



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • July 25, 2022

The Athletic

NHL predictions for 2022-23 season: Stanley Cup, Hart Trophy, dark horse, big trades, more

Will the Colorado Avalanche repeat as Stanley Cup champions? Is there a dark horse out there, waiting to steal their throne? What will the playoff field look like when it all plays out in 2022-23? And which star players are going to be traded before it does?

With summer fully upon us, the Matthew Tkachuk sweepstakes concluded and only a few impact free agents left to sign, The Athletic asked our NHL staff those questions, plus who the first coach fired and major award winners will be and more. The following are our early 2022-23 NHL season predictions.

We've brought in senior national writer Sean Gentile, analytics guru Shayna Goldman and NHL betting expert Jesse Granger to provide context, analysis and some skepticism for the results.

Stanley Cup champion

- Colorado Avalanche 38.6
- Carolina Hurricanes 31.8
- Florida Panthers 6.8
- Edmonton Oilers 4.5
- New York Rangers 4.5
- St. Louis Blues 4.5
- Tampa Bay Lightning 4.5
- Pittsburgh Penguins 2.3
- Toronto Maple Leafs 2.3

Gentile: I'm not surprised by the top two here, though I wouldn't have guessed they'd be so close. On a lot of levels, I get it. The Hurricanes were really good last season, then went out and added the prime-time goal-scorer they needed (Max Pacioretty) and upgraded on Tony DeAngelo (Brent Burns). Also, I voted for them myself. But ... almost 32 percent overall? Crushing the rest of the Eastern Conference field? I wasn't expecting all that. Does that make sense?

Also, godspeed to whoever voted for the Oilers. Best team in Canada. Nobody denies this.

Goldman: See Sean, I actually think I understand why they're so close. Normally you'd assume the Avalanche would blow the Hurricanes away, but this is a team that 1) is currently without Nazem Kadri or a replacement of his caliber, and 2) has a new-look goalie tandem after Alexandar Georgiev replaced Darcy Kuemper. Colorado has shown that it really only needs league-average goaltending to get by, but it makes sense to see them come back toward the field and specifically a Hurricanes team that has made solid improvements (or at least strong side-steps to keep/slightly build on where they left off).

Granger: If you agree with the whopping 31.8 percent of the staff who believe in the Hurricanes, now would be the time to run to the sportsbook and put those bets in. They received the second-most votes, without a close third, but currently have the fifth-best odds to win the Cup at 12-1. That's excellent value considering Colorado is only +425 to repeat as champs. Carolina is also behind Toronto, Florida and Tampa Bay, according to the odds.

The longest shot that received a vote from the staff is St. Louis. You can get the Blues at 25-1 right now.

Runner-up

- Colorado Avalanche 38.6
- New York Rangers 18.2
- Carolina Hurricanes 13.6
- Edmonton Oilers 11.4
- Toronto Maple Leafs 6.8
- Tampa Bay Lightning 4.5
- Florida Panthers 2.3
- Pittsburgh Penguins 2.3
- Vegas Golden Knights 2.3

Gentile: The Rangers have "good enough to make the Final, not good enough to win it" energy, apparently.

Granger: Lots of love here for the Rangers, who have only the fifth-best odds to win the Eastern Conference at 9-1.



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Goldman: Some of us are betting on the Maple Leafs to not only escape Round 1 but to reach the Final? It's bold, but hey it could happen ... maybe after an aura cleansing or 12. I do like the building blocks for the Oilers and the possibility of going a step further than last season — maybe if Leon Draisaitl has two functioning legs to go along with Connor McDavid's dominance.

The real team that deserved more votes, though, is the Lightning. Corey Perry's still there and still cursed!

Dark horse

A team that missed the playoffs in 2021-22 and could be a real contender in 2022-23.

Vegas Golden Knights	36.4
Ottawa Senators	18.2
Columbus Blue Jackets	11.4
Detroit Red Wings	11.4
Vancouver Canucks	11.4
New Jersey Devils	6.8
New York Islanders	4.5

Gentile: I didn't want to take Vegas here, but I did anyway — and so did a lot of us. On one hand, that's still a bizarre mix of players, and the cap problems will never go away. On the other, a run of injuries like the Golden Knights had last season is unlikely, and the Pacific Division is pretty suspect. I don't think I like them to advance all that far, but they should see the postseason.

Granger: It's no surprise the Golden Knights ran away with this vote despite missing the playoffs and then trading away their top scorer in Pacioretty this summer. Not only is Vegas slated to make the playoffs according to the oddsmakers, but it's also neck-and-neck with Edmonton to win the Pacific Division outright at +250.

Sean is spot on with his comment about the weak division. Even if the Flames stay afloat with Jonathan Huberdeau and MacKenzie Weegar helping offset the losses of Johnny Gaudreau and Tkachuk, the Los Angeles Kings are the only other team with under 10-1 odds of winning the division. Add in the fact that three teams are being given essentially no shot according to the odds — Ducks, Sharks and Kraken all at 80-1 to win the division — and it's a recipe for a bounce-back season in Vegas.

Goldman: Picking Vegas almost felt like cheating given how close it was to the postseason in 2021-22 and what we know held them back. New coaching and ideally a healthier squad should help — unless management keeps trading away players for nothing to fix their cap issues. The spicy thing here is having Ottawa, Columbus and Detroit ahead of the Islanders and, hell, even the Devils.

Biggest drop-off

A team that made the playoffs in 2021-22 but won't be back.

Minnesota Wild	20.0
Calgary Flames	16.7
Florida Panthers	16.7
Boston Bruins	13.3
Dallas Stars	6.7
Washington Capitals	6.7
Edmonton Oilers	3.3
New York Rangers	3.3
Pittsburgh Penguins	3.3
St. Louis Blues	3.3
Tampa Bay Lightning	3.3
Toronto Maple Leafs	3.3

Gentile: For a glimpse into the process, we originally posed this question to the staff before Matthew Tkachuk Mania on Friday night. Way back then, it seemed like the Flames were guaranteed to either lose any trade or take a step back next season. Also, Gaudreau had already walked. Naturally, Calgary was the big winner in this category, at 54.5 percent of the vote. Then Brad Treliving turned Tkachuk into Huberdeau and Weegar, and everything changed. That — combined with the weakness of the Pacific Division, I'd imagine — changed the results. Sorry, Minnesota.

Goldman: Florida's an interesting one here. There was already doubt after key player subtractions this offseason and an overall live-by-the-blade, die-by-the-blade, high-octane style that Sergei Bobrovsky has to withstand (unless, of course, they forget how to play to their strengths in the postseason again). With the trade, they bring in Tkachuk, who is much better defensively than Huberdeau. But losing Weegar hurts, especially when you look at the rest of the blue line outside of Aaron Ekblad and Gustav Forsling. And if they're going to make a change there, it's going to cost assets — whether it's to bring players in or move contracts out — which they're already thin on. Good luck, Bill Zito!

First-round flameout

A team that will finish near the top of its conference then lose in the first round.



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Toronto Maple Leafs	36.4
Florida Panthers	15.9
Edmonton Oilers	13.6
Tampa Bay Lightning	11.4
New York Rangers	6.8
Pittsburgh Penguins	6.8
Carolina Hurricanes	2.3
Los Angeles Kings	2.3
Minnesota Wild	2.3
Washington Capitals	2.3

Gentile: Sens-Maple Leafs in the first round is going to be a banger.

Goldman: Do you fold the team if the Senators somehow take out Toronto in Round 1? It makes all the sense in the world why they lead the vote despite actually having a good team. The math and the vibes will never add up. That's why it's not surprising that Edmonton is up there, too, even though the Oilers' offseason wasn't bad — especially compared to years past.

Granger: I realize most of these votes are based on historical narrative and not projected first-round matchups, but based on the odds, Toronto is actually a sensible pick here. There obviously aren't preseason odds for teams to lose in the first round of the playoffs, but one way to quantify that likelihood is by looking at the strength of the division. Teams with stronger divisional competition are more likely to face a tough first-round opponent, and no division is stronger at the top than the Atlantic. The division features three of the league's top four teams in terms of Stanley Cup odds (Maple Leafs, Panthers and Lightning).

If you're looking for a non-Leafs team to predict for this, the odds suggest the Rangers and Hurricanes could also be in for tough first-round matchups. The Metropolitan isn't as top-heavy as the Atlantic, but it's the only division with five teams within 9-1 odds of winning the division.

Fewest points

Chicago Blackhawks	61.4
Arizona Coyotes	36.4
Montreal Canadiens	2.3

Gentile: You're halfway there, Chicago. I can't wait until Patrick Kane starts missing games because he can't find his skates. Where did they go? He could've sworn he left them right by his locker.

Granger: These results check out. Chicago and Arizona are tied for the longest odds to win the Stanley Cup (or the President's Trophy) at 500-1.

Goldman: Watch Petr Mrazek have a bounce-back season and torch management's attempts to tank. The race to the basement between Chicago and Arizona State is on.

First coach fired

Lindy Ruff	31.8
Dave Hakstol	18.2
Sheldon Keefe	13.6
D.J. Smith	11.4
Bruce Boudreau	4.5
Peter Laviolette	4.5
Brad Larsen	2.3
Dallas Eakins	2.3
Dean Evason	2.3
John Hynes	2.3
John Tortorella	2.3
Mike Sullivan	2.3
Todd McLellan	2.3

Gentile: Is that Andrew Brunette's music? Expectations are rising in Newark, and Brunette took that associate head coach job for a reason. This one seems easy. The entire top four makes sense, actually. Lindy Ruff and D.J. Smith are about to take over improved rosters. Sheldon Keefe is in the Toronto pressure-cooker. And Dave Hakstol is going to have to start Philip Grubauer on most nights.

Goldman: Ruff makes all the sense in the world. If they struggle, it should be easy for management to point to the head coach who remains on the bench after the team parted ways with their assistants. D.J. Smith is interesting because he does have an improved roster, which has only raised expectations. The one that stands out to me has to be Peter Laviolette, since the Capitals' window is shrinking and coaches are usually the first to get the blame for a team regressing.



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Calder winner

Owen Power	43.2
Matty Beniers	22.7
Shane Wright	18.2
Mason McTavish	4.5
Ivan Miroshnichenko	2.3
Jake Sanderson	2.3
Juraj Slafkovsky	2.3
Marco Rossi	2.3
William Eklund	2.3

Gentile: It's impossible not to pick Owen Power; he was the No. 1 pick in 2021, looked great with Michigan and is about to be 20, on a roster that should be competitive. Still, I'm worried that it's illegal to give the Calder to a D-man in consecutive seasons.

Goldman: I think Shane Wright and Matty Beniers both being on Seattle could split the vote if they're both playing at the NHL level for much of the season, so Power it is. Like Sean said, he really great last season between his time in Michigan and short stint in Buffalo to end the year.

Vezina winner

Igor Shesterkin	50.0
Andrei Vasilevskiy	27.3
Ilya Sorokin	6.8
Thatcher Demko	6.8
Juuse Saros	4.5
Frederik Andersen	2.3
Jacob Markstrom	2.3

Gentile: It's unfair to expect any of us to say which goalies are going to be good in a given year. Sincerely thought about throwing a dart for this one. Juuse Saros? Sure. Why not?

Granger: Igor Shesterkin getting double the votes of Andrei Vasilevskiy is wild to me, considering the teams they play for. Most goalie stats are more dependent on the team in front of the goalie than they are the goalie himself. Vasilevskiy is a

rare combination of an elite goalie behind an elite team. Shesterkin's 2021-22 was incredible, but behind a questionable Rangers defense, I wouldn't be surprised to see some regression. Not in terms of his talent — he's still going to be awesome — but in the stats that so many lean (too) heavily on when voting for this award.

Goldman: If Shesterkin's going to go back-to-back, he's probably going to have to match or exceed his 2021-22. The one drawback this past season was playing time, and if he's healthy, that shouldn't be a problem. Plus he now has a full-length season under his belt, which should help in the long run. Vasilevskiy or Saros wouldn't be surprising. But if Ilya Sorokin or Thatcher Demko have a shot, they're going to have to get into the postseason since that tends to be necessary to even make the conversation.

Norris winner

Cale Makar	72.7
Miro Heiskanen	6.8
Adam Fox	4.5
Victor Hedman	4.5
Aaron Ekblad	2.3
Charlie McAvoy	2.3
Devon Toews	2.3
Roman Josi	2.3
Thomas Chabot	2.3

Gentile: We've got a couple of years before Cale Makar fatigue sets in, right? That was the single biggest reason I thought Roman Josi could win this past season. Let's just let someone else get one before we spend a decade voting for this guy.

Granger: Wait, some of us didn't vote for Makar?

Goldman: If the Makar fatigue sits in, maybe his partner gets a look. Devon Toews did enough to earn a place in the consideration this past season. Charlie McAvoy's injury status could hold him back, which could open the door for a player like Miro Heiskanen to get a bit more consideration.

Hart winner

Connor McDavid	75.0
Cale Makar	11.4
Auston Matthews	4.5



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Aleksander Barkov 2.3

Artemi Panarin 2.3

Johnny Gaudreau 2.3

Nathan MacKinnon 2.3

Gentile: Everyone say thanks to Connor McDavid for giving them a break last season. He's still only 25, just FYI.

Goldman: McDavid was outstanding in the playoffs and still fell short, so we have to expect him to take it up another notch to drag his team forward over the next year.

Granger: The Hart Trophy is the only award with odds currently available to bet, and McDavid is unsurprisingly the favorite at +300. However, if you're looking for value based on the staff predictions, there's certainly some on Makar. He received more than double the votes of any player not named Connor McDavid but has only the 11th-best chance to win it according to the odds (+2,000). Leon Draisaitl, Kirill Kaprizov, Nikita Kucherov, Mikko Rantanen, Huberdeau and Shesterkin are all above Makar on the board — and none received a single vote from our staff.

All-Stars most likely to be traded

We asked each voter for five members of the year-end All-Star team who were most likely to be traded. Here were the players 20 percent or more of our NHL staff thinks get moved.

Patrick Kane 93.3

J.T. Miller 83.3

Vladimir Tarasenko 83.3

Jonathan Quick 46.7

Timo Meier 36.7

Jonathan Huberdeau 26.7

David Pastrnak 20.0

Gentile: Why would the Blackhawks trade Kane? Is something going on over there?

Goldman: Huberdeau stays on the board even though he was already moved this summer to Calgary. If the Flames can't extend him, it may make the most sense to move him — otherwise it's Gaudreau 2.0, with no elite passer and no assets in exchange to recoup for him.

West playoff field

We asked each voter to pick the eight West playoff teams. Here is the percent of the vote received by each team. (Note: * playoff team in 2021-22)

Colorado Avalanche* 100.0

Edmonton Oilers* 100.0

St. Louis Blues* 100.0

Minnesota Wild* 83.3

Vegas Golden Knights 83.3

Nashville Predators* 83.3

Los Angeles Kings* 76.7

Calgary Flames* 73.3

Dallas Stars* 53.3

Vancouver Canucks 23.3

Winnipeg Jets 13.3

Anaheim Ducks 10.0

San Jose Sharks 0.0

Chicago Blackhawks 0.0

Seattle Kraken 0.0

Arizona Coyotes 0.0

Gentile: For me, the big surprise here is that so few of us have talked ourselves into the Canucks. That's a flawed roster, and who knows what happens with J.T. Miller, and the Kings got better, and the Golden Knights can't be as bad as they were last season, and ... actually, I can see why the Canucks are a distant ninth. Nevermind.

Goldman: The Stars and Canucks really took a hit in our re-voting after the Tkachuk trade. The latter, as Sean said, makes sense. Dallas should stick in the playoff race, though. The Stars should be better than last year after adding Mason Marchment, which guarantees them at least four forwards, instead of three, who can generate offense. And there's another year of Jake Oettinger.



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East playoff field

We asked each voter to pick the eight East playoff teams. Here is the percent of the vote received by each team. (Note: * playoff team in 2021-22)

Tampa Bay Lightning*	100.0
Florida Panthers*	97.7
New York Rangers*	97.7
Carolina Hurricanes*	95.5
Toronto Maple Leafs*	95.5
Pittsburgh Penguins*	86.4
Washington Capitals*	70.5
Ottawa Senators	38.6
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Boston Bruins*	36.4
New York Islanders	34.1

Columbus Blue Jackets 34.1

Detroit Red Wings 11.4

New Jersey Devils 2.3

Buffalo Sabres 0.0

Philadelphia Flyers 0.0

Montreal Canadiens 0.0

Gentile: That race for the second wild card really does seem like it'll be fun ... today. Because really, when has optimism over the Ottawa Senators ever blown up in anyone's face?

Goldman: And that optimism comes before there have been any adjustments in team defense! Where I'll disagree with you is that I think both wild card seeds could legitimately be in the mix. There are so many disruptors in the East who could take away key points. Detroit and Columbus are among them, along with Ottawa.

Granger: The betting market doesn't share the same optimism for the Senators, as they rank 20th in the league and 11th in the East, according to the odds. The Red Wings — who only 11.4 percent of the staff voted to make the playoffs — actually have considerably better odds than the Senators.



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Mailbag #32: Summer Housekeeping

Nino? Arbitration? Should we be worried about Brent Burns' age?

By Walt Ruff

RALEIGH, NC. - The NHL Draft? Check.

The opening of free agency? Check.

A handful of trades that brought aboard All-Star players? Check.

Let's get to the questions.

(Please Note: Some questions have been edited for clarity.)

And we couldn't afford Nino at \$4 million per year? - @1JeanneK

Okay, let's get into the juicy stuff right off the bat.

In case you missed it, Nino Niederreiter signed a two-year, eight million dollar deal with the Nashville Predators yesterday.

To start, as a reminder, this is a business. And per CapFriendly, the Canes currently have a little over \$4M to spend - with the implication that Jake Gardiner will be coming off of long-term injured reserve (LTIR). They still have to sure up business with both Martin Necas and Ethan Bear. Necas is expected to get a raise from his entry-level contract and Bear made in the ballpark of \$2M last year, which could be around what he gets again for this year. Most of that \$4M could be gone between those two players.

So, to answer the question, while \$4M may be surprising for Niederreiter, given it's less money after a pretty successful year, the team would have had to get even more creative than they already have been to make it work.

While we all wish Nino the best (except against the Canes, of course), let's not forget who was added on the left wing last week, either...

Explain arbitration to me like I'm five. - @PootinMayhem

Brilliant question. Timely, too.

Here it goes:

A player thinks he is worth a certain contract. The team has offered something lower than that.

The two sides present their cases to a neutral party and the neutral party reaches a decision within 48 hours.

Why does this matter?

Defenseman Ethan Bear has elected to go to arbitration. His hearing date is set for August 8.

Who do you possibly see making the roster from the Wolves side of things? Drury, maybe? Chatfield? - @OneTrueZach

Don Waddell mentioned both of those names, along with Stefan Noesen as realistic options in his press conference last week.

Anything is possible, but it seems somewhat implied that since Vincent Trocheck left in free agency, Jesperi Kotkaniemi is expected to be the number two center. Both Waddell and Brind'Amour have acknowledged such within the last week. That would open up the role down the middle of the fourth line, potentially for Drury. With 52 points in 68 games during his first North American professional season, and then perhaps an even better postseason with 24 points in 18 games, it certainly looks as if he is ready to make the jump.

Brent Burns and Brett Pesce make a really nice one-two punch on the right side of the blue line and at the moment, you'd have to suspect that one of either Jalen Chatfield or Dylan Coghlan will make up that third spot. Could both be in the lineup? Absolutely.

Then lastly, after scoring 48 goals in 70 games this past year with Chicago (AHL), you'd have to think that Noesen will have every opportunity to make the team out of training camp in the fall.

How is the situation with Martin Nečas is developing? - @Archie328

Wish I had more of an update for you, but in the same press conference from last week where Waddell talked about those maybe making the jump from Chicago, his only update on #88 was... "nothing new."

He's said prior that it will get done, other items in free agency just had to be sorted out first.

What do you think the floor and the ceilings are for the team this year? - @BigBen0397

I'll preface what I'm about to say with the fact that the team is not 100% fully formed for the season yet. But will the final moves made completely alter the landscape of the team? That remains to be seen.

The "floor" matters none. The goal for the team again will be to win the Stanley Cup. That's what it was last year and that's what it will be again this year. They won't be satisfied with another playoff appearance, another second round exit, or even an Eastern Conference Finals bounce. I don't think fans would be either.

Burns is 37. Pacioretty is 33 and in a contract year. It's no secret why they went out and got those guys as opposed to



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let's say an unproven, up-and-coming 26-year-old. Both Waddell and Brind'Amour have made comments about the two acquisitions fitting the current window for the team.

Their goal is to bring a second Stanley Cup to Raleigh ASAP.

With Burns still having 3 years left in his contract, there's obviously a worry about him "falling off" given his age. How do you believe the Hurricanes will handle such an issue if it arises? Do you think that the worry is even valid given his recent performance? - @KiwamiBeNT

I'll start with the last question, first. Do I think the worry is valid? The man hasn't missed a game since the 2013-14 season.

I understand that playing in and performing in are two different things, but he produced 54 points in 82 games last year on a subpar team. There's something to be said about him coming to a better situation with better pieces around him now, right?

Plus, while he might, he also may not have to play close to 30 minutes per night. He was asked a lot in San Jose. Perhaps less ask results in more results here.



Hurricanes bolster roster with trades for Burns, Pacioretty

Sign Kase, acquire Pederson, Coghlan in effort to make Cup run

By Tom Gulitti

After the NHL Draft, free agency and other offseason moves, NHL.com is examining where each team stands in preparation for the 2022-23 regular season, which starts Oct. 7. Today, the Carolina Hurricanes:

2021-22 season: 54-20-8, first in Metropolitan Division; lost in second round of Stanley Cup Playoffs

KEY ARRIVALS

Brent Burns, D: The 37-year-old was acquired with forward Lane Pederson in a trade with the San Jose Sharks on July 13 for forward Steven Lorentz, goalie prospect Eetu Makiniemi and a conditional third-round pick in the 2023 NHL Draft. Burns had 54 points (10 goals, 44 assists) and was third in the NHL averaging 26:09 in ice time in 82 games last season. ... Max Pacioretty, F: The 33-year-old was acquired with defenseman Dylan Coghlan in a trade with the Vegas Golden Knights for future considerations July 13. Pacioretty had 37 points (19 goals, 18 assists) last season when he was limited to 39 games because of a lower-body injury and wrist surgery. ... Ondrej Kase, F: The 26-year-old, who signed a one-year contract July 13, had 27 points (14 goals, 13 assists) in 50 regular-season games and three assists in seven Stanley Cup Playoff games with the Toronto Maple Leafs last season. ... Dylan Coghlan, D: The 24-year-old had 13 points (three goals, 10 assists) in 59 regular-season games with Vegas last season. ... Lane Pederson, F: The 24-year-old had two assists in 29 games with the Sharks last season and 18 points (nine goals, nine assists) in 22 games with San Jose of the American Hockey League.

KEY DEPARTURES

Vincent Trocheck, F: He signed a seven-year contract with the New York Rangers on July 13 after he had 51 points (21 goals, 30 assists) in 81 regular-season games and 10 points (six goals, four assists) in 14 playoff games last season. ... Tony DeAngelo, D: He could have become a restricted free agent but was traded to the Philadelphia Flyers for a fourth-round pick in the 2022 NHL Draft, a third-round pick in the 2023 draft and a second-round pick in the 2024 draft on July 8 and signed a two-year contract with the Flyers on July 11. DeAngelo had 51 points (10 goals, 41 assists) in 64 regular-season games and 10 points (one goal, nine assists) in 14 playoff games last season. ... Nino Niederreiter, F: He signed a two-year contract with the Nashville Predators on July 21 after he was third on Carolina with 24 goals and sixth in points with 44 in 75 regular-season games last season and had five points (four goals, one assist) in 14 playoff games. ... Max Domi, F: He signed a one-year contract with the Chicago Blackhawks on July 13. Domi had seven points (two goals, five assists) in 19 regular-season games after being acquired in a trade with the Columbus Blue Jackets on March 21 and had six points (three goals, three assists) in 14 playoff games last season. ... Steven Lorentz, F: He had 13 points (eight goals, five assists) in 67 regular-season games last season and no points in five playoff games. ... Ian Cole, D: He signed a one-year contract with the Tampa Bay Lightning on July 13 after scoring 19 points (two goals, 17 assists) in 75 regular-season games and two points (one goal, one assist) in 14 playoff games last season. ... Brendan Smith, D: He signed two-year contract with the New Jersey Devils on July 13 after scoring eight points (four goals, four assists) in 45 regular-season games and four points (one goal, four assists) in 14 playoff games last season. ... Derek Stepan, F: An unrestricted free agent,



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Stepan had 19 points (nine goals, 10 assists) in 58 regular-season games and no points in three playoff games last season.

ON THE CUSP

Pyotr Kochetkov, G: The 23-year-old, who was selected in the second round (No. 36) of the 2019 NHL Draft, was 3-0-0 with 2.42 GAA and .902 save percentage in three NHL regular-season games (two starts) with the Hurricanes and 1-2 with a 3.89 GAA and .869 save percentage in four playoff games (one start). Kochetkov was 13-1-1 with a 2.09 GAA and .921 save percentage in 15 regular-season games with Chicago of the American Hockey League and helped them win the Calder Cup. ... **Jack Drury, F:** The 22-year-old, who was selected in the second round (No. 42) of the 2018 NHL Draft, played his first two NHL games with Carolina last season and scored a goal in each. Drury had 52 points (20 goals, 32 assists) in 68 AHL regular-season games with Chicago and 24 points (nine goals, 15 assists) in 18 playoff games.

WHAT THEY STILL NEED

Depth on defense. The Hurricanes added Burns and Coughlan, but lost DeAngelo, Cole and Smith, who each played in every game in the playoffs last season.

THEY SAID IT

"This team is really, really close. I've been on teams that are close and you're just one or two pieces away when you're that close or you're one game away. You just need to add one or two guys and that helps out your depth tremendously." -- Hurricanes forward Max Pacioretty

FANTASY FOCUS

The Hurricanes landed two fringe top 50 overall fantasy players in Pacioretty and Burns in separate trades. Pacioretty, who led the Golden Knights in points per game (1.01; 88 points in 87 games) over the past two seasons, could play on the first line with elite center Sebastian Aho and/or bring exposure to valuable wing Andrei Svechnikov in the top six. Pacioretty boosts a power play that now also features Burns, who should be considered a top 10-15 fantasy defenseman option again. Burns leads NHL defensemen in goals (130), points (489 in 618 games) and shots on goal (2,116) and is fourth at the position in power-play points (175) since moving back to defense for the Sharks in 2014-15. -- Pete Jensen

PROJECTED LINEUP

Max Pacioretty -- Sebastian Aho -- Seth Jarvis

Andrei Svechnikov -- Jesperi Kotkaniemi -- Teuvo Teravainen

Ondrej Kase -- Jordan Staal -- Jesper Fast

Jordan Martinook -- Lane Pederson -- Martin Necas

Jacob Slavin -- Brent Burns

Brady Skjei -- Brett Pesce

Ethan Bear -- Dylan Coghlan

Frederik Andersen

Antti Raanta



Screen Shots: Flames/Panthers Trade Reaction and Carolina's Hot Off-Season

Adam Proteau breaks down the crazy trade that saw two major stars moved on Friday evening and discusses an underrated move by the Carolina Hurricanes this summer.

By Adam Proteau

Welcome back to Screen Shots, a regular feature on THN.com where we break down a handful of hockey topics and analyze them in smaller bites. Let's get right down to it:

– The NHL world was shaken late Friday when the Calgary Flames and Florida Panthers completed a blockbuster trade that sent star winger Matthew Tkachuk and a conditional fourth-round pick in the 2025 entry draft to South Florida in exchange for star winger Jonathan Huberdeau, defenseman MacKenzie Weegar, prospect forward Cole Schwindt, and a conditional first-round pick in 2025. Many had been expecting the Flames to trade the 24-year-old Tkachuk after star and former linemate Johnny Gaudreau left Calgary as an unrestricted free agent to sign with Columbus, but there were numerous skeptics that Flames GM Brad Treliving would be able to bring back a quality return for Tkachuk once it became clear he was unwilling to sign a long-term contract extension.

However, to his credit, Treliving acquired a slew of assets for Tkachuk, headlined by the 29-year-old Huberdeau, who had a career season in assists (85) and points (115) last season while also finishing fifth in voting for the Hart Trophy as the league's most valuable player. Needless to say, it's rare indeed that a sniper and playmaker like Huberdeau is dealt in his prime, but the



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opportunity to land a younger player with more snarl to his game was too tempting for Panthers GM Bill Zito to ignore, and Florida is in win-now mode, so it wasn't a shock to see Tkachuk immediately signed to an eight-year, \$76-million contract extension. The Panthers were going to be a well-above-average group before this trade, but with Tkachuk on board, Florida will be seen as a Stanley Cup frontrunner.

Calgary also has a mandate to win immediately, and although Huberdeau and Weegar both are scheduled to be UFAs in the summer of 2023, Treliving now has \$9.3 million in salary cap space to (a) improve the roster mid-season; and (b) persuade Huberdeau and Weegar to sign long-term contract extensions. The Flames are a well-coached bunch that should challenge for top spot in the Pacific Division in 2022-23, and Huberdeau now must face the pressures of playing in a hockey-mad market. But his talent is large enough to make him up to the task. All in all, this trade changes the foundation of both teams, and Zito and Treliving both can go to their fan bases with high expectations for the coming year.

– Meanwhile, another team that can rightly claim to have the Cup in its sights, the Carolina Hurricanes, continued making roster moves recently that should position them very well for a deep playoff run. Cap issues meant they were unable to retain the services of talented winger Nino Niederreiter, who signed with the Nashville Predators this past week, but 'Canes GM Don Waddell made a quiet-but-important signing when he agreed to terms on a one-year, \$1.5-million deal with veteran winger Ondrej Kase.

The 26-year-old continued to have health issues last season as a member of the Toronto Maple Leafs, but still managed to produce 14 goals and 27 points in 50 games. Kase will shore up Carolina's bottom-six group of forwards, and has the ability to play further up in the lineup. He joins fellow veterans Max Pacioretty and Brent Burns as notable off-season upgrades for the Hurricanes, and team owner Tom Dundon has to be pleased with the direction the franchise is in right now. Waddell still has more than \$4 million in cap space, and though much of that will likely be spent on RFA forward Martin Necas, Waddell has proven to be fearless when it comes to making in-season changes to his lineup. The Canes once again will vie for top spot in the competitive Metropolitan Division, and set their bar very high in the post-season.



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SB NATION
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About Last Season: Front Office, Coaches

A historic regular season followed by a second-round playoff exit, it was a busy year for the Hurricanes.

By Alec_Sawyer

Carolina Hurricanes 2021-22 By the Numbers

- Record: 54-20-8, 116 points, First place in Metro
- Playoff Result: Lost in Round 2, Game 7 to New York Rangers
- Special Teams: 22% PP (13th), 88% PK (1st)
- Advanced Stats: 55.77 CF% (1st), 58.07 GF% (3rd), 55.38 xGF% (4th), 54.67 SCF% (4th)

The 2021-22 season was a historic one for the Carolina Hurricanes, as the Canes set a franchise record in points en route to winning the Metro.

In the playoffs, the Hurricanes couldn't get past the second round, falling to the New York Rangers in a seven-game set after taking care of Boston in seven games in the opening round.

Let's take a look at the season that was for the front office and coaching staff:

Front Office

The 2021 offseason was a noticeably busy one for Don Waddell and company, as the Canes significantly retooled the team in a number of areas heading into the year.

For reminder's sake, here's a quick run down of some of the notable offseason transactions ahead of the 2021 season:

- June 17 — Signed Rod Brind'Amour to a three-year contract extension.
- July 22 — Traded Alex Nedeljkovic to Detroit for Jonathan Bernier (did not sign) and a 2021 third-round pick.
- July 23 — Traded Jake Bean to Columbus for a 2021 second-round pick.
- July 28 — Signed Jordan Martinook to a three-year, \$5.4 million extension.
- July 28 — Traded Warren Foegele to Edmonton for Ethan Bear.
- July 28 — Signed Antti Raanta (2-year, \$4m), Frederik Andersen (2-year, \$9m), Ian Cole (1-year, \$2.9m), Tony DeAngelo (1-year, \$1m) and Josh Leivo (1-year, \$750k).
- July 29 — Signed Brendan Smith to a 1-year, \$800,000 contract.
- July 31 — Signed Derek Stepan to a 1-year, \$1.35 million contract.
- Aug. 26 — Signed Andrei Svechnikov to an 8-year, \$62 million extension.
- Aug. 28 — Signed Jesperi Kotkaniemi to a 1-year, \$6.1 million offer sheet.

To say that there were some question marks surrounding some of the Hurricanes' offseason decisions would be a bit of an understatement.

After finally breaking through to the NHL level and producing well, the Canes dealt away Alex Nedeljkovic and replace him and Petr Mrazek in net with the duo of Frederik Andersen and Antti Raanta.

This one, a decision many doubted at first, ended up working out really well for the Hurricanes. Andersen and Raanta were both great in 2021-22, combining to win the Jennings Trophy for the Canes.

Waddell and co. also made a controversial decision to sign Tony DeAngelo when free agency opened, and on the ice it worked out well. DeAngelo was a bargain at \$1 million for the 2021-22 season, producing really well for the team on the top pairing alongside Jacob Slavin for most of the season.

The duo of Ian Cole and Brendan Smith were a fine third pairing together and both played essentially to their value, adding some depth on the blue line to fill out the roster. While neither did anything remarkable, neither was a massive detriment.

One of the splashier transactions that didn't necessarily work out well for the 2021-22 season was the Ethan Bear-Warren Foegele trade. While Bear started the season well and on the top pairing, COVID sidelined him early and he never fully returned to form. Bear has filed for arbitration and he could still have a future with the Canes, but his 2021-22 season wasn't what Carolina's front office would have hoped for.

The Canes also agreed to decent-sized contract extensions with two players on the 2020-21 roster during the offseason last summer, one that was a massive deal for the organization and another that may very well age pretty poorly.

On the good end was the Andrei Svechnikov extension, as the Canes locked down the phenomenal Russian winger for the long term. On the maybe not so good end was the Jordan Martinook extension, as the winger and 'A' wearer



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got a three-year deal that certainly wasn't worth the money in 2021-22.

And then the final big move for the Hurricanes last offseason was a doozy, as the Canes grabbed Jesperi Kotkaniemi from the Montreal Canadiens with a \$6.1 million offer sheet. The 21-year-old forward was later extended (more on that in a bit), as the former first-round draft pick came in and had a bit of an up-and-down season. The \$6.1 million hit in 2021-22 was obviously way higher than Kotkaniemi's contribution, but the Canes had room for it and that's just how offer sheets work. You overpay in year one to bring a player in that you like.

With all those moves, the Hurricanes front office put together a roster that went into the 2021-22 season on fire, winning its first nine games of the season.

Of course the start of the season doesn't mean the end of work for the front office. Here's a rundown of the major transactions from the Canes during the 2021-22 season:

- Jan. 9 — Signed Jack LaFontaine to a 1-year, \$910,909 contract.
- Jan. 21 — Signed Jalen Chatfield to a 2-year, \$1.525 million extension.
- March 21 — Acquired Max Domi at the deadline in a three-way trade that saw the Canes part with Yegor Korshkov and Aidan Hreschuk.
- March 21 — Signed Jesperi Kotkaniemi to an 8-year, \$38.56 million extension.

The Jack LaFontaine experience was a weird little blur, huh? The Canes signed the University of Minnesota goalie in the middle of the college season, he played in two NHL games and allowed nine goals, and that was kind of it.

It was a cool story for LaFontaine to get his chance in the NHL all of a sudden, but he obviously wasn't exactly ready for that stage. Still, he got to play in the NHL, got nearly a million dollars and got to start his professional career. In the long run, this didn't really affect the Canes in any way.

A few weeks after the LaFontaine thing, the Hurricanes gave a very deserved contract extension to Jalen Chatfield, who played some time with the NHL team early in the season and looked like he belonged completely. A good signing.

And the final in-season contract move, the Hurricanes officially inked Kotkaniemi to an 8-year, \$38.56 million extension the minute they were allowed to after the trade deadline passed.

With the signing, the Hurricanes secured the long-term future of Kotkaniemi with the team. And at this point, there's no way of telling how this contract will pan out. Did Kotkaniemi have the 2021-22 season anybody would have wanted? No. Is he a supremely talented young player who was a first-round draft pick just a few years ago? Yes.

The Canes' front office clearly likes what they see in Kotkaniemi, and it really is too early to tell if they are right or not.

As far as the actual trade deadline went, the Hurricanes were relatively quiet. The team brought in Max Domi, who other than scoring in game sevens in the playoffs, didn't really do too much of anything.

The Canes like the group, and they didn't really do much to change it at the deadline.

Coaching Staff

It's hard to criticize much of anything that the Hurricanes did during the regular season, though if there was one big issue it was the inconsistency of the power play. The Canes finished the season 13th in the NHL with a 22% conversion rate, a number that dwindled down in the back half of the season as the man advantage started to struggle more and more.

Other than that though, the regular season effort from the team and staff was great. A lot of credit should go to goaltender coach Paul Schonfelder, who both Andersen and Raanta talked about during the year as really being helpful.

Tim Gleason did a lot for the Hurricanes' penalty kill, which was the best in the league and one of the best the league has ever seen. Carolina had a lot of strengths in 2021-22, but the penalty kill was the strongest.

And then obviously, Rod Brind'Amour did what Rod Brind'Amour does. The team played hard night in and night out, and for the most part there were very few games where they just came out flat.

The sour taste with the team and staff comes from the playoff performance, where the Hurricanes couldn't muster up a single road win and did absolutely nothing on the power play for 14 games.

With this roster and the regular season it had, a second-round exit in the playoffs is nothing but a disappointment for the squad. Is that all on coaching? Of course not. But the power play's inability to get going was a massive detriment, and a lot of that can come back to scheme when the talent is as good as it is.



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Noesen wins President's Award

The American Hockey League has honored Chicago Wolves forward Stefan Noesen with the President's Award for his overall excellence during the 2021-22 season.

Noesen was recognized Thursday night during the AHL's Awards Gala that capped the Board of Governors' annual meeting in Hilton Head, South Carolina. He becomes the first player recognized in this fashion since Wolves captain Andrew Poturalski — then with Charlotte — was honored following the 2018-19 season.

The 29-year-old Plano, Texas, native was one of the primary drivers of the Wolves' Calder Cup championship team. Not only did Noesen pace the AHL with 48 regular-season goals — the league's highest total in 12 years — he led the league in game-winning goals (13), ranked second in plus-minus rating (+35) and finished third in points (85).

During the postseason, Noesen led all players in assists (16) and ranked second in points (25). He tied franchise records for assists and points in a playoff game when he handed out four assists during Game 2 of the Calder Cup Finals against the Springfield Thunderbirds. He also earned a hat trick during Game 2 of the Central Division Finals versus the Milwaukee Admirals on May 22.

Head coach Ryan Warsofsky summed up Noesen's impact on the Wolves in April — shortly after he became the organization's first player to crack the 40-goal barrier since Brett Sterling and Darren Haydar in 2007.

"He plays hard," Warsofsky said. "He's a heavy forward. He's hard to defend. He can tip pucks like the best of them. He's got a knack, obviously, for scoring goals. He should probably have more than 40. He was a little snake-bitten early in the season, but he (got) hot. He's a hard matchup for teams. He's our engine. He makes us go."

The Carolina Hurricanes recognized Noesen's remarkable season last week when they signed him to a two-year contract to keep him in the organization. He will play for either the Hurricanes or the Wolves during the 2022-23 season.

The Wolves revealed their 2022-23 regular-season schedule Thursday and tailor-made ticket plans are available now for the Oct. 15 home opener and the other 35 home games at Allstate Arena. To ensure the best deals on tickets, click here or contact a team representative at WolvesTix@ChicagoWolves.com.

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ESPN / NHL trade grades - Florida Panthers get Matthew Tkachuk, send Jonathan Huberdeau to Calgary Flames

Greg Wyshynski

The Calgary Flames and Florida Panthers swapped 100-point scorers in a blockbuster trade that was sealed late Friday.

The Flames traded forward Matthew Tkachuk and a conditional fourth-round draft pick to the Panthers for forward Jonathan Huberdeau, defenseman MacKenzie Weegar, Panthers prospect Cole Schwindt and Florida's lottery-protected first-round selection in the 2025 NHL draft.

The move sent shockwaves through the entire league, as it's a rarity for two stars to switch teams. How did both GMs do in the deal?

Calgary Flames: A

The Flames had a player who wasn't going to sign with them beyond this season in Matthew Tkachuk. They traded him for two players who might not sign with them beyond this season in Jonathan Huberdeau and MacKenzie Weegar, who are both unrestricted free agents next summer.

Considering the reality of their surroundings, it might've been the only way general manager Brad Treliving could go.

This offseason, Calgary lost two foundational players in Tkachuk and left wing Johnny Gaudreau, the latter of whom left the Flames as an unrestricted free agent for the Columbus Blue Jackets. Another team sees its top two scorers "peace out" in the same summer, and it might make a sharp turn into rebuild mode. Treliving has no such luxury.

He's got Jack Adams Award-winning coach Darryl Sutter behind the bench for at least one more season. He's got a lineup with Andrew Mangiapane, Tyler Toffoli, Mikael Backlund, Elias Lindholm, Blake Coleman and Noah Hanifin. He's paying Jacob Markstrom \$8 million in salary next season -- and \$6 million against the cap with a full no-movement clause through 2025-26 -- to help the Flames win the Pacific Division again.

The Flames are like a driver approaching a drawbridge who decides to put the pedal to the floor instead of waiting for a safer passage.

While he's an elite passer, too, Huberdeau isn't Gaudreau. The winger averaged 1.00 goals per 60 minutes and 2.95 points per 60, while Johnny Hockey was at 1.29 and 3.58, respectively, last season. Huberdeau's a little closer to Tkachuk as far as scoring output (1.31 and 3.23), but Tkachuk had the superior season. But in a three-season snapshot, Huberdeau (1.00 goals per game, 2.68 points per game) had superior numbers to both Tkachuk (0.98, 2.46) and Gaudreau (0.96, 2.55).

Treliving has spoken about not being able to fill the void left by a player of Gaudreau's caliber. To come as close as he did here by acquiring Huberdeau for Tkachuk is nothing less than extraordinary.

In Weegar, the Flames get a two-way defenseman whose media market and defensive partner (Aaron Ekblad) are the primary reasons why he isn't considered one of the NHL's elite. His reputation has been that of a defensive defenseman. Yet he has 80 points in 134 games over the past two seasons. Sutter must be salivating to get a blueliner like this next season, a player who can elevate any pairing he's on.

Cole Schwindt is a 21-year-old forward whom the Panthers drafted No. 81 overall in 2019. He has spent the past two seasons in the AHL, including 40 points in 72 games with Charlotte in 2021-22. His 6-foot-2 frame makes him an interesting prospect, but his skating doesn't inspire much confidence about an NHL impact.

Getting a first-rounder back in this package is the icing on the cake. It's lottery-protected for 2025. This is the kind of long-range move that can sometimes come back to haunt the team doing the dealing. Or at least the Flames hope so.

Calgary is being graded on a contextual curve here. The Flames had a player they were all but forced to trade, who had some influence over their return based on where he was willing to sign long term. They had all the parts of a championship-caliber team without the engine after Gaudreau and Tkachuk were gone. This trade spackles over that hole on offense, and the Flames still have some money (\$9.3 million against the cap) to add more scoring after re-signing Mangiapane and defenseman Oliver Kyllington.

They also dramatically improved their defense corps. Hanifin, Rasmus Andersson, Chris Tanev and Weegar are a heck of a top four.

Huberdeau and Weegar could be short-term Flames. But that's where Calgary's focus is, and they have to be commended for staying all-in -- while plucking a first-rounder down the line as well. If one or both sign beyond this season, all the better. Heck, if Weegar re-signs, bump this up to an A+.

If Calgary isn't the same team without Tkachuk and Gaudreau, and they figure that out quickly ... well, now they have two amazing players to move at the deadline before they hit free agency next summer.

The NHL offseason handed the Flames lemons. Instead of making lemonade, they tossed them over their shoulder and reached for freshly squeezed Florida orange juice. It might end up hitting the spot.

Florida Panthers: B+

The Panthers led the NHL with 122 points in the standings last season before checking out in the second round of the playoffs, having watched the best offense the NHL had seen since 1995-96 sputter in the postseason. That was despite a huge swing at the trade deadline that brought Philadelphia Flyers star Claude Giroux to South Florida.

GM Bill Zito's reaction to that season underscores his unique approach to this job. Another general manager is not trading away his team's leading scorer and second-most important defenseman after a season like that. Another general manager is taking the myopic approach to the roster,



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even if there was a risk that Huberdeau and Weegar might leave via free agency in summer 2023.

Bill Zito is not that general manager.

The acquisition of Matthew Tkachuk might not make the Panthers a better team next season. I think they take a step back from that 122-point campaign. But it positions them to be a potentially great team well beyond next season.

Zito called Tkachuk "a tenacious, physical competitor who possesses a tremendously unique skill set." He speaks the truth. Tkachuk is a physical playmaking winger who creates offense as effectively as he agitates opponents. His defense can be Selke Trophy-caliber, which is a glaring point of demarcation between himself and Huberdeau. The Panthers clearly feel that, stylistically, Tkachuk is what they need to break through in the playoffs: His physicality, tenacity, defense and the way he goes to the net.

Here's another: Huberdeau will be 30 years old when he signs his next big contract next summer. Tkachuk turns 25 this December. The Panthers are going to pay Tkachuk \$9.5 million against the salary cap through 2029-30. Huberdeau would have cost just as much. The Panthers essentially bought themselves a few years on the aging curve for a more complete player.

There has been a lot of debate about what Tkachuk's ceiling is in the NHL. Was that 43-goal season anomalous? The product of playing with Gaudreau in a season in which goal scoring in the league unexpectedly spiked to its highest goals-per-game average since 1993-94? It's a legitimate question and concern.

But if Tkachuk gives the Panthers what he gave the Flames in 2018-19 -- 34 goals, 43 assists in 80 games -- while offering all his intangibles, they're probably pretty happy. Vegas winger Mark Stone gets praised to the moon for a season like that while making \$9.5 million against the cap. And he's 30 years old.

I get the sense that Huberdeau wanted to remain with the Panthers. I get the sense the Panthers like him too. You never say never in the NHL when it comes to reunions, especially when Florida will have some cap flexibility next season. But to land Tkachuk, Huberdeau had to go. Who knows if that ends up burning a bridge.

Speaking of cap flexibility, the Panthers had to make the money work on this trade. Weegar's name was always in consideration if Florida was going after Tkachuk. The combination of him and Huberdeau added up to \$9.15 million in cap space -- or \$350,000 less than Tkachuk's cap hit next season.

They're going to miss Weegar. He did everything for them on both ends of the ice, and he was essential to what Florida did offensively in its transition game. He was an essential partner to Ekblad, a task that might now fall to Gustav Forsling.

Again, this was Zito getting ahead of the curve. The Panthers were shopping Weegar previously this offseason. For whatever reason, he didn't fit into their plans. While it might set them back this season, it was essential to securing Tkachuk.

Schwindt is an AHL player with some potential, but trading him away is a reasonable risk. We're not crazy about the inclusion of the 2025 first-round pick because it means the Panthers will not have had a first-round pick in four straight seasons, having given them up for Sam Reinhart (2022), Ben Chiarot (2023), Giroux (2024) and now Tkachuk (2025). Two of those players were one-and-done for a team that sputtered out in the second round. That's a little disconcerting when finding low-cost, young players to fill in the lineup around players like Tkachuk and Aleksander Barkov would seem indispensable.

There's some risk here. The best rewards always carry some. The Panthers' decision to become Matthew Tkachuk's team could end up being a shrewd reset at a time when, logically, they might have doubled down on what was already there.

Complacency gave the Panthers six postseason appearances and no series wins in 24 years. Boldness gave them the President's Trophy and their first appearance in the second round since 1996. Lesson learned.

ESPN LOADED: 07.24.2022

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Sportsnet.ca / Tkachuk exclusive: Star winger explains why he left the Flames

Eric Francis@EricFrancis

July 23, 2022, 11:24 PM

CALGARY — Matthew Tkachuk's decision to leave Calgary was three years in the making.

No, he wasn't counting down the days, dreaming of the day he could return to the U.S.

As a Calgary Flame, he poured his heart and soul into a job, a team, and a city he adored.

A city that loved him back.

However, in his first interview since being traded, Tkachuk told Sportsnet.ca Saturday that when he put his signature on his three-year bridge deal in 2019, he always knew there was a chance at its conclusion it would be time to leave.

"I put myself in a position with the last deal I signed to kind of reevaluate my life and my career at this stage, and I kind of came to the conclusion after the RFA period (July 13) it was time to look elsewhere," he explained of the decision that rocked Calgary.

"There's a lot that went into it. There's no single reason why I left. At the end of the day, I wanted to re-evaluate where I'm at, and after talking to a few teams I did that, and kind of came down to that conclusion.

"I didn't know what my decision was going to be until that talking period.

"It all changed then."

It was then the grass seemed greener, the beach seemed sandier, the air seemed warmer, and the state taxes seemed, well, non-existent.

The possibilities were endless for the 104-point superstar, who knew he could write his own ticket almost anywhere he wanted.

So he acted fast, initiating a phone call he deemed the toughest of his life, informing the man who drafted him sixth overall he would not sign an extension.

Five days later he became a Florida Panther with a sign-and-trade deal that will pay him \$76 million over eight years.

A whirlwind, to be sure.

"I'm sitting here, very emotional about my time there in Calgary," said Tkachuk, who will travel to Florida Sunday for his introductory press conference Monday.

"I'm sad and happy. Very mixed. ... I'm sad I'm leaving so many great people in the city and the organization.

"I feel like I did it the right way. I played my hardest. I tried to be in the community as much as possible. I knew pretty recently it was time for a change. ... There was no second-guessing it or delaying it. I told them right away. It's like ripping a bandaid off right away. It's hard.



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"I hope people can respect me for that, and for trying to help them out as much as they tried to help me out in this process, because I feel working together really did benefit both of us."

The call to Brad Treliving, as one can imagine, was emotional.

"It was the hardest phone call I've ever had in this sport at any level," said Tkachuk, 24. "Nothing even comes close to rivalling it. It was a very real conversation. Pretty emotional for me, some of the most emotions I've had. And he was too. It was like two friends. We really respect one another.

"I wanted to make sure I worked with him and not leave them dry.

"We worked together and it was really seamless. He did an unbelievable job. He's one of the most respected GMs in the league for a reason. ... We worked through it and I think we're both happy with how the results came."

As beloved as Tkachuk has been in Calgary, the four-piece haul Treliving landed for Tkachuk Friday single-handedly turned the woe-is-me narrative on a dime.

Suddenly there's excitement and hope in a city that was running out of it.

Losing two 100-point stars within a fortnight can do that.

But adding a 115-point superstar in Jonathan Huberdeau, a top defenceman in MacKenzie Weegar, prospect Cole Schwindt and a first rounder has flipped the narrative, and Flames fans can thank Tkachuk for that.

"I think Tre respected me for talking to him right away about it," said Tkachuk, who indeed drew praise from the GM earlier in the day. "I could have kept this decision close to me and gone about this a different way, whether it was signing a one-year deal and putting them in a tough spot.

"I wanted to be straight with them right away and being able to work with them made this so much easier."

As he confirmed, the decision had nothing to do with Johnny Gaudreau informing the club at the 11th hour he was hitting the open market.

"It did not have anything to do with it," he said. "This is my career. I signed my last contract for the sole reason of (options). I could have taken a longer deal and more money, but I wanted to re-evaluate after a three-year bridge deal, and that's what I did."

Tkachuk said he gave Treliving a handful of teams he'd sign long-term with, maximizing the return. The list was quickly whittled down.

"We narrowed it to three teams that I would have been very, very happy to go to, but at the end of the day Florida pushed like hell and it all happened within a day," he said, before explaining his choice in the Panthers.

"The thing I was most attracted to is the competitiveness and how close they've been and how good of a team they are and how great they will be in the future — it's something I really feel I can help with.

"All the guys are in their mid-to-late 20's. ... The chance to win was the most attractive. ... The sun, the beach and all that stuff — don't get me wrong, that's really, unbelievably attractive, but the chance to win trumps it all."

Throughout a 25-minute chat from his home in St. Louis, Tkachuk raved about his time in Calgary and the people who made it special.

"I will always remember my time in Calgary as the most important and best years in my life to date," he said. "I'm leaving as a 24-year-old, young man and I went in as an 18-year-old kid. I'm proud of that and I'm proud of the relationships with people who helped me with that.

"If you're a trainer, coach, manager, fan, media or security at the rink, I just hope I can go down as one of the guys who is really fun and easy to work with. That's what I want to be remembered for.

"I truly grew in that city and it's one of the greatest cities in the world that I've been to — it's so unique. There's so many cool things about the city.

"I was looking back and reflecting about my draft day, I knew nothing about Calgary. ... Leaving there I hope they can consider me the type of player the people of Alberta can be proud of. Well, in Calgary, not the people up north.

"It will always have a special place in my heart."

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 07.24.2022

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Sportsnet.ca / Flames' Treliving says city of Calgary has taken a hit, and 'it pisses me off'

Eric Francis@EricFrancis

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CALGARY — Less than 24 hours after replacing Johnny Hockey with Jonny Huby, Flames GM Brad Treliving wanted to set the record straight on the horrific predicament he managed to turn on a dime.

No, Matthew Tkachuk's decision last Sunday not to extend his contract in Calgary had nothing to do with Johnny Gaudreau's decision to leave via free agency.

No, his club will not alter its approach to acquiring American players.

No, there was no other deal out there that came close to the impressive haul he got for Tkachuk.

And, no, neither player's decision to leave is a reflection on Calgary or the Flames.

"A lot has been written, talked about and discussed over the last week about Calgary, and quite frankly I think the city and the organization have taken some body shots," said Treliving, going on the offensive after weeks of speculation and abuse.

"Quite frankly, it pisses me off.

Flames' Treliving defends city of Calgary: 'We're proud of who we are'

"I think anybody that lives here is privileged to live in a wonderful community.

"People have the right to pick and choose where they may want to go, but as a community and organization we do not have to apologize for anything.

"We've got a team I thought was a top team in the league — a team that is competing every year to be a Stanley Cup champion, and we're going to continue to do that."

They can do so, thanks to the four-player haul Treliving received from the Florida Panthers late Friday that included winger Jonathan Huberdeau and defenceman MacKenzie Weegar, as well as 21-year-old centre Cole Schwindt and a first rounder in 2025.

Looking a whole lot more energized than he was for the presser less than two weeks earlier when the ashen-faced GM addressed the 11th hour departure of Gaudreau, Treliving said he'd received a barrage of texts from excited players who suddenly had life injected back into a reeling organization.

He credited Tkachuk for being honest and up front with a decision not to re-sign that the 24-year-old called to inform him of last Sunday.



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It set the wheels in motion on a collaborative effort between Tkachuk, his representative, and the Flames to find a destination and fit that worked best for everyone.

Five days later he pulled off a blockbuster, despite the fact two of the handful of teams Tkachuk listed as desirable immediately declined interest.

"He could have put us in a more difficult situation, for instance, if we were only allowed to deal with one team," said Treliving.

"I appreciate both Matthew and Craig (Oster's) willingness to work with us.

"He made a decision to move on, I appreciate his honesty. A week ago this was not the plan we had — we were not looking to move Matthew Tkachuk. But we also were put in a position where we had to do the best thing for the organization. He chose the path we had to go down and we had to facilitate that as best we could."

The teams Tkachuk was willing to sign with, therefore maximizing return, knew of Treliving's dwindling leverage, yet somehow he managed to pull off a swap that has the hockey world heralding him as the easy winner.

"We feel by a long shot this was the very best deal we could get — it wasn't close," said Treliving.

"Once those names became real we pursued that."

History will determine how well Treliving did, as both Huberdeau and Weegar are unrestricted free agents next summer.

He said he'd already spoken to both players' agents, but admitted it's too early to start discussing whether he had a feel for whether either would consider staying long term.

"We're certainly aware of the circumstances around both players contractually," he said.

"A lot has happened in the last 24 hours. We've got to let everybody take a deep breath and we'll continue to move forward here.

"We'll get after that at the appropriate time."

In the meantime, the Flames are suddenly positioned to be every bit as formidable as they were when they won the Pacific division last season.

Weegar is hitting the prime of his career at age 28, a right-handed shot who played on the left side of the Panthers' top pairing en route to the Presidents' Trophy.

"We look at him as one of the top defencemen in the league, quite frankly," said Treliving of the 28-year-old Ottawa native.

"He's underrated, quite frankly. His ability to close plays, his ability to kill plays, not only in the defensive zone, but the ability to do so through the neutral ice, the ability to transition pucks, the ability to get it going north-to-south, the ability to get it going the other way is at one of the highest rates in the league ... his ability to deny zone entries. We think we've made our defence a significantly stronger defence."

It certainly opens the door for him to play with Rasmus Andersson, returning Noah Hanifin alongside Chris Tanev.

Plenty of time for more moves, and decisions to be made.

Huberdeau is a sizable addition who is every bit as gifted a playmaker as Gaudreau, kills penalties and makes everyone around him better, à la Gaudreau.

Both breathe new life into an organization that appeared on the verge of having to tear it all down if the return for Tkachuk wasn't significant.

Schwindt, 21, is projected as a middle six centre who has size, is deft at faceoffs and comes loaded with character.

As far as reflecting back on what the Flames could have done differently to potentially extend Gaudreau and Tkachuk in town, Treliving was philosophical.

"A lot of the narrative out there is incorrect," he said of the disheartening double defection he's had to navigate the team through.

"We tried to sign Johnny last year. Johnny's moved on. We're not going to get into that. We made a decision at that particular time, based upon the conversations that we were having that they were legitimately interested in being here, and we tried to follow through on that process. We made the decision to sign Matthew to the contract we did at the time we did knowing what his rights were going to be at the end of it. At the end of the day the players make decisions.

"You always reflect back on how you go through a process. I feel very, very comfortable that the ownership of this organization, the management team here did everything possible to have these players sign and stay. They chose, they didn't want to. Not a lot you can do about that so you move forward."

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Sportsnet.ca / Jets get temporary clarity on Dubois but next steps will decide team's direction

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WINNIPEG - No, this is not the long-term deal - or the long-term solution - that the Winnipeg Jets crave.

But Friday's news that restricted free agent centre Pierre-Luc Dubois had accepted his qualifying offer (a one-year deal with an AAV of \$6 million) does bring some clarity to the situation, at least temporarily.

How?

Well, barring a trade, this all but guarantees the Dubois will report to training camp in September.

While that was always the expected outcome, without coming to terms on a short-term deal, there was always the threat that the Jets could be without this top-six player for a stretch of time that was likely measured in weeks and not days.

For a team looking to rebound after a disappointing season, not having Dubois at their disposal was going to be a problem that required solving.

In case you've forgotten, not having defenceman Jacob Trouba for the first month or so of the 2016-17 season was a major concern - even with the Jets having ample depth on the blue line.

Trouba signed a two-year deal in early November that year, but didn't play his first game until Nov. 11.

The Jets missed the playoffs by seven points that season and there's little doubt that not having Trouba in the lineup - and the uncertainty of not knowing when - or if - he would be back after formally making his trade request public in September during the World Cup of Hockey was a factor in what became a 7-7-1 start.

This is not revisionist history, nor is it an attempt at the blame game.

Trouba made a business decision, stood up for what he believed in, stayed ready to play and ended up having a productive season, recording eight goals and 33 points in the 60 games he got into.



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The point is that the Jets had a much better chance of making the playoffs if there had been a resolution earlier.

Which brings us back to Dubois, who got a bump in his AAV (from \$5 million) but is taking a slight pay cut from the \$6.65 million he made in salary last season.

Does Friday's contract agreement ensure that Dubois will be in the lineup for the season opener on Oct. 14 against the New York Rangers?

Absolutely not.

Many would argue the AAV would make it easier for the Jets to move Dubois, should they eventually get to that point.

But more importantly, it also eliminates one of the roads that the Jets - and Dubois - had zero interest in going down because of the potential consequences.

For a player who is still looking to boost his value and secure a long-term contract - even if he has to wait until hitting unrestricted free agency in the summer of 2024 - sitting out without a contract hurts both the player and the organization that still has team control for two seasons as of today.

This outcome also brings cost certainty, which is important for a Jets team that artificially had a bunch of cap space that was mostly spoken for - but a club that is still looking to make some upgrades to the forward group.

As Jets general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff said recently, the organization had a pretty good idea of where most of the numbers for the restricted free agents were going to come in, but it's always better to be able to put those totals in pen instead of pencil.

By putting the \$6 million on the books for next season, the Jets are down to \$8.4 million in projected cap space for 18 players on a 23-man roster (according to CapFriendly) and that number drops when you add in the expected contracts for remaining restricted free agent forwards Mason Appleton, and David Gustafsson.

While none of those deals will break the bank, it means that between \$5.5 to \$6 million is going to be available for any free agent signings - and there are several intriguing players (like Danton Heinen, Evan Rodrigues and Sonny Milano) who could provide value in a middle-six role right now.

Of course, the Jets still have a logjam on defence that needs to be taken care of and there's still a strong possibility that longtime captain Blake Wheeler could still find a new home, which would free up some additional money.

However, the Dubois situation has been front of mind for weeks and it's finally coming into clearer focus.

Dubois is going to speak to members of the media on Monday for the first time since his agent, Pat Brisson, floated the idea of his client being interested in playing for the Montreal Canadiens at some point.

Dubois is a guy who has shown accountability since his arrival in the blockbuster trade for Patrik Laine and Jack Roslovic, whether he was battling through injury and struggling to find his game - or when he was putting together the type of campaign that saw him set a career-high for goals (28) while racking up 60 points.

It's impossible to know what Dubois is going to say, but you can bet that part of the discussion is going to focus on him being happy to have a new deal done and that he's looking to take the next step in his career.

He remains driven to improve and it would not come as a surprise if he's able to build on last season and take another step in his development as someone who just turned 24 and is getting set for his sixth NHL season.

It's been an emotional time for several Canadian teams, especially the Calgary Flames, who lost Johnny Gaudreau in free agency to the Columbus Blue Jackets, and then traded Matthew Tkachuk to the Florida

Panthers after letting the organization know that he's not interested in signing a long-term deal.

After watching what has transpired and could be on the horizon a few provinces over, many Manitobans have been feeling territorial and defensive, with several folks viewing Brisson's comments as a personal attack.

You don't have to like the method his agent used to float the idea - and perhaps to try and put some heat on the Jets to speed up the process of helping his client become a member of the Canadiens - but let's see how this plays out before making too many snap judgements.

Dubois hasn't quit on the Jets, nor would he be the first player who might want to play for the team he grew up cheering for.

While the public relations element of this zoom call gathering is important for Dubois, who has grown into a fan favourite, what really matters is how hard he's going to play and there's no recent evidence to suggest that he's not going to provide anything less than his best effort.

There's too much at stake for Dubois not to.

Which brings us back to the Jets.

While there's no denying the importance of getting to this point, one can't help but notice the timing.

Dubois accepted his qualifying offer on the same day the Blue Jackets announced a four-year contract extension for Laine, a deal that totals \$34.8 million and an AAV of \$8.7 million.

Unfair or not, the trade involving the second and third overall picks in the 2016 NHL Draft means that the two players are going to be tied together and continue to be measured against one another, especially after their respective departures.

In the immediate aftermath of the trade, it appeared as though Laine would be the guy who would be tougher to get signed to a longer-term deal and that Dubois was going to make Winnipeg his long-term home and become a foundational piece.

At least for the time being, the tables have turned.

The Blue Jackets provided Laine with a raise and bought three years of unrestricted free agency, while the future of Dubois remains up in the air and the end of his current contract brings him to a year away from being able to test the open market for the first time of his career as a UFA.

Roslovic has also signed a pair of two-year contracts, though he has the ability to become a UFA at the end of the 2024 season as well.

The corresponding move made by Blue Jackets GM Jarmo Kekalainen on Friday involved sending right-winger Oliver Bjorkstrand to the Seattle Kraken for a third and fourth-round pick in 2023, a move necessary to get the team under the salary cap (otherwise known as the cost of doing business in the high-rent district).

Bjorkstrand set career highs for goals (28) and points (57) last season and signed a five-year contract last season that carries an AAV of \$5.4 million (and has four seasons remaining).

Cheveldayoff can't worry about what is going on with the Blue Jackets, his focus must remain on working to improve his own team.

At this stage of the proceedings, it's impossible to argue the Jets have done enough to the roster to escape the mushy middle.

Getting new contracts for defenceman Johnny Kovacevic (three years, including a one-way contract in the final season) and forward Jeff Malott (two years, two-way deal) are important for depth building, but there is still plenty of room for improvement.

And while getting Dubois' name on a contract was an essential step in the building process, the moves that follow are the ones that could ultimately define the direction this upcoming Jets season is going to take.



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TSN.CA / Tkachuk trade shows Flames' intent to defend Pacific Division title

Salim Valji

Backed into a corner with a second star forward in two weeks set to leave the team, Calgary Flames general manager Brad Treliving came out swinging and moved Matthew Tkachuk in one of the biggest deals in franchise history.

Late Friday evening, the team announced a deal that sent the 104-point game-breaker, a rare blend of skill, physicality, edge, and leadership, to the Florida Panthers in exchange for playmaking winger Jonathan Huberdeau, who himself had 115 points last season, underrated defenceman Mackenzie Weegar, prospect Cole Schwindt, and a lottery-protected first-round pick.

For a Flames fanbase in the midst of one of the most excruciating off-seasons in recent memory, the return for Tkachuk has to provide at least some comfort and hope. While Calgary was never going to replicate him in a deal, they have at least come close to replacing him by adding another legitimate star in Huberdeau (who was fifth in Hart Trophy voting last season), a stay-at-home blueliner with an underrated offensive skillset in Weegar, plus two future assets.

The emphasis on immediate help in Huberdeau and Weegar shows the Flames still intend to defend their Pacific Division title next season.

Without Tkachuk and Gaudreau, the Flames would have still iced a strong lineup. They had Elias Lindholm, one of the game's best two-way centres, 35-goal scorer Andrew Mangiapane, and good middle-six contributors in Blake Coleman and Tyler Toffoli. Their back-end of Noah Hanifin, Rasmus Andersson, Chris Tanev, and Oliver Kylington performed very well, and Jacob Markstrom remains one of the NHL's better netminders.

Now, the Flames can pursue other business ahead of training camp in a few weeks. Nazem Kadri, who they have been connected to in the past, remains a free agent, as do depth forward options like Sonny Milano and Evan Rodrigues.

There is calculated risk in this deal for the Flames that will be addressed in the coming months.

Both Huberdeau and Weegar, like Gaudreau was this season, are pending unrestricted free agents. The Flames have the next season to not only attempt to replicate what they did last season, but try and convince them to continue their careers at the Saddledome—something they could not do with Tkachuk or Gaudreau. Treliving will have to sell them on the process he and his staff have built in Calgary, the city, lifestyle, fanbase, and merits of competing for the Stanley Cup in Canada.

For now, however, Flames fans can exhale—and even be optimistic about training camp.

Many envisioned a worst-case scenario when word got out that Tkachuk would not re-sign long-term. The Jarome Iginla trade and its negligible return flashed through many minds.

Instead, Treliving managed to trade one star for another, keeping the Flames' competitive window open for at least one more season—and give a fanbase that has been through so much the past few months some much-needed hope.