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## Columbus Dispatch / Columbus Blue Jackets add forward depth with James van Riemsdyk

**By Brian Hedger- September 16, 2024**

It didn't take the Blue Jackets long to add a veteran forward.

A day after president of hockey operations/general manager Don Waddell told reporters he was down to 10 available NHL forwards going into training camp, the Jackets signed James van Riemsdyk on Sunday to a one-year contract worth \$900,000. Waddell confirmed the signing shortly after it became public, adding an experienced power forward to the lineup and locker room.

Van Riemsdyk, 35, played 71 games for the Boston Bruins last season, tallying 38 points on 11 goals and 27 assists. Listed at 6-foot-3, 207 pounds, van Riemsdyk is a left wing who's adept at playing around the net — especially on power plays. Drafted second overall by the Philadelphia Flyers in 2007, van Riemsdyk has a career scoring line of 311-318-629 while logging 1,011 games over 15 seasons for the Flyers (527 games), Toronto Maple Leafs (413 games) and Bruins.

“James van Riemsdyk has been a very consistent, productive player throughout his career and bringing him to Columbus will not only provide depth to our group up front, but also valuable leadership and another veteran presence in our dressing room,” Waddell said in a statement.

Unsigned by the Bruins, van Riemsdyk hadn't secured a contract or professional tryout offer to attend a training camp. He no longer needs the PTO after becoming a Blue Jackets forward with a guaranteed deal three days before players report for medical evaluations. Johnny Gaudreau's shocking death Aug. 29 in South Jersey combined with Justin Danforth's wrist injury plus offseason trades that sent Alexandre Texier to the St. Louis Blues and Patrik Laine to the Montreal Canadiens left the Jackets with a glaring forward shortage.

Waddell said Saturday at the Buffalo NHL Prospects Challenge that he's looking to add two or more forwards via free agency, so van Riemsdyk will likely be joined by another veteran from the open market.

Notable names available include left wing Mike Hoffman, right wing Kyle Okposo — who just won the Stanley Cup with the Florida Panthers — and right wing Jakob Silfverberg. Jeff Carter, a center, is also available but he's a former Blue Jacket who voiced his displeasure at being traded to Columbus in 2011 and forced his way out of town in a subsequent trade the following season.

Adding van Riemsdyk gets the Blue Jackets closer to the NHL's salary-cap floor of \$65 million, but they're still \$1.8 million beneath the minimum with a full roster of 23 players, according to PuckPedia. Waddell has discussed the Jackets' payroll dilemma with the NHL and NHL Players' Association following Gaudreau's death, so there's a chance the Jackets' cap number could stay below the floor.

The Blue Jackets have \$24.8 million in cap space remaining, which could spark a preseason trade or trades for veteran players with high salaries that are squeezing other teams' budgets. Payrolls across the NHL must be compliant by the night before the league's regular season opens in October

## Columbus Dispatch / Blue Jackets scouring NHL free-agent forwards to boost depth

**By Brian Hedger- September 16, 2024**

BUFFALO, N.Y. — The Blue Jackets are searching for help at forward as training camp looms.

While continuing to grieve the death of star forward Johnny Gaudreau, the team's focus also must shift to what's ahead for the new season. Gaudreau, killed Aug. 29 along with his younger brother Matthew while they rode bicycles in South Jersey, was their highest-paid player and top forward.

Johnny Gaudreau: Blue Jackets remember forward : 'You were one of a kind and we loved you'

His loss creates a big void on the top line, but Gaudreau isn't the only missing forward going into camp later this week. The Jackets also traded forwards Alexandre Texier and Patrik Laine this summer, opted not to re-sign Alexander Nylander and may be without Justin Danforth to start the season. Danforth is dealing with issues related to offseason surgery for a wrist injury that occurred at the end of last season.

Danforth is scheduled to meet with a doctor about it Monday to assess the injury.

Waddell, who joined the Blue Jackets in May, said the team's roster is down to 10 available NHL forwards going into camp. Without a trade offer that gets Waddell's approval, the Jackets' plan is to sign "at least two" veteran free agents to bolster forward depth and potentially get the team's payroll back over the league's salary cap floor of \$65 million for this season.

According to PuckPedia, a salary tracking site, losing Gaudreau's \$9.75 million cap hit dropped the Jackets to \$62.3 million with 22 of 23 roster spots filled. There's a chance the Blue Jackets could be granted a one-year exemption to remain under the cap floor without penalties if their planned additions don't add enough salary to become compliant.

"We're in a unique situation, so I think the league and the union are both looking at it," Waddell said. "They're looking at it, and I don't think it's going to be a problem."

Rather than extending professional tryout offers to available forwards, like most teams do each preseason, the Blue Jackets are in a position where they'll offer guaranteed NHL contracts. That includes free agents who have yet to sign PTOs with other teams or those starting camps elsewhere with non-binding PTO deals.

"We've been talking about it," Waddell said. "We might sign one or two of the (available) guys right now, because if we think there's a good fit for us, and for them, I don't want to have to go through that (tryout process)."

The pile of free agents from the summer's open market has been picked over. There aren't any tantalizing options left, but there is a collection of unsigned forwards who would add experience and leadership. Some available players are young enough to tap into a talent level that allowed them to produce solid NHL numbers in recent seasons.

Those who remain unsigned include left wing James van Riemsdyk, left wing Mike Hoffman, right wing Kyle Okposo, right wing Jakob Silfverberg and center Jeff Carter, a former Blue Jacket whose displeasure at being traded to Columbus by the Philadelphia Flyers in 2011 led to a trade with the Los Angeles Kings the following season.

Notable forwards signed to PTOs with other teams include center Tyler Johnson (Boston Bruins), left wing Max Pacioretty (Toronto Maple Leafs), right wing Kailer Yamamoto (Utah), left wing Tanner Pearson (Vegas Golden Knights), center Sam Gagner (Carolina Hurricanes) — another former Blue Jacket — left wing Sammy Blais (Vancouver Canucks) and left wing Jakub Vrana (Washington Capitals).

“There will be players on waivers and all that stuff, and there’s potential trades, which, right now, the trades I’ve talked about are not something I’m willing to do,” Waddell said. “So, we’re looking at it saying, ‘Maybe a couple of guys we still like out there, we might just sign.’”

## The Athletic / James van Riemsdyk signs with Blue Jackets for 1 year

**By Aaron Portzline- September 16, 2024**

One day after stating publicly that the Columbus Blue Jackets were “probably two forwards short” of an NHL-worthy lineup, general manager Don Waddell took steps to remedy that.

Veteran left winger James van Riemsdyk, 35, signed a one-year, \$900,000 contract with the Blue Jackets, who open training camp with physicals on Wednesday.

“He’s not the fastest guy in the world,” Waddell said. “He’s 35. But every year, he gets double-digit goals. That’s what we need. We need goals. I talked to (Bruins GM) Don Sweeney during the (NHL prospect challenge game on Saturday) and he had great things to say about him. You can’t find anybody who will say anything bad about him.”

Van Riemsdyk, who spent last season with Boston — he had 12 goals and 27 assists in 72 games — has played 1,011 games with Philadelphia, Toronto and Boston.

“I’ve heard a lot of players say a lot of great things about the city and organization,” said van Riemsdyk, who counts former Blue Jackets Scott Hartnell, Cam Atkinson and Jody Shelley as friends.

“For me, just looking at the roster, there are a ton of really good pieces. There are some really established veterans. There are some young guys, too, guys who are looking to take the next step. That’s an exciting time for an organization, when you’ve got those pillars and those prospects. There’s experience, but there’s a lot of excitement and exuberance, too.”

One of the reasons the Blue Jackets circled back to the free-agent market this late in the offseason was, of course, the tragic death of Johnny Gaudreau and his brother, Matthew, on Aug. 29, when they were struck by an SUV while riding bicycles in New Jersey.

“He’s very aware of everything that’s happened, obviously,” Waddell said of van Riemsdyk. “We talked about it, just to make sure that he was comfortable joining our club, and he 100 percent is.”

Van Riemsdyk grew up in Middletown, N.J., not close enough to know Gaudreau but close enough to hear about him during his days of prep dominance, even though Gaudreau was four years younger than van Riemsdyk.

He knows this might be a difficult season for many of the players in Columbus, but he wants to help. He’s regarded as one of the better dressing-room guys in the league.

Van Riemsdyk called Gaudreau’s death “just so tragic, so senseless,” but said “the outpouring of support and love — just so many people wanting to rally behind the Gaudreau family — has been really moving.

“The hockey world, we’re a brotherhood. We look after each other and try to be there for each other, and that’s going to be an element of this. There are going to be some things here outside of the game of hockey.

“It’s not a linear thing, right? There will be good days, but some days are going to be tough. We’re going to support each other as much as we possibly can.”

Van Riemsdyk and his wife, Lauren, have a 4-year-old daughter and a 2 1/2-year-old son. Van Riemsdyk will fly to Columbus on Monday evening, he said, two days before training camp opens with physicals on Wednesday. The first on-ice session of camp will be Thursday.

Asked why he chose to sign van Riemsdyk to a contract, rather than a professional tryout agreement, Waddell said, "I knew there were a few teams still kicking tires on him. But I didn't want to go that route with a chance of losing him. So I got my group together this morning, and we all agreed, let's get him signed."

## The Athletic / Jackets ready to delve back into free agency — and not for PTO players

**By Aaron Portzline- September 15, 2024**

BUFFALO — Over the last week or so, several veteran NHL free agents have signed tryout agreements — Max Pacioretty with Toronto, Tyler Johnson with Boston, Tyson Barrie with Calgary, and Sam Gagner with Carolina, just to name a few.

Columbus Blue Jackets general manager Don Waddell is hoping to go a step further with one or two veterans before training camp opens next week.

In a brief chat with reporters before the Blue Jackets played Boston on the second day of the NHL Prospects Challenge, Waddell said he's circled back into the free-agent pool in the search for players who can fill immediate roster needs.

He's not talking about PTOs, but actual contracts.

"There will be players on waivers and there are potential trades, as we've talked about," Waddell said. "As of right now, there's nothing out there (on the trade market) that I'd be willing to do. There are a couple of guys we like who are still out there, and we might just sign them.

"We're at least two forwards short right now."

One of the reasons the Blue Jackets need emergency roster help, of course, is the Aug. 29 tragedy that took the life of the club's top forward, left winger Johnny Gaudreau.

But Waddell also revealed on Saturday that Blue Jackets forward Justin Danforth had offseason wrist surgery and is still having trouble stickhandling. He's due to see a doctor on Monday, which will determine his availability at the start of camp.

Keep in mind, Waddell said he wanted to add a forward as far back as July. A trade — perhaps with a club facing salary-cap challenges — was his preferred method then.

Among the veteran forwards still available on the market: James van Riemsdyk, Kevin Labanc, and Kyle Okposo, who could be considering retirement. Phil Kessel has expressed interest in playing again this season, but he hasn't played since winning the Stanley Cup with Vegas in 2023.

Players currently in camps on PTOs could still be signed by the Blue Jackets, too. Those agreements all allow for players to sign a contract with any NHL team, not just the ones that bring them to camp.

That's the reason Waddell is looking to sign players to contracts, not PTOs. He wants to know they're going to have the player for the upcoming season, and not have to worry about another club swooping with an NHL offer late in training camp.

The salary-cap ceiling is not an issue for the Blue Jackets, but getting to the cap floor remains unsettled. Waddell said the Blue Jackets have sought guidance from the league and the NHL Players' Association about how to measure the club's salary-cap figure for this season in the wake of Gaudreau's death.

"I'm not worried about the cap floor just yet," Waddell said. "There are some things that are going to be talked about, things I've talked to the league about. We're in a unique situation. I think the league and the union are both looking at it.

"I probably shouldn't say too much. They're looking at it. I don't think it's going to be an issue."

Waddell said he and Blue Jackets captain Boone Jenner agree that the sooner the players could arrive before the start of training camp, the quicker they could get together and mourn the passing of their teammate.

The last two to arrive — Kirill Marchenko and Dmitry Voronkov — were expected to arrive in Columbus on Friday, he said.

“The players are in their element. They’re with their friends every day, and that’s a big healing part of the process,” Waddell said. “We all grieve and mourn differently, but being together as a team is going to be critical moving forward.”



## The Hockey Writers / James van Riemsdyk Signs 1-Year Deal with Blue Jackets

**By William Espy- September 16, 2024**

James van Riemsdyk has signed a one-year contract with the Columbus Blue Jackets reportedly worth \$900,000. The 35-year-old veteran isn't at the same level we saw from him early in his career, but he's still a solid role player who can do a great job as a middle-six forward for his new organization.

### Veteran Presence

These days, you can't expect much more than 10-15 goals per season from van Riemsdyk as he's fallen off a bit from his days scoring 36 for the Toronto Maple Leafs during the 2017-18 season. With that being said, as a third-line winger that's still serviceable and he brings a lot of experience to the table as well. He hasn't won any hardware over the course of his career, but he's had some great seasons over the years, specifically during his time in Toronto. He also played well as a member of the Philadelphia Flyers and even with the Boston Bruins last season.

During the 2023-24 season, van Riemsdyk scored 11 goals and had 27 assists for a total of 38 points in 71 games. Averaging about half a point per game is pretty respectable for a third-line player.

### Fit With Columbus

van Riemsdyk is far from a superstar, but he's an effective addition who can still contribute offensively and in front of the net. He's best suited for a third-line role at this point, and that's likely where he'll slot in for the Blue Jackets. As a 35-year-old who has never lifted the Stanley Cup, his goal for the remainder of his career seems clear. He's almost certainly not going to accomplish that in Columbus this season, but a strong performance with the Blue Jackets would make him perfect trade bait at the deadline.

The Blue Jackets may play him higher up the lineup as a veteran presence for players like Adam Fantilli, or if new head coach Dean Evason breaks up the Russian line, someone like Kirill Marchenko.

Overall, the addition of van Riemsdyk gives the Blue Jackets a body that can fill a position of need over the course of the season. He'll likely be on the move once again at the trade deadline, which will allow them to add another asset into the mix in a few months time.

## The Hockey Writers / Blue Jackets Vow to Push Forward This Season

**By Mark Scheig- September 15, 2024**

The Columbus Blue Jackets are spending the week before the start of Training Camp in Buffalo at the Prospect's Challenge. Although the final score of 3-1 Sabres didn't go their way in Game 1, one important thing was able to go their way.

The Blue Jackets are playing hockey again.

That's about the best thing that could be happening to them right now. After spending the last couple of weeks trying to process everything that happened, the Blue Jackets are able to find a little normalcy while trying to prepare for the 2024-25 season.

### Pushing Forward Together

We could talk about the game itself that saw Sabres' star prospect Jiri Kulich factor into all three goals his team scored. We could discuss Nolan Lalonde turning in an outstanding performance to keep his Blue Jackets' in the game as long as possible.

The story of the night was what the Blue Jackets' vowed they're going to do this season. Cleveland Monsters' head coach Trent Vogelhuber is running the bench for the Prospect's Challenge. He spoke postgame about the approach the team must take.

"Thinking of hockey the last few weeks seems like the last thing on your mind, right? But the reality is they're not pushing the start date back for us," Vogelhuber said. "And these guys still have to be ready to go. And us as a staff and as an organization still have to be ready to move forward and push forward."

"So again, as difficult of a two-week span as I think an organization can have, but a little bit of comfort and some normalcy of being in a group and these guys being together and being able to play hockey. You're not forgetting (Johnny Gaudreau.) You're moving past it, but we're moving with it together. That's all we can do."

Trent Vogelhuber says the organization will push forward while not forgetting what happened.

The Blue Jackets are prioritizing team and doing everything they can together to get through this incredibly difficult situation. Gavin Brindley believes this approach will help everyone.

"I think it just pulls everyone in the hockey world closer together and especially the guys in Columbus," Brindley said. "I've been there for a little bit now and just seeing all the guys and the interactions and it is just good to see everyone and have everyone's company and be around the locker room. Obviously, it's been tough but I think it's hopefully forming the guys together. This is how you push forward."

### Building Deeper Relationships

Teammates who share the same locker room already have a special bond. That bond only gets magnified in this situation for the Blue Jackets.

The coaching staff as a whole, both the Blue Jackets and Monsters, will work to foster an environment where they continue to build those relationships. To Vogelhuber, this brings unity.

"You get through things like that together. And that's something we're talking about with our group," Vogelhuber said. "It's a five-day, three-game tournament but some of these guys you're going to be playing with for a long time and hopefully in Columbus. And so you start coming together and building

those relationships. That's how you get through tough things is leaning on each other. That's what we're trying to accomplish here this week."

## The Hockey News / Veteran NHLer James van Riemsdyk Signs With Columbus, Filling Jackets' Need For Scoring Help

**By Adam Proteau- September 16, 2024**

NHL winger James van Riemsdyk was one of the few remaining free agents — but Sunday, van Riemsdyk signed with the Columbus Blue Jackets, filling their need for forward help.

As the NHL's training camps are about to open up, there are a precious few job openings for players seeking employment.

On Sunday afternoon, one of those NHLers, veteran winger James van Riemsdyk, took himself off the open market when he agreed to a one-year, \$900,000 contract with the Columbus Blue Jackets.

The 35-year-old van Riemsdyk, who is entering his 16th NHL season, fills a need for the Blue Jackets at the left-wing. As per THN Lineups, van Riemsdyk will start the season on Columbus' third line, and he should also get some action on the Blue Jackets' second power-play unit.

Last year, van Riemsdyk played 71 regular-season games for the Boston Bruins, posting 11 goals and 27 points. The American winger has played for three different NHL teams — the Philadelphia Flyers (on two occasions), Toronto Maple Leafs and Bruins — and he's appeared in 1,011 career regular-season NHL games, generating 311 goals and 629 points in that span.

Jackets GM Don Waddell recognizes what van Riemsdyk can bring to the club. "James van Riemsdyk has been a very consistent, productive player throughout his career and bringing him to Columbus will not only provide depth to our group up front, but also valuable leadership and another veteran presence in our dressing room," said Waddell.

The Blue Jackets needed help on the wing after the unfortunate tragedy that killed star left winger Johnny Gaudreau. Still, van Riemsdyk will only be a secondary scoring option for Columbus. If the Blue Jackets aren't in a playoff position by the trade deadline next spring, Jackets GM Don Waddell will almost certainly deal van Riemsdyk to a legitimate playoff contender for a draft pick.

Van Riemsdyk doesn't have much competitive gas in the tank, but as a net-front presence who still has soft scoring hands, he can be someone who helps mentor Columbus' young talents. He's no longer the guy who routinely scored 25 to 35 goals per season, but if his minutes are managed effectively, he can chip in with a goal or two here and there and help the Blue Jackets put up a fight as they battle to avoid the basement in the Metropolitan Division.

It's a low-risk, decent-reward gamble for Waddell and the Jackets, but Columbus is better with van Riemsdyk, even if they're only marginally better.

## 1<sup>st</sup> Ohio Battery / Blue Jackets Sign James Van Riemsdyk To One-Year, \$900K Contract

**By Ed Francis- September 16, 2024**

The Columbus Blue Jackets are adding a veteran presence to a young team.

The club has signed free agent forward James van Riemsdyk to a one-year, \$900k contract.

The news was first reported by TSN's Elliotte Friedeman.

van Riemsdyk, 35, had 11 goals and 27 assists in 71 games last season with the Boston Bruins. Before that, he had spent a combined 14 years with the Philadelphia Flyers (2009-2012; 2018-2023) and Toronto Maple Leafs (2012-2018).

"James van Riemsdyk has been a very consistent, productive player throughout his career," said Blue Jackets President of Hockey Operations and General Manager Don Waddell. "Bringing him to Columbus will not only provide depth to our group up front, but also valuable leadership and another veteran presence in our dressing room."

van Riemsdyk plays almost exclusively at left wing. He averaged 13:30 of ice time per game last season, the lowest average since his rookie season.

The Middletown, New Jersey native eclipsed the 1,000 game mark earlier in 2024, and has 311 goals and 328 assists (629 points) in his 1,011 career games. van Riemsdyk, who is 6'3" and 210lbs, was the second overall pick in the 2007 NHL Draft.

## [BlueJackets.com / Del Bel Belluz's goal gives CBJ prospects an OT win](#)

**By Garrison McDaniel- September 16, 2024**

The Blue Jackets never trailed as they defeated the Boston Bruins by a 4-3 score in overtime in their second of three games at the Prospects Challenge in Buffalo on Saturday afternoon.

### Game in a Paragraph

Despite being outshot, the Blue Jackets were able to capitalize on a few mistakes by the Bruins youngsters to pick up their first win as an organization in the 2024-25 season. The Blue Jackets scored three unassisted goals including one by defenseman Denton Mateychuk.

### CBJ Standouts

- Columbus' 12th-overall selection in the 2022 draft, Denton Mateychuk, scored in his first appearance of the tournament and earned the primary assist on the OT goal.
- Luca Del Bel Belluz scored the game-winning goal in overtime as he now has a goal and assist in his two appearances in Buffalo.
- 2023 fourth-round pick Luca Pinelli scored his first goal of the tournament after topping the 40-goal mark a year ago in the OHL.

### How It Happened

The Blue Jackets got on the board early in the first period as camp invite Pano Fimis forced the Bruins into a defensive zone turnover and capitalized off the individual effort. The Bruins had another costly turnover as Pinelli doubled the lead for Columbus off an interception at his offensive blue line, and after he made a couple Bruins miss, he rifled a shot past Andrew Oke's glove side. Boston made it 2-1 with less than five minutes remaining in the opening frame as a strong shot by Brett Harrison found its way through Evan Gardner's five-hole.

The Bruins came out fast in the middle frame as Lucas Romeo was able to equalize the score 2:17 into the period. Mateychuk got his first of the tournament midway through the second as he took a snap shot from the point and beat Oke high to reclaim the lead. Boston then tied the game 3-3 off a goal by Adam Mechura with 3:05 left in the period.

Columbus had the first opportunity in the final period of the afternoon. Del Bel Belluz and Gavin Brindley attempted to catch the Bruins on a line change, but they failed to convert on the two-on-one. Mechura had an opportunity to spoil the game for the Blue Jackets as he got the puck on his tape with a wide-open net to shoot at, but it rolled right off of his stick with only 50 seconds left in the period.

In overtime, Oke made two crucial saves on Fimis as he was one-on-one with the Bruins goaltender. The Blue Jackets dominated possession in the second half of the frame and eventually capitalized off of it. Mateychuk won a battle for the puck and sent a backhanded pass across the offensive zone, where Del Bel Belluz buried it past Oke to earn the win.

### Notable

Gardner turned away 33 of 36 shots faced en route to his first win as a Blue Jacket. ... There was some animosity between the two teams as the game featured three different fights, including two in the third period and 46 total penalty minutes. ... Neither team scored on the power play as each team went 0-for-2.

### Roster Report

Both Mateychuk and James Malatesta made their first appearances at the event after being scratched in Friday night's loss vs. Buffalo, while Gardner spelled Nolan Lalonde in net.

### Up Next

The Blue Jackets will wrap up the Prospects Challenge on Monday at 1:30 p.m. as they take on the Ottawa Senators.