



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 7, 2019

THE NEWS & OBSERVER

Canes run winning streak to four by beating Senators 5-4

By Chip Alexander

Ottawa Senators' Matt Duchene (95) moves the puck against Carolina Hurricanes' Jaccob Slavin (74) and Brett Pesce (22) during first-period NHL hockey play in Ottawa, Ontario, Sunday, Jan. 6, 2019. (Fred Chartrand/The Canadian Press via AP) Fred Chartrand AP

Make it four in a row for the suddenly surging Carolina Hurricanes.

The Canes held off the struggling Ottawa Senators on Sunday, surrendering a two-goal lead but winning 5-4 at the Canadian Tire Centre in Ottawa.

For the first time since October, the Canes (19-17-5) have won four straight games as they reached the halfway point of the season. They did it against a team that is 0-7-1 in its last eight games but showed some fight after falling behind 2-0 early in the game.

Justin Williams' power-play goal at 7:34 of the third period handed the Canes a 5-4 lead after the Senators had tied the score 4-4 with two rapid-fire goals in a span of eight seconds in the final minute of the second period. Williams went to the front of the net and had the puck go off him and past goalie Anders Nilsson as Teuvo Teravainen unloaded a shot.

"We gave them a couple there at the end of the second, which is a real letdown, but the guys rallied, rallied," Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "I think that shows a lot about the group and now we have to obviously keep moving forward."

Justin Faulk had a power-play score for the Canes for the first goal of the game and Brock McGinn scored shorthanded as the Canes picked up three goals from special teams. Carolina also got two more scores from defensemen as Jaccob Slavin and Dougie Hamilton had second-period goals.

Goalie Petr Mrazek rebounded from the four-goal second period, with its bang-bang finish by the Senators, to improve his record to 8-8-2. Mrazek, who had 27 saves, faced 19 shots in the second period but just two in the third.

Brind'Amour wanted another strong start Sunday, and got it. Sebastian Aho drew a quick penalty on the Sens and the

Canes promptly scored on the power play as Faulk bombed one in.

The Canes then were penalized, but McGinn steamed down the ice in the final seconds of the Sens' power play was near to score shorthanded. Just 4:28 into the game, the Canes had a 2-0 lead.

"That was probably a curse because we never could get our game going," Brind'Amour said.

The Senators (15-23-5) made a push early in the second, Matt Duchene scoring, but the Canes twice had two-goals leads in the period -- at 3-1 and then 4-2 -- after the goals from Slavin and Hamilton.

Slavin's goal came off a quick shot from the left wing and Hamilton's score was his third in as many games, giving the Canes a 4-2 lead. According to the NHL, Hamilton was the first Canes defenseman to score in three straight games since Anton Babchuk in February 2008.

But the Sens' Rudolf Balcers then scored his first NHL goal. That had the home crowd roaring.

Eight seconds later, Jean-Gabriel Pageau scored his first goal of the season after missing the first 42 games with an injury. It was 4-4.

After the two soft goals by Mrazek, Brind'Amour had a decision to make during the second intermission: stick with Mrazek in the third or make a change to Curtis McElhinney. Sens coach Guy Boucher had replaced goalie Marcus Hogberg with Nilsson after Slavin's goal in the second.

"We had a good meeting and the guys just rallied and played the way we're supposed to play," Brind'Amour said. "That was a good third period."

Brind'Amour stuck with Mrazek, and the Canes helped their goalie with some strong defensive work, killing off a McGinn slashing penalty that came with 5:15 left in regulation.

The Sens pulled Nilsson late for an extra attacker but the Canes wouldn't allow a tying score, Aho won a draw in the Canes zone with five seconds left in regulation to finish it off.

Aho had a pair of assists and won 11 of 17 faceoffs. Teravainen, who had two assists, was named the game's first star.



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Recap: Power Play Pushes Canes Past Senators Canes extend winning streak to four games

by Michael Smith

OTTAWA - The Carolina Hurricanes scored two power-play goals, which included the game-winner in the third period, and a shorthanded goal to defeat the Ottawa Senators, 5-4.

Justin Williams' power-play marker in the third period was the difference, while Justin Faulk, Brock McGinn, Jaccob Slavin and Dougie Hamilton also chipped in with goals in the Canes' fourth straight victory.

"We had a great third period, won a third period on the road and won a game," Williams said.

Here are five takeaways from a Sunday matinee.

One

A week ago, the Hurricanes' power play was derided for its ineffectiveness and inability to make a difference in a positive way when the team needed it most.

This afternoon, the Canes' power play was a perfect 2-for-2, and it came through in the first half of the third period to tally the game-winning goal.

Teuvo Teravainen stickhandled at the top of the near circle, and with time and space to shoot, he let go of a wrist shot that deflected off Williams and in.

"The guys up top - Aho, Teravainen and Faulk - they're releasing to work it around very well. Once you can attack from both sides, it's tough to defend," Williams said. "We're getting some looks, getting some shots and they're going in."

"I think the biggest thing is that they're moving the puck really quick," Hamilton said of the power play. "Those guys are moving it really well and hitting seams, just doing everything right. That's a big part of why we're winning right now."

Two

Special teams was the story of the first period for the Canes, and they accomplished a feat no NHL team has in 10 years: scoring a power-play goal and a shorthanded goal in the first five minutes of the game.

Sebastian Aho drew a tripping call on Zack Smith just 41 seconds into the game, and 31 seconds into the power play, Aho, Teravainen and Faulk zipped it around, and Faulk finished the play off with a one-time blast from the point for his third goal of the season.

"The execution has been better in the last few," head coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "The pucks are actually on the tape, and the passes are a little more crisp."

Three minutes later, with Victor Rask in the box for slashing, McGinn intercepted a cross-ice pass from Mark Stone and took it the other way with an incredible burst of speed from his own blue line. In alone, he tapped the puck through Marcus Hogberg's five-hole to double the Canes' lead.

"Kind of out of nowhere you get a goal when you don't expect it. It gives you a little jolt of energy. That's big," Williams said of the shorthanded contribution. "Our PK has been really good, and as long as the power play keeps going, we'll be fine."

Three

A wild second period saw the Senators twice turn a two-goal deficit into a one-goal game, only to have the Hurricanes stretch the lead back to two goals in both instances.

Two-and-a-half minutes into the second, Matt Duchene halved the Canes' lead. Four minutes later, Jaccob Slavin beat Hogberg clean with a slap shot from the top of the far circle. After that tally, Anders Nilsson replaced Hogberg in net, the third time in the last four games that the Hurricanes have chased the opponents' starting goaltender.

Ryan Dzingel took advantage of a Senators' power play at the 12:17 mark to again bring his team within a goal, but not even three minutes later, Hamilton joined a rush, accepted a pass from Aho and scored on a wrist shot from between the circles for his third goal in as many games.

"I injured myself at the start of November, and that kind of hampered me," he said. "It's starting to feel better, and that's helping. It's nice to see it go in."

With the trio of Faulk, Slavin and Hamilton netting goals, it was the first time since March 21, 2009, that three different Canes defensemen scored goals in a single game.

"Yeah, about time they scored some goals," Williams joked with Hamilton doing a television interview within earshot. "It's very important to get offense from the back-end, certainly from your big bombers."

"Our D is supposed to be the strong part of our team," Hamilton said. "Everyone on our D can score goals, get in the rush and make plays."

Four

In the last minute of the period, the Senators again ate into the Canes' advantage, as Rudolf Balcers smacked in his first career goal. Just eight seconds later, in his first game



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back in the lineup this season, Jean Gabriel Pageau tied the game at four.

After that back-and-forth period and the demoralization of losing a two-goal lead in the span of eight short seconds in the final minute, the Canes headed back to the locker room in an even 4-4 game.

And that's where they parked it.

"We knew it wasn't good. We just had to go back out and refresh," Hamilton said. "It was a tie game on the road. We were fine. Then the PP came up big again. It was a good win."

"It was surprisingly easy to park," Williams said. "Mrazek came in after and was like, 'That's on me.' We instantly said, 'No, no, no. You've had our back all the time. It's time for us to pick you up.' That's what good teams do. They pick each other up."

Nothing much else needed to be said.

"It was pretty much self-explanatory. Forget about the goals. The fact that we knew we weren't playing our game, everybody knew it. We were fortunate to be up at that point," Brind'Amour said. "We got in here, and I even said to the guys that we were lucky to be even. Give them credit for getting together and having a great period."

"The guys rallied and played the way we were supposed to play. That was a good third period."

Five

That good third period extended the Canes' winning streak to four games, their second such stretch of the season.

"When you're winning, you're feeling good," Hamilton said. "Scoring goals helps with the confidence. Everyone is feeling good. You just go out there and play."

Keep winning, keep building.

Up Next

The Canes make their return to Long Island and Nassau Coliseum to take on the Islanders on Tuesday.

Projected Lineup: Hurricanes at Senators

Canes square off with Ottawa in Sunday matinee

by Michael Smith

OTTAWA - The Carolina Hurricanes begin a three-game road trip in Ottawa with a Sunday matinee faceoff against the Senators.

Petr Mrazek gets back in between the pipes for the Canes, who have won three games in a row.

Here is the projected lineup for the Hurricanes.

Forwards

McGinn-Aho-Teravainen
Martinook-Wallmark-Williams

Svechnikov-Rask-Ferland
Foegele-McKegg-Maenalanen

Defense

Slavin-Pesce
de Haan-Faulk
van Riemsdyk-Hamilton

Goalies

Mrazek
McElhinney

Scratches: Bishop (lower body), Staal (upper body; injured reserve)

Note: Lineup subject to change prior to opening faceoff.



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Skinner's return to Carolina with Sabres highlights week ahead

Islanders-Rangers games, Predators-Maple Leafs matchup among 5 things to watch

by Jon Lane

Jeff Skinner's return to Carolina with the Buffalo Sabres and the red-hot New York Islanders resuming their rivalry with the New York Rangers are among the highlights of the week ahead.

Here's a look at 5 things to watch:

1. Skinner returns to Raleigh

Jeff Skinner will face the Carolina Hurricanes for the first time with the Buffalo Sabres at PNC Arena on Friday (7:30 p.m. ET; NHLN, FS-CR, MSG-B, NHL.TV).

Skinner was traded to Buffalo on Aug. 2 after playing his first eight NHL seasons in Carolina, where he had 379 points (204 goals, 175 assists) and won the Calder Trophy as the top rookie in the NHL in 2010-11. His 28 goals are second behind Washington Capitals forward Alex Ovechkin (30) and put him on pace to pass his NHL career high of 37 set in 2016-17.

2. Karlsson faces Senators in San Jose

Erik Karlsson will play his former Ottawa Senators teammates with the San Jose Sharks for the second time this season at SAP Center on Saturday (10 p.m. ET; CBC, SN1, TVAS, NBCSCA, NHL.TV). He was held without a point in his return to Ottawa, a 6-2 loss Dec. 1.

Karlsson has found his game nearly four months after he was traded Sept. 13 following nine seasons with the Senators. The two-time Norris Trophy-winning defenseman has at least one point in his past 12 games (one goal, 18 assists) since Dec. 19, tying the Sharks record set by Rob Gaudreau from Dec. 3-29, 1992 (19 points; 14 goals, five assists) and Jonathan Cheechoo from Dec. 26, 2005-Jan. 24, 2006 (19 points; 10 goals, nine assists).

3. Clash of the titans

Two of the top teams in the NHL will face each other when the Nashville Predators play the Toronto Maple Leafs at Scotiabank Arena on Monday (7 p.m. ET; ESPN+, TVAS, SNO, FS-TN, NHL.TV).

The Predators (25-15-5) are 3-0-1 following a six-game losing streak and getting healthy. Forward Viktor Arvidsson has scored four goals in six games after missing 21 games with a broken thumb. Defenseman P.K. Subban has three points (one goal, two assists) after he missed 19 games with

an upper-body injury. Forward Filip Forsberg (upper body) and defenseman Yannick Weber (undisclosed) may not be far behind.

The Maple Leafs (27-12-2) are second behind the Tampa Bay Lightning for the best record in the NHL and have won six of their past eight games.

4. Grapple for the Apple

The New York Islanders and New York Rangers play twice this week: at Madison Square Garden on Thursday (7 p.m. ET; MSG, MSG+ 2, NHL.TV) and Barclays Center on Saturday.

The Islanders (23-13-4) defeated the Rangers 7-5 in Brooklyn on Nov. 15 when veterans Valteri Filppula and Leo Komarov combined for five points (one goal, four assists). They're on a six-game winning streak, 15-7-2 in their past 24 games and hold the first wild card into the Stanley Cup Playoffs from the Eastern Conference.

Robin Lehner is 7-0-0 with a 1.22 goals-against average, a .959 save percentage and one shutout since Dec. 18. He's the fourth goalie in Islanders history with a personal winning streak of at least seven games and first since Jaroslav Halak from Dec. 13, 2014-Jan. 2, 2015 (7-0-0).

The Rangers (17-17-7) defeated the Islanders 5-0 at the Garden on Nov. 21 behind 29 saves from Alexandar Georgiev to cap a 9-1-1 run, but they are 5-9-5 since to fall nine points out of the second wild card into the postseason from the Eastern Conference.

Rangers goalie Henrik Lundqvist is two wins from passing Terry Sawchuk (445) for sixth in NHL history. He has 102 wins in overtime or the shootout and passed Jacques Plante (437) for seventh with a 4-2 victory against the Florida Panthers on Dec. 8.

Plante had 145 ties and Sawchuk had 171 ties playing before regular-season overtime was instituted in 1983-84.

5. Milestone watch

* John Tavares, the No. 1 pick in the 2009 NHL Draft, is one goal from 300 in the NHL. The Maple Leafs host the Predators before visiting the New Jersey Devils on Thursday and returning home to face the Boston Bruins on Saturday.

* John Tortorella is one win from becoming the 19th coach with 600 in the NHL. The Columbus Blue Jackets are at the Lightning on Tuesday (7:30 p.m. ET; SUN, FS-O, NHL.TV), home against the Predators on Thursday, visit the Capitals



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on Saturday, and face the Rangers at Nationwide Arena on Sunday.

Tortorella, a two-time winner of the Jack Adams Award as the top coach in the NHL (2004, 2017), is 599-476-104 with 37 ties in 1,216 NHL games with the Rangers, Lightning, Vancouver Canucks and Blue Jackets.

Montreal Canadiens coach Claude Julien has won 605 NHL games, 18th on the all-time list.

Hurricanes hand Senators eighth straight loss

Williams gets tiebreaking goal in third; Balcers, Pageau score eight seconds apart for Ottawa

by Callum Fraser

OTTAWA -- The Ottawa Senators lost their eighth straight game, 5-4 to the Carolina Hurricanes at Canadian Tire Centre on Sunday.

"Every day is a new day," Senators coach Guy Boucher said. "I never change my approach and I'm not going to change it whether you win eight in a row or you've lost eight. Every day is a new day. You've got some different players in your lineup, you're playing a different team and it's a different opportunity."

Matt Duchene, Ryan Dzingel, Rudolfs Balcers and Jean-Gabriel Pageau scored for Ottawa (15-23-5), which is 0-7-1 in its past eight games. Marcus Hogberg allowed three goals on 16 shots before being pulled in the second period. He was replaced by Anders Nilsson, who made 11 saves.

Brock McGinn and Justin Faulk each had a goal and an assist, Teuvo Teravainen and Sebastian Aho each had two assists, and Petr Mrazek made 27 saves for Carolina (19-17-5), which has won four in a row.

"When you're winning, you're feeling good," Hurricanes defenseman Dougie Hamilton said. "Scoring goals helps with confidence. Everyone's feeling good and you just go out there and play. You don't have to analyze everything and try to figure out what's wrong and talk about what's wrong all the time.

"We haven't really practiced or pregame skated that much lately. We're just playing and in a rhythm and doing well."

Faulk gave the Hurricanes a 1-0 lead 1:12 into the first period when his slap shot from the point made it through traffic on the power play. McGinn scored shorthanded with a backhand on a breakaway to make it 2-0 at 4:28.

Duchene scored on a one-timer off a cross-crease pass from Bobby Ryan to cut it to 2-1 at 2:32 of the second period.

Jacob Slavin scored with a slap shot short side from the top of the left circle to make it 3-1 at 6:13, but Dzingel skated across the slot and scored with a backhand on the power play to cut it to 3-2 at 12:17.

Hamilton used Senators defenseman Cody Ceci as a screen and scored with a wrist shot to give Carolina a 4-2 lead at 14:54.

* Justin Williams is two goals from 300 in the NHL. The Hurricanes visit the Islanders on Tuesday (7 p.m. ET; MSG+, FS-CR, NHL.TV) and the Lightning on Thursday before returning home to face the Sabres on Friday and the Predators on Sunday.

* Mike Smith is two shutouts from 40 in the NHL. The Calgary Flames are at the Chicago Blackhawks on Monday (8:30 p.m. ET; NBCSCH, SNW, NHL.TV), and play the Colorado Avalanche, Panthers and Arizona Coyotes on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday.

"I feel better," Hamilton said. "I injured myself at the start of November and that kind of hampered me. Starting to feel better and [scoring] is helping. It's nice to see it go in."

Balcers scored his first NHL goal to cut it to 4-3 at 19:12, and Pageau, who was making his season debut (Achilles), scored eight seconds later to tie it 4-4.

The two goals in eight seconds tied a Senators record with Jason Spezza and Daniel Alfredsson, who did it against the Toronto Maple Leafs on Oct. 8, 2011.

"[Balcers and Pageau] came in and made a difference for us and gave us a chance," Boucher said. "It was fun to actually feel like you've got four lines that were going good. I felt all four lines gave us something."

Justin Williams deflected Teravainen's initial shot in front on the power play to make it 5-4 at 7:34 of the third period.

"Good teams pick each other up," Williams said. "Mrazek came in after (second period) and he's like, 'That's on me.' We instantly said 'no, no, no, you've had our back all the time, it's time for us to pick you up.'

"The guys up top - the three, Aho and Teravainen and Faulk - they really seem to work it around very well (on the power play). Once you can attack from both sides, it's tough to defend."

They said it

"Our [defense] is supposed to be our strong part of our team. Everyone on our [defense] can score goals and get in on the rush and make plays. When the forwards use us, we're just trying to make the most of it. ... It's effective when you can use everyone on the ice." -- Hurricanes defenseman Dougie Hamilton

"I can't tell you why the pucks are suddenly going in, because we're probably actually creating less overall scoring chances, but, I mean, we'll take it." -- Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour

"[The game] was fast. The few first shifts I was shorter than I expected. It's hard to prepare at this level. It doesn't matter how hard you go into practices or how hard you're working out, it's totally different when you come into a game like that, midseason." -- Senators forward Jean-Gabriel Pageau

Need to know



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It was the first time that three defensemen scored in the same game for Carolina since March 21, 2009 (Anton Babchuk, Joe Corvo and Joni Pitkanen).

What's next

Hurricanes: At the New York Islanders on Tuesday (Nassau Coliseum; 7 p.m. ET; MSG+, FS-CR, NHL.TV)

Senators: At the Anaheim Ducks on Wednesday (10 p.m. ET; PRIME, TSN5, RDS, NHL.TV)



Hurricanes top Senators for 4th straight win

OTTAWA, Ontario (AP) — Despite giving up two goals 8 seconds apart in the final minute of the second period to tie the game, the Carolina Hurricanes seemed to have no issues with a letdown in the third period on Sunday.

Justin Williams scored the winning goal and broke a 4-4 tie with a power-play goal at 7:34 of the third and the Hurricanes defeated the Ottawa Senators 5-4.

One minute later, Williams nearly scored again but he was robbed with a great glove save from Andres Nilsson, who came on in relief of Senators starter Marcus Hogberg in the second period.

Justin Faulk and Brock McGinn each had a goal and an assist and Carolina won its fourth straight game. Jaccob Slavin and Dougie Hamilton also scored for the Hurricanes, who got a 27-save performance from Petr Mrazek.

"It was surprisingly easy to (mentally) park (the end of the second period). I know you'll probably look at me and roll your eyes, but good teams pick each other up," Williams said.

"Mrazek came in and said 'that was on me' and we instantly said 'No, no, no. You've had our back all the time, so it's time for us to pick you up', and that's what teams do, they pick each other up. They don't let someone stew about it and we had a great third period and won the game."

Jean-Gabriel Pageau tied the game 4-4 in his return to Ottawa's lineup after missing the entire season to date with a torn Achilles he suffered on the first day of training camp.

Just 8 seconds earlier in the second period, Rudolfs Balcers scored his first NHL goal in his second career game as the Senators had their losing skid stretch to eight games. Matt Duchene and Ryan Dzingel also scored for Ottawa.

Hogberg started in goal for the Senators and allowed three goals on 16 shots. Nilsson turned aside 11 of the 13 shots he faced.

"It was fast. The first few shifts were shorter than I expected," said Pageau of his first game since April. "It's hard to prepare at this level and it doesn't matter how hard you work out, it's totally different when you come into a game like that.

"Right off the bat I tried to get myself in the game. I take pride in playing for the Sens and playing this game at home after everything I've gone through since the first day of camp. It means a lot to me."

The Hurricanes had a fast start, scoring on two of their first three shots less than five minutes into the game.

Faulk opened the scoring with a power-play goal at 1:12 of the first period with a point shot that beat Hogberg. Then, at 4:28, McGinn scored a short-handed goal as he slid a backhand through Hogberg's legs on a breakaway.

"We're not doing enough of the little things to win right now and it sucks," said Senators forward Chris Tierney, who had two assists.

"We didn't start well and that hurt us. It just seems like every night it's something else and we need to figure out a way to get everything going at once to win in this league."

That was all the scoring in the opening period although the Senators created several good opportunities, but were unable to beat Mrazek.

Ottawa finally did break through at 2:32 of the second period when Duchene beat Mrazek from in tight after a cross-crease pass from Bobby Ryan.

The Hurricanes regained their two-goal lead and knocked Hogberg from the Senators' goal at the same time as Slavin scored at 6:13 with a slap shot.

Ottawa got that one back at 12:17 on a power play as Dzingel beat Mrazek with a backhand, but at 14:54 Hamilton beat Nilsson to put the Hurricanes up 4-2. It was just the second shot Nilsson had faced.

Then came the final-minute fireworks as Balcers scored at 19:12 and Pageau scored 8 seconds later to tie the game 4-4 heading to the third.

Notes: Nick Paul and Ben Harpur were scratches for the Senators while Clark Bishop was a scratch for the Hurricanes. ... Sunday's matchup was the first of three this season between the teams. They will play in North Carolina on Jan. 18 and back in Ottawa on Feb. 12.

UP NEXT:

Hurricanes: In New York on Tuesday to face the Islanders.

Senators: Senators open a three-game California road trip in Anaheim on Wednesday.



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SB NATION
CANES COUNTRY

Recap: Hurricanes escape Ottawa, take fourth straight victory in 5-4 win

The Canes' power play opened and closed the scoring, allowing the visitors to take two points and stay perfect in 2019.

By Brian LeBlanc

For the first time since the opening four games of the season, the Carolina Hurricanes have won four straight games, but they certainly did their best to leave that streak in question for long stretches on Sunday.

Despite surrendering four goals to the Ottawa Senators in a wild second period, the Hurricanes came through on the strength of a Justin Williams power play goal and did tally their fourth win on the spin, taking a 5-4 victory at Canadian Tire Centre to move to 3-0 in the new year.

The game started well for the visitors, who earned a power play less than a minute in when Zack Smith took a seat for tripping Sebastian Aho. Justin Faulk opened the scoring by wiring home a one-timer from a Teuvo Teravainen pass to give the Canes the lead 1:12 in. Brock McGinn then doubled the lead by converting a shorthanded breakaway through Marcus Hogberg's five-hole three minutes later with Victor Rask in the box for slashing.

The Hurricanes became the first team to score both a power-play goal and a shorthanded goal in the first five minutes of a game since December 27, 2008, when the New Jersey Devils pulled the trick against the New York Rangers, and accomplished the feat for the first time in franchise history.

The Canes had the momentum throughout the first period, but the Senators turned on the afterburners in a 19-shot second period that left the visitors' heads spinning and the home crowd jubilant.

It started early, with a Matt Duchene one-timer off a goal-line pass from Bobby Ryan 2:32 into the period. Jaccob Slavin restored the two-goal lead four minutes later off a pinpoint cross-crease pass from Victor Rask (yes, this is a thing that actually happened), and ten minutes after that Ryan Dzingel

and Dougie Hamilton traded goals, the latter of which saw Senators coach Guy Boucher lift Hogberg in favor of Anders Nilsson.

The goaltending switch paid off handsomely. With all the momentum on their side, they peppered Petr Mrazek with seven shots in the final five minutes of the period. And with under a minute to go, Rudolfs Balcers and Jean-Gabriel Pageau struck for two goals in eight seconds to knot the game at 4 after two periods.

The first goal was, to no one's surprise given that this is the Hurricanes, Balcers' first career NHL goal, and Pageau scored in his return to NHL action after suffering a torn Achilles' tendon in the preseason. Pageau's goal was a real backbreaker for Petr Mrazek, who had played generally well until coming unglued late in the second period, and it was a mild surprise to see him return for the third.

The Canes, though, did everything they could to give their goaltender an easy ride home in the final 20 minutes, only allowing two shots in the final period and none after 11:30 to go. A Bobby Ryan tripping penalty proved decisive 6:30 into the period, and Williams executed a perfect screen to redirect a Teravainen point shot from the top of the left circle and score the game winner.

The three goals scored by Hurricanes defensemen marked the first time three Carolina blueliners had found the net in the same game since Joe Corvo, Joni Pitkanen and Anton Babchuk scored on March 21, 2009 against the Washington Capitals — in a game where now-coach Rod Brind'Amour scored the other Canes goal.

Mrazek made 27 saves on 31 shots to earn his second straight victory. The Hurricanes' road trip continues as they make their first trip to Nassau Coliseum in Uniondale, N.Y. since February 28, 2015, where they will face the New York Islanders on Tuesday.



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Hurricanes Owner Tom Dundon Wants Fun

By Mark Shiver

Tom Dundon, owner of the Carolina Hurricanes, wants the experience his team's fans have when they attend games to be fun. As one of those fans, he also wants to have fun. In an interview with the Triangle Business Journal, Dundon said, "I've got to have more offense, I want to lose 5-4, not 2-1. If we lose 5-4, I'll at least have fun." (From "Carolina Hurricanes Owner Dundon Talks Hockey, Business and Why He Hates Losing" – Triangle Business Journal – 12/12/18)

The fans will have fun if the Hurricanes start winning, whether it's 2-1 or 8-0. They want to see their team playing in the postseason. That would increase the fun quotient exponentially.

Fun Times With Dundon?

An objective look at the Dundon tenure that started in early 2018 reveals that not a lot has changed. He made a big splash when he bought the Hurricanes, pledging to enhance the fan experience. For a little while, he lowered the price of parking and at PNC Arena. Concessions prices also were lowered.

But, those were initial short-lived moves designed to capture the attention of fans who may have stopped coming to the Hurricanes games. Attendance seems to be up over last season, but a look at the numbers says "not really." The average home attendance in 2017-18 was 13,320, versus an average of 13,495 so far this season.

This is odd because from the vantage of media row, the building has looked fuller this season than it has in a long time. Also, the announcement of low attendance figures hasn't seemed to have been as often an occurrence this season. Nevertheless, the numbers are what they are, and in part have not changed because there hasn't really been anything tangible done to enhance the fan experience this season.

Even promotions wherein the fans are given team hats have gone by the wayside. The opening night of the regular season, the team gave away towels that were placed on sold seats, not given to fans as they walked into the arena, as was always the case under previous owner Peter Karmanos.

No Giant Scoreboard Yet

One of Dundon's most ambitious ideas to enhance the fan experience is to replace the current scoreboard with a new, giant one. Last February, Zach Spedden wrote at arenadigest.com: "Perhaps the biggest addition, however, would be that of a new center-hung scoreboard in time for the 2018-19 NHL season. While the new scoreboard has been discussed for a later season, officials at Thursday's Centennial Authority [the group that oversees the

venue] meeting expressed a willingness to consider completing the project on an earlier schedule."

Ultimately the Authority said that the new scoreboard could not be installed in time for this season due to a lack of time to ensure that it be safely installed.

"Carolina Hurricanes owner Tom Dundon had asked the authority, the arena landlord, to move up plans for a new blueline-to-blueline scoreboard and have it in place for the 2018-19 season. Committee chairman Steve Stroud said the authority would need more time to assess structural changes in the arena that will be needed to install a scoreboard that could weigh 50,000 pounds." – Chip Alexander of the Raleigh News & Observer

Dundon Got Them to Wear Green

One of Dundon's ideas that he was able to pull off was convincing his team to dress in Hartford Whalers uniforms and play a game against the Boston Bruins. Most everyone reports that it was a rousing success. The Hurricanes won, the uniforms looked fantastic and of course, will provide another option for fans to consider when wanting to purchase team gear. The mood in the arena was vibrant and exciting.

Missing from the "remembering our heritage" theme on Whalers night was former radio play-by-play voice of the Hurricanes and Whalers from the very beginning, Chuck Kaiton. Dundon had made moves to change the radio delivery in the offseason and apparently Kaiton was overlooked as a part of the Whalers heritage worth celebrating on Whalers night. The Hurricanes will take their green game on the road in a return engagement with the Bruins on March 5.

Winning Would be Fun

No matter if hat giveaways are gone or green uniforms are being worn or eventually a gargantuan scoreboard is in place, what matters is winning. Dundon says he wants to win. One would think that would lead to bringing a proven scorer to the team. So far, the only thing the Hurricanes have done regarding a proven scorer is trade one – Jeff Skinner – to the Buffalo Sabres.

Sure, the celebration, or celly if you're up on current lingo, is fun. The most recent one led by Brock McGinn after the Hurricanes 4-2 win over the Columbus Blue Jackets may have been their best post-game performance yet:

Winning is the catalyst for fun in professional sports. Winning leads to celebrations and to more fans filling the arena. The Hurricanes have had trouble scoring. Dundon finding a player who can consistently score and help lead this team to a spot in the playoffs would really be fun, not just for the fans, but for him, too.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • January 7, 2019

Flames & Hurricanes Trade: Who's the Winner So Far?

By Troy Durrell

It was the trade that sent waves throughout the hockey world. On June 23, 2018, the Calgary Flames and Carolina Hurricanes made a blockbuster deal that sent forward Elias Lindholm and defenceman Noah Hanifin to Calgary in exchange for defenceman Dougie Hamilton, forward Micheal Ferland and blue chip prospect Adam Fox.

We're just past the midway point of the 2018-19 National Hockey League season, so which team has won the trade so far? I'm going to do an in-depth look at what each player has done so far this season to determine the answer.

Elias Lindholm – 20 Goals, 42 Points

Lindholm has been nothing short of spectacular so far this season playing on a line with Johnny Gaudreau and Sean Monahan. The trio has seemingly found instant chemistry since day one and it is constantly on display night-in-and-night-out such as this goal against the Winnipeg Jets on Dec. 27.

Lindholm's statistical increase of a new career high in goals with 20 to go along with his 28 assists is noticeable, but each of Lindholm, Gaudreau and Monahan own a Corsi For percentage just under 60 and the 24-year-old Lindholm has greatly improved his plus/minus from his previous career high of minus-two in 2016-17 to plus-25 this season. Lindholm has also played a key role on the Flames' improved power play and penalty kill units which currently rank sixth and 19th, respectively.

Noah Hanifin – 3 Goals, 21 Points

Mostly known for his smooth skating and two-way play, Hanifin has filled in quite nicely in the Flames' top-four, playing with shutdown defenceman Travis Hamonic. While the 21-year-old left-handed Hanifin may not post eye-popping numbers like Hamilton's 17 goals, he is strong defensively, makes a great first pass on the breakout and his 21 points are only 11 points back of his career high of 32.

Last season, Hanifin started 63.1 percent of his starts in the offensive zone, but this season his numbers have leveled out to 50.4 percent in the offensive zone compared to 49.6 percent in the defensive zone. While those numbers may be a bit high due to the fact that he's playing with Hamonic, Hanifin has shown he's a trusted member of the Flames' top-four and can be relied upon to generate offence while also playing key defensive minutes.

Dougie Hamilton – 5 Goals, 13 Points

Hamilton's departure out of Cowtown was a bit surprising to many, considering he posted one his best statistical campaigns of his young career last season with 17 goals and 27 assists for 44 points. So why is a 25-year-old, right-shot offensive defenceman already on his third team?

There have been many stories, untrue or not about Hamilton not fitting into the Flames' dressing room and the team was looking for better chemistry. So far this season, he has five goals and 13 points which puts him on-pace for one of his worst seasons statistically in his young career. In his defence, he has regularly been a slow starter before picking up his play in the second half of the season, so look for that to once again be the storyline when the season comes to an end.

Micheal Ferland – 12 Goals, 19 Points

The wrecking ball that is Ferland got off to a quick start this season, scoring six goals in the Hurricanes' first nine games before missing some time due to a concussion. Even though he only has 19 points in 33 games, he brings a mix to the lineup that few players possess in this day and age of the NHL with his ability to hit, fight and score goals and could play a large role in how this trade could possibly work out in favour of Carolina, if they are able to keep him.

There are reports throughout social media that Ferland is asking for a long-term deal at over \$three million per season and whether or not Carolina signs him or trades him will play a big role in who wins this trade.

Adam Fox – Five Goals, 20 Points in the NCAA

The x-factor of this deal could be Fox. With the Harvard Crimson of the NCAA, Fox has posted five goals and 15 assists in 12 games. He is a solid two-way defenceman with the potential to play in Carolina's top-four in the future due to his play in both ends of the ice.

He also brings a winning pedigree to his resume when he helped the United States win gold at the World Junior Hockey Championships in 2017 as well as a bronze the following year when he had nine points in 14 games. In an interview with The Athletic, Fox said he wants to be in the NHL "as soon as possible."

The Final Verdict

At this point in time, the Flames are the overwhelming winners. Lindholm himself has outscored both Hamilton and Ferland with his 48 points compared to the 15 goals, 30 points and minus-12 rating put up by his Carolina counterparts. Add in Hanifin's totals, the Calgary duo partnered for 23 goals, 70 points and a plus/minus rating of plus-31 and they've outscored the Hurricanes' duo by 40 points.

The addition of Fox to the lineup as well as whether or not Ferland is wearing Hurricanes colours next season will play a role into who wins this trade down the line, but through the midway point of the season, the Flames win this trade.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Nedeljkovic Shuts Out Marlies For Dominant 5-0 Win

Written by Nicholas Niedzielski

The Checkers wrapped up their Canadian road trip in convincing fashion, dominating the defending Calder Cup champion Toronto Marlies for a 5-0 victory.

Alex Nedeljkovic held down the fort with a perfect performance in the crease against the Marlies' fourth-ranked offense, stopping all 34 shots he faced to pick up his first shutout of the season. The netminder's stellar showing also included denying a penalty shot attempt and helping the Checkers kill the two penalties they were assessed, including one inside of the final five minutes of regulation.

Offensively the Checkers came out fast and furious, notching three goals in the opening frame to give themselves some breathing room, then added another tally in the second and third frames to run away with the contest. Five different Checkers found the back of the net and three different skaters – Jake Bean, Andrew Poturalski and Martin Necas – all recorded multi-point games.

NOTES

The Checkers finished a three-in-three weekend with a perfect 3-0-0 record for the fourth time in franchise history

and the first time since 2013 ... The Checkers have now won three straight and earned a point in five straight ... The Checkers dressed 11 forwards for the third straight game ... Tonight was Alex Nedeljkovic's first shutout of the season and the seventh of his career, tying him for the most in franchise history ... Julien Gauthier extended his goal streak to three games, tying him for the longest such streak by a Checker this season ... Andrew Poturalski extended his point streak to five games and is now tied for fifth in the AHL in scoring ... Martin Necas extended his point streak to three games and now ranks fourth among all AHL rookies in scoring ... Nicolas Roy extended his point streak to four games ... Tonight was the first road shutout for Charlotte since the 2016-17 season ... Nedeljkovic is now a perfect 3-for-3 on penalty shots against him ... Spencer Smallman and Josiah Didier missed the game due to injury ... Zack Stortini, Steven Lorentz and Bobby Sanguinetti were all healthy extras

UP NEXT

The Checkers will now return to Charlotte for their first home stand of the new year, starting Friday against Wilkes-Barre/Scranton.

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SportScan

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

1124759 Carolina Hurricanes

Canes run winning streak to four by beating Senators 5-4

BY CHIP ALEXANDER
JANUARY 06, 2019 04:02 PM

Make it four in a row for the suddenly surging Carolina Hurricanes. The Canes held off the struggling Ottawa Senators on Sunday, surrendering a two-goal lead but winning 5-4 at the Canadian Tire Centre in Ottawa.

For the first time since October, the Canes (19-17-5) have won four straight games as they reached the halfway point of the season. They did it against a team that is 0-7-1 in its last eight games but showed some fight after falling behind 2-0 early in the game.

Justin Williams' power-play goal at 7:34 of the third period handed the Canes a 5-4 lead after the Senators had tied the score 4-4 with two rapid-fire goals in a span of eight seconds in the final minute of the second period. Williams went to the front of the net and had the puck go off him and past goalie Anders Nilsson as Teuvo Teravainen unloaded a shot.

"We gave them a couple there at the end of the second, which is a real letdown, but the guys rallied, rallied," Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "I think that shows a lot about the group and now we have to obviously keep moving forward."

Justin Faulk had a power-play score for the Canes for the first goal of the game and Brock McGinn scored shorthanded as the Canes picked up three goals from special teams. Carolina also got two more scores from defensemen as Jaccob Slavin and Dougie Hamilton had second-period goals.

Goalie Petr Mrazek rebounded from the four-goal second period, with its bang-bang finish by the Senators, to improve his record to 8-8-2. Mrazek, who had 27 saves, faced 19 shots in the second period but just two in the third.

Brind'Amour wanted another strong start Sunday, and got it. Sebastian Aho drew a quick penalty on the Sens and the Canes promptly scored on the power play as Faulk bombed one in. The Canes then were penalized, but McGinn steamed down the ice in the final seconds of the Sens' power play was near to score shorthanded. Just 4:28 into the game, the Canes had a 2-0 lead. "That was probably a curse because we never could get our game going," Brind'Amour said.

The Senators (15-23-5) made a push early in the second, Matt Duchene scoring, but the Canes twice had two-goals leads in the period -- at 3-1 and then 4-2 -- after the goals from Slavin and Hamilton.

Slavin's goal came off a quick shot from the left wing and Hamilton's score was his third in as many games, giving the Canes a 4-2 lead. According to the NHL, Hamilton was the first Canes defenseman to score in three straight games since Anton Babchuk in February 2008.

Fred Chartrand AP

But the Sens' Rudolfs Balcers then scored his first NHL goal. That had the home crowd roaring.

Eight seconds later, Jean-Gabriel Pageau scored his first goal of the season after missing the first 42 games with an injury. It was 4-4. After the two soft goals by Mrazek, Brind'Amour had a decision to make during the second intermission: stick with Mrazek in the third or make a change to Curtis McElhinney. Sens coach Guy Boucher

had replaced goalie Marcus Hogberg with Nilsson after Slavin's goal in the second.

"We had a good meeting and the guys just rallied and played the way we're supposed to play," Brind'Amour said. "That was a good third period."

Brind'Amour stuck with Mrazek, and the Canes helped their goalie with some strong defensive work, killing off a McGinn slashing penalty that came with 5:15 left in regulation.

The Sens pulled Nilsson late for an extra attacker but the Canes wouldn't allow a tying score, Aho won a draw in the Canes zone with five seconds left in regulation to finish it off.

Aho had a pair of assists and won 11 of 17 faceoffs. Teravainen, who had two assists, was named the game's first star.

News Observer LOADED: 01.07.2019
1124797 New York Islanders

Robin Lehner MVP for surprising Islanders nearing midpoint of season

By Andrew Gross
Updated January 6, 2019 10:38 PM

The Islanders will reach the midway point of their ultra-compelling season when they face the Hurricanes on Tuesday night at NYCB Live's Nassau Coliseum.

They did not practice on Sunday after extending their winning streak to six games with Saturday night's 4-3 comeback win in St. Louis despite being outplayed by the Blues.

The victory jumped the Islanders into the Eastern Conference's first wild-card spot, only four points behind the Metropolitan Division-leading Capitals (and with a game in hand).

A win on Tuesday would give the Islanders (23-13-4) their first seven-game winning streak since they ended 2013-14 with three victories and started the next season with four. They have not won seven straight in a single season since a nine-game streak from Dec. 31, 1989-Jan. 19, 1990.

Some first-half highlights:

Team MVP – A month ago, goalie Thomas Greiss was the clear pick. Lately, All-Star center Mathew Barzal, who had a six-game point streak (eight goals, three assists) snapped on Saturday, has been the team's best skater.

But there's no doubt that goalie Robin Lehner is the pick. His 29-save performance on Saturday was his seventh straight win, and he has allowed only 13 goals in his last 10 appearances. Entering Sunday, he was leading the NHL with a 2.18 goals-against average and was second with a .927 save percentage. Quite a bargain on a one-year, \$1.5-million deal.

Most improved – It could be the whole team, given the dire preseason predictions for life after John Tavares. But defenseman Scott Mayfield perhaps has taken the biggest individual jump in terms of overall play, becoming one of coach Barry Trotz's most trusted defenders and contributing three goals and 12 assists, both career highs.

Identity award – Trotz has relied upon the reunited fourth line of Casey Cizikas, Matt Martin and Cal Clutterbuck to set the tone for a detail-oriented, hard-working team identity. Cizikas already has a career-high 10 goals and Martin had a game-changing goal on Saturday.

Fountain of youth award – Fully healthy defenseman Johnny Boychuk, 34, is Trotz's most trusted end-of-game performer.



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Need more from – Top-line right wing Jordan Eberle, a 20-goal scorer the previous five seasons who has only 18 points.

What to watch for – Eberle, Anders Lee and Brock Nelson, who comprise the top line, are all on expiring contracts. The trade deadline is Feb. 25. Also, the continued development in the second half of defenseman Devon Toews, 24, and forwards Josh Ho-Sang and Michael Dal Colle, both 22.

Possible postseason honors – Lehner, sober after battling alcohol and pill addiction as well as mental health issues, could be in line for the Bill Masterton Memorial Trophy for perseverance. Trotz should be a Jack Adams candidate as the league's top coach, taking a team that allowed 293 goals last season (the most in the NHL since 2007) to a league-low 107 through 40 games. President and general manager Lou Lamoriello could be an executive of the year candidate for his roster- and dressing room-fortifying signings of Lehner, Leo Komarov and Valteri Filppula and his re-acquisition of Martin, not to mention hiring Trotz.

Newsday LOADED: LOADED: 01.07.2019

1124830 Tampa Bay Lightning

Lightning's streak ends, time to 'move on and start another one'

By Diana Nearhos

SAN JOSE—The streak is over. The Lightning's 16-game point streak ended in San Jose on Saturday. Make that streaks; Nikita Kucherov's point streak ended at 12 games as well. However, Kucherov (as well as the team) will likely do what he did when the last 10-game point streak ended: Pick up and start another one.

It was not a great game, but the team didn't view the loss as a harbinger of doom, just one game.

"Obviously, over the course of the season, you're going to lose games," forward Tyler Johnson said after the 5-2 loss. "We've been playing extremely well and we've had some good luck on our side in some situations. Now it's just time to learn from this, move on and start another one."

The Sharks did a good job of limiting this potent offense's opportunities. They blocked shots and clogged the passing lanes. The Lightning came into the game with a 30-percent success rate on the power play, so San Jose only took two penalties. That was one major difference defenseman Ryan McDonagh pointed to between this loss and previous comebacks.

Tampa Bay got tired as the game went on, while San Jose got stronger. On Friday, defenseman Victor Hedman said the Lightning started feeling the impact of the time change. The trip was only three games, and there was at least one day between each game without much travel, but the three-hour time difference had an effect. The Lightning quelled the jet lag during the first two games. But the team looked fatigued in this road-trip finale, which started at 11 p.m. Eastern.

This, however, was not like the Oct. 27 Arizona game, a 7-1 loss that can be chalked up to a tired team at the end of a long, hard trip and pretty much thrown out. As Johnson said, there are things to learn from this game.

For one, that the Lightning hasn't entirely figured out its defensive issues. After allowing three goals in two games to low-scoring teams, Tampa Bay was lit up again. This was the fifth time in the last nine games the Lightning has allowed four or more goals.

"Give credit to San Jose, they did a great job getting shots through on our goalie," Johnson said. "Us forwards and defensemen, I think we can box out a little better, try to block shots and limit those opportunities defensively."

He also said they could have done a better job of getting into the dirty areas and looking for rebounds. The Lightning hasn't had to work too hard for goals. It's high-scorers have created the pretty goals. Tampa Bay found some chances and hit the post a few times. Those attempts could have made for a different game, but they didn't.

No one on the Lightning was happy after this loss, but they weren't heart-broken either. This streak wasn't Tampa Bay's one chance. It was part of a great season.

"In the grand scheme of things, did we think we were going to win every game the rest of the way, probably not," McDonagh said. "We like where our team is headed for sure, we've proven that against some good teams, we can find ways to win. It didn't happen here tonight, but we should feel confident going forward."

Tampa Bay Times LOADED: 01.07.2019

1124831 Tampa Bay Lightning

Lightning's point streak ends with loss to Sharks

By Diana Nearhos

SAN JOSE—The Lightning's point streak came to a screeching halt at San Jose's hands.

The Sharks continued their high-scoring ways and contained the Lightning in Saturday's 5-2 win.

Nikita Kucherov's 11-game point streak also ended, as he finished a minus-four on the night. The silver lining was Mikhail Sergachev's first goal of the season, but there wasn't much shine on it.

The Lightning came on strong for the first 10 minutes of the game, with a handful of "here we go" moments. But none of them ended in a goal, just an almost.

Then the Sharks scored twice in 28 seconds, and that took some wind away from the Lightning.

First, Logan Couture struck, catching the Lightning in a line change and then beating goalie Andrei Vasilevskiy five-hole.

Then, Joe Pavelski capitalized on a turnover. Erik Cernak ran into a linesman and lost the puck along the boards. Ryan McDonagh picked it up and sent a blind pass in attempt to clear it. Instead, Brett Burns intercepted the pass and fed it to Pavelski in front.

Not the Lightning's best 30 seconds of hockey.

Victor Hedman got one back for the Lightning late in the period. He pinched down low on a delayed penalty and connected on a nice feed from Steven Stamkos.

Evander Kane scored his first of the game early in the second period, a power-play goal from the top of the right circle.

The Lightning responded 30 seconds later as Mikhail Sergachev scored his first of the season. Mathieu Joseph came streaking down the wing to get behind Tim Heed and chipped it to Sergachev, crashing the net.

Kane scored again 5:18 into the third period, a wide-angle shot through Vasilevskiy's legs. Lukas Radil added one more on a rebound with 7:20 to play.

The Lightning only had three shots in the third period.

Vasilevskiy gave up five goals on 32 shots in the game.

Tampa Bay Times LOADED: 01.07.2019

1124832 Tampa Bay Lightning

Why missing out on Erik Karlsson hasn't hurt the Lightning

By Joe Smith

Jan 6, 2019

SAN JOSE, Calif. — The Lightning pursued star defenseman Erik Karlsson both at last year's trade deadline and over the summer, trying to pry the two-time Norris Trophy winner from the Senators. It's not hard to see why after watching Karlsson, now with the Sharks, help snap Tampa Bay's 16-game point streak Saturday night by handing the Lightning a 5-2 defeat. Karlsson logged a monster 29 minutes, 15 seconds, setting up San Jose's first goal with a quick transition and the second while manning the power play. "He's an unbelievable player," said Lightning's fellow Norris winner Victor Hedman.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Hedman and Karlsson have been close friends since they were teenagers, so the two Swedes were naturally excited about the prospect of teaming up. Karlsson was intrigued by the Lightning over the summer and admires them from afar now.

"They obviously have a lot of good players, that's No. 1," Karlsson said Friday. "They've been together for a long time, they know each other really well. I think the chemistry that they have, the style of play they play for the team they have is very successful. And they've got good goaltending to back them up. It gives you a lot of confidence." In reality, the Lightning were never close in landing Karlsson in the offseason; they didn't get to the point where they could talk contract terms with the former Ottawa captain, who will be an unrestricted free agent again next summer. The price was not right in any potential trade.

But the Lightning missed out on Karlsson, having met for the first time this season Saturday, it's worth exploring whether it might have been for the best?

Tampa Bay entered Saturday with a 12-point lead over the rest of the league, in the midst of a 15-0-1 stretch. No, they don't have Karlsson, but Ryan McDonagh — acquired in a deadline blockbuster with the Rangers — has given Tampa Bay everything they've been looking for and more.

Karlsson may be the more high-profile and better all-around defenseman, but McDonagh likely fit the Lightning's needs better — at a cheaper cost. Plus, Tampa Bay still has a shot (albeit a long one) of going after Karlsson in free agency next summer.

"I can't say there are no arguments now to say Karlsson would have been a better choice," said Fox Sports Sun analyst Brian Engblom, a two-time Stanley Cup champion. "But look at the record of the team and the way they've played and what McDonagh has brought the team. And how they both would have fit. Look at the team Karlsson played on in Ottawa: He was their dynamic guy, their offensively gifted guy by a country mile, and (they) let him do that.

"If he comes to the Lightning, they are so loaded up front, he'll get the puck up, but the forwards are dominant... Would he be exactly the same? I don't know Karlsson would. All I know is McDonagh has been outstanding here."

Let's break down how Karlsson would have fared (vs. McDonagh) in Tampa Bay:

The players

As good as McDonagh has been this season — and GM Julien BriseBois said the veteran has played as well as any defenseman he's ever seen — Karlsson has the better overall metrics, according to Sean Tierney.

Karlsson has the best even-strength goals above replacement for any defenseman on either team followed by Lightning rookie Erik Cernak (McDonagh's partner) and McDonagh. McDonagh, somewhat surprisingly, has more five-on-five points (18 to 17) points and is a superb plus-20 (while Karlsson is even).

This second chart shows shot rates, where Karlsson is among the best on either team, driving possession with the best in the league. McDonagh is unmarked here, which means he's on the ice for as many shots against as shots for, playing at a slower offensive pace overall, Tierney notes.

But Karlsson is expected to drive more possession and offense — it's been his M.O. What McDonagh brings is a different style, one that's also extremely effective.

"McDonagh is the kind of guy that he's more of a classic style," Engblom said. "He really controls his area of the ice, he doesn't roam around like Karlsson or Hedman. He doesn't contribute nearly as much offensively, though his skills offensively are underrated. I don't think anyone controls their area of the ice better than McDonagh in the league, and that says something.

"Of all the guys in the game, he reads the rush, he reads what's coming at him better than any of the other three (Hedman, Karlsson, Brent Burns). They're more on the move, getting involved in the game. Karlsson plays a lot like 'Heddy.' He'll skate for days, he'll come across the other side of the ice. Burns is unpredictable.

McDonagh is 'You don't have to worry about me, I've got this side of the ice.' When things are going wrong, he takes care of it. He's a stopper."

The fit

When Karlsson was the big fish at the February trade deadline, the Lightning went after him but realized he was out of their price range. "We gave it our best shot," then-GM Steve Yzerman said at the time. Tampa Bay ended up acquiring McDonagh from the Rangers — along with forward J.T. Miller — for a sizable package that included prospects Brett Howden, Libor Hajek, forward Vladislav Namestnikov, a 2018 first-round pick and a 2019 conditional second-rounder (which becomes a first if Tampa Bay wins the Cup this season).

McDonagh was far from a fall-back option, as he gave the Lightning another horse to go along with Hedman. Tampa Bay coach Jon Cooper called him a "game-changer" during last year's playoff run when McDonagh was in the shutdown pair with Anton Stralman.

"They are two different types of defensemen," Hall of Fame coach Scotty Bowman said. "Obviously Karlsson wants to play all offense and McDonagh has been used the opposite as, playing with Rangers when they were a contender, he was always used in a shutdown role against No. 1 forward lines. Both are very useful in their own styles, but with the emergence of Hedman offensively, Ryan has been used as he has through most of his career."

The Lightning needed help on the penalty kill, which was 28th in the league last season, and McDonagh has helped it move up to ninth (82.8 percent) logging 130 minutes of shorthanded time through the first 41 games. McDonagh, a left-shot, also slid in nicely on the second pair, mentoring Cernak to the point where they often draw the opposing team's top matchups.

"First of all, look at our penalty kill. McDonagh is a huge reason why our numbers have improved," Cooper said. "We added another guy who chews tons of minutes and can play any situation. So we can slot everyone into minutes where they probably are at their best. Nobody has to play more than they should, and everyone plays better because of it. And it's all because of his impact on that blueline.

"The other thing is, you get a young Cernak coming in, and they almost seem like they were meant to be with each other. In the beginning, (McDonagh) helped guide him on the ice. And that's just on the ice. You look in the dressing room and the bench during games, how he's become a leader. He's just been a class act."

One of Karlsson's strengths is not only fueling the rush but running a power play. And the Lightning haven't really needed a boost in that category. Tampa Bay boasts the top-ranked power play percentage (30.5) with Hedman running the first unit. McDonagh and Mikhail Sergachev take turns handling the point on the second unit.

And, with Sergachev, that's where we get to the next point.

Sergachev got a huge monkey off his back Saturday with his slick tip-in off the rush, his first goal in 40 games this season. You could tell how much this one meant by his emphatic fist-pump and celebration.

"It's been a long time," Sergachev said. "I thought I wasn't going to score — ever. So it was a good one."

Sergachev, 20, acquired in the Jonathan Drouin blockbuster with the Canadiens in June 2017, showed as a rookie why he could become a pillar on the Lightning blueline and has eyes on a top-four role.

But for the Lightning to have landed someone like Karlsson over the summer, it likely would have involved parting with a top-end prospect like Sergachev.

Tampa Bay felt like it gave up a lot in the McDonagh deal — two quality prospects and two picks (both of which could turn into first-rounders).

And with the Senators making it clear they didn't want to trade Karlsson within the Atlantic Division — or if they did, that it would be at a higher price — it was not something Tampa Bay was comfortable doing, especially with Karlsson entering the final year of his deal and likely commanding an \$11 million annual average salary in his next mega-contract. With the Lightning cap-strapped, adding Karlsson long-term would make for significant changes in the roster. Instead, the Lightning locked up McDonagh on a seven-year extension with a \$6.75 million cap hit, a contract that will kick in next season. They brought the same blueline back, recalling Cernak, who



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has been a revelation on the right side and has paired perfectly with McDonagh.

McDonagh, who made arguably the play of the year in his game-saving strip in Ottawa, has the Lightning atop the league standings, ready for a lengthy playoff run.

"You can't argue with the results. Look where (the Lightning) are and what they've done," Engblom said. "It's pretty amazing."

Karlsson, in theory, could still be had if he plays out the rest of this season in San Jose without signing an extension. It's been a feeling-out process for Karlsson with the Sharks after spending his entire career in Ottawa. Karlsson has been playing well lately along with Brent Burns. But what has the adjustment been like?

"I have nothing to compare it to, so I don't really know how to assess it right now," Karlsson said. "That's something that's going to come later down the road. I'm excited about the opportunity they gave me here and seeing something different and forcing yourself to change things you were comfortable with and finding new ways to succeed as an individual player and team as well. It's been a great challenge for me. We're taking great strides forward from the start of the year, and I'm looking forward to the second half of the season."

It's hard to imagine, considering the Lightning's challenging cap crunch, that they would be able to go there again with a Karlsson courtship. They do have restricted free agent Brayden Point to sign, and Andrei Vasilevskiy is two years from being an RFA himself.

Then again, this is a Lightning team that went after both Karlsson and superstar free agent John Tavares in the same summer.

"You never say never," Engblom said. "You can never have enough good defensemen. You don't necessarily think there's a chance, but they've performed some miracles before."

Joe Smith

The Athletic LOADED: 01.07.2019

1124756 Buffalo Sabres

Skills challenge in front of family, fans a 'one-day holiday' for Sabres

Lance Lysowski

Published Sun, Jan 6, 2019 | Updated Sun, Jan 6, 2019

Casey Mittelstadt was almost sabotaged by his Buffalo Sabres teammates. As the 20-year-old rookie center participated in the shootout portion of the Sabres Skills Challenge on Sunday, players from the opposing team shot 10 pucks down the ice to try to prevent him from scoring.

Mittelstadt still managed to stick handle the puck between his legs and beat Carter Hutton to help the Team White beat the Team Blue, 12-10, in front of 9,240 fans at KeyBank Center.

"I guess I got lucky one didn't hit me," Mittelstadt said with a laugh. The event – which benefited the Buffalo Sabres Foundation – was reminiscent of open practices held at Memorial Auditorium in past decades. Both teams even wore retro-looking jerseys.

Almost 30 alumni attended – including Dominik Hasek, Gilbert Perreault and Rene Robert – to sign autographs. Players' families were able to watch the competition from up close. In addition to a remarkable display of skill, fans were given a look behind the curtain to see a lighter side of Sabres players.

"It's something you don't do too often," defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen, who was on the White team with Mittelstadt, said. "It's fun. You still come to the rink, but you get your mind off hockey and the game stuff. It's like a one-day holiday."

Neither Jack Eichel nor Sam Reinhart participated, but their absences did not spoil the five events. Rasmus Dahlin, selected first overall by the Blue team, began the afternoon by narrowly beating Mittelstadt, his roommate, in the puck control relay.

Each player had to skate from one red line to the other, collect a puck and stick handle back by going around a series of cones.

"Obviously, living together and stuff we get competitive enough, so it added something to it," Mittelstadt said. "It was pretty funny. I thought I had him, but I think he decided he was going to turn it on and when he does that it's kind of unfair."

White took a two-point lead during the hardest shot competition thanks to Ristolainen, whose second attempt was clocked at 107.5 mph. Winger Remi Elie had the second-hardest shot for White at 105.9 mph, while Tage Thompson had a 104 mph shot for Blue. Ristolainen's feat of strength was overshadowed by the antics of Zach Bogosian, who went third for Blue. Bogosian, a right-handed defenseman, chose to shoot left-handed for the drill. Each of his two attempts were clocked at 0 mph because both shots went off the crossbar and in.

Bogosian didn't have much luck right-handed, either. His second attempt registered at 17 mph, though he hoisted his stick in the air afterward as if it were the Stanley Cup.

"The guys think it's funny because I do it after practice every once in a while, shoot left-handed," Bogosian said. "I've always been able to do it, so I figured let's see how hard it is. Both of them came up zero, so I guess we'll never know."

Jason Pominville, Evan Rodrigues and Mittelstadt each hit all four targets for White in the shooting accuracy challenge, though Blue's Kyle Okposo won the event by hitting four targets on only five shots.

Sabres Skills Challenge

The next event was the 3-on-1 power-play challenge, where three players from each team had 30 seconds to score as many goals as possible on the opposing goalie. White's second group – Scandella, Elie and Ristolainen – scored three times on Hutton.

Following the drill, Hutton skated over to Blue's bench to hold his infant son, Palmer. Hasek was chatting with both goalies and Rob Ray. Eichel, Casey Nelson and Zemgus Girgensons, all of whom are out because of injury, watched from the benches.

"I think the whole day was great," Hutton said. "It was a fun atmosphere, especially getting our families involved. Getting the fans to see that other side of us, the softer side. Obviously when we're playing it's so serious. To have that was a great experience for sure."

White captured the win with five goals during the shootout, but the most memorable attempt was by Jeff Skinner, who showed off his figure-skating prowess by doing four spins toward the goal while carrying the puck in the air on the blade of his stick. His backhanded shot was stopped by Linus Ullmark.

Wow! He may not have scored, but are you kidding with this, @JeffSkinner!?! ☐

Mittelstadt scored a highlight-reel shootout goal by tucking the puck between his legs and Matt Hunwick added two more goals for White. Thompson scored twice for Blue, the second of which when he skated toward the goal, flopped down on his stomach to distract Ullmark and poked the puck in while holding his stick in his left hand. Fittingly, the final goal of the event was scored by Hutton, when he skated down and used a wrist shot to beat Ullmark. Afterward, the team photo included players' children and Sabretooth. It was a welcome reprieve for the Sabres after they lost in Boston, 2-1, one night earlier.

They had a short practice Sunday morning in KeyBank Center and will get back to work Monday in preparation for a Tuesday night game against New Jersey.

"I was pretty surprised," Skinner said of the crowd size. "It's cool. It's cool to have that many people here. It's a fun event."

Coach Phil Housley did not speak to reporters, so there was no update provided on why Reinhart did not practice or participate in the skills competition. Reinhart played 19:14 over 22 shifts against the Bruins on Saturday night in TD Garden.

Buffalo News LOADED: 01.07.2019

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Sportsnet.ca / Beyond Headlines: Making sense of IIHF's proposal for smaller ice

Chris Johnston | January 6, 2019, 1:58 PM



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'Beyond Headlines' is a deeper dive into some of the stories — and even some that weren't — discussed each week on Hockey Night in Canada's 'Headlines' segment.

WHY SMALLER ICE?

Imagine Wimbledon deciding to change to clay courts. Or Augusta National trucking in sandy soil to make the Masters more like links-style golf. Or Churchill Downs reducing the Kentucky Derby to a mile.

These are rough equivalents to what IIHF president Rene Fasel is proposing when he says he's pushing for international hockey to adopt the smaller 200-by-85 foot ice surface used in North America, starting with the 2022 Beijing Olympics.

It represents a massive departure from the history and heritage of the international game played under IIHF rules. The larger 200-by-100 foot surface is something Fasel himself has until now steadfastly defended during a nearly 25-year run at the head of that organization.

Rather than debating the merits of big rink vs. small rink — as someone raised in Canada, who has made a living covering predominantly NHL hockey, my bias and preference is obvious — I'm interested instead in exploring the most obvious question(s): Why? Why now?

Fasel spoke of the exciting speed he'd just seen at the world junior tournament played on small ice in Victoria and Vancouver when he dropped his 200-by-85 bombshell Saturday. But was it significantly different than the 2018 or 2017 tournaments, also played in North America? Or the 2016 World Cup?

Likely not.

Instead, another theory emerged in discussions with a couple prominent figures in the international game. They viewed Fasel's revelation as a carrot being dangled to the NHL in an attempt to make a return to the 2022 Olympics look a little more appealing (Of note: the Nagano, Turin and Sochi tournaments were all played on larger ice).

It's an interesting thought when paired with Nick Kypreos's report on "Headlines" about senior members of the NHL and NHLPA planning to meet in Las Vegas this week to continue collective bargaining talks.

Kyper believes the union is working on a proposal to extend the CBA, which could expire as soon as September 2020. It will surprise no one if renewed Olympic participation is among the list of things the players seek to receive as part of an extended deal that would also pave the way for a 2020 World Cup.

The NHLPA would seem to have an ally in Fasel, who is suddenly and unexpectedly willing to reimagine what international hockey looks like. And it looks exactly like the game NHL owners like best.

EP'S CANUCKS

Up in the commentator's room at Hockey Night, we joked that never had an injured player received as much love as Elias Pettersson did before and during Saturday's Toronto-Vancouver game.

And with good reason.

Not only has the Swede changed how the NHL views the Canucks inside half a season, but he even came into the studio for a pre-arranged interview with Kyper on Friday afternoon — mere hours after suffering a slight MCL sprain in his right knee.

Normally, we'd expect a player to cancel that interview after leaving a game injured the night before. Class move from Pettersson and the Canucks.

It, got me to thinking that an interesting aspect of Vancouver's situation is that it never intentionally entered a rebuild and still wound up with a unique foundational piece. Remember that this organization chose not to strip the roster bare in the final years of the Sedin twins.

There is still a case to be made that it should turn aging pieces into futures in order to maximize the force of the coming wave with Pettersson/Brock Boeser/Bo Horvat et al.

All of which makes Kyper's report about the desire to start ramping up contract talks with Alex Edler quite notable. The 32-year-old defenceman remains a useful player and has made huge contributions in Vancouver over the years, but he'd be a valuable

chip to play if management could convince him to waive a no-trade clause before the deadline.

They could even bring him back as a free agent on July 1.

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GOAL-DEPRIVED CANES

We are only in the first week of January and Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour has started speaking about the need for a winning streak to salvage the season. This comes at the same time Elliott Friedman is reporting that Carolina has let rival teams know it is open to making trades.

There could be some fascinating moving parts here.

Friedge believes well-travelled, right-shot defenceman Dougie Hamilton is potentially in play along with rugged winger Micheal Ferland, a pending UFA who is having a good year but may be pricing himself out of an extension in Raleigh.

What Hurricanes GM Don Waddell covets most is players who can put the puck in the net. It's why he was so interested in William Nylander during the Swede's drawn-out negotiations with Toronto and has since been linked to St. Louis sniper Vladimir Tarasenko, among others.

Carolina entered play Sunday ranked 28th in goals per game at 2.55, and could badly use the 28 goals Jeff Skinner has scored in Buffalo this season or the 20 Elias Lindholm has in Calgary.

Unfortunately, both players were traded away in the summer. And goal scorers don't grow on trees.

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

DUCHENE'S FUTURE

The clock may be ticking on Matt Duchene's tenure with the Ottawa Senators.

The 27-year-old centre is trending towards a career year offensively despite the struggles of his team, which has sunk to the bottom of the NHL standings.

Senators general manager Pierre Dorion has repeatedly said that it's his preference to bring Duchene back, but it doesn't sound like much headway has been made in negotiations on an extension. Of late, it doesn't seem as though there have been any significant discussions at all.

Dorion is unwilling to outline a timeframe for when he needs clarity from the Duchene camp on its intentions — not wanting to fuel media speculation, understandably — but it's no secret that there will need to be some sort of resolution by the time the Feb. 25 trade deadline arrives.

Having already surrendered his 2019 first-round pick to Colorado as part of the three-way deal that brought Duchene to Ottawa, the Sens GM will have to prioritize recouping assets if he can't get the player to agree to a new contract.

Dorion also has to figure out what's happening with pending UFAs Mark Stone and Ryan Dzingel in the seven weeks before the trade deadline.

He better keep his phone charged.

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DEMOTING PIRRI

Even in their second season, the Vegas Golden Knights remain unique.

Because of the rules governing the expansion process, the Golden Knights only have one current roster player on an entry-level contract — Alex Tuch — and that limits what GM George McPhee can do when juggling numbers.

It also explains why GMGM found himself in such a tight spot when Max Pacioretty returned from injury earlier this week.

Vegas only had two waiver exempt options that could be sent directly to AHL Chicago to create room: Tuch, with 32 points in 36 games and who is already in possession of a \$33.25-million extension that kicks in next season; and Brandon Pirri, who had six goals and nine points in a scorching seven-game cameo following his Dec. 19 call-up.



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Thus, Pirri was returned to the AHL with a promise from the organization that he'll be brought back at the earliest opportunity. It was either that or risk losing another player on waivers, and if there's any organization that understands the importance of not simply giving away assets, it's Vegas.

This won't be a permanent position for the organization.

The Golden Knights can look forward to a time in the near future when Erik Brannstrom, Nicolas Hague, Cody Glass and other prospects break through and force roster turnover. They'll have a lot more in-season flexibility once that day comes.

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.

COACH HYNES

A strong statement was made about the direction of the New Jersey Devils this week when head coach John Hynes received an extension. He was on an expiring contract and got two years added in the new deal, per a source, giving him security through 2020-21. It has been a tumultuous, emotional year in New Jersey after last season's unexpected run to the playoffs and some fans began placing the blame on Hynes, who is now in his fourth year on the job. Management saw the bigger picture — with huge struggles in net and some tough luck with injuries, including a recent one to reigning MVP Taylor Hall — and determined they still have the right man steering the ship through troubled waters.

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Sportsnet.ca / 4 things we learned in the NHL: Matthews ends scoring slump

David Morassutti January 6, 2019, 8:18 AM

Auston Matthews breaks out of a mini scoring slump, Mark Stone is worth every penny for Ottawa and Keith Yandle continues to produce for the Florida Panthers.

Here are four things we learned in the NHL.

Stream over 500 NHL games blackout-free, including the Flames, Oilers, Leafs and Canucks. Plus Hockey Night in Canada, Rogers Hometown Hockey, Scotiabank Wednesday Night Hockey and more. Matthews ended a five-game goalless drought with his third-period tally against the Vancouver Canucks on Saturday and it was a long time coming.

Matthews became the first Leaf since Wendel Clark and Dave Andreychuk to have 20 goals in 27 games or less.

Injuries have limited Matthews to 27 games this season but he currently sits second in the league in goals-per-game at 0.74 which is right behind Alex Ovechkin who is at 0.75 G/GP.

Matthews was not the only Leaf to reach a milestone against the Canucks as his fellow Nutcracker partner Mitch Marner set a new franchise record for assists in a player's first 200 games with the Leafs.

Mitch Marner's 129 assists are the most in #Leafs history through a player's first 200 career games

— Sportsnet Stats (@SNstats) January 6, 2019

Marner leads the Leafs in assists (40) and points (55) at the midway point of the season and is sixth in the NHL in overall points. The 21-year-old is well on his way to setting a new career-high after scoring 22 goals, 47 assists and 69 points last season.

With Marner and Matthews set to become restricted free agents this off-season there is no doubt they will be due some hefty pay raises based on their production this season.

Mark Stone reaches 20 once again

While Stone's future with the Ottawa Senators is not clear at this moment, he continues to lead the way, scoring his 20th goal of the season.

That is the fifth straight season in which Stone has scored 20 or more joining Daniel Alfredsson and Jason Spezza as the only players to do it in five or more consecutive campaigns for Ottawa.

Mark Stone recorded his 20th goal to mark his fifth consecutive season with at least 20 goals. Only three other players in @Senators franchise history have achieved the feat in five or more consecutive seasons:

Daniel Alfredsson (10)

Jason Spezza (6)

Marian Hossa (5)#NHLStats pic.twitter.com/N37MJMcjc7

— NHL Public Relations (@PR_NHL) January 5, 2019

The 26-year-old leads the Senators with 20 goals, 26 assists and 46 points in 42 games this season and is set to become an unrestricted free agent after signing a one-year, \$7.35-million contract this past summer.

Keith Yandle gets to 500

With two assists against the Columbus Blue Jackets, Yandle recorded his 500th-career point becoming the 67th defenceman to do so in NHL history.

The 32-year-old passed Ed Jovanovski on the all-time scoring list among defencemen with 91 goals, 410 assists and 501 points in 865 career games with the Arizona Coyotes, New York Rangers and Panthers.

Yandle was selected to his third all-star game with six goals and 33 points in 39 games leading all Panthers blueliners in scoring and is fifth on the team in points.

Jones wins it in overtime again for Columbus

Only one other defenceman has equalled the number of overtime goals Seth Jones has scored since the 2013-14 season and that is Oliver Ekman-Larsson.

Jones scored his first game-winner in the extra frame on a great play by Pierre-Luc Dubois to set up the defenceman from his knees.

In 33 games this season, Jones has six goals and 24 points for the Blue Jackets. Since joining the league, the 24-year-old defenceman has 52 goals and 207 points including a career-high 16 goals, 41 assists and 57 points in 78 games for Columbus last season.

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TSN.CA / Maple Leafs not taking any chances with Andersen's injury

Kristen Shilton

The Maple Leafs held a noon practice at MasterCard Centre. TSN's Kristen Shilton has more in her notes from Maple Leafs practice on Sunday.

There's nowhere Frederik Andersen wants to be more than back in the Maple Leafs' crease. But he'll have to wait at least three more days before that happens.

Despite Andersen taking part in his second full-team practice on Sunday, Mike Babcock already ruled him out for Monday's game against Nashville by revealing Michael Hutchinson will get his third consecutive start for Toronto. Andersen's next opportunity to play won't come until Thursday in New Jersey.

"The idea is to be ready to play. It goes without saying," Andersen said. "Until then, we take care of what we can control and make sure the right treatment is being given."

Andersen explains what led to time on the IR

Maple Leafs goalie Frederik Andersen explains what led to him being on the IR and says that his injury is progressing nicely, but Monday night's game against Nashville isn't part of the plan.

It's been more than two weeks since Andersen's last start on Dec. 22, when he was already dealing with the groin injury that would eventually sideline him. Andersen held out hope the ailment would improve over Christmas, but when that wasn't the case, he had no choice but to put his faith in the Leafs' medical staff to guide him on the right path.

"I've never dealt with anything groin-related before," Andersen said. "When it [didn't feel great after Christmas], it wasn't alarming, but it was something to kind of take care of before it got out of hand, and to try and control it and get rid of it before it becomes a bigger problem."



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To that end, Andersen's recovery process is being handled meticulously, and with as much patience as he can muster. During and after each skating session, Andersen measures how he's feeling and checks in with the team's medical and sports science staffs for further instruction.

He said that first team practice on Friday was "a hard day" while Saturday's morning skate was "a little easier," but found Sunday's skate challenging once again.

"Mostly [it's measured] in soreness and how well your body is moving and flexibility and stuff like that," he said. "That's all the stuff they're great about in the training room but it's ongoing. It's really important that we do it the right way."

Helping Andersen stay focused only on his recovery has been the play of Hutchinson. The veteran netminder recorded his first shutout in his second appearance for Toronto on Saturday, blanking the Vancouver Canucks 5-0, and he's been as serviceable a replacement between the pipes as Toronto could have hoped for on such short notice.

"It's never fun watching, but a game like last night helps. Hutch was great," Andersen said. "It makes it a little bit easier to take your time and not rush, which is also really important. You don't [want to] push it and maybe jump in a little quicker than you're ready for. That's where they're pulling a little among the medical staff and making sure we're doing it right."

As soon as Leafs' back-up goalie Garret Sparks took the first puck off his mask from William Nylander on Wednesday, he should have pulled himself out of practice. Instead, Sparks stayed in the net, and was hit again in the mask by Nylander.

The cumulative effect of the bumps is what Sparks says caused his first-ever concussion.

"I've taken hundreds of shots off the head and I've never experienced any issues," Sparks said. "It's [also] recognizing that after the first time you get hit, if it hurts, maybe don't get hit again. [Nylander] feels bad. I know he would never in a million years try to do something like that to me, so no hard feelings."

It wasn't until later in the day on Wednesday, after practice was long over, that Sparks contacted the Leafs' medical staff and told them he wasn't feeling well. Unlike some players who struggle with lighting and sounds after suffering a concussion, Sparks said his symptoms were a bit different.

"A lot of it was just not feeling like myself, and not being present," he said. "Once that started to go away and I started to feel more like myself, I knew things were improving."

Sparks on injury: I actually got hit twice...by the same individual. Currently out with a concussion, Garret Sparks explains how he actually got hit in the head twice at Maple Leafs' practice on January 2nd and that they were by the same player. Sparks isn't holding a grudge and is being patient during his recovery.

For Toronto, the timing of Sparks' injury couldn't have been much worse. Andersen was already dealing with his groin problem, and three days later Sparks was out of commission too. And before he was hurt, Sparks had put together a solid start to his campaign, going 6-2-1 with 3.00 goals-against average and .905 save percentage.

Fortunately, Sparks said he hasn't felt an ounce of pressure from anyone to get back into action before he's ready.

"When it happens to you initially, your mind goes to 'when can I come back?'" he said. "Everyone here has been great, from management to training staff to coaches, just trying to make sure my health is a priority and I feel incredible before I come back and I'm not in a position where I'm rushing to come back."

Sparks is known for being a gear junkie and getting involved with the design of almost everything he wears. So it's no surprise he'll look into adjustments that can be made to his equipment that might prevent issues like his in the future.

"All I can do is try and prepare myself better," he said. "Try to make sure my masks are in a better spot, make sure they're fresher, their padding is a little bit thicker. Make tweaks like that."

Watching the Leafs carry on without him is as difficult for Sparks as it is for Andersen, but he got a thrill out of seeing Hutchinson's shut out on Saturday. It was three years ago that Sparks recorded his first career shutout for the Leafs, in his first-ever NHL start. From that experience, to Hutchinson's own history with head injuries, the two goalies have been able to bond quickly.

"He's a Toronto kid who's dreamed about this moment forever," Sparks said of the Barrie, Ontario native. "I was able to have experience a couple of years ago. There was nobody happier for him once he got into the room than me and Freddie and [Kasimir Kaskisuo]. He's shared his experiences with...what he's done to come back from [head injuries], so I'm learning a lot from him." It's not that Zach Hyman wasn't in pain after going into the boards against New Jersey on Dec. 18. He just didn't feel enough of it to even consider leaving the ice.

"I thought I just sprained my ankle," Hyman said. "It ended up being more severe than what it was. I taped it up and played through the game. Took the next day off and tried to skate and it was tender, so we got the MRI done and it was an ankle sprain."

That was on Dec. 20, and Hyman has been out of action ever since. Toronto announced at the time it would be a minimum of three weeks before the winger could return, a timeline that falls into this week.

While Hyman was able to participate in his first team practice on Sunday after skating on his own with trainers for several days, he isn't expected to be back for Monday's tilt against Nashville.

Hyman thought he just sprained his ankle, hopes to be back soon. Zach Hyman took part in his first full practice with his teammates on Sunday and the Maple Leafs' forward says he is happy with the progress of what he originally thought was just a sprained ankle he could play through.

"It's not really in my hands, I just go out there and practice and try to show the guys I'm able to play and what not," he said. "I'm progressing. It was definitely a good step."

Hyman said the only real challenge to the whole recovery process for him has been in not being able to play, and he's excited that the prospect of a return is inching steadily closer.

Before missing the Leafs last seven games, Hyman was playing on Toronto's top line with John Tavares and Mitch Marner, recording 15 points in 32 games. Babcock said as soon as Hyman is healthy, he'll slot right back into the lineup.

Now all he needs is the medical clearance to do so.

"[I feel] good, it felt good to be out there," he said. "Our medical staff...are protecting you from yourself. I think that's important because before I would go out there and play through whatever I can. Credit to them for being with me the whole way through and getting me back as fast as possible."

Maple Leafs lines at practice:

Forwards

Brown-Tavares-Marner

Johnsson-Matthews-Nylander

Marleau-Kadri-Kapanen

Lindholm-Gauthier-Moore

Hyman

Defence

Rielly-Hainsey

Gardiner-Zaitsev

Dermott-Ozhiganov

Marincin-Holl

Goalies

Andersen

Hutchinson

Sparks

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