

13. Columbus Blue Jackets

Prospect System Ranking – 11th (Last Year - 13th)

GM: Don Waddell Hired: May 2024

COACH: Dean Evason Hired: July 2024

Another year, another missed postseason for the Columbus Blue Jackets. Yet, 2024-25 carried a spark of optimism. The team battled until the final day, falling just short of a playoff spot, fueled by breakout seasons from a few young stars.

Kirill Marchenko nearly doubled his career high with 74 points, Kent Johnson (22) approached 60, and 2023 third-overall pick Adam Fantilli broke the 50-point (54) plateau in his sophomore campaign. This emerging core signals a shift for a franchise with just six playoff appearances in 24 years.

Defenseman Denton Mateychuk (McKeen's 33rd) split time between the NHL and AHL, averaging 18 minutes per game in Columbus and cementing his pedigree as a two-way rearguard and powerplay distributor. Forwards Luca Del Bel Belluz, Gavin Brindley, Jordan Dumais, and Owen Sillinger are developing in the AHL, each showing offensive promise. While on the blueline, Stanislav Svozil, Corson Ceulemans, and Samuel Knazko are honing their skills with Cleveland, poised to bolster the defense in time.

Cayden Lindstrom, the organization's top prospect, missed the entire 2024-25 season due to injury, stalling development in his draft-plus-one season. His next steps remain uncertain, but his size and skill make him a cornerstone for Columbus's future.

With two first-round picks in 2025, GM Don Waddell has the tools to deepen the pipeline further. This organization has endured years of pain, but with a loaded depth chart, it is poised to break out.

RNK	PLAYER	NHL	POS	AGE	HT/WT
1	Cayden Lindstrom	CBJ	C	19	6-3/215
ACQUIRED	DFT TM	DFT YR	DFT SELECTED	BIRTHDATE	NATIONALITY
` 24(4th)	CBJ	2024	4	3-Feb-06	Canada
TM	GP	G(W)	A(L)	PTS(GAA)	PIM(SPCT)
Medicine Hat (WHL)	0	0	0	0	0

As of this writing, Lindstrom has not played any games in his 2024-25 season, though there is a small chance that he might as his Tigers team advances in the playoffs. This is due to him receiving back surgery in November that was meant to address a nagging issue that had been lingering since the prior season. And yet, if you were to candidly ask the Blue Jackets if they would choose to go a different direction with the fourth overall pick in the 2024 draft if given the opportunity, they would likely still decline. That's because Lindstrom truly is that exciting of a hockey player and still maintains such an enticing long-term ceiling that he is well worth the wait and the slower development path. He's a huge center with menacing physicality, explosive skating ability, sublime puck skill and infectious determination, which is a blend of traits that is highly rare and highly valuable. If everything goes right for him then the sky's the limit.

RNK	PLAYER	NHL	POS	AGE	HT/WT
2	Denton Mateychuk	CBJ	D	20	5-11/190
ACQUIRED	DFT TM	DFT YR	DFT SELECTED	BIRTHDATE	NATIONALITY
` 22(12th)	CBJ	2022	12	12-Jul-04	Canada
TM	GP	G(W)	A(L)	PTS(GAA)	PIM(SPCT)
Columbus (NHL)	45	4	9	13	20

Mateychuk made a seamless transition into pro hockey, putting up near point-per-game numbers in the AHL. He earned a shot with the Blue Jackets in late December and hasn't looked back, surpassing NHL veteran Damon Severson to claim a spot on Columbus' second pair and even getting time with Werenski on the top pair down the stretch. Denton looks extremely confident in his new role and is always ready to show off his NHL-proven shot or activate from the point to find cross-crease passing lanes. As always, he brings an above-average level of compete to everything he does. While his frame and top speed still leave something to be desired, he's taken steps forward defensively, hustling for loose pucks and showing a willingness to use his body to shut down the rush. It's clear Mateychuk is a key part of the Blue Jackets' rebuild and projects as a top four fixture for years to come.

RNK	PLAYER	NHL	POS	AGE	HT/WT
3	Gavin Brindley	CBJ	C	20	5-9/165
ACQUIRED	DFT TM	DFT YR	DFT SELECTED	BIRTHDATE	NATIONALITY
` 23(34th)	CBJ	2023	34	5-Oct-04	USA
TM	GP	G(W)	A(L)	PTS(GAA)	PIM(SPCT)
Cleveland (AHL)	52	6	11	17	24

After an impressive final year of college hockey, being named Big Ten Player of the Year, Brindley suffered an unfortunate broken finger in the pre-season, delaying his debut until November 23rd. He made the jump to the AHL with the Monsters in style, scoring five points in his first three games. However, since that start, Brindley has struggled to produce, going pointless through February and March. On the positive side, Brindley's relentless effort and speedy skating have served him well in his first AHL season. He regularly disrupts puck carriers and applies pressure on the forecheck. His quick hands, pace, and processing have even earned him a look at center, and it's important to consider the adjustment required after playing as a winger throughout his junior career. With his well-rounded off-puck game and offensive upside, there's good reason to believe Brindley will carve out a role in Columbus' middle six a few years down the line.

RNK	PLAYER	NHL	POS	AGE	HT/WT
4	Stanislav Svozil	CBJ	D	22	6-1/180
ACQUIRED	DFT TM	DFT YR	DFT SELECTED	BIRTHDATE	NATIONALITY
` 21(69th)	CBJ	2021	69	17-Jan-03	Czech
TM	GP	G(W)	A(L)	PTS(GAA)	PIM(SPCT)
Cleveland (AHL)	63	4	20	24	42

This season was supposed to be a big year for Stanislav Svozil's development, and on a rebuilding team, it looked like he'd have a shot to get some NHL time. Unfortunately, there hasn't been as much progression as anticipated, with Svozil's scoring rates staying nearly identical to last year. One area of growth, however, has been his decision-making with the puck. In 2025, Svozil has been committing far fewer turnovers and is starting to settle into his role as a future bottom-four defenseman. His offensive ability isn't fully reflected in his rather pedestrian point totals. Before the Monsters' offense stalled in February, he was producing at over 0.5 points per game. Svozil times his activations well, jumping into the play to create high-danger chances. One necessary area for improvement in Svozil's development is adding more physicality, especially considering he'll be competing for bottom-pairing minutes.

RNK	PLAYER	NHL	POS	AGE	HT/WT
5	Luca Del Bel Belluz	CBJ	C	21	6-1/185
ACQUIRED	DFT TM	DFT YR	DFT SELECTED	BIRTHDATE	NATIONALITY
` 22(44th)	CBJ	2022	44	10-Nov-03	Canada
TM	GP	G(W)	A(L)	PTS(GAA)	PIM(SPCT)
Cleveland (AHL)	61	27	26	53	12

Luca Del Bel Belluz has been a huge success story this year and looks like a strong fit in the Blue Jackets' bottom six moving forward. He tore up the AHL, building on his success from last season, and carried that production into his call-up with Columbus. After that trial run, Del Bel Belluz returned to the AHL, where his scoring pace dipped in February, but so did nearly every other Cleveland Monsters' player. Despite the slowdown, Del Bel Belluz continues to generate dangerous chances thanks to his smart timing and off-puck positioning. He always seems to find open ice, readjusting in the zone and using his slick release to beat goalies. While he's not going to be a play driver and still lacks high-end pace, he projects as a complementary scorer who can bring skill and finishing in a depth role. Del Bel Belluz looks well on his way to becoming a useful piece in Columbus' bottom six.

RNK	PLAYER	NHL	POS	AGE	HT/WT
6	Jordan Dumais	CBJ	RW	21	5-8/165
ACQUIRED	DFT TM	DFT YR	DFT SELECTED	BIRTHDATE	NATIONALITY
` 22(96th)	CBJ	2022	96	15-Apr-04	Canada
TM	GP	G(W)	A(L)	PTS(GAA)	PIM(SPCT)
Cleveland (AHL)	21	4	7	11	4

Once again, Jordan Dumais missed a significant portion of the season, returning from a lingering lower-body injury on January 31st. Dumais has now appeared in just 39 league games over the past two seasons, but he jumped back into action with four points in his first four games before falling victim to Cleveland's offensive struggles in February. Throughout his junior career, Dumais has faced criticism for his lack of size, speed, and strength, but he's consistently proven doubters wrong by producing points wherever he plays. The skills and hockey sense are clearly there. The million-dollar question now is: where does he fit in an NHL lineup? And if it's not in the top six, can he adapt his game to meet the needs of the Blue Jackets?

RNK	PLAYER	NHL	POS	AGE	HT/WT
7	Luca Marrelli	CBJ	D	19	6-2/185
ACQUIRED	DFT TM	DFT YR	DFT SELECTED	BIRTHDATE	NATIONALITY
`24(86th)	CBJ	2024	86	4-Oct-05	Canada
TM	GP	G(W)	A(L)	PTS(GAA)	PIM(SPCT)
Oshawa (OHL)	67	19	55	74	21

Intelligence is the name of the game here. Marrelli is one of the OHL's smartest defenders. He's rarely out of position defensively. He rarely turns the puck over. He consistently makes smart plays and stabilizes the offensive attack when he's on the ice. Best of all for Columbus, he does this from the right side. As a powerplay quarterback, he walks the line well and gets pucks on net, although a significant amount of his offensive production this year has come at even strength. Marrelli's upside may not be significant; we're not likely talking about a future first pairing defender. However, the consistency and efficiency of his game should play well at the pro level as long as he continues to improve his physical intensity. He'll turn pro next year and should work his way up the lineup over a few years before being ready for a role with the Jackets.

RNK	PLAYER	NHL	POS	AGE	HT/WT
8	Corson Ceulemans	CBJ	D	21	6-2/200
ACQUIRED	DFT TM	DFT YR	DFT SELECTED	BIRTHDATE	NATIONALITY
`21(25th)	CBJ	2021	25	5-May-03	Canada
TM	GP	G(W)	A(L)	PTS(GAA)	PIM(SPCT)
Cleveland (AHL)	33	2	5	7	29

A rough season got worse for Corson Ceulemans when he underwent surgery in January to repair an upper-body injury. His point production took a step back from the year prior, as he's struggled to rediscover what made him such a potent offensive threat in junior. This injury could serve as a much needed reset for Ceulemans when he returns to the AHL next year looking to re-establish his offensive presence. One area where Corson continues to show promise is his ability to close space quickly - whether it's stepping up to pressure puck carriers off the rush or springing from the netfront to retrieve pucks along the end boards. As Columbus works to sort out which of their young defensemen fit into the long-term picture, Ceulemans will need to further refine the playmaking skills he flashed in his draft year to stay in the mix for an NHL role.

RNK	PLAYER	NHL	POS	AGE	HT/WT
9	William Whitelaw	CBJ	RW	20	5-9/173
ACQUIRED	DFT TM	DFT YR	DFT SELECTED	BIRTHDATE	NATIONALITY
` 23(66th)	CBJ	2023	66	5-Feb-05	USA
TM	GP	G(W)	A(L)	PTS(GAA)	PIM(SPCT)
Michigan (B1G)	35	11	7	18	30

There's no denying Whitelaw's offensive upside. This is a highly skilled player. However, he's also about to play for his third NCAA program in three years after entering the transfer portal yet again. Whitelaw's production and ice time fluctuated at both Wisconsin two years ago and Michigan last year. Will his third stop finally bring out the best in his ability? As of writing this, this stop is not yet known, however, there's hope that they can foster his offensive abilities and help him develop for the Blue Jackets. Whitelaw is dynamic in transition because of his speed and scoring ability. As a collegiate player, his decision making and off puck play has been fairly inconsistent and that's led to less responsibility and lower production compared to his ability. It's not too late for Whitelaw to turn things around, but it does appear that he's way more of a long-term project than he was initially considered to be.

RNK	PLAYER	NHL	POS	AGE	HT/WT
10	Luca Pinelli	CBJ	C	20	5-9/165
ACQUIRED	DFT TM	DFT YR	DFT SELECTED	BIRTHDATE	NATIONALITY
` 23(114th)	CBJ	2023	114	5-Apr-05	Canada
TM	GP	G(W)	A(L)	PTS(GAA)	PIM(SPCT)
Ottawa (OHL)	52	37	34	71	63

The Ottawa 67's did not make the playoffs this year for the first time in over a decade, so as you might expect, many of their players had down years, including Pinelli. A workhorse in all three zones, Pinelli's compete level can never be questioned. He may not be big, but he is consistently successful in his pursuit of the puck and he executes well in the middle of the ice and near the crease by outthinking and outworking bigger defenders at the junior level. He certainly has a measure of skill too, in particular a quick and powerful wrister. The big question mark is whether he can continue to find success as an offensive player at the pro level, despite not being the quickest or the biggest? Additionally, if that's not the case, does he fit the profile of the kind of player Columbus would want playing a fourth line, penalty killing kind of role? Pinelli will turn pro next year and there could be some growing pains in his first season, but his work rate should endear him to his coaches.

RNK	PLAYER	NHL	POS	AGE	HT/WT
11	Evan Gardner	CBJ	G	19	6-0/175
ACQUIRED	DFT TM	DFT YR	DFT SELECTED	BIRTHDATE	NATIONALITY
` 24(60th)	CBJ	2024	60	25-Jan-06	Canada
TM	GP	G(W)	A(L)	PTS(GAA)	PIM(SPCT)
Saskatoon (WHL)	44	23	13	2.82	0.911

RNK	PLAYER	NHL	POS	AGE	HT/WT
12	Jet Greaves	CBJ	G	24	6-0/185
ACQUIRED	DFT TM	DFT YR	DFT SELECTED	BIRTHDATE	NATIONALITY
FA(2/22)				30-Mar-01	Canada
TM	GP	G(W)	A(L)	PTS(GAA)	PIM(SPCT)
Cleveland (AHL)	40	21	11	2.62	0.920

RNK	PLAYER	NHL	POS	AGE	HT/WT
13	Charlie Elick	CBJ	D	19	6-4/200
ACQUIRED	DFT TM	DFT YR	DFT SELECTED	BIRTHDATE	NATIONALITY
` 24(36th)	CBJ	2024	36	17-Jan-06	Canada
TM	GP	G(W)	A(L)	PTS(GAA)	PIM(SPCT)
Bdn-TC (WHL)	66	2	13	15	55

RNK	PLAYER	NHL	POS	AGE	HT/WT
14	Sergei Ivanov	CBJ	G	21	5-11/165
ACQUIRED	DFT TM	DFT YR	DFT SELECTED	BIRTHDATE	NATIONALITY
` 22(138th)	CBJ	2022	138	3-Apr-04	Russia
TM	GP	G(W)	A(L)	PTS(GAA)	PIM(SPCT)
HK Sochi (KHL)	38	11	21	3.00	0.911

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RNK	PLAYER	NHL	POS	AGE	HT/WT
15	James Malatesta	CBJ	LW	21	5-9/190
ACQUIRED	DFT TM	DFT YR	DFT SELECTED	BIRTHDATE	NATIONALITY
` 21(133rd)	CBJ	2021	133	31-May-03	Canada
TM	GP	G(W)	A(L)	PTS(GAA)	PIM(SPCT)
Cleveland (AHL)	41	8	6	14	49