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this season

Columbus Dispatch / Rewind: Columbus Blue Jackets fall to L.A. Kings, fourth straight loss

By Brian Hedger- November 10, 2024

The Blue Jackets dropped their fourth straight game in a 5-2 loss to the Los Angeles Kings on Saturday night at Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles.

It's also their second loss in a row to start a four-game West Coast road trip that has games left Sunday against the Anaheim Ducks (8 p.m.) and Tuesday night in Seattle.

Here's a blog roll with updates and analysis from before and during the game:

FINAL: Los Angeles Kings 5, Columbus Blue Jackets 2

Despite getting off to a good start and scoring the game's first goal, the Blue Jackets lost their 1-0 lead early in the second and never pulled even again while losing their fourth straight game (0-3-1).

Elvis Merzlikins takes the goaltending loss for Columbus, which got its goals from Dmitri Voronkov and Ivan Provorov. David Rittich gets the win in net for the Kings, whose goals were scored by Vladislav Gavrikov, Warren Foegele, Trevor Lewis, Alex Laferriere and Clarke.

"I'm not saying we gave goals (away), because they took advantage of some stuff, but the first goal we turn it over, the second goal we make a huge (defensive) mistake and the third goal we turn it over," Blue Jackets coach Dean Evason said during the FanDuel Sports Network postgame show. "That's three goals, and when we've got a 1-0 lead, in key areas of the ice we have to make the right reads or clearly not turn the puck over in key areas of the ice, in order to (not) give teams momentum to come back after us ... and we did that here tonight."

GOAL, 3rd 19:30 (PP): Los Angeles Kings 5, Columbus Blue Jackets 2

Brandt Clarke seals it for the Kings with a power-play goal scored into an empty net from the high slot. Disappointing finish for the Blue Jackets, who had a 1-0 lead to start this game.

3rd period, 15:07: Los Angeles Kings 4, Columbus Blue Jackets 2

The Kings are putting on a clinic in how to protect late leads, completely stifling the Blue Jackets' offense with great stick checks and swarming to the puck in all three zones. They've also closed off the middle third of the ice in their own zone and neutral zone for the last five minutes.

GOAL, 3rd period 7:05: Los Angeles Kings 4, Columbus Blue Jackets 2

The Kings regain a two-goal margin on a deflection goal by Alex Laferriere, who just got his stick on a shot from the point by defenseman Joel Edmundson. It's going to be a real uphill slog for the Blue Jackets now, trailing 4-2 against a big, heavy, defensive team that can make life difficult in the middle of the ice.

The goal is Laferriere's team-leading ninth of the season.

GOAL, 3rd period 0:49 (PPG): Los Angeles Kings 3, Columbus Blue Jackets 2

It only takes the Jackets 19 seconds to get the Moore shorty back, pulling back within a goal when Provorov slides down to the low slot to bang away at his own rebound until he nets his first goal of the season. Second assist of the game for Danforth, whose flubbed shot created the initial juicy rebound Provorov sent into the blue paint for his follow-up effort. Fantilli gets the second apple on the power-play goal for the Jackets' second unit.

GOAL, 3rd period 0:30 (SH): Los Angeles Kings 3, Columbus Blue Jackets 1

Not the start the Blue Jackets needed at all. Trevor More hops on a turnover, skates it down and puts a shot from a sharp angle on the left wing past Merzlikins into the far corner for a two-goal lead. Ugly.

3rd period start: Los Angeles Kings 2, Columbus Blue Jackets 1

The puck is back in play out in Los Angeles, where the Blue Jackets get 1:40 of time on a power play to see if they can knot this game up quickly. After scoring six goals in each of their first four wins this season, they've scored just six goals in their past three-plus games.

2nd intermission: Los Angeles Kings 2, Columbus Blue Jackets 1

Just as expected, the Kings charged out of the locker room after the first intermission and popped a couple goals into the Blue Jackets' net quickly to take a one goal lead. Vladislav Gavrikov netted the first one against his friend and former Blue Jackets teammate, Merzlikins, and Warren Foegele — surprisingly a gritty NHL forward and not a classic American folk singer — scored the second.

2nd period, 19:40: Los Angeles Kings 2, Columbus Blue Jackets 1

The Kings now go a man down after Samuel Helenius is sent off with 19.8 seconds left in the second for cross-checking Blue Jackets defenseman Zach Werenski.

The Blue Jackets put two shots on net before time ran out in the period, but Rittich stopped both Werenski and Sean Monahan to keep L.A. ahead by a goal with a period left to play. Columbus has 1:40 of power-play time left starting the second.

2nd period, 15:29: Los Angeles Kings 2, Columbus Blue Jackets 1

Another big penalty kill for the Blue Jackets springs Adam Fantilli from the penalty box after his delay-of-game penalty for putting the puck out of play from the defensive zone. The Kings only put one shot on net during the man-advantage, which made Columbus 3-for-3 killing penalties tonight.

2nd period, 9:06: Los Angeles Kings 2, Columbus Blue Jackets 1

Blue Jackets forward Mathieu Olivier and Kings defenseman Andreas Englund went after a loose puck behind the Kings' net and wound up in a tussle afterward.

It looked like Olivier sensed an opportunity to nix the Kings' momentum to start this second period and offered an invitation Englund couldn't refuse. The scrap didn't amount to much, but Olivier wound up on top at the end. Both serving their time in the box.

2nd period, 7:03: Los Angeles Kings 2, Columbus Blue Jackets 1

Rittich comes up huge with a pad stop to deny Cole Sillinger off a breakaway chance that could've tied it up. Sillinger likes to shoot for the five hole in breakaway scenarios, but Rittich sniffed this one out in time to give the Kings an emotional lift.

GOAL, 2nd period 6:12: Los Angeles Kings 2, Columbus Blue Jackets 1

Warren Foegele puts L.A. up 2-1 off a great pass from Akil Thomas, who scooped the puck off a turnover in the neutral zone and quickly turned it back toward the Blue Jackets' net. Blue Jackets defenseman David Jiricek got caught up ice, giving the Kings an odd-man rush against Merzlikins.

GOAL, 2nd period 4:16: Columbus Blue Jackets 1, Los Angeles Kings 1

Who else would tie this up for the Kings than Vladislav Gavrikov, who was Merzlikins' closest friend during his time with the Blue Jackets. The Kings defenseman wrested one past his buddy over the glove side shoulder and under the crossbar through traffic early in the second.

Gavrikov unleashed his patented "cellphone" goal celebration while Merzlikins let out his frustration with a shout.

2nd period start: Columbus Blue Jackets 1, Los Angeles Kings 0

The puck is down in LaLa land with the Blue Jackets up by a goal in their quest to top the Kings and end a three-game skid.

1st intermission: Columbus Blue Jackets 1, Los Angeles Kings 0

Columbus takes a slim one-goal margin into the locker room for the first break, powered by Merzlikins' six saves and Voronkov's goal late in the period.

As far as shots got, there wasn't a lot of action in the first 20 minutes. That's a good thing for the Blue Jackets, who'd like to keep building on their play in the defensive zone from the OT loss Tuesday in San Jose.

Columbus won the advanced metrics battle in the opening period with 55.6% of the 5-on-5 shot attempts (10-8), 53.9% of the unblocked attempts (7-6), 71.4% of the shots on goal (5-2), 75% of the high-danger chances (3-1) and 69.5% of expected goals (0.61-0.27).

Expect the Kings to come out with a strong push to start the second.

GOAL, 1st period 13:26: Columbus Blue Jackets 1, Los Angeles Kings 0

The Blue Jackets get the scoring started with Dmitri Voronkov's first goal of the season. He scored it just the way coach Dean Evason wants him scoring goals. The hulking power forward crashed down the slot to the net and had a pass from Danforth on the right wing deflect off him into the net.

Beautiful goal for those who appreciate that sort of play, guys like Evason.

1st period, 8:55: Columbus Blue Jackets 0, Los Angeles Kings 0

The Kings get the game's first power play after Blue Jackets forward Mikael Pyhtia is called for hooking nearly nine minutes into the game. Columbus has only allowed one power-play goal in its past four games coming into this one.

Game start: Columbus Blue Jackets 0, Los Angeles Kings 0

It's very early, but both teams have a shot on goal.

Who are the officials for tonight's Blue Jackets-Kings game?

Referees: Carter Sandlak, Peter MacDougall

Linesman: Brandon Gawryletz, Jonathan Deschamps

Blue Jackets' scratches

As expected, James van Riemsdyk and Jordan Harris will watch from the press box tonight, while Kent Johnson is out hurt.

The Kings' scratches are Kyle Burroughs, Caleb Jones and Tanner Jeannot.

Columbus Blue Jackets at Los Angeles Kings: Statistical matchup

According to Natural Stat Trick, the Kings have significant advantages in all key 5-on-5 statistical measures, including attempted shots percentage (CF%), unblocked attempts percentage (FF%), shots on goal percentage (SF%), goals for percentage (GF%), scoring chances for percentage (SCF%), high-danger chances for percentages (HDCF%) and expected goals-for percentage (xGF%).

Columbus Blue Jackets at Los Angeles Kings: Goaltending matchup

Columbus: Elvis Merzlikins gets his second straight start for the Blue Jackets after a tough-luck loss Tuesday in San Jose, where he stopped 25 of 27 shots in a 2-1 overtime loss that was dominated by Columbus in every measure except goals. Prior to allowing all six goals in the Jackets' 6-2 loss to the Winnipeg Jets on Nov. 1, Merzlikins was outstanding in three prior outings, including a 2-0 shutout of the New York Islanders on Oct. 30 at Nationwide Arena. Merzlikins is 2-3-1 in six appearances with a 2.69 goals-against average, .910 save percentage and one shutout.

Los Angeles: David Rittich didn't participate in the Kings' optional morning skate Saturday, which indicates he's their likely starter against the Blue Jackets. Rittich and Darcy Kuemper have split the net almost evenly thus far, with the former carrying a 4-3-0 record with a 2.77 GAA and .884 save percentage into the game. Rittich is 2-2-1 with a 2.65 GAA, .917 save percentage and one shutout in six career games against Columbus, including two losses (0-2-0) in 2022-23 with the Winnipeg Jets in his most recent action against the Blue Jackets.

Columbus Blue Jackets lineup at Los Angeles Kings

Columbus Dispatch / Rewind: Columbus Blue Jackets lose 4-2 to Anaheim Ducks, drop fifth straight

By Brian Hedger- November 11, 2024

The Blue Jackets were swept in another weekend back-to-back, falling 4-2 to the Anaheim Ducks on Sunday night at Honda Center in a game that began about 18 hours after they lost 5-2 to the Los Angeles Kings at Crypto.com Arena.

Columbus hasn't won in five straight games (0-4-1), while Anaheim broke a four-game winless skid.

"It's unacceptable, to be honest," Blue Jackets defenseman Zach Werenski said after leading the game with eight shots and a whopping 18 attempts in his 500th NHL game. "Enough with the moral victories. We've played well enough in a lot of games this year to win, and we ended up losing them. And that's on us. We have to look ourselves in the mirror and find a way to win hockey games."

Here's a scroll with updates, analysis and game preview information:

FINAL: Anaheim Ducks 4, Columbus Blue Jackets 2

The winless skid reaches five straight games for the Jackets, whose inability to finish scoring chances again haunts them in their third straight loss on a four-game road trip that concludes Tuesday in Seattle. Falling 4-2 to the Ducks, the Blue Jackets haven't scored more than two goals in any of their past six games, going 1-4-1 in that stretch.

They finished with a 42-29 edge in shots on goal against the Ducks, converting on only two.

GOAL 3rd period, 18:20: Anaheim Ducks 4, Columbus Blue Jackets 2 (ENG)

Anaheim gets control of the puck, works it to Isac Lundestrom for an uncontested rush at the Jackets' empty net for the insurance goal. Evason pulls Tarasov again, after the ensuing faceoff.

3rd period, 17:47: Anaheim Ducks 3, Columbus Blue Jackets 2

Blue Jackets coach Dean Evason pulls Tarasov from the net for an extra attacker and 6-on-5 advantage.

GOAL 3rd period, 16:57: Anaheim Ducks 3, Columbus Blue Jackets 2

Kirill Marchenko finally zips one past Gibson into the top left corner, pulling the Jackets within a goal for the final three minutes. Moments after play resumed, Mathieu Olivier nearly tied it with a shot that rang hard off the far corner from the right circle. Matter of inches that goes the Ducks way on that one.

GOAL 3rd period, 10:20: Anaheim Ducks 3, Columbus Blue Jackets 1

The Blue Jackets' scoring woes come back to haunt them again, as Leo Carlsson puts one under the crossbar to give the Ducks a two-goal cushion just past the mid-point of the third period. A scramble around the Jackets' net led to this one, as Tarasov makes two saves before Dumoulin sent a quick, short setup to Carlsson in the slot for a snap shot over Tarasov's shoulder.

Due to Fantilli's injury last season and the Ducks holding Carlsson out in Columbus for "rest" purposes as a rookie, this is the first time the second (Carlsson) and third (Fantilli) overall picks of the 2023 NHL draft are facing each other. Carlsson's currently up in the individual matchup and his team's cruising with a 3-1 lead getting late in the third period.

3rd period start: Anaheim Ducks 2, Columbus Blue Jackets 1

The third period is underway at Honda Center with the Blue Jackets still looking for an equalizer. This one has the feeling of "next goal wins."

2nd intermission: Anaheim Ducks 2, Columbus Blue Jackets 1

Another impressive stretch of dominating play for the Blue Jackets results in nothing added to their goal total during the second period. The good news? The Ducks only scored once on LaCombe's goal to break the 1-1 tie early in the second.

After 40 minutes of action, it's all Columbus everywhere but the scoreboard. The Blue Jackets outshot the Ducks 11-7 in the second and have a 24-16 edge in shots for the game. They also owned 5-on-5 in the middle period, finishing with commanding advantages in attempts (24-19, 55.8%), shots on goal (8-7, 53.3%) and scoring chances (9-7, 56.2%). Anaheim, however, created more 5-on-5 high-danger chances (3-1, 75%) and expected goals (0.79-0.64).

2nd period, 12:50: Anaheim Ducks 2, Columbus Blue Jackets 1

The Blue Jackets' top line and top defense pairing contributed to a marathon shift for the Ducks, who were forced into taking a penalty after three players were stuck on the ice for more than three minutes. Zegras off for cross-checking Fantilli, putting the Jackets on the power play needing a goal to tie it back up.

GOAL 2nd period, 4:22: Anaheim Ducks 2, Columbus Blue Jackets 1

Anaheim surges back in front on a defenseman goal scored by Jackson LaCombe, who drifted low into the Columbus zone between the circles to score off a rebound of his partner Radko Gudas' shot from the right point.

Troy Terry, who rung a shot off the right post moments before the goal during the same shift, gets the second assist. The goal is LaCombe's first of the season and third of his NHL career (81 games).

2nd period, 1:16: Columbus Blue Jackets 1, Anaheim Ducks 1

Daniil Tarasov comes up huge for the Blue Jackets to deny the Ducks a goal off a breakaway for Trevor Zegras, whose wrist shot from the right wing circle was soaked up by the Jackets' 6-foot-5 goalie, keeping it tied.

2nd period start: Columbus Blue Jackets 1, Anaheim Ducks 1

The puck is down in Anaheim for the second period, all even at one goal apiece with both teams at full strength. Last night, as it was for much of last season, the second period was an issue for the Blue Jackets. Let's see what they do with this one.

First intermission: Columbus Blue Jackets 1, Anaheim Ducks 1

The Ducks came out strong, controlled the first 10 minutes and took a 1-0 lead with an early goal by Leason after a Blue Jackets turnover off an errant exit pass. The Blue Jackets staved off Anaheim's push, steadily gained momentum in the period's second 10 minutes and tied it, 1-1, on Chinakhov's power-play capper with 3:44 left.

Columbus wound up outshooting Anaheim 13-9 and dominating other metrics, according to Natural Stat Trick. The Blue Jackets finished the first with 5-on-5 edges in attempted shots (21-13, 61.8%), shots on goal (11-5, 68.8%), scoring chances (12-7, 63.2%), high-danger chances (7-4, 63.6%) and expected goals (1.22-0.72).

GOAL 1st period, 16:16: Columbus Blue Jackets 1, Anaheim Ducks 1

The Blue Jackets' power play knots it up, 1-1, when a long one-timer by Yegor Chinakhov from the high slot trickles through the pads on Gibson for his fourth goal of the season and first in nine games. Alex Killorn's slashing penalty against James van Riemsdyk put Columbus on the power play late in the first.

1st period, 10:44: Anaheim Ducks 1, Columbus Blue Jackets 0

Almost a minute past the mid-point of the first and the Blue Jackets nearly tied it on Zach Werenski's attempt off the right post and Ducks defenseman Brian Dumoulin just knocking the rebound away from Fantilli in the blue paint with Gibson far out of position. The Ducks caught a couple breaks there, but they've controlled play for much of the opening period.

GOAL 1st period, 3:13: Anaheim Ducks 1, Columbus Blue Jackets 0

After swarming the Blue Jackets early to no avail, the Ducks get the game's first goal after a Columbus mistake in the defensive zone leads to Brett Leason's goal and a 1-0 lead. An errant pass by Blue Jackets forward James van Riemsdyk led to a turnover, a re-entry into the Columbus zone by the Ducks and eventually Leason's goal off a great pass from rookie Cutter Gauthier from behind the net.

Game start: Columbus Blue Jackets 0, Anaheim Ducks 0

The puck is on the ice at Honda Center, where the Blue Jackets and Ducks are squaring off in a battle of rebuilding teams hoping to take big strides in growth this season.

Columbus Blue Jackets' Zach Werenski, Jack Johnson reach milestones

Zach Werenski will skate in his 500th career NHL game, all for the Blue Jackets, while Jack Johnson logs the 1,200th game of his NHL career. Johnson is playing his second stint with the Blue Jackets.

Columbus Blue Jackets lineup at Anaheim Ducks

The Blue Jackets coaching staff is juggling the forward lines and top two defense pairings while searching for better success offensively. Adam Fantilli is shifting out to left wing on the top line, Cole Sillinger is moving back to center from left wing and Yegor Chinakhov has moved from the top line to the second.

The Jackets' defensive pairs look different, as well. Damon Severson will now shift with Zach Werenski on the first pairing while Ivan Provorov heads to the second unit to skate with Jake Christiansen.

Forward lines

Adam Fantilli — Sean Monahan — Kirill Marchenko

Dmitri Voronkov — Cole Sillinger — Yegor Chinakhov

Mikael Pyhtia — Justin Danforth — Mathieu Olivier

James van Riemsdyk — Sean Kuraly — Zach Aston-Reese

Defense pairings

Zach Werenski — Damon Severson

Jake Christiansen — Ivan Provorov

Jack Johnson — Jordan Harris

Goalies

Daniil Tarasov

Elvis Merzlikins

Scratched: D David Jiricek, F Kevin Labanc

Injured: F Boone Jenner (shoulder surgery), D Erik Gudbranson (shoulder surgery), F Kent Johnson (shoulder) and F Gavin Brindley (fractured finger)

Anaheim Ducks lineup vs Columbus Blue Jackets

Forward lines

Frank Vatrano — Ryan Strome — Troy Terry

Cutter Gauthier — Trevor Zegras — Alex Killorn

Isac Lundestrom — Leo Carlsson — Robby Fabbri

Ross Johnston — Brett Leason — Brock McGinn

Defense pairings

Jackson LaCombe — Olen Zellweger

Urho Vaakanainen — Radko Gudas

Pavel Mintyukov — Brian Dumoulin

Goalies

John Gibson

Lukas Dostal

Scratched: G James Reimer

Injured: D Cam Fowler (upper body), Mason McTavish (undisclosed)

Columbus Blue Jackets at Anaheim Ducks history

All-time record: The Blue Jackets are 31-28-7 with one tie in 66 games against the Ducks, including 15-15-3 with one tie in Anaheim. They're also just 2-4-4 in the past 10 games against the Ducks and 4-5-1 in the past 10 played at Honda Center. Columbus took three of the four available points in two games against Anaheim last season, losing 3-2 in overtime Oct. 24, 2023 at Nationwide Arena and winning 7-4 on Feb. 21 at Honda Center.

Last meeting: The Blue Jackets raced out to a 4-0 lead early in the second period, allowed the Ducks to storm back with four straight goals to send the game into the third tied 4-4 and won it with three goals in the final frame. Sean Kuraly and Zach Werenski each scored two goals for Columbus, while Mason McTavish scored two goals for the Ducks.

2024 matchups: Nov. 10 in Anaheim; Dec. 14 in Columbus

Who are the officials for Columbus Blue Jackets at Anaheim Ducks?

Referee: Mike Sullivan (47)

Referee: Trevor Hanson (14)

Lines official: Brandon Gawryletz (64)

Lines official: Kilian McNamara (93)

Columbus Blue Jackets at Anaheim Ducks betting odds

Game lines and odds from BetMGM as of Saturday, Nov.9

Spread: Blue Jackets (+1.5)

Over/under: 6.5

Moneyline: Blue Jackets +100, Kings -120

Columbus Blue Jackets news

Kings 5, Blue Jackets 2: Takeaways

Rewind: Kings topple Blue Jackets in L.A.

3 takeaways from the Blue Jackets' missed opportunity in San Jose

Rewind: Sharks top Blue Jackets in OT on Wennberg snipe

Blue Jackets notes: coaching staff sends a message

3 takeaways from the Blue Jackets' flop in D.,C.

Capitals jump out early, rout Blue Jackets

3 takeaways from the Blue Jackets' humbling loss to Winnipeg

Columbus Blue Jackets November 2024 schedule, record

Here's a look at the Blue Jackets' schedule for November, along with start times, television, and radio information of upcoming games:

Friday, Nov. 1: Blue Jackets vs Winnipeg Jets (L, 6-2); Takeaways; Photos

Saturday, Nov. 2: Blue Jackets at Capitals (L, 7-2); Takeaways

Tuesday, Nov. 5: Blue Jackets at Sharks (OTL, 2-1); Takeaways

Saturday, Nov. 9: Blue Jackets at Kings (L, 5-2); Takeaways

Sunday, Nov. 10: Blue Jackets at Ducks | 8 p.m. | FanDuel Sports Network Ohio | 97.1 The Fan

Tuesday, Nov. 12: Blue Jackets at Kraken | 10 p.m. | FanDuel Sports Network Ohio | 97.1 The Fan

Friday, Nov. 15: Blue Jackets vs Penguins | 7 p.m. | FanDuel Sports Network Ohio | 93.3 The Bus

Saturday, Nov. 16: Blue Jackets at Canadiens | 7 p.m. | FanDuel Sports Network Ohio | 97.1 The Fan

Monday, Nov. 18: Blue Jackets at Boston Bruins | 7 p.m. | FanDuel Sports Network Ohio | 97.1 The Fan

Thursday, Nov. 21: Blue Jackets vs Lightning | 7 p.m. | FanDuel Sports Network Ohio | 97.1 The Fan

Saturday, Nov. 23: Blue Jackets vs Hurricanes | 7 p.m. | FanDuel Sports Network Ohio | 97.1 The Fan

Wednesday, Nov. 27: Blue Jackets vs Canadiens | 7:30 p.m. | FanDuel Sports Network Ohio | 97.1 The Fan

Friday, Nov. 29: Blue Jackets vs Calgary Flames | 3 p.m. | FanDuel Sports Network Ohio | 93.3 The Bus

November Record: 0-4-0, T-7th place, Metropolitan Division

Columbus Blue Jackets at Anaheim Ducks records

Records: Blue Jackets 5-6-2, 12 points, T-7th place in the Metropolitan Division; Ducks 4-7-2, 10 points, T-7th place in the Pacific Division

How can I watch or listen to Columbus Blue Jackets at Anaheim Ducks?

TV channel: FanDuel Sports Network Ohio

Streaming: ESPN+; FanDuel Sports Network app

Radio: 97.1 The Fan; Blue Jackets website, Blue Jackets app

Columbus Blue Jackets at Anaheim Ducks start time

Date: Sunday, Nov. 10

Time: 8 p.m.

Location: Honda Center (Anaheim, Calif.)

Columbus Dispatch / Columbus Blue Jackets claim defenseman Dante Fabbro from Nashville Predators

By Brian Hedger- November 11, 2024

The Blue Jackets are back to carrying eight NHL defensemen.

The new guy entering the mix is Dante Fabbro, 26, who was claimed off waivers Sunday from the Nashville Predators. Fabbro, a right-handed shot, hasn't recorded a point in six games this season and had -3 plus/minus rating with the Predators — who selected him 17th overall in the 2016 NHL Draft.

"When I was initially told I was getting put on waivers, it was a bit of a tough pill to swallow and kind of bittersweet," Fabbro said. "There's a lot of things going through your mind, from whether I'm going to clear and go to (AHL) Milwaukee or whether there's going to be a trade off the waiver or a team picks me up. It was a bit stressful, to be honest, not knowing my future for those 24 hours, where I'm going, but with Columbus claiming me off waivers, I was excited and a little bit relieved. I can't give the Columbus organization enough for giving me another opportunity to go out and play again."

Fabbro, who makes \$2.5 million in the final year of a contract that will make him an unrestricted free agent next summer, has 315 NHL games under his belt. He gives the Blue Jackets another viable defenseman who can move the puck up the ice from his own end.

"Dante Fabbro is a puck-moving defenseman who can play in all situations, and adds mobility and depth to our backend," Blue Jackets president of hockey operations/general manager Don Waddell said in a statement.

Kent Johnson, an injured forward whom Fabbro sometimes skates with during the summer in Vancouver, was moved to injured reserve while rehabbing a shoulder injury, which cleared the required roster spot. Fabbro will join the Blue Jackets in Seattle, where he'll meet them upon arrival at the team's hotel.

"I'm going to a place where I know a few people and a few players," Fabbro said. "I think it's honestly an amazing situation to have some people I know and to feel, you know, that they wanted me. That feels good as a player."

Fabbro joins a defensive corps that includes Jack Johnson, Jordan Harris and David Jiricek rotating into and out of a third pairing that started out with Erik Gudbranson locked into the right point.

Since Gudbranson went down in the season's third game with a shoulder injury that required surgery, the elder Johnson has taken over the role of providing veteran experience for that pairing. Harris and Jiricek are currently locked into competition for ice time playing with Johnson, and Fabbro now steps into the equation.

Jake Christiansen, who's played every game on the second pairing in his first full season in Columbus, could get lumped into that battle after a recent dip in play during the Jackets' four-game skid they're hoping to end Sunday in Anaheim. How Fabbro fits into the puzzle will be interesting to observe. He provides another puck-moving defender with a similar build as Christiansen and Harris, but his right-handed shot could replace that part of what Gudbranson brought to the right side.

Fabbro is off to a slow start offensively, but 72 career points on 16 goals and 56 assists shows there might be untapped potential inside the opposing blue line. He also has a +6 rating in his career plus 159 penalty minutes while playing in seven seasons for the Predators, who are off to a surprisingly slow 5-9-1 start.

Fabbro was scratched by Nashville in eight games, including the past six in a row.

"Trying to find a way to impact the team positively has been a thing throughout my whole career, whether that's being strong defensively or trying to improve offensively," Fabbro said. "I feel like my puck movement, transition game and breaking pucks out are the best parts of my game, so if I do get in, I want to focus on that and get my base down again. Nothing comes easy, so I'm ready to work for it."

Columbus Dispatch / Columbus Blue Jackets' skid hits four games: 3 takeaways

By Brian Hedger- November 11, 2024

The Blue Jackets' uplifting, refreshing start is history.

After dropping their fourth straight game late Saturday in a 5-2 loss to the Los Angeles Kings at Crypto.com Arena, they've fallen below hockey's .500 mark at 5-6-2 and are showing some of the same flaws that plagued them the past three years.

Costly turnovers. Egregious mistakes. Puck management issues. Flubbed shots. Flubbed passes. Not enough Blue Jackets creating havoc for the opposing goalie. Failures on golden, "Grade A" scoring chances. The issues were extensive, again, but it was also another solid statistical night for the Blue Jackets other than goals.

That's the good news heading into Sunday's finale of a "SoCal" back-to-back in Anaheim.

Here are three takeaways:

Columbus Blue Jackets' Dean Evason facing tough challenge

Reality might be setting in now for new Blue Jackets coach Dean Evason, who has watched this team stumble into a four-game slide much the same ways former coaches Pascal Vincent and Brad Larsen did during extended losing streaks the past two years.

They're not consistently skilled enough to make opposing teams pay for defensive mistakes in nearly the same way that other teams make the Blue Jackets pay for theirs. Columbus generated more scoring chances, but couldn't convert enough in actual goals. The Kings, meanwhile, buried key goals in the second and third periods to put the Blue Jackets behind the proverbial eight ball for most of the game's final 40 minutes.

After scoring six goals in each of their first four wins, the Blue Jackets have scored a total of nine in the past five games to go 1-3-1 in that stretch. That's an average of 1.8 per game that's 2.3 goals per game lower than they averaged by scoring 33 goals in their first eight games.

Not great.

If there's a bright side, it's their secondary numbers in the first two games of a four-game road trip that began with a stinging 2-1 overtime loss Tuesday in San Jose. According to Natural Stat Trick, the Blue Jackets finished with 5-on-5 advantages in multiple stat categories, including scoring chances (18-14), high-danger scoring chances (7-6) and expected goals (1.89-1.27). The problem is they turned the puck over in key spots, leading to two goals, and young defenseman David Jiricek was caught straying far out of position defensively on Warren Foegele's goal in the second to give the Kings a 2-on-1 that resulted in a 2-1 lead.

Some of the mistakes can be attributed to the NHL maturity process, but not all. Evason's vacant stare and assessment of what happened after the game sounded eerily familiar to those who've watched this team since the Jackets qualified for the "Covid" postseason in 2020.

It's a movie that's been playing in Columbus for three or four years now, and there's currently no telling when its box office run will end.

Columbus Blue Jackets' Dmitri Voronkov impresses against Los Angeles Kings

Despite the loss, the Blue Jackets got some great news against the Kings. It was the play of Dmitri Voronkov, a second-year power forward who began the season on injured reserve with a left shoulder injury that happened late in the preseason.

Voronkov scored the game's first goal by charging down the slot, straight to the net, where a puck passed by Justin Danforth on the right wing deflect off him into the net. It was only Voronkov's fourth game back from the injury, which at one point was expected to keep him out until later this month. His previous three games were spent building back into top form, and it appears he's now close to it. Voronkov's performance in L.A. might've earned him additional ice time Sunday night in Anaheim.

Voronkov played 12:24 on 18 shifts as Danforth's left wing on the third line.

"I'm a little disappointed we didn't get him on the ice a little bit more," Evason said. "We thought his game was good. Obviously, he scored, but he was holding onto pucks, he was carrying it through the neutral zone (and) it looked like he was more comfortable. So, we've got to get him on the ice more than we did here tonight."

Columbus Blue Jackets lacking net presence

Voronkov and Ivan Provorov scored the Blue Jackets' goals against the Kings in similar ways. Each went hard to the net, right down the slot, and got rewarded for it.

Voronkov scored off a redirected shot and Provorov put back a rebound of his own shot to cap a power play in the third, cutting it to 3-2 just 49 seconds into the period and 19 seconds after Trevor Moore made it 3-1 for the Kings with a shorthanded tally. Otherwise, Evason wasn't thrilled with how little the Blue Jackets got to the Kings' net to disrupt goalie David Rittich.

That's been a recurring issue for two or three years, as the Jackets settle for too many shots taken from low-danger areas on the perimeter and lean too much on "one-and-done" rushes rather than establishing possession time inside the offensive zone. That's not how Evason prefers to play. According to reports from the Jackets' practice Friday, he placed a heavy emphasis on getting to the opposing net with numbers in that session. They showed some improvement against the Kings, but not enough.

"There was a little bit, but we can still get there, where I think we're still thinking and relying off the rush," Evason said. "Our offensive game, our offensive zone game, is hanging onto pucks and allowing the cycle and our movement to generate more offense than it has the last few games."

The Athletic / Blue Jackets mistakes exacerbated by slumping offense in loss to L.A. Kings

By Aaron Portzline- November 10, 2024

Over the first three weeks of the season, the Columbus Blue Jackets were among the most explosive clubs in the NHL. Given their heavy reliance on young forwards playing prominent roles, the output of goals seemed too good to be true.

Now, in the throes of a four-game losing streak, it appears it was.

The Blue Jackets hung with the Los Angeles Kings for two periods Saturday in Crypto.com Arena, but the game slipped away early in the third period. The Kings pulled away for a 5-2 win before 18,145, extending the Jackets' skid (0-3-1).

After scoring six goals in each of their first four wins of the season, the Blue Jackets have scored only seven goals during their recent dip.

"We gotta get back on track, get a little confidence back," Blue Jackets center Justin Danforth said. "It definitely helps to win games when everybody's scoring. But guys are going to go through times when they're not scoring, and other guys have to step up."

The Blue Jackets got goals from Dmitri Voronkov and Ivan Provorov, and Danforth had two primary assists. After spending Friday's practice driving his players to go harder to the net and look for greasy goals, Blue Jackets coach Dean Evason was not pleased.

"There's a little bit (of improvement), but we can still get there," Evason said. "I think we're still relying too much off the rush.

"Our offensive game, our offensive zone game, our hanging on to pucks and allowing the cycle and our movement to generate more chances ... it's been better this season than it has been in the last few games."

The Blue Jackets were ready to head to California for a lengthy getaway after suffering back-to-back lopsided losses last weekend — 6-2 versus the Winnipeg Jets at Nationwide Arena last Friday, and 7-2 versus the Capitals last Saturday in Washington.

But California has not provided any comfort. The Jackets lost to the lowly San Jose Sharks 2-1 in overtime Tuesday before getting a three-day break to play the Kings.

One of the perils of relying on so many 24-and-under players is the wild inconsistency of performance, including but not limited to their offensive output.

Yegor Chinakhov, who was among the league scoring leaders only a couple of weeks into the season, has no goals and two assists in his last eight games. Kirill Marchenko has one goal in his last six games. Zach Werenski (six games), Cole Sillinger (five) and Adam Fantilli (five) are also mired in scoring slumps.

The way the Blue Jackets handled the puck — and handled the Kings' pressure — there's no way two goals would have been enough to win.

The Jackets trailed 2-1 after two periods, but they started to make a push late in the second period, earning a power play late that carried over for 1 minute, 41 seconds into the third. But the pivotal moment belonged to the Kings, instead.

Only 30 seconds into the period, Sillinger fumbled a puck at the offensive blue line, springing Los Angeles in the other direction. Warren Foegele beat Blue Jackets goaltender Elvis Merzlikins with a slap shot from distance coming through the left circle.

The Jackets responded only 19 seconds later on Provorov's first goal of the season to pull within a goal (3-2), but a wicked deflection by L.A.'s Alex LaFerriere at 7:05 restored the Kings' two-goal lead.

The 5-2 goal was scored on an empty net.

"In key moments of the game, we gave them opportunities," Evason said. "I don't want to say we gave them goals, but they took advantage of some stuff.

"First goal, we turn it over. Second goal, we make a huge mistake. Third goal, we turn it over. That's three goals. In key areas, we have to clearly make the right read and clearly not turn the puck over."

The Blue Jackets play at 8 p.m. ET Sunday in Anaheim before finishing the trip in Seattle on Tuesday.

The Athletic / Blue Jackets show no finishing touch in loss to Anaheim: 'Enough of the moral victories'

By Aaron Portzline- November 11, 2024

Coach Dean Evason, growing impatient with the Columbus Blue Jackets' approach offensively, changed not only his top two forward lines but also his top defensive pair before Sunday's game against the Anaheim Ducks in Honda Center.

Ultimately, it didn't work.

The Blue Jackets' scoring slump lives on, as does their losing skid — now at five games (0-4-1) — following a frustrating 4-2 loss. During the five-game skid, the Blue Jackets have held the lead for only 10 minutes and 50 seconds of 300-plus minutes.

The fact that the Blue Jackets dialed up 42 shots on goal and spent long stretches in the Ducks' zone provided little solace.

"It's unacceptable, to be honest," Blue Jackets defenseman Zach Werenski said. "Enough of the moral victories. We've played well enough in a lot of games this year to win, and we end up losing them and that's on us.

"We have to find a way to win hockey games. I don't care if we outshoot them 50-20 or if we get outshot 50-20, at the end of the day we have to find ways to get points in this league. We have to win hockey games, and we haven't done it."

Yegor Chinakhov, who ended an eight-game goal drought, and Kirill Marchenko scored for the Blue Jackets, while goaltender Daniil Tarasov had 26 saves.

Werenski, playing in his 500th NHL game, had 18 shot attempts — eight shots on goal, six that were blocked, and four that missed the net. He also played a game-high 27:57 and assisted on Chinakhov's first-period goal.

"We had 42 shots on the net ... and some unbelievable looks," Evason said. "We have to stay after it, stay in it, continue doing what we're doing to generate those opportunities. We have to get a couple more dirty looks, or greasier looks, to combine with the good looks that we're getting.

"Goal scoring is funny. It goes in streaks. A few weeks back we couldn't miss, we were finishing, we were getting bounces. Now it's gone the other way a little bit."

Marchy finds the back of the net 📸 @FanaticsBook | #CBJ pic.twitter.com/wRzXQLCVQQ

— Columbus Blue Jackets (@BlueJacketsNHL) November 11, 2024

Evason did some overnight tinkering to the Blue Jackets lineup after a 5-2 loss down the road in Los Angeles on Saturday.

The big change was moving second-line center Adam Fantilli up to left wing on the top line, joining center Sean Monahan and Marchenko, the right winger.

That forced Chinakhov to right wing on the second line, while Cole Sillinger moved back to center and Dmitri Voronkov was moved higher in the lineup to join them. Voronkov's promotion forced winger Mikael Pyyhtiä's demotion to the third line.

Meanwhile, Werenski got a new playing partner on the Blue Jackets' top pair, with Damon Severson moving up from the second pair to replace Ivan Provorov. That dropped Provorov to the second pair on the right side of Jake Christiansen.

It's not that Evason's maneuvers didn't work. The Blue Jackets were too comfortable trying to score off the rush, Evason said after Saturday's loss, and he wanted to see them following pucks to the net and battling for rebounds in the most heavily protected spot on the ice.

They did a better job against Anaheim, but to be fair, the Ducks are neither as talented nor as physically imposing as the Kings. But once again, the Blue Jackets made an opposing goaltender look like a Vezina Trophy candidate.

On Sunday, it was Anaheim's John Gibson, making his season debut following offseason abdominal surgery, who finished with 40 saves.

"Of course, it's frustrating for everybody here," Marchenko said. "The important goal for us is to win. We played well the last three games, but lost all three. Five minutes after the game, you're frustrated. But we have to keep going to the next game. Heads up, look to the future."

With Tarasov off for an extra skater, Marchenko scored his sixth goal of the season with 3:03 remaining to pull the Blue Jackets to within 3-2. But the Ducks iced it with an empty-net goal by Isac Lundestrom with 1:40 remaining to cap the scoring.

The Blue Jackets, who are 1-4-2 on the road so far this season, finish this five-game road trip on Tuesday in Seattle. It's the first of two five-game road trips this season: they open December with games at Chicago, Calgary, Edmonton, Vancouver and Winnipeg.

Tuesday's game against the Kraken should be a desperate affair for Columbus.

"I had a lot of grade-A chances tonight and I didn't score," Werenski said. "It's on everyone. We have to find a way to score goals and win hockey games. If we have to win 2-1, that's fine, too.

"We have to find a way to get into the win column on this trip, and Seattle is our last chance."

[The Athletic / Blue Jackets claim defenseman Dante Fabbro off waivers from Nashville](#)

By Aaron Portzline- November 11, 2024

COLUMBUS, Ohio — The Columbus Blue Jackets have had to juggle their defensive pairs since the start of the season to make up for the lack of right-side defenders, but Sunday's foray onto the NHL's waiver wire may create a better fit.

The Blue Jackets claimed veteran defenseman Dante Fabbro off waivers from the Nashville Predators, adding a first-round pick (No. 17 in 2016) who has dressed in 315 games for the Predators since late in the 2018-19 season.

Fabbro, 26, is flying from Nashville to Seattle on Sunday evening to meet the Blue Jackets on Monday. It's unclear if he'll make his Blue Jackets debut on Tuesday against the Kraken in Climate Pledge Arena.

The Blue Jackets have had to patch together their defense from the start of the season, moving Ivan Provorov from the left side to the right to give them two trustworthy right-side defenders in their top four. Provorov has paired with Zach Werenski on the top pair, while Damon Severson has joined Jake Christiansen on the second pair.

The third pair, meanwhile, has been a revolving door since veteran Erik Gudbranson went down with a shoulder injury last month that required surgery. Jack Johnson, Jordan Harris and David Jiříček have all played, with Johnson playing right or left depending on his partner.

The Blue Jackets aren't likely to carry eight defensemen for too long, so Fabbro's acquisition could portend another roster move. Harris would need to clear waivers to be sent to AHL Cleveland, but Jiříček can go to the minors without waivers.

It's unclear who Fabbro might be paired with when he makes his debut, but he's happy just to be playing.

Wishing you all the best in Columbus, Dante! pic.twitter.com/5Za2NOYl4Z

— Nashville Predators (@PredsNHL) November 10, 2024

The Predators were the NHL's most aggressive club this offseason, but their major moves — signing free agents Steven Stamkos and Jonathan Marchessault, among others — have yet to pay off, and GM Barry Trotz has been warning of a major shake-up.

Nashville has won only five of its first 15 games, including an Oct. 26 win over Columbus. But Fabbro has dressed in only six games, with no goals or points and a minus-3 rating.

"I found myself in an odd-man-out rotation, and more often than not, I was the guy getting called out," Fabbro told The Athletic. "There was definitely some frustration, but when you go through something like this, you reflect on who you are.

"I used that time in practice to work on things I might not have had a chance to work on. I wanted to be as prepared as I possibly could be when I had a chance to come back in the lineup. I didn't get that chance with Nashville, but now I'm excited to be part of the Blue Jackets."

In order to fit Fabbro on the 23-man roster, the Blue Jackets placed winger Kent Johnson (shoulder) on injured reserve. He's expected back before the end of November, though the Blue Jackets have not publicly announced a target return date.

Fabbro signed a one-year, \$2.5 million contract with the Predators last summer. He'll be an unrestricted free agent next summer.

[BlueJackets.com / CBJ players take 'Earned, not given' message to heart](#)

By Garrison McDaniel- November 9, 2024

If you have been to Nationwide Arena for a game this season, then you have likely seen a video that plays before the Blue Jackets take the ice.

Dean Evason, the new head coach for the Blue Jackets, has made it clear what his expectations are from the start of his tenure with the team. In the video, which includes clips from the first team meeting of the preseason, Evason lays out what his vision of what CBJ hockey will look under his leadership.

He wants each individual on the team to understand that they have to earn their spot each on the ice each day. He has gone as far as putting a new motto on the wall in the Blue Jackets' dressing room so the words "THIS IS EARNED ... NOT GIVEN" can be seen for the entirety of the season.

Evason uses those words to make every decision.

"You have to earn the right to get into our lineup," he said. "You do it with a positive attitude. You work your (butt) off every day. You are detailed, you're coachable, and you get yourself ready to play."

His players have listened to the motto and are all using it as motivation to keep moving forward as a team, and are all working to get better every day.

Justin Danforth had a long journey to becoming a full-time NHL player. He played in four different professional leagues before being a rookie for Columbus during the 2021-22 season, in which he was 28 years old.

His story is the epitome of the Blue Jackets' new slogan.

"It's a competitive industry, so you have to earn it every day," Danforth said. "Nobody cares what you did yesterday. It's a new day, so it's a good motto."

As an undrafted player who always seemed to be underestimated, he has always understood the importance of a high work ethic and knows that he has to earn everything.

"I think it's something that has helped me get to this point with hockey," Danforth said. "The competition part is where I excel at. That's what gets me excited."

"I think it's one of those things where when one guy buys in, you have to buy in and there's no choice."

Jake Christiansen also has had a long road to the NHL, although not as long as Danforth's, as he has been in between Columbus and Cleveland for the better part of four years. However, the 25-year-old defenseman seems to have finally stabilized his spot on the NHL roster for good this season, playing in each of the first 12 games.

"I think just from day one, (Evason) has made it known that you're gonna have to earn everything that you get," Christiansen said. "As a team as well, we gotta earn it. I think that it's been great, and just trying to continue to do that every day."

Christiansen said he was feeling excitement as he sat in the team meeting as training camp started and Dean initially set the expectations featured in the opening video.

"It doesn't matter who you are, you could make this team," Christiansen said. "Obviously, that makes a guy like me excited."

It has been the thing each player has pointed to when they have earned their opportunities this season. When David Jiricek was told he would make his season debut on Oct. 19 after a few games as a healthy scratch, the young defenseman physically pointed to the sign in the locker room.

“I think I worked hard for the opportunity right now. This is earned, not given. That's my story right now,” Jiricek said.

[BlueJackets.com / Voronkov, Provorov score in loss to Kings](#)

By Dan Greenspan- November 10, 2024

LOS ANGELES -- Warren Foegele had a goal and an assist for the Los Angeles Kings in a 5-2 win against the Columbus Blue Jackets at Crypto.com Arena on Saturday.

Trevor Moore scored a short-handed goal, and David Rittich made 24 saves for the Kings (9-4-3), who are 4-1-1 on home ice.

"First period, we all thought was so-so, but liked it a lot better in the second, so everyone is happy to come away with two points," defenseman Mikey Anderson said.

Dmitri Voronkov and Ivan Provorov each scored, and Elvis Merzlikins made 18 saves for the Blue Jackets (5-6-2), who have lost four in a row (0-3-1). It was the first game of a back-to-back for Columbus, as they play at the Anaheim Ducks on Sunday.

"Honestly, I think we played a solid game," Blue Jackets forward Justin Danforth said. "But at the end of the day, we want to come out with the win. We got to find a way to win games, that's what playoff teams do, so we got to get back on track."

Columbus went up 1-0 at 13:26 of the first period on Voronkov's first goal of the season in his fourth game. Danforth picked off Kevin Fiala's pass in the neutral zone and found Voronkov driving to the net off the rush.

Fiala was benched for the rest of the first.

"Didn't like the play, and there was a consequence," Kings coach Jim Hiller said.

Vladislav Gavrikov tied it 1-1 at 4:16 of the second period. He scored on a wrist shot from the top of the right circle through traffic.

Los Angeles took a 2-1 lead at 6:12 when Foegele finished off a 3-on-1 rush from the left face-off dot. Samuel Helenius, drafted No. 59 overall in the 2021 NHL Draft, had the secondary assist for his first point in his NHL debut.

"I thought the second was a little more direct," Anderson said. "We played a little more below their goal line, got a few O-zone shifts. I think it was a little cleaner from us, maybe a little simpler, but that's the recipe sometimes."

Moore made it 3-1 30 seconds into the third, chasing down the loose puck after Phillip Danault chipped it ahead before beating Merzlikins with a wrist shot from the left circle. Moore has six points (one goal, five assists) during a five-game point streak.

"I thought [Cole Sillinger] was making like a spin-o-rama, D-to-D pass, and that's kind of green light," Moore said. "That's my guy anyway, so I feel like I can jump that. And then Phil [Danault] made a good play on it, and knocked it down in the neutral zone so I was kind of already on the way there. I didn't feel like I was kind of giving up any defense for that."

Provorov scored a power-play goal to make it 3-2 19 seconds later, finishing the rebound from Danforth's slot shot.

"Right after, we actually had a couple chances to make it 3-3," Provorov said. "Just tough turn of events, but as a team, we have to learn from it and move on."

Alex Laferriere tipped in Joel Edmundson's point shot at 7:05 to make it 4-2.

Brandt Clarke scored into an empty net at 19:29 on the power play for the 5-2 final.

The Kings have scored 27 of their 54 goals this season in the third period.

"If you have a lead, it's easier sometimes to get a little greedy and make plays, but you can catch the other team cheating for offense maybe a little bit more," Anderson said. "But I think it's maybe just the way the game flows sometimes. Sometimes it's early. Right now, it happens to be the third, which is a good problem to have if you're scoring a little bit late."

NOTES: Danault extended his assist streak to five games. He has six points (one goal, five assists) during that span. ... Anze Kopitar and Adrian Kempe each had two assists. ... Danforth had two assists for his second multi-point game of the season.

[BlueJackets.com / Blue Jackets end Cali swing with loss to Ducks](#)

By Dan Arritt- November 11, 2024

ANAHEIM -- John Gibson made 38 saves in his season debut for the Anaheim Ducks, a 4-2 win against the Columbus Blue Jackets at Honda Center on Sunday.

Gibson was unavailable the first 12 games after undergoing an emergency appendectomy on Sept. 25.

"I give credit to the guys," Gibson said of his teammates. "There's guys coming in early (to practice), staying after, shooting on me, helping me get the work to prepare to get back to game speed, so I felt pretty good as the game went on and it was a good team effort."

Brett Leason, Jackson LaCombe, Leo Carlsson and Isac Lundestrom scored for the Ducks (5-7-2), who ended a four-game losing streak (0-3-1).

Yegor Chinakhov and Kirill Marchenko scored, and Daniil Tarasov made 26 saves for the Blue Jackets (5-7-2), who have lost five in a row (0-4-1).

"It's unacceptable," Columbus defenseman Zach Werenski said. "Enough with the moral victories. We've played well enough in a lot of games this year to win and we end up losing them, and that's on us. We have to look ourselves in the mirror and find a way to win hockey games. I don't care if we outshoot them 50-20 or we get outshot 50-20. At the end of the day, we have to find a way to get points in this League and win hockey games and we haven't done it."

The fourth line for the Ducks combined to score the first goal of the game.

Tarasov made a save on a wrist shot from above the right circle by Ross Johnston, but the rebound went to the side of the net, and Cutter Gauthier made a backhanded centering pass to Leason, who swept the puck between the pads of Tarasov for a 1-0 lead at 3:13 of the first period.

Chinakhov tied it 1-1 at 16:16 with a one-timer from above the right circle that squeezed through Gibson's pads.

LaCombe put the Ducks ahead 2-1 at 4:22 of the second, chipping in the rebound of Radko Gudas' one-timer from the point at the top of the crease.

"Guddy' had a great shot and it ended up in front and I just happened to be there," LaCombe said. "I think, for our game, it's just important to stay aggressive."

Carlsson made it 3-1 at 10:20 of the third period on a one-timer from the slot off a short pass from Brian Dumoulin.

Marchenko scored from the slot at 16:57 to cut it to 3-2.

Lundestrom scored an empty-net goal for the 4-2 final with 1:40 remaining.

The Blue Jackets finished with 42 shots on goal, 15 others that missed the net and had 21 blocked.

"Goal-scoring is funny, it goes in streaks," Columbus coach Dean Evason said. "A few weeks back, we couldn't miss and the pucks were finding their way in and we were getting some bounces and good stuff. And now it's gone the other way a little bit, but there's nothing we can do about it now except move forward and keep doing those things to get those opportunities."

NOTES: The Blue Jackets killed both penalties by the Ducks and have not allowed a power-play goal to Anaheim in their past 16 meetings, killing 41 straight penalties. ... Werenski played in his 500th NHL

game, becoming the fourth defenseman in team history to reach the milestone. ... Blue Jackets defenseman Jack Johnson played in his 1,200th NHL game, joining Anze Kopitar, Marc Edouard Vlasic, Andrew Cogliano and Sidney Crosby as the fifth player from the 2005 NHL Draft class to reach the milestone. ... The Blue Jackets claimed defenseman Dante Fabbro on waivers from the Nashville Predators on Sunday. Fabbro will join the Blue Jackets for their next game at the Seattle Kraken on Tuesday. ... The Ducks have won nine of their past 11 against the Blue Jackets (9-2-0). ... Carlsson tallied his third game-winning goal of the season, tied for second in the NHL. ... Leason, who had been a healthy scratch the previous three games, entered the lineup in place of Mason McTavish, who was a game-time decision with an undisclosed injury. ... Ducks defenseman Cam Fowler skated in pre-game warmups, but missed his second straight game with an upper-body injury.

The Hockey Writers / Blue Jackets Suffer Fourth Loss in a Row 5-2 to the Kings

By Mark Scheig- November 9, 2024

The Columbus Blue Jackets were hoping coming off of three days rest would be the catalyst to good things on their California road trip. Saturday night did not go according to their plan.

The Kings got points from 11 different players on route to their 5-2 win over the Blue Jackets. Goaltender David Rittich made some key saves early in the game to allow the Kings to grab the momentum in the second period. They didn't look back.

Game Recap

The Blue Jackets had some jump as expected to start the game thanks to their days off in the Los Angeles area. They were able to parlay that into a lead after the first thanks to Dmitri Voronkov.

Justin Danforth drove the wing and found Voronkov driving the net. The pass was perfect and Voronkov made no mistake. It was his first goal of the season. That on top of killing two Kings' power plays gave them the momentum going into the locker room after 20 minutes.

But as soon as the second period started, the Kings turned up the emotion. Just 4:16 into the second, former Blue Jacket Vladislav Gavrikov tied the game. His shot went off the bar and in through a maze of players. There wasn't much Elvis Merzlikins could do with that.

Then just 1:56 later, another turnover led to Warren Foegele giving the Kings a 2-1 lead. He was the recipient of a great pass from Akil Thomas. The Blue Jackets needed a spark. They turned to a familiar face in order to get some.

Mathieu Olivier dropped the gloves with the Kings' Andreas Englund. Olivier won the fight in what turned out to be the Blue Jackets' first fighting major of the season. While it evened the game out for a bit, the Blue Jackets didn't get what they wanted out of it.

Starting the third with a power play, it was Trevor Moore who scored just 30 seconds in to make it 3-1 Kings. Ivan Provorov responded with his first of the season to cut it to 3-2.

But then Alex Laferriere scored his ninth and Brandt Clarke sealed it with an empty netter to make the final score 5-2. Merzlikins stopped 18 of 22 shots faced. Rittich stopped 24 of 26.

The Blue Jackets dropped to 5-6-2 and have a quick turnaround as they play the Anaheim Ducks Sunday. Meanwhile the Kings play in Calgary on Monday night.

The Hockey Writers / Blue Jackets Letting Big Mistakes Cost Them Games

By Mark Scheig- November 10, 2024

Coming off a 2-0 win over the New York Islanders, the Columbus Blue Jackets were feeling pretty good about themselves. At 5-3-1 in their first nine games, the team was over .500 and showing drastic improvement in key areas.

But as usual, hockey continues to be the ultimate source of humility. The Blue Jackets lost consecutive games to two of the best teams in the NHL in the Winnipeg Jets and Washington Capitals.

Still, being 5-5-1 heading to California had them in the mix in the standings. They were looking forward to seeing how they would continue to improve while trying to find wins.

At the halfway mark of their California/Seattle road trip, the Blue Jackets haven't won a game. While they gained a point in San Jose, they couldn't find anything Saturday night in Los Angeles.

The reason the Blue Jackets haven't been able to find success of late is simple and something within their control. Not only too many turnovers, but big turnovers that turn into goals against. There's enough of a pattern in these turnovers that makes this a top priority to fix in their upcoming games.

Big Mistakes

As head coach Dean Evason has said multiple times, teams will make mistakes. Given the way the Blue Jackets are trying to play, an aggressive and up-tempo style, mistakes will happen.

It's when the mistakes turn into big mistakes and goals against where it becomes a problem. It's when it starts costing the Blue Jackets games where it needs to be addressed with urgency.

Here's what Evason told reporters on Saturday night after their 5-2 loss to the Kings.

"It's key moments in the hockey game where we gave opportunities. (I'm) not saying we gave goals because (the Kings) took advantage of some stuff. The first goal, we turn it over. The second goal, we make a huge mistake. Third goal, we turn it over. That's three goals. We got a 1-0 lead. In key areas on the ice, we have to make the right reads or clearly not turn the puck over in key areas of the ice in order to give teams momentum to come back after us and we did that here tonight."

"We're not disappointed in our overall game. It's just we've got to clean up these key mistakes in areas of the ice that we can simplify and again, just not give teams momentum to start coming back or feeling good about themselves instead of just staying with the plan, staying with the systems, staying with the discipline and make them take it. Don't give them those opportunities."

Simply put, Saturday night's game flipped in the Kings' favor thanks to big turnovers. Up 1-0 early in the second period, the Blue Jackets had possession of the puck and a 4-on-2 advantage in the neutral zone. That usually doesn't lead to a goal against 10 seconds later.

However Jake Christiansen's pass couldn't be handled and was deflected ahead. The Kings won the race to the puck. It ends up on the stick of Vladislav Gavrikov. His shot through a screen tied the game.

This became the Kings' catalyst for momentum that lasted the rest of the game.

Not even two minutes later, the Blue Jackets were down 2-1. Evason called this goal "a huge mistake."

The Blue Jackets held possession in their own zone. David Jiricek found Jack Johnson. Johnson's pass found Sean Kuraly. However, Kuraly got tied up with the linesman. The puck still got to the Kings' blue line. This again shouldn't lead to a goal against in the next 10 seconds.

Jiricek pinched and got himself out of position. This created a 2-on-1 rush in which Akil Thomas found Warren Foegele for the 2-1 goal. The Kings never looked back.

The Blue Jackets had a chance to tie the game early in the third period with the power play on a fresh sheet of ice. Instead, Trevor Moore scored shorthanded thanks to another turnover. Cole Sillinger fanned on a pass from the point. The puck got deflected to center where Moore won the race and scored. It turned into the game-winning goal.

Tuesday night in San Jose, Alex Wennberg's overtime winner came on a good individual effort by him. He split Sillinger and Sean Monahan. Then Zach Werenski couldn't get the puck from Wennberg. He cut inside and beat Elvis Merzlikins high. While not a turnover, it was a mistake in coverage allowing him the space needed to create the winning goal.

Final Thoughts

While these kinds of mistakes are correctable, they need to be more limited. The Blue Jackets are at their best when they're within their structure and making the correct reads.

The start of this road trip showed what happens when they slip away from that structure and make key mistakes. Holding a team to just 22 shots on goal for the night like the Blue Jackets did to the Kings will usually lead to success. But mistakes and turnovers will take any success and throw them down the drain.

The Blue Jackets also won't use the excuse that they're a young team. While it's true they are among the youngest in the NHL, that doesn't excuse the kind of mistakes they've made in recent games.

The Blue Jackets do get two more chances on the road trip to try to make it a successful one. If they hope to win in Anaheim and in Seattle, they cannot repeat the ending in San Jose and how the second period on went in Los Angeles.

The Blue Jackets aren't playing awful. But they're also not playing well enough to win. If they start to limit the big mistakes, good results will follow.

The Hockey Writers / Blue Jackets Offensive Struggles Continue in Loss to Ducks

By Mark Scheig- November 10, 2024

The Columbus Blue Jacket saw Sunday night in Anaheim as a big game. If they won, they'd pull back to hockey .500 on the season. However, the Ducks had other ideas.

John Gibson made his season debut and made 39 saves to backstop the Ducks to a 4-2 win over the Blue Jackets. 12 different players hit the scoresheet for the Ducks in a balanced attack. For the Blue Jackets, their offensive struggles continued despite controlling the game for long stretches.

Game Recap

The Ducks got off to a quick start. Just over three minutes into the game, Cutter Gauthier was able to find Brett Leason in front. He converted an easy tap in to make it 1-0.

To the Blue Jackets' credit, they got stronger as the first period went on. They were finally able to solve Gibson on the power play late in the period. Yegor Chinakhov scored his fourth of the season on a setup by Zach Werenski. Werenski played in his 500th NHL game Sunday.

Despite the Blue Jackets carrying momentum into the second period, it was the Ducks who took the 2-1 lead thanks to Jackson LaCombe. Ivan Provorov turned the puck over in the defensive zone which led to LaCombe eventually converting on a rebound.

The Blue Jackets outshot the Ducks in all three periods firing a total of 41 shots on Gibson. It was 11-7 in the second and then 17-13 in the third. Again it was the Ducks who scored first in the third.

Leo Carlsson was able to find a puck in a maze of bodies and beat goalie Daniil Tarasov from the slot to make it 3-1. Kirill Marchenko scored his sixth of the season with the Blue Jackets pushing late to cut it to 3-2. For Marchenko, that marked a multi-point game and 15 points in his first 14 games of this season.

That was as close as the Blue Jackets could get. Isac Lundestrom was able to hit the empty net to get to the final score of 4-2. Three games in California saw the Blue Jackets fire 117 shots on goalies only to score five. That's a .957 save percentage. Tarasov stopped 26 of 29 on Sunday night. With the loss, the Blue Jackets have lost five in a row going 0-4-1 in that stretch.

The Blue Jackets now have Monday off before finishing the road trip in Seattle. Meanwhile the Ducks get a couple days off at home before hosting the Vegas Golden Knights on Wednesday.

1st Ohio Battery / As If You Needed A Reminder, We're Seeing How Impactful An Elite And Healthy Zach Werenski Is

By Will Chase- November 9, 2024

Fresh off playing 31:26 in Tuesday's 2-1 overtime loss to the San Jose Sharks, it's fun to watch Zach Werenski play his game and display elite skill.

Through the team's first dozen games, Werenski has registered nine points (three goals, six assists) and is a +1. He leads Columbus with 43 shots and, per usual, is among the leaders in time on ice per game (25:23).

Werenski is one of this group's primary leaders and core veterans, and he is only 27 years old. He's two games away from No. 500 in his career, which he should set on Sunday at the Anaheim Ducks. He should also score his 100th goal this season, as he sits at 93 career goals.

Werenski missed 12 games last season and still set a personal best with 46 assists — a franchise record for a defenseman in a season — and 57 points.

Since breaking into the league in 2016-17, Werenski is 24th among all defensemen in points per game (0.62) and he's 20th with 311 points.

He also leads Blue Jackets in several of those categories including points (311), goals (93), assists (218), points per game (0.62), and games played (498).

Werenski joined 97.1 The Fan's Hockey & Hounds with Rothman & Ice earlier this week to chat about the team and his team's play against the Sharks.

"We were better defensively," Werenski said. "We were above the puck. I thought we were playing on our toes and being aggressive. I think we were getting pucks to the net and then retrieving them after shots.

"When we're working hard our talent's really coming through and I think (Tuesday) night was a good example of that. I thought work ethic was the first thing that started and then our talent started to take over after. Obviously couldn't get more than one goal which was unfortunate but if we play like that on most nights, we'll be successful.

Columbus was 0-for-3 on the power play Tuesday and is 15.6% on the season.

"I think for our power play, we just have to keep it simple," Werenski said. "I think on the first one (Tuesday) night we tried to force the seam, just wasn't there. And then we were kind of chasing it the rest of the time. I think later in the game we had some more chances. We were more direct.

"I think at the end of the day, it has to be creative. And I think when we're stagnant and we're standing there, we're just not moving, it's easy for a penalty kill. So for us, we have to have more movement moving forward. Try to confuse the penalty kill a little bit more. And we just got to bear down and put pucks in the net."

The Jackets are in the middle of a three-game losing streak after losses to the Winnipeg Jets, Washington Capitals, and the Sharks, so what's the message from head coach Dean Evason?

"I think last night is different from those two losses over the weekend," Werenski said. "We played hard enough to win. We played well enough to win. I think the message is if we keep doing that we're going to win games.

"It obviously sucks losing and you want the results but a big part of that is the process and I thought our process was right (Tuesday)."

Weresnki and the Blue Jackets battle the Los Angeles Kings on Saturday at 9:00 p.m. ET, the Anaheim Ducks on Sunday at 8:00 p.m. ET, and conclude the road trip against the Seattle Kraken on Tuesday, Nov. 12 at 10:00 p.m. ET.

1st Ohio Battery / Blue Jackets Give Up Five Goals In The Final Two Periods, Lose 5-2 To Kings

By Ed Francis- November 10, 2024

Dmitri Voronkov and Ivan Provorov each scored their first goals' of the season but the Los Angeles Kings proved to be too much for the Columbus Blue Jackets on Saturday night en route to a 5-2 victory.

Columbus took a 1-0 lead into the dressing room after the opening period, but a pair of Los Angeles goals less than two minutes apart early in the second period would set the tone for the rest of the game.

"(There were) key moments in the where we gave (up) opportunities," said head coach Dean Evason. "They took advantage of some stuff. First goal, we turn it over. Second goal, we make a huge mistake, third goal we turn it over."

"We're not disappointed in our overall game, it's just we've got to clean up these key mistakes," added Evason.

Here's how it all went down from the City of Angels:

1st Period:

(13:26 — CBJ Goal): Voronkov gives the Blue Jackets a lead here with his first goal since of the season after returning four games ago from an injury sustained in the preseason. Great work from Voronkov to use his frame to his advantage, but this was all started with Justin Danforth intercepting a Los Angeles pass by being in perfect position to not only make the pick but to also be in position to move quickly towards the Los Angeles net. Voronkov is right there and Danforth threads the needle to help give Columbus a first-period lead.

The goal was an early exclamation point on what would be Voronkov's best game since his return to the lineup, despite getting just 12:24 of ice time.

"I'm a little disappointed we didn't get him on the ice a little bit more," said Evason. "His game was good. Obviously he scored, but he was holding on to pucks, he was carrying it through the neutral zone, he looked like he felt a lot more comfortable. We've got to get him on the ice more."

2nd Period:

(4:16 — LA Goal): Former Blue Jacket Vladislav Gavrikov knots the game at 1-1 for the Kings less than five minutes into the second period. There were five players (three Blue Jackets, two Kings) between him and Merzlikins and Gavrikov beats the Columbus goalie by getting a deflection off the stick of Sean Monahan and a friendly ring off the top of the goalpost. Unfortunately, just not a lot Elvis could do about that one.

(6:12 — LA Goal): Sean Kuraly has a little bit of trouble playing the puck in the neutral zone on a pass from Jack Johnson, which starts the sequence for a Warren Foegele goal to give Los Angeles a 2-1 lead. Akil Thomas gets possession for the Kings and both he and Foegele give the Kings an odd-man rush against Johnson, with Foegele able to capitalize with a hard shot from near the left faceoff dot before the rest of the Blue Jackets could catch up to him.

3rd Period:

(0:30 — LA Goal): Not the best time for Columbus to give up their first short-handed goal in the Dean Evason era. Cole Sillinger fanned on a cross-ice pass attempt as soon as the Blue Jackets establish the

zone while on the power play. Trevor Moore winds up with the puck and beats Merzlikins glove-side to make it 3-1 Kings.

(0:49 — CBJ Goal): Special teams makes good on the lapse less than 20 seconds later. Columbus wins the faceoff, establishes the zone, and Danforth gets off a shot that is partially whiffed. Rittich has trouble with the partial shot and gives up a rebound, which Ivan Provorov promptly puts away to make it a 3-2 game.

(7:05, 19:29 — LA Goals): Los Angeles regains their two-goal lead on, for the second time, a deflection that Merzlikins couldn't do much on. This time it was Alex Laferriere getting a tip from a Joel Edmundson shot that ends up in the back of the net. After the Kings went into an effective prevent-like defense, young defenseman Brandt Clarke would add an empty-netter in the final minute to make it the 5-2 final.

CBJ	GAME STATS	LA
26	SHOTS	23
43%	FACEOFFS	57%
1/3	POWER PLAY	1/4
3/4	PENALTY KILL	2/3
16	HITS	8
10	GIVEAWAYS	14
4	TAKEAWAYS	5
11	BLOCKED SHOTS	22
ALL SITUATIONS ADVANCED STATS		
2.86	EXPECTED GOALS	2.74
59	SHOT ATTEMPTS	50

CBJ	GAME STATS	LA
26	SCORING CHANCES	20
11	HIGH-DANGER CHANCES	9

DATA VIA:
 NHL.COM
 NATURALSTATTRICK.COM

Stat Talk:

- The Blue Jackets outshot the Kings 26-23, making it three-for-three in outshooting the opposition on the road trip. Despite outshooting the Washington Capitals, San Jose Sharks, and now the Kings by a total of 112-72, Columbus had just one point in three games to show for it.
- In five-on-five play, the Blue Jackets had more shots on goal (20-15), shot attempts (46-34), scoring chances (18-14), and high-danger chances (7-6). They also led all four categories in all scenarios combined. The chances were there and the Blue Jackets could not capitalize.
- Provorov led all skaters in time on ice, at 27:31. That was the most he has in a regular game since joining the Blue Jackets. Zach Werenski was right behind him at 27:21.

Next Game:

The Blue Jackets wrap up the California portion of their five-game road trip Sunday against the Anaheim Ducks. Puck drop is at 8:00 p.m.

1st Ohio Battery / Three Things: Losing Streak Hits Four, A Couple Of Firsts, Tough One In Net

By Will Chase- November 10, 2024

So much for a fast start after three off days.

Warren Foegele had two points with a goal and an assist as the Los Angeles Kings defeated the Columbus Blue Jackets 5-2 on Saturday night at Crypto.com Arena.

The Blue Jackets have dropped four straight.

Losing Streak Hits Four

After a winning October, the Jackets are facing in-season adversity for the first time as their winless streak has reached four games.

Off to an 0-3-1 November, Columbus has been squeezed offensively while in California. They fired a season-high 50 shots on goal in a 2-1 overtime loss to the San Jose Sharks on Tuesday. Then despite scoring first again versus the Kings on Saturday night, they could not find the equalizer in a tight affair.

Gavikov's tally continued a four-game point streak (two goals, two assists) for the one-time Blue Jacket.

"Just key moments in the hockey game where we gave opportunities (that led to Kings goals)," head coach Dean Evason said. "The first goal, we turn it over. The second goal, we make a huge mistake. Third goal, we turn it over.

"In key areas on the ice, we have to make the right reads or clearly not turn the puck over in key areas of the ice in order to give teams momentum to come back after us and we did that here tonight."

A Couple Of Firsts

Columbus struck first thanks to Voronkov's first goal of the year in the first period at 13:26 with an assist to Justin Danforth.

"We thought (Voronkov's) game was good," Evason said. "Obviously scored, but he was holding onto pucks. He was carrying it through the neutral zone. Looked like he felt a lot more comfortable so we got to get him onto the ice more than we did here tonight."

Voronkov has played in four games since his return from injury and played 12:24 Saturday night.

Ivan Provorov's power-play goal at 0:49 of the third period was his first tally of the year. The goal cut the deficit to 3-2 and came just 19 seconds after Trevor Moore scored a shorthanded goal to give the Kings a two-goal lead.

Danforth picked up his second point of the game on the assist and Adam Fantilli had an assist. Columbus was 1-for-3 on the power play.

"For a decent amount of the game, we were playing the right way, we were playing our game but there were a few costly mistakes that we made that ended up in the loss," Provorov said.

Kings rookie Samuel Helenius made his NHL debut and had an assist.

Tough One In Net

Elvis Merzlikins took the loss to fall to 2-4-1 in seven starts. He came into the night with a .910 save percentage and 2.69 goals against average but in a game that got away from the team late, he now has a save percentage back under 90 percent (.899) and a 2.89 GAA.

Merzlikins made 18 saves on Saturday night while Counterpart David Rittich made 24 stops. L.A. was 1-for-4 on the power play.

Most likely Daniil Tarasov will get the start in the second game of a back-to-back when Columbus faces the Anaheim Ducks on Sunday night.

Last Stop

Columbus finishes the California part of its road trip on Sunday, Nov. 10 against the Ducks at Honda Center. Puck drop is set for 8:00 p.m. ET. The trip will conclude on Tuesday, Nov. 12, in Seattle, when the Jackets face the Kraken at Climate Pledge Arena.

1st Ohio Battery / Claimed: Blue Jackets Add Defenseman Dante Fabbro Off Waivers From Nashville

By Ed Francis- November 11, 2024

The Columbus Blue Jackets added depth to the roster Sunday, claiming defenseman Dante Fabbro off waivers from the Nashville Predators.

Prior to being waived Friday, Fabbro played in six games this season with the Predators, including their win over the Blue Jackets on October 26th.

For his career, the 26-year-old has 16 goals and 56 assists (72 points) in 315 games — all with Nashville, and generally as a third-pairing defenseman.

“Dante Fabbro is a puck-moving defenseman that can play in all situations and adds mobility and depth to our backend,” said President of Hockey Operations and General Manager Don Waddell.

To make room the roster for Fabbro, the Blue Jackets also announced that forward Kent Johnson was placed on injured reserve retroactive to October 17th.

The Predators signed Fabbro to a one-year contract worth \$2.5 million for this season. He'll be an unrestricted free agent in the summer.

The 6'0", 190lb Canadian-born defenseman was the 17th overall pick in the 2016 NHL draft by the Predators, and he made his NHL debut against the Blue Jackets on March 30th, 2019. His first goal would come one week later:

What Does This Mean For The Blue Jackets?

It's not yet clear, but there are a few things that stand out.

Above all else, it's not a good sign for David Jiricek.

Jiricek has been a healthy scratch most of the season and was on the ice for less than ten minutes in each of the last two games. He continues to struggle at the NHL level. Rumors of a potential trade that circled during training camp will surely be rehashed with the addition of Fabbro.

It also could mean that the Blue Jackets are uncertain about another defenseman: Jordan Harris. When Jiricek has played, Harris has been a healthy scratch. Head coach Dean Evason has been reluctant to give either player significant minutes, especially late in games. Jack Johnson, who has played primarily with either Jiricek or Harris, has also struggled in the twilight of his career.

Regardless of who, the move is certainly a referendum on the bottom pairing of Blue Jackets defenseman.

This could also potentially be an indication that we've seen the last of Erik Gudbranson for the 2024-25 season. He underwent shoulder surgery in October and was expected to be out long-term. This move could be an indicator that the Blue Jackets do not expect to see him back on the ice until next season.

1st Ohio Battery / Streak At Five After Blue Jackets Fall 4-2 To Ducks

By Will Chase- November 11, 2024

The losing streak is at five.

Looking for an offensive spark and its first win on the five-game road trip, head coach Dean Evason jumbled his lines including putting Adam Fantilli on the first line.

Despite a late push, the Columbus Blue Jackets were unable to find the equalizer on Sunday night in Anaheim, falling to the Ducks 4-2.

Daniil Tarasov made 25 saves in his return to the net. John Gibson made his season debut after a September appendectomy, making 38 saves.

Here's how it went down:

1st Period

(3:13 — 1-0 ANA):

Brett Leason's first goal of the season started the scoring in this game to give the Ducks a 1-0 lead. Cutter Gauthier and Ross Johnston picked up assists on the play. The Anaheim goal broke a streak of two straight games in which Columbus scored first.

(16:16 — 1-1 CBJ):

Yegor Chinakhov's fourth of the season tied the game at 1-1 as Columbus converted on their first of two power play chances. Zach Werenski and Kirill Marchenko assisted on the play.

The point was Chinakhov's second on the trip and his first goal since Oct. 19 against the Minnesota Wild, breaking an eight-game goal drought. He finished the night with seven shots on net.

Werenski played in his 500th career game and led the game with eight shots on goal and 27:57 ice time. Jack Johnson played in his 1,200th game. Trainer Nates Goto celebrated his 1,500th game.

2nd Period

(4:22 — 2-1 ANA):

The Ducks responded early in the second period to regain the lead thanks to Jackson LaCombe. Radko Gudas and Troy Terry had the assists.

3rd Period

(10:20 — 3-1 ANA):

COLUMBUS	GAME STATS	ANAHEIM
40	SHOTS	30
56.7%	FACEOFF %	43.3%

COLUMBUS	GAME STATS	ANAHEIM
1/2	POWER PLAY	0/2
2/2	PENALTY KILL	1/2
18	HITS	20
8	GIVEAWAYS	18
8	TAKEAWAYS	4
16	BLOCKED SHOTS	21
DATA VIA ESPN		

Leo Carlsson added in the insurance marker for the Ducks with Brian Dumoulin and Ryan Strome getting the helpers.

(16:57 — 3-2 CBJ):

Marchenko's second point of the night pulled the Jackets within one when his sixth tally made it a 3-2 game. The goal was unassisted.

Marchenko had five shots on goal in 21:07 ice time.

(18:20 — 4-2 CBJ):

Isac Lundestrom's second of the year on the empty net sealed the Ducks' 4-2 victory.

Up Next:

The Blue Jackets conclude their five game road trip on Tuesday when they take on the Seattle Kraken. Puck drop is set for 10:00 p.m. ET.

The Athletic / NHL Power Rankings: A new No. 1 plus one reason to be optimistic about each team

By Sean Gentile and Dom Luszczyszyn- November 9, 2024

We're officially one month into the season, and we're starting to get a better grasp of what each team is made of.

Some teams are made of a bit more than others, sure, but every team has at least some redeemable quality worthy of optimism. Whether it's a lethal power play, a breakout season or strong goaltending, there's reason for positivity across the board.

That's the theme for this week: One reason to be optimistic about each team.

1. Winnipeg Jets, 13-1-0

Last week: 3

Sean's ranking: 1

Dom's ranking: 1

We'll give you two here because the first one is equal parts boring and predictable. Connor Hellebuyck, in a 1-0 win over Colorado on Thursday night, reminded us that he's, in fact, the biggest reason to believe in the Jets. Hellebuyck stopped all 35 shots the Avalanche put on him and racked up more than four goals saved above expected. Beastly stuff, as usual, against a high-end opponent.

Offensively, meanwhile, Winnipeg has done well to spread out its production. Guys like Kyle Connor, Nikolaj Ehlers and Mark Scheifele, as you'd expect, are at the top of the overall scoring list — but Mason Appleton leads the team with nine five-on-five points. Nino Niederreiter has four five-on-five goals. Adam Lowry is in the mix, as well. Secondary scoring and elite goaltending can get you a long way.

2. Carolina Hurricanes, 10-2-0

Last week: 2

Sean's ranking: 2

Dom's ranking: 2

Don't look now but the team that needed more oomph per 60 has:

The third-highest goals-per-game

Three point-per-game players (Martin Necas, Andrei Svechnikov, Sebastian Aho)

Somehow, Jack Roslovic with nine goals in 13 games

The Canes are a wagon. And it doesn't feel the same as usual. The most optimistic thing we can say about Carolina: It's hard to find a reason to be pessimistic.

3. Florida Panthers, 10-3-1

Last week: 5

Sean's ranking: 3

Dom's ranking: 3

If you were worried about Aleksander Barkov starting slowly after missing nearly three weeks with a lower-body injury, it's safe to stop. In four games since returning to the lineup, Barkov has 10 points and an average Game Score of 3.2. That's best-in-the-league stuff. The Panthers are good enough without their franchise center. With him, though? Watch out.

4. Dallas Stars, 8-4-0

Last week: 1

Sean's ranking: 4

Dom's ranking: 4

We'll give Jake Oettinger a pass for laying an egg against the Panthers in Finland; it was his first truly bad outing of the season, and he followed it up with a 25-save game against the Panthers, bringing his save percentage up to .922 and moving back into the top five in goals saved above expected.

It's a strong start for Oettinger, who had more wobbly stretches in 2023-24 than most of us expected. Nothing would make the Stars scarier than him turning Vezina-caliber talent into Vezina-caliber play throughout a full season.

5. New York Rangers, 8-3-1

Last week: 4

Sean's ranking: 5

Dom's ranking: 6

The Rangers won the Presidents' Trophy last season and came up just a couple wins short of reaching the Stanley Cup Final. Impressive stuff made all the more impressive by the fact they were without Filip Chytil for all but 10 regular season games and six playoff games. His presence anchoring the third line is huge for this club and is one reason to believe this could be the Rangers year. This year he's showing exactly what the team was missing last year, dominating his minutes to the tune of a 66 percent xG rate.

6. Minnesota Wild, 9-2-2

Last week: 6

Sean's ranking: 7

Dom's ranking: 5

Besides having two awards watch dark horses (Kirill Kaprizov and Brock Faber), one thing to feel good about as a Wild fan is that the captain is back and looks just as good as usual. The Wild felt the loss of Jared Spurgeon greatly last season and there were some questions regarding how he'd look after such a long layoff. So far, so good as Spurgeon helps elevate the Wild's top four from solid to elite.

7. Washington Capitals, 9-3-0

Last week: 7

Sean's ranking: 6

Dom's ranking: 8

We'll re-up a bit from this week's 16 Stats — the Capitals have won Alex Ovechkin's five-on-five minutes 13-3. It's tough to imagine a bigger reason for Caps-related optimism than that. It's far from the only

reason, though; all four of Washington's regular lines are handling their business, and Pierre-Luc Dubois (between Connor McMichael and Tom Wilson) is doing it against difficult competition.

Overall, it's made the Capitals a team worth taking seriously. They've got the second-best points percentage in the Metro and are playing at a 123-point pace.

8. Vegas Golden Knights, 9-3-1

Last week: 10

Sean's ranking: 8

Dom's ranking: 7

Jack Eichel — hello. What a start it's been for Eichel who is finally putting some big numbers on the board. It's always felt like Eichel has been holding out on us, capable of popping off for a 100-point season, but topping out at only 82 back in 2019. Even his career-high pace sits at 94 back in 2020.

This year though, Eichel looks poised to smash career bests. After 13 games he's playing at a 120-point pace. That's hot.

9. New Jersey Devils, 9-5-2

Last week: 9

Sean's ranking: 9

Dom's ranking: 9

Congratulations, Nico Hischier — you're scoring enough goals to win the Selke Trophy. His 10 are tied for the league lead, even though he's gone three games and counting without one. Hischier's shooting percentage isn't likely to stay in the 20s all season long, and most of his damage has been done on the power play, but it's still a seriously encouraging level of production for New Jersey.

Most importantly, it all comes alongside defensive numbers that are far more in line with Hischier's level-up season in 2022-23. He had a lot to gain under Sheldon Keefe, and he's back to looking like a two-way force.

10. Vancouver Canucks, 7-2-3

Last week: 13

Sean's ranking: 10

Dom's ranking: 10

It's been written and discussed plenty in the last 24 hours, but we'll re-up it here: Quinn Hughes is playing like a dude who's eminently capable of winning his second straight Norris Trophy, and Thursday night against the Kings brought more of the same. He scored a goal and set up another, and Vancouver won the scoring chance battle 9-2 while he was on the ice. Dominance.

11. Los Angeles Kings, 8-4-3

Last week: 11

Sean's ranking: 11

Dom's ranking: 11

Adrian Kempe has been a really nice player for a while now, thanks particularly to his goal-scoring, but he's shown signs of adding some more substance to his game. He's posting the best goal shares of his career (64.6 percent actual, 55.6 expected), and the Kings are scoring 4.39 goals per 60 with him on the ice, 30th among forwards with at least 50 minutes played. Does playing on a line with Anze Kopitar hurt? Certainly not — but Kempe emerging as a true first-line-caliber winger, rather than a solid support piece, would be big for the Kings.

12. Toronto Maple Leafs, 7-5-2

Last week: 12

Sean's ranking: 12

Dom's ranking: 12

Sometimes it's better to stack strengths rather than complement them. The Leafs have seemed to figure that out with their new-look top four, putting Chris Tanev next to Jack McCabe and Oliver Ekman-Larsson next to Morgan Rielly. That switch has paid big dividends so far with two pairs playing at a high level. The shutdown pair has 63 percent of the expected goals (with 1.31 xGA/60) while the offensive unit sits at 57 percent.

The Leafs may not have an elite No. 1, but they may have their strongest top four in the Matthews-Marner-Nylander era.

13. Tampa Bay Lightning, 7-6-1

Last week: 8

Sean's ranking: 13

Dom's ranking: 13

Victor Hedman is back. Maybe he never really left. Maybe he needed a capable partner. Maybe he just needed someone else to take over shutdown duties (Ryan McDonagh and Erik Cernak look strong so far). Either way, he looks like the best version of himself to start the season: 13 points in 14 games, 59 percent xG, up 15-6 on the scoreboard. Elite.

14. Boston Bruins, 7-7-1

Last week: 24

Sean's ranking: 14

Dom's ranking: 15

When the Bruins signed Nikita Zadorov, there was a fair amount of sticker shock to his price tag. At \$5 million per year, the Bruins were expecting a career third-pair guy to slide seamlessly into their top four. Zadorov felt like a great fit, but that's a tall ask.

So far so good though for Zadorov who has played well next to Charlie McAvoy, especially defensively. He's been worth the money so far and feels like the missing piece the team has long been looking for in their top four. That bodes well for Boston's playoff quest.

15. New York Islanders, 6-6-2

Last week: 25

Sean's ranking: 15

Dom's ranking: 17

A spot on the top six opened up when Anthony Duclair went down with an injury, and Maxim Tsyplov has grabbed it; the Isles' expected goal share with him on the ice is 61 percent, and he already has eight five-on-five points. Tsyplov is in his first season in North America after seven in the KHL.

16. Edmonton Oilers, 6-7-1

Last week: 14

Sean's ranking: 18

Dom's ranking: 14

Stuart Skinner hasn't been his best this season, there's no dancing around that. But his current .885 save percentage and minus-2.1 GSAx is a bit misleading thanks to an opening night stinker where he allowed five goals on 13 shots. Since? He's been mostly fine with a .901 save percentage and two goals saved above expected.

That's one less problem to worry about for an Oilers team that's started very slow again this season — and you have to figure the rest of the roster will sort itself out soon.

17. Colorado Avalanche, 6-8-0

Last week: 15

Sean's ranking: 17

Dom's ranking: 16

It's only been two games, but getting Artturi Lehkonen back in the lineup is a big deal for the Avs. His power-play goal against Seattle is a nice example — Lehkonen was ready, willing and able to convert on a great chance created by Nathan MacKinnon. Colorado, for the time being, is a little short on players like that.

“WELCOME BACK TO THE LINEUP, LEHKY” 🤝

Artturi Lehkonen finds the back of the net in his first game of the 2024-25 season, his first in 172+ days
pic.twitter.com/FFkKeGcM1y

— B/R Open Ice (@BR_OpenIce) November 6, 2024

18. Utah HC, 6-5-3

Last week: 17

Sean's ranking: 16

Dom's ranking: 18

Dylan Guenther scored his seventh goal of the season — a late tie-breaker against St. Louis — on a lucky bounce off Colton Parayko. If more of those start going in, look out; Guenther doesn't need much help. He looks like the real deal. Credit to him for a nice defensive play to start the 2-on-1, too.

Dylan Guenther – Utah Hockey Club (7) pic.twitter.com/HDxsmvN7WI

— NHL Goal Videos (@NHLGoalVideos) November 8, 2024

19. Buffalo Sabres, 6-7-1

Last week: 20

Sean's ranking: 19

Dom's ranking: 19

It took a lot of self-control not to talk about Tage Thompson again. He's the main reason for any optimism in Buffalo, but not the only one. JJ Peterka caught our eye with a really strong start scoring six goals and 11 points in 11 games while also putting up some excellent play-driving impacts. Peterka might be the team's best forward after Tage — and he's only 22. The best is yet to come.

Oh, and a dominant 6-1 win over the Rangers should offer some extra optimism, too. Maybe the Sabres aren't completely cooked after all.

20. Ottawa Senators, 6-7-0

Last week: 16

Sean's ranking: 20

Dom's ranking: 20

Ottawa's season may not be going as well as some fans hoped so far, but at the very least the team's core is proving itself early. Both Tim Stützle and Brady Tkachuk entered the season with questions regarding whether they were the type of high-level franchise cornerstones that Cup contenders are built around. Both are answering those questions early with hot starts scoring well above a point-per-game while tilting the ice at five-on-five. Even if this isn't the year the Senators take a step forward, they're in good hands with Stützle and Tkachuk back on track.

21. Detroit Red Wings, 6-5-1

Last week: 26

Sean's ranking: 21

Dom's ranking: 21

The Red Wings' power play is the real deal. No team is generating more scoring chances right now than Detroit and it's led to a top-10 unit. The team may still be figuring things out at even strength, but they make up for that (to an extent) with an elite power play.

22. Calgary Flames, 7-5-2

Last week: 22

Sean's ranking: 22

Dom's ranking: 22

Is it too early to talk about Calgary's trade bait? Well, we're gonna do it anyway.

Rasmus Andersson has two years left on a very appetizing \$4.55 million deal and is currently on fire with four goals and 11 points in his first 13 games of the season. Any playoff team looking for some electricity from the backend would be thrilled to have Andersson whose hot start has probably driven up the haul Calgary could command for his services. That's good news for the team's rebuild.

23. St. Louis Blues, 7-7-0

Last week: 19

Sean's ranking: 23

Dom's ranking: 23

Both of the Blues' Offer Sheet Boyz avoided disaster this week. Philip Broberg's lower-body injury will cost him 4-6 weeks but easily could've been worse, and Dylan Holloway ... well, we all know what happened to him. Sighs of relief all around.

Both have looked good, too. Broberg, with more points than any Blues forward not named Jordan Kyrou, is showing the offensive-defenseman chops that made him attractive in the first place, and Holloway has earned top-six minutes. Seems like money (and draft capital) well spent.

24. Columbus Blue Jackets, 5-5-2

Last week: 23

Sean's ranking: 24

Dom's ranking: 24

Odds are good that you were already rooting for Sean Monahan, and he has indeed gone out and had himself a productive first month, scoring a team-leading six goals and looking every bit the power-play factor he was in Montreal and Winnipeg last season.

Where Monahan has really helped steady the ship, though, is at five-on-five; he, along with Kirill Marchenko and Yegor Chinakov, have formed one of the most effective lines in the league, outscoring opponents 8-2 and controlling about 67 percent of the expected goal share. The latter is eighth in the league among duos with at least 50 minutes spent together.

25. Seattle Kraken, 5-8-1

Last week: 18

Sean's ranking: 25

Dom's ranking: 25

Seattle backed up the Brinks truck to Brandon Montour's house this summer and so far he's rewarded the Kraken with a stellar start. He's been an offensive machine with 10 points in 13 games to start, shouldering a lot of the offensive load with Vince Dunn sidelined. Once Dunn returns, the Kraken should have a strong one-two punch on the backend, a nice luxury for a team that thrives via its forward depth.

26. Anaheim Ducks, 4-6-2

Last week: 27

Sean's ranking: 26

Dom's ranking: 27

We should exercise some light caution here because he's put up an .864 save percentage over his last two starts, but Lukáš Dostál's performance overall (.930 save percentage, second in the league in goals saved above expected) is an unquestioned bit of good news for the Ducks. We knew he was NHL-caliber; now he's looking more like a legit above-average option. If that sticks, it would help the Ducks a) win more games b) ease the load on John Gibson once he returns and c) make a Gibson trade a bit more feasible. Not a bad combo.

27. Pittsburgh Penguins, 5-8-2

Last week: 29

Sean's ranking: 27

Dom's ranking: 26

For Pittsburgh, it might truly be a one-item list; it's been a long time since we've seen Sidney Crosby and Evgeni Malkin play together at five-on-five this frequently, and the results have been good. With them on the ice, along with Rickard Rakell, the Penguins are outscoring opponents 6-2 and controlling close to 70 percent of the expected goals.

28. Nashville Predators, 4-9-1

Last week: 21

Sean's ranking: 28

Dom's ranking: 29

At least one of the Preds' old fellas is handling business. Ryan O'Reilly, for a second straight season, is back to looking a lot like a first-line center, helping Nashville to a 57-percent expected goal share and playing tough minutes. The question, of course, is whether he stays with Filip Forsberg and Gustav Nyquist.

29. Philadelphia Flyers, 5-8-1

Last week: 28

Sean's ranking: 29

Dom's ranking: 28

Last year was a weird one for the Flyers. They looked legitimately good at times, but it all felt too early for where they were in their trajectory. For a team committed to doing a rebuild the right way, the surprising success had the Flyers veering on the wrong path.

This year though? The train is back on its tracks heading straight toward the league's basement. And that's for the best as finding franchise cornerstone friends for Matvei Michkov is pivotal for this team's future. The Flyers entered Thursday's contest against the Lightning with an eight percent chance at the first overall pick.

30. Chicago Blackhawks, 5-9-1

Last week: 31

Sean's ranking: 30

Dom's ranking: 30

Chicago's record may not offer much optimism, but at the very least the Blackhawks are hanging in there on most nights — way more than last year anyway. A leap from 40.7 percent of the expected goals last year to 47.5 this season is nothing to scoff at. It's the second-biggest jump of any team so far this season. That's real progress... even if it doesn't feel like it.

31. Montreal Canadiens, 4-8-2

Last week: 30

Sean's ranking: 31

Dom's ranking: 31

Goal Caufield can't stop scoring. The best 40-goal scorer who's never scored 30 finally looks like the sniper he was hyped to be with 10 goals in his first 13 games. That's tied for the league lead. Caufield needs 30 more over his next 68 games to hit 40 — we say he does it.

32. San Jose Sharks, 4-9-2

Last week: 32

Sean's ranking: 32

Dom's ranking: 32

Welcome back, Macklin Celebrini.

The Athletic / The Hockey Hall of Fame case against Pekka Rinne, P.K. Subban and even Alexander Mogilny

By Sean McIndoe- November 9, 2024

The Hockey Hall of Fame will welcome seven new members this weekend, including three players from the men's side. That's one fewer than the committee is allowed to induct, meaning they didn't run out of room, they just decided that some of the bigger names weren't worthy.

Good. The Hall is supposed to be tough to get into, and we should be slamming the door on some of the names that just don't deserve a spot.

At least, that's the angle we're taking today. I'm not necessarily a Small Hall guy, and I've spent plenty of time over the years making the cases for various stars. But I think there's value in trying the other side sometimes, if only to force the supporters of certain stars to sharpen their arguments. So today, I'm going to make the case against 10 names that could be front and center when the HHOF committee holds its next meeting.

We tried this a while ago, with a list of 15 players. That was two years' worth of inductions ago, and four names from that piece have got the call: Mike Vernon and Tom Barrasso in 2023, then Jeremy Roenick and Pierre Turgeon this year. Apparently my other 11 arguments were just more convincing.

We won't be doing any repeats this time around, so check that older post if you want to see my case against names like Rod Brind'Amour, Patrik Elias, Ryan Miller or anyone else you're expecting to see today but don't. This time, the group of 10 will be made up of some names that I left off last time, as well as a few new ones that are new to the mix. I won't bother with a few players I think are easy slam dunks, including Zdeno Chara, Joe Thornton and Patrice Bergeron, and we're not tackling anyone who isn't eligible until 2027 or beyond, including anyone who's still active.

That still leaves us with plenty of names to consider, including several who'd probably have my vote. Here's why none of them should make it — just for argument's sake.

The case against: Patrick Marleau

Marleau's main claim to a spot in the Hall is that he retired as the league's all-time leader in games played, which is no small feat in a sport where durability is a legitimate skill. That alone might be enough to get him into a lot of sports halls — for example, the NBA's top nine in games played are all either in or will be, baseball's top 10 are all Hall of Famers except for the exiled Pete Rose, and the NFL's games played leader is in even though he's a kicker. Mix in nearly 1,200 points and a reputation as a good guy, and Marleau feels like a lock.

Should he be? Absolutely not, according to a lot of you, which is something I've learned from experience whenever the question comes up. And not according to The Athletic's own Hall of Fame committee, we didn't just snub him this year, we actually shut him out.

That was a little harsh, but the end result was right. Playing a lot of games shouldn't get Marleau a free pass to the Hall any more than it would for Shane Doan, Glen Wesley or Matt Cullen. But once you look past that, you're left with a one-way offensive player who didn't even top .70 points per game, was never an All-Star, and had only one season where he cracked the top ten in Hart voting (by coming ninth). Despite playing 23 seasons, he was barely ever in the conversation for the best player on his own team, let alone in the world. He was good for a long time, but rarely great, and "rarely great" should never appear on a Hall of Fame resume.

Do I think he'll get in anyway: Yes, although I'm curious to see how long it takes.

The case against: P.K. Subban

Subban won a Norris, and as of today the only eligible Norris winner who isn't in the Hall is Randy Carlyle. And unlike Carlyle, who never got close to a repeat win, Subban was a finalist two other times. He was a two-time first-team All-Star, made the All-Rookie team, won the King Clancy, led his team to a Stanley Cup Final, and was once traded straight up for a first-ballot Hall of Famer. Oh, and he stood out by having an actual personality in a league full of stars who seem to go out of their way to be boring.

Unfortunately, he just didn't do it for long enough. That's really it. His NHL career lasted just 12 full seasons, the least of any player in today's post, and he retired at 33. And while his three Norris finalist honors in six years was an impressive peak, he fell off quickly after that. Even a few more strong seasons in New Jersey or elsewhere would have made his case much stronger. Unfortunately, the last four years of his career were spent with more focus on his cap hit than what he was doing on the ice.

The "every Norris guy gets in" argument is a solid one, but even putting Carlyle aside, Mark Giordano isn't getting in either. Subban deserved all the accolades he got as a player, but the Hall shouldn't be one of them.

Do I think he'll get in anyway: His case is stronger than a lot of fans give him credit for, but no, I don't think he gets in. Put him in the Hall of Awesome, though.

The case against: Carey Price

Price will be on the ballot next year, since eligibility is based on a player's last game as opposed to official retirement. And he'll have a ton of support, thanks to 361 wins, a Vezina and a (relatively rare for goalies) Hart Trophy. He didn't win a Cup, but he almost dragged a very mediocre Canadiens team to one in 2021, and he won Olympic gold and a World Cup so you certainly can't play the "not a winner" card. He's also an almost universally well-liked figure in the hockey world, which certainly doesn't hurt.

Should all that get him in? Maybe, although the case isn't the slam dunk it might seem like. The Vezina and Hart are huge, but they came in the same season, and were his only major awards. He had one other year as a Vezina finalist and two other top-five finishes, but for most of his 15-year career, he was closer to good-but-not-great territory than you might want to remember.

As for those 361 wins, while it's an impressive number, it still ranks him well behind guys like Andy Moog and John Vanbiesbrouck who aren't getting anywhere near the Hall. And yes, he'd have had better career numbers if injuries hadn't forced him out of the league at 34, but he's in the top 30 for games played, so this isn't a Peter Forsberg/Pavel Bure type of situation where we were robbed of a big chunk of a player's prime.

Do I think he'll get in anyway: Yes, and probably on the first ballot. So let's try some goalies who might be tougher calls for the committee ...

The case against: Tuukka Rask and Pekka Rinne

We'll do these two together since they have a lot in common. They're two Finnish goalies who played 15 NHL seasons. Both won a Vezina, both were two-time All-Stars, both led their teams to the Final but never won a Cup as a starter, and both won over 300 games.

And neither should make the Hall of Fame, although that's a dicier position now than it was a few years ago. For decades, the Hall was way too stingy with goalies. After inducting Vernon and Barrasso, you could argue that they over-corrected. But both of those guys were two-time Cup winners, and while it's

silly to hold a lack of championships against a skater, it makes at least a little more sense for the guy who's on the ice 60 minutes a night or more when the games matter.

We've just inducted Roberto Luongo and Henrik Lundqvist, Marc-Andre Fleury is almost certainly going to get in too, and Price probably will join them. It feels weird to say it after so many years of largely ignoring the position, but maybe we should pump the brakes on the goalies for a bit.

Do I think they'll get in anyway: I feel like Rinne will and Rask may not.

The case against: Bernie Nicholls

For years, the case for Pierre Turgeon went something like this: He was one of the 50 top scorers in the history of the NHL, and each and every eligible player ahead of him had already been inducted. The case against him was that somebody had to hold that distinction. That case apparently held up for years, but Turgeon finally got the call this summer.

Luckily for us, Turgeon has some experience with passing a torch, because there's a new name on top of the all-time "top scorers who aren't in the Hall of Fame" list, and it's Bernie Nicholls.

On the surface, the case against Nicholls seems pretty ironclad. He was never an All-Star, never won a major award, and never received votes for the Hart Trophy. He was productive and played for a long time, so his counting stats added up to some impressive totals, but he was never one of the greats.

Then again, that's basically the argument that didn't hold up against Turgeon. It's not quite the same — Turgeon won a Lady Byng and did get Hart votes in one of his 19 seasons, and he scored more points in a lower-scoring era — but it's pretty close.

If anything, Nicholls has something in his favor that Turgeon doesn't: An all-time great season. In 1988-89, Nicholls became just the fourth player to ever record at least 70 goals and 150 points in the same season, joining all-time legends Wayne Gretzky, Mario Lemieux and Phil Esposito. Nobody else has come all that close since, including guys like Steve Yzerman, Sidney Crosby and (so far) Connor McDavid. Was it a one-year wonder type of fluke? Kind of, sure, thanks to the arrival of Gretzky in Los Angeles that season. But wouldn't you rather have a guy capable of even one year like that over a compiler like Turgeon?

At the very least, maybe we owe Nicholls another look now because he's still the most recent top scorer. But I don't think the argument is all that convincing. I wouldn't have voted for Turgeon, but if I had to choose one guy, he'd be an easy pick. Nicholls was a good player who had one amazing year but otherwise just racked up a bunch of 60 and 70-point seasons in an era where lots of guys did that.

Oh, and in case you're wondering: Put Nicholls in the Hall, and the next guy up on the scoring list is Vincent Damphousse. You have to draw the line somewhere, and Turgeon was the right place to draw it. But now that he's in, Nicholls has to be that guy.

Do I think he'll get in anyway: No.

The case against: Ryan Getzlaf

Getzlaf will be eligible for the first time next year, and he checks a lot of boxes. He has a Cup, was a postseason All-Star, put up consistently solid numbers, was a Hart runner-up, and had a strong international career. He also did all of that while staying with just one franchise for his entire career, which maybe shouldn't matter but often seems to help with the committee.

The argument against him is that he was very good but never truly great aside from 2013-14, the year that saw him named a second-team All-Star while finishing second to Sidney Crosby's near-unanimous Hart win. He had one year north of 90 points and five with more than 70, which means the majority of

his 17-year career was spent putting up merely respectable numbers at best. Since those seasons didn't add up to 1,000 points or even 300 goals, and since he never finished higher than 10th in Selke voting, there's just not enough here to get him in.

Do I think he'll get in anyway: Probably not, although he was so well-respected that if anyone on the committee really goes to bat for him then I could see it happening.

The case against: Nicklas Backstrom

It's a lot like Getzlaf's, although at least Backstrom did get over the 1,000-point mark (barely). But he scored even fewer goals, and while he was always primarily a playmaker, he only led the league in assists once in his 17-year career despite playing with the greatest goal scorer of his era. He was a solid defensive player, but certainly not an Anze Kopitar-type of 200-foot force, and he never won an award or was named an All-Star. And aside from his lone 100-point season, his numbers were always good, and rarely great.

Do I think he'll get in anyway: Right now, no. But I do wonder if all the focus on Alexander Ovechkin over the coming months will cause any sort of re-evaluation of Backstrom's role in all those goals. If so, and the wind behind him blows just right, he might have a shot.

Those last few felt a little too easy. Let's crank the difficulty way up ...

The case against: Jonathan Toews

Toews spent so many years as the thinking fan's version of an ideal center that he feels like a slam dunk. But should he be? Assuming he doesn't return to the NHL someday, he'll finish his career with just 883 points. The list of modern forwards to make the Hall with those sorts of totals isn't zero, but it's not long. And it's made up of guys who either had their careers cut well short by injury (like Eric Lindros) or who won multiple Selkes (like Guy Carbonneau and Bob Gainey). Toews played well over 1,000 games, and despite his reputation as a strong defensive player, he only won the Selke once.

Beyond that, we're left with a player who never won an MVP and was never a first-team All-Star. In fact, he only finished higher than seventh in all-star voting twice. Shouldn't you have to consistently be one of the best half-dozen players at your position to get into the Hall of Fame?

Yes, he was named to the league's all-time top 100 a few years ago, but that entire list was very weird and very wrong in lots of places, and we shouldn't factor it in. And the three Cups are nice, but that's team success. Toews was a very good two-way center who ultimately fell just short of generational greatness, and it's not blasphemy to suggest that the committee shouldn't rubber-stamp his entry.

Do I think he'll get in anyway: He's probably the closest thing to a lock on this list. If anything, Toews is an example of how you can get cute with this stuff — yes he only won one Selke, but he was a finalist three times and had several other years where he was just short. Not beating out Patrice Bergeron for what might as well be called the Patrice Bergeron Award is hardly a candidacy-killer. If Carbonneau is in, Toews should get his own wing.

And finally, what might be the toughest case of them all ... unless you've been on the committee for the last decade or so.

The case against: Alexander Mogilny

Last time, I refused to include an argument against Mogilny because I thought his selection was just too obvious. I still do, and I wrote about that at length as part of the NHL99 project. But clearly, something is keeping him out of the Hall, no matter how many of us outsiders would happily vote for him. We'll

include him as our final name today if only to prove that I'm willing to see the case against players I support.

So let's try this. The two most commonly cited reasons for Mogilny's continued absence from the Hall are that he's Russian, and that he could be kind of jerk. But in a week where we're inducting Datsyuk and Roenick, that can't be the whole story. Is there a legitimate case to be made against Mogilny?

There could be. After all, we're talking about a one-way offensive player who just barely got past the 1,000-point mark, and that's despite playing his prime years in a high-scoring era. He's remembered as a goal scorer, but didn't get to 500. He had that spectacular 76-goal season in 1992-93, but only one other year north of 50 and just one beyond that where he so much as hit 40. He was a wizard with the puck, but it's not the Hall of Highlight Reels, and the numbers aren't that strong.

As for the quite literally league-altering impact he had as the first Soviet star to defect, the committee could see that as an argument for him as a builder, not a player. (They didn't for Václav Nedomanský, but maybe they've changed their minds.)

Maybe Mogilny was just a supremely talented player who simply didn't put up Hall-worthy numbers beyond a peak that was too short. At the very least, it's possible that his fans have fallen into overstating what's still a hit-or-miss case.

Do I think he'll get in anyway: He should, but I'm really starting to wonder.

The Athletic / A tribute to Eric Duhatschek from his friends and colleagues

By The Athletic NHL Staff- November 9, 2024

After 46 years behind a computer (or typewriter), The Athletic's Eric Duhatschek is retiring today. He documented his long and illustrious career in his final Friday notebook column today but we wanted to honor him as well. We reached out to many friends, colleagues and former players and executives he covered to share their memories of Eric and send along well wishes. Here's what they had to say.

I grew up in a day and age where young writers needed mentors and I was lucky enough to have legends like Eric Duhatschek, Jim Matheson, Tony Gallagher, Cam Cole, George Johnson, John Dellapina, Larry Brooks and so many others to look up to and aspire to be like.

The one thing about Eric that I'll never forget is despite my age and greenness, he always treated me like a veteran, from the start of my career to the end of his.

He treated me with the utmost respect and kindness, which is something I never took for granted. I got to watch how respected he was by the people he covered, from the players and coaches to the managers and owners. It showed me the importance of cultivating sources but doing so with grace, hard work and a passion for the game we cover.

Nobody loved this sport more than Eric, and it showed in everything he wrote. He was an incredible reporter and wordsmith. He is a Hall of Famer hockey writer and a Hall of Fame human being and it was an honor for my entire career to read his work, know him as a person and ultimately become his teammate. — Michael Russo, The Athletic

Eric is the standard bearer for integrity and professionalism in journalism.

I've always been impressed by his knowledge of the game and his unique insights into our sport.

But as much as I've enjoyed our conversations about hockey over the years, I will always be grateful to Eric for our friendship and the many meaningful talks we've had about life and family. — Paul Kariya, Hockey Hall of Famer

I had little hockey experience when I moved to cover the Avalanche, and Eric was nothing but good to me from Day 1. He always had time to talk through a story and lend historical insight. This past summer we worked together on a Hall of Fame tiers story in which we went through the NHL rosters and figured out who had a chance to make the Hall of Fame. Spending that time on the phone together was a joy. There's no one better to talk hockey with than Eric Duhatschek. — Peter Baugh, The Athletic

In my nine and a half years as chairman of the Hockey Hall of Fame's board, Eric was one of my all-time favorite people on the selection committee. He was so good, so thorough with all his evaluations with every builder or player. He was fabulous. He was just a straight shooter. He was very good at what he did. He was not afraid to speak his mind regardless of who was in the room. He just called it the way he believed was the right way. I have the greatest respect for how he handled himself and for what he did and accomplished on the selection committee.

He didn't pull any punches even if he was talking to you. He'd say, "You weren't that good tonight." "Oh thanks, Eric." We would laugh and he'd say, "No, seriously." And what's wrong with that? — Lanny McDonald, Hockey Hall of Famer

For my 12th birthday, my Dad came up with a great gift: A subscription to The Hockey News. I used to read it front to back, every week, and my favorite writer in it was the erudite back-page columnist, who

wrote from Calgary, not far from my little hometown. Eric's writing always stood out, right from the beginning.

My first full-time job in the media business, 12 years later, was as an editor at The Globe and Mail, Canada's national newspaper. I couldn't believe it; I was being paid to read (and edit) Eric Duhatschek! I'd made it.

We eventually started doing a hockey podcast together at the newspaper, a show I had to prepare diligently for in order to keep up with Eric's breadth of knowledge. He became a valued colleague and mentor in those years, and it was almost surreal when I was then able to hire him in 2017 to join our fledgling startup at The Athletic.

All of that is to say: Eric's had a tremendous impact on my career, going back more than 30 years, and it's been wonderful watching him continue to work with our young writers these past few years. Congratulations on an amazing run, my friend. — James Mirtle, The Athletic

Congratulations on a truly remarkable career. I can't think of anyone in the business who's more universally respected than you. You deserve every plaudit and Pina colada coming your way.

I know we viewed you as a close and valuable member of The Hockey News' extended family during your many years of contributions. I felt like you cared about THN as if you were a full-time employee, which speaks volumes to your character. Best of luck and happiness on the next leg of your journey. — Jason Kay, former Editor-in-Chief of The Hockey News

Eric Duhatschek is one of my favorite media people that I worked with in my 30-plus years as an NHL assistant general manager and general manager. I enjoyed the times Eric and I did an interview but after the interview we spent an additional 20-30 minutes just talking about the NHL or family. Eric was a true pro in my mind. He had the incredible ability to do his job to cover the story but never crossed the line of trust. He was fair but right on point for his readers.

Eric had incredible passion for the sport and the NHL and his job was a labor of love. Anybody could feel his passion for the NHL and the people in the game. The NHL is a much better place for having Eric as part of the game for many decades. I want to congratulate Eric on an incredible career and wish him the very best. —Ken Holland, Hockey Hall of Fame executive

As a young sports obsessive growing up in western Canada, Eric Duhatschek's work for The Globe and Mail, The Hockey News and Hockey Night in Canada's Satellite Hot Stove was essential material.

His encyclopedic knowledge paired with a conscience and curiosity highlighted the aspects of hockey that make the game special. He often provided a perspective on teams and issues that might otherwise get overlooked in the churn of coverage. This had a defining impact on me and certainly helped inspire my own sports journalism journey.

I cherish the memory of Eric regaling me with story after story from his career one summer afternoon over a few backyard beers in The Athletic's early days. Being his teammate these past few years has been a privilege. All the best in retirement, Eric! — Israel Fehr, The Athletic

Eric will always be considered one of the best to ever cover the game of hockey. He told stories better than most and was always in search of the truth. He has established a legacy built upon trust, respect and fairness. All of these traits are rooted in his passion for the game and for the fans who love the game of hockey. I am happy to be able to call him a friend and I wish him the best in retirement. — Luc Robitaille, Kings president and Hockey Hall of Famer

Our association goes back 40-plus years and I must say that throughout the years, I was always so impressed with Eric's thoroughness and the research on every article. In the coaching fraternity, we value preparation and honesty, two qualities Eric's definitely exhibited on such a consistent basis. I'm sure I can speak on behalf of many coaches you have dealt with in saying that your class and ethical approach to journalism is much appreciated. Enjoy an active retirement! — Dave King, longtime NHL coach

Eric was one of the first newspaper columnists in Canada to embrace the opportunity digital media allowed for breaking and/or reacting to news. Also, it never ceased to amaze me The Hat's memory of moments he had covered in hockey or conversations he had had with a league executive, coach or player. That allowed him to provide a unique perspective to his readers. Finally, he's been a pro's pro as a hockey journalist and never losing the humility that endeared him with his peers and people in the game. — Steve McAllister, former Globe and Mail sports editor

I love reading Eric's work. I love his mix of reporting and insight that only comes from someone immersed in the game. I'll definitely miss that. But, as much pleasure as diving into a weekly Duhatschek column gave me, nothing made me happier than running into him on the road when we were both covering the league. As everyone knows, the road can be a grind. Sometimes, it can be lonely. But I cherish the memories of hitting a dinner with Eric and spending the rest of the night talking music or hearing stories about people we both crossed paths with through the years. Or maybe even trying to sneak into a nearby concert if we were feeling especially, um, brave. I can still hear his big laugh over the sounds of a dive bar on the road. Man, what a run he had. — Craig Culance, The Athletic

My parents were longtime subscribers to the Saturday edition of the Globe and Mail. Each Saturday morning, I'd rush to the front door, grab the paper, pull out the sports section and look for Eric's story. There was always something intriguing to read about from a proposed rule change to thoughts on divisional realignment to a neat tidbit or anecdote from a player or executive. Eric had his pulse on the league and had a knack for having that come through in his writing.

Never could I have ever imagined I'd end up being Eric's colleague. I wasn't disappointed. Eric treated me like we'd been working together for years. He valued my opinions and sought my advice on story ideas with which I was more familiar. I was so fortunate I could bounce ideas off him or get advice for the right source on a particular piece. Being Eric's teammate was one of the greatest thrills of my career. Wishing Eric and Lisa all the best in their next chapter together and many years of beautiful, extra-long Ontario cottage-country summers ahead. — Daniel Nugent-Bowman, The Athletic

"Trust" is the word that comes to mind with Eric, and what better word for a journalist? Readers could always trust that Eric's stories would be fair, accurate, well-reasoned, insightful and witty. Editors could always trust in Eric's diligence and professionalism. Those who played, coached and managed hockey could always trust in Eric's respect for them and for the sport, and trust in his dedication to telling stories that mattered. Beyond all that, Eric, we'll miss your deep kindness and good nature, and we'll do our best to maintain the high standards you helped establish. — Rich Hammond, The Athletic

The first time I met Eric, it was because he'd accepted my starry-eyed fan invitation to dinner before a Jets game. We shared a meal and a pint, he graciously spun yarn and asked questions and got into some music discussion, and then when the bill came: I couldn't find my wallet. I tapped one pocket and then the next, furiously trying to conjure cash or cards while hoping he didn't notice, until eventually I couldn't stall any longer.

"I'm sorry, Eric, I think I must have left my wallet in my car." I stand up. I make him wait. I walk across the street to the spot I parked my car, unlock it, and frantically check the seats, floor mats, and centre console. Finding nothing, I consider driving away and resigning, but then skulk back to the restaurant

where our literal Hall of Famer is forced to pay for my burger and fries... and side salad. And beer. If he was as annoyed as I'd have been in his shoes, he didn't show it, but I think of Eric as someone known for his class and he showed it that day. Thank you for that grace, congratulations on an epic career, and all the best in retirement. — Murat Ates, The Athletic

Eric was Calgary's first true hockey insider. In a way, I think he was a strong inspiration for me to pursue a career in sports journalism.

I got to meet Eric when I was a varsity reporter at the University of Calgary's Gauntlet newspaper. I was covering a Flames event and was knocked off-balance a bit when Duhatschek came over, introduced himself and included me in a conversation he had been having with other reporters Steve Simmons and George Johnston. It was a sublimely subtle welcome to the fraternity I didn't expect, but certainly appreciated and never forgot.

A couple years later when I was working for the Swift Current Sun, I took a page from Duhatschek's playbook when I suggested to the WHL Broncos that I faux "tryout" for the major junior team while providing inside-the-room reporting. Team executives loved the idea, but it was quickly kiboshed by coach-GM Graham James. So much for that idea, Hat!

Duhatschek and I met up again in 1990 when I started working at The Hockey News and he was our Flames correspondent and weekly columnist. It was an enjoyable working relationship that spanned decades and we naturally talked about his travels, his son and daughter, his family in Ontario and mine in Calgary. There was often a friendly battle at the THN editing desk when it came to who got dibs on working with Hat.

I've always admired Duhatschek for being the sage and foremost voice of reason on hockey topics far and wide. What a career you had Eric. You've been a true inspiration for a lot of us. Take a bow. — Brian Costello, The Hockey News

The Athletic / After 46 years as a sportswriter, Eric Duhatschek is signing off

By Eric Duhatschek- November 9, 2024

This is how it all began for me professionally: Summer of 1978. Recently graduated from the University of Western Ontario's journalism school. Trying to cobble together a living, freelancing for the Toronto Sun in sports and the Toronto Star in news, but looking for full-time work. I had job applications all over Canada, and one day, the telephone rang at my parents' home in Scarborough, Ont. It was Lynn Watson, sports editor of the Calgary Albertan. He was looking for a ski writer. He'd read my clips and was interested. Did I know anything about skiing?

I noted that my parents had emigrated to Canada from Austria, and I'd been skiing since 10. But then I had a question: How come he needed a kid from Eastern Canada to cover skiing when Calgary was less than an hour from Banff? I thought there'd be a lineup out the door looking for that job, especially since this was the heyday of the great Canadian men's downhill team. The Crazy Canucks were turning the European-centered ski world upside down.

"All my guys want to do is cover curling," Watson said. I laughed because, of course, I thought he was joking. He wasn't kidding. It turns out, he had an older staff and curling was an easy sport to cover – indoors, sometimes, from the arena bar at the local bonspiel, where the winning skip would come over and buy reporters a drink. Skiing meant going outdoors, in the snow and cold. I remember babbling about how much I really wanted that job, and, probably, my enthusiasm won him over because he offered me the job. Weeks later, I was packing all my belongings into my car before spending three and a half days driving from Ontario to Alberta, wondering what the future might hold.

That was almost half a century ago.

That was the start for me. This is the end.

After 46 years (and a couple of months) of working full-time as a sportswriter, I'm retiring.

It's been a great, almost overwhelming ride. At The Albertan, even though I was the junior member of the staff, I got a chance to cover the 1980 Winter Olympics in Lake Placid, N.Y., because Calgary's Ken Read was the favorite in the men's downhill. And because I was going anyway, I was assigned to cover the 1980 Canadian Olympic hockey team. I traveled with them everywhere – that's how newspapers operated back in the day. The pre-Olympic tournament in Lake Placid. Three games against Herb Brooks' U.S. team in Calgary. Three others in the U.S.

I saw the U.S. men's team play seven times before the Olympics, so when the Canadian team was eliminated, I veered over to cover the final two games of the tournament and accidentally was in place to cover one of the seminal sporting events of the 20th century, the Miracle on Ice.

How different were things in the beginning? We worked on typewriters (manual, not electric) in the newsroom. We took notes by hand. My journalism school made typing and shorthand mandatory courses. I truly believe I had some early success in the business because of the accuracy of my note-taking.

The year the Flames arrived in Calgary, The Albertan folded and was replaced by the Sun. Management sent out a new editor from Toronto who believed in participatory journalism (popularized by George Plimpton). Accordingly, he asked me to try out for the Flames, and much to my surprise, the general manager, Cliff Fletcher, agreed. So yes, that was me, doing the fitness testing and then going on the ice with the Flames during their first training camp in 1980. They had us go through the testing, two-by-two,

and my partner was Paul Reinhart, one of the few players whom I knew beforehand (I'd met him the summer before when he was at camp with the Olympic team).

Fitness testing wasn't much of an issue for me – I was a reasonably accomplished runner – though the strength tests were a bit of an embarrassment. Paul, whose son, Sam, is a star for the Florida Panthers, crushed me in the strength tests, but I did OK in the run, the sit-ups, and the VO2, which was cutting-edge stuff at the time. Going on the ice was another matter. It didn't take long to realize I was in way over my head the first day. You really need to get down to ice level if you want to experience the difference between a beer league player and an NHLer. Kent Nilsson was a marvel – the only nickname I ever gave a player that actually stuck was for Kent: The Magic Man. He scored 131 points that year, still a Flames single-season record. Soon after the three-part series ran in the newspaper, I accepted an offer from the Herald, Calgary's more established afternoon broadsheet. Their approach seemed more suited to my voice and my approach to journalism. That turned out to be a great decision.

In 1980, Eric Duhatschek tried out for the Calgary Flames.

In my 20 years at the Herald, I covered world hockey championships in Vienna and Zurich, made trips to the Soviet Union in 1987 for the Izvestia tournament and in 1989, on the Friendship Tour with the Calgary Flames, covered games in Prague, Kyiv, St. Petersburg and Moscow. When the expansion Tampa Bay Lightning joined the NHL and played one season at the Thunderdome, that was my standard joke for a few years – that I'd covered hockey from St. Petersburg, Russia, to St. Petersburg, Fla., and hundreds of places in between. The Herald sent me to Japan to cover the 1998 Nagano Olympics, the first time NHL pros were allowed to participate. Later, with The Globe and Mail, I got a chance to write the lead story for the three gold medals the Canadian men won in 2002, 2010 and 2014. I wasn't assigned to Turin in 2006, so you can't pin that loss on me.

But journalism isn't all celebratory, either. There were some really hard moments: the Swift Current bus crash, the Humboldt Broncos bus crash, the deaths of George Pelawa and Steve Chiasson.

None was more personally and professionally challenging than the events of September 2011. I'd been admitted to the hospital in Calgary with a collapsed lung that stubbornly refused to heal. It was determined that I needed major surgery, a thoracotomy. While I was preparing for that operation, the plane carrying the Lokomotiv hockey team crashed in Russia, killing almost everyone aboard, including Brad McCrimmon, who had become a friend over the years. That spring, I'd seen Brad postgame after a Detroit-Phoenix playoff game. He introduced me to his parents that night and mentioned the possibility of a new adventure in the fall. I'd previously written a book about hockey in Russia a few years prior with Dave King, the first Canadian to coach in what was then called the Russian Super League.

One of the things Dave highlighted in the book was the perilous nature of air travel in Russia during his tenure with Magnitogorsk. My office, knowing I had a relationship with both Brad and Dave, wondered if I could write the story. I don't think they knew exactly how challenging that might be, in a hospital bed, with three tubes surgically implanted in my chest. But I agreed. I talked to Dave. We both got a little emotional talking about Brad, this incredibly interesting, complicated, salt-of-the-earth human being, and somehow, I managed to get some words on the page and a column filed. I was on medical leave for three months before I was healthy enough to return to work. I can honestly say that the memory of McCrimmon was the single biggest inspiration that got me through those challenging times.

Back when I was attending high school in Toronto, I once wrote an essay for Mr. O'Reilly's English class. I think it was probably Grade 11. The assignment was "What would be your ideal job?" My answer was hockey writer for the Toronto Star. I also knew how impossible that would be. A pipedream. Because in those days, there were only three NHL teams in Canada – Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. Toronto had three newspapers, and each had two full-time hockey writers, plus columnists covering the teams. But I

could do the math. There might be 10 to 12 jobs in the entire country for a hockey writer. The odds were better to make it to the NHL as a player than as someone covering the sport. So that was a whimsical notion.

If you'd told 15-year-old me that I would eventually land one of those jobs, I would not have believed it. But then, the 15-year-old me couldn't have imagined all the other blessings that came to me professionally over time. The friendships I've developed, working with so many talented, interesting colleagues. Jim Matheson. Michael Farber. George Johnson. David Shoalts. Too many to name. The places I've had a chance to visit, usually on the company dime.

I like to tell one story all the time, to amuse my younger colleagues, of how generous things used to be in the early days. I'd just joined the Herald, hired by a fine man named George Bilych. One day, George was explaining to me the expense account policy at the Herald. "We want you to live on the road the same way you do at home. If you have a glass of wine with dinner at home, have a glass of wine with dinner on the road. Just expense it. If you go to shows at home, go to a show on the road. Just expense it."

So, first trip to New York, and a colleague at the Calgary Sun, Steve Simmons, said: "Let's go to a Broadway show." I had no idea about theatre in New York at this point, but Steve did, and he recommended we see a revival of "42nd Street," starring Jerry Orbach (long before Orbach became known for his television work). Tickets were a pricey \$50 U.S. a pop. In 1980. But we went and enjoyed the show immensely. When I got home, I dutifully filed my expenses. Sure enough, a week later, the expense account was approved, every last item.

And so, for most of that first decade, as long as George was in charge, the Herald paid for dinner and a show, and there were lots of them over the years. I always found something interesting to do wherever I traveled in North America, and if you happened to land in Tampa Bay a day early and Jimmy Buffett happened to be in town, well, you know who was first in line at the box office.

Eric Duhatschek and Lisa Dillman writing on deadline in the Flames' media room.

But the attraction of the job in the early days wasn't just the generous expense accounts or the bars, restaurants, concerts and beaches that you visited.

In the years I traveled with the Flames, I took the same flights, stayed at the same hotels and rode on the team bus. The travel secretary – for the longest time, the wonderful Al Coates – would hand me a boarding card, just as he did the rest of the team. Often, I'd find myself sitting next to a player. Those flights across the country were long, and this was an excellent way of getting to know a player outside the rink.

Traveling with a team allowed you to observe how everyone interacted with one another. Sometimes, the details of a person's life that you picked up in casual conversation could often be an entry point of a story, when you finally got around to profiling them. You needed to gain their trust, but you always needed to keep them at arm's length. And every time you wrote something they didn't like, you heard about it, usually the next day. But then you'd clear the air, and on you went.

That was one of the best things about the job. It took you everywhere. Sometimes, you knew you were witnessing history. Other times, it came as a complete surprise. I was at the final game played by the Colorado Rockies (April 3, 1982, against Calgary). I was at the first home game played by the San Jose Sharks (Oct. 5, 1991). I was there, in Florida, the night the Panthers defeated the Flames 4-3 in their home opener and Scott Mellanby scored twice. Afterward, Panthers goalie John Vanbiesbrouck noted how, just before the game, a rat had scurried across the dressing room floor in the old Miami Arena, and Mellanby, who had his stick with him, sent it splattering against the wall, with a quick flip of his wrist.

Not a hat trick, but a “rat trick.” When the Panthers unexpectedly made the Stanley Cup Final later that season, plastic rats rained down on the ice surface after Florida goals, a tradition that continues today.

By the mid-1990s, I was still covering the Flames but writing more bigger-picture stories and features. Before games in Calgary, I often sat at the same table as the team’s doctors: Nick Mohtadi, whose amateur tennis career I had chronicled two decades earlier, and Winne Meeuwisse, who, at the time, was head of the NHL’s physician society.

One night, Winne mentioned a possible story idea: That he and every other NHL team doctor were meeting at the 1997 All-Star Game in San Jose to discuss concussion protocols. Ultimately, that meeting resulted in the NHL establishing concussion baseline testing. I remember writing the story and also sending a file to Sports Illustrated (because I was one of their hockey stringers in those days) on what I thought was an important, developing story. I wrote a lot about concussions in the mid-to-late 1990s before the issue really sunk into the public consciousness. I’m heartened that just last week, the NHLPA, under Marty Walsh’s leadership, formed a chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) advisory committee to further pursue this important work.

Beyond all the files I sent to SI over the years, I also spent 25 years writing for The Hockey News, first just the weekly Calgary files, and then, ultimately, graduating to the back-page column. In those days, The Hockey News was the sport’s bible. It would arrive weekly at the Canadian embassy in Moscow in the diplomatic pouch. The first time I introduced myself to Igor Larionov, he said he knew who I was and recognized me instantly from my column picture in The Hockey News. Its reach was so wide back then that it even got referenced in the movie “Slap Shot.”

Primarily, Steve Dryden and Jason Kay were my editors at The Hockey News, and I’ll never forget how Steve generously fed me extra assignments during a challenging eight-month period between November 1999 and June 2000 when my newspaper went on strike and I was earning \$10 per hour in strike pay in exchange for 20 hours of picketing duty each week. Except for game nights, I mostly chose to walk the 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. shift, so I could get after my supplementary freelance work during the day. That was a cold Calgary winter.

I always considered myself a newspaperman at heart, but over time, I found there were opportunities to do both radio and television work on the side. For years, my favorite host on Calgary radio was Rob Kerr. Among other things, Rob reunited Al Morganti and me on the East-West Hot Stove.

Then there was a period of time, for more than a decade, that my friend John Shannon had me on the “Hockey Night In Canada” segment Satellite Hot Stove. The Satellite Hot Stove was John’s brainchild. It appeared in the second intermission of the first game of the HNIC’s doubleheader, and it linked four people – the host Ron MacLean, and usually John Davidson in New York, Al Strachan in Toronto and me in Calgary – via satellite. Sometimes, we did a pre-tape. Sometimes, we went live. It was part analysis, part gossip, and the segment proved wildly popular.

The chemistry was good, and people seemed to enjoy the back-and-forth banter. It was eight minutes of TV, once a week, and maybe you’d get to contribute about two minutes worth of conversation in every segment. In the meantime, I’d be writing five columns a week at my primary job. And yet, during those years, often, whenever I’d run into someone who’d recognize me, it would be the TV appearances they’d comment on, not the work I was doing in print. It was sobering to realize how much the power of television could trump that of the written word.

Probably the most unexpected event in my professional life came in 2001 when I won the Elmer Ferguson Award, which is how the Hockey Hall of Fame honors journalists. I was just 45 at the time, the youngest ever to win the award, so I was completely caught unawares, and maybe even a little sheepish.

Ultimately, the fact that I received the award while my father was still alive meant the world to me and to my mom. The 15 years I spent on the Hockey Hall of Fame selection committee – from 2004 to 2018 – provided some of the most stimulating hockey conversations I'd ever been involved in. Those annual June meetings were stressful, exhilarating and stimulating. Term limits, which I believe in, meant I couldn't serve beyond 2018, and I miss those meetings every year.

The Hall of Fame selection committee, around 2010. Among the people here: Lanny McDonald, Igor Larionov, Michael Farber, Bill Hay and Pierre Pilote.

Here's something not everybody knows about me. When I began school, I couldn't speak a word of English. We spoke only German at home, as my parents were also in the process of learning a new language after arriving in Canada. The fact that I ended up making a living writing in what is effectively my second language is the thing I take the most pride in.

I'm not sure exactly what the future holds for me. I still get asked to appear on radio shows and podcasts occasionally. If the requests continue, I'll probably keep saying yes. Many people have told me you can always write books – and maybe that's a possibility in the future. But my standard answer today is I want to take a break from writing about sports. That's the whole point of retiring. If I wanted to continue writing sports, I would stay right here at The Athletic.

I can't stress this point enough. This has been a wonderful final act for me.

When I joined back in September 2017, it was at the urging of James Mirtle. I owe James a lot. We were colleagues together at The Globe and Mail for years. In November 2016, I was in Toronto for the Hockey Hall of Fame induction ceremonies, and James and I met for a drink. He told me he'd resigned from The Globe that day. He'd been offered a chance to lead The Athletic's expansion into Canada. At some point, he wanted me along for the ride. He didn't have anything firm to offer right then because it was early days, but 10 months later, things were moving fast and he wanted to put me in touch with company co-founder Adam Hansmann to make a formal offer.

His pitch: Did I have one more professional act left in me? James sold me on the energy of a startup and the idea that everything was on the table. If something worked, great. If it didn't, we'd try something else. I signed a two-year contract, and before you knew it, two years turned into seven. I had a chance to work with so many of the brightest up-and-comers in the industry and have collaborated with many of them over the years. That's been fun, and revitalizing.

So, I'll end there. I want to thank everyone who read my work over the years – the ones who liked my storytelling and even the ones who didn't. If you'd told that teenage wanna-be sportswriter that this would be how his professional life would turn out, he wouldn't have believed it.

Even today, the aging adult version can't believe it, either.

The Athletic / Shea Weber, David Poile enter Hall of Fame together on good terms after lengthy rift over trade, offer sheet

By Pierre LeBrun- November 9, 2024

Proving that time does indeed heal wounds, Shea Weber smiled when he realized last June that his old general manager would be entering the Hockey Hall of Fame with him.

“Definitely. I kind of chuckled at first,” Weber told The Athletic this week.

What a moment coming up for the Nashville Predators, the same night their first GM and longtime architect David Poile goes into the HHOF, he gets to stand alongside one of his greatest draft picks.

“On Monday night, Shea will be the first Predators-drafted player inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame,” Poile told The Athletic this week over the phone from Nashville. “It’s amazing”

“I’m kind of speechless,” Weber said.

The symmetry of having the two go in together is obvious. What’s not as much is the journey both had to travel to find each other again after eight years ago, Weber was blindsided by the blockbuster trade that sent him from Nashville to the Montreal Canadiens for P.K. Subban.

“It was a tough situation, to be honest, being there for 11 years and being the captain of the team and pouring my heart and soul into that organization ... and kind of getting flipped without even a head’s up,” Weber said. “It was pretty hard. It stuck with me for a long time.”

Induction night will cap the reconciliation.

“A lot of time has passed,” Weber said. “We’ve chatted multiple times since then.”

And if everyone is being honest, it’s not like blind loyalty was a one-way street. Poile was the one who felt knocked off his chair four years before the trade when he found out in July 2012 that Weber had signed a 14-year, \$110 million offer sheet with the Philadelphia Flyers.

“Yes, you’re exactly right,” Poile said.

“Oh definitely, I can see that from his side as well,” Weber said. “Obviously, negotiations weren’t really going — what we felt — fairly. And that’s how that came about. But I can definitely see that from his side as well.”

Looking back, there’s a part of Poile that wishes he never traded Weber, but at the time in 2016, he felt immense pressure to do something big for a team that couldn’t get over the hump.

“Our team had been so good for a lot of years,” Poile said. “We were right there. It just felt (like) we were kind of reaching the end there, and I thought something really drastic needed to be done to shake up the core of the team. Obviously, Shea Weber was not anything close to my first thought on that. But it happened.”

The part left unsaid, but I will fill in the blanks, is that once that offer sheet was signed, the idea that Weber was untouchable was also no longer true.

“Sometimes it happens, when you’re trying to chase higher levels to win playoff rounds to compete for the Stanley Cup, you have to make some changes,” Poile said of the trade with Montreal. “I think it worked out for both sides. But it’s still ... part of me felt he should have never left. I’m the one who did it, but I still felt that.”

It's a counterintuitive sentiment, similar to how Weber felt when he signed the Flyers' offer sheet. He was hoping Nashville would match and it would be a means to an end.

"That was my intention, for sure," Weber said.

The whole exercise was about getting the kind of contract he felt he deserved, and few around the league at the time would argue his place among the top defenders. (This is a good time to point out again that it's beyond ridiculous that Weber never won a Norris Trophy during his peak years in Nashville. He was a finalist three times and the runner-up twice.)

Four years after that offer sheet, just as Weber felt his team was about to take that next step, he was dealt.

"I get traded and they go to the Cup Final," Weber said with a laugh he can now allow, looking back. "We built it up all that time, I was like, 'OK, we're right there.' We lost to San Jose in Game 7 (in the second round in 2015-16). I was like, 'Frig, we're right there.' And then I was gone. And they went to the Cup Final.

"But I was happy for the guys that I played with because they deserved that success and a chance for the Stanley Cup."

Poile pointed out an irony in the trade: how what he loved as GM was drafting and developing players and having them grow up the Predator way.

"And yet, here I sit as the guy who has made the most trades ever in the National Hockey League," laughed Poile. "That's the business."

Added Weber: "It's part of the business. No matter how hard it is, it's what he felt was best for his team. It doesn't take away from the hurt, but that's the way the business goes."

After many years of a cold relationship, a thaw began in February of 2022, when Weber chatted with Poile during the celebration of Pekka Rinne's jersey retirement.

"Yes, I wanted to do it, we needed to talk," Poile said.

They've been in a much better place since.

And as Weber pointed out, his time in Montreal was amazing, being captain of such a storied franchise.

"I was fortunate enough to go to a great place with great fans and get so close to winning the ultimate goal there in Montreal," he said of the trip to the 2021 Cup Final, which as it turns out, was the last hockey he would play, his body finally giving out.

Looking back, an argument can be made that the Weber offer sheet also had a silver lining for the Predators.

"There's no question about that," Poile said. "When that happened, I walked into ownership's office and said, 'What are we going to be? Are we competing for the Cup?' We said that will never happen again.

"That was a turning point. As bad as the offer sheet was, it lit a fire under everybody, from our ownership all the way down. You can see how aggressive we've been (since) and how competitive we've been.

"You see what Barry (Trotz) did this past offseason. The proof has been in the actions from management and ownership since that offer sheet has taken place."

Weber also pondered that point when asked about it in retrospect. The Predators' adopting an all-in approach, parting with their frugal ways and becoming a destination franchise for free agents all can be seen as a reaction to the offer sheet.

"You would need to talk to David about that, but they signed Pekka to that seven-year deal right after that, before he even had a chance (to go to market) — so maybe that was in their mind: 'We're going to have to step up and pay these guys to have them,'" Weber said. "There's not many guys that I talk to who wouldn't want to play there. Guys love Nashville. They love playing there. As you saw last summer, guys will take a chance and go there."

Either way, it's water under the bridge for Weber and Poile.

"We are at a point now, especially with both of us going in (the HHOF) together, I'm appreciative of everything he did for me," Weber said. "As much as the trade happened, I would have never had a chance without them. They drafted me. They believed in me. They gave me a chance to play and play a lot.

"Without (Poile) and Barry Trotz and the Nashville Predators, like I don't know what I would have been, and I definitely don't think we'd be where we are today. I definitely am very, very grateful, not just to play for their team but going to a city when I was 20 years old when I got there and spent 11 years there and it became like a second home. Just an amazing city with great fans."

A homegrown Predator is going into the HHOF.

Beyond amazing, Poile said.

"Shea grew up here. He left here married with kids and the captain of our team," he said. "Shea is clearly a Predator, in my mind, and he's welcome here in Nashville any time."

The Athletic / NHL predictions 2.0: New Stanley Cup favorite, surprise Hart Trophy front-runner and more

By The Athletic NHL Staff- November 10, 2024

How much could have changed in a month?

Ask the Edmonton Oilers. When The Athletic polled its NHL staff for 2024-25 predictions in the preseason, Connor McDavid was the prohibitive favorite for the Hart Trophy, and his team was the front-runner to win the Stanley Cup.

Now? Well, the Oilers are the top pick in another category, but it's not a good one. A new team takes the top spot for who we think will win it all, and another Western Conference superstar — who didn't get any votes in the preseason — is our Hart Trophy pick.

What else has changed? This week, we polled staffers on the same set of questions we asked in the preseason. Here's how our expectations for 2024-25 have already evolved, with expert analysis and critique from senior writers James Mirtle and Sean Gentile, analytics know-it-all Shayna Goldman and NHL betting expert Jesse Granger.

Who will win the Stanley Cup?

Dallas Stars

21.4%

38.7%

Florida Panthers

0.0%

19.4%

New York Rangers

7.1%

16.1%

Carolina Hurricanes

3.6%

12.9%

Edmonton Oilers

46.4%

9.7%

Vegas Golden Knights

0.0%

3.2%

Toronto Maple Leafs

10.7%

0.0%

New Jersey Devils

7.1%

0.0%

Colorado Avalanche

3.6%

0.0%

Goldman: The Stars are the quietly effective, balanced team of all of our dreams. It's no surprise to see them at the top here — especially after the Oilers have gotten off to another iffy start. It's not as dramatic or dire as last year, but they aren't inspiring a ton of confidence yet.

Granger: I personally chose the Rangers, but it's hard to argue with any of the top three picks here. The Stars are as complete of a team as there is in the league right now, and the Rangers and Panthers look like they're in their own tier in the East, at least early.

Gentile: I rarely bail on my preseason Cup picks period, let alone after a month, but I'm concerned enough with Stuart Skinner to deviate from protocol. Hello, Dallas.

Mirtle: I have company with the 'Canes now! A 10-2-0 start, offensive explosion (more than four goals per game) and Martin Nečas arriving certainly help embiggen their case.

THIS MAN CAN'T BE STOPPED!!! pic.twitter.com/EZW21YE58t

— Carolina Hurricanes (@Canes) November 6, 2024

Who will be the runners-up?

New York Rangers

42.9%

35.5%

Dallas Stars

7.1%

12.9%

Winnipeg Jets

0.0%

12.9%

Vegas Golden Knights

0.0%

9.7%

Edmonton Oilers

10.7%

6.5%

Tampa Bay Lightning

0.0%

6.5%

New Jersey Devils

14.3%

3.2%

Colorado Avalanche

10.7%

3.2%

Toronto Maple Leafs

7.1%

3.2%

Florida Panthers

7.1%

3.2%

Vancouver Canucks

0.0%

3.2%

Goldman: Apparently it's win or bust for the Hurricanes and Panthers! I went with the Lightning here, who look a lot stronger than the last couple of seasons. With a pair of seconds and fourths in the 2025 draft, management should be able to address their depth — as long as they don't spend all their picks on a player like, I don't know, Tanner Jeannot.

Granger: It's interesting to see how little the faith in Edmonton has wavered after the 6-7-1 start, both in this poll and in the betting odds. The Oilers are still the favorites to win the Cup at +700 despite currently sitting in fifth place in the Pacific Division standings with the third-fewest goals scored per 60 minutes.

Gentile: Yeah, I'm sticking with the Rangers here. They've got an elite goaltender in Igor Shesterkin, a Hart candidate in Artemi Panarin and enough five-on-five substance to keep me on the train.

Mirtle: No one be-Leafs anymore, after a tepid eight wins in 15 games start. (I don't blame them.) I went with the Jets here, as with Connor Hellebuyck this dialed in, they could have a nice run.

Who will finish in last place?

San Jose Sharks

64.3%

80.6%

Anaheim Ducks

10.7%

6.5%

Chicago Blackhawks

0.0%

6.5%

Montreal Canadiens

0.0%

3.2%

Seattle Kraken

0.0%

3.2%

Columbus Blue Jackets

25.0%

0.0%

Goldman: The Sharks, even without Macklin Celebrini, have had some interesting games lately ... but we all know where their season is going. The big difference between them and the Ducks? Lukáš Dostál.

Granger: I thought the Sharks would be significantly better this season, and so far that's proven to be very wrong. They obviously don't have the talent to compete with the best teams, but they also sit back so passively on defense, letting teams pass the puck around the outside almost as if they're on a power play for the majority of the game.

Gentile: San Jose needs to call up Yaroslav Askarov (.950 save percentage in his first six AHL games) to make this one interesting.

Mirtle: The Habs might make this one interesting if they keep playing this way defensively. Two wins in their last 11 games doesn't look like a blip.

Who will be the biggest disappointment?

Must be projected at 100-plus points by Dom Luszczyszyn's model at the start of the season. Projected point total in parentheses.

Edmonton Oilers (110.2 points)

0.0%

35.5%

Colorado Avalanche (103.8 points)

0.0%

32.3%

Vancouver Canucks (105.3 points)

21.4%

22.6%

Toronto Maple Leafs (108.8 points)

14.3%

9.7%

Carolina Hurricanes (103.1 points)

42.9%

0.0%

Florida Panthers (104.7 points)

7.1%

0.0%

Dallas Stars (105.6 points)

7.1%

0.0%

New York Rangers (101.8 points)

7.1%

0.0%

Granger: The top three teams are all in this spot thanks to subpar goaltending. The difference between the three is that Alexandar Georgiev and Skinner have long enough track records for me to believe they'll eventually regress back to being league-average goalies. Meanwhile, it's looking less likely Thatcher Demko is stepping through that door to save the Canucks, so I'm most worried about Vancouver.

Mirtle: No love for Kevin Lankinen! He's been excellent, and the Canucks' underlying numbers are solid. Their backup is hurting them (.797 save percentage for Artūrs Šilovs), but with Demko joining the main group at practice this week, they could be fine?

Granger: You might be right. Maybe I'm not giving Lankinen enough credit. He was excellent against the Kings on Thursday, and his numbers are great. I'm still a bit skeptical that will continue for an entire season, but if Demko returns soon it'll change my mind in a hurry.

Gentile: Carolina is currently playing at a 137-point pace. Whoops!

Goldman: The Oilers bounced back from worse last year, so maybe that's why I am not super worried there. Maybe the Maple Leafs should be higher. Or we all expect them to disappoint us, so it wouldn't be a surprise if it happened.

Who's your dark horse Cup contender?

Must be projected as a middle-of-the-pack team, between 85 and 100 points by Dom's model at the start of the season. Projected point total in parentheses.

New Jersey Devils (99.4 points)

53.6%

22.6%

Winnipeg Jets (97.7 points)

0.0%

22.6%

Tampa Bay Lightning (97.0 points)

14.3%

19.4%

Vegas Golden Knights (96.1 points)

3.6%

19.4%

Minnesota Wild (91.7 points)

3.6%

9.7%

Washington Capitals (85.5 points)

0.0%

3.2%

Ottawa Senators (90.0 points)

0.0%

3.2%

Nashville Predators (97.7 points)

14.3%

0.0%

Boston Bruins (97.5 points)

7.1%

0.0%

New York Islanders (96.7 points)

3.6%

0.0%

Goldman: The Wild and Capitals have gotten off to better-than-expected starts, which makes them dark-horse playoff teams. But contenders? I don't think anyone sees them standing in the final four in the spring. That's what separates them from the Jets, Devils, Lightning and Golden Knights.

Granger: I'm still alone on the Senators bandwagon, but I'm still comfortable despite the middling start. Ottawa is scoring at a good pace, and the goaltending has been better than the numbers suggest. They're not as good as Tampa Bay or Vegas, but I find it hard to consider them dark horses.

Gentile: The Lightning are a bit of a riser here, which makes sense. They're getting secondary production from their forwards, and that was a huge issue for them last season.

Mirtle: Sticking with Vegas. They're riding a shooting percentage bender, sure, but offense sure doesn't look like it'll be the issue some thought it was this season. Pavel Dorofeyev has arrived.

Pav got us going!!! 📷 pic.twitter.com/G1kdbFZagh

— Vegas Golden Knights (@GoldenKnights) November 3, 2024

Who's your surprise playoff team?

Must be projected below 85 points by Dom's model at the start of the season. Projected point total in parentheses.

St. Louis Blues (81.8 points)

28.6%

35.5%

Calgary Flames (79.0 points)

0.0%

35.5%

Detroit Red Wings (81.1 points)

50.0%

16.1%

Columbus Blue Jackets (68.7 points)

0.0%

12.9%

Philadelphia Flyers (82.1 points)

10.7%

0.0%

Anaheim Ducks (70.4 points)

7.1%

0.0%

Montreal Canadiens (80.6 points)

3.6%

0.0%

Granger: The Flames are playing some fun, high-event hockey, and both Dustin Wolf and Dan Vladar are off to good starts in net. More than anything, I just think the Pacific Division is the easiest to earn a playoff spot in.

Gentile: Ideally, we could've left this one blank, but I can see the Blues making a run once Robert Thomas is back in the lineup.

Mirtle: Yeah, this really feels like none of the above at this point. Good for Columbus, though; finally feels like they're building something interesting there. They've been fun to watch.

Goldman: The door should be open for Detroit here with the Islanders, Penguins and Bruins all going through it, but ... nope, the vibes are simply off there as well.

Who will be the first coach fired?

Derek Lalonde, Detroit Red Wings

21.4%

35.5%

Jim Montgomery, Boston Bruins

7.1%

29.0%

Mike Sullivan, Pittsburgh Penguins

21.4%

19.4%

Andrew Brunette, Nashville Predators

0.0%

9.7%

Martin St. Louis, Montreal Canadiens

3.6%

3.2%

Lindy Ruff, Buffalo Sabres

0.0%

3.2%

John Hynes, Minnesota Wild

10.7%

0.0%

Travis Green, Ottawa Senators

7.1%

0.0%

Drew Bannister, St. Louis Blues

3.6%

0.0%

Peter Laviolette, New York Rangers

3.6%

0.0%

Ryan Huska, Calgary Flames

3.6%

0.0%

Jim Hiller, Los Angeles Kings

3.6%

0.0%

Luke Richardson, Chicago Blackhawks

3.6%

0.0%

Greg Cronin, Anaheim Ducks

3.6%

0.0%

Patrick Roy, New York Islanders

3.6%

0.0%

John Tortorella, Philadelphia Flyers

3.6%

0.0%

Goldman: There is a good case to make for any of the top three names here. Mike Sullivan would be purely for a change of direction. A team with Derek Lalonde at the helm shouldn't be this bad defensively. But I personally went with Jim Montgomery. The Bruins look lost in the early goings of the season and are seeing their playoff chances trend down by the day at this point.

Gentile: Gotta say, I did not expect to see Montgomery challenging for the crown here. I still think it's Lalonde, though. If Detroit's power play goes cold for a protracted amount of time, things are gonna get ugly in a hurry.

Mirtle: I second Montgomery. It's not so much Boston's record, which isn't great. They've been as bad defensively as we've seen in ... 20 years? And even David Pastrňák looks out of sorts now.

East playoff field

We asked each voter to pick the eight East playoff teams. Here is the percentage of the votes received by each team.

New York Rangers *

100.0%

100.0%

Toronto Maple Leafs *

100.0%

100.0%
Florida Panthers *
96.4%
100.0%
New Jersey Devils
92.9%
100.0%
Carolina Hurricanes *
89.3%
100.0%
Tampa Bay Lightning *
96.4%
96.8%
Washington Capitals *
10.7%
80.6%
Boston Bruins *
92.9%
61.3%
Ottawa Senators
21.4%
35.5%
Detroit Red Wings
28.6%
9.7%
Columbus Blue Jackets
0.0%
6.5%
New York Islanders *
32.1%
3.2%
Buffalo Sabres
17.9%

3.2%

Pittsburgh Penguins

10.7%

3.2%

Philadelphia Flyers

7.1%

0.0%

Montreal Canadiens

3.6%

0.0%

(*-playoff team in 2023-24)

Granger: There seems to be a pretty clear cutoff after the top eight teams, both in these poll results and the betting odds. Boston is still a -135 favorite to make the playoffs despite the slow start, while the next-closest team (Ottawa) is a slight +110 underdog to make it.

Gentile: Eight-for-eight thus far. End the season immediately.

Mirtle: One vote for Ottawa for me. They've looked really good lately and managed to nab some points when Linus Ullmark was out of the lineup. Maybe ease up on those Travis Hamonic minutes a bit, though, Mendes.

Goldman: The East feels somewhat decided besides that eighth seed. Boring!

West playoff field

We asked each voter to pick the eight West playoff teams. Here is the percentage of the votes received by each team.

Dallas Stars *

100.0%

100.0%

Winnipeg Jets *

78.6%

100.0%

Minnesota Wild

28.6%

100.0%

Vegas Golden Knights *

92.9%

96.8%

Edmonton Oilers *

100.0%
93.5%
Colorado Avalanche *
100.0%
93.5%
Vancouver Canucks *
100.0%
80.6%
Los Angeles Kings *
46.4%
67.7%
Nashville Predators *
92.9%
32.3%
Utah Hockey Club
32.1%
12.9%
St. Louis Blues
14.3%
12.9%
Calgary Flames
0.0%
9.7%
Seattle Kraken
14.3%
0.0%
Chicago Blackhawks
0.0%
0.0%
Anaheim Ducks
0.0%
0.0%
San Jose Sharks

0.0%

0.0%

(*-playoff team in 2023-24)

Granger: What a fall for Nashville, from 92.9 percent to 32.3 percent in only a month of hockey. The Predators are still favorites to make the playoffs according to the oddsmakers, though.

Gentile: I love what the Kings are doing. They're a top-10 five-on-five team, and that bodes well for them snagging one of the wild cards, especially given how lost Nashville has looked.

Mirtle: The rise of the Wild could make the West race pretty dull. I have a hard time seeing any of the bottom seven get in at this point. Prove me wrong, Utahns!

Goldman: Time to cancel another trip to Sphere or something to get Nashville back in this race. Utah had a lot of momentum early on and wow, did it fade quickly.

Hart Trophy

Given to the player judged to be the most valuable to his team. Voted on by the Professional Hockey Writers Association (PHWA).

Kirill Kaprizov

0.0%

41.9%

Nikita Kucherov

0.0%

22.6%

Nathan MacKinnon

7.1%

12.9%

Cale Makar

0.0%

12.9%

Connor McDavid

82.1%

6.5%

Artemi Panarin

0.0%

3.2%

Auston Matthews

7.1%

0.0%

Jack Hughes

3.6%

0.0%

Gentile: It's worth noting that we voted while Connor McDavid was on the shelf, and he wound up missing a grand total of three games. At 6.5 percent, he came in a little light.

Mirtle: Kirill Kaprizov is a fine choice, but I think we're chasing the shiny new toy here a bit. Nikita Kucherov and Nathan MacKinnon have been amazing lately and are going to make this one interesting, I think.

Goldman: No disagreements with Kaprizov and Kucherov leading the way, but goalies (and Shesterkin, specifically) should be in the conversation more often.

Get yourself a glass  pic.twitter.com/WOQrBuHni4

— Minnesota Wild (@mnwild) November 9, 2024

Rocket Richard Trophy

Given to the leading goal scorer at the end of the regular season.

Nikita Kucherov

0.0%

29.0%

Leon Draisaitl

3.6%

22.6%

Auston Matthews

82.1%

19.4%

Kyle Connor

0.0%

12.9%

Sam Reinhart

0.0%

9.7%

Artemi Panarin

0.0%

6.5%

David Pastrňák

10.7%

0.0%

Connor McDavid

3.6%

0.0%

Goldman: Who among us expected Kucherov to score this much with a 40-goal scorer like Jake Guentzel on his wing?

Gentile: "Me," I say very dishonestly. He didn't get any votes, but I feel it necessary to point out that Tage Thompson leads the league with nine five-on-five goals. If Buffalo's power play gets it together, he should have a shot.

Mirtle: The Auston Matthews skepticism also comes with him on the shelf for a few games, but the concern is warranted. His shooting percentage is down by half, the Leafs power play had a rough start but is getting better, and it feels a bit like the off-year he had in 2022-23 so far.

Norris Trophy

Given to the defenseman who demonstrates throughout the season the greatest all-around ability in the position. Voted on by the PHWA.

Cale Makar

53.6%

83.9%

Quinn Hughes

0.0%

9.7%

Brock Faber

0.0%

3.2%

Josh Morrissey

0.0%

3.2%

Miro Heiskanen

21.4%

0.0%

Roman Josi

21.4%

0.0%

Adam Fox

3.6%

0.0%

Granger: Cale Makar is scoring at an 82-game pace of 135 points ...

Gentile: Makar has been undeniably sick, but I went with Quinn Hughes here if only to make a point. His work in his own end has been both incredible and a step up from last season, when he won Norris No. 1. His campaign for a repeat deserves to start now.

Mirtle: I picked Makar, but glad to see Brock Faber here. If the Wild make the playoffs, he's going to be getting votes for this, no question.

Goldman: Hughes is having such an excellent start that he probably should be getting more hype. No shade to Makar, who rightfully leads the way here. It just feels like it should be a bit tighter.

Selke Trophy

Given to the forward who demonstrates the most skill in the defensive component of the game. Voted on by the PHWA.

Aleksander Barkov

57.1%

45.2%

Nico Hischier

21.4%

35.5%

Jordan Staal

0.0%

6.5%

Sidney Crosby

3.6%

3.2%

Anze Kopitar

3.6%

3.2%

Sam Reinhart

0.0%

3.2%

Mark Stone

0.0%

3.2%

Auston Matthews

7.1%

0.0%

Jason Robertson

3.6%

0.0%

Roope Hintz

3.6%

0.0%

Goldman: Aleksander Barkov is the easy answer here and will probably be a perennial finalist for the rest of his career. But Nico Hischier's scoring could finally push him to the top of the list this year, since there is so much more emphasis on two-way play in today's game.

Gentile: That was my logic, too. Barkov missed some time and Hischier is scoring enough (10 goals) to bolster his case.

Mirtle: The 12th (Sidney Crosby) and 13th (Anze Kopitar) oldest skaters are getting reputation votes here, but it's pretty remarkable that both are still putting up better than a point a game at age 37.

Vezina Trophy

Given to the goalkeeper adjudged to be the best at this position. Voted on by the general managers of all 32 NHL clubs.

Igor Shesterkin

57.1%

74.2%

Connor Hellebuyck

3.6%

25.8%

Juuse Saros

21.4%

0.0%

Jake Oettinger

10.7%

0.0%

Andrei Vasilevskiy

3.6%

0.0%

Ilya Sorokin

3.6%

0.0%

Granger: Shesterkin is playing on his own planet — perhaps his own universe — at the moment. The 11.97 goals he's saved above expected this season (even after a rare bad outing on Thursday) rank second in the league. It's almost unfair when he's this locked in.

Gentile: I'm Team Shesterkin, too, but shoutout to Jake Oettinger, who's having the type of regular season (.922 save percentage, fifth in the NHL in goals saved above expected) that plenty of us expected in 2023-24.

Mirtle: Quite a negotiation strategy from Shesterkin right now ...

Jack Adams Award

Given to the coach adjudged to have contributed the most to his team's success. Voted on by the NHL Broadcasters' Association.

Spencer Carbery, Washington Capitals

0.0%

29.0%

Sheldon Keefe, New Jersey Devils

42.9%

22.6%

Scott Arniel, Winnipeg Jets

0.0%

12.9%

Rod Brind'Amour, Carolina Hurricanes

0.0%

9.7%

John Hynes, Minnesota Wild

3.6%

6.5%

Travis Green, Ottawa Senators

3.6%

3.2%

Jon Cooper, Tampa Bay Lightning

3.6%

3.2%

Dean Evason, Columbus Blue Jackets

3.6%

3.2%

Paul Maurice, Florida Panthers

3.6%

3.2%

Pete DeBoer, Dallas Stars

0.0%

3.2%

Ryan Huska, Calgary Flames

0.0%

3.2%

Lindy Ruff, Buffalo Sabres

10.7%

0.0%

Andrew Brunette, Nashville Predators

7.1%

0.0%

Craig Berube, Toronto Maple Leafs

7.1%

0.0%

Patrick Roy, New York Islanders

3.6%

0.0%

Kris Knoblauch, Edmonton Oilers

3.6%

0.0%

André Tourigny, Utah Hockey Club

3.6%

0.0%

Derek Lalonde, Detroit Red Wings

3.6%

0.0%

Goldman: We saw Spencer Carbery do a lot with a little last season. With some roster additions, the Capitals are thriving. He deserves a lot of credit for it. If Washington can stay in the playoff race, he feels like the slam-dunk pick for this award.

Gentile: I'd love to see Carbery stay in the discussion here. Too many Jack Adams candidates are propped up by overachieving goalies, and that hasn't been the case in D.C. They're across-the-board good.

Mirtle: Carbery was pegged by a lot of organizations as a rising star after what he did as an assistant in Toronto, and that's definitely playing out right now. Few saw this kind of a rise from the Capitals, who suddenly look very legit. Great hire by Brian MacLellan.

Granger: The Senators aren't quite playing well enough for Travis Green to fly up this list, but I like what he's doing with that young team.

Calder Trophy

Given to the player selected as the most proficient in his first year of competition in the NHL. Voted on by the PHWA.

Matvei Michkov

46.4%

71.0%

Logan Stankoven

7.1%

19.4%

Macklin Celebrini

39.3%

6.5%

Lane Hutson

0.0%

3.2%

Jesper Wallstedt

7.1%

0.0%

Gentile: As I type this, Matvei Michkov has been healthy-scratched. It was bound to happen at some point, I suppose.

Goldman: The Sharks scored more than expected without Macklin Celebrini, so if they can build on it with him back in the fold (he scored two goals on Thursday), he could emerge as the favorite.

MACKLIN'S GOT ANOTHER ONE 🍷 pic.twitter.com/zX4UW1hZlq

— NHL (@NHL) November 8, 2024

Mirtle: I'm heavily biased here because I've watched him with my hometown team for years, but folks are sleeping on Logan Stankoven. His line has been great defensively, and his point-per-game pace isn't percentage-driven. He's going to have a great career.

Granger: Stankoven was so good in the playoffs last year and has rolled it right into this season. The guy is everywhere when he's on the ice, a great forechecker and has plenty of skill with the puck once he gets it.

ESPN / The world's best teams to watch for NHL draft prospects – ESPN

By Rachel Doerrie- November 9, 2024

Reactions

The 2024-25 NHL season is only a month old, but a few front offices might be more focused on how to prepare for the future, with Nashville Predators general manager Barry Trotz dropping the "rebuild" hint on local radio.

In other words, let the watch begin for the 2025 NHL draft class.

Draft-eligible players are in leagues all over the world, so we've created a guide of which teams or areas to keep an eye on as the season progresses.

United States National Team Development Program

This was the easiest pick of the bunch. On any given night, you will see various NHL GMs, front office employees and 20-plus scouts at the NTDP games. It is the most highly concentrated pool of top prospects in the world. The team stays together for the duration of the season and plays in international tournaments.

The program has pumped out prospects at a good clip over the past decade, and this season should be no different.

Of this current group, William Moore, Charlie Trethewey, Jack Murtagh and L.J. Mooney are drawing significant attention as possible first-round picks.

Beyond those top four, Cole McKinney, Conrad Fondrk and Mason Moe are drawing interest at forward. Donato Bracco, Asher Barnett, Carter Amico and Drew Shock have drawn significant interest from scouts on defense.

The Boston schools

Watching Boston schools play one another is some of the best and most entertaining amateur hockey in the world. Each of the four teams -- Boston College, Boston University, Harvard and Northeastern -- are loaded with NHL prospects drafted in previous years.

In terms of the 2025 class, James Hagens is lighting it up at Boston College and is the consensus top prospect. He's playing against the best in the NCAA on any given night, and has consistently performed.

At BU, Sascha Boumedienne is off to a good start. The Finnish-born, Swedish national has looked steady on the blue line, paired with Tom Willander (a Vancouver Canucks draft pick). He's likely to play a major role over the next few seasons, a perfect development path for him. Teammate Alexander Zetterberg is drawing interest as a diminutive, skilled player, and is worth keeping an eye on as a middle-round pick.

The Beanpot is one of the best tournaments in hockey and it is also an opportunity for scouts to evaluate how players perform under the bright lights. Expect all eyes to be on Hagens and Boumedienne as the Beanpot approaches.

Best of the Big 10

Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota have produced a ton of NHL talent, and this season a few draft-eligible players are drawing attention.

Wisconsin's Logan Hensler is expected to be a lottery pick and Michigan's Dakota Rheaume-Mullen is an early second-round candidate. Michigan State's Shane Vansaghi is drawing interest as a middle-round pick.

The Big 10 is home to some of the best rivalries in college sports and that extends to hockey. Teams are loaded with talent, high-octane offense and skill and the highlights come fast and furious. All three players should play quality minutes and contribute to the entertainment of the conference.

Erie Otters and Brampton Steelheads

Two teams in the Ontario Hockey League (OHL) are sure to be scouting hotbeds in particular this season.

The Otters are home to Matthew Schaefer and Malcolm Spence, who are contenders to be top-10 picks. The last time Erie had two players drafted in the top 10, it was Connor McDavid and Dylan Strome, who went first and third respectively. (They turned out to be pretty good.) Spence and Schaefer could be difference-makers at the NHL level, so expect a lot of fireworks out of Erie this season.

Brampton has quite a few players who have piqued the interest of scouts, and it starts with Porter Martone, who has an outside chance at being the No. 1 pick over Hagens. Martone is leading the OHL in scoring, and should get a long look for Canada's World Junior team.

After Martone, Lucas Karmiris is scoring nearly a point per game and is worth keeping an eye on as a middle-round pick. More intriguing are the two goaltenders: Jack Ivankovic and Jacob Gibbons. Ivankovic is drawing first-round interest, a rarity for goaltenders in recent years. The Steelheads are loaded with talent from top to bottom, and will play in a lot of entertaining games this season.

Djurgarden, Lulea and Skelleftea

Sweden has become a true development hotbed over the past decade, and these three clubs are worth keeping an eye on this season. Each club has a few prospects expected to be taken in the early rounds next June.

Within the Djurgarden organization, there are two forwards expected to be taken in the top 15. Anton Frondell should be a lottery pick and Victor Eklund could slide into the top 10. Arvid Drott, Eric Nilson and Theo Stockselius are middle-round candidates who are also drawing interest at forward.

Lulea has three players worth monitoring. Jakob Ihs Wozniak, a right-handed center, is expected to be a first-round pick and could slide into the top 15. He's likely to feature prominently for Sweden at a few international tournaments as a draft-eligible player. Linus Funck and Oliwer Sjoström are two defensemen drawing interest for different reasons. Both are puck-moving, two-way players; Funck has some more excited because he's right-handed and 6-foot-3. Both players probably will be selected in the third or fourth rounds.

Skelleftea has four players who are likely to be drafted in 2025, and two of them are candidates to be risers. Love Harenstam, a 6-foot-1 goaltender, has been at the top of his age group for a few seasons. He has potential to slide into the late first round if he continues to perform well at international tournaments and hold his own in the J20. Viktor Klingsell is a smaller forward who played well against his peers, and is off to a good start in the J20 as a 17-year-old. Viggo Nordlund is another small forward with excellent hands and flashy skill. Both players possess highlight-reel ability and could surprise scouts.

Zeb Lindgren, a left-handed defenseman could find himself rising in the rankings as the season progresses. He's primarily with the J20 team but is getting looks at the SHL level, a rarity for a draft-eligible defenseman. He's not flashy, but he's effective, and scouts love that.

ESPN / NHL Power Rankings: 1-32 poll, projections vs. current pace – ESPN

By ESPN staff- November 9, 2024

The 2024-25 NHL season turned one month old this week. That's too small of a sample to draw too many conclusions, right?

Forget it. For this edition of the Power Rankings, we'll be taking a look at the preseason over/under point total futures from ESPN BET compared to each team's current points pace. Which teams are the furthest off of their projections?

How we rank: A panel of ESPN hockey commentators, analysts, reporters and editors sends in a 1-32 poll based on the games through Wednesday, which generates our master list here.

Note: Previous ranking for each team refers to the previous edition,
Published Nov. 7. Points percentages are through Thursday's games.

1. Winnipeg Jets

Previous ranking: 1

Points percentage: 92.86%

Preseason O/U: 95.5

Current points pace: 152.3

The Jets were not believed to be an all-time great team heading into this season, and yet here we are. Led by balanced scoring and an all-world goalie in Connor Hellebuyck, this is the most complete team after one month.

Next seven days: vs. DAL (Nov. 9), @ NYR (Nov. 12), @ TB (Nov. 14)

2. Carolina Hurricanes

Previous ranking: 8

Points percentage: 83.33%

Preseason O/U: 100.5

Current points pace: 136.7

Reports of the Canes' demise have been greatly exaggerated. Despite a talent drain in free agency this summer, the team maintains its grip on a top spot in the Metro Division.

Next seven days: @ COL (Nov. 9), @ VGK (Nov. 11), @ UTA (Nov. 13)

3. New York Rangers

Previous ranking: 3

Points percentage: 70.83%

Preseason O/U: 100.5

Current points pace: 116.2

Although some pundits wondered why the Rangers were so quiet this offseason as other contenders made big additions, the reigning Presidents' Trophy winners have thus far proved that retaining the same recipe was the right call.

Next seven days: @ DET (Nov. 9), vs. WPG (Nov. 12), vs. SJ (Nov. 14)

4. Florida Panthers

Previous ranking: 9

Points percentage: 75.00%

Preseason O/U: 102.5

Current points pace: 123.0

What Stanley Cup hangover? Not only has Sam Reinhart continued scoring as if he has another contract to negotiate next summer, but it appears the patience the franchise had with Spencer Knight has paid off, to the tune of a 3-1-0 record, 2.79 goals-against average and .902 save percentage.

Next seven days: vs. PHI (Nov. 9), vs. NJ (Nov. 12), vs. NJ (Nov. 14)

5. Minnesota Wild

Previous ranking: 4

Points percentage: 76.92%

Preseason O/U: 93.5

Current points pace: 126.2

Kirill Kaprizov continues to produce -- with 21 points through 12 games -- and if the Wild continue on this trajectory, the voters for the major awards should make long-awaited notice of him too.

Next seven days: @ ANA (Nov. 8), @ CHI (Nov. 10), vs. MTL (Nov. 14)

6. Washington Capitals

Previous ranking: 6

Points percentage: 75.00%

Preseason O/U: 89.5

Current points pace: 123.0

This was supposed to be the era when the Caps existed solely to be the stage for Alex Ovechkin to chase Wayne Gretzky's record. No one told them, and they appear poised to prove last season's playoff berth was no fluke.

Next seven days: vs. PIT (Nov. 8), @ STL (Nov. 9), vs. TOR (Nov. 13)

7. Vegas Golden Knights

Previous ranking: 5

Points percentage: 73.08%

Preseason O/U: 97.5

Current points pace: 119.8

"Life finds a way," as we learned in the Jurassic Park movies. In this case, it's the Golden Knights finding a way to stay near the top of the standings despite constant flux in their roster.

Next seven days: @ SEA (Nov. 8), vs. CAR (Nov. 11), @ ANA (Nov. 13)

8. Dallas Stars

Previous ranking: 2

Points percentage: 66.67%

Preseason O/U: 103.5

Current points pace: 109.3

The current pace is a bit behind last season's total, but some Stars have yet to really begin scoring this season. Once they do, look out.

Next seven days: @ WPG (Nov. 9), @ PIT (Nov. 11), vs. BOS (Nov. 14)

9. Los Angeles Kings

Previous ranking: 13

Points percentage: 63.33%

Preseason O/U: 96.5

Current points pace: 103.9

A third straight first-round playoff loss to the Oilers portended perhaps not the greatest season upcoming for L.A. But the early returns have been strong -- despite being without veteran defenseman Drew Doughty.

Next seven days: vs. CBJ (Nov. 9), @ CGY (Nov. 11), @ COL (Nov. 13)

10. New Jersey Devils

Previous ranking: 10

Points percentage: 62.50%

Preseason O/U: 101.5

Current points pace: 102.5

A few hiccups aside, the Devils are in a much better place than recent seasons thanks to the investment made in goaltending and defense.

Next seven days: @ NYI (Nov. 9), vs. SJ (Nov. 10), @ FLA (Nov. 12), @ FLA (Nov. 14)

11. Vancouver Canucks

Previous ranking: 12

Points percentage: 70.83%

Preseason O/U: 99.5

Current points pace: 116.2

The goal differential (plus-3) isn't what the team would like to see -- nor is Elias Pettersson's slow start -- but the Canucks are tracking ahead of projections in the standings.

Next seven days: vs. EDM (Nov. 9), vs. CGY (Nov. 12), vs. NYI (Nov. 14)

12. Tampa Bay Lightning

Previous ranking: 7

Points percentage: 53.57%

Preseason O/U: 98.5

Current points pace: 87.9

Although the Lightning are currently in playoff position in the Atlantic, they are a bit behind their projection.

Next seven days: vs. WPG (Nov. 14)

13. Toronto Maple Leafs

Previous ranking: 11

Points percentage: 57.14%

Preseason O/U: 102.5

Current points pace: 93.7

Another Atlantic team in the playoff mix but behind projection, the Leafs could be without Auston Matthews in the short term as he deals with an upper-body injury.

Next seven days: vs. DET (Nov. 8), vs. MTL (Nov. 9), vs. OTT (Nov. 12), @ WSH (Nov. 13)

14. Calgary Flames

Previous ranking: 14

Points percentage: 57.14%

Preseason O/U: 81.5

Current points pace: 93.7

One of the surprises of the first month, the Flames are easily outpacing their Battle of Alberta rivals -- though one would be hard-pressed to find anyone outside Calgary who doesn't believe the Oilers will catch them by season's end.

Next seven days: @ BUF (Nov. 9), vs. LA (Nov. 11), @ VAN (Nov. 12)

15. Ottawa Senators

Previous ranking: 15

Points percentage: 46.15%

Preseason O/U: 90.5

Current points pace: 75.7

The Sens have cooled a bit since a 4-2-0 start. Nevertheless, the vibes are strong, and make us feel this team could remain in the battle for a playoff spot.

Next seven days: @ BOS (Nov. 9), @ TOR (Nov. 12), vs. PHI (Nov. 14)

16. St. Louis Blues

Previous ranking: 20

Points percentage: 50.00%

Preseason O/U: 86.5

Current points pace: 82.0

The sportsbooks had modest expectations for the Blues this season, and the club has pretty much matched them.

Next seven days: vs. WSH (Nov. 9), vs. BOS (Nov. 12), @ BUF (Nov. 14)

17. Edmonton Oilers

Previous ranking: 23

Points percentage: 46.43%

Preseason O/U: 108.5

Current points pace: 76.1

The Oilers are well behind their expected point total. And yet, if there's one team that can turn things around, it's this one. After all, they pulled a similar trick last season.

Next seven days: @ VAN (Nov. 9), vs. NYI (Nov. 12), vs. NSH (Nov. 14)

18. Utah Hockey Club

Previous ranking: 17

Points percentage: 53.57%

Preseason O/U: 87.5

Current points pace: 87.9

The expectation was that the UHC could be on the playoff bubble in Year 1, and a month in, they're in range. Will the front office push some trade chips to the middle to add some more veteran help?

Next seven days: @ NSH (Nov. 9), vs. CAR (Nov. 13)

19. Colorado Avalanche

Previous ranking: 19

Points percentage: 42.86%

Preseason O/U: 102.5

Current points pace: 70.3

Another juggernaut that is well off expected points pace, at least the injury to Cale Makar appears to be a short-term blip as opposed to an extended absence.

Next seven days: vs. CAR (Nov. 9), vs. NSH (Nov. 11), vs. LA (Nov. 13)

20. Boston Bruins

Previous ranking: 21

Points percentage: 50.00%

Preseason O/U: 99.5

Current points pace: 82.0

The Jeremy Swayman contract drama did not do anyone any favors, but is he also the cause of the short-circuiting of the team's secondary scoring?

Next seven days: vs. OTT (Nov. 9), @ STL (Nov. 12), @ DAL (Nov. 14)

21. Detroit Red Wings

Previous ranking: 24

Points percentage: 54.17%

Preseason O/U: 90.5

Current points pace: 88.8

A carry-over trend from 2023-24? Cam Talbot started off strong for the Kings last season, only to struggle thereafter. Can he maintain this season's optimistic first month?

Next seven days: @ TOR (Nov. 8), vs. NYR (Nov. 9), @ PIT (Nov. 13)

22. Columbus Blue Jackets

Previous ranking: 18

Points percentage: 50.00%

Preseason O/U: 69.5

Current points pace: 82.0

For some teams, an 82-point pace would not be that encouraging. For the Blue Jackets, it's fantastic.

Next seven days: @ LA (Nov. 9), @ ANA (Nov. 10), @ SEA (Nov. 12)

23. Buffalo Sabres

Previous ranking: 22

Points percentage: 46.43%

Preseason O/U: 88.5

Current points pace: 76.1

One of these seasons, the Sabres are going to return to the playoffs. It might still be this one, but they'll need to vastly improve on their current trajectory.

Next seven days: vs. CGY (Nov. 9), vs. MTL (Nov. 11), vs. STL (Nov. 14)

24. New York Islanders

Previous ranking: 26

Points percentage: 50.00%

Preseason O/U: 91.5

Current points pace: 82.0

The Isles' failure to launch last season led to the firing of Lane Lambert, hiring of Patrick Roy, and a run to the playoffs. Can Roy turn them around again this season?

Next seven days: vs. NJ (Nov. 9), @ EDM (Nov. 12), @ VAN (Nov. 14)

25. Seattle Kraken

Previous ranking: 16

Points percentage: 39.29%

Preseason O/U: 87.5

Current points pace: 64.4

The Kraken are 21st in scoring goals this season, and tied for 19th in preventing them. One of those two factors will need to change for them to get back on pace.

Next seven days: vs. VGK (Nov. 8), vs. CBJ (Nov. 12), vs. CHI (Nov. 14)

26. Pittsburgh Penguins

Previous ranking: 31

Points percentage: 40.00%

Preseason O/U: 90.5

Current points pace: 65.6

Thanks to Sidney Crosby and Evgeni Malkin, Penguins fans at least have some milestones to observe this season. But a playoff run seems remote at this juncture.

Next seven days: @ WSH (Nov. 8), vs. DAL (Nov. 11), vs. DET (Nov. 13)

27. Chicago Blackhawks

Previous ranking: 29

Points percentage: 36.67%

Preseason O/U: 73.5

Current points pace: 60.1

Will the Blackhawks finish higher in Year 2 of the Connor Bedard era than Year 1? For now, they are trending slightly ahead of the 52 points with which they finished 2023-24.

Next seven days: vs. MIN (Nov. 10), @ SEA (Nov. 14)

28. Nashville Predators

Previous ranking: 27

Points percentage: 32.14%

Preseason O/U: 98.5

Current points pace: 52.7

No team is further behind its preseason points projection than the Predators -- and it's not particularly close. A team this talented should not be in this spot.

Next seven days: vs. UTA (Nov. 9), @ COL (Nov. 11), @ EDM (Nov. 14)

29. Anaheim Ducks

Previous ranking: 25

Points percentage: 41.67%

Preseason O/U: 72.5

Current points pace: 68.3

The Ducks are about what most thought they'd be this season, with a number of young players still learning the ropes at the NHL level.

Next seven days: vs. MIN (Nov. 8), vs. CBJ (Nov. 10), vs. VGK (Nov. 13)

30. Montreal Canadiens

Previous ranking: 28

Points percentage: 35.71%

Preseason O/U: 76.5

Current points pace: 58.6

There are some good things happening in Montreal, but seemingly not enough of them to climb far out of the Atlantic Division basement just yet.

Next seven days: @ TOR (Nov. 9), @ BUF (Nov. 11), @ MIN (Nov. 14)

31. Philadelphia Flyers

Previous ranking: 30

Points percentage: 39.29%

Preseason O/U: 85.5

Current points pace: 64.4

Was the 2023-24 season an aberration? It would appear so based on the returns so far in 2024-25. At least Matvei Michkov is fun to watch (when he's not a healthy scratch).

Next seven days: @ FLA (Nov. 9), vs. SJ (Nov. 11), @ OTT (Nov. 14)

32. San Jose Sharks

Previous ranking: 32

Points percentage: 33.33%

Preseason O/U: 63.5

Current points pace: 54.7

The Sharks aren't world-beaters again, but they're icing a competitive team this season, and help is on the way thanks to the NHL's No. 1 prospect pipeline.

Next seven days: @ NJ (Nov. 10), @ PHI (Nov. 11), @ NYR (Nov. 14)

[Sportsnet.ca / What's changed with Team Canada's 4 Nations Face-Off roster projection?](#)

By Justin Bourne- November 9, 2024

Nine months ago I put together a roster projection for what Team Canada might look like at the 4 Nations Face-Off. Teams are now just weeks away from being officially selected — Dec. 2 is the cut-off day — and so I thought it would be fun to go back and see what's changed in such a short time.

In sum: a lot.

Hockey is a results-based game, and we've had a pile of new results to assess.

We'll start with the roster I wanted to see in February, and then pick it apart.

Zach Hyman – Connor McDavid – Connor Bedard

Brayden Point – Nathan MacKinnon – Mathew Barzal

Brad Marchand – Sidney Crosby – Jonathan Marchessault

Sam Reinhart – Anthony Cirelli – Mark Stone

Mitch Marner

Ryan Nugent-Hopkins

Mark Scheifele

Steven Stamkos

OK, let's get picking.

First, here are the locks up front:

Those names have already been selected. It's possible Marchand may not dress based on play since February, but he'll be there (and I do think he'll play, he's a gamer).

Here are the "new locks," in my opinion.

Part of the reason I had Marner as the 13th forward in February was to antagonize my co-worker, Nick Kypreos, a noted Marner-backer. But I've got him solidly in because he's no one-trick pony — even if he isn't on the power play, he can kill penalties. Mark Stone is a pure competitor having a career year, and Sam Reinhart scores, scores, and scores.

Now, some guys are having down years since I wrote the first article. Jonathan Marchessault wasn't even two years removed from a Conn Smythe Trophy then, and he ended last season scoring 40 goals. But at almost 34 years old with just two goals and a minus-10 goal rating, he's a tougher sell right now.

Steven Stamkos is having a down year, Ryan Nugent-Hopkins hasn't looked great, Zach Hyman's numbers are down, and Mathew Barzal has five points in 10 games. Even Connor Bedard only has three goals in 15 games.

That said, some of these guys are too good when you zoom out to larger samples. Bedard is still almost a point-per-game guy on a bad team, and he's going to be a part of Team Canada for a decade, so with the Olympics in the back of my mind, I've got him in. Hyman also works and forechecks and kills penalties

and hits, so even if his scoring isn't there, he's still so effective. Skill teams need some guys who play in the blue paint to make space.

Now we're up to this:

Mark Scheifele has seven goals and 18 points in 14 games thus far. He's making it very hard to leave him off. He's a big rangy guy who can be a handful when he's going, so as of today, I've got him in.

With Barzal on the outs along with Marchessault and Nugent-Hopkins, the last name I had in February to discuss is Anthony Cirelli. And we'll get there in a second, but there are some new names to consider as well.

Alexis Lafreniere has taken a big step for me, scoring just shy of 30 goals last season, looking great again this year, and he's strong and competitive. Tom Wilson has scored some early this year, and he provides the nuclear physical element. Travis Konecny has scored 30 goals in back-to-back seasons. And, hey, Sam Bennett is a banger who's got eight goals under his belt already this season, too.

Difference-makers for me are the style, age and energy of a guy like Lafreniere. I think he'll do whatever's asked of him to be there, and some guys aren't going to see special teams. In 12-13 minutes of ice time I can see him scoring a huge goal, or affecting the pace positively for Canada.

So, let's add Scheifele and Lafreniere to our forward list.

Now, including those guys I have on the outs, now you're choosing one of: Barzal, Nugent-Hopkins, Wilson, Konecny, Bennett, and...Cirelli.

All I know is this: the last guy there is a winner. Memorial Cup, Stanley Cup, and at the end of games, this is a guy you want on the ice protecting a lead. Canada has plenty of guys to go over the boards when they're down one. The idea of sending out Cirelli-Crosby-Stone or something like that to protect a lead in the dying minutes is beyond a luxury.

And so, I've got Cirelli in. Don't get too caught up in where I've got these guys slotted for lines just yet, as we'll have a whole article on potential lineup machinations down the road that considers special teams.

Next up: Tom Wilson

Next out: Alexis Lafreniere

OK, on to the defence!

Here's who I had in February:

Devon Toews – Cale Makar

Josh Morrissey – Alex Pietrangelo

Morgan Rielly – Aaron Ekblad

Drew Doughty – Noah Dobson

Let's add these names to the pile of options and get thinking.

Shea Theodore, Brandon Montour, Colton Parayko, Dougie Hamilton, Evan Bouchard, MacKenzie Weegar I'm still on board with the top pair of Toews-Makar. I still like Morrissey and Pietrangelo, both of whom remain quality top-pair defencemen.

From there, I don't see a ton of guys jumping out as MUST-TAKE, so I'm going to do something I don't love doing: I'm going to include the older and injured Doughty as my seventh defenceman, because that

guy at his best is a competitive menace, and I'm a little worried about Canada's blue line being too easy to play against physically. Here's how I'd have it today:

Toews-Makar

Theodore-Pietrangelo

Morrissey-Montour

Doughty

Next up: Rielly, Hamilton

Next out: Doughty (health watch), Montour

Montour gets in because he's a massive pain in the butt to play against, and is putting together a great season as the top defenceman on Seattle, on the back of showing up big in the Stanley Cup Playoffs. At least he's a guy who can put a body on someone hard, too.

Dobson has fallen too far and has too short a track record to assume he'll be fine; Hamilton hasn't exactly looked back to form yet (he's been pretty good, and we know he can be great, so I have an eye on him); and Bouchard needs to be on the power play to justify the defensive lapses. I actually don't have him as all that close to getting in, despite the massive point-getting ability.

And finally, on to goaltending...

I don't think this conversation is all that complicated. Here's who I listed in February:

Jordan Binnington

Adin Hill

Connor Ingram

Tristan Jarry

Sam Montembault

Stuart Skinner

Marc-Andre Fleury

Binnington and Hill have been good enough this season, with Binnington clearly a bit better. They're both above average save percentage guys who've won Stanley Cups and seem to get better with more pressure. Binnington's, ahem, confidence helps here, and he's shown he can handle being The Guy.

When picking the third goalie, I'm on team "if you end up using your third goalie, you're probably already cooked," and on team "these guys are all around 40th-60th best in the NHL and so essentially the same," so why not go with Fleury for The Vibes and experience?

With just over three weeks to go until the roster is selected, these games are going to matter. Decisions at the fringes are probably undecided as of today, so it would be a great time to get red hot if you're a player looking to get in.

[Sportsnet.ca / Friday Four: Rejuvenated Ovechkin poised to topple Gretzky's goal record this season](#)

By Michael Amato- November 9, 2024

The Friday Four is a collection of thoughts and information on some intriguing player storylines from around the NHL. On deck this week is:

- Only a matter of time before Ovechkin passes Gretzky
- Makar looking to shatter 100-point mark
- Canes bet on Necas paying off in a big way
- Why Lankinen has been the Canucks most important player so far

Alexander Ovechkin, Washington Capitals

It's not a matter of if, but when Alexander Ovechkin will pass Wayne Gretzky for the most goals in NHL history.

I suppose it was already that way coming into the season, though there probably was some doubt on whether Ovechkin could reach the milestone in 2024-25. He needed 42 goals to break the record this season, which isn't easy for a 39-year-old who clearly started to slow down last year. Ovechkin managed just 31 goals in 2023-24, his lowest total in a full season for his entire career.

The record is in serious jeopardy now, though, as Ovechkin has already tallied eight of the required 42 goals in his first 12 games. That's a 55-goal pace and even if Ovechkin inevitably slows down a little, he's banked enough goals to where he should have little trouble passing Gretzky before the end of the season barring a major cold streak. He needs to score at a rate of 0.5 goals per game over the final 70 games to get the record, which is below his career average. That said, Ovechkin endured a stretch with one goal in 18 games last season, so he's not immune anymore to going long stretches without scoring.

However, something seems different about Ovechkin this year and he appears to be in a much better position than he was in 2023-24 to fill the net with regularity. It's not his shot volume, which is still declining. Ovechkin hasn't hit 300 shots in each of the past two seasons and he's on pace for even fewer this year, trending towards 268. That would be the lowest total of his career if you exclude the lockout and pandemic-shortened campaigns.

What also makes Ovechkin's hot start more interesting is he's starting less in the offensive zone than he has in recent years. His 78.1% offensive zone starts so far would be his lowest since 2020-21. Plus, only one of his goals has come on the power play and the Caps ranked dead last heading into Thursday when it comes to the man advantage.

The biggest positive change for Ovechkin may very well be his ice time, where less could be more. Ovechkin is averaging just 18:11 per game this year, more than a minute less than he played in 2023-24 and more than two minutes less than he played in each of the previous two seasons. At his age, Ovechkin needs to stay fresh and this is helping him do so. He looks more energized and engaged physically, as his hit totals would suggest. The Washington Capitals forward has 32 hits in 12 games, which works out to a 219-hit pace. That would be his highest total since 2018-19.

Washington, as a whole, looks much better, too. They've had great contributions in their top six from players like Connor McMichael and Aleksai Protas, and currently rank fourth in the NHL in goals for, averaging more than four per game. That's a huge jump from the Caps 28th ranking a year ago and

they're averaging almost a goal-and-a-half more per game right now compared to 2023-24. Washington currently has six players on pace for well over 60 points, including four that are clicking at a point per game or better. If you compare that to last season, the Caps didn't even have one 70-point player and only one, Dylan Strome, besides Ovechkin who hit the 60-point mark. It's still very early, but Ovechkin seems to be in a much better situation than last year both physically and with the talent around him to propel him to a big offensive season.

It would be very difficult to pinpoint an exact game this season where Ovechkin could break the record, though the most fitting for storyline purposes would be in the final game of the year against the Pittsburgh Penguins and long-time rival Sidney Crosby. Both players have been the faces of a generation since they entered the league and this is a season of milestones for Crosby, too. He's already crossed 1,600 points and soon 600 goals will follow.

If you want to witness history, though, I'd clear my evenings in late March and early April. I don't think Gretzky's mark will survive until that clash in Game 82 with Crosby. Ovechkin seems motivated to take care of business sooner rather than later.

Cale Makar, Colorado Avalanche

The list of defencemen to score 100 points in a season is few and far between, but there's a good chance we can add Cale Makar to the list this season.

Makar has 23 points in 14 games, which works out to be a 134-point pace and only Bobby Orr and Paul Coffey have ever posted more than that in a single season. Now it's unlikely Makar keeps up this pace for 82 games, though it's hard to see a scenario where there's a massive dropoff if he can stay healthy.

For one, despite their struggles to start the season in the win column, the Colorado Avalanche power play looks as potent as ever. It's currently operating at 36.2 per cent and ranked second in the league, where Makar already has nine points on the man advantage. It's a unit loaded with talent and players like Nathan MacKinnon and Mikko Rantanen really make it easy for someone like Makar to pile up points.

Those two elite talents are part of the reason Makar could be in for a massive campaign at even strength, too. The Avs typically try to get Makar and partner Devon Toews out with MacKinnon and Rantanen's line at five-on-five when they can, instead of in a shutdown role. That forms a very dangerous five-man unit that is constantly pushing for offense and Makar is playing with MacKinnon and Rantanen's line nearly 15 per cent more at even strength than any other Avalanche forward group. It also certainly doesn't hurt that Toews is very reliable defensively, allowing Makar to roam and push for offence. It shouldn't surprise anyone if they are Canada's top pair at the Four Nations Face-Off.

Let's also keep in mind that as much talent as Makar has played with during this hot start, Colorado is still nowhere near full strength. Artturi Lehkonen just returned, Valeri Nichushkin should be back next week and Jonathan Drouin is still sidelined with an injury. All three should help drive offense and Nichushkin could make an already elite power play even better.

There also could be a perfect storm in Colorado this year for someone like Makar to put up massive offensive numbers. Heading into Thursday night, the Avs ranked in the bottom third of the league in high-danger chances allowed, last in goals against per game and last in team save percentage. Colorado has been bad defensively and worse in goal, so if they want to win games, the Avalanche are probably going to have to out-score their problems. That means major minutes from Makar, Rantanen and MacKinnon, often going all out for offence.

The most recent defenseman to hit 100 points was Erik Karlsson in 2022-23 and Roman Josi came close the year prior, and Makar seems to be in a much better position to surpass both of those campaigns. Even if Makar slows down some, 125 points seems like a realistic possibility and that would be a top-five offensive season from a blueliner all time. Don't bet against it. Makar is that good.

Martin Necas, Carolina Hurricanes

Martin Necas's torrid start to the season in Carolina almost didn't happen.

Before signing a two-year deal worth \$6.5M per season with the Hurricanes this summer, a trade didn't just seem like a realistic possibility, it felt like an almost certainty. Reports swirled that Necas had asked for a trade and that Carolina had offers from several teams around the league, even getting to the point where the Hurricanes forward was reportedly permitted to speak to some of those teams about a potential contract. A fresh start seemed imminent.

In a quick about-face, though, both team and player opted to continue the relationship, leading to fantastic results thus far. Necas has exploded for 21 points out of the gates, which includes seven multi-point games. The 25-year-old looks like a different player this year, already closing in on half his point total from a season ago and three of his goals have been game winners.

What makes the start even more impressive is who Necas is playing with. He's currently skating on the second line, away from all three of Carolina's most potent offensive players in Andrei Svechnikov, Sebastian Aho and Seth Jarvis. Instead, he's driving a second line that includes Eric Robinson and Jesperi Kotkaniemi. Not exactly two elite offensive talents.

To make up for it, Necas has feasted on the power play where he and the three aforementioned players are playing together on the top unit. He's scored eight points on the man advantage and to put that in perspective, Necas had just 13 power-play points all of last year.

One other thing that could be contributing to Necas's hot start is simply confidence. He came into this season on a high after winning a Gold Medal for Czechia last spring at the World Hockey Championships. While it may not be the Stanley Cup, some of the best players in the world participated in the tournament and winning a championship representing your country on home soil is an accomplishment very few players get to experience.

Although Necas playing this well is certainly surprising to some, we probably shouldn't be too shocked his game is on the upswing. Necas is continuing his bizarre trend of alternating between mediocre and strong seasons. As a rookie, Necas managed 36 points in 2019-20, following that up by scoring at an impressive 63-point pace the following year. Then he regressed to 40 points in 2021-22 before recording 71 in 2022-23, but dropping all the way back to 53 last season. And now, right on cue, he looks like he's poised for another great year.

This is maybe a long-winded way of saying Necas is inconsistently consistent, but it makes giving him a long-term deal challenging. Carolina probably wants to see him stack a couple of solid seasons together in a row before making a huge commitment, but if Necas gets to 80 or 90 points this season, he's going to get paid big-time on his next deal. Whether that's in Carolina or somewhere else.

Kevin Lankinen, Vancouver Canucks

Where would the Canucks be right now without Kevin Lankinen?

It's a fair question to ask. Thatcher Demko is still working his way back from injury and it's unclear when he'll return to the crease or what that might look like. Arturs Silovs, who became a bit of a fan favourite after stabilizing the Vancouver crease in the playoffs last year, has looked overmatched for much of 2024-

25. He was supposed to get the first crack at things with Demko out, but Silovs hasn't won yet and sports a save percentage below .800.

This has all led to Lankinen stumbling into the starting job almost by default, after only putting pen to paper on a deal in late September that is paying him just \$875K. The Canucks have found incredible value with Lankinen, who boasts a 7-0-2 record with a sparkling .923 save percentage. Lankinen also has quality starts in every game but two this year. Not bad for a 29-year-old career backup playing on his third team in four years.

Vancouver needed Lankinen's emergence for other reasons than just uncertainty around its crease. Elias Pettersson has only managed five points in 12 games and is still trying to get going. Big summer signing Jake DeBrusk also started slow, taking until game 10 to score his first goal of the season. This has all led to the Canucks being less potent offensively than they were a year ago. In 2023-24, Vancouver ranked sixth in the NHL in goals for per game, but this season they've dropped all the way down to 15th. The Canucks power play is down as well from just outside the top 10 a year ago to 22nd right now.

They're thinner on defence as well. Veterans Ian Cole and Nikita Zadorov have departed, leaving Vincent Desharnais and Erik Brannstrom to try and hold down the third pair. Cole and Zadorov together have nearly 1,500 games of NHL experience, compared to Desharnais and Brannstrom, who haven't even hit 400 combined. The Canucks have needed to be stingier when it comes to allowing goals and Lankinen is one of the biggest reasons they've still managed to get off to a 7-2-3 start.

Anthony Stolarz might be the best free-agent goalie signing from the summer, but Lankinen isn't too far behind.