



Columbus Blue Jackets Media Clips

October 31 – November 3, 2025

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The Athletic / Blue Jackets overcome sluggish start, then fritter away late lead in loss to Islanders

By Aaron Portzline – November 2, 2025

After getting sorely outplayed in the first half of the game, the Columbus Blue Jackets thought they'd stolen a road win from the New York Islanders on Sunday in UBS Arena. But the Islanders, with two goals in the final 67 seconds of the game, stole it right back.

The Blue Jackets had their four-game win streak — and their four-game streak on the road — snapped with a 3-2 loss to the Islanders in front of 14,984, many of whom had already left before the home team rallied.

"It could be the two points we need at the end of the year, and you have to treat it like that," veteran center Charlie Coyle told FanDuel Sports Network. "Not to put pressure on ourselves, but a little bit of 'hey, this means a lot.' We had it in our hands. You've got to play to the final buzzer, and it's a shame. You know, it stinks to be on the losing end in that fashion when you have it. But we need to learn from it."

The Blue Jackets got goals from Miles Wood and Denton Mateychuk, while goaltender Elvis Merzlikins had 36 saves and deserved a better fate. Mateychuk, who missed two shifts in the second period to nurse an injury, scored at 12:10 of the third period for 2-1 lead.

At that point, it looked as if Columbus might get away with two points after a game in which it struggled at the start. Three minutes into the second period, the Jackets were being outshot 23-4, as they struggled to keep pace after playing back in Columbus less than 24 hours earlier.

Like most games between these two Metropolitan Division clubs, this was not an advertisement for the speed and skill of the NHL. It was a gritty, hard-nosed muck-fest, which is just the way the Islanders like it.

But the crushing collapse didn't happen until late.

Matthew Schaefer, the Islanders' No. 1 overall pick last June, scored his second goal of the game with 1:07 remaining to tie it at 2. Schaefer's wrist shot appeared to glance off the stick of Blue Jackets defenseman Zach Werenski at net-front before sailing over Merzlikins' shoulder.

Then, with 38 seconds remaining, Anders Lee snuck a puck behind Merzlikins on his left post, the puck skidding across the goal line before Islanders forward Simon Holmstrom slammed it into the net to put the Islanders ahead 3-2.

Merzlikins, who was mostly tremendous throughout the game, jumped to his skates, spun around and slammed his stick into the crossbar twice in frustration, shattering it. His actions likely spoke for many of the Blue Jackets.

“It’s just a shame,” Coyle said. “It’s a shame. A guy who plays like that in front of us gives us a great chance to win a hockey game, just save after save. He deserves better, and we want to come back the next game and play the right way and fix things. You never want to leave it like that, especially when you have a goaltender stand on his head like he did tonight. It should be that way.”

Merzlikins was seen sitting alone on the Blue Jackets’ bench well after the game had ended. The rest of the Blue Jackets were in the dressing room and the cleaning crew was already working through the seats while Merzlikins stared across the ice, at times shaking his head.

Before the Islanders’ rally, and when the Blue Jackets led 2-1, there was an odd sequence in the Islanders’ end that, for a moment, appeared to give the Jackets a 3-1 lead.

Coyle was backing toward the crease in front of Islanders goaltender David Rittich when he was pushed backward by a defenseman and bounced into Rittich, who tumbled to the ice and (rather dramatically) ended up almost completely in his net.

As Rittich was sprawled there, Blue Jackets defenseman Zach Werenski shot the puck from above the right circle, and it rattled around in the cage with Rittich. The goal was immediately disallowed on the ice, but Evason wasn’t happy with the explanation.

The goal did not count. No penalty was called. It’s almost as if the entire sequence didn’t even happen. The game resumed, with the Jackets up 2-1.

“We’re not sure why that wasn’t a goal,” Evason said. “The puck goes in the net. The ref didn’t say there was goaltender interference. The onus should be on them (the Islanders) to challenge if the puck goes in the net or not, not for us to challenge a goal that actually goes into the net. I don’t understand that.”

Evason said officials told him he could challenge the call, but the Blue Jackets — who were already short-handed — would have put the Islanders on a five-on-three if they failed in their challenge.

“That’s too risky,” Coyle said. “But, you know, I didn’t go into him, I got pushed into (Rittich), so who knows? But I don’t think it’s worth it and we’re still in the driver’s seat (up 2-1). We have a chance to win the game and finish it off. So I’m not thinking twice about (that call).”

Evason decided to tweak the Blue Jackets’ lineup despite entering the game on a winning streak. The road streak was the franchise’s longest since 2022.

Yegor Chinakhov, who seemed to have found a home on the fourth line, was healthy-scratched so Zach Aston-Reese could get back into the lineup. Fourth-line winger Miles Wood was swapped with second-line winger Kent Johnson to give both lines a new look.

Evason seemed wise to elevate Wood, who scored his fourth goal of the season at 15:21 of the second to tie the score at 1. Johnson, meanwhile, tied with Mateychuk for a team-high three shots on goal. Mathieu Oliver had a whopping nine hits, matching the entire Islanders lineup combined.

The Athletic / Sean Monahan's first of the season, Jet Greaves' strong outing, propel Blue Jackets

By Aaron Portzline – November 1, 2025

Sean Monahan has been one of the NHL's most consistent goal scorers during his 13-year career, so nobody was too concerned, even as the Columbus Blue Jackets' top-line center played through the first month of the season without a goal.

But that doesn't mean Monahan didn't wonder when it might happen.

Monahan's first goal of the season — a power-play tap-in early in the third period — turned out to be an important score as the Blue Jackets held on to beat the slumping-but-desperate St. Louis Blues 3-2 on Saturday before 17,130 in Nationwide Arena.

Zach Werenski added a goal and an assist, Charlie Coyle scored a goal, and goaltender Jet Greaves had 17 of his 37 saves in the third period, as the Blue Jackets won their fourth straight game and for the sixth time in seven games dating to mid-October.

"I mean, you think about it a little bit," Monahan said. "But at the end of the day, we're on a bit of a winning streak, and you, I've said plenty of times, when you win games in this league, life is usually better, so it's something you can't stress over.

"But, yeah, it was nice to put one in and to win the game on that note."

Werenski fired one of his patented tricky wrist shots in on Blues goaltender Joel Hofer, and Hofer — like many netminders before him — had trouble getting a clean read on the shot, and he momentarily lost sight of it after he made the initial save.

Monahan reached behind him and tapped home the puck, one of the easiest goals of his career.

"It was a matter of time, right?" Werenski said. "He's so talented and his line's so good. It's just ... yeah. Happy to see him score tonight."

The goal, at 5:07 of the third, gave the Blue Jackets a 3-1 lead. If they thought the lead was properly insured, they were wrong. The Blues, who expected to be competitive this year, have been one of the NHL's biggest disappointments out of the gate, and they carried a six-game skid (0-4-2) into the game.

Of course, they were going to make a major push. The Blues pulled to 3-2 at 9:48 of the third, and spent the rest of the period hounding the Blue Jackets into their end and pressing for the tying goal.

"We had to hang on a little bit," Blue Jackets coach Dean Evason said. "Teams are going to push, which they did, and we didn't like how passive we were at the end. We just let them come at us, so we'll have to correct some of that."

Greaves was not passive. He continued what has been a remarkable transformation in net for the Blue Jackets this season, with Greaves and Elvis Merzljkins rotating starts and each delivering — without exception — outings that have given the Jackets a chance to win.

With 6:33 remaining, Greaves denied Blues winger Mathieu Joseph on a breakaway that would have tied the score. With less than four minutes remaining, he got a piece of a clean shot by winger Pavel Buchnevich to deflect the puck wide.

Greaves (3-3-0) now has a .916 save percentage. Merzljkins (4-1-0), who will likely start Sunday night on the road against the New York Islanders, has a .915 save percentage. Together, they've given the Blue Jackets a tandem that has been among the best in the league so far this season.

"I feel like every single night, they give us a chance to win, no matter who's in net," Werenski said. "And it's been a ton of fun playing in front of them.

"They can speak on it, but I feel like they're feeding off each other and pushing each other and encouraging each other, and it's been really fun to watch in the room. Just super proud of both of those guys."

The Blues took a 1-0 lead only 3:37 into the game, but the Jackets weren't down for long. Charlie Coyle, who had four assists in Wednesday's 6-3 win over the Toronto Maple Leafs, answered only 1:01 later to tie the score.

Werenski gave the Blue Jackets a 2-1 lead at 11:55 of the second, scoring his fourth goal of the season. This marked the third straight game in which Werenski has had a goal and an assist.

Then, early in the third, it was Monahan's time. It was the 264th goal of his career, and, along with his 336 assists, gives him 600 points in his career. He was more excited about the win than the milestone, he said, but ...

"It's definitely a milestone puck that I'll keep, and as milestones come ... now that I have a son, it's something I can store in his room. That'll be cool for him."

The Athletic / For now, Blue Jackets have found a lethal offensive balance

By Aaron Portzline – Nov. 1, 2025

NHL coaches typically resist putting a number on any of their forward lines, leaving those classifications to fans and media. Columbus Blue Jackets coach Dean Evason pushed back Thursday when asked about the luxury of having a “bottom six” that can score.

“What is the bottom six?” Evason queried.

As ridiculous as that feigned confusion can seem, Evason might have a point so far this season, especially this past week.

In Tuesday’s comeback 4-3 win in Buffalo, fourth-line wingers Miles Wood (two goals) and Yegor Chinakhov (one goal, one assist) took part in three of the four goals.

Wednesday, in a 6-3 rout of the Toronto Maple Leafs, center Charlie Coyle (0-4-4) and wingers Cole Sillinger (2-1-3) and Mathieu Olivier (1-3-4) — that is the third line — carried the mail offensively, each setting one or more career highs offensively.

For many, the Blue Jackets’ first full offseason under general manager Don Waddell was a disappointment, considering he wanted to go big-game hunting with his abundance of draft picks and salary-cap room.

But the moves he was able to make in a tight market — Coyle and Wood via a trade with the Colorado Avalanche, fourth-line center Isac Lundeström via free agency — have let Evason build his lines the way he’s wanted.

“That’s what Don and his guys upstairs did, is go get players who can not only score goals, but they all can defend,” Evason said.

Evason and his staff saw all last season that a line with Sean Monahan centering Dmitri Voronkov and Kirill Marchenko was among the best in the NHL in their almost half-season together. Even though Evason wouldn’t say this, we will: That’s the Blue Jackets’ No. 1 line.

The other three lines have shuffled frequently as Evason kept looking for the right mix. He appears to have settled on the other lines almost two weeks ago, and the Blue Jackets have won five of their past six games heading into Saturday night’s game versus the St. Louis Blues in Nationwide Arena.

Every line must be able to check and defend, Evason said. Scoring is inevitable if they play the right way, Evason believes, but a line won’t be broken up simply for its offensive woes. At the same time, they won’t stay together long if they aren’t competing and defending, he said.

Earlier this month, when Chinakhov made his season debut after a series of healthy scratches, fans began pining for him to join Adam Fantilli and Kent Johnson on the second line, loading up the No. 2 line with offensive skill and relegating Boone Jenner, the captain, to a bottom-six role.

But that line would make it difficult for the Blue Jackets to simply roll four lines as they're doing now. Offensive-zone starts would be a blast, but that line might be problematic in other settings.

As a former player, Evason doesn't like to change lines after a rough game or a rough period, he said. That's especially true now in his second year, when he knows these players well. He'd rather they work through their struggles, either individually or as a line, than get involved himself.

"We are comfortable playing any one of our lines against anybody," Evason said. "Obviously, (Leafs star William Nylander) wasn't in the lineup the other night (for Toronto), but (Auston) Matthews was, and he's a pretty special player, and we were confident that whoever played against his line would be able to, you know, do the right things.

"Not necessarily get the job done (entirely). Special players are going to have their opportunities; they're going to score. But our team feels comfortable playing whatever line against whoever, the best players in this league. That's exciting for us. We're not worried about matchups."

Evason said the Blue Jackets rely on assistant coach Steve McCarthy to match their defensive pairs against the other club's top forward lines more than they try matching forwards. (You might have noticed Zach Werenski shadowing Matthews on Wednesday.)

It's working, too. At five-on-five play, the Blue Jackets have outscored opponents 26-17 through their first 10 games. That plus-9 margin was second only to the Carolina Hurricanes (plus-10) heading into Friday's games.

The Blue Jackets, at 3.4 goals per game, are middle-of-the-pack in the NHL in scoring, even though Fantilli's line (with Jenner and Johnson) has yet to click offensively. Monahan has yet to score a goal this season, though he does have a plus-7 rating.

Over the last four games, only Johnson has tallied a point (an assist).

"We're starting to figure each other out as a line," Fantilli said. "Obviously, we want pucks to go in, and it sucks right now because you want to have a good start offensively. I like where we're at, we just have to start capitalizing on chances, it's that simple."

Fantilli, who is notoriously competitive and his own strongest critic, then snarled and said: "I've got to f—ing score."

Evason preached patience. It helps, of course, that the other three lines are firing.

"Somebody the other day said ... that people were questioning (Werenski) at the start of the year, like, where are his points and all?" Evason said. "Were we worried about Z scoring goals and points? No. Are we worried about Fantilli and Kent Johnson and Boone Jenner scoring goals? No.

"So a line or a guy doesn't score for a few games. It's OK. We'll see where it ends up at the end of the year, and the most important thing is us taking that first step and making the playoffs. We're not trying to get 30 goals out of guys. We're striving to make the playoffs."

The Columbus Dispatch / Meltdown against New York Islanders a 'shame' for Columbus Blue Jackets: Takeaways

By Brian Hedger – November 3, 2025

This one left a mark.

Protecting a 2-1 lead with less than two minutes left in a road back-to-back finale Nov. 2 in Elmont, New York, the Blue Jackets unfurled for a bitter 3-2 loss to the New York Islanders.

After leaning on goalie Elvis Merzlikins to fend off a rested team, the Blue Jackets (7-5-0) allowed goals 29 seconds apart in the final 1:07 to fumble a 2-1 lead Denton Mateychuk had given them seven minutes earlier. Throw in a goal that should have made it 3-1 with 3:04 left being called off immediately for goaltender interference on Charlie Coyle, who was pushed into Islanders goalie David Rittich, and the sting could linger a few days.

“We had it in our hands,” Coyle said on the FanDuel Sportsnet postgame show. “You’ve got to play to the final buzzer, and it’s a shame. It stinks to be on the losing end in that fashion, when you have it, but we’ve got to learn from it. That’s the bottom line.”

Here are four more takeaways:

Columbus Blue Jackets goalie Elvis Merzlikins must erase brutal loss to New York Islanders

After smashing his stick over the crossbar following Simon Holmstroms’ winning goal with 38 seconds left, Merzlikins watched time run out and headed back to the locker room to remove his gear.

He doubled back to the bench a short while later in shorts, T-shirt and Blue Jackets ballcap to reflect on what he had just experienced. FanDuel Sportsnet’s broadcast showed Merzlikins staring at the ice and shaking his head in disbelief.

“It’s a shame,” Coyle said on FanDuel Sportsnet’s postgame show. “A guy who plays like that, gives us a chance to win a hockey game, save after save, he deserves better and we want to come back in the next game and play the right way and fix things. You never want to leave him like that, especially when you have a goalie who stands on his head like he did tonight. It shouldn’t be that way.”

Columbus Blue Jackets defenseman Denton Mateychuk dealing with unspecified injury

Mateychuk played 20:17 on 23 shifts, including eight shifts in the third period, but coach Dean Evason said the reason he missed some shifts in the second was due to injury.

“He’s banged up a little bit,” Evason said. “We’ll see what the extent of it is (Nov. 3 in Columbus).”

During Mateychuk’s missed shifts, Dante Fabbro returned to his prior assignment as Werenski’s defensive partner.

Here's why Columbus Blue Jackets coach Dean Evason didn't challenge a disallowed goal vs New York Islanders

Leading 2-1 with just over three minutes left in the third period, the Blue Jackets appeared to make it 3-1 with a point shot that beat Rittich as he fell back into his net.

Referees Jean Hebert and Mitch Dunning waved it off after spotting Coyle collide with Rittich, which left it up to Evason to issue a coaching challenge. That's the opposite of how most plays that include potential goaltender interference play out.

Usually, pucks shot into the net while play is still going are ruled goals and can be reviewed with coaching challenges. This was the other way around, which left Evason befuddled. He was given a chance to review the call but felt there was a strong chance of losing the appeal and giving the Islanders a power play.

"The tough part is that the puck goes in the net, so we're not sure why there wasn't a goal on the play," Evason said. "The puck goes in the net, so we believed that ... the refs didn't say there's goalie interference, so, like, the onus should be on (the Islanders) to challenge if the puck goes in the net, not for us to challenge a goal that actually goes in the net. I don't understand that one."

Columbus Blue Jackets scratch Yegor Chinakhov, demote Kent Johnson

Playing 20 hours after downing St. Louis at Nationwide Arena, getting forward Zach Aston-Reese's fresh legs into the lineup wasn't a surprise. The surprising part was scratching Yegor Chinakhov and moving Kent Johnson to the fourth line to make room on the second line for Miles Wood.

After starting the season as a healthy scratch, Chinakhov drew into the lineup after three games and became an impact winger on the fourth line.

Evason didn't like something about his play against the Blues, though, so Chinakhov played a team-low 9:16. Johnson, off to a slow start, was moved to the fourth line while Wood got a promotion to the second line. Johnson remained on the top power-play unit.

Evason's moves were unorthodox, but moving Wood to Fantilli's line paid off with a tying goal off a pass from Fantilli in the second period, wheeled and sent a hard pass to Wood at the net for a goal that tied it 1-1 with 4:39 left in the second.

The Columbus Dispatch / Columbus Blue Jackets' collapse against New York Islanders deals Merzlikins a bitter loss

By Brian Hedger – November 2, 2025

Elvis Merzlikins didn't deserve the ending he was forced to swallow Nov. 2 at UBS Arena in Elmont, New York.

Despite stopping 36 of the first 37 shots he faced, the Blue Jackets' goalie smashed his stick over the crossbar after the New York Islanders pulled off a dramatic late comeback in a 3-2 win on goals 29 seconds apart by rookie Matthew Schaefer and Simon Holmstrom.

New York tied it 2-2 with 1:07 left on Schaefer's second goal of the game, which he scored with a shot from the right point during 6-on-5 with his own net empty for an extra skater. The puck deflected off Blue Jackets defenseman Zach Werenski's stick in the low slot and went under the crossbar.

Holmstrom scored the winner on the following shift, tapping a loose puck into the net after Anders Lee's shot from a sharp angle slid through Merzlikins' pads.

It was a gut-wrenching loss for Merzlikins and the Blue Jackets (7-5-0), who split a tough back-to-back on short rest after outlasting the St. Louis Blues, 3-2, on Nov. 1 at Nationwide Arena. Merzlikins was the reason the Islanders only led 1-0 after finishing the first period with an 18-3 edge in shots. He was fantastic all night, keeping the rested Islanders at one goal until the game's last two minutes.

Miles Wood and Denton Mateychuk scored goals for the Blue Jackets, including the latter giving them a 2-1 lead with 7:50 left in the third. The Jackets appeared to score a third goal that would've made it 3-1 prior to Schaefer's equalizer, but officials waved it off on the ice because Charlie Coyle made contact in the crease with Islanders goalie David Rittich (20 saves).

Replays showed that Coyle was pushed into the crease by an Islanders defender, but the Blue Jackets didn't challenge the call because it likely would've failed and given New York a power play.

Merzlikins, playing with rested legs as part of alternating goaltending tandem with Jet Greaves, was the biggest reason the Jackets trailed by only a goal after one period. A sluggish start on short rest for Columbus contributed to the Islanders dominating to start out, when they had near complete control of the puck.

It forced an early cross-checking penalty on Damon Severson that led to a 1-0 lead at 5:53 on Schaefer's goal to cap the ensuing power play. Schaefer, picked first overall in the 2025 NHL Draft, is the youngest player in the NHL at age 18.

It took most of the second for the Jackets to tie it, 1-1, on Wood's fourth goal of the season. After going to the front of the net following a pass from Boone Jenner to Adam Fantilli, Wood scored with 4:39 left in the period by redirecting Fantilli's pass from the right wing.

The Columbus Dispatch / Columbus Blue Jackets grind out another win against St. Louis Blues: Takeaways

By Brian Hedger – November 2, 2025

The Blue Jackets were in retreat, playing on their heels, for most of the final 10 minutes in a 3-2 victory over the St. Louis Blues on Nov. 1 at Nationwide Arena.

It was the type of game they have lost often in recent years, when late leads evaporated and a feeling that it's predestined for the Blue Jackets to lose hung around. Whether it was a prevailing thought or just a simmering notion, those watching the Jackets get pinned down by the Blues shared the same concern.

Here we go again, right? Not this time.

Jet Greaves was strong down the stretch, making 15 straight saves to close it out after allowing a goal to Nick Bjugstad with 10:12 left to pull the Blues within a goal. Thanks to his nimble play in net and his team's effort to limit rebounds, the Jackets pulled out a win to open their third straight back-to-back.

It was also their fourth straight win, a season high, and now they've got a chance to notch a second straight back-to-back sweep Nov. 2 at the New York Islanders.

"We've been in some tight games, but we do like the fact that we're hanging around," Blue Jackets coach Dean Evason said. "Obviously, we had the lead for most of the night tonight, but we were able to just weather some storms. The maturity level of the team is real good."

Here are more takeaways:

Jet Greaves continues tandem success for Columbus Blue Jackets goalies

Most goalies prefer to play the majority of a team's games to feel sharp, but Greaves and Elvis Merzlikins keep making an alternating rotation work.

Having three straight back-to-backs helps, since most teams split back-to-back games between their goalies, but Evason and goaltending coach Niklas Backstrom have alternated goalies in all 11 games. Rather than hindering one or both, it has kept each rested and ready.

Greaves, who made 37 saves, improved to 3-3-0 with a 2.67 goals-against average and .916 save percentage through six starts. Merzlikins, who is expected to start Nov. 2 in New York, is 4-1-0 with a 2.97 GAA and .915 save percentage. Evason said one might eventually get a string of starts, but it'll likely stay this way until there's a stumble.

"I think it's nice, both of us getting opportunities to play," Greaves said. "I think we have a good relationship with each other, where there's support, and I feel like both of us should use the practice days to get in positive work, and the games are good experiences as well. Every day, there's something positive coming out of it, which is great."

Columbus Blue Jackets star Zach Werenski continues hot streak

St. Louis Blues coach Jim Montgomery needed help remembering Zach Werenski's name while speaking with reporters after a practice Oct. 31 in St. Louis.

While showering Werenski with praise, he referred to the 2024-25 Norris Trophy runner-up as "No. 8," multiple times before admitting that Werenski's name had slipped his mind.

It would have been understandable had Montgomery not also mentioned Colorado Avalanche star Cale Makar, Vancouver Canucks star Quinn Hughes and two young defensemen, Lane Hutson (Montreal Canadiens) and Zayne Parekh (Calgary Flames), by name during the same commentary.

Werenski didn't take offense to Montgomery's memory lapse, letting his play do the talking with a goal and assist.

Werenski has chipped in a goal and assist in three straight games, which ties his career high goal streak. He is tied for sixth among NHL defensemen with 10 points on four goals and six assists.

Sean Monahan heating up for Columbus Blue Jackets

Sean Monahan was a point-per-game player last season, which was his first as the Blue Jackets' top center. This season, despite playing solid minutes with the top line and power play, his production lagged without a point in the first five games.

He has since gotten traction with points in five of the past six games, including his first goal to cap a power play against St. Louis for a 3-1 lead in the third period. It was Monahan's 600th career point and became the game winner after Bjuggstad's goal pulled the Blues within a goal.

"You think about it a little bit, but at the end of the day, we're in a winning streak," Monahan said. "I've said it plenty of times, where if you win games in this league, life's usually better. It's not something you can stress over, but it's nice to put one in and nice to win the game on that note."

Columbus Blue Jackets' special teams improving

The Blue Jackets' special teams are rounding into shape now, which they're relieved about after rough starts on power plays and penalty killing led to early losses.

After going 1 for 3 on power plays against St. Louis, the Jackets are up to 20th in the NHL with a 19.2% success rate that includes a blistering 30.8% (4 for 13) in the past six games.

They also went 2 for 2 killing penalties to continue climbing up from the bottom of the league rankings to 29th with a 67.7% success rate. That includes going 2 for 2 against the Blues and 7 for 8 (87.5%) in the past four games.

The Columbus Dispatch / Columbus Blue Jackets fend off St. Louis Blues to win fourth straight

By Brian Hedger – November 1, 2025

It got a little nerve wracking, but goalie Jet Greaves came up big for the Blue Jackets to preserve a slim lead in a 3-2 victory over the St. Louis Blues on Nov. 1 in front of 17,130 at Nationwide Arena.

Despite being outshot 16-2 after Blues center Nick Bjugstad cut their lead to 3-2 with 10:12 left in the third period, the Blue Jackets (7-4-0) eked out their fourth straight win, a season high, before leaving to face the New York Islanders (5-5-1) on Nov. 2 at UBS Arena in Elmont, New York to finish their third straight back-to-back set.

"We didn't necessarily like our style in the third period," Blue Jackets coach Dean Evason said. "We had to hang on a little bit. Teams are going to push, which they did, and we didn't like how passive we were at the end, when we just let them come at us. So, we'll correct some of that, and, obviously, Jet was real good."

Zach Werenski led the way for the Jackets with two points on a goal and assist, matching his career high with goals in three straight games. Charlie Coyle and Sean Monahan scored the other two Columbus goals, while Greaves made 17 saves on 18 shots in the third period for a 37-save goaltending win.

Special teams played a key role for the Blue Jackets, who didn't allow a goal on two St. Louis power plays and got Monahan's goal to go 1 for 3 on their own power plays.

"It took everyone," Werenski said, "our penalty kills, our power plays, Jet and everyone throughout our lineup, so it's a big win for us. I feel like we can maybe be a little more aggressive in the thirds, when we have leads. I feel like we were on our heels a little bit there, but we got the job done and got the two points, so it's important."

Justin Faulk scored the first goal for the Blues (3-7-2), who started goalie Joel Hofer (32 saves).

After falling behind 1-0 early in the first on Faulk's goal, the Jackets countered with three unanswered goals from Coyle in the first, Werenski in the second and Monahan in the third to build a 3-1 lead.

Werenski added a primary assist on Monahan's power-play goal for a two-point game, while Monahan's tally moved him to 600 points career points. The Blues didn't roll over, though, pulling within 3-2 on a goal by Nick Bjugstad with 10:12 left in the third and then getting power play during the next shift by drawing an interference penalty on Ivan Provorov.

St. Louis got the scoring started just 3:37 into the game with Faulk's goal off a wrist shot that beat Greaves under the blocker and inside the left post on the far side.

It took the Blue Jackets just 1:01 to tie it 1-1 on Coyle's goal to continue his line's success in a 6-3 victory Oct. 29 over the Toronto Maple Leafs. That's how it stayed until the second, when Werenski gave the

Jackets a 2-1 lead at 8:05 on his fourth goal of the season to push his goal streak to three straight games and tie his career high.

The Blue Jackets will now play the Islanders roughly 19 hours after defeating the Blues, traveling to face a rested team that last played Oct. 31 with a 3-1 victory over the Washington Capitals.

"Points are important at this time of year," Werenski said. "It's early in the season, but I feel like last year, if we'd have gotten more points early on, we would've been a playoff team. So, we'll take the points. It's been good in back-to-backs so far, and hopefully it's good (against the Islanders)."

The Hockey Writers / Blue Jackets Collapse Late in 3-2 Loss to Islanders

By Matthew Buhrmann – November 2, 2025

The Columbus Blue Jackets choked against the New York Islanders on Sunday night, falling 3-2 after giving up two goals in just 29 seconds late in the third period. The loss ended Columbus's four-game winning streak.

Scoring two goals for the Islanders was 2025 No. 1 overall pick Matthew Schaefer, while Simon Holmstrom scored the game-winner with under a minute to go in regulation. David Rittich stopped 20 of 22 shots in the comeback win.

NHL Rumours Nov. 1: Canucks Hesitant to Sign Sherwood, Avalanche Looking at Makar & Samsonov to KHL

For the Blue Jackets, Miles Wood and Denton Mateychuk were the goalscorers, while Elvis Merzlikins faced a whopping 39 shots, stopping 36 of them in the loss. Also, the Blue Jackets were outshot 39-22 on the night, went 0-for-4 on the power play, and finished 1-for-2 on the penalty kill.

First Period

The Islanders jumped out to a 1-0 lead about six minutes into the game. Schaefer sniped a power-play goal past Merzlikins off a pass from Bo Horvat.

By the end of the period, the Blue Jackets were trailing 1-0 and outshot 18-3 in what was a rough opening frame in all areas.

Second Period

The lone goal of the second period came from Wood, tying the game at 1-1 heading into the third.

Wood tipped in an Adam Fantilli shot with 4:39 remaining in the period, picking up his fourth goal of the season.

Third Period

The Blue Jackets took their first lead of the game 12:10 into the third when Mateychuk chipped home a rebound off a Kirill Marchenko shot.

It was Mateychuk's third goal of the season, with Marchenko picking up his seventh assist. But in less than 30 seconds, late in regulation, the Blue Jackets completely let the game slip away.

With 1:07 left in the third, Schaefer scored his second of the game on a shot from distance that deflected off a defender's stick and beat Merzlikins to tie it. It was Schaefer's fifth goal of the season.

Then, with under a minute to go, Anders Lee fired a shot off the post that bounced right along the goal line before being cleaned up by Holmstrom for the game-winner.

The Hockey Writers / Blue Jackets Survive Blues' Onslaught in Third to Win Fourth in a Row

By Mark Scheig – November 1, 2025

The Columbus Blue Jackets were looking to win their fourth consecutive game when they hosted the St. Louis Blues Saturday night in Nationwide Arena. They were able to accomplish their task by the skin of their teeth.

Sean Monahan scored what turned out to be the game-winning goal in the third period as the Blue Jackets survived an onslaught by the Blues to win 3-2. Charlie Coyle and Zach Werenski also scored for the Blue Jackets who improved to 7-4-0 on the season.

Columbus Blue Jackets vs. St. Louis Blues - Game Highlights

The story of this game was actually both goaltenders and their performances.

Game Recap

The Blues came in desperate to start the new month with a win after struggling all October long. It only took them 3:37 into the game to beat Jet Greaves.

Justin Faulk scored his second goal of the season off a great pass by Oskar Sundqvist. Despite allowing the opening goal, the Blue Jackets again responded like they have most of this season.

Coyle tied the game just over a minute later. While he was in front of the net, it appeared Faulk accidentally kicked the puck past Joel Hofer.

Just six seconds later, there was a spirited fight at center ice between the Blues' Tyler Tucker and the Blue Jackets' Mathieu Olivier. Olivier came out on top as he does with most of his fights. As he was heading to the penalty box, he was seen on camera giving a wink.

The first ended 1-1. The Blue Jackets held a 17-14 shot advantage. Each goalie was heavily tested and kept their teams in the game.

The only goal of the second was scored by Werenski. Denton Mateychuk slipped a pass to Werenski and he did the rest. His shot from the right circle beat Hofer clean to give the Blue Jackets a 2-1 lead going into the second intermission.

The Blue Jackets were the better team for the first 40 minutes. They outshot the Blues 10-7 in the second but dominated long stretches of the game.

But then came the third period.

Before the barrage started, Monahan scored his first goal of the season. It was the Blue Jackets' first power-play goal at home this season. It was also Monahan's 600th point. Postgame, he admitted that the puck will likely be a keepsake for his son. It made the score 3-1. That turned out to be the difference.

Nick Bjugstad scored unassisted halfway through the third off a turnover to cut it to 3-2. Then the Blues unleashed everything they had looking for a tying goal. They were unable to find it thanks to Greaves. The Blues had a power play just after the 3-2 goal and weren't able to tie it. They outshot the Blue Jackets 18-8 in the final 20 minutes.

Greaves made 37 saves on the night earning first-star honors. Meanwhile, Hofer had his best game of the early season stopping 32 of 35 Blue Jackets' shots.

The Blue Jackets have a quick turnaround as they play the New York Islanders at Belmont park Sunday night for yet another back-to-back. The Blues will travel home and prepare for their next game Monday night when they host the Edmonton Oilers at Enterprise Center.

The Columbus Dispatch / Columbus Blue Jackets' Jackson Smith an 'absolute thoroughbred' at Penn State

By Brian Hedger – October 31, 2025

It feels like Guy Gadowsky, Penn State's men's hockey coach, is describing a wild horse galloping at full speed when asked what it's been like working with Jackson Smith, a freshman defenseman the Blue Jackets selected 14th overall in the 2025 NHL Draft.

"First of all, he's an absolute thoroughbred," Gadowsky said Oct. 30 at Value City Arena. "He's 6-foot-4, he moves like a ballerina ... he's a beautiful hockey player."

It's fitting that Smith, 18, is from Calgary in the Canadian province of Alberta.

About 70 miles north of his hometown sits Sundre, a town of about 2,300 people that has a wild horse population of almost 1,000. They run free along the foothills of the Canadian Rockies, providing a breathtaking sight for all who see them run.

For Gadowsky and others, watching Smith get his 6-4, 204-pound frame up to speed in a flash, effortlessly, has a similar effect. Smith is light on his skates, but also explosive. His crossovers are nearly perfect. His edgework is artistic.

Smith doesn't skate as much as he floats, and his skills with a shiny white stick in his hands are just as impressive. Heavy wrist shots. Lasers that sneak through traffic. Exit passes, seam passes and drop passes, all tape-to-tape. Body checks, stick checks.

Even Gadowsky finds himself staring from time-to-time, and he evaluates players by the dozens in recruiting.

"He's just so fun and beautiful to watch," Gadowsky said. "I watch him every day at practice, and you get mesmerized, and I'll catch myself in the games doing the same thing. He's just a beautiful athlete to watch, and the sky's the limit for this kid."

Jackson Smith picked Penn State for NHL development

Along with winning games for the Nittany Lions, Gadowsky's role is to provide launching pads for players such as Smith and freshman forward Gavin McKenna, who is expected to go first overall in the 2026 NHL Draft.

They're two of seven players who are either connected to NHL teams already or are draft-eligible prospects. Penn State has become one of the NCAA's top programs since introducing Pegula Ice Arena and its top-shelf training facilities in 2013.

Smith, McKenna and others who have shifted from Canada's top junior division to NCAA programs wouldn't have been eligible in years past, but the introduction of name, image and likeness deals

prompted that rule's elimination. And that's how Gadowsky lassoed a couple of wild horses from the Western Hockey League's Medicine Hat Tigers (McKenna) and Tri-City Americans (Smith).

The lure of elite training staff and facilities, shorter schedules, air travel over bus rides, competing against more physically developed collegiate players and a heightened intensity playing fewer games were too enticing to turn down.

"That's a big reason why I came to Penn State," Smith said. "I love playing more hockey (in the WHL), which was tough (to give up), but coming here and getting in the gym more was about getting bigger and stronger so I can be ready for the next level."

Smith has added almost 10 pounds since arriving at Penn State for training camp, and it's good weight.

"I feel stronger out there already, and it's only been two months," he said. "It's more intensity (in college) and less time and space, which is like the NHL, or closer to it. I'm just getting more NHL-ready."

Jackson Smith eyeing his NHL future with Columbus Blue Jackets

As a defenseman, Smith probably has at least two years left before he's deemed ready to take a full-time NHL role with the Blue Jackets.

They appear set on defense for several years after re-signing Ivan Provorov and Dante Fabbro this past summer, so there's no need to rush Smith. Whether he spends multiple years at Penn State or hops to the professional game to keep developing with AHL Cleveland, his path to the NHL is earmarked.

That's why it's a luxury to play collegiately for a team that visits Columbus each season for games at Ohio State and plays most of its games within the Big Ten's footprint. After spending time in Columbus for NHL development camp in July, Smith has developed a familiarity with the city and keeps in regular contact with Blue Jackets development coach Tommy Cross.

Smith also met with Blue Jackets president/general manager Don Waddell on Oct. 30 prior to a 3-2 win over Ohio State. While he didn't get a goal or assist in that game, skating on the Nittany Lions' top pairing and first power play, Smith showed his tantalizing gifts.

"It's the feet, it's the legs, it's the frame," Gadowsky said. "There are guys as big as him. There's a few guys who can skate like him. But very seldom do you see them packaged together."

The Athletic / World Juniors stock watch: Who's making their case for Canada and USA rosters?

By Corey Pronman – November 3, 2025

Canada and USA World Junior camp rosters will be announced in roughly a month. There are a lot of important games in between now and then, but today, we look at players who have moved their stock for those teams.

This year's U.S. team isn't as deep as in some recent years, so their section isn't too bulky as a lot of the roster is locked in already.

The idea of this article isn't to point out who's played well, so try not to feel slighted if your favorite player isn't mentioned, but to identify meaningful movements in a player's chances for making the U20 team this winter.

Team Canada

Stock up

Justin Carboneau, RW, Blainville-Boisbriand (St. Louis)

Carboneau was a standout at Blues camp and carried that play over into his junior season, where he's been a goal-per-game player in Blainville. A scoring role will be very competitive on this Team Canada, but Carboneau's skill, speed and frame will be appealing for a potential bottom-six job.

Michael Hage, C, Michigan (Montreal)

Hage has been one of the best players in college in the opening month, following up his strong summer camp and all but assuring himself a spot on the Canadian roster. He's always been a very skilled player who can move well, but it's the consistency and effort level in his game of late, which haven't always been there, that have moved the needle for him.

Benjamin Kindel, C, Pittsburgh

Perhaps no Canadian player elevated their chances more than Kindel, who went from a bubble candidate at the summer camp to someone Canada is going to need to seek Pittsburgh's permission to release from their NHL team. Kindel looked excellent in Penguins camp, earning a job as their third-line center. His NHL games have been mixed, but excellent for an 18-year-old. His skill, IQ and effort level all stand out, and he could play a variety of roles on Team Canada.

John Mustard, LW, Providence (Chicago)

Mustard has been Providence's leading scorer to start the season. His skating has always been excellent, but that he's showing a little more sense and creativity with the puck, not to mention PK duty for the Friars, gives him an argument to serve a variety of spots in a potential Team Canada lineup.

Jake O'Brien, C, Brantford (Seattle)

O'Brien would likely need to make Canada in a top-nine/power-play role, and while he had a so-so summer camp, Canada couldn't ask more from him in terms of his start to the OHL season. He's been one of the best players in the CHL. His skill and vision are tremendous, and I've liked his effort level more than last season, too. He should be squarely in the mix for their team, depending on which skill players Canada gets back from the NHL.

Owen Protz, LHD, Brantford (Montreal)

Protz will be appealing to Canada as a defenseman in a particular role at the bottom of their lineup. He's a great skater who is extremely physical and will make life difficult for his opponents. His puck play is mediocre, and he may struggle to make plays against the very best junior players in the medal round, but the way he plays will be tough for a coach to leave home.

Marek Vanacker, LW, Brantford (Chicago)

Vanacker has been on a goal-per-game pace to start his OHL season. He's a skilled forward who has played the net-front role on Brantford's dangerous power play, but he's also a competitive player who has some bite in his game. He's created an argument to be a potential bottom-six winger for Canada.

Xavier Villeneuve, LHD, Blainville-Boisbriand (Draft eligible)

With the question of whether Canada will get Sam Dickinson or Zayne Parekh back from the NHL still up in the air, it opens a spot for the dynamic Villeneuve. He would need to be protected with limited even-strength minutes at the U20 level, but his tremendous skating, skill and vision would be what Canada needs to run the power play as he's the best power-play QB in junior.

Stock down**Cayden Lindstrom, C, Michigan State (Columbus)**

After missing nearly two years of hockey, Lindstrom has understandably been off to a bit of a slow start on a loaded Michigan State team. His excellent skating for his size, combined with a high level of physicality, is very exciting, even if the offense hasn't clicked yet. I still think he will make the team, but my guess is Canada is also looking at him with caution in terms of how big a role he could be expected to play.

Roger McQueen, C, Providence (Anaheim)

McQueen has been just OK to start his freshman season. The combination of size, speed, hands and physicality is exciting as a pro prospect, but the offense hasn't been clicking for him to start the year, and he hasn't made as many plays as I expected he would. I would be mildly surprised if Canada brought him unless he catches fire in the coming weeks.

Carter Bear, LW, Everett (Detroit)

Bear had a so-so camp in Detroit and start to his WHL season, coming off a serious Achilles tear injury last season. He's a highly likable long-term pro prospect, but it would be tough for Canada to justify bringing him given his performance this fall.

Team USA

Stock up

William Horcoff, LW, Michigan (Pittsburgh)

Horcoff has been one of the hottest players in college to start the season, taking him from a possible top-nine role on Team USA to all but being assured of being on the team in a notable role. He's very skilled, but his size and ability to generate offense in the high-traffic areas gives him versatility in how he can help a team.

Dakota Rheaume-Mullen, LHD, Michigan (Draft eligible)

After going undrafted last year in a tough freshman season, Rheaume-Mullen has been off to a great start as a top player for Michigan. He's a high-end skater who has shown much more offense to start the season than some of his bigger advocates likely expected. On a light USA blue line, he has worked his way into the mix.

Stock down

Cullen Potter, C, Arizona State (Calgary)

Potter has played OK to start his sophomore season. His skating and skill are excellent, but his compete level is a minor concern, especially given how often he plays on the perimeter. He would need to be a top-nine forward on Team USA, and my guess is they would look at him as a World Junior candidate next year as opposed to this season.

The Athletic / NHL Power Rankings: A new No. 1, plus your team's top Halloween costume

By Sean Gentile and Dom Luszczyzyn – October 31, 2025

Happy Halloween, hockey world!

It's that special time of year where anyone can dress up (nearly) however they want, and many around the league have done exactly that throughout October. To celebrate, we've rounded up our favorite Halloween costumes from around the league for our first-ever power rankings costume contest.

From Rick Tocchet's impression of Jacques Lemaire to Jake Neighbours dressing up as hockey's Jimmy Buckets, here's the best costume on each team. Some of them just might stick.

1. Vegas Golden Knights, 6-1-3

Last week: 4

Sean: 1

Dom: 1

Pavel Dorofeyev's costume: Joe Malone

Back in 1917-18, the NHL was very different with very strange passing rules. So different and strange that ol' Joe (Phantom) Malone scored 44 goals and added just four assists in 20 games. With an electric 9-1-10 stat line to start the season, including two goals in a win over Carolina on Tuesday, Dorofeyev looks determined to challenge that with what could be the great modern Cy Young season. To really celebrate the spirit of 1917, we're rooting for something truly nutty.

2. Utah Mammoth, 8-3-0

Last week: 5

Sean: 2

Dom: 4

Logan Cooley's costume: A member of the 2026 edition of the NHL's 10 best contracts list

Every year, Dom puts together a top 10 list of the best contracts in hockey, and you'd better believe that Cooley's will make the cut next season. He's been sensational to start the year, ranking 16th in Net Rating thanks to his eight goals in 11 games. Cooley is a superstar in the making.

Also considered: Nick Schmaltz and his 127-point pace as Nick-ita Kucherov.

3. Colorado Avalanche, 6-1-4

Last week: 2

Sean: 3

Dom: 3

Cale Makar's costume: Bobby Orr

The brief moment in which people genuinely debated the best defenseman in the world was fun, but let's be serious: It's Makar.

He looks like he's in peak form to start the season and currently leads the league in Net Rating at plus-6.0 — 1.5 more than the next best player. He has 15 points in 11 games, a 62 percent xG and the Avalanche are up 15-5 in his minutes. This is generational domination from Makar, and our hope is that he keeps it up. It's been far too long since a defenseman was even a Hart Trophy finalist and Makar looks ready to change that.

4. Carolina Hurricanes, 7-3-0

Last week: 1

Sean: 5

Dom: 2

Carolina's costume: A #RealGoals team instead of an #ExpectedByWhom team

We're all used to seeing the Hurricanes near the top of the league in expected five-on-five goals; through nine games, their 3.21 per 60 was third overall. What's new, though, is that even more than their share of pucks is finding the net — they're leading the league with nearly 3.8 actual goals per 60.

That's a pretty serious gap, and it feels even larger when you account for the "Corsi Canes" reputation. We've never seen anything like it under Rod Brind'Amour; in 2024-25, the gap was nearly a half-goal in the other direction. If that sort of finishing talent is part of Carolina's mix for good, look out.

5. New Jersey Devils, 8-3-0

Last week: 3

Sean: 4

Dom: 5

Dawson Mercer's costume: A core piece

Mercer took plenty of deserved heat for his play last season, but he's gotten the train back on the tracks so far in 2025-26. He leads the Devils in average Game Score — remember for a second some of the names on that roster — and has clicked playing right wing on a line with Nico Hischier. Through 10 games, New Jersey outscored opponents 5-1 with them on the ice and controlled more than 66 percent of the expected goal share.

6. Montreal Canadiens, 8-3-0

Last week: 9

Sean: 6

Dom: 6

Nick Suzuki's costume: A franchise center

When we were putting together this year's Player Tiers, we had a large group of players in 3A — right on the cusp of franchise status. Our question: Which one of these players will prove their worth?

It's early, but within that group of 13, it's Suzuki that has made the strongest case for himself. Suzuki is currently fifth in the league with a plus-3.9 Net Rating thanks to his 16 points in 11 games and sensational 60 percent xG. He looks worthy.

7. Winnipeg Jets, 8-3-0

Last week: 8

Sean: 7

Dom: 8

Connor Hellebuyck's costume: A brick wall

In 2023-24, Hellebuyck saved 0.65 goals above expected per game and won the Vezina Trophy. In 2024-25, he saved 0.79 goals above expected per game and won the Vezina Trophy. Somehow, Hellebuyck looks even better this year, saving 1.36 goals above expected per game. It's enough to hide that the Jets are dead last in xG percentage to start the year. Without Hellebuyck, Winnipeg has looked lottery-like.

8. Tampa Bay Lightning, 5-4-2

Last week: 32

Sean: 8

Dom: 9

Tampa Bay's costume: John Wick

Never doubt our power. Rankings HQ sources could not confirm that Tampa Bay's ranking last week was given prime real estate on the locker room bulletin board — but either way, the Lightning responded accordingly with three straight dominant wins. You're welcome, Tampa Bay.

On Saturday, they forechecked the Ducks so hard for the last three minutes that Anaheim couldn't even pull their goalie. On Sunday, they outplayed Vegas. On Tuesday, the Lightning put up a 94 percent xG rate at five-on-five (not a typo) against the Predators. And on Thursday, Jake Oettinger was the only reason they didn't blow out the Stars.

9. Edmonton Oilers, 5-4-3

Last week: 7

Sean: 11

Dom: 7

Connor McDavid's costume: A marathon runner

Ahead of Thursday night's games, the best player on the planet was averaging 4.8 miles per game in skating distance, which leads the league and is up a full mile year-over-year. Add that to the list of ways

he gives the Oilers more for their money. He scored twice against Utah earlier this week, by the way, in case you thought that “slow start” stuff could stick.

10. Pittsburgh Penguins, 8-2-0

Last week: 15

Sean: 9

Dom: 11

Sidney Crosby and Evgeni Malkin’s costumes: Themselves from 2009

Crosby has 15 points in 12 games. Malkin has 17. The Penguins woke up on Friday with the most points in the league. Their coach’s first name is Dan. What year is this?

11. Dallas Stars, 6-3-2

Last week: 10

Sean: 10

Dom: 10

Mikko Rantanen’s costume: Martin Nečas with a slightly thicker wallet

And we do mean “slightly.” Nečas on Thursday signed an extension worth \$11.5 million annually, just \$500,000 less than the one Rantanen signed over the summer. The two, of course, were traded for each other last season, with Nečas heading back to Colorado as the centerpiece of the deal that put Rantanen in Carolina for a pre-Dallas pit stop. What was the point of all that? The world may never know.

12. Washington Capitals, 6-4-0

Last week: 6

Sean: 13

Dom: 12

Logan Thompson’s costume: Team Canada’s starting goalie

Once again, Thompson has started like a house on fire; he’s top five in save percentage (.938) and goals saved above expected (8.5), and the Caps have had a chance in all seven of his starts, winning five of them. For Washington, it’s a welcome replay of 2024-25.

Maybe the follow-up will be enough for Team Canada to correct its 4 Nations mistake and bring Thompson to Milan. He’s been significantly better than Jordan Binnington, Adin Hill and Sam Montembeault, each of whom is lugging around a negative GSAX.

13. Detroit Red Wings, 8-3-0

Last week: 12

Sean: 12

Dom: 14

Axel Sandin-Pellikka's costume: A 20-year-old who's played a dozen games in North America

Sometimes a rookie defenseman steps in and dominates from the get-go, like Moritz Seider. More often than not, though, there's a steep learning curve. Sandin-Pellikka is feeling that through his first 10 games of NHL action, with a 35 percent xG rate while getting outscored 10-2. He doesn't look NHL-ready. Emmitt Finnie, on the other hand ...

14. Anaheim Ducks, 5-3-1

Last week: 11

Sean: 14

Dom: 15

Jacob Trouba's costume: An \$8 million defenseman

The Ducks are off to a fast start and Trouba's shockingly strong contributions have been a massive part of that. Anaheim is up 11-4 in his minutes and his 51 percent xG leads all defenders. Add five points in nine games and Trouba actually looks worth the money. For Ducks' fans sake, we're hoping this one isn't a costume and he can keep it up all season.

Also considered: Cutter Gauthier and his 16.6 shots per 60 as 2008-09 Alex Ovechkin.

15. Philadelphia Flyers, 6-3-1

Last week: 22

Sean: 15

Dom: 17

Rick Tocchet's costume: Jacques Lemaire

The Flyers were already a decent defensive outfit under John Tortorella with a top five expected goals against rate, but they've upped the ante further under Tocchet. The Flyers' five-on-five xGA/60 has improved from 2.31 last year to a league-leading 2.11 to start the season. And they're getting the results to match with just 2.15 GA/60. Couple that with the Canucks sitting in the bottom five in xGA/60 without him and Tocchet sure looks like the second-coming of Lemaire: A defensive savant.

16. Los Angeles Kings, 5-3-4

Last week: 20

Sean: 19

Dom: 13

Adrian Kempe's costume: The "Monopoly" man.

Already a productive, increasingly well-balanced first-liner, Kempe has put up 15 points in 12 games. He won't need to keep up a 103-point pace to become a very, very rich man. The better question — after the last batch of new contracts — might be whether his AAV is closer to \$15 million than \$10 million.

17. Florida Panthers, 5-5-1

Last week: 14

Sean: 17

Dom: 16

Sam Bennett's costume: A bank robber

Take the money and run, Sam! If you were wondering whether Bennett could be a true No. 1 center, the answer is starting to look like an emphatic "no." In 11 games, Bennett has just one goal, no assists and is getting badly outscored at five-on-five. For \$8 million per year and with a spot on Team Canada on the line, it might be time for Bennett to step up.

18. Seattle Kraken, 5-2-3

Last week: 23

Sean: 16

Dom: 19

Jaden Schwartz's costume: A major trade-deadline prize

If the Kraken fall off from their early-season pace, Schwartz could easily end up being one of the best players available at the March 6 deadline. Does that bode well for buyers? Not really! Still, he's a pending UFA with a reasonable \$5.5 million cap hit, he's coming off a 26-goal season and he's producing enough (4G, 5A in nine games) to offset some iffy five-on-five numbers.

19. Ottawa Senators, 6-5-1

Last week: 28

Sean: 18

Dom: 18

Linus Ullmark's costume: The ghost of goaltenders' past

The Senators have a long lineage of weak starts and goaltending issues. Since 2007-08, only two goalies have saved over 10 goals above expected with the team: Andrew Hammond and Anton Forsberg. In that same span, the Senators have had 11 goalies below minus-10. Ouch.

Ullmark may not be the next Alex Auld, Mike Condon, Brian Elliott or Pascal Leclaire — but he sure looks the part to start. If he can't get back to his usual elite level, the Senators will have a tough time getting back to the playoffs.

20. Columbus Blue Jackets, 6-4-0

Last week: 25

Sean: 20

Dom: 22

Columbus' costume: A sleeping giant

Since 2007-08, six teams have played a full season with a goal share above 60 percent, most recently the Presidents' Trophy-winning Bruins in 2022-23. All six ended up winning the Presidents' Trophy.

The Blue Jackets have managed to clear that mark despite playing one of the five hardest early schedules. Regression may be likely and there have been issues — the penalty kill has been rough, and the power play has been unlucky — but they're showing the look of a team that deserves to be taken seriously.

21. New York Rangers, 5-5-2

Last week: 18

Sean: 22

Dom: 21

The Rangers' costume: The Undertaker.

It wasn't all bad through Mike Sullivan's first 10 games, but the locals were getting restless. Two straight wins — including a comeback from a 3-1 deficit against the Oilers — goes a long way. They're not back from the dead, but it's close enough.

22. Toronto Maple Leafs, 5-5-1

Last week: 13

Sean: 23

Dom: 20

Craig Berube's costume: Randy Carlyle

Toronto's five-on-five xG in 2012-13: 45.4 percent. Toronto's five-on-five xG in 2025-26 heading into a game against Columbus where they got blown out: 46.3 percent. Not great! The Leafs are up to 49.4 percent after that game, somehow, which is on par with last year's mark, but considering the team's soft schedule, that's not a good thing.

Also considered: Auston Matthews and his 45 percent xG, as Tyler Bozak.

23. Chicago Blackhawks, 5-4-2

Last week: 24

Sean: 21

Dom: 25

Connor Bedard's costume: An eye test

Bedard, even after his incredible performance on Tuesday night, was still rocking a 37-percent expected goal share — last among the team's forwards. Now, Chicago has out-scored opponents 10-7 with Bedard on the ice, and his effort and engagement have been solid, according to the fellas who watch the team every night. That's good enough for us.

24. Vancouver Canucks, 6-6-0

Last week: 16

Sean: 26

Dom: 24

Adam Foote's costume: An E.R. doc

When Brock Boeser left Vancouver's game against the Blues, he departed a lineup that was already missing Quinn Hughes, Conor Garland, Nils Hoglander, Filip Chytil and five other players. The Canucks might not be playoff-caliber on their best night. The fact that they beat Edmonton and St. Louis in their current state is legitimately amazing.

25. Buffalo Sabres, 4-4-3

Last week: 26

Sean: 27

Dom: 23

Alex Lyon's costume: The starting goalie

Ahead of his start against the Bruins on Thursday night, Lyon was one of nine goalies with an above average GSAX in each of the last four seasons. The others: Connor Hellebuyck, Igor Shesterkin, Jake Oettinger, Sergei Bobrovsky, Frederik Andersen, Lukas Dostal, Anthony Stolarz and Stuart Skinner. All are starters.

In 97 games in that span, Lyon is plus-25 in GSAX. Backup Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen, on the other hand, is at 1.3 in 143 games. The net should be Lyon's, rough night against the Bruins aside.

26. Boston Bruins, 6-7-0

Last week: 29

Sean: 24

Dom: 29

Morgan Geekie's costume: David Pastrnak

Geekie's goal against the Sabres on Thursday was his ninth in 12 games and 32nd since Jan. 12 — two more than Pastrnak and everyone else in the league. For good measure, he also registered the second hardest shot of the season, according to NHL Edge.

27. New York Islanders, 4-5-1

Last week: 19

Sean: 25

Dom: 28

The Islanders' costume: Whatever the exact opposite of the last decade of Islanders hockey has been

After years and years of boring Islanders hockey, the new era is one very important thing: Fun. Chances in both directions, electric pace, blistering speed — it's track-meet hockey on Long Island, baby! Who

knew that the Islanders would start the season with the league's highest scoring chance pace? It's non-stop action.

28. St. Louis Blues, 3-6-2

Last week: 17

Sean: 29

Dom: 26

Jake Neighbours' costume: Jimmy Butler

With six goals this year on his first 12 shots, Neighbours was shooting 50 percent from the field. That's roughly the same as Butler's field goal percentage last year. Since 2023-24, Neighbours has a 19.7 percent shooting percentage, good for sixth best in the league. Keep sniping, Jake!

Also considered: Joel Hofer and his .794 save percentage (!) as a shooter tutor.

29. Minnesota Wild, 3-6-3

Last week: 21

Sean: 30

Dom: 27

The Wild's costume: A sinking ship

Minnesota is 3-6-3, they've won one of their last nine, they've lost five straight, they're getting booed off the ice at home and they're one of the worst five-on-five teams in the league. Other than that, everything is fine.

30. San Jose Sharks, 3-6-2

Last week: 30

Sean: 28

Dom: 31

Macklin Celebrini's costume: A sophomore scoring champion

In Sidney Crosby's second season, he won the Art Ross Trophy. In Connor McDavid's second season, he also won the Art Ross Trophy. Can Celebrini do the same? It felt like a far-fetched thought at the start of the season, but he's keeping pace after a hot week.

31. Nashville Predators, 4-6-2

Last week: 27

Sean: 31

Dom: 30

Steven Stamkos' costume: Steven Stamkos (Barry's Version)

“Seen Stamkos?” That was the first-year marketing that ironically preceded a small amount of Stamkos sightings to start his rookie year under coach Barry Melrose. We’re getting a glimpse of that again this season with just one goal and two points in 12 games for Stamkos while he once again gets dominated at five-on-five.

32. Calgary Flames, 2-8-2

Last week: 31

Sean: 32

Dom: 32

Nazem Kadri’s costume: A wrapped present

The sooner the Flames accept that they’re going nowhere, the better. It’s time to let Kadri play his NHL 1,000th game, open the bidding and do the sensible thing.