



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • February 8, 2019

THE NEWS & OBSERVER

Hurricanes on PNC Arena lease negotiations: 'The economics of the deal have to change in our favor'

By Luke DeCock

While the Carolina Hurricanes' lease with PNC Arena is still five years away from expiration, negotiations over an extension are about to begin – and there's a lot more on the line than last time around.

It took two years to negotiate the last five-year extension, through 2024, and this time around it figures to be more complicated and possibly more contentious.

The Hurricanes have a new owner and the building, which turns 20 next fall, is in need of massive renovations that could exceed \$150 million. And the scheduling issues with N.C. State that erupted into open warfare in 2013 are still simmering behind the scenes, with the building sitting empty for three lucrative Saturdays this winter because the school and ACC blocked dates they did not end up using.

With that as the backdrop, the authority on Thursday approved up to \$100,000 to hire Dan Barrett of CAA Icon as a consultant and negotiator, the first step toward pursuing a new agreement with the Hurricanes.

Under the current arrangement, the Hurricanes pay the Centennial Authority \$2.45 million in rent in return for use by the hockey team and the right to manage the arena, making money by booking concerts, conventions and the like. But the Hurricanes have never been able to generate the kind of profits envisioned operating the arena, in part because despite its growth Raleigh still isn't at the same level as big-city metropolitan markets, in part because the team has struggled in recent years.

The Hurricanes also argue that while their lease was generally an industry-standard deal when the building opened, it no longer is 20 years later.

"If you look around the league, for public buildings, we're at the bottom of the league," Hurricanes president Don Waddell said. "It's nothing that anyone did wrong. Those were the times back in the '90s. But if we're going to be a sustainable franchise in this marketplace for a long time, the lease plays an important role. The economics of the deal have to change in our favor."

The Hurricanes will also be pushing for more scheduling flexibility, something that's been a sore spot in the past with N.C. State. The university has scheduling priority, but because the NHL schedule is prepared over the summer and the ACC basketball schedule isn't finalized until the fall, key weekend dates are often left blocked by the Wolfpack that end up being released too late to book concerts.

That will be left to the Hurricanes and incoming N.C. State athletic director Boo Corrigan, Centennial Authority chairman Thomas McCormick said.

Meanwhile, the lease is somewhat unavoidably intertwined with the multimillion dollar package of proposed renovations that have been on hold since 2016, when the ownership uncertainty surrounding Peter Karmanos' attempts to sell the team made it unrealistic to pursue. The authority last month submitted a request for funding from the hotel- and-restaurant tax fund that helped finance the original construction of the arena as well as the Raleigh Convention Center.

While the building's behind-the-scenes infrastructure has been maintained at a high level by the arena authority, public-facing areas from the arena bowl to the entrances have an understandably dated look compared to state-of-the-art arenas elsewhere, and the authority has received several consultant recommendations for changes inside and outside the building.

McCormick said the renovations aren't contingent on a lease extension, but the authority spent considerable time meeting behind closed doors discussing the latter Thursday, aware of the Hurricanes' desire to modify the structure of the lease.

"At this time, we don't know what the Hurricanes mean by that," McCormick said. "This closed session today was simply to discuss the kinds of things that we could do, the authority could do, if it wanted to respond to something like that."

This doesn't figure to be a fast process, and it may occasionally be acrimonious at times, which is typical of this kind of negotiation, but it's a critical one for the future of PNC Arena and the Hurricanes, and Thursday was its official beginning.



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THE ATHLETIC

DGB Grab Bag: Checking in on the remaining RFAs, a no-trade clause proposal and Rob Ray fights a fan

By Sean McIndoe

From the headlines

This week's big news was Auston Matthews' new contract, which will see the young star carry a cap hit north of \$11.6 million for the next five seasons. It's a big chunk of change, to be sure. But it also locks up an elite young star who was just months away from restricted free agency.

That said, there's still a ton of young talent around the league that will need new deals. So today, let's check in on some of the biggest RFA names left in the class of 2019 and see how those negotiations are shaping up.

Brayden Point, Lightning: Given the other salaries already locked in for teammates like Nikita Kucherov, Steven Stamkos and Victor Hedman, any long-term commitment will need to factor in the increased risk of a serious shoulder injury from lifting Stanley Cups every damn year.

Mikko Rantanen, Avalanche: Can take advantage of the front office's recent history by reminding them of how Nathan MacKinnon and his agent negotiated his last deal and then telling them that he obviously wants to do the exact opposite of that.

Jacob Trouba, Jets: Will at some point have to sit down with his agent and family and figure out whether he'd prefer a short-term, medium-term or long-term holdout.

Matthew Tkachuk, Flames: Look, we can speculate all we want about how much he's worth and his true value to the team, but we all know he's going to try to sign for exactly one dollar more than Drew Doughty just to be a prick.

Brock Boeser, Canucks: Has probably met Elias Pettersson, so that's got to be worth a few million right there.

Patrick Laine, Jets: Is starting to get a sinking feeling that when his agent said they should be focused on one goal and one goal only, he was probably referring to getting a new contract done and not to his offensive production for 2019.

William Karlsson, Golden Knights: Is going to want a deal that comes front-loaded with a big signing bonus, since he'll need that money to build the time machine he uses to go back and sign a long-term deal last summer when he was good.

Timo Meier, Sharks: Should also be on this list, we guess.

Mitch Marner, Maple Leafs: Has deftly executed a long-game strategy of biding this time and letting his teammates all sign their big contracts first until there's no more cap room left, so let's see how that works out for him.

Kyle Connor, Jets: Should be just fine as long as he's not like the third Winnipeg player on this list.

Sebastian Aho, Hurricanes: Has been hearing the words "offer sheet" whispered by other teams quite a bit lately,

although come to think of it they're always preceded by "We're wimpy NHL GMs so we're never going to" and that last word might not actually be "sheet."

The week's three stars of comedy

The third star: Jose Mourinho – Should this clip even qualify? On the one hand, Mourinho is a soccer guy and this clip is from the KHL, not the NHL. On the other hand, well, it's a guy wiping out on a red carpet.

The second star: The Maple Leafs – Look, I like just about every move they've made in recent years up to and including the Jake Muzzin trade and Matthews signing, but after seeing this I can say I have zero confidence going forward in the Leafs front office.

The first star: Elias Lindholm – He's celebrating a win so this is the GREATEST THING EVER and is SO SUPER FUN and if you don't like it more than anything then you are an OLD MAN YELLING AT A CLOUD. (Am I doing this right, Hurricanes fans?)

Be It Resolved

It's trade deadline season, which means it's no-trade clause season, and earlier in the week I saw this:

Pete's a funny guy who you should be following and I'm 80 percent sure he's joking here, but I don't care because this is brilliant. Yes, the NHL should absolutely do this. Show us the lists.

Well, not the specific lists. I can understand why individual players would want their lists to be kept private. Nobody's going to want to make enemies, or get booed every time they visit a city on their list, or create an awkward situation if they wind up playing for a team down the road. That all makes sense.

So no, don't show us the individual lists. Just the aggregate. As in, the league keeps track of every NTC list a player submits over the course of the year, and at the end of the season they tell us how often each team showed up.

Why not, right? There would always be enough deniability built into the system that nobody could trace any answer back to a specific player, with the exception of the rare case where one team showed up on 100 percent of the lists and I think we can all agree that would be hilarious. So let's do it.

The only legitimate argument against the idea that I can think of is that it would be depressing to find out that your favorite team was showing up on most of the "do not want" lists. But while it absolutely would be depressing, it's also useful information to have. No fan wants to find out that their team is capped out, or has a lousy prospect pipeline, or is last in the league in attendance. But they still want to know, because it's worth knowing.



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And it can help manage expectations. Think of the small-market GM who's constantly getting roasted for not pulling off trades. Now imagine you find out his team is always ruled out of every big name before the bidding even starts. That changes things, right? And it would be fascinating to see how a team's number changed over the years, as rebuilds and new coaches and deep playoff runs changed perceptions. Our own Craig Custance has occasionally given us an informal look behind the curtain over the years; the NHL should take the next step and make it official.

It goes without saying that the league will never actually do any of this, because they hate giving their fans useful information. Just getting teams to reveal basic contract terms has been a years-long battle that we're only recently starting to win. Remember when the Department of Player Safety insisted on tweeting out suspensions without telling us how many games they were for? And heaven help you if you'd like to know what the conditions on a conditional draft pick look like. Or, you know, you want a website with functional stats.

So no, this isn't ever going to happen. But it should. So be it resolved that the NHL pretend like its fans are paying customers and give us the information we want to see.

Obscure former player of the week

Earlier this week, I set out to determine which trade was the second most important in NHL history. My personal pick ended up being the 1957 deal that sent Ted Lindsay and Glenn Hall from Detroit to Chicago, breaking up the Red Wings' dynasty and paving the way for what would be the Hawks' last Cup for almost 50 years.

As an added bonus, that trade also gives me a chance to mention one of my favorite obscure players: feisty forward Forbes Kennedy.

Despite being small even by the standards of the day, Kennedy made his reputation as a take-no-prisoners power forward in the Quebec junior league in the mid-1950s before signing with Chicago in 1956. He played one year there, scoring 21 points, before being included in the four-player package heading to Detroit in the Lindsay/Hall blockbuster. He'd get two full seasons in Detroit and parts of two more before being dealt to the Bruins, then spend four years in Boston and one in the minors before heading to the Flyers in the 1967 expansion draft. He'd last most of two seasons in Philadelphia before being traded to the Maple Leafs late in the 1968-69 season.

By that point, Kennedy was 33 years old and had almost 600 NHL games to his name. But while he didn't play much with the Leafs, he may have had the most memorable game of his career in the blue and white. In a playoff game on April 2, 1969, Leafs blueliner Pat Quinn caught Bobby Orr with his head down and delivered one of the most famous checks of the era, knocking the Bruins star out cold. When a brawl broke out shortly after, Kennedy took on just about all of Boston: he fought goaltender Gerry Cheevers, Johnny Bucyk, Cheevers again, and John McKenzie, all while absorbing punches from Bruins fans leaning over the glass. In all, he received four separate fighting majors for one brawl.

Unfortunately for Kennedy, he also landed a punch on one more opponent during the brawl: linesman George Ashley. That earned him a suspension that spelled the end of his NHL career. He'd spend one more year in the AHL, but never made it back to the big leagues. He'd finish with 603 NHL games, 70 goals, 178 points and 888 PIM in the regular season – and quite a few more in that one memorable playoff game.

Classic YouTube clip breakdown

It's been a rough few months for the Buffalo Sabres. After an early-season win streak pushed them to the top of the overall standings by the end of November, they've struggled badly ever since and have fallen out of a playoff spot. In fact, if you're a Sabres fan, you may be trying to remember what it's like to see this team beat anybody.

Today we're going to refresh your memory, as we look back on one of the most one-sided beatings the Sabres ever handed out.

It's April 1992, and our friends at TSN are recapping one of the week's biggest stories. Our clip joins Paul Romanuk in mid-sentence, and at first he seems to be describing a relatively run-of-the-mill incident in which somebody got thrown to the ice, then got up and tried to engage the Sabres' bench. Pretty standard stuff for the early '90s, really.

Our first clue that something's up is when Romanuk gets serious and makes a reference to someone "getting what was coming to him." He then reveals the twist on our story: he's not talking about a player, but a fan. Specifically, a fan who just tried to fight Rob Ray. If this strikes you as a bad idea, well, it will also strike the fan that way. And so will Rob Ray's fists. Repeatedly. We'll get there.

"I mean the fan has no more business being on the ice or near the bench than a player would have scaling the glass to take after a fan." Wait, would that be bad? Asking for a friend and/or terrible future GM.

We cut to the footage, and yeah, it's pretty much exactly what you'd think. A fan is over by the Sabres bench, and he's getting speed-bagged by Ray and friends. And look, this is a serious incident and I know we're all focused on how many punches this poor guy is absorbing. But can we all take a moment to appreciate the undisputed hero of this clip: the cop who comes flying in like an extra from a Benny Hill chase scene?

Seriously, this guy is fantastic. He sprints in, jumps for no reason, runs in place on the ice for a few seconds like Fred Flintstone and then fixes his hat while failing to help the situation even a little bit. This guy is the best, and I want to hang out with him. God bless the first responders.

Ray is interviewed and lays out a pretty reasonable rationale for what we just saw: The fan came onto the playing surface, the players didn't know who he was or what he might be looking to do and their first attempt to get him away from them hadn't worked. "We started putting it to him pretty good and then threw him back out onto the ice." And he doesn't regret it. All of which, if we're being honest, sounds pretty reasonable.



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So here's the background. The incident had come at the end of a chippy game between the Sabres and Nordiques in Quebec City. There had been a minor incident late in the third between Sabres goalie Clint Malarchuk and Nord's tough guy Tony Twist, and that had led to Quebec's Herb Raglan running Malarchuk in the final minute. A scrum breaks out, and as all eyes are on the ice, the fan scales the glass near the Sabres bench and sits there. (He'd later claim that he was trying to win a bet.) Sabres coach John Muckler apparently grabbed a stick and tried to swat him back into the stands, at which point he dropped down into the Buffalo bench like a spider you miss with the first newspaper swat.

If you watch the clip carefully, you can actually see Muckler jabbing the guy with the stick while Ray pummels him. When an old man wildly pitchforking you in the ribs isn't even remotely in the running for the worst thing happening to you at a given moment, you're having a bad day.

We learn that the fan isn't likely to press charges, but that Ray may be punished by the league. Remember, this happened about three years after another case of a fan jumping onto the ice, this time in Boston. We broke that clip down here, and it's worth rewatching from time to time as a reminder that Ron Asselstine will straight-up eat your soul if you anger him.

The last minute of the clip might be my favorite, as we go around the league to get reactions from other players. First up is Adam Graves, who mentions that there are some fans who occasionally don't like him. If you think it's bad now, Adam, wait until you see what happens next month.

Ken Baumgartner is next, wearing the sort of smirk that tells us he desperately wishes he'd been in Ray's place. He also adds that "It wasn't exactly self-defense after the first 10 punches." The Bomber was the best.

"I don't want to see that happen ever again. I don't know who's at fault ... you just want to put it behind you and really, hopefully, it will never happen again." – Don Sweeney, discussing either the Rob Ray fan incident or the first round of the Bruins' 2015 draft, I'm not sure. Maybe both.

We move on to Montreal and Denis Savard says he saw a player "hitting on the fans," which is not quite the same thing and nowhere near as unusual. He's followed by Brian Skrudland, who will be your supply teacher for fourth period math class and is definitely not taking any crap from you kids today.

"Give the fan credit, he hung in there for 15 good ones anyway." Well, yes, technically that's true. He did hang in there, in the sense that four guys were dangling him a foot off the ground while he got pummeled. Fair point there.

Ultimately, no charges were filed and Ray wasn't suspended, although he was apparently fined. Years later, Ray's old pal Tie Domi would find himself in a similar situation and reacted with surprising restraint, so maybe the message was delivered.

And that's it. To this day, the incident is remembered as one of the most unique and one-of-a-kind moments in the history of the NHL, something we'd never seen before and almost certainly will never see again: That time that Rob Ray got into a fight and wasn't creepily half-naked at the end of it.

LeBrun Notebook: High price for rentals, Ilya Kovalchuk's future and Leafs mulling their options

By Pierre LeBrun

The poker game is on.

After making some calls around the league on Thursday, one resonating message came to the forefront: contending teams are frustrated that prices remain too high for the more notable rental players.

Well you can bet it's high on Artemi Panarin, although a source told The Athletic on Thursday night that Columbus GM Jarmo Kekalainen is still in listening mode evaluating offers, which is to say he hasn't set a fixed price just yet.

Again, the Blue Jackets aren't 100 percent dealing the pending UFA unless they feel they can get what they feel he's worth. If they make him their own rental, so be it for a Jackets team with a chance to make the playoffs yet again.

My sense is that teams like Nashville and Boston are currently concerned with what it would cost to get Panarin, although I would still keep those two teams on watch for the Breadman, among other clubs. In a perfect world, the top contenders like to make these type of additions as soon as possible and not wait until the deadline to give their new players the chance to adjust as much as possible. This is why Jim Rutherford impresses me every year, the way the Penguins GM acts so early.

Right now though, the prices seem too high on many of the rentals. But there's more than two weeks to go before the trade deadline. This is the dance at this time of year. The selling teams start high and as we get closer to Feb. 25, the prices should drop to some degree.

They will certainly drop if Ottawa enters the market with Mark Stone and/or Matt Duchene next week. That will flood the market with high-end talent. As far as I could tell Thursday, there's still no firm decision yet on both those situations but I have to think by mid-week next week there has to be some more clarity.

I think a team like Winnipeg, for example, is keenly waiting out the Ottawa situation. The Jets would have interest in either Stone or Duchene for sure.

Winnipeg's issue is that it can really only acquire a rental player. Its salary cap situation moving forward will prevent it from signing rental players to new deals.

So if either Duchene or Stone are looking to sign extensions through the trade process, Winnipeg won't be a great fit.

Leafs scouting Carolina (again)

It is misleading at times to try to figure out why teams have certain scouts at certain games this time of year.



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But this one on Thursday night caught my eye: Leafs AGM Laurence Gilman taking in the Hurricanes-Sabres game. No question he was there to scout Carolina, yet again. Two weeks ago he took in a Carolina game as well as two Charlotte (AHL) games.

What I don't know for sure is why the Leafs keep monitoring the 'Canes. Once they traded for Jake Muzzin one figured they were done scouting for blueline help, unless the Leafs still have interest in one of the 'Canes right-handed studs. Or, in the interest of adding more muscle and talent up front, are the Leafs monitoring winger Micheal Ferland?

As I wrote Monday, things aren't quite as clear anymore when it comes to whether Carolina will actually move Ferland now that the 'Canes are in a playoff race. It will really depend, I think, on how the 'Canes fare in their games headed right to the Feb. 25 deadline and of course what kind of offers they get.

It could be nothing, but I find it interesting the Leafs are still keeping an eye on Carolina.

Anisimov available?

Hearing that the Blackhawks would move forward Artem Anisimov for the right price. His role has decreased in Chicago this season. I don't get the sense the 'Hawks are actively shopping him, but for the right offer they would listen.

The 30-year-old Anisimov is not a rental, he's got two more years on his deal after this season at a \$4.55-million cap hit although the actual cash owed to him is \$4 million next year and \$3 million in the last season.

Anisimov has a 10-team list of teams he would go to as part of his modified no-trade clause. So his camp has some say in how a potential deal would play out.

I wonder if Columbus wouldn't be a fit in terms of re-acquiring him? The allure here would be that they know the player and that he's signed past this year. If Columbus adds, I think the Jackets would like a player under contract, especially if they ship out Panarin in a separate deal.

What I don't know is whether Columbus is on Anisimov's list of teams.

Kovalchuk's future

The Los Angeles Kings lured Ilya Kovalchuk last summer under the premise they would be playoff contenders and well, you know what they say about best-laid plans.

And so the question now is what happens, if anything, with Kovalchuk moving forward. The 35-year-old winger has a full no-move clause so he decides his future, but my understanding of the situation is that he would waive it if the right fit presented itself, and that the Kings would try to

accommodate him and perhaps even eat some of the salary in order to make a deal work.

The question is whether or not an opportunity will present itself. Kovalchuk is in the first season of a three-year deal carrying a \$6.25-million cap hit. It is also a 35-and-over contract which no doubt scares some teams.

On the flip side, it's a front-loaded deal in real money. In fact, by July 1 this offseason, once a \$5.3-million signing bonus is paid, he'll have just under \$5 million to be paid out in total for the final two seasons. So you're getting Kovalchuk for \$2.5 million a year in real money. I would think that would interest some teams that don't mind the high cap hit in exchange for the lower cash payout.

The question is whether any team comes calling before Feb. 25?

It's not a great year to be trying to move an aging winger under contract when the rental market is loaded in forwards, though. Boston, Vegas and San Jose were among the teams that showed interest in Kovalchuk last summer but the Sharks aren't sounding overly aggressive ahead of the deadline — their Erik Karlsson trade in September was their big trade deadline acquisition it would seem — while the B's as far as I can tell are more focused on pending UFAs like Panarin and Wayne Simmonds, among others. I see Vegas being all over Stone if he becomes available.

Still, the Kovalchuk situation is something to keep an eye on closer to Feb. 25. If a team thinks the Russian veteran can help, he's definitely available.

Brisson/Dubas

Hearing that agent Pat Brisson met with Leafs GM Kyle Dubas after Wednesday's Ottawa-Toronto game at Scotiabank Arena. Brisson represents John Tavares, Jake Gardiner and Patrick Marleau on the Leafs so it would make sense to catch up with the Leafs GM since he happened to be in town.

The key player of interest, however, in that conversation would have undoubtedly been Gardiner, the pending UFA blueliner whose future remains undecided because of the Leafs' salary cap headaches moving forward. But my sense is that the Leafs haven't 100 percent closed the door on the idea of trying to re-sign Gardiner. Do I think it's likely? No, because Gardiner will be able to do much better on the open market come July 1 and the Leafs will have so little cap room left once they re-sign Mitch Marner.

But the Leafs, both management and the coaching staff, really like Gardiner. If there's any way to move other players out this summer and have time to make Gardiner an offer, I think they will. But it's going to be very difficult.



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Civian: Serious about winning? If you can't see that with these Hurricanes, you're not watching

By Sara Civian

BUFFALO, N.Y. — From the moment the Hurricanes first Storm Surged (is that a verb?), I have wanted to stay out of it.

The idea that anybody should care what The Media thinks about a post-game celebration always seemed way too self-important.

It's not for us. It has nothing to do with us. I want nothing to do with evaluating it.

The first time someone asked me about it I distinctly remember laughing at the idea of a "Storm Surge Expert" lower third graphic popping up on the evening news or something.

Anyway, it seemed like all of the riveting discourse was finally dying down until Duck, Duck, Goose really pissed off some of the more traditional folks.

It's one thing to dislike a non-traditional hockey market's silly new ritual. (Again, I think it's weird for the media to care either way — but you do you.) It's another thing entirely to imply this team doesn't work hard enough, isn't legit or doesn't take winning seriously because the players clap a few times and smile after home wins.

That was a new flavor of Storm Surge criticism after Duck, Duck, Goosegate.

For some reason, it was all I could think about after the 6-5 overtime win at Buffalo on Thursday that kept the Hurricanes within reach of the playoffs.

"We were talking before the game (about how) this was going to be a big one and we needed to win this," overtime hero Teuvo Teravainen refreshingly admitted. "... it was the biggest game of the year."

So they won it the hard way, via total team effort, which is pretty much how they have to win these things.

Maybe those concerned with the Hurricanes' effort level just don't see it like I do. Or as blunt head coach Rod Brind'Amour pointed out in response to out-of-town media a few weeks ago, maybe "no one really watches us."

I'm leaning toward the latter because if you actually watched the 2018-19 Carolina Hurricanes you'd see a whole lot more than a post-game celebration.

First, you'd notice Sebastian Aho growing into stardom. He reached his career-high in assists with his 37th in Buffalo, but his overtime game-saver showcased the hard work that is, for some reason, in question.

"To be honest, you don't think too much out there," he told me postgame. "You just play. You just try to win those first (overtime) faceoffs and get the puck. You try to build off it and get the first scoring chance."

But when he doesn't, he doesn't give up.

If you watched these Canes, eventually you'd realize the journeymen are having career years, like goaltender Curtis McElhinney standing sharp as ever at 35 years old. You'd see Greg McKegg, the 26-year-old center several franchises have given up on perhaps a bit too soon, getting his minutes and running with them on his career-high Hurricanes stint.

Of course, there are the glue guys like Brock McGinn, who absorbs shots with virtually every body part so that the skill guys can do their thing. Jordan Martinook qualifies too, though he's another one having a pleasantly surprising career scoring year with 12 goals. Two of them came right after the birth of his son, Chase, and his new contract extension.

"If I can keep scoring like this while he's alive then we're going to be a pretty happy family for the foreseeable future," he said in Pittsburgh.

Surely you wouldn't question the Hurricanes' drive if you've ever seen their penalty kill, where the skill guys log serious minutes right next to the glue guys.

Everyone does everything. Look at this roster, for crying out loud. They have to.

"Everyone needs to buy in," Brind'Amour often says.

I don't know if it's crazier that they've actually bought in or that it's working, but here we are. The Canes lead the league in goals scored in 2019 (58). What's more telling about their character is how they kept pushing with the same relentless forecheck when pucks weren't going in.

How could anyone imply these people aren't serious about winning?

You must be glossing over Nino Niederreiter's six goals and one assist in eight games since joining the team where offense allegedly goes to die. Doesn't seem like 45 seconds of Duck, Duck, Goose threw a wrench in any of his plans.

The Hurricanes' mistakes are as routine as they are brutal, their lack of talent is glaring, yet somehow an outright refusal to give up despite either of those realities has been taking over these days. Doesn't that say more about how hard they work than two minutes of fan love after wins?

"I love this group. I've been saying it all year. They've been kicked down a lot and had a lot of bad things happen, and they keep bouncing back," Brind'Amour said after the win Thursday. "Even tonight, the game should have been over and we let them back in. That could have easily been a way to just look the other way, but they found a way. I appreciate the effort this group gives every night."

There have been plenty of instances where you couldn't exactly blame this group stacked against the odds for giving up. Excuses are there if they want them. But like Storm Surge ringleader and three-time Stanley Cup champion Justin Williams says, "excuses are for losers."

These Hurricanes deserve to enjoy each win. Those who are actually watching know they don't come easily.



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You don't have to like the Storm Surge, but if the Hurricanes are putting in enough effort for Rod Brind'Amour of all people, maybe sit this one out



Gold: Canes survive Sabres in OT thriller

By Adam Gold radio host 99.9 The Fan

Following the Carolina Hurricanes' 4-0 win in Pittsburgh on Tuesday head coach Rod Brind'Amour told his team that when they play their game, there's no stopping them. Over the final 40 minutes in the Steel City the Canes were outstanding, dominating the Pens on their own ice to open up a 5-game road swing on a high.

But, what happens when you don't play "your" game?

Thursday, the Hurricanes won in an amusement park ride of a game, 6-5 in overtime in Buffalo. Teuvo Teravainen's 14th goal of the year, and second of the night, ended the affair at 3:25 of the extra period. It capped a night when the Canes gave up a late, 2-goal lead, watched former teammate Jeff Skinner score twice in the 3rd period and were loudly undressed by Brind'Amour midway through the second when the Sabres capitalized on Carolina mistakes and a bit of indifference to tie the game at 2.

It wasn't the forecheck, or a tight defensive effort or a spectacular performance in goal from Curtis McElhinney. No, the Canes left town with two points because they were resilient, opportunistic, and determined to do so. In the beginning of the year, the Hurricanes were playing well, well enough to win, but coming away empty. Now, with style points immaterial, the Canes are manufacturing offense and letting their desperation rule the day.

That's what happened in Buffalo.

Carolina was outshot 39-30, lost twice as many face offs as they won and bounced back from Skinner's extra-attacker goal with less than a minute to go. But, when things are going your way, and the group has the confidence that they can figure it out on the fly, good things happen.

Teravainen signed a 5-year/\$27 million contract extension before the All Star break and if early returns are any indication, it's going to be one of the great values in the league. Teuvo has four goals and seven assists in the seven games since agreeing to the deal. His first of the night was the atypical Turbo-charged marker, winning a physical battle in front of the net and scoring from his knees to give the Canes a 2-0 lead early in the second.

The second, was more what you'd expect from Teravainen. Scooping up a rebound of a wide Jack Eichel drive in overtime, outracing the field and going backhand to forehand to beat Linus Ullmark for the bonus point.

When the puck crossed the line, it gave Carolina their second straight win and moved them a season high 6-games over NHL-.500 at 27-21-6. And it gave the Canes a win they earned without necessarily playing "their" game.

The Hurricanes are 12-4-1 since New Year's Eve and they remain three points off the playoff line. Columbus won in Arizona, while Pittsburgh lost at Florida in overtime, so it's the struggling Pens that Carolina trails in the Wild Card race.

The Hurricanes have scored at least three goals in 13 of 17 games in their 12-4-1 stretch.

The Hurricanes are 25-2-3 when they score at least three goals.

Jordan Martinook had two assists and now has four points in the four games since signing his 2-year/\$4 million contract extension. He's also a point per game player since the birth of his son Chase.

Sebastian Aho also had two assists and set a new career high in helpers with 38. Aho is one assist shy of 100 in his career and three points short of equaling his career high of 65 set a year ago.

Speaking of personal bests, Greg McKegg's 4th goal of the season gave him his highest single season output in just 15 games.

Curtis McElhinney was far better than the five goals allow would tell you. He made 34 saves in the win and is now 12-6-1 in 19 starts for Carolina. The dozen wins tie his career high, set in 2014-15 when he played in Columbus.

The Hurricanes scored a power play goal for the first time in four games when Nino Niederreiter redirected a Teravainen pass into the slot. It was Niederreiter's 6th goal in seven games for the Hurricanes.

Carolina plays the Rangers Friday night at Madison Square Garden. 24 days ago the Rangers beat the Canes for the 16th straight time at MSG. It's been 3,024 days since the Hurricanes won in Manhattan.



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Recap: Hurricanes Edge Sabres in Overtime

Teravainen nets game-winning goal in 3-on-3 OT

by Michael Smith

BUFFALO - The Carolina Hurricanes surrendered a two-goal lead in the final five minutes of regulation but still walked away with two points in a 6-5 overtime win.

Teuvo Teravainen scored the game-winning goal on a breakaway in 3-on-3 overtime, his second marker of the game, in a pivotal Eastern Conference match-up.

Here are five takeaways from tonight's game.

One

That was a wild one.

Twice the Hurricanes had a two-goal advantage. Twice the Sabres erased it, once within the final five minutes of regulation.

But the Hurricanes never backed down, never wilted, even when momentum wasn't on their side.

"It was a battle. I feel like we had the game in our hands, and then we weren't smart enough and let them come back," Teravainen said. "We have to be more careful at the end there. At the same time, it's a good way to finish in overtime. That's pretty exciting."

"The result is what we wanted. The third period was really good until the last five minutes. We got to our game just like we wanted to," head coach Rod Brind'Amour said.

"Unfortunately, we went off it again in the last five minutes. You have to give the guys a lot of credit. They could have easily just folded up tent there."

Two

Three-on-three overtime is wide open, and a failed odd-man rush one way often leads to one in the other direction.

In this instance, a wide shot that rimmed around the boards led to what was a 2-on-0 break for the Hurricanes.

Teravainen raced after the puck, while Williams, gassed at the end of the shift, waved him on.

"It was a 2-on-0, but Willy was unselfish. He waved, you go Turbo," Sebastian Aho smiled. "He trusted Turbo. It was a great move."

Teravainen went forehand-backhand-forehand, and Linus Ullmark bit on the backhand move. It was an easy goal for Teravainen from there.

"I was pretty tired," he said. "I figured I had to go myself and try something. At the end, I felt like I should try some move, and I got lucky."

Teravainen scored his first of the game early in the second period to give the Hurricanes a 2-0 lead at the time.

Andrei Svechnikov's stick snapped in half on his shot attempt, but the puck still found its way into the slot, where Jordan Martinook's scoring chance was acrobatically swatted away by Ullmark. That left the Sabres' netminder down and out of position, though, and Teravainen outthrustled Casey Mittelstadt to backhand the puck into the empty net.

"He's one of those players that's an elite, game-changing type player. He has that type of talent. You saw it overtime," Brind'Amour said. "That's what he can do for us."

Three

So, about that third period.

The Hurricanes and Sabres combined for six goals, with the Canes taking a lead twice and the Sabres tying it in either instance.

The Canes had 1:48 of carryover power-play time to begin the third period, but they couldn't do much with it. Enter the bump-up shift from the fourth line. Trevor van Riemsdyk walked the puck in a few steps and fired a pass to Greg McKegg, who was parked alongside the goal. His first shot attempt bounced square off the post, but he easily tapped in his own rebound to put the Canes back on top, 3-2.

Jeff Skinner then scored his first of two goals in the period to even the score once again, and then it was the Canes to get back on top, as Martinook fed Brock McGinn in the slot for his fifth goal of the season.

Then, on another power play, Tervainen dished a rebound from an Aho shot to Nino Niederreiter in the slot to give the Canes a two-goal cushion with 5:02 left in regulation.

"That was a big goal," Aho said. "Pretty simple. I shot the puck. Greasy rebound. Great pass by Turbo, and [Niederreiter] put it in."

It seemed like that would hold up as the game.

But the Sabres came roaring back in the game's final five minutes, as Marco Scandella trimmed the Canes' lead in half and then Skinner scored his second of the game against his former team to tie the score at five with less than a minute to play.

"Skinner was just beating me up pretty good. Unfortunately, he's had my number this year. He's made some great plays,"



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Curtis McElhinney said. "The biggest thing was we got that two-goal lead there. I would have liked to have done a little bit of a better job on my end. ... It's a tough one, but the guys battled it out."

Four

The Hurricanes got off to a fast start and put together a solid first 10 minutes, as Justin Faulk put the team ahead just four minutes into the game.

As Aho wheeled down low with the puck, Skinner lost track of Faulk, who snuck in from the point behind him. Aho recognized this and fed Faulk with a pass right on his tape, which he one-timed top-shelf past Ullmark.

But then the Canes came off their game a bit, and Buffalo began racking up shots on goal and controlling the puck, a trend that continued into the second period and wasn't rectified until the third - until it reared its ugly head again in the final five minutes of regulation.

"We started really well in the first 10 minutes, but for whatever reason, we just took a breath and thought we could just kind of cruise through it," Brind'Amour said. "We never got our game going until the third period."

Five

Even giving an extra point to the Sabres in overtime, that's a big win for the Hurricanes, plain and simple.

And in the end, that's what matters, especially at this point of the season.

"They came back, too, and got the point, but even though they got the game-tying goal, we kept going forward and got the extra point."

"It's two desperate teams fighting their way to get into a playoff spot right now. We're just about there, but we've got to keep pushing," McElhinney said. "I think you saw a little bit of desperation at both ends at times and maybe some poor play in both ends at the same time. I'm just thankful to be on the right side of it."

"I love this group. I've been saying it all year. They've been kicked down a lot and had a lot of bad things happen, and they keep bouncing back," Brind'Amour said. "Even tonight, the game should have been over and we let them back in. That could have easily been a way to just look the other way, but they found a way. I appreciate the effort this group gives every night."

That was the biggest game of the season. The locker room knew it.

"It was huge. We know Buffalo is right there," Teravainen said. "We knew it was our biggest game of the year. It's big to get the win."

Until the next night, of course.

"Yeah, again, it's the biggest game of the year. We're in a position where we have to win every game," Teravainen said. "We have to be ready, especially on the road. We have to fight for any point."

Up Next

The Hurricanes head southeast to Manhattan to take on the New York Rangers in an 8 p.m. Friday night puck drop.

"All of the games are going to be tough down the stretch," Brind'Amour said. "They're pivotal for us, and a lot of teams are still in the hunt. It's going to be a grind the rest of the way."



Teravainen lifts Hurricanes past Sabres in overtime

Scores with 1:35 remaining for Carolina, which defeats Buffalo for eighth straight time

by Heather Engel

Teravainen wins it in overtime

Teuvo Teravainen skates in all alone and makes a gorgeous move to the forehand to bury the winning goal in overtime for the Hurricanes

BUFFALO -- Teuvo Teravainen scored with 1:35 remaining in overtime to lift the Carolina Hurricanes to a 6-5 win against the Buffalo Sabres at KeyBank Center on Thursday.

Teravainen had two goals and an assist, Sebastian Aho, Andrei Svechnikov and Jordan Martinook each had two assists, and Curtis McElhinney made 34 saves for the Hurricanes (27-21-6) who won for the 12th time in the past 17 games (12-4-1) and the eighth straight time against the Sabres.

"I was pretty tired," Teravainen said. "I saw Justin Faulk there but then I saw he wasn't there anymore so I figured I'd go myself and try something. At the end, I felt like I should try a move and I got lucky, the goalie went for my move."



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Jeff Skinner scored twice, and Linus Ullmark made 24 saves for the Sabres (26-20-7), who lost for the fourth time in the past six games (2-3-1).

"It's a choice you got to make, protecting your own net, having a respect for it," Buffalo coach Phil Housley said. "You look at the game, the five of the six goals come right in front of our own net. That's the one thing players from our opposition should be very wary of going into. No. 1, we got to be tougher to play against. We've got to start pushing guys out, boxing guys out, have a fear that if something gets into that area, there's not going to be the looks that this team had tonight."

Buffalo scored twice in the final five minutes of the third period to tie the game. Marco Scandella scored with 4:19 remaining to make it 5-4 before Skinner tied the game at 5-5 with 55 seconds left with Ullmark pulled for an extra attacker. Sam Reinhart had the primary assist on each goal.

"We had the game in our hands and then we weren't smart enough and we let them come back," Teravainen said. "We have to be more careful at the end there."

Nino Niederreiter scored a power-play goal at 14:58 of the third to give Carolina a 5-3 lead after Brock McGinn made it 4-3 at 11:03

Greg McKeegg put the Hurricanes up 3-2 at 1:54 of the third. Skinner tied it 3-3, holding off Justin Faulk on a breakaway before sliding the puck through McElhinney's pads at 5:48.

Faulk gave the Hurricanes a 1-0 lead when he took a pass from Aho at the right faceoff dot at 4:04 of the first period.

Teravainen put Carolina up 2-0 at 1:37 of the second period. Ullmark made a sprawling save on Martinook to the right of the net but the puck bounced out to his left, where Teravainen slid it in on the backhand.

"He's one of those players that's an elite game-changing type player," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "He has that type of talent. Obviously you saw it tonight in overtime and also on the power-play goal, he was in the right place picking up the backdoor stuff and making a nice pass. That's what he can do for us."

Evan Rodrigues scored at 8:15 of the second to make it 2-1 two seconds after a Sabres power play expired.

Jason Pominville tied it 2-2 on a rebound of his own shot from the bottom of the left circle at 15:14.

"We gave up too much," Skinner said. "Obviously, it's tough to win giving up that much. I think a couple breakdowns, the first one was probably 100 percent on me. ... I thought we did a good job of battling back. [Scandella] got a big goal for us there and [Reinhart] makes a good play for us to tie it up, get a point. We just have to find a way to give up less than that."

They said it

"I feel like we're getting better at those one-goal games. We lost a couple of leads there but I feel like we're learning from our mistakes. Maybe at the start of the season we would have lost that game but now we're getting better." -- Hurricanes forward Teuvo Teravainen

"We've all got to realize that we've got guys who are capable of making plays when we need too offensively. And with that being said, we need to have more respect for our own end. We need to all come back and pick up guys. If your shift calls for defending their guys, their top guys, that's what you're expected to do and we need more out of everyone in that regard." -- Sabres forward Sam Reinhart

Need to know

The Hurricanes reached 60 points in their first 54 games for the first time since 2005-06. ... Aho has 10 points (five goals, five assists) in eight games against the Sabres. ... With his goal, Pominville moved past Mike Foligno into sole possession of eighth place in Sabres history with 512 points. ... Carolina hasn't lost to the Sabres since a 3-2 loss on March 22, 2016. ... McElhinney, claimed off waivers from the Toronto Maple Leafs on Oct. 2, won his 13th game of the season to set a new NHL career high.

What's next

Hurricanes: At the New York Rangers on Friday (8 p.m. ET, NHLN, SN, MSG+, FS-CR, NHL.TV)

Sabres: Host the Detroit Red Wings on Saturday (1 p.m. ET, MSG-B, FS-D, NHL.TV)



Teravainen OT goal lifts Hurricanes to 6-5 win over Sabres

By JOHN WAWROW

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Tired as he felt, Hurricanes forward Teuvo Teravainen wasn't going to pass up a chance to score on a breakaway in overtime.

Gathering a loose puck at the right boards in his own end after Buffalo's Jack Eichel shot high and wide of the Carolina net, Teravainen scored 3:25 into the extra period to seal a 6-5 victory over the Sabres on Thursday night.

"I saw Faulker there, but then I saw he wasn't there anymore," Teravainen said, referring to trailing teammate Justin Faulk. "So I figured I'd go myself and try something."

Driving in from the right wing, Teravainen faked right before going across the crease and wrapping the puck around Linus Ullmark into the open left side.

It was Teravainen's second goal and sealed a game that finished at a frantic pace. Both teams combined for six goals



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in the third period, capped by Buffalo's Jeff Skinner scoring with 56 seconds left to force overtime.

Eichel blamed himself for how the game ended in a showdown of the Eastern Conference's ninth-place teams.

"Got to hit the net," Eichel said. "Can't miss the net there. That one's on me."

The Hurricanes improved to 12-4-1 in their past 17 games in a turnaround that has had them jump from a tie for 15th in the East to gaining sole possession of ninth. Carolina (27-21-6) upped its total to 60 points and moving one ahead of Buffalo.

Both teams began the day three points behind Columbus, which holds the conference's second and final wild-card spot.

Faulk, Brock McGinn, Greg McKegg and Nino Niederreiter also scored in a game during which the Hurricanes squandered 2-0 and 5-3 leads, but never trailed.

"I thought we started really well, the first 10 minutes, and for whatever reason we took a breath," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "We thought we could kind of just cruise through it."

What impressed Brind'Amour was how the Hurricanes refused to back down.

"I love this group. I've been saying it all year. They've been kicked down a lot. We've had a lot of bad things happen. And they just keep bouncing back," he said. "We let them back in and that could've easily been a time to look the other way. But they found a way."

Curtis McElhinney stopped 34 shots in his second consecutive start, and after a 23-save outing in a 4-0 win at Pittsburgh.

The Sabres continue a spiral in dropping to 9-14-5 since they had a franchise-record-matching 10-game winning streak end in November. Buffalo was coming off a 5-4 shootout win over Minnesota on Tuesday and failed to win consecutive games for the first time since Dec. 11-13.

Jason Pominville, Evan Rodrigues and Marco Scandella also scored for Buffalo. Linus Ullmark finished with 33 saves, while allowing four goals on 14 shots in the third period and overtime.

Buffalo's defense has unraveled in having surrendered 17 goals in its past three games, including a 7-3 loss to Chicago on Friday.

"That's Jason's job," coach Phil Housley said referring to general manager Jason Botterill, when asked to evaluate whether the Sabres need help on defense.

What bothered Housley is how Carolina scored all six goals from within 10 feet of the net.

"It's a choice you've got to make, protecting your own net, having respect for it," Housley said. "We've got to be tougher to play against."

The Hurricanes blew a pair of two-goal leads, including a 5-3 edge by allowing the Sabres to score twice in the final 4:19.

Scandella converted Sam Reinhart's cross-ice pass into the right circle, by snapping a shot over McElhinney's outstretched glove as the goalie made a lunging attempt to get across his crease.

Then, with Buffalo's net empty for an extra attacker, Skinner scored his second goal to tie the game with 56 seconds left. Reinhart set that one up, too, by driving up the right wing and threading a pass through the middle to a wide-open Skinner, who sneaked a shot in off the bottom of McElhinney's blocker.

Skinner, who was traded by Carolina to Buffalo in August, also tied the game at 3 earlier in the period by outmuscling Faulk and scoring on a partial breakthrough.

NOTES: The Hurricanes' 60 points through 54 games is their most since their Stanley Cup-winning season in 2005-06, when they had 80 over the same span. ... Sabres LW Johan Larsson returned after missing two games with an upper-body injury. ... The game featured teams with the NHL's longest active playoff droughts. The Sabres haven't made the postseason since 2011. The Hurricanes' drought dates to 2009. ... Sabres D Zach Bogosian played his 600th career game. ... Pominville's goal was his 512th point with the Sabres, moving him into eighth on the franchise list, one ahead of Mike Foligno.

UP NEXT

Hurricanes: Continue five-game road trip at New York Rangers on Friday night.

Sabres: Continue seven-game homestand against Detroit Red Wings on Saturday afternoon.



Insider Trading: Are Leafs trying to make deal with Hurricanes?

TSN Hockey Insiders Bob McKenzie and Pierre LeBrun joined host James Duthie to discuss what exactly was Sens owner Eugene Melnyk's declaration, the current market price for big name players, whether the Leafs and Hurricanes are still trying to make a deal and more.

Ottawa Senators owner Eugene Melnyk said on Tuesday that the team's rebuild will take a couple of years, but will lead to a five-year run of unprecedented success. What exactly was Melnyk's declaration?



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McKenzie: Was it a bold declaration of a new mission statement where the Senators will go in a completely different direction of running their team, going from a budget team to a cap team? Or was it really just a public sales pitch to Matt Duchene and Mark Stone to have them stay? Or cynically, Melnyk did this just to put some spin out there to protect the organization just in case Duchene and Stone are on their way out of town. The declaration happened Tuesday night at the Hockey Hall of Fame. In addition to all of the corporate people that were there, all of the Senators players were there as well - including Duchene and Stone. I would have to believe that Duchene and Stone have heard this talk before. The bottom line is do Duchene and Stone believe Melnyk? Duchene seems to be slow-playing his negotiations, while Stone doesn't seem to have much happening on that front at the moment. What I do believe is that by the beginning of next week we're going to have clarity. Either they're staying or they're going, and if they're going, they're getting traded.

What is the price for a big-name player on the trade market?

LeBrun: The market is not where the contenders want it to be right now. A lot of the contending teams are frustrated by the high prices right now that are attached to some of the bigger rental names. In particular, my sense is that Nashville and Boston checked in on Artemi Panarin in Columbus and had a bit of sticker shock when they found out how much it's going to take to pry him out of there this early in the process. We're still two-and-half weeks out from the deadline, and I think as time goes on, the price should go down; especially if Stone or Duchene are added to the trade market next week. To me, those two guys would change the landscape big time. I think the contenders have to be patient.

There were previous rumours about the Carolina Hurricanes and Toronto Maple Leafs possibly doing a trade, and apparently the two teams are still talking

LeBrun: One of my sources in Buffalo saw Maple Leafs assistant general manager Laurence Gilman in the press box in Buffalo for Thursday's game against the Carolina Hurricanes. I don't think he's there to scout the Sabres, as far as I can tell. Is Gilman there because the Leafs still covet a right-handed shot defenceman, or is it because Micheal Ferland, who has been on the market, is a power forward and that's a scenario where the Leafs could use an upgrade. This is the second time that Gilman has scouted the Hurricanes over the last couple of weeks.

NCAA stars Quinn Hughes and Dante Fabbro are eyeing early entry into the NHL

McKenzie: Not a surprise to anyone in Vancouver, but the expectation is that as soon as the season is over for the University of Michigan, the expectation is that sophomore player Quinn Hughes, who was drafted by the Canucks in the first round of the 2017 draft, wants to turn pro as quickly as possible. Meanwhile, Nashville's first-rounder from 2016, University of Boston junior Dante Fabbro, is also expected to turn pro. Fabbro gives Nashville a depth option on the blue line, or, a potential trade chip as they start to talk about all these rentals.

What's the market on Ilya Kovalchuk?

LeBrun: I would say that he would be open to a trade to a contending team, for the right fit. Kovalchuk has a full no-trade clause, so he controls his future. Remember, when he went to the Los Angeles Kings in the summer, there was quite a fierce bidding war for Kovalchuk's services. He was sold on the premise that the Kings would be a team that could go to the playoffs, obviously that hasn't played out. I think the Kings would play ball with him and try to accommodate him. The thing is though, he's got two more years left on his contract at 6.25 on the cap. It is a front-loaded deal, but I think given all of the rental players on the market, it's going to be a tough sell for a contending team.



Niederreiter leading 'Canes playoff surge

By Adam Gretz

For most of the 2018-19 NHL season the Carolina Hurricanes have been making headlines for what they have done after games.

Their Storm Surge celebrations after home victories has produced a wide range of responses from excitement locally

and in the locker room, to some outrage and anger mostly north of the border.

After their 4-0 win in Pittsburgh on Tuesday night, arguably the Hurricanes' best and most complete effort of the season, I asked forward Jordan Martinook what it would take for them to do a Storm Surge on the road, an act that would probably produce the most boiling hot takes hockey has ever seen



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(while also being wildly entertaining). He quickly responded with “that will not happen. I’m just putting that out there right now. We will not do that on the road. Only for the home fans.”

Hey, it never hurts to ask.

While the Storm Surges are fun thing to talk about and watch, and have definitely helped put a young, improving team in the spotlight more than it otherwise would have been, it is time we started to pay attention to what this team is doing during games.

Because it, too, is worth watching right now.

What they are doing is playing their way back into playoff contention.

They enter Thursday’s massive game against the Buffalo Sabres three points back of a playoff spot in the Eastern Conference and actually tied with the Sabres in the standings, making it a huge four-point game. A win in regulation would be a massive swing for either team in their quest to snap what is a lengthy postseason drought for both teams.

Lately, these are two teams trending in very different directions.

While the Sabres are in a bit of a freefall after a white-hot start that included a 10-game winning streak, the Hurricanes have been steadily climbing the standings thanks to an 11-4-1 run over their past 16 games.

One of the biggest developments for the Hurricanes in recent weeks has been the acquisition of forward Nino Niederreiter from the Minnesota Wild in exchange for Victor Rask.

For years the Hurricanes have been a team that’s been a sleeper pick because of their ability to dominate the shot charts and the possession game, but they’ve always fallen short of making the playoffs because their two biggest weaknesses have been goaltending and a lack of true finishers on the roster. If you can’t stop the puck and you can’t put the puck in the other team’s net you’re probably not going to win many games.

Rask’s 2018-19 season (and his 2017-18 one for, that matter) was pretty emblematic of the first weakness. For as good as he may have been helping to drive possession and making plays in the neutral zone he was never going to be

somebody that was going to consistently finish or put the puck in the net.

Niederreiter will, and in his first couple of weeks with the Hurricanes has been one of their most productive offensive players having already scored five goals (along with an assist) in his first six games with the team. There is an argument to be made he has already been the difference in two wins during that stretch with a pair of two-goal efforts. It was a perfect addition for the Hurricanes because he not only gives them the type of player they needed right now in the short-term, but he is still signed for three more seasons after this one and is young enough to still be a part of this core that is built around Sebastian Aho, Teuvo Teravainen, Andrei Svechnikov, and what is still a very young, talented defense.

While Niederreiter has given the offense a much-needed boost, the other big question that will determine how far this team goes is what they are able to get out of their goaltenders

Veteran Curtis McElhinney has, quite surprisingly, emerged this season as their best goaltender and carries a .918 save percentage into Thursday night after shutting out the Penguins. Whether or not he’s able to continue that level of play remains to be seen. He’s played well over the past few years in limited action, but he has only played more than 30 games in a season one time in his career and that was four years ago.

The Hurricanes have been one of the best shot suppression teams in the league for several years now but always seem to get burned because they haven’t had even adequate goaltending in net. They don’t need Carey Price or Andrei Vasilevskiy to be a top-tier defensive team.

Even decent, league average goaltending what probably give them that and help put them back in the playoffs for the first time since 2009.

In his limited action this season McElhinney has given them that level of play.

If he can continue to do so that development, combined with the addition of Niederreiter and continued development of Aho and Teravainen into top-line players, might at least give them a shot to make that happen this season.



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The Hockey News

How does the Matthews contract affect the likes of Marner, Point, Rantanen and Tkachuk?

Auston Matthews' contract was the first — and biggest — domino to fall in the next wave of major restricted free agent signings. But what does it mean for other young, burgeoning stars who are about to see their entry-level deals expire?

By Ken Campbell

The reality is that when Auston Matthews' entry-level contract expired after this season, he could have walked into GM Kyle Dubas' office and demanded an eight-year deal worth \$15.9 million per season. Whether or not he would have received it is another thing, but he would have been fully within his rights to ask for the maximum term with an annual salary of 20 percent of the salary cap. And that would have put his team in one heck of a bind.

He obviously did not do that, instead agreeing to a five-year extension that will average out to just over \$11.6 million per season. For a kid who eschewed both major junior hockey and the U.S. national team development program to play his draft year in Switzerland, a kid who was born in California and raised in Arizona and had no emotional attachment to Toronto, a kid who followed agent Judd Moldaver when the latter left the high profile CAA Agency last year, there was some thought that perhaps Matthews would be the one to finally shed the hockey player mentality and put his own financial interests ahead of those of his team, the way Sidney Crosby and Connor McDavid did before him.

"Auston Matthews could have driven whatever deal Auston Matthews wanted to drive," one agent said. "The Leafs had no choice if they believe Auston Matthews is their core piece other than to give him what he wanted for the term he wanted. He was perfectly positioned for it. The Maple Leafs have made decisions that have impacted Auston Matthews getting the most money possible. That shouldn't impact Auston Matthews."

So that made it a team-friendly contract. Until, of course, you realize that he stands to become an unrestricted free agent two months before his 27th birthday, when he could be at the height of his career. So that makes it a great deal for the player. With a U.S. television deal coming up in two years, gambling revenues on the way and another expansion team that will likely create more money in the system than ever, this yearly stipend is going to look like a bargain if revenue records continue to be smashed. Advantage: team. But then again, Matthews will have the second-highest cap hit in the NHL and will tie John Tavares for the top salary in the NHL next season, so the player made out like a bandit. He's getting a lot of money to cover the Group II years of this contract.

To be sure, there are varying opinions on which party made out better on this deal. But now that the biggest dog has

signed, how will it affect other young NHL stars coming out of their entry-level deals this summer, a group that is without a doubt the best in league history? When you consider the likes of teammate Mitch Marner, Mikko Rantanen, Brayden Point, Patrik Laine, Matthew Tkachuk, Sebastian Aho, Brock Boeser and Kyle Connor, it's a formidable group. For the past couple of seasons, conventional thinking was that you got your young stars through their entry-level deals and got them under contract for eight years after that. But the Matthews signing has changed that dynamic. There are undoubtedly players who have taken note of Matthews' move and will reconsider their position. To be 26 or 27 years old with the possibility of signing an eight-year deal with the team of your choice is a powerful enticement.

"For sure it changes the landscape," another agent said. "One good thing about this contract is the term. If this doesn't change for (other entry-level players), then they're not opening up their minds to what the realm of the possibilities are. At the end of the day, no player has to sign a contract he doesn't have to sign."

The cautionary tale here is McDavid, who signed his eight-year extension a year early, which basically tied him to the Edmonton Oilers for the next nine years. He took less money than he could have, placing his faith in the Oilers that they would spend that money wisely. They did not and now he's in for seven years on a team that is not close to being a contender at a wage that is woefully low in relation to his abilities and his status as the undisputed best player in the world.

"Matthews will be 26 years old at the end of this contract, which is better than being 30," another agent said. "And if he wants to leave, he has more control than if he signed an eight-year deal."

Really, the only risk Matthews is enduring at this point is the unlikely event of a career-ending injury. Another agent pointed out though, that if Matthews had signed an eight-year extension now, he would be 29 (going on 30) when it expired. He could conceivably sign another eight-year deal after that. But as it stands now, if he signs an eight-year deal after this one, he'll be 34 (going on 35) when it expires. "Maybe he doesn't get the other three years to make up for the eight-plus-eight contract."

The others will be watching closely. "The key thing is what does Marner do?" an agent said. "Then what can Point, Tkachuk, Rantanen say their worth is compared to Marner? If Marner is insistent that he be paid like Matthews or close to it, you're going to have a lot of arguing from those players because they're very close to Marner."



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SB NATION
CANES COUNTRY

Hurricanes Get Key Road Win In 6-5 OT Thriller over Sabres

Carolina takes a back and forth affair on Teravainen's OT winner.

By Andy House

The Carolina Hurricanes captured a topsy-turvy affair that saw them never actually trail, but also not earn victory until a Teuvo Teravainen OT winner that capped a 6-5 thriller in Buffalo.

An explosive third period saw three goals per side, and although most of the highlights were reserved for the final regulation period, both Curtis McElhinney and Linus Ullmark were peppered with quality chances for most of the night, with McElhinney stopping 31 shots and Ullmark 24. Teravainen's night produced two goals and three points total, while former Cane Jeff Skinner notched two important third period goals for the Sabres. Eleven different Canes and Sabres found the score sheet, as offense ruled the day.

As they have done so often in their solid play of late, the Canes struck first. A wonderful pass from Sebastian Aho to a crashing Justin Faulk in the right circle got the Canes on the board just over four minutes into action. The Canes continued a fruitful first period, and the momentum carried into the second period as Teravainen cleaned up near the crease after a Jordan Martinook shot rang off the crossbar, and Carolina was out in front 2-0.

After Teravainen's goal however, the Sabres officially engaged. They continued to challenge McElhinney in the Carolina end, and just shy of the halfway point in the game, Evan Rodrigues provided the first reward on the board for Buffalo as his wristed drew the Sabres within a goal. The push continued, with McElhinney turning aside a tight chance from Conor Sheary among other opportunities. But at 15:14 of the second, longtime Sabre Jason Pominville knotted the score at 2. Through two periods, the Sabres had been the aggressors, but gave Carolina a reason for optimism just prior to the end of the second.

As the Canes sought to regroup, they were given a power play that extended into the third period. While the Canes again failed to cash in on the man advantage (11 straight empty PP's at that point), Greg McKegg deposited the puck

from the door step after a swift feed from Trevor van Riemsdyk to give the Canes the lead again. The lead was short-lived, however. Following a mad scramble in front of the Buffalo net, a clearing ricocheted off a skate and sprung Jeff Skinner towards McElhinney with Faulk in tow on his hip. Skinner muscled Faulk off him and flipped a backhander past McElhinney to even the score.

As the third period rolled on, the Canes began to put together what was arguably their best period of the night, and they were rewarded for their constant pressure as Martinook missed the net from out front, but regathered the bouncing puck behind the net and fed Brock McGinn out in front for the go ahead marker just over halfway through the final stanza. With just over five minutes remaining, Skinner missed a golden opportunity, and followed up his miss with an ill-timed (and perhaps dubious) slashing penalty. The Canes broke the power play drought with Nino Niederreiter cashing in right in front on a terrific feed from Teravainen.

The Sabres would not go quietly however, as Marco Scandella answered back just over a minute later as McElhinney went down on what may have been goalie interference (the Canes were without their challenge, having used it on Pominville's tally in the second period). The goal drew the Sabres within one goal at 5-4. With 55.4 seconds remaining, Skinner got his revenge for the earlier penalty, as his beat McElhinney from the left circle to tie the game, and ultimately sending the contest into overtime.

In the three-on-three period, each team created chances, but after Jack Eichel missed the net, Carolina broke free with a 2-on-0 opportunity. Teravainen tucked the winner past Ullmark with a tight backhand-forehand deke, giving the Canes their first OT win since November 12 and extending their winning streak over the Sabres to eight consecutive games.

The Canes exited Buffalo with two points, vaulting ahead of the Sabres by one point in the overall standings. Carolina will head to the Big Apple to attempt to break their losing streak in Madison Square Garden on Friday night, as the Rangers honor their 1994 Stanley Cup winning squad, with faceoff taking place at 8:00 p.m.

About Last Night: Avoiding Heartbreak

Teravainen saved the day in overtime, but last night was almost heartbreaking for the Canes.

By Cody Hagan

Thanks to Teuvo Teravainen, the Carolina Hurricanes somehow escaped Buffalo with a win last night. The Sabres, more specifically Jeff Skinner, did everything in their (his)

power to send the Canes packing with nothing to show for their effort. The 6-5 overtime victory showed the Canes' ability to be resilient and not give up despite plenty of opportunities to do so.

The Good - We Got The Goals



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The Canes scored not one, not two, not three, but six goals against a goaltender last night — which is something they have only done three other times this season. To no one's surprise, they have won all four of those games now.

The offensive outpouring came in all different forms last night. Justin Faulk got things off and running in the first period after receiving a very nice pass from Sebastian Aho.

Teravainen tallied the Canes' only goal of the second period thanks to a good bounce off the top of the net and back in to play. While there was certainly some luck involved in the play Teravainen's good positioning and fight to get to the loose puck is what created the goal.

A wild third period feature Greg McKegg and Brock McGinn scoring goals as a direct result of getting to the front of the net. Both guys found an open area and won the battle in front for tap in goals.

The Hurricanes even got a power play goal last night. If that isn't a sign that their offense was really rolling nothing is. Nino Niederreiter continued his torrid pace as a Hurricanes off a feed from Teravainen which at the time put the Canes up by two late in the third period.

It feels like the offensive drought of December was such a long time ago seeing as the Canes are having few issues scoring in bunches now. It's unrealistic to score six goals every game, but if they can continue to put up three or more every night their odds of winning skyrocket. They will need to keep getting contributions from their blue line if they want to keep up this pace, but with guys like Brett Pesce, Justin Faulk, and Dougie Hamilton heating up, there's no reason to believe that isn't possible.

The Bad - Almost Letting Skinner Steal The Game

It has been a rough few weeks when it comes to former Hurricanes scoring against the current Hurricanes. Elias Lindholm, Derek Ryan and Noah Hanifin all scored on Sunday when the Flames were in town. Jeff Skinner scored when the Sabres were in town back in January. (Amazingly Matt Cullen did not score against the Canes on Tuesday night in Pittsburgh.) But the show continued last night — once again, at the hands of Skinner.

Everyone on the Canes knows how dangerous Skinner is and how motivated he is going to be against Carolina, and yet they still allowed him to nearly steal the game from them.

Skinner scored his first of the game in the third period when the Sabres were down 3-2. In typical Skinner fashion the goal was one for the highlight reels as he completely outworked Justin Faulk and beat Curtis McElhinney.

That was bad enough but it only gets worse. Skinner would once again score to tie the game but this time it was with less than a minute to go and the Sabres had their goaltender pulled. Somehow the defense for Carolina let Skinner creep in all alone and he was set up by Sam Reinhart for the game tying tally.

That goal was allowed because every Carolina player got puck focused. They were trying to hold on the lead late and let #53 get wide open. That play gifted Buffalo a point in the standings that the Canes desperately did not want to give up.

Jeff Skinner has always been a very competitive person and one day we won't be taken aback by him scoring goals against the Canes. Right now the wounds are still very fresh from his trade and from seeing how well he has succeeded in Buffalo. It was easy to see he was out to break the hearts of every one of the Hurricanes last night and they almost let him pull it off.

Just as when you play the Penguins and you have to know where Sidney Crosby is at all times or Alex Ovechkin for the Capitals, you absolutely have to know where Skinner is at all times when you play against him. The Hurricanes failed miserably at that last night and they have to hope that single point does not cost them in April.

The Great - Turbo Time

Teuvo Teravainen continues to prove night in and night out that he is much more than Sebastian Aho's sidekick. Turbo is a valuable asset to the Hurricanes and he has earned every penny of his new contract. Last night he scored three points including the game winning goal in overtime in just another example of how good he really is.

After the puck rimmed around the board Teravainen was set up with a breakaway to end things in overtime. He pulled a fancy little deke out of his back pocket and sent the Canes off to New York City with two points.

After the game Teuvo could have taken all the credit but he chose to credit the entire team. As an entire group they pulled off a much needed victory but they couldn't have done it without Teuvo.

Moral of the Story

If you didn't know, now you know: the Carolina Hurricanes are hot. They have won the two biggest games of the road trip already and now have a chance to break their nearly decade-long curse in Madison Square Garden. It took a while, but Rod Brind'Amour has the team headed in the right direction. They all care for each other and are playing together as one unit. That is the recipe for success. You can have all the talent in the world but if they don't come together as one they will never win.

Caring about one another and giving it their all every night has led to numerous victories like last night. These are games we have become accustomed to seeing the Canes lose over the years but they are finding ways to get it done. They face a tough challenge tonight but if they can find a way to break the curse of MSG on top of their last two massive victories, you may want to start clearing your calendar for April.



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Metropolitan Division Weekly Roundup: The Standings Tighten

Only eight points separate the first through fifth place teams in the Division, two weeks before the trade deadline.

By Zeke Lukow

1. New York Islanders: 66 Points (30-16-6)

We begin this week's roundup with This Week In Josh Ho-Sang News: he has been scratched at the AHL level, the second straight game that he was scratched for Bridgeport. This all but proves that they are going to trade the winger before or at the deadline. Normally moves to hold players out of lineups only come when they are healthy. It would be expected that a move would be coming within the week since it doesn't make sense to keep a young player out of the NHL and AHL to stop his development for any other reason.

Meanwhile, in the NHL, the Islanders have slowed down from their hot January with a 1-1-2 record in their last four games, including their first regulation loss in eight games. The Isles do still hold the reins of the division. However, they are now only in the lead by two points and are only eight points ahead of the fifth-place Hurricanes. Even despite the recent cold spell, Robin Lehner has continued to be a pillar in net. He stopped 24 of 26 shots faced in his most recent start and now leads the league with a .932 save percentage.

2. Washington Capitals: 64 Points (29-18-6)

On Tuesday, Alex Ovechkin earned his 1,180th point to pass Sergei Fedorov as the highest scoring Russian-born player in NHL history, earning the title with an assist on T.J. Oshie's opening goal. Ovechkin reached this mark in 193 fewer games than Fedorov took to reach this mark. With so much gas left in the tank, Ovechkin is poised to shatter the record and run away with it.

Tuesday was another big night for a former Capital, Jay Beagle. Beagle left the Caps this offseason to go to the Vancouver Canucks on a four-year, \$12 million deal. This is the first time he has played in his former rink, and the Caps presented him with his Stanley Cup ring before the game in their locker room. Ovechkin also hugged Beagle on the ice before the game started. It was fun to see them reunited after they played together for 472 games. It was hard for all (including Beagle) to hold back the tears when they played the tribute video in D.C.

3. Pittsburgh Penguins: 62 Points (28-19-6)

The Penguins stayed busy this past week with another trade that saw them trade Derick Brassard and Riley Sheahan along with three 2019 draft picks to the Florida Panthers. In return they received Jared McCann and Nick Bjugstad. This move allowed the Penguins to get younger and receive players with term in exchange for two rentals and picks. One of the more fun stories and subsequent videos was showing the Penguins players' commute from Florida to Pittsburgh for their game. They only made it to PPG Paints Arena with eight minutes to spare.

The Penguins have also mentioned that they expect to make more roster tweaks heading to the deadline. They now only have two picks in the first four rounds of the draft, which will make it harder for Jim Rutherford to get a deal done. It

seems to be Bryan Rust would be the easiest target to trade, unless they are looking to move Olli Maatta or another young defenseman to get back more veterans for a Cup run.

4. Columbus Blue Jackets: 61 Points (29-20-3)

The Blue Jackets were able to snap their five-game losing streak with a win against the Avalanche on Tuesday night. The Blue Jackets had their lead in the final wild card position down to one point before they were able to dig deep to beat the Avs. During this down streak for Columbus, they let up four or more goals four times. Even in their last win, they allowed three goals, but were able to overcome their defensive problems.

The problem is that they are still in no man's land. Until the deadline passes, no one will know if they are going for it or not. They are still playing like they are, but if they trade their top players, it doesn't matter what they do or don't do now. They need to make a decision, but much like the Canes and Micheal Ferland, it feels like only time can help make the decision for them.

5. Carolina Hurricanes: 58 Points (26-21-6)

The Hurricanes started their longest road trip of the season off with a bang, topping the Penguins 4-0 in Pittsburgh and head to Buffalo tonight. This was Curtis McElhinney's first start since January 15th in a 6-1 snooze fest in Madison Square Garden. He was injured after that game but was able to return Tuesday. With his great performance, it would make sense to consider riding the hot hand against a slumping Sabres team who have lost back-to-back games.

The game also saw multiple career milestones for Hurricanes players. Jordan Martinook earned a career high 12th goal of the season in his 300th game played. Brett Pesce also eclipsed his high goal mark for a season with his fifth on Tuesday. Andrei Svechnikov scored a late goal in the third to break his slump, his first point since January 20th and only his second goal of 2019. He created his own opportunity and finished the goal which hopefully brings him out of his slump.

The Canes now have four games left on the road trip, none of which are against playoff teams. They will now face the Sabres, Rangers, Senators, and Devils. For a realistic playoff push they need to win no fewer than three of these last four games. The Canes must consistently beat bad teams regardless of location to move up into a wild card position. (Now, that said, we can write off the game in New York as a loss since the Canes have a VERY well publicized losing streak at MSG.)

6. Philadelphia Flyers: 54 Points (24-23-6)

Rookie goaltender Carter Hart was named the NHL's second star of the week after earning a 3-0-0 record with a .931 save percentage and a 2.27 goal against average. He followed this up with another win against the Vancouver Canucks on Monday which saw him stop 41 of 42 total shots faced. The Flyers have now won eight straight games after being in dead last in the Metro.

Hart's recent play has some considering him for the Calder Trophy for the league's most outstanding rookie. While he



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has been able to turn around a team that has played seven different goaltenders, he is a huge longshot. Hart didn't come to the league until just about the half-way point and has only played 16 games so far this season. Both Elias Pettersson and Rasmus Dahlin have played the full season and have had season long impacts on their respective teams, which will weigh heavier in consideration.

7. New York Rangers: 54 Points (23-22-8)

In huge news, the New York Rangers traded defenseman Cody McLeod to the Nashville Predators for a seventh-round pick in 2020. McLeod was a Nashville Predator last season when he was claimed by the Rangers on waivers on January 25. Apparently, they missed his physicality so much they offered a draft pick to get him back just a year later.

The Rangers certainly aren't done yet, they still have a ton of moves to make before the deadline passes. While everyone on the team has been mentioned in trade rumors, I could really see Mika Zibanejad sticking around. He is only 25 and is signed through the 2021-2022 season. He has proven to be a top center that could still be around for the next Rangers window. I would think that they could hold onto him

to keep a real top six together when the likes of Filip Chytil and Lias Andersson are ready to compete at a high level.

8. New Jersey Devils: 47 Points (20-25-7)

On Wednesday the New Jersey Devils traded Brian Boyle to the Nashville Predators for a 2019 second-round draft pick. This was a huge win for the Devils: they don't have a ton of assets to trade at the deadline, and the fact they could sell a 34-year-old winger for a second-round pick is great for where they are at in a rebuild.

Another crazy trade rumor coming out of New Jersey, somehow, is reigning Hart Trophy winner Taylor Hall. Though it won't likely happen this season, it does show that it is a trade they are considering. When you look at the team and where they are in the rebuild, it is unlikely that Hall would want to re-sign for a long-term deal, but it is a conversation they will need clarity on as soon as possible. The longer the time a team can have a player, the more they will pay. Even if it isn't at this deadline, trading him at the Draft will bring back a significantly larger return than at the 2020 trade deadline.



Wrestling Night Featuring R-Truth is March 2

Published: February 08, 2019

The Charlotte Checkers' second annual Wrestling Night is Saturday, March 2, at Bojangles' Coliseum. WWE Superstar R-Truth will sign autographs before the game and perform live during the first intermission.

A package including a ticket to that night's 6 p.m. game against the Binghamton Devils and a printed photo to bring to the autograph session is available now for just \$20. The autograph session will begin promptly when doors open at 4:30 p.m.

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SportScan

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

1129635 New York Rangers

For Stephane Matteau, a Famous Goal Could Not Cover the Darkness

By Dave Kaplan

The tattoo etched across the left side of Stephane Matteau's torso reminds him of a signature life goal.

It does not depict his immortal moment 25 years ago this May. There is no image of the Stanley Cup, which he raised two weeks later at Madison Square Garden to celebrate the Rangers' first championship in 54 years.

As the Rangers' eternal playoff hero lifts his shirt, he reveals the inked-in words he aspires to: "Believe in yourself. You are braver than you think, more talented than you know, and capable of more than you imagine."

Matteau is wiser and sober at 49. He has battled struggles familiar to the hockey culture he grew up in: mental scars, fear, alcoholism. All of which almost cost him his life.

He had lived every Canadian child's dream, reaching the N.H.L., playing 13 seasons and being a playoff hero. On May 27, 1994, in the second overtime of Game 7 of the Eastern Conference finals against the Devils, Matteau scored perhaps the most significant goal in Rangers history. His name — and Howie Rose's "Matteau, Matteau, Matteau!" radio call — have a permanent place in New York sports history.

Whenever Matteau returns to the city — as he will Friday, when the Rangers host a reunion of the 1994 Stanley Cup champions — he knows he is part of a venerated alumni group. He still receives effusive gratitude from Rangers fans. Yet his famous goal, which he still calls lucky, does not erase lingering feelings of doubt and career dissatisfaction.

Depression marred his childhood, his hockey career and his retirement. He gave up drinking 17 years ago, but his anxieties and mental struggles were becoming too much to bear. About seven years ago, Matteau realized he was heading toward "a dark and dangerous place" and finally sought counseling.

"I'm humbled, very privileged, I was the chosen one," he said of his playoff heroics. "I feel blessed to have a lot of good people around me, during good times, and especially the bad ones."

Matteau was an inconsistent 24-year-old left wing when the Cup-starved Rangers acquired him and Brian Noonan from Chicago at the March 1994 trade deadline, because of the persistence of Coach Mike Keenan.

"Mike was banging on me all season about getting Matteau," recalled Neil Smith, the general manager at the time, who gave up Tony Amonte, a 33-goal scorer the previous season. "He went to the finals with him in Chicago in '92. Although we had the best record in the league, Mike felt adamant we'd need size and depth in the playoffs, even if we had to give up our future."

Matteau was a revelation in the playoffs. He scored six goals, including a double-overtime goal in Game 3 against the Devils, and repeated the feat in Game 7, making him an instant celebrity.

Yet his tenure in New York lasted only a year and a half. He was so unproductive for the Rangers after they won the Cup that Smith traded Matteau to St. Louis. There he was reunited with Keenan, who acquired Matteau four times during his N.H.L. coaching stints.

Keenan said he appreciated the team skills that Matteau brought. "He was a versatile player, a big, strong skater who was the type of player you need in the playoffs," Keenan said. "We needed him in New York to win the Cup, particularly against New Jersey, with how big they were."

"I pushed him hard, like everyone. I saw he had some self-doubt, but I never once had any doubt about him."

Matteau could not sustain the confidence his former coach had in him.

"I was known as a playoff player," said Matteau, who never scored more than 19 goals a season during his career. "And then I go the next seven years without one goal in the playoffs. Why is that?"

Matteau, center, celebrating his double-overtime goal that beat the Devils in Game 7 of the Eastern Conference finals in 1994. The Rangers won the Stanley Cup two weeks later. Credit: Barton Silverman/The New York Times

He played in Calgary, Chicago, New York, St. Louis, San Jose and Florida. Much of the baggage Matteau carried to those places was psychological.

His doubt stretched back to a tormented childhood in northwestern Quebec. He grew up in Rouyn (now Rouyn-Noranda), a small middle-class town about 380 miles from Montreal. It has produced 27 N.H.L. players, including stars like Pierre Turgeon and his brother Sylvain, Dave Keon, Réjean Houle and Eric Desjardins.

One of Matteau's closest friends was Pierre Turgeon. They were born five days apart and were teammates on youth baseball and hockey teams. Turgeon, who went on to score more than 500 goals in a 19-year N.H.L. career, said Matteau was always "selling himself a little short," despite his prowess as a multisport athlete.

"Even as a pro, Steph used to worry," Turgeon said. "I remember when he got traded to St. Louis, he was put on a line with me and Brett Hull, which was great. But he says to me, 'What if I get 20 goals? Everyone will always expect me to do it again.'"

A gangly boy with a bad complexion, Matteau said, he was a frequent target of bullies.

Worse, though, was his father's relentless criticism. "Whatever I did, it wasn't good enough," Matteau said.

Turgeon noticed that Matteau's father, a mechanic in a car dealership, was "very hard on him."

"But," he added, "I don't think anybody knew what was going on with Steph inside."

As 12-year-olds, Turgeon and Matteau were the standouts on the Canadian baseball team that went to the 1982 Little League World Series. But Matteau's self-esteem worsened. Around the time he was 15, Matteau seriously considered suicide. That he did not go through with it made him feel even more cowardly.

"If I could've spent my entire youth curled up under a rug," Matteau said, "I would have."



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He has found new purpose in his sobriety: talking to young people about overcoming despair, relating to their fears and vulnerabilities as authentically as he can.

Almost two years ago, Matteau helped create a leadership program for Bronx elementary and middle school students in partnership with Woodlawn Cemetery. He has visited about 50 schools.

"I struggled with a lot of things the kids go through, being bullied, feeling hopeless," Matteau said. "I want them to know they can change their own lives."

Matteau, who lives in Montreal, has also been mentoring at-risk teens at River Rock Academy, an alternative school, in Lancaster, Pa. His wife of 24 years, Nathalie, frequently participates in the Lancaster programs, a reaffirmation of her belief in her husband, who seldom believed in himself.

"What that woman has endured with me," he said, "it's a miracle she refused to lose hope."

Both his children play hockey. His son, Stefan, 25, is a former first-round draft pick of the Devils who now plays for the Vegas Golden Knights' top affiliate, and his daughter, Alyson, 21, is a senior on the University of Maine women's hockey team.

Several years ago, Matteau coached a Quebec junior team that his son played on, and things frequently grew tense.

"I was hard on Stef," Matteau said. "I didn't want him to make the same mistakes as me."

His wife interceded, reminding Matteau of the pressure his own father put on him.

On a blustery January day, Matteau visited P.S. 69 in the South Bronx for a session with 20 fifth graders. He is a big man at 6 feet 4 inches and a only few pounds over his playing weight, 220. With casual humor, he easily connected with a multicultural group of children in his French Canadian accent.

Matteau talked to the students about their positive traits, about their relationships with peers and family. The conversations are designed to empower them to be kinder and more empathetic toward one another.

His two-hour program opened with a video of him scoring his famous Game 7 goal against the Devils.

"I've watched this video 10,000 times, and I still get goose bumps," Matteau told the students. "That was a great, exciting moment for me. But my legacy is more than just scoring one of the most important goals in Rangers history."

New York Times LOADED: 02.08.2019

1129636 New York Rangers

The broadcast booth chaos behind historic Rangers moment

By Justin Terranova

"Matteau, Matteau, Matteau ..." or was it Tikkanen?

Longtime Rangers play-by-play man Sam Rosen could not tell from his angle which player was responsible for the decisive goal in Game 7 of the 1994 Eastern Conference Finals against the Devils.

"Howie Rose's call is the iconic call and one of the great calls in New York sports," Rosen said of the radio call. "I felt John [Davidson] and I had a good call up top. Unfortunately, in the spot we were in, [we]

couldn't tell if it was [Stephane] Matteau coming around the net or Esa Tikkanen who was standing at the top of the crease."

One series later Rosen would proclaim, "The waiting is over," capturing the moment most Rangers fans had waited a lifetime for.

MSG Network's celebration of that championship on the 25th anniversary will culminate Friday before and during a matchup with the Hurricanes. There will be a special pregame episode of "Connections" with Brian Leetch, Adam Graves and Mike Richter, as well as a pregame tribute and in-game interviews with alumni from that team. Davidson, now the Blue Jackets president of hockey operations, will return to the booth alongside Rosen and Joe Micheletti to relive the amazing season.

That could include Rosen and Davidson's memorable trip to the parade. Initially, MSG bosses insisted the television partners work in the studio that day to give the network unique insight to what was going on as the parade moved up the Canyon of Heroes.

"John was beside himself, he wanted to be a part of the parade. I was disappointed but I was a team player," Rosen recalled. "The production meeting ended and John said, 'Come on, let's go to breakfast.' He was growling and we kind of shrugged and came back to the studio.

"We were into the coverage pretty well, following the team up the Canyon of Heroes. All of a sudden in the doorway appeared two police officers and they're like, 'You are coming with us.' We got up, gathered our stuff as quickly as we could and we were out of there. In a squad car, the siren was blasting and it was a white-knuckle ride. Sometimes we were on the wrong side of the road, sometimes going the wrong way on a one-way street. We finally got to the backside of City Hall and we were a part of the final celebration on the steps of City Hall. It was great."

There have not been any titles since for the Rangers, nearly halfway to the 54-year drought that defined the franchise until 1994. After a couple of recent near misses, the organization is in the first season of a rebuild that started nearly a year ago.

Friday night, however, will be about the magical run that captured a city. It was the final season when regional networks broadcast games straight through the Stanley Cup. Rosen's voice was the first most New Yorkers heard when the final agonizing second ticked off the clock in Game 7 against the Canucks.

"The feelings I had growing up in New York City, rooting for the Rangers, to have the championship call that ended this long, long drought and to see the Garden and feel the Garden erupt in joy, that was as good as it gets," Rosen said. "The way the final call came out — 'The waiting is over. The New York Rangers are the Stanley Cup champions, and this one will last a lifetime' — I am very proud of that."

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1129637 New York Rangers

How Henrik Lundqvist will be paying tribute to Mike Richter

By Larry Brooks

Henrik Lundqvist coveted the Statue of Liberty.

"When I came over for my first training camp [in 2005], I wanted to have the Statue of Liberty on the crown of my mask," the Rangers goaltender said. "Back home [in Sweden], playing for Frolunda [Indians], I had their insignia of the Indian headdress on my crown, so I wanted to keep that look.



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"But then the first week I was here, Cas told me that the Statue of Liberty was [Mike] Richter's trademark and I would have to change. And he says, 'Oh, by the way, No. 35 is gone, too.'"

That was a reference to Acasio Marques, the equipment manager fondly known as "Cas," the same fellow who on Thursday tended to the Richter-inspired Statue of Liberty mask Lundqvist wore in practice and will wear in Friday's Garden match against the Hurricanes following 25th anniversary ceremonies in honor of the 1994 Stanley Cup-winning Rangers.

"It's such an iconic look. I see it here a lot, it's on display here somewhere," said Lundqvist, who will auction off the mask for charity after its intended one-and-only use. "When I heard about these ceremonies, I asked my designer, Dave [Art], to come up with something that would honor Mike and that team and would have that look. And the Statue of Liberty.

"It celebrates not only Mike, but the team. I love it."

"It's cool to get this opportunity to honor that team and create a mask." @HLundqvist30 explains the design of his tribute mask for #NYR legend Mike Richter and the '94 team. pic.twitter.com/95duylkMZs

— New York Rangers (@NYRangers) February 7, 2019

One half of the mask is essentially the Richter design, with a picture of the Cup-winning goaltender and the year "1994" painted on the shell. The other side is Lundqvist's current design. There is the Statue on top and Lundqvist's crown logo at the bottom. It serves as an homage to a champion.

"When I came over here for the first time after I was drafted and went to a game, Mike wasn't playing so I was able to meet him in the lounge and talk with him," Lundqvist said. "Right away I could tell he was a very classy and humble man. I was just standing there with big eyes trying to take it all in. That's a great memory."

Lundqvist was a 12-year-old living in Sweden when Richter and the Rangers won the Cup. He said he remembers them winning and thinks he recalls highlights of the parade. He has seen Richter's signature penalty shot save against Pavel Bure in Game 4 of the finals and knows that it was a duplicate of the save No. 35 made against Bure on a breakaway in the 1994 All-Star Game at the Garden four-plus months earlier.

"It was the same," Lundqvist said, marveling. "Unbelievable."

Lundqvist is in his 14th season as a Ranger. He did not need nearly that long to appreciate the significance of 1994.

"If you've been here a year or two, you are aware of how important that year is to the organization," he said. "It's great to see the highlights, and it's been great to get to know these guys over the years and get a better understanding of who they were as a team.

"There were four or five All-Stars on their team? They were a great team, no doubt about it. I look forward to seeing them at the Garden."

Coach David Quinn remembers 1994, too.

"I was coaching at Northeastern at the time, and a Bruins fan," he said. "But for me, it was personal a little bit because of Leetchie [Brian Leetch] and Mike Richter — guys that I played with and knew — so I was certainly rooting for them.

"But I was rooting for the Rangers because it was good for hockey. When the Rangers are good, it's good for hockey."

That's an observation that will go over well in the Commonwealth.

Quinn said he has not decided whether Neal Pionk, a scratch for Wednesday's 4-3 shootout victory over the Bruins, will be reinserted into the lineup.

New York Post LOADED: 02.08.2019

1129638 New York Rangers

Rangers captured New York's heart in 1994 like no other team

By Larry Brooks

For one brief shining moment, there was Camelot.

Twenty-five years ago, Mark Messier was King Arthur, Brian Leetch, Mike Richter and Adam Graves were Knights of the Roundtable and history was made at the Garden, reverberating in the building and up the Canyon of Heroes through which the Rangers strode with glee as champions while a grateful city exulted.

A quarter of a century later, the memories resound and the moments in time, forever frozen in history, live on. The sights and the sounds can be conjured at the most fleeting notice. It has been 25 years since Captain Courageous said They'd Win That Night; 25 years since Matteau! Matteau! Matteau!; 25 years since the Save by Richter! against Pavel Bure; 25 years since Craig MacTavish won the final faceoff; 25 years since Messier went all "The Shining" upon receiving the Stanley Cup from Gary Bettman.

It has been 25 years and it seems like yesterday. It has been 25 years and the 1994 Rangers stand as one of our city's all-time sports royalty teams, just as do the 1968 Jets.

For they represent the definition of once in a lifetime.

Never before and never since has hockey occupied such a vital part of the city's pulse and life. The Rangers are an important franchise here, with a deep history. David Quinn, the Boston-bred fellow who happens to now coach the Blueshirts, said Thursday that when the Rangers are good, it is good for hockey. I will say this: When the Rangers are good, it is good for the city.

The Emile Francis teams are beloved. They represent the Boomers and everyone knows how we glory in nostalgia, excuse me for a second, I need to reset my SiriusXM to 18 for The Beatles Channel. But even as Jean Ratelle, Vic Hadfield and that era were celebrated the past two years and would be again if Brad Park joins them in the rafters, there is always that shroud that kind of hangs over everything. They didn't win. They did everything but win. They might be the best team in NHL history never to win.

The 1994 guys were not in for that. Never has a spotlight shined so brightly on a hockey team in New York. Never has a hockey team not only withstood that glare, but basked in it. The internal chaos coach Mike Keenan wrought that was accompanied by a dysfunctional relationship with general manager Neil Smith produced almost constant tension. The news, much broken by Post colleague Mark Everson, of Keenan's treachery during the finals, produced unprecedented madness.

The Rangers were A Story.

It was a big-time team, with big-time players for whom finishing second was not an option. If the Rangers had not won Game 6 of the Eastern Conference finals at the Meadowlands, chances are the entire crew — starting with Smith, Keenan and Messier — would have been run out of town. Few teams have operated under a more stringent championship-or-bust expectation and demand than that one. To think, they were a game away from extinction and Messier responded with one of the seminal performances in sports history.

Joe Namath in January 1969. Messier in May 1994.

This was a unique operation that needed Keenan on that wall, needed Smith to provide sane and loyal opposition, needed Messier to have truly



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one of the great seasons of any professional athlete in New York sports history, needed Richter to make a half-dozen spectacular saves in Game 6 against the Devils before Messier could get the first of his three, needed Leetch to be the ultimate difference-maker in talent.

Once since 1940.

When they won, everything changed somehow. The building still was full, and there were rocking moments, particularly during the 1997 playoffs when the remnants of the '94 squad were joined by a spear carrier named Wayne Gretzky and made it to the conference finals before losing to the Flyers. But it never has been quite the same. That doesn't mean the next one (going on, well, 25 years) won't be celebrated. Rest assured, it will. But it will not be the same.

Folks talk about Stephane Matteau never having to buy a drink here, but that should apply to them all to Eddie Olczyk and Sergei Zubov and Jeff Beukeboom and Doug Lidster; to Glenn Anderson, to the splendid Steve Larmer, to Glenn Healy to Alex Kovalev to Sergei Nemchinov to Kevin Lowe.

To all of them who won in 1994.

To all of them who produced a once in a lifetime moment for the Rangers and for New York.

To all of them who produced that one shining moment known as Camelot.

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1129639 New York Rangers

Forever linked by goal and call, Stephane Matteau and Howie Rose recall 1994 Rangers

By Neil Best

Stephane Matteau was sitting beside Howie Rose at Madison Square Garden on Wednesday, talking about you know what, when he recalled posing for a picture with the announcer early in 1995, after that season's NHL lockout.

"I said, 'Who's this guy?' " Matteau recalled.

Someone there told him Rose was "the guy who made the call."

"Then I asked the person: 'Which call?' " Matteau said, laughing.

Soon enough, he would learn which call, and he has been hearing and talking about it ever since.

"It really changed my life," Matteau said of how Rose's WFAN radio call of his double-overtime goal for the Rangers against the Devils in Game 7 of the 1994 Eastern Conference finals enhanced history.

While Rose and Matteau have been asked separately on hundreds of occasions about May 27, 1994, and Rose's "Matteau! Matteau! Matteau!" call, this was the first time they spoke publicly, at length, together about it.

The occasion was an MSG Networks video shoot on the Garden ice in which the two relived Matteau's goal, which advanced the Rangers to the Stanley Cup Final, where they beat the Canucks.

MSG will show the piece next month as part of its ongoing celebration of the '94 team's silver anniversary. Matteau is in town this week for events to mark the occasion, including a ceremony before Friday night's game against the Hurricanes.

MSG plans a day of programming around the '94 team, starting at 10 a.m. with replays of Games 6 and 7 of the '94 conference finals, then Games 4 and 7 of the '94 Cup Final.

At 6 p.m., there will be a special episode of "Connections" featuring Mike Richter, Brian Leetch and Adam Graves, followed at 6:30 by the anniversary celebration.

Matteau, 49, scored only 11 regular-season goals in 85 games across parts of three seasons as a Ranger — one of his six NHL teams — but he forever has been embraced here.

"Every time I come to New York City, people come up to me and say, 'I was at the game,' " Matteau told Newsday after the video shoot. "I don't know why, but they always say the section, row and seat. It must be 10, 15,000 people.

"Even though I was struggling in my career and in my life, that moment changed things, because it brings a smile on my face, always. [It showed me] I was not that bad. That's why I'm very grateful, and today I'm more grateful than I was five years ago, more than 10 years ago. It just keeps on building."

The game-winner would have been an iconic Rangers moment regardless, but Matteau said Rose's call has enhanced its impact on him.

"I have been linked with you for years," Matteau said to Rose. "I don't know your life story."

"You're not missing anything," Rose interjected.

"We're not close," Matteau said, "but I have so much respect for him, for the call."

Matteau hopes to leverage their bond by organizing a charity fundraising appearance with Rose.

He takes none of it for granted. He noted that if the Devils' Valeri Zhelepuhin had not tied it with 7.7 seconds left in regulation, none of this would be happening.

"This is something I cherish and I take pride in," he said. "How do I give back? Because there are a lot of hockey fans out there, they want to take pictures of me and I'm sure of [Rose]. What do I do with that? Do I just walk away and pretend that it never happened? I give them the respect."

In recent years, Rose and Matteau have texted each other every May 27 to commemorate their shared moment. Matteau did the hard part, but Rose provided the punctuation.

"What's nice about this relationship, such as it is, is that yeah, we're linked together for life now, which is great, and it's for the best of reasons for both of us," Rose said.

Rose initially feared he had blown the call because he seemed out of control, but by the time he arrived home that night, he knew that even for those who watched on TV, the radio replays were resonating.

When Matteau mentioned the picture of him posing with the radio guy he did not know months after the goal, Rose whipped out his phone and there it was, a quarter-century later.

"Howie," Matteau said, "you need to send that to me."

And so he did.

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1129640 New York Rangers

Celebration of 1994 Stanley Cup team will be a thrill for Kevin Shattenkirk, who grew up a Rangers fan



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By Colin Stephenson

GREENBURGH, N.Y. — It may feel like yesterday to some Ranger fans, but 25 years ago is a long time.

Six of the current Rangers weren't born yet when the Rangers won the Stanley Cup in 1994, and two — Boo Nieves and Brady Skjei — were less than six months old when Mark Messier lifted the trophy in Madison Square Garden that night. So, when the Rangers celebrate the 25th anniversary of the 1994 Stanley Cup on Friday, a good chunk of their team won't have any real connection to that moment.

Defenseman Kevin Shattenkirk will.

Shattenkirk, who was 5 years old in 1994, grew up in Harrison, N.Y., in Westchester County, and played his youth hockey at Rye Playland, where the Rangers used to practice. He idolized Brian Leetch, and has vivid memories of sticking around after his Saturday and Sunday morning games to watch the Rangers practice, and chasing after pucks that flew out of the rink with all the other kids.

So, to Shattenkirk, who turned 30 last week, getting the chance to see the members of the '94 team, who will be reunited and feted at an on-ice celebration at 6:30 p.m., before the current Rangers host the Carolina Hurricanes, is a big deal.

"I think anytime you get a chance to meet the alumni and rub elbows with them, it's amazing, but when a lot of them are your childhood idols and heroes, that doesn't lose its specialness to me," Shattenkirk said after the Rangers practiced at their MSG Training Center Thursday. "It's going to be just as fun for me tomorrow as it's going to be for the Rangers fans that are going to be in attendance."

Henrik Lundqvist, the oldest current Ranger, was 12 years old back in Sweden when the Blueshirts won the Cup. He didn't watch the games live — they were on in the middle of the night over there — but he has gotten to know the players on that team over the years, and really appreciates the significance of that Cup win to the organization. Lundqvist will wear a new mask in Friday's game, one that replicates the design of Mike Richter's 1994 mask — with the face of Lady Liberty on the forehead — and has a picture of Richter himself on the side.

"This mask, from '94, is very iconic," said Lundqvist, who got the idea of creating a mask after equipment manager Acacio ("Cass") Marques told him a few months ago about Friday's planned celebration. "I see it a lot — it's on display here, somewhere. It feels good to give a tribute not only to [Richter], but the team. But of course, he was a big part of it, and as a goalie, I have a lot of respect for what he meant to this organization."

"I love it," Lundqvist said of the mask, which he plans to auction off for charity after the game. "And I hope people love it as well."

Rangers coach David Quinn, who grew up in Cranston, Rhode Island and was a Bruins fan, began his coaching career by 1994, and was an assistant at Northeastern University. But he felt a connection to the '94 Rangers because he knew Leetch and Richter from the U.S. Olympic team, having played with them in the pre-tournament schedule.

"I was rooting for the Rangers because I thought it was great for hockey," Quinn said. "When the Rangers are good, it's good for hockey. To have them win the Cup in '94, I thought, was good for the game."

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1129621 New Jersey Devils

Cory Schneider shines in NJ Devils' 2-1 shootout loss to Islanders

Abbey Mastracco, Feb. 7, 2019

NEWARK — Cory Schneider stepped on the ice and the Prudential Center crowd held its collective breath for the first 10 minutes.

The first part of the first period has been a particularly troubling area of play for the veteran goalie this season and in his first start since Dec. 14 everyone was on the edge of their seats waiting to see if that trend would continue against the Islanders.

But Schneider looked more like the Schneider of old in a 2-1 shootout loss Thursday night at The Rock.

"I felt like I was moving better, more athletic, more competitive," Schneider said. "All of those things that I think were probably lacking for the last little while. I'm hoping this is repeatable going forward."

Returning from an abdominal strain that had him sidelined since that last start, Schneider stopped 27-of-28 shots. He moved well, cut down angles and read the play effectively. Credit Schneider for the overtime and the shootout, as he bailed the Devils out in the third period and made one final save on a tight-angled Mathew Barzal shot right at the buzzer.

Josh Bailey scored the shootout winner for the Islanders (31-16-6, 68 points), who remain at the top of the Metropolitan Division.

"He was much more confident in the net," coach John Hynes said. "There were a couple chances early in the game where he had to face some point-blank shots and he looked much more confident. He wasn't guessing."

Schneider yielded his first goal of the night to Barzal at 13:42 in the first period. Both teams were down a man after Barzal and Blake Coleman served matching roughing penalties. Ryan Pulock sprung Barzal from the penalty box and he broke away for the goal, tying the game at 1-1.

Feb 7, 2019; Newark, NJ, USA; New Jersey Devils center Kevin Rooney (58) celebrates with teammates on the bench after scoring a goal during the first period of their game against the New York Islanders at Prudential Center.

The Devils (20-25-8, 48) nearly gave up another goal just like Barzal's with Valterri Filppula breaking away after exiting the box about a minute later. Ben Lovejoy, returning from a six-game injured reserve stint with a lower-body injury, broke up the play in front of the net but he received a tripping penalty for the efforts, leaving the Devils with another penalty to kill off.

They killed it off and remained even with Isles.

The Devils went 4-for-4 on the penalty kill even after having to make adjustments for the loss of Brian Boyle, who was traded to the Nashville Predators on Wednesday in exchange for a second-round draft pick.

Kevin Rooney scored his second NHL 5:32 into play when Kurtis Gabriel fed him off the rush and he snapped one high over the glove of Thomas Greiss.

"Aside from that breakaway by Barzal we played a pretty focused game tonight, which was good to see by our team," Hynes said. "When you talk about that brotherhood and being in an adverse situation today where a key member of our team gets traded we had a lot of guys stepping up into the lineup. We had lineup changes, we had injuries during the game, I thought it was a strong culture game."

From start to finish, this was the best performance Schneider has turned in since the postseason, but he's still searching for his first regular season win since Dec. 27, 2017.

"He was fantastic from the first shift on," Devils captain Andy Greene said. "It's unfortunate we couldn't reward him tonight for everything he's gone through and battled for. It's tough we couldn't get that second goal there."

Notes



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Miles Wood was injured in the second period after being tripped by Adam Pelech. He skated off the ice holding his left arm and was able to take one more shift before going down the tunnel and leaving the game entirely. ... The Devils finished the season series against the Islanders 0-2-2. ... New Jersey scratched Egor Yakovlev and Steven Santini.

Bergen Record LOADED: 02.08.2019

1129622 New Jersey Devils

What's next for NJ Devils after Brian Boyle trade?

Abbey Mastracco, Feb. 7, 2019

NEWARK — The short answer to the question of what follows the trade of Brian Boyle to the Nashville Predators is this: Brett Seney slots in on the left side of the fourth line.

But the long answer is more complicated.

Devils general manager Ray Shero now has eight draft picks to work with come June, including two in the second round. For an organization in this spot with a stated goal of building from within, this is about as good as it will get.

Slowly, the Devils have made changes to their player development system and director of amateur scouting Paul Castron is only starting to ink his signature on the farm system, so there are reasons for optimism.

But even then, we're still looking ahead a little too far down the line.

New Jersey Devils head coach John Hynes watches play during the first period against the Buffalo Sabres at KeyBank Center.

The Devils are in a tough spot. They have few assets that would net a high return and they're all but out of the playoff race. But they still have a whole slate of games to play through April 6. Where does the focus lie for a team that was not expecting to be in this position?

As a coach, John Hynes says his job doesn't change. He's in a difficult position, attempting to develop players in the NHL and make progress with this rebuild, but at least he knows his job is secure.

All season, he's been using wins and losses as teaching moments. That doesn't change regardless of who is on the roster, and his coaching philosophy doesn't either.

The story continues below the gallery.

"We're in the business to try to win games," Hynes said. "Your job as a coach is to try to coach what's in your locker room. You have to coach the guys that are going to be there. You have to coach them the best you can to try to win games and that's whether guys get traded or don't get traded or guys get hurt."

While fans are begging for a tank job in order to be able to draft Jack Hughes or Kaapo Kakko there's another school of thought that says losing creates bad habits and a toxic culture, which can be detrimental to the young players on the roster.

Hynes appears to buy into that theory.

"You're always going to have a roster that's in flux all the time, so it's important that you don't change the preparation and the philosophy," he said. "You've just got to help guys get better and play well, and that's what our focus is."

Shero has a plan in place, but fans seem to be angry at his failure to communicate it with them. However, this is not uncommon. Bob Murray, the general manager of the Anaheim Ducks, is notoriously tight-lipped

and has yet to really shed light on his decision to keep coach Randy Carlyle in place as the team continues its free-fall.

The Devils have few other assets on expiring contracts but this Boyle deal signals Shero's desire to continue restocking the cupboards. It doesn't look like anything is imminent right now, but that could change ahead of the Feb. 25 trade deadline.

"I'm not sure, that's not really my department," Hynes said. "I haven't spoken with Ray at length about any other moves that will take place. Usually, when we have discussions about those things, he'll let me know when something comes up. But at this point, no."

Boyle understood the fan frustration and he promises the Devils are doing everything in their power to ease their anger.

Even if it means trading him away for a second-round pick.

"We showed what we were capable of doing last year," Boyle said Wednesday, before departing for Nashville.

"It's devastating to come to the rink when you're not playing the way you know you're capable of playing. There were a lot of long, hard meetings where we were trying to learn how to get out of our own way. I will say, at no point has anyone quit. It's encouraging to see that resiliency. It's going to pay off, I'm sure."

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1129623 New Jersey Devils

How they line up: Cory Schneider makes return to NJ Devils against Islanders

Abbey Mastracco, Feb. 7, 2019

NEWARK -- Good morning from Newark, where the Devils are on high alert after veteran forward and beloved locker room presence Brian Boyle was traded to Nashville.

Boyle departed the Garden State for the Music City on Wednesday, being dealt for a second-round pick.

It appears as though Boyle's good friend and former Boston College teammate Cory Schneider will get the net Thursday when the Devils face the Islanders for the final time this season.

It was an optional morning skate for the Devils but Long Island native Keith Kinkaid was the lone goalie on the ice, meaning Schneider will make his long-awaited return. Schneider recently returned from an American Hockey League conditioning stint after an abdominal strain. It's been a long season for Schneider, who is still looking for his first regular season win since December of 2017.

His last start came on Dec. 14 against the Vegas Golden Knights. He was pulled after allowing three goals in the first period but the Devils came back to win in overtime.

Brett Seney will take Boyle's spot in the lineup. Seney was scratched Tuesday against the Los Angeles Kings and he took it in stride, saying he knew what needed to happen in order to get back into the lineup.

And no, one of those things wasn't a trade.

"I always try to bring the same work ethic, but the last couple game I maybe made some plays that I wouldn't usually," Seney said. "Just some areas on the breakout, getting pucks out and some defensive stuff. The biggest part of my game is getting in on the forecheck and I didn't do that as well the last couple games."



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Seney, the rookie out of Merrimack College, has admitted to having trouble adjusting to a more rigorous NHL schedule. He looked at the benching as less of a punishment and more of an opportunity to get a mental refresh.

"It's a learning experience. I want to be out there to help the boys but sometimes sitting up there and watching and reading the play and getting a different perspective also helps a player too."

Seney is a smaller player but has proved quite difficult to knock off the puck at times. However, that wasn't the case in recent games. Against a big, physical Islander team, the Devils need to be hard on the puck.

The last time these two teams faced off was just prior to the bye week. The Devils were manhandled and admittedly got tossed around by a much heavier team. The Islanders aren't a typical Eastern Conference team, they're more like a Western Conference team the way they check and push you out to the wall. The net-front play was practically non-existent and Mackenzie Blackwood kept the Devils in the game.

Coach John Hynes hopes Ben Lovejoy, Eric Gryba and Kurtis Gabriel can aid in those areas.

"The Islanders play a big, strong, heavy game," Hynes said. "They're strong along the wall, they're strong at the net-front. They're a heavy, big team and they compete hard. Gryba played well in Binghamton his last five games before the recall and he's looked really good in practice, so it's an opportunity for him to get in and play. And Lovejoy brings that with him coming back."

New Jersey is winless against the Islanders in three tries this season. One more shot to knock off the Metropolitan Division's top squad.

Here is the Devils' projected lineup. The Islanders' lineup will be updated after they take their morning skate at Prudential Center.

Devils (20-25-7, 47 points)

Marcus Johansson - Nico Hischier - Kyle Palmieri

Miles Wood - Travis Zajac - Blake Coleman

Jesper Bratt - Pavel Zacha - Drew Stafford

Brett Seney - Kevin Rooney - Kurtis Gabriel

Andy Greene - Damon Severson

Will Butcher - Ben Lovejoy

Mirco Mueller - Eric Gryba

Cory Schneider

Keith Kinkaid

Scratched: Steven Santini, Egor Yakovlev

Injured: Taylor Hall (lower-body), Stefan Noesen (lower-body), Joey Anderson (ankle surgery), Sami Vatanen (concussion)

Islanders (30-16-6, 66 points)

Anders Lee -- Brock Nelson - Jordan Eberle

Michael Dal Colle - Mathew Barzal - Josh Bailey

Anthony Beauvillier - Valterri Filppula - Leo Komarov

Matt Martin - Casey Cizikas - Cal Clutterbuck

Nick Leddy - Johnny Boychuk

Adam Pelech - Ryan Pulock

Devon Toews - Scott Mayfield

Thomas Greiss

Robin Lehner

Scratched: Tom Kuhnhackl, Luca Sbisa, Ross Johnston

Injured: Andrew Ladd (lower body), Thomas Hickey (upper body)

Bergen Record LOADED: 02.08.2019

1129624 New Jersey Devils

Islanders sweep season series with Devils after Josh Bailey scores shootout winner

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS | FEB 07, 2019 | 10:25 PM

NEWARK — The Islanders have been getting great goaltending from Thomas Greiss and Robin Lehner lately and they really needed it the way Cory Schneider played for the Devils in his first game in nearly two months.

Josh Bailey scored in the fourth round of the shootout, Greiss made 30 saves and the Islanders beat the Devils 2-1 on Thursday night to sweep the four-game season series.

"I think going into the game it already gives you an edge even before the puck even drops having that confidence in your goaltender and tonight was no different," Bailey said. "(Greiss) was there when we needed him most and he made some really key saves, some timely saves and difficult saves. He's the first star for us tonight, for sure."

Mathew Barzal scored in regulation to help the Islanders win for the seventh time in 10 games (7-1-2), but Schneider was outstanding in defeat, stopping 27 shots.

"We've had some great goaltending battles," Islanders coach Barry Trotz said. "I mean you look at the games in the last little while and the goalies have been great. Our goalies have been good, the opposing goalie has been good. This time of the year, so many overtimes. Every one ramps it up to a different level this time of year."

Josh Bailey celebrates after scoring winner in shootout.

Schneider, who has been sidelined since Dec. 17 with an abdominal injury, played his best game of the season. He had only appeared in nine previous games and was 0-5-1. His last win was in December 2017.

"It's nice to feel good and play well and feel like you think you should," Schneider said. "But like I said, it's just one game. It's all about moving forward. I want to stay in the moment and not say I had one good game, it's going to happen automatically. You have to keep at it and keep digging and working. Hopefully, I can get on a roll and get into a rhythm like I have done here in my career and kind of re-establish my game."

Greiss only had to stop two shots in the shootout. Kyle Palmieri and Nico Hischier missed the net on the first two chances. Drew Stafford and Jesper Bratt forced him to make saves.

Jordan Eberle hit the crossbar on New York's first attempt. Barzal never got a shot off and Schneider got a piece of Brock Nelson's shot.

Bailey converted over Schneider's shoulder with a forehand.

"I just wanted to see what he would give me and I was able to catch him on the blocker side," Bailey said after the Islanders improved to 17-4-2 since Dec. 15.

Kevin Rooney scored at 5:32 to give the Devils a 1-0 lead. It was his second career tally.

Barzal tied it on a breakaway seconds after serving a coincidental penalty that had the teams playing 4-on-4. He took a stretch pass from defenseman Ryan Pulock and beat Schneider with a backhand at



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13:42 of the first period to tie the game, which then became a goaltending show.

In the overtime, Schneider made a good glove save on Bailey with 3:17 to go, and Bratt hit a post for New Jersey about 30 seconds later.

Both goaltenders made big saves in the closing minutes to force the overtime. Greiss stopped Stafford on a shot from between the circles late in a power play, and Schneider made two key stops late, including a last-second one on a bad-angle shot by Barzal.

New York Daily News LOADED: 02.08.2019

1129625 New Jersey Devils

Islanders best Devils and vintage Schneider for shootout win

By Brett Cyrgalis

Islanders were facing a goalie who hadn't won an NHL game in 13 months, an opponent far outside the playoff picture, an organization that already had begun a sell-off leading into the Feb. 25 trade deadline, yet here was the message for Barry Trotz's team:

"Understand that it's not going to come easy," the Islanders coach said after his team snuck out of Prudential Center with a 2-1 shootout win over the Devils on Thursday night. "You look at the whole league, we're fortunate right now to be in the position we're in."

Sometimes there still needs to be a reminder these Islanders remain in first place in the Metropolitan Division, now 31-16-6 with 29 games remaining in the regular season. They got themselves the extra point on a night when Josh Bailey was the only player to score in the skills competition, his quick shot in the fourth round beating Cory Schneider on the blocker side.

This was the real Schneider, not just a goalie in name only. It was at least a close facsimile to the player so many remember from a few years ago, when he looked like he would be a decade-long bedrock for the Devils. (The Schneider who current Islanders president Lou Lamoriello traded for when he ran the Devils in 2013.)

But a hip injury bothered Schneider all of 2018 (his most recent NHL win coming on Dec. 27, 2017) and he had surgery in May. He never quite rediscovered his old game, and it surely didn't help when he suffered an abdominal strain in his most recent NHL start, on Dec. 14.

His just-completed five-game conditioning stint with AHL Binghamton was hardly a harbinger for this performance, either. He posted a .835 save percentage and 3.70 goals-against average in the minors.

But he was terrific in making 27 saves Thursday, getting around screens to flash a quick glove like he did on a long Scott Mayfield shot midway through the third period. He also battled to make stops in chaotic net-front situations, such as when he denied Anthony Beauvillier with just under three minutes left in regulation to keep the score 1-1.

It has been a long time since the Devils (20-25-8) have seen that, and the scant crowd found some voice in the old refrain of "Cor-y! Cor-y!"

"Really happy for him, and proud of him," Devils coach John Hynes said. "It's been a long road for him, and he's certainly put the work in. It's nice to see a player get rewarded for that type of effort and commitment to our team. He certainly played a good game tonight, and that's really good for him and a good sign for our team."

Schneider was only beaten by a Mathew Barzal breakaway at 13:42 of the first period (And who could blame him for that one?) while the performance in the other net wasn't too shabby, either. Thomas Greiss

backstopped the Islanders by making 30 saves seem rather effortless. He was beat only on a left-wing rush and knuckling shot from Kevin Rooney just 5:32 into the game. Greiss added four more stops in the shootout to collect the extra point.

"Schneider was really good today. I think we had some high scoring chances," Greiss said. "It was just a very tight game for both teams. Sometimes the puck just doesn't bounce in."

It's not going to get any easier for the Islanders, who are 2-1-2 in their last five after a torrid run of 16-4-1 from Dec. 8-Jan. 20.

Teams will be gunning for them now, and it's going to be difficult to remain on their current perch. They are going to have to be better if they want to maintain the good feeling with the postseason picture beginning to solidify.

That fact surely was driven home Thursday, even if it came from an unlikely source.

"The last 30 games," Trotz said, "everybody ramps it up to a different level."

New York Post LOADED: 02.08.2019

1129626 New Jersey Devils

'It goes beyond hockey': While Brian Boyle will be missed, his Devils exit is a win for both sides

By Corey Masisak Feb 7, 2019

The end for Brian Boyle in New Jersey did not live up to the movie-like quality that much of his tenure with the Devils represented.

He met with the media for a few minutes Wednesday morning outside the team's locker room at Prudential Center, shook everyone's hand, embraced vice president of communications Pete Albiez, and then he was gone, a walk down a long corridor and on to the next stop in his career. The Devils traded Boyle to the Nashville Predators for a second-round pick in the 2019 NHL Draft in the first of what could be several similar goodbyes this month.

There is a chance we haven't seen the last of Boyle in New Jersey. He is an unrestricted free agent in July. Boyle could pull a u-turn after the season and return to the Devils, even if he said "I don't know about that" to The Athletic last week.

For now, let's assume he doesn't return. If Boyle has played his last game for the Devils, this might not have been a memorable ending, but it was likely be the best one possible for both sides given the current circumstances.

Boyle is going to be remembered as one of the most popular players who didn't play on one of the three Stanley Cup-winning teams in franchise history. Trading away a player like that is never easy for a team, but the strong return made it a deal that had to be done.

"Never in my wildest dreams did I think it would mean this much to me, honestly," Boyle said. "I dive in, I try to make the most of the situations I'm in. I don't really hold a whole lot back, so people, if you know me, you know where I stand with pretty much everything."

"With how last year went, how it felt the first couple weeks to where it finished. It was just a tremendous, tremendous year that I was blessed to be a part of."

Boyle played 121 games for New Jersey in less than two seasons (including the five playoff contests), but did he ever pack in plenty of



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memories in that short amount of time. A cancer diagnosis delayed his debut in 2017. A cancer scare for his son shortly thereafter turned his life on its axis.

Then, the fairy-tale moments started happening.

* His first goal after returning to the club.

* His goal on Hockey Fights Cancer night.

* A last-minute invite to the 2017-18 All-Star Game, which became a weekend of celebration for another fan base that loves him.

* An emotional meeting with a brave, little girl in Nashville.

* Winning the Masterton Trophy, given to the player "who best exemplifies the qualities of perseverance, sportsmanship, and dedication to ice hockey."

* Announcing that his cancer was in remission.

* His first NHL hat trick, on Hockey Fights Cancer night in Pittsburgh this season.

* Making it two for two on Hockey Fights Cancer night in New Jersey.

It would be hard to imagine any player who has scored 26 goals for a franchise having a greater impact than Boyle did. The Devils signed him after six seasons without making the playoffs, including one of the worst campaigns in franchise history.

He immediately joined the leadership core with Andy Greene and Travis Zajac and personified everything the team wanted to be. Hard to play against? Check. Toughness, beyond just being willing to punch someone in the face? Check. Perseverance in the face of adversity? Imagine being in that locker room the past two seasons and thinking times were tough for you, and then looking over at No. 11's stall.

Where his stall was placed could also be part of his legacy. The Devils put him between Nico Hischier and Jesper Bratt, two players who will likely spend the rest of their careers remembering what they learned from Boyle and passing it along to others as they get older.

"They're great kids. They really are," Boyle said. "They're certainly mature, much more than I was at that age. They are people that fans of this team should be excited about because the character those guys have to go along with their work ethic and their ability."

It's a circle of life in the NHL. Veterans pass on wisdom, either through their words or their actions, to young players who grow up, become veterans and pay it forward. Brett Seney's locker is at the other end of the Devils' room, but he enjoyed a separate kind of internship with Boyle.

Seney, who was in college at this time last year, has spent much of this season learning on the fly how to play center on New Jersey's fourth line. Fortunately, he had Boyle, who's spent the majority of his NHL career as a bottom-six center, on his left wing for much of the campaign.

That meant frequent conversations while sitting next to each other on the bench, and some quick chats during stoppages on the ice.

"He's been a huge mentor for me," Seney said. "He's taught me so much, not just on the ice but off it as well. He's such a mature guy and has great leadership aspects after being in the league for so long. It goes beyond hockey. He's such a great person. He really cared about everyone in this room. It's tough to see him go, but he's going to a great spot."

"It was funny. He'd come over and ask if I wanted him to take the draw, and I'd have to shove him off. We kind of had that back-and-forth going for a while. He's played center for a huge amount of games. He taught me a lot about the differences between college and pro, and how more strategic you have to play, that sometimes you have to do less to do more. He's been a great role model for sure."

Looking forward, the Devils have to be happy with the return. The market can change from year to year leading up to the trade deadline, but fourth-line wings do not typically fetch a second-round pick. The Lightning got

one for Boyle from Toronto two years ago, but he was a center then and two years younger. Boyle may go back to playing center for the Predators.

He is a unique fourth-line left wing, one capable of playing lots of minutes on both special teams. However a team quantifies off-ice character and leadership, Boyle is going to earn the highest grade possible. So the Predators paid a little extra, and won't miss that pick if Boyle helps Nashville go deep into the Stanley Cup Playoffs.

Don't be surprised if Boyle ends up being the most valuable pending UFA/trade candidate on the Devils' roster. Marcus Johansson has played in New Jersey's top-six when healthy the past two seasons, but the injuries and his production, while ticking upwards of late, might make other teams leery of spending that much to add him. Draft pick returns for Ben Lovejoy, Drew Stafford or Keith Kinkaid would likely be of the mid-to-late round variety.

Boyle's absence creates two openings on special teams — in front of the net on PP1 and in the forward spot next to Pavel Zacha on PK2. This could create an extended chance for Miles Wood to prove he belongs in that spot on the power play, after he's shown flashes of effectiveness there in the past couple seasons.

The fourth penalty-killing forward spot could go to rookie Kevin Rooney, or fellow first-year man Joey Anderson once he returns from a broken ankle. The best long-term solution there may be Hischier. A quartet of Blake Coleman, Travis Zajac, Zacha and Hischier could make one of the best penalty-killing units in the league even better, and more dangerous at the other end of the ice.

If Boyle doesn't sign with the Devils in the offseason, he'll be back at The Rock regardless at some point next year. His presence will provide great memories, a tribute video and a standing ovation on what is sure to be an emotional night.

That night will feel more like the proper ending to a brief but incredible run for Boyle with the Devils.

The Athletic LOADED: 02.08.2019

1129641 Ottawa Senators

WARREN GAME REPORT: Senators end losing skid, adding to Ducks' misery

Ken Warren

Senators 4, Ducks 0

Amid all the ups and downs of the season and the uncertainty of what happens next for the Ottawa Senators, Anders Nilsson has firmly re-established his career here in the past month.

Thanks largely to Nilsson's 45-save shutout, the Senators snapped their five-game losing slide with a 4-0 victory over the fragile and goal-starved Anaheim Ducks. The Ducks lost their sixth straight and for the 18th time in their past 20 games.

Offensively, Matt Duchene scored twice for the Senators, with Mark Stone and Brady Tkachuk also netting goals for the Senators.

But without Nilsson, who stopped 17 shots in the first and 19 in the third, it might have been a different game altogether.

"The shutout was a bonus," said Nilsson, who has a 5-4 record with a 2.23 goals-against average and .934 save percentage since joining the Senators. "It was great to get back to winning again. I think it's great for the team."



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From a personal perspective, Nilsson says he has felt comfortable since the first day he arrived in December following a trade from the Vancouver Canucks.

"I'm feeling like at home in this locker room and all the guys have been great in welcoming me to the team. It was real easy to come in as a new guy."

Nilsson, who defeated the Ducks on Jan. 9 to register his first win in a Senators uniform, had everything going for him, including the good luck of his posts, throughout the workmanlike victory.

Give the Senators credit; they've been close during their losing slide and did what they had to do to skate out of their funk.

As for the Ducks, well, the ugly statistics help tell the story. After the latest result, they've now been shut out five times and held to one goal in 15 other contests.

Adding to the woes was the loss of No. 1 goaltender John Gibson due to an injury. Gibson made way for backup Chad Johnson to start the third period.

Anders Nilsson. 45 Saves. Shutout.

And we haven't extended him WHY?

— Accelus Hyena (@AccelusHyena) February 8, 2019

Indeed, it's not pretty in Ducks Land.

Meanwhile, it's cloudy in Senators Land.

As much as the win was welcome for the Senators, the only thing that is going to lift the current anxiety among Senators fans is the re-signing of a pending unrestricted free agent or two.

The uncertainty surrounding the futures of Stone and Duchene took on a heightened pitch Wednesday following the odd timing of owner Eugene Melnyk's statement that he will be fully committed to spending close to the salary cap — beginning in 2021.

But what about today? The \$70 million to \$80 million questions are all about whether Stone and/or Duchene will be here for part of that Melnyk "all in" pledge about the future, or whether they will be dealt away before the Feb. 25 trade deadline.

With that big-picture issue in the air, the game, in many ways, served as a sub-plot.

"That's his business, he's going to do what he thinks to make this team successful," said Duchene.

Asked whether the comments will make any difference in discussions, Duchene said, "I'm still digesting everything."

Stone, meanwhile, continued his no-comment stance on the state of his negotiations.

"Nothing for me changes," said Stone. "Like I've said since Day 1, everything I do is going to be held privately between (my agents and Senators general manager Pierre Dorion)."

Stone certainly hasn't let the off-ice business bother his on-ice game.

Tkachuk got the scoring started in the first, ripping a shot past Gibson after the Ducks goaltender stopped Stone on a backhand. The opportunity came following a ghastly turnover deep in the Ducks' end and it came as a welcome relief for Tkachuk, who had scored only once in his previous 18 games.

While Nilsson was doing his thing, Duchene provided the insurance late in the second, beating Gibson on a nifty deke following a pretty feed from Chris Tierney that sent him away on a breakaway.

After the Senators killed off an uninspired-looking Ducks power play early in the third period — the Senators had three odd-man rushes during the

shorthanded situation — Stone ripped a shot past a screened Johnson to take away all Ducks hope.

As for the current on-ice state of the Senators, nobody should be completely shocked that extended losing streaks have come as part of the rebuilding effort.

Yet the fact the Ducks have hit the wall so hard and so fast is a stunning development for a team that had legitimate designs on a Stanley Cup run.

In a coincidence of massive misfortune, both teams were also riding eight-game losing streaks when they previously met on Jan. 9 in Anaheim.

Back then, the Senators skated away with a 2-1 overtime victory, kick-starting a stretch where they won four of five games, providing a much-needed boost of enthusiasm around the group.

The Ducks, however, only spun their wheels deeper after that defeat, eventually hitting a franchise-record 11 losses before finally tasting a win. All told, they entered the Canadian Tire Centre having lost 17 of their previous 19 games.

Remarkably, in the snail's pace race for the final playoff spots in the Western Conference, the Ducks are still alive. Before Thursday's games, they were three points — and six teams — out of the second wild-card spot.

The Senators began the night last in the NHL, four points behind the New Jersey Devils.

DUCKS IN THE SOUP

In mid-December, the Ducks were 19-11-5, having won 10 of 11 games. Accordingly, Ducks captain Ryan Getzlaf says he didn't give much time to thinking about the fact the Senators were also on a downslide. "I don't even know if they're struggling ... I don't think anyone is struggling like we are," he said after the Ducks shook things up with an early morning, pre-game skate at Carleton University. "We're just looking at ourselves and how to improve our game as a group."

STRIPPING TO THE CORE

The Ducks have been left red-faced night after night (outscored 27-6 in the five games before facing the Senators) and they were all about starting with the smallest practice details Thursday morning, looking for something — anything — to find a way out of their dark tunnel.

"At this point, we're embarrassed after some of these games," said winger Jakob Silfverberg, the once highly touted Senators prospect who went to Anaheim in the trade for Bobby Ryan in 2013. "You never want to look like that. We're saying all the right things in the dressing room, but at this point, it doesn't matter what you say. You just have to go out and do it."

EMPTY SHELVES

"I said this in Montreal," Silfverberg continued. "I don't think confidence is something you can buy at the store. It's something (where) you have to build on it. Where do you start? Working on little things. You can't look too far ahead."

NOTABLE NUMBERS

This can't be a coincidence. In Jean-Gabriel Pageau's first 11 games of the season, the Senators had killed off 18 of 21 opposition power plays, a success rate of 85.7 per cent. The Senators had gone a perfect 10-for-10 shorthanded in six games before meeting the Ducks, moving up to 27th overall in the NHL for the season. Pageau and company hit 13 straight by killing off a first-period power play and two more in the third period. ... Cool gesture to have all the Senators and Ducks sport D.I.F.D. toques for the warmup. There was plenty of purple in the house for the Bell Hockey Talks DIFD Youth Mental Health Awareness night.

ALUMNI WATCH



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Bumped into Carleton Ravens coach Shaun Van Allen for a brief, colourful conversation at the Ice House on Thursday. Van Allen, who played 465 games in a pair of stints with the Senators, is one of the select few with roots in both organizations, but his focus isn't on either the Senators or Ducks these days. He's busy preparing his Ravens for the final weekend of the regular season before the playoffs kick off next Wednesday. We've said it before and we'll say it again: The intensity and competitiveness of Canadian university hockey is often underestimated and overlooked. Give it a try and you'll be surprised.

FIVE THINGS WE LEARNED

1. Tkachuk is breathing easier

Brady Tkachuk's first-period goal was his first in seven games and his second in 19 games.

2. Ducks swimming against the stream

The scoring woes continue. Anaheim was shut out for the fifth time. They've also been held to one goal in 15 other games.

3. Defensive shift

Both Christian Jaros and Ben Harpur missed the game with injuries, meaning Belleville call-up Cody Goloubeff made his Senators debut.

4. Nilsson has Ducks' number

Anders Nilsson also posted his first win with the Senators back on Jan. 9 and added a tidy 45-save shutout to his resumé Thursday.

5. Penalty-killing magic continues

The Senators have now gone seven games without allowing a power-play goal, killing off three Ducks chances.

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1129642 Ottawa Senators

The Senators believe the rebuild is on track

Bruce Garrioch

The Ottawa Senators feel they're headed in the right direction.

Senators chief operating officer Nic Ruskowski told TSN 1200 on Thursday night the organization says the rebuild is on track and the message from owner Eugene Melnyk is consistent with the direction the club wants to take.

"What's new is Eugene Melnyk re-iterating the self discipline and the focus on the team to stick with the rebuild in spite of some of the results we've had this year," Ruskowski said.

"That's the consistent with the message we've been trying to carry forward to our fans and our partners since the beginning. We're not going to measure our rebuild on a one-year basis, we're not going to measure it exclusively on wins and losses, we're going to measure it on what progress the team is making and what pieces the team needs to be in the position to succeed and open that five-year window to the Cup."

Ruskowski said the club is making a concerted effort to keep unrestricted free agents Mark Stone, Matt Duchene and Ryan Dzingel. He said if any of the trio decides to move on, then the club will spend money elsewhere to bring in other players.

"The sole focus is to get those UFAs re-signed," Ruskowski said. "If, for example, we don't get Stone signed, I would encourage people not to

look at that as the final straw, but to look at that as an opportunity in the rebuild."

He said that money could be spent through a trade or free agency because the Senators can't fall below the salary cap floor.

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1129643 Ottawa Senators

Timing is everything for Eugene Melnyk and the Senators

Bruce Garrioch

The road to respectability will be difficult for the Ottawa Senators.

But they promise there are better days ahead.

Senators owner Eugene Melnyk gave the fan base a glimpse of where this club is headed with a statement Wednesday night that he'll spend to the salary cap from 2021-25 once the organization feels it has the pieces in place to return to being a contender.

After hosting 200 people during a reception Tuesday night at the Hockey Hall of Fame, the Senators released a statement after the first period of their 5-4 loss to the Toronto Maple Leafs on Wednesday night at Scotiabank Arena to outline Melnyk's remarks.

The reception was held for the club's corporate clients based in Toronto and potential business partners down the road because that's where the head office of several businesses in this country are located, which is why the whole team participated.

Melnyk was also in Toronto to take part in the mediation sessions with the Hon. Warren Winkler at his space near Bay and Adelaide Sts. to get the LeBreton Flats project back on track. It's believed partner John Ruddy and second-place finisher DCDLS were also involved in the talks.

Melnyk promised the Senators would spend to the cap once general manager Pierre Dorion has the right pieces to take the next step in this rebuild towards being a contender. The Senators feel they can be in that position by the 2021-22 campaign and if that's the case, the money will be spent.

"The Senators will be all — in again for a five-year run of unparalleled success — where the team will plan to spend close to the NHL's salary cap every year from 2021 to 2025," the statement said.

"(Melnyk) reiterated that the Senators' current rebuild is a blueprint on how to bring the Stanley Cup home to its rightful place in Ottawa."

With only 28 games left in the first year of this rebuild after facing the Anaheim Ducks on Thursday night at home, we'll learn a lot about the path to get back to being a contender for the Senators before the NHL trade deadline on Feb. 25 at 3 p.m. ET.

This may be the first look we've gotten of what the timeline for this rebuild is going to be and how long it will take to get back to respectability. The Senators outlined part of their plan before training camp in meetings with local media outlets, but the focus was on this season.

The immediate reaction to this statement publicly was skepticism.

Some felt this was the Senators' way of laying out to unrestricted free agents Mark Stone and Matt Duchene exactly the direction this organization is going to take in the next couple of years so that if they decide to sign on the dotted line, they'll now there is hope for better days ahead.

That's not likely the case here.



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You can be certain Stone and Duchene have been kept informed throughout this rebuild of what the organization wants to accomplish. You'd have to think there's nothing Melnyk stated during his speech Tuesday the duo hasn't been told during negotiations with Dorion.

The Senators would like to keep Stone and Duchene in the fold so they can put good young assets around them to become a contender, but Ottawa fans will have to wait to see if that's going to become reality or if one or both players will be moved at the deadline to get assets in return.

The decision on what's going to happen to Stone and Duchene is just over two weeks away now. There's a good chance we'll know by early next week whether one or both are going to sign. If they aren't, you'll hear no shortage of trade speculation surrounding whoever is available.

The decision to deal for Duchene was made because the Senators felt he'd be the right piece to the puzzle after advancing to the Eastern final in the spring of 2017. It didn't work out and, before last year's trade deadline, the Senators decided to undergo this rebuild to try to get back on track.

The organization believes both players can be part of the solution and they need to determine what's next for them. Dorion was chatting with Stone's agents from Newport Sports outside the dressing room Wednesday night and agent Pat Brisson was also in the house to speak with Duchene.

Talks with both camps are continuing.

Rebuilds are difficult because nobody has a crystal ball of how long it's going to take before a team is competitive again. The likes of Thomas Chabot, Brady Tkachuk, Colin White, Alex Formenton and Drake Batherson are just some of the building blocks in place that will mature down the road.

Melnyk has promised to spend when the time is right and that's going to require patience.

Ottawa Sun LOADED: 02.08.2019

1129644 Ottawa Senators

Eugene Melnyk's comments on Senators spending to the cap leave more questions than answers

By Chris Stevenson Feb 7, 2019

The statement from the Ottawa Senators hit the inbox at 8:33 p.m. Wednesday night around the end of the first period of the Senators game against the Toronto Maple Leafs.

Where to start with another interestingly timed news drop by the Senators?

There are a couple of paragraphs of self-congratulatory public relations stuff from a reception held Tuesday night at the Hockey Hall of Fame night in Toronto. Team sponsors were thanked for their support and how that support has helped the club's charitable endeavours:

"Last night, Eugene Melnyk and the entire Senators hockey team and management hosted a thank you event in Toronto for a group of close to 200 people, mainly the team's corporate sponsors and partners.

"During Mr. Melnyk's remarks last night, he thanked those in attendance and commented on the importance of the team's partners as well as talking about the history of the Ottawa Senators during his ownership and the team's more than \$105 million of contributions to the local community."

It concludes with this mic drop by Melnyk:

"Mr. Melnyk also confirmed during the presentation that on the hockey side of the business, the expectation is that the Senators rebuilding plan will take another season or two from now, but when his general manager confirms that the Senators have all the pieces of the foundation in place, he made the following pledge to the guests in attendance:

"The Senators will be all-in again for a five-year run of unparalleled success – where the team will plan to spend close to the NHL's salary cap every year from 2021 to 2025. He reiterated that the Senators' current rebuild is a blueprint on how to bring the Stanley Cup home to its rightful place in Ottawa."

In what has been pretty much an information vacuum in one of the most critical periods in Senators history, there's finally the revelation of some kind of a plan.

So let's break this down, with, of course, more questions than answers:

1. First off, there's the credibility gap. The messages coming out of the Senators camp over the past 18 months have been, to put it kindly, mixed. They were going for it in November 2017 when they overpaid for Matt Duchene.

A month later, Melnyk was warning of player payroll being slashed if attendance didn't pick up since the team's front office had already been slashed to the bone.

Two months after that, they were going into a full rebuild and forward Mike Hoffman and captain Erik Karlsson (granted under extenuating circumstances) were traded in the summer.

Now the Senators have a plan to spend "close" to the cap?

Parking lot patience, a heavy dose of skepticism and in many cases, cynicism, have become necessary in the emotional makeup of a Senators fan.

Just saying it doesn't make it so. Melnyk's pledge, particularly one projecting so far into the future, is going to be met with a lot of skepticism.

2. Where's the money going to come from for this augmentation of player payroll? Sorry, but sometimes I get caught up in details like that. In his infamous Parliament Hill comments, Melnyk was emphatic he wasn't going to "blow a lifetime of working hard to support a hockey team."

There's certainly nothing to indicate the Senators, short of a change in ownership or restructuring of ownership, are about to benefit from access to newfound riches. If anything, with this season's attendance slipping compared to past seasons, revenue would appear to be down for the foreseeable future.

If I'm missing something here (besides some cash from the Seattle expansion), please let me know.

Is this an indication of a potential breakthrough when it comes to a new rink at LeBreton Flats? The mediation between Melnyk, Ottawa developer John Ruddy and the Devcore Canderel DLS Group from Montreal has a deadline of Feb. 28 to report back to the National Capital Commission.

If there is this plan to pump money into payroll, why wait? Why wait to spend when you can sign a guy like impending free agent Mark Stone now, who will only be 28 in the spring of 2021 when this influx of cash is supposed to kick in? Why not sign him and have him around in his prime? I bet he can help that team be good.

3. The timing of this announcement could be an attempt to convince Stone and Duchene that if they commit to the Senators it won't be that long before the resources will be there to sign this group of good Senators prospects and build a team around them.

I wouldn't blame them if they were as skeptical as some fans.



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It's believed this plan was outlined to Duchene and his agent, Pat Brisson, by Senators general manager Pierre Dorion and assistant general manager Peter MacTavish over lunch Monday. If that's the case, it seems a bit late.

4. There are going to be many in the Senators already disgruntled fan base who are going to be ticked off the owner of the local NHL team chose to make this apparently critical announcement about the future of the team in Toronto.

They could argue, and rightly so, that an announcement of critical importance to the future of a floundering franchise should have been made in Ottawa, to the team's fans and not to the team's "corporate sponsors and partners," as important as the business community's investment in the team might be.

In the big picture, it might seem to be a small thing, but when the relationship between a large number of Senators fans and the team's owner is somewhat strained, this is the kind of thing that ticks Senators fans off.

5. This is potentially one of those good news, bad news stories for a lot of Senators fans. For some, it's encouraging to hear the owner say he is going to spend "close" to the cap from 2021-2025.

For others, it would seem to mean the owner is going to be the owner for another seven years.

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The Athletic / Why Artemi Panarin as a rental is worth the risk, especially for these five top destinations

By Craig Custance

Feb 7, 2019

Adding a major rental piece at the trade deadline can be an iffy proposition. For it to truly pay off, there needs to be a long playoff run. Depending on the price paid, probably a Stanley Cup ring. And dropping a player into a new dressing room in the middle of a season is full of risk. The reality is, more often than not, it doesn't pay off.

If you're a GM, you want as much assurance as possible that a payoff is coming, that a player will fit. Some general managers hedge their bets by making their moves early and allowing time to be part of the equation.

In the rare case, the type of player can be its own form of certainty. The player is so good, plays a brand of hockey that is so conducive to success that you're lowering your risk considerably by making him the target.

Artemi Panarin is one of those players.

"His advantage, and the reason why that's a pretty good bet, is because he has a way that elevates other people," said one coach of Panarin. "The issue that you run into with players who struggle with new situations is that they're more reliant on the chemistry they're going to have with whomever they're going to play with. In the NHL, situation is very important for players. Not many players can outperform their situation. With Panarin, he can."

From the perspective of a potential teammate or someone who has to defend Panarin, his varied skillset is what makes him so dangerous.

Said a Western Conference player: "He has an unbelievable shot. An unbelievable one-timer. When he was in Chicago, him and (Patrick) Kane

were so good. He could line up on the boards below the hashmarks and still hit the net on one-timers, which is very underrated. He can score from a lot of places and he's probably as much a playmaker as he is a shooter."

And during a time in which there is a premium paid for centers among the contending teams, acquiring Panarin essentially lands you a center with the way he can control the middle of the ice and effectively enter the zone both at even strength and on the power play.

"He's going to carry the puck through the middle of the ice like a center would," said the coach. "There's no centers like that available. All those centers are (gone). That's the value in Panarin – he's one of those guys, and there's only a handful of them in the league, who are elite scoring wingers who control the middle of the ice.

So if your team needs a winger, he's the best available. If your team needs a center, he might be the best option. It's why the asking price is so high.

Which teams make the most sense? Let's dive in:

1. Nashville Predators – The Blue Jackets' ideal return would include young players who are close to contributing at the NHL level. A center would be ideal. But they really want high-end young forwards and the Predators have a player in Eeli Tolvanen who fits the description. The 5-foot-10 winger hasn't made the impact yet as a pro that he hinted at last season with his big Olympic performance, but he'd be a nice piece to build a trade around.

"It would add a whole other dimension," said the player of the potential of Nashville trading for Panarin. "In Nashville, you have a guy like (Filip) Forsberg who is, in a sense, a similar player to Panarin. He's so good. He's shifty. He can shoot and make plays. All of a sudden, you put him on another line and you're playing against two No. 1 lines."

2. Toronto Maple Leafs – The team that deals for Panarin is going to be one that believes it can win a Stanley Cup this season. Maybe there's even pressure to do it sooner rather than later. Toronto is certainly in both camps. GM Kyle Dubas made his big trade in adding Jake Muzzin and used a first-round pick to make it happen. But there are certainly still players on the Maple Leafs roster that would pique the interest of the Blue Jackets.

"I think he'd be really good with (Mitch) Marnier," said the player. "(Auston) Matthews is so good, he can play by himself. He can play with anyone. They already have three good lines, four good lines ... but (guys like Panarin), they don't need many chances to score. The difference a lot of times in the playoffs is one goal, one player. Each round you play, there always seems to be one line that carries it. All four rounds there are different guys who help their team over the hump in each different series. This is another player who can do that."

This fit also made a lot of sense to the coach.

"A place like Toronto would be fantastic," he said. "With Matthews' shot and the way Panarin can pass – he can start going dot to dot like him and Kane would do."

3. Boston Bruins – The feeling from people around the league is that the Bruins are very eager to do something big before the trade deadline. One source suggested that the Bruins were interested in Micheal Ferland and Wayne Simmonds, different kind of players than Panarin. But Boston is certainly a team to watch right now.

"There's a little pressure on Boston to do well. I think losing in the first round is not acceptable," said one team executive. "If Panarin plays with (David) Krejci and (David) Pastrnak with (Patrice) Bergeron, that's pretty good."

Yeah, pretty good.

The Athletic's Fluto Shinzawa did a great job capturing what it might cost the Bruins to pull it off. Starting with the Bruins' 2019 first-round pick and



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a young player like Trent Frederic to go with another prospect. That's a lot.

"You can not say he wouldn't help them," said an NHL source. "He would be awesome. Him playing with a guy like Krejci would be pretty special. Krejci could use a bump like that."

4. Calgary Flames – The Flames want to add help at forward with Sportsnet's Elliott Friedman reporting earlier this week that they've inquired about Rangers forward Mats Zuccarello. A deal for Panarin would be taking it up a couple notches.

There are similarities in Panarin's game with Flames star Johnny Gaudreau but imagine trying to figure out which line to match up against if they were on the same team.

"A team like Calgary would be interesting because it gives you another guy who plays like a center to control the middle of the rink on another line," said the coach. "Whether you play him with Gaudreau or away from Gaudreau, it's a win."

The Flames have their first-round pick but not a ton of organizational depth when it comes to young players to build a package around.

5. New York Islanders – The Islanders are sitting on top of the Metropolitan division, just like we all knew they would be. A trade for Panarin makes sense because the Islanders could certainly make the case they're adding him both for the stretch run and to get an early jump on negotiations for a long-term deal. According to an NHL source, Panarin's agent Dan Milstein is making it clear that Panarin has every intention of going to the market on July 1 and that teams should be aware that "he's going as a rental, at best."

Still, the Islanders could start their pitch early by making a deal and they certainly have the ammunition as a team that has drafted multiple times in the first round in three of the past five drafts.

"He would really fit well there," said one source. "You look at the challenges with the Islanders as a whole, Josh Bailey is not really a center in the NHL. He's really a winger. But he could play center with Panarin. A place like that would be an interesting spot."

Honorable mention:

Vegas Golden Knights – George McPhee isn't afraid to make big moves at the deadline and Vegas has positioned itself for another postseason run. But the Golden Knights play a speed game and Panarin likes to slow the game down, which might not be an ideal fit. They've also spent a lot of their futures in trades to acquire Tomas Tatar and Max Pacioretty. Even with those deals, Vegas still has 10 picks in the first three rounds of the next two drafts.

Winnipeg Jets – The Jets are in win-now mode and might prefer a center. But, as mentioned above, Panarin can effectively function as a center. It just might cost a player like Jack Roslovic to make it happen, which is pretty rich for a team that has consistently taken the long view.

Florida Panthers – There are great young players in the Florida system. It just might not make sense for the Panthers to give up those assets for a player they could pursue for free in the summer.

San Jose Sharks – They only get a mention because GM Doug Wilson is a big-game hunter. But he doesn't have first-round picks to move (traded in the Evander Kane and Erik Karlsson deals), making him thin on ammunition. The same goes for the Tampa Bay Lightning. Another team that is typically in the mix for players like Panarin but might be short on supply. But it is fun to imagine for a moment. "If he goes to Toronto or Tampa ... whoa," said one NHL executive.

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The Athletic / Why young NHL stars should bet on themselves and opt for less term

By Dom Luszczyszyn

Feb 7, 2019

Auston Matthews signed a precedent-setting deal on Tuesday that will afford young elite talent more leverage going forward during contract negotiations. The five-year extension with the Toronto Maple Leafs is worth \$58.17 million in total and carries an average cap hit of \$11.634 million. As "player-friendly" as the deal appears, however, Matthews could've gone even further if he took a page out of the NBA's playbook, a move that more elite players should consider in the future.

While NHL stars of today generally opt for the long-term mega-deal, NBA stars tend to go for short-term deals in order to fully optimize the rapidly changing cap landscape. One-or-two years and then re-up to reap the rewards of a larger salary cap pie. The term limits in the NBA are shorter than the NHL (five years versus eight years), yes, but that doesn't make it any less pragmatic of a strategy for the players that can afford to make it.

Since 2005-06, when the NHL salary cap was just \$39 million, the cap has risen in every year but one (the 2012-13 shortened season) at an average rate of 5.7 percent, though that figure has been closer to four percent in recent seasons. Over eight seasons that's a 31.5 percent rise at four percent per year and a 50.6 percent rise at six percent per year – a rise that is often not accounted for in a player's salary structure, a hefty sacrifice in potential earning power.

In the salary cap era, there's long been a tendency for superstars to lock themselves in for a long period, guaranteeing themselves big money and financial security for an extended stretch of time. For NHLers, term is king, with a lengthy commitment seen as a win for the player's side. For some players that ideology has credence, with elder unrestricted free agents being paid heavily for past performance without much consideration of a typical age curve definitely falling in that category. But for the cream of the crop, players like Matthews, it makes much less sense to lock in, especially those at prime age or nearing it.

It's those elite players that generally perform at a consistently excellent level that should consider less term security for a bigger payout, one that's more in line with the player's immense value on a year-to-year basis. For many players, it's a contract strategy that carries risk, but that's not as true for the players at the top of the league, the ones that deliver year-in and year-out at a high level. For them, it's about betting on themselves, a safe bet to make considering their performance.

Take a look at Sidney Crosby for example. In 2013-14 Crosby signed a 12-year deal worth \$104.4 million where he's paid \$8.7 million on average per season. At the time he was signed, the salary cap was \$64.3 million, meaning he was earning 13.5 percent of the cap. For the league's best player that's already a bargain and it's largely due to the three years tacked-on at the end where Crosby earns three million dollars each season. Regardless, with the salary cap rising to \$79.5 million today, Crosby's cap hit now only takes up 10.9 percent of the cap. That's great for the Penguins, but terrible for Crosby – it's now the 13th highest cap hit in the league and nearly two million lower than the fifth highest cap hit, a group that he rightfully belongs in.

Those three back-diving years do Crosby no favours, obviously, but while things do change when looking at actual salary, there's still a lot of money left on the table relative to what the contract intended simply due to salary cap inflation. Below is a chart outlining how much Crosby will make in the first nine years of his contract compared to what he would make if he took a one-year deal every year, and asked for the exact same salary cap percentage as was outlined in the initial contract. (ie, his



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2018-19 salary of \$10 million at the 2013-14 salary cap of \$64.3 million would be equal to a 15.5 percent cap hit).

Even ignoring the three years driving down the cap-hit at the end of the deal, or the fact that Crosby would likely command more than a cap hit percentage of 15.5 percent as was projected for 2018-19, No. 87's first nine years will likely leave roughly \$17 million on the table simply from taking term rather than opting for shorter deals (ie, one-to-two years). That's a 16 percent decrease in total earnings over nine seasons. The longer the term, the more the effect compounds itself and it starts really showing after five seasons. Crosby is an extreme example, sure, but this type of analysis can really be applied to any player with a deal at five years or longer.

Not every player is Crosby, of course, but he's not the only player who's lost earning power from choosing security instead. Nikita Kucherov, the league's leading scorer locked himself in a \$9.5-million per year for eight seasons starting next year after already taking a discount in a bridge deal. Johnny Gaudreau and Nathan MacKinnon are fifth and sixth in scoring and are both earning under \$7 million for three and four more seasons after this one, deals that will likely take up under eight percent of the cap by the time they're finished. David Pastrnak, Mark Scheifele and Sean Monahan – all on pace to score over 90 points this season – are in a similar boat. All of those players would have been much better off having bet on themselves, and there are likely many more of those cases than there are of players who robbed teams blind, at least when it comes to young players entering their prime.

There's those that will argue that the team-friendly discounts are a necessary evil in order to win, one a player like Crosby not only happily accepted, but willingly chose. With three Stanley Cup rings, there's no doubt he's very happy about that decision too.

While true for some anecdotally, it's generally an unnecessary favour to be made considering how inefficient the salary market is and it's a sacrifice that's usually only asked of the league's top earners – the players actually worst the cost – rather than the less consistent middle class. Consider too that those savings tend to go towards unrestricted free agency where money is being spent on what a player once was, not what he will be, and that point becomes more glaring. There's no reason that a player should undercut his own value for the sake of the team, especially if it means overpaying for someone else who isn't worth it. Further, making that long-term commitment lowers a player's flexibility, making it difficult to escape a team that bungled the savings earned from the superstar's long-term deal. See McDavid, Connor.

Now there is one obvious caveat to all of this and that's leverage, especially for young players that are in the restricted free agent class.

For years there's only been one option: take what the team is offering and like it. Rarely is there much of a choice as there's a negative connotation surrounding players that enter a contract dispute and miss the start of the season (greedy) or sign an offer-sheet (disloyal). A change in how both maligned parts of the collective bargaining agreement are perceived would be a big step towards younger players gaining leverage over teams and we're starting to see that.

What also helps is that teams are becoming more familiar with age curves for the average hockey player, mainly that a player's prime skews much younger than previously thought. With a boom of young talent and the knowledge of where peak performance lands, teams will likely start using their financial resources more efficiently in terms of paying for future performance rather than past performance, making offer sheets a more attractive commodity. Young players can use that knowledge to their advantage.

That brings us back to Matthews, a player who knows where he stands relative to the rest of the talent in the league and knows he's only getting better. At a cap hit percentage of 14 percent, the Leafs are paying close to full price for what he's worth now relative to what the market dictates, but going forward that percentage will drop as the cap rises. It's a precedent-setting deal because Matthews didn't take a discount despite his RFA status, and despite the shorter term, but even a five-year deal

still leaves room for inflation to deflate the value of Matthews' contract. With an average cap increase of four percent, a \$58.17-million five-year deal likely means Matthews loses just under \$5-million total, or an extra million dollars per year.

In pro sports, loyalty is a weaponized trait, an expectation placed on players, but not on teams – a one-way street that's furthered by hockey culture. For superstars, there's an added expectation to sacrifice money for the good of the team. In that sense, it's commendable that a player of Matthews' ilk took a stand and got a deal commensurate to his value, on his terms, relative to what others have received. With his league standing and talent, he had the power to do so, something not all players can afford.

But even one of the most player-friendly deals an RFA has signed still likely didn't go far enough in that direction and still arguably favours the team due simply to term length. It may not seem that way compared to other contracts for elite stars, but given the ever-rising cap, it's plausible that Matthews – as well as every other star that's ever signed a lengthy extension – left money on the table.

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The Athletic / No-move clauses, no-trade clauses, and how teams navigate both at the deadline

By Katie Strang

Feb 7, 2019

Earlier this week, a report surfaced that the Chicago Blackhawks asked Brent Seabrook to waive his no-move clause and would soon ask his fellow veteran defenseman Duncan Keith to do the same.

Later that day, Seabrook denied that he had been approached about this, according to The Athletic's Scott Powers, but the initial report fueled enough speculation regardless.

It's that time of year, with less than three weeks before the trade deadline, when the hockey world will be buzzing with these bits of information that provide insight into a team's intentions in advance of the mid-season bazaar.

And with NHL executives and media alike clamoring for these little nuggets and stockpiling intel, it is with heightened interest that a specific player's trade restrictions are viewed.

According to CapFriendly.com, there are currently 179 players who have some sort of trade protection. A no-move clause puts a player firmly in the driver's seat of any potential deal. It means that a player cannot be traded, waived or assigned to the minors, without providing his consent. A no-trade clause is slightly less restrictive, meaning a player must sign off on any deal that ships him to another NHL team. A modified no-trade clause provides the most flexibility — a player has a list of teams they submit every summer to the parent club that explicitly defines either where they are willing to go or where they will not go.

But, practically speaking, how useful are these clauses? How often do they work as intended? And what is the true value of holding one of these clause? It's a subject for debate at this time of year, when both shopping and speculation are at an all-time high.

"They are only as strong as the strength of player to resist the request," said one veteran agent. "And it may only be as strong as the player's wife is."



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"They negotiated that right, so they have the right to rely on it. But for most players, they're not worth the paper they're written on."

Some teams are wary of handing them out entirely. Nashville (with the exception of goaltender Pekka Rinne) does not; neither does Vegas. Another veteran agent said that some teams are easier to coax trade protection out of than others, but that he's never had a deal fall apart because of one.

That agent said that the sense within the industry is that they have been rendered essentially meaningless. Players earn the right to exercise those clauses by negotiating them into their clauses, but it doesn't preclude a team from asking — or exerting pressure on those players to relent.

That pressure can become intense as a team's needs crystallize and potential suitors come calling.

"There's ultimately no such thing, because a team can throw all sorts of pressure onto you," the agent said. "Teams have the strength of position to wear guys down if they need to. ... At some point (it) becomes in a player's best interest to leave, whether he likes it or not."

Agents, who have a responsibility to advocate for their clients' best interest, often advise their players they are well within their rights to dig in their heels, but that they should be aware that things might get miserable in a hurry.

Essentially once a team approaches a player about hitting the road, it can send a pretty distinct message: hit the road.

Shawn Horcoff, who played 15 NHL seasons and amassed 1,008 career games, had a no-move clause in his contract while he was in Edmonton. At the end of the 2012-13 season, he had a discussion with team's management that made it clear it was best for both sides to move on. His trade protection was also set to change; on July 1, 2013, his no-move clause became a modified no-trade clause.

According to Horcoff, when the Oilers presented him with a trade that would send him to Dallas, he had no issues with the move. Horcoff, who is now the director of player development for the Detroit Red Wings, indicated his situation was amicable between the two sides, though he can see where it can get acrimonious if a team decides to stick it to a player who has decided to stand firm.

"I'm sure it's happened," Horcoff said. "It's frustrating for the team if they want to move the player and they can't, but at the same time they're the one that kind of gave it to the player. That's one thing that the players earned."

(Per the collective bargaining agreement, a player cannot earn trade protection until he has either accrued seven years of service time or reached 27 years of age).

There's an additional consideration to be made on the team side as well: Players all talk. So if a team is bullying a player into signing off on a trade to an undesirable location, chances are the word will get out.

Will that affect the team in the short-term? Perhaps not, but with free agency becoming more and more competitive, teams can use all the advantages they can get. Developing a reputation as a team that doesn't treat players well won't help a team in the market for a high-profile free agent.

So how to navigate such a delicate situation?

"I think the hardest thing is having that open dialogue with the player while its going on," said one Western conference executive.

You don't want to go to a player too soon, in case a deal falls through and it makes for an awkward environment for both sides. Failing to loop in a player early enough, however, puts a team at risk of having a deal practically done, only to have a player squash it during the final stages.

According to the executive, there is a feeling-out process during trade talks. Once it moves beyond conceptual and things start getting a bit

more serious, the team might initiate conversations with the player's agent first. That provides an easier backchannel in which a scenario can be discussed with a bit more finesse.

Once the two teams are down to the finer points of the deal — such as haggling over which prospect to include — then it becomes vital a player is kept abreast of the developments.

Even still, there are a multitude of factors. An older player who has kids in school faces a different set of challenges then, say, a younger guy without those issues to consider.

The executive pointed out that for Seabrook, if indeed Chicago does, at some point, ask him to waive his no-move clause, there might not be a ton of incentive to do so. He's already won three Stanley Cups, he's made plenty of money, is living in a desirable city with an organization that is well-regarded. What's to gain by moving on?

"I haven't thought about it," Seabrook said when asked about potentially moving his NMC, according to Powers. "I guess I'll deal with that when that day comes. But my focus right now is to try to help this team get into the playoffs. That's what I'm thinking about."

But for others, the prospect of heading to a team with playoff hopes can be make the process much more palatable. It doesn't necessarily make the decision any less gut-wrenching for the player, but it can serve them well in the long run.

Take for example last season: Paul Stastny.

Stastny, who was in his fourth season for the Blues and was set to become an unrestricted free agent at the end of the 2017-18 season, was approached by St. Louis about waiving his no-trade clause to go to a Jets team seeking depth down the middle. Ultimately, he did waive, and he ended up reaping the reward in free agency.

Stastny went on to finish with a career-high six goals and 15 points in the playoffs with Winnipeg before the Jets were bounced in the Western Conference final, and then he signed a three-year, \$19.5 million deal with Vegas a few weeks later.

"Any time you play that long in the playoffs, it increases your value," said Stastny's agent, Matt Keator. "In the end, teams want to win the Stanley Cup. If you've got that playoff experience and have shown that you play effectively and at a high level until June, they want you. In Paul's case, it became a showcase for him. It definitely helped his value."

Some of the most coveted trade targets du jour have either no-move clauses or no-trade clauses — Sergei Bobrovsky (NMC) and Wayne Simmonds (M-NMTC) to name a few — so whether we see any of them accede to waive that clause and become a key contributor to a playoff team remains to be seen.

But it will surely be a hot topic of conversation in the weeks to come.

This time of year, everyone is feeling the sense of anticipation. Agents are keeping their antennae up in order to keep their clients informed. Front office-types are mapping out strategies and contingency plans to improve their teams. And players are monitoring their phones.

It's not easy for anyone involved.

"I know what it's like to be in that locker room when that day's around," Horcoff said. "It's not always easy. Trade deadline is a nervous day, but it all depends where you're at. For some guys, if you're on a poor team, it's an exciting day. If you're on a good team, it's a nervous day. There are guys that have a family settled that have roots. ... It's a nervous day, honestly."

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Sportsnet.ca / NHL Trade Rumour Roundup: Leafs, Lightning in on Simmonds?

Rory Boylen | @RoryBoylen

February 7, 2019, 4:01 PM

The trade season is here and moves are beginning to happen — from last week's Pittsburgh-Florida swap and the Maple Leafs getting Jake Muzzin, to the Nashville Predators adding two depth pieces to their forward group.

But we have to believe the best deals are yet to come. We don't know yet what the trade status is of Mark Stone and Matt Duchene in Ottawa, nor do we know how motivated the Blue Jackets are to move Artemi Panarin or Sergei Bobrovsky. When those pictures become clear, the trade market will be a little more defined.

As trades are starting to be made, rumours are picking up. Today we look around the league with some of what's been said over the past week.

One of the best power-play goal scorers over the past five years (though he only has five this season), Simmonds will add depth to the wing and, of course, bring a physical and net-front presence to an acquiring team. Toronto and Tampa Bay, two teams that either could use his physical element or just his size (six-foot-two, 185 pounds), may not be close to each other in the standings, but could very well have to go through one another to get to the Eastern Conference final. That will be something the GMs will have in mind.

Earlier this week the Toronto Sun's Steve Simmons said the Lightning and Maple Leafs were among teams with "big" interest in the Flyers forward.

Complicating things is that Philadelphia has won eight in a row and are trying to get back into the playoff race. Currently sitting seven points out of the second wild-card spot, it's still a lot of ground to make up when others can get a point by losing in extra time, but it gives you pause to consider if the Flyers' plans will change. On the flip side, Simmonds is a pending UFA so if he doesn't sign a contract extension it'd be prudent to get some assets for him.

The only player Flyers GM Chuck Fletcher definitively said would not be traded is Claude Giroux, who is also the only one with a full no-move clause. When Fletcher spoke to the media at the end of January just after the Flyers started their streak, he talked about having the flexibility to do different things at the deadline.

"I'm trying to make the team better at all costs, I guess is the best way of putting it," Fletcher said. "We can both buy and sell. I guess my point is every decision we make, if we're going to try to improve our team going forward and we can get that player now, great. There's always opportunities. To me it's not the next eight games or even the rest of the year, it's from this point forward we gotta get better. To be better next year we have to try to get better this year."

To be clear, the potential interest in Simmonds runs deeper than Toronto and Tampa Bay. Boston has been linked, as has Nashville and Winnipeg. Montreal was too, until GM Marc Bergevin said he wasn't interested in rental players. As Elliotte Friedman told NHL Network at the end of January, the Simmonds trade domino may not fall until the futures of Panarin, Stone and Duchene are decided.

"I think unless somebody absolutely comes right out and says 'We have to have Wayne Simmonds right now,' I think we could be waiting a bit longer," he said. "And that is simply because I think the three other guys are probably the ones teams know will cost the most so they're saying, 'Wait, wait, wait, we're going to hold our assets until we know exactly

what's going to happen with these players, are they available, and what it's going to cost to get them.' So I think Simmonds might be in a position where unless someone says he's someone we want at the price point we're going for that, I think he might have to wait a bit longer."

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.

The Panthers are 11 points out of the playoffs, which is not normally a place you'd find a trade deadline buyer. Their recent trade for Derick Brassard and Riley Sheahan, both pending UFAs, doesn't indicate they'll buy because both of them could potentially be flipped again by Feb. 25. The real pick up in that trade with Pittsburgh was cap space and now Florida is looking at hitting July 1 with more than \$21 million in salary room.

It's clear this isn't a team that's going to fall back into a full-scale rebuild. With two great centres in Aleksander Barkov and Vincent Trocheck leading the way and surrounded by a strong supporting cast of scoring wingers, the base is there to be aggressive and try to return in 2019-20 as fresh Cup hopefuls.

"We're not going to sit still," Panthers GM Dale Tallon said just before finishing the trade with Pittsburgh. "We know we have a lot of good players. We have a lot of good players coming. That's the message we've been preaching. We have a plan, we're committed to winning, (owner Vinnie Viola) has given us all the tools to be successful and we're going to do here in the next month all the things necessary to win championships down the road."

The obvious weakness in Florida this season has been the goaltending, where Roberto Luongo and James Reimer have combined for a .903 five-on-five save percentage that is better than only San Jose's duo of Martin Jones and Aaron Dell. Both goalies are under contract for a few years yet, but Luongo will be 40 next October and Reimer isn't providing the necessary stability. If the Panthers are going to do the things "necessary to win championships" they'll need an upgrade here.

There are a number of pending UFA goalies this summer, though none are bigger than Bobrovsky. It appears he is ready to move on from the Blue Jackets so enter Florida as a potential landing spot. And, in fact, if they could negotiate an eight-year extension with him beforehand, Florida may explore trading for him ahead of free agency. If not, waiting for July 1 and keeping all their assets makes sense.

The main issue might be that Columbus wouldn't be able to get a reliable goalie back, leaving Joonas Korpisalo as their No. 1 for a playoff run (barring some other trade). He and Bobrovsky have split starts since the latter was unofficially suspended for a game in January, though, and Korpisalo has performed better in that time. Plus, Bobrovsky's playoff performance history isn't inspiring.

The Panthers could entice Columbus with one of their three big forward prospects (Grigori Denisenko, Aleksii Heponiemi, Owen Tippett) and Elliotte Friedman wrote in this week's 31 Thoughts that Mike Hoffman (24 goals in 51 games) could be available out of Florida. The Panthers should be able to recoup some valuable assets for a goal scorer who is still signed for another season — and you wonder if Columbus would be a fit.

Brassard, though on an expiring contract, could also be a fit. Last week Blue Jackets coach John Tortorella was frustrated by the fact he only had "one centre playing" well, and Brassard made it clear he's a much better fit in the top-six than in a third-line role he was occupying with the Penguins.

"The feeling is (Brassard) will be moved," Nick Kypreos reported on Hockey Night in Canada's Headlines segment last weekend. "Now, whether or not that has a link to Columbus I'm hearing they may be interested in him. The question is, does it involve maybe a bigger picture with Panarin and maybe Bobrovsky?"



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Another element discussed on the Headlines panel was the value of first-round picks at the deadline and how that may be the price to bring in the likes of Ryan Dzingel from Ottawa, Micheal Ferland from Carolina or Tyler Toffoli from Los Angeles. But how long, really, is the list of teams that are willing to move their first? You'd imagine that'd be a big ask from those who are still on the bubble — and there are a lot of those in the Western Conference.

Two teams that very well could move their firsts are at the top of the Central. Nashville and Winnipeg are yet again in a heated race to the regular-season finish and their need for forwards overlap. Though Nashville already acquired depth liners Brian Boyle and Cody McLeod this week, Joe Rexrode of The Tennessean wrote that GM David Poile probably isn't done.

Last Saturday, Kypreos touched on the possibility the Predators will take a couple of big swings.

"Keep an eye on Nashville," he said. "They lost Austin Watson, they're not sure when they're going to get him back. If they're not looking for at least one front-line player, it could be two."

The Predators have been hammered by the injury bug this season, but are just about fully healthy again with Kyle Turris returning from the IR. But Turris is flanked by Calle Jarnkrok on one side and, for now, either Boyle or Kevin Fiala, who hasn't yet taken a hoped-for step up in production. With Winnipeg able to have the likes of Patrik Laine and Nik Ehlers (when healthy) on their second line, the Preds have room for improvement there.

Just like last season, the Jets are expected to be in the market for a centre and we explored four potential fits in that regard. But the Winnipeg Sun's Ken Wiebe recently wrote that the Jets may not stop there, and could even take a run at some big-name wingers, including Artemi Panarin.

And don't count out the Dallas Stars. Their GM may very well be on the hot seat, their CEO has been openly critical of their star players not doing enough, and a recent stretch of strong play has them in the playoffs with a healthy seven points. The Stars have a very clear need for more scoring and, looking more like a playoff lock each day, may start feeling more comfortable about making their first-round pick available.

Keep an eye on how the picture develops in the Central.

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

It wasn't that long ago Colorado had the best line in hockey and were locked into a playoff spot. But they're just 3-12-2 in their past 17 games and their two top scorers have cooled off some. Now the Avalanche are in the thick of the snail race for one of the two wild-card spots in the West, sitting two points out and 10th in the conference as of Thursday.

This development has certainly changed the options Colorado has at the deadline. The question was always about whether or not GM Joe Sakic believed this team was ready to really make a run for the Stanley Cup, and if the answer was yes, how big would he go? Today at least, it looks like if Sakic does anything, it'll be relatively minor.

"We've been talking with teams the better part of three, four weeks now. But what we're not doing is moving our high picks and prospects," Sakic told the Denver Post. "Right now, for any player you're talking about — they're looking at players we're not willing to give up. But we got three weeks to go and we'll see where we are at that time. There are things we'll continue to look at — hockey trades — and see how we can get better.

"We're looking at the big picture here. We love what's coming. It's a process, and we're not going to deviate from that plan. If there's a player that can help us that isn't going to include one of those (first-round) picks and top prospects, then we'll look at that."

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1129724 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Jonathan Drouin's heroics help Canadiens ground high-flying Jets

Eric Engels

February 8, 2019, 12:48 AM

MONTREAL — Jonathan Drouin sat in the Montreal Canadiens' dressing room, in the centre of a scrum that was roughly 30 reporters deep, with cameras clicking, lights flashing in his eyes and the team-awarded, player-of-the-game cape folded neatly on the seat beside him.

He may as well have been wearing it during Montreal's 5-2 win over the Winnipeg Jets at the Bell Centre on Thursday.

"He was flying," said linemate Brendan Gallagher.

"That was some big Jo," said other linemate Phillip Danault.

That was some of the biggest Jo we've seen in the National Hockey League to date; a performance that magnified all the qualities that saw him chosen third overall by the Tampa Bay Lightning at the 2013 Draft and coveted by the Canadiens in the 2017 trade that sent Mikhail Sergachev the other way; the type of dominant performance only players of a certain caliber can offer; the type of performance that leaves you wanting more.

"It's hard finding that consistency," Drouin said.

But performances like these are signs of growth in the process — especially given the quality of competition.

For the majority of the 16:03 Drouin spent on the ice, he (along with Gallagher and Danault) was matched up against the omnipotent trio of Kyle Connor, Mark Scheifele and Blake Wheeler.

The result? Drouin scored two goals, added two assists, registered nine of Montreal's season-high 53 shots, finished plus-3 and had a 65.12 percent Corsi For. In other words, he was superb bordering on superhuman in this one.

Danault also had a goal and three assists to reach the 40-point mark, and Gallagher had two assists as well.

And the Canadiens as a whole? They were pedal-to-the-floor fast, suffocating on the forecheck, no-holds-barred on the backcheck, and just fuel-injected from puck drop to final buzzer.

"From the beginning to the end, I thought we played the same way," said Canadiens coach Claude Julien. "We didn't let up, we worked hard at both ends of the ice."

And they came out with a convincing win against one of the NHL's best teams.

It started with a goal against, when Scheifele buried a pass from Connor on a two-on-one that developed on an ill-timed Montreal line change.

But a little less than three minutes later, Drouin came charging down the left wing and snapped a shot on net. The puck was collected by Gallagher on the rebound, skated to the side of Jets goaltender Connor Hellebuyck and dropped off to Drouin in the slot before being pumped into the top-right quadrant of the net.

Forty-three seconds into the middle frame, Drouin took advantage of a botched Ben Chiarot pass and turned on the afterburners to create a two-



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on-one with Gallagher. He then looked pass, shifted the puck quickly to his forehand and shot it over Hellebuyck's glove in one swift motion for his second goal of the game.

Before the game got to the second intermission, Drouin missed two golden opportunities to become the first Francophone player to score a hat trick in a Canadiens uniform at the Bell Centre since Vincent Damphousse did it in 1998. In the third, he made a perfect pass to Shea Weber for the goal that made it 3-1, and he set up 18-year-old Jesperi Kotkaniemi on the power play for his fourth goal in as many games.

"I thought I was involved every shift," said Drouin.

He took 21 of them and made something happen in each one — extending a three-game streak that's seen him record nine points, bringing his total to 46 points in 55 games.

The consistency may not quite be where Drouin wants it to be yet — he's 23 and has time to find a way to contribute more frequently — but he has shown he has a knack for stepping up in big games.

"I've shown that before in junior (he scored 102 points in 50 playoff games in his three seasons with the QMJHL's Halifax Mooseheads) and also in the NHL in the playoffs one year (14 points in 17 games with the Lightning in 2016)," said Drouin. "But this is something I want to prove."

He's not alone.

This game offered the Canadiens a chance to prove what they can do when they execute their game plan, when they have everyone pulling in the same direction, when they ready themselves to expend a playoff-style effort. They took advantage of it.

"This wasn't one of those things where I said, 'This is a big game, guys,' said Julien. "[I said,] 'This is an exciting game tonight.'

"We respected them. I didn't say we were intimidated by them, but we respected them and we knew we had to play well. And we went out there and just took charge, and again — a good 60-minute effort, that's all I can say."

That's what it will require against the sixth-place Toronto Maple Leafs on Saturday, the fifth-place Nashville Predators next Thursday and the first-place Lightning next Saturday.

It'll only help the Canadiens if the Drouin who showed up to play the third-place Jets can keep the ball rolling.

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1129725 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Canucks struggling to stay afloat in absence of Edler

Iain MacIntyre | @imacSportsnet

February 7, 2019, 11:40 PM

CHICAGO — If you constructed a list of 'Five ways to beat the Chicago Blackhawks,' you'd either be writing for a website or coaching a National Hockey League team.

Either way, bench boss and blogger would agree on item No. 1: Do not take penalties and put Chicago on the power play.

The Vancouver Canucks talked about this Thursday, then took five penalties in a sequence that gave the lethal Blackhawk power play (16-for-37 over the previous 12 games) a pair of two-man advantages.

Considering Chicago scored twice when dared to do so, it was impressive in a way that Vancouver still managed a point in a 4-3 overtime loss, settled when Blackhawks captain Jonathan Toews beat Canucks shutdown defenceman Chris Tanev one-on-one to score at 3:21 of three-on-three.

But giving the Blackhawks two points allowed Chicago to creep within two of Vancouver in the Western Conference playoff race. It also left an unsatisfying feeling around the Canucks, who finished their four-game road trip at 1-2-1 despite being the better team for long stretches in all four games.

Those two or three points left on the table could seem even more valuable in April if the wild-card playoff race out west continues to be a mass sprint — uh, jog — to the finish line.

"The way we played, we could be sitting here with six or seven points on the trip," Canucks coach Travis Green said. "At the end of the day, you've got to play well. And if you play well, good things will happen. And I really believe that. You can't just chase the game, you can't chase points. You've got to play your best hockey, and when you do good things happen."

But good things didn't happen on this trip as Vancouver lost top defenceman Alex Edler to a concussion Monday in Philadelphia and have lost three straight games since he went face-first into the ice.

The Canucks are tied with the St. Louis Blues for the final playoff spot in the Western Conference but have played three more games. The Colorado Avalanche and Edmonton Oilers are two points behind with games in-hand on Vancouver.

The Canucks have difficult home games Saturday and Monday against the Calgary Flames and San Jose Sharks before embarking on another three-games-in-four-nights trip through California.

They outshot the Blackhawks 43-35 and significantly outchanced them at even-strength, but needed rookie Elias Pettersson to get Vancouver to overtime by overpowering goalie Collin Delia with a one-timer at 18:08 of the third period, when the Canucks were skating six against four.

Delia, however, stopped Pettersson on an overtime breakaway before Toews, able to take his time and measure Tanev in the man-to-man defence teams play in OT, made an explosive move around the Canuck and beat Vancouver goalie Jacob Markstrom with a high shot.

"I was waiting for him to do it," Tanev lamented. "I knew he was going to wait for me to lunge and try and stick it under me, and he just beat me."

For a while, it looked like the Canucks would beat themselves.

Brandon Sutter, as smart and disciplined as anyone on the Canucks, took a ridiculous slashing penalty on Erik Gustafsson when Vancouver was already shorthanded, giving the Blackhawks a five-on-three power play starting at 17:26 of the first period.

As Sutter sat in the penalty box, Alex DeBrincat converted Dylan Strome's back-door feed at 17:59, and Brandon Saad flipped a loose puck past Markstrom at 18:58 to lead 2-0 in a period in which the Hawks had been largely dominated at even strength.

"I just lost control for a sec there," Sutter said. "That guy was coming at me trying to pick me, and I just got a little frustrated. I can't do that. It's not a great feeling sitting in the box when they get two on you early in the game like that. The boys battled back for me. That's not something I do very often and I don't want to make a habit of it, that's for sure."

Green had warned his team about taking penalties.

"It's easy to say," he said "Guys aren't trying to take penalties. I know that. It's part of the game. We did a lot of good things tonight. That first period, I think we gave up two chances five-on-five and three in the second period. To get down 2-0 on the road and to come back, claw your way back, and get a point is big."



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Alex Biega, brought into the lineup for Edler, blistered a high point shot past Delia to make it 2-1 at 2:20 of the second period and Josh Leivo tied it with a sharp-angle snap from left wing at 4:41.

But after the Canucks somehow put themselves down two men again — and escaped the 90-second five-on-three because Markstrom was their best penalty-killer — the Blackhawks retook the lead anyway at 14:01 when DeBrincat scored another back-door goal after four Vancouver skaters watched the puck bounce past them.

"I thought we played some pretty solid games and to not get the points we needed, especially in a playoff push, it stings a little bit," Canucks defenceman Ben Hutton said after logging 31:18 of ice time. "We clawed back and grabbed one tonight, which is nice.

"(But) we were playing with danger there a little bit. We knew their power play was good. Patty Kane, he controls it, he can hit seams out of nowhere there. So we were flirting with danger there, which we can't do. Going down the stretch here, we know we have to be disciplined and win the special-teams battle."

The Canucks' power play finished 1-for-5, and is just 3-for-33 the last 12 games.

"It was very similar to our whole road trip," Sutter said of the game. "We played a lot of pretty good hockey and it sucks to come out of it with only three points. There's a lot of things to like. We just need more points."

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1129726 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Senators' Matt Duchene still undecided on future in Ottawa

Luke Fox | @lukefoxjukebox

February 7, 2019, 12:15 AM

TORONTO — Matt Duchene does not sound like a man ready to give up easily on the Ottawa Senators, the franchise that has bailed on so many hockey stars before him.

The opportunity to play in his home country, in his home province, to raise his own young family just a three-hour drive from where he first fell in love with the game, has been the kind of special that reflects in the eyes of children.

"The young kids that come out are so excited. You see yourself in those young kids," Duchene said Wednesday during the latest in a series of public conversations about where he's at and where he might be headed.

"I remember I used to come here [to Toronto] and watch games — not a lot, because it's pretty expensive and far drive for my dad — but when I did come, it was a dream come true to watch my idols and my heroes. It's cool now to have that script be flipped.

"It's something I don't take very lightly at all. It's something that's important to me, and it's been a lot of fun."

After the buzzer sounded on yet another spirited Senators loss (5-4 to the Maple Leafs) — their fifth in a row and league-worst 34th in a ball-free lottery season only 53 games old — we wouldn't blame Duchene if his head and heart played another round of tug-o-war over his future.

"If I had a gut feeling, I'd probably go with it right now," Duchene said. "But at this point we're not at that point."

The NHL trade deadline, which doubles as Sens GM Pierre Dorion's unofficial re-signing deadline for offensive leaders and impending UFAs Duchene and Mark Stone, is only 18 days away. (Neither has trade protection built into his contract.)

Club owner Eugene Melnyk ultimately holds the purse strings on the type of big-money, long-term contracts Stone and Duchene deserve and expect. If the owner doesn't shell out, someone else will. History will repeat in tragicomedy.

Melnyk and the Senators hosted a thank-you event for corporate sponsors Tuesday in Toronto and outlined to his supporters a plan and made a pledge.

The last-place club's rebuild would last another season or two beyond this one. But, please, don't pull your marketing dollars, because after a couple more sad springs...

"The Senators will be all-in again for a five-year run of unparalleled success — where the team will plan to spend close to the NHL's salary cap every year from 2021 to 2025," Melnyk vowed, according to a team-issued press release. "He reiterated that the Senators' current rebuild is a blueprint on how to bring the Stanley Cup home to its rightful place in Ottawa."

That timeline puts Duchene in his 30s.

Today, he skates beside one winger Melnyk wished they'd traded two refinancings ago (Bobby Ryan) and another who may be dealt by month's end (another pending UFA, Ryan Dzingel). Melnyk's Senators are currently operating at a projected \$7 million under the cap, and they're expected to shed more veteran salary this month.

"Obviously, we may have to deal with that situation here with some guys," Duchene said. "Who knows?"

There's no assurance when — or if — Kanata's Canadian Tire Centre will be upgraded to a slick new downtown rink, and attendance has fallen, again, to 75.6-per-cent capacity. Only the Islanders and Hurricanes give their fans more elbow room.

"Obviously our crowds aren't the biggest most nights, but at the same time, the people that come out and the people in the city supporting us, there's just so much support around our team," said Duchene.

Duchene, 28, will play his 700th regular-season game Saturday. He has appeared in a grand total of eight post-season games. The playoff-bound Jets, Predators, Sharks and Blue Jackets are just a few teams that may be eager to rent him for a run, but Duchene has also been offered a reasonable eight-year extension in the ballpark of \$64 million, according to Sportsnet's Nick Kyreos.

He's well aware that the organization he's seriously considering sticking with is 18 points and eight teams out of a playoff picture he's consistently getting cropped out of.

"I'm looking at everything. I'm a student of the game. I watch the game. I watch NHL all the time," said Duchene, a close observer of friend John Tavares' free-agency sweepstakes.

"I'm watching what's going on, what teams have and what we have here and definitely paying attention."

And yet, the way he spoke about making a hockey home in Ottawa Wednesday makes one wonder if the Haliburton, Ont., native and new dad might just be content to play big fish in a small pond.

As a great player on a bad team, Duchene is taking big draws, earning big minutes, and hunting down the first point-per-game campaign of his 10-year pro career. (His snipe in Wednesday's loss in Toronto brings him to 22 goals and 49 points through 44 games.)

If he remains loyal to familiar, friendly Ottawa, Duchene is a clear-cut No. 1 centre. The man. Possibly, if Stone leaves, the next captain. On a contender, he slots in as a No. 2.



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"If I've said it once, I've said it 100 times: This is probably the greatest group of guys I've played with in terms of our cohesiveness in the locker room and our morale. It's just been a pleasure to come to the rink every day," Duchene said.

"Not just the [players] but the people in the organization, the trainers, everything from top to bottom. It's just such a fun place and a great place to come every day. That's been really easy to indulge in and not worry about the other stuff."

Really? "Some fans might find that hard to believe," a reporter questions.

"We've all said it all year," Duchene replied. "Obviously, there was some stuff that, uh, I would say we cleaned up from last year, but every time we get together — in the locker room, on the road, Super Bowl party, whatever — everybody's together, and that's something I've really enjoyed."

Coach Guy Boucher assures that Duchene, and the uncertain cards he's playing tight to the vest, is given sanctuary at the rink.

"In our room, we don't talk about that," Boucher said. "The players say it all the time, but I can say it: It's a really good room with great chemistry in there, and everybody understands what this year is and where the organization is going. I've liked coming to work every day this year."

So while the Senators' odds of being relevant in the league Duchene watches so closely look black and white, perhaps the truth is still grey.

Earlier this week, Duchene was asked if it's been tough to separate what the heart wants from what the head wants:

"Yes," he said. "Very."

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1129727 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Eugene Melnyk's plan for Senators brings cynicism and doubt

Wayne Scanlan

February 7, 2019, 10:50 AM

The year is 2021 and Ottawa is suddenly a scorching hot hockey market.

The erstwhile phenom Thomas Chabot has just been signed to a bonus-laden, max-term contract and all the Senators' pending unrestricted free agents have committed to stay with this contending team. Meanwhile, the scent of fresh U.S. currency is wafting under the noses of elite NHL free agents and their representatives.

This pie-in-the-sky concept of Ottawa as a destination franchise, a hockey Shangri-La for the game's stars, stems from the comments made by owner Eugene Melnyk in Toronto Tuesday.

Of course, the pearls from the Senators owner get dropped in Toronto.

Speaking to a group of team sponsors and partners, Melnyk's first public comments in ages were packaged and delivered as a PR missive, bizarrely, after the first period of Wednesday's hockey game between the Senators and Toronto Maple Leafs. Melnyk was in attendance.

The release lauds the contributions of some \$105 million by Melnyk's Senators to the Ottawa community, and then adds:

"Mr. Melnyk also confirmed during the presentation that on the hockey side of the business, the expectation is that the Senators rebuilding plan

will take another season or two from now, but when his general manager confirms that the Senators have all the pieces of the foundation in place ...

"The Senators will be all-in again for a five-year run of unparalleled success — where the team will plan to spend close to the NHL's salary cap every year from 2021-2025," Melnyk is said to have said.

He reiterated (the statement is paraphrasing now) that the "Senators current rebuild is a blueprint on how to bring the Stanley Cup home to its rightful place in Ottawa."

First question: does the rebuild blueprint include trading away the 2019 first-round pick in a go-for-it move just 15 months ago? Two, how do we distinguish a rebuild from penny pinching?

We'd love to report that the response to this news of the Senators identifying their Stanley Cup window was spontaneous dancing in the streets of Kanata and the Byward Market.

Alas, 15-plus years of Melnyk ownership comes with a certain degree of cynicism and doubt. Promises of glory have been heard before, along with a vow to move downtown, and then a flip-flop on that to suggest maybe the Sens would just stay in Kanata. Or move elsewhere, if fans aren't going to support the bloody team.

The reaction online to Melnyk's comments was swift and decisive — generally seen as more fake news from the Senators' fearless leader.

A sampling of comments from fans and bloggers:

"The Senators clearly don't understand that TRUST is the issue and the easiest way to build that trust is to repeatedly do what you say you are going to do. Not press releases. Few believe the GM or the owner. It's so weak. Basic PR."

"I don't believe a word he says ..."

"He's like Donald Trump ..."

"On top of the obvious issue of where the money comes from, you can't just flip a compete switch at a designated time. You have to invest along the way. Keep good players. Bring in competent coaches. Invest in scouting/player development. Hire an actual front office."

Yes, it is widely known in hockey and in Ottawa that the Senators run a bare-bones operation. The Leafs probably spend more on front office salaries than the Senators do on players. The Senators officially have a payroll of \$72.5 million, but some of that is accounted for in insurance payments to long-term injured players Clarke MacArthur and Marian Gaborik.

The timing of the Melnyk offensive seems obvious considering the Senators are in the midst of last-ditch negotiations with pending free agents Mark Stone, Matt Duchene and Ryan Dzingel, prior to the Feb. 25 NHL trade deadline. This was a PR offensive.

During the Sens-Leafs broadcast, the Sportsnet panel was swift to assess Melnyk's pitch. Elliott Friedman tied it to the current pursuit of pending Duchene, Stone and Dzingel. Doug MacLean said Melnyk has a credibility issue. Brian Burke, the long-time NHL executive and now analyst, was his usual blunt self:

"They're not going to be able to come through on this pledge without a new building," Burke said, referencing the bid to develop LeBreton Flats. The proposal has been approved, then abandoned, and is now the subject of mediation.

"That building is 48 months away, minimum, even if everything starts to move quickly," Burke added. "I'm not sure it's going to happen in the next six, seven years."

"So, they can say what they want, they're a revenue-sharing team now, they'll have a hard time spending near the cap with the revenue gap between their old building in Kanata and what they need downtown."



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If there's a glimmer of bright news to be read into any of this, clearly Melnyk is at least trying to keep one or more of these free agents, with a promise of a brighter financial future here. Not that these players or their representatives are going to be convinced by rhetoric; they already have a handle on what is going on behind the scenes in Ottawa.

Maybe it shows his optimism that LeBreton Flats is going to be developed, and that there will be more revenues to support a payroll, and potentially other ownership partners.

Maybe Melnyk will sell the team before it hits this supposed winning window of 2021-25, and his promise to spend will be carried out by new ownership.

Now, that is the kind of news that would get people dancing in the streets of Ottawa.

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1129728 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Oilers' complete effort breathes much-needed oxygen into playoff hopes

Mark Spector | @sportsnetspec

February 8, 2019, 12:07 AM

It's crazy to think that you can snap a six-game losing streak on Feb. 7, win for just the sixth time in your past 21 games, and find yourself two points out of a wild-card spot.

Such is the way in the mild, mild West, and the Edmonton Oilers won't apologize to anyone. They played a very complete game on the road Thursday, winning 4-1 at Minnesota to breathe some much-needed oxygen into their playoff hopes.

It's not rocket science: You get a little early luck, clean up the defensive zone, mix in some excellent goaltending by Cam Talbot, win most of the physical battles, then combine all of that with a power play that has been lethal of late.

Sure, the news that captain Mikko Koivu has been lost for the season was a body blow for the Wild. But that's even more reason to believe, when you get to play a team within hours of them hearing news like that. You've got to win those games, and the Oilers did what it took Thursday night in Minny.

Here are few thoughts on that:

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

It always takes a few games for a player to regain form after an injury, and this was only Oscar Klefbom's second game back after missing 21 games with a broken pinkie finger on his left hand. But he looked very much like the Oilers' lead defensive dog in his own zone, playing a heavy, steady game for a team-leading 23:55 of ice time.

What you notice with Klefbom is he has the size and courage to win the battle, but then the skill to make the right play once the puck is on his stick. Too many Oilers defencemen have just one of those qualities without the other, so they'll win a battle then give the puck away, or not win the battle at all.

"This just shows you what Klefbom is worth to this hockey club," head coach Ken Hitchcock told reporters in Minnesota after the game. "You get a player back who's that dominant, it's an awfully good feeling for the team."

We've said it before: When the top D-man goes down, everyone else has to play too many minutes. Against the Wild, Klefbom's 23-plus minutes positioned Darnell Nurse (22:16) and Adam Larsson (21:13) into realistic minutes, and kept Kris Russell (19:52) where he should be — below 20 minutes.

And the third pairing was in the mid-teens. Perfect.

It's been a rough week for Talbot, who had a fantastic 40 minutes versus Chicago on Tuesday before succumbing to goalie abuse, as the Oilers broke down in front of him like an old Skoda on a 33-degree day.

Talbot was pulled, had some choice words for Hitchcock on his way to the room, and we suspect that the reason Hitchcock went right back to Talbot on Thursday is that — on second thought — he decided that hook against Chicago was a bit unfair.

This time, Talbot gave his team the same level for 60 minutes, and his team gave him 60 minutes of proper defensive-zone coverage in return. It's a workable combination, eh?

"This was a good team win. We needed this one," Talbot said after the game. "Huge for our confidence."

Devan Dubnyk whiffed on Darnell Nurse's early, long slapper as the first shot of the game went into the opponent's net, a welcome change for Edmonton. It was a lucky goal, the type the Oilers haven't seen much of lately.

At the other end, Talbot was allowed to simply make all the saves that would be expected of him, and not asked to steal five or six sure-fire scoring chances due to sloppy defensive work in front of him. With two huge stops on Mikael Granlund in the final moments of the game, we'd bet Talbot will take the fourth start in five games since the All-Star break, when San Jose comes to town Sunday. And the newly-signed Mikko Koskinen will sit.

"I don't care which guy it is who gets on a roll. He's the guy who is going to play," Hitchcock said.

With a power play this hot, it shouldn't take much for Edmonton to get to three goals every night.

Leon Draisaitl (32 goals) and Connor McDavid (31) make Edmonton the only club in the NHL with two 30-goal scorers. McDavid (31-49-80) is one point behind Nikita Kucherov in the Art Ross race, while Draisaitl (32-34-66) is seventh.

The power play has scored five times in its past 11 chances. So the goals are there, to the point where it shouldn't take a ton of support scoring to win games.

The problem? This was just the second time in eight games the penalty kill was perfect, and of course, the goals-against at five-on-five has left Edmonton in a position where they need four or five goals to win.

With Klefbom back, it's time to lock down defensively. Give the goalies a chance to be the best netminder in the game, and you never know what could happen.

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Sportsnet.ca / Controversial Rittich decision overshadows Flames' loss



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • February 8, 2019

Eric Francis | @EricFrancis

February 8, 2019, 1:07 AM

CALGARY – Just like that, Big Save Dave was reduced to Rapidly Removed Rittich.

Thirteen minutes, six shots and two bad goals into a highly-anticipated showdown with San Jose, David Rittich was given the Mike Keenan treatment by coach Bill Peters Thursday night.

Yes, both goals were uncharacteristically sizeable lapses by the typically stable sophomore. But no, he never should have been given the hook. No way, no how.

Given how razor sharp he's been all season long to catapult the Flames to tops in the west, he deserved the chance to make amends. His teammates likely wanted the same, as they've previously cherished the chance to bail him out as the team did in Philadelphia a month earlier.

Not only that, the 26-year-old clearly gave the club the better chance to pull off one of their comeback miracles that have helped lift him to an other-worldly 20-5-4 record this season.

This wasn't the way to handle the team's most important asset this season.

That was made clear by the way he skated ever so slowly to the bench with his head down, clearly stunned, frustrated and embarrassed by his two gaffes. More humiliating was being forced to give way to backup Mike Smith in front of a Saddledome gathering that had yet to see Rittich lose a single game in regulation at home this season.

He deserved better.

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As Rittich disappeared down the hallway to the dressing room nobody threw a jersey onto the ice or booed the netminder or the decision. There was a stunned silence as people wondered what this might mean moving forward. His stoic, quiet availability after the game made it clear he was clearly stung by the turn of events.

Oh sure, it was one hook, one game in an 82-game marathon. There's a solid chance he'll treat it like a common cold and get over it. But given the importance of doing everything possible to maintain the youngster's confidence and mojo as the playoffs creep ever closer, one wonders if this was a moment Flames fans won't be able to forget.

More to the point, one wonders if Rittich will be able to forget it.

"The coach pull[ed] me and after [the] second goal it was maybe [the] right thing," said Rittich when asked if he was surprised by the hook.

"I'm going home to sleep and I want to be ready for the next practice and game and be better than tonight."

How this affects the surprising Czech star could largely determine the fate of this hockey club.

Whether Flames fans are ready to admit it, without the magic Rittich has provided this season these Flames would be in a fight for their playoff lives. He's that important.

With the Flames up 1-0 early against a team entering the night four points back in the divisional race, Rittich somehow allowed an Evander Kane spin-o-rama from the high slot to trickle in through his pads. He called it unlucky as he saw it last-second, it hit his blocker and rolled in off his leg.

Sixty-three seconds later he raced out of his net to play a puck near the top of the faceoff circle as big Brent Burns bore down on the situation. It was the right read to play the puck, but the wrong one to try sending it up the middle, as opposed to the safety of the boards. Burns made a great read to anticipate Rittich's target, blocked the pass and deposited it into the empty net.

"He faked me going to [the] boards and he jumped right to the middle – it was [a] smart play by him," said Rittich, who gets full marks for facing the media.

"I should hold it for a second and try to play it."

Heavily influenced by the magical stickwork and playmaking abilities of his tandem-mate, Rittich has been playing with an increasing amount of fire this year outside the blue paint. Many predicted it would soon backfire, as it did at an inopportune time.

Twenty-two seconds later, Smith allowed the first shot he faced to put the Sharks up 3-1 late in the first and, just like that, the game was over in a span of 85 seconds.

"We were down two, and he didn't look comfortable," said Peters when asked why he ended Rittich's night.

"Didn't like either goal.

"Just trying to get a little spark there, and obviously that didn't work."

Peters said he doesn't worry about how a move like this can affect a young goalie, but then admitted he considered putting him right back in to start the second period. They opted not to.

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Peters then said he wouldn't know his starter Saturday until Saturday. He was fibbing, as the answer is obvious. You start Rittich.

You owe him as much, not just because he's the team's No. 1 netminder, but because he needs to be given the chance to rebound from his shaky start and the treatment it garnered him. Again, he should have been given that chance in the second and third periods.

The Flames carried the play the rest of the game, but fell victim to a Rittich-esque effort at the other end by former Calgary Hitman Martin Jones. He was spectacular as the game's first star, saving 36 of the 38 shots he faced by a Flames team that suddenly found a 'keeper they couldn't beat.

Preceding the game with talk of the importance of accountability in the league, Evander Kane held the Flames accountable for an earlier boot-kicking with two goals in the 5-2 win that draws them within two points of the Flames. He has nine goals in his last five against Calgary.

Injury was added to insult late in the game when Travis Hamonic, fresh off a knee scare, raced off the ice clutching his left arm, in obvious discomfort after Tomas Hertl scored his second of the game in the final two minutes.

It was last year at this time the Flames lost Smith to injury and subsequently faded from the playoff picture when Rittich-the-rookie wasn't able to carry the load as starter.

Rebounding brilliantly this season with stellar numbers that place him top ten in every goalie category, the question is how he'd handle inevitable adversity.

Well, we're about to find out.

Fact is, Rittich deserved better than to have the situation play out the way it did.

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Sportsnet.ca / Why Maple Leafs' Patrick Marleau will never forget where he came from

Luke Fox | @lukefoxjukebox

February 7, 2019, 10:50 AM

Patrick Marleau's four young boys just returned from a midwinter's beach vacation in Turks and Caicos.

Maybe after school today they'll go for a twirl on their pristine backyard rink, contracted by Dad and complete with NHL-style boards and a blue maple leaf painted at centre ice.

Or maybe one of Landon, Brody, Jagger and Caleb's not-so-biological big brothers, superstars Auston Matthews or Mitchell Marner, will swing by for mini sticks and karaoke.

No, Marleau's children are not quite growing up in the blue-collar manner of their father — the humblest of Saskatchewan farm boys turned enduring hockey wonder, a gentle man of iron with an outside shot at breaking province-mate Gordie Howe's record of NHL games played.

That would be impossible.

Life under the roof of a Hall of Fame-bound, two-time-Olympic-champion father who will have raked more than \$100 million in salary over his enduring career couldn't possibly be the same as life under the roof of a mixed-grain farmer from Aneroid, Sask. — a sleepy village whose population swelled from 40 to 50 from 2011 to 2016, but remains a three-hour drive from the nearest airport.

"The biggest thing now for me when I go back is, I take the kids there and show them how I grew up, some of the things I did as a kid. Some of the fun things, but also put 'em to work a bit and do some work on the farm," says Marleau. "That's the tough part — trying to instil the same values I had growing up. We try to do that as best we can."

How Marleau grew up is the youngest of three siblings in the same farmhouse his parents, Denis and Jeanette, still live in. Older brother Richard was responsible for helping Denis with the morning's farm chores, and Patrick took the after-school shift.

"In the summer, it was all hands on deck, chasing cattle, branding, or going out on the tractor," Marleau says. "My brother's idea was to try and make money with pigs. I think he got the four bigger pigs, and I got the four little ones."

They'd see mom Jeanette rush home from her days as a schoolteacher to whip up dinner for five, then hit the garden and dirty her nails.

"She was nonstop most of the time," Marleau says. "Sacrificing."

Jeanette's sacrifice escalated when her youngest's obsession planted the seed of a profession. When his responsibilities had been checked off, Marleau would reach for a stick that, at 39, he's never let go.

Hockey Night in Canada intermissions meant Patrick and Richard stickhandling the shine off the kitchen floor with their indoor games. Warmer weather meant Patrick using a golf ball or whatever was available to work on his dangles around the farm.

"You're by yourself. It's quiet. You can't see your neighbours. I don't think I'd trade it for growing up in the city," a 17-year-old Marleau told the Mercury News prior to being drafted by the San Jose Sharks. "But I don't know if I could live out here all my life."

Celebrating heroes of the game, Sportsnet and Scotiabank unite to bring a 4-day hockey festival to Swift Current, Sask., and a 12-hour national NHL broadcast to Canadian fans coast-to-coast on Feb. 9.

Even a town as sleepy as his had a rink, and the Marleaus' 1,600-acre farm contained a small pond that would freeze over for extra shinny sessions.

It's those backyard, fresh-air games that inspired Marleau to recreate the experience for his own sons on their Toronto lot. Aneroid on steroids.

Patrick is told that Denis first knotted his skates at age three. He started playing at five. Quickly, Marleau's talent outgrew his village.

"My dad would travel with me to hockey most weekends, and Mom would be with my brother and sister (Denise), taking them to their sports and stuff like that," Marleau says.

He pauses a beat to consider what he picked up from his parents.

"Work ethic. And just trying to be a good person would be the other big thing as well."

"I can't explain how great of a guy [Marleau] is and how close we are in our relationship," Matthews said in the moments after he honoured his linemate by ripping off his own sweater to reveal a No. 12 MARLEAU jersey at San Jose's All-Star Weekend. "He treats everybody so well. It doesn't matter who you are — a random person on the street or a teammate that plays with him — he treats everybody so kindly."

To pursue his dream, a 12-year-old Marleau needed to start skating an hour north of home, in Swift Current, where he'd been born (Aneroid can't support a hospital). By 14, he'd left the farm for good and moved in with Grandma, who lived just down the street from the home of the Swift Current Broncos.

"If I wanted to play hockey, that's where I had to go to get some exposure. It was a great place to grow up and it was close to home," Marleau says. "It was only an hour away, but the two years living with my grandma helped me out quite a bit with being away from home. The first year I was lucky enough that my sister was going to school in Swift Current, so she was there as well."

"But it was tough: 14 years old living away from home. I got homesick once. After that... I wouldn't say clear sailing, but it got a lot of better."

The twin remedies for homesickness in Swift Current were playing hockey and watching hockey.

Marleau, a smooth-striding forward, lit it up with Midget AAA Legionnaires and is still the club's all-time points leader (219 in 84 games).

So big and dynamic was he that, at 14, Marleau was invited to compete with 16- and 17-year-olds at the 1995 Canada Games in Grand Prairie, where he was interviewed by Scott Oake, a cast member of his favourite TV show.

When he wasn't practising, Marleau would walk from Grandma's to watch the Broncos play.

"It was only, like, two bucks or five bucks to get in," Marleau smiles, "so I'd always go to games when I was in town."

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Marleau still recalls the excitement he felt, at age 10, when the star-studded Broncos — led by Sheldon Kennedy and Geoff Sanderson — won the 1989 Memorial Cup.

He remembers local deity Joe Sakic, who piled up 293 points in two seasons in Swift Current, and Sanderson making a dinner appearance in the nearby village of Vanguard, and approaching the head table to secure autographs from the junior stars.



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"That was huge for me," Marleau says. "I wanted to play for the Broncos until later on I realized the NHL was on top of that."

When Marleau was ready to graduate to the WHL, in 1995, the Seattle Thunderbirds stole the emerging legend away from rural Saskatchewan, and two years later he was embarking on one of the most consistent pro careers in history.

"Just think, you're going to make more money than I ever have," Denis told Patrick in those eye-opening days leading up to the 1997 draft. "Don't ever forget where you came from."

The farmer's son would set all kinds of franchise records in San Jose; he'd share a Team Canada World Cup victory (2004) with former Bronco Sakic; and all that hard work would keep him in Stanley Cup contention when a fellow Sasky, Mike Babcock, lured "the GOAT" to Toronto and plopped him on a line with 21-year-old phenom.

Alongside Matthews, Marleau has caught fire, again, putting up four points in his past four outings. He has a shot at a 16th 20-goal campaign.

"When you're 25 and it doesn't go as good, everyone says, 'No big deal.' When you start getting [older], they always say, 'Oh, the wheels are off, you're done,'" Babcock says.

"The wheels ain't off. He ain't done."

At least once a winter, Denis and Jeanette leave the farm to watch their son play for the Maple Leafs. And once every summer, the ageless Marleau dutifully returns the favour, packing his brood and travelling home to quiet Aneroid to help with some chores.

"There's always a stop in Swift Current on the way," Marleau says, "to see some people."

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TSN.CA / Sens' rebuild plan is public, but will Stone and Duchene buy in?

Ian Mendes

OTTAWA – It has been almost exactly a year – to the day – since the Ottawa Senators first planted the seed for a complete rebuild in the nation's capital.

In a Feb. 9, 2018 press release, the Senators quietly announced a three-year contract extension for general manager Pierre Dorion and hinted that significant changes were on the horizon.

"Today's announcement reflects a renewed commitment to scouting, drafting and development. It may require changes to our lineup. Rest assured, we will only tolerate pain with an endgame in mind: building an organization that wins – at all levels – year in and year out," the statement read.

That press release was widely criticized for being disseminated after 6 p.m. on a Friday, which is often the time organizations try and bury bad news. As a result, the message was met with significant skepticism in this market.

Fast-forward 12 months and yet another curiously timed statement from the club – this one coming in the middle of a Senators-Maple Leafs game on Wednesday night – is once again being met with ample cynicism by Ottawa fans.

This time, the club relayed the message owner Eugene Melnyk delivered to a group of sponsors at an event at the Hockey Hall of Fame in Toronto on Tuesday night.

"The Senators will be all-in again for a five-year run of unparalleled success – where the team will plan to spend close to the NHL's salary cap every year from 2021 to 2025," the statement read. "[Melnyk] reiterated that the Senators' current rebuild is a blueprint on how to bring the Stanley Cup home to its rightful place in Ottawa."

Some Ottawa fans are insulted the club chose to make such a significant announcement in the backyard of its most hated rival. Would any other sports organization in North America make a bold proclamation about its future plans in the downtown core of a rival city?

As Daniel Alfredsson once said about his team's chances of coming back in a playoff series against Pittsburgh, "Probably not."

Stevenson: Melnyk's comments leave more questions than answers

Chris Stevenson from the Athletic joins In The Box to talk about Eugene Melnyk's comment's regarding spending to the cap from season 2021-2025.

But the manner in which Wednesday's news was distributed fell completely in line with Melnyk's strategy over the past year.

Melnyk hasn't done an extensive media interview with any outlet since his infamous media session on Parliament Hill prior to the outdoor game in Ottawa in December of 2017.

For a man who used to have the reputation of never having met a microphone he didn't love, he's now enveloped himself in a cone of silence, playing the media game on his terms.

He believes his words at the outdoor game were misconstrued and sensationalized by news outlets. As a result, his distrust for the local media is palpable. So instead of doing traditional media interviews to announce plans for the rebuild, the Sens owner has chosen more unconventional ways to try and get his message across to fans.

There were town hall meetings last spring, in which reporters were allowed to attend one session but were prohibited from recording any audio or video of the event. In September, the club released a video featuring Melnyk and defenceman Mark Borowiecki that was supposed to kick-start the rebuild, but instead, the video was widely panned by critics for its poor timing and awkward feel.

Every few months there is a new piece added to the Senators rebuilding puzzle – and yet Ottawa fans feel like they're still not getting the full picture. If transparency and trust are two pillars on which organizations build credibility with their fan base, it still feels like the Senators are operating in the shadows.

Whether or not the fans buy into the rebuild will hinge largely on the decisions coming in the next two weeks on Mark Stone and Matt Duchene. If both of them flee for greener pastures before the trade deadline, it's a damning indictment of the Sens rebuilding plan.

There is an argument to be made that trading both Duchene and Stone could be advantageous to a full rebuild. After all, when the Senators are in the middle of this new projected window of contention – in the year 2023 – Duchene and Stone will both be north of 30 years old and theoretically on the decline. Trading them now could haul the club a bunch of assets – first-round picks and prospects – who could be entering their prime four years down the line.

NBC's Pierre McGuire on Eugene Melnyk promising to spend in the future, Sens focusing on Matt Duchene talks, Mark Stone negotiations, the Rangers shoot-out win over Bruins, play of Mika Zibanejad and Brian Boyle being traded to the Predators.

But as recently as Tuesday, Dorion made it clear that it's his intention to sign both Duchene and Stone to be major parts of the rebuilding process in Ottawa. The club has seen such a large exodus of star players in



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recent years that it's almost a necessity they hang on to at least one of them to show some degree of stability.

There is no amount of PR spin that can justify both these players being traded in the next two weeks.

Stone, in particular, can carry a significant amount of weight moving forward. Sens fans almost universally adore Stone, whose productivity, leadership and character make him one of the most popular players to ever wear an Ottawa jersey.

So if Stone is willing to buy into this plan that the team will be a contender by 2021, a lot of Senators fans will follow suit. Stone has an inherent trust factor with this fan base; a belief that he has a built-in moral compass that will undoubtedly point him in the right direction. And if that's to re-sign with Ottawa, a majority of fans will follow suit.

But if Stone feels like something is amiss in Ottawa, it should be a red flag for everybody.

Press releases and statements are all well and fine, but at the end of the day, words carry very little weight around here.

The actions of Duchene – and Stone in particular – will direct Senators fans as to whether or not they should embrace the rebuilding plan as laid out by the club on Wednesday night.

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TSN.CA / Melnyk: Sens will spend close to cap after rebuild

Staff Report

Speaking at a corporate event in Toronto on Tuesday, Ottawa Senators owner Eugene Melnyk outlined his team's plans moving forward.

Melnyk said he expects the team's rebuild to take another season or two, but when his general manager believes the team has all of its foundation pieces in place, he plans for the Senators to spend close to the NHL's salary cap every year for a five-year run from 2021-25.

Melnyk said the team's current rebuild is a blueprint to bring a Stanley Cup championship to Ottawa.

The Senators are currently last in the Atlantic Division with a 19-28-5 record, good for 43 points. The Colorado Avalanche own the Senators' first-round draft pick this season as part of the trade that sent Matt Duchene to Ottawa in 2017.

Melnyk spoke in front of close to 200 guests at the event, which included the team's corporate sponsors and partners. The club released a statement on Wednesday night summarizing the speech.

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TSN.CA / The interesting wrinkles of Matthews' new deal

Travis Yost

Auston Matthews' five-year contract extension with the Toronto Maple Leafs this week sent shock waves through the National Hockey League, but not for the usual reasons.

Matthews' extension had been a priority for the Maple Leafs all season long. The team has long recognized him as a superstar and wanted to make sure he was the leading part of a young core they believe can win a Stanley Cup in the immediate future. But the extension had two rather interesting wrinkles.

The first wrinkle is that the contract is only five years in length. It is quite rare to see a superstar player coming out of his entry-level contract (ELC) not sign a max deal.

Consider some of the comparables for Matthews. Connor McDavid in Edmonton signed an eight-year, \$100 million contract out of his ELC. His teammate, Leon Draisaitl, signed an eight-year, \$68 million contract out of his ELC. Buffalo's Jack Eichel signed an eight-year, \$80 million contract out of his ELC. Florida's Aaron Ekblad and St. Louis' Vladimir Tarasenko landed on eight years and \$60 million each. Anyways, you get my point.

It's interesting that Matthews accepted a shorter-term deal, and it raises a few interesting theories.

Is it possible that the NHL's version of the supermax contract – the ability to sign an eight-year extension with the team that drafted you as opposed to a seven-year extension elsewhere – may be diminishing in value?

If you follow the NBA, there is a bit of a crisis with their supermax, which was designed to create a carrot for players to sign with the team that drafted them for longer term and more total money. Superstar players have started to recognize they can sign shorter contracts at a higher percentage of the salary cap each year, continuing to bet on both their individual performance and the performance of their front office to build a contender.

Another way of saying this: NBA players have taken much more control over contracts, and teams – especially small-market teams – are getting increasingly agitated (Anthony Davis, anyone?).

If the pool of NHL superstars decides to get more aggressive chasing shorter-term deals and betting on both their own performance and the performance of their respective front offices to build a contender, Matthews' contract could prove to be the bellwether.

I'm certainly not the only one who is theorizing about this. Matthews' contract may not impact the greater group of NHL players, you wonder if the subset of superstars is going to be increasingly curious about shorter-term deals post-Matthews. At the very least it already appears to be a point of discussion amongst some NHL executives.

The second wrinkle is just as interesting, and this has more to do with the team than the player.

If you reviewed the terms of Matthews' deal, you will notice that 94 per cent of the money allocated in that deal is by way of signing bonuses. We have talked about signing bonuses at length here for a variety of reasons, but the crux of it is two-fold: (a) it allows players to get money up front; and (b) signing bonuses are buyout proof, which creates a significant layer of insulation for the player long-term. (In conjunction with both of those points, players and agents are using signing bonuses to create protection against a potential lockout season. So it is well on the radar of every interested party.)

Signing bonuses are also a substantial weapon for big-market teams if used appropriately. Since players perceive contracts structured with signing bonus money as more appetizing, teams with relatively more financial might can stomach the big up-front, lump-sum payments relatively easier. They also can shoulder more financial risk related to potential buyouts, since these teams tend to spend close to the cap ceiling every season.



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That brings me back to the Maple Leafs, who have engineered a number of key contracts by way of signing bonus in the Kyle Dubas era. Ninety-two per cent of John Tavares' mega-deal came by way of signing bonus. Patrick Marleau's three-year UFA deal was 77 per cent signing bonus. Fifty-four per cent of William Nylander's six-year deal came by way of signing bonus. It is absolutely core hockey strategy at this point.

It also differentiates the Leafs from most teams. If you look at signing bonus money on the books for every team in the league, it is clear that there is a big-market versus small-market divide. The Leafs top the list:

There are a couple of outliers, but for the most part signing bonus liabilities tend to be collinear with the financial might of a respective organization. A second factor – how competitive the team is presently – would also seem to have some impact.

At any rate, there is a fairly clear divide between big market and small market, and Toronto is taking full advantage – as they should. Oh, and by the way: here comes Mitch Marner.

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