



Columbus Blue Jackets Media Clips

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The Athletic / For the Gaudreau family, a year of incomprehensible grief — and immeasurable strength

By Peter Baugh — Aug. 26, 2025

Twenty-five years ago, when building his family's home in Oldmans Township, N.J., Guy Gaudreau crafted the flooring by hand. He drove to Vermont and cut down the white ash trees from his father's wood lot. He oversaw the kiln-drying of the logs, the sawing of the planks, the molding of the panels — every step of the process.

The result is well-polished and smooth, except for a single spot.

Tucked away in the kitchen, the spot once contained a knot, which popped free, leaving behind a hole the size of a quarter. Naturally it became a source of material for Guy's two sons, John and Matty, who enjoyed trying to disrupt his usual even keel. The brothers would jokingly question their dad's choice of wood, talking about how it was cheap, until a riled-up Guy fired back, defending his work.

"That's the way the boys were," Guy says, chuckling.

Full of humor. Full of life.

On Aug. 29, 2024, the eve of their younger sister Katie's scheduled wedding, John and Matty were struck and killed by an alleged drunk driver while riding bicycles near their childhood home. John, a star winger for the Columbus Blue Jackets known to many NHL fans as "Johnny Hockey," was 31. Matty, who reached the second-tier AHL as a player before recently pivoting to coaching at the youth level, was 29.

In the year since, the Gaudreau family has found flickers of light amid the darkness. NHL teams have invited Guy, a retired coach and community rink manager, to join them on the ice for practices, and countless letters from around the world — Canada to Sweden, Germany to Russia — have filled the parents' mailbox. Meredith Gaudreau welcomed her and John's third child in April, four months after Madeline Gaudreau gave birth to her and Matty's first.

Through it all, Guy has been proud of his family's efforts to keep the boys' memories alive. Of course, he adds, "I'd rather have them back."

Voice just above a whisper, he continues, reminding himself of the cruel reality.

"I can't have them back."

No guide exists for processing grief of this magnitude. Each member of the Gaudreau family shares the same two losses, but their experiences are far from uniform. Guy sometimes wakes up in the middle of the night and wanders through the house, wondering how this bad dream came to be. Older sister Kristen posts pictures of the brothers to her Instagram story on a near-daily basis. When Katie traveled to Italy for her delayed honeymoon last month, she felt a sting every time she saw an advertisement for the 2026 Milano Cortina Olympics. John had so badly wanted to play at the tournament.

"Some days you have an OK day, and then halfway through the day something will hit you," says their mother, Jane Gaudreau. "Then some days you wake up and it just feels like someone is sitting on your chest."

Jane has learned to prepare herself for the predictably hard moments, like the boys' birthdays and Mother's Day. But others catch her by surprise. At her job, writing Matty's old jersey number, 21, on a piece of paper. At a family friend's wedding, watching the mother-son dance.

Or at home one day in March. As Jane walked through the kitchen, her foot tripped on the divot in the white ash floor.

It didn't hurt at first. But then she looked down, saw the hole and started to sob.

With a guest list topping 200, Katie's wedding was scheduled for Aug. 30, 2024, in the Philadelphia area. The day before, John and Matty went golfing with their fellow groomsmen, then returned with everyone to Guy and Jane's home. The Gaudreau brothers hung out in the hot tub by the backyard pool, laughing into the evening.

Sometime around 8 p.m., they hopped on a pair of bikes and rode off to see a friend.

Meredith last saw John that morning, before he left for golf, when he gave goodbye kisses to her and their daughter, Noa, and son, John Jr. He had packed the car "in perfect Tetris fashion," she later wrote in an article for the Players' Tribune, filling it up for John Jr.'s christening, Katie's wedding, and their eventual return to Columbus for the 2024-25 NHL season. It was the four-year anniversary of the day he asked Meredith to marry him.

Meredith was in her first trimester of pregnancy. Madeline was further along, at 23 weeks. Her last interaction with Matty came that evening, while she was at a Philadelphia hotel where visitors were staying for the wedding. They texted about their future baby's name, which they had already decided.

At approximately 8:19 p.m., according to court documents, John and Matty were cycling along the narrow shoulder of Pennsville Auburn Road, around two miles from the family home, when an SUV moved to the center of the two-lane road to pass. From behind, a Jeep Grand Cherokee then sped up to the right of the SUV, fatally striking the brothers from behind. The driver, who is facing charges of aggravated vehicular homicide and involuntary manslaughter, among others, posted a blood alcohol level of 0.087, above the legal limit of 0.08.

In the aftermath, the family converged on Guy and Jane's house. Guy dropped to the floor and bawled. Meredith was unable to stand up, she wrote in the Players' Tribune, at once "awake and having nightmares." It was all too much for Madeline, who caught a ride from a friend to her and Matty's home some 10 minutes away. She went to bed by herself, hoping to wake up and learn it had just been a terribly vivid pregnancy dream.

Both Gaudreau parents were admitted into a local hospital that night: Guy out of concern for elevated heart rate and blood pressure, and Jane because she had entered what family described as a catatonic-like state at the house upon hearing the news, incapable of responding, no matter how loud Katie screamed her name.

Jane and Guy each stayed two nights at the hospital. They were put in separate rooms, but the nursing staff allowed Jane to climb into Guy's bed and sleep there. There was no cure for what they were feeling, but at least they weren't alone.

Less than a week later, Meredith and Madeline visited a funeral home to plan a joint memorial service for their late husbands. At one point that day, the two wives were in a room with Lewis Gross, John and Matty's agent. When the funeral director asked where Meredith and Madeline wanted flowers to be sent, the group began tossing around the idea of accepting donations to a charity.

"Maybe we should start a foundation in the boys' name," Gross suggested.

In setting up the John and Matthew Gaudreau Foundation, the wives focused on areas of passion for its namesakes. In a public letter launching the foundation in March, Meredith and Madeline, who serve as

co-presidents, expressed a desire to “expand youth ice hockey opportunities, help hockey families facing tragedies, as well as help families that are unfortunately also affected by drunk driving, like ours.”

Now a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit, the foundation maintains an online store selling hoodies and hats — products the brothers would have worn. The wives are planning their first event, likely a golf outing. Someday, Madeline says, they hope to pass the reins on to the next generation of Gaudreaus.

“A lot of times when Matt and John are spoken about, it’s with a lot of sadness and heaviness, and rightfully so,” Madeline says. “But I want to change the narrative, and rather than talking about the tragic way we lost them and how they should be here, talking about the foundation and what we’re doing with it is what I’m trying to do.”

The foundation has received ample support from the hockey community. Meredith was amazed to learn that three NHL players even asked for donations to it in lieu of gifts at their respective summer weddings: Blue Jackets defenseman Zach Werenski, who also had Noa Gaudreau serve as flower girl, and the Florida Panthers’ Matthew Tkachuk and Sam Bennett, both of whom played with John on the Calgary Flames, his first NHL team.

“I look at it as, ‘I have an opportunity to do a lot of good and help people who need help,’” Meredith says. “That’s what feels good to me.”

Guy and Jane, meanwhile, pursued a separate charitable effort in putting on the Gaudreau Family 5K, which raised money for an adaptive playground at Archbishop Damiano School, a school for students with special needs where both Jane and Kristen work. A family friend came up with the idea, and a group of nearly 20 handled the organizing. Neither parent was ready for such a large undertaking so soon after losing John and Matty.

The race took place in Sewell, New Jersey, on the last day of May. Less than 24 hours before, Jane saw that the weather forecast included rain. She went upstairs to the brothers’ childhood room. Aside from trading the two twin beds for an adult-sized one, the family has kept it virtually unchanged over the years. The dresser is still full of the boys’ sweats, swimsuits and other clothes they used when visiting home.

Jane plopped onto the bed. She stared up at the sports-themed wallpaper bordering the ceiling.

“Hey guys, I know I haven’t heard from you or you haven’t given me any signs,” she said. “But maybe you could just do me this one favor.”

The rain passed by the time of the race.

Madeline always liked the idea of having tattoos, but wanted to be certain she would never regret her choice before getting one. Clarity has come over the past year. She now has six, including a “J 13” for John and his jersey number on her left arm, Matty’s name below her ring finger, his and their child’s initials on her right wrist, and a particularly special one on her left abdomen.

“Love, Your Husband,” it reads.

Madeline took those words from a card Matty once gave her. The tattoo is in his handwriting. Others came before it, but this was the most emotionally difficult: Before the process began, the artist had mixed the ink with Matty’s ashes.

Both Meredith and Madeline have now gotten multiple tattoos with their husbands’ cremated remains, all done by the same New Jersey-based artist. Now, the wives are always carrying John and Matty with them.

They aren't alone. Guy, Jane, Kristen and Katie all wear bracelets with the brothers' jersey numbers on them. At Katie's rescheduled wedding in July, her bouquet featured those same numbers: 13 small roses for John and 21 large ones for Matty.

"I tried really hard to just keep saying their name," she says.

There are public tributes everywhere, too. At Hollydell Ice Arena, the rink where Guy worked as hockey director until 2020 and taught the brothers to skate, an ice sheet for younger players now bears a new name: the Gaudreau Rink. At Gloucester Catholic, where John and Matty played high school hockey before leaving for the junior level in the USHL, a banner honoring them stands outside the gym across from a trophy case of photos, as well as a No. 13 Flames jersey autographed by John.

Multiple memorials have sprung up on the side of Pennsville Auburn Road. A cross with the boys' names rises from the ground, surrounded by artificial flowers. Two bikes, both painted white, are chained to a post, their wheels intertwined with weeds. It's part of a lush country area, surrounded by soybean fields, farming equipment and big skies.

Prior to the crash, Guy would frequently jog and bike down that stretch; now he refuses to go by it and isn't sure he ever will again. Madeline won't drive past the site either, unless absolutely necessary. She knows the memorials are well-intentioned. But to her, the white bikes represent how the brothers died — not how they lived.

For this reason, whenever Katie passes it while leaving her nearby house, the youngest Gaudreau sibling instead tries to imagine how happy her brothers must have been before the crash.

"They were the two closest people I've ever met in my life," she says. "I try to think about how they were probably joking with each other and laughing and being together."

The brothers are everywhere at Guy and Jane's house. The Hobey Baker Trophy that John won as college hockey's top player with Boston College in 2013-14 sits atop the dining room table. Matty's locker tag from a run with BC to the NCAA Frozen Four leans against a cabinet. A digital frame cycles through photos of the brothers on a kitchen counter, right above the quarter-sized hole in the floor.

Nearby, at the top of the refrigerator, a magnet of John and Matty's jersey numbers keeps a picture in place. It was taken one long-ago Halloween, before Katie was born. John and Matty are both toddlers in it, dressed as clowns. Jane is holding Matty, and Kristen carries John, a decade his senior. White face paint covers the boys' faces, as Guy stands between them wearing a pirate's outfit complete with an eyepatch.

Staring at her brothers on a recent summer day, Kristen sees their children.

"Look at that face," she says, gesturing to little John and then to a picture of Noa further down on the fridge. "It's the same face."

Like Noa, Carter Michael Gaudreau takes after his dad: He was born at 8 pounds, 3 ounces and 20 1/2 inches — the exact same measurements as John. With big cheeks and a round face, middle child John Jr. follows John more in personality than looks — observant and a bit on the quiet side. Now 2, Noa is the only one old enough to have memories of her dad but doesn't quite understand what happened.

"I tell her you're in heaven and that we can look at photos and videos," Meredith wrote in her Players' Tribune article, formatted as a letter to John. "It crushes me every time."

Matty used to tell his wife he was born to be a dad. Now his son, Tripp Matthew Gaudreau, resembles him in his mouth and chin, Madeline says. Guy adds that Tripp is lanky — just like Guy's dad and just like

Matty. His favorite toy is a hockey stick. Soon, as hard as she knows it will be, Madeline will bring him to a rink. Matty was so looking forward to that.

To Madeline and Meredith, the children offer purpose. After Tripp's birth in December, despite the cold temperature outside, Madeline noticed a blue butterfly by her hospital window. It stayed there until she was discharged. When she came home with Tripp, another blue butterfly greeted her at the door.

But life away from those sources of light is more difficult.

"I feel like I have two personalities now," Madeline says. "I have one when I'm with Tripp and I'm present and I feel happy.

"Then the other part, when he goes to bed, I just feel kind of like a shell of a human."

For Madeline, it's important to experience the sadness, often alone. Sometimes she walks outside and talks to Matty. Others she spends in silence, feeling his presence. In the days after the crash, someone gifted her a journal titled "Letters to my husband." She keeps it next to her bed and writes in it every night.

"Who I was is not anymore," she says. "I haven't quite figured out where to go from that."

On Friday, Meredith and Madeline plan to spend the anniversary of John and Matty's deaths together, with their children, on the Jersey Shore. The fact that it's the one-year mark, Madeline says, holds no significance to her. Every day without her Matty is painful. She doesn't want to give any added power to this one.

Through the pain, the wives are creating happy memories. Meredith brought Noa and John Jr. to pregame ceremonies honoring John in Columbus and Calgary last season. In June, when Meredith went to Los Angeles and announced the Blue Jackets' first-round pick in the NHL Draft, Noa watched on TV, clapping her hands and grinning.

"Go, Mommy, go!" she chanted.

On her first Mother's Day with Tripp, Madeline knew Matty would want her to do something for herself. Instead, she felt better doing something for him. Taking care of their two-acre property used to always fall to Matty, who never minded the yard work. Guy and Jane had even given him a riding mower as a housewarming gift.

After Matty's death, a neighbor took care of the landscaping. But that day, Madeline felt the urge to do it herself. She looked up a YouTube tutorial on using the mower, put on a pair of Matty's brown boots, climbed into the seat and turned the key.

In the year since the loss of his sons, Guy isn't sure that the grief has gotten easier to manage. He knows he's not as fun as he used to be, and he worries that friends only see him out of pity. For a time, he struggled to talk about John and Matty's accomplishments or look at pictures of them without crying or feeling anger at all his family has lost.

"I start getting jealous of other people that have their kids, and I don't have mine," he says. "Not that I want anything bad to happen to anyone. It just makes me feel like I got (robbed)."

The sleepless nights haven't gone away, either. Sometimes, drifting through the house, he turns on the TV for a distraction. Or he calls his brother Eddy and cries through the phone. Recently, though, he believes he's started turning a corner in at least one regard: Reminiscing about his late sons is easier.

Standing in the kitchen, Guy smiles as he recounts John's first NHL goal, scored in his Flames debut wearing a No. 53 jersey now kept in the dining room. He raves about Matty's growth at Boston College,

developing from a freshman who barely played to the team's leading scorer as a senior. He laughs about preparing steaks, cheese omelets and milkshakes for the boys' breakfasts, trying to help them add weight to their skinny frames.

"Good kids," he says. "Good boys. It's hard to get up every day without 'em."

After taking September off from work, Jane returned in October to her job as a finance associate at Archbishop Damiano. The job is part-remote, and she carools with Kristen on the days she goes in. Jane doesn't like driving alone. The quiet makes her think of John and Matty, and if she turns on the radio, sad songs do the same.

The stream of letters arriving at the house helps. In one, a mother wrote about how Matty, while playing for the USHL's Omaha Lancers as a teenager, took her son, a nervous newcomer to the team, under his wing. In another, the author wished that Jane would give talks on how to keep a family close. Katie thinks she should write a book.

"We might not have had as much time as we wanted, but the time we had was better than a lot of people have with their families in an entire lifetime," Jane says. "And I would rather have that and have that closeness and be together than not have that."

Though retired, Guy stays busy. He runs, mows the grass, cleans the backyard pool and takes trips to see his mom in Vermont, where he taps trees to make syrup. In addition to serving as a guest coach at practices with the Blue Jackets, Flames, Philadelphia Flyers and Vegas Golden Knights, Guy took the ice with Team USA at February's 4 Nations Face-Off, where he learned that general manager Bill Guerin had originally pencilled John in for the national team at the upcoming Olympics.

But all Guy could really do when on the ice with the NHLers was push pucks around and chitchat. At that point, the former coach wasn't mentally ready to run drills again.

The pain lessens when he's with his grandkids, who call him Pop-Pop. He notices it when leading Kristen's 10-year-old daughter Kamryn through pushups and other basic exercises in the living room — as he did with John and Matty and as he will likely do someday with their kids. He notices it on days when he babysits Tripp and hopes that the boy inherits Matty's athletic prowess.

"When I'm holding him, I don't have such a big hole in my heart," he says.

Before their deaths, John and Matty told Guy that they wanted him to come out of retirement to teach their kids hockey. Guy hopes he can find the strength to do that and prays that all four of John and Matty's kids want to play the sport that their fathers loved.

This summer, he helped a friend coach a two-week camp in Pennsauken, N.J., a 30-mile drive from the Gaudreau family house. He spent seven hours a day on the ice with children ages 6 to 12, split into two sessions each day, leading drills and power skating sessions and scrimmages. His brain, he says, needed to start working again.

Guy describes himself as a demanding coach, unafraid to yell. This style didn't fully come out at the camp, but he "started feeling a little bit like my old self," he says. Watching the kids improve, he continues, "I kind of felt like I accomplished something."

Getting up at 6:45 a.m. every morning proved a struggle, and Guy returned home exhausted at each day's end. But he enjoyed the experience. He slept better those nights.

The Hockey Writers / 3 Breakout Candidates for the 2025-26 Blue Jackets

By Matthew Buhrmann – August 25, 2025

Since the regular season is closing in quickly, I am continuing to preview the Columbus Blue Jackets' 2025-26 season here at *The Hockey Writers*. This is a crossroads season for the franchise, given that the Blue Jackets have not made the playoffs since the 2019-20 season, nearly returning last season after falling just two points short.

It feels like a make-or-break upcoming season, and if Columbus wants to stay near the top four of the Metropolitan Division, several players will need to have breakout seasons. Of course, we already expect plenty of production from the likes of Sean Monahan, Kirill Marchenko, and Zach Werenski, but I want to take a look at some names who have already flashed at the NHL level but could take their game to another level. Here are my three breakout candidates for the 2025-26 Blue Jackets.

Note: stats below are from Natural Stat Trick and QuantHockey.

Denton Mateychuk

The first player I think can breakout is Denton Mateychuk, a young two-way defenseman who skates well and moves the puck out quickly. He has the versatility to play on both the left and right side of a pairing, can kill penalties, and could even work his way onto the second power-play unit depending on his development.

Last season with the Blue Jackets, he recorded four goals and nine assists for 13 points, while averaging 18:02 of ice time. He scored his first NHL goal on Jan. 9, 2025, and later scored the first goal in the Stadium Series win over the Detroit Red Wings in February.

A mobile defenseman with upside at both ends of the ice, he looks ready for a role boost in 2025-26 under head coach Dean Evason. My colleague Mark Scheig here at *the Hockey Writers* has him projected on the second defensive pairing on the left side with Ivan Provorov, a spot that I think fits well.

Mateychuk needs to add more physicality, which can help him break out offensively this coming season. Even though he is on the smaller side, he finished last season with 114 hits and 63 blocked shots across 45 games, which is impressive for a rookie season. With his skating and growing confidence, I see him rounding out his defensive game while also becoming more impactful offensively, with a projected breakout season in my book.

Adam Fantilli

Adam Fantilli has the potential to put up far more points than his 54 from last season. Matching his 31-goal total feels realistic, and he could even push toward 40 with the kind of ceiling he has.

Fantilli has a legitimate chance to break out and establish himself as one of the top forwards in the Metropolitan Division and across the Eastern Conference. In a previous article where I projected the Blue Jackets' power-play units, I had him slotted in as the center on the second unit because of his faceoff strength and scoring ability. Much like Kirill Marchenko last season, Fantilli is poised for a big jump.

Fantilli played all 82 games, showing how reliable he is on the second line. He averaged 17:28 of ice time and posted 54 total points. In the faceoff circle, he went 420/1019 (41.22%), taking the second-most draws on the team behind Sean Monahan. He forechecked harder in his second season, finishing with 113 hits, taking 100 himself, and blocking 56 shots. He also hit the gym this offseason to avoid getting

pushed around as much. That extra strength should help him win more battles in front of the net, be a stronger forechecker, and generate even more offense.

Offensively, the shooting numbers stand out. He fired 191 shots, which was the third most on the team, and scored on 16.2% of them, which was also the third highest. That means around 16% of his shots went in, which is pretty solid efficiency. If he shoots more, even more consistent production will follow.

Mark Scheig projects Fantilli as the second-line center with Dmitri Voronkov on his left and Kent Johnson on his right, another guy I think can break out this coming season. He averaged 0.659 points per game last season, and I think he can push that number closer to a point per game in the 2025-26 season. That is not an easy mark to hit, but I am very high on his growth and what he can become as a top-six centerman.

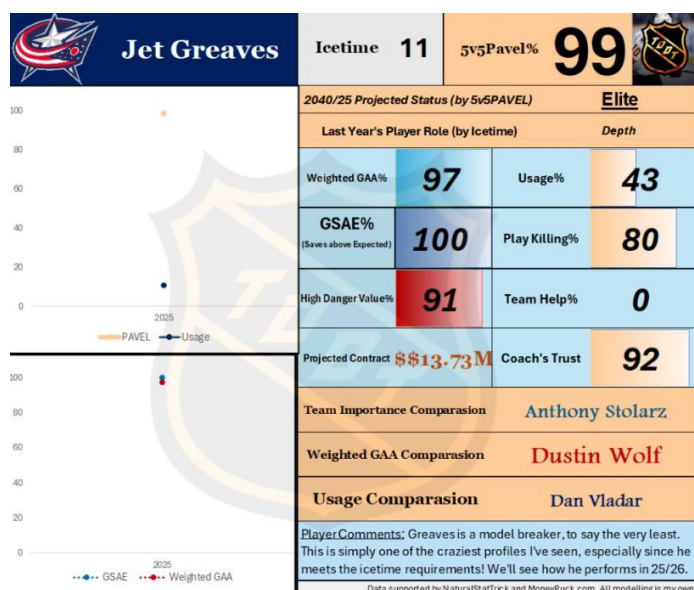
Jet Greaves

Between the American Hockey League's (AHL) Cleveland Monsters and the Blue Jackets, Jet Greaves went 5-0-0 in just seven days late last season. That stretch included four games in five nights, which showed his durability and ability to perform when it mattered most. Now that Daniil Tarasov was traded to the Florida Panthers earlier this offseason, Greaves and Elvis Merzlikins could realistically split starts this season, likely in a 60/40 role.

Depending on how October goes, where the Blue Jackets face seven out of 10 2025 Playoff teams, Greaves might even grab hold of the starter's role. In 11 NHL games with Columbus last season, he posted a 1.91 goals-against average (GAA) and a .938 save percentage (SV%), finishing with a 7-2-2 record.

Greaves is calm and smart between the pipes. He reads the play well, tracking pucks through screens, and stays composed when under attack. At 6-foot-0, he's a bit smaller than most NHL-level goalies, but he makes up for it with great positioning and athleticism. He can still improve his puck-handling, but he's a smart player who understands the game well.

According to PAVEL Analytics powered by TDDT, Greaves' underlying card was outstanding in his short NHL sample. Metrics like weighted goals-against average percentage (GAA%), goals saved above average percentage (GSAE%), and high-danger value percentage suggest he could be a future franchise goalie.



PAVEL Analytics powered by TDDT

Also, per NHL EDGE stats, Greaves stopped 46 of 47 high-danger shots (.979 SV%) and 45 of 47 midrange shots (.957 SV%) over a five-game stretch in eight days for the Blue Jackets later last season. At 24 years old, he is still young and has lots more to prove. He's played only 21 NHL games so far, with a 10-9-2 record, 2.62 GAA, and .918 SV%. All of those numbers, combined with the way the team rallied behind him last season, point to him being ready to truly break out over a full NHL season.

When looking ahead, the Blue Jackets obviously will need their key players to deliver, but they also need a few breakout seasons to stay competitive in the Metro this season. The three players mentioned above all have to take steps forward if Columbus is finally going to push themselves back into the playoffs.

Union and Blue / Fansided perspective, one on one with Blue Jackets winger Mathieu Olivier: "Columbus... is a hidden gem"

By Mike Stump – August 27, 2025

This part of the year is the part of the hockey calendar that always seems to drag, am I right? Most NHL rosters are almost entirely built for next season at this point, as the premium NHL free agents have signed in the past few weeks, and most general managers and players are either just returning to their markets or are still on extended vacations.

I set out to make it a bit more interesting. This past Tuesday, I had the opportunity to sit down with Columbus Blue Jackets winger Mathieu Olivier to discuss his time in Columbus so far, his thoughts on the city and its fans, and what drew him to the market in the long term.

This article's quotes have been edited for clarity.

Mike Stump: Well, Mathieu, you've had a pretty unique journey to get to Columbus. Obviously, you have when your father played in hockey for about 25 years over both in North America, over in Europe and you kind of followed him along after you were born. You've also been in seven on seven different clubs yourself since you were in junior, a major junior and then ultimately into the AHL and the NHL, and it's been three years since you were traded to Columbus. So I'm curious, what was your initial reaction once you learned that you were getting traded here to Columbus? What was your, the kind of the first things you knew about the city and what was your reaction when you got into town initially?

Mathieu Olivier: Yeah. Well, first of all, when you say I've been on (seven) teams and you say it like that it seems like a lot, right? *(Laughs)* ... To answer your question, when I first got traded to Columbus, I had only been in Nashville organization and you know the first thing that that came to mind was growing up in Quebec, we don't really hear much about Ohio and Columbus, so I didn't know anything. *(Laughs)*

I had been here once during the COVID season where everything was locked down. So not a lot of experience in town, but right away everyone in the organization, you know, starting with our captain Boone Jenner, everyone was super welcoming and really just kind of made me feel part of the community and part of the organization right away. And I just felt like everyone had, you know, an idea of 'wait till you get here, you're going to love this.' And I did. I was pleasantly surprised by everything. You know whether it's Columbus, the city itself or just out in the suburbs or whatever, just the whole area is just really, really surprising and kind of a hidden gem, honestly.

Mike: That's how my wife and I feel. I was born here in Columbus, but my wife's from England originally, so she's got that same kind of outsider's perspective, so to speak, coming into town now. But she says a lot of the same things, so it's interesting to hear that from you as well. Speaking of which, obviously your contract was due to expire on July 1st originally, but back in March, you decided to extend here to stay in Columbus for the next six seasons through 2031. You were honest throughout the entire negotiations process during the middle of the season that you wanted to stay here. I know both you and Don Waddell talked a lot about the fact that you were working on that to get that done. You've talked a little bit about it already, but what made the city feel right for you and your family—to want to commit here long term instead of trying to take your talents into unrestricted free agency?

Mathieu: Yeah, there's a couple of different things. First of all, you know, when you go to free agency—which I haven't been to yet *(laughs)* —but you know, preparing to go, the one thing that came back was,

and that resonates with me as well, is sometimes the best fit money-wise won't necessarily be the best fit for everything else.

And fortunately enough, for us, we felt like Columbus—the organization, the team—everything felt like the best fit, and we were able to make everything else work as well. So it's kind of the best of both worlds. But for—you know, you talk about my family—well, the big thing for us is we're in the Dublin area. And my oldest son is special needs. Not anything crazy, but still needs a little help, and the Dublin schools and the Dublin school system, they were so fantastic with him and with us. And part of the reason why we really wanted to stay was just the way they took care of us and took care of our son. It was really something special. So that was a big part of it.

Now everything else comes into play too, right? We love the neighbourhood. We love going to Columbus. We love being in Dublin. Like I said, the rink, everything—just coming to the games, it's fun, it's accessible. Obviously the team, my teammates, the wives—they all get along great. So everything just kind of fell into place where we felt like it was a good fit. But you know, those are all things that you take into consideration when you want to sign into a market and establish your family for the foreseeable future. And those are just examples of why it was important for us to stay here.

Mike Stump: You talked a little bit about the fact that both the city, the arena as well as the people here—are really special. What do you think about the Fifth Line really makes it stand out? Both you and the rest of the leadership core talked a lot during last season about how exceptional fan support has been over the last couple of years. Obviously, this franchise historically hasn't seen a whole lot of success in the last 25 years. But coming up here on the 25th anniversary, it seems like the team is really poised to take that next step, hopefully. Despite all of that, what has made the fan support and the Fifth Line really exceptional to you personally—that makes it really special to step out onto that ice every night?

Mathieu Olivier: Yeah. Well, it's easy to be positive and support when things are going well, right? And when I got here, you know, my first two years with the team, we were bottom of the East and you still see the building full. And that just says a lot about how people are so passionate and they believe in what we're going to accomplish eventually. And you know, that just spoke a lot to me about how much the support and how much the fans care and how much they deserve to get a chance to have a winning club here. And I felt like last year was a step in the right direction and we definitely felt it right away.

Especially—we had a lot of success at home, or a decent amount of success at home last year. So it felt like, you know, even that little bit of that little step that we took last year, fans were just so enthralled with it. And you know, for me, it's like, well, they could have been—like we were—really upset about us not making playoffs. But I felt like the message was, 'Well, we missed, but we're so happy with the way things are going. We're so excited for next year.' It was such a positive look into it that it kind of helped us as players deal with the deception of not making it, right? Because we were upset by missing the way we missed. And I know for myself, I had a chip on my shoulder most of the summer, trying to get over that. But it felt like their positive approach—that was really something we as players felt and knew that we could use for ourselves to get back to work here.

Mike: We're definitely excited to see everybody get back out there for sure. Running a couple of weeks away from training camp as it is. Just for the wrapping up here with the last couple of ones—obviously moving into the future—you've been here for three years now, this will be going into your fourth year with the Columbus organization, and you're committed to the next five after that. When it's—whether it's at the end of your career or whether it's all said and done—what do you think is the legacy that you want to leave here specifically in this market once your time is done on the ice at Nationwide?

Mathieu: Oh, good question. Well, I think... you know, the role that I have with the team and what I try to bring every night—and I see how guys like Jody Shelley and Jared Boll are, you know, beloved around here—not just because of what they did on the ice, but also how they treated others outside of the ice. And they got involved in all that.

I think that's—for me, for what I do with the team—those are two really good examples of what I would like. You know, you say my legacy or what I want to accomplish here—to feel like at the end, I want to be kind and in that sort of category of guys that played hard and played with a lot of heart and obviously defended their teammates and all that stuff. But to have that kind of standing with the fans—that's one thing that I do want to leave here as far as my legacy.

But you know, obviously it's a question that you don't really think about that much because you want to be a good teammate and you want to have a legacy with the team. But if you're going to talk to me as far as leaving a legacy with the city and the fans, that's something that I feel like they both did extremely well. And it's a great example.

Mike: Definitely. After they've both stayed with the organization afterwards too, it's definitely added to that. Last question I have for you, Mathieu, is: let's say you have a young unrestricted free agent, restricted free agent, or even just maybe a young draft prospect that's talking to you and they ask you something along the lines of, 'Why should I want to play in this market? What's great about Columbus in terms of committing my future here long term?' If you had to reply to that question with where you are in your career at this point, how would you respond to that young prospect?

Mathieu: Well, it goes back to what I said earlier. I mean, you want to take everything into consideration, right? You want to take everything as far as the team, the organization, the installations, the rink and all that, and then as well the city and where you're going to live and what routine you're going to do. And I always tell people Columbus is great because you have a little bit of everything.

You have—for a young guy that's coming to a new city—there's life and there's excitement, and obviously there's Ohio State and it's a young college town, while at the same time being a very, very good family town as well, with very good suburbs to eventually raise a family. You know, it's kind of the best of both worlds. Really depends on the person.

A young prospect will come in and find it exciting, and an older player that's coming in with his family—he won't have a hard time finding a really nice suburb to go and establish. So that's something that's really important for players. And obviously, you know, ultimately you make your decision for what happens on the ice, and having a good team always helps.

But as far as selling the city—that's how I usually sell it. And you know, a good example of that is a lot of the alumni stay here. You've got guys that have played here, gone somewhere else, and they come back. So that says a lot about that family life I was talking about earlier, where people can really settle down and have a good, nice home base—or do whatever. But that says a lot about how much the city is, like I said, kind of a hidden gem.

Mike: Well, Mathieu, it's been a pleasure getting to talk to you over the last 10–15 minutes. Hopefully wishing you the best the rest of this season—and hopefully we'll have something to cheer about come April and May.

Mathieu: I think so. But we'll get to work early. I appreciate it. Thank you.

NHL.com / NHL national television schedule announced for 2025-26 season

By NHL.com – August 27, 2025

A total of 172 regular-season NHL games will be broadcast nationally across ABC, ESPN, ESPN+, Hulu and TNT Sports, starting with an ESPN Opening Night Tripleheader on Oct. 7 and a doubleheader on TNT the next night.

The national schedule for ABC, ESPN, ESPN+ and Hulu will feature 100 games, including all 32 teams in action Oct. 28 as part of the "NHL Frozen Frenzy," and the 2026 Navy Federal Credit Union NHL Stadium Series between the Boston Bruins and Tampa Bay Lightning outdoors in Tampa, Florida, on Feb. 1.

In addition to all games streaming live on the ESPN App via ESPN DTC or Pay TV Subscription and more than 1,050 out-of-market games available on NHL Power Play on the ESPN App, the Stanley Cup Final returns exclusively to the Walt Disney Company this season.

The "NHL on TNT" regular-season schedule will have coverage on 14 Tuesday and 21 Wednesday nights throughout the season as well as the annual Thanksgiving Showdown on Black Friday, Nov. 28, with the New York Rangers visiting the Boston Bruins at 1 p.m. ET, and Sunday afternoon games starting in March.

TNT will again be the exclusive home of the 2026 Discover NHL Winter Classic on Jan. 2, when the two-time Stanley Cup champion Florida Panthers host the Rangers outdoors in Miami.

[Click here](#) for ABC, ESPN, ESPN+, Hulu schedule.

[Click here](#) for NHL on TNT schedule.

ESPN's NHL studio show, "The Point," will premiere Oct. 7 at 4 p.m. ET on ESPN and ESPN+, ahead of ESPN's season-opening tripleheader, and will be presented weekly this fall on ESPN2 and ESPN+. The ESPN Opening Night Tripleheader begins at 5 p.m. ET when Connor Bedard and the Chicago Blackhawks take on the Panthers, who will raise their championship banner at Amerant Bank Arena.

At 8 p.m., Sidney Crosby and the Pittsburgh Penguins face off against former coach Mike Sullivan, now the coach of the Rangers, in a Metropolitan Division matchup at Madison Square Garden. It concludes at 10:30 p.m., with Nathan MacKinnon, Cale Makar and the Colorado Avalanche facing Quinton Byfield, Corey Perry and the Los Angeles Kings at Crypto.com Arena.

The TNT doubleheader the next night will see Alex Ovechkin, the NHL's all-time leading goal-scorer, and the Washington Capitals hosting David Pastrnak and the Bruins at Capital One Arena at 7:30 p.m. ET. Then at 10 p.m., Mitch Marner will make his Vegas Golden Knights debut against the Kings at T-Mobile Arena.

Other highlights of the national schedule include:

- Connor McDavid, the No. 1 pick of the 2015 NHL Draft, and the Edmonton Oilers taking on the New York Islanders, who selected Matthew Schaefer with the No. 1 pick at the 2025 NHL Draft, on Oct. 16 (ESPN+/Hulu).
- Former Bruins captain Brad Marchand making his return to TD Garden in Boston with the Panthers on Oct. 21 (ESPN).
- The 2025-26 season will mark the centennial for the Blackhawks and Rangers, and the two will go head-to-head Dec. 10 for an epic matchup of two storied Original Six franchises (TNT).

- Two days before Christmas, TNT will present a blockbuster tripleheader Dec. 23, starting at 4 p.m. ET with the Penguins at Toronto Maple Leafs, then the Dallas Stars at Detroit Red Wings and concluding with the Philadelphia Flyers at the Blackhawks.
- Following the break for the Olympic Winter Games Milano Cortina 2026, NHL action returns with an ESPN doubleheader Feb. 26 featuring the Flyers and Rangers, followed by the Oilers and Kings in a rematch of the 2025 Western Conference First Round.
- The NHL on TNT concludes the regular season April 15 at 7 p.m. ET with a Red Wings vs. Panthers matchup, when Dylan Larkin and Patrick Kane of Detroit face off against the reigning champions in South Florida.