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March 4, 2026

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The Athletic / Blue Jackets get greasy to pull off third-period comeback win over Nashville

By Aaron Portzline – March 3, 2026

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Four players touched the puck in less than two seconds. A drop pass from Denton Mateychuk. A pass across the zone from Mason Marchment. Another pass in the other direction from Kirill Marchenko, leaving Adam Fantilli an easy finish off the rush.

Tic-tac-toe ... toe?

The Columbus Blue Jackets took an early lead Tuesday on a goal that gets slightly better with each replay. But it took two uglier goals — greasy, hard-workin', hard-area goals — to keep on chugging on the cusp of a playoff spot.

Sean Monahan's short-handed goal early in the third tied it, and Charlie Coyle's abdominal redirection of a Damon Severson wrister gave the Blue Jackets a come-from-behind 3-2 win over the Nashville Predators before 16,526 in Nationwide Arena.

Both of those third-period goals were aided or created by Coyle's net-front presence on Nashville's Justus Annunen. The go-ahead goal survived a nervy replay after Predators coach Andrew Brunette challenged it for goaltender interference.

"(The Predators) had scored some greasy goals, and we needed to score some greasy goals," coach Rick Bowness said. "Give Charlie credit, because he got to the net. He did a good job getting to the net, getting to the paint. You can't always be standing out to the side looking for tips. You don't get those breaks if you're not there."

The win allowed the Blue Jackets to jump over the Washington Capitals and take over ninth place in the Eastern Conference. They are three points behind the Boston Bruins for the second wild-card spot and five points behind Pittsburgh and the New York Islanders for second or third place in the Metro.

The Blue Jackets improved to 12-2-1 under Bowness, who was hired to replace Dean Evason on Jan. 12. On that date, the Blue Jackets were last in the conference and fading quickly out of the playoff picture.

Now they have one more game — Thursday vs. the Florida Panthers in Nationwide Arena — to state their case to GM Don Waddell heading into Friday's NHL trade deadline.

The Blue Jackets played Tuesday without defenseman Zach Werenski and forward Boone Jenner, two of their top players. Werenski has missed two games due to sickness, while Bowness said Jenner, the captain, was out of the lineup with a lower-body injury.

Only 24 hours earlier, the Blue Jackets took part in a major drama on Broadway. They led 4-0 over the New York Rangers before giving up four third-period goals, then salvaged the game on Marchenko's overtime goal.

There was no sign of hangover on Tuesday, especially in the third. Instead, they got down and dirty.

"They're not always going to be pretty," Coyle said, "The first (goal), that was pretty, and it's not always like that. I'd say more times than not the goals are from you going hard to the net and creating traffic. It's not even really the shot, sometimes, but it goes off something or someone and it's in.

“But you see the two goals (Nashville) had. We kind of talked between periods about how it’s going to come down to that for us. ‘They just did it, why can’t we?’ It’s nice when it pays off like that.”

Damon Severson makes his way down the Blue Jackets’ fist-bump line.

Monahan’s short-handed goal was his second in as many nights and the sixth of his 874-game career. He and Coyle came out of the zone with the puck after a blocked shot, and Monahan’s wrist sailed past Annunen just as Coyle brushed against him while skating past. It pulled the Blue Jackets into a tie only 1:52 into the third period.

“It certainly gave us a lot of energy on the bench,” Bowness said. “You could feel it. The energy wasn’t there like it’s been for most nights, and you just try your best to keep them wired up and keep the shifts short and keep as much energy as you can. But you need something like that to push you over the top and give you a little boost.”

On the go-ahead goal, Coyle came into the crease with Nashville’s Roman Josi, and the two of them made contact with Annunen in his crease, but not enough to knock the goaltender off-balance.

It probably also helped that Coyle quickly backed away from Annunen just as Severson’s shot arrived. After a quick review by officials, the goal was allowed to stand, giving the Blue Jackets the lead.

“We’re just, of course, happy with the call,” Coyle said.

Asked how the puck ended up in the net, Coyle said he wasn’t quite sure. And then he proceeded to describe what might be the very definition of a greasy goal.

“You’re pumping and bumping (Josi),” Coyle said. “He’s bumping me. You hit something. All of a sudden, the puck ... I don’t know (if it hit me) or how it got in the net. I don’t know. That’s why I let (Severson) go down the (fist-bump) line first. I was like, ‘I don’t want to be that guy.’ If it doesn’t go in off me and I’m going down the line, you know? So now I can give him crap now, ‘cause he went down first.”

Greasy goals — and greasy grins all around after another win.

The Columbus Dispatch / Columbus Blue Jackets' grit stokes playoff hopes in back-to-back sweep

By Brian Hedger – March 3, 2026

- The Columbus Blue Jackets eschewed skill for brawn to down the Nashville Predators 3-2 after trailing 2-1 starting the third period.
- Sean Monahan and Charlie Coyle scored early in the third period lead a comeback victory that included a gritty defensive effort.
- The Blue Jackets played without star Zach Werenski and captain Boone Jenner, who were out with health issues.
- Blue Jackets coach Rick Bowness praised his team's gritty, hard-nosed effort in a decisive third period.

Trailing the Nashville Predators after two periods of a grinding, gritty game March 3 at Nationwide Arena, the Blue Jackets needed to change the grade of sandpaper in their approach.

After failing to get much done in the fine range for two periods, shifting to course was the only way that coach Rick Bowness could see them overcoming a 2-1 deficit against the Predators, whose desire to chase a playoff spot in the Western Conference mirrored the Jackets' in the East.

So, with a stiffened resolve, the Blue Jackets pulled out a 3-2 victory on two hard-nosed, hard-fought goals by centers Sean Monahan and Charlie Coyle.

Monahan's second short-handed goal in as many days tied it 2-2. Coyle gave the Jackets a 3-2 lead at 6:07 after Damon Severson's shot hit him in front of the net, and the rest of their night was a defensive grind. That's how you get to the playoffs, in which most games are won or lost that way.

Rather than coughing up a late lead, which the Blue Jackets have done far too much this season, they hung onto it with impressive grit. Extra coarse.

"It certainly wasn't a Picasso out there tonight," Bowness said. "You had two tired teams. It was obvious. They got both of their goals by just putting it to the net and slashing it in. We were encouraging our forwards, and we did a much better job in the third period, overall, to get into the (blue) paint. Get in there."

Coyle got the message.

He has done it for his entire NHL career as a two-way center, now at 1,010 games. He has come up huge for the Blue Jackets numerous times during his first in Columbus, and it seems unlikely that Blue Jackets president/general manager Don Waddell will spin him off as a pending free agent before the NHL's trade deadline arrives at 3 p.m. March 6.

The same applies to pending free agents Mason Marchment, Boone Jenner and Erik Gudbranson, who all play key roles in the Jackets' grittiness along with Monahan, Ivan Provorov, Cole Sillinger and others.

Sillinger's resolve was key against the Predators, logging nine of his 21 shifts after Bowness shortened his forward rotation in the third period. Already playing his fifth NHL season at age 22, Sillinger received

the Jackets' post-victory donkey hat award from Kirill Marchenko for being a ceaseless hard worker who logged a memorable 1:31 shift to preserve the lead in the third.

After his stick broke while blocking a slap shot, Sillinger did everything he could to prevent a goal with his stick on the ice. He mirrored Nashville's star defenseman, Roman Josi, took away shooting lanes and even checked Josi to the ice before pushing him out of the Blue Jackets' zone as the crowd roared its approval.

Legs burning, Sillinger continued defending without a stick until the puck finally was chipped out toward the benches. Rather than hopping over the boards for a breather, Sillinger was handed a new stick at the bench and scooped up the puck for a soio charge into the Predators' zone.

The sequence ended after he whizzed a backhand over the crossbar, making him an example of the elbow grease Bowness wanted to see in the third period. That type of effort ran up and down the Blue Jackets' lineup, helping them pick up another two points to stay in the thick of a tight playoff hunt.

Impressive effort. Impressive victory, especially while star defenseman Zach Werenski (illness) missed his second straight game and captain Boone Jenner out with a lower-body injury.

"We trust each other," Severson said. "We're confident in one another. We're clearly down our best player on the back end (Werenski) for two games in a row now, and we got it done, and then obviously (we lose) the captain (Jenner). It just goes to show that we're going to do what's necessary."

[The Columbus Dispatch / Columbus Blue Jackets get 'greasy' to nip Nashville Predators](#)

By Brian Hedger – March 3, 2026

The third period was finally a charm for the Blue Jackets.

A day after losing a 4-0 lead and eking out a 5-4 overtime win March 2 at the New York Rangers, the Jackets overcame a 2-1 deficit with two gritty goals in the third period to edge the Nashville Predators 3-2 on March 3 at Nationwide Arena. It was their third straight sweep of back-to-back games going back to late January and gave their playoff aspirations a needed boost with star defenseman Zach Werenski (illness) and captain Boone Jenner (undisclosed) both sidelined.

"We were down there (starting the third) and emphasized the importance of getting greasy goals, not just trying to backdoor every single one, and we got both of them on guys just going to the net," center Adam Fantilli said. "Obviously, you want to manufacture offense and do things you can score with over and over, but sometimes it's just getting it to the net, getting a lucky bounce and just getting your nose dirty."

The win moved the Blue Jackets (31-21-8) to 70 points, pushing them past the Washington Capitals for fourth in the Metropolitan Division by one point and keeping them within three points of the Boston Bruins for the second wild-card spot in the Eastern Conference.

Sean Monahan's short-handed goal tied it 2-2 at 1:52 of the third period against the Predators (27-26-8) and Severson's shot from the blue line 4:07 later led to the winning goal after the puck deflected into the net off center Charlie Coyle.

"It certainly wasn't a Picasso out there tonight," Blue Jackets coach Rick Bowness said. "You had two tired teams (finishing back-to-backs) and it was obvious. They got both of their goals by just putting it to the net and slashing it in. We were encouraging our forwards, and we did a much better job in the third period overall, of just getting into the paint. Get in there. We got a lucky one with Charlie going there, but you need those breaks and you don't get those unless you're there."

Fantilli scored the first goal for the Blue Jackets, who started goalie Jet Greaves (20 saves) and got two saves from Elvis Merzlikins while Greaves underwent baseline concussion testing in the first period. Filip Forsberg and Ryan O'Reilly scored for the Predators, giving them a 2-1 lead starting the third.

Predators goalie Justus Annunen made 24 saves in defeat.

Monahan's short-handed goal, his second in as many games, provided an emotional lift early in the third. It tied the game 2-2 at 1:52 on a wrist shot that beat Annunen while Coyle charged in front of the net. That set the stage for Coyle's winner, which he scored by standing in front of Annunen for a deflection off Severson's shot at 6:07 of the period.

The Predators challenged for goaltender interference on Coyle, who briefly contacted Annunen before exiting the crease, but the NHL upheld the goal after ruling that Coyle didn't impede Annunen's ability to play his position.

Columbus Blue Jackets playoff picture

Adding another two points kept the Blue Jackets (70 points) within three points of the Boston Bruins, who defeated the Pittsburgh Penguins 2-1 in regulation. The Penguins' loss kept them five points ahead of Columbus for second place of the Metropolitan Division. The New York Islanders, who didn't play March 3, are also five points ahead of the Blue Jackets for third in the division.

The Jackets did climb a spot in the Metropolitan, passing the Washington Capitals (69 points) for fourth place. Washington lost at home, in regulation, to the Utah Mammoth and has played three more games than Columbus.

The Columbus Dispatch / Zach Werenski, Boone Jenner out vs Nashville Predators

By Brian Hedger – March 3, 2026

Zach Werenski will miss his second straight game for the Blue Jackets due to illness and captain Boone Jenner will sit for what the team is calling "maintenance" March 3 against the Nashville Predators at Nationwide Arena.

Werenski, the Jackets' leading scorer and top defenseman, missed the first half of their back-to-back too, watching them fumble a 4-0 lead in the third period against the New York Rangers on March 2 at Madison Square Garden before Kirill Marchenko won it in overtime.

Jenner played in that game, but wasn't available against the Predators and is considered day-to-day for an undisclosed issue. Kent Johnson, who missed the past two games as a healthy scratch, draws back into the lineup as Jenner's replacement.

After winning a gold medal with the United States at the Milano Cortina 2026 Winter Olympics in Milan, Italy, Werenski rejoined the Blue Jackets for their first two games following the NHL's Olympic break. He played 28-plus minutes in a 4-2 loss to the Boston Bruins on Feb. 26 at TD Garden and a 4-3 overtime loss to the New York Islanders on Feb. 26 in Columbus.

Werenski has missed six games due to a foot injury and his current illness, which continues making its way through the Blue Jackets' locker room. Despite getting two weeks away from each other for the Olympic break, the Jackets still had players sick when they returned to Feb. 18 for practice.

The Columbus Dispatch / Columbus Blue Jackets' OT win after meltdown gives Bowness perspective

Brian Hedger – March 3, 2026

Rick Bowness has seen it for himself now.

After a 10-1-0 start as Blue Jackets coach, the veteran NHL bench boss has come face-to-face with the monsters that prompted the Jan. 12 exits of former head coach Dean Evason and assistant Steve McCarthy.

That's when Bowness left South Florida and the boat where he was spending retirement with his wife to coach the Blue Jackets for the rest of a season.

After watching a 4-0 lead disappear on four goals in the third period of the Jackets' 5-4 overtime victory against the New York Rangers on March 2 at Madison Square Garden, Bowness might want to get back on his boat and sail away. The Blue Jackets' first win in three games following the Olympic break was a near total disaster, spared only by Kirill Marchenko's goal 1:04 into overtime.

Zach Werenski was out due to illness, which played a role in the collapse, but Bowness finally experienced what Evason and McCarthy endured along with the rest of his assistants still on staff.

"We did a lot of really good things," Bowness said in a postgame press conference shared on the Blue Jackets' YouTube channel. "So, I learned a lot about our team tonight. That's the first time I've seen this, and I learned a lot about our team, and that's ... that a good thing."

Emphasis must be placed on the word "this," in Bowness' comment, because this type of third period is why he was hired, and it followed a blown 2-0 lead in the second period of an overtime loss to the New York Islanders on Feb. 28.

Playing with leads does bad things to the Blue Jackets. It stretches back to 16 fumbled leads in third periods under former coach Pascal Vincent, who was replaced by Evason in July 2024. This was their 18th blown lead in a third period this season and the largest margin they've lost, but there are still 23 games left to top it.

The good news is Marchenko secured two points in overtime, which kept the Blue Jackets' playoff hopes alive by pulling them within three points of the Boston Bruins for the second wild card in the Eastern Conference.

"Listen, this is a good bunch of guys," Bowness said. "They care an awful lot. They work very hard and they come to play."

They just collectively lose their minds after building leads that force opposing teams to chase them with almost reckless abandon. Once the Blue Jackets allow a goal while leading, especially in third periods, a spin cycle starts that often ends with the game tied or them trailing.

This was the fourth time the Blue Jackets have blown a third-period lead since Bowness took over, but unlike Evason he hasn't experienced a loss from it yet. The Jackets went 5-3-6 while spitting the bit for Evason.

“Listen, give the Rangers credit,” Bowness said. “We knew they were going to come out hard. The fans booed them off the ice in the second period. We were expecting that, so I’d say we didn’t handle it very well.”

Rangers fans had a good reason for booing their team.

The Rangers, who are last in the East, looked mostly disinterested in the first two periods and star goalie Igor Shesterkin wasn’t sharp. Using advice from Marchenko to place shots under the goalie’s blocker and over his right pad, the Jackets built a 4-0 lead on goals by Adam Fantilli, Marchenko, Sean Monahan and Mathieu Olivier.

They even got a power play that led to Marchenko's goal, plus a successful coaching challenge for goaltender interference that overturned a Rangers goal in the second period. A 4-0 lead should have been insurmountable, but it vanished.

No lead in any period is safe for the Blue Jackets, but those that exist in third periods are particularly imperiled. The Blue Jackets have yielded 76 goals in third periods, tied with the Vancouver Canucks for 31st among the NHL’s 32 teams, and their goal differential is -25 in that period.

Against the Rangers, back-to-back goals in the first 54 seconds of the third made it 4-2. Will Borgen, a defenseman, cut it to 4-3 with 7:08 left on a 6-on-5 advantage for a delayed penalty, and Perreault tied it 4-4 with 4:46 left in regulation.

Borgen’s goal was shot off his right skate by Perreault in a scrum surrounding goalie Elvis Merzlikins, while Perreault’s equalizer came off a rush that included Marchenko, a right wing, playing defense for Damon Severson, who was caught in the Rangers’ zone.

Bowness couldn’t believe his eyes.

“First of all, I would look at our level of desperation in going back for pucks [in the third],” Bowness said. “That was certainly a problem. A couple of soft plays with the puck was a problem, and to give up that fourth goal when our defense [Severson] never should’ve been up ice pinching there, it was really self-inflicted. So, we’ll address that, take the two points and get ready for [March 3 vs Nashville].”

If that sounds familiar, it's because Evason and Vincent used to issue similar statements. They’re both gone now and Bowness knows why.

[The Hockey Writers / Blue Jackets' News & Notes: Werenski, Defensive Pairs & More](#)

By Mark Scheig - March 3, 2026

The Columbus Blue Jackets escaped New York with a 5-4 overtime win over the New York Rangers. Kirill Marchenko's goal early in overtime secured an important second point in the playoff race.

Although the Blue Jackets won the game, there was a lot not to like from their perspective. They built a 4-0 lead after two periods. They allowed the Rangers to score four unanswered goals to force overtime. In the end, they found a way to win.

The Blue Jackets didn't have much time to think too much about how Monday night unfolded. They now get ready for a huge game at home against the Nashville Predators.

The Blue Jackets start Tuesday night just three points behind the Boston Bruins for the second wildcard spot in the Eastern Conference. Let's get you ready for the game with a few pregame updates from Rick Bowness.

Gameday Updates

Zach Werenski didn't play Monday night in New York due to illness. His status for Tuesday night remains up in the air. But he's not alone in that regard.

"We have gametime decisions, so everyone's taking warmup today," Bowness said.

The one lineup thing Bowness did admit was Jet Greaves would start in net. He allowed four goals in his last start Saturday night against the New York Islanders. Elvis Merzlikins allowed four Monday night in New York.

Bowness said he didn't like his defensive pairs not only in the third period against the Rangers, but starting back in the second period.

"We're going to change some of the pairings tonight," Bowness said. "[Our problems](#) started in the second period, not the third."

If there has been one thing going for the Blue Jackets since the break, it's their top line. Marchenko, Mason Marchment and Adam Fantilli all scored Monday night in New York.

"They're reading off each other a little better," Bowness said. "And the other thing they're doing is they're hanging on to pucks a little bit longer. When they weren't clicking, the passes were forced and the other guy wasn't ready or he was covered. Now they're just kind of hanging on to the puck a little bit longer. So then you're able to make plays and the skill levels that they have. They should be able to make those plays."

The other thing Bowness called out was that he is seeing some progress from the top line defensively. But consistency is still missing in that key area.

“I see a probably better and determined effort,” Bowness said. “The consistency isn’t there, but it’s not that the effort isn’t there. Usually, that’s because of the reads. They’re making the wrong read at the wrong time. It’s a simple thing as turning away, turning the wrong way which opens up lanes. Those are the little details of the game that we’re working on with those guys so when they don’t have the puck, they’re a little bit tighter. You start swinging away, this is opening up lanes. That’s what we’re really tightening and that’s really what it started last night for us in the second period. It will be addressed. I know what’s wrong. We’re going to fix it.”

The Blue Jackets begin a four-game homestand against the Predators on Tuesday night. It’s their second to last game before Friday’s trade deadline. Bowness said that he’s not feeling any of the pressure or stress that comes with it being deadline week.

“I don’t think there’s any stress on any of them about that,” Bowness said. “I don’t feel that. When I’m talking to them, I don’t hear it. Whether they’re doing that at home or on the phone with their agent, that I don’t know. But around the rink, they’re pretty dialed in.”

[The Athletic / These 6 goalies could help a contending team at the NHL trade deadline](#)

By Jesse Granger - March 4, 2026

The NHL trade deadline is on Friday and, as always, more teams are hunting for a goalie than there are netminders to be found.

That could be further magnified by the parity between teams this season. With so many still in the playoff chase, fewer are willing to sell a goalie. There aren't many obvious options on the trade market, but we'll make a case for six goalies who could help a contender to varying degrees.

They range from starters who could instantly elevate a contender to Stanley Cup favorite status to backups who could solidify a tandem entering a long, arduous postseason, and even a young potential franchise goalie.

Here's an argument for why each goalie could end up being one of the best acquisitions of the deadline.

Sergei Bobrovsky, Florida Panthers

There's no point in easing into this. Let's start the list off with a bang.

It's easy to make a case for how Bobrovsky can help a contender. He's played in three straight Stanley Cup Final series. The 37-year-old is having a rough season playing behind the banged-up defending champions. His save percentage is below .900 for the first time since 2011-12 (his second season in Philadelphia) and he has a negative goals saved above expected number (-15.5) for the first time in five years.

But we've seen this from Bobrovsky before. His aggressive, acrobatic style can lead to big numbers against him if he's not at his sharpest, especially if the team in front of him is leaky. That same style can also carry a team through the postseason when he is on his game, and that chance alone is a bet worth making.

If Bobrovsky looked like he was physically slowing down, there would be more reason for hesitation, but that's not the case. He's as physically fit as any goalie in the league and still looks it on the ice. There have been more bad nights than good this season, but his best is still elite, and there are plenty of recent examples of that.

Bobrovsky is on an expiring deal, set to hit free agency this summer, and hasn't made progress toward an extension in Florida, according to *The Athletic's* Chris Johnston. A trade still feels unlikely, but contenders without a stud in net should be calling. Acquiring Bobrovsky could be the move of the deadline.

Elvis Merzljikins, Columbus Blue Jackets

Merzjkins' name has made the rounds at this time of year for several seasons, and that was before he had been supplanted as the starter in Columbus. Even as the Blue Jackets fight for one of the final playoff spots in the East, Jet Greaves' emergence could open the door to them shopping Merzjkins.

He still has another year beyond this season on his current deal, with a cap hit of \$5.4 million. That is a bit high, but with the recent rise in the cap and goalie contracts that have followed, it suddenly looks a lot more reasonable (especially for only one more season).

Merzjkins still has issues with consistency, and that's unlikely to change. At 31, he is what he is at this point, but he's also the type of goalie who can get hot, stand on his head and steal a playoff series. His postseason experience is extremely limited, but in his only two opportunities in 2020, he stopped 70 of 74 shots (.946).

The ship has already sailed, but this is the type of gamble that would have made sense for the Oilers, rather than swapping Stuart Skinner for another similarly styled, high-floor goalie in Tristan Jarry. The contracts are comparable, and Merzjkins offers a higher ceiling.

He is a fiery, athletic goalie built to be the hero. Any team that trades for Merzjkins is rolling the dice, but it could pay off. Hang up the phone with the league office, cue up "Viva Las Vegas" by Elvis' namesake and hope Lady Luck keeps the dice hot.

Stuart Skinner, Pittsburgh Penguins

Speaking of Skinner, he could also be available at the deadline. The 27-year-old has been solid since joining the Penguins, going 8-4-2 with a .890 save percentage and 8.06 GSAx through Monday. Currently in a playoff position, Pittsburgh could prefer to hold onto Skinner to keep him in rotation with Artūrs Šilovs.

However, with Skinner set to become an unrestricted free agent this summer, and the Penguins' promising goalie prospect Sergei Murashov tearing up the AHL, there's a chance Pittsburgh doesn't see a future with Skinner and would prefer to get something for him.

He doesn't represent a drastic upgrade as a starter, but Skinner is a big, solid, positional goalie with a lot of playoff experience. Behind a structured defense, he could thrive.

Devin Cooley, Calgary Flames

Unbefitting of his name, Cooley has been on an absolute heater. The 28-year-old, who has played the majority of his career in the AHL, has been lights out backing up Dustin Wolf in Calgary.

Cooley's .923 save percentage is the highest in the NHL among goalies with at least 20 games played. He ranks fifth with 16.3 GSAx behind only Ilya Sorokin, Logan Thompson, Andrei Vasilevskiy and Jeremy Swayman.

Considering his body of work, it's unrealistic to expect Cooley to step in as a starter and reproduce these types of numbers for a contender, but any front office feeling uneasy with its backup situation could solidify its depth by acquiring Cooley for what shouldn't be a haul.

Calgary likes Cooley a lot, and already signed him to a two-year, \$2.7 million extension that hasn't even started yet. But the Flames are in a rebuild, already have their goalie of the future and need future assets, so they could at least consider moving him.

Jordan Binnington, St. Louis Blues

Binnington is the only goalie to make it onto every version of *The Athletic's* Trade Board this season, and after a solid showing at the Olympics in Italy, he's still a potential upgrade for teams deficient in the crease.

The season-long stats are ugly. Binnington ranks last out of 92 goalies with -23.8 GSAx, and his .867 save percentage is close to the bottom of the league.

Still, Binnington's reputation among general managers, coaches and his peers as a big-game performer is well established, and his play behind Team Canada in Italy only furthered it. Rebound control is still the biggest concern, which stems from how aggressively Binnington challenges on initial shots, but as we saw in the Olympics, that issue can be mitigated by strong defense.

It's the riskiest option on this list — largely because his reputation could inflate his price well beyond what his actual production justifies — but he has consistently elevated his game when pressure rises. If a contender were to plant their flag by trading for him and making him their starter for the playoffs, that would certainly ratchet up the pressure.

Jesper Wallstedt, Minnesota Wild

Most of the other goalies on this list are short-term fixes or rental additions, but if a team were to trade for Minnesota's promising rookie, it would have the potential to change the franchise's future outlook in net.

Just ask the San Jose Sharks or Chicago Blackhawks if they're happy with their trades for Yaroslav Askarov and Spencer Knight. Both have been stellar this season and project to anchor each team for the next decade-plus, and Wallstedt represents a similar potential.

The Swedish netminder has already shown exceptional patience and angles at the NHL level. He regularly wins one-on-one battles with shooters and is only scratching the surface of his game at 23 years old, with 30 starts under his belt.

As with Florida and Nashville when they traded away Askarov and Knight, respectively, the Wild already have a talented starter with Filip Gustavsson under contract through 2031. If Minnesota wants to add another skater in its push to win now, moving Wallstedt could be on the table.

It would require quite a package in return, but Wallstedt might be worth it.