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The Athletic / Blue Jackets' Jet Greaves 'absolutely huge' in third period to seal win over Blues

Aaron Portzline – January 31, 2026

Throughout the Columbus Blue Jackets' recent resurgence, they've relied on an array of players — from Mason Marchment's goal scoring, Charlie Coyle's two-way domination, Zach Werenski's effortless excellence, etc. — to work their way back into a playoff chase.

On Saturday, after two strong periods against the St. Louis Blues, the Blue Jackets let goaltender Jet Greaves take his turn in the spotlight.

Greaves made 15 of his 28 saves in a perfect third period. Well, it was perfect for him. The rest of the Blue Jackets, looking sluggish and sloppy, barely hung on for a 5-3 win before 18,096 in Enterprise Center.

There were two good reasons for the sluggishness and sloppiness.

The Blue Jackets lost second-line center Sean Monahan to an upper-body injury after he was sent face-first into the boards on a first-period hit by Blues center Brayden Schenn. Monahan played most of the second period but didn't come out for the third.

Another center, Isac Lundeström, missed most of the third period after he plowed into Blues forward Jimmy Snuggerud — an inadvertent collision by both players — and was sent off to clear the NHL's concussion protocol. He didn't return until late in the third period.

That left Blue Jackets coach Rick Bowness and his staff to get creative in putting lines together, not to mention penalty-kill units.

"Going into that third period, it's our third game in four nights, we're down to 10 forwards and then you're scrambling your lines just to keep everybody in the game," Bowness told reporters in St. Louis. "It was a tremendous, gutty performance tonight. I was very, very proud of the guys.

"We took some penalties that were probably more out of fatigue than anything else, and then you're spending so much time in your zone. The penalty killers did a great job. I can't say enough about Jet. When you get like that, you need your goalie to come up big, and he was absolutely huge."

Five different players scored goals for the Blue Jackets, and 13 different players hit the scoresheet, led by second-line winger Kent Johnson, who had his first power-play goal of the season and added an assist.

Lundeström, Denton Mateychuk, Damon Severson and Marchment also scored for the Blue Jackets, who have won nine of their last 10 games and are 8-1-0 since Bowness was hired to replace Dean Evason on Jan. 12.

It's starting to show up in the standings, too.

The win allowed the Blue Jackets to jump the Washington Capitals and take over ninth place in the Eastern Conference. They sit only four points back of the New York Islanders for third place in the Metropolitan Division and six back of the Boston Bruins for the second wild-card spot.

The Blue Jackets have won five consecutive games for the first time since they finished last season with six straight wins in a mad dash to make the playoffs. They fell only one win (two points) short, and they're trying to avoid a similar fate this season.

The Blue Jackets fell behind early but scored twice in the first period to take a 2-1 lead. They never trailed again, but the Blues kept coming, tying it 2-2 and 3-3 before the Jackets went up 4-3 on Severson's goal late in the second period.

Protecting third-period leads has been a problem all season for the Blue Jackets, and Saturday's game certainly had the feel of many of their earlier games, where the tying or even go-ahead goal seemed inevitable.

But then it didn't happen.

Penalties by Marchment (slashing) and Adam Fantilli (holding with less than eight minutes left) only fueled the Blues more, but they couldn't solve Greaves, who had 37 saves against the St. Louis in a win earlier this season. Greaves, who earned his 17th win, deflects praise like a wrist shot from distance.

"They do a good job of getting guys to the net front, which makes the goalie's job tougher," Greaves told FanDuel Sports Network after the game. "But I think the box-outs were good. The biggest thing is clearing those guys out and taking away their sticks. That made it simpler for me."

The Blue Jackets rose in the final three minutes and started to play as they did in the first two periods. Marchment's empty net goal — fired from the red line — capped the scoring and allowed the Jackets to breathe.

"They had a lot of shots, and we get that. A lot of outside shots," Bowness said. "They only had eight scoring chances in the first two periods when we were healthy and playing our game."

"We were on our heels a bit in the third, but you expect that. They didn't play last night. We were down. The bench got a little shorter. But you find a way to win. Good teams find a way to win. We're a good team."

The Blue Jackets were scheduled to fly back to Columbus after Saturday's game and take an off day Sunday. After a brief practice Monday, they'll fly to New Jersey and get ready to play yet another back-to-back — Tuesday at the New Jersey Devils, then Wednesday at home against the Chicago Blackhawks.

After that comes a lengthy break as the NHL pauses for the Olympics.

Even as hectic as this season has been — the schedule has been compacted to fit in the Games — and as banged up as the Blue Jackets have been, they might be the only club in the league that would rather keep playing.

The Blue Jackets are on their hottest streak of the season, and now they're closing out games in the third period ... even when it's not pretty.

The Athletic / Charlie Coyle stays hot with second career hat trick in Blue Jackets win

Aaron Portzline – January 31, 2026

Earlier this week, the Columbus Blue Jackets presented center Charlie Coyle with the customary silver stick to commemorate his playing 1,000 games in the NHL. Truth be told, he's had a golden touch for three weeks now.

Coyle had the second hat trick of his career and his third career 4-point game Friday, all while playing a clutch defensive role in the Blue Jackets' 4-2 win over the Chicago Blackhawks in front of 20,247 at United Center.

The Blue Jackets have won eight of their last nine, including a 7-1-0 record since coach Rick Bowness took over Jan. 12. The win allowed the Jackets to jump the New Jersey Devils and Washington Capitals, moving to 10th in the Eastern Conference, the highest they've been since Dec. 1.

Coyle clinched his hat trick and sealed the Blue Jackets' win by scoring an empty net goal with 1:03 remaining. His linemate, Cole Sillinger, could easily have scored into the empty net, but instead passed to Coyle.

"I always forget that (Sillinger) is a young guy," Coyle told FanDuel Sports Network from the Blue Jackets bench after the game. "He's been in the league about 10 years," he said with a laugh, "and he's only 22 years old. He's a very mature kid.

"I was pretty sure I was going to get that back. He's been around the game. That play ... not that he has to do that ... but it says a lot about his character."

Mathieu Olivier, who plays on Coyle's wing on the third line, also scored for the Blue Jackets, and Zach Werenski had two assists for the third straight game. Goaltender Elvis Merzlikins made 23 saves to earn his fourth win in his last five starts.

Bowness leaned hard on the Sillinger-Coyle-Olivier line, but not only for the offense they provided. As often as possible, Bowness tried to get that line out on the ice with Chicago's top line, centered by Connor Bedard.

Bedard had a goal and an assist — he played almost 23 minutes — but Coyle's line combined for four goals and three assists, and all three players had a plus-3 rating. Coyle also won a club-high 13 faceoffs on 20 attempts.

"It's fantastic," Olivier said. "You couldn't be a better teammate than Charlie Coyle. Playing with him and Silly is a pleasure, and we're just kind of feeding off each other right now.

"To see Charlie get that hat trick ... I was hoping Silly would give it back to him so he could get his hat trick, and he did, obviously. It's a fun moment. It means we had a good night."

Coyle has been stacking good nights for a while now. Over the past 10 games, he has 9-5-14 with a plus-6 rating. On Jan. 24, he played his 1,000th NHL game. On Wednesday, he was honored for that achievement.

And now, he has his first hat trick since Nov. 9, 2023, when he played for the Boston Bruins in a 5-2 win over the New York Islanders.

“These celebratory moments, these milestones, whatever you want to call them,” Coyle said. “It’s a lot better when you win. It makes it so much sweeter and easier to celebrate, and everybody’s happy.

“We just have to stay on it, stay on the hunt here. We’re playing really good hockey, but there’s still a lot that we can clean up and get better at, which is a really good sign for us.”

Coyle scored a power play goal with only 46.9 seconds remaining in the first period, potting a rebound off a Werenski shot for a 1-0 Blue Jackets lead. He also gave them a 2-1 lead when he forced a turnover at 1:23 of the second and scored from the slot.

The Blue Jackets were thrilled to get 2 more points Friday. That said, they didn’t play a very clean game, other than Coyle’s line and the top defensive pair, Zach Werenski and Damon Severson.

Bowness has tried to instill a faster, more physical pace with the Blue Jackets, and he urged them to play a high-pressure defense. He also wants them to make smarter plays with the puck, especially in dangerous areas of the ice.

He wasn’t happy at all about the Chicago goal scored with 2.7 seconds remaining in the first period to tie the score at 1.

“Those are simple things to fix, but it’s on-ice awareness,” Bowness told media in Chicago. “We score a big power-play goal, and then we give them one ... to me, we gave them one.

“We didn’t get enough pucks on the net in the third (only two shots), so we’re going to keep on preaching that. We want to play on our toes, we want to go after them.”

The win pulled the Jackets even with ninth-place Florida, but the Panthers have a tiebreaker (more regulation wins) that puts them one notch ahead. Columbus is 6 points behind the Islanders for third place in the Metropolitan Division.

“They’re getting it, or they’re starting to,” Bowness said. “We’ve won these games. We’re still fighting here, but we haven’t done anything yet. We’ve got to keep pushing. That’s the message we’re sending.

“We haven’t done anything yet until we keep pushing and get into that playoff spot. But, yeah, I think it’s coming.”

The Blue Jackets play at the St. Louis Blues on Saturday.

The Columbus Dispatch / Columbus Blue Jackets down St. Louis Blues for fifth straight win

Brian Hedger – January 31, 2026

They were exhausted while clinging to a one-goal lead in the third period of a back-to-back finale to finish a stretch of three games in four days, but the Blue Jackets figured out a way to win Jan. 31 at Enterprise Center.

Despite being outshot by the St. Louis Blues 15-4 in the third period, the Jackets won their season-high fifth straight game and improved to 9-1-0 in the last 10 games with a 5-3 victory to sweep a road back-to-back that began Jan. 30 with a 4-2 victory in Chicago.

Isac Lundestrom, Denton Mateychuk, Damon Severson and Johnson scored goals in the first two periods for the Blue Jackets (27-20-7), who sealed the win on Mason Marchment's empty-net goal with 30 seconds remaining. Jet Greaves, meanwhile, made 15 of his 28 saves in the third period to earn the goaltending win, including three stops on two Blues power plays.

The Blue Jackets did take a key loss in personnel during the game with an injury that caused Sean Monahan to miss the third period. Monahan, who centered the second forward line, was driven headfirst into the wall by Blues forward Brayden Schenn in the first period. Monahan stayed in the game and played the second period, but he didn't come out for the third.

Jimmy Snuggerud, Jonatan Berggren and Tyler Tucker scored for the Blues (20-26-9), who started Jordan Binnington (18 saves).

Trailing 4-3 to start the third, the Blues dominated the final period. They just couldn't get the puck past Greaves despite finishing with 11 more shots and getting two late power plays.

St. Louis scored first on Snuggerud's ninth goal of the season, giving the Blues an early 1-0 lead at 7:11 of the first period. Lundestrom, who moved from center to the wing on the fourth line, quickly countered on the next shift for the Blue Jackets to tie it 1-1 on his second goal of the season.

Mateychuk made it 2-1 with 7:06 left in the first on his ninth goal of the season, and that's how it stayed through the first 20 minutes. Berggren tied it 2-2 on a Blues power play early in the second, but Johnson countered for the Jackets to make it 3-2 with a power-play goal about five minutes later.

Tucker again tied it for St. Louis with 4:25 left in the second, but Severson gave the Blue Jackets a 4-3 lead after two periods by scoring with a slap shot from the high slot to beat Binnington with 3:59 left in the period.

Columbus Blue Jackets playoff picture

Winning their fifth straight game combined with the New York Islanders' 4-3 loss to the Nashville Predators pulls the Blue Jackets to within four points of third place in the Metropolitan Division with one fewer game played. That's the division's final playoff spot, and the Jackets are six points back of the Buffalo Sabres and Boston Bruins for the East's two wild-card spots.

After winning for the third time in four days, the Blue Jackets return to Columbus for a day off Feb. 1 before practicing Feb. 2 at Nationwide Arena. Their last two games before the NHL's pause for the

Winter Olympics will be played back-to-back Feb. 3 at the New Jersey Devils and Feb. 4 against the Blackhawks in Columbus.

The Hockey Writers / Blue Jackets Getting Much More Than Coaching Bump From Rick Bowness

By Mark Scheig - February 1, 2026

Everything is coming up Columbus Blue Jackets these days. With that, everything is also coming up Rick Bowness.

After the Blue Jackets' 5-3 win Saturday night in St. Louis, Bowness improved to 8-1 since being named head coach to replace Dean Evason. The team is on a 9-1-0 run that has them in the heat of the playoff race.

NHL Rumours for Jan. 29: Panarin Benched, Senators Want Weegar, Oilers Reunion & Habs Coaching

The question comes up why coaching changes happen in the NHL. This is why. There are "coaching bumps" after a change is made when teams get new found energy and enjoy early success.

But what's going on with the Blue Jackets and Bowness is much more than just a "coaching bump." It's something that could in time have lasting ramifications on this franchise depending how the rest of the season plays out.

The Blue Jackets are getting a new lease on life in 2025-26. Whether it leads to them making the playoffs this season remains to be seen. But thanks to everything the team is getting thanks to Bowness, they're in better position to give it their best shot. That's what elevates this beyond just a bump.

Bowness' Communication

Listen to the players. They are the guide to what's going on around them. In a postgame interview with TNT, Zach Werenski told them that he's "never in his career had a coach like Bowness" who communicates as much as he does.

Think about that for a second. One of the best defensemen in the world being able to say that about a coach is telling. Consider all of the coaches Werenski has had. This includes John Tortorella, who is one of the most brutally honest coaches out there.

Yet, it's Bowness that's done something for Werenski that's never happened to him. Bowness was on a boat with his wife Judy just nine games ago.

If Bowness is able to do that for Werenski, look at what he's doing for other individual players as well as the team at large. What's making this work is that everyone is responding the right way to things.

At a recent practice, Bowness pulled his top line of Mason Marchment, Adam Fantilli and Kirill Marchenko together to talk with them. He told them how much he believes in what they could become. Bowness has had multiple conversations already with Fantilli as well as everyone on the team.

Bowness has leveled up the communication around the Blue Jackets. Under Evason, while there was some communication, it was never like we're seeing now. In fact, Evason has admitted letting his assistants handle most of that and then he'd speak up when necessary.

Communication is at the heart of Bowness' approach. It's not coddling them. He's tough and brutally honest. But players know exactly where they stand at any given moment.

This has resulted in a much different vibe and energy around the Blue Jackets. When the team was losing several third period leads, you could cut the tension with a knife. There were many questions and few answers.

Now though? Bowness has begun the process of unlocking confidence throughout the team. He's also begun the process of unlocking other important aspects too.

Bowness' Structure

We say begun because the Blue Jackets still have a long way to go to fully play the style Bowness wants. This is to be expected just nine games into his tenure.

The Blue Jackets are winning games by scoring goals. They've scored 36 non-shootout goals in nine games under Bowness, an average of four per game. They're winning goals by doing a better job preventing goals. They've allowed 24 goals under Bowness, an average of 2.67 per game.

The Blue Jackets are also winning games by doing a better job in third period leads for various reasons. Whether it was Sean Monahan scoring late against the Flyers, the team locking Connor Bedard and Frank Nazar down against the Blackhawks or Jet Greaves stopping everything the Blues could through at them, the team is finding ways to win in a manner they weren't able to before.

Blues head coach Jim Montgomery told the local Blues' media that he didn't think Bowness' structure was fully in place yet. When asked if he agreed with that, Bowness acknowledged he agreed.

"There's times where it looks really good and there's times where it's not good," Bowness said. "We can be a little more consistent with it today. Our players now know when it looks like we're playing well. They also recognize when we're not. We just have to get a lot more consistency with that part of the game."

This is another reason why what Bowness is doing is more than a bump. The Blue Jackets are showing signs they're playing with better structure. This has a domino effect on the whole roster.

Although Bowness didn't like the lines Friday in Chicago, he made some changes even after a win. Dmitri Voronkov was moved to the top-six while Boone Jenner was moved to center on the fourth line. Bowness said postgame Saturday he liked the lines before injuries came up.

"I liked the way the four lines looked tonight," Bowness said. "I wish we could have played the whole third period like that because when you're playing three in four, you need your four lines. You need your 6D to go. So that's why for the two periods, I thought we were playing really well, really strong hockey

and everyone was contributing. It got a little scrambly in the third but that's to be expected. But I did like to look at all four lines tonight."

On defense, Bowness has recently put Werenski and Damon Severson together. Severson scored the game-winning goal on Saturday night as he had ample time and space to unleash a bomb of a shot.

While Ivan Provorov and Denton Mateychuk are back together, Bowness is rotating the third pair between Egor Zamula and Jake Christiansen to each play with Erik Gudbranson. It's working right now.

But perhaps most importantly thanks to the new structure coming into place, Bowness has both Elvis Merzlikins and Jet Greaves playing well at the same time. Look at their numbers since the coaching change.

- Merzlikins: 4-1-0 record, 2.49 goals-against average, .910 save percentage.
- Greaves: 4-0-0 record, 2.58 goals-against average, .910 save percentage.

It is obviously a small sample size. But the early results are showing that Bowness can utilize both goaltenders and have confidence the team will find success. Under Evason, there was no confidence to rotate the goaltenders.

As the team continues to learn and play under Bowness' structure, it is expected that they'll find more consistency to make sure these better numbers can be sustained longer term.

What Truly Makes This Different

Traditional coaching bumps see a short-term bump in energy thanks to a fresh start and perspective. It does eventually wear off over time.

There's no question the Blue Jackets got that bump with Bowness coming in. But they've gotten so much more than that.

Before Bowness even coached a single game for the Blue Jackets, he said in his introductory press conference that this was a good team. He's repeated that at multiple points too. It's not even a question in his mind how good he thinks they are.

Now the Blue Jackets are starting to show that in their play. They're winning in different ways. They're getting contributions all over the roster. Saturday night in St. Louis, 13 players recorded a point.

The Blue Jackets are now a dangerous team in the playoff race. They sit just four points back of the New York Islanders for third in the Metro.

Belief is a powerful tool. The Blue Jackets believe they are a good team now. That belief isn't temporary. They believe they can be even better.

The Blue Jackets are confident. They are a more structured team. They are now better positioned to be a factor in the playoff race.

It's for these reasons that this is much more than a coaching bump from Bowness. His influence has the potential to be felt for many years to come in Columbus.

The Hockey Writers / 3 Takeaways From the Blue Jackets 4-2 Win Over the Blackhawks

By Mark Scheig - January 31, 2026

The Columbus Blue Jackets defeated the Chicago Blackhawks by a 4-2 score on Friday night in the only game of the NHL. Charlie Coyle recorded his second-career hat trick and assisted on Mathieu Olivier's goal. Elvis Merzlikins made 22 saves to help the Blue Jackets improve to 7-1 under head coach Rick Bowness.

The game was mostly controlled by the Blue Jackets. Connor Bedard's line kept the Blackhawks in the game just enough to keep it interesting. But when the game was winding down, the Blue Jackets shut it down and got the win.

2026 NHL Mock Draft - Blackhawks Select Ethan Belchetz at 6th Overall

Here are our three takeaways from the game.

Coyle Gaining Steam For the Selke

Coyle usually doesn't like the spotlight. But given the way he's been playing, he's been the central focus of the Blue Jackets at all ends of the ice.

Coyle scored his first goal on the power play to make it seven out of eight games that the Blue Jackets have scored first since Bowness took over. He then was in position to take advantage of an Andre Burakovsky turnover to make it 2-1.

Perhaps one of the biggest plays of the night was his defensive play on the Blackhawks on a shorthanded rush attempt. He took the puck away and ensured the Blue Jackets maintained their lead.

It's for this reason Coyle should start getting a lot more Selke Trophy attention as the league's best defensive forward. His line got the assignment on Bedard later in the game and didn't anything to them.

For Coyle, it's a team win while still doing the right things even though the Blackhawks made a push.

"How do you stay going the right way and staying consistent and believing in what we do and how we should do it. That's all stuff we got to keep growing in our game and what we do. And it's going to pay off. I think we see it more and more paying off right now and we're getting wins because of it."

Zach Werenski has also spoken at length about Coyle's impact. Even he has run out of things to say about what's happening of late.

"Yeah, I'm sick of talking about that guy. It's been 1,000th game, the ceremonies, now tonight. Honestly though, he's been incredible and I really can't say anything else. I feel like I've said it all. He's one of the best teammates I ever played with and obviously what he does on the ice. He plays the right way. I think

he leads by example. It's nice to obviously see him get four points tonight and three goals. But it's everything else away from the puck that he does that's so important to our group."

Coyle gets the tough matchups and generally wins them. Given all the rumors around him should the Blue Jackets become a seller, it seems they should do everything possible to keep him given his overall impact.

Third Period

The Blue Jackets held a slim 3-2 lead going to the third period. They had to kill a penalty late in the period. But when it mattered most, they shut things down.

The Blue Jackets held the Blackhawks to just 24 shots on the night, eight in each period. Most of those came late in the game pushing for a tying goal. Shots were just 3-2 Blackhawks with just over six minutes left.

"We didn't give up much in the third, so that's a good thing," head coach Rick Bowness said. "But we still want to generate a little bit more."

"I feel like that one line for them (Bedard's line) created a lot of offense tonight," Werenski said. "I feel like in the third we did a good job of limiting their chances."

The misery of third periods have turned in recent games, an encouraging sign as the Blue Jackets continue fighting for position.

Penalty Killing

Bowness has stressed the need for the Blue Jackets to be better at their penalty killing. They got two important kills, one in the second and one in the third.

Bowness says things are improving, but they need to watch the timing of when they take their penalties too.

"The penalty kill's better," Bowness said. "I don't like taking a penalty in the third period. We took a couple the other night and I don't like seeing those penalties in the third period. So, that's something we're going to keep addressing. And then you give the penalty killer credit. They came up big when they had to come up big."

Merzlikins was credited by Bowness postgame as well for helping with the successful kills. Coach reiterated how much he loves the way Merzlikins is playing in net citing his compete and composure.

Suddenly, the Blue Jackets have two viable options in net Bowness can choose from.

Up next for the Blue Jackets, they head to St. Louis to face the Blues at 7:00 P.M. eastern.