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FOX 28 / YMCA and Blue Jackets unveil new ADA-accessible street hockey rink

By Adam Dell – September 10, 2025

The YMCA of Central Ohio and the Columbus Blue Jackets have unveiled a new ADA-accessible street hockey rink in Liberty Township, aiming to create more opportunities for kids and families to play hockey across Central Ohio.

More than 60 children are currently participating in the Blue Jackets' free Get Out and Learn clinic. The organizations said the clinic is designed to help break financial barriers.

The new outdoor rink, a result of collaboration between the YMCA of Central Ohio, Columbus Blue Jackets Foundation, and the NHL, strengthens the Y's partnership with the Blue Jackets. It enhances opportunities for families in the Liberty/Powell area to discover hockey in a safe, supportive environment.

"It's a blessing to be able to have these kids be able to grow their passion for the game and be outside and be in the present moment," said Blue Jackets forward Cole Sillinger, who attended the event.

The Blue Jackets' Get Out & Learn clinic offers first-time participants an introductory 30-minute session with no prior experience required. By providing free equipment and instruction, the program reduces barriers and helps kids build confidence both on and off the rink.

Their next event is Saturday, Sept. 20, at Nationwide Arena. You can register for it [here](#).

Sportsnet / Columbus Blue Jackets team preview: Is a playoff push in store?

Rory Boylen – September 9, 2025

Last season was an emotional roller coaster for the Columbus Blue Jackets after the tragic deaths of Johnny Gaudreau and his brother Matthew in September. But the team pulled together and was right in the mix for a playoff spot until the end, so now expectations are being recalibrated for 2025-26.

Zach Werenski had his best season yet and was the primary driver of Columbus's success, but its top forward line was also one of the most dangerous trios in the NHL. Fourth-liner Mathieu Olivier, known for his toughness and fisticuffs, contributed so much more and added a surprising 18 goals. Kirill Marchenko was the breakout player of the year and Adam Fantilli took an important big step up in his second NHL season and first fully healthy one.

Can the Blue Jackets build on any of that success?

Most of last season's team returns, but with some intriguing additions who could make it a more balanced group. The Blue Jackets also need to have better injury luck than last season, when Yegor Chinakov, Sean Monahan and Boone Jenner missed considerable time. Fewer man-games lost would go a long way.

There is optimism in Columbus that this team is just about to break through. Here is how they are shaping up with training camp on the horizon.

Hockey fans already know the name, but this is not the blog. From Sportsnet, 32 Thoughts: The Podcast with NHL Insider Elliotte Friedman and Kyle Bukauskas is a weekly deep dive into the biggest news and interviews from the hockey world.

Newcomer to watch: Charlie Coyle

The Blue Jackets had struggled over the years to find or develop their own centres to make for a strong core down the middle, but entering 2025-26 they look pretty strong at the position. With Monahan and Fantilli looking like the top two centres, Columbus added Charlie Coyle to its mix in a summer trade, and as long as he's on the third line, that 1-2-3 down the middle is a nice combination of size, skill and snarl. Coyle was a 25-goal scorer two years ago, but doesn't need to be that in Columbus. Hitting 20 again would be a nice target and if he reaches it, then something is probably going right with this offence, which finished eighth-best in the league a year ago.

Under-the-radar player to watch: Isac Lundestrom

It looks as though Isac Lundestrom, 25, will line up as Columbus' fourth centre, between tough guys Miles Wood and Mathieu Olivier. Four years ago, Lundestrom scored 16 goals, which isn't likely to happen again in this setting, but showcased the fact he can bring offence from time to time and will be a nice weapon to have so deep in the lineup. Lundestrom has developed into a competent all-around centre and has a chance to really round out Columbus' centre depth nicely. How will he handle playing with two wingers who will surely bring intensity to their on-ice minutes?

Top Prospect: Cayden Lindstrom

The fourth-overall pick in 2024 — ahead of Ivan Demidov and Tij Iginla — Cayden Lindstrom missed nearly the entirety of his follow-up season with a back injury, surgery and the required recovery time. He returned to Medicine Hat for the end of its playoff run in the WHL, scoring four points in four games, and then went scoreless in three games at the Memorial Cup. Lindstrom's upside is tantalizing. He's six-

foot-four, 215 pounds and a scoring centre who projects to be on one of the top two lines at the NHL level. But he also has to prove he can be the same player Columbus projected him as when it drafted him so high. Lindstrom has left Medicine Hat and will be playing at Michigan State this season where he'll be challenged against bigger and overall older players than at the major junior level.

Three Burning Questions

1. Can Jet Greaves win the crease?

While Columbus had the eighth-best offence last season, it also allowed the eighth-most goals and needs to find more consistency in net. Elvis Merzlikins returns this season, but there will be an opportunity for someone else to earn the majority of starts in 2025-26. When Jet Greaves, 24, was called up at the end of last season, he had a heck of a showcase in April, going 5-0-0 with a .975 save percentage, 0.80 GAA and two shutouts. In 21 NHL games over the past three seasons, he has a .924 save percentage and there is real hope the Blue Jackets have developed their very own No. 1 goalie. He'll have to earn those starts with a good camp and solid in-season play, though, because Columbus is no longer an afterthought and very much has playoffs on the mind. The Blue Jackets missed by only two points last season.

2. What will come of Yegor Chinakov's trade request?

At the start of last season, Yegor Chinakov played alongside Monahan and Marchenko on a line that was one of the NHL's hottest out of the gate — Chinakov had 14 points in his first 21 games until an upper-body injury forced him out of the lineup until March. When he returned, he was moved down the depth chart and made a healthy scratch when his production didn't return. Over the summer, it came out that Chinakov had requested a trade out of Columbus, which was confirmed by GM Don Waddell. Chinakov's camp said the request was made due to misunderstandings with head coach Dean Evason, while GM Don Waddell remarked the player couldn't handle being scratched. Chinakov is pencilled in as a second- or third-line winger, so we'll see how this story develops through camp and the early part of the season. He has one year left on his contract, after which he'll be an arbitration-eligible RFA.

3. How will Zach Werenski follow up his Norris finalist season?

If you weren't familiar with Werenski's game last season, you surely are now as Columbus' No. 1 defenceman had a terrific year and finished second to Cale Makar in Norris voting. Werenski led Columbus in scoring with 82 points in 81 games, no NHL defenceman scored more even-strength goals or points, and no player averaged more ice time than he did. He'll be driven by the Olympics this year, but also by a playoff spot that was oh-so-close for Columbus last season. If they Blue Jackets are going to make a similar push in 2025-26, Werenski needs to be that type of difference-maker again.

The Hockey Writers / 2025 Blue Jackets' Summer Q&A: Dean Evason

By Mark Scheig – September 9, 2025

Blue Jackets' head coach Dean Evason did the almost unthinkable in his first season behind the bench in Columbus. He had his team on the verge of the Stanley Cup Playoffs despite no one around the hockey world giving them a chance.

Evason wasn't hired by the Blue Jackets until July 22, 2024. He didn't have as much time as a coach normally would to prepare for the upcoming season. Then he and the team had to deal with unimaginable tragedy just weeks before camp opened when Johnny and Matthew Gaudreau were killed by a suspected drunk driver. The team found a way to bond in honor of the Gaudreau's and turned in a season few will ever forget given the circumstances.

Going into 2025-26, Evason and his staff have had a full offseason to digest what happened and come up with a game plan to move forward. In his own words at the end of last season, he said there were a lot of good things but it wasn't good enough because they fell short. He and the Blue Jackets are ready to start Training Camp up in the hopes of taking the next step.

In the last part of our 2025 Blue Jackets' Summer Q&A series, Evason was kind enough on Monday to spend around 25 minutes with the Hockey Writers to discuss a wide range of topics. You will see everything from his reaction to the offseason to a look ahead to 2025-26. He also opened up about his experience for Team Canada at the Men's World Championships, some insights into how he thinks about certain situations and he addresses some specific individual situations on the team.

Of course, we mixed in some fun at the beginning. As with our other Q&A's, our conversation was cleaned up some for clarity and conversation. Here is our full Q&A with Blue Jackets' head coach Dean Evason on the week before 2025 Training Camp opens.

Evason Q&A

THW: Dean, thanks for doing this. Let's start with the summer for you. Were you able to enjoy any semblance of fun? What one thing were you able to do that was fun away from the rink?

Evason: "Yeah. Golf. I tried almost every day. The end of the season was fantastic as far as how we ended. After the year, we talked to the group that it was a trying year in a lot of ways, but it was a very satisfying year in a lot of ways. Ultimately, we didn't get the job done. Our first step is to make the playoffs and we came up short. But that doesn't mean that you can't still enjoy your time away. Did we think about it? We did some things as a coaching staff to work on how we're going to tweak some things to hopefully get up to the point where we make that first step. And the summer was great. Went on a few trips and visited my children was the biggest thing. Seeing them all across Canada and spending time with them which we don't get to do through the season was the highlight for sure."

THW: Now that you've had the season here, what are some of your favorite places, restaurants or anywhere else in Columbus?

Evason: "I don't go out a whole lot. The Double Eagle where Don and I are fortunate. The team's fortunate that the McConnell family has such a beautiful place. I like to go out there. It's quiet. Golf is a passion of mine. So I spend a lot of time out there. I don't want to single out any one restaurant. We'll go out to a few different restaurants. But the biggest thing for me especially this summer was to do things within the city, going to Clippers games and going to Crew games. I didn't take in any theater this

summer, but I did go over to the theater and met the people over there. So I'm excited to dive into that this year a little bit more. Yeah, just basically enjoy the city, enjoy this great weather and I love it here."

THW: How much convincing did it take you to get into some of the promo videos? I saw the one where you were telling the kid "It's your time. Get in there."

Evason: "Yeah. It's not my favorite thing to do because as an ex-player and now as a coach, I think the players should be the focal point or the visual that people see. We're support staff, and I like to do things as a group. But I understand also that there's an element that fans and people want to see everybody within the organization. That means not only the players, but the coaching staff and management. It's not my favorite thing to do, but I understand that it's a good thing for us to get out and do things like that, to get in the community and all that good stuff to promote not only our team but this great city."

World Championships

THW: This is the first time talking to you since the Men's Worlds. Just what kind of lessons can you learn from the way that ended for Team Canada?

Evason: "Yeah there's a lot. We've rehashed it as a coaching staff and with management, with Team Canada, and what we felt went wrong or what was a perfect storm against us, how we had to go to Denmark and what have you. But the experience overall was amazing. I've been fortunate to play in one. I've coached now as an assistant and a head coach. Although we didn't win the last two, the experience was fantastic."

"And that's what's the beauty of this sport or anything that's live is that anything can happen. Have we dived into it? Have we learned some things from it? Did we bring back and when I say we, Steve McCarthy was there. We brought back some system stuff that we're going to implement this year. But ultimately, the adversity that we faced and the negativity of the loss was one thing, but the experience overall was pretty fantastic."

THW: And probably nice for you to have two of your players in Kent Johnson and Adam Fantilli there. How will that experience help the two of them in this upcoming season?

Evason: "I think both are still very young hockey players and obviously had a great season. Just to be around Sidney Crosby, to be around (Bo) Horvat, just all these guys that were there, the pros, not only to watch them how they play the game. A guy like (Ryan) O'Reilly. For those two guys to watch O'Reilly and his preparation of how to play the game, I mean they both have some fantastic examples within our locker room as well. But to see these superstars and how they conduct themselves on and off the ice is very valuable to both those young men."

THW: And on the other hand, on a more positive note about the Men's Worlds, you're able to see Zach Werenski win gold. You're able to see him be named the best defenseman in the tournament. That really shouldn't come as any of a surprise. What kind of an impact can that have that he's able to go on the world stage and continue what he was able to do for your team?

Evason: "Well, not a surprise to any of us obviously, and you included that he was that player. The thing that really stands out to me and stood out to everybody and that's all that most people talked about. Clearly, the United States winning was fantastic for them, fantastic for him. But for him to run off and grab Johnny Gaudreau's jersey and bring it back, that's what really stood out. We all know he's a fantastic player but what people know now is that he's a fantastic person as well."

Offseason Thoughts

THW: So coming back here now, Don Waddell brought a couple new players onto the team in Charlie Coyle, Miles Wood, Isac Lundestrom and others. What will they bring to your team that you feel like may have been missing last season?

Evason: “I just think some professionalism. They all play the game straightforwardly. They all play the game with bite, with heart. They have all played the game for a while now and understand the league. So to put people that have been around, to have that experience, to combine with not only just our young people, but the team that was established last year, that team we think has only been enhanced by the professionalism of the guys that Don brought in.”

THW: Take us inside what a typical offseason looks like for you. What I mean by that is what does a day look like for you? Is there a lot of Zoom meetings? Do you get to talk to the coaches a lot? Just how does that work when you’re planning for next season when you’re trying to determine what changes you’re going to make and how it just all comes together? Now that you have had a whole offseason to work with.

Evason: “Yeah. First of all, we talk a lot through a group thread, a group text. And so we’re in almost constant communication. All of us are on this one thread, a coach’s thread. So we’re going back and forth with banter and most of the time, it’s fun. We’re taking shots at each other and joking and what have you. But then when we got to development camp, that’s when we really dialed in. We sat down at the end of the year, but it’s so fresh at the end of the year. And you’re bitter and you’re excited, so you kind of want to let that sit for a bit.”

“So when we got to development camp, we had meetings. We went over everything systematically, how we want to conduct ourselves emotionally and psychologically with the team and how we want to present different things that we’re going to change. We talked about it there. I asked every coach to put together their package of clips. Then when we got back here now, each coach has shown what they’d change, how we’d tweak it visually. This is why, examples, and now we will pick how we’re going to play. Clearly, our structure is going to stay pretty much the same. But you’re going to tweak different areas because we didn’t have success. So we need to be better as a coaching staff to give the players a better opportunity to make that first step and that’s make the playoffs.”

THW: How do you evaluate your assistant coaches? What does success look like to you when you look at them?

Evason: “Communication, just have an incredible feel as far as how we want to play as a team. And the one thing that can get lost I think in a coaching staff is where the penalty kill guy just cares only about the penalty kill and nobody else cares about it. I want our staff to have touches on everything. Just because Mike Haviland runs the power play, that doesn’t mean that Scott Ford and Steve McCarthy and Jared Boll and Aron (Augustitus) and Cam Briere and (Niklas Backstrom) and myself that we all don’t have a say in how (to do things.)”

“My biggest thing as a head coach is to have a coaching team that’s a team. And everybody has a different role and has different responsibilities. But when we leave that coach’s room, we are hopefully as tight and as organized and as professional and all those good things as much as we want our actual team that are sitting in that dressing room to be.”

THW: When I spoke to Waddell recently, he admitted that there was a meeting with Yegor Chinakhov and clearing of the air. Just for you, what role will you play to help him find his game if a trade does not happen?

Evason: “Yeah. He’s here. You just saw it. We just had a little banter as he came off the ice. I sat down with him last week. First time I’ve seen him since things were written and whatever. And I emphasized to him that I don’t care honestly. He wants to play hockey. He didn’t get a chance to play hockey at the end. He’s frustrated by that. He asked for a trade. That’s fine. That’s out of my control. What I wanted to emphasize to him is that if you are in this dressing room, then we will expect the exact same thing that we expected from you last year and that’s to compete. That’s to battle for a position to help your team win each and every night.”

“And the biggest thing for me is that I will not hold a grudge. I will not be pissed off at you for doing what you think is best for your career. But having said that, if you’re here, you do the same things that everybody else on the team does. We’ll ask the same thing of you this year that we asked of you last year.”

THW: The one thing that I thought was a very interesting change that Waddell made was a change of the strength and conditioning coach. You got to see it play out every day. How much of an issue do you feel like that was? Was that part of the issue with back-to-back games last season?

Evason: “Well, yeah. You can have your opinion on a lot of different things. But at the end of the day, we have to improve in all areas. So does us being a little stronger, a little physically better help us get to where we want to be? Sure. We’re all support staff, and we are supporting these players to get on the ice in order to win hockey games. And I’m certainly not somebody, and Don isn’t either, that micromanage. We will allow everybody to do their job to the best of their ability. Hopefully, the changes that we made will help us get to where we want to go.”

Individual Situations

THW: Couple players I’ll ask you about here. The first is Dmitri Voronkov. The team clearly loves the player. Anyone who saw him last season saw he had a great start but faded out a little bit toward the end of the year. What do you feel like is his ideal role when he’s really playing like he can?

Evason: “Just a big, strong, physical presence that has really good hands who can finish. Does he need to play more physically with his size and his strength? And I’m not talking about running around, chicken with your head cut off, but he definitely has to be more physical. He’s definitely got to get in on more forechecks and disrupt. That’s an area that we are going to push him to do. Ideal situation is he’s that ultimate power forward that has size combined with skill that can play up in your lineup and can play all different roles. He’s shown that he’s committed defensively. He’s shown that he can produce offensively. So if we continue to push him and he pushes himself to work each and every day at getting better in all those areas, he’s going to help us win.”

THW: One player the depth chart may indicate, but Cole Sillinger could potentially be a winger at the start. What do you want to see from him this season and what role do you potentially see him playing? With Charlie Coyle now, you have flexibility at center.

Evason: “Yeah. I talked to Silly at the end of the year about being that Swiss army knife guy that can play in every situation. He can play on the power play. He can play penalty kill. He can play left, right, center and he can play different roles. He’s got tremendous speed. He’s physical. He’s got an offensive skill set to him that can score. So we just asked him to commit to playing wherever you’re going to play. I like him at center. As you just stated, we’ve got some centermen. There’s only four positions at center. So guys are going to have to move around a little bit. If you commit to just playing the hardest you can or the best you can, wherever you get asked to do that, then you’re going to give yourself an opportunity to have success.”

"I tell the players all the time that we'll put you in a role at the start of the year and ask you to commit to that, but that doesn't mean you have to stay in that role. You can change that role. If you're not on the power play, you can change to play on the power play. If you're not on the penalty kill, you can change to play on the penalty kill by doing things a little bit above maybe your comfort zone or doing things above what you think is expected of you. Then you will get an opportunity to change your role."

THW: Goals against was a major issue last season but it got better as the season went on. What is your confidence level with that going into this year? Do you feel good about where it's at with some of the tweaks that you're bringing?

Evason: "Yeah. I think not only the changes that we're bringing. Hopefully, those will help us in all areas structurally and systematically. But I think the opportunity now for the players to understand how we play. We had guys in and out of the lineup and everybody does throughout the season, but we didn't have a consistent group right from the start of the year. So we come into this training camp and we'll see how everything plays out. But the players know how we're going to play. We're not changing our base structure of how we're going to play the game. We're going to make some tweaks. But the players now will be able to teach the new players. They'll be able to help each other and push each other to play the way that we want to play. Not necessarily how the head coach wants to play or the coaching staff wants to play. Obviously, everybody has to commit, but we'll hopefully be committed as a team to play the way that we all want to play."

THW: The goaltending situation. Daniil Tarasov is no longer here. You have Elvis Merzlikins and you have Jet Greaves. What adjustments, if any, will you make on how you play the goaltenders? At least from an outsider's point of view, I don't even know who's going to start day one for you guys.

Evason: "Yeah. Neither do I. And what's going to be determined is it'll be determined by them. They both know they can play in the National Hockey League. They both know that they're starters or can be starters in the National Hockey League. So they're going to compete for that job. And we're not changing our philosophy with that. If you have success, you play. And you saw it at the end of the year where Jet was having success, so he played. Elvis was having success, so he plays. So it's no different than any other position. If you earn the right to get in the net or you earn the right to play more minutes, then you'll play more minutes."

Looking Ahead

THW: Just got two more for you here. Training camp is interesting because of a lot of preseason games early. How will you adjust to that in how you handle the early portion of camp?

Evason: "Yeah. It's a funky camp with four games in a row. We've got the three practice days. We're going to go defensive day with penalty kill, neutral zone day with the power play, then offensive day with a little scrimmage and incorporate power play versus penalty kill. Try to hit all three zones early with those three days. And then now we'll teach through the four games. It's going to be difficult to, you have to have eight veterans in each game. I've got four games in a row. Fortunately, we have more veterans than we did last year because if we didn't if we had the same group, it would be difficult to play four in a row. So it is what it is. We're going to work with it. We've got a structured plan of how many games we want each player to play. It's not the same for every player. Some guys will get a few more that are maybe competing a little bit more for a position or the right to play more. They might play a little bit more than a guy that that we feel is already established and has a true position on our team. We've got a template of how we want to have guys play, how many games we want them to play, and all that kind of stuff. Obviously, it can change depending on what happens moving forward."

THW: And the 2025-26 season, the 25th anniversary season, there seems to be a lot of momentum. Why do you feel that this team can be successful this season?

Evason: “I just think that the people that we have in that dressing room. Yes. Any locker room you go into in the National Hockey League has guys that can play in the NHL, that have a tremendous amount of skill and determination and grit and all that kind of stuff. I just think that the people that we have within that dressing room, and I’ll single out Boone Jenner as our leader. When you have an attitude like that that is spearheading and driving your team, then that’s what gives you great hope that we’re going to be successful. I think it’s simple as that. I could go through almost every guy in that locker room and say the same thing, but it starts with Boone.”

The Hockey Writers / Blue Jackets Need More From \$15 Million Second Pair in 2025-26

By William Espy – September 9, 2025

The Columbus Blue Jackets are paying a bit of a premium for their projected second defensive pairing, to say the least.

Assuming head coach Dean Evason keeps Zach Werenski and Dante Fabbro together, the top pairing will carry a combined average annual value (AAV) of \$13.71 million. The projected second pairing will be paid more than \$1 million more than that, as Ivan Provorov's new contract and Damon Severson's existing contract combine for an AAV of \$14.75 million.

A Controversial Contract

Provorov's new contract was immediately criticized by national media and fans alike, with Dom Luszczyszyn of *The Athletic* stating, "On paper, Provorov's new contract is one of the most baffling contracts in recent memory, and it feels almost impossible to spin this in any positive light. For almost any team, this would be a back-breaking deal that would be difficult to make up for with other savvy bets. This is an immediate albatross that Provorov will have an extremely difficult time living up to" (from 'NHL contract grades: Blue Jackets massively overpay Ivan Provorov in confounding 7-year deal,' *The Athletic*, June 30, 2025).

Undoubtedly, a seven-year contract for a 28-year-old defenseman is always a bit risky. But add in the fact that Provorov is seemingly getting paid quite a bit more than his market value, and it makes this deal questionable, to say the least. He's a reliable defenseman who has some offensive ability, but he's far from his projected potential from early in his career. He's a decent second-pairing player, but a number around \$6.5 to \$7 million would've been much more reasonable based on his track record.

Severson, on the other hand, is in the third year of his deal, and to this point, he hasn't lived up to expectations either, and at 31 years of age, it's safe to say that what you see is what you get with him. He has decent offensive production for his role, but he has quite a few lapses of judgment, which lead to odd-man rushes the other way or just high-quality chances for the opposition.

Overall, neither is overly reliable in their own end and can cause just as many issues for the team as they add to the team.

It's clear that standing pat with his current defensive group wasn't general manager Don Waddell's first option. He tried to add Noah Dobson from the New York Islanders, which didn't come to fruition, and he pursued almost every lead he could, but was unable to find another option. As a result, he gave Provorov a contract that, in Luszczyszyn's words, is an "immediate albatross."

Needing a Step Forward

Given their performance last season, the Blue Jackets have quite a few more expectations on them than they had 12 months ago. While Provorov's 33 points and ability to play in all 82 games are beneficial, he's going to have to improve considerably to justify his current contract and help the team take that next step forward. As for Severson, his 25 points are somewhat beneficial, but so far in his tenure, there has been little that he's done to justify his current cap hit.

Now that the Blue Jackets' second pairing is being paid more than the top pair, they're certainly going to need to play like it. At this stage, they're not going to outperform Werenski, who is quickly becoming a

superstar. With that being said, though, they're going to need to make more of a positive impact; otherwise, those contracts are going to become a hindrance sooner or later, even with the rising salary cap.

At this point, cap space isn't a major issue, but as key players like Adam Fantilli, Cole Sillinger, and Kirill Marchenko become eligible for extensions over the next couple of seasons, it may become an issue sooner rather than later.

[NHL.com / Schaefer, Demidov among NHL Network's top 25 prospects](#)

September 9, 2025

The NHL has plenty of up-and-coming young talent who will hopefully one day make their impact on the game, and on Thursday, NHL Network's research department revealed its top 25 prospects.

The criteria for the list was that a player needed to have been drafted by an NHL team and be younger than 26 years old. Skaters must have played fewer than 25 NHL games and goalies fewer than 15 NHL games (including playoffs). Here is the list:

25. Brady Martin, C, Nashville Predators

The No. 5 pick in the 2025 NHL Draft, Martin had 72 points (33 goals, 39 assists) in 57 games for Sault Ste. Marie of the Ontario Hockey League last season. Martin had eight power-play goals and three short-handed goals. He also had 11 points (three goals, eight assists) for Canada at the 2025 World Junior Championship -- tying for fifth among all skaters in the tournament -- four assists at the Hlinka Gretzky Cup and a goal at the Prospects Challenge playing for Team CHL. The 18-year-old center was also voted "Hardest Worker" in the Western Conference of the OHL last season and signed his entry-level contract on Aug. 20.

24. Jacob Fowler, G, Montreal Canadiens

The 20-year-old goalie was 25-7-2 with a 1.63 goals-against average, .940 save percentage and seven shutouts for Boston College last season, winning the Mike Richter Award as the top goalie in NCAA hockey. He was second in the NCAA in GAA and third in save percentage. Fowler, who signed his entry-level contract with the Canadiens on April 4, was a third-round pick (No. 69) in the 2023 NHL Draft. He played three regular-season games for Laval of the American Hockey League, and went 3-3 with a 2.48 GAA, .902 save percentage and one shutout in eight Calder Cup Playoff games.

23. Cayden Lindstrom, C, Columbus Blue Jackets

Lindstrom did not play in the regular season because of a back injury but returned for Medicine Hat of the Western Hockey League and had four points (two goals, two assists) in four playoff games. The 19-year-old center, who was the No. 4 pick in the 2024 NHL Draft, had 46 points (27 goals, 19 assists) in 32 games with Medicine Hat in 2023-24 and won the Canadian Hockey League's Top Draft Prospect Award that season. Lindstrom also won gold at the 2024 Hlinka Gretzky Cup when he had two goals and an assist in five games. He's expected to play for Michigan State of the NCAA this season.

22. Cole Hutson, D, Washington Capitals

Hutson doesn't have to look very far for motivation; his older brother Lane won the Calder Trophy with the Montreal Canadiens last season as the NHL rookie of the year. Cole had 48 points (14 goals, 34 assists) in 39 games for Boston University last season, tying for the most points in the NCAA among defensemen. He also excelled at the World Junior Championship, where he led all skaters with 11 points (three goals, eight assists) in seven games to help the United States win gold. The 19-year-old was selected in the second round (No. 43) by the Capitals in the 2024 NHL Draft.

21. Axel Sandin-Pellikka, D, Detroit Red Wings

The 20-year-old, who was a first-round pick (No. 17) by Detroit in the 2023 NHL Draft, had a busy 2024-25 season. He had 29 points (12 goals, 17 assists) in 46 games for Skelleftea of the Swedish Hockey League, the top league in the country. His goals and points were the most of any under-21 skater in the

SHL. He had eight points (one goal, seven assists) in 11 playoff games to help Skelleftea reach the SHL semifinals, and was also named the best defenseman at the 2025 WJC, when he had 10 points (four goals, six assists) in seven games. Sandin-Pellikka signed his entry-level contract with the Red Wings on May 6 and played in two regular-season games (one assist) and three playoff games for Grand Rapids of the AHL. He was also named the top defenseman at the 2024 WJC (two goals, four assists in seven games).

20. Dalibor Dvorsky, F, St. Louis Blues

Dvorsky played in two NHL games last season after spending most of the season with Springfield of the AHL, where he had 45 points (21 goals, 24 assists) in 61 games, tying for sixth in goals among rookies. The 20-year-old right wing also had nine points (five goals, four assists) in five games as captain for Slovakia at the 2025 WJC, and had one assist in six games for them at the 2025 World Championship. He was selected by St. Louis in the first round (No. 10) of the 2023 NHL Draft.

19. Isaac Howard, F, Edmonton Oilers

The Hobey Baker winner as the best player in NCAA hockey last season, Howard had 52 points (26 goals, 26 assists) in 37 games with Michigan State, his second season with the team, and was named Big Ten Player of the Year. The 21-year-old left wing also had one assist in four games for the United States at the 2025 World Championship to help them win gold. Howard, a first-round pick (No. 31) by the Tampa Bay Lightning in the 2022 NHL Draft, was traded to Edmonton on July 8 and signed his entry-level contract with the Oilers that same day.

18. Gabe Perreault, F, New York Rangers

Perreault made his NHL debut on April 2 and had no points in five NHL games after signing his entry-level contract with the Rangers on March 31. The 20-year-old right wing had 48 points (16 goals, 32 assists) in 37 games with Boston College last season, the fifth-most assists in the NCAA. Perreault, the No. 23 pick by the Rangers in the 2023 NHL Draft, had 10 points (three goals, seven assists) in seven games with the United States to help them win gold at the WJC. He set single-season records for the United States National Team Development Program with 79 assists and 132 points in 2022-23.

17. Alexander Nikishin, D, Carolina Hurricanes

Drafted in the third round (No. 69) by Carolina in the 2020 NHL Draft, Nikishin spent parts of the past six seasons in the Kontinental Hockey League, and had 46 points (17 goals, 29 assists) in 61 games with SKA St. Petersburg last season, finishing third among defensemen in points. He was one of the top defensemen in the league each of the past three seasons, leading the position in points in 2022-23 (55) and 2023-24 (56). The 23-year-old signed an entry-level contract on April 11 and had one assist in four Stanley Cup Playoff games with the Hurricanes. He won a silver medal with Russia at the 2022 Beijing Olympics.

16. Artyom Levshunov, D, Chicago Blackhawks

The No. 2 pick by Chicago in the 2024 NHL Draft, Levshunov split his time between the Blackhawks (six assists in 18 games) and Rockford of the AHL last season (five goals, 17 assists in 52 games). The 19-year-old defenseman averaged 20:19 of ice time per game in the NHL. Levshunov had 35 points (nine goals, 26 assists) in 38 games with Michigan State in 2023-24, finishing second in the NCAA in points among freshman defensemen and was named the Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year.

15. James Hagens, C, Boston Bruins

The 18-year-old center was the No. 7 pick by the Bruins in the 2025 NHL Draft. He had 37 points (11 goals, 26 assists) in 37 games with Boston College, the fourth-most points among freshmen. He began his NCAA career with a seven-game point streak (11 points). Hagens had five goals in seven games to help the United States win gold at the 2025 WJC. He had 102 points (39 goals, 63 assists) for USA Hockey's National Team Development Program Under-18 team in 2023-24. Hagens had 22 points (nine goals, 13 assists) in seven games to help the U.S. win silver at the 2024 Under-18 World Championship, setting the record for points in a single tournament.

14. Porter Martone, F, Philadelphia Flyers

Martone was selected by the Flyers with the No. 6 pick of the 2025 NHL Draft after he had 98 points (37 goals, 61 assists) in 57 games for Brampton of the OHL last season. That was a Brampton record and tied for seventh in the OHL. The 18-year-old right wing was named Best Shootout Shooter in the Eastern Conference in the OHL Coaches Poll and was the youngest player for Canada at the 2025 World Championship (no goals in two games). He had 17 points (five goals, 12 assists) to help Canada win gold at the 2024 Under-18 World Championship.

13. Caleb Desnoyers, C, Utah Mammoth

Desnoyers tied for fifth in the Quebec Maritimes Junior Hockey League last season with 84 points (35 goals, 49 assists) in 56 games with Moncton, and then was named the most valuable player of the QMJHL playoffs after he had 30 points (nine goals, 21 assists) in 19 games to help them win the league championship. The No. 4 pick by Utah in the 2025 NHL Draft, he had five points (one goal, four assists) in five games for Canada at the Hlinka Gretzky Cup and one goal and four assists in five games in the 2024 Under-18 World Championship to win gold in each. The 18-year-old center is expected to miss the start of the season after having wrist surgery.

12. Anton Frondell, C, Chicago Blackhawks

Frondell had 25 points (11 goals, 14 assists) in 29 games with Djurgarden of Allsvenskan last season as a 17-year-old (he turned 18 in May), helping them earn promotion into the SHL this season. He made his Allsvenskan debut at 16 and had an assist in nine games with Djurgaden in 2023-24 before the Blackhawks selected him with the No. 3 pick in the 2025 NHL Draft. The center also had three points (one goal, two assists) in five games for Sweden at the 2025 U18 World Championship to win silver.

11. Sam Dickinson, D, San Jose Sharks

Dickinson had an impressive year for London in the OHL, recording 91 points (29 goals, 62 assists) in 55 games, the most by a London defenseman in a single season and the second-most points at the position in the OHL last season. The 19-year-old was named 2024-25 CHL Defenseman of the Year and finished fifth among all skaters in the OHL playoffs with 31 (nine goals, 22 assists) in 17 games to help London win the OHL championship and Memorial Cup (six assists in five games). The No. 11 pick by the Sharks in the 2024 NHL Draft, Dickinson had two assists in five games for Canada at the World Junior Championship.

10. Jimmy Snuggerud, F, St. Louis Blues

Snuggerud had 51 points (24 goals, 27 assists) in 40 games for the University of Minnesota, finishing sixth in the NCAA in points. He scored at least 20 goals in each of his three seasons there. The 21-year-old right wing had five goals and eight points in six games to help the United States win gold at the 2024 WJC. A first-round pick (No. 23) by St. Louis in the 2022 NHL Draft, Snuggerud signed his entry-level

contract on March 28 and had four points (one goal, three assists) in seven regular-season games and four points (two goals, two assists) in seven Stanley Cup Playoff games.

9. Sam Rinzel, D, Chicago Blackhawks

The 21-year-old defenseman made his NHL debut on March 30 after completing his sophomore season at Minnesota, where he had 32 points (10 goals, 22 assists) in 40 games and was named to the Big Ten First All-Star Team and the Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year. That came one season after he had 28 points (two goals, 26 assists) in 39 games and was named to the Big Ten All-Freshman Team and Second All-Star Team. Rinzel, the No. 25 pick by Chicago in the 2022 NHL Draft, had five assists in nine NHL games last season.

8. Berkly Catton, C, Seattle Kraken

Catton had 109 points (38 goals, 71 assists) in 57 games for Spokane of the WHL last season, third in the WHL in points, and was first in assists (31) and points (42) in the WHL playoffs. This came one season after he had 116 points (54 goals, 62 assists) in 68 games in 2023-24 and was a finalist for the WHL Player of the Year Award when he was third in goals and fourth in points. He also led the WHL with seven short-handed goals that season. Catton, a 19-year-old center, had an assist in five games for Canada at the 2025 WJC, and was the No. 8 pick by Seattle in the 2024 NHL Draft.

7. Beckett Sennecke, F, Anaheim Ducks

The 19-year-old right wing, who recently completed his third season with Oshawa of the OHL, had 86 points (36 goals, 50 assists) in 56 games and was named to the Third All-Star Team. He was third in goals (14) and fourth in points (32) in the OHL playoffs. Sennecke had 55 points (20 goals, 35 assists) in 61 games in 2022-23 when he was named to the OHL All-Rookie Team, and 68 points (27 goals, 41 assists) in 63 games in 2023-24. The No. 3 pick by Anaheim in the 2024 NHL Draft, he has 24 goals in 34 OHL playoff games over the past two seasons.

6. Zayne Parekh, D, Calgary Flames

Parekh signed his entry-level contract on July 5, 2024, and had a goal in his NHL debut last season, a 5-1 win against the Los Angeles Kings on April 17. He had 107 points (33 goals, 74 assists) in 61 games for Saginaw of the OHL, leading defensemen in all three categories, and another nine points (two goals, seven assists) in five games in the OHL playoffs. This came after he led defensemen in goals (33) and points (96) in 66 games in 2023-24 when he also had 11 points (two goals, nine assists) in 13 OHL playoff games, and five points (one goal, four assists) in five games to help Saginaw win the Memorial Cup. The 19-year-old was the No. 9 pick in the 2024 NHL Draft.

5. Ryan Leonard, F, Washington Capitals

The 20-year-old right wing had 49 points, including an NCAA-high 30 goals in 49 games with Boston College last season, and was named Hockey East Player of the Year and to the Hockey East First All-Star Team. He also had 31 goals in 2023-24 with BC. Leonard, who was United States captain, had 10 points (five goals, five assists) in seven games at the 2025 WJC to help the US win gold. On March 31, he signed his entry-level contract with the Capitals and had one goal in nine regular-season games. The No. 8 pick by Washington in the 2023 NHL Draft also had one assist in eight Stanley Cup Playoff games.

4. Zeev Buium, D, Minnesota Wild

Buium had 48 points (13 goals, 35 assists) in 41 games for the University of Denver, his second season with them after he had 50 points (11 goals, 39 assists) in 42 games in 2023-24. The defenseman was named a finalist for the Hobey Baker and the National Collegiate Hockey Conference Player of the Year

and the NCHC Offensive Defenseman of the Year in 2023-24 when he helped Denver win the NCAA title and was the second-youngest player in college hockey. Buium also had six points (two goals, four assists) and was plus-10 in seven games to help the United States win gold at the 2025 WJC and five points (three goals, two assists) in seven games for the gold-medal winning team in 2024. The 19-year-old, who was the No. 12 pick by Minnesota in the 2024 NHL Draft, signed his entry-level contract on April 13 and had one assist in four Stanley Cup Playoff games.

3. Michael Misa, C, San Jose Sharks

The 18-year-old center had 134 points (62 goals, 72 assists) in 65 games for Saginaw of the OHL last season and was named Smartest Player in the Western Conference in the OHL Coaches Poll after becoming the first player in Saginaw history to win the Red Tilson Trophy as the league's most outstanding player and the Eddie Powers Trophy as the top scorer in the OHL. He had at least one point in 60 of 65 regular-season games. Misa was granted exceptional player status to enter the OHL as a 15-year-old, and helped Saginaw win the Memorial Cup in 2023-24. He was the No. 2 pick by the Sharks in the 2025 NHL Draft.

2. Ivan Demidov, F, Montreal Canadiens

Demidov is expected to have a big impact for the Canadiens this season after signing his entry-level contract April 8 and playing in two NHL games last season, and recorded a goal and an assist in his first game. The 19-year-old right wing, who was the No. 5 pick in the 2024 NHL Draft, also played in five Stanley Cup Playoff games (two assists). Prior to coming over to North America, he had 49 points (19 goals, 30 assists) in 65 games with SKA St. Petersburg of the Kontinental Hockey League, the most in a season by an under-20 player. Demidov was named the 2024-25 Kontinental Hockey League Rookie of the Year and was named the MVP of the Junior Hockey League in Russia in both 2022-23 and 2023-24 when he combined for 42 goals and 80 assists in 71 games for SKA-1946 St. Petersburg.

1. Matthew Schaefer, D, New York Islanders

The No. 1 pick in the 2025 NHL Draft, Schaefer had 22 points (seven goals, 15 assists) and was plus-21 in 17 games for Erie last season and was named Best Skater in the Western Conference OHL Coaches Poll. The 18-year-old defenseman had surgery Dec. 30 after sustaining a broken clavicle three days earlier while playing for Canada at the 2025 WJC (he had a goal and an assist in two games in the tournament). He had six points (two goals, four assists) in five games for Canada at the Hlinka Gretzky Cup to win gold in 2024, and one goal and four assists in seven games to help his country win gold at the 2024 Under-18 World Championship. Schaefer was named to the OHL First All-Rookie Team in 2023-24 when he had 17 points (three goals, 14 assists) in 56 games. He became the second Erie player to be selected No. 1 in the NHL Draft (Connor McDavid, Edmonton Oilers, 2015).