



New York Islanders
2019/2020

We didn't make a play on this team in the preseason. There were too many question marks going into the season after the loss of John Tavares. Vegas opened the Islanders point total four points higher than their season total the the year before. Although I thought the Islanders could be relevant, I wasn't confident enough to make a play especially being a fan of the team. There has been a lot of built up frustration with this team over the years and I needed to see how their new arrivals worked out. The Islanders brought in Lou Lamoriello (GM) and Barry Trotz (Coach) during the offseason to try and convince John Tavares to stay but it didn't work. He eventually left for Toronto as a free agent and became public enemy number one on the Island. Robin Lehner (goalie) was brought in last minute to netmind and no one knew what to expect. There were a ton of question marks surrounding this team and no one could have expected what Barry Trotz did with this team in the first year as coach.

Bringing in Trotz was a move the Islanders have failed to make since their dynasty days of Al Arbour. When looking at the Islanders coaching history since their four consecutive cups in the '80's, it's understandable to see why it's been almost 30 years since the Islanders have been in the Cup and why it took 21 years (1993-2014) for the Islanders to win a playoff series:

4	Terry Simpson	1986–1988	187	81	82	24	.497	20	9	11	0	.450
—	Al Arbour†	1988–1994	461	187	220	54	.464	27	10	17	0	.370
5	Lorne Henning	1994–1995	48	15	28	5	.365	—	—	—	—	—
6	Mike Milbury	1995–1997	127	35	73	19	.350	—	—	—	—	—
7	Rick Bowness	1997–1998	100	38	50	12	.440	—	—	—	—	—
—	Mike Milbury	1998–1999	66	22	39	5	.371	—	—	—	—	—
8	Bill Stewart*	1999	35	10	18	7	.386	—	—	—	—	—
9	Butch Goring	1999–2001	143	41	89	18	.338	—	—	—	—	—
—	Lorne Henning	2001	17	4	11	2	.294	—	—	—	—	—
10	Peter Laviolette	2001–2003	164	77	62	25	.546	12	4	8	0	.333
11	Steve Stirling	2003–2006	118	56	51	17	.520	5	1	4	0	.200
12	Brad Shaw	2006	40	18	18	4	.500	—	—	—	—	—
13	Ted Nolan	2006–2007	82	40	30	12	.561	5	1	4	0	.200
—	Al Arbour ^[e]	2007	1	1	0	0	1.000	—	—	—	—	—
—	Ted Nolan	2007–2008	81	34	38	9	.475	—	—	—	—	—
14	Scott Gordon	2008–2010	181	64	94	23	.417	—	—	—	—	—
15	Jack Capuano	2010–2017	483	227	192	64	.536	24	10	14	0	.417
16	Doug Weight	2017–2018	122	59	49	14	.541	—	—	—	—	—
17	Barry Trotz	2018–present	0	0	0	0	.608	—	—	—	—	—

The Islanders only coach to have lasted more than three years not named Al Arbour since 1986 is Jack Capuano which is horrific. The Islanders introduced Peter Laviolette to the league but they found a way to fuck that up too. The players “didn’t like his methods” so he was fired. Three years later Laviolette won the Stanley Cup and has been back there twice since with two other teams. (Peter Laviolette will go down as one of the best coaches in NHL history). It would take the Islanders ten years after Laviolette left to win a playoff series.

Bringing in Barry Trotz last year was what this organization needed to be taken seriously around the league. More importantly, it was a move that was needed to change the culture on the ice and inside the locker-room. This is a team that needed to know what it meant to be led by an established and respected coach and it wasn’t long before we saw the difference it would make. The Islanders over/under opened up at 92.5 point this year. A 10.5 point decrease from where they finished last season (103 pts) and I think it’s accurate. The Islanders will NOT finish one point off the division lead this year and I believe they will struggle to be a Wild Card team this year. Here’s why:

Defense:

Goals against has been one of the weakest aspects of the Islanders team over recent history. The Islanders finished in the bottom 10 of goals against ranks four times in the last five years before last season and have finished in the top 15 only ONCE since 2007. The Islanders simply could not keep the puck out of the net. The Islanders defense made history last year by going from being the worst team in terms of goals against in 2017 to the best team in 2018. The Islanders finished first in the league 196 which was 100 goals less than the team gave up the year before.

Year	Goals Against	Rank	Coach
2018-19	196	1st	Barry Trotz
2017-18	296	31st	Doug Weight
2016-17	242	22nd	Jack Capuano
2015-16	216	13th	Jack Capuano
2014-15	230	22nd	Jack Capuano
2013-14	267	28th	Jack Capuano

After taking over as coach of the Washington Capitals in 2014, the Capitals finished 6th overall (203) in goals against improving from 22nd the year before. Over the next three years in Washington, Trotz coached the Capitals to finish 2nd (193), 1st (182), and 15th (239) in the league. He even won the Stanley Cup the year before he joined the Islanders. This was very similar to what happened with his coming in to the Islanders. Trotz has been known for his defensive success and it only took one season for him to make a difference for the Islanders. I believe Trotz will be able to keep the Islanders defense up there in the ranks over the next couple years. The Islanders defense has no significant roster changes from last year and could even possibly improve. Players to watch will be guys like Adam Peluch, Ryan Pullock, Devon Towes, and potential future star Noah Dobson. The Islanders have high expectations on these kids and now a full year under Trotz should help propel these kids in ways previous draft picks for this team weren’t.

What were some of the major defensive changes for the Islanders last season? Over the years the Islanders developed a stigma as a team not being able to hold a 3rd period lead. That didn't happen last season. One of the biggest changes to the Islanders defense was their first and third period play. Let's break down the shift in Islanders defensive play by period and see how they were able to shift the control in game flow from years prior:

2018-2019		2017-2018		2016-17	
	Overall		Overall		Overall
Scoring First	31-9-5	Scoring First	23-10-5	Scoring First	27-9-8
Opp. Scores First	17-18-2	Opp. Scores First	12-27-5	Opp. Scores First	14-20-4
When Outshooting Oppo...	17-14-1	When Outshooting Oppo...	10-14-5	When Outshooting Oppo...	19-10-3
When Outshot by Oppon...	31-11-6	When Outshot by Oppon...	25-22-5	When Outshot by Oppon...	18-16-9
1-Goal Games	8-6	1-Goal Games	6-11	1-Goal Games	7-10
when After 1 ...		when After 1 ...		when After 1 ...	
Lead	22-4-5	Lead	17-3-4	Lead	21-4-4
Trail	7-12-0	Trail	7-21-3	Trail	4-17-2
Tie	19-11-2	Tie	11-13-3	Tie	16-8-6
when After 2 ...		when After 2 ...		when After 2 ...	
Lead	34-2-4	Lead	25-2-2	Lead	30-0-5
Trail	5-19-0	Trail	6-31-3	Trail	4-22-3
Tie	9-6-3	Tie	4-4-5	Tie	7-7-4

Scoring By Period

Overall	1	2	3	ot	Tot.
Team	71	68	78	6	223
Opponent	56	61	72	2	191
Home	1	2	3	ot	Tot.
Team	37	33	42	3	115
Opponent	23	32	37	1	93
Away	1	2	3	ot	Tot.
Team	34	35	36	3	108
Opponent	33	29	35	1	98

Scoring By Period

Overall	1	2	3	ot	Tot.
Team	73	86	95	7	261
Opponent	87	108	91	7	293
Home	1	2	3	ot	Tot.
Team	40	46	49	4	139
Opponent	42	59	48	3	152
Away	1	2	3	ot	Tot.
Team	33	40	46	3	122
Opponent	45	49	43	4	141

Scoring By Period

Overall	1	2	3	ot	Tot.
Team	65	81	87	6	239
Opponent	69	79	82	8	238
Home	1	2	3	ot	Tot.
Team	38	42	45	3	128
Opponent	35	41	36	5	117
Away	1	2	3	ot	Tot.
Team	27	39	42	3	111
Opponent	34	38	46	3	121

The Islanders made a huge jump last season with their play coming into the third period. In 2016 and 2017 the Islanders struggled to take leads early in the game and carry them into the third period. On average, the Islanders would enter the 3rd period leading in the game only 32 times out of their 82 games. Last season, the Islanders increased that having the lead in 40 games when entering the third period. Why does a number as small as 8 games matter? Because in terms of points, an increase of 8 more games than their previous two seasons led them to 8+ more wins... Those are A LOT of points when you're fighting for the playoffs. The Islanders posted a total of 13 extra points than their previous two year average in terms of third period play. Those 13 points are a difference of the Islanders finishing second in the division (5th overall in the league) vs finishing 6th in the division and missing the playoffs. So what changed?

The Islanders actually finished with a lower 3rd period goal total last year than they did the previous two years but were able to win significantly more games. How? What they were able to do last year was better their play in the first period. Barry Trotz defensive prowess helped the Islanders become a more efficient team to open games.

Year	1st Period	2nd Period	3rd Period
	Goals For / Goals Against	Goals For / Goals Against	Goals For/ Goals Against
2016-17	65 / 69	81 / 79	87 / 82
2017-18	73 / 87	86 / 108	95 / 91
2018/19	71 / 56	68 / 61	78 / 72

The Islanders were able to maintain their offensive production in first periods of games while playing to highest levels on the defensive side. Under Trotz, the Islanders were able to lock down their first period play by allowing a total of 31 less goals in the first period. Shutting down opponents in the first period translated to taking more leads into the third, and the increase in goaltending play helped close these games out.

Goaltending:

Listen. Good for Robin Lehner. I am happy for him, I appreciate him, but from a hockey standpoint and STRICTLY hockey standpoint.. He won't be missed. Last year was a career year for him posting 25 wins, a 2.13 GAA, a .930 SV%, and was nominated for the Vezina trophy. I wouldn't have voted for him. I probably would have voted for Ben Bishop but that's not important right now.. Lehner came from a team in Buffalo team who ranked 29th and 20th, in goals against the last two seasons he was there.

Team	Year	Games Played	Goals Against	Goals Against Average	Shots Against	Times Pulled
Buffalo	'16-'17	59	152	2.68	1910	2
Buffalo	'17-'18	53	143	3.01	1560	10
Islanders	'18-'19	46	93	2.13	1323	2

While his numbers increased significantly last year for the Isles, his workload decreased. Lehner saw 600 less shots last season than he did in 16-17 in 13 less games. The Islanders would have had to give up an average of 46 shots per game in those 13 less games for him to amass the same totals. Last season the Islanders averaged 28.76 shots per game.. (Lehner was pulled 10 times from games in '17-'18 reflecting why his shots against were so low compared to the 143 goals he gave up in '17-'18). So what made Lehner turn into a Vezina finalist last season? Was it him getting sober? Was this the goalie he was always destined to be? Did the Islanders lose a future H.O.F'esque goalie by letting him go? I sure as hell don't think so. I hope you weren't thinking he was this good either.

Lehner's play, as the number 1, was a product of the defensive systems implemented by Trotz. I know a lot of my subscribers here are new to hockey and new to understanding the game so looking at a backup goalies numbers compared to the teams Vezina nominated goalie may not be the first comparison you make. But when we look at Thomas Greiss numbers last year we'll see that they were nearly identical to Lehner's. Both goalies split the season nearly down the middle in games played. In three less games than Lehner, Greiss gave up 6 less goals, and if we look at both of their Goals Against Average, you could project that if Greiss had played in those three extra games, his Goals Against and Goals Against

Average would be even more identical. The strength of schedule between the two isn't as far off as you may expect as well. One was nominated as a Vezina finalist, one will continue to be the backup this season.

Player	GP	GA	GAA	SA	SvPct	SPG
Lehner	46	93	2.13	1230	.930%	26.7
Greiss	43	87	2.28	1098	.927%	25.5

There isn't a coincidence of Lehner's numbers improving the way they did from Buffalo to New York AND Greiss posting the nearly identical numbers that he did. Everything comes down to Barry Trotz. Let's look at Greiss improvement from the '16-'17 and '17-'18 season vs last.

Year	Team	GP	GS	TOI	W	L			GA	GAA	Shots Against
'16-'17	 NYI	51	49	55:10	26	18	--	5	126	2.69	1453
'17-'18	 NYI	27	25	55:15	13	8	--	2	95	3.82	879
'18-'19	 NYI	43	39	53:21	23	14	--	2	87	2.28	1185

We can see how Greiss added 10 more wins in 16 more games that he played last season under Trotz while decreasing his GAA by over a goal and a half. Billy Bertrand of thepointhockey.com points out some of the significant changes the Islanders saw last season compared to the year before. The biggest being the rush and odd man rushes against. The Islanders were able to significantly lock down their blue line last season translating to their defensive success.

PROTECTING THE BLUE LINE

2017-18 VS 2018-19

2017-18		2018-19
29th	ZONE ENTRY DENIAL RATE	4th
29th	RUSH CHANCES AGAINST	1st
27th	ODD-MAN RUSHES AGAINST	1st
29th	OFFSIDES FORCED	6th

Varlamov	49	136	2.87	1496	.909%	30.5
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Sergei Varlamov will now be entering the net for the Islanders this season and it's a move I think will be able to help replace Lehner last year. Varlamov was the difference I had last year when we played the 8th seeded Av's against the Conference winning Flames to win the series. Varlamov will be leaving a

team that ranked nearly last on the PK, PP goals against, PP opportunities, 12th in shots against, and the second to worst goal differential team to make the playoffs. It's tough to say that a goalie will come in and produce better than Lehner and Greiss did last year but Varlamov should be able to keep the Islanders close. Not that he won't produce as well as Lehner and Greiss, I just mean he won't necessarily be a Vezina trophy finalist but Varlamov will give the Islanders a chance to win every night. This team is going to regress a bit defensively. They will not put up the same defensive numbers that they did last season. Fans will start criticizing Varlamov and there will be an outcry for letting Lehner go, but the bar has been set so high that the people making the claims will be the same ones who booed Tavares out of town. The Islanders will be good defensively next season, above average, maybe top five. So what's the problem with this team? Why are we not hammering the Points total over and slamming the Conference and Cup props?

Because they can't fucking score.

Offense: The Islanders had a real shot last year. They should have made it to the Conference Finals against Boston and had a chance to make it to the Cup. Why didn't they? Because Lou Lamoriello failed to make a trade at the deadline for a top 6 forward. Michael Dal Cole was a prospect that was coveted by other teams in regards to a trade and Lamoriello refused to trade him. My gripe is with the depth the Islanders have in the farm, they should have been willing to put together a package of picks the way the Blue Jackets did in order to acquire a guy like Matt Duchene or Mark Stone. Those two names aside (Stone wouldn't have signed an extension) guys like Ryan Dzingel, Marcus Johansson, or Gustav Nyqvist could have brought any kind of offensive boost to this team. The minute the trade deadline expired without the Islanders adding any offensive help was the second their season ended. If you thought the Islanders had any legitimate shot at making it out of the second round then you were thinking like a fan.



After they swept the Penguins (in low scoring games, don't fucking remind me), I was asked before Game 1 against Carolina what chances they had to win the cup. The answer was 0.

The Islanders made it to the second round after sweeping Pittsburgh (which we took the Islanders for) but as expected, four games later they were eliminated. Four games later they had 5 total goals. The

Islanders could not generate any kind of scoring against the Canes and we find the Islanders in no better shape now than they were in round 2.

The Islanders finished 19th in Goals scored during the regular season and only one playoff team scored less than them. This was their worst offensive production in the last six years but with the loss of Tavares it would be expected. The Islanders finished the season in the ranks of Ottawa, Detroit, Edmonton, the Rangers, and Buffalo in terms of goals scored. The Islanders had three 20 goal scorers last season and only Matt Barzal eclipsed 60 points. They finished bottom 3 on the power play and power play goals scored. This team lost their franchise player and have not been able to add any significant offensive help to replace him. We saw a significant decrease in goals from their captain Anders Lee. Lee went from being a 40 goal scorer with Tavares to only scoring 28 last season. While they made a strong push to sign Artemi Panarin this offseason they fell short. What they were able to do was lock up guys like Lee, Brock Nelson, and Jordan Eberle for the next few years while bringing in Derick Brassard. The Brassard signing will be decent but he'll just be a plug in for the recently departed Valteri Filppula. The Islanders will miss Filppula's 17 goals and 31 points for their anemic offense. Brassard will be expected to fill that role but just rotating replacements in and out will do nothing to help this team improve. Casey Cizikas, who put up twenty goals for the Islanders last year was a fluke for the Islanders and will regress back to his career under ten goal production. We saw last season the increase in our betting game totals from 5.5 to 6.5/7. Last season was a record setting year in terms of goal scoring for the NHL collectively being the highest scoring season in the history of it. The league scored 7,664 goals. The last highest mark was set in 2005. The league averaged a total of 3.0 goals per game. The Islanders averaged 2.7 total goals per game. The Islanders will finish lower than that this year.

The Islanders are not a 103 point team this year and while there are some big RFA's out there still, their cap limits what they can do. The 92.5 point total is a bit generous for this team and I am just not seeing how this team gets there offensively. If you were to make a play for them I would recommend a play on the UNDER here. I'll be transparent and say I personally won't be playing it but that is only because I am an Islanders fan and will find no joy in laying money on the team to fail.

Team	Wins	Losses	OT losses	Points
Carolina	3	1	0	6
Columbus	3	1	0	6
Devils	4	0	0	8
Rangers	2	2	0	4
Philadelphia	2	2	0	4
Pittsburgh	2	1	1	5
Washington	2	2	0	4

The metro is going to be a tough place to play this year. The Islanders went 18-9-1 against their fellow Metro teams last season. Repeating that production this year won't happen. There have been too many improvements within the division for the Islanders to have the same success this season.. I expect to see an 8-12 point decrease in division points for this team this season and with how crowded this division will be I don't see the Islanders finishing higher than a wild card spot IF they can get there. Next season has a deep free agency class. There will be some big names out there in Taylor Hall, Nick Backstrom, and a name the Islanders may be able to make a push for in Ryan Nugent-Hopkins. The Islanders were able to turn a Griffin Reinhart trade to the Oilers into Mat Barzal. There is some recent

history between the two teams. The Oilers could be back in position to miss the playoffs again and could see Nugent-Hopkins as a viable trade asset. While the Islanders have depth at center, getting Nugent-Hopkins on the wing of Matt Barzal could really push this team to the next level.

Plays: Under 92.5

(Thanks to @ryanclifford for the edits)