



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 7, 2018

## THE NEWS & OBSERVER

### Staal scores twice more for Wild in 6-2 romp over Hurricanes

By DAVE CAMPBELL AP Sports Writer

March 07, 2018 12:14 AM

Updated 7 hours 56 minutes ago

ST. PAUL, Minn.

Those Minnesota Wild fans waiting in concession lines or lingering too long in the concourse during the first intermission sure missed a show.

Eric Staal has put on quite the must-see performance himself this season.

Staal's second goal of the night for Minnesota capped a franchise-record flurry to start the second period, and the Wild cruised to a 6-2 victory over the Carolina Hurricanes on Tuesday night.

"Everything he touches," coach Bruce Boudreau said, invoking the Greek mythological king Midas, "it turns into gold."

Staal, the second overall pick in the 2003 draft by the Hurricanes who spent 13 years with the club until a late-season trade, has 64 goals in 149 games with the Wild. That's tied for ninth in the NHL over the last two years. He's also tied for 17th with 132 points, and he's older than every player ahead of him in that span.

This season, he's tied for fourth in the league with 36 goals, trailing Washington's Alex Ovechkin, Pittsburgh's Evgeni Malkin and Winnipeg's Patrik Laine.

"I've got a lot of work to do if I want to catch or be around those guys," Staal said with a slight smile. "I'm just going to keep playing."

Nino Niederreiter, Zach Parise, Daniel Winnik and Staal scored in a span of 3:28, the fastest four-goal stretch in Wild history that gave the home team a huge lead less than four minutes after the first intermission ended.

The sign that this was the Wild's night came quickly in the second period, when Jared Spurgeon's slap shot from the point bounced off the neck of a ducking Niederreiter and past goalie Cam Ward with just 23 seconds elapsed.

"We've got to come out of the dressing room a little bit more organized and ready to play," Hurricanes coach Bill Peters said.

Winnik scored on his 33rd birthday, prompting Peters to pull Ward for Scott Darling. Then, just 15 seconds later, on the first shot Darling faced, Staal broke free in the Carolina zone, faked right and dragged the puck left to poke a backhand in for his 10th goal in the last nine games.

"I want to win every time I get on the ice," Staal said. "But when you pump 'em in like that for a bit, I think you feel a little bad."

In seven games since Jason Zucker and Mikael Granlund joined Staal on the first line, the trio has combined for 16 goals and 19 assists. With 15 games to go, Staal has a solid chance at the third 40-goal season of his career.

"I don't think anybody would've thought he'd have 36 goals at this stage of the game," Boudreau said. "I remember when we signed him, when we were talking in the room, and thinking if he could give us 50 to 60 points we would think it was a great signing."

Staal's first score came 4:35 into the game on the power play after a tripping call on Victor Rask, adding to Carolina's NHL-leading penalty total. Parise's goal was also with the man advantage for the Wild, who entered the game ranked eighth in the league on the power play. The Hurricanes came in 22nd on the penalty kill.

The Wild, whose post-New Year's Day surge has thrust them into third place in the Central Division, are 10-3-2 in their last 12 games. They pushed their lead over fourth-place Dallas, which controls the first wild card spot, to three points.

Devan Dubnyk made 29 saves for his fifth win in his last six starts, and the Wild raised their home record to an NHL-leading 24-5-6. Matt Cullen, another long-time former Hurricanes player who teamed with Staal on the 2006 Stanley Cup champion squad, scored late for the Wild.

Phillip Di Giuseppe and Derek Ryan scored for Carolina in the third period on Dubnyk, who has allowed only nine goals over his last five victories.

The Hurricanes lost points on each of the competitors in the Eastern Conference wild card race, with New Jersey (76) and Columbus (73) currently holding the two spots and Florida (71) also ahead of Carolina (69).

"Let's look past this one," Ryan said. "Let's get rid of it and move on."

#### NOTES

Dubnyk's last shutout was on Feb. 10, a 44-save performance against Chicago. ... Wild rookie D Nick Seeler was ruled out with a strained right biceps, two nights after he engaged in an old-style, bloody fight with Detroit's Luke Witkowski. ... Hurricanes LW Joakim Nordstrom missed his fourth straight game because of an upper-body injury. ... Spurgeon and Ryan Suter had two assists apiece. Wild defensemen have 166 points in 67 games, the second-most in the NHL behind Nashville. The franchise record is 169. ...



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Wild: Play at Vancouver on Friday, followed by a back-to-back game at Edmonton on Saturday.



## Recap: Hurricanes Fall to Wild, 6-2

**Minnesota scores four early in the second to sink Canes**

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

March 6th, 2018

**ST. PAUL, Minn.** - The Carolina Hurricanes dropped a 6-2 decision to the Minnesota Wild, who used a prolific start to the second period to sink the Canes.

Phil Di Giuseppe and [Derek Ryan](#) scored for the Hurricanes in the third period, and Eric Staal potted two goals against his former team.

### One

Coming into tonight's game, the Wild had posted a stellar 20-2-5 record at home in their last 27 games. Unfortunately for the Canes, that dominance was on display again tonight.

Eric Staal burned his former team for a power-play goal - and his 35th in what has been a renaissance season for the veteran forward - in the first five minutes of the game, and the Canes had to chase the game from there.

"It's tough when you have a game like that. I thought at times we did good things, but in the end over the full 60 minutes we didn't execute at a high level. Our passes were off, our situational awareness was off, we were in the wrong spots at the wrong times, we were pinching when we shouldn't be," Ryan said. "More than anything, we can just learn that we have to play our systems and the right way if we want to win. We can just fly around and run and gun."

### Two

It was a manageable 1-0 deficit after one period, but things got out of hand quickly in the second. It took the Wild just three minutes and 28 seconds to net four goals and stretch their lead to 5-0.

The weird bounce off Nino Niederreiter just 23 seconds into the period was perhaps a harbinger of things to come. A seemingly harmless point shot came in high, and it bounced in off Niederreiter's upper body.

The Wild would then score three goals in just 1:28, beginning with a tic-tac-toe passing play on the power play finished off

by Zach Parise. Daniel Winnik's goal that made it 4-0 Minnesota ended [Cam Ward](#)'s night in net. And then coming in cold, Darling had to face Eric Staal on a breakaway, and the former Cane scored his second goal of the game and 36th of the season to put the Hurricanes in a 5-0 hole.

"I just don't think we were ready to play today. That's the bottom line," Di Giuseppe said. "We didn't match their compete in the second."

"They were just capitalizing and getting some bounces. They were getting those chances in the first and got them throughout the whole second period," Ryan said. "The puck were going in, and we continued to not compete at a high level."

"We've got to have a better response and a little more push-back," head coach Bill Peters said. "We've got to come out of the dressing room a little bit more organized and ready to play than that."

### Three

For what it's worth, Darling settled into the game after Staal's goal. He made a nice stop on a wrap-around, a desperation diving effort that saved what would have been Minnesota's sixth goal of the game. The goal light came on, but that was wishful thinking - and perhaps a little trigger happy at that point.

"I thought he unfortunately had too many quality and quantity," Peters said. "Left our goalies out to dry a little bit, both guys."

### Four

The Hurricanes' success in the win column comes and goes with their ability to score, it seems. Di Giuseppe got the Canes on the board in the third period, but the game was already well out of hand by then. In any case, it was textbook net front presence to redirect a point shot off the stick of [Trevor van Riemsdyk](#).

Ryan added another goal late on the power play, another redirection off a one-time blast from [Victor Rask](#).



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Other than that, [Sebastian Aho](#) probably had the team's best chance to score, and that came in the first period. Off a turnover created by [Teuvo Teravainen](#), Aho walked in clean. On his backhand, he tried to slide the puck through Devan Dubnyk's five-hole to no avail.

"I thought we got going and had some real good looks," Peters said. "Felt good about that part of it, and I thought we were on our way to building a quality game."

## Five

How will the Hurricanes respond on Thursday? Just 15 games remain in the regular season, and with the losses accumulating, the team's playoff chances become slimmer by the day. There still will be something to be said about how the Canes finish out this season, whether it results in them playing beyond April 7 or not.

"At this point, we don't really want to take anything from this game. We just want to move on from this game, play in Chicago on Thursday, flush this game and make sure we're coming out and playing the way we know how to play at a high level, executing and playing our system," Ryan said. "We're looking to move on from this one, but at the same time we have to realize that when we play this way, this is the result."

"You've got to remember how this feels. That's not a very good feeling. It's not a lot of fun playing like that. Remember that," Peters said. "We've got to compete at a higher level across the board."

## Up Next

The Hurricanes head to Chicago to face off with the Blackhawks on Thursday, their final visit to a Western Conference city this season.



**SB NATION**  
**CANES COUNTRY**

## Hurricanes Suffer Lopsided 6-2 Loss to Wild

**Canes start three-game road trip with blowout loss in Minnesota.**

By [Brett Finger@brettfinger](mailto:Brett.Finger@brettfinger) Mar 6, 2018, 11:22pm EST

Coming off of a 3-2 loss to the [Jets](#) on Sunday, the [Carolina Hurricanes](#) needed to collect some points on Tuesday night in Minnesota in order to keep pace in the wild card race.

The Canes failed to win on the road and, in the process, added to their lengthy list of lopsided losses this season, falling to the [Wild](#) by a score of 6-2.

The first period was, by and large, an even back-and-forth affair. Carolina pushed the tempo on offense and managed to create a plethora of opportunities, but [Devan Dubnyk](#) was phenomenal in net and Minnesota's offense came through as former Canes captain [Eric Staal](#) made it 1-0 less than five minutes into the game.

Later in the opening frame, a turnover led to a clear-cut breakaway for [Sebastian Aho](#), who nearly snuck the puck through Dubnyk's legs but just couldn't get it through. The scored remained 1-0 through 20 minutes.

The second period, in all likelihood, ended Carolina's playoff hopes - and did so in ugly fashion.

In the first four minutes of the middle frame, the Wild scored four goals. 23 seconds in, [Nino Niederreiter](#) kicked off the goal fest; and [Zach Parise](#), [Daniel Winnik](#), and Eric Staal (his second of the game) followed suit and ultimately put the game well out of reach for the visiting Hurricanes who, by that point, had already pulled starter [Cam Ward](#) for [Scott Darling](#), who allowed Staal's second goal.

Darling was able to make some impressive saves in the second half of the game, ultimately allowing just one more goal - a third-period goal from [Matt Cullen](#) - en route to a 16-save effort in relief.

The Hurricanes did manage to get on the board in the third period. Just before the 10:00 mark, Phil Di Giuseppe netted his second goal of the season, making it a 5-1 game. Then, after Cullen made it 6-1, [Derek Ryan](#) deflected a shot from [Victor Rask](#) past Dubnyk on the powerplay to make it a 6-2 game in the final minutes.

From Our Sponsor

That's how it all ended. The Canes were outworked to a disappointing degree in a must-win hockey game. While the Wild put a hurting on their opponent, the [Columbus Blue Jackets](#) won and jumped into the final wild card spot in the East. As the end of the season nears, it appears as if it'll be a two-horse race for the final playoff spot - the Blue Jackets and [Florida Panthers](#) - unless the Hurricanes make a miraculous turn around and the teams in front of them start fall off.

The Hurricanes will look to get their dignity back on Thursday night in Chicago when they take on the sinking [Blackhawks](#) at the United Center. Carolina lost its only matchup with the Hawks this season by a score of 4-3, a game in which they failed to hold onto a third-period lead and lost in overtime at the PNC Arena.



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## Maple Leafs' Recent Dealings With the Hurricanes

By [Andrew Forbes](#) March 6th, 2018

Possibly the most memorable games between the Toronto Maple Leafs and Carolina Hurricanes came during the 2002 Stanley Cup Eastern Conference Final when the Canes came in as underdogs only to beat the Leafs in six games.

While the recent transactions between these two clubs don't exactly live up to the hype that was the six-game series back in 2002, there have been some names swapped between the Canes and Leafs over the years.

With that said, here's a look at the five most recent deals between the two clubs.

### Swapping Defence

The most recent transaction happened back on Jan. 1, 2014. The [Leafs moved veteran defenceman John-Michael Liles](#) and defensive prospect Dennis Robertson to the Hurricanes for another veteran defenceman in Tim Gleason.

While Robertson hasn't cracked the NHL roster yet, still reserving a spot on the AHL's Charlotte Checkers, Liles spent parts of three seasons with Hurricanes following the trade. During that time, Liles tallied 10 goals and 46 points in 156 regular season games before heading to Boston where he last played in 2016-17.

Going the other way, Gleason played just 39 games with the Leafs finishing off the 2013-14 season. Over that span he recorded five points. Following the end of the season, he signed back with the Hurricanes and was traded to Capitals later in the year where he finished his NHL career.

### Giving Up Tlusty

Before the Gleason deal, the Leafs and Hurricanes hadn't engaged in a trade since Dec. 3, 2009. While it was more of a minor deal at the time, the Canes would end up with a player that would spend a fair amount of time within their organization.

[The Leafs acquired the rights to Philippe Paradis](#) in exchange for Jiri Tlusty. Paradis signed a three-year entry-level deal with the Leafs in Apr. 2010 and he was quickly moved to the Chicago Blackhawks two months later. He never played for the Leafs and never had any luck cracking an NHL roster.

As for Tlusty, he played 322 regular season games for the Hurricanes over parts of six seasons. He scored 76 goals and 145 points before being traded to the Jets in 2014-15. He played 30 games for the Devils in 2015-16, but hasn't played in the NHL since.

### Acquiring O-Dog

On Jul. 30, 2005, the Leafs might've made one of their biggest acquisitions from the Hurricanes' organization. The [Leafs acquired veteran forward Jeff O'Neill](#) in exchange for a conditional fourth-round pick in the 2006 NHL Entry Draft.

The Canes moved the pick to the St. Louis Blues in a deal that got them Doug Weight, while the Blues eventually used it to draft goaltender Reto Berra with the 106th overall pick.

O'Neill spent two seasons with the Leafs before he retired following the 2006-07 season. Through 148 regular season games with Toronto, he tallied 39 goals and 80 points – falling one goal shy of two 20-goal seasons.

### The Legend, Ron Francis

Before O'Neill, it was Francis – the Hall-of-Fame forward [the Leafs acquired from the Hurricanes](#) on Mar. 9, 2004. In return, the Leafs sent Carolina a fourth-round pick in the 2005 Entry Draft.

The Hurricanes used the pick in another trade on Jul. 30, 2005, with the Columbus Blue Jackets with the Jackets using it to draft Jared Boll 101st overall.

As for Francis, he played just 12 games for the Maple Leafs to finish the 2003-04 season and his career. What might've been most impressive is that he tallied 3 goals and 10 points in those 12 games. He added four assists in 12 postseason games with the Leafs, but eventually returned to the Hurricanes as their general manager – a post he holds today.

### A Druken State of Mind

No, this heading isn't spelt wrong. In fact, it has to do with the fifth most recent trade between the Leafs and Hurricanes that took place on May 29, 2003. In the deal, the Leafs acquired centre Harold Druken for defenceman Allan Rourke.

Druken played just 14 games for the Leafs over parts of two seasons collecting six assists over that span. Rourke, on the other hand, played 25 games for the Hurricanes with three points to show for it. He had stops in New York and Edmonton over the next three seasons before his NHL career ended.

While it surely wasn't any kind of blockbuster, it is one of the most recent deals between these two clubs. What do you think of the deals? Were there any clear-cut winners over the years? Be sure to share your thoughts by commenting below and tune in next time to see some of the most recent deals between the Leafs and Blackhawks.



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## Wild outburst in second period sparks win against Hurricanes

### Score four goals in 3:28, extend lead for third place in Central

by Jessi Pierce / NHL.com Correspondent

12:06 AM

**ST. PAUL, Minn.** -- The Minnesota Wild scored four goals in 3:28 and extended their lead for third place in the Central Division with a 6-2 win against the Carolina Hurricanes at Xcel Energy Center on Tuesday.

[Eric Staal](#) scored two goals for the Wild (38-22-7, 83 points), who broke their record for the fastest four goals scored (5:07, Oct. 8, 2015 at the Colorado Avalanche) with [Nino Niederreiter](#), [Zach Parise](#), [Daniel Winnik](#) and Staal scoring in the second period.

With the win, Minnesota moved three points ahead of the Dallas Stars for third place in the Central and have won seven of their past nine games.

"We've got a lot of hockey still; we just want to keep building," Staal said. "We gotta fight. It's tough, our division's tough. We've got a lot of great teams we're playing on road games coming up. We gotta win every night, and we know that coming in. We just want to keep building our game and put ourselves in the best position we can for the playoffs."

[Scott Darling](#) made 16 saves in relief for the Hurricanes (27-29-11, 69 points), who are four points behind the Columbus Blue Jackets for the second wild card into the Stanley Cup Playoffs from the Eastern Conference.

"You've got to remember how that feels," Hurricanes coach Bill Peters said. "Not a very good feeling, not a lot of fun playing like that, so you've got to remember that. We've got to compete at a higher level across the board."

Staal scored his first goal of the game on the power play to give the Wild a 1-0 lead at 4:35 of the first period. He has scored in back-to-back games and has 30 points (17 goals, 13 assists) in his past 21 games.

Staal has 36 goals this season, tied for fourth-most with [Tyler Seguin](#) and trailing [Alex Ovechkin](#) (40), [Patrik Laine](#) (38), [Evgeni Malkin](#) (37).

"Those guys can score a lot and shoot it really well, so [I've] got a lot of work to do if I want to catch or be around those guys," Staal said. "I'm just going to keep playing. We got

quite a few games left and [I'm] getting some good looks from my linemates, great plays. We're about trying to win games and get ourselves in the right position, and that kind of stuff just takes care of itself. But I don't like my chances with those guys shooting, to be completely honest."

Niederreiter scored 23 seconds into the second period when he deflected [Jared Spurgeon](#)'s shot past [Cam Ward](#) (nine saves) to make it 2-0.

Parise scored a power-play goal at 2:23, tipping in a shot from [Mikko Koivu](#) to extend the lead 3-0.

Ward was pulled after [Daniel Winnik](#) scored at 3:36, but Staal scored again 15 seconds later to make it 5-0.

[Phillip Di Giuseppe](#) ended [Devan Dubnyk](#)'s shutout at 9:23 of the third.

[Matt Cullen](#)'s fourth goal in his past nine games gave the Wild a 6-1 lead at 14:46.

[Derek Ryan](#) scored a power-play goal at 18:19 to make it 6-2.

"I think at this point we don't really want to take anything from this game," Ryan said. "We just want to move on to the next game, playing [at] Chicago on Thursday and flush this game and make sure we're coming out and playing the way we know how to play: at a high level and executing our systems. Let's look past this one. Let's get rid of it and move on."

Dubnyk made 29 saves.

### Goal of the game

Winnik's goal at 3:36 of the second period.

### Save of the game

Dubnyk's save against [Victor Rask](#) at 18:07 of the third period.

### Highlight of the game

Staal's goal at 3:56 of the second period.

### They said it

"I think we're looking to move on from this one, but at the same time we have to realize that when we play this way, this is the result." -- Hurricanes forward [Derek Ryan](#)



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"Everything he touches -- start calling him Midas from now on -- it turns into gold. I hope it doesn't end. He's well-deserved of it." -- *Wild coach Bruce Boudreau on center [Eric Staal](#)*

### Need to know

Hurricanes forward [Teuvo Teravainen](#)'s goal and point streak (four goals, one assist) ended at four games. ... Koivu had two assists and extended his point streak to five games (three goals, four assists). ... Parise has five points (three goals, two assists) in a season-high five-game point streak.

... The Wild lead the NHL with 54 points at home (24-5-6). They've gotten at least one point here in 26 of their past 28 games.

### What's next

**Hurricanes:** At the Chicago Blackhawks on Thursday (8:30 p.m. ET; NBCSCH, FS-CR, NHL.TV)

**Wild:** At the Vancouver Canucks on Friday (10 p.m. ET; SNP, FS-N, NHL.TV)

### TODAY'S LINKS

<http://www.newsobserver.com/sports/nhl/carolina-hurricanes/article203853149.html>

<https://www.nhl.com/hurricanes/news/recap-hurricanes-fall-to-wild-6-2/c-296696120>

<https://www.canescountry.com/2018/3/6/17089142/carolina-hurricanes-suffer-lopsided-6-2-loss-to-minnesota-wild-eric-staal-cam-ward-scott-darling>

<https://thehockeywriters.com/maple-leafs-trades-hurricanes/>

<https://www.nhl.com/news/carolina-hurricanes-minnesota-wild-game-recap/c-296698338>

## SportScan

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

1102284 Carolina Hurricanes

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BY DAVE CAMPBELL

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News Observer LOADED: 03.07.2018

1102285 Chicago Blackhawks

Blackhawks grant 12-year-old's wish to practice with team — and 'fight' Jonathan Toews

Phil Thompson Phil Thompson

Sometimes it takes a hockey fight with a 12-year-old to help make some sense of the Blackhawks' rough season.

It was just a couple of days ago when Jonathan Toews — not known for mixing it up — dropped gloves with Ducks center and longtime adversary Ryan Kesler. "Obviously with Kesler he's been trying to instigate a lot," Toews said. "For myself the time was right to try to stand up and do something."

Then on Tuesday morning, Midlothian fifth-grader Mason Berg pulled Toews down by his jersey and gave him a few playful shots. "I'm 0-2 in the last two," Toews laughed. "Mason connected with far more punches than the one I had earlier this week, so it was a little tougher today."

Toews, teammates and coaches skated with Mason, who has muscular dystrophy and was rolled onto the ice in a wheelchair, and made him an honorary Blackhawk for a day after the team received a request from Make-A-Wish Illinois. Berg and his parents also were set to attend Tuesday night's game against the Avalanche.

During practice, Mason scored on goalie Anton Forsberg (his favorite part), exchanged high-fives with players and found time to prank Toews. "He was pulling tricks on me, handing me a water bottle with the screw

off," Toews said. "Got a nice face wash. Apparently that was his idea too. It wasn't Seabs (Brent Seabrook) or any of the guys telling him to do that."

Asked during his "news conference" whether he's always been a practical joker, Mason smiled and said, "Kind of."

Dad Dan Callahan called it an "awesome" experience for his son. "We watch the games all the time together," he said. "He does nothing but play video games with the Blackhawks on."

"This is just amazing," mom Patty Berg added. "He's been wanting to do this. He just wants to be a Hawk so bad. And today was very special because he's always, 'Mom, can we go to the game? Mom, can we meet the guys?' So today was just a wonderful day, and it's something that he'll never ever forget and neither will I."

Chicago Tribune LOADED: 03.07.2018

1102286 Chicago Blackhawks

Blackhawks sign Erik Gustafsson to two-year extension

Paul Skrbina

Erik Gustafsson had a year and a half to ponder his NHL future.

After recording 14 assists in 41 games with the Blackhawks in 2015-16, the defenseman was assigned to Rockford, where he stayed until January of this year.

Did he doubt whether he would get another shot in the NHL?

"For sure," he said. "I (had) a good season in Rockford, came up here, worked on my game."

On Tuesday, Gustafsson signed a two-year, one-way contract extension with the Hawks that the NHL Network reported will carry a \$1.2 million salary-cap hit. A little more than \$1 million of that could be taken off the books should Gustafsson go to Rockford or another minor-league team, so the risk for the Hawks is minimal.

"Defensively, he's fine," Hawks coach Joel Quenneville said. "Offensively, he adds a nice ingredient to our team. His puck movement, support of the attack, options in the zone, defensively, there's room there. As a team, our defense needs to be better than we've been over the recent stretch."

Gustafsson scored his only goal Jan. 20 in his first game back with the Hawks. The 25-year-old also has four assists in 19 games. He said he plans to "play my own game a little bit more."

"I've been trying to pass the puck too much," he said. "I can shoot it a little bit more and create some more offense."

The team also announced that it has signed forward Tyler Sikura, brother of prospect Dylan Sikura, to a one-year deal.

Tyler Sikura leads the IceHogs with 16 goals this season.

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Chicago Tribune LOADED: 03.07.2018

1102287 Chicago Blackhawks

Corey Crawford not likely to be back on ice soon for Blackhawks



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 7, 2018

Paul Skrbina

No news hasn't been good news for the Blackhawks when it comes to goalie Corey Crawford, whose status remained "status quo," according to coach Joel Quenneville.

Quenneville said before the team's three-game trip to California that he hoped Crawford would return to the ice this week for the first time since Feb. 12, but said Tuesday it was "doubtful" that would happen during the next few days.

Crawford hasn't played since Dec. 23 and has been on injured reserved since Dec. 27 with what the team is calling an upper-body injury, reportedly concussion-related.

Still, Quenneville said he remains optimistic Crawford could return by season's end.

"Still encouraged that there's a possibility and we'll go from there," Quenneville said.

The Hawks have just 15 games remaining after Tuesday night.

Crawford was a limited participant in the team's morning skate Feb. 12 in Arizona, the only time he's been on the ice with the team since his injury.

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1102288 Chicago Blackhawks

Early goal in overtime gives Blackhawks 2-1 win over Avalanche

Paul Skrbina

An early goal late in the game was right on time as far as the Blackhawks are concerned.

Jonathan Toews, Patrick Kane and Duncan Keith took the ice for the Hawks to start the 3-on-3 overtime Tuesday against the Avalanche. Nine seconds later, thanks to Toews' goal on a pass from Kane, on a pass from Keith, after Toews won the faceoff, the three skated off the ice together 2-1 victors at the United Center.

"A lot of these games you think the offense is going to keep coming, and the next thing you know you only have one goal on the board," Toews said. "We need to grow. We need to learn from what we've been through. No better time than now."

The Hawks had allowed 16 goals in their previous three games before facing the Avalanche, their worst three-game stretch of the season.

Jean-Francois Berube was solid in goal, stopping 33 of the 34 shots he faced, including 17 in the second period.

The Avalanche, with their one point, moved into a points tie with the Kings for the second wild-card playoff spot in the West.

"It was a pretty good play," Quenneville said of the game-winner. "It was a great pass and a great shot and a good ending. Nice to see 'Berubs' get a win, and obviously nice to always win."

Erik Gustafsson celebrated the two-year contract extension he signed earlier in the day with his second goal of the season and the first of the game just less than six minutes in.

The Hawks thought they had a 2-1 lead in the second period after Patrick Kane put a spin move on an Avalanche defender and backhanded a

pass to Brandon Saad in front of the net. Saad took a few whacks at the puck and the red light illuminated.

But after a review, Saad was ruled to have kicked in the puck, to the goal was kicked out.

Quenneville let an expletive fly when he learned of the ruling, which erased what would have been Saad's 16th goal.

"I'm not allowed to say that," assistant coach Ulf Samuelsson said on the TV broadcast between the second and third periods when asked what he saw.

The closest the Avalanche came to scoring in the first 36-plus minutes came with just more than 15 minutes left in the second when play was stopped as Brent Seabrook tried to fish a stuck puck from the net behind Berube.

Shortly thereafter, Nathan MacKinnon's 32nd goal of the season went in from the front with 3 minutes, 42 seconds left in the period to tie the score 1-1 on the Avalanche's 25th shot on net.

The Hawks had plenty of chances to score plenty of goals in the second.

Nick Schmaltz followed a nifty move by firing a shot directly at goalie Semyon Varlamov's chest.

A minute later, with just more than 14 minutes left, a Saad-to-Kane two-on-one came up empty.

A Kane-to-Toews-to-Tomas Jurco deal in front of a wide-open net less than a minute later resulted in the same, and left Toews to drop his hands to his knees in exasperation.

"We can all ... look around and let the bumps in the road sink in and keep analyzing what we need to do better and apply that as soon as we can," Toews said.

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1102289 Chicago Blackhawks

Blackhawks knock off Avs on Jonathan Toews' overtime goal

Mark Lazerus

Sure, it was nice when Jonathan Toews popped in the game-winning goal off a pass from Patrick Kane nine seconds into overtime Tuesday, giving the Blackhawks a 2-1 victory against the Avalanche at the United Center. Winning is always better than losing.

In the standings, however, it was largely inconsequential. Even a 16-game winning streak to close the season probably wouldn't be enough to get the Hawks into the playoffs in the hyper-competitive Western Conference.

Still, there's meaning in these games — and not just for fringe players such as goalie J-F Berube, who made 33 saves as he auditions for a regular job next season. The urgency is still there, Toews said, to make sure this lost season isn't a totally wasted one.

"We need to grow," Toews said. "We need to learn from what we've been through. No better time than now. Don't wait until the offseason, whenever that comes, or next year. We can all grow as players and look around and let the bumps in the road sink in and just keep analyzing what we've got to do better. And try and apply that as soon as we can."

On the Beat podcast: Have the Blackhawks quit?



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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The victory against the Avs, who are fighting desperately for a playoff spot, was an encouraging one. The Hawks' defense played much better after a disastrous three-game California swing, with Erik Gustafsson scoring early. Berube was terrific. Brandon Saad was a menace, even though his apparent go-ahead goal late in the second period was overturned after a lengthy review for a "distinct kicking motion." The Hawks are 4-1-0 in their last five home games after losing seven in a row at the United Center.

After the game, coach Joel Quenneville pointed to Toews' fight Sunday with the Ducks' Ryan Kesler as proof of a pulse.

"We want our team to be competitive," he said. "Play hard, play the right way. Jonny sticking up for his teammates the other day was a great illustration of the passion that you need, regardless of where you are [in the standings]."

Gus money

Gustafsson went from being an NHL regular to being an afterthought. A year and a half later, he signed a two-year, one-way contract extension that carries a \$1.2 million salary-cap hit. He wasn't sure the day would come.

"Two more years," he said with a smile. "I'm glad I signed here, and I love this city, I love this team and I love the fans over here. I'm blessed. It's fun."

Gustafsson played 41 games with the Hawks during the 2015-16 season, then was passed up on the organizational depth chart. But he bided his time in Rockford and worked on his game. He had five goals and 25 assists in 68 games with the IceHogs last season and three goals and 14 assists in 25 games this season before being called up in January.

He has two goals and four assists in 20 games with the Hawks this season.

Status Crow

Goalie Corey Crawford's situation is "status quo," according to Quenneville, and no news is bad news.

Quenneville had said last Wednesday that he hoped Crawford, who has been out since Christmas with a head injury, might get back on the ice after the Hawks returned from their California trip. But he said Tuesday that it's doubtful Crawford will be on the ice in the next few days.

Chicago Sun Times LOADED: 03.07.2018

1102290 Chicago Blackhawks

The Blackhawks can wait: John Hayden embracing his opportunity in Rockford

Mark Lazerus

There are a few momentous calls in a hockey player's life. The one informing him he has been drafted. The one informing him he has been called up. And the one informing him he can find a place to live.

Blackhawks rookies and prospects start training camp in a downtown hotel. If they make the team out of camp, they get moved to an extended-stay hotel, the kind with a couch and a kitchen. After it appears they're in the NHL to stay, they're given permission to find a permanent place in the Chicago area.

Alex DeBrincat got that call in late October. So did John Hayden.

So, no, Hayden didn't expect to spend the last two months — and possibly the rest of the season — back in a hotel in Rockford while

paying rent on a place in the city. But you won't hear him complaining. Hayden knows he'll be back in Chicago at some point. For now, though, he's playing a major role for the IceHogs and he's in a playoff race — neither of which would be the case were he with the Hawks.

"It's been great," Hayden said during an IceHogs practice Tuesday at MB Ice Arena. "It's been great for my development and for recognizing what kind of player I am and what I can actually be. I'm getting a lot of minutes in different situations. It's definitely been fun."

With 17 games left in the American Hockey League season, the IceHogs are five points out of a playoff spot. But they've won three of their last four games and are brimming with confidence. Hayden has been a big part of it, with five goals and nine assists in 22 games.

So while some players sulk about a demotion, Hayden's not even sweating the fact that the Hawks only have one regular recall left this season. Chicago can wait.

"We're in a playoff push here," he said. "The last week's been a ton of fun for us, with some big wins. So that's where my focus is."

Considering he jumped directly to the NHL from Yale, it would have been natural for Hayden to view the demotion Jan. 8 as beneath him and to stew about it. But he was playing primarily a fourth-line role with the Hawks, posting three goals and eight assists in 39 games, so he took the demotion as an opportunity, not an insult. It was also a challenge.

"[Sometimes] you go back to the [minors] and think, 'Well, I'm just going to light it up,' " IceHogs coach Jeremy Colliton said. "That's just not how it works. It's difficult to produce offensively; it's a good league. So it's important you don't try to change your game just because [you think], 'OK, now I'm going to score points.' You've got to continue to play the right way. That's what's going to get you back to the NHL."

For Hayden, that means using his 6-3, 223-pound frame to bull his way to the net, wreak havoc in the crease and punish opponents in the corners and on the forecheck. While his role in the NHL so far has been limited, he has all the makings of a prototypical power forward — something the Hawks desperately lack in their top six and on the power play.

So when the Hawks sent Hayden down, the message he got from the coaching staff and the front office was nothing he hadn't heard before. Rockford is probably just a pit stop, but it's proving to be important.

"Since I've been at Yale, the conversation has been pretty similar: Try to evolve into that power game that I've been playing and just work on the details," he said. "I've progressed a ton here. I've had the puck a lot more, I've been playing more minutes and I definitely have more confidence. Being here has been great for me."

Chicago Sun Times LOADED: 03.07.2018

1102291 Chicago Blackhawks

Tyler Sikura extension a reminder of Blackhawks' most pressing issue

Satchel Price

There won't be much for Blackhawks fans to look forward to down the stretch this season, but the re-signing of Tyler Sikura to a one-year NHL contract Tuesday was a good reminder of the team's most immediate problem. Pretty soon, we'll know whether or not Tyler's younger brother, Dylan, has signed an entry-level deal with the Blackhawks or decided to pursue free agency.

The situation surrounding the younger Sikura has become one of the most important stories to watch for the Blackhawks as this season winds



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down. The former sixth-round pick emerged as one of the best players in college hockey over his last two seasons at Northeastern, where he's recorded 105 points in just 69 games.

The higher profile has made the Blackhawks excited about bringing Sikura into the fold as soon as possible, but the prospect of free agency stands between the two sides. As a four-year college player this spring, he'll be able to freely pick his first NHL team if he waits until mid-August. Players such as Jimmy Vesey and Will Butcher have shown us the feeding frenzy that gathers when a good prospect is on the market for nothing more than an ELC.

So the Blackhawks have done everything in their power to convince Sikura to sign in Chicago, including giving his older brother an AHL contract last year around the same time they offered him an NHL deal. It's far from the first time that an NHL team has thrown a bone to a player's sibling in order to curry their favor, but we still don't know whether it will work.

To Tyler's credit, he has surpassed the expectations of a non-prospect signed primarily as a result of nepotism. The former ECHL forward has racked up 16 goals in 57 games with Rockford, which is second on the team behind current Blackhawks forward Matthew Highmore. He's earned his spot regardless of how he got it in the first place, and seems happy to be here.

Still, his presence in the organization, more than anything, is about trying to bring his brother into the fold. The AHL production is an added bonus. The real prize here is making sure that the younger Sikura, who could become a productive NHL forward in short order, doesn't leave later this year.

The Blackhawks, by all accounts, have maintained a public confidence that a deal will get done. The re-signing of Dylan's brother Tuesday seems like the latest example of the team's anticipation that their relationship will last beyond the next few months.

The Blackhawks may have one clear advantage in their quest to sign Sikura. Assuming Northeastern doesn't make a deep run to the Frozen Four, the Blackhawks will be able to offer a two-year ELC where the first season is burned this spring. That would allow Sikura to hit restricted free agency after the 2018-19 season, which would position him for a raise beyond his ELC-limited salary as soon as possible.

The contract would also likely require maximum performance-based bonuses, which the Blackhawks would likely be happy to pay out if he played well, just like with Artemi Panarin. Every team can offer max bonuses, though.

That's why moves like re-signing Tyler Sikura are important, and show the Blackhawks' ongoing effort to make sure that one of their top prospects doesn't sign elsewhere. There's only so much they can do to make their contract offer more appealing than other teams, so it'll have to be everything else that convinces him to sign. A small move Tuesday was the latest example of that.

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1102292 Chicago Blackhawks

Watch Blackhawks grant 12-year-old boy's wish to be a member of the team

Madeline Kenney

All 12-year-old Mason Berg wanted was to be part of the Blackhawks, and on Tuesday, his wish came true.

Hawks alum Brian Campbell surprised Berg at school in Midlothian, Illinois, Friday with a Patrick Sharp sweater and an invite to participate in morning skate and watch the Hawks' game against the Avalanche Tuesday.

Berg sat behind the net for practice with his parents and pointed at players when they skated by the glass. It wasn't until the end when the fun for Berg really began.

Berg slid himself out of the stadium chair and lifted himself into his wheelchair as Nick Schmaltz and Patrick Kane met him near the Zamboni door. Schmaltz and Kane then skated him off to center ice to meet with the rest of the team.

Although Berg's was the only person on the ice with wheels, he said he felt like he was one with the team.

Berg, who calls himself a "really big" Blackhawks fan, participated in various drills with the Hawks, scored a few goals on Anton Forsberg, and even dropped the mitts for a good ole fashion hockey fight with captain Jonathan Toews.

Mason got a few past Forsberg. Coach Q might want to think about reassigning the lines ☺ #Blackhawks pic.twitter.com/kJQM0Kkzj

— Madeline Kenney (@madkenney) March 6, 2018

He also got to meet his two favorite players, Kane and Brandon Saad.

"[They're my favorite players] because Saad has the style of the hair," Berg said, "and Kane has the fast dangling stuff."

Although Berg lives with muscular dystrophy, a genetic disease that causes progressive weakness and loss of muscle mass, he's like any other mischievous and energetic boys his age.

Toews found that out firsthand when he fell victim to one of Berg's pranks.

Berg loosened up Toews' water bottle lid and then encouraged him to drink out of the bottle.

"He lifted it up and the cap hit him and all the water dumped on him," Berg laughed.

Berg thought the Hawks were helping him by letting him live out his dream, but in reality, Berg did far more for the Hawks, according to the team. He gave the Hawks (28-30-8) a sense of perspective.

"There's hockey and then there are things like that," coach Joel Quenneville said about the energy Berg brought onto the ice.

"Kids like him will always put a smile on your face," Toews said. "It just doesn't seem like anything can make them unhappy or throw them off their day. A kid like him puts it in perspective for us and balance the dream for a while."

Berg's beaming smile was still prevalent even far after morning skate ended. When asked if he thought he'd ever stop smiling, Berg responded, "No."

Hey Mason, how do those gloves smell? ☺ #Blackhawks pic.twitter.com/pR79aTDixf

— Madeline Kenney (@madkenney) March 6, 2018

Berg's mother, Patty Bueg, was nearly in tears after she watched her son field questions from a media scrum just like Toews, Kane and Quenneville previously did.

"Today was very special," Patty said. "It's something he'll never ever forget and neither will I."

"I'm going to have a happy little kid for quite awhile."

Chicago Sun Times LOADED: 03.07.2018



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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1102293 Chicago Blackhawks

Blackhawks sign Erik Gustafsson to two-year contract extension

Mark Lazerus

Erik Gustafsson had his doubts that this day would ever come, that he'd find himself not only back in the NHL, but signing a two-year, one-way contract extension with the Blackhawks. After a season-and-a-half in Rockford, Gustafsson appeared to be an afterthought.

Instead, he's a part of the Hawks' present and future.

"Two more years," he said with a smile Tuesday morning. "I'm glad I signed here, and I love this city, I love this team, and I love the fans over here. I'm blessed. It's fun."

NHL Network reported that the deal carried a \$1.2-million cap hit. That's a big raise from his current two-way, \$650,000 deal, but it carries little risk for the Hawks, who can bury \$1.025 million of the cap hit in the minors, if need be.

Gustafsson played 41 games with the Hawks during the 2015-16 season, but then was passed up on the organizational depth chart by young players such as Gustav Forsling and Jordan Oesterle, and veterans such as Brian Campbell and Cody Franson. But Gustafsson bided his time in Rockford and worked on his game. He had five goals and 25 assists in 68 games with the IceHogs last season, and three goals and 14 assists in 25 games this season before being called up in January.

He has a goal and four assists in 19 games with the Hawks this season. And while he still needs work in his own zone — he had a nightmarish game in San Jose last Thursday — the Hawks remain excited about his offensive potential. So does Gustafsson.

"[I need] to play my own game a little bit more," he said. "I've been trying to pass the puck too much. I think I can shoot it a little bit more and create some more offense in the offensive zone. Then try to play a simple game in my own zone, and join the rush as much as I can."

The blue line is the Hawks' primary area of concern, and they hope Gustafsson — who turns 26 next week — can be a big part of the long-term solution.

"He's had some good stretches here," Joel Quenneville said. "Defensively, he's fine. Offensively he adds a nice ingredient to our team. ... Defensively, there's room [for improvement] there. As a team, our defense needs to be better than we've been over the recent stretch. As a group, we can all improve."

The Hawks also signed Tyler Sikura — brother of top prospect Dylan Sikura — to a one-year deal.

NOTE: Corey Crawford's situation is "status quo," according to Quenneville, and no news is bad news. Quenneville had said last Wednesday that he hoped Crawford, who's been out since Christmas with a head injury, could get back on the ice after the Hawks returned from their California trip. But he said Tuesday that it's "doubtful" the goalie will be on the ice in the next few days.

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1102294 Chicago Blackhawks

Toews wins it in OT for Chicago Blackhawks

John Dietz

Five seconds after winning the opening faceoff of overtime, Jonathan Toews wheeled around at center ice and knew he had one thing to do: Get on his horse.

And that's exactly what happened as the Chicago Blackhawks' captain surged ahead of Colorado's Nathan MacKinnon and proceeded to fire home a perfect cross-ice pass from Patrick Kane to give the Hawks a 2-1 victory Tuesday night at the United Center.

The winning goal -- Toews' 18th of the season -- came just nine seconds into OT as the Hawks (29-30-8) won for just the fifth time in 17 games.

"It's fun in front of our fans to give them something to cheer about," Toews said. "We still get great support -- people filling the building and coming out even though we haven't been great."

J-F Berube (2-1-0) was stellar in net, turning away 33 shots, including a game-saver that came on a shot from Gabriel Landeskog with just 49 seconds remaining. Seventeen of Berube's saves came in the second period.

"He played great tonight," Toews said. "He kept us in that game, especially in the second when we seemed to give up a ton of chances and a ton of shots."

The Hawks took a 1-0 lead at 5:08 of the first period when Erik Gustafsson's pass attempt deflected off Colorado's Patrik Nemeth and scooted past Semyon Varlamov.

The Avs knotted the score at 1-1 on a MacKinnon power-play goal with 3:42 left in the second. The Hawks appeared to retake the lead on a Brandon Saad goal 2:25 later, but it was ruled Saad kicked the puck into the net.

The Avs (35-24-7) picked up an important point as they continue to battle for a wild-card spot.

Smiles all around:

Jonathan Toews is used to having a practical joke or two played on him by Brent Seabrook or other Blackhawks teammates.

As for 12-year-old kids? Not so much.

But that's exactly what happened to the Hawks' captain during morning skate when Mason Berg -- who joined the team on the ice as part of the Make-A-Wish foundation -- unscrewed the top to Toews' water bottle.

"Got a nice face wash there," Toews said, laughing. "Apparently, that was his idea -- it wasn't Seabs or any of the other guys telling him to do that. It was fun having him."

During his time on the ice, Mason, who has muscular dystrophy, was able to pass the puck with Toews, Patrick Kane and Erik Gustafsson. He also scored a few goals against Anton Forsberg and got Toews to drop the gloves as they engaged in a playful "fight."

"Today was very special because he's always like, 'Mom, can we go to the game? Mom, can I meet the guys?' " said Patty Callahan. "It's something he will never, ever forget, and neither will I. ..."

"I'm going to have a happy little kid on my hands for quite a while."

Former Hawks defenseman Brian Campbell surprised Mason on Friday at his school in Midlothian to invite him to the "Blackhawk-for-a-Day" experience.

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1102295 Chicago Blackhawks



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Deeper look at the 2 defensemen Blackhawks signed to new deals

John Dietz

Coming into this season, we all figured the Blackhawks' defense had the potential to be one giant liability.

Sixty-seven games later, we can confirm beyond a shadow of a doubt that the unit remains under construction and must take a quantum leap forward if the Hawks are to compete for a playoff spot in 2018-19.

One player Stan Bowman obviously believes in is Erik Gustafsson because the Hawks' GM signed the soon-to-be 26-year-old to a two-year extension Tuesday. It carries a \$1.2 million cap hit, according to NHL Network's Mike Kelly.

"I love this city, I love this team and I love the fans over here," said Gustafsson, who would have been a restricted free agent on July 1. "I'm blessed."

The Hawks also signed forward Tyler Sikura to a one-year deal Tuesday. Tyler, the older brother of Dylan Sikura, has been a pleasant surprise for the AHL's Rockford IceHogs and currently leads the team with 16 goals.

Here's the lowdown on each player:

Gustafsson:

A native of Sweden, the left-shot D-man possesses all kinds of offensive skills and regularly finds Patrick Kane with pinpoint passes when the two are on the ice together.

The rubs on Gustafsson have always been an inability to play a consistent game in his own end and his unnerving habit of taking too many chances at the wrong time. Fixing these traits was considered Job No. 1 for first-year Rockford coach Jeremy Colliton.

"He was on me the first time," Gustafsson told me in January. "'We know you're good. We know you can do (special things) offensively, but you don't have to do it all the time.'

"He got me to think to make the easy play in my own zone and neutral zone."

Ahh, but old habits die hard.

There are still times -- and last week's 7-2 loss at San Jose is a perfect example -- where Gustafsson just can't help himself. Poor decisions against the Sharks led to odd-man rushes, and gave goalie J-F Berube almost no chance to stop wave after wave of ultra-talented forwards

"A couple games I've been that guy that tried to risk it," Gustafsson said. "I try doing the risky play that I don't have to if I move my feet. I try to tell myself every night I've got to move my feet. If I move my feet, I open up another lane."

Colliton raved about Gustafsson's offensive potential earlier this season, and coach Joel Quenneville echoed those thoughts Tuesday. The Hawks certainly need a puck-moving D-man who is a threat to score because their production on the back end has been downright putrid all season.

With another 15 games under his belt and a solid off-season, Gustafsson has an excellent chance to be a big contributor in 2018-19.

Tyler Sikura:

For those of you who don't follow the intricate details of the Hawks, you may not know that they are extremely -- and I mean extremely -- high on Dylan Sikura. They drafted Dylan in the sixth round in 2014, and he has excelled in his four years at Northeastern University. Bowman is hoping to sign him as soon as Northeastern's season is over.

As for older brother Tyler, he's a two-way forward who played four years at Dartmouth, and slowly worked his way up from the ECHL to the AHL.

"It's an absolute dream come true," Sikura said after Rockford practiced at the MB Ice Arena. "Did it the hard way. I've played in some of the lower leagues and professional ranks and kind of worked my way into a situation that seemed to be perfect for me. ...

"To have a chance to be a phone call away from my ultimate dream is an unbelievable feeling."

Rockford coach Jeremy Colliton said Tyler started at the bottom and wasn't even a lock to make the team out of camp. All he's done since is work his way up the lineup in impressive fashion.

"He's been great and earned everything he's gotten," Colliton said.

After Tyler signed, he called his parents, then FaceTimed with Dylan, his sister and his girlfriend.

Tyler hasn't played on the same team with Dylan since they were on the junior varsity team in high school. As for what it would be like to be Blackhawks together?

"It would be incredible," Tyler said. "It's something that we obviously would love to do. ... It would be really nice to lace em up with him."

Daily Herald Times LOADED: 03.07.2018

1102296 Chicago Blackhawks

Blackhawks continue to wear jersey with pride

By Jackie Murray March 06, 2018 6:10 PM

To put it frankly, the Blackhawks aren't used to losing.

The team is entering their 67th game Tuesday night with 30 losses, a number the franchise has not seen since the 2007-08 season when it recorded 34 losses.

Despite the woes of this season, players are still bringing their best every night.

"We want to represent this organization with pride," said centerman Nick Schmaltz, the team's second-highest point leader. "We don't want to embarrass them."

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 03.07.2018

1102297 Chicago Blackhawks

Blackhawks snag Erik Gustafsson for two more years

By Jackie Murray March 06, 2018 5:10 PM

The Blackhawks have snagged defenseman Erik Gustafsson for two more seasons on a contract extension.

The Sweden native has notched five points in 19 games with the Hawks this year including a goal made during his season debut Jan. 20 against the New York Islanders.

Gustafsson — who has spent the last few seasons bouncing back between the Blackhawks and the Rockford IceHogs — is going to focus on "playing his own game more."



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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In the time Gustafsson spent with the IceHogs this season, he recorded 17 points and got the nod for the 2018 American Hockey League All-Star Classic.

While at Rockford, he was also named the team's Defenseman of the Year for their 2016-17 season when he made 25 assists.

The 25-year-old originally signed with Chicago on April 30, 2015, and made his NHL debut during the 2015-16 season where he picked up 14 assists in 41 regular-season games.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 03.07.2018

1102364 New York Rangers

Rangers fall 3-0 to Winnipeg as hopes of playoff push continue to fade

BY JUSTIN TASCH

One week filled with three road wins had the word playoffs being used in the Rangers' locker room in a post-deadline world where those left standing have felt a chip on their shoulder, playing looser and without pressure.

Gravity took hold Tuesday with a step up in competition, the Blueshirts coming back down to Earth in a 3-0 home loss to Winnipeg in which Patrik Laine had a hat trick while the Rangers couldn't convert on numerous chances.

Results like these are what the Rangers (30-31-6) were piling up before the deadline and likely will be more the norm down the stretch, as much as they continue to battle. They had every reason to enjoy their three-game sweep through Western Canada after which they found themselves only three points out of a playoff spot, but now they're seven points behind Columbus for the final wild-card spot, and a Cinderella run with this torn-apart roster needing to jump four teams in the standings is unlikely.

Especially if they can't bury the kind of chances they had Tuesday, two by Mats Zuccarello standing out in particular. He was denied at 14:22 of the first when he had an open net on a wraparound but was stuffed at the goal line by defenseman Ben Chiarot's stick before the puck ricocheted off the right post and back out. Then Zuccarello was open at the doorstep at 16:50 of the second after the puck hit off a leg and went to Jimmy Vesey, who set Zuccarello up across, but Steve Mason somehow made a sprawling stick save and pulled the puck underneath himself for a stoppage.

"If I score on those we have a game," Zuccarello said, "but I don't."

But Laine did, twice taking advantage of open ice by scoring on precise shots before finishing off the hat trick with an empty-netter. Laine, who now has 38 goals this season, sniped his first from the left dot with 55.7 seconds remaining in the first period before doubling the Jets' lead at 11:01 of the second. The Rangers, meanwhile, couldn't hit the net on some glorious chances in the slot and off the rush.

"When you leave one of the best shooters with no pressure, he's going to pick you apart a little bit. I maybe have to challenge him a little bit more," said Henrik Lundqvist, who made 31 saves.

So the Rangers were left lamenting those two open chances for Laine and their inability to capitalize on their own. It's been a season full of laments and what-ifs, which is why it's all about the future now, and why a run of seven consecutive postseason appearances likely will be snapped.

FLU FIGHTER

Mika Zibanejad missed Tuesday's game with the flu; David Desharnais took his spot between Chris Kreider and Pavel Buchnevich while Peter

Holland reentered to center the fourth line. ... Kevin Shattenkirk (meniscus surgery) participated in Tuesday's morning skate and could return within the next two weeks. He was set to travel to Tampa but plans may change.

New York Daily News LOADED: 03.07.2018

1102365 New York Rangers

USA women's hockey team celebration tour comes to Madison Square Garden

BY JUSTIN TASCH

The celebration continued Tuesday for the gold-medal-winning USA women's hockey team, which had split representation in Newark for Devils-Canadiens and at the Garden for Rangers-Jets, where 12 members of the squad received a standing ovation during a first-period stoppage.

After capturing gold and hearts at the Pyeongchang Games, the team has been recognized during several stops throughout the country - which included a Monday in New York when they went to the top of the Empire State Building and appeared on "The Tonight Show" after stops in Los Angeles, Tampa and the Stadium Series game at Navy in Annapolis.

"It's been incredible everywhere we go, especially if we have our USA stuff on. Everyone's always like, 'Oh my gosh, are you guys the women's hockey team?'" said forward Dani Cameranesi, who had two goals and an assist in the semifinals against Finland. "Everyone's so proud. Coming back home and seeing the impact that we've had and how our sport really reached out to everyone and brought USA together has been really incredible."

The team has been rightfully celebrated after snapping Canada's streak of four consecutive gold medals at the Olympics, and they want their success to create more opportunities for young girls to play hockey and be seen as equals - a fight in the spotlight last year when the team secured greater pay in a new contract after threatening to sit out the World Championship in Michigan.

"A lot of our teammates had to grow up playing with the boys teams, and there weren't always girls teams where they played," forward Hannah Brandt said. "So I think that's definitely one challenge. As the game hopefully continues to grow, that's one thing that'd be huge is if we can have girls teams all over so that doesn't have to happen. That's just one thing I'm hopeful comes out of all of this."

Everywhere they've gone the women's hockey team has heard stories about people watching them win gold and being inspired by it.

"That was one of our main goals is to hopefully bring that alive and bring awareness to women's hockey, which I think we have," Cameranesi said. "Coming back here, the amount of support we've had has been so amazing to see. Really to just try to get young girls people to look up to and realize that they can follow their dreams and be inspired to do whatever they want to do."

New York Daily News LOADED: 03.07.2018

1102366 New York Rangers

Rangers could get top defenseman back soon



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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By Brett Cyrgalis March 7, 2018 | 3:51am

It was a sight for sore eyes, Kevin Shattenkirk skating on the Garden ice with his teammates on Tuesday morning for the first time since he underwent surgery Jan. 22 to repair the torn meniscus in his left knee.

Despite Rangers management declaring a rebuild and going into the farther reaches of the playoff fringe by way of a 3-0 loss to the Jets at the Garden on Tuesday night, there was still a plan in place for Shattenkirk to return to action this season.

The 29-year-old defenseman was getting ready to go on this upcoming two-game trip through Florida, but he is not expected to play in either game, The Post has learned. The Rangers play the Lightning in Tampa on Thursday night and then the Panthers in Sunrise, Fla., on Saturday.

Coach Alain Vigneault had been unsure of Shattenkirk's availability on Tuesday night, having cancelled Wednesday's scheduled practice in Westchester and moved up the departure time of the team flight in hopes of beating the snowstorm.

But the good news for the Blueshirts is that Shattenkirk is getting closer to returning from the injury he originally suffered in training camp, and one he played through during his underwhelming start to his Broadway tenure. Now it's just on him and trainer Jim Ramsay to decide exactly when is the right time.

"I think him and Rammer have sort of narrowed down a plan for him to play," Vigneault said. "Obviously we're looking at the next couple weeks here. Won't be a lot of practice time, but he is coming along real well, he's been skating for a long time, his rehab is right where he is supposed to be."

Henrik Lundqvist got his first start since he became the first goaltender in history to make 50-plus saves in consecutive wins to open up the previous western Canada trip. But he was fooled by superlative Jets 19-year-old Patrik Laine, who beat him twice and finished off his hat trick into the empty net.

"There are a few players in the league that have a certain shot where they make you believe one thing and do something different," Lundqvist said of Laine, who now has 38 goals on the season. "When you leave one of the best shooters with no pressure, he's going to pick you apart a little bit."

First-line center Mika Zibanejad missed the game with the flu. David Desharnais took his spot between Chris Kreider and Pavel Buchnevich, just five days after Desharnais had been a healthy scratch for a 3-1 win in Calgary.

Vigneault then sat Buchnevich for a stretch of 9:43 early in the third period, down 2-0, saying he wasn't hurt and only that "he just missed a couple shifts."

Peter Holland drew back into the lineup after being a healthy scratch in the final game of the team's three-game sweep of western Canada, a 3-2 victory in Edmonton on Saturday.

New York Post LOADED: 03.07.2018

1102367 New York Rangers

Despite blanking, Rangers getting lift from new acquisition

By Brett Cyrgalis March 6, 2018 | 11:25PM

This was always going to be a big season for Vladislav Namestnikov, monetarily speaking. But now that he is with the Rangers, it might be even more so.

The 25-year-old winger who came over from the Lightning in the trade that sent Ryan McDonagh and J.T. Miller to Tampa Bay is set to be a restricted free agent with arbitration rights when this season ends. He put up 20 goals and 44 points in 62 games with the Lightning, mostly on a line with two superlative players in Steven Stamkos and Nikita Kucherov. Those career-best numbers were already raising his price, likely making him a more attractive trade chip for Lightning general manager Steve Yzerman.

Yet he, along with the rest of these Rangers (30-31-6), couldn't beat the Jets (40-17-9) and goalie Steve Mason, falling victim to a hat trick from superlative 19-year-old Patrik Laine during a 3-0 loss on Tuesday night at the Garden.

"Playing on a great line here, too," Namestnikov told The Post before he centered Mats Zuccarello and Jimmy Vesey for the fourth straight game. "I played wing there, playing center, so it's a little bit different, a little more responsibility and stuff like that. But Zucc and Vesey are good players and it's going good."

Namestnikov will be coming off a two-year, \$3.875 million deal that carried an annual salary-cap hit of \$1.938 million. Already he is likely to garner a raise to between \$3 million-\$4 million per, and Rangers general manager Jeff Gorton has to decide if he is part of their rebuilding plan — either short-term or long-term. If he is unsure on a long-term deal, then another two-year bridge deal could be had. To even further mitigate risk, Gorton could just let it go to arbitration and have a neutral party assign a price on a one-year deal (although these things almost always get settled in the days or hours before the actual hearing).

One of the many things that Namestnikov has going for him is the fact he can play both center and wing, with the Rangers desperate for depth down the middle and always in need of skilled, versatile forwards. Thus far, coach Alain Vigneault has liked what he has seen from the affable Russian, who spent most of his childhood in Utah before returning to play in the KHL when he was 16, then coming back to play in the OHL when he was 18.

"Smart player, highly skilled. There's no doubt that he sees the game well with the puck," Vigneault said. "He knows where to go, he's got good breakaway speed. I know he's played wing and he's played center, but he looks comfortable in the middle. And real nice kid, just wants to play, and real easy to coach."

Namestnikov now joins a group of restricted free agents that Gorton has to make decisions on this summer. That includes, most notably, forwards Vesey, Kevin Hayes, and Ryan Spooner, as well as defenseman Brady Skjei. And despite a handful of chances against the Jets, none of them could convert.

"If we can play the right way, we get our chances," Skjei said. "Just couldn't find a way to put the puck in the net."

New York Post LOADED: 03.07.2018

1102368 New York Rangers

It's audition time for Pavel Buchnevich

By Larry Brooks March 6, 2018 | 8:43PM

The twilight zone the Rangers operated in between management's Feb. 8 rebuild decree and the Feb. 26 trade deadline has given way to another



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dimension, one in which projections for the future are at least partially on hold pending resolution of their coaching issue.

For impressions created over the final month of the season may be washed away like footprints on the beach at low tide if, as seems likely given general manager Jeff Gorton's refusal on at least two occasions to address the status of five-year incumbent Alain Vigneault, a change is made behind the bench.

A new coach brings with him a new system and, invariably, his own opinions on personnel and how to employ it.

Still, though, the Rangers have a passel of players including Kevin Hayes, Brady Skjei, Vladislav Namestnikov, Ryan Spooner and Jimmy Vesey coming up on restricted free-agent status whose final kicks will surely influence their respective salary arbitration cases and management's response to them.

Plus, the extended auditions for defensemen Neal Pionk, John Gilmour and Tony DeAngelo should inform Gorton as he and the hockey department mull decisions regarding the blue line whose future management sought to strengthen via deadline acquisitions of prospects Libor Hajek, Ryan Lindgren and Yegor Rykov.

But, perhaps critically, this final stretch should also provide a platform for Pavel Buchnevich to showcase his talents and give the Rangers a better feel for what they have in the sophomore right winger, who will turn 23 next month. After all, ice time is open following the departures of Rick Nash and J.T. Miller.

Then again, maybe not, for this night on which the Blueshirts were blanked 3-0 by the Jets at the Garden, Buchnevich was benched for all but one brief shift during the first half of the third period before getting three turns worth 2:32 over the final 9:33.

"He just missed a couple of shifts, that's all," Vigneault said when asked about his absence before confirming the winger was not hurt.

So the dance goes on with Buchnevich and Vigneault.

Players have to earn their ice time, and it has always been thus, whether in this new-age NHL, the trap-era NHL or the Original Six NHL.

That most certainly applies to Buchnevich. It would even if he played for a coach who might be more forgiving of youthful indiscretions. There undeniably have been games in which Buchnevich has been less than engaged.

But 11th on the team among forwards in five-on-five ice time, as Buchnevich is clocking in at 11:23 per, seems out of whack and a misuse of assets, especially on a 2017-18 Rangers team searching all year for production and a go-to unit.

For two years, Chris Kreider on the left, Mika Zibanejad in the middle and Buchnevich on the right has seemed like a top line — or second line — in the making. Zibanejad — who missed this one with flu-like symptoms — suffered a concussion that sidelined him for nine games in early December, while Kreider missed 24 straight following the discovery of his blood clot in late December. Hence, the three were all healthy in only 39 of the first 65 matches. But they were also united for only 26 games despite dramatically elevated possession numbers as measured against the rest of the squad.

Vigneault and the Rangers use their own analytical measures. Corsi is not infallible as official game sheets invariably contain errors. But still, the Kreider-Zibanejad-Buchnevich unit recorded a 56.2 percent Corsi rating while the rest of the team went 44.65 when the three forwards were all in the lineup.

Again. Shot attempts are not necessarily determinative. But, interestingly enough, these are guys who don't shoot — who won't shoot — until they see the whites of opposing goaltenders' eyes, which is to say that they're not piling up their totals by blasting away from the perimeter. And the line's overall plus-minus was even, eight goals for and eight goals against.

No doubt, a combined eight goals scored in 249:10 doesn't exactly flatter the line. But that's a function of the trio's unaccountably low 5.1 percent shooting percentage that must, to some extent, be owed to bad luck.

The line hummed on the western Canadian tour, producing three goals in three games while generating a 60.4 percent Corsi in its five games since Kreider's return while the remainder of the team was just under 40 percent.

There is exactly one month to go this season. Time enough for Buchnevich to give everyone an idea of who he is and what he can do. Or not.

New York Post LOADED: 03.07.2018

1102369 New York Rangers

Rangers' Shattenkirk closer to return from knee injury

The defenseman might make the upcoming trip, but is unlikely to play.

By Colin Stephenson

Defenseman Kevin Shattenkirk, who has missed 21 games following a repair to his torn meniscus in his left knee, took part in the Rangers' morning skate Tuesday for the first time since his Jan. 22 surgery, and coach Alain Vigneault said his return to the lineup is close.

"He's been skating for a while," Vigneault said. "He's coming along. I think him and 'Rammer' (Rangers athletic trainer Jim Ramsay) have sort of narrowed down a plan for him to play. We're looking at the next couple weeks."

Shattenkirk, 29, signed a four-year, \$26.6 million free agent contract with the Rangers last summer. He has five goals and 18 assists in 46 games. His last game was Jan. 18, a 4-3 win over Buffalo that lifted the Rangers' record to 24-17-5. The team went 6-13-1 in the first 20 games it played since he went out of the lineup.

Vigneault said he wasn't certain whether Shattenkirk would be making the trip to Tampa and Florida for the next two games. Originally, the team was supposed to practice Wednesday and fly afterward to Tampa, and Shattenkirk was supposed to be on the flight. But because of the impending snowstorm, the team decided to cancel practice and fly to Tampa earlier in the day than originally planned. As of Tuesday morning, Vigneault said he didn't know whether that would affect Shattenkirk's status as far as making the trip.

Zibanejad out with illness

Center Mika Zibanejad, who had a goal and an assist in Saturday's 3-2 Rangers victory over the Edmonton Oilers, missed the morning skate and will not play in the Rangers' game against Winnipeg Tuesday because he has flu-like symptoms, the team said. The Rangers did not recall a forward from AHL Hartford, so Peter Holland will step into the lineup in place of Zibanejad, who has 19 goals and 15 assists in 57 games this season. Rangers coach Alain Vigneault said David Desharnais will elevate from the fourth line into Zibanejad's spot, in between Chris Kreider and Pavel Buchnevich.

Two USA women at game

As they wrap up their victory tour following their gold medal performance in the Olympics, the USA women's hockey team split up, with some members going to the Devils game in Newark and two, Hannah Brandt and Dani Cameranesi, coming to the Ranger game.

"It's been incredible everywhere we go — especially if we have our USA stuff on," Cameranesi said. "Everyone's so proud, and just coming back



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to home soil and seeing the impact that we've had and how our sport really reached out to everyone and kind of brought the USA together is really, really incredible."

Brandt said she never tires of hearing the same questions everywhere she goes.

"I think it's so cool to be able to share this with everyone, and just to hear everyone's stories about how they watched the game, or how they were inspired by our game, that's so cool to us," Brandt said. "And that gives us energy to keep going around and talking to everyone about it."

Newsday LOADED: LOADED: 03.07.2018

1102370 New York Rangers

Mika Zibanejad out vs. Winnipeg with flu-like symptoms

By Colin Stephenson

Center Mika Zibanejad, who had a goal and an assist in Saturday's 3-2 Rangers victory over the Edmonton Oilers, missed the morning skate and will not play against Winnipeg on Tuesday because of flu-like symptoms, the team said.

The Rangers did not recall a forward from AHL Hartford, so Peter Holland will step into the lineup in place of Zibanejad, who has 19 goals and 15 assists in 57 games this season. Rangers coach Alain Vigneault said David Desharnais will elevate from the fourth line into Zibanejad's spot, in between Chris Kreider and Pavel Buchnevich.

Shattenkirk's return imminent

Defenseman Kevin Shattenkirk, who has missed 20 games following surgery to repair a torn meniscus in his left knee, took part in the morning skate Tuesday, and Vigneault said his return to the lineup is close.

"He's been skating for a while," Vigneault said of Shattenkirk, who had surgery Jan. 22. "He's coming along. I think him and 'Rammer' (Rangers athletic trainer Jim Ramsay) have sort of narrowed down here, a plan for him to play. We're looking at the next couple weeks, here."

Shattenkirk, 29, signed a four-year, \$26.6 million contract with the Rangers last summer. He has 5 goals and 18 assists in 46 games. His last game was Jan. 18, a 4-3 win over Buffalo that lifted the Rangers' record to 24-17-5. The team has gone 6-13-1 since.

Vigneault said he wasn't certain whether Shattenkirk would be making the trip to Tampa and Florida for the next two games. He originally had been slated to go with the team, but because of the impending snowstorm, the team had decided to fly to Tampa earlier in the day than originally planned, and the coach didn't know whether that would affect Shattenkirk's status as far as making the trip.

Newsday LOADED: LOADED: 03.07.2018

1102371 New York Rangers

Rangers' three-game win streak ends in shutout loss to Jets

By Colin Stephenson

The exhilarating, post-trade deadline sweep of their three-game Western Canada trip had the Rangers feeling good about themselves for the first time in several weeks. But Tuesday's matchup with the Winnipeg Jets at the Garden represented a major step up in class over the likes of Vancouver, Calgary and Edmonton, and things didn't end as well this time.

Patrik Laine, the 19-year-old second-year forward who began the night tied for fourth among the league's top goal-scorers, recorded his first hat trick of the season for Winnipeg to lead the Jets to their 40th victory, 3-0 over the Rangers, ending the Blueshirts' modest three-game win streak.

Jets goaltender Steve Mason, playing for the first time since suffering his second concussion of the season Jan. 12, made 31 saves to earn his first win since Jan. 9.

"That's a real good team we played tonight and they were able to get their best shooter to get a couple good looks and they were able to shut it down," Rangers coach Alain Vigneault said.

"They're very good," defenseman Brady Skjei said of the Jets. "Obviously, at the front, they've got a ton of skill and if you get those top guys some time and space they make you pay."

The Rangers now head off to Tampa for a meeting with the Lightning Thursday and a reunion with their former teammates, J.T. Miller, Anton Stralman, Dan Girardi and former captains Ryan Callahan and Ryan McDonagh. The Lightning has the league's best record, and beat intrastate rival Florida on Tuesday.

The Jets sit second in the Central Division and third overall in the Western Conference. And they opened the scoring when Laine fired a long wrist shot over Henrik Lundqvist's shoulder with 55.7 seconds left in the first period for his 36th goal of the season. Laine made it 2-0 at 11:01 of the second when he cut from the left wing to the middle and whipped another wrist past Lundqvist for goal No. 37, a career-high. His third goal came in the final minute of the game into an empty net.

But as impressed as they were with Laine and the Jets, the Rangers insisted the game would have been different if only they had converted on some of the opportunities they had early.

Struggling forward Mats Zuccarello, whose assist in the 3-2 win over Edmonton Saturday night was his first point in six games, had two golden chances to score but came up empty. Late in the first period, with the game scoreless at the time, he skated in on Mason and went around the net, then attempted a backhand wraparound that slid across the goal line and clanked off the far post and out.

Then, late in the second period, with the Rangers down 2-0, Zuccarello found himself standing unchecked at the back post when Jimmy Vesey's slick, cross-crease pass came sliding across to him with Mason out at the top of the crease and the net completely empty behind him. But Zuccarello's sweeping shot went right into the back of Mason, instead of into the back of the net.

"I know I'm not a good goal-scorer, but those should go in," Zuccarello said. "That's just how it goes right now."

Newsday LOADED: LOADED: 03.07.2018

1102250 Boston Bruins

Bruins can afford to let Charlie McAvoy heal

By Fluto Shinzawa

In four weeks, the Bruins will be wrapping up their regular season. Assuming they continue their current pace of play, the results of the four final games (April 3-8) will have little consequence on their postseason



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seeding (No. 2 or 3 in the Atlantic) or first-round opponent (Toronto). The Bruins could dress a roster stuffed with squirts and still be playing beyond Game No. 82.

They are hoping, however, that one baby-faced player will be available for duty before the regular season concludes.

Charlie McAvoy is in excellent shape. He experienced the NHL playoffs last year without a single varsity tuneup. McAvoy's class can allow him to succeed where other less naturally gifted players would fall short. He will stay fit with alternate conditioning options: spins on the Airdyne bike (a contraption powered by arms instead of foot pedals) and sprints on the underwater treadmill.

But an MCL sprain is a serious injury for a whirling dervish like the mobile McAvoy. He would be best served with time to refire his engine and have his wheels properly aligned before the first round begins. Whether McAvoy will have that luxury — or even be ready for the start of the playoffs at all — is unknown.

"I'm hoping he's a fast healer, obviously," said coach Bruce Cassidy. "But if it ends up being longer, we're just going to have to make do. Assuming it's on that timeline, he'll have a little bit of time to get ready before playoffs. That's still a stretch away.

"I don't know how it will all play out, where we'll end up. We've got to get in first, obviously. We're obviously trending that way. We expect to. But that's Goal No. 1.

"We'll see when Charlie comes back, how important are the games vs. how important is it that he gets back into the lineup? How much time will he need?"

Neither Cassidy nor the medical staff can answer those questions now. The only thing the Bruins can do is wait and hope McAvoy's left knee springs back into shape promptly.

In a way, they are fortunate McAvoy suffered the injury when he did.

It would take a first-order tailspin for the Bruins to cede their 19-point lead over No. 4 Florida. Even then, they would still claim one of the two wild-card positions. Neither is a likely outcome. The Bruins could turn their sticks upside-down for the 18 remaining regular-season games and still not think about tee times for at least one round.

Their cushion allows Cassidy to evaluate different setups without McAvoy in his defensive six-pack. Brandon Carlo, a healthy scratch Feb. 25, is back with Zdeno Chara, his former security blanket. Having Chara a few steps away would give any player the strength of two men. A stretch with the strongman could give Carlo the confidence he needs in the playoffs.

For now, with Carlo moving up to the No. 1 pairing, Nick Holden will serve as Torey Krug's right-side partner. It puts two lefties on one tandem, which is not Cassidy's preference.

Cassidy likes his defensemen to play their strong sides, especially when they're transitioning from defense to offense. It puts them in position to take in-stride pucks on their forehand. In theory, it makes the journey from one end to the other seamless.

Holden, however, has a history of right-side consistency with the Rangers and Avalanche. Even if switching sides delays his transition, Holden is smart enough to compensate for the lag in other areas. Once he enters the offensive zone, he is good at threading pucks on net, even if they're not traveling as rapidly as those that spring off McAvoy's stick.

"There's always a silver lining in everything that happens," Cassidy said after Tuesday's 6-5 overtime win over Detroit. "Even the Charlie injury, we thought, 'Well, now Nick Holden, we're going to get a better look at and play a bit on the right side. [Matt Grzelcyk] gets back in. We'll get different flavors of what our lineup will look like. You've always got to look at it that way when you know you're getting the player back eventually."

Because Holden can play the right side, it allows Cassidy to keep Adam McQuaid as his spare defenseman. Even with a history of performance, a willingness to sacrifice his body, and a personality that makes him a fixture in the dressing room, McQuaid is where he is on the depth chart — on the outside looking in.

"He's the ultimate pro," Cassidy said. "So there's no outward emotion. But I know inside, it's tearing him apart not to be out there. We have every second night now, so Adam will get back in the lineup. I just can't tell you when. It's not tonight. It could be Thursday, could be Saturday, Sunday. We're going to need everybody. We know that. He's aware of that. But he wants to play. That's a tough part of the job."

Additional injuries will pile up. Defensemen will tire. Performance will climb and dip. Cassidy will ditch looks he doesn't like and try different combinations in search of results.

The six defensemen and the formations in which they skate against Detroit will not be the same when the playoffs begin. By then, the Bruins hope they have McAvoy up and running, ideally with a few regular-season tuneups for him to stretch his legs.

If that doesn't happen, McAvoy has proved to be the type of performer who does not need much time to clear his throat before commanding the microphone.

"He's been through that experience," said Cassidy. "Not like [Patrice Bergeron] has, by any means. But he has been through it once, so he knows the value of playing at that time of the year. So I think that does help him.

"It allows us a little comfort that if he doesn't get a lot of time before and he is ready just come playoff time, he has been through it. So he has that going for him."

Fluto Shinzawa

Boston Globe LOADED: 03.07.2018

1102251 Boston Bruins

Anton Khudobin to start against Red Wings

GLOBE STAFF By Kevin Paul Dupont

Trusty backup Anton Khudobin will be back on the job Tuesday night (7:08 puck drop) when the Bruins face the Red Wings at TD Garden.

Khudobin, stellar in Saturday's 2-1 OT win over the Canadiens, has won four of his last five starts and is 7-2-2 over the last three months. No. 1 stopper Tuukka Rask has been hindered of late by a minor injury, but he will be dressed as Doby's second.

Charlie McAvoy, who wrenched a knee in his opening shift Saturday, will be in the press box, likely yielding his right D spot to Adam McQuaid. McAvoy exited only 37 seconds into Saturday's matinee vs. the Habs, and will be out of the Bruins lineup for at least a month, sidelined by sprained knee.

Early Tuesday morning, Paul Postma's equipment bag was spotted outside the Bruins' dressing room. The veteran blue liner was reassigned to AHL Providence just after the trade deadline. He is likely being recalled to help fill the McAvoy void. The Bruins also have ex-BU standout Matt Grzelcyk nursing a minor injury.

Now 40-15-8 with 18 games to go in the regular season, the Bruins could play .500 the rest of the way and still finish with 106 points. They finished with 117 during their 54-19-9 under Claude Julien in 2013-14.



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Be the first to know the latest sports news as it happens.

Red Wings at a glance

- When, where: Tuesday, 7 p.m., at TD Garden.
- TV, radio: NBCSN, NESN, WBZ-FM (98.5).
- Goals: Anthony Mantha 21, Gustav Nyquist 16, Andreas Athanasiou 13, Frans Nielsen 13.
- Assists: Dylan Larkin 39, Henrik Zetterberg 34, Mike Green 23.
- Goaltending: Jimmy Howard (18-22-7, 2.79 GAA), Jared Coreau (0-0-0, 0.00 GAA).
- Head to head: This is the fourth and final meeting this season. The Bruins won the first three.
- Miscellany: Detroit ranks 28th in the NHL in scoring (2.55 goals per game) . . . The Red Wings have dropped six of their last eight . . . Including playoffs, Detroit has lost nine consecutive games at TD Garden, last defeating the Bruins there on April 18, 2014.

Kevin Paul Dupont

Boston Globe LOADED: 03.07.2018

1102252 Boston Bruins

Bruins will be without Charlie McAvoy at least a month

By Kevin Paul Dupont

Prized rookie defenseman Charlie McAvoy is expected to be out of the Bruins lineup for at least a month, sidelined by a sprained knee (MCL) suffered on his first shift of Saturday's 2-1 overtime win over Montreal at TD Garden.

McAvoy fell to the ice 28 seconds into his first shift, during a puck battle with Canadiens forward Brendan Gallagher.

After making his way to the bench under his own power, McAvoy took a kneel-down in the runway leading to the Boston dressing room and was not seen for the rest of the night.

"It could have been worse, obviously," said coach Bruce Cassidy Tuesday morning. "It didn't look that bad when it happened. We'll be without Charlie a little bit, but he'll be back. I can't tell you exactly when. Hopefully he heals quick and keeps his conditioning up."

Cassidy said he was still uncertain how McAvoy sustained the injury, but believes it happened moments prior to him engaging with Gallagher in the left faceoff circle.

McAvoy banged into the boards to his right, deep in the Boston end, his gait appearing to be slightly hampered as he pulled away from the boards. McAvoy fell seconds later, after Gallagher returned his stick slash with a chop at McAvoy's right skate boot that missed. McAvoy quickly popped back up and made his way to the bench.

"I think it happened when he went into the boards," said Cassidy. "And then he got tangled up with Gallagher and tripped. I don't think it happened when he fell, I think it happened before that. I guess one of those fluke injuries."

McAvoy, the former Boston University standout, attended Monday's practice at TD Garden but was wearing a knee brace and participated only in the team photo.

For the time being, second-year blue liner Brandon Carlo will move into McAvoy's right D spot on the top shutdown pairing with Zdeno Chara. Matt Grzelcyk was paired with Kevan Miller for Tuesday night's game against the Red Wings. Newcomer Nick Holden will flip to the right side and pair with Torey Krug on the second unit.

"Holden will probably toggle back and forth between left and right for a stretch," said Cassidy.

Holden was acquired from the Rangers just prior to the NHL's Feb. 26 trade deadline. Considered an insurance player two weeks ago, he is now targeted to log top-four minutes until McAvoy, averaging a beefy 22:06 of ice time per game this season, can resume play.

"I'm hoping he's a fast healer, obviously," said Cassidy. "But if it ends up being [longer], we're just going to have to make do, I guess that's the obvious answer."

"Assuming it's on that timeline, he'll have a little bit of time to get ready before playoffs."

Playing in last year's postseason, noted Cassidy, should play to McAvoy's advantage when he is ready to return.

"I think he's been through that experience, not like [Patrice Bergeron] has, by any means," said Cassidy, with Bergeron, his top center, out at least one more week with a hairline fracture in his right foot. "But he has been through it once, so he knows the value of playing at that time of the year. So I think that does help him."

Quicker on the draw

Despite being without Patrice Bergeron, among the league's premier faceoff specialists, the Bruins have more than held their own at the dot of late.

After three games of coping well in Bergeron's absence, the Bruins turned the faceoff dot from bright red to a black hole, losing two of every three drops. Particularly bad: David Krejci, who lost 14 of 18 (22 percent success), and Riley Nash, who lost 13 of 17 (24 percent).

Rookie Sean Kuraly, who showed improvement in the previous three games, slipped slightly, winning three of seven.

Krug rolling

Torey Krug, 2-2—4, has 47 points this season and is only 4 points from equaling his career high of 51 last season . . . David Backes and Jonathan Ericsson threw down for a big boys battle early in the second period. Ericsson scored with some early right hands to Backes's head, but he was also the first to hit the ice in a fight that fizzled out quickly . . . Tuukka Rask, who backed up Anton Khudobin for a second straight game, is expected to start Thursday vs. the Flyers . . . Newcomer Rick Nash, who had 23 shots on net in his first four games, didn't attempt his first shot on net until the third period. He finished with three attempts, only one of which made it to the net . . . Dylan Larkin, 0-1—1, fired a dozen times, eight of which hit Khudobin . . . Opponent speed is an issue for the Bruins. The Leafs were fast and edged the Bruins, 4-3, on Feb. 24. The Bruins were often in disarray vs. the speedy Wings. They'll need to devise a way to slow things down if they face a speedy attack in the playoffs. Right now, the Leafs are their likely Round 1 matchup.

Quick strikes

It was the first time since Feb. 14, 2003, that the Bruins scored twice in the opening minute. Ex-Red Wing Mike Knuble scored both of those, potting them in the opening 27 seconds vs. the Panthers . . . Veteran defenseman Adam McQuaid, 31, sat out his fourth straight game as a healthy scratch, even with a fellow righty, McAvoy, bumped to the sideline. "He's the ultimate pro," Cassidy said. "So there's no outward emotion. But I know inside, it's tearing him apart not to be out there. Adam will get back in the lineup. It could be Thursday, could be Saturday, Sunday. We're going to need everybody. We know that. He's aware of that. But he wants to play." . . . Cassidy also opted for newcomer Tommy Wingels ahead of Noel Acciari, who has been a fixture



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this season on the Trench Connection Line with Tim Schaller and Kuraly. "That's the tough part of this job," said Cassidy. "I had to tell Noel this morning, and he's a guy that will go through the wall. Those are the lousy parts of the job, but they understand what is at stake. They just have to be ready when their number is called."

Kevin Paul Dupont

Boston Globe LOADED: 03.07.2018

1102253 Boston Bruins

AJ Mleccko will lend her expertise to Tuesday's Bruins broadcast

By Chad Finn

AJ Mleccko is one of the cornerstones on which the United States women's hockey program was built. The Nantucket native and Harvard graduate, who now lives in Concord with her husband and four children, was a stalwart forward on the 1998 gold-medal team in the Nagano Olympics as well as the '02 team that took silver in Salt Lake City.

In her post-playing days, she is proving as adept at analyzing the sport as she was at playing it. And her bosses have noticed.

Mleccko, whose insight was on display as NBC's women's hockey analyst at the recent PyeongChang Olympics, served as the color analyst Tuesday night on NBC Sports Network's coverage of the Bruins-Red Wings matchup. She worked with play-by-play voice Chris Cuthbert and rinkside reporter Brian Boucher.

"It's nice to be able to talk hockey," she said. "Women's hockey, men's hockey, it's all the same."

Mleccko, who has periodically contributed to hockey coverage on NESN and the NHL Network, among other outlets, was approached with the opportunity by NBC Sports executive producer and president for production Sam Flood while they were in South Korea.

"He asked me what I was doing on March 6," she said, "and I said, 'I don't have plans.' He asked me if I wanted to do the Bruins game, that it was a home game and I wouldn't have to travel, and that it was about time for that opportunity. It was a very easy answer for me."

It's hard to imagine any fans who watched the US-Canada gold-medal match in particular could not come away impressed with Mleccko's knowledge and knack for quickly and clearly explaining the subtleties of what is happening on the ice.

"I've been a broadcaster now in more Olympics than I've played, but I think of myself as an athlete," said Mleccko, who has worked four Winter Olympics for NBC as well as the 2016 Rio Summer Games, where she called field hockey.

"So that's how I try to help our viewers, by telling them what I see from my perspective of having been out there, and bring home those subtle things to people who maybe would not notice otherwise."

Mleccko stopped by Bruins practice Monday to do some legwork.

"I follow the Bruins, but having been gone for a couple of weeks in South Korea and having had immersed myself in women's Olympic hockey, I've had to catch up," she said. "We came back right around the trade deadline, so it's about figuring out how Rick Nash has fit into the lineup and Brian Gionta coming back from South Korea himself and joining the Bruins, there are a few things to brush up on."

"So much of broadcasting is being prepared. Although my role is to analyze what's going on on the ice, all of that prep work makes me feel

more complete. Oftentimes I have all this prep work and use a small percentage of it. But it makes me feel better. If some fourth-liner has a great game, I'm ready."

Mleccko said she has been impressed by the Bruins' success so far this season, especially since it was somewhat unexpected.

"I was asking some of the players about that today. 'When did you know you had something special?' " she said. "They went through so many injuries at the beginning, but they'd win by a goal here or there, and it turned into a roll. They kept winning, and kept winning some more, into November, December, and January."

"But as a Boston person, we know that once you start doing well, expectations are heavy. It's Titletown after all, right?"

Chad Finn

Boston Globe LOADED: 03.07.2018

1102254 Boston Bruins

The Bruins really need Charlie McAvoy back for the playoffs

GLOBE STAFF By Fluto Shinzawa

On Monday, Charlie McAvoy felt sturdy enough to shuffle onto the TD Garden ice, albeit in flip-flops, to join his Bruins teammates for the annual team picture. The brace on his left knee, however, indicated that he would not be staying on the ice for practice.

Whatever damage the rookie defenseman suffered on his first and only shift of Saturday's 2-1 overtime win over Montreal was serious enough to make him unavailable for Tuesday's game against Detroit. How much more time McAvoy will miss is unknown. The Bruins have 19 regular-season games remaining.

"This is new. We missed him for a pocket earlier this year, and we survived it," coach Bruce Cassidy said of McAvoy's four-game absence (3-1-0) following an ablation in January to treat an abnormal heart rhythm. "We'll see what happens going forward with him and how extensive his injury will be. Until we know that, it's hard to get anxious."

The Bruins would not enjoy it, but they could live without McAvoy for some or all of the next 19 games. They are likely to finish in second or third place in the Atlantic Division. They would play Toronto in the first round. In the NHL, home ice for the playoffs is preferable but not required.

Things will get sour if McAvoy's absence hits the 20-game mark. The do-it-all defenseman is a critical cog in the Bruins' playoff machine, one that could already be compromised if Patrice Bergeron's broken right foot does not heal in a timely manner.

Be the first to know the latest sports news as it happens.

The Bruins will have to get by without injured cogs Charlie McAvoy (left) and Patrice Bergeron for a while.

The Bruins are averaging 3.27 goals per game, fourth-most in the league, partly because of how efficiently McAvoy transports the puck from bad areas in his own zone to good spots around opposing nets.

To this point, McAvoy has been among the league's sharpest rookies. He has 7 goals and 25 assists in 59 games. He is averaging 22:06 of ice time per game, most of any NHL rookie and second to Zdeno Chara on the Bruins. His 32 points are tops among all first-year defensemen.



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The Bruins do not have a right-shot defenseman who can replicate McAvoy's skills. Brandon Carlo will take McAvoy's spot on Chara's right side, but Carlo is having a down year after a very good rookie season.

Carlo is a stay-at-homer whose assets do not include most of those that make McAvoy special: the ability to skate the puck out of trouble, whip it onto a teammate's blade on the fly, or handle it in dangerous situations in the offensive zone.

Carlo also does not have McAvoy's bite. On March 1, after Patric Hornqvist broke open McAvoy's nose with a shoulder-to-face thump, the rookie went right back at the Pittsburgh widebody later in the game. Such meanness is not part of Carlo's personality.

Nick Holden is best equipped to deliver some of McAvoy's puck-moving and offensive-minded presence. The ex-Ranger has adjusted well to his new lineup in his two appearances. In his Bruins debut, Holden played 20:25 in an 8-4 pasting of the Penguins. As the point man on the No. 2 power-play unit, Holden flipped a puck to David Krejci through traffic to set up the center's second of three goals.

One game later, Holden played 21:52. He was McAvoy's full-time replacement on the second man-up group. Holden landed six shots on Montreal goalie Antti Niemi. He had plans to put one more puck on goal, but changed his mind when he identified Jake DeBrusk as a net-front threat on a third-period power play. The defenseman altered his windup and slapped a pass in DeBrusk's direction instead. DeBrusk redirected Holden's shot-pass past Niemi for the game-tying goal.

"I got the pass and I was going to hit it at the net," Holden said. "Their D came out. I don't know if I saw Jake's stick, but I saw his body around there. So I just put it in the middle. He did a great job of putting his stick where it needed to be and getting the puck."

The Bruins acquired Holden as left-side depth to complement Torey Krug and Matt Grzelcyk behind Chara. Holden, however, is comfortable playing the right side. His Broadway assignments included being Ryan McDonagh's right-side man on the Rangers' top pair. He played his off side Saturday next to Krug. It's where Holden's mobility, defensive awareness, and ability to sneak on net through traffic could provide some of the right-side characteristics they are now missing because of McAvoy's injury.

But like most coaches, Cassidy likes to build his defense with three left-right combinations. During Monday's practice, Holden skated mostly on Adam McQuaid's left side. Cassidy identified the transition from defense to offense where strong-side stick placement is most critical.

Part of the Bruins' success in possessing the puck and limiting opposing chances is how crisply they've turned the page from defense to offense. Even if Holden is comfortable leaving the defensive zone on his weak side, he's still going to be a hair slower than a right-shot defenseman because of how he receives pucks — either on his backhand or slightly behind him on his forehead.

"Neutral-zone transition, D-to-D plays where your sticks are the same," Cassidy said. "Normally you're passing to a partner with his stick out in front. If you're on your off side, then you're catching it on your backhand and you can't get going as quick up ice. So your target becomes behind you. There is a little getting used to that. Definitely the transition part in the neutral zone if you want to be quick."

"Now, we've tried to discourage a lot of D-to-D anyway. But you're still going to have it. It's inevitable you're going to have to make some of those. We just don't want it to be the first look."

The Bruins are in good shape to absorb McAvoy's absence. Just not one that stretches into April.

Boston Globe LOADED: 03.07.2018

1102255 Boston Bruins

Charlie McAvoy out at least four weeks with MCL sprain

Rich Thompson Tuesday, March 06, 2018

Bruins coach Bruce Cassidy is counting on Patrice Bergeron to guide rookie defenseman Charlie McAvoy through a prolonged rehabilitation.

McAvoy suffered a sprained left MCL and will be out at least for the next four weeks, when he will be re-evaluated.

He was injured 37 seconds into Saturday night's 2-1 overtime victory over the Montreal Canadiens. McAvoy appeared to trip awkwardly over the stick of Canadiens' right wing Brendan Gallagher in the Bruins zone.

"I could have been worse but it didn't look that bad when it happened," said Cassidy following the team's pregame skate at the Garden. "We will be without Charlie for a little bit and we have lots of depth."

"He will be back and hopefully he heals quickly and keeps his conditioning up."

Bergeron is out with a fractured right foot suffered on Feb. 25. He lost significant playing time earlier in his career because of concussions so he knows how to best utilize injury downtime.

"Clearly Bergy knows what to expect coming out of it and probably we'll get him to talk to Charlie about what to do between now and then so that you don't drop off," said Cassidy.

"It's natural when you don't play this time of year especially when the intensity goes up you are going to lose a little bit of your edge. He has to find a way to keep his conditioning and keep mentally sharp during this stretch of time."

A best case scenario would have McAvoy back on the ice at the start of the playoffs, which will start a few days after the April 8 regular season finale. McAvoy missed four games following a routine heart procedure earlier in the season.

"There are probably different timelines but there are some similarities with this time of year that they are missing," said Cassidy. "They are key players so we'll rely on Bergy a little bit to keep him focused as best he can."

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1102256 Boston Bruins

NHL roundup: Penguins continue OT dominance in win over Flames

Associated Press Tuesday, March 06, 2018

PITTSBURGH — Justin Schultz took a pass from Phil Kessel and buried it in the wide-open net 2:36 into overtime to give the Pittsburgh Penguins a 4-3 win over the Calgary Flames on Monday night.

Tristan Jarry made several key stops for the Penguins early in the extra period, and Schultz's fourth goal of the season helped Pittsburgh improve to 10-1 in overtime at home this season.

Evgeni Malkin scored his 37th goal for the Penguins and added an assist. Kris Letang and Chad Ruhwedel also scored for Pittsburgh. Jarry finished with 35 saves as the Penguins pulled within one point of Washington for first in the crowded Metropolitan Division.



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Mark Giordano, Mikael Backlund and Troy Brouwer scored for the Flames, who outplayed the two-time defending Stanley Cup champions for long stretches before dropping their fourth straight. Jon Gillies stopped 28 shots but had no chance when Kessel slid a cross-ice pass to a wide-open Schultz.

### SABRES 5, MAPLE LEAFS 3

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP) — Ryan O'Reilly and Zemgus Girgensons scored 2:05 apart in the second period, and Buffalo sent Toronto to its fourth straight loss.

Sam Reinhart, Jason Pominville and Johan Larsson also scored for Buffalo. Rasmus Ristolainen had two assists on consecutive shots from the right point that were deflected in during the opening four minutes.

The Sabres improved to 7-5-2 in their last 14, a stretch in which the Eastern Conference's last-place team continues playing havoc with playoff contenders. Buffalo has now defeated each of the Atlantic Division's three top teams, including Boston twice, over the past three weeks.

Leo Komarov had two goals and Mitch Marner also scored for Toronto. The Maple Leafs dropped to 0-2-2 in their past four to match their longest skid of the season.

### OILERS 4, COYOTES 3, OT

EDMONTON, Alberta (AP) — Oscar Klefbom's first goal in 34 games came in overtime, giving Edmonton the victory over Arizona.

Klefbom scored for the first time since Dec. 9.

Jujhar Khaira, Milan Lucic and Jesse Puljujarvi also scored for the Oilers, who snapped a three-game skid.

Jason Demers, Christian Dvorak and Niklas Hjalmarsen replied for the Coyotes, whose two-game winning streak ended.

### SENATORS 3, STARS 2, OT

DALLAS (AP) — Erik Karlsson scored on a breakaway with 2:19 left in overtime and Ottawa beat Dallas.

Karlsson picked up a loose puck after a missed Dallas opportunity and beat goalie Kari Lehtonen.

Stars goalie Ben Bishop left because of a lower-body injury after making 12 saves in the first period. Lehtonen replaced Bishop and had 15 saves.

Ottawa's Craig Anderson made 31 saves.

Dallas' Tyler Seguin scored twice, on the power play in the first period and from the top of the right faceoff circle with 1:02 left in the third period to tie it.

Goals by Mike Hoffman on the power play in the second period and Matt Duchene in the third gave Ottawa a 2-1 lead.

### CANUCKS 4, ISLANDERS 3, OT

VANCOUVER, British Columbia (AP) — Brendan Leipsic scored his second goal of the game 2:47 into overtime to lift Vancouver over New York.

Darren Archibald scored on a penalty shot, and Jake Virtanen also had a goal as Vancouver snapped a three-game skid. Jacob Markstrom stopped 31 shots.

Josh Bailey, John Tavares and Jordan Eberle scored for New York, which lost a season-worst seventh straight game. The Islanders remain five points behind Columbus for the second wild card in the Eastern Conference playoffs.

Jaroslav Halak made 19 saves for the Islanders.

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1102257 Boston Bruins

Power Rankings: Predators getting hot at the right time, Panthers on the rise

Jeremy Fuchs, SPORTS ILLUSTRATED Tuesday, March 06, 2018

It's too early to fully assess the impact of the deadline, so we'll just play these rankings straight. There's two interesting things of note.

First: Bring on the Predators. They're playing their best hockey of the season, at the best time. Nashville is on an eight-game winning streak and getting key contributions from recently acquired Ryan Hartman and un-retired Mike Fisher. Could Eeli Tolvanen join the fold soon? The Finnish teen forward—the Preds' top draft pick (no. 30) in 2017—is ready to make the jump once the KHL season is over and could make an immediate impact.

Second: Bring on the... Panthers? They're not that far out of it in the East and have some games in hand. The fact that they were in on Ryan McDonagh suggests that they think they have a shot. They could be a dangerous playoff team, especially with Sasha Barkov currently firing on all cylinders. He's found a rhythm with Evgenii Dadonov, giving Florida some offensive depth along with a reinvigorated back end.

Here's how we see teams stacking up in the NHL, from 31-1 (stats and records through Monday's games):

### 31. Arizona Coyotes

Last week: 31 (-)

Record: 20-34-11

A good win against Minnesota, but Coyotes fans still can dream: Pairing up Rasmus Dahlin with Oliver Ekman-Larsson would be fun.

### 30. Buffalo Sabres

Last week: 30 (-)

Record: 21-34-11

A nice win against Tampa Bay. Buffalo has been competitive all season, but the Sabres just don't have the skill to get over the top. But there's hope: they're buying into Phil Housley.

### 29. Ottawa Senators

Last week: 29 (-)

Record: 23-32-10

Wouldn't be surprised to see a post-deadline takeoff, now that the swirl of rumors can die down a bit. Erik Karlsson (2-5-7 in four games) has already gotten a start.

### 28. Vancouver Canucks

Last week: 27 (-1)

Record: 25-32-9

It's got to be frustrating getting 55 shots off against the Rangers and losing. Goalie Jacob Markstrom has been decent, but it's just not a good enough defense in front of him.

### 27. Edmonton Oilers

Last week: 25 (-2)

Record: 28-34-4



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They showed some fight against the Kings and Ducks and lost a tough one to Nashville. But it's still the Connor McDavid show with no supports acts.

### 26. Montreal Canadiens

Last week: 28 (+2)

Record: 25-29-11

It's puzzling how a team with a pretty good power play can be so anemic offensively. Losing Max Pacioretty to injury is a huge blow.

### 25. New York Rangers

Last week: 26 (+1)

Record: 30-30-6

The Rangers might have scored some keepers in Ryan Spooner and Vlad Namestnikov, but it's obvious the Rangers are trotting out a minor league defense right now.

### 24. Chicago Blackhawks

Last week: 23 (-1)

Record: 28-30-8

A few ugly losses. It's clear they can't compete without Corey Crawford, but the Hawks have to be concerned that their organization has no goaltending depth right now.

### 23. Detroit Red Wings

Last week: 24 (+1)

Record: 26-29-10

At points this season, Jimmy Howard has shown he's back in form. He looked better for parts of February, but fatigue may become a factor if the Wings continue to ride him.

### 22. New York Islanders

Last week: 19 (-3)

Record: 29-29-9

They're falling off the rails. The Isles are giving up way too many shots and if the offense doesn't show up on a given night, there's no chance of a win.

### 21. Carolina Hurricanes

Last week: 21 (-)

Record: 29-26-11

Justin Williams remains Mr. Clutch, scoring twice to knock off the six-game losing streak. Still, this team is trending in the wrong direction as playoff time comes near.

### 20. Florida Panthers

Last week: 22 (+2)

Record: 32-25-6

We thought about putting Florida ahead of Columbus, and next week that may be the case. There was too much offensive talent for the team to remain dormant all season, but the out-of-nowhere good goaltending has stabilized things.

### 19. Columbus Blue Jackets

Last week: 16 (-3)

Record: 33-28-5

Even with Thomas Vanek, the team is just too one-dimensional offensively. The Jackets are still in playoff position, but Florida is charging hard.

### 18. St. Louis Blues

Last week: 20 (+2)

Record: 35-26-5

St. Louis certainly has had a fall from grace, although the Blues still have a playoff chance. Injuries to Jay Bouwmeester and Scottie Upshall aren't helping—imagine a healthy season from this team?

### 17. Calgary Flames

Last week: 15 (-2)

Record: 32-25-10

They're in the midst of a bit of a swoon with losses in four straight and just starting a trip out East. They could use Mike Smith back between the pipes, and soon.

### 16. Colorado Avalanche

Last week: 18 (+2)

Record: 35-24-6

The Avs are obviously a different team when Nathan MacKinnon plays, but 1 for 7 on the power play against Calgary is an interesting development.

### 15. Anaheim Ducks

Last week: 12 (-3)

Record: 33-21-12

It's a good thing John Gibson has returned to practice, because back-to-back losses to Arizona and Edmonton are unacceptable for a team in the playoff hunt.

### 14. New Jersey Devils

Last week: 14 (-)

Record: 33-25-8

Trading for Taylor Hall keeps looking better on a daily basis—his personal point streak is up to 25 games. Still, the Devils are still a bit too top-heavy.

### 13. Pittsburgh Penguins

Last week: 9 (-4)

Record: 38-35-4

Top goalie Matt Murray is back to skating following a concussion, which is a good sign—the Pens need Murray for any kind of playoff run. Backup options Tristan Jarry and Casey DeSmith haven't been up to snuff in his absence.

### 12. Dallas Stars

Last week: 13 (+1)

Record: 37-23-6

It's been a mixed bag for the Stars, who have given up five goals twice in their past four games, both to contenders in the Jets and Bolts. It doesn't help that they're trying to find their offense right now, too.

### 11. Los Angeles Kings

Last week: 17 (+6)

Record: 36-25-5



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They're quietly turning things around with good wins against Winnipeg, Vegas and Columbus in recent weeks. Jonathan Quick has led the resurgence from the crease, but there has been a bit more scoring than normal as well.

### 10. Philadelphia Flyers

Last week: 11 (+1)

Record: 34-21-11

The first three games of Petr Mrazek's Philly tenure were better than the last three, though he's had little help from his defense, which is allowing too many shots to get through. He's still the type of goalie capable of a run that could rival Michael Leighton's 2010 postseason.

### 9. Washington Capitals

Last week: 7 (-2)

Record: 37-21-7

Is it time to talk about Braden Holtby? The Stadium Series win over the Maple Leafs broke a personal six-game losing streak and he's 3-5-2 in his last 10. Backup Phillipp Grubauer, meanwhile, is 4-2 in his last six.

### 8. San Jose Sharks

Last week: 10 (+2)

Record: 35-22-9

It's good to see both Joe Pavelski and Brent Burns pick things up, because the Sharks needed that boost. If they could add it to the man-advantage, that would be great—San Jose hasn't scored on the power play since Feb. 8, an 0 for 28 stretch.

### 7. Minnesota Wild

Last week: 8 (+1)

Record: 37-22-7

Not sure we're buying the Eric Staal-for-Hart Trophy talk, but what breaking the 30-goal mark this season is undoubtedly impressive. Many contenders have had a weird loss to Arizona, but the Wild's looked particularly bad.

### 6. Winnipeg Jets

Last week: 4 (-2)

Record: 39-17-9

It was a tough loss to Nashville, but new acquisition Paul Stastny seems to be settling in quickly. The power play has been a bit up and down of late.

### 5. Toronto Maple Leafs

Last week: 6 (+1)

Record: 39-22-7

Quietly humming along, and still without Matthews. When he comes back, it will be a race between the Leafs and Boston for the two seed.

### 4. Boston Bruins

Last week: 5 (+1)

Record: 40-15-8

Well, that was a weird 8-4 win over Pittsburgh last week. The depth from the deadline should help them withstand the loss of Patrice Bergeron for a few weeks, but if Charlie McAvoy is anything more than day-to-day, it will be a big test.

### 3. Vegas Golden Knights

Last week: 2 (-1)

Record: 42-18-5

Two tough losses in the home-and-home with the Kings. You wonder if they should've added a defender at the trade deadline. The no-superstar crew has been good this year, but an extra body might could have helped down the stretch.

### 2. Nashville Predators

Last week: 3 (+1)

Record: 42-14-9

The Predators are on fire right now. The win against Winnipeg was especially impressive with Roman Josi racking up five assists. It seems like the Preds can cruise to a division title.

### 1. Tampa Bay Lightning

Last week: 1 (-)

Record: 45-17-4

The Lightning could sweep Hart, Art Ross and Vezina this year. (And it's not like Victor Hedman has been bad, either). An embarrassment of depth, and Ondrej Palat should be back from a lower-body injury soon.

Boston Herald LOADED: 03.07.2018

1102258 Boston Bruins

Devils, Oilers playing in Sweden, Panthers, Jets in Finland

Associated Press Tuesday, March 06, 2018

NEW YORK — Taylor Hall and the New Jersey Devils will face off against Connor McDavid and the Edmonton Oilers to open the regular season in Gothenburg, Sweden, on Oct. 6 as part of the NHL's Global Series.

In the second year of regular games in Europe, the Florida Panthers and Winnipeg Jets will also play Nov. 1 and 2 in Helsinki. The NHL and NHL Players' Association announced the games and two exhibitions Tuesday morning.

Swiss No. 1 pick Nico Hischier and the Devils will wrap up training camp in Europe and tune up against SC Bern in Switzerland on Oct. 1. Homegrown star Leon Draisaitl and the Oilers will face Kolner Haie in Cologne on Oct. 3, Germany Unity Day.

The games at Helsinki's Hartwall Arena showcase two Finnish stars: Jets winger Patrik Laine and Panthers center Aleksander Barkov.

In addition to the games in Europe, NHL is expected to again play exhibition games in China after going there with the Los Angeles Kings and Vancouver Canucks last year.

For more NHL coverage: <https://apnews.com/tag/NHLhockey>

This story has been corrected to show the date of the Edmonton-Kolner Haie game in Oct. 3, not Oct. 4.

Boston Herald LOADED: 03.07.2018

1102259 Boston Bruins



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 7, 2018

Brad Marchand completes hat trick in overtime as Bruins best Red Wings

Rich Thompson Wednesday, March 07, 2018

Brad Marchand excelled as both a playmaker and finisher last night in the Bruins' 6-5 overtime victory against the Detroit Red Wings.

Marchand secured his third career hat trick when he scored the game-winning goal 34 seconds into the extra frame and was the key set-up man on both of Torey Krug's tallies. With the five points, Marchand leads the team in goals (28) and assists (38).

The B's have three overtime wins in the first four games of a six-game homestand. Marchand scored the OT game-winner in Saturday's 2-1 victory against the Montreal Canadiens, and Charlie McAvoy had the tally in extra time against the Carolina Hurricanes on Feb. 27.

"I appreciate all of it, and I've known Brad a long time," coach Bruce Cassidy said. "I've got a lot of respect for the way he plays the game and the way he conducts himself as a person and as a pro, and we need it. I was chuckling after the game because there he is, and the puck finds him. He's on it and doesn't quit, and he made some real nice plays tonight."

The Bruins won the previous three games against the Red Wings by a combined 9-5 that included a 3-2 victory in overtime Dec. 13 in Detroit. Last night's game broke that chain of tight-checking contests, and the B's did it quickly by scoring twice in the opening minute of a five-goal first period.

"We know there are 82 of these (regular-season games), and it is hard to stay in the moment for 82 and focused and not want to have an offensive surge and trade chances," Cassidy said. "But we are trying to play to our identity as well, and we talked about it. I hope it doesn't go in one ear and out the other . . . take it to heart and build on it for our next game."

Marchand set the wild night in motion when he fed defenseman Nick Holden for a slap shot from the right point. Krug collected the rebound of Holden's misfire and unloaded a slapper through a screen just 37 seconds in for the game's first of many goals.

Jake DeBrusk made it a 2-0 game 15 seconds later when he converted a Detroit turnover into a goal off a defender.

"I liked our start. We were on time and ready to go the whole first period," Cassidy said.

The Red Wings battled back to tie by the 7:53 mark of the first, but Krug's second goal, a power-play strike off a Marchand diagonal feed, gave the B's the lead back at 13:48.

Two Marchand goals in the second period were matched by Detroit tallies, and the Red Wings knotted the score at 5-all at 9:46 of the third. In the end, however, the visitors were no match for Marchand.

"He (Marchand) has been a big time player for our team for a long time, and obviously he enjoys being that guy," Krug said. "He had that edge (last night) physically around the net and scoring goals and making plays."

Boston Herald LOADED: 03.07.2018

1102260 Boston Bruins

Bruins notebook: Rookie Charlie McAvoy out at least four weeks with MCL sprain in left knee

Rich Thompson Wednesday, March 07, 2018

Bruins coach Bruce Cassidy is counting on Patrice Bergeron to guide rookie defenseman Charlie McAvoy through a prolonged rehabilitation.

General manager Don Sweeney yesterday announced that McAvoy suffered a sprained MCL in his left knee and will be out at least four weeks. McAvoy joined the wounded and the healthy scratches on the ninth floor for last night's 6-5 overtime win against the Detroit Red Wings.

McAvoy was injured 37 seconds into Saturday night's overtime victory against Montreal. He appeared to trip awkwardly over the stick of Canadiens winger Brendan Gallagher in the Bruins zone.

"It could have been worse, but it didn't look that bad when it happened," Cassidy said. "We will be without Charlie for a little bit, and we have lots of depth. . . . He will be back, and hopefully he heals quickly and keeps his conditioning up."

Bergeron, out with a fractured right foot, lost significant playing time earlier in his career because of concussions so he knows how to best utilize injury related downtime.

"Clearly (Bergeron) knows what to expect coming out of it, and probably we'll get him to talk to Charlie about what to do between now and then so that you don't drop off," Cassidy said.

"It's natural when you don't play this time of year, especially when the intensity goes up you are going to lose a little bit of your edge. He has to find a way to keep his conditioning and keep mentally sharp during this stretch of time."

A best-case scenario would have McAvoy back on the ice at the start of the playoffs. He missed four games following a heart procedure earlier in the season.

"There are probably different timelines, but there are some similarities with this time of year that they are missing," Cassidy said. "They are key players, so we'll rely on Bergy a little bit to keep him focused as best he can."

Krug hits home

Bruins defenseman Torey Krug is a native of Royal Oak, Mich., played his college hockey at Michigan State and gets immense pleasure from sticking it to the Red Wings.

Krug scored two goals and assisted on two of Brad Marchand's three goals including the game-winner. Krug set a career high for points in a game and has five goals and 10 assists in 21 games against Detroit.

"It is a team I get excited to play against, and it's no secret," Krug said. "I have a lot of friends and family watching back home, and I'll look at my phone and get a lot of angry text messages."

Krug has 13 goals and 34 assists this season.

Dobby double

Goalie Anton Khudobin started consecutive games for the first time since playing four straight in November. He provided the backbone in the win against the Canadiens but struggled to hold on against the Red Wings, especially on screen plays around the net.

Anthony Mantha scored two goals and Martin Frk tied the game 5-5 at 9:46 of the third period on a shot from the slot. Khudobin finished with 30 saves and recorded his 15th win of the season.

"It's the W's (that count)," he said. "It was just that type of night, and I had so much energy, and my legs felt really good, and that causes me a lot of problems."

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# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 7, 2018

Conroy: Brad Marchand puts his hard work on display once again

Steve Conroy Wednesday, March 07, 2018

Brad Marchand and Bruce Cassidy go way back. Cassidy was an assistant coach under Rob Murray in Providence when Marchand came in as a rookie in 2008-09.

Marchand had skill, and that edgy persona already honed in junior hockey. But what got him from that point to where he is now — a 200-foot threat as dangerous as anyone in the league and with a flair for the dramatic — is something that not everyone sees or appreciates. It is his work ethic. He had it back then, and he has it now.

"He was a dog on a bone, hardest-working guy in practice every day. Wanted to improve his shot. Worked on all of the offensive parts of his game," Cassidy said. "Now, would we have predicted it would get this high? But I felt Brad would have success because he had that 'I won't be denied' kind of mentality. It just depended how far he could creep up the lineup."

All that Marchand brings was on display last night in the Bruins' messy 6-5 victory against the Detroit Red Wings. He exploded for a five-point game, including a hat trick topped off with his second overtime winner in as many games.

Marchand now is the B's career leader in overtime game-winners with 11, breaking out of a tie with Glen Murray and Dit Clapper. It was his fourth OT winner this season, and the second time he's beaten the Wings in extra time.

On the winner, he collected a rebound of a Torey Krug shot and waited ever so patiently before lifting a backhand over Jimmy Howard. As far as Marchand goals go, it wasn't the most spectacular, and it didn't require the same dogged determination that his round-the-world winner did on Saturday against the Canadiens.

But with the coolness it took to hang on to the puck, it was not as easy as Marchand made it look.

"I was chuckling after the game because there he is, the puck finds him," Cassidy said. "But he's on it, and he doesn't quit."

One of his newest teammates, former Rangers defenseman Nick Holden, quickly has learned to be a Brad Marchand fan.

"For a guy who has the scoring ability that he does, it's amazing to see him work so hard," Holden said. "It's funny watching him from this side now. When you played against him, you hated (him) because of the way he plays. But when he's on your team, you love it because of the way he plays."

Marchand also had his nasty on. He mixed it up with Justin Abdelkader and later was called for slashing when he lifted his stick between Gustav Nyqvist's legs. It seemed like more of a threat than an actual slash — he has done worse, to be sure — but he got the two minutes anyway.

Cassidy backed him up.

"I think they were trying to get to him, and I think he did a good job with that," Cassidy said. "I didn't see the call he got for a slash. Those ones where they call at center ice and get one guy are kind of annoying to a coach because clearly they're jabbing each other and you're like, 'Really?' It has no effect on the play. But they're sending their messages. Sometimes when games get out of hand, you'll see those calls. We'll take a look at it, but I think he did a good job. He's going to be targeted every night, and he has to get used to that."

Marchand feels his line with David Pastrnak and currently injured Patrice Bergeron has gotten extra attention lately, but he didn't think last night's game was any big deal. It was all in the game for him.

"I honestly didn't think it was that bad. I got a couple of shots, but I gave a couple of shots, too," he said. "That's part of the way guys play, but I didn't think tonight was a game where I was really targeted. There have been games where it's been a little bit more. But guys just play hard, especially defensive guys we match up against."

Neither Marchand nor the Bruins can afford him crossing the line, not with his history that could land him a double-digit game suspension the next time. The B's are without Bergeron and Charlie McAvoy and can't afford to lose another top player.

If the way they broke out the puck last night is any indication of what life without McAvoy will be like, they'll need to be find different ways to win games. And Marchand is as resourceful as they come.

Boston Herald LOADED: 03.07.2018

1102262 Boston Bruins

Marchand (3g, 2a) helps Bruins beat Red Wings 6-5 in OT

Associated Press Tuesday, March 06, 2018

BOSTON — Brad Marchand completed his hat trick 34 seconds into overtime and the Boston Bruins, who twice squandered a two-goal lead in regulation, escaped with a 6-5 victory over the Detroit Red Wings on Tuesday night.

It was a team-record 11th regular-season overtime goal for Marchand, who also had two assists.

Torey Krug had two goals and two assists, and David Pastrnak had three assists for the Bruins, who won for the fourth game in a row.

Anton Khudobin made 30 saves for Boston, which led 2-0 after 52 seconds and never trailed but needed overtime after Martin Frk made it 5-5 midway through the third period.

Anthony Mantha had two goals and two assists for Detroit, which has lost four straight, seven of nine and 17 of 26 since it last topped .500 on Jan. 5.

Jared Coreau was beaten by the first two shots he faced and stopped just 12 of 16 shots before he was replaced 3:27 into the second period. Jimmy Howard faced 19 shots and saved 17 of them.

The Bruins led 2-0, 4-2 and 5-3 before Mantha scored his second goal in a four-minute span to make it a one-goal game with a little more than four minutes left in the second. It stayed that way until Frk was left alone in the slot, falling to his knees as he swatted the pass from Tyler Bertuzzi into the net with 10:14 remaining in regulation.

The Red Wings attacked first in the overtime but got a bad bounce off an official near their own blue line, allowing the Bruins to move in on the net. Marchand picked up a rebound off Krug's shot, moved it to his backhand and scored the winner, triggering an avalanche of the free green hats given out in honor of Irish Heritage Night.

Krug and Jake DeBrusk scored 15 seconds apart in the opening minute of the game. But the Red Wings tied it, getting a power play goal from Frans Nielsen 84 seconds later and a goal from Mike Green about five minutes after that.

Krug made it 3-2 on a power play with about six minutes left in the first, and Marchand gave the Bruins a 4-2 lead with six to play in the second.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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NOTES: Bruins defenseman Charlie McAvoy is out for at least a month with a sprained left MCL. General manager Don Sweeney said earlier Tuesday that McAvoy will be evaluated in four weeks. He was injured Saturday in the opening shift of Boston's 2-1 overtime win over Montreal. ... It was the 600th meeting between the two Original Six teams. Detroit holds a 251-250-95-4 edge, but Boston has gone 14-1-1 in the last 16 games. ... It was Irish Heritage Night, and the Bruins practice jerseys were green with plaid trim. Irish step dancers and musicians were featured in the concourse and vomitoria. ... Coreau made his first NHL appearance of the season after being named the AHL goaltender of the month in February.

UP NEXT

Red Wings: Host the Golden Knights on Thursday night.

Bruins: Host the Flyers on Thursday night.

Boston Herald LOADED: 03.07.2018

1102263 Boston Bruins

Brad Marchand, Bruins trick Wings in OT

Rich Thompson Tuesday, March 06, 2018

Brad Marchand completed a hat trick 34 seconds into overtime to lift the Bruins to a 6-5 victory over the Detroit Red Wings Tuesday night at the TD Garden.

The Bruins improved to 41-15-8 with their third overtime victory in the six-game homestand. Marchand scored the OT game winner in Saturday night's 2-1 victory over the Montreal Canadiens. Charlie McAvoy scored the overtime goal against Carolina on Feb. 27.

The Bruins completed a four-game sweep against the Red Wings.

Detroit tied the game 5-5 at 9:46 of the when Tyler Bertuzzi set up right wing Martin Frk in the slot. Frk's wrist shot through a screen was redirected by Boston goalie Anton Khudobin on the blocker side for his 11th of the season.

Boston Herald LOADED: 03.07.2018

1102264 Boston Bruins

McAvoy out four weeks with a left MCL sprain

By Joe Haggerty March 06, 2018 10:32 AM

BOSTON – The Bruins finally issued an update on 20-year-old Charlie McAvoy, and it's a case of both good news and bad news for the game-changing rookie D-man. The fortunate development is that McAvoy's season isn't done with a diagnosed left MCL sprain, and that he should be ready to return right around the time that the Stanley Cup playoffs begin in roughly five weeks.

Carlo set to step up in McAvoy's absence

The bad news is that the four week recovery time means the injury isn't the mildest version possible of an MCL sprain, and any setbacks or slow recovery from the injury could potentially spill over into the first round of the postseason. That would be a difficult proposition for the Bruins, who

have enjoyed a Calder Trophy-level season from their rookie D-man with seven goals, 32 points and a plus-26 in 59 games this season to go along with a workhorse-like 22:10 of ice time per game. As it's stated in the Bruins press release, McAvoy's left knee will be re-evaluated in four weeks and his ability to jump in ahead of the postseason should be more clearly defined at that point.

As it is right now, the Bruins are going through a hellish month of March without their best player in Patrice Bergeron, their best rookie in McAvoy and currently without their No. 1 goaltender in Tuukka Rask as he's not starting for the second straight game with a "minor lower body injury." Brandon Carlo will be stepping into McAvoy's top pairing spot alongside Zdeno Chara during 5-on-5 play, but Bruce Cassidy indicated it's going to take a village to replace the multi-dimensional young defenseman in the short term.

"It's like when we lost Bergeron, we have to do it by committee on the back end with Charlie's workload," said Cassidy. "Brandon [Carlo] is going to step and have the matchups right away...kind of like Riley Nash [in Bergeron's spot] in 5-on-5 play. On the power play, Nick Holden when he was acquired had some of that on his resume. Maybe a little more falls on [Matt] Grzelcyk or a fourth forward.

"What we're going to try and do is not ask one player to try and replace Charlie. It will be different guys. On the penalty kill we had other guys ahead of Charlie. He did a good job on it. Don't get me wrong. But we have [Zee], Kevan [Miller], Carlo and Adam [McQuaid], so that part of it becomes a little easier to manage."

Here are the projected Bruins line combos and D-pairings vs. the Detroit Red Wings based on Tuesday morning skate at TD Garden with Bergeron, McAvoy, Rask and Noel Acciari all out of the lineup:

Marchand-Nash-Pastrnak

DeBrusk-Krejci-Nash

Heinen-Backes-Gionta

Schaller-Kuraly-Wingels

Chara-Carlo

Krug-Miller

Grzelcyk-Holden

Khudobin

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 03.07.2018

1102265 Boston Bruins

Brad Marchand stepping up for undermanned Bruins

By Joe Haggerty March 07, 2018 1:52 AM

BOSTON – At a time when the Bruins are missing Patrice Bergeron and Charlie McAvoy due to injuries, they're going to need some of their other best players to step up if they want to finish up strong.

It certainly wasn't pretty on Tuesday night as they allowed five goals to the Detroit Red Wings, but they also saw Brad Marchand continue to step up and refuse to allow the Bruins to lose with a hat trick in Boston's 6-5 overtime win at TD Garden.

Marchand scored each of the final three goals for the Bruins, finished with five points and once again played the clutch hero with the 11th overtime game-winner of his NHL career that's now set a franchise record. Marchand had been in a tie with Dit Clapper and Glen Murray



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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after his last overtime game-winner last weekend against the Montreal Canadiens, but now he's got that Boston franchise mark all to himself.

It's pretty heady stuff for a guy that didn't ever feel like he'd be writing out any part of his NHL career as a potential 40-goal scorer over the last few seasons. But at this point the Bruins left winger knows that he and his B's teammates will need him at his best while waiting for the warm weather. Clearly a red-hot Marchand isn't going to single-handedly replace all the offensive production provided by Bergeron and McAvoy, but it's a good place to start out at this point in the season.

"I think that it's what I wanted to push for but a lot of it is really based on opportunity. You look at a lot of the guys around the league, a lot of the top scorers and if they're not playing power play in the big situations then it's tough to produce the same way," said Cassidy. "So I feel very fortunate that I've been put in this position, I've been playing with phenomenal players for a very long time now and they're giving me a lot of opportunities. I think a lot of guys when they're in that situation, they're able to have good years and good careers. So I think I just benefit from that.

That's the perfect example of the overall production that Marchand brings to the table with his 28 goals and 66 points in 51 games, and also to his ability to consistently come through in clutch situations for the Black and Gold. Marchand essentially refused to lose when he kept responding to every goal scored by Detroit, and in doing so showed that he can be a high-powered threat with David Pastrnak even if Bergeron is missing the equation for part of the playoffs.

"I appreciate all of it. I've known Brad a long time. I've got a lot of respect for the way he plays the game, and the way he conducts himself as a person, as a pro. We need it. I was chuckling after the game because, you know, there he is, the puck finds him," said Bruce Cassidy. "But he's on [the puck], [he] doesn't quit, and made some real nice plays tonight. Him and Pasta [David Pastrnak], I thought, really had their thing going right now, and Riley's [Nash] complemented them. It's worked out well."

Given the gaudy goal totals and the impressive 1.25 points per game he's averaging this season, Marchand certainly has a growing argument that he should be considered for the Hart Trophy his season despite missing games due to injuries. That may or may not happen given Marchand's reputation around the league characterized by suspensions, big time scoring in all situations and plenty of chirping over the years.

But the Nose Face Killah won't be changing his ways or lessening the intense way he competes at crunch time with an intrepid work ethic, a lack of slack in the swaggering, scoring style and a penchant for timely goals that rolls right into being one of the NHL's best players this season.

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1102266 Boston Bruins

Talking points: Marchand shines, B's feel McAvoy's absence

By Joe Haggerty March 06, 2018 11:23 PM

**GOLD STAR:** On a night when the Bruins needed their best players to step up and make plays if they were going to beat the Red Wings, Brad Marchand did exactly that for the Black and Gold. Marchand kicked off an epic night with a hat trick, five points and a plus-2 rating in 19:38 of ice time while also putting up with some definite targeting at the hands of the Red Wings players coming at him. Marchand also set a Bruins franchise record with his 11th overtime game-winner, which passed Dit Clapper and Glen Murray for the top spot on the all-time list. What was perhaps most impressive was Marchand providing the final three goals for the

Bruins in the game, and essentially refusing to let Boston lose in a game where they played far from their best brand of hockey.

**BLACK EYE:** It was a very "meh" night from Zdeno Chara where the Bruins captain was on the ice for four of the five goals against, finished a minus-2 in 25:26 of ice time, and made some poor decisions in puck management, zone coverage and execution in clearing pucks. It seemed like one of those nights where the heavy schedule might be getting to the 40-year-old captain a little bit, and Chara somehow didn't have even a single hit or a blocked shot while logging the most ice time of anybody in the game. Clearly the Bruins were just good enough to survive and the hope has to be that the Chara/Brandon Carlo pairing gets a little better as things move along, but it wasn't a very good showing for them just hours after it was learned that Charlie McAvoy would be out for the next four weeks.

**TURNING POINT:** The Bruins are only 8-8 in overtime this season, but they're beginning to develop a confidence and swagger when the extra session hits. It's probably because they have an absolute OT weapon in Marchand, and he was once again in full effect crashing the Detroit net and cleaning up a Torey Krug chance for his 28th goal of the season and 66th point of the season. All the Bruins needed was 34 seconds once the overtime session started, and they were ready to dispatch a Detroit Red Wings team that really isn't very good this season. Once it reached overtime and the Red Wings had put up a reasonable fight, it was all over for them and it was winning time for the Black and Gold.

**HONORABLE MENTION:** Torey Krug had an opportunity to really step up and fill in the offensive defenseman void with Charlie McAvoy out, and he did just that on Tuesday night against the Red Wings. Krug finished with two goals, four points and a plus-2 rating in 20:18 of ice time, and he was part of the early offensive boost from the Black and Gold that got things up and running for them. Krug had seven shot attempts and a couple of blocked shots as well in his night's work, and looked pretty good in a pairing with Nick Holden that's been put together with McAvoy missing. It certainly looked like that might be a better fit for No. 47 than the work he'd done with Carlo for most of this season.

**BY THE NUMBERS:** 3 – the number of assists for Nick Holden in his three games as a member of the Bruins as he's managed to notch a helper in each of the three games that he's played thus far.

**QUOTE TO NOTE:** "We know there are 82 of these [games], and it's hard to stay in the moment for 82, and focused and not want to have a little offensive surge and trade chances. But we're trying to play to our identity, as well. So we talked about it; hopefully it doesn't go in one ear and out the other and we take it to heart, and build on it for our next game." –Bruce Cassidy, knowing that the Bruins have some defensive things to work on after allowing five goals.

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1102267 Boston Bruins

Brad Marchand helps Bruins hold off Red Wings in overtime

By Joe Haggerty March 06, 2018 10:31 PM

**BOSTON –** Brad Marchand truly is the king of overtime.

He capped off an offensive slugfest by scoring his third goal of the game in overtime to lead the Bruins to a 6-5 overtime win, and give him sole possession of the all-time franchise record with his 11th OT game-winner of his career. Marchand finished with three goals and five points, and now has a ridiculous 66 points in 51 games this season.



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The Bruins got things off with a bang scoring a pair of goals in the first minute of the game, and that kicked off a goal-scoring party for both sides throughout the game.

Torey Krug scored on a bomb from the point to open things up offensively, and Jake DeBrusk followed 15 seconds later with a goal that deflected in off a Detroit defender in front of Red Wings goalie Jared Coreau. Detroit responded with an offensive outburst of its own, however, as Frans Nielsen and Mike Green scored to tie things up by the mid-point of the first period.

Krug gave the Bruins a lead at the first intermission when he scored his second of the game after crashing backdoor on the power play, and snapping home a pass from Brad Marchand. Brad Marchand extended the lead in the second period when got a return favor from Krug on a slick pass from the high point on another PP goal.

That Marchand goal actually kicked off a stretch in the second period where Marchand Red Wings youngster Anthony Mantha started alternating goals, and ended the second period with the Bruins holding a slim 5-4 lead. It didn't last too long, unfortunately, as Martin Frk scored midway through the third period after his shot deflected off a diving David Krejci and then past Khudobin for the game-tying strike.

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1102268 Boston Bruins

Khudobin's best B's season continues with another start vs. Wings

By Joe Haggerty March 06, 2018 6:00 PM

BOSTON, Mass – Once again backup goaltender Anton Khudobin is riding to the rescue in Boston's time of need.

Khudobin will be making his second straight start for the Bruins on Tuesday night against the Detroit Red Wings at TD Garden as Tuukka Rask nurses "a very minor, lower body injury" that hasn't really progressed over the last couple of days. Rask was able to make it out for morning skate with his Bruins teammates, so he'll presumably be backing up Khudobin against the Red Wings once again.

"Tuukka is out skating today," said Cassidy. "He's feeling better. ... We'll make a decision after the skate, talk to Tuukka and if he feels if he had to go in and he could do it, he would back up. Otherwise we would look at a goaltender from Providence."

The 31-year-old certainly hasn't been lights out for the Bruins lately either with just a .904 save percentage over his last five games, but he does lead the Bruins with a .921 save percentage while posting a respectable 2.34 goals against average this season.

And he was brilliant on Saturday night while stopping 27-of-28 shots and playing flawlessly behind a Bruins team that definitely made some mistakes in front of him. So Khudobin will get another start in a season that will go down as the best of his NHL career where he's consistently been used more than in any other.

"Like I always say, it's hard to sit for a week on the bench and then go in there. You have to catch the game earlier, and sometimes you don't feel it. When you play more, then you're [in it]," said Khudobin. "I don't know what the coaches thing, but the way I've played this year that maybe they're a little more comfortable with me. I don't know. But I'm just focused on my game and now it happens that I'm going to play two in a row. That is good.

"It's been good. In Carolina I had a good season, but I was hurt for half of the season. I played a lot of games and played 36 games, which was

pretty good. But this year has been very good. Standings-wise is where we want to be with the team and winning-wise. So overall, yeah, this has been my best [season] probably."

The scary proposition for the Bruins is where they would be without Khudobin, who keyed their three-month stretch of dominance by winning four in a row with Tuukka Rask benched way back in November. This stretch of two straight starts for Khudobin feels like a similar situation with just a month to go in the regular season, and with the Bruins looking to find any way to get the most out of their No. 1 goalie down the stretch and into the playoffs.

The brilliance of Khudobin has allowed the Bruins to properly rest Rask all season, and that continues in the first week of March as the B's all begin preparations for the final stretch run into the Stanley Cup playoffs.

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1102437 Websites

The Athletic / Columbus' Kody Robertson is Blue Jackets proud and #VegasStrong

Alison Lukan 17 hours ago 20

When Hilliard's Kody Robertson takes to his seat tonight in Nationwide Arena to watch the Vegas Golden Knights play the Columbus Blue Jackets, he'll be watching his favorite hockey team play his adopted Western Conference team.

But the reason Kody follows the Knights isn't because he misses former Jackets player William Karlsson's play — although he does — and it's not because the Golden Knights are a young expansion team having a remarkable inaugural year — although they are.

Kody's connection to Vegas is far more personal.

The story begins over a year ago. A big fan of country music and summer festivals, Kody and his friends had traveled out to Vegas in 2016 to attend their first Route 91 Harvest music festival. They'd had a great time, and when the 2017 headliner was announced as Eric Church, one of the group's favorite artists, they knew they had to go back.

Kody Robertson, second from left, and friends at the 2017 Route 91 Music Festival.

The Vegas show was everything Kody and his friends wanted. Church performed that Friday night on Sept. 29, and as he sang, he walked down to the event's barricades, high-fiving fans including Kody's friends. It became easy to recognize people you'd spent the weekend with — the bachelorette party that had claimed real estate next to Kody's group, the couples that sat nearby.

And then, during Luke Combs' set, as Kody headed to the bar to grab some drinks, he happened upon a new face he'd not yet seen, Michelle Vo. Through small talk, Kody found out Michelle was a huge country fan who was at the Route 91 concert by herself. Kody told the story of how he, too, had once ended up at a Combs' concert on his own. Laughter followed, and a friendship quickly was struck.

Both 32 at the time, Kody and Michelle bonded over stories of music and hockey — he a forever loyal Blue Jackets fan and she an avid follower of her hometown team, the San Jose Sharks.

"I said I was a big Sharks fan when they played the (Jackets' rival) Pittsburgh Penguins in the Stanley Cup," Kody said. "We got a laugh out of that. Sports kind of do that. They can connect you and make quick conversation of things."

The two shared stories and photos of their families, there was one of Michelle and her family at her sister's recent wedding; another photo of



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her nieces and nephews. They exchanged phone numbers and headed together back to the area Kody's group had claimed right at the front of the stage to take in the final hours of music that remained.

Then, just after 10 p.m., as Jason Aldean played on stage, the shots came.

HOLY FUCK JUST PART OF A LIVE SHOOTING AT #ROUTE91FESTIVAL... I DIDN'T GET HIT BUT THE GIRL RIGHT NEXT TO ME DID

— KODY ROBERTSON (@ROBEKO17) OCTOBER 2, 2017

Michelle was hit by one of the more than 1,100 rounds of ammunition fired into the crowds. She fell to the ground. It was chaos.

"I lifted her over a barricade and a guy next to us carried her away," Kody said. "After I took care of Michelle, I helped a couple other people over that barricade — 10-15 people or so."

It was the same barricade Eric Church had performed by just 48 hours before.

The red dot marks where Kody and Michelle were standing when the shooting began

Unharmful, Kody was among the many running from person to person, helping anyone and everyone around them — checking for vital signs and moving the wounded to safer areas. But as panic subsided, even though Kody was physically fine, he wasn't OK.

"Mentally and emotionally all over the place," Kody said. "It came down to trying to find Michelle."

He still had that number of hers she'd given him just hours earlier and he frantically started calling it. Someone answered. The phone was at Planet Hollywood, taken there by another concert-goer in the melee. Kody headed to the hotel to retrieve his friend's phone while at the same time realizing finding Michelle just became a little bit harder. She had no ID on her, she was a Jane Doe. He took off for the closest hospital.

The building was in lockdown. All around were people like Kody, still wearing bloodied clothes, desperately in search of information about their friends and family.

"We'd all just experienced this (massacre) and emotions were all over the place," Kody said. "People would come outside and give the news that someone had just passed away and you'd hear screams and cries."

MAN THIS SHIT IS HEARTBREAKING. I'M OUTSIDE THE HOSPITAL FAMILIES AREN'T BEING UPDATED BUT THE FEW FAMILIES THAT ARE TOLD IS GUT WRENCHING

— KODY ROBERTSON (@ROBEKO17) OCTOBER 2, 2017

Michelle's phone rang. It was her brother-in-law, Jeremiah. Was Michelle OK? Kody was now the only point of contact her family had. Kody told them everything he knew. He did the same when her sister called.

"I thought to myself, 'all these people are reaching out to me to make sure I'm OK, people who know Michelle are also reaching out to her and not getting a response back,'" Kody said. "Her family had no way to know, no way to find her. I had to be the one to relay that information and find her to give them peace of mind."

JUST TALKED WITH THE SISTER OF THE GIRL WHO WAS SHOT RIGHT NEXT TO ME... I DON'T THINK I COULD HAVE A MORE DIFFICULT CONVERSATION.

— KODY ROBERTSON (@ROBEKO17) OCTOBER 2, 2017

Around 5 a.m., just as the rest of the world was waking up to the news that 58 people were dead and hundreds injured, Kody heard from Michelle's family — they thought they might know where she might be. While his friends headed to the airport to return home to Ohio, Kody couldn't leave. He jumped in a cab and went to the next hospital.

"I kept being afraid that Kody wouldn't pick up, or Kody would leave, that he would drop us along the way," Diane Hawkins, 40, Vo's oldest sister, told The Washington Post. "I was calling every hospital, and every operating room, and every time I called Kody, he answered. Every message, he responded. Every time we needed him to do something, he did it."

Word finally came around 11 a.m.

AFTER WAITING ALL NIGHT AT 2 DIFFERENT HOSPITALS I WAS JUST TOLD SHE DIDN'T SURVIVE... R.I.P. MICHELLE

— KODY ROBERTSON (@ROBEKO17) OCTOBER 2, 2017

Kody relayed the information to Michelle's family. Then, he waited in Vegas till they arrived. He shared every detail of his time with his new friend and the experiences that had now become her last.

"Kody was our guardian angel, he refused to let her be alone," Hawkins said.

Three weeks later, Kody headed to Los Angeles to attend Michelle's services. There, so many people shared stories of the kind of person Michelle was. They all talked about how, just like Kody had, you felt like you'd known her for years the minute you met her.

WE CELEBRATED MICHELLE'S LIFE YESTERDAY. SHE WAS LOVED BY SO MANY PEOPLE. I'M SO THANKFUL FOR THE LOVE AND SUPPORT FROM ALL HER FRIENDS AND FAMILY. I CAN SAY I HAVE MORE FAMILY AND FRIENDS IN THE BAY AREA, LA AND WASHINGTON. #KEEFGOODGOING

A POST SHARED BY KODY ROBERTSON (@ROBEKO17) ON OCT 23, 2017 AT 3:20PM PDT

The emotion of the moment and the memory of the person lost became a call to action.

Prior to his travels, Kody had made shirts emblazoned with "#keepgoodgoing." It wasn't just something Michelle had said often, it was a mantra for how she lived her life. The shirts were just for Michelle's family and friends, but as Kody talked with someone who wanted to start a scholarship in Michelle's honor, Kody realized the shirts could be much more.

Today, he sells the shirts online and all proceeds benefit Michellestable.org, a scholarship fund set up to provide financial assistance to girls who want to attend college but may not be able to afford it.

"I think we've raised a little over \$3,000 so far just from selling a t-shirt," Kody said. "I've been posting them online and our plan is to get one to all 36 artists who were at Route 91. I want them to make a connection. They might not know all the stories (of those who were lost), but if there's some kind of way to tell them a little bit about Michelle and what she believed in, that's the point of giving them the shirts."

Kody Robertson presents Jason Aldean with a #keepgoodgoing T-shirt in Columbus

"Hopefully they'll pass it on. Even if they wear it one day, someone will see it and ask what it's about. It's just passing along Michelle's message and trying to honor her."

There are still rough days. The emotions can come in waves and without warning, but Kody is finding ways to manage the impact of what he and so many others experienced that day.

On Jan. 1, Kody got a tattoo. It's the title of a song written by Eric Church in tribute to those lost in the Vegas massacre. The song tells the story of two people who were supposed to be at one of Church's concerts, but the husband lost his life in the Vegas shooting. The font of Kody's tattoo is the same from the lyrics video Church published.

"It's kind of a way to remember Michelle," Kody said. "But it's also when I'm having a bad day or memories come up, I have something to look at



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to remind me, you can't think like that — why you and why not me. You have to make it a good day. You have to find the beauty, to find some positives, to make it a good day, no matter what.”

There are moments of reprieve, even joy, that have come from Kody's experience. In addition to the relationship he's maintained with Michelle's family, Facebook groups have popped up allowing survivors to connect with those who they helped or those who helped them. Of all those people Kody helped over the fence that awful night, he's found a few, including one very special woman in particular.

“She had sent me a message thanking me,” Kody says. “She didn't think she'd be able to make it over the barricade. I had grabbed her arm and said 'it will be alright' and helped her over.

“What I didn't know was she was pregnant at the time. So, she thanked me for being able to see her first son. I got that message today. It was pretty heartwarming and heavy and a good thing to come out of what happened.”

I'VE HAD A LOT OF TOUGH AND EMOTIONAL MOMENTS SINCE VEGAS BUT I RECEIVED A MESSAGE THIS WEEKEND THAT FILLED MY HEART WITH SO MUCH JOY AND HAPPINESS THAT I HAVEN'T FELT IN A LONG TIME AND IT MEANT SO MUCH TO ME. @MRSVANESSA24 WAS ONE OF A DOZEN OR SO PEOPLE I HELPED OVER THE MIDDLE BARRIER AT ROUTE 91. IT TURNS OUT SHE WAS PREGNANT AND WHEN WE CONNECTED THROUGH A SUPPORT GROUP SHE THANKED ME AND SAID SHE WAS GRATEFUL THAT ONE DAY SHE WOULD MEET HER SON. WELL THAT DAY CAME THIS WEEKEND WHEN ROWLEY WAS BORN. I LITERALLY CRIED FOR AN HOUR AFTER SHE SENT ME THE MESSAGE BUT THEY WERE TEARS OF JOY. I HAD AN EAR TO EAR SMILE ON MY FACE I HAVEN'T HAD IN MONTHS. CONGRATULATIONS AND WELCOME TO THE WORLD ROWLEY AND JUST TO LET YOU KNOW I'VE WON BACK TO BACK #UNCLEOFTHEYEAR AWARDS!

A POST SHARED BY KODY ROBERTSON (@ROBEKO17) ON MAR 5, 2018 AT 2:26PM PST

Kody also finds joy in following the Golden Knights. He watches the Sharks some too — they were Michelle's team — but it means something to Kody to see the Vegas team be so successful for a community impacted so significantly by the October shooting.

#VegasStrong means a lot to people like Kody.

“That's the thing,” Kody said. “Once the cameras went out, a lot of stuff didn't get published about how much the community was hurt. So many locals were affected by it. To see how the city has rallied around the victims and supported them so much? To see the team's success? It's good to see that and see people come together.

“There's a lot of evil in this world, but there's also more good. You start to see the good of it.”

And so, when the puck drops tonight, Kody Robertson will cheer. He'll cheer for his home team, he'll cheer for his adopted Western team, and he'll cheer for the good in the world to keep on winning out over the bad, even if it's just a little bit at a time.

The Athletic LOADED: 03.07.2018

1102438 Websites

The Athletic / Bourne and Wilson: A conversation on coaching, the Flames struggles and much more

By Justin Bourne 14 hours ago 6

Below is a conversation between Senior NHL Columnist Justin Bourne and hockey analytics/Flames writer Kent Wilson, that focuses on the Calgary Flames, coaching concepts, and more.

kwilson

So as you know, the Flames have had a tough year. They likely aren't going to make the playoffs, even though the GM essentially went “all in” on the roster in the off-season. It seemed like the right move at the time, but the team has really struggled to be anything but mediocre this season. As a result, eyes are turning to Glen Gulutzan and the coaching staff as the root of evil, and many suspect he'll be canned in the off-season. I want to go through some coaching stuff given your experience and get a more behind the scenes view of things.

The big problem in Calgary this year, at least in terms of evaluating the Flames coaches, is that the team isn't bad per se. In fact, by a lot of metrics they are a top-10 team in the league at even strength. But some weird, on-going weaknesses have undermined the club all year, including special teams and a penchant for withering in the face of adversity.

Let's start with special teams, specifically the power play. A lot of the Flames fan base has clamoured for drastic changes to the man advantage, but the team has been slow to change things. I imagine this is because, in part, it's hard to simply slam on the brakes and alter key tactics and set-ups. It would mean re-teaching the players everything that has been in place. Is that right?

jtbourne

Yeah, I don't know if that's exactly the case, depending on what the staff wanted to change up. In the American League you have a ton of roster turnover. If you think about it, every time a player gets hurt in the NHL, the AHL team loses a player, so they have twice as many players that, if hurt, costs them a guy. It's also often your best offensive players going up, so your power play is rarely the same for more than a game or two, and you'd be surprised how adaptable guys are to playing different roles, even when you change the formation to better suit your personnel.

I think at the NHL level, you usually have one or two special offensive guys on a team, and they generally like to play a certain spot (like say, the half-wall). To keep those guys happy, coaches usually accommodate them, even if it's suboptimal. In the case of the Flames, you know you have to have Johnny Gaudreau out there, but he's just not suited to play many other roles, ie. net-front, or man-in-the-middle. They might be a little hamstrung by personnel and don't feel comfortable moving things around.

kwilson

It also could be that they think the strategy in place could or should work. Flames had a relatively effective PP last year, for example, so why change it?

jtbourne

Very likely. They've seen it work before, so they believe it's just a matter of execution.

kwilson

On the topic of personnel, I have to bring up Dougie Hamilton. When watching and evaluating coaches decisions in the NHL I can often at least suss out what the thinking behind something is, even if I don't always agree with it. That's not true of the strange usage of Hamilton in Calgary this year. After Versteeg went down to injury early in the season, the Flames went with a 4F 1D umbrella with an umbrella formation with TJ Brodie on the top PP unit. Troy Brouwer, Micheal Ferland, Mikael Backlund, Mark Jankowski all made an appearance on the 1PP before Hamilton, who is, by most measures, one of the best offensive defencemen in the entire league.



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Hamilton was finally shifted to the top unit around game 50 of the season, and it started scoring again. In addition, he's rarely gets played in OT, and never on the PK, even though he and Giordano are by far the Flames best ES duo. Can you guess why that is and have you ever seen decisions that seem outlandish to fans make sense to players and coaches behind the scenes?

jitbourne

Yeah, usage is one area that I see Hockey Twitter get really upset, and I feel like we're missing important pieces of information. Now, that information might not be hard stats, but it may just be something they see when they're practicing at 3-on-3, or the player has told them he's not comfortable in a situation, just ... something. There's also the reality that coaches are historically risk averse, in basically every sport. The amount of math that has shown going for it on fourth down in football is the right thing to do anywhere around the middle of the field with short yardage to go is staggering. And still, coaches choose to punt the ball. Hockey's like that, in that maybe they recognize what Hamilton can do offensively in OT, they're just more sure he'll make a defensive error before he gets the chance to use his offensive tools.

As for the power play, another tough part of coaching is just ... sometimes there's not enough spots or ice time to go around. Most teams like to go 4F 1D on the PP right now, and the first unit tends to get more time. If you're the second or third best offensive D-man on a team, it's just sorta ... tough beans. Now, it doesn't sound like that's the case with Hamilton, but it could have just been that they think the risks he takes that help him get points aren't worth whatever the other outcomes are. I'm purely speculating here, but as I mentioned off the top: I definitely feel like we're missing pieces of information.

kwilson

That sounds about right. There seems to be a perception on the team that Hamilton is defensively suspect, so they keep him out of situations where he'd be the last man back or in a defensive-first position. In fact, he is now paired with Gio on the first PP unit – they never did move to 4F1D with him on it.

Ironically, the team prefers Brodie to Hamilton in those "high leverage" situations, but Brodie has gotten eaten alive most of the year from a defensive standpoint (according to shot, chance, and expected goals metrics). Once a guy has a certain "reputation" with coaches – good or bad – how hard is it to change their minds?

jitbourne

It's brutal, because every coach has their favourites, and yes, their least favourite guys. So it's sort of up to the coaching staff to be honest with one another when they recognize that someone is just seeing what they want to see, and call each other out. But avoiding that confirmation bias is really hard for humans to do, it's hard-wired into us. So if you think a player is prone to turnovers, you see every one. When you're "favourite" player makes those same turnovers, you make excuses in your head for him. So when a team has an idea about what a player is, that player has to play different from that for a very long time to change their minds.

It's also hard because once a staff has decided a player can't do something like play D, they don't get put in situations to prove otherwise very often. If Dougie Hamilton works hard on his defensive game – watches a ton of tape, works on his pivoting and boxing out after practice – and actually improved that area of his game, would the Flames give him enough chances to even prove it? Probably not. So yeah ... it's extremely hard for players to change their reputations.

kwilson

So could data and analytics play a role here? As mentioned, Hamilton's results are sterling across the board this year, Brodie's are not – but Brodie still plays more at even strength and is preferred in OT. Data can be the great "equalizer" when it comes to breaking up pre-conceived notions, but it has to be respected and acted upon. That would mean a relationship between an analytics department and the coaching staff.

Does that happen in the NHL at this point to your knowledge? Or is integrating data to impact coaching decisions to this degree still far off? (edited)

jitbourne

This absolutely happens already (and I'm sure it'll happen more and more each season). The biggest thing with convincing old school types is many respect the numbers, but if you can't "show" them, they don't care. And this is where video coaches come in. They also need an active and respectful relationship with the analytics department. There can be times when the data says "Player X is our best player at defending zone entries," and the coach responds "Except something is wrong with your data, because he's god awful, I watch him every night." That'd be a time when the analytics guys could go the video coach and ask for a package of, whatever, the last 10 games of said player taking rushes against. That way they can bring the numbers to the coach, but still scratch his eye-test itch.

What's hard with data right now, it's still got a long way to go in hockey before old school guys will take any numbers at face value. This is why I think an NHL team would be wise to hire vast video departments, so when the data churns out an outlier, someone can actually go watch all the incidents of whatever it may be, and try to figure out why the numbers say what they do. And, they could do that for all teams, not just their own, in hopes of finding underrated talent to trade for, and overrated players to avoid.

kwilson

That makes sense.

So in my latest random thoughts piece, I talk about two, parallel "processes" that should be occurring within coaching departments – the first should be the top level collection of tactics and strategies that a staff is deploying to win games – the PP formation, the PK set-up, personnel decisions, the breakout etc.

The second should be the process by which the staff and team is evaluating the effectiveness of the top level – are our tactics actually effective? Can we test and implement any innovations or changes to our current process that will improve our outcomes?

Does this ideate-test-analyze cycle happen formally or informally in hockey circles? Do teams actively try to grow and evolve as more data comes in about what they're doing? Or is it more about reacting to success and failure (or the perceptions of success and a from management and fans)?

jitbourne

I wrote a little bit about this in my first few weeks back on the media side. When I first joined the Toronto Marlies staff I was like "Oh man, I have all these idea to try, these guys are progressive and young, we're going to come up with something unique and great." And that's when I stepped on the season's treadmill that was already operating at max speed with the rest of the staff, and just started running. There's no time. There's certainly time to evaluate "are our systems working, would X be better than Y, how can we improve," just by seeing your results and making your best educated guesses. The problems with going deeper are two-fold: one, there's little time to test and implement any of your ideas. Eastern AHL teams play 76 games, and have long bus rides, and have video to watch from the game before, and have video to watch on their upcoming opponent. You rarely have more than a day or two off in between games. And players need to be shown video individually and as a team. It's relentless.

The second problem is that to make a change you'd have to re-teach the players how you want them to play, and one breakdown is all an opponent needs to score, and there's a game coming up quick. So if on one of your few proper practice days you make a systems overhaul, how long does it take for everyone to master it, and how many points does that learning process cost you? And you're never playing the exact same teams (and your roster regularly changes with injuries and line juggling),



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so how do you measure which system is more effective over what would presumably be small samples? There's an element to pro hockey – the implementation of different systems – that's so impossible to really measure that at some point, you just have to go with what you believe works, teach the hell out of every tiny detail, and hope. Tweaks you can do. Big picture “are our tactics effective” is really tough to know. The best idea I've heard: buy an ECHL team, stock it with older non-prospects (but still capable players) and have them try some really different stuff.

If you want to go deeper on this, I wrote: Why it's hard to make creative tactical adjustments in professional hockey back in August.

kwilson

So it seems like the best, deepest insights could be had in the summer — by a mix of video review and data mining. Essentially stock the cupboard with “learnings” to try to explore when the season starts.

This kinda brings me to my next point – fans often conceive of coaching talent as “fixed” – a coach is either good, mediocre, or bad. But I suspect there may be a development curve for coaches, like players, and that the best coaches don't necessarily spring fully formed into the league, but may become good coaches over time (and stay that way through constant learning and effort).

This is relevant for the Flames in particular because the evaluation process for Gulutzan and group may be less “you didn't get the job done this year” and more “are you able to learn from what went wrong and take a step forward next season?” Hartley was fired, in large part, because he failed that second requirement I believe.

jtbourne

The summer thing is bang-on. I've always thought each summer a staff should have a coaching summit where the group can spend a few days together somewhere, and each propose a few different, completely unique ways to do certain things like the PP breakout, the penalty kill formation, the neutral zone forecheck. It makes a lot of sense to me for coaches to try to evolve ahead of the game. Teams do work on summer projects though, primarily video stuff to try to dig deeper into theories they couldn't get to in-season. And yes, I do believe that some coaches, like players, have more of an interest in improving than others. It's up to individual organizations to decide if the guy they have carries that motivation or not. I suspect Gulutzan does.

kwilson

Finally, I want to touch on intangibles a bit.

One of the Flames biggest issues this year is a tendency to crumble or collapse in the face of adversity. The team has blown a lot of leads this year and suffered more gut punch style losses in a single season that I can remember. It's not hyperbole to say this very strange habit of crumbling under pressure and blowing leads will likely cost the team a playoff spot.

I don't know if this goes back to the Flames' terrible loss to the Ducks last year in the playoffs (when they had a 4-1 lead and ended up losing the game en route to being swept), but it seems from the outside to be something that is in the player's heads.

Have you ever seen something like happen on teams you played with or coached? What can you possibly do as a coach to break the spell of something like this?

jtbourne

Yeah, I totally agree that it really is a “thing,” and it's related to what coaches mean when they talk about a team's identity. I'm a believer that things in a season snowball based on what happens early in the year (which is why I think it's so important to start well). I think if you blow enough leads to see it as a trend, when you do get up late, players will play more panicky, and make more mistakes, and the issues feed on themselves. When you've shown you can lock down games, players are more likely to make more plays, stay calm, and “play” not “think.” Same

with individual seasons. Hot starts and cold starts affect how a coach uses a player, which in turn influences results, etc. etc.

I think the only answer I have here on how to change those patterns is that “This is at the core of what coaching is.” What can you identify that isn't working and fix. Should you try different personnel, is it a system issue? Is goaltending the problem? I think the answers are probably different on a team to team basis. Sometimes you just need a little luck, maybe your opponent hits a few more posts, you get a win you didn't deserve, and you get to feeling good about yourself. The brain is an awfully powerful thing.

The Athletic LOADED: 03.07.2018

1102439 Websites

The Athletic / Q&A: Danny Briere on starting an ECHL team, losing to the Blackhawks and picking Philly over Montreal

By Craig Custance 18 hours ago 25

Danny Briere was a player who was probably a bit ahead of his time. Small and skilled during an era where management tended to prefer big and physical, Briere still managed to carve out an incredible career, playing nearly 1,000 games and finishing with 696 career points. He was even better in the playoffs, where he was nearly a point per game producer in 124 games.

Since retiring in 2015, Briere has quietly been learning the front office trade, sitting in on Flyers business meetings and working his way from the ground up. He's now the GM of the Maine Mariners, an ECHL team he's starting from scratch to play in the 2018-19 season. Briere chatted with The Athletic's Craig Custance for an episode of The Full 60 podcast (listen to the full Briere interview here), but Briere was too good to limit to just audio. Here are some highlights of that talk, edited for length:

Custance: I know after your playing career was over, you went into the Flyers organization. What were your duties with the Flyers?

Briere: After my year in Colorado, Paul Holmgren approached me and kind of invited me to follow him and learn what he was doing now as the president of the Flyers. I didn't have much going on at that time. I knew it was pretty much the end of my playing days. So I thought it was a perfect opportunity. You're not committed 100 percent but you get to touch on different things. At first, it was a little scary, some of the meetings I would go to, because it was way over my head. When we're talking about ticket sales and advertising money and all that stuff, I was completely lost. But the more we went the better I started feeling.

CC: I assume when a former player takes a management role it's more along the lines of you're scouting games. But you got into some of the business side. What was it like sitting in those meetings?

Briere: I still love hockey and you know, I figured that I've played the game for so long, I think I feel comfortable if ever I come back on the hockey side eventually, which I am a little bit with the Mariners, but you realize really quickly that you don't know much about the business side of the game. You go from meetings about the teams you're going to face and the power play you're going to face ... all of sudden, you're talking about how to get more fans in the seats, how to sell suites, how to get advertising money.

Those are all things that I had no clue about. I knew they were happening, but I didn't know how, and I didn't know how many people it took to run all that.

CC: Yeah.



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Briere: It's funny, because the first few meetings that I would sit in, they were using acronyms for most of everything they talked about. I was just nodding like I knew what it was and I had no clue. Luckily, there's a couple of very nice people in that room that kind of realized that I didn't know what was going on and they made me a cheat sheet with the acronyms so that I could find out what they meant. And that's how it goes, you ask a lot of questions ... We're starting from scratch, so you have to touch everything. Even on the hockey side, I'm getting all the equipment for the guys, the gym equipment, the equipment they're going to wear for the games, the making of the jerseys, the logo for the franchise, the name, and that's mostly on the hockey side.

I'm trying to enjoy this as much as I can. I'm having a blast with running this team, the Maine Mariners. We hired our new coach a couple weeks ago.

CC: Who'd you hire?

Briere: His name is Riley Armstrong. He's played professional hockey for a lot of years. He's the little brother of Colby Armstrong. He used to play for Pittsburgh.

CC: I don't know Riley. I know Colby pretty well. Are they similar in terms of their personalities?

Briere: I would say Riley is maybe a little bit more contained.

CC: (laughs) Yeah.

Briere: But great personality, you know, expresses himself very well in front of the guys, and I think it'll show really well and the guys will respect him. He's had a long career, mostly in the minors. He's played two games in the NHL, but he's been mostly riding the bus in the minors, so he'll be able to feel what these guys are going through. I'm very excited about him.

CC: How does that work if you're trying to revive an old team? Did you have to get the rights back to the name? What was that process like?

Briere: Yeah, we had to find who had the rights to the name and make that work.

CC: Do you remember who had it? Who was sitting there with the old rights to some old hockey team name, because I want to go buy one.

Briere: I'm not sure. There's someone who was involved with the Pirates that had bought the name, but it wasn't 100 percent sure that he had it, because the Flyers in the late 70s had bought the rights, but nobody knew if they still had it. It was very slow and confusing who exactly had the rights to the team, but our lawyers figured it out. And I was given the green light to go ahead and use the Maine Mariners' name after a couple months of trying to figure it all out.

CC: I love it.

Briere: I know we are good to go at this point. Yeah, it's very exciting, just going through that process. Asking the fans which name they wanted and then the building of the logo and trying to bring a logo that the people of Maine will feel like it's their own, they'll feel attached to it. That was very interesting.

CC: In terms of your playing career, when I think of Danny Briere I think of the run you had with the Flyers in the 2010 playoffs where you put up a million points. ... You didn't win a Stanley Cup. I feel sometimes those performances get lost in the history because it just so happened your team didn't win.

Briere: I look back and you get so close and you have such a great run, you know, but we came up short. It still hurts to think about that, but that two month stretch of hockey, personally, was I feel, the best I've played in my pro career. You hear the players talking, being in the zone. That time, we were in a bubble. When you make the playoffs and you move from round, to round, to round, you have no clue what's going on on the outside. You're so focused on what you have on you and your teammates and the systems and the players that you're playing with and

against, that you're kind of in a bubble. You don't know what's going on in the outside world. That's what I remember of that playoff run.

CC: What's it feel like when you're in that zone as a player on the ice?

Briere: I mean it's amazing, because you don't think, you just go out, you just play. You just know good things are going to happen in front of you. You try to ride it as long as you can, but it's certainly an amazing feeling as a player when you jump on the ice. And for me, it was always knowing that every shift I had a chance to score. That's how I felt. I felt, 'I just have to be ready. This shift, something's going to happen, I'm going to have a scoring chance or we're going to score a goal. I've just got to be ready for it. ...

When things are not going well, it's the opposite. You're thinking, "Man, I hope something happens next shift. I hope I get a bounce next shift." When you're hoping for a bounce, that's usually not a good sign.

When you're jumping on and you know something good is about to happen, it's an amazing feeling.

CC: Was the Boston series the most memorable in that run?

Briere: You know what? I think they all had a little something.

New Jersey had finished second. We were the seventh seed. Nobody gave us a chance. That's also the series where we lost Jeff Carter who I had played with pretty much the whole year on the wing, so when we lost him, Peter Laviolette brought me back to the middle and he moved Ville Leino, who we had picked up in a trade late in the season and had been pretty much a scratch through the end of the season and into the playoffs and we needed someone. We had also lost Ian Laperriere, so we'd lost two forwards. So, he just decided to throw Ville Leino on my line with Scott Hartnell and things clicked from the first game in that New Jersey series. That was the first round.

I think it was game number four in the series. Things just clicked with Ville and Scott, and then we went on that tear the rest of the playoffs.

CC: That line was so good, Danny. That line was ridiculous.

Briere: And you know, it's so tough, and I still say to this day, if you take the three of us individually, we're OK players, but when you put us all three together, we made each other better. We needed the little things that each one of us did on the ice to take us to the next step. That was really wild to see. I've heard a lot of players who've played with Ville later and they said, "How could you play with him?" They had a hard time understanding how Ville played the game, but for some reason, the three of us we just figured it out and things just clicked naturally. That was a good feeling.

Then, the second round was the Boston series, and I mean everybody knows the story now when we came back from being down three nothing to coming back. Down three nothing and Game 7 coming back. That was definitely the wildest recollection of a turnaround that I've ever seen in my career, and to be part of it was amazing.

And in third round I got to play against the Montreal Canadiens. So for me, going back home to play in front of friends and family in a series that would send me to the Stanley Cup finals, that was pretty wild, too. That was very special. And even the Stanley Cup finals was the only one I've played in and I'll remember my whole life, even though we didn't win.

CC: Things didn't pan out for Leino in Buffalo afterwards, what made him a challenge for others to play with in terms of his style?

Briere: Personally, everywhere I had played before, I was always, for the most part, more of a set-up guy.

In Buffalo, when I played with JP Dumont or Jason Pominville, I would try to find them more than being a shooter. With Ville, I had to change. Even when I played with Jeff Carter earlier in the year, I was more of a playmaker, the passer on that line. With Ville, it was totally different. Ville would tell me, "Whenever I get the puck in the offensive zone, and I'm in the corner, don't come to me. Go get lost, backdoor, and I'll try to find



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you." The tendency nowadays, and forever, is you try to support each other.

CC: Yeah.

Briere: And you see two guys in the corner, one with the puck, the other guy gets close, they try to support each other, make little passes, to come out and attack. Ville didn't want me to come close to him, he would say, "Just get lost. Go away from me, I'll find you." I realized that pretty quickly. I would get lost and he was so strong on the puck. Sometimes he had two or three guys on top of him, trying to take the puck away, and he was also very slippery and he would come out with the puck and now if he's taken two or three guys out of the play, someone has to be open somewhere, and I would find myself in a hole somewhere where nobody was covering, and he would find me. I had to change my mentality of trying to go help him. I would try to get lost a little bit more and have more of the mentality of a shooter when I played with Ville. It worked great. It was a lot of fun.

CC: And Peter Laviolette was fine with that? There was a certain amount of freedom there.

Briere: Yes, but it's funny. Peter Laviolette is one of the rare coaches that I've had that would teach us offense, give us set plays in the offensive zone. Most of the coaches, for example, in practices you'll practice the three on three and most coaches are so worried about the defense, about not giving a goal, not giving up a chance to score, or not giving up even a shot. Peter was the total opposite. Peter would yell at us if we didn't have a shot. He would get mad if we couldn't create a scoring chance. And he would make the offensive guys skate if they couldn't get a shot on net.

CC: I love that.

Briere: It was a very different mentality. He would push the offense all the time, and he would tell us, "The best way to defend and close the game is to keep control of the puck and to keep attacking and making plays." Yeah, Peter's approach was very different than most coaches I've had. Part of the reason why he's had so much success, because he brings a different element that you don't see a lot in very many coaches.

CC: It's a pretty modern thought process. I think the game's evolving that way.

Briere: He's been doing that for years. It works everywhere he goes, but it's not easy to do. Human nature tells you when you're up by a goal, in the third period, you want to sit back and just defend. To have a coach that tells you, "Keep going, keep putting the pressure on them. They're cheating, so you'll have a lot more chances to score." It's very different, but part of the reason why he's been so successful in his career.

CC: You mentioned playing in Montreal. I vaguely remember when you were a free agent (in 2007) at the peak there was always this assumption you would go to Montreal and play. How close did that come instead of Philly?

Briere: It was very close.

CC: Really?

Briere: Yeah, it was very close. It came down that it was between Montreal and Philly and my heart was telling me to go to Montreal, but my head was telling me that Philly was the right place to go.

The way they were building their team, the direction they were going in, the trades they had made, the players coming in, it was just a better setup I felt at the time, but it was extremely tough to turn my back on the Montreal Canadiens, the team that I'd grown up idolizing. It was extremely tough that day to make that decision, but I look back and probably one of the best decisions that I've made.

CC: Were you at home or at a cottage? How does that play out as a player when you're in free agency?

Briere: Yeah, that day I was in California at my agent Pat Brisson's office. ... Pat was fielding the calls, and I was hoping to get a few of the teams that I was interested in, and within the first 15, 20 minutes, all the teams that I had interest in had called, so at that point I knew that it was going to be my decision and I was going to have to be forced to go somewhere I wasn't interested, and the money was way more than I had ever expected.

It was just a matter of identifying what place was the best and after eliminating a few of the teams, we came down to Montreal and Philadelphia, and that became the toughest decision that I had to make.

CC: How much time do you have to make that decision? This all happens pretty fast, right?

Briere: It happens fast, exactly. On that day, Scott Gomez and Chris Drury signed pretty quickly.

CC: That's right.

Briere: Within the first couple hours.

CC: That was the Rangers.

Briere: Yeah, and it's funny, because I pulled myself out of that running because I knew Chris Drury wanted to go to the Rangers, so I kind of pulled myself out of that running to give him the space to go and sign there. Not knowing that they were willing to sign two players, so that kind of surprised me when they came up with Gomez and Drury.

If I would have known that, it might have been different, I don't know. They were the third team on the list. Then I was down to just Montreal and Philadelphia.

CC: Are you one of those guys that makes a pros and cons list in the moment?

Briere: I did. Yeah, I did. We had prepared. I had gone through most of the teams a pro and cons list. I had talked to different people in the hockey world that could help me when I had questions. Pat and his crew also chipped in work on that list on the pros and the cons and that's where our list was pretty solid. Going in I had a pretty good idea, so when it came down to just Montreal and Philly, we could go back to that list and kind of look at all the positives and the negatives for both teams.

CC: I want to get to that final against Chicago, because from the outside covering it, it was such an entertaining final, for a lot of reasons. There were big personalities. Your line was going, but you had guys like Hartnell in that room, and yourself and Chris Pronger ...

Briere: Chris Pronger.

CC: Oh, my gosh. I just remember him standing — at one point they had you guys on these pedestals so he was like eight foot and we're all like looking up at him in that dressing room and he's yelling at us, and it was crazy and it was fun. What's that circus like from your point of view, when you're trying to win a Stanley Cup?

Briere: You're in a bubble. You're with your teammates and the coaching staff. You're clueless to what's going on in the real world. You're just concentrating every day on what's in front of you, the playoffs, the players, the videos, the players you're facing. I do remember seeing Chris Pronger yelling at the reporters. And Chris stealing the pucks after Game 1 and 2 in Chicago.

CC: I forgot about that.

Briere: That was great because it created a diversion for the rest of us on the team. Everybody wanted to talk to him about the pucks and where they were. The Blackhawks were all fired up, and it took away the pressure from the rest of our team. I think it was so clever on Chris' part.

CC: Was it intentional?

Briere: Chris has been in many Stanley Cup finals before and he knew we had mostly a team that it was our first time there, guys with not a lot



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of experience playing the Stanley Cup final, and he just took it upon himself to take all the attention away from us and onto himself to give us more space. I thought it was fantastic. It made our life a lot easier. He was the one having to answer all the questions and getting in fights with the reporters, which was great. We had a blast looking at and laughing at that.

CC: It's not nearly as fun getting yelled at, though, I've got to say.

Briere: Yeah. It's the only time I've ever seen a player giving it to the reporters. That was really ... I could not believe it. I've never seen anyone taking on the reporters the way he did, but you know, it was awesome because it gave us a lot more freedom.

CC: The quality of play in that last game (Game 6 of 2010 Stanley Cup finals) was unbelievable.

Briere: Yeah. I agree and that's what I remember, too. I remember two teams that were at the top of their game, really playing well. I look back, you know, sometimes I've lost different series where you look back and you say, "You know what? We didn't play well, we didn't deserve to win. We didn't show up. We didn't do this, we didn't do that." In the Stanley Cup final against Chicago, I felt like both teams were just at the top of their game. They were both playing well. We were going back and forth with them, and it's not like we got completely destroyed. ... The games were all there, they were very close, and it ended up in overtime at Game 6 so, you know, I'm still, even though we lost and it still stings, I'm still very proud of how we played and how we showed up in that series.

CC: I forgot how close it was. ... It easily could have gone to Game 7 back in Chicago.

Briere: We went back in the locker room in between periods. It was there and in our minds it was just the way it was supposed to be. We were still feeling confident. There was never a time where I felt we were going to lose that game. It was pretty wild feeling that was had, the confidence that we had. We had been pushed to the brink so many times from the last game of the regular season where we had to win a shootout against the Rangers and Henrik Lundqvist, who's probably at the time the best shootout goalie in the league, and we found a way; to losing Jeff Carter and Ian Laperriere against New Jersey and finding a way; to being down three nothing against the Bruins, coming back, losing three nothing in Game 7 and coming back. We just had the feeling that it's just the way it was supposed to be. Every time we got pushed to the limit, we answered the bell. Going back for the overtime, it was just a matter of time, in our minds, before we would score that goal and send it to Game 7.

CC: Where were you when Patrick Kane scores that (overtime) goal?

Briere: I was on the bench, and I remember him going behind the net and then starting to jump around and swing his stick, and my first reaction is, "What is he doing? What's this, a dancing contest?" The way he shot the puck and I just thought that [Michael] Leighton had it. It never crossed my mind that the puck was in until two or three seconds later when he gets to the red line and he's still dancing and now his gloves are going off. Then I had that sinking feeling that, "No. The puck is not in. It can't be." And then you start realizing that people are ... the players and the referees are all looking for the puck. Nobody knows where it is, until they lift one of the pads in the net and they see the puck there. It was a pretty devastating moment.

CC: I can't even imagine. When does it sink in how close you were? Because I've been in those rooms after those losses. It's heartbreaking.

Briere: Yeah, it's heartbreaking. It was dead silent, nobody was saying a word. You get undressed and you're in a daze, you know, because you work for two months. You work and everybody's beat up, everybody's banged up, everybody is so sore, but when you play the game you don't feel any of that. Just the adrenaline's taking you. And then you get in the room and, at the same time, there's this huge relief that, "Oh, it's finally over. I don't have to be a gladiator anymore."

CC: Yeah.

Briere: "I can go back to living a normal life." But it's like a daze. You don't really know what's going on. You're kind of clueless. You realize that you've just lost, but you don't realize the impact, you don't realize that you're going to be thinking about that moment for the next 50 years of your life. It's just kind of like a blur, almost. And the weirdest part, to me, is the next morning when you wake up, because for two months, and especially the last two weeks, you've been the center of attention. Everywhere you go, everybody's behind you. The whole city's behind you. Every time you go out to the rink, everybody wants to talk to you, you know, TV all over Canada and the U.S. Everybody wants to have a piece of you. Interviews. You're focusing on the games and you wake up the next morning and all of a sudden, there's no meetings, there's nobody expecting you anywhere, nobody wants to talk to you. It's the weirdest feeling. You go from being the center of attention, superstar in the hockey world, to being the person or the team and the player that nobody wants to talk to. They want to talk to the Stanley Cup winners.

The Athletic LOADED: 03.07.2018

1102440 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Canucks get bittersweet news with Brock Boeser diagnosis

Iain MacIntyre | @imacSportsnet March 6, 2018, 7:13 PM

VANCOUVER – "We love the Canucks. We love the fans, the organization. We're so thrilled for Brock. We had hoped he could really catch Barzal for rookie of the year, but we have a lot to be thankful for."

That was Brock Boeser's mom, Laurie Boeser, speaking on Tuesday. It could have been just about anyone who cares about the Vancouver Canucks or, even, the National Hockey League.

Brock Boeser is a special player, the best rookie to arrive in Vancouver in 25 years. He scored 29 goals as a rookie – 27 of them before he turned 21 on Feb. 25 – became the first rookie to be named MVP at the NHL All-Star Game and led his team in scoring even after all the opposing teams caught on to him.

But equally important, Boeser provided hope to a franchise desperate for it. He is what the future looks like, the better days ahead for the Canucks.

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And when you think in this context, it's understandable how the Canucks and nearly everyone, including Boeser's mom but probably not the winger himself, felt lucky Tuesday even as the team announced the kid from Burnsville, Minn., is done for the season due to a small fracture in his lower back.

Officially, Boeser's absence is listed as four to six weeks but he won't play again this season.

He is not going to catch New York Islander Mathew Barzal in the rookie-of-the-year race. He may not even be a finalist now. Boeser is not going to break Pavel Bure's Canucks rookie record of 34 goals, which has stood since 1992.

But in a few weeks, Boeser should start training again and when next season begins the Canucks will have a fully healthy second-year player who may be able to challenge Winnipeg Jet Patrik Laine for the "Rocket" Richard Trophy over the next 10 years or so.



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"He's got a small fracture, but he's going to be fine," Canucks coach Travis Green told reporters the day after Boeser left Rogers Arena in an ambulance. "He walked out of the hospital.

"Brock's had a great rookie season and the good news is he'll have a full recovery."

Boeser was injured in the final minute of regulation time Monday when he tried to finish a check on Islander Cal Clutterbuck and was launched backward against the frame of an open door at the Vancouver bench.

He immediately reached for his lower back, then lay motionless on the ice while being attended by trainer Jon Sanderson. Boeser was helped off the ice, then taken to hospital after the Canucks won 4-3 in overtime.

If you think fans were worried, imagine how Laurie Boeser felt watching the game on television in Minnesota.

"It was pretty scary because he's never just laid on the ice like that," she said. "To be honest, he's been very fortunate that he hasn't had a lot of injuries through the years of playing. We've really been blessed that way. But last night when he really wasn't moving at all ... I work in an orthopedic clinic and I know about things that can happen with the back and the neck.

"I was very concerned, but it ended up being something that will heal and allow him to get back to skating again."

Twice earlier this season it looked like the Canucks might lose Boeser to a serious injury. He literally crawled off the ice when struck in the foot by Calgary Flame Mark Giordano's shot on Dec. 17, but did not miss a game. He missed a Feb. 9 start in Carolina due to a hand injury but bounced back and played two nights later.

Odds and medical science just caught up to Boeser on Monday.

When asked about criticism from "armchair doctors" – presumably they report to the Canucks' innumerable armchair general managers and armchair coaches – who berated the team on social media for not immobilizing Boeser and stretching him off the ice, Green said: "Well, the real doctors were on the ice. I've got a lot of faith in those guys. They're the best of the best and they went protocol all the way, and did a good job with it."

Green's immediate challenge as coach is maintaining the energy and positivity in his team since he traded for Brendan Leipsic and Tyler Motte on Feb. 26. Leipsic has five points in three games and the Canucks have been both entertaining and effective, going 1-0-2. The Arizona Coyotes visit Rogers Arena on Wednesday.

"Unless you're in the battle and understand it, it's really hard to explain," Green said of the psychology of injuries. "These guys, they go through a lot. When you go through pro hockey and you play in the NHL ... you see a lot. When a player's down and he's right in front of your bench, you definitely worry about your teammate. But guys are also able to flip the switch and get back to playing. It might sound harsh, but injuries are part of the game. You know that ever since you start playing."

Among Canucks forwards, Boeser, Sven Baertschi (shoulder) Markus Granlund (ankle), Loui Eriksson (ribs) and Brendan Gaunce (foot) are all done for the season. Winger Derek Dorsett (back) was forced to abruptly retire last fall.

"We know what kind of player he is now," Canucks captain Henrik Sedin said of Boeser. "He did it for 60-plus games. (The injury) shouldn't take away from the season he's had. He'll miss the next few weeks, but he'll be ready to go next year.

"He has shown that he's going to be a star in this league. This was good news today."

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 03.07.2018

Sportsnet.ca / Boeser injury overshadows Canucks-Islanders rookie showdown

Iain MacIntyre | @imacSportsnet March 6, 2018, 2:01 AM

VANCOUVER – A night with some glorious rookie moments ended with Vancouver Canucks Calder Trophy candidate Brock Boeser taken to hospital by ambulance after a frightening collision late in the third period.

Playing at home for the first time against rookie of the year favourite Mathew Barzal of the New York Islanders, Boeser appeared to strike his hip or tailbone against the open frame of the bench door when propelled backwards by Cal Clutterbuck as the Canucks star tried to land a check.

Boeser immediately clutched his back and lay on the ice for a couple of minutes before being helped off with 27.1 seconds remaining in regulation time. Security later closed the hallway outside the Canucks' dressing room at Rogers Arena so the 21-year-old could be taken away by ambulance.

Canucks coach Travis Green said Boeser went to hospital for "precautionary" reasons and that the team's medical staff hope the winger suffered only a bruise.

Boeser's chase of the Calder Trophy — he leads all rookies with 29 goals and is the Canucks' best freshman since Pavel Bure was named rookie of the year in 1992 — is one of the last surviving positive storylines for a National Hockey League team that is hopelessly out of the playoff race for the third straight season.

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Monday's game was anticipated as a showcase for Boeser and Barzal, the 20-year-old forward from nearby Coquitlam, B.C., who leads Boeser by 12 points in rookie scoring. Make that 14 because Barzal had two assists in the Canucks' 4-3 overtime win.

By the end, the heroic rookie was new Canucks acquisition Brendan Leipsic, who had a dreadful first half of the game but scored the first and last Vancouver goals, winning it at 2:47 of overtime when Islander Anthony Beauvillier fell with the puck and Leipsic beat goalie Jaroslav Halak to it.

But what joy there was in the Canucks dressing room after a win that followed two straight overtime losses was muted by concern about Boeser.

"Obviously, it's not a good thing to see when you see Brock go down," Vancouver winger Jake Virtanen said. "But he's a tough character, a tough warrior. I think he'll be fine. I know I was changing and I was just closing the gate because I just got off and someone came and hit him, and I think he might have hit his back on the gate. I'm not really sure."

Forward Darren Archibald said: "Everybody in the room is thinking about him here. Hopefully he's alright. We just hope for the best."

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It is indicative of the transition underway in Vancouver that the Canuck scorers were Leipsic, Archibald and Virtanen.

Leipsic was acquired last week from the Vegas Golden Knights in exchange for minor-league defenceman Philip Holm and now has five points in three games for the Canucks. Archibald, who signed an NHL contract with the Canucks to facilitate a promotion from the American Hockey League a month ago, scored on a second-period penalty shot



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and has filled the void in the lineup left by the November retirement of gritty winger Derek Dorsett. Virtanen, a healthy scratch several times earlier in the season, is playing the best hockey in his three years as a pro and gave the Canucks a 3-2 lead on an accidental shot on a 2-on-1 at 10:31 of the third period.

After taking a nice pass from Leipsic, who beat New York defenceman Brandon Davidson to create the outnumbered rush, Virtanen heeled his shot between Halak's skates.

"I was going high glove but apparently it worked," Virtanen smiled. "Usually I try to shoot as hard as I can where I want it, but I was just trying to pick my spot and make it accurate. But it ended up going five-hole. When I got to the bench, I was laughing about it to myself."

After Jordan Eberle tied it for the Islanders with 1:04 remaining, Leipsic capped his mercurial night by lifting the puck from Beauvillier, rounding Halak and scoring into an open net.

Leipsic took three minor penalties in the game, including the one that preceded Eberle's tying goal, and also gave away the puck on Josh Bailey's goal that made it 1-0 in a first period dominated by the Islanders, who outshot the Canucks 15-6 in the frame.

"I was just praying that I didn't shank it wide or something because I wouldn't be sleeping for a couple of nights," Leipsic said of his winner. "It's one of those where the goalie has to make a split-second decision and it's lucky it went my way."

"I put a lot of pressure on myself to be a good teammate and do the right things, but for whatever reason I wasn't sharp from the get-go. As the game went on we kind of changed up the lines and got our skating legs going. It was kind of a tale of two games, but it was nice to contribute when it mattered."

The Canucks are scheduled to hold an off-ice workout on Tuesday, when they are expected to provide an update on Boeser.

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Sportsnet.ca / Canadiens' terrible start at least partly redeemed by refusal to quit

Ryan Dixon | @dixononsports March 6, 2018, 11:55 PM

NEWARK, N.J. — Halting the hottest scorer in the NHL was always going to be a tough task for the Montreal Canadiens. And for too long, it looked like they weren't even that fussed about trying.

Taylor Hall and the New Jersey Devils earned a 6-4 win over the Canadiens at Prudential Center in Newark on Tuesday night in a game the home side led by as many as five goals. Hall picked up two assists in the contest, extending his point streak to a truly remarkable 26 games. While the left-winger didn't score, Stefan Noesen, Blake Coleman, Travis Zajac (two), Pat Maroon and Brian Boyle all did, helping the Devils to a crucial two points in their quest to secure a playoff berth.

Of course, the post-season ship sailed long ago for the Habs, despite the fact they had actually picked up at least a point in their past seven outings before landing in Jersey. Anyone who considered those gains counter-productive to Montreal's lottery interests would be thrilled with what the club showed against the Devils, especially in the first period. The players, mind you, were not.

"That's unacceptable to start that way," said Canadiens right-winger Brendan Gallagher, whose club was down 4-0 after Zajac popped two power-play markers late in the opening frame.

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While a number of things factored into the lopsided display — the Devils held a 17-5 shot advantage in the first — it sure felt like the standings had a lot to say about how this one went down. Montreal is searching for signs of long-term potential, while New Jersey — losers of three straight coming into this affair — couldn't be more about the here and now.

"We played a team that is obviously desperate," said Montreal coach Claude Julien. "They came out ready to play and we weren't ready to counter that."

Eventually, the Canadiens got pointed in the right direction, starting with Gallagher's second-period marker, followed by a pair from Jacob De La Rose and one from Byron Froese. But that all came after the ugly opening 20 and perhaps no player epitomized the Canadiens' early troubles more than Noah Juulsen.

It's all about the ongoing auditions in Montreal right now and Juulsen — an aspiring star on the back end — has made it a little easier for fans to dream of a brighter future since joining the club on Feb. 22. But right from the word go versus the Devils, it was clear the youngster was in for a wobbly night.

On one of his first plays Juulsen turned the puck over to the last guy in the league you want to gift anything to right now — No. 9 in red — and Hall's centring pass after he took possession easily could have resulted in the first goal of the game. Then, after getting walked by speedster Michael Grabner, Juulsen lost his man in front of the net, allowing Coleman to make it 2-0 New Jersey with 3:27 remaining in the first.

"You're not going to be perfect," Habs right-winger Andrew Shaw said. "Coming up as a young guy, fatigue can always be a part of it. He's been playing a lot and it's mentally exhausting as well."

Another green blue-liner, 22-year-old Rinat Valiev, made his debut with the Canadiens after being acquired in the trade that sent Tomas Plekanec to the Toronto Maple Leafs. And while Valiev didn't do much to stand out either way in the contest, he was in the penalty box when Maroon made him pay for his slashing sins just seven seconds into the power play.

About five minutes later, Boyle scored to make it 6-1 Jersey, which could have sent a Montreal team playing without lead horses Carey Price, Shea Weber and Max Pacioretty silently into the night.

"It could have been easy to say, 'It's not our night,' but the guys fought back," said Julien. "Especially when you've got a lot of young guys in your lineup, you like seeing those things."

It was precisely that kind of resolve Julien was looking for when he left Charlie Lindgren in despite the six-pack of goals surrendered by the 24-year-old goalie.

"You don't want to give him the easy out and say, 'OK, we're going to pull you out, it's not your night,'" the coach said. "No, he's got to fight through it like the rest of our team. I think that's a great lesson for our team if we expect to move forward."

You can certainly always count on determination from Gallagher, whose goal — which saw him drive 100 m.p.h. toward the net before roofing a backhand — marked his 24th on the season, matching a career high.

That tally put Montreal on the board and helped served notice that quitting, quite simply, isn't cool.

"As a young guy coming up, you've got to look at that and learn from it," Shaw said. "He's in his sixth season and he's working hard, competing as hard as he has from Day 1. It's something you've got to do throughout your career. Once you make it, you can't stop proving yourself."



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For a team in the business of teachable moments, maybe this game wasn't such a bad thing after all.

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Sportsnet.ca / Down Goes Brown: Assessing the outsized NHL GM class of 2014

Sean McIndoe | @DownGoesBrown March 6, 2018, 10:19 AM

Hockey fans love to review, rank and debate draft classes. Is this year's any good? Was 2003 better than 1979? How does the Oilers' class of 1980 hold up against the Red Wings' haul in 1989?

But what about the guys who make those draft picks? Each year also brings a new class of NHL GMs, and like draft picks, some years are better than others. This off-season is shaping up to be a busy one in that regard, with plenty of GMs on the hot seat and the possibility of some major changes around NHL front offices.

With that in mind, it seems like a good time to look back at the 2014 off-season that saw eight teams anoint a new GM. According to the archives over at NHL Trade Tracker, that was the busiest single year of turnover since 2006, which was the year a bunch of NHL teams realized that the new post-lockout rules would require some fresh thinking. Other high-turnover years include 2000 (eight new GMs), 1997 (nine, including the expansion Predators), 1994 (eight) and 1974 (nine, including the expansion Scouts and Capitals).

Why was 2014 so busy? It's hard to say, although history shows that the years immediately before and after lockouts tend to bring significant change to NHL front offices. The 2013 class had been busy in its own right, with six changes, and seven if you count coach Patrick Roy being briefly slotted in ahead of Greg Sherman on the Avs' org chart. But the years before had been unusually stable, with just one new GM each in 2011 and 2012, so there was some pent-up demand for change. That feels a little like the situation right now, with only six GM changes (including the first hire for the expansion Golden Knights) since July 2015. That's not quite as extreme as the situation heading into 2013 and 2014, but it's not far off, so we could be in for a rocky few months ahead.

Of those eight GMs hired in 2014, seven are still on the job. (We pause here to sadly pour one out for Tim Murray.) But the clock may be ticking on them. We often say that a new GM deserves five years to implement a plan, and the Class of 2014 is about to head into year five. And history suggests that we should expect at least a few to not even make it that far – from that busy class of 2013, only Jim Nill and Jarmo Kekalainen are still employed.

So which of the 2014 GMs is in the most danger of not making it to 2019? And who's got the best shot of being remembered as the class of the, uh, class? Let's run through the seven names and see if we can figure it out.

Jim Benning, Canucks

The hiring: After missing the playoffs and firing Mike Gillis at the end of the season, the Canucks hired Benning away from the Boston Bruins, where he'd served as assistant GM, on May 21.

Record since: 133-142-36, one playoff appearance

Best moves: Benning came into the job with a reputation for drafting well, and he's largely lived up to that. Getting Brock Boeser 23rd overall in 2015 was a major win, and 2017 fifth-overall pick Elias Pettersson looks like the real deal. Benning also landed a good prospect from Ottawa for

the husk of Alex Burrows, and turned Sven Baertschi into a reasonably successful reclamation project from the Flames.

Worst moves: Given Benning's image as a draft guru, 2016 pick Olli Juolevi looks like a miss. Worse, the Loui Eriksson signing felt like a flat-out disaster from day one. But the biggest objection to Benning's tenure in Vancouver is probably the moves he didn't make. From rarely acquiring draft picks to re-signing Erik Gudbranson to holding onto Chris Tanev, Benning hasn't tried for the sort of full-scale teardown many fans seem to want to see.

Current outlook: A lot better than it was a month ago, thanks to the three-year extension he signed in February. That move came as a bit of a surprise, with the team on track to finish in the bottom five for the third straight year. Rebuilds take time, sure, but often it doesn't seem like Benning knows the Canucks are rebuilding.

Odds of seeing 2019: Excellent. The importance of GM extensions can be overstated – remember when Dave Nonis got a five-year deal in 2013, Leafs fans freaked out, and then he was gone less than two years later? – but the vote of confidence from ownership and Trevor Linden means Benning will make it to the new year. Will he see his five-year anniversary in May? That looks likely, too, but another year without progress could call it into question.

The Program

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Originally aired March 05 2018

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Jim Rutherford, Penguins

The hiring: The Penguins hired Rutherford on June 6, replacing Ray Shero. The move came as a minor surprise; Rutherford had just finished a 20-year stint as GM in Carolina and Hartford, a role he'd relinquished in April.

Record since: 178-99-35, three playoff appearances, two Stanley Cup wins (and counting). He was also named GM of the Year in 2016.

Best moves: Rutherford's been one of the league's most active traders since taking the job, with far more hits than misses. Trades for Nick Bonino and Justin Schultz worked out well, and Rutherford managed to stickhandle through the Marc-Andre Fleury expansion dilemma. But his biggest and best trade was landing Phil Kessel in 2015, a move that paid off with 45 points in two Cup-winning playoff runs.

Worst moves: He was criticized for the James Neal trade at the time, although Patric Hornqvist has worked out well. More recently, moving a first-round pick for Ryan Reaves was a head-scratcher, especially given Reaves didn't even last the year in Pittsburgh. Rutherford's biggest miss was probably hiring Mike Johnston as his first coach, although he corrected that mistake quickly by switching to Mike Sullivan after a season and a half.

Current outlook: This one gets interesting. Clearly, Rutherford has easily been the most successful GM of the Class of 2014, and his chances of getting fired any time soon are roughly zero. But he also just turned 69 years old, and when he was hired in Pittsburgh he said he only expected to hold the job for two or three years before stepping aside for a successor. Then again, that successor was presumed to be assistant GM Jason Botterill, who's now in Buffalo, and Rutherford signed a three-year extension in 2016.

Odds of seeing 2019: Rutherford will probably hold the job as long as he wants to, but we're not sure how long that will be. It's at least possible he decides to step aside this summer, but it seems more likely that he at least finishes off his current deal.



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Joe Sakic, Avalanche

**The hiring:** This one's a little tricky. Sakic had been holding the final say on moves in Colorado for a while, but didn't officially get the GM's title until sometime during the 2014 off-season when Greg Sherman was demoted to assistant GM. The Avalanche didn't make an official announcement about the switch, but it became public on Sept. 19.

**Record since:** 135-150-25 and no playoff appearances since he officially got the job, although the Avs did make the post-season in 2013-14 when he was kind-of sort-of the GM

**Best moves:** After being widely criticized for not making the move sooner, Sakic did surprisingly well on the Matt Duchene trade, landing some solid prospects and a first-rounder from the Senators that figures to be a high one.

**Worst moves:** Even putting Duchene aside, Sakic whiffed on the 2017 deadline in the midst of a miserable season. He also didn't get much for Ryan O'Reilly, although his hand was forced on that one, and let pending UFA Paul Stastny walk for nothing.

**Current outlook:** A heck of a lot better than it was this time last year, when he was widely viewed as the league's worst GM. There were reports that the Avalanche were looking at potential replacements as recently as last summer. But the success of the Duchene trade and a surprising run at a playoff spot have cooled his seat at least a little.

**Odds of seeing 2019:** Still dicey. While he'd be hard to fire given his playing career in Colorado, he could also be booted upstairs, and if the Avalanche miss the post-season again and the right candidate were to become available elsewhere, you'd have to figure Sakic's tenure could come to an end.

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Ron Francis, Hurricanes

**The hiring:** Francis took the GM job in Carolina on April 28, after Rutherford stepped down.

**Record since:** 130-129-53, no playoff appearances

**Best moves:** Scooping Teuvo Teravainen from the Blackhawks in exchange for taking on Bryan Bickell's deal was a nice win, and the team was one of the few to come away from last year's expansion in better shape than they went in.

**Worst moves:** The Hurricanes' continue to struggle in the crease, with last year's off-season acquisition of Scott Darling looking like a bust.

**Current outlook:** It's hard to imagine Francis ever being fired, given his history in Carolina, and he signed an extension in 2016 that takes him through the end of next season. But could he be moved upstairs to make way for a new set of eyes? With new ownership in place and the Hurricanes on track to miss the playoffs for a league-high ninth straight year, it wouldn't shock anyone.

**Odds of seeing 2019:** Decent, if the Hurricanes can come back to make the playoffs. If not, you have to wonder.

Ron Hextall, Flyers

**The hiring:** After his old team hired him away from the Kings as assistant GM in 2013, everyone expected Hextall to eventually replace Paul Holmgren. That day came a season later on May 7, as the club "promoted" Holmgren to president and slid Hextall into the GM's chair.

**Record since:** 147-112-53, one playoff appearance

**Best moves:** He had a decent 2015 deadline, shipping out Kimmo Timonem and Braydon Coburn for high picks, and has proven adept at

finding takers for bad salaries (even Chris Pronger's). But maybe his best move was resisting calls to fire Dave Hakstol when the team lost 10 straight earlier this season. Hakstol righted the ship, and the Flyers climbed all the way back into the running for top spot in the Metro.

**Worst moves:** Nothing really stands out as a major blunder, although last summer's deal that sent Brayden Schenn to St. Louis was trending that way early in the season. If there's a complaint about Hextall's tenure, it's that his wild-eyed playing days have given way to a management career that's almost too conservative, as he sticks to the long-term plan even when you wonder if the Flyers could use a short-term boost.

**Current outlook:** Strong. The Flyers look like they're just about a lock to return to the playoffs, and have a shot at doing some early damage once they're there.

**Odds of seeing 2019:** Pretty much a sure thing.

**Best moves:** MacLellan inherited a pretty good team from McPhee, but has made some solid moves of his own. Getting T.J. Oshie from St. Louis worked out well. But maybe his best decision has been resisting calls to blow up the roster after their annual early playoff exit.

**Worst moves:** Last year's Kevin Shattenkirk deal was viewed as a strong move at the time, but didn't work out. MacLellan was widely seen as mishandling the salary cap last summer, leading to the departure of players like Marcus Johansson and Justin Williams, and they lost Nate Schmidt to Vegas. And while the team's success means MacLellan hasn't had any high picks, his four drafts have yielded just two players who've so much as seen the NHL.

**Current outlook:** MacLellan was reportedly in the last year of his contract this season, leading to questions about whether his job was in jeopardy. But as Nick Kypreos reported on Saturday, MacLellan has apparently just signed a multi-year extension.

**Odds of seeing 2019:** That extension means he's safe.

Sportsnet's Starting Lineup

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Originally aired March 05 2018

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Brad Treliving, Flames

**The hiring:** Treliving was hired away from the Coyotes, where he'd spent seven years as the assistant to Don Maloney, on April 28.

**Record since:** 157-128-27, one playoff appearance

**Best moves:** Treliving is an aggressive trader, with wins including getting Mike Smith from Arizona and Dougie Hamilton from Boston, as well as prying a decent package out of Dallas for Kris Russell. He also drafted Matthew Tkachuk and got franchise cornerstones Johnny Gaudreau and Sean Monahan locked into long-term deals at a reasonable cap hit.

**Worst moves:** Last year's Travis Hamonic deal hasn't worked out, nor did the Brian Elliott trade in 2016. Troy Brouwer's contract was a predictable overpay. And while it's still a little early to be declaring busts from the 2014 draft, fourth overall pick Sam Bennett could at least be called disappointing.

**Current outlook:** Treliving famously went through all of last season without an extension, but was finally given a new deal last May. That contract was for a reported three years, which gives him some job security. But only some – if the Flames miss the playoffs yet again, you'd have to think that everyone in the organization is facing some tough questions.

**Odds of seeing 2019:** More likely than not. But if the Flames miss the playoffs this year, 2018–19 would shape up as a make-or-break season for Treliving.



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Sportsnet.ca / Maple Leafs' Plekanec 'can't erase 15 years just over a day or two'

Chris Johnston | @reporterchris March 6, 2018, 1:13 PM

The colour of the turtlenecks may not have changed in Toronto, but everything else did.

Tomas Plekanec has seen his world turned inside-out since the move to the Maple Leafs. Strange doesn't even begin to describe it.

"You can't erase 15 years just over a day or two," Plekanec said this weekend.

Consider that Tuesday morning was the first time since the Feb. 25 trade from Montreal where he actually woke up in Toronto. Plekanec switched allegiances just as the Leafs were embarking on their strangest road trip of the year – back-to-back games in Florida, followed by a rookie party, then an outdoor game at the U.S. Naval Academy and a visit to Buffalo.

The Leafs didn't win any of those games. Plekanec established a new mark for his lowest ice time in five years in three of them. When you account for the reality of where he's now playing, the veteran centre might fairly be wondering if he's entered a twisted hockey Twilight Zone.

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"It's not easy," said defenceman Josh Gorges, who spent parts of eight seasons with Plekanec in Montreal before his 2014 trade to Buffalo. "Mid-season is one thing to just jump ship. You're coming to a team that's already kind of got their foundation of who they are, and what they are, and you're the new guy trying to find your way. I think there's probably added [emotion] when it's Montreal and Toronto.

"That's got to be heavy on the mind."

He would certainly know.

Before getting moved to the Sabres, Gorges declined to waive his no-trade clause to facilitate a deal to the Leafs. He simply couldn't imagine himself in that blue and white sweater. And he hadn't even played half as many games with the Canadiens as Plekanec did.

"You give yourself to one team and you're so adamant about who you are and what you belong to," Gorges explained. "There were two teams especially – it was Boston and Toronto – you just, that rivalry, you love to play against them because you hate them, you know, which is a great thing. [You wonder] how am I supposed to give that same sort of approach and mentality to another team that I've become accustomed to hating for so long?"

At least Plekanec can busy himself with practical matters. He's received permission to return to Montreal following Wednesday's Leafs practice to get a quick visit in with his family and pick up some much-needed clothing.

"I didn't pack much," he said.

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.

It's been three weeks since he last saw wife Lucie and sons Adam and Matyáš. The thought of being back with them brought a smile to

Plekanec's face during a quick chat following Monday's 5-3 loss to the Sabres.

His on-ice results with the Leafs have been consistent with what you'd expect from a defensively-reliable fourth-liner. The team has controlled just a hair under 50 per cent of even-strength shot attempts with him on the ice so far and Plekanec has won slightly more than half of his faceoffs.

Even though Toronto's penalty kill has stumbled in recent games, he was out for just one of the four power-play goals they've given up on the last eight attempts.

The veteran clearly has the support of Mike Babcock, who made no secret of his desire for another centre option in the leadup to the trade deadline. The Leafs coach has already spoken with Plekanec on a couple different occasions to help ease his transition.

"In Detroit, we traded for guys like that a number of times," said Babcock. "The biggest thing when you come and you've been in one place a long, long time is you're used to doing everything the same way and suddenly you find yourself on the ice and you're thinking. And then wonder why nothing's going right for you. Well, you're spending too much time thinking and nothing moves.

"It's all going to work out perfect for him and he's just got to be a little bit patient with himself. We are. There's no problem whatsoever. He'll be a big part of our team. He's just got to work through the process."

From Toronto's perspective, the value of acquiring Plekanec won't truly be seen until Auston Matthews returns from injury and the big games arrive. It will allow Babcock to roll out Matthews, Nazem Kadri, Tyler Bozak and Plekanec down the middle once the line matching goes to another level in the playoffs.

"I can get a can't-miss matchup," said Babcock.

Gorges was part of two deep playoff runs in Montreal with Plekanec and still thinks his former teammate has something to offer at this advanced stage of his career.

"They're getting a good honest player that is a true professional," said Gorges. "He's going to come prepared to do what he has to do. He's responsible. I think whatever the situation he may be in – he can still play power play, penalty kill, move up and down the lines, if need be, [and] play against the other team's top lines.

"I think he makes the guys around him better, too. He's a smart hockey player. He makes the game easy for the guys he's playing with."

First, he needs to make it a little easier on himself.

That's still a work in progress. A quick trip home this week should help, not to mention a little more time spent with new teammates. Plekanec joked that his sons have no choice but to switch allegiances from the Habs to Leafs along with him.

They can do it together.

"It's different," he said. "It's 15 years of something. It's hard to erase it in a couple days. But it's normal. These days players get traded and they've got to put new jerseys on. It's the same for me.

"I'm trying to do the best I can."

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Sportsnet.ca / Devils' Hall thriving under stability he never had with Oilers

Mark Spector | @sportsnetspec March 6, 2018, 1:54 PM



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"I think it's safe to say I'm a very motivated player now." — Taylor Hall, the day he was traded to the New Jersey Devils.

There were plenty of intangibles around the Taylor Hall-for-Adam Larsson trade, all of which seem so inconsequential, so inconceivable right now.

Hall was too big a presence in the Edmonton dressing room. He didn't have the vision to play with Connor McDavid. He'd never figure out how to be defensively responsible.

What a load all of that turned out to be.

In reality, Hall served his bit with a dysfunctional organization whose own ineptitude landed him there in the first place, as the No. 1 pick in the 2010 NHL Draft. The new player couldn't change the old issues in Edmonton, and when management changed over (again) they decided that changing the culture would include changing out the superstar left-winger, whose dynamic game now graces the ice in Newark.

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Hall read the tea leaves correctly in the summer of 2016, when he said, "I feel slighted. I'm a proud person, and I do take this as an indictment on me as a hockey player. I don't think there's any other way to treat it."

Today, Hall is shoving that trade right up the Oilers' collective you-know-what on a daily basis, having recorded a point in each of the last 25 games he has played.

"I'm still very motivated," Hall said on a media conference call Tuesday. "I've always tried to play with a bit of a chip on my shoulder. But it's been a year and a half since I was traded, so some of that has worn off.

"(Now) it's more about, how can I help my team here? How can we get into the playoffs? That's been my motivation, more so this year than last."

That transition — from, "Man, I hate my old team," to, "Man, I love my new team," — is just one thread in the tapestry of what happens to a young player upon their first transaction. Inevitably, that first uniform change germinates a maturation in an NHL player that might have taken a few more seasons to arrive, had he stayed put.

"Whenever you go through change, whether it's a trade or anything in life, really, it forces you step back and reassess things," admits Hall, who may have donned a new New Jersey jersey, but remains the well-spoken, thoughtful interview he'd always been in Edmonton. "If anything, it was an opportunity for a fresh start, with a fresh coaching staff and fresh management. I was able to come in with a clean slate.

"In my second season here, we have the exact same coaching staff, a lot of the same players back. Over the course of my career in Edmonton I had a lot of different coaches, a lot of changes. That's probably the biggest thing."

Had Oilers owner Daryl Katz acted a year earlier than he did when he brought in Bob Nicholson, who hired GM Peter Chiarelli and head coach Todd McLellan, maybe Hall stays. But that's ancient history now, and in fact, while the Oilers stumble around in their habitual basement suite, they are re-engaging with that toxic Old Boys Club again, an systemic Oilers issue that Hall need not worry about anymore.

Hall's Devils are looking good to snap a five-spring playoff drought, and not only is he the centrepiece of that movement, he is entirely ready for the role.

"I think I'm handling it OK. I don't really feel all that much pressure, individually," he said. "More so as a team, we feel pressure to make the playoffs.

"I'll take a zero point night at this point for a win. That's where we're at in the season right now."

And where Hall is at in his career, as well.

He has grown past worrying about the history. His focus is where it should be, borne out by the fact he is a legitimate Hart Trophy candidate in New Jersey, something the Oilers never allowed him to become.

"I don't know if vindicated is the right word," he said, when asked if he felt that way. "I've always wanted to play on a playoff team. A winning team. A successful team. For whatever reason it just didn't happen in Edmonton.

"I'm happy with my season. With my team's season."

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Sportsnet.ca / Is Oilers' Milan Lucic struggling, or actually in decline?

Andrew Berkshire March 6, 2018, 3:44 PM

Monday night against the Arizona Coyotes, Milan Lucic finally, mercifully, broke his 29-game goal drought with a ripper of a slap shot from the top of the left circle near the boards, outside the slot.

Driving in off the rush after accepting a nice East-West pass through the neutral zone neutral zone by Leon Draisaitl, Lucic didn't even look at the net before he shot, just put his head down and let it rip.

It was Lucic's first goal since Dec. 23 against the Montreal Canadiens, and his first even-strength goal since Dec. 16 against the Minnesota Wild. It wasn't a high percentage shot by any means, but it was a break that Lucic needed.

The problem for Lucic, though, is that despite busting that goal drought, the scrutiny of his play and contract is only just beginning. With his contract paying him \$6 million per season for five more years after this one, Lucic is the third-highest paid player on the Oilers and has the third-longest term. With that comes expectations, and his first two seasons in Edmonton haven't met those expectations.

Last season, Lucic's struggles at even strength were hidden by a career year on the power play with 25 points, way more than his previous high of 14 and career average of 10 per 82 games.

At 5-vs-5, it was Lucic's lowest year of production per 60 minutes since he was a rookie, and his lowest ever in terms of primary points. This season his point production has recovered slightly, but is still the second lowest since his rookie season, though his primary point production of 0.86 per 60 is the lowest of his career, even worse than last year.

At 29 years old, Lucic is no longer in his prime and is likely to decline significantly, but the question for the Oilers is whether that decline will be as rapid as it looks, or if there's more to the last two years that have made Lucic look worse than he is.

To find out, we can compare Lucic to his past self.

When you look at the last three seasons for Lucic, which includes his season with the Los Angeles Kings where he put up 41 5-vs-5 points, and his second-best season in primary points per 60 with 1.73, it's less than clear that he's on a linear decline.

There are a few things that are apparent when you look closely at Lucic's offensive tendencies. The first is he's not much of a scoring chance producer.

Lucic is a below-average scoring chance producer at 5-vs-5, and a relatively low volume shooter for a scoring winger. The biggest changes for his shooting going from the Kings to the Oilers was a huge drop in



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shots from the perimeter, which is a function of his team, as you can see the Oilers shoot far less often from the outside than the 2015-16 Kings did.

His first season in Edmonton, Lucic attempted to get his shots off from much closer to the net, actually producing more high danger chances than team average, but as a result Lucic's strength at 5-vs-5 turned into a weakness.

Despite his reputation as a hulking power forward, Lucic is a far more effective playmaker than he is a scorer, and before coming to Edmonton was very adept at finding teammates in the slot. Changing his tendencies last season cut his completed slot passes in half, and his attempted slot passes by 30 per cent.

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Lucic has recovered his passing game a bit this season, though he remains below league average in that category, and his involvement in scoring chances created relative to his teammates has been in a consistent decline, going from 0.69 fewer chances created per 20 minutes in 2015-16, to 1.17 fewer in 2016-17, to 1.55 fewer this season.

The biggest problem for the Oilers going forward with Lucic is that no matter how slow his decline is from here, their third-highest paid player is a third-line player at 5-vs-5 offensively and, for the second time in his career, a negative possession player.

Some of this could probably be mitigated by getting Lucic to play to his strengths, allowing him to dominate along the boards and be a playmaker on his line, so not playing with McDavid, but ultimately his contract looked bad in Years 1 and 2, it's unlikely to get much better in Years 3 to 7.

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TSN.CA / Top 5 Boeser goals in his remarkable rookie season

Jeff Paterson

VANCOUVER – With Tuesday's news that Brock Boeser's season is over, it's worth taking a few moments to consider the many highlights produced in his first full National Hockey League campaign.

As one who covers the team and was there to watch him play 62 times and score 29 goals, I was fortunate enough to witness one of the best rookie seasons in Vancouver Canucks history.

From his first career hat trick against the two-time defending Stanley Cup champion Pittsburgh Penguins, to each of his six multi-goal performances, to his power-play prowess and to the ease with which he beat some of the best goaltenders in the world, Boeser made a name for himself and left his mark on the league.

Here are my top 5 Boeser goals from the 2017-18 season:

1) Goal 22 – Jan. 6 at Toronto Maple Leafs: There was just something about this one that stuck with me from the moment I saw it. The goal itself was routine by Boeser standards. A quick shot from his off-wing beat Maple Leafs goaltender Frederik Andersen. But the play he made to knock a strong clearing attempt out of mid-air to start the play captured everything there is to like about Boeser's game. The hand-eye coordination was off the chart. To be able to bat the puck out of mid-air and keep the play alive was incredible. Thomas Vanek picks up the puck,

moves to the middle of the ice and slides the puck back to Boeser who wastes no time ripping the puck into the back of the net. It came on a Saturday night in Toronto, with the eyes of the hockey world watching, and may have been his most complete game of the season as he went head-to-head with Auston Matthews.

2) Goal 18 – Dec. 19 vs. Montreal Canadiens: This was peak Boeser. On a third-period power play, Daniel Sedin centred the puck to a wide-open Boeser in the slot. From there it was Boeser against Carey Price – and the Canadiens goaltender stood no chance. Price came well out of the blue paint to challenge the shooter and Boeser just flat out snapped it past him high on the glove side. The goal came one game after Boeser had been injured against the Calgary Flames and his availability for the game against the Canadiens was in doubt. Instead, there was no doubt. The goal started a run of goals in four consecutive games.

3) Goal 29 – Feb. 28 vs. New York Rangers: It was the Flow vs. The King and Boeser won the battle (although the Rangers won the game). One of the things that made Boeser's season so impressive was the calibre of goalies he scored on – Andersen, Price, Andrei Vasilevskiy, Jonathan Quick, Pekka Rinne, just to name a few – and on this night he scored twice against Henrik Lundqvist, a.k.a. The King. With time winding down, the Canucks trailing by a goal and the Vancouver net empty for an extra attacker, Boeser took a pass from Brendan Leipsic on his backhand. With absolutely no panic, he pulled the puck to his forehead and around the defender and just crushed The King on the short side with 45.9 remaining. It was his second goal of the game and ultimately the final goal Boeser scored this season.

4) Goal 11 – Nov. 22 at Pittsburgh Penguins: Boeser scored five of his 29 goals this season against the Penguins and the final one of those five was one of his best of the year. It was his second of the night and his fourth in a 24-hour-span after striking twice in Philadelphia the night before. So much of Boeser's success comes from a lethal wrist shot, but anyone that watched video of him during his days at the University of North Dakota saw highlights of him blowing pucks past goalies with one-timers from the left circle. This goal might have been the hardest shot Boeser took all season. After the Canucks enter the Penguins zone, they work the puck to Alex Edler at the right point and he delivers a perfect pass into Boeser's wheelhouse on the left side. Penguins goalie Matt Murray doesn't even flinch as Boeser just rifled the puck past him.

5) Goal 12 – Nov. 30 at Nashville Predators: His first of two on the night, Boeser takes a feed from Bo Horvat as he moves in on the right wing. Using Predators defenceman Roman Josi as a screen, Boeser pulls the puck to the middle of the ice and absolutely rips a snap shot through the legs of Josi and past a screened Pekka Rinne. Did I mention it was Roman Josi and Pekka Rinne? There was no messing around here. Boeser was all business. It was a glorious combination of skill, finesse, subtlety, power and precision. He later added the game-winner as the Canucks capped a six-game road trip in style. Boeser's big night in Music City was certainly music to the ears of Canucks fans.

TSN.CA LOADED: 03.07.2018

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TSN.CA / Statistically Speaking: Luongo offers fantasy value for stretch run

Scott Cullen

Late in the fantasy hockey season, finding value can come down to finding players on teams that have motivation. This week, there are a couple of Florida Panthers pushing for the playoffs, a rookie coming into his own, a centre making the most of his new team and more.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Here are some of the players to consider on the fantasy hockey waiver wire, owned in less than 60% of TSN leagues:

Nolan Patrick, C, Philadelphia – The Flyers rookie is taking on a bigger role, and thriving with Jakub Voracek on his wing. He has 11 points (7 G, 4 A) in the past 17 games, while playing nearly 16 minutes per game. Owned: 21.8%

Nick Bjugstad, RW, Florida – He's not playing centre as much these days, but that's okay because the 6-foot-6 forward has moved to the right side on the Panthers' top line, where he can probably stick if he keeps producing, and Bjugstad has 10 points (2 G, 8 A) in the past 11 games. Owned: 15.1%

Max Domi, LW, Arizona – It's been a miserable season for the Coyotes winger, but he's had some positive moments recently, contributing eight points (2 G, 6 A) in the past 11 games. Owned: 21.0%

Ryan Spooner, C, N.Y. Rangers – Moving to the Blueshirts has been a nice opportunity for Spooner, who is getting more ice time and has seven points (1 G, 6 A) in four games with his new team. Owned: 17.7%

Sami Vatanen has been a productive addition to the Devils defence.

Sami Vatanen, D, New Jersey – The Devils blueliner has been playing big minutes, more than 24 minutes per game in the past dozen games, putting up 11 points (1 G, 10 A) in that time. Owned: 35.5%

Matt Niskanen, D, Washington – A steady influence on the Capitals blueline, Niskanen has 10 points (1 G, 9 A) while logging more than 23 minutes per game, in the past 15 games. Owned: 31.7%

Roberto Luongo, G, Florida – Since returning from injury, the 38-year-old goaltender has a .935 save percentage in seven starts. The Panthers are in the playoff race and need their netminder to continue playing at this high level. Owned: 50.8%

Players suggested last week that are still under 60% ownership: Riley Nash, C, Boston (5.6%); Tomas Tatar, LW, Vegas (25.5%); Nico Hischier, C, New Jersey (46.0%); Derick Brassard, C, Pittsburgh (53.8%)

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TSN.CA / Statistically Speaking: Leipsic rises to the challenge

Scott Cullen

Leipsic making the most of his opportunity in Vancouver; Malkin, Seguin, Komarov and more in Scott Cullen's Statistically Speaking.

Acquired by Vancouver from Vegas at the trade deadline for defenceman Philip Holm, Brendan Leipsic had a standout game, scoring twice – including the overtime winner – and adding an assist in a 4-3 win against the Islanders.

It's not as though Leipsic's performance was flawless. He did take three minor penalties, the last of which saw him in the penalty box when the Islanders scored to tie the game with 1:04 remaining in the third period.

For the record, that isn't typical for Leipsic who, even after taking those penalties against the Islanders, has still drawn one more penalty than he's taken this season.

However, the 23-year-old is getting a real opportunity to shine with the Canucks. He has five points (2 G, 3 A) in his first three games with Vancouver after producing 13 points (2 G, 11 A) in 44 games with Vegas.

But, there's an obvious difference in role. In Vegas, Leipsic struggled to get into the lineup and, when he did play, saw less than 12 minutes of ice time per game. In the early going with Vancouver, Leipsic is playing more than 17 minutes per game and, against the Islanders, was skating on the Canucks' top line, alongside Bo Horvat and Brock Boeser.

Leipsic is a worthwhile gamble for the Canucks to take in their search for more talent. He played for head coach Travis Green in Portland, and his AHL production, which included 105 points in 114 games in his last two seasons with the Toronto Marlies, suggests a player who should be able to play in the National Hockey League. Monday night against the Islanders, there was no doubt.

### HEROES

Evgeni Malkin – Pittsburgh's star centre put up a goal and two helpers in a 4-3 overtime win vs. Calgary. He's been on a tear, putting up 43 points (22 G, 21 A) in the past 24 games and, with 82 points, has pulled within three points of Nikita Kucherov for the scoring lead.

Tyler Seguin – The Stars centre scored two goals and launched 14 shot attempts (6 SOG) in a 3-2 overtime loss to Ottawa. He has 11 points (7 G, 4 A) during a six-game point streak.

Leo Komarov – The Maple Leafs winger scored two goals in a 5-3 loss at Buffalo, an unexpected development, as he had two assists in his previous dozen games.

### ZEROES

Ron Hainsey – Toronto's veteran blueliner struggled (13 for, 19 against, 40.6 CF%) and was on the ice for four goals against in a 5-3 loss at Buffalo.

Ethan Bear – The Oilers rookie defenceman, playing in his third NHL game, had a tough game (4 for, 22 against, 15.4 CF%, 2-16 scoring chances) during a 4-3 overtime win against Arizona.

Frederik Andersen – Toronto's goaltender allowed five goals on just 24 shots in a 5-3 loss at Buffalo. He has a .860 save percentage in his past four starts.

### VITAL SIGNS

Ben Bishop – Dallas' starting goaltender suffered a lower-body injury against Ottawa and left the game after the first period. Kari Lehtonen, who has been having a strong season, will have to step up while Bishop is out.

Brock Boeser – Vancouver's star rookie winger, who leads all freshmen with 29 goals, suffered what appeared to be a back injury, and it will lead to his being shut down for the rest of the season.

Charlie McAvoy – Boston's rookie blueliner, who leads all first-year players with 22:07 average time on ice per game, has suffered a sprained MCL in his knee, and will be re-evaluated in four weeks.

While the Islanders' Mathew Barzal was already the Calder Trophy front-runner, Boeser and McAvoy were likely the next candidates in line, so these injuries would figure to cement Barzal's place in the trophy race.

Micheal Ferland – The Flames winger returned to action against Pittsburgh, after missing nearly a couple of weeks with an upper-body injury.

### SHORT SHIFTS

Embedded Image

Lost in recent trade talks is that Erik Karlsson is on a good offensive run.

Senators D Erik Karlsson and C Matt Duchene both had a goal and an assist in a 3-2 overtime win at Dallas. Karlsson has 13 points (2 G, 11 A) in the past 11 games, while Duchene has 15 points (7 G, 8 A) in the past 14 games...Sabres RW Jason Pominville, C Johan Larsson, C Ryan O'Reilly and RW Sam Reinhart each contributed a goal and an assist in a 5-3 win over Toronto. Following a lengthy slump, Pominville does have



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six points (2 G, 4 A) in the past six games. Larsson had three assists in his previous 12 games, O'Reilly has 12 points (3 G, 9 A) in the past 11 games, and Reinhart has put up 23 points (9 G, 14 A) in the past 22 games...Sabres D Rasmus Ristolainen added a couple of assists, giving him six points (1 G, 5 A) in the past six games...Penguins RW Phil Kessel contributed a couple of assists in a 4-3 overtime win against Calgary, and has 10 points (3 G, 7 A) in the past six games...Flames RW Troy Brouwer had a goal and an assist in a 4-3 OT loss at Pittsburgh, matching his production from his previous 10 games...Oilers C Leon Draisaitl had two assists in a 4-3 overtime win against Arizona, giving him 27 points (10 G, 17 A) in the past 23 games...Canucks RW Jake Virtanen put up a goal and an assist in a 4-3 overtime win vs. the Islanders; he had one assist in his previous nine games...Islanders C John Tavares produced a goal and an assist, with 11 shot attempts (8 SOG), in a 4-3 OT loss at Vancouver. He had three points (2 G, 1 A) in his previous 10 games...Islanders rookie C Mathew Barzal chipped in a couple of assists, and has 16 points (2 G, 14 A) in the past 12 games.

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TSN.CA / TSN Hockey's Top 10 Storylines of the Week

Scott Cullen

Looking back at the trade deadline, dissatisfaction in many Canadian markets, Panthers, Nathan MacKinnon, Taylor Hall, Predators, Islanders and more in TSN Hockey's Top 10 Storylines of the Week.

In the wake of the NHL Trade Deadline, some of the league's top contenders bolstered their lineups for the stretch run.

A quick look at the top six teams in the standings and what they added:

While Ryan McDonagh has yet to play for Tampa Bay, since he's still nursing an upper-body injury, J.T. Miller has three points in three games while playing a couple of minutes per game more than he was in New York. To get them, the Lightning gave up picks, prospects and roster forward Vladislav Namestnikov, so when McDonagh finally starts playing, they'll be even better than they were before the deadline.

Hartman and Fisher to the Predators

Last season's finalists have improved their depth, adding Ryan Hartman, a young, agitating winger from Chicago, and luring their former captain, Mike Fisher, out of retirement. Nashville's forward depth is pretty solid now, but may be even better before season's end when they are expected to bring 2017 first-round pick Eeli Tolvanen into the fold once his KHL season concludes.

Tatar to the Golden Knights

Amazingly, the expansion team in Vegas was buying at the deadline, reportedly in on the Erik Karlsson trade talks right up until the end, but ultimately ended up bringing in skilled winger Tomas Tatar from Detroit. Some might question the price (of three draft picks) paid, but he's under contract for three more seasons too, so he has long-term value for the franchise.

Nash, Wingels, Gionta to the Bruins

Rick Nash was the prize of the trade rental market, and the Bruins got him, which improves their forward depth. Further down the depth chart, they added Tommy Wingels from the Blackhawks and pulled 39-year-old Brian Gionta back to the league after he played for Team USA at the Olympics. Nash has started with three points, and 23 shots on goal, in his first four games.

Stastny to the Jets

After years of earning a reputation for not making big moves, Jets GM Kevin Cheveldayoff surprised seemingly everyone by getting Paul Stastny from St. Louis. That was a tough pill to swallow for his ex-Blues teammates, but Stastny looks like a great fit in Winnipeg, centering Nikolaj Ehlers and Patrik Laine, and putting up four points in his first three games with the Jets.

Plekanec to the Maple Leafs

Toronto wasn't quite as active, but they upgraded their fourth-line centre slot by adding the 35-year-old who had been playing more than 16 minutes per game in Montreal this season. In his first three games with the Leafs, Plekanec is logging about 12 minutes per night, and the team is winless in those three games.

STATISTICALLY SPEAKING: Plekanec shores up middle of the ice for the Maple Leafs. <https://t.co/CeulgRVMWY> [pic.twitter.com/QQs4XSWdNF](https://pic.twitter.com/QQs4XSWdNF)

— Scott Cullen (@tsnscottcullen) February 26, 2018

KARLSSON STAYS IN OTTAWA

As the deadline approached, the big story was about how Erik Karlsson may well have been on his way out of the nation's capital.

Ultimately, Senators GM Pierre Dorion held on to his franchise player through the deadline, which will give them time to fully assess the situation. Maybe the bridge isn't completely burned and the Senators can come together with Karlsson on a long-term extension this summer, though that would require them paying retail free agent prices, and they might not love that idea.

If that bridge can't be rebuilt, then maybe Karlsson does get moved this summer, and Dorion should have more suitors leading up to the draft.

HABS CRASHING

The Montreal Canadiens also held on to their captain, Max Pacioretty, despite rumblings that the veteran goal-scorer was on the block, too.

A consistent goal-scorer, Pacioretty has run into a slump this year, scoring on only 8.0% of his shots (11.4% for his career entering this season), and that is typically the time when teams decide it's time to cut ties with a goal-scorer.

That Habs put off that decision, but now it looks like there isn't much that's going to change for Pacioretty for the rest of this season, and he's suffered a knee injury that will keep him out 4-6 weeks.

Just as with Karlsson, the Pacioretty situation still has some interesting chapters to be written.

NOT HAPPY IN VANCOUVER, EDMONTON. WHAT ABOUT CALGARY?

It's not particularly surprising that the Vancouver Canucks haven't been good this season, yet the franchise has extended GM Jim Benning, and this team that is going to miss the playoffs for the fourth time in the past five seasons doesn't have a surplus of draft picks that one might expect from a team that is undergoing a rebuilding process. Over the next three drafts, in fact, the Canucks have 20 picks. The average, for those mathematically challenged, would be 21 (ie. 3 x 7), so there is some dissatisfaction in the marketplace.

On the other hand, expectations were much higher for the Oilers coming into the season, and they have flopped spectacularly. They're currently one point ahead of the Canucks, so both teams are firmly in lottery position, but while Vancouver might have some time to work out their problems, the Oilers can't waste prime Connor McDavid seasons. Well, given their history, they sure can, but that can't be an acceptable outcome.

Just in case things weren't looking bleak enough on the landscape for Canadian NHL teams, the Calgary Flames are teetering on the brink,



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currently four points behind Los Angeles for the last playoff spot in the Western Conference. The Flames have great high-end talent, but it appears that their depth is letting them down and with goaltender Mike Smith injured, their shortcomings have been exposed.

### STADIUM SERIES

The Washington Capitals and Toronto Maple Leafs hooked up for a relatively late-season outdoor game, playing in front of 29,000 fans at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland.

Washington was clearly the better team on Saturday night, taking a 5-2 decision, and it seemed as though those involved enjoyed the experience, but doing stadium games for 29,000 fans seems a little less awe-inspiring (and lucrative) than filling massive football stadiums.

Personally, I don't mind the outdoor games, but this one didn't really sell the experience as something that needs to be part of the NHL landscape.

### SURGING PANTHERS

Winners of six straight, the Florida Panthers have climbed into playoff contention, one point behind Columbus for the last wildcard spot in the Eastern Conference, but holding three games in hand.

One big reason for the hot streak is goaltender Roberto Luongo, who has a .935 save percentage in seven starts since returning from a 10-week injury absence.

Going back to January 30, the Panthers are 13-3, with franchise centre Aleksander Barkov putting up 21 points (10 G, 11 A) to lead the way.

Can they finish strong enough to reach the postseason? In their next 11 games, the Panthers play three teams currently in playoff position, with one of those games against the Blue Jackets team that they are effectively chasing for that last playoff spot.

### MACKINNON

The Colorado Avalanche are still knocking on the door for a playoff spot, largely because they've been dragged there by 22-year-old centre Nathan MacKinnon, who has emerged as a star in his fifth NHL season.

Since returning from an injury that sidelined him for two-and-a-half weeks, MacKinnon has 16 points (7 G, 9 A) in eight games, and has re-ignited his Hart Trophy candidacy.

MacKinnon has always had great speed, but now he's just creating chances at an alarming rate. Since December 29 he has 36 points in 21 games, but in that time has generated a league-best 15.01 individual scoring chances per 60 during 5-on-5 play (per Natural Stat Trick). His 13.85 shots/60 and 23.67 shot attempts/60 both rank second.

### HALL

While we're looking at amazing individual performers dragging their teams to the postseason, look no further than Hall, who has points in each of his last 25 games, accumulating 36 points (18 G, 18 A) and 100 shots on goal.

Hall has a 31-point lead on rookie centre Nico Hischier in the Devils' scoring race, but while the narrative is that Hall is a much different player than he ever was in Edmonton, a lot of his numbers look rather similar, except that he's having more success on the power play (8.77 points/60) and scoring on career-best 13.5% of his shots.

All that said, he's had a terrific season but, as it stands right now, I'm not inclined to include him among Hart finalists. If the scoring streak keeps going, though, who knows?

### PREDATORS POWER UP

Looking like Cup contenders once again, the Nashville Predators have won eight in a row, the last four of which were on the road.

The Predators have used a balanced attack, with 10 players contributing at least five points in that eight game span, but they've been led by right

winger Viktor Arvidsson and defenceman Roman Josi, who both have a dozen points. Defenceman Ryan Ellis has 11 points, too.

They've pulled ahead of the Winnipeg Jets by six points for top spot in the Central Division.

### ISLANDERS SINKING

At this time of year, many of the teams that are compiling streaks are doing so in conjunction with expectations. Teams that sold off at the deadline go on losing slides because they may have a lineup littered with AHLers. Conversely, teams that are winning, like Nashville, could be powerhouse teams hitting their stride.

In the case of the Islanders, they were theoretically still trying to compete for a playoff spot, but after going winless in six, they are now five points behind Columbus for the final playoff spot in the East.

It's not hard to see that defensive play, or lack of it, has been a massive problem for the Islanders this year.

The idea that goaltending is the problem for the Islanders...I don't know about that. [pic.twitter.com/h4gUfA8w5c](https://pic.twitter.com/h4gUfA8w5c)

— Scott Cullen (@tsnscottcullen) February 26, 2018

Still with the Islanders, word has come down that long-time hockey writer/MSG broadcaster Stan Fischler will be retiring at season's end.

Pretty sure this @StanFischler book was the first hockey book I ever read. From the St. Mark's library in Grade One. [pic.twitter.com/mMH6R0bu96](https://pic.twitter.com/mMH6R0bu96)

— Scott Cullen (@tsnscottcullen) March 3, 2018

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TSN.CA / Statistically Speaking: Laine has rare shooting talent

Scott Cullen

Laine is a rare shooter, like Stamkos; MacKinnon, Hedman, Galchenyuk, Lundqvist and more in Scott Cullen's Statistically Speaking.

### HEROES

Patrik Laine - Winnipeg's sophomore sniper scored two goals in Friday's 4-1 win against Detroit, then buried two goals and added an assist in Sunday's 3-2 win at Carolina. He has 16 points (10 G, 6 A) during an eight-game point streak, and is shooting 18.1% in 138 career games. Here are the active players with the highest shooting percentage (minimum 100 games and 200 shots):

Paul Byron	Montreal	LW	346	66	363
18.2					
Patrik Laine	Winnipeg	RW	138	71	392
18.1					
Steven Stamkos	Tampa Bay	C	652	348	
2063	16.9				
Jake Guentzel	Pittsburgh	LW	106	36	224
16.1					
Brad Marchand	Boston	LW	584	217	1375
15.8					
Mark Stone	Ottawa	RW	304	95	609
15.6					



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Auston Matthews 15.5	Toronto	C	135	68	439
Adam Henrique 15.4	Anaheim	C	496	137	888
Sean Monahan 15.1	Calgary	C	384	136	903
Mark Scheifele 15.0	Winnipeg	C	355	111	739

Steven Stamkos - Tampa Bay's star centre, another of the league's elite shooters, tallied a pair of goals and added three assists before scoring the shootout-clinching goal in Saturday's 7-6 win at Philadelphia. He has 23 points (10 G, 13 A) in the past 19 games.

Nathan MacKinnon - Colorado's breakout star centre put up two goals and three assists in Friday's 7-1 rout of Minnesota. He added an assist in Sunday's 4-3 overtime loss to Nashville, and has 37 points (16 G, 21 A) with 100 shots on goal in the past 21 games. Linemate Mikko Rantanen added a goal and three helpers Friday before scoring a goal on Sunday, giving him 40 points (13 G, 27 A) in the past 35 games.

Victor Hedman - Tampa Bay's star blueliner got in on the act at Philadelphia, too, scoring two goals and adding two assists. He has 15 points (4 G, 11 A) in the past 13 games.

Alex Galchenyuk - The Canadiens winger recorded a hat trick, plus an assist, in Friday's 6-3 win at the Islanders. He had no goals and seven assists in his previous 15 games.

Nicklas Backstrom, Evgeny Kuznetsov and John Carlson - The Capitals trio each produced a goal and two assists in Saturday's 5-2 Stadium Series victory against Toronto. Backstrom had just one assist in the previous seven games, Kuznetsov has 21 points (7 G, 14 A) in the past 17 games, and Carlson has 26 points (9 G, 17 A) in the past 27 games.

Henrik Lundqvist - The Rangers goaltender turned away 50 of 51 shots in Friday's 3-1 win at Calgary. He had a .880 save percentage in his previous six games.

### ZEROES

Peter Holland - The Rangers centre got thumped (1 for, 18 against, 5.3 CF%, 0-13 scoring chances) in Friday's 3-1 win at Calgary.

Chris Wagner - The new Islanders forward had a tough weekend (6 for, 32 against, 15.8 CF%, 1-13 scoring chances) and was on the ice for a couple of goals against in two weekend games.

Luke Glendening - Detroit's checking centre was on the wrong side of the puck (8 for, 26 against, 23.5 CF%, 4-13 scoring chances) and was on the ice for three goals against in two games over the weekend.

Devan Dubnyk - Minnesota's netminder allowed five goals on 17 shots, and was pulled after 30:29 in Friday's 7-1 loss at Colorado. He has a .902 save percentage in his past eight games.

Jaroslav Halak - The Islanders netminder allowed five goals on 24 shots in Friday's 6-3 loss to Montreal and has a .877 save percentage in his past five starts.

Frederik Andersen - Toronto's goaltender didn't fare well outdoors, giving up five goals on 25 shots before getting pulled midway through Saturday's 5-2 loss at Washington. He had a .929 save percentage in his previous 13 games.

Martin Jones - San Jose's goalie was pulled after allowing three goals on 13 shots in Saturday's 4-2 loss to Columbus. He had a .939 save percentage in his previous six starts.

### VITAL SIGNS

Ryan Nugent-Hopkins - Edmonton's veteran centre returned to the Oilers lineup for the first time in seven weeks after suffering a rib injury;

he was skating on Connor McDavid's wing, and scored a goal in Saturday's 3-2 loss to the Rangers.

Charlie McAvoy - Boston's rookie blueliner is now out of the lineup with a knee injury, suffered against Montreal over the weekend.

Mike Fisher - The 37-year-old centre returned to the Nashville lineup, and scored in his first game, Friday's 4-3 overtime win at Vancouver.

Jordan Eberle - An undisclosed injury knocked the Islanders winger out of the lineup, snapping a 215-game consecutive-games streak.

Max Pacioretty - The Canadiens winger suffered a knee injury against the Islanders and will miss the next 4-6 weeks.

Victor Mete - Montreal's rookie blueliner suffered a broken finger and will miss the next six weeks.

Jay Bouwmeester - The 34-year-old Blues defenceman is done for the year with a hip injury.

Scottie Upshall - A knee injury has sidelined the veteran winger for four weeks.

Marco Scandella - The Sabres defenceman went head-first into the boards Friday against Florida and is out of the lineup.

Colin Wilson - Colorado's veteran winger is out due to a concussion.

Christopher Gibson - The 25-year-old stepped into the Islanders net and saved 47 of 50 shots in Saturday's 3-2 overtime loss at Pittsburgh, his first NHL start since April, 2016.

Ryan Ellis is on a roll.

Jets C Paul Stastny had a goal and an assist in Sunday's 3-2 win at Carolina. He has four points (2 G, 2 A) in three games with Winnipeg...Predators D Ryan Ellis put up a goal and two assists in Sunday's 4-3 overtime win at Colorado. He has 11 points (3 G, 8 A) in the past eight games...Ducks RW Jakob Silfverberg and RW Corey Perry both scored twice in Sunday's 6-3 win over Chicago. Silfverberg had just one goal in his previous 11 games, and Perry has 14 points (6 G, 8 A) in the past 14 games...Ducks C Ryan Getzlaf produced three assists, giving him 10 points (2 G, 8 A) in the past five games...Ducks LW Andrew Cogliano and C Derek Grant both had a couple of assists. Cogliano had three points (1 G, 2 A) in the previous 15 games, and Grant has four assists in the past four games...Blackhawks C Nick Schmaltz scored a couple of goals and RW Vinnie Hinostroza added a pair of assists in Sunday's 6-3 loss at Anaheim. Schmaltz has five points (4 G, 1 A) in the past five games, and Hinostroza has eight points (1 G, 7 A) in the past nine games...Panthers LW Evgeni Dadonov scored twice in Sunday's 4-1 win against Philadelphia, giving him 16 points (9 G, 7 A) in the past 11 games...Panthers C Aleksander Barkov added a goal and an assist, and has 21 points (10 G, 11 A) in the past 15 games...Golden Knights LW David Perron had a goal and an assist in Sunday's 3-2 win at New Jersey, giving him 25 points (7 G, 18 A) in the past 22 games...Devils LW Taylor Hall contributed a goal and an assist in Sunday's 3-2 loss to Vegas. He has 36 points (18 G, 18 A) during a 25-game scoring streak...Wild LW Jason Zucker tallied two goals in Sunday's 4-1 win vs. Detroit; he has 13 points (6 G, 7 A) in the past nine games...Blue Jackets LW Artemi Panarin scored a pair of goals in Sunday's 4-2 win at San Jose, and has nine points (5 G, 4 A) in the past eight games...Sharks LW Evander Kane produced a goal and an assist in the loss to Columbus; he has seven points (3 G, 4 A) during a five-game point streak.

Blackhawks C Jonathan Toews and RW Patrick Kane both had a goal and two assists in Saturday's 5-3 win at Los Angeles. Toews had no points in his previous five games and Kane has nine points (3 G, 6 A) in the past eight games...Bruins D Torey Krug assisted on both Boston goals in Saturday's 2-1 overtime win against Montreal, giving him 21 points (5 G, 16 A) in the past 21 games...Lightning RW Nikita Kucherov returned to the lineup and had three assists in Saturday's 7-6 shootout win at Philadelphia. He had 24 points (6 G, 18 A) in the past 16 games...Flyers D Ivan Provorov put up a goal and two assists in



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Saturday's 7-6 shootout loss to Tampa Bay. He had four points (2 G, 2 A) in his previous 14 games...Flyers LW Claude Giroux, C Nolan Patrick and RW Jakub Voracek each had a goal and an assist against the Lightning. Giroux added an assist in Sunday's loss at Florida, and has 20 points (8 G, 12 A) in the past 13 games. Patrick has seven points (5 G, 2 A) in the past nine games, and Voracek has 18 points (6 G, 12 A) in the past 19 games...Stars LW Jamie Benn had a goal and an assist, and C Tyler Seguin had a pair of assists in Saturday's 3-2 overtime win against St. Louis. Benn has five points (1 G, 4 A) in the past four games, and Seguin has nine points (5 G, 4 A) during a five-game point streak...Islanders LW Anders Lee produced a goal and an assist in Saturday's 3-2 overtime loss at Pittsburgh, matching his production from the previous seven games...Penguins RW Phil Kessel had a couple of assists in Saturday's 3-2 overtime win against the Islanders; he has eight points (3 G, 5 A) in the past five games...Rangers C Mika Zibanejad contributed a goal and an assist in Saturday's 3-2 win at Edmonton. He had two goals in his previous 10 games...Oilers C Connor McDavid had a goal and an assist in Saturday's 3-2 loss to the Rangers, and has 26 points (15 G, 11 A) in the past 17 games.

Jets D Josh Morrissey contributed a couple of assists in Friday's 4-3 win over Detroit matching his production over the previous 19 games...Red Wings D Niklas Kronwall recorded a goal and an assist at Winnipeg. He had two assists in his previous 10 games...Senators RW Bobby Ryan produced a goal and two assists in Friday's 5-4 win at Vegas, and has seven points (2 G, 5 A) in his past six games...Senators D Erik Karlsson earned three assists and has 13 points (1 G, 12 A) in the past 13 games...Senators RW Mark Stone had a goal and an assist at Vegas then added an assist in Saturday's 2-1 loss at Arizona, giving him 13 points (2 G, 11 A) during an eight-game point streak...Golden Knights RW Reilly Smith and C William Karlsson and D Colin Miller each had a goal and an assist in Friday's 5-4 loss to Ottawa. Smith has 24 points (10 G, 14 A) in the past 17 games, Karlsson has 15 points (8 G, 7 A) in the past 14 games, and Miller has 14 points (3 G, 11 A) in the past 20 games...Golden Knights LW Jonathan Marchessault contributed two assists and has 39 points (12 G, 27 A) in the past 34 games...Canadiens RW Brendan Gallagher had a goal and an assist in Friday's 6-3 win at the Islanders, and scored a goal in Saturday's 2-1 overtime loss at Boston, giving him 13 points (5 G, 8 A) in the past 14 games...Canadiens D Mike Reilly added a couple of assists against the Islanders, his first multi-point game this season...Islanders C Brock Nelson had a goal and an assist in Friday's 6-3 loss to Montreal. He had one assist in his previous eight games...Panthers RW Nick Bjugstad had a pair of assists in Friday's 4-1 win against Buffalo and another assist in Sunday's win over Philadelphia, giving him 10 points (2 G, 8 A) in the past 11 games...Avalanche D Tyson Barrie produced a goal and an assist in Friday's 7-1 win over Minnesota then added an assist in Sunday's 4-3 overtime loss to Nashville, giving him 11 points (3 G, 8 A) in the past seven games...Avalanche rookie D Samuel Girard added a pair of assists; he had one goal in his previous 11 games...Rangers C Ryan Spooner contributed a goal and an assist in Friday's 3-1 win at Calgary. He has seven points (1 G, 6 A) in four games with the Rangers...Predators RW Calle Jarnkrok both had a goal and an assist in Friday's 4-3 overtime win at Vancouver, and has seven points (2 G, 5 A) in the past six games...Predators RW Viktor Arvidsson added a pair of assists in Friday's win at Vancouver, and another assist in Sunday's 4-3 overtime win at Colorado, giving him 12 points (6 G, 6 A) in the past eight games...Canucks LW Danel Sedin had a goal and an assist in Friday's 4-3 overtime loss to Nashville, giving him 14 points (8 G, 6 A) in the past 10 games...Blue Jackets D Zach Werenski contributed a goal and an assist in Friday's 4-2 loss at Anaheim. He had two assists in his previous eight games...Blue Jackets RW Oliver Bjorkstrand added a couple of assists at Anaheim and had an assist in Sunday's 4-2 win at San Jose, ending a seven-game scoreless streak...Ducks D Cam Fowler and LW Rickard Rakell both had a goal and an assist in Friday's 4-2 win over Columbus. Fowler has four points (1 G, 3 A) in the past three games, and Rakell has 21 points (11 G, 10 A) in the past 19 games...Flames D Brett Kulak had a strong showing (21 for, 3 against, 87.5 CF%, 13-1 scoring chances) in Friday's 3-1 loss to the Rangers.

Canadiens G Antti Niemi turned away 48 of 50 shots in Saturday's 2-1 overtime loss at Boston, giving him a .931 save percentage in 12 games with Montreal...Panthers G Roberto Luongo had 39 saves on 40 shots in Sunday's 4-1 win against Philadelphia, and has a .939 save percentage in his past 17 games...Stars G Ben Bishop recorded 35 saves on 37 shots in Saturday's 3-2 overtime win against St. Louis. He had a .868 save percentage in his previous five games...Rangers rookie G Alexander Georgiev stopped 35 of 37 shots in Saturday's 3-2 win at Edmonton and has a .930 save percentage in his first three NHL starts...Ducks G John Gibson had 34 saves on 36 shots in Friday's 4-2 win over Columbus, giving him a .947 save percentage in his past nine starts...Jets G Connor Hellebuyck saved 33 of 35 shots in Sunday's 3-2 win at Carolina. He had a .904 save percentage in his previous 10 starts...Blue Jackets G Sergei Bobrovsky stopped 33 of 35 shots in Sunday's 4-2 win at San Jose, and has a .928 save percentage in his past 10 starts.

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