



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 3, 2018

THE NEWS & OBSERVER

Petrovic scores in 3rd period, Panthers beat Hurricanes 3-2

By PAUL GEREFFI Associated Press

April 02, 2018 11:53 PM

Updated 8 hours 49 minutes ago

SUNRISE, Fla.

The Florida Panthers preserved their playoff hopes thanks to much of their offense coming from unlikely sources.

Alexander Petrovic scored the tiebreaking goal in the third period to lift the Panthers to a 3-2 victory over the Carolina Hurricanes on Monday night.

Evgenii Dadonov and MacKenzie Weegar also scored to help the Panthers snap a three-game skid and pull five points behind idle New Jersey for the second wild card in the Eastern Conference. Florida has four games remaining, one more than the Devils. Roberto Luongo stopped 26 shots.

Petrovic and Weegar entered the game with one goal each on the season.

"It doesn't come too often, but everyone chips in a certain way and tonight we just found a way to get the two points," Petrovic said. "Just keeping this thing alive."

On the go-ahead goal, Petrovic shot from the boards above the right circle and beat Darling with 7:58 left for his first goal since Feb. 14 against Vancouver. His second goal of the season couldn't have come at a better time.

The Panthers host the Nashville Predators on Tuesday night.

"We needed tonight's win at all costs," Luongo said. "We got the job done, now we've got to get some rest tonight and another big game tomorrow."

Derek Ryan and Trevor van Riemsdyk scored for Carolina, and Scott Darling finished with 32 saves.

"They knew they needed two points tonight and they were going for it," van Riemsdyk said. "They were desperate, and they found a way."

Carolina had tied it 2-2 with 6:12 left in the second it caught Florida on a line change, and Ryan backhanded the puck past Luongo for his 15th.

The Hurricanes were eliminated from the playoffs on Saturday night and could have played the spoiler role.

"More than trying to ruin their season it's us playing for pride for each other. That's more important for me," Ryan said. "They dug deep when the pressure was on."

The Hurricanes took a 1-0 lead on a goal by van Riemsdyk 3:44 in. Luongo blocked a shot from in front by Brock McGinn but van Riemsdyk slapped in the rebound for his third.

The Panthers answered 19 seconds later when Weegar's shot from the right circle went over Darling's glove for his second of the season. Weegar's last goal was on Oct. 20 against Pittsburgh.

"We've got to respond after they score, and we did just that. I'm happy I could contribute. It's been a long time," Weegar said.

Dadonov gave the Panthers ahead 2-1 on a power-play goal with 9.1 seconds left in the first. Aleksander Barkov passed over to Dadonov in the slot and he flipped the puck off Darling's leg for his 27th.

NOTES: Barkov's assist on Dadonov's goal was his 50th, becoming the first Panthers player to hit that mark since Olli Jokinen had 52 in the 2006-07 season. ... Panthers forwards Frank Vatrano and Denis Malgin returned after missing the previous game with injuries. Carolina recalled D Roland McKeown from AHL Charlotte on Sunday.

UP NEXT:

Hurricanes: At Philadelphia on Thursday night.

Panthers: Host Nashville on Tuesday night.



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NORTH STATE JOURNAL

Panthers edge Hurricanes, stay in playoff hunt

Trevor Van Riemsdyk, Derek Ryan score for Carolina in loss

[April 2, 2018 Field Level Media Article, NHL, Sports](#)

Panthers teammates celebrate the goal of defenseman Alexander Petrovic during the third period against the Hurricanes at BB&T Center. (Jasen Vinlove / USA TODAY Sports)

Defenseman Alex Petrovic scored with 7:58 left in the third period as the Panthers defeated the visiting Carolina Hurricanes 3-2 on Monday night, keeping Florida in the wild-card race.

Rookie defenseman MacKenzie Weegar and veteran winger Evgenii Dadonov also scored for Florida. Panthers goalie Roberto Luongo made 26 saves for the win.

Since the All-Star break, the Panthers lead the NHL in points by defensemen.

The Panthers improved their points total to 88, five behind the idle New Jersey Devils in the battle for the last wild-card playoff berth in the Eastern Conference. Florida earned its 40th win of the season, marking the fifth time in franchise history that milestone was reached.

Carolina, out of contention for the playoffs, got goals from Trevor van Riemsdyk and Derek Ryan. Goalie Scott Darling made 31 saves in the loss.

The teams traded goals in a 19-second span of the first period.

Van Riemsdyk opened the scoring, following a shot by Brock McGinn. Van Riemsdyk earned his third goal of the season, getting the puck over the stick of defenseman Mike Matheson and past Luongo, who was out of position after stopping McGinn.

Florida tied the score on Weegar's second career goal. With Carolina winger Jeff Skinner attempting to hook him from behind, Weegar lifted a wrist shot over Darling's glove for his first marker since Oct. 20.

The Panthers went ahead 2-1 after Carolina's Elias Lindholm was caught hooking Aaron Ekblad. Florida's power play clicked quickly, scoring with 10 seconds left in the opening period. Aleksander Barkov whistled a pass from along the right boards, and Dadonov skated right down the middle for his 27th goal of the season.

Carolina caught Florida on a poor line change, tying the score 2-2 with 13:48 expired in the second period. The Hurricanes, on the rush, took advantage as Lee Stempniak fed the puck out in front to Ryan for his 15th goal of the season.

After Petrovic's goal, the Hurricanes pulled Darling for an extra attacker but could not get the equalizer.



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Recap: Canes Come Up Short Against Panthers

Canes drop 3-2 decision to desperate Panthers club

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

April 2nd, 2018

SUNRISE, Fla. - The Carolina Hurricanes fell 3-2 to the Florida Panthers on Monday night at BB&T Center.

[Trevor van Riemsdyk](#) and [Derek Ryan](#) netted goals for the Hurricanes in their first game after being mathematically eliminated from postseason contention.

Here are five takeaways from tonight's game.

One

Of the teams that sit below the playoff cut line in the Eastern Conference, only the Panthers still have a mathematical chance of qualifying for postseason play. With that in mind, the Hurricanes knew they would face a desperate club doing whatever it could in order to snag two points.

"I think they knew they needed two points tonight. They were going for it. There were a lot of chances both ways," van Riemsdyk said. "We would have liked to be an even in the third to find a way to win. It's tough. They were desperate and found a way."

Alexander Petrovic stepped in from the point to fire off a shot that beat [Scott Darling](#), who had Colton Sceviour parked right in front of his eyes.

Two

Tonight's first period featured back-and-forth action, with teams trading quality scoring chances at either end of the ice. The Hurricanes had a couple of real good looks that they unfortunately couldn't finish - [Sebastian Aho](#) had a gaping cage in front of him for his 29th goal of the season, [Brock McGinn](#) had a couple of bang-bang looks right in front and [Justin Williams](#) put a shot off the post on a 2-on-1 rush.

Though McGinn wasn't able to bury one of his chances, van Riemsdyk was able to convert and give the Canes a 1-0 lead on what was a frantic sequence.

"That was a good sequence" head coach Bill Peters said. "I thought we had lots of chances early. Lots of good looks and odd-man rushes early. Both teams were a little bit looser than I probably anticipated."

"We had them hemmed in. We had two or three chances before that, and I couldn't believe it didn't go in," he said. "When you get them hemmed in like that a lot of times you

can sneak down a little bit because they get all out of sorts. Lucky enough it just popped on my stick and I just put it in the empty net. A lot of other guys doing a lot of hard work and me just being lucky on the spot."

Three

Though this game was wide open early, it certainly tightened up in the final 40 minutes. After surrendering 19 shots to the Panthers in the first period, the Canes limited Florida to just 16 combined in the second and third.

"We were more efficient in our own zone. Early on, we were turning the puck over in our own zone, resulting in some chances against," Ryan said. "As the game went on, we were able to be more efficient, make some clear passes and get out of our zone."

"Lots of good looks early and not as much late," Peters said. "I thought the game tightened up a bit as the game went along. Needed to get something out of those offensive opportunities early in the game."

[Klas Dahlbeck](#), chasing the puck down in his own end, made a heads-up play to move the puck off the boards and back up the ice while Florida was executing a line change. [Lee Stempniak](#) grabbed the puck and fed Ryan, who fought through a slash and scored to tie the game at two.

"That was a good transition in the neutral zone. The period of the long change, and we caught their D changing," Peters said. "Both Dahly and Stemper made good plays, and Doc found a way to get it by Luongo."

Four

With the Hurricanes eliminated from postseason contention, this final week of the regular season serves as a last opportunity for individual players to make impressions on the coaching staff and front office heading into the offseason.

With [Justin Faulk](#) back on the shelf with a lingering upper-body issue, [Roland McKeown](#) was recalled on Sunday evening. McKeown isn't counted on for his physical presence, but he put the gritty side of his game on display in the second period. Brock McGinn was boarded by MacKenzie Weegar, and McKeown immediately skated in to come to the defense of his teammate and drop the gloves with Weegar. According to HockeyFights.com (<http://www.hockeyfights.com/players/18692>), it's just the second fight McKeown has had as a pro, his first coming in the first round of the Calder Cup Playoffs last season.



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"That's what somebody on the ice has to do. You have to react when something happens. Rolly did that," Peters said. "Good job by Rolly there. He played well tonight."

"That's awesome. You can't say enough about it. I don't think that's really Rolly's game, but he saw something he didn't like. I don't think any of us liked it, and he stepped up," van Riemsdyk said. "It's awesome to have teammates like that. He's a great guy on and off the ice. I didn't expect anything less from such a great guy."

Five

The Hurricanes have games against the Flyers and Lightning remaining on their schedule. Both teams are destined for the postseason.

"I think we're playing for each other. Obviously the year didn't turn out the way we wanted; I think we all believed that we had a playoff-caliber team. A lot of tight losses, and that's the difference," van Riemsdyk said. "We don't have the playoffs on the line these last two games, but we can play for each other, put out a good product on the ice and have some pride in the things we're doing."

Up Next

The Hurricanes will head back to Raleigh for a couple of days before traveling to Philadelphia for their 41st and final road game of the season.



Three reasons the Hurricanes missed the playoffs

Andrew Schnittker, Sports Editor

11 hrs ago

With a 2-1 loss to the New York Rangers Saturday night, the Carolina Hurricanes have been mathematically eliminated from playoff contention for 2018. This season will end like the eight before it, without a trip to the Stanley Cup Playoffs, as the NHL's longest active playoff drought hits nine years.

So, what went wrong? With just two games left in the regular season, let's take a look at the three biggest factors that kept the Canes out of the playoffs.

3. Special teams- Always a key determinant of an NHL team's season, special teams were a factor in the Canes missing the playoffs this year, though certainly not the biggest. Carolina finished in the bottom third of the league in both power-play proficiency (18.7 percent, 21st in the league) and penalty killing (77.7 percent, 25th in the league). The Canes surrendered far too many goals when down a man and were not nearly as dangerous with their own man advantage as they needed to be.

Coaches are fond of saying that if your special-teams percentages add up to at least 100 percent, you'll win a lot of "special teams games". The Canes' percentages did not, and as a result, the team lost far too many games decided by special teams this season.

2. Not enough scoring- One of the two (though arguably the second) biggest factors that has kept the Canes from the postseason in recent years again was a problem in 2017-18. The Canes ranked 23rd in the league with 2.75 goals per game. Of the top 15 teams in the league in goal scoring, 13 are likely to reach the postseason or are at least in the race

in the final week of the season. Of the teams in the bottom 16, only four are either in the postseason picture or have a snowball's chance of making it.

Despite breakout seasons from the team's top two scorers in young Finnish forwards Sebastian Aho and Teuvo Teravainen, Carolina simply did not have enough scoring punch up front. A down year for Jeff Skinner, who had a career-high 37 goals in 2016-17 and dipped to 24 this year, and another underwhelming season from Victor Rask, among others, did not help. However, the biggest thing holding this group back is the lack of a true number-one center. While those are not easy to acquire, the Canes will always be limited in terms of what they can accomplish without one. Finding a true front-line pivot should be a top priority for whoever majority owner Tom Dundon chooses to replace Ron Francis as the Hurricanes' general manager this summer.

1. Continued porous goaltending- Wash, rinse, repeat.

The single biggest determining factor in the Canes missing each of the last three (including 2018) postseasons reared its ugly head once again this year. The team had finished in the bottom five of team save percentage in each of the first three seasons under head coach Bill Peters, and this year was no different, with the team's abysmal .892 team save percentage ranking dead last in the NHL. This year was supposed to be different, however.

The Canes traded for the rights to Scott Darling, who had shined in a backup role with the Chicago Blackhawks and signed him to a four-year contract worth \$4.15 million per season last offseason. He was supposed to come in and finally provide the team with a reliable starter, and the



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league-average starting goaltending it would need to make the playoffs.

That is not what happened. Darling has been dreadful this year, with a 13-19-7 record, .887 save percentage and 3.15 goals-against average. Of 50 NHL goalies with at least 25 appearances this year, Darling's save percentage comes in at No. 50.

By midseason, the Canes found themselves in a familiar position, leaning on Cam Ward to take the bulk of the starts. While Ward has had his moments this year, and sports a 22-14-4 record in 42 appearances, his .905 save percentage and 2.75 goals against average [AM9] are also not what a team needs from its starting goaltender, and it's fair to

wonder if Ward's capable of carrying that kind of load at this stage of his career.

Figuring out the Canes' goaltending situation for next season is the most important task for the new GM. Whether that's moving on from Darling and bringing in someone new while resigning Ward (he's an unrestricted free agent), bringing in two new goalies or keeping Darling and adding a replacement for Ward, it's a critical decision. The Hurricanes need to solve their chronic headache between the pipes if they want to keep their streak of postseason absences from hitting double digits in 2019.



Hurricanes Start Final Week of their Season with 3-2 Loss to the Panthers

The Canes couldn't play spoiler, finish on wrong side of 3-2 score in Sunrise, Florida.

By [Brett Finger@brettfinger](mailto:Brett.Finger@brettfinger) Apr 2, 2018, 10:11pm EDT

Despite being mathematically eliminated from postseason contention with their 2-1 loss to the [New York Rangers](#) on Saturday night, the [Carolina Hurricanes](#) entered BB&T Center in Sunrise, Florida on Monday, still with a role to play in the Eastern Conference playoff race - the role of spoiler.

The Panthers, however, had different plans. Thanks to a late goal from Alex Petrovic, the Cats will live to fight another day as they look to make a late surge into the Eastern Conference's top-eight.

After a handful of chance early on, the Hurricanes broke through and scored the game's first goal.

At the 3:44 mark, Trevor van Riemsdyk pinched down and cashed in on a loose puck in front of a sprawled out Roberto Luongo. The former Blackhawk netted his third goal of the season and gave the road team an early lead.

That didn't last long, though.

19 seconds later, Panthers rookie defenseman [MacKenzie Weegar](#) out-waited Scott Darling on an odd-man rush and was able to beat him short-side for his second goal of the year. Just like that, the two teams were back on even terms.

The Hurricanes failed to score on a man advantage with just under six minutes to go in the first period. The Panthers were then presented with an opportunity of their own when Elias Lindholm went to the box for hooking with just 33 seconds left in the frame.

On the powerplay, Vincent Trocheck found an uncovered [Evgenii Dadonov](#) streaking to the front of the net and, with ten seconds left in the period, the Russian winger - and former property of the Hurricanes - netted his 27th of the season to give his club a 2-1 lead going into the first intermission.

Florida outshot Carolina 19-10 through 20 minutes.

The Hurricanes' offensive attack started to intensify in the early stages of the middle frame. As the midway point of the game neared, it looked like the Canes were on the verge of getting things tied up and, at the 13:48 mark of period two, they did just that.

Lee Stempniak found [Derek Ryan](#) for a short breakaway chance on Luongo, and the pending UFA center made a nifty move in tight and sent a backhand shot top-shelf to make it a 2-2 hockey game.

30 seconds later, [Brock McGinn](#) was on the receiving end of an illegal hit into the boards by Florida's first goal scorer, MacKenzie Weegar. Roland McKeown dropped gloves with the assailant but was given an instigator penalty and a ten-minute misconduct for his role in the incident.

That nullified the powerplay Carolina would have gotten for the boarding call, so the teams stayed at even strength and the period came to a close with the scoreboard reading "2-2".

A back and forth third period finally rendered a goal at the 12:02 mark. Alex Petrovic's long-distance wrist shot beat Darling through traffic and gave the Panthers a late 3-2 lead.



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With the goalie pulled, the Canes made one final push down the stretch, but they came up just short.

On home ice, the Cats got the big win and will, in turn, remain in the thick of the playoff race. Their 3-2 win will up the already high stakes of their matchup against the [Nashville Predators](#) on Tuesday night.

The Hurricanes, on the other hand, will go back to the drawing board in hopes of finishing this failed season on a high note as they take on a pair of playoff-bound teams in their final week of regular season play.



Hometown Weekly Report: April 2, 2018

Written by Nicholas Niedzielski

Published: April 02, 2018

The Checkers snagged three of a possible four points on the road over the weekend as they continue to hold onto an Eastern Conference playoff spot.

Week in Review

Team Statistics

- Overall record 40-26-4
- Home record 22-11-1
- Road record 18-15-3
- Last week's record 1-0-1
- Last 10 games 7-2-1
- Division Standings 4th
- Conference Standings 6th
- League Standings 11th

Rochester 4, Checkers 3 (OT)

Charlotte's final trip to Rochester proved to be a back-and-forth affair. Trevor Carrick opened the scoring with the sole goal of the first period, but Alex Nylander answered early in the middle frame for the Amerks. A snipe from Julien Gauthier later in the period gave the Checkers a one-goal advantage heading into the second intermission. The home squad would draw things even inside the first minute of third, but Greg McKegg pushed the Checkers to their third different lead of the night. It wouldn't last, however, as the Amerks tied the contest in the waning minutes of regulation to force things to overtime. The extra frame didn't last long, however,

as Colin Blackwell collected a stretch pass and converted on a breakaway just 12 seconds in to clinch the two points for Rochester. [Full recap](#)

Checkers 4, Syracuse 1

The next night's contest in Syracuse went smoother for the visitors. Trevor Carrick again opened the scoring in the first, while Greg McKegg finished off a slick passing play to double the advantage through 40 minutes of play. The red-hot McKegg found the back of the net again in the third, and despite finally breaking through on the scoresheet the Crunch couldn't muster a comeback, with Aleksii Saarela's empty netter slamming the door and securing the Checkers' 4-1 victory. [Full recap](#)

Three Stars Of The Week

- **3rd Star Trevor Carrick** 2g, 1a
- **2nd Star Andrew Poturalski** 0g, 4a
- **1st Star Greg McKegg** 3g, 1a

Notables

PLAYOFF PICTURE

The Checkers came away with three out of a possible four points over the weekend, helping them solidify their place in the Atlantic Division standings. Bridgeport, the team chasing Charlotte, split their two-game set over the weekend to fall eight points behind the Checkers, though the Sound Tigers have one fewer game played than Charlotte.

With a 7-2-1-0 mark in their last 10 games, the hard-charging Checkers have their eyes on the spots ahead of them in the standings. The third-place Bruins sit just three points ahead, with the second-place Penguins only one-point ahead of that, though both clubs have one game in hand over the Checkers.



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All four teams are in action four times this week. The Sound Tigers, who the AHL has pegged for the hardest remaining strength of schedule of the group, hosts Providence twice and has a home-and-home series with the Penguins, while the Checkers welcome Lehigh Valley and Hershey to Bojangles' Coliseum for a two-game set each. The Bruins have two road games in Bridgeport to go along with home contests against Lehigh Valley and Hartford, while the Penguins host Hershey and Binghamton to go along with their tilts against Bridgeport.

GOOD TRADE

The acquisition of Greg McKegg at the NHL trade deadline has proven to be huge for the Checkers. With four points over the weekend, the sixth-year pro now has 17 points (8g, 9a) in 13 games for Charlotte and has been held off the scoresheet just once. McKegg's current nine-game point streak is the longest by a Checker this season, the longest since Ryan Murphy's franchise-record 12-game run in 2013-14, as well the longest active streak in the AHL.

SAARELA SCORES

With four goals and seven points in his last four contests, Aleksii Saarela has pushed his way into the conversation for the league's top rookie. The 21-year-old's 24 goals rank third among all AHL rookies, trailing leader Daniel Sprong by just three, and stand as the second-most by a rookie in Charlotte franchise history, tied with Lucas Wallmark's 2016-17 mark and trailing current record-holder Warren Foegele by two.

ON THE PLUS SIDE

Philip Samuelsson continues to put together a strong season on the blue line for Charlotte. The seventh-year pro leads the league with a +39 rating, which is more than double the franchise's current single-season record of +16, most recently accomplished by Haydn Fleury last season. Samuelsson has been a plus player in each of the last 12 contests and has finished a game as a minus just 13 times all year. The blue liner is also one of two players to appear in all of Charlotte's games this season, alongside Andrew Poturalski. Should they finish the year with 76 games played, Poturalski would be the eighth and ninth players in franchise history to play in every game during a season.

Ranks

- Valentin Zykov leads the league in goals (32) and power-play goals (16), is tied for third in power-play points (29) and ranks second in shooting percentage (29.1)
- Warren Foegele ranks second among league rookies in goals (26) and is tied for seventh among rookies in scoring (43), is tied for second in the AHL in shorthanded goals (4) and points (6), is tied for the league lead in game-winning goals (8), ranks fifth among rookies in shooting percentage (17.7) and is tied for fourth among rookies in plus-minus (+19)
- Philip Samuelsson leads the AHL in plus-minus (+39)

- Roland McKeown is tied for second in the AHL in plus-minus (+35)
- Alex Nedeljkovic leads the AHL in wins (31), ranks second in minutes played (2726) and is tied for third in shutouts (5)
- Aleksii Saarela ranks third among AHL rookies in goals (24), ranks second in power-play goals (10) and is tied for 12th in scoring (39)
- Trevor Carrick is tied for sixth among league blue liners in scoring (38) and tied for eighth in assists (29), ranks third among defensemen in power-play assists (19) and fifth in power-play points (21)

INJURIES

- Andrew Miller missed 17 games starting 2/18
- Jake Chelios missed 15 games starting 2/24
- Lucas Wallmark missed one game on 3/31
- Alex Nedeljkovic missed one game on 3/31
- Clark Bishop missed one game on 3/31

Transactions

- Incoming**
 - March 28: (LW) Warren Foegele assigned from Carolina)
- Outgoing**
 - April 1: (G) Bobby Goepfert released from PTO
 - April 1: (D) Roland McKeown recalled by Carolina (NHL)
 - March 29: (D) Zack Kamrass released from PTO

Coming Up

- Tuesday, April 3 at 7 p.m. - Checkers vs. Lehigh Valley**
- Wednesday, April 4 at 7 p.m. - Checkers vs. Lehigh Valley**
- Saturday, April 7 at 6 p.m. - Checkers vs. Hershey**
- Sunday, April 8 at 1 p.m. - Checkers vs. Hershey**

By the Numbers

CATEGORY	RECORD	AHL RANK	LAST WEEK
Power play	20.1%	4th	4th
Penalty kill	80.7%	25th	25th
Goals per game	3.34	3rd	3rd
Shots per game	29.63	20th	19th
Goals allowed per game	2.89	t-13th	t-14th
Shots allowed per game	27.06	4th	4th
Penalty minutes per game	11.87	8th	8th



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LEADERS

CATEGORY	LEADER(S)
Points	Valentin Zykov (52), Andrew Miller, Lucas Wallmark (51)
Goals	Valentin Zykov (32), Warren Foegele (26), Aleksii Saarela (24)
Assists	Andrew Miller (36), Lucas Wallmark (35), Trevor Carrick (29)
Power play goals	Valentin Zykov (16), Aleksii Saarela (10), Andrew Poturalski (7)
Shorthanded goals	Warren Foegele (4), Nicolas Roy, Clark Bishop (2)
Game-winning goals	Warren Foegele (8), Valentin Zykov, Andrew Poturalski (7)

Shots on goal	Warren Foegele (147), Trevor Carrick (143), Aleksii Saarela (142)
Penalty minutes	Trevor Carrick (83), Josiah Didier (79), Zack Stortini (62)
Plus/minus	Philip Samuelsson (+39), Roland McKeown (+35), Warren Foegele (+19)
Wins	Alex Nedeljkovic (31)
Goals-against average	Alex Nedeljkovic (2.55)
Save percentage	Alex Nedeljkovic (.903)

Checkers Recall Callum Booth From Everblades

Written by Nicholas Niedzielski

Published: April 02, 2018

With a busy week of games ahead, the Checkers have recalled goaltender Callum Booth from the ECHL's Florida Everblades.

The rookie netminder has joined the Checkers twice prior this season and has appeared in two AHL games. With the Everblades, Booth is 19-6-2 with 2.41 goals-against average that ranks eight in the ECHL.

The move comes after Alex Nedeljkovic missed Saturday's contest in Syracuse. The good news for Charlotte is that it's nothing serious ailing the AHL's wins leader.

"He's fine, it's more precaution than anything," said head coach Mike Vellucci of Nedeljkovic. "We just want to make sure. We have four games this week so we want to get him ready for the weekend." The Checkers kick off their final home stand of the regular season Tuesday when they host the division-leading Lehigh Valley Phantoms.



Panthers edge Hurricanes, gain in playoff push

Move within five points of second Eastern wild card with four games left

by Alain Poupart / NHL.com Correspondent

April 2nd, 2018

SUNRISE, Fla. -- Defenseman [Alexander Petrovic](#) scored with 7:58 remaining to help the Florida Panthers gain ground in the race for the Stanley Cup Playoffs with a 3-2 victory against the Carolina Hurricanes at BB&T Center on Monday.

Petrovic beat goalie [Scott Darling](#) with a wrist shot through traffic from the right half-wall for his second goal of the season.

"It doesn't come too often, but everyone chips in a certain way, and tonight we just found a way to get the two points," Petrovic said. "Just keeping this thing alive."

The Panthers (40-30-8) moved within five points of the idle New Jersey Devils for the second wild card into the playoffs from the Eastern Conference with one game in hand. Florida



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ended a three-game losing streak (0-2-1) in its return to BB&T Center following a four-game road trip.

The Panthers have three more home games, including Tuesday against the Nashville Predators, before closing the regular season at the Boston Bruins on Sunday.

"We have to win out and win every home game," Florida coach Bob Boughner said. "It's not easy when you're on a long road trip and the first game back. Sometimes those are tough games to play in."

[MacKenzie Weegar](#) and [Evgenii Dadonov](#) scored, [Roberto Luongo](#) made 26 saves, and [Aleksander Barkov](#) had two assists for the Panthers.

[Trevor van Riemsdyk](#) and [Derek Ryan](#) scored for Carolina (35-34-11), which was eliminated from playoff contention Saturday. Darling made 32 saves.

"I thought we had lots of chances early," Hurricanes coach Bill Peters said. "We had lots of good looks, lots of odd-man rushes early. Both teams were a little bit looser than I probably anticipated. The game tightened up a little bit as the game went along. But we needed to get something out of those offensive opportunities early in the game."

Van Riemsdyk gave the Hurricanes a 1-0 lead at 3:44 of the first period when he scored on the rebound of a [Brock McGinn](#) shot after Luongo made several saves.

Weegar tied it 1-1 19 seconds later after taking a feed from [Jared McCann](#) and beating Darling from the right circle at 4:03. It was his second goal in 56 games this season, first since Oct. 20.

"We've got to respond after they score and we did just that," Weegar said. "I'm happy I could contribute. It's been a long time. Been sort of a shutdown (defenseman), working on my defense, but happy to jump up in the play and get one."

Dadonov gave Florida a 2-1 lead with 9.1 seconds left in the first with a power-play goal. After taking a centering pass from Barkov, Dadonov came in alone on Darling and shot past his blocker.

Ryan tied it 2-2 at 13:48 of the second period when the Hurricanes caught the Panthers in a line change. Two quick passes after a Florida dump-in sent Ryan on a breakaway, and he beat Luongo with a backhand.

"We needed tonight's win at all costs," Luongo said. "We got the job done, now we've got to get some rest tonight and another big game tomorrow."

Goal of the game

Petrovic's goal at 12:02 of the third period.

Save of the game

Luongo stopping [Haydn Fleury](#) at 6:08 of the third period.

Highlight of the game

Dadonov's goal at 19:50 of the first period.

They said it

"More than trying to ruin their season, it's us playing for pride for each other. That's more important for me. We're playing for the Carolina Hurricanes, not trying to ruin the Florida Panthers' season. That's how I look at it." -- *Hurricanes forward Derek Ryan*

"You can't win every game, but good teams are able to shut it down quickly and come back with a win. You can't afford to lose many games at this time of year. Right now, we're just going to focus on tomorrow." -- *Panthers goalie Roberto Luongo*

Need to know

Ryan has two goals and five assists during an NHL career-high five-game point streak. ... The Panthers reached 40 victories for the fifth time in their history (1995-96, 1999-2000, 2008-09 and 2015-16). ... With his first assist, Barkov became the first Florida player with at least 50 in a season since Olli Jokinen had 52 in 2006-07. Barkov needs two assists to tie the Panthers record of 53 assists, set by Viktor Kozlov in 1999-2000. ... Panthers fourth-line wing [Colton Sceviour](#) replaced [Nick Bjuggstad](#) on the top line for most of the third period and had an assist on Petrovic's game-winning goal.

What's next

Hurricanes: At the Philadelphia Flyers on Thursday (7 p.m. ET; NBCSP, FS-CR, NHL.TV)

Panthers: Host the Nashville Predators on Tuesday (7:30 p.m. ET; FS-F, FS-TN, NHL.TV)

TODAY'S LINKS

<http://www.newsobserver.com/sports/nhl/carolina-hurricanes/article207767359.html>

<http://nsonline.com/article/2018/04/panthers-edge-hurricanes-stay-in-playoff-hunt/>

<https://www.nhl.com/hurricanes/news/recap-hurricanes-come-up-short-against-panthers/c-297592966>

http://www.technicianonline.com/sports/article_0154bec8-36d5-11e8-9d87-ef2ebdb8d5a8.html

<https://www.canescountry.com/2018/4/2/17190342/carolina-hurricanes-start-final-week-of-season-3-2-loss-florida-panthers-scott-darling-luongo>

<http://gocheckers.com/articles/features/hometown-weekly-report-april-2-2018>

<http://gocheckers.com/articles/transactions/checkers-recall-callum-booth-from-everblades>

<https://www.nhl.com/news/carolina-hurricanes-florida-panthers-game-recap/c-297587592>



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 3, 2018

SportScan

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

1107157 Philadelphia Flyers

Senators ready to play at home one last time

Bruce Garrioch

The Ottawa Senators will make one last stand at the Canadian Tire Centre Monday night.

With only four games left in what has been a frustrating regular season, the Senators will close out the home schedule against the Winnipeg Jets.

In what could be captain Erik Karlsson's final home game in an Ottawa uniform, the Senators will face the Jets before ending the season with stops in Buffalo Wednesday, Pittsburgh Friday and Boston Saturday.

The reality is nobody is sure what's going to happen with Karlsson this summer, but the Senators do plan to make him an offer on July 1 to see if they can get a deal in place.

"That's his territory and I don't want to step on toes or intrude," said blueliner Mark Borowiecki. "What happens, happens. It's a results-based business. We know there's going to be turnover and change given the way we've played this year."

The Senators will make one change by inserting defenceman Ben Harpur into the lineup. Coach Guy Boucher didn't say which forward would be scratched because the club will go with 11 forwards and seven defencemen, but it's possible Max McCormick or Filip Chlapik comes out.

Goaltender Craig Anderson will make the start.

"This is a team that has a chance to win a Cup in my opinion," said Boucher Monday morning. "They've got great depth, their goaltender is playing great and they've got big, mobile defencemen. It's a stacked team.

"I think it's a good story and tonight we've just got to make sure it's a not a great story against us."

Philadelphia Inquirer / Daily News LOADED: 04.03.2018

1107158 Philadelphia Flyers

Steady Ivan Provorov again rocking the mercurial Flyers

by Sam Donnellon, STAFF WRITER

Travis Konecny's goal, splitting two Bruins and deking through Patrice Bergeron before short-siding it in, was otherworldly.

And the guy who enabled both? Well that may be the most promising part of the Flyers' surge toward a playoff berth. The Ivan Provorov of the first two months of the season is the Ivan Provorov of the last two weeks of this one. The point guard aspect on offense, the steady traffic cop in his own end. Sunday's 4-3 overtime victory over the red-hot Boston Bruins was the latest in a string of business-card performances that

should bolster any hopes that his team could make some noise when the playoffs begin April 11.

Giroux's first goal Sunday came after Provorov collected a puck from a faceoff scrum in his own end, took a quick look, and like a savvy point guard, skated the puck up ice with wingers on both sides of him.

"I saw it, I poked it away, I saw we had a clear three-on-two so I skated in the middle just to keep the D guessing if I was going to left or right," Provorov said. "Kicked it out right and TK made a nice pass to G. It was a nice goal."

It most certainly was. A textbook example of how to execute an odd-man rush. But a coach, a teacher of the game, would likely lean harder on what Provorov did to gain his second assist Sunday, which led to Konecny's spectacular run through three Bruins scrambling to get back into position.

Slow down the tape, and it's easy to see how that scramble occurred. Skating mid-ice along the left boards with the puck, Provorov slowed to allow two teammates to emerge from the offensive zone, veered toward the middle to converge both defensemen and draw Bruins forward David Pastrnak, chasing him from behind, toward the middle as well.

Provorov's subsequent backhanded dish to Konecny created the havoc his old Brandon teammate needed to make his Superman play and give the Flyers a 2-0 lead 25 seconds into the second period.

"I watched in Colorado and the one down in Washington," Mark Howe, the Hall of Fame defenseman, was saying in the press box between periods Sunday. "There are key points in the game where a play needs to be made and that's when he's making them. It's not like they're up 4-1 and he's making a dynamic play. It's when the game's on the line. He's making big plays in big moments."

For Howe, who was paired with Nicklas Lidstrom when he was roughly the same age as Provorov is now, watching Provorov is almost always a fond trip down memory lane. They're not the same, he often cautions — Lidstrom had 101 points over his first two seasons, Provorov now has 69 — but the minds that see the game, despite its speed, like a chess game, are bedfellows.

"That is a talent," Flyers coach Dave Hakstol said. "To be able to have hockey sense, to be able to think the game, that's a talent. The work ethic, that's a talent. It's not just all skill. There's a lot of different things that go into having talent in this league."

Ah yes, the work ethic. Provorov admitted after Sunday's game that "There have been a few games that I hadn't played as well as I can or as well as I wanted to," leading to speculation that his age — 21 — and the amount of ice time he has logged — at 24:12 he was averaging nearly three minutes more than any teammate even before Sunday's modest 22:32 — had worn down his effectiveness.

"I wasn't tired," he said of a few off games earlier last month. "I wasn't gassed at all."

He bristles each time this is suggested. Immensely proud of a summer workout regime that facilitated an amazing start to his season, he will also argue that his young body has put in the miles since moving here from Yaroslavl, Russia, at age 14. Ninety games per year in Wilkes-Barre. Another 90 or so between juniors and world juniors.

These are not NHL games, I suggested. He agreed.

"But," he said, "I'm older, I'm stronger, I'm faster than I was. The level of the game increases and I guess I'm getting better as the years go on."



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He turned 21 on Jan.13. Only 19-year-old Nolan Patrick and Travis Konecny are younger than Provorov. Even Lidstrom was 22 by the time his second season ended.

That's the double-edged sword. We expect so much of him already that any hint of humanity out there feels like kryptonite.

Don't sweat it, says Howe. "If you look at his junior numbers, they were off the charts offensively," he said. "And we've only gotten a glimpse of those here and it's going to get better.

"I like everything about him. As good as his team is and is getting, if you don't have him, it changes the whole dynamics of the defense. He's going to be a No.1 defenseman, barring injury, for a long time here."

Philadelphia Inquirer / Daily News LOADED: 04.03.2018

1107159 Philadelphia Flyers

On brink of clinching berth, Flyers see improvement since last playoff run

Dave Isaac April 2, 2018

VOORHEES — There's a chance that the Flyers clinch a playoff spot Tuesday night, which at different points this season seemed to be either a certainty or impossible depending which side of a 10-game losing streak the vantage point came from.

If the Flyers do beat the New York Islanders and the Florida Panthers don't win both Monday and Tuesday, then a return to the postseason is locked in. Last time the Flyers did that was two years ago against the Washington Capitals and if roles hold up it would be a rematch.

How different are these Flyers from those Flyers?

"I think we're a better team than we were two years ago," general manager Ron Hextall said. "I think we're a better team, yes.

"Deeper, more responsible, a little bit more experience and a little bit of youth there too. They give you the youthful pop."

There's been a lot of turnover in that time. Eight skaters who played for the Flyers in that 2016 series are gone and so is goalie Steve Mason.

There are nine players on the Flyers' current roster that don't have NHL playoff experience, although Taylor Leier and Robert Hägg are both healthy scratches these days and goalie Alex Lyon figures to go back to the Lehigh Valley Phantoms by the end of the week.

Unlike two years ago, when the only 20-goal scorers were Simmonds, Claude Giroux and Brayden Schenn, this year's team has more firepower. Four Flyers have 20 or more goals and Jake Voracek is knocking on the door with 19. Giroux is having his best season yet and Couturier has emerged as a No. 1 center with Travis Konecny being the third piece of that top line.

Defensively they have a clear No. 1 in Ivan Provorov, unlike two years ago when that role was shared by Mark Streit and Michael Del Zotto.

In goal...well, it is still Philadelphia, so the perennial answer is still best summed up by the "shrug" emoji. Brian Elliott may or may not get a game under his belt before the playoffs. Petr Mrazek has been inconsistent and Michal Neuvirth is on the shelf with another injury.

Before the team starts thinking about a rematch against Alex Ovechkin and the Caps, there's more work to be done.

"That would be the ideal situation," Wayne Simmonds said of potential clinching Tuesday, "and that's what we're gunning for, but we've just got to continue to play solid hockey."

Simmonds likes the team's consistency and resiliency. They survived a tying goal with three seconds left Sunday against the Boston Bruins after Simmonds was one of a couple Flyers that couldn't clear the zone.

They have also been the Metropolitan Division's best road team from a points percentage standpoint and can put an exclamation point on that if they beat the lowly Islanders Tuesday.

"Not even anything we talk about," coach Dave Hakstol said of possibly clinching a berth. "We know where we're at. We're just talking about trying to get ready for another hockey game. We haven't talked about that before a game to this point and we're not gonna from here on in. We know what the job at hand is and the most important job is a hockey game (Tuesday) that we've got to try and win."

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There's a lot of sense in bringing Raffl back into the fold, although the change is somewhat of a head scratcher, especially with the coach saying Laughton played well.

One player had a theory.

"I think, to be quite honest, maybe we're trying to find matches for the playoffs right now or whatever it may be," Simmonds said. "Raf hasn't played in a long time. He deserves to get back in the lineup and obviously it sucks the way lines were configured today because I think Scotty's been playing great hockey. I think at this point it's kind of a numbers game. The coach has a right to figure out what he wants to do."

Injury report

Neuvirth is considered "day-to-day" with his latest "lower-body injury." ... Down on the farm, defenseman Philippe Myers is out "somewhere in the three-week range," according to Hextall, with a foot injury. ... Goalie Anthony Stolarz will rehab for the next week and not join the Phantoms on their road trip. His injury is not related to the knee he has twice had his meniscus surgically repaired. ... Defenseman Samuel Morin, who has played only 15 games this season because of injury, can return, "hopefully in a week or two," Hextall said.

Philadelphia Inquirer / Daily News LOADED: 04.03.2018

1107160 Philadelphia Flyers

Konecny's improving by leaps, bounds and shrugs for Flyers

By Rob Parent, Delaware County Daily Times

VOORHEES, N.J. >> The play featured one of the prettiest goals seen around the Wells Fargo Center in quite some time.

Travis Konecny, who has become a top-line sparkplug, cut between two Boston Bruins, flipping the puck in the air as he did so. Somehow shivering by them, he brought the puck under control only to see — in a split-second — Patrice Bergeron there to pick it off.

Bergeron is only one of the finest two-way NHL centers of this generation. But before Bergeron knew what was happening, Konecny



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somehow pulled the puck close and deked around him, then dashed into the slot and uncorked a shot past Bruins goalie Anton Khudobin, good for a goal that helped the Flyers to an eventual 4-3 overtime victory Sunday.

What made it better was the way Konecny just shrugged it off later. He was still doing so Monday, even though he'd turned a slow season start into a 20-goal run over the last 39 games.

"I'm just leaning on my natural abilities," Konecny said Monday, as the Flyers prepared at the Skate Zone for a Tuesday night date in Brooklyn with the Islanders. "Honestly, I'm just playing hockey now. I'm not overthinking anything. I just come to the rink and do what I have to do to get ready. I dial it in as far as pre-scouting; make sure I do the little things to get prepared for the game.

"But once the game's there ... it's just like riding a bike."

That he's doing it across from one of the leading MVP candidates in the league this year (or at least, that's what Claude Giroux should be), doesn't hurt. Nor does it hurt that he's next to Sean Couturier, who really might be the leading candidate for a Selke Trophy, which is given annually to the league's best two-way kind of forward.

Yes, defensive-minded scorer Patrice Bergeron has won that award before.

Four times. Three out of the last four years, including in 2017.

As for Travis Konecny, his sleek move that had Bergeron swinging at air in the defensive zone Sunday was part of an ongoing improvement that he knows has much to do with the top-line cohorts he first hooked up with on Dec. 23.

And he never left their side.

"At the start I was worried. I know what they're both capable of doing," Konecny said. "So it was about trying to get them the puck and if I did have a play in front of me, and I didn't finish off the play, I'd feel like I ruined a good scoring opportunity. But now I think after we've had all these games that we've played together, we know what everyone can do and we know our tendencies and we can just trust that things can work out."

In turn, Giroux at 30 was coming off one of the worst seasons of his career ... and now is having the best season of his career. Much of that has to do with health. Much of that, general manager Ron Hextall made sure to note, has to do with the way Giroux pushed himself in offseason workouts last summer.

"He had a great summer last year," Hextall said. "So first and foremost, he knew what he had to do. He put an awful lot of time in. Obviously he's done a good job. His pop in his legs is much better than last year.

"When you're 29, 30 and you put up the best numbers of your career, that obviously says something about how driven you are as a player."

And then there's the way Giroux's game came together when Couturier moved up from a checking line and fit like a velvet glove at top-line center ... only to have their pairing become all the more effective with Konecny's presence.

"He's a dynamic player," Giroux said of Konecny, who is just three weeks removed from his 21st birthday. "One on one, he's going to beat them. He's going to have scoring chances. He has a good shot. He's the kind of player that he only needs one opportunity and it's going to be in the back of the net. The Travis Konecny from the start of the year to this one right now, I think it's a big difference."

But Konecny is frequently reminded that he's still on a learning curve. There have been occasional close games with the Flyers protecting a lead that he has been sat late in games. By way of explanation, coach Dave Hakstol has dropped hints about Konecny needing to improve his play away from the puck.

"A young player has a lot of things to figure out," Hextall said. "Travis still has some things to figure out. Now, in saying that, the offense part of his

game is clicking at a high level right now. He's a big part of our group, for sure. But you're seeing the evolution of a young player getting better.

"Travis, 20 years old last year, this is a young guy who's still got some growth. But he's understanding the pro game more, understanding playing in a team concept more. When these young players come up, they've had the puck their whole lives. And there are parts of the game where they don't get as well,"

But Hextall noted that the player he traded up to nab with the 24th pick in the first round in the 2015 NHL Draft is getting there.

"He's taken a lot of pride in doing things the right way, playing the game the right way," Hextall said. "You're seeing improvement there."

Delaware County Times LOADED: 04.03.2018

1107161 Philadelphia Flyers

Why has Dave Hakstol gone away from Robert Hagg?

By John Boruk | NBC Sports Philadelphia April 02, 2018 5:00 PM

VOORHEES, N.J. — If you wanted to hang a banner that represented the thoughts of Flyers fans, perhaps the most prominent message at the Wells Fargo Center would read "Play the Kids."

And if you look up and down the Flyers' roster, it would appear Dave Hakstol shares that same sentiment.

On a nightly basis, you'll find 19-year-old Nolan Patrick, 21-year-olds Oskar Lindblom, Ivan Provorov and Travis Konecny, and more recently 22-year-old Travis Sanheim. All of this youth is why the Flyers are one of the youngest teams in the Eastern Conference.

But sometimes it's not enough, and more recently, the most perplexing decision has been to sit the most seasoned rookie, 23-year-old Robert Hagg, who was on track to play all 82 games until an injury sidelined him for the first time on March 10.

"First of all, if you told me a young player would play 70-something games, I would be pretty good with that," general manager Ron Hextall said. "It's not like you're expecting him to play every single game. Hagg has done a good job for us and I know when he comes back in, he'll do a good job for us."

From a solid job to now no job, Hagg appears to be the first Flyers player this season to lose his role after sustaining an injury.

"I don't know, maybe," Hagg said. "I played two games since I came back. Hexy wanted to get me back, as well, to get the timing right and all that stuff. It is what it is and you have to deal with it. The team is doing pretty well right now, so getting into the playoffs is all that matters."

Despite spending most of the season on the right side of Andrew MacDonald, Hagg was paired with Radko Gudas in his two-game return and it proved to be a choppy combination. Then again, so has Sanheim and Gudas and at times, Brandon Manning with Gudas.

Sunday against the Bruins, Gudas was clearly the worst of the Flyers' six defensemen, especially in the Flyers' end of the ice, while committing the types of mistakes you'd expect to see from a rookie like Hagg, who had played rather consistently for much of the season.

"He wasn't clean enough with the puck," Hakstol said Sunday about Gudas. "Games come down to small plays and how efficient you are with the puck, especially when you're playing against good players, it's important. There was a couple of those tonight. In most cases, he had



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second effort that helped them clean it up, but there was a couple of plays that he needs to be cleaner on.”

When Sanheim returned to the Flyers following an 18-game stint with the Phantoms, Hakstol was cautious to not pair him with Gudas again, and consequently, Sanheim has played considerably better with MacDonald.

Like Gudas, Hagg hits hard while separating the player from the puck, he's capable of killing penalties, blocking shots and positionally it appears the rookie is just as reliable.

Or maybe not.

“[The coaches] see about 50 times more video than what we see,” Hextall said. “Yeah, you tend to err on experience, but if a young guy does it and can do it, coaches will give him a chance.”

And with Hagg, you can't help but wonder when that chance will come again.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 04.03.2018

1107162 Philadelphia Flyers

What Felix Sandstrom's contract means for Flyers' goalies

By Tom Dougherty | NBC Sports Philadelphia April 02, 2018

The Flyers signed Felix Sandstrom, their 2015 third-round pick, to his entry-level contract last Tuesday, and with Sandstrom inked, they now have four goalies under contract for 2018-19.

Add in the three goaltenders who are set to hit restricted free agency in late June, and Flyers general manager Ron Hextall has decisions to make in goal, at all levels, this summer.

Some are easier than others. Brian Elliott, who's entering the final year of his contract, will be back. Carter Hart, in his first professional season, will be in Lehigh Valley.

Then there is Michal Neuvirth, who also will be in the final season of his deal. The Neuvirth decision will be the most interesting because it will be hard to bring him back next season.

Neuvirth's health continues to be an issue. He just cannot be trusted no matter how talented he is. If Hextall wants tandems, Neuvirth isn't a reliable partner. It might be time to move on.

Petr Mrazek joins Alex Lyon and Anthony Stolarz as RFAs. Since coming over from Detroit, Mrazek, 26, hasn't done anything to secure a qualifying offer from the Flyers.

Mrazek has a 3.09 goals-against average and .893 save percentage as a Flyer. It doesn't play into the long-term plan to qualify him at \$4.15 million. It's a safe bet he was just an emergency rental.

That brings us to Lyon and Stolarz, who both signed one-year contracts last summer, and their situations may correlate with what the Flyers do with Neuvirth.

If Neuvirth returns, it's hard to envision a scenario in which both Lyon and Stolarz return. There won't be enough crease for them.

But if the Flyers decide enough is enough with Neuvirth's injuries, that opens up two spots — the NHL backup job and with the Phantoms. You have to think Lyon has more leverage than Stolarz since Stolarz missed most of this season with a significant knee injury.

Lyon has looked the part of an NHL goalie when called upon, and we can say the same about Stolarz in his limited time last year. You have to think they'll want a shot at a backup job somewhere.

There are a lot of moving factors here. In short, Sandstrom's contract means the Flyers retain his rights, and he's very much in the long-term plans (see story).

Sandstrom is signed for one more season in the SHL, with HV71. In theory, the Flyers could have a Hart-Sandstrom tandem in the AHL next season, but that's unrealistic. He's likely headed back to Sweden.

The numbers game, though, signals this summer will be fascinating when it comes to goalie decisions. While Sandstrom may not be a direct benefit, his contract makes things interesting.

As they say, it's always goaltending in Philadelphia.

Quick Hits

- Another injury for Philippe Myers, who was hurt in practice last week and seen in the press box in a walking boot, according to Jamey Baskow. Samuel Morin is skating on his own.

- Morgan Frost had five assists and seven points as Sault Ste. Marie swept Saginaw in the OHL Playoffs.

- Matthew Strome had a monster first-round series for Hamilton with eight assists and 10 points.

- Isaac Ratcliffe had five goals and nine points in six playoff games.

- Hart had a 1.97 goals-against average and a .938 save percentage as Everett eliminated Seattle in five games. Hart pitched a shutout in Game 5 on Saturday night.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 04.03.2018

1107163 Philadelphia Flyers

On brink of clinching berth, Flyers see improvement since last playoff run

Dave Isaac, @daveisaac Published 4:46 p.m. ET April 2, 2018

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"I think, to be quite honest, maybe we're trying to find matches for the playoffs right now or whatever it may be," Simmonds said. "Raf hasn't played in a long time. He deserves to get back in the lineup and obviously it sucks the way lines were configured today because I think Scotty's been playing great hockey. I think at this point it's kind of a numbers game. The coach has a right to figure out what he wants to do."

Injury report

Neuvirth is considered "day-to-day" with his latest "lower-body injury." ... Down on the farm, defenseman Philippe Myers is out "somewhere in the three-week range," according to Hextall, with a foot injury. ... Goalie Anthony Stolarz will rehab for the next week and not join the Phantoms on their road trip. His injury is not related to the knee he has twice had his meniscus surgically repaired. ... Defenseman Samuel Morin, who has played only 15 games this season because of injury, can return, "hopefully in a week or two," Hextall said.

Courier-Post LOADED: 04.03.2018

1107182 Tampa Bay Lightning

Lightning vs. Boston, Round 4 shapes the playoffs

By Roger Mooney | Times Staff Writer Published: April 2, 2018

TAMPA — The next biggest game of the season for the Lightning is Tuesday night against the visiting Bruins. And unless Tampa Bay wins, it will be the final biggest game of the regular season for the Lightning.

"It's going to probably have a big determination of which team finishes first, let's be honest," coach Jon Cooper said. "We win the game, we're right back in it. They win it, they probably got it. So, in the big scope of things, it's Game 80, but it's a big Game 80."

The Bruins (49-17-12, 110 points) hold a two-point lead over the Lightning (52-23-4) and play one more game this week. If the Lightning does not win Tuesday, it likely will not catch the Bruins for the lead in the Atlantic Division.

The Lightning is 0-3 against the Bruins this season, so a win could have a double meaning. The Lightning keeps its hopes of winning the division alive and proves it can beat a team it might have to see again in the playoffs.

"I don't know if that's the case," Cooper said. "I do believe that we went into their building (March 29) and the only thing we didn't do was come out with the score in our favor (a 4-2 loss). We thought we did everything else the right way and played well enough to win. We play like that on a regular basis we'll be absolutely fine."

Slap shots: D Victor Hedman did not practice Monday. The team said it was a maintenance day. ... Jon Cooper did not have much of an update on LW Adam Erne, who suffered a lower body injury March 26 against the Coyotes.

"He's definitely more than day to day, that's for sure," Cooper said.

Tampa Bay Times LOADED: 04.03.2018

1107183 Tampa Bay Lightning

Lightning coach Jon Cooper: Don't be 'concerned' about Steven Stamkos

By Roger Mooney | April 2, 2018 at 05:21 PM

TAMPA — The Lightning plays the Bruins on Tuesday night in a game that will play a big role in deciding the Atlantic Division race, and Tampa Bay likely will do it without captain Steven Stamkos.

Coach Jon Cooper said after Monday's practice that Stamkos was questionable with a lower body injury suffered in the second period of Sunday's loss against the Predators.

Cooper said he did not think the injury was related to the one that kept Stamkos out of the March 26 game against the Coyotes. The reason given that day was body maintenance.

Cooper also said this is not a long-term injury and that Stamkos plans to play in the postseason and might even play Friday or Saturday, when the Lightning (52-23-4) completes the regular season with games at home against the Sabres and on the road against the Hurricanes.



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"People shouldn't be concerned," Cooper said.

Cooper said he has considered holding Stamkos out until the playoffs, which begin April 12 at the earliest.

"He's been getting nicked up here the last little while, so if there is a time where we have to sit back and say, 'Okay, this is the time he can rest,' this is the time," Cooper said. "We need him feeling his best in a week and a half from now and not necessarily right now, so however we can help that, we will."

Stamkos is second on the team in points (86), tied with Nikita Kucherov for the team lead in assists (59) and third in goals (27).

But Stamkos means more to the Lightning than numbers on the stat sheet.

"Power play, first-line center. He's huge for us," Alex Killorn said. "We need him."

"Stammer brings a lot of leadership," Yanni Gourde added. "He's, obviously, great for us. He's good on the forecheck. He's good on draws. He's good on everything. He's such a tremendous, important guy for us."

Stamkos has not scored since his two-goal effort March 3 against the Flyers. He has not recorded a point in his past four games, though he played only seven minutes Sunday against the Predators.

Stamkos left the ice early in the second period when the right knee of the Predators' Austin Watson crashed into the back of his left leg. Officially, the team lists Stamkos as day to day.

While a win Tuesday brings the Lightning even with the Bruins in points (110), Boston (49-17-12) has three games remaining to the Lightning's two. So even if the Lightning ties Tuesday for the division lead, it still needs help to clinch home ice throughout the Eastern Conference playoffs.

Not having Stamkos on the ice will hurt, but it is hard to quantify how much. The Lightning is 0-3 this season against the Bruins, and Stamkos has one goal and is minus-3 in those three games.

Not having Stamkos on the ice should not be much of a factor against the Sabres (NHL-worst 62 points) and the Hurricanes, since both teams are not headed to the postseason. Besides, those games will be less meaningful if the Lightning loses tonight.

Not having Stamkos on the ice during the first round of the playoffs is the greater loss. Keeping him off the ice this week might be the prudent move.

"I think the main thing is getting him back in the lineup when he's healthy," Tyler Johnson said. "There's no reason to rush anything right now. Stammer is a big part of our team. He's obviously our leader. He's our captain. He's the guy we want on the ice."

Tampa Bay Times LOADED: 04.03.2018

1107184 Tampa Bay Lightning

Lightning first-round playoff tickets on sale Friday

By Roger Mooney | Times Staff Writer

Lightning tickets for the first round of the NHL playoffs go on sale to the general public at 10 a.m. Friday at TampaBayLightning.com/tickets or ticketmaster.com.

There will not be advance sales at the Amalie Arena box office.

Games 1, 2, 5 and 7 (as necessary) of the best-of-seven series are scheduled to be played in Tampa. The full NHL playoff schedule will be released Sunday.

Games 1 and 2 are expected to be played between April 12 and 15.

If the current standings hold, the Lightning would host the Maple Leafs.

Tickets are limited to six per household for each game. A special Lightning Text Club pre-sale is Thursday at 1 p.m. Text BOLTS to 61873 to join.

Current season ticket holders will have access to a playoff pre-sale earlier this week and will be notified via email. Call (813) 301-6600 or visit tampabaylightning.com for more information.

Tampa Bay Times LOADED: 04.03.2018

1107224 Websites

The Athletic / With Steven Stamkos injured, Lightning must weigh playoff position against health

By Joe Smith Apr 2, 2018

TAMPA, Fla. — The encouraging news for the Lightning is that captain Steven Stamkos' lower-body injury won't impact his availability for the start of the playoffs next week.

Coach Jon Cooper said Monday that Stamkos might even appear in one of the final three regular season games, though the all-star is questionable for Tuesday's showdown with the Bruins.

"People shouldn't be concerned," Cooper said.

But the fact Stamkos has dealt with two separate lower-body injuries the past couple weeks should be a reason to strongly consider shutting him down until the playoffs.

Same goes for defenseman Victor Hedman, who is also banged-up and was kept out of practice Monday.

"We'd consider that with everybody, especially guys that play bigger minutes," Cooper said of sitting players. "We're going to put ourselves in the best position to have success next Wednesday or Thursday (when the team would play its first playoff game). And we want to get better as a team in the next few games."

"But we're not going to play guys to stretch them out just to try and put our quote-unquote best lineup forward. We want to make sure we're ready as a group, that's individually health-wise, but as a group mentally."

What complicates the decision is the fact these games still matter, especially Tuesday against Boston. The Bruins hold a two-point lead over the Lightning for first place in the Atlantic Division, with a game in hand.

Win Tuesday, and the Lightning still have a chance to win the division and home ice through the Eastern Conference final. You'd think Tampa Bay would rather host a wild card team, whether it's New Jersey, Columbus or Philadelphia, and let Toronto and Boston beat each other up in the first round. Home ice against the Bruins is huge with Tampa Bay having won just seven times in 48 regular season games in Boston.

Having Stamkos in the lineup Tuesday would certainly help. Stamkos has missed just one game this season, Mar. 26 against Arizona. He acknowledged he's been playing through a "nagging" issue that would likely benefit from a week off.



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"It's a difficult decision," winger Alex Killorn told The Athletic. "Everyone is competitive, nobody wants to sit out. As a player, when you're faced with that decision [where] if you go and play, you could be worse off, I think you rest up.

"But those points could change who we play in the first round. So it's one of those balancing acts. But I think being healthy is more important."

Stamkos' injury has impacted his play. He's in a season-long, 12 game goal-drought and a minus-7 in his last five games. He's tried to find other ways to contribute, with his first-period fight against the Rangers' Pavel Buchnevich Friday sparking the Lightning's 7-3 win.

"You want to play the right way," Stamkos said after Friday's game. "The offensive stuff hasn't been going my way, but I try to dig deep and battle through that stuff and not let other areas of my game slip."

Cooper said Stamkos and the team's medical staff will decide if and when he plays this week. As Tyler Johnson said, there's no reason to rush Stamkos back.

"He's been getting nicked up here the last little while," Cooper said.

"And so if there's a time that we have to sit back and say, 'OK, this is a time to rest,' this is the time. We need him feeling his best a week and a half from now and not necessarily right now. However we can help that, we will."

The Athletic LOADED: 04.03.2018

1107225 Websites

The Athletic / A talking to, a tweak and more Taylor Hall magic helped the Devils inch closer to the playoffs

By Corey Masisak Apr 2, 2018

John Hynes didn't like how the Devils played in the first period Sunday night against the Montreal Canadiens, and he delivered a stern message in the visiting dressing room at Bell Centre after the first 20 minutes of what became a critical 2-1 victory.

The Devils, playing the second game of a back-to-back for the third consecutive weekend, were missing a little extra ... something. They were in the right places, making, for the most part, the right decisions.

But passes were ending up in skates or flubbing off intended sticks. That one extra battle to help keep possession of the puck after a good shift was lost. It added to a period that had plenty of possession time but no quality scoring chances.

It was just kind of meh. Not bad. Not good.

For a team fighting to make the playoffs, meh can be enough against teams that are out of contention sometimes. This Canadiens team on this night made it clear that wasn't going to be good enough.

"I thought in the first period, we just weren't invested in the game enough," Hynes said. "We're a team that has to have a strong work ethic and be very competitive. We're not a team that just floats through a game. I just didn't feel we were attached to this game enough.

"To the players credit, I thought in the second period we started to build towards our game and in the third we got to our game."

So the Devils responded with a better second period. The power play remained out of sync, and a team full of tired legs, hands and maybe most of all brains, skated harder and battled harder but couldn't solve Carey Price and a surprisingly astute Canadiens club.

Beyond the talking to during the first intermission, Hynes tweaked the lineup midway through the second period. Kyle Palmieri went back on the top line after beginning the game on the second.

Palmieri, sporting a grisly reminder of the previous night under his right eye, Taylor Hall and Nico Hischier almost instantly started rolling and creating chances. When Palmieri was hurt Saturday night against the Islanders, Patrick Maroon stepped in and strung together a few great shifts next to Hall and Hischier.

It wasn't working as well the following day. Maybe it wasn't the tactical decision that changed things. Sometimes the coach switches things up just at about the same time as his club starts playing better, and those two things are more coincidence than cause and effect.

Either way, New Jersey's top line regained its mojo.

"I don't know if the switching up like that was what really sparked us," Palmieri said. "We weren't happy with how we were playing. There were some good spurts, but we had another level to get to, especially this time of year.

"We came in and talked about having that edge. That's what has made us successful all year is wanting to be a hard team to play against. Not that we were making it easy on them. I thought they played a really solid game, did good a job containing us. This time of year, you just have to find that extra level."

During the first period-and-a-half, Hischier was on the ice for one shot attempt for and two against with Maroon at his side in 5:01 of ice time at even strength. For the line that has consistently been the Devils' most dangerous, that's too much of nothing happening.

By about the midpoint in the third period, Hischier had been on the ice for five shot attempts with Palmieri and one against at evens in less time than the rookie center had with Maroon.

They helped produce the Devils' first goal on the first shift of the second period. Hischier later had two more Grade-A chances, and was a few inches away from a natural hat trick.

By the end of the game, the Canadiens had pushed the shot attempts with those guys on the ice back to even. It was during that period of the game — the second half of the second period and before the penalty problems (that eventually led to Hall's shorthanded goal) in the third where the Devils started to look like the Devils of the past few weeks again.

There wasn't anything notably wrong about how Maroon played. There wasn't anything that glaringly stood out in a positive manner for Palmieri.

But Palmieri is clearly a wonderful fit as the third guy next to Hall and Hischier, and maybe that familiarity led to an extra completed pass here or a correct decision that led to good things there.

It should be noted that this was another instance where this Devils team could have easily been frustrated by the opposing team's resolve or pucks bouncing off sticks or whatever else could creep into the minds of young players experiencing their first NHL playoff chase. That could lead to nervous or poor decisions, and when this game was 1-0 it was a bad bounce away from being a real problem.

Instead, they hung around (insert the daily reminder of how great Keith Kinkaid has been here) and then Hall did something special, with the help of Travis Zajac blocking a shot and then flipping a soft backhanded pass to spring him for the breakthrough.

"We had some puck possession, this goes for probably the whole team, but whether it's just trying to hold onto pucks or it's trying to make a difference and make a play, those are two different things," Devils forward Brian Boyle said. "Second and third opportunities weren't necessarily there. But you see our [first goal], that's going to the hard areas and that extra level of determination we've talked about all year.



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"That's probably all that was missing. The effort was there. It's there every night. It's that determination, that competitive edge that can make the difference."

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The Athletic / Evgeni Malkin shoots down Evgeny Kuznetsov and 'send message' in a loss to Capitals

By Josh Yohe Apr 2, 2018

It remains unclear just how ready these Penguins are for the Stanley Cup playoffs.

Evgeny Kuznetsov would be wise to avoid asking Evgeni Malkin about this. Or about anything else, for that matter.

Malkin became engaged in a spirited battle with T.J. Oshie late in the third period of the Capitals' 3-1 victory at PPG Paints Arena on Sunday. When Kuznetsov said something to Malkin during this exchange, the Penguins' leading scorer flipped out and ultimately had to be restrained by linesman Ryan Daisy while being escorted to the locker room.

There was no one around to restrain Malkin when he was asked about Kuznetsov's interjection following the game.

"'Kuzu' spoke Russian," Malkin said. "I don't know why he started speaking to me in Russian. I don't like that. You aren't on the ice. It's my problem. I took the penalty. Oshie was mad. We decided to fight. But you can't speak with me if you're sitting on the bench."

Malkin was just getting started.

"I'm upset because he started talking to me," he said. "I'm busy. Oshie grabbed my neck. It was a little bit tough for me. He tried to speak with me. I didn't understand what was going on. I think it's not right."

The play started when Malkin and Oshie collided in the neutral zone as Malkin was skating to the bench for a line change. Oshie's stick became dislodged during the collision. Malkin, seeing the stick on the ice, shot it into the Capitals' bench.

Oshie responded by grabbing Malkin from behind which triggered a minor melee.

Malkin offered an explanation for his words with Oshie, Kuznetsov and all the Capitals who happened to be within earshot.

"A couple of fights," Malkin said. "We need to understand that we might see each other in the playoffs. We send message. We're ready to play in the playoffs, maybe in the second round."

Malkin wasn't unhappy with how the Penguins played. They were 0 for 5 on the power play for only the third time this season and were unable to score during an 81-second, 5-on-3 power play opportunity. Malkin missed a wide open cage during that stretch, clanging a shot off the crossbar.

Despite the loss — Washington clinched the Metropolitan Division with the win, leaving the Penguins in a ferocious battle with Columbus and Philadelphia for home ice advantage in the first round — Malkin and the Penguins weren't horribly disappointed with their performance. The puck simply didn't go in, Malkin explained.

"I thought we played a great game," he said.

The Penguins fought until the end. Philipp Grubauer made a sparkling glove save on Sidney Crosby in the third period. Patric Hornqvist finally

broke the ice with a late goal. The Penguins then flooded Grubauer with a barrage of pressure in the final couple of minutes, which culminated in Malkin's emotional outburst.

Malkin seemed quite inspired by what happened at the game's conclusion.

"I'm glad with what we showed in the last three minutes," he said. "We didn't stop playing. We showed we were ready to play if we meet in the playoffs."

Malkin is one of the largest Penguins and, frankly, is one of their most willing combatants. He noticed when Tom Wilson, one of the league's most imposing players, had words with the slight Jake Guentzel.

"Of course," Malkin said. "We know Wilson. He tries to finish checks. Every shift he plays hard, but not clean all the time. Of course we're not happy all the time. We're not a physical team but we need to show we're ready."

Malkin seemed utterly disinterested in the reality that the Penguins had a real chance to win the division if they had defeated the Capitals. He's very much prepared for the playoffs, it seems.

"It's not the first time (that the Penguins haven't won the division)," he said. "It's not a surprise. Now we have to focus on the first round being here (getting home ice advantage). We understand that we play better at home."

This isn't the first time Malkin has snapped, of course. It's both part of his character and part of his charm.

He dropped the gloves with Henrik Zetterberg late in Game 2 of the 2009 Stanley Cup Final. On many occasions over the years, Malkin has been the first man to jump into a scrum or assert himself physically.

Mike Sullivan had no issue with Malkin losing his temper. In fact, he seemed to like it.

"'Geno's' an emotional guy," he said. "He plays his best when he's engaged and invested emotionally. I thought he played hard tonight. What took place at the end took place on both sides. It wasn't one side. That's hockey."

Soon enough, it will be playoff hockey.

A possibility exists that the Penguins will open the postseason in Washington. If not, they could very possibly see the Capitals in the second round of the playoffs.

Malkin will be ready. By the sounds of things, so will his teammates.

"We don't like them," Hornqvist said. "They don't like us."

Then, Hornqvist added a parting shot.

"You always want to win," he said. "We know we can play better. And we will."

10 postgame observations

- Let's start with a positive. Hornqvist was simply sensational again. From his very first shift, I felt like he was the Penguins' most engaged player, which isn't particularly surprising. It's just who he is. He scored his 27th goal of the season, fired six shots on net (only Sidney Crosby, with seven, had more) and threw out a team-high five hits. He's in full playoff mode at the moment. He's playing at a seriously high level.

- OK, one more positive: The Penguins did a really nice job on Alex Ovechkin. He had a very good look during his first shift, forcing Matt Murray to make a fine save on a blast from the left circle. From that point on, did you notice Ovechkin all that much? Not really. That's all you can ask. He's one of the greatest goal scorers in history and he's always going to get the occasional look, but the Penguins controlled him as well as could be expected.



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• Speaking of Ovechkin, he was playing in his 1,000th NHL game on Sunday. I'd suggest that his durability is nearly as impressive as his goal-scoring ability. Does the guy ever get hurt? It's incredibly rare and this impressive when considering how the guy plays. One can't suggest that Ovechkin doesn't go into the corners or where the action is. In fact, he's usually the guy in the middle of the action. Has he been a dirty player at times? Sure, you can make that argument, although I'd suggest that he's toned down that element of his game to some extent. You don't seem him leaping to throw body checks the way he once did. Nonetheless, to play in your 1,000th NHL game at age 32 — when you play a physical style like he does — is a pretty incredible accomplishment.

• Boy, do the Capitals have an interesting development between the pipes. Will Barry Trotz go with Braden Holtby or Grubauer when the playoffs begin? Grubauer has better numbers this season and Trotz went with him, in Pittsburgh, with a chance to clinch the division title. It's the first time Grubauer has ever been given the start against the Penguins and he was magnificent. Holtby has looked lost during much of the second half. That said, he remains one of the NHL's most gifted goalies and he's always been pretty good in the playoffs. Not great, but rarely has he been the reason for the Capitals' dismissal from the postseason. It's a very interesting decision. The Capitals never make things boring.

• The Penguins were pretty unlucky tonight. Malkin buries that one-timer in the second period for a goal if he simply puts the puck on net, and usually, he does. Grubauer did rob Crosby in the third period, but Crosby also flubbed the shot a bit. If he gets good wood on the shot, it's a goal. The Penguins did go 0 for 5 on the power play but the only time they looked bad on the man advantage was in the first period on their first attempt. The rest of their power play chances looked pretty dominant. The puck simply didn't go in.

• Phil Kessel isn't healthy. Everyone knows this, of course, as he was listed as a game-time decision after absorbing a slash from Alex Galchenyuk against the Canadiens on Saturday. But I'm quite certain that slash to the hand isn't the only injury Kessel is dealing with. He was limping noticeably on his way out of the locker room on Sunday night and didn't skate with his customary pizzazz against the Capitals. He definitely isn't 100 percent. That needs to change soon, because these Penguins need Kessel to be at his best.

• I feel like Brooks Orpik is undergoing a pretty big career resurgence at age 37. Is he the player he was 10 years ago? Nah, he's not, nor is any 37-year-old. However, he's holding down the fort as well as could be expected this season and played a solid 18:44 against his old team on Sunday. Orpik and Hornqvist engaged in a number of spectacular battles in front of the net, and Hornqvist finally received a penalty in the game's final minutes. Those two aren't strangers and it's always enjoyable watching them go at it. They aren't players who really fit into the current speed and skill era of NHL hockey, but there's something to be said for two guys beating the crap out of each other in front of the net.

• Sullivan broke up Malkin and Kessel in the third period and I wouldn't be surprised if we don't see that duo together when the Penguins play a showdown in Columbus on Thursday. When Malkin and Kessel are right, they're spectacular. When they're wrong, they turn the puck over with reckless abandon. There was a lot of the latter taking place against the Capitals. The Penguins were credited with 12 turnovers. Kessel led the way with three and Malkin was tagged with two. I believe the Penguins are at their best with Crosby, Malkin and Kessel on separate lines.

• The Penguins never, ever have the same jump on the second leg of back-to-back games. Good thing for them is there won't be any of those in the playoffs. They were particularly flat in the first period as they produced very few opportunities in the opening 20 minutes. Oshie, who always plays well against the Penguins, opened the scoring and the Capitals were very sharp in the first period. The Penguins gained momentum throughout the game, but they didn't deserve to win this one, even though they did encounter some bad breaks.

• I will leave you with this thought: The Capitals have enjoyed a good season and are deserving division champions. Crosby, Malkin, Kessel and Hornqvist combined for 22 shots on goal in this game. Good for the Capitals and good Grubauer, who was terrific. But if they meet in the playoffs, and the Penguins' big guns get that many opportunities, it will probably be a different story.

The Athletic LOADED: 04.03.2018

1107227 Websites

The Athletic / After learning Ryan Suter's year is over, Wild blank Oilers and earn playoff spot

By Michael Russo 3h ago

Well, on the first day of the rest of the season without No. 1 defenseman and chief minute-muncher Ryan Suter, give the Wild credit: They didn't show any signs of feeling sorry for themselves.

In a 3-0 blanking of the soon-to-be-golfing Edmonton Oilers, the Wild got a fantastic game from elevated defenseman Jonas Brodin, one heck of an NHL debut from fill-in defenseman Carson Soucy, outstanding goaltending from Devan Dubnyk and two goals from Zach Parise.

Frankly, they could not have drawn it up any better in terms of a morale boost in their first game without Suter, who will require season-ending surgery on a fracture to the bottom of his fibula.

"Yeah, you don't want to go out there and get blown out and start to wonder how it's going to be," Dubnyk said after his 29th career shutout in his 400th career start.

After the game, coach Bruce Boudreau returned to his Woodbury, Minnesota, home to watch the Los Angeles Kings-Colorado Avalanche game. He said he'd do so with a towel in his mouth like the late UNLV basketball coach, Jerry Tarkanian, used to do.

All Boudreau knew was the St. Louis Blues lost in regulation to the Washington Capitals, so an Avs loss in L.A. would clinch the Wild a sixth consecutive playoff berth. He didn't understand how all the math worked but hoped to wake up in the morning and "see an 'x' by the (Wild's) name" in the standings.

Mission accomplished, thanks to a 3-1 Kings win over Colorado later Monday.

Tuesday's flight to California for the final three games of the season will be a lot less stressful than had the Wild lost to the Oilers. The Wild now know officially that they will participate once more in the postseason when it begins leaguewide next week.

Unless the Blues win their final three games and the Wild lose their final three games in regulation, the Wild will end the season in third place in the Central and have an almost certain first-round date with the Winnipeg Jets.

It'll be interesting to see how Boudreau manages these final three games. As he said, it's not like he can take out guys to rest them. The Wild have no extra healthy defensemen and one extra forward.

Suter, via text, said he mostly felt bad for the team that his injury comes at such an unfortunate time.

Monday's absence marked the end of his streak of 242 consecutive games played and was the first game he missed in his Wild career due to injury. The previous five consisted of two games missed due to the mumps, two games missed due to a suspension and one game missed to rest for the playoffs.



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"I just feel real bad for him," Boudreau said. "He's a guy that's been really durable his whole life. It's probably pretty depressing for him, but we just want him to get better."

The good news is defenseman Jared Spurgeon skated for the first time Monday morning, and it was interesting how many members of the front office and coaching staff watched intently from the stands. The hope is he can join the team Friday in San Jose to practice and be ready by the start of next week's playoffs.

In Tuesday's first test without Suter, the defense performed admirably.

Soucy, 23, in front of his parents Debbie and Mike, played a commendable game especially when one considers this kid dropped right into the heat of a tense playoff race and was replacing the team's biggest workhorse from the back end.

"That was about as impressive of a first game for a young defenseman as you can have from Soucy," Dubnyk said. "I don't think I saw one mistake out there. He looked like he's been in the league for five years. It's fun to see that for him. It's exciting for all of us to see somebody come in that looks like they're fully capable of playing well for us because we're going to need it going forward."

Soucy admitted nerves before the game but called the experience "awesome."

"Definitely nice to get that first one out of the way," said Soucy, an Alberta native who grew up an Oilers fan. "I think a lot of the anticipation happens in the time leading up to it, so it was nice to get that first shift and then that first game out of the way. Hopefully just move forward and focus on the next couple of games here."

Alongside Nate Prosser, Soucy had three shots, two hits and no panicked moments in 15 1/2 minutes of ice time.

"He did look poised," Boudreau said. "He played a simple game. He made easy plays. He never put himself in trouble. Had a couple good shots on goal."

Once again, Nick Seeler, playing his 19th NHL game, had another strong game, and Brodin, elevated onto the top pair with his close friend and longtime defense partner, Matt Dumba, was particularly strong.

Matching up against 103-point scorer Connor McDavid, the mobile Brodin kept up with the Oilers speedster and frustrated him often. Brodin and Dumba logged in the 24-minute range.

"When Suter's out, I feel like maybe I have to step up, and the same with Dums," Brodin said. "I think we played pretty good today. I mean, we played a lot against McDavid, that line, so I think we did a great job of shutting that line down. I think the whole D corps did a great job today, and the whole team, so that was a good game."

Boudreau said he has a lot of confidence in Brodin's ability to assume Suter's minutes "if he plays like he did tonight, and I've seen him play some really ridiculously good games. To be able to do it continually will be a good test for him, but he knows that we're relying on him to do it. In the past it's always been relying on Ryan and Spurge to do it."

Boudreau said it's just imperative that the defensemen continue to keep things simple. For the most part Monday, decisions were good, plays were safe and they made sure to continually get the puck out of the defensive zone in a fluid fashion.

"That's why Soose was good tonight because he didn't try to do too much," Boudreau said. "We got to a point a little bit in the second period where I think Dums was trying to do too much and he got back to being real simple. He was really good taking time and space away, him and Brods didn't give much room quite frankly to that big line."

Parise on fire

Parise relieved a lot of pressure Monday by scoring the first of his two goals just 3:33 into the game on a breakaway after stealing the puck from

Oilers defenseman Adam Larsson. His second goal came on a Brodin rebound in the second period.

In 16 games since March 1, Parise has 12 goals, tied with Winnipeg's Patrik Laine for the second-most in the NHL during that span behind McDavid's 13.

"I'm getting some good looks," Parise said. "I think our line is doing a good job. When you play with (Mikael) Granlund, you're going to get chances, you're going to get shots, you're going to get good scoring opportunities. And Mikko (Koivu's) so reliable defensively, and I think an underrated thing about him is that he wins the draw the majority of the time, so we start with the puck a lot. That goes a long way.

"So, I think as a group, we're meshing really well together."

Dubnyk keeps winning

Since his first game with the Wild on Jan. 15, 2015, Dubnyk leads all NHL in games played (229), starts (225) and shutouts (19) and he ranks second in wins (132).

On his fifth shutout of the season, this one against the franchise that drafted him in the first round, Dubnyk said, "I felt real good and kind of better as the game went on, finding pucks and being settled in my stance and really being in my stance and for pucks to move. They've got some guys that can move the puck around, so I felt good. And combine that with a good effort by the guys and it's usually a pretty good result." ...

Soucy became the 81st player all-time to make his NHL debut with the Wild and fifth this season (Luke Kunin, Justin Kloos, Seeler and Jordan Greenway). He also became the 240th player to appear in a regular-season game with the Wild all-time. ...

In order to let Tyler Ennis play in the home finale, Boudreau scratched Greenway.

The Athletic LOADED: 04.03.2018

1107228 Websites

The Athletic / Blast from the past: Pierre-Luc Dubois given stick used by his dad from Blue Jackets assistant's private collection

By Tom Reed

Blue Jackets center Pierre-Luc Dubois etched his name in the franchise record book last week, but Monday morning the teenager arrived at Nationwide Arena to the sight of hockey history far more personal.

In his locker stall was a wooden Koho hockey stick belonging to another Dubois who wore No. 18. For an old soul who cherishes family artifacts, a twig used by his father two decades ago in a minor-league game is almost as meaningful as surpassing Rick Nash's rookie record for goals in a season.

The stick was a gift from Blue Jackets skills coach and resident pack rat Kenny McCudden, who 22 years ago coached Dubois' father, Eric, in the minors.

While the sport continues to expand globally, the memento is a reminder of how small and thoughtful the hockey world really is. The youngster gripped the stick and showed it to teammates — the circle of life on full display to those witnessing the joy in Dubois' smile.

"I mean, it's really cool," Dubois told The Athletic. "I was happy. I knew Kenny had it and he told me he was going to give it to me one day, but I didn't expect to see it today in my stall when I came in."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 3, 2018

For a rookie who's given the Blue Jackets such a pleasant surprise this season, it's only fitting he receive one of his own. His transformation from third-line winger to first-line center is a major reason the club sits on the cusp of a second consecutive playoff berth.

Dubois ranks seventh among NHL rookies with 19 goals, and his 45 points are the third most on the Blue Jackets.

"(He's) a rookie that we were worried about giving too much (responsibility), and he accepted everything — and he wants more," coach John Tortorella said after Dubois' first NHL hat trick Thursday night in Calgary. "For now, and for the future, that's a huge position on a team that's trying to build right up the middle with that type of size. He's just doing everything."

Dubois is not just a collector of goals and assists, but also of memories, particularly of his family.

He loves old photos of his grandparents. His left forearm has the birth dates of his mother, father and sister tattooed in Roman numerals.

His maternal grandfather, Michael Daniel McClure, owned motorcycles, and Dubois is determined to buy back one of the Harley-Davidsons that were sold off after his death.

"Family is very important to him," said Eric, an assistant coach for the Manitoba Moose, an AHL affiliate of the Jets. "I know he would love to get that (Harley) Fat Boy or the bike his grandfather had from the 1950s."

The stick represents a bond between hockey-playing father and son. Eric coached Pierre-Luc in summer leagues for years, but being a dad was his most important role. To this day, father and son only exchange text messages during the season unless the youngster wants to talk.

When The Athletic reached Eric on Monday, he was unaware McCudden had given his boy the stick even though the two coaches had discussed the idea several months ago.

"During the team's father-and-son trip (in February), Kenny told me about it," Eric said. "I was like 'Come on, Kenny, you really didn't keep one of my sticks,' and he said, 'yeah.' I guess he was right."

Anyone who knows McCudden understands the assistant's affinity for hockey and skating memorabilia.

His family's home in Illinois doubles as a museum. It houses about 850 sticks from former players and more than 300 pairs of skates, including one pair that's more than a 1,000 years old and made from the femur of a deer.

McCudden's basement is more well organized than the Library of Congress. The sticks are catalogued and grouped in subdivisions — National Hockey League, American Hockey League, International Hockey League.

Eric, who had a long minor-league career, played for McCudden during the 1995-96 season with the Chicago Wolves of the AHL.

So when the coach's wife went home last week it didn't take her hours to find the stick belonging to Eric Dubois.

"I've got sticks from Gordie Howe to Bobby Orr, and Eric Dubois was in the middle of them," McCudden said. "Eric was a heavy hitter, a defenseman who could throw a good hip check."

McCudden originally planned to present Pierre-Luc with his dad's stick in the fall, but his wife's trip home expedited the gift-giving process.

"He had a big, big grin," the coach said. "The boys were all talking about it because they couldn't believe that was a stick they used in those days."

Eric Dubois favored wooden sticks into the early 2000s while playing in Germany and England. As the rest of the world switched to composite materials, Eric was the European leagues' equivalent to former Blue Jackets forward David Vyborny, who stayed loyal to wood through his final season (2007-08) in Columbus.

"They made fun of me in Germany for still using those sticks," the former defenseman said. "I just liked the feeling. I felt like I could feel the puck better."

Beyond the material, the feature most striking about the Koho is its relatively short length for a defenseman who played at 6-foot-2, 200 pounds.

"I guess maybe I could bend a lot better in those days," Eric said laughing. "The stick I use today is 4 inches longer."

Dubois already has started a collection of his father's memorabilia that includes old hockey cards from Eric's playing days. The stick will be prominently displayed one day.

The 19-year-old marvels at how McCudden has impacted the hockey lives of two generations of family members. The Blue Jackets assistant has been working with Dubois on making better use of his 6-foot-3, 217-pound frame and his reach to keep the puck away from defenders.

Giving him a family keepsake takes the player-coach relationship to another level, however.

"I mean, to get something that sat in his basement for 22 years is really cool," Dubois said. "It's a really nice gift that I will be able to keep for a really long time. Hockey is obviously a big part of my father's life, and to have one of his sticks is really cool."

McCudden also collects golf clubs and is a huge fan of the sport. On his bucket list is getting a chance to meet the legendary Jack Nicklaus.

Gee, you think somebody in Columbus might be able to arrange that?

The Athletic LOADED: 04.03.2018

1107229 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / There will never be another two players like the Sedins

Iain MacIntyre | April 2, 2018, 7:17 PM

VANCOUVER — The greatest thing about Daniel and Henrik Sedin is they never let their own greatness change anything.

They were rock stars in Sweden long before they became scoring champions in the National Hockey League. After their first practice with the Vancouver Canucks, at training camp in Stockholm 17 ½ years ago, it took the twins 30 minutes to navigate the receiving line of reporters standing between them and the ice.

They were a big deal years before people on this side of the Atlantic Ocean realized it. But no matter what they did, how much they accomplished playing a possession game unlike anything the NHL had seen, the brothers from Ornskoldsvik never lost their humility, drive for improvement and their commitment to doing whatever was asked of them to help their team.

Monday might have been their first selfish day with the Canucks.

The 37-year-olds announced their retirement, effective next week, in an open letter to fans. Still 50-point scorers in the NHL, and the conscience of the Canucks, the twins are leaving hockey — but not Vancouver — so they can be better dads to their kids, better husbands to their wives.

"My youngest one, deep inside, he wants me to keep playing," Henrik, the team captain, told reporters after Monday's practice at Rogers Arena. "He loves hockey, loves watching the games. I'm sure he'll be happy to have me home a little bit more."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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"We've never been guys to look back. We know we have the best jobs in the world and we tried to treat it that way. (But) it is going to be different; there's no question about it."

It's doubtful any two stars in NHL history have been not only criticized but ridiculed as much as the Sedins were. Even this season, as the twins ran a top-10 power play and scored enough to prove they still make an impact in the NHL, some fans and reporters couldn't seem to get rid of them fast enough.

The theory, refuted again Monday by Canucks coach Travis Green and president of hockey operations Trevor Linden, was that the Sedins were impeding the progress of younger players as the team rebuilds. But their retirement, at least for next season, creates a huge void in the dressing room and on the ice.

"You're losing two Hall-of-Fame players out of your lineup," Green said. "You just don't replace those elements to your game."

"You're happy for them; they've had amazing careers. To see them go out on their own terms with the season they've had, I think, means a lot to them. It means a lot to me. But also, it's sad."

By not stating publicly that they wanted to return for another season, it was clear the Sedins were considering values other than hockey. Danny and his wife, Marinette, have three children. Henrik and Johanna Sedin have two. The five kids are between six and 12 years old. The Sedins have been trending for a while towards the decision that was confirmed Monday.

But it was announced now not so much for the Sedins' benefit as for their fans and organization, so that the greatest careers any Canucks have constructed won't end with a press release in May. With home games Tuesday against Las Vegas and Thursday against Arizona, and a road game Saturday in Edmonton, the Sedins will get the NHL sendoff they deserve, even if the attention will make them a little uncomfortable.

"They wanted to do this for our fans and for their families, to have an opportunity for a chance to say goodbye and have a special week here," Linden said. "It's certainly not their style. They're such good people and have done such amazing things in our community. The real sad part about this is the game is losing two incredible ambassadors that represented the game so great."

People throughout the NHL will notice.

"They've been in the league for so long that I can't even remember when I started watching them," Ottawa Senators' superstar Erik Karlsson told Sportsnet. "They made a great impact on my generation in Sweden for playing hockey. They're someone who inspired a lot of kids to start the game."

Daniel and Henrik Sedin will play their final home game with the Vancouver Canucks on Thursday, April 5 against the Arizona Coyotes. Watch the game on Sportsnet Pacific, East, Ontario, 360 and Sportsnet Now at 7 p.m. PT / 10 p.m. ET.

Another Swedish star, Tampa Bay Lightning defenceman Victor Hedman said: "They were two of my heroes growing up. They obviously have some unbelievable skill, but I think their work ethic is what separates them from most guys. Just being around them, you feel like you're getting better. Just being around those guys made you push yourself to try and get better."

The Sedins combined for 2,107 points in 2,630 games over 17 seasons with the Canucks, and won Olympic and world championship gold medals with Sweden. But they never won a Stanley Cup, losing the 2011 final to the Boston Bruins after the Canucks were the best team all season.

Daniel said that season was both the high and low point of their careers. He hopes he and Henrik will be remembered for their attitude in the dressing room, for their positivity and consistency and dependability.

"They taught me not only on the ice but off the ice, how to be a true pro," former teammate Alex Burrows said. "They're two of the best professionals. Everybody knows they donated so much money to Children's Hospital in B.C. They treat people the right way... especially their own teammates, coaches, staff, media. They're just like the ultimate professionals."

Hank Sedin said: "People can think what they want about us on the ice. There's always going to be different opinions. But the least you can do is come in and treat people like they should be treated. Come in with a smile on your face. That's what we tried to do."

There will never be another two players like them.

"I think at times their greatness has been maybe not as appreciated as it could have been," Linden said. "Who they are and the culture that they set will live on in this organization for a long time. They've left an incredible legacy with this organization and with this city. They're such good people. These are two guys this city will miss watching."

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 04.03.2018

1107230 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Leafs' Andreas Johnsson making case for playoff roster spot

Luke Fox | April 2, 2018, 11:57 PM

TORONTO – "Maybe I don't," Mike Babcock has said, with regards to finding Andreas Johnsson ice time when the Toronto Maple Leafs finally begin to play meaningful games again next week.

But where others hear "maybe I don't," Johnsson hears "maybe I do."

The do-everything seventh-round gamble has been given just a nine-game taste of the world's highest level of hockey and already knows he belongs. If he's scratched when the Leafs' second season opens next Thursday, critics will grumble.

"I feel like I've showed I can play in this league," said Johnsson between wide grins following the Toronto Maple Leafs' 5-2 romp over the Buffalo Sabres Monday.

When Johnsson opened the scoring by setting up shop in front of Chad Johnson's crease and slamming home a money pass from Tomas Plekanec for his second career NHL goal, this time he acted like he'd been there before, because he had. ("I still get happy," he confessed.) Later, his work in the high-traffic zone of the Leafs' second power-play unit helped orchestrate an Auston Matthews strike, and the assist gave Johnsson his first multi-point game in the NHL.

"I feel comfortable with the tempo up here. There's more skilled players, so I have to be alert all the time. But I feel I'm showing I can play here. I'm happy with my start, but I know I can push out some more," said Johnsson, who earned his late-season showcase as a point-per-game stud with the AHL Marlies.

"Hockey's hockey. The thing is, you have to move faster [in the NHL]. They're bigger and stronger, and there's more skilled guys. You have to move the puck fast and be quick in every play you do to get away from them. That's the biggest difference."

The Swedish army knife did a little bit of everything Monday, firing three shots of his own, blocking two from the bad guys, and skating roughly three minutes for each specialty unit.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 3, 2018

"He's fast, he's skilled, he's smart. He makes plays," gushed Matthews. "He definitely adds another dilemma on that line with his speed and skill. He's a smart player. He can score and can beat you in different ways."

When Johnsson is buzzing on the Leafs' checking line, it has managed a positive Corsi despite starting two-thirds of its shifts in the defensive zone.

"He's definitely a workhorse," said defenceman Jake Gardiner. "He's a good PK'er. Really smart player. He's stepped right in and looks comfortable."

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A member of the Marlies staff in attendance told Babcock that Johnsson is a self-starter, not the type of player you need to negotiate with every day. He simply brings it.

"He's ultra-competitive, he works real hard, shows up every day with a great attitude and has energy. You can't say enough about that," Babcock said.

"People like that make the people around them better."

To that end, Exhibit A may be fourth-line centre Plekanec, the wily veteran rental who just now seems to be finding his groove in strange clothes.

"I loved him since Day 1," Plekanec said on-air. "So easy to play with him."

Johnsson explains that he and Plekanec think the game the same way.

"We want to be quick, be intense and move the puck fast," Johnsson said. "We've found each other a couple times here, so it was nice to score a goal together."

That Johnsson will have a lineup spot reserved for him for opening night of the 2018-19 campaign is all but a given, but the versatility and determination he's shown in less than 10 games — plus his status as an additional power-play threat — should put pressure on Babcock to consider giving Johnsson a playoff role over Kasperii Kapanen. Tough call.

The coach has already assured that Leo Komarov, who rested Monday, is healthy and will be in the post-season lineup due to his experience, toughness and penalty killing.

Such intense internal competition, wrought by Toronto's ridiculous but temporary wing depth, is new to Johnsson, who's never been in this tough to prove to himself.

The message from above, the player says, has been simple: Be ready every day.

"This is a luxury for the coaches," Johnsson says.

He flashes another toothy smile before another day of looking to see if his name pops up on the whiteboard.

"Of course I want to play every game, so we'll see."

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1107231 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Flames Prospect Report: Andersson's patience about to pay off

Eric Francis | April 2, 2018, 7:46 PM

For the first time in decades the Calgary Flames leaned heavily on their farm system this season.

However, what the Stockton Heat were able to provide the Flames wasn't enough, as the big club's lack of depth was one of the team's ultimate undoings.

Yes, the long list of youngsters who came up for extended stays included everyday third-line centre Mark Jankowski and surprise backup David Rittich.

But no, neither was able to make a positive impact down the stretch when the team needed it most.

Garnet Hathaway got an extended look as a third- and fourth-line energy player, while others like Andrew Mangiapane, Marek Hrivik, Ryan Lomberg, Morgan Klimchuk, Rasmus Andersson and Jon Gillies got cameos.

The sheer number of rookie call-ups bodes well for a franchise endlessly devoid of AHL depth.

However, the next step is developing the aforementioned into everyday NHLers capable of giving the Flames the depth needed to stay in a playoff race.

The player most likely to make the jump to start next season is Andersson, whose patience is about to pay off.

Minor league scouts and observers watched in amazement all season as Andersson dominated in Stockton, where the playmaking blueliner had eight goals and 30 assists to sit sixth amongst AHL defencemen despite a recent promotion.

Named to the AHL all-star game, Andersson was seen by many as being too good to still be playing in the minors. However, the Flames' top-six stayed healthy most of the year, preventing his ascension until late last month.

Drafted in the second round of the 2015 draft, the 21-year-old Swede would benefit from a likely off-season trade of one of the Flames' top four defencemen to acquire offensive depth.

A spot on the Flames blue line will likely come down to a battle between Andersson and Flames 2017 first-round pick, Juuso Valimaki.

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OTHER NOTEWORTHY PROSPECTS

JUUSO VALIMAKI

Drafted 16th overall in 2017, the 19-year-old captain of the Finnish world junior team has maintained the point-a-game pace he's had the last two seasons in Tri-City despite being limited to just 43 games due to injuries.

His 14 goals and 31 assists speak to his playmaking ability and his size (six-foot-two, 204 pounds) makes it clear he should have a legitimate shot to get at least a handful of games in the NHL coming out of camp to show he's ready to stay.

World Juniors

Foo had his choice of NHL teams to sign with last summer when the hotshot from Union College opted for Calgary, where he came to camp with an eye on riding shotgun with Johnny Gaudreau and Sean Monahan.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 3, 2018

The NHL game proved to be too quick for the 23-year-old Edmontonian, prompting a season-long stint in Stockton where he was the team's hottest player in the second half.

The 20-goal scorer in Stockton will play his second NHL game Tuesday with hopes of showing he's ready to step up a league.

Foo was Stockton's hottest player in the second half of the season. (Jason Franson/CP)

DILLON DUBE

Dube's decorated junior career in Kelowna came to a close last week, opening the door for an assignment with Stockton for the playoffs where the Flames will gauge how close Canada's world junior captain is to an NHL gig.

By virtue of his versatility, Dube is the most exciting forward prospect the Flames have in an organization desperately in need of secondary scoring.

His 38 goals in 53 games this season make the 19-year-old Cochrane, Alta., native a threat to compete for an NHL roster spot this fall.

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1107232 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Leafs' Matthews clicking on the power play at the perfect time

Chris Johnston | April 2, 2018, 9:50 PM

TORONTO – It had been one of the great mysteries of a spectacular sophomore season. Auston Matthews, despite his many offensive gifts, was for the longest time producing more offence for the Toronto Maple Leafs at 5-on-5 than he was with the man advantage.

Finally, the regression has arrived.

Matthews doubled his yearly output in fewer than three minutes work on Monday night, beating Chad Johnson twice on the power play in a 5-2 victory over the Buffalo Sabres.

"It's nice, you score a couple power-play goals and it gives you some confidence moving forward," said Matthews. "I think the last maybe three, four or five games we've had some good opportunities and scored some goals just being simple and getting the puck to the net.

"So, like I said, it always give you some confidence."

While you never got the sense the Leafs most dangerous offensive weapon was lacking for confidence, the results come at a nice time. He hadn't scored a power-play goal since Nov. 30 in Edmonton – a frigid night that feels like a lifetime ago with the playoffs opening next week.

The big centre has been an absolute force at 5-on-5 – posting a NHL-best 4.18 goals per 60 minutes he's on the ice this season – while being a focal part of a PP2 searching for answers.

Midway through the year, he and William Nylander were swapped from their off-wings to their strong sides in the formation. That didn't produce immediate results. More recently, they've focused on trying to funnel pucks down to Patrick Marleau around the net area and the veteran has scored twice with the man advantage in the seven games since Matthews returned from a separated shoulder.

Should it continue, opponents will not want to take many penalties against the Leafs in the post-season. The team's top unit has consistently been among the most dominant in the NHL.

"Obviously, [Tyler] Bozak's power play has been really good for us all year, very dynamic to say the least," said coach Mike Babcock. "The other group didn't have much puck speed and were frustrated and in their own way. Now their puck speed is way up and they seem to have it going and have got confidence.

"Good for us, obviously."

Truth be told, it was likely only a matter of time.

Matthews scored eight power-play goals as a rookie last season and is already among the most effective shooters in the game – registering 73 goals through his first 142 NHL games on a 15.8 per cent shooting percentage.

Penalty killers have naturally started shading towards Matthews and Nylander, taking away the passing lanes between them in the middle of the ice. It's forced the entire PP2 to go back to the drawing board with assistant coach Jim Hiller in order to find new ways to adjust to the coverage.

"I think at the beginning of the year, maybe through the first half or maybe two-thirds of the season, we were I think pretty predictable out there," said Nylander. "I mean teams kind of knew what we were going to do. Now we're getting pucks to the net and being more unpredictable."

The Leafs have filled the net during a season that now stands as their best since 2003-04 – the only other time the organization has hit 103 points. They've got games Thursday in New Jersey and at home to Montreal on Saturday to try and better that mark.

It's been particularly encouraging to see Matthews in top form since his latest return from injury on March 22. He's registered points in all seven games, scoring five goals and five assists after being sidelined for four weeks with the shoulder separation.

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

The big centre had his way against the last-place Sabres, combining with linemates Nylander and Zach Hyman to produce goals on three straight second-period shifts. After Matthews scored on a power play at 5:01, he sent Nylander in for a breakaway goal at 7:39. Hyman then feathered another pass into a wide-open Nylander at 10:32 as Toronto grabbed a 4-1 lead.

Matthews added his second power-play marker in the third period – something he chuckled about afterwards because it came hours after The Athletic's Jonas Siegel had been asking him about the lack of production at 5-on-4.

"Jonas was giving it to me this morning," said Matthews. "[Wondering] why we've been so bad this year and then we go and score twice. I mean rightfully so."

Pretty good answer.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 04.03.2018

1107233 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Takeaways: Wild simply too much for nosediving Oilers to handle

Mark Spector | April 2, 2018, 11:16 PM

The 74-point Edmonton Oilers are not the 108-point Winnipeg Jets, of that you can be sure. But on Monday the Oilers waltzed into the Xcel



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 3, 2018

Energy Center to take on a Minnesota Wild team that awaits the Jets in Round 1 of the upcoming playoffs.

Like the guy who leaves his putt eight feet short of the cup however, the Oilers didn't show Winnipeg much in this one. All we know for sure is that the Wild's defensive game was too much for a flagging Oilers team to handle, as Minnesota managed even to hold Connor McDavid pointless in a ho-hum 3-0 win.

Here are some takeaways from Edmonton-Minny, with plane tickets booked for Game 1 in Winnipeg next week:

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- This was a solid display of team defence by a team missing two top defencemen in Ryan Suter and Jared Spurgeon. The Wild announced on Monday that Suter (broken ankle) is done for the season, while head coach Bruce Boudreau is advertising Spurgeon (torn hamstring) as a playoff performer. No offence Bruce, but we'll believe that one when we see it.

While the Oilers didn't manage to test Devan Dubyk an inordinate amount, the Jets will come at Minnesota in waves. Without Suter and possibly Spurgeon — who will be coming off a pulled hammy and almost a month on the shelf — the oddsmakers will shift their lines. We'll surely be bullish on the Jets.

- Mikko Koivu is 35, and doesn't score the way he used to. But he is still a horse who plays the kind of game a young, skilled player must learn to deal with if he's going to succeed at playoff hockey.

Zach Parise, who scored two goals Monday, is having his leanest year since coming to Minny in 2012, taking just nine assists into his 40th game Monday. But you can bet that he'll dig in come playoff time and present the younger, faster Jets with some veteran opposition.

We don't suspect a banged-up Wild team can stick with Winnipeg, but you never know. The first round is where you find all the upsets, so why not in this first-ever meeting between two cities that are as familiar with each other — in a cross-border kind of way — as Toronto and Buffalo or Boston and Montreal?

- A couple of Oilers thoughts:

Anton Slepyshev — He doesn't do much other than score. He isn't physical, doesn't check particularly well, and isn't a great passer. The problem? He's played 48 games and has six goals.

With the Oilers trailing 1-0 early, Mike Cammalleri set Slepyshev up in front of a wide open net, which Slepyshev proceeded to miss. This was NHL game No. 100 for Slepyshev. We're highly skeptical that there is a great deal of player here, but he turns 24 only next month. There's time to prove us wrong.

Milan Lucic — They should send poor Lucic home for the season. At this point we've moved past bad luck and have settled on a player who doesn't have any belief left. Lucic, only last season a 50-point player, has become the boneyard where plays go to die. He has the confidence of the Washington Generals.

Lucic can't finish a thing at this point, and has a long summer ahead. On the agenda, somehow chisel 10 pounds off his massive frame, and find a skills coach who can solve the great mystery that is the whereabouts of Lucic's hands.

Special teams — The Oilers have the highest-scoring player in the NHL and the worst power play in the NHL, all at the same time. And by the way — their penalty kill ranks 27th.

It says here that the coaching staff is the least of this club's problems right now, but tell me how you defend a staff whose special teams are this pathetic?

End of the road — Only two home games remain on the Oilers schedule, and McDavid's quest for a second scoring title and the Sedins' farewell game are all that remain as far as storylines. Quite a nosedive from a year ago, isn't it?

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 04.03.2018

1107234 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Fellow NHLers offer praise for Sedins after retirement announcement

Sonny Sachdeva | April 2, 2018, 9:57 PM

After 17 seasons and a combined 2,106 points in the NHL, Henrik and Daniel Sedin have decided to move on from the league they've long dominated after the conclusion of the 2017-18 season.

The Vancouver legends announced their decision Monday, leaving the Canucks faithful only three more games to soak in the talents of two of their franchise's finest.

While the club's fans are sure to feel the sting of losing their star duo, a number of the pair's NHL contemporaries offered their own thoughts on watching the twins walk away, seeing them remain effective into their 30's, and appreciating their impact on the game.

Patrick Kane:

"They're still effective players, so it'll be sad to see them go," Kane told reporters Monday. "I know the league will miss them and what they brought to the game. Their effectiveness with the give-and-go and being able to make it more a 2-on-1 game than a 1-on-1 game is something that helped change the game to what it is now. So they'll definitely be missed. They had great careers, and two special players."

Jonathan Toews:

"They've both had incredible careers," Toews told reporters. "At this age, as young as the game is, they're still able to make incredible plays, go out there and make a difference for their team every night. It'll be a relief not to play against those guys going forward. I'm sure they both feel they want to go out on top, and feel like they can probably still play another handful of years."

Mark Giordano:

"On the ice, real true professionals. Really tough to play against, really used each other and were such a dominating duo for so many years in the league. They were competitors, hard to play against, but always carried themselves the right way," Giordano told the media Monday.

"They used each other so well on the cycle, behind the net. So many different plays that are used in the league today — they were the ones who brought in the shot-tip on the power play in the high slot. I think they were one of the first duos to use the drop (pass) on the power play, stuff like that. They're great players."

Henrik Lundqvist:

"When they came up and broke through in the Swedish Elite League, I was 15 or 16 at the time, two years younger than them," Henrik Lundqvist told NHL.com's Dan Rosen. "I think nobody had seen the way they play before. At least when I grew up, I had never seen that before, two guys hold on to the puck the way they did and dominate games the way they did. They just took the Swedish Elite League by storm. ... They're Vancouver. They've been there for so long and they've done so much for that organization for so long."



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Toby Enstrom:

"What kind of impresses me the most is that they've always been the same, they haven't changed at all in the way they treat people," Enstrom told Rosen. "They are so respected because of that. What they've done in hockey is hard to describe in words. But most of all, it's how they are off the ice, yes private, but they treat everyone the same. ...I watched them play back home when I was young, so it's kind of a sad thing to see them leave hockey. But they are two guys that if they feel they don't have anything more to give, then (they) won't keep doing it and that's what we respect about them."

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Sportsnet.ca / Sabres' Mittelstadt aspires to mimic quick success of Matthews

Chris Johnston | April 2, 2018, 2:48 PM

TORONTO – Should Casey Mittelstadt score his first NHL goal against the Toronto Maple Leafs he'll have to think twice about the celebration.

The talented 19-year-old forward paid homage to Auston Matthews after scoring for the University of Minnesota this season, but he'd never dream of doing it with Matthews in the building.

"No chance. No chance," Mittelstadt said after Monday's morning skate at Air Canada Centre.

It says something about how fast time flies in professional sports that there are already players entering the NHL who look up to Matthews. But here we are. Mittelstadt is 14 months younger than his fellow American and says that he and former Minnesota teammates would frequently watch Toronto games because of the Leafs centre.

In November, Mittelstadt caused a stir when he mimicked a Matthews celebration after scoring against Michigan State. First he lifted one leg and dropped his arms, and then he did the casual flick of the wrist while skating along the bench – causing some to think he was mocking his opponents.

Instead, it was intended to be nothing more than a nod to the Arizonan.

"I mean we all joked about (doing the Matthews goal celebration) and then we said first person to score will do it, so I did it," said Mittelstadt. "It got a little misinterpreted. It was funny."

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Now three games into his NHL career after deciding to leave the NCAA and sign his entry-level contract with the Buffalo Sabres last week, he's due to come face-to-face with Matthews.

He may even find himself trying to contain him since Sabres coach Phil Housley has kept Mittelstadt at centre and won't have control of the line changes on Monday.

"He's one of my favourite players to watch and now I'm playing against him," said Mittelstadt. "It'll be exciting, but at the same time we're going to have to do our job against him for sure and make sure that we're doing a good job against him defensively."

Matthews has registered a point in all six games since returning from a separated right shoulder. He's fifth in the NHL with 29 even-strength goals this season despite sitting out 20 games in total.

At least Mittelstadt won't need much of a scouting report given how closely he's followed the start of Matthews' career.

"I think just his skill, pretty much, is probably the main thing [to watch]," he said. "Obviously he's got great hands and he scores goals in a lot of different ways. So I think that's probably what makes him more exciting to watch than most guys."

Mittelstadt is no slouch himself.

He was selected eighth overall last June despite playing high school hockey in his draft year. In fact, he was never even invited to join Matthews and others at the U.S. national development program. But Mittelstadt put up 11 goals and 30 points in 34 games for the Golden Gophers this season and the Sabres were willing to burn the first year off his entry-level contract by having him jump straight into the NHL now.

"I think I probably got here a little faster than I thought I would," he said.

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TSN.CA / What roles should Sedins play in their final three games?

Jeff Paterson

VANCOUVER – Now that we know there are only three games remaining in the remarkable careers of Daniel and Henrik Sedin, all that remains to be seen is how much we see of them over their final three acts in the National Hockey League. Reluctant to make the entire 2017-18 season about themselves, the Sedins made it clear early on they didn't want any part of a farewell tour. But, after Monday's announcement that they are calling it a career when the season ends next weekend, that's exactly what they're going to get – albeit a brief one – with home games against Vegas on Tuesday and Arizona Thursday before the grand finale in Edmonton on Saturday.

This past Saturday, Daniel Sedin was the lowest in ice time among the 18 skaters the Canucks dressed in a 5-4 win over the Columbus Blue Jackets. He played a paltry 12:01 on the afternoon which was less than rookies Adam Gaudette and Ashton Sautner – who together had combined for all of four games in the NHL prior to puck drop and six games after it. Henrik was marginally higher at 13:45.

Now that Travis Green knows the landscape and understands that these three games mean absolutely nothing in the standings and absolutely everything to Sedin fans everywhere, the coach has a responsibility to treat Daniel and Henrik like the stars they are and have been for the past decade. So, they need to play more in these final three games than they did on Saturday.

Yet at the same time, there is no need to go overboard and play them into the ground. Neither twin has crested 20 minutes of ice time in a game this season – and there is no point in making that happen now. Henrik's season-high is 19:42 while Daniel's is 19:03, both coming in a 3-1 loss to the St. Louis Blues in the final game before Christmas. That was while the Canucks were without Bo Horvat, Brandon Sutter and Sven Baertschi. There was a requirement back then to push the Sedins close to the 20-minute mark. That need doesn't exist these days with a portion of the next wave of offensive players now on the job.

On the season, Henrik is averaging 15:23 a night while Daniel clocks in on average at 15:06. Hopefully, Green can find enough shifts over the



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final three games to get the Sedins close to their season averages. Because as much as fans will want to shower the two greatest scorers the franchise has ever known with love and adoration, those same fans also have an appetite to see the young players perform.

Whether it's Bo Horvat stepping up as the new face of the franchise, Jake Virtanen taking steps forward with his game, Nikolay Goldobin continuing to gain traction as he has in recent outings or Gaudette, the freshest face of all, continuing to get his feet wet in the best league in the world. Green's biggest challenge over the final three games of the season is to strike a balance between giving the Sedins the ice time they deserve while continuing to allow the young players to grow.

Sure, fans lucky enough to have a ticket to either of the final two home games would love to see 60 minutes from the brothers, but we all know that's not going to happen. Whether they play 14 or 16 or somehow manage to squeeze 18 minutes of ice time out of any of these games isn't really important. Special teams will have a say in some of that. But let's be honest: what matters most is that Daniel and Henrik are out for the opening faceoff, so they can be introduced in house as starters and be given a rousing ovation prior to the game. From there, the most important thing is that they are out on the ice late in the game so that they can be saluted yet again. The coach may even want to use his timeout in the final minutes not to design any kind of strategy, but simply to extend the night and prolong the opportunity for the fans to respond.

At this stage of the proceedings, goals and assists from 22 and 33 would be gravy, but no one holding a ticket for these final three games can be the least bit disappointed if the Sedins don't hit the scoresheet. It will do nothing – absolutely nothing – to alter the remarkable legacies they have left on the ice and in this city. They showed this season they can still play and produce and there is something noble about going out with some gas left in the tank rather than being shown the door because the league has passed them by.

The biggest celebration of all will come sometime next season when the Sedins rightfully have their jerseys retired and raised to the rafters. There was a suggestion that should happen on Thursday, but they'll need those numbers one last time to finish out the season at Rogers Place in Edmonton. It would have been easy for the twins to take a pass on meaningless road trip to the Alberta capital for one last game and make the homestand the official conclusion of their careers. But it won't end like that. Forever the consummate team players, the Sedins will slug it out to the bitter end with their teammates as they have for 17 seasons in Canucks colours.

Before then, however, the parties of the year will take place with two celebrations in front of the home fans. It would be amazing if the Sedins turned back the clock and put on a show. But the bigger – and better – show will be from the fans in attendance letting the Sedins know how much they've meant over two incredible decades.

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TSN.CA / Nylander, Matthews lead way as Maple Leafs beat Sabres

Kristen Shilton

TORONTO – If Monday night was any indication, Auston Matthews and William Nylander are more than ready for the NHL playoffs to begin.

The Maple Leafs' sophomore stars combined for four goals and six points in Toronto's 5-2 win over the Sabres, a night where the Leafs also tied the 2003-04 franchise record for points in a single season (103).

Matthews and Nylander each chipped in primary assists on one of the other's goals, and Monday's game was the first time in his career Matthews has tallied multiple goals on the power play in a single game. It was a long time coming for his unit, which has lagged well behind the Leafs' top power play group in production this season.

"[A reporter] was giving it to me this morning about why we've been so bad this year, and then were able to score twice tonight," Matthews said with a laugh after the game. "And rightfully so [we were criticized], but it's nice. I think the last four or five games we've had some good opportunities and scored some goals just from playing simple and getting pucks to the net. It's always good to give you some confidence."

With his pair of goals, Matthews has now scored the most goals by a Leaf in his first two NHL seasons combined (73), surpassing the 71-goal mark previously set by Wendel Clark between 1985-87. But the power play has been a point of frustration all season – before exploding on Monday, the Matthews unit comprised of Nylander, Jake Gardiner, Patrick Marleau and one of Leo Komarov, Connor Brown and Andreas Johnsson had accounted for 15 of Toronto's 51 power play goals.

Granted, Matthews has missed 20 games this season with various injuries and his group is generally deployed second, often not seeing the ice when the first unit – with Tyler Bozak, Mitch Marner, James van Riemsdyk, Nazem Kadri and Morgan Rielly – is successful. But it wasn't just a lack of opportunity that's been hurting Matthews and company.

"Their group didn't have much puck speed; they were frustrated and getting in their own way," said Mike Babcock. "Now their puck speed is way up and they seem to have it going and have confidence and that's good for us. You want to be real dangerous on the power play and that's important."

"Dangerous" isn't how Toronto looked out of the gate against the Sabres. With a playoff spot already neatly wrapped up, the Leafs admittedly didn't bring their A-game in the fourth and final meeting between the division rivals. Andreas Johnsson still managed to give the Leafs a 1-0 lead after the first period, a lead that was gone less than three minutes into the second frame when Sam Reinhart scored on the power play. From there, it the Matthews and Nylander Show for Toronto.

In short order following Reinhart's strike, Matthews had the Leafs back on top with one of his trademark snipes from the slot with the extra man. The tally was not only Matthews' first on the power play since Nov. 30, and just the third of his 32 goals scored this season with that unit, but it extended Matthews' point streak to seven games (10 points), accounting for one in each game since he returned from a shoulder injury on March 22.

"We were able to get the puck back in their end and keep it simple, not try to make too many cute plays," said Matthews. "We're just getting the puck to the net and getting guys there and capitalizing on chances now."

With one goal in the bank, Matthews got to work springing his linemate Nylander. He corralled the puck at the blue line and re-set in the Leafs' end, spying Nylander sneaking behind the Sabres' defence. Matthews wound up and sent a perfect two-line pass to Nylander's tape and Nylander made no mistake going high-glove on Johnson.

Nylander picked the same high-glove spot on Johnson minutes later for his second goal of the night, seeming to catch the goalie off guard with how fast he released the puck from the slot.

"The more you play with someone the more chemistry you build and the more you get to know them and have a feel for where they're going to be in certain areas," said Matthews of his pass on Nylander's first goal. "I think we definitely showed that tonight."

"If there is an opening, he's going to try and get me the pass. That's why I kind of jumped to get there [in position] for it," added Nylander. "I mean, some stuff you don't work on, some stuff you do. When it works, it's nice."



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Returning the favour to his linemate in the third period, Nylander fed Matthews in the right circle on the power play and the centre buried the puck underneath Johnson's pad to restore the Leafs' three-goal lead.

Along with their six combined points, Matthews and Nylander put a total of 10 shots on net while finishing (along with fellow linemate Zach Hyman) at a mediocre 44 per cent possession. But more importantly, one of the Leafs' most dynamic duos was able to re-establish its swagger in an area that will be vital for the Leafs come postseason time.

"Matthews and Nylander have such good shots, you have honour those guys and they move it well too," said Jake Gardiner. "It's one of their best assets – they can cut back on you, they can go to the net, they can shoot it. Players like that give you time and room to make space."

Takeaways

Making his (playoff) case

For a minute there, Andreas Johnsson's NHL days looked like they were numbered. On Monday, he showed how much more dynamic a lineup with him in it can look for Toronto. After being a healthy scratch on Saturday, Johnsson replaced Kasper Kapanen on the right side of the Leafs' fourth line with Tomas Plekanec and Matt Martin. It was the first time Kapanen has been scratched since taking over a regular job on Jan. 23, and showed how highly Babcock looks upon Johnsson and what he can contribute. The rookie got down to business in a hurry, scoring Monday's first goal with the Leafs' second shot on net. It was Johnsson's second NHL goal and point in his nine-game stint with the big club. But he wasn't done there – Johnsson earned the first assist of his NHL career in the second frame with a helper on Matthews' power play score, making Monday the first multi-point game of Johnsson's career. Seeing time on both the penalty kill and the power play is rare, and is a prime example of how valuable Johnsson's skill set is for Babcock. Johnsson is also a far more effective option on Toronto's second power play unit than either Leo Komarov or Connor Brown have proven to be in the same spot. As it stands now, Johnsson taking Kapanen's spot seems like a one-off opportunity, and Kapanen has certainly played well of late too and brings a similar speed and skill game to Johnsson's. Kapanen doesn't see power play time though, which may give Johnsson a slight edge in terms of upcoming ice time, or could at least persuade Babcock to make that fourth line spot into a rotation between the two freshmen going forward. Johnsson finished plus-one, with three shots on goal and 45 per cent possession.

Big-time blueliners

Not since Tomas Kaberle and Bryan McCabe were patrolling the Leafs' blueline has Toronto boasted two defencemen with at least 50 points in a season. On Monday, Gardiner joined Morgan Rielly at the 50-point mark with an assist on Matthews' second power play goal. Rielly achieved the benchmark back on March 30, with an assist against the New York Islanders. Gardiner specifically can be a polarizing player on the Leafs' back-end because of his risky tendencies with the puck and his decision making at times in the defensive zone. But Babcock sees more to Gardiner than past Leafs' coaches, and maintains he doesn't necessarily get all the credit he's due. "Tonight's game was a little looser than I'd like it, but both [Gardiner and Rielly] are really good puck movers for us from the back," said Babcock. "Jake is one of those guys he can just make plays, real good hockey sense, knows where the puck is going next, is a way better defender than people think too. He's a good hockey player."

Rolling the wrong way

One of Roman Polak's primary purposes in the Leafs' lineup is to act as a penalty killer. So when he was charged with two high-sticking penalties in a six-minute span of the first period against Buffalo, it wasn't a good sign. Adding insult to injury was Polak's second careless infraction put him in the sin bin for four minutes after he drew blood from Jack Eichel on the swipe to his face. The Leafs put together a terrific penalty kill effort for the first nearly-three minutes of the four-minute kill, until Reinhart tipped a Rasmus Ristolainen point shot past McElhinney to tie the game 1-1. Then in the third period, Polak was at fault for the Leafs' second

power play goal allowed, when he had his back to Jason Pominville and essentially screened McElhinney before he could make the stop. Toronto's penalty kill has now allowed at least a goal in each of the team's last three games, going 6-for-11 (54 per cent). Prior to this stretch, the Leafs had allowed just one power play goal in their previous six games (12-for-13) and with playoffs just around the corner, it will be a priority for D.J. Smith to get his penalty killers tightened up before the games really begin to matter.

Saving it for playoffs?

Matt Martin has been scratched in 28 of the Leafs' last 31 games, with the only three games he's skated in coming against the Sabres. The first time, back on March 5, was because Toronto needed an infusion of physicality and Martin delivered. That's what the Leafs needed again on Monday – Babcock said before the game he wasn't pleased with the intensity Toronto showed a week ago when Buffalo was here (and Martin didn't dress), so he sat Komarov out to give Martin another chance. After a poor first shift for the fourth line hemmed into their own end, Martin was relentless on the forecheck and in winning puck battles along the boards. He was able to create some chaos in front of Johnson with a strong net-front presence and maximized his ice time with the bruising edge Toronto needed not only in their last matchup with Buffalo but arguably also when they were manhandled physically by the Winnipeg Jets on Saturday. Martin has not been more help than hindrance to the Leafs in all three of his most recent appearances, but whether that makes a true difference in his opportunity come playoffs remains to be seen. Babcock said part of the purpose in playing Martin was to get him primed in case he was called upon in the coming weeks, but without injuries necessitating it, that scenario is more likely to play out if the Leafs draw the Boston Bruins over the Tampa Bay Lightning in the first round. But the Leafs should feel positively knowing Martin hasn't seemed to look any worse for wear after several extended breaks from game action.

Next game

The Leafs play their final road game of the season on Thursday in New Jersey.

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TSN.CA / Leafs' Dermott dodges major injury

Mark Masters

TSN Toronto reporter Mark Masters checks in daily with news and notes from Maple Leafs practices and game-day skates. The Leafs and Sabres held morning skates at the Air Canada Centre on Monday.

Travis Dermott appears to have dodged a major injury. The Maple Leafs defenceman left Saturday's game against the Winnipeg Jets in pain after taking a Ben Chiarot slap shot off his right foot. Dermott will sit out Monday's game against the Sabres, but the injury shouldn't jeopardize his availability for the playoffs.

"They did the X-ray and it was negative," head coach Mike Babcock said. "Then they did the CT scan and it was negative ... Now he's walking around and all that so it's just give him a couple of days here and he should be up and running."

Leafs' Dermott avoids serious injury

Maple Leafs head coach Mike Babcock says that Travis Dermott's X-Rays and CT Scan results were negative and he hopes to have the defenceman up and running in a couple of days.



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Maple Leafs head coach Mike Babcock says that Travis Dermott's X-Rays and CT Scan results were negative and he hopes to have the defenceman up and running in a couple of days.

In Dermott's absence tonight, Connor Carrick will draw in and play with Morgan Rielly. Ron Hainsey will shift over to his natural left side and play with Nikita Zaitsev. Jake Gardiner and Roman Polak, who played together during much of Zaitsev's injury absence this season, have been reunited.

"Left and right shots," Babcock explained, "and also Zaitsev and Hainsey play together a fair bit after power plays and stuff like that so we're going to go with that tonight – to start anyway – and see how it goes. Just left and right shots and it gives us a chance to do something else. Plus, we didn't play with the kind of intensity we needed last time we played Buffalo and, so, going with that."

Leo Komarov, who returned from a lower-body injury on Saturday, will sit out tonight's game, but Babcock stressed the Finn had not tweaked the injury and he will play in the two remaining games. Nazem Kadri, Komarov's good friend, was asked if getting the gritty winger to agree to take a day off may be tough.

"I'm not sure," Kadri said with a grin. "Now that he's got his kid and stuff he might need more than he's used to. It's nice for some guys to take some time to recuperate not only physically, but mentally."

"The nice thing about those things is they're out of your control," said James van Riemsdyk. "Whatever they think is best for you, you're going to do."

Kasper Kapanen will also be a healthy scratch tonight as Andreas Johnsson and Matt Martin draw in. After tonight, Martin will have been a scratch in 28 of 31 games with all three of his games played coming against the Sabres.

Curtis McElhinney will start in goal as Frederik Andersen gets another night off.

The lineup shuffle is mostly about getting players who haven't suited up in a while some ice time.

"We have lots of rest so I'm not too concerned about that," Babcock said. "We have so many opportunities for days off here coming up and then just the playoff schedule comes. I'm not really concerned about that. We've given Freddie more than a long break here so then we'll give him two games going in. As far as the game today, we want to play well, want to play hard and want to execute. We played four in six, had a day off, we need to get our energy back and get going."

Chad Johnson will start for the Sabres. He's 7-1-1 with a .934 save percentage in his career against Toronto.

Leafs Ice Chips: Komarov, Andersen get rest; D pairs juggled

Leo Komarov, Kasper Kapanen and Frederik Andersen won't play tonight as the Leafs continue to spread the minutes around in advance of the playoffs. Travis Dermott avoided a major injury, but will miss tonight's game against the Sabres after blocking a shot off his foot on Saturday. As a result, head coach Mike Babcock has juggled all his defence pairings.

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Jack Eichel and Auston Matthews have faced off five times in the NHL. Eichel has nine points in those games and Matthews has four. The Sabres have won three of the games, including last week when Eichel

scored twice. On one of the goals he stole the puck from Matthews' right before scoring. So, does Eichel have the advantage in the personal rivalry?

"No, not really, no," Eichel said shaking his head. "He's going to the playoffs."

The stark reality for Eichel, who had five assists in Buffalo's upset win over Nashville on Saturday, is that whatever happens tonight his season will end on Saturday while his good buddy will be in the postseason for a second straight year.

"I know he wants to win," Matthews said. "I think, especially for a lot of young guys coming into the NHL, you don't really play on too many bad teams. You're always on a team that wins (growing up) and that's kind of been the case for him so I'm sure it's tough. But they got some good pieces, some young guys like (Casey) Mittelstadt who are coming up and Willie's brother (Alexander Nylander) that can help them win."

It's pretty clear that Matthews didn't lose much, if any, sleep over the loss to Buffalo last Monday. The early Eichel goal was one of the few misplays on the night for his line.

"We were pretty happy with our game," Matthews noted. "Obviously, we made a mistake on that first goal and they capitalized on it, but we definitely could've had two, three, four ourselves. We had a lot of chances especially in that first period. We all emphasized it after the game, just hitting the net."

Does Eichel have bragging rights on Matthews? 'No, he's going to the playoffs'

Good friends Jack Eichel and Auston Matthews have faced off five times in the NHL. Eichel has nine points in those games and Matthews has four. The Sabres have won three of the games, including last week when Eichel scored twice, including one goal where he stole the puck from Matthews. So, advantage Eichel, right? Apparently not.

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Babcock, who matched Kadri against Eichel after the early goal last Monday, plans on ramping up the minutes for Matthews as the season winds down. Matthews is averaging 18:13 TOI/G this season and has been above that mark in just two of six games since returning from a 10-game absence.

"Auston's just on his way back," the coach noted. "I thought he's been better the last little while. Now, he's just [got back from being] injured and now played four in six [nights] so that's not conducive to being flying, but, in saying that, we tried to get his minutes a little higher, I think he got 18 and a half the other night, trying to do that a little bit to make sure he's getting a workload and by the time the playoffs start he should be going."

The one area where Eichel has a clear edge on Matthews is fashion. The second overall pick in the 2015 draft endorses his own clothing line – The Jack Eichel collection – through retailer Dave & Adam's.

But Matthews may be joining his good buddy in the fashion world soon enough.

"Maybe down the road," he said. "I kind of talked about it during the summer a little bit, but probably the timing and everything was not right. But down the road it'd definitely be something to look into, yeah."

Matthews will 'definitely' consider starting own clothing line

Auston Matthews is becoming known for his unique style, so would he consider following Jack Eichel's lead and starting his own clothing line? Matthews says it is something he would definitely consider down the road.



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Mittelstadt will get his first taste of the Sabres-Leafs rivalry tonight as he suits up in his third NHL game.

"The night I flew in they were playing and I got to watch most of the game and I think that spoke for itself," Mittelstadt said of the rivalry. "It's the border battle, there's a lot of emotion and it will be fun to be part of it." Mittelstadt, 19, is looking forward to the opportunity to face-off with 20-year-old Matthews, who is someone he admires.

"He's one of my favourite players to watch," Mittelstadt said. "Just his skill, pretty much, is probably the main thing. He's got great hands and scores goals in a lot of different ways, which makes him more exciting to watch than other guys."

Any welcome-to-the-NHL moments so far for Mittelstadt, who has picked up an assist in each game played?

"I don't even know if it's stuff on the ice," the University of Minnesota product said. "It's just like being in the hotel and things like that, that stands out more, getting on the plane, it's more little things like that. When I'm playing I'm kind of playing and I feel comfortable out there. It's things away from the rink."

Sabres coach Phil Housley was surprised that Predators forward Scott Hartnell wasn't suspended for his hit from behind on defenceman Viktor Antipin in Saturday's game.

"I do know that our player was taken off on a stretcher, has a broken nose, facial lacerations and missing teeth so, in that respect, I strongly disagree with the NHL's decision," Housley said. "It's unfortunate for Viktor, because I thought he had a solid game and I don't believe he'll be playing the rest of the year. So, we feel for him and, like I said, I disagree with the decision."

Hartnell received a five-minute major and a game misconduct for the hit.

Will Hartnell face further discipline for hit on Antipin?

Predators forward Scott Hartnell checked Victor Antipin into the glass from behind, and the Sabres defenceman was taken off the ice on a stretcher to a local hospital. Dave Poulin shares his thoughts on whether or not Hartnell will face further discipline.

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TSN.CA / Sedins close careers on classy, thoughtful note

Frank Seravalli

In the end, the departure for Henrik and Daniel Sedin was destined to go down like this - understated, classy and thoughtful.

There would be no year-long goodbye tour or months of feting and fanfare. That wouldn't be their style.

Just an open letter to Vancouver Canucks fans, with the hockey world hanging on every word.

The Sedin twins, statistically the best brother duo in the history of the NHL and the faces of hockey in Western Canada for much of the 21st century, announced on Monday they will retire at the end of their 17th season this weekend. Their final games in Canucks uniforms will be on Saturday night in Edmonton.

"Being part of the Canucks family for 18 [years] has been the best part of our lives," the Sedins wrote in a joint letter. "But it's time to focus on our families and life after hockey. It's time to help with homework every night. It's time to be at every birthday party and to stand in the cold at every hockey rink, soccer game and riding lesson on weekends. It's time to be at home for dinner every night."

The Canucks will now have two voids to fill in their lineup.

Since 2000, one year after then-GM Brian Burke orchestrated the trade to select the twins at No. 2 and 3 overall, the Sedins have been the models of consistency in Vancouver.

Some 1,360 regular-season games will have passed by Saturday and the Canucks only played seven of them without at least one Sedin in the lineup.

They have combined for 631 goals, 1,475 assists and 2,106 points – the only brothers in NHL annals with at least 1,000 points each – in addition to 47 playoff wins, seven hat tricks, six All-Star Game appearances and six end-of-season All-Star selections.

As much as Daniel and Henrik were thought of as one combined entity, they were individually successful and stood on their own two feet.

Henrik won the Hart and Art Ross trophies in 2009-10 with his 112-point season. Daniel matched Henrik with the Art Ross and Ted Lindsay the following season with his own 104-point campaign.

Henrik was often dishing, while Daniel did the finishing. They were the yin to each other's yang, seemingly always level-headed amid the maelstrom that was the Vancouver market during much of their tenure.

It's easy to forget now, but the Sedins weren't a slam dunk to achieve this level of success when they first arrived. The list of doubters was longer than supporters after their first three NHL seasons, when they were pushed around in the big-boy Western Conference and neither brother cracked 40 points.

The 2004-05 lockout robbed them of their 24-year-old seasons, but they returned to the NHL from a season home with MoDo in Ornskoldsvik, Sweden, as different, more physically mature players ready to take the league by storm. They burst into bona fide stars, producing one of the few golden eras in Canucks history.

Ultimately, the Sedins and Canucks fell one game short bringing that first Stanley Cup to Vancouver in 2011, at the height of their pinnacle in the NHL. They will close with just seven playoff series wins in 17 seasons – three of them coming in that 2011 run that enveloped the city and province – which is an underwhelming total for what they brought to the table.

Not much of that can be pinned on the Sedins. They are winners, no doubt, as their trophy case will show with 2006 Olympic and 2013 World Championship gold medals.

Even when the questions were tough, the Sedins were there answering – almost always the first to stand up to address reporters after crushing losses. Henrik and Daniel were as accountable as they were consistent – and they finished first and second in Canucks scoring for 10 consecutive seasons.

Each played more than 1,300 regular season games – both brothers were in the Canucks lineup for all 82 games in six different seasons. They will finish within 30 points of each other's career marks, each pocketing an equal \$74.1 million – not one dollar more than the other.



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Both Sedins have a chance to finish their careers making an improvement on last year's disappointing season, despite playing nearly three fewer minutes per game. But with the Canucks' roster growing younger and a third straight spring without a playoff berth sprung, they made the decision to step away. Together.

"This feels right for all of us," the Sedins wrote. "It's time to let the next generation of young players lead the Canucks."

The only shame is that the Sedins did not announce their decision earlier, to give each NHL stop on the tour a chance to say thank you, like so many of the other greats have done. Henrik and Daniel earned that opportunity.

That just wouldn't be their style, one uniquely their own, intertwined with each other and a city – now forever.

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TSN.CA / Sedins to retire at season's end

Staff

Daniel and Henrik Sedin's 17th National Hockey League season will be each man's last.

The 37-year-old brothers made the announcement through a letter on the club's website.

"We started the year with the mindset that a decision would be made in the postseason," the pair wrote. "But it became clear, after discussions with our families throughout the year, that this will be our last season. This feels right for all of us."

Natives of Ornskoldsvik, Sweden, Daniel and Henrik were drafted by the Canucks with the second and third overall selections of the 1999 NHL Entry Draft and have played their entire careers with the Canucks.

Embedded Image

Canucks All-Time Rankings

Reg Season

Henrik		Daniel
1327(1)	GP	1303(2)
240(7)	G	391(1)
828(1)	A	647(2)
1068(1)	P	1038(2)
368(1)	PPPs	365(2)

Playoffs

Henrik		Daniel
105(2)	GP	102(3)
23(6)	G	25(4)
55(2)	A	46(3)
78(2)	P	71(3)

In 1,303 games over 17 seasons, Daniel has 391 goals and 647 assists. He is the team's all-time leader in goals and won the 2010 Hart Trophy as the NHL's most valuable player to his team.

Henrik has played 1,327 games over 17 seasons, notching 240 goals and 829 assists. Henrik is the team's all-time leader in games played, assists and points. He won the 2011 Art Ross Trophy as the league's leading scorer.

With the Canucks, the Sedins won seven division titles and advanced to the 2011 Stanley Cup Final in which the team lost to the Boston Bruins in seven games. Henrik and Daniel are second and third respectively in all-time playoff games played (105 and 102) in Canucks history.

"Being part of the Canucks family for 18 seasons has been the best period of our lives," they wrote. "But it's time to focus on our families and life after hockey. It's time to help with homework every night. It's time to be at every birthday party and to stand in the cold at every hockey rink, soccer game and riding lesson on weekends. It's time to be at home for dinner every night."

Internationally, the brothers captured both a world championship (2013) and an Olympic gold medal in Torino in 2006.

The Sedins were effusive in praise for coach Travis Green and where he is taking the team.

"It's time to let the next generation of young players lead the Canucks," the Sedins wrote. "Travis is building a strong culture and emphasizes a style of play we know will be successful. The team is in great hands, with people who care about its success and it's headed in the right direction. We know there is a bright future for the Canucks."

The brothers say they intend to remain a part of the Vancouver community.

"As we've said before, Vancouver has become home," they wrote. "This is our family's home. We plan to be part of this community long after we retire. Vancouver has given us so much and we've tried to give everything we have in return. That won't change."

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TSN.CA / Giroux belongs in Hart Trophy discussion

Travis Yost

Much of the debate around this year's Hart Trophy race has been about whether an elite player on a non-playoff team is worthy of consideration.

That's understandable this year. Connor McDavid – for my money the NHL's most talented player in 2017-18 – has had an amazing year on a woeful team. Nathan MacKinnon and Taylor Hall, who are having comparatively strong seasons, play for teams that are right near the playoff outline. All three players share the same argument, more or less: that their team would be substantially worse with them out of the lineup and that they have injected heaps of goals and wins into the standings.

And yet, there's a good argument to be made that the guy who has added the most goals (and the most wins) to his team isn't in the trio above. It's Philadelphia's Claude Giroux.

One of the great things about newer hockey data is we can start to understand how team's perform with or without players on the ice. We know all of these guys collect points in bunches and are integral to their team's success. But if you're trying to get a feel for which teams were most reliant on any given player, you can measure how each unit fared with or without a player across all game states.

So what we are doing here is simple – we are comparing how each team scored goals with a player on the ice versus a player off of the ice. The



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idea here is that if the player simply did not exist, the team's normal goal-production rates would exist 100 per cent of the time. From there, we can start to understand just how many goals a player added (or subtracted) from his team's overall goal differential.

Let's break it out by game state. We will look at the top 15 around the league, starting with even-strength. A quick reference glossary first:

I think qualitatively if you asked most hockey fans which lines were most offensively impressive this year, you'd hear the McDavid line (regardless of who he was playing with) and the Vegas line (William Karlsson, Jonathan Marchessault and Rielly Smith) so it's encouraging that our first pass at this analysis sees all three of those guys in the top three. Granted you are going to have difficulty differentiating value between players like Karlsson and Marchessault (as just one example) because of how much time they played together. Nevertheless, you can see that all 15 of these guys were substantial goal drivers relative to team norms all season long.

(Quick side note: I think Auston Matthews, if he doesn't miss such significant time, is in the Hart race too. He's had an amazing, if shortened, 2017-18 season.)

Giroux appears on this list, having added 28 goals above Philadelphia's average. That's a huge number but it's still considerably behind the top of the leaderboard – the top three guys we named were about 14 goals better, which is worth about 2.5 wins in the standings. That's a material difference.

Let's move on to the power play now.

Giroux has been an absolute machine on the power play. And while that's more generally true for Philadelphia's first power-play unit, you can see that he's decisively ahead of any of his teammates on this front and by a considerable margin – 44 goals better than Philadelphia's normal power-play operation with him off the ice and 11 goals clear of the next best teammate. I can't think of a better way of emphasizing this, though, than to point out that he somehow is ahead of Alex Ovechkin

And yes, you are reading that right. Philadelphia was outscored on the power play in situations where Giroux was not on the ice.

This, by the way, is what hurts McDavid's candidacy to a small degree. The Edmonton power play has been a joke all season long and although I don't pin much of it on the Oilers superstar, he ranks 229th in the league by way of goals added on the power play. The Oilers were +16 goals with him on the power play and +8 without, and he played nearly 67 per cent of total minutes.

Lastly: if you are a Hall or MacKinnon voter, again you should be encouraged. There's compelling evidence that New Jersey and Colorado, again, were very reliant on these stars to carry them.

Let's end this with the penalty kill:

Unfortunately none of our big Hart Trophy candidates finished atop the leaderboard, though some of the big names did save goals on the penalty kill too – more on this in a minute. I did want to point out Alex Barkov's presence here. I'm not sure Barkov is in the top tier of Hart candidates but I think he's definitely deserving of recognition as one of the league's elite two-way centres at this point. Performance like this certainly cements those arguments.

But now what we have all waited for – a roll-up of all of those goals added, by game state, for the top 15 players in the league. Here is what that looks like:

Giroux is not only at the top of the list – he's at the top of the list by a considerable margin. He's effectively 13 goals clear of Hall and 19 goals clear of Ovechkin. Again, if six goals are worth a win in the standings, then he's added about two to three wins more to Philadelphia's record than Hall has in New Jersey or Ovechkin has in Washington. And although a couple of Giroux's teammates are on this list, notice how large of the spread there is between the performance – common linemate Voracek is +43 goals on the year, 31 less than Giroux. Common

defensive teammate Shayne Gostisbehere is +47 goals on the year, 27 less than Giroux.

It's worth noting a couple of other things here. One, no player has a larger gap from #1 to #2 than Hall in New Jersey. He's 27 goals clear of his next best teammate which is sizably disparate from a player like Giroux. If anything it lends more credence to the argument that Hall really is a one man band in Newark.

That should be taken into consideration when making a similar argument in support of McDavid. McDavid grades out as probably the best 5-on-5 player in the league but again, the power-play performance really does kill him relative to some of the other Hart candidates. You can chalk up Edmonton's ghastly odd-man performance any number of ways but the reality is they just didn't produce like most other units in the league, and that's the sort of stuff that can turn a Hart winner into just a guy who received a decent chunk of votes.

Lastly, I'm really not sure what to do with the Vegas or Boston duo and I doubt the voters will know either. Marchessault/Karlsson and Bergeron/Marchand lit the world on fire all year and I'm not sure they will have much to show for it individually, though both teams are at least going to be favourites to advance into the second round or further. You wonder, considering the data is now available, if we will ever have a 'best line' or 'best pair' award. I'd certainly endorse that move.

I'll end with one final caveat – this analysis is not a smoking gun. It's blind to (among other things) teammate quality, playing environment, depth competency, and so on. Players in better situations will see improvements in performance regardless of how well they are playing, and that must be taken into consideration. And elite players on very strong teams top to bottom – think Nikita Kucherov and Steven Stamkos in Tampa Bay – won't see as meaningful results, since their off-ice numbers will still be very strong. These things must be taken into consideration.

But how can you look at this and not seriously consider Giroux for the Hart?

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TSN.CA / Statistically Speaking: Dubois finishing strong for the Blue Jackets

Scott Cullen

HEROES

Pierre-Luc Dubois - Columbus' rookie centre recorded a hat trick in Thursday's 5-1 win at Calgary and scored another goal in Saturday's 5-4 overtime loss at Vancouver. He has eight points (4 G, 4 A) in the past five games and now sits eighth among rookie scorers with 45 points in 79 games.

Filip Forsberg - Nashville's top left winger scored twice and added an assist in Sunday's 4-1 win at Tampa Bay after recording three assists in Thursday's 5-3 win against San Jose. He has 12 points (5 G, 7 A) in the past eight games.

Jack Eichel - Buffalo's star centre piled up five assists in Saturday's shocking 7-4 win at Nashville and has eight points (3 G, 5 A) in the past three games.

Sam Reinhart - The Sabres winger posted a hat trick in Saturday's win against the Predators, giving him 14 points (9 G, 5 A) in the past 14 games.



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Jeff Carter - The veteran Kings centre notched a hat trick in Thursday's 4-2 win against Arizona. He has nine points (7 G, 2 A) in the past seven games.

Matt Dumba - The Wild blueliner produced a goal and three assists in Thursday's 5-2 win over Dallas and has eight points (2 G, 6 A) in the past eight games.

Seth Jones - Columbus' star blueliner had a goal and three helpers in Saturday's 5-4 overtime loss at Vancouver. He has 18 points (8 G, 10 A) in his past 15 games.

ZEROES

Scott Hartnell - It was a tough weekend (5 for, 20 against, 20.0 CF%) and Hartnell was not only on the ice for two goals against, but took a major penalty against Buffalo and the Sabres scored three times on that power play.

David Savard - The Columbus blueliner was on the ice for zero goals for and five against in two games over the weekend.

Pekka Rinne - Nashville's goaltender gave up six goals on 29 shots in Saturday's 7-4 loss to Buffalo. The Vezina candidate has a .862 save percentage in his past four starts.

James Reimer - The Panthers netminder was lit up for five goals on 24 shots before getting pulled after 36 minutes in Saturday's 5-1 loss at Boston. He had a .959 save percentage in his previous six starts.

Cam Talbot - Edmonton's goaltender was pulled from Saturday's 3-2 loss at Calgary after allowing three goals on the first seven shots, leaving him with a .839 save percentage in his past four starts.

VITAL SIGNS

Steven Stamkos - The Lightning captain suffered a lower-body injury against Nashville on Sunday and was forced to leave the game.

Ryan Suter - Minnesota's top blueliner suffered a broken fibula during Saturday's loss at Dallas, a crushing loss to the lineup, especially with Jared Spurgeon already sidelined.

Semyon Varlamov - A lower-body injury has knocked the Avalanche netminder out of the lineup for the rest of the regular season.

Erik Johnson - Colorado's big blueliner suffered a fractured patella, which will keep him out for six weeks, though if the Avalanche don't make the playoffs, it can just be classified as a season-ending injury.

John Gibson - Anaheim's star goaltender suffered a lower-body injury against Colorado Sunday, and was forced to leave the game. If he's out for the playoff push, Ryan Miller will have to handle the responsibility in the crease for the final week of the season.

Zdeno Chara - Boston's captain returned to the lineup Sunday, after missing two-and-a-half weeks with an upper-body injury.

Travis Dermott - The rookie Maple Leafs blueliner suffered a foot injury blocking a shot against Winnipeg on Saturday. He's been really good for Toronto, so if the injury takes him out of the lineup, that absence will be noticed.

Vladimir Tarasenko - St. Louis star sniper took a high-stick in the head against Arizona Saturday and left the game.

Viktor Arvidsson - The Nashville right winger suffered an undisclosed injury against Buffalo Saturday and missed Sunday's win at Tampa Bay.

Travis Hamonic - Calgary's hard-hitting defenceman suffered an upper-body injury in Thursday's loss to Columbus.

Stephen Johns - The Dallas defenceman suffered a concussion in Thursday's loss to Minnesota.

Josh Bailey - An upper-body injury has knocked the Islanders winger out of the lineup for the past couple of games.

Thomas Greiss - The netminder returned to the Islanders lineup for the first time in six weeks.

Jacob Trouba - Winnipeg's top-pair blueliner returned to the lineup Saturday against Toronto. He had missed nearly two weeks with a concussion.

Brandon Carlo and Riley Nash - The injury bug won't leave the Bruins alone. Carlos suffered a broken leg in Saturday's win over Florida, while Nash needed 40 stitches to close a gash on his head.

SHORT SHIFTS

Predators D P.K. Subban contributed a pair of assists in Sunday's 4-1 win at Tampa Bay, and has seven points (1 G, 6 A) in the past seven games...Flyers LW Claude Giroux scored a pair of goals, including the winner in overtime, in Sunday's 4-3 win over Boston. He has 12 points (3 G, 9 A) during a seven-game point streak and has a career-high 95 points this season...Flyers RW Travis Konecny chipped in a goal and an assist and has 10 points (6 G, 4 A) in the past 10 games...Flyers D Ivan Provorov added two assists against the Bruins, giving him five points (2 G, 3 A) in the past three games...Bruins RW David Backes had a couple of assists in Sunday's 4-3 overtime loss at Philadelphia and has four points (1 G, 3 A) in the past four games.

Ducks LW Andrew Cogliano scored a goal and added an assist in Sunday's 4-3 overtime win vs. Colorado. He has five points (3 G, 2 A) in the past six games...Ducks RW Jakob Silfverberg added a couple of helpers, snapping a five-game scoreless drought...Avalanche rookie LW Tyson Jost scored two goals in Sunday's 4-3 OT loss against Anaheim; he had one goal in his previous nine contests...Avalanche rookie RW Alexander Kerfoot added a goal and an assist and has six points (3 G, 3 A) in the past seven games.

Canucks LW Jussi Jokinen put up a goal and two assists in Saturday's 5-4 overtime win against Columbus. He suddenly has six points (1 G, 5 A) in the past four games...Canucks C Bo Horvat contributed a goal and an assist, snapping a four-game scoreless slump...Blue Jackets LW Artemi Panarin produced four assists in Saturday's 5-4 overtime loss at Vancouver, giving him 24 points (8 G, 16 A) in the past 14 games...Blue Jackets RW Cam Atkinson added a goal and an assist and has 22 points (11 G, 11 A) in the past 18 games.

Bruins C Patrice Bergeron recorded a goal and two assists in Thursday's 4-2 win at Tampa Bay, scored a goal in Saturday's 5-1 win against Florida, and scored again in Sunday's 4-3 overtime loss at Philadelphia. He has seven points (3 G, 4 A) in five games since returning from injury...Bruins LW Jake DeBrusk returned to the lineup and produced two goals and an assist in Saturday's 5-1 win over Florida. He has 12 points (4 G, 8 A) in his past 10 games...Bruins C David Krejci chipped in three assists and rookie LW Ryan Donato added a goal and an assist against the Panthers. Krejci had six points (3 G, 3 A) in his previous 14 games, and Donato has delivered seven points (4 G, 3 A) in his first eight games.

Devils LW Taylor Hall scored two goals in Saturday's 4-3 win against the Islanders then scored a goal in Sunday's 2-1 win at Montreal. He has 13 points (6 G, 7 A) during an eight-game point streak...Devils LW Blake Coleman and RW Stefan Noesen both contributed a goal and an assist against the Islanders. Coleman has seven points (6 G, 1 A) in the past 10 games and Noesen has three points (2 G, 1 A) in the past four games...Devils rookie D Will Butcher added a pair of assists against the Islanders and has seven points (1 G, 6 A) in the past six games.

Penguins C Riley Sheahan and RW Phil Kessel both contributed a goal and an assist in Saturday's 5-2 win against Montreal. Sheahan had one assist in his previous six games, while Kessel has 21 points (7 G, 14 A) in the past 19 games on his way to a career-high 87 points...Penguins C Evgeni Malkin had two assists against the Canadiens and one more in Sunday's 3-1 loss to Washington, giving him 20 points (6 G, 14 A) in his past 16 games.

Canadiens RW Brendan Gallagher earned a pair of assists in Saturday's 5-2 loss at Pittsburgh. He has 10 points (6 G, 4 A) in the past 11



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games...Sabres C Ryan O'Reilly had a goal and two helpers in Saturday's 7-4 win at Nashville after producing two points (1 G, 1 A) in the previous six games...Sabres RW Kyle Okposo buried a couple of goals and has four points (2 G, 2 A) in the past four games...Sabres D Rasmus Ristolainen had three assists, matching his production from the previous 11 games...Predators C Nick Bonino and LW Austin Watson both had a goal and an assist in Saturday's 7-4 loss to Buffalo. Bonino matched his production from the previous 11 games, while Watson has seven points (4 G, 3 A) in the past 11 games.

Stars C Tyler Seguin and D John Klingberg both contributed a goal and an assist in Saturday's 4-1 win against Minnesota. Seguin has 25 points (11 G, 14 A) in the past 19 games and Klingberg has six points (1 G, 5 A) in the past seven games...Coyotes LW Max Domi and C Dylan Strome both had three assists in Saturday's 6-0 rout over St. Louis. Domi has 10 points (4 G, 6 A) in the past eight games and Strome has six points (1 G, 5 A) in seven games since getting recalled from the AHL...Coyotes D Oliver Ekman-Larsson and RW Richard Panik both had a goal and an assist against the Blues. Ekman-Larsson has six points (3 G, 3 A) in the past eight games and Panik has nine points (5 G, 4 A) in the past nine games...Coyotes C Derek Stepan chipped in a couple of assists, giving him 10 points (1 G, 9 A) in the past eight games...Flames C Mikael Backlund contributed a goal and an assist in Saturday's 3-2 win against Edmonton, snapping an 11-game scoreless drought...Flames RW Michael Frolik added a couple of assists, ending his own 11-game scoreless drought...Golden Knights C William Karlsson and D Shea Theodore both had a goal and an assist in Saturday's 3-2 win against San Jose. Karlsson has 13 points (6 G, 7 A) in the past eight games and Theodore has seven points (2 G, 5 A) in the past seven games...Sharks C Joe Pavelski had a goal and an assist in Saturday's 3-2 loss at Vegas, giving him 17 points (6 G, 11 A) in the past 16 games.

Maple Leafs C Auston Matthews, C Nazem Kadri, and RW Mitch Marner each had a goal and an assist in Friday's 5-4 win at the Islanders. Matthews added an assist in Saturday's 3-1 loss to Winnipeg, and has eight points (4 G, 4 A) while recording a point in each of his past seven games. Kadri has nine points (7 G, 2 A) in the past 11 games and while Marner had his 11-game point streak snapped on Saturday against Winnipeg, he still has 23 points (8 G, 15 A) in the past 16 games...Maple Leafs D Jake Gardiner added two assists against Buffalo and one more against Winnipeg, giving him nine points (1 G, 8 A) in the past 10 games...Islanders LW Anthony Beauvillier had a goal and an assist in Friday's 5-4 loss to Toronto and scored a goal in Saturday's 4-3 loss at New Jersey and has seven points (5 G, 2 A) in the past six games...Islanders RW Jordan Eberle and D Adam Pelech both contributed a couple of assists. Eberle has 10 points (2 G, 8 A) in the past 11 games while Pelech had two points (1 G, 1 A) in his previous 21 games.

Lightning C Brayden Point scored two goals in Friday's 7-3 win at the Rangers and has six points (3 G, 3 A) in the past six games...Lightning C Cedric Paquette tallied two goals and an assist in Friday's 7-3 win at the Rangers, matching his production from his previous 27 games...Lightning LW Alex Killorn and C J.T. Miller both produced a goal and an assist at the Rangers. Killorn had one goal in his previous nine games and Miller has 16 points (9 G, 7 A) in 16 games since he was acquired from the Rangers...Lightning D Victor Hedman, LW Yannick Gourde, and LW Chris Kunitz each had two assists at the Rangers. Hedman has 11 points (4 G, 7 A) in the past 10 games, Gourde has seven assists in the past seven games, and Kunitz had one assist in his previous nine games...Hurricanes C Derek Ryan contributed a goal and an assist in Friday's 4-1 win at Washington, plus an assist in Saturday's 2-1 loss to the Rangers, giving him six points (1 G, 5 A) in the past four games...Avalanche D Tyson Barrie produced a goal and two assists in Friday's 5-0 win over Chicago. Barrie has 18 points (7 G, 11 A) in his past 17 games...Avalanche RW Sven Andrighetto scored a pair of goals and RW Mikko Rantanen added a goal and an assist. Andrighetto had two assists in his previous 11 games, and Rantanen has 18 points (6 G, 12 A) in the past 13 games...Golden Knights LW Jonathan Marchessault scored a pair of goals in Friday's 4-3 overtime win against St. Louis. He has 10 points (5 G, 5 A) in the past eight games...Senators C Jean-

Gabriel Pageau scored a pair of goals, including the winner on a penalty shot in overtime, in Thursday's 3-2 victory against Florida. He had two assists in his previous seven games.

Bruins LW Brad Marchand and RW David Pastrnak both had a goal and an assist in Thursday's 4-2 win at Tampa Bay. Marchand has 26 points (10 G, 16 A) in his past 16 games and Pastrnak has 23 points (11 G, 12 A) in the past 17 games...Bruins D Torey Krug added two assists against the Lightning and has nine points (1 G, 8 A) in his past seven games...Red Wings C Dylan Larkin, RW Anthony Mantha and rookie LW Evgeny Svechnikov each had a goal and an assist in Thursday's 6-3 win at Buffalo. Larkin added another goal in Saturday's 2-0 win over Ottawa and has nine points (5 G, 4 A) in the past seven games...Larkin had two assists in his previous 11 games and Athanasiou also scored against Ottawa, but had gone nine games without a point previously.

Penguins RW Patric Hornqvist and D Kris Letang both had a goal and an assist in Thursday's 4-3 overtime win at New Jersey. Hornqvist has six points (4 G, 2 A) in the past five games and Letang has five points (2 G, 3 A) in the past five games...Predators RW Viktor Arvidsson, RW Craig Smith and D Ryan Ellis each contributed a goal and an assist in Thursday's 5-3 win over San Jose. Arvidsson has eight points (3 G, 5 A) in his past eight games, Smith has four points (2 G, 2 A) in the past three games and Ellis has five points (2 G, 3 A) in the past five games...Wild RW Mikael Granlund put up a goal and two helpers in Thursday's 5-2 win over Dallas. He has six points (1 G, 5 A) in the past five games.

Wild LW Zach Parise scored a pair of goals; he has seven points (5 G, 2 A) during a six-game point streak...Wild LW Jason Zucker added a goal and an assist, and has seven points (3 G, 4 A) in the past eight games...Blackhawks RW Tomas Jurco scored twice in Thursday's 6-2 victory against Winnipeg and has five points (3 G, 2 A) in the past eight games...Blackhawks LW Alex DeBrincat, RW Patrick Kane and D Erik Gustafsson each contributed a goal and an assist in Thursday's 6-2 win over the Jets. DeBrincat has eight points (5 G, 3 A) in the past eight games, Kane has 19 points (5 G, 14 A) in the past 19 games, and Gustafsson has four points (1 G, 3 A) in the past four games...Kings D Drew Doughty had a pair of assists in Thursday's 4-2 win against Arizona and has 14 points (2 G, 12 A) in the past 12 games.

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TSN.CA / Carrick says challenging campaign will make him better

Kristen Shilton

TORONTO – As the final week of the Maple Leafs' regular season begins, it marks over four months since the last time Connor Carrick held a nightly spot in the team's lineup.

Since Nov. 25, Carrick has been a sporadic fill-in on Toronto's blueline, his ice time tied mostly to matchups or injuries.

It's easy for players to take the indignation of a demotion personally, but Carrick is hardly a defeatist. He's a realist who understands how the personnel game is played and is willing to embrace it.

"You're always trying out in this league. Evaluation is a daily thing," said Carrick after the Leafs' morning skate on Monday. "That's just the nature of the business. They tell you that outright – 'We are looking to make you better, and we are also looking to replace you at all times.' That's just the way it goes, and that's true for anyone in the organization, except maybe the guys that own the club."

On Monday against Buffalo, Carrick will do the replacing when he steps in for injured defenceman Travis Dermott. The rookie left Saturday's game against Winnipeg in the first period after taking a Ben Chiarot slap shot off his foot.

Mike Babcock said on Monday that Dermott's X-Rays and CT scans were negative, an indication nothing is broken, and Dermott should be "up and running" within a few days.

All things being equal, that means Carrick's opportunity will be limited to, at most, the Leafs' final three regular-season games over the next six days. He's skated in 45 contests this season, but only 28 since Roman Polak pushed him out of a permanent role in late November.

Despite being a regular all of last season and into the playoffs, Carrick has chosen to let the challenges of this campaign make him better, not bitter.

"The most fun thing for me is being good at hockey – skating well, stickhandling well, shooting well," Carrick said. "That fires me up [even when I'm not playing], because every day that you're coming to the rink is an opportunity to improve on all that. And then our practices are structured so there's a high pace, and you're going to get an opportunity to compete. [Other teams] practice a little lighter and I can see where, for someone in my position, it would be really tough to stay on top of things."

His preparation and work ethic while going in and out for the Leafs is what Babcock says impresses him most about Carrick, and it's also helped pay dividends for the 23-year-old when he does play. Carrick has posted the best numbers of his career this season, putting up four goals and eight assists; in 67 games last year, Carrick posted only two goals and six assists.

At practice, Carrick can easily be described as the feistiest player on the ice. He's been in skirmishes here and there with teammates after drills and is known to bring a game-like physical intensity to the workouts.

None of that goes unnoticed by Babcock, who has heaped praise on Carrick for his commitment to progressing.

"[Connor] and I have had a real good conversation on a regular basis about what he's got to improve on and how he can be in the lineup every day and be an important player as he moves ahead," said Babcock. "As I say to all the players, you're the CEO of your own company. And so the more you put in, the better that company runs. Connor [has] maximized his body, and so now he's working on other things to try and improve. It's hard to earn confidence when you're in and out, but that's the stage of the game he's at."

Carrick doesn't deny having heard Babcock's comments over the last few weeks, but they fail to hold the same weight when they aren't backed up by what truly matters to a player.

"You want the coach speaking complimentary of you, but the ultimate compliment is ice time," said Carrick. "I always appreciate the gesture, but my goal is to grow the intensity of those compliments and make them more frequent and more robust in nature. I'm responsible for my development at all times."

This season, Carrick has honed in on his decision-making skills ("I have a better understanding where on the ice it's not worth trying to make a play") and on becoming a faster, more fluid skater. Yet all those strides haven't made his future – both the immediate and long-term – any more secure. Carrick gets it, though.

"You want to try and stay day-to-day, but that's the skill of it," he said. "It's a mental skill to be able to focus on skating well, moving pucks well, being physical, having a good stick. And if you can break it down drill by drill [the next day], and piece together a good practice, and then two in a row, then suddenly it's a good week and you try to roll that into consecutive weeks."

Maple Leafs projected lineup vs. Buffalo

Hyman-Matthews-Nylander

Marleau-Kadri-Marner

van Riemsdyk-Bozak-Brown

Martin-Plekanec-Johnsson

Rielly-Carrick

Gardiner-Polak



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Hainsey-Zaitsev

McElhinney

Andersen

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TSN.CA / Babcock: Dermott should be back soon

Staff

Toronto Maple Leafs defenceman Travis Dermott was absent from Monday's morning skate, but head coach Mike Babcock doesn't expect him to be sidelined long.

Babcock said after Monday's skate Dermott's CT scan came back negative, meaning he did not suffer a break to his left foot. He added Dermott is walking and should be ready to play in a couple of days.

Dermott left Saturday's game against the Winnipeg Jets late in the first period after blocking a shot on the inside of his left foot and did not return. In 35 games this season, Dermott has one goal and 12 assists.

Babcock took the opportunity with Dermott absent on Monday to shuffle his team's defence pairings.

Connor Carrick slotted in with Morgan Rielly on the team's top pairing while Jake Gardiner skated with Roman Polak on the second pair. Ron Hainsey, who has spent the majority of the season with Rielly, and Nikita Zaitsev, who typically pairs with Gardiner, spent Monday's practice as the team's third pair.

Forwards Leo Komarov and Kasperii took part in the team's practice, but sat out line rushes. Both players are expected to sit Monday night for rest while Matt Martin and Andreas Johnsson re-enter the lineup.

#Leafs lines at morning skate:

Hyman-Matthews-Nylander

Marleau-Kadri-Marner

van Riemsdyk-Bozak-Brown

Martin-Plekanec-Johnsson

Rielly-Carrick

Gardiner-Polak

Hainsey-Zaitsev

McElhinney

Andersen

— Kristen Shilton (@kristen_shilton) April 2, 2018

The Leafs host the Buffalo Sabres on Monday night.

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TSN.CA / Statistically Speaking: Dubois finishing strong for the Blue Jackets

Scott Cullen

HEROES

Pierre-Luc Dubois - Columbus' rookie centre recorded a hat trick in Thursday's 5-1 win at Calgary and scored another goal in Saturday's 5-4 overtime loss at Vancouver. He has eight points (4 G, 4 A) in the past five games and now sits eighth among rookie scorers with 45 points in 79 games.

Filip Forsberg - Nashville's top left winger scored twice and added an assist in Sunday's 4-1 win at Tampa Bay after recording three assists in Thursday's 5-3 win against San Jose. He has 12 points (5 G, 7 A) in the past eight games.

Jack Eichel - Buffalo's star centre piled up five assists in Saturday's shocking 7-4 win at Nashville and has eight points (3 G, 5 A) in the past three games.

Sam Reinhart - The Sabres winger posted a hat trick in Saturday's win against the Predators, giving him 14 points (9 G, 5 A) in the past 14 games.

Jeff Carter - The veteran Kings centre notched a hat trick in Thursday's 4-2 win against Arizona. He has nine points (7 G, 2 A) in the past seven games.

Matt Dumba - The Wild blueliner produced a goal and three assists in Thursday's 5-2 win over Dallas and has eight points (2 G, 6 A) in the past eight games.

Seth Jones - Columbus' star blueliner had a goal and three helpers in Saturday's 5-4 overtime loss at Vancouver. He has 18 points (8 G, 10 A) in his past 15 games.

ZEROES

Scott Hartnell - It was a tough weekend (5 for, 20 against, 20.0 CF%) and Hartnell was not only on the ice for two goals against, but took a major penalty against Buffalo and the Sabres scored three times on that power play.

David Savard - The Columbus blueliner was on the ice for zero goals for and five against in two games over the weekend.

Pekka Rinne - Nashville's goaltender gave up six goals on 29 shots in Saturday's 7-4 loss to Buffalo. The Vezina candidate has a .862 save percentage in his past four starts.

James Reimer - The Panthers netminder was lit up for five goals on 24 shots before getting pulled after 36 minutes in Saturday's 5-1 loss at Boston. He had a .959 save percentage in his previous six starts.

Cam Talbot - Edmonton's goaltender was pulled from Saturday's 3-2 loss at Calgary after allowing three goals on the first seven shots, leaving him with a .839 save percentage in his past four starts.

VITAL SIGNS

Steven Stamkos - The Lightning captain suffered a lower-body injury against Nashville on Sunday and was forced to leave the game.

Ryan Suter - Minnesota's top blueliner suffered a broken fibula during Saturday's loss at Dallas, a crushing loss to the lineup, especially with Jared Spurgeon already sidelined.

Semyon Varlamov - A lower-body injury has knocked the Avalanche netminder out of the lineup for the rest of the regular season.

Erik Johnson - Colorado's big blueliner suffered a fractured patella, which will keep him out for six weeks, though if the Avalanche don't make the playoffs, it can just be classified as a season-ending injury.



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John Gibson - Anaheim's star goaltender suffered a lower-body injury against Colorado Sunday, and was forced to leave the game. If he's out for the playoff push, Ryan Miller will have to handle the responsibility in the crease for the final week of the season.

Zdeno Chara - Boston's captain returned to the lineup Sunday, after missing two-and-a-half weeks with an upper-body injury.

Travis Dermott - The rookie Maple Leafs blueliner suffered a foot injury blocking a shot against Winnipeg on Saturday. He's been really good for Toronto, so if the injury takes him out of the lineup, that absence will be noticed.

Vladimir Tarasenko - St. Louis star sniper took a high-stick in the head against Arizona Saturday and left the game.

Viktor Arvidsson - The Nashville right winger suffered an undisclosed injury against Buffalo Saturday and missed Sunday's win at Tampa Bay.

Travis Hamonic - Calgary's hard-hitting defenceman suffered an upper-body injury in Thursday's loss to Columbus.

Stephen Johns - The Dallas defenceman suffered a concussion in Thursday's loss to Minnesota.

Josh Bailey - An upper-body injury has knocked the Islanders winger out of the lineup for the past couple of games.

Thomas Greiss - The netminder returned to the Islanders lineup for the first time in six weeks.

Jacob Trouba - Winnipeg's top-pair blueliner returned to the lineup Saturday against Toronto. He had missed nearly two weeks with a concussion.

Brandon Carlo and Riley Nash - The injury bug won't leave the Bruins alone. Carlo suffered a broken leg in Saturday's win over Florida, while Nash needed 40 stitches to close a gash on his head.

SHORT SHIFTS

Predators D P.K. Subban contributed a pair of assists in Sunday's 4-1 win at Tampa Bay, and has seven points (1 G, 6 A) in the past seven games...Flyers LW Claude Giroux scored a pair of goals, including the winner in overtime, in Sunday's 4-3 win over Boston. He has 12 points (3 G, 9 A) during a seven-game point streak and has a career-high 95 points this season...Flyers RW Travis Konecny chipped in a goal and an assist and has 10 points (6 G, 4 A) in the past 10 games...Flyers D Ivan Provorov added two assists against the Bruins, giving him five points (2 G, 3 A) in the past three games...Bruins RW David Backes had a couple of assists in Sunday's 4-3 overtime loss at Philadelphia and has four points (1 G, 3 A) in the past four games.

Ducks LW Andrew Cogliano scored a goal and added an assist in Sunday's 4-3 overtime win vs. Colorado. He has five points (3 G, 2 A) in the past six games...Ducks RW Jakob Silfverberg added a couple of helpers, snapping a five-game scoreless drought...Avalanche rookie LW Tyson Jost scored two goals in Sunday's 4-3 OT loss against Anaheim; he had one goal in his previous nine contests...Avalanche rookie RW Alexander Kerfoot added a goal and an assist and has six points (3 G, 3 A) in the past seven games.

Canucks LW Jussi Jokinen put up a goal and two assists in Saturday's 5-4 overtime win against Columbus. He suddenly has six points (1 G, 5 A) in the past four games...Canucks C Bo Horvat contributed a goal and an assist, snapping a four-game scoreless slump...Blue Jackets LW Artemi Panarin produced four assists in Saturday's 5-4 overtime loss at Vancouver, giving him 24 points (8 G, 16 A) in the past 14 games...Blue Jackets RW Cam Atkinson added a goal and an assist and has 22 points (11 G, 11 A) in the past 18 games.

Bruins C Patrice Bergeron recorded a goal and two assists in Thursday's 4-2 win at Tampa Bay, scored a goal in Saturday's 5-1 win against Florida, and scored again in Sunday's 4-3 overtime loss at Philadelphia. He has seven points (3 G, 4 A) in five games since returning from

injury...Bruins LW Jake DeBrusk returned to the lineup and produced two goals and an assist in Saturday's 5-1 win over Florida. He has 12 points (4 G, 8 A) in his past 10 games...Bruins C David Krejci chipped in three assists and rookie LW Ryan Donato added a goal and an assist against the Panthers. Krejci had six points (3 G, 3 A) in his previous 14 games, and Donato has delivered seven points (4 G, 3 A) in his first eight games.

Devils LW Taylor Hall scored two goals in Saturday's 4-3 win against the Islanders then scored a goal in Sunday's 2-1 win at Montreal. He has 13 points (6 G, 7 A) during an eight-game point streak...Devils LW Blake Coleman and RW Stefan Noesen both contributed a goal and an assist against the Islanders. Coleman has seven points (6 G, 1 A) in the past 10 games and Noesen has three points (2 G, 1 A) in the past four games...Devils rookie D Will Butcher added a pair of assists against the Islanders and has seven points (1 G, 6 A) in the past six games.

Penguins C Riley Sheahan and RW Phil Kessel both contributed a goal and an assist in Saturday's 5-2 win against Montreal. Sheahan had one assist in his previous six games, while Kessel has 21 points (7 G, 14 A) in the past 19 games on his way to a career-high 87 points...Penguins C Evgeni Malkin had two assists against the Canadiens and one more in Sunday's 3-1 loss to Washington, giving him 20 points (6 G, 14 A) in his past 16 games.

Canadiens RW Brendan Gallagher earned a pair of assists in Saturday's 5-2 loss at Pittsburgh. He has 10 points (6 G, 4 A) in the past 11 games...Sabres C Ryan O'Reilly had a goal and two helpers in Saturday's 7-4 win at Nashville after producing two points (1 G, 1 A) in the previous six games...Sabres RW Kyle Okposo buried a couple of goals and has four points (2 G, 2 A) in the past four games...Sabres D Rasmus Ristolainen had three assists, matching his production from the previous 11 games...Predators C Nick Bonino and LW Austin Watson both had a goal and an assist in Saturday's 7-4 loss to Buffalo. Bonino matched his production from the previous 11 games, while Watson has seven points (4 G, 3 A) in the past 11 games.

Stars C Tyler Seguin and D John Klingberg both contributed a goal and an assist in Saturday's 4-1 win against Minnesota. Seguin has 25 points (11 G, 14 A) in the past 19 games and Klingberg has six points (1 G, 5 A) in the past seven games...Coyotes LW Max Domi and C Dylan Strome both had three assists in Saturday's 6-0 rout over St. Louis. Domi has 10 points (4 G, 6 A) in the past eight games and Strome has six points (1 G, 5 A) in seven games since getting recalled from the AHL...Coyotes D Oliver Ekman-Larsson and RW Richard Panik both had a goal and an assist against the Blues. Ekman-Larsson has six points (3 G, 3 A) in the past eight games and Panik has nine points (5 G, 4 A) in the past nine games...Coyotes C Derek Stepan chipped in a couple of assists, giving him 10 points (1 G, 9 A) in the past eight games...Flames C Mikael Backlund contributed a goal and an assist in Saturday's 3-2 win against Edmonton, snapping an 11-game scoreless drought...Flames RW Michael Frolik added a couple of assists, ending his own 11-game scoreless drought...Golden Knights C William Karlsson and D Shea Theodore both had a goal and an assist in Saturday's 3-2 win against San Jose. Karlsson has 13 points (6 G, 7 A) in the past eight games and Theodore has seven points (2 G, 5 A) in the past seven games...Sharks C Joe Pavelski had a goal and an assist in Saturday's 3-2 loss at Vegas, giving him 17 points (6 G, 11 A) in the past 16 games.

Maple Leafs C Auston Matthews, C Nazem Kadri, and RW Mitch Marner each had a goal and an assist in Friday's 5-4 win at the Islanders. Matthews added an assist in Saturday's 3-1 loss to Winnipeg, and has eight points (4 G, 4 A) while recording a point in each of his past seven games. Kadri has nine points (7 G, 2 A) in the past 11 games and while Marner had his 11-game point streak snapped on Saturday against Winnipeg, he still has 23 points (8 G, 15 A) in the past 16 games...Maple Leafs D Jake Gardiner added two assists against Buffalo and one more against Winnipeg, giving him nine points (1 G, 8 A) in the past 10 games...Islanders LW Anthony Beauvillier had a goal and an assist in Friday's 5-4 loss to Toronto and scored a goal in Saturday's 4-3 loss at New Jersey and has seven points (5 G, 2 A) in the past six games...Islanders RW Jordan Eberle and D Adam Pelech both contributed a couple of assists. Eberle has 10 points (2 G, 8 A) in the



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past 11 games while Pelech had two points (1 G, 1 A) in his previous 21 games.

Lightning C Brayden Point scored two goals in Friday's 7-3 win at the Rangers and has six points (3 G, 3 A) in the past six games...Lightning C Cedric Paquette tallied two goals and an assist in Friday's 7-3 win at the Rangers, matching his production from his previous 27 games...

Lightning LW Alex Killorn and C J.T. Miller both produced a goal and an assist at the Rangers. Killorn had one goal in his previous nine games and Miller has 16 points (9 G, 7 A) in 16 games since he was acquired from the Rangers...Lightning D Victor Hedman, LW Yannick Gourde, and LW Chris Kunitz each had two assists at the Rangers. Hedman has 11 points (4 G, 7 A) in the past 10 games, Gourde has seven assists in the past seven games, and Kunitz had one assist in his previous nine games...Hurricanes C Derek Ryan contributed a goal and an assist in Friday's 4-1 win at Washington, plus an assist in Saturday's 2-1 loss to the Rangers, giving him six points (1 G, 5 A) in the past four games...Avalanche D Tyson Barrie produced a goal and two assists in Friday's 5-0 win over Chicago. Barrie has 18 points (7 G, 11 A) in his past 17 games...Avalanche RW Sven Andrighetto scored a pair of goals and RW Mikko Rantanen added a goal and an assist. Andrighetto had two assists in his previous 11 games, and Rantanen has 18 points (6 G, 12 A) in the past 13 games...Golden Knights LW Jonathan Marchessault scored a pair of goals in Friday's 4-3 overtime win against St. Louis. He has 10 points (5 G, 5 A) in the past eight games...Senators C Jean-Gabriel Pageau scored a pair of goals, including the winner on a penalty shot in overtime, in Thursday's 3-2 victory against Florida. He had two assists in his previous seven games.

Bruins LW Brad Marchand and RW David Pastrnak both had a goal and an assist in Thursday's 4-2 win at Tampa Bay. Marchand has 26 points (10 G, 16 A) in his past 16 games and Pastrnak has 23 points (11 G, 12 A) in the past 17 games...Bruins D Torey Krug added two assists against the Lightning and has nine points (1 G, 8 A) in his past seven games...Red Wings C Dylan Larkin, RW Anthony Mantha and rookie LW Evgeny Svechnikov each had a goal and an assist in Thursday's 6-3 win at Buffalo. Larkin added another goal in Saturday's 2-0 win over Ottawa and has nine points (5 G, 4 A) in the past seven games...Larkin had two assists in his previous 11 games and Athanasios also scored against Ottawa, but had gone nine games without a point previously.

Penguins RW Patric Hornqvist and D Kris Letang both had a goal and an assist in Thursday's 4-3 overtime win at New Jersey. Hornqvist has six points (4 G, 2 A) in the past five games and Letang has five points (2 G, 3 A) in the past five games...Predators RW Viktor Arvidsson, RW Craig Smith and D Ryan Ellis each contributed a goal and an assist in Thursday's 5-3 win over San Jose. Arvidsson has eight points (3 G, 5 A) in his past eight games, Smith has four points (2 G, 2 A) in the past three games and Ellis has five points (2 G, 3 A) in the past five games...Wild RW Mikael Granlund put up a goal and two helpers in Thursday's 5-2 win over Dallas. He has six points (1 G, 5 A) in the past five games.

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Scott Foster - A 36-year-old accountant, who last played competitively in 2005-2006 at Western Michigan, Foster was pressed into action as the Blackhawks' emergency backup in Thursday's 6-2 win against the Jets and he stopped all seven shots that he faced, setting him up to be the all-time leader in save percentage.

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USA TODAY / Debate: Who is NHL's Stanley Cup favorite?

Kevin Allen and Jimmy Hascup, USA TODAY Published 11:54 a.m. ET April 2, 2018 | Updated 4:17 p.m. ET April 2, 2018



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The NHL's regular season ends with one game, between the Florida Panthers and Boston Bruins, on April 8. With just a few games remaining on each team's slate, now makes for a perfect time to shift gears to the playoffs.

Who is the Stanley Cup favorite?

Kevin Allen: Predators. They are 17-3-2 in their past 22 games and they just downed the Tampa Bay Lightning, the second-best team in the Eastern Conference. The Predators have the NHL's best defensive group, this year's Vezina Trophy favorite in Pekka Rinne and the No.7-ranked offensive team. This Predators squad is not just deeper and grittier, it is also healthier and better prepared than the team that reached the Stanley Cup Final last season.

Jimmy Hascup: Bruins. They have quietly evolved into the Eastern Conference's best team, and they are close to getting Charlie McAvoy back. They fear no team in the East (3-0-0 against the Tampa Bay Lightning). Where is their weakness? They are an elite possession team that ranks fifth or better in goals for, goals against, power play percentage and penalty kill percentage. The Bruins have star power (Patrice Bergeron, Zdeno Chara, Brad Marchand, Tuukka Rask) and a strong supporting cast with players such as Rick Nash, who has not played since March 17 because of an upper-body injury, and Jake DeBrusk. There might not be a team that plays a more cohesive game.

Who is a sleeper team to win the Stanley Cup?

Allen: Blue Jackets. If the Blue Jackets can survive the first round against the Penguins, they are going to be a tough out in these playoffs. They are 12-1-1 in their last 14 games. They are difficult to play against. Seth Jones has blossomed into a force on defense, and they have found their offensive flair. They've scored 59 goals in those 14 games, for an average of 4.2 goals per game.

Hascup: Sharks. Even with Joe Thornton's status a question mark, the Sharks have adequate three-line forward depth. Evander Kane can be an impact player in the playoffs and Brent Burns continues to be among the most dominant defensemen. The core is playoff-tested, including goalie Martin Jones, who has a .925 save percentage in 32 playoff games.

Who will miss the playoffs in the Western Conference?

Allen: Avalanche. The Erik Johnson injury seems like too much to overcome. He is the foundation of their defensive corps. Plus, the St. Louis Blues have a game in hand against the Avalanche and they also are 7-2-1 in their last 10. It sure would be fun if the last playoff spot in the West came down to Saturday's game between the Blues and Colorado in Denver.

Hascup: Avalanche. Their remaining schedule — Kings, Sharks, Blues — is the toughest among the three teams vying for the last two playoff spots. The Blues have a game in hand and are 3-1-0 against the Avs.

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