

Blackhawks wasting no time on rebuild

It could be a whirlwind of a rebuild for the Chicago Blackhawks.

The major beneficiary in the NHL Lottery Draw (aka the Connor Bedard sweepstakes), the Blackhawks are poised to jump from one of the worst teams in the National Hockey League to one of the best in only a couple of years.

Chicago's 59 points in 2022-23 were 31st out of 32 teams (only the hapless Anaheim Ducks were worse, by one point) and its roster looked pretty bleak, especially after the trading of superstar Patrick Kane in March and the decision not to resign Blackhawk legend Jonathan Toews. The 'Hawks' roster at the end of this season hardly sent shudders to opponents, with the likes of Taylor Raddysh, Andreas Athanasiou and Philipp Kurashev among the more recognizable names to avid Chicago fans.

But now, of course, everything has changed. The Hawks will select Bedard with the first pick in the NHL draft June 28 in Nashville, adding to the three first-rounders they had last season — defenceman Kevin Korchiński, who put up 73 points in 54 games for WHL champion Seattle this season; centre Frank Nazar from the U.S. National Development team, who went on to play as a freshman with University of Michigan this season; and Sam Rinzler, a high school defenceman from Minnesota who played two seasons in the USHL with Waterloo.

All three have reportedly NHL potential and when they mesh with Bedard plus another Blackhawk first-rounder this summer, along with four second-rounders, the talent pool in the Windy City could be immense.

But that's not all. Thanks in part to the many trades Hawks' general manager Kyle Davidson made, Chicago in 2024 has two first-rounders and two second-rounders. They also have two first-rounders and two second-rounders in 2025. It's an embarrassment of draft riches and if only a handful of those draft selections pan out, the 'Hawks will be contenders — and fast.

Chicago took great advantage of the situation the last time they picked No. 1 overall. It was 2007 and Patrick Kane was the consensus top choice but without the 'generational' adjective that has been attached to Bedard. All Kane did was go on to enjoy a Hall of Fame career, leading the 'Hawks to three Stanley Cups, winning the Rookie of the Year award, a Conn Smythe trophy (playoff MVP), as well as a scoring title and a Hart Trophy (most valuable player) in 2016.

Bedard and Co. could lead the Blackhawks to similar successes in the next decade or so. Blackhawk fans can only hope.

- Bob Molinaro of pilotonline.com (Hampton, Va.): "I'm happy to learn that the New England Patriots will honour **Tom Brady** at their home opener. The poor guy shouldn't have to go through life without some sort of recognition."
- Former pro hockey player **Rich Preston**, recalling his days with the Houston Aeros of the World Hockey Association when he played on a line with **Gordie** and **Marty Howe**: "**Terry Ruskowski** said: 'That's not a bad line, but it needs a nickname. They came up with, 'Howe, Howe and Who!'"
- Comedy guy **Torben Rolfson** of Vancouver: "Memphis Grizzlies told **Dillon Brooks** he would not be back with the team 'under any circumstances'. I find that hard to believe. How about if he agreed to play for free and they duct-taped his mouth shut?"
- **Eamon Lynch** of gulfweek.com, about LIV players perhaps getting picked for the U.S. Ryder Cup team: "**Patrick Reed** could win the next three majors and still not be invited for a uniform fitting for fear he might sue the seamstress."
- Canadian parody website The Beaverton: "Leafs fans sick of current 'good but not good enough' team going to love return of 'we suck and our front office is chaos' era."
- **RJ Currie** of sportsdeke.com: "The Arizona Coyotes recently had a local bank manager for their emergency backup goaltender. Don't laugh: The guy knew how to save."
- Another one from Currie: "Metro UK reports scientists have found a way to delete painful memories. Finally, some good news for Maple Leafs fans."
- One more headline from the Beaverton and then we'll quit picking on the Leafs: "Raising your kids to be Leafs fans classified as child abuse."
- Headline at theonion.com: "**Stephen A. Smith** blasts **Ja Morant** for poor gun-handling fundamentals"
- Another one from theonion.com: "Jets impressed how quickly **Aaron Rodgers** complaining about roster"
- From fark.com: "Connecticut governor wants to lure the Coyotes with the same arena that cost them the Whalers in the first place. Still better than what they've got in Tempe."

- Another one from fark.com: “**James Harden** to seek long-term contract with ‘basketball freedom,’ which loosely means an out clause to go to the strip club in the middle of the game.”
Care to comment? Email brucepenton2003@yahoo.ca