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## CANADA'S HOCKEY TALENT OVERFLOWING

Sports fans love debates. Who starts in goal? Who should be traded? Should the coach be fired? Who gets time on the power play?

So with that in mind, let's pretend that some sort of international hockey championship — Winter Olympics, for example — is approaching and every country has to select a 22-player roster (12 forwards; seven on defence; three goalies). Canada has such a deep pool of talent that some tremendous players would be left at home.

Sorry, John Tavares, you simply aren't good enough to play for Canada. Our country is too deep at centre.

Our fictitious Canadian team starts in the middle, with the world's best player, Connor McDavid, leading the way. He's backed by fellow centremen Nathan MacKinnon, ol' reliable Sidney Crosby and Steven Stamkos, who edges Tavares for the final centre position. Other star centres left at home include the likes of Patrice Bergeron, Logan Couture, Matt Barzal, Ryan O'Reilly, Taylor Hall, Brayden Point and Tyler Seguin. Wow! Canada has enough centres to fill three rosters.

On left wing, the Canadian squad might be led by Brad Marchand, even though he'd be likely to incite an international incident. Others on the port side are Johathan Huberdeau, David Perron and Matthew Tkachuk. (Maybe the coaches can add Tavares to the roster and use him on left wing to shore up an otherwise weak collection of players.)

Mark Scheifele would lead the Canadian right-wingers, followed by Mark Stone, Mitchell Marner and Brendan Gallagher, whose grit would come in handy to help deal with the Marchand-sparked 'incident'. A spare part on the right side would be Travis Konecny.

Defence would be another area of strength for Canada, with Drew Doughty, Shea Weber, Alex Pietrangelo, Dougie Hamilton, Morgan Rielly, Brent Burns and super rookie Cale Makar manning the blue line. Just missing the cut are Kris Letang, Ryan Ellis, Thomas Chabot, Shea Theodore, Josh Morrissey and the reigning Norris Trophy winner, Mark Giordano.

While many of the best NHL goalies are internationals, Canada would still be strong in the net behind Carey Price, No. 1 for perhaps the final time in this fictitious event. Backing him up would be Jordan Bennington and Marc Andre Fleury, with Braden Holtby and Darcy Kuemper waiting in the wings.

How would Canada stack up against the world's best with this squad? Almost unbeatable, IMO. Next week, we'll select a U.S. team that, at first glance, looks decent but has nowhere near the roster depth of Canada.

- **RJ Currie** of [sportsdeke.com](http://sportsdeke.com): "Police in China have used an unusual method to try to slow down speeders — cardboard cutouts of squad cars. They were inspired by the Cincinnati Bengals defence."

- **Norman Chad** of the Washington Post: "Watching **Tom Brady** throw these little hitch passes would be like listening to **Sinatra** sing 'Frère Jacques'."

- Comedy writer **Jim Barach**: "The Angels will buy Angel Stadium and stay in Anaheim through 2050. The plan is to merge with Disney and turn the ballpark into the new theme park, Troutland."

- Washington Post reader **Mark Cohen**, quizzing columnist **Norman Chad**: "Are there any videos in the Patriots' 'Do Your Job' series that *aren't* about cheating?"

- Headline at Fark.com: "Rendon joins the Angels, but in the good way."

- PGA player **Max Homa**, on Twitter: "**Tiger** somehow got people to believe we're real athletes. Let's not ruin all his hard work."

- Homa again, who has qualified for his first Masters: "I don't think I'd be nervous on the first tee at my first Masters. It's always been a dream of mine to play that tournament. I'd jump right past nervous and skip straight to violently ill, unfit to be in public."

- **Patti Dawn Swanson**, the River City Renegade, on the information blackout over the departure of Dallas Stars' coach **Jim Montgomery** in December: "The Stars have only told us that Monty was dismissed for 'unprofessional conduct,' a blanket statement that could cover everything from aiding and abetting **Lee Harvey Oswald** to piddling on the Grassy Knoll while intoxicated." (Montgomery later went public with an alcoholism admission.)

- **Greg Cote** of the Miami Herald, on Twitter: "Halftime security alert from the Capital One Orange Bowl: When leaving tonight's game and headed to your car, if you hear someone say, 'What's in your wallet?' — chances are you are being robbed."

- Comedy writer **Alex Kaseberg**, on the Seahawks failing to deliver a last-minute TD from the one-yard-line in a big game once again: "We may have to call **Pete Carroll** Repeat Carroll."

- **Jack Finarelli** at SportsCurmudgeon.com, on **Jimmy Haslam** about to hire his seventh head coach and sixth GM since purchasing the Browns in October 2012: "If Haslam planted a vegetable garden, I would not be surprised to learn that his harvest was meagre because every other day he would pull the plants out of the ground to see how the roots were developing." *Care to comment? Email [brucepenton2003@yahoo.ca](mailto:brucepenton2003@yahoo.ca)*