



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 15, 2019

## The New York Times

### To Lead a Young Team, the Hurricanes Turn to Rod the Bod

By Dave Caldwell

Rod Brind'Amour, the scar-faced former N.H.L. center who is the first-year coach of the Carolina Hurricanes, was talking the other day about winning and losing — specifically, how he enjoys winning less than he should, and how losing still stinks, although he used another word.

"I don't know that when I played, I had that much joy," said Brind'Amour, who scored 452 goals in a 20-year N.H.L. career and was the captain of the Carolina team that won the Stanley Cup in 2006. "I was always chasing something, or always thinking about the next one. Now I get to see these guys, and I'm enjoying it — how they've responded, how they're enjoying the run."

Despite a new coach and a rebuilt roster, the Hurricanes (46-29-7) won 31 of their final 45 games to qualify for the Stanley Cup playoffs for the first time since 2009, ending what had been the N.H.L.'s longest playoff drought. This will be their second playoff appearance since 2006.

Carolina's reward was a first-round series against the defending champion Washington Capitals. The Hurricanes, who lost by 4-3 in overtime on Saturday, trail in the series, 2-0. Game 3 is Monday night in Raleigh, N.C.

Brind'Amour acknowledged that the Capitals (48-26-8) and Alex Ovechkin will be formidable — but not impossible to beat.

"It doesn't matter who you are playing," Brind'Amour said outside the team's dressing room after its regular-season finale in Philadelphia. "It's going to be an uphill battle. We know that. But I like the way we've come at it all year, met the challenges."

The Hurricanes are young and inexperienced, especially when compared with Washington. The Hurricanes, with an average age of 26, entered the series with a less than 400 games of playoff experience; the Capitals, average age of 28, had nearly 1,300 games. Ten Carolina players had no playoff experience before last week, including the 18-year-old forward Andrei Svechnikov, who scored the Hurricanes' goals in a 4-2 loss in Game 1.

No matter what happens, Sebastian Aho, the top-line center from Finland who led the team with 30 goals, said the team was in the right hands with Brind'Amour.

"Even if we wouldn't have made the playoffs this year, he would have been the right choice," Aho, 21, said.

Brind'Amour, 48, was a tenacious two-way center: He had five 30-goal seasons, won the Selke Trophy twice as the league's best defensive forward and got into 27 fights when fighting was popular. He was, and still is, a workout fiend, known as Rod the Bod.

"You see him in the gym, working out every day still," goalie Curtis McElhinney said. "He's in phenomenal shape. There is an intensity, but there's also a calmness, maybe from being a parent or just being around some of the younger guys now. He doesn't seem to get too fired up too often. It takes a lot to get Roddy upset."

Brind'Amour, whose sweater number, 17, was retired by the Hurricanes, was traded to Carolina from the Philadelphia Flyers in 2000. He joined the Hurricanes' front office after he retired as a player at age 39 in 2010, then became an assistant a year later.

The Hurricanes were sold to the Dallas billionaire Tom Dundon during the 2017-18 season, with Don Waddell, a veteran N.H.L. executive, being named as the club's president and general manager in May. Waddell said Brind'Amour's experience with the franchise was an asset.

"If Rod were coming from another organization, it would have been really tough," Waddell said, adding: "But he was ready for this challenge. He knew what it would take. He really believed in what he was doing, and what he was doing was the right way."

Before he took the job, Brind'Amour sought advice from Justin Williams, the Hurricanes' 37-year-old captain, who had been a teammate of Brind'Amour's.

Williams played down the importance of the phone call.

"Sometimes, you just need a kick in the pants, say: 'Go get it. You can do it. Challenge yourself. I believe in you. I think you can do it,'" he said. "Life is all about opportunities, seizing opportunities for yourself. He wanted the chance, and he's done a fabulous job."

The Hurricanes scuffled for victories in Brind'Amour's first three months as coach. The low point probably came Dec. 29, when Carolina went 0 for 5 on the power play and were beaten by the Devils rookie Mackenzie Blackwood, 2-0.

It was the Hurricanes' fourth loss in five games and sank their record to 15-17-5 — 13th in the 16-team Eastern Conference, 10 points out of a playoff berth. Brind'Amour made a soft plea in interviews for his top-line players to score more, but he stuck with his master plan.

"The message was the same as it was before," said Williams, a three-time Cup winner. "We'd gotten a lot of kicks in the teeth, it felt like. We'd played a lot of good games and had not come up with any points. That was frustrating to keep the same message. But he kept the same message. We certainly didn't look at the standings for a couple weeks. Play a few games, look at it, play a few more, look at it, see where we ended up."

They beat the Flyers in their next game to begin a five-game winning streak. From Jan. 1 to the end of the regular season, Carolina had 30 victories and 62 points, more than any



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N.H.L. team except the Tampa Bay Lightning, which finished with the league's best record.

Carolina center Jordan Staal, who helped the Pittsburgh Penguins win the Cup in 2009, said the Hurricanes "created a playoff-type atmosphere early."

"We knew that if we'd slip in a few games here and there, you start sliding down the string, and it's not easy to make up at the end of the year," he added. "We've been in that situation a long time in Carolina. We knew we'd have to string together some wins. Started playoffs in January, and the boys took it from there."

The players were also responsible for the zany Storm Surge victory celebrations at home games, for which the Hurricanes became known for this season. The choreographed routines included the limbo, a walk-off home run and even an appearance by Evander Holyfield.

Storm Surge meets #MarchMadness. □

(That vert though. □) [pic.twitter.com/IOKRXQRXz4](https://pic.twitter.com/IOKRXQRXz4)

— Sportsnet (@Sportsnet) March 24, 2019

Come for the @NHL action, stay for the postgame Duck Duck Goose □ [pic.twitter.com/Kellvnp6Tq](https://pic.twitter.com/Kellvnp6Tq)

— Carolina Hurricanes (@NHLCanes) February 2, 2019

The Storm Surge celebrations are being shelved, at least for now. Brind'Amour said he would be focusing on the things the Hurricanes needed to do to beat Washington, which beat Carolina in all four regular-season games this year.

It does not sound as if he will need to fine-tune his team's attitude. Waddell said Brind'Amour has convinced the Hurricanes they can win.

"Any coach would love this group," Brind'Amour said. "You've got the leadership. You've got the younger guys who are just coming in. I can't even think of a negative. That's the thing. That's hard to do in today's climate. You can always find a teammate you're not happy about. That doesn't happen here. There's been a buy-in all around. That makes it easier on a first-year coach."

## THE NEWS & OBSERVER

### Of all the playoff series in all the world, Brooks Orpik had to walk into this one

By Luke DeCock

Erik Cole had turned off Game 2 and was on his way to a pre-prom party for his daughter Saturday night when the overtime game-winner was scored. He got out of the car, pulled out his phone to check the score and felt the name like a punch in the gut.

The Carolina Hurricanes finally get back in the postseason for the first time since Cole was still playing here, and of all the playoff series in all the towns in all the world, Brooks Orpik had to walk into this one.

"The thought that went through my head was there couldn't have been a worse guy to score a goal against the Canes in the playoffs," Cole said Sunday.

Orpik's timing was exceptional, scoring 108 seconds into overtime to give the Washington Capitals a 4-3 win and 2-0 series lead over the Carolina Hurricanes, and while he would have been an unpopular figure at PNC Arena for Game 3 on Monday anyway, the goal certainly won't dull that edge.

Thirteen years after Orpik, then playing for the Pittsburgh Penguins, broke Cole's neck with a check from behind into the boards, resentment still lingers. Not merely with Cole, whose career was cut prematurely short, but Hurricanes fans who feared their team's chances at the Stanley Cup had been severely damaged when Cole – in the middle of what would end up being the best season of his career – was injured.

Orpik got a three-game suspension. Cole got a lifetime of cervical problems and no apology.

Fate would intervene with the trade-deadline arrival of Mark Recchi from those same Penguins to fill the gap, before Cole's unlikely return in Game 6 of the Stanley Cup finals after enough CT scans to make him glow in the dark, but what happened on that March night in Pittsburgh's old Civic Arena has never been forgotten.

And there is Orpik, all these years later, not only on the ice against the Hurricanes in the playoffs, but dealing them a loss in a game that they twice came from behind to tie the score.

"No, I didn't even think about that," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "That's a tough one. A lot of things went wrong on that play."

Too true: Anyone could have scored from that position, Teuvo Teravainen scrambling at the end of a long shift having given up his stick to Brett Pesce, Petr Mrazek partially obstructed by Pesce who was worried about Evgeny Kuznetsov behind the net, Orpik hopping off the bench and jumping straight into the play to one-time Kuznetsov's pass over Mrazek's left shoulder.

Anyone could have scored. And from the Hurricanes' perspective, and Cole's in particular, anyone would have been better than Orpik, who is as beloved in the Capitals' dressing room as he is hated here.



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All these years later, Cole – who now serves as a Hurricanes ambassador – still can't shake Orpik. As he tells it, he took his son to a hockey tournament in Buffalo this winter, and while Cole was at dinner with his parents, some of the other hockey dads and players wound up in an elevator with a man who identified himself as Orpik's father. The man noted he wasn't very popular in North Carolina because his son broke Cole's neck – with Cole's son in the elevator.

Cole heard about that unpleasant moment second-hand, much like Orpik's goal Saturday, but he remains frustrated that Orpik is still playing at age 38 while Cole spent most of his career fighting through chronic neck problems and, objectively speaking, was never the same dominant power winger he was in the fall of 2005, tormenting defensemen with his electric bull rushes down the right wing.

## Hurricanes return home, counting on crowd

By Luke DeCock

There were fans at RDU International Airport when the Carolina Hurricanes landed Saturday night after their Game 2 loss to the Washington Capitals, harkening back to playoffs past here. How much it will harken back remains to be seen Monday night, but expectations are certainly high after the 10-year gap.

"I'm expecting a loud building," said Hurricanes center Jordan Staal, who played in the last playoff game in PNC Arena as a member of the Pittsburgh Penguins in 2009. "As a road team then, it was one of the loudest buildings I played in. It's going to be really exciting."

Returning home for Game 3 down 2-0 to the Capitals, Hurricanes general manager Don Waddell said the team expects a sellout Monday night. Waddell said the NHL released 700 tickets back to the team Sunday morning, many of them singles, and more than 200 sold in the first two hours. Whether it's officially a sellout or not, hopes remain high for the atmosphere inside and outside the building for which this team was once known.

"It's loud everywhere," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "Maybe just because it's your crowd, but it does feel a lot louder than most places when it's rocking in here. I don't know it really has an effect one way or another. I don't think Washington is too worried about it."

"We do it right on that thing. They know how to have a good time. They know how to enjoy the game. They certainly don't sit on their hands and watch."

ALL CLEAR The NHL's Department of Player Safety decided not impose any supplementary discipline on Micheal Ferland, Dougie Hamilton or Alex Ovechkin for their penalized head hits in Game 2, Hurricanes general manager Don Waddell said Sunday.

Brind'Amour was still unhappy with the match penalty on Ferland a day later.

"They huddle over there, as a four-man group, and that means somebody said it was a for-sure hit to the head, to make that call," Brind'Amour said. "That's my problem. If

"I wouldn't call it bad blood," Cole said. "I have zero respect for the guy. The fact that he's still playing doesn't help that at all. The fact I had to shut it down because of the degeneration in my neck based off the fracture. I just don't care for him. At all."

Cole, now four years removed from the NHL, will be in attendance at PNC on Monday. He'll watch as two of his teammates on the ice that night in March 2006, then-captain-now-coach Brind'Amour and current Hurricanes captain Justin Williams, will go up against Orpik and the Capitals with an eye to getting back in the series, not settling ancient scores.

But Orpik, like Scott Stevens once was, has been reflexively harassed at PNC for more than a decade, and that wouldn't have changed Monday whether he scored Saturday or not. Sometimes the past runs deeper than the present.

you're sure, then I'm OK with it, but when I look and see that it's not, somebody's lying. ... It's not on the refs for me. It's too hard. I saw it live and said, 'Ooh, that's tough,' because you see the head snap back. That's the point where the NHL needs to help these guys out. It's too hard. ...

"The problem is when four of them get together and say this is what happened, when it didn't, that's when I have a problem. What should happen is, if you don't know, it should be a two-minute penalty and you let player safety figure it out later, you don't make it a five-minute penalty and kick a guy out."

TOP SHELF While it's probably impossible for anyone to match up offensively with the Capitals' high-powered top line of Ovechkin, Nicklas Backstrom and Tom Wilson, the Hurricanes' top two lines have been badly outplayed in the series, even with Sebastian Aho breaking his drought Saturday.

Backstrom, the playoffs' leading scorer with three goals and one assist going into Sunday's games, is single-handedly outscoring all of Carolina's top-six forwards, who have combined for two goals, one assist and a garish minus-15 even as the Hurricanes have had a substantial five-on-five possession edge.

"There's a lot of details in the game we can do better," Aho said. "It all starts with when you defense well, that's how you get your own chances, too."

Staal has a power-play goal, Aho has a goal and Justin Williams has an assist. Nino Niederreiter, Teuvo Teravainen and Ferland are scoreless. If it weren't for Lucas Wallmark and Andrei Svechnikov, the Hurricanes would be in even bigger trouble.

"They need to be better. That's for sure. That's obvious," Brind'Amour said. "Whether they were scoring or not, I'd be saying that because they're not getting the chances, they're not creating enough and they're giving up too much. That's not a good recipe. Those guys have found a way all year to figure it out, whether we change the lines or do something different to spark something, we'll see. Our top guys, they got to show up, or it's going to be real, real tough."



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## Five points for the Hurricanes going into Game 3

By Luke DeCock

Canes gear up for Game 3 against Caps

1. **THE MATCH GAME** You'd normally look at coming home for Game 3 as a chance to get the matchups you want, and that as a key to getting the Hurricanes' struggling stars going, but the Capitals loaded up with John Carlson and their top defensemen so heavy at home that there doesn't figure to be much of a change on the road. Rod Brind'Amour isn't a huge matchup coach anyway, but he would be advised to look for any little advantage he can get with last change.

2. **MRAZEK MAN** By the underlying analytics – shot quality faced and goals allowed – Petr Mrazek is the worst goalie in the playoffs. Anecdotally, he's been more than sharp and timely enough since Nicklas Backstrom's long-distance goal to open the series, the Brooks Orpik winner in Game 2 coming at the end of a long series of Carolina breakdowns. Brind'Amour seemed to leave the door open at least a hair to giving Curtis McElhinney a shot, since McElhinney has often exerted a calming presence on a defense that has been a

little scumbly, but that may be more likely if the Hurricanes are facing a 3-0 deficit in Game 4.

3. **START ON TIME** The old Bill Peters line about "starting on time" applies here; going down two or three goals to the Capitals in the first period is a recipe for disaster. The issue was special teams in Game 1, five-on-five (and Justin Faulk) in Game 2. Another slow start could effectively end the series.

4. **FLIP THE POWER** The so-called second power-play unit with Dougie Hamilton and Jaccob Slavin has had better chances than Faulk's ponderous first unit. It's long past time for the second group to become the first group, at least until those forwards show a little more initiative.

5. **STAY THE COURSE** The Hurricanes have a 102-62 shot-attempt advantage at five-on-five through two games. If they can play the special teams to a draw and get a few big saves, they're already doing most of what they need to do at even strength to compete in this series. If they can take it back to Washington tied 2-2, all the pressure will be on the Capitals.

## Canes need Game 2 goal to spark Sebastian Aho

By Joe Giglio

Wins matter more to Sebastian Aho than his stats.

If the Carolina Hurricanes can win without their All-Star center scoring, he's fine with that. But if they can't, and Aho's production has dipped in the past few weeks, then the 21-year-old center understands the correlation.

"That's kind of a tricky one," Aho said. "When you win, that's all that matters. When you lose, you have to look in the mirror and see where you can be better."

Aho is taking a long look after the Hurricanes dropped the first two games of their first round Stanley Cup playoff series with the Washington Capitals. The Canes return home on Monday night looking to win Game 3, their first playoff home game since 2009.

Aho, the team's top scorer during the regular season with career-highs in goals (30), assists (53) and points (83), is hoping his goal in Saturday's Game 2 loss will jump-start his production and the team. It was his first goal since March 9, a span of 16 games.

"I hope so," Aho said. "I think it's good for the confidence but it's all about wins this time of the year and we haven't won. We have to find a way to get those wins."

The Canes were winning down the stretch of the regular season without Aho scoring. He didn't score a goal in the final 14 games of the regular (although he did have six assists) and the Canes went 9-5-0 to get into the playoffs.

It has been a collective effort all season for the Canes, rather than relying on one star, but the flashy but slightly undersized Finn (6-foot-0, 176 pounds) has been the team's best player. In the playoffs, that hasn't been the case.

As the old saying goes, your best players have to be your best players. That has been the case for Washington. Star center Alex Ovechkin, the NHL's leading goal-scorer during the season, and his top linemate, Nicklas Backstrom, have shone in the first two games. Ovechkin has a goal and two assists while Backstrom has three goals and an assist.

Aho says he doesn't look at it as a personal matchup between him and Ovechkin but he understands what Washington's top line has been able to do through two games.

"You can't really think about it too much but, for sure, their top line has been better than ours," Aho said.

Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour noted his team's top two lines, not just Aho's, needs to do more to get back in the series.

"They need to be better, that's for sure," Brind'Amour said of the top two lines. "That's obvious. Whether they were scoring or not, I'd be saying that because they're not getting the chances, they're creating enough and they're giving up too much. So that's not a good recipe."

Aho spent much of the season with Teuvo Teravainen on his wing. Brind'Amour broke up Finns down the stretch to try to get more scoring balance. Teravainen was second on the team with 76 points during the regular season and led the Canes with 55 assists.

Aho has been playing with captain Justin Williams on his right wing and Nino Niederreiter on the left side while Teravainen has been on a line with Jordan Staal and Micheal Ferland.

Brind'Amour has hinted at making some combination changes — Teravainen was back on Aho's wing in warmups



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Saturday, but only in warmups — but remains confident in his top six forwards.

“Those guys have found a way all year to figure it out,” Brind’Amour said. “Whether we change the lines or whether

we do something a little different to spark something, we’ll see. Our top guys, obviously, they’ve got to show up. Otherwise, it’s going to be real, real tough.”

## Canes need to use home ice to their advantage against Caps

By Chip Alexander

The Carolina Hurricanes and Washington Capitals have already played a six-game series this season, in a sense.

The Caps won the first four games, all in the regular season. The Caps have won the first two games of their Stanley Cup playoff series.

The Eastern Conference first-round series, after the first two games at Capital One Arena in Washington, now changes sites. For the first time since 2009, the Canes will have a playoff game at home, at PNC Arena, one that should create both a bit of nostalgia and a frenzied atmosphere Monday for Game 3.

“It’s going to be loud and it’s going to be emotional,” Canes center Sebastian Aho said Sunday. “I can’t wait to see what it’s going to be like.”

The problem for the Canes: the venue is changing but not the opponent. They still have to find a way to beat a deep, physical, experienced and cocksure Caps team that was the 2018 Stanley Cup champion, that has won all six games against Carolina this season and done it in different ways. If that doesn’t happen in the next two games, the Canes’ season will be over.

Are the Caps just too much of a matchup problem for the Canes?

“I think they’re a bad matchup for everybody,” Canes coach Rod Brind’Amour said Sunday. “They’re the best. They’re the champs.

“They’ve been tight games. I think every game we’ve been involved and certainly had a chance to win. A couple I thought we were the better team. But not last game. The last game they were definitely the better team.”

The Caps won Game 2 on Saturday 4-3 by being better at even strength, getting goals from forwards Nicklas Backstrom, T.J. Oshie and Tom Wilson, then an overtime winner from perhaps the most unlikely player on the ice, defenseman Brooks Orpik.

In Game 1, the Caps scored twice on the power play in the first period in jumping to a 3-0 lead and won 4-2. Shifting their emphasis to improved play at even strength in Game 2, the Caps hurt the Canes off the rush and in transition. The Caps have not trailed in either of the two games.

“Getting behind is tough,” Brind’Amour said. “When you’re chasing it you start getting away from what you want to do and that just doesn’t work very well.

“I give our guys a lot of credit. They keep digging in. We keep finding ways to get into these games. We haven’t played our best and had a chance to win. I would love to see our best and see what happens.”

The Canes clawed back into Game 1 behind a pair of even-strength goals from rookie forward Andrei Svechnikov. In Game 2, fourth-line center Lucas Wallmark scored for the Canes as did Aho, who ended a frustrating streak of 15 games with a goal with a second-period score as the Canes’ top line, outplayed much of the game, had its best shift.

The Canes had the better end of special teams play Saturday. They killed off a five-minute match penalty against forward Micheal Ferland -- a call that Brind’Amour still had a hard time discussing Sunday -- and tied the score 3-3 late in regulation on Jordan Staal’s power-play goal off a redirection off a Dougie Hamilton shot.

“I don’t think we played our best game and we had a chance to win,” Aho said. “We were in OT and in OT anything can happen.”

What happened in overtime was Canes defenseman Brett Pesce losing his stick in the neutral zone trying to defend against Caps forward Evgeny Kuznetsov. Canes forward Teuvo Teravainen finally passed his stick to Pesce in the Canes zone, only to find himself facing Orpik as Orpik took a tape-to-tape pass from Kuznetsov in the left circle.

Teravainen tried to block the shot but Orpik, who had two goals in the regular season and 18 in 1,035 career games, went top shelf on goalie Petr Mrazek for the winner.

“That’s a tough one,” Brind’Amour said of the sequence. “A lot of things went wrong on that play. That’s usually how goals go in. One thing leads to another, leads to another and then it’s in the net. Tough lesson but it’s another one.”

But it’s on to Game 3 and some Canes fans may be in the PNC Arena parking lots at first light Monday, ready to party. A lot will be firing up grills and pulling out favorite beverages to tailgate -- a Carolina playoff tradition -- and the arena should be rocking come game time.

“Our hope is we give our best and see how it shakes out,” Brind’Amour said. “The fans deserve something to cheer about and I hope we give them that. We hope to give them a lot to be excited about.”



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## Mrazek is a bright spot in the Canes playoff start

By Mandy Mitchell, WRAL reporter

If you are looking for a bright spot in the Canes first two playoff games, it's hard not to look to goal tender Peter Mrazek.

He's had some memorable saves including a save that likely secured overtime in game two.

"I think it's just a reflex save, I didn't see. I didn't see it coming just got in my glove," Mrazek said.

Mrazek's magic came after he took a slap shot to the head knocking his mask off. He was shaken up and needed a few minutes to regroup.

"It did catch me a little bit on the chin there. When I fell I didn't have the mask on, and I hit the ice pretty hard with my face, so I think that was the worst of the shot," Mrazek said.

He didn't miss any time in net and was able to give his teammates confidence as they made a comeback to force overtime.

"Yeah. He's been good for the whole year," said forward Sebastian Aho. "He's been making those big saves for us for the entire year, and that's what you need sometimes."

"He made quite a few big saves for us just to get us to where we would have a chance to win," said head coach Rod Brind'Amour.

The Hurricanes have had a chance to win in both games of this series, and they are hoping a home crowd could be the difference in game three.

If they can win at least one game at the PNC arena, they will be back D.C. on Saturday.



## Game 3 Preview: Capitals vs. Hurricanes

Canes in search of first win as series shifts to Raleigh

by Michael Smith

The Carolina Hurricanes come back to Raleigh in search of their first victory against the Washington Capitals in their first-round series.

The Capitals took a 2-0 lead in this best-of-seven slate with a 4-2 win in Game 1 and a 4-3 overtime victory in Game 2.

"We're right there," Jordan Staal said. "It's been tight games and close games. There's just a few little things, and that's the difference."

"How do we reverse it? We just have to play better and play our game," head coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "That will give us a chance, for sure."

Lessons from Game 2

Though the result was the same, Game 2 was the opposite of Game 1 in some ways. In Game 1, the Hurricanes dominated 5-on-5 play, especially early, but lost the special teams battle, which included surrendering a pair of power-play goals in the first period. In Game 2, the Capitals came out flying to take a 2-0 lead in the first 10 minutes, but the

Hurricanes won the special teams battle, scoring a power-play goal to tie the game late in regulation and killing off all four of the Capitals' chances on the man advantage.

"I just think we weren't as dialed in as we needed to be, and I think they, on the other hand, knew they needed to start better," Brind'Amour said of Saturday's matinee. "It just felt like we were chasing it and killing penalties. Somehow after the second period we were tied, which kind of felt weird. [Monday] is a new game."

A blend of the Hurricanes' 5-on-5 play from Game 1 with their special teams effort in Game 2 will give them a chance to score their first victory of the series in Game 3.

"You just try to believe that when we play our best, we have a better chance to win," Sebastian Aho said.

One Game at a Time

Not unlike their approach to the entire last half of the season, the Hurricanes have to take this series one game at a time. A win in Game 3 could shift the tides, but the Canes can't look beyond that. Not yet.

"I'd love to see our best and then see what happens," Brind'Amour said.



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In order for the Hurricanes to be successful, they need their top players to step up more offensively. Aho and Staal each scored a goal in Game 2, but a handful of offensive difference-makers remain off the scoresheet through the first two games of the series.

"We've got to be better offensively. We haven't done what we wanted to. Between myself and Turbo and Ferls, we'd like to be better offensively," Staal said. "You've got to work for your chances against that team. We'll do our best."

"They're not getting the chances or creating enough, and they're giving up too much. That's not a good recipe. Those guys have found a way all year to figure it out," Brind'Amour said. "Our top guys have to show up. Otherwise, it's going to be real, real tough."

## Make Some Noise

A group of cheering, chanting fans greeted the Hurricanes at Raleigh-Durham International Airport on Saturday night, a precursor of what's to come in Games 3 and 4.

"It gives you a little extra energy there to see that people care about us and are behind us," Aho said. "It definitely feels nice."

"Really cool. Our fans have been great," Staal said. "We're excited to play in front of them and hopefully give them a good show."

Playoff hockey will make its return to PNC Arena for the first time in 10 years, and the atmosphere is guaranteed to be thunderous.

"I'm expecting a loud building," Staal said. "I'm excited about it, and I know everybody in that room is excited to get out there and play in front of a rowdy crowd. Hopefully we can use that to our advantage."

"My hope is that we give our best. That's it. Then we see how it shakes out," Brind'Amour said. "Fans deserve something to be cheering about, so I hope we give them that."

## AT THE RINK

It's about time we see some playoff hockey in Raleigh, right? Make your voices heard. Bring the noise. It should be a blast.

There's a lot going on for Game 3. Here's a good rundown of it, and full details are also available.

Giveaway alert! "Take Warning" rally towels are waiting for you on your seat. You know what to do with it. (If not, ask Petey Pablo.)

## WATCH, LISTEN & STREAM

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## Playoff Notebook: Canes Hope to Turn Series Around in Raleigh

Canes expecting rowdy home crowd for Games 3 and 4

by Michael Smith

The Carolina Hurricanes went to our nation's capital in search of at least a split in the opening two games of their first-round series with the Washington Capitals.

With the best-of-seven slate now shifting to North Carolina's capital city, the Hurricanes face a 2-0 series deficit against the defending Stanley Cup champions.

The Hurricanes haven't been overmatched, though. They don't look out of place and even when they haven't been at their best, they've given themselves a fighting chance.

"At the end of the day, the guys are giving everything they have, and that's really all you can ask from them," head coach Rod Brind'Amour said after the Canes dropped a 4-3 decision in overtime in Game 2.

The first round is far from over, and a win for the Canes at home in Game 3 could alter the complexion of the series.

The mindset is no different than it's been for the last four-plus months: focus on improving and getting the win, one game at a time.

"How do we reverse it? We just have to play better and play our game. That will give us a chance, for sure," Brind'Amour said on Sunday. "I'd love to see our best and then see what happens."

Trust the Process

Though the results were ultimately the same, there were some key differences from Game 1 to Game 2.

The Hurricanes opened the series on Thursday with a dominant first 10 minutes, and their command of the 5-on-5 game allowed them to mount a third-period comeback. Their ailment in Game 1 was special teams, as they surrendered two power-play goals in the first period and couldn't convert on a pair of power plays in the latter half of the third period with a chance to tie the game.

The Capitals were the better team in the first 10 minutes of Game 2, and they established a quick 2-0 lead with improved 5-on-5 play. The Hurricanes won the special teams battle on paper, killing all four of the Caps' man advantage opportunities - including 4:09 worth of a major penalty - and scoring a power-play goal to tie the game with five minutes left in regulation.

"Each game was different in ways that we could have been better," Jordan Staal said. "All in all, we've got to find ways to play better defensively and make sure we don't give them any easy goals. We're fighting to get goals, and they seem to be getting a few easy ones and a few too many good chances."

If the Canes can meld those divergent 5-on-5 and special teams results, they'll set themselves up to grab their first victory in this series.

"It's all about wins this time of year," Sebastian Aho said. "We haven't won, so we just have to find a way."



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Brind'Amour asked the Canes to trust the process in late December when the team was a distant playoff afterthought at 15-17-5. It worked. The team stayed true to itself and morphed into one of the NHL's best teams in the new year.

It's time to trust the process once again, even if the early returns haven't been present.

"I don't think we played our best game, and we had a chance to win that game," Aho said of Game 2. "You just try to believe that when we play our best, we have a better chance to win."

## The Best From the Best

Lucas Wallmark (1g, 2a) and Andrei Svechnikov (2g, 1a) are the Hurricanes' leaders in points through the first two games of this series.

That's not necessarily a bad thing. Svechnikov perhaps possesses the most raw talent on the Canes' roster. He's a star in the making.

"Eventually he'll be an absolute force out there," Williams said after the rookie's two-goal performance in Game 1. "He's a really good player already, but he's got potential to be a star. You can just tell by his release and competitiveness that he's going to get there."

Wallmark, though more sparingly used than Svechnikov, has contributed where it counts. He got the Canes on the board in Game 2 with a redirection goal in the slot. He also won a game high 13 of 15 faceoffs, helping the Canes control possession in the dot.

"If you play the game right, generally you're going to have things go your way," Brind'Amour said. "He's been pretty solid all year. That's been one of his assets. He does it right."

This statistical leaderboard becomes troublesome, though, when the Canes' best offensive players have been limited in the first two games of the series.

Aho tallied his first goal since March 9 to even the score in the second period of Game 2, with the primary assist to Justin Williams, but that's been all that first line plus Nino Niederreiter has been able to generate. Staal notched a crucial power-play goal in Game 2, but his linemates Teuvo Teravainen and Micheal Ferland (who didn't play in most of Game 2) has been held off the scoresheet entirely.

"There are a lot of details in the game we can do better," Aho said. "It all starts with when you defend well, that's when you get your own chances, too."

"We've got to be better offensively. We haven't done what we wanted to. Between myself and Turbo and Ferls, we'd like to be better offensively," Staal said. "You've got to work for your chances against that team. We'll do our best."

"They're not getting the chances or creating enough, and they're giving up too much. That's not a good recipe. Those guys have found a way all year to figure it out," Brind'Amour said. "Our top guys have to show up. Otherwise, it's going to be real, real tough."

## Play On

All is quiet on the supplementary discipline front for Ferland, Dougie Hamilton and Alex Ovechkin, all three of whom were penalized to varying degrees for hits in Game 2.

Ferland's penalty was the steepest, while his hit might have been the least egregious of the three.

In the second period, the puck rolled off Nic Dowd's stick at the right blue line. Ferland had Dowd lined up and caught him with what was deemed an illegal check to the head, and as a result, Ferland was assessed a match penalty.

The hit, though, wasn't a check to the head. The primary point of contact was Ferland's midsection with Dowd's shoulder. Dowd's head then planted on Ferland's back as a result of the collision.

"I saw him reach for the puck. I could have finished with my shoulder, but I didn't," Ferland said. "I came and hit him with my butt. I thought it was a clean hit, and I don't agree with the call."

Brind'Amour didn't agree with the call either, and he let referee Steve Kozari know it. The point of emphasis?

"When four of them get together and say this is what happened when it didn't, that's when I have a problem," Brind'Amour explained. "What should happen is, if you don't know, it's a two-minute penalty and let player safety figure it out later. You don't make a five-minute penalty and kick the guy out. That's a double whammy."

The Department of Player Safety seems to agree. It won't come calling for Ferland. The same goes for Hamilton, who was penalized for elbowing Evgeny Kuznetsov in the second period, and Ovechkin, who was also penalized for elbowing (that was more of a shoulder and probably should have been a roughing minor, but, hey) Brock McGinn in the first period.

"That one's actually worse because it actually is a hit to the head," Brind'Amour said of Ovechkin's hit. "Our sport is getting too fast to officiate. It's really hard. I feel for those guys."

This series might only get more physical as inches become tougher to earn.

"That's playoff hockey. I don't think you watch any game in this first round that hasn't been chippy and physical," Staal said. "We're not expecting anything less. If anything, I think guys have been enjoying the intensity."

## Home Ice Advantage

Awaiting the Hurricanes at Raleigh-Durham International Airport on Saturday was a passionate group of Canes fans to welcome the team home. The fans cheered and chanted as cars drove by, players waving and honking in appreciation.

"Really cool. Our fans have been great," Staal said. "We're excited to play in front of them and hopefully give them a good show."

"It gives you a little extra energy there to see that people care about us and are behind us," Aho said. "It definitely feels nice."

Imagine the pent-up emotions of a fanbase that has been yearning for a playoff game for 10 long years. That fervor will



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be cathartically released in Games 3 and 4, and the Hurricanes can't wait to experience it.

"I'm expecting a loud building," Staal said. "I'm excited about it, and I know everybody in that room is excited to get out there and play in front of a rowdy crowd. Hopefully we can use that to our advantage."

"They know how to have a good time and enjoy the game. They certainly don't sit on their hands and watch. We hope to give them a lot to be excited about," Brind'Amour said. "My hope is that we give our best. That's it. Then we see how it shakes out. Fans deserve something to be cheering about, so I hope we give them that."



## Capitals ready for resilient Hurricanes in Game 3

Prepared for Carolina's speedy, aggressive style in first home playoff game since 2009

by Harvey Valentine / NHL.com Correspondent

ARLINGTON, Va. -- The Washington Capitals are expecting more of the same speedy, aggressive style of play from the Carolina Hurricanes in Game 3 of the Eastern Conference First Round at PNC Arena on Monday (7 p.m. ET; CNBC, SN, TVAS2, NBCSWA).

Washington leads the best-of-7 series 2-0 after a 4-3 overtime win at Capital One Arena on Saturday but has had to survive a Carolina comeback in each game.

"Absolutely no quit in that team," coach Todd Reirden said Sunday before the Capitals flew to Raleigh, North Carolina. "Hardworking, a lot of speed from behind when we have the puck. They do a really good job in terms of being aggressive and taking away time and space from us."

The Capitals want to make the Hurricanes play from behind again. They led 3-0 after the first period in Game 1, a 4-2 victory, and scored the first two goals in Game 2.

"Our starts have been really important, and there's going to be momentum swings," Reirden said. "Sometimes it's going to end up with them converting and other times not, but they're not going away."

He's also expecting Carolina to get a boost from its fans. It's the first home playoff game for the Hurricanes since Game 4 of the 2009 Eastern Conference Final.

"I expect them to be even better against us in Game 3," Reirden said. "They can create a little bit more offensively against us than they have so far, and I think that their crowd is going to give them a big boost."

One area Reirden said he would like to see improve is the power play. The Capitals were 2-for-4 in Game 1 but went 0-for-4 in Game 2.

"They've made a little bit of an adjustment in terms of how they're playing us up higher," he said. "I think we're still getting some opportunities. We've missed the net a few more times than we would have liked in some spots."

"[In] Game 1 we were really sharp and that'll be a key for us to making some adjustments in our room to stay unpredictable and be able to convert when we get into Raleigh. We got away with not winning that special-teams game [Saturday], but that doesn't happen very often."

If the Capitals can win Games 3 and 4, they'll sweep a best-of-7 series for the first time since entering the NHL in 1974.

Alex Ovechkin, the NHL's leading goal-scorer during the regular season, had two assists in Game 2. The first came when he fed center Nicklas Backstrom, his longtime linemate, for a tip-in to open the scoring.

"The one thing maybe opponents and us players, [on] the same team, [are] not aware of him because when he lines up like that, a lot of people think he's going to shoot because he's got a terrific shot," Backstrom said.

In a role reversal, Backstrom, who led the Capitals with 52 assists during the regular season, leads Washington with three goals in the first two games; Ovechkin, known more as a scorer than a passer, has one goal and two assists.

"When you play with [Evgeny Kuznetsov] or [Backstrom], you know, you learn a lot," Ovechkin said of his passing. "Right now, [Backstrom] is a scoring machine. You know, I'm Backstrom."



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## Hurricanes expect boost from raucous home crowd in Game 3

After losing twice to Capitals on road, set to play first playoff game at PNC Arena in 10 years

by Tom Gulitti

RALEIGH, N.C. -- The Carolina Hurricanes were tired and their spirits were understandably flagging when they arrived at Raleigh-Durham International Airport late Saturday night following a 4-3 overtime loss to the Washington Capitals in Game 2 of the Eastern Conference First Round.

After losing the first two games of the best-of-7 series in Washington, they were hoping for a lift emotionally returning home for Game 3 at PNC Arena on Monday (7 p.m. ET; CNBC, SN, TVAS2, FS-CR, NBCSWA).

One came sooner than they expected.

Waiting to welcome them as they exited the airport was a group of diehard fans, standing by the side of the road, waving Hurricanes flags and cheering.

"It gives you a little extra energy there when you see the people care about us and they're behind us," Carolina center Sebastian Aho said Sunday. "So it definitely feels nice."

Hurricanes fans have been waiting almost 10 years to be part of the Stanley Cup Playoffs again. Carolina's last playoff home game was May 26, 2009, a 4-1 loss to the Pittsburgh Penguins in Game 4 of the Eastern Conference Final.

Center Jordan Staal played for the Penguins in that game. He and captain Justin Williams, a member of Carolina's Stanley Cup-winning team in 2006, are the only current Hurricanes players who have experienced the atmosphere of a playoff game here.

"I think as a road team then, it was one of the loudest buildings I've played in," Staal said. "It's going to be really exciting. I'm excited about it. I know everyone in that room is really excited to get out there and play in front of a rowdy crowd and hopefully use that to our advantage."

This area is known for its college basketball, and playoff hockey here feels a little like that with the fans doing coordinated chants throughout the game.

"I'm excited," Aho said. "I can't wait to see that, what it's going to be like tomorrow, and I'm sure our fans will be great."

There's a different feel arriving at PNC Arena for a playoff game and seeing the fans tailgating and playing street hockey in the surrounding parking lots. Some will arrive before the Hurricanes players head home following their morning skate.

"That's what is unique to this place," Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour said, "We do it right on that thing. They know how to have a good time. They know how to enjoy the game. They certainly don't sit on their hands and watch."

Brind'Amour knows all about it from his 10 seasons playing for the Hurricanes. He was captain of their Cup-winning team and was still with them in 2009. That season, they upset the

New Jersey Devils and the Boston Bruins in seven-game series in the first two rounds before being swept by the Penguins, who went on to win the Cup.

No one thought then it would take a decade for the Hurricanes to get back to this point, but their push to qualify for the playoffs over the final few weeks of the regular season brought back memories of those days. It culminated with a raucous crowd of 17,645 celebrating Carolina clinching a postseason berth with a 3-1 home win against the Devils on April 4.

"It's exciting in here," Brind'Amour said. "It's loud everywhere. Maybe it's because it's your crowd that you think it, but it does feel a lot louder than most places when it's rocking in here."

Owner Tom Dundon heard about the playoff excitement and how much the market embraced the Hurricanes during their glory years after taking over the team Jan. 11, 2018. Now, he's seeing it grow again firsthand.

Carolina averaged 15,481 in attendance over its final 23 home games compared to 12,842 in the first 18. Dundon isn't satisfied with that but views it as a good start that coincides with the Hurricanes' success on the ice.

"I think that's been the hope for everyone," Dundon said last week. "When I first bought the team, that was my point. You can't be mad at the fans if you don't give them something to care about. So, hopefully, we're giving them something to care about."

The Hurricanes would love to give them more, beginning with a win in Game 3.

So far, the series has been a continuation of the frustration they felt in losing all four of their regular season games against the Capitals. They've given the defending Stanley Cup champions fits at times, but haven't figured out how to defeat them, yet.

"They've been tight games," Brind'Amour said. "I think every game we've been involved and certainly had a chance to win. ... Last game, they were definitely the better team. So, how do we reverse it? We've just got to play better. We've got to play our game and that gives us a chance, for sure."

It would help if the Hurricanes could play with a lead. They fell behind 3-0 in the first period of Game 1 on Thursday and battled back to make it 3-2 before losing 4-2. Then, they fell behind 2-0 in the first period of Game 2 and had to chase the game again, tying it at 2-2 and 3-3, but never getting ahead.

Maybe getting some additional energy from their fans will help them get off to a better start Monday.

"I don't know that it really has an effect one way or another," Brind'Amour said. "I don't think Washington's too worried about it. They've played in a lot of these big games. But you would hope it maybe gives your guys that little extra throughout the game."



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## 'No easy shifts' as first-round series get tight and nasty

By STEPHEN WHYNO

It wasn't long after celebrating Craig Smith's overtime goal that P.K. Subban zeroed in on the cold reality of Nashville's playoff series against Dallas.

"There are no easy shifts out there, no easy games and no easy plays," he said. "It's hand-to-hand combat out there."

Subban and the Central Division-winning Predators needed to work overtime just to even things with the Stars at a game apiece, and the Colorado Avalanche got a sudden-death goal from Nathan MacKinnon to tie up their series against the Western Conference top-seeded Calgary Flames. In the East, the defending Stanley Cup champion Washington Capitals needed extra time to take a two games to none lead on the Carolina Hurricanes, and the Boston Bruins are going blow-for-blow with the Toronto Maple Leafs in series that's all square and looking like it could be a classic.

"It's nerve-racking, but it's definitely fun," Avalanche coach Jared Bednar said.

None of these first-round series are going to be easy — even for the Capitals, who will go into a madhouse Monday (7 p.m. EDT, CNBC) for the first Hurricanes home playoff game in a decade.

"Absolutely no quit in that team," Washington coach Todd Reirden said Sunday about Carolina. "They're not going away."

This isn't a time of year for shrinking from challenges, and the Bruins showed in their Game 2 against the Maple Leafs that they're not going anywhere. As the series shifts to Toronto, the Maple Leafs will be without center Nazem Kadri for at least Game 3 (7 p.m. EDT, NBCSN), who has an in-person hearing with the NHL's department of player safety earlier in the day for cross-checking Jake DeBrusk in the face.

Kadri was suspended three playoff games for boarding Boston's Tommy Wingels when these teams met in the first round a year ago and could be banned for the rest of this series, if not longer. It's no surprise the tensions are high between the Bruins and Maple Leafs.

"Things were getting pretty amped up there towards the end of the game and a lot of emotions, and that's what playoff hockey is all about," Bruins agitator extraordinaire Brad Marchand said after Game 2. "It's going to happen on both

sides. There's going to be a lot of physicality the rest of the series."

The Capitals will try to keep up the physicality against the small and quick Hurricanes, who have shown they can come back on Washington. Center Jordan Staal said, "We're right there," and there's no shortage of belief that they can make it a series.

"I don't think we played our best game," center Sebastian Aho said. "It's just trying to believe that when we play our best, we have a better chance to win."

Stars-Predators is anyone's series going into Game 3 Monday night in Dallas (9:30 p.m. EDT, NBCSN). Each of the first two games was decided by a goal, and players expect the low-scoring trend to continue as the series wears on.

"It's not obviously open like the regular season," Stars goaltender Ben Bishop said. "Everybody finishes checks, everybody's going 110 percent. It's not going to be that up-and-down style that you're used to."

Bishop clearly isn't watching Avalanche-Flames, which finally opened up in Game 2 after a shutout by Calgary's Mike Smith in the series opener. Led by MacKinnon, captain Gabriel Landeskog and now-healthy Mikko Rantanen, Colorado looks like it can push the Flames with the series shifting to Denver for Game 3 (10 p.m. EDT, CNBC).

"We've always had the confidence in this room," forward Matt Nieto said. "Down late or running into a hot goalie, we know we can win games against this team. We're thrilled to be going back 1-1 and get back in front of that Pepsi Center crowd and try to get a lead in the series."

The Capitals know from their own experience in the first round last year that a 2-0 series lead doesn't mean a whole lot. They came back from down 2-0 to beat Columbus on the way to winning the Cup and were pushed to seven games by Tampa Bay after leading the Eastern Conference final by that same margin.

They know better by now than to underestimate the Hurricanes.

"There's a lot of desperation whether you're down two or you're starting the series, but there might be a little extra," Washington winger T.J. Oshie said. "feels good to be up 2-nothing, but I think we can still do a lot better job and we're going to have to if we want to go get a win there."



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## Capitals take 2-0 lead into game 3 against the Hurricanes

By The Associated Press

Washington Capitals (48-26-8, first in the Metropolitan Division during the regular season) vs. Carolina Hurricanes (46-29-7, fourth in the Metropolitan Division during the regular season)

Raleigh, North Carolina; Monday, 7 p.m. EDT

**EASTERN CONFERENCE FIRST ROUND:** Washington leads series 2-0

**BOTTOM LINE:** The Washington Capitals visit the Carolina Hurricanes in the Eastern Conference first round with a 2-0 lead in the series.

The Hurricanes are 24-13-4 at home. Carolina leads the league shooting 34.4 shots per game while averaging 3.0 goals.

The Capitals are 19-7-2 against opponents from the Metropolitan Division. Washington is second in the Eastern Conference shooting 11.0 percent and averaging 3.3 goals on 30.4 shots per game. The teams meet Monday for the

seventh time this season. The Capitals won the last meeting 4-3 in overtime.

**TOP PERFORMERS:** Sebastian Aho leads the Hurricanes with 30 goals, adding 53 assists and totaling 83 points. Teuvo Teravainen has 11 points over the last 10 games for Carolina.

Michal Kempny leads the Capitals with a plus-24 in 71 games played this season. T.J. Oshie has collected 9 points over the last 10 games for Washington.

**LAST 10 GAMES:** Capitals: 7-2-1, averaging three goals, 5.3 assists, 2.4 penalties and 5.7 penalty minutes while giving up 2.2 goals per game with a .923 save percentage.

Hurricanes: 5-4-1, averaging three goals, five assists, 3.2 penalties and 6.6 penalty minutes while giving up 2.3 goals per game with a .919 save percentage.

**Hurricanes Injuries:** Calvin de Haan: day to day (upper body).

**Capitals Injuries:** Michal Kempny: out indefinitely (lower body).

## Williams ready for Canes' 1st home playoff game in a decade

By JOEDY McCREARY

**RALEIGH, N.C. (AP)** — The last time Justin Williams played in a postseason game in Raleigh, he skated off with the Stanley Cup.

The stakes aren't quite that high — yet — for the Carolina Hurricanes, but the third game of their best-of-seven series with the Washington Capitals on Monday night does bring his career full circle.

Now, "Mr. Game 7" is ready for Game 3 — the first playoff game at PNC Arena in 10 years — and hoping to keep the Hurricanes from falling into a three-games-to-none hole.

"The anticipation of it is what's getting people really excited, because a lot of people don't really know what it is," Williams said. "Everyone's telling them how great (playoff hockey in Raleigh) is and how fun it is, and it is, but really it's something you've got to experience for yourself. It being a while now, you can kind of sometimes forget and fall into that trap that we've talked about of normalcy. But it's everything it's cracked up to be."

Williams had a lot to do with creating the reputation that had gone dormant during that decade-long drought. As a 24-year-old in 2006, he helped the Hurricanes win the Stanley Cup, and his empty-net goal in Game 7 stands as one of the enduring images in club history. He had been traded to Los Angeles when Carolina made its only postseason appearance since, in 2009.

In the second year of his return, he wants to make more memories during a series he called the "perfect storm" because of his strong ties to both franchises.

He spent just two seasons in Washington from 2015-17, and lost in the second round both years, but Capitals players and

executives credit him for helping to lay the foundation of the team that last year won the Cup for the first time.

"He spoke when he needed to. But mostly it was his play," Capitals winger T.J. Oshie said. "Any time the game, the pressure rose or the game got more intense, Justin — or 'Stick,' as we call him — he always seemed to be able to rise to the occasion. And he always seemed to elevate his play to match that pressure. And that's something we all tried to emulate, you know. Last year some guys did a great job of doing that. But it is something special and something not every guy can do. And he's one of those guys who can do it."

Carolina brought him back last season on a two-year deal, and then selected him as captain this season.

"I don't think leadership skills ... can be taught. You just be yourself," Williams said. "Fortunately, I've been around a lot of great leaders, so I've taken little bits and pieces of what I like about them and kind of make it my own. One of the more important things is, you can't fake being a leader. You can't manufacture being a leader. You just are. And you've got to try and do what you can. You can't be bashful about it. You believe in yourself, or you don't."

His teammates say that role suits him, and he's instilled a level of accountability that perhaps wasn't always present during a drought that ranked as one of the longest in NHL history.

He also backed up his occasionally harsh words on the ice, ranking second on the team with 23 goals and third with 53 points while helping Carolina close the regular season by going 31-12-2 in its final 45 regular-season games to climb from last place in the division to a wild-card playoff berth.

Yet he also kept things light, masterminding the "Storm Surge" postgame celebrations that took the league by storm.



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“Just how vocal he is, how he demands a lot out of everybody ... he is not afraid to hurt anybody’s feelings,” forward Jordan Martinook said. “I think he’s figured out a very, very good way, and he’s a very good motivator. Very good guy to follow because he’s done it so many times, and to see his success in the playoffs and even our ... stretch to the end of the year. You see the goals he scores, they’re big goals. It’s an easy guy to jump on his back.”

Williams has thrived throughout his career in Game 7s, owning the NHL record with 14 points in those games and scoring seven goals to tie the mark held by 15-year veteran

Glenn Anderson. His teams are 7-1 in those games — hence, the “Mr. Game 7” nickname.

The Hurricanes have a lot to do to force this one-sided series to a seventh game, but if it should get to that point, they’ll be glad they have Williams, just as the Capitals were during their two years with him.

“He has the right blend of leadership, have fun, compete,” Capitals GM Brian MacLellan said. “He really senses the tone of an organization, of a team, where they are at in the games and playoffs and he provides — and he did provide us with that leadership, and he is doing the same thing at Carolina now, so he’s just a great guy to have on your team.”



### Carolina Hurricanes vs. Washington Capitals: Game 3 Preview and Storm Advisory

It’s finally here! The Hurricanes return to Raleigh looking for their first win of the series as the city prepares for the return of playoff hockey.

By Andrew Ahr

Eastern Conference First Round Game 3

Carolina Hurricanes at Washington Capitals

Monday, April 15th, 2019 - 7:00 PM ET

PNC Arena- Raleigh, NC

TV: CNBC, Fox Sports Carolinas

Radio: 99.9 The Fan

SBN Opponent: Japers’ Rink

Despite being down 0-2 in the series, the Carolina Hurricanes have a lot to build on from their first two games in Washington. The next two games will have a much different feeling as they take on the Caps in front of what will be a packed and loud PNC Arena.

#### Vital Statistics

Category	Hurricanes	Capitals
Record	0-2	2-0
Goals/Game	2.50	4.00
Shots/Game	28.5	25.5
Faceoff %	60.5%	39.5%

Category	Hurricanes	Capitals
Power Play % (Rank)	12.5% (T9)	25.0% (6)
Penalty Kill % (Rank)	50.0% (T14)	87.5%(T7)
ES Corsi For %	62.20%	37.80%
ES PDO	93.6	106.5
PIM/Game	12:00	8:00

#### Goaltender #1

Category	Petr Mrazek	Braden Holtby
Record	0-2	2-0
Save %	.860	.912
GAA	3.50	2.46

#### Goaltender #2

Category	Curtis McElhinney	Pheonix Copley
Record	0-0-0	0-0-0
Save %	N/A	N/A



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Category	Curtis McElhinney	Pheonix Copley
GAA	N/A	N/A

Those are the lowest and the highest in the league respectively.

- For the first time in franchise history, the Hurricanes will be wearing their alternate jerseys for home playoff games. The new black jerseys held an impressive 12-2-2 home record this season.
- Parking lots open for tailgating today at 2:00 pm, doors open at 5:45 pm, and there are a number of promotions and activities scheduled for fans in attendance. Check out the Hurricanes Promotions page for more details.

### Game Notes

- In case the NBC broadcast didn't remind you enough on Saturday, Sebastian Aho broke his 15 game goal drought with a game tying tally in the second period.
- Tonight's game will return to local broadcast on Fox Sports Carolinas in the Canes' market, and will be available nationally on CNBC.
- Tonight's game is the 37th playoff matchup in PNC Arena. The Hurricanes own a 21-15 record in the building, and they really could stand to put another in the win column tonight.
- With an assist on Saturday, Andrei Svechnikov leads all rookies in playoff scoring with three points (2g, 1a) in two games. He became the first NHL player born in the 2000s to score a playoff goal, and has been one of Carolina's best players thus far in the series.
- Lucas Wallmark scored his first career playoff goal on Saturday after posting two assists in his playoff debut in Game 1. He became the second player in franchise history to tally two assists in his playoff debut (I bet you can't guess the other). Answer is at the bottom.
- The Hurricanes lead the playoff table in possession this series, but the Capitals continue to defy many NHL patterns as they cruised to a two-game series lead with a 37.80 Corsi For Percentage and a 106.5 PDO (Shooting Percentage + Save Percentage).

### Playoff Storyboard

Here's what happened yesterday:

If you think that the Hurricanes are in hot water, get a load of the Lightning. They're down 3-0 and the Blue Jackets have a legitimate chance to sweep the league's best team on home ice. What is going on?

Speaking of sweeps, the Islanders won in Pittsburgh yesterday by a score of 4-1 to push the Penguins to the edge of elimination. New York has a chance to finish that series out in enemy territory tomorrow.

The Jets took down the Blues in St. Louis last night as the entire city of Winnipeg let out a collective sigh of relief. This has been a nasty series that could shape up to be one of the best in the first round.

The Sharks dropped their first matchup in Las Vegas last night as the Knights jumped out to a 2-1 series lead. Something to watch out for today is the disciplinary action from the Department of Player Safety in response to this ugly hit from Big Joe. It's probably just a matter of how long, at this point.

And the trivia answer: Lucas Wallmark is the second player in franchise history to post two assists in his playoff debut, joining Sylvain Cote, who pulled off the feat in the 1987 Adams Division quarterfinal against the Quebec Nordiques.

## About Last Night: A Promising Comeback, But Still Not Enough

Slow starts and penalties continue to plague the Canes and they return home down 2-0 in their best-of-seven series against the Capitals.

By Andy House

The Carolina Hurricanes will return home for their first home playoff game in a decade with their backs squarely against the wall. Saturday's overtime defeat in D.C. has given the Washington Capitals a commanding 2-0 series lead, and now the Canes must attempt to hold serve on home ice to return the series to Washington on even terms.

The effort continues to be present, but the slow start that plagued the Canes in Game 1 also proved to be a major obstacle in Game 2 as they fell behind two goals early yet again.

The Good - Plenty of fight

Faced with yet another multiple goal deficit within the first 10 minutes of play, the Canes showed their mettle by answering the bell with one goal in the first, and equalizers in the second and third periods to ultimately force overtime. The first goal was a result of tremendous work from a group of bottom-six forwards that culminated in Lucas Wallmark beating Braden Holtby, in part due to some grinding work from Saku Maenalanen in front of the net.

There were certainly additional trials of adversity, including an extensive penalty kill (more on that shortly), but in general, the Canes showed they are capable of competing with the Capitals. At this point however, that fight and determination must be present for the full 60 minutes in order to garner the result they seek.

Another positive that the Canes will take from Saturday will be the resurfacing of Sebastian Aho's offensive game. His late second period goal was the result of getting to the front



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of the net and creating opportunity to earn a gritty, playoff goal.

The Canes again answered a one goal deficit in the third period as they finally tallied on the powerplay with a tip in front from Jordan Staal.

The common thread in each of the three Hurricanes goals on Saturday was a significant screen or action in front of Holtby. The Canes will certainly take note of that, and you would hope that gaining that position and working to stay there will remain a priority for the rest of the series.

## The Bad - Slow Starts and Time in the Box

Once again, the Hurricanes allowed the Caps to collect an early advantage in the first period. Nicklas Backstrom beat the Carolina defense to the front of the net to garner a tip-in on a stiff feed from Alexander Ovechkin.

That goal was shortly followed by a beauty from T.J. Oshie on the backhand.

A common thread to some of the best Capitals chances is their ability to continue to generate chances on the rush. The speed and skill of the top-end Washington forwards have given the Canes fits as maintaining gap control and sticks in the passing and shooting lanes have become more and more difficult.

In order for Carolina to remain in the series, they must find a way to force the Caps to dump the puck into the zone or to enter with much less speed than they have allowed in the first two games. No doubt the talented Caps will generate chances over the course of the game, but limiting their dangerous looks on the rush should provide a fighting chance for the Canes netminders, as well as the capable back-checking forwards, to assist the defensive corps with their difficult task.

## The Ugly - The Penalties and the Ferland call

In what will hopefully turn out to be the most embarrassing call of the Stanley Cup Playoffs, Micheal Ferland was hit with a five-minute major and a match penalty for his hit on Nic Dowd in the second period.

On a hit that featured a lunging player who lowered his own head, Ferland miraculously managed to avoid direct head contact with his shoulder or elbow in delivering an otherwise clean hit to Dowd. Contact created with his lower-back did manage to land near the head, but was clearly the result of

## Systems Analyst: Playoff Overtime

Of course it was Brooks Orpik.

By Ford Hatchett

With Saturday afternoon's 4-3 overtime defeat, the Carolina Hurricanes are officially on a six game playoff losing streak, dating back to 2009.

Saturday's overtime winner was a gut punch, especially given the goal scorer, long time Canes' villain Brooks Orpik. The winning goal was precipitated by Brett Pesce's diving effort in the neutral zone which saw him lose his stick.

Dowd placing himself in a terribly vulnerable position. After the hit, the four officials on the ice got together and somehow managed to determine that a five-minute major and ejection was warranted for Ferland.

In a 2-1 game in the Stanley Cup Playoffs, the officials managed to get the call incorrect after a conference, and punished the Canes with a hugely punitive five minute penalty, but also the loss of Ferland for the remainder of the game. Rod Brind'Amour obviously disagreed:

Nevertheless, the Canes managed to kill the extended penalty, but the effects of losing a player of Ferland's edge and caliber for the remainder of the game was certainly felt with the short bench available. Ferland, along with teammate Dougie Hamilton, who was penalized for elbowing Evgeny Kuznetsov, will not receive further supplemental discipline. The NHL appeared to confirm that the call on Ferland was simply missed. No consolation to the Canes, but clearly a positive that it will not effect future games in the series.

While the Ferland call was questionable at best, the Canes certainly must do a better job of staying out of the box in order to remain relevant in this series. The most obvious reason for this is that the Capitals have such a dangerous and dynamic power play. While the Canes were able to shut out the Caps man-advantage on Saturday, that was not the case in Game 1.

Beyond that, the Canes have also struggled to get into a rhythm in five-on-five play due to the consistent trips to the box. One of the big strengths for Carolina is their ability to basically roll four lines in five-on-five action and maintain a significant pace and style of game throughout the lineup. If they can clean up the penalties, they will be able to take away one of the Capitals' biggest weapons, while simultaneously playing towards one of their own greatest strengths.

## Moral of the Story

The bottom line is, while there are some positives to take from the effort and resilience of the Canes, the fact remains they are still searching for their first win in this best-of-seven series. Down 2-0, they must hope that they will be buoyed by what will surely be a frenzied crowd at home as they look to sweep Game 3 and 4 to return the series to Washington on even terms. That campaign must start with a solid effort in Game 3 on Monday.

The Capitals proceed to set up in zone. Recognizing that his defenseman is now without a stick, Teuvo Teravainen astutely hands his off to Pesce.

It's a smart play, given the relatively light work work that wingers have in the defensive zone compared to defensemen and centers. Obviously, in an ideal world each defender would have their own stick, but usually, wingers are tasked with covering the opponent's defensemen in low percentage scoring areas of the ice. That makes a stick less vital to their role than it is to Pesce covering a forward in the slot or near the goal.



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As the stick transition takes place, the puck is wrapped around the boards and taken by Evgeny Kuznetsov. Pesce doesn't chase Kuznetsov around the net and instead gives the Russian time to set up and survey his options. Kuznetsov finds a charging Orpik for a one-timer. Game over.

Normally, Pesce's decision wouldn't be a bad one. If Pesce were to chase Kuznetsov from one side or the other Kuznetsov would easily walk out of the other side presenting a golden opportunity with Pesce chasing from behind. As long as everyone else is covering their mark, Pesce is content to let Kuznetsov wait behind the net.

But with Teravainen without his stick, his coverage of Orpik is limited. Kuznetsov's pass is one Teravainen could normally deflect away or break up with his stick. Instead it finds Orpik for the game winner.

Pesce's decision to wait out Kuznetsov puts the Canes' defenseman squarely in Petr Mrazek's crease as an inadvertent screen. It forces Mrazek to play extraordinarily deep in his net, preventing him from getting out to challenge the Orpik shot and in turn leaves the Canes in 0-2 series hole.



## Hurricanes' Brind'Amour: "I'd Love to See Our Best"

Another Carolina Hurricanes vs the defending Stanley Cup champion Washington Capitals game is in the books. Like the previous five games they've played against one another this season, the Capitals won, but barely. They held on for an overtime win, 4-3. They have a strong 2-0 lead in their playoff series as they head to the Hurricanes' PNC Arena Monday night.

While the usual suspects are putting the puck in the net for the Capitals – Alex Ovechkin, Nicklas Bäckström and T. J. Oshie – the top scorers for the Hurricanes have been silent. Head coach Rod Brind'Amour made an appeal in a media availability Sunday morning saying, "I'd love to see our best." Given how close these contests with the Caps have been, seeing the 'Canes best might yield a different result.

### Hurricanes' Top Scorers Along for the Ride?

The Hurricanes' top goal scorers from the regular season have been held to almost no production in Games 1 and 2 against the Capitals. Sebastian Aho, who had not scored a goal since March 9, finally got one Saturday, but it wasn't one of his most compelling shots. He basically squeezed it into the goal of the butt of Capitals' goalie Braden Holtby. But, it counted, so maybe Aho is back and will get hot in the remaining games.

Brind'Amour said after the game, "At the end of the day – I guess 'Sea-bass' had one goal – our top guys aren't on the scoresheet. Theirs are. I feel pretty good that, if we get those guys going – which they have all year – it will give us a better chance to win, that's for sure. We're hanging around, and I don't think we're playing our best hockey so that's I guess somewhat positive."

Yes, "Sea-bass" – who led the team in the regular season with 30 goals – got on the scoresheet. But, team captain Justin Williams was second in the regular season with 23 goals. In the playoffs so far, he has zero goals and one assist. Brian LeBlanc at CanesCountry wrote in a recap of

Saturday's contest that Williams had this to say about the performance thus far of himself and his line:

We have to be better. Our line and just in general. I haven't been good this series, I think if you talk to our other top scorers, we need to be a lot better, and we will be in Game 3.

There is no sense piling on here. Williams is fully aware that he needs to do better. That is what makes him such a great captain, his self-awareness regarding his own game. He knows what it takes to win in the postseason and will do all he can to step his game up. The team will hopefully be inspired to do likewise, as they have been all season.

Teuvo Teravainen had 21 goals this season, Dougie Hamilton had 18 and Michael Ferland had 17 and Nino Niederreiter had 23, 14 of which were with the Hurricanes. Of these four players, only Hamilton has any points in the two playoff games with the Capitals – two assists. There are zero goals amongst this group so far in the playoffs.

The unexpected goals are more than welcome. Andrei Svechnikov scored twice in Game 1 and showed he is the real deal. But, most teams usually don't want their rookie leading the team in scoring in a playoff game unless that rookie's last name is Crosby. They also want the veterans producing.

No offense intended to Svechnikov, as he is on a rocket ship trip to stardom at the rate he is playing and growing. The point is that the guys who have been the Hurricanes' scoring leaders throughout the season need to step up

Brind'Amour summed it up well in Sunday's media availability: "I give our guys a lot of credit because we keep digging in, we find ways to get into these games but we haven't played our best. We've had a chance to win. I'd love to see our best and see what happens." So would the "Caniacs" coach, as soon as Monday night.



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## SportScan

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

1140781 Carolina Hurricanes

Of all the playoff series in all the world, Brooks Orpik had to walk into this one

BY LUKE DECOCK

APRIL 14, 2019 04:58 PM

Raleigh

Erik Cole had turned off Game 2 and was on his way to a pre-prom party for his daughter Saturday night when the overtime game-winner was scored. He got out of the car, pulled out his phone to check the score and felt the name like a punch in the gut.

The Carolina Hurricanes finally get back in the postseason for the first time since Cole was still playing here, and of all the playoff series in all the towns in all the world, Brooks Orpik had to walk into this one.

"The thought that went through my head was there couldn't have been a worse guy to score a goal against the Canes in the playoffs," Cole said Sunday.

Orpik's timing was exceptional, scoring 108 seconds into overtime to give the Washington Capitals a 4-3 win and 2-0 series lead over the Carolina Hurricanes, and while he would have been an unpopular figure at PNC Arena for Game 3 on Monday anyway, the goal certainly won't dull that edge.

Thirteen years after Orpik, then playing for the Pittsburgh Penguins, broke Cole's neck with a check from behind into the boards, resentment still lingers. Not merely with Cole, whose career was cut prematurely short, but Hurricanes fans who feared their team's chances at the Stanley Cup had been severely damaged when Cole – in the middle of what would end up being the best season of his career – was injured.

Orpik got a three-game suspension. Cole got a lifetime of cervical problems and no apology.

Fate would intervene with the trade-deadline arrival of Mark Recchi from those same Penguins to fill the gap, before Cole's unlikely return in Game 6 of the Stanley Cup finals after enough CT scans to make him glow in the dark, but what happened on that March night in Pittsburgh's old Civic Arena has never been forgotten.

And there is Orpik, all these years later, not only on the ice against the Hurricanes in the playoffs, but dealing them a loss in a game that they twice came from behind to tie the score.

"No, I didn't even think about that," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "That's a tough one. A lot of things went wrong on that play."

Too true: Anyone could have scored from that position, Teuvo Teravainen scrambling at the end of a long shift having given up his stick to Brett Pesce, Petr Mrazek partially obstructed by Pesce who was worried about Evgeny Kuznetsov behind the net, Orpik hopping off the bench and jumping straight into the play to one-time Kuznetsov's pass over Mrazek's left shoulder.

Anyone could have scored. And from the Hurricanes' perspective, and Cole's in particular, anyone would have been better than Orpik, who is as beloved in the Capitals' dressing room as he is hated here.

All these years later, Cole – who now serves as a Hurricanes ambassador – still can't shake Orpik. As he tells it, he took his son to a hockey tournament in Buffalo this winter, and while Cole was at dinner with his parents, some of the other hockey dads and players wound up in an elevator with a man who identified himself as Orpik's father. The man noted he wasn't very popular in North Carolina because his son broke Cole's neck – with Cole's son in the elevator.

Cole heard about that unpleasant moment second-hand, much like Orpik's goal Saturday, but he remains frustrated that Orpik is still playing at age 38 while Cole spent most of his career fighting through chronic neck problems and, objectively speaking, was never the same dominant power winger he was in the fall of 2005, tormenting defensemen with his electric bull rushes down the right wing.

"I wouldn't call it bad blood," Cole said. "I have zero respect for the guy. The fact that he's still playing doesn't help that at all. The fact I had to shut it down because of the degeneration in my neck based off the fracture. I just don't care for him. At all."

Cole, now four years removed from the NHL, will be in attendance at PNC on Monday. He'll watch as two of his teammates on the ice that night in March 2006, then-captain-now-coach Brind'Amour and current Hurricanes captain Justin Williams, will go up against Orpik and the Capitals with an eye to getting back in the series, not settling ancient scores.

But Orpik, like Scott Stevens once was, has been reflexively harassed at PNC for more than a decade, and that wouldn't have changed Monday whether he scored Saturday or not. Sometimes the past runs deeper than the present.

News Observer LOADED: 04.15.2019

1140782 Carolina Hurricanes

Canes need to use home ice to their advantage against Caps

BY CHIP ALEXANDER

APRIL 14, 2019 03:00 PM

Raleigh

The Carolina Hurricanes and Washington Capitals have already played a six-game series this season, in a sense.

The Caps won the first four games, all in the regular season. The Caps have won the first two games of their Stanley Cup playoff series.

The Eastern Conference first-round series, after the first two games at Capital One Arena in Washington, now changes sites. For the first time



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since 2009, the Canes will have a playoff game at home, at PNC Arena, one that should create both a bit of nostalgia and a frenzied atmosphere Monday for Game 3.

"It's going to be loud and it's going to be emotional," Canes center Sebastian Aho said Sunday. "I can't wait to see what it's going to be like."

The problem for the Canes: the venue is changing but not the opponent. They still have to find a way to beat a deep, physical, experienced and cocksure Caps team that was the 2018 Stanley Cup champion, that has won all six games against Carolina this season and done it in different ways. If that doesn't happen in the next two games, the Canes' season will be over.

Are the Caps just too much of a matchup problem for the Canes?

"I think they're a bad matchup for everybody," Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said Sunday. "They're the best. They're the champs."

"They've been tight games. I think every game we've been involved and certainly had a chance to win. A couple I thought we were the better team. But not last game. The last game they were definitely the better team."

The Caps won Game 2 on Saturday 4-3 by being better at even strength, getting goals from forwards Nicklas Backstrom, T.J. Oshie and Tom Wilson, then an overtime winner from perhaps the most unlikely player on the ice, defenseman Brooks Orpik.

In Game 1, the Caps scored twice on the power play in the first period in jumping to a 3-0 lead and won 4-2. Shifting their emphasis to improved play at even strength in Game 2, the Caps hurt the Canes off the rush and in transition. The Caps have not trailed in either of the two games.

"Getting behind is tough," Brind'Amour said. "When you're chasing it you start getting away from what you want to do and that just doesn't work very well."

"I give our guys a lot of credit. They keep digging in. We keep finding ways to get into these games. We haven't played our best and had a chance to win. I would love to see our best and see what happens."

The Canes clawed back into Game 1 behind a pair of even-strength goals from rookie forward Andrei Svechnikov. In Game 2, fourth-line center Lucas Wallmark scored for the Canes as did Aho, who ended a frustrating streak of 15 games with a goal with a second-period score as the Canes' top line, outplayed much of the game, had its best shift.

The Canes had the better end of special teams play Saturday. They killed off a five-minute match penalty against forward Micheal Ferland -- a call that Brind'Amour still had a hard time discussing Sunday -- and tied the score 3-3 late in regulation on Jordan Staal's power-play goal off a redirection off a Dougie Hamilton shot.

"I don't think we played our best game and we had a chance to win," Aho said. "We were in OT and in OT anything can happen."

What happened in overtime was Canes defenseman Brett Pesce losing his stick in the neutral zone trying to defend against Caps forward Evgeny Kuznetsov. Canes forward Teuvo Teravainen finally passed his stick to Pesce in the Canes zone, only to find himself facing Orpik as Orpik took a tape-to-tape pass from Kuznetsov in the left circle.

Teravainen tried to block the shot but Orpik, who had two goals in the regular season and 18 in 1,035 career games, went top shelf on goalie Petr Mrazek for the winner.

"That's a tough one," Brind'Amour said of the sequence. "A lot of things went wrong on that play. That's usually how goals go in. One thing leads to another, leads to another and then it's in the net. Tough lesson but it's another one."

But it's on to Game 3 and some Canes fans may be in the PNC Arena parking lots at first light Monday, ready to party. A lot will be firing up grills and pulling out favorite beverages to tailgate -- a Carolina playoff tradition -- and the arena should be rocking come game time.

"Our hope is we give our best and see how it shakes out," Brind'Amour said. "The fans deserve something to cheer about and I hope we give them that. We hope to give them a lot to be excited about."

News Observer LOADED: 04.15.2019

1140783 Carolina Hurricanes

Canes need Game 2 goal to spark Sebastian Aho

BY JOE GIGLIO

APRIL 14, 2019 02:53 PM

Raleigh

Wins matter more to Sebastian Aho than his stats.

If the Carolina Hurricanes can win without their All-Star center scoring, he's fine with that. But if they can't, and Aho's production has dipped in the past few weeks, then the 21-year-old center understands the correlation.

"That's kind of a tricky one," Aho said. "When you win, that's all that matters. When you lose, you have to look in the mirror and see where you can be better."

Aho is taking a long look after the Hurricanes dropped the first two games of their first round Stanley Cup playoff series with the Washington Capitals. The Canes return home on Monday night looking to win Game 3, their first playoff home game since 2009.

Aho, the team's top scorer during the regular season with career-highs in goals (30), assists (53) and points (83), is hoping his goal in Saturday's Game 2 loss will jump-start his production and the team. It was his first goal since March 9, a span of 16 games.

"I hope so," Aho said. "I think it's good for the confidence but it's all about wins this time of the year and we haven't won. We have to find a way to get those wins."

The Canes were winning down the stretch of the regular season without Aho scoring. He didn't score a goal in the final 14 games of the regular (although he did have six assists) and the Canes went 9-5-0 to get into the playoffs.

It has been a collective effort all season for the Canes, rather than relying on one star, but the flashy but slightly undersized Finn (6-foot-0, 176 pounds) has been the team's best player. In the playoffs, that hasn't been the case.

As the old saying goes, your best players have to be your best players. That has been the case for Washington. Star center Alex Ovechkin, the NHL's leading goal-scorer during the season, and his top linemate, Nicklas Backstrom, have shone in the first two games. Ovechkin has a goal and two assists while Backstrom has three goals and an assist.

Aho says he doesn't look at it as a personal matchup between him and Ovechkin but he understands what Washington's top line has been able to do through two games.

"You can't really think about it too much but, for sure, their top line has been better than ours," Aho said.

Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour noted his team's top two lines, not just Aho's, needs to do more to get back in the series.



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"They need to be better, that's for sure," Brind'Amour said of the top two lines. "That's obvious. Whether they were scoring or not, I'd be saying that because they're not getting the chances, they're creating enough and they're giving up too much. So that's not a good recipe."

Carolina Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour says his team needs to get back to playing its game to win Game 3 of their playoff series against the Washington Capitals. The Caps lead 2-0 in the series, which shifts to Raleigh and PNC Arena on Monday. By

Aho spent much of the season with Teuvo Teravainen on his wing. Brind'Amour broke up Finns down the stretch to try to get more scoring balance. Teravainen was second on the team with 76 points during the regular season and led the Canes with 55 assists.

Aho has been playing with captain Justin Williams on his right wing and Nino Niederreiter on the left side while Teravainen has been on a line with Jordan Staal and Micheal Ferland.

Brind'Amour has hinted at making some combination changes — Teravainen was back on Aho's wing in warmups Saturday, but only in warmups — but remains confident in his top six forwards.

"Those guys have found a way all year to figure it out," Brind'Amour said. "Whether we change the lines or whether we do something a little different to spark something, we'll see. Our top guys, obviously, they've got to show up. Otherwise, it's going to be real, real tough."

News Observer LOADED: 04.15.2019

1140784 Carolina Hurricanes

Five points for the Hurricanes going into Game 3

BY LUKE DECOCK

APRIL 14, 2019 02:33 PM

Raleigh

**1. THE MATCH GAME** You'd normally look at coming home for Game 3 as a chance to get the matchups you want, and that as a key to getting the Hurricanes' struggling stars going, but the Capitals loaded up with John Carlson and their top defensemen so heavy at home that there doesn't figure to be much of a change on the road. Rod Brind'Amour isn't a huge matchup coach anyway, but he would be advised to look for any little advantage he can get with last change.

**2. MRAZEK MAN** By the underlying analytics — shot quality faced and goals allowed — Petr Mrazek is the worst goalie in the playoffs. Anecdotally, he's been more than sharp and timely enough since Nicklas Backstrom's long-distance goal to open the series, the Brooks Orpik winner in Game 2 coming at the end of a long series of Carolina breakdowns. Brind'Amour seemed to leave the door open at least a hair to giving Curtis McElhinney a shot, since McElhinney has often exerted a calming presence on a defense that has been a little scambly, but that may be more likely if the Hurricanes are facing a 3-0 deficit in Game 4.

**3. START ON TIME** The old Bill Peters line about "starting on time" applies here; going down two or three goals to the Capitals in the first period is a recipe for disaster. The issue was special teams in Game 1, five-on-five (and Justin Faulk) in Game 2. Another slow start could effectively end the series.

Carolina Hurricanes defenseman Jaccob Slavin (74) lunges with the puck against Washington Capitals defenseman Dmitry Orlov (9), of Russia,

during the third period of Game 2 of an NHL hockey first-round playoff series, Saturday, April 13, 2019, in Washington. Nick Wass AP

**4. FLIP THE POWER** The so-called second power-play unit with Dougie Hamilton and Jaccob Slavin has had better chances than Faulk's ponderous first unit. It's long past time for the second group to become the first group, at least until those forwards show a little more initiative.

**5. STAY THE COURSE** The Hurricanes have a 102-62 shot-attempt advantage at five-on-five through two games. If they can play the special teams to a draw and get a few big saves, they're already doing most of what they need to do at even strength to compete in this series. If they can take it back to Washington tied 2-2, all the pressure will be on the Capitals.

News Observer LOADED: 04.15.2019

1140785 Carolina Hurricanes

Hurricanes return home, counting on crowd

BY LUKE DECOCK

APRIL 14, 2019 01:59 PM

Raleigh

There were fans at RDU International Airport when the Carolina Hurricanes landed Saturday night after their Game 2 loss to the Washington Capitals, harkening back to playoffs past here. How much it will harken back remains to be seen Monday night, but expectations are certainly high after the 10-year gap.

"I'm expecting a loud building," said Hurricanes center Jordan Staal, who played in the last playoff game in PNC Arena as a member of the Pittsburgh Penguins in 2009. "As a road team then, it was one of the loudest buildings I played in. It's going to be really exciting."

Returning home for Game 3 down 2-0 to the Capitals, Hurricanes general manager Don Waddell said the team expects a sellout Monday night. Waddell said the NHL released 700 tickets back to the team Sunday morning, many of them singles, and more than 200 sold in the first two hours. Whether it's officially a sellout or not, hopes remain high for the atmosphere inside and outside the building for which this team was once known.

"It's loud everywhere," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "Maybe just because it's your crowd, but it does feel a lot louder than most places when it's rocking in here. I don't know it really has an effect one way or another. I don't think Washington is too worried about it."

"We do it right on that thing. They know how to have a good time. They know how to enjoy the game. They certainly don't sit on their hands and watch."

**ALL CLEAR** The NHL's Department of Player Safety decided not impose any supplementary discipline on Micheal Ferland, Dougie Hamilton or Alex Ovechkin for their penalized head hits in Game 2, Hurricanes general manager Don Waddell said Sunday.

Brind'Amour was still unhappy with the match penalty on Ferland a day later.

"They huddle over there, as a four-man group, and that means somebody said it was a for-sure hit to the head, to make that call," Brind'Amour said. "That's my problem. If you're sure, then I'm OK with it, but when I look and see that it's not, somebody's lying. ... It's not on the



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refs for me. It's too hard. I saw it live and said, 'Ooh, that's tough,' because you see the head snap back. That's the point where the NHL needs to help these guys out. It's too hard. ...

"The problem is when four of them get together and say this is what happened, when it didn't, that's when I have a problem. What should happen is, if you don't know, it should be a two-minute penalty and you let player safety figure it out later, you don't make it a five-minute penalty and kick a guy out."

**TOP SHELF** While it's probably impossible for anyone to match up offensively with the Capitals' high-powered top line of Ovechkin, Nicklas Backstrom and Tom Wilson, the Hurricanes' top two lines have been badly outplayed in the series, even with Sebastian Aho breaking his drought Saturday.

Backstrom, the playoffs' leading scorer with three goals and one assist going into Sunday's games, is single-handedly outscoring all of Carolina's top-six forwards, who have combined for two goals, one assist and a garish minus-15 even as the Hurricanes have had a substantial five-on-five possession edge.

"There's a lot of details in the game we can do better," Aho said. "It all starts with when you defense well, that's how you get your own chances, too."

Staal has a power-play goal, Aho has a goal and Justin Williams has an assist. Nino Niederreiter, Teuvo Teravainen and Ferland are scoreless. If it weren't for Lucas Wallmark and Andrei Svechnikov, the Hurricanes would be in even bigger trouble.

"They need to be better. That's for sure. That's obvious," Brind'Amour said. "Whether they were scoring or not, I'd be saying that because they're not getting the chances, they're not creating enough and they're giving up too much. That's not a good recipe. Those guys have found a way all year to figure it out, whether we change the lines or do something different to spark something, we'll see. Our top guys, they got to show up, or it's going to be real, real tough."

News Observer LOADED: 04.15.2019

1140907 Washington Capitals

Christian Djoos has barely seen the ice to start this postseason. His coach wants that to change.

By Isabelle Khurshudyan

April 14 at 3:09 PM

Shortening the bench is a pretty common practice for coaches in the Stanley Cup playoffs, but Todd Reirden would prefer the workload on the Washington Capitals' blue line not be quite this lopsided. Through the first two games of this first-round series against the Carolina Hurricanes, the Capitals have three defensemen — John Carlson, Matt Niskanen and Dmitry Orlov — averaging more than 22 minutes a game. Brooks Orpik is next, skating an average of 18:02, and Nick Jensen is at 16:42.

Then there's Christian Djoos, who has played fewer than 14 total minutes through the first two games for an average of 6:46. Reirden has explained some of that as situational — Djoos doesn't play on the power play or the penalty kill, and these games have been heavy on the special teams — but Reirden also doesn't believe playing Carlson nearly 27 minutes a night for what the team hopes is another long playoff run is sustainable.

"I'm very confident in those three players, and I think Brooks has played really well, too," Reirden said Sunday. "Jensen, I thought, had a stronger game yesterday than he did in Game 1, so that's encouraging, and then we've got to use Djoos more often. That's probably not sustainable for the entire playoffs, but in the way the games played themselves out, that was what we wanted to go with at the time and what we felt gave us the best chance to win. Those numbers can change given how the game's playing, and who's playing the best hockey back there will continue to get more ice time."

That answers the question of whether the Capitals might consider a change on the blue line, subbing in rookie Jonas Siegenthaler. The 24-year-old Djoos averaged 10:51 in 22 playoff games for Washington last season, but since he missed two months of the season after compartment syndrome in his thigh, the Capitals haven't seen him quite return to his level of play from earlier in the year. Djoos was on the ice for both of Carolina's goals in Game 1 and then again for the first Hurricanes tally Saturday afternoon.

Carolina's minutes on the blue line have been even more disparate than Washington's. Jaccob Slavin and Justin Faulk have both skated 26-plus per game, while 22-year-old Haydn Fleury has played even less than Djoos with an average ice time of 5:51.

"That's just generally how it works," Hurricanes Coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "You pretty much look at every playoff series, and that's kind of how it goes. I think the strength of our team are our four guys back there, and we try to get them on as much as possible."

Said Reirden: "Once things settle down and special teams don't become such a factor, then I really like our team as a four-line, six-defensemen playing — obviously different amounts of ice time, but I want to use everybody. It's a big factor to having success down the road."

No supplemental discipline for Hamilton

As the NHL's Department of Player Safety has had to get involved in two other Eastern Conference first-round series — Tampa Bay's Nikita Kucherov was suspended for Game 3 against Columbus, and Toronto's Nazem Kadri could be out the remainder of the series against Boston — the league is staying out of the Washington-Carolina matchup for now. Hurricanes defenseman Dougie Hamilton won't face any supplemental discipline for his elbow to the head of Capitals center Evgeny Kuznetsov.

Hamilton was assessed a minor penalty, but there's a big gap between what's an illegal play and what's a suspension-worthy one. In the Department of Player Safety's view, there wasn't enough force here to elevate this to the level of supplemental discipline.

Third goaltender swap

The Capitals are keeping a third goaltender around for the postseason, not that there's anything wrong with Braden Holtby or backup Pheonix Copley. Earlier in the week, Reirden called it "standard practice." After top prospect Ilya Samsonov, the organization's 2015 first-round pick, was in Washington for the first two games, the Capitals returned him to their American Hockey League affiliate in Hershey and recalled Vitek Vanecek instead. He will be with the team for Games 3 and 4 in Raleigh.

Hershey's playoffs will begin Friday, and Washington sent down Samsonov so he could start in the Bears' game Sunday against the Hartford Wolf Pack, the regular season finale.

"We'll continue to address it every day and every few days, but for right now this is going exactly as we had planned it," Reirden said. "We'll readjust after probably Tuesday and look at how we want to do things from there. It's a great opportunity for both Samsonov and Vanecek to be able to be up here and be a part of this and then still remain active in Hershey."

Washington Post LOADED: 04.15.2019



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1140908 Washington Capitals

Capitals take 2-0 lead into game 3 against the Hurricanes

By Associated Press

April 14 at 3:07 PM

Washington Capitals (48-26-8, first in the Metropolitan Division during the regular season) vs. Carolina Hurricanes (46-29-7, fourth in the Metropolitan Division during the regular season)

Raleigh, North Carolina; Monday, 7 p.m. EDT

**EASTERN CONFERENCE FIRST ROUND:** Washington leads series 2-0

**BOTTOM LINE:** The Washington Capitals visit the Carolina Hurricanes in the Eastern Conference first round with a 2-0 lead in the series.

The Hurricanes are 24-13-4 at home. Carolina leads the league shooting 34.4 shots per game while averaging 3.0 goals.

The Capitals are 19-7-2 against opponents from the Metropolitan Division. Washington is second in the Eastern Conference shooting 11.0 percent and averaging 3.3 goals on 30.4 shots per game. The teams meet Monday for the seventh time this season. The Capitals won the last meeting 4-3 in overtime.

**TOP PERFORMERS:** Sebastian Aho leads the Hurricanes with 30 goals, adding 53 assists and totaling 83 points. Teuvo Teravainen has 11 points over the last 10 games for Carolina.

Michal Kempny leads the Capitals with a plus-24 in 71 games played this season. T.J. Oshie has collected 9 points over the last 10 games for Washington.

**LAST 10 GAMES:** Capitals: 7-2-1, averaging three goals, 5.3 assists, 2.4 penalties and 5.7 penalty minutes while giving up 2.2 goals per game with a .923 save percentage.

Hurricanes: 5-4-1, averaging three goals, five assists, 3.2 penalties and 6.6 penalty minutes while giving up 2.3 goals per game with a .919 save percentage.

Hurricanes Injuries: Calvin de Haan: day to day (upper body).

Capitals Injuries: Michal Kempny: out indefinitely (lower body).

Washington Post LOADED: 04.15.2019

1140909 Washington Capitals

Williams ready for Canes' 1st home playoff game in a decade

By Joedy McCreary

April 14 at 3:01 PM

**RALEIGH, N.C.** — The last time Justin Williams played in a postseason game in Raleigh, he skated off with the Stanley Cup.

The stakes aren't quite that high — yet — for the Carolina Hurricanes, but the third game of their best-of-seven series with the Washington Capitals on Monday night does bring his career full circle.

Now, "Mr. Game 7" is ready for Game 3 — the first playoff game at PNC Arena in 10 years — and hoping to keep the Hurricanes from falling into a three-games-to-none hole.

"The anticipation of it is what's getting people really excited, because a lot of people don't really know what it is," Williams said. "Everyone's telling them how great (playoff hockey in Raleigh) is and how fun it is, and it is, but really it's something you've got to experience for yourself. It being a while now, you can kind of sometimes forget and fall into that trap that we've talked about of normalcy. But it's everything it's cracked up to be."

Williams had a lot to do with creating the reputation that had gone dormant during that decade-long drought. As a 24-year-old in 2006, he helped the Hurricanes win the Stanley Cup, and his empty-net goal in Game 7 stands as one of the enduring images in club history. He had been traded to Los Angeles when Carolina made its only postseason appearance since, in 2009.

In the second year of his return, he wants to make more memories during a series he called the "perfect storm" because of his strong ties to both franchises.

He spent just two seasons in Washington from 2015-17, and lost in the second round both years, but Capitals players and executives credit him for helping to lay the foundation of the team that last year won the Cup for the first time.

"He spoke when he needed to. But mostly it was his play," Capitals winger T.J. Oshie said. "Any time the game, the pressure rose or the game got more intense, Justin — or 'Stick,' as we call him — he always seemed to be able to rise to the occasion. And he always seemed to elevate his play to match that pressure. And that's something we all tried to emulate, you know. Last year some guys did a great job of doing that. But it is something special and something not every guy can do. And he's one of those guys who can do it."

Carolina brought him back last season on a two-year deal, and then selected him as captain this season.

"I don't think leadership skills ... can be taught. You just be yourself," Williams said. "Fortunately, I've been around a lot of great leaders, so I've taken little bits and pieces of what I like about them and kind of make it my own. One of the more important things is, you can't fake being a leader. You can't manufacture being a leader. You just are. And you've got to try and do what you can. You can't be bashful about it. You believe in yourself, or you don't."

His teammates say that role suits him, and he's instilled a level of accountability that perhaps wasn't always present during a drought that ranked as one of the longest in NHL history.

He also backed up his occasionally harsh words on the ice, ranking second on the team with 23 goals and third with 53 points while helping Carolina close the regular season by going 31-12-2 in its final 45 regular-season games to climb from last place in the division to a wild-card playoff berth.

Yet he also kept things light, masterminding the "Storm Surge" postgame celebrations that took the league by storm.

"Just how vocal he is, how he demands a lot out of everybody ... he is not afraid to hurt anybody's feelings," forward Jordan Martinook said. "I think he's figured out a very, very good way, and he's a very good motivator. Very good guy to follow because he's done it so many times, and to see his success in the playoffs and even our ... stretch to the end of the year. You see the goals he scores, they're big goals. It's an easy guy to jump on his back."

Williams has thrived throughout his career in Game 7s, owning the NHL record with 14 points in those games and scoring seven goals to tie the mark held by 15-year veteran Glenn Anderson. His teams are 7-1 in those games — hence, the "Mr. Game 7" nickname.



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The Hurricanes have a lot to do to force this one-sided series to a seventh game, but if it should get to that point, they'll be glad they have Williams, just as the Capitals were during their two years with him.

"He has the right blend of leadership, have fun, compete," Capitals GM Brian MacLellan said. "He really senses the tone of an organization, of a team, where they are at in the games and playoffs and he provides — and he did provide us with that leadership, and he is doing the same thing at Carolina now, so he's just a great guy to have on your team."

Washington Post LOADED: 04.15.2019

1140910 Washington Capitals

This could be Brooks Orpik's last run with the Capitals. He's making it count.

By Isabelle Khurshudyan

April 14 at 8:00 AM

He is the one they call "Batya" — a Russian term of endearment that means "dad" — and to understand what Brooks Orpik means to the Washington Capitals, forward Tom Wilson suggests listening to the screams on the ice Saturday when Orpik lifted his stick, spun his right fist high in the air and let out a long "Wooooooo!" before being mobbed by teammates.

"There's really no better guy to score an OT winner," Wilson said.

There's really no one on Washington's roster more unlikely to have scored the goal that lifted the Capitals to a 4-3 overtime win in Game 2 of this first-round series with the Carolina Hurricanes, which Washington leads 2-0. But there's really no one more seasoned for springtime glory — the reason the Capitals re-signed Orpik, 38, for one more year last summer, just one month after trading him in a salary cap-clearing move. His name is already etched on the Stanley Cup twice, and if Washington repeats as champion, it will largely be because of Orpik's influence on the ice and in the dressing room.

"You cannot put a price on experience in playoff hockey," said Capitals Coach Todd Reirden, who coached Orpik as an assistant in Pittsburgh before both men came to Washington five years ago. "I know what happens in playoff time playing against a player like that."

In Game 1 against Carolina, Orpik was the team's muscle, with seven bruising hits that could go a long way to wearing down the Hurricanes by the end of this series. In Game 2, he got four more licks in, skated nearly 19 minutes — including a team-high 3:57 shorthanded — and capped it with a one-timer of Evgeny Kuznetsov's feed for the third playoff game-winning goal of his career. He has just four goals in 151 playoff games, and he has 18 regular season goals for his career, which has spanned 16 years and 1,035 games.

"Orpy is a secret weapon," captain Alex Ovechkin said. Considering Orpik's last playoff goal was the Game 2 winner in the Stanley Cup finals against the Vegas Golden Knights, he's not wrong. Orpik now has two postseason overtime winners, which is two more than Ovechkin.

"Everybody tries to get to a different level at this time of year," Orpik said. "I know me personally, at my age, if I try to play at this level for the whole season, I'd be done halfway through the year. I hate to say I pace myself, but you've just got to play a little more conservatively, especially at my age."

He is the oldest player on the Capitals' roster and the oldest defenseman in NHL history to score an overtime goal in the Stanley Cup playoffs.

These could be Orpik's final NHL games, or they might not be. Expect him to empty the tank either way. Orpik had offers to sign for two years elsewhere, but he did not want to commit for more than one, unsure of his future. As he played his best two games of the season since Thursday, has that been in the back of his mind?

"You always take a little bit of time off after the year and reassess where your body's at and kind of where your family's at," he said. "I don't really think about that; it just kind of distracts you from what we're trying to do."

What the Capitals have done started when they signed Orpik five years ago. The team needed to strengthen the blue line, but it also needed a grown-up in the dressing room to help change the culture. Orpik's discipline — from his diet to his training habits — was an example, and even as he nudged teammates in a more regimented direction, he wasn't overbearing.

"He's friends with the 18-year-old and everyone right across the board," Wilson said. And to that end, it's fitting Orpik's goal on Saturday afternoon was set up by Kuznetsov, whom Orpik befriended their first year together in Washington. Kuznetsov gave Orpik the "Batya" nickname as a show of his appreciation for a player who took the time to teach him a few funny English phrases and help him buy slick suits to wear on game days.

"He's like a dad in the locker room to everybody," center Nicklas Backstrom said. "He's a guy you love to have on your team but you hate to play against."

In a league that has shifted to puck-moving, offensive defensemen, Orpik's bruising style is a throwback, something his teammates appreciate even if some fans occasionally don't. With blue-liner Michal Kempny out for the rest of the season with a torn hamstring, Orpik is playing more, bumped up to a pair with John Carlson in situations when Washington is defending a lead.

Even if this isn't his last postseason in the NHL, it's almost certainly his final run with the Capitals; the team is expected to run into salary cap constraints again this summer, and he will be an unrestricted free agent. But before Orpik or the team get to that, he still has more highlight-reel moments such as Saturday's to add to what is already a significant legacy in Washington.

"If you asked anyone on our team who you would be the happiest to see score an overtime goal, it's probably Brooks Orpik," goaltender Braden Holtby said. "Come playoff time, you realize why that kind of game is so important. The way he plays, how hard he plays, how hard he makes it — it would be tough to play that way all year, but in the playoffs you can tell no one's getting by him."

"He's leaving a mark on everyone, and that wears on a team through a series. That's how important he is on the ice. And his leadership and his drive and mentality make everyone around him better. That's why we're a better team with Brooks Orpik."

Washington Post LOADED: 04.15.2019

1140911 Washington Capitals

Capitals cherish what they have in team dad Brooks Orpik

By Adam Zielonka

Sunday, April 14, 2019

To no one's surprise, Brooks Orpik was the most popular man in the Washington Capitals' locker room after he scored an overtime goal to



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give the Capitals a 2-0 first-round series lead over the Carolina Hurricanes.

"I think if you asked anyone on our team who you would be the happiest to see score an overtime goal, it's probably Brooks Orpik," Braden Holtby said.

Reporters didn't have to ask. Teammate after teammate offered up the same opinion, almost to the letter.

Most teams in the NHL don't have a precise equivalent of Orpik, the Capitals' 38-year-old alternate captain. A "defensive defenseman," as it's called, Orpik is part of a dying breed, those who grind it out with physicality and rarely appear in the score sheet.

But he's also the Capitals' most playoff-experienced player with 151 games — not Alex Ovechkin or Nicklas Backstrom — thanks to the 11 seasons Orpik spent with the Pittsburgh Penguins. He's the locker-room dad; the Russians on the team even nicknamed him batya, an informal Russian term for "father."

Now in his fifth season in Washington, Orpik has rubbed off on the team's younger players, and he always seems to bring something extra come Stanley Cup Playoffs time.

"When we get to this time of the year, I'm probably not counted on for too many goals," Orpik said, "but I think if you want to have the long runs (in the playoffs), you need everybody kind of chipping in and doing things they don't normally do."

There is undoubtedly a bit of irony and humor in the picture when any team's least-active goal-scorer rifles a puck into the net. Orpik himself said last summer that he didn't expect to score during the Stanley Cup Final — before scoring the decisive goal in Game 2 to break a 220-game goalless streak.

"It's a little extra special (when Orpik scores) and you get a little extra excited to go and jump on him and rub your glove in his face and give him a hug," T.J. Oshie said.

Oshie and his teammates did exactly that to thank Orpik for his game-winning goal. But their appreciation for Orpik goes much beyond his rare goals.

"Broosy does so much for all of us on the ice, off the ice," Oshie said. "He sets the tone out there physically for us, blocking shots. Never complains about anything. Guys like that, leaders that don't score a ton of goals, they come up in big moments for you."

Last June, the Capitals knew they needed to move goaltender Philipp Grubauer and found a trade partner in Colorado. But as part of the deal they had the Avalanche take on Orpik's contract as well, which represented a \$5.5 million cap hit on Washington's books.

The Avalanche then bought out Orpik's contract, and after a while he returned to the Capitals on a more manageable one-year, \$1.5 million deal — \$500,000 of that coming in performance bonuses. During preseason, Orpik said he understood why it needed to be done but still felt "blindsided" by the move.

But as cheery as it sounds on its face, coach Todd Reirden said Saturday that "you cannot put a price" on Orpik's playoff experience and what he means to the Capitals.

"I've been through it the last 10 years in the league, actually 10 years with him," Reirden said, referencing their shared time in the Penguins organization, "and I know what happens in playoff time playing against a player like that. I've seen him score more than one overtime, series-clinching (goal), if you go back to my (past) time with him. So, he has just a knack for that and the guys obviously rally around it and are real excited to see somebody that is the complete pro."

That excitement will be crucial as the series shifts to Carolina this week. The Hurricanes are preparing to host their first playoff game at PNC Arena in 10 years, and while Raleigh isn't considered a traditional hockey

market, the team pumped up its fan base all season with its patented "Storm Surge" celebrations after home wins.

Throughout this series, the Capitals have countered that first-time exuberance with their Stanley Cup experience — which ties back to Orpik's wisdom and fire that even fellow veterans respect.

"He's a terrific guy. He's like a dad in the locker room to everybody, very professional guy," Backstrom said. "It's a guy you love to have on your team but you hate to play against."

At 38, Orpik could be in the midst of his final season, not that he's taking that into consideration.

"Last year, it could've been my last year," he said. "Every year's a little bit different. I think you always take a little bit of time off after the year and reassess where your body's at and kind of where your family's at. I don't really think about that, it just kind of distracts you from what we're trying to do."

Orpik steps up in the playoffs not because he can sense a countdown clock ticking, but because he preserves himself for the big stage.

"At my age, if I try to play at this level for the whole season, I'd be done halfway through the year," Orpik said. "I hate to say I pace myself, but you've just got to play a little more conservatively (in the regular season), especially at my age."

Washington Times LOADED: 04.15.2019

1140912 Washington Capitals

Young Caps' fan forced to wear Golden Knights shirt in school gets the last laugh

By J.J. Regan

April 14, 2019 2:20 PM

Being a hockey fan in Las Vegas did not used to test a person's allegiances. With the Golden Knights quickly taking hold of the area, however, a young Capitals' fan was forced to wear a Golden Knights shirt to school much to his dismay.

Kasen Taylor, 7, grew up a Capitals fan thanks to his Aunt, Dana.

"Dana influenced him with the Redskins and mostly the Caps," Kasen's mother, Meghan, told NBC Sports Washington via email. "Since Las Vegas didn't have any pro teams and no one else in the family was really into hockey, it worked out for Dana to have a fan in the making."

Dana brought up both Kasen and his sister, Lauren, to be Caps fans. While his sister developed a love for hockey, she soon became a Golden Knights fan when the city got its first professional franchise.

Kasen, however, remained loyal.

"Everything changed and a rivalry developed between Kasen and his sister Lauren as she became a diehard Knights fan along with the rest of the city," Meghan said. "The two of them bicker and trash talk (as well as a 13 and 7-year-old can) all season long. I was invited to a Knights game through my work and Kasen wouldn't even go with me."

"Kasen's sister jumped ship when the Knights arrived but Kasen stayed true to his team," Dana said. "His exposure to the Caps isn't as prominent as when I lived there and he may not know every player by heart but he knows loyalty for sure."



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Kasen of course likes to remind Lauren who won the 2018 Stanley Cup.

But Kasen's loyalty was put to the test when Kasen's school decided to make a Golden Knights shirt the uniform for its field day. This was unacceptable to Kasen.

"I started chuckling when I saw it," Meghan said. "He sarcastically said 'oh, no...great.' He of course had to call his 'best friend' Aunt Dana about it. So the two of them discussed what he can do (cover up the logo, wear it inside out) and she suggested he write a letter to voice his protest."

My nephew lives in Vegas and he is distraught that he is being forced to wear Knights gear to his field day. He wrote a letter to @Capitals expressing his anger. I hope I can help let his voice be heard. Haha #capskid #wearitinsideout #whathappensinvegas #ALLCAPS pic.twitter.com/RLNTSwu2ac

— DMahG (@danamag75) April 10, 2019

"He does like to point out that this is all my fault for buying him the field day shirt!" Meghan said.

Don't let the shirt fool you, however. Kasen is a member of the Caps kids club and his favorite player is Alex Ovechkin. No Golden Knights shirt is ever going to change that.

Despite his dismay at having to wear the shirt, Kasen ultimately got the last laugh. Not only has his letter got the eye of many local Caps fans and media outlets, many of whom have expressed their support to Kasen, but Kasen also got to wear a jacket.

"The weather was not very nice [Friday] morning for his field day, so he got to wear his jacket most of the day."

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 04.15.2019

1140913 Washington Capitals

Two games into the playoffs, Alex Ovechkin and Nicklas Backstrom are enjoying a role reversal

By J.J. Regan

April 14, 2019 1:17 PM

WASHINGTON – Part of what makes the Capitals such a hard team to defend against is their lethal one-two punch of Alex Ovechkin and Nicklas Backstrom. Ovechkin has established himself over the course of his career as the best goal scorer in the world and perhaps of all-time. Backstrom, meanwhile, is one of the best set-up men in the game. So it comes as no surprise that those two, reunited onto the top line before the playoffs, are giving the Carolina Hurricanes fits. What may be surprising, however, is how they are doing it.

Through the first two games of the series it has been Backstrom who has been finding the back of the net with three goals already. Ovechkin, meanwhile, has recorded one dazzling assist in each of the first two games.

In Game 2 on Saturday, Backstrom scored the game's first goal tipping in a puck on the backdoor behind goalie Petr Mrazek. The pass came off the stick off Ovechkin who brought the puck into the offensive zone, delayed until Backstrom could get separation on defenseman Justin Faulk and delivered the puck through two defensemen.

"When he lines up like that, a lot of people think he's going to shoot because he's got a terrific shot," Backstrom said.

"It was on the tape," he added.

Ovechkin delivered another beauty in the third period. He again entered the offensive zone and cut back allowing Backstrom to set the pick. Nick Jensen drove to the net drawing the defense with him and leaving Tom Wilson wide open. Ovechkin delivered the cross-ice pass to the trailing Wilson who shot home the goal.

"He's one of the best players in the game," Wilson said. "You're not going to be that being a one-trick pony. He does it all. He's a leader, so he does it every night."

"When you play with [Evgeny Kuznetsov or Backstrom], you know, you learn a lot," Ovechkin said. "Right now, Backy is a scoring machine. You know, I'm Backstrom."

The role reversal between two of the team's biggest stars is amusing considering the soft-spoken Backstrom has spent so much of his career in the shadow of the boisterous Ovechkin. As a result, he has been one of the most underrated players in the NHL for much of his career.

The significance in terms of this postseason is that both players are showing off their versatility early on.

It's not just that Ovechkin is setting up teammates with great assists. He also has a goal of his own, he's back-checking, he's throwing big hits.

"He covered for me one time," Wilson said. "It was a 3-on-1 and he was the last guy back and turned it over. He did a heck of a job. That's what playoffs is about, that's what team is about. It doesn't matter who it is. He's our star and he carries the load every single night and it's fun to have him around."

For Backstrom, he's not just scoring. He is also blocking shots, he is playing great on the penalty kill and winning big faceoffs.

"Who's out there three-on-five?" head coach Todd Reirden said. "Who's out there going to the back post for Alex to have that play? Who's taking the faceoffs against their top guys? This player is so underrated. Most consistent guy for us in terms of year-after-year, game-in and game-out. He flies under the radar a lot. Hopefully he gets the respect he does after these first two games. He's always consistent. But these are the best two back-to-back games that I've seen Nick Backstrom play in my five years here."

To win in the playoffs, teams need big games from their best players. That does not mean just getting goals from Ovechkin and just getting assists from Backstrom. It's about the leaders stepping up and providing whatever the team needs them to provide on the ice.

Through two games, the Caps' leaders are doing just that and that is a very positive sign that this could be another lengthy playoff run.

Said Reirden, "Our leadership, our top guys came to play and I'm really proud of them."

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 04.15.2019

1140914 Washington Capitals

Capitals' Alex Ovechkin after flashing passing skills in Game 2: 'I'm Backstrom'

By Chris Kuc

Apr 14, 2019



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 15, 2019

There is very little that Alex Ovechkin can't do on a sheet of ice, including, it seems, morphing from the Capitals' all-time leading goal-scorer into the greatest assist man the franchise has known.

After two jaw-dropping passes led directly to scores during the Capitals' 4-3 overtime victory over the Hurricanes in Game 2 of the Eastern Conference quarterfinals Saturday night at Capital One Arena, Ovechkin revealed he has swapped personas with teammate Nicklas Backstrom.

"Right now, 'Backy' is a scoring machine," Ovechkin said. "You know, I'm Backstrom."

Ovechkin (or should we say, Ovechstrom?) added a chuckle after his quip, but his performance is no laughing matter to the Hurricanes, who thanks to the Capitals captain and his first mate Backstrom, find themselves down 2-0 in the best-of-seven series that will continue with Game 3 on Monday night in Raleigh, N.C.

The roles were reversed for Ovechkin and Backstrom in Game 2, with Backstrom finding the back of the net while Ovechkin was finding the open man.

The greatest goal-scorer of his generation — and arguably in NHL history — again showed there is so much more to his game than lighting the lamp. Nothing better illustrated that than Ovechkin's effort on the Capitals' first goal of Game 2 when he helped break up an odd-man rush by the Hurricanes before delivering a jolting hit on Brett Pesce, racing back the other way and then making a terrific cross-ice pass to Backstrom, who tapped the puck into the goal.

"A lot of people and a lot of players out there expect (Ovechkin) to shoot it all the time and when he comes like that and dishes the puck he creates so much room for other guys," Backstrom said. "He's not just a great goal-scorer, he's a great set-up man, too. That's something maybe he's flying under the radar."

Ovechkin struck again in the third period when he put the puck right on the tape of a streaking Tom Wilson, and the winger wired one past Hurricanes goaltender Petr Mrazek to give the Capitals a 3-2 lead.

That marked Ovechkin's 58th career postseason assist, second in franchise history behind Backstrom's 68. Backstrom's two goals gave him 34 career scores in the playoffs, second to Ovechkin's 62.

"If (Ovechkin) does pass it, you want to score because if you don't, he's got a pretty good shot, too, so he might be upset," Wilson said. "He's one of the best players in the game. You're not going to be that being a one-trick pony. He does it all."

Veteran T.J. Oshie, who also had a goal in a game that was decided when Brooks Orpik scored 1:48 into overtime, said when Ovechkin has the puck, "He draws a lot of attention. Not just from one, two, sometimes three and even four guys are looking to see what he's going to do. And when that happens, if his linemates do a good job of getting open, he creates space and he's able to put it right on the tape."

"I played with (Ovechkin) for a long time — not as much this year, but a long time these past couple years," Oshie continued. "And my numbers were pretty high, (I) scored a lot of goals and a lot of them Ovi was the primary assist because he drags so many people to him."

In addition to his two assists in Game 2, Ovechkin had four shots on goal and a game-high seven hits in 21 minutes, 12 seconds of ice time. That effort drew the praise of Capitals coach Todd Reirden, who paused after being asked about Ovechkin's play in the postgame news conference before launching into a long expression of admiration for the future Hall of Famer.

"When you go into a situation that we were going into to start the year, we needed to have strong leaders in our room," Reirden said. "I've talked about it a number of times this year in the regular season, and I'm going to talk about it (Saturday). You saw again Nick Backstrom finding the back of the net. You saw what Nick Backstrom did in Game 1 with shot blocks and a couple goals. Now you see Alex starts with a big hit in the

corner and then gets everybody engaged and then all the sudden he ends up setting up the play to Nick not long after.

"Then you see him backcheck on Tom Wilson's goal. He comes back as hard anybody and forces a turnover, forces them to turn up and then now he comes all the way back. We always have been talking to him about when he does come back this far, then when he gets the puck he's got a lot more space to work with. Now they're backed off with their gap and now he's able to get entry with his speed and then makes an excellent play on the rush.

"So, I can't talk enough about his overall game and that was a key to us having the success we did last year," Reirden added. "When your captain is doing that and your leading goal-scorer is doing that, then all the sudden people fall in line pretty quickly."

Quite a kick

Oshie's goal was a thing of beauty, including when he kicked the stick out of Justin Williams' hands in the slot before flipping in a backhand past Mrazek.

"It was on purpose," Oshie said. "I don't know, I've done it in the past. Usually, it doesn't really work out. Heat of the moment, it's just my first reaction. Fortunately, I was able to get the puck far enough to the weak side so we could set the post."

Old news

When Orpik fired in his game-winner off a terrific feed from Evgeny Kuznetsov, it marked the defenseman's second postseason overtime goal of his career. At 38 years, 199 days, Orpik is now the oldest defenseman in NHL history to score an overtime goal in the Stanley Cup playoffs. Orpik eclipsed the mark by the Wild's Keith Carney (38 years, 68 days) in Game 2 of the 2008 Western Conference quarterfinals.

"I'm probably not counted on for too many goals, but I think if you want to have the long runs, you need everybody kind of chipping in and doing things they don't normally do," said Orpik, who had two goals in 53 games this season. "It always feels good when the team comes out on top."

The Athletic LOADED: 04.15.2019

1140925 Websites

The Athletic / Roundtable reaction: Are we witnessing one of the biggest collapses in recent NHL playoff history?

By Scott Burnside

Apr 13, 2019

I recently spoke to Minnesota head coach Bruce Boudreau for a story on what it's like to coach in the playoffs and he recalled the Washington Capitals' collapse in 2010 against the Montreal Canadiens. The Capitals were Presidents' Trophy winners and heavy favorites not just to beat the No. 8 seed but also to win their first Stanley Cup. It didn't happen as Montreal shocked the Caps in seven games. "The thing I've learned more than anything," Boudreau said. "Your regular-season game cannot be your playoff game. You have to ramp it up another 20 percent."

And he offered an unsolicited warning for current Presidents' Trophy winners Tampa Bay on the eve of the playoffs: No matter how good you were in the regular season you've got to be better in the playoffs.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 15, 2019

With the Lightning staring at an 0-2 deficit against a committed, hard-working Columbus Blue Jackets team the words now seem prophetic. Throw in that regular-season scoring champ and pending Hart Trophy winner Nikita Kucherov is suspended for Game 3 in Columbus Sunday after losing his stuff late in Game 2 and boarding a defenseless Markus Nutivaara and are we witnessing one of the greatest collapses in playoff history? We asked a collection of The Athletic's NHL writers what's next for the Lightning as they teeter on the brink of a historic meltdown.

Scott Burnside: My favorite part of Game 2 was the chirping between Tampa Bay defenseman Victor Hedman and the Columbus bench that, according to analyst Pierre McGuire, went like this: How did going up 2-0 work out for you last year? That was a shot at the Blue Jackets, who blew a 2-0 series lead over Washington in the first round losing four straight times. It's a history lesson that resonates a year later. And it's safe to say Sunday's game looms as one of the most pivotal in the Lightning's history, especially with Kucherov suspended. The undisciplined play follows a disturbing trend for Kucherov and teammate Steven Stamkos, both of whom went AWOL late in last year's conference final loss to Washington. This spring Stamkos, Kucherov and Brayden Point have combined for zero points in the two losses to open this series. In spite of last spring's outcome, our guess is the answer to Hedman's chirp will go something like this; being up 2-0 is going to work out a lot better for Columbus this spring, thanks for asking.

Pierre LeBrun: The five-alarm fire feels like a potential inferno now for a Tampa Bay squad missing Kucherov for a must-win Game 3. It truly is shocking how all of this has played out so far. No one should be surprised Columbus is playing this way. That part was predictable. They're way better than a wild-card team on paper, and we know why their season has had its ups and downs. They have been playing win-or-die hockey for a while now. But regardless of the opposition, the Bolts can control their own play and that's the stunning part. They've lost their composure. One veteran NHL executive texted me today to say now we'll find out how many winners are on that roster with the adversity they're facing. I mean, it's not like this Tampa Bay core hasn't shown itself playoff ready. They've played a ton of playoff hockey the last half-decade. But the next few days will go a long way toward defining a lot of these players' careers. Win without Kucherov on Sunday and the narrative flips on its head. Now the Jackets would be facing questions about what happened last year with Washington. And the Bolts would be feeding off the season-saving momentum of winning without their best player. Sunday night. It's all right there. The most important early playoff moment in the entire NHL.

Aaron Portzline: I'm sure part of the Blue Jackets' thinking is that, sure, they'd rather face the Lightning without their 128-point player in the lineup. But I'd be shocked if they're making too much out of Kucherov's one-game absence. If anything, they may be fearful that Kucherov's absence — and the possible absence of Hedman, who missed practiced on Saturday — will be a rallying cry for the Lightning. Recall last season when the Blue Jackets came back to Columbus with a 2-0 lead on Washington. They certainly didn't let their guard down in Game 3, but they learned first-hand how quickly momentum can shift in a series. The Blue Jackets have gotten to this point by outworking and out-checking the Lightning, forcing them to play a style of game they didn't have to play much in the regular season. The Lightning need to fix their approach, make adjustments or perhaps just roll up their sleeves. As one recent NHL player said about the Lightning: "They like planting flowers, not pulling weeds."

Craig Custance: At this time last year, I was booking a trip to Columbus to go write about the end of the Barry Trotz era in Washington. The Blue Jackets held a 2-0 lead on his Capitals in round one, he was without a contract beyond last season and there already seemed to be a succession plan in place. Columbus just had to finish it off. We know how that turned out. The Capitals won Game 3 in overtime and things worked out just fine for Trotz and everybody else. It's entirely possible here that history repeats itself but that experience becomes invaluable for the Blue Jackets right now. They know they haven't accomplished anything yet. Kucherov's suspension certainly helps the cause but he has just two

goals in his last 14 playoff games. It's not like he was lighting it up. The Blue Jackets will be locked in and last season's heartbreak woven into their DNA will be a part of it.

Eric Duhatschek: Even without Kucherov for Game 3, the Lightning have enough depth, talent and goaltending to win one game, which is all they need to do in order to get back in the series and all they care about today. Just win one game — because if you win one game, it's 2-1 in the series, a manageable deficit, and in all likelihood, you start to relax and go back to doing the things that made you a 62-win regular-season team in the first place. Tampa Bay looks uncharacteristically tight and out of sync — the exact opposite of the confidence and poise they played with for most of this past season. Heavy expectations can do that to you. In 2006, a 52-win Carolina Hurricanes team lost two games at home to the Montreal Canadiens to open the playoffs — the first by an embarrassing 6-1 count — but came back, won the series and won the Stanley Cup. It can happen. This is a great Tampa Bay team. I'm not prepared to shovel dirt on them until the final buzzer of the final game.

Joe Smith: Captain Steven Stamkos said the Lightning entered this season with the feeling of "this is our time." But is Tampa Bay's time almost up? It has been stunning to watch the Lightning play the past two games. They've been a shell of the team that relentlessly ripped through the regular season. For such a veteran, experienced group that has been on three deep playoff runs in four years, it was striking to see them lose their composure and their cool in Game 2. Kucherov, the Hart Trophy front-runner, put his team in a bad spot by getting suspended for one game for his needless hit Friday. For all the talk of Kucherov maturing this season, this was not a good look. It was a fitting example of the frustration that has engulfed Tampa Bay's top guys, who have been non-factors (Stamkos, Kucherov and Point with no points and a minus-7). Hedman is banged up and doesn't look like himself. Sunday might be one of the biggest games in this core's history together, and we will learn a lot about them in how they respond. I'm not ready to bury the Lightning yet. They're too talented, with too much character to flop like this. Said former captain Vinny Lecavalier, whose '03 Lightning team overcame an 0-2 deficit to Washington in their 2004 Stanley Cup year: "Win one game and it's a whole new series."

The Athletic LOADED: 04.15.2019

1140926 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Jets turn tables on Blues with familiar brand of hockey

Mark Spector

April 15, 2019, 12:10 AM

ST. LOUIS — Whether it was a dishonest batch of pucks, or some kind of vulcanized chicanery through two one-goal losses, the Winnipeg Jets felt like they hadn't had a fair shake from the great Creator of pucks.

"Typically in this game, the puck doesn't lie," explained captain Blake Wheeler.

And by that he means...?

"It means that if you do the right things — and do them over and over and over again — and even if you're snake-bit or bounces aren't going your way, you keep that faith and keep on it... The thing's shaped weird. It's going to bounce your way once in a while."

The frozen rondelle was indeed kinder to the Jets in a 6-3, series-preserving win at St. Louis Sunday night. Winnipeg played a level of hockey that is familiar to the brand that took them to the Conference



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 15, 2019

Final a year ago, and for one night at least, it was much, much more than the St. Louis Blues could handle.

"We've liked a big bulk of our series so far, so that was a positive coming into tonight," Wheeler said. "We didn't have to reinvent the wheel, or pull an 'A' game out of the bag where we'd been playing terrible first two games. It was more of a mental thing we had to overcome than a physical thing.

"We came into this expecting it to go the distance. We're fighting tooth and nail to make that happen."

Oh boy, is this a series now.

On a night where the Pittsburgh Penguins came home a desperate club, where Tampa Bay rolled into Columbus with their playoff lives in the balance, only the Jets had the necessary chutzpah to retrieve this series from an opponent who had jumped them at home, winning two straight in Manitoba. With goals from all four lines, and one from defenceman Dustin Byfuglien, the Jets poured six pucks past young Jordan Binnington in a 6-3 win.

The score, to these eyes, was not indicative of the balance of play — the Jets could have won by four or five. Meanwhile, the Calder Trophy candidate Binnington allowed more than four goals for the first time in his National Hockey League career.

"It could have been 4-0 in the first period," Blues coach Craig Berube said of his goalie. "He played a pretty good game."

Facing the next best thing to elimination, Winnipeg was the proverbial gorilla let out of his cage. They somehow managed to trail 1-0 after 20 minutes despite dominating the period, but simply kept the train rolling down the tracks, riding it to a 3-1 lead into the second intermission. The Blues scored twice in the third but never got a sniff of momentum from either goal, with the Jets answering rapidly each time, quelling any sense of belief in the Blues that they were going to get any love in this game.

"We're building every shift, every game throughout the series," said Kyle Connor, who had two Jets goals. "We're getting closer to our game and it's pretty dangerous.

"It's a start. It's one of many here to go. It's something to build on."

While Winnipeg will be supremely confident after this game, don't expect it leave much of a dent in the St. Louis psyche. The Blues were the best team in the West in the season's second half for a reason. Losing one game to a desperate team in the playoffs won't make them go away.

"No, no panic in this room," said Blues captain Alex Pietrangolo. "We're up 2-1 for a reason. We'll look hard in the mirror. We know that that wasn't us tonight. So take tomorrow and get ready for Tuesday."

"We can't play like this," added winger Vladimir Tarasenko. "It's not like we played in the first two games. We need to refocus here. There's no panic here. Nobody said it was going to be easy. We'll be ready for our next game and come out to win the game."

And so will the Jets. That's why this series just became must-watch TV.

I'd leave your Tuesday evening open.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 04.15.2019

1140927 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Kadri drama overshadows growing list of damaged Bruins blueliners

Luke Fox

April 14, 2019, 3:13 PM

TORONTO – Understandably lost in the nasty drama that unfolded between Nazem Kadri and Jake DeBrusk is the toll Game 2's rampant physicality took on the Boston Bruins' defence corps.

Kadri most certainly has removed himself from the series with his undisciplined cross-check to DeBrusk's face — a severe blow to the Toronto Maple Leafs' centre depth and physical pushback, no doubt — but the Bruins could now be staring at an equally uncomfortable roster reshuffling.

During second-period action of Saturday's 4-1 Bruins victory, rugged Toronto defenceman Jake Muzzin laid a stiff shoulder into a speeding Torey Krug a half beat after he'd dished off the puck in the Leafs' zone.

The clean check popped Krug's helmet off his head and sent the top-four blueliner crashing to the ice.

Down on all fours for a concerning amount of time, Krug tried crawling to his bench and eventually left to the dressing room on his own power. He never returned, and details regarding the severity of his injury remain vague. He is listed as day-to-day and did travel to Toronto.

It was Krug's Game 7 goal, we'll remind you, that kick-started the Bruins' emotional comeback in the 2018 playoff showdown between these teams. This could be the third straight post-season in which he'll be forced to miss games to injury.

The offensive-minded Krug, the club's top-paid and highest-scoring (53 points) defender, suffered a concussion only 32 days ago.

"I don't think you should assume he's concussed," Bruins coach Bruce Cassidy said. "We don't know that yet."

There's more.

Third-pair defender Connor Clifton, a rookie who's endeared himself to Cassidy through his physical play and penalty-killing skills, also left Game 2 late. Clifton's Game 3 status, too, is now in question.

Both players travelled with the club to Toronto.

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Once a source of depth, Boston's blue line has become a crowded sick bay. It's arguable that Krug, who quarterbacked the Bruins' lethal power-play and logged more ice time on average (21:18) than anyone on the team, would be a greater loss than Kadri.

Off-season acquisition John Moore (upper body) has yet to enter the series. He participated in Sunday's optional practice, ditching his red, non-contact sweater for the first time in a week.

Kevan Miller (lower body) is farther behind in his recovery and suffered "additional swelling," per GM Don Sweeney, that makes a return less imminent.

A dip into the farm system may be required, opening an opportunity for the Leafs' high-powered offence to pounce on some inexperience.

Jakub Zboril has been recalled and will be on hand if needed for games 3 and 4. The 22-year-old has all of two NHL appearances. He put up 19 points in 56 games in the AHL this season.

"We have Steven Kampfer," Cassidy said of the next man up. "Obviously, [we will] draw him into the lineup if necessary. He's done a good job for us. And if we're down two guys, we have to look at Providence. Is Johnny Moore ready?"

Kampfer, a 30-year-old journeyman, appeared in 35 games this season, registering three goals, three assists, 22 penalty minutes and minus-6 rating.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 15, 2019

Bruce Cassidy said they might have to look to Providence for a defenseman, with Krug & Clifton banged up. In Prov, Lauzon's missed last 2 games with upper body injury. Vaakanainen (sick) also has sat out last 2. Zboril is healthy, but struggled Fri. night with Sweeney watching

— Mark Divver (@MarkDivver) April 14, 2019

The Bruins are also awaiting the return of fourth-line forward Sean Kuraly (fractured right hand), who is hopeful for Friday's Game 5.

Jake DeBrusk is "doing better" after the Kadri cross-check, per Cassidy, and is listed as day-to-day.

While the Maple Leafs are going to miss Kadri, Toronto can take some solace in icing the healthier the lineup.

An opportunity to seize upon Boston's banged-up back end has presented itself.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 04.15.2019

1140928 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Flames navigating first taste of playoff adversity with confidence

Eric Francis

CALGARY – No one trashed the dressing room, smashed their stick or threw anyone under the bus.

Nobody blamed the officiating or chalked it up to bad luck. Even a day later, no one made excuses. The Calgary Flames are owning their Game 2 overtime loss to Colorado.

As they should. They simply weren't good enough. They weren't fast enough or hard enough to play against, and they definitely didn't open with the type of emotion and intensity the Avalanche did.

And from all that Mike Smith actually takes great solace.

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"I don't think we've played our best hockey yet," said the Flames' 37-year-old netminder, showing no signs of concern following Saturday's 3-2 overtime loss at the Saddledome.

"I think everyone in here will tell you the same thing – I think we were a little tentative. We weren't skating as well as we can and we have, and it made them look really, really fast. We'll clean that up."

The Avalanche looked fast alright – much faster than a Flames crew that chased the Avs around the ice in the first two periods while Smith played hero once again. But with every glove snare, pad stop and ensuing chant of his name, there was still a feeling Colorado ultimately wouldn't be denied.

Even when Sean Monahan put the Flames up 2-1 with seven minutes left, it felt like just a matter of time before someone – J.T. Compher would be the one to step forward – would tie the game with the goalie pulled for an extra attacker. His goal involved a fortuitous bounce, but given how hard the Avs had been pressing the first two games they certainly deserved some puck luck.

And now they return to Colorado with a 1-1 split that gives them home-ice advantage, the knowledge Smith can be solved, and a belief they can

finally beat Calgary – something they hadn't done in four previous tries this season.

If all that momentum wasn't enough, GM Joe Sakic just signed and airlifted in arguably the hottest defensive prospect in hockey – Cale Makar, who won the Hobey Baker Award Friday, one day before his UMass Minutemen lost in Saturday's Frozen Four final.

The most delicious irony of it all – he's an Alberta Junior Hockey League grad from Calgary.

Smith and the rest of the Flames can be forgiven for not caring much at all about the goings-on in the opposition's camp. They're just focused on playing closer to the type of style that made them runaway winners of the Western Conference.

They did so on the power of tremendous depth and consistency that ensured they rebounded well from various setbacks.

This is their first taste of playoff adversity.

"If anyone thought in here we were going to sweep this team, I think we got another thing coming for us," said Smith, who has stopped 62 of 65 shots in a series that took a dramatic turn when Nathan MacKinnon's rocket found the top shelf in overtime Saturday.

"It's going to be a long series, and you have to prepare yourself for that.

"We haven't skated like we can – I think our execution has been a little bit sloppy at times. I thought we got better as the game went on again. We need to bring it for the whole game. That's what it's going to take in the playoffs. To get where you want to be you have to be as consistent as possible, as mistake-free as possible."

Smith has done well to mask those mistakes in the first two games as the central figure in a series that has featured plenty of physicality, endless speed and phenomenal goaltending at both ends.

Philipp Grubauer, who entered the playoffs as the NHL's hottest netminder not named Jordan Binnington, made 35 saves to backstop the Avs in a tight, entertaining game.

Flames coach Bill Peters, who was critical of his team's slow start Saturday, said Sunday he'll likely make a few minor changes to his lineup ahead of Game 3 in Denver on Monday. Otherwise, the goal is for things to remain business as usual.

After all, business has been good this year for the Flames.

"It's a game of mistakes – a game of inches – the margin of error is so small in the playoffs," said Smith, whose name reverberated around the Dome for the second-straight game.

"It's cliché, but every play counts mentality. You have to have that to be successful.

"There are going to be breakdowns but you have to know how to cover them up and do the right things. We did a lot of good things. Our penalty killers did an unbelievable job tonight. The power play gets one for us.

"We'll be better when we get to Colorado."

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 04.15.2019

1140929 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Avalanche finally break through against Mike Smith, Flames

Eric Francis



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 15, 2019

April 14, 2019, 8:26 AM

CALGARY – Two nights after stealing the spotlight, Mike Smith came within a hair of outright stealing a game.

Alas, justice was ultimately served in the form of a 3-2 overtime win for the Colorado Avalanche ending with a Nathan MacKinnon rocket that beat Smith clean glove side.

The Saddledome-silencing snipe came just over eight minutes into overtime, capping a dramatic turn of events that finished with one of the game's biggest stars showing everyone why.

"As good as Calgary was in Game 1, and even tonight, I thought we were one step ahead," said Avs captain Gabriel Landeskog, whose club has indeed been the better of the two in a first round series now tied 1-1.

"We were winning battles and to be honest with you we deserved this one. Now, in playoffs it doesn't always work that way, or in hockey in general. The team that deserves to win doesn't always win. But we believed, and now we're going to carry this momentum into Game 3."

After being stonewalled by Smith Thursday in a 4-0 loss peppered with endless chants of "Smitty, Smitty," the Avalanche responded with a dominating performance which had the Flames on their heels early and often.

Yet, Calgary's 37-year-old goaltender held the fort until midway through the game when Matt Nieto capitalized on a T.J. Brodie gaffe at Colorado's blue line, raced in alone and buried the opener past Smith.

The short-handed goal marked the first time in 45 shots the Avs were able to solve the man who was previously considered to be the biggest question mark heading into the series.

Now the bigger question is how Calgary will respond to losing home ice advantage to a surging Avs bunch that entered the playoffs as one of the league's hottest.

"I mean, we're fine," said Flames forward Sam Bennett, who had two assists, four hits and a cut across his cheek to show for another night of full engagement.

"We're not hitting the panic button or anything. We're a good team – we all believe in each other. It's just a matter of getting that start and being more prepared."

After a Rasmus Andersson power-play goal tied the game 1-1 five minutes later, the Flames responded properly with a third period that had them poised to complete the steal when Sean Monahan swatted in the go-ahead goal with seven minutes remaining in the third.

J.T. Compher tied it with the goalie pulled and 2:39 left on the clock, setting up an overtime frame opened rather early with a power-play chance the Flames squandered.

Four minutes later, Philipp Grubauer came up with a big save on Michael Frolik, which led to a Mikko Rantanen pass over the blue line giving MacKinnon the golden chance he finished brilliantly.

Smith's trapper, which has robbed the Avalanche of so many great chances early in this series, was beaten in dramatic fashion on MacKinnon's seventh shot of the night.

"He's a good goaltender, no doubt – he's making the saves he should make and then he's making some on top of that as well," said Landeskog, whose club fired 39 shots on goal.

"For us, we're not going to just roll over because we're running into a hot goalie. We have a lot of offensive weapons in this room and we believed it was just a matter of time before we broke through. Nate – just a great shot."

Though overshadowed by Smith's heroics most of the night, Grubauer stopped 35 shots to continue the play that helped lift the Avs into the second wild-card spot with a furious finish to the regular season.

And while the Flames swept the three-game season series and managed to pull off a win to open the playoff matchup, they're suddenly facing the type of adversity their consistency and depth took care of all season long.

"I think it's a learning experience for sure," added Bennett.

"No one is happy with the way we played in the first couple periods. Smitty bailed us out too many times to count. He's been playing great and we have to do a better job in front of him.

"We're going to learn our lesson and play Game 3 with a lot more urgency."

Coach Bill Peters agreed the team failed to start on time – a development masked once again by Smith.

"Both games he kept us in it – to have the confidence of a goalie like that we definitely can't let that go to waste," said Bennett.

"The first half of the game they seemed hungrier than us, like they wanted it more. Our team did a good job battling back, but sometimes when you let a team walk all over you in the first it makes it tough to come back. We didn't have a big enough pushback.

"They were more physical. They were faster. We have a fast and physical team and we didn't show it in the first."

They'll get a chance to show it Monday in Denver.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 04.15.2019

1140930 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Deja vu for Leafs' Kadri after dirty cross-check vs. Bruins

Chris Johnston

April 14, 2019, 2:18 AM

BOSTON — It won't take long for the NHL's Department of Player Safety to write the script for Nazem Kadri's next suspension video, they merely need to change a couple of words from the one they used to announce his three-game ban during last year's playoffs.

But Kadri won't get off so lightly this time around.

In fact, he's not likely to see another shift in this first-round series against the Boston Bruins, nor should he, given his long history of crossing the line with illegal shots to an opponent's head.

There's absolutely no evidence Kadri has learned his lesson or felt contrition. Not after forfeiting nearly \$400,000 in salary for his previous on-ice transgressions, and putting Toronto in a significant hole last spring for a dirty hit no more than 10 feet from where he violently cross-checked Jake DeBrusk to the side of the head Saturday night.

If you feel like history keeps repeating itself in these Bruins-Leafs series, you're not imagining it.

Where things differ this time, is that disciplinarian George Parros offered Kadri an in-person hearing, which leaves the NHL with the option of handing down a suspension of six games or more. The league is not compelled to do so, but the sky's the limit for how high it can go.



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Kadri's lengthy rap sheet will work against him because the severity of punishment increases for successive violations.

Each of his previous four career suspensions involved a blow to another player's head — either with his stick, arm or posterior. Tommy Wingels was down in a prone position when Kadri responded to a hit on linemate Mitch Marner in Game 1 of last year's series by leaping toward the Bruins forward and driving him into the boards.

As part of the video explaining his suspension, here's what the NHL DoPS said: "While we acknowledge that Wingels makes contact with Marner moments before, players are never permitted to retaliate in an illegal fashion. This is a forceful and illegal hit delivered on a defenceless opponent for the purpose of retribution and message-sending and such plays will not be tolerated."

Fast forward 366 days and here we are again.

Kadri and DeBrusk were going at it right from puck drop in Game 2. They got tangled up early and DeBrusk hit Kadri with a couple of punches, which somehow led to offsetting penalties at 11:12 of the first period.

The Leafs centre grew visibly frustrated with referees Trevor Hanson and Brad Meier, who turned a blind eye to transgressions from both teams, including an elbow from DeBrusk that bloodied Travis Dermott. The heat continued to rise inside TD Garden and the officials couldn't keep the lid on a boiling pot since they'd lost their whistles.

"It was a physical game," said Leafs coach Mike Babcock. "The referees, the way they refed the game, let a lot of stuff go, obviously."

One of the few minors given out was a ticky-tack hooking call on Kadri in the second period. When it was killed off, he raced back into the Leafs' end and was sent flying by DeBrusk after a knee-on-knee hit.

Kadri went straight to the dressing room and wouldn't return until the third period.

"We thought it was [knee-on-knee]," said Leafs centre John Tavares.

"I thought it was clean," said Bruins coach Bruce Cassidy. "Looking back on it, shoulder-to-shoulder. Obviously, Kadri stayed down, I mean that's his prerogative when you get hit."

Toronto clawed back some territory in the final period of a game that was otherwise completely dominated by the Bruins. Kadri even tipped home a Dermott point shot to get the Leafs back to 3-1 down before all hell broke loose.

It happened innocently enough, with DeBrusk driving Patrick Marleau into the rounded glass at the end of Boston's bench on a clean hit. Kadri skated immediately toward the Bruins player and changed the position of his stick before slamming it into the side of DeBrusk's helmet, earning a cross-checking major, game misconduct and a whole lot more trouble.

As if the parallels with last year's incident didn't look bad enough, Kadri was suspended four games in April 2016 for cross-checking Detroit's Luke Glendening in the head. There's a well-established pattern here. The message hasn't gotten through.

Kadri's absence will leave a sizeable hole in the Leafs' lineup, with either Marleau or William Nylander forced to move into the middle to replace him. At least they've got Tavares this time around to help Auston Matthews shoulder the most high-leverage assignments against Boston.

But the positive aspects of Kadri's game — his competitive, agitating side and ability to be a secondary scorer — will be missed dearly.

"Naz is a crucial part of our team," said Tavares.

Still, there was no excuse for his poor decision-making.

Not the spotty refereeing, nor the knee-on-knee hit, nor the fact Boston was clearly trying to send a message by upping its physical play. Had Kadri chosen to cross-check DeBrusk in the shoulder or tried to engage him in a fight, he wouldn't be facing the longest suspension of his career.

"It's not easy," Tavares said of turning another cheek. "Luckily [the knee-on-knee] wasn't serious, but something like that could be very serious."

"In the end, you can't let that get in the way of what you're doing," said Babcock. "Playing in the Stanley Cup playoffs isn't supposed to be easy and it's worth it."

That's a satisfaction Kadri won't experience again soon.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 04.15.2019

1140931 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Maple Leafs get full big, bad Bruins experience in Game 2 loss

Luke Fox

April 13, 2019, 10:58 PM

BOSTON – Bruce Cassidy brought a sledgehammer to a chess match.

Sensing a need for an intensity injection after his club was left gasping and flat after the Toronto Maple Leafs' series-opening win Thursday, the Boston Bruins coach vowed to try some different things in Game 2.

So, he tweaked his roster, juggled his match-ups, and unleashed the hounds.

As David Backes walked down from the press box and toward the Bruins dressing room pre-game, the happy-nasty veteran snatched a yellow rally towel off a stack of freebies and giddily twirled it over his head. He was going in.

From the moment Rob Gronkowski slipped on a Pastrnak sweater, whipped the Bruins flag like a madman and body-checked the glass to rile up the locals, the Bruins' 4-1 Saturday-night steamrolling of their visitors had a feeling of inevitability — and the puck hadn't even dropped yet.

"In playoffs, usually the team that loses comes out the next game harder," said Maple Leafs defenceman Jake Muzzin, whose face needed stitching. "We have to understand that."

If the young Leafs didn't grasp that concept before, it was drilled into the heads (and shoulders and faces) in a smash-mouth, lopsided, will-imposing affair that has altered the series' tone, removed some key players, and ratcheted the tension tenfold.

"We didn't play to our identity in Game 1," Cassidy said. "How do you respond? You're physical. Win the puck battles. Control momentum in the first period. Attack when you have the chance. We hit a lot of check lists. Basically, let them know how we're going to play."

Much happened in this one, most of it at Toronto's expense.

By the end of the first period, two Leafs defenders, Travis Dermott and Jake Muzzin, had their faces bloodied by a Bruin's doing. By the end of the second, mild-mannered Frederik Gauthier had been roped into a retaliation penalty and Nazem Kadri had hobbled to the dressing room after going airborne with a knee-on-knee from Jake DeBrusk.

Those big, bad Bruins embraced and enforced their identity, pressuring the Leafs into costly gaffes through aggression, generating 14 high-danger chances to Toronto's five.



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"We've got some guys who have been through some nasty series in the past. I don't anticipate problems there," Cassidy said. "We're not a team that runs from a physical game. It brings out the best of us at times."

Backes made his case to remain in the lineup early and often, delivering a game-high seven hits. The big winger's fierce forecheck helped spring Massachusetts native Charlie Coyle — Muzzin's man, unchecked — for his first playoff goal as a Bruin, and by the game's eight-minute mark the shots were 10-1 for the men in black.

"We had guys dialed in tonight," Backes said. "Game 1 was a slap in the face, a little wake-up call."

A poor defensive line change, the result of Mike Babcock trying to chase his match-ups, left Nikita Zaitsev hanging on a beautifully executed two-on-one strike by David Pastrnak and Brad Marchand.

And a ghastly William Nylander fumble as he tried to carry the puck harmlessly behind his own net resulted in a gift for Danton Heinen — and a curse for Frederik Andersen, who was otherwise solid in the loss. (Andersen later attributed Nylander's mistake to bad ice.)

Leafs Nation, led by GM Kyle Dubas's grandmother, was outraged by the contest's rather inconsistent officiating.

Nazem Kadri drew an offsetting roughing minor when DeBrusk rammed his face, then another soft hooking call in the second period.

As soon as he'd finished serving his second minor, Kadri hopped the boards and tried to break up a play in the Leafs zone. DeBrusk cruised through middle ice and caught him knee-on-knee.

"I'm not a dirty player," DeBrusk said. "I don't think I intended to knee-on-knee him."

National Hockey League @NHL. Watching the Leafs and Bruins, did you borrow the Officials from the OHL. It sure looks that way. Shameful!

— Marietta Dubas (@grammadubie) April 14, 2019

That play went unpenalized. Kadri limped off but returned for the third to score on a nifty tip from a Dermott point shot.

When DeBrusk checked winger Patrick Marleau into the stanchion, however, Kadri immediately charged toward him and cross-checked him in the head, drawing a major, a game misconduct, and a request for an in-person hearing from the league's department of player safety.

Kadri's series is essentially over, and there is concern about the health of Boston defenceman Torey Krug, knocked so hard by a clean Muzzin check that he was down on all fours for a while before leaving the game for good. (Krug suffered a concussion in March.)

It's on.

"We're not gonna be pushed around," said Kadri pre-game, more engaged than he's been all year but now at risk of another undisciplined suspension. "I think we made that very clear."

Patrice Bergeron scored on the five-minute power-play, putting this one to rest.

Cassidy also had great success in pulling his Perfection Line away from Babcock's Hyman-Tavares-Marner unit, but he won't have that privilege when the 1-1 series shifts to Scotiabank Arena for Game 3 Monday.

"We just played our style of hockey," Bruins defenceman Charlie McAvoy said. "Everyone's life is on the line, and so we have guys that like to play that kind of style."

It's Babcock's move now — and he won't have the same centre depth, let alone a sledgehammer, in his quiver.

"We don't want to get away from what we do well," John Tavares said.

The series now becomes what it was always intended to be: a battle of wills, of coaches, of attrition, of differing identities.

Big and bad versus skilled and speedy.

"The referees, the way they reffed the game, let a lot of stuff go," Babcock said. "You can't let that get in the way of what you're doing. Playing in the Stanley Cup playoffs isn't supposed to be easy, and it's worth it."

"Every game in this series is supposed to get better, it's supposed to get harder. We have to elevate our game here and respond."

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 04.15.2019

1140932 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Should Leafs' Kadri be suspended for cross-checking Bruins' DeBrusk?

Emily Sadler

April 13, 2019, 11:10 PM

Toronto Maple Leafs forward Nazem Kadri was the busiest man in Boston on Saturday night in what was a physical game against the Bruins, but he may have taken things too far.

After a fast-paced Game 1, the rough stuff between the Leafs and Bruins ratcheted up several notches in Game 2 and Kadri was in the middle of most of it. The Leafs' lone goal-scorer of the night was warring with Bruins forward Jake DeBrusk all game — the two exchanged more than a few verbal and physical jabs over the course of 60 minutes — and Kadri even had an injury scare after a knee-on-knee collision with his sparring opponent.

But late in the third period with emotions starting to boil over, Kadri landed himself in hot water when he cross-checked DeBrusk in the face. The incident occurred with six minutes remaining in the game when Kadri took exception to DeBrusk's hard hit on Patrick Marleau. Marleau was fine, jumping up immediately after contact, but Kadri's retaliatory actions sent DeBrusk falling to the ice where he remained while a small scrum ensued.

UPDATE: The NHL Department of Player Safety announced later Saturday that Kadri has been offered an in-person hearing, which means he can be suspended more than five games.

Toronto's Nazem Kadri has been offered an in-person hearing for Cross-checking Boston's Jake DeBrusk. Date and time TBD.

— NHL Player Safety (@NHLPlayerSafety) April 14, 2019

Kadri was given a five-minute major for cross-checking and a game misconduct. If suspended, it won't be his first time sitting out playoff games at the decision of the player safety department. Just last year, the forward earned himself a three-game suspension for boarding then-Bruins forward Tommy Wingels in Game 1 of the teams' first-round series.

The Bruins went on to win 4-1 Saturday to tie the series at one game apiece. Game 3 will take place in Toronto on Monday night at 7 p.m. ET.

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# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 15, 2019

Sportsnet.ca / Coach's Corner: How Tortorella has Blue Jackets up vs. Lightning

Emily Sadler

Two of the biggest surprises of the Stanley Cup Playoffs so far have been the Columbus Blue Jackets' back-to-back wins over the Tampa Bay Lightning to go up 2-0 in the series.

Aside from the first 20 minutes of the series when the Lightning looked like they'd be running away with the first round, it's been the wild cards of Columbus who have dominated the scoreboard and sounded the alarm bells in Tampa.

According to Don Cherry, the secret to the Blue Jackets' success is in the way head coach John Tortorella is handling his club — and approaching his opponent.

"Here's what John Tortorella's done: He said, 'Look. This team's the best hockey team in the world, go at them.' Everybody else goes in a little afraid. Go at them," Cherry said during Coach's Corner Saturday night.

Since being down 3-0 in the first period of Game 1, the Blue Jackets have outshot Tampa Bay 48-41 and outscored them 9-1.

"They went at them, and that's why they're up," Cherry said.

Also working in Tortorella's favour, said Cherry, is the fact that several players are eying new contracts this off-season.

Artemi Panarin and Sergei Bobrovsky will be on the hunt for lucrative new deals this summer as unrestricted UFAs, while rentals Ryan Dzingel, Matt Duchene, and Adam McQuaid are also slated to hit the open market. That's some powerful incentive.

"He's got five guys coming up for contracts, so he's got a lot of things going for him right now, up 2-0," said Cherry. "Couldn't be a better guy, John Tortorella, as far as I'm concerned."

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 04.15.2019

1140934 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / 5 things we learned about the 2018-19 Canucks

Iain MacIntyre

April 13, 2019, 10:59 AM

VANCOUVER — An old, inky sportswriter once described the National Hockey League team he covered as the greatest drama going.

Think about it: the plot is a series of cliffhangers (games) involving an ever-changing cast of characters beloved and disparaged, good guys and bad guys who carry their audience to euphoric, thrilling highs or drag them to angry, discouraging lows. Often in the same week.

Sports became the original — and is still the best — reality television. Nowhere do these dramas engage and dominate their markets more than in Canadian NHL cities. Former coach Alain Vigneault aptly described coaching the Vancouver Canucks as like coaching the New York Yankees, but without the New York Mets, Knicks, Rangers, Jets and Giants to distract the audience.

The plots in these dramas literally never end. There is always something new, and something else coming around the corner. As the shows spike with the Stanley Cup Playoffs this week in Calgary, Winnipeg and Toronto, here are five things we learned during the Canucks' fourth straight season without them.

### PETEY PANS OUT

Nothing sparks hope like a wispy wizard who arrives in the NHL as a teenager after an MVP season in the Swedish Hockey League and then still surpasses expectations. Elias Pettersson, who turned 20 in November after opening his NHL career with 10 goals in 10 games, really is the most exciting Canucks prospect since Pavel Bure, and like the Russian Rocket is going to win the Calder Trophy.

Even with a couple of injuries and a last-quarter slump when he struggled to adjust to the heightened intensity of the stretch drive along with increased attention and aggressiveness from opponents, Pettersson still led the Canucks as a rookie with 28 goals and 66 points in 71 games. Pettersson is a game-changer, a franchise-changer.

The paramount difference between his arrival in Vancouver and Bure's 28 years earlier is that Bure joined a very good, young team with a solid roster built around Trevor Linden and Kirk McLean, while Pettersson is here soon after the Canucks' nadir and will be the biggest piece of whatever this Vancouver team becomes. Two years ago, after the NHL Draft Lottery fulfilled its function as a fan spectacle by kicking the Canucks down two spots to fifth in the order, general manager Jim Benning believed he found the most talented player in the 2017 draft at No. 5. He also found a cornerstone at centre.

### FOUNDATION FORMING

Had it occurred next fall instead of this spring, Quinn Hughes' arrival in Vancouver would have generated the same levels of frenzied excitement and optimism as Pettersson's did in October. The dynamic defenceman from the University of Michigan, who fell as if from heaven into the Canucks' grateful arms with the seventh pick of the 2018 draft, played only the final five games of the regular season but was everything Vancouver hoped he would be.

The 19-year-old, who should have spent the whole season in the NHL but agreed with the Canucks last summer that he would return to Michigan for his sophomore year at college, collected three assists while averaging 18:04 of ice time. He was a one-man breakout, a marvellous skater able to control zone exits and entries and drive possession. And we're not sure five minutes is worth the price of admission with what NHL tickets cost in Canada, but Hughes' brief appearances in overtime with Pettersson and Boeser as three-on-three linemates were mesmerizing.

Boeser, last year's Calder runner-up, finished his second season with 26 goals and 56 points in 69 games, impressive considering the serious back and wrist injuries that ended his rookie campaign and significantly set him back in training last summer. With centre Bo Horvat (27 goals and 61 points) and goalie Jacob Markstrom (28-23-9 and .912 save percentage) getting better again, the future of the team has become clearer with the arrival of Pettersson and Hughes. The foundation still needs another top defenceman and a winger or two, but the Canucks are getting closer.

### PROBLEM IN THE PIPELINE

The most troubling part of the season for the Canucks organization was the Utica Comets. It wasn't that Vancouver's farm team, thinned by injuries in upstate New York and the NHL, struggled down the stretch and will miss the American Hockey League playoffs. It's that it failed to generate much obvious development in a handful of supposedly talented prospect-forwards.

Petrus Palmu went home to Finland and Jonathan Dahlen, arguably the top prospect in Utica, grew so frustrated with his playing time under coach Trent Cull that he requested and was granted a trade. Second-round picks Kole Lind and Jonah Gadjovich each has only three goals in their first seasons of professional hockey, and talented Czech Lukas



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Jasek had just 24 points in 60 games after managing seven points in six games at the end of last season.

To be fair to Cull, there were some development successes. Zack MacEwen had 50 points in 66 games, Canucks centre Adam Gaudette benefitted from two brief spells in the AHL, defencemen Ashton Sautner and Guillaume Brisebois got extended looks in the NHL, and second-tier prospect Michael Carcone developed well enough for Vancouver to send him to Toronto in what turned out to be a good trade for Josh Leivo. But it's impossible to overlook the lack of production from so many others, which is why Benning is starting an inquiry into what went wrong.

### NOT A GOALIE GRAVEYARD

It says a lot about the impact of Markstrom's season that the 29-year-old late bloomer was correctly voted by Canucks fans as the team's Most Valuable Player ahead of Pettersson. Only four goalies in the NHL logged more ice time than Markstrom, whose save percentage of .920 after Dec. 1 was even more impressive when factoring in the shot quality he faced behind a spotty defence weakened by injuries.

Markstrom's breakthrough made a couple of things clear. Thatcher Demko, promoted from the minors in January but restricted by injury to just nine mostly-impressive games (.913 save rate), may not have to be the goalie-of-the-future and when further developed could give the Canucks a valuable trade asset. And goaltending guru Ian Clark, who returned to the organization after seven years away and made an obvious impact on Markstrom, better get re-signed before his contract expires after next season.

### UNDER PRESSURE

You couldn't get Benning or coach Travis Green to say it at their year-end press conference this week, but the Canucks' goal next season is making the playoffs. The Canucks will be celebrating 50 years in the NHL, and it will be Benning's sixth season in charge. Local owner Francesco Aquilini, who in his desire to be a populist thinks too much at times like the fans, has been accused of interfering in hockey operations. But he has stomachached this rebuild as well as most owners could and given Benning the time necessary to construct a team. The GM is going into the final year of his contract and would like another extension. He may have to wait until the Aquilini family, which pushed out president of hockey operations Trevor Linden last summer, sees how the Canucks do next season.

The team improved by eight points this year when most observers predicted it would get worse. Benning and Green need to find another 10-15 points next season.

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1140935 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Tyler Bozak thriving with Blues, cheering on Maple Leafs from afar

Mark Spector

April 13, 2019, 4:52 PM

ST. LOUIS — Tyler Bozak hopped off the St. Louis Blues charter flight on Saturday, kissed his wife when he arrived home, and then settled in for an afternoon with a three-year-old and a nine-month-old — like any dad on any day.

And you know what else he had planned on Saturday that made him no different than any of us? He planned to watch the Maple Leafs play

Game 2 in Boston, just to see if his former 'boys' could do what the St. Louis Blues have done to the Winnipeg Jets — win the opening two games of their series on the road.

"I watch the Leafs games, oh yeah," Bozak said. "I cheer for them. Mitchy (Mitch Marner), he's a good friend of mine. Played on a line with him for most of two years. It's pretty cool to see him doing so well.

"He's still getting better and better. It's going to be crazy to see in the next few years what he's doing."

Bozak, of course, could be talking about himself, as he authors an honest, effective National Hockey League career away from the glare of the team he broke in with in Toronto. Somehow having turned 33 right before our eyes, he has landed here in St. Louis, that utility knife, third-line centre that every good team has in its lineup.

Think Guy Carbonneau, or Sami Pahlsson. Maybe a little John Madden, or some Manny Malhotra.

Or perhaps a more recent example?

"How about (Calgary's) Mikael Backlund?" offers Patrick Maroon, Bozak's left-winger on a line that has befuddled the Jets through 120 minutes of playoff hockey.

Backlund has grown into a trusty faceoff man and dependable defensive rock, giving the Flames 20 goals and 45-50 points a year. And what does Bozak do for the Blues?

"Wins faceoffs. Very skilled. Centres a good shutdown line. Can take D-zone faceoffs. Can score goals and make high-end plays," said Maroon. "Bozie just has that veteran presence. He'll get you 15-20 goals, 45-50 points a year, and he'll find ways to grind it out every night.

"You can use him all three zones — he's an all-around player."

It's been a pretty cool journey for a Regina kid who chose the Leafs from a league-wide field of teams that courted him as a college free agent out of the University of Denver. It was then Leafs Assistant GM Joe Nieuwendyk who finally earned Bozak's trust, which was well placed when you consider that Nieuwendyk's Flames pioneered the art of building an NHL team full of NCAA grads, under the great Badger Bob Johnson.

Today, Bozak centres a line with Maroon and the sublimely skilled rookie Robert Thomas, a unit that produced the game-winner in Game 1, and then erased the Jets' only Game 2 lead when Maroon shovelled one home in a 4-3 win on Friday.

"I feel rejuvenated," Bozak said, chatting easily while sitting in his stall in the visitors' room in Winnipeg. "A new opportunity, in a new role, in a new place. You want to prove to the guys and the general manager that they made the right decision. Took a little time to get used to the systems, playing in the West instead of the East, but it's been awesome. The family loves St. Louis."

Talk about night and day, Bozak moved from the centre of the hockey universe to the equivalent of, say, Neptune. Not the furthest market from the sun, but closing in on it.

"Our fans are awesome, but baseball is the dominant sport in the city. The Cardinals (players) are the big dogs in town," he said.

What's the biggest difference being an NHL player in Missouri?

"Just the attention that you get, or the pressure that it might bring. You don't get bugged everywhere you go around town. When you leave the rink, you're away from hockey."

St. Louis sports fans know who Bozak is, "but they don't really bug you like they might in Toronto. You can forget about the game," he said. "You know, you play so much hockey you're at the rink so much, it's nice to get it off your mind. You turn on a TV in Toronto, you walk around town, it's hockey, hockey, hockey, wherever you go. It's kind of hard to get away from."



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NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 15, 2019

The Blues are a franchise that haven't been back to the Stanley Cup Final since Glenn Hall used to take them out of the Western side of the Original 12, only to swept in the Cup Final in each of 1968, 1969 and 1970.

Nearly a half-century later, the path is opening up for St. Louis, who could squeeze the belief out of the Jets with a home-ice win on Sunday night.

Bozak will be an important part of whatever happens in Game 3, but that's for later on. First, he'll put on the Leafs game. Maybe pick up a pizza.

Without having to sign any autographs.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 04.15.2019

1140936 Websites

USA TODAY / Opinion: Lightning heading toward an all-time playoff implosion down 3-0 to Blue Jackets

Kevin Allen,

Published 9:49 p.m. ET April 14, 2019

Updated 10:24 p.m. ET April 14, 2019

The Stanley Cup favorite Tampa Bay Lightning are on the verge of one of the worst implosions in pro sports history.

The Lightning tied an NHL record with 62 regular-season wins and they may not win a single playoff game.

The Columbus Blue Jackets, who finished 30 points behind the Lightning, beat them 3-1 Sunday to take a 3-0 lead in the best-of-seven Eastern Conference quarterfinal. The Blue Jackets can finish a sweep of the Lightning on Tuesday (7 p.m. ET, CNBC).

How unlikely is this? The Lightning were the NHL's top scoring team, boasted the league's best power play and penalty kill and had defeated the Blue Jackets three times in the regular season by a cumulative 17-3 score.

Columbus also entered this postseason having never won a playoff series in the franchise's 18-season existence.

Opinion: Three NHL teams adding new players, potential difference makers in playoffs

More: Where have the Lightning's scorers gone?

If the Lightning lose Tuesday, this will be like the Green Bay Packers going 15-1 in 2011 and then losing by 17 points to the New York Giants in their first playoff game. Or, the 1990-91 Minnesota North Stars, which went just 27-39-14, beating the Presidents' Trophy-winning Chicago Blackhawks in the opening round. Or, the 42-40 Golden State Warriors' upset over the 67-win Dallas Mavericks in 2007.

This is why the massive upset is on the brink of happening:

► The Blue Jackets have elevated their game to a much higher level than they showed for much of the regular season. They have been hard to play against, denying time and space to Tampa Bay scorers. Columbus gave us a glimpse of this at the end of the season when it went 7-3-0 in the last 10.

► Among the players to elevate their game for the Blue Jackets is trade deadline acquisition Matt Duchene. He has two goals and five points in this series, and has been strong on faceoffs.

► Tampa Bay's best players haven't produced. Steven Stamkos, Nikita Kucherov, Brayden Point and Tyler Johnson, who combined for 156 goals, have no goals in the series. Johnson has the only point, an assist earned Sunday. The Lightning haven't played like the Lightning. Kucherov got himself suspended by the league for Game 3 for a boarding incident in Game 2.

► Coach John Tortorella has the Blue Jackets fired up. When he's motivating his teams in the playoffs, he brings the intensity. He demanded excellence from these Blue Jackets and they have given it to the Lightning.

► The Blue Jackets have stayed disciplined. They only gave the Lightning one power play opportunity in Game 3. The Lightning don't have a power play goal in the series.

► Columbus' power play, meanwhile, has found its form. After ranking 28th percentage-wise in the regular season, the Blue Jackets have gone 4-for-8 with the extra man in the series.

USA TODAY LOADED: 04.15.2019

1140937 Websites

USA TODAY / Sizing up the NHL playoff series: Where have the Lightning's scorers gone?

Kevin Allen

Published 7:30 a.m. ET April 14, 2019

The Tampa Bay Lightning's stars seemed to be everywhere this season when the team led the NHL in scoring at 3.89 goals per game.

But the team's top offensive players seem to have disappeared in the playoffs. Nikita Kucherov, Steven Stamkos, Brayden Point and Tyler Johnson combined for 156 goals in the regular season. In the first two games of their playoff series against the Columbus Blue Jackets, they have no goals, no points and a collective plus-minus of -9.

Their lack of production is a primary reason why the Blue Jackets lead 2-0 going into Sunday's Game 3 (7 p.m., NBCSN) in the best-of-seven Eastern Conference quarterfinal.

Making the situation worse, the NHL has suspended Kucherov for Game 3 for boarding Markus Nutivaara.

The Lightning tied the 1995-96 Detroit Red Wings' record of 62 wins in a regular season. But they didn't want to get upended in the playoffs, as Detroit did.

Coach Jon Cooper has called the Lightning's situation "a five-alarm fire." They didn't face adversity in the regular season. It's fair to question whether they are ready to handle it.

Unless the Lightning's top players rediscover their offensive dominance, coach John Tortorella's hard-to-play-against Blue Jackets are going to win the series. They've been relentless in subduing Tampa Bay's stars.

What's happening in other playoff series:

Islanders lead Penguins 2-0, Game 3 (Sunday, noon, NBC) in Pittsburgh



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 15, 2019

Any doubts about whether Robin Lehner could continue his strong goaltending in the postseason has been erased by his .948 save percentage after two games. Coach Barry Trotz has helped the Islanders more than a top draft pick could. He has given this team a chance to win it all.

But don't write off the Penguins just yet. Trotz won't get the matchups he wants in Pittsburgh. You'd expect Sidney Crosby and Jake Guentzel to be more dangerous in Pittsburgh. The Penguins also need is a memorable game from goalie Matt Murray. His save percentage is .896.

Capitals lead Hurricanes 2-0, Game 3 (Monday, 7:30, CNBC) in Raleigh

The Hurricanes have been the better team much of this series. What you are seeing is the difference between a defending champion that understands exactly what a team needs to do to win a series and an upstart team trying to figure out what needs to be done.

The Hurricanes are spunky, but they're also young. Plus, this franchise is in the playoffs for the first time since 2009. Alex Svehnikov, a critical Carolina player in this series, was 9 then.

Maple Leafs and Bruins are tied 1-1, Game 3 (Monday, 7 p.m., NBCSN) in Toronto

You can feel these teams' dislike for each other. When the Bruins are engaged, as they were in Game 2, they are the better-rounded team. The Maple Leafs would need Frederik Andersen and Auston Matthews, Mitch Marner or John Tavares to take over the series to win it.

The Bruins won't be complacent. They lost Torey Krug in Game 2 on a heavy hit. His status is unknown. Toronto's Nazem Kadri faces a long suspension for his cross-check to Jake DeBrusk.

Sharks and Golden Knights tied 1-1, Game 3 (Sunday, 10 p.m., NBCSN) in Las Vegas

This will be the first round's most entertaining series. The two teams have combined for 15 goals in two games. The winning team has scored five both times.

The Sharks say they are confident in goalie Martin Jones, even though San Jose ranked 31st in team save percentage this season. But San Jose's fan base seems worried about the Golden Knights' perceived goalie advantage. The value of San Jose's overpowering offense is diminished by its propensity for giving up goals.

Blues lead Jets 2-0, Game 3 (Sunday, 7:30 p.m., CNBC) in St. Louis

The Blues continue to show why they were one of the league's top teams in the second half of the NHL season. They are winning the goalie battle. Rookie Jordan Binnington (2.00 goals-against average) is outplaying Connor Hellebuyck (3.08, .897).

St. Louis depth players have stepped up, particularly Oskar Sundqvist, who had two goals in Game 2. Meanwhile, the Jets simply haven't been the dangerous team we thought they would be this season.

The Predators and Stars are tied 1-1, Game 3 (Monday, 9:30 p.m., NBCSN) in Dallas

This is an old-school series. Low scoring. Emphasis on goaltending and defense. The first two games were decided by a goal. Secondary scoring and save percentage will probably decide it.

Craig Smith scoring the overtime goal in Game 2 is a good sign for the Predators. Coach Peter Laviolette has been trying to get more from his second line.

The Stars were ranked 29th in scoring this season. Goalie Ben Bishop has stopped 71 of 75 shots in this series. He will have to continue to play this sharply for the Stars to win.

The Avalanche and Flames are tied 1-1. Game 3 (Monday, 10 p.m., CNBC) in Denver

It was nearly 2-0 Calgary, but the Avalanche tied Game 2 in the final minutes and Nathan MacKinnon won it in overtime with a powerful shot. MacKinnon has 12 shots in the series, and the Avalanche will try to free him up with the last line change in Denver to make him more dangerous.

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USA TODAY / Opinion: Three NHL teams adding new players, potential difference makers in playoffs

Kevin Allen,

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With the 2019 NHL playoffs looking wide open, teams are aggressively bringing in young reinforcements to find an edge.

The Vegas Golden Knights announced they have signed Nikita Gusev, 26, who led the Russia-based Kontinental Hockey League in scoring with 82 points in 62 games. He is expected to be given an opportunity to play immediately.

Gusev is a skilled playmaker and could help the Golden Knights match the San Jose Sharks' high-powered offense. The first-round series is tied 1-1.

With the game becoming younger and faster, adding young skilled players late in the season is becoming more popular.

Gusev is the third top prospect to be signed during these playoffs.

The Colorado Avalanche signed first-round draft pick defenseman Cale Makar out of the University of Massachusetts-Amherst and the Columbus Blue Jackets added Vladislav Gavrikov, a defenseman.

Makar, 20, the No. 4 pick overall in 2017, is a dynamic puck-moving defenseman who won the Hobey Baker Award as college hockey's best player. He can be spotted into the Avalanche lineup and give the offense a charge. The series between Colorado and the Calgary Flames is tied 1-1.

In 41 games this season, Makar scored 16 goals. He adds another difference-maker to the Colorado power play.

Gavrikov, 23, has played six seasons in the KHL and he's believed to be NHL ready. He's a 6-3 two-way defenseman who led the KHL in plus-minus (+48). He played on Russia's gold-medal-winning 2018 Olympic team. The Blue Jackets lead their series with the Tampa Bay Lightning 2-0.

At the end of the regular season, the Nashville Predators signed Boston University defenseman Dante Fabbro and he's playing in their top six in the playoffs.

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