

17. Nashville Predators

Prospect System Ranking – 17th (Last Year - 10th)

GM: Barry Trotz Hired: July 2023

COACH: Andrew Brunette Hired: May 2023

After some bold off-season roster moves, the Nashville Predators entered 2024-25 with sky-high expectations. Unfortunately, a disappointing season has left them searching for direction instead.

Shipping out goaltending prospect Yaroslav Askarov, a former cornerstone and seventh-ranked prospect here at McKeen's, further clouds their future, dropping the prospect pool from 10th to 17th.

Still, GM Barry Trotz has pieces to work with and a clear plan to accelerate a retool. Prospects Fyodor Svechkov and Zachary L'Heureux brought immediate impacts this season, carving out full-time roles. Joakim Kemell, a noted dynamic scorer, matched his previous AHL totals with the Milwaukee Admirals, putting him on the cusp of deployment.

Further down, defenseman Tanner Molendyk and forwards Matthew Wood and David Edstrom are set to join the Admirals, each offering top-six or top-four potential. Overseas, Russian forward Yegor Surin continues to develop in the KHL, adding depth to a system with solid but not elite upside.

But nothing accelerates a retool quite like stockpiling draft capital, and GM Barry Trotz has provided a masterclass. With five picks in the first two rounds of 2025, including three first-rounders, the Predators are poised for a major pipeline boost.

RNK	PLAYER	NHL	POS	AGE	HT/WT
1	Tanner Molendyk	Nsh	D	20	5-11/185
ACQUIRED	DFT TM	DFT YR	DFT SELECTED	BIRTHDATE	NATIONALITY
` 23(24th)	Nsh	2023	24	3-Feb-05	Canada
TM	GP	G(W)	A(L)	PTS(GAA)	PIM(SPCT)
Sas-MH (WHL)	49	9	38	47	18

The one missing ingredient that the powerhouse Tigers needed before embarking upon their bold playoff run this spring was an elite puck-moving defenseman, which is why they paid a pretty penny to land Molendyk, who was one of the top prizes available overall leading up to the WHL trade deadline this spring. And totally unsurprisingly, his sublime, effortless skating ability has fit seamlessly into his new team's high-octane offensive approach. Even though he doesn't rack up a lot of points his extreme mobility and breakneck pace still allow him to wreak havoc in a variety of other ways that tilt the ice in his club's favor, always keeping the opposing players on their heels or left in the dust. Molendyk might not reach quite the same heights as the Minnesota Wild's Brock Faber, who is a very similar kind of player, but it wouldn't be surprising if he got pretty close.

RNK	PLAYER	NHL	POS	AGE	HT/WT
2	Yegor Surin	Nsh	C	18	6-1/190
ACQUIRED	DFT TM	DFT YR	DFT SELECTED	BIRTHDATE	NATIONALITY
` 24(22nd)	Nsh	2024	22	1-Aug-06	Russia
TM	GP	G(W)	A(L)	PTS(GAA)	PIM(SPCT)
Lokomotiv Yaroslavl (KHL)	41	7	7	14	18

2024 Predators first-round pick Yegor Surin earned his spot on Lokomotiv's KHL roster through grit, hard work, and confident play. The young power forward quickly established a physical presence, using his strong frame to battle through contact and drive play. His forechecking has been ferocious, and he showed flashes of offensive upside with confident net drives, a heavy wrister, and solid playmaking. While Surin held his own in his first full KHL season, his puck decisions often felt rushed, as if he didn't fully trust his instincts. With more experience, that confidence should grow, and his production will likely follow. He's not NHL-ready yet, but his development is on track. Surin projects as a future middle-six, checking forward who brings energy, toughness, and scoring potential to Nashville's lineup.

RNK	PLAYER	NHL	POS	AGE	HT/WT
3	Matthew Wood	Nsh	RW	20	6-3/195
ACQUIRED	DFT TM	DFT YR	DFT SELECTED	BIRTHDATE	NATIONALITY
` 23(15th)	Nsh	2023	15	6-Feb-05	Canada
TM	GP	G(W)	A(L)	PTS(GAA)	PIM(SPCT)
Minnesota (B1G)	39	17	22	39	16

Selected 15th overall by the Nashville Predators in the 2023 NHL Draft, Matthew Wood remains one of the more intriguing and polarizing prospects from his class. At his best, he flashes the tools of a skilled power forward, which is exactly what made him a top pick: great size, soft hands, and a lethal shot. At his worst, he is just a big forward with limited mobility, making awkward plays and not winning as many battles as he probably should. Compared to his draft year, improvements can be seen, particularly in his playmaking and his power game, but that has not translated at all to his point totals, which were stagnant through his three seasons in the NCAA. There's still some huge power upside if he can improve his skating and round out his game. With the right development, Wood could become a top six winger, but that outcome is far from certain. He did just sign his ELC, so it appears Nashville wants to continue his development in the pros.

RNK	PLAYER	NHL	POS	AGE	HT/WT
4	Joakim Kemell	Nsh	RW	21	5-10/185
ACQUIRED	DFT TM	DFT YR	DFT SELECTED	BIRTHDATE	NATIONALITY
` 22(17th)	Nsh	2022	17	27-Apr-04	Finland
TM	GP	G(W)	A(L)	PTS(GAA)	PIM(SPCT)
Milwaukee (AHL)	65	19	21	40	39

Going into this season, many Predators fans probably expected Joakim Kemell to make a strong push for a roster spot with the Predators, or at the very least return to the Milwaukee Admirals and put together a strong second full season in the AHL. Kemell didn't necessarily have a bad training camp with the Predators, per se, but he didn't really force the Predators to keep him, either. Part of this was because Kemell was in-tough as a goal scoring option after the Predators' summer additions of Jonathan Marchessault and Steven Stamkos, but the opportunity was there for Kemell to play more for a struggling Predators team this season. Kemell hasn't necessarily been bad this year for Milwaukee, either, but he hasn't made the dynamic strides that one would have hoped. He's on pace for similar goal and point totals from last year, and his play has really been up or down all season. Three good games are usually followed by three subpar games, and Kemell really needs to develop consistency to forward himself as a legitimate NHL option. He still has top six NHL potential, but he needs to showcase more to earn that opportunity.

RNK	PLAYER	NHL	POS	AGE	HT/WT
5	David Edstrom	Nsh	C	20	6-3/185
ACQUIRED	DFT TM	DFT YR	DFT SELECTED	BIRTHDATE	NATIONALITY
T(SJ-8/24)	VGK	2023	32	18-Feb-05	Sweden
TM	GP	G(W)	A(L)	PTS(GAA)	PIM(SPCT)
Frolunda (SHL)	39	7	12	19	10

Despite his NHL rights changing hands a few times since his draft year, Edstrom has stayed consistent. The big centerman from Göteborg has been a key player for SHL Frölunda all season long, as well as the 1C for Sweden at the WJC in Ottawa, before missing some time late in the season with mono. Edstrom is a versatile, intelligent two-way center who can handle whatever role he's assigned without issue. He wins face-offs, battles hard, positions himself well off-puck, and goes to the net. While he may lean more defensively than offensively, Edstrom still projects as a rock-solid third line center who can contribute in all three zones. Hard to see any surprises or deviations from that projection at this point in his development.

RNK	PLAYER	NHL	POS	AGE	HT/WT
6	Reid Schaefer	Nsh	LW	21	6-3/215
ACQUIRED	DFT TM	DFT YR	DFT SELECTED	BIRTHDATE	NATIONALITY
T(Edm-2/23)	Edm	2022	32	21-Sep-03	Canada
TM	GP	G(W)	A(L)	PTS(GAA)	PIM(SPCT)
Milwaukee (AHL)	19	8	6	14	27

Reid Schaefer has battled with the injury bug all season, but he has put together a strong sophomore pro campaign that was built on a good freshman season with the Milwaukee Admirals in the AHL. When Schaefer's in the lineup, he's just tough to play against. He hounds loose pucks and opposing players, he's always willing to engage with other players physically, and never backs down from an opportunity to create havoc. This is what Schaefer needs to do to become a full-time NHL player with the Nashville Predators, and it's great to see Schaefer stick to the game that got him here from the junior level. In terms of projections, Schaefer projects to a hard-nosed third-line role at the NHL level, with the potential of playing second-unit net-front power play time. There's a chance he becomes more than a third-line player, but he needs to keep building on his shot and playmaking abilities. Schaefer should be a full-time player with the Predators in the next one-to-two seasons.

RNK	PLAYER	NHL	POS	AGE	HT/WT
7	Teddy Stiga	Nsh	C	19	5-10/180
ACQUIRED	DFT TM	DFT YR	DFT SELECTED	BIRTHDATE	NATIONALITY
` 24(55th)	Nsh	2024	55	5-Apr-06	USA
TM	GP	G(W)	A(L)	PTS(GAA)	PIM(SPCT)
Boston College (HE)	36	14	16	30	34

Throughout the season, Stiga has demonstrated consistent growth and development. Early reports highlighted his play-driving ability, offensive zone speed, and three-zone support. As the season progressed, his dynamic skating, agility, and hockey IQ became more evident, making him a constant offensive threat. His non-stop movement and knack for finding open space created scoring opportunities for himself and teammates. Defensively, Stiga showcased his awareness with an active stick, strong positioning, and well-timed stick checks, contributing in all situations. Stiga's primary strengths lie in his high-end skating, puck-handling, and decision-making. His relentless forechecking pressure and creativity in tight spaces further elevate his impact. While he has shown commitment defensively, continuing to build strength and refine his physical game would enhance his effectiveness. Looking ahead, Stiga projects as a reliable middle-six scoring forward with special teams' upside. His blend of skill, awareness, and competitiveness suggests he could thrive in a variety of roles at higher levels, but the lack of size is always a concern.

RNK	PLAYER	NHL	POS	AGE	HT/WT
8	Ryan Ufko	Nsh	D	21	5-10/180
ACQUIRED	DFT TM	DFT YR	DFT SELECTED	BIRTHDATE	NATIONALITY
` 21(115th)	Nsh	2021	115	7-May-03	USA
TM	GP	G(W)	A(L)	PTS(GAA)	PIM(SPCT)
Milwaukee (AHL)	72	8	21	29	14

Ryan Ufko is a joy to watch at both ends of the ice. He's such a smart player and there are so many great underlying details to his game, all of which have translated to the pro game from his time at the University of Massachusetts. He's great at distributing pucks and making plays in the offensive zone, he's strong on his skates as a capable defender in the defensive zone, and he's also a very disciplined player that rarely takes penalties. These are the makings of a future top four NHL defender, even though Ufko is smaller than most of those types of defenders in terms of size. With that being said, Ufko makes up for it through all the other components of his game, and he should be in the NHL with the Predators in a full-time role very shortly. He probably won't be a full-time NHL penalty killer but look for Ufko to play reliable minutes at 5-on-5 with a special emphasis toward deployments in the offensive zone. He's a special player to watch.

RNK	PLAYER	NHL	POS	AGE	HT/WT
9	Semyon Chistyakov	Nsh	D	23	5-11/180
ACQUIRED	DFT TM	DFT YR	DFT SELECTED	BIRTHDATE	NATIONALITY
` 19(117th)	Nsh	2019	117	7-Aug-01	Russia
TM	GP	G(W)	A(L)	PTS(GAA)	PIM(SPCT)
Avangard Omsk (KHL)	68	19	21	40	16

Semyon Chistyakov had a strong fifth KHL season, posting a career high 40 points in 68 games. As an offensive defenseman, he frequently activates deep into the zone and isn't shy about shooting. While his production is impressive, several areas of his game still seem far from NHL ready. He struggles in physical battles, often getting pushed off pucks and outmuscled along the boards. Though he uses his stick effectively to break up plays, his timing and positioning remain inconsistent, leaving him exposed defensively. Offensively, he can get too flashy, forcing unnecessary moves and turning pucks over when there are more simple options available. Chistyakov continues to improve each year, but he appears a step behind what's needed for an impact at the AHL or NHL level. He will continue to be a productive offensive option in the KHL for years to come, but NHL hopes are low.

RNK	PLAYER	NHL	POS	AGE	HT/WT
10	Andrew Gibson	Nsh	D	20	6-3/195
ACQUIRED	DFT TM	DFT YR	DFT SELECTED	BIRTHDATE	NATIONALITY
T(Det-6/24)	Det	2023	42	13-Feb-05	Canada
TM	GP	G(W)	A(L)	PTS(GAA)	PIM(SPCT)
Soo-Osh (OHL)	54	9	15	24	59

Don't be concerned too much about Gibson's offensive production declining in his final OHL season. That's not going to be his calling card at the next level. For Gibson, it's all about his play in the defensive end and his ability to provide stability from the right side. He brings physicality. He blocks shots. He clogs passing lanes and clears the net front. He wins 50/50 battles and clears the zone. Simply put, Gibson is one of the OHL's elite defensive defenders. Without high end skating ability or puck skill, his upside as an NHL player is likely limited. But there's a good chance that he could become a quality #4 or #6, playing a supporting role to a more offensively oriented rearguard, like say Tanner Molendyk or Ryan Ufko. He should also be able to help anchor Nashville's penalty killing unit in the future. However, don't expect him with the Preds soon. He's going to take some time in the AHL to adjust to the speed of the pro game.

RNK	PLAYER	NHL	POS	AGE	HT/WT
11	Aiden Fink	Nsh	RW	20	5-9/155
ACQUIRED	DFT TM	DFT YR	DFT SELECTED	BIRTHDATE	NATIONALITY
` 23(218th)	Nsh	2023	218	24-Nov-04	Canada
TM	GP	G(W)	A(L)	PTS(GAA)	PIM(SPCT)
Penn State (B1G)	40	23	30	53	12

RNK	PLAYER	NHL	POS	AGE	HT/WT
12	Felix Nilsson	Nsh	C	19	6-0/175
ACQUIRED	DFT TM	DFT YR	DFT SELECTED	BIRTHDATE	NATIONALITY
` 23(43rd)	Nsh	2023	43	22-Jun-05	Sweden
TM	GP	G(W)	A(L)	PTS(GAA)	PIM(SPCT)
Rogle (SHL)	40	5	17	22	4

RNK	PLAYER	NHL	POS	AGE	HT/WT
13	Ozzy Wiesblatt	Nsh	RW	23	5-10/185
ACQUIRED	DFT TM	DFT YR	DFT SELECTED	BIRTHDATE	NATIONALITY
T(SJ-6/24)	SJ	2020	31	9-Mar-02	Canada
TM	GP	G(W)	A(L)	PTS(GAA)	PIM(SPCT)
Milwaukee (AHL)	64	15	25	40	96

RNK	PLAYER	NHL	POS	AGE	HT/WT
14	Kalan Lind	Nsh	LW	20	6-0/160
ACQUIRED	DFT TM	DFT YR	DFT SELECTED	BIRTHDATE	NATIONALITY
` 23(46th)	Nsh	2023	46	25-Jan-05	Canada
TM	GP	G(W)	A(L)	PTS(GAA)	PIM(SPCT)
Red Deer (WHL)	37	12	15	27	55

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RNK	PLAYER	NHL	POS	AGE	HT/WT
15	Miguel Marques	Nsh	RW	19	5-10/185
ACQUIRED	DFT TM	DFT YR	DFT SELECTED	BIRTHDATE	NATIONALITY
` 24(87th)	Nsh	2024	87	8-Mar-06	Canada
TM	GP	G(W)	A(L)	PTS(GAA)	PIM(SPCT)
Lethbridge (WHL)	29	14	24	38	30