



**Columbus Blue Jackets Media Clips
February 3-4, 2026**

Columbus Blue Jackets News

- PAGE 2 The Columbus Dispatch / Columbus Blue Jackets blank New Jersey Devils for sixth straight win
- PAGE 3 The Columbus Dispatch / Blue Jackets promote Chris Clark, Rick Nash to new executive roles
- PAGE 4 The Columbus Dispatch / Columbus Blue Jackets won't have Kirill Marchenko vs New Jersey Devils
- PAGE 6 The Hockey Writers / Mateychuk Looks to Be the Missing Piece for Bowness' Blue Jackets
- PAGE 8 The Hockey Writers / Blue Jackets Week Ahead: Schedule & Storylines – Bowness Bump, Coyle Dilemma and More

Cleveland Monsters / Prospects News

- PAGE 9 WHL - Columbus Blue Jackets prospect Gardner named Mary Brown's Chicken WHL Goaltender of the Month for January

NHL News

Multimedia

The Columbus Dispatch / Columbus Blue Jackets blank New Jersey Devils for sixth straight win

Brian Hedger – February 3, 2026

Elvis Merzlikins earned his first shutout of the season with 24 saves Feb. 3 in Newark, New Jersey, backstopping the Blue Jackets to a 3-0 victory over the New Jersey Devils to push their winning streak to a season-high six straight games.

Mathieu Olivier scored two goals and defenseman Dante Fabbro scored one in his return from a six-game absence for a foot laceration.

Fabbro's goal put the Blue Jackets up 1-0 at 5:24 of the third period and Olivier scored the next two, making it 2-0 on a breakaway with 7:55 left and being awarded a goal with 4:00 left by outskating Devils defenseman Dougie Hamilton to draw a slashing penalty while skating at an empty net.

Along with their winning streak, the Blue Jackets improved to 10-1-0 in their past 11 games and have a shot to make it 11-1-0 by winning a seventh straight to conclude a back-to-back against the Chicago Blackhawks on Feb. 4 at Nationwide Arena.

The Blue Jackets briefly took a 1-0 lead in the first period on a goal by Danton Heinen, but it was taken away after a coach's challenge for goaltender interference showed that Miles Wood interfered with Markstrom after entering the crease on his own volition.

It stayed 0-0 through the rest of the first period, all of the second and five-plus minutes into the third before Fabbro finally broke through to put the Blue Jackets up 1-0 on his fourth goal of the year.

The Columbus Dispatch / Blue Jackets promote Chris Clark, Rick Nash to new executive roles

By Brian Hedger – February 3, 2026

The Blue Jackets are restructuring the hockey side of their front office with promotions for Chris Clark and Rick Nash, former players who continue climbing as executives.

Blue Jackets president/general manager Don Waddell announced Feb. 3 that Clark, 49, is being promoted from director of player personnel to assistant GM; and Nash, 41, is being promoted from director of hockey operations to director of player personnel/development. Clark will retain his title as general manager of the Cleveland Monsters, the Blue Jackets' AHL affiliate.

“Chris Clark and Rick Nash have each done an exceptional job as members of our hockey operations leadership group and are very deserving of these promotions,” Waddell said in a statement. “They are former Blue Jackets players who care very deeply about this organization. They are intelligent, extremely hard-working and committed to our succeeding at the highest level and I am excited that they will continue to play important roles here as we move forward.”

Clark fills a vacancy at assistant GM created by the recent departure of Josh Flynn for the same role with the Buffalo Sabres. Flynn left to rejoin former Blue Jackets GM Jarmo Kekalainen, who was recently promoted to the GM role.

Clark held the director of player personnel title since 2012 and dropped his development coach role in 2019 for the Monsters' GM responsibilities.

During his time as a Blue Jackets executive, Clark served as USA Hockey's GM for the 2023 men's world championship team that competed in Tampere, Finland, a role that has served as a precursor for some current NHL GMs. Nash served Hockey Canada in similar capacities for two world championships, first as assistant GM in 2022 in Finland and then as GM in 2024 in Czechia.

Nash joined the Blue Jackets as an executive in 2019 as Kekalainen's special assistant, and this is his third promotion after becoming director of player development (2021) and then director of hockey operations (2024).

Clark played 607 games over 11 seasons with the Blue Jackets, Washington Capitals and Calgary Flames, who selected him in the third round (No. 77 overall) of the 1994 NHL draft. Nash played his first nine of 15 NHL seasons with the Blue Jackets, who selected him first overall in 2002. He served as the Jackets' captain from 2008-12 and is the franchise's all-time leader in goals (289) and points (547) in 674 games.

Nash is also the only Blue Jackets player in franchise history to have his number (61) officially retired.

Clark and Nash's new roles followed Waddell's Jan. 6 hiring of executive Laurence Gilman, 61, as the Blue Jackets' vice president of hockey operations. Gilman, Clark and Nash comprise the Blue Jackets' senior leadership group that reports to Waddell.

The Blue Jackets face the New Jersey Devils on Feb. 3 at Prudential Center in Newark, New Jersey to start a home/road back-to-back that will conclude Feb. 4 at Nationwide Arena against the Chicago Blackhawks.

[The Columbus Dispatch / Columbus Blue Jackets won't have Kirill Marchenko vs New Jersey Devils](#)

Brian Hedger – February 3, 2026

Kirill Marchenko won't play for the Blue Jackets on Feb. 3 at the New Jersey Devils due to an illness that has affected multiple players.

Marchenko, the team's highest-scoring forward, missed practice Feb. 2 in Columbus and didn't travel to New Jersey as a precautionary measure to prevent the illness from spreading. Blue Jackets coach Rick Bowness told reporters in New Jersey that Marchenko will be re-evaluated prior to the finale of a back-to-back Feb. 4 against the Chicago Blackhawks at Nationwide Arena.

Marchenko is the third Blue Jackets player in the past week to become sick, following forwards Mathieu Olivier and Sean Monahan. Olivier managed to get through a full game with his symptoms, but Monahan had to leave after two periods in the Jackets' 5-3 victory Jan. 31 against the St. Louis Blues to complete their fifth straight win.

Isac Lundestrom, a versatile forward, will move from the fourth line to the first line to replace Marchenko at right wing on a line with center Adam Fantilli and left wing Mason Marchment. Danton Heinen will draw back into the lineup on the fourth line after watching the past three games as a healthy scratch.

Elvis Merzlikins will start in net against the Devils (28-25-2), who've won two of the first three games in the season series, and defenseman Dante Fabbro (foot laceration) will be a gametime decision.

Jet Greaves may start for the Blue Jackets (27-20-7) in the back-to-back finale against the Blackhawks. Jacob Markstrom is expected to start for the Devils, who'll play without top center Jack Hughes (lower body), defenseman Luke Hughes (shoulder) and forward Stefan Noesen (knee).

Columbus Blue Jackets playoff picture

During their Feb.2 travel day, the Blue Jackets got some help in their chase for a playoff spot in the Eastern Conference. The Pittsburgh Penguins, who are second in the Metropolitan Division with 67 points, lost 3-2 to the Ottawa Senators while the third-place New York Islanders (65 points) lost 4-1 to the Washington Capitals.

The Blue Jackets are fifth in the Metro with 61 points, two behind the Capitals (63 points), and four points back of the Islanders for the division's final playoff spot. They've played three fewer games than Washington, which plays Feb. 3 in Philadelphia, and two less than the Islanders, who host the Penguins on Feb. 3 at UBS Arena in Elmont, New York.

The Blue Jackets will start the NHL's pause for the Winter Olympics following their game Feb. 4 against Chicago, while the Penguins, Islanders and Capitals all play Feb. 5 before the break. The next three days could leave the much of the Metropolitan Division, including the Blue Jackets, entangled in a tight playoff race heading into the Olympics.

Columbus Blue Jackets at New Jersey Devils betting odds

The Devils are slightly favorite to win, likely because the game is at Prudential Center in Newark, New Jersey. Using Moneyline odds, DraftKings favors the Devils (-112) over the Blue Jackets (-108), MoneyPuck gives the Devils a 51.1% chance of winning while BetMgM and FanDuel show even odds at -110 each.

The Hockey Writers / Mateychuk Looks to Be the Missing Piece for Bowness' Blue Jackets

By Wesley Minke - February 3, 2026

The Columbus Blue Jackets have found their footing and vaulted themselves back into the playoff picture ahead of the Winter Olympic break, with a record of 8-1-0 under new head coach Rick Bowness. They can now add some talent at the trade deadline to solidify a team that should be ready to compete in the postseason.

The Blue Jackets seemed to be missing another solid defenseman to round out their blue line. However, with Erik Gudbranson and Denton Mateychuk back from injury, the defensive core looks solid.

Mateychuk has shown glimpses of greatness dating back to late last season. However, his game didn't really suit former head coach Dean Evason's system. In recent games against the Chicago Blackhawks and St. Louis Blues, however, Mateychuk has looked like the 12th-overall pick the Blue Jackets selected in the 2022 Entry Draft.

Mateychuk's Puck-Moving Ability

Mateychuk was most identifiable by his puck-moving skills. He has an extremely high ceiling as an offensive player, and that part of his game is just hitting the tip of the iceberg. Bowness likes to have a four-man rush up the ice, which allows for a player like Mateychuk to get involved in the play without worrying about overrunning the play and leaving the defensive zone vulnerable to an odd-man rush.

His goal against the Blues on Saturday showcased his ability in the offensive zone, and he can dance around defenders at the blue line, creating shot lanes that often get the puck through to the goaltender.

Outside of Zach Werenski, Mateychuk is the best blueliner on the Blue Jackets' roster. He adds a Werenski-type impact to the second unit, without forcing Werenski to play 30 minutes a game. Werenski is the best player on the ice whenever he is out there, but the team needs him available at the most critical times. Mateychuk could become that type of player eventually, but right now, he provides that additional offensive spark that the Blue Jackets should capitalize on.

Mateychuk's Aggressive Neutral Zone Play

Bowness' system has allowed Mateychuk to be aggressive from the neutral zone. Bowness wants his defensemen to bottleneck the play and basically cut it off before the opposition enters the offensive zone.

Mateychuk is perfectly suited for this style of play because he is still developing his defensive game deep in the defensive zone. His ability to anticipate and take plays away without fear of getting burned and leaving his goaltender out to dry has elevated his defensive floor.

If the Blue Jackets want to maximize their talent, Mateychuk should be a serious building block next to Werenski for the future of the team's blue line.

Jackson Smith, who is currently enrolled at Penn State, is also a talented prospect coming up the ranks. He was drafted 14th overall in 2025 and will likely be another big piece of the defensive structure moving forward. Smith, like Mateychuk, is a young left-handed defenseman with big offensive upside.

Mateychuk must continue to develop all facets of his game, but he is among the players who have benefited the most from how Bowness likes to run his team. Having a true chess piece for Bowness, on a team with a lot of talent, could help them make a real run for the postseason

The Hockey Writers / Blue Jackets Week Ahead: Schedule & Storylines – Bowness Bump, Coyle Dilemma and More

By THW Staff - February 2, 2026

The Columbus Blue Jackets are entering a critical week (Feb. 2–9, 2026) that serves as the final sprint before the NHL pauses for the 2026 Winter Olympics. Here are the key storylines and upcoming schedule for the week.

The “Bowness Bump” & Playoff Push

Under the new leadership of head coach Rick Bowness, the team has surged back into the playoff conversation.

The biggest story in Columbus is the dramatic turnaround under interim head coach Rick Bowness, who replaced Dean Evason in mid-January. Since Bowness took over, the Blue Jackets have gone on a tear, winning eight of their last nine games.

This hot streak has moved them within striking distance (six points behind the Buffalo Sabres) for a playoff spot. If they can sweep this week’s games against the New Jersey Devils and the Chicago Blackhawks, they will head into the Olympic break with serious momentum, forcing the front office to reconsider “selling” at the deadline.

The Charlie Coyle Dilemma

With the trade deadline approaching (post-Olympics), veteran center Charlie Coyle has generated significant buzz. He recently scored a hat trick against Chicago and is playing some of his best hockey.

Coyle is a pending unrestricted free agent (UFA), making him a prime trade target for contenders. However, with the team suddenly winning, management faces a tough decision: trade him for assets (future focus) or keep him as a key piece for a potential playoff run (current focus).

The Final Sprint Before the Olympic Break

The 2026 Winter Olympics in Milano Cortina begin this week, and the NHL season will pause from Feb. 6 to Feb. 24.

The Blue Jackets need to “empty the tank” in this back-to-back set. Entering the three-week break on a winning note would solidify the locker room’s belief that they are legitimate contenders, whereas a pair of losses could stall their momentum and leave them in “seller” territory when the league resumes in late February.

WHL - Columbus Blue Jackets prospect Gardner named Mary Brown's Chicken WHL Goaltender of the Month for January

By Taylor Rocca - February 3, 2026

Calgary, Alta. – The Western Hockey League announced Columbus Blue Jackets prospect and Saskatoon Blades netminder has been named Mary Brown's Chicken WHL Goaltender of the Month for January.

Gardner, a 20-year-old product of Fort St. John, B.C., went 6-2-0-0 with a 2.04 goals-against average, .937 save percentage, and one shutout during the month of January.

During the month of January, the 6-foot-1, 181-pound Gardner faced 30 or more shots on five occasions, registering save percentages above .920 in seven outings.

Arguably his best outing of the month, Gardner made 35 saves on 36 shots (.972 SV%), earning first-star honours in a 5-1 win over the Brandon Wheat Kings on Saturday, January 3.

On Friday, January 23, Gardner limited the high-flying Medicine Hat Tigers to two goals on 38 shots, as he rejected 36 pucks plus three more in the shootout to backstop the Blades to a 3-2 victory.

The cherry on top came Saturday, January 31, when Gardner logged a perfect night, turning away all 29 shots as the Blades blanked the East Division-leading rival Prince Albert Raiders by a 4-0 score.

Selected by the Blue Jackets in the second round (60th overall) of the 2024 NHL Draft, Gardner is enjoying yet another quality WHL campaign, owning a record of 19-11-2-1 with a 2.68 GAA, .911 SV%, and three shutouts.

He ranks among the WHL leaders in shutouts (three; T-1st), minutes played (2,014; second), save percentage (.911; fifth), saves (919; sixth), and wins (19; T-6th).

He was previously recognized as Mary Brown's Chicken WHL Goaltender of the Week for October 14, 2025.

Originally selected by the Blades in the third round (53rd overall) of the 2021 WHL Prospects Draft, Gardner has earned a career record of 63-29-6-4 with a 2.53 GAA, .915 SV%, and 10 shutouts.

In March 2025, Gardner signed a three-year, entry-level contract with the Blue Jackets.

The 2024-25 season saw Gardner named a finalist for the Doug Wickenheiser Memorial Trophy, presented annually to the WHL Humanitarian of the Year, for the second consecutive season. The veteran netminder, who lives with Type-1 diabetes, has been continually recognized and celebrated for his ongoing efforts and advocacy work to assist others also living with Type-1 diabetes.

Heading into February, the Blades (25-20-3-1) rank sixth in the WHL's Eastern Conference.

