



HOME OF
MINNESOTA
SPORTS

- VIKINGS
- TWINS
- TIMBERWOLVES
- WILD
- GOPHERS
- MN UNITED
- LYNX
- HIGH SCHOOL
- VIDEO GAMES

SHARE



WILD

Evaluating the Minnesota Wild Roster at the Break



Photo Credit: Brace Hemmelgarn (USA Today Sports)



By [Heather Rule](#) - January 29, 2019

The NHL held its very competitive All-Star Game over the weekend, just past the halfway point of the regular season schedule. In typical up-and-down fashion for the Minnesota Wild, they followed up a losing 3-of-4 stretch with a three-game winning streak over Columbus, Vegas and Colorado headed into the break and their bye-week that follows the next few days.

Their 26-21-3 record with 55 points has pushed the Wild from a wild-card spot in the standings to third place in the Central Division behind Winnipeg and Nashville, each with 64 points. Of course, the Western Conference standings will likely be a log jam of teams trying to get into the playoffs with the final two spots. Dallas and Colorado hold the slots at the moment, with 52 points each.

A couple of losses in a row can put a team out of the picture, and that's happened to the Wild. They already have a big game when they return to play Friday, going to face Dallas with an important two points on the line. With a lot of hockey still left, and potential trades to be made, the Wild dressing room is vying for a seventh-straight trip to the Stanley Cup Playoffs. While an accomplishment, fans are eager for more after three consecutive first-round exits.

Wild general manager Paul Fenton has already made some moves, most notably dealing Nino Niederreiter to Carolina. With the NHL trade deadline Feb. 25, he could look to deal some more, depending on his long-term plan and if the Wild comes out of the bye/vacation week with an on-ice hangover.

The break is a good time to evaluate how things have gone so far. Time to go down the roster and see who's doing well, who isn't pulling his weight and who is just showing up for games.

Zach Parise – 20 goals-24 assists—44 total points

He couldn't be having a better bounce-back season after missing the first half last year following back surgery. His 20 goals are the most he's scored with the Wild since he put up 25 in the 2015-16 season. Parise is the team's scoring leader in points and goals. He also leads the team with six power-play goals and also has nine power-play points. He's already surpassed last season's marks, with 15 goals and 24 points in 42 games.

He's 34 years old and looks like he's 24 in many ways. He continues to grind in front of the net, take crosschecks that aren't called and show he's the best goal scorer the team has. A healthy Parise makes a world of difference for the Wild, and he's shown all the evidence this season.

Greenway, Parise lead Wild past Blue Jackets, 2-1



The tough thing to ponder with Parise's successful season is that it could be a letdown year for the team as a whole. His past injury issues during the regular season and playoffs have hindered his production. So wouldn't it just figure that he puts together an amazing year when the team isn't able to do the same around him?

Mikael Granlund – 12-29–41

Granlund was the team scoring leader for a while this season and still leads in assists. Sure, the goal column could be up a little higher, but he's shown time and again that his role on the team is a playmaker. He can dish the puck to his teammates better than most, which is especially true on the power play. He has 12 helpers with the man advantage but only one power-play goal. It would be nice to see him reach the 20-goal mark for a third season in a row, however.

Eric Staal – 17-19–36

In his third season with the Wild, Staal's name has been floated around as potential trade bait during what's been a bit of a letdown season for the veteran center. But really, it was easy to expect a downturn after he tied a franchise record last year with 42 goals and added 34 assists.

Though his scoring numbers are a bit down, and he's gone through stretches where he hasn't looked all that great and behind a step on the ice, he's also played well lately. In the past six games he has nine points with four goals, including a two-goal, three-point effort in the 5-2 victory over Colorado.

If the Wild decide to deal him before the deadline, there shouldn't be any hard feelings from fans. Staal has had a successful tenure with the Wild. His overall production hasn't been a problem. Plus, his goal celebrations are always fun to watch.

Ryan Suter – 6-27–33

Suter didn't miss a beat after a bad right-ankle fracture at the end of March in Dallas. He's played all 50 games this season while averaging 26:37 time on ice. Who knows if he's back to 100 percent after the injury, but being back at all is still a feat after learning about how bad the break was in the ankle. He played in his 1,000th game earlier this season and is still a solid top defenseman on the team.

Jared Spurgeon – 8-21–29

The top defensive pairing lately has been Suter and Spurgeon. Spurgeon leads Wild defensemen (minus Matt Dumba) in goals, needing just one more to tie his mark from last season. His latest goal tied the game 2-2 near the end of the first period against Colorado. If he eclipses 28 assists this year, he'll tie his marks each of the past two seasons.

Wild defenseman Spurgeon on chipping in offensively



Spurgeon's good defense and offensive-minded playmaking help the team in a sometimes subtle way. When he plays well, the team usually follows suit.

Mikko Koivu – 7-21–28

The captain center's numbers aren't what many would like to see, but at this point in his career, Koivu is what he is. It's not like goals have ever come in huge quantities; he's been a 20-goal scorer only three times, the last coming in 2009-10 with his career-high 22 goals.

He missed a few games with an injury in December and will turn 36 on March 12. He'll need to double his goal total if he wants to match last season's 14-31–46 effort.

Charlie Coyle – 9-17–26

He's another one that's been in the trade talks, or maybe it's wishful thinking on the part of some fans who'd like to part with the winger/center. Coyle can be a streaky scorer and sometimes frustrating to watch in the sense that he'll score a goal with some great move or show he's really skating well in a game, but that effort only comes out some of the time, not game-after-game.

After last year's season was filled with undisclosed injuries, a rebound season isn't exactly taking shape. His career-year came in 2016-17 with 18 goals and 56 points. But he's in his sixth full NHL season with the Wild now and has the same number of goals as rookie teammate Jordan Greenway.

Coyle did break a seven-game pointless streak with an assist against Columbus on Jan. 19, added the game-winner in Vegas and then had a two-point effort in Colorado.

Jason Zucker – 13-12–25

After signing a five-year deal with the Wild in the offseason, Zucker's production so far has been slightly off. The deal was well deserved after his career year last season with 33 goals and 64 points. But this year, he's fallen victim to the issue that often plagues a lot of this team: He doesn't finish. Chances and shots on goal are great, but putting the puck in the net has to happen more often.

He's also gone through droughts. Zucker went seven games without a point from Dec. 27 to Jan. 8 before getting back in the scoring column. Then he went another four games without a point from Jan. 15-21 before adding an assist on a Spurgeon goal in the first period against Colorado right before the All-Star Break.

Zucker needs to show more consistency with his scoring if the Wild hope to have success down the stretch.

Matt Dumba – 12-10–22

Unfortunately, the promising season for the defenseman likely ended in mid-December when he ruptured his right pectoralis muscle during a fight with Matthew Tkachuk. The injury needed surgery, and though Dumba hasn't been ruled out for the rest of the season, his potential career year may be

finished after reports just before the new year indicated he would miss three months minimum. He's sorely missed on the Wild's power play with his killer slapshot and led the NHL with goals for defensemen.

The Wild are 9-8-1 without Dumba in the lineup.

(Fight) Matt Dumba vs Matthew Tkachuck Dec 15, 2018



Jordan Greenway – 9-7–16

The rookie winger is already known for his size at 6-6 and 227 pounds. This season, though, he's become known as the guy who can get his team on the board. Seven of his goals this season have been the Wild's first goal of the game, and five of them have been the first goal of the game altogether. He leads NHL rookies in scoring the first goal. He's spent time on a line with Staal and hasn't had many rookie mistakes in his first season.

Jonas Brodin – 4-8–12

With Dumba's injury shaking up the defense a bit, Brodin and Greg Pateryn have done nicely as the second pair. Brodin gets it done at the blue line and also has a knack for getting on the scoreboard as well.

Devan Dubnyk – 20-16-3, 41 GP, 40 GS. 2.57 GAA, .913 save percentage.

Dubnyk has once again been the No. 1 choice to stop pucks for the Wild. He was named the NHL's Third Star of the Week for Jan. 20-26 following his 30-save performance in the 4-2 win in Vegas and 20-save game in the Colorado victory. He also made 25 saves in the NHL All-Star Game in his third appearance there in the past four years as the Wild's lone representative for 2018-19.

He's 7-2-0 in his past nine starts. His presence is still one of the best trades in team history, coming over four years ago from Arizona.

Devan Dubnyk absolutely robs McDavid with spectacular glove save



Alex Stalock – 6-5-0, 14 GP, 10 GS. 2.91 GAA, .894 save percentage.

Stalock is again filling his role as the backup. The charismatic man from South St. Paul can be entertaining to watch with the way he'll leave his net to play the puck. Most of his starts this season have come when the Wild had back-to-back situations. One would think he might start seeing some more action as the season goes on, however, giving Dubnyk a little rest if they're up for another playoff appearance.

Let's take a look at the rest of the lineup:

- **Eric Fehr – 5-5–10, 41 GP.** Veteran center in his first season with the Wild. He's missed the past nine games with a lower-body injury but should be back after the bye week.
- **Marcus Foligno – 4-6–10, 50 GP.** Durable tough guy on the fourth line with 33 penalty minutes.
- **Nick Seeler – 1-3–4, 48 GP.** Third-pair defenseman from Eden Prairie is fitting into his NHL role nicely and shows he's willing to stick up for his teammates as well.

- **J.T. Brown – 1-3-4, 34 GP.** Burnsville winger in and out of the lineup as a healthy scratch.
- **Pontus Aberg – 0-3-3, 4 GP.** The winger acquired from Anaheim in exchange for Justin Kloos was put on a line with Parise and had a pair of assists in the last game against Colorado.
- **Matt Hendricks – 0-2-2, 18 GP.** Veteran center from Blaine, Minn. and often a healthy scratch.
- **Greg Pateryn – 0-1-1, 49 GP.** Second defensive pairing with Brodin in his first season with the Wild.
- **Victor Rask – 0-1-1, 3 GP.** The center that came over from the Carolina Hurricanes in the Nino Niederreiter trade. The move sent Coyle from center back to wing.
- **Nate Prosser – 0-0-0, 15 GP.** Veteran defenseman and pride of Elk River who holds the healthy-scratch role well and stepped in when Dumba went down.
- **Brad Hunt – 0-0-0, 1 GP.** Defenseman acquired from Vegas in exchange for a 2019 draft pick.

BECOME A ZONE COVERAGE MEMBER TODAY!



HEATHER RULE



Heather is a freelance sports reporter and blogger covering everything from the Minnesota Wild to high school sports to IndyCar racing. She's also a social media guru for MLB. She has a background in news reporting but can usually be found watching/Tweeting about sports. She's a journalism graduate from the University of St. Thomas.



[ALL ARTICLES](#)

TIMBERWOLVES