



Columbus Blue Jackets Media Clips
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Sports Illustrated / NHL Postpones Kings vs. Blue Jackets Due to Severe Winter Weather

By Seth Dowdle – January 26, 2026

The Los Angeles Kings and Columbus Blue Jackets are going to have to play another day because of the severe winter weather that's descended on the majority of the United States.

The severe winter storm that swept across much of the continental United States this past weekend has affected over one third of the country in some form or fashion. The same can be said for professional sports, and the NHL is no exception.

With Columbus buried under nearly a foot of snow over the past 48 hours, the NHL decided to postpone tonight's game between the Blue Jackets and the visiting Los Angeles Kings. The contest was scheduled for 7 p.m. EST, but with severe winter weather, the league deemed it unsafe for thousands of fans to converge on Nationwide Arena. The game has been rescheduled for March 9, with the exact time to be determined. This decision comes despite the Blue Jackets holding their usual morning skate earlier in the day.

With the new date for the game, Los Angeles will now have to travel out of Columbus on March 9 for a contest with the Boston Bruins the next day. The same applies to the Blue Jackets, who will be making their way to face the Tampa Bay Lightning in Florida on March 10.

At this time, there has been no announcement on the status of the Blue Jackets' home game against the Philadelphia Flyers on Jan. 28, which is set to start at 7:30 p.m. EST. Despite temperatures never rising above freezing, it should be possible for snow removal crews to clear the roads in time for the game.

The NHL Isn't the Only League Affected by the Storm

It's not just the NHL that has had to deal with adverse weather conditions. In the NBA, the Dallas Mavericks' originally scheduled game against the Milwaukee Bucks on Jan. 25 was postponed because the Mavericks' team plane was stuck on the tarmac in Dallas. The Los Angeles Lakers, who played the Mavericks the previous evening, were able to depart the city for their game in Chicago on Jan. 26.

What's Next for the Blue Jackets and Kings?

The Blue Jackets, who are 5-1 in their last six games since hiring Rick Bowness as head coach, will play the Flyers on Jan. 28 before embarking on a three-game road trip that will take them to Chicago, St. Louis and Newark. Meanwhile, the Kings are set to face the Atlantic Division-leading Detroit Red Wings on Jan. 27 before playing the Buffalo Sabres on Jan. 29. The team rounds out the month with a game at Philadelphia on Jan. 31.

The Athletic / Severe weather forces postponement of Kings-Blue Jackets NHL game

By Aaron Portzline and Eric Stephens – January 26, 2026

Monday's scheduled game between the Columbus Blue Jackets and the Los Angeles Kings was postponed after much of Ohio received at least a foot of snow late Saturday and throughout Sunday.

The makeup date, according to the NHL, will be March 9 in Columbus, with the game time to be announced in the near future.

For much of Monday, Franklin County, where Columbus is located, and surrounding counties were under a Level 3 travel advisory, meaning only emergency personnel are allowed to travel the roads.

The Kings are in the middle of a six-game trip that is expected to resume Tuesday at the Detroit Red Wings. The rescheduled game against the Blue Jackets is now one day before they are set to begin a four-game trip in Boston.

The Blue Jackets are next scheduled to host the Philadelphia Flyers on Wednesday. The makeup game will force Columbus to play at home on March 9, then at the Tampa Bay Lightning the following night.

The Athletic / Blue Jackets Monday Gathering: Jet Greaves is a no-doubt NHL No. 1, ex-goalies say

By Aaron Portzline – January 26, 2026

COLUMBUS, Ohio — A collection of notes, insights, ruminations and did-you-knows gathered throughout the week that was for the Columbus Blue Jackets:

Item No. 1: Cleared for takeoff

Jet Greaves gathered a loose puck in his crease and, with his eyes looking up the ice to make a play, fired straight ahead with the flick of a stick. It turned out to be the biggest gaffe of Greaves' young career.

The puck didn't make it up the ice. Greaves didn't see Blue Jackets center Isac Lundeström heading his way, and when Lundeström skated past him, the puck glanced off his right skate and bounced into the net.

Barely two minutes earlier, the Blue Jackets had taken a 1-0 lead in an amped-up Nationwide Arena. Now it was tied, and you could hear the groans. It could have been a devastating mistake against the Tampa Bay Lightning, the hottest club in the NHL before Saturday.

But sometimes what happens next is more important than what just happened.

Greaves made the next save. He didn't come unglued or let the mishaps multiply. Every goaltender has those nightmare bounces, the gaffes that draw more eyes online than the brilliant saves.

But the best of the best learn to move forward quickly. And on a rough night for goaltenders, Greaves helped the Blue Jackets to an 8-5 win, snapping the Lightning's point streak at 15 games.

There's a perception around the NHL about Greaves. He's 6 feet tall, a "short" player in the world of today's goaltenders. He also went undrafted, which means he was never a top prospect and faced more difficult odds on his way up the ranks.

Earlier this month, Greaves made his 50th NHL start — he's now at 53 after Saturday — so we're no longer looking at a small sample size. That is, for many, a full season's worth of games in the NHL.

The Athletic reached out to several former NHL goaltenders, a few of whom are still working in the league as scouts or goaltending instructors, to ask them what they thought of Greaves, specifically:

- Does he have the capability to be an NHL No. 1?
- What do you like about his game?
- What are your concerns?

The most difficult question, it seemed, was the last one. They didn't have any. Two requested anonymity, because it can be frowned-upon to speak about players under contract with other franchises.

"What do people need to see at this point?" said a former NHL goaltender, who works for a Western Conference team. "You're not going to make him taller, right? So, stop. He's plenty big enough to play the position how he plays it. His anticipation is off the charts. His athleticism is off the charts. I don't know this personally, but everybody says his work ethic is off the charts. Look at his glove. Look how athletic he is. Columbus has its goalie."

Another former NHL goaltender said he saw this coming from watching Greaves play the past few seasons with AHL Cleveland.

"I'm a fan, and I think the kid is a stud," he said. "What Columbus found as an undrafted free agent (in 2021) they just paid a first-round pick for in the draft. (Greaves) is a starting goalie as long as he doesn't give up the small-goalie goals. The smaller guys are more durable. We all want that unicorn in Ilya Sorokin or Andrei Vasilevskiy, but it's hard to argue with what Greaves has done so far."

Greaves is 16-12-6 with a .908 save percentage and a 2.69 goals-against average. He is tied for 15th in the NHL in wins (16), 16th in save percentage and 25th in goals-against average, which are respectable numbers for a first-year player in the NHL behind a club that has struggled mightily to defend.

Perhaps a better way to measure Greaves' performance is "goals saved above expected," a cumulative stat that compiles the number of saves a goaltender makes on shots that were reasonably expected to be goals. Greaves has saved 13.1 goals above expected, good for seventh in the NHL. That list, no surprise, is topped by Vasilevskiy.

"As long as he continues to play at the level he's been playing at, he will continue to prove it," another former NHL goaltender said. "Unfortunately for him, he will always be considered an undersized goalie. The hockey world thinks all goaltenders need to be 6-foot-6. He has a really good demeanor in the nets, though. He appears to be able to put bad goals behind him, and that's a great trait."

In the history of the Blue Jackets, there is only one goaltender with a higher career save percentage than Greaves' (.915 in 56 games, including 53 starts). There is only one goalie with a better winning percentage than Greaves' .545.

His name: Sergei Bobrovsky.

Greaves' path to the NHL is a great story often told in these parts. He was first invited to the Blue Jackets' rookie camp in Traverse City, Mich., where he started meeting every challenge put before him with dazzling results.

But, in a way, Greaves — and the Blue Jackets — may have been helped by the fact that he wasn't a high draft pick, or even a draft pick at all. As a result, the Blue Jackets kept looking elsewhere for answers in net, allowing Greaves to develop at his own pace.

He spent four seasons and played in 158 games with AHL Cleveland. No way he would have been parked that long, with the numbers he put up in the AHL, if he were a first- or second-round draft pick.

“He’s very calm, very composed, very competitive,” said Blue Jackets coach Rick Bowness, who has worked with him for only two weeks. “That’s a hard thing for a goalie to do, to stay calm when you’re competitive. He’s competing and he’s intense and he’s ready to go, but he’s composed. I love that part of his game.

“You always hear about how the great ones see the game in slow motion. The heartbeat’s going, the (arms and legs and heart) are going, but this (touching his head) slows down. I see that he has the ability to do that.”

Item No. 2: Tighten up

With Saturday’s win, the Blue Jackets improved to 5-1-0 under Bowness. No question he has them playing more aggressively when it’s time to protect a lead, and it sure feels as if the confidence is climbing, too.

But Bowness’ big concern with the Blue Jackets when he took the job was encapsulated in this quote: “I look at our goals against. I look at our shots against, our penalty kill, our slot chances against, our rush chances against ... that’s the issue.”

The final two categories — slot chances and rush chances against — are difficult to measure because the club keeps those internally.

We can say that according to Natural Stat Trick, the Blue Jackets’ high-danger scoring chances against are down under Bowness, but only by the slightest margin: 9.0 per game, compared to 9.29 under Dean Evason.

The other numbers are easier to measure accurately. The Blue Jackets have allowed 2.67 goals per game (14th in the NHL) under Bowness, as opposed to 3.38 goals per game before he arrived. The shots against have improved marginally (29.2 per game vs. 30.9 per game), while the penalty kill has dipped (76.4 percent to 66.7 percent).

Bowness has made it clear that this is very much a work in progress. The Blue Jackets have spent most of their time looking at video, because the NHL schedule is so compressed this season that finding practice time is difficult.

Item No. 3: Take 5, Sean Monahan

“Take 5” is our weekly brief and (mostly) non-hockey conversation with a Blue Jackets player, coach, broadcaster or staffer. This week, center Sean Monahan:

What part of Columbus is home?

We’re in New Albany. Honestly, I live there because John (Gaudreau) lived there, and yeah, it’s a great area. There are a lot of teammates nearby and there are a lot of kids in the neighborhood, so there’s always something happening.

What's your favorite spot to eat?

OK, so this is kinda funny. My favorite restaurant here is Martini (Modern Italian) in the Short North. But ... I still haven't been there since I signed here (two summers ago). I ate there, I think, every time I came into Columbus for a road game (with Calgary, Winnipeg or Montreal). I found it and loved it. But it's a bit of a drive from New Albany now, and with the little guy ... that's kinda tough.

Best advice you've ever been given?

It's simple and it was instilled in me by my parents from a young: Be a good person. Treat people the way you want to be treated. Just being a good person goes a long way.

Which teammate should have a podcast?

(Looks around the dressing room.) Oh, man. Um ... oh, Goody (Erik Gudbranson). He should have a podcast, 100 percent. He would be my number one. Just talk about whatever is on his mind, just day-in-the-life stuff.

What's your pizza order?

If we order out, it's Mellow Mushroom in New Albany. My wife is gluten-free, so we're starting there, with a gluten-free crust. And for me, I'd load it up with a whole bunch of proteins. Sausage, chicken, salami, that kind of stuff. I don't chart it, but I try to get as much protein as I can (in a day), like, 200 grams or more.

Item No. 4: Snacks

- A new sign hangs above the main door of the Blue Jackets' dressing room, on the side of the entrance players will see on their way toward the ice. It reads: Keep Pushing. That's true for games, certainly, but also in a broader sense. The Blue Jackets will need a heck of a run over their final 31 games to end the franchise's five-year playoff drought. On the day Bowness was hired (Jan.12), the Blue Jackets were in last place in the Eastern Conference, seven points behind Buffalo for the wild-card and seven points behind Philadelphia for third place in the Metropolitan Division. After going 5-1-0 under Bowness, the Jackets remain seven points out of the wildcard — now Boston sits in eighth — but are only four points behind the New York Islanders for third in the Metro. Breathe deep.
- Before Mason Marchment even plays his 10th game with the Blue Jackets tonight vs. the Los Angeles Kings, he already has scored more goals than any player in their first 10 games with the franchise. Marchment had 8-3-11 and a plus-6 rating after his hat trick on Saturday. Four other players — Antoine Vermette, Patrik Laine, Alexander Nylander and Monahan — each had six goals in their first 10 games. Marchment has scored eight goals on 19 shots, an outrageous 42.1 shooting percentage. There are NBA players who'd like to shoot 42 percent.
- The Blue Jackets expect defenseman Denton Mateychuk (upper body) to return this week. He was expected to join the lineup late last week, but a bout with the flu set him back a few days.

It'll be interesting to see what Bowness does with the defensive pair when Mateychuk is ready, because he's made it clear he strongly prefers lefty-righty combinations among his pairs. Mateychuk, a lefty, spent most of the season with Werenski on the top pair before he was injured on Jan. 11 at Utah. Bowness has had Werenski (lefty) with Damon Severson (righty) and Ivan Provorov (lefty) with Erik Gudbranson (righty) as the top two pairs for the past three games. With Dante Fabbro (lower body) and Brendan Smith (knee) injured, the third pair has been two lefties, Jake Christiansen and Egor Zamula. Christiansen played only 5:34 on Saturday.

- Dante Fabbro and Miles Wood have each resumed skating, which is good news. But they've been skating on their own, not with the club or in practice. Fabbro, out since getting injured early in a Jan. 17 game in Pittsburgh, skated briefly in a tracksuit. Wood, out since getting injured in a game on New Year's Eve, was put through drills with development coach Anthony Donskov.

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- Defenseman Zach Werenski's next goal will be his 20th of the season, which would mark the third time in his career he's hit that benchmark. Werenski had 20 goals in 2019-20 and 23 goals last season. The only other active defenseman to have three 20-goal seasons are Colorado's Cale Makar, Pittsburgh's Erik Karlsson and Colorado's Brent Burns. Makar, with 15 goals through Sunday's game, is on pace to do it for a fourth time this season. The NHL record for most 20-goal seasons by defensemen is shared by Ray Bourque and Denis Potvin, who did it nine times each.

- Boone Jenner is on pace to be the first player to play 1,000 games exclusively in a Blue Jackets sweater, but that wouldn't happen — if he stays perfectly healthy — until early in the 2028-29 season. Until then, the Blue Jackets will be one of only three franchises, excluding recent expansion clubs Seattle and Vegas, to not have a player hit the century mark in their kit. The other two are Florida and St. Louis. No surprise that the two clubs with the most 1,000-game players (eight) are Boston and Chicago, two members of the Original Six.

- This week's Monday Gathering trivia question: three players in Blue Jackets history have had a hat trick within their first 10 games played for the organization. Marchment had one on Saturday, his ninth game. Name the other two.

- The Blue Jackets drew only 13,278 to Tuesday's game vs. Ottawa, their smallest crowd since early in the 2021-22 season. In fact, the Blue Jackets have been under 15,000 seven times this season in Nationwide Arena (capacity 18,144). The club is averaging 16,432 this season, or 88.8 percent capacity, with six sellouts. That's down from 17,040 (93.9 percent capacity) last season, when they had 15 sellouts.

- The Blue Jackets on Saturday honored four former players — goaltender Pascal Leclaire, and forwards Cam Atkinson, Derek Dorsett and R.J. Umberger — as part of the club's 25th anniversary celebration. The four dropped the puck before Saturday's game vs. Tampa Bay.

- Leclaire, who lives in Montreal, is the only one of the group who hasn't settled in Columbus, so the trip back to where his NHL career started was particularly meaningful.

“When I got the call from (vice president of communications) Todd Sharrock asking if I wanted to come in, I said yes right away,” Leclair told BlueJackets.com. “I was pretty excited about it and, you know, kind of touched by it. It’s not every day that you get some kind of recognition from a past organization. I only played with two teams in my NHL career, here in Columbus and in Ottawa. I’m pretty excited about the opportunity to bring my daughters (aged 10 and 7) and show them what daddy used to do. They weren’t born yet when I played in the NHL. We do get some chances to go to Ottawa, because it’s close to Montreal, but they don’t know the Columbus chapter. For me, it’s a special event and a special weekend with my family.”

- The other two Blue Jackets players with hat tricks within their first 10 games for the organization are Nikita Filatov and Alex Nylander. Filatov, who had three goals in a 4-2 win over Minnesota on Jan. 10, 2009, was playing in his sixth game. Nylander, who had three goals in a 6-3 win over Vegas on March 4, 2024, was playing in his fifth game.

The Columbus Dispatch / Columbus Blue Jackets game vs Los Angeles Kings postponed

By Brian Hedger – January 26, 2026

A scheduled game between the Columbus Blue Jackets and Los Angeles Kings on Jan. 26 at Nationwide Arena has been postponed.

It will be made up March 9, and tickets purchased for the Jan. 26 game will remain valid. A large winter storm that covered Central Ohio and its roads with snow was cited for the decision. The Blue Jackets held a morning skate at Nationwide Arena, as usual, but the decision to postpone the game was made after it concluded.

The Kings' last game was a 5-4 shootout win Jan. 24 at the St. Louis Blues, but they made it to Columbus in plenty of time to face the Blue Jackets.

In fact, the Kings turned what would have been a morning skate into a full practice after the decision was made to postpone the game.

The start time for the March 9 makeup game hasn't been determined yet, but playing on that date now gives both teams an extra set of back-to-back games to play. The Blue Jackets will host the Kings and then fly to Florida after the game to conclude their new back-to-back March 10 at the Tampa Bay Lightning, while the Kings will fly to Boston for a back-to-back finale against the Bruins.

The Blue Jackets will now play four games in six days, including the last three on the road, while the Kings have a five-game road trip, rather than four.

The Hockey Writers / Blue Jackets/Kings Cancellation: Inside Crazy Morning in Columbus

By Mark Scheig – January 26, 2026

Monday morning inside Nationwide Arena in Columbus started like any gameday morning. The Blue Jackets were scheduled to hit the ice at 10:30 A.M. for their morning skate after having Sunday off.

It was no ordinary Sunday in Columbus, however. The winter storm that gripped much of the United States left a historic impact on Columbus.

According to NBC4 in Columbus, they observed 11.9 inches of snow on Sunday. It tied a daily record of snowfall in January set back on Jan 6, 1910. Their records go back to 1885.

The amount of snow observed on Sunday in Columbus has only been seen once in the last 141 years. It essentially shut the city and surrounding neighborhoods down with most counties at a Level 2 or 3 snow emergency limiting traffic to essential travel only. Schools were closed on Monday. Most schools will remain closed on Tuesday with bitter cold temperatures remaining even after the snowstorm passed.

Even with the snow and cold in the region, all systems appeared to be go for Blue Jackets and Kings on Monday night. The only question early on in the day would be how many fans would brave the elements and come to the game?

We went from a regular gameday morning to a full postponement of the game in about 90 minutes. As you will see, things changed very quickly.

Recapping a Crazy 90 Minutes

The Blue Jackets all took the ice for their morning skate at 10:30 A.M. eastern. Every expected Blue Jacket was on the ice including Denton Mateychuk, Dante Fabbro and Miles Wood, all three of which were working their way back from injuries.

After about a 30-minute skate, the Blue Jackets started heading for the locker room as usual. The room was opened up. Mateychuk was in position to return to the lineup Monday night as he was skating on the third pair with Egor Zamula.

We talked to both Mateychuk and captain Boone Jenner to get their thoughts on the storm that hit Sunday and the upcoming game against the Kings. Jenner said he treated Sunday like a snow day even trying to get his son into a sled.

“He wasn’t too fond of it,” a laughing Jenner said. “I got him outside in the sled for the first sled ride, so that was fun.”

Jenner is the longest tenured Blue Jacket who would be the most familiar with how the weather works year round in Columbus. He didn’t recall anything like he saw on Sunday with this record snow.

“Yeah, definitely. Probably the most since I’ve been here, no doubt.”

Mateychuk is used to the snow being from Canada. But even he was amazed how quickly things changed on Sunday.

“We get it,” Mateychuk said. “But not straight from bare grass to a foot-and-a-half to two feet of snow. It seemed like a lot.”

Head coach Rick Bowness held his usual availability. He confirmed Mateychuk was set to return. After about 10 minutes, Bowness was done speaking. Everything still felt normal and on schedule.

The Los Angeles Kings, who arrived in Columbus around 3 A.M. Sunday morning from St. Louis, spent Sunday in their hotel. Like the Blue Jackets, they had the day off from practice. They spent the day watching the NFL Conference Championship games while slipping in some meals.

The Kings all took the ice as usual for a road morning skate at 11:30 A.M. eastern. Darcy Kuemper and Anton Forsberg worked at each end of the ice. Again, nothing felt off as the skate started.

But as the clock started getting closer to noon eastern, you could tell something was going on. Between observing several staffers on the phone as well as player’s bags being packed, word was starting to go around that the possibility existed the game would be postponed.

At 12:02 P.M. eastern, the official word from the NHL came down that the Kings/Blue Jackets game was postponed. The two teams will make this game up on March 9 in Columbus.

Certainly, questions remain outstanding in the aftermath of this news. Among them, what actually prompted the postponement discussion to happen? Everyone involved was getting ready to play a game. Both teams were in town. What exactly changed?

Also, if postponement was a real possibility, why wasn’t it decided sooner? Franklin County was in a Level 3 Snow Emergency from Sunday into Monday. An update to Level 2 was made early Monday afternoon.

In Ohio, a Level 3 snow emergency is defined as “All roads are closed to non-emergency travel due to extremely hazardous conditions, with only essential personnel allowed on roadways, and violators face potential arrest.”

Meanwhile, Level 2 is defined as “Roadways are hazardous with blowing and drifting snow. Only those who feel it is necessary to drive should be out on the roadways. Contact your employer to see if you should report to work.”

A lot of extra work and preparation to come into the rink was made thinking the game was on. It just felt like a lot of this could have been prevented if a decision was made sooner.

The other question then becomes was there consideration to play the game with no or limited fans? At this point, the answers to those questions are unknown.

What we do know is that many of the side roads in Columbus and Franklin County haven't been touched yet. Plows are out all around to try and get as much cleaned up as possible. But there were still many areas of hazardous conditions. Couple that with the bitter cold and you have a situation where the decision makers thought it best to postpone the game.

It's not often you see two teams going through the full morning routine in a city before seeing a game scrapped for a later date. It made for one of the most unusual mornings in Nationwide Arena in recent memory.

The Blue Jackets will return to practice Tuesday morning at 11 A.M. The Kings will head up to Detroit for a Tuesday night game against the Red Wings in what was originally scheduled to be the second of back-to-back games.

The Hockey Writers / Blue Jackets Week Ahead: Schedule & Storylines – Bowness Bump, Marchment’s Hot Streak and More

By THW Staff – January 26, 2026

Here are the key storylines for the Columbus Blue Jackets and their schedule for the week ahead of Jan. 26 – Feb. 2, 2026.

The “Rick Bowness Bump” & Playoff Push

Following the firing of head coach Dean Evason on Jan. 12, the Blue Jackets have stabilized under veteran coach Rick Bowness. The team is currently playing with “swagger,” winning six of their last seven games as they head into this week. While they are still outside the playoff picture, this recent stretch has generated optimism that they can climb back into the Metropolitan Division race.

Mason Marchment’s Hot Streak

Forward Mason Marchment, acquired via trade from the Seattle Kraken in December, has been a revelation. He recently scored a hat trick against the Tampa Bay Lightning and has posted eight goals in his last nine games. His physical, high-scoring play has been a major driver of the team’s recent offensive outbursts.

Trade Deadline “Seller”

Despite the recent wins, the Blue Jackets are still widely expected to be sellers at the March 6 trade deadline.

Boone Jenner: The captain is still surfacing in rumors as a high-value rental for contending teams (potentially the Edmonton Oilers or New York Rangers).

Elvis Merzlikins: A goaltending battle has emerged, with youngster Jet Greaves often outplaying the veteran Merzlikins. This has fueled speculation that Columbus may look to move Merzlikins’ contract to clear the net for Greaves, though Merzlikins has played well recently under the new coaching staff.

Defensive Bright Spots & Injuries

Zach Werenski is playing at a Norris Trophy-caliber level, dominating offensive metrics from the blue line.

Dante Fabbro is dealing with a lower-body injury, while Erik Gudbranson has finally returned to the lineup after a long absence.

The Athletic / Mason Marchment continues to impress after trade as Blue Jackets keep rolling

By Aaron Portzline – January 25, 2026

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Mason Marchment joined the Columbus Blue Jackets almost a month before they made a coaching change, but the lanky, pesky Marchment seems a perfect fit for the way coach Rick Bowness wants to play.

Marchment's third career hat trick led the way for the resurgent Blue Jackets, who beat the Tampa Bay Lightning 8-5 before 16,852 in Nationwide Arena, handing the Lightning their first regulation loss since before Christmas.

The Blue Jackets, who have won six of their last seven games, set a season high in goals. The Lightning came into the game with a 15-game point streak.

"I hate giving up five goals," Bowness said. "That drives me nuts. But I give that team over there (Tampa Bay) a lot of credit. They've won Cups. They know how to win. (Coach Jon Cooper) does a great job with them, and they have elite guys who were coming at us. On a couple of those (goals), we made it too easy on them.

"There are things I see ... the good news is, we've got better in us. We will play better than that. But it doesn't matter. Find a way to win any way you can. If you have to score 10, do that. We got the 2 points."

Marchment, with three goals and an assist, had the fourth 4-point game of his career, and continued to produce at an impressive rate since his Dec. 20 trade to Columbus by the Seattle Kraken.

In only nine games with the Blue Jackets, Marchment has eight goals, three assists, 11 points and a plus-6 rating.

His most important goal Saturday came at 9:05 of the second period, just a few minutes after the Blue Jackets lost their grip on a 4-2 lead and just seconds after Marchment came out of the penalty box after offsetting roughing penalties with Tampa's Yannick Gourde.

Marchment came roaring out of the box, stepped into a pass from Zach Werenski and scored from the left circle, giving the Jackets a 5-4 lead. The score was never tied again.

"Yeah, he jumped out hard, and (from that penalty box) he's already got a 4- or 5-foot lead," Bowness said. "Kudos on 'Z' (Werenski) to recognize that, and get him the puck right over the blue line.

"It was a quick release. He's got the hands to get it on and off. Just on and off the stick. That's one of those releases ... you have to have the hands. I can tell you, his father (Bryan Marchment) never had hands like that, but I love to see those hands on him."

Adam Fantilli and Charlie Coyle each had a goal and two assists for the Blue Jackets, and Cole Sillinger, Dmitri Voronkov and Sean Monahan each had goals, and Werenski and Kirill Marchenko each had two assists.

Coyle's goal, a power-play goal late in the second period, was the 200th of his career. Fantilli's goal snapped a career-long, 17-game streak without a goal, and Sillinger's goal snapped a 10-game drought.

Fantilli was asked after the game how it felt to score "after it had been a minute." He joked, "It had been longer than a minute, man. It felt great to get that monkey off the back, but more than that, we got a win."

Blue Jackets goaltender Jet Greaves finished with 25 saves, including 12 in the third period, to earn his fourth straight win.

Greaves had a first-period gaffe that could have unnerved other goaltenders. He was trying to send the pass straight up the ice to help spring a Blue Jackets forward, but just as he fired the puck, teammate Isac Lundeström skated across his path.

The puck caromed off Lundeström's right skate and kicked into the net before Greaves could recover.

Between that and a few Blue Jackets defensive miscues, it was a good thing Marchment and the Blue Jackets had a banner night offensively.

The key, Marchment said, is great communication. Bowness is constantly coaching on the bench, shouting encouragement and making corrections after virtually every shift. But Marchment can challenge him for airtime, he said.

"I'm a big talker," he said. "I've been getting these guys (Fantilli and Marchenko) going, talking a lot on the bench, too. That's where it starts: communication. If you know where the guy is going to be, where he likes the puck, it's easy.

"We're having fun and just trying to enjoy it. (Marchenko's) energy is awesome. The first time we played together, he came up to me and said, 'Let's have some fun.'"

Bowness wants the Blue Jackets to be much more physically engaged than they were under previous coach Dean Evason, but new habits take a while to form, and it's been spotty progress since he took over Jan. 12.

Marchment is one of Columbus' players who needs no urging to get involved physically and get under opponents' skin, which is why general manager Don Waddell traded for him even before he decided to change coaches.

Another is Mathieu Olivier, who landed a big hit along the end boards on Tampa Bay defenseman Erik Cernak late in the first period that knocked him out of the game. Later in the game, the Lightning lost Charle-Édouard D'Astous to an injury, leaving them with just four blueliners.

Between those losses and the fact the Lightning played Friday in Chicago, the Blue Jackets adopted a smart game plan for the third: make Tampa Bay go 200 feet whenever possible, even if it means dialing back the offensive risk.

“We know they had some D go down,” Fantilli said. “So you want to make sure they’re as out of breath as possible. Keep making it hard on them. We did, and it paid off.”

The Columbus Dispatch / Columbus Blue Jackets have magic with Marchment, Marchenko, Fantilli

By Brian Hedger – January 25, 2026

“Mush” and “Marchy” sat across the locker room after the Blue Jackets' 8-5 victory over the Tampa Bay Lightning on Jan. 24 at Nationwide Arena.

They waited, patiently, for “Mo” to finish speaking with reporters, making sure that all three members of their line were included in a photo to commemorate a hat trick. Technically, it was Mush’s third career hat trick and first since joining the Jackets on Dec. 19 in a trade with the Seattle Kraken, but what fun would that’ve been to get only a snapshot of Mason Marchment and three pucks?

So, they waited.

Each got a puck, flashed a smile and posed for a shot that may adorn the walls at Nationwide Arena for years to come. Kirill “Marchy” Marchenko is on the left. Marchment, the third “Mush” in his family lineage, is in the middle. Adam “Mo” Fantilli (birth name Adamo) is on the right.

What a run it’s been for those three in their first eight games together for the Blue Jackets (24-20-7), who put a stop to the rampaging Lightning’s 15-game point streak and pulled within four points of the New York Islanders for third in the Metropolitan Division.

In two games since Marchment’s return from an eight-game absence with an upper-body injury, the “Mush, Mo and Marchy” line has picked up right where they’d left off. Their chemistry began to return Jan. 22 in a 1-0 victory over the Dallas Stars, even though it didn’t result in any goals for their line, but they struck four times against the Lightning (32-14-4).

“I’m a big talker,” Marchment said. “I’m kind of getting these guys going, and we’re talking a lot on the bench, too, which is fun. That’s where it starts is just communication, and if you know where the guy’s going to be, it’s easy.”

They’re definitely making it look easy.

In eight games together, Marchment has 10 points on seven goals and three assists, Marchenko has nine points on five goals and four assists, and Fantilli has seven points on a goal and six assists while also winning more than 50% of his faceoffs.

They’re doing exactly what Marchenko suggested going into their first full game together as the Jackets’ top line, a 3-1 victory over the Los Angeles Kings on Dec. 22. Marchment scored the first two goals of that one, Marchenko scored the third and Fantilli got an assist ... all during power plays.

“His energy,” Marchment said of Marchenko, “It’s awesome. I think the first time we played together, he came up to me and said, ‘Let’s have some fun,’ so the energy is easy to feed off, and it’s a lot of fun.”

Fantilli's enjoying it, too. His goal ended a 17-game goal drought that was driving him batty, giving the Jackets their third lead in a wild first period, 3-2. It also preceded Dmitri Voronkov's goal 1:14 later that made it 4-2 at the first intermission.

Fantilli also assisted on Charlie Coyle's 200th career goal to cap a power play late in the second and got the puck from Marchenko late in the third for a feed to Marchment at center ice for his third goal, scored into an empty net with 24.4 seconds left.

"We were just as close (against Dallas)," Fantilli said. "It was just a couple bounces. We created a lot. We had a lot off the rush, but (against Tampa Bay) we had a little bit more (offensive zone) time, and it paid off. We just stuck to our game, and when you play like that, more times than not you're getting the right bounces in the right areas, so it worked out."

According to Natural Stat Trick, the Blue Jackets outshot Dallas 6-3 in their 12:52 together at 5-on-5. The Stars, however, generated a 6-3 edge in total scoring chances that included a 1-0 margin in high-danger looks.

Against the Lightning, the Blue Jackets were actually outshot 10-7 in their top line's 12:58 of 5-on-5 and finished -2 in scoring chances (5-7). They were also -1 in high-danger chances (1-2) but outscored Tampa Bay 2-1 in those minutes. Marchment netted his second goal moments after stepping out of the penalty box in the second, putting the Jackets up 5-4 with Fantilli and Marchenko on the bench, but there's no denying their instant chemistry together.

The Hockey Writers / 3 Takeaways From the Blue Jackets' 8-5 Breakout Win Over Lightning

By Matthew Buhrmann – January 25, 2026

It was the opposite of Thursday night's 1-0 win on Saturday, as the Columbus Blue Jackets won 8-5 over the Tampa Bay Lightning. Columbus took down the best road team in the NHL and handed them their first regulation loss since Dec. 18. With the win, the Blue Jackets improved to 24-20-7.

Columbus is now four points behind the New York Islanders for third in the Metropolitan Division and still seven points behind the Boston Bruins for the final Wild Card spot. The Blue Jackets have won six of their last seven games, with five of those wins coming under head coach Rick Bowness. They are 5-1-0 under him.

Here are three takeaways from the 8-5 win.

Much-Needed Offensive Explosion

This game featured 13 total goals and six different goal scorers for the Blue Jackets. All four lines found the scoresheet, and the top line of Mason Marchment, Adam Fantilli, and Kirill Marchenko combined for nine points. That line logged 12:59 at five-on-five, while the fourth line still played 8:36, a clear sign of how much more evenly Bowness is rolling his lines, especially in a game with very little special teams time, with just two power plays for each team.

Charlie Coyle finished with three points with a goal and two assists. Fantilli also had three points with one goal and two assists. Cole Sillinger, Dmitri Voronkov, and Sean Monahan each scored once. Marchenko added two assists, and Zach Werenski recorded two assists as well.

Columbus outshot Tampa 31 to 30, outshooting them in the first two periods and then locking it down defensively in the third despite a late Lightning goal that did not matter.

Jet Greaves did not have his best game in goal. According to MoneyPuck, he gave up three low-danger goals, one medium-danger goal, and one high-danger goal. He faced 37 low-danger attempts, nine medium-danger attempts, and two high-danger attempts. Greaves stopped 25 of 30 shots. It was a shaky performance, but his team finally backed him up on the scoresheet after many nights this season where he has been hung out to dry.

The Werenski and Damon Severson pairing was strong offensively. They were on the ice for two goals for and 15 shots on goal for with 21 shot attempts for in 17:04 of ice time together.

Marchment Addition Paying Off

Mason Marchment continues to look like a perfect fit. He has been electric when healthy, with five goals and two assists in eight games since joining the Blue Jackets in mid-December after being traded from the Seattle Kraken.

Saturday was his best performance yet. Marchment recorded his third career hat trick and added an assist for a four-point night in 17:23 of ice time.

His first goal came on a screened shot with Fantilli providing the traffic. His impact was felt in all three zones, especially in moments where Columbus needed a response.

After the game, Marchment said, "The thing that sticks out for me is just the way that we bounced back after they kind of came back and pushed against us in the second there. For us to keep our foot on the gas and keep frustrating them was huge."

Physical Play Setting the Tone Again

One of my keys coming into this game was for the Blue Jackets to continue the physicality they showed Thursday against the Dallas Stars. They did exactly that. Up and down the lineup, they forechecked hard and made Tampa uncomfortable.

Mathieu Olivier was noticeable all night as a physical presence both during play and after the whistle, as he finished with four hits. Voronkov finished with five hits, forced two takeaways, and scored again. His goal came off a hard forecheck, and he also saw time on the top power-play unit, which was great to see.

Their physicality created turnovers and odd-man rushes. Columbus finished with 27 hits and forced 19 giveaways from the Lightning. It was not a pretty defensive game for either side, and the goaltending was not great, but when it mattered, the Blue Jackets made the plays they needed to keep the lead in the third period.

Columbus blocked 15 shots, led by Olivier with three. Eight different skaters recorded at least one block, a sign of a true buy-in from this group as they push toward the playoff race. In the third period, they laid the body, blocked shots from the outside, and saw strong backchecks throughout the lineup.

This win was impressive considering the last two opponents. Columbus beat two of the best teams in the NHL in completely different styles. One was a mature defensive win, and the other was an offensive shootout. It shows they can play any type of game, which is a promising sign for the rest of the season. It was not perfect or pretty, but they got it done.

The Blue Jackets now get an opportunity to rest and regroup before hosting the Los Angeles Kings on Monday night at 7:00 PM ET to continue the homestand.

The Columbus Dispatch / Columbus Blue Jackets end Tampa Bay Lightning point streak in 8-5 win

By Brian Hedger – January 24, 2026

After splitting their previous two games while scoring one goal in each, the Blue Jackets stepped on the gas pedal Jan. 24 against the Tampa Bay Lightning.

Paced by Mason Marchment's hat trick and four-point performance (three goals, one assist), the Jackets outscored the high-octane Lightning in a wild 8-5 victory in front of 16,852 at Nationwide Arena. The Lightning (32-14-4) hadn't lost in regulation since Dec. 18 against the Los Angeles Kings, bringing an end to a 15-game point streak (14-0-1).

Charlie Coyle and Adam Fantilli each added a goal and two assists for three-point games to go with Marchment's third career hat trick.

Marchment, Cole Sillinger, Adam Fantilli and Dmitri Voronkov scored goals in the first period for the Blue Jackets (24-20-7), who led 4-2 at the first intermission. Marchment and Coyle scored in the second to give the Jackets a 6-4 lead after two periods, scoring back-to-back goals after Lightning forwards Nikita Kucherov and Anthony Cirelli tied it 4-4 early in the period.

Sean Monahan scored a long-distance goal into an empty net with 5:05 left to play, putting the Blue Jackets up 7-4 with a key insurance goal, and Marchment notched his hat trick by netting his third goal of the night into an empty net with 24.4 seconds left for the game's final tally.

Coyle's goal, scored on a power play, was the 200th of his career in his 1,001st game. He'll be honored prior to a game Jan. 26 against the Los Angeles Kings for reaching the 1,000-game milestone. Coyle's goal was his 11th of the season, third scored on a power play, and it gave the Jackets a two-goal cushion, 6-4, starting the third.

Jet Greaves (25 saves) started and won his second straight start in net for the Blue Jackets, overcoming an early mistake by sending the puck off teammate Isac Lundestrom into his own net. Jonas Johansson started in net for Tampa Bay.

The Columbus Dispatch / Derek Dorsett on leading NHL in penalty minutes: 'I'm coming in hot'

By Brian Hedger – January 24, 2026

Derek Dorsett became a fan favorite for the Blue Jackets for two reasons.

He was a small, scrappy grinder willing to drop the gloves against all comers, big or small, and his sense of humor about it was endearing. Well, Dorsett's playing days are over, but his ability to tell a humorous story remains sharp.

Joining fellow Blue Jackets alumni Cam Atkinson, R.J. Umberger and Pascal Leclaire on Jan. 24 for the fourth of five 25th Anniversary celebration weekends, prior to the Jackets' game against the Tampa Bay Lightning, Dorsett shared one of his favorite stories from his five years in Columbus.

Dorsett provided the back story on how he finished the 2011-12 season as the NHL's leader in penalty minutes.

"I was in the lead for most of the year, and the last game of the year was against the New York Islanders," Dorsett said. "I think I had a 13-minute lead on Zac Rinaldo. [The Blue Jackets] and Islanders were out of the playoffs, so that game meant absolutely nothing."

A look back at that season's official stats on the NHL's official site shows that it was a six-minute differential between Dorsett and Rinaldo, then a Philadelphia Flyers rookie, but let's not push facts in the way of a good hockey story.

Rinaldo and the Flyers played the in-state rival Pittsburgh Penguins during an afternoon game April 7 to conclude that season, while Dorsett and the Blue Jackets played the Islanders in a 7 p.m. start. Rinaldo picked up 15 penalty minutes on a five-minute boarding major plus a game misconduct for driving Pittsburgh's Zybynek Michalek into the end boards to move past Dorsett by nine minutes, and the Blue Jackets forward noticed.

Just before facing the Islanders, Dorsett made his intentions for the night clear with linemates Ryan Johansen and Ryan Russell.

"We're on the bench, and I looked at Ryan Johansen, and I said, 'Joey, go hard to the net with the puck, first shift ... I'm coming in hot, I'm fighting the very first shift,'" Dorsett said. "He's looking at me like, 'You're crazy. This game means nothing.' But I knew. I wasn't going to lead the league in penalty minutes all year long, and then, you know, the last day of the season, get passed and lose the belt."

So, that's exactly how it went down.

Trailing Rinaldo in penalty minutes (232-223), Dorsett served 12 minutes in the penalty box for a roughing minor and two fighting majors for scrapping with Islanders enforcer Matt Martin. The first fight was 5:02 into the game on Dorsett's second shift

The second put him over the top on Rinaldo, 235-232.

“When I fought him the first time, he goes, ‘What are you doing? Why are you doing this?’” Dorsett said, smiling. “And then we get in the penalty box, and I was like, ‘Matt, I need five more ... so we might as well fight again. So, we’re fighting again.’ So, we fought again in the second period, and I beat Rinaldo by two or three penalty minutes, I think.”

The Columbus Dispatch / Columbus Blue Jackets vs Tampa Bay Lightning: Skate report

By Brian Hedger – January 24, 2026

After shutting out the Dallas Stars, Blue Jackets goalie Jet Greaves will stay in net against the Tampa Bay Lightning on Jan. 24 at Nationwide Arena.

That means the Blue Jackets (23-20-7) will ice the same lineup against the Lightning (32-13-4), who are 14-0-1 in their past 15 games after edging the Chicago Blackhawks 2-1 in a shootout to start a road back-to-back set Jan. 23 at United Center.

Jonas Johansson (10-6-1) is expected to start for the Lightning, who didn't hold a morning skate at Nationwide Arena. The Blue Jackets, who didn't practice Jan. 23, held a full skate at the Ice Haus rink. Prior to the opening face-off, another group of four Blue Jackets alumni will be honored in the fourth of five 25th Anniversary Night celebrations.

Forwards Cam Atkinson, Derek Dorsett and R.J. Umberger will join former goalie Pascal Leclaire for a luncheon with season-ticket holders before signing autographs at 6 p.m. on the main concourse. They'll also be honored prior to the game with a ceremonial puck drop.

Here are the projected lineups for the Blue Jackets and Lightning:

Columbus Blue Jackets projected lineup vs Tampa Bay Lightning

FORWARDS

17 Mason Marchment – 19 Adam Fantilli – 86 Kirill Marchenko

38 Boone Jenner – 23 Sean Monahan – 91 Kent Johnson

4 Cole Sillinger – 3 Charlie Coyle – 24 Mathieu Olivier

10 Dmitri Voronkov – 21 Isac Lundestrom – Danton Heinen

DEFENSIVE PAIRINGS

8 Zach Werenski – 9 Ivan Provorov

78 Damon Severson – 44 Erik Gudbranson

6 Egor Zamula – 2 Jake Christiansen

GOALIES

73 Jet Greaves

90 Elvis Merzlikins

Scratched: F Brendan Gaunce, F Zach Aston-Reese, Dante Fabbro (lower body), D Denton Mateychuk (upper body)

Injured reserve: D Brendan Smith (ankle), F Miles Wood (lower body)

Tampa Bay Lightning projected lineup vs Columbus Blue Jackets

FORWARDS

38 Brandon Hagel – 71 Anthony Cirelli – 86 Nikita Kucherov

93 Gage Concalves – 17 Dominic James – 59 Jake Guentzel

28 Zemgus Girgensons – 37 Yann Gourde – 29 Pontus Holmberg

22 Oliver Bjorkstrand – 20 Nick Paul – 11 Jakob Pelletier

DEFENSE

90 J.J. Moser – 43 Darren Raddysh

51 Charle-Edouard D'Astous – 81 Erik Cernak

67 Declan Carlile – 7 Simon Lundmark

GOALIES

31 Jonas Johansson

88 Andrei Vasilevskiy

Scratched: D Maxwell Crozier (illness), F Jack Finley

Injured reserve: C Brayden Point (lower body), D Victor Hedman (elbow), D Ryan McDonagh (undisclosed), D Emil Lilleberg (undisclosed).

The Hockey Writers / 3 Keys to a Blue Jackets Saturday Night Win Over Lightning

By Matthew Buhrmann – January 24, 2026

The Columbus Blue Jackets continue their most important homestand of the season on Saturday night at Nationwide Arena, hosting the top team in the Eastern Conference, the Tampa Bay Lightning.

Columbus is back in the mix of the Eastern Conference playoff race and currently sits seven points (3.5 games) out of the final Wild Card spot, which is held by the Boston Bruins. The Blue Jackets do have a game in hand on Boston and are 23-20-7 50 games into this season, about where they were at this point last season.

Tampa Bay enters the night with a 32-13-4 record and has already faced the Blue Jackets once this season, losing 3-2 at Nationwide Arena in mid-October. They are red-hot coming into Columbus, going 14-0-1 in their last 15 games, and will be a true test of how improved this Blue Jackets team is under new head coach Rick Bowness.

Below are my three keys to pulling off a big win on Saturday night.

Take Advantage of Tired Lightning

Columbus needs to pressure early, be hard on the forecheck, get to pucks quickly, and do what Bowness wants them to do. Tampa Bay went to a shootout on Friday night against the Chicago Blackhawks, winning 2-1, and then traveled to Columbus late. A full 65-minute game the night before will lead to tired legs for the Lightning, especially in the final half of Saturday's game.

The Blue Jackets must take advantage of this. Play physical, finish all checks, and wear the Lightning down – do not give their top players much space to make plays. Nikita Kucherov is on a tear this season with 25 goals and 49 assists in 45 games. Brandon Hagel is another winger to key on, and Darren Raddysh has been a major offensive threat from the blue line with 42 points in 43 games. J.J. Moser leads the team at plus-38 and is as defensively sound as they come.

Columbus needs to continue finishing checks the way they did Thursday against the Dallas Stars, when they recorded 35 hits compared to the Stars' seven. Mathieu Olivier led with five, and others like Isac Lundestrom and Jake Christiansen were noticeable in this area, too. These depth players are going to have to step up again to help this team take down a top NHL squad like the Lightning.

Goaltending (of course) is always important. Jet Greaves is expected to start for Columbus. Andrei Vasilevskiy started for Tampa Bay on Friday night, so Jonas Johansson is the likely starter on Saturday. Johansson started against Columbus back on Oct. 18.

Generate More Offense

The Blue Jackets have scored only two goals in their past two games. They scored once in the 4-1 loss to the Ottawa Senators and once in the 1-0 win over Dallas on Thursday. One goal is not going to cut it

against one of the highest-scoring teams in the NHL. Tampa Bay has 169 goals this season, tied for fifth in the league with the Toronto Maple Leafs.

Tampa is one of the most balanced teams in the NHL, scoring 3.45 goals per game and allowing only 2.45 goals per game. The Blue Jackets are in the bottom tier of the NHL in both categories. The Lightning have a plus-50 goal differential, second-highest in the NHL behind only the Colorado Avalanche.

Thursday night's win over Dallas was one of the best defensive performances of the season for Columbus. They need to play a mature game like that again to even have a chance in this one.

Offensively, the Blue Jackets have to find a way to break through. Tampa's defense does not stray out of position much and does not pinch up often. Dallas, on Thursday, made a big emphasis on forcing Columbus to beat them with speed, and the Lightning will likely do the same. The Blue Jackets need traffic in front of the net and have to score some dirty goals. That means getting their bigger players to the crease.

This is why Dimitri Voronkov's move to the fourth line recently has been confusing, as that is his specialty. He played only 6:43 on Thursday against Dallas, which is not enough for a player who can make an impact around the net. According to Aaron Portzline, he will be on the second power-play unit Saturday night, but I would like to see him on the top unit. He leads the team in power-play goals with seven, four more than Zach Werenski, Kirill Marcenko, and Adam Fantilli.

Somebody besides Werenski needs to step up. Werenski has six points in his last five games, but more depth contribution is needed if this team wants to climb up the standings. Fantilli is one player who has to help spark things. He centered the top line on Thursday with Mason Marchment and Marchenko, played 21:12, and clearly has Bowness' trust. It would be great to see his scoring get back up to speed, especially with the power play needing a boost.

Win the Faceoff Battle

The faceoff circle is one of the few areas where the Lightning struggle. They rank 31st in the NHL in faceoff win percentage at 46.3%. Their top regular faceoff options have been Jake Guentzel and Anthony Cirelli, but neither of them is among the league's top performers. Columbus needs to take advantage of this weakness.

The Blue Jackets rank 13th in the league at 50.7%. In Thursday's game against Dallas, Adam Fantilli took a team-high 24 faceoffs and won 16 of them (66.7%). Charlie Coyle and Sean Monahan have been the other main players taking draws under Bowness, but Fantilli took 10 more draws than Coyle on Thursday, who had the second most on the team.

Winning faceoffs directly impacts special teams' success. A clean win on the penalty kill lets you clear the puck right away, while a clean win on the power play sets up instant pressure in the offensive zone. Columbus needs to use this advantage to fire more shots and create longer stretches of sustained zone time.

The Blue Jackets continue their five-game homestand tonight at 7:00 PM, the third game of the stretch, with snow expected across much of Ohio. If you're heading to Nationwide, stay safe on the drive home.

The Hockey Writers / Blue Jackets' Rick Bowness: Back Where He Belongs Behind the Bench

By Mark Scheig – January 24, 2026

Life comes at you fast. One moment, you could be on a boat enjoying time with your family. The next, you could be packing your bags and heading to a brand new city.

That's exactly what happened to Blue Jackets' head coach Rick Bowness. Bowness and his wife Judy were on their boat when his phone rang. It was about 10:45 A.M. on Monday Jan 12. GM Don Waddell asked a simple question.

"How would you like to coach our team," Waddell asked?

It took just a few minutes. Bowness said yes. The domino effect began. Head coach Dean Evason and assistant coach Steve McCarthy were fired. Bowness was announced as the new head coach around 4:30 P.M. on that Monday.

The Blue Jackets have gone 4-1-0 in the five games since Bowness took over for Evason. They've allowed just 11 goals in those games. They're going to put that on the line against the Tampa Bay Lightning and their 15-game point streak.

For Bowness, he's right back where he belongs. He's behind an NHL bench doing what he loves to do. And at least so far, he's having a lot of fun doing it.

Bowness Having Fun

One look at Bowness says it all. He is in his element. He's trying to help the Blue Jackets back into the playoff race while trying to make them better in all facets of their game.

"Loving it. Loving it," Bowness said of being a head coach again. "Honestly, that was about a year and a half and it doesn't feel like I left."

He can even still crack the jokes too.

"You guys were all probably glad I was gone," Bowness quipped. "But no, it doesn't feel like I've left anything. I just love being behind the bench. I just love that. That just calms everything down for me. It gets me. It's not what I do. It's who I am. And I love being back behind the bench. I just love being in the locker room with the guys. That's what drives me everyday. I love it."

The Blue Jackets were in Pittsburgh last Saturday in what was Bowness' third game with the team. After securing a 4-3 shootout win over the Pittsburgh Penguins, the team improved to 3-0 since the coaching change. The vibes around the team were different despite it being a short period of time.

A Special Guest

Bowness' presence injected some much-needed new energy throughout the Blue Jackets. His approach and longevity in the league has the respect of everyone. A particular postgame moment in Pittsburgh put that into perspective.

As the media were waiting for Bowness to come out, there was a special visitor waiting to see him. It was none other than Sidney Crosby. The two of them go way back to when Crosby was in elementary

school. They shared a few words before Bowness took his spot in front of the cameras to talk about his team's latest win.

Bowness is trying to bring many things to the Blue Jackets. One of those things is respect. Crosby taking time to welcome coach back was a moment that fans didn't get to see. But it puts into perspective just how beloved Bowness is.

In fact, if it wasn't for the opportunity to coach the Blue Jackets, Bowness was set to have dinner with Crosby's parents in Florida.

"I've known Sid for a while," Bowness said. "I was supposed to be having dinner with his parents in Fort Lauderdale, right? I'd rather be here. Sid and I, we talk a lot. He's at the far end of the league. One thing about Sid, man. He loves talking hockey. So I'll take the boat up every once in a while and he'll come down and we'll sit on my boat and we'll talk hockey. He's tremendous. He respects the tradition of the game. You can talk to a lot of younger players about Guy LaFleur. A lot of the guys don't know who (he is.) Sid knows every great player. He knows every great team. And that's why I love talking hockey with him. He and I have always had a good rapport."

It's the vast knowledge and experience that Bowness brings that sets him apart. One moment, he's able to relate to one of the game's greatest players ever. The next, he's helping the Blue Jackets fix their defensive issues. And in between, he has an ability to relate to players while getting the best out of them.

Look no further for a recent example of that than Dallas Stars' captain Jamie Benn.

Bowness Impacted the Stars

Benn and the Stars were in Columbus on Thursday night. The relationship between Bowness and Benn is well documented. It had many ups and downs. But today, there's nothing but respect.

"Special person, special man," Benn said of Bowness. "Happy to see him back in the league. If there's anybody that loves hockey, it's Rick Bowness. He's been around for a long time and I'm not surprised that he's back. Bowness is somebody you want to play hard for and win for. He's just a great human being.

Benn, Bowness and the Stars spent a significant amount of time in the bubble together. All told, it was 65 days. Although they had their ups and downs during the grind of that playoff run, Benn looks back at that time fondly. Was there any advice that stood out to Benn?

"There's many things," Benn said. "I think a lot of his messages are if you play the right way and do the right things out there, the game will treat you well. There's no shortcuts in this league. You gotta do it the hard way. And the hard way is the best way. I think we all want to win. In the end, doing it the right way is the best."

Bowness was able to eventually get the best out of Benn also. How was he able to do that?

"He just told me to be myself," Benn said. "He believed in me and I believed in what he was throwing down for us for game plans and his strategy. I just try to be myself, play the right way and lead by example that way."

Radek Faksa, who played under Bowness in Dallas, recalled the Stars' room being emotional when he came on board. What stood out to him most?

“Experience. Great coach. Great human being,” Faksa said. “He took over during the season so it was a lot of emotions going on in the dressing room. He brought the calmness to the dressing room. Everyone was calm and I got just good memories going all the way back to the Stanley Cup Final.”

“I feel like he kept pushing. It doesn’t matter if it was practice or gameday. He just wanted us to do things right like hard word (and) just the simple stuff. He always tried to get the best out of us.”

Faksa said the best piece of advice he got from Bowness was “treat people the right way, all your teammates and all people around.” Coaching longevity in any sport is very hard to achieve. That’s what makes what Bowness has done and continues to do today all the more impressive.

While Bowness certainly will bring systems and principles to the teams he coaches, he brings something much more important. That’s genuine caring and respect of everyone he encounters no matter who they are.

Being around the Blue Jackets since the coaching change has felt night and day. Now, the tone of voice is more positive. There’s more positive energy going around the locker room. The room isn’t as heavy as it was. Whether that’s enough for the Blue Jackets to make the playoffs this season remains to be seen.

This is the Bowness effect. He’s back right where he belongs behind an NHL bench. He’s doing what he loves and is having so much fun right now. He is a true breath of fresh air the Blue Jackets desperately needed at a low point in their season.

The Hockey Writers / Blue Jackets Prospect Jérémy Loranger Developing His Game in Daunting NCHC

By Matthew Buhrmann – January 27, 2026

General manager Don Waddell and the Columbus Blue Jackets took a chance on Jérémy Loranger in the 2025 NHL Draft, trading up to grab him 198th overall in the seventh round. Early on, it looks like a smart choice. Loranger is off to a solid start with the Nebraska-Omaha Mavericks (NCHC) in college hockey. Among the 10 collegiate prospects in the organization, he has been one of the more intriguing names to follow.

Omaha has had an up-and-down season. Mike Gabinet and his staff leaned heavily into the USports/new Canadian Hockey League (CHL) transfer routes and have struggled to find consistency with their roster. They have picked up some big wins over Minnesota Duluth, UMass, Minnesota State, St. Cloud State, and Colorado College, but have not been able to sustain momentum in NCHC play. As of Jan. 26, they sit at 9-17-0 overall and 5-11-0 in conference play, tied for last in the NCHC standings with Colorado College.

Loranger is one of only two NHL draft picks on the Mavericks roster, along with Washington Capitals prospect Brett Hyland. Against the Miami RedHawks earlier in January, Loranger skated on the second line at right wing with Samuel Huo (C) and Trevor Wong (LW). Miami swept the series and exposed several of Omaha's weaknesses, and Loranger did not generate much offense, just as the team did not.

However, he is still impressive with his speed, competitiveness, and willingness to get to the net front. He played chippy, got into it with Miami players both nights, and finished Friday with two penalties, including an interference call on the power play and an unsportsmanlike conduct penalty after a late scrum with RedHawks' forward Ryan Smith.

Adjusting to College Hockey

Before the series, Loranger talked about how his season has gone so far. "It has been ups and downs," he said. "It started rough. I had an injury in the first game of the year that lasted longer than it was supposed to. That was a problem for a while, but now that I am back, I feel more comfortable and confident on the ice."

The jump from the British Columbia Hockey League (BCHL), where he put up a massive 119 points in 62 games in the 2024-25 season for Sherwood Park, to the NCAA is one of the bigger leaps a young player can make. The 2024-25 BCHL MVP said the difference is obvious every night. "It is a more mature game. More physical, and the guys are bigger, stronger, and older. It is a step up from the BCHL, and the transition game is a lot faster. The guys have more experience and know what it takes to win."

Through 18 games played, Loranger has put up four goals and six assists, averaging 0.56 points per game. Only three of those points have come in NCHC play, which speaks more to the strength of the conference than anything else. He did score two big goals earlier this season at Augustana, one of the tougher teams in an underrated CCHA.

He is averaging 12:47 of ice time per game and has earned a spot on Omaha's top power-play unit, where he moves around the middle of the formation and works the slot. He also screens well on shots in

from the outside and gets to rebounds. "I think the unit is getting better and better together," he said. "For myself, on the power play, I think it is one of my strengths. I can produce there and score some goals from the slot."

His timing without the puck is one of his best traits, and the puck seems to find him because he is consistently in the right spots.

In all situations, his speed stands out. He uses it to draw penalties, pressure defenders, and create turnovers. He is also not afraid to go to the hard areas in a physical league like the NCAA despite being 5-foot-10, 170 pounds. "It is just who I am," he said. "If I want to make it to the NHL and play for Columbus one day, I need to be competitive and go to the hard areas where goals are scored. That is in front of the net and being there at the right moment."

Blue Jackets Development Path

Being drafted by Columbus last summer was a big moment for him. "It was a dream come true," he said. "It was fun to be there at the development camp, meet all the people, and get to know everyone. You feel better once your first year of development camp is done. If they have me go back next summer, I will feel way better and more confident."

He worked closely with development coach Anthony Donskov at camp, focusing on details that translate to higher levels. "It was the development aspect of the game and more of the skills side. Wall plays, details of the game, things you work on as you get older."

As Omaha continues through the second half of this season, Loranger knows what he wants to build on. "I need to be more consistent," he said. "If I am not able to produce one night, how can I help the team in a different way. Defensively, having a good stick all game and getting turnovers for my team."

Loranger is definitely going to need some time. He is still only 18 years old, which is on the younger side for college hockey, and the adjustment curve can be tough for players his age. With that in mind, it would not be surprising to see him stay in school for two-to-three more seasons as he continues to round out his game before moving to pro.