



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 5, 2018

THE NEWS & OBSERVER

Laine, Jets hold off Hurricanes 3-2

By Chip Alexander

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March 04, 2018 09:24 PM

Updated 8 hours 22 minutes ago

Patrik Laine was the most dangerous player on the ice Sunday, and that was not a good thing for the Carolina Hurricanes.

Laine, the Finnish sharpshooter, had a pair of goals and could have had more as the Winnipeg Jets turned back the Canes 3-2 at PNC Arena.

The Canes (29-26-11) needed to win Sunday to stay in playoff position in the NHL's Eastern Conference. The Columbus Blue Jackets took over the second wild-card spot with a road win over the San Jose Sharks, and with 71 points now are one point ahead of the Florida Panthers and two in front of the Canes.

The Jets, coached by former Hurricanes coach Paul Maurice, have one of the best teams in the Western Conference. A team with four-line balance, good size and speed, Winnipeg (39-17-9) became even stronger by adding veteran forward Paul Stastny and defenseman Joe Morrow before the NHL trade deadline last week.

Stastny scored in the third period for a 3-1 lead after Ben Chiarot's shot went off the post and then hit a referee. Laine also assisted for his third point of the game.

Jordan Staal's goal with 4:12 remaining in the third pulled the Canes within 3-2 but Carolina could not tie it after pulling goalie Cam Ward for a sixth attacker.

"Obviously the games are getting tighter and there's less and less room out there as you get down the stretch," said Canes forward Jeff Skinner, who had six of his team's 35 shots but could not score. "You need to match that level of intensity and exceed it to keep climbing."

The Canes' first goal, by Teuvo Teravainen, came when the puck glanced off Jets defenseman Dmitry Kulikov in front of goalie Connor Hellebuyck. Teravainen earned his 19th goal and has scored in each of the past four games.

"He's way more competitive on a consistent basis right now than he's ever been probably in his career," Canes coach Bill Peters said of the Finnish forward.

Hellebuyck gave up numerous rebounds in the game but the Canes couldn't get to enough second chances other than Staal in the third. Nor did it help that Carolina was 0-3 on the power play.

"Specialty teams are huge and we were minus-1 tonight in a one-goal hockey game," Peters said. "You can say that was the difference."

Carolina was looking to maintain the momentum built last week when it took five of six points in games against Boston, Philadelphia and New Jersey. The Canes beat the Flyers and Devils in a back-to-back set behind Ward, and had Ward in net Sunday for the third time in four days seeking a third straight win.

"It's playoff style hockey right now and I thought we've been digging in, working hard, battling hard," Staal said. "We came up short tonight but the effort was there."

Laine has played with the Canes' Sebastian Aho for Finnish national teams and was on a line that Aho centered as the Finns won the 2016 World Junior Championship. The second overall pick of the 2016 NHL Draft, Laine made his NHL debut in the 2016-17 season-opener against Aho and the Canes in Winnipeg and scored his first goal in an overtime win.

After a 36-goal rookie season, Laine now has 35 in his second year, 17 on the power play. That's 71 goals as a teenager — he turns 20 on April 19 — as he passed former Detroit Red Wings great Steve Yzerman (69) and moved into sixth place on that career list for teenagers.

"It comes off his stick different, right?" Peters said. "It jumps off his stick. He was real dangerous and his line was really good."

Laine scored in first period on a low shot from the slot. After an offensive-zone penalty against Aho in the second period, Laine rifled a shot for a power-play goal and a 2-1 lead.



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Do the Hurricanes have the staying power to reach the playoffs?

By Chip Alexander

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March 04, 2018 10:17 PM

Updated 9 hours 8 minutes ago

At this point of the NHL season, for teams still battling to get into the playoffs, it's all about staying power.

Fighting through injuries. Making plays that make a difference. Winning the close games. Showing some heart.

The Carolina Hurricanes, despite their 3-2 loss Sunday against the Winnipeg Jets, want to believe they can do that and are willing to take it down to the last day of the regular season, if necessary, to make the playoffs for the first time since 2009.

The final game: Tampa Bay, at PNC Arena.

If that sounds familiar, it should. It does to Jets coach Paul Maurice.

In 2011, Maurice was coaching the Canes and Carolina needed a victory in its last game, at home, to qualify for the playoffs. The Canes were surging, going 9-2-1 in their previous 12 games, ripping the Atlanta Thrashers 6-1 in Atlanta the night before the finale.

But Tampa Bay ruined everything. The Lightning, who already had locked up a playoff spot and could not improve its seeding, beat the Canes 6-2, allowing the New York Rangers to grab the last playoff berth in the Eastern Conference.

"It was tough because Eric Staal at that point had been playing with a groin injury for about six weeks and he couldn't skate halfway through that game," Maurice said Sunday. "It was a grinder. We had a real young group. It was (Jeff) Skinner's first year.

"They played really, really hard, but to get to the end and have it end like that was really devastating for us."

Skinner, now in his eighth season, has yet to be in a Stanley Cup playoff game and wants to end that drought this season. So does goalie Cam Ward, who has been a part of some of Carolina's biggest victories through the years, who helped Maurice and the Canes reach the Eastern Conference finals in 2009, but was the loser that April 2011 night against Tampa Bay.

Ward was in net Sunday, making his third start in four days, against the Jets, whose 39-17-9 record and 87 points have them in second place in the Central Division, headed toward the playoffs.

"Cam, for me, there's a certain calmness about his personality, a bit of joy in how he plays," Maurice said. "He's pretty relaxed in that net. He's obviously competitive and when he gets into a good groove and gets to feeling good about his game, he's as good as (any) of them."

The Hurricanes will rely in Ward a lot in the final 16 games. Goalie Scott Darling has been too inconsistent, too unpredictable, although the Canes will need at least a few quality starts from him in the stretch run.

Before Sunday's game, Ward was 18-7-4 with two shutouts in his previous 31 games. He allowed three goals Sunday on 23 shots and twice was beaten by the Jets' Patrik Laine, one of the NHL's best snipers.

"He's keeping us in every game," Canes forward Brock McGinn said after Sunday's morning skate. "We know he's going to be solid back there and we just have to help him out as much as we can."

Teuvo Teravainen earned a Stanley Cup ring with the Chicago Blackhawks in 2015 as a rookie forward surrounded by such stars as Patrick Kane and Jonathan Toews. Now the Canes' leader in points, he's being counted on to help lead the way to the playoffs and has given his team productive, and recently more feisty, play — his goal Sunday was his fourth in four games and he has scored in six of the past seven.

The loss to the Jets allowed the Florida Panthers to move past the Canes and into the second wild-card playoff spot, one point ahead of the Canes. The Columbus Blue Jackets, with 69 points, played later at San Jose and could claim the spot with a win.

"The games mean more," Teravainen said. "Only wins matter. If you lose a game it feels like the end of the world. If you win, it's fun.

"It goes up and down and even when you lose games, you just have to stay with it and try to find a way and try to find the confidence."

In 2009, the Canes clinched their playoff spot in Game 79, on defenseman Anton Babchuk's overtime goal against the Pittsburgh Penguins. In 2011, there was the killer loss in Game 82.

This season? The story still is unfolding.

"We believe we're going to get in, we really do," Canes coach Bill Peters said before Sunday's game. "That's how we approach it. That's how we look at it every day. We're planning as if we're playing beyond Game 82."



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Hurricanes need to put a run together, but they're running out of time

By Luke DeCock

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March 04, 2018 10:27 PM

Updated 9 hours 1 minute ago

RALEIGH

Still can't stand prosperity. Still can't string wins together. Still can't get over the hump.

Nothing is going to change for the Carolina Hurricanes until they figure out how to change the essence of who and what they are.

Once again with a chance to move into a playoff position with a win Sunday, the Hurricanes once again piled up shots but once again not goals in a 3-2 loss to the Winnipeg Jets. The winning streak ended at two.

Had the Hurricanes won, it would have been only their fifth winning streak of three games or longer. Their longest is four, during that stretch of seven wins in eight games around Christmas on either side the 8-1 debacle in Toronto.

But that was a long time ago, and even as the other contenders for the final playoff spot founder – New Jersey lost Sunday – the Hurricanes can't make up any ground. One solid, long streak of five or six or seven wins might be enough to vault the Hurricanes into the eighth spot for good, but this team hasn't come close to that all season.

"We're right there, obviously," said Jordan Staal, a goal-scorer in his third game back with the team since his leave of absence. "I'm not sure what happened to night but we've got to put together a streak here. Two and one and then one, that's not going to do it."

If that sounds familiar, it's essentially the same thing Justin Williams said a month ago – "Playoff teams string five, six, seven wins together and we haven't done that" – and it's still true.

Nothing has changed. Something always gets in the way, whether it's goaltending – the common denominator at the end of all four of those three-game-plus streaks is Scott Darling starts – or a popgun offense or special-teams breakdowns or brain-cramp defense. Until that changes, neither will this playoff drought.

It's a mental issue as much as anything: a combination of an inability to sustain the effort level that this team needs to be successful and a lack of the fortitude to handle the pressure that comes with claiming a spot in the top eight. Both have been true for years, across multiple coaches and captains, and with each passing season, become more and more entrenched and difficult to eradicate.

Effort wasn't an issue Sunday, nor was goaltending. Cam Ward played well enough to win, even giving up three goals on 23 shots. The one that turned out to be the game-winner hit the crossbar and the neck of referee Eric Furlatt before it fell to Peter Stastny's stick to knock into an empty net. Teuvo Teravainen is playing his best hockey with the Hurricanes, and it's still not enough.

So two wins did not become three, and the Hurricanes go back to square one. Again. Winnipeg is a good team, but this game was there for the taking, and now they have to go on the road to play the Wild and the Blackhawks and the Rangers. Only one of those teams is in playoff position. If the Hurricanes can win in Minnesota, they have a chance to gather some momentum, even on the road.

They have 16 games left. They need to get on some kind of a run, or they're going to run out of time.



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NORTH STATE JOURNAL

Hurricanes can't keep pace in playoff hunt, losing 3-2 to Winnipeg

Patrik Laine scores twice for the Jets, who never trailed

[March 4, 2018 Cory Lavalette Article, NHL, Sports](#)

RALEIGH — The Carolina Hurricanes held the Winnipeg Jets' top line of Mark Scheifele, Blake Wheeler and Kyle Connor in check. The same was true for the second line of Bryan Little centering Mathieu Perreault and Jack Roslovic.

It was the third line — specifically Patrik Laine — that did them in.

Laine scored twice, and his center, new Jets pivot Paul Stastny, added the winner off a fortunate bounce to give Winnipeg a 3-2 victory over Carolina on Sunday in front of 11,407 at PNC Arena.

Stastny, who was acquired from St. Louis ahead of the trade deadline, added an insurance goal for Winnipeg midway through the third period — and the Jets needed it.

After Ben Chiarot hit the post coming up the right wing, the puck hit a referee and bounced right to Stastny, who deposited the puck in an open net for a 3-1 Jets lead at 10:06 of third period.

"It was tough, obviously, to watch that go in," Hurricanes center Jordan Staal said. "That was tough. Not much you can do about that."

With 4:12 remaining in the game, Staal ripped a shot short side on Jets goalie Connor Hellebucyk (33 saves) to cut the lead back to one.

Carolina, however, couldn't muster the equalizer with a sixth attacker on the ice, and the Hurricanes remained outside the Eastern Conference playoff picture after the Florida Panthers won earlier in the day to stake a claim to the final wild card spot.

"For the most part, most of the second and third we had control of the game," Staal said. "Obviously they're not going to be as risky, but we had a lot of chances and we couldn't quite get to three."

Prior to that, it was Laine who headlined for the Jets. The second year Finnish sniper opened the scoring just 5:40 into the game with a quick snap shot from the slot off a feed from Nikolaj Ehlers that beat Cam Ward (20 saves) and made it 1-0.

Winnipeg seemed poised to extend its lead on the power play with three Grade-A chances for Laine, but he was unable to convert — ringing the crossbar on one — and Carolina gained life.

On a power play of their own, the Hurricanes maintained zone time and wore out the Jets. Just as the man advantage expired, Teuvo Teravainen's centering pass careened in off of Winnipeg defenseman Dmitry Kulikov at 18:31 of the first to tie it at 1. It was Teravainen's fourth straight game with a goal and his 19th on the season.

"He's way more competitive on a consistent basis right now than he's ever been probably in his career," Hurricanes coach Bill Peters said of Teravainen.

Laine, however, wasn't finished.

With Sebastian Aho in the box for high sticking, Laine made good on the Jets' second power play opportunity, ripping a shot past Ward just six seconds into the man advantage to reclaim the lead for Winnipeg at 2:37 of the second.

"I don't see enough of him live, and that maybe is a good thing," Peters said of the 19-year-old. "But he was sure dangerous tonight."

The Hurricanes' streakiest scorer, Jeff Skinner, was nearly as dangerous as Laine, finishing with six shots on goal and battling to get to the Winnipeg net all night. But unlike Laine, Skinner was kept off the scoresheet — his sixth straight game without a goal.

"Just couldn't get one," Skinner said. "You just gotta keep at it, though. You've gotta keep working for them and sooner or later you get a bounce."

Notes: The Hurricanes fell to 9-2-3 when Teravainen scores a goal. ... Carolina won just 18 of 43 faceoffs, and only Staal (10 of 16) finished above .500 at the dot. Little and Stastny combined to go 16 of 20 for Winnipeg. ... Aho's assist on Teravainen's goal was his 100th NHL point. ... The Panthers win gave them 70 points on the season and moved them a point ahead of both Carolina and Columbus in the standings. Florida also has played just 63 games, compared to 65 and 66 for Columbus and Carolina, respectively.



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Patrik Laine scores 2 more goals, Jets beat Hurricanes 3-2

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RALEIGH, N.C. — Patrik Laine scored twice for the second straight game and extended his points streak to eight in the Winnipeg Jets' 3-2 victory over the Carolina Hurricanes on Sunday night.

Laine had his third multi-goal game in the last four games and has seven multi-point nights during his streak. He has 10 goals and six assists in the eight-game stretch, and 35 goals overall.

Final 1 2 3 Tot

[Winnipeg](#) 1 1 1 3

[Carolina](#) 1 0 1 2

[Preview](#) | [Box](#) | [Gameview](#) | [Recap](#)

Three Stars

- 1: [Patrik Laine](#), Wpg (2G, 1A)
- 2: [Jordan Staal](#), Car (1G)
- 3: [Connor Hellebuyck](#), Wpg (33 Saves)

STATS

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Paul Stastny had a goal and an assist, and Connor Hellebuyck stopped 33 shots for the Jets. Winnipeg improved to 7-2 in its last nine to close within six points of Nashville for the Central Division lead.

Teuvo Teravainen scored for the fourth straight game for the Hurricanes. Jordan Staal also scored, and Cam Ward made 20 saves. Carolina fell to 2-5-2 in its last nine as it tries to hold on to the final playoff spot in the Eastern Conference.

Laine opened the scoring 5:40 into the first when he ripped a wrist shot from the top of the right circle through Ward's legs. He nearly scored twice more in the first period, with a wrist shot that dinged the right post and a slapshot that rang off the crossbar.

The Hurricanes pulled even with 1:29 left in the opening period. Right as a power play ended, Teravainen fired a pass toward the Winnipeg crease that was intended for Jordan Staal, but the puck instead bounced up off Jets defenseman Dmitry Kulikov's chest and into the net.

But Laine struck again just 2:37 into the second period, and six seconds into a power play, with another wrist shot through Ward's legs, this time from the left faceoff circle.

Stastny added insurance with an unusual goal midway through the third period. Ben Chiarot's wrist shot rang off the right post and redirected to the left side of the ice, where it hit referee Eric Furlatt in the side of the face.

With Furlatt recoiling in pain and players across the ice adjusting to the puck's sudden change in position, Stastny picked up the loose puck and fired it into the net.

The fluky goal would prove critical when Staal fired home a rebound with 4:12 remaining.

NOTES: The Jets are 4-0-1 in their last five road games. ... Jets D Toby Enstrom missed his third straight game with a lower body injury. He is day-to-day. ... Jets coach Paul Maurice was the Hurricanes' coach from 1997-2004 and 2009-12.

UP NEXT

Jets: At New York Rangers on Tuesday night.

Hurricanes: At Minnesota on Tuesday night.



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Recap: Canes Fall Short Against Jets

Teravainen, Staal score but Canes fall 3-2

by Michael Smith [@MSmithCanes](#) / CarolinaHurricanes.com

March 4th, 2018

The Carolina Hurricanes attempted to mount a comeback but couldn't erase a two-goal deficit in the third period, as they fell 3-2 to the Winnipeg Jets.

[Teuvo Teravainen](#) and [Jordan Staal](#) scored for the Hurricanes, while Patrik Laine tallied twice for the Jets and Paul Stastny netted the game-winner.

Here are five takeaways from tonight's cross-conference match-up.

One

Chasing the game is a tough situation in the NHL, and the Hurricanes, who are now 5-18-6 this season when the opponent scores first, were chasing tonight's game very early on. Laine netted his first goal of the game, a quick release from the slot that eluded [Jaccob Slavin's](#) blocking attempt, just 5:40 into the game.

Laine would add another in the second period at the outset of Winnipeg's second power play of the game, a shot from a spot familiar to folks who have watched Alex Ovechkin set up shop on the man advantage all these years. That goal, scored just 2:37 into the second period, again forced the Hurricanes to chase the game.

Two

The dagger goal came in the third period on the very definition of a "tough bounce." Ben Chiarot took a shot that careened off the post and hit Eric Furlatt before bouncing right on the stick of trade deadline acquisition Paul Stastny. He pounded the puck into the gaping cage for his 14th goal of the season, which stretched the Jets' lead to two goals with less than 10 minutes to play in regulation.

"It was tough to watch that go in," Staal said. "Not much you can do about that."

"It's unfortunate," head coach Bill Peters said. "Then you're really chasing the game."

Three

To the Hurricanes credit, they didn't fold after Winnipeg's third goal. They continued to push and were eventually rewarded on a rebound. Connor Hellebuyck made the initial

save on Slavin's shot, but the rebound bounced out to Staal, and he buried it for his 15th goal of the season.

"It was big. Good release," Peters said. "Those are the types of goals this time of year: seconds and thirds. He did a good job."

Otherwise, Winnipeg did a commendable job preventing the Hurricanes from getting sticks on pucks - and there were rebounds to be had at times - in the dirty areas of the ice.

"They made it hard to get to the net and create plays. That's what good teams do," Staal said. "It's playoff-style hockey right now. I thought we've been digging in, working hard and battling hard. We came up short tonight, but the effort and chances were there. It just didn't quite go our way."

"I thought they did a good job boxing out," Peters said. "We had a hard time getting it to go and had to chase the game a bit."

Four

The Hurricanes scored at least three goals in each of their last three games (2-0-1) coming into tonight's game, in which they were unable to find a third tally. Peters often calls the league a "race to three," and Winnipeg won that leg tonight.

"Most of the second and third we had control of the game," Staal said. "We had a lot of chances, and we couldn't quite get to three."

Teravainen netted the Hurricanes' first goal on the opposite of a "tough bounce," at least from the Hurricanes perspective. After [Sebastian Aho](#) laid off the puck, Teravainen chucked it to the front of the net, where it ricocheted in off the body of Dmitry Kulikov, who was jockeying for net-front positioning with Staal.

Aho's assist was the sophomore forward's 100th career NHL point (47g, 53a), and Aho has recorded 51 of those this season (23g, 28a).

Conversion on the power play would have helped to supplement the Hurricanes' offense, but the team failed to convert on three chances.

"Specialty teams are huge, and we were minus-1 tonight in a one-goal loss. You could say that's the difference in the hockey game if you want to go down that road," Peters said. "Just execution in general. I thought we could have executed better throughout the game 5-on-5 and on the power play."

Five



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With their sixth straight win earlier this evening, the Florida Panthers bounced the Hurricanes from the second wild card spot in the Eastern Conference. With 16 games remaining, the Hurricanes are mindful of what they're going to need to do in order to secure a postseason berth - and it starts with getting back in the win column on Tuesday in Minnesota.

"We're right there," Staal said. "We've got to string together a streak and it's got to be now."

"You're always trying to get to the next level. We've done a better job as of late, and we want continue keep getting

better," Skinner said. "The games are getting tighter. There's less and less room out there as you get down the stretch. You need to match that intensity and exceed it to keep climbing. That's what we're going to try to do."

Up Next

The Hurricanes will make their final trip to Western Conference cities this week, visiting Minnesota on Tuesday and Chicago on Thursday.



SB NATION
CANES COUNTRY

Recap and Ranker: Odd bounces, tentative shooting doom Canes in 3-2 loss to Jets

We've seen this movie way too many times: cute passing and not enough shooting put an end to Carolina's winning streak.

By [Brian LeBlanc@bdleblanc](mailto:Brian_LeBlanc@bdlblanc) Updated Mar 4, 2018, 10:06pm EST

The [Carolina Hurricanes](#) have long suffered from an overpassing disease, an affliction that has cost them time and again. It happened yet again on Sunday night, as the Canes outshot the [Winnipeg Jets](#) 35-23 but couldn't make it translate on the scoreboard in a 3-2 loss to the Jets that dropped the Canes out of a playoff spot.

Despite carrying play in the first few minutes of the game, putting three shots on Jets goalie [Connor Hellebuyck](#) before Winnipeg took one of their own, it was the visitors who struck first. [Patrik Laine](#) scored his first of two on the evening as [Nikolai Ehlers](#) fed him from behind the net and the Finn fired off a one-timer that beat [Cam Ward](#) through the five-hole before the goalie knew it was past him.

We interrupt this recap to bring you the most important thing that happened tonight:

Now that you have served your two-minute ruff-ing penalty, we resume.

[Teuvo Teravainen](#) equalized for the Canes with a minute and a half remaining in the first, seconds after the Canes failed to convert on a power play following a [Josh Morrissey](#) slashing penalty. It was a lucky bounce, to be sure, but his centering pass intended for [Jordan Staal](#) caromed off of Dmitry Kulikov's leg and past [Hellebuyck](#) to tie the game.

The goal was the third for Teravainen in as many games and extended a four-game point streak for the winger. The primary assist went to [Sebastian Aho](#), his 100th NHL point. They have come in 144 games, third behind [Eric Staal](#) and [Jeff Skinner](#) (133 games each) in Carolina history as the fastest to reach the milestone.

But the story through the first two periods was the missed opportunities and the cutesy passing plays that cost the Canes time and again. It was [Victor Rask](#) directing a puck wide on what should have been a tap-in shortly before [Laine](#) scored. It was [Justin Williams](#) inexplicably passing five feet from the net to no one in particular. It was [Jacob Slavin](#) not trusting his backhand from the slot with no defender around him in the second.

True to form, the Canes outshot the Jets 17-4 in the second period, yet they conceded the go-ahead goal, again to [Laine](#), on one of those four shots. A wrister from Ovechkinland in the near circle deflected off [Brock McGinn](#) and past Ward, who was unprepared for the change in direction.

And speaking of deflections, the goal that gave the Jets a two-goal lead was one of the most bizarre you'll ever see. Defenseman Ben Chiarot took a harmless-looking shot that Ward steered off the crossbar, but on the deflection off the iron the puck hit referee Eric Furlatt in the neck and bounced right to [Paul Stastny](#), who teed off on an open net to extend Winnipeg's lead.

But Jordan Staal made sure there was still something to play for in the final five minutes. A Slavin point shot bounced off [Hellebuyck](#)'s left pad and right to the co-captain, who fired it home under the goalie's glove to cut the lead back to 3-2.

That was as close as the Canes would come, despite playing the final two minutes with Ward out of the net and Skinner coming close with just over a minute to go. The loss dropped the Hurricanes out of a playoff spot coupled with the [Panthers'](#) win over the [Flyers](#) earlier in the day.

In Their Own Words

Bill Peters:

I thought they did a good job boxing out. We had a few good looks early off the rush, and had a hard time getting it to go. We had to chase the game a little bit. Unfortunate that it goes off the official and Stastny gets that, and then you're



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really chasing the game. We needed to get one earlier, be a little sharper on special teams also.

They're deep. They're very deep. They seem to score, I don't want to say easy, but they have the ability to score. It comes off Laine's stick different, jumping off his stick. I thought they were real dangerous. I thought they had lots of shots. They had the puck lots, and they generate a lot of offense. I don't see enough of him live, and that maybe is a good thing, but he was sure dangerous tonight.

[Teravainen] is way more competitive on a consistent basis than he has ever been, probably, in his career. Skinner was good. He had good jump and drew a power play in the offensive zone. I thought he had good legs.

[Staal's] goal was huge. We're talking about getting the goaltender out and all of a sudden we score, and it changes the dynamic. Those are the types of goal this time of year, seconds and thirds. I thought he was real good. That line was good.

Jordan Staal:

For the most part, most of the second and third we had control of the game. Obviously they're up so we couldn't be as risky, but we had chances. We just couldn't get to three.

They made it hard to get to the net. They made it hard to create plays. That's what good teams do.

It's playoff-style hockey right now, and I thought we were digging in and working hard, battling hard. The effort was there, the chances were there, we just couldn't break through.

I swear, a few games ago some odd bounce off the ref was blown down, and they said they wouldn't allow a goal like that. It was tough to watch a goal like that go in.

Jeff Skinner:

I thought we had good jump. We were able to get in on the forecheck and create some turnovers, just couldn't bury one. You need to work and try to get body position. It's tough because they're trying to prevent you from doing that, and sometimes it's just where the puck falls. We got a bounce on

Teravainen's, the rebound bounced right to them on their third goal. You have to make sure you're there, and maybe we can do a little better job of establishing body positioning.

You're always trying to get to the next level. We've done a better job as of late, and we want to continue getting better. The games are getting tighter, there's less and less room out there as we go down the stretch. You need to match that level of intensity to keep climbing, and that's what we're going to try to do.

Game Notes

- A game like that is a perfect example of a loss that feels much different in March than it does in, say, November. If that effort happens before Thanksgiving, the Canes are probably...well, not fine necessarily, but it's understandable. Winnipeg is really, really good, and the Canes aren't on their level. It's just that things become more magnified in the spotlight of a playoff race.
- Peters noted the efficiency of Laine's ice time. He only played 14:16 - and, more to the point, Ehlers only played 12 minutes - but the two combined for four points and a +4. That's impressive.
- There were no media timeouts in the final period, the first time anyone can remember that happening. You can't take a break after a goal or an icing, and those were the only whistles until the final minute of the game (when they won't take a media timeout). Kind of bizarre.
- Staal finished +2 in nearly 20 minutes of ice time. They missed him dearly, and his goal was well deserved. At the other end...Derek Ryan, 16:49 of ice time, 3:55 on the power play, two shots, 1-for-7 in the faceoff circle. Yowza.
- The Canes have tomorrow off, and will head to Minnesota tomorrow afternoon to get ready for a quick two-game trip to St. Paul and Chicago this week.



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TriangleSportsNetwork

Hurricanes lose 3-2, can't keep pace with Jets

Patrik Laine's two goals, assist paces Winnipeg to win

[March 4, 2018 Peter Koutroumpis Carolina Hockey Network, Carolina Hurricanes, Triangle Sports Network, Triangle Sports Roundup](#)

By Peter Koutroumpis

editor@trianglesportsnet.com

RALEIGH, N.C. – The Carolina Hurricanes had their work cut out for them at PNC Arena on Sunday night.

The visiting Winnipeg Jets, led by Patrik Laine, handed the Hurricanes a 3-2 loss as 11,407 in attendance looked on.

The Finnish forward tallied two goals and an assist, and prompted Carolina head coach Bill Peters to concur that he's one of the most dangerous scorers in the NHL.

"Right now, it sure seems like it," he said.

"I haven't seen enough of him live, and that maybe is a good thing, but he was sure dangerous tonight."

While Teuvo Teravainen and Jordan Staal scored for Carolina, Laine's two-goal performance along with a single from Paul Stastny was enough to deny the Hurricanes a third straight win.

Both teams amply carved up all sections of the ice surface, battling for puck possessions and banging bodies along the boards throughout.

Winnipeg's modest 23-shot count nicked goaltender Cam Ward for a goal each period, while at the other end, netminder Connor Hellebuyck held up exceptionally well and made 33 stops to post the win over the Hurricanes.

The loss dropped Carolina out of the NHL Eastern Conference wildcard spot it briefly held [following a 3-1 win over New Jersey](#) on Friday.

Laine paced the Jets offense early during each of the first two periods.

His low slap shot from the high slot put Winnipeg up at the 5:40 mark of the first which Teravainen eventually matched with his 18th goal of the season late in the period.

With an almost identical shot from the same distance from the top of the circle to Ward's right, Laine's second goal, this

time on the power play, gave Winnipeg the lead back 2:37 into the second period.

Carolina struggled to beat Hellebuyck throughout the frame, at both even strength and with the man-advantage, finishing 0-for-3 on the power play overall.

"Specialty teams were huge," Peters pointed out.

"We were minus-one tonight in a one-goal loss. I'd say that's the difference in the hockey game."

Stastny's goal, which was weirdly queued up following a shot off the crossbar that subsequently deflected off the referee before the Jets forward snapped the puck into a gaping net, put Carolina further behind, 3-1, at the 10:06 mark of the third.

Staal pulled the Hurricanes closer just under six minutes later, the closest they would get despite pulling Ward for the extra skater with a minute remaining.

"We had a lot of chances, but we couldn't quite get to three," Staal said.

"They made it hard to get to the net. They made great plays like good teams do, and we need to find a way to win some games."

What's the Skinny?

Of note, forwards Jeff Skinner and Sebastian Aho put six and five shots, respectively on the Jets net, but couldn't negate the one-goal deficit the Hurricanes chased all game.

While Aho earned an assist on Teravainen's goal, his 100th NHL career point, Skinner finished without a point.

Though unable to help Carolina pull even, he looked more the scoring threat than he has in recent games, a critical factor to this team's chances in winning games during this playoff push.

"I had some pretty good shifts the first couple of periods," Skinner said.

"I created some chances, but just couldn't get one. I felt like we had good jump. The line was playing well. The D were doing a good job jumping up in the rush, feedin' the transition game and we were able to get in on the forecheck and cause some turnovers. Just couldn't bury one though."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 5, 2018



Artūrs Irbe Helped Hurricanes' Stability

By [Mark Shiver](#) March 4th, 2018

Artūrs Irbe was loved by fans of the Carolina Hurricanes. Moving what were the Hartford Whalers to North Carolina by then owner, Peter Karmanos, was at the very least a gamble. Hockey in North Carolina was not guaranteed to be successful, especially trying to get established in the proximity of Tobacco Road, the mecca of college basketball. Would a professional sports played on ice succeed in a place where it barely snowed in the winter?

Hurricanes Form in NC

The first year in North Carolina saw games played in Greensboro, [with a crew of goaltenders](#). Five different goaltenders saw playing time, with Trevor Kidd and Sean Burke carrying most of the load. The next season, 1998-99, Irbe became the starting goaltender. The NHL had re-structured the divisions, and the Hurricanes won the newly created Southeast Division. They qualified for the playoffs, losing two games to four to the Boston Bruins.

Irbe started 67 games that season and was cemented as the starter. His 2.22 goals against average and save percentage of .923 were respectable, and more importantly, the team had a fans between the pipes they could rally around. The expression, "Irbe says no!" whenever he made a particularly difficult save became a staple when listening to the games.

Irbe became a fan favorite, and making the playoffs so quickly after moving to North Carolina gave the Hurricanes credibility as a legitimate NHL team. Sure they had been the Whalers for years, but this team was now the Hurricanes, struggling to make it in the South. Irbe was one of a stable of players like Ron Francis and Keith Primeau, Glen Wesley and Jeff O'Neill who would help ensure that the Hurricanes would not only make it in North Carolina, but be successful, too.

Irbe the Man

Many may have forgotten the stranglehold that communism had on many Eastern European countries. Irbe was from Latvia, and was not allowed to leave the country and even [consider playing in the NHL until 1991](#), when he was selected by the expansion San Jose Sharks in the Dispersal Draft. He had been originally drafted 196th by the Minnesota North Stars in 1989, but did not play for them as he remained in Latvia.

After a year in the minors, Irbe became the Sharks' starting goalie in the 1993-94 season. He played 74 games, went 30-28-16, and led the Sharks to the playoffs. They eliminated the Detroit Red Wings and almost beat the Toronto Maple

Leafs, but lost in seven games. Things were looking good for Irbe.

Then things changed for Irbe in a bad way. Quoting from Legends of Hockey, "The summer of 1994 saw near tragedy visit Irbe. Back home in Riga he was doing sit-ups one day next to his sleeping dog. At one point he nudged the animal, which woke up and went berserk, tearing and ravaging Irbe's hands and forcing him to go to the hospital. He suffered extensive damage to the tendons and nerves in his hands, and his career was threatened."

Irbe was not extremely tall at five-foot-eight and was a reflex-centric goalie. His injuries slowed him down a bit and he ended up moving from the Sharks to the Dallas Stars and Vancouver Canucks. Things did not go extremely well in either venue, and he wound up in Carolina. He was able to return to form and not only lead the team to the playoffs in 1999, and 2001, but was a key part the team making it to the Stanley Cup Finals in 2002.

This relocated franchise was having early success that some teams would love to have had at any point. The Hurricanes eventually lost to the Red Wings, but the stage was set for hockey to thrive in North Carolina. Irbe was the starter for four of the six seasons he was with the 'Canes, and is a undisputed part of the success the team has enjoyed. That success so early may have spoiled the fan base, which has not seen the team in the playoffs since 2009.

Irbe's tenure was on the decline, eventually giving way to Kevin Weekes. Irbe eventually cleared waivers with the Hurricanes and wound up a year later with the Columbus Blue Jackets, where his NHL career ended. Irbe did play with his home Latvia in the World Cup many times, and also on their team in the Olympics.

Weekes gave way to Martin Gerber and eventually a rookie who, much like Irbe, would put the team on his back and this time, win the Stanley Cup Finals. Cam Ward has been the Hurricanes goaltender ever since that run in 2006, only recently supposedly replaced as the starter by Scott Darling, but not really.

The fans of the Hurricanes will point to O'Neill, Francis, Rod Brind'Amour, and a host of others as former greats that helped the team stabilize and mature in North Carolina. But, if they had not had the gritty, determined play of Irbe, their history would not be nearly as great as it has been. The small, determined Latvian made a hockey team in North Carolina great, and stabilized them with success in the early going.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 5, 2018



Canes drop tight game to Jets, fall out of wild card spot

Andrew Schnittker, Sports Editor

10 hrs ago

The Carolina Hurricanes put forth a solid effort Sunday night, but it was not quite enough to top one of the NHL's top teams, as the Canes fell 3-2 to the Winnipeg Jets at PNC Arena.

Forward and leading point getter Teuvo Teravainen scored in the second period for the Canes (29-26-11) to extend his goal streak to three games and his point streak to four, and Jordan Staal brought Carolina within a goal with a late third-period tally. Jets (39-17-9) forward Patrik Laine scored a pair of goals. Goalie Cam Ward stopped 20 of 23 shots; Carolina outshot Winnipeg 35-23 for the game.

Special teams played a key role in this one, as the Jets capitalized on one of their two power plays on the night, while the Canes went 0 for 3 up a man.

"Specialty teams were huge," head coach Bill Peters said. "We were minus one tonight in a one-goal loss. You can say that's the difference in the hockey game if you want to go down that road. Just execution in general, I thought we thought we could have executed a little bit better throughout the game, on the power play, with the puck."

The Jets jumped out to a quick lead, as Laine, one of the most dangerous shooters in the NHL, zipped a perfectly-placed shot through Ward's five hole to make it 1-0 less than six minutes in.

"[The Jets] are deep," Peters said. "They're very deep; they score lots. They seem to score, I don't want to say easy, but they have the ability to score. It comes off [Laine]'s stick different. It's jumping off his stick. I thought he was real dangerous."

The Canes tied it with just 1:29 left in the first; directly after a power play expired, Teravainen threw a puck on net that banked in off Jets defenseman Dmitry Kulikov, who was fighting for positioning with Staal in front of Winnipeg goalie Connor Hellebuyck.

"[Teravainen]'s way more competitive on a consistent basis right now than he's ever been, probably in his career," Peters said.

Laine restored a 2-1 lead for the Jets on an early second-period, with another snap wrister that deflected off Canes forward Brock McGinn and through Ward's pads.

Carolina carried play for most of the middle frame, outshooting Winnipeg 17-4, but could not get a puck past Hellebuyck. There were second-chance opportunities to be had off of Hellebuyck, but the Canes seemed to be one step away from those rebounds throughout the game.

"You need to work and try to get body positioning for sure," said Canes forward Jeff Skinner, who finished the game with six shots on goal. "It's tough because they're obviously trying to prevent you from doing that. Sometimes it's just where the puck falls. ... You've got to make sure you're there, and maybe we can do a little better job of trying to establish body positioning and go from there."

Winnipeg took a 3-1 lead about halfway through the third period on a fortuitous bounce; defenseman Ben Chiarot put a shot off the crossbar that struck an official in the face and landed in a perfect location for forward Paul Stastny to deposit it into an open net.

"I swear a few games ago there was some odd bounce off the ref and they blew it down," Staal said. "They said they wouldn't allow a goal like that. It was tough, obviously, to watch that go in."

The Canes got within one with 4:12 to play, as Staal picked up a loose puck off the rebound of a shot from defenseman Jaccob Slavin and snapped it past Hellebuyck to make it 3-2.

Carolina pulled Ward for an extra skater with a little over two minutes to play, but could not find the equalizer, ending the team's point streak at three.

"They made it hard to get to the net and they made it hard to create plays," Staal said. "That's what good teams do. We still need to find a way to win some games."

The loss, coupled with the Florida Panthers and Columbus Blue Jackets' wins, moves the Hurricanes two points behind Columbus and a point behind Florida for the Eastern Conference's second wild card spot with 16 games to go, though the Panthers have three games in hand on the Canes.

"You're always trying to get to the next level," Skinner said. "We've done a better job as of late. We want to keep getting better. Obviously the games are getting tighter and there's less and less room out there as you get down the stretch. You need to match that level of intensity and exceed it to keep climbing. That's what we're going to try and do."

Carolina will hit the road to take on the Minnesota Wild Tuesday night.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Four-Goal Second Lifts Checkers Over Hartford 4-3

Written by Nicholas Niedzielski

Published: March 04, 2018

After breaking the scoring open late in the first, the Wolf Pack notched another less than a minute into the middle frame to put Charlotte in a 2-0 hole. Warren Foegele put the visitors on the board with a breakaway tally shortly after, and that would spark a red-hot period for the Checkers. Brendan Kichton evened the score with a bomb from the point on the man-advantage, followed just 16 seconds later by Clark Bishop banging home a rebound out front to give Charlotte its first lead.

The Checkers' siege continued less than two minutes after that when Greg McKegg swooped around the back of the Hartford net to deliver a pass to Valentin Zykov, who buried it for his AHL-leading 28th goal of the season and Charlotte's fourth of the frame.

The Wolf Pack pushed back in the third, with Boo Nieves capitalizing on a two-man advantage to pull his club within one, but that would be all the Wolf Pack could muster. Alex Nedeljkovic, who finished the night with 32 saves, helped the Checkers weather Hartford's rally attempt and picked up his 25th win of the season.

NOTES

The Checkers finished their fourth and final three-in-three of the season with a 2-1-0 record ... The Checkers have won consecutive road games for the first time since Dec. 8 and 9 ... Today was the 10th time this season the Checkers have scored at least four goals in a single period and the first since Feb. 13 ... With his third goal in two games, Valentin Zykov continues to hold the AHL lead for goals ... Warren Foegele extended his goals lead among AHL rookies and moved into a tie for third overall ... Alex Nedeljkovic is the first AHL goalie to reach 25 wins this season ... Greg McKegg has recorded an assist in all three games he's played for the Checkers ... Sergey Tolchinsky extended his point streak to three games ... Marcus Kruger, Jake Chelios and Andrew Miller all missed the game due to injury ... Tyler Ganly, Mike Ferrantino and Zack Stortini served as healthy extras

UP NEXT

The Checkers will return to Charlotte to kick off a big home stand starting Friday against this same Hartford team.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Laine has three points to boost Jets past Hurricanes

Scores two goals for third time in four games; Winnipeg keeps pace in Central

by Kurt Dusterberg / NHL.com Correspondent

March 4th, 2018

RALEIGH, N.C. -- [Patrik Laine](#) had two goals and an assist, and [Connor Hellebuyck](#) made 33 saves to lift the Winnipeg Jets to a 3-2 win against the Carolina Hurricanes at PNC Arena on Sunday.

[Paul Stastny](#) had a goal and an assist for the Jets, who are 5-0-1 in their past six road games.

Winnipeg (39-17-9), which started a six-game road trip, trails the Nashville Predators by six points for first place in the Central Division.

Laine has scored in seven of eight games (10 goals), including three two-goal games in his past four.

"It's exciting, he's a goal-scorer," Hellebuyck said. "It's fun seeing the puck go in the back of the net. It leads to victories."

[Teuvo Teravainen](#) and [Jordan Staal](#) scored for the Hurricanes, who lost for the first time in three games. [Cam Ward](#) made 20 saves.

Carolina (29-26-11) trails the Columbus Blue Jackets by two points for the second wild card into the Stanley Cup Playoffs from the Eastern Conference.

Laine scored at 5:40 of the first period to give the Jets a 1-0 lead. He took [Nikolaj Ehlers](#)' backhand pass and beat Ward from the high slot.

"[The puck] comes jumping off his stick," Hurricanes coach Bill Peters said. "I thought he was real dangerous. I thought that line had the puck a lot."

Carolina tied the game 1-1 at 18:31 when Teravainen's centering pass deflected off Winnipeg defenseman [Dmitry Kulikov](#)'s leg at the top of the crease.

Laine scored his 35th goal six seconds into a power play to put the Jets up 2-1 at 2:37 of the second period. He took a pass from Stastny and scored with a shot low along the ice from the left face-off circle.

"I'm just trying to work hard every shift," Laine said. "Things are going great, but there's still lots of things we can do better. But I think we're on a good roll right now."

Stastny gave the Jets a 3-1 lead at 10:06 of the third period. [Ben Chiarot](#)'s shot hit the crossbar and then referee Eric Furlatt before Stastny gathered the rebound and scored from a sharp angle at the bottom of the left circle.

"Literally, I didn't see it hit the post," Stastny said. "I just heard it. All of a sudden, I realized it was in front of me."

Staal cut Winnipeg's lead to 3-2 when he scored on the rebound of [Jaccob Slavin](#)'s shot at 15:48.

Hellebuyck earned his 34th win of the season to tie [Kari Lehtonen](#)'s franchise record, set in 2006-07 with the Atlanta Thrashers.

"I thought the guys in front of me were blocking a lot of the key shots and keeping the players to the outside, making my life pretty easy," the goaltender said.

Goal of the game

Laine's goal at 2:37 of the second period.

Save of the game

Hellebuyck stopping [Justin Faulk](#) with 38 seconds remaining in the third period.

Highlight of the game

Stastny's goal at 10:06 of the third period.

They said it

"It was a grinder. [The Hurricanes] put a lot of pucks at the net, competed real hard, and we had to be pretty solid in front of our net. But the Stastny line, there's been more there the more and more they get used to each other. There's been a real nice chemistry." -- *Jets coach Paul Maurice on Nikolaj Ehlers, Paul Stastny and Patrik Laine, who combined for six points*

"We came up short tonight, but the effort was there. [The Jets] made it hard to get to the net, they made it hard to create plays. That's what good teams do. We've still got to find a way to win some games." -- *Hurricanes forward Jordan Staal*

Need to know

Wheeler got his 56th assist on Laine's second goal and trails Philadelphia Flyers forward [Jakub Voracek](#) by one for the NHL lead. ... Aho got his 100th NHL point with an assist on



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Teravainen's goal. ... Teravainen has scored in an NHL career-high four straight games and in six of seven.

What's next

Jets: At the New York Rangers on Tuesday (7 p.m. ET; MSG+ 2, TSN3, NHL.TV)

Hurricanes: At the Minnesota Wild on Tuesday (8 p.m. ET; FS-N, FS-CR, NHL.TV)

TODAY'S LINKS

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<https://www.nhl.com/news/winnipeg-jets-carolina-hurricanes-game-recap/c-296626378>

SportScan

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

1101948 Carolina Hurricanes

Do the Hurricanes have the staying power to reach the playoffs?

BY CHIP ALEXANDER

March 04, 2018 10:17 PM

At this point of the NHL season, for teams still battling to get into the playoffs, it's all about staying power.

Fighting through injuries. Making plays that make a difference. Winning the close games. Showing some heart.

The Carolina Hurricanes, despite their 3-2 loss Sunday against the Winnipeg Jets, want to believe they can do that and are willing to take it down to the last day of the regular season, if necessary, to make the playoffs for the first time since 2009.

The final game: Tampa Bay, at PNC Arena.

If that sounds familiar, it should. It does to Jets coach Paul Maurice.

In 2011, Maurice was coaching the Canes and Carolina needed a victory in its last game, at home, to qualify for the playoffs. The Canes were surging, going 9-2-1 in their previous 12 games, ripping the Atlanta Thrashers 6-1 in Atlanta the night before the finale.

But Tampa Bay ruined everything. The Lightning, who already had locked up a playoff spot and could not improve its seeding, beat the Canes 6-2, allowing the New York Rangers to grab the last playoff berth in the Eastern Conference.

"It was tough because Eric Staal at that point had been playing with a groin injury for about six weeks and he couldn't skate halfway through

that game," Maurice said Sunday. "It was a grinder. We had a real young group. It was (Jeff) Skinner's first year.

"They played really, really hard, but to get to the end and have it end like that was really devastating for us."

The Canes Eric Staal (12) battles the Lightning's Nate Thompson (44) on a face-off against the Tampa Bay Lightning at the then-named RBC Center in Raleigh N.C. on April 9, 2011.

Skinner, now in his eighth season, has yet to be in a Stanley Cup playoff game and wants to end that drought this season. So does goalie Cam Ward, who has been a part of some of Carolina's biggest victories through the years, who helped Maurice and the Canes reach the Eastern Conference finals in 2009, but was the loser that April 2011 night against Tampa Bay.

Ward was in net Sunday, making his third start in four days, against the Jets, whose 39-17-9 record and 87 points have them in second place in the Central Division, headed toward the playoffs.

"Cam, for me, there's a certain calmness about his personality, a bit of joy in how he plays," Maurice said. "He's pretty relaxed in that net. He's obviously competitive and when he gets into a good groove and gets to feeling good about his game, he's as good as (any) of them."

The Hurricanes will rely in Ward a lot in the final 16 games. Goalie Scott Darling has been too inconsistent, too unpredictable, although the Canes will need at least a few quality starts from him in the stretch run.

Before Sunday's game, Ward was 18-7-4 with two shutouts in his previous 31 games. He allowed three goals Sunday on 23 shots and twice was beaten by the Jets' Patrik Laine, one of the NHL's best snipers.

"He's keeping us in every game," Canes forward Brock McGinn said after Sunday's morning skate. "We know he's going to be solid back there and we just have to help him out as much as we can."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Teuvo Teravainen earned a Stanley Cup ring with the Chicago Blackhawks in 2015 as a rookie forward surrounded by such stars as Patrick Kane and Jonathan Toews. Now the Canes' leader in points, he's being counted on to help lead the way to the playoffs and has given his team productive, and recently more feisty, play — his goal Sunday was his fourth in four games and he has scored in six of the past seven.

The loss to the Jets allowed the Florida Panthers to move past the Canes and into the second wild-card playoff spot, one point ahead of the Canes. The Columbus Blue Jackets, with 69 points, played later at San Jose and could claim the spot with a win.

"The games mean more," Teravainen said. "Only wins matter. If you lose a game it feels like the end of the world. If you win, it's fun.

"It goes up and down and even when you lose games, you just have to stay with it and try to find a way and try to find the confidence."

In 2009, the Canes clinched their playoff spot in Game 79, on defenseman Anton Babchuk's overtime goal against the Pittsburgh Penguins. In 2011, there was the killer loss in Game 82.

This season? The story still is unfolding.

"We believe we're going to get in, we really do," Canes coach Bill Peters said before Sunday's game. "That's how we approach it. That's how we look at it every day. We're planning as if we're playing beyond Game 82."

News Observer LOADED: 03.05.2018

1101949 Carolina Hurricanes

Laine, Jets hold off Hurricanes 3-2

BY CHIP ALEXANDER

March 04, 2018 09:24 PM

Patrik Laine was the most dangerous player on the ice Sunday, and that was not a good thing for the Carolina Hurricanes.

Laine, the Finnish sharpshooter, had a pair of goals and could have had more as the Winnipeg Jets turned back the Canes 3-2 at PNC Arena.

The Canes (29-26-11) needed to win Sunday to stay in playoff position in the NHL's Eastern Conference. The Columbus Blue Jackets took over the second wild-card spot with a road win over the San Jose Sharks, and with 71 points now are one point ahead of the Florida Panthers and two in front of the Canes.

The Jets, coached by former Hurricanes coach Paul Maurice, have one of the best teams in the Western Conference. A team with four-line balance, good size and speed, Winnipeg (39-17-9) became even stronger by adding veteran forward Paul Stastny and defenseman Joe Morrow before the NHL trade deadline last week.

Stastny scored in the third period for a 3-1 lead after Ben Chiarot's shot went off the post and then hit a referee. Laine also assisted for his third point of the game.

Jordan Staal's goal with 4:12 remaining in the third pulled the Canes within 3-2 but Carolina could not tie it after pulling goalie Cam Ward for a sixth attacker.

"Obviously the games are getting tighter and there's less and less room out there as you get down the stretch," said Canes forward Jeff Skinner, who had six of his team's 35 shots but could not score. "You need to match that level of intensity and exceed it to keep climbing."

The Canes' first goal, by Teuvo Teravainen, came when the puck glanced off Jets defenseman Dmitry Kulikov in front of goalie Connor Hellebuyck. Teravainen earned his 19th goal and has scored in each of the past four games.

"He's way more competitive on a consistent basis right now than he's ever been probably in his career," Canes coach Bill Peters said of the Finnish forward.

Hellebuyck gave up numerous rebounds in the game but the Canes couldn't get to enough second chances other than Staal in the third. Nor did it help that Carolina was 0-3 on the power play.

"Specialty teams are huge and we were minus-1 tonight in a one-goal hockey game," Peters said. "You can say that was the difference."

Carolina was looking to maintain the momentum built last week when it took five of six points in games against Boston, Philadelphia and New Jersey. The Canes beat the Flyers and Devils in a back-to-back set behind Ward, and had Ward in net Sunday for the third time in four days seeking a third straight win.

"It's playoff style hockey right now and I thought we've been digging in, working hard, battling hard," Staal said. "We came up short tonight but the effort was there."

Laine has played with the Canes' Sebastian Aho for Finnish national teams and was on a line that Aho centered as the Finns won the 2016 World Junior Championship. The second overall pick of the 2016 NHL Draft, Laine made his NHL debut in the 2016-17 season-opener against Aho and the Canes in Winnipeg and scored his first goal in an overtime win.

After a 36-goal rookie season, Laine now has 35 in his second year, 17 on the power play. That's 71 goals as a teenager — he turns 20 on April 19 — as he passed former Detroit Red Wings great Steve Yzerman (69) and moved into sixth place on that career list for teenagers.

"It comes off his stick different, right?" Peters said. "It jumps off his stick. He was real dangerous and his line was really good."

Laine scored in first period on a low shot from the slot. After an offensive-zone penalty against Aho in the second period, Laine rifled a shot for a power-play goal and a 2-1 lead.

News Observer LOADED: 03.05.2018

1101989 Minnesota Wild

Wild's Charlie Coyle having a run of stitches to his face of late

By Sarah McLellan

MARCH 4, 2018 — 6:44PM

About two weeks ago, Wild forward Charlie Coyle was thinking about how fortunate he had been recently since pucks and sticks had avoided his face.

"All of a sudden, two games later, 'Boom,'" Coyle said. "And then again. It's funny how it works. Sometimes you're lucky; sometimes you're not."

Coyle's mouth is more than enough evidence to qualify him for the latter category.

After a puck caught him up high Feb. 13 against the Rangers, putting a gash under his lip that required about seven or eight stitches to close, the cut opened the next game after a stick rubbed it.

"I had to get it restitched," he said.



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Once those stitches were removed, it wasn't long before Coyle sported another smattering. Late in Thursday's game against the Coyotes, a shot from teammate Jason Zucker got deflected by a stick and up near Coyle's mouth. He figures it's probably the worst hit he's taken to the face, with about 10 stitches still zigzagging by his upper lip.

"It's part of the game," he said. "Comes with the territory."

The cages players wear when they're younger help protect against these kind of injuries early in their careers, but eventually they're exposed and vulnerable.

And yet they still battle the same.

"I think you see other people before you and other people play, and they play through whatever and get hit and go right back out," Coyle said. "That's just what you do now. You don't want to be the guy to not do that. Everyone before sets the bar, and your legs are still moving so you go out and play. I think that's what every guy does."

On the rise

Half of captain Mikko Koivu's goal production has come in the past month, an encouraging development for the center and the Wild.

Since Feb. 6, Koivu scored six times in 13 games — including once in each of the three games leading up to Sunday. He had six goals in the previous 52 games. This jump puts Koivu on pace for 15 goals, just three shy of the 18 he amassed in 2016-17.

"He's starting to feel it a little bit," coach Bruce Boudreau said. "He's getting a little more comfortable with Zach [Parise], I think, on the wing. They're getting a little bit of chemistry."

Who has filled out that line on the right side has fluctuated, usually between Coyle and Nino Niederreiter of late. Niederreiter was back with Koivu and Parise on Sunday, as he continues to search for a rhythm after missing stretches of the season with injury.

"That's hockey players," Boudreau said. "There's not a guy in there that's not playing with a little bruise somewhere. The more it goes down the stretch, the play comes with more pain. To succeed here, you gotta pay the price and a lot of times that price is being sore or recovering. Yeah, his leg hurts him every now and again. But in Arizona he was skating great."

Prosser back in

Defenseman Nate Prosser was back in the lineup Sunday after sitting out Friday's game, the first game he missed since the day the Wild claimed him off waivers Nov. 30 — a span of 39 games.

The decision to scratch Prosser stemmed from a host of factors; the team was finishing off a back-to-back against a speedy Avalanche team, and Boudreau felt it would benefit Prosser to take a break. Gustav Olofsson, who subbed in for Prosser, also previously lived in Colorado. That was Olofsson's first game after being idle for five, but he was out against the Red Wings.

Winger Marcus Foligno was the Wild's other healthy scratch.

Star Tribune LOADED: 03.05.2018

1101990 Minnesota Wild

Wild trying to avoid three-game losing streak vs. Red Wings

By Sarah McLellan

MARCH 4, 2018 — 10:33AM

The Wild has been mostly productive in recent weeks, pocketing at least a point in 10 of its previous 11 games before its momentum was derailed by losses to the Coyotes and Avalanche.

And although that rhythm lifted the team to the third spot in the Central Division, this two-game rough patch was enough to drop the Wild into a wild-card spot — a slide the team can reverse Sunday at home against the Red Wings.

"That's the way this game goes," coach Bruce Boudreau said. "It's tough to watch it. That's why when it's your turn, you gotta win."

This is the first time the Wild has dropped two straight in regulation since Dec. 22 and 23; the team hasn't lost three in a row since Nov. 4-8 — the only time that's happened this season. What made the defeats in Arizona and Colorado surprising is they came on the heels of impressive wins over the Sharks and Blues — the latter a 8-3 rout.

"We had three bad periods," Boudreau said. "It's a grind. I'm not letting the players off the hook, but you can't be great all the time. We gave them one scoring chance in Arizona until the third period. We got a couple against us, and it just snowballed into Colorado. We'll forget about that and start to play the way we're capable of today."

Captain Mikko Koivu and center Eric Staal didn't skate Sunday morning, but both are OK, Boudreau said. It also looks like defenseman Nate Prosser will be back in the lineup after sitting out Friday, a decision that gives the Wild a more experienced blue line against a Detroit squad it hasn't faced since the first game of the season.

"If you look at their forward lines, they're pretty good," Boudreau said of the Red Wings. "They got great speed, and they've been built on speed for years and that's what they do. I think it's important to get the lead on them and play the way we're capable of playing. It's gonna be a hard-fought game because no game is easy anymore."

Projected lineup:

Zach Parise-Mikko Koivu-Charlie Coyle

Jason Zucker-Eric Staal-Mikael Granlund

Nino Niederreiter-Joel Eriksson Ek-Luke Kunin

Tyler Ennis-Matt Cullen-Daniel Winnik

Ryan Suter-Jared Spurgeon

Jonas Brodin-Matt Dumba

Nick Seeler-Nate Prosser

Devan Dubnyk

Key numbers:

3: Goals for captain Mikko Koivu in the last three games.

18: Points for the Wild since Feb. 6 — most in the Western Conference.

199: Career points for winger Nino Niederreiter.

1: Goal has decided 11 of Detroit's last 14 games.

10: Points for Red Wings captain Henrik Zetterberg in his past 13 games.

About the Red Wings:

Since an opening-night matchup with the Wild, the Red Wings have been mostly up and down. The team has won a season-best four in a row only once, while its longest skid has been six games — twice. Overall, at 62 points, Detroit is ahead of only three teams in the Eastern Conference. Center Dylan Larkin leads the team in points with 47, while winger Anthony Mantha paces the pack in goals with 21. Goalie Jimmy Howard is 18-21-7 with a 2.79 goals-against average and .912 save percentage.

OLDER POST



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 5, 2018

Wild can't slow down speedy Avalanche in 7-1 shellacking

Sarah McLellan is an Edmonton native. She graduated from the Cronkite School of Journalism at Arizona State, and covered the Coyotes for five years at the Arizona Republic before arriving at the Star Tribune in November 2017.

Star Tribune LOADED: 03.05.2018

1101991 Minnesota Wild

Momentum-changing fight continues Nick Seeler's strong Wild debut

By Sarah McLellan

MARCH 4, 2018 — 10:17PM

Wild coach Bruce Boudreau dubbed it probably the best fight in the NHL this season.

Goalie Devan Dubnyk called it "nuts."

Others likened it to what used to happen in the 1970s.

"They were just going at it," winger Jason Zucker said.

Winger Zach Parise concurred.

"That was old school, and I had a front-row seat for it," Parise said. "The sounds that were coming out of that thing, it was nasty. It was a great scrap."

The Nick Seeler-Luke Witkowski battle was also just the momentum swing the Wild seemed to need, as the heavyweight match preceded the team's 4-1 rally over the Red Wings Sunday at Xcel Energy Center.

"Any way I can contribute to wins, I'll do it," Seeler said. "Whether that's getting on the scoresheet or being plus or being tough in front or stuff like that — any way I can help the team."

Seeler and Witkowski went toe-to-toe early in the second period after Witkowski almost crushed Parise with a hit. Once the play transitioned into the Detroit end, Seeler and Witkowski squared off — swapping punches to the face for a solid 10 seconds before slowing down and getting pulled apart by the officials.

"He's a tough customer, and I knew that," Seeler said. "That's hockey. It was a good fight. I'm glad it went well."

The fight, Seeler's first in the NHL, continues an impressive start to the rookie's career. Ever since he was ushered from the minors last month, Seeler has appeared in every Wild game — carving out a niche as a defenseman with a physical edge the team is eager to embrace.

"It is a different element for us," Parise said. "It's important to have those guys that clear the crease a little bit, a little sandpaper in front of the net, cross-checking. Those guys are really appreciated around the locker room; they block shots. I think he's fit in really well for us, and I think I owe him a steak dinner after that scrap. Standing up for teammates, you always appreciate that."

Here's what else to watch for after the Wild's win over the Red Wings.

After slowing down the last two games, the Jason Zucker-Eric Staal-Mikael Granlund line resurfaced with a four-point effort.

Staal's game-tying goal notched his 34th of the season, while Zucker added a pair of insurance goals in the third; Granlund assisted on the first of those.

"In Phoenix I thought we started off well, and we kind of tapered off a bit," Zucker said. "I think Colorado, I don't even know if we need to talk about that. I think we just need to continue to play the right way. We know we're going to be able to make some plays. If we do that, we'll be fine."

Winger Nino Niederreiter recorded his 200th point with an assist on the game-winning goal from Parise, a fitting reward for a game that looked like one of his better efforts of late.

"I thought he skated pretty good in Arizona," Boudreau said. "But you could tell he's getting a little more jump back in his step. Now if we just get him to shoot a little more, then I think he'll be back to normal."

Boudreau said he'd know more on winger Luke Kunin's status Monday after Kunin was limping after taking a hit.

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1101992 Minnesota Wild

Wild-Detroit game recap

MARCH 4, 2018 — 11:36PM

SARAH McLELLAN

STAR TRIBUNE'S THREE STARS

1. Zach Parise, Wild: The winger scored the game-winning goal.
2. Eric Staal, Wild: The center notched his 34th goal of the season.
3. Nick Seeler, Wild: The defenseman's fight in the second period seemed to help galvanize the Wild.

BY THE NUMBERS

2 Goals for the Wild in a span of 2 minutes, 53 seconds in the second period.

4 Points for the Jason Zucker-Staal-Mikael Granlund line.

200 Career points for Wild winger Nino Niederreiter.

28 Goals for Jason Zucker after scoring twice.

SARAH McLELLAN

Star Tribune LOADED: 03.05.2018

1101993 Minnesota Wild

Wild snap skid with 4-1 win over Red Wings

By TYLER MASON

MARCH 4, 2018 — 10:15PM

ST. PAUL, Minn. — Rookie defenseman Nick Seeler picked up Minnesota's offense with a timely fight.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 5, 2018

Eric Staal and Zach Parise scored in the second period after Seeler fought Luke Witkowski, and Jason Zucker added two late goals in the Wild's 4-1 victory over the Detroit Red Wings on Sunday night.

Devan Dubnyk made 28 saves to help Minnesota rebound from losses at Arizona and Colorado.

Staal and Parise scored in a 2:57 span to erase a 1-0 deficit. The goals came not long after Seeler traded punches with Witkowski on a delayed penalty, with Seeler protecting Parise after Witkowski attempted to check the star forward.

"I just thought, you know what, good time to step up," Seeler said. "We were down 1-0. I thought it was the right time."

Sunday was just Seeler's 12th career NHL game. The 6-foot-2, 200-pound defenseman has just two assists thus far but has added grit to a Wild team that has needed some toughness as it jockeys for playoff positioning.

Seeler's opponent, the 6-foot-2, 210-pound Witkowski, is no stranger to NHL fights.

"I think I owe him a steak dinner after that scrap," Parise said. "Standing up for teammates, you always appreciate that."

Seeler emerged bloodied after the brawl, which included rapid-fire punches from both players. Seeler's teammates appreciated the effort — and responded by scoring two goals with Seeler in the penalty box.

"The guys were on the bench and they're saying, 'We got to go now. If we can't get motivated for this, then we're in trouble,'" Wild coach Bruce Boudreau. "It was a real opportunistic time when I think we were really flat."

Staal tied it on a power play with his team-leading 34th goal. The forward redirected Jared Spurgeon's shot past goalie Jimmy Howard with 12:38 to play in the second.

Less than three minutes later, Parise completed a tic-tac-toe passing sequence with Nino Niederreiter and Charlie Coyle to put the Wild up 2-1. Minnesota showed plenty of life in the second period after managing just four shots on goal in the first.

"I think that's a big goal in the game, especially in that one, but we can't look back on the result," said Detroit captain Henrik Zetterberg. "At the beginning of the game we played well. I thought we had a good start, good first period, got the first goal and then they score two quick ones."

Zucker added a pair of goals less than a minute apart, including an empty-net goal with 3:38 to play. He also redirected a pass to give Minnesota some breathing room with a 3-1 lead with 4:18 remaining.

Justin Abdelkader scored for Detroit off a rebound at 3:58 of the first period to open the scoring.

The Red Wings had a good look at an open net and a potential tying goal midway through the third after Dubnyk was caught out of position behind his goal. Tyler Bertuzzi had a shot, but Spurgeon managed to get in front of the puck to keep it a one-goal game.

"It's an easy time for frustration to build, and there's nothing wrong with being frustrated now and we should be," Red Wings coach Jeff Blashill said. "If you're not, you probably shouldn't be a competitor."

NOTES: Detroit has lost three in a row. ... Wild F Nino Niederreiter had his 100th career assist and 200th career point on the same play Sunday. He had the second assist on Parise's goal. ... Howard is 14-4-3 against Minnesota. ... Staal's 34 goals are his most in a season since he had 40 in 2008-09 with Carolina.

UP NEXT

Red Wings: At Boston on Tuesday night.

Wild: Host Carolina on Tuesday night.

Star Tribune LOADED: 03.05.2018

1101994 Minnesota Wild

Wild is punchy and productive in beating Detroit to end losing streak

By Sarah McLellan

MARCH 5, 2018 — 12:24AM

Maybe it was the fight by rookie Nick Seeler, a heavyweight-style slugfest that was a throwback to when tussles like this crowded highlight reels as much as goals.

Or perhaps the finish by center Eric Staal did the trick, since the team's best delivery man picked an opportune time to capitalize.

Either way, the Wild was ignited — as if its batteries had just been replaced — and the change sparked it to a 4-1 win over the Red Wings on Sunday in front of 19,037 at Xcel Energy Center. The victory extinguished the team's two-game losing skid.

"Those are both huge plays for us," winger Jason Zucker said. "I think they got us back into the game."

Down by a goal, the Wild's turnaround started during a delayed Red Wings penalty in the second period when Seeler and Luke Witkowski dropped their gloves after the Detroit winger nearly caught Zach Parise with an open-ice hit.

Sarah McLellan recaps the 4-1 win over the Red Wings in her Wild wrap-up.

"I just thought, you know what, good time to step up," Seeler said. "We were down 1-0. I thought it was the right time."

Both traded blows that could have fit in a boxing match. Instead, they landed each in the penalty box for five minutes, with Seeler reporting there with blood on his forehead. After the game, his forehead was still red and bruised.

"Guys were on the bench and they were saying, 'We gotta go now. If we can't get motivated for this, then we're in trouble,'" coach Bruce Boudreau said.

Soon after, the Wild found the equalizer on the ensuing power play when Staal deflected in a Jared Spurgeon throw toward the Detroit net 7 minutes, 22 seconds into the second.

It was Staal's eighth goal in his past seven games and his 34th on the season, which is tied for the fourth most in the NHL; the goal also moved Staal into a tie for the third-most goals in a single season by a Wild player.

Only 2:53 later, and on the Wild's very next shot, the team moved ahead of Detroit when Parise's one-timer off a feed from Mikko Koivu sneaked past Red Wings goalie Jimmy Howard. Nino Niederreiter's assist on the play was his 200th career point.

"You never really know how the guys are going to respond, but thankfully we came up with a couple quick goals after that," Seeler said. "It was nice to see."

More than execution, the Wild finally had energy that was missing from its play in the first period — a ho-hum beginning that helped Detroit build an early lead. Just 3:58 into the first, a blocked shot by Wild defenseman Nate Prosser caromed to Detroit winger Justin Abdelkader, and he fired the puck past Devan Dubnyk.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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The Red Wings could have pulled away even more. They outshot the Wild 11-5 in the period and had a chance on the power play. But its lack of finish kept the door open for a Wild rally that included two third-period insurance goals from Zucker.

He tipped a Mikael Granlund shot five-hole on Howard at 15:42 and secured an empty-netter with 3:38 to go for his 28th.

Howard ended up with 23 saves; Dubnyk made 28.

"When we play our game, we can dominate," Dubnyk said. "We can overwhelm teams. It's not anything special. It's not Harlem Globetrotters stuff. It's just how good we compete when every single line plays hard and plays the right way."

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1101995 Minnesota Wild

Nick Seeler's brawl sparks Wild to 4-1 win over Red Wings

By BRIAN MURPHY

PUBLISHED: March 4, 2018 at 9:00 pm

UPDATED: March 4, 2018 at 11:48 PM

It was an alley fight straight out of Broad Street in Philadelphia or the Boston Garden circa 1975, an evenly matched heavyweight bout all but extinct in the NHL's buttoned-up era of European puck possession and corporate fealty.

Grab your popcorn and cue the soundtrack to Don Cherry's "Rock 'em Sock 'em" genuflection to old-time hockey fights. Then download Sunday night's manhood dare between Minnesota rookie defenseman Nick Seeler and Detroit tough guy Luke Witkowski, which sparked the Wild to an atoning 4-1 victory over the Red Wings.

Both players threw haymakers and landed several as if their very survival depended on it. This was no WWE-staged circus act in which the combatants agreed to drop the gloves before the faceoff.

It was Seeler exacting revenge in the second period for Witkowski almost putting Zach Parise on the operating table with a dangerous knee-to-knee check the Wild winger narrowly avoided at the last second.

"It could have been ugly, really ugly," Parise said. "Luckily, I got out of the way."

The play enraged Seeler. It is about time someone in a Wild jersey took umbrage with an injustice. That element of toughness that has been glaringly missing from the franchise since Derek Boogaard was jack-hammering jaws a decade ago.

By the time Seeler and Witkowski exited the penalty box after five minutes, the Wild had erased a 1-0 deficit on goals by Eric Staal and Parise that jolted the bench to life and carried them to an easy win over the goal-starved Red Wings.

"I just thought, good time to step up," said Seeler, the Eden Prairie native playing in just his 11th NHL game. "It was still 1-0. You never really know how the guys are going to respond but, thankfully, we came out with a couple quick goals after that, and it was nice to see."

Seeler was left with a small cut on the bridge of his nose and his left cheek was red and swollen, but you won't hear him bemoaning the price paid.

The throwback scrap was the talk of the Wild dressing room after the team snuffed a two-game losing streak from its dispiriting trip to Arizona and Colorado.

"I just think both teams were shocked," said goalie Devan Dubnyk, who made 28 saves for the win. "I haven't seen a fight like that in a long time. That was nuts."

Parise appreciated Seeler's gesture.

"I think I owe him a steak dinner after that scrap," he said. "That was old-school. I had a front-row seat for it. The sounds that were coming out from that were nasty."

Coach Bruce Boudreau probably had blood splattered on his St. Paul Saints jersey from his minor league tenure with the brawling World Hockey Association afterthoughts during the mid-1970s.

"Every team had five of those guys," he said. "So they would just go like that every night. Not me, by the way."

Boudreau told general manager Chuck Fletcher in their nightly postmortem it was the first time during his two-season reign that their players responded with energy and purpose from a fight instead of merely shrugging it off.

"The guys were on the bench saying, 'We gotta go now. If we can't get motivated for this, then we're in trouble,'" Boudreau said. "It was a real opportunistic time when I think we were really flat."

It appeared the Wild had brought their leaden legs with them from out west. A Parise turnover at the defensive blue line allowed Justin Abdelkader to pounce on a loose puck after Nate Prosser's blocked shot and bury it past Dubnyk at 3:58.

Not much had changed until Seeler (6-2, 200 pounds) and Witkowski (6-2, 210) leaned into each other six minutes into the second period.

Seeler can do more than fight. He plays with a definitive edge and was in the middle of several scrums in front of Dubnyk. Later, he drew a slashing penalty after Darren Helm pitchforked his groin in frustration after the Detroit winger had had it with Seeler's rough-and-tumble style.

"Any way I can contribute to wins I'll do it, whether that's getting on the score sheet or being a plus or tough in front," Seeler said. "I'm still working to gain everyone's trust here."

He already has.

Pioneer Press LOADED: 03.05.2018

1101996 Minnesota Wild

Wild Report: Nicked-up Nino Niederreiter smarting from lax production

By BRIAN MURPHY

PUBLISHED: March 4, 2018 at 11:00 am

UPDATED: March 4, 2018 at 10:23 PM

Durability has defined Nino Niederreiter since the winger arrived in Minnesota in 2013 from the New York Islanders.

He had missed only three games for the Wild, playing all 82 the previous two seasons entering 2017-18. So you can understand his frustration at missing 13 games over two stretches because of separate high-ankle sprain and bone-bruise injuries and the reality that he will never be 100 percent again this season.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 5, 2018

Niederreiter, who averaged 20 goals among 43 points his first four seasons with the Wild, has only two goals and an assist in 16 games since returning to the lineup a second time two months ago.

"You need to learn to not get frustrated with yourself," he said before the game. "I'm tough on myself. I always want to be great and score goals. When things don't always go your way, it can be frustrating. I like to put myself on the highest standard possible. If you don't want to achieve what you want to achieve, you get impatient with yourself."

He did skate with some jump in Minnesota's 4-1 victory over the Red Wings at Xcel Energy Center, assisting on Zach Parise's second-period game-winning goal. It was Niederreiter's 100th career assist and 200th career point.

Niederreiter was injured Dec. 22 against Florida when he was hit by a puck and crashed into the boards awkwardly. He initially missed five games, scored a hat trick in his return against Buffalo, played another game Jan. 6 at Colorado and missed eight more before coming back again Feb. 2.

Niederreiter made it clear he's not excusing his waning production but acknowledged he still is managing pain and adjusting to how his body responds game to game.

It reminds him of his first full season with the New York Islanders in 2011-12, when he missed 27 games. Niederreiter had groin surgery in training camp and suffered a concussion two weeks into his return. The 2010 fifth overall pick was never the same and finished with only one goal and a disastrous minus-29 rating.

"This year feels kind of similar; just one thing after the other and then you come back and it's still not good," he said. "It definitely hasn't been the easiest thing, but you can take a lot out of it."

Still, he has come a long way since 2011-12. Niederreiter had 15 goals and 23 points and was plus-11 entering play against the Red Wings. He pledged to shoot the puck more and play confidently regardless of what his body feels like.

"There's not a guy in there that's not playing with a little bruise somewhere," said coach Bruce Boudreau. "The more it goes down the stretch, the play comes with more pain. To succeed here, you gotta pay the price. Yeah, his leg hurts him every now and again. But in Arizona he was skating great. So that's an excuse. I don't buy them."

BRIEFLY

Minnesota improved to 23-5-6 at home — its 52 points the most in the NHL.

Eric Staal's goal was his 34th of the season, his most since scoring 40 for the Carolina Hurricanes in 2008-09.

Parise extended his point streak to four games (two goals, two assists) with his first game-winning goal since March 10, 2017, at Florida.

Pioneer Press LOADED: 03.05.2018

1101950 Chicago Blackhawks

Blackhawks show some rare fight but still fall to Ducks

Paul Skrbina

One Blackhawk, at least, showed some rare fight Sunday.

The same couldn't be said for most of the rest of Jonathan Toews' teammates during a 6-3 loss to the Ducks, the Hawks' eighth defeat in their last nine on the road.

Eight seconds into the second period, Ryan Kesler finally goaded Toews into dropping his gloves after years of history between the two that has a lot to do with many intense postseason meetings.

They rekindled their rivalry at center ice of the Honda Center, just the seventh fight of Toews' career, according to hockeyfights.com.

They exchanged blows for a good 30 to 40 seconds before both collapsed in an exhausted heap and subsequently served five-minute sentences in the penalty box.

"I guess you could say a while," Toews said when asked how long the fight had been brewing. "He's ... been trying to nudge me in that direction for a while, so I finally gave in."

While Toews tried his best to defend himself — and spark his team in the process — the Blackhawks had a difficult time doing the same against the Ducks in their second matinee in two days.

Twenty-nine seconds after Anthony Duclair was called for a slashing penalty, defenseman Duncan Keith was caught looking as Rickard Rakell put the Ducks ahead 1-0 just 2 minutes, 28 seconds in.

Blackhawks goalie Anton Forsberg might as well have dropped his stick and held up a sign that read "10" as an ode to Corey Perry's performance later in the period.

He would have had just as much of a chance of stopping Perry's ballerina-like spin move that accounted for the Ducks' second goal. This time, defenseman Jordan Oesterle was caught in no-man's land, leaving Forsberg defenseless.

The Ducks scored twice more in the second after Toews' fight before Tomas Jurco finally put the visitors on the board with his second goal in four games.

Still, Nick Schmaltz said Toews' scuffle inspired the Hawks, if only briefly.

"Fired up the bench to see your leader and one of our best players do that and get us going there, that shows a lot about him," said Schmaltz, who scored two third-period goals.

But by the time this one was over, the Hawks' three-game, four-day California trip ended with 16 goals allowed and two losses. For the second time on this trip and the seventh time this season, the Hawks used more than one goalie as Forsberg was yanked in favor of Jean-Francois Berube in the second.

Keith winced at that number, 16, then dug for a reason.

"It's 16?" he said. "There's been a lot of things that have gone wrong. ... It seems like every little play we make, or mistake, is costing us. It's a matter of trying to stay positive and stick with it like we did in L.A."

The Hawks won that game 5-3 on Saturday but had to come from behind to do it. It's also a game Keith probably would rather forget because he made two errant passes that led directly to goals for the Kings.

Keith said he and Brent Seabrook, as team veterans, "definitely shoulder a lot of the blame" in the Hawks' poor defensive showings of late.

Keith said he tries not to get frustrated, though, because it can be counterproductive.

"I feel like I'm always better when I'm keeping things simple," he said. "I have to be better for this team."

Hawks coach Joel Quenneville praised Toews' play, but not that of his team's defense.

"As a group it was not good enough," he said. "The other team was in playoff mode. ... That first period we were lucky it was (only 2-0)."

Chicago Tribune LOADED: 03.05.2018

1101951 Chicago Blackhawks



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 5, 2018

Column: Blackhawks embark on meaningless March — and April

Joe Knowles

If you are one of those fans who discovered the Blackhawks only in the last decade or so, you are about to enter uncharted territory.

Welcome to a month or more of games that don't matter.

For longtime fans, games such as the 7-2 pounding the Sharks laid on the Hawks last Thursday night felt like an unpleasant but not unfamiliar flashback. If you squinted just right at your TV screen, you could almost see Alexander Karpovtsev turning the puck over in his own zone or Alex Zhamnov inexplicably wearing the captain's "C" on his sweater.

It was a reminder of the bad old days, when almost every game — even those early in the season — was a pointless exercise, just one more step on a long march to nowhere.

The last time the Blackhawks played a truly meaningless game was April 6, 2008, the final match of the '07-08 season in Detroit against the Red Wings. Two nights earlier, the Hawks had been eliminated from playoff contention with a 3-1 loss to the Predators at the United Center.

The Hawks finished 40-34-8 that season under coach Denis Savard, good enough for 88 points and third place in the Central Division but miles away from the first-place Wings, who led the NHL with 115 points. It was the fifth straight season the Hawks failed to make the playoffs. Still, there were signs of progress and hope everywhere you looked.

In goal, a pair of 30-somethings, Nikolai Khabibulin and Patrick Lalime, handled the bulk of the work, but 23-year-old Corey Crawford made three starts and put up strong numbers — a .929 save percentage and a 2.14 goals-against average.

The blueline crew was shaping up nicely, thanks to the emergence of 22-year-old Brent Seabrook and 24-year-old Duncan Keith as top-four quality defensemen. Dustin Byfuglien, a 22-year-old 6-foot-5 hybrid defenseman/forward, added 19 goals as well as a much-needed physical edginess. A late season call-up, 20-year-old Niklas Hjalmarsson, showed promise in his first handful of games in the league.

Up front, there was 19-year-old Patrick Kane, who racked up 21 goals and 51 assists to win the Calder Trophy as the league's outstanding rookie. There was another 19-year-old, center Jonathan Toews, who missed 18 games but still produced 24 goals. There was 26-year-old Patrick Sharp suddenly having a breakout season and scoring 36 goals (which turned out to be a career high), a league-leading seven of them while short-handed. There was newcomer Andrew Ladd, a skillful 22-year-old winger who had already won a Cup with the Hurricanes.

"You have the talent here," Ladd said in March 2008. "It's going in the right direction, and I'm excited about the future of this team. It looks bright."

Now, 10 years later, after basking in the glow of three championships, the Hawks find themselves at a crossroads. Do they take one more swing for the fences, add a few free agents and go all-in with this group of veterans? Or is it time to sweep it clean and start over, assuming that's even possible given the team's long-term salary commitments?

Are we seeing the signs of progress and hope we saw back in '08, or does it look more like regression and resignation?

In recent years, March and April have been months of giddy anticipation for Hawks fans. Usually the Hawks were pretty much locked into a playoff berth by this time and merely jostling for position. A few times, they were sitting pretty at or near the top of the standings, in full glide mode, confidently gauging possible opponents for a first-round matchup.

Since Joel Quenneville took over as coach early in the 2008-09 season, the Blackhawks have never missed the playoffs. In four of those years, their postseasons were brief, ending in the first round. But this year, barring a miracle, the playoffs will go on without them from the start. The city's hockey fans — not the diehard minority but the casual ones who compose the majority of the base — likely will not be tuning in to watch 16 teams that aren't the Blackhawks compete in one of the greatest tournaments in all of sports.

That's a shame, but not a surprise. Even in this Original Six city, interest in the NHL beyond the Blackhawks is minimal, as the TV ratings for the upcoming Stanley Cup playoffs unquestionably will demonstrate.

The bigger issue here lies beyond this season or postseason. Will that casual majority of fans — many of whom have known only success — still pack the United Center if and when meaningless games become the norm rather than the exception? Will they still buy the souvenir sweaters when the team inevitably falls on hard times?

We may be about to find out.

Unless GM Stan Bowman can have a much better offseason this year than last — and unless his core of highly paid players can return to form — those hard times could be arriving soon, if indeed they are not already upon us.

Chicago Tribune LOADED: 03.05.2018

1101952 Chicago Blackhawks

Despite costly penalty, Anthony Duclair stays out of doghouse

Paul Skrbina

When asked whether he saw similarities between the costly penalty Ryan Hartman committed less than two weeks ago and the one Anthony Duclair committed Sunday, Blackhawks coach Joel Quenneville was noncommittal.

Hartman drew Quenneville's ire — and a seat on the bench for the final two-plus periods of what turned out to be his last game with the Hawks — for committing what his coach deemed an unwise and unnecessary penalty. Hartman was trailing on an odd-man rush when he was called for high-sticking, potentially costing the Hawks a goal.

Hartman was traded two days later, the penalty having nothing to do with it, the Hawks said.

On Sunday, Duclair was called for a seemingly unnecessary slashing penalty early in the first period that ended up costing the Hawks when Rickard Rakell scored on the ensuing power play 2 minutes, 28 seconds in for a 1-0 lead. But it didn't cost Duclair any playing time.

"It was the start of the game," Quenneville said. "It was kind of, you could argue on the call. It was one of those calls."

But was it similar to Hartman's penalty?

"It was a different call," Quenneville said.

He's No. 2: Nick Schmaltz's two goals pushed him to 45 points (20 goals, 25 assists) this season, second on the team behind Patrick Kane's 62.

The 22-year-old has four goals and an assist in his last five games, but Sunday's was especially frustrating.

"It's tough to come (back) from four down," Schmaltz said of the 4-0 deficit the Hawks faced. "I thought we had some good stretches. We were hunting pucks and playing hard and getting pucks back. But at the end of the day, it's not what we wanted."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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He said it: "I was more tired from sitting there for a while. You don't do it that often, you get the adrenaline going, get the little extra jump." — Jonathan Toews on how tiring his fight with Ryan Kesler was.

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1101953 Chicago Blackhawks

Blackhawks defenseless against Anaheim onslaught

03/04/2018, 06:18PM

Mark Lazerus

ANAHEIM, Calif. — For all the Blackhawks' problems this season, and there have been many, the biggest one has been the blue line.

You can envision Jonathan Toews and Brandon Saad having bounce-back offensive seasons next year. You can measure the difference a healthy Corey Crawford and his .929 save percentage should make. You can imagine a better power play as Alex DeBrincat and Nick Schmaltz continue to take on larger roles.

But there's no defense for this defense.

The blue line has been a flashing red warning light all season, never more glaring than during the Hawks' three-game California road trip, during which they gave up 16 goals. Nobody was perfect in Sunday's 6-3 loss to the Anaheim Ducks — quite a comedown from their stirring comeback victory over the Kings a day earlier — but the defensive effort, in particular, was alarming.

There was Duncan Keith standing idly by as Rickard Rakell moved to the front of the net for a power-play goal in the first period. There was Jordan Oesterle offering a half-hearted stick check as Corey Perry performed a spin-o-rama on the doorstep to beat Anton Forsberg to make it 2-0 four minutes later.

Those passive plays — Keith didn't really react, Oesterle didn't really move — summed up the Hawks' defensive woes this season. Nobody takes the body. Nobody clears opponents from the crease. And while Corey Crawford might be able to stop some of those chances on a regular basis, neither Anton Forsberg, J-F Berube nor Jeff Glass has been able to.

"That's the position we're [in]," Joel Quenneville said when asked about the lack of physicality on the back end. "We were watching them in the D-zone and we weren't going to people quick enough. Too much time, too much space, and poor sticks."

It goes beyond the inability to clear the slot and the crease, though. Brent Seabrook made a pass to nobody in the defensive zone during a power play, leading directly to a scoring chance for the Ducks. Keith had two turnovers that led directly to goals against the Kings. Erik Gustafsson and Carl Dahlstrom flailed their way to three quick goals-against in San Jose on Thursday.

Every Hawks defenseman this season has struggled at times. But over the past five weeks, as the bottom has fallen out on the season, it seems every Hawks defenseman has struggled at the same time. The Hawks simply have never recovered from the offseason departures of Niklas Hjalmarsson, Brian Campbell and Trevor van Riemsdyk.

"Obviously, me and [Seabrook] have been here the longest, so we definitely shoulder a lot of the blame in that," Keith said. "I have to be better for this team. It's been tough, and it's been a challenging year, obviously, so far. Especially the last couple months."

Repairing the blue line has to be a big part of the Hawks' offseason plans. They'll have millions in cap space to play with for the first time in ages, and they need to spend it on defensemen.

As for the rest of the game and this season, the Hawks at least showed some fight, and not just Jonathan Toews brawling with longtime nemesis Ryan Kesler. After falling behind 4-0, Tomas Jurco and Nick Schmaltz cut the deficit to 4-2. But Oesterle failed to clear a rebound from the goalmouth and Jakob Silfverberg backhanded it in for the dagger. Corey Perry added a second goal, too, getting behind Oesterle and Seabrook for a stuff-in from the corner, rendering Schmaltz's 20th goal with 2:28 left mere window dressing.

Just two more defensive lapses in a game — and a season — full of them.

"We have some good stretches where we play pretty good, but then [there's] a little breakdown or something that's in the back of the net," Keith said. "It seems like every little mistake we make is costing us."

Chicago Sun Times LOADED: 03.05.2018

1101954 Chicago Blackhawks

Jonathan Toews drops the gloves with longtime nemesis Ryan Kesler

03/04/2018, 06:33PM

Mark Lazerus

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Perhaps the most surprising thing about the big brawl between Jonathan Toews and Ryan Kesler eight seconds into the second period Sunday afternoon was that it took so long for it to happen.

The mutual dislike has been bubbling since the days of the Canucks-Blackhawks rivalry at the start of the decade, continued through two Olympics, and came to a head during the 2015 Western Conference final. It finally boiled over on Sunday.

"I guess you could say [it's been brewing for] a while," Toews said with a grin. "He's probably been the one who's been trying to nudge me in that direction for a while, so I finally gave in."

It was a spirited bout, not the clutch-fest that usually happen when stars fight. They each got in a few big blows before Kesler wrestled Toews to the ice. Toews was perhaps motivated to finally oblige Kesler because the Hawks were trailing 2-0 and in need of a jolt. It didn't exactly work, as the Ducks scored two quick goals afterward.

"Jonny did a good job," Joel Quenneville said. "Sparked the team. It wasn't reflected on the scoreboard, but you could see that there was some energy as the period progressed, and some enthusiasm. It gave us a chance."

Said Nick Schmaltz: "That got us going pretty good. Fired up the bench to see your leader — and obviously one of our best players — do that and get us going there. That shows a lot about him."

Bittersweet milestone

Schmaltz scored two goals, giving him 20 in 62 games. He had just six in 61 games last season. He only wished the milestone had come in a winning effort.

"Obviously, you want to score goals when they mean a lot and they help your team get a point or get a win," he said. "It's obviously not the game I would have liked it to be in."

Off the hook



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Anthony Duclair took a foolish slashing penalty just 1:54 into the game, and the Ducks scored on the ensuing power play. But unlike Ryan Hartman's high-sticking penalty in Columbus that negated a Hawks 2-on-1 and led to a goal-against, Duclair wasn't benched afterward. He wound up with six shot attempts in 13:14 of ice time.

Quenneville didn't seem to think the penalty was egregious as Hartman's was.

"You could argue on the call," Quenneville said. "It was a different call."

Chicago Sun Times LOADED: 03.05.2018

1101955 Chicago Blackhawks

Where's the consistency for the Chicago Blackhawks?

John Dietz

Consistency.

Above all else, that's the No. 1 thing Joel Quenneville demands out of his players.

Be consistent with and without the puck. Be consistent getting to the net. Be consistent with how you defend and how you win your puck battles.

He preaches all of this on a daily basis.

That being the case, it was shocking, appalling and downright unbelievable that Quenneville failed to discipline Anthony Duclair for an awful slashing penalty 1:14 seconds into the Hawks' 6-3 loss at Anaheim on Sunday.

Duclair's whack at Cam Fowler came just after he failed to push the puck into the Hawks' offensive zone. Twenty-nine seconds later, Rickard Rakell scored on the power play, and the Ducks went on to claim their eighth victory in 12 games.

After the Ducks made it 1-0, many of us wondered if Duclair would be staple-gunned to the bench the way Ryan Hartman was eight days earlier in Columbus. In that case, Hartman never played again after taking a bad high-sticking penalty late in the first period.

In this case, Duclair was right back on the ice for his next shift.

Asked if it was similar to the Hartman situation, Quenneville told reporters: "It was the start of the game. You could argue on the call."

Perhaps.

But while veterans like Duncan Keith, Jonathan Toews and Patrick Kane probably deserve the benefit of the doubt for bad turnovers or penalties, a consistent message should be sent to everyone else when miscues are made.

Now, should Duclair have sat for the rest of the game? Probably not. But he absolutely should have missed at least a couple of shifts.

To Duclair's credit, he did rebound nicely and finished with 6 shots (2 on goal) in 13:14.

As for the rest of the game, Anaheim (33-21-12) took a 4-0 lead in under 27 minutes, mostly because of horrendous coverage or misplays by Jordan Oesterle, Duncan Keith and Brandon Saad.

"We were watching them in the 'D' zone and we weren't going to people quick enough," Quenneville said. "Too much time, too much space and poor sticks."

The Hawks (28-30-8) battled back on goals from Tomas Jurco at 14:59 of the second period and Nick Schmaltz at 1:07 of the third, but the Ducks put the game away on Jakob Silfverberg's second goal with 13:00 remaining.

Corey Perry made it 6-2 with 5:19 left, and Schmaltz notched his second goal with 2:28 remaining. Schmaltz now has 20 goals on the season, and Vinnie Hinostroza (2 assists) has a goal and 7 assists in his last eight games.

Jonathan Toews tried to get the Hawks going by fighting Ryan Kesler eight seconds after the opening faceoff of the second period. Both players got in some good shots, but Kesler's seemed to connect with more accuracy.

"That got us going," Schmaltz said. "It fired up our bench pretty good to see your leader and obviously one of our best players do that. It shows a lot about him."

Toews said Kesler's wanted to fight him for quite some time.

"I finally gave in on that one," Toews said.

Daily Herald Times LOADED: 03.05.2018

1101956 Chicago Blackhawks

What is Tomas Jurco's future with the Blackhawks?

By Charlie Roumeliotis March 04, 2018 7:00 PM

Tomas Jurco's time in the NHL has been a challenging one.

He was taken in the second round (35th overall) of the 2011 draft by the Detroit Red Wings, had a solid rookie campaign in 2013-14 when he put up eight goals and seven assists in 36 games, but has since struggled to take that next step.

Believing a change of scenery could potentially benefit both sides, the Blackhawks acquired Jurco last February for a third-round pick in 2017. So far, only the Red Wings have something to show for it.

Jurco had just one goal and zero assists in 13 games last season, and didn't appear in any of the four playoff games. And with an opportunity to crack the lineup out of training camp in September, Jurco instead started the season in the American Hockey League with the Rockford IceHogs, where he registered 25 points (13 goals, 12 assists) in 36 games.

It was good enough to earn him a call-up on Jan. 8 and show whether or not he can carry over that offensive production to the big leagues.

"He looks like he's totally different, in terms of his composure and ability to make plays," Blackhawks GM Stan Bowman said of Jurco's development at the time. "That's why we brought him up here."

However, he was a healthy scratch for five consecutive games following his recall and his confidence surely took a hit, which isn't great for a young player trying to grow his game at the highest level.

Now he's finally getting a chance to show the Blackhawks what he can bring to the table, spending a few games on a line with Patrick Kane and most recently with Artem Anisimov and Anthony Duclair in a top-six role.

Jurco turned in his best game of the season in Sunday's 6-3 loss to the Anaheim Ducks, scoring his second goal in four games and recording a season-high nine shot attempts (four on goal). There was a defensive lapse on the sixth goal that he was responsible for, but that's part of the learning curve at this point.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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He had only one goal in his previous 49 games, dating back to the 2015-16 season. He's trending in the right direction.

But does Jurco have a future in Chicago?

He's 25 years of age, is a pending restricted free agent that carries a \$800,000 cap hit and would be in that range again if he were to re-sign.

The question is whether or not the Blackhawks want him back.

If the Blackhawks decide they want to include him into the fold going forward, they must extend a qualifying offer of at least 105 percent of his last contract. If they choose to go in a different direction, the Blackhawks could simply not make him an offer which would ultimately allow Jurco to sign with whoever he wants as an unrestricted free agent (UFA).

There's also another option in play: The Blackhawks could try to trade him negotiating rights. But that route is only possible if they extend an offer.

This scenario usually occurs when the player rejects the offer and the two sides can't come to terms on a deal. (An example of that would be Brandon Saad's situation in 2015, when the Blackhawks were forced to trade him to Columbus after it was apparent that they wouldn't be able to agree to an extension in time before the offseason deadline). It's unlikely, but still worth noting.

Perhaps the final month will determine Jurco's future with the Blackhawks.

But in a vacuum it's difficult to see a spot for him in the rotation when you consider some of the guys in the organization knocking on the door for a full-time opportunity, most notably John Hayden and Dylan Sikura, the latter of whom Bowman is confident will sign with the Blackhawks once his collegiate career is over. And that also doesn't include the possibility of free-agent signings.

Whether he's in Chicago next season or not, it's still important for Jurco to finish the year strong because his future in the NHL may depend on it. Fortunately for him, his leash has been unhooked and it's up to him to take advantage of it.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 03.05.2018

1101957 Chicago Blackhawks

Blackhawks don't respond to Jonathan Toews fight, but our analysts do

By Charlie Roumeliotis March 04, 2018 9:55 PM

Jonathan Toews isn't one to get into fights. He had only six of them in his NHL career going into Sunday.

But his seventh was probably a long time coming against a player he has clashed with for years.

Just eight seconds into the second period and the Blackhawks trailing 2-0 to the Anaheim Ducks, Toews tried lighting a fire under his team after they fell behind yet again when he dropped the gloves and tangled with Ryan Kesler.

Everyone in the stadium was well aware of the rivalry, and even Toews admitted that tension between the two of them had been brewing for "a while" and that "I finally gave in."

But the lack of response on the ice and acknowledgement by the Blackhawks after Toews got out of the box concerned a couple of former teammates, who were brutally honest in their criticism after the game.

Check out what Jamal Mayers, Adam Burish and Steve Konroyd had to say about it all in the video above.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 03.05.2018

1102009 New York Rangers

Vladislav Namestnikov, who has hockey in his blood, is ready to help Rangers rebuild

JUSTIN TASCH

Updated: Monday, March 5, 2018, 1:56 AM

Though there is hockey in Vladislav Namestnikov's blood, he didn't want to play when he was young. He grew to love the sport after being pushed into it not by his father, Evgeny, or his uncles, Slava Kozlov and Ivan Novoseltsev, all of whom played in the NHL, but by his mother.

"My mom made me," Namestnikov says. "The early practices, she'd always wake me up in the morning. I didn't really like it in the beginning. As I got older I got more into it."

The maturation of the man called Vlad took place in both Russia and the United States, a childhood spent in several locales and locker rooms before developing into a first-round pick and a linemate of two of the NHL's best players before becoming a Ranger in last Monday's mega-deal with the Lightning.

Namestnikov was born in Russia in 1992 but moved to the States when he was eight months old as Evgeny — currently an amateur scout with the Maple Leafs — pursued an NHL career, which began with Vancouver and went through AHL Syracuse, where Vlad also played and became the first second-generation player in the team's history.

"Wherever you go, you want to win. It's no different here," Vladislav Namestnikov said of joining the Rangers.

Vlad says he moved to the Detroit area when he was 5 or 6, right after Kozlov was part of the famed Russian Five. At 9, he moved back to his hometown of Voskresensk, a small town roughly 90 minutes outside Moscow. That's where he remained until he was drafted 20th overall by the OHL's London Knights in 2010 CHL Import Draft.

"It was tough at first because I couldn't read or write. I had to go to school and learn the Russian language," Namestnikov said. "That was probably the biggest adjustment I had to make. The culture was different a little bit, but I had my family there, my grandma. So it was pretty easy."

Being in NHL locker rooms growing up had a "big influence" on Namestnikov, he says, though his best story has nothing to do with any big hockey stars. One time, he was in the Red Wings locker room and saw Verne Troyer, aka Mini-Me.

Vladislav Namestnikov.

"I don't know why I was so scared of him. I kind of ran away and I was scared to go back," Namestnikov said. "That's one story I can remember from my time."

One year into his OHL tenure, the Lightning selected Namestnikov 27th in the 2011 draft. He made his NHL debut on Feb. 8, 2014, played in 43 regular-season games and 12 playoff matches in 2014-15 and became a full-time NHL player the following season.

This season Namestnikov gained confidence by playing on a line with Steven Stamkos and Nikita Kucherov, and has had a breakout season offensively with 46 points in 65 games. "When you're always more in the offensive zone than defensive zone, it kind of helps," said Namestnikov.

Now Namestnikov, a restricted free agent at season's end, wants to be a part of the rebuilding Rangers' path back to contention.



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New York Daily News LOADED: 03.05.2018

1102010 New York Rangers

Winning is exposing how much fire sale affected the Rangers

By Larry Brooks

March 4, 2018 | 9:27PM

Misfits? Leftovers? Or, just the Rangers, in the wake of the wholly unanticipated and strange sweep of their three-game trek through western Canada?

1. The mandate from ownership/management to deconstruct and reconstruct was righteous, but there is no doubt that it caused trauma within the room and the coaches' office.

You say if they wanted to avoid this, they should have done better, just about every single one of them over the first five months through which only Henrik Lundqvist, Marc Staal, maybe Kevin Hayes, Michael Grabner and Ondrej Pavelec (in a limited role) lived up to expectations and the group consistently appeared disorganized.

That is correct.

But that doesn't negate — and maybe to an extent even explains — the unusual and even rather uncomfortable vibes ricocheting through the team during its first three-game winning streak since the middle of December.

The Rangers seem to have become the Ronald Reagan character in the 1942 movie, "Kings Row," who awakens following surgery to find both legs amputated by a sadistic surgeon (thanks IMDB), and cries, "Where's the rest of me?"

"It's nice to win, but it doesn't change what happened," Staal, a Ranger since 2007-08, told The Post. "I don't think anybody wanted that. Certainly I didn't."

2. Alain Vigneault, who either does or does not have a job behind the bench for next season that he can save with a finishing flourish, has declined to speak to his state of mind regarding a possible playoff push after his team had been left for dead and put at least 3 feet under.

3. The Blueshirts began Wednesday's game in Vancouver holding the seventh spot in the draft lottery, which would equate to an approximate 20.9 percent chance of moving into the top three and a 6.7 percent chance of franchise defenseman Rasmus Dahlin, the unanimously ranked No. 1.

One hundred and one saves later from Henrik Lundqvist plus another 35 from Alexandar Georgiev, and the Rangers had slipped to 10th draft position and lowered their odds by 6.5 percent to move into the top three and by 2.2 percent to claim the grand prize.

When it comes to winning for losing, this seems to be another thing you can add to the list of what the 2017-18 Rangers are not very good at doing.

4. Pavel Buchnevich, who broke a 10-game drought Friday in Calgary, seemed to revive himself on the trip, and so did his center, Mika Zibanejad.

Entering the trip, the nominal first line of Zibanejad between Buchnevich on the right and Chris Kreider on the left had recorded a total of five goals all season in 216:25 of five-on-five time, per naturalstattrick.com.

But Zibanejad got one Wednesday in Vancouver, Buchnevich got one Friday in Calgary and Kreider got one Saturday in Edmonton for three

goals in 32:45. That equates to one-half as many goals in 15 percent of the time.

5. Jimmy Vesey, coming up on salary arbitration and obviously fighting for a spot next season, had his most forceful game in weeks against the Oilers, going to the front and mixing it up in the dirty areas in which he is consistently most effective.

6. The club's neutral- and defensive-zone structure might as well have been a papier-mâché model the first two games of the trip, but Neal Pionk and John Gilmour continued to impress. The Blueshirts just might have something with this pair of college free-agent signings who seem to be made for this NHL, and don't tell me that's what some people were saying 14 years ago about Thomas Pock.

7. With the way Rob O'Gara, part of the Nick Holden deal, has struggled, it is difficult to understand what went so wrong with Ryan Graves in Hartford that management sent him away rather than give the 2013 fourth-rounder an audition on Broadway.

8. These three victories over non-playoff teams behind them, the Blueshirts step up in class this week, playing Winnipeg at the Garden on Tuesday before a visit to Tampa Bay on Thursday, with Ryan McDonagh more likely than not in the Lightning lineup. And then Florida, percentage-wise holding the conference's final wild-card spot, on Saturday.

A sweep of those three — probably even two out of three, as long as that includes one against the Puddy Tats — and maybe these victories can be regarded as more than just spoiling lottery position.

New York Post LOADED: 03.05.2018

1102011 New York Rangers

Alain Vigneault's approach for Rangers is to take things one day at a time

By Colin Stephenson

March 4, 2018 7:55 PM

An unlikely three-game sweep of their Western Canada swing through Vancouver, Calgary and Edmonton left the rebuilding Rangers just three points out of a playoff spot with 16 games to play entering Sunday's games. But coach Alain Vigneault is not interested in getting anybody's hopes up just yet.

"You know what? I'm going to make sure that we . . . re-energize tomorrow, have a good practice, and focus on Winnipeg," Vigneault said after Saturday night's 3-2 win over the Oilers. "That's what we have to do. We've got to concentrate on the next opponent, and that's what we've got to focus on."

Vigneault's one-day-at-a-time approach served the Rangers well in the week following the trade deadline, which saw the Rangers push the reset button after shipping out captain Ryan McDonagh, J.T. Miller, Rick Nash, Michael Grabner and defenseman Nick Holden prior to the deadline. Energized by the play of incoming forwards Ryan Spooner and Vladislav Namestnikov, the Rangers were also no doubt unburdened, mentally, of the stress they had been under once club management announced Feb. 8 that the organization would switch its focus to the future.

"For weeks, I think a lot of us were waiting for a big [trade deadline] day, especially me," said Henrik Lundqvist, who stopped 100 of 106 shots in beating Vancouver 6-5 and Calgary 3-1 in the first two games of the trip. "It's tough to be in the right mindset. It is what it is now, and you try to



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make the most [of the situation]. You try to have fun, as well. It's been a few weeks where it's been tough, and no fun at all."

Although the Rangers certainly enjoyed stringing a few wins together and be able to smile and laugh again after enduring a seven-game losing streak, it must be pointed out that Vancouver, Calgary and Edmonton aren't exactly the 1980s Oilers led by Wayne Gretzky and Mark Messier. Vancouver and Edmonton have worse records than the Rangers, who are 30-30-6, and Calgary is fading, on the outside of the Western Conference playoff picture and missing injured No. 1 goalie Mike Smith.

Things will be a lot tougher for the Rangers this week, when the high-flying Jets visit the Garden on Tuesday and then the Rangers go to Tampa Thursday for a reunion with McDonagh, Miller, and fellow ex-Rangers Ryan Callahan, Dan Girardi and Anton Stralman and the rest of the Lightning. Tampa Bay has the best record in the league.

For the Rangers, now is the time to channel their inner Jim Mora ("Playoffs? Don't talk about playoffs!"), and instead of taking on the mental burden of chasing an unlikely postseason berth, just play hard, with a free mind, like they have nothing to lose. Because at this point, they don't.

"So, you know it's a long shot," Marc Staal said of the notion of chasing a playoff spot. "I think what [the successful road trip] does is give us some confidence; lets us enjoy coming to the rink, knowing that we can compete in some games with the guys we have now; knowing we can win some games. And now, we just see where it goes."

By Colin Stephenson

Colin Stephenson covers the Rangers for Newsday. He has spent more than two decades covering the NHL and just about every sports team in the New York metropolitan area.

Newsday LOADED: LOADED: 03.05.2018

1102059 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Maple Leafs' Mike Babcock on Capitals: They still think we're kids

Luke Fox | @lukefoxjokebox March 4, 2018, 12:24 AM

ANNAPOLIS, MD. — Those fireworks that explode and then explode a second time into smaller fireworks, they streaked the black sky with fiery webs of red, white and blue.

Hockey players were escorted by bagpipes to a pristine, windswept rink positioned on a 35,760-square-foot graphic of an aircraft carrier, itself situated in the centre of Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium.

A smartly creased military marching band's brass instruments sang and gleamed under four thick poles of football stadium lights as tall and bright as a boy thinks his heroes are. They beamed like they'd never dim.

"U-S-A! U-S-A!" group chants popped up here and there, as did members of the national women's team, gold medallions swaying from their necks.

Two Boeing F/A-18F Super Hornets zinged overhead, one piloted by a former midshipman/goalie at the U.S. Naval Academy, and they shook a packed house like a windstorm just as "The Star-Spangled Banner" hit its final note and the 500 service members lining rink's perimeter lowered their salutes.

It was National Anthem Day, after all.

"If you're a North American, this one's more special just because of the men and women that look after you and give you all the privileges you have in your life by keeping you safe and living in a democracy," Toronto coach Mike Babcock said.

"You think about heroes, there's lots of different heroes in your lifetime. But people that put themselves in harm's way to look after you, those are the heroes. So, I think that's important while we're here we understand that and recognize that."

And so it was that sometime after Team USA's Olympic-gold-medal-winning skip John Shuster delivered the ceremonial puck by curling a rock from the high slot smack on the centre-ice button and the Toronto Maple Leafs were photographed in custom uniforms whiter than the ice, hockey happened. And the vast majority of it happened in the Leafs' end.

More motivated, better prepared and hungrier for points, the Washington Capitals torpedoed their visitors 5-2 at Saturday's Stadium Series tilt between last spring's playoff foes and remain undefeated (3-0) in the out-of-doors.

"It doesn't matter that the ice is bad. The atmosphere is unbelievable," Capitals captain Alex Ovechkin said. "You have energy from the fans and you go and play."

Its nautical theme aside, the NHL's 25th outdoor regular-season game was like all the others in that it wasn't like all the others.

High-alert winds prevented either side from practising on the Annapolis ice Friday and Saturday morning, so there was no time for players to acclimatize themselves with the dead boards, hard ice or skewed sightlines.

Sportsnet's newest podcast is a weekly deep dive into the biggest hockey news in the world. New episodes every Wednesday.

When (finally) reasonable 35 km/h gusts blew the fireworks smoke to Baltimore and the puck dropped on a 6 degrees Celsius night, Toronto starter Frederik Andersen appeared to be the elements' greatest victim.

There was much pre-game talk among players and coaches of keeping things simple, of wading into the unusual setting to get a feel first. Frequently these outdoor games have been light on scoring.

But once Leafs' defenceman Travis Dermott took the game's first penalty, Washington's lethal power play pounced.

Evgeny Kuznetsov slammed home a rebound, setting off a second round of pyrotechnics. Crease-crashing Zach Hyman evened the score 90 seconds later, but once Ovechkin answered back 59 seconds after that, Washington never looked back.

Ovechkin's 40th of the year, a high-glove snipe on Andersen from the slot, gave him 598 on the career. Fun fact: Ovie has now scored an NHL goal in 38 different venues.

"The power play helped us a lot to get into the game. We feel the puck more than our opponents," Ovechkin said. "Forty is nice, but 50's better. I still have time to do that."

All the Capitals' big boys piled in on the fun, delighting the thousands who pulled their replica sweaters over top of their winter coats.

Kuznetsov, Nicklas Backstrom and John Carlson each had themselves three-point games. Goaltender Braden Holtby limited the damage after a shaky February.

By the time Jakub Vrana scored the home side's fifth goal on its 25th shot, Babcock yanked Andersen for the first time all season on account of poor performance.

"The lights were kinda glaring off the fresh ice, which was a bit difficult as far as vision goes," Nazem Kadri explained. "I'm sure for the goaltenders as well."



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With Curtis McElhinney in net, the Leafs stopped the bleeding, but it was too late — and there was no pushback.

Lights out.

No. Literally, those sky-scraping stadium lights — all but a few bulbs — lost power when the switch-sides horn sounded halfway through the third period. Snack-fetching fans only found their seats by the glow of the Leafs' uniforms, bleached to luminescence.

"The lights going out — that was probably the most entertaining part," Kadri said. "I thought it was just an effect because it was right at the 10-minute mark when we were switching sides. I thought it was part of the gig."

Not at all, but the Caps (and the naval academy's house DJ) rolled with it.

"Perfect timing," beamed Capitals winger T.J. Oshie, one of the game's few outdoors rookies.

"It seemed like things were dying down a little bit. We got the outage, and we got a small little concert there. I don't know whose playlist was running, but they found us some good jams. The crowd got into it. The phone lights came out. Me and a couple of the fellas were jamming on the bench."

The break dragged long enough that NBC pushed its prime-time viewership to NBCSN to catch the conclusion of the game in favour of the local 11 p.m. news.

When power was restored and the Capitals secured victory, the locals — the target audience for these NHL mega-spectacles — left happier if a little colder than they arrived. That feeling was shared by half the players.

"When you're skating on a pond or you're skating outside," Oshie said, "it turns into pure joy and fun."

As for the Leafs, they've now dropped three straight without superstar Auston Matthews in the lineup, and deserved this loss, regardless of pomp or circumstance.

"We knew it was a big night. They look at us and they still think we're kids. It looked like we were kids here tonight. I thought they smacked us around," said Babcock, cancelling Sunday's off-day as the clock neared midnight.

"We'll be practising tomorrow. The work we didn't put in today we'll be putting in tomorrow and get back on track here.

"A way better memory is an opportunity when you win."

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Sportsnet.ca / Vancouver Canucks Prospect Report: Underwhelming trade deadline

Iain MacIntyre | @imacSportsnet March 4, 2018, 12:49 PM

In the span of 12 months, Vancouver Canucks general manager Jim Benning went from hero to zero in the eyes of many fans, failing to collect a draft pick at Monday's deadline after making two of his best trades one year earlier.

Other National Hockey League managers were somehow uninterested in 34-year-old Thomas Vanek, who exceeded expectations in Vancouver but was a post-deadline flop for Florida in 2017 and possesses a poor playoff record. In the final hour, Benning traded Vanek to the Columbus Blue Jackets for B-grade prospect Tyler Motte and the Canucks' willingness to take journeyman Jussi Jokinen from a Columbus

organization that was getting close to its 50-contracts limit. Benning said it was the only deal he could get for Vanek, who becomes an unrestricted free agent on July 1.

The howling on social media over the trade drowned out a more intriguing deal, the Canucks' acquisition of Vegas Golden Knights' depth forward Brendan Leipsic in exchange for minor-league defenceman Philip Holm, who was signed as a star free-agent out of the Swedish League but played only one game for Vancouver — in Las Vegas last Friday.

Leipsic, a 23-year-old former scoring star with the Portland Winter Hawks, where he was coached by Canuck boss Travis Green, has a chance to earn a prime, offensive role in Vancouver. He had two assists Wednesday playing on the first line alongside Bo Horvat and Brock Boeser. Motte, a 22-year-old now on his third NHL organization, will try to build his career as an energy player.

Benning's greatest sin was his failure to add a draft pick, so the Canucks are missing a fourth-rounder as they head to the 2018 lottery in June. He surrendered that pick in October to get from the Pittsburgh Penguins defenceman Derrick Pouliot, a former eighth-overall pick who has 17 points in 53 games in his first full NHL season.

Given what he had to barter, Benning's shutout on draft picks was not surprising. League-wide, only 19 out of 217 2018 draft picks changed hands and just six of 31 teams managed to increase their net total for June.

PROSPECTS IN

Brendan Leipsic: The speedy, five-foot-10 winger had 18 goals and 51 points for Toronto in the American League last season and was an appealing enough prospect that Vegas claimed him from the Maple Leafs in the expansion draft. Used as an energy player on the Knights' fourth line, Leipsic had 13 points in 44 games for Vegas before the trade. It's his offensive upside and competitiveness that the Canucks love.

Tyler Motte: Another under-sized (5-9), fast forward, Motte disappointed the Blue Jackets, who were happy to get him from Chicago in the Artemi Panarin-Brandon Saad trade last summer. Motte scored 32 goals in 38 games two years ago in his final season at the University of Michigan, but hasn't yet shown he can be an NHL player. He can certainly skate and initiate contact, which he'll have to do to build a career from the fourth line up.

PROSPECTS OUT

Philip Holm: The 26-year-old was one of the best defencemen in Sweden last season and the Canucks were elated to sign him as a free agent last May. But Holm struggled to adapt to North American ice and after a quiet training camp was assigned to the Utica Comets. A decent skater who moves the puck well, Holm amassed 29 points in 42 games in the AHL but had to wait until last week to finally make his Canuck debut. He was unlikely to return to the organization next season.

DRAFT PICK SITUATION

2018: Round 1, Round 2, Round 3, Round 5, Round 6, Round 7

2019: Round 1, Round 2, Round 3, Round 4, Round 5, Round 6, Round 7

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DRAFT PICK OUTLOOK

The Canucks will try to add another pick or two before June and, named to host the 2019 entry draft at Rogers Arena, Vancouver isn't likely to surrender a draft pick anytime soon. Benning's problem, however, is unchanged: the Canucks simply don't have expendable assets on their NHL roster that other teams want. There has been no interest in backup goalie Anders Nilsson and little in defenceman Ben Hutton, who has been a frequent scratch under Green. And the trade market for excellent



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shutdown defenceman Chris Tavev has been shredded by constant injuries. Defenceman Alex Edler, 31, is having one of the best seasons of his career but is one of the last remaining Canucks to possess a full no-trade clause.

REASON FOR OPTIMISM

When GMs call Benning, the players they want are all in other leagues: minor-league goalie Thatcher Demko, Western League scoring star Kole Lind, fifth-overall Swedish pick Elias Pettersson. These prospects are untouchable and could all make the Canucks next season. Lind, a second-round pick who had 85 points in 51 games for the Kelowna Rockets, just signed his entry-level contract. And Pettersson, 19, on Thursday recorded his 50th point in 40 games for Vaxjo of the Swedish Hockey League, surpassing the 48 points in 40 games that Hall-of-Famer Peter Forsberg amassed in 1993.

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Sportsnet.ca / Ottawa Senators Prospect Report: Get excited about Filip Gustavsson

Ryan Dixon | @dixononsports March 4, 2018, 1:54 PM

Before the trade deadline, it felt entirely possible that an Ottawa Senators sell off would create an enormous influx of prospects and draft picks.

And while the organization does have at least one new gem (it hopes) in the system thanks to the swap that sent centre Derick Brassard to Pittsburgh via Vegas, it's fair to say things were a little quieter in the nation's capital than we anticipated.

Who knows: Maybe guys like Erik Karlsson and Mike Hoffman will still be traded in the off-season. And if that is the case, expect the Sens pipeline to bulge.

For now, all we can do is evaluate what did actually happen around the deadline.

Prospects In

Filip Gustavsson: Meet the future of the crease. OK, predicting where a young goalie's career will go is a perilous exercise, but forgive the Sens if they're extremely excited about this six-foot-two Swede. Gustavsson shone a couple months ago at the world junior championship, where he posted a 1.81 goals-against average and .924 save percentage in six outings.

Drafted 55th overall by the Penguins in 2016, the 19-year-old is far and away the best goalie prospect for a team that is presently one of only three in the league to be getting sub .900 goaltending. He might not be able to help that situation next season, but at some point relatively soon we're going to find out what this hyped kid can do.

Ville Pokka: We're stretching the definition of "prospect" to include the Finnish defenceman who was acquired from Chicago for 29-year-old forward Chris DiDomenico a couple weeks before the deadline. Pokka, who turns 24 on Tuesday and has never played an NHL game, has two assists in eight AHL contests with the Belleville Senators.

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

Prospects Out

Remember when we stretched the definition to include Pokka? We're taking it a step further with Vincent Dunn, who was part of the Brassard deal. Dunn, a 22-year-old forward and fifth-round pick in 2013, has played more ECHL than AHL games this year.

Draft Pick Situation

2018: Round 1 (conditional), Round 1 (from Pittsburgh), Round 4, Round 5, Round 6, Round 7, Round 7 (from NYR)

2019: Round 1 (conditional), Round 2, Round 3 (from Pittsburgh), Round 4, Round 5, Round 6, Round 7, Round 7 (from Calgary)

Draft Pick Outlook

Assuming Ottawa uses its own first-round pick this year to make a top-10 selection, the team's 2019 first-rounder will go to the Colorado Avalanche as part of the Matt Duchene trade. And if Ottawa is about to embark on a rebuild, that could be one tasty pick 16 months from now.

Then again, any turning of the soil by the Sens will presumably land no insignificant amount of picks coming back. Ottawa actually only made four selections in 2017 and one of those players, first-rounder Shane Bowers, was also sent to Colorado in the Duchene deal. Certainly, the club would like to re-stock the shelves.

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Reason for Optimism

Gustavsson would certainly fit the bill for this category, but since we covered off the rosiness there, let's go in another direction. Aaron Luchuk, who was passed over in three NHL drafts before being signed by the Sens two months ago, is tied for second in Ontario Hockey League scoring with 105 points in 62 games as an over-ager. It may still be a long path to the NHL, but give the young man credit for persevering and earning a pro contract.

Like Luchuk, both Logan Brown and Drake Batherson are major junior prospects who were dealt this season and the latter two are also excelling in their new homes. Brown has 22 points in 14 outings since joining the OHL's Kitchener Rangers, while Batherson has 31 points in 22 contests with his new QMJHL club, the Blainville-Boisbriand Armada.

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Sportsnet.ca / First shot once again the nail in Oilers' coffin vs. Rangers

Mark Spector | @sportsnetspec March 4, 2018, 8:43 AM

Thirteen times.

That's how many times this season the Edmonton Oilers have surrendered a goal on the game's first shot.

A baker's dozen.

In fully 20 per cent of their games, the very ... first ... shot ... goes ... in. That's one out of every five starts, for you folks scoring at home.

If there is one malady that sums up an Oilers season that has just never been healthy, it is that. And very seldom has it been a bad goal.

Most often, it has been one like the New York Ranges scored just 54 seconds into the game Saturday night: amateurish puck management, beer league defensive zone coverage, and a player depositing a puck



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into a wide open net, as Chris Kreider did to open Saturday's 3-2 Rangers victory.

"Especially for a team that played back-to-back (as the Rangers did). It should be the other way," said struggling Oilers defenceman Andrej Sekera. "We weren't engaged the first period. The next period we were much better."

The night before, the Rangers had surrendered 51 shots in Calgary. On Wednesday in Vancouver, the Canucks pelted Henrik Lundqvist with 55 shots.

Edmonton mustered 22 in the opening 40 minutes before tacking on 15 more in a desperate third-period bid. This, against a depleted Rangers defence that featured four players named Neal Pionk, Rob O'Gara, John Gilmour and Tony DeAngelo.

The average NHL tenure of those four defencemen prior to Saturday was 15 games. Edmonton didn't come close to exploiting that.

Of course, that doesn't include the goalie these woeful Oilers drew: undrafted Bulgarian Alexandar Georgiev, who donned the pads at the NHL level for only the third time.

He was, as so many backups have been against Edmonton this season, fantastic in collecting his first ever NHL win. Yes, the Oilers are back in familiar March territory, getting teams' backups in meaningless, irrelevant games, and watching him pose post-game with the puck.

Wasn't that supposed to change in this city? Does it ever change?

Head coach Todd McLellan can't have any more ideas. He comes to the rink at 5:30 every morning. If he works any longer hours, they may as well buy him a bed at Rogers Arena.

"We didn't engage at all in the first period. We weren't interested at all in ... even stick battles. Fifty-fifty stick battles," he spat. "We weren't interested even in that."

"They had their way. We slowly got into it as the game went on. Too late."

I did a radio interview on Saturday, and the first question went something like this: "Of all the things that have gone wrong in Edmonton this season, has Cam Talbot been one of the biggest issues?"

Well, Talbot's numbers (3.12 GAA, .903 saves percentage) don't defend him well, and there is no question he hasn't been as consistently sharp as he was last season. But the game we saw Saturday was a template for what he has faced this season, behind a team whose derelict defensive play makes it impossible for any goalie to build confidence.

On New York's first shot, Kris Russell gave the puck away twice. Edmonton's defensive zone coverage was completely askew, and the shift ended when Kreider took a cross-crease pass and buried it behind Talbot, who might possibly make that save once in 100 tries.

"Second shift of the game we get scored on," McLellan said. "I mean, half the team hadn't even touched the ice."

Then, on a Rangers power play, Talbot makes two saves in close. No one wearing orange can clear the puck, and on the third shot within about a three-second span, Mika Zibanejad scores from about three feet out.

Then, on New York's third goal, a harmless Cody McLeod wrister is re-directed at the top of the crease. The score is 3-1, and Talbot has played very well and not had a prayer on any of the goals.

Find me a goalie who faces chances of this calibre nightly, and yet builds confidence in his own game, as puck after chance-less puck flies past. It's impossible to like your game when the quality of chance is of as high a pedigree as Talbot faces nightly. Then you let one in that you had a chance on, and they look at you like, "Stop something, will ya?"

But with this team, the lack of compete starts early. On the first shot, most nights.

"It's something we've been trying to find the answer to all season, and obviously haven't," said Connor McDavid.

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Edmonton has 17 games left in this entirely disappointing, depleted season. If it plays like it played Saturday, the way it has for so many woebegone periods in so many games this year, who knows how many people will get fired this summer.

But those people — namely the coaches — can't do a damned thing about a bunch of players who only seem to give a care once their own level of play hits a point that embarrasses them into action.

"We can wave the magic wand, we can pound on the desk, we can do all we want," McLellan said. "They (his players) have to accept some individual responsibility to be ready to play. There's not enough of them right now."

"Tonight's start was unacceptable."

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TSN.CA / Babcock expects stiff test as Leafs renew rivalry with Sabres

Mark Masters

The Toronto Maple Leafs and Buffalo Sabres will finally renew their rivalry on Monday as the division foes clash for the first time in the regular season. The teams will face-off four times in the next month, including March 15 in Buffalo and then March 26 and April 2 in Toronto.

"I kind of like the way they set it up," said defenceman Jake Gardiner. "Divisional games toward the end, they're more meaningful. In this case, I don't think as much, but, for us, it's still a big one."

The Sabres are playing out the stretch of another lost season. Evander Kane was just traded away and star player Jack Eichel is currently sidelined with a high ankle sprain. But Buffalo has won two of its last three with the wins coming against Atlantic Division leaders Tampa Bay and Boston.

"It's regroup time," said head coach Mike Babcock. "We have a Buffalo team that will be sick and tired of hearing about the Toronto Maple Leafs so they're going to play hard tomorrow and we have to be ready to play hard ... they'll have a whole bunch of people that are battling for their life, for their livelihood, and they're going to play that hard."

Leafs need to 'fix it and move on' with Sabres on horizon

A day after the Leafs suffered a frustrating loss, head coach Mike Babcock made sure his team worked hard on Sunday afternoon. While there were plenty of areas to address following Saturday's game, the team understands that there isn't much time to dwell on what went wrong with the Sabres waiting for them on Monday.

Leafs need to 'fix it and move on' with Sabres on horizon

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Babcock was fuming after his Maple Leafs fell way short in a nationally televised showpiece event for the NHL. The coach declared that, despite the late ending on Saturday night and the subsequent travel to Buffalo, his players would go through a rare Sunday practice to make up for the poor performance in a 5-2 Stadium Series loss to the Washington Capitals.

So, what was practice like?

"Well, you guys saw," said Mitch Marner. "A lot of skating and a lot of working so that's the key point. We didn't work last night."

The up-tempo practice lasted around 40 minutes, which is long by Babcock standards, especially for the day after a game. Usually the workouts will be in the 20-30 minute range in these types of situations.

"We didn't do a lot right last night," said alternate captain Tyler Bozak. "Didn't stick to the system, didn't compete hard enough so there was a reason to be upset after a game like that."

The practice featured some puck retrieval and break-out drills.

"We weren't helping out enough in our D zone," Marner noted, "and I think the thing today was just making sure we're working and getting back and kind of getting open for pucks."

But it wasn't just one thing that felled the Leafs on Saturday; it was an uncharacteristically disjointed performance from top to bottom.

"I talk about us being a family in here and families hold each other accountable," said Marner. "We know what we have to do to be a winning team ... We just have to keep each other accountable and make sure we all step up our game."

"We were just doing stuff that we weren't used to doing," said defenceman Jake Gardiner. "Skating all over the ice, not getting open for pucks ... penalty kill wasn't good enough, power play wasn't good enough so, overall, it just wasn't a good game."

That goes for the coach as well as the players.

"When you look at the whole thing, it just didn't look like we were prepared to play in a big moment with a big opportunity and that's disappointing for me," Babcock said. "I'm in charge of having us prepared ... our guys will be disappointed in what happened last night, disappointed in themselves, and I'm disappointed in myself in the way it happened."

Leafs Ice Chips: Babcock puts Leafs through their paces

After the Capitals got the better of them outdoors on Saturday night, Mike Babcock put his team through an up-tempo practice to iron out the issues that popped up. The players were quick to acknowledge that they weren't ready to go when the puck was dropped, and the effort needs to be better against the Sabres on Monday.

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As Gardiner pointed out, special teams were a big issue for the Leafs as Washington scored twice on the man advantage in the first period.

"We felt we had done a real good job setting up our penalty kill and, in the end, we didn't do one thing we wanted to do on the penalty kill so whatever happened in the translation didn't work," Babcock said.

It was the first time in a month that Toronto allowed two goals on the penalty kill in a game. It last happened on Feb. 3 in Boston, which was also the last time the Leafs lost a game by more than two goals.

Most players who met the media after Saturday's game noted how moving the pre-game ceremony was and how cool it was to play at the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. These types of games are few and far between. There were only three outdoor games in the NHL this season and this was only the third outdoor game overall for the Leafs (2-1-0).

"In life you only get so many opportunities," Babcock noted post-game. "You want these to be real positive memories and, so, you've got to be prepared and you've got to be willing to play hard. A way better memory is when you win. When you don't and you don't play well in particular, it's unfortunate."

But Marner, still just 20-years-old and in his sophomore NHL season, is hoping there will be plenty of spectacle-type moments still to come in his career.

"Not really," Marner said when asked if it feels like an opportunity just slipped through his grasp. "I mean, here in Toronto, a lot of winters, I'm sure there's going to be many more opportunities for those kinds of games. It's over with now. Nothing we can do about it now."

NHL: Maple Leafs 2, Capitals 5

Alex Ovechkin recorded goal number 40 for the season, and the 598th of his career as the Capitals defeated the Leafs in the outdoor game at Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium in Maryland. Nicklas Backstrom, John Carlson, and Evgeny Kuznetsov each recorded three points in the win.

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Toronto's line-up at practice featured a number of changes. After starting the last two games on the wing, William Nylander shifted over to centre and skated between Zach Hyman and Connor Brown. And Kasperii Kapanen was on the right wing with James van Riemsdyk and Tyler Bozak. Dominic Moore, usually a centre, was on the left side with Tomas Plekanec and Leo Komarov.

"I haven't made any decision on what I'm doing tomorrow," Babcock cautioned. "Just so you understand, we changed our mind three different times today and there's a great chance it could be changed by tomorrow."

It is the second time Kapanen has practised on Bozak's wing although he's never started a game with the veteran. The last time they skated together in a workout, Kapanen noted that "he's that guy who lets me know that I'm still a rookie and I'm still a new guy here."

So, what about this Mr. Bozak?

"Just joking around every day," the 31-year-old said with a laugh. "A lot of us older guys like to joke with the younger guys. I'm sure it happens everywhere ... we just like to keep'em even-keeled every now and again and let them know they still have a little time to earn it."

Kapanen can, apparently, give as good as he gets. The Finn noted previously that Bozak spent a lot of time admiring a recent shootout goal watching the replay several times.

"I think he's just lying to you guys," Bozak said with a chuckle. "He's trying to give it back to me a little bit ... we try and keep it light as much



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as we can. Obviously, it's a long year and the lighter it is in the locker room and on practice days and stuff like that, it makes it a lot more fun to come to the rink."

Although there wasn't much time for friendly verbal jousting on Sunday.

"Obviously, there's going to be bumps in the road and today it wasn't too light in here," Bozak admitted. "It was pretty serious."

Lines at Sunday's practice:

Marleau-Kadri-Marner

Hyman-Nylander-Brown

van Riemsdyk-Bozak-Kapanen

Moore/Martin-Plekanec-Komarov

Rielly-Hainsey

Gardiner-Zaitsev

Dermott-Carrick

Leivo-Polak

Andersen

McElhinney

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TSN.CA / Babcock holds sluggish Leafs accountable with rare Sunday practice

Kristen Shilton

BUFFALO – The Maple Leafs haven't seen many Sunday practices this season.

They also haven't turned in many performances Mike Babcock publicly admits to being disappointed in. But that's how he described Toronto's no-show on Saturday in a middling 5-2 loss to the Washington Capitals, on the NHL's hallmark Stadium Series stage no less.

So mere hours after they arrived in town on Sunday, the Leafs served their penance by skating – and skating hard - ahead of Monday's contest against the Buffalo Sabres.

"It didn't look like we were prepared to play in a big moment with a big opportunity," said Babcock after practice. "That's disappointing for me; I'm in charge of having us prepared. [Washington] was heavier and harder early and got the job done. To me, it's regroup time...we have to be ready to play hard [on Monday] and we have to get ourselves back on track."

The workout lasted about 40 minutes at KeyBank Center and healthy competition was heavily encouraged in everything from puck retrieval drills to two-on-one battles. At least two Leafs forwards were spilled into the boards by overzealous defencemen, clearly heeding Babcock's advice from centre ice to "compete and make a [expletive] play out there."

"You don't usually see [Babcock] after a [loss] until you're on the bus, but we weren't happy with our play last night," said Mitch Marner. "We know what we have to do to be successful and that's not what we did last night. You guys saw it [at practice]; it was a lot of skating and a lot of

working. That's the key point: We didn't work last night, we weren't helping out enough in our D-zone and that was the thing today."

The loss to Washington was Toronto's third straight, marking the first time they've been on such a skid since dropping four in a row back between Jan. 8 to 18. It was also Toronto's fourth consecutive game without top centreman Auston Matthews in the lineup. As he continues rehabbing a shoulder injury, Babcock has tried several options to minimize the impact of his absence. On Sunday, William Nylander was back at centre with Zach Hyman and Connor Brown, Kasperii Kapanen had re-joined Tyler Bozak's line with James van Riemsdyk and Dominic Moore was on the left side of a Tomas Plekanec-centred fourth line with Leo Komarov.

But Babcock claimed nothing is set in stone for Monday's tilt against Buffalo, the first of four Toronto will play this month against their Atlantic Division rivals. At the moment, it's the only game the Leafs can concern themselves with, even as the stench of Saturday's defeat still lingered over them.

"There's going to be bumps in the road, and today it wasn't too light in here; it was pretty serious," said Bozak. "We weren't too happy with how we played last night, but we're excited to get back at it tomorrow."

"Over 82 games you're always going to have [intense] practices like [that one]; not every game is going to go perfectly and it's just a matter of having a good response game," added van Riemsdyk. "All the stuff in between, it just is what it is. We just have to go out and do the things we know we're capable of doing."

Earlier in the season, when Toronto was mired in a six-week stretch from December into January where they earned just six wins in 18 games, the subject of accountability became a popular topic. Goaltender Frederik Andersen went so far as to call out his team's lack of effort after a disappointing 3-2 overtime loss to Philadelphia on Jan. 18.

The tide had turned favourably for Toronto since then. Prior to this three-game slide, the Leafs had gone 14-3 since Andersen's statements. In hitting a lull again, players can turn to what they learned about keeping themselves – and each other – in check during tough times.

"I've talked about us being a family in here," said Marner. "Families hold each other accountable. We know what we have to do to be a winning team – [part of] that is holding each other accountable for things you don't want to happen. It's a new day today; everyone knows what we have to do. It's a new game tomorrow, and we have to come ready."

That's the opposite of what the Leafs did against Washington and it was that failure to meet their own standards that stung most the morning after. In the end, an outdoor game doesn't account for more points than any other contest, but for a club with aspirations of playing in many big games to come, it was a wake-up call about what they still need to be striving towards.

"The sign of a good team and good leadership is when you dig in every day," said Babcock. "Our guys would be disappointed in what happened last night, disappointed in themselves, and I'm disappointed in myself. The way it happened, I didn't like it. We're a way better team than we showed. If you lose, you lose, but when you don't put your best foot forward, that's not good enough."

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TSN.CA / Leafs miss their Top Gun in loss to Capitals at US Naval Academy

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ANNAPOLIS, Md. — With fireworks exploding into the seaside air, the Maple Leafs walked to their rink atop an aircraft carrier with "Highway to the Danger Zone" thundering throughout Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium.

On the big stage, the Washington Capitals' stars delivered, but the Toronto Maple Leafs sorely missed their Top Gun.

Alex Ovechkin scored his 598th goal and Nicklas Backstrom collected three points in the first period alone to power the Capitals to a 5-2 win over the Leafs in the 2018 Stadium Series at the United States Naval Academy.

Saturday night marked Toronto's first loss in an NHL outdoor game (2-1).

More importantly, the Maple Leafs fell to 2-5-2 in their last nine games without Auston Matthews. Matthews' absence was hard to overlook - his image was plastered on apparel and part of the pregame montage as perhaps the most prominent American-born superstar on the rise.

"We knew it was a big night," coach Mike Babcock said. "[The Capitals] look at us and they still think we're kids. It looked like we were kids here tonight. I thought they smacked us around and forechecked us ... At the start, they were just at a different level than us."

An otherwise impressive show was overshadowed by a 16-minute delay midway through the third period because of a power failure. Banks of stadium lights abruptly went dark as teams prepared to switch ends to even out any advantage because of the wind.

The night was further marred when NBC, the U.S. television rightsholder, cut away from what was supposed to be a NHL marquee event with four minutes left in regulation for local news and Saturday Night Live.

"The lights going out, that was probably the most entertaining part," Nazem Kadri said, perfectly describing the Leafs' night.

Babcock was even more direct. His words were as critical as he's been about the Maple Leafs all season.

"We weren't very good. They were good, they got on us. I didn't think we executed at all," Babcock said. "When you go through, I didn't think we had very many good players ... I was disappointed tonight. We normally play real hard and normally look organized with good structure and all that. I didn't think we were."

Perhaps Babcock wanted to sound the alarm to prevent complacency from setting in. The Leafs have talked about guarding against that since they're in such a comfortable playoff spot. The way this season has gone - great first quarter, followed by a prolonged lull, then the best third quarter in the NHL - an ebb now would follow the trend. The Maple Leafs have now lost three straight games (0-1-2) for the first time since mid-January.

Kadri didn't seem as concerned.

"This is just a bump in the road. It's not a big deal," Kadri said. "We've been playing some good hockey as of late. We'll bounce back."

That this was the NHL's first outdoor game played without the teams at least testing the conditions before the game may have affected the outcome - at least with regard to goaltender Frederik Andersen.

Andersen said Friday he would've preferred a practice or morning skate to adjust to the different sightlines for his second career outdoor game. He had no such luck.

Andersen was pulled for the first time this season due to performance when he allowed five goals on 25 shots. The Capitals didn't solve Curtis McElhinney in relief. For Andersen, Saturday night marked the second time he allowed five or more goals in a span of two weeks, with the last occurring on Feb. 17 in Pittsburgh.

"I think anything you experience in a game like this is potentially something that could happen in either end," Andersen said. "It's the same for both teams. You can't really waste any energy thinking about that."

This game will be one that Babcock is thinking about for a while.

The NHL nestled into cozy Annapolis for its 25th regular season outdoor game as a salute to the military. Midshipmen marched along and "held the rails" of the NHL's makeshift aircraft carrier, which surrounded the ice, and housed a fighter jet and buoys to complete the theme.

A trio of F-18 Hornets buzzed the 29,516 fans - with the U.S. gold medal-winning women's hockey and men's curling teams in attendance - while members of Navy's hockey teams held the American and Canadian flags for the anthems.

High winds which canceled both practice and Saturday's morning skate outdoors largely subsided in time for puck drop and did not seem to effect play. Game-time temperature hovered at an ideal 5 degrees Celsius (42 F).

"Not too bad all things considered," James van Riemsdyk said of the conditions.

Washington scored twice in the first 6:19, including a power play goal in the opening minutes and No. 598 for Ovechkin. He became just the sixth player in NHL history to collect 40 or more goals in at least nine seasons.

Those stars were the difference under the bright lights - at least while they were shining.

"Sure, but in saying all that, we knew who we were playing," Babcock said. "It's unfortunate. In life, you only get so many opportunities. You want these to be real positive memories. A way better opportunity is one when you win. You don't get many opportunities and you want to be good on them."

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