



All stats through games played Jan. 11, 2026



GAVIN McKENNA

Left Wing | Penn State (NCAA)

Born: Whitehorse, Y.T.

No. 1-Ranked North American Skater

* McKenna is currently leading all draft eligible players in the NCAA with 4-15—19 (18 GP). The Penn State Univ., freshman owns the sixth-most points in the NCAA among players age 18 or younger – every player above him has already been drafted to an NHL team.

* Named the CHL David Branch Player of the Year in 2024-25. At just 17 years, 5 months, and 24 days old, McKenna became the [third-youngest recipient of the award](#), behind **Sidney Crosby** and **John Tavares** (who both did so at age 16).

* Finished the 2024-25 season with 41-88—129 in 56 GP and riding a 40-game point streak. He later extended that streak to 54 games during the 2025 WHL Playoffs, establishing a modern CHL record (since 2000) for the longest single-season point streak across the regular season, playoffs, and Memorial Cup.

* Led the WHL in assists (88) and plus-minus (plus-60) during the 2024-25 season.

* His 2024-25 trophy case included CHL and WHL Player of the Year as well as being named to the CHL, WHL and Memorial Cup First All-Star Teams.

* Helped Medicine Hat win the 2025 WHL Championship and finished the playoffs third in the league and first on his team in points (9-29—38 in 16 GP).



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* In 2023-24, McKenna was named CHL and WHL Rookie of the Year after posting 34-63—97 in 61 GP.

* On the international stage, McKenna has represented Canada at the 2026 World Junior Championship, where he finished the tournament second in scoring (4-10—14 in 7 GP) while helping his country earn bronze and at the 2025 World Junior Championship (1-0—1 in 5 GP).

* He also represented Team Canada at the 2024 Hlinka Gretzky Cup (3-3—6 in 6 GP) and at the 2024 Under-18 World Championship, where he led the tournament in goals (10) and scored a hat trick in the championship game to help Canada rally for the gold-medal victory over Team USA.

* Wore a vest honoring his indigenous heritage, which was made by his grandmother, to all of Canada's games at the 2025 World Juniors. He became the first Indigenous *player from the Yukon* to represent Canada at the World Juniors.

* A native of Whitehorse in Canada's Yukon Territory. Only six players out of the Yukon have been selected in the NHL Draft and/or appeared in an NHL game: **Max Graham** (No. 139 in 2024 by NJD; currently in PIT organization), **Dylan Cozens** (No. 7 in 2019 by BUF; currently plays for OTT), **Gerard Dicaire** (No. 162 in 2002 by TBL; did not play in NHL), **Bobby House** (No. 66 in 1991 by CHI; did not play in NHL), **Peter Sturgeon** (No. 36 in 1974 by BOS; 6 GP in NHL) and **Bryon Baltimore** (undrafted; 2 GP in NHL).

* Grew up playing on an outdoor rink in his backyard built by his father, **Willy**. McKenna spent at least an hour a day, almost every day, out on that ice in temperatures at times as low as -20 to -30 Celsius (-4 to -20 Fahrenheit).

* Was a big Blackhawks fan growing up and lists **Patrick Kane** among his favorite players. He watched Kane highlights on YouTube daily as a kid.

SCOUTING REPORT

Shows exceptional poise and maturity in his game, demonstrating a high hockey IQ that allows him to dictate play. His skating stride is fluid and efficient, giving him the ability to separate in transition and maintain speed through tight areas. He consistently makes smart reads, showing strong puck distribution instincts and the confidence to hold onto the puck under pressure. Projects as a player with pro-level pace and vision, someone who can drive a line and elevate those around him.



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KEATON VERHOEFF
Defense | Univ. of North Dakota
Born: Fort Saskatchewan, Alta.
No. 2-Ranked North American Skater

* A 6' 3.5" freshman with the Univ. of North Dakota, Verhoeff leads all draft-eligible defensemen in the NCAA this season with 4-8—12 (18 GP) at just 17 years of age.

* Played for the Victoria Royals in 2024-25 and finished the season with the most goals and the third-most points among rookie defensemen in the WHL after posting 21-24—45 (63 GP).

* A four-time medalist on the international stage, Verhoeff helped Canada win gold at the 2025 Under-18 World Championship and 2024 World Under-17 Hockey Challenge. He also has bronze medals from the 2026 World Junior Championship and 2025 Hlinka Gretzky Cup, where he captained his country.

* Verhoeff was coached by Hockey Hall of Fame forward **Jarome Iginla** at RINK Hockey Academy in Kelowna and billeted with the Iginla family during that time.

* His cousins are **Colton** and **Kirby Dach** – he calls the two of them his inspiration and his role models. Verhoeff skates and trains with them in the summers.

* Verhoeff started as a goaltender before moving to defense – he played his last game in net at age 11.

SCOUTING REPORT

Elite defenseman playing his first NCAA season at North Dakota. Combination of size and skill has him in the conversation for the top prospect in the 2026 NHL Draft. Displays an ability to make all of the necessary plays to get the puck out of his defensive zone whether making a quick first pass or transporting the puck up ice on a rush. Has an innate ability to make the right play at the right time whether a big hit or a shot that challenges the opposing goaltender. Type of defenseman that can play big minutes and get stronger as the game goes on. Can impact the game from his position like few in this draft class. Very complete player.



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CARSON CARELS

Defense | Prince George Cougars (WHL)

Born: Brandon, Man.

No. 3-Ranked North American Skater

* Has 9-25—34 (32 GP) so far this season as an alternate captain with the Prince George Cougars. He currently has the eighth-highest (tied) points-per-game rate among WHL defensemen this season.

* Recorded 6-29—35 (60 GP) during his rookie season in 2024-25 to finish fifth in scoring among rookie defensemen across the WHL.

* Became the fifth-youngest defenseman to play for Team Canada at the 2026 World Junior Championship, trailing: **Jay Bouwmeester** (2000, 2001), **Chris Joseph** (1987), **Matthew Schaefer** (2025) and **Scott Niedermayer** (1991). He earned a bronze medal at the tournament (0-1—1 in 5 GP).

* Won gold at the 2025 Under-18 World Championship, silver at the 2024 World Under-17 Hockey Challenge with Team Canada Red and a bronze at the 2025 Hlinka Gretzky Cup.

* Works on his family farm in Cypress River, Man., which has over 500 cows. He also grew up raising goats.

SCOUTING REPORT

In his second full season with Prince George after being selected 15th overall in the 2023 WHL Bantam Draft. A unique, all-round defenseman who has offensive talent and brings a physical element while playing sound defensively. Can play big minutes and is deployed in all situations with the ability to run a power play. An excellent puck transporter and distributor who drives offense and shows some elite offensive skill. Skates very well with excellent mobility and agility and can defend with speed. Plays with his head on a swivel in the defensive zone and is good at taking away passing and shooting lanes. A potential top pair defenseman.



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CHASE REID
Defense | Soo Greyhounds (OHL)
Born: Pontiac, Mich.
No. 4-Ranked North American Skater

- * Currently averaging 1.12 points per game with the Soo Greyhounds and sits second in the OHL in goals (15) and points (38) among defensemen.
- * Topped all rookie defensemen in points across the OHL in 2024-25 after posting 7-33—40 in 39 GP.
- * Represented Team USA at the 2026 World Junior Championship, his first time representing his country at a major international tournament (2-2—4 in 5 GP).
- * Was initially a forward but switched to defense when he reached the Detroit HoneyBaked AAA program.
- * His mother, **Magyn**, was a competitive dancer who now teaches dance up to five days a week.

SCOUTING REPORT

A take charge type of defenseman that dictates the game. He plays a ton of minutes in all situations. A smooth skater with good edges and an effortless glide. He displays elite hockey sense and composure, with the ability to read and execute plays anywhere on the ice. He can jump up to lead the rush, knows when to pick his spots and has excellent recovery when transitioning from offense to defense. He is not afraid to mix it up and play physical and finish checks. No holes in his game, the complete package.

CALEB MALHOTRA
Center | Brantford Bulldogs (OHL)
Born: Victoria, B.C.
No. 5-Ranked North American Skater

- * As a rookie, Malhotra sits tied for second across the OHL with 20-33—53 (3 GP). His season has been highlighted by a five- and four-point performance as well as 15 multi-point games.
- * Skated in the BCHL with the Chilliwack Chiefs in 2024-25 where he posted 8-18—26 (44 GP), the most points by a rookie on his team that season.
- * His father is **Manny Malhotra**, who was drafted seventh overall by the Rangers in 1998 and went on to play 16 seasons and 991 NHL games. Malhotra spent the past decade coaching professional hockey – he was an assistant coach with the Canucks and Maple Leafs for seven years and has been head coach of the AHL's Abbotsford Canucks for the past two campaigns, leading them to a championship last season.
- * His sports roots run deep. His mom, **Joann**, was a soccer star at the University of Victoria, while his uncle is two-time NBA MVP **Steve Nash**.

SCOUTING REPORT

A first-year center selected 8th overall in the 2024 OHL Draft. He made his mark right away on a deep Brantford team producing very good offensive numbers. He has a good combination of size, skating ability, and does everything well with and without the puck. He has excellent hockey sense, plays a responsible 200-foot game, and knows how to create and finish offensively. The type of player you want on the ice in any situation and plays the pro-style game with high end skills, work habits and compete.



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INTERNATIONAL SKATERS



IVAR STENBERG

Left Wing | Frolunda (SWEDEN)

Born: Gothenburg, Sweden

No. 1-Ranked International Skater

* Leads all teenagers in Sweden's top professional hockey league in scoring with 6-18—24 in 25 GP, a seven-point lead over the next closest in that category: **Anton Frondell** (No. 3 overall by CHI in 2025).

* In 2024-25, he spent half of the season with Frolunda's junior team where he topped Sweden's highest junior league in points per game (min. 3 GP) after operating at a 1.96 P/GP pace and posting 26-27—53 (27 GP).

* Made his professional hockey debut in 2024-25, playing in 25 SHL games (1-2—3) and finishing tied for the third-most points by a teenager in the playoffs (3-3—6 in 12 GP).

* Won gold with Team Sweden at the 2026 World Junior Championship where he tied for the fifth-most points in the tournament and the team lead (4-6—10 in 7 GP). He has silver medals from the 2025 Under-18 World Championship and 2024 World Junior A Challenge, a tournament he led in goals (7) and points (11).

* He also has two bronze medals in international competition: 2024 Hlinka Gretzky Cup and 2023 World Under-17 Hockey Challenge, topping both tournaments in goals.

* His brother, **Otto**, was selected in the first round of the 2023 NHL Draft (25th overall). He spent last season and the first half of this campaign skating in the AHL with the Springfield Thunderbirds and has since been skating with the Blues.

SCOUTING REPORT

Has established himself as a top prospect, already playing regular minutes with powerhouse Frölunda in the Swedish Hockey League. His blend of speed, first-step quickness, and balance makes him a dangerous, dynamic skater who can both create and finish plays. Offensively, he displays elite hockey IQ and patience with the puck, often distributing with precision on the power play and in tight spaces. His vision and timing enable him to open up lanes and create high-quality scoring chances, as demonstrated by his multi-assist performances at both club and national levels. Also contributes defensively, maintaining clever positioning and showing a mature awareness uncommon for his age. Though still physically developing, his compete level and confidence make him effective in board battles and transition play.



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ALBERTS SMITS
Defense | Jukurit (FINLAND)
Born: Valmiera, Latvia
No. 2-Ranked International Skater

* Skates for Jukurit in Finland's top professional league where he has produced 6-6—12 in 30 GP, the most points by any teenager in Liiga this season (at any position). He started the campaign recording 6-4—10 (5 GP) in Finland's top junior league before making the jump.

* Named to Latvia's roster for the Olympic Winter Games Milano Cortina 2026.

* Finished tied for the third-highest point-per-game pace (1.00; 10-10—20 in 10 GP) among defensemen in Finland's Under-18 league in 2024-25. He also played 21 games for Jukurit's junior team (4-5—9 in 21 GP) and made his professional debut (1-1—2 in 9 GP).

* Has represented his country on the international stage twice – at the 2026 World Junior Championship, where he averaged a point per game (1-4—5 in 5 GP) and 2025 Under-18 World Championship.

* Moved away from his family in Latvia to pursue hockey in Finland at the age of 13.

SCOUTING REPORT

Has emerged as one of the standout young defensemen in Finland's Liiga, combining size, mobility, and poise far beyond his years. At just age 18, he has logged over 20 minutes of ice time regularly, with dominant performances that showcase confidence and control throughout. A strong skater with excellent balance and surprising acceleration, he transitions smoothly from defense to offense, often leading the rush himself. His hockey IQ is exceptional, as evidenced by his ability to read plays, make intelligent first passes, and position himself effectively in both zones. He plays a physical yet clean game, utilizing his size and reach to win battles and neutralize one-on-one attackers. Offensively, Smits is dangerous from the blue line, with a heavy, accurate one-timer and the instincts to quarterback the power play. His calmness under pressure and maturity on the puck make him look like a seasoned pro rather than a teenager.



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OLIVER SUVANTO
Center | Tappara (FINLAND)
Born: Turku, Finland
No. 3-Ranked International Skater

- * Spent the majority of 2025-26 playing in Finland's top pro league with Tappara, where he has the most points by a player age 17 or younger in Liiga with 2-5—7 (30 GP).
- * Spent the 2024-25 season playing in Finland's Under-18 league where he posted 11-31—42 (42 GP), won the league championship and was named Best Forward in the league.
- * Represented his country internationally three times: 2026 World Junior Championship (2-0—2 in 7 GP), 2025 Hlinka Gretzky Cup (2-2—4 in 5 GP), 2024 World Under-17 Hockey Challenge (0-2—2 in 4 GP).
- * His father, **Harri**, played professional hockey in Europe for over a decade.

SCOUTING REPORT

One of the most complete and mature 17-year-old centers seen in Finland's Liiga since Aleksander Barkov. He has already been trusted in key roles for powerhouse Tappara. His strong skating, balance, and physical strength make him highly effective in faceoffs, battles and defensive coverage. A natural two-way player, he combines reliability and intelligence, rarely making mistakes while consistently supporting both ends of the ice. Offensively, can create space for teammates with intelligent positioning and strong puck protection, often generating second chances or assists through simple but effective plays. Forechecking and work ethic stand out, and he plays with pro-level consistency and awareness.

ELTON HERMANSSON
Right Wing | MODO (SWEDEN-2)
Born: Ornskoldsvik, Sweden
No. 4-Ranked International Skater

- * After collecting 3-6—9 (13 GP) playing with MoDo's junior team, Hermansson made his pro debut and has the most points by a 17-year-old in Sweden's second division (9-6—15 in 24 GP).
- * Spent majority of 2024-25 playing in Sweden's top junior league where he amassed 17-19—36 (41 GP). He finished with the third-most goals (17) and fourth-most points (36) among 16-year-olds across the league that season.
- * A two-time medalist internationally, earning silver at the 2025 Hlinka Gretzky Cup, where he finished second in goals (6) and points (tied; 11), and bronze at the 2024 World Under-17 Hockey Challenge.
- * His father, **Lennart**, played professional hockey in Europe for 15 years. His brother, **Simon**, also has been playing hockey in Sweden for over a decade.

SCOUTING REPORT

Showcases elite puck-handling and offensive creativity, standing out as one of the most technically skilled prospects in Europe this year. Ability to carry the puck through traffic and create space for teammates makes him a constant threat, particularly on the power play, where his one-timer and quick release are deadly. Demonstrates vision and patience, often manipulating defenders with deceptive stickhandling and creative passing plays. His offensive instincts consistently put him in high-danger scoring areas. His skating is smooth and agile. His experience in Sweden's second division suggests he can adapt to higher levels as he gains strength and pro habits. Projects as a player with first-round potential, blending flair, intelligence, and a high offensive ceiling that promises significant upside.



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VIGGO BJORCK
Center | Djurgardens IF (SWEDEN)
Born: Stockholm, Sweden
No. 5-Ranked International Skater

* After recording 1-4—5 in 4 GP with Djurgardens' junior team, Bjorck has been skating in the Swedish Hockey League where he has the most points among players age 17 or younger (4-4—8 in 24 GP).

* Set single-season records in Sweden's junior league in 2024-25 for assists and points after registering 27-47—74 (42 GP). He also helped Djurgardens junior team win the league title, finishing second in postseason points with 4-11—15 (9 GP).

* Made his professional hockey debut in 2024-25 and was the only 16 year old in Sweden's second division to score that season (1-0—1 in 1 GP).

* Won gold at the 2026 World Junior Championship and finished the tournament tied for the second-highest point total on his team (3-6—9 in 7 GP). He also medaled at the 2025 Under-18 World Championship (silver), 2024 World Under-17 Hockey Challenge (bronze) and 2024 Hlinka Gretzky Cup (bronze).

* His brother, **Wilson**, was selected 143rd overall by the Canucks in 2025 and is currently playing in the NCAA for Colorado College. Last season, Viggo and Wilson played on a line together. His father, **Jesper**, played professional hockey in Sweden for nearly two decades.

* His aunt, **Charlotte Perrelli**, is a famous singer and television host in Sweden.

SCOUTING REPORT

Displays elite skating and creativity, standing out as one of Sweden's most dynamic young forwards. His acceleration and edgework allow him to separate instantly from defenders, while his hockey IQ shines through clever puck movement and spatial awareness in tight areas. He plays with confidence and flair, using deceptive hands and a quick release – particularly on his wrist shot – to generate dangerous scoring chances. Has strengthened his lower body, demonstrating improved balance and competitiveness in board battles. He contributes effectively on both special teams, managing the puck well on breakouts and serving as a deceptive playmaker on the power play. His energy, forechecking, and two-way commitment make him a valuable all-situations forward. With his blend of speed, skill, and evolving physical maturity, projects as an A-level prospect.



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