



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 6, 2019

THE NEWS & OBSERVER

'Kegger' fills Canes' need, changes parents' weekend travel plans

By Chip Alexander

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net, he caught the eye of defenseman Brett Pesce, who gave McKegg a lead pass from the point. McKegg redirected the puck past goalie Sergei Bobrovsky for a 3-0 Canes lead.

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"He told Greg, 'Listen, if you want to play in the league you have to find a way to contribute,'" he said. "Sometimes you come out of junior hockey and you've been doing a lot offensively but now you're got to find another role. I think that's what Greg tries to do, just kind of be a versatile type of player."

It's not easy staying patient. McKegg had a solid preseason training camp with the Canes but lost out in the numbers game among the forwards. Sent to Charlotte, he saw others get callups -- Maenalanen, Janne Kuokkanen, Clark Bishop -- before a lower-body injury to Bishop on Thursday in Philadelphia left the Canes in need of a fourth-line center. Next man up.

"It's tough not knowing if the opportunity is ever going to come again," McKegg said. "At the same time you just try to take it day by day and learn from your past experience and keep grinding it out and keep sticking with it."

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Preview: Hurricanes at Senators

Canes begin three-game road trip in Ottawa

By Michael Smith

OTTAWA - The Carolina Hurricanes take a three-game winning streak on the road, where a three-game trip begins in Ottawa.

The Hurricanes swept a home-and-home set against the Philadelphia Flyers and followed it up with a 4-2 victory over the Columbus Blue Jackets on Friday.

Extending the Streak

As the calendar turned to 2018, the Hurricanes extended their winning streak to three games, the third stretch of at least three consecutive wins this season.

The Canes will now look to continue to build on that as a three-game road trip takes the team through Ottawa, Long Island and Tampa.

"We're trying to get back in the standings," Dougie Hamilton said on Friday. "We need as many wins as we can get right now."

Depth Contributions

In his debut with the Canes, Greg McKeegg recorded an assist and scored what would end up being the game-winning goal on Friday. It was his first multi-point game in his 92-game NHL career, and he was named the first star.

"You just want to put your best foot forward and contribute any way you can," McKeegg said. "To chip in at this level is

obviously special any time you can. To cap it off with a win was pretty awesome."

"Love it. Love it. He's a pro," head coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "We did a nice job getting him in our organization. He had a great training camp and was right there. This was an easy call-up. He's obviously trying to stay here. I love it."

McKeegg centered what Brind'Amour called the team's best line on Friday, in the middle of Warren Foegele - who drew a penalty on Seth Jones, and the Canes scored at the expiration of that power play - and Saku Maenalanen.

"They were the difference, no doubt. It was probably our best line overall," Brind'Amour said. "If you look at their shifts, they didn't have too many bad ones. They pretty much dominated every shift they were out."

That's the type of impact the Hurricanes want to see their depth players contribute on a nightly basis.

"They did more tonight than just fill a spot. They contributed," Brind'Amour said. "They were noticeable. That's what we need."

The Opposition

The Senators are winless in their last seven games (0-6-1) and find themselves at the bottom of the Eastern Conference with 35 points through 42 games (15-22-5). In another matinee faceoff on Saturday, the Wild handed the Senators a 4-3 defeat. Mark Stone leads the team in goals (20) and points (46).



SB NATION
CANES COUNTRY

About Last Night: Phi Tappa McKeegg

Greg McKeegg made a big impact in his emergency call up, Dougie Hamilton had another big game, Curtis McElhinney was solid in net and the Canes have won three in a row

By Andrew Schnittker

Don't look now, but the Hurricanes are streaking into the new year. With a 4-2 win over the Columbus Blue Jackets at PNC Arena, the Canes have now won three straight for the first time since November.

Thanks to another big game from Dougie Hamilton, a standout performance from newcomer Greg McKeegg and another solid outing from Curtis McElhinney, the Canes picked up a key win against a Metropolitan Division foe.

Here's a few key takeaways from the win.

McKeegg stands tall

With Clark Bishop getting injured in Philadelphia last night, the Canes called up Greg McKeegg on emergency recall from Charlotte. He came up huge, with the game-winning goal on a tip drill from Brett Pesce and a drop pass for an assist on Dougie Hamilton's goal (more on that in a bit).

Obviously the output was surprising, but kudos to McKeegg for stepping up in spot duty when the Canes needed him. That's how you earn a longer look.

Hamilton heating up?

After not scoring since Nov. 10, Dougie Hamilton now has two goals and two assists in two games for the Canes. Obviously the sample size is small, but if Hamilton is going to go on a



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tear and start looking like the top offensive defenseman the team thought it was getting from Calgary, it would be huge.

Power play healing

After the Canes' much-maligned power play potted two goals in Philly, it as good as opened the scoring against Columbus. The tally wasn't technically scored as a power-play goal as it crossed the line right at two minutes, but the penalty box door hadn't even opened yet.

The goal was a beauty too, with Micheal Ferland finishing off a tic-tac-toe play with Sebastian Aho and Justin Williams from the slot. If the Canes are going to make any kind of a run, they need the power play to keep heating up.

McElhinney solid again

Curtis McElhinney is the definition of solid. He's calm when he's making saves, calm when he gives up a goal and pretty

much always calm, which seems to calm the rest of the team down when needed.

As head coach Rod Brind'Amour stated after the game, McElhinney is there to make the big save every time the Canes needed. On the aforementioned power play, a neutral zone turnover by Williams led to an odd-man rush for Columbus. McElhinney stepped up to snare a slapshot from Cam Atkinson, setting the table for the Canes to open the scoring.

The Canes now have a chance to tally their second four-game winning streak of the season tomorrow afternoon when they visit the woebegone Senators. They're eight points out with a game in hand. Their annual late-February hot streak may have begun six weeks early, and if it has, this thing may not be over yet.



Checkers win second straight against Belleville

By Paul Branecky

The Checkers took control of the game after a wild first five minutes to eventually prevail by a 6-3 score in Belleville and extend their point streak to four games.

Julien Gauthier scored twice for the Checkers, who gave up the game's first goal after just 21 seconds but broke a second-period tie with four unanswered goals to improve their record to 3-0-1 in their last four contests.

Alexi Saarela, Morgan Geekie, Andrew Poturalski and Martin Necas also scored for the Charlotte, while Scott Darling made 20 saves and even picked up an assist on Gauthier's empty-net goal to improve to 5-2-1 at the AHL level this season.

The early goal by Belleville that tied the Checkers' franchise record for fastest goal allowed to start a game was just the beginning of a frantic first part of the game that would produce four goals in the first 4:21 of action. It took just 14 seconds for Saarela to answer that tally thanks to a fortuitous bounce off the end boards that left him with an empty net, but Belleville would regain their lead at the 3:38 mark.

Geekie's goal, his fifth in nine games, came less than a minute later to tie the contest and start the Checkers' run that would take place over the final two periods, with Gauthier and Poturalski scoring in the second period and Necas contributing early in the third.

Just 12 seconds after Belleville scored to get within two with 2:11 remaining in the contest, Gauthier would add a long-

distance empty net goal to mark the third multi-goal game of his pro career and first this season.

The win improves Charlotte's record to 3-1-1 its their post-holiday road trip through Canada and to a league-best 26-8-3 on the season.

NOTES

The Checkers have scored 19 total goals in their last four games ... The Checkers scored on their first two shots, chasing Belleville starter Jake Paterson from the game ... Geekie has nine points (5g, 4a) in his last nine games. He had just one point, an assist, in his previous 15 ... All nine of tonight's goals were scored at even strength ... With two more points tonight, Poturalski extended his point streak to four games (2g, 4a) ... Necas returned to the Checkers' lineup after missing six games to represent the Czech Republic at the World Junior Championship ... Haydn Fleury played his first game with the Checkers since Oct. 26 and first game at any level since suffering a concussion with the Carolina Hurricanes on Dec. 13 ... Charlotte won three of four games in its season series with Belleville that concluded tonight ... Defenseman Josiah Didier missed the game due to injury ... Forwards Steven Lorentz and Zack Stortini and defenseman Bobby Sanguinetti were healthy extras.

UP NEXT

The Checkers complete their six-game Canadian road trip and their three-in-three weekend against the Toronto Marlies Sunday at 4 p.m.

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Articles from outlets covering the Hurricanes' upcoming opponents and league-wide news

1124592 Carolina Hurricanes

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BY CHIP ALEXANDER

JANUARY 05, 2019 11:58 AM

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Carolina Hurricanes' Greg McKegg, right, celebrates his goal against the Columbus Blue Jackets with Brett Pesce (22) during the second period of an NHL hockey game in Raleigh, N.C., Friday, Jan. 4, 2019.

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1124662 Ottawa Senators



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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The return of Jean-Gabriel Pageau can only help the Senators

Bruce Garrioch

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No pressure, Jean-Gabriel Pageau.

Expected to make his regular-season debut for the Ottawa Senators on Sunday after having surgery to repair an Achilles tendon ruptured on Day 1 of training camp in September, the veteran centre will be welcomed back with open arms.

Head coach Guy Boucher cautioned that nobody should expect Pageau to be a saviour against the Carolina Hurricanes on Sunday.

"He's a smart player," Boucher said after the Senators' 4-3 loss to the Wild on Saturday. "You can throw him out there and you're probably not going to get an odd-man rush because he's out there and not some other guys who have more trouble reading the game.

"You're able to get more of a tight game and somebody who can play against the top players. But, having said that, let's not put pressure on (Pageau). It's been a while since he played and the league started a while ago and everybody's on a certain pace.

"He's going to have his adrenalin and his smarts, but I'm going to have to manage his ice time slowly to build him what he normally he is."

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1124663 Ottawa Senators

Game Day: Carolina Hurricanes at Ottawa Senators

Bruce Garrioch

The Senators winger has a goal and four points in the club's last five games. He picked up an assist on Ryan Dzingel's goal Saturday and has points in three straight games. Aho has been the Hurricanes' best and most consistent player this season. He has five points in his last five games, including a two-point effort Friday vs. Columbus.

FIVE KEYS TO THE GAME

1. WELCOME BACK JEAN-GABRIEL PAGEAU

After suffering an Achilles tendon injury in training camp, Pageau will make his season debut against the Hurricanes on Sunday. He had 14 goals and 29 points with the Senators last year, but he brings some much-needed experience to the lineup. He didn't play Saturday because the Senators didn't want him to play in back-to-back games.

2. GET TWO POINTS

Last season, for the first time since 1994-95, the Senators failed to get a point against the Carolina/Hartford organization (the team became the Hurricanes in 1997) by going winless in three straight games. The Senators' last win against Carolina was a 2-1 victory in Ottawa on Nov. 26, 2016.

3. BACK TO HOGBERG

If Craig Anderson is making the trip to the West Coast, then there's a good chance he'll least be ready to be the backup Wednesday in Anaheim. If that's the case, then expect Marcus Hogberg to be sent back to Belleville on Sunday night. Coach Guy Boucher confirmed Saturday that Hogberg will start against the Hurricanes.

4. STOP THE HURRICANES

Nobody gave Carolina much of a chance, but the club has put itself back in the picture by pulling off three straight wins. The Hurricanes are coming off a 4-2 victory over the Columbus Blue Jackets on Friday at home. Curtis McElhinney made 22 stops for the 'Canes in the win. Callup Greg McKeeg had two points for Carolina.

5. FIRING ON ALL CYLINDERS

The Senators went 0-for-2 on the power play against the Wild on Saturday and that turned out to be costly. Ottawa had one with the net empty at the end of the game, but wasn't able to capitalize. The Senators are 3-for-15 on the power play in this seven-game losing streak and goals there help momentum.

Ottawa Sun LOADED: 01.06.2019

1124664 Ottawa Senators

Tick, tick, tick: NHL trade deadline looms over Senators

Bruce Garrioch

The clock is ticking on this group of Ottawa Senators.

As they prepare to face the Carolina Hurricanes on Sunday to close out back-to-back matinee games at Canadian Tire Centre, it will be exactly 50 days until the National Hockey League trade deadline at 3 p.m. on Feb. 25.

It's hard to predict whether Senators general manager Pierre Dorion will be busy because there are many factors involved before the deadline, but you have to think patience is wearing thin with some of the players on this roster.

The Senators were honest with themselves, and Ottawa fans, when they entered into this rebuild last spring, but they're really feeling the pain after a seventh consecutive loss, 4-3 at home against the Minnesota Wild on Saturday.

While the Senators will head to California on Monday for a three-game road trip starting with Wednesday's contest against the Anaheim Ducks, Dorion and his scouting staff are headed to Florida for their annual meetings.

Part of the week will focus on the NHL draft in June. The Senators don't have their own No. 1 pick because it was given to the Colorado Avalanche in the Matt Duchene deal last season, but there's a chance they'll trade for another first-round selection.

The Senators will also hold pro scouting meetings, and it's in those sessions that they'll map out a strategy for potential deals. They could wait until the Feb. 25 deadline, but, if this losing goes on, Dorion may want to strike before then.

Nobody can be happy right now.

"Top to bottom, it's on everybody," said defenceman Dylan DeMelo, who played 21:43 against the Wild and had an assist. "Even the guys who have really carried the load for us. We're a team. We're going to win together and we're going to lose together.



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"In regards as to what's going to happen between now and the trade deadline is out of our hands. We have to control what we can control in this room. That's our work ethic, details and our style of play. That's what we have to focus on."

You can't complain about the Senators' effort. They appear to work hard every game and there haven't been many times during this seven-game skid when they haven't had chances to win. There are just moments where mistakes have proven costly.

The Senators got off to a good start Saturday, taking a 2-1 lead on goals by Duchene and Ryan Dzingel, but they couldn't finish the job. Midway through the third it was 4-2 for the Wild. Stone's goal made it close, but that was the rally stopped.

What has to be bothersome is that the Senators continue to make defensive mistakes. The goal by Minnesota's Jordan Greenway to tie it up 2-2 in the second period was a perfect example.

Greenway was standing all alone in front of newly-acquired goalie Anders Nilsson and had all day to put the puck in the net.

"That part is frustrating because it's stuff we feel is self-inflicted," DeMelo said.

Of course, a lot of what happens on the trade market will depend on the future of forwards Stone, Duchene and Dzingel. All three can become unrestricted free agents if they're not re-signed before July 1, and talks with their agents are about to intensify.

Getting Stone and Duchene signed are the priorities. It's believed Dorion will sit down with Duchene's agent, Pat Brisson, in the next two or three weeks, while Stone indicated on Jan. 1 that he expected talks to get serious in short order.

Dorion has already been aggressive on the trade front, acquiring Nilsson in a four-player swap with the Vancouver Canucks last Wednesday, and another veteran or two could be moved if the losses continue to pile up.

The last time the Senators won was Dec. 17 against the Nashville Predators. The Hurricanes are on a three-game winning streak, so Sunday's matchup won't be an easy one for the Senators, either.

"As crappy as this has been, we've got to bury these games and be ready to rock n' roll (Sunday). It's a big game," DeMelo said. "It's a good Carolina team that gets a ton of shots and pushes the pace. We have to be ready for them."

"There's nothing we can do about these games we've lost. We've got to learn from them and hope to rectify the mistakes we've made, but we've just got to bring that same effort because it's not going to get any easier for sure."

Time is of the essence.

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1124665 Ottawa Senators

WARREN GAME REPORT: Senators' winless slide hits seven with loss to Wild

Ken Warren

Wild 4, Senators 3

New goalie. Same old broken-record story.

Anders Nilsson made his Ottawa Senators debut Saturday, but that didn't stop the bleeding.

The losing streak hit seven games — the last win came way back on Dec. 17 — as the Minnesota Wild rallied to defeat the beleaguered Senators 4-3.

Jared Spurgeon had two goals for the Wild, with Jordan Greenway and Mikko Koivu also scoring. Matt Duchene, Ryan Dzingel and Mark Stone supplied the Senators offence.

The start was a positive for the Senators, but, by finishing one goal away yet again, the frustration level continued to mount for the National Hockey League's last-placed squad.

"We've played a lot worse games this year than that one," Duchene said. "We weren't at our best for 60 (minutes), almost a little bit unfortunate we had only one goal to show for it. In the second (period), we got away from what we were doing that made us successful. We weren't playing bad, but they got three goals. Two of them were fluky, but that's just the way it's going right now."

Nilsson finished with 22 saves, while Wild goaltender Devan Dubnyk made 24 stops.

The Senators have another shot to end the slide Sunday, when they take on the Carolina Hurricanes, before leaving Monday for a three-game road trip to California.

Nilsson, acquired from the Vancouver Canucks on Wednesday and still wearing his Canucks-coloured gear, received plenty of early support from his new teammates, but didn't have the answers when the Wild turned up the pressure.

The Senators held a 2-1 second-period lead before fading.

Greenway and Spurgeon, with his second goal of the contest, scored 2:21 apart to give the Wild a 3-2 lead.

Koivu, all alone in front and in position to pounce on a rebound, padded the lead to 4-2 early in the third period.

Koivu's goal turned into the game winner when Stone narrowed the gap to 4-3 with his 20th of the season later in the third.

A combination of sloppy defence and shaky goaltending turned the tide.

With Nilsson sprawled on the ice and the puck loose in the crease, Greenway charged to the net and poked the puck underneath the Senators goaltender to tie the score 2-2.

Then came Spurgeon's second goal on a bad-angle shot that somehow eluded Nilsson.

"It's always a special feeling to play your first game with a new team and especially under these circumstances," Nilsson said. "My job is to stop the puck and that's what I'm focussing at. It's unfortunate that I let in four goals."

Dzingel, who has three goals and two assists in his past three games, broke a 1-1 tie earlier in the second period, finishing off a Bobby Ryan pass.

The second period began with Spurgeon taking full advantage of another Senators defensive breakdown.

With Minnesota's Zach Parise taking Ottawa defenceman Dylan DeMelo out of the play with a hard drive to the net, Brady Tkachuk was slow to cover Spurgeon, who skated toward the goal and deked out Nilsson. That tied the game 1-1.

Furious at a hooking call late in the first period, Duchene displayed some fancy footwork and slick stickwork in fighting his way to a breakaway goal that opened the scoring. After the Wild power play ended, he stepped out of the penalty box, accepted a Zack Smith pass and split through the Wild defence. After a failed poke-check by Dubnyk, Duchene tucked the puck into the net.



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Dubnyk was sharp and lucky — a couple of deflected pucks found his body — as the Senators peppered the Wild goaltender with shots in the first period. Minnesota was limited primarily to outside shots while the Senators cleared rebounds and bodies from the front of the net.

Nilsson came into the contest on an extended personal losing streak, going 0-8-1 in his final nine decisions with the Canucks. His last win with Vancouver was Oct. 16th.

"In the second period, we gave up a few odd man rushes and fumbled some pucks, some mistakes there," Senators head coach Guy Boucher said. "That third goal you would like to get back for sure ... that's where it's at. The guys pushed at the end."

TOP OF THE CHARTS

Almost overnight, the Senators have gone from having the oldest goaltending tandem to the tallest.

Craig Anderson and Mike McKenna had a combined age of 73 years and four months.

Saturday's duo of Nilsson (6-6) and Marcus Hogberg (6-5) is only an inch shy of 13 feet total, if stretched out from head to toe. We don't yet have a measure on the combined wingspan ... Hogberg, 0-2-1, with a 3.69 goals against average and .895 save percentage, will start against Carolina on Sunday, but it's possible Anderson could re-join the Senators for the California road trip. Before Saturday's game, Anderson skated with fellow injured Senators Jean-Gabriel Pageau, Thomas Chabot and Justin Falk. Once Anderson is ready to go, Hogberg will return to Belleville of the American Hockey League.

HAVE PADS, WILL TRAVEL

A couple weeks back, Ryan joked that "there were a lot of different track suits in (Mike) McKenna's closet." Since then, McKenna has gone from the Senators to the Vancouver Canucks to the Philadelphia Flyers.

McKenna was in the Flyers lineup Saturday as backup to Carter Hart for a home game against the Calgary Flames and has now dressed for 23 teams during 14 pro seasons, including NHL stops in Tampa, New Jersey, Columbus, Arizona, Dallas, Ottawa, Vancouver and Philadelphia.

If McKenna plays for Philadelphia, he'll become the Flyer's seventh goaltender this season, a record for one team in a season. "If you last long enough in the minors, you'll see things you can only imagine," McKenna told reporters. "Years ago, when I was in the ECHL, we picked up a couple of guys at a rest stop."

SHOOT FIRST, ASK QUESTIONS LATER

The number of shots allowed by the Senators has been well documented as they led the league with an average of 37.6 before meeting the Wild. However, Boucher has also been busy preaching shots at the other end. The Senators were averaging only 29.1 shots on opponents' nets, 25th among the 31 NHL teams.

A shot from the outside, Boucher says, possibly creating a rebound or a faceoff, is far better than the alternative. "Instead of trying to hang on (to the puck) and there is nobody there, losing it, a turnover, it comes back in our zone," he said.

Somebody was listening. Only 20 seconds into Saturday's game, DeMelo took a shot from the blue-line, creating a rebound that Stone threw at the net. The Senators outshot the Wild 5-0 in the opening 2:30, 11-2 in the first eight minutes and 15-8 in the first period. The pressure didn't last. The Senators were outshot 13-4 in the second period and finished the game with only 27 shots.

FROM SIN TO WIN

The Wild apparently didn't learn much from Duchene's game-opening goal. When Senators defenceman Max Lajoie left the penalty box early in the second period, he had a two-on-one break with Stone. After Ryan served his time for another infraction, he led an odd-man rush that led to Dzingel's goal ... The Wild caught a break seconds before Greenway's

goal, which tied the game 2-2. Ryan was slashed at the Wild blue line, but there was no call from referees Justin St Pierre and Tim Peel ... Forward Nick Paul was a healthy scratch for the Senators for the second consecutive game and fourth time in eight games as Boucher once again went with 11 forwards and seven defencemen, including Christian Jaros, who was back from injury ... Rudolfs Balcers made his NHL debut for the Senators on Saturday, but didn't much chance to show himself. He played only 7:45... The return of Pageau on Sunday could result in either Balcers or Paul being re-assigned to Belleville.

Ottawa Sun LOADED: 01.06.2019

1124652 New York Islanders

Isles stay hot with win over Blues

Staff Report

JAN 05, 2019 | 11:00 PM

ST. LOUIS — Jordan Eberle and Johnny Boychuk scored 11 seconds apart in the third period to help the Islanders rally for a 4-3 win over the St. Louis Blues on Saturday night.

Anders Lee and Matt Martin also scored for the Islanders, who won their season-high sixth in a row and ninth in 10 games. Robin Lehner stopped 29 shots for his seventh consecutive win.

Brayden Schenn, Zach Sanford and Ryan O'Reilly scored for St. Louis, which has lost three of its last four.

Eberle tied the score 2-2 at 8:27 of the third, and Boychuk gave the Isles their first lead with a blast from just inside the blue line on the next shift.

Lee pushed the lead to 4-2 with 4:56 left.

O'Reilly got his eighth with 1:33 remaining to pull St. Louis within one.

The Islanders, who had a season-low 14 shots on goal, entered the final period with a 2-9 mark when trailing after two periods.

Schenn pounced on the rebound of a deflected shot by Jaden Schwartz for a 1-0 lead at 4:11 of the first.

Sanford tipped in a hard drive from inside the blue line by Vince Dunn with 3:23 remaining in the opening period to make it 2-0. It was Sanford's fifth of the season and his first since being recalled from San Antonio of the AHL on Friday.

The Islanders cut the deficit in half on a drive from the slot by Martin early in the second period. Casey Cizikas set up the goal with a perfect pass from behind the net at 2:25.

St. Louis has lost five games this season after grabbing a 2-0 lead.

New York Daily News LOADED: 01.06.2019

1124653 New York Islanders

Islanders now the hottest they've been all season

By Associated Press

January 5, 2019 | 11:11pm | Updated



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 6, 2019

ST. LOUIS — Johnny Boychuk isn't known for his visually appealing goals, having scored just 52 times in 626 games covering 10 seasons.

Nevertheless, his hard drive from just inside the blue line gave the New York Islanders their first lead just 11 seconds after Jordan Eberle had tied the score, and the Isles rallied for a 4-3 win over the St. Louis Blues on Saturday night.

"Johnny's not the prettiest guy to watch," Islanders coach Barry Trotz said. "But when the game's on the line, he's the guy that makes the hard plays. Johnny never makes soft plays. Everything he does is full out."

Anders Lee capped the Islander's three-goal third period, and Matt Martin also scored to help Islanders win their season-high sixth in a row and ninth in 10 games. Robin Lehner stopped 29 shots for his seventh consecutive win.

Boychuk put the Islanders ahead 3-2 with his third goal of the season at 8:38 of the third.

"We didn't play good for two periods, we were down by one," Boychuck said. "We just had to basically play one period the way that we should play. We did, and tonight, it was enough."

Lee pushed the lead to 4-2 with 4:56 left.

The Islanders had a season-low 14 shots on goal and had just nine midway through the final period.

"Good teams, they find ways to win when they're not playing well," Eberle said. "As a group, we're definitely feeling confident."

Ryan O'Reilly got his eighth with 1:33 remaining to pull St. Louis within one.

Brayden Schenn, Zach Sanford and Ryan O'Reilly scored for St. Louis, which has lost three of its last four.

Lehner made several fine stops in the third period and protected the lead when the Blues held a 6-on-4 advantage in the final 19 seconds.

The Islanders entered the final period with a 2-9 mark when trailing after two periods.

"That was a big win for us," Lehner said. "Obviously we didn't have a great game. But we stuck with it and battled through it together. We scrambled, we just found a way to win."

Schenn pounced on the rebound of a deflected shot by Jaden Schwartz for a 1-0 lead at 4:11 of the first.

Sanford tipped in a hard drive from inside the blue line by Vince Dunn with 3:23 remaining in the opening period to make it 2-0. It was Sanford's fifth of the season and his first since being recalled from San Antonio of the AHL on Friday.

The Islanders cut the deficit in half on a drive from the slot by Martin early in the second period. Casey Cizikas set up the goal with a perfect pass from behind the net at 2:25. Cizikas also had an assist on Boychuk's goal.

"The main thing is we just kept hanging in there," Eberle said. "Eventually, we did some of the right things."

Blues goalie Jake Allen made 10 saves.

"I've got to be better than that in the third period for this team," Allen said. "I lost it for them."

St. Louis has lost five games this season after grabbing a 2-0 lead.

"We had a couple breakdowns defensively, simple as that," St. Louis defenseman Alex Pietrangolo said.

New York Post LOADED: 01.06.2019

1124654 New York Islanders

Ranking the local hockey teams' greatest players by nationality

By Larry Brooks

January 5, 2019 | 5:58PM

GLENDALE, Ariz. — So, OK, an exercise in which Henrik Lundqvist, Ed Giacomin and Mike Richter can each be designated as the greatest goaltender in franchise history ... by nationality.

As the World Juniors crown a champion Sunday in Vancouver, Slap Shots is issuing our six-nations ranking of our three local club's all-time greatest by birthplace. Ranking is determined by contributions with team — which is why, say, Wayne Gretzky is not ranked as the Rangers' greatest Canadian-born player and Jaromir Jagr is not atop the Devils' Czech Republic list.

Greatest US-born players

Rangers: 1. Brian Leetch; 2. Mike Richter; 3. Ryan McDonagh; 4. Ryan Callahan; 5. Derek Stepan; 6. John Vanbiesbrouck; 7. Cecil Dillon; 8. Mark Pavelich; 9. Tony Amonte; 10. Tony Granato; 11. Chris Kreider; 12. Mike York; 13. Brian Boyle; 14. Chris Drury; 15. Brandon Dubinsky.

Islanders: 1. Pat LaFontaine; 2. Ken Morrow; 3. Kyle Okposo; 4. Mark Parrish; 5. Bryan Berard; 6. Randy Wood; 7. Jason Blake; 8. Bill Guerin; 9. Anders Lee; 10. Dave Langevin; 11. Tom Kurvers; 12. Scott Lachance; 13. Mathieu Schneider; 14. Brock Nelson; 15. Mike York.

Devils: 1. Neal Broten; 2. Brian Rafalski; 3. Zach Parise; 4. Paul Martin; 5. Billy Guerin; 6. Scott Gomez; 7. Jamie Langenbrunner; 8. Brian Gionta; 9. Jay Pandolfo; 10. Bobby Carpenter; 11. Kyle Palmieri; 12. Tom Chorske; 13. Chris Terreri; 14. Cory Schneider; 15. Andy Greene; 16. Doug Brown; 17. Mark Johnson.

Greatest Canadian-born players

Rangers: 1. Mark Messier; 2. Rod Gilbert; 3. Frank Boucher; 4. Andy Bathgate; 5. Bill Cook; 6. Jean Ratelle; 7. Brad Park; 8. Ed Giacomin; 9. Bryan Hextall Sr.; 10. Harry Howell; 11. Adam Graves; 12. Vic Hadfield; 13. Dean Prentice; 14. Camille Henry; 15. Bill Gadsby.

Mark Messier

Islanders: 1. Denis Potvin; 2. Mike Bossy; 3. Bryan Trottier; 4. Clark Gillies; 5. Billy Smith; 6. John Tavares; 7. Brent Sutter; 8. John Tonelli; 9. Bob Bourne; 10. Pierre Turgeon; 11. Derek King; 12. Kelly Hrudey; 13. Pat Flatley; 14. Mike Peca; 15. Billy Harris; 16. Dave Lewis.

Devils: 1. Martin Brodeur; 2. Scott Stevens; 3. Scott Niedermayer; 4. John MacLean; 5. Claude Lemieux; 6. Brendan Shanahan; 7. Taylor Hall; 8. Stephane Richer; 9. Ken Daneyko; 10. Kirk Muller; 11. Travis Zajac; 12. Bruce Driver; 13. Pat Verbeek.

Greatest Swedish-born players

Rangers: 1. Henrik Lundqvist; 2. Anders Hedberg; 3. Michael Nylander; 4. Tomas Sandstrom; 5. Anton Stralman; 6. Ulf Samuelsson; 7. Jan Erixon; 8. Ulf Nilsson; 9. Ulf Dahlen; 10. Mika Zibanejad; 11. Carl Hagelin; 12. Jesper Fast; 13. Kjell Samuelsson; 14. Niklas Sundstrom; 15. Kim Johnsson.

Islanders: 1. Bob Nystrom; 2. Stefan Persson; 3. Tomas Jonsson; 4. Kenny Jonsson; 5. Anders Kallur; 6. Tommy Salo; 7. Tommy Soderstrom; 8. Robin Lehner; 9. Mats Lindgren; 10. Goran Hogosta.



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Devils: 1. Patrik Sundstrom; 2. Tommy Albelin; 3. Johnny Oduya; 4. Johan Hedberg; 5. Adam Larsson; 6. Jesper Bratt; 7. Marcus Johansson; 8. Anders Carlsson; 9. Henrik Tallinder; 10. Mattias Tedenby.

Greatest Russian-born players

Rangers: 1. Sergei Zubov; 2. Alex Kovalev; 3. Sergei Nemchinov; 4. Alexander Karpovtsev; 5. Pavel Bure; 6. Fedor Tyutin; 7. Ruslan Fedotenko (Ukraine); 8. Vladimir Malakhov; 9. Nikolay Zherdev (Ukraine); 10. Pavel Buchnevich.

Islanders: 1. Vladimir Malakhov; 2. Alexei Yashin; 3. Viktor Kozlov.

Devils: 1. Slava Fetisov; 2. Alexei Kasatonov; 3. Ilya Kovalchuk; 4. Alex Mogilny; 5. Sergei Brylin; 6. Vladimir Malakhov; 7. Valeri Zelepukin; 8. Igor Larionov; 9. Viktor Kozlov; 10. Alexander Semak.

Greatest Czech-born players

Patrik Elias

Rangers: 1. Jaromir Jagr; 2. Martin Straka; 3. Petr Nedved; 4. Radek Dvorak; 5. Michal Rozsival; 6. Marek Malik; 7. Vinny Prospal; 8. Jan Hlavac; 9. Martin Rucinsky; 10. Petr Prucha (was a healthy scratch).

Islanders: 1. David Volek; 2. Roman Hamrlik; 3. Robert Reichel; 4. Radek Martinek; 5. Josef Vasicek.

Devils: 1. Patrik Elias; 2. Bobby Holik; 3. Petr Sykora; 4. Jaromir Jagr; 5. Marek Zidlicky; 6. Richard Smechlik; 7. Jan Ludvig; 8. Martin Havlat; 9. Jaroslav Modry; 10. Pavel Zacha.

Greatest Finnish-born players

Rangers: 1. Reijo Ruotsalainen; 2. Esa Tikkanen; 3. Pentti Lund; 4. Jari Kurri; 5. Jari Gronstrand; 6. Olli Jokinen; 7. Lauri Korpikoski.

Islanders: 1. Olli Jokinen; 2. Sean Bergenheim; 3. Mikko Makela; 4. Jari Gronstrand; 5. Janne Niinimaa.

Devils: 1. Janne Ojanen; 2. Tapio Levo; 3. Tuomo Ruutu; 4. Timo Blomqvist; 5. Reijo Ruotsalainen.

Hockey people take care to be considerate of one another. Teams and fan bases recognize people and players who merit appreciation. Video tributes to returning players are generally handled with utmost class by franchises throughout the NHL.

This is what makes the Blues organization's studious snub of Kevin Shattenirk's return to St. Louis on New Year's Eve stand out as especially inconsiderate and perhaps even cruel to both the New Rochelle native and a fan base who grew to appreciate him through seven seasons representing the Blue Note with nothing but class.

It is not as if the Blues forgot. We're told on good authority the suggestion was nixed by upper management. When Ryan Reaves, who played 419 games with the Blues, returned to St. Louis, he received a video tribute. When captain David Backes, in for 727 games, returned, he received a tribute. When T.J. Oshie, who played 443 games, returned, he received a tribute.

When Shattenkirk, who played 425 games primarily as a top-four defenseman for a strong St. Louis team, returned, he did not receive a tribute.

How unfortunate.

So one of Lou Lamoriello's well-known foibles, er, rules, is not to allow television and radio personnel to travel on the club charter. He did make an exception for the Dec. 23 game in Dallas, but not so for the New Year's Eve game in Buffalo.

But ownership made its own exception, providing a pair of private jets, one to Long Island and one to New Jersey, for the TV and radio crews, so they could get home to celebrate the New Year.

That's class.

New York Post LOADED: 01.06.2019

1124655 New York Islanders

Islanders rally with three goals in final period, beat Blues to win sixth straight

Isles rally from behind in third period on goals from Jordan Eberle, Johnny Boychuk and Anders Lee.

By Andrew Gross

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Updated January 6, 2019 2:25 AM

And the Islanders continue to show, more and more, that they are a good team and a solid playoff contender.

"We definitely weren't at our best," right wing Jordan Eberle said after the Isles' 4-3 victory over the Blues on Saturday night at Enterprise Center. "We found a way to win. Good teams do that. They find ways to win when they're not playing well."

It wasn't just that the Islanders weren't at their best. For two periods, they didn't play anything close to the hard-working, detail-oriented game that has suited them this season.

Despite managing only 14 shots on Jake Allen, the Islanders shrugged off a two-goal first-period deficit and rallied for three third-period goals — including two in 11 seconds — to extend their winning streak to a season-high six games.

"Tonight was a great example of us coming together," said captain Anders Lee, who put back his own rebound to make it 4-2 at 15:04 of the third period. "We all agreed we weren't very good the first 40 minutes. Everyone pulled on the same rope the last 20 minutes. We played the right way and, thankfully, with [Robin] Lehner, we only needed 20."

"We can't make this a habit. We can't rely on having an off two periods and have Lehner or [Thomas] Greiss back us up."

Lehner made 29 saves in winning his seventh straight decision.

The Islanders (23-13-4), who have won nine of 10, are on their longest winning streak since the end of 2016-17. The win vaulted them into the first wild-card spot in the Eastern Conference. They also moved to within two points of the first-place Washington Capitals and Pittsburgh Penguins. The Columbus Blue Jackets are in third with 51 points.

The Islanders have not had seven straight victories since they won their last three games in 2013-14 and their first four games of the next season. They haven't won seven straight in a single season since a nine-game winning streak from Dec. 31, 1989 to Jan. 19, 1990.

They face the Hurricanes on Tuesday night at NYCB Live's Nassau Coliseum, and coach Barry Trotz already is worried.

"This is a little bit of a red flag that you win a game you're not supposed to because you think it's going to happen easy," Trotz said. "Hopefully it's a little bit of a wake-up call. At the end of the year, the hockey gods always even things out. They'll probably take one away at some point because I felt we stole this one a little bit."

Eberle, in the lineup after missing four games with an upper-body issue, tied the score at 2 at 8:27 of the third period as he skated toward the left post. Off the ensuing faceoff, defenseman Johnny Boychuk connected from the right point at 8:38.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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The Blues (16-19-4) thought they had tied the score at 11:22 of the third period, but Vladimir Tarasenko's apparent power-play goal was waved off upon video review because of his kicking motion.

With Allen off for an extra skater and the Blues skating six-on-five, Ryan O'Reilly made it 4-3 at 18:27.

Brayden Schenn collected a loose puck off the right post to give the Blues a 1-0 lead at 4:11 of the first period and Zach Sanford tipped Vince Dunn's shot to make it 2-0 at 16:37.

But Matt Martin, now halfway to matching his career high of 10 goals, brought the Islanders within 2-1 at 2:25. He parked low in the slot and took Casey Cizikas' feed from behind the net.

"Marty's goal was huge," Trotz said. "If they get the third goal, it might have been a six-, seven-goal game the way we were playing."

Newsday LOADED: LOADED: 01.06.2019

1124656 New York Islanders

Jordan Eberle returns to Isles' lineup after missing four games

The forward was re-inserted on Brock Nelson's top line with captain Anders Lee against the Blues in St. Louis

By Andrew Gross

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Updated January 6, 2019 2:35 AM

He scored a third-period goal to tie the score at 2, but Eberle said the game felt fast for him. Coach Barry Trotz thought it was a subpar performance.

"I didn't think much of his game. I didn't think much of that whole line," said Trotz, who started him on the top line with Brock Nelson and captain Anders Lee before temporarily dropping him to the third line in the second period.

"I just threw the puck on net," Eberle said of his goal at 8:27 of the third period. "I haven't played for a couple of weeks, so the game seems fast out there. It takes a period or two to get into it. When you come back, the biggest thing is to try and simplify the game a little bit."

Eberle, in the final season of a six-year, \$36-million deal and a 20-goal scorer the previous five seasons, has only eight goals and 10 assists in 36 games.

"Ebs probably hasn't had the year he would like," Trotz said. "This is a good opportunity for him to reset. You don't lose your job when you get injured. He should be excited. But he also sees there's pressure [FOR HIS SPOT] as well."

Lehner OK

Goalie Robin Lehner was briefly shaken up with 19.3 seconds left in regulation when he collided with Blues defenseman Alex Pietrangolo.

"I got hit pretty hard there," Lehner said. "It's 20 seconds left and we've got to win a game. It's not very hard to get up and do your best again."

Isles files

The Islanders are 3-9-0 when trailing after two periods but have won two straight in that scenario . . . The Islanders play five of the next six at home. The lone road game in that stretch is Thursday night against the Rangers at Madison Square Garden.

Newsday LOADED: LOADED: 01.06.2019

1124657 New York Islanders

Islanders' Scott Mayfield returns to his hometown of St. Louis

He praises the development of youth hockey in the area, crediting the Blues and their alumni for building up the game

By Andrew Gross

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Updated January 5, 2019 5:10 PM

ST. LOUIS — Scott Mayfield now considers Denver his home but St. Louis was his hometown until he left to play junior hockey at age 16. So, coming back to face the Blues, as the Islanders did on Saturday night at Enterprise Center, and seeing how youth hockey has developed in the region still brings out strong feelings for the defenseman.

"St. Louis has come a long way and I think it has to do with a lot of the ex-Blues players and alumni going back and starting their families," Mayfield said. "It's pretty special that the whole culture has developed, due to the Blues, due to the alumni. They're doing a good job of growing the game. It isn't a hockey hotbed that you think of right away."

The Islanders, winners of eight of nine, brought a season-high five-game game winning streak into their game against the Blues and were looking to match their longest winning streak since concluding 2016-17 with six wins in a row.

Mayfield said he attended some Blues' games growing up — "It was expensive to get in" — but followed baseball much more closely as his family had Cardinals season tickets.

"I'd get taken out of school every opening day," Mayfield said.

Saturday marked the 26-year-old Mayfield's third game back in St. Louis — he had one assist as the Islanders split those first two games the previous two seasons — but he has returned an improved player from last season.

The 6-foot-5, 223-pound Mayfield entered Saturday with three goals and 11 assists — both already NHL career bests — and he has become one of the team's most defensively-sound defensemen, using his big frame as a physical deterrent.

Saturday also marked Mayfield's fifth game paired with offensively-gifted rookie Devon Toews, a strong skater and stickhandler, after the pair initially developed complementary chemistry for Bridgeport.

"He's developed really well," said Toews, whose first NHL goal was the overtime winner in Thursday night's 3-2 victory over the Blackhawks at NYCB Live's Nassau Coliseum. "He plays a really structured and solid game. That's the coaches putting good structure in and Scotty knowing what to do."

Toews added the duo communicates well and "I think we just understand each other's capabilities, strengths and weaknesses."

Islanders coach Barry Trotz said Mayfield does have a role in Toews' poised entry into the NHL.

"I think being the steady defenseman that he is, it's allowing your partner to use his assets," Trotz said. "Toews' assets are his ability to skate and distribute the puck and move and Scotty is the big, strong defender with a really good stick and a physical element to his game. They complement each other."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Mayfield struggled along with the rest of the Islanders defensively last season as the team allowed 293 goals, the most in the NHL since 2007. He had two goals and 10 assists in 47 games as he was slowed by a lower-body injury, though former general manager Garth Snow signed him to a five-year, \$7.25-million extension that went into effect this season.

"I thought I could be a huge part of this team and that's what I want," Mayfield said. "I want to make sure I'm relied on, make sure I'm smart with the puck, not somebody they're nervous to put out there. I want the trust."

Mayfield said his family that still lives in St. Louis, including his aunt and uncle, along with his parents, who flew in from Denver, were in attendance on Saturday.

"I still have a lot of friends here," Mayfield said. "It's a great place to raise a family."

Here are the projected lineups:

Islanders (22-13-4)

Anders Lee-Brock Nelson-Jordan Eberle

Anthony Beauvillier-Matthew Barzal-Josh Bailey

Michael Dal Colle-Leo Komarov-Josh Ho-Sang

Matt Martin-Casey Cizikas-Cal Clutterbuck

Nick Leddy-Johnny Boychuk

Adam Pelech-Ryan Pulock

Devon Toews-Scott Mayfield

Robin Lehner (10-6-3, 2.13 goals-against average, .929 save percentage)

Blues (16-18-4)

Alexander Steen-Ryan O'Reilly-David Perron

Jaden Schwartz-Brayden Schenn-Robert Thomas

Zach Sanford-Tyler Bozak-Vladimir Tarasenko

Robby Fabbri-Ivan Barbashev-Oskar Sundqvist

Carl Gunnarsson-Alex Pietrangolo

Jay Bouwmeester-Colton Parayko

Vince Dunn-Robert Bortuzzo

Jake Allen (14-12-4, 3.03, .901)

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1124697 Tampa Bay Lightning

Lightning organization has two All-Star coaches

By Diana Nearhos

Published Yesterday

The Lightning organization has two All-Star coaches this year.

Tampa Bay coach Jon Cooper was named the Atlantic Division coach for the NHL All-Star Game on Saturday. Syracuse coach Ben Groulx previously was named the North Division coach for the AHL All-Star Classic.

For the NHL game Jan. 26 in San Jose, each of the four division teams in the event's 3-on-3 tournament will be led by the coach whose team leads its division in points percentage at the season's halfway point. With six of the eight Atlantic teams having reached that point Saturday, Tampa Bay's .805, from a 32-7-2 record entering the day, led and couldn't be bettered.

The other NHL All-Star coaches are the Capitals' Todd Reirden (.650) in the Metropolitan, the Jets' Paul Maurice (.650) in the Central and the Flames' Bill Peters (.643) in the Pacific.

Let's look at how crazy the Lightning's points percentage is. The last time a team finished the season at .802 or better was the Blackhawks in 2012-13 at .802. The past five Presidents' Trophy winners have not topped .735.

Back to the topic at hand. Groulx will coach the AHL's North Division due to Syracuse being atop the division at the predetermined deadline of Dec. 31. The Crunch were 20-8-2 with a points percentage of .700 (which would be second in the NHL).

Groulx will coach in the Jan. 27-28 AHL All-Star Classic due to Syracuse being atop its division at the predetermined deadline of Dec. 31.

Tampa Bay Times LOADED: 01.06.2019

1124698 Tampa Bay Lightning

Lightning-Sharks pregame: Tampa Bay takes on another high-scoring team

By Diana C. Nearhos

Published Yesterday

Updated Yesterday

SAN JOSE, Calif. — Two of the NHL's top-scoring teams meet at the SAP Center tonight.

The Lightning is the highest-scoring team by far, with 174 goals entering Saturday, 21 more than the No. 2 Flames. The Sharks are fourth with 145.

Both teams topped five goals in their previous game. The Lightning beat the Kings 6-2, and the Sharks beat the Avalanche 5-4. It was the Sharks' third straight game scoring at least five goals.

Center Joe Pavelski is the Sharks' only player with more than 20 goals (24). Wing Timo Meier is second with 18. San Jose also has six goal scorers in double digits.

The Lightning has had issues with allowing too many goals. It kept those down in its previous two games; it gave up one to the Ducks in an overtime win before beating the Kings. But Anaheim and Los Angeles entered Saturday the two lowest-scoring teams in the league.

Tonight is a Lightning test of whether refocusing on defense, which players talked about after the win over the Kings, will stick against higher-scoring teams.

Will this be a full-team effort like the 7-1 win over Colorado (144 goals)? Will the Lightning need its goalie (unannounced without a morning skate) to steal a win like in the 4-1 win over Toronto (147 goals)? Will the game be a high-scoring shootout like the 5-4 win over Calgary (150 goals)? Or a high-scoring loss like the 5-4 overtime game in Winnipeg (134 goals)?



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Tampa Bay Times LOADED: 01.06.2019

1124733 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Maple Leafs' Trevor Moore making the most of his NHL opportunity

Luke Fox | @lukefoxjukebox January 5, 2019, 9:47 PM

TORONTO – If you're going to score your first National Hockey League goal, you might as well do it the Trevor Moore way.

Don't get tangled near the blue paint and let a slapper from the point bounce off your posterior or slip one into an empty net in garbage time.

Nah.

Gather the puck and a surge of speed deep in your own zone, charge down the right wing like your whole career is a tryout, blow by a defenceman (Derrick Pouliot) like you own an E-Z Pass, and snipe five-hole on one of the hottest goaltenders in the league.

Then allow your undrafted self to be bombarded by a standing ovation 19,388 strong and the instant recognition that comes from a Hockey Night in Canada prime-time highlight (with a "Coach's Corner" boost, to boot). Oh, and please act like you've been there when they splash your face on the Jumbotron.

"I was just trying to focus on my next shift at that point. I didn't want to get too high with it. It was pretty tough to keep a straight face," Moore grinned post-win, trying to explain what it all feels like.

"I don't really know, honestly. The light just went on and it was surreal. Your whole life you work to that point, right? Pretty cool.

"I thought one might just hit me in the butt at some point if I was ever going to score."

The wonderful week of Trevor Moore has served as both a reminder of his excellent recent past and, especially on this night, a tantalizing preview of what his future may hold.

On Thursday the Toronto Maple Leafs' rookie call-up was invited to the American Hockey League's all-star game in acknowledgement of the 17 goals he potted in just 27 contests for the farm club, and on Saturday he contributed to the big club's 5-0 cruise over the Vancouver Canucks.

"I didn't know he was that fast. His speed has really stood out to me. I think every single game he gets more and more confident as he goes. His goal tonight was unbelievable," Auston Matthews said. "Every game he's gotten better and better, and I think everyone's took notice how dangerous of a player he is."

<https://twitter.com/MapleLeafs/status/1081749882912808963>

Making sure that puck found its way home. #LeafsForever
pic.twitter.com/jncS2dtekk

— Toronto Maple Leafs (@MapleLeafs) January 6, 2019

Five feet, 10 inches of forecheck, backcheck and determination, Moore has exhibited the type of dogged will that impresses an old-school hockey man like Mike Babcock, who believes ice time is for the earning.

Moore's big-league look on the Leafs' sparingly used fourth line — five games, three points and counting — has been afforded to him by ankle injuries to both Tyler Ennis and Zach Hyman and the trade of depth winger Josh Leivo (injured as well) to these Canucks.

Hyman is back skating by himself and says he's ready to return as soon as the medical staff gives him a thumbs-up. Ennis suffered a fracture on Dec. 22 and will be sidelined much longer.

"The way I look at it is, by having people out, it's an opportunity for other people. Whether it ends up helping the team right away, it should help the individual," Babcock philosophized.

"You can be really good in the American League and never play, right? There's some guys that are going to find their niche and find their way. We have a bunch of kids down there now that we monitor very closely. We're fortunate, we go to the games or watch them on TV. We get to see a lot of them.

"It's going to be hard to make our team — we'll add other guys as well — so it's going to be a tough roster to make, but we encourage the competition."

As the coach is swift to remind, it was a lapse in competitive spirit, at least over a 60-minute span, that led to consecutive defeats to the Islanders and Wild and the 12th instance of back-to-back losses in this impressive Leafs campaign.

But, once again, they prevented that slump from stretching to three games.

"The really good teams, they're able to snap out of it quick," Matthews said. "That stat proves we're going in the right direction."

In eight days, goaltender Michael Hutchinson has gone from "grinding away" in Springfield with a losing record for the Thunderbirds to posting a calm, 28-save shutout for his boyhood team. Before he could peel off his Panthers-coloured pads, Hutchinson was congratulated at his locker by both Frederik Andersen and Garret Sparks.

"Playing street hockey, you always think about it," said the Barrie, Ont., native. "The guys made it about as easy as it comes. We did a great job blocking shots, letting me have time to cover rebounds whenever they were around. We backchecked really hard tonight and took away a couple of scoring chances they had just by backchecking and breaking up plays."

Of course, it helped that Vancouver was down its most dangerous weapon and top centreman, rookie of the year favourite Elias Pettersson, and was wrapping up its third six-game road trip of the season, this one forced by hosting the world junior tournament back home.

The Canucks — "a blue-collar team," coach Travis Green said proudly, realistically, prior to puck drop — battled, but their elite finishers simply aren't as plentiful.

John Tavares opened the scoring by parking in front of goalie Jacob Markstrom, reaching across his body and deftly tipping a Morgan Rielly wristler with the inside of his shaft. That's already his 27th as a Leaf.

Auston Matthews secured a \$212,500 salary bonus when he punched home his 20th in the third frame, removing any doubt about the outcome, then set up both Andreas Johnsson and Igor Ozhiganov for giggles.

https://twitter.com/PR_NHL/status/1081739418606714881

But those all-stars score with such frequency, they may forget this one.

Moore? Not a chance.

A native of Thousand Oaks, Calif., Moore starred at the University of Denver for three winters and skated two and a half more in the AHL before his persistence and someone else's bad luck conspired for a dream come true and taped-up, Sharpied-up NHL puck that Rielly dug out of the back of the net and is now headed straight to his parents' new home.

They just put in a game room. It'll brighten up the place.

Moore said he "got chills" thinking back three summers ago, to his first Leafs development camp in Niagara Falls, Ont., and how it was then that



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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the organization decided to take a flyer on this undersized, zero-hyped prospect with a future you couldn't predict and a motor you can't teach.

"He's going to be an NHLer, for sure," Babcock said on Saturday. "It's just how soon do you want him to play eight minutes? That's the beauty of not getting kids here too soon is, you want them to score. The more he scores [in the AHL], the more likely he's going to score at the NHL level.

"If we can get healthy, he can go down, score a lot and become a scorer rather than a checker."

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1124734 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Quick Shifts: Maple Leafs' Marner and the great all-star snub

Luke Fox | @lukefoxjukebox January 5, 2019, 8:03 AM

A quick mix of the things we gleaned from the week of hockey, serious and less so, and rolling four lines deep.

1. Just because the Toronto Maple Leafs traded for Michael Hutchinson as soon as the freeze thawed doesn't mean they're done shopping at the goalie market.

That GM Kyle Dubas was already searching for depth at the position before No. 1 Frederik Andersen stepped aside to rehab a lingering groin issue and a William Nylander practice shot accidentally gave No. 2 Garret Sparks a concussion means the organization is once again considering its goaltending trade options.

Part of that is to strengthen the Andersen insurance policy; part of it is to make the AHL Marlies more competitive.

On Thursday, undrafted 25-year-old prospect Kasimir Kaskisuo was recalled to back up for the second time, and he's yet to prove himself as an AHL-calibre starter (.866 save percentage). In a perfect world, Kaskisuo might be gaining confidence in ECHL St. John's.

Seeing depth options Mike McKenna and Jared Coreau change teams (again) this week reinforces how eager clubs are to bolster the most important position on the ice.

Calgary would like to upgrade too, but the shelves are pretty bare.

"Well, there's no tree. You'd like to have a tree in your backyard and just be able to pick 'em off," Leafs coach Mike Babcock said. "We'll see what happens."

A few aging veterans on bad teams could likely be pried away — Ottawa's Craig Anderson, L.A.'s Jonathan Quick, Chicago's Corey Crawford — but they come with injury concerns and cumbersome, risk-laden contracts.

Realistically, there are two NHL-calibre goalies we could see fetching a decent return on the rental market — and Babcock knows both well.

All-Star rep Jimmy Howard and the Detroit Red Wings reportedly have mutual interest in a multi-year extension, but the Penguins and Blues were rumoured to have poked around earlier this season.

If GM Ken Holland can fetch a high pick or decent prospect for the best goalie available, why not make that deal?

Detroit could still theoretically bring Howard back on July 1.

Carolina's Curtis McElhinney (8-5, .924 save percentage), whom the Leafs waived in favour of Sparks after training camp, is the other enticing option.

In Toronto, that would require consuming some humble pie. In Calgary, it would see the journeyman's NHL journey come full circle; the Flames drafted McElhinney as a sixth-rounder back in 2006.

The Hurricanes aren't contending. They would be wise to flip the pure No. 2 and count him as found money.

2. Sparks won the award for the farm system's top goaltender last season, posting a .936 save percentage.

Right on his tail? Hutchinson at .935.

"We had a good battle for top numbers," Hutchinson says. "I was fortunate enough that I didn't play a ton of games in the American Hockey League last year, but I think four or five of my games were against the Marlies, so I got to battle him head-to-head. Those were always fun games."

Sparks agrees.

"We were neck-and-neck in the AHL last year, so I know he's a good goalie and I know he's gonna help this team, and we're happy to have him here," Sparks said after learning of the trade.

Hutchinson and Sparks first met a couple summers ago training in Toronto and had a chance to catch up Friday as two teammates who'd love to secure the No. 2 job with the Leafs.

"It's amazing. The hockey world is small. The goalie world is even smaller. You know everyone somehow," Hutchinson says. "It's all part of being a team. The main goal is the Stanley Cup. Any wins I can get just puts this team closer to making the playoffs. At the end of the day, that's the only thing that matters."

3. Fascinating conundrum for the Vegas Golden Knights this week.

Hard to believe a franchise less than a season-and-a-half old is having an issue with its surplus of depth, but with AHL call-up Brandon Pirri exploding for six goals, nine points and a plus-9 rating in just seven games and the Knights needing to clear a roster spot Friday for the now-healthy Max Pacioretty, GM George McPhee sent Pirri back to AHL Chicago.

Why? Because he didn't need waivers until the 10-game mark. (He'd already cleared immediately after training camp.)

Oscar Lindberg, Ryan Carpenter, Tomas Nosek and recently acquired Valentin Zykov all get to stay. The Knights want time to assess what they have in prospect Zykov, whose arrival from Edmonton was delayed due to visa paperwork.

Poor Pirri was already killing it in the minor leagues (41 points in 28 games) and scored thrice in his only two games with the Knights last season. Dude belongs in the NHL.

Because his demotion has nothing to do with merit and everything to do with business, the Knights were smart to release a video with assistant GM Kelly McCrimmon explaining the situation to their (mostly new) fans.

"We will have him back here," McCrimmon promised, "so I think he's got some comfort in that."

4. This is how I feel every time I play Simon Says...

Tyler's not sure what to do with his hands.
pic.twitter.com/Qb1WGV03Jk

— Good Tweet Pete (@peterhassett) December 30, 2018

5. Of the NHL's top 20 scorers, only three skaters were left off both the announced All-Star Game rosters and the Last Men In fan ballot: Toronto's Mitch Marner and Calgary's Sean Monahan and Elias Lindholm.



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The Leafs (Morgan Rielly) and Flames (Mark Giordano) each had defencemen listed on the Last Men In card instead.

If his production (55 points, more than any other "snub") isn't enough, Marner's on-ice creativity, fun-loving energy and embrace of young fans suit him perfectly to the 3-on-3 schmoozefest.

Toronto's John Tavares and Auston Matthews, who are going, each vouched for Marner's inclusion.

"Especially with our group, there's no question there probably should be a couple more guys that should be there," Tavares said. "I feel very fortunate, and it should be a lot of fun."

Matthews was surprised Marner was excluded. Ditto Rielly, who leads all D-men in scoring.

"The way it's set up, a lot of really good players get left off the list," Matthews said. "Having missed the time I did, seeing those three guys, the way they played – Johnny, Mitch and Mo – I think I'd give up my spot for them any day of the week because they've had unbelievable seasons."

Should the NHL expand the guest list?

"Maybe. Or..." Matthews paused. "I guess somebody from every team's gotta go. When it's like that and limited spots, a lot of very, very deserving guys get left off, like you've seen. Not just on this team but on others as well."

Marner downplayed his disappointment, but when given the option to dismiss all-star weekend as a hindrance to vacation time, he stuck up for the showcase.

"It's always a cool event. As a kid growing up, it's always something you think would be cool to be at, but as I said, y'know, stuff happens," Marner said.

"There's bigger things in the world to think about than that."

Go vote! Need my liney with me in San Jose #LastManLeon
<https://t.co/EywrNfwvBf>

— Connor McDavid (@cmcdavid97) January 4, 2019

6. Leafs Nation rolls deep, so we like Rielly's chances of being Last Man In the Atlantic, but his competition is thick (Patrice Bergeron, Jeff Skinner, Mark Stone, Brayden Point, Aleksander Barkov, Dylan Larkin and Shea Weber).

"It's cool. I think it's a week-long opening, so we'll see what happens. I mean, the most important stuff is here in Toronto," Rielly said. "All of that stuff is cool. It'd be fun."

So, do you think your teammates are logging on and stuffing the ballot box for you?

"I doubt it," Rielly deadpanned. "They're probably voting for the other people."

7. I tumbled down an all-star game rabbit hole and realized there has been a bizarre NHL All-Star MVP curse in place for the past decade.

Since Eric Staal in 2008, no player named Most Valuable Player of the All-Star Game has been invited back to participate in the weekend the following year.

Alexei Kovalev, Patrick Sharp, Marian Gaborik, Ryan Johansen, John Scott, and Wayne Simmonds have all carried on this dubious tradition.

That weird streak will continue this year if Vancouver's Brock Boeser, who won the car in '18, isn't voted in by fans on the Pacific Division's "Last Men In" ballot.

P.S. I realize this note is probably only of interest to me and the Boesers' travel agent.

8. Michael Frolik's agent, Allan Walsh, doubled down on throwing Twitter shade at how the Calgary Flames (i.e. head coach Bill Peters) are deploying his client:

Michael Frolik with 1 goal, +2 and 5 shots on goal (2nd among all Calgary players) with 11:04 icetime (11th out of 12 forwards). That's right...11th out of 12 forwards.

— Allan Walsh (@walsha) January 4, 2019

Since Walsh first went public with Frolik's desire to get off the bench, the forward has scored twice and added a pair of assists over three games.

Frolik, 30, still has another season after this one on his contract (\$4.3-million cap hit, but only \$3 million in 2019-20 salary), and these Flames are shaping up to be the best club he's been part of since the 2013 champion Blackhawks.

Is playing time the only issue here? Perhaps. But just in case, it seems everyone's on the same page about not degrading Frolik's potential trade value through injury:

9. As Mathew Barzal enjoyed his third multi-goal effort in four outings and extended his point streak to six games Thursday night at Nassau Coliseum, a viciously gleeful "J.T. sucks!" rang through the barn.

The Islanders were playing Chicago.

The air during Tavares' return to his old stomping grounds on Feb. 28 will be all kinds of toxic.

And just for the nationally televised crowd, a "JT Sucks!" Chant just went up from the Coliseum crowd. #Isles

— Rob Taub (@RTaub_) January 4, 2019

10. For one night only, FOX (no relation) is bringing back the Glow Puck.

Yep, for Saturday's '90s Night broadcast of the Kings-Oilers games, FOX Sports West will broadcast with that American-proof reminder of where you need to be focusing your attention when you watch hockey.

"During the summer, I like to drop by the Kings office, pretending to do actual 'work.' One day, I happened to notice '90s Night' as a date on the promotional calendar. Then it dawned on me: What could be more '90s and hockey-related than the glowing puck, animated robots, and kitschy opening montages from the NHL on FOX?" play-by-play announcer Alex Faust told LAKings.com.

"Needless to say I've been irrationally excited about this night for a while."

The 90s are returning to STAPLES Center and it's going to be totally radical

BE THERE: <https://t.co/Wxf8nucs47> pic.twitter.com/GwFWuQFu4V

— LA Kings (@LAKings) December 24, 2018

11. The aforementioned Mike McKenna, 35, is about to don his 21st different pro hockey sweater now that he's been claimed by Philadelphia.

This season alone, he's already dressed for Belleville, Ottawa and Vancouver — and we're not even at the halfway mark.

OK. I know this has been a wild week. And I'm going to look like a Munson for the foreseeable future with mismatched equipment. But remember, when you come to a fork in the road, take it.

— Mike McKenna (@MikeMcKenna56) January 4, 2019

The goaltender's wife, Rachel, wrote an eloquent message on Twitter that is worth your time, shedding some perspective as we race toward trade season:

Hi, everyone. I know I've done a fair amount of complaining lately, but I'm truly grateful for the career and opportunity Mike has had these 14



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years. Any chance he has to be in the NHL is a special and amazing one and I'm fully aware of how incredible it all is.

— Rachel McKenna (@RachelMcK17) January 4, 2019

That being said, I have a 2 year old who cries and occasionally thinks her daddy doesn't love her anymore because he hasn't lived with us in 2 months. She can't understand how special what her dad does is. And her tears and heartbreak are devastating to witness.

— Rachel McKenna (@RachelMcK17) January 4, 2019

I have a 5 year old whose dad is her hero and she misses him so much. She's trying her best to be positive, but when he only has a couple of minutes to talk because it's game day and it's been weeks since she's seen him, she can't understand why he won't talk to her longer.

— Rachel McKenna (@RachelMcK17) January 4, 2019

I am doing everything in my power to keep my kids happy, engaged, and understanding of how much their dad loves them and how cool it is that he gets to play hockey for a "job" at all. But they're little. They just want dad around to give them hugs, to see their school concerts...

— Rachel McKenna (@RachelMcK17) January 4, 2019

...to see how hard Kenlin is working on her skating at lessons so she can be a goalie like her hero, to read them a bedtime story, and so much more. Our situation is not unique. There are lots of families out there in worse positions. I get that. I understand it. They don't.

— Rachel McKenna (@RachelMcK17) January 4, 2019

So please understand that any complaining comes not from me trying to be greedy, or selfish, or disliking hockey or any of the organizations Mike has put a jersey on for, but because of our kids. We love and cherish what hockey has given us. It's just not always easy.

— Rachel McKenna (@RachelMcK17) January 4, 2019

On a positive, at least we are at our house in Belleville and don't have to risk flat tires and snow storms to get home! #itsthe little things

— Rachel McKenna (@RachelMcK17) January 4, 2019

And my gosh the stories we have! The people we've met! The places we've lived and visited! The pride I have in my husband for all his on and off ice accomplishments! There is so much to love about our life. I wouldn't trade it for anything.

— Rachel McKenna (@RachelMcK17) January 4, 2019

12. Alex Semin with the epic drum fill to kick off your weekend on the right note...

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Sportsnet.ca / 12 silver linings for Canucks despite heavy defeat to Maple Leafs

Gare Joyce | @garejoycenhl January 5, 2019, 11:50 PM

It was hard to count the silver linings for the Vancouver Canucks after Saturday night's 5-0 loss in Toronto, but we'll try. Here are a good dozen. Fans of the team, however saddened they might be by the outcome in this tilt in the Big Smoke, will be cheered by the end of this story as they are by the beauties of nature abounding in their good burgh.

One: The Canucks don't have a game until Thursday.

Two: That game, against the Coyotes, will be at home, where the Canucks haven't played since before Christmas.

Three: Vancouver's five-game losing streak on this six-game roadie isn't quite as gruesome as it looks at a glance, given that along the way the Canucks picked up a couple of points in overtime losses.

Sportsnet NOW gives you access to over 500 NHL games this season, blackout-free, including Hockey Night in Canada, Rogers Hometown Hockey, Scotiabank Wednesday Night Hockey, the entire 2019 Stanley Cup Playoffs and more.

Four: Given the performance of a select few Canadian teenagers this past week, the Canucks' recent form can rate as only the second biggest disappointment in their environs.

Five: Goaltender Jacob Markstrom did keep the Canucks in the game through 40 minutes, turning aside 22 of 24 shots, which included an improbably high number of quality chances. Markstrom was utterly blameless on John Tavares' deflection of a Morgan Rielly shot about nine minutes into the game. Though you had a sense that the die was cast with that goal, Markstrom persevered.

Six: Brock Boeser won't have to chase Mitch Marner on the cycle again anytime soon, which he did in vain for 17 awful, leg-sapping seconds on a single shift. Given that the game in Toronto was the Canucks' third in four nights and sixth in ten nights with flights hither and yon, it would have taken only two to three seconds for Boeser's legs to fill up with lactic-acid-soaked sand. Marner's game of keep-away from Boeser was an extreme example but it was a piece with the rest of the night when the Leafs' puck-possession game made the visitors' night seem much longer than the standard 60 minutes.

Seven: Defenceman Derrick Pouliot won't see Leafs' rookie Trevor Moore again until March if: (a) he doesn't watch any late-night highlights packages; (b) the Canucks' staff doesn't put together a gag reel. With a bit over five minutes to go in the first period, Moore, ostensibly a fourth-liner, picked up the puck above the circle in his own zone, built up a full head of steam as Pouliot gave ground and then absolutely blew by him without getting touched. Again.

Eight: Pouliot might not even see Moore in March because he could well be back with the Leafs' AHL affiliate at that point.

(Nota bene: You can scratch through Nos. Seven and Eight if Moore is packaged up in a trade to a place where he might see something more than fourth-line minutes.)

Nine: The Canucks didn't have to go directly to the airport after the game and will fly out Sunday, allowing them an opportunity to get fully rehydrated.

Ten: Bo Horvat says he isn't worried about not scoring because he's still getting scoring chances, which is our Silver Lining of the Game. He did register a couple of shots and he's as game as they come, don't get me wrong.

Eleven: Saturday night, the Canucks got a pretty good look at a team that they would like to be at some point down the line. "I thought there were mistakes on the first four goals and this team can make you pay," Canucks coach Travis Green said of the Leafs.

"It takes time [to get where the Leafs are] to be honest. You can't just turn 10-goal scorers into 20-goal scorers. Look at what Toronto has done for the last four or five years and now they're seeing the rewards for it. They don't have one good player or two good players. They've got a lot of good players."

Twelve: Elias Pettersson walked into the Scotiabank Arena last night. You might call it burying the lead but I think it's better described as saving the best for last, which would be the injury update on Pettersson.

In 38 reasonably sensational games this season Pettersson established himself as the Calder Trophy favourite although the odds will now have to be adjusted given that he was knocked out of the line-up when he got



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tangled up with another rookie Jesperi Kotkaniemi in Montreal Thursday night and fell awkwardly, twisting his knee in a way Our Maker had not intended.

Green called Petterson's injury a sprain of an MCL and said "it's not too bad." This is, of course, a preliminary rather than an authoritative report, mind you. "Our doctors will reevaluate him," Green said. "Probably as good of news as you could hope."

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Sportsnet.ca / Kings broadcast brings back the '90s with 'glow puck' replays

Steven Loung | @loung_s January 6, 2019, 12:02 AM

Let's take a trip down memory lane all the way back to Jan. 20, 1996.

The Mariah Carey and Boyz II Men ballad "One Sweet Day" was enjoying its seventh of 11 straight weeks at No. 1 on the Billboard charts, the vampire western cult classic "From Dusk till Dawn" was in the midst of a pretty good opening weekend at the box office, and the NHL all-star game was being hosted in Boston where Bruins legend Ray Bourque was named MVP as the East defeated the West 5-4.

More importantly than the game's result and Bourque's accomplishment however, was the fact that on that all-star game Fox, the television network broadcasting the contest in the United States, introduced the world to the FoxTrax puck, better known as "glow puck."

Created to help a more casual hockey audience track the puck on TV, what resulted was an incredibly distracting, Super Nintendo-esque graphic permanently whizzing across the screen all game long in rather annoying fashion.

Mercifully for all the hockey fans south of the border, the glow puck was abandoned and last used during Game 1 of the 1998 Stanley Cup Final.

Flash-forward nearly 21 years, however, and the glow puck made its return – whether it should be called triumphant or not is really up to personal taste, I suppose.

Saturday night during the local Fox broadcast of the Edmonton Oilers–Los Angeles Kings game, the glow puck made a return, though only limited to replays as the original glow pucks – which reportedly cost \$400 each to make – weren't actually being used and the production team just used a little post-production work to add the glow effect.

This was part of a planned '90s Throwback Night organized by the Kings, so the chances of the glow puck returning for anything more than just this one-off seems unlikely.

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Sportsnet.ca / Contract talks for Senators' Matt Duchene have cooled off

Sportsnet Staff | @Sportsnet January 5, 2019, 10:59 PM

With the NHL's Feb. 25 trade deadline a little more than a month away, the trade market on Matt Duchene should pick up soon.

The Ottawa Senators forward will be an unrestricted free agent at season's end, and has 16 goals and 40 points in 37 games so far. Given that fact coupled with the reality that Ottawa is one of the Eastern Conference's basement dwellers, he should have his fair share of suitors.

Especially now that it doesn't appear a contract extension with Ottawa is in the cards.

"It's quite interesting that the talks between the Ottawa Senators and Matt Duchene – their pending unrestricted free agent – have appeared to have cooled off," Sportsnet's Chris Johnston said on the Headlines segment of Hockey Night in Canada Saturday. "There doesn't appear to have been anything of substance here in recent times and no talks immediately scheduled in the weeks ahead.

"Pierre Dorion, the general manager, doesn't want to place any sort of deadline on when he needs an answer on Matt Duchene's intentions – whether will he sign an extension – but clearly, as this slides along here, we are looking at him as a potential target in that trade deadline period and someone that the Senators are going to have to make a decision on because I don't get the sense from Duchene's side that there's any rush for them to make that kind of decision."

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1124738 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Quick Shifts: Maple Leafs' Marner and the great all-star snub

Luke Fox | @lukefoxjukebox January 5, 2019, 8:03 AM

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"It's amazing. The hockey world is small. The goalie world is even smaller. You know everyone somehow," Hutchinson says. "It's all part of being a team. The main goal is the Stanley Cup. Any wins I can get just puts this team closer to making the playoffs. At the end of the day, that's the only thing that matters."

3. Fascinating conundrum for the Vegas Golden Knights this week.

Hard to believe a franchise less than a season-and-a-half old is having an issue with its surplus of depth, but with AHL call-up Brandon Pirri exploding for six goals, nine points and a plus-9 rating in just seven games and the Knights needing to clear a roster spot Friday for the now-healthy Max Pacioretty, GM George McPhee sent Pirri back to AHL Chicago.

Why? Because he didn't need waivers until the 10-game mark. (He'd already cleared immediately after training camp.)

Oscar Lindberg, Ryan Carpenter, Tomas Nosek and recently acquired Valentin Zykov all get to stay. The Knights want time to assess what they have in prospect Zykov, whose arrival from Edmonton was delayed due to visa paperwork.

Poor Pirri was already killing it in the minor leagues (41 points in 28 games) and scored thrice in his only two games with the Knights last season. Dude belongs in the NHL.

Because his demotion has nothing to do with merit and everything to do with business, the Knights were smart to release a video with assistant GM Kelly McCrimmon explaining the situation to their (mostly new) fans.

"We will have him back here," McCrimmon promised, "so I think he's got some comfort in that."

4. This is how I feel every time I play Simon Says...

Tyler's not sure what to do with his hands.
pic.twitter.com/Qb1WGV03Jk

— Good Tweet Pete (@peterhassett) December 30, 2018

5. Of the NHL's top 20 scorers, only three skaters were left off both the announced All-Star Game rosters and the Last Men In fan ballot: Toronto's Mitch Marner and Calgary's Sean Monahan and Elias Lindholm.

The Leafs (Morgan Rielly) and Flames (Mark Giordano) each had defencemen listed on the Last Men In card instead.

If his production (55 points, more than any other "snub") isn't enough, Marner's on-ice creativity, fun-loving energy and embrace of young fans suit him perfectly to the 3-on-3 schmoozefest.

Toronto's John Tavares and Auston Matthews, who are going, each vouched for Marner's inclusion.

"Especially with our group, there's no question there probably should be a couple more guys that should be there," Tavares said. "I feel very fortunate, and it should be a lot of fun."

Matthews was surprised Marner was excluded. Ditto Rielly, who leads all D-men in scoring.

"The way it's set up, a lot of really good players get left off the list," Matthews said. "Having missed the time I did, seeing those three guys, the way they played — Johnny, Mitch and Mo — I think I'd give up my spot for them any day of the week because they've had unbelievable seasons."

Should the NHL expand the guest list?

"Maybe. Or..." Matthews paused. "I guess somebody from every team's gotta go. When it's like that and limited spots, a lot of very, very deserving guys get left off, like you've seen. Not just on this team but on others as well."

Marner downplayed his disappointment, but when given the option to dismiss all-star weekend as a hindrance to vacation time, he stuck up for the showcase.

"It's always a cool event. As a kid growing up, it's always something you think would be cool to be at, but as I said, y'know, stuff happens," Marner said.

"There's bigger things in the world to think about than that."

Go vote! Need my liney with me in San Jose #LastManLeon
<https://t.co/EywrNfwvBf>

— Connor McDavid (@cmcdavid97) January 4, 2019

6. Leafs Nation rolls deep, so we like Rielly's chances of being Last Man In the Atlantic, but his competition is thick (Patrice Bergeron, Jeff Skinner, Mark Stone, Brayden Point, Aleksander Barkov, Dylan Larkin and Shea Weber).

"It's cool. I think it's a week-long opening, so we'll see what happens. I mean, the most important stuff is here in Toronto," Rielly said. "All of that stuff is cool. It'd be fun."

So, do you think your teammates are logging on and stuffing the ballot box for you?

"I doubt it," Rielly deadpanned. "They're probably voting for the other people."

7. I tumbled down an all-star game rabbit hole and realized there has been a bizarre NHL All-Star MVP curse in place for the past decade.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 6, 2019

Since Eric Staal in 2008, no player named Most Valuable Player of the All-Star Game has been invited back to participate in the weekend the following year.

Alexei Kovalev, Patrick Sharp, Marian Gaborik, Ryan Johansen, John Scott, and Wayne Simmonds have all carried on this dubious tradition.

That weird streak will continue this year if Vancouver's Brock Boeser, who won the car in '18, isn't voted in by fans on the Pacific Division's "Last Men In" ballot.

P.S. I realize this note is probably only of interest to me and the Boesers' travel agent.

8. Michael Frolik's agent, Allan Walsh, doubled down on throwing Twitter shade at how the Calgary Flames (i.e. head coach Bill Peters) are deploying his client:

Michael Frolik with 1 goal, +2 and 5 shots on goal (2nd among all Calgary players) with 11:04 icetime (11th out of 12 forwards). That's right...11th out of 12 forwards.

— Allan Walsh (@walsha) January 4, 2019

Since Walsh first went public with Frolik's desire to get off the bench, the forward has scored twice and added a pair of assists over three games.

Frolik, 30, still has another season after this one on his contract (\$4.3-million cap hit, but only \$3 million in 2019-20 salary), and these Flames are shaping up to be the best club he's been part of since the 2013 champion Blackhawks.

Is playing time the only issue here? Perhaps. But just in case, it seems everyone's on the same page about not degrading Frolik's potential trade value through injury:

9. As Mathew Barzal enjoyed his third multi-goal effort in four outings and extended his point streak to six games Thursday night at Nassau Coliseum, a viciously gleeful "J.T. sucks!" rang through the barn.

The Islanders were playing Chicago.

The air during Tavares's return to his old stomping grounds on Feb. 28 will be all kinds of toxic.

And just for the nationally televised crowd, a "JT Sucks!" Chant just went up from the Coliseum crowd. #Isles

— Rob Taub (@RTaub_) January 4, 2019

10. For one night only, FOX (no relation) is bringing back the Glow Puck.

Yep, for Saturday's '90s Night broadcast of the Kings-Oilers games, FOX Sports West will broadcast with that American-proof reminder of where you need to be focusing your attention when you watch hockey.

"During the summer, I like to drop by the Kings office, pretending to do actual 'work.' One day, I happened to notice '90s Night' as a date on the promotional calendar. Then it dawned on me: What could be more '90s and hockey-related than the glowing puck, animated robots, and kitschy opening montages from the NHL on FOX?" play-by-play announcer Alex Faust told LAKings.com.

"Needless to say I've been irrationally excited about this night for a while."

The 90s are returning to STAPLES Center and it's going to be totally radical

BE THERE: <https://t.co/Wxf8nucs47> pic.twitter.com/GwFWuQFu4V

— LA Kings (@LAKings) December 24, 2018

11. The aforementioned Mike McKenna, 35, is about to don his 21st different pro hockey sweater now that he's been claimed by Philadelphia.

This season alone, he's already dressed for Belleville, Ottawa and Vancouver — and we're not even at the halfway mark.

OK. I know this has been a wild week. And I'm going to look like a Munson for the foreseeable future with mismatched equipment. But remember, when you come to a fork in the road, take it.

— Mike McKenna (@MikeMcKenna56) January 4, 2019

The goaltender's wife, Rachel, wrote an eloquent message on Twitter that is worth your time, shedding some perspective as we race toward trade season:

Hi, everyone. I know I've done a fair amount of complaining lately, but I'm truly grateful for the career and opportunity Mike has had these 14 years. Any chance he has to be in the NHL is a special and amazing one and I'm fully aware of how incredible it all is.

— Rachel McKenna (@RachelMcK17) January 4, 2019

That being said, I have a 2 year old who cries and occasionally thinks her daddy doesn't love her anymore because he hasn't lived with us in 2 months. She can't understand how special what her dad does is. And her tears and heartbreak are devastating to witness.

— Rachel McKenna (@RachelMcK17) January 4, 2019

I have a 5 year old whose dad is her hero and she misses him so much. She's trying her best to be positive, but when he only has a couple of minutes to talk because it's game day and it's been weeks since she's seen him, she can't understand why he won't talk to her longer.

— Rachel McKenna (@RachelMcK17) January 4, 2019

I am doing everything in my power to keep my kids happy, engaged, and understanding of how much their dad loves them and how cool it is that he gets to play hockey for a "job" at all. But they're little. They just want dad around to give them hugs, to see their school concerts...

— Rachel McKenna (@RachelMcK17) January 4, 2019

...to see how hard Kenlin is working on her skating at lessons so she can be a goalie like her hero, to read them a bedtime story, and so much more. Our situation is not unique. There are lots of families out there in worse positions. I get that. I understand it. They don't.

— Rachel McKenna (@RachelMcK17) January 4, 2019

So please understand that any complaining comes not from me trying to be greedy, or selfish, or disliking hockey or any of the organizations Mike has put a jersey on for, but because of our kids. We love and cherish what hockey has given us. It's just not always easy.

— Rachel McKenna (@RachelMcK17) January 4, 2019

On a positive, at least we are at our house in Belleville and don't have to risk flat tires and snow storms to get home! #itsthe little things

— Rachel McKenna (@RachelMcK17) January 4, 2019

And my gosh the stories we have! The people we've met! The places we've lived and visited! The pride I have in my husband for all his on and off ice accomplishments! There is so much to love about our life. I wouldn't trade it for anything.

— Rachel McKenna (@RachelMcK17) January 4, 2019

12. Alex Semin with the epic drum fill to kick off your weekend on the right note...

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Sportsnet.ca / Takeaways: Flames bail out Rittich after uncharacteristic blunder



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 6, 2019

Eric Francis | @EricFrancis January 5, 2019, 5:04 PM

Of all the jubilant Calgary Flames mobbing T.J. Brodie, no one hugged the team's latest hero tighter than David Rittich.

After all, for a good chunk of the third period Rittich stewed in the possibility he might have cost his team the game against lowly Philadelphia.

It was a cruel reality given he had previously kept his team in the contest most of the afternoon.

Alas, true to form, the Flames erased the 2-1 deficit created when Rittich's stickhandling gaffe early in the third period gave Travis Konecny an easy goal.

With four minutes remaining Matthew Tkachuk snapped home the game-tying goal, setting up Brodie's overtime winner.

And just like that, Big Save Dave was off the hook, the Flames were back in the win column and the team's league lead in third-period comebacks was extended to eight.

The relief shown on the faces of Johnny Gaudreau's family in the stands when it was all said and done mirrored the fist-pumps locals sported when hearing Rittich was back in the lineup.

After missing two games to a lower body injury, Rittich was sensational stopping 24 of 25 shots in the first two periods against a surprisingly game Flyers bunch.

Rittich was key in stopping three of the host's four power plays in the first two frames, further reinforcing fans' belief the second-year stopper is for real.

For certain, he's this team's starter, a point hammered home by incessant calls for the team to upgrade its backup following Mike Smith's latest shaky start in Boston.

As well as things have gone for so many Flames players this year, the team's surge to the top of the Western Conference wouldn't have been possible without the emergence of Rittich as one of the loop's most effective stoppers.

His record now jumps to 14-4-3 with a goals-against average hovering around 2.35 and a save percentage over .920

He was clearly the game's first star.

Again.

His confidence level has extended to his ability to play the puck – something he's been bolder with, likely thanks to watching Smith as the world's very best.

But six minutes into the final period, Rittich came out of his crease considerably to play the puck, but failed to get all of it, sending his pass right onto the stick of Konecny.

The Flyers forward took a step in from the Flames blue line and shot the puck through the legs of a scrambling Rittich to put the hosts up 2-1.

Motivated heavily by a fear of letting his teammates down, Rittich dug deep while his teammates dug deeper.

Every player in that room wanted to bail Rittich out, as he's done for them so often.

BENCH HONOURS FOR PETERS

First-year Flames coach Bill Peters probably doesn't get enough credit for the job he's done turning the team around.

He got some much-deserved love Saturday when he was named coach of Team Pacific at the All-Star Game later this month by virtue of the Flames' first-place standing.

Peters has brought more of an edge to the gig previously held by Glen Gulutzan, demanding more of the players in terms of accountability.

There's no cheating in the defensive zone – a notion the players bought into early.

He was the one who saw the fit with Elias Lindholm on the top line, using the winger's faceoff prowess to the team's advantage on his strong side.

He's avoided the inherent pressure to use James Neal in a top-six role, despite the \$5.75-million price tag the free agent signing came with this summer. Peters would certainly love to help Neal find his game, but given how well things are going on the top two lines the impetus isn't there to do anything radical.

His penchant for making quick adjustments during games has helped the team with several comebacks.

He's pushing the right buttons.

What is clear now is that the Flames have had the horses for a while to be a special team – it just needed a conductor to get them all playing together.

Peter has been that guy, proving GM Brad Treliving right when he made the tough call to fire Gulutzan last summer and bringing in the only person he interviewed.

He felt Peters was the right man to bring about more accountability and tap into the talents of a team now showing what it's truly capable of.

The native of Three Hills, Alta., said the honour was a feather in the cap of the organization.

He becomes just the second Flames coach to be so-honoured, as Terry Crisp coached the Western Conference in 1990 as a result of winning the Stanley Cup in 1989.

THIS & THAT

- Gaudreau, a native of nearby New Jersey, grew up a Flyers fan and has long been open about how special it is to play there. His 24th goal of the year tied the game in the second period and gave him his 11th point in his last four games. His parents loved every minute of it. The Flames are now 15-1-2 when Gaudreau scores.

- You have to wonder if the league will get involved as Dale Weise was caught on camera squirting water on Tkachuk from the bench as the Flame skated by. Um, while funny for viewers, you can't do that.

- These two teams have created quite the magic for viewers, as both games this year were finished in dramatic fashion. This one didn't have the excitement of their previous meeting when Sean Monahan tied it with seven seconds left, before Gaudreau won it in overtime. But it was an entertaining finish once again.

- Brodie's goal was his fifth and came on a 2-on-1 with Tkachuk in which the tired defender skated as hard as he could to join the play before making no mistake with his conversion past Carter Hart. He is every bit as good as he was two years ago when the slick-skating veteran previously played alongside Mark Giordano. Knocked for several years for his defensive play, he's amongst league-leaders at plus-20.

- Flames wrap up their four-game roadie in Chicago Monday.

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Sportsnet.ca / Blue-collar Canucks in tough without Elias Pettersson



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 6, 2019

Luke Fox | @lukefoxjukebox January 5, 2019, 2:02 PM

TORONTO – Brock Boeser said bluntly what everyone else was thinking about Elias Pettersson — the NHL's Calder Trophy frontrunner by 100 miles, a young talent so otherworldly they call him Alien:

"It sucks having him out of the lineup tonight."

Saturday evening in the mecca. One anthem. Wizards on ice in both rooms. Hockey Night in Canada. This should've been a prime-time introduction to the casual, Eastern Time Zone hockey fan to a kid who deserves all the thundering buzz surrounding his 22-goal, 42-point rip through his first 38 games in North America.

"I remember when I was a kid playing road hockey, I felt like I could do anything I wanted with the puck, and that's a nice feeling — but there's probably only a few guys who could get that feeling on the ice," Travis Green says. The Canucks coach is trying to imagine what it might be like to see the game as Pettersson does.

"We think we have a special player, and we're just starting to see what he can do."

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What the slender, 20-year-old Swede cannot do is remain immune to the 30 to 40 little hooks and holds (Green's estimate) that occur during 60 frantic NHL minutes on small ice.

That's how Green describes Montreal's golden-boy centre Jaspersi Kotkaniemi's entanglement with Pettersson Thursday night away from the puck, a run-in that failed to yield a penalty call but injured the Vancouver star's knee.

"All top guys get in those plays, and unfortunately he got hurt from it," Green said through his game face, following a spirited morning skate at Scotiabank Arena.

"There's no sense in going off on anything. I don't think it was a malicious play."

Subtract the club leader in goals, assists, points, plus/minus, game-winners and shooting percentage from a group that ranks 19th in offence (2.89 goals per game) and throw them out against a dangerous Maple Leafs outfit that ranks second in the category (3.67 goals per game), and Vancouver's challenge appears mountaineous.

"It's tough when you lose your top guy, your leading scorer. It's an unfortunate play," Boeser said. "We're gonna need some guys to step up tonight. We're playing one of the top teams in the league and a lot of skill guys."

Green is expected to replace Pettersson as Boeser's centreman with Brandon Sutter, he of four points in 2018-19.

"Oh, it irks me a bit. He's hurt and out. He's an excellent player," Green said. "Obviously, I'm upset that he's not playing. He's out of our lineup. But he's gonna get attention, little holds, little hooks."

"If you ask Petey, he engaged in it a little bit. He pushed back."

Pettersson did explain the collision — which saw no physical retribution from his teammates and has enraged a vocal portion of Vancouver's fanbase — to Sportsnet's Nick Kypreos.

"He hooked my leg a little bit — I was going to reverse him or stop him — and it was an accident," Pettersson said during an interview airing Saturday. "We got tangled up, we both fell down and I got in an awkward position. It wasn't a dirty play or anything. He apologized afterwards,

which shows good sportsmanship from him. So it was really just unlucky for me, and it's nothing too serious."

The blue-collar Canucks are embracing a next-man-up mentality and remain hopeful for a speedy return for their all-star game rep.

"The sooner, the better," said Green, noting that Pettersson will undergo an MRI on his knee Saturday afternoon in Toronto. "He's walking around well. He looks good."

Assuming the damage is minor, the Canucks — still hovering in the playoff mix — can take some solace knowing they have a rare four-day break after facing the Leafs.

Vancouver will also dress the more established goaltender, Jacob Markstrom, against Michael Hutchinson, the Leafs' recently acquired third-stringer. (Canucks' prized AHL graduate, Thatcher Demko, will back up, and Green is tight-lipped on his plans for his first start.)

"We're not coming here to lose," Green said. "We're here to win."

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Sportsnet.ca / Can the Pettersson effect carry Canucks to a playoff berth?

Andrew Berkshire January 5, 2019, 12:34 PM

For the sake of Vancouver Canucks fans' sanity, let's assume that the unfortunate result of Jesperi Kotkaniemi holding Elias Pettersson behind the play and falling awkwardly on his leg leads to a much more minor injury than it looked like initially, and Pettersson can get back into games before we know it.

The Canucks will need their rookie phenom to continue to be in top form if they have any hope of making the playoffs this year. At this stage of the season, I don't think I was alone in thinking the Canucks would be much further out of the picture, but the team has rallied around the transcendent performance of Pettersson and sit just one point behind the Anaheim Ducks for the second wild card spot in the West.

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The one wrench in the gears outside of Pettersson's injury is that the Canucks have played more games than every other team they're within four points of, and the team that's the most dangerous to them in Minnesota has a whopping five games in hand.

So the question becomes how likely is it that Vancouver can squeeze its way into one of those wild card spots? Let's look at how the Canucks compare to the teams that are within plus or minus four points of them the standings.

Examining the statistics at 5-vs-5 on a team-wide perspective, things don't look too great for the Canucks. They're outplayed by their opponents in each of the major categories that lead to goal scoring. Specifically, the Canucks are weakest at manufacturing and preventing quality chances, both in terms of shot locations and puck movement.

The good news for the Canucks is that three of these teams can make the cut, and of this group they're currently third in the tiebreaker (regulation or overtime wins with 19, tied with Minnesota). However, that's about the only bit of good news.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 6, 2019

Jacob Markstrom has had a strong season for a team that isn't amazing defensively, but of this group, he's only putting up a better save percentage than one team's starting goalie — Edmonton's Cam Talbot, who has been giving up more and more of the net to Mikko Koskinen. Koskinen has also been stronger than Markstrom so far.

Top prospect Thatcher Demko could add depth in goal for the Canucks, giving them more chances to win games that may have previously felt like schedule losses. Even if they start getting better goaltending, their play at 5-vs-5 has to improve if they're going to not only pass one of the teams ahead of them, but avoid being leapfrogged by Minnesota as the season wears on.

Of the teams currently in a playoff spot, the Anaheim Ducks look to be the most vulnerable, despite the fact they're getting fewer than 40 per cent of the high danger chances in their games. They have John Gibson stopping 92.5 per cent of the shots he faces papering over their weaknesses.

Dallas is the other team that looks a little vulnerable, and much like the Ducks they're being carried by great goaltending, with Ben Bishop stopping 92.3 per cent of everything he's seen this season.

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Looking at special teams doesn't exactly bode well for the Canucks either, as they're among the bottom-10 teams in the league at creating scoring chances on the power play. They also shoot from outside the slot more than league average.

Vancouver does have a very effective penalty kill, preventing scoring chances overall like a top-10 team, while limiting high danger chances like a top-five team. That's something to build on, but hockey goes both ways; you have to prevent goals and score them.

The Pettersson effect has been enough to get them this far, but getting over the hump and into the playoffs is a bigger challenge than simply being almost there. Both the standings and the statistics are stacked against them this season, and while playoff fever may be a tempting feeling for Vancouver to capture once again, I don't think it would be a bad thing necessarily for this group to just miss out on the postseason.

Remember that in September this team was expected to be among the worst in the league. Now, all these young players have realized the team is better initially projected and can play well enough to get close to the playoffs. That lesson, along with a better draft pick, is not such a bad consolation prize if the Canucks can't pull it off.

This is clearly a team on the rise, but they don't look like they're quite at playoff level yet.

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1124742 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Vancouver Canucks first half report: Rebuild moving faster than expected

Iain MacIntyre | @imacSportsnet January 5, 2019, 9:14 AM

It is counter-intuitive that a team below the playoff cutoff halfway through the National Hockey League season is awash in positivity, but that's the Vancouver Canucks.

That they feel good about themselves and are more popular on the West Coast than any Canuck team since the one that went to the 2011 Stanley Cup Finals says a lot about their sooner-than-expected improvement and

a little about how low the bar was set for them after three straight seasons near the bottom of the overall standings.

Their reconstruction isn't quite over, especially on defence. But the Canucks have begun to emerge from their rebuild faster, more talented and entertaining — and more promising — than they've been in years.

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THE GOOD

Rookie-of-the-year finalist Brock Boeser was a tough act to follow, and yet 20-year-old centre Elias Pettersson has so far eclipsed Boeser and just about every other rookie in franchise history.

The Swede is scoring at a historic clip for first-year NHLers, already is the Canucks' best player and, like Boeser a year ago, will be going to the All-Star Game as a rookie. And Boeser's not far behind him, rebounding impressively from a slow start to his sophomore season, which followed a serious back injury that ended his rookie campaign after 62 games and 29 goals. Pettersson had 22 goals in his first 37 NHL games, missing six games due to a concussion he suffered in October when slammed to the ice by Florida defenceman Mike Matheson.

In his fifth season, workhorse Bo Horvat has become one of the best young two-way centres in the game and continues to raise his offensive ceiling. And goalie Jacob Markstrom is discovering his best form at age 28.

THE BAD

Until early December, the Canucks had one of the most porous defences in the NHL. But better team play and Markstrom's brilliant uptick have the Canucks surrendering fewer shots and goals, even with a defence that needs at least a couple of more players. One of them will be Team USA defenceman Quinn Hughes, a 2018 first-rounder who may be the best player in U.S. college hockey.

The Canucks still can't stay healthy. Their 2017-18 season was submarined by winter injuries, and it looked like this year might be the same when the team went 1-10-2 when as many as six regulars, most of them from the front end of the lineup, were out. But they're finally getting healthy and carrying some momentum from a 9-4-1 run against impressive competition.

A couple of questionable free-agent signings from the last two summers aren't getting better with age. Loui Eriksson is earning his \$6-million-US salary as a penalty-killer and checker, Sam Gagner was waived and loaned to the Toronto Marlies, Tim Schaller has been a frequent healthy scratch and struggling backup Anders Nilsson was traded last week to make room for minor-leaguer Thatcher Demko.

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TRADE DEADLINE LOOKAHEAD

The Canucks made the best of a cumbersome situation with the trade of Nilsson, who fetched GM Jim Benning an extra sixth-round pick in the multi-player deal with Ottawa that featured mostly minor-league players. With Nilsson gone, the only Canucks eligible for unrestricted free agency are depth defenceman Michael Del Zotto and top blueliner Alex Edler.

The Canucks will probably take whatever they can get for Del Zotto, who possesses experience and physicality, at the trade deadline. Edler is a fascinating case.

The 32-year-old has spent his career with the Canucks and said numerous times he wants to stay in Vancouver beyond this season. He also has a full no-trade clause. Despite this, it seemed likely when the season began that the Canucks would try to convince him to accept a trade and the team would cash in on the big Swede's strong all-around



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 6, 2019

game, which includes the ability to play against anyone's top line. But with Pettersson, Boeser and Horvat driving the attack, the Canucks are far ahead of where anyone expected them to be. They've climbed back into the playoff race this season and surely will be trying to make the Stanley Cup tournament next year. Suddenly, trading Edler for a draft pick or prospect makes little sense when doing so would make the team worse while it is trying to ascend.

If the Canucks make a move, they'd be happy to add more picks in the draft they're hosting. And the prospect pipeline on defence isn't what it appears to be up front.

SECOND HALF STORY LINES

Pettersson was by far the best rookie of the NHL's first half. Can he keep it up as opponents pay ever more attention to him and the league gets faster and more physical as teams sprint for the playoffs? Boeser's back injury last season cost him the chance to eclipse Pavel Bure's Canuck rookie record of 34 goals, scored in 1991-92 when the Russian Rocket became the only Vancouver winner of the Calder Trophy. If Pettersson stays healthy, he could hit 40 goals, while winning the Calder.

If the Canucks actually make the playoffs, Pettersson will get a few Hart Trophy votes, too, and coach Travis Green will probably get a bunch for the Jack Adams Trophy. The team has already come back from the dead, recovering from its late autumn crash of one win in 13 games. Now, the Canucks are getting healthy again as first-line winger Sven Baertschi and two-way centre Brandon Sutter returned after Christmas from extended injury absences. And with Pettersson and Boeser playing together, anything seems possible.

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Sportsnet.ca / Montreal Canadiens first half report: An unexpected playoff push

Eric Engels January 5, 2019, 8:19 AM

The real fun begins now.

But before we get to it, let's look back on a first half of the season that saw the Montreal Canadiens become one of the most exciting teams to watch in the NHL.

The team that was shut out 12 times last season has scored four or more goals in 16 of its 41 games and has averaged 3.12 goals per game thus far. Only the Western Conference-leading Calgary Flames have pulled out more wins when trailing after two periods. And the Canadiens have beaten some of the NHL's best teams along the way to remain in the Eastern Conference playoff picture for all but a few days since the puck dropped in October.

Now Montreal sits in the second wild card position, on pace for 98 points and well in the thick of a very tight race. Not bad, considering most people thought they'd be a draft-lottery favourite this season.

A weekly deep dive into the biggest hockey news in the world with hosts Elliott Friedman and Jeff Marek. New episodes every Thursday.

THE GOOD: EVENS IS A STRENGTH

Montreal's even-strength numbers are outstanding. The Canadiens rank fourth in the NHL in shot-attempt differential and also rank fourth in five-on-five scoring.

Then there's the individual performances from their best players.

Max Domi, who came to the Canadiens in the June 15 trade that sent Alex Galchenyuk to the Arizona Coyotes, has 14 goals and 38 points in 41 games. His linemate, Jonathan Drouin, scored his 13th goal in a 2-0 win over the Vancouver Canucks to match his output from a year ago.

Drouin ranks second in team scoring with 33 points. Behind him Tomas Tatar, who was a throw-in to the Max Pacioretty deal, is on pace to break career highs in goals, assists and points with 14-17-31 totals so far.

Jeff Petry is playing the best hockey of his career. He ranks ninth among NHL defencemen in scoring with eight goals and 29 points and did a remarkable job filling in for Shea Weber, averaging close to 25 minutes per game through Montreal's first 24 games.

Forward Andrew Shaw is dealing with a neck injury right now, but he's already surpassed his totals from last season. He had 10 goals and 10 assists 51 games a year ago and now has 11 goals and 13 assists in 36 games.

Brendan Gallagher appears poised for another 30-goal campaign, Paul Byron could hit 20 for a third straight season despite missing 14 games with an injury, and Phillip Danault is having a career year. They are three of eight players on pace for at least 40 points, which is something we haven't seen on a Canadiens team in 24 years.

Perhaps no one on Montreal has been more impressive than Weber, though. The big man returned from a near year-long absence and, after off-season surgery to both legs, has been dominant through 17 games.

Weber has scored five goals and six assists, is a plus-7, averaging 25:36 per game, and the team is regularly registering 40 or more shots and allowing 30 or less. Oh, and they've won 11 of the games he's played.

There's been no bigger beneficiary of Weber's return than goaltender Carey Price, who has a .924 save percentage and a 2.08 goals-against average since Nov. 27.

THE BAD: SPECIAL TEAMS

The penalty kill hasn't been that bad. In fact, a three per cent bump up would give the Canadiens the 13th-best penalty kill in the league. But there's obviously room for improvement at 21st overall in the category.

The power play is another story: we're not sure the Canadiens have ever had a worse one in their 109-year history.

It's perplexing, really. A team that has all the components, including two excellent coaching minds to craft strategy in Kirk Muller and Dominique Ducharme, should be able to figure this out.

But so far, nothing has come together. The Canadiens rank 31st in the category, having converted just 18 of 137 chances.

TRADE DEADLINE LOOKAHEAD

Are they buyers? Sellers? A little of each, or will they stand pat? You might not find a team in the NHL that's harder to get a pulse on than the Canadiens right now.

This season was supposed to be about getting younger and faster and trying to make the playoffs while resetting the roster for a brighter future. Standing pat—keeping the chemistry intact and not sacrificing any of their 10 picks in the upcoming draft or their top prospects in the system—seems in line with that plan.

But...

Considering the Canadiens are in a playoff position and just a few power play goals away from climbing up through the NHL's most competitive division, you have to think general manager Marc Bergevin might have his eye on adding a player or two who can help in that department. The Canadiens are loaded with cap space and can bring in players at the deadline who have salaries that add up to over \$40 million, according to CapFriendly.com. That will make the urge to do something all the more enticing.



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Ryan Dixon and Rory Boylen go deep on pucks with a mix of facts and fun, leaning on a varied group of hockey voices to give their take on the country's most beloved game.

Up front Carolina's Micheal Ferland, who's a pending unrestricted free agent, comes to mind as a player Bergevin might take a swing at. Charlie Coyle, the right-handed centre with one year left on his deal with the Minnesota Wild, could be an option too.

But Bergevin traditionally angles towards hockey trades and tries to acquire players who can help now and in the future.

Minnesota's Nino Niederreiter, who is 26 with three years left on his contract (\$5.25 million AAV) could prove appealing. And on defence, Jake Muzzin of the Los Angeles Kings has been linked to the Canadiens.

Even if Bergevin elects to add, there's a strong chance he could subtract as well.

Defenceman Jordie Benn is a pending unrestricted free agent with a \$1.1-million cap hit and he's playing as well as he ever has. He's a player who could potentially haul in a pick if Bergevin decides to sacrifice one in another deal.

Defenceman David Schlemko, who has one more year at \$2.1 million, could be had. Forwards Charles Hudon and Matthew Peca are also on the block.

Price. Carey Price.

If he continues to play as he has since the beginning of December this Canadiens team is going to defy the odds and make the playoffs. But the key to that is to avoid the injury bug, which has already hit him this season.

Price is in Year 1 of an eight-year, \$84-million contract, and he's starting to look a lot more like the guy who earned that deal than the one who stumbled through a horrific 2017-18 season. It's up to the training staff—and the hockey gods—to keep him healthy and rested.

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TSN.CA / Leafs' Rielly not satisfied yet with stellar season

Kristen Shilton

TSN Toronto reporter Kristen Shilton checks in daily with news and notes on the Maple Leafs. Toronto held an optional morning skate at Scotiabank Arena, followed by a full morning skate for the Vancouver Canucks ahead of tonight's game between the teams.

Now in his sixth year pro, Morgan Rielly is on pace to have by far the best season of his career.

Through 40 games, he's already notched 44 points (eight shy of his previous career-high in 76 games), while leading all NHL blueliners in goals (13). He's also tied for most points among defencemen, has the third-most assists (31) and third-best plus-minus rating (plus-24).

It all looks great on paper, but those stats aren't all that Rielly uses to determine how well he's playing.

"It's important that over time, you kind of look at yourself, and the player you want to be and you take steps to try and get there," he explained after the Leafs' optional morning skate on Saturday ahead of their game

against the Vancouver Canucks. "It's a long road, a long process. I have a long way to go to get to where I want to be."

Notoriously tight-lipped when it comes to discussing his own accomplishments or details of his own game, Rielly didn't expound much on where those areas for improvement are. But like the Leafs themselves, who have lost two in a row, Rielly finds himself now in a rare lull.

For the first time all year, the 24-year-old has gone three games without a point (he hadn't gone longer than two previously) and he's been minus-one in Toronto's last two outings.

With Saturday marking the halfway point of the 2018-19 campaign for Toronto, there's no time like the present for Rielly to kick-start his game again.

"It's important we all take [our recent losses] upon ourselves as individuals to try and get better," he said. "Not just me, but I know there are other guys who feel that way as well. Moving forward in this last half of the year, we all feel like we can get better, we feel like we can be more consistent as a team, and we'd like to carry that over."

Getting back on the scoresheet against Vancouver would be especially sweet for Rielly, a native of the area. In ten prior career meetings, Rielly has four assists and zero goals against his hometown team, and said on Friday he still looks forward to playing them twice a year.

The Leafs haven't lost more than two games in a row all season, a sign of consistency that's helped propel them to second place in the NHL standings.

To hold off a third consecutive defeat once again on Saturday, Toronto will tap into the same principles that have benefited them before in that situation.

"We talk about that a lot, we talk about not going through dry spells; we want to be consistent all year," Rielly said. "We make sure we're doing things right every day, whether it be in practice or morning meetings. If we do that, we feel like we're going to be ready to go at night. I guess the test is on for tonight."

"It's just fixing mistakes as quick as possible and getting back on track," added Patrick Marleau. "I think when we stumble we've been able to get right back to our winning ways, so that's what we need to do tonight."

The problem for the Leafs of late hasn't been as much a lack of execution as not being able to play their game as long as necessary to secure a victory.

"I just didn't think we've found a way to dig in for 60 like we need to," said Mike Babcock. "[The Canucks are] going to work hard, they're going to compete hard, they're going to be organized. There's another test here tonight. We have to work."

Leafs face 'test' as they aim to avoid first three-game losing streak of season

The Maple Leafs' streak of not losing more than two consecutive games this season is on the line tonight when they host the Canucks. Mike Babcock wants to see his respond to another test and remain consistent.

After giving up the fourth-most shots-against in the NHL last season (33.9 per game), Toronto set a goal to see that number reduced this season. To date, they're giving up the eighth-most shots (32.5), which is still in the upper-echelon on the league but reflective of some progress from the year before.

Whatever Toronto has been able to do right in that category, though, it wasn't on display Thursday when the team allowed 30 shots in the first two periods (and 34 total) against goaltender Michael Hutchinson. The Leafs went on to lose 4-3 to Minnesota, and can't afford for history to



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repeat itself too quickly with Hutchinson back in the crease for Saturday's game.

"Last game, we gave up too much. Hutch played really good at the start, really kept us in it a bit," Rielly said. "I think it's important that as a group we have a good start and are able to limit opportunities against by clogging up the neutral zone and have quicker breakouts and make sure we're not getting caught in the D zone"

Marleau noted that whoever is in net for Toronto, the job of players in front of him doesn't change. That means executing a tight defensive game that allows the goalie to make saves and see play moved out of the zone.

"We have to make sure we don't turn the puck over as much and we're being in the right spot," he said. "I think if we can get our forecheck going, you're playing in the other team's end, so tough for them to get shots that way."

With so much talent through the Leafs' ranks, it's easy for them to caught up offensively while ignoring other vital components of victory.

"We're skilled. We like to play that game. But the game is moving ahead," said Babcock. "In October it's one level, and it just keeps going. And it's going to keep going. It's hard, and it's heavy and it's competitive and we have to learn to play that every night."

Babcock has said repeatedly he thought Thursday's loss was good for the Leafs because it showed what they're "susceptible" to when they lean too heavily on skill alone.

"I thought [the Wild] just stuck with it, didn't get all wound up," he explained. "We made two plays [on first period goals], and they just kept forechecking and working in the first period. They had played significantly better, they had jumped harder... and spent lots of time putting miles on our D. If you don't do it right the whole 60, you don't get what you want all the time."

If he'd had his choice, Josh Leivo would like to have been part of the Leafs' plans. But in early December it was clear the team didn't have room for him to be an everyday skater anymore, so Toronto shipped him to Vancouver for forward Michael Carcone.

Out west, Leivo has finally found a home, slotting into a top-nine role nightly. Through his first 14 games, Leivo tallied four goals and one assist, before being sidelined by back spasms. That injury will force the Innisfil, Ontario native to miss Saturday's game in Toronto, but his former teammates are glad Leivo's found his footing.

"It's too bad [we won't see him]," Rielly said. "He's been playing well for them. He's a guy who was here for a long time. The fact that he went out there and has played really well is great. We're happy for him."

The Leafs had promised Leivo that after last season, where he appeared in just 16 games, they wouldn't allow him to sit mostly on the shelf again for another campaign. The emergence of Kasperii Kapanen and Andreas Johnsson ultimately helped push Leivo out.

In the end, we weren't able to play him every day like we wanted to, so I think this is a good opportunity for him," Babcock said. "Now over time, he's got to play with real good players and he's got to make himself a home. I think it's real good for Leivs."

Leivo ended his tenure in Toronto with 14 goals and 14 assists in 94 games.

Elias Pettersson won't play for the Canucks on Saturday, but the NHL's top rookie was still a popular topic of conversation in Toronto.

It's been two days since Pettersson got tangled up with Montreal Canadiens rookie Jesperi Kotkaniemi in a controversial incident that continues to spark debate. But as Pettersson awaits an MRI on his

injured knee later Saturday afternoon, Canucks' head coach Travis Green maintained there was nothing "malicious" about the play that hurt his team's leading scorer.

"You have to remember, excellent players have hooks and holds and try to take away time and space," Green said. "I'm obviously upset he's not playing, but he's going to get attention. Little holds, little hooks. That happens to all the good players. If you ask Petey, he engaged in it a little bit, he pushed back. That's nothing different than what all the top players do."

Green said there's "no sense going off on anything" when it comes to Pettersson's injury, and that the Canucks will wait for the results of Saturday's MRI to determine when he'll be able to come back. At the moment, Green is optimistic the absence won't be for long.

"He's walking around well. He looks good," Green observed. "Hopefully he can play very soon."

Even without Pettersson against the Leafs, Green has no intention of seeing his team roll over.

"We're not coming here to lose," he shrugged. "He's one part of our team, he's obviously a good player. But we're not here to lose, we're here to win."

Green on Pettersson: We'll know more after his MRI today

Canucks head coach Travis Green says that Elias Pettersson will not play tonight in Toronto and will undergo an MRI today. Green also explains that he his young star is walking around and looking good to him, but they will know more after the MRI.

Maple Leafs projected lines vs. Canucks

Brown-Tavares-Marner

Johnsson-Matthews-Nylander

Marleau-Kadri-Kapanen

Lindholm-Gauthier-Moore

Rielly-Hainsey

Gardiner-Zaitsev

Dermott-Ozhiganov

Hutchinson starts

Kaskisuo

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TSN.CA / Canucks prepare for Leafs without Pettersson

Jeff Paterson

TORONTO –The Vancouver Canucks (20-20-4) will be without their biggest weapon on one of the biggest stages in hockey when they face the Toronto Maple Leafs (26-12-2) tonight at Scotiabank Arena.

Elias Pettersson will not play tonight after suffering a knee injury in the second period in Montreal on Thursday. Pettersson, who leads the Canucks with 42 points in 38 games and had five goals in his previous four games, will have an MRI in Toronto today and is out indefinitely. The young Swede was at the rink and around his teammates this morning,



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and it's believed the injury is not considered serious. Without their scoring star, the Canucks were blanked 2-0 by Carey Price and the Canadiens. It was the third time in their past six games the Canucks have been held off the scoresheet and the fifth time this season.

With eight apiece, Pettersson and Brock Boeser have combined to score 16 of the team's past 39 goals (41%) in 13 games since December 9th. Boeser had a career-high 14 shot attempts against the Habs but was unable to score on any of his six shots on goal. He has launched 25 shots at the net in the past two games in Montreal and Ottawa.

The Canucks will need someone to step up to fill the scoring void left by Pettersson's absence. Bo Horvat, Jake Virtanen and Loui Eriksson have all gone six games without scoring while Markus Granlund has gone nine since his last goal (an empty-netter) and 17 since last beating a goalie. Nikolay Goldobin, a healthy scratch the past two games, draws back into the line-up but he's gone 10 without a goal and has just one in his past 17 games.

The Canucks went 3-3 in Pettersson's absence in October when he missed six games with a concussion. The team scored 11 times in that span (but just nine times in regulation).

Jacob Markstrom was sharp on Thursday stopping 25 shots; however, he was outduelled by Price and suffered just his second loss in his past 11 starts. Markstrom will get the call again tonight with Thatcher Demko dressing as the back-up for the first time this season after being recalled from the American Hockey League yesterday.

The Maple Leafs are back in action following a 4-3 loss at home to Minnesota on Thursday. Mitch Marner scored twice including a goal just seven seconds after the opening face-off while William Nylander scored his first goal in his 12th game since reaching a contract settlement a month ago.

Michael Hutchinson made 31 saves in his Maple Leafs debut after being acquired from Florida earlier in the week. He will get the nod again tonight as he looks for his first NHL win since October 19th. Hutchinson has started just seven NHL games over the past three seasons.

Toronto has dropped back to back games after rattling off five straight victories. The team has not lost three in a row all season. The Leafs are 11-4-2 in 17 games since November 24th.

John Tavares leads the team with 26 goals through his first 40 games in a Maple Leafs jersey while Marner leads the team with 55 points (15+40). West Vancouver's Morgan Rielly leads all NHL defensemen with 13 goals and is tied with San Jose's Brent Burns for most points by a blueliner with 44.

Auston Matthews has 19+17=36 in 26 games after missing time earlier this season with a shoulder injury. Despite the time on the shelf, he leads the Leafs with seven power-play goals. However, Matthews has gone five games without a goal.

With Marner, Tavares, Matthews, Rielly and adding in Kasper Kapanen and Nazem Kadri, Toronto boasts six players with 25 or more points this season. By comparison, the Canucks have three. Marner is playing his 200th NHL game tonight and has 56+129=185 in his first 199 games as a Leaf.

Veteran forward Patrick Marleau is slated to appear in his 1616th NHL game tonight – 80 of those have been against the Canucks. He has 30+26=56 in his career against Vancouver.

These teams are on opposite ends of the injury spectrum this season. The Canucks have lost 149 man-games to injury while the Leafs have lost just 33.

The Maple Leafs will make their lone visit to Vancouver on March 6th to complete the season series. This year it's a Wednesday night contest rather than the traditional Saturday afternoon affair. National television preferred the Auston Matthews versus Connor McDavid storyline so the Leafs will play in Edmonton on the Saturday of that week.

POSSIBLE CANUCKS LINE-UP

Roussel-Horvat-Eriksson

Goldobin-Sutter-Boeser

Baertschi-Granlund-Virtanen

Schaller-Beagle-Motte

Edler-Tanev

Hutton-Gudbranson

Pouliot-Stecher

Markstrom

POSSIBLE MAPLE LEAFS LINE-UP

Brown-Tavares-Marner

Johnsson-Matthews-Brown

Marleau-Kadri-Kapanen

Lindholm-Gauthier-Moore

Rielly-Hainsey

Gardiner-Zaitsev

Dermott-Ozhiganov

Hutchinson

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