



Columbus Blue Jackets Media Clips November 15-17, 2025

Columbus Blue Jackets News

PAGE 2	The Athletic / Blue Jackets Monday Gathering: Denton Mateychuk joins Connor McDavid's highlight reel
PAGE 8	The Athletic / Mathieu Olivier's wake-up call earns Blue Jackets a point in shootout loss to Rangers
PAGE 11	The Athletic / Has the Blue Jackets' goalie rotation ended? What to make of Jet Greaves' run
PAGE 13	The Columbus Dispatch / Mathieu Olivier's bump gives Columbus Blue Jackets a needed jolt: takeaways
PAGE 15	The Columbus Dispatch / New York Rangers down Columbus Blue Jackets 2-1 in a shootout
PAGE 16	The Columbus Dispatch / Kent Johnson looking to win more battles for Columbus Blue Jackets, avoid doghouse
PAGE 18	The Hockey Writers / Blue Jackets Fall to Rangers in Tight Checking Game
PAGE 20	The Hockey Writers / Blue Jackets' Kent Johnson Knows He Has More to Give

Cleveland Monsters / Prospects News

NHL News

PAGE 22	The Athletic / 2026 Olympic hockey roster watch: One NHL player from every team making a case
---------	---

Multimedia

WATCH	NBC4 / Columbus Blue Jackets visit Ronald McDonald House
WATCH	ABC6 / A trip down memory lane with former Columbus Blue Jackets forward Matt Calvert
WATCH	FOX28 / Alumni night celebrates 25 years of Columbus Blue Jackets

The Athletic / Blue Jackets Monday Gathering: Denton Mateychuk joins Connor McDavid's highlight reel

By Aaron Portzline – November 17, 2025

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

Item No. 1: Victimized

There isn't a more frightening sight in the NHL. Edmonton's Connor McDavid, maybe the most powerful skater the league has ever known, gathered the puck in the neutral zone and began gathering speed as he entered the Blue Jackets' zone.

Defenseman Denton Mateychuk, who turned 21 in July and hasn't yet played a full season of games, was McDavid's next victim, and the play developed, oddly, both in slow motion and as a blur.

McDavid faked a cut to the inside and instead pulled off a spin-o-rama the other direction, essentially screwing Mateychuk ankle-deep into the ice. McDavid then whipped the puck past goaltender Jet Greaves off his backhand.

This happened last Monday in Edmonton's come-from-behind 5-4 overtime win over the Blue Jackets, and it was the most-watched hockey highlight of the week.

"I've seen that it's on (TV), but I haven't watched it that many times," Mateychuk said with a smile. "But I remember it in my head mostly.

"I've had quite a few texts about it. Family, friends. It happens. It's part of the game. You look forward to a matchup like that, and when something like that happens, it's a little unfortunate. But the nice thing is, you get to play again the next night, and you get to play against him a few nights later."

That's what so impressed Blue Jackets players and coaches.

That was a rough night in Edmonton for just about every player in a Blue Jackets sweater, but Mateychuk shook off a play that could easily have rattled him. The Blue Jackets won the next night in Seattle, then came home and beat Edmonton on Thursday in Nationwide Arena.

Mateychuk scored in the rematch with the Oilers. In Saturday's 2-1 shootout loss to the New York Rangers, Mateychuk played a career-high 25 minutes, 43 seconds.

McDavid has done this to the Blue Jackets before, of course.

On Feb. 2, 2016, he split defenseman Jack Johnson and Justin Falk off a breathtaking rush. Johnson tried to hit him and whiffed. Falk tried the same from the other direction and ended up launching himself out of the highlight entirely.

It replayed on a loop in Canada for weeks.

Blue Jackets veteran Zach Werenski had a message for Mateychuk, he said, one that is born from experience.

“Every defenseman has gone through it in their careers,” Werenski said. “I’ve gone through it against guys who *aren’t* McDavid. When you play a lot of games and a lot of minutes, it just happens.

“He did a great job of just forgetting about it and playing a great game in Seattle. He made some huge plays for us. That’s the type of player and person he is, too. Those aren’t fun as a defenseman, but it was unbelievable the way he handled it.”

Mateychuk was 11 years old when McDavid made his debut in 2015-16. He’s watched hundreds of games on TV, seen more than a few in person, and had several talks with NHL veterans about how best to play against the league’s most terrifying player.

“But being on the ice with him, yeah, it’s definitely different,” Mateychuk said. “He gets to you so quick, you don’t have time to process it. He never looks down, so he’s always reading the ice, scouting (the situation). Next thing you know, you’re eye to eye with him and you can’t tell where he’s going.

“It wasn’t fun to go through. We lost. That’s tough. But it’s an experience, right? It was my first time playing against him, and you know it’s going to be an experience.”

Item No. 2: Missing Boone

Once again, the Blue Jackets are facing a long stretch of games without captain Boone Jenner in the lineup.

Jenner suffered an upper-body injury in the first period of Tuesday’s 2-1 shootout win in Seattle. He tried to play through the injury, but lasted only one shift before heading back to the dressing room. He was placed on injured reserve on Saturday.

Blue Jackets GM Don Waddell told *The Athletic* that Jenner’s injury will not require surgery, and that there is not yet any official timeline. But, Waddell said, it’s more likely a week-to-week injury than month to month.

It’s a tough blow for a Blue Jackets club that has struggled to find its footing so far this season.

“We’ve got a lot of leaders in that room,” Blue Jackets coach Dean Evason said. “Boone is a huge part of our group, our identity, all of those things. He drives our work ethic, no question. But we have a lot of guys who can do that.”

The Blue Jackets have significant experience playing without Jenner in recent seasons. Over the previous five seasons, Jenner has missed 132 games, including 56 games at the start of last season following a shoulder injury.

He hasn’t gone a season without missing double-digit games since the 2019-20 season, when the Blue Jackets last made the playoffs. And with Waddell’s “week-to-week” prognosis, he may well miss 10 or more games this season.

“(Boone) is the guy we all lean on and look up to ... the guy we follow,” Werenski said. “But it’s one of those things where, we dealt with this last year. I don’t want to say we’re used to it, because you never get used to it. He’s our captain.

“But it’s the next-man-up mentality. That’s what we did last season and that’s what we’re doing now. We have depth in here, skill and talent. We’re going to play our game and see where it goes, and hope he’s back as soon as possible.”

Jenner, 32, is in the final year of his contract, with unrestricted free agency a possibility next summer. Both Jenner and Waddell have said that the desire is to have Jenner finish his career with Columbus, where he’s spent 13 seasons.

If the Blue Jackets drift out of the playoff contention, his name would spark considerable interest across the league. Even in previous seasons, when the Blue Jackets made it clear that they had no desire to trade him, NHL clubs came calling.

The injuries are becoming a concern, though.

Without Jenner, the Blue Jackets have had to get creative on their top two lines. He had been playing in the top six all season, and this type of injury is exactly the reason Waddell has been reluctant to trade Yegor Chinakhov.

But in the two games since Jenner has been injured, Evason has kept Chinakhov on the fourth line and elevated Luca Del Bel Belluz to play with center Sean Monahan and winger Kent Johnson.

Del Bel Belluz, who started the season with AHL Cleveland, was recalled during the most recent road trip.

Item No. 3: Take 5, Marc Denis

“Take 5” is our weekly brief and (mostly) non-hockey conversation with a (former) Blue Jackets player, coach, broadcaster or staffer. This week, it’s inaugural-season goaltender Marc Denis, now a broadcaster with RDS Network in Canada:

Where do you call home, and why?

I’m back in Montreal now for a few years. This is my 14th season being a color commentator and broadcaster for the Montreal Canadiens. The boys have moved out to attend university, so we sold our house in the suburbs and my wife and I live about a kilometer from the Bell Centre. I can walk there for games.

What’s your funniest on-air moment?

We’ve had some, uh, interactions on the bench. (laughs) I don’t want to put names out there, but there have been interactions that just can’t go on the air. You always listen back to it before it goes on the air, and sometimes we go ... “Yeah, that can’t go on the air.” Expletives. A coach not wanting to answer questions. Stuff like that. It’s gotten better in recent seasons, I will say that.

As a former player, you understand, right?

I do. Absolutely. I don't forget that I played. I know what side I'm on now, but the former player in me... I definitely understand. I can relate to it, too, being in the heat of the battle. What's really awkward is, I'm between the benches. We're really close to players. There are times where we have to criticize players and they're standing right there. This is a tough market in Montreal. It never gets personal, but sometimes you have to point out a mistake a player made.

Do you have a favorite Blue Jackets memory?

Being a part of the first win at home (Oct. 27, 2000, vs. Washington) was special, to be a part of that. The other was setting the NHL record (for minutes played in a season) was really cool, and getting to set that at home against Detroit. (New Jersey legend) Marty (Brodeur) took that record right back, but on a personal level that was tremendous. The biggest thing for me, though, is that Columbus still feels like home. Our kids were born here, we spent six seasons here. It's special to us. I still visit friends here. We've stayed in touch. They're coming to Montreal when the Blue Jackets play, to see us.

Do you have an unpopular opinion?

Hmm. I have stayed true to loving country music, and that took a little while for people to come around to in Quebec, especially. My unpopular opinion has gotten popular now. I stuck to my guns. Luke Combs is coming to Montreal for a concert in May. I already have my tickets for that. I remember putting the country radio station on here and driving to the rink. It was Toby Keith, Garth Brooks and Tim McGraw. I can't say I go back to Kenny Rogers and George Strait.

Item No. 4: Snacks

- Kirill Marchenko's assist on Dmitry Voronkov's power-play goal on Saturday extended his career-long point streak to 11 games, tied with Patrik Laine (Jan. 27-Feb. 24, 2022) for the third-longest in franchise history. With a point on Monday against the Montreal Canadiens, Marchenko would match Cam Atkinson (Nov. 10-Dec. 6, 2018) for the second-longest streak. The franchise record is held by Ryan Johanson, who had a 14-game streak from Dec. 18 to Jan. 17 during the 2014-15 season. Marchenko had 3-10-13 during his streak, which began on Oct. 25.
- Saturday's game marked Evason's 100th game as coach of the Blue Jackets. He's 49-40-11, a .545 points percentage that ranks second among Columbus coaches in their first 100 games behind the bench. John Tortorella, who started 50-28-12 (.560), leads the way, followed by Todd Richards (47-44-9, .515), Ken Hitchcock (44-44-12, .500), Brad Larsen (44-48-8, .480), Scott Arniel (37-48-15, .445), Gerard Gallant (38-55-7, .415) and Dave King (32-49-19, .415).
- Blue Jackets forward Miles Wood is now 0-for-3 on penalty shots in his career after coming up empty in the first period on Saturday. Wood was slashed on a breakaway by Rangers forward Taylor Raddysh, who tripped him up and sent him hard into the goalpost before he came to a rest along the end boards. Wood's attempt was easily denied by Rangers goaltender Igor Shesterkin. His previous penalty shots: Nov. 19, 2016 vs. Winnipeg's Connor Hellebuyck, and Nov. 4, 2017 vs. Calgary's Mike Smith.

- The Blue Jackets on Saturday welcomed back former players Matt Calvert, Denis, Brandon Dubinsky and David Vyborny, honoring all four with the ceremonial puck drop before the game against the Rangers. It's the second installment in the Blue Jackets' season-long celebration of their 25th anniversary as a franchise.
- Early in the 2002-03 season, Vyborny watched a few games as a healthy scratch, and there were reports that he was pondering a return to Europe after struggling to produce offensively the first two seasons. But Vyborny revealed on Saturday that he had a contract offer from Russia — between \$3 million and \$4 million, tax free, he said — that he pondered only briefly. "I wanted to stay here and try it again, again," Vyborny said. "And I did it. Not everything is about the money, you know." And then Vyborny laughed and said, "But \$3 million or \$4 million is a lot of money." Over the next four seasons, he averaged 20-37-57, leading the Blue Jackets in scoring in both 2005-06 and 2006-07. Sadly, his final NHL season was 2007-08, and he returned to his native Czechia to play in 2008-09 ... just missing the Blue Jackets' first playoff berth as a franchise.
- As Blue Jackets fans would expect, the always outspoken Dubinsky came out swinging in his press gathering before the game. Dubinsky, who has settled his family in the Columbus suburbs of Dublin, is a real-estate developer and owns a luxury transportation company. He also coaches youth hockey, including his three sons. Asked what it's like to be a coach now, Dubinsky said. "It's fun, but it's painful, because we don't have enough sheets of ice." Asked if any of his three sons have adopted his combative, physical style of play, Dubinsky cracked: "No, they're all soft. I think it was growing up in Dublin."
- Here's your Blue Jackets Monday Gathering trivia question: The Blue Jackets are 16 of 46 (34.8 percent) all-time on penalty shots, including Wood's on Saturday. Who was the last Blue Jackets player to score on a penalty shot?
- The Blue Jackets made their annual trip to Nationwide Children's Hospital on Friday, But with so many players fighting head colds and the flu, a group of players was unable to attend. Veteran center Charlie Coyle, who was one of those players, said they'd already discussed finding a date in the near future to visit.
- Goaltender Ivan Fedotov has settled in with AHL Cleveland, the first time he's played in the North American minor leagues. But it's been a hectic first month. Fedotov raced from Cleveland to New Jersey a few days before the Monsters opened the season, arriving just in time to witness the birth of his first son, Timofey. Two weeks later, after Fedotov had made a few trips home between games, the entire family was able to relocate to Cleveland.
- If there's one complaint about his AHL experience, Fedotov said, it's the Monsters' schedule: it's not busy enough. Cleveland has played only 11 games in the first 40 days of the season, tied for the fewest in the league. When you consider that those 11 games included five back-to-back sets, it's a challenge for the No. 1 goaltender to get enough work. Case in point, this weekend: Fedotov made 28 saves in a 3-2 loss in Chicago on Saturday, while Zach Sawchenko got the start on Sunday. In seven starts, Fedotov is 2-3-2 with a .904 save percentage and one shutout.

- Blue Jackets prospect center Cayden Lindstrom, the No. 4 overall pick in 2024, missed Michigan State's weekend series against Notre Dame due to a sore groin.
- Trivia answer: Cam Atkinson was the last Blue Jacket to score on a penalty shot, beating Carolina's Alex Nedeljkovic in a 3-2 Columbus win on Feb. 8, 2021, in Nationwide. Since then, Oliver Bjorkstrand (Feb. 23, 2021, vs. Chicago), Emil Bemstrom (March 13, 2021, vs. Dallas), Gustav Nyquist (Dec. 7, 2022, vs. Buffalo), Johnny Gaudreau (Jan. 23, 2023 at Calgary), Zach Werenski (Jan. 25, 2025, vs. Los Angeles) and Wood have come up empty.

The Athletic / Mathieu Olivier's wake-up call earns Blue Jackets a point in shootout loss to Rangers

By Aaron Portzline – November 16, 2025

The Columbus Blue Jackets were struggling. It was nearly seven minutes deep into the second period, and the New York Rangers held a 1-0 lead on the scoreboard and a 21-4 advantage on the shot counter.

Mathieu Olivier, a Blue Jackets third-line winger and, quite possibly, the NHL's toughest customer, was readying for his next shift when he shouted instructions down the bench to the defensive pair that would join him on the ice soon.

"He literally told the next pair (Denton Mateychuk and Damon Severson) to get (the puck) in his corner," Blue Jackets coach Dean Evason said. "He was going to be physical and try to get things started up a bit, and he did."

Poor Matthew Robertson. The Rangers defenseman went deep to retrieve the puck and absorbed a hard, legal hit in the corner, with an audible boom resonating through Nationwide Arena just a notch below a cannon's blast.

Olivier did his job, helping the Blue Jackets rescue a point out of a chess-match meeting with the Rangers. J.T. Miller's goal in the third round of a shootout gave New York a 2-1 win before 16,298 fans in Nationwide.

Dmitri Voronkov scored the only goal in regulation for the Blue Jackets, and Kirill Marchenko was the only shooter to score in the shootout. The Blue Jackets, with the loser's point, are on a four-game point streak during their busiest stretch of the season.

Marchenko's assist on Voronkov's goal extended his career-long point streak to 11 games, tied for the third longest in franchise history.

This was not an easy night for offense, though. Neither team scored at even strength.

Blue Jackets goaltender Jet Greaves made 31 saves in regulation and overtime before allowing shootout goals to Vincent Trocheck and Miller, who ended the game by scoring a nasty back-down wrister from the slot in the third round.

"It was obviously a really good shot," Greaves said. "(Miller's) obviously a good player, and he picked a spot there. But at the same time, it's my job to make saves, especially in the shootout there to give us a chance.

"It's a save I'd like to make, but it's a good job by (Miller), for sure."

Shootout losses are always hard to quantify emotionally. A generation ago, the Rangers and Blue Jackets would have accepted a 1-1 tie and moved on to their next opponent. But the shootout — a coin flip exhibition of skill — makes for a winner and a loser.

The Blue Jackets will regret the game's start. They were overwhelmed by the Rangers, and didn't lose their composure or structure. But Columbus was outplayed by its Metro rival.

One of the few chances the Blue Jackets had in the first period came on a penalty shot by winger Miles Wood, after New York's Taylor Raddysh slashed him on a breakaway.

Wood could not score on Rangers goaltender Igor Shesterkin, who made 24 saves and was the game's first star. After that, the Blue Jackets settled back into their shell, chasing the Rangers and the puck rather than carrying it.

"Those are tough games," Blue Jackets defenseman Zach Werenski said. "They're divisional games, so points are very important. Once we started to realize it wasn't going to be easy tonight, we started playing better.

"We started playing a little bit harder and making it simpler on ourselves. The second half of the game, I thought, was even."

It took Olivier — and a Rangers 1-0 lead — to get them there, though.

After failed clearing attempts on the penalty kill by Mateychuk, Cole Sillinger and Ivan Provorov, the Rangers took a 1-0 lead on Mika Zibanejad's power-play goal at 5:42 of the second. A few minutes later, Olivier started shouting instructions down the ice.

After Olivier's hit on Robertson, Sillinger landed a similarly big hit on Urho Vaakanainen a few feet away. The temperature rose immediately, and the Blue Jackets started to match the Rangers' pace.

The Blue Jackets scored their own power-play goal at 15:20 of the second. Voronkov, on the doorstep, lunged forward to get his stick on a rebound off a Werenski shot to sweep it wide of Shesterkin to make it 1-1.

Later in the second period, after Olivier and Rangers forward Sam Carrick traded hits and chops, they dropped the mitts.

Carrick landed some early, forcing Olivier to make a rare switch to throwing rights, but the fight ended when Olivier landed a right to the side of Carrick's head.

"No. 24," Evason said, referencing Olivier's sweater number. "That got us going, right? Not necessarily the fight, but the hit.

"It gave us a real bump because, yeah, we didn't have it. We were playing good structurally, but we just didn't have that extra pop. Maybe things have caught up to us a little bit with the sickness and all that stuff. But I love the way we grinded."

Both clubs played the third period with little risk, especially late in the period. It was clear in the final minutes that the teams were playing to get points at least. You expect that from a trip, but not so much the home club.

“It’s kind of human nature a little bit,” Werenski said. “You don’t want to be trading chances, you know. It’s human nature that you’re above the puck.

“You’re playing simple, you’re just getting pucks out, getting them in. Not that you talk about that, or anything, it’s just kind of how the game goes. You’re not trying to give up anything.”

The Athletic / Has the Blue Jackets' goalie rotation ended? What to make of Jet Greaves' run

By Aaron Portzline – November 15, 2025

For the first month of the season, predicting the Columbus Blue Jackets' starting goaltender from game to game was as simple as asking yourself a question: Who started the last game?

Though he repeatedly (and oddly) denied it, Blue Jackets coach Dean Evason settled into a rotation with goaltenders Jet Greaves and Elvis Merzljkins. Greaves started the season opener, then Merzljkins played the second game, and off they went, back and forth for the first 14 games (seven starts apiece) of the season.

That's why Evason's decisions this week have raised eyebrows.

The rotation was broken during the first really rough patch in the Blue Jackets' season. Greaves started on Monday in Edmonton and the following night in Seattle, then got the nod again for Thursday's 5-4 win over the Oilers in Nationwide Arena.

That's three starts in four days, along with a flight from Edmonton to Seattle and another from Seattle to Columbus. If ever there were a need for a back-up goaltender ...

Evason said before Thursday's game that the decision to start Greaves again on Thursday — he made 21 of his 25 saves in the second and third periods — was not due to health-related reasons for Merzljkins.

But that's why Greaves started Tuesday's game in Seattle, GM Don Waddell told *The Athletic*.

"Elvis had the flu, like a lot of guys," Waddell said. "He couldn't practice. And, with Dean, if you can't practice, you can't play.

"That second night (of the back-to-back), Elvis said, 'I can play, but I'm not 100 percent.' And Dean said, 'If you can't practice, you're not playing.' Plus, Jet played so well, there's no reason to throw (Elvis) in there."

Waddell said he met with Merzljkins on Thursday, "and he is pretty sick." But on Friday, Merzljkins indicated to a reporter that he was feeling better.

There is no indication that Merzljkins' stick-smashing tirade at the end of the 3-2 loss to the New York Islanders on Nov. 2 — the start of the season-long, five-game road trip — had any bearing on Evason's lineup decisions.

Proof: Merzljkins started two games later in Vancouver. It should be noted, though, that Evason has made it clear that he isn't a fan of Merzljkins coming unglued, even at the end of a frustrating loss.

Evason said after Friday's practice that the recent run of play is not an indication that Greaves has emerged as the Blue Jackets' No. 1 goaltender, with Merzljkins assuming a classic back-up role.

Despite Greaves' recent heavy workload, Evason said the starting goaltender for each game remains a day-by-day decision.

On Friday, he would not announce the starting goaltender for Saturday's game against the New York Rangers in Nationwide Arena. That will be known after the morning skate on Saturday, he said.

"We still trust both guys," Evason said. "We're still excited about both guys. We feel very comfortable putting either one in, whichever one we choose. We feel like it's an easy decision, because both have played very well and both give us a chance to win."

Greaves is 5-4-1 with an .897 save percentage and 3.00 goals-against average. Merzljikins is 4-3-0 with a .908 save percentage and a 3.14 goals-against average.

After ranking as one of the NHL's top tandems through the first month of the season, Greaves and Merzljikins are now (combined) ranked 11th in the NHL with a .902 save percentage. The Blue Jackets have been 20th (.896, 2024-25), 22nd (.900, '23-24), 29th (.891, '22-23), 25th (.901, '21-22) and 23rd (.904, '20-21) the past five seasons.

Evason said Merzljikins and Greaves (who is in his first full NHL season) would battle for the No. 1 job during training, but he was impressed enough with both of them that he planned to keep them busy.

And with the NHL's compacted schedule because of the three-week break in February for the Olympics — the Blue Jackets have 15 back-to-backs on the schedule this season — having two reliable goaltenders is a necessity.

Evason has pushed back repeatedly at any mention of a goaltending "rotation."

"I swear I don't think like that," Evason said. "It wasn't a conscious effort to go (back and forth), it truly wasn't. It just worked out that way, and now (this week) it hasn't.

"We'll get in there (as coaches) and debate and make our choice (for Saturday vs. the Rangers)."

Evason put an emphasis on the word *debate*. And it sounds like there are more opinions in play than at the United Nations.

"The nice thing, at least for me as the head coach, is I trust our staff to communicate and make the right choice," he said. "That's not just the coaching staff, that's talking to (Waddell) and (director of player personnel) Chris Clark and (director of hockey operations) Rick Nash to make the intelligent decision.

"I love the debates. It gets heated sometimes. But it's a lot of fun, and it creates a bond within the coaching room."

The Columbus Dispatch / Mathieu Olivier's bump gives Columbus Blue Jackets a needed jolt: takeaways

By Brian Hedger – November 16, 2025

After a solid start in a 2-1 shootout loss to the New York Rangers on Nov. 15 at Nationwide Arena, the Blue Jackets fizzled into the second period.

Their possession time disappeared, along with shots and attempts. They struggled to complete passes, chased the Rangers around and struggled stopping puck movement in their own zone.

Something needed to be done by somebody on the Blue Jackets to change it, and that somebody was Mathieu Olivier. A thundering hitter as a power forward and a sneaky productive scorer and fearsome NHL heavyweight, Olivier had finally seen enough about eight minutes into the second.

The Blue Jackets trailed 1-0 while being outshot 17-5, so he called his own number.

“He literally told the next (defensive) pair that was going out to get (the puck) in his corner,” Blue Jackets coach Dean Evason said. “He was going to be physical and try to get things stirred up a bit, and he did, and it gave us a real bump ... because we didn’t have it.”

First, Olivier bumped Rangers defenseman Matthew Robertson.

He smashed the 6-foot-4, 210-pound Robertson into the boards behind New York’s net with a thud heard from the rafters. It got players from both teams buzzing, but the Blue Jackets sprung to life. They battled harder, tied it 1-1 on Dmitri Voronkov’s power-play goal and stood toe-to-toe with the Rangers the rest of the night.

Olivier's physicality wasn't over, either.

He followed Voronkov's goal with a decisive fight against New York’s Sam Carrick, giving swagger to Blue Jackets fans on a night with Rangers jerseys peppering a crowd of 16,298.

“We were playing good structurally, but we just didn’t have that extra pop,” Evason said. “Maybe things have caught up to us a little bit with sickness and all that kind of stuff, and maybe we wore down a little bit, but we loved the way we grinded (after Olivier’s hit).”

Since developing chemistry with linemates Charlie Coyle and Cole Sillinger, Olivier is again handling a key role for the Blue Jackets as a physical impact player and leader.

Here are three more takeaways:

Columbus Blue Jackets’ Kirill Marchenko extends point streak

Kirill Marchenko pushed his career-long points streak to 11 straight games with 4:40 left in the second, assisting on Voronkov’s tying goal.

Marchenko's streak is now tied for third-longest in franchise history with Patrik Laine's in 2021-22 and is two shy of tying Ryan Johansen's 13-game streak in 2014-15 for the Jackets' longest.

Johansen and Cam Atkinson, who had a 12-game points streak in 2018-19, are the only two Blue Jackets players with longer streaks than Marchenko, who tied Colorado Avalanche center Nathan MacKinnon for the NHL's longest active points streak.

Columbus Blue Jackets keeping tight lid on goalie situation

Jet Greaves was fantastic in his fourth straight start for the Blue Jackets, making saves on 31 of 32 shots. He and Olivier were the biggest reasons they earned a point, and Greaves went save-for-save with Rangers star Igor Shesterkin until J.T. Miller won the shootout in the third round.

After alternating starts between Greaves and Elvis Merzlikins in the first 14 games, Evason has given the former the season's first chance to run with the ball. He's gotten better by the game, while Evason dodges questions from those wondering why Greaves got the first chance to make consecutive starts.

Is Merzlikins sick, like a number of other Blue Jackets? Is Greaves' run simply merit-based? Is it related to Merzlikins' late meltdown Nov. 2 at the New York Islanders, when he smashed his stick over the crossbar, or allowing a winning goal with 5:45 left to play on a shot he probably could've had Nov. 8 in Vancouver?

"We talked (before) that there's different circumstances, right?" he said. "I won't go into all the details of why, but there (are) different circumstances why he's played now four in a row."

Columbus Blue Jackets forward Mathieu Olivier wins another fight handily

Why do they do it?

Opposing players continue to either give Olivier fight invitations or accept the ones he offers on shifts right after a goal is scored.

It makes no sense to do it, especially in games at Nationwide Arena, since Olivier has a propensity to pound people's faces while igniting his own crowd and team. Regardless of the reasons it keeps happening, Olivier continues to happily land cement mixer rights against guys like Carrick, who gamely got off a couple himself.

The fight didn't end well for him, though, and the Blue Jackets clacked their sticks on the boards in approval after Olivier left the penalty box early in the third.

The Columbus Dispatch / New York Rangers down Columbus Blue Jackets 2-1 in a shootout

By Brian Hedger – November 15, 2025

They didn't get a third straight win, but the Blue Jackets did eke a hard earned point out of a 2-1 shootout loss to the New York Rangers on Nov. 15 at Nationwide Arena.

Despite being outshot 32-24 and being held without a shot in overtime, the Jackets (9-7-2) overcame a 1-0 deficit on a power-play goal by Dmitri Voronkov late in the second period and leaned on goalie Jet Greaves (31 saves) to get a point in defeat.

Kirill Marchenko, who extended his career-long points streak to 11 games with an assist, scored the Blue Jackets' lone goal in the shootout. He tied it 1-1 in the top of the third round, but J.T. Miller won it for the Rangers (10-7-2) with a wrist shot under the crossbar in the bottom half.

Igor Shesterkin (23 saves) was outstanding in net for the Rangers, who won their sixth straight road game and improved to 9-1-1 away from Madison Square Garden. New York scored the game's first goal to go up 1-0 at 5:42 in the second period. Mika Zibanejad batted his own rebound into the net to cap a Rangers power play, and former Blue Jackets forward Artemi Panarin got the primary assist.

Voronkov tied it 1-1 with 4:40 left in the second by ending a Blue Jackets power play with the goal lamp flashing behind Shesterkin. Following a shot from Zach Werenski, Voronkov tapped home the rebound for his second goal of the season.

Werenski got the first assist and Marchenko got the second to extend his points streak, which is now tied for third longest in Blue Jackets history with Patrik Laine's 11-game streak in 2021-22.

The Columbus Dispatch / Kent Johnson looking to win more battles for Columbus Blue Jackets, avoid doghouse

By Brian Hedger – November 15, 2025

Something we've learned about Blue Jackets head coach Dean Evason is that he does have a proverbial doghouse for wayward players.

Once inside, it's not easy getting out. Ask Yegor Chinakhov.

His howls from the bowels of Dean's Doghouse are to no avail thus far, so he remains a disgruntled forward with top-six skills mired in a fourth-line role. Worse yet is that Chinakhov's publicly stated hope to be rescued via trade might be fading, at least until the trade deadline in March.

Chinakhov, however, is not alone.

Consider the plight of defenseman Dante Fabbro, who went from re-signing with the Blue Jackets on a four-year extension to remain Zach Werenski's partner to his current spot on the third defensive pairing.

That took all of three games to happen, and that's not to mention captain Boone Jenner's early struggles before his exit Nov. 11 in Seattle with an upper-body injury. Prior to exiting, Jenner was bumped down the lineup after holding top-six and top power play roles since 2021.

As a universally beloved captain, Jenner won't ever take up residence in any coach's doghouse, per se, but he might've been sniffing around the outside of Evason's for a hot minute.

Going back to last season, defenseman Damon Severson got stuck in the doghouse for the final nine games. He watched the Jackets rip through a season-long six-game winning streak as a healthy scratch, and his even healthier contract with six years and \$37.5 million remaining stood out for the wrong reasons.

Severson has impressively worked his way out of the doghouse this season, so there is an exit. That's good news for Kent Johnson, the fifth pick of the 2021 NHL draft and a highly skilled forward.

Is Kent Johnson nearing a stay in Columbus Blue Jackets coach Dean Evason's doghouse?

Going into a matchup on Nov. 15 against the New York Rangers, Johnson has tallied only five points on two goals and three assists in 17 games. He has also played mostly right wing on the second line and with the top power play unit, but he's saddled with a team-low -8 rating.

The first sign Johnson might be tiptoeing to Evason's doghouse was a demotion to the fourth line in the Blue Jackets' 5-1 loss Nov. 5 at the Calgary Flames. Three games later, he sat out a 2-1 shootout win at the Seattle Kraken as a healthy scratch.

Evason was blunt when asked about it Nov. 13 at Nationwide Arena, prior to the Blue Jackets' 5-4 win over the Edmonton Oilers. Asked if Johnson sat due to illness, Evason replied, "He was NOT sick."

He was also asked what Johnson needed to show against the Oilers.

“Just some compete, some bite,” Evason said. “Just, uh, sticking his nose in there.”

Johnson isn’t the first guy who comes to mind when looking for a Blue Jackets nose to be stuck “in there,” but Evason’s message was clear.

“We’ve had enough chats,” Evason said. “We talk and give the player an opportunity to do the things that we believe he needs to do ... in order to help us win hockey games, and if it consistently doesn’t happen, then (not playing) is the end result.”

Welcome to the doghouse entrance, kid. Tread carefully and follow your nose.

“I don’t think it’s been an ideal start to the year, obviously,” Johnson said Nov. 14. “For me, like, the numbers are part of it, but I want to earn more minutes and more trust. I want to score too. I feel like I haven’t been burying my (scoring) chances enough. Some of it’s luck, and it’ll change, but I definitely feel like I need to be better.”

At what, though?

“I think I can create more,” Johnson said. “I think, too ... I’ve got to win more battles, earn the trust of the coaches back more, and get on the ice more, too. I think any player feels good when they’re out there a lot, so I’ve got to earn more ice time.”

Johnson may have taken a stride in the right direction against the Oilers. Skating on a line with rookie Luca Del Bel Belluz at left wing and veteran Sean Monahan at center, Johnson was more noticeable in chasing after loose pucks.

As a line, they impressed in 9:37 together at 5-on-5.

According to Natural Stat Trick, the Blue Jackets had advantages over the Oilers in shot attempts (11-3), unblocked attempts (7-2), shots on goal (5-1), scoring chances (4-2) and high-danger chances (2-0) with those three on the ice

It’s a tiny sample size, one game, but still a good start to Johnson’s latest lineup placement. He’s already skated on all four lines, with four different centers, and the season is only 17 games old.

That can’t be easy in a sport that heavily values chemistry between linemates and defensive pairs, but Johnson isn’t even thinking that way.

“I’m not going to point the finger at any of that stuff,” he said. “Hockey’s an interesting sport with (line chemistry), but I feel like it’s on me. It’s definitely not on linemates. I don’t feel like there’s excuses for me there at all, but I feel like it can turn around quick here, hopefully ... but it sucks right now.”

The Hockey Writers / Blue Jackets Fall to Rangers in Tight Checking Game

By Mark Scheig – November 15, 2025

The Columbus Blue Jackets and New York Rangers were each looking to extend their winning streaks to three games. It took a shootout to ultimately decide the winner.

Vincent Trocheck and J.T. Miller scored in the shootout with Miller's being the winner to lift the Rangers to a 2-1 win over the Blue Jackets on Saturday night. Kirill Marchenko scored the lone shootout goal for the Blue Jackets but it wasn't enough.

Columbus Blue Jackets vs. New York Rangers - Game Highlights

The story of this game was two teams not giving an inch to the other as the game went on.

Game Recap

The first period saw no goals scored. After a slow start, the game picked up thanks to a penalty shot attempt.

Miles Wood was slashed on a breakaway. There was some concern as he was down on the ice in pain for over a minute. He was able to get up on his own and was able to attempt the penalty shot. Rangers' goalie Igor Shesterkin stopped it.

From then on, the Rangers slowly started to take over. Shots on goal in the first were 10-4 Rangers. That momentum carried over into the second period.

With defenseman Damon Severson in the penalty box, Mika Zibanejad scored on the power play to make it 1-0 Rangers. His first shot was stopped by Blue Jackets' goalie Jet Greaves. But then Zibanejad converted the rebound.

Then it was the Rangers turn to commit a penalty. They got caught with too many men on the ice. That resulted in the Blue Jackets scoring on the power play thanks to Dmitri Voronkov. Zach Werenski's shot was saved by Shesterkin. Voronkov and his long reach scored on the rebound.

With an assist on Voronkov's goal, Kirill Marchenko extended his current points streak to 11 games. He's just two games off the franchise record of 13.

Then the moment of the night happened. Just 37 seconds after Voronkov's goal, Sam Carrick and Mathieu Olivier dropped the gloves. Both players got shots in. Carrick went down at the end. Both benches got fired up as the combatants went to the locker room.

The second period ended 1-1. The Rangers held a 15-12 shot advantage in the second period and had 25-16 edge after 40 minutes.

But it was the Olivier fight that allowed the Blue Jackets to smooth things out. As head coach Dean Evason said postgame, "number 24" allowed them to get back into it.

In the third period, both teams played a tight checking game. They didn't allow an inch to each other. As the period wore down, it became apparent both teams wanted to clinch a point. Mission accomplished.

Overtime didn't solve anything. A shootout was needed. It marked the Ranger's first shootout with Mike Sullivan as their head coach.

Miller's goal clinched the shootout for the Rangers and the extra point. The Blue Jackets were pleased to get a point out of this game knowing how tight things were.

Shesterkin stopped 24 of 25 to get the win. Greaves stopped 31 of 32 in the shootout loss.

The Blue Jackets will have Sunday off before getting ready for Monday's game against the Montreal Canadiens. The Rangers will host the Detroit Red Wings on Sunday night in the second half of back-to-back games.

The Hockey Writers / Blue Jackets' Kent Johnson Knows He Has More to Give

By Mark Scheig – November 15, 2025

Columbus Blue Jackets' forward Kent Johnson entered the 2025-26 season hoping to build off of a career year numbers wise. The start has not gone according to plan so far.

Entering Saturday night's game against the New York Rangers, Johnson has just two goals and five points in 16 games while finding himself being shuffled around the Blue Jackets' lineup. This led head coach Dean Evason to make an interesting lineup decision this past Tuesday in Seattle.

Johnson was a healthy scratch.

Canucks Sign David Kämpf After Dramatic Maple Leafs Departure to Fix Center Depth

Evason admitted the news on Thursday morning before their game against the Edmonton Oilers. It was originally unclear if Johnson's scratch was a healthy scratch or if it was related to the illness still going around the team.

"He was not sick," Evason said. Ultimately, the decision to healthy scratch Johnson came down to consistency and wanting to see more compete in his game.

The Hockey Writers spoke to Johnson Friday afternoon after practice about where he feels his game is at. He knows he needs to be better than what he's shown so far.

Healthy Scratch Surprised Him

All 23 skaters took the warmup in Seattle given there were some questions on player availability thanks to the illness going through the room. Had one or two players not been available, Johnson may have played.

Instead, Johnson found himself on the outside looking in. It did catch him by surprise.

"Yeah it did to be honest," Johnson said. "But that's all good. Just move forward and use it the best I can. (Coaches are) doing their job to get the best out of me. So just try to turn it into a good thing."

Evason said that there have been several conversations between Johnson and the coaching staff about the state of his game and what they expect from him. The lines of communication have been open throughout this process.

"Definitely. I think they're trying to get the best out of me. Just move forward. We have conversations and I think it will make me better in the end."

Johnson then reflected on how he thinks the start of this season has gone.

"I don't think it's been an ideal start to the year, obviously," Johnson said. "I think for me, the numbers are part of it but I want to earn more minutes (and) earn more trust. But yeah, I want to score too. I feel

like I haven't been burying my chances enough. Some of it's luck and it will change. But I definitely feel like I need to be better."

Not a Linemates Issue

Not only did Johnson admit he needs to be better, he also said that his early struggles had nothing to do with his linemates or any of those kind of factors related to playing with different lines. He only pointed at himself when assessing the situation.

"I'm not going to point the finger at any of that stuff," Johnson said. "Hockey, it's an interesting sport with that stuff. But I feel like it's all me. It's definitely not on linemates. I've played games with great linemates so it's definitely not on that."

"I don't feel like there was excuses for me there at all. I feel like it can turn around quick here hopefully. Because yeah, it sucks right now. I want to help the team a lot more. I feel like I have a lot more to offer this team than what's been done the first few games."

One of Johnson's strengths in his early career has been his power-play production. Even that has dried up so far in 2025-26 with no points on the man advantage so far. He believes things can change quickly. How will that happen for him?

"I think I can create more and win more battles there and earn the trust of the coaches back more and get on the ice more too. I think any player feels good when they're out there a lot. So I got to earn more ice time. I feel like it could change fast though in this league. There's plenty of players that something happened quick. So hopefully, we get the ball moving quickly."

Players that find themselves in slumps handle their business based on what works for them. Some don't make any changes knowing things will get better sooner rather than later. Others make changes in the hopes that will awaken them.

For Johnson, he says there is a balance of both to consider.

"I think a bit of both. I think there's certain things. It's a team sport so there's certain stuff that coaches will ask. There's a certain role you had or whatever. There's definitely stuff like that you have to think about. It's not just coming into the rink and don't think and just be exactly what I've done my whole life. There's definitely some of that. But also, you got to remember too what you're here to do. There's always stuff to learn. I think (the) coaches have been good with that."

Johnson skated with Sean Monahan and Luca Del Bel Belluz at Friday's practice like they did against the Oilers Thursday. The Blue Jackets need the offense this line could provide.

Johnson got Evason's message loud and clear. The healthy scratch was a surprising wake-up call, but one in which he sees the bigger picture.

Johnson knows he has a lot more to give and he knows it. He's not making any excuses either.

The Athletic / 2026 Olympic hockey roster watch: One NHL player from every team making a case

The Athletic NHL Staff – Nov. 15, 2025

There are only 88 days until the puck drops for men's hockey at the 2026 Milan-Cortina Olympics, and the clock is ticking for teams to finalize their rosters ahead of the Dec. 31 deadline.

With some NHLers already officially on teams, and other roster spots seemingly starting to be finalized behind the scenes, which players are making their cases to crack an Olympic roster with their early performances this season?

The Athletic asked its NHL staff for one from each team. Here's what they said.

Anaheim Ducks

Leo Carlsson, Team Sweden

Carlsson wasn't on Sweden's initial list of six, but now the bigger question is whether he'll be the No. 1 center for Tre Kronor. The 20-year-old just had his 11-game point streak end, but he's gone without a point only three times in his first 17 games and was tied for third in the NHL in scoring as of Friday. He's becoming a star, and the best-on-best Olympics will be a massive stage. Cutter Gauthier could be playing into Team USA consideration after his blazing start. — *Eric Stephens*

Boston Bruins

Morgan Geekie, Team Canada

Geekie has not been on Canada's radar. There are so many Canadian forwards deserving of spots. But since Jan. 1, Geekie has scored 36 goals. Only David Pastrnak (40) has more among NHL forwards. The native of Strathclair, Manitoba, is a late bloomer. But if Canada wants goal scorers, no Canadian has more than Geekie in 2025. — *Fluto Shinzawa*

Buffalo Sabres

Tage Thompson, Team USA

Rasmus Dahlin has already been named to Team Sweden. Of the rest of the Sabres, Thompson probably has the best shot at making a team. He played for Team USA at the World Championship and scored the game-winning goal in the gold medal game. He has 14 points in 17 games to start the season, but he's struggled defensively and hasn't been consistent. He's not a lock for Team USA, but he still has a shot to make a push for a spot. — *Matthew Fairburn*

Calgary Flames

Nazem Kadri, Team Canada

Kadri would need an incredible season to move the needle for Team Canada. But he's a veteran presence who leads his team in scoring, and he just had his best season goals-wise at the age of 34 last year. If nothing else, it'd be a fun story for the Stanley Cup champion who recently played his 1,000th game and called his shot to make the Canadian Olympic team in August. — *Julian McKenzie*

Carolina Hurricanes

Seth Jarvis, Team Canada

Jarvis was the surprise pick by Canada for last year's 4 Nations Face-Off, but that doesn't make him a lock for Milan-Cortina. With young players such as Macklin Celebrini and Connor Bedard making a push for the team, Jarvis will still need to prove he should be wearing the Maple Leaf in February. He's doing that so far, scoring at over a 50-goal pace and contributing as an all-situations mainstay for a Stanley Cup contender. — *Cory Lavolette*

Chicago Blackhawks

Connor Bedard, Team Canada

It was pretty clear Bedard needed a hot start if he had any chance of making Team Canada's Olympic team. He has certainly done that. He's scoring more goals. He's creating more for his linemates. He's playing better defense. He's even winning more faceoffs. Aside from putting together a larger sample, there isn't much more he can do to state his case. — *Scott Powers*

Colorado Avalanche

Mackenzie Blackwood, Team Canada

I'm not sure Blackwood perfectly fits the category of "making a case" to crack an Olympic roster, because he missed the first month of the season after undergoing offseason surgery. But with Jordan Binnington, Adin Hill and Sam Montembeault all off to poor starts, he could easily force his way onto Team Canada's roster. Gabriel Landeskog was also an option here, as he could end up playing for Sweden, but he hasn't exactly "made a case" either, with only 6 points in 18 games. — *Jesse Granger*

Columbus Blue Jackets

Zach Werenski, Team USA

Werenski was a monumental player for Team USA at the 4 Nations, further cementing his status as one of the red, white and blue's pre-eminent international players. Along with Charlie McAvoy and the Hughes brothers, Werenski gives the Americans an incredibly talented blue line. His bona fides as a player who wants to play for his country are well established: Beyond 4 Nations, Werenski has played in three World Championships, two World Juniors and one World U17 Hockey Challenge. — *Aaron Portzline*

Dallas Stars

Jason Robertson, Team USA

There are plenty of locks on the Dallas roster, including Thomas Harley after his 4 Nations fill-in performance in February. But Robertson has a compelling case. If the Americans are willing to move on from older vets such as Vincent Trocheck and Brock Nelson, Robertson has a strong case as one of the more consistent producers in the league, with 109, 80 and 80 points over the last three seasons. He has size, durability (hasn't missed a game in more than three seasons) and big-game experience. — *Mark Lazerus*

Detroit Red Wings

Dylan Larkin, Team USA

Frankly, Larkin's spot on Team USA was already all but assured after his outstanding performance at the 4 Nations, but his start to this season can only have cemented it. He's been one of the top scorers in the league, with 10 goals and 21 points through 17 games, and has done it while taking on tough matchups. The latter is more important to the way he'll be used on Team USA, and his shutdown effort against Connor McDavid earlier this season showed why. — *Max Bultman*

Edmonton Oilers

David Tomasek, Team Czechia

Connor McDavid and Leon Draisaitl have already been named to their countries' teams. Struggles from Evan Bouchard and Mattias Ekholm leave them with an uphill climb to crack crowded Canadian and Swedish blue lines. Stuart Skinner, Zach Hyman and Ryan Nugent-Hopkins are long shots to make Canada's roster for various reasons. That really leaves only Tomasek, a 29-year-old NHL rookie. Tomasek was a member of Czechia's World Championship win on home ice in 2024. — *Daniel Nugent-Bowman*

Florida Panthers

Brad Marchand, Team Canada

If there was ever any doubt about putting the 37-year-old back on Team Canada, Marchand has shattered that with his phenomenal start. With another 2 points Thursday, he has 20 in 16 games, putting him into a tie for 20th in NHL scoring with Sidney Crosby and Leon Draisaitl. Only three Canadians have scored more goals than Marchand's 11 so far this season, and his star turn during last year's Stanley Cup run was nearly Conn Smythe worthy. He's on the team. — *James Mirtle*

Los Angeles Kings

Drew Doughty, Team Canada

With Adrian Kempe (Sweden) and Kevin Fiala (Switzerland) already named to those initial rosters, the focus turns to Doughty and playing in his third Olympics at age 35. He's healthy after battling back from last season's ankle fracture and looking to make the team in a defense-focused shutdown role. Doughty isn't the only one, as Darcy Kuemper's consistent play this season has put him into Canada's goaltending mix. — *Eric Stephens*

Minnesota Wild

Matt Boldy, Team USA

When Boldy made the 4 Nations roster, many accused Wild GM Bill Guerin, who doubles as Team USA's GM, of nepotism. But the 24-year-old star-in-the-making had a solid tournament and is following it up with a strong start to this campaign, with nine goals and 18 points in 18 games. On a U.S. roster pool filled with quality wingers and stiff competition, Boldy is making the case as a no-brainer selection.

— *Michael Russo*

Montreal Canadiens

Nick Suzuki, Team Canada

Team Canada general manager Doug Armstrong was at the Bell Centre twice in a span of a week. He surely had others to look at, but Suzuki was high on his watch list. Before games Thursday, Suzuki had 57 points in 43 games since the return from last season's 4 Nations, a tournament he was not selected for. That was third in the NHL, 3 points ahead of Connor McDavid. He can play center and wing, on the power play and the penalty kill. He has made it impossible for Armstrong not to take him. — *Arpon Basu*

Nashville Predators

Filip Forsberg, Team Sweden

This should be a formality, right? But unlike with teammates Roman Josi and Juuse Saros — Switzerland and Finland — Forsberg has not been officially named to the team. He continues to play at a high level at age 31, despite the Preds' offensive struggles overall, and should be a lock. Steven Stamkos (Canada) and Erik Haula (Finland) are hopefuls with less strong cases. — *Joe Rexrode*

New Jersey Devils

Luke Hughes, Team USA

The Devils already have five players named to their countries' preliminary rosters — Ondřej Palát (Czechia), Šimon Nemec (Slovakia) and Nico Hischier, Timo Meier and Jonas Siegenthaler (Switzerland) — and Jack Hughes (USA) and Jesper Bratt (Sweden) are all but locks. That leaves Luke Hughes and Brett Pesce as the only other Devils with outside shots. Luke Hughes hasn't been amazing to start the year, but he's still playing a career-high 22:56 and has 9 points in 17 games. — *Peter Baugh*

New York Islanders

Matthew Schaefer, Team Canada

Having strong leaders and veterans tends to be prioritized in an international setting. But how about some game-changing skill? Schaefer is thriving while playing big minutes on Long Island, and that should be enough to earn some Olympic consideration. Maybe he isn't ready to play every game — but it would help to have him as an option as a No. 6 or 7. That opportunity would likely be a learning experience to help him prepare for becoming a Team Canada mainstay one day. — *Shayna Goldman*

New York Rangers

Adam Fox, Team USA

Fox took a lot of heat after an underwhelming performance at the 4 Nations, but it's hard to argue he hasn't been one of the league's six-best U.S.-born defensemen to begin this season. He ranks second on the Rangers and fourth among all NHL D with 15 points (three goals and 12 assists) and has been stout in a shutdown role with new partner Vladislav Gavrikov. His 3.0 defensive rating sits eighth overall, according to Hockey Stat Cards, highlighting his high-level impact in all facets. — *Vincent Z. Mercogliano*

Ottawa Senators

Jake Sanderson, Team USA

Sanderson's coming-out party occurred during the 4 Nations Face-Off, helping the United States reach the championship game against Canada before scoring in the final. His two-way play, size, skating ability and familiarity with Team USA's brass make his case the strongest of anyone on the Sens whose spot hasn't been cemented. Shane Pinto is an honorable mention after a strong start and helping the U.S. win the World Championship this summer. — *Julian McKenzie*

Philadelphia Flyers

Trevor Zegras, Team USA

Zegras might be reaching new career heights with the Flyers, contributing 19 points (6 goals, 13 assists) in 17 games. He's easily been the Flyers' most consistent offensive player, both at five-on-five and on the power play. Something that could help his Olympic consideration is his prowess in the shootout, where he's 16 for 24 in his career: the best mark of all time for anyone with more than 20 attempts. — *Kevin Kurz*

Pittsburgh Penguins

Bryan Rust, Team USA

I was surprised Mike Sullivan didn't name Rust to the 4 Nations roster. After all, Rust is an accomplished big-game player, a strong penalty killer and knows how to play with talented linemates, as evidenced by Sidney Crosby's preference for having him on his line. Rust isn't one of the 12 most talented American forwards, but he could make Team USA better. I suspected at the time Sullivan didn't want to be viewed as taking one of his favorites. Maybe he will reconsider now that he's coaching the Rangers. — *Josh Yohe*

San Jose Sharks

Macklin Celebrini, Team Canada

Would it really make sense for Team Canada to keep one of the top scorers in the NHL off its roster? Who cares whether Celebrini is only a few months removed from his 19th birthday? The second-year center is a full-fledged star and already the leader of the resurgent Sharks after being a Calder Trophy finalist as a rookie. The conversation should be about where he fits in Canada's lineup. — *Eric Stephens*

Seattle Kraken

Brandon Montour, Team Canada

Montour is Seattle's most valuable skater. The aggressive right-handed defender has helped the Kraken drive play, win his minutes and has racked up an impressive 9 points across 13 games played. Bolstering Montour's case further, he's a Cup winner with the Florida Panthers and is pretty clearly among the contenders for the second-most dynamic Canadian-born right-shot defenseman (along with Noah Dobson). Montour's form warrants strong consideration from Team Canada's brass. — *Thomas Drance*

St. Louis Blues

Philip Broberg, Team Sweden

The Blues have several players who could be on Olympic rosters: Jordan Binnington, Colton Parayko and Robert Thomas (Canada); Alexandre Texier (France); Dalibor Dvorsky (Slovakia); Pius Suter (Switzerland); and Broberg (Sweden). While it's been a difficult start to the season for a few of them, Broberg is making a strong case, becoming a quality shutdown defenseman. The Blues' GAA was 3.76 heading into Friday's game, and Broberg was the lone blueliner who had been on the ice for more five-on-five goals for than against. — *Jeremy Rutherford*

Tampa Bay Lightning

Brandon Hagel, Team Canada

Of the Lightning's core players, Hagel isn't a lock for Team Canada's roster, but he should be thanks to his all-around game and versatility. Hagel's a pain to play against, can help shut down opponents' best and contribute a lot of even-strength offense. That makes him a perfect fit for Canada's bottom six; he boosts the team's two-way game without costing it any offensive ability. — *Shayna Goldman*

Toronto Maple Leafs

Matthew Knies, Team USA

Knies' game is reaching new heights early in his third NHL season. He's dropping more than a point per game so far, thanks in large part to a boost in playmaking. He ranks among the top Americans in scoring league-wide. His time on ice for the Leafs has ticked up to over 20 minutes a night and includes roles on both special-teams units as well as the top line (once again). Knies plays hard and with force. He's everything Team USA should want in Italy. — *Jonas Siegel*

Utah Mammoth

JJ Peterka, Team Germany

Logan Cooley and Clayton Keller are contenders for Team USA, but Peterka is a lock for Team Germany. Peterka has scored 13 points in 18 games and is coming off a 68-point season in 2024-25. Peterka, Leon Draisaitl and Tim Stützle will be Germany's three most important players. — *Harman Dayal*

Vancouver Canucks

Conor Garland, Team USA

Garland has been Vancouver's leading scorer, best play driver, best penalty killer and best all-around forward this season. The undersized, hardworking winger might be a dark horse to be invited to Milan, but Garland looks like a perfect depth fit as a play-driving, penalty-killing fourth-line player for an American team that ended up having only eight forwards it really trusted against Canada in the 4 Nations final. — *Thomas Drance*

Vegas Golden Knights

Akira Schmid, Team Switzerland

This was a tough one for the Golden Knights, as they have plenty of players who will be playing in the Olympics, but they've all been locks for their countries for quite some time. Schmid is likely a lock for Switzerland as well, but he's gotten a lot more playing time than expected because of Adin Hill's injury. He has filled in nicely for Vegas, helping the team earn points in eight of his nine appearances, making a solid case to be Switzerland's starter. — *Jesse Granger*

Washington Capitals

Tom Wilson, Team Canada

The legitimacy of Wilson's candidacy has been examined, re-examined and re-re-examined, but it's easy to understand; he's a physical force with more than enough skill, speed and intangibles to help it all hang together. We're talking about a multidimensional player and a sensible pick. — *Sean Gentile*

Winnipeg Jets

Mark Scheifele, Team Canada

Gabriel Vilardi and Cole Perfetti were on Team Canada's long list. Josh Morrissey is a lock. That leaves Scheifele, whose 18-point October catapulted him into legitimate Canadian candidacy after making it as far as a standby at the 4-Nations Face-Off. Scheifele has cooled off lately, playing his least effective hockey to start Winnipeg's most recent trip, but he has all of the offensive bona fides — and that includes a point-per-game playoff track record against top competition. — *Murat Ates*

