



**Columbus Blue Jackets News Clips**  
**July 29-August 1, 2025**

**Columbus Blue Jackets**

- PAGE 2: The Coumbus Dispatch: Columbus Blue Jackets re-hire Barry Brennan as strength and conditioning coach
- PAGE 3: The Athletic: After 15-year absence, an emotional Barry Brennan returns to Blue Jackets' staff

**Cleveland Monsters/Prospects**

- PAGE 6: NHL.com: Lindstrom 'learned so much' from Blue Jackets to prep for NHL future
- PAGE 8: The Athletic: How Blue Jackets' Evan Gardner emerged as a top goalie prospect
- PAGE 12: The Hockey Writers: 3 Takeaways From Third Day of Games at the World Juniors Summer Showcase

**NHL/ Websites**

- PAGE 14: NHL.com: Canada displaying goaltending strength at World Junior Summer Showcase

## The Coumbus Dispatch / Columbus Blue Jackets re-hire Barry Brennan as strength and conditioning coach

**By Brian Hedger – July 31, 2025**

Don Waddell's remake of the Blue Jackets' support staff is complete.

The Blue Jackets' president/general manager has hired Barry Brennan, 62, as head strength-and-conditioning coach. Brennan, who held the same role previously for the Blue Jackets from 2005-2010, has spent the past 12 years working with the Kontinental Hockey League. That includes a six-year stint (2011-2017) working with Sergei Fedorov while the former Blue Jackets star was general manager for CSKA Moscow, one of the KHL's crown jewel programs.

After his previous stint in Columbus, Brennan spent one season with the Atlanta Thrashers (2011-12) prior to that organization moving to Winnipeg. Waddell was president of the Thrashers when Brennan was hired. Rick Nash, the Blue Jackets' director of hockey operations, was in his prime as a star forward during Brennan's first stint in Columbus.

"Barry Brennan is a well-respected, experienced leader in his field and we are very pleased to welcome him back to the Blue Jackets," Waddell said in a statement. "Ryan Gadbois has done a phenomenal job for us as our assistant strength & conditioning coach, and we believe our players will benefit greatly from working with Barry and Ryan."

Brennan's hiring completes hires prompted by Waddell's decision on April 23 to part ways with former video coach Dan Singleton, equipment manager Jamie Healy, strength coach Kevin Collins and assistant athletic trainer/massage therapist Naoto Goto.

The Blue Jackets announced July 15 that Aron Augustitus was promoted to video coach, Paul DeFazio was hired as head equipment manager, Inar Treiguts was hired as massage therapist, Matthew and Anthony Donskov were hired as development coaches and former Bowling Green head coach Ty Eigner was hired as a special assignment scout.

Augustitus previously worked with Singleton as a video coach. DeFazio worked for the Pittsburgh Penguins as assistant equipment manager from 2018-25 as part of his 27 years with that team.

Treiguts worked for Waddell from 1999-2011 with the Thrashers before shifting to a role with the Detroit Red Wings (2011-2020) and the Donskovs — who worked as guest coaches during the Jackets' past two NHL development camps — have helped local hockey players improve for 25 years with Donskov Hockey Development.

Healy and Singleton had worked for the Blue Jackets since the team's inaugural season in 2000-01, while Collins started in 2010. All three plus Goto had expiring contracts.

## The Athletic / After 15-year absence, an emotional Barry Brennan returns to Blue Jackets' staff

**By Aaron Portzline – August 1, 2025**

In the summer of 2001, the Columbus Blue Jackets hired Barry Brennan to be the strength and conditioning coach for their American Hockey League team in Syracuse, N.Y. Part of the gig was to help with the NHL club's development camp in early July.

"I drove all night — 12 hours — from Ottawa to Columbus to get there early in the morning, because I couldn't freaking wait to get started," Brennan said. "I got to the rink (Nationwide Arena), was walking around trying to find the dressing room, and just pinching myself that I was working in an NHL rink.

"When I finally found the dressing room, a guy was sitting on a chair right next to the door. *The* guy. I knew exactly who it was, and I honestly almost fainted."

There aren't many Blue Jackets coaches or staff who have been with the organization long enough to have had a personal interaction with franchise founder John H. McConnell, who died in 2009. But Brennan is one of the lucky few.

And it's a big reason Brennan was so excited — almost to the point of tears, he said — to return to the Blue Jackets on Thursday, when GM Don Waddell announced his hiring as the club's new strength and conditioning coach. He last held the job in 2010.

"This whole time, through the interview process and in the last day or so since I found out I was coming back, I've been thinking about that (interaction) with Mr. Mac," Brennan said. "He reached out his hand, shook mine and said, 'You must be Barry. Happy you're here.'"

"It was so genuine. What owner does that? I was a minor-league guy, a peon. It was so meaningful to me, and I walked away saying to myself, 'This is where I belong, and I'm going to do everything I can for that man and his hockey team.' I will never forget it.

"This place just means so much to me. I mean ... I'm getting emotional, but it does. This city, this organization ... these fans. To get this opportunity ... I'm just so freakin' thrilled about what we're going to get done here, and I can't wait to get started."

Waddell said he was sent "so, so many" applications for the job, which came open shortly after the season ended in April when previous strength and conditioning coach Kevin Collins was among a wave of support staff whose contracts were not renewed.

He spent months cutting the list down to four or five candidates, then went into hyperdrive talking to mutual contacts around the league.

NHL legend Sergei Fedorov, who played for the Blue Jackets when Brennan was working in Columbus, crafted a handwritten letter to persuade Waddell. Fedorov admired Brennan's work so much that he took him along to Russia as strength and conditioning coach when Fedorov was general manager, and later coach, of CSKA Moscow.

It also meant a phone call from Waddell's longtime compatriot Rick Dudley, along with other Blue Jackets luminaries — director of player personnel Rick Nash, assistant coach Jared Boll, team services

director Aarron Johnson, broadcaster Jody Shelley — who were all players when Brennan ran the Blue Jackets' weight room.

"Usually when you talk to as many people as I talked to, you're going to find somebody who has some kind of a complaint or an issue with somebody," Waddell said. "I talked to a lot of people. Not just people in this building, but all around the league, around hockey. Nobody had anything negative to say. It was all glowing.

"His track record is impressive. You don't put that together without knowing what you're doing. And his work ethic is tremendous. But his passion for the job ... and his passion specifically for Columbus, really stood out."

Brennan spent four seasons working for the Blue Jackets' AHL club before he took over in Columbus, spending five seasons with the Blue Jackets (2005-06 to 2009-10), including the franchise's first Stanley Cup playoff berth in 2009.

After Columbus, he spent one season with the Atlanta Thrashers, but didn't make the move when the franchise relocated to Winnipeg in 2011. Waddell was the Thrashers' club president during Brennan's one season in Atlanta.

Over the last 15 years, Brennan has worked in Russia's KHL and operated a gym in Ottawa, working with NHL players and prospects, professional boxers, etc.

When Brennan and Fedorov arrived in Moscow, CSKA was the fifth-worst team in the 23-team KHL. In the years since, they've had the best record in the league six times, won three Gagarin Cups as the league champion and finished as runner-up three times.

Fedorov invited Brennan as one of his guests when he was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame in 2015.

Waddell said Brennan's expertise and experience, along with his passion for the job, were the reasons he was picked. But his experience with CSKA should come in handy with Russians Yegor Chinakhov, Kirill Marchenko, Ivan Provorov and Dmitry Voronkov on the roster.

The Blue Jackets also have a plethora of Russian prospects: goaltenders Pyotr Andreyanov and Sergei Ivanov, forward Kirill Dolzhenkov, and defenseman Nikolai Makarov, who may come to North America over the next several seasons.

"You have to be able to get 22 or 23 guys in the room to believe what you're saying," Waddell said. "We feel like he's the guy who can do that."

Brennan takes over a Blue Jackets roster that is not only blessed with some of the NHL's best young talent but was also one of the league's biggest surprises last season by finishing just two points out of a playoff spot. It's also a club that has been overwhelmed by injuries in recent seasons.

The Jackets had 309 man-games lost to injury last season, fourth-most in the NHL. That marked the fifth time in six seasons they exceeded 300 man-games lost in a season, including a franchise-record 563 in 2022-23.

Ryan Gadbois, an assistant under Collins the last four seasons, will remain in that capacity under Brennan, although Waddell said he was impressed with how Gadbois handled summer workout instruction with players over the summer, during development camp, etc.

Ben Eaves will enter his sixth season as the AHL Cleveland strength and conditioning coach.

"I told (Gadbois) and (Eaves) that we're all going to work together, all pulling the rope in the right direction," said Brennan, 62. "They're going to be the guys who take over for me, so I want to help show them the path and let them run. It's a group effort."

Even as the years ticked by, Brennan said, he always had a strange sense that his time in Columbus wasn't finished. When he returned to Columbus for a Bruce Springsteen concert in the spring of 2024, Johnson showed Brennan the refurbished dressing room at Nationwide Arena, and the fire burned even hotter.

The last couple of days, Brennan said, have been emotional.

"I watched every Blue Jackets game I could, even when I was over in Russia," Brennan said. "I poured everything into Columbus. That place means everything to me. Everything. To come back there ... man, I can't even begin to describe it.

"I'm coming back to finish the job we started. From the day I left, I wanted to come back here and help this team get to the playoffs. I feel like this team is right on the edge. There's some work to do, absolutely, but this can be special. I want a Stanley Cup for Columbus. To be part of that would be the dream of a lifetime."

## **NHL.com / Lindstrom 'learned so much' from Blue Jackets to prep for NHL future**

**By Craig Merz – August 1, 2025**

Cayden Lindstrom received an education over the past year that can't be replicated when he plays his first season for Michigan State, beginning in October.

After missing the 2024-25 regular season for Medicine Hat of the Western Hockey League because of a back injury, the 19-year-old center was able to play four games in the postseason and is eager to prove why the Columbus Blue Jackets made him the No. 4 pick in the 2024 NHL Draft.

"Facing that kind of adversity, especially for that long period of time for an injury like that, you definitely mature faster," Lindstrom said during Blue Jackets development camp in July. "You learn more about your body than you ever did and probably ever will, which is good."

"I'm not thrilled that it happened this early in my career. But everything happens for a reason, so having said that, I think it's helped me tremendously."

Lindstrom did get a sampling of NHL life last season; he spent time around the Blue Jackets at Nationwide Arena and the adjacent practice facility, got to know them during his free time and learned about a city he hopes will soon be his home.

What he couldn't do was play.

Back issues that limited him to 32 regular-season and four playoff games for Medicine Hat in 2023-24 came to a head when, after months of unsuccessful rehab in Columbus following the draft, he underwent a microdiscectomy to repair a disc that was compressing a nerve last Nov. 19 in Los Angeles.

Columbus wanted him nearby to continue his post-procedure rehab, so he settled in for a long recovery with the hope of returning to the ice for Medicine Hat in the spring.

"Not a lot of guys get the experience that I had here, staying in Columbus and hanging around pro guys the whole season," Lindstrom said. "I took so much and learned so much from all the older guys and they gave me so many pointers and cues that I'll remember forever."

Lindstrom's perseverance paid off and he played his first game on May 9. He had four points (two goals, two assists) in four games; one in the WHL playoffs and three in the Memorial Cup, where Medicine Hat lost 4-1 to London in the championship June 1.

"It was nice to see him go back for the playoffs and the Memorial Cup," Blue Jackets director of hockey operations Rick Nash said. "Just being away from the game for so long, it's important that he gets his reps. At game speed is one thing. When you're skating by yourself it's another thing."

There was a noticeable difference in Lindstrom (6-foot-4, 215 pounds) during development camp, compared to a year ago when he was shut down after several days of skating.

"He's played hockey his whole life and has never taken anything close to that much time off," Columbus director of player personnel Chris Clark said. "For him to be healthy and be on the ice, we're seeing him smiling now and just playing hockey. That's the best thing."

Lindstrom spent his down time exploring the possibility of going to college after the NCAA relaxed eligibility for players in the Canadian Hockey League as of Aug. 1.

He chose a burgeoning powerhouse in Michigan State over returning to Medicine Hat.

“In college there's older guys, there's going to be guys stronger and bigger than me,” he said. “I think that'll build me as a better hockey player and just help my overall game.”

Lindstrom said he feels he's back on track to reach his goal.

“Obviously, I wanted to play in the NHL as soon as possible,” Lindstrom said “I think everything happens for a reason; me going to school is a big part of that.

“I have a little bit of, I wouldn't say, catching up, but a little bit of development that I need and it will help me reach the next level coming into the NHL.”

## The Athletic / How Blue Jackets' Evan Gardner emerged as a top goalie prospect

**By Scott Wheeler – July 31, 2025**

When Saskatoon Blades general manager Colin Priestner broke the news to Evan Gardner following a Nov. 30 game that he didn't get invited to Hockey Canada's selection camp for the 2025 World Junior team, he immediately broke down into tears.

"What else can I do?" Gardner asked.

Nothing, Priestner told him.

"He had the highest numbers of anyone, the most wins, and he did it last year too," Priestner said on a phone call back in December. "I wouldn't be surprised if he's the starter or the backup next year, and you've just got to dust yourself off and prove them wrong."

Eight months later, almost to the day, Gardner was standing inside Ridder Arena wearing Hockey Canada workout gear at the World Junior Summer Showcase, where he's vying to make the 2026 team in Minneapolis.

"I was pretty heartbroken not to get an invite at Christmastime," Gardner said. "Last summer, I didn't get an invite either, so I was really working towards that winter, and to hear that I didn't get it, it kind of tore me apart. So I really put in a ton of time into my craft and a ton of work with my goalie coach (Jeff Harvey) back in Saskatoon to hopefully get an invite here, and it panned out, so I'm super pumped. This is something that's super special for me. It's something I've been wanting to do for a long, long time."

He's not the front-runner. Returnees Carter George and Jack Ivankovic both played well in Canada's disappointing quarterfinal exit in 2025 and were sent home early on Thursday to leave Gardner and Sharks first-round pick Joshua Ravensbergen to play Canada's final two games against Sweden and the USA.

At the moment, he's vying to be the team's No. 3. But he's used to a little adversity.

It's the 19-year-old goaltender's first Hockey Canada experience. He never played for them at the U17 or U18 levels.

He grew up in Fort St. John, British Columbia, a town of about 20,000 people, and they only had AA hockey at the time. He was always on the A team until he moved to Kelowna to enroll at RINK Hockey Academy.

He was a third-round pick in the 2021 WHL bantam draft and is the first to say that if it weren't for the delayed COVID draft pushing it from the spring and into December, he would have been drafted much later. His play with the RINK Hockey Academy's U18 team in the fall that year earned him the third-round selection.

He didn't make the Blades as a 16-year-old and was their backup to start his NHL Draft season the following year. When NHL Central Scouting released its players to watch list for the 2024 draft, he was given a "W" rating, which indicates a 6th/7th round candidate. On their midterm list that year, he was their No. 16-ranked North American goalie.

He's also on the smaller side (Hockey Canada lists him at 6-foot and 175 pounds, and the WHL lists him at 6-foot-1 and 177 pounds).



But he just kept playing well, and as the year went on, he took the net in Saskatoon from the veteran Austin Elliott (who backstopped the London Knights to an OHL title and Memorial Cup this spring after the Blades released him to hand the net to Gardner). By year's end, he'd posted a .927 save percentage. Despite having played just 30 WHL games, NHL Central Scouting moved him up to No. 7 on their final list. He then posted a .910 save percentage in another 15 playoff games.

The Blue Jackets selected him in the second round of the draft and made him the fourth goalie selected after Ilya Nabokov, Mikhail Yegorov and George, who was selected three spots in front of him. There were members of the Blue Jackets organization who liked him better than George, and it became an internal debate for them ahead of the draft.

Gardner has felt the love from the Blue Jackets, too.

"Their goalie staff is unbelievable there, and they have so much faith in me," he said. "They've treated me great, I've learned a lot from them, and I can't wait for what the future holds."

After a solid post-draft season as Saskatoon's starter, Gardner now has a .917 save percentage across 74 career WHL regular-season games and has already signed his entry-level contract with the Blue Jackets. In the spring, he made his AHL debut with the Cleveland Monsters and stopped 16 of 19 shots in a 3-0 loss.

When he maps out his path, he stops himself to chuckle. The third-round selection in the WHL draft lit a fire under him.

"There were, I believe, six goalies taken in front of me (in the WHL)," he pointed out, remembering the number.

Getting cut by the Blades at 16 grew that fire.

"I was just hoping a team would take a flier on me. That's all I wanted, was just to show a team what I was capable of, and then I had a great second half and kind of took over in the playoffs," he said.

Once Gardner started getting starts early on in his draft year, Dan Da Silva, Saskatoon's head coach, said they could see the breakout second half coming.

"They were always quality starts and we had a really good team in front of him, but there came a point where we just felt that we were most comfortable with him back there as the last line of defence and for a 17-year-old goalie to give you that type of confidence in your chances to win a game, that speaks volumes to the work he had put in to get himself to that," Da Silva said on a phone call on Wednesday.

Gardner has done it while managing Type 1 diabetes.

"He is beloved by all of his teammates. He's a very popular guy in the room. He's a very happy-go-lucky guy. He's always got a smile on his face. He's easy to talk to," Da Silva said. "He obviously does a lot there with his diabetes situation and handles that extremely well, and mature beyond his years for someone having to deal with that."

He was diagnosed eight years ago this summer, when he fell ill on a trip with his parents to Kelowna for a Blue Jays baseball camp and had to be hospitalized. His parents had noticed some symptoms crop up, including some weight loss. He still has to check his blood sugar levels during games, though he no longer has to take a finger-prick test to do so and instead uses Dexcom, a glucose monitoring system on his phone.

"I have a few things that are connected to me. I have a pump," he said, lifting his right sleeve to reveal it on his shoulder. "During intermissions, I'm always checking it. Lots of snacks during the intermissions just to make sure I'm not going low during the game."

He also missed all of February last season with a lower-body injury.

Hockey Canada — who were in touch with Harvey and Monsters goalie coach Brad Thiessen about Gardner through last season, even after they didn't invite him to selection camp — were impressed by how he managed the starter workload, how he played once he returned in March from his injury and how he played in his AHL debut.

Harvey and Thiessen also raved about him to Dan De Palma, Team Canada's goalie coach.

"Evan's been playing good goal for a long time now, and I understand why he'd be disappointed (last December) and rightly so, but he just kept playing good," De Palma said. "Evan has earned it. He earned the right to be here, and arguably he could have been here before, but he's here now, which is great."

De Palma describes Gardner as a very sound, technical, competitive goalie who doesn't make mistakes. In working with him this week, he has found him to be very coachable as well.

"So he's got that talent, he's got that work ethic, and then he's able to continue to learn," De Palma said. "Really polite, respectful, engaging. He's just a super young man, and I've heard a lot about him from Jeff and Brad, and they couldn't speak highly enough about him, and I think he has even exceeded what I thought he would be."

De Palma, who was a small goalie himself, doesn't see size in his evaluations either. (With Gardner, George and Ivankovic, three of Canada's goalies at the summer showcase were on the smaller side.)

"I don't look at height, I don't look at a whole lot of that in terms of anything. It's just 'who's going to stop the puck?' and obviously there's more to it than that and that's oversimplified, and for sure a guy that's taller has a little bit of an advantage, but at the end of the day if he's the best guy for the job to help us win a gold medal then that's all that we care about," De Palma said.

In his debut in the Red-White game, Gardner stopped 14 of 17 shots in a 4-3 shootout loss, but two of the goals came on the power play, and the other was with the opposing net empty. He also stopped the first five shots he faced in the shootout, before finally giving up the winner in the sixth round in a bit of a duel with Ravensbergen.

Da Silva has always been most impressed by Gardner's ability to read plays.

"He's a very smart goaltender. He can read shooters really well, he can read how plays are developing and knows where everybody is on the ice and if there's guys backdoor or high slot. He's always got his head on a swivel, and he's always checking and scanning the ice," he said. "He's very sound positionally. He doesn't get out of position. You don't see him scrambling or sliding past his posts or getting out of position very much at all. He knows his crease very well, he knows his posts very well, and he just uses his size. He's very, very calm in there."

Gardner believes his skating is actually his No. 1 attribute.

"I'm able to put myself in spots, my habits, and the little things you can pick up on if you really watch me that I believe help set me up for success down the road and ahead of what's happening (in) the play," he said. "And then when it comes down to it, I just find a way to stop pucks, which is what everyone wants, right? I compete on it, and I just find a way to stop pucks."

Last year, Priestner estimated Gardner alone was probably worth a third of the Blades' wins.

"He's just so consistent. He rarely has a bad game, and if he does, it's a one-off," Priestner said. "He's so projectable because he's so consistent. He doesn't have those games where he's not very good; he's just always really good."

After one more year in the WHL with the Blades, they think he'll offer that for the Monsters and then the Blue Jackets someday, too.

"We're pretty biased, but he's a special goalie," Priestner said.

## The Hockey Writers / 3 Takeaways From Third Day of Games at the World Juniors Summer Showcase

**By Mariah E. Stark (Holland) – July 30, 2025**

Only one game took place on the third day of the World Junior Summer Showcase and it was between Canada Red and Canada White on Tuesday, July 29. It was quite the display of talent as all of the players on the ice were vying for a final spot on the roster. The fans that came to watch were in for a treat as they not only saw 5-on-5 play in the first and third periods, but in the second period, both teams went on alternating power plays.

Then, when regulation ended in a tie, they went to a 3-on-3 five-minute overtime, which ended scoreless. They then went to a shootout, which was planned whether the game was tied or not, and declared Canada White a winner after six rounds. All of the speed and skills were on display, and in this article, we'll look at a few takeaways from today's game, starting with the number one overall draft pick from this past NHL Entry Draft.

### **Schaefer Shows His Skills**

Defensemen typically get overlooked for all that they do, but not a player like Matthew Schaefer. He plays heads-up hockey in both the offensive and defensive zones, and he's always moving. When watching him play in the showcase, it's easy to see his level of skill, especially in the defensive zone. He moved around the zone following the puck but always had his eyes towards the front of the net, looking for the opponent who was open and jumping to block them.

That may seem like a regular defensive move, but usually the defenseman is stationary in front of the net waiting for the player to come to them, not the other way around. He wasn't afraid to jump into the offensive zone if he saw an opportunity. He didn't do it too often, but only if he knew he had a chance.

On the flip side, if he got caught trying to enter the offensive zone, he turned on the jets and raced to get back to his position, and did so without giving up too much. He's truly a strong up-and-coming all-around defenseman who has the promise of being a great defenseman in the NHL someday soon.

"This is what I need, obviously I need high competition, everyone wants to earn a spot, and when I go to camp I'm going to be playing against NHL guys that are fighting hard, guys that are coming up and nothing's giving it. It's going to be a really hard battle and I need this, because I need game situations so when I go in I'm more ready and it's good to get game like situations so that when I go to camp and play against NHL guys, you know I have that situations," said Schaefer about how this is preparing him for the upcoming season.

The focus was mainly on Schaefer, but Gavin McKenna is also a rising star who had a lot of eyes on him. He tallied a single assist in the Red/White game, but it was clear he's still adjusting, and it'll be fun to see what he does going forward.

### **Lindstrom & Hage Shine**

Of course, everyone was watching McKenna and Schaefer mainly, but Cayden Lindstrom and Michael Hage stole the show on the scoresheet. Hage got things started with the first goal of the game, and then he went on to help his team score again as he assisted on the next goal that was originally credited to Marek Vanacker; and then given to Cole Beaudoin.

“It was good, it was intense, obviously so much skill, there’s so many smart players, it’s a lot of fun to be out there and try to showcase what type of player I am. Yeah, I really enjoyed it,” Hage said about his feelings on the game.

Hage was on Canada Red, and it looked like they had the upper hand until the third period, when Canada White found their way thanks to back-to-back power play goals courtesy of Lindstrom. He’s working his way back from injury, and he looked pretty strong out on the ice.

“Yeah, like you said before, we’re not really messing around here, we all want to showcase what we can do, and that if it’s your physical side, then so be it. We’re all physical players, and we all want to be on this team, so I think just playing physical, I mean it’s part of the game, right?” said Lindstrom about the physicality.

“For me personally, I don’t think I’m that close to where I was before, I think I have a lot of more work to do. Obviously, it is better than it was previously than a couple months ago. Ever since I got to (Michigan) State there we worked on a lot of speed work and whatnot, and sprints and things like that, so I think that’s really helped me get my speed and my strength back to really get by guys and things like that,” Lindstrom continued when asked about his injury recovery.

### **Canada Moves Smooth**

All of the games in the showcase have been fun to watch, but the Canada game went to another level. The first period had very few whistles, and it was mostly a free-flowing game with the puck going end to end and smoothly transitioning back and forth without offsides, icings, or other interruptions. It was very entertaining to watch as the puck went from player to player smoothly, and the game moved along at a strong pace.

The other games obviously had a lot of physicality because it was different teams from different countries playing each other, and the tensions were high. Most would assume that Canada’s game would’ve had minimal physical activity because they’re playing against their own teammates.

While that was mostly correct, there were a few more hits than expected, and big ones at that. It proves that when a player is trying to earn a spot on the team, they will be willing to throw their body against a potential teammate within reason. It is good for the team too, because in an actual game that has something on the line, they need that player to throw hits, and these players followed through.

All of the teams will be in action on the fourth day of the showcase, with the USA and Canada shrinking to just one roster instead of two. It’ll be interesting to see how the competitiveness rises as the showcase continues to move along, and who will come out on top in exhibition.

## NHL.com / Canada displaying goaltending strength at World Junior Summer Showcase

**By Adam Kimelman – July 31, 2025**

Canada feels one of the keys to its gold-medal chances at the 2026 IIHF World Junior Championship will come from its strength in goal.

The external narrative might be that Canada has struggled to produce top-flight goalies in recent years. But its four goalies here at the World Junior Summer Showcase -- Evan Gardner (Columbus Blue Jackets), Carter George (Los Angeles Kings), Jack Ivankovic (Nashville Predators) and Joshua Ravensbergen (San Jose Sharks) -- see it a bit differently.

"I think the guys here are phenomenal," George said. "We push each other. I think it's just good for one another, because we're right there with each other and we're pushing each other to get better. We're all fighting for that one spot. ... You can see the other three are very talented guys, and it's awesome to play with them."

They're competing this week at the WJSS, at Ridder Arena with practices and games against Finland, Sweden and the United States. It's the first step toward Canada picking its roster for the 2026 WJC, which will be held in Minnesota from Dec. 26-Jan. 5, 2026.

George had a 1.76 goals-against average, .936 save percentage and two shutouts in four games at the 2025 WJC but allowed a goal to Adam Jecho with 40 seconds remaining in the third period of Canada's 4-3 loss to Czechia in the quarterfinals. Ivankovic played one game, making 24 saves through overtime and seven saves on eight shootout attempts in a 3-2 loss to Latvia during the preliminary round.

"Obviously we all know what happened last year, and we all weren't very happy with the results," George said. "So even at the summer showcase it still gets brought up, and you kind of carry that motivation to here."

Canada goaltending coach Dan De Palma has been impressed by what he's seen from the four goalies in the short time they've been together. But one thing he's stressed is that despite there being two returning players at the position, the No. 1 spot is wide open.

"Guys are motivated," he said. "They understand the goal is to win gold. We haven't won gold in a couple years and that's the only objective for the group. So whatever it takes, whoever is going to give us the best chance, is going to get the opportunity."

Gardner, a second-round pick (No. 60) in the 2024 NHL Draft, said that was made clear to him in his first conversation with De Palma.

The 19-year-old was 23-13-5 with a 2.82 GAA, .911 save percentage and three shutouts with Saskatoon of the Western Hockey League last season.

"When I got my first call with Dan, he said, 'I really want you to push for that spot,'" he said. "'Put your head down and go to work. If they like you, they like you.' That's what I was told coming into this. I'm going to try to put my best foot forward and try and come for this spot."

Ravensbergen, a first-round pick (No. 30) in the 2025 NHL Draft, is taking the same approach after attending the summer showcase last year.

He feels he's made big strides in his game since last summer, including going 33-13-4 with a 3.00 GAA and .901 save percentage in 51 games with Prince George of the WHL.

"I feel like I've become a lot more calm," he said. "I was aggressive and feel like I read the play a lot better, and I feel like position-wise I'm a little bit better, showing more of my body and taking way more of the net. ... Things that worked in junior but need to change when I want to make that jump to pro."

Ivankovic, a second-round pick (No. 58) in the 2025 draft, last year became the first 17-year-old goalie (he turned 18 on May 22) to start a WJC game for Canada since Jimmy Waite in 1987.

He was 25-12-5 with a 3.05 GAA, .903 save percentage and two shutouts in 43 games with Brampton of the Ontario Hockey League and will play at the University of Michigan this season.

"His skill is high, his footwork is really elite, his hands are great," De Palma said. "When you have the talent, you have the chance to get to a spot to make saves. He's very smart too in the crease. He understands where the play is going, he doesn't try to overread things. He's seeing things that are happening, so between talent and brains, he does a pretty good job."

De Palma also said he's been impressed with how George, a second-round pick (No. 57) in the 2024 draft, has grown his pro habits. He had a 3.35 GAA and .909 save percentage in 47 games with Owen Sound of the OHL and finished his season going 2-0-0 with a 0.50 GAA, .984 save percentage and one shutout in two games with Ontario of the American Hockey League.

The one bit of advice De Palma gives his goalies is to ignore the outside noise and focus on their habits and their details, and the rest will take care of itself.

"They're good goalies," he said. "They've all shown that. They've all at their time played their best hockey. For us, we're going to try to encourage and teach here so they play their best here. They leave, they go play their best version of themselves and they make it an incredibly hard decision for us. The gold medal is the goal and that's all that matters."