



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • July 27, 2022



Homegrown Talent: Raleigh Native Phillips Represents At Development Camp

"I've been cheering for this team since I was born, so it's definitely an honor."

By Walt Ruff

RALEIGH, NC. - "I was kind of numb when I got the phone call, but I just wanted to come out here and make the best of the opportunity."

What Devin Phillips felt when receiving an official invitation to Canes Development Camp was understandable. After all, it's not every day that a kid gets the offer to showcase his talent for the NHL team he grew up rooting for.

Born and raised in Raleigh, the now 21-year-old "fell in love" with the sport after the franchise won the Stanley Cup in 2006. He grew up idolizing Josef Vašíček and enjoyed the All-Star festivities when the game came to town in 2011.

Now he's taking steps toward forging his own potential path to the NHL.

"It meant the world to me," Phillips continued when describing his emotions of receiving the invitation from the Canes. "I've been cheering for this team since I was born, so it's definitely an honor."

Having played his 16U hockey with the Carolina Junior Canes, the skilled forward received the chance after a third successful season with the Brooks Bandits - a Tier II junior program in the Alberta Junior Hockey League (AJHL). Posting 91 points in 45 games, his offensive prowess has led him to a commitment to the College of Holy Cross, where he'll play Division I NCAA this fall.

"[The youth hockey scene] is definitely getting a lot better. The Hurricanes do a great job of that," Phillips offered when asked about his path to Brooks and now Worcester,

Massachusetts. "Whether it's the Junior Canes, NC Force, Carolina Stars, they all just seem to keep getting better and better... I still keep in touch with most of the guys that I played Junior Canes with. It's great to come up through there and it's an unreal experience to be in this locker room and to be on this ice."

The captain of the roster Phillips will be joining at Holy Cross? Fellow Raleigh native and former Junior Canes player Nick Hale, who was invited to Canes Development Camp in 2019.

"If we can have homegrown talent, that's the biggest thing," Defenseman Development Coach Peter Harrold remarked. "We want to grow the game of hockey at-large, so it's great to have [Phillips] out there. Hopefully, some of the younger players saw it and they keep working."

After skating with the franchise's draft picks and fellow invitees for the week, the Cardinal Gibbons High School product said that despite being initially anxious about the experience, he was impressed by the character of those whom he shared the locker room with.

"When I got the call I was really nervous, but getting here and getting to meet some of the guys, seeing how down-to-earth they are, it's been a lot of fun. I want to learn from them. There's obviously a lot of talent in here."

As he attempts to improve his foot speed in the next year, his takeaway message from his time spent with the Canes coaching staff and prospects was a simple one.

"Just to be the best I can and to try and be better each day. That's what they've been preaching here and I want to follow that model."



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SB NATION
CANES COUNTRY

Carolina Hurricanes Prospect Rankings - Fall 2022

Carolina's pipeline is full of good prospects, many of which may play in the NHL.

By Matthew Somma

Prospect rankings are always fun, and this is as good of a time as any to do another one. My list in January can be found here, and obviously, there are going to be changes. Obviously, the Jack LaFontaine experiment didn't work out. At the time this list was created, LaFontaine had just made his NHL debut, and while it was a little rocky, he was just starting out as a pro and had a bright future ahead of him. Afterwards, LaFontaine struggled as a pro and was eventually pushed out of Chicago's crease by Pyotr Kochetkov.

Kochetkov coming to North America as quickly as he did wasn't expected, and while I knew he was the better goalie, I was expecting LaFontaine to have very little competition outside of Alex Lyon in the AHL. That obviously didn't happen. Hindsight is 20/20, so this ranking obviously looks bad in hindsight.

Ranking Morrow fourth also looks silly, but this ranking came after he was scratched at the World Juniors and held pointless in a series against Michigan. Funnily enough, Morrow would go on a seven-game point streak immediately after I finished these rankings and would have eight points in that stretch of games. Morrow only looked better as the season went on, and now, I believe he's the organization's top prospect. Yes, Jack Drury and Pyotr Kochetkov might be more NHL ready, but Morrow is unquestionably the top player in the Hurricanes' pipeline.

The Carolina Hurricanes losing Jesper Sellgren to Europe is a hit to the Hurricanes' defensive depth in the pipeline, but the team still has Nikishin and Fensore on the left side and added Forsmark, Grudinin and Pelevin at the draft. The only other hits to this list are Eetu Makiniemi and Joey Keane. Makiniemi was looking like a legitimate NHL prospect before his injury, which came at the worst possible time. Of course, it allowed for Kochetkov to take the crease in Chicago, but in a way, it also spelled the end for Makiniemi in the Hurricanes' system. Jalen Chatfield has passed Keane on the depth chart on the right side, and the addition of Dylan Coghlan has made it that much harder for Keane to crack the lineup. That combined with his age caused me to cut him from this top 20 ranking.

For these rankings, I'm providing my own list and commentary on each ranking. That's already going to make for a long post, so grab a snack or something. I'm also enlisting the help of Josh Tessler, the head of Smaht Scouting, for these rankings. He's providing his own ranking as an unbiased observer. In exchange for his assistance, I

have promised one (1) Storm Brew to be consumed at a later date.

Matt's Rankings

1. Scott Morrow - Well, this one shouldn't surprise. Morrow is the top prospect in the system and the player with the highest upside overall. Morrow has the potential to be a legitimate top pairing offensive defenseman and run a power play at the NHL level. It's not unreasonable to expect Morrow to hit 50-60 points per season over the course of his career. His skating and hockey sense are elite, he can work some magic with the puck and there's a lot of skill to his game. Not much else needs to be said about Morrow. He's the Hurricanes' top prospect and should be a fantastic NHL player if he is developed properly.
2. Pyotr Kochetkov - Hurricanes fans were able to see flashes of what Kochetkov could be when he was with the team towards the end of the season. He has the athleticism, quickness and size to be a starter at the NHL level. Kochetkov also gets bonus points for being an entertaining goalie. He has the ability to dazzle with his saves and is a fiery personality that isn't afraid to get involved in scraps in front of his own net. Kochetkov has the potential to be the goalie of the future here in Raleigh.
3. Jack Drury - Drury will be in the NHL next season. I still believe that he's going to be a third-line player for most of his NHL career, but he has the all-around game that will make Rod Brind'Amour comfortable with putting Drury anywhere in the lineup. I believe that Drury will be a key player for the Hurricanes this year. He may be relied upon to kill penalties, play on the second power play unit from time to time and see some tougher matchups due to his strong play in his own end.
4. Noel Gunler - Gunler is one of two, maybe three forwards in the Hurricanes' system that has legitimate top six upside. From his skating, goal scoring, hockey sense and strength on the puck, Gunler has the tools necessary to make it to the NHL. I'm excited to see him with the Wolves this season.
5. Gleb Trikozov - Trikozov, like Gunler, has top six upside and is an exciting prospect to have in the pipeline. Trikozov has elite offensive skills and could see some time in the KHL this season.
6. Vasily Ponomarev - Ponomarev reminds me of Jack Drury in a lot of ways. Both are under six feet



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tall but have the same level of confidence in all three zones. Ponomarev is a pain to play against and could possibly have more offensive upside than Drury, which is exciting. This is a player that should take on a big role with the Wolves this upcoming season.

7. Ville Koivunen - Koivunen could be as high as four on this list, to be quite honest. There's a lot to like about his game. His work ethic, hockey sense and overall offensive game give him the potential to play top six minutes in the NHL. The biggest question mark is his skating, which is why he's down at seven on this list. Some more time to improve his overall speed and agility will go a long way.
8. Ryan Suzuki - This is a big year for Suzuki. There are plenty of centers in the pipeline that could pass him on the depth chart if he can't stay healthy. If he does stay healthy, however, I believe that this is the year that we see Ryan Suzuki take a big step forward offensively. We forget that he is only 21 years old and will continue to improve. His defensive game is already miles ahead of where it was when he was drafted, but I've yet to see his offensive game take those same steps forward.
9. Jamieson Rees - Rees is a pain to play against and had a great second half of the season in Chicago. I felt that he developed real chemistry with Ponomarev and their checking line got under the skin of the opposition. He'll get the opportunity to play up in the lineup next season, which should allow for his offensive game to develop a bit more. As of right now, I see Rees being a bottom six energy forward that is close to playing in the NHL.
10. Domenick Fensore - Fensore is arguably the best skater in the pipeline and one of the better creators of offense, too. People like to bring up his size in order to discredit him, but he's a great prospect with a lot of promise. Last season, Fensore was one of the best defenders in transition in the entire NCAA. This year, he'll be the top defenseman and captain on a promising Boston University squad.
11. Massimo Rizzo - It's about time to start up the Massimo Rizzo hype train, folks. While I'm still not 100% sure of what his upside is at the NHL level, I do know that there's a ton of skill in his game. His ability to make plays at an NHL pace is bordering on elite. There's potential here and he's a player to watch when his season starts in the fall.
12. Alexander Pashin - I'll admit that I was surprised to see Pashin come to North America as soon as he did. Then again, I'm not going to complain about the Wolves adding a player of his talent level. He's another prospect with a high ceiling, although his floor may be a little lower than that of Gunler or Trikozov. Pashin has high end skill and could be another nice middle six option for the Hurricanes in the future.
13. Alexander Nikishin - I'm unashamed of my love for Nikishin, but I will say that my expectations for him have gotten more realistic since January. He's a good defender with great physicality, and his skating has become a strength as well. I do see some holes in his defensive game that need to be worked out, but he has two more years left on his KHL contract. That's plenty of time to work those out. The biggest question is whether or not his offensive game can take another step forward before he comes to North America. He has a booming shot, but it's not one that'll be a threat from the point at the NHL level. I'd like to see him make better passes.
14. Aleksii Heimosalmi - Heimosalmi had a quiet Liiga season but a really solid, albeit brief, showing at the World Juniors. There's potential in how he plays. He's quick, a good defender, can win puck battles, and has shown flashes of offensive creativity and skill. He struggled with injuries at times this past year and also played on a terrible team, so I'm interested to see how he performs this upcoming season.
15. Vladimir Grudin - Before you start on "but Matt, he's a fifth round pick," let me at least get a chance to explain myself. Grudin is legit. He's more dynamic offensively than someone like Heimosalmi, and he's arguably a better skater. There's a lot of upside in the way he plays, but in order for me to fully believe in him, he'll have to improve defensively. Still, this is a player that could be a top four defender someday, and I'd rather take him over some bruiser that might be a sixth or seventh defenseman someday.
16. Justin Robidas - Robidas is a good prospect, size be damned. He has one of the best shots in the Hurricanes' system behind Gunler and perhaps Trikozov, and plays with a ton of pace and energy. I could see Robidas being a nice complementary goal scorer at the NHL level.
17. Jackson Blake - Blake reminds me of Rizzo in the sense that both can make plays at a high pace. His USHL season was impressive, although he did cool off towards the end of the season. Blake should take on a big role with the University of North Dakota in the fall, and I'm interested to see how he plays against bigger competition. He isn't the strongest player, so he'll need to bulk up.
18. Tuukka Tiekola - Last year wasn't Tiekola's year, if I'm being honest. He struggled with Karpat and couldn't stay healthy, which certainly didn't help. This season, I'm unsure if he is Chicago bound or remaining in Finland since he did not attend development camp. Tiekola can be electrifying when he's on his game, though, and if he is able to get back on track, he could be a fun NHL player.
19. Ronan Seeley - Seeley is coming off of a career year in the WHL and will be joining the Wolves for the upcoming season. The smooth skating defenseman impressed me with his ability in all three zones and his improved physicality this past



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season. He may start off in a depth role in Chicago, but it wouldn't surprise me if he moves his way up the depth chart.

20. Patrik Hamrla - I could've picked a few prospects here, but ultimately, I decided to go with Hamrla. He played on a pretty awful team this past season and didn't have the best numbers as a result. When I watched him play, however, I saw a dynamic goalie capable of making the types of saves that keep his team in the game. He has the ability to steal games for his teams and he did just that in the first round of the QMJHL playoffs against Saint John. Stylistically, Hamrla reminds me of former Hurricane Petr Mrazek. He's still a long way away from the NHL, but I see the potential.

Honorable Mentions: Alexander Perevalov, Robert Orr, Joel Nystrom

This was a tough list to make. The Hurricanes have a clear top two prospects in Morrow and Kochetkov, but after that, it gets debatable. Ultimately, I went with Drury based on NHL readiness. He may not have Gunler's upside, but there's no denying Drury's ability and work ethic. Hell, that alone could put him in the top six at some point in his career. My feelings on the Hurricanes' pipeline are pretty similar to those of other people in the public scouting scene. The Hurricanes have a very deep pipeline with a lot of "B" and "C" level prospects, but few, if any, "A" level prospects.

Scott Morrow could be an elite player, but there's still a lot of development needed in order for that to happen. This sort of thing happens when you're a team that has been in the playoff picture for four years now. What has kept the Hurricanes' pipeline intact has been the front office's mission to keep the pipeline stocked with as many prospects as they can have. Carolina has drafted 40 players in the past four years, an average of ten players per draft. That's how the Hurricanes are going to manage to be a great team for a long time. They've kept the pipeline stocked with prospects that will either make the NHL or be utilized in trades to bring in NHL talent, like we saw this past year when the Hurricanes traded Aidan Hreschuk to Columbus for Max Domi.

Josh Tessler's Ranking

1. Scott Morrow
2. Gleb Trikozov
3. Pyotr Kochetkov
4. Jack Drury
5. Noel Gunler

6. Vasili Ponomarev
7. Ville Koivunen
8. Domenick Fensore
9. Alexander Pashin
10. Jamieson Rees
11. Ryan Suzuki
12. Aleksii Heimosalmi
13. Vladimir Grudin
14. Jackson Blake
15. Massimo Rizzo
16. Ronan Seeley
17. Justin Robidas
18. Alexander Nikishin
19. Bryce Montgomery
20. Robert Orr

Honorable mentions: Hamrla, Nybeck, Tiekola, Perevalov

There are differences in Josh's list, but none that I'm really shocked about. When you get past the top ten or so, you're really splitting hairs between the prospects at that level. The Hurricanes have drafted a lot of good prospects over the years and very few great ones, so obviously, the differences between some of the prospects in the latter half of the rankings will be marginal. Take Bryce Montgomery, for example. I left him off of my list because I was unsure of his upside at the NHL level, but I can acknowledge the fact that he has the physical tools necessary to play NHL games. He's also a strong skater and a smart defender that stood out at development camp.

Josh is incredibly high on Trikozov, enough to rank him eighth on our final draft ranking for the 2022 draft. From what I've seen of the player, it's not hard to see why. He possesses elite offensive skills and skating ability, which makes him stand ahead of a lot of the other prospects in our pipeline. I'm obviously a bigger fan of Nikishin than he is, but I'm willing to admit that there's some bias there. Overall, Josh and I agree on a lot of things and while our rankings may not line up exactly, it's pretty obvious that there's a group that we both consider to be ahead of the pack in the Hurricanes' system. Sending a huge thank you to Josh for helping contribute to these rankings. You can find Josh on Twitter and you can find our scouting work over at Smaht Scouting.



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Wolves add three players

The Calder Cup champion Chicago Wolves announced Tuesday they have signed goaltender Cale Morris, defenseman David Farrance and forward Eric Cooley to Standard Player Contracts (SPC) for the 2022-23 season.

Morris, 26, posted a 2-4-0 record and a 3.15 goals-against average in seven games with the Rockford IceHogs and a 9-7-2 record with a 2.83 GAA in 19 games with the ECHL's Indy Fuel. The Larkspur, Colorado, native posted a 58-35 record in 106 games for the University of Notre Dame. In 2017-18, he earned the Mike Richter Award as the NCAA's Top Collegiate Goalie and also was named a Hobey Baker Award finalist.

Farrance, 23, contributed 1 goal and 3 assists in 50 games for the Milwaukee Admirals last year during his first full professional season. The Rochester, New York native also earned 2 NHL games with the Nashville Predators during the 2020-21 season. Prior to turning pro, he produced 26 goals and 62 assists in four seasons at Boston University. He was

named a Hobey Baker Award finalist during the 2019-20 and 2020-21 seasons.

Cooley, 24, contributed 5 goals and 5 assists in 35 games for Ohio State University last year. The West Mifflin, Pennsylvania, native also spent four seasons at Niagara University, where he amassed 24 goals and 73 points in 130 games. He will make his professional debut this fall.

Head coach Ryan Warsofsky's Wolves start to defend their American Hockey League championship on Saturday, Oct. 15, when they host the Milwaukee Admirals in the season opener. Prior to the game, the Wolves will raise a 2022 Calder Cup championship banner to the Allstate Arena rafters. To find the latest information on Calder Cup championship merchandise, season-ticket packages and the team's roster, visit [here](https://www.chicagowolves.com) or contact a team representative at WolvesTix@ChicagoWolves.com.

TODAY'S LINKS

<https://www.nhl.com/hurricanes/news/homegrown-talent-raleigh-native-phillips-represents-at-development-camp/c-335042108>

<https://www.canescountry.com/2022/7/26/23274213/carolina-hurricanes-nhl-draft-prospects-ranking-morrow>

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SportScan

Articles from outlets covering the Hurricanes' upcoming opponents and league-wide news

1250450 Websites

'Federal government let victims down' by not acting on Hockey Canada assault allegations: MP

Katie Strang, Dan Robson, Ian Mendes

7-8 minutes 26/07/2022

The federal government "let victims down" when Sport Canada failed to follow up on allegations of a sexual assault involving members of the World Junior team after a fund-raising gala in 2018, a member of the parliamentary committee investigating Hockey Canada's handling of the accusations said Tuesday.

MP Peter Julian said he hopes the committee's work on this issue will extend beyond the scope of Hockey Canada and the alleged 2018 incident and broaden its mission for all national sports organizations.

"It's an epidemic," he told The Athletic in an interview. "It's a crisis that goes far beyond Hockey Canada."

In Tuesday's hearing, Michel Ruest, a senior director of Sport Canada, said that his organization was made aware of the sexual assault allegations in June 2018, but did not follow up with Hockey Canada or inform the then-Sport Minister of the allegations.

Julian said Sport Canada's inaction properly shows that the organization's practice of letting national sports organizations operate on the honor system has "manifestly failed," adding that there needs to be a "sea change in eliminating toxic culture."

"The federal government let victims fend for themselves," Julian said. "That's unacceptable."

When talking to reporters on Parliament Hill on Tuesday, Julian issued a challenge to Hockey Canada executives, who will appear before this same committee on Wednesday.

"It's clear that Hockey Canada has not been transparent at all," he said. "And I think people are aware of that right across the country. I think Hockey Canada has a responsibility to be transparent and accountable. And I hope they will be (on Wednesday)"

Hockey Canada's former CEO Tom Renney and current president Scott Smith are among the officials who will face questions at Wednesday's hearing.

Danielle Robitaille, a lawyer with Henein Hutchison, was the first to face questions during the two-day hearing on a scandal that has rocked Hockey Canada, following the revelation of a settlement this spring between the organization and the victim of an alleged group sexual assault that occurred following the Hockey Canada Foundation gala and golf event in London, Ont., four years ago. Henein Hutchison is the firm hired by Hockey Canada to conduct an investigation, which was reopened last week.

Members of the 2018 Canadian World Junior team who do not participate in the probe will receive a lifetime ban from participation in activities run by the governing body, and those bans will be made public, Robitaille told the committee Tuesday.

Liberal MP Anthony Housefather asks Danielle Robitaille with Henein Hutchison if she knows the identities of the players who may be involved with the alleged sexual assault in London in 2018.

Other takeaways from the hearings on Tuesday included:

The complainant in the case has agreed to participate in the reopened Henein Hutchison investigation.

Ten out of 19 players from the 2018 Canadian World Junior team participated in Henein Hutchison's initial investigation, which was launched shortly after the incident was first reported on June 19, 2018. Nine players did not participate and deferred their interviews until the then-ongoing criminal investigation by the London Police Service was concluded.

Seven members of Hockey Canada, including coaches and staff, were also interviewed by Henein Hutchison at the time.

Robitaille told the parliamentary committee that she expects to schedule interviews with players from the 2018 team imminently and that she has not been asked to stand down by London police, despite the fact the criminal investigation has been reopened.

Canadian Minister of Sport Pascale St-Onge said that testimony from Hockey Canada before the Canadian Heritage Committee last month confirmed for her that they "didn't understand the severity" of the situation. "We need to see more diversity at the decision-making table if we want to see changes at Hockey Canada," St-Onge said.

St-Onge closed the hearings today by saying she salutes the courage of any athlete who chooses to come forward with their experience, and says that courage is what guides her work every day.

In an effort to address what it called "systemic issues," Hockey Canada released an action plan Monday that included the introduction of a "tracking and reporting system for all complaints of maltreatment, abuse and harassment" and increased training for players, coaches, employees and volunteers about consent, masculinity and toxic behavior.

In response to the announcement of the plan, Sheldon Kennedy called for the resignation of Smith, his leadership team and the board of directors.

"The same people with a new plan expecting different results is the definition of insanity," Kennedy, who has been at the forefront of advocating for sexual abuse awareness since he came forward with his own story decades ago, said Tuesday in a statement.

In her post-hearing media session, St-Onge echoed Kennedy's comments, questioning the upper management of Hockey Canada.

"I think there are very serious questions that the leadership at Hockey Canada should ask themselves," said St-Onge. "If the people who were present in the past decade and in the events of 2018, are they really the



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right leaders to implement the change that hockey culture needs and to end the culture of silence in the organization?"

It has been a tumultuous few months for Hockey Canada, which was already the subject of harsh criticism over its handling of the 2018 alleged incident when allegations going back nearly two decades surfaced on Friday. Halifax Police announced they were opening a new investigation into a 2003 alleged sexual assault involving members of the 2003 Canadian World Junior team.

Hockey Canada said it learned of the 2003 allegations through TSN reporter Rick Westhead, who informed the organization that he spoke to multiple witnesses about the alleged assault. Hockey Canada said it contacted Halifax Regional Police after receiving Westhead's email.

Sponsors have also distanced themselves from Hockey Canada and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has slammed the organization's handling of the 2018 allegations.

Additionally, The Globe and Mail reported last week that Hockey Canada used a multimillion-dollar fund, paid for by registration fees from youth players, to pay out alleged sexual assault cases. Hockey Canada has since announced it will no longer use the fund to settle sexual assault cases.

The Athletic LOADED: 07.27.2022

1250451 Websites

New report demonstrates causal link between head impacts and CTE for first time

Jacob Whitehead

4-5 minutes 26/07/2022

A new report has demonstrated a causal link between repetitive head impacts and chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) for the first time.

The research, carried out by Harvard University, Oxford Brookes University and 11 other academic institutions, alongside analysis from the Concussion Legacy Foundation, has found "conclusive evidence" that the progressive brain disease can be linked to sub-concussive blows such as heading.

A type of dementia, CTE can lead to dramatic changes in mood, behaviour, and cognition. It is incurable.

The authors have immediately calls for safeguarding measures in contact sports, concluding: "the strength of the current evidence compels us to focus on immediately implementing aggressive CTE mitigation programs, especially for children."

Evidence of CTE has been found in athletes participating in football, American football, rugby union, ice hockey, lacrosse, mixed martial arts, wrestling and boxing. Several governing bodies, including the NFL, NHL, and NCAA have previously denied a causal link.

"Sport governing bodies should not mislead the public on CTE causation while athletes die and families are destroyed by this terrible disease," said lead author Dr Chris Nowinski.

CTE was first discovered by Dr Bennet Omalu in the brain of Hall of Fame NFL player Mike Webster, who played for the Pittsburgh Steelers between 1974 and 1988. In 2011, the NFL paid a group of players \$1 billion as part of a class action lawsuit.

Boston University researchers have previously found evidence of CTE in 99 per cent of brains of former NFL players studied. Dozens of former NHL players have also been posthumously diagnosed with the disease.

In football specifically, heading has been linked to dementia, with a study showing ex-professional Scottish footballers born between 1900 and 1976 were three-and-a-half times more likely to have the disease as a cause of death.

Adam J White, a co-author of the report, who works for Boston-based charity Concussion Legacy Foundation, told The Athletic: "This is significant for all sports, including soccer. Serious action is needed to reduce repetitive head impacts in sport like those from heading the ball.

"It's great to see the Football Association (FA) starting that journey by delaying heading until age 12. But more has to happen internationally to have fewer hits with less force happening later in life."

In 2002, a coroner found that heading was responsible for the death of former West Bromwich Albion striker Jeff Astle — recording a verdict of "death by industrial disease". Five of England's 1966 World Cup winning team have been diagnosed with dementia, with four dying of the disease.

"Armed with confidence in the causal connection between repeated head impacts and CTE, parents and youth coaches may reject exposing their children to a preventable degenerative brain disease," the report states.

Last week, The Athletic revealed that the FA is to trial the removal of heading at all age groups under the age of 12. At the start of the 2021-22 season, the FA also introduced guidance limiting professional players to 10 high-force headers in training per week.

Concussion substitutes were introduced to the Premier League in February 2021, allowing a player with a suspected brain injury to be replaced without the club suffering a numerical disadvantage.

However, last month, The Athletic revealed the FA had no plans to follow rugby union in changing concussion laws to ensure players had a minimum 12-day stand-down, despite pressure from the PFA.

The Athletic LOADED: 07.27.2022

1250452 Websites

NHL's 10 worst contracts, 2022 edition: Tyler Seguin, Seth Jones and others

Dom Luszczyszyn

20-25 minutes 26/07/2022

A lot of discussion in pro sports revolves around contracts, for better or worse. Every player is reduced to a singular monetary value and in a salary-cap world that value is crucial in terms of which players are providing value — and which are not.

This list is about the "nots," the bottom of the salary efficiency spectrum where players aren't living up to their worst. "How is this guy making that much" is the usual refrain.

But the thing about reducing players to their monetary value, is that we end up reducing them to just that. At the end of the day these are human beings; some of the most determined ones in the world at that. That means that an article like this is bulletin board material. It can serve as motivation. Last season offered some proof of that.

Drew Doughty, who held the top spot in back-to-back years, was looking nothing like an \$11 million defender where the expectation is 2.8 wins. In 2021-22, he played at a 3.2-win pace. He's back — and outside the top



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10 this year. Erik Karlsson was in a similar boat and though he wasn't as strong as Doughty, his 2.5-win pace was much closer to where he needed to be to live up to his contract. Jeff Skinner rounds out the top three and he had a similar jump, getting back on the top line and providing legitimate top-line value. Further down the list, Josh Morrissey is another great example and his projected value is now right in line with his contract.

Truly, we love to see it.

It's not always the most fun, ragging on players for being paid more than they're arguably worth — an option we'd all take if given the chance. "Would you rather be underpaid or overrated?" Jay-Z once rapped. But it's always a great story seeing a pro athlete get his game back on track where his salary no longer becomes part of the story.

Drew Doughty returns this season to defend his title for the NHL's worst contract. But the Sharks are coming for him ...

That's worth keeping in mind when going through this list. It's based on a projected outcome of the future based on a player's age and what he's done in recent seasons. But these are humans and math can change with some extra determination and willpower.

With that being said, here are the current 10 worst contracts in hockey.

The goal here is to grade contracts empirically with the same context being applied to each player across the league: How much value does each player bring to the table and how likely will they provide positive value over the life of the contract

The way that's measured comes from comparing a player's GSV and the expected salary that comes with it to a player's current contract. Surplus value compares what they make with what the model believes they should be making, while positive value probability measures the certainty that a player will perform above his cap hit. The list of best and worst contracts is based on those two factors (with twice as much weight being placed on surplus value) looking outwards. What players have already done holds no merit, this is about the future value of the deal. Contract clauses and bonus structure are important, but not considered in this assessment. Players on LTIR were not considered.

Worst contracts in the league

1. Tyler Seguin

Contract: \$9.9M x five years

Surplus Value: -\$38.4M

Positive Value Probability: 5.2 percent

When Tyler Seguin signed an eight-year extension during the 2018 offseason he was one of the absolute best players in hockey — one worthy of nearly \$10 million per season. Even at 27, all signs pointed to a skilled player who would be able to age gracefully and live up to a big-ticket deal. Three years in that's not what happened.

The 2018-19 season was still a strong one for Seguin where he scored at a point-per-game pace, but the contract didn't kick in until 2019-20. Unfortunately for the Stars, that would be the last time Seguin would be a point-per-game player. In each passing year, Seguin's value has dropped significantly and he's gone from a 3.5-win player at the start of the contract to one that isn't even worth one win.

Living up to the deal means playing like a high-end first-line forward again and while that's not a tall order given Seguin's talent level, it is due to his health. Seguin had to miss almost the entire 2021 season and that likely plays a massive role in last year's struggles. He came back in 2021-22 and played the full season scoring nearly 50 points, but he was a massive liability at five-on-five. It was a stark contrast from the elite play-driver he was only a few years prior.

Seguin currently holds the worst contract in hockey and his chances of living up to his deal have fallen below 10 percent. That's not a pretty sight for Stars fans, but maybe a long offseason and a new coach can help

facilitate a return to his former glory. The odds definitely aren't in Seguin's favour, but they aren't zero for the former superstar.

2. Seth Jones

Contract: \$9.5M x eight years

Surplus Value: -\$39.6M

Positive Value Probability: 20.4 percent

The summer of 2021 was the year that defensemen got paid. Those defenders come in two tiers: the best in the league who are now underpaid on the best contracts in hockey list, and the ones who aren't the best but are paid like they are. Those are the ones on this list.

It seems like the NHL at large basically said: "Do you play 25 minutes per game and score? If so, you are entitled to an eight-year deal worth \$9 million per season!" And that's how we end up with four deals from that summer on the worst contracts list, starting with the always polarizing Seth Jones.

On the surface, Jones is a 50-point defenceman who eats minutes. That's a good player and one any team would be lucky to have. The problem remains that at five-on-five he doesn't win matchups. It's nice to have a guy who can play 26 minutes per game, but what they do in those minutes matter. Jones doesn't move the needle in that way, not like he did in his prime. Perhaps that's a product of the teams he's been on, but it shouldn't be lost on anyone that he came to Chicago as a supposed needle-mover and proceeded to not move the needle. He's being paid to be a true number one who can provide 2.1 wins of value per season, but he's closer to a strong number two defenceman at around 1.3 wins. Good player, just not elite.

The problem with Jones's deal isn't really what he is now, it's the length of the deal. Eight years is a very long time and if he already isn't worth it at 27, what's that going to look like at age 35? Probably not good.

Jones' chances of living up to his deal are better than most on this list at one-in-five, and his talent is obvious. This could be one of those times where the model underrates a player due to their situation more than their ability and that shouldn't be discounted with Jones. But at the same time, Chicago was his chance to prove he's an elite number one and it's hard to say he accomplished that. With eight years left on his mega deal, it's an uphill battle for Jones to be worth his contract for the life of it.

3. Jeff Skinner

Contract: \$9.0M x five years

Surplus Value: -\$35.1M

Positive Value Probability: 6.2 percent

For any fan who sees a player on their favourite team on this list, Jeff Skinner is one reason to believe all hope is not lost — especially if there's a new coach in the mix. Usage plays a big role in value and Buffalo wasn't getting the most out of Skinner burying him lower in the lineup. Don Granato fixed that and had Skinner playing his best hockey since his first year as a Sabre. Skinner scored at a 33-goal and 65-point pace for the year, enough to play at a 2.1-win rate. That's not quite where he needs to be worth \$9 million, but it's pretty close.

The question now is whether it was a dead-cat bounce for a 30-year-old who was rapidly declining or a sign that Skinner has more game left in him. His projected 1.3 win rate for next year splits it down the middle, but the big issue remains his age. Skinner's comps don't age well and suggest a lot of downside going forward. That's natural for a 30-year-old, but the coaching context means a lot here and it's something the model undersells.

This will be an extremely interesting season for Skinner. With five years remaining on his deal, replicating last year's magic is crucial toward Buffalo getting its money's worth. If he can get up to that level again, he might not be on this list next year after all which would be a big win for Buffalo's future. But given his age and prior trajectory, there's still a



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strong chance last year was just an aberration — with more pain coming over the next five years.

4. Marc-Edouard Vlasic

Contract: \$7M x four years

Surplus Value: -\$25.2M

Positive Value Probability: 0.1 percent

With every contract on this list, there's at least a dim light sparkling within the darkness. "If this, this and this happens — we might be OK with this deal." There is one exception to that rule and it's Marc-Edouard Vlasic's albatross of a deal. The 35-year-old is set to make \$7 million per season for four more seasons. Ouch.

Vlasic was underpaid and underrated for the majority of his career, so there are no hard feelings now about him securing the bag retroactively. But in terms of judging good and bad deals, it's hard to find any positives with this one when his market value is already in the negatives.

In past years, there was an argument to be made by tough usage sinking Vlasic's underlying numbers. That's not the case anymore as he's slid further and further into a depth role, still struggling to put up positive results in the process. Vlasic isn't what he once was and at his age has essentially no shot of getting back to that level. Of his 25 best comps, only one even made it to Year 3 going forward. Vlasic had an excellent NHL career, but his days are numbered.

5. Darnell Nurse

Contract: \$9.3M x eight years

Surplus Value: -\$35.1M

Positive Value Probability: 22.7 percent

Basically, anything said in the Seth Jones blurb can be happily applied here for Darnell Nurse as well. He too has a roughly one-in-five chance of living up to his \$9 million-plus deal where the biggest issue is contract length for a 27-year-old. Nurse also eats minutes and scores, but is probably not a true number one defender. The talent is there to be more, but the price tag is still too high.

Here's the main difference with Nurse though: his last two seasons were strong enough to be a bit more optimistic about his future.

Early on in Nurse's career, he struggled defensively and that was a continuous source of concern about his future as a high-end defender. Even his breakthrough year in 2021 was mostly driven by offence. Nurse was worth 1.9 wins that season, but there was plenty of reason to be skeptical he could keep that up. Combine that with The McDavid Factor likely boosting his numbers (something GSVA controls for to an extent) and there was good reason to be skeptical of Nurse's new deal.

The 2021-22 season changed the math a bit. Nurse's own scoring regressed, as did his offensive impact, but he cleaned up his defensive game to a substantial degree. Relative to teammates, he wasn't giving up more chances against which is a departure from the entirety of his career. Overall, his effect was still negative. However, his offence more than made up for that. That's a huge step and once again he played at a 1.9-win pace — not far off from the 2.1 wins he needs to be at to be worth his hefty cap hit.

The length of the deal and his age still make Nurse's contract a very unlikely bet, but his recent trajectory leaves some room for optimism. In the short term, the deal may not be as painful as once thought. It's worth noting too that Nurse's best comp is Brent Burns so the best may be yet to come here (though, on the other hand, Brent Seabrook wasn't far off either).

6. Colton Parayko

Contract: \$6.5M x eight years

Surplus Value: -\$31.2M

Positive Value Probability: 16.2 percent

The third big defenceman contract from the summer of 2021 doesn't come in at an exorbitant \$9 million or more, but is just as problematic. Colton Parayko signed an eight-year pact that kicks off with his age 29 season and pays him \$6.5 million per season. The expectation: a strong number two defenceman.

Compared to the other defenders on this list, offence is not Parayko's calling card. He's generally good for around 30-to-35 points, but actually driving offence at five-on-five isn't his specialty. That holds his value back a bit, especially from being a true number one, but his defensive ability is supposed to make up for it. At his peak, Parayko was one of the league's very best defensive defencemen — one who would absolutely be worth a big-ticket deal.

The problem is Parayko hasn't been that over the past two seasons. His relative scoring chance suppression has been OK, but that's been relative to a below-average defensive team that gives up a fair share of chances. A lot of those chances are also ending up in the net, which over a larger sample size does matter — even if it's prone to luck in the short term. Parayko is now projected to be an average defensive defender, with a little boost given because of the context of his usage which is very tough.

Right now Parayko looks like a strong number three according to GSVA, but there's a path back towards being a legitimate top-pair defender ... maybe even a high-end one like he once was. What Parayko needs is help on the left side. He isn't a guy who can drive a pair on his own, and while there's nothing wrong with that, it's harder to like an eight-year commitment at top-pairing money under those circumstances. Parayko has the ability, talent and size to be very valuable, but better support is needed.

I believe in Parayko and that he can get back there, but there's an even bigger hindrance and that's age. For a rugged defender, the age curve isn't kind, especially as he enters his 30s. Parayko's best comp is Erik Johnson which isn't bad, but it isn't great either.

Getting back to the top-pair level in his early 30s will make this deal much more palatable for the Blues, but it's no guarantee and the mid-30s part will likely be even tougher to swallow. This will be a very interesting season for his trajectory.

7. Erik Karlsson

Contract: \$11.5M x five years

Surplus Value: -\$30.0M

Positive Value Probability: 20.9 percent

While a lot of eyes were on Drew Doughty's resurgence in 2021-22, Erik Karlsson had a similar bounce-back of his own, making his contract look much less onerous than years past.

With Karlsson, health is always the concern. In 2021 he clearly wasn't healthy and it showed in his numbers, his worst ever season. Offensively he struggled and defensively he was worse than ever. His play made his contract look especially bad and almost impossible to live up to. But then the 2021-22 season came along and Karlsson — when healthy — looked vintage. The offence was there again and he was driving play to a positive degree. Defensively he struggled, but he more than made up for it. Not enough to be worth \$11.5 million, but much closer than the prior year.

The talent is always there with Karlsson, but as usual, it comes down to health with him. How much longer can his body last? With five years left and at 32 years old, it's a terrible bet that things will go well going forward. But at the very least, last year was encouraging in the sense that in the short term it may not be as completely painful as previously thought. There's still some upside here, even if it's limited and unlikely.

8. Zach Werenski



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Contract: \$9.6M x six years

Surplus Value: -\$27.2M

Positive Value Probability: 27.4 percent

The fourth and final defenseman contract from the summer of 2021 belongs to Zach Werenski, who signed the richest, but most optimistic one. For starters, it's only six years rather than eight years, meaning less tail-end risk. The fact he's also 25 rather than 27 (or 29, yuck) is also a plus as it means the deal doesn't operate much in his 30's. That's a plus.

It's easy to see why both of those details are attractive in the chart above, as there's plenty of upside above Werenski's projected trajectory, a trajectory that stays mostly stable too. For the entire length of the deal, Werenski is projected to be a one-win defender, give or take.

The problem with that is he's being paid to be double what he is.

He's not that guy and almost all of his comparables are also not that guy either. Werenski currently grades out as a number two defenceman, but \$9.6 million is elite defenceman money. It's extremely hard to live up to. Again, he scores like one and plays as much as one, just like Jones and Nurse — but when a team pays a defender that much, the expectation is winning matchups on top of that. Werenski doesn't do that and he's arguably the worst of the three in that regard.

He also has the least support and Columbus and that's a big factor to remember too. With more support, Werenski's talent can potentially shine to make his current deal palatable. Hell, his 27 percent chance of doing so isn't that bad either. But for now, he has a tall hill to climb to get there.

9. Nick Suzuki

Contract: \$7.9M x eight years

Surplus Value: -\$22.3M

Positive Value Probability: 35.3 percent

Personally, I'm excited to see how wrong this one is.

I'm reporting it how the model spits it out now, and as you've read — the best framing for each of these players is one born out of optimism. Nick Suzuki deserves the most optimism given his age and previous trajectory. His comps make that even rosier, pushing his positive value probability from 24 percent to 35 percent (inclusion on this list is based on the former number).

Signing a young player one year out from restricted free agency is usually a way to reduce risk. For Montreal, seeing Suzuki play like a borderline top-line center at such a young age was enough to lock him in long-term at just under \$8 million. It was a touch rich at the time, but a deal he could grow into.

Suzuki can still do that — the expectation is only a two-win player — but the hill got steeper after a trying season with Montreal, one where he was thrust to the top of the lineup. Perhaps it would've been prudent to see if it was a role he could handle first before making a big commitment because that's now the biggest question mark.

The upside is still there for Suzuki and using comps helps make his trajectory look more promising (Ryan O'Reilly, Elias Lindholm, and Bo Horvat are standouts). Still, there are also less promising comps than there have been when he signed (Alex Galchenyuk, Mikkel Boedker, Jonathan Drouin). What once felt like a near guarantee, now feels like a reasonable question: can Suzuki be a true top-line pivot? There's more downside than initially intended and that's the reason he lands on this list.

Part of that is the overall Montreal Stink likely dragging him down. Perhaps the team effects are too strong here, but it was still a team he was part of. A big bounce-back is needed in 2022-23 and one reason to feel like it will come is his play under Martin St. Louis. Coaching matters and Suzuki was a changed man under new tutelage, looking back on track to where he was at the end of 2021.

Consider this a warning sign more than Suzuki actually belonging. The model spits out this result because Suzuki is not currently an \$8 million player. He's not close either and there's a lot more risk now with his deal. With the deal being eight years long, the yearly negative surplus also compounds.

With that being said, it would be an absolute shock to see him anywhere close to this list next season. He's a talent worth betting on, even if the odds lowered after last season.

10. Ben Chiarot

Contract: \$4.8M x four years

Surplus Value: -\$16.2M

Positive Value Probability: 11.7 percent

Ben Chiarot is 31 years old. He plays a very rugged and punishing game. He is signed until he's 35 for nearly \$5 million per season. His best comps are Jack Johnson, Roman Polak, Dion Phaneuf, Brent Seabrook, Mark Stuart, Dan Girardi and a slew of other similarly-branded defencemen. Of his 25 best comps, over half were out of the league after two years.

This is not a good contract in any sense of the imagination.

Is it bad enough to be on this list? It depends on how you calculate surplus value. The chart above shows a negative \$16.2 million, but that imagines a low-end cutoff of the league minimum. As you can see on the left side of the chart, Chiarot's market value — according to the model — falls well below that. The actual retail price is negative \$23.7 million.

But.

That's based on the model's judgement of value. As has been often reported, Chiarot's real value lies somewhere above that... and somewhere below what traditional hockey folks believe. That mid-point is a third-pairing defender, and \$4.8 million is already a steep price for that. Add in his age, the term, and the comps that all scream limited utility and Chiarot is a player who belongs here. He can be worth it if traditional scouts are right about his game, or if he thrives in a more suitable role. For now, however, it's a bit hard to see.

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Who are the NHL's best goalie prospects? Scott Wheeler ranks the top 10 under 25

Scott Wheeler

17-21 minutes 26/07/2022

Welcome to the second part of the 2022 edition of my drafted NHL prospect rankings.

Today's top 10 goalie prospects list follows yesterday's top 50 drafted skaters ranking. Together, this package of content serves as the conclusion of all of my work from the preceding season and the start of my prospect coverage for a new one.

Collectively, it follows thousands of hours spent watching these players on tape and in person, as well as speaking with sources and studying the ins and outs of their games and the data that comes with it.

After producing a combined annual ranking in 2018 and 2019, the skaters and the goalies were divided in 2020, 2021 and now 2022. This is done to evaluate for our readers a greater number of goalies (when it



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was one top 50 list, I only ever liked two or three goalie prospects enough to rank them) reflective of the one-sixth share they represent on the ice. Separating the two lists also allows me to use a separate set of criteria for the goalies, one which better understands the different rates at which goalies develop and the different reasons for which they're drafted in the first place.

As such, the criteria for a goalie's prospect's inclusion in this ranking differs from the parameters I use for skaters. To be eligible, a goalie must be:

- Under 25 years old. This expanded age criteria (I used to lump goalies in with my under-23 cutoff for skaters) allowed for the continued consideration of goalies like Stuart Skinner and Connor Ingram, who are still very much prospects.
- Not currently established as one of their NHL club's two primary options, with rare exceptions for goalies on the younger side. I give myself some arbitrary leeway here. You'll notice that 22-year-old Lukas Dostal, who played four games for the Ducks last year and should again challenge John Gibson and Anthony Stolarz for starts this season, and 23-year-old Skinner, who played 13 times for the Oilers last season and should back up Jack Campbell beginning in the fall, still feature in the ranking. But other young goalies from last year's list who established themselves further than Dostal and Skinner last season, like Boston's Jeremy Swayman and Florida's Spencer Knight, are no longer eligible.

My annual top 50 drafted NHL prospects ranking at @TheAthletic:

1. Owen Power
2. Luke Hughes
3. Shane Wright

1. Jesper Wallstedt, G, 19 (Minnesota Wild — No. 20, 2021)

Wallstedt's the best goalie prospect on the planet for me. And that's not meant as a slight to the next four names on this list, who each belong in that group or not far behind. But there's just a control to his game that is so singular and rare in goalies his age. I've written about it in the past as almost robotic, and that's truly the best descriptor for it. Wallstedt's a big 6-foot-3 (he fills the net for his size) goalie who plays sharp lines positionally, holds those lines, and swallows the first shot so that he doesn't have to make a ton of second saves. His movement is compact, he tracks through layers incredibly well to find pucks, and he reads opposing shooters so well that he's rarely beat cleanly.

There's a minor question mark or two around every young goalie in the sport and with Wallstedt I don't see a single hole or area of weakness that worries me. I'd maybe like to see him develop a little more quickness (he's strong across the net and low-to-high on pushes, but he sits a little heavy over his skates and I wouldn't say his feet are fast per se). But otherwise, he's got all of the makings of a true No. 1 starter and he's the best bet on this list to join the shrinking number of goalies (Andrei Vasilevskiy, Igor Shesterkin, Jacob Markstrom and Connor Hellebuyck, with Juuse Saros, Thatcher Demko and Ilya Sorokin maybe angling to join them?) that we can say that about.

2. Yaroslav Askarov, G, 20 (Nashville Predators — No. 11, 2020)

Last season was the first real valley on Askarov's trajectory, after the three prior had followed a steep incline. I had to remind myself, though, when I found myself watching him and he was struggling, that he was still a 19-year-old playing for the entire year (he just turned 20 in June) — and playing at Russia's top two pro levels. My belief in his tools or his upside as a starting NHL goalie is not deterred, but I did pause at times and his play wavered just enough to make Wallstedt an easy choice for the top spot on this list. Askarov's raw talent certainly makes him unique. His ability to change directions in the net, stay on top of shooters, track their hands, and make reactionary saves is elite. His athleticism is, too. He regularly makes second- and third-chance saves holding firm in his positioning even when he's laying on the ice. But there are tools in his game that still need some refinement.

There are still times where he gets frozen over his glove hand, something NHL teams will exploit. He still looks jittery in the net, bouncing on his toes and moving to pucks (which he says is to keep himself focused and make some of those quick-twitch saves I talked about). But his agility and reads are so impressive that he can steal games when he's at his best, and make the difficult saves that others just can't get to or stick with. There isn't a goalie prospect in the world with quicker feet through shuffles or more explosiveness side-to-side or low-to-high than Askarov. That blend of power and speed combines with his extended early track record to give him high, high upside.

3. Sebastian Cossa, G, 19 (Detroit Red Wings — No. 15, 2021)

Between the Traverse City Prospects Tournament in September, a pair of Calgary camps with Canada in August and December, and the Memorial Cup in June, I've watched Cossa play live more than double-digit times this season. In those viewings, I've seen him look unflappable. I've also seen him look rattled as shots sneak through holes they shouldn't be finding. The same was true this year for him in the WHL, where his previously-stellar numbers came back down to earth.

Cossa's a huge (6-foot-6), powerful, athletic goalie and those last two things don't always come with the first. He's a fiery, confident, talkative competitor who doesn't like to get beat (which contrasts with the stoic demeanour we see in many goalies) and wants to command the net and the room. Bigger goalies often struggle with their movements and their recoveries but neither are an issue for Cossa. His positioning (he does a really good job holding his outside edges to be patient on shots) and reflexes (he's got great hands up high) help him block and grab a lot of pucks. But it's his ability to bounce back into his stance or change directions with passes that separates him. His power through his pushes gives him rare side-to-side ability for a goalie as big as he is.

But there are also some question marks. Some of them are contextual, like how good the Oil Kings have been in front of him these last three years. But others are about the tools, including some of the trouble he faces closing his five-hole because of his size (this is a major recurring issue, even though he does a really good job kicking pucks aimed for the lower corners) and the way he can occasionally lose himself in his net on scramble plays (those strong pushes to get to tough lateral saves can pull him off his lines). He can get pulled out of his net overcommitting on dekes too. His natural gifts give him undeniable upside though. When he's set and square to shots (as he almost always is), he's tough to beat. I still think he's got starter upside due to his combination of size, dexterity and rare explosiveness in the net, but I wouldn't quite consider him in the same tier as Wallstedt or Askarov at this stage.

4. Dustin Wolf, G, 21 (Calgary Flames — No. 214, 2019)

I seriously considered ranking Wolf third here. That's how good I think this kid is. And if you've been following my work for any amount of time, you'll know that Wolf is my favourite goalie prospect in the sport, so that won't come as a surprise to you. When the Flames drafted him at the end of the seventh round, he ranked in the second round of my 2019 draft board, as my second-ranked goalie behind only Knight. He possesses elite footwork and tracking. He never loses sight of the puck and anticipates the movements of opposing carriers so, so well, making him extremely hard to beat with a deke. You'll rarely see a player beat him side-to-side on a breakaway because he can stick on top of them. He has everything you look for in a top goalie prospect today except for the size. The results are there, he's athletic and his technical ability is refined.

Small goalies are expected to be quicker through their footwork and edges than bigger goalies, but that can often pull them out of position and force them into a scrambling style. Wolf's game is remarkably compact, though. He holds his edges and angles beautifully, making himself look bigger than he is in the net and helping him to stay centre. I fully expect Wolf to push for the backup job at some point in the not-too-distant future in Calgary. He and the next name on this list are proof NHL clubs are still too concerned about size in their netminders — and reason



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enough that other small, successful goalies like Hugo Havelid, Brett Brochu and Thomas Milic should have been drafted.

5. Devon Levi, G, 20 (Buffalo Sabres — No. 212, 2020)

Levi had a season for the ages at Northeastern, posting a .952 save percentage across 32 games and winning both the Mike Richter Award as college hockey's top goalie and the Tim Taylor Award as its top rookie. His journey from the CCHL to the world juniors and then the Olympics all during the pandemic is one of the best stories in hockey these last couple of years. He has exactly the skills smaller goalies need to be successful — impressive control on his outside edges (and the patience to hold them), quick feet on his shuffles so that he can stick with dekes and go post-to-post or low-to-high to get to tough pucks, perfect reads on shooters, excellent tracking through and under traffic, and a battler's mentality in the net which keeps him in plays even when he looks like he's down and out on his knees. There aren't a ton of 6-foot goalies in today's NHL, at least not starting ones, but Levi, like Wolf, has all of the tools to become one.

6. Lukas Dostal, G, 22 (Anaheim Ducks — No. 85, 2018)

After a slow start to the season (really his first extended run of mediocre play in years), Dostal regained his form after Christmas to again look like the goalie who'd performed so well from Liiga right through to the AHL across the previous three seasons. Dostal's a smallish goalie who has turned his lean 6-foot-2 frame into an asset by slowly adding some strength and power to a game that was already built on agility. He's got pristine technical ability, great hands (especially his glove), and quick feet which help him stick with dekes, track the play through screens, and make recovery saves on scrambles. Plus he holds his lines on his outside edges extremely well, limiting his movements when he needs to, staying compact, and playing his angles head-on. He has also proven, time and time again, that while his game requires movement, he's in complete control and rarely swims. He's going to be one of the Ducks' two goalies long-term. The question now is just which one. He looks like he'll be a tandem goalie at minimum now and has certainly turned me from cautious a few years ago into a believer.

7. Dylan Garand, G, 20 (New York Rangers — No. 103, 2020)

Garand has really emerged these last three years as one of the top goalie prospects in the sport, to the point where he is now the CHL Goaltender of the Year and a lock to be Canada's starter at the restarted 2022 world juniors in Edmonton in August. That light isn't going anywhere either. Next year, in his final season in the WHL, he'll get to backstop his Memorial Cup host Blazers. And though he's listed at 6-foot-1 by the Blazers and by Hockey Canada, he's listed at 6-foot by the NHL, making him the fourth consecutive goalie on this list (the next name will make it a fifth) who is below average in size.

Garand's game is led by his quickness in the net (which helps him make acrobatic saves when he needs to), great hands (especially on the glove side, which can really flash), a studious understanding of the game, his positioning, and how he sees the way plays develop in front of him. He plays on his toes and is active in the net, but he does it without spinning and swimming by holding his outside edges when he settles into his stance before a shot, playing sharp angles, and tracking pucks into his body. He also almost never looks panicked in the net and his post-to-post movement is meticulous so he never seems to pull past his parallels and always seems to find and hold his short side on bad-angle shots (his skate and shoulder are always in the right spot, even off of switches when some goalies lose some of those habits). This may be a little high given his size and the work he still has in front of him in the AHL even once he's done with junior, but I like the goalie and the kid (he's got a good head on his shoulders).

8. Drew Comesso, G, 20 (Chicago Blackhawks — No. 46, 2020)

After a .915 freshman year at BU, Comesso climbed back to a .914 sophomore season with the Terriers following a slow start (for him and the team in front of him, which was banged up and not at its best out of the gate), while also continuing to be a focal point of USA Hockey's with

an invite to the Olympics. I see a mature makeup as a kid and goalie. At 6-foot-2, he's not big by today's standards for a goalie, but he blends a studious approach to the position with sharp angles, sound technique, and a calming, poised demeanour to keep shots in his chest, control rebounds, settle down plays and hold firm to his edges. And while he's not a dynamic athlete, he can fall back on his athleticism when the play does break down, he's efficient in his movements, he's quick on his feet and he doesn't put himself into many scrambles because of the way he reads the play. Comesso reliably makes the saves that he should and plays the same game-to-game. He doesn't steal a ton of starts and I wouldn't say he's got any A-plus tools that really pop, but there's not a lot in his game that you can nitpick either. I'm not convinced he's going to be a starter at the next level, but I — and the rest of the hockey world — fully expect him to become an NHL goalie.

9. Erik Portillo, G, 21 (Buffalo Sabres — No. 67, 2019)

After waiting for his turn in the Wolverines goal as a freshman, Portillo ran with the net as a sophomore, playing every night to some of the best non-Levi results in college hockey, with a .926 save percentage across 42 games (second only to Hobey Baker winner Dryden McKay's 43) to backstop Michigan to a Frozen Four appearance. Portillo is massive, with a 6-foot-6 and 225-pound frame. He uses that frame to play a poised, deep-in-his-net style, rarely overcommitting to shooters in an effort to play within his net and avoid scrambles when things start to break down. At his best, Portillo takes away all of a shooter's space and looks unbeatable. He'll let the odd soft goal squeak through and his rebound control can sometimes disappoint him but he's got impressive control, coordination, skill and mobility for a goalie his size. I also like how loud he is in the net. You can really hear him back there (a lot like Cossa) and it's clear he wants to command play with directions and his impressive ability to play the puck and start breakouts. He's also, like Levi but with very different tools, an excellent goalie one-on-one with shooters on breakaways.

10. Stuart Skinner, G, 23 (Edmonton Oilers — No. 78, 2017)

I've been slow to come around on Skinner and this ranking is me admittedly playing a little bit of catch-up. For a few years, I saw him as kind of slow in the net and believed he struggled to make the tougher reactionary saves while moving that many of today's goalies excel at. And while I think I misread that a little, I also believe he has made real progress in those areas these past two seasons to put it all together and earn his NHL promotion. He's never going to be the quickest goalie on his feet but he's got desirable size (6-foot-4, over 200 pounds), he has some legitimate power and his habits have become so consistent that he's consistently square to the first shot. His emergence has been all about learning to play within himself and developing efficiency in his movements. I don't think he has the upside of the goalies in front of him here but the results are starting to speak for themselves and suggest he's probably here to stay as a solid NHL goalie now. He's not going to be on this list this time next year because he'll be considered fully graduated, I'd wager.

The Ranking

All told, 20 goalies were strongly considered for this year's ranking, with the 10 who missed the cut featured below as honourable mentions.

As always, the ranking is broken down into tiers to give you a better sense of where the divisions are between one group and the next. This year's ranking is divided into three tiers. They are: 1-2, 3-5 and 6-plus. Consider that third tier as a group that runs from 6-20 (give or take).

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Sportsnet.ca / Hockey Canada marketed the game as a safe place for families. Now that myth is shattered



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Michael Grange@michaelgrange

July 26, 2022, 12:08 PM

As a parent, you can't help but subscribe — knowingly and unknowingly — to myths.

It turns out that raising kids is neither art nor science, but instead a great leap of faith. You hope for great things, pray against terrible ones and in the end come to recognize either one of those extremes is largely outside your control.

That said, being a fatalist about the job isn't really an option. So in addition to hugging, cajoling, teaching, encouraging, and nagging, you try to outsource wisely, leaning on examples, role models, dreams, and stories. The idea being, roughly, that something will take root in an innocent heart or mind and offer a beacon, structure or guide that helps get them through.

And then you hope for the best.

In Canada, for decades now, hockey has been an outlet for that kind of thinking. It's not that every parent who gets their kids up on skates actually believes it will lead to something, it's that the process — in addition to being fun — will help develop character and build habits that shape a person who can make their way in an increasingly confusing world.

And no organization has benefitted more from the notion of hockey as the fabric that binds than Hockey Canada and its annual participation in the World Juniors.

For those whose holy trinity is Howe, Gretzky, and Orr, it is a holiday tradition with its own set of rituals: puck drop on Boxing Day, the excitement building with a typically crucial rivalry game on New Year's Eve before the playoffs conclude early in January, just before schools go back in. Canada doesn't always win but wins enough — 10 times in 26 years — that a World Juniors gold feels like Canada's to lose. The 18- and 19-year-olds who deliver the goods get all the glory and everyone watching at home gets to reflect themselves in it.

It has always been a decent trade-off.

But the bombshell revelations of alleged group sexual assaults by members of the 2018 World Junior team and — late last week — the 2003 team first reported in each case by Rick Westhead of TSN, threatens to change the equation. Twice in less than 20 years, some of Canada's best and brightest hockey talent is alleged to have acted out the most disturbing scenes imaginable, implicated in crimes both heinous and seemingly pre-meditated. In each instance, the perpetrators are unnamed but given that multiple members of two rosters are potentially involved it's impossible for anyone associated with Hockey Canada to argue they were isolated events by rogue actors.

Who knew what? Which secrets were kept out of hockey's tradition of dressing room omerta?

For the second time this summer Hockey Canada executives will this week have their feet held to the fire by the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage as politicians from all parties try to discern how many similar incidents Hockey Canada has had to deal with — a valid question since The Globe and Mail reported details of what seems to be a multi-million dollar slush fund Hockey Canada maintained, at least in part, so they could settle potential lawsuits out of court and without involving insurance. As well the committee will ask which processes Hockey Canada normally uses to deal with sexual assault allegations and how transparent they are when they do. The committee also wants to know if public funds have been used to settle claims or if registration fees paid to the organization by everyone from adult beer leaguers to families of minor hockey players have been the source.

To what degree real change can be expected is an open question.

For its part Hockey Canada released a 'comprehensive Action Plan' Monday that it called "an important step in upholding Hockey Canada's responsibility to address toxic behaviours — both on and off the ice — that conflict with what Canadians expect hockey to be and to confront the culture of silence that exists in corners of the game."

Under that new plan, it's not business as usual for players attending Hockey Canada camps this week. Those players had to participate in a Zoom call addressing expectations for conduct before arriving in Calgary and underwent a further session on diversity, equity, and inclusion before they hit the ice Saturday, per sources. The ongoing discussions around the sexual assaults figured prominently in the conversations and an invitation to parents and players to speak to Hockey Canada executives was offered as well.

If you or someone you know is in need of support, those in Canada can find province-specific centres, crisis lines and services here. For readers in America, a list of resources and references for survivors and their loved ones can be found here.

Will these and other measures be enough to prevent future incidents like those that have been revealed so far?

It's unknowable. But the idea that hockey's self-described 'culture of silence' is going anywhere soon borders on laughable. I contacted the families of some players at the current World Junior camp and while their parents were willing to talk, it was only if they remained anonymous due to concerns that any comments made would reflect on their sons at such critical junctures of their careers. It's understandable and there shouldn't be an obligation of current and future members of the World Junior teams to speak on the sins of the past. But the anxiety families feel about airing thoughts or concerns publicly is telling. The pervasive urge to say nothing in elite hockey circles is hard-wired.

Similarly, while several players on the 2003 and 2018 teams have released statements in reference to the incidents said to have taken place, they have been uniformly self-exculpatory, representing efforts to distance themselves from the alleged actions of their former teammates and claim that they had no prior knowledge of what went on. Even years after the fact no one adjacent to the alleged events is willing to acknowledge a secret held or a rumour ignored, although these players say they will cooperate with investigations.

In some ways that any of this has happened shouldn't be a complete shock, even though what allegedly happened is shocking. Only the naïve would believe that all those generations of fresh-faced kids were in real life the flawless young heroes that live only fiction. In any endeavour where there is a race to get through the eye of the needle, character is rarely weighed on the same scale as talent. Compromises are made as anyone who has been around the underbelly of elite anything can attest.

And it's not as if hockey hasn't had deeply disturbing scandals before — from sexual abuse by authority figures against vulnerable teenagers away from home to mistreatment of brain injuries to hazing rituals that border on medieval.

But what makes these events somehow different is both their gravity and that the young men who skate across our TV screens every Christmas are — by definition — the best that hockey has to offer, players who were the captains of their teams and the top players on them since they put on skates. They represent the best-case embodiment of all those Tim Horton's commercials featuring the early morning practices and cozy moments in the car with Mom and Dad.

It's the image that Hockey Canada has mined for years and very lucratively, as commercial sponsors have spent top dollar to have their brands associated with the peak representation of an iconic Canadian archetype.

And yet in at least two instances, not one member of those national junior teams had, in the moment, the moral compass to sort out very wrong from right and speak up against their teammates on behalf of an outsider



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who needed help. And now — even years after the fact — they are willing only to say 'it wasn't me' rather than take the brave step and publically support the innocent even if it means implicating a teammate.

It's a disgrace. It's reprehensible. For decades Hockey Canada has marketed hockey generally and the World Juniors in particular as a safe place for kids and families to dream big dreams.

Will they be able to again, after this nightmare?

It's hard to imagine, because here's the thing about myths: once shattered, they don't get put together again.

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Sportsnet.ca / Analyzing the Tkachuk for Huberdeau/Weegar trade: Did Flames or Panthers win?

Shayna Goldman@hayyishayyy

July 26, 2022, 4:10 PM

It's been a few days since the Flames and Panthers shook up the hockey world with a banger blockbuster trade. It's not often superstars are on the move in the NHL, and this one saw two switching teams.

When it was clear that Matthew Tkachuk was not willing to sign long-term in Calgary, management took the opportunity to move him to increase the return. Since that sentiment was known, it wouldn't have been too surprising if they lost leverage and couldn't maximize the return to the heights of this calibre player. It's not easy to win a trade as a team moving the best skater in all of it. But there were teams with interest and offers — but clearly, the Panthers were the most enticing.

After first losing Johnny Gaudreau to free agency and Tkachuk via trade, the Flames bring back Jonathan Huberdeau and MacKenzie Weegar, along with a first-rounder and a prospect (Cole Schwindt). The Panthers, on the other hand, get the best player in all of this and extended him for eight years, at \$9.5 million a year on average. So now that the dust has settled a bit and we've all have a second to digest the trade, and hear what all players involved (and managers) have had to say, let's break it all down.

The biggest piece of this deal is obviously Tkachuk, who is coming off a 104-point career-year. With 42 goals on the year — also a career-high — his shooting is a key aspect of his offence. Tkachuk has really smooth hands and can pull off some really stellar plays, even in tight spaces. He can drive to the quality areas of the ice and concentrates most of his shots to the home plate area, even at 5-on-5 when he has less time and space out there. Plus, he can play a net-front role, which contributed to him collecting such a high rate of inner-slot shots. The winger is among the best at creating offence off the cycle thanks to his ability to generate scoring chances.

An underrated aspect of his game is his ability to set up his teammates as well. Tkachuk's more of a dual-threat than he gets credit for. He sends his teammates a high volume of passes in the offensive zone and can move the puck right to the quality areas of the ice.

Tkachuk is responsible back in his own zone as well, which upgrades that winger slot for Florida. If he ends up playing with Aleksandar Barkov, that's two elite two-way players on one line. Or, it could create a one-two punch with the duo split between the top-six, whether he's centered by Sam Bennett, Sam Reinhart, or even Anton Lundell for lineup balance.

But there is a ripple effect from this trade, that doesn't have to do with Tkachuk directly. The loss of Weegar only weakens the Panthers team-defence that was already suspect, which puts more pressure on a starting goaltender who hasn't always played up to expectations.

On the other side of it, there's Calgary. After Gaudreau walked, it could have made all the sense in the world to stay a step back and quickly re-tool to extend their window. The Flames did lose their most valuable player, after all. The Tkachuk situation put them in a position to lose both of their superstar forwards.

In Huberdeau, they add one right back. He's less of a Tkachuk replacement, and has more similarity to Gaudreau, thanks to his puck movement — although there's a bit of a gap, and much of it shows below the surface.

Despite leading the league in assists (both raw totals and rate), Huberdeau didn't earn the title of 'best passer' in 2021-22 — that was reserved for Gaudreau. The former Panthers' winger didn't rank as highly when it came to primary shot assists in all situations, or passes that directly preceded shots, and that showed on the scoresheet as well with a lower percentage of primary helpers.

*Viz from April 20, 2022

Plus, Huberdeau's 5-on-5 impact wasn't as strong this past season. That doesn't change the fact that the Flames added a player who can move the puck better than most in the league. The winger can create shooting lanes for his teammates with his distribution; he puts out a high volume of passes, makes his own lanes to thread the puck to the slot, and completes his pass attempts at a high clip. Plus, Huberdeau has an effective shot when he opts to use it — but not to the extent where he'll replace Gaudreau, who generated the second best rate of scoring chances off the rush at 5-on-5. Nor does he carry the puck in nearly as much as the former Flame. However, his passing could help keep Elias Lindholm (if paired together) towards the top of the charts in shot attempts off the cycle if he can get him the puck as often as his former linemate. And Bennett, who Huberdeau was often paired with, did generate quite a few scoring chances off the rush in Florida, thanks to help from his teammate's set ups, so it's possible that the Flames can find a way to keep those rush shots up.

What helps Calgary's addition is that they're a much better team defensively, and that structure should support Huberdeau more than Florida's riskier style of play. Huberdeau does have some defensive struggles because of his all-offence focus; but within this structure, it shouldn't stand out as much.

Speaking of defence, the Flames addressed that with this trade as well with Weegar. He's been sound back in his own zone for quite a few seasons, but really has gained appreciation for it in more recent years. Recency bias may say otherwise after some memorable misplays in the playoffs, but those are only a small snippet of his NHL career. And time in Calgary could strengthen his efforts on the backend even more — even if he doesn't have Aaron Ekblad on his side for support.

Weegar's defensive efforts start before opponents can even get into the offensive zone; at 5-on-5 he can be counted on to deny entry, whether he steps up in the neutral zone or closes the gap back in his own end to limit scoring chances. The defender does his best to block passing lanes and knock opponents off the puck — whether with his stick or a hit to change possession. Plus, he can help break the puck out of his own end with control.

The question is fit. The Flames already had a pretty solid top-four on defence without Weegar in the mix. Now, technically their top-five is even better. But who shifts to the third pair? Or, does a defender move to make room for Weegar in the top-four, maybe to bring back a forward to address the loss of their other top-six forward? That likely only happens if there's a guarantee he's sticking around for more than just the season.

That's the risky part of this all. Huberdeau and Weegar both just entered the final year of their contracts. And that puts Calgary back to a situation



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they were just in with key pending unrestricted free agents. But the Flames have options on how to proceed, depending on their priorities for this upcoming season. And in the meantime, they just added two very strong players to their roster who should be in a position to succeed with the team's defensive structure around.

So neither team walks away from the trade a loser. There's a downside from both perspectives, but quite a bit of upside thanks to the calibre of the players each squad just added.

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Sportsnet.ca / What we learned from Day 1 of the Hockey Canada hearings

Paul D. Grant@RealPDGrant

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OTTAWA -- The first day of hearings held by the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage was theoretically supposed to be less newsworthy than Wednesday's appearances by Hockey Canada and Canadian Hockey League officials.

But appearances on Tuesday by Danielle Robitaille, partner of Hockey Canada's third-party investigating law firm Henein Hutchison, minister of sport Pascale St-Onge, Sport Canada senior director Michael Ruest and deputy minister Isabelle Mondou provided a few big moments of their own.

The hearings were prompted by recent revelations of an alleged sexual assault in 2018 by eight CHL players, some of whom were members of the Canadian World Junior team, after a Hockey Canada event in London, Ont.

Biggest takeaways from Day 1:

In a strong and impassioned opening statement, St-Onge made it clear change could be coming to Hockey Canada's leadership.

"Hockey Canada should not underestimate the work ahead," she said in French. "The organization's board and management leaders have a moral responsibility to reflect on the role they should play in what comes next. They must ask themselves if they are the right people to affect culture change. Is this group of leaders adequately equipped to carry out a system-wide change? Is there enough diversity in decision-making roles to drive change? Are there enough women in significant leadership positions within Hockey Canada to provide needed perspective on sexual violence and its impact?"

"Hockey Canada should be asked all of these questions. The nature of their answers will determine the credibility of the organization and the level of seriousness that they propose to take in their next steps.

"Hockey Canada must also take this situation as an opportunity to make a fundamental shift on the underlying violence in the sport, including issues such as racism, concussions or fighting on the ice. Canadians expect Hockey Canada to behave differently and it requires leadership capable of doing so.

"Hockey Canada, the whole country is watching."

Bloc Quebecois MP and associate committee member Sébastien Lemire told Sportsnet he has doubts about the current Hockey Canada leadership.

"Of course we want to see change," he said after the hearing. "If what they do in the past they will do again, I'm very, very worried about (it). They're taking action because they have a lot of pressure -- pressure by politicians, of course, by the (sports) minister, by the media. But the question is: If we are not there today, do they change their culture as they say? The answer is absolutely no."

NDP MP committee member Peter Julian said placing Hockey Canada into a trusteeship or guardianship is not out of the question.

"That's something that needs to be considered if what we see (Wednesday) is similar to what we saw last month, which was Hockey Canada stonewalling on important questions that are asked to it," Julian told Sportsnet. "So, I think the pressure is on the Hockey Canada executives (Wednesday) to actually be transparent to show that they take the issue of sexual violence and sexual abuse seriously and convince the Canadian public that they are going to be appropriate trustees of our national winter sport.

"I certainly, as a member of the committee, am awaiting their testimony. I expect transparency, I think Canadians expect transparency and taking responsibility. We'll see whether or not that actually comes to pass. And then when you couple that with systematically Hockey Canada not putting into place measures that they have committed to in the past, like even gathering racism statistics, that was something they committed to over two years ago, they failed to do it. They keep putting it off, and these are all elements that undermine confidence in Hockey Canada."

What this means: Scott Smith took over on July 1 as leader of Hockey Canada from the now-retired CEO Tom Renney, adding president to his title of chief operating officer. With the statements about Hockey Canada's leadership getting stronger and louder, and with other important voices such as members of the women's national team and Sheldon Kennedy joining the chorus, you have to expect new leadership -- or even a new structure entirely (new name, new accountability) -- is coming sooner rather than later for Hockey Canada.

The biggest takeaway from Tuesday's testimony for Julian revolved around Sport Canada's leadership.

Under questioning by Conservative MP and committee vice-chair John Nater, Ruest testified that Sport Canada had been notified about the 2018 allegations surrounding Hockey Canada and did not hold back funding or take further action. Nater cited four funding requests that had been approved after Ruest was personally notified of the allegations in June 2018.

Ruest said this was because Sport Canada was waiting for completion of the criminal and third-party investigations.

"No one's asking Sport Canada themselves to investigate," Nater said during the hearing. "You just mentioned they took note. They took note and wrote down a piece of paper and nothing more happened with that, it was kept in a filing cabinet somewhere and the (previous) minister of sport, who two weeks earlier had made a big deal about safe sport, wasn't even informed. They took note and then did nothing. That's not good for anyone in the sporting community, it's not good for individuals participating, it's not good for victims, and that's what happened."

That also didn't fly with Julian.

"The failure of Sport Canada really to enforce the rules that they supposedly had put into place 20 years ago, their refusal to even take seriously allegations of serious criminal activity that are encompassed by the allegations of sexual violence" was the biggest takeaway, Julian told Sportsnet. "I mean, it's unbelievable to me that you would basically take it and file it rather than take it seriously.

"So, I think it's fair to say Hockey Canada has let down Canadians, I'd say Sport Canada has let down Canadians too, and let down those athletes that are victims and victims from the general public who have been victimized in part because we've seen no concrete action taken."



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What this means: Although the heat isn't as hot on Ruest as it is on Hockey Canada's leadership, you have to think some accountability or, at the very least, a harder line on following up with individual sport associations in Canada is coming.

Robitaille, a partner with Toronto-based law firm Henein Hutchison LLC, was the first on Tuesday to appear before the committee. She said her firm was contacted to conduct an investigation on the morning after the alleged incident took place in London on June 19, 2018. She said the law firm's advice was to contact London police; Hockey Canada executives testified on June 20, 2022, that they contacted London police around "6 p.m. to 7 p.m." that day. Robitaille added her firm was hired on June 21, 2018, to conduct an investigation.

She said that between June 30 and July 11, 2018, she travelled across Canada and the United States to conduct interviews with 10 of the 19 players who were at the gala event in London on June 18, 2018. On July 7, 2018, Henein Hutchison learned that London police were conducting their own investigation. On July 13, 2018, seven players said they would not participate in interviews until the London police investigation had been completed. On that same date, July 13, 2018, Robitaille testified, the complainant said she would not participate in the law firm's investigation until the police investigation had been completed.

After interviewing coaches and other staff members, Henein Hutchison submitted its "interim report" on Sept. 14, 2018. Over the next 18 months, the law firm continued to contact the woman through her attorney to be interviewed, but without her account and the criminal investigation closed by London police, it closed its own investigation.

When pressed by the committee to say if she knew who the eight suspected players are in the alleged 2018 incident, Robitaille chose her words carefully.

"This is an area that I have to be very careful in answering," she told the committee. "As I indicated, the goal of our mandate is the search for the truth. I do not want to provide an answer in the course of these proceedings that could potentially taint the evidence from other witnesses that I have yet to hear from, nor do I want to provide an answer that taints the evidence that will be provided to the London Police Service, who's reopened their investigation, or the NHL or NHLPA ongoing investigation.

"And so I do have to decline answering that question, with the following caveat: My investigation is going well. As I indicated, I have the complainant statement now. And as I indicated in my opening statement, I am well-equipped to continue this investigation."

What it means: Although she did not directly answer the question, Robitaille's response that the investigation is "going well" would seem to indicate all the key parties are participating, which is ahead of where the firm was from 2018-20. If that's the case, and in conjunction with the fact that Robitaille said London police have not asked her to stop her investigation, we are much closer to finding out what happened and who was involved in the alleged incident of June 19, 2018.

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TSN.CA / Lawyer says player interviews imminent in reopened Hockey Canada investigation

Rick Westhead

A lawyer hired by Hockey Canada to investigate claims of alleged sexual assault involving players on Canada's 2018 World Juniors hockey team

testified Tuesday that she is overseeing a rekindled investigation and is in the process of scheduling interviews with players.

During her hour-long appearance, attorney Danielle Robitaille from the Toronto law firm Henein Hutchison told the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage that she was hired on June 21, 2018, to investigate an allegation that eight players had sexually assaulted a woman in a London, Ont., hotel room two days earlier following a Hockey Canada event.

Hockey Canada has settled a \$3.55 million lawsuit related to the allegations, which have not been proven in court.

Robitaille testified that between June 30 and July 11, 2018, she interviewed 10 of 19 players from the team who attended the event, as well as seven coaches and staff members from the team. Nine other players did not agree to be interviewed immediately because they wanted to wait until the London Police Service's criminal investigation was done, Robitaille testified.

Robitaille also said she wasn't prepared to interview the remaining players without a statement from the victim.

After a London police investigation was closed with no criminal charges in February 2019 and the alleged victim decided not to cooperate with Henein Hutchison, Robitaille abandoned proceeding with further player interviews.

"As a matter of due process, I could not interview players without giving them fair notice of what was alleged against them," Robitaille said.

Now that the woman is cooperating with the restarted investigation, Robitaille said she is resuming player interviews.

"We now have the benefit of the complainant's detailed version of events," Robitaille testified. "...I am in contact with counsel for the players and I expect to be scheduling interviews imminently."

Robitaille also testified that players who refused to participate in the investigation may be banned for life from representing Hockey Canada. The organization would also make public the names of those who refuse to participate.

It's unclear how many of the nine players who have not yet been interviewed will agree to do so. Robitaille testified that the players and their lawyers have concerns about her investigation after comments made by politicians and Hockey Canada officials.

"They have a concern that the issue has been prejudged," Robitaille testified. "I am attempting to address those concerns and assuage those concerns. I hope that I will receive voluntary compliance with my investigation."

Robitaille's testimony opened two days of summer hearings by the House of Commons committee, which is scrutinizing Hockey Canada's response to the 2018 sexual assault allegation. The hearings come a month after Hockey Canada officials Scott Smith and Tom Renney first testified before the committee in Ottawa.

In the days since the June 20 hearing, the federal government has frozen Hockey Canada's public funding and several of the organization's major corporate sponsors have put their ties with the organization on hold.

Sport Minister Pascale St-Onge was the final witness to testify on Tuesday and questioned whether Hockey Canada's current leadership is qualified and capable of delivering the kind of organizational change that has been promised.

"Hockey Canada, all of Canada is watching you," St-Onge said.

Following Tuesday's hearing, former NHL player Sheldon Kennedy, a sexual abuse survivor and advocate, called for Smith, his "leadership team," and Hockey Canada's board of directors to resign.

Robitaille testified that she first learned of the allegations on the morning of June 19, 2018, when Hockey Canada senior vice-president of risk



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management and insurance Glen McCurdie phoned her hours after the alleged assaults.

Robitaille testified that she advised McCurdie to contact police immediately. McCurdie responded that he needed to consult with Hockey Canada's executives before he could do that, Robitaille told the hearing.

Smith testified on June 20 that police were first contacted during the late afternoon or evening of June 19.

Robitaille declined to answer several of the questions posed by members of parliament.

When Conservative MP Richard Martel asked her for details about the interim report and recommendations she provided to Hockey Canada about the 2018 incident, Robitaille said Hockey Canada had exerted solicitor-client privilege on that subject.

After Liberal MP Anthony Housefather asked her if she had "a good idea" about the identities of the eight players who were allegedly in the hotel room with the alleged victim in June 2018, Robitaille declined to answer, saying she did not want to taint future interviews with witnesses.

When Robitaille was asked how many of the team's coaches and staff had been interviewed, she again invoked solicitor-client privilege. After she was directed by the committee chair Hedy Fry to answer the question, Robitaille told the committee that seven coaches and staff members had participated.

Several committee members challenged Robitaille for halting her investigation after the complainant refused to cooperate. Robitaille told the committee that "there is a gold standard" in her field of work.

"I appreciate that it's very frustrating to Canadians that we don't have an outcome yet," Robitaille said. "My investigation is taking time, but justice and fairness sometimes take time."

The hearing also included testimony from Michel Ruest, a senior director of Sport Canada, who said that while federal organization was made informed about the alleged sexual assault in late June 2018, it did not follow up with Hockey Canada to inquire about the status of its investigation for four years.

Ruest also told MPs that Sport Canada, a branch of Canadian Heritage, did not inform then-sport minister Kirsty Duncan. St-Onge, who was appointed sport minister in September 2021, has said she did not know of the allegations until earlier this year.

Several MPs challenged St-Onge and Ruest about why Hockey Canada's funding was not cut earlier.

Conservative MP Kevin Waugh said that Sport Canada's staff should have informed and directed the sport minister in 2018 to investigate.

"You can point fingers at Hockey Canada all you wish," Conservative MP Kevin Waugh said to St-Onge. "I'm pointing a finger at Sport Canada."