

MONEYBALL WEEKLY:

THE TERRIBLE TENURE OF THE NASHVILLE PREDATORS' BARRY TROTZ

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On Tuesday, it was announced that Nashville Predators' General Manager Barry Trotz would be soon retiring from his job, marking the near end of one of the worst tenures in NHL history.

Back in 2023, it was announced that longtime general manager David Poile would be stepping down after being with the team since its inception in 1998. Though Nashville still has yet to win it all, Poile built a team which made the playoffs in 15 of his final 19 years in office.

Nashville announced the successor to be Trotz, the head coach from the team's inception all the way through the 2013-14 season. Trotz guided the Washington Capitals to a Stanley Cup win in 2018, followed by two eastern conference finals appearances with the New York Islanders.

Trotz had been an advisor to Poile for a season to learn the job better, but moving from a coach to a GM so quickly is extremely uncommon due to the risks of inexperience.

Poile still drove the draft but upon reaching free agency Trotz took the reins, with a class headlined by Gustav Nyquist and Ryan O'Reilly.

Many expected the Predators to sell at the upcoming deadline, considering their 27-25-2 record. The core that had taken them to a cup final was all but gone, with only five players left, and with goaltender Juuse Saros only having one more year on his contract and a top 15 draft pick in Yaroslav Askarov waiting for a chance, the anchor of the roster seemed as good as gone.

That February, the team had plans to go to a U2 concert while in Vegas.

But a 9-2 loss to Dallas caused Head Coach Andrew Brunette to call this off.

Nashville went 16-0-2 in their next 18 games, marking the longest point streak in franchise history.

The talks of selling at the deadline were quickly marked as dead. Nashville made the playoff in the first wild card, though they lost to Vancouver in round one.

Concerns lingered when looking past the incredible 18-game stretch, but Trotz chose to ignore the flaws and just start buying in the off-season.

Trotz brought in 30-year-old defenseman Brady Skjei on a seven-year deal, 34-year-old forward Steven Stamkos on an eight-year deal and 33-year-old forward Jonathan Marchessault on a five-year deal. Stamkos received the highest average annual value in the free agency class, Skjei at fourth and Marchessault ninth.

Saros received an eight-year extension while Askarov was



General Manager Barry Trotz of the Nashville Predators on the ice with a player. On Tuesday, it was announced that Trotz will be retiring from his position.
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Former general manager of the Nashville Predators', Barry Trotz, standing with David Poile, former Predators' president of hockey operations and general manager. Trotz will be retiring from his job as the Nashville Predators' general manager.
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traded to the San Jose Sharks for picks and prospects.

All of these contracts included clauses, three of which being full no-move clauses.

Despite the bold moves, the concerns remained. Almost every single returning core player was coming off a career year, some of which being far beyond what they had ever done before, while the new acquisitions all fell on the wrong side of thirty.

Unfortunately for the Predators, these flaws proved to be right.

Marchessault's scoring halved to 21 from the prior year's 42, Skjei's points went down from 47 to 33, and Stamkos dropped from 81 all the way down to 53.

It doesn't get better when it comes to the returning members. While both were still productive, Filip Forsberg and Roman Josi fell notably in production, and Josi missed a decent portion of the year due to injury.

Saros saw his save percentage drop below .900, meaning his heroics that had bailed the team out on multiple occasions the prior year were nonexistent.

Nyquist saw the biggest drop of anybody, going from 75 points on the year to just 28. Though his prior season remains an outlier in his career, he fell even below what his expectations had been before his career year.

Nashville chose to sell off underperforming parts at the deadline, moving both Nyquist and Tommy Novak, who looked like he broke out the year prior but, like many others, failed to meet expectations.

The result of the year was a brutal 30-44-8 record and 30th in the league in what was marketed as the leap to true contention.

To add insult to injury, Nashville fell from third to fifth in the draft lottery.

A far less aggressive offseason has now culminated to a 27-23-6 record as the deadline approaches.

Trotz had originally planned to retire after next year but instead will help the team look for his replacement. As a result of his retirement not being imminent, he'll still be behind the wheel for the trade deadline.

The structure of the team would warrant a fire sale to begin the rebuild that was expected two years ago, but the structure of contracts prevents that.

Also, with a weak bottom of the western conference, the Preds only sit three points out of the playoffs.

Regardless of this year's outcome, Trotz's time as GM is a warning sign to other teams about the danger of trying to buy a championship, proving that building a quality core takes time and that jumping the gun only leads to a bigger mess.