



DALLAS STARS COMMUNICATIONS

# DAILY NEWS CLIPS

Wednesday, March 18, 2026

**NHL.com (Dallas Stars)**

## **Dallas Stars to host annual Pride Night on Tuesday, March 24 vs. New Jersey Devils**

By Dallas Stars Communications

Date: 03/17/26

FRISCO, Texas – The Dallas Stars announced today details for the club's annual Pride Night on Tuesday, March 24 against the New Jersey Devils at 7 p.m.

The celebration kicks off with a Pride Happy Hour prior in the Patron Club at American Airlines Center beginning at 5:30 p.m. with drink specials available till puck drop. Early arriving fans will receive a Stars branded Pride socks, and the game will open with a performance of the National Anthem by singer/songwriter and Texas native Lady Kennedy. Jennifer 'Lady' Kennedy, is a sixth generation Texan who has been singing since she was four years old. Jennifer is a local Jazz/Pop artist performing at venues throughout DFW. Jennifer has performed on 'The Voice' and has won several local singing competitions.

The Dallas Stars are also partnering with Ciera Oates is creating the specialty logo for the jersey auction jerseys and limited edition merchandise. Oates is a Dallas-based designer, marketing professional, and creative collaborator with more than a decade of experience in branding and visual storytelling. She currently serves as Marketing & Operations Manager at Dallas Hope Charities, where her work supports LGBTQ+ young adults experiencing homelessness. Her Dallas Stars Pride Night jersey design reflects themes of unity, hope, love, equality, and belonging — values that mirror the mission of Dallas Hope Charities. The jerseys will be auctioned following Pride Night, with proceeds benefiting Dallas Hope Charities's programs supporting LGBTQ+ youth in North Texas.

The Dallas Stars Foundation will host an autographed jersey auction featuring specialty Pride jerseys at [DallasStars.com/JerseyAuction](https://DallasStars.com/JerseyAuction) and will be available for auction from 10 a.m. CT on March 24 to 5 p.m. on March 31. Additionally, autographed Pride-themed mystery pucks will be available for purchase at the fan center outside section 113. Proceeds collected from the jersey auction and mystery puck sales, as well as The Dallas Stars Foundation 50/50 Raffle presented by Higginbotham Insurance on Pride Night will benefit Dallas Hope Charities, an organization whose mission is to provide food, shelter, and services that instill dignity, stability, and hope for all.

"We are incredibly grateful to the Dallas Stars for their commitment to our mission," said Tamika Perry, CEO of Dallas Hope Charities. "This partnership shines a vital spotlight on the urgent need for safe, stable housing for LGBTQ+ young adults in North Texas and directly supports our efforts to provide a continuum of care that leads to long-term independence."

Dallas Hope Charities specifically addresses the critical needs of LGBTQ+ young adults, ages 18-24, who are experiencing housing insecurities and homelessness. Through outreach via Hope Street and housing programs at the Dallas Hope Center and Finally Home, Dallas Hope Charities provides a safe, affirming continuum of care designed to empower individuals to transition from crisis to long-term stability.

**NHL.com (Dallas Stars)**

## **Game Day Guide: Stars at Avalanche**

By Stars Staff

Date: 03/18/26

When: Wednesday, March 17 at 8:30 p.m.

Where: Ball Arena

TV: TNT, HBO Max

Radio: The Ticket 96.7-FM, 1310-AM

Live Stats: NHL Game Center

### Five Points

The Dallas Stars face the Colorado Avalanche Wednesday night for the third of four games this season. Dallas defeated Colorado in their first meeting earlier this season on Oct. 11 (5-4 SOW) while falling short in their last matchup on March 6 (5-4 SOL), earning points in both of those games.

Dallas is 70-68-23 all-time vs. Colorado, including a 27-45-9 mark on the road.

The Stars have earned points in six of their last eight games played against the Avalanche (3-2-3) dating back to Jan. 4, 2024. Dallas has also collected points in three of their last five games played vs. Colorado at Ball Arena (2-2-1).

Forward Jason Robertson enters Wednesday's contest riding a four-game point streak vs. Colorado, earning seven points (4-3—7) during that span, including putting up two assists in Dallas' last game against them on March 6. Through 16 career games played against the Avalanche, Robertson has tallied 20 points (9-11—20), averaging 1.25 points per game. His 1.25 points per game against them ranks eighth in the League among all active NHL skaters who have played Colorado at least 10 times in their careers.

Defenseman Miro Heiskanen enters Wednesday's matchup riding a two-game point streak against the Avalanche, registering three points (1-2—3) during that span. In all, Heiskanen has totaled 11 points (2-9—11) in 23 career games played vs. Colorado, averaging 24:46 of time on ice per game. His 24:46 of time on ice per game against them ranks seventh among all active NHL skaters.

Stats Against Opponent

### Active Streaks

Wyatt Johnston (3-9—12, 7 GP)  
Jason Robertson (4-3—7, 4 GP)  
Miro Heiskanen (1-2—3, 2 GP)  
Jamie Benn (1-1—2, 2 GP)

### Leading Scorers

Jamie Benn (16-35—51, 62 GP)  
Tyler Seguin (26-23—49, 43 GP)  
Matt Duchene (14-7—21, 21 GP)  
Jason Robertson (9-11—20, 16 GP)

### Players To Watch

Stars forward Johnston scored a goal in Dallas' last game on March 16 against the Utah Mammoth and now enters Wednesday's game riding a four-game point streak dating back to March 10, earning seven points (3-4—7) during that span. This marks the third stretch of the season that Johnston has scored in three consecutive games (also: Jan. 4-7 and Oct. 9-16). In all, Johnston has totaled 74 points (37-37—74) in 67 games played this season, ranking second on the team in scoring. He has already set career highs in both goals (37) and points (74) this season and enters Wednesday's game having totaled 37 assists this year, which is one shy of matching his career high of 38. Johnston is currently on pace to finish the year with 46 goals, 46 assists and 92 points. His 37 goals this season are tied for fifth in the NHL while his 36 power-play points (22-14—36) rank third, entering play Tuesday. In his career against Colorado, Johnston has notched 13 points (4-9—13) in 13 games played. He enters Wednesday's contest riding a seven-game point streak against the Avalanche, recording 12 points (3-9—12) during that span, including putting up a goal and an assist in Dallas' last game against them on March 6.

Avalanche forward Martin Necas enters Wednesday's matchup riding a four-game point streak dating back to March 10, collecting five points (3-2—5) during that span. Necas tallied an assist in Colorado's last game on March 16 against the Pittsburgh Penguins, while putting up 24:08 of time on ice. In 63 games played this season, he's totaled 81 points (31-50—81), ranking third on the team and tied for seventh in the NHL in scoring entering play Tuesday. His 24 drawn penalties this season lead Avalanche skaters, while ranking second in goals (31) and tied for second in power-play goals (8). In his career against Dallas, Necas has registered 17 points (6-11—17) in 20 games played. He enters Wednesday's game riding a five-game point streak against the Stars, tallying 11 points (4-7—11) during that span, including putting up four points (1-3—4) in his last meeting against Dallas on March 6, which matched a single-game career high that he has recorded on five other occasions (last: Nov. 13, 2025).

### First Shift

It's been quite a week for Justin Hryckowian.

The free agent forward who played at Northeastern University and worked his way up through the Stars' AHL affiliate was front and center on Thursday when Dallas beat Edmonton 7-2 in a nationally televised game. Hryckowian was sticking up for teammate Arttu Hyry when he found himself in a scrum with three-time MVP Connor McDavid at the end of the second period.

The interaction was innocent enough, but the Oilers didn't take kindly to anyone messing with their captain, so they harassed Hryckowian for the remainder of the game. At one point, the 25-year-old winger addressed the Oilers bench with some sharp words and a gestured stick point, and that made all the social media.

So, is it pretty cool that everyone knows how to pronounce your name, now, Justin?

"It's been kind of a lot right now," he said with a smile. "I'm just trying to stay in the moment and play my game."

That's what he was doing when this whole thing blew up, and that does bring him some comfort. Hyry accidentally shot a puck that hit Leon Draisaitl as time expired and that made McDavid mad.

"Connor was sticking up for his guy and Ritzy was sticking up for his guy, so I liked it," said Stars coach Glen Gulutzan.

The coach also liked the fact the moment was true to Hryckowian's career. The native of L'Île-Bizard, Quebec is listed at 5-11, 198, so he has had to work his way up. He played three years at Northeastern and became a pretty good offensive player. When he signed with the Stars and jumped into Cedar Park, he found a way to tally 60 points (22 goals, 38 assists) in 67 games and earned the AHL Rookie of the Year. He was even better in the playoffs with 18 points (9 goals, 9 assists) in 14 games and that led him right to the Dallas Stars training camp in the fall.

A tight salary cap forced Dallas to part with Mason Marchment, Mikael Granlund and Evgenii Dadonov over the summer, and that opened the door for a player like Hryckowian. He impressed the new coaching staff and has been claiming ice time ever since.

"If there's one guy that's all business all of the time, it's him," Gulutzan said. "His routine hasn't changed, it's the same thing every day. It's a very regimented pregame ritual and that's how guys like him will themselves into the league and he's not going to chance that."

Still, the spotlight has been a challenge. The internet artists took one of the photos of him confronting the Oilers bench and turned it into a virtual portrait. Hryckowian worries his teammates might place a real one in his locker at some point. And his phone, well that has been working overtime. All of his friends from Quebec, from Boston, from Cedar Park are voicing their approval.

His mom was in town for the game and Hryckowian said it was a nice moment.

"It's awesome for everyone," he said. "Me and my family, we're just trying to soak the moment in."

Because if anyone knows that the Stars still have a lot of work to do, it's Justin Hryckowian.

"It's good for him," Gulutzan said. "He's focused, he's not going to go buy a Lamborghini."

But he is going to try to help the Stars win. Through 66 games, he has 23 points (10 goals, 13 assists) and has been a "Swiss Army knife" for Gulutzan, fitting into a lot of different roles.

"He's at the center of a lot of the physicality," said teammate Robertson. "You kind of see how his growth through the season, he's embracing what he's doing. Not just doing that (physical) stuff, but the little stuff, faceoffs, PK, even scoring and providing a little bite. It's a big piece for us as a team."

And as the league gets to know him, he understands the job will get tougher. But he seems to be ready for that.

"I just want to show up and help this team win," he said. "That was a big game on national TV. It's probably done by now...hopefully."

#### Key Numbers

14-1-1

Dallas just finished a two-month stretch with a 14-1-1 record. The Stars led the league in scoring in that span at 4.06 goals per game, were second in GAA at 2.56, and were first on the power play (31.6 percent).

Plus-76

Colorado leads the NHL in goal differential at plus-74. Dallas is second at plus-51.

51

Colorado goalie Scott Wedgewood played three seasons in the Stars organization, logging 51 games and posting a 28-11-11 record.

#### He Said It

"We're just trying to do the little things and make sure we're doing that every single shift. Right now, it's a good opportunity because we're playing a lot of good teams. Just doing those little details, we get rewarded for that."

-Colin Blackwell on attention to detail during the 15-game point streak

**NHL.com**

## **State Your Case: Avalanche or Stars as NHL's top team**

By NHL.com

Date: 03/17/26

The Central Division is the toughest in the NHL this season.

It is home to the League's best team almost since the puck dropped in October in the Colorado Avalanche, who are 44-13-9 with a League-high 97 points.

It is home to the League's hottest team in the Dallas Stars (42-15-10), who had a 15-game point streak (14-0-1) end with a 6-3 loss to the Utah Mammoth on Monday. The Stars have 94 points and have made up seven points on the Avalanche since Jan. 1.

Just for fun, the Central also boasts the the Minnesota Wild (39-18-12), who with 90 points are tied for third in the League standings with the Buffalo Sabres (one game in hand) and Carolina Hurricanes (two games in hand).

But it is the battle between the Avalanche and Stars that will take center stage during the second half of a national TV doubleheader when the teams meet at Ball Arena on Wednesday (9:30 p.m. ET; HBO MAX, TNT, TVAS2). The New Jersey Devils visit the New York Rangers in the first part of the doubleheader at Madison Square Garden (7 p.m. ET; HBO MAX, TNT).

Dallas has the opportunity to make a case as the League's best team, coming off a points streak that tied the Stars/Minnesota North Stars record set in 1998-99 (12-0 with three ties). A victory Wednesday would put them within one point of Colorado in the race for the Presidents' Trophy and the top seed in the 2026 Stanley Cup Playoffs.

So which of these teams is the NHL's cream of the crop? We put that question before NHL.com senior writers Tom Gulitti and Amalie Benjamin in this edition of State Your Case.

Benjamin: Let's make this easy: The Avalanche have been the best team in the NHL all season and, at points, it wasn't even close. They'll win the Central Division, the toughest in the League, case closed. OK, fine. I'll back that up, starting with Nathan MacKinnon. The center has played like he's on a mission all season, with 110 points (45 goals, 65 assists) in 65 games, second only to the 114 points (37 goals, 77 assists) of Edmonton Oilers center Connor McDavid. But Colorado's success goes beyond MacKinnon. There's also forward Martin Necas, who has been a more than worthy replacement for forward Mikko Rantanen, who ended up with the Stars after a stopover with the Hurricanes last season. Necas has 81 points (31 goals, 50 assists), and the Avalanche lead the NHL in goals for per game with 3.73. Plus there's defenseman Cale Makar (68 points; 19 goals, 49 assists in 66 games), center Brock Nelson (30 goals as part of his

55 points) and newly acquired forward Nazem Kadri (43 points; 13 goals, 30 assists in 66 games with the Calgary Flames and Colorado). So the offense is there, specifically at 5-on-5, with 181 goals, a whopping 26 more at even strength than the next-highest team (Buffalo Sabres, 155). That should be enough, and I haven't even started in on their defense.

Gulitti: I agree with Amalie to a point. The Avalanche have been the best team in the NHL for most of the season. The Stars have been the better team for close to two months now, though, and are surging at the right time with the help of a franchise record-tying 15-game point streak. The Stars have been doing this despite being without forwards Mikko Rantanen (lower body) and Radek Faksa (initially upper body, now lower) since they were injured during the 2026 Milano Cortina Olympics, Roope Hintz (lower body) since March 6 and Tyler Seguin (knee) since Dec. 2. Despite those personnel losses, Dallas has continued to thrive, thanks to its superior depth. The Stars had eight players reach double digits in points during their point streak: forwards Jason Robertson (22), Matt Duchene (21), Wyatt Johnston (20), Jamie Benn (16), Sam Steel (13) and Mavrik Bourque (13) and defensemen Miro Heiskanen (18) and Thomas Harley (11). Johnston leads the NHL with 22 power-play goals this season. Unfortunately, Seguin is out for the season, but Dallas will be even better when Rantanen, Faksa and Hintz return.

Benjamin: Everything Tom said is true: The once world-beating Avalanche have fallen back to earth a bit and the Stars have risen in that time. After all, Colorado entered the 2026 calendar year with two regulation losses. Two. Let that sink in. And while the Avalanche have seen that regression since, which was bound to come, I think that will make them all the better at the end of the season, when they're fighting it out for a division title they still have the inside track to win. That being said, I'm headed back to talk about Colorado's defense, which is (much like its offense) tops in the NHL, giving up 2.50 goals per game. Though their defensive core doesn't necessarily set the world on fire outside of Makar and Devon Toews, their goalies have become a formidable tandem, with Scott Wedgewood (25-5-5, 2.23 goals-against average, .915 save percentage, two shutouts) and Mackenzie Blackwood (18-8-1, 2.48 GAA, .904 save percentage, three shutouts). I believe this group can turn defense into offense on a dime, and they'll be more than enough to get the Avalanche to the finish line in the Central.

Gulitti: It's difficult to make a case against the Avalanche because of the many points Amalie mentions. They're one of the best teams in the NHL, for sure. So, I'll just focus on the Stars, who are playing their best hockey at the right time and measure up well against Colorado on defense and in net, too. Dallas has one of the most underrated defensemen in the NHL in Heiskanen, and he's supported by a deep group that includes Esa Lindell, Harley and Tyler Myers, who was acquired in a trade with the Vancouver Canucks on March 4 to add size (6-foot-8, 229 pounds) and physicality. The Stars also have one of the best goalie duos in the NHL, headed by Jake Oettinger (28-10-5, 2.62 GAA, .900 save percentage, two shutouts) with Casey DeSmith (14-5-5, 2.40 GAA, .907 save percentage, one shutout) backing up. Since Jan. 11, Dallas is 10th in the NHL in

scoring with 3.50 goals per game, and Colorado is 17th (3.09). During that same period, Dallas is first in allowing 2.45 goals per game and Colorado is 19th (3.18). There isn't much difference between the teams. The winner Wednesday probably will win the division.

**NHL.com**

## **Avalanche, Stars set for crucial Central matchup**

By Dan Rosen

Date: 03/18/26

MANALAPAN, Fla. -- The top two teams in the NHL will face off against each other Wednesday in a nationally televised game in the United States that has far-reaching implications on the Central Division standings and what's to come in the Stanley Cup Playoffs.

The Colorado Avalanche, in first place in the Central with 97 points in 66 games, are home at Ball Arena against the Dallas Stars, the second-place team in the division with 94 points in 67 games (9:30 p.m. ET; HBO MAX, TNT, TVAS2).

It's the second of three games between the Stars and Avalanche in a span of 30 days. Colorado won 5-4 in a shootout in Dallas on March 6. The Stars are also home against the Avalanche on April 4.

"These games do (feel different) because there's a mutual respect between both teams," Dallas general manager Jim Nill said. "They know that, 'Hey, this is a team we're probably going to have to go through if we want to win the Stanley Cup.' The players know that. They understand that. And they've got a lot of pride.

"But win or lose, it's not the end all be all. There's a long ways to go yet."

That sentiment is shared by the Avalanche and their GM, Chris MacFarland, and it is important for many reasons, but the emphasis on the standings plays a big role in why the game Wednesday is so meaningful and intriguing.

The Avalanche (44-13-9) and Stars (42-15-10) are the top two teams in the League. The Minnesota Wild (39-18-12), who are third in the Central with 90 points in 69 games, are also tied for third in points in the overall League standings with the Buffalo Sabres (one game in hand) and Carolina Hurricanes (two games in hand). They still have two games remaining against the Stars.

Because the playoff format guarantees one of the Avalanche, Stars and Wild will be eliminated in the first round and two will be out following the second round, finishing first in the division matters as it all but ensures avoiding playing one of the other two in the first round.

"With the start we had I think it's important (to finish first in the division)," MacFarland said Tuesday from the League's GM meetings. "I think Dallas would say the same thing. I think Minnesota would say the same thing."

But saying that now and stressing it with still a double-digit number of games to play are different, which is why MacFarland and Nill are choosing to focus on how their teams are playing instead of the standings even when pressed on the importance of finishing first.

“I get the question, but I think for us ‘Bedsy’ (coach Jared Bednar) does a good job and our coaches do a good job of just focusing on the process day by day, and if we do our thing right day after day then the scoreboard, the standings will kind of take care of themselves,” MacFarland said. “It’s our job to be ready to play Dallas, Chicago on Friday and then, you know, a month from now, wherever we are in the standings we’ll be ready to go for Game 1 somewhere.”

Said Nill, “This is probably an easy way out of the question, it’s really just getting ourselves ready for the playoffs. We know we’ve got to be at our best to beat these teams so we have to make sure we’re at that level.”

The Stars were, up until a 6-3 loss to the Utah Mammoth on Monday. It was their first regulation loss since Jan. 22, ending a 14-0-1 stretch in which they scored 4.13 goals per game and allowed 2.33, were 33.3 percent on the power play, including scoring in 12 consecutive games, and were 86.0 percent on the penalty kill.

They gained nine points on the Avalanche in that stretch, doing so with injuries to three key forwards: Roope Hintz, Mikko Rantanen and Radek Faksa.

The Stars will play their sixth straight game and for the 10th time in 11 games without them when the puck drops against the Avalanche.

The hope is all three will be back before the end of the regular season.

“We’re playing very cohesive,” Nill said. “Our defensive structure is very good. Our 5-on-5 play has come up, which was a concern early in the year and kind of midyear when we hit a little bit of a bump. That’s come up. Our power play has been outstanding and the PK is finally getting its traction. Right now, we’re playing well. We’ve got a lot of injuries, but it has been an opportunity for these young guys and some other players to grab it, and they have.”

The Avalanche are also battling injuries up front, with Artturi Lehkonen set to miss his eighth consecutive game, Gabriel Landeskog his sixth and Ross Colton his fourth.

MacFarland said the hope is to have Landeskog, Lehkonen and forward Logan O’Connor, who hasn’t played all season after having hip surgery in June, in the lineup soon, with an update coming in the next week or two. He didn’t have a firm timetable on Colton.

The injuries have forced the Avalanche to use center Nazem Kadri, who was acquired in a trade with the Calgary Flames on March 6, at right wing on the top line with Nathan MacKinnon and Martin Necas. Kadri was acquired to be Colorado's No. 3 center.

"We haven't really seen what we envision, but that's what you've got to do when you're missing guys," MacFarland said.

They won't see it Wednesday either, but they will see a team hungry to catch them in the race for first place in the Central Division.

With less than one month to go in the regular season and the playoff picture around them blurry with so many teams still in the race, to the Avalanche and Stars, it is abundantly clear why finishing first matters so much, even if the day-to-day focus is more macro than that.

"There's not a lot of weaknesses on either team," Nill said. "These are big games."

## Dallas Morning News

### 3 things to know about Stars-Avalanche: Central Division foes face off in pivotal showdown

By SportsDay Staff

Date: 03/17/26

After falling into the loss column for the first time in nearly two months on Monday, the Dallas Stars will look to start another streak on Wednesday.

And there couldn't be a better team to start one against.

Check out three things to know about the Stars' matchup with rival Colorado, including the huge implications for both the Central Division and the Presidents' Trophy.

How to watch

When: Wednesday, 8:30 p.m.

Where: Ball Arena in Denver

TV/Streaming: TNT, HBO Max

Radio: Sportsradio 96.7/1310 The Ticket

Where things stand

Wednesday's matchup will pit the top two teams in the NHL against each other. They also just so happen to be in the same division.

The Avalanche currently sit three points ahead of the Stars in the standings and have a game in hand over Dallas. The implications of the Stars passing the Avalanche would be huge, as not only would they take over the lead for the Presidents' Trophy and seal home-ice advantage throughout the playoffs, but they'd also avoid a tough first-round matchup with the Minnesota Wild, currently third place in the division.

A win on Wednesday would put the Stars just a single point back of the Avs.

Previously on

Before Monday night's streak-snapping loss to the Mammoth, the Stars hadn't lost a game to a non-Colorado opponent in nearly two months.

An overtime loss to Colorado on March 6 was the only thing keeping Dallas' 15-game points streak from being an outright win streak.

That game featured the Stars coughing up a late lead thanks to a Valeri Nichuskin goal with 14 seconds left in regulation. The Avs would then win it in overtime.

Dallas won the teams' previous matchup in October, and Wednesday will be the third of four regular-season meetings between the teams.

Robo loves the Avs

Forward Jason Robertson enters Wednesday's contest riding a four-game point streak vs. Colorado, earning seven points (4 goals, 3 assists) during that span, including putting up two assists in Dallas' last game against them on March 6.

Through 16 career games played against the Avalanche, Robertson has tallied 20 points (9 goals, 11 assists), averaging 1.25 points per game. His 1.25 points per game against them ranks eighth in the league among all active NHL skaters who have played Colorado at least 10 times in their careers.

## Dallas Morning News

### Jim Nill: Re-signing Jason Robertson is a 'priority' for Dallas Stars this summer

By SportsDay Staff

Date: 03/17/26

The further along Jason Robertson's stellar season goes, the more talk there is about his soon-to-be expiring contract.

The 26-year-old who currently leads the Stars in points is set to become a restricted free agent after this season, unless he and his longtime team can reach an agreement on an extension. Talks between the two sides slowed to a standstill before the start of the season.

Since then, Robertson has built a pretty strong case for himself being deserving of a new deal. And it seems, publicly at least, that Stars general manager Jim Nill agrees.

Nill recently sat down with "NHL Tonight: First Shift" where he discussed the state of his team (currently preparing for a pivotal matchup against the Avalanche), and the GM was asked about the state of contract talks with Robertson.

Robertson, who's putting together his best year statistically since the 2022-23 season, is a "priority" for Dallas this offseason, Nill says.

"He's a big part of our team," Nill said. "He's one of the leading scorers in the league, he's really in the prime of his career. He's a big part of our team, so a priority for us is to get him signed this summer, and move on."

Robertson is first on the Stars in points with 80 and second on the team in goals (36) behind Wyatt Johnston.

He recently changed agents, switching to Andy Scott of Octagon, with whom Nill has a recent history of reaching long-term deals.

"We started discussions with Jason last summer, so we've kept in touch," Nill told First Shift. "In the end we decided, let's table this. Let's go have a good year, have a good playoff, and we'll make this work."

That seems to be coming to fruition, both for Robertson and the Stars, with Dallas on the verge of clinching another playoff spot thanks in large part to the forward's contributions.

## Shap Shots

### **Arttu Hyry, Emmitt Finnie, and the Fine Art of Faceoffs for NHL Rookies with Robert Tiffin**

By Sean Shapiro and Robert Tiffin

Date: 03/17/26

We ended up in a face-off wormhole on Monday and now you have to (or get to...) come with us.

With the Detroit Red Wings currently missing their top-two centers, Dylan Larkin and Andrew Copp, they are having to rely more heavily on 20-year-old Emmitt Finnie, and moved the rookie forward to center, his natural position, after he's spent most of the season on the wing.

And face-offs, to put it bluntly, have been rough for Finnie at the NHL level. Against the Calgary Flames on Monday, he took 13 draws and only won five.

This naturally led to some further discussion with other centers in Detroit, including Marco Kasper, who in his second NHL season has improved his face-off percentage from 44.9 to 49.7 percent.

In that discussion about face-offs Kasper, unprompted, brought up the work of Dallas Stars rookie center Arttu Hyry, whom according to Kasper was one of the better centers he battled in one-on-one in draws on the weakside.

I guess you could call it kismet, but around the same time this conversation was happening in Detroit, maybe even the exact same time, Hyry was discussing his face-off approach in Dallas.

Hyry made his NHL debut in January 2025. In his first career NHL game, he went 6-for-6 on faceoffs, but the Stars' forward roster under Pete DeBoer was a crowded one, and as a result, Hyry would only take 10 more draws before he was sent back to the AHL for the rest of the season.

But as it turned out, his 69% faceoff winning percentage in those five games (11-for-16) was a very real clue about what Hyry would be able to do when given a longer run. This year, Hyry's arrival has been similarly dominant on the dot, as he's averaged 11 faceoffs per game at a 59% win rate—tied with Roope Hintz for the team lead.

So, how has a 24-year-old undrafted rookie come into the league and won 52 of 88 faceoffs over the course of eight games? It's taken a whole lot of work, in Hyry's opinion.

“Well, obviously I still have a really small sample size,” Hyry said on Sunday. “But I think just taking draws daily, since a long time ago. Obviously, some guys who are well above their thirties have a couple more draws than I have, but I have more hockey in me than most of the guys my age.”

Hyry has had to adjust his technique a bit since coming over to North America in 2024, when Dallas signed him as a free agent out of Karpas in the Finnish elite league (SM Liiga). Hyry says faceoff procedures in Finland have become more aligned with NHL rules now, but that wasn't always the case in his earlier years. So as he developed his skills, Hyry focused primarily on learning from players with NHL experience.

But it hasn't just been hard work and focus. Hyry keeps a trick or two up his sleeve as well. Because back in Finland, Hyry and two of his Karpas teammates started trying something that's become more common amongst NHLers: turning over their stick blade on faceoffs, and putting their hand down almost on the heel of the blade.

One of those teammates was current NHLer Aatu Raty, who now plays in Vancouver—and who, incidentally, has been a career 59% faceoff player in the NHL, using the same strategy that Hyry often employs.

Hyry's AHL and NHL teammate Justin Hryckowian knows all about Hyry's tactics, but he is quick to point to something fundamental about Hyry: his strength.

“He's a beast first off,” says Justin Hryckowian of the 6-foot-3, 211-lb Hyry. “The strength's crazy. Like, that's the hardest thing, honestly. He kills our fitness testing every year. He's a beast of a guy. So already you gotta find a way to try and get leverage on a guy like that.”

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Part of that figuring out process was already happening on the bench, it turns out. Hyry said on Tuesday that he could tell he was struggling against Compher early in that Detroit game, so he asked teammate Matt Duchene for tips on how he could frustrate Compher's efforts.

"I know Dutchy [Duchene] likes to exit across the forehand, so I asked him, what does he hate when he goes with the forehand when a lefty comes up against him?" Hyry said. "And then yesterday, I asked Roope [Hintz] the same thing. I even got to try it a couple times when Utah had a guy that took the draws with the forehand [on Monday]. So yeah, obviously if I see something I'm losing a lot against, I'll try to get out of it as soon as possible."

In talking with Duchene last week, he was quick to point out that Hyry's success is "not normal" for a rookie, whatever his size or age. And Duchene might be one of the most ideal NHLers for Hyry to continue to learn from, given that Duchene is currently on an all-lefty line with Jamie Benn and Sam Steel, which means Duchene has been taking faceoffs on both sides of ice.

And while Duchene may not have cribbed Hyry's faceoff approach, it wouldn't completely surprise anyone to see a good idea continue to spread.

It's important to note that not all rookies enter the league in similar situations. Hyry is technically a 24-year-old rookie who turns 25 in April, and that means he has a major advantage over players like Wyatt Johnston, who made their NHL debuts at a much younger age: A bigger, more developed frame than the 19-year-old Johnston was working with.

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When Johnston broke into the league as a teenager in 2022, he struggled at just 43% on faceoffs in his first year. However, Johnston's faceoff numbers jumped above 50% in his second and third NHL years. And while he's having a down year in Dallas currently, Johnston's track record is that of someone who is always getting better and learning

from his mistakes. That's where technique comes into play, and Johnston is a big fan of Hyry's.

"It's definitely very unique. You don't see many people get down that low with their hand," Johnston said of Hyry's approach. "The way he can do that, mixed in with [being] a really strong, powerful guy...I think it just makes it tough [on opponents]. Obviously he's been awesome so far. So it's super impressive, especially without having taken many draws against NHL players until this year."

Another key element, which Red Wings coach Todd McLellan pointed out, was that there's a team element wrapped into the success or lack of success for young players on face-offs. That the individual center might be assigned the face-off percentage statistically, but like a goalie and save percentage, McLellan views it as more of a team or line statistic.

And while that might be true, for the individual center it's a right of passage to figure it all out, Finnie said, ideally through a bit of self exploration and picking brains of NHL veterans.

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## Stars Thoughts

### **Arttu Hyry, Emmitt Finnie, and the Fine Art of Faceoffs for NHL Rookies with Sean Shapiro**

By Robert Tiffin and Sean Shapiro

Date: 03/17/26

What connects Emmitt Finnie, Vincent Trocheck, Wyatt Johnston, and Arttu Hyry?

I didn't know the answer to that question a week ago. But after once again teaming up with my pal Sean Shapiro, I think I might have something of an idea.

By the way, Sean's work is found in many places, but some of my favorite writing he does is over at Shap Shots, which I cannot recommend highly enough.

All right, let's get into a topic that we both really enjoyed learning and writing about.

We ended up in a face-off wormhole on Monday and now you have to (or get to...) come with us.

With the Detroit Red Wings currently missing their top-two centers, Dylan Larkin and Andrew Copp, they are having to rely more heavily on 20-year-old Emmitt Finnie, and moved the rookie forward to center, his natural position, after he's spent most of the season on the wing.

And face-offs, to put it bluntly, have been rough for Finnie at the NHL level. Against the Calgary Flames on Monday, he took 13 draws and only won five.

This naturally led to some further discussion with other centers in Detroit, including Marco Kasper, who in his second NHL season has improved his face-off percentage from 44.9 to 49.7 percent.

In that discussion about face-offs Kasper, unprompted, brought up the work of Dallas Stars rookie center Arttu Hyry, whom according to Kasper was one of the better centers he battled in one-on-one in draws on the weakside.

I guess you could call it kismet, but around the same time this conversation was happening in Detroit, maybe even the exact same time, Hyry was discussing his face-off approach in Dallas.

Hyry made his NHL debut in January 2025. In his first career NHL game, he went 6-for-6 on faceoffs, but the Stars' forward roster under Pete DeBoer was a crowded one, and as a result, Hyry would only take 10 more draws before he was sent back to the AHL for the rest of the season.

But as it turned out, his 69% faceoff winning percentage in those five games (11-for-16) was a very real clue about what Hyry would be able to do when given a longer run. This year, Hyry's arrival has been similarly dominant on the dot, as he's averaged 11 faceoffs per game at a 59% win rate—tied with Roope Hintz for the team lead.

So, how has a 24-year-old undrafted rookie come into the league and won 52 of 88 faceoffs over the course of eight games? It's taken a whole lot of work, in Hyry's opinion.

"Well, obviously I still have a really small sample size," Hyry said on Sunday. "But I think just taking draws daily, since a long time ago. Obviously, some guys who are well above their thirties have a couple more draws than I have, but I have more hockey in me than most of the guys my age."

Hyry has had to adjust his technique a bit since coming over to North America in 2024, when Dallas signed him as a free agent out of Karpat in the Finnish elite league (SM Liiga). Hyry says faceoff procedures in Finland have become more aligned with NHL rules now, but that wasn't always the case in his earlier years. So as he developed his skills, Hyry focused primarily on learning from players with NHL experience.

But it hasn't just been hard work and focus. Hyry keeps a trick or two up his sleeve as well. Because back in Finland, Hyry and two of his Karpat teammates started trying something that's become more common amongst NHLers: turning over their stick blade on faceoffs, and putting their hand down almost on the heel of the blade.

One of those teammates was current NHLer Aatu Raty, who now plays in Vancouver—and who, incidentally, has been a career 59% faceoff player in the NHL, using the same strategy that Hyry often employs.

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## The Hockey News

### Dallas Depth Forward Quietly Putting Together Career Season

By Jake Tye

Date: 03/17/26

While much of the spotlight on the Dallas Stars this season has centered around high-profile offensive performances, one of the team's most compelling stories has developed further down the lineup.

Fans and analysts alike have been captivated by Wyatt Johnston setting a power play goals record, Matt Duchene catching fire with one of the hottest scoring stretches of his career, and Jason Robertson skating toward what could become his second 100-point season. Yet amid these headline-grabbing performances, depth forward Sam Steel has quietly put together the best season of his career.

Through 67 games, Steel has recorded 12 goals and 20 assists for 32 points, already surpassing his previous career high of 28 points set during the 2022–23 season with the Minnesota Wild. His steady production has not only provided a boost to the Stars' bottom six but has also underscored his growing importance within the lineup.

Selected 30th overall in the 2016 NHL Draft, Steel entered the league with high expectations following a standout junior career. For years, he showed flashes of potential without fully breaking through at the NHL level. This season, however, he appears to be putting the pieces together.

If his current pace continues, Steel is on track to finish just shy of the 40-point mark, a milestone that would further cement his evolution into a reliable depth contributor. His versatility has been particularly valuable for Dallas. Steel has moved seamlessly throughout the lineup, spending time on the top line when needed and dropping into bottom-six roles to provide balance and secondary scoring.

Beyond offensive contributions, Steel's impact has been most evident on the penalty kill. Paired with Oskar Back, he has helped anchor one of the league's more effective units, with Dallas ranking among the top ten in penalty killing efficiency. His ability to read plays, disrupt passing lanes, and contribute in high-pressure defensive situations has made him a trusted option for the coaching staff.

In a season defined by star power and offensive milestones, Steel's emergence serves as a reminder that championship-caliber teams are often built on depth and adaptability. His contributions may not always command headlines, but they have become increasingly difficult to overlook.

## The Hockey News

### Stars Streak Snapped by Mammoth

By Taylor Newby

Date: 03/17/26

The Dallas Stars took on the Utah Mammoth in their last game of a six game home stand. The Stars had the opportunity to beat the franchise point-streak record that is held by the 1998-1999 Stanley Cup winning Stars.

A theme throughout the season has been the "extra 1%" and up until recently, it did not appear that it had really landed, but since the Olympic break, the Stars are now collectively playing with the extra 1% in they physicality department. The first period had two fights. The first one between Adam Erne and Brandon Tanev that derived from getting tangled up at the blue line.

The other pair that dropped the gloves was Lian Bichsel and Jack McBain in a heavy weight tilt after Bichsel took exception to a late hit that came after the whistle. With the fights came a pair of goals from each side. The Stars got on the board first with a great set up by Jamie Benn to Sam Steel. Steel scored his 12th goal of the season. He broke his career high in goals against Edmonton and with his recent uptick in offense since being paired with Benn and Matt Duchene, it appears he could end the season with 15-20 goals.

Utah tied it up with a sharp angle snipe from Clayton Keller. Coming into the game, Keller had tallied seven goals and ten assists in 26 games against the Stars. That goal put Keller at 20 goals on the season.

While the extra-curriculars seem to have calmed down during the second frame, the Mammoth and Stars are still trading goals. Nate Schmidt got Utah on the board with a deflection, giving the Mammoth their first lead of the game. After the goal, the Mammoth really started to surge. The Stars finally stopped the momentum and got back into their rhythm. And with a shot from the point by Miro Heiskanen, Wyatt Johnston gets his stick on it and notches his 37th goal of the season.

After only allowing the Mammoth to take two shots on goal in the first period, after 40, the shots on goal are 20-13, Dallas and things are all tied at 2.

The Stars had an uncharacteristic third period collapse, giving up four goals. Two that came on odd-man rushes while the Stars were in the Mammoth's zone firing off scoring chances. Erne did score the Stars third goal with two seconds left, but far too late. After the game head coach, Glen Gulutzan, contributed the loss to some mistakes on the Stars end, but gave credit to the Mammoth for capitalizing on every opportunity they got.

Fortunately for the Stars, the Colorado Avalanche lost 7-2 to the Pittsburgh Penguins so there was no change in the standings. The Stars and Avalanche play in Denver on Wednesday for a huge two points.

