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WILD

## A Minnesota Wild Fan's Christmas List



Credit: Harrison Barden-USA TODAY Sports



By [Heather Rule](#) - December 25, 2018

~~It's that time of year again.~~ Merry Christmas, happy holidays and a joyous new year to one and all.

As folks all around celebrate with gifts, favorite movies, time with family and friends and stuffing themselves with way too many Christmas cookies and cups of eggnog, the NHL also takes a break for a few days. That's probably a good thing for the reeling Minnesota Wild, which are on a season-long four-game skid.

I thought about some of the Christmas songs out there and came across the modern "Grown-Up Christmas List," which I remember as sung by Amy Grant even though a quick Google search revealed Kelly Clarkson has also covered the song. Anyway. I got the idea for my next Wild piece, turning it into a Minnesota Wild fan's Christmas list.

I didn't go through and try to match/rhyme lyrics to fit the hockey theme; [go check out Ben's piece for some of that creativity](#). But here are some things I'm sure Wild fans would love as belated Christmas presents from their favorite hockey team:

### **A win.**

I mean, this one is pretty basic when a team has lost four games in a row. Even though the last game netted a point in an overtime loss when Dallas scored the game-winner with 10 seconds left in overtime, one little point doesn't mean a whole lot for a consolation prize right now.

Now at Christmas, the Wild (17-15-3) sit in fifth place in the Central Division and out of the playoff picture with 37 points, just five ahead of the trailing St. Louis Blues and Chicago Blackhawks. The Wild were riding near the top of the division at Thanksgiving with 28 points, so my writer-math tells me the Wild have only gained nine points since the last holiday (4-8-1 since then).

### **A lump of goals, please.**

The Wild's offense has completely fallen off the map during the four-game slump. The Wild have scored just three goals – two from Jordan Greenway and one from Jason Zucker near the end of Saturday's third period against Dallas – and were shut out at home against San Jose. The shots on goal have been there, with 35 against Calgary and 41 in Pittsburgh in 2-1 losses.

Let's see here... Zucker didn't have a goal in six games before tying it late against Dallas, Mikael Granlund has the helpers down (10 in the past 12 games) but doesn't have a goal of his own in the past 10 games. Eric Staal, who had a phenomenal career year last season, has just three goals since Nov. 27. Captain Mikko Koivu doesn't have a goal since he scored Nov. 15. Youngster Joel Eriksson Ek was a healthy scratch against Dallas with his one goal and three assists this season. Stop me if you've heard this before, but the Wild are getting the chances and aren't burying them.

## Wild's Boudreau wants more from his goal scorers



### **A quick recovery for Matt Dumba.**

General manager Paul Fenton announced last week that Matt Dumba is expected to have surgery following an upper-body injury that he apparently sustained during the Dec. 15 game against Calgary. [He'll miss "significant" time with the club](#), which is a huge blow to the team and Dumba individually. He led NHL defenseman with 12 goals this season, in the first year of his five-year, \$30 million contract. With the injury and timetable all uncertain, fans can only hope for a Christmas miracle that the recovery goes smoothly so he can return to the Wild's blue line and get his powerful shot back on the power play.

### **A dash on consistency from guys like Coyle, Niederreiter.**

Guys like Charlie Coyle and Nino Niederreiter can be frustrating to watch because of their up-and-down play. Both are in search of a bounce-back year after injuries derailed their time on the ice and production last season. Coyle has five goals and 10 assists while Niederreiter has seven goals and 11 assists. Niederreiter started the season in a huge slump, going scoreless for 14 games and only adding six helpers before he celebrated his first goal of the season on Nov. 8. He scored four goals in three games earlier in December and looked like a much more confident player, but as has happened with Niederreiter before, he can be a very streaky goal scorer.

**Giles Ferrell**



for Niederreiter.



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As for Coyle, he made quite the move for a highlight-worthy goal against Montreal in the 7-1 victory Dec. 11. He added an assist in that game but had only earned a point in the previous five games combined. When he comes to play, he has some great moves on offense, but those instances don't happen enough. He also doesn't use his 6-3 frame as he could. Of course, fans hoping that Fenton makes some trades might just wish Coyle gets shipped off to another NHL team soon.

### **A healthy roster in 2019.**

Compared to last season especially, the Wild have had a pretty solid year when it comes to a lack of injuries (go find some wood). Last year they were without Zach Parise for the first half and had three players injured in a single game. This year, Dumba's injury has been (mostly) the only issue. Sure, Koivu missed four games with a lower-body injury, Greg Pateryn, Staal and Parise each missed a game, and Eriksson Ek and Matt Hendricks each missed a chunk of time early on. But the lineup hasn't gone through any major rough patches with a constant train up and down I-35 to/from Iowa. Let's keep things healthy as the calendar turns to 2019, too.

And for a few lofty, Christmas-miracle wishes:

**Cheaper tickets, food, drinks for fans at Xcel Energy Center.**

**A playoff series win.**

**A deep playoff run to rival the magical spring of 2003.**

**A Stanley Cup.**

See? Christmas-miracle type stuff. Merry Christmas to all!

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## HEATHER RULE



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