



**Columbus Blue Jackets News Clips**  
**March 1-3, 2025**

**Columbus Blue Jackets**

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## Columbus Dispatch / Johnny and Matthew Gaudreau to be honored during Columbus Blue Jackets' outdoor game

**By Brian Hedger- March 1, 2025**

The Blue Jackets were joined by a group of their mothers Thursday night in Detroit for a 'Moms' Trip' that included Jane Gaudreau.

The mother of Johnny and Matthew Gaudreau, brothers who were killed Aug. 29 when struck by a vehicle while riding bikes, donned her son's Blue Jackets jersey and joined her peers for the Jackets' impressive 5-2 victory over the Detroit Red Wings at Little Caesar's Arena.

Next up is an outdoor rematch for the Blue Jackets against the Red Wings on Saturday at Ohio Stadium (6 p.m.), where the Gaudreau brothers and their surviving family will be honored during the 2025 Navy Federal Credit Union NHL Stadium Series game.

"We're going to celebrate Johnny and do it in a different way," said Steve Mayer, the NHL's president of content and events. "This is a unique, worldwide forum to make sure that his story and his memory stays alive, and that he is celebrated, and the family is celebrated in a unique way. They'll be a part of everything that goes on Saturday, as well."

The Gaudreau family — including Jane, their father Guy, sisters Kristen and Katie, wives Meredith (Johnny) and Madeline (Matthew) — have celebrated the lives of their sons, brothers and husbands all season. They've made appearances for tribute ceremonies in Columbus, Calgary, Philadelphia, Boston and other locales that were key to the brothers' lives.

The Jackets have also kept Johnny Gaudreau's jersey with them, hanging it in his locker stall, and they changed their postgame "player of the game" award from a blue Civil War era kepi hat to a gray donkey hat that symbolizes his favorite nickname for teammates.

Guy Gaudreau, an avid hockey fan and coach, has also skated at practices with the Blue Jackets, Philadelphia Flyers, Calgary Flames and the U.S. national team prior to the 4 Nations Face-Off tournament, while Johnny Gaudreau Jr., recently celebrated his first birthday in Columbus with a packed Nationwide Arena crowd singing Happy Birthday to him.

Now, another global television audience can remember the Gaudreau brothers along with 90,000-plus expected to attend the first outdoor hockey game in Columbus — a city that surprisingly won over Johnny and Meredith Gaudreau during NHL free agency in July 2022.

## Columbus Dispatch / Cole Sillinger will not play for Columbus Blue Jackets in NHL stadium series matchup

**By Brian Hedger- March 1, 2025**

Blue Jackets center Cole Sillinger will miss Saturday's 2025 Navy Federal Credit Union NHL Stadium Series matchup at Ohio Stadium.

The team used an emergency recall Friday to bring rookie forward Mikael Pyhytia back from AHL Cleveland to replace Sillinger in a rematch of the Jackets' 5-2 road win Thursday against the Detroit Red Wings. Sillinger, 21, was injured early in the first period when bowled over in a collision with Red Wings defenseman Moritz Seider at the blue line.

The fourth year forward briefly left the game for medical assessment and returned later in the first period for just two shifts before ending his night early with an upper-body injury. According to the team, Sillinger will be further evaluated Friday and won't be available Saturday against the Red Wings.

After leaving the game, Blue Jackets captain Boone Jenner slid from left wing on Sillinger's line into the young center's spot in the middle, skating with James van Riemsdyk at left wing and Kent Johnson on the right. They generated three of the Jackets' four goals in the second period, including Van Riemsdyk scoring twice, Johnson netting his 20th goal of the season and Jenner assisting on all three.

Those three are expected to stay together as the second forward line, while Pyhytia draws back into the lineup at Van Riemsdyk's prior spot at left wing on the fourth line.

Sillinger's long-term diagnosis is unknown at this point, but the Blue Jackets should get a better read about that after his medical evaluation Friday.

## Columbus Dispatch / Columbus Blue Jackets Zach Werenski, Sean Monahan to appear in 'FACEOFF: Inside the NHL'

**By Rob Oller- March 1, 2025**

Blue Jackets defenseman Zach Werenski and forward Sean Monahan will soon get extra face time as part of Prime Video's FACEOFF: Inside the NHL six-part docuseries that features a behind-the-scenes look into players' lives off the ice.

The series' second season, set to launch in fall of 2025, will, in part, follow friends Werenski and Monahan as they traverse the 2024-25 season, including the lead-up to Saturday's outdoor game against Detroit in Ohio Stadium. Other featured players include Ottawa Senators captain Brady Tkachuk and Carolina Hurricanes leading goal scorer Seth Jarvis.

Werenski is in the midst of a career season. He leads the Blue Jackets in scoring (63 points) and led the 4 Nations Face-off in points (0-6-6) in four games. Monahan has 41 points in his first season with the CBJ.

## Columbus Dispatch / Jenner clutch for Columbus Blue Jackets after Sillinger injury in Detroit: 4 takeaways

**By Brian Hedger- March 1, 2025**

The NHL couldn't have hoped for a better matchup than what the Blue Jackets and Detroit Red Wings will provide for 90,000-plus fans Saturday night at Ohio Stadium.

After splitting the first two games of their season series with the Blue Jackets' 5-2 victory Thursday in Detroit, the final scheduled meeting this season now carries added importance when they rematch in the 2025 Navy Federal Credit Union NHL Stadium Series matchup.

A Blue Jackets win would boost them into the East's top wild-card spot while dropping the Red Wings, who currently have it via tiebreaker, into the second wild card. A Detroit win keeps the wild-card spots aligned as they are now. Putting it another way, the playoffs are already underway in Detroit and Columbus, where Saturday's attendance is expected to reach the second highest ever to watch an NHL game.

How's that for a storyline?

Here are four takeaways from the Blue Jackets' win in Detroit:

**Boone Jenner gives Columbus Blue Jackets needed boost**

This was Boone Jenner's third game since returning from a preseason shoulder injury that required surgery in early October and forced him to miss the Jackets' first 56 on the schedule.

After picking up two assists over the first two games, Jenner played a key role Thursday in Detroit after Cole Sillinger sustained an upper-body injury in the first period. The Blue Jackets' captain slid over from left wing to fill Sillinger's vacated spot at center on the second line, showing fast chemistry with James van Riemsdyk and Kent Johnson as wingers.

Van Riemsdyk moved up from the fourth line to skate with Jenner and Johnson, and the move quickly paid off. They generated three goals, two scored by Van Riemsdyk and Johnson's 20th of the season, while Jenner assisted on all three. He also won 53% of his draws (8 of 15) while leading all players in the game with seven shots on goal and 12 attempts.

Jenner has primarily handled the Blue Jackets' top center role the past three seasons, so shifting to the middle wasn't a problem. Depth down the middle could become an issue if Sillinger is out for extended time, but Jenner's experience and acumen at center would likely mitigate a daunting challenge.

It's starting to feel like the Blue Jackets can't play a game without losing one or more players.

It happened again in Detroit when Sillinger was injured during a heavy collision with Red Wings defenseman Moritz Seider in the first period. Seider was credited with a hit, but replays showed him bowling over Sillinger after turning forcefully to chase the puck.

Regardless of intent, Sillinger sustained an upper-body injury and left the game after logging four shifts. After initially leaving the bench to get checked out, the fourth-year center returned for just two more shifts before leaving for good. He was officially ruled out at the start of the second period.

Sillinger's status for the outdoor rematch is now in doubt. The only bright side to the situation was Jenner's availability to cover the center position on the second line without missing a beat.

Unheralded Kent Johnson's 20th goal for Columbus Blue Jackets further proof he's one of the NHL's top young forwards

Prior to the early shoulder injury that cost him 14 games, Blue Jackets forward Kent Johnson showed signs he was ready to unfurl an impressive breakout season. Since returning Nov. 21 with two goals in the Blue Jackets' 7-6 overtime win against the Tampa Bay Lightning, Johnson has put together the type of breakout campaign he'd hoped to unfurl in his fourth NHL season.

After contributing two points with a goal and assist Thursday in Detroit, Johnson is scoring at nearly a point-per-game pace with 20 goals, 22 assists and 42 points in 45 games. His +2 plus/minus against the Red Wings also pushed him back into the positive side at +1 in that category. Since the calendar flipped to January 2025, Johnson also has a scoring line of 11-10-21 in 21 games that includes points added in 12 of the past 13 games.

Not many outside Columbus mention Johnson when talking about the NHL's brightest young stars, but he won't stay a hidden gem forever.

Kirill Marchenko goes superhero to seal Columbus Blue Jackets victory

Since returning from a fractured jaw in less than three weeks, wearing facial protection on his helmet, Kirill Marchenko has played with near reckless abandon.

He's starting to play like a new wave Marian Hossa, using relentless drive while battling for pucks and good size to gain inside position in the offensive zone. Marchenko and center Adam Fantilli buzzed around the Red Wings' net all game without producing a goal, but the Russian right wing finally got one over the goal line with Detroit goalie Cam Talbot on the bench for a 6-on-5 advantage.

After shoveling the puck between two defenders, Marchenko raced Seider to it before laying out inside the Detroit zone with a "Superman" dive to tap it into the empty net. As empty-net goals go, it was a thing of beauty that set Marchenko's new career-high for a season at 24 goals.

## Columbus Dispatch / Going to the Blue Jackets Stadium Series game? Here's what you can bring into Ohio Stadium

**By Nathan Hart- March 1, 2025**

The Columbus Blue Jackets are set to take on the Detroit Red Wings in a 2025 Navy Federal Credit Union NHL Stadium Series game at Ohio Stadium on March 1. It will be the venue's first outdoor hockey game ever.

But don't pack your bags just yet. There are some things you're not allowed to bring into The Horseshoe.

Here's what you need to know.

Can you bring a bag or purse into Ohio Stadium?

Only wallets and wristlets no larger than 5"x8"x1" are allowed inside the stadium. Bags and purses are not allowed, according to an NHL fan FAQ.

Visitors who need a bag for medical, dietary or childcare reasons will have to enter the stadium via the press entrance or the Steinbrenner Band Center Entrance and have their bags screened. Only one bag for these reasons is permitted per visitor.

Normally, umbrellas are allowed into NHL games but are prohibited from being opened. This rule is waived for Saturday's outdoor game, but you might not need one.

The weather for the game will be partly sunny, The Dispatch previously reported.

When is the NHL Stadium Series game?

The Blue Jackets will take on the Detroit Red Wings at 6 p.m. on Saturday, March 1.

Where can you buy tickets for the game at Ohio Stadium?

Tickets are available for purchase via ticketmaster.com.

Where can you livestream or listen to the game?

The game will be available for viewing on ESPN. It will also hit the radio airwaves on 97.1 The Fan.

## **Columbus Dispatch / Going to the Blue Jackets' Stadium Series at Ohio State? Here's what to know about parking.**

**By Nathan Hart- March 1, 2025**

The Columbus Blue Jackets' first game in Ohio Stadium (and the first outdoor hockey game at the venue ever) is almost here.

The Blue Jackets will take on the Detroit Red Wings in Ohio Stadium at 6 p.m. March 1. The game, officially known as the 2025 Navy Federal Credit Union NHL Stadium Series, will attract upward of 90,000 hockey fans.

Most of these fans will have to deal with the pesky problem of parking their cars. The NHL and Ohio State University have several parking options for fans, but they don't come cheap.

Here's where you can park for the 2025 Navy Federal Credit Union NHL Stadium Series game.

Where can you park for the 2025 Stadium Series game in Columbus?

Game attendees can pre-purchase parking for lots near the Schottenstein Center and one in the Neil Garage on OSU's website. Parking tickets available online start at \$50 and go up to \$200.

Day-of-game parking will be available in multiple credit card-only campus lots for \$30. There are three clusters of day-of-game lots: one on the West side of campus, one northwest of Ohio Stadium and another just south of The Oval.

Consult the map above to see for yourself. The day-of-game lots are in bright green.

A shuttle will run from the west side of campus to Coffey Road Park.

When do parking lots open?

Parking lots for the Stadium Series game open at 8 a.m. Saturday, according to the NHL. Cars will have to vacate the lots by 8 a.m. Sunday.

What can I bring to the Stadium Series parking lot?

The NHL and OSU have a number of rules for parkers.

Charcoal grilling is not allowed on campus, except in some designated locations. Open burning is not permitted.

Consuming alcohol or possessing an open alcohol container in a public place is illegal on campus as it is everywhere else.

RV drivers must buy a permit to park in the RV lots.

Tailgating setups must fit within the parking space provided. They cannot take up other parking spaces, crosswalks, pedestrian areas, unloading spaces or interfere with traffic flow.

Drivers of vehicles that do not fit in a normal parking space will have to buy an RV permit and park in the RV lot or the Ohio State Fairgrounds.

## Columbus Dispatch / Johnny Gaudreau's impact felt in Blue Jackets Stadium Series victory

**By Brian Hedger- March 2, 2025**

Shortly after taking the job last summer as the Blue Jackets' head coach, Dean Evason paid a visit to his new team's top scorer.

That's when he met Johnny Gaudreau in South Jersey for the first and only time. Evason left the meeting impressed by Gaudreau's thoughts, which he heard not long before the Blue Jackets star and his brother, Matthew, were tragically killed in South Jersey when struck by a vehicle while riding bicycles.

"I just wanted to get a feel for him and him a feel for me, and what struck me is that not one time did he say, 'I want to play with this guy, or 'Our power play should be this setup,' or whatever. All he said was just, 'I want to win. I want to win, and I want this to be a close team.' And that's what our guys are."

The Blue Jackets have shown it from the start of training camp through their showdown Saturday night at Ohio Stadium against the Detroit Red Wings in the 2025 NHL Stadium Series matchup. Gaudreau's presence was felt throughout the day, including each team giving a nod to the memory of Gaudreau and his brother.

The Red Wings exited their bus at the stadium clad in jerseys worn by each Gaudreau brother throughout their careers, while the Blue Jackets arrived for the NHL's version of an OSU Skull Session at St. John Arena wearing a different kind of Gaudreau "uniform."

Every player wore Johnny Gaudreau's favorite outfit away from the ice, complete with light blue hoodies, black pants, black ballcaps and even black Uggs on their feet.

"He loved the game, and he loved his teammates," Blue Jackets captain Boone Jenner said. "He loved everything about it. He loved his family, and that family skate (Friday) would've been special for him too. So, we think about him and what he would do a lot of times: 'What would Johnny do or what would Johnny say?' and 'How would he approach this?'"

Gaudreau would've savored every second of Saturday's fanfare in Columbus, the city that he stunningly picked as a free agent in July 2022 to continue his NHL career. Gaudreau's only two seasons for the Blue Jackets included a lot of losses, many frustrating nights and always the feeling that it was short-term growing pains for a team he believed could develop into a playoff contender.

The game Saturday night had a playoff atmosphere, and not just because it packed 94,751 fans into a historic college football stadium as the second-largest crowd in NHL history. The Red Wings and Blue Jackets held the top two wild-card spots in the NHL's Eastern Conference, in that order, and the winner was set to skate away with the first top spot at 68 points.

The 5-3 win, off a game-winner from Justin Danforth with just over two minutes remaining and an empty net goal from Adam Fantilli to seal the victory with 68 seconds left, went to Gaudreau's Blue Jackets.

Those are the kind of stakes Gaudreau dreamed about bringing to the Blue Jackets and Columbus, and in a way that's exactly what he's doing in spirit.

The Jackets carry his No. 13 everywhere they go.

They hand out a donkey hat as a postgame locker room award following wins because Gaudreau called all of them "a donkey" at one time or another. Goalie Elvis Merzlikins included a mural of Gaudreau

shooting a puck at Blue Jackets goalie Matiss Kivlenieks, who was killed July 4, 2021 in a fireworks incident at former goalie coach Manny Legace's home.

The Blue Jackets were also led out of the home tunnel Saturday night by Meredith Gaudreau, Johnny's wife, and coaches on both benches wore No. 13 pins on their winter coats. It was simply a night for "Johnny Hockey" to shine once again on one of his sport's biggest stages.

"There's no doubt he would've had a blast and we're going to play for him (Saturday) like we have all year and honor him that way, the best way we can," Jenner said Friday. "He would've loved this, everything about it."

## Columbus Dispatch / Columbus Blue Jackets' first outdoor game draws second-highest NHL outdoor attendance

**By Brian Hedger- March 2, 2025**

After a week of anticipating Ohio Stadium becoming the site of the second-largest crowd in NHL history, it's now official.

According to the NHL, a crowd of 94,751 showed up Saturday night to watch the Blue Jackets play the Detroit Red Wings at Ohio State's "Horseshoe" for the league's 2025 Stadium Series matchup.

The only crowd larger to watch an NHL game was for the 2014 Winter Classic at Michigan Stadium, where an announced crowd of 105,491 showed up to watch the Toronto Maple Leafs defeat the Red Wings in a shootout. Ohio Stadium's listed capacity for Ohio State football games is 102,780, so Saturday's game wasn't going to set a record even at the iconic venue's full capacity.

The NHL along with its broadcast partner ESPN also took out about 10,000 seats to place TV camera mounts plus a large stage on the South end of the field for Twenty One Pilots to perform during the first intermission.

Steve Mayer, the NHL's president of content and events, said earlier in the week the league was expecting the game to reach the second-highest attendance mark. Most of the tickets were also purchased by people with Ohio zip codes.

"What we're finding lately is exactly what happened here in Columbus, that fans take their time," Mayer said. "There was a lot (happening) in this market a few months ago with one college football game after another college football game, and we recognized that. We knew that sales would pick up late and they (did). What a testament to the Columbus Blue Jackets that you can fill a stadium with 90,000 people. That's just unbelievable."

## Columbus Dispatch / Blue Jackets leapfrog Red Wings in Eastern Conference standings with win in outdoor game

**By Lori Schmidt- March 2, 2025**

The Blue Jackets beat the Red Wings 5-3 in Columbus' first outdoor game, which started at 6:36 p.m. when the temperature at Ohio Stadium was 29.4 degrees.

The Jackets' win allowed them to leapfrog Detroit into the Eastern Conference's first wild card playoff spot.

Justin Danforth scored the game winner with 2:17 remaining. It was a hustle play that he capped by jumping on his own rebound and putting the puck past Cam Talbot.

Adam Fantilli would add an empty-netter less than a minute later.

Danforth's heroics were necessary because Alex DeBrincat had two goals on the evening, the second of which had tied the game 3-3 with 3:24 to go. Red Wings forward Patrick Kane also hit the net in the third period.

FAN GUIDE: Columbus Blue Jackets to play at Ohio Stadium on March 1. Here's what you need to know

Blue Jackets forwards Dmitri Voronkov (off the power play) and Mathieu Olivier had rapid-fire goals late in the second period. Denton Mateychuk opened the scoring and gave the Jackets a 1-0 second-period advantage with his third goal of the season. However, the Red Wings would counter on a DeBrincat power play tally.

The Red Wings got 14 shots to the Jackets' six in the scoreless first period, before the band 21 Pilots performed at the intermission. As lead singer Tyler Joseph said, "There are two places in the world tonight. There's Columbus, Ohio..." He paused dramatically. "And there's everywhere else!"

Blue Jackets vs Red Wings score updates

TEAMS	1st period	2nd period	3rd period	Final
Blue Jackets	0	3	2	5
Red Wings	0	1	2	3

Today's other NHL scores

Columbus Blue Jackets win 2025 Stadium Series Game final score/stats

STAT	RED WINGS	BLUE JACKETS
Shots on goal	46	21
Faceoff percentage	49.1%	50.9%
Power play	1/2	1/1
Penalty minutes	2	2
Hits	19	21
Blocked shots	14	22
Giveaways	17	20

Takeaways      5      7

18:52 third period | Adam Fantilli may have iced outdoor for Blue Jackets

Adam Fantilli scored an empty net goal in front of a surprisingly still robust crowd, given the 26-degree temperature and 18-degree wind chill.

17:43 third period | Justin Danforth's effort play puts Columbus in front

Justin Danforth's hustle resulted in a third-period goal and a 4-3 Columbus lead. He scored off his own rebound

16:36 third period | DeBrincat scores his second

Detroit won a faceoff, then a shot came out really far for Alex DeBrincat to pounce on. He scored his second of the night to tie the game 3-3

Blue Jackets fan of the game

The Columbus supporter named fan of the game from the throng of 94,751 was wearing a Boomer costume because not all heroes wear capes.

3:34 third period | Patrick Kane scores from out top

The Red Wings kept the puck in the Blue Jackets zone for a bit and eventually capitalized with Patrick Kane firing a shot from 43 feet away that found itself behind goalie Elvis Merzlikins.

Stats after two periods

STAT	RED WINGS	BLUE JACKETS
Shots on goal	25	13
Faceoff percentage	42.4%	57.6%
Power play	1/1	1/1
Penalty minutes	2	2
Hits	19	21
Blocked shots	8	16
Giveaways	13	13
Takeaways	3	7

Vibe update:

The cannon did not fire after Dmitri Voronkov's goal, however, it did fire after Mathieu Olivier's goal 35 seconds later. The goals in quick succession drew loud cheers from the crowd of 90,000 plus.

There were also cheers for the Red Wings goal but not at any volume comparable to the cheers after any Blue Jackets goal.

Boone Jenner was interviewed by the in-stadium person after the second period, drawing large "Boo-ne" cheers from the crowd as well.

In a notable moment in the second period, Blue Jackets fans passed around a huge banner with Johnny Gaudreau's name and number on it.

— Bethany Bruner

Elsewhere in the NHL...

Sportsnet reports that former Blue Jackets defenseman Seth Jones has been traded by the Chicago Blackhawks to the Florida Panthers for Spencer Knight and a first-round draft pick.

Earlier today, former Blue Jacket Gus Nyquist was sent from the Nashville Predators to the Minnesota for a 2026 second-round draft pick.

17:55 second period | Mathieu Olivier wakes up the cannon

Capping a series of events that started with Seider's penalty and happened so quickly, the press box announcer shared them all at one time, Mathieu Olivier scored off the backhand. He got the puck from Justin Danforth.

A Bronx cheer went up from the crowd when the Blue Jackets' famed cannon fired because it had misfired after Vorokov's power play

17:23 second period | Dmitri Voronkov records power play goal

Just 8 seconds after Mortiz Seider took a tripping penalty, Dmitri Voronkov put the Blue Jackets back out in front with a power play wrist shot.

The assists went to Kent Johnson and Zach Werenski.

13:06 second period | Red Wings even score on power play

Columbus' Dante Fabbro took the first penalty of the game, an Interference call against Alex DeBrincat. DeBrincat would make the Blue Jackets pay for that with a sharp-angle shot from goalie Elvis Merzlikins' left.

Patrick Kane and Mortiz Seider were credited with assists.

5:41 second period | Blue Jackets' Denton Mateychuk scores

Columbus, though getting fewer pucks on the night than the Detroit, holds a 1-0 lead in the second period thanks to Denton Mateychuk's wrist shot. His goal comes off assists from Boone Jenner and James van Riemsdyk.

First period stats

STAT	RED WINGS	BLUE JACKETS
Shots on goal	14	6
Faceoff percentage	43.8%	56.3%
Power play	0/0	0/0
Penalty minutes	0	0
Hits	12	13
Blocked shots	2	9
Giveaways	5	8
Takeaways	1	5

Gaudreau family welcomed with cheers at Ohio Stadium

During a stoppage in play with 4:25 left to go in the first period, Jane Gaudreau, the mother of Johnny Gaudreau, was shown on the stadium's screens.

The crowd of more than 90,000 cheered her warmly and chants of "Johnny Hockey" echoed around the stadium.

—Bethany Bruner

Pregame excitement includes flyover, fireworks

As the game neared puck drop, the crowd became audibly excited for each team's entrance to the ice. The Blue Jackets were led on to the ice by Meredith Gaudreau, the wife of Johnny Gaudreau, as well as the couple's two children, Noa and Johnny Jr. Gaudreau's mother, Jane, and Blue Jackets Sean Monahan and Erik Gudbranson.

A ceremonial puck drop by Ohio State University president Ted Carter was "won" by Blue Jackets captain Boone Jenner.

The national anthem was performed by Ohio State University's Athletic Band and a flyover accompanied the anthem, as well as fireworks.

— Bethany Bruner

Game on

The puck has dropped for the Blue Jackets-Red Wings game. It officially started at 6:36 p.m. The temperature was 29.4 degrees Fahrenheit with no precipitation.

Important broadcast update:

With the Alabama-Tennessee game running long, the start of the Blue Jackets-Red Wings will air on ESPNNews, rather than ESPN.

Nobody is having more fun than Brutus

Ohio State mascot Brutus Buckeye is here at the 2025 Stadium series game, and so far, he has thrown snowballs, run around with a hockey stick and appeared to receive a surprise handshake from Michigan's Kent Johnson.

Columbus Blue Jackets scratches

The Blue Jackets have scratched Jack Johnson, Jordan Harris and Cole Sillinger. Johnson and Harris are healthy scratches while Sillinger has an unspecified upper-body injury.

Officials for the Stadium Series game

Francis Charron - Referee

Kendrick Nicholson - Referee

Travis Gawryletz - Linesman

Jesse Marquis - Linesman

Detroit Red Wings scratches

The Red Wings have scratched William Lagesson, Michael Rasmussen and Sheldon Dries.

Vibe update:

ESPN has a booth set up near the north end of the stadium where the broadcast team of Steve Levy, Mark Messier and PK Subban are doing live coverage. The Ohio State University Marching Band is also in the north portion of the stadium and will be providing music during breaks in the action.

— Bethany Bruner

Blue Jackets' stats leaders

Points: Zach Werenski, 62

Goals: Kirill Marchenko, 24

Assists: Werenski, 44

Penalty minutes: Mathieu Olivier: 99

Blue Jackets vs Red Wings time today

Date: Saturday, March 1

Time: 6 p.m. ET

Location: Ohio Stadium (Columbus)

What channel is Blue Jackets vs Red Wings on?

TV Channel: ESPN

According to ESPN, Saturday's broadcast will feature "state-of-the-art technology, including aerial coverage, Skycam, on-ice skatecam and virtual graphics."

The studio crew of Steve Levy, Mark Messier and P.K. Subban will be on-site in Columbus along with reporters Marty Smith, Emily Kaplan and Kevin Weekes. Play-by-play will be handled by Sean McDonough. Saturday's color analyst is Ray Ferraro.

How to livestream Blue Jackets vs. Red Wings

Streaming options for the Stadium Series game at Ohio Stadium include ESPN+ and Disney+. Of special note, one of the ESPN+ streams is the "NHL in ASL," which will feature deaf commentators doing play-by-play and analysis in American Sign Language.

Where can I listen to the Blue Jackets on the radio?

Radio: WBNS-FM (97.1)

"The Fan" will air Saturday's game at Ohio Stadium with longtime radio voice Bob McElligott on the call. Special pregame coverage starts at noon.

Blue Jackets vs Red Wings history

Series record: 1-1.

Blue Jackets' last win: 5-2, Thursday.

Red Wings' last win: 5-4, Jan. 2.

The Blue Jackets are 47-54-15 all-time against the Red Wings.

Have the Blue Jackets ever played an outdoor game?

Famously, no.

The Blue Jackets will be playing their first outdoor game. The Red Wings have played in two Winter Classics (2009, 2014), one Stadium Series (2016) and the Centennial Classic (2017).

Blue Jackets hockey schedule 2024-25

Full schedule here. Results from 2025 below:

DATE	OPPONENT	RESULT	RECORD
Thu, Jan 2	vs Detroit	5-4, L	16-17-6
Sat, Jan 4	vs St. Louis	6-4, W	17-17-6
Tue, Jan 7	at Pittsburgh	4-3 SO, W	17-17-6
Thu, Jan 9	vs Seattle	6-2, W	19-17-6
Sat, Jan 11	at St. Louis	2-1, W	20-17-6
Tue, Jan 14	vs Philadelphia	3-2 SO, W	21-17-6
Thu, Jan 16	vs San Jose	4-1, W	22-17-6
Sat, Jan 18	at New York Rangers	1-0 SO, L	22-17-7
Mon, Jan 20	at New York Islanders	3-1, L	22-18-7
Wed, Jan 22	at Toronto	5-1, W	23-18-7
Thu, Jan 23	at Carolina	7-4, L	23-19-7
Sat, Jan 25	vs Los Angeles	3-2 OT, W	24-19-7
Thu, Jan 30	at Vegas	2-1 OT, W	25-19-7
Fri, Jan 31	at Utah	3-2 OT, W	26-19-7
Sun, Feb 2	at Dallas	5-3, L	26-20-7
Tue, Feb 4	at Buffalo	3-2, L	26-21-7
Thu, Feb 6	vs Utah	3-2 OT, L	26-21-8
Sat, Feb 8	vs New York Rangers	4-3, L	26-22-8
Sat, Feb 22	vs Chicago	5-1 W	27-22-8
Tue, Feb 25	vs Dallas	6-4, W	28-22-8
Thu, Feb 27	at Detroit	5-2, W	29-22-8
Sat, Mar 1	vs Detroit	6:00 PM	

Record: 29-22-8, one spot behind the Red Wings, who owns the first Eastern Conference wild card spot

NHL Stadium Series past results

2024: Devils 6, Flyers 3 and Rangers 6, Islanders 5 (OT) at MetLife Stadium.

2023: Hurricanes 4, Capitals 1 at Carter-Finley Stadium.

2022: Lightning 3, Predators 2 at Nissan Stadium.

2021: Postponed (COVID-19 pandemic).

2020: Kings 3, Avalanche 1 at Falcon Stadium.

2019: Flyers 4, Penguins 3 (OT) at Lincoln Financial Field.

2018: Capitals 5, Leafs 2 at Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium.

2017: Penguins 4, Flyers 2 at Heinz Field.

2016: Detroit Red Wings 5, Avalanche 3 at Coors Field and Wild 6, Blackhawks 1 at TCF Bank Stadium.

2015: Kings 2, Sharks 1 at Levi's Stadium.

2014: Rangers 7, Devils 3 and Rangers 2, Islanders 1 at Yankee Stadium | Ducks 3, Kings 0 at Dodger Stadium | Blackhawks 5, Penguins 1 at Soldier Field.

Where is the 2026 NHL Stadium Series Game?

The outdoor games for next season have already been announced with hockey heading to the Sunshine State in 2026.

It gets started with the Panthers hosting the Rangers in the 2026 NHL Winter Classic on Jan. 2, 2026 at LoanDepot Park in Miami, home of the Marlins.

On Feb. 1, 2026, the action travels 273 miles northwest with an Atlantic Division showdown when the Lightning take on the Bruins in the 2026 NHL Stadium Series game from Raymond James Stadium in Tampa Bay, home of the Buccaneers.

## **Columbus Dispatch / How to watch Blue Jackets NHL game vs Red Wings: Tip-off time, TV channel to watch game**

**By Lori Schmidt- March 2, 2025**

Of the NHL's 32 teams, 29 have played in an outdoor game. Of the stragglers? One is the Utah Hockey Club, another is the Florida Panthers.

The final team that has been waiting its turn gets its shot this weekend.

Here's how you can watch the Blue Jackets make team history – Columbus' first outdoor game, a 6 p.m. faceoff Saturday against the Detroit Red Wings.

Blue Jackets vs Red Wings time today

Date: Saturday, March 1

Start time: 6 p.m. Eastern

The puck will drop at 6 p.m. at Ohio Stadium.

What channel is Blue Jackets vs Red Wings on?

TV Channel: ESPN

According to ESPN, Saturday's broadcast will feature "state-of-the-art technology, including aerial coverage, Skycam, on-ice skatecam and virtual graphics."

The studio crew of Steve Levy, Mark Messier and P.K. Subban will be on-site in Columbus along with reporters Marty Smith, Emily Kaplan and Kevin Weekes. Play-by-play will be handled by Sean McDonough. Saturday's color analyst is Ray Ferraro.

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Where can I listen to the Blue Jackets on the radio?

Radio: WBNS-FM (97.1)

"The Fan" will air Saturday's game at Ohio Stadium with longtime radio voice Bob McElligott on the call.

## Columbus Dispatch / Meredith Gaudreau issues 'thank you' for tributes in NHL Stadium Series outdoor game

**By Brian Hedger- March 3, 2025**

Saturday was a day that won't be forgotten in Columbus, where the city celebrated a Blue Jackets outdoor game with the fanfare of an Ohio State football game at Ohio Stadium.

It was also a day for the Blue Jackets, Detroit Red Wings and NHL to paid homage to Johnny Gaudreau and his brother Matthew, who were killed Aug. 29 when they were struck by a drunk driver while riding bikes near their family home in New Jersey.

The way the brothers' lives were honored throughout the day was powerful, leading to Johnny's wife, Meredith, to issue a statement of thanks Sunday afternoon.

"Thank you from the bottom of my heart to the NHL, Detroit Red Wings and especially the Columbus Blue Jackets for honoring John in so many ways during the Stadium Series this weekend," the statement reads. "The management, players, wives and fans from both organizations made my family feel so loved and supported. Thank you most of all for including our children by making them a big part of all the events throughout the weekend. I know John truly appreciates it as much as I do."

The Gaudreau family was incorporated into many aspects of the day and game, including Meredith and Jane Gaudreau, Johnny and Matthew's mom, leading the Blue Jackets into Ohio Stadium and later onto the field from the home tunnel — each carrying one of Johnny and Meredith's young children.

A blue "Gaudreau 13" banner was also unfurled among fans on the East side of the stadium during a stoppage, coaches from each team wore No. 13 pins on their coats and players from both teams honored the Gaudreaus with their arrival outfits.

The Red Wings wore various jerseys from the brothers' non-NHL hockey careers, while the Blue Jackets styled themselves in "signature Johnny" outfits that included black designer ball caps, slate blue hoodies from Avalon Surf Shop in New Jersey, black sweatpants and black UGGs.

"It just reminds us of him," Blue Jackets captain Boone Jenner said. "That's why we did it. There's so many days when we've seen him come to the rink like that, and we have some pictures where he's pretty much wearing the same thing. It just puts some good memories in our minds, I guess. ... he was with us here tonight and he's been with us all season."

## Columbus Dispatch / Columbus Blue Jackets 5, Detroit Red Wings 3: Memorable moments from NHL Stadium Series

**By Brian Hedger- March 3, 2025**

Ohio State's Victory Bell, located atop the Southeast tower of Ohio Stadium, started to chime shortly before the victorious Blue Jackets returned to their locker room Saturday night.

A gift from the OSU graduating classes of 1943, 1944 and 1954, the 2,420-pound bell has tolled for the past 70 years following Buckeye football victories. Members of the Alpha Phi Omega national co-ed service fraternity are charged with ringing it for durations of 15 minutes for most triumphs and 30 minutes for victories over a certain school located in Southeast Michigan.

It's a big deal at OSU, so an NHL team with a nickname that starts with "blue" prompting the bell to ring speaks volumes about how much pride exists in Columbus for its sporting community. The Blue Jackets defeated "The State Up North's" Red Wings, 5-3, in the NHL's 2025 Stadium Series matchup at OSU's famed Horseshoe, and the Victory Bell's repetitious chime was the culmination of a fun, frozen day packed with memories and moments that won't soon be forgotten in Columbus.

Justin Danforth had quite a night centering the Blue Jackets' third line, and not merely because he scored the winning goal just 1:07 after Alex DeBrincat tied it, 3-3, for the Red Wings late in the third period.

Danforth also assisted Mathieu Olivier's tally for a 3-1 lead on goals scored 32 seconds apart late in the second and finished the night with a team-high six hits. One of those hits by Danforth, who's listed at 5 feet 8, was a shoulder-to-chest smash that injured Elmer Soderblom (6-8) when the crown of his helmet knocked into the towering forward's head as a result of the hit.

The hit sparked a near fight for Olivier, who rushed to Danforth's defense, and wasn't the only controversial play the Jackets center stoked. He also got away with a high stick against Simon Edvinsson seconds before scoring the winning goal off the rebound of his own shot.

Should it have been called? Did Edvinsson embellish it while throwing his head back when Danforth's stick rode high? The answer might be yes to both, but it doesn't matter now. Danforth's goal counted, the Blue Jackets won, and he was handed the Jackets' postgame donkey hat award that honors the memory of Johnny Gaudreau and his dry sense of humor.

"Johnny's here with us in spirit and he's been with us all year, so to get the 'Donkey' on a night like tonight ... I know he's laughing up there and calling me a donkey, because he liked to joke around with me a lot. He's such a big part of our group, so it was special for us to get the win for him and his family."

Gaudreau family leads Columbus Blue Jackets into Ohio Stadium, out of home tunnel for NHL Stadium Series game

Speaking of Gaudreau's family, they were included throughout the day and evening in ways that warmed hearts amid frigid temperatures.

Meredith Gaudreau, Johnny's widow, and their young children — daughter, Noa, and son, Johnny — led the Blue Jackets into the stadium to conclude a spirited pregame walk from a pep rally at St. John Arena. Along with Jane Gaudreau, Johnny's mother, the Gaudreau family also joined Sean Monahan and Erik Gudbranson to lead the Blue Jackets out of the home tunnel to start the game.

Meredith and Jane beamed, taking in a cherished moment to celebrate the lives of Johnny and his brother, Matthew, who were killed Aug. 29 when struck by a drunk driver while they biked in Salem County, New Jersey. After the tragedy and heartbreak they've endured, seeing their smiles was uplifting.

Each team had a Gaudreau theme for their arrival attire to the game. The Red Wings wore jerseys from the Gaudreau brothers' careers, while the Blue Jackets used a different type of Gaudreau authenticity.

Their arrival "look" was modeled after Gaudreau's laid back fashion combinations, which he wore most of the time to and from practices. It was subtle, so the purpose behind their look didn't immediately register. Once the meaning spread about the reason for the Jackets' slate blue Avalon Surf Shop hoodies, black sweatpants, black designer ball caps and black UGGs, it caused goosebumps.

The team's veteran "leadership group" came up with the idea, including captain Boone Jenner.

"We thought of it quite a while ago and we just thought it was fitting," Jenner said. "To us, that's a signature Johnny fit, and we've seen him come to the rink in that or something very similar. It's just a special thing we wanted to do for him, and we've had so many good times with him, in those clothes. I mean, it was special. ... It was special to wear that and come in like that, for us."

Elvis Merzlikins, fresh off making 43 saves to earn first star of the game, wore it into the postgame interview room. Smiling, he added: "Also, they are very comfortable."

It wasn't billed as a Skull Session, which OSU reserves for its free pep rallies inside St. John Arena that precede home football games, but the NHL PreGame Pep Rally mirrored the same look and feel.

Fans lined up outside the entrances to St. John Arena well before doors opened, and they filed into the venerable building in droves once they could. The venerable building, which holds roughly 13,000, was filled almost to the top by the time O.A.R., a band with strong Ohio and OSU ties, welcomed the Blue Jackets to the party at the start of their free concert.

Watching a team dressed like Johnny Gaudreau followed by coaches and execs sporting "CBJ" letterman's jackets stroll across the stage as a chant of "C-B-J!" filled the historic arena was a stirring sight and sound.

"I didn't really even know what a pep rally was to be honest with you," Blue Jackets center Adam Fantilli said. "I mean, if that's what those are, that was pretty sweet. The walls were steep. It felt like everyone was on top of you. That was awesome."

The OSU Athletic Band played sets at the pep rally and against at the game. Popular rock bands O.A.R and Twenty One Pilots, which both have strong Columbus and OSU ties, delivered fantastic free concerts. The Blue Jackets' cannon, transported by flatbed truck Friday to The Shoe, blasted louder than ever — except for one missed opportunity due to a technical issue after Dmitri Voronkov's goal late in the second period.

Roars emanating from a crowd of 94,751, the second-largest to ever witness an NHL outdoor game, were felt as much as heard. Having a small crew unfurl cannon helmet "stickers" on a field designed resemble a silver Buckeyes helmet following Blue Jackets goals added even more fun to the standard cannon booms.

Military fighter jets roared overhead during the national anthem, the OSU band also formed a rink sized adaptation of Script Ohio during an opening ceremony — including a sousaphone player dotting the 'i' — and then the sounds of outdoor hockey began with skates and sticks slashing across the ice.

Ring the bell again.

## The Athletic / Blue Jackets awed by Ohio Stadium ahead of NHL Stadium Series: 'It's incredible'

**By Aaron Portzline- March 1, 2025**

COLUMBUS, Ohio — The scene Friday in Ohio Stadium was enough to leave some members of the Columbus Blue Jackets breathless. As they walked down a tunnel to the field for a late-afternoon practice, players looked up into the sea of seats with wonder, pointed at their infamous cannon and marveled at the bright, crisp rink that's been built in the middle of a football field.

If they were already excited for Saturday's Stadium Series against the Detroit Red Wings, well, the anticipation is almost overwhelming now. It was even enough for a Michigan man to place a temporary pause on the rivalry with Ohio State.

"It's incredible," Blue Jackets defenseman Zach Werenski said. "There's no rivalry for me this weekend. I'm just putting it out there now, I don't really care about it. It's a historic venue. (Ohio State is) the national champs. There's a buzz around that.

"It's great for our fans, our city. It's great for our team and our organization. The whole event, for me, is just super special. It was really cool walking out there today and seeing it from ice level. We were on the field (for a football game) earlier this year, so we kind of had some idea what it's like out there.

"But to see a hockey rink out there is a totally different element."

Blue Jackets captain Boone Jenner, the club's longest-tenured player, was in the stadium earlier this week to see how the rink was progressing. He's attended, by his count, "12 or 13" Ohio State football games and is an unabashed Buckeyes fan, he said.

But walking down the tunnel and seeing the completed layout on Friday ...

"It kind of took my breath away, to be honest," Jenner said. "It looks amazing."

The Blue Jackets and Red Wings, tied with 66 points, are in the throes of a playoff race, giving this game some added juice. Detroit holds the first wild card in the Eastern Conference, and Columbus holds the second, but they have Ottawa, Boston and the New York Rangers chasing closely behind.

Blue Jackets coach Dean Evason had the Blue Jackets run five-on-five drills to loosely simulate game situations so that players could get used to the ice, the depth perception beyond the glass — fans are further away in this massive building — and get a mild sweat going.

But it was mostly about soaking in the atmosphere and sharing the experience with family and friends. After the Blue Jackets' 45-minute practice, wives and girlfriends, parents, kids and longtime friends were brought onto the ice to skate, too.

"I just feel lucky and grateful to be here and to be part of it," said Blue Jackets center Sean Kuraly, who grew up in the Columbus suburbs and has attended scores of Ohio State games through the years. His two brothers took the ice with him for the family skate.

"I'm going to try to enjoy it as much as I can," he said. "Some of the memories of the game we had at Notre Dame Stadium (when he played for Boston in the 2019 Winter Classic) have lived on in a really special way. So whether it's a kid watching the game tomorrow or an adult, these are the moments that stick with you for a long time."

Evason has coached in two previous outdoor games: in the 2022 Winter Classic when he was coach of the Minnesota Wild and in the 2011 Winter Classic when he was an assistant coach with the Washington Capitals.

The game on Saturday will be played at a typical NHL pace. But Evason is encouraging his players to take time, in the midst of the game, to look around and soak it up.

"The timeouts is when you have that opportunity," Evason said. "You're sitting there and you look up and see the stars, and it's incredible. Enjoy it. Look around. And when the puck gets dropped again, let's get after it."

"We're very fortunate to be in the role we're in, whether you're a coach, a trainer or a player, especially a player. You shouldn't take for granted what we do for a living, and to share that with your family or friends ... it's amazing."

Even as the Blue Jackets smiled and laughed on Friday, they recognized one of their teammates who wasn't present. As has been the case all season, they talked about and thought about Johnny Gaudreau, who was killed in August along with his brother Matthew when they were struck by a car while riding bikes in New Jersey.

As players and coaches soaked in the scene, Evason said he had the following back and forth with Jenner.

"I asked him, 'Do you think Johnny would like to be here?'" Evason said. "And Boone said, 'Hell yes he would.'"

Meredith Gaudreau, Johnny Gaudreau's widow, is going to lead the Blue Jackets onto the ice before the game on Saturday, Evason told reporters. Just a week ago, Blue Jackets fans in Nationwide Arena serenaded Johnny Gaudreau Jr. with "Happy Birthday" when he attended a game on his 1st birthday.

The NHL is planning to honor the Gaudreaus during Saturday's game.

"Our group has been very close since Day 1, and Johnny is still teaching us," Evason said. "We talk about him a lot. His mother (Jane) was with us (on Thursday in Detroit) for the mom's trip. His dad (Guy) was on the ice with us earlier this season. There are so many ways that Johnny has inspired us."

"I didn't get the opportunity to coach him ... but everybody who speaks of him will tell you about his love of hockey, and our guys have embraced that. He's with us all the time."

## The Athletic / Amid the spectacle, Blue Jackets honor Johnny Gaudreau and fan base with an important win

**By Aaron Portzline- March 2, 2025**

COLUMBUS, Ohio — It took a moment for the scene to make sense.

Though other NHL clubs have made grand and obvious entrances to celebrate the uniqueness of their outdoor games — everything from Elvis jumpers to Peaky Blinders suits — the Columbus Blue Jackets strolled into St. John Arena wearing hoodies, baggy pants and black-on-black ball caps.

Blue Jackets captain Boone Jenner called it the “ultimate Johnny fit.”

No, Johnny Gaudreau — for all his flash and dash on the ice — was not a fancy dresser, preferring a T-shirt or sweatshirt, usually one that paid homage to a local business from back home in New Jersey. There was a roar when the players walked into their pregame pep rally, but a wave of emotion seemed to sweep the crowd when the realization hit.

This was a theme for the entire night. On the biggest stage the Blue Jackets have ever known, and quite possibly one of the biggest nights in the sporting history of this city, the Blue Jackets beat the Detroit Red Wings 5-3 in a Stadium Series game in venerable Ohio Stadium.

It was a spectacle 25 years in the making, and yet it seemed to arrive at just the right time to honor Gaudreau, to highlight a Blue Jackets franchise that is one of the NHL’s best stories, and to let one of the league’s top fan bases flex their size and passion to the hockey world and beyond.

The crowd of 94,751 was the second-largest crowd in NHL history. The game was broadcast to more than 200 countries, the NHL said.

Justin Danforth scored the go-ahead goal with 2:17 remaining, a hellacious effort to split two Red Wings defenders at the blue line and then score off his rebound to give the Jackets a 4-3 lead. Adam Fantilli scored an empty net goal with 1:08 remaining to seal it.

Denton Mateychuk, Dmitri Voronkov and Mathieu Olivier scored for the Blue Jackets, but the game’s first star was goaltender Elvis Merzlikins, who had 43 saves, including 19 in the third period, when the Red Wings came back from a 3-1 deficit.

It was the second-most saves in an NHL outdoor game.

“He competed his ass off,” Blue Jackets coach Dean Evason said.

The Blue Jackets routinely play before full houses just a few miles away at Nationwide Arena, but their home rink holds 18,144. Saturday’s crowd in Ohio Stadium was more than five times as large. Another way to explain the scene: The Blue Jackets’ infamous cannon, which made its way to the game, was loaded with 10 times the charge it gets in Nationwide.

It was all a bit overwhelming for the Blue Jackets.

“I didn’t know what to do (after I scored),” Danforth said. “I just screamed pretty much. (Mathieu Olivier) hugged me. I can’t even explain it. (The roar of the crowd) took over everything. Very loud. A lot of emotion involved. It’s probably the highlight of my career.”

Danforth wore the donkey cap the Blue Jackets have passed around all season to the player deemed the star of the game. This, too, is an homage to Gaudreau, who called all of his friends “donkey” as a term of endearment.

It was one hell of a night to wear the donkey cap, Danforth noted.

“Johnny’s here with us in spirit,” Danforth said. “He’s been with us all year. To get the ‘donkey’ on a night like tonight ... I know he’s laughing up there and calling me a donkey because he liked to joke around with me a lot. He’s a big part of our group. It felt really special for us to get a win for him and his family.”

The Blue Jackets, who were outshot 46-21, allowed the tying goal to Detroit’s Alex DeBrincat, his second of the game, with 3:24 remaining.

Only 67 seconds later, Danforth outworked Red Wings defenders Simon Edvinsson and Albert Johansson to score his sixth goal of the season. As Danforth plowed between the two, his stick rode up on Edvinsson and smacked him in the face, but there was no call. It was the third game-winning goal of Danforth’s career.

“It could go either way,” Evason said. “I’m sure if we were on the other end, we’d be speaking to it. But, yeah, the bottom line is Danny had one hell of an effort, not just to get there but to find the puck after that and to have the skill to score it.”

Evason has coached in two NHL outdoor games: once as an assistant with the Washington Capitals and once as a head coach for the Minnesota Wild. He thought he knew what to expect.

Evason was choked up, and it took him a few seconds to gather himself.

“All of the stuff with the Johnny made it extra special,” he said. “The stadium, the pep rally, you walk in and, yeah, there’s a lot of emotions here.

“This is an incredible city. It’s an incredible fan base and an incredible environment that we just witnessed — the whole thing. But the most important thing is the presence of Johnny and his whole family.”

The Blue Jackets made their way from the pep rally to Ohio Stadium, a path of several hundred feet that was completely lined with fans on either side. During the second period, Blue Jackets fans passed a gigantic No. 13 flag — Gaudreau’s number — around the lower portion of the stadium.

Evason instructed them to “take it all in” and look around at the scene — the stars and the atmosphere — during stoppages of play. This was an NHL game with 2 vital points on the line, but it was not a typical game.

“The pep rally, the fans outside of the stadium already, the walk in and then seeing the crowd in warmups,” Jenner said. “I mean, warmup was pretty much sold out — warmups.

The win pushed the Blue Jackets past Detroit into the first wild-card spot in the Eastern Conference. Don’t look now, but the Blue Jackets are suddenly only 4 points behind the second- and third-place clubs — the Carolina Hurricanes and New Jersey Devils, respectively — in the Metropolitan Division.

Danforth, an undrafted player who bounced around the ECHL, the AHL, Russia and Finland before signing as a free agent with the Blue Jackets in 2021, was fully appreciative of the moment. But not just for himself and his teammates.

“Just walking toward the rink today, seeing all the fans there,” Danforth said. “Just seeing the support we have. We have the best fans in the league, I think. They’re deserving of this game, and they’re deserving of us getting into the playoffs and making a run.

“This was a big night for Columbus. They deserve it, and they got it.”

## The Athletic / NHL Stadium Series: Ohio State alums take the stage, but there's disappointment for Sillinger

By Aaron Portzline- March 2, 2025

COLUMBUS, Ohio — One of the first major details the NHL tries to secure when an outdoor game takes shape is the musical acts. Since NHL executive Steve Mayer has been fascinated by staging a game in Ohio Stadium for years, he knew exactly who he wanted.

The Columbus Blue Jackets are hosting the Detroit Red Wings in a Stadium Series game on Saturday, and the event will be started and highlighted by two major recording acts with strong ties to both Columbus and Ohio State University: O.A.R. and Twenty One Pilots.

"Nine out of 10 times, we fail to get the bands we want, because it's tough, with touring and scheduling," said Mayer, the league's president of content and events. "In this case, we wanted two bands, and we got 'em both. That's unheard of, and that's really cool.

"They are as excited as any musical acts we've ever had perform. They freakin' love the Blue Jackets. They're also huge hockey fans in general, so this is great."

Members of both bands are frequently spotted in Nationwide Arena for Blue Jackets games.

O.A.R., whose five members all attended Ohio State in the late 1990s, is playing at the pregame pep rally at Ohio State's St. John Arena, just a few hundred steps from Ohio Stadium. The Blue Jackets players will arrive at the pep rally to hear a work-up between O.A.R. and the Ohio State Athletic Band, then walk to Ohio Stadium, just as the Ohio State football team does on home-game Saturdays.

Twenty One Pilots is comprised of Tyler Joseph and Josh Dun, who are both from Columbus. Joseph attended Ohio State.

They flew home in the middle of a world tour — they were in Mexico just a couple of days ago — to play a first-intermission set. Judging by their soundcheck on Saturday after the Blue Jackets and Red Wings practiced in Ohio Stadium, it's going to be a raucous set, with both fire and fireworks.

The Athletic had a quick email exchange with Dun on Friday. Here was the conversation:

You guys have played all over the world in some pretty amazing places. What is this gig going to be like?

Given the unique nature of this performance, it will be a lot of fun for a few reasons. We're in the middle of a world tour, which has been incredible, but there's nothing like being back in our hometown. Also, it's always fun to be part of a sports event because Tyler and I are competitive people at our core. We're so excited to be playing in Columbus, especially at such an iconic venue.

As long as you've lived in Columbus, did you ever dream of playing Ohio Stadium?

I remember being a teenager and feeling like playing the Newport Music Hall on (Ohio State's) campus would be the pinnacle. I don't know if I really knew how to dream beyond that. As time has gone on and we've played a lot of shows, the idea of the Ohio Stadium has been intriguing. It feels weird to think back to the time that the Newport was the biggest we could dream, and now feeling like someday playing our own show at the Ohio Stadium could be a reality.

How did this come together with the NHL?

It was a bit like a formality. Before this conversation started, we already had a relationship with the Blue Jackets and the university. The NHL (executive) team came to the show when we played in New York City

last year. Everyone walked us through the vision of the night ... when you hear that you realize that it's one of those moments that was almost too obvious. We love Columbus, and it really is an honor to be a part of a night that will go down in Columbus, Ohio, history.

How long is your set? And how difficult is it to put together given the time constraints of intermission?

We'll be playing in between periods at the hockey game, so I think total play time will be somewhere around eight minutes — which is actually not the shortest set we've ever done. Our first show we played together, the cops came and shut down the music due to curfew after one song. So at least we'll be playing longer than that. We're gonna try and get as much music into that time as we can — it's gonna be fun.

Rick Nash beaming

He was the Blue Jackets' first star player. He was, during many seasons, the Blue Jackets' singular standout, scoring goals in bunches even as the franchise struggled. His sweater number (61) is the only number retired by the Blue Jackets.

This week, as the NHL has worked to give the Blue Jackets their biggest stage yet — 90,000 are expected at tonight's game, and the game will be broadcasted all over the world — we've wanted to know: What's Rick Nash, now the Blue Jackets' director of hockey operations, thinking?

"I've always hoped this day would come for us, especially after playing in (three outdoor games) with (the New York Rangers) and knowing how perfect a setup Ohio Stadium would be, just how close the fans are to the football field there.

"Walking around the stadium (on Friday) ... it was a proud moment, seeing the whole hockey world in Columbus for an event that's hosted by the Blue Jackets."

Nash, while playing for the Rangers, played two Stadium Series games in February 2014, facing the New Jersey Devils and New York Islanders, both in Yankee Stadium. Four years later, the Rangers played the Buffalo Sabres in a Winter Classic game in Citi Field, home to the New York Mets.

The Rangers are Original 6 members, one of the NHL's iconic clubs. They need no elevating. Nash was asked what this game, this stage, can mean to the Blue Jackets. The game will air on ESPN and be broadcast to roughly 200 countries worldwide.

"I feel like in the United States right now, with all of the buzz coming out of the 4 Nations Face-Off ... there's a lot of interest in hockey and the NHL right now," Nash said. "And to have all eyes on Columbus right now, in this moment, is huge, especially with the way the two teams are playing,."

"I think I speak for a lot of people in the organization and the city in saying that I'm really proud of this group of players and how they've come together this season through a lot of adversity. And I'm really happy for them that they get to experience this with our city. It's so great."

Tough break for Sillinger

Blue Jackets center Cole Sillinger was injured in the first period of Thursday's 5-2 win in Detroit, and coach Dean Evason confirmed after Friday's practice that he will not be able to play in Saturday's game.

"I'll say this, it wasn't as bad as we were thinking it was," Evason said. "But he's definitely not in our lineup tomorrow night."

That's a tough blow for the Blue Jackets, as Sillinger was centering the No. 2 line. But it's also a tough blow for Sillinger, who has emerged — even as a 21-year-old — as one of the Blue Jackets' young leaders.

The Blue Jackets will also be without center Sean Monahan, winger Yegor Chinakhov and defenseman Erik Gudbranson.

“(Sillinger’s) is probably the toughest one,” Blue Jackets defenseman Zach Werenski said. “The other guys probably had an idea they weren’t going to play in this one a couple of months ago, which is still tough to swallow. But for Silly to come so close, come one game away ... it’s unfortunate, that’s for sure.

“I talked to him today. He has a great mindset about it. He’s a guy who gets it, who understands. We definitely feel for him, but he’s got the right attitude.”

The Blue Jackets recalled forward Mikael Pyhtia from AHL Cleveland on Friday.

#### Snacks

- Werenski and Red Wings forward Dylan Larkin grew up playing hockey together in Michigan. Werenski has said they first met when he was 8 years old. But that friendship hits pause whenever they play. During the Blue Jackets’ family skate on Friday, Larkin and other Red Wings were warming up with a soccer ball near the rink. Here’s Werenski: “My fiancée (Odette Peters) was like, ‘Should we go say hi to him?’ I was like, ‘No, no, no. We’re not doing that. We hate these guys until the game is over.’ We’re going to battle, we’re going to play hard, and after the game I’ll give him a hug and we’ll talk about it.”
- The Blue Jackets and Red Wings both enter today’s game with 66 points. The Red Wings own the first wild-card playoff spot, and the Blue Jackets the second, because the Wings have more regulation wins. It marks the third time in the NHL’s 43 outdoor games that the two opponents are tied in points. In 2014, Toronto and Detroit were tied (45 points) when they played in a Winter Classic at Michigan Stadium. Two months later, Pittsburgh and Chicago were tied (84 points) when they played a Stadium Series game in Soldier Field.
- Mayer confirmed to Dave Maetzold of FanDuel Sports Networks that the Ohio State Athletic Band will form script Ohio on the ice at some point tonight. Who dots the I?
- ESPN’s Sean McDonough will handle play-by-play, with Ray Ferraro serving as analyst between the benches. But Blue Jackets TV play-by-play voice Steve Mears will still work the game, serving as the play-by-play voice of the NHL’s international feed, along with former NHLer Brian Boyle. This will be Mears’ seventh outdoor game in the broadcast booth.

## The Athletic / Blue Jackets Sunday Gathering: NHL's melding of Ohio State and Blue Jackets could signal a new day

**By Aaron Portzline- March 3, 2025**

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

Item No. 1: A new day

Two worlds collided Saturday in Columbus in a way many locals never imagined.

Script Ohio was formed in the middle of Ohio Stadium, but in a hockey rink, not on a football field. A crowd of nearly 95,000 chanted "Johnny Hockey" one minute and sang "Hang On, Sloopy" the next. The Ohio State University's championship football team was honored in the middle of a hockey game.

And in the afterglow of the Blue Jackets' 5-3 win over the Detroit Red Wings in the NHL's latest Stadium Series game, the band played and the crowd sang "Carmen Ohio," Ohio State's alma mater.

Most of those fortunate enough to attend the NHL's 43rd outdoor game seemed almost to float out of chilly Ohio Stadium late in the evening Saturday, convinced that they'd witnessed one of the truly unique and memorable nights in the long sporting history of Columbus.

Maybe some were wondering, too, if this is the beginning of a new day in Ohio's biggest city, one in which Columbus' major sports franchises do more than simply co-exist, but start working on ways to support and elevate each other.

It hasn't always been that way.

When the Blue Jackets first arrived on the scene in 2000, Ohio State acted like a big brother who never really wanted a sibling. If not for Blue Jackets founder John H. McConnell, who pushed to build Nationwide Arena beginning in 1998, the Jackets would have played in Schottenstein Center and lived under OSU's thumb.

Even though Nationwide Arena and Ohio Stadium are barely three miles apart, the Blue Jackets and Ohio State existed in almost separate universes during the early years of the Blue Jackets.

This has never made sense, of course. Fans in Detroit have no issue cheering for the Red Wings, Tigers and Lions and either Michigan or Michigan State. Fans in Boston support the Red Sox, Bruins, Patriots and either Boston U. or Boston College.

Too often, fans in Columbus have been placed in different buckets, in which they either cheer for Ohio State or the Blue Jackets or the Columbus Crew, one of Major League Soccer's top organizations. In fact, that's never been true. The vast majority of fans have no issue supporting all three.

For fans of certain age, Columbus had a certain sporting hierarchy for most of their lives. The block 'O' of Ohio State loomed large above the local sporting scene, with the Blue Jackets and Columbus Crew fighting to be seen in the periphery.

It's too big to be acting that way.

This is a surprise to many, even locals, but Columbus is Ohio's largest city, with 913,000 residents, according to the latest U.S. Census. It's bigger than the combined populations of Ohio's better-known big cities Cleveland (362,000) and Cincinnati (311,000) by nearly a quarter-million residents.

Judging by online comments on this site and others, there were some Blue Jackets fans who felt as if Saturday's game had too much of an Ohio State touch.

I'm sure there are Ohio State fans who weren't too excited to have an NHL game played in "their" stadium, especially one featuring a Columbus dressed in blue and the Michigan team wearing red. (Hey, at least it wasn't scarlet!)

Each of those opinions are valid, but both of them, I believe, are in the minority. Sports, like politics, can make for strange bedfellows. Most fans, especially those 30 and younger, see Ohio State sports, the Blue Jackets and the Crew as existing on even footing.

Most on hand for Saturday's festivities seemed to stand in awe of the scene and the atmosphere, the perfect melding of the city's two biggest sports franchises.

Saturday's game probably wouldn't have happened if not for key developments at Ohio State and in college athletics, specifically football. The expanded college football playoffs, now at 12 teams, requires universities to host opening-round games, meaning teams (especially in the north) needed to get their buildings ready for winter. Ohio State took steps to winterize Ohio Stadium — the tune of \$8 million — in the event that it hosted a game.

And wouldn't you know, they hosted Tennessee in a first-round game on Dec. 21. Before the grand old stadium was winterized, the water would have been shut off by that date, leaving it unable to host events such as an outdoor hockey game.

It's likely that Ohio State president Ted Carter (an avid hockey fan) and new athletic director Ross Bjork will signal a change in the future relationship, too.

There were minor quibbles behind the scenes of Saturday's events.

An NHL executive told The Athletic that Ohio State at first resisted allowing the league to refer to the game as "the" Stadium Series because OSU has trademarked "THE" on clothing and other branded products.

The school also wouldn't allow Blue Jackets goaltender Elvis Merzlikins to put buckeye leaves on his helmet, and they wouldn't allow the NHL to use its name for the pre-game football pep rallies — Skull Session — to promote its own pep rally in St. John Arena.

But to get stuck on these details is to ignore the big one: Ohio State opened up its grand stage, the largest stadium in Ohio and one of the largest in the country, so that the Blue Jackets and the NHL could have a celebration. Saturday is a night many will remember forever.

In the minutes after the Blue Jackets clinched the win and the cannon blasted for a final time, fans filed out of Ohio Stadium singing "We Don't Give A Damn for the Whole State of Michigan," just as they do on football Saturdays.

Except this time they wore Blue Jackets sweaters.

Item No. 2: "13"

Meredith Gaudreau and her two kids helped lead the Blue Jackets onto the ice on Saturday. The Red Wings arrived at the stadium decked out in Gaudreau jerseys from all points in his career, including his high school days. A gigantic No. 13 flag was passed around Ohio Stadium in the third period.

As has been the case all season, the Stadium Series game was full of tributes and remembrances of Gaudreau, who was killed along with his brother Matthew when they were struck by an SUV while riding bikes in New Jersey last August.

But the Blue Jackets found a subtle and special way to honor their former teammate on Saturday. They walked into St. John Arena for a pre-game pep rally, then walked several hundred feet through a tunnel of fans wearing sweatshirts from Avalon Surf Shop in Avalon, N.J., located just off the Jersey Shore beach.

On non-game days, Gaudreau would often be seen in shirts and sweatshirts that repped local businesses near his Jersey home.

"It was a pretty collective (idea) with the older guys on the team," Blue Jackets captain Boone Jenner said. "We thought it quite a while ago, and we just thought it was fitting. To us, that's the signature Johnny 'fit, and we've seen him come to the rink in that or something very similar. It's just a special thing we wanted to do for him, and we've had so many good times with him in those clothes.

"Mere helped us out so much in tracking down those sweaters that he always wore from Avalon, and we just kind of pieced together the rest. It was special to wear that and come in like that, for us."

Jane Gaudreau, Johnny and Matthew's mother, was also in Ohio Stadium on Saturday after returning from Detroit on Thursday, where she was included in the Blue Jackets' moms trip.

#### Item No. 3: Snacks

- Well into the fall, there was private concern within the Blue Jackets and the NHL that ticket sales were lagging for the Stadium Series and Ohio Stadium might not be close to sold out when Saturday's game was staged. But NHL president of content and events Steve Mayer said the league was impressed by the brisk pace of ticket sales as the game drew near. Early last month, Mayer said the league was expecting about 85,000 fans. By the early part of last week, he indicated that it would clear 90,000. The final count: 94,751.

The league did not announce a capacity, but it took roughly 10,000 seats out of "inventory," Mayer said, because the large section of seats behind the Twenty One Pilots' stage was obstructed. Also, the league had to create camera decks in C-deck sections on both sides of the stadium.

- It was the second-largest crowd in NHL history, exceeded only by the 2014 Winter Classic at Michigan Stadium. The announced attendance to watch the Red Wings and Maple Leafs that day was 105,491.
- The Blue Jackets have come out of the 4 Nations Face-Off break with four straight wins: 5-1 vs. Chicago, 6-4 vs. Dallas, 5-2 in Detroit and 5-3 vs. Detroit on Saturday. They've now scored five or more goals in 19 of their 60 games this season, including a franchise-record four consecutive games. They scored five-plus in three straight games way back in February of the inaugural season (2000-01).
- Defenseman Zach Werenski assisted on Dmitri Voronkov's power-play goal in the second period and on Adam Fantilli's empty-net goal with just over a minute to play on Saturday. It was his 16th multi-point game of the season, but it also allowed him to catch a franchise legend. With 258 career assists, Werenski is now tied with Rick Nash for the most in franchise history. It took Nash, a power forward and goal-scoring behemoth, 674 games. Werenski is at 545 games and counting.
- Plus-minus is a much-debated stat, but there's no question right winger Kirill Marchenko is on quite a run. He's plus-35 on the season, tied with Tampa Bay defenseman Ryan McDonagh for tops in the entire NHL. If this holds, it'll be a franchise record, as the previous mark was held by defenseman David Savard (plus-33 in 2016-17).

Since Dec. 15, Marchenko has a plus-25 rating in 27 games, and in that span he's had only one game — one! — with a negative. He was minus-2 on Jan. 20 when the Blue Jackets lost a road game to the New York Islanders.

- Sunday Gathering trivia question: Werenski had a secondary assist on Voronkov's power-play goal on Saturday for his 21st power-play point this season, matching a career high. Who holds the franchise record for the most power-play points in a single season?

- Red Wings coach Todd McLellan, who interviewed for the Blue Jackets job last summer before GM Don Waddell hired Dean Evason, was asked after Saturday's game what he sees in the Blue Jackets after coaching against them three times since he was hired by Detroit on Dec. 26.

"They're having fun playing the game," McLellan said. "When you're having fun playing the game, it comes easier. Their staff has done a tremendous job putting structure in their play. The belief system is strong. Put those things together, you give yourself a chance to win. The talent is spread out throughout the league, but you have to have those three things to have success, and Columbus has them right now."

- Saturday was Detroit's fourth outdoor game, but first since 2017. So for many players on the roster — not Dylan Larkin or Erik Gustafsson, and certainly not Patrick Kane — playing outside was a new experience, especially in the NHL.

Here's McLellan on how the Red Wings viewed the scene in Ohio Stadium: "It's a really unique experience for us, an incredible night. Well done. The league, the city of Columbus, and obviously the Blue Jackets deserve a lot of credit for the way they put this game on. It was really smooth and first-class all the way through. The fans got a hell of a game to watch. We'll all tell these stories in 10 years or so. You'd like to end that story with, 'Oh, and we won.' But we can't do that. Hopefully we'll get another chance to play in a game like this and be able to say that."

- The Blue Jackets were off Sunday, a much-needed day to breathe. They'll get back to practice Monday, then depart later in the day for Tampa Bay, where Tuesday they begin a four-game road trip against the Lightning. The trade deadline arrives Friday, the day after the Blue Jackets play in Florida against the defending Stanley Cup champions. After this trip, the Blue Jackets will finish with 11 of their final 18 games in Nationwide Arena.

- It's now safe for Blue Jackets fans to check the standings and the scoreboard on a daily basis. But don't just look down from the Blue Jackets' current spot in the first wild-card in the Eastern Conference. Look up, too.

Heading into Sunday's games, the Blue Jackets are just four points behind Carolina and New Jersey, the second- and third-place teams in the Metropolitan Division. Carolina hosts Calgary and New Jersey plays in Vegas on Sunday. On Dec. 18, the Blue Jackets were 12-15-5 (29 points) and trailed New Jersey by 16 points and Carolina by 12. Since then, the Jackets have gone 18-7-3.

- Trivia answer: Ray Whitney, aka "The Wizard," had 42 power-play points (8-34-42) during the 2002-03 season, finishing tied for third in the NHL behind only Vancouver's Markus Naslund (54 points) and Pittsburgh's Mario Lemieux (45).

## [BlueJackets.com / Blue Jackets ready to embrace NHL Stadium Series atmosphere](#)

**By Jeff Svoboda- March 1, 2025**

For hockey players, routine is key.

To play at a consistently high level throughout a demanding 82-game schedule, players try to do the same things to get ready for each and every game. Many nap at the same time each gameday, leave for the rink at the same time, and some even eat the exact same meal before every game.

There's some superstition involved, too, and it's all about trying to maximize themselves to be ready to play each and every night.

Well, there's no routine for what's about to happen for the Blue Jackets tomorrow. At the Navy Federal Credit Union NHL Stadium Series game, just about everything will be unique in the hours leading up to puck drop.

Something as easy as finding your locker room stall will be different for the Blue Jackets, as CBJ captain Boone Jenner found out Monday when he was given a quick tour of Ohio Stadium.

"There's so many of them," Jenner said after seeing a locker room that normally houses more than 100 football players, not 20 hockey players. "I don't know where I'm gonna sit. It's a big room."

That might sound trivial, but it helps illustrate the situation the Blue Jackets will encounter when they take on the Detroit Red Wings. Of course, everyone is more than excited for the spectacle of playing in front of more than 90,000 fans in the organization's first-ever outdoor game, but there are challenges and experiences the players won't face on a typical gameday.

There will be a buzz unlike any other when the Blue Jackets skate onto the rink at midfield for pregame ceremonies, and that brings along a whole host of emotions the team will have to handle. Again, it's not a bad thing – it's a great thing, in fact – but it is different.

To head coach Dean Evason, who has coached in two previous NHL outdoor games, the key is to enjoy the moment – at the right times.

"The experiences that I've had is that yes, when the game's going on, as a coach you're watching and as a player you're just concentrating," Evason said. "I think the timeouts is when you have the opportunity, when you're sitting there and you look up and you see the stars. It's incredible. That's where you take it all in, enjoy it, look around for sure.

"But then, when it gets dropped again, let's get after it."

The average game doesn't have a pregame flyover or an intermission concert, but as Evason said, when the puck is on the ice, it'll still be hockey.

Though weather conditions are forecast to be about as perfect as can be for the ice, there may be an odd bounce or two on the temporary surface, and the teams may have to play a bit simpler just because of the unique conditions and lighting. But at the end of the day it's still the sport they play on a daily basis, and Evason said he won't be making any major strategic changes to the CBJ game plan to account for playing outdoors.

Perhaps the biggest difference will be with the atmosphere. First, unlike in an NHL arena, fans will be a distance away from the rink, which is situated at the 50-yard line of the much bigger gridiron surface.

And then, of course, there's a lot more of them. The largest attendance for a regular-season game at Nationwide Arena in franchise history is the overflow crowd of 19,434 that packed the rink March 5, 2022, for the retirement of Rick Nash's No. 61 jersey. There will be more than four times that in Ohio Stadium, with the NHL confirming more than 90,000 tickets have been sold.

"For myself, I think playing in front of this many people, it's probably the first time and maybe the only time ever you get this many fans in the stands of a game," Jenner said. "The most has probably been maybe Montreal (with) 21,000, but quadruple that and you're at 100,000 in here. That'll be a cool experience for us and myself.

"I haven't been part of any outdoor games, so just trying to soak it in and hopefully it'll be a highlight of my career playing in one of these."

Considering this is also a heavily anticipated celebration of the sport, players will also have plenty of friends and family on hand. Blue Jackets center Sean Kuraly has played in two previous outdoor games, and he noted that all of the festivities that are involved seem like they could be distractions but can actually help players focus on the task at hand.

"I think the biggest advice I've gotten from guys that have come before me is just keeping it simple," Kuraly said. "You've got tickets, you've got people in town, you've got people at your house. There's a lot of different things that are beyond this game, but the nice thing is when you go between the gates and step on the ice, it's just a regular hockey game."

Considering the Blue Jackets moved into a tie for the top wild card spot with the Red Wings with Thursday's win, it's an important hockey game as well. And of all the lessons Evason has learned from his previous two forays into outdoor hockey, focus remains important because the scoreboard might determine just how memorable an experience it will be.

"I've been involved in one where our team has won and one where a team has lost," Evason said. "I can guarantee you the one that we won was a lot better. The experience is great, but your memories are a lot happier after a win."

## BlueJackets.com / Blue Jackets fans buzz with excitement for Stadium Series

**By Garrison McDaniel- March 1, 2025**

For the Columbus community, the Navy Federal Credit Union NHL Stadium Series game is an opportunity to show the hockey world they belong.

The first outdoor game in Blue Jackets history will have over 90,000 in attendance, the second-most for a single game in NHL history. Ohio Stadium is used to holding a large amount of people in the fall, now Columbus wants to prove it can do the same for their hockey team in the winter.

"We really want to show Columbus as a hockey town," said Rich Tsung, who used to live in Detroit and moved to Columbus 10 years ago.

The game will provide excitement to the city, excitement that has been building for a year since the NHL announced the Blue Jackets as host for the Stadium Series.

"Once they told us we were going to actually have a game like this, it's been a year of preparation. We've been excited since they released it," Columbus native David VanStone said.

The anticipation for the event led VanStone and his friend Johnathan Modlich to start tailgating at 8 a.m., and the two are excited for the entire experience that the game has to offer.

"They said that the cannon's going to be louder, so I'm excited for that, but just the overall experience," Modlich said. "Super pumped for it."

The city has hosted its fair share of major events, including the Arnold Sports Festival that is featured every year and is going on alongside the Stadium Series game. The community is excited to show that hockey events can be added to that list.

"I am glad the shootout is going to be strong here," Tsung said. "Columbus is a city where major events can be held here."

When Tsung heard that 90,000 fans are expected to be in attendance at the 'Shoe on Saturday, he could not believe it.

"It's insanity," Tsung said. "I am used to being at Nationwide Arena when it sells out, but thinking 90,000, three or four times when Nationwide sells out, it's going to be crazy."

## [BlueJackets.com / Danforth's late goal lifts Blue Jackets past Red Wings in Stadium Series](#)

**By Dan Rosen- March 1, 2025**

COLUMBUS, Ohio -- An unforgettable experience and a wild win. The Columbus Blue Jackets and their fans got it all in their first NHL outdoor game Saturday.

Justin Danforth scored off his own rebound at 17:43 of the third period, Elvis Merzlikins made 43 saves, and the Blue Jackets defeated the Detroit Red Wings 5-3 in front of 94,751 at Ohio Stadium in the 2025 Navy Federal Credit Union NHL Stadium Series game at Ohio Stadium.

"Definitely knew this day was going to be special but I was still blown away," Blue Jackets captain Boone Jenner said. "Coming here today with the pep rally, the fans outside the stadium already, the walk in and then seeing the crowd in warmup -- I mean warmup was pretty much sold out. I knew Columbus was going to show up and they did. What an atmosphere. What an experience for us. A great day."

The Blue Jackets and Red Wings played in front of the second-largest crowd to attend an NHL game, behind the 105,491 that were at Michigan Stadium for the 2014 Winter Classic between the Red Wings and Toronto Maple Leafs on Jan. 1, 2014.

"This night was definitely my favorite night so far that I've played," Merzlikins said. "It was amazing. Seriously, amazing."

The Blue Jackets (30-22-8) have won four games in a row, the past two coming against Detroit, and moved two points ahead of the Red Wings for the first wild card into the Stanley Cup Playoffs from the Eastern Conference.

"Since the break, the pace of play has upped and a lot of guys are stepping up," Columbus forward Mathieu Olivier said. "You add the Stadium Series to that, the in-season series against the Wings, it was like the perfect storm and obviously quite a magical moment tonight."

The event was a celebration of hockey in Columbus mixed with Ohio State football gameday traditions.

It was also a night to honor and remember the late Johnny Gaudreau, the former Blue Jackets forward who was killed with his brother, Matthew, on Aug. 29, when they were struck by an alleged drunk driver while riding bicycles near their homes in Salem County, New Jersey.

The Blue Jackets were led into the stadium on their walk from a pep rally at St. John Arena by Johnny Gaudreau's widow, Meredith Gaudreau, who was holding the couple's youngest child, Johnny Jr., and his mother, Jane.

The Gaudreaus led the Blue Jackets onto the ice during the pregame ceremonies.

"I know we just lost to those guys twice, but you know what those guys have been through," Red Wings captain Dylan Larkin said. "And, you know, knowing Zach (Werenski) personally, like they've been through the ringer and this city, this night was special. And I hope Mr. and Mrs. Gaudreau had something to smile about tonight. I want both of our teams in the playoffs, and I think those guys have quite the story going right now. And sometimes it's bigger than the game. Those guys are doing something that I tip my cap to and can appreciate."

Merzlikins also had late teammate Matiss Kivlenieks on his mind. Kivlenieks, a goalie who played eight games for the Blue Jackets between 2019-21, was killed in a fireworks accident on July 4, 2021.

"To me, the most important thing was making this game done in a positive way for Johnny, for the Gaudreau family and for Matiss," Merzlikins said. "This is why I put on the helmet both of them. It was huge for me to win this game. I was waiting for this game a long, long time and it was really important to win as well because I feel home here. I came here as a young guy and now I have family, I got married here, I had first kid and the second one should pop out any day. I almost didn't make this game. That was stressful as well. But it was really important to win for this city because this city, they really care about the sports they have here. The football, the soccer team, us -- they really love us and it was really important to get that win done."

Alex DeBrincat scored two goals, Patrick Kane had a goal and an assist, and Cam Talbot made 16 saves for the Red Wings (30-24-6).

"It was an incredible night," Detroit coach Todd McLellan said. "Well done. The League, the city of Columbus, obviously the Blue Jackets deserve a lot of credit for the way they put this game on. It was real smooth and first class all the way through. I think the fans got a hell of a game to watch. We'll all tell those stories 10 years from now but you'd love to end that story by saying and, 'Oh, by the way we won.' We can't do that now."

Rookie defenseman Denton Mateychuk gave Columbus a 1-0 lead, scoring the first Blue Jackets goal in an outdoor game at 5:31 of the second period.

"Something I'll never forget," Mateychuk said.

The Red Wings tied it 1-1 on DeBrincat's power-play goal at 13:06.

Columbus needed eight seconds to score on its first power-play opportunity and take a 2-1 lead at 17:23. Dmitri Voronkov cashed in from in front of the net.

Thirty-two seconds later, Olivier made it 3-1 when he kept the puck in with a good pinch on the wall, got the puck back behind the net, came around the right post and backhanded it in over Talbot's left pad at 17:55.

"Sometimes you just have to make winning plays at the right time," Kane said. "Game management."

Kane cut Columbus' lead to 3-2 at 3:34 of the third period, and DeBrincat scored on his own rebound to tie it 3-3 at 16:36.

However, 67 seconds later Danforth fought off Simon Edvinsson for the puck, possibly getting away with a high stick, and scored off his own rebound to give the Blue Jackets a 4-3 lead.

"Probably the highlight of my career," Danforth said.

Adam Fantilli scored an empty-net goal at 18:52 for the 5-3 final.

"Fantastic," Merzlikins said. "It's a dream come true."

NOTES: Red Wings defenseman Erik Gustafsson became the first NHL player to appear in an outdoor game with five different teams (Detroit, New York Rangers, Washington Capitals, Philadelphia Flyers and Chicago Blackhawks). ... Talbot became the first player to dress in an outdoor game with six different teams (Detroit, Minnesota Wild, Edmonton Oilers, Calgary Flames, Philadelphia Flyers, Rangers). ... Blue Jackets forward James van Riemsdyk played in his NHL-record eighth outdoor game. He had an assist, giving him seven points in outdoor games, tied for the most in NHL history with Jonathan Toews and Henrik Zetterberg.

## BlueJackets.com / Winning Thoughts: Stadium Series victory is one the Blue Jackets won't forget

By Jeff Svoboda- March 2, 2025

After CBJ wins, we'll give three takeaways about what stood out or what we'll remember from the Blue Jackets victory.

BLUE JACKETS 5, RED WINGS 3

1. The Navy Federal Credit Union NHL Stadium Series experience didn't just live up to the expectations, it exceeded them.

I was thinking about this the other day, that we've overused such words as amazing, unbelievable, and the rest to the point that they've almost lost all context and meaning. As a friend said to me the other day, was the sandwich really unbelievable? I'm sure it was great, but you can probably believe how good it was.

But as those superlatives and words like "unreal" and "incredible" were uttered in the Blue Jackets – well, Ohio State football – locker room after the win over the Red Wings, you couldn't help but agree that they summed up how it felt to be among the more 94,751 in Ohio Stadium on Saturday night.

It's an experience this franchise and pretty much everyone supporting the Blue Jackets in the venue will remember forever. It took more than two decades for the NHL to bring one of its marquee events to Columbus, but it was more than worth the wait.

"I definitely knew this day was going to be special," captain Boone Jenner said, "but I was still blown away coming here today."

It was a celebration of Blue Jackets hockey, of the Columbus community and a strong nod to the NHL that this is a market that has fully embraced the sport and the team. When the game was announced a year ago, some wondered if there would be sections of empty seats in the venerable Horseshoe, and all CBJ fans did was produce the second-largest crowd in NHL history despite below-freezing temperatures and gusting winds.

Some fans were out as early as 8 a.m. to set up tailgates, and by early afternoon, droves of fans began heading to Ohio State's campus to check out pregame events. The pregame pep rally in St. John Arena was filled to the brim to welcome the Blue Jackets to the venue, and crowds lined the length of the team walk to the stadium.

From there, the Horseshoe took over the rest, with the more than 100-year-old building still proving she has her fastball. The iconic double-decked venue inspired by classical Roman architecture has long been one of the most recognizable venues in American sport, and it proved particularly well-suited to outdoor hockey.

Add in two teams battling tooth and nail for playoff positioning and the stage couldn't have been set any better. By the time Justin Danforth put home the game-winning goal with 2:17 left, breaking a 3-3 tie, you couldn't have scripted this any better.

"Quite a magical moment tonight," Mathieu Olivier said.

2. The Blue Jackets won this game for Johnny Gaudreau.

It's been a season of tributes for the Blue Jackets star who passed away this summer, with Johnny Hockey's memory never very far from the team, the organization or the fan base. On a stage that combined everything Gaudreau loved – hockey, family and community – the Blue Jackets made it very clear from their arrival on campus that No. 13 was with them.

It's become a tradition for teams to come up with special outfits to wear for their arrival to outdoor games, and the Blue Jackets walked into Ohio Stadium looking like they had raided Gaudreau's closet. Columbus players wore matching blue Avalon Surf Shop hoodies, black sweatpants, Uggs boots and Amiri three-star hats, a signature look of Gaudreau.

"It just reminds us of him," Jenner said. "That's why we did it. There's so many days we've seen him come to the rink like that, and we have some pictures that he's pretty much wearing the same thing. It just puts some good memories in our minds.

"He was here with us tonight. He's been here with us all season. We've played for him, and tonight, obviously he was here. We wanted to honor him the best way that we could, and not only doing that but playing as he would play."

In addition, CBJ players were led onto the ice for the game by members of the Gaudreau family, including his mother, Jane; his wife, Meredith; his daughter, Noa; and his son, Johnny Jr. At one point during the game, fans passed a banner with Gaudreau's name and No. 13 through the east stands.

CBJ head coach Dean Evason has been part of two previous outdoor games, but when asked what made this one unique, he had a quick answer.

"Johnny -- simple as that," said Evason, who at one point became a bit choked up when talking about Gaudreau. "Obviously it's nice to get the two points. That's extremely important, but the most important thing was the presence of Johnny and his family here tonight."

Evason saw one more sign that Gaudreau's presence was there. At the end of the team's Friday practice in the stadium, Jenner was selected to take the open-net shot that determines how many laps the team takes to finish their work, which has become known as the "Johnny skate."

Jenner missed the shot wide, and as a result, he didn't have better luck Saturday. The captain had a chance to ice the game with a look at an open net and the Jackets up 4-3, but his shot hit the post and caromed away.

"I think Johnny was messing with him a little bit," Evason said.

2. Danforth's showed again why he's such a big piece of the CBJ puzzle.

One of the smallest players on the ice had an outsized impact on this one, as the 5-foot-8 forward made a fantastic individual effort to put the Blue Jackets on top for good.

Columbus had watched its 3-1 lead to start the second period evaporate with Alex DeBrincat's second goal of the night with 3:24 to go, and the Red Wings were buzzing and looking to take their first lead of the game when Danforth created the winner.

Zach Aston-Reese flipped the puck off the wall and high out of the CBJ defensive zone, with Danforth chasing it into the neutral zone. Red Wings defensemen Albert Johansson and Simon Edvinsson were there to seemingly field it with a fair catch, but Danforth had other plans. When the puck hit the ice and bounced over the blue line, Danforth got his stick underneath Edvinsson's and muscled him away.

Danforth may have gotten away with a high stick as his blade appeared to catch Edvinsson up high, but no whistle was made, and the CBJ center tracked down the puck and suddenly had a clean look on goalie Cam Talbot.

The Detroit netminder made the first save, but Danforth had the presence of mind to follow his own rebound, drag it to the forehand and quickly put the puck past Talbot to set off another massive cannon concussion in the stadium.

"I can't even explain it," Danforth said when asked to describe how the emotion of the moment felt when he scored. "Honestly, it took over everything. Just very loud. A lot of emotion involved. It was a fun one, probably the highest of my career at that point. Yeah, it's awesome."

Danforth did more than just score the winning goal, as well. He had a team-high six hits, including a third-period shoulder check on Elmer Soderblom that left the 6-8 forward needing medical attention. Danforth was also a key part of the battle behind the net that led to Olivier's goal late in the second period that made it 3-1.

But really, how can you beat a game-winning goal with two minutes to go in front of more than 90,000 people?

"He's a little pit bull out there," Olivier said. "He gets it done. I've seen Danny do that (goal) a bunch of times. ... I'm glad for him he got this moment. It's well deserved."

## BlueJackets.com / NHL Stadium Series provides an experience the Blue Jackets won't ever forget

**By Jeff Svoboda- March 2, 2025**

Very rarely in life does something have outsized expectations and then exceeds them.

Saturday was one of those days.

When the Navy Federal Credit Union NHL Stadium Series was announced a year ago, the fact outdoor hockey would be played in Ohio Stadium felt like a dream come true for the Blue Jackets and their fans.

The problem with a dream is that at the end, you wake up and have to return to reality. But for the Blue Jackets, this really happened, an all-day celebration of the team and the city capped perfectly by a late game-winning goal and a 5-3 victory against the Detroit Red Wings.

When asked if the day lived up to expectations or exceeded them, head coach Dean Evason had a quick answer.

"More," Evason said. "I've been fortunate to be through a couple (outdoor games), but this experience was incredible. Not just the win – obviously, that's fantastic – but all the stuff (honoring) Johnny (Gaudreau) made it even extra special. The stadium, the pep rally, the walk in, yeah. There's a lot of emotion there."

The star of the show was the venue itself, 103-year-old Ohio Stadium, long considered one of the most iconic venues in sports, a classic, Roman-inspired horseshoe design that has stood the test of time for both its architecture and its sightlines. Everything points to midfield, where the ice rink was placed with care over the past two weeks and supplemented by Ohio State football-inspired decor that covered the rest of the playing surface and made the setting uniquely Columbus.

It also helps the stadium holds more than 100,000 fans for football games and welcomed 94,571 fans for the Stadium Series game, the second-largest crowd in NHL history. If there were any doubts that Blue Jackets fans would be able to fill the venue – even as temperatures dipped below freezing and chilling winds swirled – those were answered emphatically by the time the puck dropped and the crowd roared.

The noise was taken to another level when the Blue Jackets scored, which they did five times, with the celebrations punctuated by a blast of the team's famous goal cannon and the placement of a CBJ helmet sticker on the field.

"It's tough to find a way to describe it," Olivier said of the atmosphere and the noise. "Obviously it's a little unknown to us because we're used to playing with around 18 (or) 20,000 people. This is almost five times that. Everything sounds louder. Everything sounds like a deeper roar, and it's definitely extremely special."

The atmosphere inside the stadium was supplemented by a pregame scene that made the event feel like a fall Saturday. There was an Ohio State gameday vibe, with tailgating lots opening 10 hours before the game and crowds slowly gathering on campus throughout the day to enjoy the pregame fan festival, hang out with friends or simply enjoy the spectacle.

Perhaps the perfect touch was the Blue Jackets version of the pregame Skull Session and the Ohio State football team's arrival to the stadium. The historic wooden seats of St. John Arena filled to the top with CBJ fans who were treated to a pregame concert featuring the Ohio State athletic band as well as Of A Revolution, the platinum-certified band whose members attended OSU.

As O.A.R. played its hit “This Town,” CBJ players entered the arena for their sendoff to the stadium. Fans lined the route from St. John Arena across Woody Hayes Drive and through Jesse Owens Plaza to the rotunda entrance of the stadium, chanting “C-B-J!” and encouraging the players, and the Gaudreau family led the team’s walk into the building.

“Coming here today with the pep rally, the fans outside the stadium already, the walk in, and then seeing the crowd in warmups, the warmup was pretty much sold out,” captain Boone Jenner said. “I knew Columbus was going to show up, and they did. What an atmosphere, what an experience for us.”

It was the biggest sign yet of how the Blue Jackets fan base has grown over two and a half decades of hockey in Columbus. An entire generation in Central Ohio now has grown up with NHL hockey in their backyards, and it shows in so many ways, from increased youth and adult participation to a fanbase that has filled Nationwide Arena in recent years no matter the team’s record.

As exciting as Saturday was, what’s truly fun to think about is what an event like this can do to continue to build a love of the sport.

“I think Columbus hockey is only going to grow from here,” CBJ forward Kent Johnson said after the game. “We have unbelievable fans already. We are very lucky, and we know that. We love playing in front of the fans, and obviously it showed even more. Hopefully this event can help grow the game in Ohio. I’m sure there were fans from other places than Columbus, too, that made the drive, so we definitely appreciate it.”

When it was all said and done and the cannon fired one last time to signify a CBJ victory, players and coaches understood they had just taken part in something they would never forget.

“This incredible city and incredible fan base and incredible environment – we just witnessed 90-something-thousand people (at a hockey game),” Evason said. “My God. It was just, you know, I’m glad we were able to talk to the group about taking it all in and enjoying the experience. They did.”

That they did.

“There were definitely times I was looking around and just enjoying it,” Zach Werenski said. “It’s one of those things where it doesn’t happen every day. It could never happen again in my career for all I know. I was doing the best I could, realizing how many people are actually in the building watching. It was special for sure.”

## The Hockey Writers / ESPN's Sean McDonough Talks Upcoming Stadium Series at the Horseshoe

**By Mark Scheig- March 1, 2025**

ESPN's top hockey broadcast team will have the call of the 2025 Stadium Series Saturday night in Ohio Stadium when the Detroit Red Wings play the Columbus Blue Jackets. This will mark Sean McDonough's first call of a Blue Jackets' game on ESPN.

McDonough has been to the Horseshoe on several occasions for college football calling Ohio State games. But calling hockey games is quite the different assignment especially when the game is in a football stadium.

Before he calls the Stadium Series with Ray Ferraro, Emily Kaplan, Kevin Weekes and Marty Smith, McDonough spoke to the Hockey Writers on various topics including the preparation involved for an outdoor game. He opens up on that, the game storylines and how they make sure to present them to a bigger audience. He also talks about lessons learned from the past as well as how the Blue Jackets are perceived nationally.

Here is our conversation.

Differences in Preparation?

"It's not a lot different," McDonough said of preparing for an outdoor game. "I think the major part of the focus and preparation is getting to know the teams. This is our fourth year back in the NHL at ESPN and ABC and I have not done a Columbus Blue Jackets game yet. So I'm immersing myself this week in that and just getting to know the players and the storylines. And the same is true of Detroit. I've had some Red Wing games in the past. I have not had one this year. But preparing for them and then meaning of the game, they're both right in the thick of it in a really crowded playoff race in the Eastern Conference."

"And then, you want also to have the historical context. I think that's where the preparation is different. We don't spend much time typically day-to-day talking about the arenas that these games are played in. But when we do these, you do. The people want to know the history of Ohio Stadium and the great teams that have been played there and what the size of the crowd is. We spend time focusing during the game on the weather, which we never do in a game that's indoors and the condition of the ice and that sort of thing. For the most part especially in the preparation, but also the execution of the game, it's pretty standard for what we would do week-to-week on an evening game and Saturday. It is a little bit different because it's outdoors."

Determining Storylines

Broadcast crews have the task of determining what storylines to highlight during the game. When there are so many to choose from, there is a challenge not only picking storylines, but how to present them. McDonough shared what goes into his thought process.

"It's really biggest part of our challenge, I think, week-to-week, but particularly like this. I was just on a podcast with a couple of friends of mine, former sports anchors in Boston, Bob Lobel and Mike Lynch, who do a podcast called Unanchored. And we were talking about the championship game of the 4-Nations. And it was similar in that even though these are the biggest names in hockey, in 92 of the best players in the world on the four teams and then half of that in championship game. We still were conscious of the fact because of the build up to it that there are going to be a lot of people watching that

game last Thursday night who weren't hardcore hockey fans, who didn't know much or grasp anything about the players."

"It's a huge challenge in hockey just because it goes so fast. It's not like baseball where you have these lulls. Thankfully fewer now with pitch clock. But the puck is moving very quickly. Something can happen in a second, a penalty, a goal, whatever the big hit that you don't really want to be in mid-sentence when that's happening. You have to pick your spots. And to me, they're almost like little bullet points or nuggets about players. If you have more time, then just slide that in."

"To me, one of the interesting stories that we told Thursday night was about the history between Brad Marchand and Sam Bennett a year ago in the playoffs. Bennett lays out Marchand, a controversial hit. Got a lot of conversation. Marchand gets hurt, misses two games. Bennett scores a controversial goal in the next game in which Marchand didn't play. So you try to have stories like that ready to go, and then the game dictates whether or not there's actually an opportunity to tell it."

"So prepare as much as you can. Try to know as much about the players as you can, and then prioritize which are the most important or interesting stories. And then if you can, weave them in when they're involved in the play. Someone's carrying the puck up the ice and you have ten seconds to say he's leading the National Hockey League in plus/minus right now, then that's when you should do it."

#### Learning From the Past

No matter what walk of life someone has, there is always a desire to get better at what you do. It's no different for a hockey broadcaster.

The Stadium Series presents a unique challenge for McDonough. Let him explain that challenge and how it's an area that he thinks the broadcast will be better for now than in the past.

"One of the things that I learned last year is sometimes you have to call the game basically off the monitor. We were in the football TV booth at MetLife Stadium, which is perfect if you're doing a football game. It's at the 50-yard line. It's not that high off the field. It's spacious. But for a hockey game, it wasn't perfect. It was a tough angle. It was lower than you want to be given how far away we were. The people who are on the half of the ice closest to us were almost completely blocked out by the boards."

"So last year, we had a much bigger monitor in the booth than we would typically have for a hockey game in a hockey arena and I called a lot of it off the monitor. I won't know until I get there on Friday what this vantage point is like. I think it's, you're going to be in a booth that's typically a football booth. I've done football games there. It's a fine vantage point to do football. But finding the way to best be able to call the action, I don't think I've ever called any other hockey game in my life off my monitor, but I did call a lot of it last year in New Jersey. That's the biggest challenge for me is generally, these booths were not set up to be broadcasting a hockey game that's set up in the middle of a football stadium. So trying to get the best view of the action is the biggest priority for me."

#### National Perception of the Blue Jackets

Blue Jackets' fans are not used to the national attention their team is getting. Given the events of the offseason coupled with the team being in the playoff hunt, it's making for one of the greatest stories in sports.

Here's McDonough on what the national perception of the Blue Jackets is coming into this game.

"I think it's impressive what they've done. You look at the roster to your point, they're not on national TV very much. And then when you look at the roster even though there's not a lot of household names on the team, there are a lot of excellent hockey players. Zach Werenski got a tremendous amount of

attention for one during the 4-Nations Faceoff. He should. He's a great player. He's having a Norris Trophy caliber season."

"I think another one of our challenges is to explain why is Columbus having this kind of year. Why are they exceeding most people's expectations? And I do think, obviously, Johnny Gaudreau is going to be a part of this. I think for many of us, the success is probably even more surprising given his tragic death and what a great player he was and how important a part of this team he would have been."

"I remember living in Boston. We had the marathon bombing. The Red Sox weren't expected to be any good and they wound up winning the World Series. One of to me, the most emotional, most awesome parts of the 4-Nations Faceoff was Johnny's dad being brought to practice being at the dinner before the tournament started, and then having Johnny's number 13 in the locker room and giving it to the player of the game. And Michael Eruzione walking out on the ice and the huge buildup to the game having Johnny's number on."

"So I think it's not at all surprising and it is wonderful how the tributes that continue to be paid to him and to Matthew and the outpouring of affection for their family. It's still just incredibly heartbreakingly sad. I think that'll be another part of the telecast for us making sure that we talk about Johnny in many ways that he is still a very big part of this team. And as we saw in the 4-Nations Faceoff in this sport, that will never change. When you just think about it, it's just tragic beyond just about anything else I can think of or remember."

"I'm learning about the Blue Jackets as we go. I'm looking forward to telling the stories along with Ray and Emily and the rest of our team. And it's great for hockey. The Red Wings obviously have a long playoff drought themselves. Ottawa is right there. The teams I think we typically think about being in the playoffs, Boston, New York Rangers, Pittsburgh, although they've missed the last couple of years. Now that almost feels like a little bit of a changing of the guard here in some ways."

## The Hockey Writers / Blue Jackets Score Late to Defeat Red Wings at 2025 Stadium Series

**By Mark Scheig- March 2, 2025**

The night everyone associated with the Columbus Blue Jackets waited for came at the 2025 Stadium Series. Against a desperate Detroit Red Wings' team, the Blue Jackets bent but didn't break. A late goal helped propel them to victory.

Justin Danforth scored the game-winning goal with just 2:17 left in regulation while Adam Fantilli added an empty netter to lift the Blue Jackets to a huge 5-3 win over the Red Wings in front 94,751 fans at Ohio Stadium. It was the second-highest attendance to watch a game in NHL history.

The story of the game was the Blue Jackets finding a way to grind out a win.

### Game Recap

Just like Thursday night in Detroit, the first period ended 0-0. The Red Wings started strong knowing they had to play a lot better. They outshot the Blue Jackets 14-6.

Even though the Red Wings dominated the rest of the night in terms of shots and chances, it was the Blue Jackets that struck first. Denton Mateychuk became the trivia answer to who was the first Blue Jacket to score an outdoor goal? He pinched and fired the puck past Cam Talbot to open the scoring.

The Red Wings' desperation level only increased after the 1-0 goal. Their vaunted power play got their first chance of the night and converted. Alex DeBrincat made it 1-1.

Then the Blue Jackets got a power play of their own. They scored quickly on it thanks to Kent Johnson's pass to Dmitri Voronkov. It took just 32 seconds to extend it to 3-1 thanks to Mathieu Olivier's backhanded wrap around. Postgame, Olivier said he's never smiled bigger about a goal than that one.

The Red Wings dominated the third period to the tune of 21-8 on the shot clock. They were able to erase the two-goal deficit to tie the game. Patrick Kane scored early while DeBrincat added his second goal of the night to make it 3-3 with just 3:24 left.

The game was ultimately decided on a bit of a controversial non-call. Danforth appeared to high stick Simon Edvinsson. The non-call created a scoring chance. Danforth scored off his own rebound the game-winning goal sending most of the 94,751 into a frenzy.

With the win, the Blue Jackets improved to 4-0-0 since the 4-Nations. They also scored at least five goals in four consecutive games for the first time in franchise history. Merzlikins was named the game's first star after making 43 saves. Talbot stopped 16 of 20 in the loss.

The Blue Jackets own the first wildcard spot by two over the Red Wings. They now have their sights set on both the Devils and Hurricanes for third and second in the Metro. Up next is a four-game road trip starting in Tampa Bay on Tuesday night.

Meanwhile, the Red Wings host the Carolina Hurricanes on Tuesday night.

## The Hockey Writers / Blue Jackets Nailed Smallest Details to Ensure Perfect Stadium Series Experience

**By Mark Scheig- March 2, 2025**

Saturday night in Ohio Stadium at the 2025 Stadium Series turned into a night no one associated with the Columbus Blue Jackets will ever forget. Everyone will remember where they were when Justin Danforth scored the game-winning goal late in the third period.

Even before that goal, there were countless stories and memories made amongst the 94,751 fans who went to the game. Whether it was families being able to spend a night together watching their favorite team play hockey outside or it was enjoying the spectacle of everything the Stadium Series had to offer, these new memories will last a lifetime.

The question that kept coming up in my mind during the entire lead up to the Stadium Series was how much it took to make this event the perfect experience for the Blue Jackets.

For around three hours on Saturday night, we got to see the finished product in Ohio Stadium. A great hockey game was played between two teams fighting tooth and nail for playoff positioning. Once the game was over, fans left in celebration knowing that their Blue Jackets capped off one of their most incredible experiences in franchise history.

Why were the fans able to leave happy? That's because the NHL, the Blue Jackets, the Ohio State University and everyone else involved with the planning nailed the execution every step of the way even to the very smallest detail.

It took a lot of planning and many hours of work to put the finished product together. It was a total team effort. Many aspects happened behind the scenes. When you consider the long hours and energy that was poured into this, it shines the Stadium Series in a much different perspective.

### Starting With a Plan

We found out in the week leading up to the Stadium Series that the game was five years in the making. That came with a lot of dialogue, meetings and making sure every obstacle and challenge was addressed.

The story as to why there was never an outdoor game before in Columbus usually centered around Ohio Stadium not being winterized. The desire for a game had always been there with several entities pushing for it to happen. It was now about coming up with a plan to address the shortcomings.

Just consider for a moment how much dialogue there was that led up to the formal announcement of an outdoor game coming to Columbus. Everyone had to be on the same page in order to execute an event of this magnitude.

There had to be a plan. Without all of the time and effort behind the scenes, Saturday night doesn't become a reality. If talks about the game were five years in the making, imagine what one day in those discussions looked like.

While several major challenges needed addressed, other smaller ones came up along the way. Ensuring that even the smallest detail was addressed helped lead to this game. You will see an even deeper appreciation for what you saw Saturday night when you view everything from that lens.

### Building a Unique Experience

Every NHL outdoor game takes on a personality of its own. It's uniqueness is what's remembered when we look back. Just as it is in coming up with a plan, making sure it's a unique experience comes down to nailing the smallest details.

Anyone who was at the Pep Rally at St. John Arena got to see firsthand the importance of the smallest details. The event started with a packed arena eagerly awaiting the arrival of the Blue Jackets. OAR went on stage before the team came to the stage.

When the time came for the Blue Jackets to walk out, they did so wearing a ball cap, hoodies and baggy pants. Those that didn't take the time to ponder the meaning would easily miss the significance of the moment.

Captain Boone Jenner called this the "ultimate Johnny fit." The Blue Jackets have spent the season honoring the Gaudreau's in everything they did. It was no different for one of their biggest games in franchise history.

Johnny Gaudreau typically wore casual clothes such as a T-shirt. The Blue Jackets walked into St. John Arena as a team wearing something Johnny would wear. The clothing even honored a local business in New Jersey where he grew up.

Looking around the crowd, one could tell that the meaning was starting to hit as time passed. That was just the beginning for what was going to happen. The Gaudreau family then led the Blue Jackets from St. John Arena to Ohio Stadium. It became one of the most powerful moments in franchise history.

Postgame, emotions were high. Head coach Dean Evason had to fight back tears. Goaltender Elvis Merzlikins was asked to reflect on the night walking out behind the Gaudreau family. Once again, nailing the smallest details led to a lifetime of memories.

"This experience was incredible," Evason said. "Not just the win, obviously. That's fantastic. But all of the stuff with Johnny made it even extra special, the Stadium, the Pep Rally, the walk in. There's a lot of emotion here."

"Johnny was here with us and he helped us win this game," Merzlikins said. "The past two games when the family was here with us, we lost. One was in Calgary and one was our opening night. I'm glad that we could make a win happen in this game right now because that was a huge hit."

Jenner admitted that the dress like Johnny idea came collectively amongst the older players on the team.

"We thought of it quite a while ago," Jenner said. "Just thought it was fitting. To us, it's a signature Johnny fit and we've seen him under the rink so many times in that or something very similar. It's just a special thing we wanted to do for him and we've had so many good times with him in those clothes. Meredith helped us out so much with tracking down those sweaters that he always wore from Avalon. We just pieced together the rest and it was special to wear that and come in like that for us."

#### Experience Inside Ohio Stadium

Once everyone got to their seats, they were treated to a memorable experience from everything they could see. Script Ohio came together on the ice pregame. After the game, the crowd sang Carmen Ohio the same way after a Buckeyes' game.

But then looking around at the finer details, it added up to a perfect Stadium Series experience. The famed Cannon was in a prominent place near the ice. The crowd cheered loudly with each new blast from a goal scored.

As for the finer details, a cannon was rolled out with each goal scored. Denton Mateychuk's 1-0 goal unveiled this neat twist on a cannon blast.

Ohio Stadium looked amazing for the game. We got the chance to come in periodically leading up to the game to see the progress of the build. One can't help but have a new found appreciation of how important the small details are.

Whether we're talking about making the ice, maintaining the ice, building the dashers, installing the glass or anything else associated with ensuring a rink safe for play, the NHL did meticulous work to make sure things were where they needed to be.

There was also the stage inside the stadium for the Twenty One Pilots performance. There was the pregame festivities that included shooting off of fireworks and a flyover. It was a lot to take in over a short period of time. Planning and execution had to be flawless. It was.

#### The Game Itself

There was still a huge game to play. The Blue Jackets had to try to get down to business after an emotional day. To their credit and to make the night complete, they did just that.

The Blue Jackets had to overcome some unique challenges to the conditions. Merzlikins admitted postgame that he wasn't happy with his catcher. He compared it to have "two blockers." The weather and wind played a factor in that as the cold made it so he couldn't close his glove. Once he discovered the issue, he made the adjustment. He went on to make 43 saves which was the second-most saves in an outdoor game in NHL history.

Merzlikins said being at different ends of the ice presented challenges due to the wind. His in-game adjustment is a detail one might not consider given the situation, but it became a huge factor in the outcome of the game.

The Blue Jackets also were outplayed most of the game by a desperate Red Wings' team. They hung in there and got timely scoring from their bottom-six. Specifically Danforth and Mathieu Olivier each scored huge goals. Olivier called Danforth "the little pit bull out there" during postgame indicating that his work ethic helped make sure the Stadium Series ended in a win.

#### Smallest Details Created Lasting Memories

The entire event showcased what Columbus is all about. The team on the ice takes after the identity of their coach. Evason believes in team first with everything they do. They are hard-working and give maximum effort with every game they play.

Then all of the various teams off the ice are just as hard-working. They made sure that every aspect of the event was as smooth as possible. The result of all that hard work was the nation and world seeing 94,751 fans pack into Ohio Stadium and watch the Blue Jackets shine.

Now consider this. What impact will this game have on the next generation? Perhaps now they can get into hockey because of the Stadium Series experience.

The overwhelming feeling from everyone who got to experience the game was a feeling of awe and wonder. It's for this reason that the splendor of the outdoor game will always have its place in hockey.

The lasting memory of Saturday night will be how much planning and execution led to making sure it was perfect. Everyone involved in the game has a lot to be proud of.

Thanks to everyone nailing the smallest details, the 2025 Stadium Series was the perfect experience that will truly last a lifetime.

## 1<sup>st</sup> Ohio Battery / Stadium Series Game Preview: Blue Jackets Host Red Wings At Ohio Stadium In Columbus' First-Ever Outdoor Game

By Ed Francis- March 1, 2025

The NHL Stadium Series is finally here. Here's what to look for when the Blue Jackets and Red Wings do battle in front of over 90,000 fans under the lights of Ohio Stadium.



DETROIT RED WINGS  
SATURDAY, MARCH 1  
6:00 P.M.

OHIO STADIUM  
COLUMBUS, OH

RED WINGS:  
30-23-6 (66 pts; .559%)  
Last Ten: 7-2-1  
Division: 4th of 8  
Conference: t-7th of 16  
NHL: t-14th of 32  
ROSTER  
SCHEDULE

It's here.

More than 90,000 fans are expected inside Ohio Stadium on Saturday when the Columbus Blue Jackets host the Detroit Red Wings in the 2025 Navy Federal Credit Union NHL Stadium Series.

It's the second half of a unique home-and-home between the two teams, one that the Blue Jackets set the tone for Thursday with a decisive 5-2 win in Detroit.

The day will feature several undertones of the storied football rivalry between Ohio State and Michigan, but the players on the ice are much more concerned with the game — even those who are proud Michigan alumni.

"No rivalry for me this weekend," said Zach Werenski, one of those alumni. "I don't really care about it."

"It's great for our fans, for our city, it's great for our team and our organization."

Even for those who don't have a personal tie-in to the college rivalry, they understand the moment.

"It kind of blew me away at first," said captain Boone Jenner. "Seeing the ice out there for the first time was pretty special. Enjoying it with my teammates, it's something we've been looking forward to."

Head coach Dean Evason said that Friday's outdoor practice was a good way for the team to soak it in before the big day.

"(Friday) is about getting prepared, no different than it is the day before a regular game," said Evason. "But you can still have some fun and enjoy it, it's very special out there."

The game is also pivotal in the standings, perhaps more so than any other outdoor game in NHL history. Columbus and Detroit are tied at 66 points each, holding down the two wild card spots in an ultra-competitive Eastern Conference playoff race.

With just about six weeks left in the regular season, every point matters.

"It feels like the perfect storm," said forward Mathieu Olivier. "Where they're at, where we're at, where we're at in the season — and then you add the outdoor game."

"You can't make this up."

Saturday will feature many special moments, but none more-so than the team's plan to be led into the stadium before the game by Meredith Gaudreau, the wife of the late Johnny Gaudreau.

"(Johnny) would have loved everything about this," said Jenner. "There's no doubt he would have had a blast and we're going to play for him."

Here's what else to know when the Blue Jackets and Red Wings play under the lights of The Shoe:

DET		SEASON STATS		CBJ	
14-10-3		ROAD / HOME		19-6-4	
t-17th	2.88	GOALS FOR	3.32	5th	
22nd	3.15	GOALS AGAINST	3.25	25th	
2nd	29.3%	POWER PLAY	21.0%	t-18th	
Last	70.0%	PENALTY KILL	75.6%	25th	
t-26th	26.9	SHOTS FOR	28.9	t-12th	

DET		SEASON STATS	CBJ	
23rd	29.2	SHOTS AGAINST	29.3	t-24th
15th	50.7%	FACE-OFFS	47.1%	27th
DETROIT: LAST THREE GAMES				
SUN, 2/23		vs. Ducks	OTW, 5-4	
TUE, 2/25		@ Wild	W, 3-2	
THU, 2/27		vs. Blue Jackets	L, 5-2	
DETROIT: TEAM LEADERS				
GOALS		Alex DeBrincat	27	
ASSISTS		Lucas Raymond	41	
POINTS		Lucas Raymond	63	
ODDS & PROJECTIONS				
CBJ WIN PER MONEYPUCK:			47%	

CBJ ODDS PER ESPNBET: -110

- RE: WINGS

As he did in Detroit's loss Thursday, Cam Talbot will get the start in net again Saturday. He's had a save percentage under .900 in four of his last five starts, going 2-2-1 in those games while allowing a total of 17 goals. This will be his fourth start in eight days. ... Detroit scored one of three power play chances Thursday; they're now 6-of-13 on the man-advantage in the four games since the 4 Nations break ended. For the season, the Red Wings rank second in the NHL on the power play. ... Lucas Raymond, Dylan Larkin, and Alex DeBrincat all have at least 22 goals

and at least 50 points on the season, but there's a steep drop in production after that: Patrick Kane is fourth on the team in both categories, with 14 goals and 35 points.

- **SCORING IN DROVES**

The Blue Jackets have scored at least five goals in their three games since returning from the break: a 5-1 win last Saturday over Chicago, a 6-4 win over Dallas on Tuesday, and Thursday's 5-2 win over Detroit. They're 5th in the NHL for the season in goals per game at 3.25 and even better at home, where their 4.03 per-game average leads the league.

- **JVR: A MAN OF THE OUTDOOR GAMES**

Saturday's game will be the eighth outdoor game in the career of James van Riemsdyk, more than anyone else. He has three goals and three assists in the first seven games. The last time JVR played outside: Feb. 21st, 2021. Three of his six career outdoor points came in that game, but his team — the Philadelphia Flyers — lost 7-3 to the Boston Bruins. The game was played at Lake Tahoe, one of the very few games in NHL history not played in an NHL city.

- **LINEUPS & PROJECTIONS**

Cole Sillinger was injured in the first period of Thursday's win and Evason confirmed that he will not be in the lineup Saturday. Mikael Pyyhtia, recalled Friday from the (AHL) Cleveland Monsters, comes into the lineup and will be on the fourth line with Sean Kuraly and Joseph LaBate.

The only other lineup change is in net, where Elvis Merzlikins will get the start after Daniil Tarasov was between the pipes in Thursday's game. Merzlikins has won both of his starts coming out of the break, defeating the Blackhawks on Saturday and the Stars on Tuesday.



Here are the complete lineup projections:

LW		C		RW	
10	Dmitri Voronkov	19	Adam Fantilli	86	Kirill Marchenko
21	James van Riemsdyk	83	Boone Jenner	91	Kent Johnson
27	Zach Aston-Reese	17	Justin Danforth	24	Mathieu Olivier
82	Mikael Pyyhtia	7	Sean Kuraly	14	Joseph LaBate
LD		RD			
8	Zach Werenski	15	Dante Fabbro		

LD		RD	
5	Denton Mateychuk	9	Ivan Provorov
2	Jake Christiansen	78	Damon Severson
Starting Goalie		Back-Up	
90	Elvis Merzlikins	40	Daniil Tarasov

## 1<sup>st</sup> Ohio Battery / CBJ 5, DET 3: Merzlikins Makes 43 Saves, Justin Danforth Scores Game-Winner In Blue Jackets' Stadium Series Win Over Detroit

By Ed Francis- March 2, 2025

	1	2	3	F
	0	1	2	3
	0	3	2	5

CBJ GOALS:

Mateychuk (P2, 5:31)

Voronkov (PP) (P2, 17:23)

Olivier (P2, 17:55)

Danforth (P3, 17:43)

Fantilli (EN) (P3, 18:52)

Two more points.

This time, in front of 94,751 at Ohio Stadium.

Justin Danforth scored the game-winner with just over two minutes left, Elvis Merzlikins dazzled with 43 saves, and Denton Mateychuk scored the first outdoor goal in Columbus Blue Jackets' history in their 5-3 win over the Detroit Red Wings on Saturday night in front of the second-largest crowd in NHL history.

After a scoreless first period — the second in three nights between the two teams — it was Mateychuk's goal at 5:31 of the second period that put Columbus in front 1-0. He said that the moments after the goal were a blur.

"After I scored, I don't even remember what my celly was or anything," said Mateychuk. "I remember hearing the crowd was pretty loud."

The Blue Jackets would keep that lead for a chunk of the period before the Red Wings tied it at the 13:06 mark of the second period. But just four minutes later, Columbus would score twice in 32 seconds to take a 3-1 lead through forty minutes.

The first goal came just eight seconds into Columbus' only power play of the night. Dmitri Voronkov took a good goal line pass from Kent Johnson and beat Detroit goalie Cam Talbot to put the Blue Jackets in front 2-1.

Right after that, Mathieu Olivier put together one of his best shifts of the season that results in his 12th goal of the season, extending the Blue Jackets lead to two goals entering the third period.

But Detroit would not go away. The Red Wings scored twice in the third period to tie the game at 3-3, with the (briefly) game-tying goal coming with just 3:24 left in regulation.

Enter Danforth.

He beats two Detroit defenders entering the zone and after his first shot is saved by Talbot, makes a tremendous second effort to find the back of the net and give the Blue Jackets a 4-3 lead with just 2:17 left in regulation.

Then, with just over a minute left in regulation, Adam Fantilli's empty-netter led to the cannon firing for the fifth time, putting the finishing touches on a home-and-home over the Red Wings for another crucial pair of points in the standings.

Despite the five-goal night from the offense, it was Merzlikins who was named the First Star of the game. The goalie fought off 43 of Detroit's 46 shots, the second-highest number of saves in an outdoor game and just two off Nico Daws' record last season for the New Jersey Devils.

"The confidence that Elvis has given us all year, forget about just tonight, but clearly he was incredible tonight," said head coach Dean Evason. "(Detroit) made a conscious effort to get to the net, put pucks on the net ... and (Elvis) has competed his ass off."

Evason was emotional after the game, for a number of reasons.

"This experience was incredible. Not just the win, obviously that's fantastic," said Evason. "All this stuff with Johnny made it even extra special. The stadium, the Pep Rally, the walk in... there was a lot of emotion here."

The team was led into the stadium earlier in the day by the family of the late Johnny Gaudreau, who was honored by both teams throughout the weekend. As they made the walk, the Blue Jackets wore hoodies and surf shop gear — clothes typically worn by Johnny around the locker room.

It was certainly an emotional lift for a team already riding a once-in-a-lifetime high that comes with playing in an outdoor game.

Here's how Columbus picked up two more points, came away with their fourth straight game of five or more goals, and won one for Johnny:

#### 1st Period:

No goals in the opening frame under the lights at Ohio Stadium, though both teams had good chances. The Red Wings had a decisive advantage in shot attempts (29-10) and in scoring chances (11-6), but it was the Blue Jackets who had three of the four high-danger chances through the first 20. The best chance of the period was an Adam Fantilli snapper with about six minutes left, but it went just wide of Detroit goalie Cam Talbot, keeping the score at 0-0 through one.

#### 2nd Period:

(5:31 — CBJ Goal): Mateychuk makes history here, becoming the first Blue Jacket to score in an outdoor game. Jenner sets him up perfectly with a no-look pass into the slot, where Mateychuk is waiting, slides to the left, and fires it past Talbot to send 90,000 into a frenzy and have the cannon fire at The Shoe.

James van Riemsdyk gets the secondary assist for his 7th point (three goals, four assists) in his 8th outdoor game.

(13:05 — DET Goal): The Red Wings second-ranked power play ties the game at 1-1, with Alex DeBrincat picking up his team-leading 28th goal of the season. Patrick Kane fires from the right dot and DeBrincat scoops it up and beats Merzlikins to knot the game.

(17:23 — CBJ PP Goal): It takes just eight seconds for the Blue Jackets to connect on the power play. Zach Werenski finds Kent Johnson right along the goal line and Johnson immediately slips it right to Voronkov in front of the net, who rings it off the top of the post and in to put Columbus back in front, this time 2-1. Johnson's assist gives him a point in five straight games, while Werenski's 45th assist of the season ends a brief (but long for him) two-game streak without a point.

(17:55 — CBJ Goal): Just 32 seconds after Voronkov's goal, Olivier gets his 12th of the season after a hard-working shift. He first gets the puck out of the Columbus zone and then dumps it in, then skates into the corner and gets control of the puck, getting it behind the Detroit net. Justin Danforth helps keep it there long enough for Olivier to skate in, scoop the puck up and then make a wrap-around effort that bounces around and goes into the net to make it a 3-1 Blue Jackets lead.

3rd Period:

(3:34 — DET Goal): The Red Wings pull within one on a snipe from Patrick Kane, who gets his 15th of the season. He beats Merzlikins stick-side to cut Columbus' lead to 3-2.

(16:36 — DET Goal): The Red Wings tie it with just 3:14 left in regulation; DeBrincat's second goal of the night temporarily takes the air out of the Ohio Stadium crowd.

(17:43 — CBJ Goal): Was there a high-sticking on the game-winning goal? "It could go either way," said Evason. "If we're on the other end, we'd be speaking to it." In either event, the goal counted after a phenomenal individual effort from Danforth. Zach Aston-Reese flips the puck airborne towards the Detroit zone, and Danforth beats a pair of Detroit defenders to get to it first. He skates in and shoots, with his first attempt being saved by Talbot. The rebound comes right his way though, and with an incredible second effort he slips it through Talbot's five-hole to put the Blue Jackets in front 4-3.

(18:52 — CBJ EN Goal): Detroit's errant pass ends up on the stick of Jenner, he hits Werenski with a pass as they enter the zone together. Werenski's shot from the blueline pings off the post, but he gets a rebound and finds Fantilli right in front of the net to bury the empty-netter and give Columbus the win.

DET	GAME STATS	CBJ
46	SHOTS	21
49%	FACEOFFS	51%
1/2	POWER PLAY	1/1
0/1	PENALTY KILL	1/2

DET	GAME STATS	CBJ
31	HITS	25
17	GIVEAWAYS	20
5	TAKEAWAYS	7
14	BLOCKED SHOTS	22
ALL SITUATIONS ADVANCED STATS		
4.72	EXPECTED GOALS	3.62
84	SHOT ATTEMPTS	45
33	SCORING CHANCES	19
13	HIGH-DANGER CHANCES	9
Data via NHL.com & NaturalStatTrick.com		

#### Stat Chat:

- With his second period assist, van Riemsdyk collected his seventh outdoor point. That's tied for the most in NHL history with Jonathan Toews and Henrik Zetterberg.
- Boone Jenner's pair of assists gives him seven in his first four games back, including five in the pair of games against the Red Wings. Kent Johnson had an assist as well, giving him a five-game point streak. He's scored at least one point in 13 of his last 14 games.
- Merzlikins faced 21 shots in the third period as the Red Wings furiously got pucks to the net. Detroit's expected goals for the game came in at 4.72, more than half of which came in the final frame (2.47).

#### Up Next:

Columbus gets a few days to breathe before they begin a tough, four-game road trip that starts Tuesday in Tampa against the Lightning. Puck-drop is set for 7 p.m.

## 1<sup>st</sup> Ohio Battery / Three Things: Oh, Danny Boy, Elvis Makes History, JVR Ties Outdoor Mark

**By Will Chase- March 2, 2025**

The much-anticipated game everyone had been waiting for.

Justin Danforth scored to break a 3-3 tie late in the third period and Elvis Merzlikins made 43 saves as the Columbus Blue Jackets won their fourth in a row, knocking off the Detroit Red Wings 5-3 in a classic at Ohio Stadium on Saturday night in the NHL Stadium Series.

Oh, Danny Boy

The Blue Jackets had a 3-1 lead into the third period but you can't count out the team tied with them in the standings coming into the night.

With Columbus and Detroit both coming into the game knotted at 66 points and occupying the two Eastern Conference wild-card spots, the first-ever outdoor game at The Shoe lived up to the hype and then some.

Patrick Kane had a three-point night with two assists and a goal when he cut the deficit to one to make it 3-2 at 3:34 of the third period. The tally is his 15th. Simon Edvinsson (17) and Albert Johansson (6) added the helpers.

Then things got a little too interesting when Alex DeBrincat scored his 29th, and second of the game, at 16:36 to tie the game 3-3. He's on a nine-game point streak (eight goals, six assists). Erik Gustafsson (15) added to his four-game point streak with an assist (zero goals, four assists) and Kane (23) had an assist.

Tied and looking for the goal late, Danforth (6) delivered, scoring the eventual game-winner on a second-chance rebound to make it 4-3. Zach Aston-Reese (10) and Ivan Provorov (21) assisted.

Adam Fantilli scored the empty-net goal at 18:52 to seal the 5-3 win with Zach Werenski (46) and Boone Jenner (7) each picking up their second assist of the night.

Here's how the other scoring happened.

Denton Mateychuk scored his third goal of the season at 5:31 of the second period to give Columbus the 1-0 lead. Jenner stretched his point streak to four games with the assist. James van Riemsdyk (15) picked up his 15th assist. He has seven points (three goals, four assists) in eight career outdoor games.

At 13:06 DeBrincat scored on the power play, his 28th, to tie the game 1-1. Kane (22) and Moritz Seider (31) assisted. DeBrincat is on a nine-game point streak (seven goals, six assists).

Dmitri Voronkov restored the Blue Jackets' lead at 17:23 with a power play goal of his own. The goal is his 20th. Kent Johnson (22) and Werenski (45) picked up the assists. Johnson is on a five-game point streak (four goals, three assists) and has points in 13 of his last 14 games.

Just 22 seconds later, Mathieu Olivier made it 3-1 at 17:55 for his 12th. He's on a three-game point streak (two goals, one assist). Danforth picked up his eighth assist.

Columbus scored seven second-period goals against Detroit since Thursday and for the first time in franchise history scored at least five goals in four straight games.

Danforth was the Third Star of the Game.

Elvis Makes History

Just as he's done most of the season, Merzlikins came up huge.

In arguably the biggest NHL game of his and his teammates' careers, the goaltender had a career night in front of the second-largest crowd for an outdoor game, and any game, in NHL history as 94,751 witnessed the spectacle at Ohio Stadium.

The 94 thousand-plus also saw Merzlikins swat away a season-high 43 of 46 shots and hold off Detroit's comeback bid as he made the second-most saves in an outdoor game in NHL history.

"The confidence that Elvis has given us all year, forget about just tonight, clearly he was incredible tonight," head coach Dean Evason said. "(Detroit) made a conscious effort to get to the net, put pucks on the net ... (Elvis) has competed his ass off."

Merzlikins was named First Star of the Game.

Cam Talbot made 16 saves on 21 shots.

JVR Ties Outdoor Mark

Van Riemsdyk is an NHL veteran with 1,064 career games under his belt and 658 points (325 goals, 333 assists) across 16 seasons.

He's also no stranger to the outdoor game.

Van Riemsdyk played in his record eighth outdoor game, the most among any player in NHL history. Kane played in his sixth outdoor game.

In addition to playing in the most outdoor games, he's also among the most productive when the league takes the game outside. Assisting on Olivier's second-period goal to make it 3-1 Jackets, van Riemsdyk picked up his seventh career point, tied for the most points scored in outdoor games.

Sunshine State

Columbus begins a four-game road trip with the first leg of the trip starting in Tampa as they battle the Lightning on Tuesday, Mar. 4 at 7 p.m. ET.

## 1<sup>st</sup> Ohio Battery / An Emotional, Successful Weekend: Blue Jackets Honor Gaudreau's, Get Big Win On And Off The Ice In Monumental Weekend For Columbus Hockey

**By Ed Francis- March 2, 2025**

For the 94,751 in attendance at Ohio Stadium on Saturday night, it was a night they won't soon forget.

The second-largest crowd in NHL history saw the Columbus Blue Jackets defeat the Detroit Red Wings 5-3 in Columbus' first-ever outdoor game, with Justin Danforth scoring the game-winner at the 17:43 mark of the third period before Adam Fantilli would seal the deal with an empty-netter just over a minute later.

The win, on the ice, was meaningful: an important two points in the standings that gave the Blue Jackets a lead in the Eastern Conference wild card race. It was also against a team Columbus is in firm competition with for those wild card spots (though it's worth noting that the Blue Jackets are now just four points behind the Carolina Hurricanes and New Jersey Devils for second place in the Metro division).

But off the ice, the win meant even more.

The primary reason for that: the perfect way in which the Blue Jackets used the weekend to honor the legacy of the late Johnny Gaudreau and his brother Matthew, who were killed by an alleged drunk driver in August.

"This experience was incredible. Not just the win, obviously that's fantastic," said head coach Dean Evason.

He then got choked up.

"All this stuff with Johnny made it even extra special. The stadium, the Pep Rally, the walk in... there was a lot of emotion here."

Among the ways that made it "extra special" was how the Blue Jackets entered the stadium. They were led by Gaudreau's wife Meredith, their kids Johnny and Noa, and Johnny's mom Jane. Next to them were Sean Monahan and Erik Gudbranson, two close friends of Johnny who were unable to play in the game as they both continue to work their way back from injuries.

"The most important thing was the presence of Johnny and his family here tonight," said Evason.

But honoring the Gaudreau's started even before than that, most notably with how the Blue Jackets entered the stadium. Special outfits for team's arrivals for an outdoor game are nothing new, but Columbus opted for Avalon Surf Shop hoodies, matching black sweatpants, Ugg boots, and Amiri hats.

All signature items of Gaudreau.

"It just reminds us of him," said captain Boone Jenner. "There's so many days we've seen him come to the rink like that, and we have some pictures that he's pretty much wearing the same thing."

"We wanted to honor him the best way that we could," said Jenner.

It wasn't just the Blue Jackets that honored Gaudreau as they made their way into the stadium. When the Red Wings stepped off their bus, they were adorned in various sweaters worn throughout the career of Johnny and Matthew.

Once the game was underway, a video tribute to the Gaudreau's played late in the opening period. The crowd of nearly 95,000 saw Jane in a Gaudreau jersey, tearing up. A "Johnny Hockey!" chant broke out, only adding to the tears.

In the second period, a Gaudreau jersey banner was passed section-to-section in the lower stands in another impactful moment.

Back on the ice, the Blue Jackets were in a battle. After Dmitri Voronkov and Mathieu Olivier scored goals 32 seconds apart late in the second to give the Blue Jackets a 3-1 lead heading into the third, the Red Wings fought back and tied the game at 3-3 with just 3:24 left in regulation.

Just over one minute later, Justin Danforth had what he called "the highlight of (his) career" when he worked his way to a loose puck through two Detroit defenders and beat Detroit goalie Cam Talbot on a second-effort shot to put the Blue Jackets in front with 2:17 left in the game.

The cannon fired, the crowd erupted, and the Blue Jackets got a lead they would not relinquish.

Danforth was wearing the "donkey cap" after the game, which is given out by who the players choose as the player of the game. The donkey cap is another tribute to Gaudreau, who lovingly would refer to friends and teammate as "donkeys".

"I know he's laughing up there and calling me a donkey," said Danforth. "He's a big part of our group; it felt really special for us to get a win for him and his family."

But for all the goals scored, perhaps the best player on the ice was Columbus goaltender Elvis Merzlikins, whose 43 saves were the second-most in an NHL outdoor game and just two away from the all-time record.

"This night was definitely my favorite night so far," said Merzlikins, who was named the First Star of the game.

Merzlikins was happy for the win, but knew who helped play a hand in the victory.

"Johnny was here with us," said Merzlikins. "He helped us to win this game."

It was a win off the ice, too.

The hockey world had its eyes on Columbus, and the night was a cannon-booming success. From fans tailgating early in the morning despite sub-freezing temperatures and a blustery wind, to the full Pep Rally at St. John Arena, Blue Jackets nation showed up early and stayed throughout for the monumental day.

It was further proof to those remaining few that needed it that, yes, Columbus is a hockey city.

Give an assist on the win to The Ohio State University, who worked with the Blue Jackets to make everything about the experience was a well-done tie-in between the two groups.

There was a military flyover after the National Anthem, and Ohio State president Ted Carter led the ceremonial puck-drop. Next to him, Ohio State football players Jayden Fielding and Sonny Styles were with the Buckeyes' recent national championship trophy.

Brutus Buckeye was everywhere throughout the stadium with a hockey stick in hand. The Ohio State Athletic Band performed "Script Ohio" on the ice, just as they would on the gridiron before a Buckeye football game.

When Columbus scored each of their five goals, it was the Ohio State band who played Locksley's "The Whip", the Blue Jackets goal song for well over a decade. After that, a large "cannon sticker" was added to the field, akin to the helmet stickers placed on Ohio State helmets.

It was the perfect blend between the two most-followed sports teams in Columbus.

And it was part of a perfect weekend for Columbus hockey.

## The Athletic / Canadian hockey player Matt Petgrave re-bailed on suspicion of manslaughter over death of Adam Johnson

**By Ali Rampling- March 1, 2025**

Canadian hockey player Matt Petgrave has been re-bailed until May following his arrest on suspicion of manslaughter over the death of Adam Johnson.

Nottingham Panthers player Johnson, 29, died after being cut in the neck by a skate during a Challenge Cup match against the Sheffield Steelers on October 28, 2023, in what his club labelled a “freak accident”.

In an unorthodox decision that raises questions over how far players should be held responsible for accidents such as this in sport, Petgrave was arrested on suspicion of manslaughter in November 2023. He was later bailed and South Yorkshire Police confirmed he has now been re-bailed until May 29 2025.

The investigation into the circumstances of Johnson’s death remains ongoing.

A South Yorkshire Police statement read: “Any further updates or developments in this investigation ahead of the new bail expiry date will be issued proactively on our website. Our thoughts remain with Adam’s family and friends.”

Petgrave has never been named by UK police but a crowdfunding account purporting to belong to him was launched in December to help him fight the allegations of manslaughter.

Petgrave was told to remain in the United Kingdom while the investigation was conducted. That bail has since been extended eight times — February 9, April 25, May 14, June 26, September 2, November 11, January 20 and most recently on February 28.

A message posted by an account claiming to be him on CrowdJustice — an online platform where individuals or groups can appeal for money to fund legal action — reads: “I am seeking help to cover some of my legal costs whilst I am subject to police bail, as well as additional costs if the matter proceeds to criminal court. Any remaining funds will be donated to initiatives that promote safety in hockey.”

The message on the CrowdJustice page also claims that Petgrave is unable to work in the UK while he awaits a resolution to the police investigation.

The Athletic has been unable to contact Petgrave to confirm whether the page is genuine.

## The Athletic / NHL Power Rankings: A battle at the top, plus trade deadline 'popcorn' ratings

By Sean Gentile and Dom Luszczyszyn- March 1, 2025

The NHL's trade deadline is March 7, a week from today, and we at The Athletic have you covered with story after story after story covering every possible angle.

Even if the names available aren't that wild, the next week should still be entertaining. The goal for this week's edition of the rankings is figuring out just how entertaining each team should be during that time. We're bringing out the popcorn once again, ranking each team on a scale from one-to-five based on how exciting the next week could be for them. For buyers, we've outlined their potential needs going into the deadline while for sellers we've listed every player they have available on Chris Johnston's latest trade board.

From 1-to-32, here's each team's popcorn rating.

1. Winnipeg Jets, 42-15-3

Feb. 7 rank: 1

Sean rank: 1

Dom rank: 1

Popcorn factor: 🍿🍿🍿

Needs: 2C, defensive depth

It's a deadline tradition like no other: the Winnipeg Jets need a second-line center. Yes, thanks, we'll have the usual.

The Jets are clearly good enough as is, even with Vladislav Namestnikov as the 2C, but a true upgrade could really put this team over the top. These Jets are good enough to win it all. Some third-pair help that isn't Logan Stanley could also be useful.

It's boring because we know Winnipeg's m.o. — it's been the same for nearly a decade. But with how good these Jets have been, even a mundane trade would be an exciting one. Who will be this year's 2C addition?

2. Washington Capitals, 38-13-8

Feb. 7 rank: 2

Sean rank: 2

Dom rank: 2

Popcorn factor: 🍿🍿

Needs: Top nine forward

Capitals GM Chris Patrick summed things up on Thursday night: No deals for the sake of making deals.

"I think it's going to be a balance of, are there ways to improve our team," Patrick said (via Tarik El-Bashir). "Versus risking over-tinkering with what's been a pretty good group this year."

Pretty good group, indeed. One that doesn't need Brock Nelson, say, but shouldn't be against acquiring him if the price turns out to be reasonable. Which it almost certainly won't be. Alas.

### 3. Dallas Stars, 37-19-2

Feb. 7 rank: 4

Sean rank: 3

Dom rank: 3

Popcorn factor: 🍿🍿🍿

Needs: Top four defenseman

We keep trying to find ways to get Seth Jones back to the Metroplex, but it's not easy. Never underestimate the Stars' ability to add expensive right-shot defensemen, though. They've got at least a few million to play with, too, even after the Mikael Granlund/Cody Ceci trade on Feb. 1.

### 4. Florida Panthers, 36-21-3

Feb. 7 rank: 6

Sean rank: 4

Dom rank: 5

Popcorn factor: 🍿🍿

Needs: Offensive top four defenseman

The Panthers have a week to decide whether to send Matthew Tkachuk to LTIR. If they end up making the move, look out; they're going to have money to burn and would immediately become a threat to reel in the big deadline fish. Erik Karlsson, as a play-driver on the back end and a power-play piece, would be the biggest.

### 5. Toronto Maple Leafs, 36-20-2

Feb. 7 rank: 5

Sean rank: 5

Dom rank: 4

Popcorn factor: 🍿🍿🍿

Needs: Top six winger, 3C, defensive depth

In play: Nicholas Robertson

Toronto's needs have been fairly clear all season. The Leafs need an actual top-six winger to play with John Tavares and William Nylander and they need a 3C that they can trust defensively. After a 6-1-0 stretch that has the team atop the Atlantic by points percentage, this year feels like a good one for the Leafs to go big at the deadline.






The problem is the Leafs don't have a lot of attractive assets that make sense for both sides. They don't have a whole lot of space to maneuver with either. That could prohibit the team from being major players next week. With how strong their record has been, maybe they find a way to make it work.

### 6. Vegas Golden Knights, 35-18-6

Feb. 7 rank: 7

Sean rank: 6

Dom rank: 6

Popcorn factor:     

Needs: Top six winger




The Golden Knights probably have more available cap space than you think, and that's even after adding Brandon Saad a few weeks back. Good as Pavel Dorofeyev has been — he's on pace to score more than 30 goals — Vegas needs another piece in the top six. More generally, though, we know they're capable of anything; who saw last year's Tomas Hertl deal coming? That track record alone makes them a five-box team.

7. Tampa Bay Lightning, 34-20-4

Feb. 7 rank: 13

Sean rank: 7

Dom rank: 7

Popcorn factor:   

Needs: Top six winger, forward depth

The Lightning have a few million in cap space at their disposal. And it's just sitting there! They don't have to do anything surprising or weird! They can just trade for someone pretty good! It's got to be a welcome change of pace for Julien BriseBois.

8. Los Angeles Kings, 31-17-8

Feb. 7 rank: 12

Sean rank: 8

Dom rank: 10

Popcorn factor:  

Needs: Offensive firepower




The Kings might be the league's best defensive team and look well positioned to actually make some noise this season because of it. They could still use some offensive help though to make them a more complete team... but given they're such a deep team they don't actually have a lot of holes they can fill. Maybe something comes up that makes sense, but it doesn't seem like the Kings will be a major player.

9. Carolina Hurricanes, 34-21-4

Feb. 7 rank: 8

Sean rank: 9

Dom rank: 9

Popcorn factor:   

Needs: 2C

In play: Mikko Rantanen

The Canes started as a five-popcorn team thanks to the seemingly out-of-nowhere rumors that Rantanen might be flipped at the deadline. That bombshell alone, brought about by early struggles and contract uncertainty, is enough to make Carolina a team to watch.

But perhaps a two-point outing from Rantanen is enough to cool the hysteria. It doesn't seem at all sensible that Carolina would trade Rantanen after giving up so much to get him — and the Hurricanes don't usually deal with unsensible. We're on alert, but we're going to turn the heat down on this one.

#### 10. Edmonton Oilers, 34-21-4

Feb. 7 rank: 3

Sean rank: 10

Dom rank: 8

Popcorn factor: 🍿🍿🍿🍿

Needs: Top six winger, top-four defenseman, starting goalie

For one of the best teams in the league, the Oilers sure have a lot of holes to fill... and not a lot of ammo to fill them.

We know exactly why the Oilers are good — an elite core that's second to none — but the team around that group remains flawed enough to make Edmonton vulnerable. We're seeing that play out during the team's current five-game losing streak.

The Oilers probably need another top six winger because Jeff Skinner and Viktor Arvidsson aren't working out as well as the team hoped. The Oilers probably need a right shot top four defenseman to pair with Darnell Nurse. And perhaps most importantly, the Oilers probably need to upgrade on Stuart Skinner — or at the very least take out a sensible insurance policy behind him.

The Oilers will be a major team to watch for that reason. Pulling it all off, though, will be tough.

#### 11. Colorado Avalanche, 34-24-2

Feb. 7 rank: 10

Sean rank: 11

Dom rank: 11

Popcorn factor: 🍿🍿🍿

Needs: 2C, top four defenseman

In play: Casey Mittelstadt

Last year the Avalanche needed a 2C and got one, trading away a defender with top-four potential. This year the Avalanche need help in the top four... and also still need a 2C. Casey Mittelstadt hasn't worked out, and that puts Colorado back on the lookout.

A 2C alone won't be enough to get this team where it needs to go, though. That may solve the non-Nathan MacKinnon minutes, but Colorado would still have an issue with the non-Cale Makar minutes on the backend.



With that electric duo, it might always be worth going for it for the Avalanche. They're a team to watch for that reason, but going all-in might not be the right idea.

#### 12. Minnesota Wild, 34-21-4

Feb. 7 rank: 9

Sean rank: 12

Dom rank: 12

Popcorn factor:  

Needs: Forward depth

Given their team's financial situation, Wild fans should've been ready to snooze their way through deadline day. Joel Eriksson Ek's knee injury, problematic as it is for the on-ice product, could create a whole bunch of meaningful cap space. It certainly snagged them at least one extra popcorn box. If Eriksson Ek is indeed out for the rest of the regular season, expect to see them linked up to every forward on the market — especially guys with local ties named Brock (Nelson and Boeser).

### 13. New Jersey Devils, 32-22-6

Feb. 7 rank: 16

Sean rank: 13

Dom rank: 13

Popcorn factor:    

Needs: Top six winger, 3C


The Devils have a very clear need for a top six winger — Ondrej Palat is not going to cut it. With three second-round picks as ammo (and maybe Dawson Mercer or Simon Nemec), it wouldn't be a shock to see the Devils make a big splash. It feels like they'll need to make one to be serious this season. The team has been sputtering since the holiday break and could use the adrenaline injection that a fresh face can bring to the table.

### 14. Columbus Blue Jackets, 29-22-8

Feb. 7 rank: 18

Sean rank: 14

Dom rank: 14

Popcorn factor: 

In play: Ivan Provorov, Mathieu Olivier

With a big 5-2 win over Detroit, the Blue Jackets continue their unlikely surge to the playoffs. Given their contention trajectory, the unexpected success puts the team in a bit of a pickle. Do they stay sensible with long-term goals in mind and sell, or do they reward the fantastic work the team has done and add a little something for the stretch run? We're voting for the latter, but it feels more likely that the Blue Jackets don't make much of a splash in either direction. Whatever happens happens — this season will have been a major success regardless.

### 15. Detroit Red Wings, 30-23-6

Feb. 7 rank: 11

Sean rank: 15

Dom rank: 16

Popcorn factor: 🏠🏠🏠🏠

Needs: Top four defensemen, 2C, top six winger

The Red Wings are close enough to a playoff spot to taste it. They've been surging since hiring Todd McLellan and this team deserves to be rewarded for it. Is that worth sacrificing some of the future, though? That's a difficult question, especially with Detroit still so far from actually contending. The Red Wings have the assets and cap space to do some damage at the deadline — and they have a lot of holes that need filling, too. Whether they actually bite the bullet and go for it is the question.

16. Vancouver Canucks, 27-21-11

Feb. 7 rank: 17

Sean rank: 16

Dom rank: 15

Popcorn factor: 🏠🏠🏠🏠

In play: Brock Boeser, Carson Soucy

Never count out ol' Jimmy Rutherford to make the deadline interesting. That man shoots from the hip and we have nothing but respect for that.

What does that mean for the Canucks? We've got no idea. Maybe it means a firesale. Maybe it means they're surprise buyers. Maybe it means Elias Pettersson (the forward) is gone, and maybe Boeser too. Maybe it means a Boeser extension and some reinforcements for the playoff push. Whatever happens, we can't wait to watch ol' Jim do his thing.

17. New York Rangers, 29-25-4

Feb. 7 rank: 19

Sean rank: 18

Dom rank: 17

Popcorn factor: 🏠🏠

Needs: Top four defensemen

In play: Ryan Lindgren

The Rangers are in a tough spot, especially with Adam Fox on the shelf for an undetermined amount of time. This is a win-now team that's certainly not in a win-now position — can they really justify buying? Probably not, but this is the Rangers after-all and we have to at least be mindful that they may still do something to salvage this season. At the very least, they can still salvage whatever's left of Ryan Lindgren's value, but they probably won't be big players in the coming week.

18. Ottawa Senators, 29-25-4

Feb. 7 rank: 15

Sean rank: 17

Dom rank: 20

Popcorn factor: 🏠

Needs: Top six winger, defensive depth

The Senators picked a bad time to start slumping. At one point they were in the thick of the Atlantic Division battle with some folks saying they were “just” four points behind the Leafs. After five straight losses, they’re back outside the playoff picture entirely. Woof. Now what?


Ottawa could use some middle-six winger help and that could be what boosts the Senators’ fortunes. But being on the outside isn’t a great position to add from. The next week could be big to change fortunes, but this may end up being a quiet deadline.

19. Utah HC, 27-24-9

Feb. 7 rank: 23

Sean rank: 20

Dom rank: 18

Popcorn factor: 

In play: Nick Bjugstad


On one hand, we get why the future-Mammoths aren’t all that interested in sending players out; they’re on the periphery of a playoff race with a bunch of other mediocre teams, and one of them has to make it. Might as well roll the dice. Still, they’ve got enough draft capital and interesting mid-level pieces to try something interesting. Nothing suggests that they will, but still ... they should.

20. Calgary Flames, 28-22-8

Feb. 7 rank: 20

Sean rank: 12

Dom rank: 19

Popcorn factor: 

We thought about recalibrating the scale solely so we could give the Flames a zero. They’re too close to a wild-card spot to trade anyone, and they’re too mediocre to add anyone. The middle stays mushy, in other words. Hope the possibility of a few games’ worth of playoff revenue is worth it.

21. St. Louis Blues, 28-26-6

Feb. 7 rank: 24

Sean rank: 21

Dom rank: 21

Popcorn factor:   

In play: Brayden Schenn






Credit to the Blues, they might pull off this deadline’s savviest heist: Getting a first (and possibly more?!) for Brayden Schenn in the year 2025. It’s like GMs snooping around Schenn forgot that contracts can still be bad, even with a rising cap. Schenn is fine, but he’s 33 and is owed \$6.5 million per season for three more years. It only takes one sucker for the Blues to win big.

22. New York Islanders, 26-25-7

Feb. 7 rank:: 14

Sean rank: 22

Dom rank: 22

Popcorn factor:     

In play: Brock Nelson, Kyle Palmieri






In each of the last three seasons, the Islanders found themselves on the outside looking in just before the deadline. This time around, the team feels a little too far gone to bring in reinforcements. The team looks like they're going to do the actual sensible thing and sell. Nelson is one of the biggest fish out there and Palmieri might be one of the better wingers available. The Islanders have some seriously coveted assets — who's going to take them home?

23. Boston Bruins, 27-25-8

Feb. 7 rank: 21

Sean rank: 23

Dom rank: 24

Popcorn factor:     

In play: Brad Marchand, Brandon Carlo, Trent Frederic, Justin Brazeau


Would the Bruins really trade their captain? That's the question that has all eyes on the Bruins. Marchand still has game and is the exact type of player that teams want on their side come playoff time. If he's traded — and that's a big if — it's a game-changer. A Marchand move is the kind of deal that stops you in your tracks, and he's the lone reason that Boston has one of the biggest popcorn ratings going into deadline day.

24. Montreal Canadiens, 28-26-5

Feb. 7 rank: 22

Sean rank: 24

Dom rank: 23

Popcorn factor: 

In play: Jake Evans, Joel Armia, David Savard

Montreal can be a one-stop shop for any team looking for fourth-line or third-pair help. For our purposes, the Canadiens are the trade alert that gets you riled up before you see it's just David Savard for a fourth. Boring!

25. Anaheim Ducks, 26-25-7

Feb. 7 rank: 25

Sean rank: 25

Dom rank: 25

Popcorn factor:   

In play: John Gibson, Trevor Zegras, Brian Dumoulin

There's only one goalie on CJ's trade board and there's one team specifically that seems to need one. That's enough reason to up Anaheim's popcorn factor, especially with the season that Gibson is having.

In past years, a Zegras trade would push this bad boy to four-to-five buckets. With another poor season in progress, though, it's hard to even get that excited about a Zegras trade.

26. Philadelphia Flyers, 26-26-8

Feb. 7 rank: 26

Sean rank: 26

Dom rank: 26

Popcorn factor: 🍿🍿🍿

In play: Scott Laughton, Rasmus Ristolainen, Andrei Kuzmenko

The Flyers: Quite nearly a four-box team. We live in a world where Ristolainen is an effective, appropriately used defenseman who's clearly capable of helping a playoff-caliber team. Wild times. Laughton, meanwhile, seems set to have a starring role on Canadian TV coverage of the deadline, and Kuzmenko was on the receiving end of an all-time great backhanded compliment from John Tortorella.

"I just want him to meet us halfway in his effort and accountability toward the other side of the puck. ... I just want him trying as hard as he can."

John Tortorella is pleased with Andrei Kuzmenko so far, in the winger's "audition" with the club: <https://t.co/JkRITKmLtl>

— Kevin Kurz (@KKurzNHL) February 25, 2025

27. Buffalo Sabres, 24-28-5

Feb. 7 rank: 27

Sean rank: 27

Dom rank: 27

Popcorn factor: 🍿🍿🍿🍿

In play: Dylan Cozens, Bowen Byram, Jordan Greenway

It feels like the tipping point on a Cozens trade came and went, but he's still a brand-name, 24-year-old center with a monster two-way season under his belt. We pretend those guys are typically moved at the deadline, but ... are they really? Whatever. Check back in the offseason. Also, don't ask Cozens to fight anyone.

Wow. Cozens and Kotkaniemi drop the gloves off the opening faceoff. [pic.twitter.com/GOUhC3tPbX](https://pic.twitter.com/GOUhC3tPbX)

— The Charging Buffalo (@TheChargingBUF) February 28, 2025

28. Pittsburgh Penguins, 24-28-9

Feb. 7 rank: 28

Sean rank: 28

Dom rank: 28

Popcorn factor: 🍿🍿🍿🍿

In play: Rickard Rakell, Erik Karlsson, Anthony Beauvillier

Rakell might not be an earth-mover on his own — the Sidney Crosby Effect remains considerable, even after 20 years. He may also still be the best winger (not named Mikko Rantanen) who could realistically change teams. That alone makes Pittsburgh worth watching closely.

Karlson, though, is the wild card. Anyone who watched the 4 Nations Tournament got a glimpse of how great he can still be under the right circumstances. The Penguins, if they ever were a fit, are no longer. Other teams, though — ones where Karlsson is insulated a bit more — should kick the tires. The NHL is better when he's at his best.

29. Seattle Kraken. 25-31-4

Feb. 7 rank: 29

Sean rank: 29

Dom rank: 29

Popcorn factor: 🍿🍿🍿

In play: Yanni Gourde, Jamie Oleksiak, Brandon Tanev

The Kraken got three popcorn boxes based on quantity, not quality. Take the players we singled out; they're all decent. They're all relevant. They all can help. They're also all firmly in the category of "Hey, it's getting close to 3 p.m., we'd better do something."

30. Nashville Predators, 21-30-7

Feb. 7 rank: 30

Sean rank: 30

Dom rank: 30

Popcorn factor: 🍿🍿🍿🍿

In play: Ryan O'Reilly, Gustav Nyquist, Michael McCarron

Say what you will about the GM Barry Trotz Era; it hasn't been boring. In less than two calendar years, the man has bought out Matt Duchene, built a playoff team, signed Steven Stamkos and Jonathan Marchessault and watched the whole thing fall apart. We simply must account for the possibility that Trotz goes into wild-boy mode.

31. Chicago Blackhawks, 17-35-7

Feb. 7 rank: 31

Sean rank: 31

Dom rank: 31

Popcorn factor: 🍿🍿🍿🍿🍿

In play: Seth Jones, Ryan Donato, Connor Murphy


Jones did us all a favor on Wednesday night with one of the most diplomatic, even-keeled "get me the hell out of here" requests on record. Easier said than done for a second-pair defenseman who makes \$9.5 million against the cap until 2030. He's a big name with a game that GMs appreciate, though, and the mere possibility that he changes teams adds something to the discourse.

32. San Jose Sharks, 15-36-9

Feb. 7 rank: 32

Sean rank: 32

Dom rank: 32

Popcorn factor: 

In play: Mario Ferraro, Luke Kunin

The Sharks, like all rebuilding teams, are short on tradeable assets; they've got a few untouchable pieces at the top, then a whole bunch of roster flotsam. No shame there. Mike Grier has a plan, and he's executing it. His big moment, though, came way back on Feb. 1, when he sent Mikael Granlund and Cody Ceci to Dallas. It's tough to imagine him doing any more than adding a couple mid-round picks.

## The Athletic / Why are NHL officials wearing smartwatches during games this season?

**By Aaron Portzline- March 1, 2025**

COLUMBUS, Ohio — For NHL players, coaches and fans, it's been a subtle change to the game, most likely unnoticeable. For NHL on-ice officials, it's a game-changer on the end of their arm.

Eight years ago, just after the league worked with tech giant Apple to equip players and coaches with tablets on the bench for real-time replays and adjustments, the league turned its sights toward making life better — and safer — for referees and linespeople.

The result, which began its rollout this season, is an Apple Watch loaded with custom software that sends game-clock updates to the officials' wrists in the form of buzzes and pulses, allowing them to keep their eyes on the play rather than constantly looking away at the scoreboard.

On Saturday, when the Columbus Blue Jackets host the Detroit Red Wings in a Stadium Series showdown in Ohio Stadium, the device will be used in an outdoor game for the first time, the NHL said.

"I can't tell you how many times you take your eyes off the play to check the clock, especially near the end of a period or the end of a penalty," NHL executive vice president of hockey operations Stephen Walkom, a longtime former official, told The Athletic. "And it's not like it's one person taking their eyes off the play, either, it's every official on the ice doing it."

"Even if it's only for a split-second, things happen fast out there."

The official's watch receives a signal in the form of a haptic response (a vibration, a pulse, etc.) when there are 10 minutes, three minutes, two minutes and one minute remaining in a period, and when there are 10 seconds, three seconds, two seconds and one second remaining in a penalty. (If a power-play goal is scored, ending the penalty, no alerts are sent.)

Officials receive real-time data on their watches. (Courtesy of NHL)

The software, built by global digital power Presidio, is integrated with the NHL's Oasis real-time stats feed, which is used for player-tracking and stats aggregation. That's a much more accurate read, the league said, than linking to a specific arena's scoreboard, as they vary greatly across the league.

Each arena is equipped with its own watches, stored in a case and fully charged between games. An IT employee watches over them and is on-site during games in case any problems arise. So far, there have been very few issues, Walkom said.

The watches are not mandatory, but since their debut in multiple NHL preseason games on Oct. 4, they have been adopted by more than 90 percent of the league's 70 full-time officials, said Dave Lehanski, the NHL's executive vice president of business development and innovation.

"The commissioner (Gary Bettman) hasn't said, 'You better do this, or else!' so that's an unbelievable number out of the gate," Lehanski said. "A big reason for that, I believe, is the (officials) were involved from the very early part of this. They not only contributed to the overall solution, but they've had a stake in it."

"They feel they've been part of it, so there's more buy-in."

Andres de Corral, a vice president at Presidio, said an emphasis was put on building a simple, clean and efficient application.

“We’re pulling 25 data points into the watch,” de Corral said, “but just because you can do it, it doesn’t mean they need that information on their wrists. A big part of this was just dialing in exactly what the officials wanted on their wrists in the form of a non-visual alert to increase on-ice awareness.

“It was a really interesting and challenging project.”

One could make a strong case that officiating hockey is the most difficult of the major sports. It doesn’t have continual breaks in action, such as in football or baseball, and it moves much quicker — both the puck and the players — than basketball. And, with walls and glass surrounding the rink, there’s no quick way to escape the field of play to avoid contact.

As any fan knows, if you look away for even a second, the entire landscape of the ice can change. For officials, any time spent looking for the scoreboard high above the rink or on each end of the ice, is time they aren’t paying attention to the game on the ice.

That’s even more of a challenge for outdoor games, such as this weekend’s in Columbus. Referees Francis Charron and Kendrick Nicholson, and linesmen Jesse Marquis and Travis Gawryletz, have all worked several games in Nationwide Arena. But Ohio Stadium is new turf for any NHL officials.

One glance away from the ice and they can miss penalties, blow an offside call, or worse. Every half-second matters when a puck is fired or deflected in your direction, or when a towering player is heading your way.

And then there’s the penalty box. Officials need to be mindful when the penalty box is going to swing open, setting free a player who is in a hurry to get back on the ice and get his club back to even strength. Nobody wants a collision, and no official wants to affect play by getting in the way.

“If there’s a 200-pound person coming at me at 50 miles per hour, I should get out of the way,” Lehanski said.

Walkom said one concern was if the watches, which weigh barely an ounce, would be rugged enough to take the day-in, day-out beating that is life as an NHL official.

“Could it handle the bouncing around the ice, the smashing against the boards, the whack from an errant stick? When you’re in a pile of players, somebody’s going to bump your arm and that watch,” Walkom said. “Knock on wood, we’ve had good feedback that it’s stood up to a lot of jostling around out there.”

Walkom said he can see a difference — even if hockey fans, players and coaches haven’t yet. The biggest challenge for officials, he said, is developing a new habit of glancing quickly at their wrist after years of constantly checking the scoreboard.

“It’s been a great tool for giving guys a heads-up during the game,” he said. “They’re starting to feel safer with it and really trust it. That’s what we hoped for, but you don’t really know until you try it.”

## The Athletic / Remembering the best seasons by an NHL player who was traded midway through

**By Sean McIndoe- March 1, 2025**

With just one week left before the deadline, let's kill some time on a Friday with a trade-themed question.

What are the best statistical seasons a player has ever had while being dealt during that same season?

It's a trickier question than you might think. We're used to seeing big names get moved at the deadline, but those stars aren't typically having career years. After all, a player in the middle of a monster season wouldn't typically be available — for all the talk this time of year about selling high, teams rarely seem to do that.

So today's post will be a mix of familiar names you might expect and a few you might not. And of course, any talk of the best statistical season hinges on which stat you're looking at. Let's start with the big one.

### Points

The record for the most points in a season in which a player was traded is 125, and I'm guessing you know who holds it. That would be Joe Thornton, who was traded from Boston to San Jose in November 2005, then caught fire to win the scoring title. Not surprisingly, he's the only player ever to be traded during an Art Ross season.

You'll often hear that Thornton is also the only Hart winner to be traded midseason, but that's not quite true. On Oct. 4, 1991, the Rangers acquired Mark Messier from the Oilers, and racked up 109 points while winning his second Hart. That trade came the day after their opener, so it was indeed a midseason trade. Messier didn't play a game for Edmonton that year, meaning Thornton remains the only MVP to play for two teams in the same season. But Messier was technically traded during the season, too. We'll focus on players who actually played for multiple teams in the rest of the post, but I just wanted to slip that in there.

That said, Messier's 109 points only rank him in fourth spot, behind Thornton and two other names that may surprise you. The first is Bernie Nicholls, who was part of that Messier trade in 1991. That's not the deal we're looking for here, though. Instead, we're looking at the deal that sent him from the Kings to the Rangers in January 1990. He was less than one year removed from his record-setting 150-point season, and while his production had predictably dropped, he still finished that split season with 112 points. That established the record stood until Thornton broke it a quarter-century later.

The third spot goes to a player from a trade you might be thinking of: the 1991 deadline blockbuster that sent Ron Francis from Hartford to Pittsburgh. You often see that deal top rankings of the biggest deadline moves ever made, and for good reason, since Francis was the final piece of the puzzle that led to two championships for the Penguins. The twist here is that Francis himself isn't our guy; he finished that year with a rather pedestrian 87 points. Instead, it was the main guy going to Hartford — center John Cullen, who finished the year with 110 points, of which a remarkable 94 came in just 65 games in Pittsburgh.

Rounding out our top five is Teemu Selanne, who had 108 points in 1995-96 while going from Winnipeg to Anaheim. The only other members of the midseason trade 100-point club are Jean Ratelle (105 while going from the Rangers to Bruins in the 1975-76 Brad Park blockbuster) and Wayne Gretzky (102 in that weird 1995-96 season when he went from the Kings to a brief stop with the Blues).

## Goals

A player has hit the 50-goal mark 209 times over NHL history, but only two of those guys were traded in the year they did it.

One of those names will be familiar to Leafs fans, as well as to anyone who follows the Hockey Hall of Fame. Dave Andreychuk was in the middle of what was a 54-goal season when he was dealt from the Sabres to the Leafs midway through the 1992-93 season as part of a package for Grant Fuhr. It was his first 50-goal season, and he claimed another the next year in Toronto while riding shotgun on Doug Gilmour's wing.

Andreychuk's feat was impressive, but it doesn't quite claim our top spot. Instead, that honor goes to Craig Simpson, the former No. 2 pick who went from the Penguins to the Oilers during the 1987-88 season as part of the Paul Coffey trade. He caught fire in Edmonton, scoring 43 times to finish the year with 56, leading our list.

The next batch of players ends up being a list of Hall of Fame wingers. Brendan Shanahan had 47 goals while going from Hartford to Detroit in 1996-97; Mike Gartner had 45 going from the North Stars to the Rangers in 1989-90; Dino Ciccarelli had 44 going from the North Stars to the Capitals in 1988-89; Joey Mullen had 44 going from the Blues to the Flames in 1985-86; and Mark Recchi had 43 going from the Penguins to the Flyers in 1991-92.

And just for fun ...

## Games played

You don't often hear about the single-season games-played leaders, since ... well, it's just a list of all the players who didn't miss a game in a given year. Or at least, that's what it should be. There is a way to play more than the maximum number of games, and it comes when a player is traded midway through the season. If his old team had played more games than his new team, and the player ends up dressing for every contest, then it is possible to end up exceeding what should be the limit.

And sure enough, that's what we see when we check the all-time list. There are eight players in NHL history who've played at least 85 games in a season, and all of them can thank a midseason trade for making it happen. The two leaders are Jimmy Carson (Detroit to Los Angeles in 1992-93) and Bob Kudelski (Ottawa to Florida in 1993-94), who both clocked in at 86 games played.

The 85-game club includes recognizable names like Glenn Anderson and Bill Guerin, as well as somewhat lesser-known guys like Mark Lamb and Joe Reekie, plus another we'll meet in a bit.

## Defenseman scoring

We've been heavy on the forwards so far, but seeing Reekie's name show up reminds us not to forget the noble blueliner. Let's check in on a few of their top trade-interrupted scoring seasons.

The record holder for points isn't a big surprise, and it's a guy from a trade we've already encountered. That would be Paul Coffey, who went from the Kings to the Red Wings in that Jimmy Carson trade we mentioned in the last section. It was the third of five midseason trades for Coffey, and he finished that year with a record 87 points.

Nobody comes all that close to top spot, and Coffey himself ends up tied for second with the 69 points he had when he went from the Penguins to the Kings in 1991-92. His somewhat surprising running mate there is Dave Babych, who did a bit of scoring in his early years before becoming the patron saint of defensive defensemen. Babych had 69 points in a 1985-86 season that saw him traded from Winnipeg to

Hartford. That puts Coffey and Babych just ahead of Hall of Famer Phil Housley, who finished with 68 points while going from the Flames to the Devils in 1995-96.

If we switch the criteria to goals scored, we see some recognizable names like Rob Blake (19 goals going from Los Angeles to Colorado in 2000-2001) and Ray Bourque (18 while going from Boston to Colorado in 1999-2000). But the record is a two-way tie between some slightly less famous names. Carol Vadnais hit the 20-goal mark during the 1975-76 season that saw him go from the Bruins to the Rangers. And as long-time readers know, any kind of “Wow, I didn’t know that blueliner scored so many goals” piece wouldn’t be complete without Reed Larson, who hit the 20-goal mark six different times including while going from Detroit to Boston at the 1986 deadline.

(As a fun twist, the player Larson was traded for in that one-for-one deal: fellow defenseman Mike O’Connell, who’d go on to become the GM of the Bruins who made the Thornton trade. It’s the circle of life midseason trades.)

#### PIMs

I’ll keep this one brief, but that kid in me who grew up watching the 1980s Norris Division had to check. And sure enough, we don’t have to scroll far to see some recognizable names.

For example, Dave “The Hammer” Schultz holds the all-time single-season record with 472 PIMs during a 1974-75 season he spent entirely with the Flyers. But he also holds third spot on the list at 405, and that was in a 1977-78 season that saw him traded from the Kings to the Penguins. That makes him the leader for our purposes, well ahead of Norris legends Tie Domi (344 PIMs while going from the Rangers to the Jets in 1992-93) and Basil McRae (342 in 1986-87 while going from the Wings to the Nordiques).

Keep going and you run into seasons from Chris Nilan, Jay Miller, Joey Kocur and Tiger Williams, but I’ll stop here before I end up going down a YouTube rabbit hole and never finish this post.

#### The goalies

You don’t often see top-tier goaltenders get moved during a season, for obvious reasons. We won’t try to build up the suspense and will instead cut right to the one name everyone is waiting for: Patrick Roy, who was traded from the Habs to the Avalanche during a 1995-96 season that saw him win 34 games.

Seeing Roy here isn’t surprising. What might be is that those 34 wins only tied the NHL record for a traded goaltender. Bill Ranford went from Boston to Edmonton at the 1988 deadline in a deal that worked out OK for the Bruins at the time, and slightly less well two years later when Ranford won the Conn Smythe for beating them in the final.

Maybe more surprisingly, Roy and Ranford’s wins record has since been broken, and it even happened within the last decade. I’ll give you a second to see if you can figure out who did it. Here’s a hint: They were traded midway through a 36-win season, and all they cost was a third-round pick.

Yes, it’s Devan Dubnyk, who had just nine wins with the Coyotes when they sent him to the Wild in January 2015. He’d catch fire in Minnesota in the second half, winning 27 of 39 starts and setting a record that still stands.

Dubnyk’s season also holds the mark for goals against average, but things get even weirder if you dive into some of the other stats. If you look at shutouts, the record for a traded goalie is seven by Peter Budaj in 2006-07, when he went from the Kings to the Lightning. That broke the record held by Felix Potvin, who had six when he went from the Canucks to the Kings in 2000-01. And in terms of save percentage, it’s Dubnyk, followed by 2015-16 James Reimer (Leafs to Sharks) and 2013-14 Ben Scrivens (Kings to Oilers). Goalies are weird.

OK, but what about the cap era?

Aside from those goalies, most of the numbers in this post come from well before the cap era, back before the Dead Puck Era ruined everything. So, let's wrap up with a quick look at who holds the offensive records if we just look at the cap era.

In points, nobody gets close to Thornton's 125. The next best total is Ilya Kovachuk's 85 when he went from Atlanta to New Jersey in 2009-10. Next up after that is Jake Guentzel going from the Penguins to the Hurricanes last year, with 77 points in just 67 games, followed by Mark Stone's 73 on the way from Ottawa to Vegas in 2018-19. After that, you run into Vaclav Prospal, which feels like a good place to stop.

In goals, Kovalchuk's 41 barely edges out Timo Meier's 40 when he went from the Sharks to the Devils two years ago. Bo Horvat had 38 the year he went from the Canucks to the Islanders, and after that, it's all the way back to Bill Guerin and Ryan Smyth both having 36 in 2006-07. Among defensemen, the leaders are Brian Campbell's 62 points while going from Buffalo to San Jose in 2007-08, and Lubomir Visnovsky's 15 goals while going from Edmonton to Anaheim in 2009-10.

The games-played mark is fun, as the honor goes to Tyson Barrie playing 85 games between the Oilers and Predators in 2022-23, which is impressive given the season is just 82 games now, instead of 84 like it was when Carson and Kudelski set their mark. There was something about that 2022-23 season, as Lars Eller and Garnet Hathaway both got to 84 that same year.

And finally, the cap-era leader for PIMs is, um, not giving the Hammer and 405 minutes much of a run for his money. Daniel Carcillo did manage to rack up a league-leading 254 PIMs while being dealt from the Coyotes to the Flyers in 2006-07. It's safe to say that cap-era record isn't going to be broken, as the leader in the last 10 years is Cody McLeod, who had 145 minutes split between Colorado and Nashville in 2016-17.

(And in case you're wondering, the record for points by a player who dressed for three teams in a season is Thomas Vanek's 68 back in 2013-14, when he went from the Sabres to the Islanders to the Habs. Just in case Mikko Rantanen needs something to shoot for.)

## [The Athletic / NHL rumblings: Lou Lamoriello talks trade-deadline plans, plus latest on Flyers, Ryan O'Reilly, more](#)

**By Pierre LeBrun- March 1, 2025**

On a Thursday morning just eight days from the trade deadline, the NHL's longest-tenured general manager pondered the question at hand.

What do we make of a New York Islanders team that had won eight of nine games to get right back in the playoff race before losing four straight? Who is this team, really?

"We lost a couple of tough games before the break. We lost a couple of tough games since we got back," Lou Lamoriello told The Athletic over the phone from Boston. "What we can't do is dwell on that. Right now the most important thing is tonight. We can't think about yesterday and we're not focused on tomorrow. It's all about tonight."

The Isles would go on to win 2-1 over the Bruins, keeping alive their faint playoff hopes.

Like so many teams this time of year — particularly teams on the bubble, with a big group in the Eastern Conference trying to chase down the two wild-card spots — every game matters for the Islanders. One win or one loss as we close in on next Friday's trade deadline can change everything as far as decision-making.

"And unfortunately, the way the year has gone with the teams we're talking about (on the bubble), including ourselves, it could be the same at the last minute so right now you can't focus on that," Lamoriello said. "You've got to simply stay focused on the here and now and adjust accordingly."

Lou Lamoriello tip his hand? Come on. But that doesn't mean I'm not going to ask the question du jour. Does the Islanders GM believe Team USA forward Brock Nelson — the No. 1 player on The Athletic's trade board — will still be in an Islanders uniform past March 7?

"All I'll say is that he's an Islander, he's certainly an integral part of our organization and our play, and I don't have anything more to add to that," Lamoriello said.

The Islanders are believed to be attempting to extend the pending unrestricted free agent, or at least having conversations with Nelson's agent Ben Hankinson about it, and those efforts I think will continue into next week, much like so many of these pending UFA situations go to the 11th hour.

What's unclear at the moment is what Lamoriello will do if he can't convince Nelson to re-sign. And many contending teams would love a clear answer to that question before they decide to move on to other targets.

I would think he will be available at that point, but I'm not ready to say that 100 percent.

Lamoriello, the Hockey Hall of Fame executive, has not always traded pending UFAs in this situation in the past. Sometimes yes. Sometimes no. He goes to the beat of his own drum, regardless of what may be considered so-called normal practice around the league.

"That's very fair," Lamoriello said. "I think history says that."

So it would be foolish for any of us to think we know for sure where this is all headed.

In the meantime, I asked Lamoriello whether there's an update on a timeline for Mathew Barzal, who has been out since Feb. 1.

"No," he said. "Hopefully he'll be (back) before the end of the year, but he's going through rehab right now and that's all I can say. It's an unfortunate injury. It's sort of been an exceptional year for injuries from our perspective, but we've also seen a lot of injuries throughout the league this year."

And finally, does he still see a playoff team in his Islanders? Do they have a run in them here to make things interesting?

"Well, I don't think there's any question I believe we're capable of that," Lamoriello said. "But we have to get it done."

Capitals after a depth forward

The first-place Washington Capitals will probably look to add a depth piece at forward, but I would be surprised if they did anything big.

Their main goal seems to be achieving balance in finding ways to improve the team while not tinkering too much with a team that has played so well all season and a group that trusts and plays for each other. That may sound a bit corny, but one thing the Caps have learned over the years is not to overextend themselves at the trade deadline. There's a feeling within the organization that there were some years when they were "all-in" last decade that they added too much and upset the apple cart.

But depth is always important come playoff time because if you're going deep, injuries simply happen. So perhaps adding a bottom-six forward is the move.

There's also the realistic possibility of 2023 first-round pick and World Juniors goal medalist Ryan Leonard joining the NHL club once his college season is over. The Caps want to have room for him as well.

Flyers' price for Ristolainen

It was interesting to hear Philadelphia Flyers coach John Tortorella's comments earlier this week when asked about Rasmus Ristolainen and the trade deadline (via The Athletic's Kevin Kurz).

"If you trade him on Friday, then on Saturday, you say, 'S—, I need a big right-handed defenseman.' These are the conversations that coaches have with their (general) managers, and you talk about it," Torts said. "But I do think you have to listen, because you can't fall in love. If there's something that really is a good situation for the time frame that we're in with our team right now, I'm sure (GM Danny Briere) is going to look really hard at it. You have to listen. But you just can't make a trade just because you think you have to make a trade."

Tortorella, it sounds like, would rather his GM not trade Ristolainen, who has two more years on his deal at a \$5.1 million cap hit. But the Flyers, being where they are, have to listen, and they indeed are.

Having said that, as of Thursday, my understanding is that the Flyers hadn't received anything that came even close to getting their attention. I believe the price tag to be a first-round pick plus another asset to get the Flyers into a serious discussion.

Remember, he's not a rental. And he's that rare bird called a right-handed defenseman.

Will Canadiens hold Evans?

The Montreal Canadiens have come out of the 4 Nations break with three straight wins to stay on the periphery of the race, but I don't believe their management will allow emotion to rule the day as far as doing what's right for the organization ahead of the deadline.

That is to say, the Habs remain open to trading Jake Evans, however they've also communicated to teams they're not trading him for the sake of trading him. Montreal has got lots of draft picks. If teams don't

pay up, the Canadiens seem legitimately fine keeping Evans and see value in him helping the team the rest of the way.

The Winnipeg Jets, New Jersey Devils, Minnesota Wild, Toronto Maple Leafs and Edmonton Oilers are among the teams that I believe have checked in on Evans and/or fellow pending UFA forward Joel Armia.

Armia back to Winnipeg makes a lot of sense as a possibility. He could slide up and down their lineup. The Wild have entered the picture after the long-term injury to Joel Eriksson Ek; they have cap room now to do something. And well, the Wild's 30th-ranked PK could use both Evans and Armia, frankly. And the Leafs have seemingly called on every center available on the market, so it's no surprise they would have checked in on Evans.

Flames in or out?

There are teams paying close attention to the Calgary Flames' current road trip, wondering whether it may affect their deadline activity by next Friday.

The name, as always, that teams would love to see on the market is top-four right-handed defenseman Rasmus Andersson. My understanding is Flames GM Craig Conroy has reiterated to teams calling this week that he doesn't intend on moving him. Calgary believes it can either extend Andersson this summer, one year out from free agency, or trade him then if a new contract can't be worked out.

While the Flames' answer to teams continues to be no, though, I suspect teams will keep trying right up to Friday, just because of the need for quality right-handed defensemen and the scarcity of them on the market. It sounds like a home-run deal is what it would take to get Calgary to come off its stance.

The Flames don't want to be sellers. They hope to stay in the race.

Latest on Predators-O'Reilly

The Predators continue to get calls on Ryan O'Reilly, but it didn't sound as of Thursday like anything yet had gained traction. As previously reported, the Preds aren't shopping him and are happy to keep him as he's signed for another two years after this season. But they'll keep listening, and what they've told teams is that a good young NHL player who can step into their lineup needs to be part of any offer for it to get their attention.

More likely is that Nashville will deal pending UFA forward Gustav Nyquist. I wonder about L.A. as a potential fit there, given the Kings are on the lookout for a top-nine forward who can add a little offense.

Gourde update

Following up on my Yanni Gourde note from earlier this week, the pending UFA center is hoping to return for the Seattle Kraken next week before the deadline in perhaps a showcase game — but one thing to add is that I don't think the Kraken have closed the door on trying to re-sign him.

Jordan Eberle spent a lot of time on trade boards last year because he was also a pending UFA, but then he signed an extension at the 11th hour — and that's still a possibility for Gourde, too. I still believe, all things being equal, it would have to be a real strong offer.

I also know the two-time Stanley Cup champion Gourde burns to return to playoff hockey. It will be interesting to see how this one plays out. I do really think a healthy Gourde is the kind of guy who raises his game come playoff time.

## The Athletic / NHL trade deadline 2025: Which player (or pick) each team is most likely to deal

**By The Athletic NHL Staff- March 1, 2025**

Who or what will your NHL team be saying goodbye to before the league's March 7 trade deadline? This week, The Athletic asked its NHL staff for their expert picks and analysis on all 32 teams.

In response, we heard about veteran role players, expiring contracts, valuable picks and prospects.

Here are our writers' picks for the most likely assets to be dealt.

Anaheim Ducks

Brian Dumoulin, LHD

A recent surge moved the Ducks into the outer fringes of the Western Conference playoff race and Dumoulin has played a big role as a stabilizing veteran in the team's defense corps. But they should keep their eye on the bigger picture. He's an impending UFA and New England product who spent most of his career in the Eastern Conference, winning two Cups with Pittsburgh. The price for a minutes-crunching shutdown defender could rise in the days leading up to the deadline. Moving him would also get both Pavel Mintyukov and Olen Zellweger into Anaheim's lineup. Having the developing youngsters rotate in and out isn't an ideal setup. — Eric Stephens

Boston Bruins

Trent Frederic, LW

Frederic is unsigned after this season, and the Bruins may not be interested in bringing him back for the price he wants. He is out week-to-week with a lower-body injury but when back will play a heavy and confrontational style that would reinforce a Stanley Cup contender's third line and penalty kill. — Fluto Shinzawa

Buffalo Sabres

Henri Jokiharju, RHD

Jokiharju is a pending unrestricted free agent with a \$3.1 million cap hit. The right-shot defenseman has been a healthy scratch at times this season but after scoring for Team Finland at the 4 Nations Face-Off, he now has goals in consecutive games for Buffalo coming out of the break. He's only 25 and could be a useful addition for a team looking for depth. He also has plenty of reason to want to play elsewhere given his inconsistent role this season. — Matthew Fairburn

Calgary Flames

2026 third-round pick

The Flames have two third-round picks in 2026 — their own and the Canucks'. If the Flames are willing to buy low ahead of the deadline, it would be easy to make one of these draft picks expendable in a trade.

— Julian McKenzie

Carolina Hurricanes

Jack Roslovic, RW

The Hurricanes look positioned to make some depth additions and nothing more, but if GM Eric Tulsky wants to add another significant player, it will require money going out. Roslovic has added needed secondary scoring (19 goals through 58 games) but has just two goals since the calendar flipped to 2025. If Carolina wanted to add another player, his \$2.8 million cap could be the one to move out. — Cory Lavalette

#### Chicago Blackhawks

##### Ryan Donato, RW

Donato and Taylor Hall were considered the most likely players to be traded. Hall is gone. The question now is whether Donato will follow. It's unlikely Donato will re-sign with the Blackhawks, but they may still keep him through the season. It all may depend on what teams are offering for him. — Scott Powers

#### Colorado Avalanche

##### Casey Mittelstadt, C

If the Avalanche are looking to make a sizable move, it would likely come with a corresponding move to open up a bit more cap space. The most likely candidate has to be Mittelstadt, who still has two years left on his deal with a \$5.75 million cap hit. Mittelstadt has played well for stretches, but it feels like moving that cap hit may be the easiest way for Colorado to improve elsewhere. — Jesse Granger

#### Columbus Blue Jackets

##### 2025 fourth-round pick or 2026 third-round pick

There's a chance Don Waddell trades defenseman Ivan Provorov, right winger Mathieu Olivier or another prominent pending UFA if he gets a substantial offer, but it's hard to see him messing with the core of this club after the season they've had. Think mid-round picks. He's got two fourths this summer, so there's some flexibility. — Aaron Portzline

#### Dallas Stars

##### 2026 first-round pick

This is almost by default. With Logan Stankoven, Lian Bichsel and Mavrik Bourque unlikely to be made available, and a shallow prospect pool beyond them, a distant first-round pick is all the Stars really have to bargain with. They've already moved their first-, second- and fourth-round picks in the 2025 draft. — Mark Lazerus

#### Detroit Red Wings

##### 2025 third-round pick

It remains to be seen how aggressive the Red Wings will be at the deadline — or if they'll really add at all — but if they do, the Rangers' 2025 third-round pick they got for Olli Määttä earlier this season gives them some bonus draft capital to work with that could suit their needs for a depth defender. Obviously, doing something more substantial would require a higher price (whether it's picks or prospects) but having a surplus pick makes one of the 2025 third-rounders the most likely to move. — Max Bultman

#### Edmonton Oilers

##### 2025 second-round pick

The Oilers have little to trade off the roster unless they jettison a goalie to upgrade the position. Their first-round pick was already conditionally dealt to Philadelphia at last year's draft. There aren't many prospects in the stable to move. Their best chip could be the second-rounder they received from St.

Louis for not matching Philip Broberg's offer sheet. That's got a bit more value than theirs (which was dealt) would have, too. — Daniel Nugent-Bowman

#### Florida Panthers

##### 2026 second-round pick

The Panthers, at the moment, won't pick until the fourth round of the 2025 draft, and their prospect pool is brutal. So it goes; winning Stanley Cups is expensive. That does mean, though, that the most valuable trade asset they have is probably their 2026 first-rounder. It's easy to imagine Bill Zito moving that if the right deal came around, but we'll err on the side of caution. — Sean Gentile

#### Los Angeles Kings

##### 2025 first-round pick

A few possibilities were considered. Would it be all that shocking if the Kings were to put one of Alex Turcotte, Brandt Clarke or Jordan Spence in a deal? Turcotte is healthy and could get more ice time elsewhere, Clarke is now the No. 7 defenseman after playing a lot early on and Spence is a viable asset to move if Clarke is the right-shot defender to keep long term. But with the 2025 draft not considered to be all that strong and the Kings in line to draft later in the first round, GM Rob Blake could use that toward getting another offensive threat. Especially with his unsettled future and L.A. needing to shake its first-round bugaboo. — Eric Stephens

#### Minnesota Wild

##### Liam Ohgren, LW

The Wild have already dealt their 2025 first-round pick (in the David Jiricek trade with Columbus) and would be reluctant to move their 2026 first. That means they'd likely deal from a prospect pool ranked No. 2 in NHL by The Athletic's Scott Wheeler. Ohgren, a 2022 first-rounder, comes with some NHL experience (25 games). He has a great shot — 12 goals in 25 games for AHL Iowa this season — and some upside in his 200-foot game. — Joe Smith

#### Montreal Canadiens

##### Jake Evans, C

Evans' contract is set to expire, he and the Canadiens are far apart in negotiations and there are teams interested in acquiring his services. He is a right-shot center who is strong on faceoffs and one of the league's elite penalty killers. The Canadiens are trying to package Evans with Joel Armia — his penalty-killing partner and fourth-line linemate — in a single trade to try and increase the return. But of the two, it seems Evans is more likely to move if the Canadiens can't swing the package deal. That said, the Canadiens are not desperate to move him, or anyone really, and will expect a strong return for Evans. — Arpon Basu

#### Nashville Predators

##### Gustav Nyquist, LW

This is virtually a lock. Nyquist, in the last year of a deal with a \$3.2 million AAV, is a classic rental forward for someone looking for a bit more offense entering the stretch run and the playoffs. He has fallen off significantly from last season's career-best production, but he's a heady, skilled player who can help someone and will no doubt be glad to get away from all the losing. — Joe Rexrode

#### New Jersey Devils

## 2025 second-round pick

The Devils can get a helpful player by using a second-round pick, either alone or packaged with another player or pick. New Jersey has three second-rounders (its own, Edmonton's and Winnipeg's) in this summer's draft. Flipping one or more could make a lot of sense to bring in some help at forward. — Peter Baugh

## New York Islanders

Brock Nelson, C

Nelson is this year's ideal trade chip: a high-performing center who plays in all situations on an affordable (\$6 million cap hit), expiring deal. The perfect rental. If the Islanders pass up this chance, then what exactly is the trade deadline for? — Arthur Staple

## New York Rangers

Reilly Smith, RW

Smith isn't one of the top available forwards, but he can bring a contender a player with postseason experience (he won the Cup with Vegas in 2023) and some offense. The Rangers could probably get a mid-round pick for the veteran. — Peter Baugh

## Ottawa Senators

Jacob Bernard-Docker, RHD

If the Senators are going to move for a piece, whether a player or a prospect, don't be surprised if a draft pick or a young defenseman in Bernard-Docker gets dangled in exchange. As the Senators resume play, Bernard-Docker is at risk of being on the outside looking in with the emergence of Nikolas Matinpalo as a bottom-pairing defenseman. It could be time for the 24-year-old to experience a change of scenery. — Julian McKenzie

## Philadelphia Flyers

Rasmus Ristolainen, RHD

Big, physical right-shot defensemen are often coveted by teams looking to add at the deadline, and Ristolainen checks all of those boxes. Not only that, his skating has notably improved over the past couple of seasons, making him a much more effective 200-foot player than he was earlier in his career. Suddenly, Ristolainen's \$5.1 million AAV doesn't look so bad. The 30-year-old could also be a target for teams that have difficulty luring free agents, because he's signed through 2026-27. — Kevin Kurz

I'm told that the Flyers haven't gotten many calls on defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen. Fewer than they expected. There is a decent chance now he sticks around post-deadline.

Things can change quickly. But that's where it stands at the moment.

— Kevin Kurz (@KKurzNHL) February 26, 2025

## Pittsburgh Penguins

Anthony Beauvillier, LW

Beauvillier has been fine for the Penguins, moving up and down the lineup and chipping in with some goals. He's fast. He plays hard. He has playoff experience. He's on an expiring contract. He'll be a nice depth addition for a team looking to fortify its forwards. — Rob Rossi

## San Jose Sharks

Nico Sturm, C

The Sharks have already done their heavy lifting in trading Mackenzie Blackwood, Mikael Granlund and Cody Ceci, so there isn't a whole lot left to actively peddle. But the classy Sturm is a big-bodied fourth-line center who can win faceoffs and help on the penalty kill. The 29-year-old has a Stanley Cup with Colorado to his name and is on an expiring contract. He's back in action after some injury time off and played a season-high 15:38 on Monday in Winnipeg. Feels like some showcasing is on tap. — Eric Stephens

Seattle Kraken

Brandon Tanev, LW/RW

Brandon Tanev is 33 and on an expiring deal with a clear non-playoff team. Unlike Yanni Gourde, there's no injury complications where Tanev is concerned. A lightning-quick skater with enough skill to punish opponents' mistakes, Tanev is the perfect bottom-six add for just about any playoff team in need of wing depth. He's going to have a robust market, and looks like the most straightforward deadline deal we'd expect from Ron Francis and the rest of the Kraken hockey operations. — Thomas Drance

St. Louis Blues

Zack Bolduc, RW

To be clear, I don't think Bolduc will be traded before the deadline, or even this summer. But the Blues aren't trading prospects Dalibor Dvorsky or Jimmy Snuggerud, and they don't have many draft picks (only a first-rounder, a fifth and a sixth this year, and no seconds for the next three drafts). I don't think the Blues want to move Bolduc, but he's got potential and might be the player other clubs are asking about. It would make much more sense for the Blues to keep prospects such as Bolduc while the retool continues. — Jeremy Rutherford

Tampa Bay Lightning

2025 second-round pick (from Kings)

The Lightning's prospect pool is pretty thin, so draft picks are their best trade assets right now. Tampa Bay is without its own first and second in 2025, but has two seconds to work with from Los Angeles and Toronto. The Kings pick is probably more valuable here, especially if they continue on their collision course to another matchup against Edmonton. — Shayna Goldman

Toronto Maple Leafs

2026 first-round pick

If the Leafs are going to make a splash, they are going to have to part with a premium asset. And while they could certainly opt to move a top prospect such as Easton Cowan or Ben Danford, moving this pick instead would allow them to hang onto those prospects, who aren't far from becoming NHLers. I'd also circle the team's third-round pick in the upcoming draft as one that could get moved. Thirds are often exchanged for depth rentals at the deadline, including Joel Edmundson last spring. — Jonas Siegel

Utah Hockey Club

2025 first-round pick

It's not the strongest draft class and Utah is trying to make a late push into the playoff picture. Draft picks should be expendable to the team, as they could help them help in the race to acquire players such as Brock Nelson, Brock Boeser, Rickard Rakell or any other high-end forwards available. — Shayna Goldman

## Vancouver Canucks

### Brock Boeser, RW

Boeser's contract is expiring, there has been no meaningful progress in contract talks and the club is on the fringe of the playoff picture out West. As much as Boeser wants to stay and as much as Vancouver needs offense, we know how this sort of story usually plays out. — Thomas Drance

## Vegas Golden Knights

### 2025 second-round pick

Vegas doesn't have a first-round pick in 2025 or 2026 after trading them for Tomas Hertl and Noah Hanifin, respectively, ahead of last year's trade deadline, so this year's second-round pick is one of their most valuable assets. It wouldn't surprise me if we see the Golden Knights package this pick with another to bring in a winger to improve the depth scoring. — Jesse Granger

## Washington Capitals

### 2025 second-round pick

The good news for the Caps if they want to make a relatively big move is that they've got plenty of draft capital, including their own second-round pick along with Boston's in the 2025 draft. Top prospects such as Ryan Leonard, Andrew Cristall and Cole Hutson don't seem to be in play. — Sean Gentile

## Winnipeg Jets

### Colby Barlow, LW

Winnipeg has traded a first-round pick in all three of its best seasons: the 2018 run to the Western Conference final, 2019's attempt at an encore and last season's Sean Monahan pick up. Combine that with contender status and ample cap space and it would be unusual if Winnipeg wasn't willing to go that route — for the right player. At the same time, I think Jets management wants to give its scouts more to work with on draft day. Barlow could give the Jets a way to go big while keeping their first-round pick. It's rare for the Jets to move top prospects, mind you, so it may have been safer to answer this question with draft capital. — Murat Ates

## The Athletic / How many goals does Alex Ovechkin have? Tracking his chase to catch Wayne Gretzky

By Dom Luszczyzyn- March 2, 2025

Alex Ovechkin will almost certainly break Wayne Gretzky's all-time goal-scoring record. Ovechkin began this season with 853 goals — 41 shy of Gretzky's 894 — and got off to a great start before missing time with an injury in December and slowing down a bit since his return. But it's really not a matter of if Ovechkin becomes the goal-scoring king but when. Barring a serious injury, Ovechkin will set the record this season or early next season.

We're tracking Ovechkin's chase and trying to determine the game in which he's most likely to break the record. Below you'll find details — updated daily — on where he stands, his latest goal, his odds of breaking the record this season and in which game, and more.

Ovechkin's last goal: No. 884 on March 1 against the Lightning.

Ovechkin scored in the third period against the Lightning, putting him 11 goals away from breaking Gretzky's record.

Ovechkin needed 42 goals this season to surpass Gretzky for the all-time record of 895 goals.

The following histogram shows Ovechkin's likely goals finish by the season's end based on 10,000 simulations of the rest of the season. The simulation factors for Ovechkin's expected scoring pace (40.1 goals per 82), who he plays with and where.

Based on those factors, Ovechkin currently has a 52 percent chance of finishing the 2024-25 season as the NHL's all-time scoring leader. Ovechkin's current most likely finish is 41 goals, leaving him at 894 career goals.

Ovechkin started the season with a 22 percent chance of breaking Gretzky's goal record this season. After a tepid start, Ovechkin's odds shot up quickly thanks to a hot stretch where he scored 13 goals in 11 games. With 15 goals in 18 games, Ovechkin's odds peaked at 65 percent on Nov. 18.

Those odds dropped slowly with each game Ovechkin missed due to a fractured left fibula until all progress from his hot streak was momentarily erased. Ovechkin's odds dropped down to 15 percent after missing 16 games and sagged further until a hat trick on Feb. 23 revived his chances.

What makes the possibility of Ovechkin breaking Gretzky's goal record this season so special is that Ovechkin would be doing it at the same seasonal rate as Gretzky did. This is Ovechkin's 20th season in the NHL — the same amount that Gretzky played to reach 894. The two stand alone not only in their goal total but also in the speed at which they've reached these heights.

Because it's likely that Ovechkin will not become the NHL's all-time leading goal scorer this season, the most likely game Ovechkin breaks the record this season is the last game of the season.

### Methodology

The probability of Ovechkin breaking the goal record is based on a Monte Carlo simulation of the rest of the season.

The simulator estimates the likelihood Ovechkin scores in a given game based on his projected output, his opponent's defensive strength, and whether the game is at home or on the road. Ovechkin's

projected output is based on his last three seasons, weighted for recency and regressed to the mean of players that play a similar amount of minutes.

That projected output, adjusted for opponent and venue, is then used to calculate the odds of Ovechkin scoring a goal (or more) using the Poisson distribution.

## The Athletic / NHL trade deadline 2025: Making one bold prediction for each team

**By The Athletic NHL Staff- March 2, 2025**

Could Bruins captain Brad Marchand be headed to Colorado to add some veteran leadership to the Avalanche? Will we see a surprise Lightning reunion in Tampa Bay?

This week, The Athletic asked its NHL staff for their bold predictions ahead of the March 7 trade deadline that's less than a week away, and those were just a couple of the enticing (and sometimes contradictory) scenarios we heard about in response.

Here's one pick for each team.

Anaheim Ducks

Prediction: They will finally trade John Gibson.

The keywords with this are "prediction" and "bold." Is it a guarantee that it will happen? No. The Ducks have made it clear that they'll trade Gibson on their terms and that means teams meeting a high asking price. Anaheim can increase the interest level if it retains a sizable portion of Gibson's \$6.4 million cap hit, if not half of that. What helps the Ducks is Stanley Cup-contending teams such as Edmonton and Carolina have legitimate questions in goal. Gibson's upper-body injury isn't expected to keep him out long. He's having a bounce-back season and might be open to a change where he'd be the clear No. 1 again. — Eric Stephens

Boston Bruins

Prediction: They will trade Brad Marchand.

Marchand is the team captain. He is the only remaining member from the 2011 championship team. Marchand remains an important player. However, he is unsigned after this season. The organization might consider future returns they could receive for Marchand as being worth trading their captain. If they are not interested in bringing Marchand back beyond this season, the Bruins could move him for assets. — Fluto Shinzawa

Buffalo Sabres

Prediction: They will trade Jason Zucker.

Zucker has been an excellent free-agent pickup for the Sabres. He has 44 points in 54 games while playing on a one-year deal. That the Sabres haven't extended him yet puts him on the trade radar in the next week. His value is as high as it has been in years, so the Sabres should get a good asset if they can't get him under contract. — Matthew Fairburn

Calgary Flames

Prediction: They will emerge as the biggest trade broker at the deadline, and they'll buy.

The Flames are in an interesting situation. They're competing for a playoff spot thanks to their rookie goaltender but don't have a potent offense. And they have tons of cap space to play with (nearly \$18 million in projected cap space, according to PuckPedia). The Flames are willing to buy, judging by the acquisitions of Joel Farabee and Morgan Frost (especially if they can land another young forward between 18 and 25). But if they can weaponize their cap space to land assets for the future, too? That's as good of a trade deadline as the Flames can have. — Julian McKenzie

### Carolina Hurricanes

Prediction: They will extend Mikko Rantanen.

So much of the noise surrounding Rantanen is that Carolina is already exploring ways to flip the star forward, worried that he will not sign a contract extension with the Hurricanes. Carolina, however, remains confident it can get a deal done with Rantanen, and I think an eight-year, \$106 million contract — which would work out to a \$13.25 million AAV — is the sweet spot. — Cory Lavelle

### Chicago Blackhawks

Prediction: They will trade Seth Jones.

There are a lot of hurdles for the Blackhawks to clear to trade Jones. Odds are they won't before the deadline, but there is a slim chance they might. What it would take is finding a Cup-contending team that wants Jones, doesn't require the Blackhawks to retain too much of his cap space and for the Blackhawks to get something in exchange. — Scott Powers

### Colorado Avalanche

Prediction: They will trade for Brad Marchand.

These are supposed to be bold. Marchand has said his plan is to play his entire career in Boston, but he only has an eight-team no trade list in the final year of his deal, and it's unlikely Colorado is on that list. The Avalanche need depth scoring and some veteran leadership, and Marchand would provide both in a big way. — Jesse Granger

### Columbus Blue Jackets

Prediction: They will acquire a top-nine forward.

When this season started, nobody could have expected Blue Jackets GM Don Waddell to be a buyer at the deadline, but here we are. The Blue Jackets have been one of the NHL's pleasant surprises this season and Waddell wants to reward them with a roster boost down the stretch. Don't expect him to move a first-round pick or a top prospect for a rental. He's more cagey than that. But a mid-round pick makes sense. Keep former Blue Jackets forward Gustav Nyquist, currently a pending UFA with Nashville, in mind. — Aaron Portzline

### Dallas Stars

Prediction: They will stand pat.

It's not terribly bold, and the Stars could use another top-four defenseman, with Miro Heiskanen's future murky. But Dallas already made its big move, acquiring Mikael Granlund and Cody Ceci from San Jose. And the fact is, the Stars don't have a whole lot left to give up other than a third-round pick in the 2025 draft. To land a true impact player at this point, a trade partner would probably want Mavrik Bourque or Lian Bichsel included in the deal, and that's almost certainly a nonstarter for GM Jim Nill. — Mark Lazerus

### Detroit Red Wings

Prediction: They will add a defenseman.

The attention in Detroit has been on the center position, especially after Andrew Copp was ruled out for the season after undergoing surgery on his left pectoral tendon. And they could look to do something there. But the Red Wings have more internal options available at center than they do on the blue line, which is already thinned out after Jeff Petry's injury. We'll see if the Red Wings do anything major at the

deadline (in a similar position last year, they stood pat), but if they do, defense seems like the better bet.  
— Max Bultman

#### Edmonton Oilers

Prediction: They will acquire a top-nine winger.

There's been a ton of angst about the need to replace Stuart Skinner in net, but GM Stan Bowman has been steadfast in his view that goaltending isn't a big problem. Here's betting he turns his attention toward another issue. Zach Hyman is the only high-end scoring winger the Oilers have based on the combination of performance and usage, and his production is way down compared to last season. The Oilers need more options there. The quality of player they acquire could depend on if Evander Kane will remain on LTIR through the end of the regular season. — Daniel Nugent-Bowman

#### Florida Panthers

Prediction: They will send Matthew Tkachuk to LTIR.

Paul Maurice said Tkachuk will play again for the Panthers this season. Fair enough. But if what's believed to be a groin injury he sustained in the 4 Nations Face-Off is indeed a several-week affair, there's no reason for Florida not to shut him down until Round 1 and use the resultant cap space to meaningfully improve, particularly on the blue line. Seth Jones? Erik Karlsson? Why not? The Panthers are chasing glory, and they're not afraid. — Sean Gentile

#### Los Angeles Kings

Prediction: They will add a scoring winger.

The NHL's best home team is in good shape with 16 of their final 23 games at Crypto.com Arena and can use that to try chasing down either Vegas or Edmonton to gain home ice advantage in the first round. But the deadline can be about better positioning themselves for a matchup against either the Oilers (again) or the Golden Knights. Even though they've perked back up during a surge, the Kings aren't immune to a scoring drought. That's where another winger who can put the puck in the net is an ideal add. Especially one who can play with Anze Kopitar and Adrian Kempe. — Eric Stephens

#### Minnesota Wild

Prediction: They will trade for Brock Nelson.

The Wild didn't appear to be buyers a week ago due to a lack of cap space. But the injury to Joel Eriksson Ek and uncertainty over Kirill Kaprizov's return date suddenly give them potential room to be players at the deadline. If Minnesota determines that Eriksson Ek will be out for the rest of the regular season, it can use his \$5.25 million cap hit to go shopping for a center. Nelson fits the bill. The pending unrestricted free agent (and native Minnesotan) has the ability to help up the middle and on the PK. He'll likely have a lot of suitors if the Islanders decide to move him, though, which could drive the price up. — Joe Smith

#### Montreal Canadiens

Prediction: They will acquire a roster player with term.

The Canadiens are open to doing a lot of things. They have long-term needs at center, right defense and perhaps even a top-six winger. They also have a ton of draft picks and prospects they would be willing to move. Hockey trades at deadline time are rare, but the Canadiens are in a spot where they are willing to be creative and bold. They recognize they need to improve and wouldn't be afraid to make a big splash closer to the draft, but if that opportunity arises now, I see no reason why they wouldn't pull the trigger.  
— Arpon Basu

## Nashville Predators

Prediction: They will recall Joakim Kemell and he will be a big story by season's end.

Is this wishful thinking bordering on fantasy? Perhaps, and especially because the 20-year-old forward has not been lighting it up in the AHL (30 points in 47 games for the Milwaukee Admirals entering the week). But the dreadful last few weeks of this lost season need something, and it stands to reason he'll get called up and get an opportunity to show he's part of this team's future core. — Joe Rexrode

## New Jersey Devils

Prediction: They will acquire a top-six forward.

The Devils have a strong collection of forwards, but one more legitimate one in the top six would buoy one of the first two lines and have a trickle-down effect on the lineup. Someone such as Ondrej Palat or Tomas Tatar could move down to a bottom-six role. Obviously, top-six forwards aren't cheap, but the Devils have a strong collection of picks and prospects they can work with to get a deal done. — Peter Baugh

## New York Islanders

Prediction: They will trade Jean-Gabriel Pageau.

He's still got a year left on his deal and he's a useful No. 3 center, as he's been since Lou Lamoriello acquired Pageau ahead of the 2019-20 deadline and signed him to a six-year extension on the spot. But those qualities, plus the meager center market, make Pageau a perfect deadline chip — especially if the Isles retain half of Pageau's \$5 million cap hit. — Arthur Staple

## New York Rangers

Prediction: They will be sellers.

This prediction isn't as bold nowadays, but it would've been in the preseason. The Rangers are still within striking distance of a playoff spot, but they have not shown much reason for the front office to believe they can make a deep playoff run. Selling off pending UFAs for future assets makes sense. — Peter Baugh

## Ottawa Senators

Prediction: They won't do anything because they can't.

The Senators desperately need to make some kind of move at the deadline to keep pace with fellow teams. But with a crippling salary cap structure and very few assets to make a significant move, there is a world where GM Steve Staios remains quiet at the deadline. Instead, he looks at his players getting healthy (Brady Tkachuk, Josh Norris, Shane Pinto) and thinks of them as "additions." — Julian McKenzie

## Philadelphia Flyers

Prediction: They won't make a trade.

Teams that are in the midst of rebuilds don't often stand pat at the trade deadline. But the Flyers don't have any pending unrestricted free agents other than newcomer Andrei Kuzmenko, who they seem to want to give a real chance to make an impact, and veteran defenseman Erik Johnson, who wouldn't return much anyway. The Flyers could very well hang onto defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen and forward Scott Laughton — the two players most often in trade rumors — if their asking prices aren't met, and then reevaluate the status of both this summer. — Kevin Kurz

## Pittsburgh Penguins

Prediction: They will keep Rickard Rakell.

Clearly rebuilding, despite what GM Kyle Dubas says publicly, the Penguins are in asset acquisition mode. Rakell, 31, is having one of his best seasons and should help any contender. But he has a reputation of being streaky, has cooled a bit when it comes to goal scoring and has a lot of years left on his contract. For all of those reasons, not to mention the unlikelihood of him commanding a first-round pick, he'll remain a Penguin after the deadline. — Rob Rossi

San Jose Sharks

Prediction: They will shop Mario Ferraro, but won't move him.

The specter of Ferraro getting dealt goes back to last spring and this is another Sharks season that's gone down the drain. This could be a deal that's more likely to occur next year when his contract expires but the 26-year-old defenseman is attractive for his age, affordable contract (\$3.25 million cap hit) and ability to soak up minutes with his skating and willingness to put his body in front of shots. The Sharks should take calls and maybe even kick tires on their own, but can hang onto Ferraro if they don't like what's being offered. — Eric Stephens

Seattle Kraken

Prediction: They will trade Yanni Gourde despite his injury.

Gourde hasn't played since Jan. 2 as a result of surgery to repair a sports hernia, and time is getting short on him to return to the lineup before the trade deadline. Gourde has been skating, but won't be able to play many games prior to the deadline — if he makes it back at all. While this uncertainty will make trading Gourde somewhat complicated, the lack of center options on the market and Gourde's reputation as a playoff performer will still permit the Kraken to net good value in a trade deadline deal as a classic seller team. — Thomas Drance

St. Louis Blues

Prediction: They will trade captain Brayden Schenn.

Schenn's name has been involved in trade conversations, but the question is: Are the Blues dangling their captain or are teams simply calling about him? It's likely the latter. Either way, you can't rule out the possibility of him moving, as general manager Doug Armstrong continues to search for ways to maximize the team's retool. Schenn does have a no-trade clause and would have to be talked into accepting a deal. But if there's a team willing to unite him with brother Luke (Predators) somewhere, that might be of interest. — Jeremy Rutherford

Tampa Bay Lightning

Prediction: They will reunite with Yanni Gourde.

The Lightning only have so many assets to spend at the deadline, but need reinforcements up front. While they could try to swing big for Brad Marchand, who fits their needs on the wing, Tampa Bay probably needs to look a tier lower. While centers generally are pricey at the deadline, his injury status could make this more feasible for the Lightning. Tampa Bay doesn't need a center, but it wouldn't hurt to have options. Plus, the Lightning know exactly what they would be getting from the disruptive forward. — Shayna Goldman

Toronto Maple Leafs

Prediction: They will make a big splash.

It's bold because it's never really been GM Brad Treliving's thing to make major trades in-season. We saw a rather safe deadline from Treliving in his first year with the team. The end result was another first-round loss. I have to believe the organizational pressure to do more will be higher this time around, what with Keith Pelley now running the show atop MLSE and team president Brendan Shanahan in the last year of his contract (or so we think). The East is also wide open, and with an impactful addition or two, the Leafs could jump to the front of the pack. — Jonas Siegel

#### Utah Hockey Club

Prediction: They will acquire a top-six forward.

It may be a vague answer, but that's because Utah has options. The organization stockpiled picks and prospects over the years, and now management should feel ready to start using their pipeline to add more NHL-caliber talent. Utah also has rental defensemen to send to others in the playoff mix, if it helps thread the needle up front. The key is that this is a new ownership group that has already shown a willingness to swing big via trade — so their name will be in the mix for all of the top centers and wingers available over the next week. — Shayna Goldman

#### Vancouver Canucks

Prediction: They will both buy and sell.

The Canucks are locked into a tooth-and-nail fight for the second wild-card spot in the West. Across the board, though, all of their best players are dealing with either nagging injuries or baffling underperformance. They already sold J.T. Miller, entering a transitional phase of their team-building cycle. My prediction, then, is that they'll both buy and sell. Whether it's Brock Boeser or Pius Suter or Carson Soucy, the club will make at least a seller trade before the deadline. However, like with the Miller return, the Canucks will turn around and use that asset to make sure they don't take a step back in the short term. — Thomas Drance

#### Vegas Golden Knights

Prediction: They will trade two second-round picks for Brandon Tanev.

It certainly wouldn't be the boldest move the Golden Knights have made at a deadline, but after trading two first-round picks and a first-round prospect last season, Vegas will likely be looking for fit over flash at this deadline. Tanev checks a lot of boxes with physicality, playoff experience and strong skating. He would immediately plug into the Golden Knights penalty kill and help balance the lineup. — Jesse Granger

#### Washington Capitals

Prediction: They will get their third-liner.

The Caps don't have to do anything, really; they've turned the Eastern Conference into a race for second place. We're not talking about a team with glaring holes. Still, even with Sonny Milano and (presumably) prospect Ryan Leonard on the way, they could use a medium-term answer at 3C. Acquiring Jake Evans — a young, solid player who fits their timeline and makes just \$1.7 million against the cap — would make them better for the playoffs and down the line, assuming they work out a contract extension. — Sean Gentile

#### Winnipeg Jets

Prediction: They will acquire both Rasmus Ristolainen and Scott Laughton from the Flyers.

Ristolainen checks off a lot of boxes as a big, strong and physical defenseman who helps Philadelphia eliminate scoring chances in front of the net. Laughton is a versatile Flyer on the ice and glue guy off of it. Acquiring both top Flyers would be bold because it would take a big package, forcing the Jets to part with a first-round pick or prospect that they otherwise would prefer to keep, while filling two of the only holes on a deep Jets team. It could also relegate 6-foot-7 defenseman Logan Stanley to the press box come playoff time; he offers some physicality but leaks scoring chances to an extent that Ristolainen does not. — Murat Ates

## The Athletic / Who says no? NHL trade proposals evaluated: Brayden Schenn, Jake Evans and more

**By James Mirtle- March 3, 2025**

The Athletic has live coverage of the 2025 NHL trade deadline.

We put out the call for your trade ideas, and boy did you ever deliver.

Nearly 500 (!?) responses — and not one person had Seth Jones going to Florida. I'm disappointed.

For everyone who did have a Jones trade proposal, however, my apologies as they won't be included here. We'll stick primarily to trades that are still possible, even if some of these might be highly implausible.

Obviously, we couldn't respond to all of your great ideas. Instead, we went with some of the most realistic and/or entertaining options for a little game of "Who says no?"

The trade proposals are atrocious here. I'm not even sure there are any good enough to even run the article LOL. — Joseph L.

Maybe the first "no" should have been me to my editor last week? And, yet, press on we will ...

Johnathan Kovacevic to MTL for a 2026 fourth-round pick (NJD). — Shane L.

A good ol' troll trade proposal I see here.

A trollposal? Protrollsal?

But you, sir, want the "Who should have said no?" article a few sections over. I'm sure DGB will be writing one of those any day now. And the answer is the Canadiens, who dealt Kovacevic for a fourth-round pick in the summer only to have him blossom into an elite shutdown D with the Devils this season.

He's in line for a very nice payday as an unrestricted free agent after making less than \$800,000 the past three years.

If it's any consolation for the Habs, they did claim Kovacevic off waivers in the fall of 2022. And they have a nice young blue line coming, which was the thinking in moving him to begin with.

DET gets Jake Evans. MTL gets a third-round pick, converted to a second if DET reaches third round and Evans plays enough games, or if DET re-signs him. — Delorey G.

I like Evans. He's someone I've been thinking would be an under-the-radar fit for a contender that needs a center, like the Maple Leafs or Devils. As a 3C, he can chip in offense, kill penalties and help out on the draw.

I believe Montreal should be able to get a second-rounder for him, so I'm going to say they say no here, especially considering these conditions, which are pretty unlikely to be met.

But from the Red Wings' perspective, it should probably be a no, too. They had less than a 30 percent chance of making the playoffs even before the loss to Columbus on Saturday. And while the Andrew Copp injury creates an obvious hole and the fan base is understandably desperate for some postseason success after years in the rebuild wilderness, moving picks for rentals this season doesn't make a lot of sense.

The good news is that, in light of their recent surge under new coach Todd McLellan, the progress is certainly evident. Your time to make regrettable deadline overpays will come (again), Detroiters.

To Winnipeg: Ivan Provorov (50 percent retained). To CBJ: Chaz Lucius, second-round pick. — Matt H.

This is an interesting one.

Lucius has been an intriguing prospect for years, going back to before the Jets took him 18th four years ago, but he simply hasn't been able to stay healthy. Still only 21 years old, he's played just 96 games over the past five seasons going back to his draft year.

I'm going to take a bit of a copout here and say the Blue Jackets say no because they have a better than 50-50 shot of making the playoffs and Provorov is playing huge quality minutes for them.

They also still have a chance to re-sign him and keep a good thing going, which isn't something many expected coming into the year. But it's been that kind of season in C-Bus.

The Jets would certainly get even more formidable with Provorov on the back end, though, so this makes a ton of sense from their perspective.

Leafs trade: 2026 first-rounder, 2025 second-rounder, Max Domi and Fraser Minten. Nashville trades: Ryan O'Reilly, Luke Schenn, Gustav Nyquist (half retained). — Michael N.

Nyquist went to the Wild already, but we'll make an exception and allow this given he appears to be a bit of a throw-in here.

There's been a ton of talk about O'Reilly all season and what a great fit he would be back in Toronto. The Leafs acquired him before the deadline a couple of years back and finally won a playoff round, so there's obviously those good vibrations, but there are complicating factors.

Namely that O'Reilly turned down the Leafs to go to Nashville in the first place, something at least partially related to his concerns over playing in Toronto.

And the Predators have said they wouldn't move him to somewhere he doesn't want to go, so perhaps the deal dies there? (Meaning: O'Reilly says no.)

It's unclear if this trade proposal is half retained on all three players, but I'm assuming not, given the Predators used their final retention slot to send Nyquist to Minnesota. That means this is a lot of salary for the Leafs to try and fit unless they bring in a third team as a cap broker, which would mean including more picks.

The first, second and a prospect (Minten) is probably about what it would take to make Nashville think about this swap, though, especially given you're dumping three more years of Domi at \$3.75 million on them.

And the Leafs being so stuck for another center likely means they contemplate this one long and hard, assuming ROR is open to the idea. Both players they're getting have term, too, so this isn't a rental scenario.

But I think it only works for Toronto if, without Nyquist involved, you find a way to bring the cap hit of either ROR or Schenn down considerably.

Trevor Zegras to PHLY for ANA 2025 second. — Brian K.

It's sad how much Zegras' stock has fallen, to the point that this isn't even an outlandish return. He was once one of the more exciting young kids in the league, even appearing as the Chel cover athlete in 2023.

But the Ducks say no here simply because why would they do this? Zegras is still only 23 years old. He's had a bunch of injuries. And the Ducks aren't exactly in win-now mode at the moment, so they can afford to be patient and hope he regains his 65-point form at some point.

That feels unlikely at the moment, to be sure. But it's a better bet to make than to swap him for a pick that doesn't really hold a whole lot of value.

Although I'm sure we'd all benefit from the chaos that would be Zegras trying to find his game under John Tortorella. Now there's an Amazon series episode that will sell.

DET: Mathew Barzal. NYI: 2025 first, Nate Danielson, Vladimir Tarasenko. — Tim N.

Wow. Well, that's one way for the Red Wings to address their hole at center. And for the Islanders to start their rebuild.

The Islanders say no, given what Barzal means to the franchise. He has a ton of term left, and he's become a great two-way player, even if this season has been frustrating on the injury front. It's not a completely ridiculous offer, but I just can't see the Isles going scorched earth like this. And Barzal would be the last player they'd move.

I know many are very high on Danielson, though, so your feeling on the trade should really rest with how high you believe his ceiling is. The Athletic's Scott Wheeler had him 40th in his recent ranking of draft prospects, and that strikes me as about right.

But Danielson's not going to be Barzal, who was already torching the league by the same age. If — and it's a huge if — the Islanders were to move their superstar, it's going to be for more of a sure thing than this.

I feel like Barzal has become underrated given his team's struggles of late, to be honest. Since entering the league, he has more points per game than Dylan Larkin and isn't far off Tim Stützle and William Nylander — and that's playing on what's been a pretty defensive New York team.

PHI sends: Rasmus Ristolainen and Scott Laughton. TOR sends: Easton Cowan, FLA 2025 second, TOR 2026 first, TOR 2028 seventh. — Jagger D.

This is too much for Toronto to give up here, although I think both players make sense given the Leafs' needs. I wonder if you take Cowan or the first out of the deal if it would work.

The big question is what is Ristolainen's value? He's played much better this season — and in bigger minutes — but with two more years on his contract at a big cap hit (\$5.1 million) is anyone really going to give up a first-round pick for the big Finn given how his career has gone of late?

If the Flyers are willing to add in some heavy retention and the ask gets dialed down, I could see this one getting interesting. But I don't see them budging from wanting a first for Laughton given how valued he is in Philadelphia.

To EDM: Jordan Binnington. To STL: Stuart Skinner, Oilers 2026 first-round pick. — Logan S.

I was set to dismiss this one right away, but it's actually pretty interesting.

I think the Oilers say no, given Skinner is younger, cheaper and has had better performances in the past. But if you're Edmonton, where you need to go all-in and continue to try to maximize this Connor McDavid/Leon Draisaitl window, can you really bank on Skinner in the postseason after the season he's had?

Binnington's stock is also on the rise after the 4 Nations. He's signed for two more years at a big cap hit, but he's only 31 and had a terrific year last season. A contender really should take a flier on him with a first-round pick given the other options available.

This would certainly be a fun one.

Min: Brock Boeser. Van: 2026 first-round pick, Riley Heidt. — Zach B.

The Wild say no and just sign him in free agency on July 1.

They make it a double shot of Brocks, too, by adding fellow home stater Brock Nelson.

How many Brocks are in Minnesota anyway? (Not as many as North Dakota, apparently).

The Moon receives: Max Domi. Leafs receive: Well, ya, no Max Domi. — Sean S.

What's with Leafs fans trying to send their unwanted players out of Earth's atmosphere? The other week, it was Pontus Holmberg; now they're onto Domi.

Toronto already has a place called Robidas Island. They don't need a lunar crater involved, too. Just retain salary and move your unwanted contracts off like everybody else.

But this does show how frustrated the market is with the bottom six of the Leafs lineup.

To COL: Brayden Schenn, Radek Faksa. To STL: Casey Mittelstadt, Calum Ritchie, 2025 second-round pick from CAR. — Logan S.

Avs say no, in a heartbeat.

For one, I'm not even certain how huge an upgrade 33-year-old Schenn gives you over Mittelstadt at this point in his career. But more importantly, Ritchie is going to be a stud, and the Avs desperately need some cost-controlled youth to come in and start helping the cause.

He could be in the NHL as soon as next season, too, so it's not even like they have a huge wait for what could be a nice second-line addition.

## ESPN / After Ohio and Florida, where will NHL host next outdoor games?

**By Emily Kaplan- March 1, 2025**

THE NHL INCLUDED Ohio Stadium on its list of potential venues for outdoor games for as long as anyone in the league office can remember. Not only is the stadium iconic, but also it's massive -- with up to 90,000-plus fans watching live hockey.

NHL executives made their first site visit to the Horseshoe five and a half years ago. But there was one problem holding the 103-year-old building back: plumbing.

"For a long time, we'd shut [the stadium] down in November and we wouldn't really turn it back on until April," said Colin Thompson, Ohio State's senior associate athletic director for facilities and events. "In a big outdoor building like that, that's exposed in the Midwest, you could freeze your water lines, you could freeze your sanitary lines, and we had to protect against that so we could offer services to all of the guests."

No flushing toilets meant no NHL winter events. Then, the expanded College Football Playoff format changed everything. The Buckeyes had to prepare to play host to first-round games on campus. Two years ago, the athletic department began a phased multi-million dollar project of installing heat trays. That allowed the Buckeyes to host their first winter event this December, a home playoff game.

Once Ohio Stadium started winterizing, the NHL committed. Saturday's Stadium Series game -- featuring the Columbus Blue Jackets and Detroit Red Wings in a crucial playoff bubble battle (6 p.m. ET, ESPN/ESPN+/Disney+) -- is expected to have the second-biggest crowd ever for an NHL outdoor game. The 2014 Winter Classic at Michigan Stadium between Detroit and Toronto ranks first, with 105,491 fans.

The NHL has announced its outdoor plans for next year: hosting a pair of games in Florida (Miami and Tampa Bay, respectively) which should be another spectacle, building a professional-grade ice surface amid humidity.

The Horseshoe will be the NHL's 43rd regular-season outdoor game over the past two-plus decades. One thing is abundantly clear: the NHL isn't stopping.

"I've heard some people claim outdoor games are a dying breed. No they're not," said Steve Mayer, president of NHL content and events. "We believe in outdoor games. We still think that they're significant. They're a big part of our season, definitely our highest rated games. And the buzz that's in the local community leading up to the game is incredible."

Now that the NHL has knocked off some items from its outdoor bucket list, what comes next?

CLAIMS ABOUT FATIGUE stem from repeats of teams and venues. The Chicago Blackhawks lead the pack with seven appearances, and the league has now made two trips to Wrigley Field and Fenway Park. Cycling through again may be inevitable, but the league is constantly looking for ways to reimagine the experience.

"Many of the places now are about to go on repeat a bit," Mayer said. "There are multiple stadiums in most of the cities that we play in, whether it's a baseball stadium, a football stadium, even the soccer stadiums. Would we ever venture to go there? Most of them are a little bit too small.

"And then the interesting places, we've definitely looked at them in the past. Could that be part of our future? Whether it's an auto racing track, a horse track, just a location where we either take advantage

of an infrastructure that's already there or we build our own infrastructure and we're definitely open and really try to be creative."

Once the Panthers play in next year's Winter Classic, the only team that has yet to appear in an outdoor game is the Utah Hockey Club. The Smith Entertainment Group has told the NHL they are interested -- and they'd be prepared if the NHL gave them a green light.

Mayer said his team has scouted Utah but hasn't made any decisions yet.

"A lot of the issues we have as well are now the schedules are really crowded in terms of college football," Mayer said. "In Utah, for example, their football stadium, you could never do a Winter Classic because of the possibility of doing a college football playoff game."

Another venue the NHL has flirted with for years: the massive Beaver Stadium on the campus of Penn State. The NHL and Penn State have had conversations, but talks are on hold as Beaver Stadium undergoes a \$700 million revitalization project.

Penn State athletic director Pat Kraft has been transparent about wanting to host events -- such as concerts, hockey or soccer -- once the renovations are complete. But university spokesperson said they are probably years away, with 2028 as the earliest date.

"We'd love to talk at some point about Penn State. We said, 'make us aware of your timeline.' By no means have we committed to them, though we always think it's attractive," Mayer said. "Remember the timing has also been interesting over the years too, because we did play back-to-back [2017 and 2019] Philadelphia versus Pittsburgh once in Pittsburgh, then in Philadelphia, which I think you almost have to do when you play at Penn State. It was too soon. And so we've definitely talked again."

State College -- in the center of Pennsylvania, 140 miles from Pittsburgh and 193 miles from Philadelphia -- would be considered a neutral site, something the league isn't opposed to doing. The league has done that with its Canadian Heritage Classic, which brought games to non-NHL cities like Regina, Saskatchewan and Hamilton, Ontario.

In 2021, the NHL went completely off the board by staging two games in Lake Tahoe, which boasted dazzling visuals. That piqued ideas about the NHL in iconic landmarks like New York's Central Park or Lake Louise in Banff National Park.

"We did [Lake Tahoe] because we couldn't play in front of fans [due to COVID restrictions], and it made a lot of sense and we loved putting that game on. It was unique. It came at a time where people were yearning for special events and we provided them with one," Mayer said. "We did a lot of research during that particular period of time. We visited quite a significant amount of places and we do get numerous pitches from areas, landmarks, places that don't have infrastructure to build infrastructure and to put on a successful event."

Those venues may stay on the wish list -- for now. While there's interest on both sides, it's not as turnkey as going to another stadium that already has the infrastructure in place.

"It's very costly as well, so those are factors that come into play. But [NHL commissioner] Gary [Bettman] just really feels that we're in a world where we should be in front of as many people as we can playing in front of fans," Mayer said. "Could we build a stadium? Sure. Could we put a game where we knew that fans would come? Sure. But I think those games for right now are a bit on the back burner. Our main focus is trying to do the next bunch of years in stadiums or places that have the ability to house fans."

THE NHL IS ENTERING a period of reimagining signature events -- especially with the success of the 4 Nations Face-Off replacing typical All-Star festivities. The league announced the 2026 All-Star at UBS

Arena on Long Island -- which will be a sendoff to players ahead of the 2026 Olympics in Milan -- but hasn't committed further than that. They also haven't lined up outdoor games past next season's pair in Florida.

"When this stretch is done, we're all going to sit down and we're going to figure it out," Mayer said. "But we haven't made any decisions yet."

The NHL has made a commitment to more international competition and will stage a World Cup of Hockey featuring at least eight teams beginning in 2028, every two years in off-Olympic cycles. In announcing the World Cup, Bettman invited European venues to make bids as host cities. The NHL has hosted 20 regular-season games in Europe since 2017. Could an outdoor one be next?

"We get inquiries from around the world. We haven't really focused on one particular area, one particular stadium, but we have had conversations about a potential outdoor game overseas," Mayer said. "Nothing is imminent at all, but I could see down the line years as something in the future that is a possibility for sure."

That's the one thing Mayer wanted to emphasize: everything is a possibility.

"These are evolving. That whole myth that these aren't as popular? No way. They aren't going away," Mayer said. "We know our sponsors love them. The fans love them. I'm not just saying this, we really don't have a specific pecking order yet."

"But right now we're focused on next year, which is the Florida games, which are extremely unique. And believe me, we're looking forward to those two because that's going to be different and that'll get people buzzing."

## ESPN / NHL Power Rankings: 1-32 poll, each team's fantasy surprise

**By Sean Allen, Victoria Matiash- March 1, 2025**

Now that the 4 Nations Face-Off is in the rearview mirror, the NHL has resumed the regular season -- which means its time for another round of power rankings!

Along with the updated voting totals, it's time for another fantasy hockey takeover. Sean Allen (Eastern Conference) and Victoria Matiash (Western Conference) have identified each team's biggest surprise this season in fantasy hockey -- for positive or negative reasons.

How we rank: A panel of ESPN hockey commentators, analysts, reporters and editors sends in a 1-32 poll based on the games through Wednesday, which generates our master list.

Note: Previous ranking for each team refers to the previous edition,

Published Feb. 7. Points percentages are through Thursday's games.

### 1. Winnipeg Jets

Previous ranking: 1

Points percentage: 72.50%

Mark Scheifele, F: Just weeks before he turns 32, the Jets center is threatening to hit the 45-goal mark for the first time in his career. Toss in another 40-something assists and Scheifele could wrap 2024-25 as a top-10 forward in ESPN fantasy leagues.

Next seven days: vs. PHI (March 1), @ NYI (March 4), @ PHI (March 6)

### 2. Washington Capitals

Previous ranking: 2

Points percentage: 71.19%

Logan Thompson, G: He has only a 55.8% crease share on the season, yet the surprising Thompson ranks a comfortable third in fantasy points among all goaltenders. Honorable mentions go to Pierre-Luc Dubois, who has finally found a productive home, and Alex Ovechkin, whose 0.71 goals per game ties the second-best rate of his career as he closes in on Wayne Gretzky's goals scored record.

Next seven days: vs. TB (March 1), vs. OTT (March 3), @ NYR (March 5)

### 3. Dallas Stars

Previous ranking: 5

Points percentage: 65.52%

Logan Stankoven, F: Remember when Stankoven exploded for four goals and 10 assists in his first 15 games, wedging himself well into the Calder Trophy conversation? No? That's probably because he's kicked in only 12 points in 40 contests since. A surprising drop-off, following an equally remarkable fantasy start to 2024-25.

Next seven days: vs. LA (Feb. 28), vs. STL (March 2), vs. NJ (March 4), vs. CGY (March 6)

### 4. Toronto Maple Leafs

Previous ranking: 8

Points percentage: 63.79%

Anthony Stolarz, G: Dishonorable mention to the defense, which is producing fantasy value from physical play only -- only the Sharks and Ducks have fewer power-play points from the blue line. Honorable mention to Stolarz's goalie partner, Joseph Woll. The goaltending has been simply fantastic for the Leafs this season.

Next seven days: @ NYR (Feb. 28), @ PIT (March 2), vs. SJ (March 3), @ VGK (March 5)

#### 5. Vegas Golden Knights

Previous ranking: 7

Points percentage: 64.41%

William Karlsson, F: Recently placed on IR, the center hadn't exactly been lighting it up even before suffering this latest lower-body injury. Seven goals in 38 games? After potting 30, along with another 30 assists, in 70 contests this past season, that serves as a surprisingly disappointing dip in production and fantasy value.

Next seven days: vs. NJ (March 2), vs. TOR (March 5)

#### 6. Florida Panthers

Previous ranking: 4

Points percentage: 62.50%

Carter Verhaeghe, F: Maybe it shouldn't be a surprise, but after scoring 42 goals in 2022-23, the 34 scored by Verhaeghe this past season felt appropriate and repeatable. It's an unpleasant shock, but he'll be lucky to get 21 goals this season in what's been a healthy campaign.

Next seven days: vs. CGY (March 1), vs. TB (March 3), vs. CBJ (March 6)

#### 7. Edmonton Oilers

Previous ranking: 3

Points percentage: 61.02%

Zach Hyman, F: For another player, 19 goals in 53 contests would serve as an impressive haul. Except Hyman scored 54 this past season. So his fantasy managers can feel excused -- especially those who blew an early draft selection on the winger -- for feeling less impressed with the surprise drop.

Next seven days: @ CAR (March 1), vs. ANA (March 4), vs. MTL (March 6)

#### 8. Tampa Bay Lightning

Previous ranking: 13

Points percentage: 62.07%

Anthony Cirelli, C: Sure, Cirelli flirted with fantasy value on and off this past season. This season, he is a roster mainstay, and he's doing it with minimal power-play access and infrequent ice time with the superstars on the Lightning. Cirelli was a very worthy addition to Canada at the 4 Nations.

Next seven days: @ WSH (March 1), @ FLA (March 3), vs. CBJ (March 4), vs. BUF (March 6)

#### 9. Los Angeles Kings

Previous ranking: 14

Points percentage: 62.50%

Darcy Kuemper, G: While some of us (ahem) were a little more optimistic about how Kuemper would fare in this second tour in L.A., his current eighth ranking among goalies in total fantasy points still qualifies as a pleasant surprise. Between the experienced netminder's solid play and the Kings' stingy defense, his managers certainly aren't complaining.

Next seven days: @ DAL (March 28), @ STL (March 1), @ CHI (March 3), vs. STL (March 5)

10. Minnesota Wild

Previous ranking: 10

Points percentage: 61.02%

Marco Rossi, F: The 23-year-old sophomore is already comfortably ahead of his points total from this past season. Barring injury, Rossi should break through with 70 in his second full campaign. Not too shabby for a player projected for 10-15 fewer than that. Centering the top line definitely doesn't hurt.

Next seven days: @ COL (Feb. 28), vs. BOS (March 2), @ SEA (March 4)

11. Carolina Hurricanes

Previous ranking: 6

Points percentage: 61.02%

Seth Jarvis, F: He was fantastic this past season, but it's still a bit of a surprise that he is repeating the results like clockwork. Not all 23-year-old wingers bring the kind of consistency we're getting from Jarvis, as he's on pace to finish with 33 goals for the second consecutive season -- this time in seven fewer games.

Next seven days: vs. EDM (March 1), vs. CGY (March 2), @ DET (March 4), vs. BOS (March 6)

12. New Jersey Devils

Previous ranking: 9

Points percentage: 58.33%

Stefan Noesen, F: The production has been slowing down as teams got wise to the Devils' strategy on the man advantage, but raise your hands if you had Noesen down to be in the top 10 league-wide for power-play goals at this stage of the season.

Next seven days: @ UTA (March 1), @ VGK (March 2), @ DAL (March 4)

13. Colorado Avalanche

Previous ranking: 11

Points percentage: 58.33%

Mackenzie Blackwood, G: Forgive the considerable and obvious understatement, but the trade from San Jose helps big time. Blackwood is now competing often and well. Only three other goalies have logged a greater points total in standard leagues: Connor Hellebuyck, Andrei Vasilevskiy, and Logan Thompson.

Next seven days: vs. MIN (Feb. 28), vs. PIT (March 4), vs. SJ (March 6)

14. Detroit Red Wings

Previous ranking: 15

Points percentage: 55.93%

Lucas Raymond, F: With 31 goals and 72 points this past season, it looked like Raymond had finally broken out in his third NHL season. Surprise! He has another level. Raymond is on pace for a 90-point campaign as the Red Wings look to make their first playoff appearance since 2016.

Next seven days: @ CBJ (March 1), vs. CAR (March 4), vs. UTA (March 6)

#### 15. Calgary Flames

Previous ranking: 17

Points percentage: 55.17%

Yegor Sharangovich, F: Perhaps a second-straight 30-plus goal season in Calgary was too big an ask? Obviously, since he has all of 11 goals to show for 50 contests. Lately, Sharangovich is seeing limited minutes, and in the Flames' bottom six.

Next seven days: @ FLA (March 1), @ CAR (March 2), @ PHI (March 4), @ DAL (March 6)

#### 16. Columbus Blue Jackets

Previous ranking: 16

Points percentage: 55.93%

Zach Werenski, D: It's not a surprise that a healthy Werenski is having a great fantasy season, but it is pleasant that he's keeping pace with none other than Cale Makar. They both round off to 2.9 fantasy points per game to lead the league for defensemen.

Next seven days: vs. DET (March 1), @ TB (March 4), @ FLA (March 6)

#### 17. Ottawa Senators

Previous ranking: 12

Points percentage: 53.45%

Jake Sanderson, D: It usually plays out that the old guard slowly cedes the role to the new guy and there is some back-and-forth. Thomas Chabot had better per-game stats than Sanderson in 2023-24, so it wasn't clear the torch had fully passed. This blue line is now all Sanderson all the time, and it's not close.

Next seven days: vs. SJ (March 1), @ WSH (March 3), @ CHI (March 5)

#### 18. Vancouver Canucks

Previous ranking: 19

Points percentage: 55.08%

Elias Pettersson, F: He isn't shooting. He certainly isn't scoring. Seven other Vancouver skaters have more goals than the 102-point performer from two years ago. As far as fantasy surprises go, the Canucks center ranks right up there as one of this season's most frustrating showings.

Next seven days: @ SEA (March 1), vs. ANA (March 5)

#### 19. New York Rangers

Previous ranking: 20

Points percentage: 53.45%

Chris Kreider, F: Twenty-two games into the season, Kreider didn't have a single assist when, surprise, he finally got one on Dec. 6. The next assist would come in January and he's now up to four on the season. Kreider was always more of a goal scorer, but the overall lack of points really has been a shocker.

Next seven days: vs. TOR (Feb. 28), vs. NSH (March 2), vs. NYI (March 3), vs. WSH (March 5)

#### 20. Utah Hockey Club

Previous ranking: 23

Points percentage: 52.50%

Dylan Guenther, F: The 21-year-old is blossoming into a top skater and fantasy star in real time. Although projected to serve as a near point-per-game player at some point in his career, this feels a bit (pleasantly) premature. Through the fantasy lens, Guenther is now equal to fellow Utah forward Clayton Keller as a must-roster in fantasy leagues of any size.

Next seven days: vs. NJ (March 1), @ DET (March 6)

#### 21. Boston Bruins

Previous ranking: 18

Points percentage: 51.67%

Jeremy Swayman, G: As surprises go, we might have seen this coming. Contract negotiations that threaten training camps rarely have a positive impact on a player's offseason regimen. We hoped Swayman would be a difference-maker in the crease as one of the top goalie picks, but, surprise: He's allowed the most goals in the league this season.

Next seven days: @ PIT (March 1), @ MIN (March 2), vs. NSH (March 4), @ CAR (March 6)

#### 22. St. Louis Blues

Previous ranking: 24

Points percentage: 51.67%

Pavel Buchnevich, F: The good news is that production appears to be improving for the Blues' winger. After a mostly quiet January -- and dry spell-littered season altogether -- Buchnevich has a goal and four assists in three games since the break. This makes a lot more sense for someone who erupted for 76 points, including 30 goals, in his first season in St. Louis only three years ago.

Next seven days: vs. LA (March 1), @ DAL (March 2), @ LA (March 5)

#### 23. Montreal Canadiens

Previous ranking: 22

Points percentage: 51.69%

Lane Hutson, D: Before the season, there was the hope that one or more of the Habs' young defenders would get some game action this season. It became quite the surprise when Hutson took over the depth chart early in the campaign. He's not just excelling, he's threatening to win the rookie scoring race.

Next seven days: @ BUF (March 1), vs. BUF (March 3), @ EDM (March 6)

#### 24. Philadelphia Flyers

Previous ranking: 27

Points percentage: 50.00%

Travis Sanheim, D: Inside the top 20 for total fantasy points, Sanheim has asserted himself as a must-roster player in fantasy hockey. He was on our radar before the season but has been a pleasant surprise in lineups since the opening faceoff.

Next seven days: @ WPG (March 1), vs. CGY (March 4), vs. WPG (March 6)

#### 25. New York Islanders

Previous ranking: 21

Points percentage: 50.86%

Bo Horvat, F: This surprise can be shared with other members of the Isles' offense, which has failed to produce a single forward with a rate of at least 2.0 fantasy points per game. Even Mathew Barzal's per-game rates aren't that close to the threshold.

Next seven days: vs. NSH (March 1), @ NYR (March 3), vs. WPG (March 4)

#### 26. Anaheim Ducks

Previous ranking: 25

Points percentage: 50.86%

Jackson LaCombe, D: One of several positive surprises to emerge out of Anaheim -- goalie Lukas Dostal is another -- the sophomore defenseman is comfortably on pace for his first 40-point campaign. In fact, LaCombe leads all Ducks' skaters in averaging 2.0 fantasy points per game in 2024-25. He won't be under the radar much longer.

Next seven days: vs. CHI (March 1), @ EDM (March 4), @ VAN (March 5)

#### 27. Buffalo Sabres

Previous ranking: 28

Points percentage: 46.49%

Dylan Cozens, F: Two seasons ago, Cozens finished with 31 goals and 68 points as a central pillar of the team's power play. This past season, he dipped to 47 points but was still a big part of the man advantage. This season, he'll be lucky to get 37 points and is off the top unit.

Next seven days: vs. MTL (March 1), @ MTL (March 3), vs. SJ (March 4), @ TB (March 6)

#### 28. Pittsburgh Penguins

Previous ranking: 26

Points percentage: 46.72%

Rickard Rakell, F: Easily outpacing all other Penguins in fantasy scoring and hot on the heels of players like David Pastrnak and Mikko Rantanen among all skaters in FPPG, Rakell has been the most pleasant of surprises in a season of troubled waters for the Pens.

Next seven days: vs. BOS (March 1), vs. TOR (March 2), @ COL (March 4)

#### 29. Seattle Kraken

Previous ranking: 29

Points percentage: 45.00%

Matty Beniers, F: So much for rebounding off this past season's sophomore slump. After rifling off 57 points in his Calder-winning rookie campaign, Beniers is putting up disappointingly pedestrian numbers, translating into equally mediocre fantasy points, ever since.

Next seven days: vs. VAN (March 1), vs. MIN (March 4), @ NSH (March 6)

### 30. Nashville Predators

Previous ranking: 30

Points percentage: 42.24%

Steven Stamkos, F: What else is there to say? It's been a sheer disaster in Nashville since the start. Stamkos earned fewer than 50 points in a full NHL campaign back in his 2008-09 rookie season (47), and it's only growing more dire. Ahead of Thursday's tilt with Winnipeg, the former Lightning captain hadn't collected a single point since Jan. 23.

Next seven days: @ NYI (March 1), @ NYR (March 2), @ BOS (March 4)

### 31. Chicago Blackhawks

Previous ranking: 31

Points percentage: 34.75%

Philipp Kurashev, F: It's difficult to believe that Kurashev potted 54 points in 75 games with the Blackhawks only a year ago. Or that the 25-year-old was supposed to take another step forward within Chicago's top six this season. But nine points in 41 games definitely serves as the stark opposite of forward.

Next seven days: @ ANA (March 1), vs. LA (March 3), vs. OTT (March 5)

### 32. San Jose Sharks

Previous ranking: 32

Points percentage: 32.50%

Jake Walman, D: It speaks volumes that Red Wings fans continue to bemoan the deal that sent the defender westward in exchange for future considerations. Settling in nicely with the Sharks, the surprising Walman leads San Jose's blue line in scoring, power-play production, shots and blocked shots. If it wasn't for losing several games to injury, the unanticipated fantasy gem might have totaled 50 points this season.

## ESPN / NHL trade grades: Report cards for the biggest deals of 2025

By Ryan S. Clark, Greg Wyshynski- March 2, 2025

### Reactions

The NHL trade deadline for the 2024-25 season is not until March 7, but teams have not waited until the last minute to make major moves.

For every significant trade that occurs during the season, you'll find a grade for it here, the Colorado Avalanche and San Jose Sharks swapping goaltenders, Cam Fowler to the St. Louis Blues, Kaapo Kakko to the Seattle Kraken, the blockbuster deal sending Mikko Rantanen to the Carolina Hurricanes and Martin Necas to the Avalanche, J.T. Miller from the Vancouver Canucks to the New York Rangers, and the Canucks staying busy and getting Marcus Pettersson from the Pittsburgh Penguins.

March 1 featured three big trades, with Ryan Lindgren headed to the Colorado Avalanche, the Minnesota Wild adding Gustav Nyquist, and Seth Jones joining the Florida Panthers.

Read on for grades from Ryan S. Clark and Greg Wyshynski, and check back the next time a big deal breaks.

### March 1: Panthers land Jones, send Knight to Blackhawks

After saying he wanted to play for a contender, Seth Jones is now a member of the defending Stanley Cup champions.

The Florida Panthers acquired Jones and a 2026 fourth-round pick from the Chicago Blackhawks with goaltender Spencer Knight and a conditional 2026 first-round pick going the other way. The Blackhawks will also retain 25% of Jones' salary for the next five seasons.

How did each front office perform in the NHL's latest blockbuster? Let's find out.

### Florida Panthers

Grade: A-

It was never a question of whether the Panthers needed Jones. They did. But many wondered whether the Panthers had the capital to pull off a deal. Turns out, the Panthers had a different kind of capital.

They provided the Blackhawks with a first-round pick one would expect for a top-pairing, right-handed-shooting defenseman such as Jones. But to include Knight in the deal and have the Blackhawks retain \$2.5 million in salary over the next four years?

There are many layers to that decision, so let's unpack it.

The package that Panthers GM Bill Zito presented to the Blackhawks was something that checked two significant boxes:

He provided a rebuilding team with a 2026 first-round pick that ensures the Blackhawks will have at least two first-rounders in every draft since 2022

Zito also offered Knight, a 23-year-old goaltender who was a first-round pick in 2019

The Panthers had a hole on the right side of their defense beyond Aaron Ekblad, the second-longest tenured player on the roster. Ekblad is an unrestricted free agent in the final season of an eight-year deal worth \$7.5 million annually. PuckPedia projects Florida will have \$20.5 million in cap space this

offseason, which means a deal could be struck to keep Ekblad. The Panthers can also use that space to re-sign forward Sam Bennett, another pending UFA.

Jones is under contract for four more years at a rate that provides flexibility, and the Panthers have a top-four unit this season that features Gustav Forsling, Niko Mikkola and Ekblad.

Although ... at what potential long-term cost?

The Panthers needed to decide their long-term plans in net. They won the Cup last season -- and have had the greatest period in franchise history -- with future Hall of Famer Sergei Bobrovsky as their No. 1 option. Meanwhile, Knight developed into a backup, and was slated to be his heir apparent in the crease.

Bobrovsky, 36, has one year remaining on his deal at \$10 million before hitting free agency. Some thought the Panthers could recoup those savings and re-sign Knight, who is 13 years younger, to a new contract.

Including Knight in the deal to get Jones means the Panthers must find another solution in goal post-Bobrovsky. In the interim, the Panthers have a proven backup option in Chris Driedger, with the 30-year-old playing this season in the AHL.

If the Panthers win another Cup this season -- or when they have Jones on the roster, the cost of losing Knight is easily justified.

Chicago Blackhawks

Grade: A+

Finding a legitimate franchise goalie is difficult, yet the Blackhawks may have just found one in Knight.

Think about the conversation that's being had right now about the state of American hockey: Goaltending is one of the biggest advantages the United States has, with Connor Hellebuyck, Jake Oettinger, Jeremy Swayman, Thatcher Demko and rookie Dustin Wolf all being developed in the country.

It wasn't that long ago when Knight, who was a first-round pick partly due to his prototypical size, was in that conversation. Going to the Blackhawks and possibly establishing himself as the outright No. 1 goalie could see him get back into the mix.

But what does his arrival mean for the Blackhawks' goaltending landscape?

Knight is now the fourth goalie on the Blackhawks' NHL roster who is either under contract for next season or the team has control via restricted free agency. Laurent Brossoit, who is on injured reserve, has a year remaining at \$3.3 million while Petr Mrazek has a year remaining at \$4.25 million. Arvid Soderblom costs only \$963,000 but he's the RFA.

With Knight on the roster, the Blackhawks could trade one of those other goaltenders, with the hopes of adding even more draft capital to what's already a rather strong reserve of draft picks. This would also open the door for Knight to get more playing time. He's 12-8-1 with a 2.40 goals-against average and a .907 save percentage in 23 games for Florida. The most he has played in an NHL season is 32 games, while the most he's had in his professional career are the 45 he played last season in the AHL.

The more looming question around their goaltending landscape is: What does this mean for Drew Comesso?

Comesso was a second-round pick in 2020 that came through the famed United States National Team Development Program before he played three seasons at Hockey East powerhouse Boston University. Comesso's final two seasons at BU reinforced the belief he could become the Blackhawks' goalie of the future.

He finished his first AHL season with a 2.65 goals-against average and a .906 save percentage in 2023-24. Comness is still in the AHL but played two NHL games in mid-December. He allowed four goals on 24 shots to the New Jersey Devils in one of those games before he was sent back to the minors.

Since then, he's had 15 starts in the AHL and has allowed more than three goals in 15 of those outings. That includes a run of five consecutive games in which he allowed more than three. In total, he's allowed more than three goals in 15 of his 25 games this season; to be fair, he's played behind a team that has been inconsistent throughout the season.

In other words, finding another young goaltending option was a possibility this trade season.

But instead of just another option, they added one of the few goaltenders who has gone in the first round in recent memory, further strengthening a youth movement that's considered one of the NHL's most promising. -- Clark

#### March 1: Predators trade Nyquist to the Wild

Shortly after one Central Division team made a trade on Saturday, two more made a deal with each another.

The Minnesota Wild received forward Gustav Nyquist from the Nashville Predators in exchange for a 2026 second-round pick, with the Predators retaining 50% of Nyquist's salary.

Here's a quick glance at what it means for both clubs.

#### Minnesota Wild

Grade: B

Any deal the Wild were going to make ahead of the deadline had to fit within their salary cap constraints. They entered Saturday with minus-\$603,556 in projected cap space, but Kirill Kaprizov and his \$9 million cap hit going to long-term injured reserve meant there was extra room, per PuckPedia.

Having a manageable cap hit, among other items, is what made Nyquist such an attractive option for the Wild -- or any team that needed additional offensive support at a team-friendly price tag.

Getting the Predators to retain 50% of Nyquist's salary means the Wild are on the hook for \$1.595 million. PuckPedia indicates the Wild have a little more than \$6.632 million in deadline cap space; it's possible they could add more before Friday's deadline.

The expectation is that the Wild could add another forward. There has been a need for offensive consistency since December when Kaprizov, who emerged as a Hart Trophy candidate, sustained an injury that has kept him out of the lineup. His 23 goals still lead the Wild, while his 52 points are tied for the team lead -- despite playing 23 fewer games than current leader Matt Boldy.

The situation got worse this week when top-line center Joel Eriksson Ek was injured, and he'll be out on a week-to-week basis with a lower-body injury. The Wild entered the weekend ranked 21st in goals per game; despite that, they are third in the Central Division, while having the same number of points but played one fewer game than the Colorado Avalanche, who hold the first wild-card spot.

The Wild could move Nyquist to their first or second line while shifting Vinnie Hinostroza, who was on their second line, to the third. There is belief that Nyquist can ramp his scoring back up to previous levels; he's scored just nine goals and 21 points in 57 games for the disappointing Predators, but he had 23 goals and 75 points in 81 games this past season.

#### Nashville Predators

Grade: B

At one point, the Predators were believed to be a team that was going to be active at the deadline because they would be challenging for a playoff spot.

Instead, the Predators are now focusing on their future. Part of that includes reshaping portions of their roster, and that's what ended Nyquist's time with the club before the deadline.

He was Nashville's most prominent pending UFA in a market that also has other forwards reportedly available, such as Yanni Gourde, Brock Nelson, Brayden Schenn and Jason Zucker, among others. His manageable cap hit meant the Preds were going to have options, and they found one that adds a nice bit of draft capital.

Given that they were already retaining part of Mattias Ekholm and Ryan Johansen's contracts, and would have to retain on Nyquist, this deal had to be the right one.

Getting the Wild's 2026 second-round pick adds to an impressive haul; the Predators may end up being one of the busiest teams ahead of the NHL draft if GM Barry Trotz elects to make subsequent deals.

The Predators have three first-round picks and two second-round picks in 2025, along with now having an extra second in 2026. -- Clark

March 1: Lindgren, Vesey to Avs; de Haan, Parssinen to Rangers

Finally! A trade has happened as we enter the final six days before the March 7 NHL trade deadline.

The Colorado Avalanche acquired defenseman Ryan Lindgren, forward Jimmy Vesey and prospect defenseman Hank Kampf from the New York Rangers on Saturday for forward Juuso Parssinen, defenseman Calvin de Haan, a conditional 2025 second-round pick and a conditional 2025 fourth-round pick. The Rangers will also retain 50% of Lindgren's salary.

Here's a look at how both GMs did in the trade.

Colorado Avalanche

Grade: B+

The Avs lost Josh Manson to an injury before 4 Nations Face-Off, and he remained out of the lineup through the Avs' first four post-tournament games. His absence created questions about whom they would pursue to strengthen a top-four group that was using Oliver Kylington as a fill-in.

Getting Lindgren accomplishes a few items for the Avs:

- He gives them a proven top-four, defensive-minded defenseman

- Like Manson, he provides balance to a second pairing, which allows Samuel Girard to continue operating as a facilitator in the offensive zone

- He can log heavy minutes on a penalty kill

This final part is critical, as it could lessen the burden on Devon Toews and Cale Makar, who lead the Avs in short-handed minutes (among other categories).

Vesey is a bottom-six forward with size who can be used in rotation with Ross Colton, Joel Kiviranta, Logan O'Connor and Miles Wood. He has just four goals and six points in 33 games this season, with the idea he could add more, considering he finished with more than 11 goals in consecutive campaigns before the 2024-25 season. He would also give them another forward option on the PK. He had three

consecutive seasons of logging more than 85 minutes in short-handed sequences before this one. This season, he was limited to a little more than five total PK minutes with the Rangers.

This deal provides the Avs with a bit of a respite while Manson recovers, at a time when the club is trying to reach the playoffs either through one of the three Central Division spots or as a wild-card entry.

Entering Saturday, the Avs were in the first wild-card spot. They have the same number of points as the Minnesota Wild, who are third in the Central, but the Wild have played one fewer game.

While both players are a fit, this trade works even better for the Avs because both Lindgren and Vesey are pending unrestricted free agents. That gives the Avs a six-player pending UFA class ahead of an offseason in which PuckPedia projects they'll have only \$8.2 million in cap space.

New York Rangers

Grade: B+

Lindgren's future with the Rangers was in question as a pending UFA who might not have had a place in the blue-line rotation moving forward.

The Rangers will need to re-sign RFAs K'Andre Miller and Zac Jones this summer, while having a projected \$17.83 million in cap space according to PuckPedia.

Re-signing Jones and Miller would complete a defensive unit that already has a Norris Trophy winner in Adam Fox signed to a long-term contract. Will Borgen, who they acquired in-season, went from earning \$2.70 million this season to signing a three-year contract extension with the Rangers worth \$4.10 million annually.

The Rangers also have Braden Schneider signed for one more season, while Urho Vaakanainen is another pending RFA. Plus, the recently promoted Matthew Robertson is another defenseman under contract for next season.

That gives the Rangers seven defensemen who were either signed or remain under team control for 2025-26, which made pending UFA Lindgren expendable.

That made it important for the Rangers to get something of value in return. They did so by adding draft capital for 2025, plus two players in de Haan and Parssinen who provide depth to a lineup that's still trying to make the playoffs. The Rangers came into Saturday four points behind the Detroit Red Wings and Columbus Blue Jackets for the two Eastern Conference wild-card spots.

Moving on from Lindgren means the Rangers have adjustments they'll need to make when it comes to who takes over on the second pairing and on the PK. It's possible that either Jones or Schneider will get promoted to the second pair, while de Haan could be one of those players who helps fill the void left by Lindgren on the Rangers' PK. -- Clark

