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## The Columbus Dispatch / Columbus Blue Jackets have a ton of flexibility as draft, free-agent season loom

**By Michael Arace – April 25, 2025**

The Blue Jackets took their fans on an unexpectedly wonderful ride in 2024-25. It ended last week. They missed the playoffs for the fifth year in a row.

What now?

Let us go back a year, to the interlude between the firing of general manager Jarmo Kekalainen (Feb. 15) and the hiring of president of hockey operations/general manager Don Waddell (May 28). The job opening was an attractive one for a number of reasons, including the Jackets' mix of draft picks, high-end prospects, solid veterans and gobs of cap space. In the right hands, an idling rebuild could be throttled to respectability. The chance was there.

Waddell said as much the day he was introduced: "Previous management did a good job drafting. It's not like this organization is going to take a long time to fix."

Waddell hired Dean Evason to coach. He traded away center Alexandre Texier and sniper Patrik Laine, bought out defenseman Adam Boqvist and passed on extending defenseman Jake Bean. Then he signed a few veteran free agents – first-line center Sean Monahan, depth defenseman Jack Johnson and forward James van Riemsdyk.

We all lost Johnny Gaudreau on Aug. 29. That was the end of summer.

Off waivers, Waddell plucked depth forward Zach Aston Reese in October and defenseman Dante Fabbro in November.

As a whole, these decisions on additions and subtractions represent the work of a craftsman. The roster was cleaned up and it began to make more sense. The Monahan signing and the Fabbro waiver claim turned out to be artistic flourishes. The Jackets (39-33-9) finished two points out of a playoff spot. Their 89 points represented a 23-point improvement over the previous season.

What now?

This past season was a gimme for management and the coaching staff. It was a time to survey and assess. No expectations, no pressure. Now comes a more interesting phase: Waddell can now bring to bear many of the features that made the job alluring – the draft picks, high-end prospects, solid veterans and gobs of cap space.

"A few years from now we'll stop talking about making the playoffs, and (then) it's about winning the Cup," Waddell said at his season-ending presser last week. "I truly believe after what I've witnessed this year, we have most of the pieces in that locker room. Obviously, there's going to be some changes. There are some unrestricted free agents, and there are some needs we have to address, and we'll do everything in our power to address those needs this summer."

Our man Brian Hedger has surmised what is on Waddell's immediate "to-do list." Among the items: decisions on free agents (defensemen Ivan Provorov and Fabbro, in particular); negotiations on a extensions for budding star Adam Fantilli and moose Dmitri Voronkov; assessment of the goaltending

situation (wherefore Elvis Merzlikins?); survey of the situation ahead of the late-June draft (one or both of the Nos. 13 and 20 overall picks owned by the Jackets could be in play on a trade).

The Jackets need to bolster their defense and goaltending.

“Yeah, that’s the issue,” Waddell said. “There are different avenues you can explore. One is through trades. We have a lot of pick assets we can use for trades. Then, there’s the free-agent market. This year, with the cap going up, a lot of teams have locked up their players for a numerous amount of years. There’s going to be challenges there but, I think, every summer there are deals to be made. Like I say, having the draft capital is always important.”

Waddell could have as much as \$40 million in cap space, give or take, when free-agent season opens July 1. The number probably won’t be that high because a couple of contract extensions and/or draft-day trades are likely to get done before that date. In any case, the Jackets cap flexibility will be Slinky-like. He’ll be able to sign a marquee free agent, if he so chooses. (Nik Ehlers, anyone? He’s a 29-year-old version of do-everything Gus Nyquist, only better.)

Asked if he had the flexibility to consider any buyouts, Waddell said:

“Nah. Not at this point. That’s not something we’re looking at. I can’t say how the summer is going to play out, but as of now we haven’t even talked about it.”

There’s a chance.

Asked about his views on offer sheets – and he has been on both sides of those pitches for restricted free agents – Waddell said:

“It’s a tool in the tool box. It’s like everything else you have. If we don’t use all the tools in our toolbox, we’re not doing our job thoroughly. Does that mean we’re going to have an offer sheet? That’s hard to say. Who’s the player? What’s the value? Do you have the picks to make an offer sheet?”

Offer sheets seem unlikely, as teams are likely to have the cap space they need to protect their valuable RFAs.

## The Athletic / Blue Jackets Sunday Gathering: Zach Werenski for the Hart? Monahan for Masterton?

**By Aaron Portzline – April 27, 2025**

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

### **Item No. 1: Hardware hopefuls**

The NHL will begin announcing the finalists for major awards this week, beginning on Monday with the top three vote-getters for the Vezina Trophy, honoring the league's top goaltender.

The Blue Jackets don't have a candidate for that trophy, but for the first time in five seasons, this news rollout bears watching for Columbus fans. The Blue Jackets may not bring home any hardware when the award winners are honored on June 27 in Las Vegas, but they have players in the conversation.

Let's get to it.

#### *Monday: Vezina Trophy*

Honors: Top goaltender

Who votes: NHL general managers

CBJ candidate: None

CBJ award history: Historically, this is the major award for which the Blue Jackets have had the most success. Sergei Bobrovsky won it twice (2012-13, 2016-17) and Steve Mason finished second (2008-09) during his remarkable rookie season. Most recently, Elvis Merzlikins finished fifth in the voting in 2019-20.

#### *Tuesday: Norris Memorial Trophy*

Honors: Top defensemen

Who votes: Professional Hockey Writers' Association (PHWA)

CBJ candidate: Zach Werenski

The argument: Werenski set career highs and finished among the top NHL blueliners with 23-59-82 in 81 games, one of only three defensemen to play at a point-a-game pace this season. It will be tough for him to overcome the exploits of Colorado's Cale Makar — 30-62-92 — but Werenski drew considerable national attention for the way he carried the Blue Jackets on both ends of the ice. He will almost certainly be a finalist when the top three are announced.

CBJ award history: If/when Werenski is named a finalist, it will mark a franchise first. The organization has never had a Norris finalist. The closest player was Seth Jones, who finished fourth in 2017-18 and ninth in 2018-19.

#### *Wednesday: Ted Lindsay Award*

Honors: Most outstanding player

Who votes: NHL players

CBJ candidate: Zach Werenski

The argument: This is going to be interesting. It's worth noting that this award is different from the Hart award, as the Ted Lindsay is voted on by the players. Werenski certainly played like one of the NHL's best players for most of the season, but this award typically goes to the highest scorer or the most dominating goaltender. The only defenseman to ever win this award is Bobby Orr, and that was 50 years ago.

CBJ award history: None

*Thursday: Hart Memorial Trophy*

Honors: Player most valuable to their team

Who votes: PHWA

CBJ candidate: Zach Werenski

The argument: Werenski has a strong chance here — who was more valuable to his team? — but only if voters follow the description of the award and don't make this their "league MVP" pick. Anybody who saw Werenski play this season, especially early on when so many players and the team as a whole needed to find their footing, could see that Werenski is deserving of votes. It will hurt him, however, that the Blue Jackets didn't make the playoffs. The voting takes place after the regular season, and there's no playoff stipulation in the award, but many voters have a personal policy of considering only playoff-bound players.

CBJ award history: The only finalist was Sergei Bobrovsky, who finished third in the voting in 2016-17. Steve Mason was fourth in 2008-09 and Bobrovsky was fifth in 2012-13.

*Friday: Masterton Memorial Trophy*

Honors: Player who best exemplifies perseverance, sportsmanship and dedication

Who votes: PHWA

CBJ candidate: Sean Monahan

The argument: For many years, this award had turned into the "comeback player of the year award," but writers have been urged to look beyond that narrative. Monahan, who was nominated for the award earlier this month by the Columbus chapter of the PHWA, is a shining example of all three qualities the award seeks to honor. Not only has his perseverance through the death of his best friend, Johnny Gaudreau, been a source of inspiration within and beyond the Blue Jackets' dressing room, but his career has been a triumph over a series of serious injuries. The guess here is that he'll be, at least, a finalist.

CBJ award history: The Blue Jackets have never had a winner, but they've had finalists on three occasions. Kevin Dineen finished top three in the first two years of the organization (2000-01 and 2001-02), while Nick Foligno was a finalist in 2018-19.

*Friday: Selke Trophy*

Honors: Top defensive forward

Who votes: PHWA

CBJ candidate: Sean Monahan

The argument: This is probably a long shot for Monahan, because the Selke is unique among the trophies in the habits of voters. It typically takes two or three really good defensive seasons to work your way into the argument, and then it's hard to get supplanted. Monahan has not been in the discussion in recent seasons, mostly due to injuries, but centering the NHL's top line for most of this season (until he suffered a wrist injury) is a pretty good argument.

CBJ award history: No finalists

*Friday: Jack Adams Award*

Honors: Top coach

Who votes: NHL Broadcasters' Association

CBJ candidate: Dean Evason

The argument: The Blue Jackets were expected to be a lottery team in 2024-25. Instead, under Evason in his first season in Columbus, they fell one win short of making the playoffs for the first time in five seasons. Put another way: they went from being the first club eliminated from the playoffs in 2023-24 to the last club this season. Beyond the on-ice improvement, Evason also played a key role in helping the Blue Jackets, one of the youngest teams in the league, play through their grief following the death of Gaudreau just before the start of training camp.

CBJ award history: John Tortorella won the award, the second of his career, after steering the Blue Jackets to a club-record 108 points in 2016-17. He also finished third in the voting in 2019-20. It remains criminal that Ken Hitchcock wasn't at least a finalist after coaching the Blue Jackets to their first playoff berth in 2008-09.

*Friday: Lady Byng Memorial Trophy*

Honors: The player who exemplifies sportsmanship and gentlemanly conduct, combined with a high standard of playing ability

Who votes: PHWA

CBJ candidates: Sean Monahan, Zach Werenski

The argument: For many, this becomes a "best player with the fewest penalty minutes" award, which isn't the worst criterion. It would be interesting to see how the players would vote for this one, as opposed to the writers. Monahan and Werenski are both very accomplished players, but they play the game hard and firm within the confines of the rules. You could say the same of Boone Jenner, but he missed two-thirds of the season.

CBJ award history: The Jackets have never had a finalist, but they've had scores of players receive votes through the years. Werenski finished sixth in 2019-20.

*Monday, May 5: Calder Memorial Trophy*

Honors: Top rookie

Who votes: PHWA

CBJ candidate: Denton Mateychuk

The argument: You can expect Mateychuk to get votes, and he may land a spot on the NHL's all-rookie team. But this is a tough field this season, with Lane Hutson, Matvei Michkov, Macklin Celebrini, Dustin Wolf and others. If you watched Columbus closely this season, you would have been impressed with Mateychuk during his 45 NHL games. But his numbers don't pop like the others. Jet Greaves could have worked his way into this discussion, perhaps, if he'd been recalled earlier in the season.

CBJ award history: You might think, with the number of top-10 picks the Blue Jackets have had through the year, that the list of Calder winners and finalists would be dotted with Columbus players. But, not so much. Steve Mason won the award in 2008-09, but only two others have been finalists. Rick Nash was third in 2002-03 and Werenski was third in 2016-17. Merzlikins finished fifth in 2019-20.

## **Item No. 2: Take on the World**

Expect an official announcement as soon as Monday that Blue Jackets coach Dean Evason has been named head coach of Team Canada at the IIHF World Championship next month in Sweden and Denmark. He was an assistant coach last year when Canada finished fourth.

It's hard to say how much that experience helped Evason land the job in Columbus — Rick Nash, the Blue Jackets' director of hockey operations, was GM of Team Canada in the tournament — but it certainly helped build a relationship between Evason and one of the Jackets' top decision-makers.

Evason was a finalist for vacancies with the Seattle Kraken, Ottawa Senators and perhaps others before landing the Blue Jackets job in late July, and Nash played a significant part in GM Don Waddell's coaching search.

Who might be joining Evason?

Blue Jackets' center Adam Fantilli, who had 31 goals in his second NHL season, has signed on with Team Canada for a second straight year, but will likely be a prominent player this time around.

Last spring, Fantilli joined Canada as an extra player once he recovered from the sliced Achilles tendon that prematurely ended his rookie season. But he returned home once the lineup was settled and it was clear he was an extra player.

So far, two Blue Jackets have made it clear that they won't be participating: defenseman Zach Werenski (Team USA) and goaltender Elvis Merzlikins (Latvia).

## **Item No. 3: Snacks**

- All four of the Blue Jackets' support staffers who were let go last week — equipment manager Jamie Healy, video coach Dan Singleton, strength and conditioning coach Kevin Collins and assistant trainer Naoto "Nates" Goto — were in the final year of their contracts. But the terminations of Healy and Singleton, who had been with the organization since it came into the league via expansion in 2000, were a surprise to many. Healy, a fixture on the Blue Jackets' bench, and Singleton, whose quick eye helped overturn scores of goals on replay, both worked under 11 different head coaches in Columbus and almost all of the Blue Jackets' 1,896 games. Both are well over 2,300 games when you factor in previous stops, games with Team USA, etc. They were fired on Saturday, two days after the season ended.

- Singleton started the Metro Columbus Hockey League three seasons ago and has served as its commissioner. The league, which gave local kids a competitive environment in which to play without

having to travel around the Midwest for games, has been a huge help to single parents, families where both parents work or families that can't afford to pay for travel hockey.

- AHL Cleveland completed a two-game sweep of the Toronto Marlies in the first round of the AHL playoffs on Saturday, winning 4-3 on James Malatesta's goal at 19:05 of the second overtime. Cleveland also won Game 1 by a 4-3 score, but the win on Thursday in Cleveland was capped by Luca Pinelli's goal at 9:42 of the first overtime. The Monsters move on to play the Laval Rocket in a best-of-five second-round series beginning either Wednesday or Thursday.
- Obvious second-round storyline: Laval is coached by Pascal Vincent, who spent three years on the Columbus coaching staff, including 2023-24 as head coach, and knows several of the Blue Jackets' farmhands from previous call-ups to the NHL. Vincent, fired shortly after GM Don Waddell took the Columbus job last spring, was named the AHL's coach of the year last week after guiding the Rocket to an AHL-leading 48-19-3-2 record this season.
- Coaches and players in Cleveland were, of course, delighted by the success Mateychuk and goaltender Jet Greaves had with the Blue Jackets, especially Greaves' hot streak at the end of the season that nearly pushed Columbus into the postseason. But you can't blame Cleveland coaches for welcoming those two, both AHL All-Star caliber players, back into their lineup for the playoffs. "We were cheering hard for the Jackets," Cleveland coach Trent Vogelhuber said. "Those guys were outstanding. Obviously, Jet ... everybody's been talking about it. But, yeah, we've had those two in our lineup, our record is pretty good."
- Mateychuk said he wasn't told implicitly that he'd be sent to Cleveland when the NHL season ended, but he expected it, he said, if the Jackets missed the playoffs. Blue Jackets assistant GM Chris Clark, who handles the Cleveland roster, said both Mateychuk and Greaves were eager to get back to Cleveland, even though they'd tasted success in the major leagues. "Both of those guys are true professionals," Clark said. "They love hockey. They love playing, and they love playing for the guys here, too. That makes a huge difference."
- Pinelli scored his first two professional goals in Thursday's Game 1 win. Not bad, considering he missed about two weeks with an upper-body injury. Pinelli is not new to Cleveland. He was recalled last season, too, after his junior club — the Ottawa 67s of the Ontario Hockey League — ended their season, but he didn't get into any games. The club wanted him around to see what pro hockey is like up close, much like goaltender Evan Gardner and defenseman Charlie Elick are doing this season. But, Clark said, Pinelli, a fourth-round pick (No. 114) in 2023, nearly practiced his way into the playoff lineup last spring. "We had our playoff (lineup), but we got to the point where, if we needed him, he could play. (The coaches) loved what they saw. They would have thrown him in with no hesitation."
- Here's Vogelhuber, one year later, on Pinelli, who will likely be a full-time AHLer next season: "He has an elite shot, which is the first thing that pops off. He's an undersized guy (5-9, 170), but he'll go to the hard areas and he's got that kind of dog in him, where he's a competitor. As a coach, I love that he's got that 'me versus you and I'm coming out on top' mentality. Those are the guys you win with this time of year."
- Pinelli had a great start to the playoffs. Not so much for the Monsters' other Luca. Just after the opening faceoff, while seated on the bench, Luca Del Bel Belluz was struck by the puck on the right side of his head, opening a nasty cut on his right ear. Del Bel Belluz, who had 27 goals for Cleveland during the regular season, said the cut, which left his lobe "dangling," required "14 or 16" stitches. Del Bel Belluz, who was centering Cleveland's top line with wingers Mikael Pyyhtiä and Trey Fix-Wolansky, returned late in the first period and finished the game. Late in the regular season, he needed stitches on



his upper and bottom lip after taking an elbow and a high stick. "The modeling career is over," Del Bel Belluz said. "Actually, it never really started."

- Luca Del Bel Belluz. Luca Pinelli. Asked if he was having trouble keeping his Lucas straight, Vogelhuber said: "There's another one coming here down the road, too." That's a reference to defenseman Luca Marrelli, who was a third-round pick (No. 86) in 2024. (More on him in a moment.) Vogelhuber said he's sticking to last names only so he doesn't send Del Bel Belluz over the boards when it's Pinelli's turn, or vice versa. "I've got some Italian in me, so I'm happy to have as many Lucas as you want, especially if they play like that."
- Coming soon: Luca Marrelli, who has had a breakout season with the Oshawa Generals of the OHL, totaling 19-55-74 in 67 regular-season games. Marrelli has 4-16-20 in 13 playoff games for Oshawa, which is ahead 1-0 on Barrie heading into Sunday's Game 2 of their conference final.
- Forward Jordan Dumais is day to day with an upper-body injury, but Clark said it's not related to the abdominal/hernia issues that hampered him in recent seasons. In 21 games with Cleveland, Dumais has 4-7-11. Not bad for a player who missed more than a year following surgery and other health issues. "It's a big loss for us having him out of the lineup," Clark said. "He's a dynamite player. Knock on wood, the (previous injury) has been great."
- An incredible stat: Greaves made 39 saves and was the game's first star Saturday in the series-clinching win over Toronto. Impressive, sure, but not a surprise. The Toronto native is now 16-0-0 with a .937 save percentage against the Marlies in three-plus seasons with Cleveland. When asked, the AHL said that the league does not keep records for goaltenders versus a specific opponent, but Greaves' mark is believed to be an AHL record for consecutive wins against a single opponent. Blue Jackets fans are clamoring for Greaves to have a full-time NHL job next season. The Marlies probably are, too.

## [Cleveland.com / Cleveland Monsters survive 2OT to win Calder Cup first-round series over Toronto](#)

**By Matt Lofgren – April 26, 2025**

CLEVELAND, Ohio — Cleveland Monsters forward James Malatesta scored the game winner with 55 seconds left in the second overtime to end the Toronto Marlies' playoff run with a 4-3 win on Saturday afternoon in the Coca-Cola Coliseum in Toronto.

The Monsters advance in the AHL's Calder Cup playoffs with a 2-0 series victory to play the Laval Rockets in the North Division semifinals. The top-seeded Rockets await the Monsters in a best-of-five game series that will begin in Cleveland on either Wednesday or Thursday, depending on the outcome of the Cavaliers-Heat NBA playoff series.

Game two will follow on Friday.

This season, the Rockets and Monsters split the regular season series 2-2. Both wins by the Monsters came in overtime, with the last meeting coming on March 22, a 6-0 defeat in while goaltender Greaves was playing with the Blue Jackets.

The Marlies made a big move in net, calling on 2016 Stanley Cup-winning goalie Matt Murray for the win-or-go-home matchup. Murray was the second star of the night, stopping 46 of 50 shots, but couldn't corral Malatesta's game winner.

Jet Greaves was the first star of the game with 42 saves, including all 15 shots he faced in the two extra frames.

Falling into a 2-0 deficit by the second period, the Monsters' offense found its rhythm midway through the second. Scoring three straight goals, with the third coming from Denton Mateychuk for his second straight game with a goal, Greaves was rock solid in goal.

Just like in game one, things took a turn for the Marlies in the third period. With 15:10 remaining in regulation, a penalty shot was called for the Marlies that awarded Robert Mastro Simone the opportunity.

Mastro Simone scored his first goal of the playoffs to even the score at 3-3, leading to a lengthy scoring drought that Malatesta ended nearly four hours after puck drop.

## **Cleveland 19 News / Monsters advance to North Division Semifinals with double OT win over Marlies**

**By Leah Doherty – April 26, 2025**

CLEVELAND, Ohio (WOIO) - The Cleveland Monsters survived a 4-3 double overtime thriller against the Marlies to advance to the North Division Semifinals.

The Monsters had a 1-0 series lead headed into Game 2 in Toronto on Saturday.

The Marlies opened up scoring with a goal from Zach Solow at 14:35 of the opening frame leaving the Monsters trailing 1-0 after 20 minutes.

Toronto took a 2-0 lead in the second period off another goal from Solow, but Hunter McKown got the Monsters on the board at 7:47 assisted by Madison Bowey to cut the score to 2-1.

Rocco Grimaldi tied the game at 14:58 off feeds from Denton Mateychuk and McKown.

Mateychuk kept it rolling for Cleveland with an unassisted goal at 17:16, giving Cleveland their first lead of the night headed into the third period.

In the final frame the Marlies were awarded a penalty shot that Robert Mastro Simone converted to tie the game and force overtime.

Following a scoreless 20 extra minutes, James Malatesta scored the game-winning goal at 19:05 of the second overtime securing the 4-3 win and the Monsters advancement to the North Division Semifinals against the Laval Rocket.

Cleveland's Jet Greaves stopped 39 shots for the win while Toronto's Matt Murray made 46 saves in defeat.

The Monsters will face the Laval Rocket in the best-of-five series that will begin with Game 1 in Cleveland on either Wednesday, April 30 or Thursday, May 1. The exact date will be finalized Monday evening based on the outcome of the Cleveland Cavaliers vs. Miami Heat series in which a potential Game 5 may be played at Rocket Arena on April 30. Game 2 is confirmed for Friday, May 2 at 7:00 p.m. in Cleveland.

## WKYC 3 / Cleveland Monsters advance to North Division Semifinals of Calder Cup Playoffs after sweeping Toronto: What you need to know

**By Justin McMullen – April 27, 2025**

After consecutive overtime wins over Toronto, the Cleveland Monsters advance to the North Division Semifinal series, where they will meet top-seeded Laval Rocket.

The Cleveland Monsters got off to an unblemished start to their Calder Cup Playoffs run, sweeping the Toronto Marlies in their North Division First Round series with two consecutive overtime victories.

Cleveland swept the three-game series in double overtime of Game 2 on Saturday evening at Toronto's Coca-Cola Coliseum, courtesy of James Malatesta's one-timer from the faceoff circle with less than a minute remaining in the frame.

The Monsters now advance to the North Division Semifinal series where they will meet the top-seeded Laval Rocket. The five-game series will begin at Rocket Arena either Wednesday or Thursday night, depending on whether the Cavaliers need the building on Wednesday to play a Game 5 in their first-round series against the Miami Heat. (We'll know by Monday evening when the Cavs have a chance to sweep the Heat in four.)

After falling 2-0, the Monsters went into the third period Saturday with a 3-2 lead but had to overcome a late Toronto rally after the Marlies tied the game via a penalty shot in the final five minutes of the third period. Cleveland's three regulation goals, courtesy of Hunter McKown, Rocco Grimaldi and Denton Mateychuk, were all scored within a 10-minute flurry in the second.

Jet Greaves, the 24-year-old goaltender fresh off a remarkably successful season-ending stint with the Blue Jackets, made 39 saves in the win. Marlies backstop Matt Murray, making his first playoff appearance after Dennis Hildeby played Game 1 for Toronto, turned aside 46 shots in the losing effort.

Saturday's game followed Cleveland's overtime triumph at home by the same score in Game 1 on Thursday.

Here's what we currently know about the North Division Semifinals series:

### **AHL NORTH DIVISION SEMIFINALS SERIES SCHEDULE**

- **Game 1:** Wednesday, April 30 OR Thursday, May 1 – 7 p.m. at Rocket Arena
- **Game 2:** Friday, May 2 – 4 p.m. at Rocket Arena
- **Game 3:** Sunday, May 4 – 3 p.m. at Place Bell (Laval, Canada)
- **Game 4\*:** Tuesday, May 6 – 7 p.m. at Place Bell (Laval, Canada)
- **Game 5\*:** Friday, May 9 – 7 p.m. at Place Bell (Laval, Canada)

### **TICKETS**

For a limited time, the Monsters are offering a bundle that includes tickets to Game 1 and an equal number of tickets to the 2025-26 home opener on Friday, Oct. 17 for free.

The Monsters are also advertising tickets in The Deep End, a fan zone in Rocket Arena's south end, where Cleveland shoots twice. Fans in this area (sections 112-116 and M112-M116) are given thundersticks noisemakers and are asked to arrive early to help hoist a special crowd banner ahead of the game.

### **WHERE TO WATCH**

The whole series is available to watch on the league's streaming service, AHLTV on FloHockey.

For Cleveland's away fixture for Game 2 this past Saturday, the Monsters hosted a watch party at Quaker Steak & Lube in Valley View complete with "raffles, giveaways and a playoff atmosphere." The Monsters have yet to announce details on watch parties for the upcoming series.

### **GIVEAWAYS**

The first 5,000 fans attending Game 1 will receive a T-shirt and a rally towel.

### **FEAR THE DEPTHS FAN KIT**

Monsters fans are invited to "bring the excitement of the Calder Cup Playoffs to their own house" with the Fear the Depths Fan Kit. The kit comes with a 3x5 "Fear the Depths" flag and a "Countdown to the Calder Cup" dasherboard decal, a replica of "a fan-favorite tradition in which the players cross of a number after a playoff win," according to the Monsters.

Kits can be picked up in person at an official Monsters watch party or a home playoff game at the Cargill Community Corner near portal 6. Purchasers will be asked to show proof of purchase in the form of an email receipt to receive the kit. Kits can also be shipped for an additional cost.

### **NEW PLAYOFF GEAR**

The 2025 Monsters Playoff Collection is now available at Center Ice, the official team shop of the Cleveland Monsters. Fans can buy playoff apparel at Center Ice/Center Court at Rocket Arena or at the new Center Court location at Pinecrest in Orange Village.

## News 5 Cleveland / Monsters beat Toronto 4-3 in double overtime to advance to North Division Semifinals Calder Cup Playoffs

**By: Mercy Sackor - Apr 26, 2025**

The Cleveland Monsters are in the semifinals.

After taking the series with a 4-3 double-overtime win against the Toronto Marlies at Coca-Cola Coliseum Saturday night, the Monsters advance to the North Division Semifinals in the Calder Cup Playoffs.

The Marlies were up in the first half with Zach Solow scoring a goal almost 15 minutes in. The Monsters trailed 1-0 after the first 20 minutes.

The video player is currently playing an ad. You can skip the ad in 5 sec with a mouse or keyboard

Solow scored again about four minutes into the second period, but Monsters' center Hunter McKown opened room for offense with the help of defenseman Madison Bowey, scoring a goal three minutes later— cutting the score 2-1.

Monsters' right-wing Rocco Grimaldi tied the score almost 15 minutes into the second period off of feeds from defenseman Denton Mateychuk and McKown. Mateychuk followed up with an unassisted tally, which landed Cleveland with a 3-2 advantage.

During the final period, the Marlies were granted a penalty shot— their last score of the night —to tie the board.

After a scoreless extra 20 minutes, left wing James Malesta scored the game-winning goal just over the 19-minute mark.

Next, the Monsters will face the Laval Rocket on April 30 or May 1 for the first game of the Semifinals in the Calder Cup Playoffs.