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## Columbus Dispatch / Marchenko's magic hat trick paces playoff chasing Columbus Blue Jackets: takeaways

By Brian Hedger – April 3, 2025

Kirill Marchenko leaned back against the boards in front of the Blue Jackets' bench, taking in the aftermath of his handiwork Tuesday night at Nationwide Arena.

Hats rained onto the ice early in the third period of the Blue Jackets' 8-4 stomping of the Nashville Predators, prompting a surreal question as the Jackets' ice crew scooped up chapeaus following Marchenko's third career hat trick in just his third NHL season.

Were enough caps left to celebrate potential hat tricks by Sean Monahan and/or Adam Fantilli, who'd also scored two goals by that point?

Neither provided the answer by scoring additional goals, but the fact it was even a thought sums up what kind of night it was for the Blue Jackets (34-30-9) and their playoff hopes.

**Here are four takeaways:**

### **Columbus Blue Jackets boost playoff chances with rout over Nashville Predators**

The Blue Jackets didn't know it while celebrating their win, but they were within nine seconds of retaking control of the second wild-card spot in the NHL's Eastern Conference.

The Montreal Canadiens pulled off a stunning comeback victory over the Florida Panthers at Bell Centre to maintain their grip on the East's final playoff ticket, winning on goals by Nick Suzuki that tied it, 2-2, with nine seconds left in regulation and won it, 3-2, just 29 seconds into the 3-on-3 OT.

Otherwise, a three-way tie at 77 points between the Blue Jackets, Canadiens and New York Rangers would've gone to Columbus on a tiebreaker decided by games played. Despite Montreal's heroics, the Jackets still passed the idle Rangers for ninth in the conference standings via that tiebreaker.

According to MoneyPuck, their chances of making the playoffs climbed to 18.8% after dipping into single digits during a recent six-game losing streak. The forecasting site also gives the Canadiens a 50.1% chance and the Rangers a 26.2% chance of making the East's starting playoff field. Following losses Tuesday, the Detroit Red Wings (75 points) dropped to 3.7% and the New York Islanders (74 points) dipped to 2.9% to qualify.

### **Columbus Blue Jackets win after nixing streak of allowing first goal**

Marchenko gave the Blue Jackets a 1-0 lead on his forward line's first shift, scoring from the slot after receiving a short feed from star defenseman Zach Werenski (two assists).

The goal ended a nine-game streak with the Blue Jackets allowing the first goal, which contributed to an ugly 2-6-1 skid after they routed the Rangers, 7-3, March 9 at Madison Square Garden. The Jackets are now 25-9-5 when scoring first and just 9-21-4 in games that include them trailing 1-0.

"I don't know how many games it's been since we scored first, but that's a huge part of the game if you chase it," Fantilli said. "So, 'Marchy' coming up with that one was awesome to see."

### **Kirill Marchenko gives Columbus Blue Jackets a 30-goal scorer**

Marchenko's goals were his team-high 29th, 30th and 31st of the season to continue extending a career-high he set Feb. 27 in Detroit with his 24th goal in a 5-2 win over the Red Wings.

Topping the 30-goal mark also gives the Blue Jackets their first 30-goal scorer since Cam Atkinson scored a career-high 41 in 2018-19, when they pulled off a shocking first-round sweep of the Tampa Bay Lightning in the playoffs.

"I really wanted to score 30, and it feels great," Marchenko said. "But (Alex) Ovechkin has scored, how much? Thirty-seven? I'll try to score more. Not done."

Ovechkin, who's also Russian, moved to within four goals of passing Wayne Gretzky as the NHL's all-time leader in goals with his 38th of the season Tuesday in the Washington Capitals' 4-3 win over the Boston Bruins. It's also worth noting that Blue Jackets captain Boone Jenner was on pace to score 30-plus goals the past three seasons before multiple injuries prevented it from happening — including 26 goals in 68 games two years ago.

### **Columbus Blue Jackets' skill preyed on Nashville Predators' lax defense**

The Blue Jackets have gotten used to facing teams that can lock it down defensively with a playoff brand of hockey, so facing the Predators had to be a breath of fresh air.

Nashville, which was finishing a back-to-back on tired legs, was supposed to be a playoff team. A terrible start ended those aspirations early, and the Preds are playing out the string in a frustrating season. Those factors all showed in how much time and space they gave the highly skilled Blue Jackets to operate.

Along with Marchenko, Monahan and Fantilli accounting for seven of the Jackets' eight goals, there were also multi-point performances from Kent Johnson (three assists), Werenski (two assists), Jenner (two assists) and Dante Fabbro (goal, assist) — who torched his former team almost four months after Columbus claimed him off waivers from Nashville.

Marchenko and Monahan also finished with four points apiece, while Fantilli added a 2-1-3 scoring line in just 11:43 of ice time.

The Blue Jackets set a new season-high with eight goals, pushed their franchise record for games with six-plus goals to 14 — which leads the NHL — and their 236 goals are the most in franchise history through 73 games.

"It's funny, because when I first got here (last summer), everybody just kept saying, 'You've got such young skill,'" Blue Jackets coach Dean Evason said. "I'd always buck it a little bit by saying that we've got some older guys, veteran people, that play the right way, gritty ... but we have a skillset. And we've had enough learning situations throughout the year that if we play strong, sound hockey, that skillset can come out. If you don't and you just try to 'skill' a game, then you're not going to have success."

## [BlueJackets.com / Winning Thoughts: Marchenko's hat trick highlights a crucial victory](#)

By Jeff Svoboda – April 3, 2025

After CBJ wins, we'll give three takeaways about what stood out or what we'll remember from the Blue Jackets victory.

BLUE JACKETS 8, PREDATORS 4

### **1. Kirill Marchenko's third career hat trick highlighted a night in which the Jackets' top dawgs brought their best.**

The saying goes that big-time players make big-time plays in big-time games, and that's how it went for the Blue Jackets on Tuesday night. With 10 games to go and the Blue Jackets needing to stay close to Montreal for the final Eastern Conference playoff spot, Columbus had four players notch at least three points for just the third time in team history on the way to the eighth eight-goal game in franchise annals.

No one shone brighter than Marchenko, who had the opening goal of the first, second and third periods to notch his third career hat trick, as well as the Blue Jackets' first one at home this year. It was the third overall this season for Columbus and 53rd in franchise history, and it left Marchenko as just one of four players in team history with at least three hat tricks (Cam Atkinson, 6, Rick Nash, 4, Tyler Wright, 3).

"I say on the bench it feels like a dream every time when you score a hat trick and all the hats are going on the ice," Marchenko said. "I really enjoy this moment because I score a hat trick at home because on the road, it doesn't feel like that. Here, I just try to enjoy this moment."

Marchenko added an assist for his first career four-point night, while linemate Sean Monahan also had four points with two goals and two assists. Adam Fantilli added a two-goal, three-point night, while Kent Johnson had three helpers to complete the quartet of players with at least three points.

But it was Marchenko's night, especially as he became the first CBJ player and eighth all-time to reach the 30-goal plateau in a single season.

"I really wanted to score 30," he said. "It feels great, but (Alex) Ovechkin scored how much? 37 right now (38 after scoring Tuesday night). (I'll try) to score more. It's not done."

### **2. The Blue Jackets finally got to play with a lead on the way to the win over the Predators.**

Saturday at Ottawa, Columbus gave up the first goal of the game to the Senators, and it marked the ninth straight contest in which the Blue Jackets found themselves in a 1-0 hole.

The irony is that the Blue Jackets have been one of the better teams in the NHL this season at scoring first, so the sudden reversal of fortunes was a bit foreign. Columbus has said all the right things – they haven't been lacking effort at the start of games, and the pressure of having to come back hasn't weighed on them, players and coaches noted – but the reality is in hockey, you'd rather play from in front than from behind.

Fans might have thought it was an April Fools' Day prank, then, when they saw the Blue Jackets need just 75 seconds to get on the board against the Preds. Marchenko did the honors, as Zach Werenski pulled the puck out of a scrum and set up the Russian wing in the slot for a quick shot past goalie Juuse Saros.

Columbus never trailed from there – the 58-plus minutes with a lead was a far cry from the 23 total seconds the Blue Jackets led in the previous nine games – and built leads of 3-0, 4-1 and 8-3 before Nashville set the final score.

“I think right from the hop, the boys were ready to play,” Fantilli said. “Marchy scored on his first shift. He didn’t stop from there. Their whole line didn’t stop from there. Our power play was great today, something we’ve been looking for. It was a great all-around win.”

Head coach Dean Evason didn’t quite have the same opinion of the start, though. Even though the Blue Jackets built a three-goal advantage in the opening frame, they gave up too many chances to the Predators for the coach’s liking, but he was happy with the result.

“We scored tonight early, but we didn’t particularly play the right way,” Evason said. “It’s funny how that goes, right? We’ve talked for a bit now, and I scolded you guys for talking about our starts to the players all the time, but we had the results tonight but the start wasn’t good. We were cheating it, we were giving up odd-man rushes. We were very fortunate early to not be behind. It kind of flipped.”

### **3. The Blue Jackets' power play once again looked powerful.**

As the calendar flipped from 2024 to ‘25, Columbus was the home of one of the hottest power plays in the NHL. From Dec. 8 through Jan. 11, the Blue Jackets scored a power-play goal in 13 of 17 games, tallying 16 times overall in 45 chances for a 35.5 percent success rate.

But as the weather got colder, so did the CBJ man advantage. In 27 games over a two-month-plus span, the Blue Jackets notched just three power-play goals while allowing four shorthanded tallies, which is not exactly a recipe for success in the modern NHL.

Things could be turning around, though. Columbus broke a 10-game stretch without a power-play tally Friday, and on Tuesday night, the Blue Jackets went 2-for-5 on the man advantage for its first multigoal game on the PP since Jan. 7.

“We did some different things as far as maybe not being as stagnant as we have,” Evason said. “We’ve talked about getting some movement and we did that, but yeah, to get rewarded (was important). The penalty kill as well. Hopefully that can jump-start us in both the special teams.”

Monahan had both power-play goals – beating goalie Juuse Saros from the wing in the first period and sliding the rebound of a Marchenko shot past Saros in the second – and one could argue his return to the lineup is one of the reasons the unit has started to have more success. Columbus clicked at a rate well above 20 percent before he was injured in early January in Pittsburgh, and the power-play struggles coincided with his time out of the lineup.

“I think the last couple of games, we’ve been moving it around pretty well,” Monahan said. “It’s confidence, guys getting touches and guys reading off each other. We’re doing a better job with that right now.”

## The Hockey News / Marchenko Has Four Point Night As Blue Jackets Cruise Past Nashville

**By Jason Newland – April 3, 2025**

Kirill Marchenko (29,30,31), Adam Fantilli (23,24), Sean Monahan (15,16), and Dante Fabbro (7) poured in the goals for Columbus, while Elvis Merzljikins made 24 saves in an 8-4 Blue Jackets win on Tuesday night.

The Blue Jackets beat the Nashville Predators in another wild game. Columbus has now scored 15 goals in the last two games at Nationwide Arena. It's safe to say that the scoring woes are over for the CBJ, at least for now.

On Tuesday night, the Jackets had a trio of players trying to get a hat trick, but Kirill Marchenko was the one who had fans tossing hats onto the ice.

Marchenko said after the game, "I say on the bench it feels like a dream every time when you score a hat trick and all the hats are going on the ice. I really enjoy this moment because I score a hat trick at home because on the road, it doesn't really feel like that. Here, I just try to enjoy this moment."

The Blue Jackets are now 34-30-9 with 77 points.

### **Final Stats**

#### **Player Stats**

- Kirill Marchenko now has 31 goals on the season, and has goals in four straight games. He also had an assist, which makes it his first career four point game. He also becomes the first 30-goal scorer since the 18-19 season (Atkinson-41).
- Sean Monahan had 2 goals and 2 assists on the night. He now has 7 points in his last four games.
- Adam Fantilli scored 2 goals and had an assist.
- Dante Fabbro had a goal and an assist.
- Zach Werenski recorded two assists and has 5 points in the last three games. He now has 74 points, which is the fifth most in CBJ history for a single season. His 54 assists are the fourth most in a single season.
- Kent Johnson recorded three assists and now has 49 points.
- Boone Jenner picked up two assists and now has 17 points in 17 games played this season. He also has a five-game points streak.
- Elvis Merzljikins earned his 25th win of the season and 93rd of his career.

#### **Team Stats**

- The Jackets power play went 2/5 on the night.
- The Columbus PK stopped all four Predator power plays. Nashville only had one shot on four power plays.
- Columbus won 56.7% of the faceoffs.

**Up Next:** The Colorado Avalanche visits Columbus on Thursday.

## The Hockey News / Zach Werenski Is On The Cusp Of CBJ History Once Again

**By Jason Newland – April 3, 2025**

Defenseman Zach Werenski has arguably been the Most Valuable Player for the Columbus Blue Jackets this season. If you were to take him off of this team, the CBJ wouldn't be in the position they are in my opinion. Several national NHL personalities have even said that if the Blue Jackets make the playoffs, they're going to vote for Werenski for the Hart Trophy. The Hart is supposed to be awarded for the most valuable player to his team in the National Hockey League. Not the highest scorer, the most valuable player to his team, and Zach Werenski fits that description.

Werenski has set a few Blue Jackets records this season, and after his two-assist performance last night against the Nashville Predators, he has a couple more records in his sights.

Werenski has recorded 54 assists this season. With the two assists last night, he passed the late, great Johnny Gaudreau(53) for the fourth most assists in a single season.

Sitting ahead of him are former Jackets forwards Artemi Panarin and Jakub Voráček. Panarin recorded 55 assists in 2017-18 and 59 in 2018-19. Voráček had 56 in 2021-22. Meaning Werenski only needs 6 assists in his last nine games to set the record.

His 74 points also put him with the fifth most points in a single season, and he is currently tied with Johnny Gaudreau. The four players ahead of him are Ray Whitney(76), Rick Nash(79), and Artemi Panarin(82,87). While it will be hard to catch Panarin, Whitney and Nash are clearly in his sights.

Werenski has already cemented himself as the greatest CBJ defenseman and is on the verge of becoming the best Blue Jacket ever, regardless of position.

**Up Next:** The Colorado Avalanche visits Columbus on Thursday.

## The Hockey Writers / 3 Takeaways From the Blue Jackets' Huge 8-4 Win Over the Predators

By Matthew Buhrmann – April 3, 2025

The Columbus Blue Jackets took care of business at home against the eliminated Nashville Predators on Tuesday night, doubling them up in an 8-4 win. Kirill Marchenko scored three goals for his third career hat trick and added an assist for a four-point night, while Sean Monahan also had four points with two goals and two assists of his own.

“On the bench, it feels like a dream every time when you score a hat trick and like all [the] hats are going on the ice...I really enjoy this moment because I scored a hat trick at home, because on the road, it's not really feeling like that.”

– Kirill Marchenko

Dante Fabbro delivered a standout performance with a goal and an assist, while Zach Werenski and Kent Johnson each chipped in two assists to drive Columbus forward. It wasn't Elvis Merzlikins' best night in net, as he stopped 20 of 24 shots—but his teammates more than made up for it with an explosive offensive display, scoring a season-high eight goals to seal the victory, their 14th time scoring six goals or more this season.

Columbus improved to 34-30-9 with the win, now two points behind the Montreal Canadiens for the second wild card spot. Sadly, for Blue Jackets fans, Montreal pulled off a 3-2 win in overtime over the defending Stanley Cup champion Florida Panthers on Tuesday night. While Columbus still has a game in hand, Montreal holds the all-important tiebreaker between the two teams.

### **Deadly Marchenko-Monahan Combo**

Since coming back from his wrist injury, Sean Monahan has been great alongside Marchenko on the Blue Jackets' top line. The duo was electric on Tuesday night, combining for a whopping eight points, constantly setting each other up for goals and playing a huge role in securing two critical points for the team.

Monahan didn't have his best night in the faceoff circle, going 7 for 18 (39%), but his overall impact on the game was massive. According to hockeystatcards.com, he posted an adjusted game score of 3.25—just barely edging out Marchenko's 3.20. In fact, they earned the top two adjusted game scores across the NHL that night.

The three goals on the night gave Marchenko 31 on the season, giving him his first 30-goal season in the NHL. He gave a lot of credit to his linemates for giving him great feeds, as he especially could not have reached this career-high without them.

“I scored three tonight. I'm so happy for sure. He gave me great passes...He gives me confidence too & we feel each other really well right now & I enjoy playing with him. I hope we'll play together a long time.”

– Kirill Marchenko on linemate Sean Monahan

Moving forward, the top line of Voronkov-Monahan-Marchenko needs to keep up the production to help get this team back into the playoffs, which is surely not going to be easy, but can be done.

### **Blue Jackets Finally Got an Early Lead**



The Blue Jackets broke a frustrating streak by scoring first for the first time in 10 games—something they had excelled at earlier in the season. Tuesday night marked a return to form, with Marchenko wasting no time and opening the scoring just 1:15 into the game off a crisp pass from Werenski.

Despite the fast start and early lead, head coach Dean Evason wasn't pleased with how his team opened the game. During the first TV timeout, he huddled the players at the bench to remind them about playing the right way and avoiding shortcuts, as they'd given up more odd-man rushes than he was comfortable with. Luckily, Merzlikins stood tall in net, making key saves early on to keep Columbus ahead and buy them time to settle into the game.

"We were cheating it; we were giving up odd-man rushes. We were very fortunate early to not be behind, and you know, it kind of flipped."

— Head coach Dean Evason

The team seemed to take Evason's message to heart, responding with a strong push to extend their lead. Fantilli and Monahan found the back of the net, giving the Blue Jackets a commanding 3-0 advantage late in the first period. However, the momentum was briefly halted when Filip Forsberg fired back just 24 seconds later with a sharp snipe, cutting the lead to 3-1 as the period came to a close.

### **Blue Jackets' Power Play Gains Confidence**

The Blue Jackets' special teams showed signs of life on Tuesday night, delivering a solid performance. They went 2-for-5 on the power play and were a perfect 4-for-4 on the penalty kill. Although the penalty kill ranks 24th in the NHL this season at 75.8%, it looked much sharper against Nashville. The unit consistently cleared pucks the full length of the ice and excelled at clogging shooting lanes, blocking and deflecting shots to protect Merzlikins, who stood strong while the team was shorthanded. However, they still showed some defensive lapses at five-on-five that will need attention.

On the power play, Monahan led the way, scoring both goals. One came off a one-timer, while the other was a slick finish from the side of the net.

The unit as a whole played with more energy and creativity, moving the puck well, firing more shots, and creating a little more traffic in front of the opposing netminders, Juuse Saros and Justus Annunen. Evason emphasized in his post-game presser that the special teams still have room for improvement, and it's hard to argue with him—these units will need to keep building if Columbus is to push into the playoffs.

"I think it's a good point. We did some different things as far as maybe not being as stagnant as we have. We've talked about getting some movement, and we did that. But yeah, to get rewarded and the penalty kill as well—hopefully that can jumpstart us in both the special teams. We've talked about our special teams having to be better. They were tonight. They need to be even better moving forward."

— Head coach Dean Evason

Monahan also noted the improved movement on the man advantage post-game Tuesday night.

"I think the last couple of games, we've been moving it around pretty well. It's confidence, guys getting touches, and guys reading off each other. We're doing a better job with that right now."

The Blue Jackets will practice on Wednesday in advance of Thursday's 7:30 PM ET game against the Colorado Avalanche (45-26-4) at Nationwide Arena.

## The Hockey Writers / The Final NHL Playoff Spot in the Eastern Conference Will Belong To...

By Alex Chauvancy – April 3, 2025

What is the definition of the slang term “mid”? It means something is of average, mediocre or poor quality, often used to express disappointment or disapproval. I don’t know about you, but that seems like the perfect way to describe what’s unfolding in the Eastern Conference playoff race for the final wild-card spot.

There are probably three realistic teams vying for that spot, with another two having slim chances, but nobody seems to want to take that spot. It remains up for grabs, but who will come away with it?

### **New York Rangers**

Talent-wise, the New York Rangers are probably the “best” team vying for the second wild-card spot, though they certainly haven’t played like it. Sure, they sold at the trade deadline, but they still have Artemi Panarin, Adam Fox and Igor Shesterkin. I don’t think any teams competing for this playoff spot boast that kind of high-end talent.

But for whatever reason, it hasn’t clicked for the Rangers this season. Regression from players like Chris Kreider and Mika Zibanejad hasn’t helped, and their power play hasn’t been as lethal, but they should be better than their record indicates.

However, the Rangers have not played particularly great hockey lately. They have a 44.69 expected goals percentage (xG%) over their last ten games, a bottom-10 rate in the NHL. Making matters worse, they have a brutal schedule to close out the regular season.

It starts tonight with a tilt against the Minnesota Wild, who are battling to secure their playoff position in the West. They also play the Tampa Bay Lightning twice, the Carolina Hurricanes and the Florida Panthers. That’s about as difficult as it gets. Shesterkin will likely have to steal a couple of wins for them, but that might be too tall a task. Ultimately, I think the difficulty of their schedule keeps them out.

### **Columbus Blue Jackets**

If you aren’t rooting for the Columbus Blue Jackets to make the playoffs after what they’ve been through in the last year, what the heck? It looked like the Blue Jackets were in a prime position for WC2 a month ago. They were just four points back of the New Jersey Devils for third in the Metro, but they’ve slipped quite a bit over the last month.

The Blue Jackets are 4-8-1 across their last 13 games, including the two losses to the Devils. They’ve played well in some of those games and have had some outrageously bad shooting luck, but it came at the worst possible time. They’re now 10 points back of the Devils, but WC2 is still in their grasp.

They’re just two points back of the Montreal Canadiens, who occupy WC2 as of this writing, and their underlying numbers suggest they might have the juice to make a run. The Blue Jackets have a 55.69 xG% across their last ten games; only three teams have a better xG% across their previous ten games. They’re shooting just 8.46 percent at five-on-five across those ten games, but their process suggests they should be converting more often.

However, like the Rangers, the Blue Jackets’ schedule isn’t doing them any favors. They have a home-and-home with the Ottawa Senators and another with the Washington Capitals. They also have to play the Toronto Maple Leafs and Colorado Avalanche. The Capitals may have nothing to play for by the time

that home-and-home takes place on April 12 and 13, but that's still a tall task for the Blue Jackets, even if their process suggests they should be getting better results.

### **Montreal Canadiens**

The current WC2 holder may have the best odds of getting the job done. The Canadiens aren't playing the best hockey out there, but they continue to find ways to win and stay in the race. They have the best record over their last ten games (4-3-3) of the teams chasing WC2 and just swept a home-and-home with the Florida Panthers.

For context's sake, the Rangers are 4-5-1 over their last ten, the Blue Jackets are 3-6-1, the New York Islanders have lost six in a row and are 3-4-3, and the Detroit Red Wings are 4-5-1. The Canadiens' schedule also looks much more favorable than the Rangers and the Blue Jackets to close the regular season.

The Canadiens have tilts left against the Maple Leafs, Senators and Hurricanes, but they also play the Philadelphia Flyers, Boston Bruins, Nashville Predators, Chicago Blackhawks and Red Wings. That's pretty favorable for the most part and may ultimately put them over the edge, even though I'd argue that the Blue Jackets and Rangers are better than the Canadiens.

### **What About the Islanders and Red Wings?**

The Islanders were in the thick of the playoff just two weeks ago. But the math is starting to stack up against them since they've lost six in a row, and their goal differential of -26 suggests it's a long shot they get back in it.

They also don't have the easiest schedule. The Islanders play the Wild, the Capitals twice, the Devils, the Rangers and the Blue Jackets. Even though games against the Rangers and Blue Jackets might have some meaning, the Islanders appear out of it.

MoneyPuck has the Islanders' playoff odds at just under four percent after losing to the Tampa Bay Lightning last night. They did go on an incredible heater at the end of last season to sneak into the playoffs. But that may prove difficult without Mathew Barzal (injured) and Brock Nelson, the latter whom they traded to the Colorado Avalanche.

As for the Red Wings, I was never a believer, even after the coaching change to Todd McLellan. He did right the ship and get them back in the conversation, but that roster just isn't good enough to make a run. Per MoneyPuck, their playoff odds are down to just 2.9 percent. It's probably over for them, too.

### **Are the Canadiens the Favorite?**

So, who makes it? The Rangers and Blue Jackets have the best goal differentials at +2 and -8, but they have incredibly difficult schedules to close the season. The schedule isn't the sole determiner, but it does give the Canadiens the easiest path. Do I think they're a good team? Not really, but that goes for everyone chasing WC2. Someone will fail upward into that position, just as the Capitals did a season ago, and the Canadiens seem like the best bet.

## The Hockey Writers / Blue Jackets' Boone Jenner's Impact Goes Way Beyond the Scoresheet

**By Mark Scheig – April 3, 2025**

The Columbus Blue Jackets got a massive boost when captain Boone Jenner was able to return from a shoulder injury he suffered during training camp. We're now starting to see how massive that boost was in more ways than one.

Jenner has been the model of consistency in his approach to the game as a member of the Blue Jackets. He only knows one way to play the game. That's with everything he has.

Jenner's return couldn't have come at a better time for the Blue Jackets. They are fighting tooth and nail in the Eastern Conference Playoff race. What he's been able to bring to the table with his on-ice production has lifted the entire team.

But it's what Jenner is doing off the ice that isn't necessarily getting enough attention. As you will see, that will have a lasting impact for years to come in the Blue Jackets' locker room.

### **On the Ice**

After taking a few games to shake some rust off and get used to the speed of the game again, Jenner has been one of the Blue Jackets' best players. Even when the points weren't there, head coach Dean Evason said Jenner was their best player in certain games.

Given the recent struggles finding offense, that says something. That means Jenner is impacting the game the way we all come to expect. He continues to play in every important situation. He wins key faceoffs. He plays an important role on the power play. He kills penalties. He does it all.

Now, the offensive output is starting to come. [Jenner has](#) 17 points in his 17 games since returning from injury. This includes 5-3-8 in his last five games. He is showing that he can contribute offense in different ways.

In the Blue Jackets' 8-4 win over the Nashville Predators, Jenner made a key play at a key time in the game.

The score was 4-3 Blue Jackets. The Predators just scored two goals to cut it to a one-goal game. They had pressure in the offensive zone looking for a tying goal. That's when the captain turned defensive into offense.

Jenner was in position to take advantage of a turnover. But instead of just clearing the puck and going for the change, he saw Fantilli with his stick on the ice and got the puck to him with speed. It helped create the 5-3 goal and a turning point in Tuesday's game.

Jenner could have high flipped the puck over the defense so everyone could change. But instead, thanks to the chemistry that line already has, they saw an opportunity to make a play and made it. The Blue Jackets never looked back.

Fantilli says he's having a lot of fun playing with Jenner right now.

"He came in right away and was impactful," Fantilli said. "He's been so hot especially the last few games here when maybe our scoring hasn't been at the level that we've had it. He's been going and he's been taking charge of that. That's why he is our captain. He's been unbelievable and playing with him, he's been a lot of fun. So I love it."

Their linemate Kent Johnson had three assists on Tuesday night. He says they all have chemistry together. It comes down to being connected in what they do.

“All of us on a line, you got three guys doing the exact same thing out there or wanting to be in the same spots all the time,” Johnson said. “I definitely think we all have very different games, very different skill sets. But I think we’re connected well and using each other’s strengths.”

While the goals and points are good, that is only a small part of the story of how Jenner is impactful inside the locker room. As Fantilli said earlier, Jenner is their captain for a reason.

### **Helping the Next Wave**

This is perhaps the most underrated part of Jenner’s impact. He’s in position to impart his wisdom and knowledge to the Blue Jackets’ young core. To a player, each of them recognize how important the captain’s presence is.

When Jenner first returned from injury, everyone on the ice couldn’t hide their smile. There was a happiness and jubilation knowing that they were getting a massive boost.

Johnson gets to see Jenner everyday from the perspective of being his linemate. No matter what situation arises, the captain is there sharing his knowledge to the next wave.

“It’s lead by example,” Johnson said of Jenner’s leadership. “His effort everyone sees every night. He’s always working really well in battles. Then he’s just a great guy and very positive. He will say something if need be. I think he does a good job of helping you out (when needed.) It’s saying what he believes and how it is. It’s really fun to play with him.”

“He’s a worker but he also enjoys it. I think that’s the perfect balance. It’s contagious. We’re very lucky to have him as our captain.”

Kirill Marchenko recorded a hat trick on Tuesday night. He couldn’t stop smiling when reflecting on what all the captain does in his eyes.

“We enjoy. I think everybody enjoy playing with him,” Marchenko said of Jenner. “He’s a great leader (and) great captain and he gives us all energy. He’s scored a lot of goals (and) makes a lot of things happen on the ice. We need to follow him and it’s unbelievable.”

Denton Mateychuk is a leader in his own right. As a captain in junior, he understands what comes with being in that kind of position. He too sees Jenner’s approach and tries to learn from him.

“You can just see he’s so excited to come into the rink everyday,” Mateychuk said. That energy, it feeds off when a guy is that happy to be at the rink and playing. You all know how hard he’s worked to get back. It’s awesome to see that. That’s leadership right there just having that mindset. I think the way he conducts himself and speaks in the room, it’s awesome the way he helps his team.”

### **Final Thoughts**

When considering Jenner’s career, it’s incomplete to only consider his numbers. While he is having a positive impact and quickly rising up the franchise ranks, we have to consider his role as captain equally.

What Jenner is doing for the likes of Johnson, Fantilli, Marchenko, Mateychuk and everyone on the Blue Jackets is the stuff of captains. The young core is learning and getting to see firsthand what it takes to be an impactful player in the NHL. These lessons are priceless and don’t always appear in the scoresheet.

Consider the days when the Blue Jackets were losing and struggling to score. It’s in those moments that a captain has to act the part and be an example for this team. Jenner has pressed into that role and is

flourishing. His consistent approach will have a major influence on the core as they grow into their roles moving forward.

Jenner truly does it all for the Blue Jackets. His teammates feed off his energy. When he speaks, everyone listens. He lets his actions do the loudest talking. The result is a room closer than ever under his watch.

Jenner's impact goes way beyond the scoresheet. His impact will be remembered for years to come thanks to the leadership he brings everyday.

## **1<sup>st</sup> Ohio Battery / Three Things: Starting Right, Adding On, Finishing Strong**

**By Ed Francis – April 3, 2025**

New month, new start?

Kirill Marchenko had four points and scored his third-career hat trick as the Columbus Blue Jackets defeated the Nashville Predators 8-4 on Tuesday night at Nationwide Arena. Elvis Merzlikins made 24 saves on 28 shots. Juuse Saros made 19 saves on 26 shots. Justus Annunen stopped 10 of 11 shots in relief.

### **Starting Right**

On Monday, Nashville lost 2-1 to the Philadelphia Flyers at Wells Fargo Center. The Predators have the third-fewest road wins (9-24-5) behind the San Jose Sharks and Chicago Blackhawks.

Looking to play spoiler, they've owned the Blue Jackets through the years, to the tune of a 70-23-1-8 record since 2000. Tonight belonged to the home team.

For the first time in 11 games, dating back to their 7-3 win over the New York Rangers at Madison Square Garden on Nov. 9, the Blue Jackets scored first. Kirill Marchenko extended his four-game goal and point streak (six goals, two assists) with his team-leading 29th. Zach Werenski stayed hot with his career-best 53rd assist and 73rd point. He has points in three straight (zero goals, five assists).

Per the Blue Jackets broadcast on FanDuel Sports Network, Columbus only had a lead of 23 seconds over the previous nine games, which occurred after the Mathieu Olivier goal on Friday against the Vancouver Canucks.

### **Adding On**

Adam Fantilli extended the Blue Jackets' lead at 16:34 following a Predators push, in which the Jackets got the puck out of their zone and converted at the other end.

The goal is Fantilli's 23rd with Denton Mateychuk (7) and Kent Johnson (25) getting the assists. Mateychuk is on a career-best three-game point streak (one goal, three assists).

Sean Monahan capped off the Jackets' three-goal first period, scoring his 15th at 18:10 on the power play to make it 3-0. Kent Johnson (26) and Werenski (54) each picked up their second assist of the night.

In the second period, Marchenko scored his second of the game at 4:12 for his first 30-goal season. Monahan picked up his second point and 31st assist.

Fantilli scored his second of the game at 12:00 to make it 5-3. Jenner added his 11th helper and is on a five-game point streak (five goals, three assists).

Monahan's second power-play goal of the night made it 6-3 at 16:47. Marchenko added another point with his 39th assist, and Jenner picked up his 12th.

Dante Fabbro made his old team pay as he scored his seventh, and the Jackets had a four-goal second period. Fantilli (23) and Kent Johnson (27) earned assists on the play as Johnson had his first career three-assist game.

The Predators had a first-period goal by Filip Forsberg (29) at 18:34 to make it 3-1, Jackets. Luke Evangelista (17) and Ryan O'Reilly (28) had the assists. They made things interesting in the second period with goals by Michael Bunting (17) and Justin Barron (5), 43 seconds apart at 5:43 and 6:26,

respectively, to make it 4-3, Columbus. Fedor Svechikov (8) and Evangelista (18) assisted on Bunting's goal. Vrana (5), playing in his 400th career game, assisted on Barron's goal. Justin Oesterle (2) added a goal at 9:02 of the third period. Cole Smith (8) had the assist.

### **Finishing Strong**

Entering the third period, three Blue Jackets had two goals each: Marchenko, Fantilli, and Monahan.

With a triple hat trick watch on, Marchenko broke the tie among teammates and added to the scoring party at Nationwide as he scored his third-career hat trick at 5:23 of the third period. It's his first-career four-point game. Monahan picked up his fourth point, 32nd assist, and Fabbro had his second point and 15th assist. It's the first Blue Jackets hat trick at Nationwide all season. Marchenko is the team's first 30-goal scorer since Cam Atkinson scored 41 in 2018-19.

For the game, Columbus had eight players record a point and seven record multiple points.

The Blue Jackets, first and foremost, took care of business in their win over the Predators. They could have used more help from the Florida Panthers, who let in Nick Suzuki's game-tying goal with nine seconds left, then scored 29 seconds into overtime as the Montreal Canadiens won 3-2 and swept the season series from Florida. The Canadiens remain in the second Eastern Conference wild card spot, holding the two-point lead over Columbus as the Jackets leapfrog the Rangers.

### **Quick Two-Game Homestand**

Columbus hosts the Colorado Avalanche on Thursday, April 3 at 7:30 p.m. ET.



## The Athletic / NHL's weirdest honor? A brief history of the Second-Team All-Star goalie

By Sean McIndoe – April 3, 2025

With just a few weeks left before awards ballots go out, we already know how one of the races will go. Connor Hellebuyck will win the Vezina Trophy. And if there's any justice, the GMs who vote on the award will make it unanimous.

Cool. Now let's talk about the best goaltending honor.

Not the honor for best goaltender — I mean the honor for goaltending that is the best. The best honor, as in the most fun, the most interesting, and also the weirdest.

I'm talking about the Second All-Star Team honors.

Yes, this might be something only I'm interested in. But today, I'm going to try to get you on board.

Each year, PHWA writers vote to create two All-Star teams, which are not to be confused with the (far inferior) teams from the actual All-Star Game in seasons where the NHL forces us to endure one. These postseason All-Star Team honors are a genuine distinction, proof that a player was considered among the very best at his position during that season.

Each of the two teams consists of two defensemen, a center, left and right wingers and a goalie. The highest vote-getters earn First-Team honors, which is the very best of the best of any given year. Then comes the Second Team, which is ... sometimes interesting.

That's true at all positions, at least occasionally. Sometimes you'll see a good-but-not-great player earn Second-Team honors up front, such as Thomas Vanek in 2007 or a 39-year-old Ray Whitney in 2012. Sometimes, a lesser-known defenseman will earn the honors, such as Lubomir Visnovsky in 2011 or Francois Beauchemin in 2013. But for the most part, a look at the Second-Team All-Star squads shows pretty much the names you'd expect — the best of the best, with the occasional exception that proves the rule.

Second-Team goalie honors? Those get weird. Or at least, the Second-Team goalie honor serves up some names that you might generously call unexpected.

It could happen again this year, with Logan Thompson battling Andrei Vasilevskiy for Second-Team honors. One of those guys has a Vezina, a Conn Smythe and multiple Cup rings. The other is Logan Thompson, who got traded in the offseason for mid-round draft picks. He's probably the favorite.

Why? Because goaltending is weird. And apparently, being the league's second-best goaltender is especially weird. Let's remember some guys who had one year where they were very nearly The Guy.

### **The early years**

The postseason All-Star Teams date back to 1931, and I won't spend a ton of time going through names you've never heard of. But after starting off honoring future Hall of Famers such as Tiny Thompson, Roy Worters and Charlie Gardiner, it didn't take long for the Second Team to start getting, uh, eclectic. Ever heard of Wilf Cude, Earl Robertson, Mike Karakas, or Jim Henry? You're not alone. Shout out to Frank Brimsek, a legitimate star who'd periodically show up to claim Second-Team All-Star honors during the 1940s, five times in all and presumably out of a sense of duty, before the voters would go back to giving it to guys named Paul Bibeault.

One more weird thing happens in the pre-expansion era: In the decade between 1954 and 1963, we get an era where the only goalies to earn Second-Team All-Star honors are Terry Sawchuk, Glenn Hall and Jacques Plante. That's it. Just three of the greatest of all time, passing it around between themselves. It wouldn't last, although it took the voters a few more years to start getting really weird.

### **The 1980s**

Things start to wobble a bit in the 1970s, when we get multiple Second-Team appearances by guys such as Chico Resch and Don Edwards. Neither of those guys was a Hall of Fame candidate, and Resch is known more for his broadcasting career, but they were both solid players in that journeyman kind of way.

Then things get weird. Does anyone remember Mario Lessard?

You old-timers might — he was the Kings' goalie in the Miracle on Manchester game — but I'm guessing the younger fans might not know the name. He was a ninth-round pick whose career only lasted four full NHL seasons. But one of those came in 1980-81, when he led the league in wins with 35. That was enough to earn him a couple of Hart votes, and enough All-Star love to land Second-Team honors behind Mike Liut (who won the Pearson Award that year over Wayne Gretzky, but that's a whole other thing).

Two years later, the Second-Team honors went to Rollie "The Goalie" Melanson, who split the Islanders' net with Billy Smith. In fairness, he led the league with a .909 save percentage, which, if you adjust for the early-'80s era, is the modern equivalent of (runs numbers) about 1.005. But while Melanson was good again the next year and would play several more seasons, he never received another All-Star vote.

The year after Melanson's win, the 1984 Second-Team honors went to Pat Riggin of the Capitals, presumably because he had the league's best GAA at 2.67. He also got a handful of votes in 1985, but then was out of the league completely in just three seasons. Then, after a one-year hiatus with future Hall of Famer Tom Barrasso, the Second-Team honors went to Bob Froese, who I remember best as the only guy I know of to ever retroactively lose credit for a goalie goal.

Keep your head up, Bobby — they can take your goals away, but not your Second-Team All-Star goalie honors. No, really — we've tried, and they apparently can't take those away.

Sabres goalie Daren Puppa earned Second-Team All-Star honors in 1990.

### **The 1990s**

All told, this was not a bad decade. Given how we remember this era being dominated by Patrick Roy, Dominik Hasek and Martin Brodeur, you might assume that trio hoarded the All-Star honors. But that's not the case; Brodeur won Second-Team honors twice and Roy once, but they still left the other seven years up for grabs.

As a result, we get to recognize some dependable 1990s mainstays who never won any other awards. That list starts with Daren Puppa, who earned the Second-Team honors in 1990. That's not the Lightning-era Puppa that you might remember, but rather the Sabres version Buffalo was constantly trying to replace for reasons nobody ever fully understood. Puppa had led the league in wins in 1989-90, a feat matched by fellow second-teamer Kirk McLean in 1991-92. McLean would play nine more years for four different teams, but would never appear on another ballot.

Our next second-teamer might be controversial, as there are some fans who insist to this day that he was a superstar who belongs in the Hall of Fame. Yes, it's our old pal Chris Osgood, who won a league-leading 39 games for the Red Wings in his first year as a full-time starter. He'd play 14 more seasons in

the NHL, but never again finished in the top five of All-Star balloting, because the writers hate voting for Red Wings. (Please do not check any of the era's other award results to verify that statement.)

After a two-year stop with Brodeur, the honor ended the decade in the possession of Boston's Byron Dafoe, largely on the strength of his league-leading 10 shutouts. Those were the last All-Star votes of his career, which lasted just five more seasons, two of which were with the Thrashers so they barely count. I'd have more to say about Dafoe, but I just learned from his Hockey-Reference page that his middle name was apparently Jaromir, and I'm too thrown off by that to go any further. Let's get to the 2000s.

### **The 2000s**

This is where things really go off the rails.

In 2000, the Second-Team honors went to a guy who posted 42 wins and a sub-2.00 GAA for the best team in the league. So far so good, and this goalie was indeed very good that year. Unfortunately for the Blues' Roman Turek, that would be the last award votes he'd get in his career, which turned out to only have four seasons left in it. Ah well, at least I'm assuming the playoffs went great.

Next up may be my favorite name on the list: Flyers legend Roman Cechmanek. He'd been drafted as a 29-year-old in 2000 and took over the starter's job as a rookie. In addition to those Second-Team honors, he nearly beat out Hasek for the Vezina and even finished fourth in Hart voting, trailing only some guys named Joe Sakic, Mario Lemieux and Jaromir Jagr. Despite how you may remember it, he was actually really good in all three years in Philadelphia, at least in the regular season (playoffs, not so much). Then he was traded to the Kings, played one season, and was done in the NHL.

Things get stranger in 2002, when Jose Theodore took home Second-Team honors. That might not sound weird, since Theodore won a Vezina and a Hart in his career. Here's the issue: He won both of those awards that year. Yes, the same year he was also named a Second-Team All-Star. In other words, the same writers who decided that Theodore should be only the second goalie of the expansion era to be named MVP also thought he wasn't even the best goalie in the league that season. First-Team honors went to Patrick Roy. Sure, why not?

By 2003, nobody knew what to expect from the goalie All-Star voting. Might as well hand Second-Team honors to a 27-year-old in his first full season as a starter. Why not. Come on down, Marty Turco, you're the second-best goalie in the league this year. Also, the second-best Marty, but we take what we can get.

After that stretch of four straight out-of-left-field picks, the voters settled down, bouncing back and forth between Brodeur and Roberto Luongo until 2009, when they gave the Second-Team honors to Blue Jackets rookie Steve Mason. He took home the Calder, too, despite being only 20 years old when the season ended. It would be the last hardware he'd win in an NHL career that was over before he turned 30.

### **The 2010s**

If there's a patron saint of the Second-Team All-Star goalie, I think it might have to be Ilya Bryzgalov.

The 2010 winner checks all the boxes. He got the honor once. It was the only one of his career. He was genuinely very good in the season he was honored — seriously, I'm not sure you can say that any of these guys didn't deserve it — but never quite reached those heights again. And when you hear his name, you go, "Oh right, I remember that guy, he was pretty good for a minute." It makes you happy. Well, unless you're a Flyers fan, but everyone else really enjoyed how this all turned out.

If we skip ahead to 2014, we meet our first second-teamer who's still active today. That would be Semyon Varlamov, who earned the honors by winning 41 games for the Avalanche in that weird year

where Patrick Roy turned them from a laughingstock into a contender overnight. In 11 seasons since then, including the last few reunited with Roy, Varlamov has received All-Star votes exactly one other time, back in 2021.

Finally, we have what may be the weirdest single-season goalie story of the modern era. When the 2014-15 season began, Devan Dubnyk was backing up Mike Smith in Arizona. By mid-January, he was traded to the Wild for a third-round pick, having started just 16 games on the year. Then he pretty much immediately became the best goalie in the league the rest of the way, and was nearly a Hart finalist based on that half-a-season's worth of work. He also earned Second-Team All-Star honors for, it goes without saying, the only time in his career.

And that's pretty much where our story ends. Since 2015, every goalie to be voted a second-teamer has been a reasonably big name with a good-to-great resume, at least assuming Thatcher Demko can get back on track.

Can Logan Thompson bring the tradition back? We'll see, because he's only 28 and has plenty of runway ahead of him, and this could simply be the year that kicks off a long and successful career as a starter. Or maybe not, and the curse honor of the Second-Team All-Star goalie claims another name. Maybe we have to wait until next year, when the honors go to Joey Daccord or Petr Mrazek or Samuel Ersson or some guy who isn't even in the league yet.

It would be weird. It would not be any weirder than what this honor has already given us, which is why it's the best.

## The Athletic / NHL rumblings: Will McDavid, Kaprizov, the Tkachuks and other injured stars be back for the playoffs?

**By Pierre LeBrun – April 3, 2025**

The Stanley Cup playoffs are two and a half weeks away, and there is still uncertainty around the injury recovery timelines affecting some big names.

**Here's the latest on some big ones:**

### **Miro Heiskanen, Dallas Stars**

Heiskanen injured his left knee Jan. 28 and had surgery on it Feb. 4. He started skating last week.

It is still early in the process. The initial timeline was three to four months. It will be two months on Friday. But the updated timeline right now is anywhere from the start of the Stanley Cup playoffs to the end of the first round. And when you consider that the Stars are currently lined up to play the Colorado Avalanche in a conference final-worthy matchup in the opening round, the difference in those two timeline scenarios is massive.

So it's TBD on how this will impact the playoffs, with all kinds of intrigue. The Stars, despite continuing to win games, haven't been the same defensive team without their No. 1 blueliner, which is to be expected given that he leads the team in average ice time at more than 25 minutes per night and touches all aspects of their game. You can't properly replace those minutes or the quality of those minutes.

His availability or lack thereof for Round 1 is a monster storyline in a potential Avs-Stars matchup.

### **Matthew Tkachuk, Florida Panthers**

Injured while playing for Team USA at the 4 Nations, Tkachuk skated a bit on his own earlier this week. There is still no firm timeline, though. The earliest he is expected back is the start of the playoffs, but that's not a sure thing. It could also be later. It all depends on how he feels, and with that type of injury (the team is saying lower body, but my understanding is it's a groin), there's always a risk of setbacks after pushing it.

There's no definitive way to know how a player recovers from a groin injury. So, again, it's not guaranteed whatsoever that he'll be ready to go for Game 1. But knowing the warrior that Tkachuk is, I wouldn't bet against him.

This makes it all the more important for Florida to try and win the top seed in the Atlantic and avoid either Tampa Bay or Toronto in the first round. Not that Ottawa would be a pushover, but the Senators would be a more desirable first-round opponent, especially if Tkachuk isn't ready for Game 1.

### **Dougie Hamilton, New Jersey Devils**

After Hamilton was injured on March 4, the Devils indicated he would be out for the regular season and likely wouldn't be back until the second round of the playoffs. He started skating late last week, which is a positive development, and if he continues to progress with no setbacks, the Devils are now holding out slim hope of their No. 1 defenseman returning before the end of the regular season — or at least for the opening round of the playoffs. There's definitely no guarantee of that, though.

My understanding is that it's the type of knee injury that would normally require four to six weeks' recovery time. It marked four weeks on Tuesday, but it all depends on how it feels when he pushes it in

recovery. His availability and effectiveness loom large if the Devils, without star center Jack Hughes for the rest of the season (playoffs included), have any chance of upsetting Carolina in the opening round.

#### **Kirill Kaprizov, Minnesota Wild**

As our Wild beat writers, Michael Russo and Joe Smith, have chronicled in detail, Kaprizov has been back at practice with teammates since Sunday, which was a welcome sight. But he still hasn't been medically cleared.

Kaprizov is on the team's road trip this week, but the team said he won't play. The organization was slated to find out more about his situation Tuesday, and we should get another relevant update from Wild head coach John Hynes after the morning skate Wednesday at MSG in New York — the same city where Kaprizov had surgery in January.

What makes the most sense would be waiting until he has the team's next full off-day practice next Tuesday and then unleashing the Russian superstar next Wednesday night at home versus the San Jose Sharks. Either way, the expectation is that Kaprizov will be back to help the sinking Wild before the end of the regular season.

#### **Gabriel Landeskog, Colorado Avalanche**

The Avs captain hasn't played since his team won the Cup in June 2022, having undergone a type of knee surgery in May 2023 that no NHL player has ever tried to play again with.

As such, it's no surprise it's taken longer than the team's original prognosis for him because there is no real handbook on this. It was big news when he joined the team in practice two weeks ago. The latest this week is that he's doing well, skating more consistently with the team. He's still ramping up the workload and seeing how he responds.

There's no timeline yet, which is the most important reality. But at least there's hope, where there wasn't nearly as much of a few months ago.

#### **Tomas Hertl, Vegas Golden Knights**

Hertl injured his shoulder crashing into the boards in a game on March 23 and won't play this week, head coach Bruce Cassidy told local Las Vegas media Monday. Second on the team with 31 goals, his availability isn't known beyond that update. But my understanding is that the team does expect him to be a playoff participant when Game 1 rolls around.

#### **Brady Tkachuk, Ottawa Senators**

I debated even putting Brady Tkachuk on this list because the team doesn't consider his sudden upper-body injury very serious, but given the time of year, I figured why not touch on it? He missed Tuesday night's game and is considered day-to-day by the club. The Senators expect him to play in the next game.

It's a different ailment than what he was battling coming out of the 4 Nations. He was injured Sunday after being interfered with by Penguins defenseman Ryan Graves, who got a penalty on the play, but it was more awkward than violent, to be sure. And of course, the Senators captain stayed in the game. But the team was smart in being cautious and keeping him out of Tuesday's game.

My sense here is that the Senators were going to give their captain a break at some point before the playoffs, and this presented itself as a natural opportunity as he felt stiff from that hit with Graves.

#### **Connor McDavid, Edmonton Oilers**

Oh yeah, that guy.

The world No. 1, who joined his teammates for the morning skate in Vegas on Tuesday in a non-contact sweater, has been out since suffering a lower-body injury in a game on March 20. The Oilers say they expect No. 97 back before the end of the regular season. More specifically, they don't expect him on this current road trip, which wraps up Monday night in Anaheim, but they are looking sometime within the last stretch of five games for his return. That's subject to change, but that's what I was hearing Tuesday.

So he'll probably be back in the last week of the regular season. The silver lining is that he will return after getting some rest, which isn't the worst thing after playing into late June last season, having a short offseason and not quite looking at his very best/ridiculous standard most of the season. Factor in playing in the 4 Nations, too.

Aside from playoff seeding within the Pacific Division, missing games right now isn't the end of the world. A full tank of energy for the playoffs is what's most important, and I think that's how the Oilers are looking at it.

## ESPN / NHL playoff standings: Rangers, Wild both on the ropes?

By ESPN staff – April 3, 2025

As the defending Presidents' Trophy winners, the New York Rangers were envisioned as a playoff team again in 2024-25. As the team on top of the league standings in early December, similar words could be written about the Minnesota Wild.

And yet, heading into Wednesday night's matchup between the clubs (7 p.m. ET, ESPN+), nothing is certain about either team's playoff chances after the pair has gone 8-9-3 in the past 10 games apiece.

The Wild enter the game in a playoff position, and have a 93.7% chance to make the playoffs per Statline. A key part of that is the team's remaining strength of schedule; their remaining opponents have a 46.0% winning percentage, which is the second-easiest path. (Only the New Jersey Devils face a weaker slate in the final stretch.)

Compare that to the Rangers, who have a 19.0% chance, and will begin this game on the outside looking in. New York's remaining slate is considerably more difficult; a 54.1% opponents' winning percentage ranks as the second toughest, behind only the Detroit Red Wings.

If the Wild qualify as the first wild card, their likely first-round opponent is the Vegas Golden Knights; if they land in the second wild-card position, their likely opponent is the Winnipeg Jets. Unfortunately, Minnesota went 0-3 against both teams this season.

The Rangers' more likely outcome as a playoff entrant is as the second wild card, which earns them a matchup against the Washington Capitals; the Caps have won all three games against New York this season. The Rangers could wind up as the first wild card, earning a matchup against the Atlantic Division champ. They went 1-2 against the Toronto Maple Leafs, 0-2 against the Florida Panthers (with one more game coming up on April 14), and 0-1 against the Tampa Bay Lightning (with games coming up on April 7 and April 17).

So, the future isn't blindingly bright in the playoffs for these teams. But all you need is a ticket in, and unexpected things can happen!

There are just over two weeks left until the season's end on April 17, and we'll help you track it all with the NHL playoff watch. As we traverse the final stretch, we'll provide details on all the playoff races, along with the teams jockeying for position in the 2025 NHL draft lottery.

**Note:** Playoff chances are via Statline.

### **Current playoff matchups**

#### **Eastern Conference**

A1 Toronto Maple Leafs vs. WC1 Ottawa Senators

A2 Tampa Bay Lightning vs. A3 Florida Panthers

M1 Washington Capitals vs. WC2 Montreal Canadiens

M2 Carolina Hurricanes vs. M3 New Jersey Devils

#### **Western Conference**

C1 Winnipeg Jets vs. WC2 Minnesota Wild

C2 Dallas Stars vs. C3 Colorado Avalanche



P1 Vegas Golden Knights vs. WC1 St. Louis Blues

P2 Los Angeles Kings vs. P3 Edmonton Oilers

### **Wednesday's games**

**Note:** All times ET. All games not on TNT or NHL Network are available to stream on ESPN+ (local blackout restrictions apply).

Minnesota Wild at New York Rangers, 7 p.m.

Washington Capitals at Carolina Hurricanes, 7 p.m. (TNT)

Florida Panthers at Toronto Maple Leafs, 7:30 p.m.

Colorado Avalanche at Chicago Blackhawks, 9:30 p.m. (TNT)

Seattle Kraken at Vancouver Canucks, 10:30 p.m.

### **Tuesday's scoreboard**

Washington Capitals 4, Boston Bruins 3

Montreal Canadiens 3, Florida Panthers 2 (OT)

Buffalo Sabres 5, Ottawa Senators 2

Columbus Blue Jackets 8, Nashville Predators 4

Tampa Bay Lightning 4, New York Islanders 1

St. Louis Blues 2, Detroit Red Wings 1 (OT)

Utah Hockey Club 3, Calgary Flames 1

Edmonton Oilers 3, Vegas Golden Knights 2

Anaheim Ducks 4, San Jose Sharks 3 (SO)

Los Angeles Kings 4, Winnipeg Jets 1

### **Expanded standings**

#### **Atlantic Division**

##### **Toronto Maple Leafs**

Points: 94

Regulation wins: 37

Playoff position: A1

Games left: 8

Points pace: 104.1

Next game: vs. FLA (Wednesday)

Playoff chances: 99.9%

Tragic number: N/A

##### **Tampa Bay Lightning**

Points: 93

Regulation wins: 38

Playoff position: A2

Games left: 8

Points pace: 103.1

Next game: @ OTT (Thursday)

Playoff chances: 99.9%

Tragic number: N/A

**Florida Panthers**

Points: 92

Regulation wins: 35

Playoff position: A3

Games left: 8

Points pace: 102.0

Next game: @ TOR (Wednesday)

Playoff chances: 99.9%

Tragic number: N/A

**Ottawa Senators**

Points: 84

Regulation wins: 30

Playoff position: WC1

Games left: 8

Points pace: 93.1

Next game: vs. TB (Thursday)

Playoff chances: 98.6%

Tragic number: N/A

**Montreal Canadiens**

Points: 79

Regulation wins: 25

Playoff position: WC2

Games left: 8

Points pace: 87.5

Next game: vs. BOS (Thursday)

Playoff chances: 51.7%

Tragic number: N/A

**Detroit Red Wings**

Points: 75

Regulation wins: 26

Playoff position: N/A

Games left: 8

Points pace: 83.1

Next game: vs. CAR (Friday)

Playoff chances: 2.3%

Tragic number: 13

**Buffalo Sabres**

Points: 70

Regulation wins: 26

Playoff position: N/A

Games left: 8

Points pace: 77.6

Next game: vs. TB (Saturday)

Playoff chances: 0.1%

Tragic number: 8

**Boston Bruins**

Points: 69

Regulation wins: 23

Playoff position: N/A

Games left: 7

Points pace: 75.4

Next game: @ MTL (Thursday)

Playoff chances: ~0%

Tragic number: 5

**Metro Division**

**x - Washington Capitals**

Points: 105

Regulation wins: 41

Playoff position: M1

Games left: 8

Points pace: 116.4

Next game: @ CAR (Wednesday)

Playoff chances: 100%

Tragic number: N/A

**Carolina Hurricanes**

Points: 94

Regulation wins: 40

Playoff position: M2

Games left: 9

Points pace: 105.6

Next game: vs. WSH (Wednesday)

Playoff chances: 99.9%

Tragic number: N/A

**New Jersey Devils**

Points: 87

Regulation wins: 35

Playoff position: M3

Games left: 6

Points pace: 93.9

Next game: vs. NYR (Saturday)

Playoff chances: 99.8%

Tragic number: N/A

**Columbus Blue Jackets**

Points: 77

Regulation wins: 24

Playoff position: N/A

Games left: 9

Points pace: 86.5

Next game: vs. COL (Thursday)

Playoff chances: 25.5%

Tragic number: 17

**New York Rangers**

Points: 77

Regulation wins: 32

Playoff position: N/A

Games left: 8

Points pace: 85.3

Next game: vs. MIN (Wednesday)

Playoff chances: 19.0%

Tragic number: 15

**New York Islanders**

Points: 74

Regulation wins: 25

Playoff position: N/A

Games left: 8

Points pace: 82

Next game: vs. MIN (Friday)

Playoff chances: 3.1%

Tragic number: 12

**Pittsburgh Penguins**

Points: 71

Regulation wins: 20

Playoff position: N/A

Games left: 7

Points pace: 77.6

Next game: @ STL (Thursday)

Playoff chances: 0.1%

Tragic number: 7

**Philadelphia Flyers**

Points: 71

Regulation wins: 20

Playoff position: N/A

Games left: 6

Points pace: 76.6

Next game: @ MTL (Saturday)

Playoff chances: ~0%

Tragic number: 5

### **Central Division**

#### **x - Winnipeg Jets**

Points: 106

Regulation wins: 40

Playoff position: C1

Games left: 7

Points pace: 115.9

Next game: @ VGK (Thursday)

Playoff chances: 100%

Tragic number: N/A

#### **x - Dallas Stars**

Points: 102

Regulation wins: 40

Playoff position: C2

Games left: 8

Points pace: 113.0

Next game: vs. NSH (Thursday)

Playoff chances: 100%

Tragic number: N/A

### **Colorado Avalanche**

Points: 94

Regulation wins: 38

Playoff position: C3

Games left: 7

Points pace: 102.8

Next game: @ CHI (Wednesday)

Playoff chances: 99.9%

Tragic number: N/A

### **St. Louis Blues**

Points: 89

Regulation wins: 30

Playoff position: WC1

Games left: 6

Points pace: 96.0

Next game: vs. PIT (Thursday)

Playoff chances: 96.9%

Tragic number: N/A

**Minnesota Wild**

Points: 88

Regulation wins: 33

Playoff position: WC2

Games left: 7

Points pace: 96.2

Next game: @ NYR (Wednesday)

Playoff chances: 93.7%

Tragic number: N/A

**Utah Hockey Club**

Points: 80

Regulation wins: 26

Playoff position: N/A

Games left: 7

Points pace: 87.5

Next game: vs. LA (Thursday)

Playoff chances: 0.7%

Tragic number: 7

**e - Nashville Predators**

Points: 62

Regulation wins: 23

Playoff position: N/A

Games left: 7

Points pace: 67.8

Next game: @ DAL (Thursday)

Playoff chances: 0%

Tragic number: E

**e - Chicago Blackhawks**

Points: 51

Regulation wins: 18

Playoff position: N/A

Games left: 8

Points pace: 56.5

Next game: vs. COL (Wednesday)

Playoff chances: 0%

Tragic number: E

**Pacific Division**

**x - Vegas Golden Knights**

Points: 98

Regulation wins: 42

Playoff position: P1

Games left: 8

Points pace: 108.6

Next game: vs. WPG (Thursday)

Playoff chances: 100%

Tragic number: N/A

**Los Angeles Kings**

Points: 93

Regulation wins: 37

Playoff position: P3

Games left: 8

Points pace: 103.1

Next game: @ UTA (Thursday)

Playoff chances: 99.9%

Tragic number: N/A

**Edmonton Oilers**

Points: 91

Regulation wins: 31

Playoff position: P2



Games left: 8

Points pace: 100.8

Next game: @ SJ (Thursday)

Playoff chances: 99.9%

Tragic number: N/A

### **Calgary Flames**

Points: 82

Regulation wins: 26

Playoff position: N/A

Games left: 8

Points pace: 90.9

Next game: vs. ANA (Thursday)

Playoff chances: 6.4%

Tragic number: 11

### **Vancouver Canucks**

Points: 81

Regulation wins: 26

Playoff position: N/A

Games left: 8

Points pace: 89.8

Next game: vs. SEA (Wednesday)

Playoff chances: 2.4%

Tragic number: 10

### **Anaheim Ducks**

Points: 74

Regulation wins: 23

Playoff position: N/A

Games left: 8

Points pace: 82.0

Next game: @ CGY (Thursday)

Playoff chances: ~0%

Tragic number: 3

### **e - Seattle Kraken**

Points: 68

Regulation wins: 25

Playoff position: N/A

Games left: 7

Points pace: 74.3

Next game: @ VAN (Wednesday)

Playoff chances: 0%

Tragic number: E

**e - San Jose Sharks**

Points: 50

Regulation wins: 14

Playoff position: N/A

Games left: 8

Points pace: 55.4

Next game: vs. EDM (Thursday)

Playoff chances: 0%

Tragic number: E

**Note:** An "x" means that the team has clinched a playoff berth. An "e" means that the team has been eliminated from playoff contention.

**Race for the No. 1 pick**

The NHL uses a draft lottery to determine the order of the first round, so the team that finishes in last place is not guaranteed the No. 1 selection. As of 2021, a team can move up a maximum of 10 spots if it wins the lottery, so only 11 teams are eligible for the No. 1 pick. Full details on the process are [here](#). Matthew Schaefer, a defenseman for the OHL's Erie Otters, is No. 1 on the draft board.

**1. San Jose Sharks**

Points: 50

Regulation wins: 14

**2. Chicago Blackhawks**

Points: 51

Regulation wins: 18

**3. Nashville Predators**

Points: 62

Regulation wins: 23

**4. Seattle Kraken**

Points: 68

Regulation wins: 25

**5. Buffalo Sabres**

Points: 70

Regulation wins: 26

**6. Boston Bruins**

Points: 69

Regulation wins: 23

**7. Philadelphia Flyers**

Points: 71

Regulation wins: 20

**8. Pittsburgh Penguins**

Points: 71

Regulation wins: 20

**9. Anaheim Ducks**

Points: 74

Regulation wins: 23

**10. New York Islanders**

Points: 74

Regulation wins: 25

**11. Detroit Red Wings**

Points: 75

Regulation wins: 26

**12. New York Rangers**

Points: 77

Regulation wins: 32

**13. Columbus Blue Jackets**

Points: 77

Regulation wins: 24

**14. Utah Hockey Club**

Points: 80

Regulation wins: 26

**15. Vancouver Canucks**

Points: 81

Regulation wins: 26

**16. Calgary Flames**

Points: 82

Regulation wins: 26

## [Sportsnet.ca / How trade deadline acquisitions are faring with new clubs](#)

**By Ryan Dixon – April 3, 2025**

Nearly a month has passed since the NHL trade deadline came and went. That's not enough time to know if your team found its Butch Goring or Marian Gaborik — only the drama and high stakes of the playoffs can make true heroes of deadline acquisitions — but four weeks is certainly enough runway to get a sense of the new fit.

Of course, trade deadline season really kicks up about six weeks before the actual cutoff for swaps, so some players who were moved early in the action have had quite a bit of time to acclimate to their new surroundings.

So, how's everybody doing?

To answer that question, we're going to examine each trade deadline buyer who spent significant capital to add pieces. We'll list each team according to their conference rank by points percentage and begin in the East.

No team factored more prominently into deadline season than the Canes. In late January, they pulled the trigger on a huge move that landed Mikko Rantanen from the Colorado Avalanche. When Rantanen declined to sign a big extension to stay in Raleigh, he was moved to Dallas for a package built around young gun Logan Stankoven.

Lost in the excitement of Carolina originally acquiring Rantanen was the fact it also snagged Taylor Hall from Chicago. Hall has been on fire lately, recording eight goals in his past 15 outings. And if you think nobody paid much attention to the Hall acquisition, we really weren't talking about the Canes snagging Mark Jankowski from Nashville for a fifth-rounder on deadline day. All Jankowski has done since landing in Carolina is score seven goals in 10 games. Now, some would say his shooting percentage of 63.6 per cent since joining the Hurricanes is due for a dip, but Jankowski has probably already justified the cost of a fifth-rounder for his services.

Stankoven, meanwhile, is actually playing a tick less in Carolina than he was in Dallas, averaging 14:36 per night in 10 games with his new team compared to 15:06 in Texas.

Obviously there's been consternation over the fit with former Flyers centre Scott Laughton so far. Both his traditional and underlying numbers are grim and coach Craig Berube has given him some run on wing to reduce his responsibility level. Ultimately, the Leafs need Laughton down the middle to get the most out of him, but it's really just about helping the player get comfortable in a new, pressure-filled situation in time for when the games really matter.

As for Toronto's other notable acquisition — big, right-shot defenceman Brandon Carlo — he's been, more or less, as advertised. For what it's worth, Carlo and partner Morgan Rielly — who seemed endlessly in search of a right-shot buddy he could pair with long-term — have an expected goals percentage of 58.3 per cent in a dozen games since Carlo landed in Toronto.

The Bolts knew what they were getting when they acquired old friend Yanni Gourde from the Seattle Kraken. That said, Tampa is likely pleasantly surprised by the eight assists in 13 games Gourde has posted since returning as the 3C to the team he won a pair of Cups with. Skating alongside Gourde on the third line is Oliver Bjorkstrand, who came over in the same swap with Seattle. The winger scored in his first game with Tampa, then was held to a single assist in nine contests. Recently, though Bjorkstrand has

been showing that 20-goal touch, notching three goals in his past three outings, including during Tuesday night's win on Long Island.

It's tough to say Seth Jones' brief tenure in Florida has been a smashing success, though he does have a goal and an assist in his past two outings with stronger underlying numbers in his recent games. Still, it's a little troubling that he's minus-6 in his 13-game tenure with Florida despite having over 60 per cent of his shift starts in the offensive zone.

One unexpected development since Jones landed in South Florida is the 20-game suspension handed out to Aaron Ekblad for violating the NHL and NHLPA's policy on performance-enhancing drugs. With Ekblad — the Panthers' other minute-munching, right-shot defenceman — out of the lineup for most of Jones' time there, the latter has been seeing even more time (25:47) than was likely intended.

Meanwhile, Brad Marchand has now played three games with the Panthers since returning from an injury. The former Bruins captain picked up a helper and had four shots on goal during his debut, but has not registered a point or put a puck on goal during his past two contests.

Dylan Cozens has looked right at home on the Senators' second line between David Perron and Drake Batherson. The former Sabre has nine points in 13 contests with the Sens and looks like a good, right-shot compliment to top centre Tim Stutzle.

Meanwhile, it's been a grind for former Shark Fabian Zetterlund in his new surroundings. The winger has just a single assist in 12 games, but maybe things will turn soon; Zetterlund has totalled nine shots on goal in his past two games.

## **WESTERN CONFERENCE**

The Jets didn't really push their chips in ahead of the deadline, opting for complimentary pieces in bottom-six forward Brandon Tanev and big-bodied blue-liner Luke Schenn. Tanev — who began his NHL journey with 195 games in a Jets uniform — has managed to chip in four points in 12 games while playing just over 10 minutes per night in his return to Manitoba.

Schenn, meanwhile, missed Tuesday night's 4-1 loss in Los Angeles after coach Scott Aniel said he was "stiffening up" at the morning skate. In the nine games he has played with the team, Schenn has seen more action in Winnipeg than he was previously getting in Nashville, seeing 17:42 per night with the Jets compared to 15:35 with the Preds.

It's has obviously been a bizarre season for Mikko Rantanen, an elite, two-way winger who is now on his third team of the year. Rantanen's production in Dallas has been in the middle between his crazy-good stats in Colorado (107-point pace) and shockingly low output in Carolina (six points in 13 games). Overall, Rantanen has 11 points in a dozen games with Dallas, but seven of them have come in his past five games as he's heating up in his new(est) surroundings.

And don't forget about the other Finn Dallas picked up this year. Mikael Granlund, who came over with Codi Ceci from San Jose in January, has 17 points in 23 games with Dallas and looks like a valuable middle-six forward.

As for Ceci, he's playing over 20 minutes a night and is a solid plus-14 in 23 outings as a Star.

Could Andrei Kuzmenko wind up being a buy-low heist for the Kings? The Russian winger is feeling it lately, with goals in his past two games and four tallies and nine points in his past seven contests. Kuzmenko — who has filled the net at different times in his three-year NHL career — has been skating on the top line with Anze Kopitar and Adrian Kempe.

Not for nothing, but the Kings were 23rd in goals per game (2.80) when they picked up Kuzmenko from Philly for a third-rounder and rank eighth since then with 3.57 goals per game.

### **Colorado Avalanche**

When the Avs hit the ice — depending on the lineup on a given night — five of their 12 forwards are players acquired by the team since late January. That's nearly two full lines of new guys.

Brock Nelson was the biggest acquisition at the deadline by Colorado and — even with 0-0-0 lines in his past two games — the former Islander has six points in his past six games.

Right now, Nelson is skating beside Martin Necas, the centrepiece of the return for Rantanen from Carolina in January. The former has been a point-per-game player since landing in Denver just after his 26th birthday.

Charlie Coyle hasn't had a goal in a dozen games with the Avs, but his big body will be a valuable third-line presence once the post-season starts.

On the back end, banger Ryan Lindgren has two goals in 14 games with Colorado, which is the same number he posted in 54 contests with the Rangers this year. Lindgren has been seeing just over 18 minutes per night on the second pair and starts more than 60 per cent of his shifts in the defensive zone.

One of the Oilers big — as in, six-foot-three, 221 pounds — acquisitions ahead of the deadline, Trent Frederic, has yet to debut with the club thanks to an ankle injury he had already sustained as a member of the Boston Bruins. Ideally, Frederic would squeeze into at least one or two regular season contests as Edmonton's 3C before lacing 'em up with a new team in Game 1 of the second season.

As for the guy who is playing, Jake Walman scored for the first time as an Oiler in Tuesday's 3-2 win in Vegas. The former Sharks defenceman has six points in 12 outings with Edmonton and is averaging a pretty significant 21:20 of ice time per night.