

FORMER UCONN STAR LEADS SABERS TO NO. 1 OVERALL SEED IN NHL PLAYOFFS

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Tage Thompson played for the UConn Huskies from 2015-2017. He now leads the Buffalo Sabers into the playoffs for the first time since 2011.

Recording 64 points (33 goals, 31 assists) in 70 games over his career, Thompson was a standout from the start, leading the NCAA during his freshman season with 13 power play goals.

Following his two seasons with the Huskies, Thompson entered the 2016 NHL Draft and was selected 26th overall by the St. Louis Blues. In 2018, Thompson was traded in a blockbuster package with the Sabers as they targeted him as a young asset during their rebuild. The trade paid off a few years later, with the Sabers not only qualifying for the playoffs for the first time in 15 years but also earning the No. 1 seed.

Buffalo fans did not disappoint with their team securing home ice for the entirety of the postseason, starting off strong in Game 1 versus the Boston Bruins. "I didn't know the next level the fanbase could get to," Thompson told reporters after his three-point playoff debut. "That was pretty exciting to see, coming out of warmups, and it was already almost full. Just a ton of energy," he said, according to NHL.com.

Not only were the fans electric, but the game itself was something Buffalo fans will never forget.

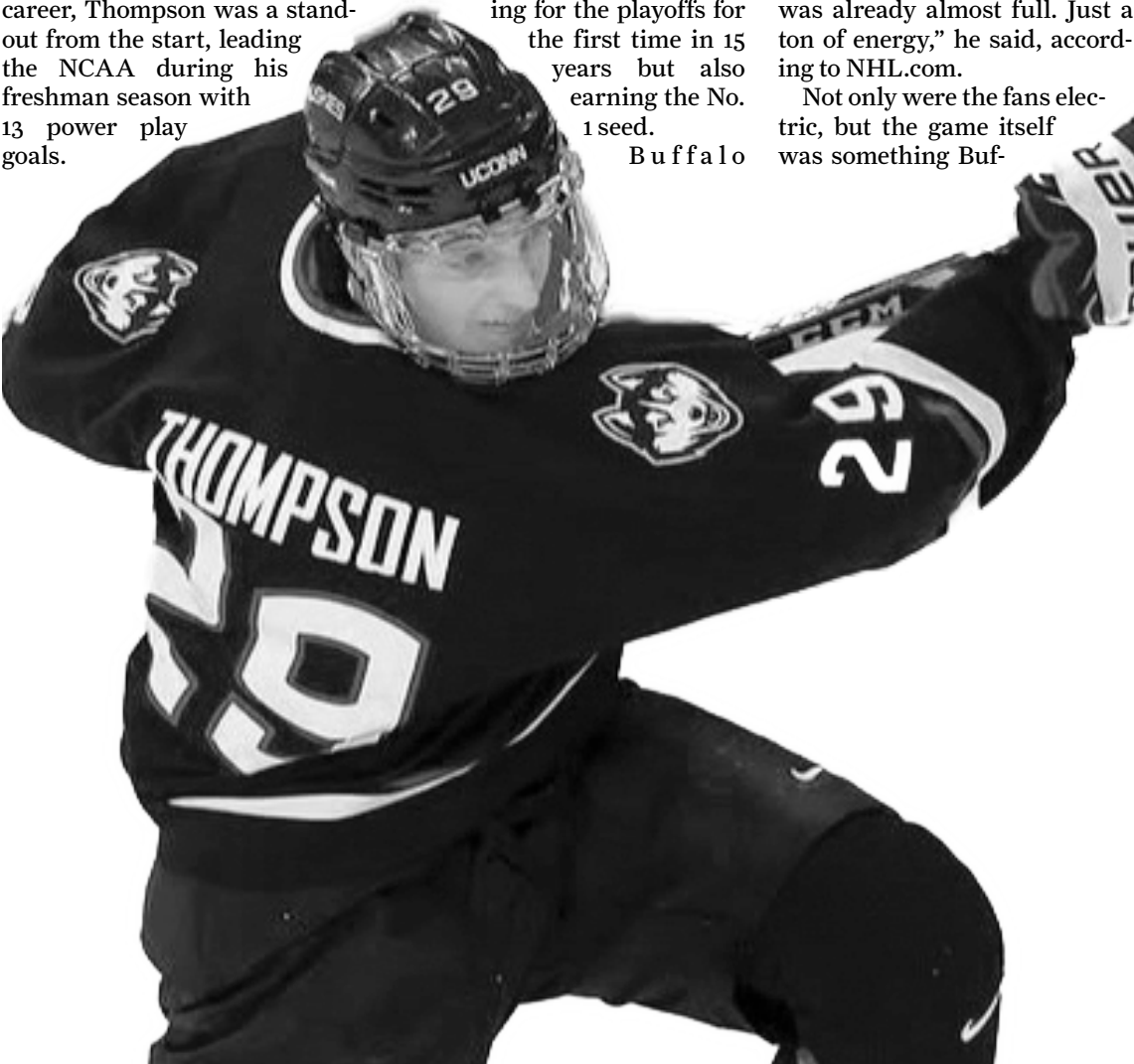
The game did not exactly start the way fans wanted it to. Bruins' goaltender Jeremy Swayman was perfect in the net during the first two periods with Boston leading 2-0 early in the third period.

That was until Thompson delivered the first playoff goal for Buffalo since April 26, 2011, with a wraparound shot sending fans and the atmosphere into a frenzy.

their historic run.

The game didn't go in their favor, but it started off with the beating of the drum by Buffalo Bills star Josh Allen. That was the most excitement the stadium would see as the first two periods ended with Boston leading 3-0.

In the fourth, Viktor Arvidsson scored his second goal of the game to extend the lead to four.



The Sabers fought back with back-to-back goals in less than two minutes but struggled for the rest of the game, ending 4-2.

The series shifts to Boston for Games three and 4 as the Sabers look to advance to the second round for the first time since 2007.

As the playoffs continue, the spotlight remains on Thompson with the Sabers looking to their star facing the postseason for the first time.

It is not just about talent, but about belief. The Sabers will go as far as their fanbase fuels them, something that cannot be measured on a stats sheet.

With Buffalo fans proving to be some of the most loyal and dedicated, the rally-towel wave could carry them deep into the postseason.

Back to their feet and singing his song, "T.N.T" by ACDC.

Buffalo fans will never forget that song, because four minutes later Thompson buried another to tie the game.

The excitement continued 52 seconds later when Mattias Samuelsson notched the Sabers' third goal of the game for their first lead.

Thompson was not done yet, as he would add to his debut with an assist to Alex Tuch slotting home the game winner on an empty net.

For a team and city that has been out of the spotlight for more than a decade, they were the talk of the hockey world on Sunday night.

They entered Game 2 on Tuesday night eager to continue

Former UConn hockey star Tage Thompson shoots at the goal during a game. Thompson recorded 64 total points over 70 games during his two years at UConn. PHOTO COURTESY OF @UCONNMHOC ON INSTAGRAM.

Lombardi Lineup:

Surprise April MLB breakouts

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In Major League Baseball, April means a fresh start. After a long offseason, a few names always find their way on the national radar after a hot start. For many, this is the first time hearing about these players, and their early impressions can mean a lot for their careers going forward. Here are a few of the biggest breakouts in MLB in the first month.

José Soriano, Los Angeles Angels

Previously seen as just a volatile flamethrower, 27-year-old José Soriano has seemingly blossomed into a legitimate ace for the Angels. His staggering 0.28 ERA is the best among qualified starters and has been a workhorse providing significant innings to a team known for struggles with pitching depth.

Velocity has always been Soriano's strength, but now he's finally been able to generate more swing and miss, significantly improving his strikeout rate as a result. He showed off his potential as a frontline starter with back-to-back ten strikeout games, only surrendering a single run. His offseason adjustments to his approach have paid early dividends, transforming him into one of the most feared pitchers in baseball right now.

Ben Rice, New York Yankees

If someone said a Yankee was leading the league with an on base plus slugging percentage over 1.200, that wouldn't be much of a surprise. But for it to be first baseman Ben Rice, most probably didn't see coming.

Rice had a strong 2025 campaign in his first full season in the majors, hitting 26 home runs and posting an .836 OPS. Part of his dominance can be attributed to his composed plate

discipline, nearly doubling his walk rate and cutting down on chases out of the zone, making him incredibly difficult to get out. Rice is currently in the 97th percentile of barrel rate, meaning he's been able to punish pitchers who hang a pitch in the zone. In a short time frame, he's gone from a reliable contributor in the middle of the lineup to a rising star in The Bronx.

Parker Messick, Cleveland Guardians

Taking a no-hit bid to the ninth inning is sure to get the world's attention, and 25-year-old Parker Messick is showing that it wasn't just a lucky performance. The newest product of Cleveland's pitching development, Messick has solidified his spot in the Guardians rotation, putting up a stellar 1.76 ERA in five starts.

The 25-year-old southpaw doesn't rely on triple digits to record outs but poses elite command and a nasty changeup that hitters haven't been able to figure out. He already has six pitches at his disposal, with extreme movement on his breaking pitches holding hitters to a batting average below .200. Messick has quickly gone from a back-end starter to a legitimate force in a talented, young Cleveland staff.

Jordan Walker, St. Louis Cardinals

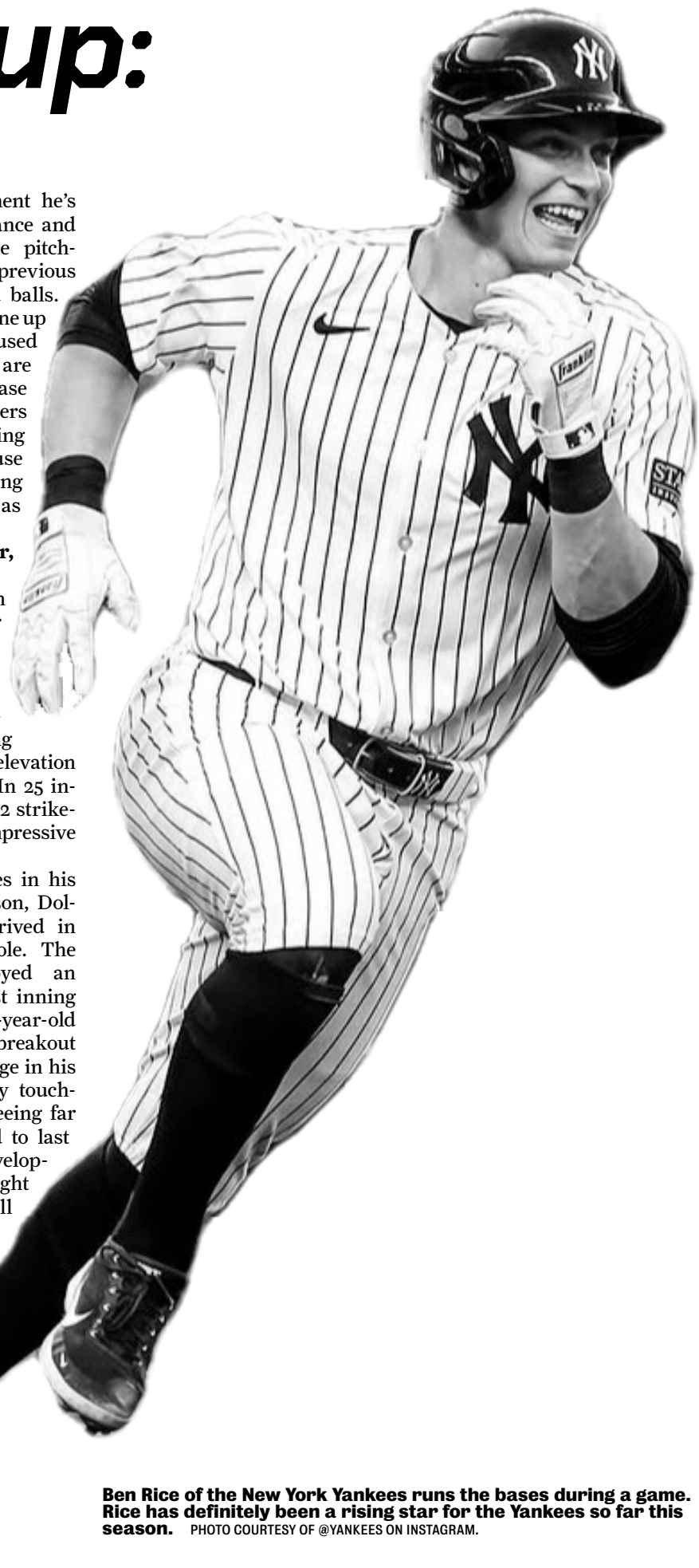
This may not be much of a surprise to many, but the Cardinals' former top prospect has finally started to see elite physical tools turn into results. After a disappointing few years since his call-up in 2023, Walker is proving to be one of the best all-around hitters right now. With eight home runs, he's tied for the National League lead while batting just under .300. He only recently saw his 15-game hitting streak snapped, but that kind of consistency shows he's more than capable of keeping up this production.

The biggest adjustment he's made is a different stance and approach, lifting more pitches as opposed to his previous struggles with ground balls. His launch angle has gone up significantly, so what used to be hard groundouts are translating into extra base hits. Opposing pitchers should beware the rising star in St. Louis, because right now, he's looking like the five-tool player as advertised.

Chase Dollander, Colorado Rockies

Pitching isn't easy in Denver, but Dollander has made it work. Selected 9th overall in the 2023 draft, he's shown why he was a top pitching prospect not long ago despite the Coors elevation working against him. In 25 innings, he's racked up 32 strikeouts en route to an impressive 2.88 ERA.

After major struggles in his first major league season, Dollander has so far thrived in a slightly different role. The Rockies have employed an opener to face the first inning before letting the 24-year-old take the reins. His breakout may be thanks to a surge in his fastball velocity, nearly touching triple digits and seeing far more whiffs compared to last year. This kind of development is a welcome sight for a Colorado team still trying to establish an identity after a historically bad 2025 season.



Ben Rice of the New York Yankees runs the bases during a game. Rice has definitely been a rising star for the Yankees so far this season. PHOTO COURTESY OF @YANKEES ON INSTAGRAM.