



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 16, 2018



Hurricanes Homegrown Guide: March 17

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

March 15th, 2018

The penultimate game in the 2017-18 Hurricanes Homegrown Series is Saturday, March 17, when the Carolina Hurricanes host the Philadelphia Flyers in a Metropolitan Division match-up.

Expanded in its second season, the [Hurricanes Homegrown Series](#) features seven games that showcase some of the best our local community has to offer in t-shirts, food, beer & spirits, art and music.

Here's an in-depth look at each Homegrown aspect for Saturday night at PNC Arena.

T-Shirt

House of Swank designed and produced this vintage goalie mask t-shirt. When doors open at 6 p.m., 200 of these shirts will be available at the north end location of The Eye team store (section 112). Each shirt is marked by a unique printed tag that denotes the game and shirt series, and there is a limit of two shirts per person per purchase.

Food

The featured in-house, signature entrée is a returning favorite: pimento grilled cheese on sourdough bread and served with sweet potato fries. You can get this at the

section 109 concessions stand (where all Homegrown entrees are available this season) for \$13.

New for the 2017-18 Hurricanes Homegrown Series is an in-house, signature dessert, and featured in this game is a classic: peach cobbler. This treat is available at the newly-created Homegrown Series dessert cart at section 111 for \$8.

Beer & Spirits

Flights, featuring four six-ounce pours, of Aviator Brewing Co.'s beer will be available at section 337. You can select any combinations of the brews they offer, and the flights are priced at \$12.

New for the 2017-18 Hurricanes Homegrown Series is TOPO Organic Sprints' special Hurricane rum mixed drink, which is discounted to \$12 at section 129.

Art

[This St. Patrick's Day-themed poster](#), designed by local artist Kat Lamp, will be available free to the first 1,000 fans. Swing by section 108 to pick one up and chat with the artist, as well.

Music

[Youth League](#), a local post-pop trio, will perform live during the first and second intermissions, now featuring extended sets in the 2017-18 Hurricanes Homegrown Series.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 16, 2018



Alumni Night

Published: March 15, 2018

The Checkers are welcoming several former players from the 1960s and 70s during their game against the Binghamton Devils this Sunday, March 18, at 2 p.m.

Twenty-four players and coach Pat Kelly will on hand during the game, which will include the unveiling of a new banner honoring five championships won by the Checkers during the team's early years (Eastern Hockey League in 1957, 1971 and 1972 and the Southern Hockey League in 1975 and 1976). The ceremony will take place during the second intermission, with all of the Checkers alumni available to meet fans in the Red Line Club before and after the official recognition takes place.

Former players attending the reunion are:

- Yvon Bilodeau
- Don Brennan
- Barry Burnett
- Gaye Cooley
- Wayne Chrysler
- Frank Golembrosky
- Steve Hull
- Pat Kelly
- Neil Korzack
- Jim Lane
- Jerry Maloney
- Jack McCreary
- Gordon McCrae
- John Morrison
- Ken Reid
- Mike Rouleau
- Blaine Rydman
- Bob Shupe
- Barry Simpson
- Jack Surbey
- Jack Wells
- Hal Willis
- Ned Yates

TODAY'S LINKS

<https://www.nhl.com/hurricanes/news/hurricanes-homegrown-series-game-guide-march-17/c-296940384>
<http://gocheckers.com/articles/promotions/alumni-night>



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 16, 2018

SportScan

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

1103890 Philadelphia Flyers

Flyers' collapse continues in loss to Columbus

by Sam Carchidi,

The Flyers have been Team Resilient this season.

They overcame a 10-game winless streak and the loss of their top two goalies to injuries.

Now they have to overcome a March skid that has knocked them out of first place and made fans uneasy about whether they will even make the Stanley Cup playoffs.

The misery continued Thursday night at the Wells Fargo Center.

Columbus 5, Flyers 3.

The Flyers lost for the seventh time in eight March games, and they fell into a tie for third place with Columbus in the Metro.

Cam Atkinson scored a hat trick, including an empty-net goal, to spark Columbus to its sixth consecutive win, and former Flyer Sergei Bobrovsky made several acrobatic saves and lifted his career record to 10-3-1 against his former team.

New Jersey is just one point behind the Flyers and has a game in hand.

Florida, which is trying to sneak into the final wild-card spot, moved to within four points of the Flyers. The streaking Panthers, who have three games in hand on Philadelphia, were 16 points behind the Flyers on Feb. 26.

"Obviously, a sense of urgency now has to be amped up," said Andrew MacDonald, who, along with fellow defenseman Shayne Gostisbehere, was among the Flyers' scorers.

"We're still sitting pretty," said Gostisbehere, resident optimist, after the Flyers held a team meeting following the loss. "We just need to keep pushing."

The Blue Jackets built a 3-1 first-period lead and the Flyers chased the game.

"We were pretty loose in our coverage," MacDonald said. "Maybe our level of intensity and attention to detail wasn't where it needed to be, especially starting the game."

Coach Dave Hakstol took the blame for the slow start, saying Columbus was "a little more ready to play. That squarely comes to me ... and that can't happen at this time of the year."

Fourteen seconds into the second period, Gostisbehere snapped a 19-game goal drought by scoring a power-play tally from the right circle to get the Flyers within 3-2.

The Flyers swarmed Bobrovsky over the next few shifts, but Atkinson made it 4-2 by beating Petr Mrazek with a right-circle blast with 16 minutes, 37 seconds left in the second.

Goodbye, momentum.

Goodbye, Mrazek, who allowed four goals on 10 shots and continued to come up small. Since winning his first three games with the Flyers, Mrazek has just one victory in his last seven starts.

Mrazek was replaced by rookie Alex Lyon, who received a standing ovation late in the period when he made six saves during an abbreviated Columbus power play. Lyon stopped all 18 shots he faced and may have earned a start Saturday in Carolina.

About three minutes after the goalie change, captain Claude Giroux left the game with about 14:30 left in the second when he was hit in the face with a shot. Giroux went to the locker room and had several stitches administered above his lip and didn't return until 1:07 remained in the second.

With 7:37 left in the second, the Flyers got to within 4-3 on a point drive by MacDonald, who was aided by Michael Raffl's screen.

Columbus, taking advantage of poor defensive play, scored almost as many goals in Thursday's first period (three) and it did in the previous three games (four) against the Flyers.

A weak clearing attempt by rookie Travis Sanheim led to Columbus' first goal, a left-circle drive by a falling-down Oliver Bjorkstrand with 10:19 left in the opening period.

Just 11 seconds later, Boone Jenner got position on defenseman Brandon Manning and redirected Jack Johnson's pass past Mrazek, giving the Blue Jackets a 2-0 lead.

Giroux, who has been virtually a one-man offensive show over the last two weeks, cut the deficit to 2-1 with 8:26 to go in the first, scoring his 26th goal of the season and his 11th in the last 18 games.

After hitting the right post on a breakaway, Giroux took a pass from Travis Konency and whipped a left-circle one-timer into the net and pumped his fist wildly. The Flyers regained the momentum for a few shifts, but Columbus took it away late in the period.

With 1:52 to go in the session, Atkinson tipped Zach Werenski's point drive past Mrazek to give Columbus a 3-1 lead.

It seemed fitting that the Rolling Stones' "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" blared through the speakers at the first intermission because the Flyers were headed to their seventh loss in eight games since they climbed into first place in the division.

Now, with 11 games left in their topsy-turvy season, their sights aren't on a Metro title.

They're on securing a playoff spot.

"When we get that one win, we'll get our confidence back," Giroux said in a church-quiet locker room.

Philadelphia Inquirer / Daily News LOADED: 03.16.2018

1103891 Philadelphia Flyers

Flyers need to improve (greatly) on home ice down stretch of playoff race

by Sam Carchidi



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 16, 2018

One of the most perplexing parts of the Flyers' up-and-down season has been their inability to take advantage of home ice.

The Flyers are the only team in a playoff spot that has more losses (19) than wins (17) at home. They are just 17-13-6 at home after going 25-11-5 last season.

"Home-ice advantage is usually pretty huge, and we've always had success here at the Wells Fargo," captain Claude Giroux said before the Flyers lost to visiting Columbus, 5-3, on Thursday. "We haven't had the success that we're looking for at home [this season], but at the same time we have a lot of games at home coming up and it's important for us to get those wins."

Giroux thinks the Flyers may be trying too hard to please their home fans.

"Maybe we put too much pressure on ourselves," he said. "But at the end of the day, it has to be an advantage for us."

Conversely, the Flyers have played extremely well on the road (18-12-5). Entering Thursday, no Metropolitan team had more road wins than the Flyers.

"Maybe we try to be too pretty at home and try to put on a show," winger Michael Raffl said. "I don't think we're a team like that. That's what has given us success on the road – it doesn't have to be beautiful, it has to be effective. Play simple and get a couple greasy ones instead of making that extra pass that makes it look unreal."

The Flyers have five of their remaining 11 games at the Wells Fargo Center. They are in danger of recording fewer than 20 home wins for just the second time in 21 seasons, excluding the lockout-shortened 2012-13 campaign.

Strome signs

Left winger Matthew Strome, 19, selected by the Flyers in the fourth round of the draft last June, signed an entry-level contract Thursday.

The 6-foot-4, 206-pound Strome has 37 goals and 68 points in 64 games with Hamilton in the Ontario Hockey League this season. He is the younger brother of NHL players Dylan Strome (Arizona) and Ryan Strome (Edmonton).

According to CapFriendly.com, Strome's three-year deal is worth an average of \$925,000 per season.

Breakaways

In the last nine games before Thursday, the Flyers' power play was 3 for 30, while their penalty kill had allowed seven goals in 24 opportunities. ... Shayne Gostisbehere is averaging 0.77 points per game. The Flyers have had only three defensemen in franchise history average more than that while playing at least 60 games in a season: Mark Howe (four times), Garry Galley, and Behn Wilson.

Philadelphia Inquirer / Daily News LOADED: 03.16.2018

1103892 Philadelphia Flyers

12 games for Flyers to show if they can be resilient (again)

by Sam Carchidi, STAFF WRITER

After the Flyers' 1-0 shootout win in Montreal on Feb. 26, they moved atop the Metropolitan Division and were 13 points ahead of the team just out of a wild-card spot (the Islanders) and a staggering 16 points ahead of Florida.

Since then, the Flyers have lost six of seven and dropped to third place in the Metro. In addition, they are just six points ahead of surging Florida (which is on an 8-1-1 run), and the Panthers have three games in hand and are battling to get into a wild-card spot.

With that as a backdrop, the Flyers have a virtual must-win game Thursday against visiting Columbus.

The good news: The Flyers have shown resiliency all season, overcoming a 10-game losing streak and the loss of their two top goalies to climb from last place to (briefly) first place in the Metro.

Twelve regular-season games remain. Games that will show whether they can be resilient down the home stretch.

Columbus, which has won five straight, is two points behind the Flyers, and Thursday's matchup figures to be a tight, low-scoring affair. The teams have met three times this season, and each game has ended in a 2-1 final. Columbus won in a shootout Dec. 23, and the Flyers won in overtime Feb. 16 and in regulation Feb. 22. In the last meeting, Petr Mrazek made 19 saves and collected his first win as a Flyer.

"I love this time of the year," said Mrazek, who is 2-3-1 with a 2.47 goals-against average and .917 save percentage in his career against the Blue Jackets. "I enjoy it so much. Everybody can feel the pressure, but in a good way, so I'm looking forward to it."

On Thursday, Mrazek will face Sergei Bobrovsky, who is 9-3-1 with a 1.82 GAA and .936 save percentage against his ex-teammates.

"I think he's the best goalie in the league right now," Flyers winger Michael Raffl said after Thursday's morning skate at the Wells Fargo Center. "But you can't stop what you can't see. We have to get in front of him and get some greasy rebounds."

Overall, Bobrovsky is 30-21-5 with a 2.42 GAA and .921 save percentage. With the Flyers, Mrazek is 4-4-1 with a 2.85 GAA average and .898 save percentage.

If the Flyers make the playoffs and Mrazek gets at least five regular-season wins, the fourth-round draft pick they will send Detroit in June will become a third-rounder.

It seemed like a foregone conclusion at the time that the Flyers would make the playoffs and Mrazek would get at least five wins. But the Flyers, with their special teams being the main culprit, have made things tough on themselves lately and nothing is guaranteed.

"You have to enjoy the battle, and I think the guys do," said coach Dave Hakstol, whose team is trying to rebound from Monday's crushing 3-2 defeat to Vegas, which scored the winner with 2 minutes, 40 seconds left. "You look at the standings and everything is tight. These are big games, day in and day out, and every game you play is your next-biggest game. Those are things that I think as a team we embrace, and you have to go out and enjoy the challenge of it."

The Flyers are just 17-12-6 at the Wells Fargo Center; they are the only team in a current playoff spot that has a losing record at home.

"Our record at home is not what we want, but it's not terrible," Hakstol said. "But you know what? You have to win games at home. We've lost a couple tight ones here, especially of late. ... Sometimes, there's a little extra pressure when you play at home. You feel like you have to do a little bit more rather than keep it a little bit simpler. So it's just that fine line of being able to use the home-ice atmosphere to our advantage."

Half of the Flyers' 12 remaining games will be at the Wells Fargo Center.

Breakaways

In their last nine games, the Flyers are just 3 for 30 on the power play. In that span, their PK has allowed seven goals in 24 opportunities. ... Claude Giroux has 24 points (10 goals, 14 assists) in his last 17 games and has a seven-game points streak. ... Shayne Gostisbehere is averaging 0.77 points per game. The Flyers have had only three defensemen average more than that in a season in which they played at



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 16, 2018

least 60 games: Mark Howe (four times), Garry Galley, and Behn Wilson. ... Columbus has just four games remaining against teams in a current playoff spot. The Flyers have six games left against such teams.

Philadelphia Inquirer / Daily News LOADED: 03.16.2018

1103893 Philadelphia Flyers

Flyers' latest meeting with Jackets might be most important

By Rob Parent, Delaware County Daily Times

PHILADELPHIA >> Since they essentially swapped goalies and contract problems in various trades a few years back, the Flyers have mostly not enjoyed a special closeness they've shared with the Columbus Blue Jackets.

They dumped their talented but unhappy young backup goalie, Sergei Bobrovsky, on the Blue Jackets, and he went on to win a Vezina Trophy there.

They acquired Columbus' talented young backup goalie Steve Mason, and he won a lot of games here before they let him go.

They sent expensive veteran Scott Hartnell there and brought in expensive veteran R.J. Umberger, and Hartnell kind of thrived for a while while Umberger's career quickly died on a vine.

That's all past history, of course, except Bobrovsky is still starring in Columbus' goalie crease. He's partly responsible for what has happened on the ice in recent years between these teams, too.

From a Blue Jackets home win over the Flyers on Dec. 21, 2013 through a 1-0 Blue Jackets home win over the Flyers March 21, 2017, Columbus beat the Flyers in 13 out of 15 meetings. Many of the same Flyers players who went through all those games are still around to simmer about it, and that should count for something as the teams prepare to meet again Thursday night at Wells Fargo Center.

"They're tough to play against, obviously," said seventh-season Flyer Jake Voracek, who started his career with the Blue Jackets as a teen back in 2008. "It's been like that for the last four or five years. It's always tight games against them, whether it's there or here."

There and here, it has been a little better for the Flyers against the Blue Jackets in recent meetings. The Flyers won the last two, a grinding 2-1 home victory Feb. 22, and a 2-1 win in Columbus Feb. 16. The Jackets had won by 2-1 in C-Bus in the team's first meeting of the season on Dec. 23.

During that long-term losing run to Columbus, the Flyers did enjoy a respite two years ago, beating the Jackets 6-0 March 5, 2016. But the Flyers only won three of the next eight games (including the last two) since then. That said, three of those eight went overtime or beyond.

So the teams, in a way, have only tightened up. Yet in recent days, they've been going opposite ways.

The Flyers, who put themselves in a solid position for the playoffs via a 10-0-2 run through February, have suddenly lost six of their last seven games to slide back onto slippery ground. Meanwhile, the Blue Jackets (37-28-5, 79 points) have won five straight games, and enter this one just two points behind the Flyers (35-24-11, 81) in the Metropolitan Division standings with a dozen games remaining for both teams.

So basically ... everybody's starting to sweat?

"We don't know what's going to happen but we control what position we are in right now," Claude Giroux said Wednesday. "We control our own

destiny. I really feel like we're playing good hockey right now. I know we didn't get the results last game, but Vegas coming in here (Monday), they're one of the best teams in the league and we were right there playing with them. ... But that's what happened. We've got to find a way."

What happened is a goal by the Golden Knights late in the third period slapped the Flyers with a loss. This just two games after a goal with 22 seconds remaining in regulation in Boston left the Flyers getting nothing out of a well-played game there, too.

"Over the last three games we lost two games in kind of a heartbreaking way. We should have come up with two, three or four points," Voracek said. "But it is what it is. There's nothing we can do about it now."

"We're playing Columbus tomorrow. We know what it's about. We have to treat it like a four-point game."

They also have to treat it as their most important game of the season, which isn't hard to believe considering it's against a hot and hard-charging Blue Jackets team and a goalie who loves to beat the team that cast him away.

"It's definitely the biggest game of the season, we know that," Giroux said. "But sometimes you can't overthink it. You just have to go out there and play the game. If you don't enjoy it you're not going to play your best."

"They're rolling right now. They're playing some good hockey and they've got momentum. So it's important for us to go and get a good start here and kind of get the fans on our side."

NOTES >> The Flyers practiced at Wells Fargo Center Wednesday after sitting through their annual team picture session. On hand for the practice were goalie Michal Neuvirth and defenseman Robert Hagg, who are both on the injured list. According to general managing practitioner Ron Hextall, Hagg will miss another week or so and Neuvirth maybe a couple more weeks. Maybe. ... Another practicing injured Flyer is Johnny Oduya, who was claimed off waivers at the trade deadline and was injured in Florida in his first Flyer game. "Not the way you want to start," said Oduya, now listed as day to day. "We'll manage it and move forward. I feel better. That's a positive."

Delaware County Times LOADED: 03.16.2018

1103894 Philadelphia Flyers

For Flyers and their coach, it's full speed ahead ... to where?

By Rob Parent, Delaware County Daily Times

PHILADELPHIA >> Claude Giroux was doing his very best Thursday night to keep a stitched upper lip. It was proving difficult.

Giroux's several stitches beneath the left side of his ginger moustache didn't seem quite closed after a 5-3 loss to the Columbus Blue Jackets. As for his usual positive vibes ... well, they weren't exactly oozing after a seventh loss in the last eight Flyers games.

Is this any way for a team of playoff lions to spend the early days of March?

"Um, we didn't have a good start, and they got a few goals on us and ... I don't know," said Giroux, who missed a chunk of the second period getting minor surgery on a lip that had met a speeding puck. "We battled back in the third period and played well but we put ourselves in a bad position. We'd get it going and think we had the momentum and they'd get a goal. So that's very frustrating."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 16, 2018

It took a while for the flopping, failing Flyers to get anything going at all. It was several minutes before they bothered to wake Blue Jackets goalie Sergei Bobrovsky, and by the time the first period was half over, Columbus had scored a pair of goals 11 seconds apart to get a two-goal jump.

All the while, there were more than a few hairy moments in the Flyers' defensive zone, which once again was a playground for the opposition. Whether it's forwards not holding up forecheckers or defensemen suddenly struck clueless when it comes to clearing pucks or forwards not bothering to help the defensemen do that ... the Flyers' sense of discipline has been on the lam of late.

It shows.

It's chronic.

It's costing them games, points, and any kind of spring visions of success.

"It's a tough stretch right now," Giroux said. "We've been in this position before. We just need to put it behind us and somehow get our confidence back."

The Flyers strutted into the season stretch drive with a win in Montreal Feb. 26 that completed a 10-0-2 run that seemed to indicate good things to come in the playoffs. They had moved into first place in the Metropolitan Division. They were looking straight ahead, though paying attention to fellow Metro bigwigs Pittsburgh and Washington.

Not a thought was given to a team like the Florida Panthers, who were 16 points behind the Flyers at that time.

Flash forward eight games over the course of 17 days and many long nights ... such as this Thursday night at Wells Fargo Center, when the Flyers look like a disorganized, poorly coached group of individuals lacking motivation against the Blue Jackets (38-28-5, 81 points). Thus, Columbus moved into a tie for third in the division with the backsliding Flyers (35-25-11-81), who have gone 1-6-1 in those eight games since the high in Montreal.

Given the stinking, streaking, sinking situation, you'd think the Flyers would recognize the importance of getting a good start. Yet a couple of players said after the game that their team had lacked intensity in the first period.

"I would agree," coach Dave Hakstol said. "I thought their team was a little more ready to play and that squarely comes to me. I thought their team was a little bit more ready to play in that first 20 minutes and that can't happen at this time of year."

By the way, those Panthers (35-26-7), the No. 9 team in the Eastern Conference, won again Thursday to move to within four points of the Flyers and Blue Jackets, who each have played three more times than the Panthers.

The Eastern bloc in the NHL has tightened significantly, and the Flyers' insistence on playing streaky hockey, one way or the wrong way, is a big reason why.

They can lose three or four in a row without batting an eye, or lose 10 in a row, then not lose in regulation over the course of 12 games, only to turn around and lose seven of eight ... it's all enough to give Claude Giroux a headache to go along with the pain in his mouth.

But that didn't keep him from addressing his teammates behind closed locker room doors after the game.

"We just talked about the position we're in right now and what we need to do to get better," Giroux said. "Right now we're all frustrated, a little pissed off and I think that's good. When we get that one win, we'll get our confidence back."

Asked if some of the mistakes they're making, especially those in the defensive zone, have become chronic errors, Giroux added, "Yeah ... to

be honest, I don't know what to say to that. It's a good question, but I don't have an answer for you."

Flyers coach Dave Hakstol is paid to have such answers.

"We lost too many 50-50 puck battles and we gave a few too many of those pucks back," Hakstol said. "...But I love the will and the fight, where guys continually keep coming back, fight back. But there were a couple of things that we did that were sloppy mistakes that ended up in goals-against."

Flyers goalie Petr Mrazek, mostly a victim but sometimes of his own misdeeds during this Flyers freefall, had no answers as his team's repeated gifts to the Blue Jackets put him under fire through the first period and into the second. Mrazek (4-5-1, 3.15 GAA, .887 SP as a Flyer) had twice surrendered goals to Cam Atkinson — who would finish with a hat trick — after the Flyers had closed to within one.

It was Atkinson's second goal, making it 4-2 Columbus, that moved Hakstol to pull Mrazek 3:23 into the second period. Flyers rookie Alex Lyon came on and stopped all 12 shots he faced.

Don't be surprised to see a new starter in net for the Flyers when they hit Carolina Saturday.

"Peter didn't give up a bad goal tonight, but you look for a timely save from your goaltender," Hakstol said.

And yet, the coach also said that this is no time for any Gloomy Gusses to get on his team bus.

"Believe me, while there are things you have to take from this game, we also have to leave it behind," Hakstol said. "The players do, when they leave the rink. The real honest truth is, with 11 games to go, it's an even race. There's eight spots to be had and we're right there."

Yes they are! ... and they're another loss or two from being out of a playoff spot.

"I told our players after, 'I'll take that challenge,' I'll happily take that on with our group," Hakstol said. "Things haven't gone well here over the last six or seven games. We know that. But it's that time of year. You have to be able to clear the deck, clear the mind, and really get focused on the next challenge ahead."

Before looking ahead, they might want to shore up their rear ranks first.

Delaware County Times LOADED: 03.16.2018

1103895 Philadelphia Flyers

Flyers fail biggest test of season with loss to Blue Jackets

By John Boruk | NBC Sports Philadelphia March 15, 2018 9:35 PM

Allowing two goals during a span of 11 seconds in the first period set the tone for the Flyers in a 5-3 loss to the Blue Jackets in the final meeting between the two teams.

Bad defensive coverages and a failure to clear their own zone led to a very poor start.

Claude Giroux scored the Flyers' first goal for the third straight game and has now scored 11 goals in his last 18 games.

The Flyers had to fight back from three different two-goal deficits, but couldn't manufacture the game-tying goal in the third period.

Shayne Gostisbehere scored his 12th goal just 16 seconds into the second period to reduce the Blue Jackets' lead to 3-2, but Columbus



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 16, 2018

answered just 3:09 later as Cam Atkinson scored his second goal of the game.

Atkinson netted a hat trick after adding an empty-net goal in the final second.

The Flyers and Blue Jackets are now tied with 81 points in the Metropolitan Division as both teams have 11 games remaining. The Flyers hold the tiebreaker with one more regulation/overtime victory.

- It took all of 11 seconds for the Flyers to fall behind 2-0. With the Flyers chasing the puck around their end, they couldn't clear the zone as Travis Sanheim pushed the puck forward without gaining possession. That allowed the Jackets to maintain possession and Oliver Bjorkstrand from one knee roofed a shot from close range. Those types of mishaps the Flyers must avoid.
- Columbus came right back and doubled its lead with four of its defenders along the boards. Once the Blue Jackets gained possession, Boone Jenner simply beat Brandon Manning to the front of the net and redirected Jack Johnson's slap pass in which Petr Mrazek had very little shot at stopping. It's a lost board battle leading to a breakdown in coverage that we've seen from the Flyers on several occasions this season.
- Giroux had Sergei Bobrovsky beaten on a breakaway attempt but the puck hit the post. However, Giroux received his redemption and fired a one-timer past Bobrovsky. The Flyers' top two lines were very good in the offensive zone in the first period.

TK ➔ Giroux = PERFECTION pic.twitter.com/wuzzrJ1Dzj

— NBC Sports Philadelphia (@NBCSPhilly) March 15, 2018

- Another tough break for Mrazek as the Blue Jackets took a 3-1 lead after Atkinson batted in Seth Jones' shot from the point. Another goal where the Flyers were chasing the puck in their end and couldn't clear the zone.
- Two bad goals to start the second period. Gostisbehere scored on a simple snap shot from the right circle that Bobrovsky couldn't contain as the puck snuck past him. Mrazek answered with a bad goal of his own as Atkinson beat him blocker side. The way Mrazek played it appeared as if he was never on his angle.
- Giroux took a puck to the side of his face that forced him to go to the locker room and get treatment. The Flyers' captain returned in the final three minutes of the second period.
- Andrew MacDonald needed every bit of the 72 inches from post to post to beat Bobrovsky as his slap shot clanked off the right post and then the left post to cut the Jackets' lead to 4-3 after 40 minutes of action.

This shot by MacDonald ☐☐☐ pic.twitter.com/x4bPKmjmxU

— NBC Sports Philadelphia (@NBCSPhilly) March 16, 2018

- The Flyers came out for the third period with a desperate mindset, outshooting Columbus, 9-3, in the first 10 minutes, but not much from the high-danger areas.
- John Tortorella completely lost his mind when the officials whistled the Blue Jackets for too many men on the ice. His theatrics make those seats behind the bench worth the price of admission.
- The officials let a lot of stuff go in that first period, including a clear crosscheck into the back of Sean Couturier on the Giroux goal. Not sure how or why that wasn't called.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 03.16.2018

1103896 Philadelphia Flyers

How Flyers plan on solving Sergei Bobrovsky

By John Boruk | NBC Sports Philadelphia March 15, 2018 1:00 PM

One Flyers employee who has seen hundreds of players come and go has a short list of two of the hardest working athletes they've witnessed off the ice: Ivan Provorov and Sergei Bobrovsky.

Provorov's offseason regimen has been well documented, but word is, Bobrovsky would be riding the bike or working out well after all the lights to the facility had been turned off.

The reigning Vezina Trophy winner didn't just stumble into greatness, but unfortunately, it now comes at the expense of the Flyers, who infamously traded him to Columbus a season after backing up Ilya Bryzgalov. Claude Giroux was one of the few Flyers who remembers what it was like to battle Bobrovsky over the course of a season.

"Just in practice when he was here, he battled every shot," Giroux said. "It was fun to have practice with goalies like that. They just won't let any pucks go in, even with rebounds when the play was over. He made it a lot of fun. I'm not surprised how good he's playing because his work ethic is really good."

Take that talent and work ethic and add an extra five percent of incentive — motivation against the organization that elected to go in a different direction — and you have a stellar 9-3-1 record, 1.82 goals-against average with a .935 save percentage in 13 starts against the Flyers.

"I think we've played good games against them," Giroux said. "Bobrovsky has been pretty solid all those games. For us to beat him, we've got to find ways to get pucks to the net, get rebounds. If he sees the puck, he's going to stop it. We've got to have a lot of traffic in there."

Sixteen different Flyers have scored goals against Bobrovsky, and you can count the number of players who've beaten him twice on one hand. Impressively, the one player who had the greatest amount of success against Bobrovsky is no longer here. Brayden Schenn scored six goals against big, bad Bob.

Dave Hakstol has a different sense of history, one that has seen the Flyers' last three games against the Blue Jackets result in a 2-1 game, with the Flyers winning two of those matchups.

"You stay with the game, whatever the game is," Hakstol said. "You look at the history of these 2-1 games against Columbus, it's going to be a tight, close game. Our guys have full understanding of that."

To compound the challenge facing the Flyers, scoring hasn't been a strength of theirs recently, as they've scored two or fewer goals in seven of their last eight games.

"I think that's one thing we can do a little bit better is keep pucks in the scoring area a little bit more," Hakstol said. "In saying that, I think in the last 10 games, we've been outshot once. I think you've got to factor everything in and not overreact to anything."

Flyers leading scorer Sean Couturier beat Bobrovsky for an overtime winner on Feb. 16, and he hasn't scored since.

For Couturier and the rest of his teammates, nothing would be prettier than the ugliest of goals and wins against Bobrovsky right now.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 03.16.2018

1103897 Philadelphia Flyers

Flyers in a tight race but, 'these are the fun games'



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 16, 2018

Dave Isaac, @davegisaaac Published 5:20 p.m. ET March 15, 2018

PHILADELPHIA — It's crunch time and the Flyers have six rookies on the roster hoping to learn how to win in the NHL's second season. Add in Travis Konecny and Ivan Provorov, a pair of second-year players who didn't taste the playoffs last season, and there's a lot of inexperience.

For all the advice Stanley Cup winner Valteri Filppula may have to give, turning off the television isn't among his messages to the Flyers' young players.

"I'm bad at telling that because I like to watch and see what's going on," Filppula said. "Whatever works...that's more of an individual thing."

Maybe it's good for the young guns to watch highlights of all the teams chasing the Flyers, who are still in third place in the Metropolitan Division.

Maybe those footsteps the Flyers feel and hear behind them add to the pressure in a positive way.

"These are the fun games," said Filppula, who won it all with the Detroit Red Wings a decade ago. "I don't think you have to really prepare anyone too much. Especially as of late I think we've been playing pretty well so we don't need to change too many things. We need to keep playing and believe that what we're doing, it's going to work."

"We knew two weeks ago that teams would be doing a push to make the playoffs," captain Claude Giroux added. "For us, it's making sure we don't focus on that. We need to focus on what we're doing, how we're doing as a team and how we can get better. Sometimes it's hard not to look at the scores and what other teams are doing, but at the end of the day, if we don't win we're not going to make the playoffs."

Wednesday the Flyers opened the doors of the renovated gym and nutrition areas of the team's practice facility to the media. Wochit

It can be easy to forget to smile when the margin of error is so small. That's what the Flyers are trying to remember.

Their standing in first place lasted less than one day. They beat the Montreal Canadiens on Feb. 26 and one day later the Washington Capitals jumped them.

The Flyers entered Thursday's pivotal game against the Columbus Blue Jackets with only one win since then. Victory in Montreal was followed by a five-game losing streak where four of the games they had a less-than-stellar performance. It can be easy to lose sight of the big picture in a streak like that, but the team's leadership group has tried to keep everyone focused.

"We've been able to keep an even keel through ups and downs and there's a clear understanding of what's at stake," coach Dave Hakstol said. "I don't think you need to overstate that. Everybody knows what's on the line night in and night out. You have to be able to mentally process that and then put your energy and focus into playing the game. The core leadership does a good job of that and conveying that to the young guys in the dressing room."

If the Flyers miss out on the playoffs, for the third time in the last four years, it would be a pretty big collapse. They had a nine-point cushion on a playoff spot when they were in first place.

Of course the team wants to make the postseason every year, but this year in particular would help the development of their eight players age 23 or younger.

"Obviously it helps when you just play. It helps when you don't think about it too much," Filppula said. "At this point you've played big games in junior. You've kind of grown into big games. To be honest, it's not much different. You want to win really bad. You know it's an important game. But you also just have to trust what you're doing and at the end of the day see what happens."

Filppula sees the Flyers' young group as having several potential big-game players. It's pretty clear watching the flashy moves of Konecny and the emergence of Nolan Patrick that someday the Flyers could be a very dangerous bunch in the playoffs. And as the Nashville Predators proved last season when they were the last team to qualify, anything can happen when a team gets in.

Of course, you've got to get there first.

"You gotta enjoy the battle and I think guys do. I see that in the players," Hakstol said. "You look at the standings and everything is tight. These are big games day in and day out. Every game you play is your next biggest game and in some senses your biggest game of the year. Those are things that I think as a team we embrace. You gotta enjoy the challenge of it."

Dave Isaac, @davegisaaac; 856-486-2479; disaac@gannett.com

Up next: at Carolina Hurricanes

When: 7 p.m., Saturday

TV/Radio: NBCSP/97.5 FM

Courier-Post LOADED: 03.16.2018

1103898 Philadelphia Flyers

Flyers vs. Blue Jackets: 3 things to watch in Game 71

Dave Isaac, @davegisaaac Published 7:00 a.m. ET March 15, 2018

Tonight: Flyers vs. Columbus Blue Jackets

Site: Wells Fargo Center / Philadelphia Pa.

Time: 7 p.m.

TV/Radio: NBCSP/97.5 FM

Records: Blue Jackets 37-28-5; Flyers 35-24-11

PROSPECT WATCH:Felix Sandstrom's rough season

FLYERS PROJECTED LINEUP

Forwards

28-Claude Giroux, 14-Sean Couturier, 11-Travis Konecny

54-Oskar Lindblom, 19-Nolan Patrick, 93-Jake Voracek

12-Michael Raffl, 51-Valteri Filppula, 17-Wayne Simmonds

15-Jori Lehtera, 21-Scott Laughton, 24-Matt Read

Defensemen

9-Ivan Provorov & 53-Shayne Gostisbehere

6-Travis Sanheim & 47-Andrew MacDonald

23-Brandon Manning & 3-Radko Gudas

Goalie

34-Petr Mrazek

Injuries/Suspensions

G Brian Elliott — injured reserve, abdominal surgery

G Michal Neuvirth — injured reserve, groin pull

D Robert Hägg — out two weeks, left foot injury



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 16, 2018

D Johnny Oduya — day-to-day, "lower-body injury"

BLUE JACKETS PROJECTED LINEUP

Forwards

9-Artemi Panarin, 18-Pierre-Luc Dubois, 13-Cam Atkinson

22-Sonny Milano, 71-Nick Foligno, 28-Oliver Bjorkstrand

38-Boone Jenner, 10-Alexander Wennberg, 26-Thomas Vanek

11-Matt Calvert, 55-Mark Letestu, 17-Brandon Dubinsky

Defensemen

8-Zach Werenski & 3-Seth Jones

7-Jack Johnson & 27-Ryan Murray

23-Ian Cole & 58-David Savard

Goalie

72-Sergei Bobrovsky

Injuries/Suspensions

D Seth Jones — probable, rib injury

D Ryan Murray — day-to-day, undisclosed injury

RW Josh Anderson — out two weeks, knee sprain

D Dean Kukan — injured reserve, upper-body injury

THREE THINGS TO WATCH

1. Sense of urgency

Between teams chasing them — Columbus first among them — and the inability to close out games recently, the Flyers need to play like a team with a fire under them.

"It's a long, hard battle from Game 1 all the way through Game 82 to be a playoff team and I think we came into this year with our focus pretty clear knowing that it's a hard fight to get in," Dave Hakstol said. "it's a great time of year to be right in the middle of that fight and to control our own destiny. That's what you want to have."

2. Can Lindblom light the lamp?

Oskar Lindblom has been knocking on the door for quite a while now. He is still searching for his first point, let alone goal, after 11 games and there's not much else he can do aside from physically put the puck in the net.

"There was a little frustration in the second period (Monday) when he had a great opportunity right on top of the goaltender but I think he shakes that off pretty well," Hakstol said. "We went out and played a good hockey game. He was part of several really good scoring chances, either he having them or part of setting them up. He's gotta stay with it."

3. Goalie matchup

Petr Mrazek is expected to get the start for the Flyers. In six career games against Columbus, he has a 2-3-1 record, 2.47 goals-against average and .917 save percentage.

Sergei Bobrovsky is likely the masked man for the Blue Jackets. He has done well against his former team, with a 9-3-1 record in 13 games with a 1.82 goals-against average and .935 save percentage.

Courier-Post LOADED: 03.16.2018

1103899 Philadelphia Flyers

Flyers 5 takeaways: Dave Hakstol says brutal loss 'squarely comes to me'

Dave Isaac, March 15, 2018

PHILADELPHIA — It was a deflection that was a perfect 180 of the coach running the other bench.

If John Tortorella's team had come up that small in the first period, you'd better believe he'd have ripped them three ways toward the draft lottery. Just check YouTube for the precedent.

Dave Hakstol took the polar opposite approach.

"I thought their team was a little more ready to play," Hakstol said after his Flyers lost 5-3 to the Columbus Blue Jackets Thursday night. "That squarely comes to me. I thought their team was a little bit more ready to play in that first 20 minutes and that can't happen at this time of year."

Two goals in 11 seconds midway through the first period set the Flyers back too far to come back. They now have only one win in their last eight games and the Blue Jackets are tied with them in points. The Flyers are only in third place in the Metropolitan Division by virtue of a tiebreaker.

It started a string of three games against division teams, the ones that are supposed to motivate teams at the start and have them come out of the gates flying.

"I don't think our readiness was quite there, obviously," said Shayne Gostisbehere, who scored his first goal in 20 games. "You could see that. It was a slow start and this time of year it's tough to have those kind of starts."

"They get a couple quick ones and we were pretty loose in our coverage," alternate captain Andrew MacDonald added. "Our level of intensity and attention to detail wasn't where it needed to be, especially starting the game. From there we were playing behind the 8-ball. Found a way to scrap back into it, but obviously too little too late."

Hakstol took the blame for it, uncharacteristically, but it was his team that showed up small.

Each defenseman was a disaster in the first period. Coverage lacked and it allowed three goals for Columbus in the first period. They tightened up, but it was too little too late. Hakstol volunteering to fall on the sword was his way of trying to join them in the battle after their brief postgame meeting.

"At this time of year ... believe me there's things we have to take from this game, but we also have to leave it behind, the players do, when they leave the rink," Hakstol said. "The real honest truth is there's 11 games to go and it's an even race. There's eight spots to be had and we're right there. I told our players after, I'll take that challenge and I'll happily take that on with our group. Things haven't gone well here over the last six, seven games. We know that, but it's that time of year. You gotta be able to clear the deck, clear the mind and really focus on the next challenge ahead."

Here are four more observations from Thursday's game...

Mrazek has an off-night

It was the biggest game of the year and the Flyers went out and got Petr Mrazek for situations just like this.

He couldn't have come up much smaller. On the fourth goal he allowed, which was on the 10th shot, he barely even moved.

CAM YOU FEEL IT?! pic.twitter.com/YFKIE2VmK7

— Columbus Blue Jackets (@BlueJacketsNHL) March 16, 2018



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 16, 2018

Tough to fault him on the first goal, which came right after a blocked shot and he didn't see Oliver Bjorkstrand shoot from one knee to open the scoring. Even the goal that came 11 seconds later was difficult to stop, a redirection from Boone Jenner who had no trouble getting in front of Brandon Manning.

"I didn't have any big saves in the first period," Mrazek said. "They pushed us hard in the beginning and scored three quick goals. That fourth one, if I had stopped (it) I would probably get the momentum back and we could still have a chance."

Somewhere the Flyers needed a big momentum save from Mrazek and he didn't have one for them. One interesting note on the cost of the Mrazek trade: he's one win away from the fourth-round pick becoming a third-round pick...but the Flyers also have to make the playoffs for that pick to be upgraded.

Giroux's wild second period

For most of the second period, the Flyers' captain was off for repairs. Claude Giroux, who scored the Flyers' first goal, stopped a 2-on-1 pass from Brandon Dubinsky, intended for Matt Calvert, with his face. He was slow to get up, having been cut on his upper lip and missed several shifts.

Giroux blocks a pass with his face. pic.twitter.com/WoIFO1ELNW

— Sons of Penn (@SonsofPenn) March 16, 2018

"It was good when I heard the horn to make it 4-3," said Giroux, who didn't know how many stitches were under his beard. "I just wanted to go out there and help the team come back. It wasn't the case.

"Right now we're all frustrated. We're all pissed off. I think that's good. When we get that one win we'll get our confidence back."

Lyon earned more trust

Alex Lyon came on in mop-up duty for the third time since the end of January. He stopped all of the 18 shots he faced and gave the Flyers a chance to get back in the game.

The score was 4-2 when he entered the game, but the Flyers couldn't tie the game.

"I think coming in in relief is the same concept as coming in as a starter," Lyon said. "You just build confidence each time it happens. Really over my career, for whatever reason, it just relaxes me. I feel good. It's probably not going to go that well every time, but just trying to ride the wave and get momentum each time they come in like that."

He probably earned himself at least one more start for his efforts and it's not lost on the coach how hard that is to do.

"If you go in and give one up, that's it. It's game over," Hakstol said. "Alex has done a good job for us a couple of times going in and closing the door and I guess I don't want to overstate it. He went in and did his job. He gave us some timely saves and gave us an opportunity."

Defense needs change

Hakstol made a change in the third period, switching Scott Laughton and Valtteri Filppula so that the former was on the third line and it worked rather well. He didn't touch the defense pairs and the third duo of Brandon Manning and Gudas was an adventure all game.

This hasn't been a new occurrence for a pair that has habitually been out of position and/or evaded coverage in the defensive zone over the last couple weeks. Robert Hägg is out for another week, by the Flyers' estimation. When he returns, it would be hard to justify keeping these pairs together.

Courier-Post LOADED: 03.16.2018

1103875 New York Islanders

Islanders show no signs of life in ugly, blowout defeat

By Associated Press March 15, 2018 | 10:30PM

T.J. Oshie scored twice, Dmitry Orlov and Nicklas Backstrom each had a goal and two assists, and the Islanders were routed by the first-place Capitals 7-3 Thursday night at Barclays Center.

Andrei Burakovsky added a goal and an assist, and Lars Eller and John Carlson also scored to help Washington improve to 10-4-3 in its last 17 games against the Islanders. Evgeny Kuznetsov had three assists and Philipp Grubauer finished with 35 saves for his 11th win of the season.

Brock Nelson, Andrew Ladd and Ryan Pulock scored for the Islanders, who lost for the ninth time in 10 games. Christopher Gibson started and gave up five goals on 12 shots before he was pulled midway through the second period. Jaroslav Halak came on and finished with eight saves.

Orlov gave the Capitals a 3-2 lead with 2:43 left in the first as he beat Gibson for his ninth of the season.

Burakovsky extended Washington's lead at 3:12 of the second, and Backstrom made it 5-2 with his 18th with 9:38 remaining in the middle period, ending Gibson's night.

Christopher Gibson was pulled in the second period. Paul J. Bereswill

Carlson got his 13th with 4:19 left in the third to give the Capitals a four-goal lead.

Pulock got the Islanders to 6-3 just 52 seconds later, but Oshie scored an empty-netter for his second of the night and 14th of the season with just under two minutes to go.

The Islanders were coming off a 5-2 win at Calgary on Sunday night that snapped their eight-game skid (0-4-4) with Gibson making 50 saves.

Nevertheless, their defensive struggles returned against the Capitals.

The Islanders have allowed a league-high 252 goals and are 15-23-8 since finishing November at 15-7-2. They will almost certainly miss the playoffs for the second straight year and the third time in five years. New York has won only one playoff series — in 2016 — in the nine-year career of their captain John Tavares, who is set to become an unrestricted free agent in July.

Nelson opened the scoring at 2:19 of the first as he took a pass from rookie Tanner Fritz while skating down the slot before beating Grubauer for his 16th.

Eller tied it at 10:19 with his 16th before Oshie scored at 11:29 to put the Capitals ahead 2-1.

Ladd tied the score 2-2 at 12:29 when he scored his 10th. Rookie Mathew Barzal got his team-leading 52nd assist on the play.

New York Post LOADED: 03.16.2018

1103876 New York Islanders

With Isles in dire straits, Doug Weight backs team's direction

By Andrew Gross

The playoffs are nearly out of reach for the Islanders, but Doug Weight, calling himself still a "work in progress" as a coach, is confident in the direction the organization is heading.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 16, 2018

"It's really hard between patience and acceptance," he said Thursday. "I really believe in this franchise. We're still going in a good direction. It's hard for everybody to understand that, but I believe in it and I believe in the process we're going through."

Weight, 47, replaced the fired Jack Capuano on Jan. 17, 2017 and has a 54-42-14 career record.

"You're always learning," he said. "You don't want to turn your cheek to it and say, 'We had injuries, we didn't have this in the beginning.' Those are always going to be there. Every team has that. You still have to face it and get better from it, and that's what I'm trying to do."

Back to Halak?

Goalie Jaroslav Halak is likely to start Friday night at Washington, but Weight wouldn't rule out Christopher Gibson getting a fourth straight start. "At this time of the year, you can't take anything off the table," he said.

Isles files

Nikolay Kulemin, out since undergoing shoulder surgery on Nov. 13, may be within a week of taking a full practice. The 31-year-old forward, an impending unrestricted free agent, accompanied the team on its recent road trip and has started to take contact on the ice.

"It's time-sensitive now for the doctors," Weight said. "They want to make sure he's 100 percent. I would say he's really close to starting to practice with us."

Forward Alan Quine (lower body) missed his seventh game but skated toward the end of Thursday's optional morning skate. Forward Scott Eansor, 22, who has 16 goals and six assists in 57 games for Bridgeport (AHL), agreed to a two-year, two-way contract.

Newsday LOADED: LOADED: 03.16.2018

1103877 New York Islanders

Christopher Gibson yanked as Capitals rout Islanders

The Islanders are inching closer to calculating when they'll be eliminated

By Andrew Gross

The promise the Islanders saw in goalie Christopher Gibson's play was nowhere to be found on Thursday night.

"Today was just one of those games that tells me I still have a lot of things to work on to play with the best," Gibson said.

The Capitals beat the Islanders, 7-3, at Barclays Center and chased Gibson from his first home start of the season at 10:22 of the second period. He had allowed five goals on 12 shots.

The teams meet again on Friday night at Washington.

"We didn't get any bounces but we also had breakdowns that weren't very good," defenseman Johnny Boychuk said. "This time of year, when you're fighting for your life and we don't get those bounces, you've got to have a little bit of anger and drive. Playoff hockey. It just wasn't there."

The Islanders (30-30-10) remain in last place in the Metropolitan Division, one point behind the Rangers, and are 10 points behind the Devils for the second wild-card spot in the Eastern Conference. They fell short in their attempt to win consecutive games for the first time since Feb. 15-16.

Philip Grubauer, allowed to settle in after a shaky start, made 35 saves for the Capitals (40-23-7), who remain in first place in the division.

Jaroslav Halak wound up stopping eight of nine shots.

Gibson, making his third straight start and fourth in the last five games, was coming off Sunday's 50-save performance as the Islanders snapped an 0-4-4 skid with a 5-2 win at Calgary to end a 1-0-3 road trip.

"We played pretty well," Islanders coach Doug Weight said. "I know it was 7-3. I don't know what to tell you."

If the rest of this disappointing season does not include any sort of playoff pursuit, the time can be well spent evaluating whether Gibson, 25, can be part of the Islanders' goalie rotation in the future.

Both Gibson, playing on a one-year, two-way deal worth \$650,000 in the NHL, and Halak, completing a four-year, \$18-million deal, are impending unrestricted free agents. Thursday was Gibson's eighth NHL appearance.

Andre Burakovsky, parked in the slot, deflected a shot past Gibson's left pad to make it 4-2 at 3:12 of the second period.

After Cal Clutterbuck was whistled for slashing Tom Wilson, who in the first period left his skates and briefly knocked Casey Cizikas from the game, Nicklas Backstrom batted a power-play goal over Gibson's glove at 10:22 and Halak was summoned.

"We needed a spark," Weight said.

Gibson looked suspect on two of the Capitals' three first-period goals, which came on nine shots.

"I wasn't happy with my game tonight," Gibson said. "There was more than one goal I should have had. I'm disappointed with my performance."

Lars Eller beat Gibson to the far post from the right circle to tie it at 1 at 2:19 and defenseman Dmitry Orlov slipped a shot underneath the goalie's pads from below the left circle to give the Capitals a 3-2 lead at 17:17.

Andrew Ladd snapped a 25-game goal-less streak dating to Dec. 21, tying the score at 2 at 12:29 of the first period after Brock Nelson opened the scoring at 2:19.

Newsday LOADED: LOADED: 03.16.2018

1103839 Edmonton Oilers

Nugent-Hopkins can relate to Oilers teammate Klefbom, injured shoulder

"You can play with it, but it's a matter of how sore and how dangerous it is to the point of it getting weak"

Jim Matheson, Edmonton Journal

Ryan Nugent-Hopkins knows exactly what Oscar Klefbom is going through with his shoulder injury.

Nugent-Hopkins had major surgery in his second NHL season, the lockout year of 2012-13, after initially hurting it in his rookie year when he played 62 games and was runner-up in Calder Trophy voting to the Colorado Avalanche's Gabriel Landeskog.

"You can play through a shoulder problem, but when you leave the rink, you're really sore," said the 24-year-old. "I played my first couple of years with it before I had surgery for my torn labrum, and looking back, maybe I should have had it earlier. You can play with it, but it's a matter of how sore and how dangerous it is to the point of it getting weak."

He admitted guarding against getting hit on the bad shoulder.

"You over-think things and put yourselves in spots you shouldn't," said Nugent-Hopkins. "There's no tip-toeing around this. I don't know if it's the



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 16, 2018

same thing with Oscar, but guys who have bad shoulders, it's a never-ending. Knock on wood, I haven't had any other trouble. It's about maintenance and keeping the shoulders as strong as possible," he said.

Sens unlikely to move Hoffman

Who is the ideal winger for Connor McDavid? Is it the Ottawa Senators' much-underrated Mike Hoffman? The winger the Oilers will see next Thursday when they wind up their upcoming four-game road trip in the nation's capital following games in the southeastern U.S. against the Florida Panthers, the Tampa Bay Lightning and the Carolina Hurricanes.

Yes, they'd love to acquire Hoffman and may be pushing the issue, but the Sens aren't crazy about trading him. And talk of Nugent-Hopkins for Hoffman is probably off-base. That would be a lateral move for the Oilers, no gain there.

The 28-year-old Hoffman makes \$5.1 million for two more years, and sources say he's not on the block because Senators general manager Pierre Dorion likes the chemistry he has with No. 1 centre Matt Duchene and doesn't want to mess with that. They listened to lots of offers at the trade deadline and didn't move him.

Ottawa has precious few offensive wingers. Mark Stone is their No. 1, and Ryan Dzingel, who's got 20 goals this year, is the other, but he hasn't built up any hockey creed that he can do that year after year.

Dorion did watch the Oilers' games in Calgary and against San Jose this week, but he's also out west scouting juniors for the draft.

New appreciation for the wing

Nugent-Hopkins has a different appreciation for wingers now that he's one of the breed. Centres have more defensive responsibility, but wingers are dealing in close quarters along the boards. Nugent-Hopkins is getting the hang of that.

"As a winger, those pucks come ringing around the boards to you and there's a lot less you can do with it," he said. "As a centreman, you have backhand, forehand, but with the winger, you have to make the play and there's no two ways about it, and I have a new respect for all the wingers with guys (checkers) closing down on you.

"Everybody's so good at pinching you off (the wall) and San Jose's so good at it."

Rattie called up

The Oilers have called up Ty Rattie, their leading minor-league scorer (21 goals) for a second time from Bakersfield. They're carrying an extra forward, Anton Slepyshev, for the four-game road trip, and it didn't appear anyone got hurt in the loss to San Jose, but we'll wait and see.

McDavid was the only one banged up when he plowed into the end boards when checked by the Sharks' Justin Braun. He got up shaking his left hand and maybe he got a knock on his head, but he finished the game.

Slepyshev took another step back when scratched against the Sharks after some good games, unless he was sick or he's ailing and the club isn't saying. His contract's up; do the Oilers resign him or trade his rights at the draft?

This 'n that

Oilers assistant coach Jim Johnson's father has passed away, and he wasn't behind the bench for the Sharks' game. Fellow Oilers assistant Ian Herbers, who normally sits in the press box during games, took his spot on the bench.

Oilers defenceman Kris Russell, who has been playing with a sore left hand (shot block) for a while now, took another one off the mitt against the Sharks.

The Oilers signed Russian right-winger Kirill Maksimov, their 2017 fifth-rounder who has 33 goals and 73 points in 59 games for the OHL

Niagara Ice Dogs. The six-foot-two, 195-pound forward is 19th in league points.

Milan Lucic has one goal in his last 67 shots since scoring against Montreal Dec. 23, and about a dozen posts. Will this nightmare ever end? He was counted on to be an automatic top six winger, but he has seven points in his last 34 games. And he's -18. He played only 13:11 against the Sharks, just 3:30 in the third period.

Logan Couture continued his terrific career run against the Oilers with two points in the Sharks' shootout win on Wednesday. He has 18 goals and 29 points in 29 career games against Edmonton.

The Sharks lost first-line winger Joonas Donskai in the third period with a shoulder injury when he whacked into the boards in a puck-battle with Ethan Bear. Donskai, who was a handful all night long, had shoulder problems last year.

Edmonton Journal: LOADED: 03.16.2018

1103840 Edmonton Oilers

Jones: My plan expands playoffs of expanded NHL to 20 teams

Terry Jones

With the expectation the National Hockey League will expand to 32 teams by adding the Seattle Totems (I loved that name in the old Western Hockey League with the Edmonton Flyers, the Portland Buckaroos, etc.), there's talk of expanding the Stanley Cup playoffs.

The idea of 16 teams in and 16 teams out isn't exciting general managers when it comes to job security.

But who wants five rounds of playoffs ending in July or seasons starting on Labour Day?

I doubt many would want to depart from the basic concept of best-of-seven series formats. Some of us remember best-of-three and best-of-five first round series after the World Hockey Association merger.

To have a top team put together a 100-point regular season and then get eliminated by a hot goalie in two or three games (with only a couple of home gates) just doesn't fly.

So how would you do it?

First, you'd want to decide how many teams should qualify for the playoffs.

My number would be 20 of 32.

Twenty-four would only leave eight teams out and half the teams would have their playoff positions clinched by Valentine's Day.

But 20 does work in a bracket-style playoff format.

There have been suggestions such as a play-in game like the one introduced in major league baseball or even two play-in-games on the Tuesday after the season ends with the winners proceeding into normal seven-game series against the first- and second-place teams.

But with that format, there would be no home playoff game for half those teams.

While there's plenty of potential for a Bobby Thompson/Ralph Branca memory-maker in there, playing 82 games to make the playoffs and be bounced out in one game on the road isn't much like being in the playoffs for a fan or the team.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 16, 2018

My solution would put the top six teams East and West in traditional best-of-seven first-round series.

You'd need to play 1st versus 6th, 2nd versus 5th and 3rd versus 4th.

You'd put the next four East and West, in best-of-three series with the first game at the home of the lowest-finishing team and Game 2 and Game 3 (if necessary) at the team finishing higher.

It would mean 7th vs 10th and 8th vs 9th.

The two winners of the best-of-three series would then meet in another best of three series with the same format while the top six are in mid-series of their best-of-seven series.

You'd end up with three winners of the best-of-seven series and the one survivor of the best-of-threes to proceed to the second-round best-of-seven series, the traditional best-of-seven Eastern and Western Conference finals and the Stanley Cup Final.

Like the teams in the best-of-seven first-round series, the team coming out of the best-of-threes would need to win four games to do that. So that's fair.

The number of flights would be the same as a six-game series. So that's fair.

You could argue that it would be more advantageous to finish seventh than sixth because the sixth-place team would have to beat the first-place finisher, and the seventh-place team would have to beat the 10th place team and the 8th or 9th place team. That's a flaw. But the seventh-place team's post-season could be over in two games (one at home) so you'd still probably prefer to finish sixth.

So, there you go Gary Bettman. Your new playoff format.

What's that Mr. Commissioner?

Bettman recently dealt with the idea of more teams in the playoffs.

"Not from my standpoint and not from most of the governors I've talked to," he said recently on his tour through Vancouver, Edmonton and Calgary.

"We think what we have right now is pretty terrific. The regular season is compelling, exciting unpredictable and we have great races.

"We're going to have teams that make the playoffs by a point or two. I think what we've got now is pretty good. And I believe most of our clubs feel the same way. The feedback we get from fans from the research we do is similar. I don't foresee a change."

But Gary, they haven't read the Jones Plan yet.

Edmonton Journal: LOADED: 03.16.2018

1103841 Edmonton Oilers

Nugent-Hopkins looks as good as ever after rib injury

Robert Tychkowski

If this keeps up, everyone on the Oilers will want broken ribs.

Players are supposed to struggle when they return to action after missing a quarter of the season with a lengthy injury, but Ryan Nugent-Hopkins looks like he never missed a shift.

Those 18 games on the shelf didn't seem to leave a speck of rust or dust on him at all. He scored a goal in his first game back and already has three goals and two assists in the six games since his return.

Playing on Connor McDavid's line for the last three games helps, as the Oilers experiment with the possibility of him being a steady left winger there next season, but you have to make the most of your opportunities and he's doing exactly that.

"Our first game together I changed my game a little bit and it wasn't clicking right away so I just went back to playing the way I play," said Nugent-Hopkins, who scored the 3-2 goal for Edmonton in the third period Wednesday. "We read off each other well. Early in the game he set me up a couple of times for nice chances. Same with last game in Calgary, we found each other. Its' starting to click pretty well.

"Obviously it's fun playing with him because he's a different level player. Whoever gets to play with him is going to be enjoying it. We're finding each other and playing well."

NET FRONT PRESENCE

Al Montoya got a rare start for the Oilers after watching Cam Talbot play seven straight. It was just his second game in the last 16 games, so he has to enjoy them when he can.

"You try to make the stops," said Montoya, who saved 36 of 40 shots in the 4-3 overtime loss to San Jose. "I felt good. I feel like I gave the team a chance.

"This is the kind of team that's going to score goals so as a goalie that's a great feeling. If you give up one or two you know your team is capable so you just focus on the next shot. That's all I really concerned myself with."

Head coach Todd McLellan thought Montoya played more than well enough for the win.

"Our backup goaltender gives us a performance like that, I thought we should be able to close it off."

GOING AWAY PRESENT

In what might have been his last home game before undergoing shoulder surgery and shutting it down for the season, defenceman Oscar Klefbom notched a goal and added an assist against the Sharks.

It was nice to get a couple of points, but he said he would have much rather gone out with a win.

"It was fun to be able to help the team," he said. "I think I've played many games better than I played tonight, but the puck went in and I created some offence. I'm very happy for that but it's tough, I'd rather not have any goals and win a game. It was a tough one."

With three leads on home ice, Klefbom says there is no excuse for letting this one get away. But the Oilers were sloppy and careless with the puck at times and it cost them dearly.

"San Jose is a very good team that will take advantage of it," said Klefbom. "It was a tough one. They're a good team, but we have to find a way to win this game. We're at Rogers, we had the lead three times, we should be able to get two points."

The coach agrees.

"We turned a few pucks over which allowed them to get back into it," said McLellan. "Just a few individuals with some tough nights that created some turnovers."

NUMBERS GAME

Leon Draisaitl had a tough night for the Oilers. He was on the ice for all four goals against. He did go 12-5 in the faceoff circle, though ... Connor McDavid played 22:07 and had two assists, but didn't register a shot on net. He is five points back of Nikita Kucherov for the scoring lead.

Edmonton Journal: LOADED: 03.16.2018

1103842 Edmonton Oilers



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 16, 2018

Lowetide: The Oilers and college free agents

By Allan Mitchell Mar 15, 2018

In theory, signing college free agents is an intelligent way to add to the pro depth chart. For just money (and an entry-level deal that takes one slot on the 50-man roster), an NHL team acquire a useful plug-and-play option in an area of need. The Oilers have been using this area of free agency more in recent seasons, but are they getting value?

Oilers college free-agent signings

During the period where the Oilers were rebuilding under Steve Tambellini and then Craig MacTavish, the quality of the group being signed was high (Justin Schultz representing a high-water mark) and the club graduated Taylor Fedun, Schultz, Andrew Miller and Jordan Oesterle. Only Schultz' deal featured a major bonus number (\$2.85 million available for each of his first two seasons, via CapFriendly), none of the other deals from 2011-2014 were worth more than \$1 million a year in the ELC.

March 8, 2011: Oilers sign Taylor Fedun from Princeton

March 19, 2011: Oilers sign Tanner House from Maine

March 31, 2011: Oilers sign Hunter Tremblay from University of New Brunswick

July 1, 2012: Oilers sign Justin Schultz from Wisconsin

April 17, 2013: Oilers sign Andrew Miller from Yale

March 31, 2014: Oilers sign Jordan Oesterle from Western Michigan

Peter Chiarelli took over the business in 2015, signing his first college free agent almost one year to the day from his arrival in Edmonton. None of the bonus outer markers come close to Schultz and only two contracts during the Chiarelli regime feature bonuses that are in excess of \$250,000.

April 7, 2016: Oilers sign Nick Ellis from Providence. Nothing beyond signing bonus

May 6, 2016: Oilers sign Drake Caggiula from North Dakota. Potential bonuses of \$425,000 times two

May 9, 2016: Oilers sign Patrick Russell from St. Cloud State. Nothing beyond signing bonus

August 27, 2016: Oilers sign Matt Benning from Northeastern. Potential bonuses of \$300,000 in second year

March 28, 2017: Oilers sign Joe Gambardella from UMass-Lowell. Nothing beyond signing bonus

April 10, 2017: Oilers sign Shane Starrett from Air Force. Potential bonuses of \$132,500 in year one and \$82,500 in year two

March 4, 2018: Oilers sign Colin Larkin from UMass-Boston (Div. 3). Nothing beyond signing bonus

The latest signing, Colin Larkin, is from a Division-III school and represents what might be a disturbing trend for the Oilers in college free agency: Is the organization getting bullied out of contending for the top-end prospects? Or did the team take a chance on a player who can thread the needle? As a point of reference, Division-III NCAA players who make the NHL are a fairly rare item (Guy Hebert, Keith Aucoin and Kurtis McLean are three such men).

Since 2015, when Chiarelli took over the club and Connor McDavid arrived via the draft, NHL teams have been very active in college free agency. Among the seven Canadian teams, there have been 19 men

signed between 2015-2017. (Note: Although this list has been carefully constructed, I cannot claim it is a complete list of college free-agent signings in this time period).

Toronto signed forward Trevor Moore, \$2.55 million in available bonuses

Toronto signed goalie Kasimir Kaskisuo, \$1.7 million in possible bonus dollars

Calgary signed forward Spencer Foo, \$1.7 million in possible bonuses

Edmonton signed forward Drake Caggiula, \$850,000 in possible bonus money

Ottawa signed goalie Matt O'Connor, \$850,000 in possible bonuses

Montreal signed defenceman Tom Parisi, \$415,000 in potential bonuses

Edmonton signed defenceman Matt Benning, \$300,000 in potential bonuses

Edmonton signed goalie Shane Starrett, \$215,000 in potential bonus dollars

Calgary signed defenceman Josh Healey, \$132,500 in possible bonuses

Toronto signed centre Casey Bailey, \$25,000 in potential bonus money

Calgary signed defenceman Kenney Morrison, nothing past a signing bonus

Montreal signed goalie Charlie Lindgren, nothing in extra bonuses

Edmonton signed goalie Nick Ellis, no bonus beyond signing bonus

Vancouver signed defenceman Troy Stecher, nothing after signing bonus

Edmonton signed winger Patrick Russell, no added bonuses

Winnipeg signed centre Brandon Tanev, no additional bonus money

Vancouver signed goalie Michael Garteig, no additional bonus dollars

Vancouver signed centre Griffen Molino, no bonus beyond signing

Edmonton signed forward Joe Gambardello, no bonuses beyond signing bonus

Edmonton leads the group with six signings. Toronto, Calgary, and Vancouver have three apiece, Montreal has two and Winnipeg and Ottawa one. The Oilers were also close in the Spencer Foo signing, so I think it's reasonable to suggest the team has been more aggressive than the others in the group when it comes to signing college free agents. How much success have they enjoyed? For lack of a better metric, I'll list the teams by games played procured via this method.

Edmonton: 240 (Drake Caggiula and Matt Benning)

Vancouver: 133 (Troy Stecher, Griffen Molino)

Winnipeg: 104 (Brandon Tanev)

Montreal: 16 (Charlie Lindgren)

Toronto: 13 (Casey Bailey)

Ottawa: 1 (Matt O'Connor)

Calgary: 0

The Oilers have two players who arrived in the NHL, reflecting both their commitment to signing college free agents and perhaps to roster weaknesses that allowed quick advancement. That's not necessarily a negative, NHL teams should capitalize on any and all advantages, and in the case of both Caggiula and Benning, the new arena, the McDavid draft and opportunity to advance surely had a part in things.

Is it worth it?



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 16, 2018

The bigger question about all of this: Is it worth the roster spots? Edmonton has 12 per cent (more when Colin Larkin is included next year) tied up in college free agents. Is the organization getting value?

I think the answer is yes—for now. One of the reasons Caggiula and Benning came to Edmonton was the quality of the depth chart. Benning signing in Boston (his drafting team) would have certainly involved playing time in Providence and who knows how long it would take to overcome the incumbents with the big club. At some point, the club should be procuring its own complementary talent via the draft, giving them more control over the second contract.

I would rate Caggiula as a fourth-line NHL talent—your mileage may vary but among forwards with over 500 minutes at 5-on-5 this season he ranks No. 281 in scoring with 1.15/60. There are 279 top9 forwards in the NHL at any given time, I'm comfortable listing Caggiula just outside. That isn't a putdown, there are 43 less productive forwards offensively this year who have played 500 or more minutes.

Benning is a solid third-pairing defenceman based on my metrics (Corsi and qual comp), your mileage may vary here, too. Either way, coach Todd McLellan has employed both men over two seasons and that's where the rubber hits the road. It is my opinion the investment, both cap and 50-man, has been worth it during this transition period.

UMASS BOSTON: AN UNLIKELY SPRINGBOARD TO AN NHL CONTRACT. [HTTPS://T.CO/G5PCNFVM6F](https://t.co/G5PCNFVM6F)

— FLUTO SHINZAWA (@GLOBEFLUTO) MARCH 10, 2018

Betting against the Edmonton Oilers has been good for business since 2006. It would be easy to look at the signing of Larkin as a wasted spot on the 50-man list (not the world's biggest crime, but those slots have value). Larkin has played three games for the Bakersfield Condors since the end of his college career and has two shots on goal. There's every chance we never see him at the NHL level, a possibility that extends to Joe Gambardella, Shane Starrett and others, too.

That said, if the reason you're down on the signing is his D-III career, I think it's an unwise reaction to the signing. Larkin may be that unique skill set that slipped through the cracks and the Oilers are taking a chance on a 6-foot-3 centre with speed and some skill. I can get behind the idea behind the procurement.

On a larger scale, at some point Edmonton won't be able to afford this kind of commitment, due to a flourishing farm team producing talents at all positions annually. That is not an issue at this time.

The Athletic LOADED: 03.16.2018

1103952 Websites

The Athletic / As the Devils vie for the playoffs, Brian Boyle has already become one of the NHL's most vocal champions

By Corey Masisak

Mar 15, 2018

It was an incredible moment watching Kendall James, a beautiful little girl who has endured 43 weeks of chemotherapy, six weeks of radiation and a surgery to remove part of the mass in her abdomen in her fight against cancer, walk to center ice Saturday night at Bridgestone Arena.

The Nashville Predators fan base welcomed her with a thunderous ovation. Devils alternate captain Brian Boyle, a fellow cancer survivor, skated over to her with Predators captain Roman Josi for a ceremonial puck drop.

Kendall, decked out in Predators gear, looked to Boyle first. She gave him a quick wave and a thumbs up.

"Oh gosh ... yeah," Boyle said, his voice trailing off a bit to convey the weight of another indelible memory.

"It was great that she was out there. It was great to see her get that big ovation. I don't know if she was really comfortable in front of all of those people, but after what she's been through in the past year, to see that great, big smile ... it's inspiring. She is inspiring."

These types of moments are a part of Boyle's life now. After being diagnosed with chronic myeloid leukemia in September, Boyle has become a leader and champion of one of his sport's great causes: Hockey Fights Cancer.

"Bringing the attention, getting people to donate — that's what it is all about," Boyle said. "This is going to be our calling for my wife and I going forward."

Boyle has always been a large presence in every hockey dressing room he's resided in. Beyond towering over many players with his sculpted 6-foot-7 body, Boyle's magnetic personality has made him a leader at so many stops during his career path from Boston College to his fifth NHL team, the New Jersey Devils.

He's always been a mentor to younger players, active in the community, popular with the media. This year has been a different kind of challenge, on many levels.

Having the ability to continue playing hockey just months after being diagnosed with leukemia makes him an obvious candidate to help raise awareness for various charities. People see athletes as heroes, and for anyone dealing with cancer, Boyle makes an impact just by putting on his uniform and stepping on the ice.

It's part of his nature to want to do more.

"The outpouring of support, the number of phone calls, voicemails, texts, from people that some of whom were just acquaintances, some of whom were people he'd never met and yet he was so taken with the efforts that people had to go to wish him well, pray for him and try to put his mind in a positive place as they could — he was so appreciative of that," Rick Curran, Boyle's agent, said.

"I said, 'Look, I'm getting a lot of requests here.' He said, 'Rick, I will do anything and everything that I can to bring attention to the need to help beat this thing. At all levels. Every form of cancer.'"

Just being able to play and contribute for the Devils this season would be enough to make Boyle's story remarkable. His desire to help others adds another wrinkle.

There are requests for Boyle's time through Curran, who works for Orr Hockey Group. There are various asks made through the Devils, which all get filtered through vice president of hockey communications and team operations Pete Albietz.

If Boyle had it his way, every reply would start with, 'Yes, whatever you need.'

"It's my pleasure," Boyle said. "I've played ... 900 pro hockey games [counting his time in the minors]. I can figure out a way to adjust. I've always been a believer that we have a platform and a voice for a reason and it's up to you how you want to use it.

"All of these places need funding. They need more research so we can get rid of this disease for good. I can be a guy that only has to take two pills in the morning and two at night and can still play hockey and live a normal life. We need to get to that point for everybody."

Still, Boyle is 33 years old and trying to keep pace in a sport that has gotten younger and faster during his time in the NHL. His team is one of the surprises of the league this season, rising from a lottery-bound club that secured the No. 1 pick in the most recent draft to a playoff contender that just moved into the first wild card position in the Eastern Conference following Wednesday's 8-3 win in Las Vegas.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 16, 2018

"He's going to do everything he can to support other people's efforts to try and conquer this disease, but also realize that you've only got so much time in the day," Curran said. "If he can help anybody as people helped him, and if he can do anything that supports someone as he feels he's been supported, it's what he wants to do. The only problem is he's only got so many hours."

Boyle's condition also wasn't the only health problem his family has dealt with.

When a hockey player has 12 brothers and sisters, including one that was also drafted by an NHL team, the family becomes part of his story. Boyle's father, Artie, had beaten cancer when doctors gave him a five percent chance to live.

Boyle's own fight against the disease is one of the best stories in the NHL this season. His work to help others is no surprise to any of his former teammates.

"He's one of the nicest people I've met in hockey," New York Rangers forward Mats Zuccarello said. "I was a young kid coming here from Norway and he treated me so well. We had so many good times. ... "You couldn't ask for a better guy to do this, with who he is and what he's been through and how well he's playing this season. It is inspiring."

Added another ex-Rangers teammate, Chris Kreider: "He definitely took me under his wing when I first got here and was a great friend to me. Talk about a resilient person, a resilient family, they've been through a lot. It's harrowing. It's upsetting. I'm sure he'll say everything happens for a reason. He'll be nothing if not a great ambassador, a great inspiration for people going through a similar situation. He's going to help a lot of people."

Kreider mentioned the Boyles are a resilient family. It's not just Brian, or his father Artie, that he was talking about.

Brian and Laura Boyle have two young children. Their son Declan has spent swaths of time in hospitals during this hockey season. They feared the worst, that another family member was going to have to fight this terrible disease.

Boyle told reporters at the NHL All-Star Game that his son has brain arteriovenous malformation, which is a problem with arteries and veins that disrupts blood flow. It almost prevented him from attending as an injury replacement for Taylor Hall.

"We're fortunate that it wasn't what we thought it was going to be," Boyle said. "He's not a cancer patient, but he's still a kid who's had to battle some things. And to see the nurses and doctors do what they do every single day with different kids — they're angels."

All of this would be an incomprehensible ask for any normal young family to deal with. If Boyle wanted to ask out of the appearances or the visits with other sick children, everyone would understand.

"He will tell you that his life support has been Lauren, his wife. She's been absolutely tremendous," Curran said. "As big and strong as he is, he pales in comparison to the strength that he found in his wife. She has just been a pillar through everything. They also just had a baby last fall. She's the one that has her hands full."

Through everything that has happened, something that could feel far less meaningful has occurred: Brian Boyle is having one of the best seasons of his NHL career.

Signed to a two-year contract in the offseason to provide depth and mentorship for a young club, Boyle's debut was delayed because of his diagnosis. Still, he needs two goals and five points in the Devils' final 12 games to match the second-highest totals of his career.

He's basically been right at the team's average puck possession rate, though a little unlucky in a share of the goals while he's on the ice. Boyle is also averaging more time on ice per game than he has in any of the past four seasons.

"I feel pretty good," Boyle said. "It's been a tremendous amount of stress and anxiety. We were scared for a while. We were scared for our son. It can take a toll on you emotionally. For the most part, I feel really good. Every year the league gets faster and I feel like I'm keeping up as well, if not better."

The NHL rewarded Boyle by inviting him to replace Hall at the All-Star game in Tampa, where he played for three seasons. In a season of touchstone moments, that weekend was full of them.

"He's a great person," Pittsburgh Penguins forward Carl Hagelin said. "He means well and he cares for not only his closest friends but people in general. For him to be able to go to the All-Star Game was a special moment. The type of guy he is, he's always liked to be involved in the community. He's just a good person."

"It was kind of like magic," Curran said.

So too was Saturday night in Nashville.

Boyle met Aleks, another child with cancer before the game. The Predators' foundation was hosting him at the game, and Boyle took a break from the Devils' pregame soccer routine to speak with him.

Then came the tear-inducing meeting with Kendall on the ice. Then came a very important game for the Devils against one of the best teams in the NHL.

Boyle helped bolster his team's playoff chances by scoring his 13th goal of the season, tallying the deciding shootout goal and playing the most he has in the past 20 games because his club was short two injured centers.

There will be more nights like this for Boyle. The league, his team and others outside hockey will ask for him to help.

If there are enough minutes in the day, Boyle will be there and ready to help others fight.

"I've felt really bad for Brian and his family, especially with what his son is going through now too. It seems like they can't catch a break," Kreider said. "But you wouldn't know it from talking to him or watching him play or being around their room. That's just Brian for you. I guess sometimes pretty good people get dealt a pretty tough hand."

"He's just an amazing person."

The Athletic LOADED: 03.16.2018

1103953 Websites

The Athletic / Daniel Negreanu, poker legend, is now also a Vegas Golden Knights superfan

Michael Russo

Mar 15, 2018

LAS VEGAS — Walk around T-Mobile Arena, and everywhere you look are fans wearing Marc-Andre Fleury, William Karlsson, James Neal and Jonathan Marchessault jerseys.

Not Daniel Negreanu.

An hour before Wednesday night's game against the New Jersey Devils, one of poker's most popular and recognizable stars for the past 15 years waltzes into the Jack Daniels Lounge wearing the No. 92 sweater worn by Tomas Nosek, an undrafted fourth-liner from the Czech Republic



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 16, 2018

taken in last June's expansion draft from the Detroit Red Wings and not exactly one of the household names that have helped the Golden Knights soar shockingly toward a likely Pacific Division championship.

"I think I have the only one," Negreanu says, proudly.

In Sin City, where they love to put on over-the-top shows up and down the Vegas Strip, there has been nothing bigger than the Golden Knights in Year 1 of their NHL existence.

The Minnesota Wild, who boast the NHL's only Nevada-produced player in history, Jason Zucker, will get their first taste of it Friday night in front of what's expected to be thousands of Wild fans along for the ride.

The Golden Knights have a 10-point lead in their division and have established expansion records for wins, points and road wins. Negreanu's eyes light up with astonishment when asked how amazed he is in what has transpired since the Golden Knights first hit the ice for training camp last fall.

"When you look at what every pundit said, no one had Vegas higher than 28th overall," said Negreanu, who grew up in Toronto, is a long-suffering Maple Leafs diehard and is second all-time in fantasy titles on his now-rebuilding 20-year keeper league team. "A few guys took a flier and said they would win a few games. But, first of all, the idea of hockey in Vegas was awakened just a couple of years ago. To see it go from that to already having a team, and a team that's really good, it's amazing. No one expected that we would draft a team, through the expansion draft, that would be competitive to the point where you want to keep your assets at the deadline.

"Guys like (David) Perron and Neal, we were like, 'Oh cool, they can audition here for where they're going to play after the deadline.' And then, you know, the team's doing so well that it would've been a travesty to get rid of them."

Not only didn't general manager George McPhee sell, he bought by acquiring skilled forward Tomas Tatar from the Red Wings.

The Golden Knights have 24 home wins, winning 19 of their first 23 inside their palace of an arena nestled between the hotel and casinos of New York-New York and the Monte Carlo.

It's here where the entertainment that surrounds the game is unlike any other experience in 30 other NHL barns.

It's loud. Very loud.

There are cheerleaders and a drum line and a giant castle and party decks and outrageous videography and on-ice projections and intermission performances from anything from the Golden Knights' Drumbots to the surrounding Cirque du Soleil casts.

Even when the Golden Knights trailed 4-0 in what turned out to be their worst loss of the season by an 8-3 score Wednesday to the Devils, the party kept rocking.

"Like Alex Ovechkin said when he came here, 'I don't know if it's a beach club, a dance party, or a hockey game because everybody's dancing,'" Negreanu said. "And, I mean ... people are drinking. It's Vegas."

Negreanu, the 43-year-old that burst onto the poker scene as KidPoker, was inducted into the Poker Hall of Fame four years ago. He has won six World Series of Poker bracelets and two World Poker Tour championships.

He's first all-time with more than \$36 million in earnings. He's third all-time with \$17 million in World Series of Poker earnings and sixth all-time with 105 World Series of Poker cashes, according to WSOP.com. On the World Poker Tour, he's second all-time with \$6.4 million in earnings and nine final tables. He has cashed 23 times.

Overall, he has won more than 50 poker events and has had cameos in multiple movies and TV shows. He was in a Katy Perry music video and tried to fool a lie detector on the show Sports Science. He has authored multiple books on Hold'em, is active on social media (@RealKidPoker),

has a website and blog (fullcontactpoker.com) and two years ago a documentary was released detailing his life and career called, KidPoker.

Affable, energetic, funny, what you see from Negreanu during his tournament play as seen often on ESPN and Fox Sports is what you get when you hang out with him for an hour on a Wednesday night.

He is still largely the face of poker. And he has quickly become the most identifiable celebrity spokesman for the Golden Knights.

The Vegas resident was an original member of Golden Knights owner Bill Foley's "Founding 50," which ultimately grew to more than 75.

Their job?

"Selling tickets to something that didn't exist and asking people to pay 10 percent for a team that wasn't awarded and we didn't have any sort of timeline on when they'd get their money back and it was non-refundable," Negreanu said. "We had to, you know, sell it, really."

That's why there's unmistakable pride when you watch Negreanu walk around T-Mobile Arena and take in a game.

He owns 16 season tickets, 12 in the upper deck that he donates to Foley's charity, the Folded Flag Foundation, and four in Section 6, 11 rows behind the benches at center ice where he is basically the mayor known by everybody.

"During the exhibition games, there were season-ticket holders around me and they were like, 'Why did they stop the play?'" Negreanu said. "I'd be like, That's called ICING! You know, so I was basically teaching them the rules. Not anymore. They know it."

Daniel Negreanu

One of the winningest poker players of all-time, Canadian Daniel Negreanu is also a hockey nut and one of the key celebrity fans for the Vegas Golden Knights. (Credit: Chris Weeks/WireImage)

There are other well-known people there like local celeb Ed Bernstein, Bar Rescue's Jon Taffer and, uh, the owner of Sapphire's adult establishment.

"There's often a very interesting view behind me of guests that he brings," Negreanu said, laughing. "Only in Vegas do you go to a hockey game and they're handing out cards for free bottle service at Sapphire's."

But as Negreanu walks to his seats transfixed on line rushes in warmups, he high-fives fans, fist bumps the in-arena host with a golden microphone, takes pictures with kids, dances to the music and man-hugs his longtime agent and lawyer, Brian Balsbaugh, whose seats are a row in front of Negreanu and is at the game with his youngest son, 9-year-old Cash, who plays hockey for the Junior Golden Knights.

Balsbaugh is a former Adjunct Professor of Sports Law at the University of Minnesota. His wife is from Inver Grove Heights, Minnesota, and in Sept. 2003, Balsbaugh, an agent for several PGA golfers, signed Negreanu to be his client at the old Palomino in downtown Minneapolis.

Today, Balsbaugh is CEO of Poker Royalty and represents most of the top-20 poker players in the world.

"People think there is a public personality and a private personality with Daniel. But Daniel's exactly the same," Balsbaugh said. "He's my kids' godfather, he's my best friend, we've been business partners for 15 years and I feel like everybody else knows him as well as I know him.

"He's the same person all the time. He's completely genuine all the time."

Negreanu's entire life revolves around the Golden Knights these days.

He has only missed six home games due to poker tournament obligations, and he quickly notes that the Golden Knights are 3-3 in games he misses, so that can't happen anymore.

"When I'm home in Vegas, they're non-miss," Negreanu said.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 16, 2018

One of the biggest tournaments on the European Poker Tour is the Grand Final in Monaco at the historic Monte Carlo casino. Negreanu has competed in the tournament for a decade, cashed for more than \$2 million.

Unfortunately, the tournament takes place in late April.

"Just not gonna happen this year," Negreanu said. "I can't imagine missing the first playoffs here ever, and ever (again), really. The playoffs are just something you can't miss. So, I have evolved my schedule, and it's enriched my life."

The World Series of Poker, which does last until mid-July, starts in late May in Las Vegas. What if the Golden Knights ride this Cinderella season to the Stanley Cup Final?

"If we're in the Stanley Cup, I can miss a couple events," Negreanu said, laughing. "It would be a good problem to have."

Negreanu takes a pause to just consider the fact that he's discussing the possibility of an expansion NHL team taking part in the playoffs, let alone playing to potentially hoist Lord Stanley's cherished cup.

"I'll tell you what I did expect," Negreanu said of this season. "I expected Colin Miller and Nate Schmidt to improve their numbers. Because I thought that the offense was going to be pretty staggered, so a lot of the goals would come from the point because (Miller and Schmidt) were more offensively gifted. No one saw William Karlsson putting up 35 (goals). I mean, Marchessault was going to get his points but other than that, like Neal's gonna get his 20, 25 (goals), but it didn't feel like there was going to be a lot of offense throughout the lineup."

"I thought, 'Fleury is going to have to steal some games here and there. We will be one of the lower-scoring teams.' I didn't foresee (coach Gerard) Gallant using the assets he had to create such a high-tempo style. Like, you didn't expect that, but it actually makes so much sense. You have a team of guys that weren't expected to do well, you know what, let's gamble. Let's just get the puck in transition and turn it up ice immediately. And forecheck and forecheck and forecheck!"

What Negreanu loves is he and the rest of the Golden Knights contingent — which, by the way, isn't as outnumbered by opposing fans turning Golden Knights games into a destination trip as one may think — isn't just watching victories night after night.

Fans are being thoroughly entertained by one of the most exciting teams in the NHL.

"You would have expected the team to be slow, to be kind of meandering around the ice, a bunch of old guys waiting to retire, but it turned out that McPhee did a really good job of picking guys that had talent, that weren't being utilized," Negreanu said. "So, you look at Karlsson as an example or (former Wild players Erik) Haula or (Alex) Tuch."

"They were never really given a chance to show their offensive chops, but they got a brand new chance here and they had the chops in juniors and whatnot, and all of a sudden you put them all together, a bunch of guys with a chip on their shoulder with a lot to prove."

The Golden Knights have been embraced by the community.

Negreanu says all his friends' kids, many of whom are top-end soccer and lacrosse players, have already fallen in love with hockey and started playing. So his belief is the sport will grow in Las Vegas just the way it has in non-traditional markets like Florida, Arizona and California.

And the organization became such a special vehicle toward helping the community heal following the Oct. 1 mass shooting during the Route 91 Music Festival that killed 58 and injured hundreds just down the road at Mandalay Bay.

The Golden Knights still honor a hero from that tragic night every home game. They've paid homage to the heroes by having players accompany firefighters, doctors, nurses, police officers and paramedics on the ice before their home opener.

"The sadness and the tragedy didn't go away, but we turned it into a positive somehow," Negreanu said. "It gave me chills when they were walking in and they were saying, 'Introducing, Dr. Michael Lee,' accompanied by some guy named James Neal. It really illustrated the heroes, the actual heroes of our community, not just the hockey players, in a way that I think the whole league looked at and said, 'Wow, it became easy to root for Vegas.'"

Around the arena, there are pregame concerts and large gathering spots, bars and restaurants for home and visiting fans alike. Thousands of Wild fans in for Friday's game have already organized a gathering at the Beerhaus next door at 3 p.m. Friday.

"You know what's great about it?" Negreanu said. "It doesn't feel like Vegas when you walk that area. It feels like kind of a cool, normal city, but sports happy. And we didn't really have that before. We didn't really have that kind of culture, a whole bunch of places where people just hang out. I think playoffs will be awesome."

He added with a laugh, "From a tailgate perspective, we might have to have a breathalyzer at the door before people get in."

As for those playoffs, Negreanu was asked whom he wants the Golden Knights to play.

"If I'm being completely honest, and I hope I don't jinx myself, I don't think Calgary is going to make the playoffs, but if I had to pick one right now, and I'd say it looks good — Colorado," he said. "I think we match up best with Colorado. Not Minnesota! Minnesota, they've done really well against us winning two games, they seem to roll four lines and they're deep and they're pretty steady."

Daniel Negreanu

Negreanu sits right behind his longtime agent, Brian Balsbaugh — who once worked in Minnesota — at Golden Knights games. (Credit: Michael Russo)

"And the teams that we struggle against are teams that want to slow the game down and play like sort of zone to zone. We like to be in transition. Minnesota doesn't seem to want to play that with us, and they're very smart not to. Like any team that keeps a third man back does really well against Vegas. I hate giving away the secret but when Dallas did it, they beat us 3-0. When we don't score, it's usually because people are clogging up the neutral zone, protecting the lead if they have one, or are just like, 'We are fine playing a boring style of hockey.' That's not the style we like to play."

Negreanu does know the sport, having been mostly a road hockey player growing up.

"I was not a very good skater," he said. "Scouting report would've been like, 'Really weak skater, tenacity, he's a grinder, but can't skate for shit.'"

Negreanu's Maple Leafs are third in the Atlantic. A Golden Knights-Maple Leafs Final could potentially give Negreanu a coronary, but — sorry, Leafs faithful — he says, "I don't think this is Toronto's year. I think they're going to run up against it. Boston's going to be a tough, brutal, grinding series ... and if you've got injuries going in, you're probably going to have some more after (Brad) Marchand gets involved in some dirty hits here and there."

"I don't know if they're ready yet. I think (Mike) Babcock's done a good job of coaching what he's got, but I think there are holes on defense. ... I don't think that they'll be able to get through the tough sled, and if they had to go through Boston and Tampa, I don't see it."

Negreanu definitely wears his Golden Knights heart on his sleeve. He has several jerseys, maybe his favorite being the one with a "TUCH-YEAH" nameplate.

Believe it or not, even though many hockey players are typically poker fanatics and Negreanu's clearly a hockey guy, he doesn't really know any of the Vegas players.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 16, 2018

"I don't do that," he said. "You know, from afar I've talked to a few here and there, but I don't really go party with them or anything."

Negreanu joked last year that he was semi-retired from poker with all the young, up-and-coming newbies out there, but he says now that he has started to revive his game.

"October, November, December I put together what I call PSP, a personal strategic plan of attack in terms of what I'm going to study," he said. "I basically didn't play much, but I studied for three months, watching game film and also working with a computer scientist and another guy who can sort of help make the information manageable for me to use.

"And that really helped. The first night after I played with that, I won a million at the Bellagio and I've done really well since then. But, you know, I'm playing slightly less but much more effective and I plan to play hard at the World Series as always."

Daniel Negreanu

He sees a big correlation between poker and hockey.

"I think with poker that you can compare it to virtually any sport because in any sport you see teams that will try to take advantage of something," Negreanu said. "So when you think of game theories — that's a popular word in poker, we call it GTO. Poker, a lot, really revolves around that. When you see people doing something wrong, or like say a team is playing too aggressively, there's a counter-strategy to that.

"Like football. Perfect example. If a team is running the ball too much, well then your defense should set up against the run, and not worry about the pass. Or vice-versa. If they throw a lot, maybe you can put more resources toward that. And then, like in hockey, it's very similar too. If you have a team that runs run-and-gun, like Vegas, well maybe you want to hem them up in the neutral zone, or not play their style. So, always adapting in sport and in poker, there's a lot of similarities."

Vancouver Canucks coach Travis Green has played in the World Series of Poker. So has Florida Panthers goalie Roberto Luongo, and several other NHLers play poker religiously, whether in tournaments or cash games in casinos or on team charters.

Asked the best? Negreanu laughs.

"(Former Gophers star) Phil Kessel's a good buddy of mine," Negreanu said. "He thinks he's the best, he really does. He thinks he's the best poker player. But I don't know about that. His poker game is so much like his hockey game. He's just a savant talent, right? He has no idea why he scores so many goals. He really doesn't have a clue. I understand it better than he does. He's like, I don't know, eh. I just go out there and I try to shoot the puck and score.

"It's kind of like the same in poker. Not the most analytical."

The Athletic LOADED: 03.16.2018

1103954 Websites

The Athletic / Blues' Joel Edmundson looks back at the blocked shot that put him in surgery before the game ended

By Jeremy Rutherford

Mar 15, 2018

When the Blues' game against the Colorado Avalanche on Feb. 8 began, Joel Edmundson was on the bench under the bright lights at Scottrade

Center. When it ended, he was on the operating table under anesthesia at Barnes-Jewish Hospital.

Edmundson had blocked a team-high 125 shots going into the night and suffered no serious damage, so the third-year defenseman thought nothing of stepping in front of a one-timer off the stick of former teammate Nail Yakupov in the first period.

"Same thing every time — I'm trying to stop the puck from getting in the net," Edmundson said. "That's my job to block shots, so I didn't think twice about it. I knew it was going to be a hard shot. I saw it was coming, so I turned my head like I usually do, and went down."

Yakupov's attempt from the top of the right circle went an estimated 18 feet, traveling about 60 miles per hour, before it was deadened by Edmundson's right forearm. His arm was completely covered in padding, but the shot hit him in the seam of that padding, between his glove and his built-up elbow pad.

"I thought it was just another blocked shot, like shake it off," Edmundson said. "I didn't really know what a broken bone felt like, but my whole arm just kind of went numb. The puck fell right in front of me, so I just tried to scoop it up with that arm. But I put my hand over the puck and I couldn't feel it at all."

Edmundson tries to sweep it away, but can't get a grasp. Colorado's Colin Wilson skates past him and nearly gains possession along the wall, but the Blues' Brayden Schenn gets position and clears the puck out of the zone.

Colton Parayko, Edmundson's defensive partner, was standing in front of the crease and watched him block the shot. He couldn't believe when he then saw Edmundson go for the puck a second time.

"The first time I looked, he was down, and then the second time I look up he's over playing the puck," Parayko said. "I'm like 'What's going on here?' You don't really know where it hits him, but it looked like it kind of caught him in the arm. Those spots are pretty dangerous because it's in between the glove and the pad — basically puck on bone. It's amazing that he kept battling through it. It's pretty insane actually."

As Schenn swats the puck the length of the ice, Edmundson bends in half, holding his arm, and that's when Parayko knew it was serious. "He doesn't hunch over in soreness very often," Parayko said. "You could tell he was in a lot of pain. You knew something happened."

Bob and Lois Edmundson, Joel's parents, were watching the game from the family's living room in Brandon, Manitoba, and they knew as well.

"I thought, 'That didn't look too good,'" Bob said. "Then he skated off the ice dragging his arm, and I said, 'Lois, that doesn't look good.' They showed the replay and I said, 'Broken arm.'"

Edmundson headed to the Blues' bench, where goalie Jake Allen gives him a pat on the backside, and then Parayko taps his glove on the top of Edmundson's helmet, which was their way of saying, "good job."

Edmundson remains hunched over and, with head medical trainer Ray Barile at the other end of the bench, assistant trainer Dustin Flynn instead checks on the defenseman's condition.

"Dusty was asking me the basic questions, but I was in pain, so I wasn't really answering too much," Edmundson said. "He just kept on asking me if we should go back and get it looked at. I just wanted to wait it out and see if it would go away."

Edmundson had another reason for wanting to stay in the game. A few minutes earlier, Colorado's Nikita Zadorov had laid a clean but vicious hit on Blues center Paul Stastny. Edmundson, who was not on the ice, was not happy.

Three Blues — Vladimir Tarasenko, Alexander Steen and Alex Pietrangelo — all confronted the 6-foot-5, 230-pound Avalanche defenseman. No punches were thrown, but Tarasenko was whistled for a roughing penalty.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 16, 2018

Edmundson came on one shift later and said he wanted to drop the gloves with Zadorov, but the Avs player had left the ice.

"I wanted to go see if the guy wanted to fight, just to kind of stand up for 'Stas,' and that shift is when I got injured," Edmundson said. "I went to the bench and it wasn't going away. I didn't want to do anything stupid, so I was like, 'Hey let's get an X-ray just to make sure.'"

Blues general manager Doug Armstrong knew that if Edmundson was willing to get his arm looked at, he was not well.

"I thought it might be OK because he actually played for a bit, but when a guy like 'Eddie' goes to the locker room, you know it's serious," Armstrong said. "He's a little bit like Barret Jackman in that sense that they play through a lot of pain, so if they do leave, you know it's something that is potentially serious."

Edmundson headed back, taking off his helmet and gloves, and then went to the trainer's room, where he needed help getting his upper gear off. He got his sweater and shoulder pads over his head and then noticed something peculiar.

"I saw blood on my left hand," Edmundson said. "I was confused. I was looking around and I had no idea where it came from. But I took my elbow pad off and it was soaked in blood. No one could see it through the pad, but once I took it off in front of the doctors, there was blood everywhere."

"I thought it was just another cut or something. I couldn't turn my arm, so I couldn't see (where the puck hit). But there was just a big gash there, about one-and-a-half to two inches long. I didn't see the gash at all. I didn't know what it looked like, but it was just kind of dangling there."

The Blues took an X-ray and confirmed that Edmundson had indeed fractured his forearm.

"They took one picture and just by one picture they could see the crack," he said. "They did one or two more and you could see a clear crack."

It was a good thing that Edmundson didn't fight Zadorov.

"That would have been bad," he said. "I wouldn't have been able to throw left because I wouldn't have been able to grab with the right hand. There's no good way to look at it. I was either throwing with my right or grabbing with my right, and either way it would have killed. So it was a good thing I went to get X-rays."

Edmundson was in the trainer's room for less than 10 minutes. Knowing that his parents were watching the game, he immediately sent a text message to his father, Bob, to give his parents an update.

Edmundson didn't respond to his dad right away, but what doctors were saying was that they were worried about an infection, so they sanitized the cut with some cream and made plans for him to have immediate surgery.

Until now, the 24-year-old had only suffered a broken nose in his career because of fighting and had never had surgery. He went to the locker room by himself, removing his skates with one hand, unsure of how many weeks he'd miss.

"I was pissed off because I didn't know how long it was going to be," Edmundson said. "I wasn't in the best mood."

After dressing in a Blues' tracksuit, Edmundson returned to the trainer's room where he learned he'd be out six weeks. That was at the first intermission, when the club was leading Colorado 1-0, so players stepping off the ice were coming in to check on their teammate.

"They were saying, 'Hell of a block, Eddie,' giving me props," Edmundson said. "But then they looked at me like, 'Are you alright? You're pale.'"

Chris Thorburn was one of them.

"Eddie turned and looked at me and I was just like, 'Holy ...' it wasn't even Eddie," Thorburn said. "I don't know if it was shock or what. He

looked like he was struggling. Thank God we had the doctors and the training staff around to make sure nothing happened."

At that point, Blues orthopedic surgeon Rick Wright drove Edmundson to Barnes-Jewish Hospital, and while Wright was parking his car, Edmundson called his dad to say he was headed into surgery.

"I was in the lobby in my Blues gear," he said. "I'm on the phone with my parents and people are looking. No one came up to me, but you get the looks."

Edmundson then changed into a surgical gown and was prepped for the procedure with a dose of anesthesia. Before the medicine kicked in, he remembers chatting up the nurses and admitted that he may have even been hitting on them.

"Probably," Edmundson said.

"He better watch what he says because his mom is a nurse," Bob Edmundson said, laughing.

Whether he was flirting or not, Edmundson and everyone in the room thought it was surreal that he was playing a hockey game an hour earlier and, after flirting with danger, a blocked shot now had him set up for surgery.

The game was still going on at Scottrade Center.

"They all love the Blues and they couldn't believe it," Edmundson said. "I'm sitting on the surgery table, and while all the doctors and nurses are figuring their stuff out, I'm checking live updates of the game on my phone. Right before surgery, it was like 3-1 or 4-1 — the boys were just going off."

And then, Edmundson, snapping his fingers, says, "I'm out. I was out cold before the game was even over."

A couple of hours later, after the Blues wrapped up a 6-1 win over the Avalanche, he awoke with six screws and a plate in his arm, which was now heavily wrapped in a cast.

"I looked down at my arm and I was like, 'I guess it's over with,'" Edmundson said. "I didn't even know what happened."

Shortly after midnight, Edmundson FaceTimed his parents to notify them he was out of surgery. He spent the night at the hospital and, despite being an NHL player accustomed to four-star hotels, he didn't mind.

"I was actually surprised how comfy the beds are," Edmundson said. "I had a great sleep."

The Blues confirmed the surgery at 10 a.m. the next day. There was a report that he had suffered a compound fracture, meaning Edmundson's bone had pierced the skin, but that was inaccurate.

"It wasn't a compound, but it's not a bad rumor," he said. "Everyone thinks I'm tough now, so I'll take it."

At 10:30 a.m., Ryan Miller, the Blues' director of hockey administration, picked up Edmundson from the hospital and took him home. Edmundson lives in the same complex as teammate Robby Fabbri, but Fabbri was back home in the Toronto area, rehabbing from his second knee surgery in seven months. So he FaceTimed Fabbri, who told him, "Someone is after us."

It would be tough to prove whether any hockey ghosts were coming after Edmundson, but he finally found out who took the shot that fractured his forearm. It wasn't who he thought it was.

"I actually didn't know it was 'Yak' until after the surgery," Edmundson said. "He texted me saying 'sorry' and that's when I realized it was him. I thought it was (Colorado forward Mikko Rantanen) the whole time."

But despite the sizable incision, one that had to be lengthened to be able to insert the plate, Edmundson isn't holding any grudges. In fact, he likes the scar that was left behind.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 16, 2018

When told it was like a hockey tattoo, Edmundson agreed.

"I love it, I love it, it's a good story," he said. "I have lots of scars on my face, but this one stands out the most. Chicks dig scars. I mean, I can't do anything about it, so I might as well like it."

Edmundson wore his original cast for about four days and then traded it in for a removable one, so he could begin working on his range of motion. He had a ball in his right hand at all times, which allowed him to regain strength in his fingers after about a week, and eventually his wrist. He progressed from squeezing the ball to twisting his arm while holding the shaft of a hockey stick, then a hammer and then a baseball bat.

Five weeks later, the pain has subsided and the scar has softened, but as Edmundson showed The Athletic when the Blues were in Anaheim last week, he can feel the plate in his arm.

Doctors have told Edmundson that the cracked bone is as strong now, if not stronger, than it was before the injury. But while practicing the past couple of weeks, he admits that he still thinks about it.

"It's definitely in your mind; you don't want to hurt it again," Edmundson said. "But at the same time, I know it's sturdy now. You've got to fight through the pain, but it still plays in your mind that it feels weak."

When the defenseman takes the ice Thursday, he'll be wearing even more padding on his right forearm. There will be no gap between his glove and his elbow pad.

There will also be no hesitation in Edmundson's willingness to step up and block a shot against the same Colorado club that caused the injury.

"You have no doubt he will," Blues coach Mike Yeo said. "You don't throw around the word 'warrior' lightly, (but) he is. The way that he competes, sacrifices his body, pays a price and does it night after night ..."

"I'm not switching my style," Edmundson said. "I won't think twice about it. The guys say I'm crazy. I tell them, 'I love blocking shots.' Guys hate blocking shots, but they do it. I don't know why, but I look forward to it. I love jumping in front of shots, especially if we're playing somebody like (Montreal's Shea) Weber. I want to block that. It's kind of weird. I'm just messed up in the head, I don't know. The pain is going to go away, and it's stopping a goal — that's the main thing."

The Athletic LOADED: 03.16.2018

1103955 Websites

The Athletic / How much does March matter for the Penguins?

By Josh Yohe

Mar 15, 2018

MONTREAL — Historically speaking, a team shouldn't desire to play the Penguins in April, May or June. They've won the Stanley Cup five times in the past 27 years, have reached a Stanley Cup final six times and currently boast a core of players that thrives in the postseason.

History also tells us that you don't want to play the Penguins in March.

March success is no guarantee that the Penguins will thrive in the playoffs — interestingly enough, the Penguins are almost always good in March, even in seasons when their playoff performance was ultimately a disappointment — but it has always been a trend in their championship seasons.

Let's take a look back at previous March records of the best teams in Penguins' history, along with the most disappointing teams in franchise history. (We'll call "March" the entire month plus the few regular season games that are usually scheduled in early April.)

1991 Penguins

Stanley Cup Champions

Finished first in Patrick Division

March record: 9-4-2

The Penguins played most of the 1990-91 regular season without Mario Lemieux, who was dealing with a multitude of back issues following surgery during the previous summer. He returned in late January, and by March, the Penguins found their stride. They had once trailed the Rangers by a dozen points for Patrick Division supremacy but caught them in March thanks to a victory at Madison Square Garden and Kevin Stevens' fluke overtime goal against the Rangers at Civic Arena four nights later.

1992 Penguins

Stanley Cup champions

Finished third in Patrick Division

March record: 11-5-1

If there is a team that the current Penguins look to pattern themselves after, it might be this one. The 1991-92 Penguins were the quintessential example of a team that was able to flip the switch when it pleased. They finished third in the division and even making the postseason took some work as those Penguins blew off large chunks of the regular season. They finished the playoffs by winning 11 straight games. While they didn't take the regular season all that seriously, they did start to find their footing in March.

2009 Penguins

Stanley Cup champions

Finished second in Atlantic Division

March record: 14-2-3

Remember that whole Dan Bylsma magic thing? It started here. Bylsma was hired in February and the Penguins took off almost immediately under his watch. They started swarming the opposition on a nightly basis, out-shooting teams with great frequency while using an energy and forecheck that was simply too much to handle.

2016 Penguins

Stanley Cup champions

Finished second in Metropolitan Division

March record: 16-5-0

There are plenty of similarities to the 2016 Penguins and the 2009 Penguins. Like Michel Therrien seven years earlier, Mike Johnston was dismissed largely because the Penguins' stars had stopped listening to him. Mike Sullivan didn't need much time to turn the Penguins around. By March, they had become the league's best team. A six-game winning streak was punctuated by a 6-2 rout against the eventual Presidents' Trophy-winning Capitals. A few days later in Detroit, something called the "HBK Line" became a thing. Kris Letang started playing 30 minutes a night and he was almost flawless throughout. It all came together in March.

2017 Penguins

Stanley Cup champions

Finished second in Metropolitan Division



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 16, 2018

March record: 12-6-3

Letang also played a role in this March, though in a much different manner. The Penguins played without him in March and they wouldn't enjoy his services again the rest of the season, as he eventually underwent neck surgery. It wasn't a flawless stretch by any means, but the Penguins heated up enough to hold off Columbus, thus earning home advantage in the first round of the playoffs.

Without question, the Penguins get hot in March in their championship seasons.

But what about those other seasons? What about the great Penguins' teams who have flamed out in the playoffs?

Here are some examples.

1993 Penguins

Lost in the second round

First place in the Patrick Division

March record: 17-2-1

This team was the ultimate outlier. Lemieux went on the greatest binge of his career, producing 29 goals and 53 points during a 17-game winning streak that still stands as an NHL record. These Penguins never should have been defeated in the playoffs. But they're proof that an indomitable March doesn't mean postseason success is a given.

1994 Penguins

Lost in the first round

First place in the Northeast Division

March record: 13-7-1

This is a forgotten team in Penguins' history. Under Eddie Johnston, the Penguins won the division even though Lemieux played sporadically because of back and fatigue issues. There's nothing wrong with a 13-7-1 March record, certainly. But this was the only Penguins' team to lose to the Capitals in the playoffs.

1996 Penguins

Lost in the conference final

First place in Northeast Division

March record: 12-8-0

These Penguins faded a bit down the stretch and it cost them the No. 1 seed in the Eastern Conference playoffs. In fact, they dropped three of their final four games, missing out on the top seed to the Flyers. They never looked right in the first round series against the Capitals, losing the first two before managing to win the series in six. Later that postseason, they were stunned by the Panthers in seven games.

2010 Penguins

Lost in the second round

Finished second in Atlantic Division

March record: 11-6-3

These Penguins ran out of gas. I once asked Sidney Crosby about this team and how much frustration he felt, not only because they lost to the underdog Canadiens in the second round, but also because the rest of the draw — the Penguins would have played the Flyers in the conference final and the Blackhawks (before they had won anything) in the Stanley Cup final — seemed fairly favorable. He responded: "Nah. We were done. Olympic year. Final the past two years. We were out of gas." Of the 16 games they played in March, they only won seven in regulation. Then, they struggled to put away a pretty ordinary Senators team in

overtime of Game 6. Then came the Canadiens series. In this case, March foreshadowed what was to come.

2012 Penguins

Lost in first round

Finished second in Atlantic Division

March record: 14-4-1

One of the most frustrating teams in Penguins' history. Sure, that record down the stretch looks impressive. But consider that those Penguins lost two games against the putrid Islanders in March, which cost them the division championship and a much easier draw. Those Penguins permitted 41 goals in their last 11 games. Defense didn't matter because of all the goals they were scoring. Sound familiar?

2013 Penguins

Lost in conference final

Finished first in Atlantic Division

March record: 8-4-0

Because of the lockout that season, April essentially served as March, so we're going with the April record as the "March record." And by the way, this team was so good that the 8-4-0 record to close the season actually wasn't very impressive. Then Penguins GM Ray Shero added four pieces to this team and probably didn't need to. This team didn't look right down the stretch and never dominated in the postseason the way it had earlier in the regular season.

2014 Penguins

Lost in second round

Finished first in Metropolitan Division

March record: 11-8-3

These Penguins only won half of their games down the stretch and performed so poorly in the playoffs that Shero and Bylsma would be fired shortly thereafter. It was a flawed team and, despite a good regular season, these flaws did start to show in March.

So, what does it all mean?

The Penguins have an oddly brilliant history of playing wonderful hockey in March. So far this month, they're 4-2-1, so it's too early to draw conclusions.

In their five Stanley Cup seasons, they've compiled a 62-22-9 record in regular season games played beyond March 1. That's a 117 point pace.

History says that they better heat up in the next couple of weeks if they're to play at their best in the postseason. Few teams play poorly leading into the postseason before flipping the switch. It usually just doesn't happen that way.

This is especially true of the Penguins. While their five championship teams span multiple generations, Penguins teams have all been pretty similar. From 1991 to 2017, championship Penguins team have always been about a combination of star power and energy. Sure, good goaltending goes a long way. Playing structured hockey is great, too. But the Penguins are all about offense, and they have historically found a different gear in March, which has led them to greatness on five occasions.

There is a cavalier feel to the current Penguins, who can seemingly score at will. They have been allowing goals with alarming regularity this month, much like the 2012 squad. This is a bad sign.

But then, the Penguins are playing without Matt Murray and were due for a minor funk following their wonderful run in January and February.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 16, 2018

They have time to find their stride before the postseason. If the Penguins are going to make history by winning a third straight Cup, they'll probably start playing better soon. It's the way it has always been.

Note:

The Penguins are not holding a morning skate in Montreal Thursday. Sullivan will meet with the media at 5:30 p.m., where it's expected he will announce Tristan Jarry as the starter for this game.

The Athletic LOADED: 03.16.2018

1103956 Websites

The Athletic / Matt Stajan reflects on a career full of ups and downs as game No. 1,000 approaches

By Scott Cruickshank

Mar 15, 2018

CALGARY — He cannot provide the details surrounding the occasion of his 1,000th game. Well, not yet. Give it a few more days.

But Matt Stajan's very first taste of the NHL — and the lead-up to the milestone moment — is plenty vivid. Rightfully so.

"You'll like this," he (correctly) predicts before diving into the tale, which takes place back in 2003.

- Tuesday, April 1 — Stajan records a point in his OHL swan song, the Belleville Bulls' elimination post-season loss to the Toronto St. Michael's Majors.
- Thursday, April 3 — Signs with the Toronto Maple Leafs and travels immediately to St. John's to join the AHL team.
- Friday, April 4 — Makes his pro debut against the Manitoba Moose, registering a helper.
- Saturday, April 5 — Discovers that the Leafs would like to squeeze him into the Game 82 lineup. In other words, that freaking night.

So Stajan hops a mid-day flight in St. John's. By 4:30 p.m. he's at Pearson Airport, where his sister Michelle is waiting to ferry him to the doors of the Air Canada Centre.

"I walk in at 5:15 for a 7 o'clock game," he says. "I remember wheeling in with my hockey bag. There were already fans there. I looked 10 years old. I had a shaved head from the playoffs in junior, a Mohawk. And I was a scrawny kid. It was all happening fast."

He hands his gear to equipment staffers, who quickly find a stall for him — right beside Ed Belfour. Meanwhile, Gary Roberts, spying the spindly interloper, wonders aloud who the new trainer is.

Roberts soon learns that Stajan is his centre for the evening. Owen Nolan will patrol the right side.

His second shift of the night, deep in Toronto territory, Stajan cleanly loses the draw. But the Ottawa Senators' defencemen bumble away the puck.

"So I went in on a breakaway," Stajan says. "I didn't get all of it, and it went five-hole (on goalie Martin Prusek). That whole sequence, it was just meant to be. And on Hockey Night in Canada. Unforgettable.

"A pretty amazing week to look back on — I scored a point in each league within five days. Pretty neat stuff. If I ever want to write a book, I guess I have some stories."

Of course, not every contest is going to pack the same sort of wallop. Then again, how could it? Especially when you consider that a blur of 995 appearances have followed Game 1.

Propelled by good fortune and a stubborn streak, the Calgary Flames centreman can nearly touch the coveted four-digit benchmark. Barring mishap, Stajan will reach the 1,000-game plateau March 21 against the visiting Anaheim Ducks.

"When I get there, it'll definitely be a credit to not just myself, but everybody around me," the 34-year-old says. "Right from the two organizations I played with to all the coaches and teammates I've had and, most of all, my family, my wife (Katie), who is there for the day-to-day grind through the whole career."

With the Leafs, Stajan watched Tom Fitzgerald and Roberts hit the marker — on the same night. He's seen Craig Conroy, Olli Jokinen, and Nolan receive their silver sticks as members of the Flames.

Now he himself is days away from becoming the 317th member of the club.

"I never came into the league saying, 'I'm going to play 1,000 games,'" says Stajan, who's rustled up 411 points along the way. "It was just do my job, come to the rink, work hard, be effective, be a good person, be a good teammate. Through all that, games keep ticking by. It's kind of surreal that it's almost here.

"You know what? It's the best league in the world. You can't approach it, at the start of your career, that you're going to play forever. You go day by day. And here I am."

Which, according to Stajan, is a lesson to other lesser lights. Stay the course.

He never possessed the high-end ability that would allow him to coast. Flash was — and is — foreign to him.

In his first shot at the OHL draft, he was snubbed. ("And there were 20 rounds that year.") Regrouping while skating for the Mississauga (Midget AAA) Senators, he upgraded his skill and drew Belleville's interest the following season.

Meaning he needed to win over a fresh batch of skeptics.

"His first training camp, there wasn't a wow factor," says Jamie Pringle — then an assistant in Belleville, now an assistant in Calgary. "But as we started to get the numbers down, he stayed because of his smarts. You could tell he was a good thinker of the game. Really, a defend-first kind of player.

"I remember he came in wearing these big, white tube socks and he had these spindly little pipe-cleaners for legs. There wasn't anything to him. But he had a brain and he was willing to get into hard areas."

His value, beyond checking acumen, was noted. During Stajan's rookie campaign in Belleville, Pringle served as the team's eye in the sky — assessing action from the press box. The next year, though, he was assigned to work the bench.

It had been Stajan, only 17, who helped him make the adjustment.

"He basically took a roster (sheet) and went down it and said, 'Hey, here's the approach you need to take. This guy might need a pat on the back. This guy just needs to be taught, even keel. This guy might need the odd kick in the ass,'" says Pringle. "And he wasn't shy about saying, 'I need the odd kick in the ass, too.' It was invaluable for me to know, 'OK, these are the buttons I need to push.'

"He just had a real good grasp at an early age of the mentality and the personalities in the room and how we mesh them together."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 16, 2018

He produced offensively in Belleville, too, and was taken 57th overall by his favourite team, the Leafs, at the 2002 NHL draft in his hometown. That had been a thrill – one that lasted more than seven seasons.

Then one Sunday morning, Stajan and Katie, his high-school sweetheart, were about to tuck into a platter of French toast, when the phone buzzed.

It was Ian White, saying he'd been shipped to Calgary.

"While I was talking to him, I got a call from (Toronto general manager) Brian Burke and right then and right there, it was, 'Staje, thank you for your services here. We've made a trade and you're part of it. You're going to Calgary,'" says Stajan. "A crazy day. But now looking back at it, it was probably one of the best things that's happened to me and my family."

At the time – Jan. 31, 2010 – it didn't feel so hot. They'd been living in their new house for only two weeks. Katie was crying as she crammed clothes into suitcases.

"It was really surreal," she says. "It's crazy how fast it happens. The personal side of it is different than the hockey side, for sure."

Joining Stajan and White were Niklas Hagman and Jamal Mayers. En route to Toronto were Dion Phaneuf, Fredrik Sjostrom, Keith Aulie.

In Calgary, he generated enough – 16 points in 27 dates – to log his second straight 50-plus-point season, but his work under coach Brent Sutter was criticized. So, too, was the four-year extension handed to him by general manager Darryl Sutter.

"To be honest, I had a short leash with Brent," says Stajan. "I got off to a really bad start and once you lose that trust with a coach early on, it's hard to gain that confidence back. I was kind of stuck in a hole with him."

At the 2011 camp – with Stajan buried on the depth chart behind centres Jokinen, Brendan Morrison, Mikael Backlund, Roman Horak – general manager Jay Feaster piled on: "I contrast him with, say, Nik Hagman, who came in here ... saying, 'I have to make this hockey team.' With Matt, it's, 'Every city needs a whipping boy.'"

Stajan lost sleep, dusted off his defensive game, re-made himself, learned to embrace scant duty, stiffened his upper lip, eventually tiptoed out of the dog house. No small feat.

"By the end of Brent's tenure ... I built my way back up," says Stajan. "We're proud people and this game isn't smooth. There's ups, which are great, there's downs, which you've got to find your way through. There's bumpy roads for every single guy in the room."

He became a pillar of the Flames' dressing room. Just as he was in Belleville. Just as he was in Toronto. Always the glue guy, just with more scars and less hair as the winters skipped by.

"The way he was in junior is the same way he is here," says Pringle. "Whether it's veteran guys or rookies, they all feel good going to him."

And while teammates learned to lean on No. 18, a rock during tough times, it was Stajan and Katie who suffered the cruellest blow imaginable when their infant son Emerson died March 3, 2014.

The city embraced the young couple.

"I feel like the doors of communication have been opened up. If we're doing a charity event, other families have come up to us to talk about loss," says Katie, who, with her husband, hosted a January 2015 event called A Night Under The Stars, which raised money for the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at the Foothills Medical Centre. "When we do things like that, it makes us feel that Emerson's legacy lives and he will forever live in everyone's hearts and his life had so much meaning and purpose."

Now, more than eight years after arriving in Calgary, Stajan's contract is set to expire. His aim is to continue playing. Whether that's here or in another NHL centre remains to be seen.

First things first – those 1,000 games.

"You can't really (think), 'I'm going to get there,' because things change in this game daily," says Stajan. "It's a day-to-day league. Just look at the start to my season this year – I fought it for the first half. I had one point in the first 30 games, even though I felt great. The confidence wasn't there. But you work hard and it eventually turns if you stick with it.

"That's how I've gone about my career. There's been so many ups and downs, all you can do is control what you can – that's been my focus."

The Athletic LOADED: 03.16.2018

1103957 Websites

The Athletic / Jonathan Toews' offense has awoken, but how can the Blackhawks make sure it lasts?

By Scott Powers

Mar 15, 2018

Blackhawks coach Joel Quenneville reminds us all the time points aren't the only way to measure Jonathan Toews.

Toews certainly measures himself that way, though. Toews values those other parts of his game that Quenneville does, but the production still matters to him, and he gauges his stats from season to season.

"It's hard not to," Toews said Wednesday. "I think once in a while you look at the big picture, trying to see what the trends are in your game, what you need to work on, what you're doing well. Sometimes things change as far as circumstances that you focus on what you can do better, what you can improve on. Yeah, there's no doubt everyone kind of looks at their numbers especially when you consider yourself an offensive player."

For most of Toews' career, he's been a moderate offensive player, especially among the league's centers. He has finished among the top-10 centers in points over an 82-game schedule once in his career. That came during the 2010-11 season when he produced a career-best 76 points. On average, he's about 20th among centers in points each season.

In past years, the points haven't mattered as much. He matched up against top lines, was on the ice for many more goals for than goals against, contributed on both sides of special teams, won a ton of faceoffs and still produced a respectable amount of points. Back then, fans weren't fixated on his lack of production and massive cap hit. Losing has a way of changing perspectives.

This season he hasn't done enough of those other things to ignore the fact he's on track to have the worst offensive season of his career. His rate of 2.13 points per 60 minutes is the lowest of his 11-year career.

Why has this happened? There are a number of reasons.

- Toews hasn't produced much on the power play. His 2.75 points per 60 minutes on the power play is the third worst rate of his career. He's especially struggled to score on the power play as his 0.54 goals per 60 rate is the worst of his career. Of the 49 forwards who have played 200 minutes on the power play this season, he has the second fewest goals with two.

- Toews' shooting percentage has dropped. His overall 9.45 shooting percentage marks the first time in his career he's been under 10 percent for a season. His 8.63 shooting percentage in 5-on-5 play is the second worst of his career. His 4.88 power-play shooting percentage is the worst of his career.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 16, 2018

- Toews' 5-on-5 production isn't where it's often been. He's averaging 1.84 points per 60 minutes, which is the third worst of his career. His 0.76 goals per 60 minutes is also third worst in his career and 1.08 assists per 60 are fourth worst.

- His linemates aren't helping. While Toews' 0.83 primary assists per 60 minutes in 5-on-5 play has been among his best seasons, he's having a career-worst season producing secondary assists. He's averaging 0.25 secondary assists per 60 minutes, about half of what he typically averages. Brandon Saad not living up to expectations, and Richard Panik failing to duplicate last season hurt as well.

- Possession isn't resulting in scoring, and he's defending a lot more too. Toews has never been on the ice for more shot attempts for and against per 60 minutes than he has been this season. He's been on the ice for 75.49 shot attempts for per 60 minutes and 58.16 against. It's nearly the same for shots on goal for and against. The problem for Toews is that hasn't translated the way he'd hope in terms of goals. Toews has been on the ice for 43 goals for and 39 against this season for a 52.44 goals for percentage, the second worst of his career. At his best, Toews had a plus-30 goal differential during the 2010-11 season.

- Toews hasn't registered a shorthanded point this season. Never has he finished a season with fewer than two shorthanded points, and he had a career-best seven shorthanded points during the 2015-16 season.

Toews touched on a number of factors when explaining why his production has often been absent this season.

"Personally, there's a lot of things I can work on," Toews said. "I think even throughout the stretches where our team wasn't scoring I felt like I was getting stretches and a lot of great shooting opportunities that I wasn't converting on. I think with my linemates, playing a majority of the year with Brandon Saad, I think we did a good job of creating when we had the puck, but sometimes we felt we were one-and-done where we get one chance and we're skating back to our end to get the puck, and I think that can drain the energy out of you over the season. I think for myself it's focusing on where I can support my linemates better and try work on keeping puck possession so you can create more and more plays where eventually pucks go in for you."

Toews has had a couple stretches over the last few seasons in which he's shown he still has offensive ability and can accumulate points. The line of Nick Schmaltz, Toews and Panik was the Blackhawks' best line for some time last season. Saad, Toews and Vinnie Hinostroza produced when together this season. Toews began this season on a five-game points streak and had nine points over five games from Dec. 31-Jan. 9.

Now he's finally heating up again. His nine points in March have already exceeded any month's point total this season, and the Blackhawks have nine more games before the calendar flips to April.

"I feel like late in the season is where I always pick it up and play my best hockey," Toews said. "I don't know if you stop thinking out there and just play, eventually pucks go in. It's easier to concentrate on the process. I'm getting a lot of good opportunities to shoot on the power play and things are happening from there as well. It's not easy to pinpoint, but there's probably a few things like that that are contributing right now."

Toews is right. He has often been at his best — or near it — late in the season. He has averaged 0.97 points in February and 0.88 points in March, which rank first and third, respectively, in terms of the most productive months of his career.

Quenneville pointed to Toews playing with Saad and Patrick Kane as why he's producing now, but it's gone beyond that line. Of Toews' nine points in March, he's registered four points on the power play, four at 5-on-5 and one at 3-on-3.

Toews has benefitted from moving away from the slot and to the right half-wall on the power play. It's allowed him to be more mobile, distribute the puck better and get off his shot.

"I guess when pucks start going it's easy to let every part of your game just settle in and just go out there and play and make things happen and eventually the chances come and eventually they go in," Toews said of the power play."

Quenneville will have to decide heading into next season whether to keep Kane and Toews together. He's often split the two apart to give the Blackhawks more balance. Late this season, Quenneville united them because nothing else seemed to be working. Quenneville said Wednesday playing Kane and Toews together next season is a possibility.

The results with Kane and Toews together this season have been mixed. In 175 minutes of 5-on-5 play, they have a 55.08 Corsi percentage and 47.37 goals for percentage. They have been on the ice for nine goals for and 10 against.

The goals for percentage probably does draw a yellow flag. The Blackhawks have often succeeded when Toews is matched up against top lines and creating more goals for than against. That's also often allowed Quenneville to get Kane and his line more offensive zone opportunities and better matchups. That's probably why Quenneville will separate them again next season.

Toews would benefit greatly from two things happening next season. First, Saad needs to start finding the net again. He's shooting a career-worst 7.53 percent in 5-on-5 play. He's usually around 11 percent. Second, that line needs a consistent right winger. The hope was Panik would be that, but his inconsistencies proved to be too much. The line has been effective with Hinostroza this season, and Alex DeBrincat, Anthony Duclair and Kane have all also played 100-plus minutes with Toews this season.

This season isn't going to end the way the Blackhawks hoped it would, but there is value in Toews finishing strong. Over the past 25 games, he's second only to Kane in points on the Blackhawks. If he can keep it up, that's something he and the Blackhawks can carry into next season.

"It comes down to having confidence," Toews said. "It comes down to looking at where you're at positionally, how you're playing the game, how you're trusting your linemates. As we head into the postseason or whatever happens the next handful of games, keep getting better. When the offseason comes, it's always good to assess what you need to work on and definitely get ready for next year."

The Athletic LOADED: 03.16.2018

1103958 Websites

The Athletic / Worried about the long-term effects, Mark Borowiecki will turn down fights

By Chris Stevenson

"For me and my health on and off the ice, I don't think fighting is the right thing right now."

The two weeks of constant vomiting, the mood swings, the wondering if his professional life as he knew it was over, pushed Mark Borowiecki to make the decision.

The Ottawa Senators defenceman missed 23 games after sustaining a concussion when he was sent flying into the boards by New York Rangers defenseman Brendan Smith on Nov. 19. He was unconscious on the ice.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 16, 2018

On an off day in Las Vegas a couple of weeks ago, he sat on a rock and turned his face to the sunshine and talked on the phone with his wife, Tara, for an hour, turning over and over the thought that had been going through his mind since his return.

When he got off the phone that day, a player who had opened the door to his professional career by fighting all comers — “I never had that ability to say no” — had decided that was exactly what he was going to do.

“I need to make a decision here in terms of how many shots can you take to the head before it comes back to bite you?” Borowiecki wondered to The Athletic on Thursday.

He’s concerned, and he should be, about the long-term effects of taking what amount to needless punches to the head. He knows and is willing to accept there is a certain level of risk associated with a collision sport like hockey, especially the way he plays it (since he became a full-time player in 2014-15, he is third in hits with 1,022 behind Matt Martin, 1,187; and Cal Clutterbuck, 1,063).

He said he thinks his game has improved to the point where he can keep his gloves on and still be an intimidating presence.

“I think now kind of maturing on the ice with my game rounding out and being able to contribute in more ways and also maturing off the ice as kind of an adult and someone who wants to have a life after hockey, I want a family,” he said. “I want to do all those things.”

The effects of the concussion he sustained in November were “scary,” he said and when the fog started to lift, he saw more clearly the decision he had to make.

“I’ll be honest with you. I spent a week to 10 days, two weeks, throwing up when my head would move up and down. I wasn’t driving. I wasn’t myself. It’s scary. It really, truly is. It’s one of those things you’ve got to make a choice,” he said.

“Back when I broke into the AHL, CTE (chronic traumatic encephalopathy), it really wasn’t at the forefront like it is now. I just didn’t care. I just wanted to establish myself. I was fighting 15, 20 times a year. Not as a heavyweight, not taking some of the shots that some of those other guys take, but more as a gamer, a middleweight.

“I think (turning down fights) is something I need to do to grow as a player and a person. For me and my health on and off the ice, I don’t think fighting is the right thing right now. If it happens spontaneously I’ll do it ... even this year, as recently as my last fight (against Washington Capitals forward Tom Wilson on Feb. 27), I didn’t have to go, and I don’t even know if I consciously chose to, but it was almost like a reflex, I just went.”

Borowiecki, 28, fought 38 times in the AHL between 2011 and 2014. He has had another 47 fights in the NHL, including five this season.

Mark Borowiecki career fights by season (includes pre-season):

2011-12 (AHL) 11

2012-13 (AHL) 15

2013-14 (AHL) 12

2013-14 (NHL) 5

2014-15 (NHL) 15

2015-16 (NHL) 8

2016-17 (NHL) 14

2017-18 (NHL) 5

Source: hockeyfights.com

Fighting might have got his foot in the door, but now he is ready to start closing the door on that part of his career. He said he feels like he’s at the point where he can contribute in other ways. He worked hard in

improving his skills this past off-season. They are modest totals, but he has career bests in goals (three) and shots (53) and is one point away from tying his career high of 11 points with 13 games left in the season.

On the possession front, he’s broken into positive territory in unblocked shot attempts at 50.14 per cent, one of two current defencemen, along with Erik Karlsson, to be north of 50 per cent (keep in mind he was out for December which wasn’t a good month for the Senators).

“My focus this past summer was on my hands and my shooting and my conditioning. I think it has paid off for me,” he said. “People who have watched me this year can’t say that this hasn’t been the best hockey that I’ve played. I felt it out there myself. I have that belief in myself now, that I know I can contribute in ways with my gloves on. It’s something that I’m going to keep working on. I’m not going to just sit here and be content with it. I plan on doing the same thing this summer, working on those skill sets a lot and really trying to round out my game.

“The way I’ve been playing this year, I don’t have to fight to make a mark on the game. That last game against Tampa, for me, I had a bunch of hits, a bunch of blocked shots. I was still that physical presence, but in a different way. I thought that was one of my best games of the year. If I can keep playing that way, I can have an impact physically with my gloves on and I think that’s going to be an important thing for me moving forward.”

Senators coach Guy Boucher said he has had conversations with Borowiecki about changing his game and how he can contribute. He asked Borowiecki to try and get more involved in the play this season and has been happy with the results.

“One of the reasons he’s here is he’s a tough guy, but he’s definitely developed way past that, like way past that. I need him on the ice,” Boucher said. “That’s what he is right now. He jumps into the play and I’ve asked that of him since the beginning of the season and that’s how he started the year.

“That’s what he’s become now. He’s not just this guy you put out there to scare the opponent. He can play now.”

Boucher knows there are still going to be times when Borowiecki is going to drop the gloves. It’s still part of his game, but it’s going to take a different set of circumstances for him to fight now.

“Sometimes your better players are being harassed and since the players stick together some guys are going to stand up for those guys and Boro is certainly one of those guys. He never shied away from it,” Boucher said. “There are a lot of moments in the game where you don’t need that anymore. You really don’t. I’d rather have him on the ice hunting guys because he hits so hard and the opponent knowing that he’s on the ice and not in the penalty box for X number of minutes and they’re free to skate around because he won’t be there.

“When there’s a hunter on the other side, he always on your mind and obviously Boro’s one of those guys, so that does have an intimidation effect.”

Borowiecki said his talk with Tara, “the voice of reason,” he called her, confirmed what he had been thinking. He said he had been keeping to himself during the road trip as he contemplated this adjustment in the course of his career.

“We had an adult conversation ... we both kind of said our piece and talked it through and we agreed,” he said. “She’s very supportive of me in whatever direction I wanted to go. She didn’t read me the riot act and say ‘you have to stop fighting’ and she didn’t say ‘you have to fight to be in this league.’”

He’s not naive enough to think he’s not going to have guys knocking on his door, especially given the way he plays the game. That’s fine. He’s just not going to go looking for it anymore or accept a fight for the sake of justifying his existence.

“No matter how much I try and avoid it, I’m going to go out there and lay someone out and I’m going to turn around and my gloves are going to be



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 16, 2018

off," he said. "That's the nature of the beast, right? But am I going to out there chasing guys around the ice calling them out? That's a maturity, a growth as a person and as a player to cut that out."

The Athletic LOADED: 03.16.2018

1103959 Websites

The Athletic / Consistent Artemi Panarin proving to be as good as advertised in Columbus

By Alison Lukan

Mar 15, 2018

When Artemi Panarin was traded to the Blue Jackets this offseason, the first reviews of the move were frequent and repetitive surrounding one point — how will he do playing away from a player like Patrick Kane?

"Throughout my career, people always said I'm playing (well) because of somebody else," Panarin said through his agent, Dan Milstein, at a news conference after the trade. "Nobody remembers when I played prior to the last couple years. I'm used to it, and I don't pay any attention to it. I get a little bit angry with it."

But the question lingered. Could Panarin produce in a similar way to what made him so successful in Chicago? Now 70 games into the Russian's first season with the Blue Jackets, we decided to take a look at how he's done, and if it's better or worse than his play with the Blackhawks.

Let's start off with where everyone looks first, the scoreboard. Last year, in 82 games, Panarin put up a stat line of 31-43-74 with 9-8-17 coming on the power play. This year, through 70 games, the forward has 21 goals and 40 assists for 61 total points and has 6-10-16 while playing with the man advantage.

Obviously, with 12 games left this season we can't compare those totals directly, but we can compare the rate at which Panarin has been scoring. Using data from Corsica.hockey, the chart below shows Panarin's points per 60 and primary points (goals plus primary assists) per 60 for both last year and this.

We see that in each of these measures, Panarin hasn't varied significantly in his performance this year compared with last. This is particularly meaningful on special teams knowing that he's played on a Jackets power play that struggled early in the season.

"He's come in here and every single night he's brought his game," defenseman Zach Werenski said. "In a year where we've kind of been up and down, haven't scored many goals, he's a guy that's every single night he's on the scoresheet."

While scoring is valuable, what has been just as meaningful is Panarin's play away from the puck.

"I always start by saying we know him as a goal scorer," former NHL player and current Jackets broadcaster Jody Shelley said. "When you look at the highlights — he's a highlight reel. He's a star in the National Hockey League. But right away, the way he plays away from the puck, the way he never loses the battle, the way he competes, those were three things I did not know about him."

The style is one that is informed by Panarin's passion for mixed martial arts, Shelley believes, and it's the type of work on the ice that can pay off.

In the GIF below we see Panarin fight to maintain possession of the puck through two separate battles. The end result of his play is that the Jackets maintain control of the puck and David Savard's shot ends up in the net.

Plays like this only reflect that Panarin has remained remarkably true to the player he showed himself to be before he came to Columbus, not just in his own individual performance, but in his benefit to his team. We can see this in numbers that track the percentage of shot attempts, goals and expected goals (shot quality) the Jackets have with Panarin on the ice as illustrated in the chart below.

"He's playing his game, he's one of our hardest workers," Werenski said. "I can learn a lot from him, just the way he plays the game, how hard he competes."

We can look at what Panarin does well at an even deeper level, also. The Athletic's Corey Sznajder's tracking work documents every pass that leads to a shot (a shot contribution), every zone entry (getting the puck into the offensive zone) and every zone exit (getting the puck out of the defensive zone).

The chart below, courtesy of CJ Turtoro, illustrates how Panarin performed in these categories last year compared with this.

Not only does Panarin prove to again be remarkably consistent, he's remained at an elite level of performance when it comes to moving the puck the right way and generating offense.

"(Panarin) is a guy that knows how to get the attention and then find the open guy," Shelley said. "He's an excellent anticipator, even when there's open space when there's not much out there for him now because he is a guy that's being targeted, he's finding it."

There's perhaps no better example of what Panarin can do than the five-assist performance he put up Dec. 8 in New Jersey. All of Panarin's skills were on display, including two helpers that came on royal road passes — a pass that crosses an imaginary line that goes lengthwise up the ice from the goal out to the top of the circles. Royal road passes that lead to a shot attempt have one of the highest degrees of likelihood of leading to a goal.

"Getting to know him, he knows where to put the puck," Pierre-Luc Dubois said earlier this season. "You just have to skate into it and I never know 100 percent if he's going to make those plays, but I kind of expect it from him. He's so good, so smart."

And perhaps the most interesting wrinkle to all of this is that Panarin's performance this season has come with more challenging starts, perhaps due to his head coach's trust in the player's abilities. Panarin's zone start ratio this year, which measures his percentage of offensive zone starts relative to total starts, is at 64.74. That's a big decrease from the 80.51 he was seeing last year in Chicago.

"We wondered how is he going to adapt here but he drives the bus when it comes to playing defense, winning battles and competing," Shelley said. "That's what really jumps out to me. He's out there making it happen."

The Athletic LOADED: 03.16.2018

1103960 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / McElhinney's bump in playing time could benefit Leafs in long run

Gare Joyce

March 15, 2018, 11:56 PM



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 16, 2018

BUFFALO, N.Y. — You can forgive Toronto Maple Leafs fans if the upper-body injury of goaltender Frederik Andersen in the home shootout win over Dallas Wednesday has them on shpiikes. The Leafs were going to opt to start their No. 2 man Curtis McElhinney in Buffalo Thursday, the latter of back-to-back games. Effectively there was no change to the lineup, only a what-if to ponder: What if Toronto has to call McElhinney's number again in a much more meaningful game than a late-season tilt with the going-nowhere Buffalo Sabres?

There wasn't definitive intel to glean from McElhinney's performance in the Leafs' 5-2 win over the host Sabres, who, given the exodus of face-painted fans down the Queen Elizabeth Way, were the second-most beloved team in the KeyBank Center Thursday.

McElhinney made a blocker save on Ryan O'Reilly with the game scoreless in the first minute but soon thereafter he was staked to a lead. At the end of the night he had made 38 saves, 18 in a furious second period when the puck pin-balled all around the Leafs' goalie on a power play before the second intermission.

Livestream every single game of the 2018 Stanley Cup Playoffs—blackout free—plus all 162 Toronto Blue Jays games, key Raptors & NBA Playoffs matchups and the 100th Mastercard Memorial Cup, all in one subscription.

The only blemishes on his night's work were power-play goals by Sam Reinhart in the first and Jason Pominville in the second. No matter, McElhinney improved his season record to 9-4-1. He came into the game with a .929 save percentage and a 2.27 goals-against average, so those numbers will be fractionally shinier after the fact. "My [career] record has been closer to .500 so this year has been a bit of a surprise," McElhinney said, keeping his ego in check.

Shinier too is the Leafs record: The win over the Sabres put the Leafs 20 games over .500. Yeah, they're very unlikely to run down Tampa. Maybe Boston could be a target, though that's a big ask down the stretch — the win against the Sabres and the Bruins' loss to the Panthers Thursday, leaves Toronto five points behind the current No. 2 seed in the division. (Boston has two games in hand.)

Buffalo has infamously been a bit of a graveyard for the Leafs over the years and when you looked at the schedule, it looked like a trap game, even if the Sabres were without Jack Eichel. McElhinney credited his teammates with setting the tone early. "It's a tough building [for us] and I thought we had a good start tonight," McElhinney said. "I thought we played a pretty solid game for a back-to-back situation."

One of the old-school hockey canards is that some goaltenders inspire teammates to raise their game. The standard line goes something like: "They play hard in front of him." Buy it or not, it at least looked that way with McElhinney Thursday.

After notching a hat trick against Dallas, James van Riemsdyk scored twice in the first seven minutes in Buffalo and the die was cast. While Reinhart's goal brought the Sabres to within one going into the first intermission, they never really threatened to tie the game. When the score tightened, so did the Leafs' play in their own end. Goals by Connor Carrick and Tyler Bozak stretched the Leafs' lead to 4-1 in the second and Patrick Marleau snuffed out faint late hope for the Sabres with an empty-netter.

You had to cringe when you saw Leo Komarov collide with linemate William Nylander and limp off with what looked like a hyper-extended knee. What his status will be going forward is to be determined. More worrisome, though, is the status of Andersen in the near future and the weeks ahead.

Before he came to Toronto from Anaheim, the oft-asked questions about Andersen pertained to his ability to stand up to the workload of a No. 1. It looked like he dispelled any doubts with his play in 58 games prior to being knocked out of the win over Dallas Wednesday. Now, those questions will be reheated.

You have to believe that any team's hopes in the playoffs ride on the well-protected shoulders of its No. 1 goaltender.

Needing some help from a backup at some point in the post-season? Okay, sure. And look at what Marc-Andre Fleury did with Pittsburgh last season when Matt Murray was hors de combat. But Fleury was no typical backup — he was the Penguins' main man in the Cup run of 2009 and the near-miss the year before. When he drew the assignment, he was no ordinary Yesterday's Man.

Mike Vernon was another case in point back in 1997. Most figured Chris Osgood, the ostensible No. 1, would get the start in the Red Wings' post-season, but instead Scotty Bowman went with Vernon, who had a Stanley Cup on his CV. He wound up being good for another ring.

There's no mistaking McElhinney for Fleury or Vernon. And leave aside the biggest goaltending gamble of all time: the Canadiens' decision to go with rookie Ken Dryden, he of six career NHL games, instead of Rogie Vachon, a future Hall of Famer.

If Andersen isn't good to go for a while, well, you'd have to think that the Leafs wouldn't be completely at sea, at least if you're looking at the short run. Not that McElhinney has a Cup on his resume like Fleury or Vernon, nor generational upside like Dryden barely out of college. No, McElhinney is now as ever a backup; a fall-back. He does have history, though.

Want to livestream 56 Leafs games this season? See how you can stream this + over 300 regular season NHL games with Sportsnet NOW.

On the last Saturday night of last season, with the Leafs' playoff hopes hanging in the balance, Andersen went down in a pile against the Penguins and McElhinney was summoned. The Leafs came from behind in that game and McElhinney wound up making a save on a Sidney Crosby one-timer in the final minute of regulation that clinched the needed two points for a post-season berth. And, yeah, that would be a reason for his teammates to raise their game when his number has been called this season, last night included.

Thursday night in Buffalo wasn't remotely like the situation that McElhinney was thrust into last April. And Mike Babcock wasn't ringing alarm bells about Andersen's injury after the win over Dallas. Andersen could be back in time for Saturday night when the Canadiens visit Toronto. Or not. The Leafs might exercise some caution with Andersen. Or have no other choice. Andersen could be right as rain and good to go the rest of the way and into the post-season. Or maybe get banged up by, say, Brad Marchand or some rules-breaker taking liberties.

Even if he's not called on in the post-season, it might have been a net benefit that McElhinney had a chance to get a couple of victories in a couple of nights this week and maybe a bit more of a workout down the stretch than might have been anticipated.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 03.16.2018

1103961 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Canadiens' De La Rose, Drouin gain valuable experience vs. Crosby, Malkin

Eric Engels

March 16, 2018, 12:12 AM

MONTREAL — It was a 5-3 loss to the Pittsburgh Penguins, but an experience worth savouring for certain members of the Montreal



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 16, 2018

Canadiens. Two in particular, both of them 22 years old, who drew what might be considered the toughest assignments in the NHL.

Jacob De La Rose learned he'd be matched up against Sidney Crosby when he read his name in the starting lineup, and Jonathan Drouin knew he had drawn Evgeni Malkin by default. Colossal challenges that were met well by both players, according to Canadiens coach Claude Julien.

"I don't have the [Patrice] Bergerons," said Julien.

Never mind the Boston Bruin who happens to be the best defensive centre in hockey; Julien doesn't even have Tomas Plekanec, who'd have taken the Crosby assignment—and part of the Malkin one, too—if he were still plying his trade with the Canadiens instead of doing so for the Toronto Maple Leafs.

Phillip Danault (headaches) and Andrew Shaw (concussion symptoms) could've helped, too. Knowing that they weren't available and knowing the Canadiens were dressing 11 players who hadn't started their year in Montreal against the two-time Stanley Cup champion Penguins was knowing how this was going to play out.

But as Julien pointed out, there was experience – and confidence – to be gained from it. It's fair to say both De La Rose and Drouin took their share.

"Obviously it's a great challenge and I like to challenge myself, too," said De La Rose. "I think I was plus-1 against [Crosby]. Obviously we want to win the game, but I think our line [with Alex Galchenyuk and Artturi Lehkonen] did a pretty good job against him."

It was just three minutes into the game when De La Rose transitioned the play to offence, starting the play that led to the opening goal.

Galchenyuk took over and found Jeff Petry at the point and Lehkonen slashed to the middle and put a nifty tip on a shot that beat Penguins goaltender Tristan Jarry.

Drouin and his unit got to work on the power play three minutes later and the puck eventually found Paul Byron for his 17th goal of the season.

But what Drouin was doing in the neutral zone—and more importantly in his own zone throughout—was something worth paying attention to. He shadowed Malkin well, kept his feet moving and his head on a swivel, and he started the momentum in the faceoff circle that led him to win 79 per cent of his draws in the game.

Neither De La Rose nor Drouin were on the ice when Bryan Rust gifted Phil Kessel the goal that got the Penguins on the board. And though Drouin was caught on for Patric Hornqvist's 2-2 marker, it was Petry who fell for Hornqvist's deke and Byron who slipped his pass into the Canadiens' net.

Later in the game, with the score 3-3, the Canadiens got caught running around in their own end and a puck came to Hornqvist in the slot to put the game on ice and he delivered. Drouin got caught in no man's land, but that's what happens when assignments get missed all over the ice.

"We were all out of whack on that play," said Drouin's linemate Brendan Gallagher.

So were the Penguins earlier, when Drouin came storming into the offensive zone and trapped defenceman Kris Letang in the corner to free the puck on Nicolas Deslauriers' goal that made it 3-3 in the second period.

That was the ebb and flow of this game, with the Canadiens holding their own (to the best of their limited ability) against a much stronger opponent.

"If you want to be in this league, you gotta be able to [stand] up to challenges like that," said De La Rose.

It's been a long road for the Swede to show he was capable. He was drafted 34th overall in 2013 and has played just 108 NHL games to the 133 he's played in the AHL.

It appears as though it's starting to finally click for him.

"There are different circumstances and he was in and out of the lineup, but when he was out he was upset," said Gallagher. "When he was coming back he was motivated to play, and now for him getting a chance to play he's really taking advantage of it. He's showing what he can do at this level."

The Canadiens had hoped it wouldn't take this long for Drouin to do the same at centre, but he had spent his first NHL years as a winger with the Tampa Bay Lightning and expectations might have been unreasonably high for what he could do on a roster with an obvious talent deficiency.

"In an ideal world, he'd be on the wing," said Canadiens general manager Marc Bergevin earlier this year about the player he traded 19-year-old stud defenceman Mikhail Sergachev for.

They were words that stung Drouin, but ones that also motivated him to prove himself.

"I like centre," he said prior to Thursday's game. "I'm getting better at it. It's like if I can't play it next year, then at that point I haven't succeeded. But I'm still being given the chance to show what I can do. I can play the position, and I'm starting to like it quite a bit."

Julien sees the difference.

"If he continues to play the way he is right now, we're allowed to be wrong sometimes because we're seeing progress. I think [Bergevin's] comment was made at the time we weren't seeing things we're starting to see now," said Julien Thursday morning.

"I think Jonathan continues to thrive on those kind of assignments, so I see a guy playing much better lately," Julien said after matching Drouin up against Malkin, who had come into the game having scored 25 goals since Jan. 1.

There was evidence of it all over the ice on Thursday.

"He didn't deserve to be minus-2," said Gallagher.

Hornqvist's winner and Rust's empty-net goal made it so. But all in all, it was a very positive night for Drouin and De La Rose.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 03.16.2018

1103962 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Five players Canucks could take in Round 1 of NHL draft

Rory Boylen

March 15, 2018, 2:36 PM

With a 3-0 loss to Anaheim on Wednesday night, Vancouver's third straight game without scoring a goal, the Canucks are officially eliminated from Stanley Cup Playoffs contention. They may have unofficially been out of the running for the past few months, though the final nail in the coffin was hammered at the end of this three-game road trip.

But while fans of the team won't be looking forward to the Stanley Cup this summer, there will be another prize on the way that could one day help the Canucks get there.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 16, 2018

Already with an unprecedented collection of youth (as Sportsnet's Iain MacIntyre wrote about earlier this season), Vancouver will add another top-level prospect in the early stages of the 2018 NHL Draft. After finishing in a bottom three spot in the league the past two seasons, Vancouver has whiffed on draft lottery luck and picked fifth overall in both 2016 and 2017. As they continue to sink lower in standings with a 2-6-2 record in their past 10, Vancouver could at least guarantee itself a top-four pick by finishing last overall.

In that scenario, they'd also have approximately a 48.1 per cent chance of picking within the top three.

While we don't yet know exactly where the Canucks will select in Round 1, we can look at the players who could be available at the top end of the draft. Even if Vancouver doesn't end up with projected No. 1 pick Rasmus Dahlin, there are other high-end prospects who will likely have a lasting impact in the NHL.

1. Rasmus Dahlin, D

This is the guy everyone is talking about. Dahlin is in line to be the first defenceman taken at the top of the draft since Aaron Ekblad in 2014.

When asked on Sportsnet 650 in Vancouver about the prospect of being chosen by the Canucks this summer, Dahlin replied: "That would be sick. We will see."

There's been a ton of focus on the production of Canucks prospect Elias Pettersson in the SHL this season, as the fifth-overall pick from last summer not only led the league in scoring but set a new points record for an under-20 player in the league. This has allowed Dahlin to fly under the radar in terms of where his season ranks on the all-time list.

With 20 points in 41 regular-season games, Dahlin finished with the fifth-best season ever in the SHL by a defenceman under the age of 20. Even more incredibly, of the four players ahead of him, only one had his big SHL season in the first year of being eligible for the NHL draft: Victor Hedman, who had 21 points in 43 games. If you go by points-per-game average, the two are even at 0.49.

Dahlin on playing Pettersson this season, "He is unreal, he can do things no one else can. He led our league in points and is only 19 years old." #Canucks

— Rick Dhaliwal (@DhaliwalSports) March 14, 2018

Dahlin is a shifty and creative defenceman, who says he still needs to work on his defensive game and bulk up physically. That's normal for a 17-year-old player. He scored six points in seven games for Sweden at the world juniors, a huge impact in what's generally a tournament owned by 19-year-old players. And though he went to the Olympics for Sweden, he got into just two games and saw very few minutes.

Next, Dahlin could join Sweden at the world championship before his name is called at the NHL draft. Whether Vancouver is able to land him first overall or not, Dahlin is expected to step right into the NHL next season.

2. Filip Zadina, RW

In our first draft rankings of the season, Zadina came in at No. 6 as he moved from the Czech Republic for his first taste of North American hockey. But after strong showings at the Top Prospects Game, world juniors, Five Nations Tournament, and being the second-highest rookie scorer in the QMJHL (79 points in 55 games), Zadina has been ranked No. 2 by Sportsnet for the past two months.

Zadina is the latest star to come out of the Halifax Mooseheads system in the QMJHL. Developing on a team that has produced two of the past five No. 1 overall picks (Nathan MacKinnon in 2013, Nico Hischier in 2017), and a few other top-10 picks (Jonathan Drouin, Timo Meier, Nik Ehlers), Zadina is on track to become a top-line sniper in the NHL if all continues to go well.

With 42 goals in 55 QMJHL games this season, he's tied for fifth in the entire league, but when you account for goals-per-game average, he moves up a spot.

"When he gets time and space with the puck, he makes plays at ease," Mooseheads defenceman and projected first-rounder Jared McIsaac told Sportsnet in January. "He's got a really good shot, one of the most lethal shots in our league, maybe even the CHL."

The few games he's missed have been due to the world juniors and a two-game suspension for the play below.

3. Andrei Svechnikov, RW

After starting the year ranked No. 2 in Sportsnet's NHL draft rankings, Svechnikov has slipped behind Zadina to No. 3 but not because of his own play. Unlike the other top prospects in this draft, Svechnikov did not play a significant role for his country at the world juniors, but still managed five assists in five games. At the Top Prospects Game in January, Svechnikov was bested by Zadina, two goals to none.

But at the recent Five Nations Tournament in which the Russians finished with a 2-2 record, Svechnikov was tied for the lead in goals (four) and points (eight).

What's especially amazing about Svechnikov's first year in North America is how he's stood out from the pack in scoring despite missing significant time for international tournaments and because of a hand injury that forced him out of action for two months in the first half of the season. With 66 points in 41 games, Svechnikov has an 11-point lead in the rookie scoring race. His 37 goals are tied for 11th in the OHL, with a per-game average better than anyone ahead of him.

Since returning from his injury in December, he has 52 points in 31 OHL games, including a nine-game stretch in which he recorded at least two points each time he hit the ice. Since Dec. 8, Svechnikov's been held pointless just three times.

Another winger with a powerful shot, the six-foot-three, 184-pound Svechnikov says he watches a lot of Auston Matthews and, like the Maple Leafs' top young centre, the Russian could also move right to the NHL after being drafted.

"I think if there's one (Canadian Hockey League) player right now who can step into an NHL lineup it would probably be [Svechnikov]," NHL Central Scouting's Karl Stewart told NHL.com earlier this month. "He's big and his shot is so powerful. He just drops the shoulder and turns it on; you can't stop him. His shot bides him so much time and space that defenders have to play up on him, but he has the skill to dance around you. He's a magician on the half-wall on the power play."

4. Brady Tkachuk, LW

Brother of feisty Flames forward Matthew, there's some who believe Brady is the better of the two. With 28 points in 36 games for Boston University this season, Brady is the highest-scoring NCAA player who is in his first year of NHL draft eligibility.

Tkachuk was a star at the world juniors for the Americans, finishing sixth in tournament scoring with seven points in six games. He was the top producer among draft eligibles there, too, finishing one point ahead of Zadina.

Consistently ranked in the 4-5 range in Sportsnet's draft lists this season, the area Tkachuk needs to improve most on is his skating, which sounds similar to Matthew in his draft year. Brady plays with the same kind of edge as his 57 PIMs this season, and 73 in just 24 USHL games last season, attest. He says he wants to bulk up more, as young players do, but Tkachuk is already six-foot-three and 200 pounds.

A late birthday (Sept. 16), Tkachuk barely missed the cutoff to be eligible for the 2017 NHL Draft.

5. Adam Boqvist, D



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 16, 2018

A sub-six-foot defenceman with excellent foot speed and ability to create offence, Boqvist isn't at the level of Swedish counterpart Dahlin right now, having spent most of his season in the Swedish junior league, but the potential is sky high.

Boqvist is currently on loan to Almtuna in the Allsvenskan, but spent 25 games in Sweden's under-20 league earlier this season. His 14 goals rank second all-time by a player under 18-years old in that league, behind only Lars Johnsson, the seventh overall pick in 2000. His goal number as a junior ranks ahead of Hedman and Erik Karlsson and, as you see in this graphic below from eliteprospects.com, he did it in far fewer games (granted Hedman was just 16 at the start of his season).

The issue the Canucks would be faced with if they held a top-three pick would be deciding between taking one of the elite shooting wingers, or fill an organizational need, where Boqvist would fit. Conventional wisdom would suggest you always go with the best player available, especially this early in the draft, but Boqvist's huge upside at least gives pause for thought.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 03.16.2018

1103963 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Rangers' Pavel Buchnevich makes young fan cry tears of joy

Mike Johnston

March 15, 2018, 1:23 PM

Pavel Buchnevich's fan base has grown significantly this year thanks to the breakout sophomore season he's having with the New York Rangers. His popularity received yet another boost Wednesday night when he gave a young fan named Benjamin one of his sticks prior to a 4-3 overtime win over the Penguins.

Benjamin gained Buchnevich's attention near the glass during warmups at Madison Square Garden by wearing one of Buchnevich's old KHL jerseys. Prior to debuting in the NHL in 2016, Buchnevich spent the majority of his four-year KHL career with his hometown team Cherepovets Severstal. Cherepovets is not in the upper echelon of KHL franchises so it must have been quite the surprise for the 2013 third-round pick to see it.

Following the game, Benjamin was interviewed by Rangers TV reporter/host Amanda Borges and recounted his experience.

"I'm a season-ticket holder for the Rangers," he said. "My grandfather has been a season-ticket holder for a very long time. I'm wearing this jersey tonight, my grandpa got it for me from a Russian website. It took about three months to come and then I'm at the glass, I have [Mika] Zibanejad, [Chris] Kreider, they're all waving to me, and then I see Buchnevich and then he winks and he's like, 'Wow, that's a very nice jersey,' and then he's talking to Vlad Namestnikov because they're both Russian, like 'Wow look at this kid.' A second later, boom, Buchnevich comes and gives me the stick over the glass and I'm crying. I'm a huge Ranger fan so it's just really emotional."

Last night 12 year old #NYR Season Ticket Member Benjamin had the "top moment of his life" when Pavel Buchnevich gave him his signed stick. See him tell his RangersTown story! pic.twitter.com/DUPf0G3sKZ

— New York Rangers (@NYRangers) March 15, 2018

Buchnevich has been a bright spot in a disappointing season for the Rangers and appears to be a player the team's general manager, Jeff

Gorton, can build around moving forward. One thing is for sure, Gorton and Rangers brass will love Benjamin's scouting report on Buchnevich.

"He's a great player," Benjamin added. "He has a great one-timer, I love seeing him play on the power play. He's just an overall great player and he's gonna be someone for this rebuild for the Rangers who's going to evolve into one of the top stars and help this team."

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 03.16.2018

1103964 Websites

TSN.CA / Surging Leafs edge closer to Bruins

Kristen Shilton

BUFFALO—The Toronto Maple Leafs and Buffalo Sabres have seen a lot of each other lately. Just 10 days after the Sabres dropped the Leafs in Buffalo, Toronto returned to the scene of the crime and left with a 5-2 victory on Thursday night. It was the third straight win for the Leafs — they host the Sabres twice more during the last two weeks of the season — moving them to 42-22-7, five points behind the second-place Boston Bruins in the Atlantic Division.

TAKEAWAYS

Start right, finish right

Coming off a 6-5 shootout win over the Dallas Stars on Wednesday at home, the Leafs emphasized the importance of getting their legs moving early prior to playing the second half of their back-to-back. They were able to jump out to an early 2-0 lead by doing exactly what the Sabres did so effectively in a 5-3 win over Toronto on March 5 — putting pucks on the net and establishing a presence in the offensive zone.

Mitch Marner, skating with Leo Komarov and Nazem Kadri, played a big role in driving the Leafs up front, turning pucks over on the backcheck, moving seamlessly through the neutral zone and propelling his line's offensive zone possession with a good forecheck. After a first period where the Leafs' controlled play at 61 per cent possession with a 2-1 lead, the middle frame was once again a struggle for the Leafs while the Sabres dominated them in all three phases.

While Curtis McElhinney's terrific play kept the Leafs in the lead, Connor Carrick offered some insurance with a point shot through traffic near the halfway point of the period; it was Carrick's fourth goal of the season, and first since Jan. 20. Then it was Tyler Bozak's turn to pile it on. He had put together a nice stretch of games recently and after a two-assist night against Dallas, which included scoring the shootout winner, Bozak tallied a backdoor power-play goal late in the frame to put the Leafs up 4-1.

That was the eighth goal scored by that first power-play unit in the Leafs' last eight games. Buffalo responded with another power-play goal from Jason Pominville in the third, but wouldn't come any closer to a comeback and Patrick Marleau added the empty-net dagger with 43 seconds left to seal a victory for the visitors.

Man on fire

James van Riemsdyk tallied a hat trick against Dallas on Wednesday and picked up right where he left on in the opening four minutes against Buffalo. His line once again established good offensive zone pressure and were cycling the puck well when he managed a five-hole strike from a tough side angle to put Toronto up 1-0. It was van Riemsdyk's 30th goal of the season, marking the second time in his 10-year NHL career that he's reached the milestone. He came achingly close last season with 29 goals over 82 games; he hit 30 in just 70 games this season.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 16, 2018

His next goal came exactly three minutes later in the first period, a bar down strike from the hashmarks that set a new career-high for van Riemsdyk with 31 goals. He added an assist to his point haul before the end of the second period with a helper on Bozak's marker, putting him at five goals and one assist in his previous five periods of play.

Van Riemsdyk has been a streaky scorer all season, putting together runs where he can't miss juxtaposed with stretches of 10 or more games with only one or two goals. But when he's on, van Riemsdyk is as powerful and potent with the puck on his stick as anyone on Toronto's roster. With star centre Auston Matthews out with a shoulder injury for the eighth straight game, the contributions of the Leafs' other forwards have been more critical than ever and van Riemsdyk is answering the bell.

Mac up to the task

The last time McElhinney saw playing time in consecutive games? The 2016-17 NHL season, not 2017-18, let alone on consecutive nights. But the backup, who has been a good soldier for the Leafs in taking on the unenviable task of only playing the second half of back-to-backs, was more than ready to step up with Frederik Andersen's status uncertain after suffering an upper-body injury on Wednesday.

During the first period, the Leafs made things pretty easy on their netminder by controlling play and outshooting the Sabres 18-11. McElhinney's only blemish in that frame was not being able to sweep a loose puck out from his crease that was eventually potted by Sam Reinhart on the power play. The second period was busier for McElhinney, who turned aside 18 of 19 Sabres shots but allowed a second on the power play to Jason Pominville. In between the two extra-man goals, McElhinney was on top of his game – he was in good position for most of the night, tracking well in traffic and sealing his posts as the Sabres tried to beat him from behind the net.

After the game, McElhinney said it was Buffalo's pushback more than anything that the Leafs stopped – doing that gave them an edge in the second frame. But, overall, he was pleased with the support he got up front and with his own preparation in putting together two straight wins on consecutive nights. Thursday's game marked the third time in 12 starts this season that McElhinney has faced at least 40 shots; he turned aside 38 of 40 from Buffalo.

Komarov suffers lower-body injury

The Leafs are already dealing with injuries to Matthews and Andersen, plus a lingering flu defenceman Nikita Zaitsev has been battling the last few days. So when Komarov collided with teammate William Nylander near the blueline in the second period and got his leg tangled up on the play, it was the last thing Toronto needed to see.

Nylander was cutting back and lost an edge when he skated into Komarov, falling into the veteran's left leg and twisting it backwards at an awkward angle as he tumbled to the ice. Komarov was down for a few minutes before being helped off the ice, and then was bracing himself on a trainer as he went down the tunnel to the Leafs' room. The 31-year-old Komarov has been one of the Leafs' best penalty killers, averaging the fourth-most short-handed minutes per game and second-most among forwards (2:35). He's also been as versatile as any winger for the Leafs all season, deployed in every situation from even-strength to power-play situations, penalty kill or 5-on-3.

Komarov, who finished the night with 8:11 of ice time, doesn't have the flashy statistics (seven goals, 12 assists in 71 games), but his contributions run deeper inside and outside the dressing room than is immediately recognizable.

"I think he's going to be fine...I just saw him a second ago walking around; he tells me he did good in all the tests," Leafs head coach Mike Babcock said after the game. "So I don't know if that means missing a game or playing the next game."

Bad blood boiling over

It's been well established there's no love lost between Kadri and Sabres defenceman Rasmus Ristolainen. After dropping the gloves during the Leafs' visit to Buffalo earlier this month, their jawing in the penalty box over how many more times their teams will face each other before the end of the season went viral.

Before Thursday's game, both players acknowledged they expected to exchange a few more pleasantries before it was all said and done, and by the second period the two were mixing it up once again. They were chirping at each other early on, but it wasn't until Kadri was coming out of the box after serving a hooking penalty in the second period that things escalated a notch. When he emerged, the 6-foot Kadri went barreling towards the 6-foot-4 Ristolainen near the Sabres' bench, where he delivered a hit to the back that Ristolainen sold hard as a cross-check to put Kadri back in the box before he'd even made it to the Leafs bench.

On the ensuing power play, it was Ristolainen's point blast that was perfectly re-directed by Pominville to give Buffalo its second man-advantage goal of the night. As Buffalo chased Toronto looking to close the gap in the third period, there wasn't much more opportunity for the two to interact. But with two more games still to play between these divisional rivals over Toronto's last 11 games, Kadri and Ristolainen stand to have plenty of feisty moments ahead of them.

Next game

The Leafs head home for a meeting with the Montreal Canadiens, their longtime archrivals, on Saturday night.

TSN.CA LOADED: 03.16.2018

1103965 Websites

TSN.CA / Kadri ready to renew Ristolainen rivalry

Mark Masters

TSN Toronto reporter Mark Masters checks in daily with news and notes from Maple Leafs practices and game-day skates. The team had a team meeting at the KeyBank Center in Buffalo on Thursday morning. The Sabres held a regular skate.

Is Nazem Kadri expecting to mix it up with Rasmus Ristolainen again tonight?

"Yeah, of course," he said nonchalantly.

The Leafs centre and Sabres defenceman have had a feud brewing for a few games now, but Kadri isn't about to let it get personal.

"He competes hard so that's something I can appreciate and I can respect," he said. "I certainly know what that's like. You want to be hard to play against. He plays important minutes and he's a big body and he wants to make it as hard as possible, especially when guys are coming into your city and your building."

Ristolainen has quickly emerged as a key character in the QEW rivalry, dropping the gloves with James van Riemsdyk last season before going after Auston Matthews and Mitch Marner later in the same game.

"It's fun playing against him," Marner said. "He's a hard competitor. He goes out every shift and plays the same way every time. You got to make sure you're ready when you play him. I think he's always ready for those Toronto-Buffalo games."

In the final game between the teams last season, Kadri chirped Ristolainen after scoring a goal, setting off a brouhaha. And then last



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 16, 2018

week Ristolainen levelled Kadri behind the net with a big hit. Kadri felt it was late and initiated a fight.

Sabres players say this is nothing new for Ristolainen who is public enemy No. 1 for a lot of their opponents.

"He brings that intensity and that's something all the guys feed off of," said centre Ryan O'Reilly, who has just one minor penalty this season. "He's hard to play against. He gets in their heads and that's huge, that gives us an advantage."

"They're both hard competitors," said Marnier. "Nazzy's a guy that if something happens to him that he doesn't like, he's going to let you know about it and is going to want payback for it."

After the fight last week, Kadri and Ristolainen continued to trade verbal blows in the penalty box. Ristolainen told Kadri the teams would be playing four more times and Kadri seemed to correct him, noting there are only three more battles between the clubs this season.

Marnier was sitting beside Kadri in the box as the conversation unfolded.

"It was hilarious," said Marnier. "I mean, I was laughing. It was pretty funny to be part of that."

"Whenever Naz gets into it with guys, I think the majority of the room enjoys it," said Tyler Bozak. "We get to see it quite a bit. Yeah, I'm sure they'll have their battles for the rest of the year and everyone will be happy about that."

Ristolainen received some good-natured ribbing from teammates for losing the numbers game.

"Yeah, we gave it to him a little bit," O'Reilly said laughing. "That was pretty funny. That's for sure."

"I thought it was pretty funny," said a laughing Sam Reinhart, "so we'll have to see what happens tonight."

The Leafs will also play the Sabres in Toronto on March 26 and April 3.

After "hilarious" penalty box conversation, Kadri and Ristolainen renew rivalry

Defenceman Rasmus Ristolainen always seems to be in the middle of everything when the Sabres and Leafs clash and last week was no exception. The Finn levelled Nazem Kadri with a borderline hit leading to a fight and then some trash talk in the penalty box. The pair seemed to be planning their next meeting, which comes tonight in Buffalo.

After "hilarious" penalty box conversation, Kadri and Ristolainen renew rivalry

Defenceman Rasmus Ristolainen always seems to be in the middle of everything when the Sabres and Leafs clash and last week was no exception. The Finn levelled Nazem Kadri with a borderline hit leading to a fight and then some trash talk in the penalty box. The pair seemed to be planning their next meeting, which comes tonight in Buffalo.

Last night, Mike Babcock downplayed concerns regarding Frederik Andersen's injury. Again today Babcock seemed to indicate the concern level wasn't high when it comes to the NHL's leader in minutes played.

"Yeah, I don't really have much," he said when asked for an update on Andersen. "I don't think there's much going on there, to be honest with you. He wasn't playing today anyways so we didn't bring him. Sparky will back-up and Mac will start."

McElhinney won in relief last night and has excelled this season posting a career-high .929 save percentage.

"I feel very comfortable out there right now," he said last night. "Obviously, we've gotten the goal support which certainly goes a long way so, so far things have gone pretty well, can't complain."

What's he most proud of this season?

"Probably just picking up wins (8-4-1 record), that's the biggest thing," the 34-year-old noted. "And just those solid performances, especially in the back-to-back games."

Garret Sparks was called up on an emergency basis and will dress as the backup tonight. He's been outstanding in the AHL this season posting a 24-8-2 record and .936 save percentage to lead the league.

Leafs Ice Chips: Babcock downplays Andersen injury

Frederik Andersen didn't make the trip to Buffalo and will not dress on Thursday night, but head coach Mike Babcock continues to downplay concerns about Toronto's No. 1 goal. Meanwhile, Garret Sparks has been called up and will dress as the back-up to Curtis McElhinney against the Sabres.

Leafs Ice Chips: Babcock downplays Andersen injury

Frederik Andersen didn't make the trip to Buffalo and will not dress on Thursday night, but head coach Mike Babcock continues to downplay concerns about Toronto's No. 1 goal. Meanwhile, Garret Sparks has been called up and will dress as the back-up to Curtis McElhinney against the Sabres.

Auston Matthews made the trip to Buffalo and skated with the other scratches. He was still wearing a red non-contact sweater and will miss an eighth straight game tonight.

Nikita Zaitsev will miss a third straight game due to illness and has not been spotted on the ice since last Friday's practice. Babcock hopes to have a more definitive diagnosis for the defenceman by Saturday.

"We need all hands on deck," Babcock said, "and we need to get as healthy as we possibly can. But we're finding ways with whoever's in the lineup and that's what we expect to do tonight."

The Leafs power play has converted on five straight opportunities in the last three games. What's working so well right now?

Quarterback Morgan Rielly, who has 19 power-play points on the season, believes the break-out plays following clearances have clicked off late allowing the Leafs to get set up in the offensive zone quicker. He also points out that JvR, the net-front presence, and Marnier, the half-wall distributor, are playing at an extremely high level.

Marnier leads the team with 22 power-play points. Kadri and van Riemsdyk are tied for the lead in power-play goals with nine.

Prior to this hot streak, the Leafs had clicked on only five of 31 man-advantage chances over the previous 12 games.

"We got too deliberate and too slow and didn't work," said Babcock. "We're way quicker again and we're moving the puck well and have good net presence and a good scheme."

NHL: Stars 5, Maple Leafs 6 (SO)

James van Riemsdyk buried back-to-back goals to finish off his hat trick and erase the Stars lead but after Dallas went back in front, Patrick Marleau tied things back up with 16 seconds left in the third and Tyler Bozak and Mitch Marnier would seal the win in the shootout. Curtis McElhinney stood tall in goal for the win after Frederik Andersen left with an upper-body injury.

NHL: Stars 5, Maple Leafs 6 (SO)

James van Riemsdyk buried back-to-back goals to finish off his hat trick and erase the Stars lead but after Dallas went back in front, Patrick Marleau tied things back up with 16 seconds left in the third and Tyler Bozak and Mitch Marnier would seal the win in the shootout. Curtis McElhinney stood tall in goal for the win after Frederik Andersen left with an upper-body injury.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 16, 2018

1103966 Websites

TSN.CA / Del Zotto the lone Canucks blueliner to avoid injury bug this season

Jeff Paterson

ANAHEIM – Smiles have been in short supply lately in the Vancouver Canucks locker room, but a big one broke out over Michael Del Zotto's face. It's remarkable nothing else broke, like an arm or a leg, given the kind of season it has been on the injury front for the struggling hockey club that was officially eliminated from Stanley Cup playoff contention with a 3-0 loss in Anaheim last night.

Del Zotto couldn't help but laugh when asked how he's managed to avoid being bitten by the injury bug that has feasted on his Canucks teammates all season. And with word Wednesday that Erik Gudbranson requires shoulder surgery and is the latest to be shut down for the season, the Canucks went into battle against the Ducks missing eight regulars from their lineup.

Del Zotto and Henrik Sedin are the only Canucks to appear in all 71 games for Vancouver this season. On the blueline, Derrick Pouliot is the only other defenceman to dress for 60 games in Canuck colours this year. So Del Zotto stands alone in terms of durability.

However, not willing to tempt fate, the 27-year-old knocked on wood, and had everyone within ear shot do the same, before he answered the question about his durability.

"I haven't been healthy the past couple of years and I've had some tough injuries that have kept me out of the lineup a long time," he said in the wake of the Canucks third straight shutout loss. "I play the game hard. I give everything I have every single night whether it's being physical or blocking shots. I take pride in my work ethic every single day. You play the game hard, injuries and bumps and bruises are going to happen. It's been nice to stay healthy for 71 games and I've got 11 more to go."

In his nine year career, Del Zotto has played more than the 71 games he's appeared in so far only twice. He suited up for 80 games with the New York Rangers in his rookie season of 2009-10 and was in uniform 77 times two seasons later. Since then, through injury and inconsistency, Del Zotto has not come close to playing a full season. And the past three years in Philadelphia he dressed for 64, 52 and last season just 51 games.

It's been a bumpy ride for Del Zotto in his first season in Vancouver after signing a two-year deal as an unrestricted free agent last summer. He leads all Canucks defencemen with six goals and is second on the blueline with 19 points. He is the runaway leader on the team with 210 hits – 74 more than anyone else. He sits sixth overall in the league in that category and third among all defencemen.

However, he has been on the ice for a team-high 89 goals against in all situations which over the past five seasons is the second highest number for any Canucks defenceman. And it won't be long now until he tops that list. With Del Zotto on the ice, opponents have controlled 55 per cent of even strength shots and scored more than 57 per cent of all goals. So the ice has been tilted, and not in the direction the defenceman or his hockey club would like to see.

Del Zotto has been game. It's impossible to knock his effort level. And Wednesday, with the Canucks reeling and searching for an answer to their scoring woes that have now reached 212 minutes and nine seconds without a goal, the veteran was among the most dangerous offensive players in the lineup. He set up Nic Dowd for a deflection opportunity early in the hockey game on the same sequence rattled a slap shot off

the post behind Ducks netminder John Gibson. Then in the second period Del Zotto drilled Gibson squarely between the eyes on a quick shot off the rush after taking a pass from Jake Virtanen.

These days, however, close calls and chances are all the Canucks have to show for their efforts. They've dropped five straight and eight of their last nine. By the time they step onto the ice at home against San Jose, the Canucks will have gone more than a full week without putting a puck in the net.

It's been a grind for players like Del Zotto who have soldiered on while teammates, particularly fellow defencemen, have fallen with regularity.

"There's not really much you can say about it," he says of the toll the injuries have taken on the team. "You can be frustrated all you want. I don't even know how many guys we have out of the lineup. (Told it's eight). That's almost half your roster, right? That's a lot of guys. Injuries are part of the game. We play a tough game and trying to stay healthy through an 82-game season isn't easy. It's unfortunate. I don't know what else to tell you."

Del Zotto has just 11 games to go now to be able to wear a full NHL season as a badge of honour. Somehow he hasn't been injured, other than wounded pride, as he and the Canucks play out the string now already looking forward to next season before this one is has come to an end.

TSN.CA LOADED: 03.16.2018

1103967 Websites

TSN.CA / Injuries put Leafs' depth to the test

Kristen Shilton

BUFFALO – A season ago, the Maple Leafs were admittedly spoiled by the lack of major injuries to their top players. But whatever luck Toronto possessed then, when their top-nine forwards missed a combined 10 games the entire season, has diminished over the course of this campaign.

In Thursday's game against the Buffalo Sabres, the Leafs will be without starting goaltender Frederik Andersen as he deals with an upper-body injury suffered in Wednesday's win over Dallas.

They'll also be missing top-line centre Auston Matthews for the eighth straight game (and 18th contest of the season) with a shoulder ailment, and top-four defenceman Nikita Zaitsev will sit out his third consecutive game with the flu.

The absence of all three players at once will put the Leafs' often-praised depth to the test.

"That happens to all teams, but it's just a matter of keeping with the game plan," said Morgan Rielly of key players missing time. "We have great depth. We have guys that are going to take on bigger roles if needed but we feel comfortable with the group we have."

Andersen pulled himself from Wednesday's game midway through the second period with the undisclosed issue, forcing backup Curtis McElhinney to step in while Toronto trailed Dallas 3-2.

The veteran's 13-save performance lifted the Leafs' to an eventual 6-5 win in the shootout, one of many examples over McElhinney's eight-win season (in 13 outings) that have fostered confidence among teammates despite his light workload.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 16, 2018

Andersen has made 58 of 70 starts so far this season, producing a .919 save percentage, with McElhinney (.929 save percentage, 2.27 goals-against average) relegated to starting on the second half of back-to-backs and coming in to relieve Andersen on three other occasions.

Head coach Mike Babcock had little by way of an update on Andersen's status following Thursday's optional morning skate ("I don't think there's much going on there to be honest with you") but since McElhinney was scheduled to start against Buffalo anyway, the Leafs recalled prospect Garret Sparks from the AHL Toronto Marlies and left Andersen in Toronto.

"[McElhinney]'s a great leader, a great guy in the room and then obviously as he shows, he's a great goaltender," surmised Tyler Bozak. "We're really lucky to have a guy of that calibre and that type of person as a backup. You never want to see your starting goaltender go down but we're really confident in Mac. He's been in this league a long time and knows how to win games."

If nothing else, the Leafs have become accustomed to dealing with lineup changes. Along with Matthews missing significant time, Zaitsev had previously missed 17 games with a foot injury, Rielly missed six with an elbow problem and a smattering of regular skaters have sat out a game or two with nagging injuries and illnesses.

Yet Toronto is still safely ensconced in a playoff spot as the Atlantic Division's third seed, boasting a 14-point lead over the Florida Panthers. Andersen has been the Leafs' backbone throughout the season, making the prospect of any extended time without him all the more daunting.

Babcock didn't expect to know more about a timeline for Andersen or Zaitsev's returns until after the Leafs' scheduled day off on Friday.

"It's no different than Z [Zaitsev] or Matty [Matthews]. We need all hands on deck and we need to get as healthy as we possibly can," said Babcock. "But we're finding ways with whoever is in the lineup and that's what we expect to do again tonight."

The Leafs have posted a respectable 9-6-2 record without their former leading scorer Matthews, and have won 15 of their last 21 games. But Buffalo is always a challenging stop for Toronto, even with an overwhelming majority of fans in attendance cheering on the visitors. When the teams battled 10 days ago, the Leafs were on the losing end of a 5-3 decision.

"I think we just gave up too much; they got to our net too much," said Bozak. "They got a few bounces here and there in that game. ... They're going to play us hard and we're going to have to try and give our goalies a little more breathing room and keep their guys away from the net and keep doing what we do offensively."

TSN.CA LOADED: 03.16.2018

1103968 Websites

TSN.CA / Toronto home to NHL's most productive power-play unit

Travis Yost

Do the Toronto Maple Leafs have the best power-play unit in the NHL?

It's hard to avoid that line of thinking if you've been watching Toronto of late. At the team level, they are sixth best in the NHL in converting on power-play opportunities (21.7 per cent). But digging a little deeper, you start to notice that Toronto's two power-play units aren't quite the same.

The unit that's played far and away the most minutes with the man advantage in Toronto consists of Nazem Kadri, Mitch Marner, Tyler Bozak, James van Riemsdyk, and Morgan Rielly. The group is interesting for two reasons. One, it's incredibly offence-oriented – each skater is a talented playmaker in his own right, and on the power play, deficiencies in the defensive zone really aren't material. Two, it's just another data point in the league's shift towards four forward/one defenceman power play deployment.

If you have been watching Toronto over the last few weeks, you have noticed that this group has converted on a curiously high number of power-play chances. They have outperformed basically every other regular Toronto power-play combination, including another frequently played unit in Auston Matthews, Patrick Marleau, William Nylander, Connor Brown, and Jake Gardiner.

Because of how frequently the Kadri five-man group has played and because of how productive they appear to be while on the ice, I was curious as to how they would compare to some other first units across the NHL. The below data table reflects each team's most commonly utilized five-man unit and their production on a goals-per-60 basis. As a note, I included both Toronto units for a point of reference:

The table is sorted by goal production and, sure enough, the Kadri power-play unit ranks as one of the league's most productive groupings, with 22 goals to their credit. Only three units rank above them – Nathan MacKinnon's in Colorado, Matt Duchene's in Ottawa, and Joe Thornton's in San Jose – but all of those units have pretty limited ice-time together. Of the groups that have seen considerable power-play opportunity, the Kadri line has been the most productive, though the Crosby unit is just a goal or two behind from overtaking the lead.

Watching the Kadri group, it seems to me that they make defences awfully uncomfortable. Each player is individually creative with the puck and can not only stickhandle into tight areas, but also work through constricted passing lanes to open up better looks for quality scorers. They are also fantastic at cycling the puck, with sequential passing sequences designed to pull a penalty killer out of his box and into chase-the-puck scenarios.

I think that's an important distinction because this particular unit in Toronto – unlike some of the other great power-play units around the league – doesn't have your prototypical sniper teeing up one-timers from the circles. They do have a bunch of guys (most notably Bozak and van Riemsdyk) who consistently post high shooting percentages, in large part because they have an aptitude for generating shots at or around the net mouth. It's a great example of a team succeeding without having a Steven Stamkos or Patrik Laine-type forward.

The only thing left for this quintet? Replicate their success in the postseason – presumably against Patrice Bergeron and the Boston Bruins.

Easier said than done.

TSN.CA LOADED: 03.16.2018

1103969 Websites

TSN.CA / Statistically Speaking: van Riemsdyk will draw UFA interest

Scott Cullen

James van Riemsdyk knows what to do around the net; Kreider, Couture, Gibson and more in Scott Cullen's Statistically Speaking.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 16, 2018

Toronto Maple Leafs left winger James van Riemsdyk notched a hat trick in a 6-5 overtime win against Dallas. It ended a four-game streak without a point, but he's also tallied 29 goals for the second straight season.

He may not be the ideal player, and is playing 14:47 per game this season, his lowest average time on ice since 2010-11, but van Riemsdyk's soft hands around the net provide real value and should put him in demand as a free agent this summer.

Here is a look at the top wingers that will be unrestricted free agents this summer:

James Neal	Vegas	RW	211	78
James van Riemsdyk	Toronto	LW	191	72
Evander Kane	San Jose	LW	203	69
Daniel Sedin	Vancouver	LW	234	64
Michael Grabner	New Jersey	RW	224	62
Rick Nash	Boston	LW	196	59
Thomas Vanek	Columbus	LW	210	54
Patrick Maroon	New Jersey	LW	217	54
David Perron	Vegas	LW	217	46
Leo Komarov	Toronto	LW	219	40

HEROES

Chris Kreider – The Rangers winger was a force, putting up a goal and three helpers in a 4-3 overtime win against Pittsburgh, matching his production over his previous 10 games.

Logan Couture – San Jose's pivot had a goal and two assists in a 4-3 overtime win at Edmonton. He had just two goals in his previous eight games.

John Gibson – Anaheim's netminder posted a 32-save shutout in a 3-0 victory over Vancouver. He has a .941 save percentage in his past nine games.

ZEROES

Erik Haula and David Perron – While Haula did score a pair of power play goals, the duo was on the ice for four even-strength goals against and one shorthanded goal against, finishing minus-5 in an 8-3 loss to New Jersey.

Leon Draisaitl – The Oilers centre was on the ice for three even-strength goals against in a 4-3 overtime loss to San Jose.

Marc-Andre Fleury – It was a rough night for Vegas. Their starting goaltender was pulled after allowing four goals on 11 shots, on the way to an 8-3 home loss to New Jersey.

VITAL SIGNS

Frederik Andersen – Toronto's goaltender took a bump in the head and was forced to leave a 6-5 shootout win over Dallas. With Andersen likely out for some time, Garret Sparks could be on the way up from the AHL, where he has a .936 save percentage in 35 games this season.

SHORT SHIFTS

Mika Zibanejad is finishing strong for the Rangers.

Ducks D Brandon Montour buried a couple of goals in a 3-0 win vs. Vancouver. He had four assists in his previous 15 games...Ducks LW Jason Chimera added a goal and an assist against the Canucks; he had no points in his previous nine games...Rangers C Mika Zibanejad scored a pair of goals in a 4-3 overtime win over Pittsburgh, and has eight points (4 G, 4 A) in the past five games...Rangers rookie D Neal Pionk put up three assists, giving him eight assists in the past eight games...Maple Leafs RW Mitch Marner and C Tyler Bozak both

contributed a couple of assists in a 6-5 shootout win vs. Dallas. Marner has 21 points (9 G, 12 A) in the past 14 games, while Bozak had two points (1 G, 1 A) in his previous seven games...Stars C Tyler Seguin produced a goal and two assists in a 6-5 shootout loss at Toronto, and has 17 points (8 G, 9 A) in the past 11 games...Stars LW Jamie Benn added a goal and an assist, and has 10 points (4 G, 6 A) in the past 10 games...Sharks LW Tomas Hertl scored a pair of goals in a 4-3 overtime win at Edmonton; he had two points (1 G, 1 A) in his previous 10 games...Sharks RW Mikkel Boedker added a couple of assists, giving him 13 points (6 G, 7 A) in the past 14 games...Oilers C Connor McDavid contributed a couple of assists in a 4-3 overtime loss to San Jose, and has 15 points (6 G, 9 A) in the past nine games...Devils C Blake Coleman scored twice in an 8-3 rout at Vegas. He had two points (1 G, 1 A) in his previous 14 games...Devils LW Taylor Hall, C Nico Hischier and RW Michael Grabner each had a goal and an assist against the Golden Knights. Hall has 40 points (19 G, 21 A) in the past 29 games, Hischier has four points (2 G, 2 A) in the past three games, and those were Grabner's first points for the Devils in his ninth games since arriving in a trade...Devils LW Brian Gibbons added a couple of assists, matching his production from his previous 10 games...Golden Knights D Colin Miller had a goal and an assist in a 8-3 loss to New Jersey, matching his production from the previous nine games.

FIRSTS

Andreas Johnsson – The 23-year-old Swedish winger made his NHL debut for Toronto against Dallas, but left early with an upper-body injury. He had 54 points (26 G, 28 A) in 54 AHL games to earn the promotion.

TSN.CA LOADED: 03.16.2018

1103970 Websites

TSN.CA / Statistically Speaking: Pastrnak powers Bruins to another win

Scott Cullen

Pastrnak leads Bruins' big comeback; Lehkonen, Miller, Smith and more in Scott Cullen's Statistically Speaking.

HEROES

David Pastrnak – The Boston winger tallied three goals and an assist, leading the Bruins to a big third-period rally for a 6-4 win at Carolina, giving him 16 points (5 G, 11 A) in the past 10 games. The 25th pick in the 2014 Draft, Pastrnak has more goals than anyone from that draft class.

David Pastrnak	Boston	RW	25	240	86
Leon Draisaitl	Edmonton	C	3	256	72
Nikolaj Ehlers	Winnipeg	LW	9	224	67
Viktor Arvidsson	Nashville	RW	112	209	65
Sam Reinhart	Buffalo	RW	2	236	57
Aaron Ekblad	Florida	D	1	294	50
Dylan Larkin	Detroit	C	15	229	49
Brayden Point	Tampa Bay	C	79	138	45
William Nylander	Toronto	RW	8	172	42



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 16, 2018

Sam Bennett Calgary LW 4 230 42

Artturi Lehkonen – Montreal's sophomore winger scored two goals in a 4-2 win against Dallas. He had three points (1 G, 2 A) in his previous 14 games.

J.T Miller, Steven Stamkos and Nikita Kucherov - The new Lightning forward moved to left wing on the top line and buried three goals in a 7-4 loss to Ottawa. Miller has nine points (5 G, 4 A) in seven games with Tampa Bay. Stamkos and Kucherov both earned three assists against the Senators. Stamkos has 28 points (10 G, 18 A) in the past 23 games, while Kucherov has 30 points (7 G, 23 A) in the past 20 games.

Ryan Spooner N.Y. Rangers C 7 2
9 11

J.T. Miller Tampa Bay C/LW 7 5 4
9

Paul Stastny Winnipeg C 7 2 6
8

Brian Gionta Boston RW 7 2 4
6

Evander Kane San Jose LW 8 3 3
6

Brendan Leipsic Vancouver LW 7 2
4 6

Rick Nash Boston LW 8 3 2
5

Patrick Maroon New Jersey LW 6 1
4 5

Mike Reilly Montreal D 8 0 5
5

Mike Smith – Calgary's veteran netminer recorded a 28-save shutout in a 1-0 win over Edmonton. It was his second start coming back from injury, and had a .882 save percentage in his previous six games.

ZEROES

Brett Pesce and Jacob Slavin – Carolina's top defence pairing was on the ice for three goals against in a 6-4 loss to Boston.

Christian Folin – The Kings blueliner had a tough night (6 for, 17 against, 26.1 CF%, 1-9 scoring chances) and was on the ice for two goals against in a 4-3 shootout loss against Arizona.

Andrei Vasilevskiy - Tampa Bay's goaltender allowed six goals on 29 shots in a 7-4 loss to Ottawa, giving him a .894 save percentage in his past nine starts.

Devan Dubnyk - The Minnesota netminder gave up five goals on 22 shots in a 5-1 loss to Colorado, and has a .885 save percentage in his past seven starts.

VITAL SIGNS

Paul Stastny – The newly-acquired Jets centre suffered a lower-body injury in pre-game warm-ups and was out of the lineup for a 3-1 loss at Nashville.

Michael Hutchinson – Winnipeg's goaltender suffered an upper-body injury, possibly a concussion, and was forced to leave a 3-1 loss at Nashville.

Marc Methot – Dallas' stay-at-home defenceman suffered an upper-body injury at Montreal.

Andrew Shaw – Montreal's agitating winger suffered a concussion after hitting Stars defenceman Greg Pateryn.

SHORT SHIFTS

Embedded Image

Mike Hoffman has topped 20 goals for the fourth straight season.

Senators LW Mike Hoffman scored two goals in a 7-4 win at Tampa Bay, and has 10 points (5 G, 5 A) in the past nine games...Senators LW Ryan Dzingel, LW Marian Gaborik, RW Tom Pyatt and D Erik Karlsson each contributed a goal and an assist against the Lightning. Dzingel has four points (3 G, 1 A) in the past four games, Gaborik matched his production over the previous 19 games, Pyatt had two assists in his previous 23 games, and Karlsson has 23 points (4 G, 19 A) in the past 22 games...Senators C Matt Duchene and D Cody Ceci both added a couple of assists. Duchene has 20 points (9 G, 11 A) in the past 18 games and Ceci has one assist in the past 11 games...Lightning D Victor Hedman recorded two assists in a 7-4 loss to Ottawa, giving him 17 points (4 G, 13 A) in the past 17 games...Canadiens C Jonathan Drouin and LW Alexander Galchenyuk both had a pair of assists in a 4-2 win over Dallas. Drouin has six points (2 G, 4 A) in the past eight games and Galchenyuk has eight points (4 G, 4 A) in the past eight games...Bruins LW Brad Marchand contributed a goal plus a couple of assists in a 6-4 win over Carolina, and has 40 points (15 G, 25 A) in his past 25 games...Bruins rookie D Matt Grzelcyk posted a goal and an assist against the Hurricanes, matching his production from the previous 10 games...Bruins C Riley Nash added two assists, giving him 10 points (3 G, 7 A) in the past eight games...Hurricanes LW Teuvo Teravainen, RW Sebastian Aho and LW Brock McGinn each had a goal and an assist in a 6-4 loss at Boston. Teravainen has 14 points (8 G, 6 A) in the past 14 games, Aho has eight points (4 G, 4 A) in the past eight games, and McGinn matched his production from the previous 13 games...Hurricanes C Elias Lindholm and D Justin Faulk both contributed a couple of assists. Lindholm had four assists in the previous 13 games, and Faulk has seven assists in the past eight games...Avalanche RW J.T. Compher scored a pair of goals in a 5-1 rout at Minnesota, snapping a 14-game scoring drought...Kings C Jeff Carter scored two goals in a 4-3 shootout loss at Arizona, and has eight points (6 G, 2 A) in the past eight games...Kings D Drew Doughty contributed a pair of assists, and has seven points (1 G, 6 A) in the past nine games...Coyotes C Nick Cousins produced a goal and an assist in a 4-3 shootout win against the Kings. He had one assist in his previous 11 games.

Avalanche G Semyon Varlamov turned away 33 of 34 shots in a 5-1 win at Minnesota. He has a .932 save percentage in his past eight games...Predators G Pekka Rinne saved 32 of 33 shots in a 3-1 victory over Winnipeg, giving him a .945 save percentage in his past nine starts...Oilers G Cam Talbot recorded 31 saves on 32 shots in a 10 loss at Calgary, and has a .932 save percentage in his past dozen starts...Canadiens G Antti Niemi stopped 36 of 38 shots for a 4-2 win against Dallas, giving him a .933 save percentage in 14 games since arriving in Montreal.

FIRSTS

Adin Hill – The 21-year-old Coyotes goaltender, a third-round pick in 2015, earned his first career win, with 34 saves on 37 shots, in his fourth career start, a 4-3 shootout decision over Los Angeles.

TSN.CA LOADED: 03.16.2018

1103971 Websites

TSN.CA / Statistically Speaking: Ovechkin an all-time finisher

Scott Cullen



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 16, 2018

Ovechkin hits a milestone; Vesey, Wennberg, Fleury, Quick and more in Scott Cullen's Statistically Speaking.

Washington Capitals superstar left winger Alex Ovechkin scored a pair of goals in a 3-2 overtime victory against Winnipeg, the second of which was the 600th of his illustrious career. It was a vintage Ovechkin performance as he launched 15 shot attempts with eight on goal.

Historically, he's an all-timer. His 600 goals in 990 games is impressive, of course, but consider that he's done it in what is virtually a dead-puck era.

Using Hockey-Reference's Adjusted Goals stat, which adjusts scoring for the era in which it occurs, Ovechkin already ranks seventh all-time, with 690 adjusted goals.

Gordie Howe	RW	1767	801	925	0.45
Jaromir Jagr	RW	1733	766	841	0.44
Wayne Gretzky	C	1487	894	758	0.60
Teemu Selanne	RW	1451	684	741	0.47
Brett Hull	RW	1269	741	738	0.58
Jarome Iginla	RW	1554	625	706	0.40
Alex Ovechkin	LW	990	600	690	0.61
Brendan Shanahan	LW	1524	656	672	0.43
Phil Esposito	C	1282	717	671	0.56
Maurice Richard	RW	978	544	653	0.56

Among the players with at least 500 games played, Ovechkin ranks fourth with .61 adjusted goals per game, behind only Mike Bossy (.76), Mario Lemieux (.75), and Pavel Bure (.62). The per-game rate is due to decline as his career goes on, because even a legend like Ovechkin is slowing down.

That might seem like outrageous talk for a guy who has scored a league-leading 42 goals in 69 games this season, but consider that in 2007-2008 and 2008-2009, combined, he scored 121 goals in 161 games, while averaging more than six shots on goal per game!

So, the adjusted numbers already suggest that Ovechkin may be the best goal-scorer ever. Can he possibly catch Gretzky's all-time record of 894 goals? If he could average 40 goals per season for the next seven years, he'd be right there (880 plus however many he adds before the end of this season), but that's a tall order to keep doing that through age 39.

But, if you want to set the all-time goal-scoring record, a previously untouchable record, it should be difficult. The hard is what makes it great.

HEROES

Jimmy Vesey – The Rangers winger netted his first career hat trick in a 6-3 win against Carolina. He had just one goal in his previous 13 games, but is up to 15 goals in 67 games this season.

Alexander Wennberg – The Blue Jackets centre accumulated a goal and three assists in a 5-2 win over Montreal, giving him seven points (1 G, 6 A) in the past four games.

Marc-Andre Fleury – Vegas' veteran netminder turned away 38 of 40 shots in a 3-2 win at Philadelphia to earn his 400th career win. He has a .948 save percentage in his past five starts.

Jonathan Quick – The Kings veteran netminder posted a 35-save shutout in a 3-0 win against Vancouver, giving him a .935 save percentage in his past 11 games.

ZEROES

Marian Gaborik – Ottawa's veteran winger had a brutal night (7 for, 19 against, 26.9 CF%, 1-7 scoring chances) and was on the ice for all three goals against in a 5-3 win at Florida.

Kevin Bieksa – The Ducks blueliner had a hard game (12 for, 15 against, 44.4 CF%, 8-13 scoring chances) and was on for three goals against in a 4-2 loss to St. Louis.

Neal Pionk – The Rangers rookie blueliner was stuck in his end of the ice (7 for, 32 against, 18.0 CF%) during a 6-3 win over Carolina.

Charlie Lindgren – Montreal's rookie goaltender gave up five goals on 25 shots in a 5-2 loss at Columbus. He's been slumping, with a .848 save percentage in his past four starts.

Roberto Luongo – The Panthers netminder surrendered five goals on 25 shots in a 5-3 loss to Ottawa. He had a .932 save percentage in his previous 13 games.

Scott Darling – The rough year continued for the Hurricanes netminder, who allowed four goals on 21 shots in a 6-3 loss at the Rangers, giving him a .863 save percentage in his past 14 games.

VITAL SIGNS

Seth Jones – Columbus' star defenceman did have a goal and an assist in a 5-2 win over Montreal, but was forced to leave the game for "precautionary reasons". He had 12 points (7 G, 5 A) in the past nine games.

Anthony DeAngelo – The Rangers defenceman suffered an ankle injury during a 6-3 win against Carolina.

Mark Stone – The star Senators winger did not accompany the team to Florida due to a leg injury.

SHORT SHIFTS

Matt Duchene is quietly producing in this lost Senators season.

Senators C Matt Duchene and LW Magnus Paajarvi both scored a pair of goals in a 5-3 win at Florida. Duchene has 18 points (9 G, 9 A) in the past 17 games, while Paajarvi had one assist in his previous 10 games...Senators LW Mike Hoffman and D Erik Karlsson both contributed a couple of assists. Hoffman has eight points (3 G, 5 A) in the past eight games and Karlsson has 16 points (2 G, 14 A) in the past 14 games...Panthers LW Jonathan Huberdeau had a goal and an assist in a 5-3 loss to Ottawa, giving him 10 points (5 G, 5 A) in the past 10 games...Panthers C Vincent Trocheck added a couple of assists and has 11 points (4 G, 7 A) in the past 10 games...Rangers C Mika Zibanejad and RW Pavel Buchnevich both had three assists in a 6-3 win over Carolina. Zibanejad has seven points (3 G, 4 A) in the past six games, while Buchnevich had two points (1 G, 1 A) in his previous nine games...Rangers RW Mats Zuccarello added a couple of goals, giving him four goals in the past three games...Capitals C Evgeny Kuznetsov produced a goal and an assist in a 3-2 victory against Winnipeg, giving him 11 points (5 G, 6 A) in the past eight games...Blue Jackets D Ian Cole both recorded a goal and an assist in a 5-2 win vs. Montreal; he has four points (2 G, 2 A) in the past five games.

Ivan Barbashev is heating up for the Blues.

Blues C Ivan Barbashev produced a goal and an assist in a 4-2 win at Anaheim, giving him five points (3 G, 2 A) in the past four games...Blues D Alex Pietrangolo added two assists, and has six points (3 G, 3 A) in the past six games...Kings RW Tyler Toffoli had a goal and an assist in a 3-0 win over Vancouver. He has six points (3 G, 3 A) in the past eight games...Kings C Adrian Kempe contributed a couple of assists; he had one assist in his previous eight games...Sharks RW Timo Meier and C Chris Tierney both produced a goal and an assist in a 5-3 win against Detroit. Meier had three goals in his previous nine games, and Tierney has nine points (4 G, 5 A) in the past 12 games...Sharks C Joe Pavelski and D Dylan DeMelo each had a pair of assists. Pavelski has nine points (3 G, 6 A) in the past six games and DeMelo has seven assists in the past five games...Red Wings LW Tyler Bertuzzi assisted on all three



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 16, 2018

goals in a 5-3 loss at San Jose, giving him seven assists in the past seven games...Red Wings C Henrik Zetterberg, RW Gustav Nyquist and D Trevor Daley each had a goal and an assist at the Sharks. Zetterberg had two assists in his previous seven games, Nyquist had two assists in his previous 10 games, and Daley had three goals in his previous 18 games.

Panthers RW Nick Bjugstad controlled play (21 for, 4 against, 84.0 CF%) in a 5-3 loss to Ottawa...Canadiens LW Artturi Lehkonen had 12 shot attempts (5 SOG) and had a strong game (25 for, 6 against, 80.7 CF%, 14-4 scoring chances) in a 5-2 loss at Columbus...Ducks LW Rickard Rakell had ridiculous possession numbers (19 for, 2 against, 90.5 CF%, 11-1 scoring chances) in a 4-2 loss to St. Louis.

Blue Jackets G Sergei Bobrovsky stopped 38 of 40 shots in a 5-2 win over Montreal, giving him a .930 save percentage in his past dozen games.

TSN.CA LOADED: 03.16.2018

1103972 Websites

TSN.CA / Crucial hearing in NHL concussion suit coming Friday

Rick Westhead

The National Hockey League concussion lawsuit is finally coming to a head.

More than four years after the landmark case against the NHL was first filed in U.S. District Court in Minneapolis, lawyers for the league and a group of disgruntled former players face off in court Friday to argue over whether the litigation should proceed as a class action.

If judge Susan Nelson decides to approve the case as a class action – a decision that might not come for many months – some 5,000 former NHL players would automatically become plaintiffs, hiking the stakes for the NHL and raising the league's potential financial liability.

For the players, a loss would mean that the roughly 300 former players who have either filed a lawsuit against the NHL or retained lawyers to do so would have to argue their claims individually.

The hearing Friday is expected to last several hours. Lawyers for each side will have 30 minutes to make oral arguments about their respective cases. The judge will also hear arguments related to the NHL's motions to exclude expert witnesses working for the plaintiffs.

During arguments over the case's future as a class action, lawyers for the former players will likely underscore the emotion of the case, drawing comparisons between the NHL, which steadfastly refuses to concede a connection between head hits and long-term brain damage, and the tobacco industry, which for decades denied a link between its products and cancer.

Judge Nelson is a former trial lawyer who represented plaintiffs during tobacco-related personal injury lawsuits in the mid-to-late 1990s.

Plaintiff lawyers may also recap some of the NHL's internal emails and documents, a paper trail that includes:

- A 2009 email chain where a top NHL lawyer suggested to commissioner Gary Bettman and others that the NHL not invest in researching the health of former NHL players and "focus on the here and now and leave the dementia issues up to the NFL!"

- Emails that show deputy commissioner Bill Daly in 2011 acknowledging a connection between head hits and fighting and long-term health problems such as depression.

- Emails showing the NHL quietly shut down its concussion study group in 2007 after researchers lost interest in the project and had not analyzed any data collected since 1997 because they were not being paid by the league.

- Emails from an unnamed NHL team doctor slamming the league for having "situational ethics" when deciding when players are held out of games after Chicago Blackhawks forward Martin Havlat returned to play during the 2009 playoffs two days after being knocked unconscious.

"This hearing is going to give the judge the opportunity to tell the parties and in many respects the players how she views the evidence," said Charles Zimmerman, lead lawyer for the former NHL players, in an interview on Tuesday.

"The judge will have to comment and give her views on whose evidence makes the most sense. She's going to have to decide if this case can proceed as a class action, which is highly significant to all of the players who don't yet have lawyers, and on the strength of the science that we think supports the link between head hits in hockey and brain damage."

Zimmerman said the hearing and subsequent judgment would be a watershed moment in the highly polarizing issue of head trauma and professional sports.

"The NHL has argued there is no science that shows the disease CTE or any other brain degenerative disease is connected to hockey," Zimmerman said. "This is the first time the court has been confronted with that question in any sport on a contested basis. Football and the NCAA have both settled lawsuits before judge issued rulings on this. That's why this is so significant."

While judge Anita Brody in the NFL concussion lawsuit heard arguments about whether that case should have proceeded as a class action, she reserved her decision for more than a year. That had the effect of putting enough pressure on the NFL and the plaintiffs to reach a settlement in that case in 2015.

Since a settlement in the football lawsuit was reached, Brody never issued a legal judgment over the claims that repeated head hits are connected to long-term brain diseases.

Zimmerman and the plaintiffs have asked judge Nelson to establish two classes in a class action: one providing medical monitoring for players at risk of developing brain diseases and another for retired players who already have been diagnosed with disease such as dementia, Parkinson's or Alzheimer's.

TSN.CA LOADED: 03.16.2018

1103973 Websites

TSN.CA / Maple Leafs claw out win over Stars after losing Andersen

Kristen Shilton

TORONTO – On a night when a lot went wrong for the Toronto Maple Leafs, just enough went right – at the right time – to earn them a 6-5 shootout victory.

Taking on the Dallas Stars on Wednesday, the Leafs were already without top-line centre Auston Matthews (shoulder injury) for the seventh straight game, and by midway through the second period starting



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 16, 2018

goaltender Frederik Andersen pulled himself from the game with what later would be revealed as an upper-body injury.

Andersen seemed fine prior to abruptly exiting the ice during a TV timeout, forcing backup Curtis McElhinney to take over. But before the Leafs had even lost Andersen, they'd already coughed up their two-goal first period lead, with Dallas pocketing four unanswered goals by the start of the third period. A 3-2 deficit wasn't easy for McElhinney to step into, but he helped the Leafs claw back on the strength of a James van Riemsdyk hat trick and a game-tying goal by Patrick Marleau with 15.3 seconds left in the third period.

Tyler Bozak scored the shootout winner as the Leafs (41-22-7) won their franchise-record 11th straight game on home ice.

"There was no heads-up, really. It's just one of those things," said McElhinney. "I'm sitting there [charting] my faceoffs and next thing you know they're handing my gloves to me. It was a strange game, a little bit back and forth with some good opportunities. Nice way to come back and pull it out at the end."

The only obvious collision Andersen was involved in during the game's first half happened at the 14:24 mark of the opening period when Stars winger Alex Radulov went careening into Andersen's net and landed on top of him.

Leafs head coach Mike Babcock said after the game he believed Andersen was rattled on the play, and he didn't have any further update on his status. But Babcock added that he didn't think the injury was serious as Andersen continued to play after he was hurt.

But a source told TSN.ca Wednesday night that the team is recalling Garret Sparks from the AHL Toronto Marlies to be McElhinney's backup in Buffalo on Thursday.

Coming in cold off the bench, McElhinney ended up being the difference for Toronto Wednesday. He not only earned them at least a point with a solid effort in the third period, he was also terrific in overtime when the Leafs had to kill off a minor penalty and were outshot 7-3. It was the second time this season McElhinney has replaced Andersen mid-game, and marked his eighth win in 13 appearances this season.

"The heart-rate spikes [in that situation]. I think it would be interesting to see what that looks like on a heart rate monitor," McElhinney said. "But it certainly goes up and the adrenaline starts pumping and when the first shots are taken there you start to settle in."

"I feel very comfortable out there right now and, obviously, we've gotten the goal support which goes a long way."

Andersen didn't get quite the same support McElhinney received over the first period and a half, with the Leafs' early 2-0 lead aided by some lucky bounces. Nazem Kadri got Toronto on the board by capitalizing on a wandering Stars goalie Kari Lehtonen, who tried to play the puck outside his net but it bounced right to Kadri with a gaping net to score on. Just 25 seconds later, van Riemsdyk banged in an easy rebound off Lehtonen's pad.

But Dallas (38-26-7) responded with two goals of their own in just 1:32, courtesy of captain Jamie Benn and centre Radek Faksa, to tie things up before the end of the frame.

While the first period ended on a low note for Toronto, the second frame was one of the worst periods of hockey the Leafs have played all season. They managed just three shots on net (compared to Dallas' 14), had one horrendous turnover and ineffective stretch passes earned the Leafs just 30.56 per cent possession. The Stars, meanwhile, kept their offensive momentum going with Tyler Seguin and Remi Elie extending Dallas' lead to 4-2 after 40 minutes.

"They played right and we didn't. They were better than us," said Babcock. "They played hard. We didn't handle their forecheck, we didn't execute, we didn't make any plays, we didn't play heavy, but I thought we came out in the third period and we dug in. We just talked about, 'Let's

just get one and they'll tighten up a bit and we'll crawl our way back in the game,' and so, in the end, that's what happened."

After Babcock shortened his bench and started blending lines in the third, Toronto's offence re-emerged. Van Riemsdyk knocked in another rebound off Lehtonen and completed his first hat trick of the season (the third of his career) on the power play five minutes later. Toronto's power play has been red-hot of late, going 8-for-16 in its last seven games.

"I just try to get to the good spots on the ice where you can score goals and I'm playing with smart players who know how to get the puck to those areas," said van Riemsdyk. "I got some good puck luck tonight and was able to capitalize on my chances."

So did Marleau, when the Leafs were out against five exhausted Stars who couldn't get a change late in the third period and he knocked in a goal to force overtime. That's when it was McElhinney's turn to shine. The goaltender stood on his head in the extra frame and the shootout, flashing the leather twice on Seguin and making a couple saves right off his mask. He finished the night with 13 saves on 15 shots.

"He gets ready for games in crazy ways, but that's all goalies," said Mitch Marner of McElhinney. "He gets his mind ready, and for moments like that he's always ready to jump in. Everyone saw it tonight; coming in cold tonight against that team isn't easy, especially in the shootout. He had a great night for us."

McElhinney was already scheduled to start in Buffalo, but Babcock didn't commit to whether Andersen will back him up.

But suffice it to say, no one among the Leafs is lacking for confidence in McElhinney if he's the starter for a spell going forward.

"I mean, Mac's been great all year, obviously," said Babcock. "He was good in the shootout, gave us a chance and got us a big win. We're trying to crawl our way into the playoffs and you need points and we don't have enough so we got to find ways to win."

TAKEAWAYS

Giving their all

While the Leafs had a shocking number of passers for too much of Wednesday's game, Bozak and van Riemsdyk consistently stood out in a good way for continuing to press hard. Bozak started the night by assisting on van Riemsdyk's goal and was flying all over the ice in the first period with good play through the neutral zone. He kept on sparking his line alongside van Riemsdyk and Connor Brown, and he got a couple great shifts off the rush going for his line – on one, van Riemsdyk tried feathering a pass to Brown on a two-on-one but the puck ricocheted off a sliding defenceman who cut off the lane, yet still almost wound its way through the air and in. When many of Bozak's teammates started letting their games slip in the second period, Bozak was backchecking and playing hard down low to get some semblance of a cycle going for his line with a rotating crop of wingers. Eventually that line's hard work paid off when Bozak set up van Riemsdyk's third period score to give the Leafs some juice. Bozak also scored the Leafs' shootout winner prior to Marner potting the final goal in the shootout. He finished the night with two points and was plus-3, with 59 per cent possession, while van Riemsdyk finished at 61 per cent possession.

Jonesing for Johnsson

It was a long road to his NHL debut for Andreas Johnsson. After being brought over to North America from the Swedish Hockey League in 2015, Johnsson took an elbow to the head in an AHL playoff game with the Marlies and missed the remainder of the postseason with a concussion. That injury affected him into the following year and slowed his progress towards an NHL opportunity. So when Johnsson finally got his shot on Wednesday, he was sure to make the most of it. He flew onto the ice for his first shift like a rocket, and put his first NHL shot on net on just his second shift. He didn't shy away from using his body to get physical in the corner and win puck battles. Then suddenly, it felt like déjà vu all over again for Johnsson when Radulov caught him from behind and pancaked



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 16, 2018

the rookie into the boards. Johnsson immediately went to the Leafs' bench, and retired to the dressing room right after that. The 23-year-old was able to return for the start of the second period after a cut to his face was dressed. With the Leafs trailing early in the second period, he didn't get as much ice time from there as Babcock might have liked, but Johnsson had good jump when he was on the ice and didn't let the dustup with Radulov keep him from using his body effectively along the boards. Babcock said he wasn't able to deploy Johnsson the way he wanted with the Leafs chasing the game, so he didn't have a good scouting report on the winger's debut. Johnsson finished at minus-1 with one shot on goal in 7:34 of ice time.

TSN.CA LOADED: 03.16.2018

1103974 Websites

USA TODAY / From worst to one of hottest: Coyotes say streak is for real

Kevin Allen,

Published 2:54 p.m. ET March 15, 2018

Updated 3:00 p.m. ET March 15, 2018

General manager John Chayka's take on the Arizona Coyotes' late-season surge is that it is sustainable energy.

"What we see is a group that has beliefs, and real hope for what we can accomplish here," Chayka told USA TODAY Sports.

The upgraded optimism in Arizona stems from an 11-3-2 run over the past five weeks, which represents the team's best 16-game run in five years. In that period, the 23-35-11 Coyotes have posted three shutouts and given up two or fewer goals eight times.

The Nashville Predators, who visit on Thursday, are the only Western Conference team with more points during the last month.

The Coyotes don't believe this is a case of wait-until-next-year promise arriving several months early. They see this run of success as what they could have done at the beginning of the season had they not been beset by a myriad of problems. They haven't just become a hot team. They are finding their game.

"We had to suffer a bit in order to prosper," Chayka said.

The disappointing season, which started with a 0-10-1 record and has them as the 30th-ranked team, can be attributed to several factors. Adjusting to new coach Rick Tocchet. New veterans adapting to a new team. Younger players learning the NHL game. Starting goalie Antti Raanta suffering an injury. Key young defenseman Jakob Chychrun recovering from surgery.

Since New Year's, the Coyotes are 14-8-6.

"We have an extremely young group and there was a lot of learning that was going on at the start of the season," Coyotes center Derek Stepan said. "We didn't understand how detailed and structured you have to be and what it takes to win."

Rookie Clayton Keller, 19, is a key figure in the late-season surge, posting five goals and nine assists in the past 16 games. He's +12 during that stretch, an indication of how much tighter defensively the team has been. Overall, he has 19 goals, 50 points and a -10 rating.

Chayka said Tocchet has learned to expect late-night texts from Keller with videos and thoughts about what he needs to do to have a greater

impact. It's clear that his development is crucial to the team's future success.

"He's been real strong for us," Stepan said. "He's got some real elite talent."

Stepan also has two goals and 12 points during the last 16 games. Christian Dvorak, 22, has five goals in his past 11 games.

Stronger goaltending has aided the Coyotes down the stretch, although Raanta is injured again. Chayka acquired goalie Darcy Kuemper, 27, from the Los Angeles Kings before the trade deadline because he wanted to improve the team's depth. Chayka sees Kuemper as another potential Devan Dubnyk, a goalie who reaches his potential after receiving the right opportunity with a new team. Kuemper had a 27-save shutout in his last outing. But he will be tested Thursday night when the Nashville Predators come to town.

"We are playing with a lot more confidence," Stepan said.

Stepan said this stronger play definitely was born out of the team's early struggles.

"There was a huge adjustment," Stepan said. "Not only did we have a new coach to adjust to, regarding what he wants, and his lingo, and his system, but we also had new assistant coaches and a lot of new faces and a lot of young guys. And now what's showing now is that we are learning from the bumps we took."

Chayka had added veterans Stepan, Niklas Hjalmarsson and Jason Demers last summer with the hope they could help the younger players, but their own adjustment wasn't seamless.

"Our guys have come together," Chayka said. "Our young guys have learned what it takes to win, and our veterans have stabilized the room. All of those things took time."

USA TODAY LOADED: 03.16.2018