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Trade Deadline Primer: Wild GM Bill Guerin is in search of help at the center position

By **Heather Rule / Wild.com**
March 02, 2026

Minnesota Wild President of Hockey Operations and General Manager Bill Guerin already made one of the most blockbuster trades of the season when he brought defenseman Quinn Hughes to Minnesota in a deal with Vancouver on Dec. 12.

Instead of Christmas in July, "it's Christmas at Christmas," Guerin said at the time. Hughes has been a huge difference-maker for the Wild since he arrived, scoring a goal in his first game with his new team and racking up the assists. He has three goals and 36 points in 29 games with the Wild this season.

Guerin also locked up forward Kirill Kaprizov to an eight-year, $136 million contract before the season started, a deal that will begin next season. Kaprizov scored his 34th goal of the season in a loss to the St. Louis Blues on Sunday, which was also his 219th career goal, putting him into a tie with Marian Gaborik for the most goals in franchise history.

Guerin and Hughes, along with some Wild players and staff, are riding the high of the U.S. men's hockey team winning the gold medal last month, a team Guerin put together as the general manager. But as the calendar turns to March, it's time for the Wild to get back to work as they work toward reaching the playoffs for what they hope will be a lengthy stretch of games this spring.

The 2026 NHL Trade Deadline is 2 p.m. CT Friday. For any potential trade on the table, Guerin said he will look at the short-term and long-term aspects.

"If I have a chance to make the team better, I will," Guerin said. "It's just got to make sense. Whatever the ask is, whatever we feel like is a good price for whatever we're getting, we'll do it.

"If it's astronomical and doesn't make sense and could hurt something for us in the future or whatever, then we won't."

The Wild are third in the Western Conference standings, a near lock to make the playoffs. The defensive pairing of Brock Faber and Hughes is solid on the blue line, defensively and offensively. The blue line is not something Guerin is too worried about at this year's deadline.

"I'm OK with it," Guerin said. "Yeah, I'm good."

Kaprizov and Olympic gold medalist Matt Boldy are carrying the weight as the team's top scorers, too. Boldy was named the NHL's Third Star of the Week on Monday. He has 35 goals and 69 points this season.

The Wild are in a good spot as-is, but if there's a key piece to add, it's at the center position. Guerin made it clear that he'd like to see his team improve on faceoffs.

"Our center position is extremely important," Guerin said. "I think, not in a generating offense area, I think most just the – we could do a top six, or we could do a bottom six.

"But I think our current guys have to be better in the faceoff circle no matter what. That has to change. But we can also, we can also look to getting somebody that could help us in that department, too."

Joel Eriksson Ek has taken the fourth-most faceoffs in the NHL this season, but his face-off win percentage is the lowest of the top-10 players in the league with the most faceoffs taken. His overall and even-strength face-off win percentages are both below 50%. Ryan Hartman's percentages in those categories are around 43%.

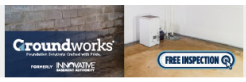
Guerin also doesn't have a preference – "just as long as the person will help" – on picking up potentially a younger player with a longer-term contract that could cost the team more money versus a rental player which could be cheaper. He also wouldn't be surprised if he doesn't make any moves at the deadline. He's already confident in the Wild players currently with the club.

"I really am," Guerin said. "I think when we put it together and play our game and our style and we're executing, I really believe in this group. I have a lot of confidence.

"Can we tweak certain things and get better in certain areas? Probably, yeah. But again, we're an extremely competitive team right now, and I have a lot of confidence in this group."

From a player's perspective, Marcus Foligno, who was placed on Injured Reserve Monday with a lower body injury, added that this year's deadline feels a little different because the Wild have a great team already.

"If we can add some big pieces, that's awesome," Foligno said after Wild practice last week. "I think Billy knows that's got to be someone to come into the dressing room and gel well and work with the work ethic that we have and take off running from there.



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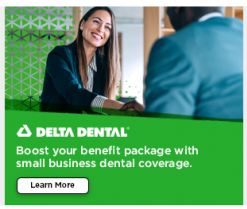

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“I like our team. I really like the way that we’re built and just the way that we compete every night.”

While Guerin deals with the deadline, it’s an aspect of hockey that Wild coach John Hynes said is “out of our control.”

“I think as coaches and players, to me to be very honest, the most important thing is getting back, getting together, making sure that we’re focused on getting ourselves going,” Hynes said, as he and the other Olympians returned to Wild practice last week. “I think everyone’s focus now is let’s get the group we have here, let’s get playing again back to the winning hockey that we know we can play, and then we’ll take it day by day from there.”

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