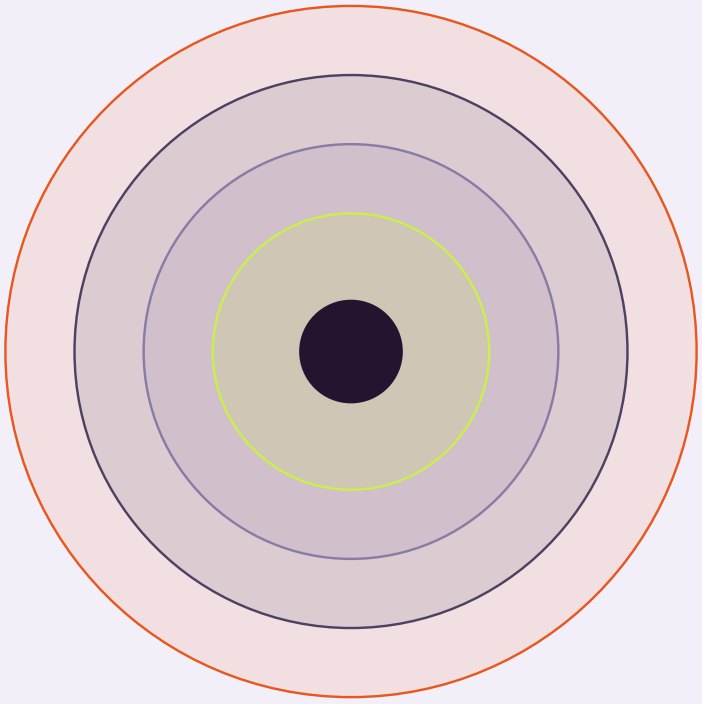


Game Day: The Uncensored Life of an NHL GM

A reading of the book by Doug MacLean with Greg Oliver (2026)

1. ACTION BOOK

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ABOUT THIS EDITION

This is HourLife's reading of Game Day: The Uncensored Life of an NHL GM, in our own words. It is not a substitute for the book.

BEFORE YOU START 01

The book in a minute

Doug MacLean coached the Florida Panthers and was the first general manager of the Columbus Blue Jackets before he became a hockey broadcaster. Written with the hockey and wrestling writer Greg Oliver, Game Day follows his 2024 book Draft Day and moves from the scouting room to the front office. It describes the general manager's job as one person answering to everyone: the owner and the finance staff, coaches, players and their families and agents, office staff, sponsors, box holders and the media. The GM makes the final call on hires, firings, trades and buyouts, after clearing them with the owner, and can lose the job at any time. MacLean mixes his own years running a team with conversations with current and former GMs about the trades they regret, the players they wish they had drafted and how analytics has changed the work.

Below are the 9 ideas HourLife readers vote up most, each in our words with a note on what it asks of you, and then the steps that put them to work.

WHAT READERS KEEP

The takeaways

1 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

A general manager has no typical day, only the one the phone hands you.

MacLean starts from the point that the job will not sit still. Trade talks, contract talks, the waiver wire and the list of pending free agents all move at once. Planning still matters, but the plan has to leave room for the call you did not expect.

2 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

The person who makes the final call answers to more people than anyone else in the building.

The book lists who a GM has to manage: the owner and the finance staff, coaches, players and their families and agents, office staff, sponsors, box holders and the media. Each group wants something different from the same decision. Knowing who they are before you act is half the job.

3 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

You own the decision, but you clear it before you make it.

Hires, firings, trades and buyouts are the GM's to decide, and the owner signs off first. Authority and sign-off are two different things. Being clear about both keeps a bold move from turning into a surprise for the person who pays for it.

4 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Numbers work best in a room where the analysts and the scouts respect each other.

MacLean says he came to value analytics by talking with the analysts, scouts and assistant GMs inside teams. He notes that many older scouts still push back. The teams he sees doing well are the ones where both sides take the other's work seriously.

5 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

One mentor who keeps opening doors can shape a whole career.

MacLean dedicates the book to Bryan Murray, who hired him as an assistant coach in Washington, brought him to Detroit and later made him director of player development in Florida. The pattern is worth copying: a mentor who keeps taking you along, and who keeps telling you what to do better after the game.

6 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

When you start from nothing, borrow someone else's checklist.

MacLean was the Blue Jackets' first employee, hired in 1998 to an office with a desk and a pad. To work out which staff he needed before the first game, he used another team's media guide as a list of jobs to fill. A finished example from elsewhere is a fast way to see what you are missing.

7 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Under pressure, a routine stops being a schedule and becomes something you protect.

MacLean's game days follow a set rhythm: the overnight scouting reports, practice, the phone calls, the owner, and a nap. It is closer to superstition than method. A fixed shape to the day gives you something steady to stand on when the results are not.

8 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Every GM carries a list of calls they would make differently.

The GMs MacLean talks to are asked about the trades they regret, the players they wish they had drafted and the coaching hires that looked wrong at first. Regret is not a sign the job was done badly. It is what remains when you decide with half the facts, which is every time.

9 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Losing the job is part of the job, and it does not have to be the end of it.

Florida let MacLean go 23 games into the 1997-98 season, and Columbus hired him a few months later to build a team from scratch. A GM's seat is never safe, so the work is to make calls you can defend and to keep the relationships that lead to the next chance.

PUT IT TO WORK

Your action book

Do the setup steps once, then keep the habits going. The setup changes your week; the habits keep it changed after the first good one.

The download puts this whole reading and a printable action book in one PDF: the setup checklist, then a page of real calendar days for each habit, starting on the day you choose.

SET UP ONCE

- [ ] Write down everyone you answer to
- [ ] Agree what needs sign-off
- [ ] Borrow a finished checklist
- [ ] Pair your numbers with an eye witness
- [ ] Start a regret file

KEEP UP DAILY

- ◯ Read the overnight report first
- ◯ Make calls before you need them
- ◯ Give one tip after the game

30 days · Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Part two, after the reading, prints each of these as a page to fill in by hand.

THE LAST WORD

Before you go

Pick one step from the action book and do it today. An idea from a book starts to count once it changes what one ordinary day looks like.

PART TWO

The action book

Change the setup once, then keep it up. 5 setup actions to do once, and 3 habits to mark each day for 30 days.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Print it, or write on it in any PDF app.

SET UP ONCE

The setup checklist

Each of these is done once. Do one a day, and check it off when it is done.

- [ ] SETUP 1

Write down everyone you answer to

List every group your work answers to, the way the book lists a GM's: who signs off, who pays, who does the work, who speaks for them and who watches from outside.

Put one name next to each group.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 2

Agree what needs sign-off

Ask the person you report to which decisions they want to clear before you act: hires, exits, budget moves.

Write the answer down so the next big call is not a surprise to them.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 3

Borrow a finished checklist

If you are building something new, find a working version elsewhere, such as another team's org chart, handbook or launch plan, and use it to list what you are missing.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 4

Pair your numbers with an eye witness

For your next big decision, put the data next to the view of someone who has watched the work up close.

Note where they agree and where they do not before you choose.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

- [ ] SETUP 5

Start a regret file

Write down three calls from the past few years you would make differently, and what you knew at the time.

Keep the file where you will see it before the next big decision.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

DAILY HABIT 1 OF 3

Read the overnight report first

Start each working day with the latest information, such as your inbox summary, the numbers or the notes from yesterday, before you make or take a single call.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
9 ○	10 ○	11 ○	12 ○	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
16 ○	17 ○	18 ○	19 ○	20 ○	21 ○	22 ○
23 ○	24 ○	25 ○	26 ○	27 ○	28 ○	29 ○
30 ○						

December 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
	1 ○	2 ○	3 ○	4 ○	5 ○	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 2 OF 3

Make calls before you need them

Each week, ring or message two people in your field you are not currently negotiating with.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 3 OF 3

Give one tip after the game

After a meeting, launch or hard week, give one person on your team one specific, useful note, the way a good mentor does after a game.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

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30 ○						

December 2026

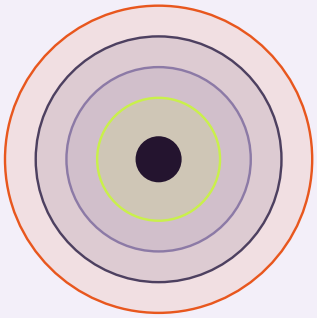
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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP



Everyone has a say in the call, but only one person has to make it, own it and pick up the phone the next morning.

HOURLIFE NOTE AFTER DOUG MACLEAN