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## Japers' Rink Mailbag: Would P.K. Be "O.K.?"

By [ThePeerless](#)  [@ThePeerless](#) on Jun 19 2014, 12:00p [±](#)



Eric Bolte-USA TODAY Sports

Addressing the defense via offer sheet, draft or trade, as well as a look at Braden's back-up in this week's edition of "you ask, we answer."

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Let's dive right in with a possible quick fix for what ails the Caps' blueline:

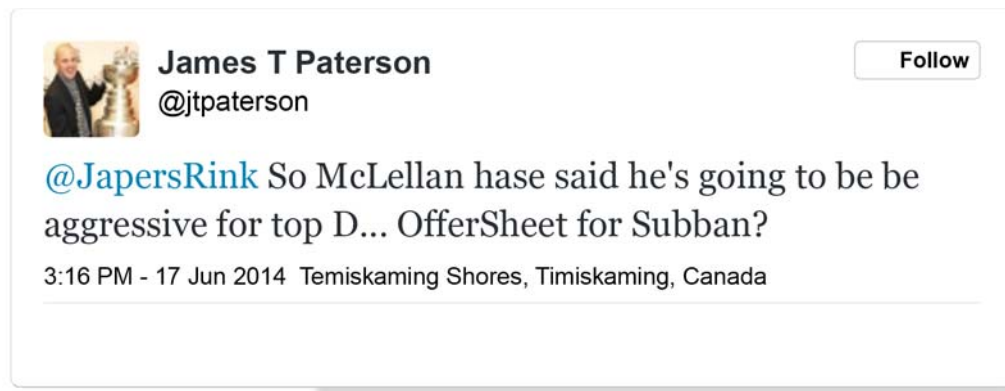


**Jack Soule**  
[@justjacko89](#)

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[@JapersRink](#) What do you think of Foussekis saying Caps should submit Subban an offer sheet? Any plausability there or just going for hits?

8:21 AM - 9 Jun 2014



**Peerless:** First, some background on the notion of the "offer sheet." Since the [Toronto Maple Leafs'](#) **Gary Nylund** was presented an offer sheet by the [Chicago Blackhawks](#) in August 1986, a total of [35 players have been received and signed offer sheets](#) under restricted free agency by National Hockey League teams. In the early days of the process, acceptance of an offer sheet (i.e. the team taking the compensation and letting their player go) was rather common. Six of the first nine offer sheets presented to players were accepted (including that made to the [Washington Capitals'](#) **Scott Stevens** in July 1990), two offer sheets were matched by the player's original club, and one was dropped.

Things have changed, though. Perhaps to confirm the old adage, "a bird in the hand (your own free agent) is worth two in the bush (draft pick compensation)," acceptance of offer sheets has become rare, when the offer is made at all. Since the 2004-2005 lockout and establishment of a "salary cap," eight players have signed offer sheets. Only one - that to the [Anaheim Ducks'](#) **Dustin Penner** by the [Edmonton Oilers](#) - was accepted. And, there have been only three offer sheets signed over the past five off-seasons (not including the one about to begin):

Player	Posn.	Date of Offer	Terms of Offer	Annual Cap Hit (in M)	Original Team	Offer Team	Result	Compensation
Ryan Kesler	C	9/12/06	1 year, \$1.9 million	\$ 1.90	Vancouver Canucks	Philadelphia Flyers	Matched	-
Thomas Vanek	LW	7/6/07	7 years, \$50 million	\$ 7.14	Buffalo Sabres	Edmonton Oilers	Matched	-
Dustin Penner	RW	7/26/07	5 years, \$21.5 million	\$ 4.30	Anaheim Ducks	Edmonton Oilers	Accepted	1st, 2nd, and 3rd round picks in 2008
David Backes	C	7/1/08	3 years, \$7.5 million	\$ 2.50	St. Louis Blues	Vancouver Canucks	Matched	-
Steve Bernier	RW	7/8/08	1 year, \$2.5 million	\$ 2.50	Vancouver Canucks	St. Louis Blues	Matched	-
Niklas Hjalmarsson	D	7/9/10	4 years, \$14 million	\$ 3.50	Chicago Blackhawks	San Jose Sharks	Matched	-
Shea Weber	D	7/18/12	14 years, \$110 million	\$ 7.86	Nashville Predators	Philadelphia Flyers	Matched	-
Ryan O'Reilly	C	2/28/13	2 years, \$10 million	\$ 5.00	Colorado Avalanche	Calgary Flames	Matched	-

(click image for a larger version)

There is no apparent pattern in the proposed deals above, either by position (three centers, three wingers, two defensemen), the term (ranging from one to the whopping 14-year deal offered to [Nashville Predators](#) defenseman [Shea Weber](#) by the [Philadelphia Flyers](#)), or the annual cap hit (ranging from the \$1.9 million offered [Vancouver Canucks](#) center [Ryan Kesler](#) by the Flyers to the \$7.86 million offered Weber by the Flyers).

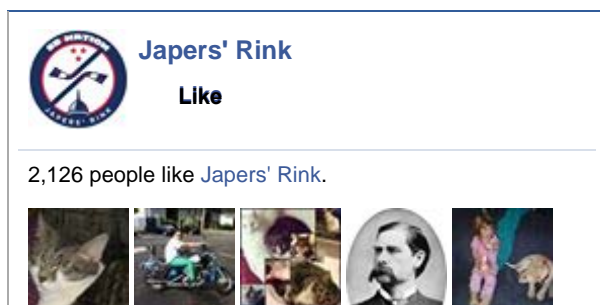
What you do see, though, is seven matches against one accepted deal. And that is what argues against tendering an offer to [P.K. Subban](#) (as is the suggested course of action in the referenced column [here](#)). Unless the Capitals were to offer Subban the sun, the moon, and the stars (which Philadelphia offered for the services of Shea Weber), it would seem a betting certainty that Montreal is going to match the offer. This would merely exert upward pressure on the price for defensemen. Given the Caps' thin nature at the position as it is, this is not a desired result.

It is hardly relevant that Subban would be a significant upgrade on the Capitals' blue line. Even if Montreal was to accept the offer, the price would be too high in for the Caps over the longer term. First, having presented the offer in the first place would exert the same upward pressure on the price for defensemen. In a salary capped league that just has the effect of filling other positions that much more difficult.

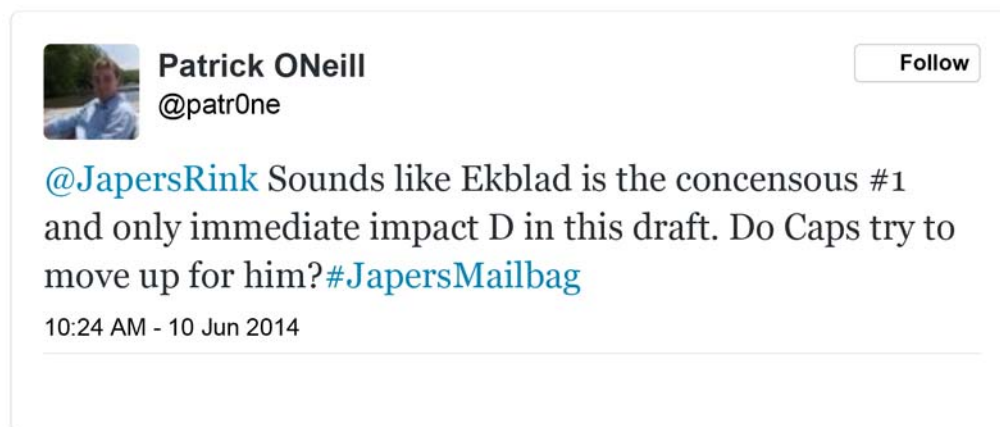
Second, there is the notion of the compensation owed to Montreal. If the Capitals were to tender an acceptable offer to Subban along the lines of the Flyers' offer to Weber, the price would be two first, one second, and one third round draft pick ([at a minimum](#)). The Caps would have little potential for filling talent out of the draft in the next few years.

This is compounded by another problem related to the salary cap itself. The Caps already have more than \$16.2 million (almost 23 percent of an assumed \$71.0 million cap in 2014-2015) tied up in two players. Adding Subban at, say, \$7.5 million would mean that more than a third (33.4 percent) of the cap would be tied up in three players. The salary cap puts a premium on getting production out of players on entry level deals. When you have to fill 20 other roster spots with only two-thirds of your remaining cap space (about \$47 million in 2014-2015), the pressure is even greater to find that value.

The thought of tendering an offer to restricted free agent P.K. Subban is intriguing in a fantasy hockey sort of way, but the cold harsh reality is that it just is not a practical avenue on which the Caps seem likely to travel.



Next up, questions about the upcoming draft:







**Kevin Funk**  
@CAPSneed2points

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@JapersRink Do you think the #Caps should go after Fl. pick, and if so, what/who would you be willing to move to get it. #Japersmailbag

7:38 AM - 18 Jun 2014



**Marky Narc**  
@markynarc

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@JapersRink What is the better draft strategy: best player available regardless of position or drafting for a specific need? #JapersMailbag

1:12 PM - 14 Jun 2014

**Muneeb:** Best. Player. Available. And [that's what new GM Brian MacLellan intends to target](#):

"In general we want the best player available, but we do weight centers and defensemen a bit higher than we do wingers. There would be a priority on a position, if all else being equal."

Added Assistant GM **Ross Mahoney**:

"Our philosophy has always been to take the best player that's available to us. You don't want to pass on a player specifically for a position and then you have that player turns out to be a much better player than the positional player you took. Having said that, all things being fairly equal, you obviously want to try to be strong down the middle. Good defenders, good defensemen, but we've always tried to take the best player."

[Alex Ovechkin](#) is turning 29 in September and [Nicklas Backstrom](#) 27 in November. The Capitals need to win now. But outside of very high-end prospects, it's not realistic to bank a player you just drafted making significant contributions to the team immediately. Since 2007, [only 23 players have exceeded 0.61 points per game \(a 50-point pace per 82 games\) in their draft-plus-one or draft-plus-two seasons](#). That's only two or three players per draft - and only two or three ([Tyler Seguin](#), [Patrick Kane](#), and arguably Backstrom) were with Cup-caliber teams.

★ MUST READ ★


*[SBN Mock Draft: Capitals Select Julius Honka](#)*

And as tough as it is to bank on forwards contributing early in their careers, defensemen probably [take longer to develop](#) and have [more uncertain development](#).

All of this is to say that it's risky to draft for current need - by the time your picks mature, your needs could well have changed - and that's especially true for blueliners. Throw in the high price tag for the first overall pick ([in 2003, it cost the Penguins the 3rd overall pick, a late 2nd-round pick and a depth player](#) to move up two spots to draft [Marc-Andre Fleury](#) and pick up a mid-third, and [in 1999, Vancouver moved the 4th overall pick along with two 3rd-rounders to Tampa for the top spot](#)... which they then flipped to Atlanta for the #2 pick and a third) and while the Caps' brass didn't rule out moving up (or down) in the draft, it probably doesn't make sense for the Capitals to trade up for the cream of the crop in this draft.

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Still on the blueline, eh?



**Nhat**  
@Nhat02

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[@JapersRink](#) do you think Keith Yandle could be a good fit for caps?

8:34 AM - 13 Jun 2014

**Muneeb:** Yandle is a great puck-moving defenseman. Having those types of players never hurts. That said, Yandle will turn 28 in September and has two more years left on his contract at a friendly \$5.25 million, so he won't be cheap. A 31-year-old [Dan Boyle](#) cost San Jose a promising young defenseman ([Matt Carle](#)), a recent 1st-round pick ([Ty Wishart](#)), and a future 1st-rounder and 4th-rounder, and a 2nd-round pick and 26-year-old [Brent Burns](#) cost the [Sharks](#) a middle-six forward with a 30-goal season on his resume ([Devin Setoguchi](#)), a recent 1st, and a future 1st. Those are high prices to pay, improving the team now while stripping it of young players who could be major contributors five or six years down the road...but with the Caps locked into Ovechkin and Backstrom for seven and six more years, respectively, maybe a bold move for a top defenseman is the right move for this franchise.

\*\*\*

Last but not least, questions about who's going to back-up [Braden Holtby](#):



**Ryan Boushell**  
@RBoushell

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[@JapersRink](#) Who would you go for as the vet backup? I think Hiller on a two year deal would be my ideal choice.

1:20 PM - 16 Jun 2014 Pennsylvania, USA, United States



**J.P.:** Becca did a great job [breaking down the available goalies](#) earlier in the week, so make sure you've read that. I think Hiller is likely to be too expensive (I'd like to see the Caps spend no more than \$2 million on the position) and potentially too ambitious, so he's out. And yes, I'd be happy to see [Tomas Vokoun](#) return to D.C. if he's fully healthy (he [missed last season due to issues with blood clots](#)).

But I really like [Thomas Greiss](#), who posted a .938 five-on-five save percentage in 25 games last season, [tops among free agent netminders](#) and actually has [the second-best five-on-five save percentage in the League over the last three seasons](#) (minimum 2000 minutes) behind only Tuukka Rask. How 'bout that?

Speaking of Rask, [Chad Johnson](#) backed him up last year and was terrific and is now available (though he certainly wouldn't get the same support in Washington that he got in Beantown), and if [Justin Peters](#) would be as good *for* the Caps as he's been *against* them, he'd be a no-brainer (as it is, he's still a good option). So I guess those would be my three non-Vokoun guys... but I'd also put in a call to Toronto about [James Reimer](#) and see what the asking price was.

\*\*\*

Agree? Disagree?

If you've got something on your mind, go ahead and ask it here on the site, [on Twitter](#) (use [#JapersMailbag](#)), via email or [on Facebook](#), and we'll try to get to them. As always, there are always a lot of question marks around this team... so let's talk about as many of them as we can.



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