



Could Team Canada Have Beaten the USA With Better Roster Selections?

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Introduction

This project analyzes whether Canada's and USA's Olympic men's hockey roster was statistically optimal. Using player performance data and optimization methods, I will qualitatively evaluate whether alternative roster selections could have improved Canada's predicted chances of winning (and if USA still could have won, counting the actual performances of the game as well).

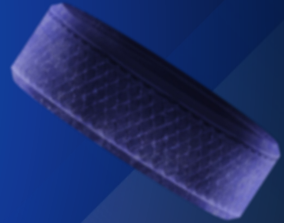


Methodology

- Rewatched the 2026 Olympic final multiple times and took shift-by-shift notes on usage, mistakes, and impact.
- Combined film observations with player-card metrics and data from HockeyStats.com.
- Compared actual roster selections to notable snubs using percentile-based performance indicators.
- Used a qualitative approach because Olympic-specific sample sizes and public game data were limited.

Explaining Data Cards

- **Projected WAR %** – Overall projected total impact.
- **EV Offense %** – Even-strength offensive value.
- **EV Defense %** – Even-strength defensive value.
- **PP %** – Power-play impact.
- **PK %** – Penalty-kill impact.
- **Finishing %** – Chance-to-goal scoring efficiency.
- **Goals %** – Goal-scoring production/impact.
- **1st Assists %** – Direct playmaking value.
- **Penalties %** – Net penalty impact (drawn vs taken).
- **Competition %** – Strength of opponents faced.
- **Teammates %** – Quality of teammates played with.



Jarvis V Bedard



SETH JARVIS



Proj. WAR %

87%

Pos: **RW**

Age: **23**

TOL: **1st Liner**

Cap: **\$7.4M x 7**

EV Offence

76%

Goals

85%

EV Defence

88%

1st Assists

53%

PP

70%

Penalties

96%

PK

85%

Competition

99%

Finishing

68%

Teammates

84%



CONNOR BEDARD



Proj. WAR %

45%

Pos: **C**

Age: **20**

TOL: **1st Liner**

Cap: **\$1M x 1**

EV Offence

90%

Goals

63%

EV Defence

0%

1st Assists

96%

PP

63%

Penalties

65%

PK

NA

Competition

93%

Finishing

69%

Teammates

46%

Johnston V Bennett



WYATT JOHNSTON



Proj. WAR %

92%

Pos: **C/RW**

Age: **22**

TOI: **1st Liner**

Cap: **\$8.4M x 5**

EV Offence

96%

Goals

86%

EV Defence

5%

1st Assists

82%

PP

86%

Penalties

52%

PK

NA

Competition

92%

Finishing

92%

Teammates

95%



SAM BENNETT



Proj. WAR %

50%

Pos: **C**

Age: **29**

TOI: **2nd Liner**

Cap: **\$8M x 8**

EV Offence

85%

Goals

84%

EV Defence

13%

1st Assists

68%

PP

87%

Penalties

2%

PK

NA

Competition

66%

Finishing

44%

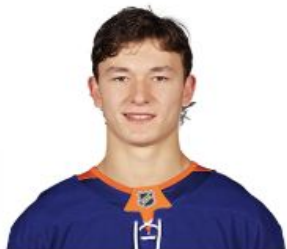
Teammates

77%

Schaefer V Sanheim



MATTHEW SCHAEFER



Proj. WAR %

99%

Pos: **D**

Age: **18**

TOI: **Number 1**

Cap: **\$1M x 3**

EV Offence

98%

Goals

96%

EV Defence

71%

1st Assists

85%

PP

9%

Penalties

100%

PK

18%

Competition

90%

Finishing

100%

Teammates

62%



TRAVIS SANHEIM



Proj. WAR %

92%

Pos: **LD/RD**

Age: **29**

TOI: **Number 1**

Cap: **\$6.3M x 6**

EV Offence

91%

Goals

79%

EV Defence

84%

1st Assists

57%

PP

56%

Penalties

88%

PK

39%

Competition

93%

Finishing

49%

Teammates

67%

Parayko V Chychrun



COLTON PARAYKO



Proj. WAR %

74%

Pos: **RD**

Age: **32**

TOI: **Top Pair**

Cap: **\$6.5M x 5**

EV Offence

20%

Goals

91%

EV Defence

94%

1st Assists

25%

PP

NA

Penalties

94%

PK

10%

Competition

84%

Finishing

85%

Teammates

61%



JAKOB CHYCHRUN



Proj. WAR %

60%

Pos: **LD/RD**

Age: **27**

TOI: **Top Pair**

Cap: **\$9M x 8**

EV Offence

84%

Goals

99%

EV Defence

12%

1st Assists

75%

PP

87%

Penalties

24%

PK

NA

Competition

54%

Finishing

100%

Teammates

52%

Wilson V Scheifele



MARK SCHEIFELE

Proj. WAR %

89%

Pos: **C**

Age: **32**

TOI: **1st Liner**

Cap: **\$8.5M x 6**



EV Offence

94%

Goals

83%

EV Defence

0%

1st Assists

98%

PP

82%

Penalties

96%

PK

NA

Competition

94%

Finishing

94%

Teammates

99%



TOM WILSON

Proj. WAR %

89%

Pos: **RW**

Age: **31**

TOI: **1st Liner**

Cap: **\$6.5M x 6**



EV Offence

82%

Goals

82%

EV Defence

97%

1st Assists

52%

PP

82%

Penalties

31%

PK

40%

Competition

93%

Finishing

83%

Teammates

90%

Doughty V Bouchard



DREW DOUGHTY



Proj. WAR %

74%

Pos: **RD**

Age: **35**

TOI: **Top Pair**

Cap: **\$11M x 2**

EV Offence

77%

EV Defence

86%

PP

36%

PK

43%

Finishing

78%

Goals

58%

1st Assists

35%

Penalties

14%

Competition

79%

Teammates

75%



EVAN BOUCHARD



Proj. WAR %

99%

Pos: **RD**

Age: **26**

TOI: **Number 1**

Cap: **\$10.5M x 4**

EV Offence

99%

EV Defence

63%

PP

92%

PK

35%

Finishing

88%

Goals

94%

1st Assists

89%

Penalties

96%

Competition

96%

Teammates

99%

Impacts on Roster



- Removing Doughty or Sanheim weakens PK trust and shutdown defense.
- Bouchard adds puck-moving and power-play offense.
- Schaefer adds skating, transition defense, and retrieval ability.
- Johnston or Jarvis boosts scoring, forecheck pressure, and depth.
- Best move: replace one low-offense role player with more transition and finishing impact.

Canada 5 on 5

5-on-5 Lines



Left Wing

Center

Right Wing

M. Celebrini ◀C LW	C. McDavid ◀C	N. MacKinnon C▶
M. Marner RW C▶	N. Suzuki C▶	M. Stone RW▶
B. Marchand ◀RW LW	W. Johnston C RW▶	T. Wilson RW▶
B. Hagel ◀LW	B. Horvat ◀C	S. Jarvis RW LW▶
LW5	C5	S. Reinhart RW▶
	S. Crosby ◀C	RW6

Left Defense

Right Defense

D. Toews ◀LD	C. Makar RD▶
T. Harley ◀LD	C. Parayko RD▶
M. Schaefer ◀LD	E. Bouchard RD▶
S. Theodore ◀LD RD	RD4

Canada Special Teams

Powerplay 1



Powerplay 2



Penalty Kill 1



Penalty Kill 2



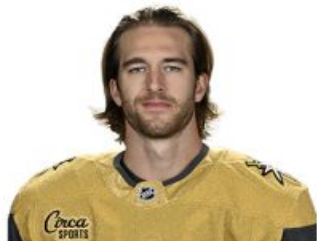
Penalty Kill 3



Hanifin V Fox



NOAH HANIFIN



Proj. WAR %

88%

Pos: **LD**

Age: **28**

TOI: **Top Pair**

Cap: **\$7.4M x 7**

EV Offence

94%

Goals

59%

EV Defence

53%

1st Assists

69%

PP

NA

Penalties

69%

PK

80%

Competition

60%

Finishing

77%

Teammates

57%



ADAM FOX



Proj. WAR %

99%

Pos: **RD**

Age: **27**

TOI: **Top Pair**

Cap: **\$9.5M x 4**

EV Offence

99%

Goals

68%

EV Defence

95%

1st Assists

97%

PP

99%

Penalties

85%

PK

NA

Competition

66%

Finishing

97%

Teammates

97%

LaCombe V Hutson



JACKSON LACOMBE



Proj. WAR %

96%

Pos: **LD/RD**

Age: **24**

TOT: **Number 1**

Cap: **\$9M x 9**

EV Offence	EV Defence	PP	PK	Finishing
94%	79%	83%	84%	46%
Goals	1st Assists	Penalties	Competition	Teammates
86%	92%	80%	79%	72%



LANE HUTSON



Proj. WAR %

97%

Pos: **LD**

Age: **21**

TOT: **Number 1**

Cap: **\$8.9M x 9**

EV Offence	EV Defence	PP	PK	Finishing
98%	27%	95%	NA	45%
Goals	1st Assists	Penalties	Competition	Teammates
70%	96%	95%	59%	31%

Keller Vs Robertson



CLAYTON KELLER



Proj. WAR %

91%

Pos: **LW/RW**

Age: **27**

TOI: **1st Liner**

Cap: **\$7.2M x 3**

EV Offence

92%

EV Defence

79%

PP

50%

PK

NA

Finishing

80%

Goals

64%

1st Assists

97%

Penalties

91%

Competition

86%

Teammates

85%



JASON ROBERTSON



Proj. WAR %

99%

Pos: **LW/RW**

Age: **26**

TOI: **1st Liner**

Cap: **\$7.8M x 1**

EV Offence

96%

EV Defence

79%

PP

97%

PK

NA

Finishing

96%

Goals

97%

1st Assists

81%

Penalties

85%

Competition

87%

Teammates

89%

DeBrincat V Trocheck



ALEX DEBRINCAT



Proj. WAR %

95%

Pos: **LW/RW**

Age: **27**

TOI: **2nd Liner**

Cap: **\$7.9M x 2**

EV Offence

97%

Goals

89%

EV Defence

35%

1st Assists

63%

PP

89%

Penalties

89%

PK

NA

Competition

83%

Finishing

84%

Teammates

82%



VINCENT TROCHECK



Proj. WAR %

25%

Pos: **C/RW**

Age: **32**

TOI: **1st Liner**

Cap: **\$5.6M x 4**

EV Offence

37%

Goals

48%

EV Defence

12%

1st Assists

82%

PP

71%

Penalties

33%

PK

16%

Competition

70%

Finishing

42%

Teammates

82%

Nelson V Caufield



BROCK NELSON



Proj. WAR %

88%

Pos: **C/LW**

Age: **34**

TOI: **1st Liner**

Cap: **\$7.5M x 3**

EV Offence

72%

Goals

91%

EV Defence

64%

1st Assists

62%

PP

32%

Penalties

70%

PK

84%

Competition

78%

Finishing

92%

Teammates

68%



COLE CAUFIELD



Proj. WAR %

95%

Pos: **LW/RW**

Age: **24**

TOI: **2nd Liner**

Cap: **\$7.9M x 6**

EV Offence

94%

Goals

100%

EV Defence

5%

1st Assists

86%

PP

64%

Penalties

93%

PK

NA

Competition

100%

Finishing

97%

Teammates

99%

Impacts on Roster

- Removing Trocheck, Miller, or Nelson lowers penalty-kill value, matchup utility, and defensive faceoff options
- Robertson adds elite finishing, shot generation, and higher projected offensive impact
- Fox or Hutson would improve puck movement, transition efficiency, and power-play creation from the blue line
- Best balance would be replacing one low-offense role player with added play-driving skill



USA 5 on 5

5-on-5 Lines



Left Wing

Center

Right Wing

M. Tkachuk
◀LW|RW

J. Eichel
C▶

B. Tkachuk
◀LW

J. Guentzel
◀LW|C

A. Matthews
◀C

M. Boldy
◀LW|RW

J. Robertson
◀LW|RW

T. Thompson
C|RW▶

J. Hughes
◀C

D. Larkin
◀C

B. Nelson
◀C

V. Trocheck
C▶

J. Miller
◀C|LW

C5

RW5

LW6

K. Connor
◀LW

Left Defense

Right Defense

Q. Hughes
◀LD

C. McAvoy
RD▶

J. Slavin
◀LD

A. Fox
RD▶

Z. Werenski
◀LD

J. Sanderson
◀LD

LD4

B. Faber
RD▶

J. LaCombe
◀LD

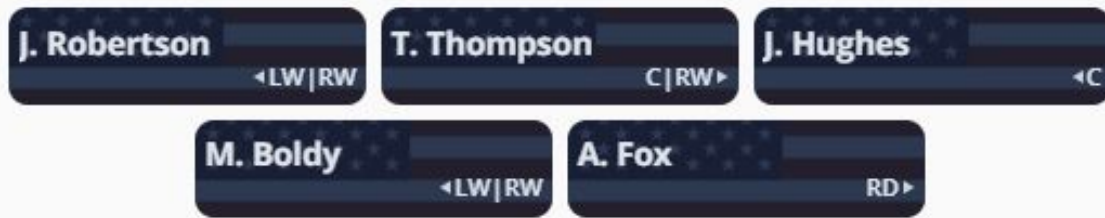
RD5

USA Special Teams

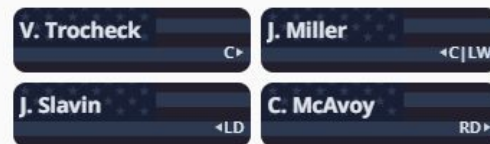
Powerplay 1



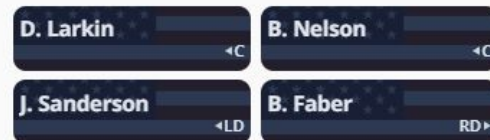
Powerplay 2



Penalty Kill 1



Penalty Kill 2



Penalty Kill 3



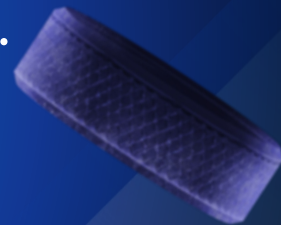
Likely Scenarios

- Canada benefits most from added transition skill, offensive creation, and finishing
- Cleaner breakouts and entries for more sustained zone time
- Better finishers may increase early conversion rates
- USA still remains dangerous because of speed, structure, and goaltending
- Most likely change is that Canada wins in regulation, but US still could win because of Hellebuyck



Conclusion

- Managers often favor safety, size, and familiarity over broader impact traits.
- Strongest undervalued traits were play-driving offense, transition ability, and finishing efficiency.
- Defensive specialists still matter, but too much sacrifice can lower offensive ceiling.
- Since Canada's best players were already used late, better supporting traits earlier mattered most.
- Best roster strategy: balance role players with elite multi-impact talent.



Data Sources

- **PuckPedia**
- Official Olympics page
- MoneyPuck
- Hockey Reference
- NHL.com
- **HockeyStats.com**

