

DALLAS STARS COMMUNICATIONS

DAILY NEWS CLIPS

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NHL.com (Dallas Stars)

Dallas Stars announce 2025-26 regular-season schedule

By Dallas Stars Communications
July 16, 2025

FRISCO, Texas – The Dallas Stars announced today their 2025-26 regular-season schedule, which opens Thursday, Oct. 9 against the Winnipeg Jets at Canada Life Centre. The Stars will hold their home opener at American Airlines Center on Tuesday, Oct. 14 vs. the Minnesota Wild.

[Click here to view the season schedule in calendar form](#)

The League's regular-season schedule will pause from Feb. 6-24, when the world's top NHL players will gather in Milan and Cortina for the 2026 Olympic Winter Games.

Dallas will host 31 opponents at American Airlines Center as part of its 2025-26 home slate, featuring 13 within the Central Division, 12 against Pacific Division opponents and 16 vs. Eastern Conference foes, with the majority of the games starting at 7 p.m. CT. The Stars will have 16 home weekend dates, including four on Fridays, eight on Saturdays and eight on Sundays.

March will be a home-heavy month for the Stars, who will play eight times at AAC including a six-game homestand March 6-16. On the flip side, Dallas will be on the road for 11 games in January. The team's longest road trip of the season is six games from Jan. 6-15, 2026.

Additional highlights include a day-after Thanksgiving game vs. Utah (Nov. 28), a New Year's Eve matchup vs. Buffalo (Dec. 31) and a New Year's Day game at Chicago (Jan. 1).

All Stars home games for the 2025-26 regular season will go on sale to the general public at a later date. Dallas Stars Victory Club Members, Dallas Stars App users and Dallas Stars Insiders will receive presales to purchase tickets before the general public. Victory Club Memberships and Half Memberships are available now. Fill out an [interest form](#) to get more information. The app is available to download now on the [App Store®](#) and [Google Play](#). To become a Dallas Stars Insider and get access to ticket presales, [click here](#).

The complete national and local broadcast schedules will be released at a later date.

STARS SCHEDULE NOTES

Home games by day

Monday: 3

Tuesday: 9

Wednesday: 3

Thursday: 6

Friday: 4

Saturday: 8

Sunday: 8

Road games by day

Monday: 3

Tuesday: 10

Wednesday: 5

Thursday: 11

Friday: 1

Saturday: 9

Sunday: 2

Home games by month

October: 6

November: 7

December: 7

January: 4

February: 4

March: 8

April: 5

Road games by month

October: 5

November: 8

December: 7

January: 11

February: 0

March: 8

April: 2

Back-to-backs (12 sets/24 games total)

Oct. 25 vs. Carolina & Oct. 26 at Nashville

Nov. 8 at Nashville & Nov. 9 vs. Seattle

Nov. 25 at Edmonton & Nov. 26 at Seattle

Dec. 2 at New York Rangers & Dec. 3 at New Jersey

Dec. 18 at San Jose & Dec. 19 at Anaheim

Dec. 31 vs. Buffalo & Jan. 1 at Chicago

Jan. 6 at Carolina & Jan. 7 at Washington

Jan. 12 at Los Angeles & Jan. 13 at Anaheim

Jan. 22 at Columbus & Jan. 23 vs. St. Louis

March 2 at Vancouver & March 3 at Calgary

March 21 at Minnesota & March 22 vs. Vegas

March 28 at Pittsburgh & March 29 at Philadelphia

NHL.com

Examining the Dallas Stars for 2025/26

By NHL Tonight
July 17, 2025

The NHL Tonight guys predict how the Dallas Stars will fare in their upcoming season

<https://www.nhl.com/video/examining-the-dallas-stars-for-2025-26-6375774658112>

NHL.com

NHL teams release 2025-26 schedules with creative social media videos

By Christopher Detwiler
July 16, 2025

Wednesday marked schedule release day in the NHL for the 2025-26 season, and teams got creative with their announcements on social media.

The Dallas Stars recruited kids who play for the Stars' youth hockey program to draw the logo of each of their opponents this season.

https://x.com/DallasStars/status/1945529200548438372?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1945529200548438372%7Ctwgr%5Edfd4319691a20acf5f426a3fa33e735ceb2f0b5e%7Ctwcon%5Es1_c10&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nhl.com%2Fnews%2F2025-26-nhl-schedule-release-videos

The end results look pretty good if you ask us.

https://x.com/DallasStars/status/1945529894047293765?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1945529894047293765%7Ctwgr%5Edfd4319691a20acf5f426a3fa33e735ceb2f0b5e%7Ctwcon%5Es1_c10&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nhl.com%2Fnews%2F2025-26-nhl-schedule-release-videos

In another video, Calgary Flames forward Ryan Lomberg showed off his acting skills, parodying the hit movie series "Rambo." Lomberg dressed up as Sylvester Stallone's iconic character as the video went through the team's opponents.

Cal Clutterbuck also did some acting, helping out with the New York Islanders schedule release video in the role as a summer intern with the team.

https://x.com/NYIslanders/status/1945529410096173264?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1945529410096173264%7Ctwgr%5Edfd4319691a20acf5f426a3fa33e735ceb2f0b5e%7Ctwcon%5Es1_c10&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nhl.com%2Fnews%2F2025-26-nhl-schedule-release-videos

The Toronto Maple Leafs released a paws-itively great video, using players' dogs to announce the schedule. The video also featured dogs from the Save our Scruff program, who are up for adoption.

https://x.com/MapleLeafs/status/1945531305908658368?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1945531305908658368%7Ctwgr%5Edfd4319691a20acf5f426a3fa33e735ceb2f0b5e%7Ctwcon%5Es1_c10&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nhl.com%2Fnews%2F2025-26-nhl-schedule-release-videos

The San Jose Sharks had more of a nostalgic take on the schedule release video.

https://x.com/SanJoseSharks/status/1945529533626462386?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1945529533626462386%7Ctwgr%5Edfd4319691a20acf5f426a3fa33e735ceb2f0b5e%7Ctwcon%5Es1_c10&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nhl.com%2Fnews%2F2025-26-nhl-schedule-release-videos

The Buffalo Sabres added onto their schedule teaser, when they announced their opponents as different chicken wing flavors. For the full release video, the team had broadcaster Rob Ray try all the different flavors.

https://x.com/BuffaloSabres/status/1945528911195992528?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1945528911195992528%7Ctwgr%5Edfd4319691a20acf5f426a3fa33e735ceb2f0b5e%7Ctwcon%5Es1_c10&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.nhl.com%2Fnews%2F2025-26-nhl-schedule-release-videos

The season starts on Oct. 7 with a nationally televised tripleheader on ESPN in the United States and Sportsnet and TVA Sports in Canada.

DLLS

Why Mavrik Bourque will get the reset he needed this season with the Dallas Stars

By Sean Shapiro
July 18, 2025

Mavrik Bourque had a frustrating end to his season.

After appearing in 73 regular season games, posting 25 points, he was shelved in the playoffs and spent most of the postseason watching from the press box. In the three playoff games he did play, the Stars went 0-3, and in the Game 5 season finale against the Edmonton Oilers he took an early penalty that the Oilers capitalized on.

Whatever terminology you want to use, Bourque had ended up on Pete DeBoer's no-fly list. And while DeBoer had mended some past relationships in prior situations, Nils Lundkvist for example, the 23-year-old forward and former AHL MVP might have the most to gain from the coaching change.

Bourque also stands to benefit from the Stars offseason roster shuffling. With Mikko Rantanen and Jake Oettinger's contracts kicking in, the Stars will have to rely more on younger players this.

Bourque is naturally a center, but has also played on the wing in his short NHL career. Believe it or not with his smaller frame, Bourque did a nice job getting to the front of the net last season, something the Stars struggled with in the playoffs when Bourque was primarily a healthy scratch.

Here is Bourque's shot chart from last season, courtesy of InStat.

<https://cdn.allcitynetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2025/07/18062312/Screenshot-2025-07-18-at-7.21.32%E2%80%AFAM.png>

Here are his goals isolated out.

<https://cdn.allcitynetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2025/07/18062332/Screenshot-2025-07-18-at-7.21.21%E2%80%AFAM.png>

Bourque also does this primarily without camping in that area. His offensive game, particular as a finisher, is built more on arriving and stopping at the right time. Two years ago in the AHL, he was the best player in that league in this regard.

Bourque already fits in the way Stars coach Glen Gulutzan will want his forwards to play, offensively creative and defensively responsible, while the player also benefit from his old AHL coach, Neil Graham, being promoted to the NHL bench as an assistant.

That's a bit of an underrated element of the coaching change and how it impacts players. Many players are getting a blank slate with Gulutzan, only Jamie Benn has played for him, but some

of the younger players that have recently come through the Texas Stars might have an advocate on staff now with Graham.

Gulutzan acknowledged this earlier this week, telling me how he would lean on Graham to get a good early feel on some of the players coming in that the assistant recently coached through multiple playoff runs.

Bourque also has an opportunity to prove his positional flexibility this season. While he's primarily been a center and then a right wing, there could be more opportunity in the top-six on the left side, where Bourque could potentially be a candidate to play with Matt Duchene and Tyler Seguin.

Either way, for a player that had a sour taste at the end of the season, there's a big opportunity upcoming if he's willing to take it.

DLLS

Top highlights & moments of the Dallas Stars 2025-26 schedule

By Sam Nestler
July 16, 2025

The Dallas Stars, along with the entire NHL, officially released their 2025-26 regular season schedule on Wednesday, always a surge of excitement during an otherwise silent time for hockey fans mid summer.

First of all, here is the Stars full schedule:

https://x.com/samnestler/status/1945529746701549635?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1945529746701549635%7Ctwgr%5E6e9aab2c2d1d2f344196e39f57c5d9b9873e1e6d%7Ctwcon%5Es1_c10&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Falldls.com%2Ftop-highlights-moments-of-the-dallas-stars-2025-26-schedule%2F

Now, let's dive into a few of the highlights and potential moments throughout the year.

Season opener is always a good time

As they did last season, the Stars open 2025-26 on the road. This season, they open their schedule at the Winnipeg Jets on Oct. 9 and in Denver against the Colorado Avalanche two days later.

Talk about seeing familiar faces. The Stars dispatched both the Avalanche and Jets in the first two rounds of the 2025 Stanley Cup Playoffs. They impressively overcame a 2-0 deficit to beat the Avs in Game 7 and handled the Presidents' Trophy Jets in only six games. Will this be the return of Connor Hellebuyck-Buyck-Buyck on the DLLS Stars show? Will Colorado get a bit of revenge on the team that ended their season two years running?

Oh, and the Stars get to see an old friend in Jonathan Toews, now with the Jets after missing two full seasons due to injury... well, not so much a friend. More so, a player who haunted their dreams, slicing up many Dallas teams with his pal Patrick Kane and the Chicago Blackhawks.

The NHL schedule begins on Oct. 7, so per usual — or at least it feels like it is — Dallas will wait around a couple of days before dipping their toes in the water.

I feel home

After two road games, the Stars finally get to play in front of a packed, sold-out, and raucous American Airlines Center crowd in their home opener against the Minnesota Wild on Oct. 14. Sure, it's a Tuesday night. But that doesn't matter in Texas. Stars fans are going to flood that building, the Green Carpet will be lined up hours early, and the atmosphere should be a fun (and hot) one in Big D.

Opening up at home against Minnesota is fun since that is where Dallas began as an NHL franchise. However, that rivalry has cooled off, if it ever really got going. How about a Minnesota-Dallas playoff round again? I know the fans hate each other, and I'm sure many of the players feel the same.

Two days later, Dallas welcomes the Vancouver Canucks to town for a Thursday night showdown. The Canucks were a MESS with a capital every letter last season. But this year, they hope to put most of that behind them, as captain Quinn Hughes and new head coach Adam Foote look to get back in the playoff race and the media cycle for good things, rather than the bad and messy.

Welcome back, boys!

I always think it's nice when a former Stars player gets to face his old team in Dallas first, rather than on the road. And that's what we get to see this year, and pretty early in the season, too.

On Oct. 25, just the eighth game of the season, Dallas fans get to welcome back a player they loved, Logan Stankoven.

Stankoven — fresh off signing an eight-year extension— and the Canes should make for a fun Saturday night at the AAC, the first home Saturday of the year. Stankoven was a key piece in the trade that brought Mikko Rantanen to Dallas. Although not many Stars fans can possibly find a way to complain about adding a superstar like Rantanen, most or maybe even all, are disappointed and sad that it had to be Stankoven going the other way.

Stankoven came on the DALLS Stars show this summer to talk about his trade, former teammates and good friends, and plenty of other fun stuff. Check that out if you missed it!

But Stankoven is not the only former Stars forward to make a welcome return to Dallas this season.

Mason Marchment and the Seattle Kraken come to town on Sunday, Nov. 9. Marchment was traded to Seattle this summer to make some room in the salary cap to bring back Matt Duchene and Jamie Benn. Stars GM Jim Nill admitted he did not want to move Marchment, but the addition of Rantanen and the earned extensions of Thomas Harley, Wyatt Johnston, Jake Oettinger, and Esa Lindell made it impossible to keep him around.

Marchment has a lot to prove in Seattle. After getting off to a wicked hot start last year, he saw his offense dry up after his brutal facial injury. He never really re-found that offense and was among the many underperforming forwards during the Stars playoff run.

Many, including myself, believed Marchment was a key to this team taking a more physical approach next season. The Stars are making a conscious effort to do exactly that, including being heavier on the forecheck, but will have to do it without one of the better F1 forecheckers in the game.

But more importantly, the reunion of Marchment and Oettinger, and the likely many hijinks that will come between the two buddies, will be fun to watch.

We meet again, for the first time, for the last time

I understand that this heading makes no sense. I was going to just say we meet again. But then I thought, if I don't add "Spaceballs" references every week or so, what am I really even doing with my life?

On Nov. 4, the Stars host their now-hated rivals, the Edmonton Oilers. Is rival too strong a word?

I know many sports fans who believe both teams have to win for it to be a true rivalry. In reality, Edmonton has not only ended the Stars season in the Western Conference Final two years running, but they have exposed Dallas and made them look the far inferior team of the final four, especially this year.

Edmonton is also the source of plenty of drama and likely the main reason Pete DeBoer is no longer behind the Dallas bench. DeBoer was fired after falling short again, but also because of the way he pulled Oettinger in an elimination Game 5 and pretty much stomped all over his franchise goalie in postgame and exit interviews.

In a bigger sense, the loss to Edmonton is why Glen Gulutzan is back leading the Stars.

It's nice that many of these "big" games or reunions take place in Dallas. Fans get to see some of their favorite players and their most hated team up close on home ice. Should be a fun year, can't wait to cover it with y'all.

Other notable dates

Nov. 1 – Dallas travels to Sunrise to face the Stanley Cup champion Florida Panthers.

Nov. 6 – Mikael Granlund returns to Dallas with the Anaheim Ducks.

Nov. 25 – The first visit back to Edmonton.

Nov. 28 – The first-ever matchup with the Utah Mammoth.

Jan. 29 – A matchup with Mitch Marner, Mark Stone, and the Vegas Golden Knights that Stars fans adore so much. Oh, and it is exactly one year and one day from the moment Stone dove headfirst into Miro Heiskanen's knee. So there's that.

Feb. 5 – Feb. 24 – A long, three-week break for the Winter Olympics, which NHL players will partake in for the first time since 2014.

April 15 – The regular-season finale at the Buffalo Sabres during a month that features five home games in 10 days.

Dallas Morning News

Dallas Stars schedule release: Season and home openers, playoff rematches, more

By SportsDay Staff
July 16, 2025

The Dallas Stars released their schedule for the 2025-26 season on Wednesday.

See highlights from the Stars' 2025-26 slate and the full schedule below.

Starting the season against familiar foes

The Stars will open their season at 7 p.m. on Oct. 9 against the Winnipeg Jets at Canada Life Centre in what will be new head coach Glen Gulutzan's debut.

The game will be a rematch of the second-round playoff series between the Stars and Jets last year. Dallas beat Winnipeg in six games with an overtime game-winner by Thomas Harley to advance to the Western Conference finals.

Dallas will face another familiar foe in its second game, a road matchup against the Colorado Avalanche at 8 p.m. on Oct. 11.

The Stars defeated the Avalanche in a first-round series that went seven games last postseason. Mikko Rantanen's hat trick led the Stars to victory in Game 7.

Home opener

Dallas will host the Minnesota Wild in its home opener at 8:30 p.m. on Oct. 14 at American Airlines Center.

The game will be the first in a two-game homestand that concludes against the Vancouver Canucks on Oct. 16.

Conference finals rematch

The Stars will face the Edmonton Oilers, the team that has eliminated them in the last two Western Conference finals and where Gulutzan was previously an assistant coach, for the first time on Nov. 4. The game will be at 7 p.m. at American Airlines Center.

That will be one of three contests against Edmonton. Dallas will also face the Oilers on the road Nov. 25 and again at home on March 12.

New Year's Eve game

In their annual New Year's Eve game, the Stars will host the Buffalo Sabres in a 7 p.m. matchup.

Heavy home, road months

In March, Dallas will play eight games at AAC, including a six-game stretch from March 6-16. During that homestand, Dallas will face Colorado, Chicago, Vegas, Edmonton, Detroit and Utah.

In January, Dallas will play 11 road games, including the team's season-long six-game road trip from Jan. 6-15. The Stars will face Carolina, Washington, San Jose, Los Angeles, Anaheim and Utah during that stretch.

Full schedule

https://media.d3.nhle.com/image/private/t_document/prd/oj4chd6r3bkc8pa7kuzp.pdf

Fort Worth Star-Telegram

Dallas Stars release 2025-26 schedule: Key matchups and dates to know

By Alyssa Cooper
July 17, 2025

The 2025-26 National Hockey League season begins on Tuesday, Oct. 7. After falling in the Western Conference Finals last season, what lies ahead for the Dallas Stars this season?

The Dallas Stars will open their season on the road against the Winnipeg Jets on Thursday, Oct. 9, at Canada Life Centre. The Stars' home opener is against the Minnesota Wild on Tuesday, Oct. 14.

The Stars' longest homestand of the season occurs in March as they host the Colorado Avalanche, Chicago Blackhawks, Las Vegas Golden Knights, Edmonton Oilers, Detroit Red Wings and the Utah Mammoth from March 6-16.

The Stars will spend the most time away from Dallas in January as they take on the Carolina Hurricanes, Washington Capitals, San Jose Sharks Los Angeles Kings, Anaheim Ducks and the Utah Mammoth from Jan. 6-15.

The Stars will take on the Chicago Blackhawks on New Year's Day.

The Stars play two games this season against the defending Stanley Cup Champions, the Florida Panthers. They will host the Panthers on Saturday, Dec. 13 in the American Airlines Center in Dallas.

Fans can purchase tickets to all Dallas Stars games on the official NHL website.

NBC DFW

Dallas Stars rematch with Edmonton set for November, 2025-26 schedule released

By NBCDFW Staff
July 16, 2025

The Dallas Stars released their 2025-26 season schedule on Wednesday and circled a November date for a rematch with the Edmonton Oilers.

In May, the Stars lost 4-1 to the Oilers in their third straight trip to the Western Conference Finals. The Oilers lost to the Carolina Panthers 4-2 in the Stanley Cup Finals.

Led by new head coach Glen Gulutzan, the Stars will host 41 opponents at American Airlines Center next season, including "13 within the Central Division, 12 against Pacific Division opponents and 16 vs. Eastern Conference foes."

The team said they'll have 16 home weekend dates, including four on Fridays, eight on Saturdays and eight on Sundays. Most of the games next season will start at 7 p.m.

The Stars will be busy over the holidays. They'll play the Utah Mammoth the day after Thanksgiving, host a New Year's Eve matchup against Buffalo, and then fly to Chicago for a game on New Year's Day.

The NHL will take about three weeks off in February for the 2026 Olympics in Milan Cortina. The Stars will only have four games in February, all home games. They will host St. Louis on Feb. 4 before the break and return to action at home on Feb. 25 vs. Seattle.

With the delay due to the Olympics, the Stars' regular season ends on April 15 in Buffalo.

Single-game tickets are not yet on sale. Dallas Stars Victory Club Members, Dallas Stars App users and Dallas Stars Insiders will have access to exclusive presales.

WFAA

Here's who the Dallas Stars are playing in the 2025-2026 regular season

By Zachary Yanes
July 16, 2025

DALLAS — With the 2025–26 NHL season just a few months away, the Dallas Stars released their full regular-season schedule Wednesday.

The Stars open the season on Oct. 9 against the Winnipeg Jets at Canada Life Centre. They'll remain on the road for a matchup with the Colorado Avalanche on Oct. 11 before returning to Dallas for their home opener against the Minnesota Wild on Oct. 14.

Later in the season, the Stars will have a busy holiday stretch. They're set to host Utah on Nov. 28, the day after Thanksgiving, and Buffalo on New Year's Eve, then travel to Chicago to face the Blackhawks on New Year's Day.

In February, the regular season will have a break from Feb. 6 to 24 for NHL players to travel to Milan and Cortina to compete in the 2026 Olympic Winter Games.

Throughout the 2025 season, the Stars will host 41 games in Dallas: 13 against teams in the Central Division, 12 against the Pacific Division and 16 against the Eastern Conference.

After falling short to the Edmonton Oilers in the Western Conference Final, the Stars made several organizational changes -- including a coaching shakeup. Dallas parted ways with Pete DeBoer after three seasons and brought back former Stars head coach Glen Gulutzan.

So, as fans begin circling dates on the calendar, they'll also prepare to welcome a new-look team to the ice this October.

View the Dallas Stars' [full schedule here](#).

Stars Thoughts

My Summer Reading, Including Two Hockey Books I Heartily Recommend

By Robert Tiffin
July 17, 2025

You may or may not believe, like Dostoevsky, that the world will be saved by beauty. Imagination and contemplation can sometimes seem like luxuries of privilege, something only those not stuck in the everyday fight for survival can enjoy.

One thing that I find becoming truer every year is how much I benefit from searching out things that will make me think more deeply than I did before encountering them. This is, I think, increasingly vital to our cultural survival, with so many people's lives now being spent in the shallow pools of whatever videos or rage-baiting posts The Algorithm feeds us.

I recently spent half a decade in elementary education, and from what I saw, it is not getting better. Kids are being raised by screens inches from their faces with endless scrolling, and indiscriminate video consumption (almost exclusively of the micro variety found on TikTok or Reels) is withering our imaginations on the vine.

The good news is that there is hope.

Whether as parents, teachers, artists, friends, or co-workers, we are all of us individuals with imaginations of our own, and we can always make someone else's life better just for being there. I can't tell you the amount of times I've had a friend give me an eye-opening moment by cooking me something I'd never tasted before, showing me an incredible movie I hadn't even heard of, or by recommending a book that blew my mind, or a hike I'd never taken before. These things all changed me because someone I cared about led me to something wonderful.

(I won't pretend that I'm doing that today, though. I'm just recommending some books I liked.)

I remember at one of my first jobs, I would love to use my lunch break to read a few chapters of a book, or even to listen to part of a podcast. But now, there's a far stronger urge to "check in" with my phone after being away from it for a while. Before I know it, I've gotten a bunch of tiny dopamine hits from scrolling without really learning anything new at all, and half an hour (or more) has gone by, and I reluctantly put my phone down, feeling vaguely unsatisfied.

This isn't an anti-technology screed, or even an anti-escapist one. We need entertainment, after all, and not every book, or movie, or even TikTok needs philosophical justification. Sometimes, it's perfectly fine to eat a metaphorical piece of candy or two. All I'm saying is, there's probably a good reason that a whole lot of college students can't read a full book anymore.

Besides, the dangers of mindless entertainment is a criticism I've heard of sports, too. How is some arbitrary game played by millionaires really good for us, as people? Shouldn't we be taking all that money generated by pro sports and giving it to the poor,¹ or something?

Where I land on this is that sports, at their best, can be as meaningful as a great book. They push us to think more deeply about what it means to be human, and they inspire and ennoble

us in ways we never saw coming. Because sports, like all works of art, are made and played and refereed by people.

So today, I wanted to talk about a handful of good books I'm reading this summer, or have already read this year, and one I haven't read yet. If you've read any of these and want to yell your disagreement or anything, please do so! Sometimes even I am wrong,² and I always benefit from being corrected, unless I'm hungry.

A couple of these are hockey books, and a couple are not. Even if you have no interest in reading any of these, I'd love to hear what books you're reading, especially if I'd benefit from them.

Let's start off with an all-timer.

The Game, Ken Dryden

During the 2012-13 NHL lockout, I was starved for hockey. After the Stars had fallen just shy of a playoff spot in Glen Gulutzan's first season as head coach, there was reason to be optimistic that the dark days of Dallas Stars hockey were ending, particularly with Tom Gaglardi having bought the team. New life was on the horizon, and hey, the Stars even signed the legendary Jaromír Jágr! It was going to be a fun season, however it ended.

Turns out, seasons need to start in order to end, though. With another CBA expiring, things took a slow-but-inevitable turn back to the hallmark of Gary Bettman's tenure as NHL Commissioner: yet another lockout, just eight years after a whole season was lost in order to bring in a hard salary cap.

I'll wax poetic about it for just a second: it sucked.

One redeeming part of that whole time, however, was that I was starved for hockey, so I expanded my horizons a bit. And that's how I finally ran across *The Game*, by Ken Dryden, which I believe was a birthday gift from my parents in that summer of 2012.

This book is fantastic. Probably, it is the best hockey book ever written, but I haven't read them all yet. If you have even a passing interest in hockey, you need to read it. This is a player who took a year off (and then retired shortly after) to study law. Oh, and he also happens to be one of the greatest goalies in NHL history.

Dryden's writing is thoughtful and introspective, the rare combination of insight and resignation. He talks about his and his teammate's superstitions with a sort of wry grin because yeah, he and you both know they're bogus, but they make him feel better, so what are ya gonna do?

But I use superstition in another way. I don't want...the first shot to be the reason I play well. It may be "better to be lucky than good," as we're often reminded (for a loser can be good, but only a winner is lucky), but I want to feel connected to what I do, I want the feelings a game gives unshared, undiminished by something separate from me. So, instead, I use it a focus for the fear I feel.

-Ken Dryden, *The Game*

The best stuff might be when Dryden talks about his experience before and after games just sitting in the dressing room, taking in the atmosphere. I don't want to spoil anything, but this book is one the most immersive reads there is, written by one of the most brilliant hockey players ever to play, ahem, the game.

The Game is available on Amazon, but go into a used bookstore to buy it if you want to make a more pleasant afternoon of it.

Home Ice, Jack Falla

Something I meant to do this year was to thank John Buccigross.

I only rarely saw him on ESPN with Barry Melrose doing NHL 2Night, as we didn't have cable TV in my house growing up for much the same motivations discussed in the introduction above.

But after I graduated college in 2008, I had a weird pastiche of part-time jobs for that first year attempting to use my journalism degree, and one of them was interning at a local chamber of commerce. Which meant that I mostly sat at a desk and didn't get paid while my boss occasionally stopped by the office to play poker on his computer. Those days could drag, but one good thing that came out of them was reading Buccigross's columns on ESPN.com.

That column is where I read his first "Alex Ovechkin will catch Gretzky" story 15 years before it happened. But more importantly, for me, it's where I first heard about Jack Falla.

The sports journalism professor at Boston University was a beloved figure, but I never met him. I did, however, read a few of his books. And the best one, by far, is Home Ice.

What's it about? Well, it's mostly about skating on frozen ponds that you build yourself, but it's also about what backyard ice rinks mean to a neighborhood, and to the people who have them. There's a stirring scene in one chapter where Falla and his wife go for a skate late at night after the children have all left, and it's stuck with me for coming up on two decades now.

It's a book that is clearly written by a journalism professor, so you can see hooks and ledes and exactitude in every short chapter. It's part journal, part memoir, and part history of going to watch the Bruins play at the Boston Garden—a 20-page chapter that will make you miss days you might never have experienced yourself.

Also, read Fluto Shinzawa's story about the book if you don't want to take my word for it.

Home Ice is on Amazon, but you'll enjoy it more if you pick up a used copy somewhere for cheap. Okay, let's finish up this list with a few shorter hits.

Mr. Hockey, Gordie Howe

This is one I haven't read yet, even though I was given it years ago. But, I do own it, so that's something, right?

If you've read it, how is it? Should I stop stalling and dig into this? I'm a little worried that it's gonna be vaguely dissapointing, the way Bobby Orr's autobiography was, but maybe that's just paranoia.

I'm told it's good, but I guess I'll have to get back to you when I actually read it. Maybe I just wasted your time. Hey, sometimes you just don't get around to reading things, right?

It's on Amazon.

Letters to a Young Poet, Rainer Maria Rilke,

This was a gift from an old girlfriend years ago, and I only made it halfway through before we broke up. Then it sat untouched for a while, for obvious reasons. I'm reading it again this summer, but slowly.

It's a collection of ten letters the esteemed Rilke wrote to Franz Kappus, the eponymous recipient, in the early 20th century. (Side note: The Greater Journey is a fantastic background read for something like this.)

You can tell the letters are the furthest thing from perfunctory. The German poet seems to be working out his own views on what it means to write while trying to be as practical as a poet is capable of being. Rilke goes into detail about how to navigate even some great writers (like Richard Dehmel) without falling prey to some of the pitfalls those artists failed to avoid themselves, and he also just gives painfully honest answers about what he thinks, feels, loves, and hates.

Each of the ten letters is dense in a protein-rich sort of way, and each deserves to be mulled over accordingly. You can't breeze through the collection, even though it totals something like just 50 small pages. I think of this collection as a sort of fancy charcuterie, where each piece of meat and cheese is worth savoring, making you reflect on just what makes meat and cheese so delicious to begin with when presented in their ideal states. Maybe I'm just hungry, though.

It's touching and sincere, and it will make you think about beautiful words in a tender sort of way that I won't even try to describe further for fear of getting mawkish. It can border on the pretentious if you don't approach it with a sincere desire, like Kappus, to write better. But like all great art, it transcends that risk because it accomplishes its goal. It's a great book to own, sort of an Elements of Style for tortured poets. Read it.

It's on Amazon.

Eager, Ben Goldfarb

Everyone knows about the "bringing wolves back to Yellowstone" story, but what if I told you this book has a whole chapter arguing that beavers might be the unsung hero in that tale? Or that the tale is even a largely false one, so far as it's commonly understood?

This is like Bill Bryson as a crunchy park ranger who had recently been converted to the hydrological reformation movement (real thing). This book made me want to go look at beaver dams. It was commended to be my Jeff Sullivan years ago, and he knew what he was talking about. I don't know what else you need to hear, really.

It's also well-researched enough (or at least, there are lots of citations and balanced arguments about complex issues—I haven't read the research myself, because I'm not a nerd) for that not to matter. Thinking about nature is the point, not always coming up with easy answers.

It's also really funny and delightful, written with merciful amounts of wit to make even a bunch of trees sound entertaining. Also, about beaver scent glands. A lot about beaver musk, oh man, there's a bunch. Thankfully, it's not a scratch-and-sniff.

It's on Amazon.

Piranesi, Susanna Clarke

Did you begrudgingly read *Wind and Truth* because you were so invested in the *Stormlight Archives* that you slogged through over a thousand pages of meandering young adult fiction pretending to be epic fantasy, only to be fantastically annoyed after all was said and done? I sure did, but this isn't the place to talk about why that book was so disappointing (but mostly it's because nothing happens for like 900 pages).

No, this is where I wanted to talk about one of the best new novels I've read in years: *Piranesi*, a sort of post-apocalyptic mystery that probably doesn't merit the Fantasy label slapped on the cover. It's a great, entertaining, and thoughtful little story that you'll enjoy regardless of your predilection for or aversion to the genre.

Clarke takes the idea of an epistolary novel and spins the concept delightfully, but I won't spoil it with anecdotes here. We get literary irony meted out in surgically precise doses, and it works. The first part takes a bit of patience, given the limited perspective of the protagonist, but the pace increases before long, and the payoff is more than worth it. You feel the pressure just before it hits the protagonist, and it has all the best elements of a suspense film with none of the schlock.

If you need a good beach read, this is great. If you want an excuse to spend two hours at a coffee shop with air conditioning, this will also serve. Just be careful not to start reading it right before bed, because you'll have trouble putting it down and going to sleep. It's that good.

It's on Amazon. Everything seems to be, doesn't it?

Stars Stack

2025 Report Card: Jamie Benn's last hurrah is upon us.

By David Castillo
July 18, 2025

One sentence summary

More brawn than swan, Jamie Benn's parting song is Cup or Bust.

A few good stats

Cap: \$1 million (Year 1 of 1)
GP: 73
Goals: 16
Assists: 33
Points: 49
Postseason: 18 GP — 1 goals, 2 assists — 3 points
xSPAR: -0.2 less points in the standings (Rank on the team: 20th of 26)

Whatever your thoughts are of Jamie Benn at this point in his career, there's no denying — Wyatt Johnston effect or no — that he's still got plenty of juice when it comes to creating offense. While this year's chart makes clear that he belonged nowhere near the top power play unit (as we discussed in detail), he still managed to conjure up what remains of his skills into a potent offensive broth. In some ways, Benn is quite reliable.

Granted, reliability takes on a different connotation when you consider his significant weaknesses. But this year, Dallas will finally get what they pay for.

Thematically appropriate highlight

<https://youtu.be/3ZsRhE7mrfk>

I know. Sometimes metaphors aren't metaphors at all. Benn's pugilism skills have declined over the years. Just this season he got murked by Nikita Zadorov. Winnipeg's captain, Adam Lowry, is a very capable scrapper. That Benn did so well encapsulates who he is at this point in his career — his game is a five-sided fistagon. Though a shell of his former self, sound and fury don't always have to amount to nothing.

Grade: A (modest) C

Benn would get an easy B+ if we were just talking about the regular season. As I've said before, I don't think we give enough credit to how Benn has been able to stay relevant despite being a player who should look like Milan Lucic and Josh Anderson instead of Gustav Nyquist. In the regular season, 38 of his points were at even-strength. That was good for fourth on the team, tied with Roope Hintz. Again, more credit goes to Johnston for carrying him along, but Benn still has to deliver what Johnston tees him up for, and Benn did.

However, then the playoffs happened. It really was worst parts of the Bible stuff. Ilya Lyubushkin and Cody Ceci had the same amount of points. He was a -8 on faceoffs, which was the worst

mark on the team. To top it off, he took a whopping eight penalties. While it wasn't a team-worst (Mason Marchment and Lian Bichsel took more), because he didn't draw many penalties, his penalty differential came close to being the team-worst (Marchment ended up taking that "crown"). His playoff performance was, in many ways, a rejoinder to the lazy toughness talking point. Benn was second on the team in hits thrown. By all means, show me what it amounted to.

None of this is to question Benn's effort, or for that matter — condemn him. He was a mad man in 2024, when he scored 15 points in 19 playoff games. But for all of his strengths, he's grown more erratic with age.

The good news is that the offense is scheduled to show up once more.

The bad news is the same that has been true for years: not only the lack of defense, but also the fact that he's pulling Johnston down. Even his shot outcomes have declined — a regression he has mostly avoided.

In a talking point we keep returning to, Benn's swan song resides in Glen Gulutzan's hands.

Will he split up Benn and Johnston? If so, what does that mean for Benn? If not, what does that mean for Johnston? As much as I would personally like to see Johnston separate from Benn permanently, it's not like Dallas is flush with left wingers. Even Sam Steel, the most qualified candidate to play up the lineup, is anything but a guarantee. Not to mention, he projects to give you a lot less offense (although a case can be made that the defense he provides higher in the lineup is more valuable). Is there a world where Benn's defense improves this year? Could he end up on the fourth line? Could his role be elevated?

If there's any hope for a good year, it's held within that old cliché in prizefighting...how every great fighter still has one great fight left in them.

Stars Stack

2025 Report Card: Rumors, Selkes, and shootouts. Let's talk about the complete Jason Robertson experience.

By David Castillo
July 17, 2025

Apologies in advance. This one is all over the place. Today we're covering Jason Robertson's defense (if it's real or a statistical illusion), the rumors, the fancy stats, and yes — what makes him so special in the shootout. I know. It's stuff you probably didn't ask for. But no player has been the source of more debate, and so I figured I'd write about it...from A-to-Z.

One sentence summary

Dallas is gonna have to buy this one for a lot more than a dollar. (And why he's worth it too.)

A few good stats

Cap: \$7.75 million (Year 4 of 4)
GP: 82
Goals: 35
Assists: 45
Points: 80
Postseason: 11 GP — 4 goals, 2 assists — 6 points
xSPAR: 8.1 extra points in the standings (Rank on the team: 2nd)

Let's ignore the rumormill for now. In terms of impact on offense, Jason Robertson has few peers. And yes, that includes Mikko Rantanen if we're only going by the fancy stats — or in this case, goals above replacement. While his skating might not make him look it, Robertson is the complete goal-scoring package: deadly at evens, on the power play, and worse for opponents — he's disciplined and draws penalties, which is not a skill most Dallas forwards have. We'll talk more about Robertson's defense later but what was true this year has been mostly true of the previous two.

Robertson's offense is literally off the charts. Every conceivable way for a forward to tilt the goal-scoring edge in his team's favor — goals, the stuff of goals, defense, special teams, and the share of special teams he helps Dallas control — is there. There's an asterisk, but we'll get to that.

Thematically appropriate highlight

<https://youtu.be/gTd5qIn6pO4>

I'm gonna cheat on this one. Along the Ice is a YouTube channel that gets super granular with player skills, and as such, is worth your time.

It's also the theme of the day: granularity. Keep in mind, this isn't directed at all Stars fans, or most, or even the small minority of fans who think Robertson is somewhat expendable. Rather, this is directed at the part of our brain that isn't able to see the unseen value. Robertson may

not look like hockey royalty from a skill perspective, but his success in the shootout is a great example of how absurd his hockey brain is — the way one move represents three, and how he's able to leverage smarts and creativity into the same raw efficiency that someone like Nathan MacKinnon displays instead with comic-book level speed. Not for nothing, but Robertson was worth more in wins (or WAR) this year than MacKinnon.

While time will tell on Robertson's future, I hope everyone can appreciate what a unique talent he is.

Grade: A (decent) B+

I'm not sure how we got here. Was it just the playoffs?

Whatever Robertson represents now, we're talking about a player who casually scored 80 points. Unlike Roope Hintz, his defense didn't completely crater without Joe Pavelski — something I think potentially calls into question just who the backbone of the top six defense really is. But we're getting ahead of ourselves.

Robertson had a good year to most fans, but nothing great, and certainly not in the playoffs. On the surface, there aren't many excuses. While the top line struggled to find a complementary piece, there's no reason why Robertson and Hintz specifically should have struggled when paired with Wyatt Johnston, Logan Stankoven, Mikko Rantanen, and Mavrik Bourque. That's a lot of different talent with not a lot of results, hence why the season ended with Robertson and Hintz on separate lines.

My issue with this logic is that both scenarios had completely rational explanations: injuries. That he was able to perform to more or less his usual standards is a testament to what he is when he's completely healthy. Even if you're someone that is something of a Robertson skeptic, and maybe GAR doesn't make much sense, the heat maps really emphasize just how dangerous he is, and just how little Dallas is giving up the other way.

When Robertson is on the ice, the Stars are killing it in the middle of the ice. The same is true on the power play. In terms of shift-to-shift rating, he's not a mere mortal on the stats sheet.

The same is true of his shooting. This year followed more or less the same pattern. Robertson's shots are less likely to be frozen by the goalie (yellow), more likely to go in, and less likely to miss.

The only exception is that his shots are more likely to be blocked, on average. While that might seem a little odd, this is basically in line with league-wide trends for wrist shots (which Robertson, like most shooters, favors).

For me, the leniency comes from one guy: Hintz. Again, we have a good explanation for why the top line struggled. Injuries to the blueline and its lack of depth, along with Robertson's own injury before the season started (and Pete DeBoer's lack of patience with letting the top line settle) does a good job of putting things into perspective. However, where Hintz' production dropped, and his defense cratered — Robertson didn't quite suffer the same consequences. He scored as many points this year as he did previously, 13 more than his partner. And yes, his defense took a dip, but it was still better than average, and a lot better than Hintz.

Speaking of...

A digression: Robertson's defense

I want to start with something I wrote to Bob Sturm. I'm sorry for copying and pasting myself, but it's hard for me to re-word this, as it's something I myself struggle with trying to understand. Keep in mind, this was in response to Bob's question to me re: whether or not I truly believed Robertson is the top defensive forward the analytics suggest he is.

So my personal take is that no, he's definitely not. In such a connect-heavy sport, it's hard to rate a player in a category and say that they pointing out certain numbers is a successful way of isolating their impact. But I also think the numbers call into question if we're seeing what we want to see. What defines good defense from a forward? Are we distracted by when the aesthetic doesn't match? On the surface Robertson certainly doesn't LOOK like a great defensive forward. He's not fast enough to ever look good on the backcheck, isn't really a shot blocker, and often looks awkward reaching for the puck. But maybe the numbers highlight things we miss: his positioning, ability to work from defensive zone with control, and simply lack of presence in the DNZ due to being such a strong puck protector in transition. Maybe there's a kind of absence of evidence effect that juices his defensive numbers simply because he's so good controlling territory elsewhere.

Whether that's true or not, I don't know. But when you look at his microdata in the defensive zone, it's something that has developed from his first few years, going from being a ghost as a puck facilitator in the defensive zone to being quite good over the last two seasons specifically. Even if neither you nor I buy that he's Selke level, at minimum, we could probably agree that he's developed new aspects of his game. At that point, it's a question of degree.

Looking at Corey Szajder's tracking data, I think we see exactly why Robertson's "Selke love" is so confusing. It was a part of his game that was developing until it all took a nose dive this year (teal = defense against zone entries, pink = overall chances prevented, and yellow = the combination of unforced errors created in the defensive zone on the forecheck, successful dump-ins, and takeaways).

We've talked about why already. However, I think Louis Boulet's macro-view gives us our ultimate clue. Robertson had one great year before two developing ones. 2024-2025 was the outlier. So wherever you land on this discussion, I think we can safely say that while he may not be Jere Lehtinen, his defense is extremely capable, and has — broadly speaking — gotten better. And quickly for those wondering what those badges represent, they are based on bronze-silver-gold-platinum tiers of the following in Robertson's case:

Stylistic unicorn: unique play style.

Wrister master: higher than average rate of scoring on wrist shots.

Efficient attacker: players who attack not just on the boxscore, but generate from shift-to-shift.

Scoring threat: chance creators, chance contributors, and strong finishers

Puck police: controls territory, good at takeaways, doesn't turn the puck over, and is more likely to put their team on the PP, and less likely to put their team on the PK.

Coach's dream: players who generate higher rates of forechecking pressure, recover dump-ins, and generate takeaways.

A bright but uncertain future?

And that brings us unceremoniously to the rumor mill.

Thankfully Sean put a pin in all this (sort of). Jim Nill wants Dallas to contend. He needs Jason Robertson to do that. And Glen Gulutzan needs Robertson if he's to have a chance at success. If the Stars are unsuccessful this next postseason, maybe then the Robertson rumors can churn some more. But for now, the Stars have most of their team intact. Why mess with that if there's no need to?

There isn't. But I'm also not sure what this team is supposed to be if it's a lesser team than the one they previously took in the playoffs. In many ways, Robertson represents Dallas' future as much as his own. If he's not part of it, then neither is Dallas a part of the Cup conversation. If he is, great — but there are still issues that need fixing. It's the classic rock and hard place.

Gulutzan is the x-factor here. Does he find a way to maximize Robertson? If so, how? Does that mean going all-in on the top line next to Hintz and Rantanen? While I don't believe it's the move, perhaps better movement breaking out of the zone mitigates their weaknesses. Could it be next to Johnston and Matt Duchene? It's a complete unknown, but with how Dallas' depth is set up, it might make more sense to stack the top six. Robertson's deployment was eased up a little by DeBoer, as Johnston starting getting tougher minutes. Does Gulutzan continue rolling it back some, or does he deploy Robertson in all situations and without favorable zone starts?

At the end of the day, Robertson determines Robertson. Will Robertson have the season of his life in a contract year? Will that then translate into the postseason? Whatever the case, Robertson's future is very bright. Seems like a no-brainer to keep him. "At what cost" shouldn't be a question...unless Robertson gives Dallas a reason to ask it.

The Hockey News

Analyzing the Stars Schedule: First Ten Games Will Be Major Challenge

By Taylor Newby
July 17, 2025

The Dallas Stars released their full regular season schedule Wednesday, opening the season at home on Oct. 14 after two games on the road.

The schedule release usually signifies the last bit of hockey news for a while as players don't usually start skating again for a little while and training camp is still a full two months away. The free agent frenzy is usually over other than an occasional straggler signing here and there.

Let's dive in and analyze what the Stars schedule has to offer over 82 games, breaking it down 10 at a time until the final stretch of 12 games.

The first ten games all come in October (11 October games overall) with six at home and four on the road.

Dallas opens the season two days after the official opening night triple header on Oct. 7. The Stars open up with three Central Division match-ups in a row, starting out with a rematch of the second round playoff series against the Winnipeg Jets on Thursday Oct. 9 in Winnipeg.

The Stars have struggled to play the Jets on the road for seemingly quite a while, and while Dallas scraped a win out of Game 1 of the series last year, they ended up getting shut out by Connor Hellebuyck in the two other games in Winnipeg. Now with a freshly won Vezina and Hart Trophy, Hellebuyck and the Jets will be looking to win their home opener while Dallas looks to spoil one for the second season in a row after a 4-3 season opening win in Nashville last season.

After facing a stiff test in Winnipeg, Dallas heads to their other vanquished foe from the playoffs last season, heading to Colorado to play the Avalanche Saturday Oct. 11. Mikko Rantanen will be back to play under his new eight year contract that Avalanche fans will still probably wish was signed with Colorado and not Dallas, and Avs fans will have their first reckoning (aside from a preseason game) with him since single-handedly rag-dolling them out of the playoffs with an unforgettable third period performance in Game 7.

Next, Dallas heads home to open the season against Minnesota, a late 8:30 p.m. start on Tuesday Oct. 14 that indicates it being a nationally televised game. Stars fans will get their first look at a new regime with Glen Gulutzan behind the bench. Dallas plays Minnesota and Colorado in the preseason, so it will be the first meaningful game against the rival Wild team.

After that, Dallas is back home to face the Vancouver Canucks in their only non-Central Division match-up of the first five games of the season. Compared to when the Stars opened 4-0 last year, the start of the schedule is far more difficult this year to open up.

Going to St. Louis in game five of the season means Dallas will also be playing four playoff teams in their first five games as well - every Central Division playoff team.

The Stars get two days off of that and then start a three game homestand that starts with the much-improved Columbus Blue Jackets. Columbus has a knack for giving Dallas more of a test than usual at home, and head coach Dean Evason had the Blue Jackets just behind Montreal for the final Eastern Conference playoff spot last year in a season that was supposed to be a major throw-away.

Next, Dallas plays two more playoff teams from last year, welcoming the Los Angeles Kings and Carolina Hurricanes. The game against Carolina will feature the two runners-up in each Conference Final.

After playing Carolina at home, the Stars have their first back-to-back of the season, flying to Nashville for a Saturday-Sunday home-away set. The Predators are trying to rebound after a horrible season last year.

Finally, the tenth game of the season will feature Alexander Ovechkin's last game in Dallas, as Ovechkin will leave the Washington Capitals and retire from the NHL at the conclusion of the season. Ovechkin broke Wayne Gretzky's record for career goals at the end of last season, and now will have a farewell tour to a storied career. This one is a can't miss game for Stars fans on Tuesday Oct. 28.

Overall this is an incredibly difficult start to the season, featuring eight of ten teams having made the playoffs last year, and the other two finishing one and two places out of the playoffs as well. Coming out with a winning record will get Dallas on track for another good season.

Next up in the series will be games 11-20 as the Stars season moves along.

The Hockey News

Stars Open Regular Season Home Schedule Against Division Rival

By Taylor Newby
July 16, 2025

The Dallas Stars have released that their opening night contest for the regular season will be against their division rival Minnesota Wild.

The game will be a late one to start the home slate, starting at 8:30 p.m. Tuesday Oct. 14 against the Wild. A late start means Dallas will feature in a nationally televised game. The season officially starts a week prior to the 14th, meaning Dallas will probably feature several games on the road before finally coming home to the American Airlines Center.

Dallas started last season against the New York Islanders, with Jake Oettinger posting a shutout. This year, the intensity of the matchup will be far greater to start off new head coach Glen Gulutzan's time behind the bench.

The Wild and Stars will also meet twice in the preseason.

Daily Faceoff

2025-26 NHL Prospect Pool Breakdown: Dallas Stars' Top 10

By Steven Ellis
July 17, 2025

Welcome back.

It's time for Daily Faceoff's third annual NHL Prospect Pool Breakdown, looking at the best all 32 teams have to offer. We're highlighting the top 10 prospects for every franchise, their biggest strengths and weaknesses, and so much more.

The criteria for being labeled a "prospect" are simple: players generally have to have played in 50 or fewer NHL games or spent more time outside of the NHL than in it last year. Players over 23 years old are not included, with goaltenders needing to be 25 or under.

Today, we're checking out the Dallas Stars.

A year ago, the Stars had two solid prospects leading the way in Logan Stankoven and Mavrik Bourque. It wasn't an entirely deep pipeline, but having those two go on to become full-time NHLers last year added some extra legitimacy.

But Stankoven is gone, being used as trade bait to land Mikko Rantanen from the Carolina Hurricanes at the 2025 NHL Trade Deadline. It was a great move then and remains a great move today, even after Stankoven signed an eight-year deal to stay in Raleigh.

But beyond that, Dallas' pipeline just lacks... everything. Lian Bichsel is the only one who'll become a full-time NHLer this year, and then there's a ton of other project players throughout the pipeline. The Stars won't mind – they're focused on another long playoff run. But don't expect much value on the trade front if GM Jim Nill is forced to decimate the farm to bring in immediate help.

Biggest Strength

The Stars have some solid defensive depth, with Bichsel easily leading the way. While none of the others is a sure-fire NHLer, I do like what Christian Kyrou and Aram Minnetian bring to the table, in different ways. I won't give up on Tristan Bertucci or George Fegaras, either. Those are two that I'll always have time for and still think should be in the conversation for third-pairing jobs at some point in the next few years. There might not be much in terms of high-end defensive talent, but I like what they have.

Biggest Weakness

A year ago, the Stars had a legit top-six scoring threat in Stankoven. Now, most of the team's top forward prospects look more destined to play bottom-six roles. Emil Hemming feels like the safest best to become an NHLer due to his versatility. Cameron Schmidt – the team's top pick in the 2025 NHL Draft – is the most skilled forward in the pipeline, but his small stature could hold him back. Beyond that, there isn't much in terms of offensive depth, and no one else who projects to become a top-six threat.

Fast Facts:

NHL GM: Jim Nill

Dir. Amateur Scouting: Joe McDonnell

Dir. of Player Personnel: Rich Peverley

AHL Affiliate: Texas Stars

ECHL Affiliate: Idaho Steelheads

TOP 10 PROSPECTS

1. Lian Bichsel, LHD, 21 (Dallas Stars)

Acquired: Drafted 18th overall, first round in 2022

Bichsel had a fascinating season in 2024-25. He split the year between the NHL and AHL, and he seemingly played better in Dallas than he did with Texas. The 6-foot-7, 231-pound defender is absolutely massive. Like, there are few blueliners his age that are scarier to go up against. Offense has never been a big part of his game, but he actually reads plays in the attacking zone quite well. Bichsel's name has been linked in trade rumors for a few years now and that's because any major trade has to include him as a key target at this point. It won't be long until Bichsel is a huge part of Dallas' blueline.

2. Emil Hemming, RW, 19 (Barrie Colts, OHL)

Acquired: Drafted 29th overall, first round in 2024

Hemming left Finland for the first time to play in the OHL last year, putting up 18 goals and 48 points with the Colts. Inconsistency seemed to be an issue – again – but it's hard to not love the pro-level skills. He has a good 6-foot-1, 200-pound frame, and he loves to battle hard in front of the net. Scouts have also liked how much energy he seems to have late in games – he's built for endurance. I like his wrist shot, and I think he plays with a bit more skill than he gets credit for. I hope to see more consistency and confidence in his games in his second year in North America – we'll chalk up 2024-25 to a tough learning curve.

3. Ayrton Martino, LW, 22 (Texas Stars, AHL)

Acquired: Drafted 73rd overall, third round in 2021

Martino was one of the top wingers in the NCAA this past year, pacing the Clarkson Golden Knights with 25 goals, 26 assists, and 51 points. He was named the ECAC's Player of the Year and was a top 10 finalist for the Hobey Baker Award, too. From watching him play in the OJHL as a 17-year-old, you could tell he's a smart player who's calculated in his decision-making and can beat opponents in tight areas. He has continued to add some muscle to his game, but don't expect him to start knocking guys down. I'm not sure what type of NHL role he'll have, but a year or two in the AHL could do wonders for him.

4. Cameron Schmidt, RW, 18 (Vancouver Giants, WHL)

Acquired: Drafted 94th overall, third round in 2025

It'll never not be funny that the most exciting player on the Giants this year happened to be the most skilled "small" player in the 2025 NHL Draft. Schmidt might be 5-foot-8, but he makes up for it in pure skill. He started the season as one of the league's most productive forwards. His numbers started to quiet down as the season wore on, but he still showed his incredible puck skills and play reads every single night. Schmidt is a pure offensive forward with great speed

and likes being in front of the net. Of course, with any smaller player, you have to wonder if the skill will be able to translate over against tougher competition. But it worked with Stankoven, and the Stars are likely hoping it happens again here.

5. Christian Kyrrou, RHD, 22 (Texas Stars, AHL)
Acquired: Drafted 50th overall, second round in 2022

Kyrrou has always played a high-risk, high-reward style game – and I love that. Back in his OHL days, he was never afraid to rush the puck from his own zone, and he had a great shot, too. That carried over to his game when he jumped over to Texas, although injuries limited him to just 15 points in 36 games this year. Kyrrou needs to add some more muscle, and improve his defensive reads if he's going to become an NHLer. But I really like where his game has been in the AHL so far. Next year, I want him to play the full campaign and earn an NHL call-up along the way.

6. Aram Minnetian, RHD, 20 (Boston College, NCAA)
Acquired: Drafted 125th overall, fourth round in 2023

There's absolutely nothing sexy about Minnetian's game. He doesn't shoot a lot of pucks, he won't pull off incredible, hair-raising moves and he's best when you don't notice him. But as an actual defenseman, Minnetian has so much going for him. He's a mobile defender who takes space away and leaves you little room to work with. He can hit like a truck (which is impressive given he's 5-foot-11) and always looks to make a good outlet pass. He had a solid year at Boston College, showing some improved chops as a puck-mover. Look for him to spend another year at BC before potentially transitioning to the AHL next spring.

7. Tristan Bertucci, LHD, 20 (Texas Stars, AHL)
Acquired: Drafted 61st overall, second round in 2023

Bertucci's numbers slipped in each of the two years after getting drafted, which is never ideal. I did like some of what I saw from him this past year, though – he had to do a lot of extra defensive work to make up for Gabriel Eliasson. I like that Bertucci calmed his decision-making down a bit, although I'd like to see the intensity with the puck that made him dangerous back in his GTHL days. He'll have a solid opportunity to earn a lot of ice time in Texas this year, so we'll see where his game's at.

8. George Fegas, RHD, 21 (Cornell University, NCAA)
Acquired: Drafted 83rd overall, third round in 2022

Yup. You saw that right – Fegas represented Team Greece internationally last year. He was damn good, too, registering nine points in three games against teams like Jamaica, Lebanon and Puerto Rico (made up of a mix of junior, college and minor pro players). Back in the NCAA, Fegas finished his sophomore year with Cornell, doubling his output from seven points to 14. Fegas is much better defensively than offensively, but he has a great shot and a 6-foot-2 frame to boot. I'd like to see him become more involved in Cornell's offense next year, but I still see a defenseman with No. 6/7 potential.

9. Brandon Gorzynski, C/LW, 18 (Calgary Hitmen, WHL)
Acquired: Drafted 126th overall, fourth round in 2025

Gorzynski had an excellent second half of the year, making himself one of the biggest movers up draft rankings. The 6-foot-2 forward does an excellent job of making everyone around him better because he lets them focus on getting into scoring lanes. Gorzynski will never be a playdriver, but he works hard to win puck battles and is willing to compete in congested areas of the ice. He's always moving and trying to chase down pucks. Gorzynski has the shot to be a solid producer at the junior level, but he also has the pure workman-like effort that teams absolutely crave. Look for another big season from the powerful skater.

10. Måns Goos, G, 18 (Farjestad BK, Sweden U-20)
Acquired: Drafted 158th overall, fifth round in 2025

It's hard to miss Goos out there – he stands tall at a massive 6-foot-5. Teams love big goaltenders and he's got good enough athleticism to work with. His inconsistency was an issue this year, in my opinion. But you can't ignore the upside. If Goos can work on some more lateral speed, he'll be in excellent shape to at least become an NHL backup. He's raw right now, and he just needs to keep facing a ton of shots – and, eventually, move up to the SHL – to really push himself forward.

The rest: Kyle McDonald, RW (23), Justin Ertel, LW (22), Chase Wheatcroft, LW (22), Matthew Seminoff, RW (21), Angus MacDonell, C (20), Francesco Arcuri, C (22), Antonio Stranges, LW (23), Atte Joki, C (17), Dawson Sharkey, RW (18), Charlie Paquette, RW (19), William Samuelsson, C (19), Sebastian Bradshaw, LW (20), Jack Bar, RHD (22), Trey Taylor, LHD (23), Connor Punnett, LHD (22), Gavin White, RHD (22), Niilopekka Muhonen, LHD (19), Arno Tiefensee, G (23), Remi Poirier, G (23), Ben Kraws, G (24), Maxim Mayorov, G (21)