



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018

## THE NEWS & OBSERVER

### Hurricanes' Pesce, Rask to miss remainder of season with injuries

By Chip Alexander

[calexander@newsobserver.com](mailto:calexander@newsobserver.com)

March 21, 2018 06:07 PM

Raleigh

The Carolina Hurricanes announced Wednesday that defenseman Brett Pesce and forward Victor Rask would miss the remainder of the season, both with shoulder injuries.

Rask left Tuesday's game against the Edmonton Oilers after making a play against Oilers center Connor McDavid but later returned. He was not at practice Wednesday at PNC Arena.

Pesce, who has played with defenseman Jaccob Slavin much of the season on the Canes' best defensive pairing, was at Wednesday's practice.

The Canes said defenseman Roland McKeown had been recalled on emergency from the Charlotte Checkers of the American Hockey league. McKeown, 22, has two assists in three games with the Hurricanes this season.

Defenseman Noah Hanifin, the Canes' representative in the 2018 NHL All-Star Game, is sidelined indefinitely with a concussion.

The Hurricanes have generally been injury-free much of the season, with 71 man-games lost. Forward Lee Stempniak missed 36 games with upper-body injuries.



### Gameday: Coyotes vs. Hurricanes

by Michael Smith [@MSmithCanes](https://twitter.com/MSmithCanes) / CarolinaHurricanes.com

12:00 AM

Celebrating the "Heart of the Hurricanes."

This is the gameday hub, where you can find all the latest news and information you need to know for tonight's Kids 'N Community Foundation Night match-up featuring the Arizona Coyotes and Carolina Hurricanes. Make Hurricanes.com a regular stop throughout the day, as we update this hub with notes, videos, photos and more as puck drop draws near.

The Hurricanes will hold an optional morning skate at 10:30 a.m., and we'll be posted up rinkside at PNC Arena to provide updates.

*Last updated: 12:00 a.m.*

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#### CANES TO ICE DIFFERENT LOOK AGAINST COYOTES

12:00 a.m.

The Carolina Hurricanes will sport a bit of a different look when they face off with the Arizona Coyotes on Thursday night.

The team announced on Wednesday that both forward [Victor Rask](#) and defenseman [Brett Pesce](#) will miss the remainder of the season due to shoulder injuries. Defenseman [Noah Hanifin](#) has already been out of the lineup due to a concussion and remains sidelined.

Enter Valentin Zykov, who had two shots on goal in 15:05 of ice time on Tuesday against Edmonton, and Roland McKeown, who was recalled from Charlotte on Wednesday evening - reinforcements, and a chance to get a read on each at the NHL level.

"I thought he did some good things. Hung on to a couple of pucks and did a good job net-front on the power play," head coach Bill Peters said of Zykov's season debut. "We'll get a good evaluation here over the next couple of weeks with him."

In addition to some new faces in the lineup, the Canes will also experiment with their line combinations. [Sebastian Aho](#) will be slotted back in at center, flanked by Zykov and [Teuvo Teravainen](#) on his wings.

"He's a dynamic player," Peters said of Aho. "It's a little different workload down low as a centerman, but he's capable of it."



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018

Not only is Aho a dynamic player, but Aho and Teravainen together are a dynamic duo. The two are tied for the team lead in points with 59; Aho has a team-high 26 goals and 33 assists in 69 games, and Teravainen has 22 goals and a team-high 37 assists in 73 games. The Finns have combined for 36 points in their last 19 games (16g, 20a), and both are riding six-game point streaks.

"They play a similar style and think the game the same way offensively. Where Turbo is real good is he hangs on to pucks and draws duplication to open up people. He's very calm with that, and he'll make that play at the last second under pressure," Peters said. "Other guys try to rush that play; they see the same play, but they rush it. I think with Turbo, he's got a real long wick and has patience with the puck."

Zykov on the left side gives that trio a physical presence.

"You need somebody to go to the net and get pucks back," Peters said. "A big, heavy body, somebody different from them."

The Hurricanes and Coyotes first met this season in the first week of November. [Jordan Staal](#) scored in the final three minutes of regulation to tie the game and force overtime, and the Coyotes snagged the extra point in the shootout.

The Canes will be looking to rebound from a 7-3 loss to the Edmonton Oilers on Tuesday, while the Coyotes have won two in a row, including a 4-1 victory in Buffalo on Wednesday.

**CANESPR NOTES:** The Hurricanes have scored on the man advantage in five of their last seven games (6-for-21). The

team ranks tied for second in the league with 25 power-play goals scored since Jan. 1. ... [Jeff Skinner](#) has logged at least one shot on goal in each of his last 93 games, the second longest active stream in the league.

## CLICKS AND CLIPPINGS

### Articles

- [Pesce, Rask to Miss Remainder of the Season](#)
- [Tweetmail No. 181: Checkers, Calder Cup & Interference](#)
- [Recap: Canes Can't Contain Oilers](#)

### Videos

- [In the Room: Bill Peters, March 21](#)
- [Postgame Quotes: March 20 vs. EDM](#)
- [Highlights: EDM 7, CAR 3](#)

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- [Kids 'N Community Foundation Night](#)
- [2018-19 Season Ticket Memberships](#)
- [First Goal Contest presented by Kayem](#)

## Tweetmail No. 181: Checkers, Calder Cup & Interference

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

March 21st, 2018

Hello and welcome to Tweetmail, presented by our friends at [Tijuana Flats](#)! Wear your Canes gear to participating Raleigh locations on Wednesdays throughout the season and receive 50% off any entrée.

Tweetmail is a weekly feature on CarolinaHurricanes.com in which I take your Twitter questions about the Carolina Hurricanes or other assorted topics and answer them in mailbag form. Hopefully the final product is insightful to some degree, and maybe we have some fun along the way.

Let's get to it.

*Are there any other [@CheckersHockey](#) players we should expect to see up between now and when their playoff run starts? [#Tweetmail](#)*

Nine games remain in the 2017-18 regular-season for the Carolina Hurricanes, while the Charlotte Checkers have 10 games still on the docket in their 76-game campaign. The Canes are all but eliminated from Stanley Cup Playoff contention, while the Checkers currently occupy a playoff spot in the American Hockey League's Atlantic Division.

In weighing whether to recall players from Charlotte, the Canes must consider a few things. The first and most procedural is the post-trade deadline recall limit, which stipulates that a team may make no more than four non-emergency recalls after the trade deadline. The Hurricanes have used two of their four, which, barring injuries, limits what the team can do in the final two-and-a-half weeks of the season.

The next consideration is one of balance: does the recall of player x benefit him and his individual development more so than his absence negatively impacts the Checkers?

In considering these matters, don't expect to see an influx of Checkers in the final weeks of the season. The Canes are limited procedurally, and they aren't going to want to derail Charlotte's playoff hopes, either. Valentin Zykov, who leads the AHL in goals (32) and power-play goals (16) is already up with the big club. Another name I could see getting the call is Warren Foegele, who has put together an impressive rookie season in Charlotte. Foegele has notched 26 goals and 16 assists (42 points) in 64 games. He's a plus-18 and ranks tied for second in the AHL with four shorthanded goals. Whether he gets the call this season or not, he's one to watch heading into the 2018-19 season.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018

Which leads us to ...

*What are the chances of the checkers winning the Calder cup? [#tweetmail](#) [#Redvolution](#) [#RedvolutionRampage](#)*

Once you're in, anything can happen.

Here's the thing with playoffs, not just in hockey but really in any sport: once the postseason begins, everything resets to zero. Anything can happen. Any player can rise to the challenge and cement himself in playoff lore. Any team can defy the odds and emerge victorious. It's a tremendous time of year, and the Charlotte Checkers currently find themselves right in the mix to return to the AHL playoffs for the second season in a row.

The East is going to be tough. If the season ended today, the Checkers would draw the Atlantic Division-leading Lehigh Valley Phantoms in the first round, a best-of-five series. The Checkers are 2-4 against the Phantoms this season with a pair of games against them at home coming up in the first week of April. Opposite Lehigh Valley in the North Division is Toronto, the top team in the league; the surviving teams from the Atlantic and North Divisions meet in the Eastern Conference Final.

There's still work to be done down the stretch of the season for the Checkers to once again punch their postseason ticket. It would be fun to see the team get another crack after losing in the first round to Chicago a year ago.

*[@MSmithCanes](#) [#tweetmail](#) I'm one of the most optimistic people when it comes to my sports teams (NCSU, Atlanta Braves, the Canes), but even I am feeling the blues right now. How do you stay so optimistic and unbiased at a time like this?*

There's no denying times are tough right now. The Hurricanes, in a playoff spot as recently as late February, have since slipped, unable to string together that season-defining winning streak and unable to avoid the loss column with any regularity. It's the unfortunate cha-cha dance that has plagued the team all season - one step forward, two steps back, over and over again.

Losses like Tuesday night's to Edmonton underscore the type of season it's been.

"That goes to show that we have to come to work. We play in the NHL. We have this privilege to be here," [Jordan Staal](#) said after the game. "We can't lay eggs like that every other game. We can't just not work. It looks like that when we don't. It's no fun to play. It's no fun to let each other down like that. I'm one of them. I wasn't good enough tonight. It's too bad. I'm going to be ready for the next game."

I'm optimistic about the future of this team because I do believe there are talented pieces in place, and the organization's prospect pool is arguably as deep as it's been in a number of years. That gives me hope for the future, even if the present isn't so dandy. Plus, who knows what the offseason could hold? If nothing else, it's evident that change is on the horizon - and that will begin up top with a new general manager.

I am, however, inherently biased, but I do aim to still be honest, authentic, candid and realistic in everything that I write on this website and say on CanesCast. And I thank you all for reading, listening and following along, through the good times and all the rest.

*[@NHLCanes](#) [@MSmithCanes](#) who was at the GM meeting for the Hurricanes?*

Don Waddell, president of the Hurricanes, sat in for the team at the GM meetings in Boca Raton, Fla., which are slated to wrap up today.

While we're on the topic of the GM meetings, let's discuss some news that's emerged. There's been lots discussed - goaltender interference, player safety and offside among the hot-button topics - but there seems to be the most traction with the goaltender interference review process. Currently, on-ice officials, after consulting with the "War Room" in Toronto, have the final say in what is and is not determined to be a good goal. The league's general managers formally recommended Wednesday that the final decision rest solely with members of the NHL's Hockey Operations Department in the Toronto "War Room," a change that could be implemented immediately if all parties involved approve.

From a public-facing perspective, not much will change; the review process will remain largely the same, but the final decision will rest with Toronto rather than the two on-ice officials. That likely won't alter outcomes much, either. According to [NHL.com](#), the "War Room" has strongly disagreed with on-ice officials on only four of the 170 reviews for goaltender interference through 1,100 games this season.

What the rule change aims to accomplish is simply a better standard for consistency; having the final say rest with a small group of people - no matter the game, venue or situation - should do just that, at least in theory.

*What's your favorite type of roll at press meal? - Deven and [@\\_alexwhite](#)*

I'm not really picky on roll type as long as it's soft. That's all I ask.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018



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

## Victor Rask and Brett Pesce Ruled Out for Rest of the Season, Roland McKeown Recalled from Checkers

**The Canes announce two injuries and recall their top AHL defensive prospect.**

By [Brett.Finger@brettfinger](mailto:Brett.Finger@brettfinger) Mar 21, 2018, 5:47pm EDT

[Share](#)

Brett Pesce will miss the remainder of the season with a shoulder injury. *Jamie Kellner*

Things continue to look worse and worse for the [Carolina Hurricanes](#).

The team announced on Wednesday that forward Victor Rask and defenseman [Brett Pesce](#) will miss the remainder of the season with shoulder injuries. The extent of their injuries were not disclosed. This news comes just two days after [Noah Hanifin](#) was ruled out indefinitely with a concussion.

In light of the injury news, the team called up defenseman [Roland McKeown](#) from the Charlotte Checkers on emergency basis.

Rask is nearing the end of the second year of his six-year, \$24 million contract with the team. The Swedish center will finish his season with 14 goals and 17 assists for a career-low 31 points. He was on pace to beat out his rookie season total of 33 points in 82 games.

Pesce will enter year one of his five-year extension with the team next season. His season comes to an end after 65 games played, wherein he logged 19 points. He was on pace to top his sophomore season total of 20 points.

[McKeown](#) gets his second NHL call-up of the season. A 2014 second-round draft pick of the [Los Angeles Kings](#),

McKeown was acquired by the Hurricanes in the Andrej Sekera trade at the 2015 [NHL trade deadline](#).

The 22-year-old right-handed blueliner has had a big season as a second-year pro in Charlotte. After amassing one goal and 11 points in 71 games as a rookie, he has netted seven goals and 23 total points in 61 games. He also leads the AHL with a +35 plus/minus.

In three games with the Hurricanes earlier this season, he had two assists, two penalty minutes, and was a +1.

The official [news release](#) from the team is below.

The Carolina Hurricanes today announced that defenseman [Brett Pesce](#) and forward [Victor Rask](#) will each miss the remainder of the 2017-18 season due to shoulder injuries. The Hurricanes have recalled defenseman [Roland McKeown](#) ([mick-CUE-in](#)) on emergency from the American Hockey League's (AHL) Charlotte Checkers.

McKeown, 22, has earned two assists in three games with the Hurricanes this season. The Listowel, Ont., native made his NHL debut on Nov. 4 at Arizona and earned his first NHL points with two assists against Florida on Nov. 7. McKeown currently ranks first in the AHL in plus/minus (+35), and has totaled 23 points (7g, 16a) in 61 games for Charlotte this season. He ranks tied for first among Checkers defensemen in goals and second in points.

A second-round selection (50th overall) by the Los Angeles Kings in the 2014 [NHL Draft](#), McKeown (6'1", 195 lbs.) has totaled 35 points (8g, 27a) in 136 career AHL games for Charlotte. He was acquired by the Hurricanes from the Kings on Feb. 25, 2015, along with a first-round pick in the 2016 NHL Draft ([Julien Gauthier](#)) in exchange for Andrej Sekera.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018



## Hurricanes hope to stay alive vs. Coyotes

**The Carolina Hurricanes haven't been eliminated from playoff contention, but they're trending in that direction without a major turnaround.**

by [STATS](#)

7h ago • 2 min read Update 7h ago

The [Carolina Hurricanes](#) haven't been eliminated from playoff contention, but they're trending in that direction without a major turnaround.

They'll be facing a team Thursday night that already has met the fate of being elimination from playoff contention.

The [Arizona Coyotes](#) can put the Hurricanes in a deeper hole if they can pull out a road victory at PNC Arena in Raleigh, N.C.

"Where we are stinks," said Carolina center Jordan Staal said. "We have to come to work. We can't just not work. ... It's no fun to let each other down like that."

The Hurricanes have lost four of their past five games, sinking in the Eastern Conference standings after making it above the playoff line just a few weeks ago.

Now, there's little room for missteps if the Hurricanes are going to make the necessary climb.

"It's disappointing," Carolina coach Bill Peters said. "If we're not the hardest-working team, we don't give ourselves a chance."

The Hurricanes insist much of this depends on turning in the right focus and effort.

"Just work ethic, it doesn't matter if we make mistakes," Staal said. "... When it gets loose is when we're not playing our game."

The Hurricanes have allowed at least six goals in four of their last seven games. Many of those goals given up have come in rapid sequences.

"When they score, they usually score their (next one) right away," Hurricanes right winger Sebastian Aho said.

Scott Darling was in the net for Tuesday night's 7-3 home loss to Edmonton, with all indications that the Hurricanes will go back to Cam Ward for the Arizona game.

Arizona began its six-game road trip by learning that defenseman Jason Demers would miss the last 10 games of the season because of an upper-body injury.

The Coyotes, who won 4-1 on Wednesday night at Buffalo, will play six games in nine nights on the road.

The Coyotes put Dylan Strome, who racked up 50 points in 47 AHL games, right to work.

"He got called up to play," Arizona assistant coach John MacLean said of the 21-year-old center.

Strome said: "We try to preach the same thing down there as we do up here. Just have fun and go out there and do your thing."

For Arizona's Clayton Keller, this will be the first chance to increase a franchise record that he set Wednesday night. His 55 points are a rookie team record.

Coyotes coach Rick Tocchet returned after missing Monday's game to attend his mother's funeral.

The Hurricanes announced Wednesday that defenseman Brett Pesce and forward Victor Rask will miss the remainder of the season because of shoulder injuries. Pesce was on the ice 20 minutes Tuesday night.

Already this week, the Hurricanes are without defenseman Noah Hanifin because of a concussion.

The Hurricanes recalled defenseman Roland McKeown on emergency from the American Hockey League's Charlotte Checkers. McKeown, 22, made his [NHL](#) debut Nov. 4 at Arizona, marking one of his three NHL games.

The Hurricanes are 16-15-6 on home ice with four home games remaining, so they won't be able to win a majority of their home games.

In the previous meeting this season, Arizona won at home in a 2-1 shootout Nov. 4.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018



## Hurricanes Recall Roland McKeown, Checkers Sign Zack Kamrass To PTO

Written by Nicholas Niedzielski

Published: March 21, 2018

Roland McKeown is headed to the NHL as the Hurricanes have recalled the defenseman from Charlotte.

This marks the third recall this season for the second-year pro. McKeown who made his NHL debut earlier this season, has recorded two assists in three games with Carolina. In the AHL, McKeown has set career highs in goals (7), assists (16) and points (23) and ranks second on among Charlotte blue liners in scoring, as well as tying for the league lead with a +35 rating.

The loss of McKeown compounded with Josiah Didier's upcoming three-game suspension leaves the Checkers' blue line shorthanded heading into this weekend's series against the Laval Rocket. To fill that hole, the Checkers have signed Zack Kamrass to a professional tryout.

The 27-year-old defenseman has put up 17 points (6g, 11a) in 44 games this season for the Florida Everblades. Kamrass, a product of UMass-Lowell, has spent most of his three pro seasons in the ECHL, totaling 83 points (18g, 65a) and 50 penalty minutes in 170 games with the Idaho Steelheads and the Florida Everblades. The Atlanta native logged one AHL contest in 2015-16 with the Texas Stars.



## Goalie interference review change won't eliminate judgment calls

**GMs recommend giving final say to Situation Room for more consistency**

by Nicholas J. Cotsonika [@cotsonika](#) / NHL.com Columnist

March 21st, 2018

**BOCA RATON, Fla.** -- The theory is simple: If fewer people make the calls on coach's challenges for goaltender interference, the standard will be clearer. The calls will be more consistent.

That's why NHL general managers recommended a rule change at their annual meetings Wednesday. It was approved by the NHL Players' Association executive board and the NHL/NHLPA Competition Committee; if it is unanimously approved by the Board of Governors, the ultimate authority will rest with the NHL Hockey Operations Department in the Situation Room in Toronto, not the referees on the ice, and a former referee will be involved.

But the goaltender interference rule will not change. The enforcement standard will not change. The process will not change much.

If history is a guide, the vast majority of calls will not be different than they would have been otherwise. There were 170 coach's challenges for goaltender interference through 1,100 games this season. How often would senior vice president of hockey operations Kris King have overruled the referees?

"Four, maybe five, times," King said. "And on the fifth one? They could have said, 'You're crazy.'"

That this is a judgment call will not change. That there will be some disagreement -- and, of course, controversy -- probably will not change because someone else is making the final judgment. If it's to the point hockey ops feels strongly enough to overrule referees, it's probably a play reasonable people could see differently. That's the nature of



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018

it, and it's not as big of an issue as it has been made out to be.

"We're talking about six in 170," King said. "Really, 164 of them, there were no problems, and it worked really well. The officials took our information. They looked at that information. They've overturned their calls because of that information, when a lot of people said they wouldn't."

Here is how it works:

The Situation Room is in the NHL office in Toronto. On the front wall is a large video panel showing each game. The brass sits there: King, senior executive vice president of hockey operations Colin Campbell, senior vice president of hockey operations Mike Murphy and vice presidents of hockey operations Rod Pasma and Kay Whitmore. Behind them are workstations with people assigned to monitor each game.

Each time a goal is scored, the person monitoring the game yells something like, "I've got a goal, guys." If there's even a chance of goaltender interference, he yells something like, "I've got a goal here. There's a lot of traffic around the net. You might want to look at this."

King and Pasma handle most of the coach's challenges for goaltender interference during the regular season. King handled all of them during the playoffs last year and will again this year -- the first three rounds in the Situation Room, the Final on site. He rushes over to the workstation, which has a monitor showing 14 different views.

"I'll look at that game before the team even decided whether they're going to challenge," King said. "And the interesting part is, eight out of 10 times, we know they're challenging the play before they do."

When the video goal judge in the arena calls the Situation Room because the coach is challenging for goaltender interference, a light flashes. If it's the final minute of regulation or overtime, hockey ops decides whether to initiate a review.

The person at the workstation cues up the replays for the referees to see on their tablet. In the regular season, King, both referees and the video goal judge speak to each other on headsets. In the playoffs, it's King, both referees and either a former referee, Pasma or Whitmore sitting with the video goal judge. (Each series has an officiating manager on site: one of six former referees, Pasma or Whitmore.)

King starts out with real-time replays, because that's how the referees judged the play on the ice. Usually, he shows them the overhead shot. He and the referees talk about other angles he wants them to see or they want to see, and whether they want them in real time or slow motion.

"We'll give him everything available to us, and obviously in a timely manner," King said. "You've probably watched ones where they've been too long, and nobody likes it. Trust me, we hate it. But we know how big they are sometimes, and sometimes even with the 14 different views and the live feeds, we still don't get that one look we're looking for."

King always finishes with a real-time replay.

"When you have HD cameras and overheads in slow motion, it's deceiving," King said. "Things look a lot worse than when you're actually watching it live. ... You have to almost get it back in their head again."

The referee down low generally makes the call, but sometimes his view is blocked. His partner's opinion is just as important.

Finally, King will ask the referees what they think, and they will ask him what he and his colleagues think. Now and then, there will be disagreement in the Situation Room. But King said 99 percent of the time, he and his colleagues think the same way because they have been together for a long time.

"We can get a real sense of where [the referees are] leaning," King said. "If I feel they're off track a little bit, because two days earlier we had a very similar play and they were looking too hard, I'll say, 'Guys, you know what? We had a play like this the other day, and this is what the guys thought on this play.'"

"And then they'll say, 'OK, you know what? You're right. I think the better call here is to keep our call,' or, 'We didn't see that live, and the better call is to overturn our call.' Now, I can't say, 'Listen, you guys are wrong, change your call,' because that's not the way it's written. They have the final call."

If the rule change is approved, hockey ops will have the final call. The department might use it for, say, 3 percent of reviews.

"I hope not," King said.

Ideally, it will be even less.

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# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018

## SportScan

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

1104913 Carolina Hurricanes

Hurricanes' Pesce, Rask to miss remainder of season with injuries

BY CHIP ALEXANDER

RALEIGH—The Carolina Hurricanes announced Wednesday that defenseman Brett Pesce and forward Victor Rask would miss the remainder of the season, both with shoulder injuries.

Rask left Tuesday's game against the Edmonton Oilers after making a play against Oilers center Connor McDavid but later returned. He was not at practice Wednesday at PNC Arena.

Pesce, who has played with defenseman Jaccob Slavin much of the season on the Canes' best defensive pairing, was at Wednesday's practice.

The Canes said defenseman Roland McKeown had been recalled on emergency from the Charlotte Checkers of the American Hockey League. McKeown, 22, has two assists in three games with the Hurricanes this season.

Defenseman Noah Hanifin, the Canes' representative in the 2018 NHL All-Star Game, is sidelined indefinitely with a concussion.

The Hurricanes have generally been injury-free much of the season, with 71 man-games lost. Forward Lee Stempniak missed 36 games with upper-body injuries.

News Observer LOADED: 03.22.2018

1104914 Carolina Hurricanes

Five takeaways from the Hurricanes' 7-3 loss to the Oilers

BY CHIP ALEXANDER

RALEIGH—It didn't have a big crowd. There wasn't a lot of energy in the building.

But to get hammered 7-3? The Carolina Hurricanes had a hard time Tuesday trying to explain such a lackluster effort and beating at PNC Arena, when they were booed at game's end.

"We weren't playing good from the start right through to the end," Canes center Jordan Staal said.

That pretty much covers the full 60 minutes. There were a few glimmers of a pushback — goals from Sebastian Aho and Teuvo Teravainen after the Oilers spurred ahead, each pulling the Canes within a goal. But Edmonton's speed and aggressive forechecking was too much for a team whose defense was in disarray too much of the game.

"We never really got a spark, never really got engaged," Canes coach Bill Peters said. "It's disappointing. It's disappointing when our compete is the way it was tonight."

Staal said the Canes need to "come to work every game," adding, "We can't lay eggs like that every other game."

— Don't put all the blame on Scott Darling. That was Peters' opinion about the goaltending Tuesday.

Darling, the winner Sunday against the New York Islanders, was in net for all seven goals as the Oilers worked their way into good scoring positions and made the most of their shots, scoring six times on the first 19 shots.

Peters said the coaching staff discussed replacing Darling with Cam Ward after the Oilers' sixth goal but decided against it.

"We were pretty flat," he said. "I didn't think that was going to do much for us. It didn't make any sense to put Cam in, in that environment."

— The Canes' Aho and forward Jesse Puljujarvi of the Oilers are good friends and the two joined Teravainen for a meal Monday night in Raleigh. Good Finnish food, Puljujarvi said. Good company.

All three then scored in the game. Aho and Puljujarvi each had a goal and an assist, and Teravainen scored.

Aho centered a powerhouse Finnish line in the 2016 World Junior Championship, with Puljujarvi on one wing and Patrik Laine of the Winnipeg Jets on the other. The Finns won the gold medal in Finland and were treated like rock stars after it.

Puljujarvi said he and Aho played five years together as juniors. "He has good speed and sees all over the ice, a very smart player," Puljujarvi said. "I really liked playing with him."

— A year ago, Valentin Zykov was recalled from the Charlotte Checkers in March and scored in his first NHL game. The Russian forward then was injured in the second. That was that.

"That was unexpected," he said Tuesday. "That's about all I can say."

Zykov is back, saying he's more comfortable and confident. He has 32 goals for the Checker to lead the AHL, 16 on the power play, and had 15:05 of ice time in his first game for the Canes this season, playing on the fourth line with Victor Rask and Phil Di Giuseppe. Zykov had one shot in the game and was used on a power-play unit.

Many Canes fans have been asking why it took so long to get Zykov up to the big club, given the Canes' scoring problems. No complaints from Zykov, however.

"I'm just playing hockey," he said. "The rest is not up to me."

— After a listless 3-1 loss to the San Jose Sharks on Feb. 4, Peters wrote on a whiteboard "Who are we? 29 games to find out" at the next practice. He then tapped it with his stick for emphasis as he left the ice.

Twenty games later, after going 7-10-3, the answer is in: a team that will again miss the playoffs, that has not established a team identity.

"If we don't compete, if we're not the hardest-working team, we don't give ourselves a chance," Peters said.

News Observer LOADED: 03.22.2018



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018

1104890 Arizona Coyotes

Game Day: Arizona Coyotes take on Sabres in Buffalo

azcentral sports Published 12:20 p.m. MT March 21, 2018

NHL: Nashville Predators at Buffalo Sabres

Wednesday's game

Coyotes at Sabres

When: 4 p.m.

Where: KeyBank Center, Buffalo, N.Y.

TV/Radio: Fox Sports Arizona/KTAR-AM (620).

Outlook: After a lengthy homestand, the Arizona Coyotes (24-37-11) embark on a six-game road trip beginning with a Wednesday night matchup against the Buffalo Sabres (23-37-12) ... Buffalo (58 points) has the fewest points among all NHL teams; entering play Tuesday, Arizona and Vancouver were next with 59 points each ... This is the second of two matchups between the teams this season, with the Sabres having notched a 5-4 victory on Nov. 2 at Gila River Arena; forward Benoit Pouliot scored twice for Buffalo ... The Sabres are led in scoring by forwards Jack Eichel (22 goals, 34 assists) and Ryan O'Reilly (20 goals, 23 assists), as well as defenseman Rasmus Ristolainen (35 points) ... Eichel (ankle) returned to the Sabres' lineup on Saturday after being sidelined since Feb. 10 ... Coyotes head coach Rick Tocchet, who missed Monday's game while attending his mother's funeral in Toronto, is expected to rejoin the team on Wednesday in Toronto ... The Coyotes also recalled center Dylan Strome and defenseman Trevor Murphy from their AHL affiliate in Tucson on Tuesday; the team announced defenseman Jason Demers will miss the rest of the season with an upper-body injury.

Arizona Republic LOADED: 03.22.2018

1104891 Arizona Coyotes

Clayton Keller breaks Coyotes rookie points record in win over Sabres

BY KELLAN OLSON | UPDATED: MARCH 21, 2018 AT 10:55 PM

For all that has gone wrong with the Arizona Coyotes this season, at least one thing has gone right.

The play of rookie Clayton Keller has added some optimism to the team's future, as he adds a much-needed scoring boost to a forward group that has lacked offensive firepower.

Keller's two assists in the Coyotes' 4-1 win over the Buffalo Sabres Wednesday brought his point total on the season to 55. That bests Peter Mueller's 54 in the 2007-08 season that was the previous high tally for a Coyote in their rookie season.

The 19-year-old's 35 assists are also a Coyotes rookie record.

55 points.

35 assists.

2 Coyotes rookie records.

1 kid. [pic.twitter.com/UViU2pQxZx](https://pic.twitter.com/UViU2pQxZx)

— Arizona Coyotes (@ArizonaCoyotes) March 22, 2018

The Coyotes got on the board early thanks to Dylan Strome on the power play. Strome's shot off Sabres goaltender Chad Johnson made it 1-0 in the early first period.

After Buffalo would answer in the mid-first period, Derek Stepan scored the team's second power play goal, assisted by Oliver Ekman-Larsson and Keller, to make it 2-1 in the late first period.

Caution: NSFW. [pic.twitter.com/LiRK3x7SCE](https://pic.twitter.com/LiRK3x7SCE)

— Arizona Coyotes (@ArizonaCoyotes) March 21, 2018

A scoreless second would be followed by Richard Panik's 10th goal of the season in the third period, assisted by Stepan and Keller.

Meet the highest-scoring rookie in @ArizonaCoyotes history, @ClaytonKeller37. 🐾 #ARlvsBUF [pic.twitter.com/8LQhNZyJDI](https://pic.twitter.com/8LQhNZyJDI)

— NHL (@NHL) March 22, 2018

Max Domi's empty-netter would seal a win that made it seven victories for the Coyotes in March, the team's highest win total for a month with six games still remaining in March.

Keller's scoring promise fills a hole that has been present for quite some time in Coyotes hockey. In this decade, the Coyotes have had only two instances of a player scoring at least 25 goals in a season. Shane Doan tallied 28 goals in the 2015-16 season and Radim Vrbata had 35 in the 2011-12 season.

The 55 points for Keller, in fact, tie the highest point total for a Coyote in the previous two seasons. Radim Vrbata had 55 points last season and Oliver Ekman-Larsson hit that same number the year prior.

If Keller was to record at least one point in the Coyotes' nine remaining games, it would be the most points by a member of the Coyotes since the 2011-12 season, when Ray Whitney notched 77 points and Vrbata had 62.

Keller could very well hit 60 points, and that would make him only the 11th player in Coyotes history to do so. He would join Keith Tkachuk, Jeremy Roenick, Mike Gartner, Daymond Langkow, Daniel Briere, Mike Johnson, Mike Comrie, Whitney, Vrbata and Doan. Not bad for a rookie.

Arizona Sports LOADED: 03.22.2018

1104969 Ottawa Senators

Game Day: Edmonton Oilers at Ottawa Senators

Ken Warren Published on: March 21, 2018

EDMONTON AT OTTAWA

Canadian Tire Centre, 7:30 p.m. TV: TSN5. Radio: TSN 1200 AM, 94.5 Unique FM.

Five Keys To The Game

1-Overdue with the man advantage: It's shocking, really, how a team blessed with Connor McDavid can rank dead last in the National Hockey League on the power play. Add in a weak penalty kill and there's little wonder why the Oilers sit near the bottom of the standings.

2-Intensity: Both clubs have to find reasons for motivation, having kissed away their chances at the post-season long ago. The Senators need to



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018

deliver a better effort after Tuesday's dismal 7-2 loss to the Florida Panthers.

3-Learning on the fly: The Senators' makeshift lineup has many Belleville call-ups, and those players have been prone to making mistakes while adjusting to the faster pace in the more skilled NHL.

4-Establishing early pace: The Senators were on their heels in the first period against the Panthers and never dictated the pace. A quicker start is necessary against the Oilers.

5-Rallying around the captain: The shock surrounding the death of Erik Karlsson unborn child on Tuesday carried over into the game against the Panthers. While Karlsson remains in their thoughts, other Senators have had time to adjust to his absence from the lineup.

### Special Teams

Senators: PP 16.9 per cent (26th), PK 75.4 per cent (28th)

Oilers: PP 14.3 per cent (31st), PK 75.1 per cent (30th)

### Game Day Rosters

#### Senators

#### Forwards

Ryan Dzingel-Matt Duchene-Mike Hoffman

Max McCormick-Jean-Gabriel Pageau-Bobby Ryan

Magnus Paajarvi-Zack Smith-Tom Pyatt

Marian Gaborik-Filip Chlapik-Alex Burrows

#### Defencemen

Thomas Chabot-Cody Ceci

Mark Borowiecki-Freddy Claesson

Ben Harpur-Christian Wolanin

#### Goalies

Craig Anderson

Mike Condon

#### Sick Bay

Clarke MacArthur, Chris Wideman, Mark Stone, Erik Karlsson (personal leave)

#### Oilers

#### Forwards

Ryan Nugent-Hopkins-Connor McDavid-Ty Rattie

Drake Caggiula-Leon Draisaitl-Pontus Aberg

Milan Lucic-Ryan Strome-Jesse Puljujarvi

Anton Slepyshev-Jujhar Khaira-Iiro Pakarinen

#### Defencemen

Darnell Nurse-Adam Larsson

Kris Russell-Ethan Bear

Yohann Auvitu-Matt Benning

#### Goalies

Cam Talbot

Al Montoya

#### Sick Bay

Matt Benning, Zack Kassian, Oscar Klefbom

### The Big Match-Up

Connor McDavid versus Matt Duchene: It has been an agonizingly long year for the Oilers, just like the Senators, but Thursday marks McDavid's one and only appearance at Canadian Tire Centre this season. Before Wednesday's games, McDavid (90 points) trailed only Tampa Bay's Nikita Kucherov (94) and Colorado's Nathan MacKinnon (91) in the NHL scoring race. Duchene has been held without a point in the Senators' past two games, but remains their most dangerous offensive threat.

Ottawa Citizen LOADED: 03.22.2018

1104970 Ottawa Senators

Game Day: Edmonton Oilers at Ottawa Senators

Ken Warren

### EDMONTON AT OTTAWA

Canadian Tire Centre, 7:30 p.m. TV: TSN5. Radio: TSN 1200 AM, 94.5 Unique FM.

### Five Keys To The Game

1-Overdue with the man advantage: It's shocking, really, how a team blessed with Connor McDavid can rank dead last in the National Hockey League on the power play. Add in a weak penalty kill and there's little wonder why the Oilers sit near the bottom of the standings.

2-Intensity: Both clubs have to find reasons for motivation, having kissed away their chances at the post-season long ago. The Senators need to deliver a better effort after Tuesday's dismal 7-2 loss to the Florida Panthers.

3-Learning on the fly: The Senators' makeshift lineup has many Belleville call-ups, and those players have been prone to making mistakes while adjusting to the faster pace in the more skilled NHL.

4-Establishing early pace: The Senators were on their heels in the first period against the Panthers and never dictated the pace. A quicker start is necessary against the Oilers.

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Marian Gaborik-Filip Chlapik-Alex Burrows

#### Defencemen

Thomas Chabot-Cody Ceci



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018

Mark Borowiecki-Freddy Claesson

Ben Harpur-Christian Wolanin

Goalies

Craig Anderson

Mike Condon

Sick Bay

Clarke MacArthur, Chris Wideman, Mark Stone, Erik Karlsson (personal leave)

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Forwards

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Ottawa Sun LOADED: 03.22.2018

1104971 Ottawa Senators

Warrenspiece: Harpur reminisces about McDavid; Sieloff scores; Duchene earns A grade

Ken Warren

Ben Harpur has a mere 55 National Hockey League games to his name, but he might very well be asked to help stop a lightning bolt named Connor McDavid of the Edmonton Oilers on Thursday night.

If it happens, Harpur won't skate away in fear.

Instead, the 23-year-old Ottawa Senators defenceman said he would welcome the challenge of reliving some of his fondest hockey memories from a head-to-head matchup with McDavid in the 2013-14 Ontario Hockey League playoffs.

At the time, Harpur was in his third season with the Guelph Storm, McDavid was in his second with the Erie Otters, and the OHL's Western Conference title was on the line.

"It was funny how it worked out," Harpur said Wednesday. "In Game 1 in Guelph, his line went out and scored two goals in the first period and our coach came down the bench and really gave us the option — "Does anybody want to play against this guy?" — and it was up to me and my defence partner at the time, Phil Baltisberger. We were the line that hadn't been scored against, so we just kind of jumped out on the ice and we ended up being the shutdown guys for the rest of the series."

Harpur and Baltisberger, currently playing pro hockey in Switzerland, got the last laugh.

"We won the (OHL title), and that was a big challenge for us back then," Harpur said. "I still remember kind of taking a step back and realizing how great this player was, but it was a challenge to play against him. It went five games. That was one of the most fun couple of months I had, going on that run and being up against a player who would go on to being one of the top players in the NHL. That was a great experience."

So, it's easy stopping McDavid, the 2017 Hart Trophy winner recipient who now has 34 goals and 56 assists and is contending for a second straight NHL scoring title?

"That was a couple of years ago," Harpur said. "He has only got better since then."

**SIELOFF APPROVAL:** Patrick Sieloff, who has been Harpur's roommate in the American Hockey League for the better part of two years, also experienced playing against McDavid while with the OHL's Windsor Spitfires. He may or may not be back in the Senators lineup Thursday, depending on the status of Christian Wolanin, who was signed Wednesday.

Even if Sieloff's latest NHL stint is one and done — a 7-2 defeat to the Florida Panthers — he has a spot in the record books to show for it.

Sieloff, who scored the Calgary Flames in his only other NHL game in April 2016, became the first player to score his first two NHL goals in two games with different teams.

"Not everybody's going to get the opportunity to put his name in the record book, I guess, so it was kind of neat," he said. "I guess how it happened was just shoot it on net and hope for the best."

Actually, Sieloff's shot missed the net, took a crazy hop off the boards, floated back over the net, hit the back of Panthers netminder James Reimer and trickled over the goal-line.

Just the way he planned it. Maybe the story will change a bit by the time Sieloff tells his grandkids.

"That's not like my game," said Sieloff, a hard-nosed, Mark Borowiecki-type defender with seven goals in 199 AHL games. "I'm going to be in your face, simple, but, when those come, it's just a bonus."... Max McCormick is also receiving a "bonus" for his solid play since being called up from Belleville. Primarily used as a fourth liner, McCormick skated with Jean-Gabriel Pageau and Bobby Ryan during Senators practice Wednesday ... Forward Jim O'Brien was returned to Belleville, clearing a lineup spot for Ryan Dzingel, who took a Mike Hoffman shot off the helmet during Saturday's game at Columbus and sat out Tuesday's ugly loss to Florida.

Matt Duchene, right, seen here checking the Blue Jackets' Alexander Wennberg in a game on Saturday, has been wearing an A as Senators alternate captain since Mark Stone was sidelined by a leg injury.

**DUCHENE EMBRACES LETTER:** Matt Duchene is pleasantly surprised to be wearing an "A" these days. When alternate captain Mark Stone went down with a knee injury, Duchene assumed the role. "I'm incredibly honoured to be given that role while Stone is out," Duchene said. "As a new player coming in, you don't expect that. I can't be more grateful and happy with the role I've been given here, on and off the ice. I feel very



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018

close to my teammates here.” Duchene, who has one year remaining on his contract before he can become an unrestricted free agent in 2019, isn’t committing to anything long-term. He’s like Ottawa fans, but waiting to see what direction the team heads during the off-season. “I’m curious to see what happens at the draft and July 1 and stuff like that and kind of go from there,” he said. “I know this could be a really great place for me going forward, if everything works out. That’s kind of my hope.”

Ottawa Sun LOADED: 03.22.2018

1104972 Ottawa Senators

Erik Karlsson blasts online troll for disgusting comments

Staff Reporter

An online troll who Erik Karlsson says has been harassing him for months has now attacked his wife, Melinda, on Instagram after the death of their son, Axel.

Erik Karlsson issued this statement on Instagram on Wednesday:

AT THIS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TIME IT’S HARD TO SEE THE LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL BUT WE KNOW ONE DAY WE’LL GET THERE. WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK EVERYONE FOR THE LOVE AND SUPPORT WE HAVE RECEIVED AND ALSO FOR RESPECTING OUR PRIVACY AND THE PROCESS WE NEED TO GO THROUGH NOW. WE FEEL VERY LUCKY TO BE AXELS PARENTS. EVEN THOUGH HE WAS STILLBORN, WE KNOW WE WILL HOLD HIM AGAIN ONE DAY UNDER DIFFERENT CIRCUMSTANCES AND THE JOY HE GAVE US WILL BE WITH US FOREVER.

A POST SHARED BY ERIK KARLSSON (@ERIKKARLSSON65) ON MAR 21, 2018 AT 10:00AM PDT

An Instagram user known as sandydandy45 posted the following comment:

Erik and many supporters quickly responded to the abuse.

As of the time of publishing, sandydandy45 – Sandra B. – had zero posts, two followers and was only following two accounts (Erik Karlsson being one of them).

Instagram user Sandra B.

Erik Karlsson’s original post had tens of thousands of likes and thousands upon thousands of supportive comments.

Ottawa is with you.

Ottawa Sun LOADED: 03.22.2018

1104973 Ottawa Senators

Erik and Melinda Karlsson issue statement about loss; Senators mourn with team captain

Ken Warren

The Ottawa Senators will give captain Erik Karlsson all the time he needs to grieve.

After the Senators announced Tuesday that Karlsson and his wife, Melinda, had lost their unborn child, the couple issued an Instagram statement of their own on Wednesday.

“At this extremely difficult time, it’s hard to see the light at the end of the tunnel, but we do know one day we’ll get there,” the statement read. “We would like to thank everyone for the love and support we have received and also for respecting our privacy and the process we need to go through.

“We feel very lucky to be Axel’s parents. Even though he was stillborn, we know we will hold him again one day under different circumstances and the joy he gave us will be with us forever.”

The devastating news hit the community hard and left a hollow feeling in the Senators dressing room.

Hours after hearing the news, there was no way the Senators could skate away from the tragedy and they lost handily, 7-2, to the Florida Panthers on Tuesday night. At times, Senators players seemed to lose their focus while chasing the puck around the ice.

“After the game, I didn’t want to excuse our performance with outside circumstances, but I have to be fair to the players,” Senators coach Guy Boucher said following Wednesday’s practice. “It was very difficult for everybody because of the circumstances with Erik. A lot of our players are in similar circumstances. There are couples and some of them right now are pregnant.”

Boucher said Karlsson’s teammates were in their own collective state of shock, almost numb while trying to support their captain.

“The human side took over (Tuesday),” Boucher said. “It’s not just caring, it’s disturbing, too. It puts you in a kind of weird, surreal mood. It was dead on the bench the whole game.”

There is no timetable for Karlsson’s return. The Senators are offering him whatever he needs while, at the same time, recognizing they also have a job to do.

Centre Matt Duchene said the Karlssons’ situation “transcends hockey.

“I know we’re all still hurting for him, but, as we’re able to internalize it and digest it, I think we’ll be able to put it in a place and put hockey in another place,” Duchene said.

Compassion wasn’t limited to the Senators dressing room. The Edmonton Oilers, who will face the Senators at Canadian Tire Centre on Thursday night, were well aware of Karlsson’s situation.

“Throughout the hockey community, when something like that happens, when it happens to anyone in life, you definitely feel for them,” Oilers forward Ryan Nugent-Hopkins said. “Everyone on our team is thinking about him and his family. It’s so unfortunate and we wish him all the best.”

Ottawa Sun LOADED: 03.22.2018

1104974 Ottawa Senators

Defenceman Christian Wolanin signs with the Senators

Ken Warren

There are fast tracks to the National Hockey League and then there’s the bullet train Christian Wolanin could ride into making his debut for the Ottawa Senators on Thursday night.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018

Wolanin, an offensive defenceman only days removed from an outstanding third season with the University of North Dakota Fighting Hawks, signed a two-year entry-level contract Wednesday morning.

If, as expected, he plays against the Edmonton Oilers, the ink on the deal will be barely dry by the time his skates hit the ice.

Senators head coach Guy Boucher laughed Wednesday when asked if the team was throwing Wolanin into the fire.

"That's what it is," Boucher said. "It's tough because the calibre. It's not like he's (coming from) the AHL. The disparity between the (NCAA and NHL) is gigantic."

Wolanin, 23, is the son of Craig Wolanin, who played 695 NHL games as a renowned defensive presence with the New Jersey Devils, Quebec Nordiques, Toronto Maple Leafs, Tampa Bay Lightning and Colorado Avalanche.

Originally drafted by the Senators in the fourth round (107th overall) in 2015, Christian Wolanin scored 12 goals and 23 assists in 40 games with North Dakota this season, giving him leverage in negotiations with the Senators.

If he hadn't signed with the Senators before Aug. 15, he would have been eligible to become a free agent.

"Christian is a talented player that has displayed high-end offensive skill from the blue-line during his career at the University of North Dakota," Senators general manager Pierre Dorion said in a statement. "He made the decision to turn professional and we are happy to have him under contract."

Boucher was keeping his own expectations in check.

"I'm not expecting the kid to come in and all of a sudden get everything right and understand everything," Boucher said. "It will be difficult for him, but right now it's an opportunity for him to see what it is, to see the calibre, to be around NHL players and step on the ice and show us his attributes."

Ottawa Sun LOADED: 03.22.2018

1104975 Ottawa Senators

Senators rally around Karlsson family during sad days at Canadian Tire Centre

By Chris Stevenson Mar 21, 2018

I am going to cover a bit of ground here because Wednesday was one of those types of days at Canadian Tire Centre.

Enveloping everything, of course, was the overwhelming sadness of the situation involving Ottawa Senators captain Erik Karlsson and his wife, Melinda, whose son, Axel, was stillborn.

Karlsson, who missed practice Monday and the Senators' 7-2 loss to the Florida Panthers on Tuesday and is away from the team indefinitely, tweeted this message Wednesday:

Forward Matt Duchene, who has quickly occupied a place of leadership in the Senators' dressing room since joining the team in a trade in November, spoke eloquently about what the players were feeling Tuesday before their game against Panthers after they, like the rest of the hockey world, learned of the heartbreaking news.

"Coming into (Tuesday) night, we were sitting around the locker room here and the mood is just not the same. You look at it, his stall, and he's not here," Duchene said. "It's not like he's hurt. It's not something like

that. He had something so horrible happen to him and his wife. You hurt for him, and there's nothing you can say or do to make things better.

"A big group of us in here have wives that are either pregnant or guys that are in that stage of life, getting married. ... It seems like the bulk of our group is in or around that age. When that happens, it takes you aback, big time."

Senators forward Zack Smith and his wife are expecting a baby.

"I couldn't imagine being in their position right now. We're never going to use that as an excuse on the ice, but away from the ice, we feel for them. Our hearts go out to them and we hope they're doing OK," Smith said. "As expecting parents, it hits a little deeper. You realize what it would be like, the feeling, the attachment you get to something like that. I don't know what else to say. It's devastating. I just feel terrible for them right now."

At another time, in another season, this might have been an exciting time. The Edmonton Oilers and Connor McDavid practised at Canadian Tire Centre on Wednesday before their game against the Senators on Thursday. This was supposed to be a game between two teams with high hopes, one coming off a long playoff run and another aspiring for the same.

Instead, they are two teams playing out a lost season and, after Tuesday's tragic news, that got even harder to do for the Senators in a world where playing hockey, for the time being, just doesn't mean as much.

"I think it definitely affected us early," Duchene said of the Senators start against the Panthers. "It took a lot of mental energy just to play the game. Our excitement level probably wasn't where it needed to be to win the game. I know all of us are thinking about him like crazy and praying for him and Melinda. It's a family atmosphere and, when you have a guy in this locker room that you see every day and you care about, have something like that happen, it transcends hockey, it goes beyond. It's a real life thing. Sometimes it puts things in perspective in a good or bad way a little bit. It was tough for us last night. We're all still hurting for him.

"As we internalize it and digest it, I think we will be able to put it in a place and keep hockey in another place and it won't overlap like it did last night."

If the game against the Oilers is the first in the NHL for defenceman Christian Wolanin, who left the University of North Dakota Fighting Hawks after completing his junior season and signed a two-year entry level contract Wednesday, Senators fans will see a player capable of being an offensive force from the blue line.

"They are going to see a very dynamic, puck-moving defenceman. At the college level, he was a game changer at our level as far as making things happen every time he hit the ice," UND coach Brad Berry told The Athletic. "He's a guy who plays with energy and enthusiasm.

"He's very good on the power play, 5-on-5 and also a very good defender. In his three years here, he's rounded his game out, but he took it to the next level offensively. He's not afraid to make plays. He's very confident and energetic, a positive force in the locker room. I'm excited to watch him going forward here."

The 23-year-old, the son of former NHLer Craig Wolanin (Senators associate coach Marc Crawford coached Craig with the Quebec Nordiques and the Colorado Avalanche in the early '90s; now he'll coach his son, too), was the Senators fourth-round pick, No. 107, in the 2015 draft. He led the Hawks in scoring with 35 points (12 goals and 23 assists) this past season. He was member of the national championship team as a freshman in 2016 and is expected to face former North Dakota teammate Drake Caggiula, now with the Oilers, who scored two goals in the championship game.

Wolanin was in a unique contract situation. Because he wasn't drafted until he was 20, he could have filed papers to become an unrestricted free agent within 30 days of leaving school. That put pressure on the



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018

Senators to sign him. Wolanin didn't even have an agent until recently, but a conference call between all the involved parties resolved the situation. Wolanin signed a deal that will pay him a pro-rated \$832,500 for the rest of this season (about \$4,500 a day in the NHL) along with a \$92,500 signing bonus.

He probably looked at the opportunities that appear to be there on the transitioning Senators blueline after the departures of veterans Marc Methot, Dion Phaneuf and Johnny Oduya and figured it might not be much better anywhere else.

He will burn a year of the deal this season, leaving him just one season away from being a restricted free agent.

Two executives made a comparison between Wolanin and New Jersey Devils rookie defenceman Will Butcher, also 23, who is having a solid season after completing four years at the University of Denver. He was drafted 123rd by the Colorado Avalanche in 2013, but didn't sign and became an unrestricted free agent, signing with the Devils.

Butcher had nine goals and 23 assists in his junior year and seven goals and 30 assists in his senior year, similar to Wolanin's production. Butcher has two goals and 33 assists for the Devils this season and is tied with Mikhail Sergachev for the scoring lead among rookie defencemen.

"Yes, you can draw a parallel between Wolanin and Butcher," one executive said. "But keep in mind Butcher played an extra year of college. It will be interesting to see how (Wolanin) stacks up. There are no guarantees, but you can see some comparisons there."

Berry said Wolanin followed in the footsteps of some pretty good defencemen with that national championship team who have gone on to start making their mark in the NHL.

"The biggest thing that happened was his freshman year when we won the national championship in 2016, he got to play alongside and watch Troy Stecher, who's in Vancouver, Paul LaDue in L.A., Tucker Poolman in Winnipeg right now," Berry said. "Those defencemen were elder statesmen on the team and he learned how we do things here. It only helped his game. Where those guys were when we won it two years ago, he was at that level this year. He learned as a young guy coming in and he was that guy his junior year here."

Berry said Wolanin, partnered with Tucker Poolman's younger brother, Colton, evolved his defensive game to the point where he was matched up against the other team's top forwards.

"It was situations involving different things on the game management side: in the offensive end when to pinch, when not to pinch; coming into the defensive zone on your sorts and coverage," Berry said. "He got very good at it. In this day and age, he's got a good stick, stick on ice and taking time and space away. He did an excellent job on that."

"He evolved knowing he had to develop that (defensive) side and he was a good defender for us this year."

Berry said he was impressed with Wolanin's growth into a student-athlete.

"I think as far as goaltenders and defencemen, you have to take your time and learn your craft, learn your position and get better at it on a daily basis," Berry said. "He had the wherewithal and the maturity to do that. Everything that he does on a daily basis, he's all in. Even the academics side. He's going to finish his credits this semester even though he's in Ottawa there."

The Athletic LOADED: 03.22.2018

1104965 New Jersey Devils

Devils fall to Sharks: 4 observations | Need better from goalie on out

Posted March 21, 2018 at 06:00 AM | Updated March 21, 2018 at 07:03 AM

By Chris Ryan

The Sharks piled up the goals quickly against the Devils, netting six on 25 shots against two goalies. That was more than enough to hand the Devils a 6-2 loss on Tuesday at SAP Center in San Jose California.

After dropping their second straight game, the Devils wanted more from every aspect of there game.

While Cory Schneider struggled in his return to net, giving up four goals on 14 shots, Keith Kinkaid didn't have an easy start either, allowing two goals on the first two shots he saw in relief.

Between two power-play goals and a couple odd-man rushes, the Sharks capitalized on prime chances, and the Devils needed a better effort from their goalies on out.

"We gotta be better in front of (Schneider), too," Devils coach John Hynes told media after the game. "It's not about one player, and this is a situation, too, for us, where we talk about different parts of the season and our team understanding how to play these games, meaningful games in March and meaningful games in April."

"Over the last couple games, we played two teams that are also fighting for playoff position. The intensity level, the later it gets in March and April, our group really has to learn quick here. I think there's a lot of things we can gather here from these two games to make us a better team going into Pittsburgh and then Tampa after that."

The Devils had a few stretches, particularly in the second period before the Sharks blew the game open, where they were able to generate some pressure and dangerous looks. But for the most part, the Sharks gave the Devils trouble moving the puck, using a strong forecheck to keep the puck in the Devils' defensive zone.

One of the Devils' biggest strengths is accessing their speed and getting pucks down behind opposing defenses. When the Devils are turning pucks over and not consistently getting through the neutral zone, it's much tougher for them to find regular offensive pressure.

Sami Vatanen, Eric Fehr

"There's just some parts of our game where we're a little bit off," forward Taylor Hall said. "It doesn't seem we have the confidence with the puck right now that we've had all season long, so we have to find that."

"I've talked to you guys a lot this year. You don't want to get too high or too low, and there's still a chance to go over .500 for our road trip. At this time of year I think it's best to be positive and keep moving forward and keep your eyes on what's ahead of you. We'd love to have that game, but it didn't work out, so we're looking forward to finishing the road trip on the right foot."

1105028 Websites

The Athletic / LeBrun: James van Riemsdyk's recent play will make him one of the most sought-after UFAs this summer

By Pierre LeBrun Mar 21, 2018 35

James van Riemsdyk's five-goal, 48-hour outburst last week provided some fresh material in a close-knit Toronto Maple Leafs dressing room.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018

His teammates had fun with the pending UFA, being a contract year and all, after that sensational, back-to-back performance pushed his season goal total to a new career high.

"Yeah a little bit, a couple of jabs here and there, which was funny," the Middletown, New Jersey native said Monday with a grin.

He was at it again Tuesday night with another pair of goals in Tampa, although I highly doubt there was any playful banter in that visitors' dressing room after the Leafs blew a 3-0 lead en route to a 4-3 loss to the first-place Lightning.

It wasted another big night from van Riemsdyk who made it seven tallies in his last four games and 33 on the season — passing John Tavares for most goals among pending UFAs.

Cha-ching, cha-ching.

Every goal counts in a year which will determine so much for the rest of the 28-year-old winger's career. But he hasn't allowed the unsettled nature of his professional future to affect his everyday duties with the playoff-bound Maple Leafs.

"It's one of those things where sure, you'd like to know what's going on, but at the same time you realize it's out of your control so you try to stay confident," van Riemsdyk said. "It makes it easier when you're on a team like this, it's a special group of guys and a special group of players. You don't know how many chances you're going to have to play on a team like this. You make sure you're taking care of that, first and foremost."

Still, every now and then, the subject of his pending UFA status flashes up as a headline. Which happened again last week after a hat trick against Dallas at home was followed the next night by scoring the opening two goals for his team in Buffalo. Then Tuesday night the JVR goal train kept rolling in Tampa.

Eclipsing the 30-goal barrier for the second time in his career, after also putting up 29 goals last season, began to give teeth to what his UFA calling card will formally look like.

How does the marketplace view him?

"From 15 feet in, he's lethal," an executive from another Eastern Conference team told The Athletic. "And he can score in many ways. He's got great hands, he can shoot, he can deke, he's creative, he's not just a one-trick pony. He's a very good player. You look at the premium on goals now, just how hard it is to score ... he'll be in serious demand."

"And let's say you step up and give him the seven years, he'll still be just 35 at the end of that," added the exec. "He won't be 41 or 42 like some of these guys who sign long-term deals. You do worry about the non-prolific skaters grinding to a halt when they turn 30-plus, but he's not quite that heavy. He's more of an ugly skater than a poor skater, in my mind."

I got a more moderate view from another Eastern Conference hockey exec via text message.

"Big, strong 30-ish goal scorer. Reliable to score those goals regardless of the environment around him. But a support guy. Isn't gonna generate the offence alone and doesn't really have another weapon. (He's) actually unique. Because it's hard to be a consistent goal scorer at that level without other dimensions."

The player comparisons for recent UFA signings by wingers of similar production aren't hard to find:

— Alexander Radulov, turned 31 a few days after signing last summer, five years, \$31.25 million (\$6.25 million cap hit);

— Kyle Okposo, 27 when he signed, seven years, \$42 million (\$6 million cap hit);

— Cam Atkinson, will be 29 when his extension kicks in next season, seven years, \$41.125 million (\$5.875 million cap hit);

— T.J. Oshie, was 30 when he signed, eight years, \$46 million (\$5.75 million cap hit);

— Loui Eriksson, was 30 when he signed, six years, \$36 million (\$6 million cap hit);

— Patrick Marleau, was 37 when he signed, three years, \$18.75 million (\$6.25 million cap hit).

With natural inflation and a salary cap due to go up by a healthy margin in June, the basic starting point you would think for JVR is six times six.

"I think it'll be north of that," said the first Eastern Conference executive we spoke with. "It wouldn't surprise me if he got 6-7 years at \$6.5 million (per season) if not more than \$6.5 million. He'll be a player in huge demand."

JVR's preference would certainly be to stay put and re-sign with the Maple Leafs. But if that's not in the cards, he's readying himself for his first-ever UFA experience.

Marleau just happens to have the stall right next to van Riemsdyk at the team's practice facility and I asked the veteran how his first UFA experience went last July. A dozen teams came calling. It was a bit overwhelming at times.

"I don't know if there's anything you can do to prepare for it," Marleau said with JVR in earshot. "When teams are calling, everything looks good, everything is painted in a good light, it definitely makes you think 'What if I go there, or what if I go there, or what if I go there.' You got to be quick on your feet. I think a lot of lists are good. Put down what you're looking for and what your needs are. If you do that, it can kind of take a bit of that chaos out of it."

Van Riemsdyk might be going through it with a good pal, the centre on his line, Tyler Bozak, also a pending UFA. That reality has helped him deal with his contract year and what's ahead.

"We obviously joke about it a little bit and stuff like that," said van Riemsdyk. "It's in good fun. It does make it easier when someone else is going through a similar thing that you're going through. You can share those feelings at times."

Because the Leafs have important contracts to negotiate with the likes of Auston Matthews, William Nylander and Mitch Marner this summer (they can wait another year on Matthews and Marner but I doubt they will), the narrative that has taken hold is that JVR is likely gone.

But if there's one thing we've learned with Leafs GM Lou Lamoriello is that he is tough to predict. Could he make an off-season trade to make room to re-sign JVR?

And it just so happens, for what it's worth, that van Riemsdyk and Lamoriello have a good relationship which dates back to his youth hockey days growing up in New Jersey when the veteran GM ran the Devils.

"That's been really good for me," JVR said of his relationship with the GM. "I met him my freshman year in high school and we had a bit of that familiarity just being a Jersey guy and following all the stuff that he's done over the course of his years there and his whole career. So the chance to work for him, work with him, has been pretty cool. You have that comfort with him."

Such is the hockey world at times, so small, that Lamoriello knew both van Riemsdyk's high school coach and college coach, too.

"The high school tournament was always at the arena and his team was always in it," Lamoriello told The Athletic. "James was the best player without question in that tournament. I had spoken at their luncheon every year that their team was there... I had knowledge of James then as far as the type of person he was and his work ethic through his coach. I knew the family as far as how they raised the kids and how important it was to be good kids, good people."



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018

Business is business, though, and van Riemsdyk can put himself in Lamoriello's shoes, look at the Leafs' pending salary cap puzzle, and understand there are some tough decisions ahead.

"Oh for sure. It would be ignorant not to realize those things," van Riemsdyk said. "You realize how all that kind of stuff plays into something like this. It's obviously like putting together a puzzle and you have to mix and match certain things to get a certain number. Yeah, you appreciate how tough a job that can be and you're projecting down the line so you're not handcuffing yourself too much. You realize it's not as easy as maybe liking a person or liking a player. There's a lot more that goes into it than that."

Lamoriello, of course, wasn't about to tip his hand on JVR's future with the Leafs other than to stress the organization was lucky to have the person and player.

"There's no question how important he is to our team. That speaks for itself," Lamoriello said. "He's a quality young man and a quality hockey player. His focus is on playing right now. He knows that he's a good hockey player. He's not worried about tomorrow. He loves Toronto, he loves the team, he loves the players, he's going to do everything he can to help. He's a pro. He's just going to do his job right now. Whatever the end result is, it will take care of itself."

On that, we can all agree.

The Athletic LOADED: 03.22.2018

1105029 Websites

The Athletic / GMs' offseason priorities: Rangers open to moving a first-round pick

By Craig Custance Mar 21, 2018 10

BOCA RATON, Fla. — The spring meeting is the GM meeting that is typically the most productive. There's been a full season to evaluate suggestions made in Montreal during the fall meeting. There's usually an incident or two leading into the meetings as the games get more intense that influences rules being discussed.

But it's also a moment the GMs can catch their breath. Even for just a minute or two. While in Florida, some took part in a fishing trip to unplug for a bit. Others might meet with an owner who has a place nearby because, as it turns out, there's a bit of money in Boca Raton.

We certainly wouldn't have faulted Rangers GM Jeff Gorton if he took a moment by the pool or the water or the beach to recharge because the spotlight has been on him since the Rangers made the public decision to rebuild. His phone was drained over the trade deadline, as the contending teams honed in on Rick Nash, Michael Grabner and then the monster deal for defenseman Ryan McDonagh.

The Rangers now have three first-round picks in June's draft and another two in both rounds two and three. Pulling him aside following the second day of the meetings, it sure sounds like his work is just beginning. Rather than GMs leaving him alone after he made the moves he had to make at the deadline, that deep pool of draft picks has made him a popular target once again.

"The fact that you have picks and you have the ability to get your assets, it makes you a little more popular amongst your peers," Gorton told The Athletic.

What his colleagues are finding in those conversations is a GM in New York who isn't against moving some of the draft picks. He confirmed he's open to trading a first-rounder.

"At the point we're at, we're looking to get as many good players as we can," Gorton said. "We're trying to rebuild. It's hard to say no to anything. We have to keep our options open and I think we'll do that."

The Rangers famously went four consecutive years without a first-round pick in their pursuit of a Stanley Cup. Their first pick in 2016 didn't come until pick No. 81 (Sean Day). So there's a bit of a gap in the system of a certain age range that Gorton wouldn't mind fixing.

He's open to moving a first-rounder if he can get a good young player who is a little closer to contributing at the NHL level back in return.

"They can't all be 18 (years old)," Gorton said. "You need different age groups to build your team."

2. One of the things the Rangers will have to determine before doing anything with their draft picks is where the different tiers are in this draft. There's a clear-cut No. 1 overall pick in Rasmus Dahlin and after that it starts to get pretty muddy. Not in a bad way because there are players teams really like at the top of this draft.

"It's one and then it's going to get interesting," said one assistant GM of the draft makeup. "Some years there's more layers to it, you might have one guy and you might have three or four and then six or seven players. I think this year is going to be interesting to see where guys end up."

It's not any clearer from the Rangers' perspective.

"We're all out there watching these guys to find what that tier is," Gorton said. "Everyone is talking about the No. 1 pick, it's clear there are good players. Sometimes you have a great player and you get lost in the next few guys but the next few guys are good, too."

3. The Rangers aren't the only high profile team in the midst of a transition. Chicago GM Stan Bowman finds his team in an interesting place this offseason. The Blackhawks were officially eliminated from the playoffs on Tuesday and you can tell Bowman is still working through why this season went the way it did.

"It's just been a tough year, no question about it. It obviously hurt without (Corey) Crawford," Bowman told The Athletic. "Even if we had Corey all year we wouldn't be where we need to be. We would be fighting for that final spot. We've got to try to do better in more ways than just goaltending. I think, if anything, it's shown how underrated Corey is."

4. Bowman points out that last year's team probably wasn't as good as the record indicated, over-reliant on Crawford and the beneficiary of overtime wins. "This year, we're not even getting to overtime," Bowman said. His sense is that the team is the opposite — better than the record shows, although still frustrating coaching and management with its ability to find ways to lose. "We need our best players to play better. There's no question," Bowman said. "Our top players are all having their worst years all at the same time. That's not a recipe for success. The question is, why? It's not one thing. It's not like there's one thing — 'Aha, I found it, let's go fix that.' Why are these guys not playing like they've always played? That's a fair question."

5. There may not be a simple answer, but we tried to provide one anyway. Age. In a game where young players are making more of an impact every year, Chicago's core is getting further away from peak age. Jonathan Toews and Patrick Kane are pushing 30, Duncan Keith turns 35 next season. Brent Seabrook is 32.

Bowman wasn't sold.

"I don't know if I buy that. That's a simple answer. Kaner and Toews are 29. I don't know," Bowman said. "I look at (Zdeno) Chara, he's having a great season and he's 40." If it isn't simply regression because of age, Bowman has his work cut out trying to find better answers.

"We haven't played as much hockey the last couple years. For a stretch there, we played so much hockey. I'm not sure," Bowman said. "I think (age) is a convenient answer and I could say that's it. I don't know if I buy it. Our young guys have been good. Our better players haven't been



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018

good this year. I don't know why. That's what we have to try and figure out."

6. The success the Bruins are having this season was noted by Bowman and a couple other general managers. GM Don Sweeney took a team that was a playoff contender, took a step back for a couple years and moved a couple key pieces in gathering first-round picks, and now has an influx of young talent supporting veterans like Patrice Bergeron and Chara.

When it was suggested to Sweeney that his team was becoming the example some of his colleagues want to follow, he was quick to point out that Boston still hasn't accomplished anything yet.

"The story is not told yet," Sweeney told The Athletic. "We charted the course, we've stuck with it, which is a testament to our core group and I've always said that and led the way in terms of where we are."

His core group was patient and his young players have seized nearly every opportunity presented to them.

"The younger players deserve credit because they've come in and identified themselves and grabbed the opportunity."

7. Sweeney can relate to what Gorton is feeling in having three first-round picks. Part of the rebuilding process in Boston included a year in which they had three consecutive picks in the first round, acquired in a flurry of activity around the 2015 draft.

The Bruins missed on the opportunity to grab Mathew Barzal, selected by the Islanders after the Bruins trio of picks, so it could have gone better for Boston. The advantage Gorton has, that the Bruins didn't, is the time to plan out the best strategy.

"In Jeff's case, just comparing the two situations, he's got a longer window to prepare for the upcoming draft," Sweeney said. "You'd like more lead time in terms of the expectations of the organization from top to bottom. And the players themselves, you're talking inexact science with 18-year-old kids. You commit to it and you try to make adjustments and learn pretty quickly."

8. Capitals defenseman John Carlson continued his big season with a goal and assist against the Stars on Tuesday. He has three goals in four games and is tied with John Klingberg for most points by a defenseman this season with 61.

The timing is great for Carlson. As much hype as the 2019 free agent class of defensemen has received, Carlson is first in line to cash in. He's set to become an unrestricted free agent on July 1 and might be pricing himself right out of Washington.

"It's tough because we have to go in and balance what we have to pay him, (Tom) Wilson and other roster decision," Capitals GM Brian MacLellan told The Athletic. "It's going to come to a point where we have this much to spend. We really like the player, we really like the season."

MacLellan said there have been some contract conversations but this is likely an offseason decision for the Capitals, who have quietly set themselves up for another Metro division title.

"I'm assuming he's going to say yes or no and 'I'm going to see what's out there. If I can get \$8 million somewhere else ...'" MacLellan said. "I don't know. That's me reading the tea leaves. They haven't come out and said that. They want to sign, I want to sign."

9. Sharks GM Doug Wilson has been very happy with the fit of Evander Kane, acquired in a deadline deal from the Buffalo Sabres. Sabres fans should be happy to know that the Sharks appear very serious about keeping Kane in San Jose long term. He has five goals in 10 games to go with 10 points overall since being traded to the Sharks.

The second-round pick the Sabres received for Kane becomes a first-rounder if Kane signs an extension after this season. All indications point to that being a very real possibility.

"He's done all the things we've asked him to do. For us, he fits for now and the future. He has the right ingredients. He's the right age," Wilson told The Athletic. "He's 26 and plays the game a certain way. I have a lot of cap space. A lot of cap space. Do I have enough cap space to take care of our own guys and keep Evander and do some other things? I do."

10. How much cap space the Sharks ultimately have could depend on Joe Thornton's future. Thornton is recovering from knee surgery and Wilson was quick to praise the impact Thornton makes even while injured in gestures like picking Kane up from the airport.

Wilson certainly wasn't taking the bait when it was suggested to him that the Sharks might consider moving on from Thornton in a league getting younger and faster every year. Thornton is also an unrestricted free agent after this season and working hard to return to health.

"If you watched him before he got hurt, he was playing tremendous," Wilson said. "The injury came at an unfortunate time for him and us. The respect we have for Joe — we're letting him just do his rehab. Don't count Joe out, that's all I'll say."

BONUS ITEM: According to an NHL source, the Florida Panthers have been told that prospect Adam Mascherin won't be signing with them before the draft. If that remains the case, he would re-enter the draft where he would be an interesting prospect coming off a big season in Kitchener. He has 40 goals this season in 67 games. Mascherin is the Panthers second-round pick (No. 38 overall) in 2016, and GM Dale Tallon is now shopping him to try and get a return before the draft.

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1105030 Websites

The Athletic / Eight reasons why the Blackhawks didn't make the playoffs this season

By Scott Powers Mar 21, 2018 32

The Blackhawks will be sitting out the Stanley Cup playoffs come April for the first time since 2008.

Here's why.

1. Corey Crawford got hurt

The Blackhawks probably weren't a Stanley Cup contender even when Corey Crawford was playing, but they were likely a playoff team.

Crawford was playing the best regular-season hockey of his career before he was mysteriously placed on injured reserve on Dec. 27. Crawford had stopped 782-of-842 shots for a 92.87 save percentage in 28 games. In 27 starts, he had allowed zero goals twice, one goal nine times and two goals five times. The Blackhawks were 16-9-2 in his starts.

When Crawford went down, the Blackhawks had a 17-13-5 record and had a team save percentage of 92.31 (87 goals on 1,132 shots). Since then, the Blackhawks have gone 13-22-4 with a 89.98 save percentage (128 goals on 1,278 shots).

The Blackhawks have tried to use Anton Forsberg, J-F Berube and Jeff Glass in Crawford's place, and none of them were nearly as consistent as Crawford.

Goalie	Games	Overall Sv%	5v5 Sv%	PK Sv%	Quality Start %
Crawford	29	92.87	93.24	90.77	0.630
Forsberg	32	90.50	90.67	85.44	0.429



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018

Glass	14	89.83	91.74	87.30	0.417
Berube	10	89.74	92.05	81.48	0.429

While Crawford's injury was bad luck for the Blackhawks, they were also rolling the dice with their backups this season. Forsberg started one NHL game last season and had nine career NHL starts before this season. Berube started seven NHL games last season and had 13 career NHL starts. Glass hadn't played an NHL game before this season.

Considering Crawford hasn't started more than 58 games in any season, his durability was a question mark prior to this season and certainly has to be an even bigger one going forward.

### 2. Too many shots, goals against

Crawford and the rest of the goalies only had to do so much for the Blackhawks to win in the past. The knock used to be that anyone could stand in net for the Blackhawks.

Back in the 2009-10 season, the Blackhawks allowed a league-low 25.2 shots on goal per game. Over the next four years, that number didn't increase much.

Since then, it's been downhill. They gave up 30.2 shots on goal per game in 2014-15 (ninth worst), 30.8 in 2015-16 (seventh worst) and 31.4 in 2016-17 (tied for ninth worst).

The Blackhawks have given up even more shots on goal this season. They've allowed 32.7 shots on goal per game, which is 10th worst in the league.

The Blackhawks have been playing a high-event game this season. They've been creating a lot of shots and giving up a lot. They're tied for second in the league with 34.4 shots on goal per game. They're also fourth with a 52.81 Corsi percentage in 5-on-5.

The problem is more of the opponents' shots are going into the net. They've been outscored 227-208 overall this season and 153-141 in 5-on-5 play. It's the first time they'll have a negative goal differential in all situations under Joel Quenneville and the second time in 5-on-5 play.

### 3. The defense group wasn't up to par

The Blackhawks' defenseman corps was rock solid throughout their successful run.

That corps largely consisted of Duncan Keith, Brent Seabrook, Niklas Hjälmarsson and Johnny Oduya. When the Blackhawks won the 2015 Stanley Cup, it was those four defensemen who carried them through the last two rounds. The Blackhawks knew what they had in those defensemen and knew they could depend on them in certain roles.

This season was different. The Blackhawks had quantity and depth when it came to defensemen, but they lacked the quality.

Quenneville's displeasure with the defense is easily noticeable by the number of players he scratched. Of the 10 defensemen who came through the NHL this season, nine of them were healthy scratched.

Only Keith wasn't sat this season, and even he's had a rough year. He has been on the ice for 42 goals for and 61 against this season. His 40.78 goals for percentage is by far the worst in the last 11 years. He had only once been under 50 percent before and that was the 2010-11 season when he had a minus-3 goal differential. A season ago, he had a plus-14 goal differential.

Quenneville especially struggled to find a shutdown pairing this season. Gustav Forsling and Jan Rutta had some early success there, but their consistency dipped over time. Quenneville tried other pairings there throughout the season, but none have been up to the task over consecutive games.

Jordan Oesterle played well with Keith as the top pairing, but he's been less effective with other defensemen. Oesterle has a zero-goal differential with Keith, and a minus-11 differential with everyone else.

Seabrook and Connor Murphy have been at their bests in a third-pairing role. Erik Gustafsson has offensive upside, but also defensive downside. He's been on the ice for 25 goals for and 20 against in 27 games. Rutta has delivered offensively, but also hasn't had a definitive pairing.

This has to be one area the Blackhawks address in the offseason. They're in need of at least another top-4 defenseman.

### 4. The top line didn't deliver as expected

A lot of motivation behind acquiring Brandon Saad for Artemi Panarin in the offseason was in hope of giving the Blackhawks a premier top line again.

The assumption was Saad combined with Jonathan Toews and Richard Panik would spark a line that had been down in recent years.

With Saad being 25 years old and coming off a 24-goal season, Panik looking as if he turned the corner and going off for a career-high 22-goal season and Toews consistently hitting the 20-goal mark, the trio was penciled in for somewhere in the 65-70 goal range this season. On paper, the line had the potential to score a lot of goals, match up against top lines and have a substantial goal differential.

That's not how that line played out, though.

Panik reverted to his old streaky self. He scored five goals in the first nine games and scored just one goal in his remaining 28 games with the Blackhawks. By the end, he had spent time as a healthy scratch and bottom-6 forward.

Blackhawks general manager Stan Bowman was able to move Panik and his \$2.8 million cap hit to the Arizona Coyotes for Anthony Duclair in January. Aside from the financial savings, it's unclear whether the trade will benefit the Blackhawks. Duclair has been inconsistent since arriving. Either way, the Blackhawks were banking on Panik being a difference-maker this season, and that plan failed.

Panik's struggles weren't a complete surprise, but Saad's were. Saad had great success in his two seasons with the Columbus Blue Jackets, averaging 27.5 goals during that time. He also looked dominant in the preseason and early into the season for the Blackhawks. He scored a hat trick in the season opener and had six goals through the first six games.

Saad's play dropped off from there. He had three goals in November, three goals in December, one goal in January, two goals in February and now has one goal in March. For the season, he has 16 goals and 31 points in 74 games.

Of the three players, Toews has had the best season. He's reached the 20-goal mark again and is second on the Blackhawks with 52 points. He's played his best hockey in March.

The Blackhawks need Saad to be the player they thought they were trading for next season. If he can get back to that, Toews has especially shown in recent weeks he can still play at a high level. The Blackhawks will need to figure out whether they want to keep Toews and Patrick Kane together or separate them as they have been most of the time in recent years.

### 5. Trading Artemi Panarin was a mistake

Saad and Forsberg haven't been what the Blackhawks had hoped for in that trade. On the other hand, Panarin has been essential to the Blue Jackets' season. Panarin scored a hat trick on Tuesday and now has 25 goals and 68 points on the season.

It's safe to assume the Blackhawks would be in a much better position if they had kept Panarin this season. He may have even put up more points with the Blackhawks. The Blackhawks have missed his production at 5-on-5 and on the power play.

Kane has also certainly missed him. Kane averaged 1.19 points per game the last two seasons, but only 0.95 points this season.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018

The Panarin-Artem Anisimov-Kane line was also on the ice for 72 goals for and 57 against during the last two seasons. Kane has been on the ice for 49 goals for and 58 goals against this season. It's going to be the first season in his career he's had a negative goal differential.

6. The other moves didn't pan out either

After the Blackhawks were swept by the Nashville Predators in four games, Bowman decided to make significant changes to the roster.

The biggest moves were trading Panarin for Saad and Hjalmarsson for Murphy.

The Blackhawks also lost Marcus Kruger (trade), Scott Darling (trade), Trevor van Riemsdyk (expansion draft) and Marian Hossa (skin allergy). Brian Campbell also chose to retire after the Blackhawks didn't offer him a contract.

The Blackhawks have certainly missed Kruger and Hossa's defensive presence and Darling's reliability as the No. 2. Campbell and van Riemsdyk were effective in their roles last season, too.

Hjalmarsson has had his own issues with the Coyotes, but the Blackhawks couldn't have foreseen that completely. Regardless, more was expected out of Murphy this season. Quenneville realized Murphy wasn't an ideal pairing for Keith. Murphy became a healthy scratch and struggled in a top-4 role. He was best utilized when playing on the left side in a third-pairing role beside Seabrook.

Murphy has been on the ice for 34 goals for and 41 against with a 49.06 offensive zone starting percentage. Last season, Hjalmarsson had a plus-1 goal differential with a 44.86 offensive zone starting percentage.

7. The power play continues to be a problem

The Blackhawks haven't often been a great power play team in recent years. They were 19th in the league with an 18.0 success rate just last season.

Still, that's better this season. The Blackhawks are 28th in the league at 16.1 percent.

Panarin's absence has especially been felt there this season. He had 17 goals and 24 assists on the power play the last two seasons. The Blackhawks just haven't had that one-timer option from the left side this season.

Anisimov has been the savior for the power play this year. He has scored 11 of the Blackhawks' 41 power play goals. Kane has just four power play goals after scoring 24 the past two seasons. It hasn't helped that Saad, Toews and Keith have combined for four power play goals as well.

8. Odds and ends

These reasons also factored into the Blackhawks missing the playoffs:

They're 20th with a 79.3 penalty kill percentage.

They're 7-11-3 in the Central. They have the worst winning percentage in the division.

They're 17-16-4 at home. They were 26-10-5 at home last season.

They're 13-19-5 on the road. They were 24-13-4 on the road last season.

They've been outscored in 5-on-5 play in 33 games. That happened 24 times last season.

They're 18-2-4 when leading after two periods. They were 92-2-7 when leading after two periods the previous three seasons.

They're 23-15-6 when scoring first. They were 37-8-5 when scoring first last season.

They've been outscored 78-63 in second periods and 76-67 in third periods.

They're 6-8 in overtime games.

The Athletic LOADED: 03.22.2018

1105031 Websites

The Athletic / Dissecting the Devils: Hall buzzing at a higher pace playing with Hischier

By Evan Sporer Mar 21, 2018 4

When the New Jersey Devils hired new head coach John Hynes in the summer of 2015, he and general manager Ray Shero painted the picture of a different type of Devils team.

While they would uphold some of the franchise's traditions from its days with Lou Lamoriello in charge, the on-ice product would be faster, adapting to the trends of today's NHL, Shero said.

Watching the Devils now is an entirely different viewing an experience than say, three seasons ago. Shero and Co. have assembled a personnel group that can play at a higher pace, and put pressure on the opposing team simply with its skating ability.

Perhaps no player personifies that on a regular basis more than Taylor Hall, who has flourished offensively this season with his skate fully on the throttle. But it's also one of the forwards riding shotgun with Hall who has really helped him in a big way.

For the majority of his deployment, Hall has been centered by rookie Nico Hischier; entering play Tuesday, Hall and Hischier had been on the ice together for just more than 666 minutes at 5-on-5, or more than 68 percent of Hall's even strength time on ice.

And with that kind of partnership has obviously come the bulk of Hall's production: 15 of Hall's 5-on-5 goals have come with Hischier out there, which is close to twice as many as the next Devils skater on the list (John Moore; eight).

What the now 19-year-old Hischier has done so well playing next to Hall is not simply keeping up with the speedy winger, but pushing the pace. For a skater who made his NHL debut an 18-year-old coming straight out of the Quebec Major Junior League, it's remarkable how quickly Hischier not only adjusted to the pace of NHL play but has begun to drive it.

The end result has been the ability for that line to really impose its will against defenses simply by being freakish skaters. Add to that good puck instincts and the ability to make decisions quickly and that whole pace-of-play concept, the one Shero said the Devils would need to rev up two summers ago, has certainly been addressed.

In Hischier, Hall has found not simply a passenger, but someone willing and able to play a fast game.

This whole sequence starts with Hall chipping in along the boards in the defensive zone and then playing the puck ahead.

From there, Hischier picks it up in the neutral zone and speeds forward. You can see the room he's able to create by how quickly he flies across the blue line, and the attention he attracts; instead of picking up the trailer, Hall, the third Blue Jackets skater is eying Hischier. (Also of note: It's very telling that Hall made that initial play and got all the way to the blue line in this frame.)

As Hischier gets down to the faceoff dot, he makes a great play on his edges to pull up. It's so difficult as a defenseman being backed down at that speed to come to a full stop when a cut like that is made, and Hischier creates a bit of separation in doing so.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018

The other thing Hischier does is sell with his shoulders that he's passing to the fourth man into the zone (Jesper Bratt) and not Hall. That misdirection gets Zach Werenski to put his stick behind the level of the puck instead of into passing lane across Hischier opened up in doing so.

You can see on the reverse angle how Hischier choreographs this to open up space for Hall. By cutting inside, he sells that he's going one way with the puck, and in doing so, creates that diagonal passing lane with Hall all alone on the back side.

And by the time Will Butcher has crashed the net to take the first Blue Jackets skater with him, Hischier has bought enough time using his speed and smarts to create a space to slip the puck to Hall, and threads it between Seth Jones and Werenski.

It's pretty easy to see the benefits Hischier provides with the puck on his stick. But when you're that quick of a skater, it can completely alter the spacing of a play, like this goal Hall scored against the Islanders where Hischier never touched the puck.

After the Devils create a turnover in their defensive zone, you can see how low Hischier is compared to a few other skaters. But part of playing fast is also thinking fast: With his head picked up, Hischier quickly identifies an opportunity to join the rush and create an odd-man situation, which he does.

Now the Islanders are in a really defensively compromised situation. With Hall and Hischier bearing down on a 2-on-1, Adam Pelech is forced to keep his stick in the passing lane. Hall, a left-handed shot, can comfortably pass onto his off wing or shoot, but Pelech really has no choice but to defend the lane.

And Hall, the smart offensive player that he is, takes advantage of the horizontal space, keeping the puck on his backhand where he can quickly pull it back to protect against a lunging poke-check (which is forthcoming). By Hischier making this read and quickly getting involved, he affords Hall this opportunity and buys him all the time in the world to make a decision in a high-danger scoring area.

Then there are situations where Hischier and Hall can put pressure on a defense with a forecheck. This is a twofold type of situation again: It's their speed that allows them to really get in quickly and take away time and space on the puck, but it's how quickly they identify and react that makes the whole sequence possible.

This is just a case of Hall and Hischier being pests in the neutral zone. Hall first applies pressure on Brad Marchand along the boards, forcing him to play the puck across. It's a sloppy pass though, and Hischier is close enough to the play and in a position where he won't leave his team in a bad spot that he can blitz the pass. If Hischier whiffs, there are three Devils behind the play to defend three Bruins.

But Hischier is able to intercept that pass with a really strong initial burst, and now the Devils are in business. This is perhaps Hischier's best moment of this sequence: He doesn't wait for the play to come to him, and quickly moves this puck across to Hall really high in the offensive zone. By doing so, he's not restricting the angle Hall has to attack the net; on so many occasions, players wait far too long to make this cross-ice pass and it totally confines the area for the receiving skater.

And this is one of the byproducts of these sequences created by fast skaters creating turnovers and turning defense into offense at pressure points. Marchand isn't in a great defensive position (again, thanks in large to when Hischier chose to move this puck) and has to dive across, reaching with his stick. For a player of Hall's caliber that's a low-hanging fruit to pick off: He quickly rolls his hands over, pulls the puck back a few inches, and olé's the outstretched stick to evade the check.

When you have a linemate that can be this type of player, it's easy to see how there are offensive benefits to be reaped.

At other times, the impact Hischier has on Hall isn't as clear to the eye, but still very important in creating those shots and scoring chances.

This is just a very simple center-ice dump-in turned forecheck for New Jersey. At the top of the frame you can see a pretty sizable gap between Hischier and Kevin Connauton. In most instances this kind of uncontrolled zone entry would lead to a change in possession. With Hischier's speed though, putting the puck in area and letting him attack it isn't such a bad play.

When this puck reaches the goal line, Hischier still has a few feet to make up. Hall is kind of floating around the top of the zone, waiting to read the play and make his next move.

While Hischier doesn't win possession, he does get in on Connauton very quickly, forcing him to move the puck as soon as it's on his stick. By Hischier denying a play up the boards toward the blue line, it also forces Connauton to move the puck on his backhand back toward goal with his head down.

And you can see where Connauton is moving the puck. The Devils manage to funnel the play into Bratt, who originally dumped the puck in, while Hall gets lost and quickly sprints into the low slot. No point for Hischier on this goal, but another sequence where his speed is so influential in creating space for Hall, and facilitating puck possession for New Jersey.

Back on the puck again in this sequence, where Hischier makes a very fast, heady play in the neutral zone before a great decision with shot selection.

This is just a terror to play against in the neutral zone. In the best case scenario you're making a pass under duress that hits the target but is a stressful play nonetheless. The worst case scenario is a turnover that leads to a counter-attack with your team in a vulnerable position.

Now this is one of the things that's been so impressive about Hischier. Here's a two-on-one, with no passing lane to go to Hall. Mike Smith is pretty high in his crease, cutting down the angle and making it difficult to beat him on a high shot.

But there is one other option though: A shot-pass low and to the pads. No matter what you're probably creating a rebound that should kick out above the goal line. This began with Hischier quickly stripping a player in the neutral zone, and ended with Hischier quickly identifying where he needed to shoot the puck to set up his teammate.

That's one of the more important and impressive things about Hischier's body of work this season. He's not like a Luis Mendoza, a player with all the physical tools who doesn't know how to use his speed to his advantage. While Hischier has been able to do things very fast, he's been able to process what's happening at the same speed. On a line with a player like Hall that's paramount with "keeping up" in every sense of the phrase.

For Hall, Hischier has been the high-powered engine under the hood that has allowed him to go well above the speed limit. It's the type of quick-strike offense that can really just create a dangerous situation out of nothing, and not be totally reliant on a system. It can happen at any time, which is what makes it so effective and so terrifying for a team to defend against.

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1105032 Websites

The Athletic / Mirtle: The Leafs, the Lightning and the first-round matchup everyone in hockey wants to see

By James Mirtle Mar 21, 2018 22



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018

TAMPA — Ron Hainsey was waiting in the empty dressing room, by himself, sitting on the bench and staring at his toes.

That's not normal. And, as far as I could tell, no one in the media had requested to talk to him post-game. But he was there to atone for being on the ice for three goals against in a 12 minute and 34 second span, a span where a 3-0 Maple Leafs lead became a 4-3 Lightning win.

Hainsey, the fifth oldest defenceman in the NHL this season, was clearly disappointed. In himself and in his team.

And he wanted to talk about it.

"We played really good then made some big errors in the third. None bigger than me trying to get my stick back on the game-winner — and it ends up costing us getting to overtime," Hainsey said.

"They turned the ice (on us). We spent the whole third in our zone. As much as we made big errors — that one being the one that cost us — I think there'll be a lot from it that we'll be able to take as a group."

This was the faceoff play where he lost his stick, and no, it wasn't pretty. With Hainsey frozen at the top of the circle with jazz hands, Alex Killorn was able to slip into the slot uncontested.

What pissed Hainsey off the most was he felt they had this game. They had nearly beaten the best team in the East without their top centre.

"I think we play better when we have a fear that the other team can possibly embarrass us," Hainsey said. "I really believe that. I think that's been the case a lot of the year. It was the same thing when we played these guys the first time at home, a while ago, and they were just flying. We had a really, really good game. We did some things we hadn't been doing consistently."

"We have a level that we get to when we fear the other team a little bit more. I felt we did that. We had a lot of good stuff going. I think there'll be a lot we'll be able to take from the first couple periods that show how we should be playing in a couple weeks here."

A couple weeks. The playoffs. Potentially between these two teams.

This was a preview, sort of. The players all knew it, and for the most part, they showed up. There was nothing on the line, though, and the Leafs were missing Auston Matthews and Nikita Zaitsev. Both teams have been piling up wins against mediocre competition lately, but it's not like there's been a wait-for-the-playoff malaise settling in.

This was a weird hockey game. Through 36 minutes, the Leafs dominated. Over the final 24, they were the ones receiving everything.

Tellingly, Lightning coach Jon Cooper went in his dressing room in the second intermission and said he couldn't tell from his players whether they were winning or losing.

"This is a winnable game," they were saying to one another, before going out and winning it.

"It was nothing they did," defenceman Anton Stralman said of the Leafs' controlling the early portion of the game, explaining how the Lightning had to simplify what they were doing in response to Mike Babcock's system clogging things up in the defensive zone.

Trying to make a series of pretty plays, Stralman said, was futile. The ugly ones — i.e. Nikita Kucherov's goal off a skate and in — won them the game.

But it wasn't all luck. The Lightning are the best offensive team in hockey this season for a reason, and they turned that on nicely when they had to. The Leafs are fifth, despite missing their top goal getter for nearly 30 per cent of the season.

"They have a lot of skill," Stralman mused afterwards. "Just like our team. A top offensive team in the league."

A first-round meeting would likely be the focal point of the start of the NHL postseason, with a team many are again picking as the Stanley Cup

favourites taking on a team many feel could be the next to threaten them in the East.

The ghosts of playoff present versus the ghosts of playoff future, kind of thing. (Gary Bettman can be Scrooge.)

It's tempting to take this crazy game in mid-March and try and boil it down to a single narrative — in this case, that the Leafs aren't ready to win games against good teams like this — but that's not exactly fair. The Leafs finished the season series against Tampa with a win, two losses and a shootout loss, and all four games could have gone either way.

They've also beaten a ton of good teams this year, with one of the best records leaguewide against top 10 clubs.

I'd likely favour the Lightning in a seven-game series — especially with the addition of Ryan McDonagh at the deadline — but this is no easy call. A healthy Leafs team is a near-match for Tampa, especially given both teams' year-long struggles to lock things down defensively.

WHO WOULD YOU RATHER THE MAPLE LEAFS FACE IN ROUND 1?

— JAMES MIRTLE (@MIRTLE) MARCH 21, 2018

Most Leafs fans appear to want to see their team face the Lightning instead of the Bruins, and that makes sense. Tampa may have a ton of firepower, but they have similar strengths and weaknesses.

They open the door for teams like Toronto to skate and score around them, turning games into a series of trading chances. Boston might be able to lock things down and win boring, especially at home, when Patrice Bergeron and Brad Marchand are at their best.

At their worst, the Leafs have been flustered by strong defensive teams — even if they went 3-1 against Boston this year.

As of Wednesday morning, the Leafs' chances of facing the Bruins in a rematch of that gutting 2013 series were about 75 per cent. Otherwise, Toronto is getting a date with the Lightning, back here in Tampa three weeks from today.

If there's something to be taken from this one game, No. 73 on the year, it might be this: The Leafs have a chance, if they play the way they did through 36 minutes. They might not be fully formed, with their stars in their primes the way Steven Stamkos and Victor Hedman are, but they're not that far off either.

"I think if anything, you know you can play with these teams," Babcock said post-game. "There's no issue that way."

"The stakes keep getting amped up," Cooper added. "Who knows — we may face these guys? You just can't take anything for granted. You've just got to get your game going for when it really matters."

That day is coming. And a rematch of this game, with something more on the line, would be something to see.

It would be good for hockey. And it would probably be good for the Leafs.

The Athletic LOADED: 03.22.2018

1105033 Websites

The Athletic / Sharks offense remains red-hot as they extend winning streak to a season-high five games

By Kevin Kurz Mar 21, 2018 12

Nothing against Brenden Dillon, who has been a very fine, steady third-pair defenseman for the Sharks this season.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018

But when the physical, mostly stay-at-home rearguard is on a lengthy point-scoring streak — now a career-high five games — you know the Sharks offense has caught fire.

The Sharks erupted for six more goals on Tuesday night at SAP Center, spanking the Devils, 6-2. The Sharks have a whopping 27 goals in their last five games, all wins, as they continue to ossify their playoff position.

"There's a first for everything, I guess. A blind squirrel finds a nut once in awhile," said Dillon, who now has two goals and four assists in his last five games, after adding a pair of helpers against New Jersey. "Just trying to enjoy it. We're piling up the wins right now, too, which is great."

The offense against the Devils came from up and down the lineup. The fourth line set the pace, contributing three goals — one each by Eric Fehr, Jannik Hansen and Barclay Goodrow. Joe Pavelski and Mikkel Boedker scored on the power play, Logan Couture potted his 30th of the season, and Brent Burns had three assists in the blowout.

That sort of scoring from everywhere is just the way it's gone for the Sharks during their five-game winning streak, a season high. Nine different players are averaging at least one point-per game during the run, while 13 different players have at least three total points in victories over the Red Wings, Oilers, Flames, Canucks and Devils.

"It's one of the reasons why we're winning consistently — each night there's a different line that steps up," Couture said. "Obviously (Evander Kane and Pavelski) carried us a few nights. The fourth line tonight with three goals is huge."

Coach Pete DeBoer said: "We're not doing anything differently. Pucks are going in for us. The guys are shooting with confidence. It's not like we've got a magic formula for it. We've just been playing pretty well offensively and I think getting contributions from all four lines."

#SJSHARKS HAVE SCORED 27 GOALS IN THEIR LAST 5 GAMES. PER @ELIASSPORTS, THE LAST TIME SJ SCORED 27 IN A 5-GAME SPAN WAS JANUARY 30 – FEBRUARY 10, 1996.

— DARIN STEPHENS (@SHARKSSTATS) MARCH 21, 2018

Regarding the fourth line, Fehr and Goodrow, in particular, have been contributing on the penalty kill, as well. Among Sharks forwards, only Chris Tierney had more time on the PK against the Devils than that pair.

That's surely a trend that DeBoer would like to continue, as it helps to keep the more dangerous forwards, like Couture, fresh on the bench.

"They've done a real good job on the penalty kill, giving us the ability to roll four lines and not have to worry," DeBoer said of Fehr and Goodrow. "They were out there against (Taylor) Hall's line a few times tonight. I'm not worried about that. That allows us to get a mismatch somewhere else in the lineup with one of our other lines. It's nice feeling as a coach to have a line like that."

Couture said: "Eric's done a good job. He's a veteran guy. He's reliable, smart, has hockey sense, he knows where to be. It's really been an easy transition for him to play this system. ... Goody is playing some of the best hockey he's played in this league."

The Devils, fighting for their playoff lives, made their strongest push in the second period while trailing 3-1. The Sharks got a bit sloppy with the puck, but Martin Jones bailed out Tierney on a turnover by stopping Drew Stafford with 13:35 to go, denied Michael Grabner after Kane gave the puck away in the neutral zone, and then got just enough of a Brian Boyle shot on an odd-man rush midway through regulation.

The Sharks put the game away after that, when Goodrow found Cory Schneider's five-hole on a 2-on-1 break, and then Couture buzzed a wrist shot over Schneider's replacement, Keith Kinkaid, just 30 seconds later. Boedker's score with the Sharks on a man advantage with 1:40 left in the second period pushed the lead to 6-1 at the break.

The lone marker that Jones gave up — other than a garbage-time goal with less than two minutes to go in regulation — was to Hart Trophy-

candidate Hall, who took the puck from Justin Braun and quickly zipped it into the top corner at 11:19 of the first period to tie the game, 1-1. Hall has 20 goals and 22 assists for 42 points in his last 32 games.

But Hall was also involved in the biggest collision of the evening, when he was caught with his head down by a hard-charging Kane in the Devils' defensive zone. The blistering shoulder-to-chest hit forced Hall briefly from the ice late in the second period.

The result — a game that was getting increasingly chippy and nasty was, frankly, boring in the third; that's just how the Sharks surely wanted it with their sizable lead.

Kane didn't get on the scoresheet, but his freight train impression seemed to settle everything down.

"I thought they were taking some liberties and running around a little bit," DeBoer said. "He answered back for us. That's important."

Of much more importance is the Sharks keeping their distance ahead of the teams behind them. The Sharks are now four points ahead of Los Angeles in second place in the Pacific Division, with one game in hand on the Kings, and five points in front of Anaheim. Only an epic collapse would keep them from making the postseason.

It's a good time for the Sharks to be on their longest winning streak of the season, ahead of a Thursday night meeting at home with the first-place Vegas Golden Knights.

"We talked going into the month that we wanted to put our foot on the gas and make sure that we're in a (playoff) spot," DeBoer said. "I think the guys have responded to that. ... We were in a group a couple weeks ago of five or six teams that were all pretty much in the same spot, and we found a way to separate ourselves, which says a lot about the group."

The Athletic LOADED: 03.22.2018

1105034 Websites

The Athletic / Suddenly, the Penguins have company in the Metropolitan Division standings after another poor loss

By Josh Yohe Mar 21, 2018 34

Mike Sullivan, who is normally a member of the longwinded community, was asked following the Penguins' lackluster 4-1 loss against the Islanders in Brooklyn if he believes this team has been inconsistent lately.

His response?

"Yes."

Sullivan was then asked if he is especially troubled by this, given that the Stanley Cup playoffs are near.

"Yes."

Sullivan almost certainly possesses another concern, that being his team's position in the Metropolitan Division standings.

The Blue Jackets, winners of nine straight, have caught the Penguins and are now tied for second with 87 points. While the Penguins own a game in hand over the Blue Jackets, the still must play in Columbus in the season's penultimate game on April 5.

Meanwhile, the Flyers are only a point behind the Penguins and play in Pittsburgh on Sunday.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018

The Penguins aren't in grave danger of missing the playoffs, but finishing as a wild card — this would likely force them to play either Tampa Bay, Boston or Washington in the first round — is entirely possible.

If they don't start playing better, their playoff seeding will be of little consequence. The Penguins are only 5-5-1 since the NHL trade deadline and needed overtime to claim two of those victories.

They were outplayed by a bad Islanders team and, last week blew a two-goal lead and ultimately lost a point in overtime to the struggling Rangers.

Against the Islanders, they were a combination of undisciplined, sloppy and lazy throughout.

"Every time we tried to get into a flow, we took a penalty," Sullivan said. "It's hard to win that way. We didn't have nearly the discipline that we needed to have. We beat ourselves."

Matt Murray made his return to the lineup and played well, stopping 36 of 39 shots. But he dealt with an ambush for most of the evening, as the Islanders found themselves on five power plays and with an abundance of odd-man rushes.

The Islanders took leads of 2-0 and 3-1 while never being particularly threatened.

"We didn't have a good start," Sullivan said. "We didn't play with the urgency that we need to. We didn't defend hard enough. If you don't defend in this league, you can't win. We didn't defend hard enough. We lacked discipline. We didn't have a good start. That's the story of the game."

The red hot Evgeni Malkin was held without a point for only the seventh game in 2018. Sidney Crosby was also held off the scoresheet.

Conor Sheary scored the Penguins' only goal.

He acknowledged that something was mentally off with the Penguins from the outset.

"I don't think we got many bounces but I just think we weren't ready to play," he said.

Ten postgame thoughts

- While the Penguins were soundly defeated, they had some momentum and only trailed by a goal when Malkin took an inexcusable penalty at the 4:38 mark of the third period. Malkin was attempting to create a turnover but was woefully out of position when he carelessly lunged at Mathew Barzal with his stick. It was an easy call to make and the Anders Lee quickly responded with a power-play goal, restoring the Islanders' two-goal advantage. In the second period, Patric Hornqvist took a penalty for slamming his stick in the direction of a linesman after a high-stick on the puck call that he disagreed with. These aren't acceptable penalties to be taking at any point, let alone while fighting for a division title in the season's 73rd game. Plus, these are two team leaders. Not good. Sure, Malkin's having a remarkable season and Hornqvist is having a very good one, but these were a couple of ridiculous penalties that did little to help the Penguins' cause.

- The Penguins' penalty killing is currently a significant issue. Since the Penguins traded Ian Cole, one of their best penalty killers, they have killed only 69 percent of their penalties, the worst number in the NHL during that stretch. Sure, it's a fairly small sample size, but it's still an alarming trend. Is Cole an all-star performer? No, but he's a legitimate top-four defenseman who is a particularly good penalty killer, and his absence has been felt. The Penguins are allowing far too many passes through the slot, forcing their goaltenders to move side-to-side to unfair extents. Teams with poor penalty killing units don't thrive in the postseason. The Penguins have three weeks to figure it out.

- All things considered, it was a pretty strong return for Murray, who played his first game in three weeks after sustaining a concussion in practice. Murray stopped 36 of 39 shots against a gifted group of

Islanders' forwards. Granted, he received help from the post on four occasions, but still, I felt Murray was pretty strong. He made a wonderful save against John Tavares in the game's opening seconds, which foreshadowed what was to come. The Penguins simply allowed far too many Grade-A scoring opportunities. This has been a trend in general for the Penguins and was especially apparent against the Islanders. Murray made a couple of terrific saves and looked fluid throughout the night. He wasn't perfect but none of the goals could be described as poor on his part. So, while it was a poor evening for the Penguins, Murray's performance was encouraging.

"I felt pretty solid considering how much time I missed," Murray said. "I didn't feel that rusty. I felt pretty good for the most part."

- It wasn't a good night for Kris Letang. Every time I think Letang has taken a step forward, he has a rough game. He did register four shots on goal and led a couple of wonderful rushes. However, he played a role in the Islanders' first two goals. Letang coughed up the puck behind the net when Barzal scored on a deflection to give the Islanders a 1-0 lead. Later in the first, Letang and Jake Guentzel were both responsible for another turnover that led to a goal. Guentzel should have made a better play on the pass from Letang, but the forward wasn't exactly open and Letang gave him the puck in a dicey spot. In general Letang has been better in recent weeks, but this wasn't a good night for him.

- Everything about this performance from the Penguins was sloppy. I realize the ice at Barclays Center is notoriously bad, but still, nothing was working. Bryan Rust had two wonderful looks in the second period and fanned on both of them. The Penguins had a two on one opportunity in the second period when Phil Kessel simply fell down. It was just that kind of night. The Penguins entered the game having been wonderful when playing a game with three or more days of rest, boasting a 5-1 record in such situations. On this occasion, though, they looked completely flat throughout the game.

- Sullivan needs to rethink some of these line combinations. I'm a big Rust fan and he tends to make every line he's on a little better. But I'd argue that he never looks right when he's on Crosby's wing. That line probably had the most energy of any Penguins' unit on this night, but it felt out of sync. The Penguins feel a lot more balanced when Crosby plays with Sheary and Guentzel. This allows the dominant second line to remain intact, and Rust, in limited action, made Kessel and Derick Brassard better on the third line. I still think that's the way to go.

- Speaking of Kessel, he was pretty quiet against the Islanders, but the pass he made to set up Sheary's goal was simply marvelous. He looked off a defender, then looked at goaltender Christopher Gibson before firing a pass to Sheary, who scored the Penguins' only tally. His playmaking ability continues to astound.

PHIL KESSEL FINDS CONOR SHEARY FOR A SLICK GOAL TO CUT THE PENGUINS DEFICIT IN HALF! PIC.TWITTER.COM/BCS9VVUNSF

— NHL DAILY 365 (@NHLDAILY365) MARCH 21, 2018

- One of the Penguins' biggest problems at the moment is a curious one. Crosby isn't scoring enough goals. He's only registered six goals in his past 26 games. One of those was an empty-netter and another came in three on three play during overtime. He only has 23 goals on the season, a strangely low number for him. Last season, Crosby led the NHL with 44 goals. I don't think he's playing with an injury but I do think the revolving door of wingers on his line has affected him. Still, the Penguins need him to start finding the back of the net eventually.

- Things could have been even worse for the Penguins. The Islanders should have been awarded a penalty shot after Olli Maatta was very, very clearly guilty of holding. Not sure how that call was missed.

- If the Penguins want to win the division, Wednesday night's game against the Canadiens strikes me as an absolute, must-win situation. The Penguins are home and playing another team that's out of playoff contention. Carey Price might be back between the pipes for the Habs, but no matter. The Penguins can't afford to lose on two consecutive



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018

nights against non-playoff teams. Look for Casey DeSmith to get the start for the Penguins.

The Athletic LOADED: 03.22.2018

1105035 Websites

The Athletic / Basu: On the day the NHL proposes change we get a shining example of why it's necessary

By Arpon Basu 4h ago 2

PITTSBURGH – The NHL's general managers made an attempt Wednesday to standardize something that is almost impossible to standardize.

Goaltender interference might be the most subjective call in hockey, and because the definition of the rule is open to interpretation, the general managers wanted goals that are challenged by coaches to be judged by fewer sets of eyes.

By recommending to have the situation room in Toronto, with the added help of a former referee in the room, have the final say on goaltender interference subject to a coach's challenge rather than the referees on the ice, the theory is that a more consistent standard will be established. But in announcing the recommendation, NHL commissioner Gary Bettman wanted to emphasize how often the on-ice officials actually get the call correct to begin with.

"While, since the adoption of the Coach's Challenge, there have been relatively few controversial calls on goaltender interference – perhaps half a dozen of approximately 170 challenges this season – the objective is to be as close to perfect as possible," Bettman said in the NHL's press release on the recommendation. "However, goaltender interference ultimately is a judgment call."

It didn't take long for the notion that controversial calls are a rare occurrence to be challenged.

Later the same night, Pittsburgh Penguins centre Evgeni Malkin won an offensive zone faceoff, drove the net and wound up scoring a goal as he slid into Montreal Canadiens goaltender Carey Price. Price made the initial save, but as Malkin was sliding into him the puck bounced off his leg and into the net.

Good goal, apparently.

Referees Graham Skilliter and Ian Walsh – who made the original call of a good goal on the ice – were tasked with reviewing the play after Claude Julien challenged the goal. He obviously believed he had a pretty good case, but no. The goal stood. And Julien was left shaking his head.

"I'm not ready to talk about the officials' decisions because, at the end of the day, you have to respect those decisions even if you don't agree," Julien said after the game in French.

Literally two minutes later, when taking questions in English, Julien couldn't help but expand on his answer because he was clearly frustrated by it.

"It's probably another one of those replays that you'll see GMs discuss, because right now it doesn't even matter even if they explain it, we don't get it," he said. "So it's a matter of not wasting our time and just moving on; it's never the same thing so it's not worth arguing."

A few days earlier, prior to facing the Toronto Maple Leafs on Saturday, Julien expressed how puzzling the current standard can be.

"It's confusing, at times," Julien said. "You're seeing something and you think it's the same and the next time around it's a different answer. For some reason there's something that they've seen that (is) different. I think at the end of the day it's probably about making sure we all understand what the criteria are. You know, not just referees but coaches and general managers and the league itself. If we can get on the same page, it's going to make a big difference. Right now I don't think we're all clear and I'm not sure we're all on the same page with that.

"So I think they've got an opportunity at the GMs meetings to maybe rectify that."

Centralizing the decision might be a step in the right direction, only because the decision will be made by more of the same people league wide and therefore won't be subject to a wide variety of different criteria. But that change didn't come in time for Julien on Wednesday.

First, is this goaltender interference? Who knows?

Here we see Malkin diving for a loose puck in front of Price, who loses his balance after making the initial save.

This is the moment Malkin makes contact with Price in the crease. The puck is circled in red and is not going toward the net until it hits Malkin's leg after he makes contact with Price.

This is when the puck, again circled in red, enters the net. Note the position of Price hasn't changed drastically from the previous screen grab, but any chance he has at preventing the puck from going in has been nullified by the fact Malkin is sliding into him and pushing him away from the puck.

Here's the entire play.

Clear cut goalie interference? Clearly not, because the referees upheld the call, and they might very well have been right. But they could have just as easily been wrong, which is the problem. Even Price didn't have any problem with the call after the review.

"I'm not surprised," Price said. "You go to the net and you get lucky. I don't think it was a goalie interference, personally."

His coach didn't agree, obviously. But Brendan Gallagher, who is more familiar with the goaltender interference standard than most players in the NHL because he is constantly stretching the boundaries of it, feels the changes proposed Wednesday can effectively remove a lot of the gray area that surrounds this call.

"I think everyone just wants consistency," he said. "For me, I think the problem (is) it's different people making calls. Obviously the refs are the ones that are there, they see it. But if you want consistency you've got to have the same person making the decision. I think the easy solution would be to have someone in Toronto watch every single game and make the calls every night, you know, one or two guys, and you'll start to get more consistency. You might not like the call every time, but at least we'll start to get consistency with the rule and understand. But it's tough.

"Every time, I think when something like that happens, nobody really knows if it's going to be a goal or no goal."

The goal being the single most important event that happens in a hockey game, this is something that needs to change. Hopefully, the adjustment proposed Wednesday will eliminate that element of doubt.

But does anyone believe that will actually be the case?

The Athletic LOADED: 03.22.2018

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The Athletic / Good tipper: Blue Jackets' Thomas Vanek among NHL's best at redirecting pucks



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018

By Tom Reed 7h ago 7

NEW YORK — Thomas Vanek makes a living redirecting flying objects. Like an air traffic controller blessed with a sense of humor, he can laugh about the close calls.

The much-traveled Blue Jackets forward and father of three kids said he once tried redirecting a point shot on goal only to see the puck glance off his stick and strike him in the crotch.

Another time Vanek opened the face of his stick blade too quickly and the puck he intended for the top corner of the net nailed him square in the jaw.

"I have been hit with more pucks than go in, that's for sure," the 34-year-old winger told *The Athletic*. "There have been many times when you think you have it and, at the last second, you get pushed and (the puck) hits you right in the ribs."

Such is the toll for being one of the masters in the art of deflection.

All the bumps and cross checks in the back are worth it to Vanek when he scores goals like the one Monday night in the Blue Jackets' 5-4 overtime win against the Bruins.

Vanek skated through the slot early in the third period and tapped his stick on the ice to attract the attention of Markus Nutivaara at the blue line. The Blue Jackets defenseman read the play and whipped a wrist shot toward the left post, one that brought Bruins goaltender Tuukka Rask sliding across his crease.

Parked between the circles, Vanek took a check swing at the knee-high offering 15 feet from the goal and redirected the puck over the shoulder of Rask to tie the game.

"I have never seen a player tip pucks like him," Blue Jackets captain Nick Foligno said. "That goal (Monday) night was like a cross-body tip to the (top corner of) the net. I watched him do it when I was playing in Ottawa and he was in Buffalo and it would drive you crazy because it's so hard to defend."

The Blue Jackets represent Vanek's eighth team in five seasons, and the next analyst to call him a 200-foot player will be the first.

The Austrian-born winger keeps finding NHL suitors, however, because of the offense he generates. Vanek has scored 353 goals in 957 games. He's also among the league's elite in deflecting pucks that produce goals, rebounds and chaos in front of opposing goaltenders.

"He's got that down, and he works on it," Blue Jackets linemate Boone Jenner said. "He can get a stick on anything — backhand, forehand, high, low. He's definitely one of the best I have ever seen if not the best."

A trade-deadline acquisition, Vanek has played an important role in the Blue Jackets' nine-game winning streak that gets put to the test Thursday night at Nationwide Arena against the Panthers. He's registered three goals and five assists in that span and, skating alongside Jenner and Alexander Wennberg, has helped give coach John Tortorella a productive second line.

The unrestricted free agent also has been a popular player in the locker room and on the ice before and after practice. He's receptive to teaching teammates such as Foligno the nuances of tipping pucks around the net.

In an era when goaltending has never been better, teams are looking for ways to slip pucks past big, athletic netminders. It's why you see an increasing number of players attempting slap passes — think Ryan Murray's beauty to Sonny Milano on Monday night — and shooting for teammates' sticks around the cage.

A well-timed deflection as a goalie begins his descent into the butterfly position is one way to beat him.

Since entering the league in 2005, Vanek ranks second in tipped shots (187) behind only Corey Perry (203) of the Ducks, according to NHL.com figures. He's ninth in tipped goals (32) — eight behind leader Wayne Simmonds of the Flyers.

"I have asked him about them," Foligno said of his conversations with Vanek. "I am the middle man on the power play and it would be a great skill to improve on for me. I mean the guy finds a way to get a stick on everything."

'Glad he's on our team'

Vanek doesn't have a colorful backstory in how he got started in the business of redirection.

His father, Zdenek, who played pro hockey, didn't spend hours inside freezing Salzburg rinks pounding pucks at young Thomas in front of the net. Vanek didn't hammer tennis balls at a brick wall and control the caroms the way Hall of Fame defenseman Nicklas Lidstrom did in Sweden.

"I really didn't start working on it until I got here in the United States to play junior hockey," Vanek said. "But I did play a lot of tennis and ping pong as a kid. I was used to having a paddle of some kind in my hand. Maybe, that's where the hand-eye coordination comes."

Vanek taught himself how to alter shots by watching others do it. The bruising enterprise is about more than see puck, tip puck.

The winger often keeps the blade of his stick off the ice when getting into position to redirect a shot. He doesn't want to give opposing defenders an opportunity to tie it up.

Vanek rarely plays like a 6-foot-2, 214-pound forward, but he uses his long reach to great effect. Even when defenders think they have him corralled, Vanek can often get a blade on a shot.

"I love just trying to find different ways of being creative with it," Vanek said. "It's about more than just standing in front of the net."

Some defenders will front Vanek in hopes of preventing shots from getting through. If a goaltender senses a forward looking for a net-front tip, he might creep from his crease to cut down space and limit a puck's change in direction.

Serial deflectors like Vanek always are looking for ways to change their approach to the poach.

"Having played against him for a few years, you always had to be aware of where he was and you had to try to take away his stick, especially on the power play," Jenner said of Vanek, who has 106 tallies with the man-power advantage. "I'm glad he's on our team now."

Beating Bob

Blue Jackets goaltender Sergei Bobrovsky and Vanek have been teammates for nearly a month. They have yet to speak about the goal.

On Oct. 22, 2015, Vanek scored one of the cheekiest power-play goals of his career while a member of the Wild. He drifted out of traffic three feet to the left of Bobrovsky and accepted a feed from Jason Zucker.

Vanek had three conventional options: Pass the puck to a darting teammate, skate across the face of the goal and lift a shot over a sprawling Bobrovsky or gather the puck, wait for the goalie to commit and either roof a shot or try to stuff it inside the near post.

The crafty winger chose none of them.

Instead, he rolled his hands slightly to adjust his stick and allow Zucker's pass to ricochet off the heel of it. The puck popped up, grazed the back of a startled Bobrovsky and into the net for what proved to be the game-winning goal.

VANEK BURIES A POWER PLAY GOAL TO PUT THE WILD UP 3-2 OVER CBJ PIC.TWITTER.COM/BTMMO3C1DN



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018

— STEPH (@MYREGULARFACE) OCTOBER 23, 2015

"That was amazing," Jenner said recalling the shot.

"Of course, I remember it," Foligno said.

Among his 32 tipped goals, Vanek acknowledges it remains his favorite. He almost did it again last week from the other side of the net, but the audacious chip hit the Flyers goaltender in the side of the mask.

"That's one tip I love working on," Vanek said. "It's something where I know the goalie sees me or at least he sees me out of the corner of his eye. But I don't think he expects me to chop at it and try to put it under the bar."

Vanek seeks soft pockets in an opponent's defense and teammates who can get him the puck in those areas. While the goal scorer gets the praise, Vanek said players who can shoot for sticks and fire pucks just wide to set up redirections are invaluable.

He enjoyed terrific chemistry with Jason Pominville in Buffalo and Minnesota.

"We got really good at it," Vanek said. "It's more credit to the guy who you can find you — that's a very underrated skill."

He admits Monday's goal is a special one because the tip came from distance and it happened almost as he envisioned it from the moment he tapped his stick on the ice.

"When it actually happened it was like, 'wow, that's better than I thought.'" Vanek said laughing.

Almost makes the occasional puck to the crotch tolerable.

Almost.

The Athletic LOADED: 03.22.2018

1105037 Websites

The Athletic / Dellow: Tampa Bay doesn't have the profile of a top tier Stanley Cup contender

By Tyler Dellow Mar 21, 2018 10

Tampa's comeback win against Toronto on Tuesday made it a little more likely that the Maple Leafs will get the Bruins in the first round of the playoffs. As Editor Mirtle discussed post-game, the Lightning seem like the preferable matchup for the Maple Leafs, so that's unfortunate for Toronto. While Editor Mirtle was focused on some of the stylistic aspects of that matchup, the issues run deeper. This Lightning team simply might not be a truly high-end Cup contender, if such a thing even exists in the NHL outside of the Central Division anymore.

As is well known, the Lightning had a hellacious start to the season. That's narrative setting time, so starting hot is great, particularly for teams that don't live on the radar of the national media on a day-to-day basis. Through 19 games, Tampa was 15-2-2, which included 2-2 in OT/SO games. Since then, the Lightning are 35-17-2, which includes 10-2 after 60 minutes. That's still great — a 109-point pace overall but it's just a 94-point pace through regulation.

To pick the obvious Atlantic Division comparator, the Maple Leafs have played at a 31-16-7 rate in their past 54 games, which includes an 8-7 after 60 minutes. So the Maple Leafs have played at a 105-point pace in their past 54 games, which includes a 93-point pace through 60 minutes. It's awfully similar.

Now look: the games early in the year happened. They count. But the way in which the Lightning were winning them was never something that was likely to be sustained. Through their first 19 games, they shot 10.3 per cent at 5-on-5 with a .934 save percentage. They got out-shot at 5-on-5 in those games but the percentages were so overwhelming that it didn't really matter and they outscored the opposition 46-31 at 5-on-5.

Since then, Tampa's settled down a little bit in terms of shooting and save percentage. They've shot 9.2 per cent and put up a .929 save percentage. Which is still incredibly good. For those of you who don't have the scale internalized here, the league average shooting percentage at 5-on-5 is about 7.7 per cent, which is a .923 save percentage. So the Lightning, even after having cooled off a bit, have a shooting percentage that's about 15 points better than league average and a save percentage that's about six points better.

One might be inclined to look at the 5-on-5 shooting percentage that Tampa's posted and say "The Lightning have a pile of great offensive players — of course they're going to shoot at a very high rate." And there's some truth to that. Through games played Saturday though, the big driver of Tampa's shooting percentage relative to the league was Tampa's second and third line.

The Lightning's first line has shot 10.8 per cent against a league average of 9.0 per cent for first lines. That's maybe a touch high but Tampa does tend a couple of high-end offensive players, even relative to high-end offensive players, on that line in Steven Stamkos and Nikita Kucherov. Ten teams are at 10 per cent or better so it doesn't seem too outlandish that the Lightning are where they are.

The second line is at 10.4 per cent at 5-on-5. This is where I start to get a little skeptical. The league average second line is shooting 7.6 per cent. Is Tampa's second line (the four most consistently used players here are Brayden Point, Ondrej Palat, Yanni Gourde and Tyler Johnson) really about 35 per cent better at finishing than the league average second line? Are they really better at finishing than a typical first line? I mean, anything's possible but I've got my doubts.

The third line is more of the same. They've shot 9.4 per cent this year. The league average third line is shooting 6.9 per cent so, like the second line, Tampa's third line has finished about 35 per cent better than the typical NHL third line at 5-on-5. There's been some more flux in the third line but the most commonly used players on that line are Alex Killorn, Johnson, Gourde, Cory Conacher, Ryan Callahan, Chris Kunitz, Adam Erne and Vladislav Namestnikov. Does that seem like a collection of players that should finish like a typical first line?

If the answer to that question is no, then there's something else going on here, whether it's luck, some tactical wrinkle or some mix of the two. Luck has a tendency to dry up. Tactical wrinkles are more readily addressed in the playoffs, when teams have more time to identify those wrinkles and can game plan for specific things.

Tampa's fourth line legitimately struggles to score. The Lightning are shooting 5.0 per cent with the fourth line on the ice; the league average fourth line is shooting 6.4 per cent.

There's another curious little wrinkle with the Lightning. They seem to let the opposition put an inordinate amount of their 5-on-5 shot attempts on goal. As a result, they've got a somewhat sizeable gap between their Corsi% (sixth in the NHL) and the percentage of the shots on goal that they get (16th). Accordingly, if you're looking at possession numbers, Corsi% kind of overstates the difference between the Lightning and their opponents. They allow fewer attempts but when they do allow an attempt, it's much less likely to be blocked or forced wide.

Even worse, the problem is particularly acute with opposition forwards. League-wide, forwards turn 57.5 per cent of their shot attempts into shots on goal. The Lightning allow 61.2 per cent of shot attempts from opposition forwards to become shots on goal. That might not seem like a lot but it works out to about an extra shot per game from a forward — which means it's likely from a more dangerous position — that the goalies



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018

have to deal with. The difference with the defencemen is smaller – it works out to about an extra shot against every four or five games.

Even worse on the forward point, the problem is particularly acute when Tampa's top six forwards are on the ice. They're spending about 65 per cent of the ice time against opposition top six forwards, which means that it's the opposition's better players enjoying the lion's share of these extra shots on goal.

The end result of all this is that the Lightning are a team that is dependent on the percentages because the shots tend to end up fairly even. Ultimately, teams that have this sort of success simply don't have a great track record once they make the playoffs. In the NHL's Somewhat Better Data Era, which began in 2007-08, 11 teams have gone into the playoffs on the back of a shooting percentage that was at least 10 per cent better than league average with a shot share of between 49 and 51 per cent. None of them have made a Stanley Cup final.

2007-08 Colorado Avalanche: Lost in second round to Detroit Red Wings

2007-08 Dallas Stars: Lost in third round to Detroit Red Wings

2007-08 Ottawa Senators: Lost in first round to Pittsburgh Penguins

2008-09 Boston Bruins: Lost in second round to Carolina Hurricanes

2008-09 Vancouver Canucks: Lost in second round to Chicago Blackhawks

2009-10 Vancouver Canucks: Lost in second round to Chicago Blackhawks

2012-13 Anaheim Ducks: Lost in first round to Detroit Red Wings

2012-13 Pittsburgh Penguins: Lost in third round to Boston Bruins

2014-15 New York Rangers: Lost in third round to Tampa Bay Lightning

2015-16 Florida Panthers: Lost in first round to New York Islanders

2016-17 Minnesota Wild: Lost in first round to St. Louis Blues

Tampa will be the 12th team like this to make the playoffs in this era. The past doesn't condemn the Lightning, of course, and they've got strengths that might help them overcome their regular season reliance on 5-on-5 shooting percentage. In today's NHL, if you make the playoffs, you're almost certainly good enough to win a Cup if the stars align. They're loaded at 5-on-4. Maybe that carries them. Maybe Andrei Vasilevskiy goes on a tear. Maybe Ryan McDonagh will help them cut down on the percentage of shot attempts that turn into shots on goal. Maybe they never run into a real possession powerhouse. Things happen.

Outside of the Lightning finding a way to become a bit more dominant from a possession perspective though, I don't see them in that very top group of playoff contenders. It looks increasingly likely that they'll get a favourable first-round matchup, hosting whoever finishes fifth in the Metro Division. They should win that. After that though, assuming good health, they don't seem like they're likely to be big favourites against any of the teams that they're likely to meet as the playoffs roll along.

The Athletic LOADED: 03.22.2018

1105038 Websites

The Athletic / Blackhawks' playoff streak ends as surging Artemi Panarin and Blue Jackets keep rolling

By Tom Reed Mar 21, 2018 28

NEW YORK — On a night his former club was mathematically eliminated from playoff contention for the first time in a decade, Artemi Panarin delivered a hat trick in the Blue Jackets' ninth consecutive victory.

The timing of the two events was coincidental yet somehow fitting.

The blockbuster trade that sent Panarin from Chicago to Columbus last summer significantly impacted the fortunes of both franchises. After a bright start, the reunion of Brandon Saad and the Blackhawks did not go as anticipated. Meanwhile, Panarin has shattered the narrative that his rousing success over the previous two seasons was the product of Chicago's wealth of offensive talent.

Turns out the winger can bedevil Henrik Lundqvist whether he's taking passes from Patrick Kane or Ian Cole.

Panarin was terrific again Tuesday night at Madison Square Garden in leading the Blue Jackets to a 5-3 victory over the Rangers. He scored three times and added an assist to strengthen his team's hold on a postseason spot.

Panarin even spoke to the media through a Russian translator and provided a classic response that needed no interpretation. Asked if he was evolving into one of the NHL's top game-breakers, Panarin smiled. So did the translator.

"The answer is there," the man said alluding to the player's expression. Speaking his only two words of English during the interview, Panarin added: "You know (the answer)."

Plenty have contributed to the Blue Jackets' second-longest winning streak in franchise history, but it's the dynamic forward who has been the 5-foot-11, 170-pound talisman. He's registered seven goals and eight assists in the nine games and has provided out-of-nowhere moments of brilliance like his rapid-fire, third-period goal from a faceoff win in Boston on Monday night.

"It's a key thing," coach John Tortorella said. "It's something that teams that end up being there at the end of the year have — a game-breaker, a guy who relishes being in those situations, a guy who wants the puck in key situations. We're fortunate we have one and I think everyone looks to him and follows him in those situations as far as our offensive guys."

No streak begins without a first win, and it was Panarin's two-goal night in San Jose on March 4 that enabled the Blue Jackets to avoid a three-game losing skid on their critical trip to California. On short rest, they come home two nights later and beat the Golden Knights, 4-1, behind a three-point effort from Panarin.

He's notched at least one point in eight of the nine wins.

"I'm happy I landed on a good team, and I'm happy the season is as it is right now," Panarin said.

It's a sentiment probably not shared by Saad, whose 31 points (16 goals, 15 assists) have him on pace for his worst season since his rookie year. Then again, he has two Stanley Cup rings to remind him of better days in Chicago.

Saad helped the Blue Jackets to a franchise-best 50 wins last season and his long-term contract, which offers the Blackhawks cost certainty, enticed Stan Bowman to part with Panarin.

Before you say the Blackhawks general manager should start letting all of Jarmo Kekalainen's calls go to voice mail, let's see how this spring and summer play out.

Panarin's next hurdle is to become a good postseason performer. Unlike Saad, the winger did not have long and productive playoff runs in Chicago.

As the Blue Jackets sit third in the Metro Division with eight games remaining, it's starting to look as though Panarin will get another shot at the playoffs. If he excels, it only will drive up his price tag and value as Kekalainen attempts to sign him to a long-term extension in July.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018

And if Panarin gets writer's block and doesn't want to put his name to a contract, it's a risk the Blue Jackets always knew existed when they acquired him. One thing is for certain; Kekalainen will not play Garth Snow to Panarin's John Tavares. There's no way the general manager would risk losing him for nothing next summer.

Right now, there are no complaints.

Panarin's 68 points (25 goals, 43 assists) represent the sixth-most productive season in the organization's history. The Blue Jackets needed to follow last campaign with a return to the playoffs and Panarin has helped make it possible. He's not just piled up great numbers and scored timely goals. His work ethic and tenacity have positively influenced youngsters such as Oliver Bjorkstrand.

"He's meant so much to our team," Blue Jackets captain Nick Foligno said. "He's a game-breaker. We've been looking for that player here ... In moments you need him, he just rises to the occasion."

Especially against the Rangers. Panarin has nine goals and three assists in eight games with Lundqvist as the starter. He has two career hat tricks — both against New York.

"It was the same luck again today," Panarin said through the translator. "I'd like to play against the Rangers every day."

It was all smiles in the visitors' locker room in New York on Tuesday night, while the mood was vastly different in Chicago after a 5-1 loss to the Avalanche.

"Obviously one of those runs you want to keep going," Kane told reporters at the United Center of the nine-year playoff streak that ended. "We had a disappointing second half of the season to say the least."

Kane recently attributed his declining stat line to the loss of Panarin in a Chicago Sun-Times interview. Wasn't it supposed to be the other way around?

Panarin has made believers out of skeptics and contenders out of the Jackets. Columbus has never been so hot so late in the season when something other than a high draft pick was at stake.

"I miss Patrick Kane as well, but what's done is done," Panarin said.

That includes what had been the NHL's second-longest active playoff streak.

WE LOAF HIM PIC.TWITTER.COM/QLN94FMXVI

— COLUMBUS BLUE JACKETS (@BLUEJACKETS NHL) MARCH 21, 2018

Notebook

- Blue Jackets defenseman Seth Jones (upper body) missed his third consecutive game.
- The club continues to receive strong production from their depth defencemen. Markus Nutivaara scored his second goal in three games, and Ryan Murray has three assists in the past two contests.
- The Jackets' nine-game win streak is the second longest in franchise history only behind the 16-game run a season ago. Just the Avs and Predators (10 games each) have won more games in a row this season.
- Tortorella was pleased with all of his forward lines and spread out the ice time nicely in the second game in as many nights. Lukas Sedlak, who replaced healthy scratch Brandon Dubinsky, played 11:17.
- The Blue Jackets blocked 24 shots.
- The club left New York late Tuesday night ahead of the storm — Tortorella was barking that he wanted everyone ready to go by 10:15 — and will take off Wednesday. The Blue Jackets host the Panthers on Thursday.

The Athletic LOADED: 03.22.2018

1105039 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Takeaways: Goalie interference blunder part of Canadiens loss to Penguins

Eric Engels March 21, 2018, 11:16 PM

It was a game that featured eight goals — one of them on a very controversial call involving (you guessed it) goaltender interference and another that will likely go down as the nicest scored in the NHL this year — and two penalty shots, and six breakaways, and 79 shots on net, and 64 hits, and a fight, and a linesman and a team trainer both cut and sent off for stitches on the same play.

Let's just say it was a wild one. In the end, the Pittsburgh Penguins beat the Montreal Canadiens 5-3 and we've got takeaways from it.

Carey Price is healthy and sharp

After missing a month with concussions symptoms, Price bravely stepped back into the starter's net against the lethal offence of the Penguins.

His first test: a penalty shot for Derick Brassard, which he coolly turned aside with his blocker.

It's easy to look at the score sheet and suggest Price didn't have his best, allowing five goals on 39 shots. But he didn't have a chance on any of them, and he also came up with some incredible saves in this one.

A sizzling Evgeni Malkin one-timer caught by Price was one highlight. Saves on Sidney Crosby, Phil Kessel and Patric Hornqvist were others.

All in all, it was a solid performance for Price behind a team currently filled with AHL call-ups.

Definitely no chance for Price on Malkin's game-opening goal

Here's what the NHL's rule book considers grounds for a goal to be reversed:

"Goals should be disallowed only if an attacking player, either by his positioning or by contact, impairs the goalkeeper's ability to move freely within his crease or defend his goal."

Further down in Rule 69, it says, "the overriding rationale of this rule is that a goalkeeper should have the ability to move freely within his goal crease without being hindered by the actions of an attacking player. If an attacking player enters the goal crease, and by his actions, impairs the goalkeeper's ability to defend his goal, and a goal is scored, the goal will be disallowed."

Watch this one closely and you be the judge:

There's nothing ambiguous on this play. By the definition, it's no goal. Even the magnificent Mario Lemieux, owner of the Penguins, was bewildered the goal was allowed to stand. We were shocked, too.

Definitely no chance for Price on Crosby's baseball goal

As if we haven't seen Sidney Crosby do every incredible, unexpectedly ridiculous thing in hockey in his 855 previous NHL games, he one-upped himself with the 3-3 goal in Wednesday's game.

A puck is deflected off Canadiens forward Charles Hudon not 10 feet in front of Crosby, but he manages to pick it out of midair with his forehand, bat it to his backhand and whack it in past Price.

It was just obscene.

Scary moments for Steve Miller



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018

Being an NHL linesman is a tough job.

You've got to keep up with a frenetic pace of play, be in position to make split-second decisions, break up fights and do everything possible to avoid getting in the way.

Steve Miller found that last challenge a bit too tough to overcome in Wednesday's game. First he was run over by Penguins forward Jake Guentzel and then he was sliced by Hudon's skate in front of Montreal's bench.

A period later — and a number of stitches, too — Miller returned to complete the game.

We look forward to Don Cherry praising his toughness in this week's Coach's Corner segment.

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

Shoutout to the no-celly celly from Nikita Scherbak

Canadiens forward Nikita Scherbak slipped in for a shorthanded breakaway while the Penguins took one of the worst line changes in the history of line changes.

Scherbak pulled a forehand-backhand, forehand-backhand, forehand-backhand-roof job on Casey DeSmith and celebrated his goal by pretending it never even happened.

He skated around the Penguins net and just stood at the sideboards while his teammates jumped all over him. We call it the Joe Sakic throwback special and we totally approve.

Two penalty shots, two saves

DeSmith deserves full credit for shutting down Brendan Gallagher's penalty-shot attempt 3:14 into the second period.

Gallagher tried to wait him out and beat him over the glove, but DeSmith held his ground and made the stop.

It's rare to see a penalty shot awarded to each team in a single game and probably even rarer to see both of them stopped.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 03.22.2018

1105040 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / NHL GM meetings wrap: Vegas to be spared from a Seattle draft

Chris Johnston | @reporterchris March 21, 2018, 5:26 PM

BOCA RATON, Fla. — By now you've heard enough about goaltender interference reviews.

The NHL general managers wrapped up three days of meetings Wednesday with a tweak to the way those are administered — shifting the final decision from referees on the ice to the league's hockey operations department.

They also decided to bring a retired referee into the Toronto video room to assist with reviews and have set the wheels in motion to do it as soon as possible. The new process will be in place by the playoffs, barring an unexpected snag.

While that was the headline item to come out of these GM meetings, there was plenty more going on behind the scenes. Here are five things we learned:

Vegas off the hook in possible Seattle draft

The GMs were informed that any potential future Seattle expansion draft will be conducted under the same conditions as Vegas, and there's an interesting caveat: The Golden Knights aren't likely to be part of the Seattle process at all, according to a source.

There's no reason to expect them to be put in position to lose a player because they're not going to be sharing in the \$650-million fee the Oak View Group will be asked to pay if/when the NHL accepts its expansion application. That was part of the deal the league struck with Golden Knights owner Bill Foley when he was granted the 31st franchise.

As a result, the Original 30 will eventually receive \$21.67-million apiece from Seattle after cashing \$16.67-million cheques from Vegas. That helps soften the blow of losing another player through expansion.

While the NHL has not committed to a timeline on when Seattle might be ready to enter the league, it's unlikely we'll see the next expansion draft occur before June 2020.

Golden Knights GM George McPhee will be resting a little easier than his colleagues at that point in time, free of the decision about which seven forwards, three defencemen and goalie he wants to protect from the 32nd franchise.

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Seattle would get same entry draft odds as Golden Knights

A Seattle expansion team would also be granted the same rules that were extended to Vegas for its first entry draft last year — getting identical odds in the lottery as the team finishing with the third-fewest points to determine Round 1 positioning, and then selecting third in each subsequent round.

In the meantime, the NHL is set to introduce new odds for next month's draft lottery.

Pending NHLPA approval, GMs were told that the last-place finisher will now have an 18.5 per cent chance of landing the No. 1 pick — up from 18 per cent last year (when Vegas was introduced), but down from the 20 per cent chance the Toronto Maple Leafs enjoyed after finishing last in the 2015-16 season.

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

Nothing wrong with LTIR

Despite concerns raised by managers about how the long-term injured reserve provision was used by the Maple Leafs with Joffrey Lupul and Nikita Soshnikov, and Chicago with Marian Hossa, the NHL remains confident that the spirit of the collective bargaining agreement is being followed.

"We have the right to have an independent medical examination and we use that right liberally," said deputy commissioner Bill Daly. "We've never had an issue confirming the condition."

Lupul (back) and Hossa (skin condition) were each subjected to third-party medicals after failing physicals with their teams at the outset of training camp.

The Soshnikov case raised eyebrows in February because the Leafs were able to keep him on LTIR for three days after he completed an American Hockey League conditioning stint where he put up five points and registered 17 shots on goal in five games with the Marlies.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018

The implication at the time was that Soshnikov wasn't healthy enough to be activated. The Leafs were also carrying the maximum 23 players and eventually eased their logjam by trading the Russian winger to St. Louis for a 2019 fourth-round pick on Feb. 15.

Daly indicated that the league maintains the right to an independent medical on players coming off an LTIR conditioning loan like Soshnikov. He also said that it typically orders multiple third-party medicals for players each year.

Even though the LTIR provision was discussed during these meetings, he expressed confidence that business is being conducted above board.

"We police these issues," said Daly. "It's not to call into anybody's integrity or judgement, it's to make sure the CBA's integrity is maintained. All of the issues that were raised were looked into."

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

Potential record cap increase could be coming

Any GM facing a cap crunch left the Boca Beach Club feeling a little better about his situation. The NHL is projecting that the upper limit of next year's salary cap will fall between \$78 million and \$82 million.

That's a nice jump from the \$75 million in effect this season.

"There's healthy revenue growth again this year," Daly explained. "It'll all come down to what we negotiate with the players' association in terms of an inflator for next year."

If it hits the top end of the current projection, the league would establish a new record – surpassing the \$6.4-million bump between 07-08 and 08-09.

Not a bad time to be a marquee free agent (looking at you, John Tavares).

Dimitri Filipovic provides entertaining and thoughtful dialogue about the game of hockey with an analytical edge. Not as nerdy as it sounds.

Goaltender interference talks end ... for now

Even with the goaltender interference review changes recommended Wednesday, this is probably not the last we've heard on the topic. Expect it to be discussed when the GMs next convene at the Stanley Cup Final in June.

There's a chance they'll circle back and apply a two-minute delay of game penalty for incorrect challenges – just as they did last year for those involving offsides, a move that cut the number of reviews nearly in half.

After seeing 170 goaltender interference challenges through the first 1,100 games of this season, the league would like to find a way to reduce those, too.

"There are lots of times when the coach issues it when we're really using it to correct a glaring error – not an argument over whether it could have been or might not have been," said commissioner Gary Bettman. "The answer should be if it's a completely blown call, that's when it should be used. And if you're issuing the challenge in circumstances where it isn't clear-cut, you should expect you're probably not going to get the determination that you want."

While giving out a penalty might seem like a tricky thing to do after a subjective review call, there was some support for the idea here.

Should they ever decide to move forward, it's bound to become its own hot-button issue.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 03.22.2018

1105041 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Stanley Cup Playoff Push: Who would the Maple Leafs rather play?

Rory Boylen | @RoryBoylen March 21, 2018, 1:21 PM

With two and a half weeks left in the season, many teams have already fallen out of contention, but there are still some tight races to watch to see who gets in and then, once they get there, who everybody plays.

Here is our first Stanley Cup Playoff push, with updates every Monday, Wednesday and Friday until the end of the season.

EASTERN CONFERENCE

If the season ended today...

(A1) vs. (WC2)

(M1) vs. (WC1)

(A2) vs. (A3)

(M2) vs. (M3)

Here's what the Eastern Conference standings look like today:

Who's in?

A Sunday win against the Edmonton Oilers made the Tampa Bay Lightning the first Eastern Conference team to clinch a playoff berth and a third-period comeback win over the Toronto Maple Leafs on Tuesday (as the Boston Bruins had a rare off-night) gave the Lightning a five-point cushion for the division lead.

The Bruins still have two games in hand on the Lightning, but their destiny is no longer in their own hands — at the current point differential Boston would need some help from Tampa to end up with the division title.

Both teams are 7-2-1 in their past 10 and securely in the playoffs, though Boston doesn't have the little 'X' beside its name. The third-place Atlantic team from Toronto can also feel confident about playing spring hockey, and there's a real debate in the city about which team in front of it would be a better first-round matchup. Is it the Bruins, a surging second-half team against whom Toronto holds a 3-1-0 season series advantage? Or is it the Lightning and their porous defence that has allowed the fifth-most shots in the league since Jan. 1 and helped bring down one-time Vezina contender Andrei Vasilevskiy's save percentage to a pedestrian .907 rate for the past three months?

On style alone, the Maple Leafs' offensive lean might suggest that taking on that Lightning defence is the preferred choice and they'd have a better chance in a back-and-forth slug fest. But also consider that the Maple Leafs have a better record against the Bruins this season and that blowing a three-goal lead against the Lightning on Tuesday night (without Auston Matthews) served as a reminder of just how hard it is to keep up with the best offence in the league.

The Metro half of the Eastern Conference bracket is far less clear, though Washington is closing in on a clinch. Pittsburgh, too, is getting there despite cooling lately (5-4-1 in its past 10), but both teams are looking over their shoulder at the Columbus Blue Jackets who are finally starting to score.

NINE STRAIGHT WINS!!!!!!!

pic.twitter.com/fec9f5DGcH

— Columbus Blue Jackets (@BlueJacketsNHL) March 21, 2018



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018

Through most of the season the Blue Jackets had the lowest shooting percentage in the league as Alexander Wennberg and Cam Atkinson (among others) were nowhere close to the scoring pace they had a season ago. Not everyone on this team could have had a career year at the same time, could they?

The offence is now coming around and the Jackets are starting to look like the sneaky contenders some picked before the season. During their nine-game winning streak they've scored a league-high 38 goals as Artemi Panarin (15 points), Boone Jenner (nine), Atkinson (nine) and Wennberg (nine) are all scoring at point-per-game paces, while Seth Jones (eight points in six games) was making a late bid for Norris consideration before he was forced out of the past three games with an upper-body injury. Sergei Bobrovsky (.930 save percentage during the streak) has been as good as ever and an outside candidate for the Vezina.

What did I miss?

The Philadelphia Flyers are easily the streakiest team in the league this season and one that's been nearly impossible to get a read on. Just who are these guys?

After back-to-back wins on the weekend, the Flyers were on their way to reverting back to their Dr. Jekyll form after a 1-7-0 Mr. Hyde stretch. But as they headed into Detroit, a 40-year-old problem for the team reared its ugly head again as goaltender Petr Mrazek melted down.

Philadelphia acquired the 26-year-old at the deadline to cover for injuries to Brian Elliott and Michal Neuvirth. Mrazek had a promising start with three wins and a .947 save percentage in his first three starts. But in nine March appearances, Mrazek has two wins, an .865 save percentage and was pulled Tuesday after allowing three goals in under four minutes.

The goals weren't all on Mrazek, but the fact he's allowed fewer than three goals in a game just once this month is alarming. Meanwhile Alex Lyon, a 25-year-old undrafted goalie from Yale University, has been nearly perfect coming on in relief this season and appears to be the steadiest option in net right now.

Both Elliott and Neuvirth have been skating recently and there's hope both will be back before the end of the regular season. With Florida and New Jersey both pushing from behind, the Flyers can't figure this out soon enough. Their next game is Thursday against the lowly New York Rangers and Lyon may take over the interim No. 1 job at that time.

Fun fact:

#Leafs have now lost 11 games when holding a 2-goal lead since the start of the 2016-17 season. That's the most in the NHL during that span

(h/t @StatsBySTATS)

— Sportsnet Stats (@SNstats) March 21, 2018

WESTERN CONFERENCE

If the season ended today...

(C1) vs. (WC2)

(P1) vs. (WC1)

(C2) vs. (C3)

(P2) vs. (P3)

Here's what the Western Conference standings look like today:

Who's in?

The Nashville Predators became the first Western Conference team to clinch a playoff spot a few days ago and the Vegas Golden Knights could be next as they sit with 99 points and a magic number of just four.

As an expansion team, everybody expected the Golden Knights to cool by now, but the team has kept on chugging to prove everyone wrong and

set a new (and completely unattainable) standard for Seattle when the NHL expands there in a few years. But while the Golden Knights have been the best story of the NHL this season, some cracks are starting to show.

Much has been made of their home record this season and the "Vegas Flu" that strikes teams by the time they hit the ice at T-Mobile Arena. The Golden Knights were 19-3-2 at home through January and clearly, somehow, held a distinct advantage there. But from the beginning of March, the worm has turned. Vegas is a mediocre 2-3-0 in friendly confines in that time and hasn't beaten a team currently in a playoff spot at home since a 6-3 win over Columbus two months ago, before the Blue Jackets offence started to take off again.

The Golden Knights have been able to maintain an eight-point lead on the Sharks – who are 8-2-0 since adding Evander Kane at the trade deadline – because they've been stronger on the road lately. The Golden Knights are 9-3-1 in their past 13 road games, but face stiff tests in San Jose and Colorado to close out this week. Depending on what the St. Louis Blues do, one or two wins could clinch Vegas a playoff spot.

They may have to do without Marc-Andre Fleury again, too. The face of the franchise left Tuesday's 4-1 win over Vancouver after the first period and though the team hasn't given an injury update, head coach Gerard Gallant did confirm it wasn't a rest option: the training staff didn't clear Fleury to return for the second period. It's speculated Fleury became hurt when he took a Brandon Sutter shot off the mask.

When he's been healthy this season, Fleury has been good enough to be an under-the-radar Vezina option (.930 SP, 2.18 GAA), though an early-season injury probably took him out of the running because he likely wouldn't have played even 50 games.

Though the four-headed monster of Oscar Dansk, Malcolm Subban, Maxime Lagace and Dylan Ferguson received deserved kudos for holding the fort when Fleury missed two months from October to December, it's worth remembering that they combined for an .896 save percentage in Fleury's absence and allowed the 10th-most goals in the league over that time. If Vegas finds itself without its 33-year-old, three-time Cup-winning goalie again, it could be a death knell.

What did I miss?

The Winnipeg Jets beat the Los Angeles Kings 2-1 in a one-sided affair made closer on the scoreboard by Jack Campbell's 36-save effort. Kyle Connor scored both goals and is now just two shy of the injured Brock Boeser for the rookie goal-scoring lead. He's been consistent in his production all season and one of the many rookies flying under the radar in a surprisingly deep class of first-year players.

The Jets need Connor to keep that scoring up, especially if anything comes of Patrik Laine's situation. The 19-year-old sniper entered Tuesday's game with 18 goals in 15 games, but left early after blocking a shot. It was a scary moment for one of the most important players on the team, though head coach Paul Maurice said it was "nothing sinister" in his post-game comments.

"We think he's going to be fine. We don't think it's anything long term," he said.

The Jets have nine games left on their schedule and look pretty secure as the second seed in the Central Division. This is likely to draw them either Minnesota or Colorado in Round 1, who have both been among the West's best in 2018.

Elsewhere, the Dallas Stars had a chance to get back into a wild-card spot Tuesday night with the Anaheim Ducks idle, but a 4-3 loss to the Washington Capitals ended a six-game road trip in which they didn't get a win. In fact, Dallas has just one win in its past nine. The team lost Ben Bishop to injury for at least the next two weeks on Sunday and is pushing ahead with Kari Lehtonen, who has failed as the team's No. 1 for the past four seasons and has an .894 save percentage this month.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018

The latest loss had coach Ken Hitchcock challenging certain players to be better:

"We had players that really carried the ball in the last four games of this trip and we still couldn't get wins," Hitchcock told the Dallas Morning News. "I think we have to have more people join the fight. If you're not scoring, you'd better be terrorizing people with your work, and we did not get enough participation at the end when our big guys really played well."

Four of Dallas' next five games are at home, but it'll face few easy touches against Boston, Vancouver, Philadelphia and Minnesota. When the calendar flips to April, the Stars will have three games left on the schedule as they finish with a very difficult California road swing. This upcoming home set is huge.

Meanwhile the Colorado Avalanche, who are in this fight for a wild-card spot with Dallas, are hitting a high note and getting healthy at exactly the right time. Since Nathan MacKinnon returned to the Avalanche lineup on Feb. 18, Colorado is 9-3-4, which is the second-best record from a Western Conference team in that stretch. For his part, MacKinnon has a whopping 30 points in those 16 games. The Cole Harbour, N.S., native is now just three points shy of Nikita Kucherov for the league-scoring lead and has the best points-per-game rate in the NHL.

Nathan MacKinnon passed 90 points tonight. He's playing his 65th game.

— Dimitri Filipovic (@DimFilipovic) March 21, 2018

As MacKinnon secures his position as Hart Trophy favourite, minute-muncher Erik Johnson returned to the lineup from injury with a (relatively) light workload on Sunday. But that was ratcheted up in a 5-1 win over the Blackhawks on Tuesday, where Johnson played 28:43.

Fun fact:

MacKinnon extends points streak to 13 and Barrie extends club-record points streak for D to 11. That play by MacKinnon was worldly. We need to tweet that out. #Avs

— Mike Chambers (@MikeChambers) March 21, 2018

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 03.22.2018

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Sportsnet.ca / Were the Calgary Flames sunk by bad play or bad luck this season?

Andrew Berkshire March 21, 2018, 1:13 PM

Six points out of the playoffs, eight games remaining and needing to leapfrog three teams just to get to the wild card, the Calgary Flames are unlikely to sneak into the playoffs this season. Perhaps their place on the outside looking in is a symptom of the parity the NHL loves so much, but it's hard not to think the Flames should be better than this.

The Flames have a terrible home record this season at 15-17-4, which is likely the difference between making the playoffs and not. Head coach Glen Gulutzan was asked about their home-road split recently on Hockey Central Saturday with Jeff Marek and John Shannon, to which he replied that, based on their internal metrics, the record doesn't reflect their play.

Without knowing for certain what metrics the Flames are using, Gulutzan's claim passes with flying colours when you look at the Flames' total numbers this season.

The Flames are less effective on special teams than at 5-on-5, and their power play has been a huge drag on their effectiveness. This is

something Tyler Dellow of The Athletic pointed out recently about their 5-on-3 work, but it extends to their 5-on-4 power play as well.

The problem is the Flames haven't only struggled on special teams. They're getting just 49.82 per cent of their goals at 5-on-5, and 49.66 per cent at even strength overall. That alone isn't enough to take them out of playoff contention, but only three of the 16 teams currently in playoff spots are being outscored at even strength: San Jose, Pittsburgh, and New Jersey. Florida, one point behind the Devils for a wild card spot, are also being outscored.

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A combination of an anemic power play that's almost three percentage points worse than the league average of 19.8 per cent, and not getting their earned goals at even strength has kept the Flames out of the playoffs.

If you're trying to find why the Flames haven't gotten the goal differential their play has seemingly earned, the easy answer is they're a top-heavy team.

Their first line of Sean Monahan between Johnny Gaudreau and Micheal Ferland is one of the league's best offensive lines and their second line of Mikael Backlund between Matthew Tkachuk and Michael Frolik is one of the league's best two-way trios. The top defence pairing of Dougie Hamilton and Mark Giordano is brilliant. After that, though, things get a little dicey, but that hasn't been the root of their problem.

The Flames have a couple players who don't live up to where they're slotted on the depth chart, but among those who have actually played significant minutes (300+), only Sam Bennett and Troy Brouwer are below 50 per cent in on-ice high danger scoring chances or scoring chances overall, and only Michael Stone is below 50 per cent in Corsi.

That speaks to a team playing a strong system with decent depth, and yet they haven't got the breaks.

Looking at roster players who have hit 500 or more minutes at 5-on-5, we can see where the issues are by comparing their on-ice goals for percentage to their expected goals for percentage using Corsica.Hockey's model, and order the players by total ice time descending left to right.

The top line for the Flames has been the only bright spot by this measure, with all three players over four per cent better than expectations in goal differential. But everyone else aside from a low leverage player like Matt Stajan has been devastatingly unlucky.

The entire top-four on defence have been getting less than they deserve, which basically cripples the entire team, despite the Hamilton-Giordano pair controlling 58.5 per cent of high danger chances, and the Brodie-Hamonic pair controlling 53.7 per cent.

The biggest factor outside of that top-four has been the 3M line's absurd year of bad luck, where they've controlled 55.9 per cent of high danger chances, 59.22 per cent of shot attempts, but have just 46.81 per cent of the goals. As a line, they're nearly 12 per cent lower in goals for percentage at 5-on-5 than Corsica's expected goals says they should be.

That's unbelievable.

To top things off for the nightmare season that line has had, they've also taken 15 more penalties than they've drawn, which is the second-worst mark for any line in the league that has played more than 300 minutes together, trailing only the Jets' Scheifele,-Wheeler-Connor line with 19. Oddly, the Gaudreau line is the NHL's best in penalty differential at plus-14.

The Flames are not a perfect team, and maybe Mike Smith staying healthy all year gets them to the playoffs anyway with his stellar even strength save percentage, but this has to be a bitter pill for the Flames



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018

organization to swallow. It isn't like there are major off-season mistakes by the front office to point to, nor has the coaching staff been terrible and in need of being replaced.

Dimitri Filipovic provides entertaining and thoughtful dialogue about the game of hockey with an analytical edge. Not as nerdy as it sounds.

The only real issue that can be easily corrected is the power play, but it's a lot to ask for that to make up six or seven standings points in one season. For example, if the Flames drew the same number of power plays this season, but converted at the league average rate of 19.8 per cent, it would net them just an extra seven goals.

The general rule of thumb is three goals equals one point in the standings, so seven goals only gets them 2.3 extra points when they need at least seven to jump ahead of the Ducks. For the power play to compensate for their bad luck at even strength this year, it'd have needed to convert on 25.5 per cent of their attempts, which is something only the Penguins have done this season.

Calgary iced a very good team, one that was top-10 at 5-on-5, and lost a year of their core's prime due to factors outside of their control. The good news is they aren't likely to be in this same spot next year, so there's no need to panic over the summer.

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Sportsnet.ca / What's next for Blackhawks: Fire the coach? Trade key players?

Rory Boylen | @RoryBoylen March 21, 2018, 4:49 PM

For the first time since 2008, the Chicago Blackhawks will not be in the Stanley Cup Playoffs. And even though we've seen this coming for weeks (or months), it's still a weird thing to say about the salary cap-era dynasty.

So as the 'Hawks play out the remainder of a season in which they look like a shadow of their former selves, questions are starting to be raised about how the team should approach the off-season. For years the 'Hawks and general manager Stan Bowman have done a masterful job navigating the salary cap with a roster that had big contracts for its stars but still found ways to surround that core with useful players.

But as we've seen with other capped-out teams over the 12 years of this era, it always catches up to you. Eventually, the big-money players age and stop being worth it, while it gets harder to find value around them.

"They're getting old, they're getting slow and slow doesn't go in the NHL these days," said Marc Savard on Hockey Central at Noon Wednesday. "Seabrook is definitely one of those guys. They're in a tough spot."

Looking back on this season, Brent Seabrook is the poster boy for bad contracts on this team. He'll turn 33 years old next month and will keep making \$6.25 million against the cap for another six years. Though he'll always have size on his side, his legs have noticeably gone. In a modern NHL game where teams focus on utilizing speed across all four lines, Seabrook is rapidly aging. His overall time on ice is a career-low 20:11, with the most obvious dip coming at even strength where Seabrook has averaged 15:50 per game, the sixth-most among 'Hawks blue-liners.

Duncan Keith will be 35 at the start of next season, making \$5.53 million until he's 39 and coming off a season in which it took him until Feb. 15 to score his first goal. Up front, 29-year-old Patrick Kane is still a star talent worth \$10.5 million to a contender, but captain Jonathan Toews (also

making \$10.5 million) is being looped in with the other aging players no longer worth their hefty hits ... on the ice anyway.

"You hate to say it because he's done so much for the Chicago Blackhawks, but is he a guy you put out on the market?" Savard asked. "Does someone give you a couple nice pieces to move forward? I don't think you move Patrick Kane at all, he's still got all it takes. But you definitely need to do something going forward and it starts with those two key cogs. Are they going to get you to where you want to be in the future?"

Years of deep playoff runs and big minutes appear to be taking their toll, though the biggest drag on Toews could be the wingers that have disappeared around him. Not enough can be said about the loss of Marian Hossa before the season and how irreplaceable he was alongside Toews.

In fact, Toews has 20 points in his past 24 games and picked up his production after Kane was put on a line with him. That may be a combination the team needs to move on with permanently and look to 22-year-old Nick Schmaltz as a line leader on the second unit. Schmaltz and rookie Alex DeBrincat are a couple of the bright spots in this miserable season that give hope a turnaround could come as quickly as next season.

Still, this Blackhawks predicament isn't all on the players.

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Bowman made some bold, if controversial, trades around the draft last summer that sent out the likes of Niklas Hjalmarsson and Artemi Panarin and brought back Connor Murphy and Brandon Saad, among other depth pieces. Saad has been only OK and a big downgrade on the offence Panarin contributed, while head coach Joel Quenneville never really wanted to lose the sturdy defence Hjalmarsson brought.

"As a coach, we're in the short-term business, we're thinking about now," Quenneville told the Chicago Sun-Times last summer. "So we're going to do everything we can to better ourselves right now, looking to win today. It's not an easy thing to do in today's business, when it's hard to move players and it's hard to find ways to manage the cap. At the same time, as a coach, my motivation is I want to be better and I want to try to win. But Stan's motivation has a longer-term look to it."

Quenneville, too, is now in the hot seat despite being the second-winningest coach in NHL history. On top of appearing to disagree with the deals Bowman did last summer, Quenneville was "not happy" with the GM's decision to let go of long-time assistant Mike Kitchen. Quenneville and Kitchen were very familiar with each other, having worked together since 2010 in Chicago and in St. Louis before that.

It's hard to believe someone of Quenneville's status would be on the hot seat, especially considering that in a recent player poll conducted by the NHLPA, he was voted as the coach for whom most players would want to play. Even someone with that reputation can lose their impact on a dressing room after 10 years, though local columnist Mark Lazerus noted that isn't really the case here.

"If Joel Quenneville wants to come back with the Chicago Blackhawks, he should be back," Doug MacLean said on HC at Noon. "This guy should not be let go. If they fire him, c'mon. You're asking for big time trouble."

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

The question to ask above all of this is whether or not the conversation is this intense had Corey Crawford stayed healthy. One of the best goalies in the game today was right in the thick of the Vezina Trophy race when he went down for the season with a suspected head injury. His



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018

replacements have faced as heavy a workload, but where the 'Hawks were a top-five team in goals-against with Crawford, they fell to third-worst after he went down.

That is the key behind this downfall. Crawford covers a lot of the warts on this team, and had he stayed healthy a lot of these concerns would be muted. It's not a bad thing that Chicago's roster deficiencies are out in the open to be analyzed, but big and sweeping changes may not be necessary.

When the 2018 Stanley Cup Playoffs end, the 'Hawks will have a total of three post-season wins across three seasons, which is two more than another recent powerhouse in Los Angeles gathered from 2015-2017. Those Kings largely kept their core intact, but did change the coach to adopt a quicker style. The two teams aren't exactly identical and where they play could prove the biggest difference between the two.

The primary challenge to Chicago getting back on top might very well be the Central Division. A year after sweeping the 'Hawks from Round 1, the Nashville Predators are Stanley Cup favourites. The Winnipeg Jets, after years of waiting, have arrived as the top Canadian contenders with a young roster. The Minnesota Wild are a top-three Western team since Jan. 1 and the Colorado Avalanche are led by the Hart Trophy favourite and have an exciting collection of prospects who have arrived, or are nearly there. Dallas, under Ken Hitchcock, will be aiming high as long as he's there.

"Bowman did a masterful job keeping them as competitive as he has and Joel has done a masterful job keeping them as competitive," MacLean said, "...it just catches up to you."

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Sportsnet.ca / Seattle's possible NHL expansion draft would have same rules as Vegas

Mike Johnston | @MikeyJ\_MMA March 21, 2018, 3:30 PM

If and when Seattle is officially granted an NHL franchise, the expansion draft to follow would be conducted under the exact same rules as when the Vegas Golden Knights broke into the league.

As Sportsnet's Chris Johnston reported Wednesday at the GM meetings in Boca Raton, Fla., NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly said general managers have been informed Seattle's expansion guidelines would be the same as they were in 2017.

NHL GMs have been told Seattle's potential expansion draft would be conducted under the exact same rules as Vegas was, per Bill Daly.

— Chris Johnston (@reporterchris) March 21, 2018

The Oak View Group, along with prospective owners David Bonderman and Jerry Bruckheimer, officially submitted Seattle's bid to the NHL in February. The group, which is currently in the process of revamping KeyArena, held a season ticket drive in early March where fans had the opportunity to make a deposit for priority access to tickets. More than 10,000 deposits were collected within 12 minutes of the drive opening. More than 25,000 deposits were collected altogether.

To that, NHL commissioner Gary Bettman responded: "They have begun what looks like an amazing expression of interest. We're aware of it. Obviously, that's one of the many factors that we have to evaluate as we go through the expansion process. And other than the ticket drive, which obviously didn't seem like it's taking a whole lot of time, we're in the infancy of the process. So there are some boxes we have to evaluate

and check before the board gets anywhere close to having to make a decision."

As we've seen from the Pacific Division-leading Golden Knights this season, the expansion rules can result in having a playoff-calibre squad in an inaugural season.

So, as a refresher, here are the rules Seattle would have to follow.

Player protection

The 31 current teams will have two options to choose from when it comes to which players will be left exposed. Teams can (a) protect exactly seven forwards, three defencemen and one goalie or (b) protect eight total skaters regardless of position plus one goalie.

The vast majority of teams went with a standard 7-3-1 protection list ahead of the Vegas draft, however the Arizona Coyotes, Florida Panthers, Los Angeles Kings, Nashville Predators, New Jersey Devils and Pittsburgh Penguins each decided to protect four defencemen and four forwards, while the New York Islanders protected just three forwards and five blueliners.

Players with no-movement clauses will be protected automatically. Also, any first- or second-year professionals and all unsigned draft choices are exempt.

Player exposure

Every team must leave exposed at least one defenceman and two forwards that are under contract for the following season and played 40 or more NHL games the season prior (or have played in 70 or more total NHL games over the previous two seasons combined). Each team must also expose at least one goalie who is under contract for the following season or one that is a pending restricted free agent.

Players with career-threatening injuries or health issues that have missed at least 60 consecutive games (think Marian Hossa in Chicago) would not be allowed to count towards a team's exposure requirements.

Player selection

Seattle would be required to select one player from each of the 31 teams, including a minimum of 20 players who are under contract for the next season. They'd also have to select a minimum of 14 forwards, nine defencemen and three goaltenders. Vegas ended up selecting 14 forwards, 13 defencemen and three goalies.

The total contractual value of the players selected would have to fall somewhere between 60 and 100 per cent of the previous season's salary cap, and Seattle would not be allowed to buy out any contracts until the summer after its debut season.

NHL Draft Lottery odds

The Golden Knights were given the same odds as the team with the third-worst record the season prior (they ended up with the sixth-overall pick) and were slated to select third in rounds two through seven. Seattle would presumably be given the same odds.

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Sportsnet.ca / NHL Power Rankings: 31 Billboards Outside Your City, NHL Edition

Luke Fox | @lukefoxjokebox March 21, 2018, 11:10 AM

Not happy with your favourite hockey team?





# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018

1105046 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Canada's NHL playoff hopes riding on two vastly different teams

Mark Spector | @sportsnetspec March 21, 2018, 8:34 AM

Two teams in the playoffs. That's your deal, Canada. A lousy pair.

Oh how we loved the plucky Ottawa Senators and those high-flying, Las Vegas-favoured Edmonton Oilers back in October, a win away from the Stanley Cup and the Western Conference Final, respectively, last spring. Today they are lottery teams, living in the low-rent district and playing out the string alongside woeful Vancouver and the soul-sucking Montreal Canadiens.

We had some hopes for Calgary and their "best Top 4 defenceman in the NHL," didn't we? In the end, that disappointing blue line won't play any more games than Arizona's D-corps this season, after a revealing stretch run that left everyone in Cowtown wondering just exactly what they have on this roster, one that so many of us believed in last fall.

So we get two teams in the National Hockey League playoffs. Not five, like last year. But hey — it's better than the zero that qualified in 2016.

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

So, with (hopefully) a few rounds of Canadian content on tap beginning in a few weeks, let's take a look at what we have. It's an interesting dichotomy: Canada's marquee club, Toronto, a Hockey Night in Canada staple; and the team whose time zone doesn't work for anyone, arguably the least sexy market in the NHL in Winnipeg.

A Canadian hockey fan can't avoid the Maple Leafs even if they tried — but why would you? Toronto is perhaps the most entertaining team we have this season, with a budding superstar in Auston Mathews, enough offence to keep the lamp lit, and just loose enough defensively that Frederik Andersen (when healthy) is one of the three stars whenever Toronto wins.

And the Jets, that club you've been hearing about all winter and have no doubt been meaning to watch, with a sniper in Patrik Laine who is on his way to becoming a generational goal scorer. Now that your club is toast — we're talking to you Calgary, Vancouver, Edmonton, Ottawa and Montreal — do yourself a favour and see what a proper, slow and successful build is supposed to look like.

It was only a year ago when we wondered aloud, "Why on earth would Jets ownership extend general manager Kevin Cheveldayoff and head coach Paul Maurice?" The coach hadn't accomplished a darned thing in Winnipeg, and the GM could barely muster a trade to speed up one of hockey's most deliberate rebuilds.

A year later we can only hope that neither guy is underpaid. The coach is going to squeeze more than 105 points out of an injury-plagued roster, and the GM has one of the deepest teams in the NHL with young stars aplenty, tons of size, skill, and a goalie in Connor Hellebuyck who can truly carry a team somewhere.

Let's start with Laine, who tragically limped out of Tuesday's 2-1 overtime win over Los Angeles after blocking a shot. If he's seriously injured, stuff changes. But with Laine working that left wing dot on the Jets power play, Winnipeg has an elite sniper whose name you can speak — through his first two seasons, anyhow — alongside any of the great scorers in NHL history.

Blake Wheeler has evolved into one of the true leaders in the game, having once been dealt by Bruins GM Peter Chiarelli for Rich Peverley and a handful of magic beans. Today, Wheeler is the veteran conscience of the Jets, a slow-to-evolve, big-body forward having a career season with 62 assists at age 31. He plays like a Canadian, even if he comes from just over the border in Minnesota.

Mark Scheifele would be an anointed superstar if he played for the Leafs or Habs. He is as slick as he is strong, a pedigree of player who will play internationally for Canada for years to come, as players like Jonathan Toews and Patrice Bergeron pass the torch.

Adam Lowry is a wrecking ball, a bottom-six centre whose game you can hear as well as see. Kyle Connor, just 21, is a fantastic young winger, closing in on 30 goals in his first NHL season. They don't come any more trusty than Bryan Little, a guy who could walk down Toronto's Bay St. without ever being asked for an autograph. Mathieu Perreault? Think a younger, faster Antoine Vermette.

Then there's the Jets blue line: Big Dustin Byfuglien? High-skilled Jacob Trouba, who comes in at six-foot-three and 202 lbs? Tyler Myers, who somehow wasn't good enough for Buffalo? Josh Morrissey, the perfect example of how a patient, proper organization brings a player along?

Guess it turns out Calgary didn't have the best defence corps after all.

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Sportsnet.ca / The Emerson Goal: Remembering the most emotional moment of Stajan's career

Eric Francis | @EricFrancis March 21, 2018, 12:55 PM

Before the tears started streaming down her face, Katie Stajan remembers the chill that ran through her body.

It had been almost three weeks of intense emotional outpourings since she and husband Matt had lost their first child shortly after birth, and one never knew what the next day would bring.

Matt had decided after almost two weeks of grieving he would return to a Calgary Flames team that was nothing but supportive throughout their horrific ordeal.

It felt comforting and safe.

Felt like home.

Little did he or Katie know that while surrounded by 20 teammates in the hostile environs of Edmonton's Rexall Place he'd experience a moment they both consider the most magical of his career.

"I remember it so vividly," said Katie, who was watching in her Calgary home with her parents on March 22, 2014 as Matt played his third game back after their tragic loss.

"I couldn't believe he got a penalty shot because that doesn't happen very often for him. And I just felt like it was going to go in and he has an angel watching over him and this is going to be for him."

After winding his way in on Viktor Fasth, Matt lifted a backhand under the netminder's glove for one of his 146 career goals.

None meant more.

As he rounded back towards the bench he let out a scream and pointed skyward for his son.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018

His name was Emerson, and he would have turned four earlier this month.

"I had this chill go down my whole body and I watched as the goal went in and I just started bawling my eyes out," said Katie.

"My family was all there and we just kind of hugged. We all silently knew who that was for and when he pointed up to the heavens I'll never forget that. It was just raw emotion and that's what he felt in that moment. He knew who it was for – that was his first goal since coming back."

When he reached the bench, the ever-popular Stajan was immediately embraced by teammates, including Brian McGrattan, who'd been so instrumental in helping Stajan mend his broken heart.

"I told him I loved him," said McGrattan when asked what he whispered to Stajan in front of the bench.

"It was emotional for everybody – probably the most heartwarming moment of my career on the ice. His tragedy really rocked the team because everybody was so close. For him to come back and play the last 11 games, it really gave everybody a boost. When he scored...incredible."

Stajan celebrates after scoring the most emotional goal of his career. (Jason Franson/CP)

Fact is, had Stajan not come back to play the last 11 games that year he might never have hit the milestone he'll celebrate Wednesday – becoming the 319th player in NHL history to play 1,000 games. After all, there are only eight games left this year and it's uncertain whether a team will sign him to another deal.

"For my family it was a special moment we'll cherish forever," said Matt, who also had three assists that night.

"It was the most memorable moment of my career after all my family had been through."

He's had plenty of time to think about his 15-year NHL journey of late, leading up to his 1,000th game Wednesday at home against Anaheim.

The Pat Steinberg Show

Matt Stajan on his 1000th game, career and the city of Calgary

Originally aired March 21 2018

Audio Player

However, the 34-year-old centre doesn't need a silver stick to reflect on that special moment when life and sport so brilliantly intersected.

He and Katie are reminded daily of The Emerson Goal, as they call it.

"We still have that puck framed now and it's in Elliot's room – we have a plaque for it," said Katie, who was blessed with a healthy son 364 days after Emerson's passing.

"That's one I know Matt will never forget and his teammates won't either. The guys had been so great.

The Emerson Goal was one of the most heartwarming moments you'll ever see on a rink. (Jason Franson/CP)

Matt felt ready to go back, knowing if he had to stop he had that option. Being around the guys was really helpful for his healing and grieving. It was all just a complete shock. We didn't have any time to plan for it – we went into the hospital thinking we were going to come home with our son."

Katie received so much love and support from other players' wives and girlfriends, too, which has had a tremendous impact on their lives moving forward.

The Stajans have since held fundraisers for the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Foothill Medical Centre to help others who've lost children too

early. They've felt so indebted for the embrace of Calgarians they plan to call Calgary home moving forward.

Despite the fact Matt's contract ends in a few weeks, they just bought a new house – a house filled with dozens of family members this week who have flown in to watch his milestone achievement Wednesday.

It's a home they'll be proud to bring another son home to in July.

Yes, Katie is pregnant again, with another boy.

"My family was all there and we just kind of hugged. We all silently knew who that was for and when he pointed up to the heavens I'll never forget that."

On and off the ice, Matt said the ups and downs of his career and life have made him a better player and person – something only time can teach.

"I think early in your career as a young guy you tend to worry more just about scoring and all the offensive stuff because that's the flashy stuff everyone talks about," said the former second-round pick of the Leafs, who he played with for seven seasons.

"But it's not about that – and if you can figure that out you'll last a long time."

Adapting is what Stajan has done best as a player, arriving in Calgary as a second-line centre who quickly found Brent Sutter's doghouse after being acquired as part of the Dion Phaneuf swap in 2010.

The Mississauga, Ont., native has since re-signed with the team twice while adjusting to roles as a third- and fourth-line pivot, which he is now.

The thrill of scoring his first NHL goal with the first shot in his first NHL game has been countered by times when he wondered if his career was soon over.

He lists his lone NHL playoff goal as his second-best moment as the dramatic marker capped a wild comeback against Vancouver in 2015 when he scored the series clincher.

"When you first come into the league you're just trying to make it to the next day," he laughed.

"Next thing you know you're at 1,000."

And how special to be able to do so with the love and support of more than 20 family members who'll be on hand tonight to celebrate yet another high.

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TSN.CA / After being out 4 weeks, Matthews 'ready to go'

Mark Masters

TSN Toronto reporter Mark Masters checks in daily with news and notes from Maple Leafs practices and game-day skates. The Leafs practised at Bridgestone Arena in Nashville on Wednesday.

For the first time since being sidelined by a shoulder injury last month, Auston Matthews skated with regular Leafs linemates Zach Hyman and William Nylander at practice. Per coach Mike Babcock, a final decision on whether Matthews plays against the Nashville Predators will be made Thursday morning, but all signs point to the 20-year-old returning to the lineup.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018

"Nice to kind of get in all the reps and everything so, in my mind, I think I'm ready to go, (approaching) it as I'm getting ready to play tomorrow (Thursday night)," Matthews said. "Felt really good today."

Matthews has sat out the last 10 games since the Feb. 22 injury against the New York Islanders, but unlike his previous injuries this season he was able to skate right away during the rehab process. And Babcock believes that should make the transition back to game action a bit easier.

"The other times, one with his back and one with his head, he wasn't able to do anything and so when you come back you're out of shape and you say, 'How can you lose it?' That's just the way it is. Now, it's still going to be going way faster than he's been practicing, so there'll be an adjustment period and he'll figure it out."

Matthews missed four games with a back injury in November and then six more with a concussion in December.

"They're all different," Matthews said referring to his injuries. "Been able to skate more with this one so feels like my legs will be better. I don't know, we'll see."

Leafs Ice Chips: Matthews poised to return vs. Preds: 'I think I'm ready to go'

Auston Matthews says he feels good after taking reps with his usual line at practice and believes he's ready to go. Mike Babcock says an official decision will be made on Thursday whether he'll make his return against the Predators. Mark Masters has more from Nashville.

Leafs Ice Chips: Matthews poised to return vs. Preds: 'I think I'm ready to go'

Auston Matthews says he feels good after taking reps with his usual line at practice and believes he's ready to go. Mike Babcock says an official decision will be made on Thursday whether he'll make his return against the Predators. Mark Masters has more from Nashville.

Nerves? Excitement? Matthews wasn't sure what to expect at puck drop Thursday night. But Morgan Rielly has a sense for what his younger teammate may be feeling. The defenceman has had a couple injury absences in recent years including a six-game layoff for an elbow issue this season.

"You're nervous," he recalled, "you just want to get back into it. You play your first shift a bit hesitant, but after that it's important to get back to being yourself. It's not very easy, but Auston's one of those guys who, I imagine, it won't take long to get back into a rhythm."

Matthews has responded well after returning from his earlier injuries, at least in terms of production. He scored twice against the Canadiens in his first game back from the back injury on Nov. 18 and then he had a goal and an assist against the Rangers in his first game back from a concussion on Dec. 23. He has 28 goals and 22 assists in 53 games this season.

"It is the NHL," Babcock reminded reporters, "it is hard to just step in and just get going as we've seen from other guys."

But even if he struggles to score early in his return, the mere presence of Matthews in the lineup makes a big difference.

"Guys are used to playing with certain players and when everyone's healthy you just get better chemistry throughout the entire lineup," said centre Nazem Kadri. "Certain guys don't have to play with different guys constantly and it's more of a set group and I think that's going to help us ... He's going to give us that different look and, obviously, it's harder for opposing teams to match up lines."

"I mean, it's not going to change anything," Rielly cautioned. "We've played a certain way for a while now. I think when you get guys back it's just a matter (of) depth and confidence and it's not a new group, it's just a group with a little more depth."

While Matthews returned against non-playoff teams earlier in the season, Thursday's game will be in the home of the hottest hockey team in the

world. Nashville has gone 14-0-1 since Feb. 19 to surge into top spot in the NHL.

"They got a lot of depth," Matthews observed. "They're fast and they play a real structured game. With their D, they're always jumping up in the play so we got to make sure we don't lose our F3 and have guys above their guys because they play with a lot skill and speed."

"This is probably going to feel like a real playoff game here tomorrow," said Mitch Marnier. "It's a real team we're playing and we got to make sure we're ready."

Matthews back in regular spot at Leafs practice

Auston Matthews is back in his regular spot between William Nylander and Zach Hyman for the first time since his injury February 22nd. Nikita Zaitsev is also back alongside Jake Gardiner. Mark Masters has the latest from Nashville.

Matthews back in regular spot at Leafs practice

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Matthews wasn't the only Leaf back in his usual spot at Wednesday's practice. Defenceman Nikita Zaitsev, who has missed five games due to illness, was paired with his usual partner Jake Gardiner and also may be ready to return on Thursday. As with Matthews, Babcock noted a decision on Zaitsev's status will be made after the morning skate. Connor Carrick was the extra defenceman at practice.

Leo Komarov, who has missed the last two games with a lower-body injury, was absent from practice.

Leafs willing to give Stamkos a pass over 'dangerous' trip

Tampa Bay's Steven Stamkos fined \$5,000, the maximum allowable under the CBA, for a dangerous trip on Toronto's Morgan Rielly.

— NHL Player Safety (@NHLPlayerSafety) March 21, 2018

The NHL Department of Player Safety fined Steven Stamkos \$5,000, the maximum allowable under the CBA, for "a dangerous trip" on Rielly during the first period of Tuesday's game. The Lightning captain received an elbowing penalty on the play and got an earful from the Leafs defenceman on the ice.

But Rielly wasn't all that eager to relive the sequence on Wednesday.

"I haven't watched it again. I just found out about it two seconds ago," Rielly said when asked about the fine. "He plays the game hard. He's not dirty, that's just what happens sometimes, I guess. I don't know. I'm not worried about it."

Stamkos declined to comment on fine - just 2nd of his career (both this season). Called for elbowing Rielly. Fined for "dangerous trip."

— Joe Smith (@TBTimes\_JS) March 21, 2018

Rielly's sentiment was echoed by teammates.

"I'm not quite sure 100 per cent what happened on the play, but I know that's not in Stamkos's DNA," said Kadri, who has been matched against Stamkos plenty of times over the years. "He doesn't usually do that. So, I think, for that you can kind of give him a pass for it. Things happen fast and it's an instinctual game and sometimes players do things that they didn't necessarily want to do."

Rielly on Stamkos: 'He's not dirty, it's just what happens sometimes'

After the NHL Player Safety announced they fined Steven Stamkos \$5,000 for a "dangerous trip" on Morgan Rielly, the Maple Leafs



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018

defenceman knows that Stamkos isn't a dirty player and that sometimes stuff happens on the ice.

Rielly on Stamkos: 'He's not dirty, it's just what happens sometimes'

After the NHL Player Safety announced they fined Steven Stamkos \$5,000 for a "dangerous trip" on Morgan Rielly, the Maple Leafs defenceman knows that Stamkos isn't a dirty player and that sometimes stuff happens on the ice.

Johnsson earns Babcock's trust – for now

It appears rookie Andreas Johnsson has done enough to stay in the lineup even with Matthews poised to return.

Johnsson, who has played the last two games with Nylander, was moved to the fourth line at practice skating alongside Tomas Plekanec and Kasperii Kapanen.

"He's been very good, very quick on the puck, good defensively, made a couple mistakes last night but, in saying all that, I like him," Babcock explained. "If he keeps playing good, he gets to play and if he doesn't, someone else will play."

Josh Leivo, who played Tuesday in Tampa, was an extra forward at practice alongside Dominic Moore. Forward Matt Martin skated as a defenceman in the workout and is the other extra body up front.

Marner not always looking for JvR on power play

The Leafs' top power-play unit – Rielly, Marner, Kadri, Tyler Bozak and James van Riemsdyk – remains scorching hot as the team has now piled up nine man-advantage goals over the last six games (15 opportunities).

While van Riemsdyk, the net-front presence, is the finisher on the unit with a team-leading 10 power-play goals, Marner is the straw that stirs the drink on the half wall.

"It's nice," Marner said of his office on the side boards. "You get to see the whole ice and what the PK wants to do and go from there."

And the diminutive dynamo insists he isn't always looking for JvR in front.

"Not really, no," he said. "I mean, it's just trying to survey the ice and see who's open and he's been open so it's been going to him and he's been putting it in."

This latest hot streak has boosted the Leafs' power play to fourth in the NHL on the season at 23.1 per cent.

"We have good communication, good chemistry," said Kadri, "and guys know where the puck's going to be and where the puck's going to go. We have plays that we draw up and we just communicate together and that allows people to be in the right place at the right time."

"Mo (Rielly) does a great job of drawing guys in," said Marner. "Bozie does a great job when he gets it on his side as well. You got a duel threat on both sides. And Mo up top can get the puck through constantly and JvR's obviously a tipping machine."

Lines at Wednesday's practice:

Forwards

Hyman-Matthews-Nylander

Marleau-Kadri-Marner

van Riemsdyk-Bozak-Brown

Johnsson-Plekanec-Kapanen

Leivo, Moore

Defencemen

Rielly-Hainsey

Gardiner-Zaitsev

Dermott-Polak

Martin-Carrick

Goaltenders

Andersen

McElhinney

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Power-play units at Wednesday's practice:

Rielly

Bozak-Kadri-Marner

van Riemsdyk

Gardiner

Matthews-Brown-Nylander

Marleau

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1105049 Websites

TSN.CA / GM meetings notebook: No push to change Hart Trophy definition

Frank Seravalli

BOCA RATON, Fla. — The NHL awards were one item on the GM meetings' agenda that got washed out by the wave of goaltender interference discussion.

One thing that won't be changing any time soon is the definition of the Hart Trophy.

NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly said Tuesday he does not believe GMs have an appetite to change the wording of the award's definition, which has not changed since hockey's most prestigious individual trophy was introduced 94 years ago in 1924.

The Hart Trophy is awarded annually to the "player judged most valuable to his team," though there is debate about whether it should be that of most valuable player or instead most outstanding player.

TSN informally polled some of the NHL's most senior managers and none expressed any concern with the current definition. One politely abstained.

"I'm the wrong guy to ask," Maple Leafs GM Lou Lamoriello said. "I think the MVP is the team."

Keeping with tradition is one reason no one expressed interest in change. Another is that an award already exists for hockey's most outstanding player in the Ted Lindsay Award, as voted by members of the NHL Players' Association.

Connor McDavid won both the Hart and Ted Lindsay last season. The last time the awards were split was 2013, when Alex Ovechkin took home the Lindsay and Sidney Crosby captured the Hart, which is voted on by members of the Professional Hockey Writers Association.

McDavid is at the centre of the Hart debate this season. He is third in the NHL in scoring with 90 points — his numbers are even better than last year, on a significantly worse team — but the Oilers will be eliminated from playoff contention in March.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018

The last player from a non-playoff team to win the Hart Trophy was Mario Lemieux in 1987-88, when the Penguins missed by one point, but he lapped the field in scoring.

The knock against McDavid's Hart candidacy, based on the current definition, has been that he must not have provided that much value with the Oilers in 24th place. McDavid is unquestionably in the conversation as the NHL's most outstanding player though.

Avalanche GM Joe Sakic, the 2001 Hart Trophy winner, said he doesn't believe the current definition needs fixing.

"As far as I'm concerned, Nathan MacKinnon checks all of those boxes, as both the most outstanding player and most valuable to our team," Sakic said this week. "I don't know how you could ask him to do any more than what he's done for us this year. He's been unbelievably good from start to finish."

## REST AND RELAXATION?

Another agenda item that didn't make it up for discussion was the rule regarding the "resting" of players late in the regular season. This has been a hot-button issue in the NBA and NFL at times, but has rarely come up in hockey.

Daly said there is language in the collective bargaining agreement requiring teams to ice the most competitive roster possible, but does not foresee an issue. After all, teams comfortably ahead in the standings have "earned" the right to rest players when they see fit.

The Nashville Predators, the first team to clinch a playoff spot, have raised an eyebrow or two by cycling players through their lineup in recent weeks. Coach Peter Laviolette scoffed at the notion of rest, but instead called it "maintenance." The players who have sat out, including Roman Josi, Kyle Turris, Craig Smith, Kevin Fiala, Scott Hartnell and Mike Fisher, were all officially available and would've played if it was the playoffs.

"I don't think it's an issue in our sport," Jets GM Kevin Cheveldayoff said. "To be honest, we've had so many injuries. We'd love to get all of our guys on the ice at the same time for as many games possible before the playoffs."

## TWO MINUTES FOR CHALLENGING

One wrinkle to keep in mind for the summer is a potential two-minute penalty for coaches who incorrectly challenge a goal for goaltender interference.

That change was instituted for the start of this season for offside challenges and has resulted in a nearly 50-per-cent reduction in the number of calls. Of the 18 penalties issued for the incorrect challenge, the opposition has scored on eight of the ensuing power plays.

NHL senior vice-president Colin Campbell did not seem to support a similar change for goaltender interference since it is subjective, unlike the black-and-white offside rule, but there was support for it.

"It's a possibility," Daly confirmed. "It was discussed as one possibility in the meeting, but let's defer that until the summer and see how we want to approach that as a rule."

## THE JOFFREY 'LOOPHOLE'

The NHL clarified the use of long-term injury relief and roster management with regard to the injured list, specifically with regards to Toronto's Joffrey Lupul and Nikita Soshnikov as well as Chicago's Marian Hossa (allergic reaction to equipment).

"We've gone through a thorough review process," commissioner Gary Bettman said. "If we think there's an issue, we investigate, look into it, and, if necessary, do our own evaluation."

Some GMs wanted a more thorough explanation of why those teams were allowed to receive the benefit they did, even though the NHL already ruled those transactions were salary cap compliant.

"It's not to call into question anyone's integrity or judgment," Daly said. "It's to make sure the CBA's integrity is maintained. All the issues that were raised were looked into."

Bettman followed that up by asking GMs to stop complaining through the media: "All they have to do is call us and we'll answer."

## BOCA BITES

Daly said next season's salary cap projection of \$78 to \$82 million, up from \$75 million this season, has not changed. "There's healthy revenue growth," Daly said, "but it will all come down to what we negotiate with the players' union" ... Daly said the NHL has an "idea" on how to realign the Western Conference should Seattle be granted an expansion franchise in 2020, but declined to reveal specifics. "You'd try to minimize the amount of teams you might have moving," Daly said. With eight in the Pacific and seven in the Central, the easiest move in that case, would be to move one to the Central – maybe Arizona? – to balance it out, even if there is no ideal geographical fit ... GMs were officially told by the NHL that a potential expansion draft for Seattle would have the same format and protection requirements as Vegas in 2017 ... Bettman said the NHL is "still finalizing arrangements" to play games in China next season.

## QUOTABLE

"The coach's challenge really probably shouldn't have been used 170 times. There were lots of times a coach issues it when we're really using it to correct a glaring error – not an argument over whether it could've been or might not have been. The answer is it should've been used when it's a completely blown call. If you're issuing a coach's challenge when it isn't clear cut, you should expect that you're probably not going to get the determination that you want."

— Bettman on the coach's challenge.

Contact Frank Seravalli on Twitter: @frank\_seravalli

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TSN.CA / NHLPA agrees to goaltender interference review change

Coach's challenges for goaltender interference and the ensuing arguments aren't going away.

There will just be a new place to direct the complaints.

With the goal of refining the consistency of goalie interference challenges, NHL general managers on Wednesday recommended shifting the decision from on-ice officials to the league's situation room in Toronto. The change could go into effect as soon as the playoffs, which begin April 11, after the NHL Players' Association signed off and now just needs approval from the board of governors.

The NHLPA has agreed to approve the recommended change to Rule 78.7 (ii). Media release here: <https://t.co/XFHBOVLYRc>  
[pic.twitter.com/6OWR3Wy4J4](https://pic.twitter.com/6OWR3Wy4J4)

— NHLPA (@NHLPA) March 21, 2018

"The players want consistency in the application of the rule, and therefore support this proposed change in order to help accomplish that goal," said NHLPA special assistant to the executive director Mathieu Schneider said after consulting with competition committee members and other players.

Commissioner Gary Bettman said only perhaps a half-dozen of about 170 challenges this season were controversial, yet GMs overwhelmingly were in favour of a centralized location for final decisions.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018

"The objective is to be as close to perfect as possible," Bettman said, noting goalie interference is a judgment call. "The recommended change is intended to help resolve the rare cases in which the situation room and the referees might have different opinions of a particular play and is intended to produce more predictability for our players and coaches."

Currently, on-ice officials have the final say on whether a goal should count or be disallowed when challenged. Under the proposed change, the officials would continue to be involved, but a member of the NHL Officiating Management Team — made up of former referees — would be part of the decision-making process.

Washington Capitals coach Barry Trotz said this won't affect how he approaches challenging goalie interference but believes having someone outside the area making the call is a positive.

"There's some referees who are more established and, I'd say, sure of themselves, they won't reverse the calls," Trotz said. "They almost say, 'That's the way I saw it and that's the way it is and live with it.' And others get swayed by what they see or maybe the crowd or another coach or how the game's going."

"So it's no different than the student marking their own papers. Let's have a non-emotional person who has no skin in the game and is not in an emotional environment to make those calls and I think you'll find it will be more consistent."

Coaches and goaltenders have complained about the inconsistency all season. Bettman said during All-Star weekend in late January that officials might be "overthinking" reviews and that the intent was, "Take a quick look, but don't search it to death."

The league sent a memo to all teams outlining the standard, which is closer to what Dallas Stars coach Ken Hitchcock prefers. Hitchcock said he and his colleagues want to lean toward allowing more contact and counting more goals.

"We're tie goes to the runner," Hitchcock said. "I think that's how a lot of the coaches feel is that when you see a situation that is a positive-area sacrifice (for players), give the runner the benefit."

It took years of debate for GMs to approve coach's challenges for offside and goaltender interference, which are in their third season. The grey area in interpretation still causes issues.

"I don't know what is and what isn't," New York Islanders coach Doug Weight said recently. I think there's a lot of confusion. That's tough. It's frustrating for us."

The hope is to lessen the frustration by letting a rotation of former officials take over. But nothing about the way goalie interference is called is being changed.

Former player Ray Ferraro suggested adopting the international standard that says a goal is waved off if a skater interferes with a goalie's positioning but allows it to count if the goalie initiates contact.

"You're never going to find a solution for this because what you see when you're 200 feet away in a press box is different from what you see on TV, which is different from what is happening on the ice," goaltending analyst Justin Goldman of The Goalie Guild said. "I feel bad for the referees because it's so hard to make that call in that moment, but to go to Toronto and expect Toronto to get it right every single time, you're at the mercy of what they're seeing on a TV screen, not what actually happened on the ice. For the goalies, that's super frustrating."

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TSN.CA / Statistically Speaking: Panarin leads Blue Jackets attack

Scott Cullen

Panarin producing during the Blue Jackets' big finish; Draisaitsl, Larkin, Ovechkin, McCann and more in Scott Cullen's Statistically Speaking.

### HEROES

Artemi Panarin – Columbus' star winger recorded a hat trick and added an assist in a 5-3 win at the Rangers, giving him 22 points (10 G, 12 A) in the past 16 games. From the looks of it, he's not merely a product of playing with Patrick Kane, because Panarin is generating similar scoring rates (0.92 points per game) and a career-best 2.84 shots per game this season.

Leon Draisaitsl – Edmonton's centre tallied a goal and three helpers in a 7-3 win at Carolina, matching his production from the previous eight games. Nevertheless, he's up to 66 points in 69 games.

Dylan Larkin – Detroit's speedy centre scored two goals and added an assist in a 5-4 shootout win over Philadelphia. He had just three assists in the previous 10 games.

Alex Ovechkin – Washington's super sniper reclaimed the goal-scoring lead, tallying his 44th, and added two assists in a 4-3 win over Dallas. He has 23 points (12 G, 11 A) in the past 19 games.

Jared McCann – The Florida centre put up a goal and two helpers in a 7-2 win at Ottawa. He had one assist in his previous eight games.

Kyle Connor – Winnipeg's rookie winger scored a pair of goals, including the overtime winner, in a 2-1 victory over Los Angeles. He has five goals in the past four games, and is two behind injured Canucks winger Brock Boeser for the rookie goal-scoring lead.

### ZEROES

Mark Borowiecki and Ben Harpur – It was a long night for the Senators defencemen, both of whom were on the ice for four goals against in a 7-2 loss to Florida.

Klas Dahlbeck and Justin Faulk – The Hurricanes defence duo was crushed (6 for, 14 against, 30.0 CF%, 2-7 scoring chances) and on the ice for four goals against in a 7-3 loss to Edmonton.

Marc Staal and Neal Pionk – The Rangers defence pairing had a tough night (8 for, 16 against, 33.3 CF%, 5-11 scoring chances) and was on the ice for three goals against in a 5-3 loss to Columbus.

Morgan Rielly and Ron Hainsey – Toronto's defence tandem had a difficult time (7 for, 14 against, 3-10 scoring chances) and were on the ice for three goals against in a 4-3 loss to Tampa Bay.

Scott Darling – A miserable season continued for the Hurricanes netminder, as he gave up seven goals on 30 shots in a 7-3 loss to Edmonton. He has a .848 save percentage in his past eight games.

Craig Anderson – Ottawa's veteran netminder allowed four goals on 17 shots before getting pulled from a 7-2 loss to Florida. He had a .923 save percentage in his previous four starts.

### VITAL SIGNS

Matt Murray – Pittsburgh's starting netminder returned to action, for the first time in three-and-a-half weeks after suffering a concussion, and allowed three goals on 39 shots in a 4-1 loss at the Islanders.

Patrik Laine – The Jets sniper suffered a foot injury when blocking a shot and was forced to leave a 2-1 overtime win against Los Angeles. Obviously, if it turns out that the foot is broken, that would be a major loss for Winnipeg.

Marc-Andre Fleury – The Golden Knights netminder was forced to leave a 4-1 win over Vancouver after the first period with an undisclosed injury.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018

He was replaced by Malcolm Subban, who stopped 21 of 22 shots in relief.

Ryan Callahan – Tampa Bay's veteran winger suffered an upper-body injury against Toronto.

Brett Ritchie and Jason Spezza – A lower-body injury and back injury, respectively, kept the Stars forwards out of the lineup for a 4-3 loss at Washington.

### SHORT SHIFTS

JvR is raising his free agent price tag with a strong finish.

Maple Leafs LW James van Riemsdyk scored a pair of goals in a 4-3 loss at Tampa Bay; he has eight points (7 G, 1 A) in the past four games...Lightning LW Yannick Gourde picked up a pair of assists in a 4-3 win over Toronto and has seven points (2 G, 5 A) in the past eight games...Oilers LW Pontus Aberg produced a goal and two assists in a 7-3 win at Carolina; he had two assists in his previous eight games with Edmonton...Oilers D Yohan Auvitu, RW Jesse Puljujarvi and C Ryan Strome each had a goal and an assist. Auvitu had two assists in his previous 13 games, Puljujarvi had one goal in his previous nine games, and Strome had no points in his previous six games...Hurricanes RW Sebastian Aho had a goal and an assist in a 7-3 loss to Edmonton. He has 12 points (5 G, 7 A) in the past 11 games...Islanders C Mathew Barzal recorded a goal and an assist in a 4-1 win against Pittsburgh and has 22 points (4 G, 18 A) in the past 18 games...Islanders C John Tavares contributed a couple of assists, giving him 11 points (2 G, 9 A) in the past eight games...Blue Jackets LW Nick Foligno and D Ian Cole both had a pair of assists in a 5-3 win at the Rangers. Foligno has five assists in the past three games and Cole has four points (1 G, 3 A) in the past five games.

Same goes for John Carlson, who is putting up big numbers for Washington.

Stars LW Jamie Benn and RW Alexander Radulov both had a goal and an assist in a 4-3 loss at Washington. Benn has 15 points (6 G, 9 A) in the past 13 games and Radulov has six points (2 G, 4 A) in the past six games...Stars D John Klingberg added a pair of assists, and has four assists in the past four games...Capitals D John Carlson and RW T.J. Oshie both had a goal and an assist in a 4-3 win vs. Dallas. Carlson has 14 points (4 G, 10 A) in the past 12 games, while Oshie has five points (4 G, 1 A) in the past four games...Capitals C Lars Eller added two assists against the Stars, giving him four points (2 G, 2 A) in the past four games...A bunch of Panthers – Nick Bjugstad, Evgeni Dadonov, Jamie McGinn, Frank Vatrano and Keith Yandle each had a goal and an assist in a 7-2 rout at Ottawa. Bjugstad has 14 points (6 G, 8 A) in the past 11 games, Dadonov has 25 points (12 G, 13 A) in the past 19 games, McGinn had one goal in his previous seven games, Vatrano has four points (2 G, 2 A) in six games with the Panthers, and Yandle has 11 points (1 G, 10 A) in the past 10 games.

Tyson Barrie is riding an 11-game point streak.

Flyers C Sean Couturier and D Shayne Gostisbehere both had a goal and an assist in a 5-4 shootout loss at Detroit. Couturier has seven points (1 G, 6 A) during a five-game point streak and Gostisbehere has five points (3 G, 2 A) in the past five games...Avalanche C Alexander Kerfoot scored a pair of goals in a 5-1 win at Chicago, ending a 12-game scoring drought...Avalanche D Tyson Barrie and RW Mikko Rantanen both had a goal and an assist against the Blackhawks. Barrie has 15 points (6 G, 9 A) during an 11-game point streak and Rantanen has 23 points (7 G, 16 A) in the past 12 games...Avalanche C Nathan MacKinnon added two assists, giving him 30 points (14 G, 16 A) in the past 15 games...Sharks D Brent Burns earned three assists in a 6-2 win against New Jersey. He has 46 points (9 G, 37 A) in the past 47 games...Sharks LW Barclay Goodrow contributed a goal and an assist, matching his production from his previous 16 games, and D Brenden Dillon added two assists, giving him six points (2 G, 4 A) during a five-game point streak.

Avalanche G Semyon Varlamov turned away 44 of 45 shots in a 5-1 win at Chicago, and has a .963 save percentage in his past five starts...Islanders G Chris Gibson stopped 36 of 37 shots in a 4-1 win over Pittsburgh. He has a .936 save percentage in five starts...Kings G Jack Campbell had 36 saves on 38 shots in a 2-1 overtime loss at Winnipeg, giving him a .927 save percentage in four appearances.

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TSN.CA / Statistically Speaking: Karlsson crushing it for Vegas

Scott Cullen

Wild Bill has turned into a star in Vegas; Pietrangelo, Kane, DeBrincat, MacKinnon, Fleury, McElhinney and more in Scott Cullen's Statistically Speaking.

### HEROES

William Karlsson - Wild Bill recorded a hat trick in Sunday's 4-0 win against Calgary. The Golden Knights' centre has 14 points (9 G, 5 A) in the past 13 games and is up to an astonishing 39 goals this season.

Alex Pietrangelo – The Blues defenceman scored two goals and added an assist in Saturday's 4-3 overtime win against the Rangers then added a goal and three assists in Sunday's 5-4 overtime win at Chicago. He has 11 points (4 G, 7 A) in the past five games.

Evander Kane – The Sharks winger scored four goals in Friday's 7-4 win at Calgary. After being held off the scoresheet Saturday, he has 10 points (5 G, 5 A) in nine games since he was traded to San Jose.

Alex DeBrincat - Chicago's rookie winger recorded a hat trick in Sunday's 5-4 overtime loss against St. Louis. He had just three assists in his previous 13 games, and yet is still tied for second among rookies with 25 goals.

Nathan MacKinnon - Colorado's star centre scored two goals and added an assist in Sunday's 5-1 win over Detroit. He has 24 points (13 G, 11 A) during a 12-game point streak.

Marc-Andre Fleury - The Golden Knights netminder stoned the Flames, stopping all 42 shots that he faced in Sunday's 4-0 win against Calgary. He has a .945 save percentage in his past six starts.

Curtis McElhinney – Toronto's backup netminder posted a 33-save shutout in Saturday's 4-0 win over Montreal. He has a .954 save percentage in his past nine games.

### ZEROES

Jonathan Ericsson – The Red Wings blueliner had a tough weekend (22 for, 31 against, 41.5 CF%, 13-22 scoring chances) and was on the ice for no goals for and seven against in two Detroit losses.

Brock McGinn – The Hurricanes left winger was on the wrong side of the puck (18 for, 22 against, 45.0 CF%) and on the ice for four goals against in two games.

Michael McCarron – Called up to fill-in on the injured Canadiens forward lines, the towering centre struggled (5 for, 16 against, 23.8 CF%, 2-9 scoring chances) and was on the ice for two goals against in Saturday's 4-0 loss at Toronto.

Travis Hamonic – Calgary's hard-hitting blueliner was on the ice for five even-strength goals against in a pair of weekend losses, to Vegas and San Jose.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018

### VITAL SIGNS

Jacob Trouba – Playing just his second game after returning from a sprained ankle, the Jets blueline was knocked out of Sunday's game against Dallas after taking a hit from Stars captain Jamie Benn.

Mark Scheifele and Adam Lowry – At the same time, the Jets did get a couple of centres back into the lineup for Sunday's game. Scheifele had missed a week-and-a-half with an upper-body injury, while Lowry had been out for more than six weeks with his latest injury.

Ben Bishop – Dallas' netminder suffered a lower-body injury against Winnipeg Sunday and will be re-evaluated in two weeks. That leaves the Stars' playoff chase in the hands of Kari Lehtonen.

Jack Eichel – The Sabres centre returned to the Sabres lineup Saturday after missing five weeks with a sprained ankle.

Evgeny Kuznetsov – Washington's playmaking centre had two assists before suffering an upper-body injury Friday against the Islanders, enough that it kept him out of Sunday's loss at Philadelphia.

Vladimir Tarasenko – St. Louis' star winger suffered an upper-body injury against the Rangers Friday, causing him to miss Sunday's win at Chicago.

David Backes – The Bruins forward suffered a nasty gash on his leg, one requiring 18 stitches to close, against Tampa Bay Saturday.

Marc-Edouard Vlasic – San Jose's veteran defenceman took a slapshot in the throat Saturday against Vancouver.

Ryan Dzingel – Ottawa's winger suffered a head injury during Saturday's loss at Columbus.

Seth Jones – Columbus' Norris Trophy candidate suffered an upper-body injury last week and while he played against Philadelphia Thursday, the Blue Jackets kept him out of the lineup for Saturday's win against Ottawa.

Noah Hanifin – The Hurricanes defenceman missed Sunday's win over the Islanders with an upper-body injury.

Andrej Sekera – Edmonton's veteran blueliner, who has been struggling as he tries to return from a torn ACL, suffered a foot injury blockint a shot Sunday at Tampa Bay.

Vladislav Kamenev – Acquired from Nashville as part of the Matt Duchene trade, the Avalanche rookie broke his arm in his first game, but made his return to the lineup for Sunday's 5-1 win against Detroit.

Ty Rattie – The 25-year-old journeyman winger was called up from the AHL, and found himself skating on Connor McDavid's wing. He's put up three points (2 G, 1 A) and 14 shots on goal in four games. He had 43 points (21 G, 22 A) in 53 AHL games before getting called up.

### SHORT SHIFTS

Patrik Laine has tied Alex Ovechkin for the goal-scoring lead.

Jets RW Patrik Laine scored twice in Sunday's 4-2 win against Dallas. He has 26 points (18 G, 8 A) in the past 15 games...Jets RW Blake Wheeler added a goal and an assist against the Stars, giving him 22 points (5 G, 17 A) in the past 18 games...Avalanche LW Gabriel Landeskog put up a goal and two helpers in Sunday's 5-1 win against Detroit; he has 12 points (4 G, 8 A) in the past 11 games...Avalanche RW Mikko Rantanen added two assists, and Avalanche RW Blake Comeau contributed a goal and an assist. Rantanen has 21 points (6 G, 15 A) in the past 11 games, while Comeau has six points (2 G, 4 A) in the past six games.

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Nikita Kucherov maintains a four-point lead in the scoring race.

Lightning RW Nikita Kucherov scored twice in Sunday's 3-1 win over Edmonton, and has 27 points (9 G, 18 A) in the past 17 games...Lightning C Steven Stamkos added a couple of assists, giving

him 24 points (8 G, 16 A) in the past 19 games...Hurricanes C Victor Rask and D Jaccob Slavin both had a goal and an assist in Sunday's 4-3 win at the Islanders. Rask had nine points (1 G, 8 A) in the previous 20 games, and Slavin has five points (3 G, 2 A) in the past five games...Islanders LW Anders Lee scored two goals, C John Tavares put up three assists, and RW Josh Bailey had a goal and an assist in Sunday's 4-3 loss to Carolina. Lee has seven points (5 G, 2 A) in the past seven games, Tavares has nine points (2 G, 7 A) in the past seven games, and Bailey had three points (2 G, 1 A) in the previous 12 games

Flyers RW Wayne Simmonds scored two goals in Sunday's 6-3 win over Washington, giving him six points (3 G, 3 A) in the past five games...Flyers LW Jakub Voracek added a goal and an assist, and has nine points (5 G, 4 A) in the past nine games...Flyers C Sean Couturier and D Radko Gudas both had a pair of assists. Couturier has five assists in the past four games while Gudas matched his production from the previous 15 games...Capitals LW Alex Ovechkin and D John Carlson both had a goal and an assist in Sunday's 6-3 loss at Philadelphia. Ovechkin has six points (3 G, 3 A) in the past four games and Carlson has 19 points (7 G, 12 A) in the past 20 games.

Blues rookie D Vince Dunn had a goal and three assists in Sunday's 5-4 overtime win at Chicago, giving him seven points (1 G, 6 A) in the past seven games...Blues LW Alexander Steen added a goal and an assist; he had just one assist in the previous seven games...Golden Knights D Nate Schmidt earned a pair of assists in Sunday's 4-0 win vs. Calgary, and has four assists in the past four games...Blackhawks RW Tomas Jurco and D Duncan Keith both had a pair of assists in Sunday's 5-4 overtime loss vs. St. Louis. Jurco has seven points (4 G, 3 A) in the past 12 games and Keith had three assists in the previous 14 games.

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Connor McDavid is tied with Evgeni Malkin and Nathan MacKinnon for second in scoring behind Kucherov.

Oilers C Connor McDavid had a goal and two helpers in Saturday's 4-2 win at Florida; he has 23 points (11 G, 12 A) in the past 15 games...Oilers LW Ryan Nugent-Hopkins and RW Ty Rattie had a goal and an assist in Saturday's 4-2 win at Florida, and has seven points (4 G, 3 A) in the past eight games...Sharks RW Timo Meier scored a pair of goals in Saturday's 5-3 win at Vancouver, giving him four points (3 G, 1 A) in the past four games...Sharks C Logan Couture and RW Kevin Labanc both contributed a goal and an assist. Couture has five points (2 G, 3 A) in the past three games, and Labanc has four points (3 G, 1 A) in the past four games...Canucks D Alexander Edler had a goal and an assist in Saturday's 5-3 loss to San Jose, snapping a six-game scoring drought...Canucks RW Sam Gagner added a couple of helpers, matching his production over his previous 10 games.

Bruins D Torey Krug recorded three assists in Saturday's 3-0 win at Tampa Bay, giving him 13 points (3 G, 10 A) in the past 10 games...Sabres RW Nick Baptiste scored a pair of goals in Saturday's 5-3 win against Chicago. He had one assist in his previous 12 games...Sabres RW Sam Reinhart scored once and added two assists in Saturday's 5-3 win over Chicago. He has 26 points (11 G, 15 A) in the past 24 games...Sabres C Ryan O'Reilly added a goal and an assist against the Blackhawks and has 15 points (4 G, 11 A) in the past 16 games...Blackhawks C Jonathan Toews had a goal and an assist, while RW Patrick Kane earned two assists in Saturday's 5-3 loss at Buffalo. Toews has 11 points (4 G, 7 A) in the past nine games and Kane has 16 points (4 G, 12 A) in the past 15 games...Blues LW Vladimir Sobotka chipped in a couple of assists in Saturday's 4-3 overtime win against the Rangers, and has five points (2 G, 3 A) in the past five games...Rangers C Mika Zibanejad scored two goals in Saturday's 4-3 overtime loss at St. Louis, giving him 10 points (6 G, 4 A) in the past six games...Rangers LW Chris Kreider added a pair of assists, and has 10 points (2 G, 8 A) in the past nine games.

Predators C Colton Sissons and LW Filip Forsberg both scored two goals in Friday's 4-2 win at Colorado. Sissons has five points (2 G, 3 A) in the past seven games, and Forsberg has nine points (3 G, 6 A) in the past



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018

nine games...Predators RW Craig Smith contributed a couple of assists, and has 14 points (5 G, 9 A) in the past 15 games...Capitals RW Alex Chiasson produced a goal and two assists in Friday's 6-3 win over the Islanders. He had three assists in his previous 14 games...Capitals C Nicklas Backstrom and rookie LW Jakob Vrana both contributed a goal and an assist against the Islanders and both had an assist in Sunday's 6-3 loss at Philadelphia. Backstrom has 12 points (4 G, 8 A) in the past nine games and Vrana has four points (1 G, 3 A) in the past three games.

Islanders rookie C Mathew Barzal had a goal and an assist in Friday's 6-3 loss at Washington and had an assist in Sunday's 4-3 loss to Carolina. He has 20 points (3 G, 17 A) in the past 17 games...Islanders D Ryan Pulock added a pair of assists Friday and another assist Sunday, giving him six points (1 G, 5 A) in the past five games...Senators C Matt Duchene and LW Mike Hoffman both had a goal and an assist in Friday's 3-2 overtime win against Dallas. Duchene has 22 points (10 G, 12 A) in the past 20 games and Hoffman has 12 points (6 G, 6 A) in the past 11 games...Senators D Erik Karlsson chipped in a couple of assists and has 25 points (4 G, 21 A) in the past 24 games...Stars LW Jamie Benn earned a pair of assists in Friday's 3-2 overtime loss at Ottawa and scored a goal in Sunday's 4-2 loss at Winnipeg, giving him 13 points (5 G, 8 A) in the past 12 games.

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Tomas Hertl had a good run through Western Canada.

Sharks C Tomas Hertl had a goal and an assist in Friday's 7-4 win at Calgary plus another goal and an assist in Saturday's 5-3 win at Vancouver, giving him seven points (4 G, 3 A) in the past three games...Flames RW Micheal Ferland had a goal and an assist in Friday's 7-4 loss to San Jose. He has five points (1 G, 4 A) in the past six games...Ducks RW Jakob Silfverberg had a pair of assists in Friday's 4-2 win vs. Detroit and added a goal in Sunday's 4-2 win against New Jersey; he has seven points (3 G, 4 A) in the past eight games...Wild LW Jason Zucker scored a goal and added an assist in Friday's 4-2 win at Vegas. He has 16 points (7 G, 9 A) in the past 15 games...Golden Knights C Erik Haula had a goal and an assist in Friday's 4-2 loss to Minnesota; he has five points (4 G, 1 A) in the past four games...Golden Knights LW David Perron contributed a couple of assists against Minnesota and added another in Sunday's 4-0 win against Calgary, giving him 13 points (2 G, 11 A) in the past 13 games.

Avalanche G Semyon Varlamov saved 37 of 38 shots in Sunday's 5-1 win over Detroit and has a .939 save percentage in his past 11 games...Oilers G Cam Talbot stopped 40 of 42 shots in Saturday's 4-2 win at Florida, giving him a .933 save percentage in his past 13 starts...Lightning G Louis Domingue stopped 29 of 30 shots in Sunday's 3-1 win vs. Edmonton; he had a .894 save percentage in his previous five games...Predators G Juuse Saros had 33 saves on 35 shots in Friday's 4-2 win at Colorado, and has a .942 save percentage in his past 15 starts.

FIRSTS

Andreas Johnsson – Toronto's 23-year-old winger scored his first NHL goal, in his second career game, Saturday's 4-0 win against Montreal.

Andreas Johnsson was delighted to score his first NHL goal  
[pic.twitter.com/FKZoThHYvf](https://pic.twitter.com/FKZoThHYvf)

— Jeff Veillette (@JeffVeillette) March 18, 2018

Oskar Lindblom – Philadelphia's 21-year-old winger buried his first NHL goal, in his 14th career game, Sunday's 6-3 win over Washington.

OSKAR LINDBLOM SCORES HIS FIRST NHL GOAL TO GIVE THE FLYERS A 2-1 LEAD  
[pic.twitter.com/9fgEEMwm62](https://pic.twitter.com/9fgEEMwm62)

— Broad Street Hockey (@BroadStHockey) March 18, 2018

Many of the advanced stats used here come from Natural Stat Trick, Corsica and Hockey Reference.

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TSN.CA / 'Dimmed landscape' for NHL players after concussions, study reports

Rick Westhead

National Hockey League players who suffer brain injuries severe enough to go through the league's concussion protocol experience a higher rate of professional and financial instability than other NHLers, a new study claims.

The study was published March 8 in The Journal of Neurotrauma and its lead authors are Prem Ramkumar, an orthopedic surgeon at the Cleveland Clinic in Cleveland, and Sergio Navarro, a graduate medical student at Baylor University in Houston.

The peer-reviewed study examined 2,194 players who played in the NHL from the 2008-09 season through 2016-17 and concluded 198, or 64.1 per cent, of the 309 players who had been through the NHL's concussion protocol in a game during that time frame did not play in the NHL three full seasons after their injury.

Two hundred and sixty-four, or 85 per cent of players, did not play in the NHL five full seasons after their trauma.

"We aren't saying we captured every concussion because not all of them are reported publicly," Navarro said in an interview. "But we have enough to allow us to draw a line in the sand and say here are what the outcomes look like when there are concussions."

Navarro's study determined that 309 NHL players went through concussion protocol during the nine-year time frame, including 290 skaters and 19 goalies. Of the 309 concussed players, 273 suffered one concussion and 36 players had two or more concussions during the same season.

During the study's time frame, NHLers played an average of 2.1 full seasons after going through concussion protocol for the first time.

Navarro said the researchers obtained data regarding player contracts, transactions, injury reports and performance stats from official NHL publications such as NHL.com, as well as from websites including [prosportstransactions.com](https://prosportstransactions.com) and [capfriendly.com](https://capfriendly.com).

Navarro said players who had publicly reported concussions were compared to players who didn't. The players with concussions had a 14.6 per cent chance of playing in the NHL five years after the injury. Players who didn't have reported concussions had a 43.7 per cent chance of being in the NHL five years later.

"I think people understand that players with concussions are going to have memory issues and dementia and issues 15 to 20 years down the road," Navarro said. "But I think it hasn't been as noticed what the shorter-term implications are."

The NHL players who did go through concussion protocol experienced a mean loss of \$390,000 per year in their next contract after their injury, the study reported.

"The findings in our study demonstrate a dimmed landscape for the professional NHL player after concussion, whereby an abbreviated career with shorter post-concussion contracts may be expected, in addition to hampered on-the-ice performance and financial loss of more than \$380,000 a year," the study's authors wrote.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018

"Professional athletes may face competitive or financial pressures that preclude the self-reporting of post-concussed symptoms. The downstream risk of chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) is well described in the literature and mainstream media, but some athletes may be compelled to 'play through the pain' for various reasons."

In addition to some players playing through pain and not reporting their symptoms to their teams, some NHL clubs have been suspected of under-reporting concussions, raising questions about officially released concussion statistics.

During an Oct. 22, 2011, game in Montreal, then-Toronto Maple Leafs goalie James Reimer was injured during a collision in front of his net. The Leafs at the time called the injury a "whiplash" affecting his neck.

After backup goalie Jonas Gustavsson called Reimer's injury "a concussion," coach Ron Wilson said Gustavsson was unqualified to comment on Reimer's injury.

On Nov. 9, the Toronto Star's Dave Feschuk quoted Reimer's mother Marlene in a story questioning why the Maple Leafs were refusing to call her son's injury a concussion.

"That's the frustrating part for us – not knowing what it is, and why they're not calling it a concussion when they say 'concussion-like symptoms,'" she said. "Like, how is that not a concussion?"

A day later, NHL commissioner Gary Bettman, deputy commissioner Bill Daly and NHL lawyer Julie Grand were included on an email chain about concussions, and about Reimer specifically.

On Nov. 10, 2011, Bettman emailed Grand to ask, "How are we doing so far this season?"

Grand emailed statistics that showed there had been 10 reported concussions to that point during the 2011-12 season, down from 26 from the same point the previous season.

"But this doesn't take into account the 'under-reporting' of concussions that Kinger [senior vice-president of hockey operations Kris King] thinks our clubs are engaged in," Daly replied to Grand and Bettman. "BTW, has Reimer been reported as a 'concussion' by Toronto?"

"Right point re the under reporting," Grand wrote. "I will check re Reimer."

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TSN.CA / Statistically Speaking: Bruins' Donato has a great debut

Scott Cullen

Donato with an outstanding debut; Rinne, Ekman-Larsson, Doughty, Domi, Luongo and more in Scott Cullen's Statistically Speaking.

The Boston Bruins have been decimated by injuries lately, but they did get some positive news with the signing of 2014 second-round pick Ryan Donato, who just completed his junior season at Harvard, scoring 26 goals and 43 points in 29 games (he added five goals and an assist in five games for Team USA at the Olympics).

Donato made his NHL debut Monday, playing 19:40 in a 5-4 overtime loss to Columbus, and he was every bit as good as advertised, scoring one goal, assisting on two others and recording eight shot attempts (6 SOG).

One of the reasons to suspect that Donato's collegiate production can translate favourably to the NHL is that he is a shot generator. He put 175

shots on net in just 29 games for the Crimson this season, which is 6.03 per game, easily best in the nation.

In his debut, he skated alongside David Krejci and Danton Heinen on Boston's second line and while most nights aren't going to be quite as magical as his performance in his first NHL game, Donato gives the Bruins a legitimate scoring threat in their middle six group of forwards.

### HEROES

Pekka Rinne – Nashville's veteran netminder posted a 35-save shutout in a 4-0 win at Buffalo. He's making a strong case for the Vezina late in the season, recording a .950 save percentage in his past 11 starts.

Oliver Ekman-Larsson – Arizona's star blueliner scored two goals in a 5-2 win against Calgary; he has 13 points (5 G, 8 A) in the past 15 games.

Drew Doughty – The Kings blueliner recorded three assists in a 4-3 overtime win at Minnesota, giving him 10 points (1 G, 9 A) in the past six games.

Max Domi – The Coyotes winger put up two goals and an assist in a 5-2 win over Calgary, and has eight points (2 G, 6 A) in the past 10 games.

Roberto Luongo – Florida's veteran goaltender stopped all 28 shots that he faced in a 2-0 win at Montreal, and has a .928 save percentage in 13 starts since returning from injury.

### ZEROES

Brendan Guhle and Scott Wilson – The Sabres' defenceman and winger had fine possession numbers, but were both on the ice for three goals against in a 4-0 loss to Nashville.

Michael McCarron and Nicolas Deslauriers – Montreal's fourth liners both scrapped, but otherwise had a tough night (3 for, 17 against, 15.0 CF%) in a 2-0 loss to Florida.

Nick Cousins and Jordan Martinook – The Coyotes forwards were on the wrong side of the action (13 for, 25 against, 34.2 CF%, 6-13 scoring chances) and were on the ice for both goals against in a 5-2 win over Calgary.

### VITAL SIGNS

Trevor Lewis – The Kings winger, who recently returned from injury, suffered an upper-body injury against Minnesota and was forced to leave the game.

### SHORT SHIFTS

#### Embedded Image

As expected, Jeff Carter has added goals since returning to the Kings lineup.

Kings C Jeff Carter scored two goals, including the overtime winner, in a 4-3 win at Minnesota; he has 10 points (8 G, 2 A) in the past 11 games...Kings RW Dustin Brown had a goal and an assist in a 4-3 OT win at Minnesota, and has nine points (5 G, 4 A) in the past 12 games...Predators LW Filip Forsberg produced a goal and an assist in a 4-0 win at Buffalo, and has 11 points (4 G, 7 A) in the past 10 games...Predators RW Viktor Arvidsson added a couple of assists, giving him 18 points (8 G, 10 A) in the past 15 games...Blue Jackets LW Boone Jenner and RW Thomas Vanek both had a goal and an assist in a 5-4 overtime win at Boston. Jenner has eight points (5 G, 3 A) during a six-game point streak, and Vanek has seven points (3 G, 4 A) in the past six games...Blue Jackets LW Nick Foligno and D Ryan Murray both had two assists against the Bruins. Foligno had three points (2 G, 1 A) in his previous 11 games, and Murray matched his production from his previous 20 games...Bruins LW Brad Marchand contributed a goal and an assist in a 5-4 OT loss to Columbus; he has 20 points (9 G, 11 A) in the past 12 games...Bruins rookie winger Danton Heinen added a couple of helpers. He had two points (1 G, 1 A) in his previous 17 games...Coyotes C Derek Stepan earned two assists in a 5-2 win over Calgary and has eight points (1 G, 7 A) in the past nine games.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • March 22, 2018

Panthers D Aaron Ekblad had a strong game (25 for, 6 against, 80.7 CF%, 12-0 scoring chances) and scored a highlight-reel goal in a 2-0 win at Montreal...Flames D Dougie Hamilton scored a goal and launched 16 shot attempts (6 SOG) in a 5-2 loss at Arizona.

Coyotes G Antti Raanta turned away 42 of 44 shots in a 5-2 win vs. Calgary, giving him a .948 save percentage in his past 11 games...Canadiens G Antti Niemi stopped 38 of 40 shots in a 2-0 loss to Florida, and has a .932 save percentage in 16 games since arriving in Montreal.

Cullen: Niemi the lone bright spot of Canadiens' season

#NHL #TSNHockeyAnalytics #MontrealCanadiens  
<https://t.co/PmFhEj6VxR>

— TSN Hockey Analytics (@TSNAnalytics) March 17, 2018

Many of the advanced stats used here come from Natural Stat Trick, Corsica and Hockey Reference.

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USA TODAY / NHL's Sweet 16: What playoff field would look like with NCAA tournament bracket

Kevin Allen and Jimmy Hascup, USA TODAY Published 1:51 p.m. ET March 21, 2018 | Updated 3:58 p.m. ET March 21, 2018

One NHL debate that never goes away is whether it's time to change the divisional emphasis in the playoffs to add variety to the matchups.

Reseeding after the first round. Seed No. 1 through No. 8 in each division. Adding a No. 9 vs. No. 8 play-in game. Everyone has an idea.

That got us thinking about what the NHL playoffs would look like if it were seeded like the NCAA college basketball tournament, ranking teams No. 1 through No. 16 by points, regardless of geography.

Because David Poile and the Nashville Predators remind us of Mike Krzyzewski and Duke and the Colorado Avalanche have a Clemson possibly-in-the-tournament-after-a-long absence vibe, we decided to have fun and see how it looked.

The Winnipeg Jets, with their young talented squad, would be this year's version of the Kentucky Wildcats, who are starting five freshmen. Guess that makes the Tampa Bay Lightning Villanova. Cooper is Jay Wright,

and Nikita Kucherov and Steven Stamkos are like Mikal Bridges and Jalen Brunson, two offensive powers.

Best draw: Nashville Predators. It's a greater advantage for a No. 1 seed in a Sweet 16 format. If they win the first round, the Predators would play either the Wild or Sharks, two teams who are in the middle of the pack among playoff teams. They would certainly like these matchups better than facing the Ducks, a team that gave the Predators trouble last season; or the Kings, who have a storied playoff history; or the skilled Jets.

Worst draw: Boston Bruins. It's not fair for the No. 3-seeded Bruins to have to travel cross-country for a Sweet 16 matchup, against the experienced, physical Ducks, no less. Nobody considers the Penguins an 11-seed, so that would not be a gift matchup even if they "upset" the Maple Leafs. The Bruins' most favorable matchup would occur in the Final Four ... if the Lightning aren't their opponent.

Cinderella potential: Los Angeles Kings. Their corner of the bracket includes a team in its first season (Golden Knights), a team that has advanced to the playoffs once in in the past 10 seasons (Jets) and the inconsistent and disappointing Blue Jackets. The Kings, with Anze Kopitar, Drew Doughty and Jonathan Quick, would gladly take their chances against the Predators in a Final Four matchup.

Current format vs. Sweet 16: Adopting the Sweet 16 format, nine teams from the West would be in the playoffs and only seven from the East. The Stars aren't in the playoffs today under the current set-up, but the Stars are the No. 16 seed under the Sweet 16 format. The Devils would not qualify. In this 1-16 format, only one matchup features two divisional teams. You end up with some unique matchups, including Washington vs. Colorado. Would Capitals fans prefer that over Washington vs. Philadelphia?

Could it work? Aggravating travel is the primary reason why the Sweet 16 format would never receive widespread support. One lure of the divisional format is that it keeps travel bearable in the early rounds. In our Sweet 16 matchups, Anaheim and Boston are separated by about 3,000 miles.

Fun comparison: Vegas Golden Knights and No. 9 Florida State. Vegas does not have big-name stars, just as the Seminoles are led in scoring by Phil Cofer and Braian Angola, who are both averaging around 13 points per game. But Vegas and Florida State are deep — the Golden Knights can roll four lines effectively, while Florida State utilizes a 10-man rotation. Add in the Seminoles' upset of No. 1 Xavier in the NCAA tournament and the Golden Knights' shocking run through this season and it's hard not to see the parallels.

Conclusion: No matter what format you use, the four-round gauntlet is a challenging endeavor. The format doesn't change the reality that Nashville will be the team to beat on one side of the bracket and Tampa Bay is No. 1 on the other side.

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