



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • February 9, 2020

## THE ATHLETIC

### Hurricanes trade tiers: Which players are untouchable, could go but at a steep cost and the most likely to go

By Sara Civian

LAS VEGAS — The NHL trade deadline is about two weeks away, and it's time to address a few things for the playoff bubble Hurricanes.

It has honestly been tough to pinpoint exactly what they need to fix, considering most losses have been a mixed bag of "meh" at every angle — an inability to finish chances, giving up too many 'Grade As', losing the special teams battle, a few goals the goaltenders 'would like back,' as they say. But they'd been displeased with their blue line since before Norris contender Dougie Hamilton went down, and his injury expedited the need for help.

So that's a decent place to start. They'll probably be looking to enhance the defense, but at what cost?

Untouchable

Sebastian Aho: Legally this can't happen, but it wouldn't anyway.

Andrei Svechnikov: He's going to be a superstar. The Hurricanes could not adore him more than they do, and more than they have from the second he stepped foot on NHL ice.

Jacob Slavin

Seriously?

It's not going to happen.

Toronto media please read this.

Svechnikov and Aho are the Hurricanes' franchise players right now. For those who try to propose trade deals involving Slavin, let me tell you he isn't going anywhere.

Justin Williams

Again, he isn't going anywhere. I said it before he came back and no one listened, I'll say it again and no one will listen. He likes it here, with his family and the house he built. What a monster.

Teuvo Teravainen

People don't talk about it enough, but Teravainen is the MVP of the Hurricanes most nights and Brind'Amour knows that. He would hate a trade. That would be the worst thing ever. Moving on ...

Jordan Staal

The Canes ain't trading the captain.

Highly Unlikely

Brett Pesce: The Hurricanes are looking for a defenseman right now. You probably don't trade arguably best one you have who is on a moderately long-term, reasonable deal.

Martin Necas: You should be upset if the Hurricanes trade Necas, who has been essentially a depth Teravainen and has an intriguing ceiling. There's 0.5 percent chance they touch him, anyway.

James Reimer: He's been playing well for the Canes, and what does he go for? Makes no sense.

Trevor van Riemsdyk: Who is going to trade for impending free agent TvR? He's been (surprisingly) pretty good as the Canes try to fill Hamilton's void, but it's probably too late to bait him and the Canes don't want to take anything else from their blue line as it is.

Ryan Dzingel: Why?

Nino Niederreiter: Tough sell right now.

Jordan Martinook: The city of Raleigh would riot, and for good reason. Heart and soul the Hurricanes desperately need these days.

Joel Edmundson: The Hurricanes have loved the toughness Edmundson brings to the lineup and how well he's fit into the system almost immediately. There have been system-wide struggles these days, but it's not his fault.

Haydn Fleury: He finally has his chance and he's been making the most of it. He wouldn't get the return he's worth. Let him live.

It Will Cost you Dearly

Warren Foegele: The Canes love Foegele, as they probably should love a speed demon, penalty drawer of an ELC winger. They don't want to give him up, but it's my understanding he's one of many wingers that could be touted on the move for some help on the blue line. I don't think it'll happen at all, and I think the Canes seriously love Foegele too much to trade him, and he loves them back. But who knows what's out there?

Petr Mrazek: Are the Canes on the hunt for a different No. 1 goalie? I think they're always looking at how they could improve the team. Mrazek's on an awesome contract, and he hasn't been the outright issue for the Hurricanes this season. But they might be looking to shake things up. If the Canes could trade him and acquire Robin Lehner from the Blackhawks, they would definitely explore it. A lot of that is dependent on Chicago's place in the playoff race the next few days. Pay attention.

Brock McGinn: We all know that Rod Brind'Amour loves this man a little too much.

I could see it

Erik Haula: I think this would be a mistake, as Haula is one of the few Canes that actually stands in front of the net these days. But there's been some drama, and the return of Williams



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has removed necessity for drama in the forward lineup. I could see it happening for something good.

Julien Gauthier and/or Jake Bean: Both of these men are killing it in the AHL, could clearly play in the NHL, but the Hurricanes have been too stacked. Bean, the most productive man in the entire AHL, deserves either a call-up during this dire blue line situation. Or ... to be packaged in a trade to a real NHL team for a second- or third- pairing proven NHL-er.

Jake Gardiner: He's heating up, including a multi-point game in Vegas on Saturday. But he hasn't fit into the Hurricanes system as seamlessly as they would've hoped and he has the name recognition that unfortunately matters while doing

trades with the Hurricanes. I would prefer to wait it out and see how he performs now that Hamilton is injured. I think the Hurricanes are on the same page. But I wouldn't be surprised to see him garner a good return.

Lucas Wallmark: This would physically hurt me. I would riot. But I get it.

Most likely to go

A draft pick and/or a prospect: At this point, the Hurricanes are contenders, and contenders trade picks and prospects. Just do it.



## Recap: Canes Capture Thrilling Shootout Victory in Vegas

Canes score four goals in third period, Williams nets game-deciding shootout goal

by Michael Smith

LAS VEGAS - The Carolina Hurricanes scored four goals in the third period to erase a two-goal deficit, and Justin Williams netted the game-deciding tally in the shootout to lift the team to a thrilling 6-5 win over the Vegas Golden Knights.

Five different players tallied for the Canes, who also netted two power-play goals in their third period surge en route to improving to a perfect 5-0 in the shootout this season.

Here are five takeaways from Sin City.

1. Bet on Red

That was fun.

"Oh, what a game," Sebastian Aho said.

Well, maybe not for goaltenders.

"Or coaches," Aho smiled. "I liked it."

And why would he not? In dramatic fashion, the Hurricanes scored a come-from-behind victory against one of the Western Conference's best teams, all after sputtering early in the game and again having to climb out of a multi-goal hole.

"Pretty crazy game," Erik Haula said. "Feels good right now."

The recent starts are somewhat concerning - after all, this is the fifth straight game in which the Canes have failed to score first - but the fact that the team is seemingly comfortable being uncomfortable is encouraging.

"First period, that's a good home crowd, good home team. They have a step on everyone, every team here," Aho said. "After we shook that off, we came back and started to go to work. We trusted each other."

"We've got to get the better start, obviously. We've got to figure that one out," head coach Rod Brind'Amour said.

"We've always kept coming back. That's a positive feeling for the group."

In some ways, the script was similar in Raleigh just over a week ago. The Canes were down by two goals in the third period. They worked their way back into it and tied the game. Same story in Vegas, only this time, they were able to snag not just a point, but two in the shootout.

And, there were 200 Season Ticket Members plus more Canes fans in enemy territory to celebrate.

"It was a crazy game, but we never stopped believing. We just went to work," Aho said. "You could feel the bench when we got one goal. OK, now we can get another one. That feeling, it's a great feeling to have."

2. That Third Period

Where to even begin with the final 20 minutes of regulation?

"It was a crazy Vegas show third period," Williams said. That seems like a fair place to begin. "Up, back, the other way. Happy we came out with the win."

After a shoulder shrug of a first 40 minutes, the Hurricanes seemed to have a renewed energy and a confident swagger in the third period.

"We were a different team," Haula said. "We played well, played how we wanted to play."

"We got outplayed in the first, outplayed a little bit in the second," Williams said. "Maybe it was human nature, but they let off the pedal just a bit, and we were able to just get some momentum and get some goals."

Aho helped shave the deficit to a goal 79 seconds into the third period and were then set up with a four-minute power play and a golden opportunity to tie the game. Instead, not even a minute after Aho tallied, Chandler Stephenson raced down the ice on a shorthanded breakaway and restored Vegas' two-goal advantage.



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That could have been a dagger.

But, the Canes answered back with three straight goals, including two on the power play, in just under 10 minutes.

Haula got the first power play goal, 1:59 after Stephenson's shorthanded marker.

"Little sparks can get your team going," Haula said.

Then, Haydn Fleury netted lucky number three of the season (and his career), a wrist shot from the point that had eyes and eluded Marc-Andre Fleury. The Canes were successful in challenging the no-goal ruling on the ice, as it seemed the officials mistook Fleury using his glove hand to peer around Warren Foegele as goaltender interference. In the end, the right call was made.

Three minutes and 10 seconds later, Martin Necas potted the go-ahead goal on another power play, the Canes converting at 50 percent on the man advantage. Jake Gardiner's point shot was bodied down in the slot, but the puck bounced right to Necas at the left circle, and he lasered his wrist shot to the back of the twine.

Because the third period was what it was, Cody Eakin tied the game at five with just under four minutes left in regulation.

### 3. Mr. Shootout

Exactly two weeks after being the eighth-round shootout hero in his season debut, Justin Williams again scored the game-deciding shootout goal five rounds earlier.

"He's a pretty clutch guy," Brind'Amour smiled.

Brind'Amour dialed up ~~Mr. Game 7~~ Mr. Shootout again in the third round in Vegas, and he delivered.

"He's been lights out," Brind'Amour said.

A head fake. Forehand. Backhand. Forehand. Goal, glove-side high on Fleury.

Three shootout winners in three weeks for Williams, this after not having a shootout goal since Nov. 2013 and not having a shootout winner since Nov. 2011.

"If you look at my career, I'm not very good at them, to be honest," Williams laughed. "Right now, they're going in."

"He's a clutch player," Aho said. "I don't know what to say."

Andrei Svechnikov also scored in the shootout for the Canes, while James Reimer saw two Vegas shots sail high at the other end of the ice.

### 4. Haula Back (in Vegas)

Erik Haula received a hearty welcome back to Vegas with a video tribute, a standing ovation and a chant of his name during a break in the first period.

"The reception from the fans, a big thank you to the Golden Knights for making me feel welcome," he said. "This will always hold such a special place in my heart. It was emotional. A big thank you to everyone here."

And then, he scored a goal against his former team in the third period, and the crowd's reception was much less enthusiastic.

"I'm sure they were love boos," Haula quipped.

On the tail end of a four-minute power play, Jake Gardiner hit Haula in stride with a stretch pass. Haula skated in alone and beat Fleury five-hole on a backhand. That power-play marker brought the Canes back within a goal, a spark that ignited a string of three straight as they claimed a lead in the third period, albeit briefly.

"That kind of got us back on our feet," Brind'Amour said. "For the rest of the game, I thought we were actually the better team. It was certainly exciting."

### 5. 30 for 20

Sebastian Aho netted his 30th goal of the season on a delayed penalty sequence early in the third period, as he tapped in a loose puck on the near side of the net off a shot from countryman Teuvo Teravainen, who scored the Canes' first goal of the game in the last minute of the first period.

Aho's goal extended his point streak to six games (6g, 4a) and his goal streak to four games.

Of Aho's 30 goals, which matches his career-high total from 2018-19, 17 have been scored on the road.

The 22-year-old now has 40 in his sights.

"This win feels so good," Aho said. "I'm happy if I can help the team win. Winning is the main thing this time of year."

### Up Next

The Hurricanes finish off this four-game road trip in Dallas on Tuesday night.



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## Hurricanes use four-goal surge in third to top Golden Knights in shootout

Eakin ties game with 3:53 left after Carolina takes first lead 2:09 earlier

by Danny Webster

LAS VEGAS -- The Carolina Hurricanes scored four goals in the third period of a 6-5 shootout win against the Vegas Golden Knights at T-Mobile Arena on Saturday.

Martin Necas gave Carolina its first lead when he made it 5-4 with a power-play goal at 13:58, but Cody Eakin tied the game 5-5 at 16:07.

Andrei Svechnikov scored in the second round of the shootout for the Hurricanes, and Justin Williams ended the game with his goal in the top of the third.

Sebastian Aho scored his 30th of the season to extend his goal streak to five games, and defenseman Jake Gardiner had three assists for Carolina (32-20-3), which is 2-1-0 on its four-game road trip. James Reimer made 33 saves.

"There's no quit in this team," Aho said. "They played a really good first period, and we were kind of off, but I have to credit them because they were good. We went to work and didn't stop believing. You could feel it on the bench. That's a good feeling."

Erik Haula had a goal and an assist in his first game at Vegas since being traded to Carolina on June 26. He played the past two seasons with the Golden Knights after being selected from the Minnesota Wild in the 2017 NHL Expansion Draft.

"It was pretty crazy," Haula said. "Even when we came out for warmups and came out for the game, I wasn't surprised. It was the norm. It felt good."

Defenseman Shea Theodore had a goal and an assist for the Golden Knights (28-21-8), who led 3-1 and 4-2 in the third period. Marc-Andre Fleury allowed five goals on 34 shots, and Jonathan Marchessault and Theodore missed on their shootout attempts.

"Not a good game from us," Marchessault said. "Overall, it was just a bad game. Gave away too many chances, kind of played on our heels in the third period."

It was Peter DeBoer's first home game as Vegas coach since replacing Gerard Gallant on Jan. 15. The Golden Knights, who played their previous eight games on the road, are 4-2-2 under DeBoer.

"Strange game," DeBoer said. "I was worried a little bit about the game coming off the road. I thought we really started well, I liked our first period. ... I thought the second and third we didn't manage the game well."

Max Pacioretty gave Vegas a 1-0 lead at 13:26 of the first period when he redirected a Theodore shot.

Jon Merrill scored with a backhand from the slot at 14:35 to make it 2-0 after William Carrier brought the puck into the Carolina zone on the left side, skated it behind the net, and passed to the defenseman in the right face-off circle.

Teuvo Teravainen, playing in his 300th game in the NHL, scored with a wrist shot through traffic from the right point to make it 2-1 with 29 seconds left in the first.

Theodore scored for the second consecutive game to give the Golden Knights a 3-1 lead 59 seconds into the second.

Aho scored for the sixth time during his streak to get the Hurricanes within 3-2 at 1:19 of the third, but Chandler Stephenson scored shorthanded at 2:17 to make it 4-2.

Haula scored on the power play to make it 4-3 at 4:16.

Haydn Fleury tied it 4-4 at 10:48. The goal initially was disallowed for goaltender interference, but Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour challenged, and the call was overturned after video review.

"They pushed, and we turned pucks over and took some penalties," DeBoer said. "Some uncharacteristic things. We've been playing some real solid hockey for a while, and the second and third, I thought, we were our own worst enemy."

They said it

"I had a lot on my mind; I sat out the whole year and had a lot to focus on. There's a lot of work ahead of me still. I'm proud of where I got myself to, from where I was, and every night I'm trying to play my best. I only have good memories, except for that game [at the Toronto Maple Leafs on Nov. 6, 2018, when he sustained a season-ending leg injury]. I love a lot of those guys over there [with the Golden Knights]." -- Hurricanes forward Erik Haula

"There's no excuses for our group. It starts with a guy like me too, just not ready mentally, physically. It starts with me. If a guy like me doesn't show the example, it's just going to creep down into our game." -- Golden Knights forward Jonathan Marchessault

Need to know

The Hurricanes rallied from down two goals to win for the second consecutive game. They trailed 2-0 at the Arizona Coyotes on Thursday before winning 5-3. ... Aho has six goals and four assists during a six-game point streak. ... Svechnikov had an assist on Teravainen's goal to extend his point streak to four games (three goals, three assists). ... Marchessault had his point streak end at six games (three goals, four assists). ... Theodore has nine points (two goals, seven assists) in the past seven games and 11 (two goals, nine assists) in the past nine.



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What's next

Hurricanes: At the Dallas Stars on Tuesday (8:30 p.m. ET; ESPN+, FS-SW, FS-CR, NHL.TV)

Golden Knights: At the Minnesota Wild on Tuesday (8 p.m. ET; FS-N, FS-WI, ATTSN-RM, NHL.TV)



## Carolina tops Vegas in shootout, spoils DeBoer's home debut

By W.G. Ramirez

LAS VEGAS (AP) — For a brief moment, after the jumbotron inside T-Mobile Arena played a highlight reel and Erik Haula's name was announced the same way as when the forward starred for the Vegas Golden Knights, the veteran got a bit emotional as an announced crowd of 18,417 gave him a standing ovation.

Then it was back to business.

Haula had a goal and an assist, Andrei Svechnikov and Justin Williams scored in the shootout, and the Carolina Hurricanes notched a 6-5 victory over Vegas on Saturday night.

"It felt good," Haula said. "The reception from the fans, obviously a big thank you to the Golden Knights making me feel welcome. This will always hold such a special place in my heart."

Carolina erased a two-goal deficit twice in the third period, scoring four goals in the final frame.

"Games are a little crazy sometimes and just little sparks can get your team going," said Haula, who snapped a nine-game drought without a point. "In the third there, I don't know what happened. We were a different team and we played well, we played how we want to play."

Martin Necas, Teuvo Teravainen, Sebastian Aho and Haydn Fleury scored in regulation for the Hurricanes. James Reimer made 31 saves, including 12 in the third period, when the fireworks began.

With Vegas leading 3-1, Aho punched in a loose rebound from his initial shot, sneaking the puck between Marc-Andre Fleury and the post. Less than a minute later, Vegas' Chandler Stephenson broke free on a breakaway and notched his second short-handed goal of the season to push Vegas back in front by two goals.

The lead wouldn't last, though, as Haula ignited the Hurricanes and triggered three unanswered goals before Vegas' Cody Eakin tied it at 5-all with his first goal since Nov. 23.

Both teams had opportunities in overtime, particularly Carolina, when Svechnikov hit the crossbar and Brett Pesce hit the post. With less than a minute remaining, Fleury stopped Aho on a breakaway, while Reimer stopped Shea Theodore's one-timer.

Carolina, playing its third road game in five nights, came back from a two-goal deficit for the second straight game, as it defeated Arizona 5-3 on Thursday after falling behind 2-0.

The win moved the Hurricanes into the second wild-card spot in the Eastern Conference with 67 points, one point back of the New York Islanders. Carolina will conclude a four-game road trip by riding a 5-2-1 win streak into Dallas on Tuesday.

"There's no quit in our team," said Aho, who has recorded a point in six straight games, including a goal in each of the last five. "They played really good (in the) first period and we were kind of off maybe. But we went to work and we never stopped believing. And when we got the one, you could feel it on the bench we would get a second one and another one, and that's a good feeling to have."

The loss spoiled the home debut of Vegas coach Peter DeBoer, who was hired Jan. 15 and coached his first seven games with the Golden Knights on the road. Vegas was also playing its first home game in 28 days after two four-game road trips that sandwiched the All-Star break and the team's midseason bye week.

Max Pacioretty, Jon Merrill and Theodore also scored for Vegas. Fleury made 29 saves.

The Golden Knights committed two costly penalties in the third period, and Carolina, which came in with the 12th-best road power play, scored both times. Vegas, meanwhile, came in with the league's third-best home power play and went 0 for 2.

"Strange game," DeBoer said. "I was worried a little bit about the game coming off the road. I thought we really started well, I liked our first period. ... I thought the second and third we didn't manage the game well. They pushed and we turned pucks over and took some penalties. Some uncharacteristic things. We've been playing some real solid hockey for a while and the second and third, I thought, we were our own worst enemy."

NOTES: Vegas C William Karlsson, who has not played since Jan. 14, skated with the team for the first time in a month. He has been listed as week to week with an upper-body injury. DeBoer said "he's getting close (and has) got another X-ray tomorrow." Pending the result, Karlsson could join the Golden Knights for Tuesday's game in Minnesota. Prior to his injury, Karlsson played in 234 straight games and was the only player to appear in every game in franchise history. ... The Golden Knights will play nine of their next 11 games in Vegas. ... Teravainen played in his 300th career game with Carolina

UP NEXT:

Carolina: Visits Dallas on Tuesday.

Vegas: Visits Minnesota on Tuesday.



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## Recap: Canes top Vegas in wild shootout win

Justin Williams played shootout hero for the Hurricanes yet again, as Carolina beat Vegas 6-5 in a shootout after a wild game.

By Alec\_Sawyer

For the third time in their last seven games, the Carolina Hurricanes won in a shootout. And for the third time in a row, it was Justin Williams who played hero for the Canes.

Williams sealed a 6-5 shootout victory over Vegas in T-Mobile Arena Saturday, as his make along with one from Andrei Svechnikov sent the Canes home happy. Goaltender James Reimer wasn't beaten by two looks in the shootout from Vegas, as he secured his fourth straight victory after stopping 33 of 38 shots faced in regulation and overtime.

It was the second time the Canes and Golden Knights have met in the past eight days, and it was the second time that the Hurricanes had to mount a third-period rally to get back into the game. This time however, the Canes were able to get over the hump and come away with two points.

Carolina scored four goals in a wild six-goal third period, thanks in big part to three third-period assists from Jake Gardiner. The Canes battled back from down 3-1 to up 5-4, but Vegas was able to force overtime with a late third period score from Cody Eakin.

For the Canes, Haydn Fleury tied the game in the third with his third career goal, while Martin Necas delivered a power-play effort to give Carolina its temporary lead. Sebastian Aho scored his 30th goal of the season and extended his goal streak to five games with an early third-period tally, while Teuvo Teravainen and former Golden Knight Erik Haula also found the goal sheet.

Vegas got the scoring going early, netting two goals within 70 seconds in the opening period to jump ahead to a 2-0 lead. Max Pacioretty scored the first, deflecting a Shea Theodore shot from the point past Reimer with Jaccob Slavin draped on him.

The second goal came from Jon Merrill, who backhanded a good pass from William Carrier past Reimer. Carrier brought the puck around the back of the net, getting some help from a slip by Haydn Fleury. Carrier delivered a great backhanded pass to Merrill, who was alone in the slot and able to control the puck and make it 2-0.

Everybody needs a little luck on a trip to Las Vegas, and the Canes got some great fortune late in the first period to cut the Golden Knights' lead to 2-1. Teravainen skated down a deflected puck right before it left the Canes' offensive zone, and he immediately lifted the puck towards the net to keep play alive. Teravainen's shot found its way through everyone and floated past Marc-Andre Fleury, who took the loss in the shootout after stopping 29 of 34 shots faced.

Aho and Andrei Svechnikov picked up assists on the goal, moving Aho's point streak to six games and Svechnikov's to four games.

The Golden Knights regained their multi-goal lead almost immediately after the second period started, as Theodore made it 3-1 just 59 seconds into the middle frame. A poor pinch in the Canes' offensive zone from Brett Pesce sprung a rush for Vegas, as Reilly Smith carried the puck down the ice.

Smith drew a couple Canes skaters, leaving Theodore all alone with Reimer. Smith delivered a perfect pass across to Theodore, who had an easy finish on some open net with Reimer coming across.

Apart from a very underwhelming power play, the Canes didn't have much doing for them in the second period. Carolina did out-shoot Vegas 13-9 in the middle frame, but didn't significantly challenge Marc-Andre Fleury in net.

Aho cut the Vegas lead to one goal just over a minute into the final period, working in the crease to find a loose puck and put it in the net. Teravainen laced a shot at Marc-Andre Fleury, who couldn't quite control. The puck bounced for a second, making its way behind Marc-Andre Fleury and in the perfect spot for Aho to calmly slot it away.

However, the Canes took what could have been a demoralizing blow a couple minutes later, right after they had been gifted a four-minute power play thanks to a high sticking from Zach Whitecloud. Vegas scored a gut-punch shorthanded goal just 12 seconds into Carolina's power play, as Stephenson skated the length of the ice and netted one past Reimer.

The Canes were able to break even on the extended man advantage as Haula, who drew the penalty on Whitecloud, beat Marc-Andre Fleury with a great stick move to cut the lead to 4-3 with over 15 minutes still to play. Gardiner delivered a fantastic breakout pass to Haula, who pushed a backhand through Marc-Andre Fleury's five hole for the goal.

Carolina tied things up midway through the third period, as Haydn Fleury netted just his third career goal to beat Marc-Andre Fleury. Haydn Fleury blasted a shot from the point into the back of the net, beating the Vegas netminder up high. The goal was initially waved off for goaltender interference by Warren Foegele, but the call was overturned after a successful challenge from Rod Brind'Amour.

With just over six minutes left to play in the game, the Hurricanes got their first lead. Vegas' Tomas Nosek gave the Hurricanes another power play after getting called for a tripping, and Necas and the Canes took full advantage. Necas received a good feed from Gardiner and ripped off a laser to beat Marc-Andre Fleury. The assist was Gardiner's third of the third period.



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However, the Canes held that lead for less than three minutes, as a bad mistake from Reimer allowed Eakin to tie things up at 5-5. Reimer tried to clear the puck out from behind the net, but had to retreat with Eakin coming in hot. Eakin was able to collect it and wraparound for the goal before Reimer was ever able to get back in position.

The Hurricanes had a huge penalty over the last minute of regulation and first minute of the overtime period, keeping

Vegas from winning the game with the man advantage. The first half of the penalty kill delivered Carolina a point in the standings, while the second half kept things alive to get to the shootout.

Carolina will wrap up its four-game road trip Tuesday in Dallas, as the Hurricanes will meet with Stars in the American Airlines Center.



## Janne Kuokkanen's overtime goal secures sweep of Hartford

by Nicholas Niedzielski

It took a little longer than 60 minutes, but the Checkers were able to pull off another win against the first-place Wolf Pack.

After a scoreless first, a back-and-forth battle erupted in the second. Hartford opened the scoring with a power-play strike early and added another tally minutes later, but both were quickly answered by Charlotte to even the score after 40 minutes.

Steven Lorentz gave the Checkers their first lead of the night with a snipe early in the third, but Hartford launched a see-eye point shot into the back of the net minutes later to draw the score to a deadlock once again.

Neither side could finish the job in regulation so a hectic overtime period ensued, with both sides creating several quality chances. It was Janne Kuokkanen who ended things, though, as he kicked down a feed from Chase Priskie and lofted a shot into the top corner to clinch Charlotte the two points.

### QUOTES

Coach Ryan Warsofsky on the game

I thought we responded pretty well. I didn't love our start – they got us on our heels, but we kind of figured they were going to push back. Our MO this year was just to stick with it and play the game no matter what the score is. That's what we did tonight.

Warsofsky on the overtime goal

A little Finnish connection there. Kuokkanen has great hand-eye coordination. He gets a pass there by Priskie, gets a little bounce there and it goes in the back of the net.

Warsofsky on Morgan Geekie's goal

He works on his skill set every single day after practice and before practice, so it doesn't surprise me. He gets us going there, then Priskie's goal gets us going into the third period 2-2, so those were two big goals.

Warsofsky on moving forward in this home stand

We'll have tomorrow off, come in Monday and reset. Every game is important from here on out, so we have to make sure we're focused and ready for a really good Rochester team that's super skilled and can score. They're at the top of their division, so it's a good challenge for us and we'll see how we match up.

Kuokkanen on his overtime goal

I just got a puck from Priskie and it was a bouncing puck, so I just took a shot and it went in. It was pretty lucky, but I'm happy.

Kuokkanen on Hartford last night compared to tonight

They were a totally different team tonight. We just kept our momentum and kept playing like we played last night, and luckily we won.

Kuokkanen on the game

It was like playoff hockey. It was a really tough game. We gave everything and took everything too, so I'm really happy we won this time.

### NOTES

The Checkers are now 4-2-0 against the division-leading Wolf Pack this season, with the home team winning each time ... This was the first time Hartford has ever earned a standings point against Charlotte. They are now 0-12-1 ... Geekie extended his point streak to 13 games (10g, 7a), setting a new franchise record. It ties the third-longest point streak set by an AHL player this season. He also has goals in five straight games ... Kuokkanen has points in three straight games (2g, 2a). This was his second game-winning goal of the season, making it the only time in his three AHL campaigns that he has scored more than one ... Priskie's goal was his first since Dec. 22, ending a 16-game drought ... After recording no points in his first 15 games as a Checker, Terry Broadhurst has four in his last four (all assists). He had two assists and a game-high +3 rating tonight ... This was the first time in 12 games that the Checkers did not score a power-play goal when given an opportunity. They were 0-for-5 tonight ... Forwards Brian Gibbons, Colin Markison and Stelio Mattheos missed the game due to injury ... Forward Jacob Pritchard and defenseman Cavan Fitzgerald were healthy extras.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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# SportScan

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

1175579 Dallas Stars

Stars snap their losing streak against the Blues with the help of Roope Hintz's stellar shooting

By Matthew DeFranks

2:44 AM on Feb 9, 2020

ST. LOUIS — Like an illness would bother the Stars.

Stars interim coach Rick Bowness missed Saturday night's 3-2 overtime win over the Blues due to an illness, turning head coaching duties to assistant John Stevens. Roope Hintz scored two goals, including the game-winner 2:19 into overtime to lift the Stars past the Blues for the first time since Game 5 of the second round last May.

Captain Jamie Benn scored a power-play goal in the first period and Anton Khudobin made 23 saves, including a key left-pad save on Ryan O'Reilly that kept the game tied in the third period.

The win snapped Dallas' four-game losing streak against the Blues, dating back to last year's second-round playoff series. The two teams play twice more during the regular season.

"This group has done a really good job in terms of their professionalism in handling some tough situations this year," Stevens said. "I think today was another example of that."

To say a team has been battle-tested on Feb. 8 is an odd thing to say. But for the embattled Stars, it's true.

Start the season 1-7-1? Just be the Western Conference's best team across the next almost four months by going 30-12-4.

Abruptly fire the head coach for unexplained reasons in December? Just continue his low-scoring ways with an interim head coach and keep chugging.

Fall behind two goals in front of the second-largest crowd in league history at the Winter Classic? Just score the next four goals.

Endure injuries to John Klingberg and Roope Hintz? Withstand goal droughts from Tyler Seguin currently and Jamie Benn previously? Absorb public criticism from Jim Montgomery in November? Watch a tornado damage Seguin and Ben Bishop's properties?

It hasn't mattered.

"You've just got to laugh really," Benn said. "It's just one thing after another after another. Nothing we can do about it. Players go down and

other players step up and play bigger roles. When coaches go down, other coaches step up and play bigger roles. We're a tight knit group and once again, adversity didn't faze us today."

That's just the hurdles.

Throw in Stephen Johns' return from post-traumatic headaches and his emotional first goal, Justin Dowling's first career goal in his hometown Calgary, plus returns to California for Corey Perry, Andrew Cogliano and Joe Pavelski, and Saturday's overtime win over the Stanley Cup champions who eliminated the Stars in double overtime of Game 7 last year somehow could be forgotten in a few weeks.

But after allowing the game-winning goal to Minnesota in the game's final minute one night before, Saturday's victory was a necessary one.

"It's a huge win for us," forward Corey Perry said. "It's definitely a stepping stone in the right direction. Coming off last night, disappointing loss in the last minute there. But we came in, we showed them that we can play with this team."

Colton Parayko scored two goals for the Blues, once on a one-timer on a power play and another on an open slap shot from the blue line.

The Stars have seen no opponent more often than St. Louis in the last two years, playing 18 games (preseason, regular season and postseason) against the Blues since Sept. 2018. And if Dallas wants to advance far in the playoffs this year, the road likely leads through St. Louis, which owns the conference's best record.

"They are the bar," Stevens said. "They deserve a lot of credit for what they've done. They come off a Stanley Cup. They haven't missed a beat."

So Perry's assist that set up Hintz's first goal — which came after an extended shift in the Blues' zone — matters greatly. So does Hintz's team-leading 17th goal of the season at the end of a 48-second shift in overtime on a pass from Miro Heiskanen. ("I couldn't even see where it went, but it went in, so it's good," Hintz said.) So does the coaching.

Stevens said he found out Bowness would not be coaching shortly before 3:15 p.m. Business went as usual with video coach Kelly Forbes running the faceoff meeting, but Stevens (instead of Bowness) conducted the penalty kill meeting.

"It'll be good to have Bones back because we gave up a goal tonight," Stevens said.

Stevens maintained his duties running the defense during the game, while assistants Derek Laxdal and Todd Nelson combined to run the forward group. Nelson, typically in the press box for the first two periods, was on the bench for the entire game. Goaltending coach Jeff Reese's duties remained unchanged. Though he was not behind the bench Saturday, Bowness was in the arena.



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Saturday marked another twist, albeit very minor, for the Stars coaching staff this season. Laxdal became the third coach to run the forwards (joining former coach Jim Montgomery and Bowness), while Stevens became the third coach to act as the team's head coach (Montgomery and Bowness).

While Stevens assumed head coaching duties, the game counted for Bowness' head coaching record.

Saturday was the team's 24th game since Bowness took over for Montgomery on Dec. 10. The Stars were 13-8-2 across nearly two months under Bowness. Stars general manager Jim Nill said Bowness would remain the coach for the remainder of the regular season.

Dallas Morning News LOADED: 02.09.2020

1175580 Dallas Stars

Stars defenseman Stephen Johns plays back-to-back games for the first time since returning from a 22-month absence

By Matthew DeFranks

5:43 AM on Feb 9, 2020

ST. LOUIS —Stars forward Alexander Radulov missed Saturday's game with an upper-body injury suffered during a collision with teammate Denis Gurianov during Friday's home loss to Minnesota.

When Bowness met with reporters early Saturday afternoon, he said Radulov was back in Dallas and classified as day-to-day. It was the second injury-related absence of the season for Radulov, who also missed two games in December after blocking a shot in Tampa Bay.

It was also the second time this season that a Radulov collision with a teammate resulted in a Stars player missing a game. Radek Faksa missed three games in January with an upper-body injury after he crashed with Radulov during practice in Colorado.

Without Radulov, Joel Kiviranta slotted back into the Stars lineup alongside Mattias Janmark and Joe Pavelski. Kiviranta was a healthy scratch in the previous three games after he scored his first career NHL goal against the Devils on Feb. 1.

"We've liked the games he's played," Bowness said. "He hustles, he's on the puck, he hangs on to the puck. He makes plays. He's fearless. He goes into traffic, goes into corners. He's done a really good job for us, so we're anxious to see him play against a big team like St. Louis."

Overtime decisions: The Stars began the overtime period on the power play, a result of Jay Bouwmeester's holding the stick penalty with 45.6 seconds left in the third period. In overtime, with a 4 on 3 power play, Stevens said the Stars wanted to set up one-timers to try to win the game.

So the coaching staff chose Tyler Seguin (left circle), Denis Gurianov (right circle), Jamie Benn (net-front) and John Klingberg (point). As the power play was running out, Miro Heiskanen and Esa Lindell took the ice to prevent a Blues counterattack.

Hintz did not get on the ice until 3 on 3 resumed at a faceoff 91 seconds into overtime. He scored the game-winner shortly after.

"It was nice to see Roope shoot the puck again," Stevens said. "He's got a great shot. He's been a big source of production for us."

Mixed lines: While Kiviranta slid easily into Radulov's spot (and Janmark was in Radulov's spot on the power play in the right circle), the Stars coaching staff shuffled two other lines. Jason Dickinson centered Jamie Benn and Denis Gurianov, while Tyler Seguin centered Roope Hintz and Corey Perry. The checking line of Andrew Cogliano, Radek Faksa and Blake Comeau remained together.

The shuffle resulted in two of the Stars' recent producers back in the top six: Gurianov and Perry. Against Minnesota on Friday, Gurianov scored his 15th goal of the season, tying for the team-lead. Perry had points in all three games on the New York road trip and could have had another against the Wild if Faksa buries a late-game 2 on 1.

"He's hanging onto the puck more," Bowness said of Perry. "He's got good puck skills, he's got good range. You saw it last night on that power play, that opportunity we had late in the game. He's a big strong guy that can protect the puck and he's hanging on to it a little longer and he is making more plays. He's getting more opportunities."

Perry again made plays in the offensive zone before setting up Hintz on a shift Perry said "we played the way we wanted to play" by playing below the goalline.

"That's the biggest thing is playing with confidence in this league," Perry said. "If you don't have any, you feel like it's going the other way and you're going one way. But right now, working hard, trying to hold on to it and good things are happening."

Stay hot: The Stars power play scored for the fourth straight game with Benn's goal during the first period Saturday night against the Blues. After going 0 for 14 across five games, the Stars power play has rebounded with goals against the Rangers, Islanders, Wild and Blues.

Benn tipped a pass from Janmark on the Stars' second power play of the evening, following up a solid first power play in which Dallas generated three prime scoring chances. Roope Hintz's shot at a wide open net was deflected above the net by Jay Bouwmeester. Benn had a tip go just wide of the net. A Seguin one-timer was stopped by Jordan Binnington, who also stopped Benn's rebound attempt.

In the first period, the Stars had seven shots on the power play and seven shot at even strength. The Stars finished with 12 shots on the power play and 21 at even-strength.

-- For the first time since he returned from a 22-month absence due to post-traumatic headaches, Stars defenseman Stephen Johns played in back-to-back games with his inclusion in Saturday's lineup.

Johns was paired with Miro Heiskanen one night after playing against Minnesota. Johns was a scratch earlier this week against the Islanders after playing the Rangers the night before.

"He feels good, then he plays," Bowness said. "Confident and he's done a really good job for us, so he'll stay."

More Stars

Dallas Stars' Roope Hintz (24), of Finland, celebrates after scoring the game-winning goal past St. Louis Blues goaltender Jordan Binnington (50) and Ryan O'Reilly (90) during overtime of an NHL hockey game Saturday, Feb. 8, 2020, in St. Louis.

STARS

Stars snap their losing streak against the Blues with the help of Roope Hintz's stellar shooting

Dallas Morning News LOADED: 02.09.2020

1175581 Dallas Stars

Multiple healthy defensemen are a luxury for the Stars, but managing them poses a challenge for Rick Bowness

By Chuck Carlton

2:12 AM on Feb 8, 2020

Having eight healthy NHL caliber defensemen on the roster can be a luxury this time of year, Stars interim coach Rick Bowness understands.



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It also poses a significant coaching challenge with deciding who plays and who doesn't while avoiding any grumbling.

So far, Bowness has been managing through a compact February schedule that includes 15 games in 29 days. The Stars were facing another back-to-back this weekend, traveling to St. Louis on Saturday after Friday's home game against the Minnesota Wild.

"We're fortunate," Bowness said at Friday's morning skate. "It's a tough situation, but a lot of team would love to have this situation."

Friday's healthy scratches were Andrej Sekera and Tyler Fedun.

Stephen Johns, who missed a year and a half with post-traumatic headaches, was back in the lineup after sitting out Tuesday's overtime loss to the New York Islanders — part of the plan to bring him along carefully.

"With Stephen you take it one game at a time and we see how he's doing. It's as simple as that," Bowness said. "Again, we're rushing him. A year and a half off, it's tough. We can't throw too much at him too quickly. We have to help him feel his way through it, and that's what he's doing."

Fedun hasn't played since Jan. 11 against San Jose, although Bowness would like to get him game action soon.

"He's handled a very tough situation very well so we give him full marks for that," Bowness said. "He's anxious to play. The longer you go without playing, it becomes a concern, no doubt about that."

As an assistant, Bowness has handled the defense throughout his coaching career. While that experience has given him some insight into managing the current situation, he acknowledged that everybody on the roster wants to play.

Sitting out is not fun for anyone.

"I think any coach tells you you're not playing, it's hard to sugarcoat that one. ... You have to look them in the eye," Bowness said. "You've got to deal with it."

Maximizing home games: Friday's game at American Airlines Center was part of a stretch that will see the Stars play seven of their first nine games this month on the road.

Bowness has emphasized the importance of taking care of home ice with his players.

"You'd rather take full advantage of your home games while you can," Bowness said. "Home ice is very, very important in a month like today because there's just not very many home games."

Ready to lead: Forward Blake Comeau is now wearing an "A" as an alternate captain, a decision that Bowness made during the Stars recent three-game road trip.

"For me to be added to the rotation, it's a great honor, but it's not going to change who I am or how I play," Comeau told reporters Thursday after practice. "We have a great locker room and I think there are several players who lead whether they have a one [a letter] or not."

Dallas Morning News LOADED: 02.09.2020

1175582 Dallas Stars

Stars 20/20: Roope Hintz's offensive explosion leads Stars to overtime win over the Blues

By Saad Yousuf

Feb 8, 2020

The Stars beat the St. Louis Blues in overtime 3-2 Saturday night.

1. Roope Hintz came to the rescue.

The young sniper came alive in a big way when the Stars needed it most. Hintz was riding a season-long eight-game goal-scoring drought entering the game. It had been almost exactly a full month since he last found the back of the net on Jan. 8 against Anaheim, but he snapped that streak in the second quarter to help tie the game and added one more for good measure in overtime to deliver the victory.

2. The overtime goal came courtesy of Finland, with Miro Heiskanen simply dropping the puck off for Hintz, who just blindly tried to put something on the net.

"I couldn't even see where it went," Hintz said. "It went in, so that's good. (I) was just trying to get it on the net. I was really tired, but it went in so it's good."

The goal was Hintz's 17th of the season and second of the game, restoring his position as the team leader in that department.

3. The odds were stacked against the Stars before the puck even dropped in St. Louis. Dallas was on the second game of a back-to-back after playing a physically and emotionally exhausting division game less than 24 hours ago that was lost in the final minute of regulation to the Minnesota Wild. Factor in that this was a road contest against the top team in the Western Conference and the task seemed daunting.

Then, the puck dropped and the odds stacked even higher. The Stars took two penalties in the first eight minutes. Just after the midway point of the first period, they were already staring at a 2-0 deficit.

Things looked bleak, but in a strange sense, it was restoring what has become normalcy. Including Saturday night, the opposition has scored first in nine of the past 10 games. The one game in which the Stars scored first was the loss Friday night against the Wild. The Stars simply went about their business, undeterred by the multigoal deficit, and got the win.

"It's a huge win for us," Corey Perry said. "It's definitely a stepping stone in the right direction. ... We came in and we showed that we can play with this team, and we played well."

"It's big. They are the bar," assistant coach John Stevens said of the Blues. "They deserve a lot of credit for what they've done. They come off a Stanley Cup and they haven't missed a beat and leading the conference again. ... It's big, but after dropping that game against Minnesota (Friday) night, that really stung. I think it was really important that our group bounced back and got points on the board."

4. Jamie Benn played in his 800th NHL game Saturday night, and he had a night of mixed results. It was his penalty early in the game that led to the first Blues goal, but he made amends by scoring a goal of his own on the power play, tipping in a shot in the waning minutes of the first period.

"It just kind of happened," Benn said. "It was a good play by Janny and fortunate enough that it went in."

For a bit there in the first period, the Stars had some symmetry as far as goal-scoring statistics. When Benn scored his goal, it gave him 15 for the season, bringing a four-way tie for the team lead among himself, Alexander Radulov, Hintz and Denis Gurianov. Obviously, Hintz went on to take sole possession of first place with the two goals he scored later in the game.

5. Colton Parayko had himself a game. The Blues defenseman hadn't scored in 19 consecutive games since the end of November. He recently broke out of the slump, scoring a goal in each of the previous two games coming into the game against the Stars.

In 10 minutes, he doubled it.

The first goal came after Benn was called for boarding six minutes into the game. The Stars had already escaped one power play, but this one cost them. Alexander Steen screened off Anton Khudobin, and Parayko blistered one past him.

The second goal came about three minutes later when John Klingberg tried to clear the puck, but David Perron kept it in the Blues' zone. Perron quickly made a good pass to a wide-open Parayko, who was on the other



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side and had nobody between himself and Khudobin. It was an absolute missile that gave the Blues a 2-0 lead.

6. Even though the two St. Louis goals were scored close to each other, the three minutes in between were extremely eventful. First, there was a pretty good chance for Tyler Seguin on a feed from Hintz, but Jordan Binnington denied him. However, Seguin drew a penalty, and the Stars got their first power-play opportunity of the game at the expense of Ivan Barbashev.

It was probably one of their better power plays of the season ... except they didn't score.

Dallas got six shots in that power play and had some very good looks, but Binnington was stellar, as was the defense in front of him. Early with the man advantage, Seguin went for a one-timer that was rejected by Binnington. Then Perry had a chance that didn't connect, but the biggest scramble came with 30 seconds left. Joe Pavelski crashed the net, and the puck was sputtering around until it found Hintz's stick. Right as Hintz shot it though, Jay Bouwmeester barely got his stick in the way and deflected it. Here's what that final sequence looked like:

It felt like an opportunity lost that could loom large as the game went on. The Stars had a chance there to tie it up but couldn't capitalize.

7. Coming into the game, interim head coach Rick Bowness said he felt confident that if the Stars played the kind of game they did the previous night in the loss to the Wild, they would be fine. The Stars lost to the Wild in an uncharacteristically off performance by their goaltender, and the chances of that happening routinely are slim with Ben Bishop and Khudobin.

Khudobin was phenomenal in St. Louis. He saved 21 of the 23 shots he faced, and most importantly, he came up big when it mattered most. The robbery of Ryan O'Reilly while doing the splits with less than five minutes left in regulation and the game tied 2-2 was the save of the game by either goalie.

8. Khudobin's goaltending style is interesting to watch and is very different from the way Bishop operates. Bishop is a bit more methodical, making calculated movements and positioning himself based on what he's seen on film when scouting the opposition and things like that. Khudobin is more free-flowing, sometimes just moving around on instinct when trying to prevent a goal. I did a story earlier in the week on goalie coach Jeff Reese, and here's what he told me about the two goalies:

"They couldn't be any more opposite. They are completely opposite. You start with the size and go right down the line; the way they play, the way they position, the way they are off the ice, too. They're completely different personalities, but that makes it fun for me."

When I talked to Khudobin, he said he doesn't worry too much about this and that. His goaltending philosophy is simple: "Stop the pucks in the game."

9. One guy who will probably get lost in the shuffle from this game because of so many other names denting the scoreboard is Mattias Janmark, but he quietly had himself a nice game.

10. Seguin's drought continues, extending now to a career-long 16 games without scoring a goal. The way it was bookended was pretty indicative of how frustrating this stretch has been for him. Early in the first period, he had that opportunity mentioned above right before drawing a penalty. Then, he had a good look on that ensuing power play.

With the game tied 2-2 and less than five seconds left in regulation, Benn dished it to Seguin in the left corner, and Seguin seemed to lose his balance and spin in circle a couple of times, sending the game to overtime without that final shot in regulation.

After the game, Perry was asked about his own increase in offensive production, and his answer really made me think about Seguin.

"Confidence with the puck. That's the biggest thing — playing with confidence in this league," Perry said. "If you don't have any, you feel like it's going the other way and you're going one way, but right now I'm working hard, trying to hold on to it, and good things are happening."

Again, this is just Perry talking about himself, but it made me wonder if maybe Seguin just needs his confidence to be rejuvenated and to see just one puck slip through to get him going.

11. Perry had a three-game point streak to start February but saw it snapped Friday night against the Wild. He got back on the sheet with the assist on Hintz's goal. Hintz gets the glory on the goal, but really Perry was the star of that shift. His puckhandling was remarkable, completely turning Alex Pietrangolo around. He fed Hintz in the slot while falling, resulting in a relatively easy finish for Hintz.

"If you look at the shift, as a whole, we played the way we want to play," Perry said. "I played with Roope before. Haven't played with Segs a whole lot, but Roope, I mean, he can skate, he can finish and he showed that tonight."

12. Bowness was under the weather and missed Saturday night's game, prompting assistant coach John Stevens to lead the team. It's the third coach to be at the helm this season after Jim Montgomery and Bowness.

Stevens continued his role handling the defensemen, while Derek Laxdal and Todd Nelson combined to assume responsibility for the forwards, and Nelson was on the bench the entire game with the headset.

"You've just got to laugh, really," Benn said. "It's just one thing after another after another. Nothing we can do about it. Players go down and other players step up and play bigger roles. When coaches go down, other coaches step up and play bigger roles. We're a tightknit group and, once again, adversity didn't faze us today."

The credit for the win goes to Bowness, so it's not technically a third head coach this season. The Stars franchise has officially had three head coaches just once before, back in the 1977-78 campaign as the Minnesota North Stars. That season, Ted Harris went 5-12-2, Andre Beaulieu 6-23-3 and Lou Nanne 7-18-4.

13. The Stars went through their regular game-day morning, and Bowness met with the media as well. The development of him missing the game happened later in the day, right around 3 p.m.

"Later this afternoon, came to the rink and got word that Bones was taken in just as a precautionary measure," Stevens said. "Jim Nill did a great job of just informing everybody of what was going on so we could just plan accordingly and try and get a sense of normalcy for everybody to get ready to play. This has done a really good job in terms of their professionalism manning some tough situations this year, and I think today was another example of that."

Stevens has previous head coaching experience in the NHL. He spent 2006 to 2010 with the Philadelphia Flyers, though that last year he was only around for 25 games before being fired. He also served as head coach of the Los Angeles Kings for the 2017-18 season and parts of two other seasons. His NHL head coaching record is 171-148-43, but again, this one is filed under Bowness' name.

14. Gurianov's playing time continues to be a topic of discussion and interest among fans, and I thought Bowness provided some valuable insight Saturday morning as to how he views the whole situation.

"(Friday) night, don't look at the minutes. Look at the shift totals," Bowness said.

Against the Minnesota Wild on Friday night, Gurianov's ice time was 12:45. The only forward who played less was Radulov at 11:08, and he left the game early with an injury. However, Gurianov had 21 shifts, more than Radulov (14), Janmark (15), Hintz (18), Perry (19) and Benn (20). Other forwards who also took 21 shifts along with Gurianov were Andrew Coglian and Pavelski. All of a sudden, Gurianov doesn't seem as buried in the pecking order as his time-on-ice numbers would indicate.

"The shift totals (for Gurianov) are where they should be," Bowness said. "I always look at the shift totals to make sure they're getting enough shifts to stay in the flow of the game. I don't always look at minutes. Sometimes the minutes will tell you that the shifts are too long or the minutes will tell you that the shifts are too short. It's the number of shifts that are more important."

Bowness said 21 shifts, or somewhere in that range, is what he feels like the ideal target for Gurianov should be each game. He had 21 shifts once again in St. Louis.



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15. Radulov did not make the trip to St. Louis, staying back in Dallas. He remains day to day with an upper-body injury. That opened the door for Joel Kiviranta to slide back in the lineup, which was a particularly interesting trade-off against this Blues team. Radulov is officially listed at 6-foot-1, 205 pounds and is known to be rather imposing physically.

Kiviranta is listed at 5-11, 180 pounds, losing a few inches and 25 pounds. There's not a single forward on the St. Louis roster listed below 187 pounds. To Kiviranta's credit, he held his own against the Blues and didn't seem to get bullied much, but the size difference certainly did jump out a little bit.

16. With that being said, there was some line juggling. Here's the lineup the Stars went with:

Jamie Benn — Jason Dickinson — Denis Gurianov

Roope Hintz — Tyler Seguin — Corey Perry

Mattias Janmark — Joe Pavelski — Joel Kiviranta

Andrew Cogliano — Radek Faksa — Blake Comeau

Esa Lindell — John Klingberg

Miro Heiskanen — Stephen Johns

Jamie Oleksiak — Roman Polak

The Blues countered with this:

Zach Sanford — Ryan O'Reilly — David Perron

Jaden Schwartz — Brayden Schenn — Robert Thomas

Sammy Blais — Tyler Bozak — Alexander Steen

Mackenzie MacEachern — Jacob de la Rose — Ivan Barbashev

Carl Gunnarsson — Alex Pietrangelo

Jay Bouwmeester — Colton Parayko

Vince Dunn — Justin Faulk

17. Yes, that's Stephen Johns in the lineup less than 24 hours removed from skating off the ice at the American Airlines Center. It's his first back-to-back he's played in since his return to the NHL.

Johns played Monday against the Rangers, where he scored an emotional goal. He then sat out the second game of that back-to-back on Tuesday before returning to action Friday night against the Wild. There is a logjam with the defensemen, but Bowness sounded pretty simplistic Saturday morning about the Johns being active.

"He feels good, then he plays," Bowness said. "He's confident and he's done a really good job for us, so he'll stay."

This is obviously another step forward for Johns, which is just great news for everybody. He played well, one of his most notable moments coming midway through the third period when he leveled Zach Sanford when it looked like Sanford was going to have a good chance to score.

18. One more thing on the cluster of defensemen: Bowness talked about that yesterday when the question was framed to him in the context of Taylor Fedun staying out of action for a long time, a stretch that has now extended to 10 consecutive games.

"He's a true pro, a consummate pro," Bowness said. "He's handled a tough situation very well, so we give him full marks for that. He's anxious to play, and the longer you go without playing, it becomes a concern. There's no question about that, so we'll have to manage him and get him in the lineup here pretty soon."

Bowness emphasized a day-by-day, cautious approach as it pertained to Johns, but if that timeline is expedited and Johns gets to a point soon where he can be available every game, there will be tougher decisions to make on game day pertaining to the veterans who are on the top-six bubble. Roman Polak and Andrej Sekera are the ones involved in the shuffle, with Sekera being healthy-scratched in the previous two games.

"That's tough, and you need them to be pros," Bowness said. "When you have eight (defensemen), we met with them and we said, 'Look, this is

what we all have to deal with and handle it as professionally as we can.' Do we like going to a pro like Roman and Andrej who have given us everything they can every game and say, 'You're a healthy scratch today?' Absolutely not, but it's what we all have to deal with, and we have to deal with it as professionals. When your name is called to play, be ready to play."

Of course, it's a good problem to have if a coach feels like they have depth at a position. The juggling will continue on the back end, so something to keep an eye on.

19. Logistically, February has been brutal to the Stars. They started the month with a three-game road trip that featured a back-to-back. Then they got to come back home, but that game was also part of a back-to-back, with the other game of that sequence being this game against the Blues. Dallas gets to go home for a breather, hosting Carolina on Tuesday before it departs again for a three-game Canada road trip, which will also feature a back-to-back.

The good news? So far, the Stars have scratched out at least a point in all but one game of this stretch.

20. A quick standings check: The Stars have 67 points, good for third in the Central Division, right on the tail of Colorado's 68 points and six points ahead of Winnipeg. The Blues still lead the division and conference with 73 points.

The Athletic LOADED: 02.09.2020

1175625 New York Rangers

Artemi Panarin has reached his first Rangers speed bump

By Larry Brooks February 8, 2020 | 6:45PM

Time, space and the rink shrink for everyone at this time of the year. That includes Artemi Panarin, who is drawing more attention from the opposition as he works at navigating through his first speed bump as a Ranger following more than a half-season of bliss.

"Sometimes I feel that I am watched more closely and sometimes I don't," Panarin told The Post following Saturday's practice, in advance of Sunday's match at the Garden against the Kings. "I don't want to say that there is a big difference in the way I am playing, I think I'm still making good plays."

Panarin has four points (1-3) over his past six games, including a lovely backhand feed that set up Mika Zibanejad for the Blueshirts' first goal in Friday's 3-2 loss to Buffalo. Of course, No. 10 had recorded 23 points (6-17) in time immediately preceding 10 contests in relentlessly diving the team and propelling himself into the conversation for the Hart Trophy.

"Sometimes not everything is working," said Panarin, fifth in the Art Ross race with 72 points (27-45). "Sometimes not everything goes 100 percent all year."

If there is a fault line to Panarin's season, it came in the Rangers' 2-1 victory at the Coliseum on Jan. 16 in which the winger sustained some sort of neck injury. Panarin soldiered through the next game, sat out the match prior to the winter recess, and has played in all five since the break. If he hasn't seemed quite himself, that's because he probably wasn't.

"Last game, against Buffalo, it was good. I was 100 percent. But the game before that, I felt really bad. I don't know why," Panarin said. "After that game, I went home and did everything right, getting rest, eating the right food, doing my [routine] that I always do."



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"Now I feel good. It's all good."

Artemi Panarin Robert Sabo

David Quinn has observed the opposition tightening the screws on Panarin. The coach also has observed Panarin probably trying to do too much and cut it too fine, attempting to thread cross-ice passes through thickets of sticks and legs. The first three-plus months, nearly every pass found its way through and onto a teammate's tape. The first three-plus months, every shot that hit something, whether a stick, a leg or a body, almost magically found its way into the net.

Lately, not quite so much.

"Obviously teams are aware of him with the season he's having. Teams are paying a little more special attention to him," Quinn said. "But I also think it might just be the ebbs and flows of a season for a great player."

"He's going through a stretch here where things aren't happening statistically for him and I also think when that happens to someone who's used to being productive offensively, they press. He's made a lot of turnovers that he usually doesn't make."

Quinn said he had talked to Panarin about the state of his game, "but not enough."

"I need to talk to him before he leaves [the rink]."

Quinn shifted his combinations during the third period of Friday's match, moving Panarin onto Zibanejad's left side with Chris Kreider on the right as the Blueshirts attempted to rally from the 3-0 hole they had dug and leaped into against Buffalo. Alas, they came up a goal shy. But the coach is going back to the Kreider-Zibanejad-Pavel Buchnevich, Panarin-Ryan Strome-Jesper Fast top six combos against Los Angeles that have been in place through the guts of the season.

"[Panarin] has found chemistry with Strome," Quinn said. "I think Kreider and Mika have always had that little connection and bond and it gives us depth throughout the lineup, people worry about two lines. There's less attention on one line."

Of course, there is always attention on Panarin, from the opposition, from the coaches, from his teammates, from the fans. He is not only a marquee talent, but a Broadway performer. His 27 goals are four shy of his personal-best established in his sophomore 2016-17 season with the Blackhawks.

There were no leg kicks back then. Panarin came up with his signature celebratory move this year upon joining the Rangers, apparently spontaneously.

"I score the first time, I was so happy," said the Russian Rockette. "I was so excited. So that's what I did. And everyone liked it."

Everyone — well, not the Kings on Sunday — would like to see more.

New York Post LOADED: 02.09.2020

1175626 New York Rangers

Rangers' messy goalie situation is getting to Alexandar Georgiev

By Larry Brooks February 8, 2020 | 5:48pm | Updated

Perhaps the biggest challenge for Alexandar Georgiev as he adapts to the Rangers' three-goaltender situation is dealing with those

nights on which he does not dress. That will be the case again Sunday, when Igor Shesterkin gets the start against the Kings at the Garden while Henrik Lundqvist backs up.

"It's tough. You don't want to be sitting in the lounge watching the guys play," Georgiev told The Post following Saturday's practice. "It's not a fun part of hockey."

Georgiev made 25 saves in Friday's 3-2 loss to Buffalo, his first start since Jan. 21. He played the third period in relief of Lundqvist four nights earlier, allowing one goal on six shots against Dallas.

"I come to the rink every day to try to improve," said Georgiev, who is more likely to be here following the Feb. 24 trade deadline than not. "Every day is a new day for me."

Shesterkin's start will be his second in three games and sixth in 12 games since his Jan. 7 debut against the Avalanche. When David Quinn was asked if he is "as confident in [Shesterkin] if not more than anyone on the roster," the coach said, "Yes."

Micheal Haley has undergone surgery for a bilateral core muscle injury and will be sidelined indefinitely.

"It was something he's had for a while and just gradually got worse," Quinn said of the winger, who had been scratched for the past five games.

If Haley, 1-0 in 22 games with 50 penalty minutes, goes on injured reserve, that would open a roster spot for the Blueshirts, who had been carrying the max 23.

The Rangers can expect the same type of neutral-zone trap from the Kings they saw from the Sabres on Friday. The Blueshirts haven't done well against more passive and structured teams that don't want to trade chances with them.

"We get into trouble against teams [that play that way]," Quinn said. "We think we have to try harder to make more skilled plays. That hurts. It really hurts."

Instead, the Rangers need to get the puck in behind the defensemen and go to work on the forecheck and adopt a ground-game mentality. It's meat-and-potatoes hockey without the sizzle. It doesn't seem to come naturally.

"It's hard to do the same thing over and over again. It can get a little boring," Quinn said. "We're not good at boring."

New York Post LOADED: 02.09.2020

1175627 New York Rangers

Rangers rookie Igor Shesterkin will get the start in net on Sunday against the Kings

By Colin Stephenson

GREENBURGH, N.Y. — Igor Shesterkin will start in goal Sunday when the Rangers close out their four-game homestand against the Los Angeles Kings, who are last in the Western Conference.

It will be the sixth start for Shesterkin since his initial recall from AHL Hartford on Jan. 6 and his third in the six games the Rangers have played since the All-Star break. He also started Wednesday's 5-3 win over the Toronto Maple Leafs, and the 4-2 win over Detroit on Jan. 31.



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Shesterkin has a 4-1 record, a 2.60 goals-against average and a .922 save percentage. His GAA and save percentage are the best among the three goalies on the roster.

Said coach David Quinn, "He certainly is playing the best so far."

### Haley to undergo surgery

The Rangers announced that forward Micheal Haley will have surgery to repair a bilateral core muscle injury and will be sidelined indefinitely.

Haley has not played since the last game before the All-Star break, though he did practice as recently as Tuesday and took part in the morning skate Friday. Quinn said the injury was not something that came on recently.

"It's something that he's had for a while, and just kind of gradually got worse," Quinn said.

Haley, a physical forward who attended training camp as a professional tryout and signed a one-year contract after making the team, has played in 22 games and scored one goal. He has 50 penalty minutes.

### Panarin slows down

Quinn was asked if opposing teams are defending Artemi Panarin differently recently. The team's leading scorer has gone four games without a goal and has only two assists in that span. He has 27 goals and 45 assists in 52 games.

"Obviously, teams are aware of him and the season he's having," Quinn said. "And teams are paying a little bit more special attention to him. But I also think it might be the ebbs and flow of a season for a great player. He's going through a stretch here where, you know, things aren't happening statistically for him, and I also think that when that happens to someone who's used to being productive offensively, they press. And he's made a lot of turnovers lately that he usually doesn't make."

Newsday LOADED: LOADED: 02.09.2020

1175628 New York Rangers

### Rangers forward Brendan Lemieux still trying to gain traction

By Colin Stephenson

GREENBURGH, N.Y. — When the Rangers acquired Brendan Lemieux at the deadline a year ago as part of the Kevin Hayes deal, they had big plans for the abrasive winger.

But in his second full NHL season and first full season as a Ranger, it's been difficult for the 23-year-old Lemieux to gain any traction with the team. He struggled to score for long stretches of time in the first half of the season, and then, right after Christmas, just as he seemed to be finding a niche as the left wing with 20-year-old Filip Chytil and 18-year-old Kaapo Kakko, a broken hand kept Lemieux out of the lineup for three weeks.

While Lemieux was out, Brett Howden filled his spot on the Kid Line quite nicely, so that when Lemieux came back, just before the NHL All-Star break, there was a question of just where he would fit best in the lineup.

Coach David Quinn is still trying to figure that out.

Lemieux had 12 goals and five assists in 63 games for the Jets and Rangers last season. This season he has six goals and nine assists

in 42 games. But in the five games since the All-Star break, Quinn has used him on the fourth line, the third line, and for a time — when Chris Kreider was out with a neck injury — even the first line.

At Saturday's practice, Lemieux was on the fourth line with center Greg McKegg and Howden. But the way Quinn changes line combinations within games, that's hardly set in stone.

"I think it's just a matter of, you know, our team finding some chemistry," Lemieux said. "We've had a lot of moving parts, [and] just to be frank, it's not easy to negotiate ice time. We have a lot of skilled players and a lot of good players, and somebody's got to play on the fourth line. That's the bottom line. And that whoever that is that night, not going to play as much.

"And so, I think Coach [Quinn] has just been trying to find what works for our group, and who can step in and out, and who's playing good that night."

Quinn said the three weeks out of the lineup has been a factor in Lemieux's inability to nail down a spot among the top three lines on an every-night basis.

"It's hard to come back when you miss — he missed almost a full month, and then we had the break, so that compounded the situation," Quinn said. "But we've talked to him about things he needs to do to put himself in a more solidified role."

Those things include playing better defensively and making sure to not turn the puck over, Quinn said.

The coach, though, has always raved about the straight-to-the-net, in-your-face game that the 6-1, 215-pound Lemieux plays. He's made it clear that he's a fan.

"He obviously gives us something we don't have a lot of, so he's a very valuable player," Quinn said. "But we think there's a lot more there, and so does he. This isn't something he's not aware of."

Newsday LOADED: LOADED: 02.09.2020

1175629 New York Rangers

### Rangers have tough decisions regarding Chris Kreider and Tony DeAngelo as trade deadline nears

By Colin Stephenson

Two weeks to go before the NHL trade deadline, give or take a day, and if the Rangers are to be believed, no one is thinking about it.

Left wing Chris Kreider, who is scheduled to be an unrestricted free agent this summer, has long been identified as the No. 1 name available on the rental player market this month, given the unlikelihood the Rangers will be able to afford to re-sign him to a long term contract. Up until Wednesday night, when Kreider returned from a one-game absence due to an injured neck and scored a goal and had an assist in a 5-3 win over the Toronto Maple Leafs, the Rangers hadn't even spoken to Kreider's agent, Matt Keator, to explore what it would take to get Kreider to sign a contract extension.

On Thursday, though, TSN's Pierre LeBrun tweeted that the Rangers and Keator were expected to talk "in a few days." So maybe the Rangers will try to figure out if — and how — they could afford to re-sign the 28-year-old Kreider. Given Kreider's likely market value being somewhere in the neighborhood of the \$7.14 million per year that former Ranger Kevin Hayes got from Philadelphia, it is hard to see how the Rangers could afford to sign



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Kreider and keep all the other free agents they're going to need to re-sign this summer.

But maybe it will be Kreider they keep, and others who get shipped out at the Feb. 24 deadline.

Defenseman Tony DeAngelo, who reported late to training camp after trying, unsuccessfully, to negotiate a multi-year contract last summer as a restricted free agent, will be an RFA with arbitration rights this summer, meaning he has the leverage to expect a big raise from the \$925,000 he is earning this season. And DeAngelo, 24, is having a career year, with 12 goals and 29 assists in 53 games, numbers that project to 18 and 45 for the season. A righthanded, offensive-minded defenseman like him would figure to be a valued commodity.

"I don't really have much of a thought process on it," DeAngelo said when asked if he was stressed out about the possibility of being traded. "I guess whatever happens, happens. Obviously, I want to stay, but . . . I haven't even thought into it. What we're hoping is to be in a position where either nobody's leaving, or we're buying."

Buying seems unlikely. Two years after The Letter, where the Rangers explained to fans that their window of being a Stanley Cup contender had closed, and they would be going into rebuild mode, they are still rebuilding, even if the hardest part of the rebuild – the teardown – seems to be over.

The nucleus of the next generation seems to be forming, after the signings of Artemi Panarin and Jacob Trouba, the drafting of Kaapo Kakko, and the trade for Adam Fox. There are prospects who are already here (Fox, Filip Chytil, Igor Shesterkin), and others are seemingly on the way (Vitali Kravtsov and Yegor Rykov in Hartford, and perhaps Nils Lundkvist in Sweden and K'Andre Miller at the University of Wisconsin).

But the playoffs are not likely this spring. And so, while they may mostly stand pat, it's probably more likely they'll be selling off some veterans for picks and prospects for the third straight year.

Kreider, DeAngelo, unrestricted free agent Jesper Fast, and restricted free agents like Ryan Strome, Brendan Lemieux and Alexandar Georgiev – all of whom have arbitration rights – are guys who could be on the move if the price is right.

"We know the situation we're in," said Fast. "We know what could happen if we're not in a playoff spot, in the playoff race. Anything can happen. But we've just got to focus on what we can control. And that's our game."

Fast realizes that, playoff race or no, as a pending UFA, he could potentially be on the move. Some team gearing itself for a long playoff run might want him to be part of a checking line.

"Of course, I've loved my time here," he said. "I'd love to be here. But I try to focus in on my game right now, what I can control. And that's my game. Whatever happens, happens."

Trouba looking forward to Rangers' visit to Winnipeg

Jacob Trouba is looking forward to his first trip back to Winnipeg. It'll be his first trip there since the Jets traded him to the Rangers over the summer. The Rangers play there Tuesday.

"It'll be fun," Trouba said with a wide smile. "Kind of similar feelings to the first game of the year, I guess without the added (element) of it being my first game with the Rangers. It will be nice to see some friends play against some buddies. It will be good going back to that city."

Trouba said he stays in touch with four or five former Jets teammates to whom he's close, and he is looking forward to going back to Winnipeg, which he said he really enjoyed.

"I kind of grew up, and learned a lot about life there," he said. "And that whole experience was -- it was good."

The Rangers, who play the L.A. Kings on Sunday, will fly to Winnipeg Monday after practice. Trouba said he won't be taking his Rangers teammates out to show them the sights, however.

"No, I'll probably go see some old teammates," he said.

Newsday LOADED: LOADED: 02.09.2020

1175584 Edmonton Oilers

Edmonton Oilers trade style points for real ones in clutch win over Nashville

Robert Tychkowski

The Edmonton Oilers will be the first to tell you that what happened Saturday night at Rogers Place isn't anything anyone will ever want to put a frame around and hang on a wall.

At times, the slow-developing chess match against the Nashville Predators looked like more like a grease stain than an oil painting.

But, the Oilers are also quick to remind everyone that winning ugly still beats the heck out of losing ugly.

So, after dropping a pair of lethargic games to Arizona and San Jose, they weren't the least bit concerned about style points in their grinding, 3-2 comeback victory over the visiting Predators.

"At this time of year it's about sticking with it," said Oilers centre Leon Draisaitl, who led the way with two goals. "It doesn't have to be pretty. Two points is two points. It's a gutty win for us and that's huge for our group."

The Oilers started slowly, but finished with a bang, overcoming a 2-0 deficit with a fluke goal late in the second period and two nice ones from Draisaitl in the third to turn the tide. It was scary for a while, and not especially fun to watch for a good 40 minutes, but it felt good to post their first win since last Saturday's showdown in Calgary.

"We haven't been playing as well as we wanted to the last couple of games," said Ryan Nugent-Hopkins, who assisted on both of the Draisaitl goals. "But tonight we stuck with it, started to get more chances in the second as the game went on and had a couple of good looks in the third period."

Looking to re-establish themselves after a pair of lifeless defeats, and facing a Predators team just three points behind them when the game began, the Oilers were expected to respond with a show of force Saturday.

Instead, they only managed seven shots in the opening 20 minutes were down 1-0 at the first intermission.

There wasn't much life in the second, either, as the Predators checked Edmonton into frustration and built a 2-0 lead on a late goal from Nick Bonino.

The hosts were on their way to being in big trouble until a fluke goal with 8.1 seconds left (Kyle Turris booted a rebound into his own net from about 10 feet out), closed it to 2-1 after 40.

"That was huge," said Draisaitl. "If you go into the third down 2-0, it's lot harder to come back from that than 2-1."

It was the break they needed. Draisaitl, who didn't show much in the first two periods, or the last two games, tied it 3:43 into the third period with his 30th of the season. Ten minutes later, after drawing a penalty to give Edmonton a four-on-three power play, Draisaitl



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potted his second of the night to give Edmonton its first lead of the game.

"The team needs me, the team needs everyone," said the 24-year-old, who knew he wasn't in his usual beast mode in the losses to Arizona and San Jose. "I thought our line was a lot better tonight than the nights before. It's OK to play a few games that maybe aren't your best, but you have to make sure you respond and I thought our line was good tonight. We created, scored a big goal. It was a good night."

Edmonton started the night third in the Pacific Division with 62 points, but could see that the six teams directly beneath them in the standings were charging hard, with 61, 61, 60, 59, 58 and 58 points. There is no room to breathe and you could tell that by the urgency in the third-period ... if not the first.

"I don't think we started with the same energy we needed to counter what they were doing," said goalie Mike Smith, who kept the Predators from pulling away for good with some key saves in his 600th NHL game. "They were playing well of late and they're a veteran team that's been in the playoffs and knows what it takes.

"They kind of took it to a new level in the first. We were OK, but as the game went on we got our legs going, got feisty on pucks, created some power plays for ourselves had a great third and were able to get two points."

### BIG SCARE

There was a big scare in the second period when Nashville's Dante Fabbro shoved McDavid into the end boards at high speed. The Oilers captain was slow to get up and talked with trainers on the bench for a few minutes, motioning to the knee he spent all summer rehabilitating, before taking it out for a test drive during a TV time out.

He came back and played the rest of the game but was being assessed by the Oilers medical staff after the game and wasn't available for interviews. The Oilers official position right now is that he has a bruise and will be fine.

Edmonton Sun: LOADED: 02.09.2020

1175585 Edmonton Oilers

Connor McDavid has scare crashing into end boards

Jim Matheson, Edmonton Journal

Take a deep breath. OK, exhale.

When Connor McDavid crashed into the end boards four minutes into the middle frame while tangled up with Dante Fabbro, it looked bad. But he came back to play 19 and-a-half minutes and while he was being assessed by team medical people after the 3-2 win over Nashville on Saturday and didn't come out to speak, it appears to be just a healthy scare. As of right now, everything seems fine.

"Just a bruise on top of the (left) knee," said Edmonton Oilers coach Dave Tippett. "They looked at it between periods and he iced it and I asked him how he was doing. He said 'I'm fine to play.' That's the last I heard from him.

"You get a bruise on the knee especially with him there's extra precautionary stuff. Far as I know it's nothing serious. They wanted to ice it after the game again."

McDavid was down on the ice for 10 seconds after the collision with the boards. He got up flexing the knee and huddled with athletic

therapist T.D. Forss on the bench but while he seemed to be cruising his first shift after the mishap, he roared in on Juuse Saros later in the second with one of the three subpar six-foot goalies getting his glove on the flicked shot.

Then, McDavid ripped a shot with nine seconds left in the period on an Oilers power play and it hit Alex Chiasson and then pin-balled off the skate of Nashville centre Kyle Turris and into the net to get the Oilers first goal.

With McDavid tearing a knee ligament in the final league game last April and going through a long, difficult rehab where surgery was considered, there's obviously concern every time he goes down. McDavid also suffered a broken collarbone when piled into the end boards his rookie season.

### BRUISED AND BATTERED

Oilers defenceman Oscar Klefbom was shaken up twice in the game, once blocking a shot, the second when he slammed into the boards with Viktor Arvidsson but he wound up with two assists over his 24:37.

"I told them I should have the helmet and the vest (warrior of the game), like they didn't see me out there?" he joked.

"First one hit me on the outside of the knee, bad spot," said Klefbom, who missed a shift with partner Adam Larsson when Craig Smith got Nashville's first goal 12 minutes into the game. "When you win a game like this, those sort of things (crashes) feel good."

Klefbom took a maintenance day Friday and has taken others, in part because he's averaging over 25 minutes a game and needs a rest. But maybe he's also banged up more than we think.

"Nah, I wouldn't keep anything away from you guys (media). Everything's fine," he said.

### NOT A LOT OF LOVE FOR KASSIAN

While Zack Kassian has played most of the season on Connor McDavid's right side, he played three shifts in the first frame, four in the second, and two in the third on right wing on a fourth-line with Gaetan Haas and Tyler Benson. He finished with a season-low 7:05. Until this one it was 12:20 against Calgary Jan. 29.

Tippett says it was circumstance that Kassian (29 points, all even-strength) got on so little. The Predators didn't play their fourth line of Colton Sissons, Yakov Trenin and Colin Blackwell much, either. Plus there were seven power plays in the game (three by the Oilers, four by Nashville) and Kassian is on neither the PP unit or the PK.

"He got stuck, tight game. Not by design and the way penalties were going he didn't get as much (ice) as I would have liked. Kass will get more next game (Tuesday vs Chicago)," said Tippett.

He says he wasn't sending a message to the Kassian, who admitted Friday he hasn't played nearly up to his standards the last while.

"I wanted to try Chiasson on that line (McDavid). Archie (Josh Archibald) and (Riley) Sheahan were going good on the other one and I didn't want to mess with that."

### ABOUT THAT ICING PLAY

The Predators clearly iced the puck, whipping it past Darnell Nurse and down the ice before Smith's goal with play carrying on for several seconds rather than a face-off in the Nashville end. Linesman Darren Gibbs, in his 23rd NHL season, waved it off.

"They said they thought Darnell could have gotten it (puck). I watched the tape. I didn't agree with it. There were a couple earlier that were a little sketchy and a few the other night (San Jose)," said Tippett. "You get a little sensitive."



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Nurse had a conversation with Gibbs, one of the league's best, by the benches after the Smith goal. Then they got that one back on the one of Turriss's skate.

"You earn your breaks," said Tippett.

### HE SAID IT

"He Van Gogh'd him." Oiler radio play-by-play man Jack Michaels after Sam Gagner was caught with his stick in Mattias Ekholm's ear-hole early in the third period

This 'n that: Jujhar Khaira almost spilled Preds' Nick Bonino into the Nashville bench in the opening frame with Bonino hanging on the ledge ... Oiler defenceman William Lagesson can't get much traction in his bid for regular work on the blue line. After playing against San Jose, he was back in the press box with Caleb Jones back in the third pairing.

Edmonton Sun: LOADED: 02.09.2020

1175586 Edmonton Oilers

Edmonton Oilers Game Day: Predators return looking for payback

Jim Matheson, Edmonton Journal

Nashville Predators vs Edmonton Oilers

5 PM, SPORTSNET, 630 CHED

Five Things to WATCH:

### 1. TIME TO RIDE SMITH?

Oilers goalie Mike Smith, platooning with Mikko Koskinen, hasn't lost a game in regulation since Dec. 18 against Pittsburgh. He lost to Buffalo in OT and to Calgary in a shootout but has won six other games. He hasn't played since that wild one in Calgary when he got tossed for fighting his Flames counterpart Cam Talbot. He out-duelled fellow veteran Pekka Rinne 4-2 Jan. 14 at Rogers Place. Smith has played 28 games and Koskinen 31.

### 2. REVOLVING DOOR ON MCDAVID'S LEFT SIDE

Leon Draisaitl's been there, James Neal's been there. Josh Archibald's been there, Sam Gagner will get a shot against Nashville. For the most part Zack Kassian has been a constant on RW with the Oiler captain but it's been a revolving door on LW with McDavid. GM Ken Holland's looking with the trade dead-line approaching. Andreas Athanasiou's name is out there because Holland knows him from Detroit.

### 3. POWER PLAYS AND PENALTY KILLS

The Oilers are in the top six in both categories and the Predators are 25th and 26th. They only have 30 PP goals and the season is two-thirds gone. And they're only killing off three out of four opposing PPs a game. When the game's five-on-five they're fine but not on special teams where they are very poor. The Oilers PP is still the best but it seems to have plateaued and their PK is No.1 on the road (almost 90 per cent) but 27th (75 per cent) at Rogers Place. Go figure.

### 4. ANOTHER LACROSSE GOAL?

Filip Forsberg pulled off one of those crazy goals turning the blade of his stick over behind the net and wrapping it just past Smith under the crossbar last month. Maybe that's a once in a lifetime cheeky move from the Swede but who knows? In Carolina, Andre Svechnikov has done it twice this season as the second-year player

has surpassed 20 goals. Forsberg has long been poison against Edmonton whether he's using a lacrosse play or just a more conventional shot. Nine goals in the last 15 games.

### 5. GETTING BACK ON OFFENSIVE HORSE

Draisaitl looked weary against San Jose, understandable with the scoring run he's been on that there had to be some drop-off. The NHL's scoring leader has gone two straight games without a point (Arizona and San Jose), the first time that's happened since late November, which means almost two and a half months. Draisaitl (83 points) hasn't gone three consecutive games without a point all season.

Big Match-up

### ROMAN JOSI VS CONNOR MCDAVID

The Predators captain is having a Norris-type season and realistically it's between Josi and Washington's John Carlson (65 points), who may get the nod with voters because he could finish with 90 points. Josi is carrying the load on a depleted back-end that doesn't have the injured Ryan Ellis to help with a solid Mattias Ekholm. The smooth-skating Swiss-born D is always in the Norris conversation but this season he's plus 21, has 53 points (35 even-strength and he's playing 26 minutes a night, pretty much against the other team's top guns. He'll see lots of McDavid, who now has 80 points and 30 goals for the fourth straight season.

### SPECIAL TEAMS

Oilers: PP 46-160 28.8 per cent, first. PK 126-152 82.9 sixth

Predators: PP 30-176 17.0 per cent, 25th. PK 123-167 74.8 26th.

### SICK BAY:

Oilers: James Neal, Joakim Nygard, Kris Russell

Predators: Ryan Ellis, Calle Jarnkrok

Game Day Lines (projected)

### OILERS

Sam Gagner-Connor McDavid-Zack Kassian

Ryan Nugent-Hopkins-Leon Draisaitl-Kailer Yamamoto

Jujhar Khaira-Riley Sheahan-Josh Archibald

Tyler Benson-Gaetan Haas-Alex Chiasson

Oscar Klefbom-Adam Larsson

Darnell Nurse-Ethan Bear

Caleb Jones-Matt Benning

Mike Smith

Mikko Koskinen

### PREDATORS

Matt Duchene-Ryan Johansen-Mikael Granlund

Filip Forsberg-Kyle Turriss-Craig Smith

Rocco Grimaldi-Nick Bonino-Viktor Arvidsson

Yakov Trenin-Colton Sissons-Colin Blackwell

Roman Josi-Dante Fabbro

Jarred Tinordi-Mattias Ekholm

Dan Hamhuis-Yannick Weber

Pekka Rinne

Juuse Saros



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • February 9, 2020

Edmonton Sun: LOADED: 02.09.2020

1175587 Edmonton Oilers

Oilers Observations: A Connor McDavid scare, Leon Draisaitl's back, boosting the top line and helping Zack Kassian

By Daniel Nugent-Bowman Feb 8, 2020

The Oilers might have won 3-2 over the Predators on Saturday, a gutsy comeback victory in regulation, but it's entirely reasonable if some fans are worried or even assuming the worst.

That's because superstar and captain Connor McDavid got tangled up with Predators defenceman Dante Fabbro early in the second period and crashed heavily into the end boards. He got up limping and favouring his left knee. You know, the same left knee he severely injured in the 2018-19 season finale.

McDavid managed to continue his shift but spent the next TV timeout working through his apparent discomfort by making turns and cuts. Even though he didn't miss a shift the rest of the period — and game — McDavid was in regular communication with head athletic therapist T.D. Forss.

Oilers coach Dave Tippett was in on a quick discussion, too.

"I asked him how he was doing. He goes, 'I'm fine. I'm playing,'" Tippett said.

The situation was a little worrisome for his teammates to see.

"He's a tough guy," defenceman Oscar Klefbom said. "He's gonna have some bumps and bruises during the year, but he's our most important player, maybe. It was good to see him finish the game."

McDavid finished the contest with an assist, recorded with 8.1 seconds left in the middle period on an Edmonton power play. He had three shots on seven attempts and was -2 in 19:27.

McDavid was unavailable to speak after the game because he was receiving treatment. Tippett said McDavid bruised his knee and was icing it down after the second period and following the final buzzer.

"As far as I know, it's nothing serious," Tippett said.

Of course, the previous left knee injury McDavid sustained was believed to be a partial PCL tear and it ended up being much, much worse — like, career-threatening worse.

With the Oilers off Sunday, there is expected to be an update on the team's most impactful player on Monday.

Other than McDavid's ailment, here's what else was notable from Saturday's win.

### Draisaitl's breakthrough

There's no sugarcoating it. Leon Draisaitl's previous two games were awful.

Not only was he held pointless in back-to-back games for the first time since the end of November, but he also looked sluggish and hardly generated much offensively, either.

That changed Saturday with a two-goal performance in the third period.

"He's such a dominant player when he plays a big, strong game. That's where he was tonight," Tippett said. "He knows; you don't

have to tell him that he had a couple tough games. He knew things weren't going as well as he liked.

"He knows he's one of the leaders on our team. He played with a purpose to turn it around tonight, and he did."

Through two periods, Draisaitl and his teammates were checked tightly by the Predators. Edmonton's only goal was credited to Alex Chiasson after the initial shot by McDavid was stopped by Nashville netminder Juuse Saros before the rebound hit Kyle Turris and slid in. The power-play goal came in the dying seconds of the middle period.

But Draisaitl took control of the game over the final 20 minutes.

He received a beautiful cross-ice, backhanded pass from Ryan Nugent-Hopkins in the neutral zone, then skated in and wristed a shot by Saros from the faceoff dot.

After drawing an interference penalty on Jarred Tinordi to send the Oilers on a four-on-three power play, he one-timed a pass from Nugent-Hopkins for the winner.

"The team needs me. The team needs everyone," Draisaitl said. "I thought our line was a lot better than the nights before. I think it's OK to play a few games that are maybe not your best games. But you have to make sure you respond."

The two goals gave Draisaitl 85 points, which leads the league. They were crucial to the Oilers winning, too.

But perhaps just as importantly, they got Draisaitl moving in the right direction after two subpar performances.

"It's a learning process for him," Klefbom said. "He's gonna be in the league for so long. He's gonna have those ups and downs. There are 82 games, and it's not gonna be easy every night."

"Those games when you don't have any points, you still wanna find a way to help your team. Even though a lot of people and the players in here want him to score and get points, for me as a defenceman, I want to keep him accountable for the work ethic."

"I'm really happy with the way he responds and comes out and be as dominant as he is because he's a very important player for us."

### McDavid's linemates

The Oilers could use lineup enhancements in a few areas ahead of the trade deadline, but Saturday's lineup construction highlighted what should be the most glaring need.

McDavid needs a highly skilled, and ideally speedy, winger at his side.

Chiasson and Sam Gagner got the assignments against Nashville, and the line was heavily out-attempted at five-on-five. (Surely, McDavid's so-called bone bruise didn't help.)

With all due respect to Chiasson, a 22-goal scorer last season, and Gagner, a beloved Oiler, but both being top-line players together doesn't seem like an ideal combination. This has nothing to do with Chiasson's glaring open-net miss early in the game, either. It's more that they have just 12 goals between them this season and neither comes close to matching McDavid's wheels.

With the second line of Draisaitl, Nugent-Hopkins and Kailer Yamamoto seemingly locked in for the near future, Tippett's first-line options are few.

James Neal has spent time recently with McDavid but missed his fifth straight game with a foot injury. He has 19 goals, but 12 have come on the power play.

Josh Archibald has spotted in with the captain for spurts since the beginning of December. He's fleet of foot but more known for his checking. He has seven goals and 13 points in 45 games.



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And then there's regular linemate Zack Kassian.

Kassian's effectiveness

Kudos to Kassian for getting the four-year, \$12.8 million contract that was announced on Jan. 29.

The 2009 first-round pick has turned around his career and life since coming to the Oilers in December 2015 from Montreal for goalie Ben Scrivens. Never has that been more apparent than for most of the 2019 calendar year when he rode shotgun to McDavid and Draisaitl. He's played the best hockey of his professional career over the last season and a half.

The 2020 portion of the season has seen him skate with McDavid and other wingers, mostly Neal before the latter's injury. Over the previous two games, however, he's been relegated to depth duty, where his ice time — and effectiveness — has been severely limited.

Tippett said Friday he wants to see Kassian battle more and be more determined around the net. Kassian said it's up to him to be ready to play even though his number won't be called as often when he's on a bottom line, something he had to do earlier in his career.

Other than the odd brief second power-play shift, Kassian doesn't play on special teams. All but two assists of his 29 points, which includes 14 goals, have come at five-on-five. Naturally, when his centre is Gaetan Haas and he's playing 7:05 (as he did Saturday) rather than lining up next to McDavid and skating at least double that amount of time, his production is going to plummet.

Tippett said he didn't mean for Kassian's ice time to be so low.

"That was not by design," he said. "Just a tight game the way the penalties were going; he didn't get as much as I wanted him to get.

"Kass will get more next game. That's just the way it worked out today."

Kassian's demotion won't be permanent, especially given how well he's fared alongside the captain. However, he and the coaching staff have to find a way for him to be more useful when he's not with McDavid.

Smith's excellence

The Oilers might not have won this game without Mike Smith's goaltending.

Smith stopped 27 of 29 shots and was called upon to make a few big saves. The biggest ones came on back-to-back chances, first off Mikael Granlund on a backhand in tight and then off Roman Josi on a point-blank slapper.

"I've said it for the last few weeks now — I feel like my game's the best it's been all season long," Smith said. "I wanna continue that in the most important games of the year."

After a poor November and December, Smith's save percentage is now .901 in 2019-20.

"He's really dialled in," Tippett said.

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1175588 Edmonton Oilers

Lowetide: The Oilers trading their first-round pick is a bad idea

By Allan Mitchell Feb 8, 2020

Based on the standings, the Edmonton Oilers should expect to select in the middle of the first round in the draft in June. Entering Saturday, that pick would be No. 16, and it's fair to assume it will end up being in the Nos. 12-20 range unless the Oilers go on a playoff run of epic proportions.

There's plenty of deadline talk surrounding the idea of trading first-round picks, with Oilers management (to this point) unwilling to entertain the idea, even though substantial rentals like Taylor Hall have been made available.

For our own purposes, is it possible to estimate who might be available at No. 16? If we can identify a player, and then find several comparable players who went through the same league in previous seasons, can we then estimate the approximate value of the draft pick Edmonton holds?

If we can do those things, we can fairly assess the wisdom of holding on to the pick. Let's have a look.

The 15 best players in the draft

We're at midseason across the hockey world, so there are many miles still to go for every prospect eligible for the draft. On the schedule: The rest of the regular season, the playoffs, the Memorial Cup in Canada, major tournaments in Europe, the NHL combine and interviews and, finally, the draft.

Any list ranking players at this point in the season is a snapshot of a moving target. That said, we're gifted with some experts in the draft evaluation field and are able to use their latest lists as our guide.

My goal is to take 15 names off the draft board in order to establish a group of players who might be available for the Oilers, assuming they remain at No. 16. Using the list compiled by The Athletic's Corey Pronman and the midseason rankings by TSN's Bob McKenzie, I picked the 15 names most likely to be gone by then.

The top three names (Alexis Lafrenière, Quinton Byfield and Tim Stutzle) are in the same order, while Marco Rossi, Jamie Drysdale, Yaroslav Askarov, Lucas Raymond, Alexander Holtz and Cole Perfetti are all in the top 10 on both lists. The final six names, based on combining lists, are Dawson Mercer, Connor Zary, Anton Lundell, Hendrix Lapierre, Dylan Holloway and Jacob Perreault.

The Oilers at No. 16

I've chosen three players who would be attractive options for Edmonton. All are forwards who qualify as the best player available. They are Jack Quinn from the Ottawa 67s of the OHL, Seth Jarvis from the Portland Winterhawks of the WHL and Mavrik Bourque of the Shawinigan Cataractes of the QMJHL. All are substantial offensive prospects.

Player	League	Boxcars	Pts/game	
Seth Jarvis	WHL	45gp	28-42-70	1.56
Jack Quinn	OHL	47gp	43-26-69	1.47
Mavrick Bourque	QMJHL	49gp	29-42-71	1.45

The OHL is generally regarded as the best junior league in Canada, followed by the WHL and QMJHL. That doesn't necessarily apply to individual players, and I think we can assume all three prospects listed are among the 31 best this year.

Now for the comparables. I used players drafted from 2013 to 2018, meaning we have at least some post-draft numbers on all players included. I also stayed in the first round of each draft and stayed in the league of origin for each player.

Comparable players

Quinn is the most promising prospect based on math, and his comparables are strong. Quinn was born on Sept. 19, 2001, meaning he will be 18 years and nine months old on his draft day.



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His comparables are somewhat aligned with his birth date, and I've made no allowance for style, size or speed.

Player	Born	Draft	year	Boxcars	Pts/game	
Nick Suzuki	Aug. '99	2017	65gp	45-51-96	1.48	
Jack Quinn	Sept. '01	2020	47gp	43-26-69	1.47	
Michael dal Colle	June '96	2014	67gp	39-56-95	1.42	
Max Domi	March '95	2013	64gp	39-48-87	1.36	
Sean Monahan	Oct. '94	2013	58gp	31-47-78	1.34	
Kerby Rychel	Oct. '94	2013	68gp	40-47-87	1.28	
Gabriel Vilardi	Aug. '99	2017	49gp	29-32-61	1.24	
Nick Ritchie	Dec. '95	2014	61gp	39-35-74	1.21	

That is an impressive list, with the best NHL players (Suzuki, Domi, Monahan) suggesting a career of great promise. Dal Colle and Rychel did not adjust quickly to the NHL, serving as a reminder that draft bets come with no guarantees. One note: Quinn is scoring at a fearsome rate and is an outlier among the group. He is on pace to score more than 60 goals and currently leads the OHL in goals via 22 tallies in his past 15 games.

Bourque is producing solid numbers in the QMJHL and should be moving up the draft charts based on math. That doesn't always happen, but with massive errors like Alex DeBrincat in the NHL's recent past, surely the smart teams are holding the math of the draft in higher esteem.

Player	Born	Draft	year	Boxcars	Pts/game	
Nico Hischier	Jan. '99	2017	57gp	38-48-86	1.51	
Timo Meier	Oct. '96	2015	61gp	41-46-87	1.48	
Mavrik Bourque	Jan. '02	2020	49gp	29-42-71	1.45	
Filip Zadina	Nov. '99	2018	57gp	44-38-82	1.44	
E Svechnikov	Oct. '96	2015	55gp	32-46-78	1.42	
A Beauvillier	June '97	2015	67gp	42-52-94	1.40	
Anthony Mantha	Sept. '94	2013	67gp	50-39-89	1.33	

Although Bourque's numbers line up closely with Quinn's, the comparable players from the QMJHL are stronger. Everyone on the list except for Evgeny Svechnikov has begun a solid NHL career or is emerging. That's encouraging for a No. 16 selection.

Jarvis is a smaller forward and because of it could fall in the draft. Math suggests that's a bad idea, and his comparable players from the WHL offer us some interesting possible futures.

Player	Born	Draft	year	Boxcars	Pts/game	
Leon Draisaitl	Oct. '95	2014	64gp	38-67-105	1.64	
Seth Jarvis	Feb. '02	2020	45gp	28-42-70	1.56	
Kailer Yamamoto	Sept. '98	2017	65gp	42-57-99	1.52	
Nolan Patrick	Sept. '98	2017	33gp	20-26-46	1.39	
Cody Glass	April '99	2017	69gp	32-62-94	1.36	
Mathew Barzal	May '97	2015	44gp	12-45-57	1.30	

Jarvis is an undersized player, so in terms of style or presence, we wouldn't ordinarily compare him with Draisaitl. However, we're

looking at numbers only in the WHL for our purposes, and frankly, the list is exceptional even if Draisaitl is excluded.

Jarvis is smaller, so Edmonton may pass on drafting him because it already has Kailer Yamamoto. However, Barzal's presence on the list offers a sober reminder about what size bias can do to an organization. Passing on Barzal, in favor of a trade for size, sunk the Peter Chiarelli administration.

What does it all mean?

Ken Holland needs to hold on to that first-round draft pick. It's potentially a major piece of the future. Even after setting aside the 16 best players (according to the combined lists), there are three exceptional forwards who could remain on the draft board. If one of them is chosen before Edmonton's turn, one of the original 16 shakes loose.

It's a fabulous draft through the top 20. That's not in question.

How strong could the pick at No. 16 be? The high end of the comparable names represents an impact player. That seems a little rich at No. 16, but it is a strong draft at the top.

What's more, the chances of the chosen player being able to fill an NHL role is very high. Of the 18 comparable names listed, only one, Rychel, appears certain to play fewer than 200 NHL games, though Svechnikov has not developed as hoped and dal Colle is playing a support role after being chosen in the top five.

The other 15 are solid NHL players, many at the high end of the spectrum.

Bottom line: If reports are true, Holland's decision to keep his powder dry in terms of dealing the first-round selection is a wise one even with the understanding there is a sense of urgency.

The first-round pick is too valuable to trade. It represents a major potential piece and possibly a workaround for the miss on Jesse Puljujarvi in 2016. Holding on to the pick would be the right play for the Oilers.

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1175589 Edmonton Oilers

After a 'long road' to the NHL, Tyler Benson's Oilers debut holds extra meaning

By Daniel Nugent-Bowman Feb 8, 2020

From the pregame jitters to the solo lap in warmups, Tyler Benson experienced all the things players about to compete in their first NHL contest usually do.

But it wasn't until he waited on the blue line beside Oilers captain Connor McDavid and listened to Robert Clark belt out "The Star-Spangled Banner" and "O Canada" that what was about to happen really sunk in.

"Standing there for the national anthems, looking around at the crowd, was a pretty unreal moment," he said.

Benson's first NHL game wound up being far from spectacular. He was minus-1 in 9:25, and one of his two shots reached the net. The Oilers, meanwhile, got off to a quick two-goal lead on the Sharks, only to fall flat and lose 6-3. The next day included a hard practice, especially at its conclusion, and a testy coach.



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While things could have gone better in his debut, Benson feels there's lots to build on as he starts his NHL career.

Given all he's been through, too, the first one was still an exceptional feeling.

"It's been a long road, but it definitely makes it special to get to this point," Benson said.

Benson doesn't turn 22 until March. He's by no means old by NHL-debut standards, with 110 AHL games on his résumé over his first two pro seasons.

Had it not been for some bad luck and bizarre injuries, Benson probably would have been in The Show much sooner.

"I'm super proud of him," said Jason McKee, Benson's coach for his final two years of junior. "Tyler went through a lot in junior with regards to injuries. He never got discouraged."

Growing up in Blackburne, a community on the south side of Edmonton, Benson was a minor hockey star. A passionate Oilers fan, Benson wore the sweaters of their best offensive players — Ales Hemsky, Ryan Smyth and Mike Comrie — and played with the creativity, leadership and flair of his favourite players.

By the time he reached the bantam ranks, Benson was a budding elite prospect. While captaining the South Side Athletic Club, he recorded 146 points in 33 games to break the Alberta AAA bantam scoring record held by Ty Rattie, who played for the Oilers the past two seasons.

There was talk of Benson entering the WHL a year early as an exceptional status player after the Vancouver Giants selected him first in the 2013 draft. Benson played his minor midget season dominating at the Pursuit of Excellence school in Kelowna, B.C., instead.

After a respectable rookie WHL season in which Benson produced 45 points in 62 games, the Giants had big plans for him in his draft year. He was named captain at 17 and was supposed to be featured piece of an organization that had made the playoffs just once in three years.

That's when the injury bug started biting, frequently and in all sorts of bizarre ways.

He missed the first 10 games of that season, the result of surgery to remove a cyst near his tailbone that started as an ingrown hair. His return to the lineup was delayed by 10 minutes of game action when a puck in the warmup went off the crossbar and hit him in the mouth, splitting his lip. He needed eight stitches to close the gash.

That proved to be a harbinger. Benson developed a groin issue and had to stop playing in February of that season, limited to 30 games.

A player who seemed like a surefire first-round talent months earlier, Benson slid to the second round of the 2016 draft. The Oilers selected him 32nd.

Jason McKee took over the coaching ranks for the Giants the following season and hoped to have Benson as the focal point of his offence. But shoulder and core/groin issues, which led to a sports hernia surgery, allowed Benson to play just 33 games.

Despite the injuries, Benson stayed in Vancouver with his teammates and coaches and tried to lead off the ice when he couldn't play. McKee rarely noticed signs of frustration.

"There were times where he probably wasn't 100 percent. He was pushing through some things to try and keep playing," said McKee, who coaches the Junior A Vipers in Vernon, B.C. "Eventually, over time, as his body responded, he could get back to full health by the end."

"There were times when I was dealing through a lot, so having him there to support me was huge for me," Benson said of McKee. "He's a big part of my development through my junior career."

After being robbed of more than half of two seasons of critical development, Benson finally enjoyed close to a full WHL campaign again as a 19-year-old in 2017-18, participating in 58 of 72 possible games. He notched 69 points.

With Benson leading the way, the Giants finally made it back to the postseason, where he posted 11 points in seven games.

"He was a guy that guys would follow because he would play so hard," McKee said. "When he was healthy and going, he was a bull for us. He didn't shy away from anything. He played with lots of courage to go along with his skill set."

McKee saw what type of player Benson could become in the pros. He noted Benson's ability to make plays on both sides of his stick, his elite anticipation and awareness and his determination to win puck battles along the boards. More importantly, that season was vital in Benson's belief that he could eventually make it to the NHL.

"Just being able to start at a point and play the rest of the season really got my confidence up," Benson said. "It really got me feeling good mentally. It was a big year for me. Ever since then, I've just been progressing. I wanna continue to do that."

That progression has really taken its form with the Bakersfield Condors. Benson made the AHL's second All-Star Team in 2018-19 and has been Bakersfield's leading scorer this season and last.

In addition to his production, the coaching staff values his work ethic and attitude and uses clips of his in-game determination to show to his peers.

The biggest knock on Benson is his skating, something McKee noted he continues to work on. Benson spent the offseason training three times a week with Oilers skating coach David Pelletier, focusing on his edgework and crossovers.

His other skills should be able to help him overcome any shortcomings.

"He's a very smart player," said defenceman Matt Benning, a fellow Edmontonian who is a longtime offseason workout and skating partner of Benson's and was also just in Bakersfield for a conditioning stint. "You can get around it as long as you're smart. He definitely is."

"He's crafty. He's really good in tight. I saw a lot more fight in him than I thought. I hadn't really played with him. He's quite feisty. He goes in the corners hard and battles. His skill can take over from there. He has good hands and he's good around the net."

It all led to Benson finally getting his first NHL taste.

He had roughly 20 family members in attendance, including his parents, Kevin and Leonara, and his brother, Cole, a former WHL player with the Edmonton Oil Kings. His parents also ran into several former minor hockey teammates and opponents who were there to cheer him on.

Benson mostly played with Alex Chiasson and Gaetan Haas. McDavid took Haas' spot for a few shifts.

Oilers coach Dave Tippett also gave Benson the starting assignment alongside McDavid and Josh Archibald. Waiting for him at the faceoff circle was Patrick Marleau, a player who was drafted nine months before Benson was born.

"I've watched him since I started watching hockey," Benson said. "To be able to line up beside him was a pretty unreal moment."

It was only moments before when Benson stood at the blue line beside McDavid, waiting for Clark to finish the Canadian anthem. As Clark held his last note, McDavid started to bolt away, eventually



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flipping his helmet onto his head as he went for a lap around the Edmonton end of the rink.

Before he took off, however, McDavid gave Benson a tap on the shin pads, a nod to the night ahead and the years it took for him to reach the game.

"Being able to stand along there with him on the blue line was a cool moment and one I'll probably remember forever," Benson said.

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1175683 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Maple Leafs' defence falls apart again despite promising signs

Luke Fox | February 8, 2020, 9:50 PM

MONTREAL – Under the bright lights of a Saturday night in Montreal, thick in a murky playoff hunt, the Toronto Maple Leafs appeared to have uncovered the type of defensive performance Sheldon Keefe has not only been craving but demanding from his hockey team.

Until it all fell apart in the third period, again.

"I had to point out some things this morning that lead to us allowing teams to spend time in our end and get life and get energy," Keefe said, during his first night coaching in his favourite road rink as a player.

"A lot of it, to me, is about our physicality and just how engaged we are to close defensively and get the puck back quickly. Because when we have the puck, we're very difficult to play against."

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Barely resembling the club that blew leads to the Panthers, Rangers and Ducks earlier this week, Toronto limited the NHL's most shot-happy side to a scattered 11 pucks on Jack Campbell's net through two periods, tilting the ice to Canadiens' end and hinting at the Leafs' potential when their effort and patience matches their offensive gifts.

Yet once again, a lack of discipline and a void of killer instinct marked an ugly third period, and a tenuous 1-0 lead swiftly flipped into a 2-1 overtime loss to the resilient Canadiens in the brand of tight-checking contest the Leafs should expect to see plenty of down the stretch.

The suddenly hot John Tavares busted a scoreless tie during the first dangerous rush of the third period, conjuring a rainstorm of "Go! Leafs! Go!" chants in the enemy's cathedral.

The captain has now found the back of the net five times and has added a pair of assists during a timely four-game goal streak.

But this roster has long been voted "Least Likely to Win Games 1-0."

Cue the Habs' inevitable push, which came in fierce, frenzied waves as the clock ticked away and the Leafs slid back on their heels, hoping to keep it out instead of driving for a second goal of their own.

Montreal outshot Toronto 16-1 in the third.

Tavares explains how "human nature" kicks in, that instinct to shot-block and dump-out, to protect what little you have and hope time slips away.

Yet that's not the identity the Leafs are driving for.

"We did all the things that we don't want to be as a team, and we just gave it back to them, so we never had a chance to get going," Keefe said. "You don't win games when you score one goal; it's very difficult.

"So we let that team hang around, and when you just have a one-goal cushion like that, you leave the door open for a point shot to catch you."

Marco Scandella finally bent twine with just 2:33 remaining, and the Leafs never regained control.

"I'm definitely not happy giving that one up, to give them life again and blow that lead in the third," said Campbell, after battling through both ends of a back-to-back for the first time in his NHL career. "One more save, and we get two points.

"I'll fix it, and I know I'll be even better next game."

A jubilant Ilya Kovalchuk whacked in a rebound for an odd-man-rush overtime winner that felt inevitable after Tyson Barrie decided to take a low-percentage slapshot on a 3-on-2 with Mitch Marner and Auston Matthews as passing options.

"I probably should've pulled up and waited for something better to present itself," Barrie regretted. "You gotta be a little smarter sometimes."

Just as some sloppy periods in this busy four-game week gave evidence as to why a post-season berth is anything but guaranteed, Saturday's more disciplined, detailed performance reminded that, when the Leafs strap their work boots on, maybe there is reason to dream big.

Blowing leads in four-straight games presents a disturbing trend.

The three points Toronto earned in overtime this weekend feels like a salvage, not a statement.

"During different points during the season you just have different obstacles and different things that become issues," said Jason Spezza, blessed with the perspective of 1,109 games. "It's probably good for us that we're seeing different things and different struggles and we have to come through it."

After a wild week in Leafland that began with a soul-sucking loss, featured a potentially season-saving trade, and included critical absences of Frederik Andersen (neck) and William Nylander (illness), Toronto has emerged on the right side of the bubble — if barely.

"The whole league is on the bubble," Spezza said. "I don't know if anybody's too confident with where they're at right now if you look at the standings.

"Since Sheldon's been our coach, our record's been good. I think we're a team that's trending in the right direction. I think we have our warts like everybody else, and we're trying to work through it. But for the most part, we've done a lot of good things since Sheldon's been coach, and we need to continue building — and I think we're in a really good position."

That position will be improved if Frederik Andersen, who skated for a third consecutive day Saturday, can rejoin for next week's heavy schedule.

"It's a really busy time of year for us," Barrie said, "so there'll be no time to feel sorry for ourselves."

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1175684 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Oilers beat Predators at their own game in gritty comeback

Mark Spector | February 8, 2020, 11:50 PM

EDMONTON — The Edmonton Oilers are, in many ways, the Toronto Maple Leafs West.

They've always had the skill guys, the ones who lead the league in jersey sales and look great in a 6-5 shootout. But come February and March, a bunch of guys in a uniform you'd never buy — sorry, Nashville — annually come through town and work them for two points.

Or perhaps more accurately, "outwork" them for two points.

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But while the struggles continued for the Maple Leafs Saturday night in Montreal, the Oilers fought one out in the alley with a Predators team that has mastered games like this over the years.

They ran this race on a muddy track in Edmonton Saturday, and the Oilers managed to turn a 2-0 deficit into a mucky, dirty 3-2 regulation win. This was the opposite of fire wagon hockey: Gritty, limited space, hard-checking, stretch run hockey.

You can win all the track meets you want in November and December.

If you can't win a game like this in February? You're not going anywhere, pal.

"No, and we've seen that in the past," said Ryan Nugent-Hopkins, the longest-serving Oiler. "We could win those pretty games when things were easy, but when push comes to shove you've got to be able to win games like these. Games against Calgary, St. Louis... It's good we're battling all the way through and finding ways to win."

Mike Smith, who was stellar versus the Preds, suddenly hasn't lost a game in regulation since Dec. 20 (7-0-2). He's been around long enough to know hockey's change of seasons, as games turn colour — to black and blue — with the playoffs approaching.

"I think we've seen our team when we've tried to out-skill teams and outscore teams and it works for maybe a game or two here or there," Smith said. "But consistently, it doesn't give yourself a chance to win on any given night. It doesn't give you a chance to make the playoffs, let alone be a good team in the playoffs. And I think this team is figuring that out slowly."

Look, Nashville isn't a great team. We get that.

They don't score much. Never have, actually. So they've perfected the art of the 2-1 or 3-2 win.

The Preds copyrighted the act of coming into your building, scoring one in the first, another in the second, then nursing a game home the way they did in Calgary two days before.

"We expected that coming in," Nugent-Hopkins said, "and then really understood it once the game got going. It wasn't going to be fancy or pretty. We had to keep it simple."

"It was a greasy game."

In Gary Bettman's National Hockey League, where parity — no, competitive balance — rules the day, March happens in February. We used to get pseudo playoff games like this one for the final three weeks of the regular season. Now we get them starting in about the second week of February.

Kyle Turris hoofed home an own-goal with nine seconds left in the second period to give Edmonton life, trailing 2-1 after 40 minutes. Then Leon Draisaitl and Nugent-Hopkins, whose mixture of sublime defensive work and high-end offensive skills make him perhaps the perfect linemate for the big German, went to work.

Nugent-Hopkins thwarted a Turris chance with a stellar bit of checking, and moments later sauced a backhand pass across the ice to send Draisaitl wide. He would beat Juuse Saros to draw the Oilers even, then score the winner on a Nugent-Hopkins feed 10 minutes later, on the power play.

It was Draisaitl's 31st goal and league-leading 85th point.

"He is such a dominant player when he plays a big, strong game," marvelled head coach Dave Tippett. "He just holds the puck and can dominate the game at times. People don't give him enough credit for being a fast player. He can beat people out wide as you saw on our second goal."

"And you don't have to tell him that he had a couple of tough games. He is a smart hockey guy. His dad is a coach — he knows how to evaluate his own game. He knew things weren't going as well as he liked and he knows he is one of the leaders on our team and he played with a purpose to turn it around tonight."

McDavid injured his knee when he crashed into the end boards in the second period. He was not made available to the media after the game, but Tippett didn't sound too stressed about the left knee injury, the same knee he rehabbed all summer long.

"He has a little bruise on top of his knee or something like that," Tippett said. "They looked at it between periods, he iced it and they wanted to ice him right after the game. I asked him how he was doing and he said 'I'm fine, I'm playing.' He got out there and played."

"As far as I know it is nothing serious."

Edmonton will enjoy an off day on Sunday, so the next McDavid update will not come until we see if he skates out for Monday's 11 a.m. MT practice.

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Sportsnet.ca / Canadiens' Kovalchuk providing hope with passionate demeanour

Eric Engels | February 9, 2020, 12:31 AM

MONTREAL— It was after Ilya Kovalchuk stormed down the gut of the ice and ended a nail-biter of a game between the Toronto Maple Leafs and his Montreal Canadiens that he circled back towards the home side's bench, crossed his arms and then extended them out while screaming, "It's over."

Then he turned towards the crowd, pointed at his family in attendance and churned his arms up and down before slamming himself into the glass. He was then mobbed by his teammates.

#victoire #family GoHabsGo!!! #важнаяпобеда



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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20.1k Likes, 265 Comments – Ilya Kovalchuk (@ilyakovalchukofficial) on Instagram: “#victoire #family GoHabsGo!!! #важнаяпобеда”

Canadiens forward Max Domi called it the celebration of the year.

“Across the league,” he added.

It was really just a perfect sample of who Kovalchuk has proven himself to be since signing a two-way, prorated \$700,000 contract to rekindle his NHL career.

“If I just wanted to sit and collect my paycheque, I could have done that for another year-and-a-half (in L.A.),” he told us shortly after arriving in early January.

No one else was serious about offering Kovalchuk an opportunity to prove he was worth something after he and the Los Angeles Kings opted to terminate his contract less than halfway through their three-year, \$18.75-million pact. But the Canadiens have gotten more than their money’s worth on their investment.

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On Saturday, in front of boisterous Bell Centre crowd, with Canada tuned into the national broadcast and much on the line between two of the NHL’s longest-standing rivals, Kovalchuk scored his fourth game-deciding goal (one in regulation, two in overtime and one in the shootout) as a member of the Canadiens. His shot, which gave them a 2-1 win and got them to within five points of the Leafs, who occupy third place in the Atlantic Division, was his 12th point in 15 games with Montreal.

But what the big Russian has given this group is so much more than that. Kovalchuk has brought hope, he’s brought wall-to-wall effort, and he’s taken care of every single detail to help them win nine of their last 12 games.

Not that we’d discount that he’s been on the ice for close to 50 per cent of the goals the Canadiens have scored since he’s arrived. And the six that have come off his stick have all been huge.

“We wouldn’t have those wins if it wasn’t for him,” Canadiens coach Claude Julien said after Saturday’s contest. “He’s not the perfect player. There isn’t a perfect player. But everything that I’ve talked about for days now and weeks—his energy, his will, he’s happy for (Marco) Scandella to score his first goal (and) that’s the first thing that comes out of his mouth. He’s got the right demeanour for this team right now being a veteran and buying into everything we’re trying to do here. So there’s that, and then those goals.”

About Scandella (and goals): The Montreal native, who was the other player Canadiens general manager Marc Bergevin brought in while his team was ailing at both ends and losing game after game, came up with the game-tying marker with 2:23 remaining in regulation. It was his first in bleu, blanc et rouge, and he too was in a celebratory mood after the win.

“Growing up watching the Canadiens, being a Habs fan my whole life, it’s a dream come true,” Scandella said. “Goals like that—this is why I play this game. I feel really blessed, lucky to be able to do that, to play at the Bell Centre every home game. I can’t even describe it. It’s amazing.”

He’s an example of a player who has willed his way towards contributing to the Canadiens keeping their thin playoff hopes alive, playing through a nagging injury and proving to be the reliable defenceman Julien was hoping for when Bergevin gave up a fourth-round pick to the Buffalo Sabres on Jan. 2.

“We went to him for reinforcements and he’s absolutely giving us reinforcements,” said Julien. “He’s a veteran and, again, no one’s

perfect. We can look at his errors but we can look at his good things too. I think his experience, in general, is very good. He scored a big goal tonight. He’s got a good shot. We knew that he had a good shot. He came here with a good attitude and wants to be here and that’s the kind of guy we want in our dressing room.”

Kind of like Kovalchuk.

The 36-year-old, who finished up Friday’s practice and drove to an outdoor rink to play hockey with his kids while 30 centimeters of snow was falling and winds were swirling at close to 60 km/h.

Ковальчуки в городе #семья #кайф...Ma famille a Montreal @chcfondation @canadiensmtl @bleublancbougue #lafondationdescanadienspourlenfance #gohabsgo

59.3k Likes, 1,251 Comments – Ilya Kovalchuk (@ilyakovalchukofficial) on Instagram: “Ковальчуки в городе #семья #кайф...Ma famille a Montreal @chcfondation @canadiensmtl...”

Kovalchuk, the hockey-loving man who pinned Toronto’s goal on their only shot of the third period on himself after he lost an edge in the offensive zone to give the Leafs a 4-on-2 opportunity John Tavares ended up finishing.

“I kind of felt like I had to make it back from the mistake,” he said of the effort he showed after that.

It was Kovalchuk who had Montreal’s three best scoring and three of their 16 shots in the third period. It wasn’t for Leafs goaltender Jack Campbell, he’d have tied or closed this game out on his own before overtime.

It didn’t matter in the end. Kovalchuk won it after Nick Suzuki generated a rebound on the breakaway and he celebrated like he might never score again.

“It’s how much he loves the game,” said Canadiens defenceman Ben Chiarot. “He’s not the youngest guy anymore, but every day he’s... Whatever he’s working on in the gym, on the ice—he’s as passionate of a guy as I’ve ever seen playing the game. That’s what’s made him one of the best players for his generation, one of the best goal scorers; it’s just how much he loves the game. And that’s what’s common among the great players is just how much they love the game. Mark Scheifele, Blake Wheeler, guys like that come to mind when I think of guys who have the same kind of passion for the game that Kovy does.”

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Sportsnet.ca / Flames' Tkachuk, Gaudreau answer coach call vs. Canucks

Iain MacIntyre February 9, 2020, 2:10 AM

VANCOUVER – It is hard to think of two elite offensive teammates as different in style as Matthew Tkachuk and Johnny Gaudreau.

But the answer to Calgary Flames coach Geoff Ward’s public question this week about the identity of his team probably lies in some combination of Tkachuk and Gaudreau, who in their own ways were outstanding on Saturday in a 6-2 dismantlement of the Vancouver Canucks.

The game between Pacific Division rivals, both on three-game losing skids, began with playoff intensity. But by the third period, the Flames were the only ones who looked like a playoff team.



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Two nights after Ward roasted players following a loss to Nashville over their willingness – or unwillingness – to compete, battle and play with an identity, the Flames outscored the Canucks 4-0 over the final two periods to move within three points of Vancouver and back into a playoff spot.

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The Canucks themselves are threatening to fall into their own identity crisis as they continue to struggle on special teams and bleed high-quality scoring chances. Even if Saturday's loss was their first at Rogers Arena in 10 games since Dec. 17, the Canucks are suddenly on a four-game losing streak (0-3-1) for the first time in two months.

"I think we have to tighten up everywhere, to be honest with you," Canucks captain Bo Horvat said. "We've got to be better in the grey areas, just chipping pucks deep, getting pucks out of our (blue) line. We lost that battle tonight.

"Just get back to our game. It's a matter, again, of sticking to our systems and every guy buying in and doing little things right in order to win. They played a good game tonight, they played well; you've got to give them credit. But we've got to be a lot better."

If a game's turning point can occur in the opening minute, Tkachuk changed the direction for everyone when he challenged and fought Canucks veteran J.T. Miller as soon as the puck touched the ice after Tanner Pearson made it 1-0 for Vancouver at 34 seconds.

The Flames scored twice in the next 11 1/2 minutes, Tkachuk himself giving them their first lead at 12:08 when he legally knocked the puck in with his skate after being stopped by Jacob Markstrom's pad following a pass from Gaudreau while the Canucks were changing.

### Home of the Canucks

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"Just tried to give the team a spark," Tkachuk said. "We're down 1-0 30 seconds in, losing three straight. I just tried to do something, you know?"

"Every single guy on the bench was going crazy," said Flames forward Dillon Dube, who scored the game-winner and added two assists. "That got our momentum going and said we were here for business. He was big for us. That fight of Chucky, every guy on the bench was emotionally invested after that. That was a heated game. I think we brought it tonight."

The Canucks thought they brought it, too, but the Flames took it away.

After Vancouver's Adam Gaudette tied it 2-2 late in the first period on a geometrically inexplicable bounce off the end boards when Tkachuk tried to chip the puck behind his goal, Dube made it 3-2 at 2:51 of the second, peeling away from defenceman Tyler Myers and beating Markstrom with a screened wrist shot from above the right-wing circle.

Milan Lucic's redirect of Mikael Backlund's outstanding shot-pass made it 4-2 on a power play at 6:48 of the third period, before Gaudreau beautifully set up Sean Monahan at 16:01 and Tobias Rieder scored into an empty net.

The whole period looked like the answer to Ward's uncomfortable questions.

"I think we really needed that," Dube said of Ward's criticism on Thursday. "Desperation at this time of year is the biggest thing. We just kind of listened to him and had a good practice (on Friday). . . and just knew that tonight was a must win."

"Honest to God, I don't really listen (to media)," Tkachuk claimed. "I don't watch a ton of TV and I don't read Twitter and that stuff. We know he wasn't happy from our meetings and stuff. And we weren't happy."

"It was a playoff-type period for us (in the third), going in with the lead, 3-2, getting a real timely power-play goal, which we want to continue to get more of. We just played a really good brand of hockey. . . and made them come through a bunch of us."

The Canucks' power play returned to hibernation, going 0-for-3, while the Flames scored on their only advantage.

Vancouver opened its six-game homestand – the Canucks are celebrating Sedins Week, which will see Daniel and Henrik's numbers retired on Wednesday – with Elias Pettersson back in their lineup after missing Thursday's loss in Minnesota with a lower-body bruise.

But Canucks winger Brock Boeser, the Calder Trophy runner-up before Peterson won the rookie award last season, suffered what appeared to be a significant shoulder or arm injury in an awkward third-period collision with Andrew Mangiapane.

And the Flames, already without injured captain Mark Giordano, lost key blueliner Travis Hamonic in the second period. Ward offered no details post-game about Hamonic's condition.

The Flames, at least, finishing with something to show for it.

"I thought we were emotionally engaged," Ward said. "I thought our compete level was good, but I thought we were also emotionally controlled and I thought our details were good. So there's a lot of things in that game that we certainly can build on and I thought the guys did a great job staying together."

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Sportsnet.ca / How Nunavut hockey's 'band of brothers' sparked a new era for the North

Sonny Sachdeva | February 8, 2020, 9:27 AM

There's an adage head coach Martin Joy recites often to his young pupils in Iqaluit, Nunavut.

"Adversity builds character, but it also reveals it," he says.

For the names that comprise the roster for Joy's squad, Team Nunavut, the battle just to play the game has revealed plenty. Passion for the sport isn't tough to come by in the North, but the environment in which that passion lives presents its own novel difficulties not experienced by young players elsewhere in the country.

In Nunavut, adversity comes as physical distance, Joy says, in the vast expanses that lie between teammates from different remote communities across the territory.

"It's always a challenge in the North," the coach says.

The geography separating those communities isn't the kind simply bested by a couple hours' drive down the highway. Each year, when



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tournaments are held to bring together players from all over the area, it takes a logistical feat just to get all the players to the same spot.

"Everything's by air travel," says Jared Ottenhof, president of Hockey North, the body that oversees amateur hockey in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories. "There's no road connecting any of the communities together. There's some communities that actually travel by snowmobile to get tournaments sometimes."

Then there's the matter of what happens when everyone arrives.

"Finding spots for all the kids and parents to stay as well — some communities have to resort to billeting and hosting families and players at times, there's often not a lot of hotel rooms. But we always find a way to make it work."

And, of course, there's the question of whether the ice holds up.

"Twenty-three out of the 25 rinks we have up here are natural ice rinks," Joy says, meaning locals are nearly constantly at the whim of the weather.

Hockey Day in Canada in Yellowknife, NT

Celebrating Scotiabank Hockey Day in Canada's 20th anniversary, Sportsnet and Scotiabank unite to bring a 4-day hockey festival to Yellowknife, NT and a 12-hour NHL broadcast to Canadian fans coast-to-coast-to-coast.

It's the scope of that complicated reality that makes the territory's landmark achievement in 2019 all the more impressive.

It was then that Team Nunavut, an all-star roster of sorts comprised of the top under-16 boys from the area, travelled 2,876 kilometres southwest to Red Deer, Alta., to make their first-ever appearance at the Canada Winter Games.

It was an emotional journey for those involved — representing Nunavut on such a large stage and serving as a beacon for those back home. But just getting to that point took almost half a decade of preparation, says Joy.

"It was a four-year process of evaluating what we had as a team and where the programs were," the coach says. "Just working hard and making sure that we could find the right amount of players to go, because we are a small territory — like 33,000 people. And inside that you have about 300 to 400 hockey players that would be in that age group."

"So we wanted to make sure that if we could go to the games, we were respectable in regards to the accomplishments on the ice but (also) that the program was ready for it."

Chipping away at the process at home, the next step for Joy and the others involved in Hockey Nunavut was assessing the kids at the Arctic Winter Games — an international tournament held every two years. Team Nunavut finished fourth in the bantam male division at the 2016 iteration. Then, at the 2018 Games, they earned fourth once again in bantam male, but finished with a silver in the midjet male bracket.

"We started to see some players that were starting to stand out a little bit. We could see sort of a groundswell of development happening," Joy says of the progress found during those tournaments. "There was a good group of supporters who thought that it would be unique and an excellent opportunity for Nunavut to really join the rest of Canada, and be part of the major games in Canada. The Canada Winter Games are massive, and it's just the opportunity that we wanted to give to the kids."

Nunavut defenceman Garren Voisey looks on during a game. (Courtesy Vincent Theriault)

So, in February 2019, that's what they did, pulling together kids from three different time zones and making the trek to Alberta for the

national tournament. To say the opportunity was a novel one for the players on that roster would be a wild understatement — many of the players on the trip had never been amid that type of atmosphere at all, let alone faced that level of competition.

Game 1 pitted Team Nunavut against a familiar foe, Team Yukon. Of course, this time the rivals' meeting was to be under the bright lights of the national tournament, with far more eyes looking on. But in the final moments before the squad took the ice to make their historic debut, it was the crew of adults feeling anxious to get things rolling, not the kids.

"I think the coaching staff were a little bit more nervous than anything else," Joy recalls with a laugh. "But it was the funniest thing — the team itself was really relaxed inside the dressing room. They were just confident. They were confident in who they were."

And they knew that regardless of how they performed, of whether they filled the standings with W's or L's, their first foray into this new environment was about something bigger.

"It was a bit of a spectacle for sure, for them to be there. But they really got into the idea of playing for what's on the front of your chest, playing for home," Joy says. "You could really see that this was a band of brothers down there."

But a funny thing happened in that first game. The band of brothers didn't just show up — they won. A five-goal effort in their first appearance on the national stage earned them a 5-3 win over Team Yukon. Josie Cote clinched the victory with a game-winning power-play marker midway through the third frame, adding an empty-netter for good measure.

"It feels amazing," Cote said repeatedly to reporters after the historic win. "All the boys were going crazy, the coaches were going crazy, they were super happy. We're the underdogs going into this tournament — it feels amazing to get a win out of it."

Nunavut's Josie Cote celebrates a goal during the tournament. (Courtesy Rod Ince)

Back home, the feeling was much the same.

"To see a team from Nunavut compete at that level, and be successful, that was amazing," says Ottenhof. "I think it shows that we have players in the smallest communities that can come together and play on a team like that and be successful.... That win, it makes everything very real. It's not just paying your fees, going to practice, playing your games — it meant something to the other kids as well. It gives you something to look forward to a bit more."

Joy's side didn't register a second win at the tournament. But it didn't matter. Returning home, they were lauded like champions for their barrier-breaking efforts. And the weight of that moment, clear immediately upon their arrival back in Nunavut, has become only more poignant as time's passed.

"These guys ended up being ambassadors — they went back to their home communities and were involved in some local camps. They gave back. They helped us with coaching," Joy says. "Even today, a year or so after, you still see the guys wearing their Canada Winter Games gear — they'll sometimes wear it at the rink, and the younger kids just look up to them. That's the most important thing ... giving that little bit of hope."

Team Nunavut's run to Red Deer has others wanting to make history, too.

"Positivity is something that is contagious when you see it — when you see a local Northern boy playing on the biggest stage in Canada and representing himself so well," Joy says. "We've got a bunch of younger kids that have already started talking about wanting to make the 2023 Canada Winter Games. We've got the girls wanting to be the first girls' team from Nunavut to get a shot to go there."



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"There's always a cost, but you can't really talk about dollars and cents when you look at the impact that you could have on these young people's lives. This is the stuff you remember forever."

With registration numbers in the region on the rise — Joy says this year was the Iqualuit Amateur Hockey Association's biggest on record — the task at hand is to build on the growing legacy, to make the 2019 Games the first brick in a longer path.

"We always talk to the kids about lighting a spark. That spark was meant for all the younger generations back home, the impact that they'll have on future generations of hockey players that were there to see Josie Cote score the game-winning goal, or Inuuki Burke in net making some great saves," the coach says. "It really shows the kids in Nunavut that you can achieve great things — that just because you're isolated, it doesn't mean the opportunities won't be there for you if you work hard, if you dedicate yourself to the craft."

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Sportsnet.ca / Q&A: Ice master Dan Craig on his days perfecting the rink for Gretzky's Oilers

Sonny Sachdeva | February 8, 2020, 8:49 AM

TORONTO — There's one man who knew his way around NHL ice better than anybody that came before him, and likely anyone that'll come after. The record books make clear Wayne Gretzky's hold on that distinction. But there's one man who knows the ice itself even better still.

For more than 20 years, Dan Craig's been the one the NHL trusts with perfecting its sheets. The longtime ice master has been perfecting the craft since he was 26 years old, his work eventually taking him into the lead role getting the makeshift rinks ready for the league's past 20-plus outdoor games.

But in between working as a zamboni driver in his hometown of Jasper, Alta., and leading the effort to transform stadiums and ballparks into NHL rinks, the game's best on the ice and the game's best ice-maker were in fact working in tandem.

Craig's first run-in with NHL action came when he tended to the ice at Edmonton's Northlands Coliseum, then the site of Gretzky's last go-round with the Oilers before a trade sent him south to Los Angeles soon after. He remembers fondly those early mornings working away at the Coliseum with the former Edmonton greats milling about.

"We didn't go out of our way to search out the players and talk to the players, but there were a lot of times that we were still working on the ice and Paul Coffey, Glenn Anderson, a couple of guys would come out onto the bench, have a cup of coffee, and be more than willing to stop and talk to us," Craig says.

"We'd pick their brains a little bit about what happened the night before or the game before, their road trips and what they encountered on the road, to make sure we didn't fall into any habits that would be detrimental to the game."

More important to him and his team, though, were the players' thoughts on the quality of the Coliseum ice.

"We always got great compliments from road teams coming into our building — it was a source of pride for the whole group," he recalls. "We had eight building tenants that worked on the ice, everybody had a program that they had to work on every day back in '97, and

that's what I brought forward with the National Hockey League and our gameday program."

The names adorning the jerseys that would fly around the ice after Craig and Co. finished up served as a stark reminder of the stakes at play — a lesson that hasn't left Craig all these years later.

"Talking to a player like Paul Coffey, once in a while Esa Tikkanen would give his two cents' worth, you knew that you were working with the elite," he says. "You knew every day that when you came to work, that you better be putting your best step forward because you were with the best players in the world."

Since getting called up to be the league's lead ice master in '97, Craig's been a stalwart for the annual outdoor games, touching down in each locale and ensuring all is perfect when the game's best take the rink. He caught up with Sportsnet to discuss his love of ice growing up, passing the torch to his son Mike, and the upcoming Stadium Series tilt in Colorado on Feb. 15.

Note: This article has been edited for clarity and brevity.

Sportsnet: What was your relationship with hockey growing up? Tell us about some of your earliest memories of the game.

Dan Craig: Oh my goodness, that's way back. I grew up in Jasper, Alberta, and (Jasper Arena) was the first rink that I worked at. I worked at that rink in Grade 12, and from there I went out to British Columbia for a couple of years, and then ended up in Northern Alberta for eight years taking care of a rink and building a new rink. And from there I ended up with the Edmonton Oilers at Northlands Park.

SN: How did you first get involved in working on ice during those early years in Jasper, kicking this all off?

Craig: I was 16 at the time. And even before that, just like anybody else, I was a rink rat. I just had some really good people to work with, and the Edmonton Oilers came to the rink a couple of times back in the WHA days. From there, in Northern Alberta, we had a really good senior hockey team up there that I worked with. And it just kind of took off from there. I ended up in Edmonton, I made connections with the Edmonton Oilers and Glen Sather and the group, and everything just moved forward.

From there, Brian Burke came from the National Hockey League and we set up a program. That was in '97, so I'd say it's been a long journey, that is for sure.

SN: Tell us about what your role with the league fully entails now and how that role's changed over the years.

Craig: The role itself hasn't changed but it's all-encompassing — from the day that I started, we're talking over 20 years ago, now it's the whole entire field of play, different elements within the locker room, different elements that are on hockey operations and gameday operations. We're more in tune with the engineering departments for every building now. But it's still the same — we're monitoring those gameday operations every day.

Mike (Craig) and Derek (King) have been really the new voice, the new focus. A lot of the building operations people, they're coming up and they're of a younger generation than myself. The guys that I grew up with when I came up in the league, they're basically on the retirement side moving out. So we're really trying to have Mike and Derek step forward and work with the new engineering groups and new personnel in the new buildings that are coming online.

Post-game fireworks light up the sky above Mosaic Stadium after the NHL Heritage Classic outdoor hockey game in overtime. (Matt Smith/CP)

SN: You mentioned your son Mike, and also Derek. Tell us about their roles on the team and how you three work together.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Craig: Whenever there's anything on a gameday situation that they feel needs to be addressed, they send us video clips of what we need to take a look at, whether it's ice conditions itself or boards and glass or gates and those types of things. So, we're constantly communicating with each other — we're very rarely in the same city, same building together. I'm fortunate to be assisting on the setup of this outdoor game for the Stadium Series. The last one, the Winter Classic, I was there to assist setting up with Derek on his crew. So the transition has been very smooth with them taking over the lead roles on all the outdoor games and special events.

SN: You're in a unique situation teaming up with your son — what does it mean to you to share this with him and have that connection?

Craig: Ask any parent, you're always proud that your children are successful, it doesn't matter what line of work they're in. Mike played junior hockey out in British Columbia and from there he ended up taking a recreation management course in Southern Alberta. When it came time to open up a building out in lower mainland British Columbia, he jumped on that chance. He worked really hard, came and worked a couple events with me — at the Winter Olympics in 2002, we did games over in Japan together. His work was really well-noted with Colin Campbell and his group, so when it came time to bring someone else online, Colin Campbell presented an opportunity to Mike, he accepted it, and it's worked out really well for everybody.

SN: When you do get the chance to work on the same event or in the same building, what's that experience like working alongside your son?

Craig: You know, we have a great father-son relationship, but we also have a great working relationship. He'll see something and he'll come to me and ask me advice, because he is the lead on this event. My position now, especially on the outdoor games, is to advise from past events that I've done — to let the young guys get out there and haul the big pipes around and move the heavy snow.

SN: Obviously this is something you care deeply about — it's clear why it is so important to the game, but in your words, tell us about how important the work you guys do is to allowing the game to be what it is.

Craig: Well, it's super important, and it's more in the details — taking care of details every day. When you are dealing with the best players in the world, and the best league in the world, you always need to be able to step up and take care of things that need to be taken care of every day.

SN: What would you say are all the factors you need to get that best-case scenario, perfect ice for an outdoor event?

Craig: If you have about three hours then we can go through them — I mean, we have our basic program that we have for game-day events, because whether you're dealing with New York or you're dealing with Florida or you're dealing with Phoenix, you have different scenarios, different weather. So every building has its own unique balance that we have to take into consideration. And that's what we do, and we've been doing it successfully here for quite a few years now.

SN: Two of the three outdoor games this season are in the books, the Stadium Series game in Colorado is coming up. How do you feel everything went on the last two?

Craig: We got major compliments for Regina — the big challenge was in Dallas, when we had the big rainstorm go through there. But it's why we put our crew together the way that we do. They stepped up and made sure that it worked the way that it was supposed to, and here we are. Last night we got six inches of snow and now it's going to be bitterly cold here in the next couple of days, putting everything together. But again, that's why we put together the crew that we do.

SN: When you look back to the first outdoor game you ever worked on, what memories stand out most to you?

Craig: That's the greatest part — every event has its challenge. I think I'm on No. 27 or 28 outdoor games right now. And every single one is unique. I don't think we've ever had one that went absolutely perfect for us — you just learn to adapt as you go, you make notes, and you try to figure out what not to do next time and what things we can do better as we move along.

SN: It's obviously been a huge hit from the fan perspective, creating these marquee events all over the continent. What does it mean to you to be helping provide that thrill for the fans, and ensuring they get good ice and a good game?

Craig: That point is never lost on us, for sure. When we come into a building or into a city, we make sure we connect very closely not only with the local rinks but with the hotels and businesses — we hear about it from the day that we walk into the city, how excited everybody is. It's never lost on us — and it's not only the adults but the children. When you see the children on game day and how excited they are, those are the things that you live for.

SN: What do you think about the importance of highlighting outdoor hockey in general, and what it means for the game?

Craig: You look at it from the time that we started and the trickle-down on outdoor games that are documented, and it's amazing. It's all over the world — we're not just talking North America, we're talking over in Europe, in Russia, all the outdoor games that have taken place at some point. I think that's a major accomplishment for the hockey world itself, really bringing our hockey back to grassroots. That's the main focus for us, to make sure that's always maintained.

SN: Looking back over all the events you've worked, what stands out as the biggest challenge you've faced in your time doing this so far?

Craig: Every one that we do is a different challenge — sometimes we get sun, which is a major challenge, other times we'll get overcast, which is absolutely perfect for us, and then all of a sudden it'll start to rain, and then we've got to deal with that. And then it'll get bitterly cold, and the ice gets really chippy and chunky. So, there's a lot of things — every single one that we do, we have to pay attention to all the small details because as we've always said, we do have the best players in the world and this is not an exhibition game.

This is two points on the table, and everyone is expecting us to be the best.

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Sportsnet.ca / Quick Shifts: Why Kyle Dubas should not be done trading

Luke Fox | February 8, 2020, 8:20 AM

A quick mix of the things we gleaned from the week of hockey, serious and less so, and rolling four lines deep. Alex Ovechkin scored four hat tricks in the time it took to pen this week's column.

1. Will Kyle Dubas pull a Stan Bowman?

Surely, the temptation to spin bad luck into good business must be there, twitching in the back of the executive's mind.

When Patrick Kane went on long-term injured reserve with a busted clavicle in February of 2015, Bowman went on a bit of spending



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spree at the trade deadline, knowing Kane would not be available until the post-season, when teams are free to hop over the salary cap.

Bowman rented defenceman Kimmo Timonen and forwards Antoine Vermette and Andrew Desjardins, bolstering his roster depth nicely. Kane returned in the post-season and those expensive Blackhawks captured a title.

The Maple Leafs are an injured goalie short of being able to not dress a full LTIR roster:

Mikheyev-Horton-Clarkson

Rielly-Ceci

Yes, in a cap world, the rich can still carve ways to flex their financial might.

With all those ailing bodies, Dubas currently has \$6.5 million worth of available cap space to spend on a defenceman prior to the trading deadline. That evaporates fast if Rielly's foot heals early, and the whole gambit becomes moot if the Leafs — teetering on the playoff bubble — fail to make the dance.

But, as Bowman well knows, there is a risky, intriguing gamble that could pay off.

"It's gonna really depend on Morgan, just because of the cap-space part of it, and then we could add a defenceman," Dubas explained. "We would want someone to move the needle for us."

Matt Dumba falls into that category. So does Josh Manson. Rentals Brenden Dillon, Ron Hainsey or Sami Vatanen not so much.

A right-shot Flames defenceman on an expiring deal — TJ Brodie or Travis Hamonic, whom Dubas kicked tires on over the summer — falls somewhere in between, although Mark Giordano's injury likely decreases those odds.

"Unless it was the perfect deal, it would have to be something in the long run. It's probably a long-term situation we want to address," Dubas said.

"But it'll depend on Morgan, as we get more updates on him in the coming weeks here, in terms of how long it's going to be out that'll dictate how much cap space we have going into the deadline."

Certainly, it did not go unnoticed that Dubas kept his more precious trade chips — Kasperii Kapanen, Andreas Johnsson, Alexander Kerfoot — away from Rob Blake.

Dubas should have a clearer picture on Rielly's healing and the No. 1 D-man's expected return date next weekend, but he refuses to use the club's rash of injuries as a copout.

That he already spent to upgrade with Jack Campbell and Kyle Clifford suggests he believes in this group, this season. Injuries be damned. Why not go all in and upgrade a battered, mediocre blue line?

"It's unfortunate. You'd love to be able to have the full lineup, but I hate that excuse: 'Well, they haven't had a full lineup the whole year,'" Dubas said. "That's why, if we don't make it, that'll be a failure on my end."

2. Don't rule out Dubas taking a run at re-signing Kyle Clifford.

The way Clifford speaks about the organization (big Mats Sundin fan from back in the day) and the way Dubas speaks about the player's character, if the next few months go well, the winger might not just be a pure rental — something Dubas is hesitant to trading for in the first place.

"You're paying for something, you'd rather be able to use it a little bit longer," Dubas said after the trade.

Because Clifford is that rare player who can be depended upon for a solid bottom-six shift, enhances the leadership and maturity of a young room, and delivers that elusive sandpaper, why not?

At 29, how much of a raise over his current \$1.9-million salary could he command?

"Those guys aren't in abundance anymore," Dubas said. "Other teams that have players like him, that do have some toughness and competitiveness but can also play and play well, the price is very, very high.

"You'd like to develop your own. The greater issue is that if you go to amateur and college and junior hockey, there's a very, very scarce number of those players there as well. So it's just not a common player that's available these days, frankly."

3. When Mitch Marner is ready for his next shift, which is almost immediately after Mitch Marner's most recent shift, he's not afraid to give the coaching staff a visual hint.

"He gives you a little look over his shoulder, wondering if he's next or, if he's not, 'Why aren't I?' kind of thing. But those are the cues you look for from your players, especially your best guys," Sheldon Keefe smiles.

"Because you're trying to gauge, 'Are they tired?' Sometimes if they're tired, they don't want the next shift, they're telling you by not giving you eye contact. I need a little bit more of a breather.

"When a player's giving you the eyes, he's telling you, 'Don't slow this down any more. Let's keep 'er going.'"

Does Marner ever tire?

"It's a great question, because it doesn't appear that he does frankly," said Keefe, who throws the winger out on both special teams.

Marner — the only member of the Big Four that kills penalties in addition to working the power plays — will tell assistant Paul McFarland he's ready to hop the boards if he can't catch Keefe's glance.

Marner takes immense pride in his conditioning, and was asked the same question as Keefe: Does he ever get tired?

"It doesn't feel like it sometimes," Marner replied.

An aside (in a column comprised of asides): Marner was announced as the most mentioned NHLer on Twitter, and @Marner93 gave his take on the honour.

"I try and stay off it quite a bit. I usually have someone try and do it (for me). I'm not gonna say anything else about that, but I guess it's cool. I mean, I don't really try and focus on it too much," said Marner, who makes a point of shutting off his phone an hour before settling in for his pre-game nap.

"Media can be good and bad, and Twitter is something that can be very good for people to try and bring eyes to something, and it can be very bad for people to try and bring other people down."

4. The more you watch Alex Ovechkin and the more you talk to hockey people around him, the more you start to believe he's going for the record.

"I don't see any reason that he's going to stop this quest to get as high as he can in the goal-scoring ranks. He enjoys coming to the rink," his coach, Todd Reirden, said.

"The last two years have been the happiest I've seen him day in and day out. It's no coincidence that his play has matched it, in terms of his consistency.

"He wants to get that goal-scoring number, but he wants to win again. He liked the taste of winning and how special it was for him to



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bring the Stanley Cup back to Russia as the first Russian-born captain. It's an amazing accomplishment, and something that he's driven by and wants to do again."

Ovi didn't rate on the PHWA's top three in Hart Trophy voting at the Midseason Awards, but if he wins the goals race and leads his club to another divisional title, he must be considered.

During his climb up the all-time goals list, Alex Ovechkin has been keeping pucks, sticks and gloves for his vast memorabilia collection. "My wife tell me, 'Stop! We don't have any space.'" #Caps #ALLCAPS pic.twitter.com/MPWVNN6VKi

— Tarik El-Bashir (@Tarik\_ElBashir) February 6, 2020

5. The Arizona Coyotes — just another noodle in the tangled soup that is the Pacific Division race — are a rather pedestrian 8-10-3 since acquiring Taylor Hall.

But the UFA-to-be has pumped his individual production to nearly a point-per-game pace (19 in 21) since the trade.

I asked coach Rick Tocchet what he's learned about Hall working with him that he wasn't aware of from afar.

"He's a real hockey nerd. I didn't know that. A real hockey nerd. He really wants to dissect the game and his game and Watch video and wants information. I didn't know he was that type of player, but he likes information. He wants to know things," Tocchet replied.

The coach and star have sat down for a couple of one-on-one video sessions, even though Tocchet would never describe himself as a big film guy.

"He enjoys it. I'm not a coach who likes to overload video on guys. Sometimes I'll make it mandatory; I'll tell the guy I want to show it," Tocchet said. "But he actually wants to do it, so that's kinda cool."

6. I had to ask Tocchet — who has been described as the Kessel Whisperer — if he has a theory as to why Iron Phil is on pace for his worst offensive showing (11-20-31) since he was a sophomore in Boston. (Not just because Kessel is killing my fantasy team but partly because Kessel is killing my fantasy team.)

"He was banged up early in the year — that kind of contributed (to the low production). I think sometimes you have different players you play with. We're a little different than Pittsburgh; we have a little more grinding team. And I think once you start and don't score and get some points, it kind of snowballs. He's starting to play better for us. But there was a stretch, yeah, he was struggling," Tocchet said.

Is the underwhelming output taking a mental toll on Kessel?

"You know what? I think if we weren't where we are now (in the standings), if we were like last place, I think it'd be really hard," Tocchet said. "But because we're doing OK, it's kind of helped his psyche that he's contributed for us being where we are. If we were in last place, he'd really take a lot of the heat — for himself."

7. Minnesota's Marcus Foligno dropped the gloves with Vancouver's Zack MacEwen, then dropped the Quote of the Week when conducting his post-game scrum all bloodied and scratched and flush:

"I didn't feel anything, then I looked in the mirror and it looks like I fell off the ugly tree and hit every branch on the way down."

8. Stephen Johns pushed through 718 gruelling days between NHL goals, and he was emotional after getting back on the board Monday.

He thought he may never score again.

Johns said he didn't know what goal song he'd choose. He joked that he'd pick a song called "Once in a While" if there was one. There is.

The Dallas defenceman's perseverance is one of this season's great under-the-radar feel-good stories. Listening to him talk about his parents in Section 104 is must-see TV:

A night I'll never forget. Tried to hold in the emotions, but the only thing I could think of all night were my parents sitting in the crowd. If you know Ray & Noreen and their passion for traveling to watch me play for the last 20 years, you understand.  
<https://t.co/KMMYUJHa9U>

— Stephen Johns (@stjohns28) February 4, 2020

9. One of the most wide-eyed, happy-to-be-here invitees to the NHL's all-star weekend was Pittsburgh goalie Tristan Jarry, who made sure to get two sticks full of autographs — one from each conference. He's also started a sweater collection from opponents.

As a cool gesture, Jarry had his old billet family around all weekend.

Ironically, the player Jarry was most excited to meet was the Capitals' Braden Holtby, and he peppered the Penguins' archrival with questions.

Funny dynamic here: Holtby is getting pushed for his job in Washington by a young buck (Ilya Samsonov) while Jarry's acceleration is giving Matt Murray a run for his crease.

Since the break, Murray has received two starts (1-1-0) and Jarry one (1-0-0). The Penguins hardly have a clearcut Number 1, and with both goalies on expiring contracts and Casey DeSmith patiently waiting on the farm, GM Jim Rutherford has admitted it "certainly will be tricky and difficult" to keep both in the fold.

The spotlight doesn't come naturally to Jarry.

"I'm usually the quiet one on the team. I don't like too much attention," Jarry says.

But his 47-game, .915-save-percentage campaign in Wilkes-Barre last year instilled in him the confidence to excel during an NHL playoff race.

"I wanted to prove to myself that I could do it," says Jarry, who discusses the craft with Murray regularly.

"Matt and I are good friends. We've been together since my first year in Wilkes-Barre. We're easy to get along with, and we go to dinner every night. It's nice to have someone that's familiar with the process who you can go to and talk about those things."

i love Tristan Jarry

i love Matt Murray

not sure why half the fanbase can't appreciate both

— Fifth Ave. (@PartyOnFifth\_) February 2, 2020

10. How's this for a wonderful stat?

Since the St. Louis Blues' Stanley Cup parade, the great state of Kansas Missouri has enjoyed 30 per cent growth in minor-hockey enrolment for kids aged eight and under.

USA Hockey has tracked an uptick in youth participation in the sport every single fall in the state that the Cup champion plays. (That dates all the way to 1994, need we remind you that the most recent Canadian team championship occurred when Montreal hoisted the thing in '93.)

11. Amid reports that he couldn't find common ground with Capitals coach Todd Reirden, 303-game NHLer Dmitrij Jaskin left the NHL this past off-season at the tender age of 26.

Looking at the six-foot-two, 216-pound winger's drop-off in 2018-19 for Washington — just two goals and six points in 37 games — one could imagine the Russian setting off for the KHL and playing out his remaining days.



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But Jaskin's bounce-back overseas should be re-grabbing the top league's attention.

Now blessed with top-line minutes, the guy leads the KHL in goals (27) and is second only to Dynamo linemate Vadim Shipachyov in points (59) and plus/minus (plus-32).

Jaskin also leads the entire league in hits (159).

Considering Jaskin only inked a one-year deal in the K and becomes a free agent again this summer, it's hard not to imagine a young, bruising winger like him at least getting a second look from the NHL.

Wonder if he gets another chance with a possession-first club.

12. The province of Alberta needs to etch this image on a commemorative coin and preserve it for all eternity. ASAP.

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TSN.CA / Jack Campbell starts back-to-back games for Toronto Maple Leafs

Mark Masters

TSN Toronto reporter Mark Masters checks in daily with news and notes on the Maple Leafs. The team held a limited media availability at Bell Centre on Saturday afternoon prior to their game against the Montreal Canadiens.

Jack Campbell wasn't exactly thrilled with his Leafs debut last night.

"I know I have the ability to make a couple of those saves," he said after allowing four goals on 30 shots in a win against the Ducks.

The Leafs blew leads of 3-1 and 4-3 in the third period.

"I just knew it wasn't great on my end," Campbell said. "To be an elite goalie you got to shut the door, especially in the third, it's that simple."

The 28-year-old, who admitted to dealing with nerves in his first game with his new team, gets an immediate chance at redemption tonight in Montreal as he starts on consecutive nights for the first time in his NHL career. He posted a 40-save shutout at the Bell Centre in his only previous NHL game there last season.

"It was a pretty easy decision for me," said coach Sheldon Keefe. "It was more just making sure he was comfortable and good and feeling like he was able to go and, talking to him, he's excited and want to get him back in there."

"I'm excited to play whenever he puts me in," Campbell had said last night. "I'm not sure if I've played a back-to-back in the National League, but I played a lot last year when (Jonathan Quick) went down so I feel confident, especially in our team, and I know I'll be ready to go if my number's called."

Michael Hutchinson, who lost on Monday and Wednesday and owns an ugly .886 save percentage this season, will be the back-up. Frederik Andersen remains day-to-day with a neck injury.

This is the third meeting between the Leafs and Canadiens this season and the third time that Toronto played the night before while Montreal rested. The Habs won both previous games, including a 5-2 decision at the Bell Centre on Oct. 26.

Campbell admitted one mistake he made last night was getting mesmerized with how skilled some of his new teammates are.

"I got caught watching the guys making plays," Campbell revealed. "I was just in awe. It's incredible so I'm just glad I'm in the blue and white right now."

Campbell's new teammates were also effusive, heaping praise on the ex-King after the game.

"He looked very calm and just kept his composure, I thought he was seeing it well," noted captain John Tavares, who will suit up in his 800th career game tonight. "Not an easy spot to come in, I'm sure it's been a whirlwind ... in the third we have to do a better job in front of him."

"He was really steady in there," said Auston Matthews, who scored his 40th goal matching a career high set during his rookie season. "Didn't look nervous, just calm, cool, collected, goal went in and it didn't really matter. He looked really good in there, made some really big saves for us."

'Unacceptable on my end': Campbell vows to be better after nervous Leafs debut

Despite pulling out a win in overtime, an admittedly nervous Jack Campbell said that it was unacceptable by him to have the Ducks tie it late. Getting the start tonight in Montreal, Campbell and his teammates are confident in getting another two points.

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Tied with Alex Ovechkin in the goal-scoring race, Matthews continues his Rocket Richard Trophy push tonight in Montreal.

"When you're out there with him and you know he's got any time and space really in any kind of area in the offensive zone you want to get the puck to him," said Tavares. "He's locked in right now. He's playing great hockey, playing like an MVP, a catalyst."

Matthews acknowledged that hitting the 40-goal mark in just 55 games "means a lot" and credited his linemates for helping him reach the number so fast.

Keefe suggested the 22-year-old centre isn't getting enough credit for the well-rounded nature of his game.

"The offence has been there and will always be there," Keefe said. "His complete game is not getting enough attention. When the puck turns over you really focus in on him, he's digging in. His first three strides are real quick, lots of urgency, he's understanding the value of having the puck and getting it back. He's really leading the way for us in a lot of those regards. So, I thought the first half of this game, especially, it was a clinic from him in that regard. He's feeling it. So, happy he gets to 40, happy he's filling the net the way that he is, but he's also really, really figuring out the other side of it and doing it consistently."

Matthews has thrived against the Habs in his career scoring 12 goals and picking up 17 points in 13 career games. Ten of those goals have come against Carey Price. Ottawa's Craig Anderson (12) is the only goalie he's victimized more in the NHL.

"He's having a special season and I think everybody else feeds off that," said Jason Spezza. "I think we're seeing him elevate to the upper echelon of the league and I think Sheldon's pushed him to get to that point and demanded a lot out of him and he's responding."

Tavares on Matthews: 'He's locked in right now ... playing like an MVP'

Auston Matthews hit the 40-goal plateau last night against Anaheim, which has come with some high-praise from his teammates.

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With William Nylander sidelined due to illness, Spezza was elevated to a third-line role last night and delivered with a key goal late in the third period.



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"It was an unbelievable play," gushed Matthews. "Just vintage Spezza right there ... just a beautiful fake and a great shot."

Spezza is already up to nine goals this season, which is more than the eight he potted in each of his last two seasons in Dallas.

"Just kind of a play I've done over the years," Spezza said. "A reaction play. It harkened back to the Ottawa-Buffalo days with me against (Ryan) Miller so just kind of some nostalgia there."

Nylander will remain out tonight.

What a shot by Spezza. 4-3 Leafs. #LeafsForever  
pic.twitter.com/O031quFoe5

— Maple Leafs Hotstove (@LeafsNews) February 8, 2020

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It didn't take long for gritty winger Kyle Clifford to stand out. During the warm-ups on Friday, he was the only Leafs player to take the ice without a helmet.

"It was a bit of a power move and I loved it," Matthews said.

Clifford was surprised to field a question about it during the in-game broadcast and then also post-game.

"I didn't realize I'd be the only one," he said. "I don't know if they have a rule here or not, but just my routine."

Wearing a helmet in warm-up seemed to be mandatory during the tenure of Lou Lamoriello and no one has let their salad fly since.

"I have a feeling they're going to try and shut that down," said Mitch Marner. "Maybe no one told him ... I'm sure the training staff will try and cut it out."

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Projected Leafs line-up tonight:

Johnsson - Matthews – Marner

Kerfoot - Tavares - Hyman

Clifford - Spezza – Kapanen

Engvall - Gauthier - Timashov

Muzzin – Holl

Dermott - Barrie

Sandin - Liljegren

Campbell starts

Hutchinson

Scratch: Marincin

Illness: Nylander

Injured: Rielly (foot), Mikheyev (wrist), Andersen (neck)

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TSN.CA / Canucks vs Flames Game Day Preview

Jeff Paterson

VANCOUVER – After playing 10 of their last 13 games on the road, the Vancouver Canucks (30-30-5) open a crucial six-game homestand tonight when they host the Calgary Flames (27-22-6) at Rogers Arena. It's a key match-up in the Pacific Division and Western Conference wild card race with the Canucks entering play five points ahead of the Flames.

Following a 4-2 loss in Minnesota on Thursday, Vancouver has dropped three straight (0-2-1) for the first time since mid-December. It was a tough end to a five-game road trip that started promisingly with a pair of victories. The club will try to avoid its second four-game losing skid of the season after going 0-3-1 from November 5th to 10th.

Against the Wild, JT Miller and Antoine Roussel scored power play goals while and Quinn Hughes picked up an assist on Miller's goal giving the rookie blueliner 40 points on the season. Jacob Markstrom stopped 33 of 37 shots in goal making his second straight start and fourth in the past five games. Markstrom will get the start again tonight.

The Canucks will welcome scoring leader Elias Pettersson back after he missed Thursday's game with a lower body injury suffered in Boston on Tuesday. Brandon Sutter will play right wing with Bo Horvat and Tanner Pearson while Loui Eriksson drops to the fourth line with Jay Beagle and Tim Schaller.

On defense, Jordie Benn will draw into the line-up after being a healthy scratch in the past 11 games and 17 of the last 18. Benn's last taste of game action came on January 9th in Florida. Oscar Fantenberg is in the concussion protocol and was placed on IR on Friday after being hit hard in the third period on Thursday.

Micheal Ferland, who has been limited to just 14 games due to concussion-related issues, took part in the team's morning skate this morning. It was his first skate with the group since being injured for the second time this season on December 10th. The plan remains for Ferland to go to Utica to play American Hockey League games, but he remains convinced that he will return to the Canuck line-up before the end of the regular season.

The Canucks have won nine straight games on home ice running the table from December 19th through January 27th. They are 12-2 in their last 14 games at home and 17-5-3 on the season.

Captain Bo Horvat has been held without a point in four straight games for the first time all season. He had one empty net assist on the team's five game road trip. Brock Boeser has gone 10 games without a goal and has 0+2=2 during that time. His last home ice goal came against Pittsburgh on December 21st. Jake Virtanen and Tanner Pearson both scored in San Jose in the opener of the team's road trip, but neither has picked up a point since. Pearson has three goals in his past 14 games and two of them have been into an empty net.

The Flames are flickering as they arrive in town having dropped three straight and five of six (1-4-1). They have not won in regulation in their past eight since a 4-3 victory over Edmonton on January 11th. With their recent struggles, the Flames find themselves clinging to the second and final wild card spot in the West by just a single point over Nashville and Winnipeg and by two over Minnesota and Chicago to start the day.

Calgary dropped a 3-2 decision at home against the Predators on Thursday night. Sam Bennett and Rasmus Andersson scored the Flames goals while Cam Talbot made 32 saves in goal. Tonight marks the start of a four game road trip that will also see them visit all three California teams.

The Flames are without captain Mark Giordano who suffered a leg injury on Tuesday and missed his first game of the season on Thursday. He is the team's leader in ice time this season averaging 23:57 per game.



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Elias Lindholm leads Calgary with 22 goals this season while Matthew Tkachuk leads the team in scoring with 17+26=43 while Johnny Gaudreau has 14+28=42.

Despite a line-up that includes proven scorers, the Flames are 28th in the league in offense averaging 2.60 goals per game this season. Only Dallas, Anaheim, Los Angeles and Detroit are behind the Flames in total goals scored (143).

These teams have split their first two meetings of the season both played at the Saddledome. Calgary will be back in Vancouver on March 27th.

#### POSSIBLE CANUCKS LINE-UP

Miller-Pettersson-Boeser

Pearson-Horvat-Sutter

Roussel-Gaudette-Virtanen

Schaller-Beagle-Eriksson

Hughes-Tanev

Edler-Stecher

Benn-Myers

Markstrom

#### POSSIBLE FLAMES LINE-UP

Mangiapanne-Lindholm-Tkachuk

Gaudreau-Monahan-Robinson

Lucic-Ryan-Dube

Rieder-Backlund-Bennett

Brodie-Hamonic

Hanafin-Andersson

Davidson-Stone

Rittich

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