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May 12, 2025

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The Columbus Dispatch / Columbus Blue Jackets center Cayden Lindstrom finally returns for Medicine Hat Tigers

By Brian Hedger – May 10, 2025

It took 399 days plus back surgery in November and a lot of skating by himself in Columbus, but Cayden Lindstrom is officially back to playing hockey again.

The Blue Jackets' top prospect, selected fourth overall in the 2024 NHL Draft, helped the Medicine Hat Tigers win the opening game of their Western Hockey League championship series against the Spokane Chiefs on May 9 at Co-op Place in Medicine Hat, Alberta.

Centering a line with two NHL prospects as wingers, Lindstrom notched an assist just 54 seconds into his first game since April 5, 2024, to give the Tigers a quick 1-0 lead.

"You can't blame a kid who just wants to play hockey," Blue Jackets president of hockey operations/general manager Don Waddell said. "He feels good. He went through (the game) and played about 13 minutes, and he feels good."

Lindstrom, 19, sustained a disc-related injury with Medicine Hat during the season leading up to the Jackets making him the draft's fourth pick June 28, 2024, at Sphere Las Vegas. After unsuccessfully attempting to rehab the issue in Columbus from August through November 2024, he eventually needed a microdiscectomy to repair a disc that was compressing a nerve.

The procedure worked, allowing Lindstrom to continue his rehab work in Columbus into April 2025 before gaining clearance to receive contact in practices. He returned to Medicine Hat and rejoined practices with the Tigers while they advanced through the first two rounds of the junior level WHL playoffs. Patience finally paid off with Lindstrom's return to action in Game 1 of the championship round.

He centered a line with Calgary Flames prospect Andrew Basha on one side and Florida Panthers prospect Hunter St. Martin on the other. Basha also returned to the Tigers' lineup after missing a majority of the season with an injury, scoring the game's first goal that started with a pass from Lindstrom to St. Martin to cap a strong forechecking effort by all three.

"We thought all along that he wouldn't play this year," Waddell said. "But he'd been skating for a long time without contact, and then, when you get cleared for contact ... he wanted to play the next day. The doctor said, 'We'd be more comfortable if you get some battle drills in (during practices), and at that time they were still in their first round and second round.'"

A May 5 call with Lindstrom and the team's doctor cleared the return, which put a wide smile on the power forward's face.

"There's going to be some bumps and stuff like that, and a lot of rust probably," Lindstrom said during a pregame interview posted by the WHL on the league's Twitter/X account. "The speed might not be there, but honestly, I'm not too worried about that. I'm just going to play my role. I know what I have to do, and my game will come as the series goes on."

Lindstrom didn't show any rust on his first shift, spotting a loose puck sliding along the boards behind the Spokane net and swiftly skating down to get it while cutting off an opposing defenseman. Quickly wheeling to his forehand, Lindstrom sent a pass to St. Martin to set up another feed to Basha driving to the left post.

Basha's wrist shot gave Medicine Hat a 1-0 lead in a 4-1 victory, and the Tigers can go up 2-0 in the series by winning Game 2 at 9 p.m., Sunday, May 11 in Medicine Hat.

"He was extremely excited just to go play the game he loves," said Daren Hermiston, who represents Lindstrom. "He just loves the game, and he loves to be competitive, and he really wanted to be out there with his teammates. So, getting that opportunity, he's really excited about that and hopefully the team can keep it going."

Assuming Lindstrom finishes the Tigers' playoff run in good health, he's expected to return to be a full participant at the Blue Jackets' offseason development camp in early July. He's still expected to play next season at the collegiate level for Michigan State, too, which was revealed in late March 2025.

Returning for a last spin with Medicine Hat is a special way to close out his junior career, especially if the Tigers win the league's championship and advance to the Canadian Hockey League's prestigious Memorial Cup from May 22 to June 1 in Rimouski, Quebec.

"It was always his goal to play hockey," Hermiston said. "He's a competitive kid and he wanted to play this year, so that was always in the back of his mind and that was always his goal – even when, at times, it was very trying and didn't seem realistic. He's worked his (tail) off putting in the work in Columbus every single day, kept himself positive and we're all just thrilled for him."

NBC4i.com / Johnny Gaudreau named to NHL all quarter-century team

BY Kevin Accettulla – May 10, 2025

The late Johnny Gaudreau was named to the NHL's all quarter-century team as part of the group of skaters whose debuts came after 2010.

Gaudreau was drafted by the Calgary Flames, where he spent the first eight seasons of his career. In 2022, Gaudreau signed with the Blue Jackets.

Through his career, Gaudreau scored 243 goals and had 500 assists.

He was killed in August after he and his brother, Matthew, were hit by a suspected drunken driver.

"I'm grateful I had the chance to play against him, played playoff series against him, played many heated battles in the Battle of Alberta against him, and got to know him a little bit," Edmonton Oilers captain Connor McDavid said in a statement. "I'll miss him a lot. He was a great player and great person and obviously was taken away way too soon."

Also named to the team on Saturday were Leon Draisaitl, Nathan MacKinnon, Cale Makar, Auston Matthews, and McDavid.

The NHL Quarter-Century team was selected by fans, who were able to vote for players between Feb. 12 and April 1. The players who were eligible to be voted for were the six players from each NHL team who were named to the club's First Team.

Spectrum News 1 / Johnny Gaudreau voted onto NHL Quarter-Century Team

By Cody Thompson – May 10, 2025

Johnny Gaudreau, of the Columbus Blue Jackets and Calgary Flames, was voted onto the NHL Quarter-Century Team, the top 25 NHL players of the last 25 years per fan voting.

Gaudreau was among the six players chosen by voters who made their debut in the league after 2010, according to a post on the NHL website announcing the news.

"The fan vote followed the reveal of all 32 NHL clubs' first and second teams, which were announced earlier this year," the post reads. "The six players named to each team's First Team were eligible for selection in the Fan Vote."

Gaudreau, also known by the nickname "Johnny Hockey," was killed alongside his brother while bicycling near their hometown in southern New Jersey on the eve of their sister's wedding on Aug. 29, 2024. They were hit by an alleged drunk driver.

The man who hit them faces 70 years in prison if convicted on all counts.

Gaudreau played for Calgary for eight seasons and came to the Blue Jackets in 2022. In regular seasons, he played a total of 763 games, scored 243 goals and earned 500 assists, according to the NHL.

Other players who joined Gaudreau in making the Quarter-Century Team, who debuted after 2010, include:

- Leon Draisaitl of the Edmonton Oilers
- Nathan MacKinnon of the Colorado Avalanche
- Cale Makar of the Colorado Avalanche
- Auston Matthews of the Toronto Maple Leafs
- Connor McDavid of the Edmonton Oilers

The Athletic / Cayden Lindstrom, Blue Jackets' No. 4 pick last June, makes triumphant return

By Aaron Portzline – May 10, 2025

Ever since Cayden Lindstrom had back surgery in November, the Columbus Blue Jackets' seemed resigned to waiting until next season to see their 2024 No. 4 pick back on the ice. Every precaution was taken, and patience ruled the day.

But Lindstrom's diligent work during rehab and the Medicine Hat Tigers' long, impressive run through the Western Hockey League playoffs conspired to make the unlikely possible on Friday.

After more than 13 months away from competitive hockey, Lindstrom played for Medicine Hat in Game 1 of the WHL Championship, assisting on the Tigers' first goal — only 54 seconds into the game — and playing a regular shift in a 4-1 win over Spokane.

Lindstrom finished with a plus-1 rating, took a penalty and won 5 of 10 face-offs while centering Medicine Hat's second line.

The Blue Jackets had two scouts on hand in Co-op Place, and several more scouts and executives watching via the internet back in Columbus and points beyond.

"Our doctor cleared him a while back, but he wanted him to have a couple of weeks, at least, of contact in practice," Blue Jackets GM Don Waddell said. "We had a conference call on Monday and another one on Wednesday, and the doctor fully released him.

"If he feels good, he said. He sees no reason why he shouldn't be able to play, and the kid wants to play."

Waddell admits to being initially uneasy about Lindstrom's return. He had told himself and others that Lindstrom most likely wasn't going to play this year, and that was the organization's mindset. But the more he listened to doctors and Lindstrom, he started to come around.

The original prognosis when Lindstrom went under the knife on Nov. 20 was that he could return to play in five months. It's been nearly six, Waddell noted.

"The kid is eager to get back," Waddell said. "It's been a long year, and when you're a hockey player and you don't get to play hockey all year ... that's tough.

"He's worked his ass off to get to this point. At the end of the day, it's his decision. But like I said to him on the phone Wednesday, 'We're going to support you, Cayden. I just want you to be honest with the team, with the trainers and with us. If you feel anything at all, or if you don't feel like you're ready for a game, you have to be honest with us.'"

If Medicine Hat, the second-best club in the WHL during the regular season, didn't go on a postseason burner, Lindstrom's return wouldn't be possible. The Tigers have won 11 straight playoff games, including second- and third-round four-game sweeps over Prince Albert and Lethbridge to reach the final.

"I haven't played in a while, so there's going to be some bumps and a lot of rust, probably," Lindstrom told reporters in Medicine Hat. "The speed might not be there, but, honestly, I'm not too worried about that. I know what I have to do. My game will come as the series moves along."

Lindstrom was a constant presence in Nationwide Arena this season, with several veteran players taking him under their wings as he faced the day-to-day grind of rehabbing with no return in sight. He'd skate on his own during the day, then watch from the press box along with the club's injured players or healthy scratches.

On Nov. 20, he had back surgery in Los Angeles.

"You kind of go through the highs and lows. I did, at least," Lindstrom said. "I would just go week by week. Some days I'd feel not very good, other days I'd feel great. I tried to stay positive ... self-talk, stay positive.

"The guys there were all so supportive in wanting to help me. They did a great job with me there. They all really cared, and that was the big thing."

Friday, Lindstrom centered a line with wingers Andrew Basha and Hunter St. Martin. On the first shift of the game, Lindstrom went in hard on the forecheck, gathered a loose puck and quickly spun and fed St. Martin in the right circle. He found Basha coming through the left circle for the game's first goal.

It was a triumphant night all around in Medicine Hat. Basha, who'd been out since having surgery in December, made his return to the ice on Friday, too. It was Lindstrom's first game since a WHL playoff game on April 5, 2024.

"I thought it was real exciting to have them score on their first shift," coach Willie Desjardins told reporters in Medicine Hat. "That was about as good as you could start, for sure. It's going to be exciting having them in the lineup."

Patience will still be the Blue Jackets' guiding principle with Lindstrom.

Waddell noted that Lindstrom, even if he's feeling completely healthy, may not play every game of the series. There are two back-to-backs in the best-of-seven showdown: Game 3 and 4 are set for next Tuesday and Wednesday in Spokane, Wash., while Game 6 and 7, if necessary, are set for May 18-19 in Medicine Hat, Alberta.

The Memorial Cup runs May 22 to June 1 in Rimouski, Quebec. Waddell said he'd travel to Rimouski to watch Lindstrom in person, if Medicine Hat qualifies.

Either way, Lindstrom will head into the offseason knowing where he stands with his back. If everything goes swimmingly, it would be a big boost to him and the Blue Jackets' future.

The Athletic reported last month that Lindstrom had committed to play next season at Michigan State University — per the NCAA rule change, players may now make the leap from juniors to college — but neither Lindstrom nor his agent, Daren Hermiston, has made a public pronouncement of that.

The Blue Jackets' depth chart at center is as strong now as it's ever been. Veteran Sean Monahan, coming off a point-a-game season, and 20-year-old Adam Fantilli, who had 31 goals this season, are locks on the top two lines. Cole Sillinger has settled into the third-line role.

Lindstrom, a combative two-way center, projects as a top-six impact center when he's NHL-ready. Nobody can say when that will be, of course. But Friday's return makes it seem less far away.

The Athletic / Revisiting oddly specific 2024-25 NHL predictions: The right and mostly wrong (but maybe right?)

By Sean McIndoe – May 12, 2025 7:00 am EDT

Every year, just as the regular season is set to begin, I make oddly specific predictions for each NHL team. It's one of my very favorite columns to write each year.

And then in the spring, I have to see if I actually got any right. That's today's column, and it is not one of my favorites.

But we have to do it because accountability matters, so here we go. If you're new to the Oddly Specific prediction game, it's exactly what it sounds like: A prediction for each team that gets a little too detailed. It's not enough to say a team will have more points; we need an exact total. Don't tell us something will happen; give us the specific game. Anyone can predict an Alexander Ovechkin goal; let's see you plant the flag for Joel Hanley.

That last one, of course, is maybe our most memorable hit: In 2022, I didn't just predict that defensive defenseman Hanley would finally score his first regular-season goal, but I also gave you the exact game it happened in. It was pretty amazing. I've been chasing that high ever since.

I'll save you the suspense: This year's predictions, which you can go back and read here, don't have any Hanley-level miracle calls. At least ... not yet. But we'll get to that.

As always, we'll do this in tiers, starting with the boring one you can honestly skip.

Tier 1: Garden-variety wrong

Utah Mammoth

Lawson Crouse did not score the first NHL goal for Utah; Dylan Guenther did. Crouse scored the *last* goal in their first game, which is apparently what I meant.

Anaheim Ducks

None of the players who scored an overtime goal for the Ducks were subsequently traded, meaning none are scoring playoff OT winners for their new teams.

Carolina Hurricanes

They did not start the season 5-4-1.

Boston Bruins

I predicted that Jeremy Swayman would get pulled in his first game after signing his big new extension. He wasn't great, giving up four goals, but stuck around in a win. He did get yanked from an 8-2 loss to the Hurricanes later in October, but by then it was too late for me.

St. Louis Blues

Not only did the Penguins and Blues not manage a four-on-four goal in either of their two games against each other, but the refs didn't even give them an opportunity. (The last game did end on a four-on-three goal, though.)

Minnesota Wild

The Wild didn't play a game in which they had the same number of shots as their opponents until mid-December.

Vancouver Canucks

Thatcher Demko did not return to the lineup with a shutout in his first start. He gave up a goal nine minutes in, one of four he allowed on the night.

Buffalo Sabres

The Sabres did not lose both games of their season-opening homestand.

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Los Angeles Kings

There were no shutouts in the Kings' early road trip, although five of the seven games featured a team scoring exactly once. (And then one of the games finished 8-7, because hockey.)

New York Islanders

The Islanders did beat the Avalanche in Patrick Roy's early-season return to Colorado, but they did not need a 40-save performance to do it. (Ilya Sorokin had 32 that night.)

Detroit Red Wings

It's an annual Oddly Specific tradition that I pick one team and predict they'll finish with the same point total as the year before. The Red Wings were that team this year, but they dropped from 91 points to 86.

Colorado Avalanche

There were no six-on-three goals in games involving the Avalanche, or, for the third straight season, any other team.

Pittsburgh Penguins

I predicted that the Penguins would finish with only 87 points. They wish; they dropped all the way to 80.

Winnipeg Jets

The shootout-averse Jets only won two games that way all year, and neither against the teams I'd predicted.

Patrik Laine scored in his Canadiens debut on Dec. 3, 2024. (David Kirouac / Imagn Images)

Montreal Canadiens

Patrik Laine did not score on his first shift as a Hab, although he did get one in his first game.

Florida Panthers

It was the first season to feature multiple goalie goals, but Sergei Bobrovsky did not score one of them. I continue my lifetime streak of going o-fer at predicting goalie goal scorers. Yes, I plan to continue trying next year.

Tier 2: Not just wrong, but almost impressively wrong

Tampa Bay Lightning

I predicted that Jake Guentzel and Steven Stamkos would finish tied in goals. Not quite, as Guentzel ran away with the race, winning 41 to 27.

Chicago Blackhawks

Connor Bedard did not score the winning goal at the Winter Classic. Or any goals in that game. Or any goals at all, apparently, based on how some Blackhawks fans were acting.

Dallas Stars

Miro Heiskanen did not finish third in Norris Trophy balloting, and his injury-shortened season means he probably won't even get a single vote.

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San Jose Sharks

I predicted they'd get out of the first month with a .500 record; they started the season with a nine-game losing streak, so that would be a no.

Tier 3: Wrong, but at least a little close

Philadelphia Flyers

I predicted Matvei Michkov would mirror Pavel Bure's rookie season, with 34 goals and 60 points. Nope, although with 26 goals and 63 points, I wasn't that far off.

New Jersey Devils

Oddly specific prediction legend Jacob Markström had four shutouts, and one of them did indeed come against a former team. But that was the Canucks, and I predicted he'd have a shutout against the Panthers.

Ottawa Senators

I swung big on the most far-fetched prediction we've ever had, but no, of course Linus Ullmark and Jeremy Swayman did not drop the gloves and hug it out in a line brawl. It felt like we were close when a January game started to get ugly, and Swayman even got involved in the action. But even if the goalie fight had happened, it was Leevi Meriläinen in net for Ottawa that night, not Ullmark.

Calgary Flames

I predicted our old friend Joel Hanley would score his lone goal of the season in his 23rd game. He waited for his 28th, which is close. But then he let all that offense get to his head and scored a second goal at the end of the season. OK, Bobby Orr, maybe settle down and let the rest of the kids touch the puck too.

Tier 4: Wrong, and more than a little close

Toronto Maple Leafs

I predicted Mitch Marner would finish exactly 20 points ahead of William Nylander in scoring, even though the latter was coming off a 98-point season. This one got very spicy down the stretch, and I almost nailed it — Marner ended up with 102 points while Nylander had 84, a gap of 18.

Nashville Predators

Steven Stamkos did not score in overtime in his return to Tampa. The game did go to OT, though, and Stamkos even had one decent scoring chance to make me look smart.

Seattle Kraken

I noticed the Kraken hadn't scored a wraparound goal all year in 2023-24 — and, in fact, had only five attempts — and then said they'd score one this year. They did get one — exactly one, on six attempts this time — but it didn't come against the Jets, the team I'd specifically predicted.

It turns out I was off by one game; Kaapo Kakko scored one on March 14 against Utah, the game before Winnipeg came to town. OK, fine, but Utah used to be the Jets, so I should get partial credit.

Tier 5: Completely wrong but almost sneaky right

New York Rangers

I predicted the Rangers wouldn't win the Presidents' Trophy, but rather would finish sixth. The context makes it clear that I meant sixth overall, which would leave me off by 16 spots after the Rangers' disastrous drop all the way to 22nd. That's some very bad prediction work.

But! For a while, I could have claimed I meant they'd finish sixth in their division, which would have been a massive long shot of Nostradamus-like levels, and I absolutely would have milked it for all it was worth. Tragically, the Rangers edged out the Islanders and finished fifth in the Metro instead. Yet another reason they should have let the Islanders win one of those games.

Tier 6: Correct, but only vaguely impressive

Vegas Golden Knights

I noted that the Golden Knights had gone a league-worst 0-5-0 in 2023-24 in games in which they had exactly three days' rest, then predicted they'd win both of the two such games they had in October. They did, beating the Kings 6-1 and then using a late third-period comeback to beat the Senators.

Tier 7: Correct, and moderately impressive

Edmonton Oilers

I predicted Leon Draisaitl would win the Rocket Richard, despite the oddsmakers having Auston Matthews as a prohibitive favorite. He did, and it wasn't all that close, with Draisaitl's 52 goals putting him a comfortable seven ahead of runner-up William Nylander.

Tier 8: Still to be determined

Columbus Blue Jackets

I said the Blue Jackets' brutal early schedule would yield a win against the eventual Cup winner. They racked up more wins than we'd expected over that stretch, although victories against the Avalanche, Sabres and Islanders don't help us. But they also beat the Oilers and the Maple Leafs, so we've got two cards still in play to put this one in the win category.

Tier 9: Definitely wrong ... FOR NOW

Look, we all hate replay review, but I think we can agree that the most important thing is to just get it right ...

Washington Capitals

I predicted Pierre-Luc Dubois would have four points in the eight games combined that the Caps played against his former teams: the Blue Jackets, Jets and Kings. Then I went even more specific and said it would be exactly one goal and three assists.

Dubois' actual totals in those eight games: One goal and four assists. That's agonizingly close to nailing an all-timer. Sadly, close enough is not enough in Oddly Specific world, so this one goes into the "wrong" bin with all the others.

EXCEPT!

I mean, let's all watch this goal from the Nov. 2 game between the Caps and Blue Jackets...

First of all, it's already 5-1, so why are you even trying to score? But more importantly, that's Dubois at the very beginning of the play, poking the puck up to Tom Wilson and Connor McMichael, who do all the work. They can't convert on the two-on-one, but the puck eventually bounces off Blue Jackets defenseman Jack Johnson and back to McMichael, who buries it.

Are we *sure* Johnson doesn't have possession there? I think he might. And if he does, that would make McMichael's goal unassisted, taking a helper away from Dubois and landing this prediction in the Oddly Specific hall of fame.

Look, I'll just say it: I'm calling on Dubois to do the right thing here, and publicly renounce this secondary assist on a meaningless goal from a blowout win. It's not all about the individual stats, Pierre-Luc, and I think this move would send a strong message that you're more about the team than about personal glory.

We await your confirmation of this decision. Until then, this one will have to be grudgingly filed as (just barely) wrong.

Sportsnet / Fleury shines, Canada routs Latvia at world men's hockey championship

By Canadian Press – May 11, 2025

Marc-Andre Fleury came away with player-of-the-game honours in his world championship debut at 40 years old.

The legendary goalie made 16 saves as Canada routed Latvia 7-1 on Sunday to remain undefeated in two games.

"It was a fun game," Fleury said. "I had a bit of a tough start, but it was a great time. The Latvian fans were awesome and they were making noise all game long."

Kent Johnston and Travis Konecny had two goals apiece, while Nathan MacKinnon, Macklin Celebrini and Barrett Hayton also scored at Avicii Arena in Stockholm, Sweden.

Captain Sidney Crosby added three assists for Canada, which opened the tournament with a 4-0 win over Slovenia on Saturday.

"The boys in front of me scored some big goals and had a lot of blocked shots, so that was a big help," Fleury said. "This is a great roster and a great group of guys, and our chemistry is already very good."

"Everyone here wants to do well, and we know that goal differential is important in this tournament, so it was nice to get a big win today."

Fleury, who is set to retire from hockey after the event, made several trademark acrobatic saves in his first start.

The product of Sorel-Tracy, Que., dove across the crease for a save on Latvia's Dans Locmelis, replicating his famous game-saving stop on Nicklas Lidstrom in Game 7 of the 2009 Stanley Cup final that Fleury's Pittsburgh Penguins would go on to win.

Gustavs Grigals made 30 saves for Latvia.

Eduards Tralmaks opened the scoring at 7:05 of the first period before Canada responded with seven unanswered goals.

Canada head coach Dean Evason liked the way his team bounced back from the early threat.

"(The Latvians) scored early and they played hard, and we knew they were going to play that way," he said. "We are happy with the way we responded to that early goal. We know teams are going to give us their best, so it is a good lesson for us to learn that we need to be ready for every team we play."

Canada continues round-robin play Tuesday against France.

Konecny said the Canadians are aiming for gold, but trying to stay focused on one task at a time.

"We know what the end goal (of this tournament) is and what we came here to do, but our group is really good about staying dialled in day-to-day and just focusing on the next game or practice," said Konecny, who also tallied an assist. "We have incredible leadership in our locker room, so you just kind of put your head down, go to work and follow those guys."