

# Seattle Kraken select Yannick Gourde from the Tampa Bay Lightning

After much speculation, and galaxy-brain level side deal arrangements, the Seattle Kraken stuck with a keep-it-simple philosophy and choose the best player available to them from the [Tampa Bay Lightning](#)'s allowed list – Yannick Gourde. The 29-year-old center will, barring any trades or free agent acquisitions by the league's newest team, slot in as one of their top-two centers next season.

For most of the offseason, it was expected that Seattle would take the Quebec native and it was all but settled when the Lightning decided to protect defenseman Ryan McDonagh instead of Gourde. The team's salary crunch and depth at forward likely factored into their decision not to protect the two-time 20-goal scorer. If there is any consolation for Lightning fans, removing his \$5.16 million cap hit does give General Manager Julien BriseBois a little breathing room as he navigates roster construction this summer.

Gourde leaves the Lightning organization after six seasons, having played 310 games and recording 187 points (80 goals, 107 assists). Originally undrafted despite stellar QMJHL numbers as a junior hockey player, the diminutive forward (5'9", 170 lbs) bounced around the AHL and ECHL for a few seasons before the Lightning signed him away from the [San Jose Sharks](#) AHL affiliate in Worcester in the spring of 2014.

Mr. BriseBois was prescient in his evaluation of the player at the time when he [explained](#) the signing,

"He is a really smart player. He's an offensively gifted player, that because of his hockey sense can play in all situations. He gives us a lot of skill. Our scouts saw him

play this year and put him on the radar.”

While the Lightning scouting staff should be congratulated for finding and signing him, Gourde should also receive a tremendous amount of credit for continuing to develop his game. A lot of undrafted players earn an NHL contract, not all of them improve their game to the point where they are valuable members of a back-to-back [Stanley Cup](#) champion team.

Gourde continued to mold his game with the Crunch for the next three seasons and helped them to a Calder Cup Final run in 2016-17 by putting up 27 points (9 goals, 18 assists) in 22 games. He also appeared in 20 games for the Lightning that season after getting recalled multiple times throughout the season.

Gourde broke out the following season, appearing in all 82 games for the Lightning and posting career highs in points (64), goals (25), and assists (39). That performance, and a hot start to the 2018-19 season earned him a six-year, \$31 million extension from the organization. Over the next two seasons, his offensive counting numbers declined and earned him some derision on social media outlets by portions of the fan base, but that all changed in the 2019-20 postseason when Coach Cooper put him on a line with newcomers Barclay Goodrow and Blake Coleman.

The trio gelled and quickly became one of Coach Cooper's most dependable lines. At the beginning of periods, after goals, or late in close games, whenever Coach Cooper needed a line he could trust, over the boards went Gourde and his linemates, They usually rewarded him. In 2019-20 they controlled the play anytime they were on the ice, posting a 57.12 CF% and 56.85 xGF% at even strength. The duplicated that superb play last season with a 52.17 CF% and 54.76 xGF%.

Gourde epitomized the effectiveness of that line by basically never stopping while he was on the ice. Whether it was

skating, checking, or yapping in a middle of a scrum, Gourde was in constant motion.

It wasn't just his ability to play defense that made him (and his line) so effective. They could make the right play and turn it around on the other team. Case in point, his final goal in a Lightning uniform.

Goodrow forced a turnover at the Lightning blueline and then helped Coleman transition the puck through the neutral zone. Gourde immediately went to the front of the net and established position in front of Carey Price. Coleman released his shot and Gourde tipped it home. Defense to offense in 10 seconds. That's what made that line effective.

If there is a type of player that has defined the Lightning during the Steve Yzerman/Julien BriseBois Era it's Yannick Gourde. Players that are often overlooked by other teams but possess a particular set of skills that, when molded by the Lightning, make them a nightmare for other teams. He is going to be missed in Tampa. Best of luck to you in Seattle, Yannick!

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