense in the second round wasn't something we expected. When this guy gets the puck on his stick he can score. He's capable of being a dual threat in being able to make plays and be a goal-scorer."

No. 53: Vasiliy Ponomarev, forward, Shawinigan, QMJHL

Yorke: "When he played in the Ivan Hlinka tournament (for Russia) he was high end playmaking and showing hockey sense, compete and defensive ability. He understands the game. As he transitions to the pro game it's going to be a pretty easy step."

THIRD ROUND

No. 68: Alexander Nikishin, defenseman, Spartak, Russia

Yorke: "Bigger defenseman that when he plays in the Russian junior league shows a little more of that offensive dimension. When he plays in the KHL he uses that long stride to get up in the play. For an 18-year-old going against men he's able to hold his own."

FOURTH ROUND



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No. 115: Zion Nybeck, forward, HV 71, SHL

Yorke: "Unfortunately when everybody looks at him they look at his (5-6) size. That's unfortunate because of how smart, how skilled he is. In the corners he can get the puck to the net despite being a little shorter than the competition."

SIXTH ROUND

No. 159: Lucas Mercuri, forward. Des Moines, USHL

Yorke: "He's another smart player who can transition the puck. To have the hands that he has at 6-3 is pretty impressive. Another player who has that hockey sense."

SEVENTH ROUND

No. 199: Alexander Pashin, forward, UFA 2, Russia

Yorke: "Not someone we expected to be there. Similar to Nybeck in terms of the high-end skill. Him and Ponomarev played together at the Ivan Hlinka and Ponomarev was able to feed Pashin just to score goals."

No. 208: Ronan Seeley, defenseman, Everett, WHL

Yorke: "Extremely fast skater. Holds tight gaps, able to jump up into the play. He's able to play the style we love in Carolina."

Glossary: WHL, Western Hockey League; SHL, Swedish Hockey League; QMJHL, Quebec Major Junior Hockey League; KHL, Kontinental Hockey League; USHL, US Hockey League.

Canes taking Yaroslav Askarov in the NHL draft makes sense, but Carolina has options

By Chip Alexander

Social distancing, intentional or otherwise, has never been evident at the NHL draft.

Picture 31 teams seated at designated tables and all 31 crammed on an arena floor. Owners, general managers, head coaches, scouts, analytics experts, other team personnel — it's not a place for the claustrophobic. Or all that private.

This year, because of the coronavirus pandemic, the 2020 NHL Draft will be held remotely. The draft begins Tuesday with the first round, conducted virtually, and the Carolina Hurricanes' contingent will be gathered in a "war room" at PNC Arena — all the principals seated a safe distance from each other.

"We're able to have conversations without worrying about the other teams hearing them," Darren Yorke, the Canes' director of player personnel, said on a recent media call. "I think we're going to be able to speak more freely knowing we don't have every other team sort of standing right beside us."

Anyone attending a draft has seen the scene, which looks like a mosh pit of guys in suits and ties — and one owner in an athletic wind shirt and cap. Media types at the draft are always looking to see what GM is on the phone in the minutes leading up to a selection if there's a hint of a potential trade, or who's talking to who on the floor during breaks.

Not this year.

The Hurricanes have the 13th pick in the opening round and Don Waddell, team president and general manager, has indicated offense is a priority. But Waddell also has said the team will be "open-minded" about the pick, leaving open all options.

Goalie Yaroslav Askarov of Russia? That could be an option, if he's available at 13. Many draft prognosticators believe the Canes could make him the first goalie taken by the team in the first round since Cam Ward was the 25th pick in 2002.

"No one knows how the draft is going to go," Waddell said on the media call.

Yorke oversees the Canes' amateur scouting and preparations for the draft, which was scheduled for June in Montreal before the pandemic led to a four-month delay. He said enough scouting had been done before leagues began to stop play in the spring, and additional scouting done more recently as European leagues start up, that the Canes — and other teams — should be well-prepared.

"We probably have more up-to-date information on players than we would have normally had," Yorke said.

One hitch: There was no NHL Scouting Combine this year in Buffalo.

"You can really get a feeling by watching (prospects) work out on who can add weight and muscle and get stronger," Waddell told the N&O. "That's probably the biggest obstacle going into the draft. But we have had more time to watch more video and now watch the European guys, so there are pluses and minuses for all of us."

Player interviews also had to be held remotely, which created more challenges, but the Canes had done their due diligence early.

"I like it when you can bring a player in and talk to them and see them eye-to-eye and see how his body language and how they answer questions," Waddell said. "It's much different over video, although you still get a pretty feel for players."

"The good news is that almost every player we would be looking to draft has been interviewed in person prior to the (NHL) pause. That's one of the jobs of our scouts when they're out during the year, to meet the players face to face and put those notes into our scouting program. For me doing it all by video is different."



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And there's always the possibility of the Canes trading the 13th pick, which they originally acquired through a 2019 trade with Toronto.

"You're always looking to get better, so whether that's to select a player or whether that's a trade I think as the draft goes on, a lot of those conversations happen," Yorke said. "If a team views there is more value for them at pick 13 and we view it as we can still get a great player, maybe that same player at 15 or 18, I think you're always looking to get your team better."

The Canes had the No. 13 pick in 2016 and took defenseman Jake Bean. The next year, with the 12th pick, Carolina went with center Martin Necas, a regular with the Canes this past season.

Martin Necas

Two years ago, the Canes were the talk of the town in Dallas — the hometown of owner Tom Dundon — when they used the No. 2 overall pick on forward Andrei Svechnikov and also made a blockbuster trade with Calgary for defenseman Dougie Hamilton, forward Micheal Ferland and prospect Adam Fox. You can do both: Use the first-round pick and pull off trades.

The second through the seventh rounds will be held Wednesday. Unless they trade some of their picks, the Canes will have eight total selections in the 2020 draft.

CAROLINA HURRICANES POTENTIAL NHL DRAFT TARGETS

The draft begins Tuesday at 7 p.m. on NBC Sports Network.

JAROSLAV ASKAROV, GOALIE

SKA-St. Petersburg, KHL, Russia

The 18-year-old Russian is playing in the KHL with SKA St. Petersburg and has an 0.74 goals-against average and .974 save percentage in his first three games this season. Taking a goalie this high in the draft would be a risk but the 6-foot-4 Askarov could be worth it.

JACK QUINN, RIGHT WING

Ottawa 67's, OHL, Canada

A player said to have a wickedly good release on his shots and a lot of offensive flair, the 5-11 Quinn scored 52 goals in 62 games for the 67's in the 2019-20 season. Ranked seventh among North America skaters by NHL Central Scouting.

SETH JARVIS, CENTER/RIGHT WING

Portland Winterhawks, WHL

The forward doesn't have a lot of size at 5-10 but has skill. Rated the 11th best North America skater by NHL Central Scouting, Jarvis is another creative offensive player who had 42 goals and 56 assists in 58 games for the Portland Winterhawks.

DAWSON MERCER, CENTER/RIGHT WING

Chicoutimi Saguenéens, QMJHL

Another versatile, crafty forward, Mercer is rated 10th among North America skaters by NHL Central Scouting. He had 24 goals and 60 points in 42 games in the QMJHL last season and is off to a good start with the Chicoutimi Saguenéens in 2020-21.

Glossary: Kontinental Hockey League (KHL), Ontario Hockey League (OHL), Quebec Major Junior Hockey League (QMJHL).

THE ATHLETIC

Justin Williams is exactly who you think he is: 'Nothing was handed to him'

By Sara Civian

Sebastian Aho has developed a knack for getting his point across with very few words. Three-time Stanley Cup champion Justin Williams used to sit beside him in the Hurricanes dressing room encouraging him to do so.

They weren't stallmates by accident — not much is left to chance in Williams' world.

So when Williams announced his retirement Thursday after 19 clutch years in the NHL, I thought about the unique impact he's had on everyone he knows. Especially Aho, who somehow wrapped it all up in four words.

"He's one story himself," Aho said when I asked for his best Williams story. "Just looking at his career and looking at him as a guy or a teammate. You can't really say bad things

about him. Everyone who's been around him can agree with me. He's just a world-class guy, and that's not even mentioning his career. He's an awesome leader and awesome guy to have on your team."

It was part of a longstanding effort to compile a collection of anecdotes about Williams, one of the most interesting players to grace the NHL. But the more I snooped around for the best behind-the-scenes stories about the man with the most points in NHL Game 7s history, the more it all sounded the same.

I often badger Williams' dear friend, head coach and Stanley Cup-clinching linemate Rod Brind'Amour for a good story, and it's never anything new. No witty prank or kitten rescued from a tree. But he told me that when he thinks of Williams, he thinks of the Hurricanes dressing room after their Game 7



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win over Washington in 2019. Williams captained the Hurricanes through double overtime and scored his last Game 7 point, an assist on Brock McGinn's game-winner.

When it was time to celebrate, Williams could barely speak or move. Brind'Amour paints a portrait of a man exhausted from giving it all he had, head in his hands, as celebratory chaos ensued around him.

"There was nothing left to give," Brind'Amour said.

It dawned on me that this is the magic of Williams. There are no hidden stories or behind-the-scenes anecdotes that will make you realize how great he is because you already know. He is exactly who you think he is.

"Throughout that entire Game 7, Willy kept saying things like, 'Hey, stay patient guys,' so casually," Warren Foegele once told *The Athletic*. "I'm just thinking, like, 'It's Game 7, what is he talking about!?' But that's why he's our leader. You just try to listen."

It's hard to imagine Williams has any regrets as he calls it a career four days after his 39th birthday. He recorded 797 points (320 goals, 477 assists) in 1,264 regular season games with the Hurricanes, Flyers, Kings and Capitals. His three Stanley Cup wins came with Carolina in 2006 and Los Angeles in 2012 and 2014, and he won the Conn Smythe Trophy in 2014. Most hockey fans will remember him for his postseason prowess that amounted to 102 points (41 goals, 61 assists) in 162 playoff games.

Then, of course, the Game 7s — 15 points (7 goals, 8 assists) in nine of them — though he will roll his eyes about it if you ask him directly.

"Since I first broke into the league a day after my 19th birthday back in 2000, this game has brought me so much that I will never be able to repay it," Williams said in a press release. "The countless experiences, relationships, lessons and hardships will remain with me forever as I move on to the next stage of my life. I've never once taken for granted the privilege it is to be able to play a game for a living, and that is probably why I was able to play it professionally for as long as I have."

Talk to Williams' mom, Denise, for a few minutes and you'll understand.

"I was not prepared for (Justin) to leave," she once told me in Nashville. "He was 16 and I was a basket case. I have a daughter who is two years older, and she was going to nursing school, it took me a year to get over her leaving. Then I found out Justin got drafted, and driving to Plymouth (Michigan) was, like, five and a half hours. I was just beside myself the whole time, I could've wrote a country song. My mom passed away that year, the kids went, (other personal hardships occurred), and I don't know how we did it. But we'd do what we had to do, just picked up and went. We never told the kids how hard it was. We drove our Pontiac 6000 that had no hubcaps cause they all fell off those Pontiacs. We drove that thing like the energizer bunny all over the countryside. We just did it, we didn't know any different."

Then-Plymouth Whalers GM and head coach Peter DeBoer was not expecting much out of Williams, selected in Round 6 (125th) of the 1998 OHL draft. When Denise dropped him off, DeBoer saw a "skinny and awkward kid." But Williams' confident disposition existed even back then.

"Nothing was handed to him — he came from a time when nothing was given to people and players weren't pampered," DeBoer said in a phone interview. "And still his competitiveness stuck out. He was out there pissing veterans off. He'd put the team on his back with overtime goals in elimination games."

We debate the concept of "clutch" in hockey 'till we're blue in the face, and I think the essence of clutchness gets lost in the debate. You don't just wake up feeling in the mood to win a Game 7. Williams is someone who has shown up prepared to compete every day for almost two decades, and that's why he rolls his eyes at "Mr. Game 7."

Brind'Amour will tell you that Williams prepared for every game as if it was Game 7.

A more accurate, albeit less catchy nickname would be "Mr. Game-43-of-the-regular-season-but-you-never-hear-about-those."

On my first day on the job as a Hurricanes beat reporter, on the eve of the 2018-19 season, I started to ask a stupid question.

"Obviously your goal is to get back in the playoffs ..."

Williams stopped me.

"Our goal is to win the Stanley Cup."

Congratulations to Williams for a career that speaks for itself, but more importantly a willingness to show others how to get there.

Lisa Dillman, *The Athletic*: "Williams was/is an avid crossword puzzle man. I thought it was refreshingly old school. During the Kings' run to their second Stanley Cup championship in 2014, they hit a strange double of conventions in the road cities. There was an anime gathering, I believe, in San Jose. Then came next level stuff, a Star Trek convention at the airport hotel we stayed in Chicago. After a morning availability at the hotel, I ran into Williams and he was doing a crossword puzzle, naturally. We talked about the run of Trekkies on hand, and Williams, by then, had a terrific playoff beard going. He said, dryly, "They probably think WE look a little weird."

Mike Sundheim, longtime Hurricanes PR extraordinaire: "I think what stands out the most is that the guy is just great at everything. Golf. Crosswords. Ping-pong. Fatherhood. We're in Montreal one night during his first stint with the team and he breaks out fluent French, because of course. It would be annoying in almost anyone else, but naturally he is also great at being a wonderful human, so you can't even get mad."

Aaron Ward, 2006 Stanley Cup teammate: "I actually had a running competition with Roddy and Justin Williams and it got pretty intense. Even in pregame skate, I was dropping



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down on passes on two-on-ones. (Peter) Laviolette's practices were, "This, this, this, then get the hell off." When we got to the two-on-ones, it got to the point where it was so competitive that Roddy and Willy would line up to go against me every single time. I either had a great pregame meal or an awful one based on how successful I was against them. And then the goalies found out how much was riding on it — (Martin) Gerber and Cam (Ward) would completely sell out on two-on-ones. You know how competitive Roddy is, right? Well, Willy became the same way, so that I would derive a ton of excitement that day just from ruining his pregame skate — just from not letting them score."

Former teammate Nicklas Backstrom: "He's probably one of my favorite people ever. He's just a great person. He cares.

He cares about everyone on the team. He's funny, but he can get everyone on board too, so it's no surprise where he's taking (the Hurricanes). It's like him — the way they are, the way they are playing."

Tripp Tracy, longtime Hurricanes color commentator: "My parents always loved Willy. When my dad died and my mom was really struggling, it was Petr Mrazek and Willy that really went out of their way to make her feel like she was a good luck charm for the (2018-19) team. I remember we were staying in Georgetown before Game 7, and Willy was usually one of the latest people to get on the bus. My mom was hanging out by the bus before Game 7 and he came out, dapper as usual, and he gave my mom a big hug. He said 'I knew I'd see you here. We're definitely winning tonight.'"

So you've been drafted. What happens next? Inside Seth Jarvis' virtual draft day

By Thomas Drance

It was a different sort of draft day for 2020 first-round pick Seth Jarvis.

Jarvis didn't travel to Montreal with his family and his agent for the event. He didn't take a seat in the lower bowl of Le Centre Bell — numbered, per NHL broadcasting specifications. He wasn't surrounded in the lower bowl by his peers at the top end of the 2020 draft class, all waiting anxiously with their families for their names to be called.

He didn't watch as an NHL club's hockey operations staff filed up to the stage. He didn't sit up a little straighter, confident he'd nailed his interview with this particular club. He didn't wait impatiently as the general manager took his sweet time congratulating the Stanley Cup champions, thanking the host city and then shouting out the fans at the watch party back home, before pausing and calling out: "With the 13th overall pick, the Carolina Hurricanes select Seth Jarvis from the Portland Winterhawks."

Jarvis didn't awkwardly file by family members in a narrow arena row, hugging each one individually. There was no long walk down the stairs to the draft floor, his movement tracked by cameras as a broadcast analyst praised him for "playing bigger than his size."

He didn't pass his jacket to a PR person, didn't go up on stage in front of a packed house to don a ball cap, shake the commissioner's hand and put on a No. 20 Carolina Hurricanes jersey.

And he didn't go through the post-draft "car wash," stopping by the NHL Network to chat with EJ Hradek while an over-served relative or 10 were escorted by player development staff up to the team suite.

He didn't even get to pose for one of those goofy draft day photos. You know the ones. The photos where the prospect points a hockey stick at the camera, as if that's a natural athletic movement in hockey, something a hockey player

would definitely do naturally without being specifically asked to...

No, on the day Seth Jarvis became a first-round pick in the NHL, all he really had to do was set up a camera in his living room. And even that didn't quite work out:

"Well I don't know if anyone saw the celebration," Jarvis said, recalling the moment his family heard his name called. "The camera we had was pretty below average."

We're seven months into the pandemic and things are still surreal in every facet of life. Milestones are marked differently and accomplishments are celebrated differently. And somewhere amidst the more material changes, the second day of the NHL Draft morphed into a week-long event.

Jarvis, 18, is used to this by now. He's adjusted.

When he graduated high school this past June, for example, Jarvis didn't put on a gown and sit under a tent or in a sweaty gymnasium with hundreds of his classmates and their families. He didn't get to walk across a stage to celebrate the accomplishment either.

Instead, his commencement was a drive through celebration.

"Graduation was completely different too, couldn't have too many people, just had to drive by," said Jarvis with a laugh.

These moments can feel diminished by the unique, remote and often virtual circumstances we're inhabiting. It can all seem a bit dehumanizing.

As events from high school graduations to the Stanley Cup playoffs and from weddings to the NHL Draft are retrofitted to accommodate physical distancing, it's important not to lose sight of the fact the milestones in our lives matter.

Whether celebrating a blessed union, a high school graduation, or a tremendous, rare accomplishment like being drafted into the NHL, you're celebrating for a reason.



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Enjoying the moments, commemorating the occasions, that's what living is all about.

This is why it's so important to take stock of the things in life that are freaking incredible, like beginning your NHL career by hearing your name called on draft day.

"It was an interesting day," said Jarvis of his unique draft experience. "I had a few calls, a few interviews with teams in the morning and then the day started going by kind of slow, so I decided to go to the gym just to take my mind off everything and kind of relax.

"I got home, got back into it, set up the cameras and got the suit going — made sure not to eat in the suit, so I didn't spill on it — and it was just a waiting game from there. We had about 10 people over, my grandparents and a couple of uncles, then I just waited for my name to be called."

Jarvis didn't have to wait too long. With the 13th pick, he was off the board, the newest member of the Hurricanes. It might've come across blurry on television, but for Jarvis and his family, the emotion was sharp and unforgettable. As was what came next.

"We did the hugs and stuff and then about five minutes later I got a FaceTime call from Rod Brind'Amour and Don Waddell congratulating and welcoming me. It was awesome, seeing Rod on TV all the time, then having him talk to me like that was incredible."

As the conversation with Brind'Amour neared its end, Hurricanes management revealed that in the Hurricanes home locker room at PNC Arena, they'd set up a stall for Jarvis with his jersey hanging from an inverted hanger, the way it would prior to an NHL home game.

"We've got you a spot, but you've got to go earn it, right?" Brind'Amour told his club's new top prospect.

"I could tell by how they handled themselves that they're a first-class organization and having that stall set up helped solidify that for me," Jarvis said. "They run things super professionally there.

"It was cool to see, you could see in the background other jerseys with names like Staal and other NHL players on there. It was weird to see my name mixed in with them. It was cool though, and some extra motivation to earn my spot there someday."

Across the league, NHL clubs — and the league itself — put some time and thought into making these moments special, or as special as possible, for the players they were selecting. The NHL sent 31 team-branded draft hats to all of the prospects with cameras in their homes. Jarvis is already working on giving away his surplus hats to friends, having given a few already to his grandparents and uncles.

Several teams The Athletic reached out to had staff working on some kind of welcome packet, with a combination of gear and a jersey and some literature on the organization, ready to be sent off to the newest members of their respective organizations.

It's all part of beginning to get prospects to identify with the club that selected them, to build the relationship in a way that's not possible in a pre-draft interview. It might seem quaint, but that connection can matter an awful lot, especially for a club drafting a prospect headed into the NCAA ranks.

"Getting selected is such a huge accomplishment for these players and their families," Hurricanes director of player development Darren Yorke explained to The Athletic on Wednesday. "When we select these players and you see the reaction of the player and their families celebrating, you realize how big a moment it is and not just for the player, but for their father and their mother and their sister, brother, grandparents."

The Hurricanes, in considering this facet of draft day, wanted to go the extra mile to create a keepsake for their drafts picks. They came up with a novel approach, one that went even beyond the locker room stall.

"As soon as we knew that we were going to be in a situation where we couldn't have this draft in person, we got together with our PR staff, our marketing staff, our video in-house production staff, and we have some great people who were able to create a unique opportunity to share this moment with these players.

"So we had the stall set up, but we wanted something that would be tangible for these players and their families too, just to be able to remember the moment... So when his successful playing career is done, he can look back and have a video to remember this moment."

The result was a personally customized welcome video, sent to every Hurricanes draft pick digitally throughout the draft. The video opens on an image of the player's name on a Hurricanes sweater, before shifting to scenics of Raleigh, N.C. and game highlights featuring both Hurricanes stars in action at the NHL-level interspersed with highlights of the newest Hurricanes draftee.

And to give the production an extra layer of personal appeal, the video itself is narrated by Hurricanes star winger Andrei Svechnikov, who personally welcomes the freshly drafted prospect to the organization while selling the club's "bright future."

Carolina's video staff filmed two versions of the voiceover narration with Svechnikov. They filmed one in English and one in Russian, to accommodate the linguistic preferences of their drafted prospects.

"I got the video a couple hours after I was picked," Jarvis recalled. "It was sent to me over text, on YouTube, a welcome to Carolina video with some clips of me in it too which was cool.

"Everyone knows how good he is," Jarvis said of having Svechnikov, one of the NHL's most dynamic young stars, narrating a personalized video. "At the start I didn't know what to expect, it was just taking me through the city in Carolina and the organization, then it's Svech talking to me. That's definitely going to stick with me."



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This year, everything runs a little bit differently. That's just life in 2020.

A special day remains a special day though. And a once-in-a-lifetime accomplishment should still be celebrated and commemorated.

And even in what's been lost, there are real positives, if you're willing to see them.

"You kind of miss out on the walking on stage, that's something everyone dreams about," Jarvis said, reflecting on the context of his different draft day experience.

"Honestly doing it this way, I wouldn't trade it for anything," he continued. "Being around my family like that, and not all of them would've been able to come to the draft, but I was able to share this with my great support system and that means a lot to me.

"The feeling isn't any different than being there, you're still getting drafted. It's still an honour."

Q&A: What the Hurricanes should expect from No. 13 pick Seth Jarvis

By Adam Vingan

On Tuesday, the Hurricanes selected Portland Winterhawks forward Seth Jarvis with the No. 13 pick in the 2020 NHL Draft.

Jarvis, 18, ranked second in the WHL this season with 98 points — 59 more than his 2018-19 output — and third with 42 goals. The Athletic's Scott Wheeler rated Jarvis as the 14th-best draft prospect in this year's class. Corey Pronman wrote that Jarvis' "combination of skill, speed, production and work ethic makes him a player that projects to play high in an NHL lineup."

Winterhawks coach Mike Johnston spoke to The Athletic about Jarvis' breakout WHL season and what should be expected of him at the NHL level:

What was behind Jarvis' 59-point improvement this season?

It's pretty challenging to come into the Western League and play as a 16-year-old. The main reason you do come in and play is you can contribute, but you're going to be ready to be an impact player at 17. Seth took a big jump just because (he matured). His first year in the league helped him prepare for his 17-year-old year — moving away from home, getting more comfortable, all those types of things that a young kid has to go through when he plays in the Western Hockey League.

Draft experts praise Jarvis for his well-roundedness. His point total stands out, but what makes him effective without the puck?

You don't often see a young player who kills penalties, and he's probably one of our most effective penalty killers. The reason we put him in those positions is so his game did become a little bit more well-rounded. He became one of our top penalty killers. His biggest asset is he plays the game with speed. He plays the game fast. He plays the game the way it is nowadays at the NHL level. He's got compete to him. He's just got a little bit of everything, but he does everything fast. He thinks fast. He plays fast. He executes fast. He goes to the net. He is a 200-foot player, but I would call him more of an offensive player.

Is there a specific play this season that sums up Jarvis' overall game?

We were playing Seattle one night, and he had a chance on the rush and missed his chance on the rush. Seattle took off, and he came from behind, lifted the guy's stick in the neutral zone, took the puck off him, came around with speed, beat the defender one-on-one, came in on the goaltender, drove the net and put it top shelf.

That was the type of take-charge second half he had. Almost night in and night out in the second half, he was our top player. That doesn't happen often with a 17-year-old. He can make those highlight-reel, turn-the-game-around type of plays, where he defends, he attacks and he scores. His consistency was really amazing in the second half. He's a game-changer. He can change the game quickly.

Which of Jarvis' skills will most easily transfer to the NHL?

He's such a good skater and so good on his edges. He's elusive and hard to handle because he's quick on his edges and quick to pucks and quick to people. I just think the skating part for today's game, the way the game's going, he has that type of skating.

Conversely, which areas of his game will need to improve?

He doesn't have many holes in his game. We've had a lot of players go on to the NHL level, and usually with those guys, there's something in their game that I would say, "He's got to really work on this." For Seth, I think it's just maturing and getting stronger. He's going to play at 5-foot-11, six-feet, but he's going to be strong. He's going to be a thick guy ... I don't think it really matters how big he is height-wise.

But really, I don't see any holes in his game. For what he's done as a 17-year-old, he's been as good as any 17-year-old we've had, and we've had quite a few first-rounders (over) the last 10 years.

Which current NHL player does Jarvis remind you of in terms of his skill set?

He's quick like (Islanders forward Mathew) Barzal, and he's elusive like Barzal, but he's a winger. (Blue Jackets forward) Oliver Bjorkstrand is a player that we had that's had good success in Columbus the last couple years. Seth is quicker than Oliver, but he plays a similar game. He's got a good stick. He's got a good shot. He's assertive and competitive for his size. That's a player that we had that I would compare



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him to. His game is a little unique with his speed and the way he can play. Some people say, "Should he be a winger? Should he be a center?" We played him on the wing, but

other teams might (play him at) center at the NHL level. He distributes the puck well. He's really smart.

Who says no? Evaluating your Hurricanes offseason trade proposals

By Sara Civian

The 2020 NHL Draft is upon us, and the Hurricanes have a few enticing options with pick No. 13. While that's exciting, I'll bet most of y'all are looking forward to that thing that happens right after the draft: free agency.

The Hurricanes are close to the cap and, like every other team, dealing with general financial uncertainty due to an ongoing global health crisis. I wouldn't expect any huge free agency signings, but the current climate could provide a backdrop for some creative trades. I took to Twitter and your suggestions were equal parts ridiculous and serious. Regardless, I was entertained. In no particular order, let's go through some of your serious and some of your silly trade proposals.

Martin Necas, Brady Skjei and 2021 second-round pick for Patrik Laine

The Hurricanes don't want to trade Necas, but they're one of several teams that have expressed interest in Laine, and if they actually want to get him the ask is going to involve trading someone they don't want to trade. That could mean Necas or Vincent Trocheck, or that could mean a blueliner like Brett Pesce. That's why I think although Laine is obviously an offensive dynamo with one of the best shots in the league — and he could reunite with Finland teammate Sebastian Aho — the ask is just too high for the Canes.

I also think it's a little suspicious that it seems like the Jets keep trying to force a trade for him, anyway. I understand they have more pressing needs and don't want to end up paying what his shot might force them to pay, but shouldn't the Canes adhere to the same philosophy?

The Jets can deal from a position of power considering multiple teams with more of a need for help up front are in on Laine. The Canes are going to have to give up something they don't want to give up for something they don't necessarily need.

Who says no?: Me

To CAR: Patrik Laine; To WPG: Brady Skjei, 13th overall pick, Jack Drury

Now this, I would consider. If the Hurricanes are trying to win now and take the expansion draft into consideration, you don't overthink it. I just doubt this would ever be an option.

Who says no?: The Jets

"KUEMPER for Dzingel?"

I appreciate the enthusiasm from the Twitter user who put "KUEMPER" in all caps, but I don't think it will be enough to steer the Coyotes brass into accepting this deal. Despite Arizona's reported financial issues, it isn't going to be quite

this easy. Dzingel's salary is also not significantly lesser enough for this to make sense. So yes, the Coyotes are seeking cheap players but they will still need to fill Darcy Kuemper's void; that's why James Reimer's name has been tossed out as a possible part of a package for Kuemper. It's also been reported that a first-round pick has been part of Arizona's initial ask.

Who says no?: The Coyotes

Reimer and a third for Kuemper; Reimer and 2020, 2021 second-round picks for Kuemper, etc.

Pierre LeBrun posed this scenario a few weeks ago:

"... Here's what's so interesting about that in my mind. Can you think of a team that's in more dire need of cheaper players than Arizona? Word out of the desert is ownership wants to cut payroll in a serious manner. You're not getting Kuemper for Reimer straight up. But if the Canes add in another asset to the deal, it makes you wonder if there's not a fit there for Arizona."

Is a third-round pick enough of an asset for this to make sense? Are two second-round picks? It honestly depends what other teams are offering.

Who says no?: Potentially the Coyotes but the Canes should agree to this if it's on the table

Jake Bean, 2020 second and a conditional 2021 third (which becomes a second if he starts 45 games) for Joonas Korpisalo.

I always love the galaxy brain proposals around this time of year. Is betting on trades a thing? I hope this Twitter user hits this parlay.

Anyways, this is random, but it isn't bad. Any trades involving Jake Bean just make me think of the expansion draft, though. If the Canes have a suitable expansion draft plan that doesn't involve Bean, then he's a great asset to use in a trade. But you might just want to hold on to him to keep the defensive core deep when that time comes.

Who says no?: Seattle

"Trading Brett Pesce"

I chuckled at this concept as a whole. "Trading Brett Pesce." That's it, that's the tweet.

He's somebody fans and non-Carolina reporters have always loved to throw out as a trade possibility because he's on one of the best contracts in the league and the Hurricanes have a deep blue line. But the small-market Hurricanes thrive off squeezing every bit of value out of contracts that they can and they love Pesce. I wouldn't say he's totally off-limits, you never know if an offer too good to refuse pops up from a desperate team. But especially after the Canes traded Joel



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Edmundson and are set to let Trevor van Riemsdyk and Sami Vatanen explore free agency, I don't see why they'd be champing at the bit to trade Pesce.

Who says no?: The Canes

Jake Bean for the 18th overall pick

Like, why?

Dougie Hamilton (one year left on deal) for Matt Murray (RFA) and Kris Letang (two years left on deal)

I appreciate the details this Twitter user included and I see where this is going. But I see Murray's upcoming contract negotiations as a huge risk, and you're just trading one upcoming blockbuster deal for another. Hamilton's is less risky and he's a huge part of this Hurricanes team on and off the ice. The only reason the Hurricanes would trade him is the upcoming contract, so why would they trade him for a player in the same situation and also take on Letang's \$7.25 million AAV.

Who says no?: The Canes

Marc-Andre Fleury and Reilly Smith for Mrazek and Nino

I like this for the Canes. I like it a lot. But I don't think the Golden Knights would or should give up Reilly Smith, especially when Niederreiter costs a bit more.

Who says no?: Vegas

I personally believe the Staal brothers should have to go to their cabin and participate in a shootout to decide who gets to be on what team. Unprecedented times, people.

"Take Tuukka. Please."

Grading the Hurricanes' 2020 NHL Draft: What we know about Carolina's class

By Corey Pronman

Corey Pronman grades how the team performed at the 2020 NHL Draft, and details what to expect from the prospects and how they fit into the farm system.

Organizational ranking: No. 6

2019 draft grade: A-minus

2020 Draft Grade: B+

I'm a big fan of Seth Jarvis, whom Carolina picked at 13. Noel Gunler at 41 will be a talking point of this draft. Among scouts, he's a consensus late first-round talent, but he was considered among the bigger character risks in the draft. I like him a lot, but his progress will be closely monitored in the years to come. They targeted high skill afterward in Vasili Ponomaryov and Zion Nybeck. Alexander Nikishin also has NHL potential if his medicals are fine.

Draft Class

Seth Jarvis, C/RW (No. 13): Jarvis had a fantastic season, as the WHL's second-leading scorer and a major part of why Portland was such a dominant team. Jarvis is a dynamic

Never change, Bruins fans.

The goalie market is extremely saturated at the moment and financial problems are making it even more interesting. There are tons of potential options detailed here. Please don't let all the shiny toys distract you from a situation that makes perfect sense: the Canes and the Coyotes making a deal for Kuemper.

After giving this situation an abundance of thought, I can't remember a time it was easier to get one of the best goaltenders in the league than this, and who knows when the next opportunity will strike?

He was top 10 in the league in both save percentage and goals-against average last season. The 30-year-old has a .918 save percentage through his eight-year NHL career, most recently he's had a .923 save percentage and a 2.39 GAA in 94 games with the Coyotes. He finished fifth in Vezina Trophy voting two seasons ago but had his 2019-20 season cut short to 29 regular season games due to injury. He'd be an upgrade for the Hurricanes in a reasonably affordable way at \$4.5 million AAV through 2022, especially if they can keep Mrazek. The contract is short enough and small enough to make perfect sense for the Canes.

Obviously the Coyotes are looking for picks and not to take on too much salary or cash, so maybe a second or two and Dzingel could work. Or is a 2021 first-rounder worth it? I say yes.

If I missed your trade proposal, feel free to post it in the comments and I'll respond with my thoughts.

player who ticks a lot of boxes. He is a highly skilled and intelligent with a lot of quickness. He has the skill to beat defenders 1-on-1, but more importantly, he does so with speed. The high-end pace of his game is what makes him so dangerous and will translate to the higher levels. He has legit NHL speed and very good edges, allowing him to pressure defenders at the highest level with speed and cutbacks. I wouldn't call his hands elite or call him an elite passer, but he has flashes of the highest level with both and both attributes are very good. Jarvis isn't the biggest forward, but he is a very hard working player. He attacks the middle of the ice consistently, he's hard on pucks and wins far more battles than you'd think a 5-foot-10 forward would. His game is very direct and he will be both a coach and fan-favorite due to the way he plays the game. His combination of skill, speed, production and work ethic make him a player that projects to play high in an NHL lineup.

Alan Millar, GM for Canada's U18 team, on Jarvis: "He has very good hockey sense, puck skills and can shoot the puck. He plays a strong two-way game. He's a complete player."



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Pronman's thoughts: Jarvis is a very dynamic and competitive player. Other than his size, there's so much to like about him. His great speed, skill, sense and work ethic project him to be a very good top-six forward, possibly a center, in the NHL. He adds to a lot of skill Carolina has added to its pool in recent years.

Noel Gunler, RW (No. 41): Gunler played all season up in the SHL, getting limited minutes for one of the top teams in that league. He excited folks when he scored 27 goals in 31 junior games last season. Gunler is a high-end passer and shooter. He shows great vision and patience, holding pucks and finding teammates through seams. He shows good creativity on his entries with flashes of top-end skill. He has a very hard shot and projects as a legit mid-distance shooter. The combination of his shot and vision makes him a threat inside the offensive zone and on the power play. Off the puck, his game is just OK. He is a physical player who regularly throws his weight around and can win battles versus men, however, scouts criticize his compete level and discipline at times. Gunler's skating is average as well. His stride looks good but lacks any real power.

Tomas Montén, coach of Sweden's U20 team, on Gunler: "This year he matured a lot. He plays like a pro. He can put pucks in the net and he can make plays, he has great hockey sense."

Vasili Ponomarev, C (No. 53): Ponomarev was one of the draft-eligible players I struggled with the most this past season. I think he's one of the most talented players in the draft. There were about ten moments I can recall from watching him this past season where he made truly elite plays, plays that screamed top-six caliber NHL forward. He has high-end skill, and tremendous ability to improvise with his playmaking and ability to find his teammates. When those types of players don't usually produce they are labeled as "he doesn't compete," but that is not the case with Ponomarev. He works hard, he kills penalties and most scouts praise his compete level. His skating is just fine. I think it's good enough, he can slip away from checks but his skating does lack explosiveness, especially for a 5-foot-10 player. It's hard to equate what my eyes have seen with a sub-point-per-game player in the Q. I think there's a lot of talent, and he has a track record of producing at various levels and tournaments over many years, so it makes me believe in the player, but an uneasy belief.

NHL scout on Ponomarev: "He works his butt off and he's got a lot of skill. It's hard to look past the 49 points and just OK skating for a high pick, but he's a good player."

Alexander Nikishin, D (No. 69): Nikishin played most of the season in a limited minutes role in the KHL. Because of that usage and no appearances on the Russian national team, a lot of what you have to go on with him is how he looked last season at the junior level. He's interesting as a 6-foot-3 defenseman who can move and shoot pucks well. Nikishin won't dazzle you with speed or skill, but he makes good passes out of his own end and has some poise at the

offensive line. Even with his average feet I never had an issue with his defensive play and thought he disrupted a fair number of plays. He has some significant health questions that kept me from listing him, but on talent he's an NHL prospect.

Zion Nybeck, LW (No. 115): Nybeck is a divisive player and one I expect many discussions about in the coming years. He's put up huge numbers in the Swedish junior ranks and has a ton of skill. When you watch him with the puck, his ability to dangle clearly stands out. He also has excellent vision and is very dangerous off the perimeter. A lot of NHL scouts see a barely 5-foot-7 forward without great speed and a so-so game off the puck and think his probability of making it is low. I think he's a good skater, but it's clearly more elusiveness than explosiveness in his stride. He's my type of player, so I could see him be a third/fourth-line player for a coach willing to play this style of player in that role, but I get that he won't be for everyone. I do think that he competes well, but it's not his selling point. I respect his track record, especially at the club level over the years, but he's going to be hard-pressed to become a scorer in the league without an extra step.

Magnus Havelid, coach of Sweden's U18 team, on Nybeck: "He's small, but he's strong. He can score, he can see the ice very well, and he's not afraid to go to the net."

Lucas Mercuri, C (No. 159): Mercuri has good skill and size, but he isn't dynamic with the puck and scouts question his skating.

Alexander Pashin, RW (No. 199): Pashin was a top player for one of the best teams in Russia's junior league. But he was up and down in international play for Russia's U18 team. He is a player who ticks a lot of the boxes you're looking for in a skill set. Pashin has great hands. His small area play is high-end and he's so tough to strip pucks off due to how slippery he is. That he can skate very well and make highly skilled plays in motion makes him very dangerous. Pashin is also a player who moves the puck and finishes plays, with his vision being more impressive between the two. He is tiny at 5-foot-8, but Pashin is a competitor who I've seen push much bigger players off pucks and kill penalties effectively.

Sergey Golubovich, Russia's U18 coach, on Pashin: "He's very technically skilled, he's quick, he's not big, but he has the willingness to help a team."

Ronan Seeley, D (No. 208): Seeley grew on me as the season went along. There isn't a lot about his game that stands out, but he does a lot well. He's a mobile two-way defenseman. He kills a lot of plays with good gap control and was a reliable defender for Everett. He can use his skating to rush pucks up, too. He sees the ice quite well, with creative and effective outlets. He showed some power play skill this season, although I'm skeptical that's his role versus men. He's a bubble pick for me because it's hard to get really excited about a six-foot player without high-end skill, speed or production, but he's worth thinking about.



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2020 NHL Draft: Pick by Pick

By Michael Smith

The Carolina Hurricanes made eight picks over seven rounds during the 2020 NHL Draft, which was staged virtually.

Here's a quick snapshot of each pick with quotes from Hurricanes Director of Player Personnel Darren Yorke, President and General Manager Don Waddell and the prospects themselves.

1st Round, No. 13: Seth Jarvis, C, Portland (WHL)

Yorke's take: "Seth's hockey sense is elite. His ability to process the game and create space for himself is so imperative to make the transition from junior to the NHL easier. From a competitive standpoint, he works as hard away from the puck as he does with it. For a 'shorter' player, he's able to get to the net, defend the puck and put taller, bigger defensemen on his back. That comes down to his hockey sense."

Waddell's take: "What he brings to the table, our scouts really, really like. He's very, very skilled. He makes players around him better. ... You want someone who can drive a line. He can do that."

Jarvis on being drafted: "This moment is hard to describe. It's something I've dreamed of since I started playing hockey. It's been a goal of mine for a really long time. I'm super pumped to be a part of Carolina. They're a great organization, and I can't wait to get started. ... This is a moment I'll never forget."

Jarvis on who he patterns his game after: "Brayden Point is someone I take a lot of parts of my game from. He's a smaller-body player who can really make a big impact on a team and a game."

Jarvis on Canes head coach Rod Brind'Amour: "He's awesome. You see all those pictures of him, how in shape he is and how he was back when he played. You hear all these stories about him. Just being able to talk to him briefly was awesome. I can tell he likes to bring a lot of energy. That's something I love and feed off of."

Jarvis on what he knows about the Canes: "There are some unreal players there. Aho, Svechnikov. I've been able to skate with Morgan Geekie here in Winnipeg, so I got a taste of what Carolina hockey is like."

2nd Round, No. 41: Noel Gunler, RW, Lulea (Sweden)

Yorke's take: "He's a player who is able to transition the puck and get it from the neutral zone to the offensive zone and make plays. When he gets the puck on his stick, he can

score. He has the dual threat of making plays and being a goal scorer."

Gunler on being drafted: "I got a pretty good birthday gift. I'm so happy and proud to be picked by the Carolina Hurricanes. I couldn't be happier."

Gunler describing his game: "I'm a guy who can shoot the puck and score goals. ... What I bring on a daily basis is a threat in the offensive zone with my shot and playmaking abilities."

2nd Round, No. 53: Vasiliy Ponomarev, C, Shawinigan (QMJHL)

Yorke's take: "This is a player who knows how to play from an offensive and defensive standpoint. As he transitions to the pro game, it's going to be an easy step because of how smart he is."

Ponomarev on being drafted: "I'm happy so much. It's a dream come true."

Ponomarev describing his game: "I'm a hard worker. I will help the team win the Stanley Cup. ... I have good hockey vision. ... I have good stickhandling and shot."

Ponomarev on his two-way game: "I'll help in the defensive zone and find a solution in the offensive zone."

3rd Round, No. 69: Alexander Nikishin, D, Spartak (Russia)

Yorke's take: "Bigger defenseman. ... When he's defending, he holds extremely tight gaps and adds a little bit of a physical element."

4th Round, No. 115: Zion Nybeck, LW, HV 71 (Sweden)

Yorke's take: "Unfortunately, when everyone looks at him, they look at his size. That's really unfortunate because of how smart and skilled he is."

Nybeck describing his game: "I think I'm a pretty smart player on the ice. That helps me a lot. I'm growing more and more in my game. I think I'm going to be a great player for the Hurricanes."

Nybeck on if he's heard of Zion Williamson: "Yeah, I have."

6th Round, No. 159: Lucas Mercuri, C, Des Moines (USHL)



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Yorke's take: "Another smart player who can transition the puck. To have the hands he has at 6-3 is pretty impressive. ... It's another player who has that hockey sense."

7th Round, No. 199: Alexander Pashin, RW, UFA 2 (Russia)

Yorke's take: "Not someone we expected to be there. Similar to Nybeck in terms of the high-end skill. ... What's great about Alexander is he's able to take his game from the MHL

Canes Eye Hockey Sense with Seven Picks on Day Two of Draft

By Michael Smith

It was around 11:30 a.m. on Tuesday when the Carolina Hurricanes front office, connected with their scouting staff via a virtual conference call, reconvened in the team's locker room at PNC Arena for the second day of the 2020 NHL Draft.

Around 50 minutes later, the Canes made their first selection of the day, the 41st overall pick. The team didn't make its final selection of the day, the 208th overall pick, for another six-and-a-half hours.

It was a long day, so long that a counterpart joked with Canes President and General Manager Don Waddell that "some of these players are going to be retired by the time the draft is over."

It was a long day, indeed, and an even longer wait to get to the long day.

But for the Canes - from the front office to the scouts to the prospects themselves - the wait was well worth it.

"This is what we live for," Waddell said before the seventh round began. "This is what our scouts have worked for all year, so whether it takes four hours or 10 hours, we're going to be prepared to make the next selection."

The Canes supplemented their 13th overall selection of center Seth Jarvis with seven additional draft picks - five forwards and two defensemen - on day two, the common thread throughout the class being a high level of hockey sense.

"Draft day is really the most exciting day of the year," said Director of Player Personnel Darren Yorke, who heads up the team's amateur scouting efforts. "These players, it's not necessarily us selecting them; it's that they earned the selection. They were able to show their talents to us and basically force us to select them."

Noel Gunler, a right-winger from Sweden, was the first name off the board for the Canes on Wednesday.

"I know it sounds cliché when teams say they don't expect a player to be there, but we really didn't," Yorke said. "So, for us to get a player who has that speed and skill and hockey sense in the second round wasn't something we expected."

Gunler, who had stayed awake into the wee hours of the morning for the first round, wasn't sure what to expect either.

and play it in the KHL. ... He's still able to bring that high-end skill level while competing against men."

7th Round, No. 208: Ronan Seeley, D, Everett (WHL)

Yorke's take: "Extremely fast skater. Holds tight gaps and is able to jump up into the play. ... He's able to play the style we love here in Carolina."

He had practice early on Wednesday and was running on not even two hours of sleep.

"It was a pretty tough wait yesterday," he said. "When I heard my name, it was such a relief. I was so happy."

He was soon after on a FaceTime call with Waddell and head coach Rod Brind'Amour, who wished him a happy 19th birthday.

"I got a pretty good birthday gift," he smiled. "I couldn't be happier."

NHL Central Scouting describes Gunler as a "tall wing with good offensive instincts" who "creates scoring chances with smart, surprising moves in the offensive zone. Gunler keeps it simple when detailing his game.

"I'm a guy who can shoot the puck and score goals," he said. "What a bring on a daily basis is a threat in the offensive zone with my shot and playmaking abilities."

Vasily Ponomarev, a Russian center playing in the QMJHL, and Alexander Nikishin, a big-bodied defenseman playing in his home country of Russia, were the Canes' next two selections at 53 and 69, respectively.

"This kid understands the game," Yorke said of Ponomarev. "This is a player who knows how to play from an offensive and defensive standpoint. As he transitions to the pro game, it's going to be an easy step because of how smart he is."

The Canes didn't pick again until 115, when they selected Zion Nybeck, a diminutive but high-end talent who led all skaters in Sweden's junior league with 66 points (27g, 39a) in 42 games in the 2019-20 season. NHL Central Scouting calls him a "mobile, quick playmaker who plays bigger than his size," adding that he "compensates for his lack of size and strength with speed, puck handling, passing and hockey IQ."

Though Waddell's phone was more active on Wednesday than it was on Tuesday night, the Canes made just one trade, moving down 19 spots in the order of selection from 140 (fourth round) to 159 (fifth round) and picking up an extra seventh-round pick (Los Angeles) in 2021.

With that 159th pick, the Canes selected power center Lucas Mercuri, who the team was eyeing in the fourth round.

"When you get late in the draft, everybody likes players differently," Waddell said. "We felt like we were going to get



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the same player, which we did, and we picked up an asset for next year's draft."

The Canes rounded out their day two picks with Russian forward Alexander Pashin and Canadian defenseman Ronan Seeley in the seventh round.

Canes Extend Qualifying Offers to Eight Players

By Michael Smith

The Carolina Hurricanes extended qualifying offers to forwards [Clark Bishop](#), [Warren Foegele](#), [Steven Lorentz](#) and [Spencer Smallman](#) and defensemen [Haydn Fleury](#), [Gustav Forsling](#), [Oliwer Kaski](#) and [Roland McKeown](#).

In doing so, the Hurricanes retain negotiating rights with these restricted free agents, a group headlined by Fleury and Foegele.

"We're in discussions on a daily basis with their representations," President and General Manager Don Waddell said last week.

Fleury tallied his first NHL goal on Oct. 18 in Anaheim but didn't see regular ice time in 2019. When [Doug Hamilton's](#) season ended due to injury in mid-January, Fleury became a mainstay in the Canes' lineup. He finished the 2019-20 campaign with four goals and 10 assists (14 points) in 45 games and carried confidence into the playoffs, where he scored two goals and was a plus-4 in eight games.

"At the end of the day, everyone wants to play. Everyone has confidence in themselves and thinks they should play every night. For me, that wasn't the case at the start of the year," Fleury said during the postseason. "Roddy kept saying there's going to be an injury or there's going to be something that happens where we're going to need you every night. Unfortunately, Dougie got hurt, but that was kind of the start for me. I just tried to roll with that opportunity and take advantage of it."

Canes Select Dynamic, Skilled Seth Jarvis in First Round

By Michael Smith

Moments after being selected 13th overall by the Carolina Hurricanes in the 2020 NHL Draft, Seth Jarvis' phone rang.

President and General Manager Don Waddell and head coach Rod Brind'Amour were waiting on the other side of the FaceTime chat to welcome Jarvis to the organization.

"I'm super excited," a smiling Jarvis said. "Thank you guys so much."

Brind'Amour motioned over to a corner stall in the Canes' locker room, which is serving as the team's draft headquarters for this virtual event. In that stall hung a black Canes' third jersey, the team's draft hat and a nameplate with Jarvis' name.

"Now you've got to go earn it, right?" Brind'Amour said.

"A dream come true," as Ponomarev said, and now the work begins for this draft class as they aim to take the next steps in their hockey careers.

"We're thrilled with this class," Yorke said.

Foegele has completed two seasons in the NHL, totaling 48 points (25g, 23a) in 147 games with the Canes. Despite playing nine fewer games in 2019-20, he improved in all statistical categories with 13 goals, 17 assists and 30 points.

Forward Jacob Pritchard and goaltender Callum Booth were not tendered qualifying offers, so they will both become unrestricted free agents on Friday, Oct. 9.

The following players are also pending unrestricted free agents: forwards [Brian Gibbons](#), [Max McCormick](#) and [Justin Williams](#), defensemen [Trevor van Riemsdyk](#) and [Sami Vatanen](#) and goaltender [Anton Forsberg](#).

Van Riemsdyk, who has played in 206 regular-season games for the Canes since 2017, and Vatanen, who was acquired at the trade deadline, are among the top names in the group. Waddell last week didn't close the door on either returning if the price was right.

"It's fair that they test the market," Waddell said. "We've made it real clear that we like both guys, but we also understand that we're under a little bit more of a scrutiny with our salary cap."

Williams, meanwhile, has again not yet made a decision on his playing future.

"I don't have that answer. Ask Justin," Waddell laughed when asked recently about Williams' status. "Like we did last year, we left it in Justin's hands to take some time and make a decision on what he wants to do."

Jarvis, who went to the gym earlier in the day to take his mind off the potential stress of the night ahead, is prepared for that opportunity.

"This moment is hard to describe. It's something I've dreamed of since I started playing hockey," he said on a virtual media call. "I'm super pumped to be a part of Carolina. They're a great organization, and I can't wait to get started."

In Jarvis, the Canes are getting a "a smart player that does everything at high speed," according to NHL Central Scouting, who added that he's "elusive and creative with the puck and can impact a game in all zones."

Jarvis, 18, was the Western Hockey League's second-leading scorer in 2019-20 with 98 points (42g, 56a) in 58 games with the Portland Winterhawks. He also ranked third in the league in goals and tied for fifth in assists. Jarvis notched a point in 45 of 58 games, 28 of which were multi-



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point performances, and had an eye-catching conclusion to his season with 63 points (27g, 36a) in his last 26 games.

Waddell said the Canes' amateur scouting staff was enamored with Jarvis' skill set and had him ranked in the top 10 on their draft list.

"Seth's hockey sense is elite," Director of Player Personnel Darren Yorke said. "His ability to process the game and create space for himself is so imperative to make the transition from junior to the NHL easier. From a competitive standpoint, he works as hard away from the puck as he does with it. For a 'shorter' player, he's able to get to the net, defend the puck and put taller, bigger defensemen on his back. That comes down to his hockey sense."

The outside experts agree.

TSN's Craig Button said Jarvis is a "very skilled, smart center who uses deception and guile to gain advantages and produce offensively." Corey Pronman of The Athletic called Jarvis "a dynamic player who ticks a lot of boxes. He is highly skilled and intelligent with a lot of quickness."

Some compare his game to that of Mitch Marner, who was picked fourth overall by Toronto in 2015. Jarvis said he models his game after Brayden Point, who recorded 33 points (14g, 19a) in 23 playoff games, helping the Tampa Bay Lightning capture the Stanley Cup.

"I take a lot of parts of my game from his," Jarvis said. "He's a smaller-body player who can really make a big impact on a team and a game."

The Canes believe Jarvis possesses the same game-breaking abilities and can carry a line.

"Seth's a leader," Yorke said. "Playing with some younger players on his line, he was able to help them transition to the

WHL with him going through the draft process at the same time."

"He's very, very skilled. He makes players around him better," Waddell said. "You want someone who can drive a line. He can do that."

What else can Jarvis bring to the organization?

"Commitment and energy," he said. "Just bringing good positive energy and being committed. Those are two things Canes fans can expect from me."

That will tickle Brind'Amour's ears.

Jarvis, a native of Winnipeg, said something else that will endear him to the area.

"I'm a big fan of college basketball," he said. But, be warned: He's a Duke fan, following after a number of people in his family who are, as well.

And the Storm Surge?

"I've seen a few good ones," Jarvis said, noting his favorite was the one that featured Evander Holyfield. "Those look like a lot of fun and something I'd definitely be into."

A Storm Surge is down the road a bit, but for now, Jarvis gets to enjoy the moment with his parents, brother, grandparents and uncle, all "big parts of my life, so they're all deserving here," he said. "Here" not being Montreal in June, as originally expected, but home in Winnipeg in October. The celebratory moment in which he heard his name called was captured on a fuzzy video feed, but his future is clear.

"We're thrilled to welcome Seth to our organization," Yorke said. "I think the fans are going to be excited to watch him play."

SportScan

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

The Athletic / Predicting destinations for Holtby, Crawford, Fleury and 6 other goalies

By Craig Custance

Oct 8, 2020

On Thursday, The Blackhawks announced that Corey Crawford wasn't going to return and it's perfect because the goalie market was already chaotic. You've got whatever you want out there. Future Hall of Famers are available via trade or free agency. There are Cup winners. Bought out veterans. Goalies with upside. Reclamation projects. Just name your price.

"This is going to be a whirlwind next couple days for goalies," an NHL goalie coach said Thursday afternoon. And while we were chatting about

the crazy goalie market and where they might end up, it seemed like a good idea to pin him down on some predicted destinations. Assuming he was up for it.

"Sure," he said. "Let's do it."

So, enjoy, before another name hits the market and messes this all up:

Henrik Lundqvist

Predicted destination: "Washington. I think he'd be good there. He's a great guy. I think he'll be great with the Samsonov kid, who has shown glimpses of being a franchise goalie. I like (Lundqvist), I think on a real good team that he has a little bit of hockey left in him. He's still in great shape."



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Notes: The belief is that Lundqvist wants to stay in the East. Capitals GM Brian MacLellan didn't shoot down Lundqvist rumors when his name was brought up. This makes a lot of sense.

Braden Holtby

Predicted destination: "This one is a wild card for me. Let's say Minnesota, if they aren't able to get (Marc-Andre) Fleury. They're not that bad a team. They're closer than people think. He hasn't been great the past couple of seasons and he needed a change. Minnesota really likes (Arizona goalie Darcy) Kuemper too. It's going to be wild."

Notes: There's no denying that Holtby has struggled the last few seasons. He has a .906 save percentage in his last 159 regular season starts. He also has a recent Stanley Cup win. A change of scenery might work but this would likely have to be a stopgap measure for the Wild.

Corey Crawford

Predicted destination: "He wants to go to a winning team. Let's say, Colorado. (Philipp) Grubauer is always injured. When you have a team that good, you have to go for it."

Notes: The Avalanche have two goalies under contract in Grubauer and Pavel Francouz but there remains a belief out there that GM Joe Sakic would like to add a veteran during their Cup push. Crawford, with all his playoff experience, would be just about a perfect fit.

Anton Khudobin

Predicted destination: "I think he goes back to Dallas. At the end of the day, I think he circles back. He had a great run, but is that going to be worth \$4 million? He's definitely not \$5 million and Robin Lehner hurt the market. With the landscape, I think he goes back."

Notes: Khudobin was amazing for the Stars in the playoffs. He led goalies in the regular season with a .930 save percentage. He's earned a big payday but at 34 years old and in a jammed up goalie market, it may not be the big payoff he should get.

Jacob Markstrom

Predicted destination: "I heard Vancouver is offering him seven years. If it's not there, I'm going to go with Edmonton. That's a weird one. Edmonton or Colorado. (Oilers goalie Mikko) Koskinen is at 4.5 (million) but they could find a place for him via trade."

Notes: The Robin Lehner contract might have hurt Markstrom but one source pointed out that Lehner's deal comes with a huge tax advantage in Nevada so Markstrom should end up with a bigger deal. It might have to take more than moving Koskinen for the Oilers to come up with the cap space to sign Markstrom.

Thomas Greiss

Predicted destination: "St. Louis. I heard he's a great guy. Seems like he'd be OK in a role like that with the Blues."

Notes: Like many contenders, the Blues have their own cap squeeze to deal with. But perhaps the jammed up goalie market could lead to a player like Greiss signing at a discount to play for a Stanley Cup contender.

Cam Talbot

Predicted destination: "Let's say Detroit. He's just had that one bad year in Edmonton, other than that he's really good. He was good last year in Calgary. He's younger than Khudobin, he's younger than Greiss, he'd be good for them."

Notes: If you remove the 2018-19 season from Talbot's resume, he has a .915 save percentage in 314 games. At 33 years old, he is a sneaky good option for teams. The Red Wings would do well here in getting value and a guy people seem to really like, which goes a long way during a rebuilding process that can be painful.

Jimmy Howard

Predicted destination: "I'll say Florida. They need a backup and maybe he has a chip on his shoulder. It has to be the right situation."

Notes: Howard definitely struggled last year with an .882 save percentage in 27 games. But he still wants to play and won't cost much, an important factor for a Florida team that is paying Sergei Bobrovsky \$10 million per season. A fresh start on a better team could help get another effective season out of Howard.

Marc-Andre Fleury

Predicted destination: "I've heard Billy Guerin in Minnesota likes him. Vegas is going to have to eat at least \$2 million of that contract to get anyone to bite. But I'll go Pittsburgh. It'd be great for the young kid there. And (Tristan) Jarry still hasn't proven that much."

Notes: While this would be a great story, it's hard to make the numbers work. The best case would be to get a third team, like Detroit, in the mix to make the cap hit more palatable. If it's not Pittsburgh or Minnesota, what about Carolina? The Hurricanes are looking to upgrade and Fleury would be a great fit there if he's willing.

The Athletic / The 2021 NHL Draft ranking: Corey Pronman's top 35 prospects

By Corey Pronman

Oct 8, 2020

With some European leagues weeks into the season and the QMJHL kicking off recently, whether we're ready or not, it's time to turn the page from the 2020 NHL Draft to 2021.

In an early survey of NHL scouts of who they thought was No. 1, it was a roughly 50-50 split between Aatu Raty and Owen Power, with a slight tilt to Power, and the odd vote for Dylan Guenther.

The obvious headline is the trio of players who will suit up for Michigan, as the Wolverines currently have three players rated in my top five in what has the potential to be a historic draft for college hockey. Not to mention the possibly fun subplot should the Red Wings finish low in the standings again.

The tiers breakdown as follows:

Special NHL prospect: Projects as one of the very best players in the league.

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

High-end NHL prospect: Projects as a first-line forward, a top-pair defenseman or a top-10 starting goaltender.

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

Aatu Raty, C, Karpat-Liiga

Nov. 14, 2002 | 6-foot-1 | 181 pounds

Tier: Elite NHL Player

Raty is a very talented player who has excelled versus his peers for years. He contributed on a very strong Karpat team as an underage player and had a great end to the 2019-20 season, as the leading player for Finland's U18 team that won its last tournament. Raty has tremendous hands and offensive instincts, and is an above-average skater. Despite those positives, extremely early on as a major caveat, it's hard to say Raty is an exciting No. 1 prospect. He has a high talent level, but it doesn't jump off the page like Jack Hughes or Alexis Lafreniere.



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Owen Power, D, Michigan-Big Ten

Nov. 22, 2002 | 6-foot-5 | 214 pounds

Tier: Elite/High-end bubble

The main challenger to Raty for the top spot is Power, the top defenseman and arguably the best player in the USHL last season. He checks a lot of boxes as a 6-foot-5 defenseman who is very mobile for his size and moves the puck at a high level. He projects as a tough minutes two-way defenseman in the NHL. Due to his size and mobility combination, some would even say he's Power-ful. I think you could reasonably ask if his offensive skill and output is ever going to be truly elite, which makes me lean to him as #No. 2 instead of No. 1 right now, but he's right there in the discussion.

Kent Johnson, C, Michigan-Big Ten

Oct. 18, 2002 | 6-foot-1 | 165 pounds

Tier: High-end NHL player

Johnson was the top forward in the BCHL and CJHL last season. He's an extremely entertaining player to watch. He has elite stick skills and offensive IQ. In the BCHL he looked like he could do whatever he wanted, showing the dangles to beat players consistently and create offense in unique ways. He's a fantastic passer who can improvise well and make difficult plays. Johnson is an average skater and will need to improve physically, but there's no questioning he's a dynamo with the puck on his stick.

Dylan Guenther, RW, Edmonton-WHL

April 10, 2003 | 6-foot-1 | 170 pounds

Tier: High-end NHL player

Guenther had an excellent first season in the WHL, scoring 26 goals and 59 points in 58 games as an important part of a good team. Guenther is a well-rounded player. He has very good puck skills. He can set up and finish plays at a high level. He's a good skater who competes well off the puck and gets into the tough parts of the ice. I don't think anything about his game jumps out at a truly special level, but he has a lot of components you look for in a top NHL forward prospect.

Matthew Beniers, C, Michigan-Big Ten

Nov. 5, 2002 | 6-foot-1 | 174 pounds

Tier: High-end NHL player

Beniers does not dazzle with elite speed and skill. His game lacks flash, but his game also has very few holes. He will become a fan and coach favorite because of his elite competitiveness. He wins a ton of pucks battles, and he plays fearlessly in how he attacks the net. Beniers does have offensive talent, too. He's a highly intelligent offensive player who makes a lot of plays in the middle third of the ice. He has good speed and hands, and can play fast, but his game is not built around those components. He's impressed me almost every time I've seen him and is often one of the best players in any given game.

Carson Lambos, D, Winnipeg-WHL

Jan. 14, 2003 | 6-foot-1 | 201 pounds

Tier: High-end NHL player

Lambos was excellent as a rookie in the WHL, playing significant minutes in all situations for Winnipeg. He's a very mobile defenseman. His edgework is excellent, he's able to turn up the ice and rush pucks very well, and can close on quick forwards efficiently. The offensive skill in his game doesn't pop, but he's a heads-up passer with some blue line creativity and great vision. The combination of his skating and IQ makes me optimistic about his NHL potential.

Fabian Lysell, LW, Frolunda-Sweden J20

Jan. 19, 2003 | 5-foot-10 | 176 pounds

Tier: High-end NHL player

Lysell early on looks like the most dynamic player in the 2021 class in terms of his combination of skating and skill. He has the ability to wind up in his own end and go all the way or dance around the offensive zone. He is a very imaginative offensive player who can create chances very well and has a good shot. Lysell is a small, slight player who will have physical challenges as he goes to play against better players, but he competes well enough.

Luke Hughes, D, USNTDP-USHL

Sept. 9, 2003 | six-foot | 161 pounds

Tier: High-end/very good bubble

Hughes, the youngest brother of Jack and Quinn Hughes, enters the season hoping to be a high pick just like his brothers. Luke has the Hughes family skating ability, showing exceptional edge work and ability to create offense with his skating. He's a very skilled puck-mover who can make creative offensive plays. He may not have the truly game-breaking ability of his brothers, but he's also bigger than them coming in at six-foot (that was his previous official measurement, he actually measured is at NTDP camp at 6-2) and projects to be a strong defender because of his great feet and size combination. He's always stood out in my viewings and I think he'll be an excellent NHL player.

Daniil Lazutin, C, SKA-MHL

July 25, 2003 | 6-foot-2 | 174 pounds

Tier: High-end/very good bubble

Lazutin looks like they have all the tools He's a 6-foot-2 center who can skate and has a high skill level. There are shifts when he comes barreling up the ice, turning defenders around or pulling pucks through legs and sticks, where he looks like a no-doubt top-six NHL forward. He can get a little tunnel-visioned at times, but I also see moments of great vision and offensive IQ. His consistency will need to get better, but I see a player with the potential to become a great pro.

Chaz Lucius, C, U.S. NTDP-USHL

May 2, 2003 | six-foot | 172 pounds

Tier: High-end/very good bubble

Lucius is the top goal-scorer of this draft class, with 31 in 52 games with the U.S. program last season. He has a good shot, but Lucius gets a lot of goals because of how skilled and competitive he is. He scores a ton of goals from the slot and net-front area, and despite not being overly physical, shows no fear in getting to the hard spots of the ice. He has tremendous 1-on-1 skill and in tight hands. He's known as a goal-scorer but can make tough plays to his teammates, too. Lucius' foot speed is average and that could hold him back at higher levels, but the rest of the package is so good that I think he'll overcome that.

Daniil Chayka, D, Guelph-OHL

Oct. 22, 2002 | 6-foot-3 | 187 pounds

Tier: High-end/very good bubble

Chayka has progressed well the last few years, developing into a well-rounded defenseman. He was a top player for Guelph last season. He was also one of the best players at Russia's recent World Junior camp. He's a mobile, 6-foot-3 defenseman who can move the puck and make a lot of stops. There's not a lot of highlight reel plays in his game. He can skate pucks up but his offense is going to be steady and through a good transition game with his feet and brain. The way he plays will translate to the higher levels. Chayka will begin the season playing in Russia.

Prokhor Poltapov, LW, CSKA-MHL

Feb. 1, 2003 | 5-foot-10 | 161 pounds

Tier: High-end/very good bubble

Poltapov has been an excellent player in Russia's junior ranks, a leading player at the U17 challenge and one of Russia's best players for its U18 team in February. He's a very talented player. His skill can break open a



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shift. He makes a lot of plays and does so with pace. Poltapov is a very strong skater and can generate a lot of controlled entries with his quickness and skill. He's undersized, but works very hard and generates a lot of chances through his drive. Everything about his game is high-end except for his size.

Jesper Wallstedt, G, Lulea-SHL

Nov. 14, 2002 | 6-foot-3 | 214 pounds

Tier: High-end/very good bubble

Wallstedt has been a top goalie in his age group for years, routinely playing ahead of his age group. He doesn't have standout athletic tools. He's 6-foot-3, but doesn't have the tremendous side to side quickness you'd typically imagine in a top goalie prospect. He's such a good prospect because of his elite hockey sense. He has tremendous puck tracking ability and anticipation of the play, and makes a lot of great decisions with his positioning. Wallstedt always seems to square up pucks and never seems rattled in the net. I could see his quickness get picked apart a little in the coming year, but his consistency over the years will help his case a lot.

Simon Edvinsson, D, Frolunda-Sweden J20

Feb. 5, 2003 | 6-foot-4 | 185 pounds

Tier: Very good NHL prospect

Edvinsson checks off a lot of the things you want in a pro defenseman. He's 6-foot-4 and he's not overly quick, but he's mobile for that size, he can move pucks up the ice and he can kill rushes coming toward him. For Sweden's 2003 group, he's often been the quarterback on the power play. He can make plays, and has the ability to break a shift open with his combination of length, speed and skill. The offense isn't elite in his game, but I could see him become a PP2 type in the NHL and I think he's going to be a very solid all-around defenseman.

Brandt Clarke, D, Barrie-OHL

Feb. 9, 2003 | 6-foot-1 | 181 pounds

Tier: Very good NHL prospect

Clarke was one of the top rookies in the OHL and took off toward the last few weeks of the season after a coaching change. Clarke's puck game stands out. He's a very intelligent offensive player who makes a lot of plays. His outlets are excellent and he creates a lot of chances at both ends of the rink. He has great puck skills and is able to maneuver through traffic at a high level. Clarke shows no hesitation to jump up into attacks and to use his skill. The main drawback is his average skating, which gives some scouts hesitation on how his game and defensive play will project into the NHL, even though he still does bring a lot of offense.

Corson Ceulemans, D, Brooks-AJHL

May 5, 2003 | 6-foot-2 | 190 pounds

Tier: Very good NHL prospect

Ceulemans was a productive 16-year-old in the AJHL and solid in international play for Canada. Ceulemans' game won't jump off the page, but he does a lot things well. He's a 6-foot-2, right-shot defenseman with good mobility. He closes on checks well due to his great physical play and feet. He escapes pressures effectively and can skate pucks out of trouble. Offensively he makes a strong first pass and has some blue line poise, but isn't going to dazzle with his skill. He has all the attributes to be a quality NHL defenseman who can contribute at both ends.

Mackie Samoskevich, RW, Chicago-USHL

Nov. 15, 2002 | 5-foot-10 | 172 pounds

Tier: Very good NHL prospect

Samoskevich had a solid USHL season, as a useful part of a dominant offensive team in Chicago. Samoskevich doesn't have great size at just around 5-foot-10, but he has everything else you like in an NHL prospect. He's a great skater with great hands. He's able to navigate the ice very

well with his skating and make skilled plays through defenders on the move. He only scored 13 goals last season, but he has a shot that can finish from a distance and he can set up chances well too. I like his compete and energy, which combined with his quickness and skill helps him make a consistent impact.

Mason McTavish, C, Peterborough-OHL

Jan. 30, 2003 | six-foot | 196 pounds

Tier: Very good NHL prospect

McTavish scored 29 goals in 57 OHL games, as one of the more promising rookies in the CHL last season. Inside the offensive zone, McTavish can make a lot happen. He has great stick skills and can evade checkers well with his puck handling. He can make plays through seams and be creative as a passer, and he has a great shot that can score from range. Scouts are hesitant because he has average foot speed, is six-foot and is not overly physical, and they wonder if the way he plays will translate. It's a lot of talent so I think it will, but he will have hurdles to clear.

Sasha Pastujov, RW, U.S. NTDP-USHL

July 15, 2003 | six-foot | 181 pounds

Tier: Very good NHL prospect

Pastujov was impressive throughout last season, as a point per game player in the USHL who stood out in international play as well. He stands out because of his skill and playmaking. He is the kind of player who can hold onto pucks for an extra second to make a play, can run a power play and has the hands to beat defenders 1-on-1 consistently. He competes well and is not a soft skill type of player. Scouts are quick to point out his brothers Michael and Nick Pastujov are skilled too but mediocre skaters, which has kept them off the NHL radar. Sasha also isn't the best skater, but his skill level is so high that it compensates to an extent.

Zachary Bolduc, C, Rimouski-QMJHL

Feb. 24, 2003 | 6-foot-1 | 174 pounds

Tier: Very good NHL prospect

Bolduc was the top rookie in the Q after scoring 30 goals in 55 games. Playing with Alexis Lafreniere helps matters, but Bolduc certainly stood out in my viewings. He's a player with a high skill level who can skate, which is immediately intriguing. Bolduc has the ability to play fast and make tough plays with the puck on the move. He's not an elite playmaker, but he moves the puck very well and can clearly finish plays. He's not a physically imposing player and the footspeed is good, not amazing. But he ticks off a lot of boxes you want in a potential top-six forward.

Joshua Roy, C, Saint John-QMJHL

Aug. 6, 2003 | six-foot | 190 pounds

Tier: Very good NHL prospect

Roy, the former No. 1 pick in the Q, had a strong 40 point campaign as a rookie junior and was good in international play. His game is built on his skill. He has great hands and is a high-end passer. With the puck on his stick he stands out consistently with how many plays he can make through defenders and to his teammates. The physical tools are less flashy. He's six-foot and an average skater who competes well but isn't this overly physical player. It's possible the athletic tools don't translate that well to the NHL, but it's a lot of skill.

Nikita Chibrikov, C, SKA-MHL

Feb. 16, 2003 | 5-foot-10 | 161 pounds

Tier: Very good NHL prospect

Chibrikov has been successful at the junior and international level, as Russia's No. 1 center when the team won gold at the U17 challenge. He's an entertaining player to watch due to his great puck skills and playmaking ability. He can make a lot of good things happen in the



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offensive zone with how he can navigate around and pick apart defenses. He's not a blazing fast skater for his size, but he's agile and can elude checks well. For the purposes of this article, I'm predominantly focusing on how the players looked up to 2019-20, but Chibrikov has also looked very impressive to start the 2020-21 season.

William Eklund, C, Djurgarden-SHL

Oct. 12, 2002 | 5-foot-10 | 172 pounds

Tier: Very good NHL prospect

Eklund has grown on me as time went on. When I saw him a year ago, I thought he was a nice player; undersized with some skill and speed. As I saw how he played versus men with Sweden's U20 team into this preseason, I bumped the skating up a grade as I saw a player who could be a very good pro. He's not overly fast, but his edge work is excellent and he's quite elusive. Eklund combines that with great playmaking ability, making a lot of plays on the move, and he works hard off the puck. The 5-foot-10 frame isn't ideal and you'd prefer his feet to have an extra gear at that size, but the package is good enough to help an NHL team.

Cole Sillinger, LW, Medicine Hat-WHL

May 16, 2003 | six-foot | 187 pounds

Tier: Very good NHL prospect

Sillinger was one of the top rookies in the WHL, scoring over a point per game. From inside the offensive blue line, Sillinger is dangerous. He has a good stick and can make skilled plays, but he's very dangerous as a passer and shooter. He can score from range, and has the skill and the willingness to score around the net area too. Sillinger isn't the biggest or quickest, though, so there are minor questions from NHL scouts about whether his game will project from junior to the big leagues. All he seems to do is score, so there is value in that.

Samu Tuomaala, RW, Karpat-Finland J20

Jan. 8, 2003 | 5-foot-10 | 165 pounds

Tier: Very good NHL prospect

Tuomaala is an undersized but highly talented winger who scored a lot in Finland's junior circuit and was a major contributor as an underage player to Finland's U18 team in February. Tuomaala has great speed and skill. The quickness helps make up for the 5-foot-10 frame. He's able to take the puck in his own end and create a lot of controlled zone exits and entries. He has a great shot from range and is able to beat goalies clean. He can get a little tunnel-visioned at times and I wouldn't call him a great passer, as he relies more on his skating, skill and shot to create offense.

Isak Rosen, LW, Leksands-Sweden J20

March 15, 2003 | 5-foot-10 | 154 pounds

Tier: Very good NHL prospect

Rosen had a successful season in Sweden's junior circuit, scoring 21 goals as a leading player for a top team. Rosen has a lot of dimensions to his game that makes him appealing and fun to watch. He has slippery 1-on-1 skill. He is a very smart passer who can make tough passes frequently. He can finish plays. He doesn't have truly elite speed for a smaller player, but he is a very good skater. He competes hard and makes plays in the high percentage areas. The only real downside of his game is his 5-foot-10 frame.

Fyodor Svechkov, C, Togliatti-VHL

April 5, 2003 | six-foot | 179 pounds

Tier: Very good NHL prospect

Svechkov was very good when I saw him with Russia's U17 team last season, and has started off 2020-21 holding his own versus men. He gets a lot of praise from scouts for his skill level. He can drive a line due to his great hands, playmaking and above-average speed. He gains the zone with control often, makes a lot of plays and can maneuver in tight

areas at a high level. He's not among the best in the draft at any one thing, but I see an offensive toolkit that has a lot of pro dimensions and will allow him to succeed at higher levels.

Xavier Bourgault, C, Shawinigan-QMJHL

Oct. 22, 2002 | six-foot | 172 pounds

Tier: Very good NHL prospect

I watched a lot of Shawinigan last season for top 2020 prospects Mavrik Bourque and Vasili Ponomaryev, and in doing so it was often Bourgault who stole the show. He's a very talented offensive player. Bourgault makes a ton of plays with the puck and shows great hands. He can create offense consistently through his skill and playmaking. He's also an above-average skater, and can create a lot of clean entries with his speed and skill. He's not that big or physical, but I did think he worked hard and showed up every night.

Artyom Grushnikov, D, Hamilton-OHL

March 20, 2003 | 6-foot-2 | 174 pounds

Tier: Very good NHL prospect

Grushnikov is a boring good player. He's not going to dangle anyone, or take the puck and rush it end to end. His point totals at various levels are nothing to write home about. He's played up an age level for years because he does a lot of things well. He's a big, mobile defenseman who can make a lot of stops and make a strong first pass. Playing up his age level for Russia's U18 team he would play on both special teams with a regular even-strength shift and not look out of place. I don't think a ton of offense will ever come out of him, but I think he's got enough offense to be a good pro.

Zachary L'Heureux, LW, Halifax-QMJHL

May 15, 2003 | 5-foot-11 | 196 pounds

Tier: Very good NHL prospect

L'Heureux had a great first season in the Q, scoring 20 goals and 53 points in 55 games with Moncton. His skill and his compete levels are elite. He's an electric player to watch in how he can will his way into scoring chances, or slip pucks through sticks and legs with ease to generate offense. He makes himself noticeable whenever he's on the ice and creates so much about the hard areas. He's an imperfect player, though. At 5-foot-11, he's an average skater, and I don't think he sees the game that well. I think he's very good in spite of those flaws, but it will lead to him being debated into next season.

Matthew Knies, LW, Tri-City-USHL

Oct. 17, 2002 | 6-foot-2 | 205 pounds

Tier: Very good NHL prospect

Knies had a great first USHL season, scoring around a point per game for Tri-City and playing on both special teams frequently. Knies isn't a guy who is going to go end to end a lot, but he's a very intelligent forward with size. He can find seams from the perimeter but also has the hard elements in his game to use his frame to win battles and get to the middle third of the offensive zone. His average footspeed is the main drawback in his game in terms of projecting to the NHL level.

Kirill Kirsanov, D, SKA-MHL

Sept. 19, 2002 | 6-foot-1 | 198 pounds

Tier: Very good NHL prospect

Kirsanov has consistently impressed me whenever I've watched him over the last year at the club and international levels. He's not a defenseman who is going to generate a ton of offense, but he's a truly excellent defender. He's a strong skater with excellent gap control and breaks up a ton of rushes. He's a very clever puck-mover, and because of that and the skating, I do think he is going to generate some offense. But his role is certainly more of a steady all-around defender rather than a high skill type.



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Zach Dean, C, Gatineau-QMJHL

Jan. 4, 2003 | 5-foot-11 | 176 pounds

Tier: Very good NHL prospect

Dean's natural toolkit doesn't stand out initially. He's this 5-foot-11 forward with good but not great speed and hands. That kind of profile is usually a mid-round pick. Dean is rated highly though because his hockey IQ and his compete level are so good. He maximizes the most out of what he has because of how hard he works every shift. He also makes a lot of plays and displays great vision. At his size you'd like a tad more quickness to be a top-30 pick, but he skates well enough and he shows very impressive offensive consistency as a junior.

Logan Stankoven, C, Kamloops-WHL

Feb. 26, 2003 | 5-foot-7 | 170 pounds

Tier: Very good NHL prospect

Stankoven scored 29 goals in the WHL last season and was an important part of a good team. He's very talented, but he's also very tiny. NHL Central Scouting measured him at just under 5-foot-7. He has elite skating ability, which helps makes up for the size to an extent. The elite feet to go with his great 1-on-1 ability and a hard shot that allows him to be very dangerous off the rush. He can get a little tunnel-visioned with the puck looking to shoot, but he's one of the best goal-scorers in the draft.

Sean Behrens, D, U.S. NTDP-USHL

March 31, 2003 | 5-foot-8 | 172 pounds

Tier: Very good NHL prospect

Behrens doesn't have the typical profile of a guy who should be slotted here. He's a 5-foot-8 defenseman who is a good but not spectacular skater. The reason he is slotted this high is because of his fantastic hockey sense. He makes so many great plays at both ends of the rink and shows the offensive creativity to run a power play at a high level. The skating is good enough to walk the line and evade pressure, but he isn't a blazer or someone you project to check good NHL forwards. I know some NHL scouts are skeptical because of the athletic toolkit, whereas some are all-in because of the brain.

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

Emily Sadler | @Emmysadler

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It's the day before free agency, and as we near the official opening of the market on Oct. 9, here's an updated summary of the biggest names looking to sign on the dotted line this fall.

Since we last checked in, the Vegas Golden Knights officially took the No. 1 netminder off the market, signing Robin Lehner to a five-year deal worth \$25 million. After playing for three different teams in the past two seasons, the goaltender can finally settle into his new hockey home.

We've also seen more players added to the UFA pool, both through buyouts — Bobby Ryan in Ottawa, Kyle Turris in Nashville, Cory Schneider in New Jersey — and through non-tendered RFAs, with Ottawa's Anthony Duclair, Edmonton's Andreas Athanasiou, and Vancouver's Troy Stecher among them.

Here's an updated, re-ranked, and revised look at this year's biggest unrestricted free agents and the latest rumours and reports for each one as we count down the hours to the opening bell.

Get all the latest signing news and updates on Hockey Central Signing Season on Friday, Oct. 9 starting at 11:30 a.m. ET/8:30 a.m. PT on Sportsnet and SN NOW as 2020 NHL free agency gets underway.

1. Alex Pietrangolo, D, St. Louis Blues

Age: 30

2019-20 cap hit: \$6.5 million

After a season-long saga that saw both sides consistently reiterate a desire to continue the relationship, the latest major report to emerge was that Pietrangolo and the Blues would be parting ways. As The Athletic's Jeremy Rutherford reported last month, talks between the two parties broke off late last month, and now with one day to go before free agency opens... it's crunch time.

Math was always going to be an issue — general manager Doug Armstrong said as much earlier this off-season, and the flat salary cap makes the \$9-million-plus annual salary Pietrangolo can command on the open market tough to accommodate.

Sportsnet's Elliott Friedman reported in a recent edition of 31 Thoughts that Blues management and Pietrangolo's camp are going to take one more run at this and suggested the biggest question is this: "Do the Blues believe he will leave?"

2. Taylor Hall, LW, Arizona Coyotes

Age: 28

2019-20 cap hit: \$6 million

It feels like we've been heading in this direction for a while now, but we've finally arrived at the conclusion: The Arizona Coyotes will not be re-signing Taylor Hall, meaning the winger is officially set to hit the open market.

"We wish Taylor the best," Armstrong said. "I think it's a mutual parting between two parties. He, just at this point in time, wouldn't be a good fit for the Coyotes and the direction that we're moving."

So, where to next? 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 Arizona's 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."

Hall has also previously acknowledged the current financial landscape of the league is strained due to COVID-19, which could immediately affect what he's able to earn. According to Sportsnet's Chris Johnston, Hall isn't necessarily interested in settling into a market long-term — he may be entertaining short-term deals right now, too.

3. Torey Krug, D, Boston Bruins

Age: 28

2019-20 cap hit: \$5.25 million

After playing on a series of bridge deals with the Bruins, Krug said he's "very opposed" to signing another short-term deal now that he's in control.

"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."

Both he and the Bruins have previously indicated they'd like that deal to be in Boston, but now on the eve of free agency and with the rumour mill churning out reports of the Bruins' interest in another big-name d-man in Arizona's Oliver Ekman-Larsson*, it's looking more and more like this partnership is ending with Krug and heading elsewhere.

But... where? Whether based on geography, cap space, roster fit or a combination of all three, it feels like the gritty rearguard is destined for Detroit, doesn't it? Krug's hometown is just outside Detroit, and Red Wings general manager Steve Yzerman has a ton of cap space and a wide-open roster — especially after buying out Justin Abdelkader, letting



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RFAs Madison Bowey, Christoffer Ehn and Brendan Perlini go unqualified, and setting UFAs Jonathan Ericsson, Trevor Daley and Jimmy Howard walk in free agency.

*Now, about Ekman-Larsson. He's not a UFA, but he does appear to be in the driver's seat when it comes to where he'll be playing next season, setting his own self-imposed deadline of Friday for teams to trade for him. And with a no-move clause, the captain is said to have lifted that barrier for just two teams: Boston and Vancouver.

4. Tyson Barrie, D, Toronto Maple Leafs

Age: 29

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

After a down season and considering the down market he's walking into, Barrie seems like a strong candidate to sign a short-term "show me" deal with a team. If the Flames walk away from both of their UFA rearguards in T.J. Brodie and Travis Hamonic, do they try to woo Barrie? Might Edmonton make a pitch on a one-year pact? And if teams rumoured to be interested in Pietrangelo don't get their man, does Barrie's phone start ringing? He should be a popular guy come Friday.

5. Jacob Markstrom, G, Vancouver Canucks

Age: 30

2019-20 cap hit: \$3.67 million

With Robin Lehner re-signing in Vegas, Markstrom is now the de facto No. 1 goalie available, setting the stage for a bidding war that the Canucks might not be prepared to participate in.

"We're going to be prudent and smart. We can go into free agency and try to fill the holes we need to fill. Whether it's players from within or through free agency, we still have those avenues."

Reports (and team need) suggest the Flames, Oilers and Red Wings would be in line for his services. San Jose was in there, too, but their recent acquisition of Devan Dubnyk via trade takes them out.

While the emergence of Thatcher Demko makes the idea of Markstrom moving on a little more tolerable, it would then put Benning in the position of finding another netminder to split the crease with the young phenom to suit head coach Travis Green's preference to go forward with a tandem approach.

Of course, attempts to re-sign his season MVP aren't just limited to what the cap will allow as Benning prepares for upcoming extensions to young stars Elias Pettersson and Quinn Hughes. There's also the Seattle expansion draft to worry about – should he manage to keep both netminders, he'd have to make a little magic happen to avoid having one claimed by the Kraken.

6. Mike Hoffman, LW/RW, Florida Panthers

Age: 30

2019-20 cap hit: \$5.1875 million

Hoffman looked like a sure rental candidate at the deadline but ultimately wasn't moved. All signs point to him being on the move now.

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, though clubs will likely be wary of bidding wars here as he's a candidate for a contract that doesn't age well.

7. Braden Holtby, G, Washington Capitals

Age: 30

2019-20 cap hit: \$6.1 million

"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."

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 standout 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.

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.

Expect anyone interested in Markstrom – Calgary, Edmonton, Detroit – to be talking about Holtby, too. And if Markstrom does indeed move on from Vancouver, is Holtby a fit with the Canucks?

8. Evgenii Dadonov, RW, Florida Panthers

Age: 30

2019-20 cap hit: \$4 million

With Hoffman reportedly heading to the open market, does that mean Florida's looking at keeping their other leading scorer?

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. A short-term deal feels like the most logical move here.

9. Tyler Toffoli, RW/LW, Vancouver Canucks

Age: 27

2019-20 cap hit: \$4.6 million

Up until a few days ago, an extension being worked out between Toffoli and the Canucks felt like it was all but certain. The fit between player and club was excellent, and Toffoli himself made it clear he was prioritizing staying. But a pending cap crunch makes that easier said than done.

Throughout his time on L.A.'s trade block last season, word was he was a candidate to return to the Kings after being rented out. Might that plan come to fruition after all?

10. Mikael Granlund, C/LW, Nashville Predators

Age: 27

2019-20 cap hit: \$5.75 million

Predators general manager David Poile confirmed earlier in Nashville's off-season that Granlund would walk in free agency – just one of several roster changes he's making, along with the buyout of Kyle Turris, trade of Bonino.

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.

Another strong Nashvillian to WATCH: Craig Smith, one of the team's longest-tenured players, is also heading to the open market.

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

Age: 29

2019-20 cap hit: \$4.65 million



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Flames GM Brad Treliving has two defencemen on the verge of free agency in Brodie and Travis Hamonic. Brodie told Wes Gilbertson of the Calgary Sun earlier this week he's "definitely open" to staying with the Flames, but at that point it didn't sound like many numbers were being discussed.

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.

12. 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 courtesy of Khudobin, who jumped into the No. 1 slot in place of an unfit-to-play Ben Bishop this summer and backstopped the Stars all the way to the Stanley Cup Final.

Khudobin's strong play probably just priced himself out of staying in Dallas, and Stars general manager Jim Nill said Thursday the veteran will, in fact, test free agency.

13. Kyle Turris, C, Nashville Predators

Age: 31

2019-20 cap hit: \$6 million (bought out)

With the news of the Predators buying out the final four seasons of his six-year deal earlier this week, Turris suddenly becomes one of the biggest names on what is a shallow centre market.

14. 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. His No. 1 destination? Tampa. Wonder if he takes a hometown deal to stay.

15. Travis Hamonic, D, Calgary Flames

Age: 29

2019-20 cap hit: \$3.857 million

Hamonic 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?

Hamonic's Manitoba roots, combined with the Jets' blue line needs, makes Winnipeg a team to watch. The club just re-signed Dylan DeMelo, and likely aren't done addressing defence.

16. Corey Crawford, G, Chicago Blackhawks

Age: 35

2019-20 cap hit: \$6 million

While Crawford's \$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.

Sportsnet's Elliott Friedman reported in 31 Thoughts last month that Blackhawks management and Crawford's camp were initially "not seeing eye to eye on the dollar value of an extension," and the team confirmed

Thursday that an emotional parting of ways will indeed be the way forward in Chicago.

Should the two side part ways, Crawford would be a compelling case for a team looking for a veteran 1B — in the same vein as Khudobin has been for Dallas and Halak has done for Boston.

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, C/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. Jesper Fast, RW, New York Rangers

Age: 28

2019-20 cap hit: \$1.85 million

One of the longest-tenured Rangers is on the move, and should be pretty popular. Age is on his side, and the fact that he was on pace for his most productive season yet at the time of the NHL's stoppage suggests he could be a really strong addition to the right team.

Sportsnet.ca / NHL free agency rumblings: Latest on Ekman-Larsson, Markstrom, Krug

Staff Report

October 8, 2020, 11:51 AM

We are one day away from Oliver Ekman-Larsson's deadline and still the Arizona Coyotes captain hasn't been traded.

The 29-year-old defenceman wants to see a quick resolution to his situation and has said he won't waive his no-movement clause for a deal to Vancouver or Boston beyond Friday. At this stage it appears the Canucks are the more interested buyer, and talks continue between them and the Coyotes.



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The teams are believed to be grinding over which prospect or player is included in the deal.

As reported earlier this week, the Coyotes have asked for goaltender Thatcher Demko, which is a non-starter for Vancouver. There is also the issue of how much money Arizona may or may not take on as part of the trade package.

So hurdles remain as the clock ticks.

Ekman-Larsson feels he negotiated a \$66-million, eight-year extension with Arizona in good faith back in 2018 and plans to stand behind the NMC included in his contract if these trade talks don't bear fruit.

MARKSTROM'S MARKET

The Vancouver Canucks are still hoping to retain Jacob Markstrom even as suitors begin to form a queue to make their pitch to the pending free agent.

Markstrom is the top goaltender available in a crowded marketplace at the position and will almost certainly net a contract with an average value above the \$5 million that Robin Lehner got last week from Las Vegas.

The Calgary Flames and Detroit Red Wings are believed to have interest. Despite some cap limitations, the Edmonton Oilers will likely come calling as well.

Vancouver doesn't sound prepared to engage in a bidding war to retain Markstrom's services – "We're going to be prudent and smart," general manager Jim Benning told Sportsnet's Iain McIntyre – but it hasn't given up hope of bringing back a player that's blossomed during his seven years with the organization.

Even if Markstrom tests the open market on Friday, the door won't be closed with the Canucks. It might even compel him to stay right where he is.

ACTIVE OILERS

Keep an eye on Edmonton when free agency opens: Ken Holland has to be judicious with his spending because of the salary cap ceiling, but he'll likely have his fingers in a lot of different pies.

Among the team's targets? A goaltender, a third-line centre and a defenceman to run the power play with news that Oscar Klefbom is likely facing an extended absence because of a lingering shoulder injury that will probably require surgery.

That's put Tyson Barrie on the radar there.

As mentioned above, Markstrom could be a candidate in goal.

There's even some talk that Taylor Hall would seriously consider a reunion with the Oilers, although it's hard to imagine Edmonton being able to pull that off without shedding some salary in trades to make the finances fit.

Either way, the Oilers intend to be fairly active and they've already reached a deal to bring winger Jesse Puljujarvi back over from Finland.

CHASING TOREY

In a league where cap space is king, Steve Yzerman possesses more of it than virtually all of his peers.

He also has more available roster spots than NHL-ready prospects after an off-season where the Detroit Red Wings let Jonathan Ericsson, Trevor Daley and Jimmy Howard walk away in free agency, bought out Justin Abdelkader and didn't tender qualifying offers to Madison Bowey, Christoffer Ehn and Brendan Perlini.

That's led to increased chatter that the Red Wings are poised to take a run at free-agent defenceman Torey Krug when the market opens Friday.

There's a natural fit: Krug was raised in a Detroit suburb and attended Michigan State. He's also looking for some long-term security after being one of the NHL's most productive blue-liners over the past seven

seasons and the Red Wings have the means to sign the 29-year-old to the kind of contract he covets.

TRADE BRAKES

There's been just one player-for-player trade during what was expected to be a busy week of transactions, and many believe the high number of non-tendered restricted free agents is largely to blame.

Why part with an asset when you can fill a hole without doing so?

Plenty of useful young players are set to become unrestricted free agents on Friday after not being QO'd before Wednesday night's deadline. The list includes Anthony Duclair, Troy Stecher, Dominik Kahun, Lucas Wallmark, Andreas Athanasiou, Carter Verhaeghe, Mark Jankowski, Devin Shore and Nick Cousins, among others.

Under normal circumstances, most of them would not have been cut free. But with a flat salary cap and the potential for higher arbitration awards than teams might be comfortable with they're now free to sign wherever they chose.

It's created some sentiment that the trade market might pick up once everyone sees how the dust settles.

TSN.CA / Cap concerns have displaced a number of quality players into free agency

Travis Yost

With the 2020 NHL Entry Draft in the rear-view mirror, front offices are turning their attention to the growing talent pool available in unrestricted free agency.

We knew the league's economic crisis, coupled with the flat salary cap growth, would force teams to make difficult roster decisions. A number of those difficult decisions started to manifest during the draft, particularly with restricted free agents and qualifying offers.

In normal years, qualifying offers are nothing more than accomplishing the bare minimum. These one-year offers, calculated at 100 to 120 per cent of the player's base salary, allow for a team to retain the rights of first refusal or draft choice compensation should the player sign an offer sheet. Players frequently reject these qualifying offers and file for arbitration, generally because arbitration awards (or negotiated contracts down the road) deliver bigger paydays.

But this isn't a normal year. A big arbitration award could be of concern to a cash-poor or cap-burdened team heading into 2020-21. Not surprisingly, this concern has displaced a number of quality players into free agency – most of whom are still on the right side of the aging curve and will likely be had inexpensively.

The below table isn't a comprehensive collection of non-qualified restricted free agents, but I think this Goals Above Replacement retrospective captures the talent pool quite well (via Evolving Hockey).

The percentiles compare each player's cumulative contributions in three phases of the ice – how his team has performed offensively with the player on the ice, how the team has performed defensively with the player on the ice, and the player's ability to carry positive penalty differentials relative to his positional peers.

As you can see, a number of these players compare quite well. A forward like Nick Cousins (non-qualified by Vegas), or defencemen like Matt Benning (non-qualified by Edmonton) and Troy Stecher (non-qualified by Vancouver) will have no issue finding contracts – they have been capable NHLers for years and were textbook definitions of cap casualties by their respective teams.

But even down the table, there is plenty of available talent. Looking for a capable offensive forward? Ottawa made a surprising – perhaps even shocking – decision to non-qualify forward Anthony Duclair, who managed to score 23 goals and 17 assists before the regular season was stopped.



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Looking for a capable checking line forward? Mark Jankowski has carried some of the league's best shot and expected goal differentials for a few years now despite some shaky goaltending behind him.

I think teams expected this off-season to be about goaltending, and understandably so. But the level of talent in the skater ranks available in free agency has grown considerably in the past week.

For the teams that do have some cap flexibility, there are a number of impact players that can be had at a fraction of the usual cost – and that's true whether you're a rebuilding team or a contender looking for the final piece.

The Athletic / NHL Draft grades 2020: Corey Pronman evaluates all 31 teams

Corey Pronman Oct 7, 2020

The 2020 NHL Draft is finally over. With all 216 picks in (the Coyotes were forced to forfeit the No. 49 pick), I end my coverage of this draft by giving my opinion on how I think the clubs did based on my knowledge of the players selected.

The only way I can sanely and fairly go about this exercise is to assign grades based on which team added the most by way of draft picks to the organization. I don't account for players acquired by trade, how well a player fits into the organization, or whether a team reached or got potential value on a pick. This is a ranking showing who got the most talent in the draft, divided by tiers represented by a letter grade. Teams are listed by their grade, but teams with the same grade are listed alphabetically.

To those who don't like this type of exercise because you think a draft can't be evaluated until five years later, your concern is heard, but we're still doing this anyway.

Full analysis of every team's picks is linked below also.

Check out all of The Athletic's NHL Draft coverage

New York Rangers: A+

The Rangers had the No. 1 pick and got a consensus special talent. That alone would get a high grade on talent injected into the system, but it would not have locked them into the highest grade by itself. In addition to Alexis Lafreniere, they added a potential top-four defenseman in Braden Schneider, a potential bottom-six forward in Will Cuyllé, a potential backup goalie in Dylan Garand and some quality later picks like Evan Vierling, which makes this class impressive and adds a lot to an already deep pipeline of young talent.

Los Angeles Kings: A

The Kings got a potential star center at No. 2 in Quinton Byfield, getting one of the toughest pieces to find when building a team. They followed it up with a lot of picks on Day 2. I think their next three picks — Helge Grans, Brock Faber and Kasper Simontaival — all have solid chances to play NHL games and I didn't mind some of their later picks either. Adding depth and impact is the ideal draft weekend.

Ottawa Senators: A

Ottawa had three first-round picks and made them count. No. 3 pick Tim Stutzle will be a star, possibly as a No. 1 center. Jake Sanderson will play big minutes on a top-two D pair, and Ridly Greig has 2C potential, but likely is a 3C on an org now suddenly overflowing with young center talent. I think Day 2 picks Roby Jarventie and Egor Sokolov could be bottom-six guys, and even though I'm not the biggest fan of Tyler Kleven at 44, I respect he's a prospect and brings some things to the table. You can quibble over whether they should have picked this guy over that guy, I would have picked different players at 5 and 44, but overall I think the haul is very impressive and could be a big part of turning the franchise around.

Detroit Red Wings: A-

I think Detroit made the right pick at 4, and got the player with the most talent outside the consensus top three in Lucas Raymond. After that they had a ton of picks. You could quibble over the slot for a couple, but overall I think they added a lot of talent. No. 32 overall, defenseman

William Wallinder, projects as an NHL player and several of their other picks have either strong or fair chances to play games in the league.

New Jersey Devils: A-

In Alexander Holtz and Dawson Mercer, the Devils got two very good forward prospects who project to become important parts of their team. I like their other first-round pick, Shakir Mukhamdullin. I think he's an NHL player. I'm not sold he's a top-four defenseman, but I see the argument. Both goalie Nico Daws and forward Jaromir Pytlík have decent chances to play games, too.

Anaheim Ducks: B+

I think Anaheim got the best defenseman in the draft in Jamie Drysdale, a potential top-six forward in Jacob Perreault and I think Sam Colangelo will help the Ducks, too. I don't mind defensemen Ian Moore and Thimo Nickl, but while I like their athletic toolkits, I'm not as confident they make it. Those first three picks are a strong haul though.

Carolina Hurricanes: B+

I'm a big fan of Seth Jarvis, who Carolina got at 13. Noel Gunler at 41 will be a talking point of this draft. Among scouts, he's a consensus late first-round talent, but he was considered among the draft's bigger character risks. I like him a lot, but his progress will be closely monitored in the years to come. They targeted high skill afterward in Vasilii Ponomarev and Zion Nybeck. Alexander Nikishin also has NHL potential if his medicals are fine.

Minnesota Wild: B+

Getting Marco Rossi is a big piece, as a player who projects as a first-line forward and an important young piece for any team. On Day 2, I thought the Wild maximized their picks, getting four players in Marat Khushnutdinov, Ryan O'Rourke, Daemon Hunt and Pavel Novak who have solid or better chances to become NHL players.

Winnipeg Jets: B+

The Jets had only four picks but made them count. Cole Perfetti has elite skill. He has deficiencies that led to him getting to 10, but that's a lot of talent to get at 10. Both winger Daniel Torgersson and defenseman Anton Johansson have shots to play NHL games. I didn't list Tyrel Bauer on my draft board, but I thought about it and he has tools.

Calgary Flames: B

Calgary added picks and did well to rebuild a thin farm system. I'm on the high side of Connor Zary in the industry, but he could be a very good NHL player. Yan Kuznetsov and Jeremie Poirier, who they picked after Zary, will be NHL defensemen. Jake Boltmann at 80 was one of the more surprising picks, but overall I saw talent in the later rounds that has potential to be useful.

Florida Panthers: B

I like Anton Lundell a lot and think he's going to be a good NHL forward. No. 12 was a bit high for me, but Florida got a player. On Day 2, they had a lot of picks and selected players that have the potential to play in the NHL. I like that they got Justin Sourdif at 87 in particular.

Nashville Predators: B

I'm a huge fan of their top pick, Yaroslav Askarov, and have no issue in picking the goalie at 11. I also like their second pick, Luke Evangelista. I debated Luke Prokop in my rankings a lot, but ultimately see too many offensive upside questions there, especially at 73. They took some nice shots later in the draft on players with intriguing talent levels.

Toronto Maple Leafs: B

I'm a supporter of Rodion Amirov, who is going to be a great top-six forward in the NHL. The Leafs had a lot of Day 2 picks. The real players were their second- and third-round picks in center Roni Hirvonen and defenseman Topi Niemela, who I think will make it. After that, they took a lot of shots. I like a few of them, some less than others. Depending on who you ask around the league, they will like a few that I didn't. I appreciate the strategy of taking a bunch of shots on guys with roughly close talent level. I think the Leafs helped their farm system this week.

Buffalo Sabres: B-



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I think Jack Quinn is a very good player. I wouldn't have picked him at 8. I know some scouts who endorse him there, and some who don't. He was the most divisive name of the top-10 candidates. He may be a true high-end talent, I see the case based on how he ended his season, but I can't get there. I think both he and JJ Peterka will be good NHL players, with both having strong chances to be top-six forwards with Quinn obviously being a more sure bet.

Colorado Avalanche: B-

Colorado didn't have a ton of picks or high picks but I thought they made them count. Justin Barron will be a good NHL defenseman. I think Jean-Luc Foudy and Colby Ambrosio have reasonable chances to play games too, which is all you want in the middle rounds.

Montreal Canadiens: B-

I liked many of Montreal's picks, thinking they got par or better value on a fair number of them, particularly Sean Farrell at 124. The one I didn't love was their first one. Kaiden Guhle is a good player, but I'm skeptical he's a top-four defenseman. I know NHL scouts who agree, and some who very much disagree. Ultimately, how he progresses will likely dictate how this class ages.

San Jose Sharks: B-

The Sharks didn't pick until 31. Their first five picks — Ozzy Wiesblatt, Thomas Bordeleau, Tristen Robins, Daniil Guschin and Brandon Coe — will play in the NHL or have quality chances to make it. They didn't get the impact talent, but they added quality depth to their pipeline.

Washington Capitals: B-

Washington took a real swing at Hendrix Lapierre at 22. That pick has risk for a variety of reasons, but he has a lot of skill and could become a good NHL player. The Capitals didn't pick again until 117, but Bogdan Trineev, Bear Hughes and Oskar Magnusson have skill. For what they had in terms of draft capital, pun intended, I think the Capitals did a good job and added much-needed skill to their system.

Chicago Blackhawks: C+

I liked Chicago's first two picks, Lukas Reichel and Drew Comness, par value for where they were picked. I didn't mind Wyatt Kaiser at 81 either. Landon Slaggert is a fine player, but 79 was high for what he brings. Some NHL folks think he could be a bottom-six type, but I'm not there yet.

Edmonton Oilers: C+

The Oilers got a very good player at 14 in Dylan Holloway. They didn't pick again until 100, but got three forwards late in Carter Savoie, Tyler Tullio and Maxim Berezkin who are talented and have chances to make it.

Tampa Bay Lightning: C+

Tampa didn't pick until 57, but ended up with a lot of selections and added depth to its pipeline. I like Jack Finley and Maxim Groshev in particular. I could see them help the team down the line. Around those two, they got several other players who have chances to make it. You could debate a few guys as too high, but I also think they got some value on later picks so it evened out.

Dallas Stars: C

Bourque is a very skilled player, and while he has some limitations, he's going to score in the NHL and be a significant player for the Stars. They didn't have a second or third, but some of their later forwards like Antonio Stranges, Daniel Ljungman and Evgeni Oksnetyuk are all players who have a chance to play, too.

Vegas Golden Knights: C

I liked where Vegas got its first two picks, Brendan Brisson and Lukas Cormier, at 29 and 68, respectively. I think both will play and Brisson has top-six potential. I have some time for Jackson Hallum, and he has a fair number of supporters among NHL scouts, but 91 was high for what he brings.

Philadelphia Flyers: C

The Flyers didn't have a lot of picks, but got a fair number of players who could play in the NHL. I struggle with Tyson Foerster at 22. He's a good player, a future NHL player, but with his skating, it's hard for me to see a top-six forward. Connor McClennon at 178 has a chance to provide value if he gets a little quicker.

Columbus Blue Jackets: C-

I wrote about the Chinakhov pick. I like him and I think he's going to play in the NHL and help Columbus. I'm not all the way to where Columbus is in terms of the caliber of player they think they got. I had Samuel Knazko on one iteration of my final list, but it's hard to get past his lack of offense. I do like Mikael Pyyhtia, he was one of my favorite sleepers going into the draft and snuck onto my list after I saw how he played over the summer.

Pittsburgh Penguins: C-

I really like Joel Blomqvist, who the Penguins got at 52, and he was my No. 2 goalie. The Penguins didn't have a lot of picks or high picks, but with Blomqvist, goalie Calle Clang and forward Lukas Svejkovsky, they made the most of their situation and got some players who have a chance to make it.

St. Louis Blues: C-

I typically have liked how the Blues have drafted, but this class underwhelms me a bit. I like Jake Neighbours, but after that I don't see a ton to get excited about. Dylan Peterson is an NHL prospect and scouts think he could be a fourth-line forward. Leo Loof at 88 was high for me. Coming into the season he was in that discussion for sure and he has talent, but I didn't think his 2020 season justified that pick.

Arizona Coyotes: D

Mitchell Miller has a chance to play, but not picking until 111, your expectations for a class are low and it's hard to see much NHL impact coming from this group.

Boston Bruins: D

I don't mind the Trevor Kuntar pick at 89. I didn't have him there but I respect the skill. Mason Lohrei at 58 was quite surprising and watching him last season, I don't see the value in the second round. I have my skepticism that this Bruins class will provide much at the NHL level.

New York Islanders: D

The Islanders didn't pick until 90 so they didn't have a ton to work with. I still didn't see the justification for Alex Ljungkratz where they took him. I didn't mind some of their later picks, like Alex Jefferies and William Dufour, but it's hard to see this draft adding a ton to their system.

Vancouver Canucks: D

The Canucks didn't have a pick until 82, so it was always going to be tough to add talent. I have time for Joni Jurmo. I'm not his biggest fan, but I appreciate how good an athlete he is and what he could become. They didn't make a lot of picks that really excite me. I don't think this draft made a big dent in improving their pipeline.

The Athletic / NHL Draft winners and losers: Ranking every team's Day 2 picks

By Scott Wheeler Oct 7, 2020

Welcome to my comprehensive analysis of how all 31 teams did in Rounds 2-7, including evaluations of almost every player chosen.

The analysis that follows does not evaluate any of the trades that were made. Instead, it is designed to assess solely each team's picks and the ranges within which they were taken.

This project follows my pick-by-pick first round grades by sorting into the following tiers:

• **Winners:** Teams I believe won out over their competition with sleuth, home-run-level selections relative where they picked.



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• Overtime winners: Teams I believe did well with where they were slotted, even if they might not have picked the exact player(s) I would have.

• Overtime losers: Teams I believe could have done better but might, in time, be happy with their pick(s) regardless.

• Losers: Teams I believe will regret taking the player(s) they took.

For more insight into how I do my job and each of these players, check out my guide to scouting and my final top 100 ranking.

Winners

Carolina Hurricanes

The Hurricanes were the team that drafted most in line with my draft board last season (in fact, their 2019 draft was probably the most in line with my boards ever). So it was no surprise when they took my best player available on Wednesday at No. 41 with Noel Gunler, who ranked 10th on my final board. On pure talent, Gunler was the most talented player available on Day 2, bar none. On track record and production relative to his leagues and age, he was too. But cuts from Team Sweden and limited ice-time in the SHL (despite positive results at both ends), including a healthy scratch early on this season, resulted in his drop. I just don't see the concerns some have with his consistency, at least not to the degree that it mitigates against him being a worthwhile late-first. You can count on one hand the number of Day 2 picks with 30-goal upside if they can put it all together. Gunler's on that list. Big, loads of skill, much-improved skating (to the point where he regularly creates breakaways now).

Nor was I surprised when the Canes nabbed Vasilii Ponomaryov, ranked 53rd on my board, with, well, the 53rd pick. Ponomaryov is a ton of fun to watch and a slick puck handler who looked for much of last season like he was just scratching the surface as a rookie in the QMJHL. There's a boom-or-bust element to his projection, but I like the way he works to get pucks back when he doesn't have it, which helps mitigate against the smallish size and good but not great production. He's exactly the kind of swing the Canes have shown they're willing to take a cut on.

The Alexander Nikishin pick (fell to No. 94 on my final board) is more of a departure from their mould but he's got strong age-adjusted results in the MHL, his game will eventually come in the KHL (where he has already played more than most), and they likely think they can work with his raw tools to take his game to the next level as a long-term project.

But... they were back at it with the Zion Nybeck pick. Nybeck, unsurprisingly, was my best player available when they selected at 115 (here's more on why I like the kid with loads of video and quotes from HV71 staff).

And... then they took Alexander Pashin, my 67th-ranked prospect, 199th overall.

Even Ronan Seeley, with their final pick of the day, made me smile. Seeley bounced in and out of my top 100 all year and plays a poised, headman-the-puck style with above average footwork and a great stick in place of a physicality.

The Canes need to get off my turf.

All seriousness, though: I'm a huge fan of the job they've done. They see the game a lot like I do and I think that's reflected in the program they've been able to build. The proof will be in its longevity when the Canes remain as contenders for the next few years, I'd bet.

San Jose Sharks

I love the Thomas Bordeleau pick. Over the course of the last month, I spent some time learning more about his unique story and skillset for a story that is now live. He's travelled a unique journey, he's got some quirky skills, the University of Michigan staff plan on keeping him at centre despite the fact that he's on the shorter side, and he became the clear driver of the NTDP's offence over the last two seasons. I'm not sure whether he's going to be able to play a depth role like most NHL coaches want, but he's got top-six potential and that's the kind of swing I'd advise a team take in the second round.

I liked that the Sharks didn't shy away from taking a similar player to Bordeleau with their second pick of Round 2 in Tristen Robins (taken 56th and ranked 57th on my list). Robins plays the game the way it's

meant to be played these days. He excels at baiting defenders, playing in tight, and releasing from different spots on his body. And despite measuring at 5-foot-10, he absorbs contact and keeps plays alive. Then you mix in a counted-upon defensive game that gives him all-situations upside and suddenly you've got a bit of a swiss-army knife, even if there are things that could prevent him from becoming a star player.

By the time they moved up to pick Danuil Gushchin, my 40th-ranked prospect and one of the top remaining players on my board at the time, 76th-overall, I was sold on the Sharks' day. Gushchin is a spark plug who never stops moving, cutting, and attack, and has enough skill to start and finish his own plays. He's a real favourite of mine and plays bigger than his 5-foot-9 frame might suggest at first glance. After spending his draft year in the USHL, I can't wait to watch him in the OHL with the Niagara IceDogs.

Philadelphia Flyers

It's no secret that I'm really quite fond of the way the Flyers have drafted in recent years. They continued that trend by taking Emil Andrae 54th-overall. Andrae (No. 21 on my list) was the top-ranked player on my board. He's one of the most purely gifted defenders in the draft, and he's as confident as he is talented, so he's never going to shy away from trying things or looking to dictate. Some are concerned about the role his average skating and 5-foot-9 height could play in preventing him from excelling in the NHL, but I'm not hugely worried about either of those things. He's a heavy (emphasis on heavy) 5-foot-9, a stout defender in his own zone, and I rarely worry about rush defence, though he can be a little too eager to step up and deliver a hit when his gaps waver. He has looked great to start the SHL season, too, and I expected that might help him go in the 30s or 40s.

If that weren't enough, the Flyers stole my heart with their Zayde Wisdom pick in the fourth round. Wisdom was just a worthwhile pick there as a potential checking forward with third-line skill, but he's also the hockey story I'm proudest to have told. He has overcome a lot to get here and I'm pulling for him. He's going to make it.

Connor McClennon in the sixth round is a really nice get, too. He was a minor hockey sensation growing up, the second overall pick in the WHL bantam draft, and a star for Canada at U17s internationally. And while it took him some time to figure out how he was going to translate his small skill game to the top of a WHL lineup, he really came into his own this season as a go-to player in Winnipeg. He's the kind of player who's going to put up 90-100 points in the WHL and have to prove he can produce in the AHL before he gets a shot, but I was pretty comfortable slotting him at No. 49 on my final board.

Florida Panthers

Though Emil Heineman finished at No. 65 on my board, he wasn't a reach in the middle third of the second round. Heineman's known for his ability to finish off plays around the slot, which contributed to a near goal-per-game pace in SuperElit last season, but I've often argued that his playmaking ability is a little underrated. I've seen him execute his fair share of cross-ice passes when defenders take away his lanes to the net. He's going to take some time, as his skill and speed aren't so high-end tough as to merit a quick transition to the NHL (he likely spends two years in the SHL before giving the AHL a go for a year or two) but there are enough pieces there that he could become a useful middle-six contributor.

The Panthers also plucked three players who lingered a little too long on the board with their next three picks at 74, 87, and 95 in Ty Smilanic, Justin Sourdif, and Michael Benning, who all ranked inside my top 50. Smilanic has a ton of talent but battled an ankle injury, a broken hand, and mononucleosis last year in a weaker NTDP age group. Sourdif is an up-tempo individual creator who plays bigger than he is. And Benning is one of the more poised defencemen in the draft class.

The Kasper Puutio pick in Round 5 made sense, too. He's an anticipatory player who relies on his reads and a constant surveillance of the ice to make smart, careful plays.

Toronto Maple Leafs

Three of the Leafs' picks in 2019 (Nick Robertson, Mikhail Abramov and Nick Abruzzese) exceeded expectations last season. All three, despite each having their own question marks, fit the same mould: They were driven when they didn't have the puck, slippery when they had it, and well-rounded offensively rather than dynamic in one specific. In Roni



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Hirvonen (No. 30 on my board), the Leafs found a similar type. Versatile, hard-working, highly-talented, and capable of manufacturing offence in several ways, instead of one. Those who doubt Kyle Dubas' approach will be off-put by the 5-foot-9 frame. I see a player who, if he picks up a step, may have slightly higher upside than most of the other players available with the pick.

I don't hate that they went back to the Finnish well with the Topi Niemala pick at No. 64, either (he was No. 54 on my board). The Leafs have shown they're willing to move back. When you do that, though, you have to make sure you get equal or better value relative to those who were taken higher. In Niemala, they get a player who is calm, calculated, and comfortable under pressure to make the right play. As is usually the case with the Leafs' picks, he's not particularly dynamic, he reminds of the types they've targeted in Rasmus Sandin and Travis Dermott.

The Leafs continued their 'take one goalie a year' trend with Artur Akhtyamov in the fourth round. I was asked a lot in the lead-up to the draft by readers who, if I had to pick a late-round goalie to target, would be my guy. Akhtyamov, who has been unflappable in the MHL but hasn't yet played in the KHL (which comes with some notoriety, rightly or wrongly), was always my answer. If my draft board ran a little longer than 100, he would've been the next goalie listed.

The Leafs' best pick of the day, though, might become William Villeneuve 122nd overall. I've done a ton of due diligence on him, both on tape and in talking to people in Saint John, and I ultimately settled on him at No. 39 on my board. His offensive package reminds me of Evan Bouchard (though with less upside, obviously), in that he's constantly producing near the top of his age group without ever really looking like he's a dynamic player. And his defensive game, despite a mediocre stride, is already pretty polished. The numbers alone should've made him a no-brainer at least a round earlier. The Leafs clearly believe they can help him get quicker.

Though Dmitry Ovchinnikov didn't crack my top 100, he was another player, like Akhtyamov, that I broke down in my analysis of some intriguing players who narrowly missed out. I like his high energy and skill. When the Leafs picked Axel Rindell late, it capped off their selection of three of the prospects I broke down in my look at the players who just missed my list. Then they picked a fourth in Jr. A standout Ryan Tverberg (full scouting reports on all four here). If the Canes' board was closest to mine, the Leafs' wasn't far behind.

The Leafs' Veeti Miettinen selection was the icing on what I believe was a huge day for a team that sorely needed to add prospect pool depth. Miettinen was my best player available (No. 37 on my board). For more, check out my story him.

Los Angeles Kings

The Kings have done a superb job in the last couple of drafts identifying talent in Rounds 2 and 3 and Helge Grans, who was one of my top-ranked players (No. 26) to start Day 2, could become another one of those value picks. His game has some deficiencies (I've often questioned his decision-making and attention to detail) but he's a long, strong, right-shot defenceman who makes a surprising number of skill plays in the offensive zone for a player his size. He's exactly the kind of player I'd look to target in the second round, work with, and tap into.

The Brock Faber pick at No. 45 kind of fits in with the Tobias Bjornfot pick of a year ago, too. I was a little lower than most on Bjornfot then, and I'm a little lower on Faber than the Kings appear to be here (he was my 95th-ranked prospect in the draft) but he's a fluid, mobile skater who gaps as well as any defenceman taken outside the first round, he can transport the puck up ice, and there is a belief among some that he has more to offer within the offensive zone than we've seen to date. I'm not convinced there's top-four upside there, but Faber has the tools required to potentially play a modern, effective depth role. Give him three or four years at the University of Minnesota and take it from there. No rush.

My favourite pick of the day for the Kings was their Kasper Simontaival choice early in the third round. If you followed my work at all this year, you'll know that he's one of my favourites. If you're new to my work, well, he was my top-ranked forward prospect available at No. 66, finishing the year as my 27th-ranked prospect. He's on the smaller side, but his ability to play in traffic and create off the flank was unique where he was picked and I think he has a real chance to be a play-driving middle-six winger who can run the second power play unit at the NHL level.

What's more impressive, is that one of the next-best potential value picks of the day may have also been the Kings' selection of the highly-skilled, multi-tool Martin Chromiak (47th on my board) at 128.

Alex Laferriere (not to be confused with Lafreniere!) also has another gear I think he's capable of getting to, in time, at Harvard.

That made for five picks I liked for one reason or another — and a big day. The Kings get it.

Canadiens pick Luke Tuch. (Courtesy Rena Laverty)

Overtime winners

Montreal Canadiens

Any head-scratching I was doing with the Canadiens' selection of Luke Tuch, who is a good prospect but tops out as more of a depth piece, at No. 47, quickly faded at No. 48 when they made one of my favourite picks of Day 2, taking Jan Mysak with the very next pick. Mysak was my best player available (more here) and finished at No. 12 on my board. He's got an electric offensive game, useful defensive tools, and an ability to crack open a shift with an NHL skill play that was unrivalled in the class by the time he was picked. His statistical case is also really, really strong relative to his age and league, dating back three seasons. He's one of the only players of Day 2 who I think has a real shot at putting up top-six counting stats and impacting PP1 as a scoring threat. Patience will be key but his skill pops.

The Mysak pick wasn't the only Canadiens home run of the day for me. Sean Farrell, one of the better passers and drivers outside the first round on my board, sat around way too long and I think there are medium odds the Canadiens found a potential middle-six playmaker at the end of the fourth round.

Though I didn't love their other picks, that's not a huge surprise given how late most of them were (Blake Biondi is kind of interesting and ranked firmly in my top 100). The Mysak and Farrell picks were big.

Calgary Flames

I loved the way the Flames finished Day 1 and I really didn't love (to put it mildly) the way they started Day 2 with Yan Kuznetsov at No. 50. Whenever I've watched Kuznetsov play, I've come away with a shrug. He's fine. But any time I asked someone to tell me what others see in him that I don't, I was left unconvinced by the case. I don't think he should've been more than a late-round pick.

They corrected against that with the Jeremie Poirier pick at No. 72. Poirier was my BPA with that pick as my 23rd-ranked prospect. He might be the most purely talented defenceman in the draft with the puck on his stick. And though there are legitimate concerns about how he manufactures that offence (by giving up too much defensively), I'll take that bet where they took it every time. Read more in my recent profile.

Their selection of Ryan Francis in the fifth-round was a nice little pick-up in that range, too. Francis is a bit of late bloomer who became one of the QMJHL's more entertaining prospects last season, his third in the league. I love how quickly he plays the game. He's quick through his hands and feet, but he has also learned, in time, how to execute with a little more aggression too.

Rory Kerins is a bit of a long shot but I've argued on his behalf, if only because his underlying results are excellent, for most of the year, so I liked that choice in Round 6.

New Jersey Devils

After a busy first round, the Devils were one of the last teams to the party on Day 2, waiting until the middle of Round 3 to make a pick. I like the decision to take a chance on Nico Daws. The Devils are obviously happy with what they have in Mackenzie Blackwood, but you can't have too much goaltending depth and Daws has clearly established himself as one of the three or four best goalies in the draft. He was just so, so important to the 2019-2020 Storm and he did it on the back of a blocking style that uses aggressive angles and his big size to make the first save. I do have concerns about his movement in the net, as he can get carried away in his crease, but he took such huge steps as an overager and this pick was earned.

I was a big fan of their Ethan Edwards swing at No. 120. Edwards is one of the best skaters on his edges in the draft, plays one of the more



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aggressive gaps in the draft, and uses his feet to open up lanes for himself in the offensive zone. Once he gets stronger, which he will have time to do at the University of Michigan, he could be a really interesting package.

Jaromir Pytlík at No. 99 was a fine high-floor, low-ceiling choice. He's big and responsible defensively and staff in Sault Ste. Marie say they think they may have done him a disservice by trying to turn him into a right-shot centre when he's probably a better fit at the wing. There might just be enough offence to turn him into a depth piece.

Artem Shlaine and Benjamin Baumgartner (another player who I broke down in my missed cuts piece) are interesting enough to have merited late-round picks. I'm not sure whether the Devils knocked a single pick out of the park, but they're one of only a couple of teams I didn't really have any qualms with on Day 2.

Edmonton Oilers

The Oilers had to wait until pick 100 for their first selection of Day 2 and think they have a chance to get one of those classic down-board home runs with Carter Savoie, who, after Alexander Holtz, is in the conversation as the best pure shooter in the draft. There are real concerns about Savoie's wavering effort without the puck and his athleticism, but he only needs one shift to change a game. He's one of the only players in the class who can beat goalies from long range and tough angles consistently. He's dynamic with the puck as a handler, too, and does a phenomenal job shading away from pressure to maintain control and wait for his chance to shoot. It would not surprise me in the least if he scores 30 goals someday and emerges from three or four years in college hockey as one of the NCAA's top scorers. There are risks associated with every prospect in the middle rounds. But there may have been none with Savoie's potential reward.

I really liked their next pick with Ty Tullio a round later. I've touched on him lot this year and highlighted him as a potential faller/sleeper in my final column before the draft. He's got clear skill, he's feisty, and he has produced everywhere he has ever played. The worry some have with his projection is that he may end up as a bit of a tweener — not quite a depth type or a scoring type. I see a player who has come a long way and creates all over the ice, despite a small(fish) frame.

The rest was a bit of a mixed bag, comprised mostly of shrugs, but the Savoie-Tullio picks were enough to earn good overall grades.

Detroit Red Wings

The Red Wings got to kick off Day 2 with the 32nd overall pick, which for all intents and purposes, will be a first-rounder once the Seattle Kraken join the fray. I like the William Wallinder pick. It reminds me, frankly, of the decision to take Antti Tuomisto at the top of the second round a year ago. Both are (were) raw, long defenders with some exciting tools to work with. In Wallinder (ranked 36th on my board), the Red Wings target a huge left-shot defenceman who skates really well for his size, excels through the neutral zone, and has seen his offensive touch improve a great deal in the last year.

Theodor Niederbach was selected in the right range, give or take. Though I'm a little higher on him than some scouts in the public and private spheres are, having seen him look a little too passive a little too often, Niederbach has undeniable small area skill. He's a slick, puck-carrying forward with a creative flair who has proven he can dictate against his peers. Now he has to prove he can play with pro pace and aggression, especially considering he's 5-foot-11.

I was less fond of the Cross Hanas pick. Hanas was an honourable mention on my final board, which means that I don't view him as more than worthy of a late-round flier. His constant energy, physical presence, and room to grow into his frame excite some scouts, who believe he's got third-liner written all over him. That's just not the kind of player I'd be targeting in Round 2.

Though Donovan Sebrango wasn't ranked inside my top 100, he was one of the toughest cuts I had to make — and a player I highlighted in my summer look at 10 intriguing prospects who just missed being ranked. So he's a fine selection in the third round. Sebrango moves quickly and smartly without the puck, making himself available in all three zones to receive passes and advance the play (an underrated skill). He's a well-rounded defender whose head is always up. He could become a useful depth option. I'd be surprised if he's more than that though.

Eemil Viro's stock has benefitted from his early, advanced usage in Liiga for a teenaged defender, but whose skillset has never really aligned with his early progressions up levels for me. He just does everything well. Is that enough? We'll see.

Alex Cotton might give you something out of the 132nd pick, too. He can sling it and his pace of play has come a long way.

After Wallinder I didn't love any of Detroit's picks, but they had a good day.

Minnesota Wild

The Marat Khusnutdinov pick was a good start to the day for the Wild, who continued to make clear their desire to target centres in the 2020 draft. Khusnutdinov became a real darling in public sphere draft analysis this year and though I was a little more reluctant than most to rank him in the 20s and 30s in this draft, he was a good pick once Day 2 got started. Khusnutdinov's game is all about the little choices that contribute to the whole. He does a little bit of everything really well, he rarely turns pucks over, and then he's got enough skill to manufacture offence within the offensive zone. He's going to be able to play up and down the lineup, with a variety of player types, and contribute in all three zones.

In recent weeks, I wrote a trio of stories on players to be published after they were picked. Ryan O'Rourke was one of those stories (read it here). He's often cast as a bit of a throwback for his mean, physical approach to defending. But he's more than that. O'Rourke's got more offence than he showed last season (in part because he didn't play on PP1 in the Soo), he rarely makes mistakes on reads with and without the puck, and he can lean into his shot.

Daemon Hunt fits that O'Rourke mould in the third round. He's well-liked by all who coach him and there are some big believers in his upside. I've been lower on him than most, though, and ultimately made him one of the final cuts for my top-100 because I didn't love what I saw in him when he was healthy. He's a tougher evaluation, after having missed half the year to a skate cut injury.

Pavel Novak's puck skill and heavy wrist make him a worthwhile prospect, even if he's got work to do elsewhere in his game (mainly on his skating, though I think he's a little quicker than most think).

Anaheim Ducks

I've been a little lower than most on Sam Colangelo, who I think benefitted more from playing on a stacked Steel team than their other top prospects benefitted from playing with him. But he's a strong winger, does a good job protecting the puck on the perimeter, has enough skill to cut off the wall for quick chances, and has the finishing touch needed to score from mid-range and in tight. Though he finished at No. 72 on my board, he was fair game for me once the first round was concluded.

I really like Ian Moore, who has a raw quality to his game that's going to need some time to develop, but he climbed on my board all year, all the way to 70th (which is three slots after where the Ducks picked him).

Thimo Nickl's got some underrated o-zone vision and Artyom Galimov's a worthwhile flier as far as 21-year-old prospects go.

The Ducks basically just had a day that made me say "that's a fine pick" multiple times, without ever really connecting on one. We'll see!

Winnipeg Jets

Daniel Torgersson, the Jets' second-round pick, is a tough player to evaluate. There are people who believed he became a worthwhile pick in the late first round and others who believed he was more of a mid-round pick. I've always settled somewhere in the middle. He wouldn't have been my pick for the Jets, but he's really heavy along the wall, he's got decent interior skill for his size, and the Jets' hope, surely, is that even if he doesn't take that next step offensively to become a middle-six option, he's one of the safer bets to become a bottom-six piece given his size, cycle prowess, and penalty kill experience.

I loved the cut they took on the slick, effortless Anton Johansson in the fifth round. Johansson was picked more than 70 picks after where I had him ranked. It took him a little longer than most of the other high-skill defencemen in this draft to work his way up the ranks, and he's an extremely light kid who could be held back by his strength, but he's a superb four-way skater who can do it all offensively.



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All told, I like their quiet day without loving it.

Overtime losers

Colorado Avalanche

The Avalanche didn't pick in Round 2 and for that reason I don't mind them taking a chance on a truly unique prospect in the draft with the Jean-Luc Foudy selection at No. 75. Foudy disappointed me this year after an excellent Draft-2 season but he's arguably the best skater in the draft and if he can just learn to slow down a little more, or make his play a little earlier before he gets into trouble, then he has enough skill to be a decent playmaker, on top of the obvious value his skating gives him on retrievals and neutral-zone carries.

Colby Ambrosio and Ryder Rolston with their second and third picks of the day are fun gambles, too. Ambrosio's a kid I broke down in my 'missed the cut' column as intriguing for his ability to hit holes, make plays, and rotate in and out of space to make things happen. Rolston's an athletic, two way forward who plays the give-and-go effectively and has room to continue to fill out his frame.

Though the Avalanche picked just one player from my board with their four Day 2 picks, I wouldn't say it was a bad day, per se. Some interesting kids.

Vegas Golden Knights

I haven't been shy to say the Knights have been one of the top-drafting teams since inception and I think they knocked the Lukas Cormier pick out of the park in the middle of the third round. Cormier's size contributed to his fall but he's an excellent rush and cycle defender for that size and a smart o-zone creator across the blue line without needing to take risks.

I don't have a ton to offer on their other four picks of the day though, as none of them were really on my radar. I've seen a fair amount of goalie Jesper Vikman, who I don't honestly think is any good. I was excited about the Golden Knights after the Cormier pick but ultimately left it feeling a little confused about the picks by a team that has typically impressed me.

Tampa Bay Lightning

Jack Finley is one of a small number of players who wasn't ranked inside my top 100 but who I've said I'd be fine with in the late second or third round. He was one of the very last picks on my board and I don't blame the Lightning for wanting to work with his unique size-skill package (he's huge!). His September 2002 birthday gives him a lot of runway to refine a raw, intriguing package.

In my final column before the draft, I noted that one source told me to watch out for how high Gage Goncalves, an overager who earned an invite to Canada's virtual world junior camp this summer, might go. And while Goncalves was an honourable mention on my board, he's coach's favourite who plays hard, takes what's given to him, doesn't cheat, and has begun to show a real knack for sliding in and out of pockets of space to make quick, aggressive plays.

Though Amir Miftakhov is a little on the smaller end for a goalie, he made a lot of sense as a late-round flyer on track record and quickness alone — even as an overager.

I quite like Jack Thompson at 93 (he's 88 on my board). He can really sling it, he's aggressive with and without the puck, and now he just needs to round out the rest of his game, especially by opening up his vision a little more with the puck off the point.

The rest is a mixed bag. Nick Capone's as mean as any player in the draft, including Will Cuyllie, but I don't see anything more than fourth-liner who can forecheck. And then Maxim Groshev, though he's a worthwhile pick, felt a little high to me.

New York Rangers

I wasn't fond of the Rangers trading up to select Braden Schneider in the first round and I didn't love the William Cuyllie pick at No. 60, even if it was a freebie for Lias Andersson, who was never going to return to the organization. Cuyllie was featured in my players-to-avoid piece earlier this summer. He's a menacing physical presence, he hits harder than just about any player in the draft, and his wrist shot can overpower goalies. But he hasn't taken the steps needed to play with the proper pace or skill,

he was reliant on his linemates in his draft year, and he probably tops out as a fourth liner.

The highlight of the Rangers' day was their selection of Evan Vierling 127th-overall. I've been fond of him since I first saw him play minor hockey at 15 — and before he was the second overall pick in the OHL draft after Quinton Byfield. He has battled mental health issues and left the Flint Firebirds for seven weeks while demanding a trade in his draft year. On talent, Vierling was one of the only players left with potential top-six upside, he was fabulous on Barrie's top line with Tyson Foerster after the trade, and he is a potential steal. He could put up big numbers in the OHL this year.

I like their follow-up with Brett Berard (my No. 68), who works for everything he gets and has some NHL skill, despite a diminutive frame.

But I just can't seem to move past the decision to trade up to take Cuyllie in the second round.

Buffalo Sabres

I didn't love the Sabres' job on Day 1 but they started Day 2 on a nice note with John-Jason Peterka 34th overall. Peterka isn't going to be a top-of-the-lineup player but he's as aggressive on the forecheck as any player in this draft and he's got north-south tools that help him get to the net and create chances for himself. As his draft year progressed, I softened on Peterka's offensive package (he could use his linemates better and doesn't have a ton of east-west danger to his game) before ranking him at No. 43 on my final board. But he's got the tools needed to play with a variety of linemates, push tempo, and score in a complementary role in the middle-six. The second round was always going to be the right range for him.

Their day kind of started and ended there for me. Not a lot to touch on after, though Matteo Costantini does a nice job getting to the slot and might be able to build on that over the next few years, based on what I've seen. (Plus it's got to be cool for him to be picked by the Sabres after playing in Buffalo for the last two years.)

Nashville Predators

Luke Evangelista at No. 42 (he was 58th on my board) was a decent choice. Evangelista does everything well, has spent his offseason working tirelessly to improve his shot, and could take a huge leap in the OHL this year (COVID-permitting) offensively. The worry is that he's not going to be a fourth-line type and he may not quite have the offensive tools needed to contribute at a high level in the top-nine. But he took huge leaps in an increased role in his draft year and I rarely left a viewing disappointed by his contributions all over the ice.

Luke Prokhop tops out as a third-pairing guy, maybe. Adam Wilsby's a nice story who has bloomed late and looks like he'll be a good AHLer at worst and a depth option at best. And Gunnarwolfe Fontaine has good skill across the board without ever having wowed me, especially as an older USHL player on a loaded Chicago Steel team. So I don't hate those picks. But there were better talents available at all of their picks and it felt like they were playing it a little safe on some low-upside kids who are just "good."

Dallas Stars

Antonio Stranges is a fun, long-shot swing that was always going to be worthwhile in the draft's later rounds as someone who does some pretty unique things as a handler and skater. At some point, he's the kind of prospect where it's like "why not?" Given how few chances they had at it, I don't mind the decisions to try something a little different.

I like the Yevgeni Oksentyuk roll of the dice at No. 162, too. He's a fascinating player who can do a lot with the puck and turn dead plays into exciting sequences. But he's also 5-foot-8, he's an overager, and he's starting the year at home in Belarus, playing in a league that makes him almost impossible to evaluate after a strong showing in the OHL.

I don't think Daniel Ljungman and Remi Poirier have NHL upside. It was kind of a weird day for the Stars.

Pittsburgh Penguins

After moving Matt Murray to start the day, I don't think anyone should be surprised by the Penguins' decision to begin to rebuild their depth in net. In Joel Blomqvist, they get an aggressive, centred goalie who does a good job challenging shooters, directing low saves out of traffic, and



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making the routine saves, well, routinely. Though he's not huge nor super quick, he's decently athletic and technically sound. I like it, despite having ranked him 90th on my final board. He looks good to start the year too.

But then they took Calle Clang, who wasn't one of the four goalies I ranked on my board, with their very next pick. And that surprised me. Clang's good and plays a style that's honestly not all that different to Blomqvist's, but he swims a little more and I doubt he becomes more than a backup if all goes well. Using one bullet on a goalie? Fine. Using two? Your first two!?! Less fine.

All three of their final picks of the draft are a little quirky in execution, too. Raivis Ansons' former coach Jon Goyens talked me into giving his powerful game a second look at the midway point of the season. I love watching Lukas Svejksky's jersey billow up the ice as he carves teams up in the neutral zone, but I'm not sold on whether he's talented enough at a light 5-foot-10 to translate that game at the pro level. And Chase Yoder's a well-rounded player who just doesn't have enough skill to project as more than an AHLer, I don't think.

It got spicy after the Joel Blomqvist pick, even if I didn't absolutely hate it.

Vancouver Canucks

The Canucks didn't pick until No. 82 but I think they got a decent prospect in Joni Jurmo, my 63rd-ranked prospect. Jurmo is a 6-foot-4, left-shot defenceman who doesn't shy away from joining the rush or attacking off of the o-zone blue line. That aggression, considering players with his makeup are typically asked to play a more shutdown role, should be enough to intrigue you. He needs to make better choices with the puck and it's going to take him some time to get comfortable at the pro level, but I'd love to work with him and try to tap into his raw talent and confident approach.

I really liked the Jacob Truscott pick in Round 5. I think he has a stronger case as a potential depth piece than some of the other NTDP kids who went ahead of him. He could become a smart, two-way defender at the next level but Truscott has always been a victim of a skillset that lacks a dynamic quality. I wondered in my final ranking (where he was 77th) if he could fall a little further than he should because nothing about his game pops. And he did.

Jackson Kunz's late birthday and wrist shot were enough to warrant late-round consideration but the fourth round felt a little high. You won't be hearing much about Dmitri Zlodeyev and Viktor Persson after today (though Persson has some skill for his size and he's a righty, so maybe that carries him forward).

Losers

Ottawa Senators

A year ago, the Senators picked Shane Pinto (then my 50th-ranked prospect) with their first pick of the second round. This year, they selected Roby Jarventie (my No. 55-ranked prospect) at 33. Both are big, versatile forward prospects who can create in a variety of ways, whose only real question mark is their pace of play. Both project as middle-six, complementary pieces with mid-level offensive ceilings and potential PP2 upside. Both are efficient and useful without having a star quality tool that defines them. Jarventie's off to a good start in Liiga this season, too, and if his post-draft season is anything like Pinto's, he'll work his way up my board in retrospect.

I think they'll likely regret spending assets to move up for a player like Tyler Kleven, though. Word out of UND is that Kleven has impressed the entire staff there in practices sessions, so that's the good news. The bad news is that he was only an honourable mention for my top-100 prospect ranking, the Senators are clearly relying (a little too much in my view) on their ties with UND, and his offensive tools are lacking. Kleven's a fine skater when he gets moving, a capable penalty killer, and really strong along the boards. But I worry about his pace of play at the pro level and he struggles to turn back on chipped pucks through his pivots.

Though Egor Sokolov didn't make my final list (he was an honourable mention), I strongly considered him for the 70-100 range. He's a unicorn in this draft class, who is heavier on the puck than any other player and has shown a real knack for scoring from tough angles, especially for a player his size. The big question? Can he keep up. He has worked to improve his stop speed but those boots are heavy. His skating will determine whether he fits in.

I really didn't like the Senators' decisions in Rounds 3-7 and when the day was done, most of their picks just felt like a bit of a stretch. And though Leevi Merilainen is a fine goalie prospect (with a late birthday), he's on the smaller side and he just doesn't have the kind of track record to merit a third-round pick. They could've got him later.

Columbus Blue Jackets

After a weird Round 1 selection, the Blue Jackets kind of picked up where they left off on Day 2. Their task was always going to be a little harder than most because they didn't have a second-round pick. Samuel Knazko, who they selected with their third-round choice acquired alongside Max Domi, bounced in and out of my board all year before ultimately landing in my honourable mentions. He was an effective two-way defender in Finland's top junior league last season and has begun this season as a borderline-dominant one, but he has struggled in best-on-best events to look like the top player that Slovakia need him to be. If he makes it, it'll be as a smart two-way type on a third pairing. I think that should've made him more of a late-round pick.

Big Mississauga Steelheads defenceman Ole Bjørgvik Holm (who is now playing pro in Norway!) and overager Samuel Johannesson, who plays a modern game, are both semi-intriguing even though they weren't on my board. All told, though, I think there's a chance the Blue Jackets don't get an NHL player out of their picks this year.

Chicago Blackhawks

After Yaroslav Askarov was off the board, the second goalie picked this year was more contested, with several goalies who could've gone early on Day 2 in Drew Comness, Joel Blomqvist, and Nico Daws. I expected that Daws would be the second goalie taken but I was happy when Comness, my second-ranked goalie (No. 81 on my board) was taken first. He's not a huge goalie, but the track record, technical ability, and athleticism are all there. He swallows up first saves by staying in sound position. I'm looking forward to watching him at BU, where he should get plenty of opportunity to be the starter.

Unfortunately, the rest was underwhelming, though I have time for Wyatt Kaiser and to a lesser extent Isaak Phillips, who are both worthwhile projects and could, in time, give you some potential depth as third-pairing options who can move the puck (Kaiser with his vision, Phillips with his feet and shot).

Washington Capitals

Oskar Magnusson, my 78th-ranked prospect, in the seventh round was a deft selection. Magnusson's a fun carrier who's dangerous one-on-one, works well off of pressure, creates in transition, and has sneaky traffic skill that allows him to get to difficult spots. And while he's on the smaller side and he's going to need some time at the SHL level with Malmo to translate his game and get to those same spots, he's exactly the kind of player I'd target late in the draft and play the long game with.

He's not enough, though, after a great Day 1 with the Hendrix Lapierre pick, to push the Capitals into "good day" territory. Bogdan Trineyev and Bear Hughes are nice stories but they've both got a long way to go to convince me they're legitimate NHL prospects.

Arizona Coyotes

Before I dive into any analysis of the Coyotes' draft, it behooves me to highlight that their first pick of Day 2, Mitchell Miller, was involved in a pretty ugly bullying and assault case in 2016 of a Black classmate with developmental disabilities. It landed him in court and the details are pretty disturbing (see the Toledo Blade's coverage of the trial for more). Before learning more about the case, I considered Miller for my draft boards. After reading on it in more depth, I decided against ranking him.

Carson Bantle, one of my honourable mentions, is talented enough at 6-foot-4 and 200-plus pounds to warrant a late-round pick and the benefit of time to see if he can take a raw game with a ton of puck skill for his size to the next level. He's a lot to handle in front and along the wall but he's got some sneaky skill that's worth trying to tap into.

I don't see anything in their final three picks, and taking Filip Barklund (who isn't more than an interesting skater for me) just ahead of a kid with Connor McClennon's skill could sting sooner rather than later.

New York Islanders



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I don't know whether the Islanders' long wait before picking 90th overall convinced them that they needed to try to be cute but... Alexander Ljungkrantz is a player I've seen play a fair amount and he was never even in serious consideration for my honourable mentions, let alone my top 100. He works hard and his wrist is hard enough to occasionally freeze goalies. But that's about it. He wasn't just a long way away from some of the available players on talent, but I'm confident they could have got him later.

Of the four picks that followed, only winger William Dufour — an honourable mention on my board who has looked great early on in the QMJHL — intrigues me, on the back of a heavy frame and enough skill to attack off the wall to the slot.

St. Louis Blues

Dylan Peterson's a worthwhile project whose tools grade out higher than his production does. I have no issues with that pick.

But none of the five picks that followed were ever in the conversation for my top-100 ranking. The Blues had the most perplexing draft of the weekend for me and if you came here expecting more on their choices, I'm sorry!

Boston Bruins

The Bruins have typically reached relative to my board in recent memory. I argued they did with John Beecher, their first pick a year ago, and I think they did with Mason Lohrei, their first pick this year. Lohrei is a late-blooming overager who became one of the better defenders in the USHL last season. But despite his 6-foot-4, 200-plus pound frame he's not the physical, stay at home type you might expect. He wants to join the rush as a shot threat or as puck transporter. I worry his success, though, was driven by his size and age advantage, rather than by real NHL upside.

The rest didn't impress me either. Trevor Kuntar was one of the better overagers available in the class, may become a useful third liner, and imposes himself on the game attacking you in waves, but I wouldn't have taken him in the top-100.

Mason Langenbrunner is a player I'm not super familiar with but his pick felt like nepotism in action considering his dad works with the Bruins.

And Riley Duran's a fun player to watch but he's a project in the truest sense and it's going to be a long time before we know if he's any good.

The Athletic LOADED: 10.08.2020

The Athletic / LeBrun: Matt Murray to Ottawa, Taylor Hall's suitors and other NHL rumblings

By Pierre LeBrun Oct 7, 2020

The Pittsburgh Penguins began the Matt Murray trade market weeks ago by asking for a first-round pick and why not for a two-time Stanley Cup champion?

But as Friday's free agency approached, they wisely took their best offer.

Because once the free-agent market opens Friday, you've got a deluge of UFA goalie options and Penguins GM Jim Rutherford would have lost more leverage in trade talks on Murray. Not to mention the fact the Penguins wanted a pick in this year's draft, not next year, so they got that with the 52nd overall selection from the Senators (which they used Wednesday to select netminder Joel Blomqvist).

The Sens and Pens had talked about this deal for a few weeks but as one source said a few minutes after it was completed, it ramped up in the hour leading up to the second round of the draft opening Wednesday. That's what deadlines do, they push deals along.

I'm sure Pittsburgh would have preferred Ottawa's 28th pick on Tuesday night, but I'm told Sens GM Pierre Dorion made it clear to the Pens early on it was off-limits.

Carolina and Edmonton were among several other teams that also had conversations with the Penguins over the past 5-6 weeks about Murray, but I personally feel Ottawa was the best fit possible for the 26-year-old

netminder. He joins a team on the rise. It's a perfect place to bounce back and grow again with the young talent around him.

"Matt's really excited about the opportunity in Ottawa," Murray's agent Rob Hooper of Octagon told me Wednesday afternoon. "He thinks they've got a great young team. He also saw the draft picks last night for Ottawa. So he's very excited about the opportunity."

"Hopefully, things will go smoothly in the talks with Pierre (Dorion) and we can focus on the opportunity at hand here for Matt."

Yes, now the interesting part. Signing Murray. He's got arbitration rights, and a one-year deal would walk him right into UFA status next summer. But the real part that scared off teams like Carolina and Edmonton was that Murray potentially could go from \$3.75 million to \$6 million or so in arbitration.

So the pressure will be on now for Dorion to get him signed to a multi-year deal and avoid all that. Given how good the fit is with this young Sens team on the rise, I do think Murray will be open-minded to a deal.

Taylor Hall suitors

The plan for Taylor Hall when the market opens Friday is to do a bunch of Zoom calls with suitors. No travelling for visits. But going through Zoom calls may mean we don't get a decision on his next contract on the opening day of free agency, so keep that in mind.

That could be a by-product of not having a UFA speaking period anymore, that things may drag out.

My understanding is the Nashville Predators are among the clubs that come calling on Hall. They cleared out some cap space Wednesday by trading Nick Bonino and buying out Kyle Turris (!) and Steven Santini.

One reason it would make sense is that Hall would be reunited with his old Devils coach, John Hynes. Hall's Hart Trophy season in 2017-18 was under Hynes and my sense is that they had a good relationship.

Also, count me in for grabbing a bowl of popcorn next season to watch Hall and Matt Duchene playing on a line together.

Having said that, I don't think Nashville will be in a position to simply outbid other suitors. They're only going to have so much room for a Hall contract so this will come down to selling him on fit and the allure of playing in Nashville.

Columbus, as our Blue Jackets guru Aaron Portzline has mentioned recently, is also expected to at least inquire on Hall. The Jackets still have a hole on left-wing after losing Artemi Panerin to free agency a year ago and they've got the cap room to take a run at Hall. It's not been easy to lure free agents to Columbus but the one thing the Jackets may have over other suitors is being able to offer a long-term deal.

I've got a feeling other suitors may try to sell Hall on a shorter-term deal, the idea being he could head back on the market in a few years when the salary cap eventually goes back up.

For example, if a team like Edmonton came calling Friday — and I'm not saying for sure the Oilers will — but it would be the kind of situation where I would foresee a short-term approach in trying to entice Hall.

But I doubt Hall's agent Darren Ferris will be endorsing the short-term approach for his client.

Where do Shattenkirk and Barrie end up?

Underneath the tidal wave of attention Alex Pietrangelo and Torey Krug are getting at the top of the UFA defense market, there are other options drawing attention. I'm especially intrigued by where Kevin Shattenkirk and Tyson Barrie end up.

For starters, there's no question Shattenkirk would like to stay put in Tampa and the Lightning this week expressed to his camp they'd like the same in an ideal world. The salary cap hell the Cup champs are faced with, however, makes it likely that Shattenkirk is headed to market.

And he's in for nice raise over the \$1.75-million show-me salary he took in Tampa last August after being bought out by the Rangers. He responded with a wonderful season which re-established his stock around the league.



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Anaheim showed interest in Shattenkirk last summer after the buy-out and I think the Ducks will circle back to his camp come Friday. I also think the Ducks are going to keep tabs on Barrie, too. The Ducks could use that type of offensive, puck-moving blueliner. Either Shattenkirk or Barrie would fit the bill in Anaheim.

I also think Alberta rivals Edmonton and Calgary will show interest in Barrie. The Flames have both Travis Hamonic and T.J. Brodie from their right side potentially headed to market on Friday (Hamonic for sure, Brodie we'll see), so it makes sense they would inquire on Barrie.

Defense is not a big need for the Oilers but with Oscar Klefbom's long-term injury, I think it opens the door to Edmonton making a pitch to Barrie's camp Friday. And if I were the Oilers, I would try to sell him on a one-year deal with the pitch being: come quarterback a power play with Connor McDavid and Leon Draisaitl on it, rack up the points, and hit the market again in a year with your market and profile re-established after a miserable year in Toronto.

Re-signing Markstrom

The Canucks continue in their efforts to re-sign pending UFA goalie Jacob Markstrom as Friday approaches.

It's going to be the moment of truth for both sides soon enough.

But at least as of Wednesday afternoon the dialogue was still ongoing and both sides were intent on seeing this through, either way.

Rival teams are waiting anxiously to see what happens.

Both Edmonton and Calgary have Markstrom on their radar, sources confirm, which would be a real kick in the pants for Vancouver if indeed either scenario played out.

Mind you the Flames have been active on many goalie fronts so who knows at this point where they end up. They've kept the door open with Cam Talbot's camp as well regarding the possibility of bringing him back.

The Oilers would be intriguing to me because their cap situation doesn't really indicate they'll be able to outbid other teams on the AAV. But maybe they throw term at Markstrom as a way around it.

But again, the door isn't closed with Vancouver at this stage.

Anderson deal makes sense

The Montreal Canadiens often surprise us with trades out of left field that weren't on anyone's radar. GM Marc Bergevin loves that.

But not this one.

As we speculated just the day before the trade was made, Josh Anderson to Montreal made so much sense, especially with Max Domi going the other way as the Jackets were looking for a No. 2 centre.

Sometimes you can't ignore the logic right in front of you. I think this deal has a chance to be really beneficial for both clubs.

But the upside on the power forward is so tantalizing, which is why several teams were in on him, including Calgary. Yes, you worry about his shoulder, which is fully healed now, but if this guy can stay healthy he's an absolute monster out there and I can't think of a team in the NHL that was in more need of that kind of player than the Canadiens. We just saw again in these Stanley Cup playoffs how this type of player can make a difference.

The Habs have had an interest in Anderson for about a year and a half and tried to land him at the trade deadline this past season but Columbus wasn't ready to go down that road just yet.

Now Montreal inherits the same problem, however, that the Jackets had. Which is that Anderson has arbitration rights and can choose to go that route which would walk him right to UFA next summer on a one-year deal. Columbus didn't want to risk that after failing to get him signed before the trade.

The Habs wasted no time, within an hour of the trade they had already reached out to Anderson's agent Darren Ferris to schedule contract talks over the coming week. Montreal will put its best foot forward in trying to get him signed. Anderson said on a media call with Montreal reporters on Wednesday that he would be open-minded to a long-term deal.

Interest in Saad

The Blackhawks have garnered interest on Brandon Saad over the past few weeks which isn't surprising since he's got one more year on his deal and those players are in demand these days. Several teams have checked in with Chicago on him, I hear.

So many contending clubs are worried about their cap situation past next season, so players with one year left on their contracts are appealing for that reason.

For example, I believe Colorado is among the teams that kicked the tires on Saad. That makes total sense. The Avs want to protect themselves against tying their hands cap-wise in a few years but they also know their window to win is now so a player like Saad with one year left would be perfect to help for next season. I've also been told that Boston has shown interest in Saad.

Which doesn't mean the Blackhawks will actually trade Saad. He could very well be part of a Chicago team that I believe will contend for a playoff spot next season.

But I guess it depends on the kind of offers the 'Hawks get on the 27-year-old winger entering the last year of a deal which carries a \$6-million hit.

The Athletic LOADED: 10.08.2020

Sportsnet.ca / Winners and losers from one-of-a-kind 2020 NHL Draft

October 7, 2020, 7:46 PM

One of the old-timey stories I never tire of hearing is how guys like Toronto Maple Leafs legend Darryl Sittler would get drafted eighth overall in the 1970s and not even know about it for hours or days because they were too busy shovelling something at their summer job.

Today, we can see into the living room of prospects on different continents in real time as they test the stitching of their best big-boy suits by jumping up and down and hugging people who are — hopefully — firmly within the family bubble.

It's fair to say the first virtual NHL draft was a success. Day 1 saw some risers and fallers churn the mix a little bit, while the trade market was slightly more active on Day 2. So, with "love this pick!" having been declared for the final time in 2020, let's examine the fallout from one of the league's signature events.

Winners

New York Rangers: If you combine the past two regular seasons, seven teams had a worse points percentage than the Rangers. But, thanks to some serious lottery luck, the Blueshirts added Kaapo Kakko second overall in 2019 and, of course, Alexis Lafreniere to kick off the 2020 draft. Start spreading the news...

Ottawa Senators: Ottawa picked three times in Tuesday's first round. Overall, the Sens added a player they believe can be a top centre (Tim Stuetzle, third overall), a six-foot-two defenceman (Jake Sanderson, fifth overall) and a 26-year-old goalie with two Stanley Cups on his resume in Matt Murray thanks to a low-risk deal with Pittsburgh. Add that to the mountain of quality young players and prospects that have already landed in Ottawa and you can begin dreaming big.

Teams that start with 'W': Cole Perfetti was routinely placed inside the top 5 picks in the mock drafts circulating before the real thing, yet there was the smart, creative centre just waiting to be nabbed by the giddy Winnipeg Jets at No. 10. Hendrix Lapierre — with a questionable injury history he believes is now sorted — was identified as the wild card of Round 1 and the Washington Capitals played a strong hand, moving up two spots to snag him. There must have been a lot of mask-covered smiles in both of those camps.

Quinton Byfield: Most significantly, Byfield became the highest-selected black player in NHL draft history when he went No. 2 overall to the Los Angeles Kings. He also crushed it on the fashion side of things with a white jacket and bowtie. Also, it looks like he'll be starting his professional career in California. Not a bad night for the guy who — as



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we learned on the broadcast — sent a hand-written thank you card to the Sudbury Wolves when they drafted him into the OHL.

The Germans For the first time ever, two Germans (Stuetzle and Chicago's Lukas Reichel) were taken in the first round. A third, John-Jason Peterka, was taken early in the second round by Buffalo. Leon Draisaitl's options for off-season pick-up games are getting really good.

Everyone watching Round 1: Alex Trebek making a guest appearance to announce Ottawa's first selection was amazing. Crystal Hawerchuk — wife of the recently deceased Dale Hawerchuk — calling Perfetti's name for the Jets was downright touching, as was seeing ecstatic kids celebrate their dreams come true. Usually you get a few stiff family celebrations when people are maintaining some kind of proper public decorum. Put those same people on their own couch and suddenly they shriek and jump like the Stanley Cup-winning goal they've long fantasized about actually just happened. Watching Ozzy Wiesblatt and his crew go crazy after he closed out the night as the 31st pick was something else.

And just to do a little back-patting, the Sportsnet crew was on fire. The best moment had to be when everyone — from prospect guru Sam Cosentino, to Brian Burke to newcomer Mike Futa — all collectively shrugged and said "I got nothing" when Columbus went way off the board with Yegor Chinakhov at No. 21. That or 'Sammy Coz' saying on Day 2 that new Carolina Hurricane Vasily Ponomaryov was, "built like a small beer fridge." Apparently that's a good thing, by the way.

Losers

The concept of brevity: If you think baseball has a pace problem, you haven't met Rounds 2-7 of the 2020 draft. Wow, was that a grind. I have attended one draft in my career and the speed with which things happened on Day 2 left my keyboard smoking. You could have run the Daytona 500 in the time it took to complete Rounds 2 and 3 alone. Talk about footspeed questions.

Arizona Coyotes: Punished for their bad behaviour under former GM John Chayka, the Yotes were dinged their 2020 second-rounder and 2021 first for violating combine testing regulations. Arizona, which had moved its 2020 first-rounder in the Taylor Hall deal, didn't make a selection until taking Mitchell Miller No. 111. (No pressure, Mitch!) Surely new GM Bill Armstrong was hoping to complete a deal or two that would have allowed him to move into the derby earlier and start putting his stamp on the organization.

Monster Trade Lovers: Speaking of the Coyotes, Oliver Ekman-Larsson isn't a Boston Bruin or Vancouver Canuck yet and Patrik Laine — the other star player said to be on the move — continues to be a Winnipeg Jet. That could all change very quickly, but usually we get a couple spicy swaps while we watch the next generation of NHLers get selected. Though we got some second-tier trades, there was nothing truly jaw-dropping to freak out about.

Detroit Red Wings: This is no reflection of the Red Wings' decisions. Count me as one of the people who believe we have to find a way to get teams that find themselves in awful situations a path to the top of the draft board. Conspicuous tanking — the kind that makes leagues worry about optics and the integrity of games — is never going to be a thing like it was when the New Jersey Devils and Pittsburgh Penguins were being as putrid as possible in pursuit of Mario Lemieux. And even if it was, I agree with the adage you're either selling wins or hope. Detroit had the worst points percentage if you combine the past two regular seasons, yet, between 2019 and 2020, there were eight players they never had a chance to draft. Let's at least amend this thing to prevent teams — like the Rangers — from making big jumps into the top three in consecutive years.

Sportsnet.ca / Three UFAs NHL teams should be wary of paying too much for

October 7, 2020, 3:44 PM

Unrestricted Free Agency is the most dangerous day on the calendar for NHL general managers. Between the competition of the market and players generally coming down from their peaks by the time free agency hits, many mistakes are made.

Sometimes the mistakes are justifiable. A team will overpay for a player who many teams are pursuing, that player has a track record of good play, and there aren't many signs of precipitous decline. Sure, it may have been an overpay from the start, but one that would be worthwhile to get the player. Then the player breaks down completely out of seemingly nowhere, and the team is on the hook. Just ask the Vancouver Canucks about Loui Eriksson.

Those will always happen and it's one of the risks inherent in the game. However, there are players who should come with big warning signs hanging off of them, and smart teams will always be wary of how those players are approached, if they're approached at all.

Who are the players buyers must beware of in 2020?

JACK JOHNSON

At this point it almost seems like bullying. The hockey analytics community has been talking about Johnson being a negative impact player for about a decade, maybe even longer, but apparently some hockey people still haven't got the memo.

Up until he was bought out by the Penguins, GM Jim Rutherford was still openly going to bat for Johnson, which would make sense given the context that a GM should defend his players, but he was throwing other players under the bus to cover for him, which was odd to see.

Johnson likely took a bit too much blame for the Penguins being upset by the Montreal Canadiens in the qualifying round this season, but as he's back on the market now, there's little doubt that some team looking for depth on defence will still value his draft pedigree, and long NHL career. They'd better be very careful not to overvalue it.

For most of his career, Johnson has been lambasted for poor shot share numbers, with his teams doing better in shot attempt differentials when he's off the ice every year of his career. But the counter was always that when you look at the higher quality plays, Johnson shows much better.

Except, since that information began to be tracked accurately a few years ago, the exact opposite is true. As bad as Johnson is at controlling shot share overall — about six per cent worse than his teams usually play — things get way worse when you look at the details.

Last season the Penguins were nearly 10 per cent worse in inner slot shot differential with Johnson on the ice, and nearly 12 per cent worse in slot passes. Despite playing the fifth-most minutes per game at even strength among regular Penguins defencemen, Johnson was on the ice for 36.4 per cent of the slot passes the Penguins allowed last season, and 38.3 per cent of the inner slot shots.

He wasn't given top-end matchup duties or anything, he was just a defensive disaster. It's hard to imagine a need for any team that Johnson fills at this point outside of veteran depth if he's a very good teammate.

ALEX GALCHENYUK

There was a time not too long ago that I truly believed Alex Galchenyuk could have been a very good player in the NHL, but injuries, broken confidence, and musical chairs of linemates have seemingly made teams push him into big time question mark territory.

That isn't to take responsibility away from Galchenyuk. He played his part in going from a rookie who scored at one of the highest rates for an 18/19-year-old in recent memory to clinging with one hand to still being in the league.

There was a bit of a resurgence when he joined the Minnesota Wild last season, as they're a team with the defensive structure to insulate him. But Galchenyuk's poor defensive play was among the worst in the league and it hasn't improved after multiple stops in different cities. And the offence that he brings to the table that used to make his defensive risks worth taking on has seemingly fallen off.

Galchenyuk's even strength offence has been on a decline compared to the league average for years now, with his peak being the one season he spent as a centre with the Montreal Canadiens, when he put up elite level offence at even strength on a team that desperately needed it, but was undone all season by injuries, especially the ones that took out Carey Price for all but 12 games.

In the following seasons, even with his even strength offence falling off, you could still bank on Galchenyuk's one-timer on the power play being a



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deadly weapon for teams to have to deal with, but that disappeared for him last year as well.

For the first time in his career, Galchenyuk was generating less offence at even strength than a league average forward, and his bread and butter placement on the power play was taken away from him.

Still just 26 years old, the talent isn't suddenly gone for Galchenyuk, but he's going to need to work a lot harder to get his game back. For a former 30-goal scorer, it may be a tough pill to swallow to not be able to get term or a high dollar amount in what should be the prime of your career, but anything over a one-year deal to show some improvement looks like a gigantic risk for teams looking to add some skill.

His defensive limitations are likely to keep him away from playing centre, yet it's at centre where he does his best work. It's an unfortunate situation that is almost mirrored by Max Domi, who he was traded for in 2018 and who was also just shipped out of Montreal this off-season after one successful season at centre, and an underwhelming follow up splitting time on the wing. Time is a flat circle.

BRADEN HOLTBY

A model of consistency for years, the past few have been pretty rough to Braden Holtby.

At 31 years old, it's around the time that a lot of players start to break down in their careers, though we have seen good goaltenders time and again resurrect themselves; just look at Pekka Rinne's Vezina Trophy win at 35 years old. However, that doesn't mean we should expect it to be the norm.

Holtby posted a relatively disastrous .895 save percentage this past season with the Washington Capitals in 36 games, seemingly losing his grip on the net before getting the nod for the Capitals' extremely underwhelming playoff performance where they were dusted unceremoniously by the New York Islanders.

Holtby was better in the playoffs, but not by much, and he's now gone three straight seasons where he was about average or significantly worse behind a pretty good team in Washington.

The drop in performance seemed sudden from the perennially .920 or above goalie, but it was preceded by a year where Holtby was struggling on inner slot shots and feasting on the lesser chances to boost his numbers back in 2016-17.

I don't think it's a guarantee that Holtby will struggle next season, and throwing in the towel on his career is way too premature, but with his pedigree as a Stanley Cup winner, Vezina Trophy winner, Jennings Trophy winner, and All-Star... Does anyone believe he's looking to be a bargain signing next season?

The cap is tight for everyone right now, but Holtby could be looking down the barrel at his last opportunity for a big contract, and he has to try to get it. Whoever signs it, though, could be making a very expensive mistake.

USA TODAY / Falling TV ratings across most sports? Here are four reasons to explain drop during pandemic

Dan Wolken

When we were smack in the middle of the barren sports landscape of April and May, it seemed natural to assume that the hunger to watch big events would build to a crescendo when they finally came back. With no options other than classic games or documentaries, the only salvation was the promise of a fall cornucopia to give us our sports fix and then some.

But the idea that sports coming back would automatically bring fans to their televisions in huge numbers has turned out to be inaccurate. In fact, it would be completely fair to say that the viewership for sports has been a bit disappointing.

There are lots of theories about why that has been the case. But the one that makes the most sense?

It turns out, there might be too much sports to watch. And when you combine that with the lifestyle changes so many people have made during the COVID-19 pandemic, there is both an explanation for the drop in numbers and somewhat of a long-term warning for sports.

"Everyone is excited in the spring like, 'Oh we'll have this incredible fall with so much sports to watch,'" said Austin Karp, the managing editor/digital at Sports Business Journal who closely tracks ratings and the sports television industry. "But the problem is there is that tonnage. That's why we spread this out over the course of the year. People are inundated with, 'OK, I have football, do I really need to watch the NBA Finals? My mind is trained to watch that in June.'"

NOT-SO QUICK DRAW: Meet the artist who completed Michael Jordan 'Taking Flight' pencil drawing in 250 hours

The average fan should not care how many people are watching a particular game or sport. If you enjoy it, you should watch it. Generally speaking, television ratings are a niche topic that only matter inside the industry, and yet the coverage they receive in the news media often leads people to seize on them to further a particular narrative.

The most prominent example of that, of course, began in 2016 when right-wing political commentators tried to correlate Colin Kaepernick's protest of police brutality and racial inequality during the national anthem with a drop in NFL ratings as a way to validate their criticism of him personally.

The same pattern has been repeated during the NBA's restart with players highlighting social justice messages and the league's embrace of the Black Lives Matter movement. Indeed, ratings for the bubble have been lackluster overall and viewership of the Finals thus far has been historically poor, with Game 1 registering 7.4 million viewers (lowest on record) and sinking to 5.9 million for Game 3.

But the theory that fans are turned off by "wokeness" doesn't hold up when you consider the following:

Ratings for the Stanley Cup Finals were down 61% from last year, averaging 2.1 million viewers.

The final round of the U.S. Open golf tournament had 3.2 million viewers, by far the fewest going back more than 30 years.

The U.S. Open tennis tournament viewership fell sharply on ESPN, down 45% from the year before. The French Open is down 57% so far on NBC.

The Kentucky Derby, which normally gets around 15 million viewers, only had 9.3 million at its rescheduled slot in September.

Even the NFL, which has had some bright spots in the ratings thus far and seems to be holding steady, has had trouble getting viewers in certain windows like Thursday night, which has recorded consecutive lows for prime-time games.

In other words, the pattern is clear. And it should lead us to examine what's really going on.

There are four factors contributing to that.

There's a certain level of cannibalization on the calendar. As an example, Monday's Game 1 of the Rays-Yankees AL Division Series had 2.3 million viewers on TBS, which was one-third less than a similar time slot on TBS last year. Also a year ago, the baseball game was going up against a "Monday Night Football" broadcast, but this week's Rays-Yankees matchup was competing against two NFL games because one had been moved from Sunday due to a COVID-19 outbreak

It's not part of our natural cycle to be watching sports on weekday afternoons or NBA Finals games in October or Triple Crown races on a college football Saturday. "We get used to watching certain things or having particular sports be part of our lives at certain times of the year," said Dennis Deninger, a former ESPN production executive, who is now a professor in sports communications at Syracuse University's Falk College of Sport and Human Dynamics. "If you move sports from their natural positions to places that they're unfamiliar, they're competing with sports that are traditionally seen in those time periods and everyone suffers a little bit."



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Lack of fans in the stands is a psychological cue that these games don't mean as much. "The crowd going crazy is part of the allure of watching sports on TV," Karp said. "Crowd goes wild is an expression for a reason."

There's a presidential election going on in a highly charged political climate, which echoes some of the data Karp saw from 2016 when some news and commentary shows were up 30%. "Viewership in cable news networks is up significantly, and right now, especially once the president got COVID, that's all anyone was watching," Karp said. "It affected college football numbers (last weekend). It affected everything."

But there's also an existential question that nobody really knows the answer to. Has the pandemic changed people's behaviors and habits in a way that will be difficult for sports to recover from when life goes back to normal?

For millions of Americans, the routine of going to work, coming home, eating dinner and settling in on the couch to watch a game has not been part of their lives for seven months. They've been working from home, schooling their children at home, developing new hobbies to occupy their down time and watching television when it fits their schedule.

"This familiar, linear nature of our lives has been interrupted," Deninger said. "In the first six months of 2020, Netflix added 5.2 million new homes subscribing in the United States and brought their total to almost 73 million. They don't have any sports. Regardless of how your schedule has been upended, you can watch what you want when you want and escape into fiction."

The number of so-called cord cutters getting larger is not a new story – and many of those viewers can stream live sports – but it's one that has certainly been magnified by the pandemic. Whether those people and others come back to watching sports once this is all over is difficult to project, but it will have major implications on rights negotiations in the future, which directly impacts league revenues and player salaries.

In that sense, Karp said the industry is viewing 2020 as a one-off and that the ratings for anything should not be compared to 2019. Likewise, 2021 should not be compared to 2020. In the end, the demand for live sports is still going to win out, even if some people have shifted to Tiger King for the time being.

"I'm almost giving a pass to everything going on right now," he said. "I think people that are helping negotiate those deals are smart enough to know we just need to get games on TV right now and ratings be damned."

"When rights deals come up, the NFL and NBA are still going to get an increase. When you look at the top 100 programs, it's all football, Olympics, World Series games, the Derby. There's no 'Big Bang Theory' anymore that is going to crack that. 'Cheers' isn't coming back. Those are shifted to Netflix or Amazon or one of the 10,000 things launching now."

USA TODAY LOADED: 10.08.2020

USA TODAY / Ranking top 25 NHL free agents for 2020 offseason: Anyone need a goalie?

Jimmy Hascup Mike Brehm

The usual July 1 opening of NHL free agency has turned to Oct. 9 due to the delay caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

Eleven days after the Tampa Bay Lightning won the Stanley Cup in the Edmonton, Alberta, bubble and two days after the conclusion of the NHL draft, general managers are hard at work again at improving their teams.

This offseason's crop of free agents is a top-heavy one, including a No. 1 defenseman and several front-line wingers, mixed in with puck-moving defenseman and the standard depth forwards and defenseman. The major difference this year, though, is the number of goalies available. It will also be interesting to see how the pandemic affects prices given to these top free agents, with teams facing financial hardships and the ETA on next season's start and fans in the stands being unclear.

Here's a look at the list:

1. Alex Pietrangolo, defenseman, St. Louis Blues: The only negative with signing Pietrangolo is that he is 31, meaning his best seasons are likely in the past and the contract might not age well. Other than that, Pietrangolo fills all of the boxes: He's been the captain of a Stanley Cup winner and he's a right-shot defenseman with size and plays in all situations. He had 16 goals and 52 points last season.

2. Taylor Hall, forward, Arizona Coyotes: A former No. 1 overall pick, he won the Hart Trophy in 2017-18 with a 93-point season. He hasn't been able to match that, but his scoring ability will be coveted. Injuries have been a problem.

NHL DRAFT 2020: First-round picks, scouting reports of the players selected

RECAP: Updates, analysis of news, rumors from Day 1 (first round)

3. Mike Hoffman, forward, Florida Panthers: Hall will likely command the longer, larger contract as he is two years younger, but Hoffman is an acceptable 1B. His 29 goals and 59 points last year are tops among pending unrestricted free agents. Hoffman can be a high-end, first-line contributor.

4. Torey Krug, defenseman, Boston Bruins: He has exciting offensive skills and can quarterback a power play and bring the puck up ice. He also keeps opponents honest with the occasional big hit.

5. Tyson Barrie, defenseman, Toronto Maple Leafs: He has had three 50-point seasons and is strong on the power play. His production dropped off after the Avalanche dealt him to the Maple Leafs. He's prone to giveaways.

6. Evgenii Dadonov, forward, Florida Panthers: Since Dadonov entered the NHL as a full-time player at 28, he has notched 81 goals and 182 points in 225 games. Now 31 and one of the premier offensive players on the market, he will command a heftier contract than the three-year, \$12 million deal that just expired.

7. Sami Vatanen, defenseman, Carolina Hurricanes: Vatanen is 29, shoots right and does a lot of things acceptably, even if he's not a star. He has logged more than 21 minutes per game over his career. Even if he fits in a second-pair role, he will likely be popular.

8. Jacob Markstrom, goalie, Vancouver Canucks: Coming off his best season, he helped the Canucks end their postseason drought. He was strong in knocking off the defending champion St. Louis Blues in the first round, but Thatcher Demko appears ready to assume the lead role.

9. TJ Brodie, defenseman, Calgary Flames: Brodie doesn't offer a lot of offensive upside (34 points in 2018-19 and 19 points last season), but he is a steady, veteran presence who could fit in on a second pairing. While he shoots left, he has experience on the right side and can log heavy minutes.

10. Braden Holtby, goalie, Washington Capitals: If Holtby were a free agent a few years ago and had his current credentials as a Stanley Cup winner and Vezina winner, he would get paid. But with an abundance of goalies on the market and Holtby's play slipping — .907, .911, .897 save percentages over the past three years — he is not a lock to ink a huge long-term deal nor have a starting spot assured.

11. Anton Khudobin, goalie, Dallas Stars: The career backup thrived in a starting role when Ben Bishop was hurt during the playoffs, leading the Stars to the Stanley Cup Final. He had a .950 save percentage in the conference final against the Golden Knights.

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12. Tyler Toffoli, forward, Vancouver Canucks: Toffoli is a bit of a hard read. He has flashed potential with 31 goals and 58 points in 2015-16, though he has never been able to replicate that production. He seemed to find chemistry with the Canucks after being acquired at the deadline, when he put up six goals and 10 points in 10 regular-season games. Even as a middle-six option, the 28-year-old should be an asset as he typically influences puck possession in a positive way.



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13. Kevin Shattenkirk, defenseman, Tampa Bay Lightning: It wasn't long ago when Shattenkirk was considered one of the best offensive blueliners. Now, at 31, he still provides offense, but he has lost speed and should not be relied on as a focal point of an offense. He can still help a power play, and is coming off a postseason in which he tallied 13 points in 25 games.

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14. Mikael Granlund, forward, Nashville Predators: The trade to the Predators didn't work for him, but he did have back-to-back 60-point seasons with the Wild. A team could be willing to take a chance that he regains that touch.

15. Alex Galchenyuk, Minnesota Wild: He is here because of his age and not because he has fulfilled his promise as a former third overall pick. Galchenyuk had 24 points in 59 games last season, but he won't turn 27 until February and has a 30-goal season on his resume. Some team still will bet on his upside.

16. Erik Gustafsson, defenseman, Calgary Flames: The offensive potential is there. He scored 60 points two seasons ago. His defensive game can be an issue.

17. Pat Maroon, forward, Tampa Bay Lightning: He provides grit and leadership and he just completed the rare feat of winning back-to-back Stanley Cups with different teams (St. Louis and Tampa Bay).

18. Christopher Tanev, defenseman, Vancouver Canucks: He doesn't put up a lot of points (his 20 points last season tied his career high), but he is solid on the defensive side. He kills penalties and blocks shots.

19. Erik Haula, forward, Florida Panthers: He had 55 points with the Vegas Golden Knights in their inaugural season but was traded to the Carolina Hurricanes and Panthers in the past year.

20. Craig Smith, forward, Nashville Predators: Smith is not a high-upside option, but he is reliable and has played in 52 playoff games in his career. He has five 20-plus goal seasons and should be in line for 40 points.

21. Henrik Lundqvist, goalie, New York Rangers: After being bought out by the Rangers, the surefire Hall of Famer will only be looking for a short-term deal on a bargain contract. At 38, Lundqvist is not at his peak and can't carry the bulk of starts, but should be able to find a job as teams rely more on timeshares in net.

22. Anthony Duclair, forward, Ottawa Senators: The speedy winger had a career-best 23 goals last season and was named to the All-Star Game. But he had only two goals after Christmas. Duclair had arbitration rights, and the Senators chose not to give him a qualifying offer.

23. Conor Sheary, forward, Pittsburgh Penguins: He has been a regular on Pittsburgh star Sidney Crosby's line. His production dropped when he was traded to the Sabres, but the Penguins brought him back around the trade deadline.

24. Corey Crawford, goalie, Chicago Blackhawks: Blackhawks GM Stan Bowman said he was "optimistic" the team would keep Crawford, who has been with Chicago since being drafted in 2003. Crawford posted a .917 save percentage last season.

25. Bobby Ryan, forward, Ottawa Senators: The Masterton Trophy winner was bought out by the Senators. He got treatment for alcohol addiction and scored a hat trick in his first home game back. He had eight points in 24 games. The Flyers would be an ideal choice for the South Jersey native.