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NHL News

Multimedia

The Athletic / Blue Jackets start slow in loss to Flames; Sean Monahan leaves with injury

By Aaron Portzline – November 6th, 2025

The Columbus Blue Jackets insisted they weren't rattled by Sunday's late-minute loss on Long Island. However, two days of separation and a trip to the other side of the continent weren't enough to recalibrate.

The Blue Jackets gave up a pair of goals 36 seconds apart, falling behind 2-0 to the Calgary Flames 1:32 into the game Wednesday in an unfortunate start to what became a 5-1 loss for Columbus before 16,802 at Scotiabank Saddledome.

It may have been a more damaging night beyond the scoreboard.

Sean Monahan, the Blue Jackets' top-line center and one of their most reliable forwards, left the game early in the third period after trying to play through an injury suffered on a hit by Calgary's Rasmus Andersson late in the second period.

Monahan was in obvious discomfort as he spoke with a Blue Jackets trainer on the bench immediately after the hit, which happened along the end boards in the Flames' end. The veteran center finished the second period but left the game at 4:45 of the third.

Blue Jackets coach Dean Evason did not have an update for reporters in Calgary after the game, saying that Monahan was being evaluated.

If Monahan misses significant time, it could be devastating for a Blue Jackets club that is trying to end a five-year playoff drought. He missed 28 games last season with a wrist injury, and while the Blue Jackets compensated for a while, they endured a 1-7-1 plunge in March that effectively tanked their season.

Columbus was the last club eliminated in the Eastern Conference, missing the eighth and final playoff spot by two points.

If Monahan is out, look for 21-year-old center Adam Fantilli to replace him on the top line between winger Dmitri Voronkov and Kirill Marchenko. Fantilli, who played in Monahan's spot while he was injured last season, became a major offensive threat for the Jackets down the stretch and finished with 31 goals, tied for tops on the club.

The Blue Jackets traveled to Vancouver after the game and will have an off day today before returning to practice Friday. They play the Canucks at 10 p.m. ET Saturday in Rogers Arena.

They'd better hope this off day is more successful as an emotional reset than Monday's off day following the 3-2 loss to the New York Islanders. In that game, the Jackets led 2-1 before allowing the tying goal with 1:07 remaining and winning goal with 38 seconds remaining.

In the wake of that loss, you expected Wednesday's game to go one of two ways.

Either the Blue Jackets, spittin' mad, would come out with their hair on fire against the NHL's last-place club — the Flames have been struggling, especially offensively — or the Jackets would wander in a haze, struggling to get their legs under them and match the energy of a desperate Flames club.

It was mostly the latter.

"We didn't seem like we had a bunch of jump, early," Evason said. "We'll watch and see why. We thought in spurts we were real good.

"But we didn't do the right things we talked about all the time to give ourselves a chance to win."

Calgary's Morgan Frost redirected a Jonathan Huberdeau shot past Blue Jackets goaltender Jet Greaves only 56 seconds into the game. Seconds later, Blue Jackets captain Boone Jenner turned over the puck deep in his own end, beginning a sequence that ended when Calgary's Blake Coleman scored through a screen from high in the left circle.

It was 2-0 Flames before the Blue Jackets had a shot on goal.

"We spot them two goals that quickly and we're playing from behind all night," Blue Jackets defenseman Zach Werenski told reporters. "That's never fun."

The Blue Jackets showed signs of life later in the first period and early in the second.

Marchenko, who has dabbled in penalty killing this season for the first time in his career, scored his first short-handed goal on a breakaway at 6:57 of the first period, pulling the Blue Jackets to 2-1.

It felt as if the Blue Jackets had steadied themselves after Calgary's strong start, and they had copious chances to tie the score early in the second period. However, the Jackets lost their way and allowed two goals in 37 seconds to help the Flames put it out of reach.

Dante Fabbro, playing next to Werenski on the top pair in the injury absence of Denton Mateychuk, carried the puck deep into the zone, skating behind Calgary's net and attempting a pass to Werenski in the left circle for a one-timer. But Fabbro's pass was deflected wide of Werenski, and it sent the Flames off on a two-on-one.

Nazem Kadri, playing in his 1,000th game, scored off the rush from the left circle to make it 3-1 at 7:47 of the second. At 8:24, Adam Klapka finished a two-on-one, and it was 4-1. The Flames added an empty net goal in the third.

"It got away from us because we allowed it to get away from us," Evason said. "We had seven scoring chances in the second period before they scored (the 3-1 goal).

"One thing we've praised our group about all year is that we haven't shot ourselves and been out of hockey games. We've stayed in games until we've had an opportunity to win hockey games. When you go down three goals, you're not giving yourself a chance."

The Blue Jackets fired 43 shots on Calgary goaltender Dustin Wolf, including 22 in the third period. The Jackets had 85 shot attempts (43 on goal, 24 blocked, 19 missed) compared to just 45 for Calgary, but they dug too big a hole early in the game.

"I like the way we played in the third when we were behind and pressing," Werenski said. "That's the way we have to play for a full 60 minutes, though."

The Athletic / Blue Jackets Monday Gathering: Jackson Smith ‘beautiful to watch’ in strong start at Penn State

By Aaron Portzline – November 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: Action Jackson

Blue Jackets GM Don Waddell, assistant GM Chris Clark and the club’s entire development staff made their way to Ohio State’s Schottenstein Center late last week to watch the Ohio State’s men’s hockey team host Penn State in the Big Ten opener for both clubs.

It’s not unusual for any of them to show up at a rink other than Nationwide Arena, but they were there en masse for a specific reason: 18-year-old defenseman Jackson Smith, the Blue Jackets’ No. 14 overall draft pick from June.

Smith, now a freshman at Penn State, was one of several prospects to jump from the Canadian junior ranks to the NCAA hockey over the summer. After two seasons with the Tri-City Americans in the Western Hockey League, Smith is now being observed by a whole new region — and legion — of hockey fans.

And the early returns? Wow.

Even on a club with wildly talented winger Gavin McKenna, the presumptive No. 1 overall draft pick next summer, Smith has stood out for the Nittany Lions (9-1-0), who were ranked No. 4 in the country last week and could be higher when the new poll comes out Monday.

Smith is 6-foot-4 and now weighs 204 pounds, up nine pounds since he joined Penn State’s well-regarded off-ice training program. But what you notice isn’t his size or the way he muscles even older players off the puck, which he did routinely in the Nittany Lions’ two-game sweep of the Buckeyes.

What stands out about Smith is his feet, his agility. His turning radius is that of a much smaller forward. The way he changes direction so abruptly and explodes out of his first step is jarring. Penn State coach Guy Gadowsky has watched him for two months now, and he can’t get over it.

“He’s so beautiful to watch,” Gadowsky said. “I watch him every day at practice, and you get mesmerized. I still catch myself in the games sometimes doing the same thing. He’s just a beautiful athlete to watch. The sky is the limit for this kid.

“It’s the feet. It’s the legs. It’s the frame. There are guys as big as him. And there are a few guys who can skate like him. But very seldom do you see that package together.”

Waddell is similarly impressed. He's watched most of Smith's games at Penn State online, but Thursday's game in Columbus was Smith's first college game he watched in person. The topic among Waddell and his staffers during the first two periods was Smith's agility.

But Waddell is watching for defensive gains. Not that Smith struggles on that side of the puck, but the challenge in college hockey — against 22-, 23- and 24-year-olds — is a much bigger challenge, and Smith has always been able to use his skating skills to overcome bad pinches and reads.

Waddell was at the rink Thursday morning, too, meeting with Smith, but also with Gadowsky and his staff for an update.

"We all know what he's capable of offensively, but they continue to say that he's really worked on his defensive game," Waddell said. "And they see the improvement just in the eight or so games that he's played."

Through eight games, Smith has 2-6-8 and a plus-8 rating. He's on Penn State's top defensive pair and runs the point on the top power play, too.

Smith said he "showed the boys around" Columbus last weekend. He knows it a bit after coming for development camp in July. He wasn't able to attend NHL training camp because classes had already begun at Penn State. He's learning every day, he said.

"There are fewer games in the college (compared to the WHL), so the intensity every game is a lot higher," Smith said. "Everybody's fresher going into each game, so every game is a playoff game. Guys are going hard. There's less time and space."

Waddell will see Smith again next weekend. He'll also see center Cayden Lindstrom, the Blue Jackets' No. 4 overall pick in 2024. Penn State and Michigan State play a Friday/Saturday twin bill in East Lansing.

Item No. 2: Slow-talkin'

It can change quickly, with a single phone call. But don't expect the Blue Jackets to make any major contract news in the near term, even as the rest of the NHL has made major news recently by signing young, promising players to massive, long-term contracts.

Waddell said he and the agents for veteran Boone Jenner, an unrestricted free agent next summer, and Adam Fantilli, a restricted free agent next summer, have stayed in touch and spoken frequently, but no numbers or term have been exchanged.

Patience is the preferred approach. "Nobody is in a hurry," Waddell said.

And why would the players be? The recent escalation in player salaries has changed the landscape along with the NHL's skyrocketing salary cap, especially for young players with enormous potential.

Case in point: If you're Fantilli, your ears certainly perked up when Utah's Logan Cooley signed an eight-year, \$10 million AAV contract before his entry-level deal was complete.

The guess here is that we'll see movement between the Blue Jackets and Jenner, Fantilli and others deeper into the season, perhaps during the Olympic break. And, as other markets have learned in the last few weeks, be prepared for sticker shock.

Fantilli's deal, like Cooley's, will be based on his early-career production, but also his potential.

A deal for Jenner would be different. Jenner will be 33 years old when he begins play under his next contract, which may well be his last contract, too. The term might be tricky here.

The NHL is, increasingly, a young man's game, and Jenner has worked incredibly hard each summer just to keep pace. But it's not easy, and it won't get easier. His current deal, which pays him \$3.75 million per season, is one of the league's most club-friendly contracts.

He's worth significantly more than that when you hold up his resume and job description against players across the league, or even in his own dressing room. This will be fascinating to watch, but Waddell knows how important it is to take care of Jenner, one of the most respected players in franchise history.

"We want him to finish his career in Columbus," Waddell said.

One other contract that Waddell may want to work on during this season: Charlie Coyle.

The Blue Jackets have been impressed with Coyle's impact just through the first month of the season, with how he's stabilized their depth chart at center and given them a third forward line that can make an impact. Basically, he's everything they hoped he'd be, on the ice and in the dressing room.

Coyle, who turns 34 in March, is an unrestricted free agent next summer.

Item No. 3: Take 5, Adam Fantilli

"Take 5" is our weekly brief and (mostly) non-hockey conversation with a Blue Jackets player, coach, broadcaster or staffer. This week, 21-year-old center Adam Fantilli:

In which part of Columbus do you live?

I'm close to German Village. It's where I ended up my rookie year (2023-24) and I haven't moved since. Love it. It's so nice. I'm close to everything and it's not far at all from the rink. I've got Lindsey's (restaurant) nearby. Sycamore is there, Cento... For some reason, I end up going to restaurants outside of the Village.

What is your irrational fear?

Snakes and spiders piss me off, just their existence. Snakes, mostly. I don't know about any scary encounters, but we had a couple in our backyard when I was a kid (in Ontario, Canada) and they were like five or six feet long. These were milk snakes, I think. Huge.

Biggest challenge in living in the U.S.?

That's easy: my family. When I want to go home, it's to see my family. Biggest adjustment? ... I'd say it's the lingo. When I was growing up (in Canada), calling somebody "buddy" was a nice thing. It was like,

hey, we're buddies. It wasn't mean, at all. But when you say it to somebody here, it's like you're big-dogging them. I learned that when I went to prep school (Kimball Union Academy in Meriden, New Hampshire). Yeah. Don't say buddy.

Guilty pleasures ... song and a snack?

I would never play it in the room, but I've known to turn on some Adele and just belt it sometimes. Oh, belt it. Yeah. "Set Fire to the Rain," "Rolling in the Deep" ... those are both fire. She has others, too. Rainy day, sweater on ... love it. As far as a snack ... It's gotta be ice cream, or my mom makes these chocolate, macadamia nut, and white chocolate chip cookies ... unreal. I'm not eating much bread right now, but I can bury Chick-fil-A.

Favorite vacation spots?

Prince Edward Island or Italy. We go to PEI every summer as a family, and that's just perfect. In Italy, I'll go to where my family is from in Rome and then, like, spread out from there. Sorrento, the Amalfi Coast, Capri ... perfect.

Item No. 4: Snacks

- Strange scene in the Blue Jackets' 3-2 loss to the New York Islanders on Sunday. With 2:32 remaining, and the Blue Jackets leading 2-1, play was at four-on-four with Columbus' Dmitri Voronkov in the box for interference at 16:17 and the Islanders' Alexander Romanov off for tripping. As the play carried into the Islanders' zone, Coyle was battling with an Islanders player who backed him into New York goaltender David Rittich, sending Rittich down to the ice and mostly into his own goal. A half-second after Rittich was parked, Blue Jackets defenseman Zach Werenski fired a wrister from the right point that sailed into the net with Rittich.

The goal, which would have given the Jackets a 3-1 lead, was immediately disallowed by NHL officials. But no penalty was called on Coyle and no further public explanation was given. Blue Jackets coach Dean Evason said he was given the option of requesting a replay, but the risk was simply too great. If the Jackets lost the challenge, they would have been forced to kill 1 minute, 50 seconds of a five-on-three because Romanov was just 10 seconds away from leaving the box.

Play continued. No goal, no penalty. As of Monday morning, the Blue Jackets had not heard an explanation from the league. "We're not sure why that wasn't a goal," Evason said after the game.

- Blue Jackets defenseman Erik Gudbranson had further evaluation on his injured hip over the weekend, and the news is mostly positive. Gudbranson, who has missed four games, will likely miss at least four more, including the rest of this road trip through Calgary, Vancouver, Edmonton and Seattle. But he will travel with the club and is expected to start skating at some point on the trip. He could return at some point soon after the Blue Jackets return home to play Edmonton on Nov. 13.

- Evason said Dante Fabbro moved up beside Werenski on the top pair for two shifts late in the second period because second-year player Denton Mateychuk is nursing an injury. Mateychuk did return and

play the full third period, even scoring a go-ahead goal at 12:10 of the third period. The Blue Jackets, who were off on Monday, may provide an update on Tuesday.

- Blue Jackets right winger Kirill Marchenko has gone seven games without scoring a goal, but ... he has a five-game point streak, all assists.
- Columbus native Kiefer Sherwood is having an incredible start to the season with Vancouver. Actually, it's just a continuation on the terrific last season he had with the Canucks, when he scored a career-high 19 goals and set an NHL record with 462 hits. He's already scored nine goals (in 13 games!) this season, just one off the NHL lead. It's all been very well timed by Sherwood, too. He's an unrestricted free agent next summer, ready to cash in after years of making the NHL minimum (or barely above it) on short-term contracts. Sherwood, 30, has become a bit of a cult hero in Vancouver. The Blue Jackets play there on Saturday.
- The Jackets will see another Columbus native — and, in this case, a former teammate — when they play in Edmonton on Nov. 10. Jack Roslovic, who missed all of camp before signing with the Oilers a few days into the season, has gotten up to speed with the Oilers. He has 2-3-5 and a plus-6 rating in 11 games. He played 22:52 and scored a power-play goal in Saturday's win over Chicago, with his mother, Jane, in attendance. Roslovic is playing on the left wide with center Leon Draisaitl and winger Vasily Podkolzin. He joined Sportsnet's *After Hours* after the win over the Blackhawks:
- Blue Jackets Monday Gathering trivia question: Miles Wood's OT winner on Tuesday in Buffalo was the first three-on-three overtime goal of his 520-game career with New Jersey, Colorado and Columbus. Which got us thinking ... which player has scored the most goals for the Blue Jackets without ever scoring a three-on-three overtime goal?
- It was a banner week for the Ohio AAA Blue Jackets overall last week. On Thursday, all four of the program's current NHL players hit the scoresheet in their respective games: Roslovic (Edmonton) had an assist against the New York Rangers, Sean Kuraly (Boston) had an assist against Buffalo, Connor Murphy (Chicago) had an assist against Winnipeg, and Sherwood (Vancouver) had a hat trick against St. Louis, the first of his career.
- AHL Cleveland's Jordan Dumais is getting up to speed after missing the entire preseason and training camp with a hip injury. Dumais has 2-3-5 in four games with the Monsters, including Friday's 4-3 overtime win in Milwaukee, when he had a goal and two assists. At this rate, the Blue Jackets' first forward call-up would probably be Luca Del Bel Belluz (3-2-5), Luca Pinelli (2-2-4) or Mikael Pyyhtiä (1-4-5), who have all started well for Cleveland. But Dumais could hang big numbers this season if he can stay healthy.
- Trivia answer: Oliver Bjorkstrand played in 382 games and scored 111 goals for the Blue Jackets, but never scored a three-on-three overtime goal. He scored one with the Seattle Kraken in 2022-23.
- Lots of good candidates out there, but former Blue Jackets captain Nick Foligno — now with the Chicago Blackhawks — won Halloween this year. Over the past few seasons, whenever the NFL's Philadelphia Eagles have been on national television, Foligno has been inundated with text messages

from friends and family who have noticed Foligno's stunning resemblance to Eagles coach Nick Sirianni. So Foligno went all in this Halloween, dressing as Sirianni does on the sidelines. His wife, Janelle, dressed as the Lombardi Trophy, which Sirianni and the Eagles won in 2024.

The Columbus Dispatch / Columbus Blue Jackets go down in flames to start road trip: takeaways

By Brian Hedger – November 6th, 2025

It only took two games for the Blue Jackets to go from rolling to reeling.

After a four-game winning streak to cap a stretch with wins in six of seven games, the Jackets have dropped two straight after losing to the Calgary Flames, 5-1, to start a road trip Nov. 5 at Scotiabank Saddledome.

Coming off a stunning 3-2 loss Nov. 2 at the New York Islanders, when allowing goals 29 seconds apart in the game's final 1:07 spoiled a gutsy effort on tired legs in a back-to-back finale, a more familiar issue sunk them in Calgary.

They ran into another hot goalie, struggling to beat Dustin Wolf despite building big edges in nearly every tracked statistic except goals, the only one that matters. The Flames (4-9-2) scored five goals, four against Jet Greaves, while Wolf made 42 saves against the Blue Jackets (7-6-0).

Calgary also scored in quick bursts against Greaves, including goals 36 seconds apart in the first 1:32 of the game.

"Definitely, when you spot them two goals that quickly, you're playing from behind all night and that's never fun," defenseman Zach Werenski said. "We got a big short-handed goal, and I feel like we gathered ourselves, had some chances in the second (period), and that's when they score two more quick ones on mistakes by us. It's definitely tough."

It wasn't pretty, and the Blue Jackets still have games Oct. 8 at the Vancouver Canucks (7-8-0), Oct. 10 at the Edmonton Oilers (6-5-4) and Oct. 11 at the Seattle Kraken (6-3-4) to finish their trip.

Here are four more takeaways:

Sean Monahan injured against Calgary Flames

Sean Monahan, the Blue Jackets' top center and biggest catalyst on power plays, sustained an undisclosed injury on a hit by Rasmus Andersson in the second period.

It looked like a normal hit behind the Flames' net, but Monahan skated back to the bench favoring his left arm. He winced while talking to an athletic trainer but finished the period before leaving with 15 minutes left in the third and the Blue Jackets trailing 4-1.

Blue Jackets coach Dean Evason told reporters in Calgary that Monahan was being evaluated after the game and didn't have an update on his condition or availability.

Losing him for a significant stretch could be detrimental to the Blue Jackets' playoff hopes, just as it was last year during a mid-season wrist injury that kept him out two-plus months. Monahan centers the first

line, plays a vital role for the top power play group as the “bumper” in the middle of their 1-3-1 setup, is a strong two-way player and wins a lot of key faceoffs

Adam Fantilli centered Monahan’s line to finish the game, but Evason could go with captain Boone Jenner in that spot. Cole Sillinger also has experience at center, so the coaching staff has solid options down the middle if needed.

Columbus Blue Jackets stumped by another goalie

Add Wolf to the growing list of goalies the Blue Jackets haven’t been able to solve despite gaining sizable advantages in shots, attempts and scoring chances.

Wolf made a career-high 42 saves to earn the win against Columbus, which had already lost to the Nashville Predators’ Juuse Saros, New Jersey Devils’ Jake Allen and Washington Capitals’ Logan Thompson under similar circumstances.

Those four games account for 31% of the Blue Jackets’ season and 67% of their losses. The good news is their ability to pepper opposing goalies with shots and attempts, but there’s growing frustration with each game they struggle to score enough with that edge.

The Blue Jackets had similar droughts that led to losing streaks last season, when they set a franchise record with 267 goals, and those stretches were one of several factors that kept them two points shy of gaining a playoff spot.

Kirill Marchenko could be a penalty killing threat for Columbus Blue Jackets

Marchenko has logged a total of just 15:48 killing penalties in his four NHL seasons, including a productive 20-second shift in Calgary. Sent into the game at the tail end of a Flames power play late in the first period, he scored the Blue Jackets’ only goal on a breakaway for the first short-handed goal of his career.

Jenner sent Marchenko a pass approaching the Calgary blue line that sprung the Blue Jackets’ leading goal scorer for an uncontested shot that beat Wolf between the pads.

Mixing Marchenko into the end of penalty-kill situations is an interesting twist that adds another concern for opposing teams to think about.

Columbus Blue Jackets lose discipline against Calgary Flames

Going into the game, the Blue Jackets had done a good job limiting odd-man rushes in their first 12 games. Their dedication to playing responsibly was impressive, but for a stretch in the second period they tossed that approach into a garbage can and lit it on fire.

Calgary scored goals by Nazem Kadri and Adam Klapka with 2-on-1 rushes 37 seconds apart in the second, turning a close game into a 4-1 lead that was too large for the Blue Jackets to overcome.

“In the second period, it got away from us because we allowed it to get away from us,” Evason said. “We give them two 2-on-1s. Once thing we praised our group about all year is that we haven’t shot ourselves (in the foot) and ... stayed in hockey games until we had an opportunity to win a hockey game. When you get down three goals, you’re not giving yourself an opportunity.”

The Columbus Dispatch / Columbus Blue Jackets torched by Calgary Flames to open road trip

By Brian Hedger – November 6th, 2025

Rather than bouncing back from a gut-wrenching loss, the Blue Jackets were bounced by the Calgary Flames 5-1 on Nov. 5 at Saddledome to start a four-game trip.

After allowing goals 36 seconds apart in the game's first 1:32, falling behind 2-0, the Jackets allowed two more in a span of 37 seconds in the second to trail 4-1 starting the third.

The two bursts provided plenty of scoring for the Flames (4-9-2), who got an outstanding performance from goalie Dustin Wolf (42 saves). Jet Greaves started for the Blue Jackets (7-6-0), who outshot the Flames 22-6 in the third period without scoring.

As if things weren't bad enough for the Jackets, they also lost top center Sean Monahan to an apparent upper-body injury. Monahan was injured during a collision with Flames defenseman Rasmus Anderson behind the Flames' net in the second, but finished the period. He left the bench at 4:45 of the third after his third shift of the period.

Adam Fantilli picked up Monahan's shifts, skating with Kirill Marchenko and Dmitri Voronkov. Marchenko scored the lone Columbus goal while killing a penalty late in the first for his sixth goal of the season and first short-handed goal of his NHL career.

Morgan Frost and Blake Coleman scored back-to-back goals for the Flames to start the game. Calgary's second set of back-to-back goals were scored in the second period by Nazem Kadri and Adam Klapka. Mikael Backlund scored into an empty net late in the third to complete the scoring in Kadri's 1,000th NHL game.

The loss was the Blue Jackets' second straight after coughing up a 2-1 lead Nov. 2 at the New York Islanders in a stinging 3-2 setback at UBS Arena. The Islanders scored those two goals just 29 seconds apart in the final 1:07 of the game.

The Blue Jackets now head to Vancouver for a game Nov. 8 followed by games Nov. 10 at the Edmonton Oilers and Nov. 11 at the Seattle Kraken

The Columbus Dispatch / Merzlikins 'lost it' on stick smash in Columbus Blue Jackets' loss to New York Islanders

By Brian Hedger – November 5th, 2025

Anybody who's ever sliced a tee shot into the water and then chucked their driver into the drink can relate to Elvis Merzlikins' emotions at the end of the Blue Jackets' 3-2 loss to the New York Islanders on Nov. 2 at UBS Arena.

The Blue Jackets were playing the second game of a back-to-back. During the span in which the exhausted club allowed two goals in the final 1:07 to go from leading 2-1 to losing the game, Merzlikins smashed his stick over the crossbar. It took two big whacks to break.

"Well, he's frustrated," Blue Jackets coach Dean Evason said. "Would we like him to hold his composure? Yeah, no question. We've talked to him, and it happens. We get that there's high emotions and what have you, but the more calm we can stay ..."

Evason, a former NHL center who himself played with high intensity and grit, paused a beat.

"We all lose our (expletive) sometimes," he said. "So ... it happened."

It's happened previously, too, which is why Merzlikins wasn't thrilled with his inability to keep from boiling over in such a public display. After two days of simmering down, he reflected on it.

"It's something that I'm really not proud of, and I apologize to many people because I hold myself (back) many times," he said. "There is the idea to break (my stick), because it's just gonna be a release, but the problem with that, breaking the stick, why I'm not proud of it, is because this is the National Hockey League. There are a lot of kids coming to watch you. They admire you. They want to be, one day, you ... and you are showing them the wrong example."

Columbus Blue Jackets goalie Elvis Merzlikins on displaying frustration: 'It's nothing to be proud of, but it's sports'

Merzlikins keeps track of how many sticks he's smashed during his professional career.

By his count, it happened twice in Switzerland, and it's happened twice in the NHL. (That's not counting an unsuccessful attempt to snap a stick while leaving the ice during a 7-3 loss to the Colorado Avalanche on April 3 at Nationwide Arena last season.)

The first such instance in the NHL occurred during John Tortorella's tenure as head coach, which Merzlikins remembers vividly.

“He made (it) pretty clear that I can’t do that,” Merzlikins said. “Again, it’s nothing to be proud of, but it’s sports, as well. Players on the bench, I see many sticks break, and it’s just frustration when things don’t go your way, like you wish.”

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It’s not just hockey players.

Other pro athletes have reached similar boiling points on tennis courts, baseball diamonds, basketball courts and football fields. They have melted down into epic rants, smashed rackets, spiked balls into the ground, tossed helmets and even snapped wooden bats like toothpicks.

It’s almost par for the course, so to speak, even though it’s always a bad look.

“Unfortunately, on emotions like that, you don’t control it,” Merzlikins said. “And, yes, I lost it, and I let my anger go over me, and frustration, but at the end of the day, it’s also a sport.”

Series of unfortunate events led to stick smash by Columbus Blue Jackets goalie Elvis Merzlikins

The unfortunate sequence of events leading up to Merzlikins' latest meltdown were galling.

After a fantastic effort that had his tired team up 2-1 late in the third, a potential victory and two points in the standings slipped away from Merzlikins and the Blue Jackets on two flukish Islanders goals scored 29 seconds apart.

The first was accidentally deflected past Merzlikins by Blue Jackets defenseman Zach Werenski, who tried to stop a bouncing shot from the point. The second clanged off the right goal post before sliding through Merzlikins’ pads and into the crease for Simon Holmstrom’s winning tap-in.

Merzlikins, enraged, responded with two violent hacks at the crossbar before leaving with a badly damaged paddle.

“It was hard to accept something like that,” he said. “The guys were tired, and obviously, New York was fresh. You could tell that from the very first shift, and in some way, we managed to block them and get under control, the game, and lead, and then ... this is what happens in the NHL, you know?”

It can be a maddening sport, especially when games are decided by bad bounces and other things players can’t control. Merzlikins said he will continue trying to contain himself when things get heated, but that’s probably not a realistic expectation for the rest of his career or even this season.

“I mean, that’s the sport,” he said. “It’s something you can’t control in that moment and it’s just ... the sparkle hits, and you react.”

Like Evason put it, we all lose our (expletive) sometimes.

The Columbus Dispatch / Columbus Blue Jackets not lingering on stinging loss to New York Islanders: 'You move on'

By Brian Hedger – November 5th, 2025

The Blue Jackets' bitter loss to the New York Islanders on Nov. 2 will linger in the standings, but they've already moved past it.

In fact, they left it behind on the flight home after allowing goals 29 seconds apart in the final 1:07 of a 3-2 loss at UBS Arena in Elmont, New York. Getting two days to simmer down helped, but the Jackets' focus quickly shifted to a four-game road trip to Western Canada and Seattle starting Nov. 5 in Calgary.

"This might sound bad, but I feel like the fans and everyone else were more up in arms about it than we are, and I don't mean that in a bad way," star defenseman Zach Werenski said. "It sucks, right? That's the worst-case scenario, but we understand that (bad stuff) happens. The whole flight home, we were like, 'Man, we could've stolen that,' but the longer you're in this league, you quickly forget about stuff like that, and you move on, and that's all you can do."

Werenski and Merzlikins have each erased what happened, which is good considering their terrible luck in the final minutes. Werenski tried blocking a shot from the point with New York's net empty for a 6-on-5 advantage, but the puck skipped off his blade and zipped over Merzlikins' shoulder for a goal that tied it, 2-2, with 1:07 left in the third period.

"That was something crazy, especially bar down," Merzlikins said. "It was a crazy goal, I would say. That would be, probably, a one out of 100 chance. It was just hockey, and you had to take it."

Werenski thought about the play for a while after the game but reached the same conclusion he'd made in a split second on the ice.

"I watched it a couple of times and I wouldn't play it any other way," he said. "I'm trying to front it. I think if I get a stick on it, I have some room in front of me to skate to either get the empty net or just get it out. I know it's a flutter (shot) coming at me. I'm trying to time it, and of course, right as I time it, it takes that little hop off the top of my stick."

Werenski and Merzlikins talked it over on the team's bus heading to the airport. They had the same reaction to what happened.

"Out of all the places that puck could've gone, it goes bar down," Werenski said. "We had a laugh about it. It sucks. He played his (tail) off and no one felt worse about it than I did, but I'm not going to dwell on it. I'm not trying to tip one, bar down, into our own net and tie the game. So, move on and forget about it."

Merzlikins is taking the same approach despite smashing his stick in frustration after allowing the winning goal on the next shift.

“Obviously, it hurts, but it’s already forgotten,” he said Nov. 4 at Nationwide Arena. “We are going on a long road trip. We have games coming up, really important points in front of us, and we have to forget about this little incident or this unfortunate, unlucky game ... and just keep moving forward.”

Other than addressing what happened before a practice on Nov. 4, Blue Jackets coach Dean Evason said the whole team has fully shifted its focus to the current trip.

“I know the players are fine,” he said. “It happens. It’s a long season. A lot of things happen in a negative regard, and we talk about ‘one game at a time’ and letting it all go. ... We didn’t get the outcome, but there’s a lot of positives in that game, as well.”

The Columbus Dispatch / Columbus Blue Jackets defensive depth challenged by Mateychuk, Gudbranson injuries

By Brian Hedger – November 4th, 2025

It took only 12 games for the Blue Jackets' defensive depth to get a big test.

Already missing Erik Gudbranson, a veteran who's missed four games with hip soreness, the Jackets might now start a four-game road trip to Western Canada and Seattle without Denton Mateychuk on Nov. 5 in Calgary. Mateychuk, 21, is dealing with an unspecified injury and didn't practice Nov. 4 at Nationwide Arena.

Mateychuk and Gudbranson will join the Blue Jackets on the trip, but coach Dean Evason ruled Gudbranson out for the game in Calgary and said Mateychuk will be reevaluated there. Mateychuk missed several shifts and played a season-low 13:01 in the Blue Jackets' 3-2 road loss Nov. 2 against the New York Islanders but still managed to score a go-ahead goal with 7:50 left in the third period.

If he's out, Dysin Mayo, 29, will make his Blue Jackets debut in his first NHL game since Feb. 13, 2023, when he played for the former Arizona Coyotes.

"He's played games in the NHL, so if he plays, then we feel comfortable the spotlight's not going to be too bright ... because he's been there and done that," Evason said. "I'm sure he's very excited about having that opportunity to maybe get in (a game)."

Should Mayo play, he's expected to skate on the right side of the third defense pairing as a right-handed shot to pair with lefty Jake Christiansen. Dante Fabbro, who's skated on that pairing with Christiansen since Gudbranson's exit, will move back to the top pairing alongside Zach Werenski, with whom he played with last season.

Fabbro continued playing with Werenski to start this season but was replaced by Mateychuk after four games. His play has since picked up, including more wins in puck battles, better decisions with the puck plus three points on a goal and two assists in the past five games.

"He's playing really well," Werenski said. "It's one of those things where it's probably tough for him. You go from, in essence, the top pair, and then you move down, and then we start winning all these games. It's a tough situation. Matty's playing really well and Fabbs is playing really well, but he's handled it tremendously."

Dysin Mayo excited for potential Columbus Blue Jackets debut

As for Mayo, a decision to sign with the Blue Jackets rather than taking his career to Europe could lead to his NHL return sooner than expected. Should he play, Mayo will bring 82 games of NHL experience to

the ice. All those games came with the Coyotes, who selected him in the fifth round (133rd overall) of the 2014 NHL Draft.

"It's been a couple years now, probably just about three, so it'd definitely be exciting to get in the lineup," Mayo said. "It's something where I'm just trying to keep a positive attitude every day, work hard and be a good teammate around here."

Mayo spent the past two seasons with the AHL's Henderson Silver Knights, the top minor league affiliate of the Vegas Golden Knights. He started this season with four assists in five games for AHL Cleveland before the Blue Jackets called him up for a back-to-back this past weekend, which included a trip Oct. 2 to face the New York Islanders.

Mayo began training camp competing with Christiansen, veteran Christian Jaros and rookie Daemon Hunt to be the Blue Jackets' seventh defenseman. It went to Christiansen, but Mayo's path to Columbus was boosted after Jaros left camp to return to the Kontinental Hockey League and Wood returned to the Minnesota Wild on waivers.

"When I signed, I didn't know if an opportunity like this would come at all, especially this quick into the season," Mayo said. "I mean, we had a guy leave training camp and then somebody picked up off waivers ... so, things can change quickly, and that's why you've just got to go with each day and control what you can."

The Hockey Writers / 3 Takeaways From Blue Jackets' 5-1 Loss to the Flames

By William Espy – November 6th, 2025

The Columbus Blue Jackets visited the Calgary Flames on Wednesday night to kick off their trip through Western Canada. They ultimately were defeated by the Flames with a final score of 5-1. Now, let's take a look at some key aspects that led to the result.

Early Deficit Applies Pressure

The Flames celebrated Nazem Kadri's 1,000th career NHL game with a pregame ceremony before their matchup against the Blue Jackets. His teammates were ready to play, and in the opening moments, it became clear the Blue Jackets weren't so ready.

Morgan Frost gave the Flames a 1-0 lead just 56 seconds into the game, then Blake Coleman scored his sixth of the season just under 40 seconds later to make it 2-0. The game wasn't even two minutes old, yet the Blue Jackets trailed 2-0. Regardless of circumstance, that type of start is unacceptable in the NHL.

To make matters seemingly worse, Adam Fantilli took a hooking penalty just over five minutes into the affair, giving the Flames their first man advantage of the night. Ironically, that penalty ended up helping the away team, but we'll get to that shortly.

Marchenko Breaks Goal Drought

Even though it may not have felt like it, especially considering he's still on a point-per-game pace, Kirill Marchenko entered Wednesday's game in the middle of a seven-game goal drought.

After Fantilli took the aforementioned penalty, Marchenko found an opportunity to break the drought while shorthanded. He got a breakaway off a pass from Boone Jenner, then wasted no time putting the puck behind Flames netminder Dustin Wolf.

Marchenko's tally marked the first shorthanded goal of his career and broke his tie with Dmitri Voronkov for the most goals on the Blue Jackets this season, moving Marchenko into sole possession of first place.

Marchenko's goal drought did showcase one important thing about his development, though. When he first entered the league, if Marchenko wasn't finding the back of the net, he didn't add much more value. These days, he's making plays and helping the Blue Jackets in multiple ways, whether they're reflected on the scoreboard or not.

Offensive Zone Mistakes Lead to Major Deficit

Entering the second period, the Blue Jackets were trailing, but the game wasn't out of reach just yet. Then, just under eight minutes into the period, as the Blue Jackets pressured Wolf, a misplaced pass sprung the Flames the other way. Kadri and Joel Farabee found themselves with a 2-on-1, and ultimately

Kadri scored, making it 3-1. The new deficit was certainly less than ideal for Columbus, but still manageable if they picked up their level of play.

Instead, another errant pass by the Blue Jackets in their offensive zone sent the Flames on a rush the other way once again. This time, Adam Klapka kept the puck on the 2-on-1 rush and fired it past Jet Greaves to make it 4-1 and effectively put the game out of reach for the Blue Jackets.

Both of the Flames' second period goals were the direct result of a mistake by the Blue Jackets in their offensive zone. As a result, both were avoidable goals. While mistakes and odd-man rushes are bound to happen in any hockey game, these were the result of reckless plays and bad decision-making rather than the defense forcing a bad play and earning their chances.

A bad start could have been salvaged had the Blue Jackets played their game for the remainder of the night; instead, they made unforced errors and put the game out of reach early on. The Flames were motivated, especially knowing how important this game was to Kadri, but the Blue Jackets were unable to match their energy, and they got the result that reflected that.

[The Hockey Writers / Blue Jackets' News & Rumors: Forwards, Mateychuk & More](#)

By Mark Scheig – November 5th, 2025

It's a new week. For the Columbus Blue Jackets, that means an opportunity to move on from the bad taste in their mouths from the way Sunday's game against the New York Islanders ended.

The Blue Jackets have embarked on their Western Canada trip for the 2025-26 season. But it's not like a normal Western Canada trip.

Jonathan Huberdeau - Assist vs. Columbus Blue Jackets

The Blue Jackets play Wednesday night in Calgary. Nazem Kadri will play in his 1000th NHL game. But instead of going to Edmonton, they go to the West Coast.

The Blue Jackets play Saturday night in Vancouver, Monday night in Edmonton and then Tuesday night in Seattle. One would think given the geography that handling Alberta and then handling the coast together would make more sense. But instead, it's more of a zigzag trip than a straight shot.

The Blue Jackets are only worried about who's on their upcoming schedule. That begins Wednesday night against the Flames. They have some interesting things going on up front. That's where we start this week in News & Rumors.

State of the Forwards

You may have noticed a different forward alignment in Sunday night's game. For over 58 minutes, it seemed to pay dividends.

Miles Wood was moved to the top-six. He scored a big goal in the game Sunday. As a result, Kent Johnson was moved to the fourth line while Yegor Chinakhov became a healthy scratch again. Zach Aston-Reese replaced Chinakhov in the lineup.

Yegor Chinakhov is on the outside looking in up front for the Blue Jackets. (Jess Starr/The Hockey Writers)

Let's look at these one at a time. For Wood, it's rewarding his play. He's got four goals in seven games this season. The goals he's scored at big goals at key moments in games.

Wood scored the tying and winning goal in Buffalo. Then he scored the tying goal Sunday in New York. There's a reason he got a promotion. It is a current theme the Blue Jackets are trying to address.

The team wants to be a north and south team, not an east and west team. Wood plays north and south. He's had an impact in games. That was rewarded.

Coach Dean Evason said as much on Sunday when asked about the forward changes. He admitted wanting his team to be north and south.

That could explain why Johnson was moved to the fourth line. He can play an east-west game at times. Given the timing of Evason's comments, it's reasonable to believe that was part of the motivation for this to happen now.

Johnson does have 2-2-4 in 12 games this season. It's not the kind of start he or the Blue Jackets would have imagined given his talent. It appears he will remain on the fourth line Wednesday night in Calgary. Blue Jackets' reporter Jeff Svoboda reported there would be no changes up front.

That means Aston-Reese stays in and Chinakhov stays out. Evason has also said he's liked Aston-Reese's game and it was hard to take him out. Like Wood, Aston-Reese is more of a north-south player.

The Chinakhov situation gets more interesting by the day it seems. Despite scoring goals in consecutive games in Buffalo and Pittsburgh, he finds himself on the outside looking in again.

Evason also said that having 13 available forwards who can all play causes them to have long discussions about who to play on a nightly basis. The issue is how to address that.

The top line of Dmitri Voronkov, Sean Monahan and Kirill Marchenko is in tact. The third line of Cole Sillinger, Charlies Coyle and Mathieu Olivier found some chemistry of late. Perhaps a top-six chance with the demotion of Johnson was a possibility. But it was Wood and not Chinakhov who got the call with Boone Jenner and Adam Fantilli.

What will the Blue Jackets do about it? They're one injury away from needing Chinakhov in their lineup. They're not just going to trade him because he requested a trade.

There were many scouts in Columbus for Chinakhov's season debut. There appears to be a lot of interest but nothing has materialized as of yet that has made the Blue Jackets say yes.

They want an NHL-ready player who can help them now. Unless there's a change and a sudden desire to trade him as soon as possible, they'll wait and see if the right offer comes along.

The Chinakhov story will not go away if they continue to scratch him. The noise will only get louder given his trade request this past offseason. The Blue Jackets are listening but they might need him too soon. It's an interesting dynamic they are trying to balance.

As for the rest of the forwards, watch for a more north and south approach. That's what Evason expects from them on a nightly basis.

Mateychuk's Status

Denton Mateychuk will not play Wednesday night in Calgary according to FanDuel's Dave Maetzold. Mateychuk was limited some Sunday as he was banged up.

The good news is that Mateychuk's injury is not considered serious. He has a chance of playing Saturday in Vancouver.

Meanwhile, Dysin Mayo will make his Blue Jackets' debut on Wednesday. He last played in the NHL in 2023 for the Arizona Coyotes.

Expect Dante Fabbro to play with Zach Werenski in Mateychuk's absence. Mayo would then play with Jake Christiansen on the third pair.

Side Dishes

- Remember when goaltending was a major question for the Blue Jackets? They enter Wednesday's games second in the NHL in team save percentage at .912. Both Elvis Merzlikins and Jet Greaves have an even-strength save percentage over .930.
- For reference, 21 teams have a team save percentage under .900 going into Wednesday.
- The road has been very kind to the Blue Jackets. They average 33.7 shots per game (2nd) and score 3.83 goals per game (3rd) away from Nationwide Arena.
- Coyle has eight points in his last five games going into Wednesday.

Star Phoenix / Home, sweet home for Saskatoon Blades: Five things to know

By Darren Zary – November 6th, 2025

The Saskatoon Blades — fresh off a lengthy, and difficult, road trip to the United States — are back on home ice this weekend.

They'll resume Western Hockey League play Friday and Saturday against the Moose Jaw Warriors and Calgary Hitmen, respectively.

Here are five things to know as the Blades try to take advantage of home ice:

1) Home, sweet home

The Blades are back at home, where they sport a 5-1-0-0 record in six games thus far this season.

They are 10-6-2-0 overall, and are tied for third in the WHL's Eastern Conference.

2) U.S. road trip

The Blades picked up just one win during their six-game road trip through Washington and Oregon, going 1-3-2 on the West Coast swing.

Saskatoon secured its lone win on Oct. 28, defeating the Tri-City Americans 4-2 thanks to three unanswered goals in the third period.

The next night, the Blades lost 2-1 in overtime to the Spokane Chiefs. On Halloween night, the Blades lost 5-1 to the Seattle Thunderbirds. They concluded the road trip this past Saturday with a 3-2 OT loss to the Wenatchee Wild.

3) New-look D corps

With Isaac Poll sidelined indefinitely due to injury, the Blades feature a new-look defensive corps after adding Tyrone Sobry and Derek Thurston.

Thurston joined the Blades for the U.S. trip, where he posted a goal in five games. The 19-year-old blueliner, who stands 6-foot-1 and weighs 195 pounds, hails from Delta, B.C. He was acquired from the Red Deer Rebels in a trade that sent forward Kohen Lodge to the Central Division's Rebels. Lodge had one assist in eight games with Saskatoon this season.

4) Offensive leaders

David Lewandowski leads the Blades with 18 points thanks to five goals and 13 assists.

Hunter Laing and Dominik Petr are next with seven goals and eight assists apiece for 15 points.

Rowan Calvert (8-5—13), Cooper Williams (5-8—13) and defenceman Jordan Martin (2-11—13) are tied for fourth in team scoring.

5) Puck stops here

Evan Gardner and Ethan McCallum continue to share goaltending duties for the Blades.

Gardner, a Columbus Blue Jackets prospect, sports a 2.40 goals-against average and .910 save-percentage, to go with a 6-4-2 record. He also has one shutout.

McCallum is 4-2-0 with a 3.49 goals-against average and 0.888 save-percentage.