



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • February 15, 2020

## THE NEWS & OBSERVER

### Carolina Hurricanes return to PNC Arena and roll past New Jersey Devils 5-2

By Chip Alexander

Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour bounced up and down on his toes during the national anthem, smacking on his gum, showing off some nervous energy.

High above PNC Arena, Dougie Hamilton had rolled out on his scooter, sounding the warning siren before the game, showing some stamina.

In short, there were all the earmarks of an important game Friday as the Hurricanes faced the New Jersey Devils. Crunch time has come early for the Canes, who entered the game four points out of playoff position but responded with a solid 5-2 victory.

"It's definitely a step in the right direction," said Canes forward Nino Niederreiter, who had a goal and assist and was named the game's first star. "This season we've got to do whatever it takes to get there and make the playoffs."

Niederreiter and Warren Foegele scored for the Canes in the opening period, and Martin Necas and defenseman Joel Edmundson scored in the third. But the play that really had the sellout crowd buzzing came in the second. It also came from the top line of Sebastian Aho, Teuvo Teravainen and Andrei Svechnikov.

In a perfectly executed sequence, Svechnikov carried the puck up the left wing into the Devils zone, dropping off a pass to Aho. The center zipped a cross-ice pass to Teravainen, who then found Svechnikov open in front of the crease for his 23rd of the season.

Canes goalie Petr Mrazek, on his 28th birthday, got the work done in net, making 35 saves. Mrazek, who had lost his last three games, earned his 19th win and the first since Jan. 17 against Winnipeg, allowing goals to Mirco Mueller and Joey Anderson but also making a variety of high-quality stops.

The Devils had a 5-on-3 power play late in the third, but Mrazek made a scrambling stop on a Jack Hughes shot as the Canes killed off both penalties.

"They had a lot of chances, and Petr was a wall back there for us," said Brind'Amour, whose second season as coach has been more challenging than the first.

Four points out of wild-card playoff position in the Eastern Conference, the Canes (33-21-3) needed to beat the Devils (21-26-10), who are having a lost season but playing some of their best hockey of the season. New Jersey was 4-1-3 in its past eight games before Friday, beating the Detroit Red Wings 4-1 on Thursday in Newark, New Jersey.

The Canes were back on home ice after a four-game trip that produced mixed results — close wins over Arizona and Vegas and decisive losses to St. Louis and then Dallas in the final game. They also were facing a Metropolitan Division team — Carolina was 5-10-1 in the Metro before Friday including a 5-3 loss to the Devils at PNC Arena.

Brind'Amour wanted a better start, and he got what he wanted: a first-period goal by Niederreiter, who was playing on a line with Erik Haula and Necas. For the first time in seven games, Carolina had scored the first goal of the game, Niederreiter taking a pass from defenseman Haydn Fleury and unloading a heavy shot from the right point while covering for defenseman Trevor van Riemsdyk.

Foegele's goal, his first in 13 games, came after defenseman Brett Pesce got off a shot from the point. Foegele collected the puck in front of goalie Louis Domingue and smacked it in for his 11th of the season.

Necas' goal, the 15th of the season for the rookie forward, came on a redirection, the puck being swatted past Domingue by Devils defenseman Damon Severson. Edmundson scored after the Canes had killed off his slashing penalty.

"It was a better game for us," Brind'Amour said. "Not great, but we came up big at the right times."

The Canes still are adjusting to playing without Hamilton. The versatile defenseman missed his 10th game since fracturing his left fibula, but he had the crowd roaring before the game when he sounded the siren and gave it a good, hard crank.

"It's great to see him around," Brind'Amour said. "We miss him. It's obvious."



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## Hurricanes score early, often in 5-2 win over Devils

Nino Niederreiter and Martin Necas had a goal and an assist for Carolina

RALEIGH — Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour has said he's waiting to see his whole roster give a 60-minute effort consistently.

Friday night's 5-2 win over the New Jersey Devils in front of a sellout crowd of 18,680 at PNC Arena was a step in the right direction.

"I think that's exactly what we did tonight," said Nino Niederreiter, who opened the scoring and added an assist in being named the game's first star. "It's definitely a step in the right direction. We have 25 games left in the season, you've got to do whatever it takes to get there and make the playoffs."

Brind'Amour is hopeful the effort will give Niederreiter — and his whole team — the confidence boost it needs for the stretch run.

"It's huge for individuals, and then actually for our team too," he said. "We gotta kind of get that swagger back a little bit. It starts with, to me, just getting back to basics and trusting in your game, regardless of whether you score or not. ... To me, it's just playing the right way and goals will come. We saw that tonight."

No one is walking around with more swagger than Carolina's top line.

The Hurricanes got what would be the game-winning goal with just over six minutes remaining in the second period. Sebastian Aho zipped a pass cross-ice to Teuvo Teravainen, who quickly found Andrei Svechnikov on the backdoor for the 19-year-old's 23rd goal of the season and a 3-1 Carolina lead.

"That's a highlight-reel goal," Brind'Amour said.

But more importantly, Carolina got the depth scoring it needs if they are going to load up their first line with the team's top three scorers.

It started with Niederreiter.

The Hurricanes opened the scoring for the first time in seven games when the snake-bitten winger's point shot through a screen beat New Jersey goalie Louis Domingue (26 saves) to give Carolina a 1-0 lead 3:43 into the game.

"If there's a guy that probably deserved a goal, it's probably him," Brind'Amour said of Niederreiter, who now has eight goals on the season after scoring a combined 25 with Minnesota and Carolina last season. "He's had a tough year that way. It's nice to see him get on the scoresheet."

The Devils got it back just a few minutes later when Carolina's forwards got beat up the ice and Mirco Mueller tapped in a Travis Zajac pass to tie the game at 7:07.

Carolina's secondary scoring, however, struck again.

Defenseman Brett Pesce's point shot was stopped in the slot by Warren Foegele, and he quickly fired a shot past Domingue to snap his 12-game goal drought and give Carolina a 2-1 lead at 11:23.

After the Svechnikov goal just past the game's midway point, Carolina added an insurance tally early in the third. Martin Necas redirected a point shot and a Devils' defender accidentally swept the puck in his own net for a 4-1 Hurricanes lead at 1:04 of the final period.

Joel Edmundson's breakaway goal coming out of the penalty box at 14:36 of the third was quickly countered by Devils forward Joey Anderson's first goal of the season, but by then the game was decided.

"Everything went right, but at the end of the day, it's one game," Pesce, who had two assists and was a game-best plus-4, said. "We've got to take the good and learn from the bad and move on to the next one. ... We needed that one, for sure."

Notes: It was both goalie Petr Mrazek and play-by-play broadcaster John Forslund's birthday. ... Mrazek had 35 saves. ... Aho was a game-best 9 of 14 on faceoffs. ... Defenseman Haydn Fleury, who registered an assist, now has points in three of his last four games.



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### Hurricanes Gameday Diary: Deadline push edition

By Adam Gold

Ten days.

Ten days is all that separates the Carolina Hurricanes from the NHL's trade deadline. Ten days and five games (max) to prove to management, the head coach and each other that this is a team worth enhancing. Ten days, five games and four points from a playoff position in the Metropolitan Division.

The Hurricanes open up a brief, 2-game home stand tonight against the New Jersey Devils looking to start the same sort of streak they were on a year ago at this time. Carolina is coming off a 2-2-0 road swing through the Western Conference, one in which the Canes were fortunate and resourceful enough to win twice but ended on a very sour note with a 4-1 convincing loss in Dallas.

Rod Brind'Amour's team finds itself 6th in the Metro, four points shy of both the Blue Jackets and Flyers as we head towards the weekend. Philadelphia, after a Thursday win over the Panthers, has Friday night off. Columbus will host the Rangers on the heels of their second straight overtime loss.

It's a delicate time -- a dangerous time if we're being honest -- for the Hurricanes right now. Carolina has been treading water of late, posting a 10-10-1 mark over the last 21 games. They haven't won as many as four straight games since the middle of November and have fallen below the post season cut line as the Flyers, Jackets and Islanders have continued to post points more often than not.

The Devils beat the Red Wings in Newark on Thursday, scoring four times in a 4-minute span of the 3rd period in a 4-1, come-from-behind win. Wayne Simmonds was the star, scoring twice in the rally, his 6th and 7th of the season. New Jersey has won the only meeting between the two this year, 5-3 at PNC Arena in November.

The look...

Svechnikov-Aho-Teravainen

Nino-Haula-Necas

McGinn-Staal-Foegele

Dzingel-Wallmark-Williams

Slavin-van Riemsdyk

Gardiner-Pesce

Fleury-Edmundson

Note: Ryan Dzingel did not practice on Thursday, but Brind'Amour said he should be in the line up against New Jersey.

Not sure who is going to be in goal, but the hunch is that it will be Petr Mrazek.

Extras: Jordan Martinook (upper body)

Take me to your leaders...

Hurricanes

Points: Teuvo Teravainen, 54; Andrei Svechnikov, 52; Sebastian Aho, 52.

Goals: Aho, 31 Svechnikov, 22; Dougie Hamilton, 14.

Power play points: Teravainen, 19; Svechnikov, 15, Aho, 12.

Hot: Aho, 6 game goal-scoring streak, points in 7 (7g,4a)

Not: Goal droughts...Dzingel, 14; Foegele, 12. Wallmark, 11; Staal, 9.

Devils

Points: Kyle Palmieri, 39; Nico Hischer, 32; Nikita Gusev, 32.

Goals: Palmieri, 21; Blake Coleman, 21; Hischer, 13.

Power play points: Palmieri, 15; Sami Vatanen, 10; Hischer, 9.

Hot: Palmieri, 7 points in his last 5 games (4g, 3a).

Not: Goal droughts...Travis Zajac, 11; P.K. Subban, 8.

The stakes....

As the kids say "ish just got real".

The Islanders (72 points), Blue Jackets (71) and Flyers (71) are all off in the distance from Carolina, sitting with 67 points in 6th place in the division. Yes, Carolina has games in hand on Columbus and Philadelphia, but those only matter if you win them. Same with Toronto, who sits third in the Atlantic division, should the Leafs not stay in front of Florida.

Carolina has 26 games remaining in the regular season and likely will need 33 points out of those in order to earn the right to play beyond Game 82. As earlier noted, five of them — tonight, Sunday afternoon against the Oilers, at Nashville, home to the Rangers and a visit to the Leafs — come before rosters will be set for the final five weeks. These games will determine how Tom Dundon, Don Waddell and company will approach the balance of the year.

The Canes will likely be active in some way. I could see them adding a defenseman with a year or more left on a contract and then moving some players heading into free agency. Joel Edmundson and Trevor van Riemsdyk fit that category, as does Erik Haula. Making the playoffs right now, however, should still be the priority because when you have a team that is still on a pace for 98 points that should be your focus. However, the following question needs to be answered honestly, as it shapes just how aggressively they approach the deadline.

Is this team capable of winning a Stanley Cup?



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If we're being honest, right now, the answer is "no". However, the push to prove otherwise, or to at least show themselves to be dangerous to the field of contenders begins tonight, against a team well beneath them in the standings.

Storm Watch starring Alec Campbell begins at 6:30. Opening face off will follow at 7:08. Everything can be heard on 99.9 the Fan.



## Recap: Hurricanes Down Devils

Canes earn 5-2 win, sit with 69 points

by Michael Smith

The Carolina Hurricanes returned home from a four-game road trip and scored a 5-2 win over the New Jersey Devils on Valentine's Day.

Andrei Svechnikov finished a highlight-reel play for what would be the game-winning goal, while Nino Niederreiter recorded two points (1g, 1a) in his first-star performance.

Here are five takeaways from Friday night in Raleigh.

### 1. Home Sweet Home

Sitting just outside of the Eastern Conference playoff picture following a road trip in which some concerning trends manifested, the Hurricanes were cognizant of the importance of establishing their game at home against a divisional opponent.

The main points of emphasis: Get everyone to dig in and come out with a better start in order to play with the lead.

Check and check.

"It's definitely a step in the right direction," Niederreiter said. "We have 25 games left in the season, and we have to do whatever it takes to get there and make the playoffs."

"We're in the final stretch here," Brett Pesce said. "We've got to put together a bunch of wins, and that's the start we needed."

The Canes last scored the first goal of the game on Jan. 21. Since then, the team posted a 3-3-0 record when surrendering the first goal.

But, how's this? With their victory tonight, the Canes improved to 23-3-1 this season when scoring first.

After the Canes killed off an early penalty, Niederreiter let go of a bomb from the point for his eighth goal of the season, giving the Canes a 1-0 lead less than four minutes into the game.

"We could get to our game and not chase the game," Pesce said. "It was a good feeling. The boys responded well from that."

"It was a better game for us," head coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "We came up big at the right times."

### 2. Save the Tape

The Hurricanes' top line of Andrei Svechnikov, Sebastian Aho and Teuvo Teravainen was buzzing, a dominant trio all night, and it culminated when they connected for a highlight-reel goal in the second period.

Svechnikov laid the puck off for Aho along the far wall. Aho whipped the puck across the ice to Teravainen, who one-touched it to Svechnikov for the backdoor tap-in. Tic-tac-goal, a thing of beauty.

With the assist, Aho extended his point streak to a season-long eight games (7g, 5a). Svechnikov is currently riding a six-game point streak (3g, 5a).

"We know the Aho line - it seems to be going pretty good," Brind'Amour smiled. "They made a couple nice plays."

Yep, but perhaps more importantly ...

### 3. Getting Everyone Involved

... the Hurricanes got contributions up and down their lineup.

Niederreiter finished the night with a goal and an assist and could have perhaps had a second goal, had a Devils' defenseman not swept the puck into his own net. Instead, that tally went to Martin Necas, his 15th of the season. Among all NHL rookies, Necas ranks fourth in goals, seventh in assists (16) and sixth in points (31).

"I thought Nino, that line was pretty effective all night," Brind'Amour said. "We need that."

Warren Foegele put the Canes back on top in the first period when he corralled a loose puck in the slot off an offensive zone faceoff win and beat Louis Domingue with a quick shot.

In the third period, Joel Edmundson, straight out of the box, took a stretch pass from Niederreiter and skated in alone. Domingue denied Edmundson's initial shot, but the Canes' defenseman popped in his own rebound.

That's getting everyone involved.

"Willy might need to watch out in the shootouts," joked Pesce, who finished the night with a pair of assists and a game-high plus-4 rating.

### 4. Happy Birthday!

Birthday boy Petr Mrazek presented a gift of a performance in net. He finished with 35 saves on 37 shots, none better than his sequence in the third period when he made a series of



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acrobatic saves and got some help from Edmundson's hand-eye coordination on the goal line. That hat trick of saves brought the crowd to its feet.

"It's just a confidence booster. It's just that trust factor," Pesce said of his goaltender's performance. "He was awesome tonight. He really kind of kept us in here for a bit when they were pressuring hard. Awesome game by him."

"When we needed the saves, that's the difference in the game, I think," Brind'Amour said. "They had a lot of chances, and Petr was a wall back there for us."

## 5. Dougie Wheels In

Dougie Hamilton missed his 10th game after having surgery to repair a broken leg, but that didn't keep him from jumping in on the action.

Hamilton wheeled in and cranked the Canes warning siren prior to the team taking the ice, a delightful surprise for the ninth sellout crowd of the season at PNC Arena. Hamilton pumped up the fans and gave a thumbs up before wheeling away.

"It's awesome to see him ... rolling around on that scooter," Pesce smiled. "It got the crowd going and got us going."

It was good to see No. 19 in sweater again, even if he wasn't suiting up to play.

"It's good to see him around. I hate it for him, this injury. I've been there," Brind'Amour said. "It's great to see him around. We miss him. It's obvious."

## Up Next

The Edmonton Oilers make their only appearance of the season in Raleigh on Sunday afternoon.



## Necas, Mrazek lift Hurricanes past Devils

Forward has two points, goalie makes 35 saves for Carolina, which has won three of four

by Kurt Dusterberg

RALEIGH, N.C. -- Petr Mrazek made 35 saves, and the Carolina Hurricanes defeated the New Jersey Devils 5-2 at PNC Arena on Friday.

Martin Necas and Nino Niederreiter each had a goal and an assist for the Hurricanes (33-21-3), who have won three of their past four games and moved within two points of the Columbus Blue Jackets for the second wild card into the Stanley Cup Playoffs from the Eastern Conference.

"It was a better game for us, not great," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "I thought we came up big at the right times."

Mirco Mueller and Joey Anderson scored for the Devils (21-26-10), who were playing the second of a back-to-back following a 4-1 win against the Detroit Red Wings on Thursday. Louis Domingue made 26 saves.

"I thought the compete and effort was actually better throughout the game tonight than it was in the Detroit game," Devils forward Blake Coleman said. "We just weren't sharp, really, throughout the whole game. Just slapping the puck around a bit. Sometimes you've just got to calm down and play the game."

The Hurricanes took a 1-0 lead on their first shot of the game when Niederreiter scored with a one-timer from the right point at 3:43 of the first period.

"The biggest thing for us was playing simple hockey," Niederreiter said. "We got pucks in deep when we had to, and we made plays when they were there. In the last period, [Mrazek] made some ginormous saves for us."

Mueller tied it 1-1 at 7:07, skating down the slot before tapping in a pass from Travis Zajac into an open net.

Warren Foegele put Carolina ahead 2-1 at 11:23, settling Brett Pesce's pass at the right hash marks and shooting inside the left post. The goal was Foegele's 11th of the season, an NHL career high.

Andrei Svechnikov extended the lead to 3-1 at 13:46 of the second period. Sebastian Aho took a drop pass from Svechnikov along the left boards and sent a cross-ice pass to Teuvo Teravainen, who quickly sent his own cross-ice pass back to Svechnikov at the left post for a tap in.

"That's a highlight-reel goal," Brind'Amour said. "You got to be careful not to do that too often. When those plays happen, you want to do it again and again versus keeping it a little simpler. But those guys have a little more leeway on that because they obviously have a pretty high skill level."

Necas gave Carolina a 4-1 lead at 1:44 of the third period when Devils defenseman Damon Severson knocked the puck into his own net while trying to clear Necas' redirection of Jordan Staal's initial shot.

"I just don't think we competed long enough and hard enough to give ourselves a chance to win," Devils forward Kyle Palmieri said. "We started going off on our own page and that's what caused the disconnection. It wasn't a great last 40 (minutes)."



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Joel Edmundson got his own rebound on a breakaway to make it 5-1 at 14:36.

"I felt like that was a long time coming, having a 60-minute effort like that," Pesce said. "We didn't have to chase the game, and it was a good feeling."

Anderson scored his first of the season to cut it to 5-2 at 14:57. Nicholas Merkley, who was making his season debut, had the primary assist for his first NHL point.

They said it

"I don't think the score reflects our energy or our effort. It's just there's a lot to learn and there is a lot to clean up. Sometimes it doesn't take much to get off course, but it happened in the second period and we just couldn't get to our game." -- Devils coach Alain Nasreddine

"(Confidence) is huge for individuals and actually for our team, too. We've got to get that swagger back a little bit, and it starts

with getting back to the basics and trusting in your game. To me, it's just playing the right way and the goals will come. We saw that tonight." -- Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour

Need to know

Aho extended his point streak to eight games (seven goals, five assists), and Svechnikov extended his point streak to six games (four goals, four assists). ... Pesce had two assists and was plus-4. ... Severson, who played a game-high 24:06, had his eight-game point streak end. ... Merkley was playing his first game since he made his NHL debut with the Arizona Coyotes on Dec. 19, 2017.

What's next

Devils: Host the Columbus Blue Jackets on Sunday (6 p.m. ET; MSG+, FS-O, NHL.TV)

Hurricanes: Host the Edmonton Oilers on Sunday (4 p.m. ET; FS-CR, SNW, NHL.TV)



## Svechnikov, Mrazek help Hurricanes beat Devils 5-2

By Aaron Beard

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Andrei Svechnikov scored on a perfectly executed rush in the second period to push his point streak to six games and help the Carolina Hurricanes beat the New Jersey Devils 5-2 on Friday night.

Nino Niederreiter and Warren Foegele scored first-period goals for the Hurricanes, helping Carolina play from in front nearly all night as it jostles for wild-card playoff positioning. Martin Necas and Joel Edmundson added two more in the third period for a 5-1 lead, part of a relatively smooth night for the Hurricanes in their return from a four-game road swing.

"We're in the final stretch here and we've got to put together a bunch of wins," said defenseman Brett Pesce, who had two assists. "That's the start we needed."

Petr Mrazek finished with 35 saves for Carolina after losing his previous three starts. He had four stops during an early New Jersey power play and a pair of big saves in the final minutes with the Devils holding a two-man advantage.

Sebastian Aho assisted on Svechnikov's goal, but was unable to find the back of the net, ending his six-game goal scoring streak.

Mirco Mueller scored in the first period and Joey Anderson added one in the third for the Devils, while Louis Domingue had 26 saves in a losing effort. New Jersey had won three of four coming in, including Thursday's 4-1 home win against Detroit.

Interim Devils coach Alain Nasreddine said things began to get away in the second period when the team got "disconnected" and "couldn't get to our game for some reason."

"We had chances, they really capitalized on their chances," Nasreddine said. "I think the scoring chances are pretty even ... but the problem with us is the scoring chances that we gave up are massive. I know it sounds old now because I've been saying it for a while, but we just have to be better."

The Hurricanes entered this game four points back of Philadelphia for the second wild card in the Eastern Conference playoff race with two games in hand. They went ahead for good when Foegele got between the circles and slipped the puck past Domingue at 11:23 of the first.

Then Svechnikov provided the highlight midway through the second. The Hurricanes won a face-off and pushed up ice, with Svechnikov leaving a short drop pass to a trailing Aho along the left boards. He cut toward the crease as Aho zipped the puck cross-ice to Teuvo Teravainen, who sent it right to Svechnikov on the left side for an easy putaway and a 3-1 lead.

"That's a highlight-reel goal," Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "You get those every so often. You've got to be careful that you don't try to do that too often because ... when those plays happen, you want to do it again and again versus just keeping a little simpler and taking the shots. But those guys have a little more, I'd say, leeway on that because they obviously have pretty high skill level."

NOTES: Foegele's goal was his first since scoring the winning goal against Arizona on Jan. 10, ending a 12-game drought. ... Mueller's goal was his second of the season, the other coming Dec. 13 at Colorado. ... Necas' third-period goal came after Devils defenseman Damon Severson tried to knock the puck away from the crease but inadvertently put it into the net. ... Severson had his eight-game point streak snapped. ... Injured Carolina defenseman Dougie Hamilton sounded the pregame siren for the Hurricanes. Hamilton was selected for



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the NHL All-Star Game but suffered a broken left leg beforehand and missed his 10th straight game Friday.

UP NEXT:

Devils: New Jersey returns home Sunday to host the Columbus Blue Jackets.

Hurricanes: Carolina plays a second straight home game Sunday when the Edmonton Oilers visit Raleigh.



## No Love Lost in Hurricanes' Convincing Valentine's Day Win Over Devils

Niederreiter, Mrazek show out in Hurricanes' date with the Devils.

By Brett Finger

RALEIGH — Love was in the air on Friday night inside the walls of PNC Arena.

Large men standing on knives were hitting each other, vulcanized rubber discs were being smacked around with sticks, and the Devil(s) was present.

It was a lovely night for hockey in Raleigh, and the Carolina Hurricanes put together a wholehearted effort en route to a 5-2 win over the New Jersey Devils in what was every bit of a must-win game.

After an early barrage of shots against that were all handled by Petr Mrazek, the Hurricanes needed one rush up the ice to break the ice.

Haydn Fleury took a big hit to make a play in the Canes zone, and that rush up ice led to a good offensive zone possession. Trevor van Riemsdyk pinched wisely down the right wing to keep possession and continue the cycle, fed Martin Necas behind the net, and then Fleury re-entered the play as he took Necas' pass and set up Nino Niederreiter for a long-range dart that beat Louis Domingue.

The Hurricanes couldn't really gain the momentum after their first goal, though. An early theme was that Carolina couldn't muster consistent possession, and the Devils were able to take advantage of that at the 7:07 mark of the first period.

After a quick chance from Jordan Staal off of a Devils turnover in the slot, New Jersey quickly pushed the puck up ice as Carolina's forwards were still deep in the zone. The quick 3-on-2 transition ended with defenseman Mirco Mueller tapping the puck into a wide-open cage after Mrazek tried to play the shot instead of the pass. Seemingly some miscommunication on the play from the Canes, and the game was tied.

The minutes following that goal were quiet. Not much zone time and not much in the way of offensive opportunities. Then, with 8:37 left in the opening frame, an offensive zone face off win led to an early tie-breaking goal.

Jordan Staal cleanly won a draw back to Brett Pesce, who walked in and threw a wrist shot towards the net. Warren Foegele batted the puck down, gained control, and slid it by the right pad of Domingue to the far-side post. Foegele's eleventh of the season let the Canes regain the lead.

The Hurricanes started to dominate the second half of the period, led by Sebastian Aho's top trio, which nearly found twine on several occasions early on, and the newly formed Erik Haula line.

Pesce rang the crossbar with less than a minute left in the first period, but the Devils caught a break as the puck bounced down and out. The score was 2-1 through twenty minutes.

The Hurricanes came out of the locker room flying in the second period. Teuvo Teravainen led a rush up on ice in the first minute, and Andrei Svechnikov had an excellent chance on Domingue, but he was robbed in grand fashion.

Revenge is sweet, though.

Almost 14 minutes into the second period, the first line made a marvelous play and extended the Carolina lead to two goals.

Svechnikov to Aho to Teravainen to Svechnikov in rapid succession led to an absolute beauty of a goal at a big time for the Hurricanes.

The Hurricanes controlled play in the second period and gave up virtually no threatening scoring chances, except for one rush for the Devils that saw a 2-on-1 very nearly cash in, but Fleury made another great play and saved a possible goal.

The second period ended with the Canes holding onto a 3-1 lead over the Devils with an opportunity to put their foot down in the third period and close out a much-needed win.

The foot went down.

Carolina continued to push their game forward, and New Jersey couldn't do anything about it. Everything looked exactly the way it needs to look moving forward. There was buy-in, there was desperation, there was execution, and the Canes closed out one of their most complete games in a month.

Haula's line, featuring Niederreiter and Necas on the wings, continued to play exceptionally well in the third period, and they were on the ice for another goal.

A long-range point shot got deflected in the high slot by Necas, and the puck got deflected in by a Devils defenseman in front who was battling with Niederreiter for position. The weird tally marked the 15th goal of Necas' rookie season and it gave the Canes a three-goal lead.

The Hurricanes put on a masterclass in defending a lead over the next ten minutes of in-game time. They kept the high-danger areas of their own zone clean and did a good job of getting pucks deep in the New Jersey zone.



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Joel Edmundson took a seat just under 13 minutes into the third after slashing Miles Wood, and the Canes were in need of a strong kill.

The kill was strong, but the seconds immediately following the kill were even stronger. Niederreiter collected the puck just inside the Carolina blue line right as Edmundson left the penalty box. With great poise, Nino waited and fired a perfect spring pass to Edmundson, who was unmarked and cashed in a breakaway goal that was chocked full of 2012 Bryan Allen vibes.

That pretty much ended things, though just a few moments later, the Devils got one back via Joey Anderson's first goal of the year on a defensive breakdown in front from the Hurricanes.

Pesce and Staal got off their discipline shortly thereafter, both getting whistled for tripping penalties and forcing their teammates to kill off a pretty lengthy 5-on-3.

The best penalty killer during that sequence was Mrazek, who did everything humanly possible to keep the puck out of the net. That included an unbelievable sequence of near-goals that eventually ended with Edmundson knocking a puck out of mid-air and clearing it 190 feet down the ice from his own goal line.

The final horn sounded and the Hurricanes were on the right side of a 5-2 final score. An announced Valentine's Day attendance of 18,680 people were on deck to watch what was one of the team's most complete efforts in quite some time.

The win boosts Carolina to 33-21-3 on the season. Mrazek stopped 35 shots in what ended up being an awesome start, following up his equally impressive performance in Dallas. Niederreiter, Necas, and Pesce all had multi-point games.

Next up for the Hurricanes another home game, against Leon Draisaitl and a heavily depleted Edmonton Oilers club.



## Canes break Devils' hearts in Valentine's Day matchup

By Ryan Henkel

PNC Arena did not find inter-divisional love as Carolina ruined its date with the Devils, stomping out their hearts 5-2 Friday night.

However, the love that was in the air was the strong support of the ninth sellout crowd at PNC Arena this season as the Hurricanes battled it out against New Jersey.

Oh, yeah. And some love for a few ridiculous plays by some of the Hurricanes' best.

Not only that, but also a double birthday.

Both goaltender Petr Mrazek and the voice of the Carolina Hurricanes, play-by-play voice John Forslund.

With so many festivities occurring in the building, the Hurricanes did not let the crowd down.

"Our building has been great this year," Mrazek said. "The fans are awesome. Four-game stretch on the road is not what you want, but we are home for today and Sunday, so you have to take advantage of it."

Nino Niederreiter got the game going, ripping a bomb from the blueline only 3:43 into the game. Niederreiter's goal was his second in 11 games and it snapped the team's six-game streak of surrendering the first goal in a game.

"The biggest thing for us tonight was playing simple hockey," Niederreiter said. "That's what we did early on. We got pucks deep when we had to and we made plays when they were there and put pucks to the net."

A bit later, a breakdown by the Canes saw them cough up the lead as Mirco Mueller tapped home an easy goal after an entire forward line failed to backcheck.

On the precipice of that frustration, Warren Foegele got his team back in front as he collected a hard pass from the point, controlled it and turned and fired, beating New Jersey netminder Louis Domingue.

Carolina took control of the game from there and it was easily due to the complete dominance that the Hurricanes' top-line of Sebastian Aho, Teuvo Teravainen and Andrei Svechnikov exhibited on the ice.

According to Natural Stat Trick, an advanced analytics site, the line had a Corsi-for percentage of 89.47% with 17 chances for and only 2 chances against. In layman terms, the line virtually allowed almost no shots against and just simply poured on the offensive pressure every time they were on the ice.

The dominance placed itself on a perfect platter as a tape to tape, Tic-Tac-Toe sequence of passing led to Carolina gaining a 3-1 lead.

Entering the zone, Svechnikov dropped it off to Aho, who laced it cross-ice to Teravainen, who one-touched it to Svechnikov who had placed himself right in front of the net for an easy tap-in. The whole play lasted about three seconds off the rush before the line scored.

Even when the Hurricanes weren't putting the puck in themselves, New Jersey was finding little ways to make their dates nights even better.

For one, Martin Necas redirected a point shot right into Domingue and as the puck lay loose near the crease off the initial save, a Devils defenseman took it upon himself to knock the puck across the goalline.

Other times, even when New Jersey was on the power play, the Devils were still allowing a few Hurricanes' players to



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attempt to further the lead with shorthanded breakaways. Jordan Staal and Aho each got a chance, but it was eventually Joel Edmundson hit by a stretch-feed from Niederreiter as soon as he stepped out of the box who converted.

The Devils picked up a second goal a few seconds later off of another breakdown in coverage, but it would be the last for either team, but not from lack of trying. Mrazek and Edmundson came together late in the game to stone the Devils with a sequence of ridiculous saves.

"In the last period, Petr made some ginormous saves for us," Niederreiter said. "We got to make sure he doesn't need to do that every night for us."

With the win tonight, Carolina moves within two points of the second wild-card position. The team is still battling just to make the playoffs again, but it is proving it is capable and willing to do what it takes to return.

"It was a better game for us," said head coach Rod Brind'Amour. "Not great, but I thought we came up big at the right times. The penalty kill was big, especially at the end. The score wasn't in doubt necessarily, but when the game was tight... a big goal kind of got us moving in the right direction."

The Canes are back in action Sunday as the team plays host to the Edmonton Oilers, 4 p.m. at PNC Arena.



## Hurricanes unload on Devils, win 5-2

Carolina scoring helps earn valuable two points in standings

By Peter Koutroumpis

RALEIGH, N.C. – The word stressful was mentioned in Rod Brind'Amour's scrum following the pregame skate on Friday.

The Carolina Hurricanes coach more-or-less alluded to the fact that expectations are high to qualify for the postseason.

Sitting four points out of an NHL Eastern Conference wildcard spot, the concern justified and the response was swift.

The Hurricanes put together an impressive effort against the New Jersey Devils, a 5-2 finish that included timely saves in net and hard-working and well-orchestrated goal scoring.

Birthday boy Petr Mrazek was a wall in net as described by Brind'Amour, complimenting his goalie's 36-save performance in front of a sellout crowd at PNC Arena.

Led by Nino Niederreiter's game-opening marker, four other Hurricanes – Warren Foegele, Andrei Svechnikov, Martin Necas, and Joel Edmundson – contributed to the cause at the other end.

"It was a better game for us; not great, but we came up big at the right times," Brind'Amour said.

"When the game was tight, the start wasn't great and then all of a sudden we get a big goal to kinda get us moving in the right direction."

Supporting cast

The line of Svechnikov, Sebastian Aho, and Teuvo Teravainen put together one of the cleanest and efficient passing and scoring displays of the season to put Carolina ahead 3-1 at the 13:46 mark of the second period.

Not a surprise that line continued to produce as it has in recent games, but more significant was the Canes' first two goals from Niederreiter and Foegele.

Scoring has been spotty and/or MIA for long stretches from those two.

Niederreiter's eighth goal of the season was only his second in his last 10 games played.

Foegele hadn't scored in 12 games, so his 11<sup>th</sup> marker ended that drought while establishing a new career high.

Contributions from both players will be critical during this playoff push.

"It was a big game for myself and our team," Niederreiter said.

"We know we have 25 games left in the season. We have to do whatever it takes to get there and make the playoffs."

Keeping it simple, complete

Devils netminder Louis Domingue faced 31 shots but couldn't deny opportunities Carolina created with the traffic in front of him.

Even while being outshot by the Devils, the Hurricanes tried to keep it simple according to Niederreiter.

"I think that's exactly what we did early on," he said.

"We got pucks in deep and we made plays when we were there and got pucks to the net most of the time. Petr made some ginormous saves for us."

Defenseman Brett Pesce who tallied two points on the night thought it was as complete a game that Carolina has played in a while.

"Probably was from what I can remember in long time," Pesce noted.

"We needed that one for sure."

Even while earning a critical two points, Pesce pointed out that the stress of the situation his team is in wasn't entirely relieved.

"It's still there to be honest," he concluded.

"It's just one game. We gotta find ways to play like that every night"



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Notables: Carolina finished 0-2 on the power play, 37-171 (21.6%) overall...On the PK, the Hurricanes went 4-4, 167-202 (82.7%) overall... With his goal and assist, Necas reached 31 points (15g, 16a) through 53 games played this season. Among all NHL rookies he now ranks fourth in goals,

seventh in assists and sixth in points...In addition to establishing a new career high in goals, Foegele also established career marks in assists (15) and points (26) in 2019-20.

## TODAY'S LINKS

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<http://trianglesportsnet.com/carolina-hockey-network/hurricanes-unload-on-devils-win-5-2/>

# SportScan

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

1176450 Carolina Hurricanes

Carolina Hurricanes return to PNC Arena and roll past New Jersey Devils 5-2

BY CHIP ALEXANDER

FEBRUARY 14, 2020 09:29 PM

Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour bounced up and down on his toes during the national anthem, smacking on his gum, showing off some nervous energy.

High above PNC Arena, Dougie Hamilton had rolled out on his scooter, sounding the warning siren before the game, showing some stamina.

In short, there were all the earmarks of an important game Friday as the Hurricanes faced the New Jersey Devils. Crunch time has come early for the Canes, who entered the game four points out of playoff position but responded with a solid 5-2 victory.

"It's definitely a step in the right direction," said Canes forward Nino Niederreiter, who had a goal and assist and was named the game's first star. "This season we've got to do whatever it takes to get there and make the playoffs."

Niederreiter and Warren Foegele scored for the Canes in the opening period, and Martin Necas and defenseman Joel Edmundson scored in the third. But the play that really had the sellout crowd buzzing came in the second. It also came from the top line of Sebastian Aho, Teuvo Teravainen and Andrei Svechnikov.

In a perfectly executed sequence, Svechnikov carried the puck up the left wing into the Devils zone, dropping off a pass to Aho. The center zipped a cross-ice pass to Teravainen, who then found Svechnikov open in front of the crease for his 23rd of the season.

Canes goalie Petr Mrazek, on his 28th birthday, got the work done in net, making 35 saves. Mrazek, who had lost his last three games, earned his 19th win and the first since Jan. 17 against Winnipeg, allowing goals to Mirco Mueller and Joey Anderson but also making a variety of high-quality stops.

The Devils had a 5-on-3 power play late in the third, but Mrazek made a scrambling stop on a Jack Hughes shot as the Canes killed off both penalties.

"They had a lot of chances, and Petr was a wall back there for us," said Brind'Amour, whose second season as coach has been more challenging than the first.

Four points out of wild-card playoff position in the Eastern Conference, the Canes (33-21-3) needed to beat the Devils (21-26-10), who are having a lost season but playing some of their best hockey of the season. New Jersey was 4-1-3 in its past eight games before Friday, beating the Detroit Red Wings 4-1 on Thursday in Newark, New Jersey.

The Canes were back on home ice after a four-game trip that produced mixed results — close wins over Arizona and Vegas and decisive losses to St. Louis and then Dallas in the final game. They also were facing a Metropolitan Division team — Carolina was 5-10-1 in the Metro before Friday including a 5-3 loss to the Devils at PNC Arena.

Brind'Amour wanted a better start, and he got what he wanted: a first-period goal by Niederreiter, who was playing on a line with Erik Haula and Necas. For the first time in seven games, Carolina had scored the first goal of the game, Niederreiter taking a pass from defenseman Haydn Fleury and unloading a heavy shot from the right point while covering for defenseman Trevor van Riemsdyk.

Foegele's goal, his first in 13 games, came after defenseman Brett Pesce got off a shot from the point. Foegele collected the puck in front of goalie Louis Domingue and smacked it in for his 11th of the season.

Necas' goal, the 15th of the season for the rookie forward, came on a redirection, the puck being swatted past Domingue by Devils



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defenseman Damon Severson. Edmundson scored after the Canes had killed off his slashing penalty.

"It was a better game for us," Brind'Amour said. "Not great, but we came up big at the right times."

The Canes still are adjusting to playing without Hamilton. The versatile defenseman missed his 10th game since fracturing his left fibula, but he had the crowd roaring before the game when he sounded the siren and gave it a good, hard crank.

"It's great to see him around," Brind'Amour said. "We miss him. It's obvious."

News Observer LOADED: 02.15.2020

1176451 Carolina Hurricanes

Who says no? Part 1: Evaluating your not-so-serious Hurricanes trade proposals

By Sara Civian Feb 14, 2020

OK, I'm just going to say it: The weeks leading up to the trade deadline — to me — are the worst of the NHL season.

Every year when February rolls around I feel like I wake up, repeat what the Canes are looking for and what they're willing to give up about 15 times, go to bed and do it all again the next day.

THE HURRICANES ARE LOOKING FOR HELP ON THE BLUE LINE AND/OR ANY WAY TO "MAKE THE TEAM BETTER."

THEY ARE RELUCTANTLY WILLING TO GIVE UP A FIRST-ROUND PICK FOR "THE RIGHT RETURN." THAT'S CODE FOR "A LOT MORE THAN WHAT'S BEEN FLOATED" WITHOUT SAYING, "THE GUY YOU OFFERED SUCKS," AND THAT'S REALLY NICE. I DON'T THINK THE CANES REALLY WANT TO MESS WITH THE CURRENT NHL ROSTER, BUT YOU NEVER KNOW WHEN APPARENTLY SOMEONE OUT THERE WILL OFFER YOU NINO NIEDERREITER FOR VICTOR RASK.

Is this thing on?

This time of year can get tedious, and that's why I'm proud of The Athletic for a fresh take on all of it. It's been refreshing to read the "Who Says No" posts some markets have published and many more are about to. People love to make fun of what fans have to say this time of year when in reality so many of your proposals have been spot on in ways I haven't even thought about. I'm so glad we have respect for you.

With that said, if you're reading this post you probably understand what my Twitter is like. You know when I posed the question I got about 70 percent jokes and 30 percent legit trade proposals.

This is why I keep coming back to that cursed place, so, first of all, thank you for all the laughs. Second, the jokes on you, bozos.

Why not actually try to answer the jokes a La Down Goes Brown, then address the serious stuff along with an elaboration on the screams above on Monday morning?

I'm Mark Messier-ing myself into a full trade deadline primer at your doorstep Monday morning. But it's the freakin' weekend, and baby we are about to have us some fun.

Who says no?!

Trevor van Riemsdyk and Stormy for Gritty. — Simon P.

This one seems crazy at first, I know, but Simon P. is playing chess not checkers and I have the hockey sense to know exactly where he's going with this. Stormy is the most beloved Ice Hog in North Carolina — maybe even in the world excluding Rockford, Illinois. But sources are telling me

his morale is at an all-time low these days without his best friend Dougie Hamilton and it's bringing down the locker room.

Gritty's stock is as low as ever after a literal police investigation that for some reason referred to the sentient person inside the mascot costume as "Gritty."

If Gritty could talk I think he'd call this slander, but the Grit didn't fit so you must acquit.

Anyway he/she is free, he/she did no wrong, and you better believe this is a revenge tour for the ages.

The Hurricanes have yet another opportunity to strike while the iron's hot on a player who could use a change of scenery. Take one look in Gritty's eyes and you know he'd buy into Rod Brind'Amour's system.

As for van Riemsdyk, this would be a feel-good story all around because he'd get to play with big brother James, pretty close to home. I think this — and joining the Flyers' feel-good season — would soften the blow of being traded for a mascot.

Andrei Svechnikov for "half of" the Red Wings — Ali

"Which half, the top or the bottom," I laugh like a Dad as I am immediately escorted out of The Cheesecake Factory.

Obviously this would never actually happen in the modern NHL or even the NHL in which Brian Burke left his daughter's birthday party to finesse both Sedin twins, but it's pretty fun to think about. Another feel-good story of brothers reuniting (by the way, there are so many Hurricanes with brothers in the NHL ...), but at what cost?

I literally think the Red Wings would trade the bottom half of their roster for Andrei Svechnikov.

The top half is probably going to be a no, but who is it?

We've got a Top 5 of

Dylan Larkin: 15-25—40, -18

Tyler Bertuzzi: 18-20—38, -21

Filip Hronek: 9-19—28, -29

Robby Fabbri: 11-16—27, -22

Anthony Mantha: 12-14—26, -7

I'm not trying to pile on to a team that is obviously tanking, and Mantha would be on fire if he didn't get hurt. No, I don't think you trade the top half of your rebuilding roster for one Svech, but I'm enticed enough to put serious thought into it. And I heard Michigan goals count as automatic hat tricks when you play for Detroit.

I'm so amused by this that I asked Detroit scribe Max Bultman to weigh in.

Bultman: "He'd be their best player by a considerable amount, obviously. Just as long as Evgeny stays so they can play together then they might as well! (Or they could just trade Evgeny there ...)."

Now you're talking crazy.

Marky Marksmen and a signed team poster for Petr Mrazek — The Fayetteville Marksmen

For context, I tweeted a few days ago that there's been some unwarranted criticism thrown Mrazek's way, as if "some of y'all act like he should be in the SPHL."

Well, North Carolina's own SPHL team has now put the Hurricanes on the clock.

I don't say no, I scream no.

Sebastian Aho for Sebastian Aho — Biggest Larry Walker Stan (lol)

I said Boom Boom Boom, now let me hear you say.

Every team in the Metro besides the Canes for every team in the Pacific — Inappropriate display name



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Consider this series of information:

The Hurricanes are 0-6 against the Rangers and the Blue Jackets and generally abysmal in their own division, one Brind'Amour heralded "the hardest (to play in)" he's ever seen.

The Hurricanes have a better record than every single team in the Pacific Division. They wouldn't need to worry about the wild card, they'd be sitting pretty in second place, in a race with the Canucks for that No. 1 spot.

The Hurricanes are 10-2-2 in the Pacific.

As we in the biz say, the Hurricanes might "kick around" for a trade, but I know who says no.

The Storm Surge for the Daily Media Coverage the Leafs Get — Flashalytics, @Flash\_33

I like to think I don't have some gigantic ego, but whenever people bring up the small market Hurricanes and their stress-free media landscape I get offended.

Are you not entertained?!

But obviously it's true. My ego remained intact after finding out this person is an unbiased Flames fan, so let's dig in.

This seems like one of those random trades that happen, like, two months into the season where you're like "OK?"

The Storm Surge coverage from the Toronto media market would be absolutely epic, I'd make this trade in a second to witness the meltdown. But the catch-22 is if the independent, traveling Hurricanes media is shipped to the Six in this scenario, it is literally just me, and here we are again.

Do I have to wear a suit?

One time in Canada a reporter asked Noted Finn Sebastian Aho if winning felt better "under the bright lights of Canada."

Do I have to do that?

I'm out on this.

My trade proposal: 1) Don't get rid of anyone because I love them all. 2) Get someone really cool that will fit the team well! — Jim B.

Again, pre-deadline hockey Twitter honestly feels like the sanctimonious hockey media's flu game. Quote tweeting the one ridiculous proposition you see and things of that nature.

Brethren, I raise you one Jim B.

The Athletic LOADED: 02.15.2020

1176485 Edmonton Oilers

No malicious intent for Oilers' Zack Kassian as he crosses the line against Tampa Bay Lightning

Derek Van Diest

February 14, 2020 7:02 PM MST

SUNRISE, Fla. — When Zack Kassian met a small group of reporters to discuss his kicking incident Thursday in Tampa, he was not aware how quickly reaction spread on social media.

Why would he be?

Kassian was busy trying to help the Edmonton Oilers win on the road against the Tampa Bay Lightning for the first time in nearly a decade. To him, kicking out at Lightning defenceman Erik Cernak was a natural reaction to having his other leg pinned on the ice while play continued.

It would be a normal reaction to most people ... not wearing skates.

But Kassian was wearing skates and he did seem to make contact with Cernak's chest, which is why Friday the NHL offered him an in-person hearing with the Department of Player Safety. It was respectfully turned down and Kassian was suspended for seven games following a phone hearing.

"He was holding my leg, it was reactionary, I was just trying to get him off me, kick him off me. I was just trying to get my foot loose," Kassian said after the game. "I was laying there for awhile, a couple of seconds, so I was just trying to pull my leg out."

There seemed to be little malicious intent on Kassian's part when he kicked out trying to break free of Cernak, who also had Oilers forward Josh Archibald pinned underneath him.

Kassian took part in an optional practice at the BB&T Center on Friday and stayed out on the ice longer than most of his teammates as he prepared for a phone hearing to determine the length of his suspension.

He was not made available to the media Friday while the process was still playing itself out. However, the Oilers know they are now going to lose another important piece of their lineup when they face the Florida Panthers (2 p.m.) on Saturday in the second of a three-game road trip.

"I honestly didn't even see it, I was on the bench for that," said Oilers defenceman Matt Benning, who had his own run-in with Cernak, taking an elbow to the nose from the six-foot-three, 233-pound blueliner. "It was one of those things where the play was down at the other end of the ice and I was watching the play. I haven't even looked at it, I try to stay away from social media as much as I can."

Kassian admitted he had not seen video of the incident when, to his credit, he agreed to talk to the travelling media contingent after the game in Tampa. He's surely seen it since and it does not paint him in a good light — particularly just coming off a two-game suspension for rag-dolling Calgary Flames forward Matthew Tkachuk.

"The thing is with him, when you play that role, it's not an easy role that all of us can sit here and go: 'OK, maybe he shouldn't have done that and he shouldn't have done this.' But you're not in those shoes night in and night out," said Oilers assistant coach Glen Gulutzan, pinch-hitting for Dave Tippett on Friday. "It's not easy to play. Probably the player that I've seen the biggest transformation in my career is Zack Kassian.

"He's made himself a player on the ice and has improved on the areas he needed to improve on from Vancouver."

Kassian, 29, has always been considered a talented player, which is why the Buffalo Sabres made him the 13th-overall selection in the 2009 NHL Entry Draft.

Yet early in his days with the Sabres and Vancouver Canucks, he developed a reputation for being a habitual line-stepper, to borrow a line from a classic Dave Chappelle comedy skit with the late Charlie Murphy about Rick James.

What was once a constant is seen less and less frequently, even though the two suspensions come less than a month apart.

"We joke, because I had him at both ends of the spectrum," said Gulutzan, a former assistant in Vancouver. "Him and I joke on the bench he goes: 'About three or four years ago, Gully, the wires would have been touching.' I said, 'I know, I've seen it before, you've just grown up.'"

"He's got a great sense of humour about it, he gets it and it's a credit to him the way he's put himself where he is."

Unlike the incident with Tkachuk, where Kassian snapped after taking a pair of questionable and dangerous hits from the Flames forward, he did not intend to hurt Cernak. Kassian was simply trying to break free, and at the time, the officials on the ice felt the same, not issuing a penalty.

"I don't think it was malicious, I think he was pushing and there was a little bit of a crossing of the line that he knows he shouldn't do that," Gulutzan said. "When you're a guy that plays on the edge all the time, you're going to get on to the other side. You're going to touch it (wires) for sure."



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"He used to touch it every third or fourth game in Vancouver. He touches it every 40 or 50 or 60 games now and that's a huge improvement."

Edmonton Sun: LOADED: 02.15.2020

1176486 Edmonton Oilers

Despite 'transformation' with Oilers, Zack Kassian's on-ice actions come under scrutiny again

Daniel Nugent-Bowman

Feb 14, 2020

SUNRISE, Fla. – There are a number of reasons why Zack Kassian's kick to the chest of Lightning defenceman Erik Cernak was a terrible decision. Two stand out above all.

Most importantly, attempting to strike an opponent with a razor-sharp blade is never a good idea. Kassian's side kick on Thursday impacted Cernak in a place where he was protected and he thankfully avoided a serious injury.

Had Kassian aimed a little bit higher, Cernak's neck, throat or face could have been swiped, which could have resulted in a horrifying scene.

But then there's the hockey side of things, the second part of the equation.

Although he hasn't been as impactful recently while on a different line than Connor McDavid, Kassian's importance on an Oilers team fighting for a playoff spot is hardly up for debate.

In the last 15 months, Kassian has rounded into an effective player – mostly riding shotgun to McDavid and Leon Draisaitl. He's been almost exclusively a 5-on-5 contributor and has done well in that role on a special-teams dependent squad.

The Oilers have outscored the opposition 45-40 in the nearly 775 5-on-5 minutes he's been on the ice, per Natural Stat Trick. With 28 points, he's third in team scoring in that game state, too.

Kassian, of course, won't be adding to those totals anytime soon. He skated with some of his teammates during an optional practice Friday ahead of his phone hearing with the Department of Player Safety. He opted to waive his right to an in-person meeting with the league's disciplinarians.

Friday evening, Kassian received a 7-game suspension. And his presence leaves a big hole to fill, according to Oilers assistant coach Glen Gulutzan.

Gulutzan was an assistant coach in Vancouver from 2013-2015 when Kassian was a Canuck. He said the difference between Kassian then and Kassian now is a stark one.

"I've said this out loud in our coaches' room. Probably the player that I've seen the biggest transformation on the ice in my career is Zack Kassian," Gulutzan said. "He's made himself a player."

Gulutzan went on to mention how beloved Kassian is as a teammate and his great sense of humour. He's a character, the coach said.

"But his game has transformed and grown and matured that I'm impressed with."

It's what Kassian brings to the ice that the Oilers shouldn't have to miss right now, especially with all the injuries they're dealing with.

McDavid (quad), James Neal (foot), Kris Russell (concussion protocol) and Joakim Nygard (hand) are out of the lineup. The Oilers called up Markus Granlund from AHL Bakersfield on Friday, after putting McDavid on injured reserve (retroactive to Sunday) to accommodate for Kassian's impending supplemental discipline. Tyler Benson, just recalled from

Bakersfield on Wednesday, is expected to draw back into the lineup against the Panthers on Saturday.

"It's more opportunity for guys who have wanted more opportunity," Gulutzan said. "One thing that we've done over years past here is we have more depth. We have more NHL depth. We're going to have to rely on that."

That may be so. However, what Kassian has done – yet again – is weaken his team by his actions at a critical time of the year.

First, it was by pounding Flames forward Matthew Tkachuk repeatedly with his left fist on Jan. 11. That put the Flames on the power play and resulted in Calgary's winning goal.

He was then suspended two games for his punches. Luckily for him, the Oilers were 2-0 in his absence.

And here we are today. The scenario could be worse for the Oilers and will be much worse for him.

Gulutzan went on to speak about how much Kassian has changed from a player who often took bad penalties to one who, in the coach's mind, seldom does.

"We joke because I've had him on both sides of the spectrum," Gulutzan said. "Him and I joke on the bench. He goes, 'You know what? About three or four years ago, Gully, the wires would have been touching.' I said, 'I know. I've seen it before.' I said, 'You've just grown up.'"

As for what happened with Cernak, Gulutzan feels what happened was out of character for Kassian.

"I don't think it was malicious. I think he was pushing him away," the coach said. "There's a little bit of that crossing the line and he knows he shouldn't do that."

"But when you're a guy who plays on the edge all the time, you're gonna get on the other side of the line. You're gonna touch it for sure. He does every once and a while. He used to touch it every third or fourth game in Vancouver. He touches it every 40 or 50, 60 games now."

Gulutzan knows Kassian well. His assessment has its merits.

But for Kassian to have two such incidents within a month where he's not only touched the line but blown past it is a bad sign – especially since his four-year, \$12.8 million extension kicks in next season.

Kassian has become a key contributor for the Oilers, but he can only be that guy if he plays.

Getting suspended once because he went into a fit of rage and being handed another one because of his reckless and violent act casts doubt on Gulutzan's praise.

Worse than that, Kassian's actions have – and will – hurt his team most since he won't be around for some time to help out.

The Athletic LOADED: 02.15.2020

1176487 Edmonton Oilers

Willis: Why the Oilers are playing their best 5-on-5 hockey of the season

Jonathan Willis

Feb 14, 2020

For the last couple of months we've been breaking down Edmonton's performance by game state, and the picture always looks the same: elite on the power play, really good on the penalty kill and just maybe passable enough at even strength not to give it all back.

Then the Oilers started doing something funny as the calendar flipped to 2020: they started playing well at 5-on-5. In fact, their performance in the



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game's most common state was the best it had been all season, better even than it was during a 9-4-1 October.

It's a dramatic improvement, one that appears to have saved their season after a brutal December slump.

We have to start with the shot rate. Despite all the roster changes over the summer, for most of this year the Oilers have closely resembled last year's failed team at even strength, averaging about 28 shots per hour and surrendering 31.

Hockey's a funny game because as important as possession and the shots that come with it are, problems there can be overcome in any number of ways. Edmonton's method had been special teams. Elite goaltending can get it done, too. Theoretically, a team of elite shooters could outperform but as a rule high shooting percentages aren't sustainable because in a capped 31-team league it's hard to find and pay for 12 forwards who consistently finish much above the average.

Besides, it's far better to combine strengths. A team that adds good possession metrics to exceptional special teams to strong goaltending can win a bunch of different ways and tends to be more resilient when the inevitable slumps and injuries hit.

Having established that it's happening, the next question is why.

The biggest reason is the decision to split up Connor McDavid and Leon Draisaitl while loading up Draisaitl's line. It's something we never saw during the Todd McLellan era; while he sometimes furtively experimented with balancing the scoring those attempts featured McDavid with the best of the rest and Draisaitl with whatever meagre support hadn't already been shipped out of town by Peter Chiarelli.

Dave Tippett did something different: he played McDavid with the leftovers and loaded up the Draisaitl line, rather like Craig MacTavish did once upon a time with Doug Weight and Mike Comrie. The result has been two lines with strong possession numbers. Draisaitl's unit has a 55 percent on-ice shot share since the start of January and McDavid's 53 percent.

That's most of the game right there. Riley Sheahan's line (46 percent) is still getting thumped but doing it while devouring defensive zone starts, while the various iterations of the fourth line (mostly Gaetan Haas) have continued to hover around 50 percent.

It's a winning combination. In the short term it's going to be sharply challenged by the injuries (and looming Zack Kassian suspension) Edmonton's dealing with now. In the medium-to-long term, the path to being a contender is clear: add some teeth in the form of a quality scoring winger to the McDavid line and find a third-line pivot to push Sheahan down into the old Boyd Gordon/defensive zone starts role.

There have been two changes on defence.

Edmonton seems to have found a second pairing again. Oscar Klefbom has been playing hurt and had ups and downs while Adam Larsson has never truly looked comfortable after missing most of the early season. Their numbers have improved, giving the Oilers a far more complete top four than they've iced at any other point this season.

There's also the third pairing. Caleb Jones has been pushed over to his natural left side in the wake of Kris Russell's injury and has been a revelation. Not only does he have excellent shot share (51 percent) and expected goal share (52 percent) to go along with great on-ice goal numbers (he's plus-5 at 5-on-5) but he's scored three goals himself since the switch. Combine that with the return of Matt Benning from injury and the Oilers have an effective third pair at two-thirds the cost of Russell's contract alone.

Of course the single biggest change in the short term has been goalie Mike Smith, who after submarining the Oilers for most of two months looks every inch a full-time starting goalie.

During their December swoon, the Oilers' .888 save percentage at 5-on-5 was the worst in the league. Now it's up to .915, just below the league median of .917. Smith personally sits at .922, which ranks 15th among the NHL's 31 starting goalies over this span.

It's probably not a great idea to bank on Smith staying this hot. He's had high highs and low lows over the past two years and on balance has

been one of the league's weaker goalies. His .905 5-on-5 save percentage ranks 57th among the 62 most-used NHL goalies since the start of 2019. Nevertheless, he's clearly still capable of highly effective runs and the Oilers are wisely riding this one for as long as it lasts.

Edmonton has done well to get its game squared away at even strength because for the first time this season the power play is struggling. It's giving up shorthanded goals at an alarming rate and the offence has dipped, too, though not down to its lousy pre-Tippett levels.

Mostly the shorthanded goals would seem to be the cost of doing business, and well worth suffering, though the Oilers are going to have to smarten up on their zone entries now that they don't have McDavid for a bit. The captain carries a heavy load in that department and it was unreasonable to expect the man advantage to adapt seamlessly without him.

It's possible this slide is related to the loss of James Neal, though Neal's on-ice numbers the last little while haven't been all that good even on the power play. At 5-on-4, the Oilers have shot the puck more frequently, scored more often and allowed fewer shorthanded shots and goals with Alex Chiasson on the ice than they have Neal. That's been especially true since the start of December:

Chiasson: 68 minutes, 61.5 shots per hour, 14.9 goals per hour

Neal: 61 minutes, 51.9 shots per hour, 10.8 goals per hour

As much as Neal is a lethal shooter, Chiasson's handedness and excellence in front of the net seem to lead to better results, though the sample is so small that this data is far from definitive. My inclination is to believe that what we're seeing at 5-on-4 over this stretch is mostly noise mixed with some post-McDavid chaos.

However, the unit won't be the same without McDavid and a drop should be expected until he comes back. That being said, it's at least an opportunity to experiment with adding another righty to the mix, with the coaches tabbing Kailer Yamamoto for that duty in the early going.

I keep looking at the penalty kill, with its middling shot prevention rate and inflated save percentage, and wondering if something's going to break down. The Oilers have done fine work all season at limiting cross-seam passes and keeping chance quality down while shorthanded but with the goaltending instability at 5-on-5 I can't help feeling that there's at least some risk of drop off.

Instead, the reassuring results are accumulating. After a December dive, the save percentage bounced back over this latest stretch, and to a level which based on recent league history we know to be sustainable. It's what we predicted last month:

We've seen Edmonton's goalies fall down (in December) to the same 83-84 percent range that they had under McLellan, something which seems unlikely to last given the wholesale changes to the unit and its coaches over the summer. Getting back to 92 percent is unrealistic, but something in the high 80s should be entirely manageable.

We've also begun to see the kill convert on some of the chances it was getting. Shots aren't common while killing penalties but they tend to be good rush chances when they do come and Edmonton's finishing rate in the early going was ridiculously low.

For the immediate future, things look rocky. As I write this, McDavid is slated to miss 2-3 weeks, though the team thinks and hopes he might come back sooner. Neal is injured, Joakim Nygard is injured, Kassian's looking at a potentially long suspension and all of Edmonton's new-found gains at 5-on-5 are likely to disappear as the Oilers settle into survival mode.

Looking beyond that, though, the potential is here for Edmonton to make some noise in the playoffs. Great special teams go a long way in the regular season but they're harder to rely on in the postseason as penalty call rates go down.

This shift to a more balanced attack at 5-on-5, in concert with a defence which seems to be settling in, will make the Oilers a harder out for the opposition. This will be especially true if McDavid gets a scoring left winger between now and April.

The Athletic LOADED: 02.15.2020



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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1176488 Edmonton Oilers

Lowtide: Making sense of the Oilers defensive depth chart for the stretch run and the summer

Allan Mitchell

Feb 14, 2020

The Edmonton Oilers enter the deadline and the stretch run with a plethora of defencemen. Good problem. Edmonton lost Kris Russell to concussion protocol recently and was able to maintain a strong run through January and February.

As we get closer to the deadline, there may be interest in one of the Oilers current NHL defencemen and there's a chance Edmonton will listen due to the quality bubbling under with the AHL Bakersfield Condors and in Europe.

Listening and trading are two different things but there is an organizational pressure point at the position.

There is a numbers problem ahead for the team and the issue has to be solved by opening night 2020-21. It all stems from the graduation of three defencemen — Ethan Bear, Caleb Jones and William Lagesson — from entry-level deals at the conclusion of the 2019-20 season. Each of these players will either be on the Oilers roster in the fall or be a waiver risk should they be sent down. No chance for Bear or Jones to spend the fall in Bakersfield, and it's unlikely for Lagesson, too. He's bona fide. Too good for the AHL, too good to risk on waivers.

Added to that trio is Evan Bouchard, Edmonton's top prospect who is NHL-ready and currently flourishing in the AHL.

Edmonton has five NHL defencemen under contract for next season: Darnell Nurse, Oscar Klefbom, Adam Larsson, Russell and Jones. Close to a full boat. Restricted free agents Bear, Lagesson and Matt Benning have all earned contracts. That's eight, one more than the traditional total NHL teams carry at any given time, and we haven't started to factor in Bouchard and the AHL group or the European contingent of Oilers prospects.

It's going to take some time to work it all out. Let's start with the decisions among the players in Europe, then the AHL and finally the NHL players.

Broberg, Berglund and Niemelainen

We can begin with Philip Broberg, the one player in the conversation with no urgency to play in North America. He is signed, playing in the SHL and developing there. An additional season with Skelleftea could work in his favour, especially if Broberg sees an increase in playing time and responsibility. His splits (first 16 games through mid-November, second 16 games through February) give us an indication of his usage.

The time on ice is close enough for jazz, almost all of Broberg's playing time has come at even strength. He has shown improvement in even strength goal differential and is more involved offensively (shots) but we're miles from knowing how much he'll bring at the opposite end of the rink. Can the Oilers afford to keep Broberg in the SHL another season, secure in the knowledge he'll play a more prominent role? That's the question for Holland.

Filip Berglund has to be signed by June 1, 2020 (via CapFriendly) or the Oilers will lose his rights. He is a solid two-way defenceman and his role in the SHL (Berglund also plays for Skelleftea) shows top-four usage over the last three seasons:

Berglund is a big part of the team's power play this season, after being only a bit player in the past. He's a good passer and can defend, I'll suggest Berglund will be signed by Edmonton before June 1.

Markus Niemelainen is playing big minutes for Ässät in Finland's best league, the Liiga. His spike in time on ice this season and his playing

style (he's a big shutdown defenceman) means he wouldn't be applying for the same job as Berglund or Broberg in North America.

Niemelainen, like Berglund, has to be signed or lost by June 1, 2020. His style is a match for current AHL-NHL types like Lagesson, Samorukov, Russell and Larsson. It's my guess the Oilers sign him because there should be room in Bakersfield for two additional Europeans.

Prediction: Berglund and Niemelainen sign with the Oilers, Broberg (already signed) spends another year in Sweden.

The AHL players

The Bakersfield Condors current roster includes just two players who are signed for next season: Bouchard and Dmitri Samorukov. Two right-handed defenders (Logan Day, Joel Persson) are restricted free agents and need new contracts, while two more (Brandon Manning and Keegan Lowe) are unrestricted free agents at the end of the season.

Jones, Bear and Lagesson — the key to Bakersfield's defence for two seasons — will have all graduated by October 2020. Bouchard may be in the NHL by then too which means Samorukov could be the only defensive prospect who both played in Bakersfield this season and is expected to return.

Graduating four defencemen from October to October — Bear, Jones, Lagesson, Bouchard — seems impossible and in Edmonton's case it is at the very least highly improbable. Signing at least one of Day or Persson seems obvious, as does grabbing two more veterans who can play in the AHL (similar to Manning and Lowe). The Condors depth chart in the fall might look like this:

AHL veteran-Persson

Samorukov-Day

AHL veteran-Berglund

Niemelainen (seventh defencemen play often)

Prediction: Oilers sign RFAs Persson and Day, plus two veterans to NHL two-way deals ala Keegan Lowe.

The NHL players

It's my belief that Bouchard is NHL-ready and will break camp with the blue club for the 2020-21 season. That places the NHL roster in a rather unusual state, due to the sheer number of defenders who are qualified to play.

As mentioned above, the Oilers already have five signed players for next year: Nurse, Klefbom, Larsson, Russell and Jones. Bear, Benning and Lagesson will be signed and Bouchard (if I'm right) will be among the top six defenders opening night.

That's nine. Something's gotta give.

Bouchard's progress in Bakersfield this season has been impressive. Consider his splits before and after Christmas:

27 games, 3-12-15 (.556 points-per-game); 21-31 even strength (-10 goal differential)

21 games, 4-12-16 (.762 points-per-game); 16-16 even strength (0 goal differential)

The Condors have fallen on tough times in the last 10 games, losing six of 10 and being outscored 27-34 in those games. Bouchard has eight points and is plus-1 in those 10 games. All arrows point to him being ready in the fall.

Nine men available for seven spots. Good problem.

Making the call

At the end of January I wrote about Larsson being a more likely asset to be traded this summer than Russell. I still believe this to be true. Here's how I see the nine men discussed above starting the 2020-21 season:

Nurse-Bear

Klefbom-Bouchard



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Jones-Benning

Russell

Larsson is dealt for help up front and Lagesson is either traded at the deadline, in the summer or as a waiver worry in October. I think Russell remains because he's insurance for Jones and Bouchard but Holland may be able to trade Russell and find a less expensive solution at the No. 7 spot.

It's been many years since I've seen the kind of defensive depth we're looking at right now in the Oilers organization. Good problem.

The Athletic LOADED: 02.15.2020

1176520 Nashville Predators

Predators construct downtown outdoor skating rink for 'Hockey Day in America'

Shelley Mays

1:06 p.m. CT Feb. 14, 2020

There's now two ice rinks at Bridgestone Arena — one inside and a new temporary public rink on the plaza outside the arena.

In celebration of "Hockey Day in America" on Sunday, the Nashville Predators built an outdoor rink that opened Feb. 1, and will remain open until Feb. 23.

The 70 x 36 oval ice rink named The Rink on Broadway, will also be part of NBC Network and Hockey Day in America's 10-hour broadcast Sunday with the show originating from the Bridgestone Arena Plaza. Three games that day begin with Pittsburgh at Detroit at 11:30 a.m., New York Rangers at Boston Bruins at 2:30 p.m., ending with the Preds hosting the St. Louis Blues.

Tennessean LOADED: 02.15.2020

1176521 Nashville Predators

'I don't have a doghouse': John Hynes explains how he distributes playing time

Adam Vingan

Feb 14, 2020

As the Predators trailed 4-0 early in the second period against the Vancouver Canucks on Monday, John Hynes decided to make a point.

Matt Duchene and Filip Forsberg each received six total shifts in the second and third periods, finishing with 10:04 and 11:12 of ice time, respectively. Ryan Johansen played 11:25, and Viktor Arvidsson ended up with 11:36.

Since Hynes became the Predators coach, his message has been consistent.

"You've got to earn your ice time to keep your ice time," he said Wednesday. "That's the only way to eliminate complacency."

But the loss to the Canucks raised an interesting question: How does a coach hold his top skill players accountable while also not hindering the team by benching them?

"We have to have a standard that we're going to play to," Hynes said. "You need your top players to play at a high standard. They need to be

guys that are driving your team. When your top players are playing the way they need to play, they get 20 minutes of ice. But if your top players aren't playing as well as they need to or at the level they need to, you can keep playing them, but they're not going to produce offense."

Johansen, Duchene, Forsberg and Arvidsson, among others, have contributed to the Predators' woes this season, but they're also the players who possess the talent necessary to turn things around before the playoffs fade from view. From afar, it would seem to make the most sense to play your most skilled players as often as possible, as ESPN's Dmitri Filipovic remarked during the Predators' loss to the Toronto Maple Leafs on Jan. 27.

THE PREDATORS WERE TRAILING PRETTY MUCH THE ENTIRE TIME AND THEY WOUND UP PLAYING FILIP FORSBERG 16:22 AND MATT DUCHENE 15:41. THEY'VE BEEN DOING STUFF LIKE THIS ALL YEAR WITH THEIR FORWARDS.

NHL COACH GALAXY BRAIN WHEN IT COMES TO ICE TIME CONTINUES. JUST PLAY YOUR BEST PLAYERS

— DIMITRI FILIPOVIC (@DIMFIPOVIC) JANUARY 28, 2020

But Peter Laviolette didn't subscribe to that theory, and neither has Hynes since he arrived.

ONE CURIOSITY OF LAVIOLETTE'S SEASON IN NASHVILLE IS THAT HE USED A VERY FLAT PROFILE OF FORWARD USAGE, WITH LESS VARIATION BETWEEN TOP AND BOTTOM LINES THAN MOST COACHES. PIC.TWITTER.COM/0EMSGRKQXC

— MICAH BLAKE MCCURDY (@INEFFECTIVEMATH) JANUARY 7, 2020

Under Hynes, who took over as coach before the Predators' 42nd game, Mikael Granlund and Kyle Turris have experienced the biggest spike in ice time among forwards, each averaging two more minutes per game than they did under Laviolette. The other top-six forwards have had their playing time reduced to varying degrees. (Johansen has seen the steepest decline, going from 17:56 per game to 15:50 since the coaching change.)

Hynes wants the Predators to be a "four-line attacking team." Rocco Grimaldi, Nick Bonino and Craig Smith, who combined for four goals Thursday in the Predators' 5-0 win against the New York Islanders, have formed the team's most productive forward combination this season. That line, which has outscored opponents 27-9 at five-on-five and controlled 61.28 percent of expected goals, shouldn't be the Predators' primary source of offense, though.

"I do think it's situational," Hynes said when asked about his distribution of playing time. "The players that you would expect to be top-six forwards or top-four defensemen, you'd like to see those guys playing 18 to 20 minutes, and when they do play that way, they're driving the team. They're putting the other team on their heels, and they're deserving of that ice time. And then there's other times (when) maybe they're not going as well as they need to, and you have other players that are going and (being) productive.

"I think in this league, with the schedule and how hard and how fast the games are, you have to have a team that has depth. ... You'd like to have those guys play (in the) 17- to 20-minute range, and when they're performing well, then they get that ice time. And when (they're) not, you've got to play the guys that are playing the right way."

Hynes met with his top forwards Wednesday to reiterate his expectations, characterizing the conversation as positive. He restored their ice time Thursday; Arvidsson played 15:58, Johansen 15:08, Duchene 14:56 and Forsberg 13:38. (The Predators didn't have a power play against the Islanders.)

As far as Hynes was concerned, they got the message.

"I don't have a doghouse," Hynes said. "(The players and I) have a good relationship. It's honest, but there's expectations and a standard we need to play at. We need to understand that there's skill in the game, but there's will, and your will and your (compete) level allow your skill to come out. It always is a fine balance, but you also have to understand that just because a player's talented doesn't mean they deserve to play (when they're not playing) at a high level. If the standard isn't where it



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needs to be, then you've got to play the guys that are getting the job done."

The Athletic LOADED: 02.15.2020

1176530 New York Rangers

Rangers win fourth straight behind 36 saves from Alexandar Georgiev

MITCH STACY

FEB 14, 2020 | 10:51 PM

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Chris Kreider scored the go-ahead goal in the third period, Alexandar Georgiev had 36 saves and the New York Rangers topped the Columbus Blue Jackets 3-1 on Friday night.

Kreider scored on a wrist shot from the slot with 3:12 left in the game, just 2 seconds after a Rangers' power play ended and Columbus' Jakob Lilja was rushing out of the box. Ryan Strome added an empty-netter with 1:11 left.

Pavel Buchnevich also scored for the Rangers, who have won four straight and are 7-2 in their last nine. They swept a back-to-back, beating Minnesota in a shootout on Thursday night. Friday's win put them within seven points of wild-card teams Columbus and Philadelphia in the Eastern Conference playoff hunt.

Oliver Bjorkstrand got his team-leading 19th goal and Elvis Merzlikins had 25 saves for injury ravaged Columbus, which is winless in its last four games (0-2-2) on the heels of a 10-game points streak.

New York scored off a face-off just 22 seconds into the game when Buchnevich redirected a Jacob Trouba shot from the point high past Merzlikin's glove.

After a sustained attack in the second period in which Columbus outshot New York 22-7, the Blue Jackets were rewarded with some luck. Bjorkstrand tied the game when he took a blind, backhanded swipe at a loose puck and beat Georgiev late in the second.

Columbus' Boone Jenner hit the post on a short-handed breakaway with 4:44 left before Kreider scored the winner.

NOTES: Georgiev started ahead of Igor Shesterkin, who missed his second game with an ankle injury. He is day to day. ... Columbus F Liam Foudy was obligated to go back to London of the Ontario Hockey League to play Friday night after playing Thursday for the NHL team. Jakob Lilja was recalled from Cleveland (AHL) to replace him. ... Blue Jackets D David Savard is the only NHL player with at least 120 blocked shots and 100 hits. ... Columbus still has nine regulars out with injuries, including G Joonas Korpi, D Seth Jones and forward Cam Atkinson. ... New York D Marc Staal returned after missing Thursday night's game with the flu. ... Buchnevich is the NHL's 20th player to score in the opening 22 seconds of a game this season.

New York Daily News LOADED: 02.15.2020

1176531 New York Rangers

Rangers' David Quinn: Pavel Buchnevich putting it together

Brett Cyrgalis

February 15, 2020 | 2:33am

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Pavel Buchnevich's game has been likened to "going to an amusement park," and his pouts have earned the moniker of

"Captain Happy." But he has managed to string together some consistency in his game, and the Rangers couldn't be happier.

Buchnevich scored his second goal in as many games to help the Rangers to a 3-1 victory over the Blue Jackets on Friday night. The 24-year-old Russian winger has 10 points in his past 10 games, including six of his 13 goals this season during that stretch. But more importantly for coach David Quinn — the author of the comedic descriptions above — is the way Buchnevich has played away from the puck.

"The thing about Buchnevich, he's doing all the things that maybe a scorer usually doesn't do," Quinn said Friday night. "His defense has gotten a lot better. He makes a heck of a play defensively in the third period coming by our bench, back-checking, he makes a great poke check and we go the other way.... His wall play was really good. He was in a great position defensively."

His line with Mika Zibanejad (assist, plus-2) and Chris Kreider (goal and assist) finished this three-game road-trip sweep with a combined 12 points.

"That line has been really good for us," Quinn said.

Defenseman Tony DeAngelo sat out for the first time this season after suffering an upper-body injury late in Thursday's game. DeAngelo was leading the Rangers' defensemen with 13 goals and 30 points (sixth in the league among defensemen). Quinn wasn't anticipating being without the 24-year-old blueliner for very long.

"This is going to be short-term," Quinn said.

Quinn said goalie Igor Shesterkin is "close" to being able to return from the minor ankle injury he suffered Tuesday night.

"I don't want to say couldn't have [played Friday]," Quinn said, "but the right thing to do is to not play him."

Defenseman Marc Staal played, though he was a game-time decision after missing Thursday's game with a quick onset of the flu.

That made 20-year-old Joey Keane, called up from AHL Hartford on Friday morning, a scratch.

Brendan Smith stayed in for the second straight game on defense, as the defenseman-turned-winger returned to his longtime position. He played 12:44 in place of DeAngelo on the right side next to Staal.

New York Post LOADED: 02.15.2020

1176532 New York Rangers

Rangers backup goalie Alexandar Georgiev powers Rangers past Blue Jackets

Brett Cyrgalis

February 14, 2020 | 9:52pm

COLUMBUS, Ohio — So here's the kindly jab Rangers coach David Quinn wanted to throw in the wake of calling Igor Shesterkin the team's No. 1 goalie "right now," and in the aftermath of Alex Georgiev posting back-to-back gems, capping off a sweep of the club's three-game road trip with a 3-1 victory over the Blue Jackets on Friday night.

"Well, we're 10-5 with three [goalies], so I'm thinking about bringing up a fourth," Quinn joked, his team actually now 11-5 since they called up Shesterkin on Jan. 6, pushing Henrik Lundqvist to the background with just two starts in those five weeks.

"I know everyone made a big deal of the comment I made, and I said 'right now' [Shesterkin] was our No. 1 guy," Quinn said. "I really feel like we have three No. 1 goalies. At any time, one of them is going to emerge and go on a run."



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"I've been through this before as a coach when you have good goalies, and you tell the guys, 'All right, the guy that's got the hot streak can be the No. 1.' That's kind of the situation we're in."

The situation for the Rangers (30-23-4) is that they have won four in a row for the first time all season (and the first time since Oct. 30-Nov. 6, 2018), picking up three impressive wins on this trip in three difficult buildings.

Shesterkin played the first road game of his career at Winnipeg on Tuesday, earning his sixth win in his first seven starts. But he suffered a minor ankle injury, so Quinn turned to Georgiev for the comeback 4-3 shootout victory at Minnesota on Thursday. Georgiev was back against John Tortorella's stingy Blue Jackets (30-18-11), making 36 saves with Lundqvist watching from the bench yet again.

"[Georgiev] hasn't played a lot, so I wasn't worried about the fact that he was tired," Quinn said. "And he's played well."

It turns out the Rangers are finding a way to play well, too, even if it's not always pretty. Both of these teams were tired from playing in different cities Thursday night (the Blue Jackets lost at Buffalo). The Rangers played simple, smart hockey, keeping Columbus from the high-danger areas and allowing Georgiev to clean up what came his way.

"The whole team accomplished it, not about me," said the 24-year-old Bulgarian. "We played really great defense, made my job real easy. Really glad we got two important wins."

After Pavel Buchnevich got his second goal in as many games with a deft redirection just 22 seconds into the game, the Rangers had to kill off the four minutes of penalties that Buchnevich got midway through the second period for a hold and an unsportsmanlike conduct — and they did just that.

"Our penalty kill was immense," Quinn said.

Yet Oliver Bjorkstrand was able to tie it with 1:08 left in the second period, a backhand whack through traffic that took the game into the third tied, 1-1. Boone Jenner then had a shorthanded breakaway that Georgiev may have gotten a piece of before it hit the post and went out of play — maybe the only distinct odd-man rush the Rangers gave up all night.

Two seconds after that penalty ended, Mika Zibanejad fed Chris Kreider in front for a quick rip from one knee that beat rookie goalie Elvis Merzlikins to give the Blueshirts a 2-1 lead with 3:11 left in regulation.

After Ryan Strome was gifted an empty-netter from Phillip Di Giuseppe, the Rangers knew they had just taken six points in these three road games and they were keeping their faint hope of the playoffs alive.

"We can't get too high and get too excited, and get away from the things that we've been doing well that have led to success," Kreider said. "We have to continue to be humble and continue to work, because that's the cornerstone to the recent success we've had."

That, and great goaltending helps — no matter who it's coming from.

New York Post LOADED: 02.15.2020

1176533 New York Rangers

New York Rangers recall defenseman Joey Keane from AHL Hartford

Vincent Z. Mercogliano

1:08 p.m. ET Feb. 14, 2020

COLUMBUS, Ohio - The New York Rangers have recalled defenseman Joey Keane from AHL Hartford, the team announced Friday.

The 20-year-old has skated in 48 games with the Wolf Pack this season, registering eight goals and 20 assists for 28 points. He played in the

2020 AHL All-Star Challenge and is tied for sixth among AHL defensemen in goals while ranking first among rookie defensemen. Keane had recorded five points (two goals and three assists) in his last six games.

The 6-foot, 187-pounder was a 2018 third-round selection (No. 88 overall) and has risen in status as one of the Rangers' top prospects. He scored six goals in his first 11 games with Hartford, affirming his reputation as a skilled offensive player. But the organization has also raved about his growth in the defensive zone.

"I think everyone saw him score so many goals and so many points that they just labeled him as an offensive defenseman," Hartford coach Kris Knoblauch told the USA TODAY Network last month. "But I think it's his defensive game that's really the thing that stands out for me — how well he defends."

There is no corresponding move with the recall of Keane. The Rangers have been carrying a 22-man roster since Micheal Haley went on injured reserve due to bilateral core muscle surgery, and now Keane fills out the roster as the 23rd man.

The decision to bring Keane up provides depth while fellow defenseman Marc Staal is dealing with the flu. He was replaced in the lineup by Brendan Smith in Thursday's 4-3 shootout win against the Minnesota Wild, but it's possible the Rangers are also concerned about Tony DeAngelo. He appeared to get banged up late in the game against the Wild, although no injury has been confirmed. Like DeAngelo, Keane is a right-handed shot with power-play experience.

Rangers coach David Quinn is scheduled to speak at 5:30 p.m. Friday, prior to the 7 p.m. game in Columbus against the Blue Jackets, and will confirm whether Keane will make his NHL debut that night.

Bergen Record LOADED: 02.15.2020

1176534 New York Rangers

Chris Kreider scores late to give Rangers edge over Blue Jackets

Colin Stephenson

February 15, 2020 12:32 AM

COLUMBUS, Ohio — The skeptics may not believe that the Rangers are legitimate contenders for a playoff spot, but the Rangers themselves certainly do.

"I think it's always been there," an exhausted-looking Mika Zibanejad said in a happy locker room after the Rangers' 3-1 victory over the Columbus Blue Jackets on Friday night. "I think we've shown throughout this season that we can play good hockey and beat any team, really, when we stick to our game. And I think when you start winning a couple, you get more of that belief in the locker room."

The win over Columbus completed a sweep of the Rangers' three-game road trip and extended their winning streak to a season-high four games.

They pulled within seven points of the Blue Jackets and Flyers, who currently hold the two wild-card playoff spots in the Eastern Conference. The Rangers have two games in hand on Columbus and one on Philadelphia.

Chris Kreider's goal with 3:11 remaining broke a 1-1 tie. The Blue Jackets were called for too many men on the ice with 5:13 remaining and Kreider scored two seconds after the power play expired. It was his seventh goal in the last nine games and 10th in 15.

Ryan Strome added an empty-net goal with 1:11 left.

"We've really made some great strides and just continue to play good hockey and at a clutch time right now," coach David Quinn said. "[Thursday] night, coming back the way we did [in a 4-3 shootout win over Minnesota], and then tonight scoring late to win the game. We've



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talked about the fact that we have come together as a team over the last few months.”

Friday’s victory came with newly anointed No. 1 goaltender Igor Shesterkin missing his second straight game with an ankle injury and with the Rangers missing their fourth-leading scorer, defenseman Tony DeAngelo, who suffered an injury to his right shoulder Thursday.

The Blue Jackets certainly have their own injuries and weren’t likely to be too sympathetic to the Rangers, but missing DeAngelo and Shesterkin meant other people had to step up in their place.

Goaltender Alexandar Georgiev was one who did. Once Shesterkin was called up from the minor leagues on Jan. 6, Georgiev looked the most likely to be the odd man out in the Rangers’ three-goaltender situation, and there was plenty of speculation that he could be traded before the Feb. 24 deadline.

He still could, certainly, but Quinn needed Georgiev to come through Thursday and Friday, and he did. He made 36 saves against the Blue Jackets and improved to 14-11-1.

Georgiev was asked what he’s taken from the uncertainty of the three-goalie rotation. “Just that you have to be ready whenever you get the chance to play,” he said. “These are very important games for our team, and you have to be prepared every time.”

Pavel Buchnevich’s second goal in as many nights — and his sixth in 10 games — gave the Rangers a 1-0 lead 22 seconds into the first period, but Oliver Bjorkstrand’s rebound goal with 1:08 left in the second period tied it at 1-1.

The Rangers will face the Bruins on Sunday afternoon at the Garden before going back on the road against Chicago on Wednesday and Carolina on Friday.

Newsday LOADED: LOADED: 02.15.2020

1176535 New York Rangers

Igor Shesterkin is Rangers’ No. 1 goalie, David Quinn says

A Jets shot is stopped by Rangers goaltender A Jets shot is stopped by Rangers goaltender

Colin Stephenson

February 13, 2020 10:48 PM

ST. PAUL, Minn. — Igor Shesterkin is the Rangers’ No. 1 goalie right now, coach David Quinn declared Thursday.

But a tender left ankle, the result of a collision with Winnipeg forward Andrew Copp in Tuesday’s game, kept him out of the lineup for Thursday’s game against the Minnesota Wild. Instead, Alexandar Georgiev, the other 24-year-old Russian goaltender on the roster, got the start.

The Rangers have been carrying three goaltenders since they called up Shesterkin from AHL Hartford on Jan. 6. In his first seven NHL starts, Shesterkin is 6-1, with a 2.18 goals-against average and a .941 save percentage. After Sunday’s 4-1 win over the Los Angeles Kings, in which Shesterkin made 42 saves, Quinn said he was done trying to find ways of rotating the goalies to keep all three sharp. From that point on, he said, the best goaltender would play.

On Thursday, he explained his thinking.

“I think when you get three goalies in the situation we were in, you’re a little bit sensitive to everybody,” Quinn said. “You want to give everybody an opportunity and see how this thing unfolds. I thought everybody had an ample opportunity and everybody had a chance to state their case. And I just felt that Igor had made the most impact and I was in a position to kind of ride him for a little while.”

Shesterkin made his second straight start Tuesday in Winnipeg — his first appearance in a road game — and again made 42 saves in another 4-1 win.

Quinn danced around the question Monday when he was asked if Shesterkin was the No. 1 goaltender. On Thursday, when asked the question again, he answered it definitively.

“Yes,” he said. “Right now, that’s the situation we’re in because of his play, for sure.”

Quinn said Shesterkin would have started Thursday except for the ankle injury. He was knocked down by Copp, who’d been pushed into the goaltender by Rangers defenseman Tony DeAngelo. Shesterkin stayed down for a little while but stayed in the game. After about five minutes of action, an NHL concussion spotter called down and ordered Shesterkin to leave the game, with 6:04 remaining in the first period, to undergo concussion testing.

Henrik Lundqvist replaced him for the rest of the first period, but Shesterkin came back to start the second period and finished the game.

Quinn said Shesterkin’s status is “day-to-day.” He is a possibility to play Friday when the Rangers complete their three-game road trip with the second game of a back-to-back against the Columbus Blue Jackets.

If Shesterkin is unable to play, Quinn will choose between Georgiev and Lundqvist, who now are competing to be the No. 2 goaltender. Before Thursday’s game, the two had the same goals-against average this season (3.12) and nearly identical save percentages (Georgiev’s is .908, Lundqvist’s is .907). Georgiev had appeared in 25 games (23 starts) with a 12-11-1 record; Lundqvist had appeared in 28 (25 starts) with a 10-11-3 record.

Georgiev, who turned 24 on Monday, has served as the backup to Lundqvist since the beginning of last season, so he has experience handling the infrequent starts that backup goaltenders typically have to deal with. Lundqvist has been the No. 1 goaltender for most of his 15 seasons with the Rangers, and he’s used to playing most of the games and being able to get into a playing rhythm. How he would handle going long stretches of time between starts is unknown.

Georgiev got the assignment Thursday. “Well, he’s been a really good goalie for us for a while now,” Quinn said. “We’ve got confidence in all three of our goalies.”

Newsday LOADED: LOADED: 02.15.2020

1176536 New York Rangers

Rangers’ goalie carousel is working

Colin Stephenson

February 15, 2020 1:26 AM

COLUMBUS, Ohio — At Thursday’s morning skate, Rangers coach David Quinn was asked if Igor Shesterkin had become the No. 1 goaltender. With Shesterkin having made 42 saves in Tuesday’s win over Winnipeg, Quinn said that, yes, based on his play, Shesterkin is the No. 1 goaltender right now.

But Shesterkin sat out the last two games with an ankle injury and Alexandar Georgiev backstopped the Rangers to wins on back-to-back nights. So Quinn was asked after Friday night’s 3-1 win over Columbus if his thinking had changed regarding his goaltenders.

“Well, we’re 10-5 with three [goaltenders],” Quinn quipped. “I’m thinking about bringing up a fourth.”

Quinn amended his statement about the No. 1 goaltender. The position is a little more fluid, apparently.



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"I know everybody's made a big deal of the comment I made and I said right now [Shesterkin] was our No. 1," Quinn said. "I really feel like we got three No. 1 goalies and any time, one of them's going to emerge and go on a run. And you know I've been through this before as a coach, where you've got good goalies and you tell the guys, 'All right, guys, whoever's got the hot streak can be the No. 1.' And that's kind of the situation we're in."

Keane called up

With Tony DeAngelo unable to play and the status of Marc Staal in question, the Rangers called up defenseman Joey Keane from AHL Hartford, and the 20-year-old was available to play if needed.

Brendan Smith, who stepped in Thursday when Staal was unable to play in the 4-3 shootout win over Minnesota because of the flu, stayed in the lineup, replacing DeAngelo. Keane was on hand to step in for Staal in the event he had to miss a second straight game. Staal was able to play, so Keane was scratched and did not make his NHL debut.

"We liked him an awful lot in training camp," Quinn said. "He skates real well, he competes, he's got good puck skills, and the thing I think he's really done a good job of down there, from all the times I've talked with Kris [Knoblauch, the Hartford coach], is he's really honed his game. You know there's a simplicity to his game that maybe there wasn't early on in his pro career because you know when you get that much offensive ability . . . You try to do that at this level, there is an adjustment you have to make."

DeAngelo hurt his shoulder on a body check late in the third period of Thursday's game. DeAngelo, who had an assist in the game and is having a career year with 13 goals and 30 assists in 56 games, went to the bench hunched over and favoring his right shoulder after the hit and was not on the ice when the Rangers pulled Georgiev for an extra skater. Mika Zibanejad tied the score with 1:06 remaining and DeAngelo was able to play during the five-minute, three-on-three overtime.

The 6-foot, 187-pound Keane played in the AHL All-Star Challenge last month. Like DeAngelo, he is a righthanded-shooting defenseman who runs the point on the power play. He has eight goals and 20 assists in 48 games for Hartford and ranks sixth in goals among AHL defensemen. He has five points (two goals, three assists) in his last six games.

Newsday LOADED: LOADED: 02.15.2020

1176537 New York Rangers

Pavel Buchnevich could be in store for another late-season surge, but will it be with the Rangers?

Rick Carpiello

Feb 14, 2020

Important building block or important trade piece?

Trade him while his value is high, or keep him because he's playing so well?

This is the enigma that is Pavel Buchnevich.

He did this in February and March of last season, too. He played terrific hockey, produced, got his nose dirty, defended and won pucks. Mostly, he was engaged.

He's doing it again now, and this is where you see the potential of a 24-year-old.

But lately, after some motivation from coach David Quinn, who briefly demoted him in the lineup, Buchnevich has again reacted the right way.

If he didn't need that push every now and then, there wouldn't be a question that the Rangers would keep him at the trade deadline — now

nine days away — that he'd be a centerpiece to the rebuild. But he does need it, and he does respond to it.

Buchnevich, for a while now, has figured out that the Rangers need him to score goals. Yes, he's a good passer, a very good passer. But there's no reason he shouldn't score. He finished with 21 goals last season after his surge down the stretch. He's up to 13 this season after his first-period goal in the Rangers' 3-1 win Friday, but that's because he didn't shoot enough earlier in the campaign.

Score or not, though, the Rangers needed Buchnevich to be engaged and playing with some passion, as he also did down the stretch last season, especially when he replaced Mats Zuccarello after the trade deadline.

Buchnevich is certainly doing that now, and Quinn has praised him for all of those things — defensive awareness, playing hard in tough areas of the ice, and of course, scoring.

Buchnevich scored the first goal of the game Friday, a deflection from the high slot, 22 seconds after the opening faceoff. Chris Kreider — Buchnevich's close friend and confidant, who, like Zuccarello, could be dealt by Feb. 24 — scored the tiebreaker in the third period Friday. There apparently is still some hope the Rangers can get Buchnevich to accept a deal to stay. Buchnevich and Mika Zibanejad, who is both the team's best center and best 200-foot player, create a formidable and dangerous line when Buchnevich plays this way.

After Friday's tally, Buchnevich now has six goals and 10 points in the past 10 games. Kreider and Zibanejad are on fire, as well. When Buchnevich deflected Jacob Trouba's shot past goalie Elvis Merzlikins, Buchnevich mimicked playing a guitar solo on his hockey stick, playfully mocking Merzlikins' "Elvis" guitar skit he does after wins.

PIC.TWITTER.COM/F2RZZQPHXJ

— SHAYNA (@HAYYYSHAYYY) FEBRUARY 15, 2020

And, yeah, Buchnevich still isn't perfect. At one point in a second period dominated by Columbus, Buchnevich was whistled for one of those ultra-soft, new-era NHL penalties for holding. He took one hand off the stick and lightly nudged an opposing player while, at the same time, doing the kind of thing his coaches want him to do. He was tenaciously chasing down and nullifying an icing.

Buchnevich, frustrated with the call, said something to one of the officials — and I can confirm that, while he doesn't do a lot of interviews in English, he has a firm grasp of the swear words. I don't know which, if any, he used, but he put his team in a bad spot. The Rangers were leading 1-0 at the time and were facing a four-minute Columbus power play.

The Rangers' surging penalty kill — their special teams has been fabulous for a long stretch now — killed it off, and when Buchnevich got back to the bench, it appeared assistant coach David Oliver, and perhaps some teammates, told Buchnevich to do the right thing. And it appeared he went down the bench and thanked the penalty killers. He is learning, or being taught, to do the right things.

Another funny thing happened. Quinn put him back on the ice for his next shift.

👉 PIC.TWITTER.COM/I381ANM0QV

— SHAYNA (@HAYYYSHAYYY) FEBRUARY 15, 2020

There is a myth that Quinn dislikes Buchnevich, which couldn't be more false. The coach has some projects in this rebuild, and Buchnevich is one of them. Quinn coaches him up. Up and down, actually. They talk frequently at practice. And Quinn couldn't be happier when this particular player shines.

Thoughts

1) So by sweeping this trip through Winnipeg, Minnesota and Columbus, the Rangers have, for the first time this season, won four in a row. They are 30-23-4.

Yeah, they can finally sniff a playoff spot, but they're still seven points out of the last wild-card spot with three teams ahead of them. They are 5-1 in



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their past six games. They still have an outside chance of making the playoffs, but it's still not very likely.

2) When you watch Igor Shesterkin getting acclimated to the NHL and can tell right away he's going to be a top goalie for a long time, it's kind of easy to forget Alexandar's talent. And Georgiev is actually younger (Shesterkin turned 24 on Dec. 30, Georgiev turned 24 on Monday). With Shesterkin injured in the Winnipeg game, the "other" youngster got the call for a back-to-back set and was terrific, if not exceptional. Georgiev has a lot of Henrik Lundqvist's competitiveness and a lot of Shesterkin's quickness. The only thing he's missing is experience, and that is perhaps why the Rangers couldn't trade him for top value even if they wanted to. But I don't think they want to, and I think the three-goalie system is going to last into the summer. And nobody knows how it will settle out. The only thing we likely know is that Shesterkin is going to remain with the Rangers.

Georgiev is 11-4 on the road this season and has won four of six since Shesterkin (6-1) arrived.

3) Good Tony, Bad Tony: After suffering an apparent shoulder injury late in the game against the Wild on Thursday, Tony DeAngelo — who shoved Winnipeg's Andrew Copp into Shesterkin and caused his ankle injury — missed Friday's game. So rookie righty Joey Keane was called up from Hartford. But with Marc Staal returning from the flu, Keane was scratched for Brendan Smith. Yeah, it doesn't make sense to me, either, even though Smith played really well in an emergency situation on Thursday. And he was pretty good again Friday, this time on the right side, with Staal, who had another big game. Anyway, Adam Fox moved to the first power-play unit in DeAngelo's spot. And that move turned out to be critical in the eventual outcome.

Or could another team have interest in Smith and the Rangers want to showcase him? I doubt it.

4) The Wild fired coach Bruce Boudreau on Friday, a day after his team lost to the Rangers. Former Devils coach John Hynes was let go a couple of days after his team lost to the Rangers. Peter DeBoer was fired in December, one day before the Rangers played the Sharks.

5) Remember how bad the Rangers were on faceoffs in Minnesota on Thursday? Twenty-two seconds after the start of the game on Friday, Zibanejad won a faceoff back to Trouba, who took a shot that Buchnevich deflected out of mid-air and past Merzlikins, who had five shutouts in his past 10 games, to give the Rangers a 1-0 lead. Merzlikins stuffed a Zibanejad wraparound off the rush from Buchnevich later in the first period.

OUR FAVORITE TYPE OF VALENTINE ... A @NYRANGERS GOAL!  
PIC.TWITTER.COM/YIRRBNJ2FU

— RANGERS ON MSG (@RANGERSMSGN) FEBRUARY 15, 2020

6) Brady Skjei backed off way too much in Minnesota on Thursday and did it again early in Columbus on Friday. I still think he has all the tools to be a good defenseman ... but as was the case last season and the season before, his decision-making is often just a tick or two too slow, and costly. I think there'll be a market for him in the next nine days.

7) The Rangers' streak of good luck that began in Minnesota continued in the final minute of the first period when Skjei tripped his defense partner, Trouba, and the penalty was called on Columbus' Eric Robinson. Blue Jackets coach John Tortorella vehemently disagreed with the call. The Rangers' power play was split by the intermission, and it was decent on both sides, but didn't score.

TORTS DID NOT LIKE THAT PENALTY CALL  
PIC.TWITTER.COM/XVJZ3TOECK

— TOM URTZ JR. (@TOMURTZJR) FEBRUARY 15, 2020

8) With some really good hustle, Buchnevich beat Zach Werenski down the ice to nullify an icing in the second period. But Buchnevich was whistled for holding against Werenski on a questionable call. Buchnevich didn't like it, said the magic word, apparently in English, and got an additional two minutes for unsportsmanlike conduct. Extraordinary officiating.

LINDGREN GOT A LITTLE V-DAY KISS FROM THE PUCK 🍷 #NYR |  
@NYRANGERS PIC.TWITTER.COM/JAU3JHADFE

— RANGERS ON MSG (@RANGERSMSGN) FEBRUARY 15, 2020

9) Ryan Lindgren — big as the building, as Torts would say — took a puck in the mouth and was bleeding in the defensive zone as the Rangers got pinned (Kaapo Kakko gave Lindgren his stick, complicating matters). Lindgren is freakin' tough as a \$3 steak. Smith had the honor of awarding the Broadway Hat and gave it to Lindgren, calling him "the warrior." And that's the kind of thing good teams do. Smith's teammates gave him the hat 24 hours earlier for his emergency fill-in on defense. Not saying this is a particularly good team, but it's headed toward being that someday.

10) Late in the second period, which was dominated by the Blue Jackets, Oliver Bjorkstrand, in a four-man crowd with Trouba and Skjei, chipped a back-hander that Georgiev didn't appear to see as it floated up under the crossbar to tie the score 1-1.

ANOTHER LOOK AT THE FINISH BY BJORKSTRAND. #CBJ  
PIC.TWITTER.COM/PFTABCNB2S

— ALISON (@ALISONL) FEBRUARY 15, 2020

11) Daily Bread: Artemi Panarin was booed again in his return to Columbus — he scored the game-winner the first time back — and he had another typical Panarin game, only he had a harder time finishing. Early in the third, he sent a rebound over the crossbar behind Merzlikins.

12) Kakko-Meter: After a second period in which the Rangers spent very little time in the offensive zone (and a first period in which they did), the young line of Kakko, Filip Chytil and Phil Di Giuseppe did just that. They've been good on the forecheck for a while now, especially Chytil and Kakko ... though sometimes they tend to peel away from defenders toward the boards instead of going toward the net. They'll learn. They're learning. Di Giuseppe, a bit older, is just built to forecheck.

13) Columbus, which got away with eight men on the ice earlier in the game, got whistle for too many men with 5:13 left the third period — a gigantic opportunity for the Rangers in a 1-1 game. But they gave up a wide-open shorthanded breakaway to Boone Jenner, whose shot might have glanced off Georgiev and off the post. Though really, it was the outside of the post, if anything, and I'm not sure Georgiev gave him much else.

A VERY HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY TO US ALL 💙❤️ #NYR |  
@NYRANGERS PIC.TWITTER.COM/NNIJMUHLHY

— RANGERS ON MSG (@RANGERSMSGN) FEBRUARY 15, 2020

14) As the power play expired, and with the Blue Jackets out of gas, a couple of keep-ins by Panarin and Fox kept the play alive. Fox sent a fairly remarkable backhanded saucer pass down the left wing to Zibanejad, who found Kreider alone in the slot for a one-timer to take a 2-1 lead. Kreider remains hot (17-12-29 in his past 28) and the most cherished player on the trade market ... unless he signs.

15) After an icing, with the Jackets on a six-on-five, Ryan Strome won a big draw, and Panarin and Di Giuseppe set up Strome's empty-netter for a 3-1 advantage.

Shayna Goldman's analysis

- Columbus had the slightest edge in the shot battle at even strength, but the Rangers had the lead in quality chances, taking 58.7 percent of the expected goal share.

- In all situations, Ryan Strome led with seven shot attempts and an individual expected goal total of 0.82. At even strength, Pavel Buchnevich's five attempts and 0.36 xG ranked the highest.

- The Rangers tilted the ice the most with the KZB line deployed. Not only did each register a point, but below the surface, the team took over 60 percent of the shot share at even strength and 70 percent of the xG share with them on the ice. Adam Fox and Ryan Lindgren gave New York the biggest boost from the backend.

- Individually, Kreider led with a +11 shot differential while Lindgren's .69 xG differential ranked the highest. The Rangers created the most offense in terms of quantity (22 shot attempts) and quality (1.24 xG for) with Fox on the ice.



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- Kreider keeps heating up with a power-play goal that ended up as the game-winner. So far in 2020, he's up to 11 goals and 16 points in 17 games.
- Fox led the Rangers in ice time against the Blue Jackets. His career-high in minutes is still 24.5 against the Bruins on Nov. 29, but his time over the past two games has climbed up to his second (23.7 against Minnesota) and third (23.4 against Columbus) highest of the season.
- Alexandar Georgiev stopped 36 of the 37 shots put on net. He was 2.48 percent above the expected save percentage and prevented 1.34 more goals than expected.
- With nine skaters in the top 10, the Rangers ranked highly in game score, which blends traditional and advanced statistics for a single value. Kreider's 3.48 ranked the best of all skaters and was a season-high for him. Rounding out the top five were Mika Zibanejad (2.66), Fox (2.42), Buchnevich (1.97), and Strome (1.80).

The Athletic LOADED: 02.15.2020

1176616 Websites

The Athletic / Duhatschek: Anniversaries of the Miracle on Ice, Canada's Golden Goal and the thread that links them

By Eric Duhatschek Feb 14, 2020 22

Two important hockey anniversaries are coming up later this month, both of which qualify as "where-were-you-when" moments in time.

The first is the 40th anniversary of the Miracle on Ice, the U.S. victory over a heavily favored Soviet Union team at the 1980 Olympics in Lake Placid, which spurred unprecedented growth of hockey in the United States and paved the way for hundreds of American-born players to make their way to the NHL.

The second is the 10th anniversary of Canada's overtime win over the United States in the gold-medal game at the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver. Like the U.S. victory in Lake Placid, it came before an appreciative hometown audience. Unlike the U.S. victory — which featured a plucky underdog group — it came amid a weight of pressure and expectation that has rarely been felt in a major international competition.

If there's a single thread that can perhaps link together the two disparate events, separated by 30 years, it may well be Anaheim Ducks goaltender Ryan Miller.

Miller was born in July of 1980, less than six months after a U.S. team led by Jim Craig's goaltending and the timeliest goal of Mike Eruzione's career defeated the Russians in the next-to-last game of the Olympic medal round. It prompted commentator Al Michaels to utter the immortal phrase 'do you believe in miracles?' and when the U.S. completed its run to the gold medal two days later with a victory over Finland, it set in motion a miraculous growth in the sport of hockey in the U.S. By the time Miller led the American to overtime of the gold-medal game against Canada in 2010, there was nothing miraculous about the achievement. The U.S. had become an international power in its own right.

As a youngster growing up in Lansing, Michigan, Miller will tell you the Miracle on Ice made a lasting impression on him.

"Being a goaltender, Jim Craig was a household name for me," Miller said. "Even though I missed seeing it live and it was a few more years before I became conscious of what it meant, it was still a storied event — part of the folklore for us as young kids. It spanned generations.

"And I can tell you, before the overtime in Vancouver, the question in our dressing room was, 'who's going to be Eruzione?' So, it was on the guys' minds — that we had a chance to do something cool. It didn't quite work out the same way — not the fairy tale ending we'd imagined — but it certainly was on our minds."

Miller's reference was to the sudden death of the 2010 gold-medal final when Sidney Crosby — on a pass from Jarome Iginla — scored the Golden Goal to give Canada the victory, which resulted in an ear-ringing celebration, in the arena and the streets of Vancouver. It wasn't much consolation after the fact, but Miller was voted the tournament's most valuable player — and his goaltending was one of, if not the primary reason, the Americans went as far as they did.

Even now, however, Miller says he still hasn't quite come to terms with settling for a silver medal in that tournament.

"The medal is still in the sock drawer," he said. "My wife just yelled at me about it too. She said, 'you had a great tournament. You guys were not picked to finish so highly. It was supposed to be a transitional time for U.S. hockey.' But we came together and had a great group and I'm very proud of what we did.

"It's just really hard to accept losing. I had a drug test after my interviews and I just kind of sat there and thought about what had just happened. We had missed the opening ceremonies; there was no chance we could walk in them; so, I'd told myself: 'If I'm still in town for the closing ceremonies, it means something cool is happening, so I'm going to walk in them.' After we lost, I just told myself, 'you're still going to do that; put a smile on your face and enjoy that moment.'

"For me, it actually sunk in more later, how close we were. Ever since, it's just constantly been like, 'man ...'"

Lost in the mists of time was the fact that back in 1980, at Lake Placid, Canada also came close to recording its own Miracle on Ice against the Russians. They were ahead 4-3 after 40 minutes, but couldn't hold on and failed to qualify for the final medal round.

But close? Yes, they were close. And coming so close rankled as much for them as it does for Miller now.

Curiously though, members of Canada's 1980 team such as Jim Nill, general manager of the Dallas Stars, can acknowledge the U.S. victory was a critical step in the growth of the sport in the United States.

"I wouldn't be sitting here in Dallas now, doing what I'm doing today if it wasn't for what the Americans did at the 1980 Olympics," Nill said. "When I look back at what the 1980 Olympics did for hockey in the United States — it changed everything."

It's because in 1980, there were only a handful of U.S.-born players in the NHL and the ones that were there didn't possess megawatt star power. But the gold-medal win in 1980 set in motion a boom to the point where now 240 American-born players have played at least one game in the NHL this season, second behind Canada (404).

Miller grew up in the thick of that boom. In some respects, the Millers are to U.S. hockey what the Sutters are to Canadian hockey — a sprawling, multi-generational family that feels the sport in its collective bones.

Up until the 1980 breakthrough, the vast majority of U.S.-born players held modest goals for their hockey careers — college scholarships and perhaps the chance to play in the Olympics. But that victory forced the NHL to take greater notice of this cohort of players. Many of the 1980 gold medalists forged successful NHL careers — and it became clear to every U.S.-born player that followed that the NHL was an increasingly viable option.

Miller, like the rest of his generation, said he had an eye on both goals — moving through the ranks, testing himself at every new level, to see how far he could go.

"I was in a unique position because I got to see my family members wear all different crests," Miller said. "There was a lot of hockey I wanted to play. For me, the feeling was, 'if they can do it, I can do it.' Where some people might look and say, 'I'd love to do that someday — but what are the odds?' My approach was: 'Well, they did it. They're from the same town, the same family and we do all pretty much the same things, so it didn't feel so far away.

"My cousins (Kelly, Kevin and Kip) all went to Michigan State, where I grew to love the game. Kevin played in the Olympics, Kelly was one of the last cuts of the '84 team. Then there was the NHL. They were all able to play pro hockey and play in the NHL. So, for me, it was a blend — an awareness of the Olympics but also the dream of playing in the NHL."



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By 2002, Miller had realized the first of those dreams. After being selected in the seventh round, 138th overall, of the 1999 NHL Draft by the Buffalo Sabres, he made his NHL debut in the 2002-03 season, getting into 15 games. In the lockout season of 2004-05, Miller won a league-leading 41 games for the Sabres' farm team in Rochester. The next year, he won 30 regular-season NHL games and 11 more in the playoffs for the Sabres.

But 2009-10 was the year it all came together. He went 41-18-8 for Buffalo, won the Vezina Trophy, was a first-team NHL All-Star and at the Olympics, on top of tournament MVP honors, he made the All-Star team and was selected as the best goaltender.

As of Thursday, he was tied with Mike Vernon for 15th on the NHL's career wins list, with 385. But at the age of 39, Miller says he's not quite ready to do a career retrospective just yet – which is what he told his wife, Noureen DeWulf, when she was quizzing him about the proper place to store his 2010 Olympic silver medal.

"I just don't want to take time to think about it at the moment," Miller said. "That's what I kind of told her: I just can't change my perspective and I don't want to put too much on it right now. It's a weird situation – you can be happy and disappointed about it at the same time, so you just let it be what it is.

"I've been trying to realign that energy for a long time, and just hasn't come to the point where I can work through it. I'll have a better place for it in time. That's why I think Noureen and some people are surprised I don't have a different perspective because it's been 10 years. But for me, I haven't set aside the time to think about it. You live your life and you keep doing what you do. I still like to play hockey.

"ALSO: People want to let certain things define their entire life – for good and bad. I don't think, even your best moments should define your entire life. And your bittersweet moments, I don't think should either. I just try to live my life where that happened. It was a lot of fun with that group. I'm glad I got to do it with a lot of the same guys four years later in Sochi and have another experience and proud to represent the country. To tie it back into where you started, when you see so much of the footage of Miracle on Ice and what it meant to people to have pride in their country and what sports can capture. You can be unapologetic about it.

"I do think we did something good for USA Hockey – not at the Miracle on Ice level – but we pushed things forward. We represented ourselves well. I'm happy about that – but it'll probably take until I wrap my career up to get to a different place."

The near Miracle on Ice

Canada's 1980 men's Olympic had half-a-dozen players that went on to have NHL careers, including the most talented of the bunch, Glenn Anderson, who went on to win Stanley Cups in Edmonton and New York and eventually made it to the Hall of Fame. But it also included Anderson's fellow Oiler, Randy Gregg, plus future long-time NHLers such as Paul MacLean, Tim Watters and Nill, who made the Olympic team after being captain of the University of Calgary team.

Canada needed to defeat the Soviets to advance to the final round and Nill said that they had some confidence based on "playing them all year and played them pretty tight.

"At the Rude Pravo tournament in Czech, I still remember Bobby Orr was over there (in September, 1979) and he gave us a bit of a pep talk beforehand," Nill recalled. "Then he spoke to our coaches after and told them: 'I wish you luck because you've got a bunch of young kids and they're going to get their eyes poked out.' We lost the game but it wasn't a blowout (a 6-4 defeat). We played the Russians a number of other times during the year and they were all tight games. I don't know if people knew that the U.S. had a pretty good team, but we had a pretty good team too.

"The U.S. and us had played numerous times throughout the year. They were all great games. We might have beaten them a little more than they beat us, but overall, it was a pretty close series. I remember the game against the Russians, we came out and scored early and it was a close game right to the end. I'm sure the U.S. saw our game and what we did and saw the Russians were a little bit vulnerable — and it probably gave them some hope."

Nill said it was difficult to accept the loss to the Soviets, which practically no one remembers because the Canadians thought they were really "close but far away. It did hurt. It's like with everything. Before you win, you have to learn how to lose. Unfortunately, you don't get a second chance at the Olympics. Afterward, you think: I'd like to do that one more time because I would handle things differently. That's how I left there. You came so close. You're heartbroken. Then the Americans go on and win it – and you played against them all year and you knew you were just as good as them. But on the flip side, good for them, congratulations."

With the benefit of hindsight – and the passing of time – Nill says there probably couldn't have been a better result for the overall growth of hockey in the United States.

"Back then, you had college hockey, but hockey wasn't in Florida or Texas or as big as it is now," Nill said. "Then here are these college kids that go and beat the big Red Russian machine – and that put hockey on the map. If those guys don't win, do we have hockey everywhere we do now? I don't know. People in Alabama were talking about the 1980 Olympic hockey team. People in Florida were talking about hockey. It brought people together. That stoked the fires of hockey in the U.S."

And while a percentage of those people may never have thought about hockey again, enough became fans of the sport once they were exposed to it.

"It turned the wick up," Nill said. "The fire got hotter."

After losing to Czechoslovakia in the meaningless fifth-place game, the Canadian team went home right away.

Nill was back in Hanna, Alberta, watching the U.S.-Soviet game.

"We were staying in the penitentiary, which is where the athlete's village was," Nill said. "There wasn't enough housing, so once your event was over, they got you out of there. That's the other thing people forget – Lake Placid was a town of 2,000 people. You don't see that any more. So, we bused up to Montreal and all flew home from there.

"I was just a fan then like everybody else. You prepare all year and then you get there and everything happens so fast. Then you lose – and you're done and you're going home. That was the tough part. That's why I say, you'd loved to do it again. But I'm good friends with most of the Americans on that team – played with some and played against them all. In a way, that game became almost North America against the Russians. I was so happy for them. They changed the landscape of hockey in the U.S. And it's really hard to believe it happened so many years ago."

And finally ...

David McNab is currently the senior vice president of hockey operations for Anaheim, and his 40-year career in NHL administration began right around the time of the Miracle on Ice. He had played goal for the University of Wisconsin on their 1977 NCAA championship team and was best friends with Mark Johnson and teammates with Bob Suter. Working for the Washington Capitals at the time, McNab attended the first four games of the Olympic tournament but had to leave Lake Placid because he'd been assigned to scout a weekend college series in Grand Forks, N.D.

From his hotel room, he watched the U.S.-Russia game on tape delay and didn't know the outcome, the same as the rest of the country. McNab remembers that there was far more attention being paid to the speed-skating exploits of Eric Heiden, who also from Madison, Wisconsin, than to the hockey team. Heiden went on to win five gold medals and became the darling of the ABC broadcasts.

"Even when you were in Lake Placid, you couldn't feel a lot of excitement over the hockey team," McNab said. "I mean, the first game against Sweden wasn't even sold out. After the second game – the Czech game – that was where it started to change because they slaughtered the Czechs and at that point, it seemed as if they at least had a chance to play for a medal. I don't think anybody was thinking first place, but they realized they had a good team.

"In the third, you kept waiting for the Russians to score. Mark's goal at the end of the first, which caused them to pull Tretiak, was a defining moment. That changed the whole dynamic of the game. They score an



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amazing goal to tie it, and now Tretiak's out of the game, you think something could be happening here.

"But more people watched the games in their minds after the fact than actually watched it that day because there wasn't any great anticipation. They probably turned it on in the middle and saw it was 2-2 and then watched it from there."

Once the Olympics ended, the NHL doors slowly creaked open. Ken Morrow went on to record a unique double – he joined the New York Islanders and was part of their run to the 1980 Stanley Cup championship.

Craig signed with the Atlanta Flames. Even though Atlanta was extremely deep in goal – with Dan Bouchard, Pat Riggin and Rejean Lemelin in the system – attendance was dreadful. Craig's presence in the lineup was thought to create interest in a team that ultimately survived only a handful more months in the Georgia city.

According to McNab, the Penguins only had a lukewarm interest in Johnson, until he scored virtually all the key goals for the Americans in the tournament.

"I know for an absolute fact that Mark was going to have to go back to college, had they not won that game," McNab said. "Pittsburgh had no interest. Even when it was over, they were sort of forced into signing him. It absolutely opened doors for players.

"It opened up hockey in the United States. Without question, it was the single most important event in the history of U.S. hockey in terms of getting people excited and interested in the sport. Why did so many people start to play hockey in the 1980s, when there was this big boom? It was because of the Olympics. So many young kids wanted to emulate those guys.

"We all say that thing, 'where were you when?' But how many events are there really where you can say that? Very, very few. There were two events in hockey that'll never be matched, the '72 Summit Series in Canada and the '80 Olympics in the States. No way. Impossible. And it was because everything about that event was positive. Everyone was excited. Everyone was proud. Usually, people don't care very much about the gold-medal presentation, but that event was one of the great moments in people's lives – Mike Eruzione calling everyone to the stage.

"I don't remember another gold-medal presentation ever, but I remember that one. It wasn't like it would be today – where there'd be agents and endorsements around all the players. There was none of that. They just played and they won and they left. People will sometimes pull in the political angle – what was going on between the U.S. and Russia – but this was just a great moment by a really good bunch of guys who just kept to themselves and never cheapened the moment. And it was for a whole country, not a lot of whom were hockey fans. So, I think it was the single, greatest event in this country for exploding hockey. I just wish there'd been more reunions.

"They were like the Beatles. You always wanted them to get back together."

The Athletic LOADED: 02.15.2020

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The Athletic / Roundtable reaction: Making sense of the surprising timing behind Bruce Boudreau's firing

By Craig Custance Feb 14, 2020 229

The feeling out process is over. Minnesota Wild GM Bill Guerin is putting his imprint on his team — first, he traded forward Jason Zucker to the Pittsburgh Penguins. Now, he's made his first head coaching change.

On Friday, Bruce Boudreau was fired and replaced by assistant coach Dean Evason on an interim basis. To make sense of a move that comes

at a curious time, The Athletic's hockey writers convened on a roundtable to talk it out:

Scott Burnside: Didn't see that coming at all. But given the coaching carnage of this season maybe I should have. I think lots of folks imagined Guerin might look to install his own coach at some point but figured that would likely be this summer. Instead, Boudreau, one of the most successful regular-season coaches in NHL history, becomes the eighth coach dismissed this season despite having coached the Wild into the thick of a playoff race they have no business being in.

Whether it's the right decision won't be known until the playoffs start and it won't look good if the Wild stumbles back out of the picture, which could happen. As for Boudreau, his penchant for getting maximum results from flawed teams in the regular season suggests he won't be out of work long. Certainly Seattle GM Ron Francis has a who's who of coaching elite now to consider for the team's first-ever head coach.

Craig Custance: First, according to an NHL source, this was purely a hockey-related decision. It's a question we have to ask, in light of the off-ice coaching changes this season. And really, considering what Boudreau has to work with in Minnesota, the hockey wasn't all THAT bad. It's hard to win when you don't get consistent goaltending and, still, the Wild have managed to stay in the playoff race.

I'll never fault a general manager for wanting their guy, someone whose coaching reflects the way the GM wants to play. So Guerin gets to make this call. But if I'm another GM, not sold on my team right now, Boudreau is right at the top of the list of calls I'm making. The big winner here will be the team that hires Boudreau next.

Mike Russo: I'm very shocked today. The team had points in eight of their last 11 games. They've gotten really poor goaltending even though all the advanced stats tell you they give up near the fewest high-danger chances in the league. You have to credit the coaching there. It had to be a hard existence every single day for Bruce Boudreau to wake up knowing that there was almost zero chance he'd be the coach next year.

This is a sign Guerin wants to make the playoffs. This is a guy who makes this move knowing they're within three points of a playoff spot. There are definitely guys in that room not playing well right now — the top two lines, the way they've been playing and deployed has been troubling for Guerin. Eric Staal has been bad since before the all-star break. Mats Zuccarello has been terrible lately and they can't find him a spot. All of that factors into this decision.

Pierre LeBrun: All Boudreau does is get his teams in the playoffs every year. And the fact this Wild team is even within a sniff of it is a testament to his coaching prowess. But you started to hear whispers over the last few weeks that Boudreau and Guerin weren't on the same page as far as where the program was headed. Which is completely natural. Guerin inherited Boudreau, they had no history together, and their visions for the team can't possibly be the same.

I would imagine seeing Jets coach Paul Maurice extended this week in his own division might have made Boudreau feel like he needed an answer on his own future. Which you can understand if that was the case, although I don't know that. With Boudreau's coaching contract expiring, it made sense for Guerin to want to pick his own guy. That's normal. But make no mistake, Boudreau is a hell of a coach and will be in demand this offseason. Imagine a world in which Boudreau, Gerard Gallant, Mike Babcock and Peter Laviolette are all free agents at the same time. Holy mama. That's a deep class of talented coaches up for grabs.

Sean McIndoe: I guess I can't call this a surprise because Boudreau has been on all the Hot Seat lists for a few years now and had a GM who didn't hire him. But the timing is obviously odd, with the Wild playing well and inching back into the race. My assumption when I first saw the news was that Guerin had one of the other big names ready to step in, but apparently not. So I can't say I really get it, and some other team is going to wind up with an excellent coach when Boudreau gets snapped up.

Dom Luszczyzyn: Usually coaching changes make sense. This one doesn't. Boudreau has consistently been one of the league's best coaches with only Scotty Bowman having a better career winning percentage and the Wild are surging of late, going 7-3-1 over their last 11 to inch closer to a potential playoff spot. Minnesota's current chances



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stand at 38 percent and a lot of credit for that has to go to Boudreau – I mean, just look at the roster he's been handed. It's one that many expected to be in the league's bottom five and instead, they're on an 88-point pace despite brutal goaltending.

And I mean, maybe that's the point? The Wild are stuck in purgatory and firing Boudreau might be their second step (trading Zucker being the first) toward a stealth tank to improve their future. Any other reason is not one I can comprehend.

The Athletic LOADED: 02.15.2020

1176618 Websites

The Athletic / DGB Grab Bag: Trade deadline rumors, when goalies get traded and breaking down some awkward NHL ads

By Sean McIndoe Feb 14, 2020 101

The NHL trade deadline is almost here, which you may not know because the media doesn't write about it very much. But with only 10 days left, GMs are hard at work coming up with excuses and maybe, in rare cases, also making a few trades.

But which teams will do what? My spies have been gathering intel from sources around the league, and have supplied a few scoops on how the deadline is shaping up for various teams.

Buffalo Sabres – Jason Botterill says his phone has been ringing constantly for the last few weeks, although if you press him for details he admits that 95 percent of the calls are just Duane yelling "WAIT ONE MORE THING."

Montreal Canadiens – Have several holes which could be filled by Chris Kreider, all of which are in the town square pillory they built for him after the 2014 playoffs.

Minnesota Wild – Just acquired Alex Galchenyuk a few days ago, so are probably mainly focused on trading away Alex Galchenyuk.

San Jose Sharks – There's talk that Joe Thornton might prefer to go to a team where he'd have a better chance at a Stanley Cup, which narrows the list down to "literally anyone who isn't this year's Sharks."

Columbus Blue Jackets – Will serve as a cautionary example that any team that goes all-in on short-term success at this year's deadline will be putting themselves at serious risk of having a lot of fun in the playoffs and then being even better next year.

Arizona Coyotes – Have adamantly denied reports that they could flip Taylor Hall to a contender, and will instead remain laser-focused on their one key goal for this season, which is apparently winning the draft lottery.

Boston Bruins – Will certainly be looking to make a move during the only week of the season in which the NHL allows trading, says Don Sweeney, before awkwardly asking why everyone is staring at him.

Colorado Avalanche – Will look to use their league-leading \$30 million in deadline day cap space to address their biggest need, somebody to distract their fans from wondering if it's weird that they're not already using all that cap space.

Chicago Blackhawks – It's become conventional wisdom that teams with a chance at making the playoffs should try to add talent at the deadline but it's theoretically possible that the Blackhawks might too.

Detroit Red Wings – Have been receiving constant calls from contenders about their most talented player but so far Steve Yzerman doesn't sound like he's interested in a comeback.

Toronto Maple Leafs – Are totally going to address their blue line by trading William Nylander for your favorite team's fifth defenseman, just post it one more time on Twitter and it's a done deal for sure.

Carolina Hurricanes – Will address their tricky roster decision the same way that's always worked in the past: By letting Marc Bergevin do all the work and then matching his offer while laughing hysterically.

Vancouver Canucks – Some team can probably bamboozle widely mocked and maligned rube Jim Benning out of some valuable future asset, like the GM of the Year trophy he's going to win in June.

Ottawa Senators – Everyone at team headquarters is actively selling as long as you don't count the ticket department.

Nashville Predators – David Poile has been focused on a strategy of making smaller deals involving an exchange of late-round draft picks, then writing "and also Kyle Turris" in the margin and hoping nobody notices.

Tampa Bay Lightning – Have been desperately trying to swing a deal for the one thing that would guarantee playoff success but it turns out you can't trade for a first-round matchup against the Tampa Bay Lightning.

The week's three stars of comedy

The third star: T.J. Oshie's adorable daughter – You have to admit, she's already cracked the code on how to motivate people.

T.J. OSHIE: "A DONUT? WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO TO GET A DONUT?"

LENI: "SCORE GOALS!"

T.J.: "HOW MANY GOALS?"

LENI: "JUST ONE." PIC.TWITTER.COM/MRZWZMRUI9

&MDASH; SAMANTHA PELL (@SAMANTHAJPELL) FEBRUARY 10, 2020

Leni's such a good motivator that I thought she might have a future as an NHL coach, but then she yelled "MORE GOALS" instead of "OFF THE GLASS AND OUT" so I guess not.

The second star: Brad Marchand's adorable daughter – The kid's got some moves.

BRAD MARCHAND'S DAUGHTER HAS THE CUTEST GOAL CELEBRATION. ❤️

(👤 @BMARCH63) PIC.TWITTER.COM/ME15SZIMWR

&MDASH; NHL (@NHL) FEBRUARY 10, 2020

What a sweetie. I've heard she also cleans her room, helps around the house and always leaves for bedtime eight seconds before she actually needs to.

The first star: Kevin Bieksa roasts the Sedins – This is just a solid standup performance top to bottom. From cheesecake parties to cheating accusations to repeated random shots at Alex Burrows, he's got the crowd eating out of his hand.

NEED A HOST FOR YOUR NEXT EVENT? @KBIKSA3 IS THE MAN FOR THE JOB!! 🍌🍌 PIC.TWITTER.COM/QPB0XHJQE5

&MDASH; VANCOUVER #CANUCKS (@CANUCKS) FEBRUARY 13, 2020

And he did it all without notes. I think Kevin Bieksa might be good at this.

Be It Resolved

I thought this article by Dan Robson was fascinating, because it answered a question that had never even occurred to me: When a goalie is part of a midseason trade, how does he get new gear in the right colors so quickly? It turns out it's a lot more complicated than you might think.

I've always found goalie gear to be one of those cool things about hockey. Sure, it's too big, but it's also the most notable hockey gear that's visibly customized. In a sport that doesn't allow for much in the way of individual identity – and in which skaters wearing things like tinted visors or colored skate laces still rubs people the wrong way – we've somehow decided it's OK for the goalies to express an on-ice fashion sense.



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And that's neat, since goalie are always the weirdest guys on the team. We've seen them breaking out creative goalie masks dating back to the 1970s, and the rest of the gear eventually followed. Some are still pretty plain, while others show some flair. And then somebody gets traded, and there's this behind-the-scenes mad scramble to update everything to a new look.

All of that gave me an idea, and I want you to hear me out. Be it resolved: Whenever a goalie goes to a new team, he has to keep at least one piece of gear from his old job.

We've got five pieces to work with: two leg pads, a trapper, a blocker and a mask. (Plus a bunch of other stuff that isn't visible enough to count.) You just got traded? Keep your old team's blocker. Signed as a free agent? Use a pad or two to remember where you came from.

It would be cool to see guys like Henrik Lundqvist and Pekka Rinne decked out head-to-toe in one team's gear, reminding you that they've spent their entire career in one place. And it would be neat to see other guys with gear that reflected their stories. You could see Marc-Andre Fleury still rocking Penguin pads or Sergei Bobrovsky representing Columbus and Philadelphia on each arm. Some guys, like Ben Bishop or Devan Dubnyk, would end up looking like Voltron.

It would be a fun way for new fans to learn about these guys. It would look cool, or at least different, while nodding toward recent history. And as an added bonus, seeing Tuukka Rask eliminate Toronto every year while wearing a blue-and-white trapper would make Leaf fans even more miserable than they already are. Everybody wins!

Granted, we'd have to figure out what to do with guys who played for more than five teams. Call it the Curtis Joseph Rule. Maybe mix in a mandatory throat protector? Divide up those giant leg pads? Use some of that terrible CGI from All-Star weekend? Poor Mike McKenna would have looked like Times Square by the end of things. But we can work this out.

I say we do it. All of us are who we are because of where we came from, and that's worth remembering. Especially for those weirdos who go on to become NHL goaltenders. Let's mix and match, boys.

Obscure former player of the week

Today is Valentine's Day, I have recently realized, after wondering why my wife seemed cranky about my announced plans to sit on the couch and watch hockey all night. So we should probably go with a romance-themed obscure player this week.

We've done that in the past; the last time this column fell on Valentine's Day, we puckered up for Kelly Kisio. There aren't as many other options as you might think out there. But when in doubt, you can't go wrong with flowers. NHL history has plenty of those, including legendary Canadiens sniper Guy Lafleur. If I know my French, and I think I do, his name literally translates to "Dude with a flower." Unfortunately, he's not all that obscure, and generic flowers don't really fit today's mood. So let's hit the upgrade button, and bestow some romantic obscure player honors on Guy Larose.

Larose was a center who put up solid but not outstanding numbers with the OHL's Guelph Platters as a 17-year-old in 1984-85. That was enough for the Sabres to take a flyer on him in the 11th round of the 1985 draft, a few picks after the Canucks snagged future Hall of Famer Igor Larionov. Larose put up two more decent OHL seasons but didn't earn a contract from the Sabres. Instead, he signed with the Jets in 1987, and settled in as a classic tweener, putting up strong AHL numbers but appearing in just 10 NHL games, recording a single assist. The Jets traded him to the Rangers for tough guy Rudy Poeschek but he didn't crack the NHL there. His break finally came early in the 1991-92 season, when the Rangers sent him to a bad Maple Leafs team in one of Cliff Fletcher's first trades as Toronto GM.

Going to Toronto meant a chance at a regular NHL job, and he made an impact by scoring the first two goals of his career in the third period of a win against the Canadiens on Hockey Night in Canada. He had two more goals in the next game and scored again in the one after that, and Leaf fans temporarily had a new hero. Chants of "Guuuy" would ring out at the Gardens for the rest of the year, even as Larose topped out at nine goals.

The Leafs' revival under Pat Burns spelled the end of Larose as a regular, although he showed up occasionally in each of the next two seasons before being claimed on waivers by the Flames in 1994. He played seven games in Calgary and four more with the Bruins in the 1995 playoffs but that would be it for him in the NHL. He'd play pro until 2002 and occasionally made highlight reels but finished his NHL career with 10 goals and 19 points in 70 games.

Who says the NHL doesn't know how to sell a little sex appeal? Let's get romantic.

Oh god no.

Yes, it's the immortal mid-90s ad from the one time the NHL ever tried to be hip, the "Coolest Game on Earth" campaign. Some of those ads were actually pretty darn good, and several have aged reasonably well. This one has, um, not.

So yeah, our star here is Adam Oates, working his way through briefly playing for literally every NHL team with a stop in Boston. Here, he's apparently going to try to romance this young lady by being "relentless." Huh. That doesn't sound great, but we'll be OK as long as they don't immediately say something way worse and yep there it is.

Look, I get that you can't call a woman "loose" and get away with it in 2020. But I'm pretty sure that you also could absolutely not do this in 1996. It's not even like "loose rebound" is an especially common hockey term. Let's just go with "rebound" when we do the inevitably gritty reboot in a few years. Probably starring Gritty.

You have to admit, Oates is a better actor than you thought, right?

The scorned lady tells Oates that he's offside, at which point we pause so that everyone can stand around for eight minutes watching freeze-frames to see whether or not that's true.

And that wraps up our 30-second spot. Ah well, you can see what the league thought they were going for. And at least it was definitely the only mid-90s ad that featured an NHL star annoying a woman so (checks earpiece) OK spoke too soon.

This is a Fox Sports ad from 1996, and it begins with a young lady who has locked her keys in her car. Hopefully some big brawny hockey star will be by to help. Preferably one wearing a terrible uniform.

Oh good, it's Keith Tkachuk, reminding us that he once wore Coyotes colors. All 400 of them.

Can we just take a moment to note that Tkachuk is skating on a parking lot? Those are clearly roller blades, but they mix in a skate blade sound effect just to mess with you. It's weird and I'm on board.

He's here with a coat-hanger to do the old unlock-the-car trick that probably makes no sense at all to anyone under the age of 30. Trust me kids, it was a thing. Don't even get me started on how we used to have to roll down our window.

As Keith works, our lady in distress side-eyes him, presumably trying to figure out if he'd be the sort of guy who'd make good father material or whether he'd just produce bratty kids that everyone wanted to punch all the time.

Tkachuk isn't having much luck with the subtle approach, so he just decides to swing his stick at the problem. Gosh, that seems so unlike him.

And with that, our hero skates off into the sunset, leaving behind another unhappy young lady and several hundred dollars in property damage. Man, the mid-90s NHL sure did like to market the "we're all kind of jerks" angle, didn't they? Surely they can do better. Like, what if we found the most gentlemanly, baby-faced hockey star of all-time and put him in an ad? Surely we could think of something for him to do other than randomly harass people who are just minding their own business?

Yep, mid-90s hockey stars were just jerks.

So to recap, this is lovable scamp Paul Kariya, a marketer's dream with marquee looks and non-threatening dimples. Let's watch as he, uh, stares longingly at a knife and then makes an old man choke to death on a pea.



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He also commandeers a customer's jukebox, which in this business is a move known as The LeBrun. But the real stars of the show are a family of four, who are enjoying a meal together right up until the moment when Paul Kariya decides to break them up.

I mean, I think we can all agree that this family was on thin ice to start with. The dad clearly has anger issues. The kids just laugh at him, showing that whatever respect they once had for him has faded long ago. And the mom's world-weary reaction suggests that this isn't the first time a family meal has been ruined by dad being an idiot. She's probably cheating on him.

Also, hockey fans now have our own response to that Kermit-sipping-tea meme:

So that's it. Apparently every NHL star is a jerk who makes everyone around him miserable. If only we could find one commercial – just one single ad – in which NHL players actually made somebody happy, if only fleetingly. Even if it was just one dude awkwardly holding a boom box.

Yes, if only ...

The Athletic LOADED: 02.15.2020

1176619 Websites

The Athletic / Q&A with Bryant McBride, the producer behind the impactful Willie O'Ree documentary

By Scott Burnside Feb 14, 2020 6

We talk often in sports about a person's journey. The Willie O'Ree story is a journey for all-time. So it's no surprise the documentary about his life turned out to be both compelling and impactful.

In early 2019 'Willie' was introduced at the Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival in Toronto and went on to win audience awards as well as other awards and accolades around the film world.

It has been purchased for a limited run on various ESPN platforms this month.

There are special screenings scheduled for Canadian cities before the end of February and filmmaker Laurence Mathieu-Leger will return to Columbia, South Carolina, for a special screening of 'Willie' to celebrate Black History Month.

NHL executive and entrepreneur Bryant McBride was working for the NHL as the league's vice-president for business development when he was tasked with setting up its first diversity program in the early 1990s. With the help of a pal at the FBI McBride found O'Ree, who was working in security at a California hotel and introduced him to new NHL commissioner Gary Bettman.

O'Ree has worked with the league since sharing his story of perseverance and courage as the NHL's first black player.

Since the 'Willie' documentary was released the NHL and the hockey world as a whole has gone through an upheaval when it comes to inclusivity and openness starting with the firing of iconic broadcaster Don Cherry after he made offensive comments toward immigrants during a segment of "Coach's Corner." That was followed by the resignation of Calgary head coach Bill Peters following reports that he used racial epithets toward former player Akim Aliu as well as subjected other players under his charge to different forms of abuse.

Bettman has, in response, pledged to introduce a comprehensive program to ensure the inclusivity of the game for all and to ensure that players and other staff have an avenue to report allegations of abuse and/or inappropriate behavior.

We caught up with McBride, the producer of the documentary, to talk about how 'Willie' plays a role in this process and how O'Ree's story seems ready to stand the test of time.

I thought this would be a good time to catch up and see what has transpired since we met in South Carolina.

It's been an amazing year and a half. It's been incredible to see the response. It's been an amazing personal journey. To see all these people watch the film and the reaction there has been, because it wasn't a puff piece, because it was real and watching young kids of color speak their piece about the game and where it is and what needs to be improved and how they react to not feeling a certain way inside hockey. Those were all very candid, forthright things that I think surprised people when they watched it. And they came away with a deeper appreciation for what some kids and players have gone through.

One thing that struck me, and I've been around this a long time, really struck me, was when all the stuff happened with Don Cherry and Akim Aliu and all that, right? Wayne Simmonds (who appears in the 'Willie' documentary) brilliantly, he just put it out there, he says find me a black hockey player and I'll find you a guy that's been called names or a woman that's been called names. I just thought "Holy smokes, he's right." One hundred percent. That jarred me a little bit. That floored me.

So I think the film is serving a purpose beyond, it's been great that it's won awards, it's been picked up for distribution, three percent of films get picked up for distribution, it speaks to the quality of the product that Laurence made. It's just really well-done. She made a social impact movie that was disguised as a hockey movie.

I watched you guys do the work and felt fortunate enough to be around near the end and watching Willie go through those documents that tie him to a family of slaves in South Carolina and to understand a little bit of what went into it so I was curious what it was like the first time you saw the finished product?

It was moving. It was moving and I knew that we had it right. You weren't sure, right? You don't know. You don't know until the cake comes out of the oven if it's going to taste good, right? And it did. We edited and we shot as we went along. Which was amazing. We did this thing in nine months. Nine months. We edited and shot, we finished on Dec. 21 in Justin Trudeau's office and we submitted it to Hot Docs on January 5. It was insane.

Do you remember the first time you watched it with Willie, that must have been nerve-wracking?

It was in a huge setting. We watched it at Hot Docs. I'm sitting with my family, my mom, dad, everyone flew in, my sister. I'm sitting next to Sheila Johnson (co-founder of BET and the first black woman to be part owner or partner in three professional sports franchises including the NHL's Washington Capitals). Sheila Johnson's between myself and my wife. And it's just like, "Oh my God." Willie's there. It's opening night of Hot Docs, the biggest documentary film festival in the world and it's a mob scene. There's not an empty seat in the house. It's sold out. Tickets went in 11 minutes. It's just surreal. And I've seen the film two or three times by now so I'm watching the other people. And Sheila's crying at one point next to me, then she's laughing.

And then one of the most special feelings I've ever had and I've had it now five or six times is watching everyone watch the film when an hour in they all find out Willie has one eye. (O'Ree lost the sight in one eye courtesy of a deflected puck several years before his NHL debut.) Whoa. It's like a punch in the stomach. People who aren't expecting it they're just floored and you can see it, they start to cry and shake their heads. So that's really special. But the most special feeling of all is watching with everyone in a big, crowded theater, they laugh at all the right places, they cry at all the right places and then Willie walks out for a Q&A. It just crushes. And people just ask him questions and he's just himself.

He's such a humble person, was there a time when you got a sense of what it meant to him?

Yeah, there's been a couple of them. That night in Toronto was a big moment. Seven hundred people and packed in. It was really special and the big reception after that. But one of the things that was really interesting, one of the most interesting screenings was on Martha's Vineyard in August. That was one of the first all-black audiences, almost



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all-black audiences, that we showed it to. These are captains of industry, movers and shakers in the black community and Willie was there and we were there and I think it was summed up by John Thompson, the former coach at Georgetown, the son not the dad, but the son, he walked out and he was like, "Oh my God, I had no idea." They were all just blown away. They had no idea. And there he was (Willie). And they met him and they were just "Oh my God, this is incredible. How come we didn't know this story?"

A similar event is going to happen on Feb. 20. We are going to show the film at the African American Museum of History at the Oprah Winfrey Theater. That's going to be a largely black audience, D.C., congresspeople, I mean that's going to be really moving too. One other one that was pretty crazy looking back on it was the first day of the (U.S. presidential) impeachment hearings. They were that afternoon. We showed the film that night and there was a bunch of Congresspeople that had been on TV who were in that room. We were looking at them on CNN that afternoon and there they were at a screening of our film. That was pretty cool.

Talk about different realities colliding.

It was really cool in that they were all fighting and screaming (before the screening) and there you have a bi-partisan group who are all sponsoring the Willie O'Ree Congressional Gold Medal bill and they were all shaking hands and patting him on the back and realizing the goodness in the world because of this guy.

You mentioned Don Cherry, Akim Aliu, Bettman's template for making the game more inclusionary. It strikes me that this is a good time for the game for this film to be out. Do you feel that?

The NHL was a collaborator on this when we made this film. And the first person to get behind this film was Gary Bettman. A year and a half before any of this stuff happened he was onside. He was a huge champion. That's important. That's really important. His relationship with Willie O'Ree is really special. I've seen it, I've watched it up close and personal. I introduced them. I was there when they met for the first time. And after Gary spent 15 minutes with him he turned to me and said: "Hire him immediately, like right now, get him on staff now." I was like, done. So it started there. And now it's at the point where Gary Bettman got the call for the Hall of Fame you know the first thing he asked? "Did Willie get in?" And he meant it. I have it on video. That's all he cared about. That to me really spoke volumes about who Gary really is. He calls Willie his mentor.

The league is in a different place because of some of the things that have happened recently or come to light recently and the response to address these issues and not let it get swept under rug, how does 'Willie' play a role in that or does it?

It does. It will. This film is going to travel now. Our goal now, winning awards was great, being distributed is great, but it's all about getting this film into schools now. It's all we care about. We want every kid in North America and beyond to see this film. We've partnered with a whole bunch of amazing people that when it's announced people are going to go "Wow, that's incredible." We've had screenings with the State Department of the United States. And at embassies (and the U.S. Consulate General) in Calgary and Ottawa. And sponsored screenings. It's incredible the different people that have reached out. And that's the drumbeat, how do we get this in front of every kid in the country? There's going to be some fun ways that this lives beyond this initial push.

It feels to me like this is a living, breathing thing.

You just captured it. That's exactly right. Did I send you the Hot Docs curriculum? It's unbelievable. What they did is they took three films out of the 300-some films out of the world's biggest documentary film festival. And they took three films and they said these have special potential to teach children and we were one of the films. The Hot Docs people and the Government of Ontario built a curriculum around 'Willie.' I showed it to Gary, I showed it to Kim (Davis, the NHL's executive vice-president of social impact, growth initiatives and legislative affairs), and they said, "We're going to get this to every market. It's that good. We're going to cut a version of the film, a 30-minute version, so it fits in the classroom setting ... so that kids start to talk about race in a positive, wonderful way." And then teachers can say, "Now you can go here to watch the whole film."

The Athletic LOADED: 02.15.2020

1176620 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Canadiens clinging to hope that miracle run to playoffs is still possible

Eric Engels | @EricEngels February 14, 2020, 11:59 PM

PITTSBURGH — Reality catches up to everyone eventually, and the Montreal Canadiens are no exception.

They have fought, and fought valiantly with their backs against the wall to avoid facing it. And even now — with a third-straight loss in a pivotal week that their playoff hopes were riding on, this one a 4-1 beating at the hands of the Pittsburgh Penguins — they're clinging to a desperate hope that they haven't run out of time to pull off a miraculous run from here to the end of the season.

But they're barely clinging to it, and they know that what they have to do has to be miraculous.

They knew that they had to win three of four games this week to keep themselves in the mix, and they know that the best they can do now is win one back in Montreal, in a Saturday matchup against a potent Dallas Stars team that's just been sitting there waiting for them.

The Canadiens know that they haven't won more than three games in a row all season but that they have to win their next four, and get some help from some of the other teams they're chasing, to have any hope of keeping general manager Marc Bergevin from selling off some assets at the Feb. 24 trade deadline.

Maybe it was knowing that the axe was inching closer and closer to their necks on the guillotine that caused the Canadiens to make the kind of mistakes on Friday the Penguins have capitalized on all season — en route to building the fourth-best record in the NHL. Mistakes like giving Sidney Crosby an odd-man rush from his own blue line, which led to Jason Zucker's first goal as a Penguin since coming over in a trade from the Minnesota Wild on Monday.

It's entirely possible the pressure of their situation has become too stifling for this Canadiens group. It would make for a perfect explanation of why they've fallen into a habit they established early in the season, wherein they allow a goal against in the final minute of a period.

That happened for a 16th time (not including empty-net goals) when Brett Kulak allowed Zucker to beat him to the middle of the slot for his second goal as a Penguin. It was just 36 seconds after the Canadiens had clawed their way back to a 2-1 deficit on a power play goal from Brendan Gallagher.

"That third goal really hurt us," said Canadiens coach Claude Julien.

It just about killed them. Then the Penguins suffocated them into a coma for the rest of the game, and pulled the plug with Zach Aston-Reese's empty-net goal.

Maybe it's not just the pressure of knowing that, starting on this night, they had to win at a clip no other team in the league's been able to just to keep their season alive.

Maybe it's that they've been fighting so hard — through injuries, bumps, bruises and illness — that they just don't have enough gas left to match up with the superior teams they've faced this week.

When that question was put to Julien after Friday's game, he didn't dismiss it.

"We'll see with time, right," he said. "It's actually a reality [that they could be out of gas]. We don't want to go there as far as ... As a team we feel that we want to keep pushing."



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"I know our chances are getting slimmer every game we lose, but we look around and we have a little bit of help like last night [the Toronto Maple Leafs and Florida Panthers both lost in regulation on Thursday] and it gives you hope.

"And, at the end of the day, it's pretty simple: We're going to have to get on a really good winning streak if we plan on getting back into this hunt."

Senior Writer Ryan Dixon and NHL Editor Rory Boylen always give it 110%, but never rely on clichés when it comes to podcasting. Instead, they use a mix of facts, fun and a varied group of hockey voices to cover Canada's most beloved game.

Knowing that, can the Canadiens simplify their game and trust that the results will fall on their side of the ledger? Can they avoid making the kind of mistakes they've consistently made all year, but specifically in games they absolutely must win (like Monday's against the Arizona Coyotes, or Wednesday's against the Boston Bruins, or Friday's in Pittsburgh)?

"We don't have a choice," said Montreal forward Tomas Tatar.

It feels like the Canadiens don't have a prayer.

They have to collect 36 of 44 points available to them over the final 22 games of the season to finish with a point more than the third-in-the-Atlantic Maple Leafs are on pace for. Make it 38 of 44 points to finish with one more than the Columbus Blue Jackets — current owners of the Eastern Conference's second wild-card position — are on pace for.

"We can only just prepare for the next game," said Montreal centre Max Domi.

We're preparing for what's seemingly become inevitable — another Canadiens season losing significance well before Game 82.

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1176621 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Canucks' Jacob Markstrom enjoying Vezina-calibre season amid adversity

Iain MacIntyre | @imacSportsnet February 14, 2020, 7:47 PM

VANCOUVER – When he was making a super-human 49 saves on Wednesday, it looked like Jacob Markstrom was playing with the strength of 20 men. In a way he was. Twenty, minimum.

The Vancouver Canucks goalie is having the greatest season of his NHL career while going through one of the worst times in his personal life, having lost his father, Anders, to cancer back home in Sweden in November.

Markstrom's 3-0 win over the Chicago Blackhawks on the night the Canucks retired Daniel and Henrik Sedin's numbers boosted his save percentage to .918. NHL.com correspondent Kevin Woodley, who runs a goaltending website in Vancouver, tweeted Thursday that proprietary data indicates Markstrom is the league's runaway leader in goal-differential at plus-22.1 – the difference between the goals he has allowed and the number of pucks that should have beaten him based on micro-analyzed shot quality. For context, Boston Bruins starter Tuukka Rask is second at plus-15.2, based on data from the private firm Clear Sight Analytics.

That's 22 extra goals saved in 41 games for Markstrom, who has been a massive factor in the Canucks' surge to the Pacific Division lead. No wonder there's growing talk on the West Coast that the 30-year-old should be in the Vezina Trophy discussion this season.

The most compelling part of Markstrom's story – he has seven wins this season when facing 40 or more shots – is that he has turned himself into an elite NHL starter while mourning his father's death at age 59.

"When you go through tough times, you need support," Markstrom told reporters on Friday as the Canucks, near the end of an emotional week, rested ahead of Sunday's game at Rogers Arena against the Anaheim Ducks. "You need friends, family, you need teammates, coaches to kind of (guide you) ... so you go down the right path. Make you feel like you have support. This team has done a great job of that. It's been tough, yes. And it's still tough. But ... you've just got to keep going and keep pushing."

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The strength and support of those 20 players in the Canucks dressing room, and many more people outside of it, is why Markstrom said he feels his starts are a chance to honour those helping him.

"Relief, I don't know if that's the right word," Markstrom said of the mental simplicity of playing. "It's more honouring, I feel like. You want to do everybody proud. Not only teammates, but family that are here with us and that aren't. You think about it all the time. You can't not do this."

"We all have each other's back and we're a family here," teammate J.T. Miller said. "The only thing I can do as a teammate is to be there and support him and be there for him and play hard for him. He gives so much to us as a goalie, it's easy to play for a guy like that. He's super-respected in our locker room and he's a great guy. That comes as no surprise that we're playing for him and he's obviously playing for us."

It was only five years ago that Markstrom, acquired in the 2014 Roberto Luongo trade after badly failing in Florida to meet expectations as an over-hyped prospect, sailed through NHL waivers on his way to one more season in the American Hockey League.

But Vancouver general manager Jim Benning kept him in 2015 ahead of Eddie Lack, whose trade outraged much of Canuck Nation, and the team's hiring of goaltending coach Ian Clark before last season turbo-charged Markstrom's improvement.

Under Clark, Markstrom rebuilt and narrowed his stance, which allowed him to move more efficiently and gave the six-foot-six netminder more "reach" to make difficult saves. The better movement helps Markstrom track the puck and stay ahead of the play.

"I feel like I'm taking steps every day," Markstrom said. "We don't look back to what we've done, we always look forward and try and add stuff to make me a better goalie. It's so rewarding to have that every day.

"I don't look back. I haven't played a playoff game yet and we haven't won anything as a team. For me personally, I feel like I've evolved my game and I'm becoming better every day, but there's a lot of steps left to take. I don't look back and I'm happy; when I start looking back, that's not a good sign."

Looking ahead then, Benning and Markstrom's agent, Pat Morris, are still trying to find some traction in contracts talks. The team and the goalie both want Markstrom to stay in Vancouver, but it's a complex landscape and it may be challenging for the Canucks to pay the Swede close enough to market value to get him to stay. He is eligible for unrestricted free agency on July 1.

"I love it here and I want to stay here for sure," Markstrom said. "But I don't think about it too much. I've got this contract this year and then we're going to figure out the rest. Every time I put that jersey on, it's an honour and I love being out here in Rogers Arena in front of the home fans.

"I feel like the fans are very deserving of having a playoff team here. They've been really patient and loyal throughout this rebuild. Right now, we have given ourselves a good chance and put ourselves in a good spot, but we've got to keep pushing."

With his play, Markstrom is becoming more valuable by the week. Plus, there's the Vezina Trophy conjecture.

"It's obviously nice to hear your name in those discussions," he said. "But if you believe everything you read, you're going to be misinformed. Not by you guys. You always tell the truth."



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We'll bookmark that last quote.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 02.15.2020

1176622 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Oilers' Zack Kassian suspended seven games for kicking Erik Cernak

Sportsnet Staff | @Sportsnet February 14, 2020, 8:12 PM

Edmonton Oilers forward Zack Kassian has been suspended seven games for kicking Tampa Bay Lightning defenceman Erik Cernak's chest, the NHL's Department of Player Safety announced.

Kassian waived his right to an in-person hearing, and the NHL Department of Player Safety conducted a phone hearing on Friday afternoon instead.

A two-game suspension for being an aggressor in the Matthew Tkachuk altercation in January made Kassian a repeat offender, which would've played a factor in the league's decision this time.

Being a repeat offender also means that this seven-game suspension will cost Kassian \$166,463.41 in salary.

During the first period of Thursday night's game in Tampa Bay, Kassian became tangled with the Lightning player on the ice and he appeared to kick Cernak as they struggled to separate.

"It felt like we were there a lifetime. We were down there for a while," Kassian said after the game on Thursday. "He was holding my leg, it was reactionary. I was just trying to get him off me, kick him off me. I was just trying to get my foot loose."

Cernak added: "He kicked me right in the chest, so luckily that wasn't higher. I knew right away when he was on the ice he kicked me. I think he was a little bit mad and I asked him what was wrong with him, because that's not a right play to do on the ice, and he didn't say nothing."

The Oilers close out their road trip with back-to-back games against the Florida Panthers and Carolina Hurricanes this weekend.

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1176623 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Mike Marson on challenges he faced as NHL's second black player

Wayne Scanlan February 14, 2020, 2:32 PM

Even a casual hockey fan knows that Willie O'Ree became the first black player in the NHL when he played two games for the Boston Bruins in 1958.

How many can name the second black player in the NHL, who arrived 16 years later?

If you said "Mike Marson," without a Google search, take a bow.

February is Black History Month, and while O'Ree, a longtime hired ambassador for the NHL, is rightly being celebrated and showcased in appearances throughout North America, Marson is largely a forgotten pioneer.

When O'Ree was in Ottawa last week he spent time with Anthony Duclair, a black forward on the Senators. Together, they coached in a charity game honouring the old Coloured Hockey League of the Maritimes, and shared the spotlight during a ceremonial faceoff between the Senators and Anaheim Ducks.

Clearly moved by the presence and gentle manner of O'Ree, Duclair respectfully held the old man's arm to help him off the ice, revelling in this opportunity to literally walk in O'Ree's footsteps. Out of curiosity, I asked Duclair this week if he'd ever heard of Mike Marson. He drew a blank, slightly sheepish to learn Marson was just the second black player in the NHL. To his credit, Duclair asked questions about Marson — where did he play and when?

From Toronto, Marson chuckles while talking about a TV commercial for Black History Month without hearing his name or seeing his image.

Living not far from the Scarborough, Ont., home where he grew up, now a painter of acrylic abstracts, a grandfather and a retired TTC bus driver, Marson has come to terms with a lot of things he experienced in a hockey career shortened by hatred.

He doesn't spend a lot of time dwelling on the death threats he received in the mail, the letters cut out individually from newspaper and magazine headlines by anonymous cowards. Those individual letters spelled out the 'N'-word and 'D-I-E.'

As a rookie with the Washington Capitals in 1974, Marson would see mail addressed to him and get a thrill, imagining it was a fan wanting an autograph. Instead it was often a message saying he would "get it" if he appeared in a certain game or, question what he was doing in a "white man's game."

Although he was a talented player who grew up in a loving, caring household, Marson suffered personal hardships early in life. At 17, while away playing junior hockey in Sudbury, Marson's mother, Jackie, died suddenly of a brain aneurysm. A gentle soul, the Bermuda-born Jackie grew to like hockey but couldn't bear seeing her sons fight while playing — Mike had three brothers and a sister.

"You don't get over something like that," Marson says of his mother's passing.

About four years later Mike's younger brother, Richard, 20, an aspiring art student at Sheridan College, died of a grand mal seizure. Mike had just had lunch with his siblings the previous day and was on the ice for warmups before a game against the Leafs at Maple Leaf Gardens when he was pulled off and told to call home. His father delivered the tragic news. Mike was devastated.

Today, a young hockey player would be offered counselling for such traumatic, life-altering events. At the time, Marson was left to carry the personal loss far from home, a lonely black man enduring daily abuse no one else in the NHL could appreciate.

"Suck it up and go," he says. "That's what you were supposed to do."

Marson was just 19 when he cracked the Capitals lineup as a junior from the OHA Sudbury Wolves, after cutting his teeth in the Wexford minor hockey association in Scarborough. The Wolves had made Marson their first overall pick; the Capitals took Marson 19th overall, rewarding him with a five-year, \$500,000 contract, worried he might jump to the World Hockey Association. Despite scoring 94 points as an 18-year-old junior with the Wolves and 16 goals as an NHL rookie, Marson eventually got distracted from the skills that made him a prospect, fighting to avenge racial slurs and taunts and was gone from pro hockey by age 25. As a rookie, Marson had 28 points and 59 penalty minutes. Three years later, he had eight points and 101 PIM. His career line: 196 NHL games played (151 more than O'Ree), 24 goals, 24 assists, 233 PIM.

It's easy to see how a little more guidance or change in direction could have helped a player who was a 35-goal scorer as a 17-year-old junior. Easy to see now.

Regrets? Marson has a few. He battled lifestyle issues, including alcohol and an endless fight to keep his weight down, but the overriding element was the "garbage" he faced every day. He has since stopped beating himself up over his abbreviated career.



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"For a few years I did that," he says. "There was even, perhaps, a bitterness. But I could tell you when I turned pro, I was the only person of colour on the planet playing hockey at that level. And I was a teenager.

"I ask anyone who is a man over 50 or 60, if you could go back and fix things when you were young, to a better outcome, would you do it or would you leave it alone? Would you make changes in judgment?"

America in the early 1970s was still embroiled in race issues. One could argue it still is, although athletes of colour are generally treated with respect and dignity. Racial profiling remains a major problem. From Marson's perspective, it felt as though the Civil War was still on, with old world beliefs entrenched.

"There were places I went to as a National Hockey League player where they weren't going to allow me to stay in the hotel, where I couldn't get fed in the dining lounge," he says.

We don't feed people like you here, he was told.

"All that stuff you've heard about that was evil and wicked? I went through all of that as an 18-year-old just turned 19."

In today's NHL, good young players are welcomed as the next big thing — the subject of media profiles and rookie "combines." In the mid-1970s, the last of hockey's tough eras, the Broad Street Bullies still roamed and a rookie was supposed to know his "place." It was bad enough for white rookies. For a black player willing to defend himself, hockey was an endless parade of name-calling and dance partners, including the toughest of the Philadelphia Flyers' Bullies — Dave Schultz and Don Saleski. Marson also fought Tiger Williams, then a rookie thug for the Toronto Maple Leafs. Though just 5-foot-9 and a strong skater, Marson weighed 200-plus pounds and was fearless. Perhaps to his detriment.

"I had good luck, if you can call it that, with fisticuffs," Marson says. "So then it became who was going to be the one to set me straight?"

"It was like one man against the entire social order of life in North America. And how does he stand up against it? It was endless. You would go to pre-board an airplane, and you can't pre-board because it's 'just for the team.'

How could he be on the team? He was a black guy.

"This was an ongoing, everyday thing where something would go on," Marson says, growing weary from reflection, his arthritis acting up.

"I'm a born Canadian. My dad was Canadian born. My mother came from Bermuda. We were raised with the concept of, just do your thing. Be creative. Things will work out."

Except that in this arena at this time, the field had all the advantage. The field being everyone but Marson.

"People weren't ready. They didn't know how to handle it. So how was an 18-year-old supposed to do it?"

"I tell people," Marson says, "if you want to get a sense of it, move to someplace in Africa where you're the only person who looks like you and be at the top of your field and compete. Try that. You will get an insight.

"If I took away those things I experienced as a young player, who knows? But it wasn't to be. I was the guy to open some doors and then the other guys could come in and take it further."

Others came. Finally in greater numbers. Tony McKegney. Grant Fuhr. Jarome Iginla. Dustin Byfuglien. Wayne Simmonds. P.K. Subban. Although there should be more, by now close to 100 men of colour have played or do play in the NHL, not sore thumbs anymore, but everyday NHL players. They all owe a debt not just to Willie O'Ree but to Mike Marson, too.

"I would love to be turning pro now," he says.

His mood brightens as Marson shifts the topic to his current passion, modern art.

After retiring from hockey, Marson became a trainer in the martial arts, but his love of making art, as his late brother did, occupies most of his time approaching his 65th birthday. Even when he played hockey, Marson dabbled in art, studied it.

Marson is inspired by the giants of the canvas. He favours Picasso and van Gogh, but also the Group of Seven, especially Tom Thomson and Lawren Harris. Marson's art, creating images of faces and masks, perhaps most closely resembles the work of Jean-Michel Basquiat, an American artist of Haitian and Puerto Rican descent who died tragically at age 27.

"I try to come up with a style that kind of mimics what they did, but good luck trying," Marson laughs.

His style, like his play on the ice, is bold. Several of his works were featured at The Spoke Gallery in Toronto a little over a year ago. Marson was nervous about the show, as he used to be before a big game.

"It was like playing Madison Square Garden or the old Montreal Forum," he says of the gallery experience.

Marson sees other parallels with sport and art.

"You are still out there, you're being creative," he says. "Whether you're doing a toe drag or putting some kind of different background on a piece of work, you still have to try to reach the people, so they appreciate what it is you're doing."

Players and artists are used to being judged, critiqued by their end result.

Finnish artist Martti Nieminen often painted hockey players. He once did a large portrait of former Senators and Calgary Flames enforcer Brian McGrattan; somewhat eerily, McGrattan's eyes followed you no matter where you stood in the room. That was no coincidence. Nieminen saw McGrattan as a policeman on ice, always watching for a violation of peace, a hurt being put on a teammate.

Marson is similarly focused on the eyes of his subjects.

"When you line up for a faceoff against some of the greats, or you are shoulder to shoulder with someone in the corner, like Jerry 'King Kong' Korab, a monster of a man, their eyes turn on," he says. "They become hunters."

These days Marson hunts for the instinct to know a painting is finished, that it's time to move on. Just as he has from an NHL career that brushed paths with Guy Lafleur, Bobby Orr, Marcel Dionne and other luminaries of the 1970s.

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TSN.CA / Friday Five: Zack Kassian's kick lands him a seven-game suspension and Marc Bergevin's trade record

Frank Seravalli

Let's dive right in to the Friday Five, where we're pointing out questions, quirks and quips from around the NHL with just 10 days to go until the trade deadline.

1. A brief history of NHL suspensions for kicking

Edmonton Oilers winger Zack Kassian has been suspended seven games for kicking Tampa Bay defenceman Erik Cernak with his skate on Thursday night. Kassian had waived his right to an in-person hearing on Friday, hoping to speed up the process on his looming suspension.

Because Kassian was offered an in-person hearing with George Parros and the Department of Player Safety, the NHL had the option to suspend Kassian for five or more games. It's an option, but not a guarantee.

There is a short list of non-negotiable, zero-tolerance penalties in the NHL and Kassian touched the third rail with his kick. He was not assessed a penalty on the play.

"If I kicked him hard I think he would have flew back or the ref would have called a penalty," Kassian told reporters after the game.



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The last suspension for kicking was in 2012. Jeff Skinner's two-game ban for kicking St. Louis' Scott Nichol also appears to be the most similar incident.

"Regardless of whether Skinner felt that he needed to protect himself or separate himself from an opponent, any intentional or reckless use of the skate blade in this manner is extremely dangerous and unacceptable," NHL vice-president of Player Safety Brendan Shanahan said at the time.

As precedent was an indicator, Kassian did not receive a double-digit suspension. His most recent suspension – a two-game ban doled out less than a month ago for punching an unwilling Matthew Tkachuk – did not factor into his supplemental discipline.

Only in cases where a player has stomped on an opponent – or had previous incidents of violent use of their skate blade – has a harsher penalty been delivered. Here is the list:

2012 - Carolina's Jeff Skinner suspended two games for kicking St. Louis' Scott Nichol.

Courtesy: Fox Sports

2011 - Anaheim's Bobby Ryan suspended three playoff games (six regular-season game equivalent) for stomping on the skate of Nashville's Jonathan Blum.

2008 - Anaheim's Chris Pronger suspended eight games for stomping on Vancouver's Ryan Kesler.

2007 - Islanders' Chris Simon suspended 30 games for stomping on Pittsburgh's Jarkko Ruutu.

2005 - Ottawa's Martin Havlat suspended five games for kicking Boston's Hal Gill.

2004 - Florida's Donald Audette suspended two games for kicking Islanders' Sven Butenschon.

2004 - St. Louis' Chris Pronger suspended one game for kicking Calgary's Ville Nieminen.

### 2. Should Panarin's shootout winner have counted?

Slow down Artemi Panarin's game-deciding shootout goal in Minnesota on Thursday night and there seems to be clear evidence that it should have been disallowed.

The Ranger winger's wizardry might have masked that he appeared to pull the puck backward, a violation of Rule 24.2, which states that "the puck must be kept in motion towards the opponent's goal line."

Here's the thing: The NHL's Situation Room in Toronto upheld the "good goal" call on the ice.

Take a look at these two still-frame photos. The puck appears to nip the top of the crease on the left, and then is clearly moving in a backward direction as Panarin slides to the other side of the cage.

Courtesy: MSG

So why was it confirmed a goal? Part of the thinking is that if Panarin's goal is disallowed, then technically hundreds of others must also be, because so many dekes pull and drag the puck back. Others, in which a player skates toward the side boards on their way to the net, would also have to be disallowed.

Clips similar to the Panarin goal have been shown at GM meetings and the stewards of the game have generally believed these are acceptable goals for the entertainment value. Polls done by NHL Hockey Ops at GM meetings have indicated that the onus should be on the goalie to challenge the shooter in that case.

In this case, Wild netminder Alex Stalock was exasperated on the ice. Coach Bruce Boudreau was not happy postgame.

"It should've been [called back]," Boudreau said. "I just read the rule and the rule says the puck has to be going forward at all times. I may be blind, but it doesn't look like it was going forward at the end."

Turns out, those were among the last words of Boudreau's tenure in Minnesota. He was fired on Friday morning.

Boudreau is the eighth head coach shown the door this season, matching the bloodiest season for in-season coach firings in league history, according to the Elias Sports Bureau.

### 3. TradeCentre: Record \$\$\$ retained?

Nearly half of the NHL (15 teams) are operating within \$1 million of the \$81.5 million salary cap. Of that group, 13 teams are using the long-term injury exception to be cap compliant.

In other words, money is tight. We'll keep an eye on whether that might create a record amount of salary retained in transactions on Deadline Day. Teams can retain up to 50 per cent of a player's contract on their own salary cap to facilitate a trade.

The record of retained salary transactions on Deadline Day is six, when \$9.53 million was retained back in 2015, according to CapFriendly.com's searchable trade database.

Teams willing to retain salary might get a better return because cap space is an asset not every team has.

Year	Retained Salary Deals	Amount Retained
2019	2	\$3.26M
2018	2	\$4.63M
2017	4	\$7.22M
2016	1	\$500,000
2015	6	\$9.53M
2014	1	\$950,000

### 4. Bergevin's trade record gets high marks

The winner of best Deadline Day deal over the past five years is ... Canadiens GM Marc Bergevin. On March 2, 2015, Montreal sent a second-round and conditional fifth-round pick to the Edmonton Oilers in exchange for defenceman Jeff Petry. It's a deal that's still paying dividends for the Habs.

Petry, 32, has been worth every penny of the six-year, \$33 million extension he signed with the Habs that summer. He has averaged 41 points over each of his full seasons in Montreal and is on pace for a career-best 49 this season, anchoring the Canadiens' right side during long stretches without Shea Weber.

Petry is on the TSN Trade Bait board this season only because so many teams would covet having a player like him under control for another season at a reasonable, \$5.5 million cap hit. Bergevin may be forced to listen, but he's unlikely to act since there is no easy replacement for the 23:36 Petry plays every night.

Naturally, the Petry trade led to some further inspection of Bergevin's trade record. Credit is due, especially after Bergevin was crushed for the Weber/P.K. Subban swap with Nashville.

Look how that's turned out. That's why it might even be too premature to grade Bergevin yet on what looks like another blemish: Jonathan Drouin to Tampa Bay for Mikhail Sergachev in June of 2017. At the very least, it's easy to understand why Bergevin made that deal, given the Habs' needs.

Would it be a mistake to trade Max Domi? What makes the most sense for Marc Bergevin and his approach to the NHL trade deadline?

There have been a few real steals. In 2018, he traded captain Max Pacioretty to the Vegas Golden Knights for Tomas Tatar, Nick Suzuki and a second-round pick they traded to the Kings for a third (Mattias Norlinder) and a fifth (Jacob Leguerrier). Tatar has matched Pacioretty in production and Suzuki has blossomed into a heck of a player.

Earlier in 2018, he swapped Max Domi for Alex Galchenyuk – and Galchenyuk might be playing in the KHL next season. He turned rental Tomas Plekanec into a second-round pick, which became Jacob Olofsson, along with Kerby Rychel and Rinat Valiev.

An even better deal than Petry was Dale Weise and Tomas Fleischmann to Chicago for reliable pivot Philip Danault and a second-round pick,



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which they turned into dynamic Russian defenceman Alexander Romanov – who could be starring on the Montreal blueline next season.

There have been other misses, including Andrew Shaw to Chicago for two second-round picks – one of which became Alex DeBrincat. But the bottom line is Bergevin has made out better than the majority of his counterparts in trades over the last number of years.

Consider that fair warning to other GMs over the next 10 days.

### 5. Sabres not searching for POHO

The natives are growing restless in Buffalo with the Sabres on track to miss the playoffs again for a ninth straight spring. That has led to some speculation that owners Terry and Kim Pegula might hire a president of hockey operations to oversee GM Jason Botterill.

Sources say that the Pegulas have not considered that move. In fact, Botterill was recently told by ownership that they will not be creating a new hockey position above him.

That is not to be misconstrued as a vote of confidence or any referendum on Botterill's job security. The Pegulas, who have not spoken publicly on the state of the franchise, share every bit of frustration and angst as fans and the media in the market.

Meanwhile, Botterill continues to make calls ahead of the Feb. 24 deadline. The list of Sabres untouchables isn't long after Jack Eichel and Rasmus Dahlin.

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TSN.CA / Daniel Alfredsson will be in the building for Chris Phillips' jersey retirement

Ian Mendes

Daniel Alfredsson has not attended an Ottawa Senators home game in more than a calendar year.

But the franchise icon is going to make a return to Canadian Tire Centre on Tuesday night, when his long-time teammate Chris Phillips will have his No. 4 jersey retired to the rafters, where it will forever hang alongside Alfredsson's No. 11.

While Alfredsson's exact role in the pre-game ceremony is still being ironed out – he's not expected to have a major speaking part – he wanted to be there in person to support Phillips.

"It's going to be pretty cool. I think that with the history we have together, I'm really looking forward to the night," Alfredsson told TSN 1200. "It's going to be special for him and to see his No. 4 up next to mine will be pretty cool."

Despite slipping out of the public eye following a second divorce with the hockey club in the summer of 2017, Alfredsson remains the franchise's most beloved icon within the Senators fan base. At a time when the organization is trying to reconnect with those same fans, Alfredsson says it's crucial that the teams he was a part of are celebrated and honoured with nights like the one they are hosting for Phillips.

"I think it's very important. As a franchise, I think we were a big part of taking us from being a bottom team in the league to becoming a real consistent team that the community here could identify with," Alfredsson said. "And it wasn't just for three or four years. It was for 10 or 12 years that we were good all the time, under circumstances where pre-salary cap – we had a salary cap that was self-enforced. But we were able to compete with the bigger guys on a consistent basis and Chris was a huge part of that."

Alfredsson became the first player in modern franchise history to have his jersey retired in an emotional ceremony in December of 2016.

Phillips, Chris Neil and Erik Karlsson were part of the group who stood alongside Alfredsson on a red carpet as his jersey was raised to the rafters that evening.

Since Alfredsson has first-hand experience with seeing his own jersey retired, his advice to Phillips for Tuesday night is to be prepared for a sentimental evening that will stir up a lot of feelings.

"It's going to be emotional for sure. I think it's easier once you retire from hockey to appreciate these kinds of acknowledgments than when you're playing, because you're so focused on stepping onto the ice in 10 minutes and playing a game. Now you can take it in," Alfredsson said. "For me, it was definitely one of the best experiences I've had in hockey. I wouldn't compare it to your child's birth because that's way more significant, but it's something you can't plan for. People can tell you what to expect, but you have to go through it yourself to really understand it. You can't prepare for it."

Alfredsson and Phillips were cornerstones of a Senators team that was a perennial Stanley Cup contender for nearly a decade. Despite some soul-crushing losses in the playoffs, the group treated fans in this market to the best hockey they've ever witnessed.

With a little bit of hindsight and perspective, Alfredsson is proud of what the group accomplished, despite the lack of a Stanley Cup banner to hang alongside their retired jerseys.

"We had some ups and downs, but overall we experienced a lot of ups. We were consistently in the hunt for the championship and made the playoffs consistently," Alfredsson said. "We also had a lot of drive within each other. We had different personalities that helped push each other and help each other throughout those years. A lot of good memories that come back – and fond ones."

It was during the playoffs where Phillips earned his reputation as one of the game's elite defenders. Alfredsson was on the ice with Phillips for 114 postseason games and said he saw the most out of the stay-at-home defenceman when the stakes were the highest.

"We always knew, in the regular season it was steady Philly and then come playoff time, it was a different Philly," Alfredsson explained. "He always stepped up his game and did that little extra in the playoffs. And it wasn't just one or two times, it was every time we were in the playoffs. He always excelled and he showed us what he could do."

Phillips' most memorable playoff moment came during Game 6 of the Eastern Conference final against the New Jersey Devils in 2003. Facing elimination on the road in overtime, Phillips swooped in from the point to bury a puck past Martin Brodeur to force a Game 7 and keep the Senators season alive. The scene of teammates piling on Phillips near the bench remains one of the most indelible images seared in the collective minds of Sens fans.

Alfredsson says Phillips had a penchant for rising to the occasion when the situation called for it, like it did that night in New Jersey.

"In the big moments, it was almost like it triggered a different reaction for him," Alfredsson said. "I wouldn't say he got bored with the regular season games, but he just went out and did his job. And then when the spotlight was on, it was like he had a little something extra."

While Phillips played with a number of defence partners during his 17 seasons in Ottawa, he is most closely associated with Anton Volchenkov. The duo earned the reputation of being one of the most reliable, physical defensive pairs in the league when the Senators advanced to the Stanley Cup Final in 2007.

"They were both selfless. They did everything they can to help the team first," Alfredsson said of the Phillips-Volchenkov pairing.

While Phillips carved out a niche as a reliable, stay-at-home defenceman, Alfredsson says he had an underrated offensive element to his game. Selected first overall by the Senators in the 1996 draft, the club struggled to find a home for him – even experimenting with him as a forward in the early part of his career.

But Alfredsson believes Phillips made a conscious decision to temper his offensive game in order to focus on becoming an elite defender.



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"He had it in him, but he took so much pride in being that shutdown guy that he put that to the side a bit," Alfredsson explained. "It couldn't have been easy for a lot of guys in that position, being drafted first overall – and just getting chances here and there. But then he said, 'Okay, this is what I am now,' and he became the absolute best at it and became one hell of a team player."

While Alfredsson owns virtually every meaningful statistical record in franchise history, there is one mark where Phillips has the edge on him. When Phillips suited up for his final game on Feb. 5, 2015, it was his 1,179th game with Ottawa – allowing him to move past Alfredsson for the record of most games played by a member of the Senators.

That fact does come up from time to time when the two ex-teammates are texting with each other.

"He teased me a few times, but it's all in good fun," laughs Alfredsson. "We respect each other and we're good friends. I'm happy for him. It's not a record like I was looking to come back and play a couple of games late in my career. But it comes up once in a while."

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USA TODAY / Minnesota Wild fires coach Bruce Boudreau -- the eighth NHL coach to lose his job this season

Mike Brehm

The NHL's massive coaching turnover continued Friday when the Minnesota Wild fired coach Bruce Boudreau.

He is the eighth NHL coach to lose his job this season, six for performance reasons. That's a record.

The Wild (27-23-7) are sitting three points out of a playoff spot in the Western Conference. They blew a two-goal lead in the third period Thursday night and lost 4-3 in a shootout to the New York Rangers.

"It's not just one win, it's not one loss, it's not one week," general manager Bill Guerin said. "It's a series of things. Even though Bruce and I have had a great relationship ... the most important thing is that the players are going into this stretch run on a high, and I felt that they just needed a different voice right now."

Assistant Dean Evason was promoted to interim coach. He had been a head coach in the American Hockey League.

Guerin had inherited Boudreau, 65, who was in the fourth and final year of his contract. He went to the playoffs his first two years but missed the playoffs last season.

Guerin traded forward Jason Zucker to the Pittsburgh Penguins this week and said there would be more trades if he noticed the team was quitting. Instead, he changed his coach.

"We are pushing through," he said. "I expect this team to compete for a playoff spot. And I think maybe some adjustments and the different voice that Dean will bring will help the guys. Let's be clear here, too. There's a lot of responsibility on all of our part. ... The players have to be better."

Boudreau had coached 984 NHL games, going 567-302-115.

So far this season, two coaches were replaced for off-ice reasons: Calgary's Bill Peters and Dallas' Jim Montgomery. Toronto's Mike Babcock, New Jersey's John Hynes, San Jose's Peter DeBoer, Nashville's Peter Laviolette and Vegas' Gerard Gallant were fired for performance reasons.

Hynes (Nashville) and DeBoer (Vegas) found new jobs.

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