



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 11, 2019

## THE ATHLETIC

### 'The belief is the biggest thing': Canes' bounce-back win in Nashville shows how this team is different

By Sara Civian

NASHVILLE — It was the same exact thing, except it was totally different.

The headlines chronicling the Hurricanes' 5-3 win at Nashville on Saturday will try their best, and they won't be wrong. But they won't really do it justice: Hurricanes Respond to Blowout with Big Win Over Nashville

The Hurricanes followed up their biggest blowout loss of the season, an 8-1 drubbing by the Jets, with the win. They won in Nashville the game after their worst of the season in 2017-18, too, but the similarities stop at opponent and outcome.

This time around there was the new captain, Justin Williams. His unwavering confidence in this team was on peak display via Mark Messier-esque conviction after the Canes' loss Friday.

"We've always answered the bell this year so far, and it's time to do it again," he said post-game. "At this time of the year, a game like that can go one way or the other. We've answered the bell and we're going to do it tomorrow."

It was starkly different than what last season's co-captains had to say after their 8-1 loss to the Leafs on Dec. 19, 2017.

"We just didn't really show up tonight," Justin Faulk offered back then. "We didn't compete as hard as we wanted to. ... we sure hope we can move on fast."

"It was embarrassing, it wasn't a fun game," Jordan Staal added. "We'll have to swallow this one and move on to Nashville. It was embarrassing. It sucks."

Nothing against either co-captain—Faulk and Staal have stepped up this season in ways some might have a hard time acknowledging, maybe subconsciously because of their former joint status leading a less inspired squad.

To their credit, they did bounce back last season. But the difference this season is Williams was confident enough that they'd do so that he put his credibility on the line.

"That's just not us," he said of their performance in the loss. And it wasn't.

He acknowledged how hard it was to conduct the interview in the first place, but there was no lack of eye contact or unassured body language. He faced it head-on, guaranteed a bounce-back win and reaffirmed the team's identity. Then he put some clothes on and greeted fans in the tunnel.

That is him.

Petr Mrazek poke-checks, Nino Niederreiter two-goal nights, Sebastian Aho flexing his speed on insurance empty netters, Williams scoring goals as important as they are underrated, post-game music taking playful jabs at the opponent?

That's them.

There's them now.

And while head coach Rod Brind'Amour is still getting used to the post-game music and all the celebrations, he's well-versed in the standard of on-ice excellence that's returned to the Hurricanes. So just like he would've expected of himself, he knew the bounce back was coming for these Canes.

"I expected it," Brind'Amour told me. "I mean, these guys have been really great all year, their effort. Last night was one of those one-offs, and (the first line) wasn't good. Tonight they were the difference. They came out and asserted themselves. Willy especially."

The Game 68 win crowned Brind'Amour the fastest head coach in franchise history to surpass 80 points. It took him six fewer games than the rest of them.

"A change of scenery sometimes helps," Niederreiter said of his post-trade performance. "But I feel like the most important thing is the trust you get in the coaches and the belief in me. The belief is the biggest thing."

Niederreiter ended Friday's game a franchise-worst minus-six. As useless and irrelevant as that metric arguably is, it's still all over the post-game stat sheets, so of course he saw it. And of course you don't brush off being the franchise-worst at anything, even ping pong.

If you're Brind'Amour, though, you keep Niederreiter on the first line and give him the same minutes as you had been.

If you're Niederreiter, you go out there the next night and score two fierce goals in the first period.

He has more goals (11) with the Hurricanes in 22 games than he did with the Wild (9) in 46 games.

The belief has been the biggest thing. Niederreiter is the most obvious embodiment of it, but look past the surface and you'll see how the body language has changed. It starts with the coach, even and especially after the worst game of the season.

It extends through the star, who scoffed at the notion that he's overachieving.

"Yeah, well I'm 21 years old," Aho told me in Boston. "I expect to be in better shape every year."

He believes in improvement.

Then there's the captain, who called game on the bench in Florida and in the media in Nashville.

"That's all?" Williams expressed playful disappointment that we weren't interrogating him hard enough after the win. "You guys don't have anything else for me?"

Again, he was right about his team. Again, he led the charge.

And as he reached 20 goals for the seventh time in his career, he seemed as young as the gash on his cheek.



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## Preview: Hurricanes at Avalanche

Canes face third straight Western Conference opponent

by Michael Smith

DENVER - The Carolina Hurricanes wrap up a brief, two-game road trip with a Monday night match-up against the Colorado Avalanche.

The Avs are the third consecutive Western Conference opponent the Canes have faced before they finish their season playing 12 of 13 within the East and eight of those 12 within the Metropolitan Division.

Hitting the Right Notes in Music City

The Hurricanes followed up their most lopsided loss of the season with a 5-3 win in Nashville on Saturday.

Nino Niederreiter scored two goals, and the power play struck twice to lead the Hurricanes to their sixth consecutive victory over the Predators.

"We had to make sure we bounced back, and that's what we did," Niederreiter said. "We stuck to our game plan, got pucks in deep and found a way to score goals."

It was exactly the type of bounce-back effort the Canes were in search of.

"Two points. Absolutely," said Justin Williams, who scored a power-play goal early in the third period. "We played hard. We played it right from the onset, and we atoned from a dismal performance last night."

"I expected it," head coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "These guys have been really great all year with their effort."

30 and 20

The Canes' first line of Sebastian Aho, Niederreiter and Williams each hit milestone goal markers on Saturday. With an empty-net goal to seal the victory, Aho scored his 30th goal of the season, a new career high for the third-year forward. He became the seventh player in franchise history to score 30 goals in a season before turning 22 years old.

Niederreiter reached 20 goals for the fourth time in his last five seasons. He's totaled 11 goals and 21 points in 22 games since joining the team.

Williams scored his 20th goal of the season, the seventh time in his career he's done so and third time with the Canes. Four of his seven 20-goal seasons have come after his 30th birthday, and he's the third player in franchise history to score 20 after turning 37 years old.

The Last Meeting

After beginning the season 4-0-1, the Hurricanes were handed their third straight regulation loss by the Colorado Avalanche in a Saturday afternoon game in Raleigh. Philipp Grubauer made 42 saves and Gabriel Landeskog netted two goals in the Avs' 3-1 win. Micheal Ferland scored the lone goal for the Hurricanes.

The Opposition

The Avalanche are pushing for a playoff spot in a wide-open Western Conference wild card race. They currently sit two points back of the Minnesota Wild, with the Arizona Coyotes occupying the space in between. The Avs, who are 6-3-1 in their last 10 games, are coming off a 3-0 shutout win over the Buffalo Sabres in the first match of a four-game homestand. Grubauer has posted two shutouts in his last three starts and has stopped 80 of his last 82 shots faced.



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## Coach's Corner: Players 'hate' Hurricanes' creative celebrations

It's been three weeks to the exact date that Don Cherry went on his now famous tirade against those "bunch of jerks," the Carolina Hurricanes, and their creative celebrations.

Since then, instead of getting angry about it, the Hurricanes turned what appeared to be a negative into a very positive and well-received marketing campaign, turning Cherry's comment into a fun t-shirt that the 85-year-old also appeared to endorse.

It was all water under the bridge at that point, right? Not so fast.

On Saturday, Cherry, apparently, wasn't done on this particular topic of his ire and once again reiterated his disgust in the Hurricanes' bouts of exuberance.

"The players hate this here, by the way, they hate this stuff," said Cherry during his 'Coach's Corner' segment during Hockey Night in Canada.

To support his claim, Cherry then used video clips of two players, the Winnipeg Jets' Adam Lowry and Calgary

Flames' Elias Lindholm, appearing to mock the Hurricanes' Viking Clap celebration.

"[Lowry] did that there, the 'thunder clap' that they do," said Cherry. "Now watch [Lindholm] doing the same thing. Players hate that. They hate it."

Two players isn't exactly the greatest of sample sizes, but Cherry believes his experience as a former professional player mostly in the 1960s gives him greater insight into the kind of mood these Carolina jubiliations put opposing players in now.

"I tried to say it but here at Sportsnet they think it's nice, and do you know why they think it's nice, it's because they don't know," Cherry said making sure to sarcastically emphasize the last word nice. "They've never been in the pits, but I think as a player and I still think as a player."

Adding: "They don't know hockey and they think it's lovely."

So once again Cherry has made his position known, and all we can hope for again is for Carolina to once again come with another delightful clap-back.



## About Last Night: Two nights, two very different Hurricanes teams

It was darkest before the dawn for the Canes, who were able to bounce back in a big way in Nashville on Saturday.

By Brett Finger

The Carolina Hurricanes had a tough weekend - a back-to-back sequence against two legitimate Western Conference Stanley Cup contenders in the Winnipeg Jets and the Nashville Predators.

From one night to the next, the Canes looked like two entirely different teams, but they certainly left their best for last and avoided what could have been a season-derailing weekend.

Friday Night

There's not much to say about Friday's disaster against the Winnipeg Jets. From the early moments of the game until the final buzzer, the Hurricanes were dramatically outplayed, malling in an effort reminiscent of last season.

The red-hot first line flatlined in dramatic fashion. Nino Niederreiter, Sebastian Aho, and Justin Williams were a combined minus-15 on the night. Even beyond the top line, though, they were just totally dusted. It was over before it even started.

The 8-1 final score is Carolina's worst loss of the season, and it was worrisome that it came in such a meaningful early-March game on home ice. On the bright side, they were given very little time to dwell on it. They had to jump on a plane and fix their sights towards another extremely good hockey team.

They had to make a statement on Saturday and prove that Friday's outcome was nothing more than a poorly-timed fluke.

Saturday Night

The Canes' effort on Saturday in Nashville was going to be under heavy scrutiny after Friday's disaster, and they knew that. And they delivered in a big way.

Less than 24 hours after having their, collective, worst game of the season, the first line came out of the box at warp speed. Nino Niederreiter netted two goals in the first period, including a snipe that no goalie in the NHL has a chance of stopping.

The top trio had a combined plus-five rating and five points. Each of them scored at least one goal. Niederreiter has 11 goals and 21 points over his last 21 games.

The trade was one-for-one.



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While the Canes ended up having a bit of an offensive explosion, it wouldn't have happened without the outstanding performance of Petr Mrazek who, with his 31-save outing, has now won five consecutive starts.

There was an intensity level on Saturday that was totally absent from the Canes' game on Friday. Pretty much everything that we saw from them on the second night of the back-to-back was what you'd want to see after how bad the loss to Winnipeg was.

They were able to dictate the game and play the way that they wanted to play, as opposed to letting their opponent get the upper hand on them early. Even after an extremely irritating and ineffective 5-on-3 early on, they didn't let the negatives overwhelm them like they would have in years past. To boot, they even stepped up their special teams effort after that, ending the night two-for-five after going zero-for-three in the early stages of the first period on the power play.

#### Moral of the Story

The Hurricanes had an egregious game on Friday. Their worst of the season. That happened, and there was only one thing they could do about it - not let it carry over.

Instead of letting that game wear on them, they opted to make sure that was a one-off. The response that the Canes showed on the road against a great Nashville team in a tough environment was very impressive. It was a testament to the mental fortitude in this group and the excellent leadership core they have in Justin Williams on the ice and Rod Brind'Amour behind the bench.

After all of the emotional highs and lows from the weekend, the Hurricanes are right back in third place in the Metropolitan Division, and their playoff hopes remain very realistic and promising. Carolina will stay on the road for their next two games - a Monday-night date with the slumping Avalanche in Denver and a Friday-night divisional showdown in Columbus.

Every game and every point is hugely important at this time of year, and for once, it seems like the Hurricanes aren't intimidated by that fact. They're ready for a fight. They've gone through adversity and come out stronger on the other side. That's what you have to do if you want to be a playoff team in the NHL.



## Hurricanes' Svechnikov More Than Draft Hype

By Mark Shiver

In last year's NHL Entry Draft, the Carolina Hurricanes selected Andrei Svechnikov as the second-overall pick. The notoriety that accompanies being the second-overall pick is significant, and along with notoriety has come increasing scrutiny. As the season enters the home stretch, would the Hurricanes have still wanted Svechnikov at number two overall had they seen his first season?

#### Svechnikov Was a Draft Darling

If you can recall the hype going into last year's NHL Entry Draft, Svechnikov was talked about widely as a worthy top-five overall pick. Some scouts even had him at number one overall. He definitely had the hype train rolling pretty good. For example, in The Hockey Writers' Draft Prospect Profile last April, Andrew Forbes quoted Steve Kournianos/The Draft Analyst as saying, "His vision and hands already are at an elite level. Additionally, his upper-body strength is often underestimated, and opponents losing puck battles via a shove become commonplace when Svechnikov is involved in a tight-checking affair. You can use Svechnikov in any situation, and he is a threat to score while shorthanded."

Kournianos echoed a theme that seemed to be prominent among scouts about Svechnikov's size as well as speed and vision. While he has not emerged thus far as the offensive juggernaut he was touted to be, he has proven beyond a doubt that he belongs playing in the NHL. Even at his young age – he will be 19 in a week or so – "Svech," as he is called by his teammates, is not out of place.

#### Svechnikov Statistically So Far

Through 68 games, Svechnikov has put up numbers some veterans would love to see on their stat line. He has 15 goals and 14 assists for a total of 29 points. At Hockey-Reference, he is shown to be averaging 14:26 of ice-time per game. Compared with another phenom for the Hurricanes in the recent past, Sebastian Aho, who averaged 16:47 per game his rookie season, Svechnikov is not too far off in playing time as a rookie.

What about the physical factor that scouts loved? Through 68 games, Svechnikov is fifth among the Hurricanes forwards in total hits at 102. He is averaging 1.5 hits per game, not too shabby for a rookie forward. The book on Svechnikov said that his weakness was on the defensive side of the game.

#### Where is Svechnikov?

To his credit, Hurricanes head coach Rod Brind'Amour has parked "Svech" on the third line, seemingly to give him the defensive experience he needs. With a top line of Aho and Teuvo Teräväinen, Svechnikov's scoring prowess is not needed there. The result is that he has not only put up decent rookie numbers, but is learning to improve his defensive game also playing a lot with Jordan Martinook and Brock McGinn.

Of course, coaches do make changes, and against the Nashville Predators on Saturday night, Brind'Amour had Svechnikov on the second line with Jordan Staal and Teräväinen.



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During the Hurricanes' recent game at home against the St. Louis Blues, I paid particular attention to Svechnikov and his line. Against the Blues, they were rarely in the offensive zone. Time after time they would be on the ice and barely cross the center line. They played well, but there was little, if any, offense. It made one of my media colleagues question, "Is Roddy hiding him on the third line? Is he trying to improve the defensive part of his game?"

Interestingly enough, the whole conversation that night started with one of the Blues' media to whom I was saying, "He's only 18. Cut him some slack." We were talking about what appeared to be a Svechnikov first season lacking the flash that the hype train promised before he was drafted second overall. Another member of the media made this observation about Svechnikov: "He rarely has a superstar in the making moment."

I watched for that moment against the Blues and had to admit that a moment like that did not happen. But, that really is not the point in my opinion. I believe that the Hurricanes were absolutely correct to select Svechnikov second overall. I see a soon-to-be 19-year-old playing nearly a fourth of entire games night in and night out. I see a young player who is not

afraid to hit and who is learning what it means to be a two-way player in the NHL.

Nobody expected "Svech" to knock Aho or Teräväinen out of their spots in his first season. But, unlike some, I do see a superstar in the making. The biggest reason I see that is his attitude. He's not complaining and griping about where he plays. He's thankful to be playing and is willing to learn. It would not surprise me at all to see Svechnikov blow up in season two or three just like Aho is doing. To me, he's that good.

Oliver Thompson wrote about Svechnikov about a month ago at Cardiac Cane. He wrote, "Svech is having a very good first year in the NHL. He's not playing alongside a Brock Boeser (as Elias Pettersson is), or a Mark Stone (as Brady Tkachuk is). He's driving the play himself, improving his teammates, and learning what it takes to compete at the top level from an early age, from one of the very best...Svech has handled the jump from the OHL with considerable ease, and we should all be excited about what the future holds for him."

At number two overall, the Hurricanes selected Svechnikov. A great selection and one that is very likely to pay huge dividends for the team for seasons to come.



## Nedeljkovic blanks Phantoms in 4-0 blowout win

by Nicholas Niedzielski

After falling just short in the weekend's first meeting, the Checkers left no doubt in their rematch with Lehigh Valley, pounding the Phantoms 4-0 behind a shutout performance from Alex Nedeljkovic.

The netminder stood tall on all 22 shots he faced – including helping kill off six man advantages – to frustrate a powerful Phantoms offense and pick up his third shutout of the season, as well as extending his league wins lead.

While Nedeljkovic proved to be a brick wall between the pipes, Charlotte's offensive attack pulled their weight in the win as well. Nick Schilkey continued his breakout campaign by opening the scoring in the first with a beautiful finish off a slick feed from Morgan Geekie and then capping things off with a power-play strike in the third for his third multi-goal game of the season.

Newcomer Tomas Jurco banged home a rebound out front to double the lead and keep Charlotte's momentum moving forward early in the second, while Nicolas Roy ripped a quick one-timer from the slot in the third off of another dish from Morgan Geekie, who finished the night with a pair of assists.

### NOTES

Nedeljkovic is now tied for fifth in the AHL in shutouts this season and has nine in his career ... Nedeljkovic has not had consecutive regulation losses this season ... Schilkey is now tied for fourth on the team in goals and has 12 points in his last 10 games ... Schilkey and Carrick both extended their point streaks to four games ... Carrick has an assist in each of the last four games ... The Checkers have scored a power-play goal in four straight games ... The Checkers have killed 23 of their last 24 penalties ... The Checkers have had a two-goal scorer in each of their last three games ... Haydn Fleury missed the game due to suspension ... Janne Kuokkanen and Spencer Smallman missed the game due to injury ... Steven Lorentz and Dennis Robertson were healthy extras

### UP NEXT

The Checkers will return home for a two-game set against the Rochester Americans on Friday and Saturday to kick off a relentless stretch to games to finish the season.



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## Haydn Fleury suspended one game by AHL

by Nicholas Niedzielski

The AHL today announced that Haydn Fleury has been suspended one game.

The suspension comes as a result of an illegal check to the head of an opponent in Friday's loss to Lehigh Valley. The

blue liner will miss Sunday afternoon's rematch against the Phantoms.

The Checkers are currently carrying eight healthy defensemen, so either Dennis Robertson or Bobby Sanguinetti – both scratched from Friday's contest – will draw into Sunday's lineup.

### TODAY'S LINKS

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# SportScan

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

1135318 Carolina Hurricanes

Hurricanes Handle Predators – Sweep Season Series

BY THE CANADIAN PRESS

MARCH 10TH, 2019

NASHVILLE — Nino Niederreiter scored twice in the first period and the Carolina Hurricanes held off the Nashville Predators 5-3 on Saturday night to sweep the season series.

Sebastian Aho had a goal and an assist and Justin Williams and Jordan Martinook also scored. The Hurricanes snapped a two-game skid to keep their spot in the first wild-card in the Eastern Conference.

Teuvo Teravainen had two assists, and goalie Petr Mrazek improved to 8-0-0 against Nashville.

Mikael Granlund, Brian Boyle and Craig Smith scored for the Predators.

Nashville coach Peter Laviolette pulled goalie Juuse Saros with about 2:33 left, and Granlund scored with 2:28 left in regulation from right in front with officials waving it off both on the ice and after an initial review for interference by Boyle who collided with Mrazek. The Predators challenged and won for Granlund's first goal since being acquired at the trade deadline.

Aho sealed the win with an empty-net goal with 19.3 seconds left.

The Predators played without Filip Forsberg, day to day with a lower-body injury. Granlund replaced Forsberg on the top line with Viktor Arvidsson and Ryan Johansen. Nashville also was coming off its first three-day break since the team's mandated break immediately after the All-Star Game in late January.

Juuse Saros, Justin Williams

Carolina lost 8-1 to Winnipeg on Friday night and travelled. That didn't stop the Hurricanes from jumping on the Predators early, outshooting them 16-8 and grabbing a 2-0 lead after the first period.

The Predators got into penalty trouble early and often starting with Smith just 30 seconds into the game. Then they wound up giving the Hurricanes a 5-on-3 for 95 seconds with back-to-back tripping penalties on Matt Irwin and captain Roman Josi. Saros, starting for Pekka Rinne, made seven saves during the penalty kill to keep it scoreless.

Niederreiter put Carolina up 1-0 at 14:29 with a wrist from the left circle that went top shelf over Saros' glove. Nashville took its fourth penalty late in the period for too many men on the ice during a power play, and Niederreiter made it 2-0 with a second left tipping in Teuvo Teravainen's shot from the slot on the man advantage for his 11th goal in 22 games with the Hurricanes.

Smith got Nashville on the board at 2:52 of the second, beating Mrazek's blocker with a slap shot from the top of the right circle.

Williams scored Carolina's second power-play goal 55 seconds into the third. Boyle answered quickly scoring at 2:35 to pull Nashville within 3-2. Then Martinook beat Saros with a wrist at 6:38 to pad the lead for Carolina.

NOTES: The Hurricanes improved to 10-3-1 in the second game of back-to-backs. ... Williams notched his seventh straight 20-goal season. ... Nashville dropped to 5-17-4 when trailing after the second period.

UP NEXT

Hurricanes: At Colorado on Monday night.

Predators: At Anaheim on Tuesday night.

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1135322 Colorado Avalanche

From AHL all-star to NHL fourth-liner, Avalanche's Andrew Agozzino adapts

By MIKE CHAMBERS

March 10, 2019 at 5:00 PM

Points streak, interrupted.

Avalanche forward Andrew Agozzino is "riding" a 10-game points streak with the Colorado Eagles of the American Hockey League. And of course, the AHL's fourth-leading scorer didn't carry his statistics with him when he was recalled to the NHL team last week.

With his AHL points streak on hold, Agozzino hopes to again prove he belongs in the NHL by playing far less than he did with the Eagles. The AHL all-star went from a first-line forward with the Eagles to a fourth-line center with the Avalanche. Agozzino centered a line with Sven Andrighetto and Gabriel Bourque and logged 7:52 of ice time in Saturday's 3-0 victory over the Buffalo Sabres.

While with the white-hot Eagles — who have won six straight games and produced shutouts in their last two — Agozzino was playing around 20 minutes a night.

"It's not really that crazy. When I'm up there (with the Eagles in Loveland), I play in all situations — penalty kill, all defensive-zone situations. It's obviously an adjustment with the ice time, but then again, I try to just continue to play the same way, and maybe be a little bit more reliable and don't take as many risks," Agozzino said Sunday after an optional practice.

Agozzino, 28, makes a comfortable AHL living with a \$300,000 annual salary. But he more than doubles it (\$650,000) when he's with the Avalanche.

But that's not the main reason he wants to remain in the Denver area.

"I would rather stay here, and we can keep that (AHL points streak) at 10 games as long as we can," he said. "I'd much rather stay here and be part of an NHL playoff push. I'm just trying to do my job on a nightly basis in whatever role they want me to play."

The Avs are two points out of a Western Conference playoff position with 13 remaining games. They continue a four-game homestand Monday night against the Carolina Hurricanes, who entered Sunday's games two points inside of the Eastern Conference playoff cut.

Colorado also hosts the Anaheim Ducks on Friday and the New Jersey Devils on Sunday before beginning a key two-game Central Division trip at Minnesota and Dallas on March 19 and 21.

UND reunion. Avalanche second-year forward Tyson Jost is excited to see his former North Dakota teammates this week, heading into the Fighting Hawks' NCHC best-of-three playoff series at the University of Denver this weekend. Jost was a UND freshman in 2016-17 before signing with the Avs.

Radulov hat trick, Bishop shutout as Stars beat Avs 4-0

Jost, who celebrates his 21st birthday Thursday, would have been a junior at UND this season.

"They get in on Wednesday," Jost said of his former teammates. "It will be nice to see those guys and spend some time with them. I spent some time with them last time they were here (Feb. 1-2) when I was rehabbing my shoulder. I had like eight or nine guys over to the house."

Jost lives with fellow second-year forwards J.T. Compher and Alex Kerfoot, who played at Michigan and Harvard, respectively.

Footnotes. Forward Matt Nieto has ditched his crutches for a soft walking boot. Nieto suffered a leg injury Feb. 22 and was scheduled to miss 4-to-6 weeks. He has a chance to return late this month. ... The Avs are on a six-game points streak at home (5-0-1), during which they have climbed to 16-15-6 for the season.

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1135323 Colorado Avalanche

Chambers: Cale Makar poised to make an immediate impact with the Avalanche

By MIKE CHAMBERS

March 10, 2019 at 7:00 am

Unsigned NHL defenseman Cale Makar has become a proverbial rock star in NCAA hockey. The Avalanche draftee (first round, No. 4 overall in 2017) led the University of Massachusetts to the Hockey East regular-season title, a pending berth to the NCAA Tournament and is a big name in the Hobey Baker Award race as national player of the year.

Last week Makar, a 20-year old sophomore, was named the No. 1 NHL prospect among drafted players by ESPN. He previously was 20th. Makar, whose 42 points in 34 games is a record for a UMass defenseman, went from a sure-fire NHL player to a guy we should expect to compete for the Calder Trophy next season.

"Of every drafted player I've watched this season, none has impressed me more than Makar," ESPN's Chris Peters reported. "He is an elite skater with high-end puck skills, excellent distribution skills and adequate defensive play. A one-man transition who can get up the ice as fast as anybody outside of the NHL right now, this is a player who has taken significant steps to solidifying his projection as a likely top-pairing stalwart."

This is a player who could be a generational talent on the blue line for the Avalanche, which had only drafted two defensemen in the first round in 10 years before Makar. The Avs chose Kevin Shattenkirk 14th overall in 2007 and Duncan Siemens at No. 11 in 2011. Makar will serve as an example of why teams must select top-ranked defensemen when they have the opportunity. Makar went second overall among D-men in 2017, one spot behind Miro Heiskanen, who already is a 23-plus-minute player as a rookie for the Dallas Stars.

The beginning of Makar's NHL career depends on how second-ranked UMass (26-8) fares in its first NCAA Tournament appearance since 2006. The national regionals are March 29-31, and if the Minutemen don't advance to the Frozen Four April 11-13, Makar could play in the Avalanche's final four games of the regular season, which concludes April 6 at San Jose.

If the Avalanche makes the playoffs, Makar is eligible to join the team in the postseason.

Whenever Makar signs his entry-level contract to make the jump, don't expect it to be a big jump. Makar is poised to be in Colorado's top pairing as soon as he turns pro.

Is the Avalanche's Tyson Barrie expendable? Colorado has options with Cale Makar and Conor Timmins

Radulov hat trick, Bishop shutout as Stars beat Avs 4-0



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 11, 2019

The college route. It wasn't long ago when the Avalanche, then coached by Patrick Roy, preferred major-junior backgrounds over the NCAA route. But since, Colorado general manager Joe Sakic and his staff are building their roster around former college players.

According to ESPN's Peters, the Avs' eight drafted prospects currently playing in NCAA are at the upper-echelon of all NHL teams. The Chicago Blackhawks have a league-high 13 drafted prospects playing in college, followed by Nashville and Philadelphia, each with 10, and Florida, the New York Islanders, Ottawa, San Jose and Tampa Bay, each with nine. Colorado is tied with Buffalo, Detroit and Edmonton with eight.

Denver Post: LOADED: 03.11.2019

1135324 Columbus Blue Jackets

Upcoming stretch of games crucial

Brian Hedger

Posted Mar 10, 2019 at 7:28 PM

Updated Mar 10, 2019 at 7:28 PM

The Blue Jackets played the Pittsburgh Penguins on Saturday with a desperation they hadn't shown yet.

They reached a new level of effort in a 4-1 win that ended an eight-game losing streak to Pittsburgh, and there was a good reason.

"Looking at the standings, you understand how important a game like that is," said defenseman Seth Jones, who logged a whopping 28:57 for his fourth-highest non-overtime ice time. "That can make or break a season. I know it's not going to come down to just one game, but you put yourself in a tough spot if you lose important games, divisional games, especially."

Columbus moved back into a playoff spot by winning, supplanting the Montreal Canadiens for the second wild card in the Eastern Conference based on the NHL's regulation/overtime wins (ROW) tiebreaker. Prior to the game, the Blue Jackets were two points back of Montreal on the outside of the playoff picture.

They're now tied with the Canadiens at 79 points apiece, in one less game, and trail both Pittsburgh and Carolina by two points.

That's how thin the margin is for bubble teams in the East's postseason race with 14 or fewer games left for the top 10 teams in the conference — and it only gets tougher for the Jackets this week.

After an optional practice Sunday, the Blue Jackets flew to New York for a game Monday against the New York Islanders — the start of two key back-to-backs this week.

The Islanders are second in the Metropolitan Division, three spots ahead of Columbus — which will then host the Boston Bruins on Tuesday, the Atlantic Division's second-place team. The Jackets will then be idle until Friday, when they play a back-to-back that starts Friday against the Hurricanes and concludes Saturday in Boston.

All four games are against teams currently in playoff spots, which could go a long way in determining the Jackets' postseason fate.

"It's massive," said forward Josh Anderson, who was feeling the effects of his seven hits Saturday against the Penguins. "We've got, really, no space to lose games here. So, every game, we're going to treat it like a playoff game and play our hearts out. ... Hopefully, we can build on (Saturday) night's win and keep it going."

It was an impressive victory against the Penguins, who hosted the Bruins on Sunday.

The Blue Jackets played with an emotional edge because of their losing streak against Pittsburgh, which extended to Feb. 17, 2017, but also because time is running out on the regular season.

They also have one of the toughest remaining schedules among teams vying for the postseason — with nine out of the final 14 games against teams holding playoff spots.

"We've got to start getting into a playoff mindset right now," Jones said. "That's what I would say about it. We play some pretty good teams coming up here. ... We're just going to control what we can control, though, which is our work ethic, the way we prepare and our mindset before every game."

The Blue Jackets have dropped the first two games against the Islanders, losing 3-2 Dec. 1 in New York and again Feb. 14 in Columbus, getting shut out 3-0 on Valentine's Day.

They've gone 1-2-0 in the first three games against Carolina — splitting the two road matchups — and Columbus will play its entire three-game series against the Bruins in the next three weeks.

"We all have to be in a playoff mindset at this point," Jones said. "We have no room to start games slow or not be ready to play individually or as a team, because at the end of the day, you don't want to be that team on the outside."

Columbus Dispatch LOADED: 03.11.2019

1135325 Columbus Blue Jackets

Blue Jackets 4, Penguins 1: Five takeaways

Brian Hedger

It was something that, apparently, the Blue Jackets had never even thought about.

An eight-game losing streak to the same, hated team that dated back two years? What? No, of course not. How could a stretch of ineptitude that long possibly nest in anybody's mind, let alone the mind of a headstrong hockey player?

Or hockey team? Or entire fanbase?

"It's a mental hurdle for you guys," coach John Tortorella said to reporters Saturday night, after his Blue Jackets cleared their Pittsburgh Penguins mental hurdle without tipping it over, halting the aforementioned eight-game losing skid with a rousing 4-1 victory at sold out Nationwide Arena. "You guys talk about it all the time. I don't think (players) think about that much."

Maybe he's right.

Maybe each of those eight straight losses to Pittsburgh since the Jackets' last win Feb. 17, 2017 — along with four other losses in a five-game, first-round playoff series that year — just dissipated into thin air. Maybe they didn't compound, time after time after time, stacking on top of each other like black-and-gold bricks until they were encased in a depressing fortress of Penguins woe.

It's just kind of hard to believe, in the same way that it's hard to believe Charlie Brown never sees it coming whenever Lucy tees up the football.



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"It doesn't really matter, actually, what's been in the past," said goalie Sergei Bobrovsky, who refuses to admit he's probably the most tortured Blue Jacket of the bunch against Pittsburgh. "You prepare yourself for one game at a time and it doesn't matter what's the score, what's the last time we played or stuff like that. It doesn't really matter. Statistics live in the past, you know? So, you go out there and create the history actually. That's it."

He's absolutely right, too, while being completely wrong at the same time.

See, this happens in sports at all levels, including the NHL.

One team beats up on another, regardless of the reasons, and over time the team that's losing needs to prove – mainly to itself – that another, better outcome is possible. That's what happened Saturday night at Nationwide Arena.

It was beyond time the Blue Jackets bloodied the Penguins' beak, finally, after losing and losing in various forms of heartbreak.

They still lost the season series, going 1-3-0 against Pittsburgh. The Jackets are still behind the Penguins in the playoff chase, sitting two points back in the Eastern Conference's second wild card. But they left their own arena victorious against "that team," in front of their own fans – who've seen them trot out some stinkers this season.

This was only one regular-season game, yes, that's true. But some games mean more than others. They just do, and this was one.

"There's always going to be that team, wherever you play," said Ryan Dzingel, who went to Ohio State but is a newbie to this rivalry. "There's always going to be that team that you don't like or that rivalry team that seems to get you once in a while, and we're going to have to get over that right now."

He said that before the Blue Jackets did exactly that, helping them polish it off with a slick dish to Oliver Bjorkstrand to put the Blue Jackets up 3-1 and break the Penguins' chokehold on this rivalry.

Even if it was just for a night, Columbus forced Pittsburgh to cry uncle. Happier history was created, by the Blue Jackets, and now they can spring forward into the remaining 14 games on their schedule.

Before they do, here are five takeaways from HNIC (Hockey Night in Columbus):

### 1) What it means

The Blue Jackets (79 points) reclaimed the second wild card in the East with the win, moving two points back of Pittsburgh (81 points) – which holds the first wild card.

The Penguins began the day in third place of the Metropolitan Division, but dropped into the wild card after the Carolina Hurricanes won 5-3 in Nashville to take over third. The Hurricanes (81 points) won the standings tie-breaker by having one more regulation/overtime win (36-35).

Columbus now has 37 regulation/overtime wins (ROW), which could come in handy if the race comes right down to the wire. In fact, the Blue Jackets leaped past the idle Montreal Canadiens (79 points) because they have more ROW (37-34).

The Blue Jackets will now get ready for a brutal four-game schedule this week that will be played in two back-to-back sets.

The first starts Monday at the Metro-leading New York Islanders and concludes Tuesday at home against the Boston Bruins – who are second in the Atlantic Division. The second back-to-back starts Friday at home against the Hurricanes and wraps up Saturday in Boston – which kicks off a four-game, 10-day road trip that includes three games in western Canada.

"When we play like that, we're a dangerous team and it can't be a one and done," said Cam Atkinson, whose 37th and 38th goals led the way

against the Penguins. "We need to continue to play like that and get better every day, and there's no reason we can't play like that."

### 2) Superb start

The Blue Jackets have really yawned their way into some big home games this season, but this was not one of them. Energized by a packed house and a pregame buzz circulating around the arena, they came out with fire in their pupils for this game.

Ten seconds into the game, captain Nick Foligno put a hit on former Blue Jackets teammate Jack Johnson, who signed with the Penguins as a free agent last summer. Six seconds after that, Josh Anderson stapled forward Dominik Simon into the half wall with a thud, sounding an alarm that Columbus wasn't going to snooze through the start of this one.

It progressed from there, with Boone Jenner getting penalized for a slashing call 20 seconds into the game and then making it 1-0 just 11 seconds after he was set free – taking a pass from Anderson and rifling a wrist shot past Penguins goalie Matt Murray.

"I thought guys had great energy," Bobrovsky said. "(The) stands gave us great energy, too, and it was fun to be part of it and even more fun to get two points."

### 3) Bigtime 'Bob'

Speaking of Bobrovsky, he was in peak form from start to finish. After Tortorella scratched him Thursday in a 3-0 loss to the Penguins at PPG Paints Arena – a wink-wink, nod-nod "rest" maneuver – Bobrovsky was as confident and sharp as he's been all season.

And he did it against a team – the team – that has, as mentioned earlier, tortured him for two-plus seasons including playoffs. Bobrovsky made nine saves in the first period, eight in the second and 11 in the third to slam the door on the Penguins.

"Bob has told me he's mentally good, he's physically good – even if I played him in Pittsburgh (on Thursday), he's good," Tortorella said. "There were a lot of people around the net, as Pittsburgh's always around that net (and) I thought Bob fought to see the puck and made some saves that were harder saves than they looked like, after he finished his business. He did a really good job there. I just thought he was really confident in how he played."

### 4) 'It's who we are'

Once again, the Blue Jackets' top checking line was their best line.

Foligno, Jenner and Anderson started the game as heat-seeking missiles and set the tone right away. They didn't let down, either. Anderson led the way with seven hits, while Jenner and Foligno racked up three each.

The Penguins looked a little stunned by the Jackets' physicality right off the opening face-off, which led into Jenner's goal. Columbus had 70 percent of all 5-on-5 shot attempts in the first period (14-6) and a lot of that was earned with those three on the ice.

"They scored an early goal, Andy's banging everything in sight ... it's who we are," Tortorella said. "And I think they have to keep reminding us how we have to play. I heard them on the bench reminding guys, 'This is how you have to play,' and they certainly lead by example that way."

"We don't expect (Matt Duchene) and (Artemi Panarin) and Cam to be banging like that, but they can take lessons from that line, as far as how straight ahead they are. It's a line that's really done some good things for us and just set the tone for us, and tonight was a very important one."

### 5) Murray was fantastic

The Blue Jackets broke the game open late in the third period, but it could've been a full-on rout had it not been for the guy in the Penguins' net.



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Murray was beat clean by Jenner for the first goal and again by Atkinson in the second, but he made a number of great saves to keep the Penguins close.

The first was against an open look for Jenner at 6:16 in the first period, when Murray lunged to his right to stop the puck mid-flight with the blade of his goalie stick.

In the second, 7:16 into the period, he came up with another highlight-worthy stop – just getting the inside of his blocker on a puck tipped in front of the net by Markus Nutivaara. Murray also robbed Anderson of a goal late in the third, sprawling into a prone position to get his right pad on a one-timer from the left face-off circle.

Columbus Dispatch LOADED: 03.11.2019

1135311 Buffalo Sabres

Amerks finish weekend sweep with rout of Devils

By Staff

Published Sun, Mar 10, 2019|Updated Sun, Mar 10, 2019

The Rochester Americans completed a sweep of their three weekend games and reclaimed first place in the North Division of the American Hockey League with a 6-1 triumph over the Binghamton Devils on Sunday afternoon at Blue Cross Arena in Rochester.

The Amerks (38-18-5) moved one point ahead of the idle Syracuse Crunch (37-17-6) in the standings.

Rasmus Asplund, a 21-year-old left wing from Sweden, had his third multi-point game in the last three with a goal and two assists for Rochester. Asplund had six goals and 23 assists in 61 games for Rochester this season.

After a slow start, the Amerks scored three first-period goals. The first was an even-strength goal by Taylor Leier, his 18th of the season and seventh for Rochester. Then Remi Eli scored short-handed with an assist from Leier. Defenseman Matt Tennyson scored the third goal when the teams were skating four aside.

Binghamton's Nikita Popugaev scored his team's lone goal on the power play at 2:31 of the second with Buffalo native Ryan Schmelzer, a former Canisius College star, getting the primary assist.

Rochester countered that with a power-play goal by defenseman Lawrence Pilut with 1:37 left in the second.

C.J. Smith scored with a man advantage for his 21st goal at 3:01 of the third period with Asplund getting an assist. Asplund closed the scoring at 12:55 with Victor Olofsson assisting for his third point in the last two games.

Scott Wedgewood had 18 saves in goal for Rochester and improved his record to 24-10-2.

Evan Cormier had 26 saves for the Devils.

Rochester has collected 35 out of a possible 48 points in its last 24 games and points in 13 of the last 17 games against the Devils since the start of the 2017-18 season.

The Amerks have a home game Wednesday night against Utica then a two-game series at Charlotte on Friday and Saturday.

Buffalo News LOADED: 03.11.2019

1135312 Buffalo Sabres

With NHL sitting Jack Eichel for two games, Alexander Nylander gets the call

By Mike Harrington

Published Sun, Mar 10, 2019

Updated Sun, Mar 10, 2019

As yet another meaningless March moves on, one of the best reasons to watch the Buffalo Sabres these days won't be on the ice the next two games.

Captain Jack Eichel received a two-game suspension Sunday night from the NHL's Department of Player Safety for his hit on Colorado's Carl Soderberg during the second period of Saturday's 3-0 loss to the Avalanche in Denver.

Eichel will miss KeyBank Center visits by the Dallas Stars on Tuesday and the Pittsburgh Penguins on Thursday before returning to the lineup Saturday in Carolina. Eichel has 25 goals and 72 points in 65 games and the suspension will temporarily derail his bid for his first 30-goal season.

To replace Eichel, the Sabres have called up former first-round draft pick Alexander Nylander from Rochester. It's the first callup of the year for Nylander, who has 12 goals and 19 assists in 49 games for the Amerks.

Eichel was given an "illegal check to the head" penalty at 14:48 of the second period after appearing to pick Soderberg's head as the pair was engaged in a puck battle in the neutral zone. Soderberg went down briefly on his stomach but got up and headed to the bench. He played the rest of the game and appeared to be uninjured.

According to the NHL's Department of Player Safety video released Sunday night, Eichel's suspension was largely a result of the fact that Soderberg's head was the principal point of contact on the play.

"With Soderberg reaching for the puck, Eichel cut sharply in front of him with his upper body, hitting Soderberg's head and making it the main point of contact on a hit where such head contact was avoidable," the league said in its video explanation of the play.

The league ruled that Eichel could have taken a different angle on the hit and driven through Soderberg's shoulder and core rather than picking the head. The league also absolved Soderberg of contributing to the nature of the hit.

"His head and core move in a consistent manner," the DoPS said of Soderberg, "and do not suddenly and materially change position in a way that changes the nature of this hit from a full body check to one that picks the head."

The Sabres have made no comment on the suspension. They were off Sunday and will return to practice Monday.

It will be interesting to see if Nylander is getting a two-game look simply to replace Eichel or if he has a chance to stick in the NHL for a few games before returning to Rochester for the Calder Cup playoffs.

Nylander, 21, has had another mostly quiet year in Rochester but has raised eyebrows with a goal in four straight games, culminating in his tally during Saturday's 5-3 win in Binghamton.

Nylander, taken eighth overall in 2016, has played just seven NHL games the last two years with one goal and one assist.



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The Sabres have 14 games left and will endure their seventh straight March when a playoff berth has not been on the line.

It's a bitter disappointment for a franchise that hasn't made the postseason since 2011 or even competed for a spot since going 1-3-1 in the final five games of 2012 to blow its most recent chance.

The Sabres are 2-8-2 in their last 12 games and are now only one point ahead of the New York Rangers in the Eastern Conference, leaving 13th place in the East a realistic possibility.

Nine of the remaining 14 games are against teams in the playoff hunt, with the exceptions being two games apiece against Detroit and Ottawa and a trip to New Jersey.

The highlights include Ryan O'Reilly's return with the St. Louis Blues on Sunday, the March 20 visit by Toronto (which has beaten the Sabres four straight times for the first time since 1972) and the March 30 game against the New York Islanders that will see the Sabres return to the Nassau Coliseum for the first time since 2015.

Tuesday's game will be a huge one for Dallas. The Stars enter Monday holding the West's first wild card but are just one point ahead of Minnesota, two up on Arizona and three ahead of Colorado.

While the Sabres have been abysmal on the road — losing nine in a row and winning just three of their last 22 — they have been much better at home.

The Sabres are 19-10-4 this year in KeyBank Center compared to 11-19-5 on the road. Last year, they were an NHL-worst 11-25-5 at home so they've already improved by 15 points eight home games left.

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1135313 Buffalo Sabres

Sabres recall Alexander Nylander from Rochester

By Staff

Published Sun, Mar 10, 2019

Updated Sun, Mar 10, 2019

The Buffalo Sabres recalled Alexander Nylander from the Rochester Americans on Sunday, with captain Jack Eichel facing an NHL disciplinary hearing.

Nylander, the eighth overall pick in 2016, is riding a four-game goal streak and has seven points in the last six games with the Amerks. He has already set career highs in goals (12) and points (31) in 49 games. He has tied his career high with 19 assists.

The Rochester Americans host Binghamton on Sunday at 3:05 p.m. and the Sabres are not practicing, but the recall happened Sunday morning to avoid the potential for injury.

Nylander has played in seven games with the Sabres — four in 2016-17 and three last season. He has a goal and an assist.

Buffalo News LOADED: 03.11.2019

1135314 Buffalo Sabres

Jack Eichel gets two-game suspension for head hit against Avalanche

By Mike Harrington

Published Sun, Mar 10, 2019

Updated Sun, Mar 10, 2019

The long arm of NHL law reached out to Jack Eichel on Sunday and the Buffalo Sabres captain will be sitting out the next two games.

Eichel has been given a two-game suspension by the NHL's Department of Player Safety for his hit to the head of Colorado's Carl Soderberg during Saturday's game in the Pepsi Center. Eichel had a phone hearing with the league earlier Sunday and the resulting ban was his first fine or suspension in his four-year NHL career.

Clearly expecting Eichel to be suspended, the Sabres recalled Alexander Nylander from Rochester on Sunday.

Eichel was given an "illegal check to the head" penalty at 14:48 of the second period after appearing to pick Soderberg's head as the pair was engaged in a puck battle in the neutral zone. Soderberg went down briefly on his stomach but got up and headed to the bench. He played the rest of the game and appeared to be uninjured.

According to the NHL's Department of Player Safety released Sunday night, Eichel's suspension was largely a result of the fact that Soderberg's head was the principal point of contact on the play.

"With Soderberg reaching for the puck, Eichel cut sharply in front of him with his upper body hitting Soderberg's head and making it the main point of contact on a hit where such head contact was avoidable," the league said.

"While we acknowledge Eichel's argument that Soderberg is low and reaching for the puck, this hit does not meet any of the criteria for an avoidable head contact under Rule 48."

Eichel was clearly agitated in the wake of a late and high hit he took from former Sabres defenseman Nikita Zadorov in the first period. Zadorov got a minor penalty for roughing on the play, which came after a whistle for offsides. He is not facing any supplemental discipline.

After the game, Eichel admitted he took matters into his own hands to show some response in the wake of repeated physical play against the Sabres in recent weeks.

"It seems like they were taking runs a little bit at times," Eichel said of the Avalanche. "If I'm going to be at the forefront of it, I might as well push back a little bit. I've got to protect myself."

The league ruled that Eichel went too far, saying he could have taken a different angle on the hit and driven through Soderberg's shoulder and core rather than picking the head. The league also absolved Soderberg of contributing to the nature of the hit.

"His head and core move in a consistent manner," the DoPS said, "and do not suddenly and materially change position in a way that changes the nature of this hit from a full body check to one that picks the head."

Eichel will miss two straight home games, Tuesday against Dallas and Thursday against Pittsburgh, and will be eligible to return Saturday in Carolina. Eichel has 25 goals, 47 assists and 72 points in 65 games. He missed three games earlier this season after suffering an upper-body injury.

Eichel's two-game ban matches match what Edmonton's Connor McDavid earned last month for a similar check to the head on New York Islanders defenseman Nick Leddy. Like Eichel, that was McDavid's first hearing with Player Safety.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Buffalo News LOADED: 03.11.2019

1135367 NHL

Hall of Famer Howell, Rangers' games leader, dies at 86

Staff Report

By The Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Harry Howell, the Hall of Fame defenseman who played the most games in New York Rangers' history, has died. He was 86.

Howell died Saturday night. He had been living at an assisted care facility near his hometown of Hamilton, Ontario.

A seven-time All-Star, Howell played 1,160 games for the Rangers from 1952-69 and had his No. 3 retired by the team.

"One of the most iconic players in franchise history, Harry's Hall of Fame accomplishments on the ice were exceeded only by the tremendous gentleman he was off the ice," Rangers President Glen Sather said in a statement. "I was privileged to have worked with Harry for over a decade in both Edmonton and New York and treasure our memories together."

Howell also played in the NHL for the Oakland/California Golden Seals and Los Angeles before finishing in the World Hockey Association with single seasons with New York/New Jersey, San Diego and Calgary.

Known for his smart, steady play, "Harry the Horse" won the Norris Trophy as the league's top defenseman in 1966-67. He finished with 94 goals and 324 assists in the NHL and was elected to the Hall of Fame in 1979. He had seven goals and 36 assists in 170 games in the WHA.

Howell was a player-coach with New York-New Jersey and San Diego in the WHA and had an 11-game stint behind the bench in the NHL with the Minnesota North Stars. He also scouted for Edmonton.

"The National Hockey League mourns the passing of legendary defenseman, consummate professional, and Hockey Hall of Famer Harry Howell," NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman said in a statement.

Howell helped the Guelph Biltmores wins the 1952 Memorial Cup junior championship.

The NHL said Howell's wife, Marilyn, died last month.

Seattle Times LOADED: 03.11.2019

1135423 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Flames find relief with monumental effort against Golden Knights

Eric Francis | @EricFrancis

March 11, 2019, 2:03 AM

CALGARY – The Calgary Flames are back in the saddle – as in the Dome and atop the west.

Snapping a four-game losing streak against a divisional foe that had won six straight, the Flames leap-frogged the San Jose Sharks to regain Pacific division bragging rights Sunday night.

And they did it the old fashioned way – with their top players.

Oh no, not the first line. While Johnny Gaudreau's nine shots on goal were a refreshing change of pace for the top trio, it still left him, Sean Monahan and Elias Lindholm scoreless.

On this night, with the stakes befitting a return engagement with Vegas, three other top six forwards were the ones who finally answered the bell in a 6-3 win over the Knights.

Yes, the same line the Flames have long counted on to shut down the opposition, turned the tables on a troubling trend in Calgary with a monumental effort.

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Matthew Tkachuk's first NHL hat trick (and assist) highlighted an 11-point effort from Calgary's 3M Line, which included two goals and an assist from Mikael Backlund and four assists for Michael Frolik.

"I don't even know if I should be the one to have it," said Tkachuk when asked about the keepsake puck.

"I should cut it in half and give it to Backs and Fro just for the job they did tonight. They gave me a couple of tap-in birdies there. Couple open nets and they were awesome tonight."

Stewing in a two-game road trip through Vegas and Phoenix that saw the Flames score just one goal, the Flames returned to the Dome feeling the heat of a surging Vegas team that had made up eight points on the Flames since the Feb. 25 trade deadline.

A Knights win Sunday would have cut the lead to six, given the visitors a 3-1 series win this season along with plenty of confidence and momentum should the two collide early in the playoffs.

But the Flames had other ideas, refusing to give up on their pursuit of first in the Pacific division, which they found themselves playing second fiddle in on Saturday for the first time in more than two months.

That's how long things had been going Calgary's way, before the recent four-game slide proved their defensive improvements could no longer overcome their sudden offensive shortcomings.

"Every time you end a losing streak you feel good, it's a relief," said Backlund, who snapped a 3-3 tie with 22 seconds left in the second period with a net-front redirect that was challenged and cleared, prompting goalie Malcolm Subban to lose his composure at the horn and earn a penalty.

"This stretch can be a little tough on the group but guys approached it the right way this morning. Now we've been No. 1 for a while and it puts a little more pressure on the team and maybe that's part of why we had two losing streaks. Everybody has them, except Tampa I guess. Being through some tough years you really appreciate being in this spot and want to make the most of it for sure."

A veteran's deke by young Andrew Mangiapane opened the scoring in an intense first period the Flames led 3-1. The Knights scored twice in the opening 80 seconds of the second to remind everyone what a tough out they'll be again this spring.

"We know how they play and they know what we're all about – who gets to their game first and stays on it wins," said Flames coach Bill Peters of the potential playoff partner they finished the season series tied 2-2 with.

"We got to our game early, came off it and got rattled, and then got composed again. But in the end, the execution improved."



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David Rittich (25 saves) was solid in the third period as the Knight pressed for the tie, before Tkachuk converted a sweet Backlund pass into an open net with four minutes left. His empty-netter two minutes later prompted hundreds of hats and toques to hit the ice from a fan base finally able to exhale.

"We struggled the past week or so, so to get that one at the begging of a home-stand here, we just want to carry the momentum," said Tkachuk, whose club plays two more at home against non-playoff teams before a jaunt to Winnipeg, where they'll definitely need the top guns to continue their rebound.

"(Scoring) is obviously a focal point lately and we know it.

We don't have to get reminded about how we're struggling to put the puck in the net. It was definitely a relief tonight.

"We didn't talk about (losing first place) at all today but would assume if you asked every guy to give their honest answer, we don't want to be trailing anybody. We want to win the division, not finish second or third. We didn't want to be chasing teams and I think it was a little extra motivation."

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 03.11.2019

1135424 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / What to expect from Quinn Hughes if he joins the Vancouver Canucks

Rory Boylen | @RoryBoylen

March 10, 2019, 2:17 PM

For a while now the expectation has been that Quinn Hughes would join the Vancouver Canucks after his season with the NCAA's Michigan Wolverines concluded. He suggested as much in December during an appearance on the FAN 650's Starting Lineup and the Canucks even considered asking Hughes to leave school following the WJC, which was hosted in Vancouver.

Back in January and even February, there was a hope that when Hughes arrived the Canucks would still be in the thick of a playoff race. But a 5-11-3 stretch now has them nine back of the wild card and just as close to the bottom of the conference as they are to a playoff spot.

A silver lining for the fan base, though, is that they'll now likely get to watch their top prospect — an exciting one at that — take his first NHL steps. Michigan's season ended Saturday night and it's expected Hughes will sign a contract with Vancouver, possibly this week.

"His vision with the puck, he's a play ahead," Wolverines head coach Mel Pearson said about what aspect of Hughes' game he's most excited about translating to the NHL. "He knows where he's going with the puck. He's not one of those guys who needs to look right at a guy to make a pass.

"His skating. Everybody can see his skating, creativity with the puck," Pearson continued. "Hockey sense, vision, poise and patience. Some players have that and some don't."

The 19-year-old is coming off a monster of a season, his second with the Wolverines, in which he recorded 33 points in 30 regular season games. That 1.10 points per game average was the second-highest mark of any under-20 NCAA defenceman in the 21st century, trailing only Adam Fox's 1.14 (40 points in 35 games) in 2016-17. Fox was a freshman for a loaded Harvard Crimson that made it to the Frozen Four that season,

while Hughes led the 13-14-7 Wolverines who were swept in the first round of the Big 10 playoffs.

With Elias Pettersson and Brock Boeser in tow, Hughes is another dynamic talent who will be a huge factor when Vancouver finally takes that next step as a playoff team. But for now, expectations need to be tempered as to what his initial impact will be. Even Rasmus Dahlin, the only defenceman taken before Hughes in his draft, had just one goal and four points in his first month in the NHL. Hughes' payoff is all about the long-term contribution.

"He's not going to be the saviour," Pearson cautioned. "He's a very good player who's going to do great things for Vancouver over time, but I'd tell people to have some patience.

"Like Dylan Larkin in Detroit, another Michigan player. Dylan's a hell of a player, but he's not going to get them to the playoffs this year. Somewhere down the line they'll get there and he'll be a big part of that and the same will be true about Quinn."

The area of his game that will need the most tightening is on defence, which isn't uncommon for a teenaged blueliner stepping into the NHL. The biggest challenge for Hughes will be figuring out what he can't get away with in the NHL that he could nightly in the NCAA, while still being fearless with his natural abilities.

This is where Hughes' exposure to professional talent representing USA at the 2018 World Championship will come in handy. Pearson noted how impressed Team USA coach Jeff Blashill was by Hughes' ability to adapt to pro competition in 10 games last summer, over which he accumulated two assists.

The Wolverines coach also calls Hughes a "perfectionist" and that playing at the highest level will push Hughes to thrive and focus on improving at the things that will one day make him a great NHL blueliner. He rises to the level of competition he's against.

He won't overpower you physically, but he can keep up with anyone, which will make it tough to beat him out of a play. That's the more important thing teams look for in a blueliner nowadays as the NHL game has changed in a way that favours the kind of 5-foot-10, 170-pound puck-mover Hughes is.

Pearson noted that, generally, when he talks to NHL teams about various defencemen, the kind of answers they seek aren't the same that were being sought out years ago.

"When I talk to GMs or scouts they ask 'how are his first three steps' or 'how is his speed?' Pearson said. "Very rarely do they ask about physicality. They might ask you about compete, but speed is so important."

Hughes has that in spades. The Canucks were appointment viewing at the start of the season just to see what Pettersson would do, and now the same could be true with Hughes in the lineup. He's tremendous at transitioning the play, creating and controlling up-ice rushes that should help pick up Vancouver's tempo when he's on the ice.

It'll just take a little time for Hughes to round into his full potential. Not only does he personally have to evolve against top competition, he'll face that challenge on a Canucks team that is likely to lose more often than not down the stretch. One of the marks of a great player, though, is how he responds to personal mistakes or rough team stretches and Pearson believes Hughes is more ready than most to deal with this reality in a hockey-mad market.

"He bounces back from things," Pearson said. "Maybe it's because of how young he is, but he does not dwell on the negativity of a tough outing. He's such a positive person. That's one of his strengths. You have to have thick skin and a short memory."

The bottom line is Hughes wants what Vancouver has to offer and the Canucks need exactly the dimension Hughes can add. The picture may not always be rosy with immediate elite production when Hughes arrives,



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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but at the foundation, he is another dynamic talent setting the table for better days ahead.

"He's really excited about coming to Vancouver," Pearson said. "We've talked about that before. Some kids get drafted by a team and go 'oh shoot' but he's excited. He got a real good feel for (the city) at the WJC. He wants to play for a hockey market."

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TSN.CA / Six Takeaways: Canucks vs Golden Knights

Jeff Paterson

### TAKEAWAYS

1) It doesn't take a 6-2 loss to the surging Vegas Golden Knights to expose the many issues plaguing the Vancouver Canucks these days. No, losses like the one the Canucks suffered Saturday on home ice simply underscore those problems. The Canucks simply had no answer for the Knights in the 10-feet around their own net. Mark Stone opened the scoring on a rebound, Alex Tuch extended the lead on a redirect, Cody Eakin scored from in tight to make it 3-0, Tomas Nosek beat his man to the net to tip home the fourth Vegas goal and Paul Stastny rounded out the first period scoring by walking around Alex Edler and taking the puck to the net to make it a 5-1 game. The Canucks have had trouble defending for much of the season, but the play in and around their own net has not been worse at any time in the first 68 games than it was on Saturday night. The Knights are deep, they are skilled and they have the ability to come at teams in waves. The Canucks, quite simply, were overwhelmed in their own zone in a one-sided first period that was difficult to watch.

2) The starts of hockey games are killing the Canucks these days. For the third time in four games, they trailed 3-0 and in the other game during that time they fell behind 2-0. They have played the past six games without spending a second in the lead. Given that fact, it's quite remarkable they have a win and a shootout loss over that six game stretch (1-4-1). But Saturday was the ninth time in 11 games the Canucks have spotted their opponent the lead. So it probably shouldn't come as a surprise that they aren't winning many hockey games. The Canucks are 2-6-2 in their last 10 and 4-10-3 in their last 17. Of note there is the fact the Canucks have just one regulation victory in their last 17 games since February 4th in Philadelphia. They beat Anaheim 4-0 on home ice on February 25th. Otherwise, 16 of their last 17 opponents have taken at least a point off the Canucks. That win over the Ducks is also the only time in those 17 games that the Canucks have scored more than three goals in a hockey game. Since Christmas, the Canucks are 30th in the NHL in offense -- and Saturday did nothing to improve that statistic.

3) This loss to Vegas has to be more disappointing and, quite frankly, more troubling for the Canucks than the one in Sin City last Sunday. Sure they scored a couple of goals this time around and didn't surrender 48 shots like they did last weekend, but to a man, the Canucks players and head coach Travis Green spent Saturday morning talking about being ready for the Golden Knights, being prepared to push back and playing more of the game in the Vegas end than they did a week ago. And then the puck dropped. Just 92 seconds after the opening the face-off, the Canucks were down and the carnival in their own zone was underway. Full credit to the Golden Knights for taking the play to the Canucks. Vegas has won six straight since the arrival of Mark Stone and they look like a complete team that could very well make another deep playoff run.

The Canucks knew that, talked about it, and then were unable or unwilling to do anything about it. After the morning skate, Gerard Gallant said he expected to see more from the Canucks and went so far as to call what happened last Sunday at T-Mobile 'unfair' -- he said his team had one of its best games and he knew the Canucks weren't very good. The Canucks may have been marginally better the second time around, but they were nowhere close to good enough to offer up much resistance to their visitors.

4) It's quite remarkable that it took 69 games into the season for Travis Green to get the hook out and lift his starting goaltender. But that's what happened at the 14:17 mark of the opening period once Vegas made it a 5-1 hockey game. Jacob Markstrom, who was heroic in Vegas last weekend, had his night come to a premature end and he was replaced by Thatcher Demko who needs playing time and mopped up over the remaining 45 minutes. Markstrom stopped 11 of the 16 shots he faced and didn't get much support from the skaters in front of him. It's hard to pin much of the blame on any of the goals on the starter, but obviously allowing five goals on 16 shots was far from his finest night. Green said he considered lifting Markstrom at 4-1 -- which is when I would have made the switch -- but the coach really had no choice three minutes later when the Golden Knights scored again. At that point, it was a mercy hook for Markstrom who deserved better from his teammates last weekend and again on Saturday night. Demko gave up one goal -- a friendly fire deflection off Josh Leivo's stick -- on the 17 shots he faced. The Knights seemed to lose interest in scoring over the final 30 minutes of the hockey game so it's hard to accurately assess Demko's night other than to say any playing time is good playing time for the young netminder.

5) Antoine Roussel was in no mood to discuss setting a career-high for points in a season. The feisty winger picked up an assist on Bo Horvat's second period goal to give him 30 points in 64 games. He very nearly reached the milestone earlier in the hockey game when he sprung Elias Pettersson on a first period breakaway. Roussel was back in his familiar spot on left wing with Bo Horvat to start the game. And that's where he should stay over the remaining 13 games. In his return to the line-up after missing 10 games with a pair of cracked ribs, Jake Virtanen started the game on right wing on that line, but was swapped out after the first period. I'd stick with Roussel-Horvat-Virtanen and Josh Leivo-Elias Pettersson-Brock Boeser as my top two lines for a while. Outside of a goal in Arizona, Tanner Pearson has done very little in his six games as a Canuck to warrant any more time above a third line role. Pearson didn't manage a shot attempt on Saturday night and was on the ice for three of the Golden Knights first five goals including the 3-0 goal when he couldn't contain Tomas Nosek at the side of the Canuck net.

6) Some may question the benefit to Quinn Hughes of joining a team in a tailspin. But Brock Boeser was in Hughes' skates just two years ago and made the jump from college to the NHL for the final nine games of Willie Desjardins' tenure behind the Canucks bench. A little history lesson: the Canucks won Boeser's debut in Minnesota and promptly lost the remaining eight games. It seems Boeser has managed to shake off any lingering effects of that first taste of NHL action. And he spoke following Saturday's loss about how much those nine games meant to him and what Hughes can learn when he signs and leaves college life behind. Boeser said he gained confidence by scoring four times in those nine games, he discovered the speed of the NHL game and how much he needed to work on specific aspects of his game that first summer. He sounded legitimately excited about the addition of Hughes to a sagging line-up that can certainly use any shot in the arm in can get these days. There is no timeline for Hughes' arrival in Vancouver, but all indications point to him being signed, sealed and delivered early in the week. He can't get here soon enough.

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