



Columbus Blue Jackets Media Clips
March 3, 2026

Columbus Blue Jackets News

- PAGE 2 The Athletic / Whew! Blue Jackets cough up 4-0 lead, but rally to win on Kirill Marchenko's OT goal
- PAGE 5 The Columbus Dispatch / Marchenko saves Columbus Blue Jackets from embarrassing loss in OT
- PAGE 7 The Columbus Dispatch / Zach Werenski out with illness against New York Rangers
- PAGE 8 The Columbus Dispatch / Blue Jackets coach hopes to spark Kent Johnson
- PAGE 10 The Hockey Writers / 3 Bad Trends the Blue Jackets Have Shown Out of the Break

Cleveland Monsters / Prospect News

NHL News

Multimedia

The Athletic / Whew! Blue Jackets cough up 4-0 lead, but rally to win on Kirill Marchenko's OT goal

By Aaron Portzline – March 2, 2026

Rick Bowness must have thought it was all the figment of somebody's imagination. Ever since he took over behind the Columbus Blue Jackets' bench in mid-January, they've closed out third-period leads with authority.

That rash of gags, chokes and stumbles earlier in the season? Did those really happen?

Well, Bowness had a front-row seat to the madness on Monday. The Blue Jackets coughed up a 4-0 lead in the third period to the New York Rangers before rescuing their night — and quite possibly their playoff chances — with a 5-4 win in overtime.

Kirill Marchenko scored his second goal and his third career overtime winner at 1:04 of the extra period, ending a wild night in Madison Square Garden.

Adam Fantilli, Sean Monahan and Mathieu Olivier also scored, and Charlie Coyle and Damon Severson had two assists for the Blue Jackets, who have crept to within three points of the Boston Bruins for the second wild-card spot in the Eastern Conference.

"I can't explain this game, just craziest game ever," Marchenko told FanDuel Sports Network after the game. "It's 4-0, then 4-4. It's a tough stat for us. Happy we get the two points, and I think everybody will try to forget this game. We can't play like that (in the third). It's not our game. It's not good hockey. It's not playoff hockey."

The Blue Jackets improved to 11-2-1 under Bowness, who seemed unsettled and a bit surprised by how his club approached the third period. The way the Jackets shriveled and retreated in the third period had to be alarming to him, but it was a reminder of what happened all too frequently to Columbus when they carried leads into the third period in November and December.

The Rangers increased the score to 4-1 only 30 seconds into the third. It was 4-2 only 24 seconds later, after Blue Jackets defenseman Denton Mateychuk whiffed and stumbled over the puck in his own end, simply handing it over to New York.

Bowness called a timeout to let his players breathe — he could be seen on the bench imploring his team to calm down — but it only lasted for a bit.

At 12:52, it was 4-3. At 15:14, the Blue Jackets and Rangers were tied, and fans in the Garden, who booed the home team lustily after the second period, were back into it.

"We got a couple of harsh reminders out there of how to play the game the right way, with the right level of desperation," Bowness said. "That was missing at certain times, but give the guys credit. They found a way to get the two points, and that's the most important thing."

“Did we make it far more interesting than it had to be? Yeah, we did. But now we get ready for Nashville.”

The Blue Jackets were playing without Olympic-gold-winning defenseman Zach Werenski, who was sick. It's unclear if he'll be able to play on Tuesday vs. the Predators.

Still, the Blue Jackets were handling the Rangers just fine without Werenski through two periods before they started coasting in the third. You'd think by now they would know playing the clock is a fool's errand in the NHL.

“I would look at our lack of desperation going back for the puck,” Bowness said. “That was certainly a problem. A couple of soft plays with the puck were a problem. To give up that fourth goal ... our defense (veterans Provorov and Severson) never should have been up ice, pinching there. It was really self-inflicted. A lot of it was self-inflicted. And we'll address that.”

The Blue Jackets donating a point to the Rangers' cause is really a non-issue. The Rangers are last in the East. Yet, the Blue Jackets have scattered loser's points throughout the conference, and it may come back to bite them at season's end.

However, it happened before Bowness arrived.

“I learned a lot about our team tonight,” he said. “This is the first time I've seen this. But I learned a lot, and that's a good thing.”

The Blue Jackets took a 1-0 lead at 5:50 of the first period when Marchenko spotted Fantilli alone in front of Rangers goaltender Igor Shesterkin. Fantilli redirected Marchenko's sharp pass into the net for his fifth goal in four games at the Garden.

Marchenko made the score 2-0 with a one-timer from the right circle later in the first period. It was a power-play goal on the Blue Jackets' only opportunity of the night.

Bowness has grumbled about this lately, and rightly so. After Monday's games, the Blue Jackets have had three power-play chances in their last four games.

“We got a power play!” Bowness said cheekily post-game. “They had to take a bench minor for us to get a power play.”

The game took a major turn in the second period after the Rangers scored what appeared to be the 2-1 goal at 3:04 of the second period. The Blue Jackets challenged J.T. Miller's goal, and it was overturned after review when it was ruled that New York's Alex Lafrenière had impeded Elvis Merzlikins' ability to play the puck.

Twenty-three seconds later, with the score restored to 2-0, Monahan finished a short-handed two-on-one to make it 3-0. Mathieu Olivier made it 4-0 midway through the second. At that point, it felt like the rout was underway.

Instead ...

“We made it way more interesting than it should have been,” Olivier said. “The last two games, we felt we played good enough to win those. Sometimes the hockey gods will give you one back. We’ll take that one.”

The Columbus Dispatch / Marchenko saves Columbus Blue Jackets from embarrassing loss in OT

By Brian Hedger – March 2, 2026

It might've seemed unbelievable to some watching, but the Blue Jackets blowing a 4-0 lead in the third period March 2 at Madison Square Garden wasn't all that surprising for those who've watched them implode in that period all season.

Allowing four straight goals to the New York Rangers in a span of 15:14 was the 18th time the Blue Jackets have blown a third period lead this season and the 10th time it's been a multiple-goal cushion. Unlike most of those meltdowns, this one ended with a massive sigh of relief when Kirill Marchenko saved the Jackets' night and playoff hopes by scoring 1:04 into 3-on-3 overtime for a 5-4 victory.

Next up, the Blue Jackets host the Nashville Predators on March 3 at Nationwide Arena to conclude back-to-back games.

"Give the guys credit," Blue Jackets coach Rick Bowness said at his postgame press conference shown on FanDuel Sports Network. "They found a way to get the two points (for a win) and that's the most important thing. Did we make it far more interesting than we should've? Yeah, we did, but we got the two points and we get ready for Nashville (on March 3)."

Mar 2, 2026; New York, New York, USA; Columbus Blue Jackets right wing Kirill Marchenko (86) takes a shot against New York Rangers left wing J.T. Miller (8) and defenseman Braden Schneider (4) during the first period at Madison Square Garden. Mandatory Credit: Brad Penner-Imagn Images

Playing without star defenseman Zach Werenski (illness), the Blue Jackets (30-21-8) built a 4-0 lead after two periods by netting two goals in each of the first two frames. Adam Fantilli and Marchenko scored in the first, Sean Monahan and Matthew Olivier added two more in the second, and that's when things got interesting.

The Rangers turned what should've been a cruise to the final horn for the Blue Jackets into a nail-biter.

New York scored four unanswered goals against Blue Jackets goalie Elvis Merzlikins in the third, tying it 4-4 on tallies by former Blue Jackets defenseman Vladislav Gavrikov, Will Borgen and two by Gabe Perreault. The Rangers (23-29-8) also pressed for a go-ahead goal in the waning stages, forcing Merzlikins to make some clutch stops to force OT.

Mar 2, 2026; New York, New York, USA; New York Rangers right wing Gabe Perreault (94) celebrates his goal against the Columbus Blue Jackets with teammates during the third period at Madison Square Garden. Mandatory Credit: Brad Penner-Imagn Images

Leading 2-0 early in the second, the Blue Jackets used a coaching challenge as momentum to build a 4-0 lead. J.T. Miller's apparent power-play goal that briefly cut the Jackets' lead to 2-1 just 3:04 into the second was overturned by a challenge for goaltender interference. In its ruling, the NHL said Rangers

forward Alexis LaFreniere contacted Merzlikins head before the shot, impairing his ability to play his position.

Monahan scored a shorthanded goal 23 seconds later to give the Blue Jackets a 3-0 lead and Olivier made it 4-0 with 8:06 left in the period, setting up a wild third. Gavrikov and Perreault cut it to 4-2 with goals in the first 54 seconds of the third, separated by 24 seconds, and that lit a spark under the Rangers for the remainder of regulation.

Will Borgen cut it to 4-3 with 7:10 left in the third, Perreault's second of the game tied it 4-4 at 15:14 and Marchenko capped a 2-on-1 rush in overtime to win it with his second goal and third point of the game.

Mar 2, 2026; New York, New York, USA; Columbus Blue Jackets goaltender Elvis Merzlikins (90) tends net against the New York Rangers during the second period at Madison Square Garden. Mandatory Credit: Brad Penner-Imagn Images

Columbus Blue Jackets playoff picture

Winning moved the Blue Jackets (30-21-8) to 68 points, where they're now three points behind the idle Boston Bruins for the second of two wild cards in the Eastern Conference.

They moved to within one point of the Washington Capitals for fourth place in the Metropolitan Division in three fewer games played, and trail the New York Islanders by seven points for third in the Metro and the last of three divisional playoff spots.

Behind the Blue Jackets, the Philadelphia Flyers are just one point back after defeating the Toronto Maple Leafs 3-2 in a shootout on March 2 in Toronto, while the idle Ottawa Senators are two points behind Columbus.

The Columbus Dispatch / Zach Werenski out with illness against New York Rangers

By Brian Hedger – March 2, 2026

Facing another key matchup to remain in contention for a playoff spot, the Blue Jackets don't have star Zach Werenski against the New York Rangers on March 2 at Madison Square Garden.

Werenski, who played the Jackets' first two games after winning a gold medal with the United States at the 2026 Winter Olympics, is their top defenseman and leading scorer. He was a late scratch due to illness and missed his fifth game of the season.

Egor Zamula drew back into the lineup as the Jackets' sixth defenseman.

Ivan Provorov moved up to play Werenski's spot on the left side of the top defensive pairing, skating with Damon Severson. The Blue Jackets also played without playmaking forward Kent Johnson, who sat as a healthy scratch for the second straight game.

The Columbus Dispatch / Blue Jackets coach hopes to spark Kent Johnson

By Brian Hedger – March 2, 2026

It's rare that you hear an NHL coach say a player is being scratched because they need to produce more offensively, especially a coach with Rick Bowness' tenure.

Usually, it's a lack of defensive awareness that does it.

Well, that's not the case with Kent Johnson, whom Bowness sat as a healthy scratch Feb. 28 when the Jackets lost 4-3 in overtime to the New York Islanders. Johnson's skill would've been handy in 3-on-3 OT, but his ongoing struggle to create time and space for himself during other situations is largely why he sat.

It's also why Johnson might sit March 2 against the New York Rangers at Madison Square Garden to open a back-to-back that concludes March 3 against the Nashville Predators at Nationwide Arena.

"Listen, he's a big part of the future of the team," Bowness said. "This isn't, 'We're going to sit you out for the next month.' This is 'take a look at the game.' Sometimes there's a little more room out there than you realize when you're on the ice, with the pace of the game. 'We're not down on you. We've just got to make some changes.'"

Johnson, who has six goals and 12 assists for 18 points, has seen a drop in production that's striking, given what he did last season. He's gone from resembling a developing version of Vegas Golden Knights star Mitch Marner to a forward who gets erased too often and can't drive play like he did a year ago.

It's baffling.

Despite battling through an early shoulder injury, Johnson put up career-highs last season with 24 goals, 33 assists and 57 points in 68 games. It resembled his rookie year (2022-23), when Johnson contributed a solid 16-24-40 in 79 games.

What he's going through now looks more like his second NHL season, when he produced career lows with 6-10-16 in 42 games and struggled through a slow start that led to an AHL assignment.

Bowness, hired Jan. 12 to replace Dean Evason, needs to see less of that Johnson and more of the guy whose elite skills as a freshman at the University of Michigan enticed the Blue Jackets to select him fifth overall in 2021.

That's the crux of what the veteran coach told Johnson about his decision to skate Danton Heinen at right wing on Sean Monahan's line.

Dmitri Voronkov also moved off Monahan's line, heading to the fourth line in a flip-flop with captain Boone Jenner. Johnson's wiry frame and playing style left him without a matching role. He's a highly skilled forward in the mold of Marner or Patrick Kane, and the Blue Jackets need him to play like it down the stretch.

That's also his goal.

“I want to be an offensive guy,” Johnson said. “That’s why I was drafted. I know [Bowness] talked about the goal scoring and shooting, and he watched my goals ... I was also drafted to be a playmaker, so I want to be a dual threat and set my linemates up a lot. So, I think it’s good. I should be focused on offense. That’s obviously what I want too.”

The Hockey Writers / 3 Bad Trends the Blue Jackets Have Shown Out of the Break

By Wesley Minke – March 2, 2026

The Columbus Blue Jackets went into the Olympic Break as the hottest team in the NHL. However, coming out of the break they were not been able to win either of their first two games against the two teams directly ahead of them in the standings, the Boston Bruins and New York Islanders.

Where the Blue Jackets stand right now, the upcoming stretch feels like a massive turning point in the season, and they have to find a way to turn this bad stretch of play around as soon as possible. That can happen when the Blue Jackets take on the New York Rangers tonight at Madison Square Garden and then play four-straight home games over the next week.

These are what we call must-win games, if that even counts as a thing. Games against the Nashville Predators, Florida Panthers, Utah Mammoth, and Los Angeles Kings pit the Blue Jackets against teams in similar playoff fights.

So, what three things do the Blue Jackets need to fix to break the trend of these recent games?

Goaltending Has to Find Footing

Going into the break the Blue Jackets goaltending tandem of Elvis Merzlikins and Jet Greaves had posted back-to-back shutouts. However, coming out of the break, they look to be just a bit unsettled in the crease. They have allowed some easy ones to squeak by which wouldn't have happened when they were locked in.

Now, they have to figure out how to get back into that groove. Both Merzlikins and Greaves didn't play awful in their return games, but their teams didn't take advantage of the performance they put out there either. The Blue Jackets had chances in both games to win late, and in neither game did they manage to capture two big points.

The Blue Jackets need to lean back into the structure that head coach Rick Bowness runs so well, and they have to find a way to play staunch defense and take away passing lanes that have given teams golden opportunities in front.

Gold-medal winning defenseman Zach Werenski has continued to play great offensively, but he has to find his superb defensive status again, and the defensive unit as a whole has to be better. The Blue Jackets defensive core blocked 19 blocked shots in the two games since the break, which exceeds their season average of roughly seven blocked shots per game.

However, the goaltenders have been forced to make a lot of acrobatic saves, and a lot of that is due to defenders having bad positioning in front and allowing redirects and tips in front of the net. If the goaltending is going to get better, it will all start with the defense in front of them.

Stars Need to Take Over

No longer can this Blue Jackets team sit back and allow the game to come to them; they need to step up and take it. Werenski is one of the biggest pieces of that, and he has come back strong in two games offensively, but the rest of the offense hasn't really been there.

We have seen Bowness call out both Kent Johnson and Dmitri Voronkov. These these guys didn't seem to take it personally, but rather as an expectation to elevate their game. Johnson was even a healthy scratch in the Blue Jackets' most-recent game against the Islanders on Saturday.

There is the expectation for Johnson to step up and be a massive offensive piece moving forward, and his offensive output had a really nice jump when Bowness took over. However, that hasn't been the case in the past few games, and he needed some sort of a spark to revive his play.

The Blue Jackets don't have a lot of glaring holes as constructed, but they also don't have a superior-enough scoring forward for their recent lapses in depth scoring. The closest thing they have to a top scorer is Kirill Marchenko, and even at that he's been inconsistent at times this season.

Too often, the Blue Jackets have started super hot but haven't been able to stay on the gas and finish games out. They had a first-period lead in both losses recently, and dominated the entire period both times. However, the second period is when things caught up to them.

Keep Pushing for a Full 60 Minutes

One of the biggest issues that eventually cost former head coach Dean Evason his job was the team's inability to close games out in the third period. How they were able to get over that hump and find success in the third period was Bowness getting them to play within a system.

Now they find themselves on the brink of falling into a really difficult place to dig out of in the playoff race, and also struggling to play a complete game against playoff-calibre opponents. They have come out of the gates hot, and have played near perfect first periods, but the periods beyond that have not been good enough.

So, with the projection of the Blue Jackets hanging on by a thread in the playoff race, they have to find a way to fix the middle-period lull they have right now.

They have to find some sort of bump from somewhere to jump over their bubble status and capture enough momentum for the rest of the season to get in the dance. If they book a ticket into the playoffs, the Blue Jackets have enough talent to make a real push and are a team not many Eastern Conference opponents would want to see.

There is work to be done to get there, but they have shown plenty of glimpses in the past of being a good enough team to take out some of the most talented teams in the league. They went toe-to-toe offensively with the Tampa Bay Lightning earlier this season and own a pair of dominant wins over the Dallas Stars as well

They have the talent to do it, but just need to put it in all together. The Blue Jackets have shown they can do it, now we get to see if the playoff expectations many of the younger guys put on this team can come to fruition.