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Columbus Blue Jackets

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Columbus Dispatch / Columbus Blue Jackets' Yegor Chinakhov on injury status: 'I'm good right now'

By Brian Hedger – March 4, 2025

After sweeping two games against the Detroit Red Wings during a four-game winning streak, including a frozen thriller Saturday at Ohio Stadium, the Blue Jackets expect more good news.

Yegor Chinakhov hopes to return to the Jackets' forward mix either Tuesday in Tampa or Thursday in South Florida after missing the past 39 games with an unspecified back injury that also cost him the final 17 games last season.

After joining the Blue Jackets' outdoor practice Friday, Chinakhov practiced again Monday at the Ice Haus before joining his teammates for a flight to Tampa. He skated at left wing on a second line featuring captain Boone Jenner in the middle and Kent Johnson on the right.

"Obviously, we stuck him on a line here (at practice) just to see how he conducted himself," Blue Jackets coach Dean Evason said. "We'll evaluate. We'll talk. We'll make a decision tonight or (Tuesday) morning and see how he comes out of a full practice and then we'll go from there."

Evason said there is a chance Chinakhov will play Tuesday. If not, the focus will shift to Thursday's game against the Florida Panthers, assuming Chinakhov doesn't have a setback. During his absence, he had multiple setbacks after returning to skating work. He was a full participant Monday, including a role on the right wing with the second power play.

"Sometimes, I was already practicing with the team and it's not one step back ... it's three, four steps back," Chinakhov said. "It's frustrating, for sure. But it's alright. Sometimes, (stuff) happens."

Yegor Chinakhov eager to help Columbus Blue Jackets make playoff push

Neither the team nor Chinakhov have revealed the specifics of his injury. He played the first 21 games of the season without missing a game before the issue again flared up and pushed him out of the lineup.

Chinakhov said he has talked to "six or seven" physicians, including one in Russia. He credits that doctor for helping him get to the point where he feels ready to play and said the team approved the consultation. Sources said Monday that Chinakhov underwent a minor procedure that involves the insertion of a small camera into his back but hasn't undergone corrective surgery.

Chinakhov felt discomfort in training camp, but it was slight enough to keep playing. The pain intensified during the season's first two months before reaching a point in late November where he couldn't continue to play. His last game was Nov. 27.

"For sure, it's pretty tough because every time, watching the game, you can't help (them) and just see how guys battle for a playoff spot," Chinakhov said. "It's hard."

The bright side is that 22 games remain, and he can still give the Blue Jackets a huge boost toward qualifying for the playoffs. Cole Sillinger (upper body) is now out along with Chinakhov, center Sean Monahan (wrist) and defenseman Erik Gudbranson (shoulder).

Prior to leaving the lineup, Chinakhov had seven goals, seven assists and 14 points, and he's become more adept at playing a two-way game the past couple of years. Through four seasons, Chinakhov has missed 96 of 328 possible games due to injuries, which is a 29% absence rate.

“Maybe I need to push through this thing, but I don’t know,” Chinakhov said. “We’ll see. I’m good right now and that’s all I need. I’m so happy to help my team get a playoff spot, and then just do what I can do ... I want to extend the season because I missed a lot, and I just want to play in the playoffs in the NHL.”

The Athletic / Blue Jackets, Mathieu Olivier closing in on long-term contract

By Aaron Portzline – March 4, 2025

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Mathieu Olivier has emerged as perhaps the NHL's most feared fighter this season, but he's also provided an unexpected offensive impact for the Columbus Blue Jackets, making him a rare talent in today's league.

With so few comparable players around the league, it was a challenge for Blue Jackets general manager Don Waddell and Olivier's agent, Philippe Lacavalier, to reach terms on a new deal.

But it sounds like they've done it.

"We're getting really close," Waddell told The Athletic on Monday. "We're hoping to get it wrapped up in the 24 hours or so."

A team source said it will be a multi-year contract, likely four years or more. The Blue Jackets wanted to get Olivier signed by the NHL's trade deadline on Friday, and they certainly didn't want him to hit free agency in July.

"He's an unrestricted free agent who would be welcomed by 31 other teams," Waddell said, "and I have to take all of that into account in trying to sign him. So it's been time-consuming, but in a positive way."

Waddell and Lacavalier made significant progress in negotiations last week, Waddell said. But by Thursday, he put talks on hold to focus on the Blue Jackets' home-and-home with the Detroit Red Wings, including Saturday's Stadium Series game in Ohio Stadium.

After the Blue Jackets practiced on Monday, Olivier made clear his desire to stay put in Columbus.

"I've said this multiple times: I love Columbus. My family loves Columbus. Everything about it works well with our family and our values," Olivier said. "The direction the organization is going is great. The guys we have in this room, what we're building... I take a lot of pride in that, and I want to see it through with these guys in here. There's nothing I'd like more."

The Blue Jackets acquired Olivier on June 30, 2022, trading a fourth-round pick to the Nashville Predators. He spent most of the previous season playing for Nashville's farm club, AHL Milwaukee.

The reason then-GM Jarmo Kekalainen wanted Olivier was his toughness. The Blue Jackets, at that point, were getting routinely abused by opponents with no way to fight back.

But Olivier has bloomed in a way nobody could have imagined.

With 12-9-21 in 60 games, Olivier has already set career-highs in goals and points. He's also third in the NHL with 99 penalty minutes, second in hits (228), and first in fighting majors (11).

The 12 goals are the most impressive, however, and they've allowed coach Dean Evason to play Olivier on the Blue Jackets' third line. In his first 168 NHL games, Olivier scored 13 goals. He's one short of that already this season, with 22 games to play.

Repeatedly, when asked to talk about Olivier's fighting prowess and goal-scoring, his fellow teammates have mentioned that Olivier has also emerged as one of the vocal leaders in the dressing room.

The Blue Jackets entered play on Monday in seventh place in the Eastern Conference, holding the top wild-card spot. They've won four straight games coming out of the 4 Nations Face-Off, and open a four-game road trip on Tuesday in Tampa Bay.

[BlueJackets.com / Stadium Series win was latest big showing for Merzlikins](#)

By Jeff Svoboda – March 4, 2025

As the final seconds of Saturday's Navy Federal Credit Union NHL Stadium Series game ticked off the clock and a Blue Jackets win was all but assured, the emotions of the moment took over for Elvis Merzlikins.

They came out in the form of an impromptu salute to the venue. As the 94,571 bone-chilled, windswept fans – or at least those left after a couple hours of being in the elements – in Ohio Stadium rose to their frozen feet and the puck went behind Merzlikins' net, the goaltender gave the crowd a quick "O-H-I-O" salute.

It wasn't planned, but it was very Elvis.

"I was trying to do it, but it's hard to think how to do it and then the guy is coming at you," he said with a laugh Monday. "It just came right out. It was emotions. It was really a big, emotional game. It was unreal. It seriously was unreal."

So was Merzlikins' performance. You could understand why he'd want to celebrate after the one of the biggest efforts of his NHL career, a 43-save performance that helped the Blue Jackets cap off an unforgettable day with a final cannon blast denoting a 5-3 victory over Detroit.

Seeking revenge after Thursday's CBJ win in Detroit, the Red Wings fired from anywhere and everywhere, placing Merzlikins under duress from nearly the opening faceoff. They saved their best for last, putting 21 shots on goal in the third period and getting two through screens and behind Merzlikins to tie things up in the final minutes, only to see Justin Danforth's goal with 2:17 to go serve as the difference.

Despite the barrage of shots and the two third-period goals allowed, Merzlikins stood tall throughout the contest, just the latest strong effort for the Latvian netminder who is now 13-5-2 and 2.82 GAA in his last 20 appearances.

"The calmness that Elvis has given us all year, forget about just tonight. Clearly, he was incredible tonight," head coach Dean Evason said after the game. "He's competed his (butt) off. We've talked about this many times this year already. His team-first mentality has been incredible. Obviously he stops the puck, but the way that he plays within the team structure is awesome."

Perhaps the irony of Merzlikins' performance is he said he very nearly wasn't able to play. He and his wife Aleksandra are expecting their second child, and the goalie was a bit stressed that baby No. 2 would be on the way in the leadup to the Stadium Series game.

Personally, the event was circled on Merzlikins' calendar as soon as it was announced a season ago, as much as for what it represents as the experience itself. Now in his sixth season with the Blue Jackets, Merzlikins has had his fair share of ups and downs in his tenure but has come to view Columbus as a second home, so he knew what it meant for the franchise and the city to host one of the NHL's marquee events in Ohio Stadium.

"It was huge for me to win this game," Merzlikins said. "I was waiting for this game for seriously a long, long time, and to me it was really important to win as well because I feel home here."

"I came here, I'm not going to say a kid, but a young guy. Now I have a family. I got married here. I had first kid, and then second one should pop out any day. I mean, I almost didn't make this game. I'm telling you that. That was stressful as well, but it was really important to win for this city."

There was little doubt Merzlikins would get the start as he's become the Blue Jackets' clear No. 1 between the pipes as the season has reached the stretch run. He's on pace to potentially near his career-high mark of 59 appearances in 2021-22, making this a major bounceback season after injuries and the up-and-down nature of his game limited him to a combined 71 contests the past two years.

Goalies are always on a bit of an island given the nature of the position, but as Evason said, Merzlikins has impressed the first-year head coach with his embracing of the team concept. It was that way on Saturday, too, for a netminder who is often known for drawing energy from the fans' support.

Of course, doing it in front of almost 95,000 fans was an entirely new thing for Merzlikins.

"I never had this experience," Merzlikins said. "It was awesome, but it's not my style. Usually when I come to the rink, I am focused, and here I wanted to enjoy every single moment. Like Dean said as well before the game, we are all grown men here and we are going to get ready for the game when the puck drops, so just enjoy this.

"Actually, way before that, I was talking to Sean (Kuraly) and I said, 'I feel pretty nervous, you know? It's a big thing going on now. There's so many people.' Everything that they organized, it was perfect, you just feel shaky a little bit. You know that there is a game to play, and at that time, I just tried to enjoy that and right before the game, just got that focus back on."

The blustery, chilly conditions weren't always easy, though, and that's where the goalie delivered a classic Merzlikins line. When asked about how he dealt with the cold and wind on the outdoor stage, he made a joke about his occasional troubles catching the puck.

"Well, honestly today I played with two blockers," he said. "I wasn't really happy with my catcher today, but by the third period I figured out what was the issue. The catcher on the heater was soft, then after like five minutes being out there on the ice, it was getting crispy and cold and I couldn't really close the catcher.

"Second period, being in the other net, you feel a little bit different the wind blowing, which was interesting. You get in your position and you just feel your catcher and blocker swing away. It was a little bit weird, but you get used to it pretty quick."

The Hockey News / Columbus Blue Jackets Stadium Series Game: Game/Event Reactions

By Jason Newland – March 4, 2025

A little over a year ago, when THN Columbus was told by sources that the 2025 Stadium Series Game was officially going to be held at Ohio Stadium, we had doubts, even though everything we were told was rock solid. After several weeks of debating whether to release the info, we felt it was time. Ohio Stadium was going to be hosting a 2025 NHL Stadium Series game to be played between the Columbus Blue Jackets and Detroit Red Wings on March 1st, 2025.

Several weeks later, Gary Bettman announced that the Columbus Blue Jackets, in cooperation with The Ohio State University, would be hosting the 2025 Stadium Series Game at Ohio Stadium. That was a year ago. Yesterday, the game finally happened.

For myself, the day started at 8:30 AM. We joined a tailgate in the East Lot of Ohio Stadium. It started off relatively quiet. The group of five or six people I was with took a bit to set everything up, but they got the grill fired up to start serving everyone breakfast. An excellent start to what would turn out to be a very long day. It was extremely windy all day and very cold. Some say it was perfect for hockey.

As the morning went by, the area around Ohio Stadium started getting more and more active. The East lot started filling up, and more people started to tailgate. As for the tailgate I was at, it also started to get a bit more lively. Before we knew it, it was lunchtime, so the burgers and hot dogs went hitting the grill.

By this time, the NHL's fanfest was starting across the street in front of St. John Arena, so fans started pouring into the area. Every person that was at our tailgate has at least five to six friends show up. It was getting quite large at this point, but there was plenty of food and drinks to go around.

Before you knew it, it was time for the team to walk from St. John Arena into Ohio Stadium. Led by Johnny and Matthew Gaudreau's family, the team made the couple hundred-yard walk across the street into the stadium, with fans cheering and clapping.

We made our way into Ohio Stadium about an hour before game time to take in warmups and everything else that went with it. The stadium looked absolutely amazing. From the pregame to the 21 Pilots concert at the first intermission, to the final horn, everything about the stadium setup and festivities was perfect.

Of course, there was a game to be played. In front of 94,751 fans, most of whom were rooting for the Blue Jackets, Columbus took down the Detroit Red Wings 5-3 in a wild game. This was the second most attended NHL game in its history.

When Denton Mateychuk scored the opening goal for Columbus, you couldn't actually hear the goal horn or cannon go off because the CBJ fans were so loud. The same goes for the Justin Danforth game-winner and empty goal by Adam Fantilli. When the horn and cannon went off, you couldn't hear it due to the deafening crowd. Throughout the night, the Horseshoe crowd chanted C-B-J, Let's Go Jackets, and also the O-H-I-O chant, which is a legendary chant at Ohio State football games.

Despite being pummeled all night to the tune of 46 shots, Columbus goalie Elvis Merzljikins made 43 saves on the night, helping to spark the Jackets to their 4th straight win and 20th win at home. They now sit with 68 points and in the wild card one spot. They're also just four points behind the New Jersey Devils and Carolina Hurricanes for second place in the Metro Division.

We also got some fan reactions to the Stadium Series Game at the Shoe:

Geoffrey Miller: Absolutely historical day for our franchise and fanbase. I couldn't be more proud of this franchise, this fanbase, and our city. Columbus is firmly on the hockey map.

Garrett Mann: What a great event put on by the NHL, CBJ, and Ohio State. With the buzz going around the city for the past few days, and I'm sure that'll stick around for the next few days, let's hope we don't have to wait another quarter-century for another one.

Sarah Kent: Yesterday was an unforgettable experience that Blue Jackets fans will never forget. The NHL and the Blue Jackets did a tremendous job making it a spectacular event. From the cannon "helmet" stickers on the field after each goal, the firing of the cannon, the band playing the goal song, and all the other little details, it is something that I will cherish for the rest of my life.

Tyrin Franklin: This is one of the best things to happen to Columbus hockey since Johnny came. All hockey fans around Ohio traveling to see this game. We've been waiting YEARS for this, and it did not disappoint. Seeing Blue Jackets, Red Wings, Pens fans, Capital fans, etc., great outcome. Whoever set up this game needs a raise. The hint of Ohio State football with Blue Jackets hockey was perfect. To the pep rally/skull sessions, the players walk, the band, script Ohio on the ice, and adding decals to the field after every goal! This was one of the best hockey experiences of my life. Johnny and Matty should've been here.

Dave Fetzer: It was an awesome event. They were able to put together an event that felt like you were at an Ohio State football game. Shout out to the students that came and provided the student section energy, starting O-H-I-O chants around the stadium, as well as the band being there and playing the Blue Jackets goal song after a goal. It had the same feel as them playing the fight song after a touchdown. The tailgaters were there pregame, and the general atmosphere felt like a football game, outside of the fact that you were watching hockey. The attention to detail in my mind was incredible. The floor of the field being the speckled silver to look like the football helmet, and giving the helmet a sticker every time the Jackets scored was incredible. The way the band played the goal song. The fight song was incredible. The Cannon was incredible and of course, all of the nods to Johnny from what the Jackets were wearing walking to the stadium, the Red Wings wearing Gaudreau jerseys into the stadium, Meredith, Jane, and the kids leading the team both into the stadium and onto the field was all incredible, and even the fact that they brought chaos Elmo brought everything together. The only two things that I felt we were missing last night were the chili chant and DMX. Other than that, they did an absolutely incredible job of replicating a Blue Jackets home game in a football style at a football stadium.

Some Facts About The 2025 NHL Stadium Series Game At Ohio Stadium

- 94,751 fans were in attendance, making it the second highest attended NHL game in history.
- James van Reimsdyk is the all-time leading point scorer in outdoor game history with 7 points.
- Boone Jenner and Dylan Larkin became the first players in major professional sports history to be interviewed by a Deaf broadcaster. NHL in ASL did the interview.

Quotes From Players and Coaches

- Zach Werenski - This whole day was in honor of him. I think it was perfect how it was all set up, and it was a really special day for everyone involved.
- Zach Werenski on the pregame - I think that's when it kind of felt real, to be honest. Warmups are cool, but once the building gets full like that and the flyover happens and the flag goes up, and you're looking around, it's pretty surreal.

- Dean Evason - I understand now why the football players want to go out and rip people's heads off. My God, you're just jacked. But to have the presence of Johnny with us in that setting, all your emotions, like, you want to cry, fight. You want to get after it, right? So, yeah, Johnny's with us here.
- Mortiz Seider on wearing Johnny Gaudreau jerseys: It's a little thing we can give back, and I think it was the right decision.
- Sean Kuraly, on hearing the O-H-I-O chant - It was pretty awesome. I've been up there when I'm [spelling out] the letters.
- Elvis Merzlikins - Having the Gaudreau family walking in front of us it was amazing, especially kids as well. As Dean said, Johnny was here with us, and he helped us to win this game.
- Elvis Merzlikins on the game - This night was definitely my favorite night so far that I played in hockey games. It was amazing. It was seriously amazing.
- Meredith Gaudreau on seeing a giant Johnny Gaudreau banner being passed around the stadium - That's incredible. I didn't see that before. It's just so cool to see everything Columbus has done and everything Detroit's doing in his honor. It's really, really touching.
- Dylan Larkin - This night was special, and I hope Mr. and Mrs. Gaudreau had something to smile about tonight. I want both of our teams in the playoffs, and I think those guys have quite the story going right now, and sometimes it's bigger than the game.

Final Statement From Meredith Gaudreau per CBJ Public Relations:

Thank you from the bottom of my heart to the NHL, Detroit Red Wings and especially the Columbus Blue Jackets for honoring John in so many ways during the Stadium Series this weekend. The management, players, wives and fans from both organizations made my family feel so loved and supported. Thank you most of all for including our children by making them a big part of all the events throughout the weekend. I know John truly appreciates it as much as I do.

All my love,

Meredith Gaudreau

CBJ on X

Yesterday was perfect in every aspect. Great job, NHL, Columbus Blue Jackets, and Ohio State!

The Hockey News / Blue Jackets Need To Pivot To Other Trade Targets After Gustav Nyquist Trade

By Spencer Lazary – March 4, 2025

Yesterday, one of the Columbus Blue Jackets' trade targets, Gustav Nyquist, was traded from the Nashville Predators to the Minnesota Wild.

This will force the Blue Jackets to pivot to other trade targets who are on the trading block ahead of the March 7 trade deadline.

It is important to keep in mind that Blue Jackets GM Don Waddell doesn't want to sell the future to improve the roster, which means they will be targeting less expensive depth players.

A few names that make sense are:

- Jake Evans - Montreal Canadiens
- Ryan Donato - Chicago Blackhawks
- Nick Bjugstad - Utah Hockey Club
- Trent Frederic - Boston Bruins

If Waddell was willing to part with a few draft picks or a better prospect, they could target Scott Laughton from the Philadelphia Flyers.

The Blue Jackets' front office has only five days left to decide who they want to bring in to help improve the team. While there is still a chance that they don't do anything and instead see how the team performs, they will likely make a small move or two to help push them into the final wild card spot in the Eastern Conference.

The Hockey News / Boone Jenner Is Back With A Vengeance

By Jason Newland – March 4, 2025

When Boone Jenner went down to a shoulder injury before the season started, people who follow the CBJ all shouted, "Here we go again!"

Jenner had surgery to fix a torn up shoulder caused by losing an edge and slamming into the boards in training camp. He would end up missing 56 games.

His goal was to return in time for the Stadium Series game on March 1st, and he did just that.

Boone Jenner made his season debut on Feb. 22 against the Chicago Blackhawks, and Nationwide Arena welcomed him back with a long, loud "BOOOOOOOONE!"

Since his return, Jenner has played like his hair is on fire.

He's played in four games so far against Chicago and Dallas and twice against Detroit. One would think that he would come back a little slow while trying to get into game shape, but no, that's not how Boone Jenner operates.

Take a look at Jenner's stats since his return:

- 7 assists - he had 3 against Detroit on the road
- Plus-7 Rating
- 9 shots - Including 7 against Detroit at LCA
- 16:59 average ice time
- A total of 7 hits

He's been fairly physical since he's been back, although not as much as normal, it doesn't seem. But it's well within his right to go a little easy on that shoulder.

Jenner was also put on the wing when he came back, which is a welcome sight for people who follow the team and want him to play the wing, especially since guys like Adam Fantilli and Cole Sillinger are playing so well. But then, another injury happened that caused Jenner to be moved back to center. Cole Sillinger suffered an injury against Detroit last Thursday that put him out of commission for the time being. Since his return to center early in the first Detroit game, Jenner has 5 points, a plus-4, and was being the playmaker he's been known for in the past.

Some say getting back Jenner was like making a trade deadline move, and so far, it's been working out.

Boone Jenner is back, and it couldn't have come at a better time for the CBJ.

The Hockey News / Blue Jackets Weekly Injury Report: Week 20

By Jason Newland – March 4, 2025

The Blue Jackets got some very good news over the last week when Captain Boone Jenner, Kirill Marchenko, and Dante Fabbro were able to return to the lineup.

But just as players come back, players get hurt.

In the February 27th game against the Detroit Red Wings, Cole Sillinger would take a hit that would force him from the game. It's listed as an upper-body injury at this time. He left early in the first and did not return. The injury also forced him to miss the Stadium Series Game this past Saturday.

CBJ PR on X

The Blue Jackets seemed to have escaped any injuries during Saturday's win against Detroit at the Horseshoe. As of Monday, everyone was practicing who played.

Yegor Chinakhov also practiced on Monday, which is a very good sign. Not only did he practice, but he practiced on the second line with Jenner and Johnson - A sign that his return could be soon.

Erik Gudbranson is also skating more and more and looks to come back sometime this month.

Now, on to the injury report:

Injuries

- Erik Gudbranson (upper body) is on Injured Reserve on Oct. 16 (57 Games)
- Yegor Chinakhov (upper body) is on Injured Reserve retroactive to Nov. 27 (39 Games)
- Sean Monahan (upper body) is on Injured Reserve retroactive to Jan. 7 (19 Games)
- Kevin Labanc (shoulder) is on Injured Reserve on Feb. 21 (4 Games)
- Cole Sillinger is day-to-day with an upper body injury (1 Game)

TOTAL MAN GAMES LOST: 258

The Hockey News / Could The Blue Jackets Be Suitors For Anaheim's Trevor Zegras?

By Spencer Lazary – March 4, 2025

NHL insider Elliott Friedman hosted his Trade Deadline Preview episode on his 32 Thoughts podcast. In this episode, he goes over all 32 teams and what he has heard and believes each team will do.

One team that was interesting was the Anaheim Ducks, who have to decide on the future of Trevor Zegras. There could be a path where he is dealt, which is where the Columbus Blue Jackets should come calling.

If they add Zegras, it would be low risk, high reward. At just 23 years old, he would fit into the Blue Jackets' plans for the future.

Unfortunately, it hasn't worked out during his time in Anaheim, and a change of scenery may be welcomed. The only challenge for Blue Jackets GM Don Waddell would be the asking price.

Historically, Ducks GM Pat Verbeek drives a harder bargain and usually doesn't lower the asking price on his players.

One thing is clear: the Ducks aren't in need of defensemen but could benefit from some help up front.

Prospects like Luca Pinelli or Jordan Dumais could be the centerpiece of a trade package, along with a potential first- or second-round pick in 2027.

Waddell wouldn't be tinkering with the immediate future of the team while also adding someone like Zegras, who could fit in well with the core of the Blue Jackets.

The Hockey News / Blue Jackets' Rumor Report: Provorov & Trade Deadline Needs

By Spencer Lazary – March 4, 2025

With the NHL Trade Deadline only four days away, the Columbus Blue Jackets' rumor mill is heating up. The Blue Jackets are in the race for the final wild card spot in the East, and although they don't want to mess with the future, they want to add to reward the team for their good play this season.

Blue Jackets & Provorov Extension

According to Pierre LeBrun, the Blue Jackets and Ivan Provorov are working on an extension. However, they are also taking calls on him. Even though it is unlikely that he will be dealt, the Blue Jackets are getting a lot of interest in the defenseman.

Waddell Searching for a Forward

LeBrun also tweeted that the Blue Jackets are looking for a forward to add to the mix. They don't want to sell the future to make an addition, but they want to reward the team for its strong play this season.

A few names that could make sense for Columbus are:

- Scott Laughton - Philadelphia Flyers
- Trevor Zegras - Anaheim Ducks
- Jake Evans - Montreal Canadiens
- Ryan Donato - Chicago Blackhawks
- Nick Bjugstad - Utah Hockey Club
- Trent Frederic - Boston Bruins
- Charlie Coyle - Boston Bruins

There are a few other notes, including Mathieu Olivier staying with the Blue Jackets. He won't be traded at the deadline, as the team is instead looking to work out an extension.

With so little time before the deadline, there will be plenty of news surrounding the Blue Jackets, so keep it locked here for more updates and rumors.

The Athletic / NHL trade deadline: Grading every deal completed this trade season

By The Athletic NHL Staff – March 4, 2025

NHL trade season is well underway. There have been significant trades going back to the fall but the “trade season” really kicked off in a big way in late January when the Colorado Avalanche shocked the hockey world by trading Mikko Rantanen to the Carolina Hurricanes.

We’ve been dishing out Trade Grades analysis ever since. Here they all are so far with many more to come this week ahead of the 3 p.m. ET deadline on March 7.

Blackhawks grant Seth Jones’ trade wishes as Panthers press on

Florida Panthers get: D Seth Jones (Blackhawks retain \$2.5 million of Jones’ \$9.5 million contract per season).

Chicago Blackhawks get: G Spencer Knight, 2027 first-round pick

This could easily be a win-win for both sides.

This had the potential to drag out into an awkward, ugly saga. Instead, the Blackhawks found a swift solution and got a couple of intriguing pieces.

Spencer Knight is enjoying a breakout season. Landing a first-round pick on top of Knight is impressive work for the Blackhawks.

However, the Panthers desperately needed more help on the blue line. Their bottom-four defense has looked compromised without Brandon Montour and Oliver Ekman-Larsson. Jones is a polarizing player, but most of that is because he was miscast and paid to be an elite No.1 defenseman on an awful team.

Blackhawks grade: C

Panthers grade: B

Wild’s pickup of Gustav Nyquist from Predators is a worth a shot

Minnesota Wild get: F Gustav Nyquist

Nashville Predators get: 2026 second-round draft pick

Will playing for a better Wild team unlock the Gustav Nyquist of old? Or, at least, the Nyquist of last season?

Minnesota can only hope so. But if this really is the year that the Wild break out of the mushy middle and win a playoff series for the first time in a decade, they’re going to need more than just a third-line depth scorer.

Wild grade: B

Predators trade: A-

Rangers flip pending UFA Ryan Lindgren to Avalanche in sensible deal

Colorado Avalanche get: Ryan Lindgren, Jimmy Vesey, prospect Hank Kempf

New York Rangers get: Juuso Parssinen, Calvin de Haan, 2025 second-round draft pick, 2025 fourth-round draft pick

Rangers retain 50 percent of Lindgren's salary.

This trade threads the needle for both the Rangers and Avalanche, just in different ways.

The Rangers could have kept battling it out in the Eastern Conference playoff race and bet on their goaltender to drag them into Round 1. But maybe the Adam Fox injury was the final straw that persuaded management to take a step back and start loading up for next year.

While there is some risk to Lindgren's game, between his on-ice decline and durability (thanks to his playing style), the Avalanche should be able to maximize him better. At 50 percent retention, he should be an upgrade over Calvin de Haan, because he can step up into a bigger workload if needed.

Rangers grade: B+

Avalanche grade: B

Hurricanes acquire Mikko Rantanen in stunning blockbuster with Avalanche

Hurricanes get: RW Mikko Rantanen, LW Taylor Hall

Avalanche get: RW Martin Necas, C Jack Drury, second-round draft pick in 2025, fourth-round draft pick in 2026

Blackhawks get: Third-round draft pick in 2025. Chicago retains 50 percent of Rantanen's salary

The Avalanche give up the best player in the deal, and traditional reasoning in the NHL is that means they lose the trade. But the reality is there had been rumors all season they weren't going to meet Rantanen's asking price — said to be Leon Draisaitl-ish — and it made no sense to walk him to UFA status in July. But this one will sting, big time, on the ice, as Rantanen was one of their heart-and-soul leaders, an all-situations superstar playing the second-highest minutes for a forward in the league.

Necas has had a nice offensive breakthrough this year, but he's not the all-around player Rantanen is and there remains some debate about how high the 26-year-old's ceiling really is given his limitations.

Hurricanes grade: A

Avalanche grade: B-

Blackhawks grade: C

Stars land Mikael Granlund and Cody Ceci

Dallas Stars get: F Mikael Granlund, D Cody Ceci

San Jose Sharks get: 2025 first-round pick, 2025 fourth-round pick (becomes third-round pick if Dallas makes Stanley Cup Final)

If the Stars get the Granlund who has thrived on a bad Sharks team with a scoring resurgence, they are adding someone who can help retrieve puck from his own zone and transition the puck up the ice. Last year, his passing was up in San Jose and this season he seems to be emphasizing his shot volume more. Dallas may need some depth to navigate the Miro Heiskanen injury, but Ceci isn't the answer. He is a one-dimensional defensive defenseman who tends to play in roles that are above his head.

Getting a first-rounder in return is a great bit of business for the Sharks, especially without any salary retention.

Stars grade: C+

Sharks grade: A-

Canucks pay Penguins steep price for Marcus Pettersson, Drew O'Connor

Vancouver Canucks get: D Marcus Pettersson, F Drew O'Connor

Pittsburgh Penguins get: F Danton Heinen, D Vincent Desharnais, F Melvin Fernström, 2025 first-round pick (via New York Rangers, top-13 protected)

After it looked like Vancouver was set to take a step back by sort of punting with the J.T. Miller trade, it flipped the Rangers' first-rounder and picked up exactly what the team needed: another top-four defender who can play significant minutes and take some of the pressure off Quinn Hughes.

O'Connor, meanwhile, has been mired in a season-long slump and brings at least some potential to offer physicality and depth scoring off the wing after he had 16 goals and 33 points last season.

It's obviously a lot for the Canucks to pay for two rentals, but their need on D was so glaring that it threatened their season, even with all the focus on the Miller drama.

Canucks grade: B

Penguins grade: B+

Canucks finally send J.T. Miller to Rangers in big swing for both teams

New York Rangers get: F J.T. Miller, D Erik Brännström, D Jackson Dorrington

Vancouver Canucks get: F Filip Chytil, D Victor Mancini, 2025 first-round pick (top-13 protected)

A high-risk, high-reward trade for both sides.

For the Rangers, this comes down to what version of Miller they're going to get. Miller has been an excellent player for the Canucks through six seasons, but he's alternated between two different versions of himself. The upside for New York is that it didn't give up a lot and that Miller could give them a home run-like jolt if he regains last season's form.

For the Canucks, this is an underwhelming return on paper for a player of Miller's stature.

Rangers grade: C

Canucks grade: C+

Flames bet on upside, Flyers hope for short-term Andrei Kuzmenko spark

Calgary Flames get: F Joel Farabee, F Morgan Frost

Philadelphia Flyers get: F Andrei Kuzmenko, F Jakob Pelletier, 2025 second-round draft pick, 2028 seventh-round pick

The Flames, wild-card spot aside, are an abysmal offensive team, enough for Morgan Frost and Joel Farabee to represent upgrades. These aren't world-beaters. They're not going to make the Flames good. Better, maybe, but not good.

Kuzmenko is a creative, skilled player. He's had offensive success in the past, most notably the 39 goals he scored with the Vancouver Canucks in 2022-23, but that was a flash in the pan, given that he scored on an outrageous 27.3 percent of his shots playing next to Pettersson. Kuzmenko's defensive habits are poor, and he's a very slow forechecker.

Flames grade: B+

Flyers grade: C

The Athletic / What we're hearing about every NHL team heading into deadline week

By Chris Johnston and Pierre LeBrun – March 4, 2025

The Athletic has live coverage of the 2025 NHL trade deadline.

General managers are talking with some urgency.

Front offices are sizing up potential fits.

There seems to be a genuine desire to get down to business.

But in a season where more than two-thirds of teams are still legitimately in playoff contention, the floodgates have yet to open.

With Friday's 3 p.m. ET deadline now coming into view, here's what we're hearing about the approach being taken by each of the league's 32 teams.

Anaheim Ducks

Hanging around the distant reaches of the Western Conference playoff race, the Ducks are showing signs of turning a corner following six consecutive seasons well out of that mix. While general manager Pat Verbeek may elect to move veteran defenseman Brian Dumoulin, that doesn't make him a seller. At least not to the degree he's been in recent years. The Ducks would also be open to trading John Gibson, although there don't seem to be any teams currently shopping for a goaltender in his price range. Gibson is willing to waive a no-trade clause to go to Edmonton — the Oilers insist they aren't in the goalie market — and Anaheim has had on-again, off-again conversations with Carolina going back to last summer. They seem to be (mostly) off now. Add it all together and it may end up being a quiet deadline period in Anaheim.

Boston Bruins

These are unusual times on Causeway, where a perennial buyer has had to slowly get its mind around the prospect of selling. That task was made a little more difficult last week when Trent Frederic suffered a lower-body injury that left him in a walking boot. Still, there's a belief the injured forward will be dealt in the days ahead along with, perhaps, fellow rental Justin Brazeau. Meanwhile, it's down to white-knuckle time on negotiations with captain Brad Marchand. Both sides would like to get something done, with the term being the main sticking point in talks to date. One thing that does not appear likely is Boston shipping the heart-and-soul legacy player out of town.

Buffalo Sabres

Well down the road to a 14th straight year outside the postseason, the Sabres are sellers ... albeit sellers wary of selling distressed assets below market value. They've received plenty of interest in 24-year-old forward Dylan Cozens and 23-year-old defenseman Bowen Byram but haven't found a suitor willing to make an appealing player-for-player deal involving either. The same goes for veteran winger Alex Tuch, who has one season beyond this one left on his contract. Rival GMs have started to wonder about the future of JJ Peterka, a 23-year-old winger set to become a restricted free agent this summer. Unless something bigger comes together, though, Buffalo is most likely to move out some rentals, with Jordan Greenway and Henri Jokiharju among the possibilities.

Calgary Flames

Still with two games remaining on a difficult road trip before the deadline, the Flames are clinging to a wild-card spot in the Western Conference. That makes it unlikely GM Craig Conroy does anything that diminishes his group's chances of getting in. Teams have called on right-shot defenseman Rasmus Andersson, but unless someone steps up with an offer the Flames simply can't refuse in the days ahead, his future will likely be dealt with this summer. Andersson's contract extends through 2025-26 so he's eligible to sign a new deal as of July 1. Conroy, meanwhile, would love to add a young center who can grow with his group and has shown interest in Buffalo's Dylan Cozens, among others. The GM continues to juggle the longer-range picture with the immediate one and hopes to keep all hands on deck for the playoff chase.

Carolina Hurricanes

Unless someone steps up with a can't-miss offer on Mikko Rantanen, the Hurricanes have likely already made their biggest moves. While they continue to field calls on Rantanen, a pending unrestricted free agent who has indicated the need for more time before considering his options beyond this season, the most likely outcome for Carolina is holding on to the big winger for a playoff run and another shot at contract talks afterward. Remember that Carolina also acquired veteran Taylor Hall in January. Don't be surprised if he signs an extension in the near future. This is a front office that seems to be in the middle of everything, but that doesn't guarantee more fireworks by Friday.

Chicago Blackhawks

Kyle Davidson got a massive piece of business off his plate by trading dispirited defenseman Seth Jones to Florida on Saturday night, freeing himself up to focus on other moves ahead of the deadline. The Blackhawks have a highly coveted rental in Ryan Donato, who is having a career season, plus a slew of other veterans on expiring contracts who won't be in nearly as much demand. It's worth noting that while Chicago has oodles of cap space to potentially take on another team's cap casualty with a sweetener, it does not have any remaining salary retention spots to deploy this season.

Colorado Avalanche

The Avs got ahead of the market by acquiring Ryan Lindgren from the Rangers over the weekend. He's viewed as a competitor who will slide onto Colorado's third defensive pairing. With that move completed, the Avalanche front office has an opportunity to continue tinkering with its forward group in the days ahead. They've shaken things up more than any other contender since the season began and wouldn't mind strengthening their posture down the middle, if possible.

Columbus Blue Jackets

The Blue Jackets were in on Gustav Nyquist before he was traded to Minnesota over the weekend and have made overtures at re-signing pending UFAs Ivan Provorov and Mathieu Olivier. So yes, after being presumed sellers for much of the season, they are operating like a buyer. There is growing internal belief that this group may be for real after unexpectedly hanging in the Eastern Conference playoff race all season and delivering two big wins over Detroit last week. As they continue looking for ways to bolster their forward group, the Blue Jackets have pivoted away from the rental market and are looking for options with term remaining on their contracts.

Dallas Stars

The biggest additions for this group may ultimately come when center Tyler Seguin and defenseman Miro Heiskanen return to health. While the timelines are still a bit fuzzy on when exactly those players will rejoin the lineup, the Stars aren't banking on needing them both to stay on long-term injured reserve through the end of the regular season for cap reasons. They've already lost Nils Lundkvist for the

season, opening up the space needed for any marginal additions in the days ahead. Plus, GM Jim Nill already made a splash by bringing in Mikael Granlund and Cody Ceci from San Jose last month. Those acquisitions have worked out extremely well so far.

Detroit Red Wings

With an elusive playoff spot in their grasp and Andrew Copp done for the season, the Red Wings have the right mix of cap space and incentive to do something interesting at this deadline. That doesn't necessarily guarantee that GM Steve Yzerman will go all in on a headline-grabbing move. But after years of patiently building, and with last season's near-miss on a playoff return still fresh in mind, there has to be a temptation to put the cap space to use. The Red Wings could certainly use a little more depth both at forward and on the blue line.

Edmonton Oilers

A run of indifferent play out of the 4 Nations break has only reinforced the need to make a move to reinforce the blue line. That's top of the agenda for GM Stan Bowman. A move to bring in another forward can't be ruled out, either — at least assuming the Oilers can find a way to make the numbers work. To that end, Edmonton is currently exploring the market on Evander Kane, who saw a full no-movement clause converted to a 16-team approved trade list late last week and may be ready to come off LTIR before the end of the season. That would cause major cap complications if he remains with the Oilers post-deadline. Lots of moving parts here.

Florida Panthers

Even after making the trade to land defenseman Seth Jones, GM Bill Zito has lots of room to maneuver while trying to add a forward and third-string goaltender. With Matthew Tkachuk placed on LTIR, the Panthers can still add more than \$8 million in cap commitments for this season. That puts Zito in an enviable spot while trying to give his core everything it needs to make a third straight trip to the Stanley Cup Final. He's certainly shown no reluctance to take gambles at prior deadlines.

Los Angeles Kings

The Kings are believed to be among the teams that checked in with Carolina on Mikko Rantanen, but nothing seems to be cooking there. If anything, the Kings are likely to swing for a single rather than a home run. There seem to be some encouraging signs in Los Angeles about the way the group is coming together. The current wish list includes a middle-six winger.

Minnesota Wild

Bill Guerin effectively ruled out the possibility of a big swing when he told reporters Sunday that injured forwards Kirill Kaprizov and Joel Eriksson Ek are both expected to return during the regular season. That means the cash-strapped team won't have the benefit of extra LTIR space to use on a roster upgrade. The Wild did manage to bring back veteran winger Gustav Nyquist in a trade with Nashville over the weekend. Anything else they do will need to be a cash-in, cash-out transaction, and those tend to be difficult to pull off at the deadline.

Montreal Canadiens

The Habs are poised to be modest sellers even after reeling off four straight wins to continue hanging around the margins of the Eastern Conference playoff race. They've got the effective penalty-killing duo of Jake Evans and Joel Armia to peddle as rentals and aren't opposed to moving those two forwards as a package deal if it yields a strong enough return. Should they go individually, Evans is the more marketable of the two as a right-shot centerman who is strong in the faceoff dot. GM Kent Hughes also

has right-shot defenseman David Savard playing on an expiring deal but will likely only move him if the price is right.

Nashville Predators

A brutally disappointing season has left Nashville in an awkward spot at this deadline. This is not a rebuild — at least not yet — so GM Barry Trotz isn't conducting a fire sale of veterans after already moving out rental Gustav Nyquist. The Predators are listening on center Ryan O'Reilly but need to get a promising young player back in return in order to be compelled to pull the trigger on a reliable veteran with term. Trotz is more than happy to keep him. It sounds like nothing has advanced beyond tire-kicking on the former Conn Smythe Trophy winner as a result.

New Jersey Devils

What the prognosis is for Jack Hughes could have a bearing on how GM Tom Fitzgerald navigates the deadline. Things didn't look good for Hughes on Sunday night after he slammed into the end boards late in a game against Vegas and went to the dressing room in obvious distress. New Jersey had been in the market for more help down the middle even before its leading scorer potentially suffered a significant injury. As for how that plan may shift now, stay tuned.

New York Islanders

It is anyone's guess as to how cagey GM Lou Lamoriello will approach a deadline with two attractive rentals on his roster and his team's hopes of qualifying for the playoffs fading fast. Lamoriello may simply choose to hold on to forwards Brock Nelson and Kyle Palmieri even though they're pending UFAs. Nelson, in particular, could net a significant return with so few quality center options available on this trade market. The Islanders have a chance to do a little reboot/retool here, but there's no guarantee Lamoriello takes it. Even rival teams don't seem to know which way he's leaning.

New York Rangers

It says something about how wayward things have gone on Broadway this season that a team that's been to the Eastern Conference final two of the past three years feels like it can't risk letting pending UFAs walk away for nothing. That was part of the rationale behind the trade that sent Ryan Lindgren and Jimmy Vesey to Colorado over the weekend, and it's also why Reilly Smith will soon join them out the door. Officially, the Blueshirts aren't waving the white flag on their playoff chase. But they're still focused on shipping players out rather than bringing them in like in years gone by.

Ottawa Senators

With his team pushing to get back to the playoffs after eight years on the outside looking in, GM Steve Staios would love to do his part to help the group get over the top. However, cap limitations will probably keep the Senators from being major players at this deadline. Still, Staios is in the market for a winger and should be able to find an addition that can be squeezed into the remaining space. Someone like Ryan Donato could fit the bill, although he's got plenty of other suitors.

Philadelphia Flyers

While GM Daniel Briere is open to listening on a number of his players, it's not yet clear how aggressively the Flyers will end up selling. That's partly because the GM can set a high price on Scott Laughton and Rasmus Ristolainen, a pair who've drawn varying degrees of interest, since both have term remaining on their contracts. Basically, neither has to be turned into future assets by Philadelphia right now. The only rental players remaining on the Flyers roster are Andrei Kuzmenko and Erik Johnson, and it's no guarantee either of those guys finds a new home before the weekend.

Pittsburgh Penguins

For Kyle Dubas, the deadline represents an opportunity to continue his mission of turning over the roster. There are very few untouchables in Pittsburgh, with the GM prioritizing young NHL players, prospects and draft picks as a return in any deals for his established roster players. While not stocked with any of the most-prized rentals on the market, Pittsburgh would like to be active. The organization has no intention of putting its biggest name in play — Sidney Crosby — as it tries to retool its way back to respectability, and the 37-year-old captain remains an impactful player.

San Jose Sharks

For a rebuilding organization still in asset-accumulation mode, the deadline is all about adding draft picks and prospects. GM Mike Grier got a head start on that task by trading Mikael Granlund and Cody Ceci to Dallas for a first-rounder and conditional third-rounder last month. His remaining rentals include Luke Kunin, Nico Sturm, Jan Rutta and two goaltenders — Vitek Vanecsek and Alexandar Georgiev — and he has Mario Ferraro signed through next season, as well. The goal for Grier is to keep the rebuild moving along while the Sharks look forward to making another potential lottery pick in the upcoming draft.

Seattle Kraken

On their way to a third season outside the playoffs in their fourth year of existence, the Kraken have players to move. Yanni Gourde, on the verge of a return following sports hernia surgery, promises to be one of them, provided a last-minute contract extension doesn't get worked out instead. Brandon Tanev is another rental forward on the block and is almost certain to find a new home. Seattle has a little more flexibility with veterans Oliver Bjorkstrand and Jamie Oleksiak signed through next season, but both of their names have made their way through the rumor mill, as well.

St. Louis Blues

It's a period of transition in St. Louis, with GM Doug Armstrong set to hand off the organization's day-to-day decision-making duties to Alex Steen in 2026. In the here and now, with a team just outside the playoff cut line, Armstrong is listening to offers on some veteran players, including captain Brayden Schenn. There's certainly no guarantee he moves any of them right now. He's got the ability to establish high prices with players signed well beyond this season. But the Blues are currently postured more as a seller than a buyer even with the playoffs still well within reach.

Tampa Bay Lightning

Management has reversed course in recent weeks, shifting focus away from pursuing a defenseman because of J.J. Moser's return to health and Emil Lilleberg's continued emergence, and prioritizing an addition at forward. That doesn't rule out a depth addition on the blue line, though. The Lightning tend to conduct their business discreetly, but some in the industry believe they'd be open to a reunion with forward Yanni Gourde as a rental. The element of surprise is always in play with Tampa GM Julien BriseBois, too.

Toronto Maple Leafs

It's nearly decision time after a months-long pursuit of a third-line center. The Leafs have looked at Brayden Schenn in St. Louis and Scott Laughton in Philadelphia, while keeping tabs on fall-back rental options like Montreal's Jake Evans, Seattle's Yanni Gourde and Utah's Nick Bjugstad. Meanwhile, GM Brad Treliving is also hoping to procure another depth defenseman who can play the right side. A tight cap situation looms over every decision in Toronto, which is why Treliving is likely to seek salary retention from any seller and/or use another team as a third-party broker to make the money work.

Utah Hockey Club

There are eight pending unrestricted free agents on this roster, including center Nick Bjugstad and goaltender Karel Vejmelka, but there isn't likely going to be a "For Sale" sign put up in Salt Lake City. Utah reeled off three big wins last week and management doesn't seem inclined to make any moves that would take wind out of the sails of the playoff chase. Remember that they stockpiled plenty of draft picks and future assets before the move from Arizona. In fact, it wouldn't be a surprise if GM Bill Armstrong made a trade to add to this group.

Vancouver Canucks

The coming days hold a range of possibilities for an organization that has endured its share of ups and downs this season. The most pressing decision surrounds winger Brock Boeser, a pending UFA the club held contract negotiations with earlier in the season. He could be in position to walk away for nothing this summer if he's not extended or traded now. Ideally, GM Patrik Allvin would also like to fortify his forward group for a charge into the playoffs, particularly if he could find an upgrade down the middle. While Elias Pettersson's long-term future in Vancouver is certainly in question, it's difficult to imagine him being dealt at this deadline given the current depth of his struggles.

Vegas Golden Knights

There really aren't any apparent holes in the Vegas lineup, but it would be unwise to conclude that GM Kelly McCrimmon will let the deadline pass quietly. That's simply not how the Golden Knights operate. It's believed Vegas is looking to add another forward, and given the team's track record, it wouldn't be surprising to see them opt for something splashy. Now, is that Brayden Schenn or perhaps another player not currently on our radar? We'll have to see.

Washington Capitals

Wary of disrupting the chemistry that's helped vault them to the top of the Eastern Conference, the word out of D.C. is that this could be an uneventful deadline. The Capitals have kept tabs on the market for depth forwards and are most likely to strike there, if at all, with the likes of Brandon Tanev, Jake Evans, Joel Armia and Ryan Donato among potential targets. Even though GM Chris Patrick recently told reporters that "anything is on the table," the truth remains that there's no reason to do anything drastic because of the position the Capitals have put themselves in. Also of note here is that top prospect Ryan Leonard is likely to turn pro and sign in Washington when his season with Boston College finishes this spring.

Winnipeg Jets

Kevin Cheveldayoff is involved in all kinds of different trade conversations, but the veteran GM isn't expected to take a jackhammer to a roster that's racked up the NHL's best points percentage and an eye-popping plus-71 goal differential. The situation is similar to the one in Washington. Among the items on Cheveldayoff's shopping list are a depth defenseman and a bottom-six forward who has the ability to jump into the top six for a spell should an injury necessitate it. As a result, the Jets are among the teams calling on Jake Evans, Joel Armia, Ryan Donato and others.

The Athletic / Weekend NHL rankings: The 5 most interesting names to watch during trade deadline week

By Sean McIndoe – March 4, 2025

The Athletic has live coverage of the 2025 NHL trade deadline.

Five days to go, and pretty much the entire hockey world is all deadline, all the time. While we overhype the deadline every year, this season really does feel different. I can't remember many previous years where it felt like such a wide range of outcomes was in play, from a week full of big names being moved and shaking up races to a quiet week that feels like a total bust and ends with James Duthie quietly playing solitaire on live TV for six hours.

History tells us that the next few days will play out more like the second option than the first, but for now, a lot of scenarios are in play. Here are the five I'm most interested in.

Bonus five: Deadline-week names I'm watching

5. Erik Karlsson — This was originally going to be the Seth Jones spot, where I explained how his contract was too onerous to be moved. Whoops. OK, so if a \$9.5 million defenseman can be traded, what about \$11.5 million? It feels like a long shot, but after a reasonably solid showing at the 4 Nations, the Penguins should be working the phones to see if there's a way to make it happen.

4. Brayden Schenn — Just because he seems to be this year's traditional guy whose reported asking price seems wildly high. That often means a team is floating those rumors in an attempt to create a market, and you can't blame a GM for trying. But if Doug Armstrong can get a package like this one that includes a first and a top prospect in his penultimate deadline as Blues GM, it will make for a nice parting gift. I'll believe it when I see it.

3. Elias Pettersson — As I wrote last week, I've recently converted from the "it's an extended slump, he'll be fine" camp to the "I'm not sure I want to risk carrying that extension" camp. At the very least, the Canucks need to be having some brutally honest conversations about what the future looks like. And if they're as concerned as I am, it could mean one of the only times in cap-era history that a player with this sort of name value is traded with a ton of time left on his contract — and no trade protection to keep him out of a market that would normally have trouble getting a superstar locked in. Is he still a superstar? Was he ever? That's the question.

2. Brad Marchand — In one sense, Marchand is the deadline's most obvious target: a tough, talented veteran with a ton of playoff history playing out an expiring contract on a team that's probably missing the playoffs. He checks every box for a slam-dunk deadline move. But he's also the captain in Boston and a lifelong Bruin, and has said he doesn't want to be moved. For what it's worth, Fluto thinks it could happen, and plenty of teams should at least be calling. If it does, it could be a big enough move to legitimately shuffle the contender ranks.

1. Mikko Rantanen — It's the obvious pick. It also may be the easiest one to figure out and maybe the least likely to actually move. We all half-expected Rantanen to have signed a monster extension in Carolina by now, but it sounds like he's not sure if he wants to make that commitment. That certainly adds some drama, but then you get to what happens if he decides he wants to test UFA. If that's what he wants, you'd assume he becomes the rental of the deadline, one who'd be an all-in target for a contender that was lacking big-game firepower up front.

Except ... well, that's the Hurricanes, right? Unless Rantanen has a destination in mind where he'd be willing to sign an extension, I don't think he moves. But if he does, it would be a league-wide game changer.

And yes, it's very possible none of those names move and we spend the next week debating whether Brock Nelson is worth a first. But for now, a guy can dream. On to the rankings ...

Road to the Cup

The five teams with the best chances of winning the Stanley Cup.

The highlight of the weekend was the Blue Jackets' win over the Red Wings at Ohio Stadium. Between the spectacle, almost 95,000 in attendance and the touching tributes to the Gaudreau brothers, the whole thing was an unqualified success.

5. Edmonton Oilers (35-21-4, +22 true goals differential*) — They've been fading, and the other rankings have already dropped them down to 10th. I've got slightly more faith, partly because they finally got a win on Saturday but mainly because they still have time to add some goaltending help.

The big-name goalie list was just John Gibson for most of the year, but now there's at least a chance Jordan Binnington could be in the mix, too. If so, that's at least two options for the Oilers, not to mention somebody like Karel Vejmelka or another cheaper option who could be a 1B. The key question here is whether the Oilers are willing to go into another Cup-or-bust run with Stuart Skinner as their only real option.

I wouldn't, but let's see where Stan Bowman lands. Remember, they hired him to be the closer on getting this team over the top, and at this point, it seems clear which roster hole needs closing.

4. Florida Panthers (37-21-3, +29) — This admittedly may be the last time we can include the Panthers as the top five's Atlantic rep, with the Lightning on fire and the Maple Leafs moving ahead of them. For now, I'm keeping them here based on two things. The first was Saturday's 3-0 win over a good Flames team in which the final score flattered Calgary and the game took extra time to complete because the refs had to keep reviewing Dan Vladar saves to try to figure out how they were physically possible.

The other factor is the Seth Jones trade, combined with Matthew Tkachuk going on LTIR and potentially freeing up his cap space to go after yet another big name. It's the Panthers, this is what they do.

3. Dallas Stars (39-19-2, +50) — The Stars have settled in as a fun team to watch this week, as just about everything seems to be in play. A big move for a big name? It could happen. Something smaller? Sure. Nothing at all? Given they already made their move for Mikael Granlund, it's very possible. And of course, they'll be watching to see what the Jets and Avs do.

2. Washington Capitals (38-14-8, +61) — The Alex Ovechkin watch sits at 11 goals to go, after he scored in Saturday's 3-1 loss. He's been hot for the last week and has now moved north of a 50 percent chance of breaking the record this year, according to Dom's model.

1. Winnipeg Jets (42-15-4, +71) — Murat's had a fun week, tackling some aggressive offers from the fan base and then suggesting a half-dozen smaller names that might fit. But now that the Jets have lost two straight for the first time since mid-January, I think we all agree they're in a tailspin and need to trade for Sidney Crosby to salvage the season.

*Goals differential without counting shootout decisions like the NHL does for some reason.

Not ranked: Tampa Bay Lightning — OK, I'm officially scared of them again.

To be clear, we did this once already this year, back in late December when the Lightning were coming off a stretch of six wins in seven games, and we were wondering if the league was sleeping on them. Then they lost four straight, all in regulation, and we all went back to sleep.

Well, I'm awake again, and you should be, too. The Lightning have won eight straight, including Saturday's road win in Washington against the conference's top team. That stretch also includes a win over the Oilers, plus a pair of wins over a Senators team that had almost caught Tampa in the standings. Now the bigger question is whether the Lightning can finish first in the Atlantic, passing Toronto and Florida and forcing those two contenders to face off in the first round.

That's getting a little ahead of things, but only a little. For now, the story starts with Andrei Vasilevskiy looking like his old self for the first time in a while, giving up just three goals in his last four starts. Nikita Kucherov is pushing for another Art Ross, Brayden Point and Jake Guentzel are providing support, and new Canadian national hero Brandon Hagel is on his way to a career year.

And now, all eyes turn to GM Julien BriseBois. He doesn't seem to have many paths to a major deal, but that's hardly stopped him in the past, including when he landed Hagel at the deadline in 2022. Is there room for another sneaky-good depth add, the kind that's become BriseBois's signature deadline move? There could be.

The bottom five

The five teams headed toward dead last and the best lottery odds for a top pick that could be James Hagens, Matthew Schaefer or someone else.

The MVP of the pre-deadline weekend is an easy call. That would be the Flyers' Scott Laughton, who dropped this Last Supper-inspired beauty on social media on Friday:

For what it's worth, Kevin isn't convinced the Flyers will be busy this week.

5. Pittsburgh Penguins (24-29-10, -46) — Yesterday afternoon's loss to the Maple Leafs was drunk. Quick advice: If you're going to try to move Karlsson, maybe hope the other team's scouts weren't watching this one.

Also, this stat has to be fake, right? Please tell me it's fake.

4. Buffalo Sabres (24-29-5, -13) — They say they're "right on the doorstep of where we want to go." Then again, that's where doormats go. Consecutive regulation losses have cooled off a hot streak that had seen them win six of seven, and they've got the Habs tonight before a rare chance to play the favorites when they host the Sharks tomorrow.

3. Nashville Predators (21-32-7, -49) — The sell-off has begun, and getting a second for Gustav Nyquist seems like decent value. The question will be whether Barry Trotz can do anything bigger or if we're firmly into the territory of just riding out a miserable season.

Speaking of misery ...

Ilya Sorokin ended up getting credit there, but we need a term for plays like this that isn't "goalie goal." I'm open to ideas in the comments.

2. Chicago Blackhawks (18-35-7, -48) — I said on the podcast this week that I was finding it hard to imagine a scenario where there was a market for Seth Jones that didn't involve the Hawks eating way too much salary retention for a team coming out of a rebuild. Apparently Kyle Davidson has a better imagination than I do because he got way more for Jones at just 25 percent retention than I thought was possible.

It's still a setback in the rebuild, because the Hawks weren't supposed to still be selling two years into the Connor Bedard era. Laz captures some of that frustration here. But as a standalone deal, I'm not sure how you don't love this as a Hawks fan.

1. San Jose Sharks (15-37-9, -69) — Make it 14 losses in 15 games. They get the Leafs in Toronto tonight, and without a ton of deadline-week options that stand out, they're quickly getting into "the season can't end soon enough" territory.

Not ranked: Ottawa Senators — We've all heard that old cliché: The key to making the playoffs in the modern NHL is not going a full month between banking points.

To their credit, the Senators avoided that mistake, if only barely. Saturday's win over the Sharks snapped a streak of five straight regulation losses, earning them their first points since Feb. 3. Even with the 4 Nations break in the middle of that stretch, it's a tough streak to endure in a crowded race. And it made Saturday night's visit from the lowly Sharks feel like a bit of a must-win in Ottawa, where the Senators were icing something close to a healthy lineup for the first time in a while. In a season in which they seemed like a lock just a few weeks ago, another loss would have been disastrous.

They took care of business, if only barely, needing a third-period comeback in a game they were outplayed in early. That means they can reset on a miserable month — one that saw the Blue Jackets and Red Wings blow by Ottawa for the wild-card spots while the Lightning ended any talk of third in the Atlantic being up for grabs. It's pretty much wild-card or bust in Ottawa now, and bust can't really be an option anymore.

The rest of the pre-deadline schedule is fun, serving up the Capitals tonight and the Blackhawks on Wednesday. That will certainly give GM Steve Staios a chance to see how his team fares against both ends of the spectrum. The question is whether there's much he can do with that information due to his extremely tight cap situation. Given their recent history, the Senators should be aiming for some aggressive additions, but there's a fair question about whether they realistically can.

Instead, this may be a week for Senators fans to grimace and hope none of the teams they're battling for a wild-card spot make major upgrades. The good news is the Rangers seem to be selling and the Bruins might be too, meaning the Ottawa outlook could improve without them even adding a thing. But a big move by Detroit or Columbus — or both — could hurt.

Of course, maybe Staios has something up his sleeve after all, and can bring in at least a bit of help. We'll see. For what it's worth, the Senators host the Red Wings a week from tonight, and they get the Blue Jackets three times in the season's final 11 games. The path back to the playoffs still has a long way to go, and the margin for error has dropped significantly. But remembering how to win was the first step, and they took it.

ESPN / NHL trade deadline 2025: Deals we want to see before Friday

By Ryan S. Clark, Kristen Shilton, Greg Wyshynski – March 4, 2025

The NHL trade deadline for the 2024-25 season is at 3 p.m. ET Friday.

While a number of blockbusters have already happened -- including Mikko Rantanen to the Carolina Hurricanes and Seth Jones to the Florida Panthers -- there are some big names still reportedly available to contenders.

So, who gets traded next?

ESPN reporters Ryan S. Clark, Kristen Shilton and Greg Wyshynski devised logical trades that could happen before the deadline and benefit all teams involved, keeping salary cap implications in mind.

Let's start with a deal that could substantially shift the balance of power in the Western Conference.

Winnipeg Jets get:

RW Mikko Rantanen

Carolina Hurricanes get:

LW Nikolaj Ehlers, C Rasmus Kupari

Carolina had the best of intentions entering its relationship with Rantanen. But the blockbuster trade that sent Rantanen from Colorado to the Hurricanes in January hasn't produced the response for which Carolina had hoped. Rantanen has two goals and five points in nine games.

And if Rantanen -- a pending unrestricted free agent -- doesn't seem keen on re-signing with the Canes, then Carolina might want to avoid another Jake Guentzel-type situation and part ways with Rantanen while he's still a hot commodity -- especially to a team like Winnipeg.

The Jets have soared all season and are in a prime position to compete for the Stanley Cup, and Rantanen gives them a better shot at it. Winnipeg is elite up front already, and Ehlers is certainly part of the reason, but if general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff sees Rantanen as an upgrade over Ehlers, he has to at least consider a swap, right? Ehlers is a pending UFA too, and there's no guarantee Winnipeg can hold onto him anymore than Rantanen. This type of opportunity to acquire a player of Rantanen's caliber doesn't come along often.

On the other side, Hurricanes GM Eric Tulsy has shown he isn't exactly risk-averse. So, grabbing Ehlers, with the potential to use him on a Cup run now and get a longer-term deal done later, is appealing. And while Kupari has had a down season, he's a sweetener of sort; a fresh start for the 24-year-old center (drafted 20th overall in 2018) could pay dividends for both player and team. Ultimately though, it's Rantanen for Ehlers, and the way each skater could elevate their new squad is intriguing (and something we'd definitely like to see). -- Shilton

Minnesota Wild get:

C Brock Nelson (at 25% of salary)

New York Islanders get:

2026 first-round pick, RW Charlie Stramel, 2026 fifth-round pick, retain 50% of Nelson's salary

Buffalo Sabres get:

2026 third-round pick, retain 25% of Nelson's salary

With Joel Eriksson Ek on injured reserve and Kirill Kaprizov on long-term injured reserve, the Wild must add more top-six help in their quest for a playoff berth. Nelson would fill that need as a proven, top-six center who can create and finish in the offensive end, while also having the two-way profile to fit within the Wild's defensive structure.

The Wild already started the process of strengthening their top-six forward group on Saturday when they traded for veteran winger Gustav Nyquist from the Nashville Predators, sending a 2026 second-round pick to the Volunteer State. With Kaprizov (and his \$9 million cap hit) on LTIR, the Wild have \$6.632 million in deadline cap space, according to PuckPedia. But that's only the case if the Wild feel Kaprizov won't return until the start of the playoffs. For the sake of this deal, let's assume they do.

While this might be a lot for the Wild to give up, getting Nelson at 25% of his \$6 million cap hit would certainly help the playoff push. Remember, the Zach Parise and Ryan Suter buyouts come off the books this summer. At that time, they'll have the cap space to re-sign Nelson, a pending UFA -- and yes, a Warroad, Minnesota, native -- if they elect to go that route.

So, how does this benefit the Islanders? Nelson is expected to be one of the more sought-after forwards ahead of Friday. With this deal, the Isles add a first-round pick along with a later-round pick and a prospect forward in Stramel, whom the Wild drafted 21st in 2023. The Isles need young talent in the worst way, and this jump-starts addressing that need. -- Clark

Utah Hockey Club gets:

C Elias Pettersson, D Carson Soucy

Vancouver Canucks get:

C Barrett Hayton, LW Matias Maccelli, D Sean Durzi, G Michael Hrabal, 2026 second-round pick (OTT)

The Canucks had trade talks about both Pettersson and J.T. Miller before deciding to trade Miller to the New York Rangers on Jan. 31 -- although, frankly, the Hurricanes opting to acquire Rantanen instead of either Canuck might have forced their hand.

With Miller and his personal beef with Pettersson gone, the 26-year-old center has been free and clear to rediscover his game ... which he hasn't, in any way, since Miller was traded. In his past nine games, Pettersson has two assists, skating to a minus-4. After being challenged to shoot more by coach Rick Tocchet, he has produced five shots in nine games. There's still plenty of runway for Vancouver and Pettersson, who is signed through 2031-32 (\$11.6 million AAV), but his regression this season is disturbing.

There are two recent trades that could serve as a model for a Pettersson deal, although neither are perfect comps. Jack Eichel was 25 when the Buffalo Sabres traded him to the Vegas Golden Knights in 2021 for a lottery-protected first-round pick, a second-round pick, a top prospect in Peyton Krebs and a top-six winger in Alex Tuch. The standoff on Eichel's medical dispute with Buffalo was a mitigating factor for the trade; ditto Pierre-Luc Dubois's pending free agency ahead of Winnipeg's trade with the Los Angeles Kings in 2023, which netted them a second-rounder and three NHL players in Alex Iafallo, Rasmus Kupari and Gabriel Vilardi.

Utah has some promising players but could use far more star power. Petterson and Logan Cooley up the middle for the next seven seasons could be a fantastic one-two punch, provided a change in scenery helps Pettersson find his game. Soucy has a no-trade clause and is signed through 2025-26, giving Utah another veteran stopper on the blue line (if he waives for this deal).

The Canucks, who are selling at the ebb of Pettersson's value, pick up a couple of under-25 forwards in Hayton and Maccelli as well as Durzi, who could be a fixture on the Vancouver blue line for several seasons. Hrabal is a tall, 20-year-old goalie prospect with some upside.

There isn't a home run in this package, nor is there a first-round pick; perhaps if they want one, they can forego either Durzi or Hrabal. But it does take the full freight of Petterson's contract off their books before his no-movement clause kicks in this summer, ending a relationship with the center that has seen him go from franchise star to franchise pariah. -- Wyshynski

Toronto Maple Leafs get:

C Brayden Schenn

St. Louis Blues get:

2026 first-round pick, C Fraser Minten

This is the time for Toronto to go all-in. Because if not now, well ... when? The Leafs need another top-nine center to complement their existing forward group and to stack the middle ahead of what they hope is a long playoff run. Yes, it would hurt to part with Minten -- whom the Leafs drafted 38th overall in 2022 -- but you can't get something for nothing, and Toronto has a serious deficiency that can be remedied by adding Schenn.

The Blues' captain has a full no-trade clause, so he'd have to go along with the plan, first and foremost. But there's familiarity between Schenn and Leafs coach Craig Berube from the latter's time in St. Louis, which could ease the transition to a new team for Schenn and take away some of those post-trade pains. Schenn can take on heavy minutes and gives the Leafs a superior shutdown center option than anyone they have right now. Lining up Auston Matthews, John Tavares and Schenn would be the best Toronto's looked in that department for a while. And the confidence boost it should provide would be huge.

On St. Louis' side, it would be getting players to continue building toward a brighter future. The Blues have struggled to find their footing since winning the Stanley Cup in 2019, and collecting a prime prospect such as Minten along with another high draft pick goes a long way in stocking the cupboards with fresh talent.

These are two teams at a crossroads, and this trade could ultimately benefit both in heading down the desired path. -- Shilton

Utah Hockey Club gets:

RW Rickard Rakell

Pittsburgh Penguins get:

LW Matias Maccelli, 2025 first-round pick, 2026 second-round pick (OTT)

This swap would prove beneficial for both sides in the short term and the long term.

Let's start with Utah. The UHC has the draft capital and salary cap space to be a player at this deadline, with the idea that any potential move should have benefit beyond this season. Rakell can help it right away, and he also is under contract for three more seasons at \$5 million annually. That allows the UHC to have cost certainty while adding a veteran winger to a core seeking to take the next step -- is he enough to get the team to the playoffs in the first season in Salt Lake City? But that extended term on Rakell's deal raises the trade price too.

Although Sidney Crosby, Evgeni Malkin and Kris Letang remain on the roster, the Penguins are planning for the future. Just take a look at how much draft capital the Penguins have accrued for the next three cycles:

This deal ramps up their capital in the short and long term, which allows Kyle Dubas & Co. to rebuild a beleaguered farm system that held onto its first pick only four times since 2014. Maccelli, who has had a tough first season in Utah after a breakout in 2023-24 with the Coyotes, also allows them to get younger and add some upside to their NHL lineup. -- Clark

Buffalo Sabres get:

2026 first-round pick (from TB, unprotected), 2025 second-round pick (LA), C Gage Goncalves, D Nick Perbix, retain 25% of Gourde's salary

The Lightning are likely going to be a playoff team -- a very top-heavy playoff team, whose top-six forwards carry most of the ice time and the offensive load. One could argue the Bolts haven't had ideal balance up front since their halcyon days of Stanley Cup contention. So, why not bring back one of the most prominent names from that era to bolster this group?

Gourde was the team's primary checking center during its back-to-back Cups, anchoring a dynamic line with Blake Coleman and Barclay Goodrow. Gourde is expected back from injury this week, ahead of Friday's deadline. He's still an effective defender with more offensive contribution than the Bolts get from down the lineup: 16 points in 35 games this season.

But GM Julien BriseBois usually isn't one to just think about the present at the deadline. (Please recall the Brandon Hagel trade, one of the best in recent memory for Tampa Bay.) So, while using the Sabres to retain some salary on Gourde in order to facilitate the trade, the Lightning get aggressive and acquire Peterka, a tenacious winger who has 45 points in 56 games this season. Peterka will be a restricted free agent this summer and has a bit more proof of concept than Hagel did when the Lightning acquired him. The unprotected first in next year's loaded draft is a big chip here, but the Sabres also get a young center in Goncalves and defenseman in Perbix, the latter of whose ice time is dropping ahead of unrestricted free agency this summer.

That package might not be enough to get Peterka, but the Lightning aren't known to skimp on trade bounties. (Please recall the Tanner Jeannot deal.) Peterka is just the kind of young standout who could thrive in a Jon Cooper system and on the right side with Hagel and Brayden Point for years to come. -- Wyshynski

Sportsnet.ca / Real Kyper's Trade Board 5.0: 25 names to watch as deadline week begins

By Nick Kypreos – March 4, 2025

Even though we saw three trades with playoff ramifications over the weekend, we enter the final week before the NHL's trade deadline with plenty of teams still weighing the market, their outlook, and contemplating how aggressive they want to be by Friday at 3 p.m. ET / noon PT.

While just over a week ago I had the St. Louis Blues hanging up the 'for sale' sign and writing that Doug Armstrong was open for business, they did manage to follow that by stringing four wins together and putting themselves back to within a whisker of the Canucks and Flames for the last wild card spot in the west.

Armstrong always says he lets the players tell him with their play what he should do at the trade deadline, so their situation is not so clear again. Is it possible that Wednesday's game in Los Angeles — St. Louis' last before the trade deadline — will dictate how aggressive, or not, Armstrong plays his hand?

Meanwhile in the East, leave it to the reigning Stanley Cup champion Florida Panthers to set the tone on the trade market and reset expectations by going big and acquiring Seth Jones over the weekend.

In the wake of that deal, Dallas' low bid to Chicago to try and get Jones leaves them going back to the drawing board, but don't expect them to be idle. Stars GM Jim Nill may now turn his attention towards other defencemen, such as Rasmus Ristolainen, as a possible solution.

Toronto is also feeling the squeeze of Jones going to Florida, a direct competitor in the tight Atlantic Division. The Maple Leafs would love to finish first in the division to likely avoid a first-round matchup against Florida or Tampa Bay, but lead the Panthers by just a single point despite winning five games in a row. Look for the Leafs to respond to Florida's move in some way.

Despite GM Brad Treliving's public plea for a centre, I'm hearing there is a focus on acquiring more depth for the blue line.

There is another big question around Toronto as we head to this important week: where does the team stand with Mitch Marner now less than four months until his contract expires and he becomes eligible for unrestricted free agency?

The fact is, Marner's no-movement clause makes this situation rather easy to understand. After many failed spring playoff attempts, only a deep post-season run can give management a shot at re-signing him this off-season. Another early playoff exit and Marner is as good as gone. If that comes to pass, Toronto would be looking to reinvest cap dollars in other big ways.

Believe it or not with as many as 23 teams still waiting out results from their next game, we might have to wait another 72 hours before the floodgates really open up on the trade market.

Detroit and Columbus are also in buyer positions, but both remain reluctant to overspend now when their rosters are not quite ready for deep runs. Ottawa, on the other hand, is in cap hell and much like the Winnipeg Jets, they are working around many players having them on their 'no-trade' lists. Meantime the New York Rangers and Boston Bruins, right on the heels of those three, are thinking about selling.

As we head into what's always a wild week of NHL transactions, here's my latest trade board, which we'll update as the games unfold.

In 11 games with the Hurricanes, Mikko Rantanen has two goals and six points while Carolina sits 4-6-1, not pulling away from the pack behind them as GM Eric Tulsky may have hoped when he traded for the player in January.

It hasn't been an easy time for Rantanen to get acclimated to his new surroundings, with six of those games being on the road and the schedule interrupted by the 4 Nations Face-Off.

For now, Rantanen's status remains status quo and the Hurricanes have a big decision to make. Word is he won't sign an extension this week, so the ball is in ownership's hand to keep him and push ahead into the playoffs with a top 10 player in the league who could leave via free agency, or trade him again.

Whichever team has Rantanen on the roster after the deadline has passed is the only one that can offer him an eight-year deal, but can only do so until the market opens on July 1.

I was so tempted to take Brad Marchand off my trade board because he's hurt and not expected to play again until after the deadline. He publicly remains adamant that he wants to remain a Bruin, but I keep hearing teams like Vegas and Colorado won't go away.

Marchand, who doesn't have a complete no-trade clause, has made it clear around the league he doesn't want to be traded. Boston also has made it clear that if he does open up to the possibility of being traded, the 36-year-old winger will return GM Don Sweeney some much-needed assets back. This could also leave the door open to Marchand re-signing with the Bruins again in the off-season as a free agent.

After a great performance at the 4 Nations Face-Off, Erik Karlsson has returned to NHL action with seven points in six games, but a minus-7 rating overall.

Making \$10 million against the cap for another two seasons beyond this one, it won't be too punishing if the Penguins retain a little money, especially if it increases Karlsson's trade value. Seth Jones, though a younger defenceman, was moved over the weekend for a young, future hopeful No. 1 netminder and a first-round pick and the Blackhawks had to retain \$2.5 million of his cap hit to get that return.

Could the Penguins take a similar approach with Karlsson? The team has one more salary retention slot remaining, with Reilly Smith and Jeff Petry on the books through the end of this season.

Coming out of a tough weekend in a tie for the second wild card with Calgary at 65 points and just 1-4-0 since returning from the international tournament break, it's believed the Canucks don't want to wave the white flag on the season and are still trying to find ways to improve their group.

Unfortunately, no new meaningful talks on a contract have happened with Brock Boeser recently, so an \$8 million AAV remains out there on a short-term deal from earlier in the season. A 40-goal scorer last season, Boeser has scored just four times in 24 games since the calendar turned to 2025 and didn't record a shot in Saturday's 6-3 loss to Seattle.

Vancouver remains open to any avenue with Boeser, whether to re-sign him by Friday, trade him as a rental, or possibly even move ahead with him on the roster unsigned.

With the Canucks not setting up to be an outright seller, I've taken Elias Pettersson back off the trade board this time, though he will remain a player to watch after the season ends.

The Sabres are set up to sell again, but with so many options of how to approach this week in front of him, the question is how big and bold will GM Kevyn Adams get in the trade market?

Dylan Cozens remains a name to watch, two seasons removed from a 31-goal output, making \$7.1 million against the cap through 2029-30, still just 24 years old and with big upside as a top-six centre.

But his value is perhaps not as high as it should be right now, facing back-to-back seasons of declining production.

It's a situation for the Sabres to be cautious about. They've extended a rebuild before when they traded Jack Eichel and have seen several players moved go on to have much more success elsewhere. Making the same mistake again with such a young player at an important position is a risk the Sabres would be taking by trading Cozens.

Bowen Byram will be an RFA at the end of the season and a valued asset -- he's equalled his career high in points already and is 13th among all NHL blueliners with 27 even strength points, tied with Victor Hedman and John Carlson

As the Sabres explore their options, they're listening to teams on the 23-year-old Byram, but also on 24-year-old blueliner Mattias Samuelsson who is already under contract at a \$4.285 million cap hit through 2029-30. It's unlikely the Sabres would trade both of these players, but one could be in play.

Alex Tuch could be another option for the Sabres to move, a 28-year-old power winger who's third on the team in scoring and tied for 20th among all NHL forwards with 18 even strength goals. He has the size (6-foot-4, 220 pounds), goal scoring acumen, penalty killing ability and willingness to block shots that will all be valued by rival GMs.

As Adams considers his options, trading Tuch may not be as eyebrow-raising as a Cozens or Byram move, but it surely would make for an exciting hockey trade. Tuch is not a rental, still under contract for one more season at \$4.75 million and in his prime at 28 years of age.

A four-game winning streak was snapped with Sunday's 6-3 loss in Dallas and, outside of that game, Jordan Binnington has been excellent since returning from the 4 Nations Face-Off. Suddenly the Blues are in the thick of the Western wild card race again, just one point behind Vancouver and Calgary, though with two more games played than both.

GM Doug Armstrong could take all of his decisions right down to the wire, with a road game in Los Angeles Wednesday night their last before Friday's trade deadline.

Binnington remains a name to watch as he would be the top goaltender available, still under contract at \$6 million for another two seasons. The issue for Armstrong is a very weak goalie market that may need to wait until the off-season. Edmonton remains the only bonafide partner at this point. The Oilers are on Binnington's no-trade list, but he could change his mind for the possibility of chasing a Stanley Cup with Connor McDavid. Binnington would have Carolina on his no-trade list as well, and Detroit seems an unlikely candidate at this point in their team's development.

Whatever happens, Armstrong still wants to shed some money and turn over some of this roster before next season, so many possibilities are on the table. Brayden Schenn, 33, is making \$6.5 million for another three seasons and though he's the captain of this team, might be a candidate for the GM to attain that change.

Schenn is having a down season overall in 2024-25, but has been something of a leader in this charge back into the playoff race for St. Louis, with six points in his past five games. That may yet convince Armstrong to keep his captain around, but if many teams get involved and drum up a competitive market, St. Louis may be presented with an offer they can't refuse. The idea of uniting Brayden Schenn with his brother Luke in separate deals remains a target for a couple teams.

If it's not Schenn that gets a deal done, Armstrong is believed to still be taking calls on the likes of Pavel Buchnevich and Jordan Kyrou, two younger players signed long-term who have appeared on my list in the past.

As for defencemen, the Blues have been looking into trading one of their top paid blueliners for some time, but four of them have no-trade clauses. That possibility remains true this week.

Colton Parayko has gone from someone deemed untouchable to suddenly a player garnering a lot of attention around the league. His trade value has never been higher, which is forcing the team to consider him in trade talks. Parayko has already scored a career high in goals and is tied for fourth among all defencemen in the league with 15. He's also 6-foot-6, 228 pounds, can kill penalties, and is signed through 2029-30 at \$6.5 million.

Justin Faulk has appeared on my list before and is a name that's still on the table as well. Armstrong won't trade all of these players, and isn't looking to tear down the roster to rebuild, but is taking Washington's lead in how to consider re-tooling a team on the fly to get a better result.

With a two-goal, three-point effort on Saturday, Brock Nelson helped lead the Islanders to their second consecutive win, but they still trail the playoffs by five points and will have to get over six other teams to get there. Still, it's close enough that it's not clear what GM Lou Lamoriello will decide to do or, if he does sell, how far he decides to go with it.

Nelson might be the player who moves the needle most for contenders looking at New York's roster, a middle-six centre who has scored 37, 36 and 34 goals over the past three seasons and with 19 goals in 59 games this season. The market for centres is deep and diverse, but the Islanders could come away with a nice return for the 33-year-old.

The Islanders will also have to consider what to do with another rental, winger Kyle Palmieri, who has scored three times in four games since teams returned from the 4 Nations. Jean-Gabriel Pageau isn't a rental -- he has one additional season remaining at \$5 million -- but will be another player Lamoriello takes calls on.

A pending UFA making just \$3.75 million against the Rangers' cap (thanks to previous salary retention by the Penguins), Reilly Smith hasn't fit in so cleanly with New York this season, scoring just 10 goals in 58 games and none since Jan. 23.

Smith was held out of Saunday's game (a 4-0 win over Nashville) for "roster management purposes" which clearly increases the likelihood that he'll be moved by Friday. New York plays again at home Monday vs. the Islanders and Wednesday against Washington before a call has to be made.

Meantime, the Rangers are just two points out of the East's second wild card spot, with three wins in their past four games.

Colorado got the weekend off and play again on Tuesday at home to Pittsburgh and Thursday against San Jose before the trade deadline. The Avs have already traded for Martin Necas and Jack Drury earlier this season, then acquired defenceman Ryan Lindgren from the Rangers over the weekend, but may not be done yet.

Colorado has \$3.286 million in projected deadline day cap space, per PuckPedia, but may also explore moving Casey Mittelstadt one year after acquiring him from the Sabres. Mittelstadt, a 26-year-old centre, makes \$5.75 million on the cap for another two seasons, but hasn't been the seamless answer as Colorado's second line pivot, a role they've been trying to fill since Nazem Kadri left in free agency.

It's an area Avs GM Chris MacFarland may still be looking to address by Friday.

Six points out of the playoffs, the Ducks' charge may not be enough to finish the job this season, but they're starting to make progress. Still, GM Pat Verbeek will be looking for ways to set his team up to take another step next season, and Trevor Zegras' name remains out there.

No longer a highly productive player on the rise, Zegras has dealt with various injuries the past two seasons, which have slowed him to 31 points in his past 65 games played. There is no chance the Ducks will be able to get the same return in trade on Zegras today than if they had decided to move him two years ago, but Verbeek has been looking into finding the player a new home all season.

Still just 24 years old next week, making \$5.75 million through next season, someone may yet be willing to step up and take the chance on Zegras while he can be had. He will return from a three-game suspension this week, when the Ducks will face Edmonton and Vancouver in Tuesday and Wednesday night road games.

When John Gibson was forced to leave a game early last week, the first question was 'what did that mean for his trade candidacy?' With so few quality netminders available in trade, Gibson was seen as an attractive target having a bounce back season -- .911 save percentage, 2.76 GAA, and eighth in the league in Goals Saved Above Expected, per MoneyPuck.

Fears of an injury dissipated quickly, however, and Gibson returned to Anaheim's net Saturday, though in a rough 6-3 loss to Chicago in which the netminder made just 18 saves on 24 shots.

The Ducks acquired another goalie, Ville Husso, last week, which gives them organizational depth and an option behind Lukas Dostal if Gibson is traded, but the move itself doesn't indicate something is definitively coming down the pipe.

Gibson is signed at \$6.4 million for another two years and will turn 32 in July.

Ryan Donato continues to appeal to contending teams and scored twice in Saturday's win over Anaheim.

Donato is having a career season, now with 21 goals and 22 assists and the team leader in even strength goals and points. If there is one thing to be aware of, it's that Donato's shooting percentage is also at a career high, so this level of production may yet slow down, but he's a feisty player and one of Chicago's team leaders in hits. He wins just over 45 per cent of his draws, but also can be used on the wing.

By trading Seth Jones to Florida over the weekend for Spencer Knight and a first-round pick, Blackhawks GM Kyle Davidson signalled that this team was still in the thick of a rebuild and was able to get a good return for a player seeking a way out. While Donato could be a useful player for the Hawks going forward, the fact is he's a pending UFA making just \$2 million against the cap, so the team will likely sell high on him in this moment.

The Blackhawks have now used up all three of their retention slots, however, meaning a buyer will have to take on Donato at full value or else find a third team to get involved.

Sharks GM Mike Grier is still seeking the right return for Mario Ferraro, a left shot blueliner under contract for \$3.25 million and signed for another season at that attractive number.

Ferraro can play physical and is not shy about blocking shots. He can kill penalties (third on the Sharks in PK ice time per game) and play reliable minutes in the top four. Ferraro does a good job tipping the ice more than most other San Jose defencemen and has gotten a lower percentage of offensive zone starts than any of them as well. He's drawn tough assignments and has done well enough with them, considering the Sharks are the NHL's worst team with a horrendous minus-73 goal differential.

Still just 26 years old, he's on the fringe of being young enough that he could be a useful piece for the Sharks when they come out of this rebuild, so it's still possible the team keeps him and looks at re-signing him before he hits the open market in a year. But by moving him now, a year before he becomes UFA eligible, the Sharks may try and acquire more future assets instead.

With four wins in their past five games -- and at least one point in each -- the Flyers are hanging on to playoff hope, four back of the wild card Monday morning. Management may be cautious in how it approaches the deadline overall, not wanting to give up on the roster yet -- especially when the team is delivering results -- and making sure to not sell low on any players under contract.

That brings us to Rasmus Ristolainen, who is enjoying something of a bounceback season with 19 points, a team-leading 90 hits, 88 blocked shots and an important presence on Philadelphia's penalty kill. Big, right shot, physical defencemen are common targets this time of year and the Flyers could be enticed to move him for the right price.

But Ristolainen still has another season remaining on his deal, so the Flyers won't be rushed into making a move if the price isn't right. They're by no means out of the race yet.

Scott Laughton stirred the trade rumour mill over the weekend with a 'last supper' photo that made it seem like he knew something was up. It turns out that Laughton, a mainstay on trade lists for the past year, was trying to have fun with the ongoing speculation.

"We were joking around, I think you kinda got to keep it light at this time of year," he said Saturday. "Joking around that it was my last time (with the Flyers) on the road. (Teammate Erik Johnson) was kind of poking fun at me, so we re-created a little picture.

"I think when you're in (trade) rumours for five years straight, it's nice to get some people back with a little bit of trolling."

Like Ristolainen, Laughton is not in a situation where he has to be traded now but if it is a sellers' market for centres, the Flyers might entertain a move if someone meets their price, which is thought to be for at least a first-round pick.

Making just \$3 million against the cap for another season, Laughton leads all Flyers forwards in penalty kill time per game, wins just shy of 50 per cent of his draws, and is one of the more physical players on the roster. He has the ability to play centre or wing, so allows a coach some flexibility with how he lines up the players. Laughton is a best fit in a bottom-six role.

It remains to be seen what happens with Laughton, who was in a similar situation a year ago. But he's well-liked in the dressing room and by head coach John Tortorella, who certainly won't be satisfied to give up when the team is on a little bit of a roll, beating Winnipeg on Saturday. The Flyers play Calgary and Winnipeg again before Friday's deadline.

Just 4-5-1 in their past 10, Seattle has slipped to nine points out of the wild card and now GM Ron Francis will be considering a wide variety of moves. But one player who could bring the team back a sneaky good return is Brandon Tanev, one of the more physical players on the team who also leads all Seattle forwards in shot blocks.

Tanev is the Kraken's PK minutes leader per game and plays with the sort of intensity that translates to playoff hockey and is targeted by GMs around the deadline. He's not a big point scorer, though does have nine goals this season, so will be a load to handle in a depth winger role. A playoff rental type, through and through.

Since having surgery to repair a sports hernia, Yanni Gourde hasn't played a game since Jan. 5, with an initial timeline that he was expected to miss five-to-seven weeks. We're right near the end of that window now, though with just two games left before the trade deadline, Seattle may be careful with how it handles Gourde.

Before the injury, there was a long list of suitors for Gourde, an interesting and feisty third line centre who could greatly complement a contender's top two options and can kill penalties as well. Gourde has the experience of winning two Stanley Cups with Tampa Bay, during which he scored a combined 13 goals in 48 games.

The injury introduces a bit more risk into acquiring the player, but it's still believed there will be a market for the pending UFA.

Saturday's loss to New Jersey ended a three-game winning streak for Utah, but they are very much alive again, just two points out of a wild card position. While they could look to leverage some assets to find improvement and upgrade the roster, it's still believed Utah's bigger trades will come in the off-season.

The fact is GM Bill Armstrong has lots to consider on this roster. Nick Bjugstad is a big forward on an expiring contract who could be sent out as a rental player. It's also been suggested that Utah thinks it needs to size up its forwards, meaning some smaller players such as Alexander Kerfoot (another pending UFA) or Matias Maccelli (scratched since Feb. 8, one year removed from recording 57 points) could also be had.

But if the Hockey Club seeks out a more intriguing return, Lawson Crouse will draw interest from around the league. Though Crouse, 27, is having a down season on offence (13 points in 60 games), he's a unique sort of player who can be used in all situations, and play physically (130 hits) at 6-foot-4, 214 pounds. Prior to this season, he scored at least 20 goals three years in a row.

Crouse is also under contract for another two years at \$4.3 million, a reasonable number that someone might want to jump all over.

The closer we come to the trade deadline without an extension, the more likely Montreal will trade 28-year-old centre Jake Evans. Making just \$1.7 million this season, Evans is on the cusp of surpassing career bests in goals and points.

The Canadiens are just three points out of the playoffs and so may yet keep some players they'd otherwise consider moving, but this is a team and management group still thinking with a more long-term outlook. Evans is a depth guy who can kill penalties, play with an edge and wins more face-offs than he loses. Teams are calling on the player and, if he's pricing his way out of Montreal, GM Kent Hughes will be seeking the best offer.

With so many big things going on in Vancouver this season, depth defenceman Carson Soucy has come in under the radar, but is believed to be available. Not that he's a replacement for Quinn Hughes, but the injury to the team's captain over the weekend will put further pressure on the defence corps so, if management does not want to give up on the playoff push, moving Soucy becomes a little tougher to do.

A 6-foot-5, 208-pound left shot defenceman, Soucy is a physical player, second on the Canucks in blocked shots, and relied upon for key penalty kill minutes. If you're a playoff team looking for a depth defender on your third pairing, you could do worse than Soucy, who comes with the added value of having one more season left on his contract at a \$3.25 million AAV. He also has a full no-trade clause.

Trent Frederic is one of the more physical forwards in the league, with 155 hits on the season. It's that sandpaper plus the flexibility of being a centre or winger that will make him an intriguing player on the trade market.

Frederic is a pending UFA, but will be far easier for the Bruins to move on from than the call they have to make on Marchand. Frederic is also capable of providing a decent amount of offence from the bottom-six -- though he has just 15 points in 57 games this season, he notched 18 goals and 40 points a year ago.

Sportsnet.ca / Which buyers have the most cap space heading into the 2025 trade deadline?

By Sonny Sachdeva – March 4, 2025

Just a few days remain before the NHL's 2025 trade deadline. And we've seen plenty of business handled by general managers around the league already.

On Saturday, a trio of trades sent a few veteran defenders on to new chapters. Earlier moves saw one of the game's best wingers switch jerseys, and a bona fide contender land a new starting goalie. Even so, a number of marquee names could still find themselves repping different clubs by the end of March 7, and plenty of organizations head toward the deadline with enough cap space to make things interesting.

That in mind, let's take a look at a few buyers who have meaningful cap space to work with as deadline day looms:

Washington Capitals

Deadline cap space: \$3.7 million (\$16.7 million LTIR pool)

The Caps are enjoying their best season in half a decade, a meteoric campaign that has them sitting atop the Eastern Conference with 22 games left to navigate. The club has every reason to go all-in and capitalize on this strong regular-season showing, to try to potentially spin it into the second Cup of Alex Ovechkin's career. The front office seems to agree, as GM Chris Patrick said "anything is on the table" when it comes to bolstering the roster ahead of March 7.

The Caps have the flexibility to make some interesting moves, with plenty of LTIR space granting them room to work. That said, the Caps did much of their business in the off-season, bringing in netminder Logan Thompson, defender Jacob Chychrun and pivot Pierre-Luc Dubois. The biggest concern heading into the deadline is how to add without upsetting the chemistry that's carried them this far in 2024-25. A significant acquisition that would shake up that status quo likely doesn't make much sense, but a smaller swing to improve the bottom of the lineup could be worthwhile as Washington turns its attention to the post-season.

Florida Panthers

Deadline cap space: \$8.7 million (\$10.6 million LTIR pool)

The Panthers are always an intriguing club to watch this time of year, and GM Bill Zito already made some noteworthy waves in the market over the past week — first acquiring veteran defender Seth Jones and then announcing that Matthew Tkachuk will be out for the rest of the regular season, meaning the defending-champion Cats have some significant LTIR space to work with.

The most important consideration here is Zito's affinity for taking unending swings, keeping the Panthers all-in at all times. If there's another marquee move to be made, it's a fair bet this Panthers front office will try to make it happen. On the latest episode of 32 Thoughts: The Podcast, Sportsnet's Elliott Friedman said as much: "I think you have to look at them right now and say, 'With all that cap room, they're going to strike again.'"

With Spencer Knight moved out as part of the Jones deal, goaltending depth has become an area the club could look to address before March 7. Bringing in some help up front to hold the team over while Tkachuk is sidelined could be an option, too. Either way, something is coming.

Dallas Stars

Deadline cap space: \$4.6 million (\$12.3 million LTIR pool)

A bona fide contender that's been hit hard by injuries, the Stars still find themselves in a solid position heading into the home stretch, sitting second in the Central despite the absence of Miro Heiskanen and Tyler Seguin. The club has some room to operate, given the LTIR space created by those injuries, but the biggest question for Dallas's brass is when it expects the key pair to return. With Heiskanen undergoing knee surgery a month ago, and Seguin undergoing hip surgery in December, it's unclear whether one or both will be back in the lineup before Game 82, which muddies Dallas's deadline plans.

Either way, there are holes to fill. A blue-line upgrade could help, and there may be room to add more up front as well. GM Jim Nill already brought in Mikael Granlund, fresh off a sterling 4 Nations performance, but Dallas has the flexibility to do more. In fact, it could swing much bigger than some expect — on Monday's podcast, Friedman highlighted the Stars as a potential landing spot for star winger Mikko Rantanen if the Canes can't ink him to an extension and elect to flip him before the deadline.

Colorado Avalanche**Deadline cap space: \$3.3 million (\$8.9 million LTIR pool)**

Coming off two brief post-season appearances in the wake of their 2022 championship, the Avs have wasted little time in retooling their roster to get a deeper run in 2025. They've already gotten much of their business out of the way over the course of the regular season. This past weekend, the club brought in defender Ryan Lindgren and forward Jimmy Vesey in a deal with the New York Rangers. Before that, they authored two of the biggest deals we've seen in 2024-25, sending franchise star Rantanen to Carolina in a January blockbuster, and retooling their goaltending with the acquisition of Mackenzie Blackwood a month before that.

But Colorado still has room to operate, and every reason to utilize it before the post-season arrives. There's still a need at centre behind Nathan MacKinnon, and with some intriguing pivots seemingly up for grabs, Friedman suggested that 2C spot could be where GM Chris MacFarland looks to add before March 7.

Detroit Red Wings**Deadline cap space: \$13.6 million**

On the cusp of ending a near-decade-long playoff drought, the Red Wings should have all the reason they need to swing big and look for progress in 2025. Holding on to the second wild-card spot in the East, with the Senators, Rangers and Bruins just a couple points behind them, Detroit could use an impactful addition or two to ensure it holds on and officially book its ticket back to the dance.

The Wings have plenty of space to make moves, and could use help both up front and on the back end. The 32 Thoughts crew highlighted blue-line depth as the GM Steve Yzerman's focus of late. A massive swing for a marquee name doesn't exactly seem in line with Yzerman's style, but a few quieter moves to build up the squad's blue-line depth and fill out its forward corps could help seal the Red Wings' return to the playoff picture.

Deadline cap space: \$12.4 million

Flying high as the league's No. 1 club in the lead-up to the deadline, the Jets find themselves in a similar spot as the Capitals — all-in on trying to turn this momentum into a meaningful Cup run, but wary of tinkering with the chemistry of a winning squad. As Friedman pointed out in Monday's episode, even if this is a season in which it seems worth taking a big swing and moving out a first-round pick to land a

key piece, there doesn't seem an obvious option that makes sense for these Jets. Even so, reports have GM Kevin Cheveldayoff scanning the market to assess those options, seeking out a worthy big swing.

The more worthwhile approach, without upending too much, might be simply filling more specific holes in the bottom half of the roster, adding players who can address particular needs and serve in particular roles. There's room to add to the blue line in that sense, and to potentially find a depth pivot who could bolster the Jets' lineup down the middle, too.

Deadline cap space: \$5.2 million (\$5.1 million LTIR pool)

Fresh off a Cup Final run, and hungry to get back there again, the Oilers are having a tougher go this time around. The key names on the roster aren't firing on all cylinders, the chemistry doesn't look quite as seamless as it has in the past, and the club is feeling the absence of some of the quick-footed pieces it lost in the off-season. There's little question the Oil are all-in on making the moves needed to get Connor McDavid and Co. back in position to make some serious playoff noise, but the path to getting there isn't too clear-cut.

Much of the chatter around Edmonton has linked the club to a change in net, with the Ducks' John Gibson floated as a potential target. GM Stan Bowman has downplayed the potential of a goaltender acquisition, but hasn't ruled it out all together — the real issue is whether they feel Gibson, or any of the other potential options available, would truly be a significant upgrade over Stuart Skinner. Outside of the cage, help on the blue line and more speed up front are high on the Oilers' list of needs, according to Friedman. Edmonton has some cap flexibility to work with, and could find itself with even more if it's able to move Evander Kane and his \$5.1-million cap hit before March 7.

Deadline cap space: \$3 million (\$3.6 million LTIR pool)

It's looking like familiar territory for the Maple Leafs. The club has looked good through the regular season, sitting atop its division as it heads into the home stretch. But the Leafs also haven't exactly been firing on all cylinders all season, nor have they necessarily proven they're clear of the issues that plagued them in post-seasons past. GM Brad Treliving is no stranger to taking swings at the deadline, so it's fair to assume moves are coming — the question is simply how high the Maple Leafs manager reaches.

A move to bolster Toronto's centre depth seems a near sure thing, with the club linked to Brayden Schenn and every other potential option down the middle. Friedman offered another intriguing possibility to shake up the blue-and-white's forward corps, though: Rantanen.

"If it becomes a thing, it's just Treliving's way that he would poke into Rantanen. Now, obviously, it could never be a long-term thing unless their cap situation completely changed," Friedman said. "But I find it very hard to believe that if Rantanen got out there, Toronto wouldn't at least see what it took to do it."

Tampa Bay Lightning

Deadline cap space: \$6 million

After a pair of first-round exits over their last two post-seasons, the Lightning's run as one of the league's elite seemed all but through. But the Bolts are enjoying a resurgent 2024-25 that has them back among the Atlantic Division's best. A dominant eight-game win streak has them hitting their stride as the season's home stretch approaches, too, setting up the Lightning to be a playoff force once again.

Like their state rival, the key for the Lightning is GM Julien BriseBois' history of taking big swings. With his club having revived its contender status, look for BriseBois to make waves once again. Per Friedman, the focus is adding more scoring to the Lightning — ideally, someone who could be a meaningful

contributor, like Buffalo's Alex Tuch. The key obstacle to navigate there is what exactly the Lightning have in the way of assets that could go the other way. An alternate path might be adding a role player to fill out the bottom six — like, perhaps, Yanni Gourde, who won a pair of Cups in Lightning colours before he was moved to Seattle.

"I do think they're going to add," Friedman said of the Bolts during Monday's episode. "Especially with how they've played lately, I do think they see themselves as a team that can be a threat, and a legitimate threat. So, I don't think they're going to sit here and let this all go by."

Columbus Blue Jackets

Deadline cap space: \$86.4 million

Rewind to the beginning of the 2024-25 campaign, and there were few prognosticators, if any, who had the Blue Jackets in this position. A tragic start to their season and a half-decade of difficult campaigns were enough to warrant assumptions that this would be another tough year for Columbus. Instead, the Blue Jackets sit in the East's top wild-card spot in March, looking likely to make their return to the post-season after four years on the outside.

Blue Jackets GM Don Waddell said last month that he feels he should reward his squad for what it's showed to this point. "The way I look at it, I don't know if selling off is the right thing for this group," he told NHL.com in February. "This group has done a great job of sticking together, and whether we can get there or not, I think I've got to give this group a chance."

If the Jackets do elect to add, they have enough room to do seemingly anything they want, with a ton of deadline-day cap space at their disposal. While a massive swing seems unlikely, bringing in meaningful forward depth could help the Jackets hold on to that wild-card spot through the rest of the season.