

31. Colorado Avalanche

Prospect System Ranking – 31st (Last Year - 25th)

GM: Chris MacFarland Hired: July 2022

COACH: Jared Bednar Hired: August 2016

Propped up by McKeen's 30th-ranked prospect, Calum Ritchie, the Colorado Avalanches' prospect system had been teetering on the edge for years.

Well, in an attempt to stock up on win-now assets, that high-profile prospect, along with William Zellers, has been sent out of the picture. Unfortunately, the return, which includes William Dufour, does little to inspire confidence in the system's future, dropping Colorado to 31st in our rankings.

It's evident that the draft means little in their current situation. Their aggressive approach has pillaged their draft capital, with just two picks (fourth and seventh rounds) remaining for the 2025 entry draft.

Bright spots within the system do exist, though. They hit with a nice fifth-round (2024) gem in Maxmilian Curran, who led his Tri-City Americans (WHL) with 74 points in 65 games. Meanwhile, the injection of Taylor Makar, who is now signed and fresh off his second NCAA Hockey East Championship, is a healthy addition to the system.

Furthermore, respectful AHL campaigns from Oskar Olausson and Ivan Ivan have both been sitting on the brink of graduation and contributing at the NHL level. Between the pipes, Ilya Nabokov continues to put up solid numbers in the KHL, providing hope for the future in the crease.

Unfortunately, while all intriguing in their own right, most do not project to be game-changers, and with the club set to see its third consecutive season without a first-round pick, there is little help to save the day in the immediate future.

And unlike their 2024 draft, which introduced a healthy dose of late-round picks—nine picks in total—their 2025 draft is currently scheduled for just two picks (fourth and seventh rounds).

Now navigating their new life without star forward Mikko Rantanen, the Colorado Avalanche have pushed all of their chips into the center of the table as they chase their second Stanley Cup in four years. Will trading away Calum Ritchie come back to haunt them? Stay tuned.

| RNK | PLAYER | NHL | POS | AGE | HT/WT |
|---------------------|------------------|--------|-----------------|-----------|-------------|
| 1 | Mikhail Gulyayev | Col | D | 20 | 5-11/170 |
| ACQUIRED | DFT YR | DFT TM | DFT SELECTED | BIRTHDATE | NATIONALITY |
| ` 23(31st) | Col | 2023 | 31 | 26-Apr-05 | Russia |
| TM | GP | G(W) | A(L) | PTS(GAA) | PIM(SPCT) |
| Avangard Omsk (KHL) | 67 | 7 | 8 | 15 | 8 |

Mikhail Gulyayev's offensive game continues to impress. Now in his third KHL season, he shows more poise and decision-making, using elite skating to drive offense with smooth edgework and effective transitions. His speed helps set up plays in the offensive zone, but his production has plateaued compared to last year. He moves the puck well but doesn't create the same quality chances as he did in juniors. I'd like to see him attack the middle more with his passes and cuts rather than sticking to the perimeter. Defensively, he still struggles with strength and positioning, often chasing the play rather than shutting it down. Despite these challenges, his skating remains elite, with quick acceleration and agility. Gulyayev has NHL potential as a bottom-four defenseman and power play quarterback, but he must improve his defensive game and maximize his offensive talents to carve out a role on Colorado's deep blue line.

| RNK | PLAYER | NHL | POS | AGE | HT/WT |
|------------------------------|--------------|--------|-----------------|-----------|-------------|
| 2 | Ilya Nabokov | Col | G | 22 | 6-0/180 |
| ACQUIRED | DFT YR | DFT TM | DFT SELECTED | BIRTHDATE | NATIONALITY |
| ` 24(38th) | Col | 2024 | 38 | 27-Mar-03 | Russia |
| TM | GP | G(W) | A(L) | PTS(GAA) | PIM(SPCT) |
| Metallurg Magnitogorsk (KHL) | 49 | 23 | 17 | 2.22 | 0.923 |

Ilya Nabokov has proved that his rookie KHL season wasn't a fluke, backing up his stellar season with another great one as one of the league's top goalies. He looks to be a lot more aggressive and displays his world-class athletic ability more frequently this season. His skating is second to none, he uses his compact stance and low centre of gravity to explode from any position to fly around the crease. Additionally, his tracking has improved, gluing his eyes to the puck and being able to process play at great speed mentally. However, this more aggressive, athletic, and flashy approach this season likely won't work as well at the NHL level. He has shown that he can be much calmer in the net, focusing more on precise positioning and controlled movement; it just isn't always present. Being too wild can lead to inconsistency, and especially in the case of Nabokov, creates a lot of dangerous rebounds. Unlocking his calmer side could be the key to him becoming the next Dustin Wolf in a few years.

| RNK | PLAYER | NHL | POS | AGE | HT/WT |
|--|--------------|--------|--------------|-----------|-------------|
| 3 | Sean Behrens | Col | D | 22 | 5-10/175 |
| ACQUIRED | DFT YR | DFT TM | DFT SELECTED | BIRTHDATE | NATIONALITY |
| ` 21(61st) | Col | 2021 | 61 | 31-Mar-03 | USA |
| TM | GP | G(W) | A(L) | PTS(GAA) | PIM(SPCT) |
| Colorado (AHL) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Behrens was getting ready to make his pro debut with the Eagles when he suffered a season ending knee injury during a practice. He was coming off a strong finish to his NCAA career winning a championship with the University of Denver Pioneers in 2023-24. He was name to the All-Tournament team while his regular season play earned him NCHC "Defensive Defenseman of the Year award". He seemed destined for a top four role at some point given his shutdown capabilities and ability to chip in offensively but that now remains to be seen how he recovers from a lost year of development. | | | | | |

| RNK | PLAYER | NHL | POS | AGE | HT/WT |
|---|----------------|--------|--------------|-----------|-------------|
| 4 | Oskar Olausson | Col | RW | 22 | 6-1/180 |
| ACQUIRED | DFT YR | DFT TM | DFT SELECTED | BIRTHDATE | NATIONALITY |
| ` 21(28th) | Col | 2021 | 28 | 10-Nov-02 | Sweden |
| TM | GP | G(W) | A(L) | PTS(GAA) | PIM(SPCT) |
| Colorado (AHL) | 61 | 11 | 15 | 26 | 26 |
| Oskar now in his third season in the AHL, his offensive production has unfortunately stagnated. An injury derailed the latter part of his season but this year he has been healthy. However, his off-puck game is still an issue, the offense is streaky, and he has been a healthy scratch for the Eagles multiple times. The tall, lanky, Swedish forward plays a speedy game, perfect fit for what the Avalanche are looking for, has a great shot and has developed a better transition game throughout this season. Olausson also has the offensive instincts to be creative and create scoring chances, but it's way too inconsistent. The top six upside with Oskar is still there, the shot is already NHL level but the clock is ticking. He either needs to round out his game for a middle six role or bring more consistent offense to be able to play with the top guys. If none of this is achieved, then in all likelihood Olausson will have to turn to European hockey eventually. | | | | | |

| RNK | PLAYER | NHL | POS | AGE | HT/WT |
|---------------|----------------|--------|--------------|-----------|-------------|
| 5 | William Dufour | Col | RW | 23 | 6-2/195 |
| ACQUIRED | DFT YR | DFT TM | DFT SELECTED | BIRTHDATE | NATIONALITY |
| T(NYI-3/25) | NYI | 2020 | 152 | 28-Jan-02 | Canada |
| TM | GP | G(W) | A(L) | PTS(GAA) | PIM(SPCT) |
| Bri-Col (AHL) | 57 | 9 | 13 | 22 | 57 |

The Quebec-born power forward is in his third professional season and although he produced at a high rate both in his last junior season and in his rookie AHL season, Dufour has had issues replicating that same success. The Colorado Avalanche acquired the forward in the Brock Nelson deal and immediately integrated him into the Eagles system. His ice-time was increased compared to his start with the Bridgeport Islanders in hopes of sparking his offense again, but so far it hasn't delivered the results. His shot is good, and he loves to come down the wing and do his signature curl-and-drag shot to beat the opposition's goalies. The creation of offense by transitioning through the neutral zone and heavy forechecking thanks to his large body are all traits that are very exciting for an organization like the Avalanche. But consistency was a question mark entering the season and remains an issue despite the new surroundings. Dufour is still young and could find that confidence back in hopes of reaching his potential as a goalscoring top nine winger.

| RNK | PLAYER | NHL | POS | AGE | HT/WT |
|----------------|--------------------|--------|--------------|-----------|-------------|
| 6 | Nikita Prishchepov | Col | C | 21 | 6-1/195 |
| ACQUIRED | DFT YR | DFT TM | DFT SELECTED | BIRTHDATE | NATIONALITY |
| ` 24(217th) | Col | 2024 | 217 | 20-Feb-04 | Russia |
| TM | GP | G(W) | A(L) | PTS(GAA) | PIM(SPCT) |
| Colorado (AHL) | 51 | 9 | 14 | 23 | 38 |

Outside of the 2024 draft first round, Nikita Prishchepov was the only player from that draft that made their NHL debut. Whilst being a D+3, many saw this as a surprise. He has spent 10 games so far with the NHL club scoring zero points but has been much more effective in his time in the minors. Prishchepov is never going to shock you with offensive production, no matter which league he plays in. But what he brings is a great defensive game, uses timely stick checks to break up plays and pressures well in his own end. While not the tallest at 6-foot-1, he's very broad-shouldered coming in at 195 pounds and uses that size well. What may hold him back into becoming an NHL bottom six regular is his puck skill. With less time to make plays at the NHL level, it could cause him problems. However, already breaking into the NHL lineup shortly after getting drafted is extremely impressive and Colorado might have a solid future penalty killer on their hands.

| RNK | PLAYER | NHL | POS | AGE | HT/WT |
|---------------|-------------|--------|-----------------|-----------|-------------|
| 7 | Jake Fisher | Col | C | 20 | 6-2/190 |
| ACQUIRED | DFT YR | DFT TM | DFT SELECTED | BIRTHDATE | NATIONALITY |
| ` 24(121st) | Col | 2024 | 121 | 27-Mar-05 | USA |
| ` 24(121st) | Col | 2024 | 121 | 27-Mar-05 | USA |
| Denver (NCHC) | 42 | 8 | 7 | 15 | 12 |

Fisher has shown steady progression in his first college season, adapting well from the USHL. His defensive game stands out, characterized by strong positioning, responsible play, and consistent support in puck and board battles. He effectively covers for his defensemen, demonstrating excellent defensive awareness and a reliable presence in his own zone. His ability to read plays contributes to cleaner breakouts for his team and transitioning to offense faster. Offensively, he positions himself in the slot, creating traffic and seeking rebound opportunities. However, his offensive impact remains limited, lacking dynamic play-driving abilities. Fisher's skating, agility, and puck skills are average, but his intelligence and understanding of the game are notable. He also receives power play time, maintaining movement and communication effectively. With continued development in his puck handling and offensive engagement, Fisher projects as a reliable, defensively responsible forward at the pro level, with potential to contribute in a bottom six role and on special teams.

| RNK | PLAYER | NHL | POS | AGE | HT/WT |
|----------------|----------------|--------|-----------------|-----------|-------------|
| 8 | Jean-Luc Foudy | Col | C | 22 | 5-11/175 |
| ACQUIRED | DFT YR | DFT TM | DFT SELECTED | BIRTHDATE | NATIONALITY |
| ` 20(75th) | Col | 2020 | 75 | 13-May-02 | Canada |
| TM | GP | G(W) | A(L) | PTS(GAA) | PIM(SPCT) |
| Colorado (AHL) | 48 | 5 | 14 | 19 | 20 |

Jean-Luc Foudy was drafted during Covid and since the CHL was shut down, he had to play somewhere else. He turned to Sweden across the Atlantic, playing in their tier 3 league. When the NHL/AHL continued in 2021, Foudy managed to secure a spot in the Eagles organization and had an impressive rookie season putting up 14 points in 34 games. Through a ruling in the CHL, Foudy didn't have to spend the rest of his junior years with the Windsor Spitfires and has been playing in the AHL ever since. While his 22-23 season was quite impressive production wise, he hasn't been able to replicate that same success the last couple seasons. He might have to focus on developing some off-puck skills that will make it easier for him to transition into a bottom six role in an NHL lineup. Considering his great skating ability, his transition play, and solid playmaking, there are tools that are translatable to the NHL. He just has to round out his game and become more consistent.

| RNK | PLAYER | NHL | POS | AGE | HT/WT |
|----------------|----------------|--------|--------------|-----------|-------------|
| 9 | Maros Jedlicka | Col | C | 22 | 6-2/195 |
| ACQUIRED | DFT YR | DFT TM | DFT SELECTED | BIRTHDATE | NATIONALITY |
| ` 23(219th) | Col | 2023 | 219 | 23-Oct-02 | Slovakia |
| TM | GP | G(W) | A(L) | PTS(GAA) | PIM(SPCT) |
| Colorado (AHL) | 18 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 4 |

Even though Maros Jedlicka produced great numbers in the Slovakian league, the Avs didn't draft him for his offense. He's responsible defensively, works hard in his own end and could be a future bottom six penalty killer for the Avalanche. Producing almost a point per game with HKM Zvolen in both 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 while also representing his country at the World Juniors both years, earned him getting drafted 219th overall in 2023. Unfortunately, he missed the entire 2023-2024 season due to an injury he received in a preseason game against Dallas. Starting his current season with HC Kometa Brno in the Extraliga, he later received an AHL contract and has been with the Eagles ever since, producing five points in 18 games. Don't expect his production to be elite in North America since the Slovakian league is many tiers below the AHL. However, his offensive numbers were quite impressive in Slovakia for such a young forward and since he missed an entire year there is still a reasonable chance that the production will improve even more next year.

| RNK | PLAYER | NHL | POS | AGE | HT/WT |
|--------------------------|-----------------|--------|--------------|-----------|-------------|
| 10 | Zakhar Bardakov | Col | C | 24 | 6-2/200 |
| ACQUIRED | DFT YR | DFT TM | DFT SELECTED | BIRTHDATE | NATIONALITY |
| T(NJ-3/24) | NJ | 2021 | 203 | 24-Feb-01 | Russia |
| TM | GP | G(W) | A(L) | PTS(GAA) | PIM(SPCT) |
| SKA St. Petersburg (KHL) | 53 | 17 | 18 | 35 | 30 |

Acquired from the New Jersey Devils in exchange for depth defender Kurtis MacDermid, Bardakov recently signed with the Avalanche and will play next season in North America. The 24 year old had a breakout season offensively in the KHL this past year, although expectations should not be sky high for him offensively as an NHL prospect. Bardakov brings value as a role player. He's big. He's quick. He brings a consistent physical element and is excellent in puck pursuit. He can kill penalties. He might even be given a chance to earn a fourth line, depth role with Colorado at next year's training camp, with an eye on developing him as that swiss army knife kind of role player. As an older prospect, he should be more pro ready than many others in the Avalanche system. On a one year deal, if Bardakov struggles to make plays with the puck and isn't able to find a consistent production level in the AHL, his North American appearance could be a short one.

| RNK | PLAYER | NHL | POS | AGE | HT/WT |
|----------------|----------------|--------|--------------|-----------|-------------|
| 11 | Matt Stienburg | Col | C | 24 | 6-1/185 |
| ACQUIRED | DFT YR | DFT TM | DFT SELECTED | BIRTHDATE | NATIONALITY |
| ` 19(63rd) | Col | 2019 | 63 | 7-Oct-00 | Canada |
| ` 19(63rd) | Col | 2019 | 63 | 7-Oct-00 | Canada |
| Colorado (NHL) | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 22 |

Matt Stienburg has been in the Avs organization for a long time now and finally been getting a foothold in the minors. After getting drafted, the physical centerman spent four full seasons at Cornell University. His offensive game throughout those four years may have been disappointing in some eyes but he has still been consistent with his physical game. The start of the 2024-2025 season started very promising, getting a call-up quite early and managed to dress up for eight games with the NHL club before getting a suspension. He was later sent down to the AHL but has been injured up until recently and started playing again around April. Stienburg has spent six years in leagues below the NHL and it's time for him to cement himself as an NHL player. It is unclear what role the Avalanche have in mind for him but continuing to play to his strengths by being physical and rounding out his defensive game could potentially lead to him being a future bottom six center that can play a tough and heavy role in the playoffs.

| RNK | PLAYER | NHL | POS | AGE | HT/WT |
|---------------|-------------|--------|--------------|-----------|-------------|
| 12 | Tory Pitner | Col | D | 19 | 6-0/180 |
| ACQUIRED | DFT YR | DFT TM | DFT SELECTED | BIRTHDATE | NATIONALITY |
| ` 24(185th) | Col | 2024 | 185 | 6-Mar-06 | USA |
| TM | GP | G(W) | A(L) | PTS(GAA) | PIM(SPCT) |
| Denver (NCHC) | 40 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 21 |

| RNK | PLAYER | NHL | POS | AGE | HT/WT |
|-----------------|---------------------|--------|--------------|-----------|-------------|
| 13 | Christian Humphreys | Col | C | 19 | 5-11/170 |
| ACQUIRED | DFT YR | DFT TM | DFT SELECTED | BIRTHDATE | NATIONALITY |
| ` 24(215th) | Col | 2024 | 215 | 4-Feb-06 | USA |
| ` 24(215th) | Col | 2024 | 215 | 4-Feb-06 | USA |
| Kitchener (OHL) | 28 | 11 | 22 | 33 | 8 |

| RNK | PLAYER | NHL | POS | AGE | HT/WT |
|----------------|------------|--------|-----------------|-----------|-------------|
| 14 | Max Curran | Col | C | 18 | 6-3/185 |
| ACQUIRED | DFT YR | DFT TM | DFT SELECTED | BIRTHDATE | NATIONALITY |
| ` 24(161st) | Col | 2024 | 161 | 27-Aug-06 | Czech |
| TM | GP | G(W) | A(L) | PTS(GAA) | PIM(SPCT) |
| Tri-City (WHL) | 65 | 22 | 52 | 74 | 30 |
| | | | | | |

| RNK | PLAYER | NHL | POS | AGE | HT/WT |
|-------------|--------------|--------|-----------------|-----------|-------------|
| 15 | Taylor Makar | Col | LW | 24 | 6-3/190 |
| ACQUIRED | DFT YR | DFT TM | DFT SELECTED | BIRTHDATE | NATIONALITY |
| ` 21(220th) | Col | 2021 | 220 | 13-Mar-01 | Canada |
| TM | GP | G(W) | A(L) | PTS(GAA) | PIM(SPCT) |
| Maine (HE) | 38 | 18 | 12 | 30 | 47 |
| | | | | | |