



Columbus Blue Jackets News Clips
June 17-18, 2025

Columbus Blue Jackets

- PAGE 02: The Hockey Writers: Blue Jackets' Werenski Will Get His Hardware in the Future
- PAGE 04: Columbus Dispatch: Latvia selects Columbus Blue Jackets' Elvis Merzlikins for 2026 Winter Olympics in Italy
- PAGE 06: The Athletic: Blue Jackets mailbag, part 1: Fabbro's future, trade possibilities, contender status check
- PAGE 10: The Athletic: Blue Jackets mailbag, part 2: Merzlikins' future, a possible AHL wave, offer sheets
- PAGE 15: Columbus Dispatch: Columbus Blue Jackets reveal 25th anniversary logo for 2025-26 NHL season
- PAGE 16: NBC4i.com: Blue Jackets unveil special logo to commemorate 25th season
- PAGE 17: 10TV.com: Blue Jackets unveil new logo commemorating 25th anniversary

Cleveland Monsters/Prospects

- PAGE 18: The Hockey Writers: Blue Jackets' Lindstrom Makes Right Call Heading to NCAA

NHL/Websites

The Hockey Writers / Blue Jackets' Werenski Will Get His Hardware in the Future

By William Espy – June 16, 2025

Zach Werenski may not have won the first Norris Trophy in Columbus Blue Jackets history this season, but his time will come.

Werenski Making Franchise History

Werenski already made history this season, becoming the first Blue Jackets' defenseman to be named a finalist for the Norris after undoubtedly the best season of his career. Spending most of his time alongside Dante Fabbro, the 27-year-old reached a level we had never seen from him before. Although he's been a phenomenal defenseman throughout much of his career, he's now entered the conversation of an "elite defenseman."

While the Blue Jackets are looking to lock down his defensive partner Fabbro, Werenski is still under contract with the organization for three more seasons at a hefty \$9.5 million per season. This season though, he showed that he's far from overpaid. He finished at more than a point-per-game clip with 82 points in 81 games, which was also enough to lead the team (Kirill Marchenko was second with 74 points.) That type of offensive production isn't overly common for defensemen, with only a few accomplishing it each season.

Werenski ultimately finished second in Norris Trophy voting behind the winner, Cale Makar. Makar, who won his second-career Norris, finished the season with dominant offensive numbers, crossing the 30-goal plateau for the first time in his career and finishing with 92 points in 80 games. The fact that Werenski was in the same conversation as a generational talent such as Makar proves he's a top defenseman in the NHL at this point in time.

Werenski's Record-Breaking Season

While Werenski didn't have as dominant of an offensive performance as Makar, he did hit a couple of key milestones and even broke some franchise records along the way. He posted the most points for a defenseman in club history with 82, and the number also tied him for the second-highest overall point total in a season (only Artemi Panarin recorded more with 87 in 2018-19.)

Speaking of Panarin, Werenski also tied the former Blue Jackets winger for the most assists in a season with 59. On top of that, he broke his own record as well. In the 2019-20 season, Werenski scored 20 goals — the most by a defenseman in team history — and this season, he scored 23.

At the end of the season, Werenski was named to the NHL's First All-Star Team, joining Sergei Bobrovsky as the only Blue Jackets to ever receive that particular honor. Only four Blue Jackets have been named to a postseason All-Star team in general, with Steve Mason and Seth Jones getting Second All-Star Team honors in the past.

Even Blue Jackets general manager Don Waddell didn't see this type of performance coming, telling Kristen Shilton of ESPN, ""I'd be lying if I said I thought Werenski would be having this good of a year. We were hoping he could. Now it's happening. The way he's playing and carrying our team, without him, I don't know where we'd be."

Werenski's importance to the Blue Jackets is also seen off the ice; he's a key figure in the community which is why he was also nominated for the King Clancy Memorial Trophy this season. The organization recognized him as their Community MVP for the third time citing "his unwavering dedication to making a meaningful impact in the central Ohio community."

While Werenski didn't walk away with any hardware at the 2025 NHL Awards, his performance remains one of — iff not the best — by a skater in Blue Jackets history. Moreover, he turned himself into a household name around the NHL and showed he's worth every penny of his massive contract. With his name now alongside those of Makar, Quinn Hughes, and the rest of the NHL's elite defensemen, it's safe to say that hardware, in one form or another, is on the horizon for Zach Werenski.

Columbus Dispatch / Latvia selects Columbus Blue Jackets' Elvis Merzlikins for 2026 Winter Olympics in Italy

By Brian Hedger – June 16, 2025

The Blue Jackets will have at least one player representing them at the 2026 Winter Olympics in Milan and Cortina, Italy.

Latvia announced June 16 that goalie Elvis Merzlikins will play for his country in the first Olympic Games to feature NHL players since 2014 in Sochi, Russia.

The Latvian Ice Hockey Federation revealed part of its Olympics roster as part of a coordinated effort by the 12 nations invited to compete from Feb. 11-22 to share their “first six” players on June 16. That included the U.S. and Canada.

No other Blue Jackets were included among the announcements, as USA Hockey declined to name Zach Werenski one of its “first six” 2026 Olympians. Werenski put together his best NHL season for the Blue Jackets in 2024-25 and finished second to the Colorado Avalanche’s Cale Makar for the Norris Trophy as the league’s top defenseman.

Werenski was also voted on the NHL's first all-star team by the Professional Hockey Writers' Association and led the NHL’s 4 Nations Face-Off tournament in scoring with six points on six assists for the U.S. in February 2025. The U.S. won silver in the event, which pitted teams from Canada, the U.S., Sweden and Finland against one another in a mid-season “best-on-best” tournament held in Montreal and Boston, acting as a precursor to the league’s return to international play.

Werenski also played for the U.S. at the men’s world championships in May, helping the red, white and blue end a long dry spell by winning a gold medal in that tournament for the first time since 1933.

Chosen ahead of Werenski by U.S. general manager Bill Guerin (Minnesota Wild) were Jack Eichel (Vegas Golden Knights), Quinn Hughes (Vancouver Canucks), Auston Matthews (Toronto Maple Leafs), Charlie McAvoy (Boston Bruins), Brady Tkachuk (Ottawa Senators) and Matthew Tkachuk (Florida Panthers).

Merzlikins, 31, has played for Latvia in six men’s world championships. Between 2016-2024, compiling a 2.79 goals-against average, .907 save percentage and three shutouts in 31 appearances. He was named a Top 3 player on his team in 2016, 2017 and 2018, prior to starting his NHL career with the Blue Jackets.

Merzlikins has found the NHL waters much choppier to traverse, posting a 94-100-35 record with a 3.20 GAA and .902 save percentage in 244 career games – all for the Blue Jackets. He went 26-21-5 with a 3.18 GAA and .892 save percentage in 2024-25, helping the Jackets become the NHL’s best story while staying in the hunt for a playoff spot through 81 of 82 games.

With two years left on a contract that counts at \$5.4 million a year against the NHL’s salary cap, there are fans and analysts who feel that Blue Jackets president of hockey operations/general manager Don Waddell should buy out the remainder of his deal and make Merzlikins an unrestricted free agent.

Waddell disagrees and recently told the Dispatch he’s not considering the use of contract buyouts this summer for Merzlikins or other players. Short of a trade, Merzlikins will return as the Blue Jackets’ top

goalie for 2025-26 and will have his sights set on posting his best NHL season before heading to the Olympics.

The Athletic / Blue Jackets mailbag, part 1: Fabbro's future, trade possibilities, contender status check

By Aaron Portzline – June 17, 2025

As great as the Stanley Cup Final has been, there are 30 other clubs ready to get on with the offseason.

The Columbus Blue Jackets are hoping to make significant upgrades this summer after taking a major step forward and nearly making the playoffs in 2024-25, and the fun is right around the corner. The first round of the NHL draft is 10 days away. The start of free agency is just a two-week wait.

We asked for your questions, Blue Jackets fans, and, as usual, you did not disappoint. There are too many to cram into one mailbag, so we're going to spread it out over two days.

In today's bag of letters, we get to the major task facing GM Don Waddell in reshaping the Blue Jackets' defensive corps, plus what trades they might consider with their two first-round picks, how far away Columbus might be from contender status, and what the future might hold for James van Riemsdyk.

On Wednesday, we'll try to tackle what lies ahead with the troubled goaltenders, whether or not Waddell would consider buyouts, the possibility of offers sheets and more.

Hope you enjoy!

Seems like the Blue Jackets are going to try to bring back Dante Fabbro and Ivan Provorov. If so, how do they upgrade the defense from last season? — Finn M.

Great question, and one I posed to Waddell last week. He acknowledged the issue, and said that he'd be happy to add to last year's group and let training camp and the early season decide who plays and where. But there's only so much he can say at this point because there's (probably) only so much he knows at this point. There's a reason he's trying to mine the trade market first, because that doesn't have to wait until July 1, which is when Provorov can sign elsewhere. If he can swing a trade now, he'll have a better sense of what he has — or doesn't have — heading into free agency. He didn't say this, but that could also be a reason talks with Provorov have been exceedingly slow. If he makes a trade for a right-side top-four defenseman, the urge to re-sign Provorov may not be as urgent.

Likelihood they keep Dante Fabbro? Likelihood they keep Ivan Provorov? — Scott Q.

The sense as of this weekend is that Fabbro was moving in the right direction toward a deal and Provorov was yet to really get serious. Obviously, this can all change quickly. But I'd put Fabbro at a "quite likely" to re-sign and Provorov at a couple of spots below that.

Who plays next to Zach Werenski if we don't sign Fabbro? Seems like he's more valuable to us than he is with anyone else. — G.R.

Is this J.P. Barry? I'm guessing Barry, Fabbro's agent, has posed these same questions in his talks with Waddell over the last week or so. That's his leverage. I'm sure the Blue Jackets have mentioned that Fabbro was out of sorts in Nashville last season before they rescued him off waivers. But to answer your question ... there is no obvious choice for a top-pair partner with Werenski. Now, they could land a player via trade or free agency, and Waddell would have a better sense of that possibility than anybody.

But if Fabbro walks and is not replaced, well, the Blue Jackets would be where they were last season before they claimed Fabbro. And, well, that's why they claimed him.

Waddell has to get the club out from under the Damon Severson contract. What are the chances that he can pull off a decent deal? — Michael E.K.

Not quite sure what you mean by "decent." It's not a trade the Blue Jackets would win at this juncture. Obviously, Severson has not had a smooth landing in Columbus. You thought it might get better last season, his second with the Jackets, but it just really didn't. I'm not ready to give up on him, but in order to trade him — he has six years(!) remaining on his contract — the Blue Jackets would almost certainly have to retain a significant portion of his contract and/or sweeten the deal by sending a prospect or a draft pick along with him to a new destination. It's not an ideal spot.

What do you believe in Severson's mindset? Does he believe he's the liability that most believe him to be? Will he be content taking his money while being a healthy scratch? — Joseph M.

I don't pretend to know him well, but we've had good conversations and he's a guy who cares deeply about how he's playing and how he is contributing to the team. There may be some imposter syndrome at play here. The massive contract seemed to weird him out during his first season in Columbus. He even admitted that he was trying to hang points and make perfect plays to justify the Jackets' confidence in him. Strangely, maybe the salary cap going up and other defensemen joining the organization who draw bigger paychecks may help. He's a mobile player who has decent skills as a puck-mover. He doesn't need to be any more than he is, but he's been making brain-cramp plays all the way back to his New Jersey days. Simplify, man.

I was hearing Jason Robertson trade talks with the Blue Jackets. Have you heard anything similar? — Ua G.

I would put it this way: I've seen his name mentioned in trade rumors, and if there's any whiff that he's available, you'd be safe to assume that Waddell would make contact. Hell, he's probably spoken with Stars GM Jim Nill on a number of occasions this summer, because Waddell is actively making calls. But — not to kill a perfectly wonderful rumor — I have no substantive proof that the Blue Jackets have had trade talks specifically regarding Robertson.

Besides draft picks, who are the most likely trade candidates that could net real value? — Aaron P.

(For the record, this is a different Aaron P.) I would start with Yegor Chinakhov. I don't think the return would be huge, but it wouldn't be too late of a draft pick or too low of a prospect in return. If it becomes clear that the Blue Jackets aren't going to resign Provorov, I could see his rights becoming available. Outside chance that Elvis Merzlikins gets moved, but his March and April didn't help.

What do you think would be available for the Blue Jackets' first-round picks, separate or together? — Jack H.

Great question. Honestly, at No. 14 and No. 20, the Blue Jackets may be just outside the window where clubs think they can find big-time, sure-fire NHL players. I'm pretty certain that neither of those picks alone would land an established NHL difference-maker, but if the right player falls and another club gets excited to add him ... you never know. More likely, I'd guess, is that the Blue Jackets use the No. 14 or No. 20 as a package with something else.

I'm probably in the minority, but I don't think the Blue Jackets should trade their first-round picks this year? I say keep adding prospects. Disagree? — Alex E.

I'd have to know what's available in trade to answer that. I'm not opposed to spending those picks, but if there is immediate help — young player with term, especially — I would argue that the Blue Jackets are well within the window now where it's appropriate to start trading mid-first-round picks in order to immediately help the young wunderkinds already in place. The goal is still continuing to improve, of course, but being top-eight in the East next season is the target.

Thoughts on plans for Yegor Chinakhov? How does the team view him? — Dan C.

I started to sense real frustration last season. He's missed a lot of games the last three seasons. And as much as that may not be anybody's fault — injured is injured — you're trying to build a competitive team here. As a former Blue Jackets coach used to say: "Guys who are always hurt ... are always hurt." You saw what Waddell did last summer with the likes of Jake Bean, Adam Boqvist, Nick Blankenburg and others. Waddell seems to avoid guys who are chronically injured. I won't be surprised if he's traded. If he stays and stays healthy, the sky is the limit. That kid is talented.

I'm not buying into this Mitch Marner thing. Playing in Toronto takes a thick skin but it seems a lot had to do with ego. — Salvatore T.

I've never gotten any sense that Marner is anything other than a good dude and a good teammate, but that's a hard thing to judge from the press box, especially one a few hundred miles away. I'll grant you that the Blue Jackets need to be cognizant now of not just collecting high-end skill, but in adding the right parts to fit their roster needs. But the idea of adding Marner, one of the most talented forwards in the game, to that forward group is plenty enticing. That kind of player lifts everyone around him.

If Waddell gets a good (but not necessarily Marner) winger, retools the defense and the goaltending situation, this team makes the playoffs but is one or two years away from being a serious contender. Agree? — George M.

Would you settle for "on the right track"? All of those things you mentioned are key. And, yes, it would make them more competitive, especially when added to the continue growth of their top-notch young players. But I ponder two things with this. First, what's going to happen around the Eastern Conference over the next two or three weeks? The Blue Jackets aren't the only team trying to take big steps forward. The Rangers are not going to rest. The Red Wings, at some point, are going to elevate. Is Boston down for a while now? Maybe not. The other issue is, this Blue Jackets group almost certainly has some tough lessons ahead to learn in the playoffs. They have to taste it first. It usually has to hurt like hell a couple of times before you break through. Three or four years, maybe.

We still don't look anywhere close to competing with the Oilers or Panthers of the world. Do we really think a goalie and another forward is enough? We might be further away that we hope. — Drew T.

I don't. I don't think most people do, either. No, there's plenty of work to be done here still. They need a goalie. They could use another forward. This is the building that has to continue. The 2025-26 season won't be the peak of this roster, not with all of the 20-to-24-year-olds. The future is bright and the trajectory seems to be pointed upward. But that's rarely in a straight line. Can they keep this group together? There's a question. But to think they're two players away from being a conference champion is a stretch.

James van Riemsdyk's veteran and net presence is needed, no? — Steve F.

I think so, but I would understand both parties going to July 1 to see what's out there. (Not saying that's the plan, just that I could understand it.) The Blue Jackets are expected to let Sean Kuraly walk and might lose Justin Danforth, too, although the two sides are talking. To lose those three would be quite a blow, and it would be imperative that they add some competitive veterans lower in the lineup. But nobody knows how all of this will shake out in the next couple of weeks. I was more than a little mystified late last season when van Riemsdyk, with 16 goals, was sitting during the most important time of the season.

It seems like almost every team is in the same position as CBJ: money to burn, assets to spend, and a desire to upgrade. — Jonathan B.

That is the truth. The infusion of cap space has opened up the possibilities for many teams this summer, and the promise of significantly more cap space in subsequent years will give them confidence to look boldly into the future, too. My prediction: free-agent prices are going to skyrocket this year, and moderately effective players will start making the money of much better players. I'm also guessing that some young players will take short-term deals, knowing there will be big tickets waiting and available for them in a few years. Get ready for sticker shock.

Trent Vogelhuber has been great with AHL Cleveland. Any word on if he's getting NHL buzz from Columbus or others? — Charles P.

Well, with the Blue Jackets' entire coaching staff back next season — that was made clear right after the season — there doesn't appear to be a vacancy for him to fill in Columbus as of now. The other thing to consider is, that for many AHL guys, it's a question of what's best for their careers and their career path. For some, they'd rather be an AHL coach than an NHL assistant because they want that head coaching experience. At some point, as a guy who didn't play in the NHL, I'm guessing Vogelhuber will need his next step to be as an NHL assistant. Not ruling it out. Jared Bednar, for one, made the leap from the minors to the NHL without playing in the NHL or serving as an NHL assistant. It can be done. Vogelhuber is very highly regarded around the NHL and AHL. It'd be a shame if the Dublin, Ohio, native was snatched away.

Will we ever update our primary sweater logo? — John B.

Why would you do that? How can something become classic if you keep changing it? I like the sweater, but I don't get too hung up on such details. To each their own.

The Athletic / Blue Jackets mailbag, part 2: Merzlikins' future, a possible AHL wave, offer sheets

By Aaron Portzline – June 18, 2025

Nobody expected the Columbus Blue Jackets to be competitive this season, so most watched them challenge for a playoff spot this spring — they were the last team to be eliminated — and counted it at a good sign that a bright future looms.

They have veteran building blocks and a cadre of young players who are already impact NHL players. Now, it's on GM Don Waddell, the coaches and players to get over the hurdle. Nobody will count next season as a success if they don't make the playoffs.

We asked late last week for your questions, and you did not disappoint. We answered a bunch on Tuesday. We emptied the mailbag today.

The topics are meaty, too. All eyes are on the Blue Jackets' goaltending position, which has been a sore spot for the past three or four seasons. What becomes of Elvis Merzlikins? Is Jet ready for takeoff? Who's next if they need a veteran goalie?

But it didn't stop there. Enjoy these, and thanks again for taking part. (Some questions have been lightly edited for style and clarity.)

Are the Blue Jackets a goalie away from making the playoffs? Or did we overachieve last year? — Andy J.

This is a good question to get us started. There are many ways to go with this. Let me take the second part first. They were better than anybody expected, but I'm not sure they overachieved. There were some (so far) career-best years in there, sure, but nothing that feels as if it can't be replicated. Zach Werenski, Adam Fantilli, Kirill Marchenko, Sean Monahan ... that's a pretty good skill nucleus. And they're all either young or in their primes. To me, it feels like the start of something, not the pinnacle.

To the first part ... they likely would have made the playoffs with even slightly better goaltending, but as we've noted many times, it's probably unfair to pin their defensive woes entirely on that position. (I do think they need to change up the net, though.) But are they guaranteed a postseason berth with better goalie play? I would think not. The Eastern Conference is probably going to be tougher next season. Each year is its own animal. Further, the Blue Jackets want to improve at more spots than in goal, because the goal isn't to just make the playoffs. It's to do something once you're there.

How realistic are buyouts? And do you know if Waddell ever did this in Carolina? — Ryan C.

I know what's been said by Waddell. But I find it hard to believe that a contract buyout actually is off the table, especially for Merzlikins. A buyout is not ideal, of course. They'd have to spread out two-thirds of his remaining salary (both years) over the next four seasons, or about \$7.5 million total. The worst hit would come in 2026-27, when they'd owe him \$2.8 million. But it might be the only remedy. If this is a consideration, Waddell is wise to not air that publicly. You may as well exhaust your efforts to trade him — even with salary retained — because buyouts are a last resort. I haven't even asked about a Damon Severson contract buyout, because there is no way they'd sign up to pay a player over the next 12 seasons. That's Bobby Bonilla territory.

Merzlikins (and half of his remaining salary retained) and one of the first-round picks (No. 14 or No. 20) to Boston for Jeremy Swayman. Who says no? — Timothy N.

Boston, and quickly. It wasn't a great season for the Bruins or Swayman, and I'm not saying they won't trade him at some point. But for a mid-round pick and Merzlikins? Can't see it even being a consideration, even if the Blue Jackets eat a portion of his contract.

Jet Greaves has spent most of his time in the AHL, despite a few successful call-ups to the NHL. Seems like there's some question with the Blue Jackets about him having sustained success. What gives? — Scott K.

Broad answer: what you're seeing is a prospective NHL goaltender being developed the right way, with guidance and patience. He's spent four years in the AHL and he's only 24 years old. He's also come a long way in that time with his patience and positioning, which is what you want to see. It takes undrafted players longer to have an NHL job carved out for them. It takes 6-foot goalies a while longer to earn trust, too. He has a one-way NHL contract for 2025-26, so he's here now. He's a great story, eh?

Recognizing that Daniil Tarasov has been inconsistent, how did he become persona non grata this season? Was it strictly his play or is there more to the story? — Clem B.

Clearly he did not have the trust of Blue Jackets coach Dean Evason, and I don't think his refusal early in the season to accept a conditioning assignment in AHL Cleveland helped. Neither did Tarasov's struggles, which led them to consider sending him down for a tune-up. It's fair to question Evason's handling of the goaltenders this year. He wasn't around the previous season, obviously, but those who were watching then saw a long stretch when Tarasov played quite well. That kind of opportunity never found him this season. Not saying he would have replicated that, but there were times when it sure felt as if Merzlikins needed a rest.

What would you do to overhaul the goalie situation? — Jack H.

Excuse me, but I'd rather sit back and judge the moves of others. So ... I'd either trade Merzlikins in the manner that Patrik Laine was traded last summer — best offer gets him — or I'd buy out the contract. I've always believed that there is a talented goaltender in there, but a change of scenery is needed both for the player and the club, at this point. I'd qualify Tarasov and try to get him through to AHL Cleveland at the end of training camp. If he gets claimed off waivers, that's a risk I'm willing to take. Greaves comes to camp as a lock to be at least the backup to a veteran goalie, but with a chance to make it a timeshare if his play demands it.

Now, this is where it gets tricky. Vitek Vanecek? Jake Allen? Dan Vladar? Alexandar Georgiev? Ilya Samsonov? I would ask goaltending coach Nik Backstrom to make a list of the top UFA candidates and join the marketplace on July 1. If there's not a huge difference between No. 1 through No. 5, I'd wait out the first few days to see if I could get a guy on a two- or three-year deal. That veteran and Greaves would be the 1-2 punch. Keep in mind, they also need an AHL one and two. I'd make sure (or try to) that the anticipated No. 1 in Cleveland has NHL experience.

What will be the biggest challenge next season? The team was so bonded last season and now there will be new faces on the team. — Julieta H.

Every year is a new challenge, but this is no longer a dressing room without a culture or a foundation, so there may be more carryover in that respect than we're used to. With players such as Boone Jenner,

Zach Werenski, Sean Monahan, Erik Gudbranson, Cole Sillinger and Adam Fantilli, the room has a cluster of leaders both young and old. There's a way things are done with this group. They call it a standard. New players find their place within that, which is much healthier than expecting new guys to be the ones who establish that. Last year was special, and that team really did become incredibly close, by their own admission. But the bond they established last season can only benefit them in the future, in my opinion.

How do the young forwards in the system impact offseason plans? Specifically, Luca Del Bel Belluz. Is he viewed as an NHL player next season? — Marshall S.

If Del Bel Belluz makes the same strides this summer as he made last offseason, he'll definitely give them something to think about in training camp. If his play dictates it, he'll be a Blue Jacket. But I don't think he comes to camp with a lineup spot to lose, and that may be different than it's been during previous stretches with this organization. If he comes to camp and earns a spot, he earns a spot. But he'll have to take that job from somebody else, either a player who is here now or one who will be added in the next few weeks. I would not count out Del Bel Belluz, however. I'm not sure what type of player he'll be in the NHL, but he seems destined and driven to get there and stick. He's a very interesting player to keep an eye on over the next couple of seasons. How does he shape his game to find a niche on this club?

Is Waddell known for giving young players an NHL chances, or is he more likely to trade young players for veterans? Thinking of Del Bel Belluz, Pyyhtiä, Brindley, Lindstrom, etc. — Dave E.

There's not a GM in the NHL who is opposed to young players making the roster. It's the lifeblood of a healthy organization. It's also fiscally necessary in the salary-cap era. But the word you used — "giving" — is not going to happen. It can't be that way for a competitive NHL franchise. Lindstrom is probably at least a year away from being an NHL regular, but we might see him at the end of this coming season when Michigan State's season ends. The others you mentioned are already pros and will have to take a job to get a job. That's how it works.

There are lots of good RFAs this summer. Are you hearing any whispers of an offer sheet? — Ryan L.

Whispers, eh? No whispers, just Waddell acknowledging that it is a tool GMs can use to acquire players. The taboo around offer sheets is now officially gone, I'd say, especially with the success St. Louis had last summer. It can be an expensive way to do business. There is much to consider here, however. The Blue Jackets do not have their second-round pick in 2026. It was sent to Montreal as a sweetener to get them to take full freight on Laine's contract. In order to sign an RFA to an offer sheet, you must have the draft-pick compensation to pay his current team if they choose not to match. And to be clear, it has to be your second-round pick, not just any second-round pick.

Unless the Jackets reacquired that pick from the Canadiens, they could not sign a player to an offer sheet that includes a salary of between \$7.02 million and \$11.7 million. They could go over that range or under it, but not in that range. Puckpedia has a nifty display of all the price levels and compensation. One last thought: Matthew Knies would be a hell of a fit in Columbus, wouldn't he?

Will Adam Fantilli be signed to a bridge deal or a long-term deal — or will they look at an eight-year deal? — Greg M.

Don't know about eight years, but I'm guessing Waddell would be willing to go long-term with Fantilli, yes. My only hesitation in saying yes to eight years is that the player might be wise to see how high the

salary cap goes — and where his game goes — before locking in long-term after his first full season. Thirty goals at 20 years old projects to one heck of a player. Ten-digit guy, right? We'll see where it goes and what makes sense to each party, but I would say, yes, there is a willingness on the part of the club to go long-term.

The organization moved on from some long-term employees this summer. What prompted these changes and why so many changes in so many different areas? — Courtney W.

We sort of knew when Waddell took over that changes were coming. Some happened right away, and others took time. New eyes make for new ideas. I don't get the sense that Waddell is bringing in guys from his previous stops. But it's pretty clear he wanted a new air about the building. Fair or not, that's his call. It is tough for many to see people who have been with the organization from the start get moved along. It's a tough business. I've talked to a couple who said that they feel fortunate to have lasted as long as they did. Good people.

Are there any players named Luca worth drafting this year? I feel like we need to make it four years in a row, even if it's a seventh-round reach. — Todd G.

Luca Romano, a right-shot center from Kitchener of the Ontario Hockey League. Could see him going in the third round (No. 77 overall) or the fourth (No. 109). Book it.

Do you get the sense that Waddell and the amateur scouts are kicking themselves for passing on Ivan Demidov? — Matthew A.

Why specifically Demidov? My sense is the Blue Jackets are feeling much better about Lindstrom after he was able to get in some games at the end of this season without feeling any issues with his back. He'll take part in development camp and then have a crucial year at Michigan State. We're still years away from being able to evaluate this draft.

Given Aaron Ekblad's heavy usage, physical style and injury history, is that someone we really want to hand a long-term contract? — Jeffrey B.

If you want to sign him as a free agent, it is. I'll be very interested to see how Florida handles its business, with so little time between the end of the Stanley Cup Final and the start of the silly season. It's unclear if Ekblad will even be available. He's a lifelong Panther, so we'll see. But he will be in high demand if he hits the market. Heck of a player.

Could you project Boone Jenner's role next year? On a contender, I think Boone is a third-line winger. Do you think we'll have enough depth to make that make sense? — Peter S.

Good question. Probably not one that's going to have a definitive answer, even after the summer moves are made, because this game is so fluid. It will be hard for the Blue Jackets to keep Jenner in a strictly third-line capacity until somebody else joins the club who is a really good faceoff guy and an absolutely gladiator for pucks along the wall. Monahan is strong on faceoffs. Jenner is strong. Everybody else is a work in progress.

One thing to look for this summer is that the Blue Jackets want a right-shot center who can help them with faceoffs on that side of the ice. Even if the Jackets add a top-six winger, I'd be reluctant to say that Jenner is a third-line guy. In part because teams tend to think more in terms of top-nine now, and the mix of skill on the top three lines can be, for some guys, interchangeable. If there's an injury at center,

Jenner could go back there, too. It's hard for coaches to keep a competitive player such as Jenner confined to a role playing just 12 to 14 minutes a game.

Columbus Dispatch / Columbus Blue Jackets reveal 25th anniversary logo for 2025-26 NHL season

By Lori Schmidt and Brian Hedger – June 17, 2025

The Columbus Blue Jackets revealed a logo to celebrate their 25th anniversary during the 2025-26 season.

The logo features the number 25 inside an outline of Ohio, acknowledging the team's statewide reach.

Silver, the traditional 25th-anniversary color, is incorporated, along with a patina finish referencing Civil War medals.

The logo will be featured on a uniform patch and prominently displayed throughout the season.

The 2025-26 season will mark the Blue Jackets' 25th anniversary, and on June 17, the team unveiled a logo to honor a quarter-century of team history.

Calling it in a press release "a dynamic design that pays tribute to the franchise's legacy," the club did not detail all the ways the logo might be featured. However, the Blue Jackets did share photos of a uniform patch featuring the logo and offered that it will "be prominently featured throughout the team's 2025-26 National Hockey League season."

"The newly unveiled logo is encased in an outline of the state of Ohio, reinforcing the Blue Jackets' role as Ohio's sole NHL franchise and proudly representing hockey fans across the state," the Jackets said in their statement.

"Inside the emblem," it continued, "a bold number 25 is presented in the Blue Jackets' established font, consistent with the team's uniform identity since the 2017-18 NHL season."

The press release further mentioned that the logo incorporates the color silver, the traditional color for 25th anniversaries, and incorporates a metal patina finish, "evoking imagery of medals worn by Union Civil War soldiers, serving as a nod to the Blue Jackets' historical inspiration."

[NBC4i.com / Blue Jackets unveil special logo to commemorate 25th season](#)

By David DeGuzman – June 17, 2025

COLUMBUS, Ohio (WCMH) — While the NHL has yet to crown its Stanley Cup champion for the season, the Blue Jackets are already looking ahead to a milestone year for the franchise.

Columbus unveiled a special logo to commemorate its upcoming 25th season on Tuesday, showing off what the franchise calls “a dynamic design that pays tribute to the franchise’s legacy, the state of Ohio and the team’s deep historical ties.” The mark will be prominently featured during the NHL’s 2025-26 season.

The logo features an outline of the state of Ohio with a bold number 25 inside, presented in the Blue Jackets’ established font and in a silver scheme, which is the traditional color for 25th anniversaries. The beveled design is meant to mirror the etching on the club’s signature goal cannon.

The team plans to commemorate its 25th season with a series of dedicated events, celebrating historic moments, legendary players, and the franchise’s lasting impact in the community. Special anniversary-themed games will recognize some of those important moments in the last quarter century. Those details will be announced at a later date.

In the meantime, the front office is gearing up for the upcoming NHL draft, which will take place on June 27 and 28 in Los Angeles. The Blue Jackets will host a special watch party for fans to see the first round unfold at Nationwide Arena on Friday, June 27.

10TV.com / Blue Jackets unveil new logo commemorating 25th anniversary

By 10TV Web Staff – June 17, 2025

The club's milestone season will feature special anniversary-themed games recognizing pivotal moments from the team's history.

The Columbus Blue Jackets unveiled a new logo honoring the club's 25th anniversary.

The Blue Jackets had their first game in September 2000, three years after the NHL awarded Columbus with a team.

The logo is encased in an outline of the state of Ohio, a representation that Columbus is the state's only professional hockey team.

Inside the logo is the number 25 with the Blue Jackets logo underneath.

The logo incorporates a metal patina finish, evoking imagery of models won by the Union Civil War soldiers as a nod to the Blue Jackets' historical inspiration.

Columbus will celebrate its 25th anniversary season with a series of events, celebrating historic moments, legendary players and the franchise's lasting impact on and off the ice.

The club's milestone season will feature special anniversary-themed games recognizing pivotal moments from the team's history. More details are expected to be announced soon.

Fans can join the celebration by entering to win a Blue Jackets jersey featuring the 25th anniversary patch and an exclusive merchandise gift pack.

More information about the anniversary can be found [here](#).

The Hockey Writers / Blue Jackets' Lindstrom Makes Right Call Heading to NCAA

By William Espy – June 17, 2025

Cayden Lindstrom is officially heading to Michigan State University. After a postseason return to the Canadian Hockey League for Medicine Hat Tigers, the Columbus Blue Jackets prospect opted to leave the Canadian Junior hockey system and make his collegiate commitment official. The announcement confirmed a long-time rumor that he'd be one of the many big names moving to the NCAA for the 2025-26 season.

The Blue Jackets drafted Lindstrom with the fourth overall pick in the 2024 NHL Draft and haven't been able to see him much since as he spent the entirety of the Western Hockey League's (WHL) regular season and the beginning of the playoffs recovering from back surgery. As a result, there's a lot of uncertainty surrounding the 19-year-old forward; however, his performance in the WHL playoffs showed some promise. He recorded four points in four games against the Spokane Chiefs but was held without a point in the Memorial Cup.

Right Call for Lindstrom's Health

There are a few reasons why it seems obvious that Lindstrom has made the best decision for his career by opting to go the college route rather than standing pat in the WHL. While the CHL has traditionally had an abundance of higher-end talent, including the current projected first-overall pick in 2026, Gavin McKenna, many are considering making the jump to the NCAA. Add in the fact that collegiate players are slightly older, which makes it a tougher league for young players, and it seems like the perfect place for a player like Lindstrom to develop moving forward.

Coming off a major back injury, it'll be important for Lindstrom to ease his way back into playing on a regular basis. This is another important benefit for him moving to the NCAA, as he'll play half of the regular season games as he would in the WHL. He'll have more time to rest over the course of the season, which will limit the chance of him reaggravating the injury, which could be detrimental to his long-term potential.

When speaking to Aaron Portzline of The Athletic, Lindstrom stated, "The travel is so much easier (in college). The facilities (in East Lansing) are great. It'll help me recover my body and put me in a position to have a really long career." (from, 'Blue Jackets prospect Cayden Lindstrom looks forward to 'long career,' with his next stop at Michigan State,' The Athletic, June 5, 2025.)

Closer to Columbus, AHL Possibilities

While Lindstrom plays just a single state away, Blue Jackets management will be able to keep an eye on him much easier than if he returned to the Medicine Hat Tigers. This will allow them to check in with him more regularly and watch him more in a season that will be key for his development.

The one major question that still needs to be addressed is whether or not his move to the NCAA will affect his ability to play in the American Hockey League (AHL) or not. Under the prior agreement, players in the CHL were ineligible to play in the AHL until they turned 20 years old or met specific eligibility criteria. The NCAA, on the other hand, didn't have an agreement of that nature, and as a result, players were eligible for the AHL as 18-year-olds. If Lindstrom becomes eligible for the AHL and stays healthy, that could lead to an interesting decision for management following the NCAA season.

Overall, the NCAA's stature in hockey is growing quickly, and the league is going to get more and more competitive. Allowing Lindstrom to play fewer games as he bounces back from a major injury while playing in a more difficult league seems like the perfect mixture for a prospect's development. While there are some specifics that will need to be worked out, it seems clear that he made the right decision all things considered.