Detroit Red Wings

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Should the Detroit Red Wings make a trade for a defenseman?

If hockey mattered more in this country, ESPN and the other sports networks would spend a lot more time swooning over the Red Wings. The Patriots are a dynasty even though they hadn't won a title in 10 years. The San Francisco Giants are a dynasty even though they missed the playoffs in two of the last four years. The LA Kings are a dynasty -- they've won two Cups in three years.

What exactly does that make the Red Wings?

It's difficult to answer, but the best way to describe them is this. The Red Wings have not only made the playoffs for 23 consecutive seasons, they have transitioned from contender to heavy contender to champion to contender to rebuilding to contender. Show me another team in another sport that has pulled off that trick, making the playoffs the whole time, and then we can have a conversation.

The Red Wings, of course, will never admit this. The Stanley Cup was the goal, is the goal and always will be the goal. But realistically, only now can we start to imagine a deep playoff run for the first time since 2009. That's the thing that makes this whole dynamic so fascinating. For years, Red Wings fans were trained to expect the best and expect the most. The question wasn't will the Wings make a move at the trade deadline, the question was how many moves will the Wings make at the deadline. Deal prospects? Heck, the average fan couldn't even name a prospect much less what city they played in. Draft picks were sent away as easily as season ticket renewals.

But now, things have changed. As the Red Wings have struggled to keep their playoff streak alive, fans have started to zero in on the future more than the present. I'm not saying that more fans care about the Grand Rapids Griffins than the Detroit Red Wings, but I will say that fans can tell you a lot more about those younger players than they could 10 or 20 years ago. So while youngsters like Gustav Nyquist, Tomas Tatar and Riley Sheahan have already made their mark in the NHL. And prospects like Anthony Mantha and Dylan Larkin continue their rise in the minors, I'm sensing reluctance among fans to part with youth for the sake of the current team.

This was the case a year ago when Ken Holland traded Calle Jarnkrok in exchange for David Legwand from the Predators. At the time, the Wings were skating very shorthanded and were in desperate need of a center. Plus, they clearly wanted to keep the playoff streak alive. They did accomplish that. But Legwand did nothing in his brief time in Detroit (a minus-9 in 21 games – no points in five postseason games) and Jarnkrok now has 13 points and is a plus-seven for the Predators, who are tied with Anaheim for the most points in the NHL.

It's easy to say in hindsight that Holland should have stood pat. Many fans said that loud and clear at the time of the deal. It's impossible to quantify what that playoff streak
means to the men and women who have built it. But it clearly means something, which probably led to the Legwand trade.

That was then. This year is far, far different. Entering Thursday's game against Colorado, the Red Wings have 67 points, in a second place with Montreal in the Atlantic Division and also tied for second overall in the Eastern Conference. They have done this while playing the last 3 1/2 weeks without goalie Jimmy Howard. They have done this while giving heavy minutes to a younger group that has rightfully earned them. And they have done this despite having an average defensive core for the most part. They've beaten, among others, the Penguins, the Islanders, the Predators and the Blackhawks -- all among the best teams in the game. In other words, they're legit.

Last year, Holland made a move to ensure his team would make the playoffs. This year, will he make a move to push them deeper than they've gone in six years?

First of all, it's Holland -- so you can assume that some deal will be made. Even in quieter years, he picked up the likes of Kyle Quincey at the deadline, and I hardly expect this year to be any different.

Secondly, there is such an obvious need for this team, this season that I'd be stunned if he let the deadline pass without addressing it. Mike Babcock can count on defensemen like Nicklas Kronwall and Danny DeKeyser. Beyond that, there are some serious wildcards. Jonathan Ericsson is a veteran but still makes senseless mistakes. Quincey has played well this year (plus-4), but his struggles over the past two seasons make you wonder. Brendan Smith and Xavier Ouillet are talented youngsters -- but just that -- youngsters. All are left-handed shots. And beyond them, there's Jakub Kindl and not much else.

The big name that's been in the rumor mill a bunch over the past few weeks is Tyler Meyers of the Sabres. He'd be a welcome addition with his age (25), his game and his right-handed shot. The question then is how much are you willing to give up?

Some people have the philosophy that you go for it whenever and wherever you can. Henrik Zetterberg and Pavel Datsyuk are not going to be here much longer, so why take the chance on holding out for another year or two. Others are a little hastier. It's so hard to project for sure which players will make it and which won't. Given how deep the Wings are in terms of youth, and particularly at forward, I'd make the following players untouchable - Nyquist, Tatar and Mantha. Beyond that, I'd go shopping and see if Meyers or another defenseman becomes available.

If this team were on the edge of playoff contention, I'd lay back and hold all my cards. But this team has done enough and beaten enough of the big boys, that Holland can be bold. Remember, too, that the most important free agent of all- - the head coach -- probably wants a legitimate shot at the Cup this spring. Giving him all the resources he needs might be the best way to keep him around long term. As long as he's around long term to team with Holland, there's no telling how long this dynasty might last. Or whatever you want to call it.

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DENVER – Henrik Zetterberg was back on the ice, a relief for teammates left with a vivid imprint of what it means not to have their captain.

Zetterberg practiced today at the Pepsi Center, and he and coach Mike Babcock said Zetterberg will play Thursday when the Red Wings meet the Colorado Avalanche. Fifty games into the season, Zetterberg has led the Wings in scoring since October, and his 46 points are eight ahead of runner-up Gustav Nyquist. Zetterberg also logs the most ice time among forwards at 19 minutes, 15 seconds per game.

"Having Hank healthy, I don't know if you can put it in perspective, really, how much it means to this team," Niklas Kronwall said. "He's the captain for a reason. He's our engine, really."

Zetterberg missed half of last season because of a back injury that required surgery. He didn't practice Tuesday, but he said it wasn't related to his back.

Mike Babcock on the importance of Henrik Zetterberg. Helene St. James, Detroit Free Press

Babcock said there would be no lineup changes from Saturday, but young defenseman Xavier Ouellet will be available. He and goaltender Jonas Gustavsson were to join the team today, while goalie Tom McCollum was to go back to Grand Rapids of the American Hockey League. The team will carry eight defensemen for the trip, then send either Ouellet or Alexey Marchenko back Sunday.

The Wings have been near or at the top of the Eastern Conference throughout the season, carried there by health and the development of young players. Babcock rattled off a bunch of names when talking about the Wings' good standing, but when asked to elaborate on Zetterberg, Babcock said: "He's determined, and he's calm. He knows what's going on, and he understands what's right."

Zetterberg, 34, conceded he was worried last year because he'd never had back surgery.

"Last year, you just want to scratch from the memory bank," he said. "I feel good now, and I'm happy about that."

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Old-time hockey: NHL's Original Six still has an aura

By Kevin Allen, USA TODAY Sports 9:36 p.m. EST February 4, 2015

Some time between now and the March 2 trade deadline, some NHL player will say he is happy to be moving to Toronto, Detroit, New York, Boston, Chicago or Montreal because he has always wanted to play for an Original Six franchise.

But do the Original Six franchises still carry the same aura and might they once had? Numbers say they do:

■ Five of the Original Six franchises are in the top 12 places in the NHL standings this morning, with Detroit and Montreal leading the way tied for fifth. Only slumping Toronto is out of that group.

■ All six of the Original Six franchises have 100% home attendance or better. Chicago leads the NHL in attendance, and Montreal and Detroit are second and third, respectively. The Blackhawks are drawing at 109% of capacity, meaning they are selling out their standing room.

■ Five Original Six teams are ranked in the NHL's defensive teams. Giving up 2.26 goals-per-game, Montreal is No. 1. Chicago is third, the New York Rangers fourth and the Red Wings seventh.

■ Three of the top four-selling individual NHL jerseys of 2014 are owned by players from Original Six teams. The No. 1-selling NHL jersey was Chicago's Patrick Kane, followed by Pittsburgh's Sidney Crosby, New York Rangers' Henrik Lundqvist and Chicago's Jonathan Toews.

■ Detroit is the NHL's best penalty-killing team, Montreal is the best faceoff team and Toronto leads the league in takeaways.

It has been 48 years since there were only six teams in the NHL, but the Original Six legacy remains.

Headling into Wednesday's game against the Rangers, the Bruins were 8-1-1 in their past 10 games.

The Rangers had the second-best goal differential in the Eastern Conference, but they were without Lundqvist, who was hit in the throat by a shot on Saturday but continued playing that game and also played on Monday.

"The Bruins have turned the corner. They are playing a hard, smart, disciplined four-line game. The depth scoring of Carl Soderberg and Loui Eriksson has helped make the Bruins a tough team to establish matchups against," NBC analyst Pierre McGuire said.

"The Rangers have had a very solid season. The roster has gone though some serious changes from last season's run to the Final. Losing Brian Boyle, Anton Stralman, Benoit Pouliot to unrestricted free agency forced them to adapt quickly and they have. This is the best Derick Brassard has played since he came into the league. The Rangers can play with any team in the league as their recent dash through California proved."
Denver — Henrik Zetterberg returned to the ice after what Red Wings coach Mike Babcock coach called a "maintenance day," and the further good news is, it was not due to the back that caused the captain excruciating pain at the Sochi Games 12 months ago and required surgery.

It was merely a good day for a 34-year-old workhorse and team leader to rest, two months before the start of the playoffs.

When he took a harsh spill during practice Wednesday at the Pepsi Center, Zetterberg was up and back at them.

It has been productive having Zetterberg and Pavel Datsyuk in the lineup for such long stretches this season. Interrupting such good fortune would have hurt the cause.

But, no worries.

"They haven't told me anything different," said Babcock, perhaps a bit facetiously, when asked if Zetterberg would play tonight against the Avalanche.

"I don't know," Babcock said, playfully spotting the captain walking through the dressing room. "Are you playing tomorrow?"

Zetterberg's smile told the story, though his words could not be heard above the din in the room.

"Yeah," Babcock said. "I think he is.

"Having him and Pav the whole time makes a huge difference."

Zetterberg said it simply was wise and good to take a day to restore and refresh.

"I've been skating well," he said. "I've been feeling good, healthwise.

"And I've been playing with some young line mates, you know, young guys who kind of keep me a little younger."

Asked about the status of his back, regardless, Zetterberg said it is good.

"This is my first surgery," he said. "I've never been through surgery before, so I didn't know what to expect. But, obviously, the rehab is really important to get that right, and I feel good now.

"I play a physical sport. You never know what can happen. But I feel good now, and I'm happy about that."

Through 50 games, Zetterberg has 15 goals and 31 assists. In the past five, he has three goals and five assists.

Teammates emphasized the critical role Zetterberg plays.
"We have our leader back," forward Gustav Nyquist said. "He's the one who gets us ready for games. He's the one that leads us every night; he brings it every night. "The way he's performed all throughout the season, he's been our best player out there, arguably, him and Pav."

For Babcock, the value added by Zetterberg is clear.

"He's a good player and he's a leader," Babcock said. "He's determined and he's calm, and he knows what's going on and he understands what's right.

"He elevates his game when it matters."

Praise for Avalanche

The Avalanche did not storm out of the gate this season under Patrick Roy as they did a year ago.

But the Red Wings seemed impressed by their speed and skill.

"It's an extremely fast, extremely high-talented, high-skilled team," defenseman Niklas Kronwall said.

Babcock put it simply.

"They're a good team," he said. "Their goaltender (Semyon Varlamov, .923 save percentage and 2.59 goals against average) was hurt for a while, and he's a star.

"And they have lots, when you look at their lineup.

"(Alex) Tanguay, (Matt) Duchene, (Jarome) Iginla have really been playing well. Obviously, (Nathan) MacKinnon, (Gabriel) Landeskog and (Ryan) O'Reilly— elite, elite skill.

"When you look at their back end, even though they're missing one (Erik Johnson) right now, (Zach) Redmond, (Tyson) Barrie — real active guys. (Nick) Holden, and active guy, as well."

Gustavsson to return

Late Wednesday, the Wings announced that they had recalled goalie Jonas Gustavsson and returned goalie Tom McCollum to Grand Rapids. Goaltender Jonas Gustavsson played in a final rehab game for Grand Rapids on Wednesday.

He was scheduled to join the Red Wings in Denver. He had not played since seriously injuring a shoulder Nov. 5 against the Rangers.

Gustavsson, critical to the Red Wings playoff run last season, stopped 30 of 31 shots and was named the first star in a 2-1 victory over the Toronto Marlies.

"He was really good," said Marlies forward Matt Frattin, who has 135 games of NHL experience, on a YouTube interview.

The Red Wings also announced that they had recalled Xavier Ouellet from Grand Rapids, after sending him down five days ago. Babcock said there would be no changes in his lineup against the Avalanche, however.
General Manager Ken Holland said that no injury resulted in recalling Ouellet and that eight defensemen will be carried for the road trip.

Detroit News LOADED: 02.05.2015
DENVER - The Detroit Red Wings recalled defenseman Xavier Ouellet Wednesday from the Grand Rapids Griffins.

The move enables Ouellet to join the team on its annual Fathers/Mentors trip with his dad, Robert, a former professional hockey player in France and Germany.

Ouellet is not expected to play Thursday in Colorado - coach Mike Babcock said he was not making any lineup changes from last Saturday's game - but he might play Saturday at Arizona.

A roster spot opened for Ouellet when goaltender Tom McCollum was reassigned to the Griffins.

Jonas Gustavsson, already on the active roster, was scheduled to join the Red Wings in Denver on Wednesday night. He completed his two-game conditioning stint for the Griffins earlier in the day, making 30 saves in a 3-1 victory at the Toronto Marlies. Gustavsson, who suffered a dislocated shoulder on Nov. 5, stopped 59 of 62 shots in going 1-1 for the Griffins.

Ouellet was sent back to Grand Rapids on Friday because the club wanted to look at defenseman Alexey Marchenko. One of them is likely headed back to Grand Rapids after the weekend.

Ouellet has played 21 games for the Red Wings this season, notching three points (two goals, one assist) and posting a plus-4 rating.

McCollum (1-0-0) appeared in two games for Detroit this season in relief of Petr Mrazek, posting a 0.91 goals-against average and .960 save percentage.
Detroit Red Wings legend Gordie Howe well enough to travel to Saskatoon for tribute dinner

Mark Howe couldn't have imagined two months ago his father being able to fly from Texas to the Canadian Prairies for one more public appearance.

Gordie Howe’s remarkable recovery from a major stroke in late October, thanks to stem cell treatments in Mexico, will enable the hockey legend to attend the 55th annual Kinsmen Sports Celebrity Dinner Friday in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

It was billed long ago as a "tribute to Mr. Hockey," and fellow legend Wayne Gretzky is the keynote speaker.

The Howes weren't even sure their father would live to see this day. Now they're excited to join him in his hometown for this special occasion. Son Murray, a radiologist in Toledo, traveled to Lubbock, Texas, Wednesday to help his father prepare for the trip. Along with Howe's daughter, Cathy, they'll take a private jet Thursday to Saskatoon, where sons Mark and Marty as well as Gordie's two sisters will join them. Gordie's brother, Vic, died last week at age 85.

The 85-year-old Gordie Howe has been much more active since undergoing stem cell therapy in early December, helping with household chores and playing driveway hockey with his great grandson. But he hasn't been out except for a few trips to the mall and grocery store.

"Getting there should be fine," Mark Howe, the Detroit Red Wings director of pro scouting, said. "Dad has some days that are better than others. Once you get to an event he tends to rise to the occasion. It's something new. Hopefully he reacts positively. It'll be a great experience for him."

The Howes will be joined there by another famous hockey family as Bobby Hull, brother Dennis and Bobby's son, Brett, the former Red Wing, are scheduled to appear.

"It's neat for the hockey fan," Mark Howe said. "The greatest center (Gretzky) right wing (Howe) and left wing (Bobby Hull) will all be in the room together. That's a pretty neat thing, doesn't happen very often."

In between scouting games for the Red Wings as the March 2 trade deadline approaches, Mark Howe spent four days with his father in Lubbock during the All-Star break in late January.

"He was eating a lot, gained back 21 pounds since his stroke to 191 pounds," Mark Howe said. "He can get around on his own with his walker (sometimes without it). His speech is OK, sometimes kind of garbled. You have to lead the conversation."

Gordie did surprise Mark on the fourth day.
“It was the first time he called me by name in 6-7 months,” Mark said. “It was one of the better days I’d seen from him since January of last year.

“Even a bad day was so much better than it was before the treatment. It's a blessing for us to see.”

Mark Howe said he's pretty sure his dad will recognize Gretzky and Bobby Hull.

“Wayne has called quite a bit since Dad's stroke, even before that,” Mark said. "They've been pretty darn close, have a lot of respect for each other."

They're having a private dinner on Thursday, which might give them an indication of how Gordie will react the next night.

"With dementia, anytime you go into a different environment it's a whole other animal," Mark said. "We'll all be there to support him and hope all goes well."

Michigan Live LOADED: 02.05.2015
DENVER - The back issues Detroit Red Wings captain Henrik Zetterberg experienced for years finally came to a head one year ago this month, when excruciating pain forced him out of the Olympics and onto the operating table.

"Seeing what he went through in Sochi was not pretty, it's not something I would ever like to see a friend go through again," teammate Niklas Kronwall said.

Surgery to remove part of a disc that was rubbing against a nerve has made a tremendous difference.

Zetterberg, 34, hasn't missed a game this season. He leads the team with 46 points in 50 games, tied for 13th in the NHL before Wednesday's game. He has 10 points (five goals, five assists) in the past six games, clicking on a line with Gustav Nyquist and Justin Abdelkader. The Red Wings are 7-1 in their past eight games.

"He's captain for a reason, he's our engine," Kronwall said. "I think right now he's probably playing the best he ever has."

Zetterberg practiced Wednesday at the Pepsi Center, after taking a maintenance day Tuesday for an issue he said wasn't related to his back. He said he'll be in the lineup Thursday against the Colorado Avalanche (9 p.m., Fox Sports Detroit).

"It's been good, it's been fun to be playing," Zetterberg said. "Last year I just want to scratch from the memory bank. This year coming in I didn't really know how to feel. I've been skating well. I've been feeling good health-wise.

"Also been playing with some fun linemates, young guys that kind of keep me feeling a little younger."

Zetterberg and Pavel Datsyuk each appeared in only 45 games last season due to injuries. Datsyuk, plagued by knee problems, also has bounced back strong, with 37 points (15 goals, 22 assists) in 39 games.

Their work ethic and drive rubs off on the rest of the team.

"That helps the development of the younger guys to see how bad they (Zetterberg and Datsyuk) want it, how much work they put in," Kronwall said. "When they see that they want to follow."

Said Nyquist: "He's the one that gets us ready for games. He's the one that leads us every single night. He brings it every night. The way he's performed all throughout the season he's been our best player, arguably. Him and Pav, them being out there together and being healthy, it's a big thing for our team."

Nyquist has eight points (four goals, four assists) in his past six games.
"You play with Z you get to touch the puck a lot," Nyquist said. "That's a fun thing. I get to keep the puck. Your line is real strong in the O-zone, hanging onto it. For me personally, I just try to find open spots for him to find me and he usually does.

"And in the D-zone, on the breakout pass he's always in the right spot. He does things right. I'm just fortunate to be playing with him."

Detroit (29-12-9) is one of two clubs that hasn't lost consecutive games in regulation this season (Nashville is the other). Zetterberg is one of the main reasons the Red Wings are competing with Tampa Bay and Montreal for the top spot in the Atlantic Division.

"He's determined and he's calm and he knows what's going on and he understands what's right," coach Mike Babcock said. "He elevates his game when it matters."

Zetterberg admitted there was concern about his future 12 months ago.

"I never been through a surgery before so I didn't know what to expect," Zetterberg said. "The rehab is really important to get that right and I feel good now. I play a physical sport. You never know what could happen."

Said Kronwall: "I know he had his ups and downs with his back and he has over the last few years; it wasn't just last year. And that's why you're even more happy for him now."

Michigan Live LOADED: 02.05.2015
Players looking forward to annual trip

By Chuck Pleiness, The Macomb Daily
Posted: 02/04/15, 6:56 PM EST |

DETROIT >> The Wings’ annual Fathers/Mentors trip is running out of newbies to take part in the behind-the-scenes excursion.

But there still are some.

Stephen Weiss, Luke Glendening and Riley Sheahan will get to take their fathers this time around and they’ll get to see Detroit play at Colorado (Thursday) and in Arizona (Saturday).

“It’s a great trip for the guys,” Wings coach Mike Babcock said. “The dad’s love it. It’s great to be able to perform in front of your dad and give your dad thanks. To me all these opportunities in life are because your parents helped you out along the way or else you’d never be here.

All these kind of things are great."

Babcock, whose father is ill, won’t be taking anyone on this trip, but will have a buddy of his join the team in Phoenix for the team dinner.

“They do whatever, it doesn’t matter to me,” Babcock said of the access they’re allowed. “The most important thing is have a few beers with the coach once you get off the bus and get all the gossip on all the guys.

“I’ll never forget it, the first time we had a dads trip and Stevie Yzerman’s dad is standing next to me and (Yzerman’s) standing there watching and he just looked worried what his dad would be telling me,” Babcock continued. “They’re a little nervous when their dads are hanging out with the coach. It’s fun.”

Weiss, who’s taking his dad, Karl, was injured last season and didn’t make the trip.

“I still could have gone, actually,” Weiss said. “I had just gotten home a day before we were leaving for the trip but I didn’t really want to be limping around for a few days on the trip so my dad was pretty crushed about that. He really wanted to go last year but decided to wait until this year. He’s even more excited to go this year after missing last year.”

Florida never did a trip like this during his 10 seasons with the Panthers.

“I’ve always heard about teams doing it and I remember once playing against Detroit in Florida and they had their Fathers trip at that time and seeing them all down there at the game,” Weiss said. “I’ve always wanted to be a part of something like that and I’m really looking forward to it.”

Glendening, who’s taking his father Tom, was shuttling back and forth from Grand Rapids to Detroit the first half of last season he wasn’t able to bring his father, Tom, on the trip last year.
“It'll be fun to spend some time with my dad,” Glendening said. “We didn’t know what was happening last year. I made the trip from Grand Rapids to Detroit quite a few times. The timing didn’t work.

“He’ll enjoy everything,” Glendening added. “Just being able to spend time with the guys and dad will be fun for him. He’s excited. It’s a new experience. I’m excited that he’ll be with me and we’ll get to spend some time together.”

Sheahan also was in Grand Rapids during last year’s trip.

“He’s definitely pumped and I’m excited to have him come,” Sheahan said of his dad, Mike, coming on the trip. “When you can share the experience with someone who means so much to you it means a lot. For him to get to see some of the behind the scenes stuff and different experiences we have it’s definitely pretty cool.

“He is my biggest supporter,” Sheahan added. “Both my parents and my sister mean so much to me and they’ve helped so much. I think he’s really excited to kind of meet some of the guys and get to know what happens on the road and get to see the different things, how we prepare for games and stuff like that. It’s going to be pretty cool.”
In three games with the Wings this season, Jonas Gustavsson is 1-1-1, with a 2.30 goals-against average and a .908 save percentage.

The Red Wings have recalled goaltender Jonas Gustavsson and defenseman Xavier Ouellet from Grand Rapids, their American Hockey League affiliate, and returned goaltender Tom McCollum to the Griffins.

Gustavsson, 30, was sent to the minors for a two-game conditioning stint after rehabbing a dislocated left shoulder sustained on Nov. 5. He made 29 saves in a 4-0 loss to Milwaukee on Saturday, but stopped all but one of 31 shots in a 3-1 matinee victory Wednesday over the Toronto Marlies.

In three games with the Wings this season, Gustavsson is 1-1-1, with a 2.30 goals-against average and a .908 save percentage. His victory was a shutout.

Ouellet, 21, Detroit's second pick (48th overall) in the 2011 NHL Entry Draft, has played 21 games for Detroit this year, scoring two goals among three points with a plus-4 rating while averaging a healthy 16:23 of ice time per game.

Both are expected to join the Wings for their two-game road swing through Colorado and Arizona.

McCollum, 25, appeared in two games for the Wings this season, both in relief of Petr Mrazek, who is expected to start his ninth straight game Thursday against the Avalanche.

McCollum earned his first NHL victory against Buffalo in relief of Mrazek on Jan. 18. He posted a 0.91 goals-against average and a .960 save percentage. With the Griffins this year, he owns a 10-8-3 record.

Gustavsson likely will dress as Mrazek's backup. Detroit's No. goaltender, Jimmy Howard, is rehabbing a torn groin suffered on Jan. 10 at Washington. He is hoping to return on Feb. 11 at Pittsburgh.

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Wings’ top draftee Larkin named National Rookie of the Month

KEITH GAVE
FOX Sports Detroit
FEB 04, 2015 8:01p ET

University of Michigan freshman Dylan Larkin was the Red Wings' first-round pick (15th overall) in last summer's NHL Entry Draft.

University of Michigan freshman Dylan Larkin, the Red Wings' first-round pick (15th overall) in last summer's NHL Entry Draft -- and probably the top prospect among forwards in the organization -- was named National Rookie of the Month for January by the Hockey Commissioner's Association.

A 6-foot-1, 192-pound center, Larkin led all college hockey freshmen with 14 points (including seven goals) in six games. He was No. 2 in scoring among all players in the nation -- second to his winger Zach Hyman.

Larkin recorded a point in every game during the month and owns an eight-game point streak that includes eight goals among 18 points. Overall, Larkin is averaging 1.43 points per game, ranking second among all U-M freshmen in the last 60 years. Bruno Baseotto averaged two points per game in the 1979-80 season.

Larkin opened the month with a goal and also had an assist on the game-winning overtime goal against Minnesota on Jan. 9. The following night, he recorded four points, including the game-winning goal to complete the sweep against the Gophers.

On Jan. 16, in a 10-6 victory at Ohio State, Larkin had a career-best five-point night (two goals, three assists) and became the first Michigan freshman to record five points in a game since Oct. 18, 1997, when Mike Van Ryn had five assists in a 6-4 win over Colgate.

The Wings, of course, have kept a close eye on Larkin, since he plays his home games just down the road in Ann Arbor, and they love what they're see. One club official said he's passed center Anthony Mantha, Detroit's top pick (20th overall) in the 2013 draft, as the franchise's best prospect.

Mantha is off to a challenging start in his first professional season with Grand Rapids after breaking his leg in a rookie camp game last summer.

Nevertheless, both youngsters will hear their names banded about this month in trade rumors. The Wings are trying to land a defenseman who can quarterback their power play, and every team in the league covets Larkin and Mantha -- for good reason.

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'Miracle' recovery: Video shows Howe on feet, playing with grandson

FOX Sports
FEB 04, 2015 5:51a ET

Recent video appears to show amazing improvement in Gordie Howe's health. When Gordie Howe suffered a stroke late in October 2014, his family began preparing for the worst.

"I wrote his eulogy. We were making his funeral arrangements and didn't have a whole lot of hope for him," Gordie's son, Dr. Murray Howe, recently told TV station WDIV-4 in Detroit. "It was to the point where even if you pounded on his chest there would be no response from him. ... His eyes were open but there was just kind of nothing there."

But a recent trip to Mexico, where Gordie enrolled in a clinical study involving stem cells, has apparently yielded stunning results. According to the report, "just hours" after the stem cells were injected into the hockey legend, who was nearly paralyzed when he arrived in Mexico in early December, he began walking.

"I said, 'Dad, you can't walk,' and he said, 'The hell I can't,'" Murray Howe told WDIV. "It was really funny. He was like, 'Let's go,' you know, 'I'm outta here.' He didn't even want the wheelchair when he left. I said, 'Dad, you gotta be in the wheelchair, we don't want you to fall on the way out.'"

In the video below, you can see footage of the 86-year-old Gordie Howe not only on his feet, but playing floor hockey with his grandson.

The report did not divulge any long-term prognosis for Gordie, but Murray said this to NHL.com:

"He's doing very, very well," said Dr. Howe, the director of sports medicine imaging of Toledo Hospital. "He has good days and bad days like anybody who's 86 [years old], but overall he's heading in the right direction really every day, a little bit better. He had his stem cell treatment Dec. 8 and really since that time he's just been doing fantastic."

"He loves to be busy. If you want to torture him just make him sit down and watch television. He is just about doing stuff. He's in great spirits. He has an excellent quality of life. He's doing all the things that he wants to do now other than fishing, only because we haven't taken him fishing since his treatment, but he's looking forward to doing that."
ESPN / Revitalized Gordie Howe returns home to be honored for place in hockey history

By Scott Burnside

Gordie Howe will be making a rare appearance in his home province of Saskatchewan this weekend.

In some ways, the Kinsmen Club of Saskatoon's annual sports celebrity dinner has become iconic.

Held every year since 1960, the Saskatchewan service club's signature event has continued to highlight grassroots sports achievements on both the individual and team level while at the same time attracting world-class athletes such as John Elway, Bo Jackson, Steve Yzerman, Joe Sakic and a guy named Wayne Gretzky.

And every year, the volunteers who put the dinner together wonder, how do we top last year's event?

Now the group knows the answer to that question, Brayden Richards, a member of the organizing committee, told ESPN.com this week.

That's because for all the events that have taken place in more than half a century, it's hard to imagine Friday's dinner will be surpassed for what its guests of honor represent to the province, the country and the game of hockey.

Magical?

A place in time?

Hard to argue either.

Friday's dinner will be hosted by Gretzky, and the guest of honor will be Gordie Howe, the Saskatchewan native who is known the world over as Mr. Hockey.

Of course, Howe's health has become an ongoing story for hockey fans around the world, which only adds to the build-up for this year's event in Saskatoon.

Already suffering from dementia, a severe stroke suffered by Howe last fall prompted an outpouring of support from around the NHL, while fans feared the worst for the 86-year-old icon.

Then, after stem cell transplant procedures that took place in Mexico in early December, Howe has bounced back in remarkable fashion, according to various family members.

So dramatic has been his recovery that what was once unthinkable, a trip to his home province and the city where he spent much of his childhood, was now back within the realm of possibility.

The organizing committee in Saskatoon knew of Howe's setbacks early in the fall and of course were buoyed by the reports of his weight gain and overall recovery following the stem cell procedures, all of which led to confirmation that Howe would indeed attend the Saskatoon event.
"It's been a real emotional rollercoaster," Richards said.

And while there are no guarantees when you are talking about a person who has endured what Howe has endured in recent months -- and the fact is he still has good days and bad days -- the hope is that he will mount the stage Friday night and meet with Gretzky, the boy who once idolized the great Detroit Red Wing before embarking on a career that would in itself become iconic.

Needless to say, when word got out that Howe was in fact feeling well enough to attend the dinner, the local community was enthralled. The Kinsmen added tables to the facility in downtown Saskatoon, and every ticket was bought up in record time.

There was interest media-wise locally, nationally and internationally.

Businesses and individuals have paid in the tens of thousands of dollars for tables with the many celebrities who are expected to attend the dinner.

(Five years ago when Howe, Gretzky and Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper were at the event, some attendees paid $20,000 for a seat at Gretzky’s table.)

Extended members of the Howe and Gretzky families are expected to converge on the prairie city, along with the Hull family, Howe’s former teammate Ted Lindsay, Kelly Chase and Colby Armstrong. Howe’s younger brother Vic, 85, died earlier this week in Moncton, New Brunswick.

Proceeds from the event go to a variety of charitable groups, but some of the monies raised this year will, at the request of the Howe family, go to the study of dementia and/or Alzheimer's.

Richards is reluctant to guess at what the response will be to Howe on Friday night.

"I've seen how proud people are here in this province, especially when it comes to someone who's grown up in this area," he said.

"With a guy like Gordie, his name is Mr. Hockey. The support is going to be astounding."

ESPN LOADED: 02.05.2015
Griffins 3, Marlies 1: Jonas Gustavsson saves 30 in final conditioning stint

By MLive.com

TORONTO - Teemu Pulkkinen scored twice and Andy Miele recorded two assists to lift the Grand Rapids Griffins over the Toronto Marlies 3-1 in a Wednesday matinee at Ricoh Coliseum.

Grand Rapids (24-17-3-1) has won three straight on the road and has allowed one goal during the road winning streak.

Toronto (18-18-8-0) scored first before Grand Rapids countered with three goals. The Marlies struck first at 2:51 of the first period when Matt Frattin skated around the top of the right circle and fired a long wrist shot over the glove of Grand Rapids goaltender Jonas Gustavsson.

That turned out to be the only blemish Gustavsson had as he turned away 30 of 31 shots in his second Griffins appearance since being assigned by the Detroit Red Wings for conditioning.

The Griffins evened the game later in the first period when Pulkkinen drove toward the net and slid a backhand shot past Marlies goaltender Christopher Gibson just outside the crease while being hooked by Tyler Biggs. Pulkkinen's 25th goal of the season at 15:37 was assisted by Miele.

The scoreless second period was controlled by the host Marlies as they outshot the Griffins 11-9 but Gustavsson made several big saves including a glove save on Frattin after Spencer Abbott dropped the puck back to Frattin to setup a one-timer.

The game appeared to head to overtime until Mark Zengerle gave the Griffins the lead with his 7th goal of the season after captain Jeff Hoggan centered the puck and Zengerle came up with it following a scramble and shot the puck between Gibson's pads at 15:16 of the third period.

Pulkkinen, the AHL's leading scorer, scored his 26th goal and 50th point of the campaign with an empty netter at 19:08 after Toronto pulled Gibson in an attempt to equalize the game. Miele assisted on the goal, which gave him 27 assists and 40 points this season.

The Griffins went scoreless on two power play opportunities and the Marlies failed to score on one power play chance.
The Griffins return to Van Andel Arena Friday at 7 pm when Rochester visits for a two-game set.

Grand Rapids Griffins 3 at Toronto Marlies 1 - Status: Final

Wednesday, February 4, 2015 - Ricoh Coliseum

Grand Rapids 1 0 2 - 3

Toronto 1 0 0 - 1


2nd Period- No Scoring.Penalties-Mikkelson Tor (trippling), 17:53; Carrick Tor (kneeing), 19:19.


Power Play Opportunities-Grand Rapids 0 / 2; Toronto 0 / 1.

Goalies-Grand Rapids, Gustavsson 1-1-0 (31 shots-30 saves). Toronto, Gibson 9-11-0 (29 shots-27 saves).

A-7,851

Referees-Kendrick Nicholson (44), Garrett Rank (48).

Linesmen-Vaughan Rody (13), Mike Hamilton (60).