



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 16, 2018



Red-Hot Checkers End Regular Season On High Note With 4-1 Win

Written by Nicholas Niedzielski

Published: April 15, 2018

In the 76th and final game of the regular season, the Checkers took care of business to stay hot and clinch 3rd place in the Atlantic Division.

With Providence winning its game earlier on Sunday evening, the Checkers needed at least one point from their meeting with the Bridgeport Sound Tigers to jump ahead in the standings. The home squad got on the board first thanks to a ricocheting puck, but the visitors would take over from there.

Trevor Carrick ripped a wrister through from the point for a power-play tally late in the first, then rookie Warren Foegele pulled off an impressive power move to the net to give Charlotte a lead early on in the middle frame. The Checkers would buckle down from there, led by a strong showing from netminder Jeremy Smith, and a pair of empty-net tallies would seal the 4-1 victory for Charlotte.

The win cemented Charlotte's position in 3rd place and set up a first-round matchup with the two-seed Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins. Additionally, although he didn't light the lamp, tonight wrapped up Valentin Zykov's historic 2017-18 campaign as his 33 goals on the year clinched him the Willie Marshall Award as the AHL's leading goal scorer.

NOTES

Though his nine-game point streak came to an end, Valentin Zykov won the Willie Marshall Award as the AHL's top goal scorer with 33 on the season ... The Checkers won their seventh consecutive game, tying a franchise record set last season. They also extended their point streak to 10 games (9-0-1), which is their longest since a franchise-record, 12-game run that occurred in December/January of the 2015-16 season ... They enter the playoffs with the longest active win streak in the league and are tied for the longest active point streak (Toronto) ... The Checkers finished with their highest point total (96) since moving to a 76-game schedule prior to the 2011-12 season. Their .632 points percentage is a franchise record ... Philip Samuelsson finished as the league's leader in plus/minus (+44) ... Jeremy Smith won his fifth consecutive game, tying his longest streak of the season ... Carrick has goals in consecutive games and nine points (4g, 5a) in his last eight ... Greg McKegg picked up an assist, giving him at least one point in 17 of his 19 games as a Checker ... Foegele scored for the first time in nine AHL games ... The Checkers have eight power-play goals in their last five games ... Forward Marcus Kruger, defenseman Jake Chelios and goaltender Alex Nedeljkovic missed the game due to injury ... Forwards Mike Ferrantino, Nick Schilkey, Zack Stortini and Sergey Tolchinsky, and defensemen Matt Finn, Tyler Ganly and Dennis Robertson were healthy extras.

UP NEXT

With the regular season over, the Checkers will now regroup for their first-round matchup with the Penguins. Game 1 will take place on Friday at 7 p.m. in Bojangles' Coliseum.

Checkers to Face Wilkes-Barre Scranton in First Round

Published: April 15, 2018

The Charlotte Checkers today announced dates and times for their entire first-round Calder Cup Playoff series against the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins.

As previously announced, Bojangles' Coliseum will host Game 1 and Game 2 of the best-of-five series on Friday, April 20, at 7 p.m. and Saturday, April 21, at 6 p.m., respectively. A full series schedule, including subsequent games in Wilkes-Barre/Scranton, can be found below.

GAME	DATE	TIME (EDT)	
1	Friday, April 20	7 p.m.	Bojar
2	Saturday, April 21	6 p.m.	Bojar
3	Thursday, April 26	7:05 p.m.	V
4*	Saturday, April 28	7:05 p.m.	V
5*	Sunday, April 29	3:05 p.m.	V

* if necessary



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Individual tickets for Games 1 and 2 are [on sale now via Ticketmaster](#) (Home Game A for April 20 and Home Game B for April 21) and will be available Monday at the Bojangles' Coliseum box office. "Pay as We Play" packages requiring no money up front and offering the best savings on tickets for the entire playoffs can also be purchased now by contacting the Checkers at (704) 342-4423 or tickets@gocheckers.com.

Both of the Checkers' first-round home games will feature food and drink specials including \$2 hot dogs, \$2 popcorn and \$2 domestic draught beer, as well as \$4 craft draught beer.

Valentin Zykov Wins AHL Goal-Scoring Title

Published: April 15, 2018

The American Hockey League today announced that Valentin Zykov has earned the Willie Marshall Award as the league's top goal scorer for the 2017-18 season.

Zykov, who scored a career-best 33 goals during the campaign, is the second Checker to ever win the award, joining Zach Boychuk in 2014. Zykov's total is the third highest in team history behind Boychuk's 36 in his award-winning season and 34 by Chris Terry during the team's inaugural AHL campaign in 2010-11.

The 22-year-old native of St. Petersburg, Russia, also led the league with 17 power-play goals and set an AHL record for

Each game also has a ticket special that is currently available online. Friday's game features a \$5.50 ticket deal for all kids aged 12 and under (maximum of two) that can be purchased at gocheckers.com/kids. For Saturday's game, a Family Pack option of 50 percent off the box office price on groups of four tickets can be purchased at gocheckers.com/family.

Charlotte, which clinched a playoff spot last weekend, is making consecutive postseason appearances for the first time in eight AHL seasons.

highest shooting percentage (29.5 percent), scoring his goals on just 112 shots. He more than doubled his goal total in each of his three seasons in the league, going from seven as a rookie in 2015-16 to 16 last season and now to his league-leading total of 33.

Zykov, who also recorded seven points (3g, 7a) in 10 NHL games with the Carolina Hurricanes this season, finished second on the Checkers with a career-high 54 points.

The Los Angeles Kings' second-round draft choice (37th overall) in 2013 who the Hurricanes acquired via trade in February of 2016, Zykov has 102 points (56g, 46a) in 174 career AHL games with Ontario and Charlotte.

TODAY'S LINKS

<http://gocheckers.com/game-recaps/red-hot-checkers-end-regular-season-on-high-note-with-4-1-win>

<http://gocheckers.com/articles/features/checkers-to-face-wilkes-barre-scranton-in-first-round>

<http://gocheckers.com/articles/features/valentin-zykov-wins-ahl-goal-scoring-title>



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SportScan

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

1091848 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Wild desperation an inevitable obstacle on Jets' path to second round

Mark Spector | @sportsnetspec April 16, 2018, 12:08 AM

ST. PAUL — Here is what having a few playoff series under your belt teaches you, because, my goodness, have we watched this movie a few times over the years:

It is impossible for the team with a 2-0 series lead to match the desperation of the club that is trailing 2-0. Players on both teams can say they're desperate, but only one roster is looking at a 3-0 series deficit.

Throw in the fact that, most often, the team that's trailing is playing at home in front of their own fans, and the 6-2 spanking that befell the Winnipeg Jets Sunday evening in St. Paul was, well, sort of predictable.

Right, Bryan Little?

"You try," he said when asked about matching desperation levels. "You don't come out, up 2-0, saying, 'Let's relax and see what happens.' We had every intention of coming out hard and putting the pressure on them and keeping it simple, like our first two."

But then the Wild came out and made things complicated. Suddenly, the Jets' zone entries weren't so smooth. And that squeaky clean area in front of goalie Connor Hellebuyck, a virtual no-fly zone through the first two games?

Yeah, not so much in Game 3. It was packed with green jerseys.

Minnesota wired 29 shots on the Winnipeg goal, just eight fewer than they had in Games 1 and 2 combined, to chase Hellebuyck after 40 minutes. Eric Staal, the 42-goal man who had been quiet as a mouse, sniped one. Mikko Koivu, quietly one of the true leaders in hockey today, was fabulous in Game 3.

"Well I think everybody knows, if we lose Game 3, how difficult it is," said Wild head coach Bruce Boudreau. "I think desperation is the best word. When we're down 0-2 it's still a big hurdle. They will be a lot better next game."

Suddenly there are two teams in this series, not just one, with a Game 4 on tap for Tuesday that will likely define everything we love about playoff hockey.

"This win, this gives us a lot of confidence. We can beat this team," declared Wild winger Marcus Foligno. "That team's skilled. And they're big. They're fast and strong. They're a heck of a team. Now it moves to Game 4 where we have an opportunity to tie the series."

The opponent is off the mat, Jets fans, but don't fret. It was inevitable. Your team wasn't going to go 16-0, and they'll likely still win this series. It just won't happen before Wednesday.

The Wild lost just six games in this building this season. Did we really think the Jets would walk in here and win Games 3 and 4?

"It's one game in a seven-game series," said captain Blake Wheeler. "We didn't play anywhere near our level tonight, and it's a fine line for us. We need to play with team speed, like we were able to accomplish the second half of both Games 1 and 2. It's not a death sentence by any means in this building."

The Jets had spent Saturday trying to fly into the snowbound Twin Cities, only to spend four hours on a tarmac in Duluth before turning around and sleeping in their own beds back in Winnipeg Saturday night. They took another run at it Sunday morning, and touched down here around 10 a.m.

It's not an excuse, but a day like that can't help the cause either.

"I don't know if it made us worse," said head coach Paul Maurice. "But I can say for a fact that it certainly didn't make us better."

Alas, it was an experience, and that alone can help these Jets. There are some players here who have played a few playoff games, but as a group everything beyond the first week of April is brand new, right down to the travel dysfunction.

"You can't really talk about experience when a lot of guys don't have it," Little admitted. "We're going through this together, leaning on some of the older guys, like Buff, who've been there before and been on that journey. We're a group that learns day-to-day, and we talk to each other about it."

"We're forgetting about this one and getting ready for the next one."

That's another post-season lesson: The playoffs are no place for an elephant. Win and forget, lose and forget.

It's a race to four, so don't worry, Jets fans. Your team is just fine.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 04.16.2018

1091849 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Kings turn up physicality but Golden Knights still prevail

Iain MacIntyre | @imacSportsnet April 16, 2018, 2:14 AM

LOS ANGELES — The Los Angeles Kings demonstrated Sunday how tough they are. All the Vegas Golden Knights did was prove again how good they are.

Battered by the Kings all game, the Knights absorbed all the physical punishment and then scored three times in the third period to beat Los Angeles 3-2 and move within a game of winning their first ever National Hockey League playoff series.

In 2018, speed beats physicality. At least it does when you combine it with the skill, cohesiveness, lineup depth and self-belief the Knights have engineered in their improbable, impossible inaugural season.

Those 51 wins in the regular campaign were not lucky. Vegas is that good. Now the Knights are 3-0 in the Stanley Cup playoffs, too, and can make the final eight with a win in Game 4 here Tuesday.



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"We're going to be in all different situations throughout the playoffs here if we want to make a run," veteran James Neal said after scoring the 26th playoff goal of his career during the Knights' late surge. "We knew they weren't going to go away, knew the (physical) push they were going to have. We just believe in ourselves, believe in our team and we continue to play the right way."

If people were expecting a market correction or reality check for the Knights in the playoffs, it isn't happening against the Kings, who played their best game of the series and still lost.

"I think people have been waiting since Game 1 and it hasn't happened yet," Vegas centre Cody Eakin said. "We don't plan on slowing down."

With Vegas trailing for the first time in the playoffs, Eakin tied it 1-1 at 6:10 of the third period when, after his first shot was blocked by defenceman Dion Phaneuf, the Knight got a second chance and buried Ryan Carpenter's pass behind goalie Jonathan Quick.

Neal then spun away from Kings' defenceman Oscar Fantenberg and fooled Quick with a quick shot through his pads to make it 2-1 at 14:23. And 21 seconds later, William Karlsson converted Reilly Smith's centring pass after the Vegas forward beat two Kings to puck on the end boards following a lost faceoff.

Anze Kopitar deflected in Fantenberg's shot to bring the Kings within a goal with 2:04 remaining. But Los Angeles still fell to 0-3 in this series and 1-7 since the Kings won their second of two Stanley Cups four years ago.

"They were relentless on their forecheck, turning it up ice and playing the way we like to play," Eakin said. "We did a good job weathering it and continuing to move our feet and in the third period we capitalized at the right time."

Unable through two games to join 'em, the Kings tried to beat 'em on Sunday.

They tried to slow down the Knights the old-fashioned way. Well, the old-fashioned way in playoff hockey. The Kings hammered the Knights physically every chance they could.

Off-ice officials in this series have showered the scoresheet with hits as if they were throwing rice at newlyweds. Los Angeles coach John Stevens noted after Game 1 (127 official hits in 60 minutes) that if the stats were accurate there'd be nobody left to play Game 2.

On Sunday, the Kings were credited with 28 hits in the first 20 minutes. That may have included dirty looks and bad breath. But what was indisputable was the physical intensity with which the Kings attacked the Knights.

On one indicative sequence, Los Angeles winger Dustin Brown tripped Marc-Andre Fleury as the Vegas goalie tried to get across his crease, then steadied himself by chopping down with his stick on the back of defenceman Nate Schmidt's leg. Had there been a folding metal chair nearby, as there is in wrestling, Brown would have smashed it over someone's head when the refs weren't looking.

In more conventional hits, Jake Muzzin knocked down Karlsson, Adrian Kempe threw to the ice Jon Merrill, and Drew Doughty blasted Smith. All in the first five minutes. But between all those early hits, the game was still in the Kings' zone more than it was the Knights' half of the ice.

Quick, who was easily the best King in Las Vegas – sorry fat Elvis – for the series' first two games, made a backdoor save against Colin Miller and bumped Erik Haula's shot straight up in the air, finding the puck just in time to keep it from tumbling in behind him.

Ironically, amid all the human missiles the Kings were launching, it was overly-aggressive play by the Knights' Schmidt that led to Los Angeles' opening goal at 13:14.

The Vegas defenceman drifted behind the net to try to land a check on Brown, who was already engaged with Brayden McNabb, Schmidt's

partner. When the puck squirted to Kopitar, there was no defenceman in front to cover Alex Iafallo, who tucked the puck under the bar for a 1-0 lead that had to be confirmed by a video review.

The official scorer's pen must have run out of ink in the second period because the Kings were credited with only nine hits, which is akin to pacifism. But L.A. maintained its lead until the Eakin line turned the game on one superb, third-period shift.

"It was for sure the toughest one," Karlsson said. "They came in hard, they were physical."

And still the Knights won. That should tell you something.

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1091850 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Crosby, unfazed by Flyers' hostile environment, takes over in Game 3

Kristina Rutherford | @KrRutherford April 15, 2018, 9:52 PM

PHILADELPHIA — There's a black Penguins ball cap on Sidney Crosby's head, and he's still wearing half his equipment, sitting in his stall in the visitor's dressing room at Wells Fargo Center, his skates resting on a little black Penguins carpet.

Based on facial expression alone, you'd never guess the captain of the two-time defending Stanley Cup champions just had a four-point afternoon, that he'd led his team to a 5-1 drubbing of the Philadelphia Flyers.

No, it's only when some news is presented to Crosby that his previously straight face breaks into a bit of a smile, or some sort of smirk. And this news is really quite something: A group of fans here in Philadelphia spent part of their Sunday putting pictures of Crosby's face at the bottom of all the public urinals in their team's home arena.

Yes, that's right—the Flyers faithful in this Battle of Pennsylvania went there. And just how many urinals are in this arena? One security guard shrugged and said: "I gotta think there's more than a hundred."

That's a lot of Crosby faces in a lot of urinals.

And while the news that fans are relieving themselves on your likeness might disturb some, Crosby is not among them, or at least he's good at pretending he's not. No, the Penguins captain didn't have much of a reaction.

"It's not the first building that's happened in, so..." No. 87 said with a grin and a shrug. "I don't know if they stole that idea from somewhere else. But yeah, it's not the first time that's happened."

Ah, the life of a superstar. Pictured in urinals, booed the moment you set foot on enemy ice, booed as you're announced as the game's first star.

Yes, it was quite the Sunday afternoon for Sidney Crosby.

One game after he broke his stick on the Flyers' cross bar after missing a wide-open net on the power play, Crosby and his Penguins entered a hostile environment—the "Crosby Sucks!" chants began even before fans broke out in "Let's go Fly-ers!"—the captain had a goal and three assists to lead the Penguins to a 2-1 series lead in this heated state battle.

And so Game 2, which saw Crosby not only miss on an open net but also fail to convert on a breakaway attempt, obviously didn't rattle him much.

"I mean, you have to move on," he said. "You gotta turn the page, so it was good to get one early. I think that always makes a big difference as far as being able to forget about it."



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Crosby's goal on Wednesday, the first of this game, was a big one.

It briefly sucked the air out of this raucous arena, and it had to be discouraging for a Flyers team that had the balance of chances in the first period. Rookie Nolan Patrick had his team's best, fewer than two minutes in, when he ripped down the right wing and manufactured a breakaway, only to see Matt Murray—who was stellar early on—come up with the glove save.

Pittsburgh didn't generate a shot until near the half-way mark of the first, but it wasn't long after that when Patric Hornqvist forced a turnover in the Flyers end, then poked the puck toward Crosby.

In one seemingly fluid motion, Crosby kicked it to his stick and skated around the net—his skates positioned at 10 and two—and snuck home the wrap-around. It's the type of goal that looks easy, until you see the replay.

The crowd went silent for a bit, and then came the boos and "Crosby Sucks!" chants.

As Penguins coach Mike Sullivan pointed out, that animosity from Flyers fans might actually be good for his captain, winner of back-to-back Conn Smythe trophies.

"I just think it's an indication of how competitive he is—I think he thrives in that environment," Sullivan said. "He has a comfort level in that environment and so, when stakes are high, in an away building, in important games, Sid tends to play his best. He's done that certainly from my experience, time and time again."

Until about six minutes into the second, the fans were really loud and the Flyers were right in this one. But Philadelphia got into penalty trouble against the NHL's top power-play unit, and it was basically game over. Derick Brassard made it 2-0 Penguins with the man-advantage early in the second, thanks to a patient pass from Phil Kessel, who earned his first point of these playoffs.

And then, in the space of five seconds, beginning at the 6:48 mark, the Penguins struck two more times to make it 4-0. Never in their history have the Flyers gotten up back-to-back goals so quickly.

First, it was Evgeni Malkin on a one-timer, again with the man-advantage, where Crosby recorded his first of three assists.

Seconds later, Crosby authored his prettiest helper of the afternoon. He won the faceoff back and immediately charged up ice, got the puck right back, carried it into the Flyers' zone on the right-wing, and then backhanded a saucer-pass cross-ice to defenceman Brian Dumoulin, who joined the rush and made it 4-0.

"We were just trying to play quick, and however it worked out, it worked out," Crosby explained. "Dumo made a great read to jump in the play there and give us some numbers on the rush. I think we were just trying to play fast and it ended up that we were able to get a good one."

A good one, indeed—The Flyers weren't coming back from a 4-0 deficit.

This in-state battle is just three games old and the Penguins captain has, to nobody's surprise, figured big: A natural hat-trick in the first game, a stick broken in frustration in the second and a four-point effort in the third.

The teams now have two days off, and then they'll be back at the Wells Fargo Center for Game 4 on Wednesday night. Crosby's expecting more of the same from these hostile fans. As he said, "It's a tough environment to come into."

And hey, that might be just the way the Penguins captain likes it—though he could probably do without the urinal humour.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 04.16.2018

1091851 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Matthews must rise above chaos, find next level to keep Leafs afloat

Chris Johnston | @reporterchris April 15, 2018, 8:00 PM

When the roof started to cave in, the cameras cut to a shot of Auston Matthews on the Toronto Maple Leafs bench. He kept a stoic expression that belied any of the understandable frustration bubbling up inside.

All the face of the Leafs franchise could really do was watch while Saturday's game slipped from grasp.

He had his own opportunities on the ice, of course, playing more minutes than any other Toronto forward. A review of his 25 shifts from Game 2 showed that he handled them quite well. Matthews had the puck on his stick a lot. He came out on the winning end of an early battle with Patrice Bergeron and intercepted a David Pastrnak cross-seam pass in the defensive zone.

The Leafs rolled around in the Boston end for most of his first six trips over the boards. And they were still trailing 3-0 after 12 minutes. Things didn't go so well when Matthews needed a breather.

Auston Matthews and the Maple Leafs watch from the bench as the Boston Bruins score their third goal of Game 2.

That's why he said "S— happens, I guess, so ... it's hockey" when asked about the 20 points put up by Bergeron's line through two games, compared with the bagel for his own. Despite failing to smash through the Chara-McAvoy wall and put a puck behind Tuukka Rask, he was a disruptive force in Game 2 while spending time working between six different wingers.

His pointed post-game response was a sign of process-driven thinking.

"Got to rebound for Game 3," Matthews added.

It has been a difficult season for the 20-year-old centre—perhaps never more difficult than right now at this moment. The three injury absences tested his patience and taxed his body. A completely unsheltered workload saw him challenged with higher-stress situations more frequently than in his rookie year.

That made for some tough nights to push through, like the Dec. 19 visit to Pittsburgh where Sidney Crosby kept his line to zero even-strength shot attempts. Or the elaborate game of keep-away Jonathan Toews orchestrated inside the United Center on Jan. 24.

"Jonathan Toews had the puck the whole time in the first 30 minutes," Babcock said then. "Obviously, he's a veteran player, and Matthews is a good player, but Toews knows how to play. It takes you a while to learn how to play in this league—to play right and face the puck and get used to playing against good players."

The pot of gold at the end of those lessons and time spent on the trainer's table was supposed to be the playoffs. And it may yet be, although you'd have to think Matthews and the Maple Leafs absolutely need a victory at the Air Canada Centre on Monday to slow this Bruins freight train.

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Much of the hope for a potential Game 3 turnaround falls on his shoulders, especially with No. 2 centre Nazem Kadri having removed himself from the series with a suspension. It remains so even though Matthews will only play one-third of the game. He may make good decisions during his minutes and see things unravel elsewhere.

But that is true of all the stars in our sport, each of whom carries the same burden of expectation: that they should be able to bend the



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outcome of a chaotic game built around team play with their superlative individual talent and will.

"You've got to do it. If you want to be considered a good, good player, you've got to do it at this time of the year," Babcock was saying earlier this week, before his team dug an 0-2 hole. "You want to be a winner, that's what the good players are, they're winners. They find a way to win. You've got to do it when it matters—it matters now. To me, that's how you separate yourself from the group. If you want to be—you look at Crosby's resume, you look at Jonathan Toews's resume, it's loaded with winning.

"When you become a serial winner, you get a ton of respect."

Somewhat surprisingly, Matthews has seen more even-strength minutes away from Bergeron (14:43) than with him (12:49) in this series. That speaks partly to the disjointed nature of the first two games, which saw tons of special-teams play and lopsided leads for Boston, but also to the fact that Babcock found his top pivot some softer spots to take control.

He darted out from behind the net and created a chance for Patrick Marleau during a shift against Sean Kuraly's fourth line. The steam was released from a couple Matthews rush attempts by the strong defensive sticks of Chara and Kevan Miller. Fooling goaltenders and defenders with a deceptive release in traffic is one of his greatest weapons—it accounts for his 15.9 per cent shooting percentage across 152 career NHL games—but the Bruins have yet to blink at the sleight of hand.

Bruins defender Kevan Miller gets his stick in the way of a shot from Auston Matthews.

"I thought we had plenty of chances, plenty of opportunities," said Matthews. "At times we really had momentum on our side and really grinded them down low in their zone and controlled the play. It was a lot better than the first game."

Even if a couple of his nine shots on goal have come from longer distances than usual, the high-danger chances have been there. The Leafs generated 13.87 of those per 60 minutes with him on the ice this season and sit at 13.07 in the playoffs.

(As an aside, Pastrnak, Bergeron and Brad Marchand are absolutely shredding Toronto inside the home-plate area with league-best per-60 rates of 29.71, 29.65 and 25.78.)

It was upon returning home for Game 3 when Matthews broke through with his first goal in last year's playoff series against Washington. He followed that up by scoring in Games Nos. 4, 5 and 6 as well. He wasn't a focal point in the Caps' gameplan to the same degree he is now for the Bruins—drawing No. 2 centre Evgeny Kuznetsov and, after a mid-series adjustment, the top defence pairing of Dmitry Orlov and Matt Niskanen—and that's just another reminder of how life has changed.

What hasn't changed is his game-breaking ability and knack for rising to meet a challenge. The bar has been set by the Bruins' difference-makers and Matthews needs to find a way to turn his good shifts into even better results.

Otherwise a long, hard year might suddenly become shorter than he ever could have expected.

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1091852 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Wild's Eric Staal finally produces in meaningful game again

Luke Fox | @lukefoxjokebox April 16, 2018, 12:05 AM

ST. PAUL, MN – The pressure on the Minnesota Wild's most dangerous offensive weapon was mounting from around, above and within Staal.

Sure, the rejuvenated Staal had enjoyed a renaissance regular season, pouring in 42 goals for a club not exactly known for its offensive prowess and making a surprise trip to the outskirts of the Hart Trophy debate.

But get this: Over his past 17 playoff games, Staal had scored just one lonely goal — and that was nine years ago. When the playoff-bound New York Rangers rescued Staal from floundering Carolina in the spring of 2016, Staal didn't so much as register a playoff point. And the big free agent centre was held to one measly assist in Minnesota last April during its swift five-game ouster by the St. Louis Blues. Oh, and the last time Staal suited up for Team Canada, at the 2013 worlds, he went 0 for the tournament. He wasn't picked for Sochi.

The belaboured point is, it had been a minute since he'd lit the lamp in a meaningful game.

"Thanks for the reminder," Staal said Sunday, smirking after his most productive playoff effort since *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* was in theatres.

We wouldn't blame you if you'd thought Staal's Triple Gold Club skills got diverted to Duluth for games 1 and 2 in Winnipeg.

Wild coach Bruce Boudreau first called out his top line, then juggled it, flipping Nino Niederreiter to Mikko Koivu's shutdown unit and promoting Mikael Granlund to Staal's right.

"They have to become more of a factor," Boudreau said. "Your most offensive line has got to be as good as their best offensive line. There's room for improvement."

Staal heard but says the drive was boiling from inside anyway.

"When you're expected to perform, it should elevate you," he explained. "I've always been that way. I expect a lot of myself coming to the rink every day. It's disappointing, those first two games. This was a huge game and opportunity for all of us. I wanted to make sure I was engaged and got to the inside to the net."

That he did.

Checked to the fringes of the rink and relevancy in Manitoba, Staal parked himself in Connor Hellebuyck's crease early and often in the Wild's 6-2 Game 3 rout. He drew a Ben Chiarot cross-checking penalty early; helped set up the Wild's first goal, a power-play marker by Granlund; then sniped a beauty of his own after patiently waiting for his big winger to deliver a spin-o-rama pass you might as well watch right now:

Kudos to Boudreau.

"It was big. Granny, he's a playmaker. He can draw people to him and make plays. A lot of skill. You saw him on the pass to me there—not a lot of guys make that play. I was ready but it took longer. That's the type of stuff he can do. He's a fun guy to play with, he's competitive. I thought it was going to be a quick pass, then once he held it, held it, held it, I knew it was coming eventually, and I was ready."

"You start feeling good about pucks hitting the back of the net. Confidence goes."

Huge goal, and an emotional celebration from a usually straight-faced guy who's been there but hasn't done that in a while.

Winning goalie Devan Dubnyk chuckles when he learns that was Staal's first postseason goal in nearly a decade.

"I didn't know that, but what a shot," Dubnyk says. "That's a guy who knows how to score goals. Granny makes a great pass to him, and with zero hesitation, [Staal] puts it the size of a puck short-side. That's a goal-scorer's goal right there. Hopefully it gets him feeling good. We need him."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 16, 2018

That's the key. If the Wild have any hope of climbing back into this series, its offence needs to act as deep as the Jets', and that means Staal & Co. must build on the momentum.

"It's good for him, good for our team for him to get on the scoresheet," Zach Parise said. "For us to get all the lines going, get everyone involved in the offence [is important]. There wasn't much to feel good about after game 1 and 2. You're not gripping the stick as tight anymore, and hopefully next game we can get contributions up and down again."

A measure of frustration has been replaced with a tablespoon of conviction. A springboard. A monkey bucked.

"Our emotional level was high, the building was energetic, we got to the gritty areas and we got the job done," Staal says. "I wanted to get on the board. I've been one of those guys all year for us, and I don't want that to stop now just because it's playoffs. Hopefully I can build on that."

"Now, the best part is, you gotta reset, recharge and do the same thing in Game 4."

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1091853 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Tyler Bozak appears to already be preparing for his Maple Leafs exit

Gare Joyce | @garejoycenhl April 15, 2018, 3:15 PM

TORONTO – Standing in the Toronto Maple Leafs' dressing room Sunday brunch-time, fielding questions from reporters, Tyler Bozak didn't look shaken particularly. Not humbled. Not enraged. In his time with the Leafs he has always stepped up and answered the questions.

About twelve hours after another humiliating loss in Boston, the questions were, roughly: What the hell happened? What the hell can you do to get back into this opening-round series starting with Game 3 Monday night?

At age 32, in his ninth NHL season, Bozak is practiced in offering answers that illuminate not much more than a flickering birthday candle.

To the theme of the first query, he said: "The first two games didn't go as planned. You want to go in there and get a split. A few bounces early didn't go our way and got behind the eight ball and it's tough to come back against a team that plays that well defensively like Boston."

And for the second: "[We'll] get fresh again and ready to go. Obviously you have to win your home games. We have to play our game. We got away from a couple of things that we do. It was good to get a power-play goal against them [in Game 2]. Hopefully we can stay out of the box and win the special-teams game."

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All of what Bozak said was true as far as it goes, but it doesn't go very far.

When Bozak was talking about the upcoming games in Toronto, you had to wonder if, in the back of his mind at the very least, he was thinking about them as potentially the last two games he'll play for the Leafs, the team that he signed with as a college free agent in 2009 and, but for a brief stint with the Marlies, the only professional team he has ever played for.

So far it has been 594 regular-season games and 13 more in the playoffs. He's an unrestricted free agent in the off-season and, if you try

to project the future, who gets paid how much for how long, it just doesn't feel like there's a place for him at all going forward. Not short term, not at a hometown discount.

This season and, particularly, this post-season it was incumbent on Bozak to change perceptions and force management to re-evaluate him. He has, after all, scored as many as 20 goals in one season and just once made it to 50 points. When the team was passing the 100-point mark, attention was diverted from Bozak but he can't be happy with 11 goals and 32 assists nor can those who sign his paycheque. Through two games in this series, all he has managed to do is validate those who are most sharply critical of him.

Curiously enough, adversity for the Leafs provided an opportunity for Bozak. When centre Nazem Kadri was suspended after the opener and suspended for three games, Bozak was presented a chance to step up and fill a void. It didn't play out that way in Game 2 – really it only served to remind you just how vital Kadri is to this team.

When you look at it, Bozak's not exactly set up for success going forward. If any team in the Eastern Conference exposes the shortcomings in his game it's Boston – the Bruins live under the skin of opponents and physically take the game to them. Pushback is not Bozak's game. He has skill. He can make plays. He can win face-offs, no doubt. Useful as far as it goes in the regular season, not particularly helpful against Boston. He looks like a replacement-level player and that's the thing about replacement-level players – they wind up getting replaced.

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Bozak and James van Riemsdyk have been mentioned in the same breath for most of their professional lives, for better or worse.

It's not just that they've skated together on the same line so often. In the remaking and remodelling of the Leafs they seemed like anomalies. They were inherited from the old regime, the Brian Burke days, and, as such they were survivors of the last disastrous time the Leafs faced Boston in the post-season. Through their time they have been the Leafs' most often rumoured to be sent away in trade, rumours that were probably more wishful than substantiated. Additionally, their contracts wind down in tandem and face futures that are similar in their uncertainty if nothing else.

In Game 2 against Boston, van Riemsdyk actually tried to level a body-check, against Zdeno Chara of all people. Talk about picking your spots. The timing wasn't great either – the game was in its death throes, the Leafs hopelessly out of it. It seemed more petulant than anything else. (It might have spurred you to actually look at the hits level by JVR this year: 40 in the regular season. Fact is, Bozak and JVR combined for fewer hits than Kadri did by himself.)

Bozak suggested that there wasn't much of a point rehashing or breaking down Game 2, not with just a sleet-filled day between games.

"You just flush it away," he said.

There's no looking back on what happened this weekend for the Leafs players, just as there'll be no looking back for management when this season winds down. Standing across from Bozak in the dressing room Sunday, you felt like you were at a dress rehearsal for his exit interview, which might come as soon as the end of business Friday.

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1091854 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Maple Leafs need to address struggling penalty kill if they want to rebound

Ryan Dixon | @dixononsports April 15, 2018, 3:35 PM



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 16, 2018

Awful April weather has wreaked havoc on travel plans far and wide, from flights across time zones to everyday commutes into work.

"I almost blew a tire myself," joked Toronto Maple Leafs coach Mike Babcock.

You might expect Babcock's spirits to be just as low as those grounded in airports by sideways sleet, but the difference between the two is Babcock — who was upbeat and direct on Sunday afternoon — clearly believes there are answers to the problems facing his club, which dropped two games each by four goals to the Boston Bruins to open the Stanley Cup Playoffs.

"We're down 0-2 and we haven't been as good as we're capable of being," Babcock said. "The way I look at it, there are so many things we can do better."

One area you can expect the Leafs to zoom in on is the penalty kill. Boston went three-for-six on the power play in Game 1 and two-for-four with the man advantage in Game 2, meaning the Bruins are smoking along at a 50-per cent conversation rate. A number of those tallies — including David Backes's game-winner in the opener and Jake DeBrusk's first-period tally on Saturday night that put the Leafs down 2-0 before the halfway mark of the first period — have come from the lip of the crease, where Black and Gold bodies have had their way.

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"We've got to keep them off our net," said defenceman Morgan Rielly. "We went over their goals this morning, they're all from in tight, so they're getting to our net. We've got to do a better job of boxing them out and blocking shots."

That's actually been true for longer than the past few days. While the Leafs' PK killed 81.4 per cent of the power plays it faced in the regular season — good for a respectable top-half ranking of 11th in the NHL — that number dropped significantly over the course of the final six weeks of the year. From March 1 through the end of the regular season calendar, Toronto managed to succeed short-handed just 71.4 per cent of the time. That's a worse mark than all but seven clubs during that stretch and indicates there was trouble in the water long before David Pastrnak and Co. came along.

"We've left our goalies alone," said Babcock, who confirmed Frederik Andersen would start Game 3 on Monday night in Toronto. "You have to give your goalie a chance to be good. We haven't done that."

Among the number of ways the Leafs found to shoot themselves in the foot in Boston, Toronto took one penalty for having an extra skater on the ice in each of the first two contests — and there have only been a total of three called since the playoffs began on Wednesday. Eliminating bumbling errors of that nature would go a long way toward evening out the always-critical special teams battle.

"We [have to make sure] we don't allow them too many opportunities," said Andersen. "That always helps."

Babcock said left winger Leo Komarov, who sustained a lower-body injury in Game 2, would be evaluated again later on Sunday and a decision would be made on Monday about his availability. Regardless of whether or not the rugged Finn suits up, the coach expects his club to make a clean break with the recent past and start fresh in friendly territory.

"This is our first game at home in front of our crowd; we're going to be great," he said. "You spend all year preparing for this opportunity, put in a lot of work and we don't feel we've been as good as we're capable of being. That part is disappointing, but the other part is, we know how good we are."

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1091855 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Jets-Wild Notebook: Winnipeg is owning puck possession

Mark Spector and Luke Fox

ST. PAUL, MN — Hours after what the National Weather Service dubbed a "historic" mid-April snowstorm that dumped a foot of snow on the Twin Cities, caused hundreds of accidents and pushed the Jets team charter back to Winnipeg, we're playing hockey.

"This is real playoff weather — if you're playing in Antarctica," quipped Minnesota Wild coach Bruce Boudreau, noting that his wife was at home shovelling the driveway a second time while he ran the game-day meeting.

Here is a flurry of notes ahead of Game 3 of the series, which will mercifully be played indoors Sunday night.

Jets can't catch a direct flight

The Jets tried to fly to Minneapolis Saturday, got re-routed to Duluth, Minn., and ultimately returned for a good night's rest back at home.

The club hopped back on the plane early Sunday morning and landed roughly eight hours before puck drop.

"It's overblown," Boudreau said of his opponents' travel issues. "It's playoff hockey, and they're going to be ready. We had a time in Washington, one time we had a noon game, Pittsburgh couldn't get in, they bussed in 10 hours before the game and outplayed us really badly. It's all about the will, and Winnipeg has will right now, so this travel thing is a non-issue."

Wild bank on home ice to turn emotional tide

As the series jumps towns, from Whiteout to whiteout, the Wild look to lean on the crowd support that boosted them to the second-best home record in 2017-18 (27-6-8).

"It's gonna be big," Eric Staal said. "This is a great place to play. We've had success here all year. Great chance for us in Game 3 in front of our fans to get the job done and get the win."

The Wild have now lost five straight road games in Winnipeg, getting outscored 23-12 in the process.

In order to claw back into this series, they must clean up their game and increase their speed.

"We have to play our absolute best," Boudreau said. "The guys care a lot, and they're a resilient group, but, most of all, they're competitive and they care. So, I mean, when things don't go well, they're not happy."

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Dumba deserves a day off

Swallowing a huge chunk of injured workhorse Ryan Suter's minutes, 23-year-old defenceman Mathew Dumba took Saturday's practice off and is reportedly playing banged up.

"When you play 30 minutes a game, and you're really not used to it, I just told him to stay home," Boudreau said. "He is OK. He should be well-rested for [Sunday night]."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 16, 2018

Boudreau denied a report that Dumba would be a game-time decision. He better be ready go.

Myers made 'em nervous

Towering Jets defenceman Tyler Myers had just six goals in 82 games this season, but he opened the scoring in Game 2 with his fourth goal in 19 career playoff games. He walked by Minnesota winger Jason Zucker and then whipped a shot past Devan Dubnyk.

"I know a lot of the guys were a little nervous when I first made the move, but luckily it worked out well," laughed Myers. He knows Dubnyk well, but won't claim to have the big goalie's number.

"I was just shooting," he said with a chuckle. "I've shot on him a lot this past summer and he's always a very good goalie. I was lucky to put one by him."

Eric Stalled

Staal's 42 goals this season tied a Wild franchise record (Marian Gaborik) and elevated the top-line centre to the fringes of the Hart conversation. He was but a rumour in Games 1 and 2, so Boudreau is reuniting Staal with Mikael Granlund in hopes to wake him up.

"Granny's a great playmaker. He's on the pucks, he makes plays in traffic," Staal said. "It's tight out there, so you gotta be able to make plays quickly and he can do that. Hopefully we play well."

Neutral(izing) zone

The Wild devoted most of Saturday to working on a plan to bust through the Jets' suffocating middle-ice scheme instead of just dumping it out. They're timing is off, and they failed to provide enough puck support during their zone exits.

"They're staying pretty patient. They're aggressive, but they sit back," Zucker explained of the Jets. "They let our D-man have control and one guy kind of forcing, and then once you start coming up, they have two guys kind of waiting weeds and then they have their other two D-men really waiting back in the weeds coming forward also.

"If you come with speed, they're in trouble.

Winnipeg owns the puck

The Jets' possession has been off the charts in this series, a large part of the reason they've outshot the Wild 84 -37 in two games. They've got a 66 per cent 5-on-5 Corsi through two games (source: naturalstatstrick.com), tops in the NHL in Round 1.

The Jets have posted back-to-back 40-shot nights, while Minny doesn't have 40 shots in total, falling behind 2-0 as the series now shifts to St. Paul.

"We've played a very fast game," observed Jets defenceman Joshua Morrissey. "Our forwards have been extremely hard in not giving them any clean ice to make passes on breakouts. We've played two solid games and sort of have limited their time and space with the puck.

"That's the style we want to play."

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Big Buff

Dustin Byfuglien can go in and out a bit during the regular season, but he is absolutely dialled in through two games in this series.

"He's been amazing," said teammate Adam Lowry. "I think he's had a couple hits that have almost seemed to single-handedly change the game. You look at the hit on Joel Eriksson Ek in the first game, and the one on Koivu in the second game."

With the puck on his stick, Byfuglien still has one of the heaviest shots in the league, and made a deft pass from behind the Wild net on Paul Stastny's Game 2 goal.

"He's doing it all," marveled Lowry. "That was a great play on Stastny's goal. He's using his size effectively. He's been a force for us back there."

Jets like those odds

Teams that go up 2-0 in a playoff round by winning both games at home go on to win the series 89.3 per cent of the time. Teams that take a 3-0 lead win 98 per cent of the time. If the Wild don't salvage a W Sunday night, you can safely bet they'll become first-round fodder the third straight year.

"We've had moments all year where we've needed to respond at certain points in the regular season, so it's no different [now]," Stall said. "We have to have everybody on board to execute and respond.

"We gotta play the biggest game of the year."

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1091856 Websites

TSN.CA / Statistically Speaking: Crosby leads Penguins back to series lead

Scott Cullen

Crosby paces the Penguins to victory; Werenski, Fleury, and more in Scott Cullen's Statistically Speaking.

HEROES

Sidney Crosby – Pittsburgh's superstar centre put up a goal and three helpers in a 5-1 Game Three victory at Philadelphia. He has eight points (4 G, 4 A) in the series.

Zach Werenski – The Columbus blueliner contributed a goal and two assists in a 5-4 Game Two overtime win at Washington. He has seven points (3 G, 4 A) in his past seven games.

Marc-Andre Fleury – Vegas' veteran netminder stopped 37 of 39 shots in a 3-2 Game Three win at Los Angeles. He has a .970 save percentage through the first three games of the postseason.

ZEROES

Tobias Rieder, Adrian Kempe and Trevor Lewis – The Kings trio had a tough game (10 for, 14 against, 41.7 CF%, 4-7 scoring chances) and were on the ice for two goals against in a 3-2 Game Three loss to Vegas.

Ben Chiarot – The Jets defenceman struggled (9 for, 18 against, 33.3 CF%, 2-7 scoring chances) and was on the ice for one goal for and three against in a 6-2 Game Three loss at Minnesota.

Connor Hellebuyck – Winnipeg's netminder lasted only two periods after giving up six goals on 22 shots in a 6-2 Game Three loss at Minnesota. This was Hellebuyck's 70th game of the season and only the second time that he had surrendered six goals.

Philipp Grubauer – The Washington goaltender was pulled after allowing four goals on 22 shots in a 5-4 overtime loss in Game Two against Columbus. He got the opportunity to start this series, but responded by stopping 41 of 49 shots (.837 SV%).

Brian Elliott – After a tough first game and a strong second game, the Flyers netminder allowed five goals on 26 shots in a 5-1 Game Three loss to Pittsburgh. He has a .863 save percentage in the series.

STANLEY CUP HALF FULL/HALF EMPTY



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 16, 2018

Sergei Bobrovsky – The Blue Jackets goaltender may have allowed four goals, which isn't typically an indicator of leading one's team to victory, but it's a little different when Bobrovsky stops 54 of 58 shots for an OT win in Game Two at Washington.

VITAL SIGNS

Jake Muzzin – The Kings' defence was bolstered by the return of Muzzin, from injury, and Drew Doughty, from suspension, and they partnered together on the top pairing.

David Perron – Vegas' playmaking winger made his first appearance in the postseason, after recovering from a late-season injury.

Tomas Tatar – Perron's return to the lineup resulted in Tatar being a healthy scratch. He has just six points (4 G, 2 A) in 22 (regular season plus playoff) games since he was acquired from Detroit at the trade deadline.

Tyler Myers – Winnipeg's defence suffered a big loss in Game Three at Minnesota when Myers suffered a lower-body injury after getting tangled up with Wild winger Marcus Foligno.

Jakub Vrana – Checking centre Jay Beagle returned to the Washington lineup which resulted in Vrana, the rookie winger, being a healthy scratch in Game Two against Columbus. Vrana had one assist in just 6:58 of ice time in Game One.

Andre Burakovsky – Washington's forward group was thinned out early when Burakovsky suffered an upper-body injury in the first period and was forced to leave the game.

SHORT SHIFTS

Embedded Image

Mikko Koivu has four assists in three playoff games against the Jets.

Penguins C Evgeni Malkin recorded a goal and an assist in a 5-1 Game Three win at Philadelphia, giving him three points (2 G, 1 A) in the series...Penguins D Kris Letang chipped in a couple of assists and has three assists in three playoff games...Wild C Eric Staal, RW Mikael Granlund and D Matt Dumba each had a goal and an assist in a 6-2 Game Three victory against Winnipeg. Granlund has three points (1 G, 2 A) in three games, while those were Staal and Dumba's first points of the postseason...Wild C Mikko Koivu and rookie D Nick Seeler both had a pair of assists. Those were Seeler's first career playoff points, while Koivu has four assists in three games against Winnipeg...Blue Jackets RW Josh Anderson put up a goal and two assists in a 5-4 overtime Game Two win at Washington. He had two goals in his previous 10 games...Blue Jackets RW Cam Atkinson scored a pair of goals; he has 21 points (13 G, 8 A) in his past 15 games...Blue Jackets D Seth Jones and LW Artemi Panarin both added a couple of assists in Game Three. Jones has 19 points (7 G, 12 A) in his past 13 games and Panarin has 34 points (10 G, 24 A) in his past 18 games...Capitals LW Alex Ovechkin scored two goals, on 17 shot attempts (10 SOG), in Washington's 5-4 OT loss in Game Two against Columbus. He has six goals in his past five games...Capitals D John Carlson earned three assists in Game Two against Columbus, the second consecutive game in which he's had three helpers...Capitals RW T.J. Oshie contributed a goal and an assist and C Nicklas Backstrom had a pair of assists in a 5-4 overtime loss in Game Two against Columbus. Oshie has 13 points (7 G, 6 A) in his past 13 games, while Backstrom has 26 points (5 G, 21 A) in the past 17 games...Kings C Anze Kopitar had a goal and an assist, his first points of the series, in a 3-2 Game Three loss to Vegas...Penguins G Matt Murray turned away 26 of 27 shots in a 5-1 Game Three win at Philadelphia, giving him a .929 save percentage in the series.

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1091857 Websites

TSN.CA / Statistically Speaking: Bruins' top line punishes the Leafs

Scott Cullen

Boston's top line punishes the Maple Leafs; Kucherov, Couture and more in Scott Cullen's Statistically Speaking.

HEROES

David Pastrnak – Boston's 21-year-old winger enjoyed a sensational night, putting up six points (3 G, 3 A) and tying a Bruins playoff record held by Rick Middleton and Phil Esposito. That gives Pastrnak 13 points (6 G, 7 A) in eight career playoff games and he's the early leader this year with nine points (4 G, 5 A) in two games.

Patrice Bergeron and Brad Marchand – Pastrnak's linemates on the best line in hockey both had four assists in Game Two. Bergeron has five assists through two games and Marchand has six points (1 G, 5 A).

Through two games, when Bergeron, Marchand and Pastrnak are on the ice, the Bruins are getting 73% of the shots, and 81% of the scoring chances. Oh, and 100% of the goals.

Nikita Kucherov – The Lightning sniper scored a goal and added two assists in a 5-3 Game Two win against New Jersey. He has four points (2 G, 2 A) in the series.

Logan Couture – San Jose's scoring centre had a goal and an assist in a 3-2 Game Two victory at Anaheim; he had four points (3 G, 1 A) in his previous eight games.

ZEROES

Nikita Zaitsev – The Toronto blueliner was on the ice for four goals against (two at evens, two shorthanded) in a 7-3 Game Two loss at Boston.

Matt Nieto – The Avalanche winger was on the wrong side of the puck (3 for, 13 against, 18.8 CF%, 1-5 scoring chances) in a 5-4 loss at Nashville.

Frederik Andersen – Toronto's netminder was pulled after allowing three goals on five shots in a 7-3 Game Two loss at Boston. Since the beginning on March, he has a .888 save percentage in 14 games.

Keith Kinkaid – The Devils goaltender allowed five goals on 15 shots before getting pulled in a 5-3 Game Two loss at Tampa Bay. Cory Schneider stopped all 10 shots that he faced in relief, and could get a chance to start as the series returns to New Jersey for Game Three.

STANLEY CUP HALF FULL/HALF EMPTY

Hampus Lindholm – It came in a losing effort, but the Ducks blueliner had a strong showing in a 3-2 Game Two loss to San Jose. He had a goal and an assist to go with team-best possession stats (18 for, 8 against, 69.2 CF%).

VITAL SIGNS

Samuel Girard – Colorado's rookie blueliner didn't play in Game Two due to an upper-body injury, opening the door for Duncan Siemens to get into the lineup.

Ryan Donato - With Tommy Wingels still hurting, the Bruins inserted rookie winger Donato into the lineup for Game Two.

Leo Komarov - The veteran Leafs winger suffered a lower-body injury and was forced to leave Game Two at Boston early.

SHORT SHIFTS

Embedded Image

Alex Killorn has three goals through two games against New Jersey.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 16, 2018

Bruins D Torey Krug produced three assists in a 7-3 Game Two win against Toronto. He has 26 points (4 G, 22 A) in his past 22 games...Lightning LW Alex Killorn scored two goals in a 5-3 Game Two win over New Jersey, giving him eight points (4 G, 4 A) in the past seven games...Lightning C Brayden Point added a goal and an assist, and has 11 points (6 G, 5 A) in the past 11 games...Lightning D Ryan McDonagh had a pair of assists against the Devils. He had three assists in two playoff games, after producing three points (1 G, 2 A) in 14 games with the Lightning after he was acquired from the Rangers...Predators LW Kevin Fiala contributed a goal and an assist in a 5-4 Game Two win vs. Colorado. He had gone five games without a point...Predators defencemen P.K. Subban and Mattias Ekholm both added a pair of assists against the Avalanche. Subban has seven points (1 G, 6 A) in the past eight games and Ekholm had two assists in his previous eight games...Avalanche LW Gabriel Landeskog and C Nathan MacKinnon both had a goal and an assist in a 5-4 Game Two loss at Nashville. Landeskog has seven points (2 G, 5 A) in the past seven games and MacKinnon has eight points (2 G, 6 A) in the past seven games...Avalanche D Tyson Barrie added a couple of assists; he has seven points (2 G, 5 A) in the past seven games.

Lightning RW Ryan Callahan put up solid possession stats (12 for, 2 against, 85.7 CF%, 7-1 scoring chances) in a 5-3 Game Two win vs. New Jersey...He didn't play a ton, but Predators C Kyle Turris dominated played (11 for, 1 against, 91.7 CF%) in a 5-4 win against Colorado...Sharks G Martin Jones turned away 28 of 30 shots in Game Two, and has stopped 53 of 55 shots through the first two games of the series.

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1091858 Websites

TSN.CA / Statistically Speaking: Flyers bounce back in Game Two

Scott Cullen

Couturier picks up the Flyers in Game Two; Laine, Myers, Haula, Elliott and more in Scott Cullen's Statistically Speaking.

HEROES

Sean Couturier – Philadelphia's top centre put up a goal and two assists in a 5-1 Game Two win at Pittsburgh. He has 16 points (3 G, 13 A) in the past 15 games and had managed four points (3 G, 1 A) in his 20 previous playoff games.

Patrik Laine – Winnipeg's sophomore sniper notched a goal and an assist in a 4-1 Game Two victory against Minnesota. He has three points (2 G, 1 A) and 10 shots on goal through the first two games of the series.

Tyler Myers – The towering Jets blueliner produced a goal and an assist in Game Two against Minnesota; he had just two assists in his previous 19 games.

Erik Haula – The Golden Knights centre scored the double-overtime winner in a 2-1 Game Two victory against Los Angeles, giving Vegas a 2-0 series lead. Going back to the regular-season, he had gone four consecutive games without a point, matching his longest scoring drought of the year, before scoring that huge goal.

Brian Elliott – After getting pulled from Game One of the series, the Flyers goaltender bounced back and stopped 34 of 35 shots in a 5-1 Game Two win at Pittsburgh.

ZEROES

Charlie Coyle – The Wild winger was on the wrong side of the puck (2 for, 12 against, 14.3 CF%, 0-6 scoring chances) in a 4-1 loss at Winnipeg.

Nick Seeler – Same goes for the rookie Wild defenceman (4 for, 22 against, 15.4 CF%, 0-11 scoring chances).

Trevor Lewis - The Kings veteran spent most of the five periods at Vegas in his own end (8 for, 34 against, 19.1 CF%) in a 2-1 overtime loss in Game Two at Vegas.

Matt Murray – After posting a shutout in Game One, the Penguins netminder gave up four goals on 19 shots in a 5-1 Game Two loss to Philadelphia.

STANLEY CUP HALF FULL/HALF EMPTY

Nolan Patrick – The Flyers rookie recorded his first career playoff goal, on a nifty power-play setup from Couturier, but was otherwise buried in his own end (2 for, 13 against, 13.3 CF%, 1-6 scoring chances) in a 5-1 Game Two win at Pittsburgh.

VITAL SIGNS

Jack Roslovic – Inserted into the Jets' Game Two lineup to replace an injured Mathieu Perreault, the Winnipeg rookie contributed a pair of assists in a 4-1 win over Minnesota.

Oscar Fantenberg – On a Kings blueline missing Drew Doughty, Jake Muzzin and Derek Forbort, the rookie blueliner logged 41:03 of ice time in Game Two at Vegas, second-highest on the team behind Alec Martinez (44:51).

SHORT SHIFTS

Flyers D Ivan Provorov picked up a pair of assists in Game Two at Pittsburgh, and has nine points (3 G, 6 A) in the past eight games...Fresh off scoring the game-winning goal in Game One, Jets D Joe Morrow had a stellar possession game (20 for, 3 against, 87.0 CF%, 10-0 scoring chances) in a 4-1 Game Two victory...Kings G Jonathan Quick stopped 54 of 56 shots in a 2-1 double-overtime loss in Game Two at Vegas. He has stopped 81 of 84 shots in two games and the Kings are still down 2-0 in the series...Golden Knights G Marc-Andre Fleury turned away 29 of 30 shots for the win in Game Two; he's stopped 59 of 60 shots to take the 2-0 series lead.

TSN.CA LOADED: 04.16.2018

1091859 Websites

TSN.CA / Leafs return home with single goal in mind

Kristen Shilton

TORONTO – The playoffs are a marathon, not a sprint. Or at least, that's what the Maple Leafs are hoping for.

After dropping the first two games of their opening round Stanley Cup playoff series to the Boston Bruins on the road, Toronto has returned home with a single goal in mind – just win.

"It's a seven game series for a reason, so there is no reason to get down and frustrated this early in the series," said Tyler Bozak. "It's only going to hurt you. So we've just got to stay positive, get back to what we do and try to get back in this series."

Taking advantage of home ice the way Boston did will be chief among the Leafs' concerns as they prepare for Game 3 on Monday. Since Jan. 22, Toronto has lost only two games at Air Canada Centre, and set a franchise record for longest home winning streak (13 games) in the process. It's those types of accomplishments from the regular season – including the franchise wins record (49) and home wins record (29) – that the Leafs are drawing from to bolster their sagging swagger now.



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"You earn [confidence] all year, you work hard to put yourself in the playoffs and win games and to have a good record," said Morgan Rielly. "You have to earn that, and moving forward we have to find it, we have to do the things that we have to do today to get ready for tomorrow. You have to chip away, and when you go out there, it starts with the first shift and from there on out, you build off of it."

While acknowledging "that's not the way we planned for our first two games to go," Rielly was also optimistic that learning from their mistakes – and a few small victories – would be crucial to finding success against Boston.

"There were points in the game [on Saturday] where we were able to control the puck more than we were in Game 1," he said. "And it's important we look at that and look at what created those opportunities and try to replicate that in Game 3 but do it more consistently."

Mike Babcock agreed the Leafs' start in Game 2 showed good punch, and was impressed with the way his team tried to push back after the Game 1 loss. But everything Boston put on net went in, and whatever pressure the Leafs established didn't result in points. It comes down to superior play in their own end and elevating their goaltender that will turn the tide for Toronto in front of its fans.

"This is our first game at home in front of our crowd; we're going to be great, get re-energized today," said Babcock. "We basically brought [the players] in to clean the mechanism out and let's get ready to go, and get after it. We spent all year preparing for this opportunity and don't feel we've been as good as we're capable of being. That part is disappointing, but the other part is we know how good we are and want to play that well."

It was a brutal night in Beantown for Frederik Andersen on Saturday, when he was pulled from the Leafs' net after allowing three goals on five shots in just over 12 minutes of action. He was not made available to the media following the loss, but on Sunday reflected over what went wrong and how the Leafs can go about fixing it before Monday.

"There's a few things, some bounces too that came at their end," he said. "An early save on that first goal [by David Pastrnak] would have been huge, and that's playoff hockey for you. Sometimes you make that save and we build off that. I know we're capable of playing better and myself included so we can look forward to that and turn the page for tomorrow."

After Andersen exited, Curtis McElhinney inherited the 3-0 deficit and didn't fare much better against the high-flying Bruins, turning aside 19 of 23 shots for an .826 save percentage. The blip hasn't shaken Andersen's confidence in himself though, or in his ability to lead Toronto to their first victory of the series when he re-takes the starter's net in Game 3.

"I feel good," he said. "When I look at a game like that, I think some bounces here and there could have changed things, but I know one big save could change the series in a game like that and be huge, so it's what we do from now on and we've been feeling really good at home so we want to come out flying tomorrow."

There was no doubt in Babcock's mind he would go back to Andersen, despite his shaky play over the series' first two games. The results haven't deserved to hang solely on Toronto's goaltending, and that's the message Babcock tried to get across in Sunday's team meeting.

"He's our guy," Babcock confirmed of Andersen. "The puck was going in and it wasn't going our way, so we got him out. But we haven't done a very good job in front of him. You have to give your goalie a chance to be good, we haven't done that. Freddie is our guy and he'll be back tomorrow."

It was no secret the key to victory for Toronto in this series would be how well they contained the Bruins' top line of Patrice Bergeron, Brad Marchand and Pastrnak. Given that trio has already combined for 20

points in two games, it's safe to say keeping them in check hasn't been easy.

While in Boston the Leafs have been without last change, allowing Bruce Cassidy to roll out the Bergeron line against Auston Matthews' line to good success. Suspended centre Nazem Kadri won't be available for either of the Leafs' home games this week, but at least Babcock will be able to dictate matchups. He wouldn't say much about his plan, simply stating, "we're going to play hard against them, we've got last change." But suffice it to say, the Bergeron line is a top priority.

To this point in the series Matthews has been held off the scoresheet, and despite dominating possession against the Bergeron group on Saturday, the Leafs need production from Matthews (and the rest of their forwards) in the form of goals and assists.

"Any way you look at it, their one line is having too much fun, so we have to look after that," said Babcock. "And the second thing is the play in front of our net hasn't been good enough for us to have success, so we have to clean that up."

To that end, it's not about any one player neutralizing a line that hot. It takes the combined effort of all six players on the ice to slow them down.

"We have to eliminate some of their space," said Andersen. "They've been getting a little too much time maybe and they're too skilled to let them do that. I think you see the nice goals, it looks pretty easy for them, but I'm sure we can fix that."

Indeed, when Pasternak scored his first of three goals on Saturday he had the entire front of the net clear to work the puck on his stick - and eventually over top of Andersen. Blown assignments defensively and disorganization among forwards has led to too many small breakdowns that elite forwards like the Bergeron crew can capitalize on.

It's been the same issue on special teams, where breakdowns and lack of execution have led to the Leafs going 1-for-7 on the power play through two games, while the Bruins are 5-for-10. It's a matter not only of confidence that the Leafs get both those units going, but that the disparity is killing them in the long game of the series against an opponent that gives them so little to work with as it is.

"We have to keep them off our net a little bit on the kill," said Rielly. "We went over their goals here this morning; they're all from in tight it seems like. So they're getting pucks to our net, they're getting pucks to our net, so we have to do a better job of boxing them out and blocking shots."

"Their power play unit is very good, they have a lot of firepower on that unit," added Bozak. "They make good plays, they win faceoffs and they have guys who can score. Our power play has been good all year; we've got guys who can score. It was nice to finally get one later in [Game 2 from James van Riemsdyk], hopefully that gives us a little boost on our power play and hopefully we can stay out of the box and win the special teams game."

Leo Komarov already missed seven regular season games with a knee injury, and now another lower-body injury is expected to cost him at least one playoff game.

Komarov was slow to get up off the ice after being flattened by Kevan Miller in the second period of Game 2, appearing to re-injure the same knee that held him out for half of March. The veteranwinger did try and return to the game with another shift, but left the bench again in a hurry afterwards and was officially ruled out for the rest of the game at the start of the third period.

Babcock didn't have much of an update to offer on Komarov's condition, saying Sunday he was still being evaluated and as such Babcock would go ahead with a plan that didn't include Komarov in Game 3. Who might replace him in the lineup, Babcock didn't say, leaving the door open to multiple possibilities.



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The Leafs currently have three extra forwards in the fold – Matt Martin, Dominic Moore and Josh Leivo.

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USA TODAY / NHL playoffs loading up early with questionable hits

Kevin Allen, USA TODAY Sports Published 7:56 p.m. ET April 15, 2018 | Updated 8:11 p.m. ET April 15, 2018

Could this be the David Pastrnak NHL playoffs? How about the Marc-Andre Fleury playoffs? Sidney Crosby? Maybe Artemi Panarin?

Or is this going to be the George Parros playoffs?

Way too early to reach any conclusions, but the NHL's director of Player Safety has been forced to be more involved than he wants to be. Only two games into the opening playoff series, Parros already has had to review a handful of on-ice incidents.

Parros has handed out a couple of suspensions, and a couple of his decisions were probably difficult.

Are these incidents outliers? Or is this going to be a nastier playoff year than usual? Is the league-wide parity or some other factor creating more hostility?

We will know more once we see games in all of the playoff cities. What we do know is hatred is building in most series, particularly the Winnipeg-Minnesota, Toronto-Boston and Columbus-Washington series. Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, because of their long rivalry, started with animosity built in.

Here is sampling of hits that fans have been talking about so far:

Los Angeles Kings defenseman Drew Doughty (on William Carrier): Doughty was suspended one game because Carrier's head was the principal point of contact. Doughty strongly resented the suspension, saying it was unwarranted. His defenders said it was a hockey play that went awry because Carrier was cutting in and Doughty's hit struck Carrier's arm and continued up to his head.

Toronto Maple Leafs center Nazem Kadri (on Tommy Wingels): Kadri slammed into Wingels after Wingels had struck Kadri's teammate, Mitch Marner, with a high hit. Kadri was suspended three games because Wingels was facing the boards, falling down and was defenseless when Kadri hit him. Kadri also left skates to add force to the blow.

Scary moment in Flyers vs. Penguins as Giroux and Letang collide. pic.twitter.com/iCyhmnJtCH

— NHL on NBC (@NHLonNBCSports) April 14, 2018

Philadelphia left wing Claude Giroux (on Kris Letang): This was the oddest hit in the group because Giroux was going backward when he upended Letang, who was moving forward. Most people seem to believe replays support that it was an accidental hit, but some knowledgeable NHL people believe Giroux knew what he was doing. Giroux didn't have a hearing.

#CBJ Josh Anderson has been assessed a 5 minute major and a game misconduct for this hit on Michal Kempny. [#StanleyCuppic.twitter.com/2KslGZ9loG](https://twitter.com/StanleyCuppic/status/2KslGZ9loG)

— NHL on NBC (@NHLonNBCSports) April 13, 2018

Columbus forward Josh Anderson (on Michal Kempny): Anderson received a five-minute major and was ejected for boarding Kempny in Game 1. Kempny was injured when he was crunched from behind. No hearing on this one, either.

Tom Wilson's hit on Alexander Wennberg last night who left the game with an upper-body injury.... [#StanleyCuppic.twitter.com/8SANKrVEuB](https://twitter.com/StanleyCuppic/status/8SANKrVEuB)

— Robert Söderlind (@HockeyWebCast) April 13, 2018

Washington right wing Tom Wilson (on Alex Wennberg): Wilson left his feet to wallop Wennberg, and he received no hearing. But the Capitals did pay a price. The Blue Jackets scored on the power play created by Wilson's penalty. That tied the score 2-2 and they won the game on Panarin's goal.

Corey Perry's hit on Melker Karlsson last night. [#StanleyCuppic.twitter.com/qP4ezfFe1C](https://twitter.com/StanleyCuppic/status/qP4ezfFe1C)

— Robert Söderlind (@HockeyWebCast) April 15, 2018

Anaheim right wing Corey Perry (on Melker Karlsson): Some social media outcry for Perry to have a hearing for his blindsided hit on Karlsson. The argument is that Karlsson was defenseless and Perry knew it when he hit him hard enough to send Karlsson's helmet airborne.

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