



Columbus Blue Jackets Media Clips

October 14, 2025

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The Columbus Dispatch / Columbus Blue Jackets leave another win on the table, special teams need work

By Brian Hedger – October 14, 2025

It's far too early to sound alarms.

The Blue Jackets aren't panicking after dropping two of their first three games, both in maddening ways, but that doesn't lessen the frustration. Should the season end in April with the Blue Jackets missing the playoffs by four points or fewer, this start will be partly to blame.

"We've got to stay the course with what we're doing and not push too many panic buttons, obviously," coach Dean Evason said. "It gets frustrating when it doesn't go in the net, because you want to get rewarded for that, right? So, we've got to just continually talk to the group and reinforce that they are doing the right things to score goals, and believe they will go in."

The way things have started, belief is likely wavering outside the Blue Jackets' locker room.

They should have won their season opener Oct. 9 in Nashville after dominating the Predators through the first two periods but lost 2-1. They should have won their home opener Oct. 13 at sold-out Nationwide Arena after pinning the New Jersey Devils into their own zone for most of the first period but lost 3-2.

That's four valuable points left on the table after just three games.

According to Natural Stat Trick, the Blue Jackets finished with more shots (33-28), attempts (71-56), unblocked attempts (49-43), scoring chances (34-23), high-danger chances (11-10) and expected goals (3.82-2.88) than the Devils. In Nashville, they had similar advantages over the Predators in all those categories at 5-on-5.

What does all that mean?

It means the Blue Jackets have outplayed two of their first three opponents and didn't get anything but regulation losses to show for it. It also means multiple areas need work, including finishing touch on scoring chances and a focus on special teams.

"It's only the third game, and we have room to grow this season," said Kirill Marchenko, who scored his fourth goal of the season. "We need to just work on our game and have confidence, the whole team, and I feel that we'll play better."

Columbus Blue Jackets special teams struggle again

Evason started smiling almost as soon as the words left his mouth at the morning skate.

"We think our penalty kill's been real good," he said, "and I know it sounds silly when you give up four (power-play goals), but it's been real good. ... It's not an excuse. We've got to get better. We've got to keep the puck out of the net on the penalty kill but it's not a structural thing. We think that it will correct itself here moving forward."

Well, it didn't.

At least, not against the Devils, who went 2 for 2 on power plays after scoring each with less than five seconds left in the penalty. After going just 4 for 8 killing penalties in a 7-4 win Oct. 11 at the Minnesota Wild, the Blue Jackets are just 7 for 14.

Neither of the Devils' power-play goals went down as the winner, but they provided a 2-1 lead the Blue Jackets were still chasing with an extra attacker when Dawson Mercer made it 3-1 by scoring into an empty net. At the other end of the ice, the Blue Jackets drew five penalties and went 0 for 5 on power plays to drop their success rate for the season from 25% (1 for 4) to 11.1% (1 for 9).

"Obviously, I said this morning that our penalty kill was pretty good," Evason said. "It just seems to end up in our net. What was it, one second and four seconds (left)? We've been able to kill the whole penalty, but it's going in right now in that area. So, when it does, your power play should pick you up too."

It didn't. Far from it, in fact. The Blue Jackets came up empty on man-advantage situations, including 0 for 2 on a four-minute power play after Miles Wood left the game in the first with a facial laceration from Dougie Hamilton's stick.

Kirill Marchenko's magic not enough for Columbus Blue Jackets

One Blue Jackets player who seems to have found his scoring touch is Marchenko, who scored his fourth goal in the past two games, following his fourth career hat trick to pace the win against Minnesota.

Scary thought for the rest of the NHL: Marchenko went 0 for 8 on shots in the Blue Jackets' season-opening loss to the Predators. The only other time he put eight shots on goal in an NHL game, it was during one of his three previous hat tricks.

Marchenko's goal was a remarkable exercise in effort, ripping the puck off Devils star Jack Hughes with a stick lift at his own blue line and skating down the ice at top speed for a breakaway goal that tied it 1-1.

"We've seen his work ethic be as high as it's been," Evason said. "I think at the start of last year, it wasn't that high. When it finally picked up and he figured some things out and played the game the right way, then his natural gifts started happening and he started scoring goals. Same thing as this year. He's come in with a lot of confidence. He's stronger. He's in great shape and he's doing all those things to win puck battles and play straight forward, and he's getting some goals because of that."

Columbus Blue Jackets lose Miles Wood to ugly injury

Wood left the game with a facial injury at 6:08 of the first period after catching Devils defenseman Dougie Hamilton's stick blade near his left eye while charging to the net. He didn't return and the Blue Jackets played the rest of the game with 11 forwards.

Should Wood not be ready by Oct. 16 against the Tampa Bay Lightning, Yegor Chinakhov will likely make his season debut. Chinakhov, selected 21st overall in 2020, has watched the first three games as a healthy scratch after requesting a trade in the summer due to his usage last season.

Where Chinakhov would slot back into the lineup will be something to watch. He has a skill set that's suited to a role at wing for one of the top two lines, but filling Wood's role on the fourth line could be where Chinakhov slides back into the lineup. The Jackets don't practice again until Oct. 15, so it'll be a couple days to get an answer about Wood's availability.

The Columbus Dispatch / Gudbranson out and Greaves to start for Columbus Blue Jackets vs New Jersey Devils

By Brian Hedger – October 13, 2025

After splitting two games to start the season on the road, it's time for the Blue Jackets (1-1-0) to play their home opener.

The Jackets will begin the celebration of their 25th anniversary by hosting the New Jersey Devils on Oct. 13 at Nationwide Arena, where they'll get an early start to Metropolitan Division play.

Jet Greaves, after starting the season opener in a 2-1 loss Oct. 9 in Nashville, will get back in net against the Devils (1-1-0). The only other lineup change will be on the third defense pairing, where Jake Christiansen will make his season debut as a replacement for the injured Erik Gudbranson (upper body).

"I'm really excited for the opportunity," Christiansen said. "I haven't really thought about getting an opportunity, though, as much as I've just tried to go out and be the best version of myself in practice, and then whatever happens (with lineup decisions) happens."

Christiansen skated on the left side of the third pairing with Denton Mateychuk, who'll slide over to play the right.

New Jersey will start goalie Jake Allen and rookie forward Brian Halonen will make his season debut replacing injured Zack MacEwen on the fourth line. The Devils are also without left wing Evgenii Dadonov, who's on injured reserve after sustaining a fractured hand in their season opener.

Columbus Blue Jackets defenseman Erik Gudbranson to miss first game

Gudbranson, 33, was injured on his first shift in the third period in the Blue Jackets' 7-4 victory Oct. 11 at the Minnesota Wild. It happened five seconds after the ensuing faceoff following a goal by Zach Werenski 1:11 into the third period. Gudbranson sent a pass up the ice before Wild power forward Marcus Foligno delivered a big hit that drove him into the boards and out of the game.

Blue Jackets coach Dean Evason didn't provide details on the injury, but it sounds like a day-to-day issue. Evason also said after the game the Blue Jackets "didn't like" Foligno's hit, which wasn't penalized.

Here's a look at each projected lineups for the Blue Jackets and Devils:

Columbus Blue Jackets lineup vs New Jersey Devils

Here is how the Blue Jackets are expected to line up in their home opener against the Devils:

Forwards

Dmitri Voronkov – Sean Monahan – Kirill Marchenko

Boone Jenner – Adam Fantilli – Cole Sillinger

Kent Johnson – Charlie Coyle – Mathieu Olivier

Zach Aston-Reese – Isac Lundestrom – Miles Wood

Defensemen

Zach Werenski – Dante Fabbro

Ivan Provorov – Damon Severson

Jake Christiansen – Denton Mateychuk

Goalies

Jet Greaves

Elvis Merzlikins

Scratched: F Yegor Chinakhov

Injured: D Erik Gudbranson (upper body)

New Jersey Devils lineup at Columbus Blue Jackets

Here is how the Devils are expected to line up against the Blue Jackets:

Forwards

Ondrej Palat – Jack Hughes – Jesper Bratt

Timo Meier – Nico Hischier – Dawson Mercer

Arseny Gritsyuk – Cody Glass – Connor Brown

Paul Cotter – Luke Glendening – Brian Halonen

Defensemen

Jonas Siegenthaler – Dougie Hamilton

Luke Hughes – Brett Pesce

Brendan Dillon – Simon Nemec

Goalies

Jake Allen

Jacob Markstrom

Scratched: D Dennis Cholowski, C Juho Lammiko

Injured: LW Evgenii Dadonov (Hand)

The Columbus Dispatch / New Jersey Devils spoil Columbus Blue Jackets' home opener after surviving early push

By Brian Hedger— October 14, 2025

The Blue Jackets' home opener Oct. 13 in front of a sellout crowd of 18,627 at Nationwide Arena was too much like their season opener.

A strong start produced no goals against goalie Jake Allen before the New Jersey Devils scored two power-play goals in a 3-2 victory to put a damper on the Blue Jackets opening celebration of their 25th anniversary season.

Timo Meier and Dawson Mercer scored the goals for the Devils (2-1-0), who got the winner from Mercer with 57 second left on an empty-net goal. Kirill Marchenko and Dmitri Voronkov scored goals for the Blue Jackets (1-2-0), who got 25 saves from goalie Jet Greaves.

Allen started for the Devils and made 25 saves before leaving the game prior to the start of the third period. Jacob Markstrom took over and made eight saves on nine shots to close it out. Voronkov scored with 20.1 seconds remaining to pull the Jackets within a goal at 3-2, but there wasn't enough time left to tie it.

The game was almost a carbon copy of the Blue Jackets' 2-1 loss to open the season Oct. 9 at the Nashville Predators.

Just like they did in a frustrating 2-1 loss Oct. 9 in Nashville to open the season, the Blue Jackets dominated the opening period. They outshot the Devils 17-8, had 12 more attempts (28-16) and pinned the puck in the offensive zone for long stretches.

They just couldn't get the puck past Allen, who stopped all 17 shots. At the other end, Greaves faced eight shots and allowed Meier's power-play goal scored one second before Adam Fantilli was set to exit the penalty box after a hooking call.

The Jackets trailed 1-0 at the first intermission, but tied it 1-1 at 8:49 of the second when Marchenko created a breakaway for himself by swiping the puck from Devils star Jack Hughes and beating Allen for his fourth goal of the season.

New Jersey, however, countered with another power-play goal, making it 2-1 when Mercer one-timed a pass from Arseny Gritsyuk past Greaves with four seconds left in Cole Sillinger's hooking penalty. That made the Blue Jackets 0 for 2 on penalty kills in the game and a horrid 7 for 14 (50%) for the season.

The Athletic / Blue Jackets' penalty-kill woes persist in home-opener loss to Devils

By Aaron Portzline – October 14, 2025

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Columbus Blue Jackets coach Dean Evason spent part of Monday morning defending his club's shoddy penalty kill, which allowed the decisive goal in last Thursday's season-opening loss in Nashville and coughed up four more on Saturday in Minnesota.

But that's becoming a more difficult argument.

It was special teams that wrecked the Blue Jackets' home opener on Monday, a 3-2 loss to the New Jersey Devils before a sold-out crowd of 18,627 in Nationwide Arena. The Jackets started with a flurry, faded after three failed first-period power plays and never led. And that penalty kill? Ouch.

The Blue Jackets got goals from Kirill Marchenko and Dmitri Voronkov, while goaltender Jet Greaves had 25 saves. Marchenko's goal was the Columbus highlight of the night. He stripped New Jersey's Jack Hughes of the puck at his own blue line, and scored — bar down — on a breakaway.

But special teams, a consistent power drain in Columbus for the last several seasons, and once again in the bottom third of the league (both units) in 2024-25, are not off to a good start this season.

They got away with it on Saturday, only the second time in franchise history — and the first time on the road — that they allowed four power-play goals and still won. But they weren't so lucky Monday.

"That's the stuff we've got to take care of and get better at and work at," center Charlie Coyle said. "Whether it's talking over things, watching video ... fine-tuning that part of the game, because it's so crucial. You've got to win those battles to win a game. Not all the time, but it definitely gives you the best chance."

Get this: New Jersey's empty-net goal with 56.4 seconds remaining snapped an ignominious streak by the Blue Jackets. Before that, seven consecutive goals allowed by the Blue Jackets had come against their penalty kill, the longest in franchise history and two short of matching the NHL record of nine straight by the 1952-53 Toronto Maple Leafs.

"I said this morning that our penalty kill is pretty good," Evason said after the game. "It just seems to end up in our net."

Evason believes the Blue Jackets are "structurally" sound on the penalty kill. There have been some mishaps and blown assignments — the Nashville Predators' Ryan O'Reilly was somehow left all alone in front of the net in the opener — but it's mostly been bad bounces and breaks, he said.

On Monday, the Devils' first power-play goal was scored with one second remaining on Adam Fantilli's hooking penalty. Timo Meier buried it at 15:47 of the first period for a 1-0 New Jersey lead.

The second power-play goal got past goaltender Greaves with four seconds remaining on Cole Sillinger's hooking penalty. That put New Jersey back on top at 2-1 on Dawson Mercer's goal.

"I mean, we've literally killed the whole penalties, you know, but it's going in right now in that area," Evason said. "So when it does, your power play should pick you up, too, and it's struggled here tonight."

The Blue Jackets got off to a tremendous start. They forced New Jersey to weather the storm for most of the first period, at one point leading 16-3 in shots on goal.

That included a four-minute power play after Blue Jackets forward Miles Wood was lumberjacked at the front of the net and a two-minute advantage only two minutes after that expired. Both of those passed without the Jackets scoring, but then New Jersey quickly made it 1-0.

"Obviously, that could have changed the momentum for us," Evason said.

The Jackets never got back on top of the game. The power play went 0-for-5 and the Blue Jackets had 38 of their 71 shot attempts either blocked or sail wide of the net.

"Tons of shots, tons of opportunities," Coyle said. "You know, sometimes you don't capitalize or get the end result right away, but it's up to us to kind of maintain that through in the (second period). They upped their play, and we kind of played a little looser. I think we tried forcing some things, especially in the neutral zone, rather than just kind of putting a puck in space or behind them, having good support."

The Blue Jackets played the game without defenseman Erik Gudbranson, who sustained an upper-body injury in the third period of Saturday's win in Minnesota. Jake Christiansen took Gudbranson's spot, making his season debut on the third pair with Denton Mateychuk.

The Jackets also played most of the game without Wood, who took an ugly high-stick to the face from New Jersey's Dougie Hamilton only six minutes in. Bloodied, he headed straight to the dressing room and did not return to the game.

The Devils had their own health issues. Goaltender Jake Allen, who stopped 23 of 24 shots through the first two periods, did not come out for the third period due to cramping. Jacob Markstrom took over and stopped eight of nine shots, allowing only Voronkov's goal with 20.1 seconds remaining.

Cleveland.com / How hot goalies and a struggling penalty kill spelled déjà vu for the Blue Jackets against the Devils

By Tim Bielik – October 14, 2025

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Monday night at home for the Blue Jackets felt a lot like Thursday night in Nashville.

A hot start was neutralized by an even hotter goaltender, and a power play goal by the opponent was the difference in a loss for Columbus.

Predators goalie Juuse Saros was the difference on Thursday.

Monday, it was the tandem of Jake Allen and Jacob Markstrom in the New Jersey Devils' 3-2 win at Nationwide Arena.

The Blue Jackets fired 18 shots on goal in the first period, twice as many as the Devils.

Yet, they trailed 1-0.

The reason?

Allen stopped all 18 shots he faced. He stopped 23 of 24 in two periods, with Kirill Marchenko's breakaway goal at 8:49 of the second period the lone shot to beat him, before Markstrom came in for the third period and stopped eight of nine.

"We've got to stay the course with what we're doing and not push too many panic buttons," Blue Jackets coach Dean Evason said. "Obviously, it gets frustrating when the puck doesn't go in the net because you want to get rewarded for it."

The advanced stats from both games tell a similar story.

Against Nashville according to Money puck, Saros saved exactly two goals above expected in a 2-1 Predators win as he turned away 37 of 38 shots faced.

The first period played out in a similar way on Monday when the Blue Jackets had an expected goal total of 1.99 per Money puck, but did not beat Allen once.

Instead, they gave up a power play goal to Devils forward Timo Meier with 4:13 left in the period, sending them to a 1-0 deficit despite their overwhelming shot advantage.

For comparison's sake, when the Blue Jackets routed the Wild, they more than outperformed their expected goals (2.96).

When asked after the game if the first period deficit was disheartening, Blue Jackets center Charlie Coyle said it was a matter of perspective.

"It's what you make of it, and I think the leadership and just knowing how much time, how much game is left," Coyle added. "But those are the signs of good teams who can kind of weather that and just know that we're playing the right way. Sometimes you play that way and you score four or five in a period. Sometimes you don't score at all. Sometimes, it's in between."

"I like the way we played. But there's some fine-tuning there that we can definitely address and get better at."

Goaltending has not been an issue for the Blue Jackets. Greaves has allowed four goals on 58 shots, and Elvis Merzlikins gave up four on 52 shots in a 7-4 win at Minnesota on Saturday.

Columbus' 5-on-5 play has been good once again. They are plus-6 in goal differential at 5-on-5 and have only allowed two goals on even strength, one of which was a Dawson Mercer empty netter.

Two sets of numbers stand out early on as to why they are just 1-2.

One is that the Blue Jackets are fifth in the NHL in shots per game (34.7) yet just 22nd in shooting percentage (9.6%).

It's very early in the season and the Blue Jackets have the type of offensive players who can score, including Marchenko, who already has four goals.

The other is that of the nine goals the Blue Jackets have given up, seven are on the penalty kill. They are 7-for-14 on the PK.

A Nashville power-play goal by Ryan O'Reilly was the difference on Thursday.

The Blue Jackets were only shorthanded twice on Monday, but the Devils scored both times. Those goals plus Mercer's empty netter were too much to overcome.

"I said this morning about our penalty kill is pretty good. It just seems to end up in our net," Evason said. "What is it, one second and four seconds? I mean, literally killed the whole penalties, but you know, it's going in right now in that area."

Hockey can sometimes be about luck. They can't control how good the goaltenders are against them, although they can fix their penalty kill after its sluggish start.

That combo has led to two frustrating losses early for the Blue Jackets despite the good they've done, particularly in 5-on-5.

"We're doing a lot of really good things," Evason said. "That's why it's frustrated that you don't get rewarded for playing good defensive hockey. We've just got to find that balance and keep doing the right thing."

NBC4 / How Blue Jackets support the community

By Samantha Bender – October 14, 2025

COLUMBUS, Ohio (WCMH) — The Columbus Blue Jackets took the ice for the team's 25th season and highly anticipated home opener Monday. Off the ice, the team has been scoring big for decades, especially when it comes to supporting children and families in central Ohio.

"We're up to over a thousand organizations we're working with each year now," Columbus Blue Jackets Senior Vice President Kathryn Dobbs said. "That's incredible. We really show up in a lot of different ways, a lot of different programs."

For a quarter century, the Columbus Blue Jackets Foundation has quietly been transforming lives across central Ohio.

"When the McConnells brought a professional sports team to Columbus, one of the reasons why they wanted a team here is because they understood the value that a sports franchise could do for a community to make it a better place to live, work and play," Dobbs said.

How Blue Jackets support the community

The foundation was established at the same time as the team in 2000. Since then, it's been skating alongside Columbus as a force for good.

"We know the incredible work of our health partners in this community," Dobbs said. "We know the importance of making sure that children have a safe place to play, to grow up, that we are providing the support, like addressing things like third grade reading scores and making kids ready for school and prepared."

The foundation focuses on four main areas: pediatric cancer, education, health and safety, and growing the game of hockey. Longtime fan April Vanest sees the work firsthand at Nationwide Children's Hospital.

"They come in the hospitals, and they work with the kids and they're present," Vanest said. "They are so vital to our city."

Since its creation, the foundation has granted more than \$15 million back into the community, impacting more than 100,000 youth every single year.

"Our captain Boone Jenner is collaborating with Ronald McDonald House to bring families to 20 games, do a meet and greet, give them an experience," Dobbs said. "And so those partnerships can come to life in so many different ways. Sometimes we're investing time, sometimes we're investing money."

That support shows up in big ways, from 14 new playgrounds around central Ohio to new street hockey rinks.

"Mayor Ginther had said, you know, we'd like to make sure that there's a safe place to play within a half mile of every home in Columbus," Dobbs said. "And the Blue Jackets said we feel like we can show up there."

As the foundation looks ahead to the next 25 years, it plans to continue showing up where it matters most.

“I’m really excited about some of the projects that we’re looking at,” Dobbs said. “I think you’ll see some fun announcements coming up from the foundation as we move forward and consider, you know, what do we do to make sure that we’re delivering on our promise to this community.”

The Hockey Writers / Blue Jackets Special Teams Continue To Be Dreadful In Loss To Devils

By Jason Newland – October 14, 2025

Kirill Marchenko(4) and **Dmitri Voronkov**(2) scored the goals for Columbus, and Jet Greaves again played well, stopping 25 Devils shots, but would lose to New Jersey 3-2.

The Blue Jackets' special teams have been absolutely awful this season. After giving up four power-play goals to Minnesota on Saturday night, they had hoped to get that fixed for last night's game against the Devils. What happened was anything but pretty.

On one hand, they only took two penalties compared to the nine they took against the Wild. On the other hand, they gave up two power-play goals on two Devils' man advantages.

The Jackets power play was also very bad. They had five total power plays awarded to them, which included a four-minute double minor to Dougie Hamilton for high-sticking Miles Wood. They went 0-5 and really did come anywhere close to scoring.

This wasn't a good game for Columbus. The first ten minutes of the game were all CBJ, but after that, it was all Devils. Columbus made it interesting with 21 seconds left by pulling the score to within one goal, but that was it.

Miles Wood, who took a high stick from Dougie Hamilton, would not return after leaving the ice. The Jackets announced that he wouldn't return soon after he left. We will update you on his injury when the team announces it, but it looks like his eye was injured.

Dean Evason - "We have to stay the course with what we're doing and not push too many panic buttons."

Player Stats

- Kirill Marchenko scored his 4th of the season. He also had 5 shots and played 24:24 of ice time.
- Dmitri Voronkov scored his second goal of the season. He was a plus-2 and had 5 shots.
- Ivan Provorov collected an assist and played 21 minutes.
- Zach Werenski had 7 shots on the night and played 29 minutes.
- Jet Greaves made 25 saves on 27 Devils shots.

Team Stats

- The Jackets power play went 0/5 on the night.
- The Columbus PK gave up two power-play goals on two man advantages.
- Columbus won 56.7% of the faceoffs.

The Hockey Writers / 3 Takeaways From the Blue Jackets' 3-2 Loss to the Devils

By William Espy – October 14, 2025

The Columbus Blue Jackets hosted their home opener on Monday night (Oct. 13) against the New Jersey Devils. They'd ultimately end up falling to the Devils, with a final score of 3-2. Despite the loss, there were some positive takeaways from the night, and one major negative.

Special Teams Need Major Improvement

It seems like an annual discussion, but the Blue Jackets' power play needed to take advantage of their abundance of opportunities in the first period. Entering the night, the Blue Jackets had a power play percentage of 25%, which put them eighth in the NHL. While that sounds great on paper, they had scored one goal on four attempts. Meanwhile, their penalty kill was second-worst with a 58.3% efficiency rate, ahead of just the Washington Capitals.

Miles Wood was injured by a Dougie Hamilton high-stick, which gave the Blue Jackets a four-minute man advantage, and they didn't convert. Then, Mathieu Olivier drew a hooking penalty after being taken down by Brett Pesce. Again, the Blue Jackets didn't convert, and the power play was cut short by Adam Fantilli taking a hooking penalty of his own. After a short spell of four-on-four hockey, the Devils almost instantly took advantage of their first power play opportunity, and Timo Meier made it 1-0 even though the Blue Jackets had been dominating play. Just like that, the season PP% was down to 14.2% and the PK% was down to an abysmal 53.8% after just 20 minutes.

The Blue Jackets' penalty kill continued to struggle in the second period, as Dawson Mercer regained the Devils' lead while Cole Sillinger sat in the penalty box.

Every special teams opportunity went the Devils' way throughout the night, as the Blue Jackets finished the game 0/5 on the power play, and the Devils scored on both of their man advantages.

Marchenko and Voronkov's Hot Starts Continue

Kirill Marchenko scored a hat trick when the Blue Jackets defeated the Minnesota Wild on Saturday night. He continued that momentum against the Devils. The Russian winger took the puck off of Jack Hughes' stick, creating a breakaway for himself. He was able to beat Devils netminder Jake Allen, and scored what was, at the time, a crucial equalizer for Columbus.

Dmitri Voronkov chipped in his second goal of the season moments after the Devils scored an empty-net goal to extend the lead. The goal left Devils' goaltender Jacob Markstrom, who entered the game after Allen left due to cramps, shaken up, but he remained in the game. Voronkov is on pace for a breakout season, as he has four points in three games to kick off the campaign.

Greaves Proving Evason Right

The Blue Jackets' goaltending was a major weak spot last season and, ultimately, it can be said that goaltending cost the team a playoff spot during the 2024-25 season. Head coach Dean Evason made a shocking move deciding to start rookie goaltender Jet Greaves on opening night, and he gave him the nod once again in the home opener.

Despite a 0-2-0 record following the loss to New Jersey, Greaves has played phenomenally so far this season. Through his first two games, Greaves now boasts a .932 save percentage and 2.06 goals-against average.

Veteran goaltender Elvis Merzlikins also had a strong performance in his only outing of the season, meaning the Blue Jackets' goaltending battle will be something to keep an eye on moving forward.

The Blue Jackets have now fallen to a 1-2-0 record; however, that doesn't tell the entire story. They've been competitive in every game this season and actually boast a positive goal differential through three games. As a result, if they continue playing like they did on Monday and clean up certain aspects of their game, they'll likely have a very strong season.

The Athletic / NHL weekend rankings: It's too early to know anything, except maybe in Buffalo

By Sean McIndoe – October 14, 2025

Welcome back to the weekend rankings. By my count, this is the eighth year of this column's lifespan at The Athletic, and it had a few homes before that. How long is eight years? Put it this way: In that debut edition on this site way back in 2018, the very first team to be listed in the Stanley Cup contenders section was the San Jose Sharks. They'd just acquired Erik Karlsson, you see, and we all knew there was no way that trade wouldn't work out great.

That's a long time ago. But it fits with the theme, because these are the long-range rankings. That makes them a bit different from most of the power rankings you'll see out there — we're not trying to measure who had the best week, or who'd win a game between two teams right now. Instead, it's about trying to unravel the future and figure out which teams are best positioned for a Cup run and which are headed toward the bottom of the standings.

And yes, that means your favorite team can win a few games against contenders and not immediately rocket past them in the rankings. I know that's very upsetting for some of you, but we have resources available in the comment section to help you work through your feelings. (Those resources are other commenters, who will make fun of you.)

It also means this is way too early to be ranking much of anything, because not enough has happened to really alter our preseason predictions. That's never stopped us before, and it won't stop us today. Maybe it will backfire — last year's first rankings had the New York Rangers in the top five. Maybe we'll be a bit too slow to catch on to teams like last year's Washington Capitals or Winnipeg Jets, or a surprise team like the Montreal Canadiens.

Recency bias isn't always wrong, and if you'd prefer a bit more of it in your rankings, Dom and Other Sean will have you covered with their version on Fridays. My advice would be to read both, and then see how (or whether) they converge as the season goes on, but it's not my job to tell you how to live your life. Have you had any water today? Drink some water.

Enough preamble. Let's get to a very weird weekend in the NHL, which saw a night off Friday, just one game Sunday, and the rare full-32 schedule in between.

Bonus five: Random observations from a packed Saturday night

5. I haven't forgotten about the Columbus Blue Jackets bandwagon — Seven goals against a goalie who just got a bunch of money is a nice sign this team plans to resume causing problems. I'd assume giving up 52 shots against wasn't part of the game plan, but Kirill Marchenko had a hat trick and Elvis Merzljikins had 48 saves, and my math says both of those things are sustainable, so let's roll.

4. We might be sleeping on Thatcher Demko as an Olympic factor — Yes, you figure Connor Hellebuyck and Jake Oettinger will get all the starts that matter. Then you see Demko do stuff like this and you wonder ...

3. I'm not remotely worried about the Tampa Bay Lightning — Sure, they're 0-2-0 and have given up 10 goals despite opening at home. They'll be fine. (Note to editors: If they lose in Boston on Monday, delete this and replace with the file called "lightning_are_cooked.doc.")

2. We love to see a first pick get his first goal — ... especially when he does it by impersonating a bowling ball.

Peter Baugh has more on the start of the Matthew Schaefer era.

1. Whatever this was — I did not have the Anaheim Ducks and San Jose Sharks on my must-watch list, but they delivered the best game on the weekend. Sure, why not?

When Ryan Reaves is out there absolutely dangling, it might be a weird game.

Did all of those things affect this week's rankings? Sure, but maybe not as much as you'd expect because again, we're playing the long game here. Let's see what that ends up looking like in week one.

Road to the Cup

The five teams with the best chances of winning the Stanley Cup.

5. Carolina Hurricanes (2-0-0, +4 true goals differential*) — After winning two at home, they're off to the West Coast to start a six-game trip. With the three California teams up next, it's not hard to imagine the Hurricanes sitting at 5-0-0 heading into an early showdown with the Vegas Golden Knights in a week.

4. Edmonton Oilers (1-0-1, +2) — Yes, we all immediately panicked during the opener when that play happened. But they've been fine, and will probably flip back and forth with Vegas all season long as the Pacific rep in the top five. With the Knights losing two of three, the Oilers get first dibs.

3. Colorado Avalanche (2-0-1, +4) — It was fun to see them get the Dallas Stars, a nice appetizer for the playoff rematch we're all expecting in the spring. Not as fun: realizing these two teams don't meet again until March.

2. Dallas Stars (2-0-0, +1) — Beating the Jets and the Avs on the road is impressive, even if shootout wins are mostly fake. They've got the Minnesota Wild in the home opener Tuesday, and 6 points against that trio of teams would certainly send an early message about where the path out of the Central Division runs.

1. Florida Panthers (3-0-0, +6) — Here's a free prediction: The Panthers are going to be the toughest team to rank this year, at least as far as a long-term outcome.

They'll be missing Sasha Barkov for probably the entire regular season, and Matthew Tkachuk for most of it. And they've shown us in recent years they don't really care where they finish in the standings. (Last year, they went into the playoffs as the 11 seed.) It won't surprise anyone to see them stumble through a mediocre season, maybe even hanging closer to a wild-card spot than a division title, at least until they're healthy. But assuming they make the playoffs, will anyone want to pick against them? Doubtful.

How do you rank that? I'm not really sure. Luckily for me, they looked good enough in week one that I can put them in the top five without any controversy. But at some point, they're going to be an issue, and I'm guessing they won't apologize for it.

*Goals differential without counting shootout decisions as the NHL does for some reason.

Not ranked: Boston Bruins — Ho hum, just sitting at 3-0-0, the only team besides the defending champs at that mark.

And no, it doesn't get them into the top five. It doesn't get them anywhere close, in fact. (This is your reminder that "not ranked" does not mean "sixth.") If you're looking at the long term, you're not going to pretend that a 76-point team suddenly pushed to the front of the Cup chase based on one good week.

But the Bruins are worth talking about, and maybe the conversation should start with whether this was really a 76-point team last year. On the one hand, they absolutely were, because you are what your record says you are. But last year was also a strange one in Boston, where just about everything that could go wrong did, from the Jeremy Swayman contract debacle to Charlie McAvoy's weird injury situation to the deadline sell-off. It's easy to forget that on paper, this is still a team that should have enough talent to at least stay in the playoff race.

So far so good, although those wins came against the Caps, Chicago Blackhawks and Buffalo Sabres, and they needed OT to get past Chicago. You can only beat the teams the schedule gives you, but we'll learn more this week, starting Monday when the Bruins host the Lightning. After that, it's on to road stops in Vegas and Colorado. Beat a few of those teams, and then we can talk about early-season surprises. Until then, we might at least have our early Jack Adams favorite.

The bottom five

The five teams headed toward dead last and the best lottery odds for Gavin McKenna.

Some years, we're not sure which prospect teams might end up tanking for. Not this year, where Penn State forward Gavin McKenna is already penciled in as next year's top pick. If you missed it, be sure to check out Gentile's piece on the freshman's heavily hyped college debut.

5. Seattle Kraken (2-0-0, +3) — Here's our annual "unbeaten team that still shows up in the bottom five." Enjoy it, Kraken fans, it means you either get to make fun of me all year long or forget this ever happened when 2-4 a week from now.

4. Philadelphia Flyers (0-1-1, -2) — The early schedule is tough, and a pair of one-goal losses is something you can maybe build on. Dan Vladar looked great in the opener, and even halfway decent goaltending would solve a lot of problems for this team.

3. Pittsburgh Penguins (2-1-0, -1) — They looked good through two games, and somewhat less good Saturday against the Rangers in Mike Sullivan's return. Ah, well, Evgeni Malkin's leading the league in scoring was fun while it lasted.

2. San Jose Sharks (0-0-2, -2) — Two losses, but 2 points, and an early game-of-the-year candidate against the Ducks that made fans of Team Chaos stand up and take notice.

Also, their owner is apparently paying attention after all, and he had some interesting things to say.

1. Chicago Blackhawks (0-2-1, -3) — The big question in the bottom five this year: Will any team other than Chicago or San Jose ever get a chance to hold down the one-spot?

It feels unlikely. They almost pulled it off last year — the Sabres were the only other team all season to get the "top" ranking down here, and it was for only one week — and that was before a summer that saw just about everyone else actually trying to improve.

Then again, surprises happen. Absolutely nobody went into last year thinking the Predators or Bruins would be in the bottom five conversation, after all. Still, it's not hard to imagine getting all the way to April having just watched the Sharks and Hawks trade the spot back and forth. Let's see whether that expectation changes, and how quickly.

Not ranked: Buffalo Sabres — Look on the bright side, Sabres fans, at least your owner is terrific.

That's about where the good news ends, at least based on the very early returns of yet another make-or-break season. The Sabres opened against two teams that missed the playoffs last year, and dropped both games by a combined score of 7-1. Mix in a major long-term injury, and ... yeah. Sabres hockey, feel the excitement.

They're not in the bottom five, but unlike in the Bruins section up above, I'm not going to lecture you about how they weren't close. They were. They should be. There's no real benefit of the doubt here, not after 14 years of misery.

For now, I'm showing some kindness, which might or might not be influenced by empathy for long-suffering Sabres fans. I'm also factoring in the absence of their starting goalie, which would throw off most teams. We're not really sure how long Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen will be out, but it shouldn't be enough to completely torpedo their season. Then again, Sabres seasons often come pre-torpedoed, so ... we'll see.

This week will be a challenging one, with the Avalanche and Panthers coming to town. They've also got meetings with the Ottawa Senators and Habs, two of the teams they'll need to keep pace with if they're going to stay near the playoff race. With the Detroit Red Wings up next and then two against the Toronto Maple Leafs, the Sabres can't afford to lose ground in their hunt for the Atlantic's mushy middle.

It never makes sense to panic when you're two games in. But the Sabres are two games and 14 years into this thing, and it's going to get late very early in Buffalo. Check back next week to see whether we're already there.