

# IN COLUMBUS, WHO SHOULD PAY FOR KARLSSON DECISION?

## By Bruce Penton

An interesting Twitter thread recently addressed the phenomenal 2017-18 season of William Karlsson, the breakout sniper of the Vegas Golden Knights.

The question on Twitter was this: Should the people who run the Columbus Blue Jackets, who left Karlsson exposed in the expansion draft, be fired for their incompetence? Or should they be given a reprieve, due to the fact that no one could possibly have foreseen Karlsson, who managed six goals in 81 games last season, becoming one of the most feared goal scorers in the NHL?

Justin Bourne, who writes about the NHL for The Athletic, posted this: "If you expose a player in an expansion draft who scores 40 the next season you should auto-lose your job. I know player evaluation is hard but I don't think most guys would even be mad. 'Yeah I know, I'm fired, that's fair.'"

Some responders blamed the Columbus GM, Jarmo Kekäläinen; others felt that Kekäläinen provided the talented player to coach John Tortorella, and it was up to the coach to extract the maximum production.

Said @Julie Robenhymmer on Twitter: "But if a coach isn't utilizing a player to their greatest advantage, I'd assume that's a talk the GM would have with a coach to rectify. On the flip side, we're talking about a 25-year-old player who may have simply hit his stride. Doesn't the player deserve credit here?"

Perhaps it was opportunity that knocked for Karlsson, who will be a key player counted on by the Golden Knights to help them vie for a Stanley Cup. Others, like Reilly Smith and Jonathan Marchessault, have similar stories to that of Karlsson. Both were deemed excessive parts by the Florida Panthers' braintrust, and it must be exceedingly satisfying to Vegas coach Gerard Gallant to see two former Panthers, whom he coached until getting fired in November of last season, not only performing well but becoming vital cogs in his slam-dunk run toward the Coach-of-the-Year award.

Karlsson is getting 50 per cent more ice time than he received last year in Columbus, but with 41 goals at last count, is scoring 700 per cent more goals than he did last year. Coaching? Serendipity? Luck?

Whatever the reason, the brightest light among the Golden Knights collection of neon is proof that not even the most astute hockey minds can play Kreskin, and foresee how the future will unfold.

- **RJ Currie** of sportsdeke.com: "**Molly Schuyler** won the Wing Bowl in Philadelphia by eating 501 chicken wings in 30 minutes. She was poultry in motion."
- **Norman Chad** of the Washington Post, with two of his 20 ways to make the NBA better: "1. **LeBron James** gets to change teams every year, and at midseason, half the roster turns over to ensure he makes the NBA Finals; 2. Statistical adjustment: When a pass leads to a three-point basket, it should count as 1.5 assists."
- **Dwight Perry** of the Seattle Times: "North Dakota has been ranked the drunkest state in the U.S. But it was only No. 5 until **Carson Wentz** blew out his knee."
- **Brad Rock** of the Deseret News (Salt Lake City): "University of Memphis coach **Tubby Smith** went on a righteous rant about 800 college basketball players transferring 'when they want.' Problem was, Smith has had six jobs in the last 25 years — when he wanted. Isn't there something about glass houses he's supposed to know?"
- **Dwight Perry** again: "The San Francisco Giants announced plans to retire flaxseed-oil connoisseur **Barry Bonds**' No. 25 this season. His was the only jersey you had to wash in cold water just to keep the number from increasing to 26."
- Comedy writer **Jim Barach**: "A report says the entire Raiders complex in Las Vegas will cost \$2 billion. Which means when the team raises \$1 billion they can put it all on red and just let it ride."
- **Janice Hough** of [leftcoastsportsbabe.com](http://leftcoastsportsbabe.com): "**Matt Harvey** says the Mets will 'shock a lot of people' this season. Is there an electrical wiring issue at Citifield we don't know about?"
- **RJ Currie** again: "With Alberta skip **Laura Crocker** set to wed curler **Geoff Walker**, will she be last-rocker Crocker-Walker?"
- Another one from Barach: "**Steve Nash** will be inducted into the NBA Hall of Fame. Although it's sad to see **Pete Rose** is still the only athlete kept out of the Hall of Fame because of a bad haircut."
- Comedy writer **Alex Kaseberg**, on ex-MLB slugger **Albert Belle** getting charged with two counts of DUI and indecent exposure after drunkenly urinating by his car in front of children: "This move was so stupid Belle may have accidentally become an honorary Kardashian."
- One more from Perry: "**LiAngelo Ball**, with an international shoplifting incident and a grandstanding father on his résumé, has declared for this year's NBA draft. Sounds like now might be an opportune time to invest in 10-foot poles."

Care to comment? Email [brucepenton2003@yahoo.ca](mailto:brucepenton2003@yahoo.ca)