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1st Ohio Battery / It's About That Time: Training Camp Is Just Around The Corner As Blue Jackets Look To Feed Off Last Season

By Will Chase – August 25, 2025

Are you beginning to crave hockey?

With the Blue Jackets' season set to begin Oct. 9 in Nashville, the franchise is set to commemorate its 25th anniversary.

There have been more lows than highs in terms of on-ice success throughout many of the previous 24 seasons, but the best might truly be what's ahead for the franchise.

A young core boosted by the likes of Adam Fantilli, Kent Johnson, and Kirill Marchenko, led by the likes of Zach Werenski, and featuring more offensive skill overall than we've seen prior, the Jackets are hoping to make the 25th year the best one yet.

A two-time All-Star, Werenski was the MVP of last year's team that fell one point short of a playoff spot and will be relied upon to be more of that player again. A player who finished second to Cale Makar in the Norris voting for top overall defenseman and seventh for the Hart for league MVP.

Werenski shined on the national stage, leading all players with six points (all assists) in four games during last February's 4 Nations Face-Off. Then he helped the U.S. win gold in the World Championship for the first time in 92 years with six points (one goal, five assists).

Boone Jenner is the captain of the Blue Jackets, donning the 'C' and leading the team on and off the ice. But as Jenner missed most of last year recovering from shoulder surgery, we saw Werenski not only level up on the ice but also represent the de facto captainship of the team. Among the veteran leaders, you could certainly feel his presence, representing the organization on and off the ice as a respected pillar of the organization and in the community.

After just missing out on the playoffs, head coach Dean Evason and the Blue Jackets will need more of what they got from their offense last season, as well as core players continuing to elevate their game.

The Jackets' offense scored 3.26 goals for per game, eighth in the league and tied with the Maple Leafs. That number, along with its 267 goals, was a franchise record.

There were many big contributors on the offensive side of the puck, and many players set new career scoring highs.

From Werenski's 82 points (23 goals, 59 assists) to Marchenko's personal best 74 points (31 goals, 43 assists), a 32-point increase from 2023-24. Fantilli showed offensive flash in year two, with 54 points (31 goals, 23 assists), and played in all 82 games after his rookie season was cut short by injury. Johnson was back to looking like a top-five draft pick, setting a new scoring high with 57 points (24 goals, 33 assists).

Just as importantly for Evason, if not more, is the defensive side of the puck. Did the team do enough to correct for the number of goals that found their back of the net?

The off-season might not have gone as according to plan for the fan base. Likely, it didn't go quite the way president and general manager Don Waddell would have thought, either. A team that didn't necessarily make the big off-season additions they might have considered, they kept blue line pieces intact, re-signing Dante Fabbro and Ivan Provorov.

Gone are Christian Fischer, Jordan Harris, Jack Johnson, Luke Kunin, Sean Kuraly, Kevin Labanc, Joseph LaBate, Daniil Tarasov, and James van Riemsdyk.

In are Charlie Coyle and Miles Wood via trade, and then the free agent signings of Hudson Fasching, Christian Jaros, and Isac Lundestrom.

Whether this team can feed off last year's surprising run and claim a playoff spot will depend on health, as it always does, but the core players continuing to step up, and what the team can get out of its new goaltending duo with Elvis Merzlikins and primarily Jet Greaves for a full season.

The Hockey Writers / 3 Toughest Sections of the Blue Jackets' 2025-26 Schedule

By Matthew Buhrmann – August 20, 2025

Hockey season is not too far away on the calendar, despite it feeling like it is. As of the day I'm writing this (Aug. 20), we are 50 days from the Columbus Blue Jackets season opener on the road vs the Nashville Predators, and 54 days from the home opener vs the New Jersey Devils.

This has been quite the long offseason with a lack of big moves across the NHL, so I am going to take a look at some tough stretches for the Blue Jackets this coming 2025-26 season, particularly three stretches of the schedule. When taking a deeper look at the schedule, according to the 1st Ohio Battery, 41% of the home games (17 of 41) are on the weekend, slightly below the 44-55% league average.

The schedule overall is loaded around the end of the week. The Blue Jackets have 50 games from Thursday through Sunday: 17 on Thursdays (nine at home), just three on Fridays (two at home), 22 on Saturdays (11 at home), and eight on Sundays (four at home).

The Blue Jackets had 12 back-to-back sets last season and struggled in them tremendously, especially in the second game, where they went a whopping 2-9 record-wise. There are 15 back-to-back sets this season, and the Blue Jackets "must" do better, especially in their conditioning, an area that many raised questions about after last season. However, this appears to have been handled this offseason with the hiring of a new (and former) strength and conditioning coach, Barry Brennan, who was with Columbus in that same role from 2005 to 2010.

Now, let's break down what I consider the three toughest stretches of the upcoming season.

October Gauntlet

The Blue Jackets open the season with a tough stretch. From mid to late October, they face the New Jersey Devils, Colorado Avalanche, Tampa Bay Lightning, and Dallas Stars in consecutive games. To close out the month, they have two back-to-backs, each featuring one home/road game.

The toughest opponents in those sets are the Washington Capitals and Toronto Maple Leafs, both of which they'll see at Nationwide. October features 10 games in total, with seven against teams that made the playoffs last spring, according to Jeff Svoboda.

It's important for this team to at least go .500 in October, given the talent of the opponents they're facing. This stretch will also serve as an important measuring stick for the goalie tandem and the true trajectory of this team.

Heavy Load Before the Break

Heading right into the Olympic break, the Blue Jackets face a heavy workload against some decent opponents. This part of the season is when injuries piled up earlier in 2025, with Sean Monahan, Cole Sillinger, Boone Jenner, Kirill Marchenko, and Yegor Chinakhov all missing time, some being significant.

One notable tough stretch is a late-January three-game homestand in just five days against the Ottawa Senators, Stars, and Lightning, part of nine games in 15 days to close out the first half, closing it out with two sets of back-to-backs. One begins with a road trip to Chicago, followed by St. Louis, and another starts in New Jersey before the Blue Jackets fly home to face the Chicago Blackhawks the very next day.

The opponents themselves during this section aren't the toughest when looking holistically at the season, but the volume of games in such a short span could take a toll on the team's health and energy as they try to reach the 19-day Olympic break.

The Final Stretch

The final stretch of the season is just as demanding, with a three-game road trip from April 7-11 at the Detroit Red Wings, Buffalo Sabres, and Montreal Canadiens. With playoff hopes/position possibly (and hopefully) on the line, these games could be huge.

The closing stretch is packed thanks to the long Olympic break in February, much longer than the typical All-Star Break and last season's 4 Nations Face-Off. The Blue Jackets will play 16 games in the final 29 days, with zero two-day breaks. That's a brutal grind for a team that may be fighting for a playoff spot, but one that all teams will be dealing with, so no excuses.

Tougher opponents during this run include the Winnipeg Jets, Carolina Hurricanes (three times), and Boston Bruins (twice). By this point in the season, every player is banged up, and the physical toll will always be a challenge.

The Blue Jackets wrap up the season with two games at home, and if all goes well, they'll be playing in front of a fired-up crowd as the team heads into the playoffs.

The Hockey Writers / 3 Blue Jackets That Could Be on Olympic Rosters

By Nicholas Arnold – August 20, 2025

It's hard to believe that the 2026 Olympic Games are only six months away, for a couple of reasons. First, it's tough to believe we've almost made it to 2026 and somehow still don't have flying cars. But it's also tough to comprehend because this cycle's Olympic hockey tournament will be the first in 12 years in which NHL players are allowed to compete. For context, a child born just after the 2014 Sochi tournament will have made it to the seventh grade before seeing NHL players fighting for gold on the biggest stage in the world. What a travesty, and thank goodness that ship has been righted.

The Columbus Blue Jackets are an organization on the upswing. After a half-decade of negative headlines, decline, and rebuilding, the team took a massive step forward and narrowly missed the postseason in 2025. That came on the backs of some pretty talented players who elevated their games to an all-world level. Some of those players could appear in their home country's colors at the 2026 Games.

We'll take a look at three players from Ohio's team that could claim roster spots in the tournament. We'll go in order of most likely to least likely of the candidates to represent their nations in Italy next February.

Elvis Merzlikins – Team Latvia

The Blue Jackets' goalie, Elvis Merzlikins, is a lock to once again represent his country at the national level, which is because he's already been named to the team. Let's go through his resume anyway. He's been the Latvian starter at six World Championships since 2015-16, which was four seasons before he even made his NHL debut. He's played in 31 games with a 13-17-0 record in those tournaments and has a .907 save percentage (SV%). That history, combined with the fact that he's only 31 years old and still a starting goalie in the NHL, should be enough to give him the first start in Italy.

Merzlikins will not be uncontested for the starting role in the Latvian crease, as he was for a decent number of years. Pittsburgh Penguins' goalie Arturs Silovs—who was also already named to the team—will give him a run for his money. Silovs was named the most valuable player in this June's American Hockey League (AHL) Playoffs when he was a member of the Abbotsford Canucks. He also already showed the ability to play well under pressure when he put the Vancouver Canucks on his back and almost singlehandedly willed them into the second round of the 2024 NHL Playoffs. Internationally, Silovs has a 9-5-0 record at the World Championships with Latvia and a .929 SV%. The 24-year-old certainly seems to be the future of the nation's crease, so we'll have to see if the metaphorical torch is passed while the Olympic torch is lit in Milan.

Zach Werenski – Team USA

I know there are a lot more elite American defenders than in decades past, so there's going to be a lot of competition to get a roster spot, but Zach Werenski is as close to a lock as you can get. While he wasn't one of the first six named to the team, his breakout 2024-25 season has elevated his status as one of the league's premier rearguards.

The only thing that could derail his appearance in the red, white, and blue would be an injury or a complete and utterly disastrous start to the season. Werenski led the Blue Jackets in scoring last season, and he was the runner-up for the James Norris Memorial Trophy as the league's top defenseman. There's no way Columbus would've been as close to a playoff spot as they were without him. The other thing for him is that he has a history of performing in pressure situations.

He was the captain of the 2016 American World Junior Team and led the tournament in scoring by a defender. He has scored 13 points in 15 games through his last two appearances in the World Championships, including the Americans' first gold medal at the tournament. Most importantly, he was outstanding for the Americans at the 4 Nations Face-Off. He not only led his team in scoring, but his six assists were enough to lead the tournament in scoring. While yes, 16 defensemen were invited to the Team USA Olympic orientation camp, one of those few roster spots will be given to Werenski.

Isac Lundestrom – Team Sweden

If Russia was allowed in the Olympic Games this cycle, there would be another three Blue Jackets who would be guaranteed to appear in Italy. However, political tensions have not eased, and therefore Kirill Marchenko, Dmitri Voronkov, and Ivan Provorov will all have to wait at least another four years to wear their nation's colors while vying for a gold medal.

Without them, to be honest, I was scrounging for a third player who could sneak onto an Olympic roster. I think I've found one. This guy may be a bit of a stretch, especially with all of the high-end skill talent that's come out of Sweden in the past few years, but new Blue Jacket Isac Lundeström could be a sleeper to at least make the trip as an extra roster player.

Lundeström has a decent history with Team Sweden, representing the country at two World Juniors and three World Championships. He contributed decently as a depth player with 11 points in 27 games at the World Championship. The first-round draft pick fell out of favor and his production dipped over the last few seasons with the Anaheim Ducks. However, if he is able to come to Ohio and become a solid defensive option who specializes in the penalty kill and somehow finds a bit more of a scoring touch, he certainly could be an option for the yellow and blue. It's a lot of ifs, but there is a path. Hey, if career fourth-line center Marcus Kruger could be an Olympian for Sweden in 2014, who's to say Lundeström couldn't find a place in the roster in a similarly defensive role?

The hockey world is agog in waiting for the rosters to be released in the first true best-on-best Olympic tournament in over a decade. Debate and speculation are going to fill webpages and monopolize water cooler conversations over the next six months. For the Blue Jackets to have a couple of players as locks to be active in the tournament and maybe one more sneaking in as an extra body, it will be invigorating to the fanbase.

[NHL.com / Dahlin, Bedard, Celebrini among NHL Network's top 25 players born this century](#)

By NHL.com – August 22, 2025

Young, talented and determined. The NHL has plenty of young players who are making their marks on the game. NHL Network's research department on Friday revealed its top 25 players born since 2000. Here is the list:

25. Matthew Knies, F, Toronto Maple Leafs

The 22-year-old had a strong season with 58 points (29 goals, 29 assists) in 78 games, fifth on the Maple Leafs behind Mitch Marner (102 points), William Nylander (84), Auston Matthews (78) and John Tavares (74). Knies proved he could deliver in clutch situations, scoring six game-winning goals that were behind only Tavares and Nylander (eight apiece) and Marner (seven). He signed a six-year, \$46.5 million contract (\$7.75 million average annual value) with the Maple Leafs on July 1.

24. Kirill Marchenko, F, Columbus Blue Jackets

The right wing, who turned 25 on July 21, set NHL career highs in goals (31), assists (43) and points (74) in 79 games. He became the third player in Blue Jackets history to have a 30-goal and 70-point season, joining Rick Nash (2008-09) and Nick Foligno (2014-15). Marchenko took a puck to his jaw Feb. 2, had surgery and was back Feb. 22. He'll start this season where he ended last season, on Columbus' top line potentially with left wing Dmitri Voronkov and center Sean Monahan.

23. Matvei Michkov, F, Philadelphia Flyers

There were a lot of positives last season for Michkov, who led NHL rookies in goals (26) and even-strength points (46) and tied San Jose Sharks forward Macklin Celebrini for the lead among first-year players with eight power-play goals and Anaheim Ducks forward Cutter Gauthier with 18 even-strength goals. The 20-year-old will start this season with a new coach, Rick Tocchet, who was hired to replace John Tortorella on May 14. The Flyers are looking to make the Stanley Cup Playoffs for the first time since 2020 and Michkov will be a big help in achieving that goal.

22. Noah Dobson, D, Montreal Canadiens

This will be Dobson's first season with the Canadiens. He was acquired in a trade with the New York Islanders on June 27 for forward Emil Heineman and two first-round picks in the 2025 NHL Draft (Nos. 16 and 17) and signed an eight-year, \$76 million contract (\$9.5 million AAV). The 25-year-old will be looking to get back to the numbers from 2023-24, when he had 70 points (10 goals, 60 assists) in 79 games. Dobson had 39 points (10 goals, 29 assists) in 71 games last season. He's expected to be in Montreal's top four and should help their power play, which was 21st (20.1 percent) in the NHL.

21. Dustin Wolf, G, Calgary Flames

A finalist for the Calder Trophy awarded annually to the League's top rookie and the lone goalie on this list, Wolf was 29-16-8 with a 2.64 goals-against average, .910 save percentage and three shutouts in 53 games last season. The 24-year-old was one victory away from the Flames rookie record of 30 set by Mike Vernon in 1986-87. He made at least 25 saves in 35 games and allowed two or fewer goals 25 times. Not bad for Calgary's seventh-round pick (No. 214) in the 2019 NHL Draft.

20. Leo Carlsson, F, Anaheim Ducks

Carlsson had 45 points (20 goals, 25 assists) in 76 games last season after he was limited to 55 games as a rookie because of injuries, including a sprained right MCL. He had five game-winning goals, tied with Alex Killorn for first on the Ducks. The 20-year-old, who played one game for Sweden at the inaugural 4 Nations Face-Off, is one of several young forwards the Ducks are anticipating good things from in the years to come.

19. Quinton Byfield, F, Los Angeles Kings

Byfield was back at his natural center position for most of last season and it suited him well. The 23-year-old had 54 points, including an NHL career-high 23 goals, in 81 games, one point shy of the career-best 55 he had in 2023-24. He also averaged a career-high 18:37 of ice time per game. Byfield is expected to be the Kings' No. 2 center this season. He dealt with some injuries early in his career but is now finding his niche.

18. Luke Hughes, D, New Jersey Devils

The youngest of the Hughes brothers after defenseman Quinn Hughes (Vancouver Canucks) and forward Jack Hughes (Devils), Luke is earning his own family bragging rights in the NHL. The 21-year-old was a Calder Trophy finalist in 2023-24, when he had 47 points, tied with Minnesota Wild defenseman and fellow Calder finalist Brock Faber for second among rookies. He had 44 points (seven goals, 37 assists) in 71 games last season. Now the Devils just need to sign him. They extended the restricted free agent a qualifying offer and general manager Tom Fitzgerald said signing Hughes is a priority.

17. Moritz Seider, D, Detroit Red Wings

The 2022 Calder Trophy winner continues to be one of the Red Wings' brightest young stars. The 24-year-old had a career-high 46 points and averaged a career-best 25:04 of ice time per game in 82 games last season. And just in case you weren't sure of his stamina and durability, he's played every game in each of his four seasons in the NHL. It's no surprise that Seider was one of the first six NHL players named to Team Germany for the Olympic Winter Games Milano Cortina 2026.

16. Brock Faber, D, Minnesota Wild

Faber had 29 points (10 goals, 19 assists) in 78 games last season and two assists in four games for the United States at 4 Nations. He led all U.S. skaters (23:20) and Minnesota in average ice time (25:32). The Wild have benefitted from the 22-year-old's consistency during his two seasons.

15. Seth Jarvis, F, Carolina Hurricanes

The 23-year-old continues to be one of Carolina's most dependable forwards. Last season he had 67 points (32 goals, 35 assists) in 73 games, second on the Hurricanes behind Sebastian Aho (74). Jarvis equaled his point total from 2023-24, when he had 33 goals and 34 assists in 81 games and signed an eight-year, \$63.2 million contract with the Hurricanes on Aug. 31, which includes \$29.24 million coming in signing bonuses.

14. Lane Hutson, D, Montreal Canadiens

As rookie seasons go, it couldn't have gone much better for the native of Holland, Michigan. The 21-year-old had 66 points (six goals, 60 assists) in 82 games to lead first-year skaters. Hutson was the Canadiens' second Calder winner in the expansion era (since 1967-68) after goalie Ken Dryden won it in 1971-72. He was the fourth defenseman in the League's modern era (since 1943-44) to lead rookies in scoring (Bobby Orr, Brian Leetch, Quinn Hughes) and the first since Hughes, the Canucks defenseman who had 53 points (eight goals, 45 assists) in 2019-20.

13. Logan Cooley, F, Utah Mammoth

The Mammoth played their inaugural season in Salt Lake City and Cooley was a big part of their offense. The 21-year-old had 65 points (25 goals, 40 assists) in 75 games, second behind captain Clayton Keller (90). Those two will likely skate with right wing Dylan Guenther on Utah's top line to start the season. Cooley has done well the past two seasons to build his game and production.

12. Cole Caufield, F, Montreal Canadiens

The 24-year-old, who helped the Canadiens get to the playoffs for the first time since 2021, had NHL career highs in goals (37) and points (70) in 82 games last season. He was second on the Canadiens behind Nick Suzuki (89 points) and his 37 goals were Montreal's highest since Max Pacioretty had the same in 2014-15. Caufield scored 10 power-play goals, second on the Canadiens behind Patrik Laine (15), and his eight game-winning goals were second to Suzuki's nine.

11. Lucas Raymond, F, Detroit Red Wings

Raymond led the Red Wings with a career-best 80 points (27 goals, 53 assists) in 82 games last season. The 23-year-old represented his native Sweden twice, first at Four Nations (three assists in three games) and then won bronze at the 2025 IIHF World Championship (five goals, six assists in 10 games). Raymond was among the first six players selected to Team Sweden's roster for the 2026 Olympics.

10. Matt Boldy, F, Minnesota Wild

The 24-year-old completed his fourth season with the Wild. He had a career-high 73 points (27 goals, 46 assists) in 82 games last season. His 10 game-winning goals set a single-season Wild record and were tied with Pittsburgh Penguins captain Sidney Crosby for third in the NHL. At 4 Nations, Boldy had three points (one goal, two assists) in four games for the United States.

9. Adam Fantilli, F, Columbus Blue Jackets

The 20-year-old had 54 points (31 goals, 23 assists) in 82 games and ended his season on a four-game goal streak (six goals). His 31 goals tied Marchenko for the Blue Jackets lead and 48 of his points came at even strength. It was a great rebound for the center, who sustained a calf laceration Jan. 28, 2024, and missed the rest of his rookie season. Fantilli is a big piece for the Blue Jackets, who finished two points behind the Canadiens for the second wild card into the playoffs from the Eastern Conference.

8. Connor Bedard, F, Chicago Blackhawks

The 20-year-old is the latest face of the Blackhawks, who are hoping he'll help get them back to prominence. The No. 1 pick in the 2023 NHL Draft, Bedard's gotten off to a good start, leading the Blackhawks in scoring in each of his first two seasons. He had 67 points (23 goals, 44 assists) in 82 games last season and 61 points (22 goals, 39 assists) in 68 games in 2023-24, when he won the Calder Trophy. Bedard can be a restricted free agent after this season and sign a new contract at any time. Though that's more likely to happen after the season, he's a big bright spot in Chicago's rebuild.

7. Wyatt Johnston, F, Dallas Stars

The 22-year-old has been consistent since joining the Stars and is coming off his best season thus far with 71 points (33 goals, 38 assists) in 82 games. Johnston has played all 82 games in each of his three seasons in the NHL and has been a big part of Dallas' past three trips to the playoffs, where he has 32 points (18 goals, 14 assists) in 56 games. He benefitted greatly from living with Joe Pavelski's family the first two seasons of his NHL career, especially in terms of learning how to be a pro. The talent, however, is all his.

6. Thomas Harley, D, Dallas Stars

Another player the Stars gave ample time to develop, Harley has become one of their top defensemen. The 24-year-old had 50 points (16 goals, 34 assists) in 78 games last season, taking on more minutes (23:23 of ice time per game) and responsibility after defenseman Miro Heiskanen injured his knee Jan. 28. After 34 games as a rookie in 2021-22, Harley played most of the following season with Texas of the American Hockey League. It's paid off. He's been a reliable player since returning to Dallas for good.

5. Macklin Celebrini, F, San Jose Sharks

The No. 1 pick in the 2024 NHL Draft, Celebrini led the Sharks with 63 points (25 goals, 38 assists), eight power-play goals and four game-winning goals in 70 games last season. He scored his first NHL goal and had an assist in his debut, a 5-4 overtime loss to the St. Louis Blues on Oct. 10. Celebrini finished third in Calder voting and the 19-year-old is part of a young core with Will Smith, 20, and William Eklund, 22, who are looking to get San Jose back to its winning ways.

4. Jake Sanderson, D, Ottawa Senators

The 23-year-old had 57 points (11 goals, 46 assists) in 80 regular-season games to help the Senators make the playoffs for the first time since 2017. His 30 power-play points were second among defensemen behind Cale Makar of the Colorado Avalanche (35) and he was named to the U.S. team for the 4 Nations Face-Off to replace an injured Quinn Hughes. A second-generation NHL player (his father Geoff played 1,104 games), Jake is making his own mark on the League.

3. Tim Stutzle, F, Ottawa Senators

Stutzle led Ottawa in points (79) and assists (55) last season. The 23-year-old also had five points (two goals, three assists) in six playoff games. He scored his 100th NHL goal Nov. 23, his 300th point Feb. 3 and 200th assist March 3. Stutzle was one of the first six players named to Team Germany for the 2026 Olympics.

2. Jack Hughes, F, New Jersey Devils

The middle Hughes brother, Jack has 351 points (141 goals, 210 assists) in 368 games for the Devils and had an assist in four games for the U.S. at 4 Nations. When he had season-ending surgery on his right shoulder March 5, he was leading New Jersey in goals (27), shots on goal (229) and game-winning goals (seven) and was tied with Jesper Bratt for the team lead in points (70). The good news is Hughes will be ready to start training camp and add to his already impressive production.

1. Rasmus Dahlin, D, Buffalo Sabres

The No. 1 pick by the Sabres at the 2018 NHL Draft, Dahlin continues to be their most reliable defenseman. The 25-year-old had 68 points (17 goals, 51 assists) in 73 games last season and had a goal in three games for Sweden at 4 Nations. He's a three-time NHL All-Star (2022, 2023, 2024) and was one of the first six players named to Team Sweden's roster for the 2026 Olympics. It'll be Dahlin's second Olympic appearance. He had an assist in two games at the 2018 PyeongChang Olympics, a few months before he made his NHL debut.