



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 26, 2018



Tweetmail No. 186: Playoffs, Outtakes & Office Space

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

April 25th, 2018

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

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

Let's get to it.

Thoughts on how the checkers have fared in the playoffs so far?

So far, so good for the Charlotte Checkers in their first-round Calder Cup Playoff series against the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins. The Checkers take a 2-0 series lead on the road, where they'll need to win just one of the next three games to advance to the second round.

I was in Charlotte for Games 1 and 2, and what I saw was impressive. The Checkers are a skilled, quick bunch. They're well-coached. They're confident. They've got some swagger.

Though the Checkers won both games over the weekend, they've played with a lead for less than six minutes in over 120 minutes of hockey. What's impressive about that is the situation never seemed dire otherwise, and even down 2-0 in Game 1, there wasn't a sense of panic among the Checkers.

"We talked about just getting one. Get that first one and the next couple will come," Checkers head coach Mike Vellucci said after the game. "We never give up. We've always fought back, no matter what the score was. The guys don't give up. They compete and stay positive."

"It was a big goal, the first one," said Lucas Wallmark, who scored the game-winning goal in overtime of Game 1. "After that we played with more confidence."

In Game 2, the Checkers fought through being scored on in the first shift of the game. That, coming less than 24 hours after a dramatic, come-from-behind victory in overtime, could have taken the wind out of Charlotte's sails and shifted the momentum towards the Penguins. Rather, the Checkers settled in, tied the game before the period's end and scored the go-ahead goal late in the third before adding a pair of empty-netters.

Goaltender Alex Nedeljkovic has also looked sharp. In Game 1, a dump-in from the neutral zone took a nasty hop and beat him glove side to put the Penguins up 2-0. Nedeljkovic parked that and stopped everything he saw from then on. In Game 2, after the Pens scored just 22 seconds into the game, Nedeljkovic again shut it down from then on and finished with 27 saves.

"He was huge. Last night after that second one went in - that's a pretty bad bounce - he rebounded well. He was solid for the rest of the game," defenseman [Haydn Fleury](#) said after Game 2. "Just the way he can park a goal and leave it there - they scored one on the first shift tonight, and they don't get another one. He's been huge."

The team now heads to Wilkes-Barre/Scranton riding a nine-game winning streak. They peaked at the right time, and they've carried it into the playoffs. One more win and it's on to round 2.

What's the funniest "outtake" type moment from this season that you can share? [#Tweetmail](#)

I've given some thought to this excellent question all morning and have come up with a few "outtake" moments that are sharable enough.

We'll start with one that happened to me.

So, we're in Columbus in November. I can't remember if it was our first or second stop there, but in any case, I was wearing pants that I knew were on their last leg - no pun intended. They'd soon be retired, but I was going to wear them until I couldn't any longer. Turns out, that moment was in Columbus.

Upon returning to the hotel from the team's morning skate, I discovered a rip in the seat of the pants.

Flashback to 1999 and the second episode of *SpongeBob SquarePants*. In "Ripped Pants," our spongy, yellow protagonist [does just that](#) in front of a crowd of onlookers at Goo Lagoon. My situation wasn't as embarrassing because it didn't happen in such a public fashion, but it's all I could think of.

In any case, I still faced the conundrum of the ripped pants. Time was tight, and this was the only pair of slacks I packed. I had no choice but to wear them back to the rink that evening. The rip wasn't too big yet, but that could change with an overly-aggressive bend or squat or really any



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sudden, swift lower-body movement. I took it as easy as I could. Once at the rink, I sought out the assistance of the fine Hurricanes' equipment staff. Jorge Alves worked some double-sided tape magic, and the pants would get me back home, at which point they'd be properly laid to rest.

Though, while Alves was performing pants surgery, [Cam Ward](#) walked in the room bewildered at what was happening.

And that's The End of the time I ripped my pants in Columbus.

Here's another story.

The Canes were in Saskatoon in late September for a neutral-site preseason game. The team practiced at a rink nearby the SaskTel Centre, but this set-up necessitated the dress-at-the-arena-and-bus-to-the-practice-rink routine. Because I'm selfish and wanted to capture a funny video to share with the World Wide Web, I was hoping one of the guys would forget to take his skate guards off before hitting the ice. It happened to Kris Versteeg a few years back in New Jersey, and it's always good for a laugh.

Unfortunately for social media, every coach and player remembered to remove their skate guards in Saskatoon. If I remember correctly, [Joakim Nordstrom](#) came closest to leaving his on but discarded them at the last moment. Me

lurking with my phone nearby probably gave it away. An outtake that wasn't quite an outtake. Oh well.

Two more outtakes that made it to social media but are worth resurfacing.

There was that one time assistant coach Steve Smith stiff-armed TV's Mike Maniscalco in a bench interview.

And here are the Swedes scrum lurking while sporting some sweet shades.

What about y'all - any good outtakes to share?

With all the front office moves, are you going to take over a new/better office space for yourself?

Nope. DMS 4 lyfe.

Really, the one thing that could take our office space, affectionately known as the Digital Media Suite (or DMS, for short) to the next level would be a window. And, since we're stationed in limbo between the first floor and arena level, I don't think that's going to happen.

What's your favorite color?

Red! Blue's not bad either, especially Carolina Blue and Panther Blue.

Prospect Playoff Roundup: April 23-24

Jeremy Helvig helps Frontenacs to victory, avoids second-round sweep

by Nikki Stoudt [@NikkiStoudt](#) / CarolinaHurricanes.com

April 25th, 2018

The Carolina Hurricanes' season may be over, but a number of Canes prospects are making noise in their own playoff runs.

Here are the highlights from the last couple days.

Morgan Geekie, Tri-City Americans

Had one assist and was minus-4 in Tri-City's 8-4 loss to Everett on Monday in Game 3 of their third-round series. The defeat marked Tri-City's first loss at home in the WHL playoffs, as the Americans fell behind two games to one in the series.

Geekie still leads all WHL goal scorers with 16 goals and ranks third in the league with 26 points in 11 postseason contests.

Noah Carroll, Sault Ste. Marie Greyhounds

Blueliner Noah Carroll was minus-1 with two penalty minutes as Sault Ste. Marie fell to Kitchener 3-0 on Monday in Game 3 of their conference final series. Sault Ste. Marie still leads the series two games to one, with Game 4 in Kitchener on Wednesday.

Jeremy Helvig, Kingston Frontenacs

Goaltender Jeremy Helvig stopped 30 of 32 shots to lead Kingston to a 5-2 victory in Game 4 on Tuesday, as the Frontenacs avoided a sweep in their conference final series against Hamilton.

Game 5 will take place on Thursday night in Hamilton.

Wednesday: Noah Carroll and the Sault Ste. Marie Greyhounds visit Kitchener for Game 4 tonight. Sault Ste. Marie holds a two games to one advantage in the series.



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Bruins advance with Game 7 win against Maple Leafs

Score four goals in third period, move on to Eastern Second Round

by Matt Kalman / NHL.com Correspondent

12:13 AM

BOSTON -- The Boston Bruins scored four goals in the third period of a 7-4 win against the Toronto Maple Leafs in Game 7 of the Eastern Conference First Round at TD Garden on Wednesday.

The Bruins will play the Tampa Bay Lightning in the second round. Game 1 is at Tampa on Saturday.

It's the first time Boston advanced in the Stanley Cup Playoffs since 2014.

The Bruins, who lost Games 5 and 6, trailed by one goal three times, including 4-3 entering the third period.

"That was one of the most incredible games I've ever been a part of," said forward [Brad Marchand](#), who scored into an empty net to make it 7-4 with 51 seconds remaining. "It was so back and forth, the intensity from the crowd and the emotion was a lot of fun to be a part of. But even after they got the lead a couple times ... we knew that we have the resiliency in the room to continue to come back."

After [Torey Krug](#) tied it 4-4 at 1:10, [Jake DeBrusk](#) scored his second goal of the game, at 4-on-4, to give the Bruins a 5-4 lead at 5:25. DeBrusk kept the puck on his hip and then beat goalie [Frederik Andersen](#) with a wrist shot just before defenseman [Jake Gardiner](#) hit him.

"I don't get out there 4-on-4 that much, so I just wanted to take it to the net and I kind of caught I think their defenseman off guard right away with just my speed," DeBrusk said. "And then I tried to make a move and actually tried to raise it, and I didn't even see it go in, I just heard the crowd go pretty nuts. It was a very special feeling, especially making it 5-4 at that point."

[David Pastrnak](#) scored from the slot off a pass from [Patrice Bergeron](#) at 11:39 to make it 6-4.

Bergeron had a goal and two assists, [David Krejci](#) had three assists, and [Tuukka Rask](#) made 20 saves for the Bruins.

[Patrick Marleau](#) scored two goals, and Andersen made 29 saves for the Maple Leafs, who were eliminated in the first round for the second straight year and have not advanced in the playoffs since 2004.

"It [stinks]," Toronto center [Nazem Kadri](#) said. "But you have to take the positives out of it. We would have loved to have

advanced, but I think for the future we're going to be a team to be reckoned with and we will be back in this situation."

Marleau scored his first goal during a power play 2:05 into the game to give the Maple Leafs a 1-0 lead. He tipped Jake Gardiner's shot past Rask from the slot.

DeBrusk scored on the power play to tie it 1-1 at 4:47 when he redirected Pastrnak's pass, but Marleau beat Rask with a one-timer from the bottom of the right face-off circle to give the Maple Leafs a 2-1 lead at 6:12.

[Danton Heinen](#) scored with a wrist shot from the high slot at 9:10 to get the Bruins back even 2-2, and Bergeron scored to give Boston a 3-2 lead with 37 seconds left in the first after [Kevan Miller](#)'s shot from the right point caromed off the end boards to him to the left of the net.

Maple Leafs defenseman [Travis Dermott](#) scored at 2:07 of the second period on a wrist shot from the left circle that hit Miller's stick to tie it 3-3.

[Kasperi Kapanen](#) shed Marchand's backcheck at the Bruins blue line and then beat Rask shorthanded at 6:05 for a 4-3 Toronto lead.

"At the start of the series, if you'd have told me we were playing Boston and it'd be like this and we'd be right here going into the third period, I would've taken that all day long," Toronto coach Mike Babcock said.

Goal of the game

DeBrusk's goal at 5:25 of the third period

Save of the game

Rask stopping [Auston Matthews](#) at 18:12 of the third period

Highlight of the game

Krug's goal at 1:10 of the third period

They said it

"There's no real explanation. I felt fine. It just seemed like everything I was doing ended up in the back of the net." -- *Maple Leafs defenseman Jake Gardiner, who was minus-5*

"Yeah, it's huge. It's a momentum shift, for sure. You know we didn't care how long it took, but eventually we were going to get it. It was a big play and we kept it going, foot on the gas pedal." -- *Bruins defenseman Torey Krug on his game-tying goal*



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Need to know

Boston is 14-12 in Game 7 in its history. Toronto is 12-11. ... The Maple Leafs are 1-15 in series they trailed 3-1. Their only win was the 1942 Stanley Cup Final against the Detroit Red Wings; they trailed that series 3-0. ... It was the first time all season Toronto allowed four goals in the third period. ... DeBrusk had seven points (five goals, two assists) in his first NHL playoff series. ... Krug leads NHL defensemen with nine points (two goals, seven assists).

Stanley Cup Playoffs second-round schedule

Penguins, Golden Knights resume chase for history

NHL.com [@NHL](#)

April 25th, 2018

The Pittsburgh Penguins and Vegas Golden Knights will each resume their quest for history when the second round of the Stanley Cup Playoffs begins Thursday.

The Penguins, who will play the Washington Capitals in the Eastern Conference Second Round, are trying to become the first team to win three straight Stanley Cup championships since the New York Islanders from 1980-83. The Golden Knights, who will play San Jose Sharks in the Western Conference Second Round, are seeking the title in their inaugural season.

Here is the complete second-round schedule (*All times ET, subject to change*):

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Tampa Bay Lightning (A1) vs. Boston Bruins (A2)

Saturday, April 28, 3pm: Bruins @ Lightning | NBC, SN, TVA Sports

Monday, April 30, 7pm: Bruins @ Lightning | NBCSN, CBC, TVA Sports

Wednesday, May 2, 7pm: Lightning @ Bruins | NBCSN, CBC, TVA Sports

Friday, May 4, 7pm: Lightning @ Bruins | NBCSN, CBC, TVA Sports

***Sunday, May 6, TBD:** Bruins @ Lightning | TBD

***Tuesday, May 8, TBD:** Lightning @ Bruins | TBD

***Thursday, May 10, TBD:** Bruins @ Lightning | TBD

Washington Capitals (M1) vs. Pittsburgh Penguins (M2)

Thursday, April 26, 7pm: Penguins @ Capitals | NBCSN, CBC, SN, TVA Sports

Sunday, April 29, 3pm: Penguins @ Capitals | NBC, CBC, TVA Sports

Tuesday, May 1, 7:30pm: Capitals @ Penguins | NBCSN, SN, TVA Sports 2

What's next

Maple Leafs: Season over

Bruins: Game 1 of Eastern Conference Second Round at Tampa Bay Lightning on Saturday (3 p.m. ET; NBC, SN, TVAS)

Thursday, May 3, 7pm: Capitals @ Penguins | NBCSN, SN, TVA Sports

***Saturday, May 5, TBD:** Penguins @ Capitals | TBD

***Monday, May 7, TBD:** Capitals @ Penguins | TBD

***Wednesday, May 9, TBD:** Penguins @ Capitals | TBD

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Nashville Predators (C1) vs. Winnipeg Jets (C2)

Friday, April 27, 8pm: Jets @ Predators | NBCSN, CBC, SN360, TVA Sports

Sunday, April 29, 7pm: Jets @ Predators | NBCSN, CBC, TVA Sports

Tuesday, May 1, 8pm: Predators @ Jets | CNBC, CBC, TVA Sports

Thursday, May 3, 9:30pm: Predators @ Jets | NBCSN, CBC, TVA Sports

***Saturday, May 5, TBD:** Jets @ Predators | TBD

***Monday, May 7, TBD:** Predators @ Jets | TBD

***Thursday, May 10, TBD:** Jets @ Predators | TBD

Vegas Golden Knights (P1) vs. San Jose Sharks (P3)

Thursday, April 26, 10pm: Sharks @ Golden Knights | NBCSN, CBC, SN, TVA Sports

Saturday, April 28, 8pm: Sharks @ Golden Knights | NBC, CBC, SN, TVA Sports

Monday, April 30, 10pm: Golden Knights @ Sharks | NBCSN, CBC, TVA Sports

Wednesday, May 2, 10pm: Golden Knights @ Sharks | NBCSN, CBC, TVA Sports

***Friday, May 4, 10pm:** Sharks @ Golden Knights | NBCSN, CBC, TVA Sports

***Sunday, May 6, TBD:** Golden Knights @ Sharks | TBD

***Tuesday, May 8, TBD:** Sharks @ Golden Knights | TBD

** if necessary
TBD - To Be Determined*



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The Athletic / Now it's time for Bruins to back up Bruce Cassidy in Game 7

By Fluto Shinzawa Apr 25, 2018 10

From one perspective, Mike Babcock is a genius.

In Games 3, 5, and 6, the Toronto coach deployed Tomas Plekanec as a matchup center against the Bruins' best line. The Maple Leafs won every game. Brad Marchand, Patrice Bergeron, and David Pastrnak combined for zero points.

Plekanec's promotion, however, only happened after Nazem Kadri lost all sense of right and wrong. Babcock shifted Plekanec from bit player to shutdown stuffer because the NHL's Department of Player Safety ruled Kadri ineligible for three games — a just suspension for his ass-first hit on Tommy Wingels.

So from another perspective, Babcock is an imbecile for not thinking of promoting Plekanec sooner.

In that way, Babcock does not have a monopoly on brilliance and buffoonery. In Game 6, Bruce Cassidy dropped Rick Nash to the third line. He jerked Danton Heinen out of the lineup. Cassidy used Tommy Wingels, a healthy scratch in Games 2, 3, and 5, as his No. 2 right wing.

The move looked smart when Nash, serving as the No. 3 left wing, poured four pucks on Frederik Andersen through two periods. The Bruins had the balance Cassidy was seeking.

But in the third period, the Bruins needed top-six presence from Wingels. The career energy forward did not flash the necessary scoring hands. This was not a surprise.

The point is that for as much control as coaches like to wield, their influence on the outcome is minimal compared to those of their players. If you believe Babcock's decision to roll Plekanec against Bergeron is the reason No. 37 went scoreless, there are bridges all around Massachusetts that are available for purchase. Those same spans can be bought if you think Wingels' presence as the No. 2 right wing made the No. 1 line whiff on all 26 of its Game 6 attempts.

It is all well and good for Cassidy, in other words, to mess with his lineup. But if his best forwards are not sinking pucks or Tuukka Rask is not pulling them out of his net tonight, Cassidy could turn his roster upside down and still be looking for his golf clubs by the end of Game 7.

To that end, Cassidy will turn to the lineup he has rolled most consistently. Nash will go back to David Krejci's right side. It is the position the Bruins projected for him when they ceded their 2018 first-rounder, along with Ryan Spooner, Ryan Lindgren, and Matt Beleskey, to the Rangers. Heinen will return to the left side on the third line, the spot at which he became a permanent fixture in the NHL.

Cassidy is tossing the keys into his players' hands. It's where they belong.

"It's basically the groups we had envisioned," Cassidy said. "We trust this group to get it done."

Cassidy is a tinkerer. He is quick to fiddle from shift to shift as well as game to game. It started from Game No. 1 this season.

With Bergeron unavailable because of a lower-body injury, Spooner started the regular-season opener against Nashville as Marchand's center. Krejci centered Pastrnak on the second line.

By the second period, Cassidy moved Anders Bjork down to Krejci's line. Pastrnak was promoted to Marchand's right flank. In Marchand and Pastrnak, Cassidy found a combination that became two-thirds of the NHL's best 200-foot line.

It was not Cassidy's original plan. But Cassidy had no choice but to keep Marchand and Pastrnak together because of how well they played. The players, as usual, dictated where they should play and how much ice time they deserved.

Once the players optimized their performance, Cassidy kept them in place. Other than Brandon Carlo being unavailable, tonight's lineup is the formation Cassidy used the most.

That principle guided Cassidy toward tonight's decision to get the band back together again. Earlier this season, when the battered Bruins were chasing secondary scoring, they finally got some middle-of-the-lineup presence with Riley Nash centering Heinen and David Backes. It became an all-purpose line.

When the top line was healthy and Cassidy wanted to relieve them of defensive responsibilities, he asked the No. 3 unit to take the hard shifts. They responded. According to Corsica Hockey, the three forwards skated together for 332 five-on-five minutes, making them Cassidy's third-most regular threesome.



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Heinen finished the season with 16 goals and 31 assists. He was the Bruins' fifth-leading scorer. The 22-year-old finished ninth among league rookies.

Heinen's individual accomplishments and body of work alongside Nash and Backes prompted Cassidy to welcome him back to the lineup after spending Game 6 in suit and tie.

"That line played really well for us," Cassidy said. "We're trusting in them to do that again tonight. He sat a game. Generally, guys have come back in the lineup and played well. He hasn't sat a lot for a younger guy. But that's why the decision was made. He's played really well for us this year. We expect him to do that tonight."

Heinen did not enjoy being out of uniform in Game 6. In yesterday's practice, Cassidy gave Heinen a look on Krejci's right wing. He wasn't sold. But after practice, Cassidy pulled Heinen aside for a one-on-one on-ice conversation. The coach wanted Heinen to learn a lesson and apply it to the biggest game of his career.

"If Danton does go back in after sitting a game, you hope you do get that response," Cassidy said yesterday. "That's the idea — for them to learn something from being up there. Not take it personally, but take it personally, if that makes sense to you: 'Hey, I've got to get back in there and keep my spot. There's some worthy guys here.' If he goes back in, that's what we hope happens. At the end of the day, I do believe it's bigger than that, to be quite honest with you, on whether Danton or [Ryan] Donato or Wingels plays in that spot. There's a lot more that goes into the game that we need to do to win than one lineup decision."

Cassidy believes the players that got it done all year long can deliver once more. It's their turn to reward their boss for his faith.

Tonight's lineup:

Brad Marchand-Patrice Bergeron-David Pastrnak

Jake DeBrusk-David Krejci-Rick Nash

Danton Heinen-Riley Nash-David Backes

Tim Schaller-Sean Kuraly-Noel Acciari

Zdeno Chara-Charlie McAvoy

Torey Krug-Kevan Miller

Matt Grzelcyk-Adam McQuaid

Tuukka Rask

Anton Khudobin

The Athletic LOADED: 04.26.2018

1093680 Websites

The Athletic / Duhatschek: On-ice success came quickly to Vegas, but Sharks wrote the book on how to get a team off the ground

By Eric Duhatschek Apr 25, 2018 15

LAS VEGAS — In 1991, long before the Vegas Golden Knights became an overnight NHL sensation, there was another first-year team that was also an expansion phenomenon.

The San Jose Sharks had a hip-looking sweater, in a color — teal — that sold a mountain of merchandise in their inaugural season and soon became ubiquitous among fashionistas around the hockey world. Like Vegas this year, the Sharks were the first team into a previously underserved market for professional sports. They were based in the

heart of Silicon Valley, with a new state-of-the-art arena on the horizon and were lovable in a klutzy, New York Mets-sort of way out of the gate. Faced with a far more restrictive expansion process, the Sharks won 17 games their first season, 11 in a disastrous second and then took a great leap forward, unexpectedly making the playoffs in their third.

That, of course, is the fundamental difference between early Sharks and early Golden Knights. Vegas was a spectacular success story right out of the gate, on and off the ice. A hit at the box office and in the souvenir shops, they were also matchless on the ice compared to previous NHL expansion teams, qualifying for the playoffs with the fifth best regular-season record in the league and then sweeping their first-round playoff opponent, the Los Angeles Kings.

It means that on Thursday, when the second round of the NHL playoffs gets underway here at the T-Mobile Arena, the matchup in the Pacific Division will feature today's expansion darlings, the Golden Knights, against a Sharks' team that wrote the book on how to get a hockey enterprise off the ground.

An interested observer in these heady times will be former Sharks centre Perry Berezan, who played 66 games in their inaugural season. During Berezan's two years with the Sharks, he and his wife Marie had a daughter, Lindsay, who now works for the Golden Knights in their marketing department. Hockey can be a small world sometimes.

In a telephone interview from his office in Calgary, Berezan was retelling the story of how his daughter grew up as a died-in-the-wool Sharks fan — and when those allegiances shifted to the new kids on the block.

"She has a picture of herself as a one-year-old, with my Sharks' jersey on and she always cherished that picture," said Berezan. "She talks about being born in a hockey family and born a San Jose Shark. She was a Shark fan all her life. She watched them. She cheered for them. It was all Sharks, Sharks, Sharks — until she became a Golden Knight. Now, of course, there's no doubt who she's cheering for in this series."

Berezan has paid close attention to the progress and development of the Golden Knights and is heartened that their players didn't have to go through the same misery the Sharks did in their first two seasons, when they were overmatched most nights because the NHL didn't give them a fighting chance to select a competitive team in the expansion draft.

"The success they've had, I've been thinking about the comparisons to the Sharks," Berezan acknowledged. "As players, it was cool for us for a little bit at the start of the season, but we didn't want to be the laughingstock of the league. Winning 17 games a year and being as bad we were — we had two 11-game losing streaks that first year I think — for players and coaches, it became irrelevant how much merchandise they sold. In San Jose, I think everyone realized they had something going on the business side. But as players, we were still in the Cow Palace the first two years — and that transition was kind of gross. It was almost as if they were buying time until we got into the new rink — just hang in for two years and gearing up for that."

Berezan was signed by San Jose as a free agent by Jack Ferreira, the Sharks first-ever general manager. Ferreira was also the architect of the expansion Anaheim Ducks, meaning he put two different expansion teams together in the 1990s. Ferreira is now a consultant for the Kings. As someone with a front-row seat to a couple of different NHL expansion experiences, Ferreira says he greatly admires the work done by Vegas GM George McPhee and his staff in assembling this year's team.

"They did a great job," said Ferreira. "The guys scouting for them, they had that full year to look at every organization and determine who was their eighth or ninth best player available and then they went from there. The other thing George did was accumulate draft picks. He's set up for about three years with extra picks. He's going to get to a certain point where he moves some players and maybe get another pick or two. They're set up really well. They did a fabulous job. I don't know who could have done a better job."



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The Sharks' expansion experience was the most complicated since the NHL-WHA merger in 1979 and it revolved around the owners of the Minnesota North Stars, George and Gordon Gund. Unable to strike a deal to relocate the North Stars, the Gunds sold the franchise and in exchange, were awarded the right to operate an expansion team in San Jose. The NHL implemented a complicated two-step process to stock both teams, first with a dispersal draft and then with an expansion draft. As part of the dispersal draft, the North Stars were able to protect 14 skaters and two goaltenders who'd played a minimum of 50 NHL games. The Sharks were then able to select 14 skaters and two goaltenders from the Minnesota roster, only a handful of whom were in their opening-night lineup: Brian Hayward, Neil Wilkinson, Rob Zettler and the infamous Link Gaetz. From there, both San Jose and Minnesota participated in the ensuing expansion draft, each taking turns selecting from the pool of players left unprotected by the 20 other NHL teams. San Jose had the first pick – goaltender Jeff Hackett from the New York Islanders – and Minnesota had the last pick – Guy Lafleur from the Quebec Nordiques. Other than Hackett, there wasn't much to work with in the beginning, said Ferreira. Hackett didn't provide the sort of lights-out goaltending that Marc-Andre Fleury did for this year's Golden Knights, but he made a bad situation far better.

"Our goaltending was actually pretty good," said Ferreira. "We were lucky we ended up with Jeff Hackett. We also had Brian Hayward there, he got our first win, and then his back went out and he was gone for the year. We also got Arturs Irbe, who we put in the minors to start, but Hackett was our MVP. Without him, we would have been worse than we were."

Ferreira didn't last long in San Jose, but he saw enough in his short time at the helm to realize it was a non-traditional NHL market that had a chance to work.

"I knew from Day One we were going to be a hit with the fans," said Ferreira. "The first practice we had, the rink was full. About 10,000 people were there, and when the Zambonis came out – and you remember they had that shark fin on them – the Zambonis got a standing ovation. So, I knew we were on the right track. I just knew. The city, everything, the new rink was coming, the fan base. We were so well accepted, it was unbelievable. But I think the expansion fee was \$30 million. It wasn't anything like what Vegas had to pay."

According to Sportsnet commentator John Shannon, a former executive producer of Hockey Night in Canada and a former NHL broadcast vice president, the Golden Knights have gained a television following in Canada, even in a year when the Winnipeg Jets and the Toronto Maple Leafs were the two primary attractions.

"I think they have been every Canadian's second favorite team," said Shannon. "At this time of year, fans are the same. I think there's a little skepticism. But early on, coming off the tragedy and then the way they started and having an identifiable player like Fleury – and by the way having a really cool looking sweater – I think people really identified with them. And when push came to shove, if your team wasn't playing, you were watching the Knights. I really believe that. They're getting a lot of attention in Vegas, but I think they're as big a story here across the country as they are in Vegas."

Berezan for one will be watching to see how far Vegas can go.

"I cheer for them now, too," he said. "We were just there last month when they clinched the playoffs against Colorado. Seeing my daughter go through on the business side, they've ridden a ride similar to the players in some respect. It's insane how well they've done – and of course, the success they had on the ice makes it easier to sell the product off the ice."

The Athletic LOADED: 04.26.2018

1093681 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Despite Game 7 defeat, young Leafs' ascension just getting started

Chris Johnston | @reporterchris April 25, 2018, 10:47 PM

BOSTON – There's very little choice in a moment like this but to pick up and move on.

Amid the tears and frustration and disappointment swelling inside the Toronto Maple Leafs dressing room on Wednesday night, there was also understanding. This series saw them fall on their faces early before rallying to push it to the limit. Game 7 saw them fly out of the gates and take a lead to the third period before crumpling under the weight of the relentless Boston Bruins attack.

There was no disputing that the Bruins were the better team in this best-of-seven. Toronto had its moments, and fought gamely, but it would have been an upset had they pulled it off.

They came close.

"The team is on its way up and competing with the top teams," said veteran defenceman Ron Hainsey. "I think there's still a level we can get to here, this group can get to. A little bit better. We showed some stuff coming back after a terrible first two games in here and we showed some good stuff to get back in the series to this point, but there's a little bit higher notch you've got to [hit] – up and down the roster – in order to win a series like this.

"This is a top, whatever, three, four or five team, right? I mean we're on the edge of that. But [Boston] was up there. From Nov. 1 on, their record is incredible."

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The Leafs were no slouches with a 105-point season and a 4-3 lead over Boston at the second intermission of Game 7. They were 20 minutes from moving on to face Tampa. But the Bruins seized back control the way they had all series – controlling the puck in the offensive zone for long stretches and applying pressure.

Torey Krug's tying goal came off an offensive zone faceoff win and a shot through traffic. Jake DeBrusk's second of the night, the winner, arrived at the end of a powerful rush where he separated himself from Jake Gardiner and snuck a shot past Frederik Andersen.

They added two more goals for good measure and after the 7-4 loss Nazem Kadri didn't hesitate when asked what lessons could be taken from these two weeks.

"To just keep applying that pressure," he said. "It's just a maturity thing and hockey is a game of momentum swings. You've got to be able to withstand them, especially on the road. Everything is not going to be pretty, but they were able to get to more pucks than us and put them on the net."

Some of the Leafs were left raw. Gardiner had tears in his eyes while speaking with reporters and said that he'd let a lot of people down after being on the ice for five goals against in the decider. Andersen spoke in tones more hushed than usual after posting an .896 save percentage in the series.

There were a lot of long looks as players shuffled to the bus.

From Morgan Rielly, with his lip busted up after taking a Zdeno Chara shot to the face. From Auston Matthews, who fired a team-best 27 shots on goal but only beat Tuukka Rask once. From Connor Brown, who said only "tough one" while shaking broadcaster Joe Bowen's hand in the hallway and walking off into the night.



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"I'm not really commenting on anything. I didn't go in like I normally do and go through the replays or that," said coach Mike Babcock, letting his foot off the gas for the first time all season. "We're done. So, we'll have lots of time to look at those goals and get that figured out. The bottom line is we went out for the third period and they scored and we didn't."

"Once they scored, they tilted the rink and I don't even know how many looks we had if we had any."

The Bruins tilted the ice from start to finish, controlling 52.3 per cent of even-strength shot attempts in the series. Where they really gained separation was in transition and the ability to break the puck cleanly out of their zone. That put it in the hands of the Brad Marchand–Patrice Bergeron–David Pastrnak line, which inflicted considerable damage.

It once again underscored the need for the Leafs to address their blue line. There will be considerable pressure on management to do that this summer. They simply don't have a horse like Chara, who at age 41 logged 28:38 for Boston in Game 7.

The good news for Toronto is that Mitch Marner was a star in this series, scoring points in each of the last six games. Patrick Marleau proved that he can still play at a high level, which is essential given his \$6.25-million cap hit the next two seasons. Speedy depth wingers Andreas Johnsson and Kasperi Kapanen look ready for more important roles and will likely need to fill them with the expected departures of James van Riemsdyk and Leo Komarov in free agency (to say nothing of centre Tyler Bozak).

Any concerns about Matthews requires serious perspective. While he wasn't as dominant as usual during this series, he forever appeared on the cusp of a breakthrough that didn't come.

"Pavel [Datsyuk] was one of the best players I've ever coached, a two-way guy. I think he went four years without scoring a playoff goal," said Babcock. "It's hard, it's real. These other teams are competing and they want to win too. I don't think Bergeron and Marchand and Chara and these guys – they're dialled in to play against you and, so, you've got to find a way to get to the next level."

"Some of these hard knocks are a growth opportunity for you in life because you've got to embrace it. You've got to dig in and you've got to grow your craft in the off-season."

As much as this ending brought about flashbacks to the Game 7 meltdown in 2013, there really aren't many parallels to draw.

The Leafs have spent four years, 11 months and 12 days tearing apart every aspect of their organization since then. They've changed a general manager and a coach and won the draft lottery while making several smart decisions to rebuild the roster.

Even though they ended up back where they started – with a blown lead in this building in a Game 7 – there's nothing to suggest they're headed backwards from this point forward. Heck, they might even watch the Bruins lift the Stanley Cup six weeks from now.

"They didn't wilt at all," said Hainsey. "Like a great team would, they kept coming back when we'd get the lead."

As emotional as this loss was, the Leafs aren't far off becoming a great team themselves. They're an organization in transition that needs to keep plowing forward.

Here, tonight, it just wasn't their time.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 04.26.2018

1093682 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / 2018 Stanley Cup Playoffs Round 2 Preview: Penguins vs. Capitals

Rory Boylen | @RoryBoylen April 24, 2018, 1:22 PM

For the third year in a row the Penguins and Capitals meet in the second round of the Stanley Cup Playoffs, though it's been a mostly one-sided affair. Pittsburgh, of course, has won the previous two post-season meetings en route to claiming the Stanley Cup, but the franchise rivalry goes even further back than that.

This is the fourth playoff meeting between the two in the Ovechkin-Crosby era and prior to 2005, Pittsburgh and Washington met an additional seven times with the Pens coming out on top in six of them. The only time the Capitals have triumphed over their division rivals was in 1994 when the Caps won a first-round series in six games.

The Penguins will face Washington in Round 2 of the Stanley Cup playoffs, the first postseason meeting between those teams since 2017. The Capitals have won all but nine of the previous 10 series against Pittsburgh.

— Dave Molinari (@MolinariPG) April 24, 2018

This is also the third straight season in which Washington won the Metropolitan Division crown, though this year's is the most surprising. The Caps were all-in on last season's playoff run, then lost a ton of skill in the off-season and were expected to take a step back from contending. This season brought underwhelming underlying numbers and developed a goaltending controversy between a struggling Braden Holtby and backup Philipp Grubauer, which seems to have been resolved in the playoffs.

The Penguins are the Bizarro Capitals — a team without a Presidents' Trophy, but three Crosby-era Stanley Cups instead. This year the Penguins are chasing history as they try to become the first team since the dynastic New York Islanders to win three consecutive championships. It didn't always look like the Pens would even get this far, though. The Pens allowed 50 goals in 13 October games, were 28th in even strength goals through the first two months of the season and Matt Murray struggled with a .904 save percentage as of Dec. 31, which was 42nd-best at the time.

But it all started to get back on track in 2018 — Pittsburgh was 13th in goals against from Jan. 1 onwards, and became a top 10 team in even strength goals in the 2018 portion of the schedule with Murray improving to a .912 save percentage in the second half as well. While that was still a below-average mark, it somewhat stabilized a troubling trend in the first half.

Make no mistake, as has been the case in these series since 2005, the show is all about Crosby vs. Ovechkin. While the Pens captain is heavily decorated and has won everything conceivable in his hockey career, Ovechkin hasn't seen Round 3 of the Stanley Cup Playoffs yet. The greatest goal scorer of his generation and perhaps in NHL history has a huge monkey to get off his back and is looking forward to the challenge ahead.

Alex Ovechkin on playing the Penguins again: "I can't wait. It's a huge opportunity for us to take a step forward."

— Isabelle Khurshudyan (@ikhurshudyan) April 24, 2018

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ADVANCED STATS

5-on-5 via Corsica.Hockey

Pittsburgh: 52.23 CF% (5th), 48.07 GF% (21st), .910 SP% (29th), 7.29 SH% (23rd), 98.33 PDO (29th)



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Washington: 47.99 CF% (24th), 52.48 GF% (12th), .925 SP% (13th), 9.14 SH% (2nd), 101.61 PDO (4th)

POWER NUMBER

Determined by percentiles created for a variety of statistics and weighed equally to give each team a grade out of 10 for offence and defence (seven for 5-on-5 and three for special teams). These numbers are then averaged to come up with a power number to measure a team's all-around play.

TEAM	OFFENCE (rank)	DEFENCE (rank)	POWER NUMBER (rank)
Pittsburgh	9.12 (1st)	3.95 (19th)	6.53 (6th)
Washington	5.62 (13th)	3.56 (23rd)	4.59 (19th)

TEAM STATS

Pittsburgh: 26.2 PP% (1st), 80.0 PK% (17th), 270 GF (3rd), 248 GA (20th)

Washington: 22.5 PP% (7th), 80.3 PK% (15th), 256 GF (9th), 238 GA (16th)

HEAD-TO-HEAD RECORD

Pittsburgh: 2-2-0

Washington: 2-2-0

Round 1 Strengths for Pittsburgh: As the highest-scoring team in Round 1, offence was a strength for the Penguins, although a large chunk of that can be attributed to the weak goaltending in Philadelphia's net. In this sense, it's hard to get a read on what the Penguins actually did well, and what was the result of a distressed opponent. But by now we know the Penguins win on the backs of their biggest three stars (Crosby, Evgeni Malkin and Phil Kessel), who they sometimes spread across three lines, and the deadline addition of Derick Brassard gives Pittsburgh its best 1-2-3 punch down the middle since Jordan Staal left in 2012.

Crosby is the leading playoff point-getter and he's boosted linemate Jake Guentzel yet again as the 23-year-old is out of the gate as a goal-a-game player. Malkin has five points in five games to go with 15 shots and the fact Kessel scored just once in the opening round series only means he's due for more. The Pens can create matchup nightmares when they have game-breakers spread out over three different lines. The most promising outcome for Pittsburgh against the Flyers was its continued success at 5-on-5. After becoming one of the best even strength teams in the second half of the season, salvaging a terrible first half, the Pens were the highest-scoring team at evens in Round 1.

Round 1 Strengths for Washington: The Penguins' power play may have been the best in the regular season, but Washington's conversion rate of 33.3 per cent paced the league in Round 1 of the Stanley Cup Playoffs. The Blue Jackets handed the Capitals the most man advantage opportunities of anyone in the first round and they earned five more goals on the power play than did Columbus, the biggest difference of any first-round series.

John Carlson was a key contributor from the back end and, of course, Ovechkin was the driver up front. After falling behind 2-0 in the series, Ovechkin guaranteed the Capitals would return home with the series all tied up, which they did, and his two goals in Game 6 gave the Capitals a lead they wouldn't relinquish. This guy is a playoff player.

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

Penguins' X-Factor: With Marc-Andre Fleury in Vegas, Murray no longer has a high-calibre backup fully capable of assuming No. 1 duties in case of injury or poor play. The safety net is gone. Murray's play has been sporadic all season, and even in Round 1 he was up and down. The 23-

year-old may have earned two shutouts against the Flyers, but he also allowed more than three goals in two of the games and was nearly pulled in Game 6. There is some question about his health, too. Murray was seen by local reporters consulting with the Pens' assistant athletic trainer last week. The goalie said he was fine, but given his play, it's a situation worth watching.

Capitals' X-Factor: We have to take the goalie in Washington, too, given the offensive potency of the Penguins and the fact Holtby wasn't the Caps' starter in either of Game 1 or 2 versus Columbus. Holtby's .907 save percentage this season was by far the worst of his NHL career and in January and February his save rate dropped below .900. This led to more starts for Grubauer, but since wrestling the job back from him against Columbus, Holtby's playoff save percentage is a very respectable .932 — the second-best mark of all advancing Eastern Conference goalies, behind only Tampa's Andrei Vasilevskiy. If Holtby is back on top of his game as one of the world's elite, he will be the key for Washington to exorcise their demons.

PLAYOFF TEAM LEADERS (G-A-PTS)

Pittsburgh: Jake Guentzel (6-7-13), Sidney Crosby (6-7-13), Kris Letang (1-6-7)

Washington: John Carlson (1-8-9), Alex Ovechkin (5-3-8), Evgeny Kuznetsov (4-4-8)

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1093683 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / 2018 Stanley Cup Playoffs Round 2 Preview: Jets vs. Predators

Rory Boylen | @RoryBoylen April 23, 2018, 2:26 PM

This is the series every hockey fan was waiting for, and though many would rather it happen in the Western Conference final, the NHL's top two regular season teams are expected to make what is usually the blandest round in the Stanley Cup Playoffs among the most exciting.

These teams, basically, can play you any sort of way. They can be physical, but also bring a load of speed — Winnipeg's Blake Wheeler is what a modern power forward should look and play like. They can also come at you with waves of offence, or shut you down with their great systems and blue lines — Nashville and Winnipeg were two of the four teams who allowed an average of less than 30 shots a game in Round 1.

And in goal, even though Pekka Rinne is the odds-on favourite to win the Vezina Trophy, the Preds don't have much, if any, edge at the position as the Jets' Connor Hellebuyck was a finalist for the award and earned two shutouts in Games 4 and 5 to close out the Minnesota Wild.

The Jets are undoubtedly a team on the rise, but Nashville has been here before and as the reigning Western Conference champions, how much will that experience help them? We take a closer look at this epic Round 2 battle.

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ADVANCED STATS

5-on-5 via Corsica.Hockey

Winnipeg: 51.5 CF% (10th), 54.72 GF% (3rd), .925 SP% (11th), 8.53 SH% (5th), 101.07 PDO (7th)



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Nashville: 51.52 CF% (9th), 56.61 GF% (2nd), .936 SP% (1st), 8.19 SH% (9th), 101.74 PDO (3rd)

POWER NUMBER

Determined by percentiles created for a variety of statistics and weighed equally to give each team a grade out of 10 for offence and defence (seven for 5-on-5 and three for special teams). These numbers are then averaged to come up with a power number to measure a team's all-around play.

TEAM (rank)	OFFENCE (rank)	DEFENCE (rank)	POWER NUMBER (rank)
Winnipeg	6.00 (9th)	6.02 (6th)	6.01 (7th)
Nashville	6.38 (8th)	5.42 (13th)	5.90 (9th)

TEAM STATS

Winnipeg: 23.4 PP% (5th), 81.8 PK% (9th), 273 GF (2nd), 2016 GA (5th)

Nashville: 21.2 PP% (14th), 81.9 PK% (6th), 262 GF (8th), 204 GA (2nd)

HEAD-TO-HEAD RECORD

Winnipeg: 2-3-0

Nashville: 3-1-1

Round 1 Strengths for Winnipeg: After the pickup of Paul Stastny at the trade deadline, Winnipeg's depth at centre reached a level that few NHL teams can match and that strength was on display against a banged-up Wild team in Round 1. Scheifele's four goals led the Jets and Stastny's three assists led all Winnipeg forwards. Little had two points in his first five playoff games, but when Nik Ehlers had to miss Game 5 Winnipeg had the depth to move Little off to the wing and run Andrew Copp and Adam Lowry as the third and fourth line pivots. It's key at this time of year to be strong down the middle and in such a tight matchup in Round 2, it's an area where Winnipeg has the advantage.

Not enough can be said about the presence of Dustin Byfuglien either. His average of five hits per game was the fourth-best of the opening round and he also contributed with five assists and his time on ice was more than a minute higher than it was in the regular season. The 6-foot-5, 260-pound defenceman needs to keep that up against a Nashville team that has an all-around more potent offence than Minnesota.

Round 1 Strengths for Nashville: The Predators faced a stiffer test against the Avalanche than many expected and notably it was the depth players who made the biggest difference on the scoreboard. The third line of Austin Watson, Colton Sissons and Nick Bonino were three of Nashville's top six scorers in Round 1 and more than made up for the underwhelming production from the likes of Kevin Fiala, Ryan Hartman and Craig Smith. You have to figure the latter three will start scoring, but if the Predators' third line keeps this up, it will go a long way towards nullifying Winnipeg's advantage down the middle.

Jets' X-Factor: Every team is banged-up at this time of year and players regularly fight through injuries, but Tyler Myers, Tobias Enstrom, Mathieu Perreault and Nik Ehlers all missed time against Minnesota (Enstrom has been out since late-March). Jacob Trouba missed a couple weeks in March before returning to the lineup, while Dimitry Kulikov has been out since March 8 and isn't skating again yet. How many injuries, bumps and bruises can this roster absorb?

In Round 2, Winnipeg faces a much more polished, experienced and deep Predators team that healthy scratched veteran Scott Hartnell, trade deadline pickup Ryan Hartman, and wildcard rookie sensation Eeli Tolvanen are options should injuries hit Nashville. If the injury bug keeps checking Winnipeg, the likes of Tucker Poolman, Sami Niku and Jack Roslovic are waiting in the wings — none of them have great experience, but all of them can skate and add speed. By the time Nashville reached the Stanley Cup final in 2017 they were extremely banged up and eventually outclassed by a more experienced Pittsburgh Penguins team

— if these Jets struggle to stay healthy over the next 4-7 games, they could experience a similar fate against this year's Predators.

Predators' X-Factor: Nashville took 29 minor penalties in six games versus Colorado and were shorthanded 20 times, but were saved by a penalty kill that was successful 90 per cent of the time. Nashville was the most penalized team in the NHL during the regular season, but that lack of discipline could start catching up to them against better teams — and Winnipeg will be a great test. The Jets had the fifth-best PP in the regular season and it continued to be strong against Minnesota, converting on 23.1 per cent of its opportunities. Nashville has to be careful to not give the Jets power play too many chances in what should be a very tight series.

PLAYOFF TEAM LEADERS (G-A-PTS)

Winnipeg: Mark Scheifele (4-1-5), Dustin Byfuglien (0-5-5), Patrik Laine (2-2-4)

Nashville: Austin Watson (4-3-7), Colton Sissons (3-4-7), Filip Forsberg (4-2-6)

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 04.26.2018

1093684 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Leafs' Jake Gardiner after painful Game 7: 'I let a lot of people down'

Luke Fox | @lukefoxjukebox April 26, 2018, 12:57 AM

BOSTON — All that promised pain, Jake Gardiner wore it on his face.

It crept into his voice and slunk his shoulders.

"Personally, I got to be better. A lot of this game is on me," said Gardiner, the posterboy defenceman for risk-reward.

Gardiner's voice quavered. Tears coated his eyes. He exhaled deeply.

"It's just not good enough, especially in a game like this. It's the most important game of the season, and I didn't show up, so... there's not much you can say really."

In the fury and dismay of another third-period Game 7 collapse on Boston ice, Toronto Maple Leafs fans may lay this 7-4 rubble at the feet Gardiner, or goalie Frederik Andersen (.829 save percentage in this one), or Auston Matthews (two points all series), or Mike Babcock's deployment, or Lou Lamoriello's decision to sit tight at the trade deadline, or Nazem Kadri's brutal timing to earn a suspension.

But to blow it against an excellent team is a group failure, just as rallying from a 1-3 series deficit to seize a 4-3 third-period lead in Game 7 was a team effort.

"At the start of the series, if you'd have told we were playing Boston and it'd be like this and we'd be right here going into the third period, I would've taken that all day long," Babcock said.

"The best way to fix things is take total responsibility yourself."

To his credit, Gardiner did so with raw honesty.

Through a scrum and lump, he swallowed ownership of the most gut-wrenching loss of his life, and that includes his minus-two performance in the 2013 debacle you neither need nor want us to rehash.

Gardiner was a dash-five. He had two giveaways. He fumbled the puck frequently and compounded his poor decisions. His passes refused to stretch, and when they did, it was for icings. When Babcock tapped No.



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51 on the shoulder, 61 per cent of the shot attempts were being blasted at the visitors' end.

"There's no real explanation," Gardiner said. "I felt fine. It just seemed like everything I was doing ended up in the back of the net."

The ultimate turning point in a contest that featured at least seven of them featured Gardiner turning the wrong way on a brilliant burst by Bruins super rookie Jake DeBrusk.

"I saw he had a lot of speed. I didn't think I could've kept him in front of me, so I turned, skated with him," said Gardiner, who tried to throw a body check as DeBrusk angled to the crease. "He made a good play. I gotta get a stick on it, though."

He didn't. Neither did Andersen, who let the game-winner slip five-hole. DeBrusk said he caught Gardiner off-guard. The highlight was too ugly or too heartbreaking for Babcock to re-watch.

"We'll have lots of time to look at those goals," the coach said.

As wonderful a talent as Gardiner is—he racked up a career-best 52 points this season—and as gracious as he is under all circumstances, the cold truth is he might have just played his last night for the Maple Leafs.

"Hockey's a fast game," Kadri reminded. "Sometimes you don't have a lot of time to think about or process a lot of the things that happen. That's what a lot of people don't understand: Things happen in a blink of an eye. You go back and say, 'Oh, I should've done this. I should've done that.' But in the moment, it's tough."

Stop us if you've heard this one before: Constructed as is, the Maple Leafs defence is not good enough.

Toronto allowed an average of four goals per game in this series, despite a couple of headstands and cartwheels by Andersen. They surrendered 35 shots a night. They gave the puck away a playoff-worst 79 times. For long stretches, proper zone clears felt like mini triumphs.

"Bottom line, we gave up six before the goalie got pulled. That's a lot," said Ron Hainsey. "We just could not hold the leads. We had three of them."

We lobbed a loaded question at Kadri: Is this group good enough defensively to win a Cup?

"There's no doubt about that. Absolutely," he replied. "Do we need some work and some tweaking? Of course."

Back to Gardiner, a left shot who skates well and creates offence. Morgan Rielly and rookie Travis Dermott, who scored a pretty goal in Game 7, already fit that bill.

Gardiner's contract is one of the last vestiges of the Dave Nonis regime. It carries a \$4.05-million cap hit for next season, and then he becomes an unrestricted free agent.

With a strong possibility of all six UFAs—James van Riemsdyk, Leo Komarov, Tomas Plekanec, Dominic Moore, Tyler Bozak, and Roman Polak—walking this summer, Toronto's roster is ready for a wave of turnover around the edges. (Heck, after this series, maybe Polak has the best chance to re-sign—one year, league minimum, anyone?)

Trading Gardiner would cut to the core, but the market for an underpriced 52-point, 27-year-old puck-mover who can work a power play could be tempting enough to help the Leafs improve its centre depth and strength on the ride side of the blue line.

Gardiner isn't as much to blame as he thinks right now, but the rewards may never outweigh the risk.

At his lowest, Gardiner was asked how long it would take to get over the weight of this performance.

"I'm not sure on that one," he mustered.

"It's going to be a tough one to swallow, that's for sure. I let a lot of people down. But you know what, hopefully I can come back better from it."

He can, but for whom?

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 04.26.2018

1093685 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / 2018 Stanley Cup Playoffs Round 2 Preview: Bruins vs. Lightning

Rory Boylen | @RoryBoylen April 26, 2018, 1:06 AM

As the first- and second-overall teams face off in one Western Conference semifinal (Nashville-Winnipeg), the Eastern Conference's second round will showcase the third- and fourth-best NHL teams when the dominant-at-both-ends Boston Bruins meet the all-offence Tampa Bay Lightning, who won the Atlantic Division and home-ice advantage by a single point.

These teams played four times all season, but three of those games came in the final four weeks, so we could have a better gauge on how these teams matchup than usual. The Lightning were an offensive juggernaut all season long and scored a whopping 17 more goals than the next best team, but where their problems come is on defence.

The Lightning allowed the sixth-most shots in the NHL from Jan. 1 to the end of the season, more than 14 other playoff teams, and though Andrei Vasilevskiy was named a Vezina Trophy finalist last week, his numbers took a hit in the second half when the workload increased. Tampa Bay was even outshot by the Devils in Round 1, though Vasilevskiy was excellent again with a .941 save percentage.

The Bruins may not have scored as often as Tampa Bay, but they did close the gap in the second half and are the far better team on defence. Boston really can play successful any way — they were the only NHL team this season to finish top six in goals for, bottom six in goals against, and top three in both power-play and penalty-kill rates.

Boston's Round 1 opponent, Toronto, was similar to Tampa Bay in how much it leaned on its offence and the Bruins nearly ran away with that series. The Maple Leafs did fight all the way back to force Game 7 of course, but when everything was on the line Boston's defence clamped down hard and the offence exploded for seven goals. That's what this team is all about.

Boston and Tampa Bay had the top two spots nailed down in the Atlantic for months and may have been looking forward to this matchup for that long. It figures to bring us fast hockey with a ton of goals and high-end skill all over the ice.

Both teams are still working towards recovering from off years a season ago, Boston being knocked out in Round 1 and Tampa Bay missing the playoffs altogether. This season, with Stanley Cup aspirations in tow, whichever team loses in Round 2 will finish short of expectations.

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ADVANCED STATS

5-on-5 via Corsica.Hockey

Boston: 53.8 CF% (2nd), 54.49 GF% (4th), .923 SP% (14th), 7.82 SH% (13th), 100.16 PDO (15th)



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Tampa Bay: 51.62 CF% (7th), 57.18 GF% (1st), .929 SP% (5th), 9.35 SH% (1st), 102.28 PDO (1st)

POWER NUMBER

Determined by percentiles created for a variety of statistics and weighed equally to give each team a grade out of 10 for offence and defence (seven for 5-on-5 and three for special teams). These numbers are then averaged to come up with a power number to measure a team's all-around play.

TEAM (rank)	OFFENCE (rank)	DEFENCE (rank)	POWER NUMBER
Tampa Bay (2nd)	9.10 (2nd)	5.20 (13th)	7.15
Boston	6.96 (6th)	9.21 (1st)	8.08 (1st)

TEAM STATS

Boston: 23.5 PP% (4th), 83.7 PK% (3rd), 267 GF (6th), 211 GA (4th)

Tampa Bay: 23.9 PP% (3rd), 76.1 PK% (28th), 290 GF (1st), 234 GA (13th)

HEAD-TO-HEAD RECORD

Boston: 3-1-0

Tampa Bay: 1-3-0

Round 1 Strengths for Boston: The top line of Patrice Bergeron, David Pastrnak and Brad Marchand, hockey's best, was a force against Toronto, combining for 30 points in seven games. When this line went cold on offence, even if it was still getting the majority of shots and scoring chances, the Bruins struggled; when they were on, the Bruins were dominant.

On the back end, Zdeno Chara, even at 41 years old, confounded Toronto's offence with his strength and reach and was Boston's most-used defenceman. The Bruins allowed just 28.1 shots against per game in Round 1, and got 35 of their own per game, maintaining a high level of play at both ends of the ice from the regular season that few teams can match.

Round 1 Strengths for Tampa Bay: Nikita Kucherov torched the Devils for 10 points in five games — he, along with the rest of the first line (Steven Stamkos, J.T. Miller), dominated New Jersey and accounted for seven of the Lightning's 18 opening-round goals. Even more important in Kucherov's production was that all five of his goals came at even strength. But by now we know Tampa Bay's No. 1 attribute is its offence and, specifically, that top line. The most important strength for the Lightning that needs to continue if they are to extend this playoff run another couple rounds is the play of Vasilevskiy in net.

The Lightning's defence was a troubling point for them this season — they were bottom five in shots against from Jan. 1 onwards and it didn't improve much after acquiring Ryan McDonagh at the trade deadline. In Round 1 against New Jersey, the Lightning allowed an average of 34.2 shots per game, the most of any advancing team. The key difference is that, in the second half of the regular season, Vasilevskiy's save percentage was a well below-average .905, but in Round 1 he was stellar again, stopping 94.1 per cent of his shots, the highest rate of any Eastern Conference goalie. The Vezina Trophy finalist evens out Tampa's porous defence, which will be put to a much stiffer test in Round 2.

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

Bruins' X-Factor: Tuukka Rask was on the verge of being pulled in Game 7 versus Toronto and may have only been saved by the defence in front of him, which kept the Maple Leafs without a shot for nearly half of the third period. On one hand, the Bruins netminder can play at an MVP level and steal games for Boston — he allowed just one goal in Games 1 and

4 when he was at his best. On the other, Rask can have bad stretches, which doesn't bode well in a short playoff series. His .899 save percentage in Round 1 was easily the worst of any goalie left in the second round. Tampa's top strength is its offence and if Rask has a bad game or two, it might be enough to sink Boston's Stanley Cup hopes.

Lightning's X-Factor: Three of Tampa's top four scorers against New Jersey came from the top line, but while secondary scoring wasn't necessarily a problem for them in Round 1, it will be put to the test against the Bruins. While Auston Matthews' top line in Toronto struggled to produce against Boston, Mitch Marner and his line found great success and was a huge factor in their bounce back from a 3-1 series deficit. Tampa Bay needs to follow suit and find that same formula in their second unit with Tyler Johnson, Ondrej Palat and Brayden Point, who combined for four goals against New Jersey.

PLAYOFF TEAM LEADERS (G-A-PTS)

Boston: David Pastrnak (5-8-13), Brad Marchand (3-6-9), Torey Krug (2-7-9)

Tampa Bay: Nikita Kucherov (5-5-10), Steven Stamkos (1-5-6), Alex Killorn (4-1-5)

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 04.26.2018

1093686 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Sportsnet's 2018 Stanley Cup Playoffs Second Round Broadcast Schedule

Sportsnet Staff | @Sportsnet April 25, 2018, 11:16 PM

TORONTO — With the Winnipeg Jets the last Canadian team standing and the only hope to break a Stanley Cup drought dating back to 1993, the Pittsburgh Penguins 12 wins away from a three-peat, and the Vegas Golden Knights looking to make even more history, Sportsnet unveils its broadcast schedule for the second round of the Stanley Cup Playoffs.

Fans will have front-row access to all the action with Sportsnet's exclusive English-language wall-to-wall coverage. All second round matchups are available on TV on Sportsnet or CBC and via live stream on Sportsnet NOW and Rogers NHL LIVE. On radio, select Stanley Cup Playoff games will be available along the Sportsnet Radio Network, including on Sportsnet 590 The FAN, Sportsnet 960 The FAN and Sportsnet 650.

Second round coverage begins Thursday, April 26 with Pittsburgh vs. Washington at 7 p.m. ET/4 p.m. PT on Sportsnet and CBC followed by San Jose vs. Vegas at 10 p.m. ET/7 p.m. PT on Sportsnet and CBC. The puck drops on the Winnipeg vs. Nashville series on Friday, April 27 at 8 p.m. ET/5 p.m. PT on CBC and Sportsnet 360. Coverage Friday begins with Hockey Central Tonight at 7:30 p.m. ET/4:30 p.m. PT on Sportsnet 360. Full broadcast schedule is below.

As the home of hockey, Sportsnet's world-class roster of analysts, reporters and hosts continue to deliver the most up-to-date news and stories throughout the second round of the Stanley Cup Playoffs:

- Nightly installments of Hockey Central Tonight tee up the post-season action with host Ron MacLean alongside Elliotte Friedman, Kelly Hrudey and Nick Kypreos.
- Don Cherry returns for Coach's Corner alongside Ron MacLean.
- Harnarayan Singh, Randip Janda, Bhupinder Hundal, and Harpreet Pandher deliver select Saturday night games on Hockey Night in Canada: Punjabi Edition to hockey fans coast-to-coast on OMNI.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 26, 2018

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

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Tampa Bay Lightning (A1) vs. Boston Bruins (A2)

• Play-by-play: Paul Romanuk; Game Analyst: Garry Galley; Reporter: Kyle Bukauskas

GAME	DATE	TIME	STATION
G1 PT	Sat., April 28 SN		Boston @ Tampa Bay, 3 p.m. ET / Noon
G2 p.m. PT	Mon., April 30 CBC		Boston @ Tampa Bay, 7 p.m. ET / 4
G3 p.m. PT	Wed., May 2 CBC		Tampa Bay @ Boston, 7 p.m. ET / 4
G4 p.m. PT	Fri., May 4 CBC		Tampa Bay @ Boston, 7 p.m. ET / 4
G5*	Sun., May 6		Boston @ Tampa Bay, TBD TBD
G6*	Tues., May 8		Tampa Bay @ Boston, TBD TBD
G7*	Thurs., May 10		Boston @ Tampa Bay, TBD TBD

Washington Capitals (M1) vs. Pittsburgh Penguins (M2)

• Play-by-play: Rick Ball; Game Analyst: Greg Millen; Reporter: Christine Simpson

GAME	DATE	TIME	STATION
G1 p.m. PT	Thurs., April 26 SN, CBC		Pittsburgh @ Washington, 7 p.m. ET / 4
G2 Noon PT	Sun., April 29 CBC		Pittsburgh @ Washington, 3 p.m. ET /
G3 / 4:30 p.m. PT	Tues., May 1 PT SN		Washington @ Pittsburgh, 7:30 p.m. ET
G4 p.m. PT	Thurs., May 3 SN		Washington @ Pittsburgh, 7 p.m. ET / 4
G5*	Sat., May 5		Pittsburgh @ Washington, TBD TBD
G6*	Mon., May 7		Washington @ Pittsburgh, TBD TBD
G7*	Wed., May 9		Pittsburgh @ Washington, TBD TBD

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Nashville Predators (C1) vs. Winnipeg Jets (C2)

• Play-by-play: Jim Hughson; Game Analyst: Craig Simpson; Secondary Analyst: Cassie Campbell-Pascall; Reporter: Scott Oake

GAME	DATE	TIME	STATION
G1 PT	Fri., April 27 CBC,SN360		Winnipeg @ Nashville, 8 p.m. ET/ 5 p.m.
G2 PT	Sun., April 29 CBC		Winnipeg @ Nashville, 7 p.m. ET/ 4 p.m.
G3 p.m. PT	Tues., May 1 CBC		Nashville @ Winnipeg, 8 p.m. ET / 5
G4	Thurs., May 3 6:30 p.m. PT CBC		Nashville @ Winnipeg, 9:30 p.m. ET /
G5*	Sat., May 5		Winnipeg @ Nashville, TBD CBC, OMNI

G6* Mon., May 7 Nashville @ Winnipeg, TBD CBC

G7* Thurs., May 10 Winnipeg @ Nashville, TBD CBC

Vegas Golden Knights (P1) vs. San Jose Sharks (P3)

• Play-by-play: Dave Randorf; Game Analyst: Louie DeBrusk; Reporter: Dan Murphy

GAME	DATE	TIME	STATION
G1 PT	Thurs., April 26 SN, CBC		San Jose @ Vegas, 10 p.m. ET / 7 p.m.
G2 PT	Sat., April 28 SN, CBC, OMNI		San Jose @ Vegas, 8 p.m. ET / 5 p.m.
G3 PT	Mon., April 30 CBC		Vegas @ San Jose, 10 p.m. ET / 7 p.m.
G4 PT	Wed., May 2 CBC		Vegas @ San Jose, 10 p.m. ET / 7 p.m.
G5* PT	Fri., May 4 CBC		San Jose @ Vegas, 10 p.m. ET / 7 p.m.
G6*	Sun., May 6		Vegas @ San Jose, TBD TBD
G7*	Tues., May 8		San Jose @ Vegas, TBD TBD

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TSN.CA / Statistically Speaking: Bruins rally to eliminate Leafs

Scott Cullen

Boston rallied against Toronto, with veterans and rookies stepping up when it was needed most. Bergeron, Krejci, DeBrusk, Marleau and more in Scott Cullen's Statistically Speaking.

HEROES

Patrice Bergeron – Boston's star centre put up a goal and two helpers in a 7-4 Game Seven win over the Maple Leafs. He finished the series with eight points (1 G, 7 A) and dominant possession numbers (64.9 CF%) in six games.

Jake DeBrusk – The Bruins rookie scored a pair of goals, including the game winner, in a 7-4 Game Seven win against Toronto. He was outstanding in his first NHL playoff series, producing seven points (5 G, 2 A) in seven games.

David Krejci – Boston's veteran playmaking pivot earned three assists in Game Seven vs. Toronto, giving him eight points (2 G, 6 A) in the series.

Patrick Marleau – Toronto's veteran left winger buried a pair of first period goals during a 7-4 Game Seven loss at Boston. He finished the series with five points (4 G, 1 A) in seven games.

ZEROES

Jake Gardiner – Toronto's veteran blueliner had a night to forget (if that's possible) in Game Seven at Boston. He was on the ice for five goals against at even strength in a 7-4 loss.

Tomas Plekanec – It wasn't an ideal night for Toronto's veteran checking centre, as he was on the wrong side of the puck (4 for, 13 against, 23.5 CF%) in a 7-4 loss at Boston.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Frederik Andersen – Toronto's netminder surrendered six goals on 35 shots in a 7-4 Game Seven loss at Boston. He had some strong games, notably in games five and six of the series, but ended the series with a .896 save percentage in seven games.

STANLEY CUP HALF FULL/HALF EMPTY

Tuukka Rask – He certainly wasn't at his best and it looked like he could have been pulled when the Bruins fell behind after two periods of play, but even with just 20 saves on 24 shots, Rask emerged as the victorious goaltender in Game Seven.

SHORT SHIFTS

Bruins RW David Pastrnak and LW Brad Marchand both contributed a goal and an assist in the third period of a 7-4 Game Seven win against Toronto. Pastrnak has moved back into a tie for the playoff scoring lead, with Pittsburgh's Sidney Crosby and Jake Guentzel, having put up 13 points (5 G, 8 A) in seven games against Toronto. Marchand had nine points (3 G, 6 A) in the series...Maple Leafs RW William Nylander produced a pair of assists in a 7-4 Game Seven loss at Boston and ended the series with four points (1 G, 3 A)...Bruins D Kevan Miller added a couple of assists, giving him four points (1 G, 3 A) in the series.

MAPLE LEAFS FALL

Auston Matthews scored one goal on 27 shots against the Bruins.

No matter which team lost Game Seven between Boston and Toronto, there was bound to be profound disappointment because both teams had impressive regular seasons, the type that could only be soured by losing in the first round of the playoffs.

Start in net, where Frederik Andersen finished the series with a .896 save percentage, and yet he was instrumental in Toronto's three wins, saving 114 of 120 shots that he faced (.950 SV%) in the three games that Toronto won. Of course that means it wasn't so good in the losses, and Andersen struggled (posting a .832 SV%) in those four games. It would have been nice for Andersen to perform better, but the Maple Leafs wouldn't have even been in a Game Seven if not for Andersen's play in Games Five and Six.

On defence, Jake Gardiner obviously had a brutal night in Game Seven but, through the first six games, the Leafs were controlling play with him on the ice and that was relatively rare. The defence pairing of Morgan Rielly and Ron Hainsey was stuck in its own end (37.3 CF%) far too often. Rookie Travis Dermott didn't have the trust of the coaching staff, at least in terms of playing time, yet finished the series with the best shot differentials (56.2 CF%) on the team. Roman Polak, who can be a polarizing figure, had okay possession stats (49.5 CF%) and the Leafs outscored the Bruins 5-3 with Polak on the ice in 5-on-5 situations.

Up front, the most glaring poor performance comes from the franchise player. Auston Matthews managed a goal and an assist in seven games, and was outscored 8-4 during 5-on-5 play. At the same time, he's 20-years-old, had solid possession stats (50.7 CF%) and had a team-leading 27 shots on goal. Toronto's fate may have been better had Nazem Kadri not been suspended for three games in the series, and Kadri struggled at times (44.2 CF%, 28.6 SCF%) when he did play.

On the plus side, Mitch Marner was outstanding in the series, recording nine points (2 G, 7 A) as he was Toronto's most consistent offensive threat. With his pair of goals in Game Seven, Patrick Marleau led the club with four goals in the series.

This loss will be painful for the Maple Leafs, not least of all because they had the lead going into the third period of Game Seven, but they lost to a better team. As much as Toronto has improved and appears to be a team capable of contending, they are currently the third-best team in their division, behind Tampa Bay and Boston, so they have some major work to do if they are going to get beyond a difficult first-round matchup.

The Maple Leafs are faced with the prospect of losing quite a few players as free agents in the summer, but it's also going to present an opportunity for Toronto to make some significant changes, and that may

be necessary if they are going to enter next season with expectations that they can overtake Boston and Tampa Bay.

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TSN.CA / Statistically Speaking: Ovechkin, Capitals bounce Blue Jackets

Scott Cullen

Ovechkin and the Capitals finish off the Blue Jackets while Frederik Andersen again stands tall while the Maple Leafs stave off elimination; Stephenson, Plekanec, Marner and more in Scott Cullen's Statistically Speaking.

HEROES

Alex Ovechkin – Washington's superstar winger buried a couple of goals in a series-clinching 6-3 Game Six victory against Columbus. He had eight points (5 G, 3 A) and 34 shots on goal in the series. He has 51 goals in 103 career playoff games, the second-best per game rate (.495 gpg) among active players to play in at least 50 playoff games, behind only Tampa Bay's Nikita Kucherov (.54 gpg), who has played exactly 50 playoff games.

Chandler Stephenson – The Capitals' rookie LW had a goal and an assist in at Columbus, the second straight game in which he's recorded two points.

Frederik Andersen – Toronto's netminder stopped 32 of 33 shots in a 2-1 Game Six win vs. Boston. He had some rough games early in the series, but is up to a .909 save percentage through six games.

ZEROES

Morgan Rielly and Ron Hainsey – The Maple Leafs defence tandem was buried (3 for, 20 against, 13.0 CF%) against Boston.

Cam Atkinson – Although he did generate a game-high 12 shot attempts (7 SOG), the Blue Jackets winger was a tidy minus-4 in the deciding game.

Sergei Bobrovsky – Columbus' goaltender allowed five goals on 27 shots in a 6-3 Game Six loss to Washington. He finished the series with a .900 save percentage.

STANLEY CUP HALF FULL/HALF EMPTY

Nick Foligno – It happened in a losing effort, but the Blue Jackets captain notched his first two goals of the series in Game Six against Washington.

SHORT SHIFTS

Mitch Marner continues to make a difference in the postseason.

Maple Leafs C Tomas Plekanec and RW Mitch Marner both had a goal and an assist in a 3-1 Game Six win over Boston. Plekanec, who had two points in 17 regular-season games with Toronto, has four points (2 G, 2 A) in the series, while Marner has a team-leading eight points (2 G, 6 A) in six games...Maple Leafs D Nikita Zaitsev added a couple of assists, his first points of the series...Capitals D Brooks Orpik had a pair of assists at Columbus, his first multi-point game of the season...Bruins RW David Pastrnak recorded 10 shot attempts in Game Six at Toronto, but only managed one shot on net.

BLUE JACKETS BOUNCED

It looked like the Columbus Blue Jackets had a legitimate opportunity to knock off the Washington Capitals, especially so after winning the first



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 26, 2018

two games of the series in overtime, but once again the playoffs did not bring the desired results for Columbus.

Goaltender Sergei Bobrovsky is still searching for a his first strong playoff performance. He had a few nice games early in the series, but allowed at least three goals in every game and finished with a .900 save percentage which, unfortunately, is slightly better than his previous career playoff save percentage.

Early in the series, no one was more dangerous than Blue Jackets LW Artemi Panarin, who put up seven points (2 G, 5 A) in the first three games. He looked dangerous with the puck all the time, but then he was held off the scoresheet in the next three games, which tilted the series back towards Washington's favour.

Columbus didn't get much production out of their fourth line, but otherwise there were contributions throughout the lineup. Checking winger Matt Calvert, for example, led the team with three goals and had the best possession stats (59.5 CF%, 64.6 SCF%) in the series.

Star defenceman Seth Jones ended up the wrong side of the possession ledger (48.9 CF%, 44.3 SCF%), which wasn't ideal, but he also recorded five points (1 G, 4 A) in six games. In a closely-decided series, the Blue Jackets probably needed better results with Jones on the ice if they were going to advance.

The major difference in the series was that the Capitals scored nine power play goals, nearly 13 goals per 60 with the man advantage in the series, while Columbus had four power play goals, just under six per 60.

Both teams are familiar with playoff disappointment, but the Capitals also seemed to benefit from the experience of playoffs past. They didn't wilt after losing the first two games, at home in overtime, and gradually took control of the series.

Washington also turned to veteran starting goaltender Braden Holtby after those first two losses and he posted a .932 save percentage in the series, which is typical of his playoff track record.

So, back to the drawing board for the Blue Jackets, who have found a way to reach the postseason in back-to-back years for the first time in franchise history, but they're still trying to figure out how to win a series once they get there.

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TSN.CA / Statistically Speaking: Penguins, Preds moving on

Scott Cullen

Guentzel and Couturier have memorable performances in a series-deciding game, Nashville finishes off the Avalanche and more in Scott Cullen's Statistically Speaking.

HEROES

Jake Guentzel – The sophomore Penguins winger tallied four goals and added an assist in an 8-5 Game 6 win at Philadelphia. He vaulted into the playoff scoring lead with 13 points (6 G, 7 A) in six games.

Sean Couturier – Playing with a torn MCL, the Flyers centre recorded a hat trick and added two assists in an 8-5 Game 6 loss to Pittsburgh. He finished with nine points (5 G, 4 A) in five games against the Penguins.

Nick Bonino – Nashville's third-line centre scored a goal and added two helpers in a 5-0 Game 6 win at Colorado. He had five points (2 G, 3 A) in the series.

ZEROES

Claude Giroux and Valteri Filppula – Both veteran Flyers forwards were on the ice for four goals against in an 8-5 Game 6 loss to Pittsburgh.

Gabriel Landeskog – Colorado's captain was on the ice for four goals against in a series-deciding 5-0 Game 6 loss vs. Nashville.

Jamie Oleksiak – The Penguins defenceman had a tough game (4 for, 11 against, 26.7 CF%, 1-5 scoring chances) and was on the ice for three goals against in an 8-5 Game 6 win at Philadelphia.

Michal Neuvirth – With the Flyers' season on the line, Neuvirth allowed seven goals on 27 shots in an 8-5 Game 6 loss to Pittsburgh, leaving him with a .847 save percentage in three appearances in the first round against the Penguins.

STANLEY CUP HALF FULL/HALF EMPTY

Matt Murray – Pittsburgh's netminder allowed five goals on 26 shots in Game 6 at Philadelphia, yet somehow that was good enough to win and clinch the series for the Penguins. He finished the first round with a .911 save percentage.

VITAL SIGNS

Evgeni Malkin – Pittsburgh was fighting uphill to start Game 6 at Philadelphia because they were missing Malkin, who appeared to suffer a lower-body injury in Game 5.

Carl Hagelin – The Penguins winger was levelled by Philadelphia's Claude Giroux and forced to leave Game 6 at Philadelphia.

SHORT SHIFTS

Penguins C Sidney Crosby and Penguins RW Patric Hornqvist both put up a goal and two assists in an 8-5 Game 6 win at Philadelphia. Crosby is up to 13 points (6 G, 7 A), tied with Guentzel for the playoff scoring lead and Hornqvist has six points (2 G, 4 A) in four games...Penguins D Kris Letang contributed three assists, giving him seven points (1 G, 6 A) in the series...Penguins RW Phil Kessel added a couple of helpers, giving him five points (1 G, 4 A) in the past four games...Predators C Colton Sissons had a pair of assists in a 5-0 Game 6 win at Colorado. He finished with seven points (3 G, 4 A) in the series.

FLYING AWAY

Sean Couturier was Philadelphia's leader against Pittsburgh.

It seems one of the oldest running stories in hockey is that the Philadelphia Flyers don't have a goaltender that they can trust, and the series against Pittsburgh added yet another chapter as the trio of Brian Elliott, Michal Neuvirth, and Petr Mrazek combined for a .852 save percentage, which is quite obviously not remotely adequate.

Aside from Ivan Provorov, the Flyers defence was mostly overmatched. They might have fared better by playing rookie Travis Sanheim more on the blueline, but that wouldn't have suddenly made Philadelphia's defence capable of keeping up with Pittsburgh's vaunted forwards.

Sean Couturier was sensational for the Flyers, leading the team with nine points, but he was the only Flyer with more than three points in the series. If they were going to have a chance in the series, particularly given the state of their goaltending, the Flyers needed more from the likes of Claude Giroux, Jakub Voracek, Wayne Simmonds and Travis Konecny. Giroux was outscored 14-4 at evens in the series, and defenceman Shayne Gostisbehere was outscored 11-3 at evens.

All in all, it comes as no surprise that the Flyers are out in the first round, and they have some young talent on hand that should help the team improve moving forward, but the summer ought to bring some serious decisions on the blueline and in goal.

AVS BURIED

Gabriel Landeskog and the Avalanche put forth a game effort against Nashville in the first round.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • April 26, 2018

After recording just 48 points in 2016-2017, the Colorado Avalanche made a quantum leap forward this season to make the playoffs, but they were also massive underdogs against the Nashville Predators, so losing the series in six games was an entirely respectable showing.

They were already missing starting goaltender Semyon Varlamov going into the postseason, so Jonathan Bernier started the first four games against Nashville, but then he got hurt too, so Andrew Hammond was summoned from the minors to start the last couple of games.

Defensively, the Avalanche could be better. They were missing Erik Johnson and rookie puck-mover Samuel Girard missed half of the series with an injury. At the same time, they dressed Duncan Siemens for five games and he was stomped (23.4 CF%, 25.0 SCF%) while getting outscored 4-0.

As they had all season, Colorado's top line of Gabriel Landeskog, Nathan MacKinnon, and Mikko Rantanen led the attack, but they received contributions throughout the lineup. It was a team effort to push this series to six.

The Avalanche can reasonably expect that some of their young players will improve next season, but they have to be better if they are going to be a playoff team again, and that might require a savvy addition or two in the offseason.

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1093690 Websites

TSN.CA / Leafs collapse in third, knocked out of playoffs

Kristen Shilton

The Maple Leafs' season ended with a thud on Wednesday, when they fell 7-4 to the Boston Bruins in Game 7 of their first-round Stanley Cup playoff series. In what started as a back-and-forth affair, where the Leafs ahead by one goal after two periods, Toronto had its continued playoff hopes dashed in the third by a hungry Boston team that didn't give up a shot on goal in the final eight minutes of the game en route to sealing the best-of-seven series' win.

TAKEAWAYS

Had it in hand

The Leafs got off to as good a start as they could have hoped for against the Bruins, scoring the game's first goal and showing the kind of intensity befitting of a Game 7. But with so much experience playing one another over the last two weeks, a season-deciding game was filled with ups and downs for both teams.

Rookie Jake DeBrusk scored twice for the Bruins, their first and second-to-last goals of the game, and both were exceedingly important for Boston. After Patrick Marleau scored his first of two goals on a Leafs' power-play just over a minute into the first period, DeBrusk was there less than three minutes later to counter with a power-play goal for Boston. Both scores came off tips in front of the net, and would set a tone of sorts for how the rest of the game would go, with the division rivals swapping lead changes right into the third.

In short order, it was Marleau's turn again to give Toronto back its advantage, capitalizing off a terrific play by Mitch Marner to feed him in the left circle for a one-timer past Tuukka Rask. Right on script, it was less than three minutes later that the first career playoff goal by Danton Heinen evened the score. With just 9:10 gone off the clock, the Bruins and Leafs had combined for four goals on 11 shots. And both teams were far from done.

Patrice Bergeron gave the Bruins their first lead of the game with 36 seconds left in the opening frame by taking advantage of Boston's active end boards. He corralled a puck that came flying out from there and buried it behind Frederik Andersen before the goalie could recover to the right side of his net.

That lead didn't last long, either. There was another career-first coming just 2:07 into the third period, when defenceman Travis Dermott buried his first NHL playoff goal with a bouncing puck that ricocheted off David Pastrnak and over Rask.

There were seven different lead changes by the midway point of the second period, when Kasperii Kapanen scored shorthanded to give Toronto a 4-3 advantage. But the pace of the game really settled down in that frame, with both teams playing less frantic hockey than they did in the first.

While skating 4-on-4 early in the third, Bruins defenceman Torey Krug tied the game once again with a one-timer past Andersen. Toronto had won the draw but Ron Hainsey couldn't get control of the puck, which is how it ended up back at the point with Krug. From there, it was all Bruins – the Leafs only had eight shots that entire period, and DeBrusk's go-ahead goal felt like a dagger. By the time Pastrnak added the insurance marker with over eight minutes to play (and well before Brad Marchand potted an empty-netter), the game felt too far out of Toronto's control to come back from.

Quiet night (and series) for Leaf stars

All season long, the Leafs had been driven by their high-powered offence. Toronto had three 30-goal scorers in Auston Matthews, James van Riemsdyk and Nazem Kadri, while Marner and William Nylander both had more than 60 points. But with the Leafs' season on the line, Nylander and Marner were the only ones of the five who registered anything on the scoresheet (two assists for Nylander and one for Marner). For Marner, it was his team-leading ninth point of the postseason.

Matthews, van Riemsdyk, Kadri and Nylander combined for just 12 points over the series (although Kadri missed three games due to a suspension). It wasn't enough for Toronto, not when the Bruins' big line of Bergeron, Marchand and Pastrnak rebounded from being held off the scoresheets in Game 5 and Game 6 with a combined seven-point performance in Game 7 (three goals, four assists).

From Matthews, especially, the Leafs needed (and probably expected) much more. And it's not that he wasn't generating more scoring chances as the series went on; it's that despite his efforts, Matthews wasn't able to bury nearly enough of them. He had his legs going early in Game 7, and Boston wasn't hard-matching Matthews against the Bergeron line as they had done before at home.

The sophomore tried to take advantage of what open ice there was by getting to the front of the net and hounding out pucks, like he did in putting a spin move on Rask in the first period that ultimately went nowhere. Matthews continued to try and establish his offensive game, but it was his play on defence that was standing out more. He made a couple strong back-checking moves to force turnovers in the Leafs' end and was engaged on that side of the puck, but once he got into the Bruins' zone there was very little happening as Game 7 wore on.

In the end, Matthews finished the postseason with 27 shots on goal, a minus-4 rating and just two points, from his game-winning goal back in Game 3 and an assist in Game 5. Van Riemsdyk finished with just one even-strength point (an assist) and three power-play goals, while Nylander had four points and Kadri had two.

Two out of three? Not good enough

If it weren't for Andersen's terrific performances in both Game 5 and Game 6 of this series, Wednesday's Game 7 would never have been possible. Andersen had outplayed Rask to keep the Leafs' season alive, and he did exactly that again on Wednesday for two periods, making all



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the big saves Toronto needed to try and propel them into the second round.

The Bruins didn't make it easy on him, peppering the Leafs' net with 36 shots (compared to 24 at Rask), but once Andersen got over his skittishness in the first period, he was prepared to answer all comers. Both Andersen and Rask were leaky out of the gate, with the former giving up two goals on their first six shots he faced, and the latter allowing two goals on his first five shots faced. From there, though, it was about making the stops that counted, and Andersen did more of that in the second. He halted Bergeron (without his stick) on the Bruins' second period power play that allowed Kasperi Kapanen to take off for the Leafs' shorthanded go-ahead goal, and Andersen stiffed DeBrusk on a great chance that would have capped off a nice three-way scoring play by the Bruins in the Leafs' end. Toronto was getting outshot 26-16 after two periods, but still went to the dressing room with a 4-3 lead because of Andersen.

In the third, however, the Bruins came at the Leafs hard and Andersen didn't get the same support in front of him that Boston was giving Rask. Even though the Leafs won the possession battle in the third at 56 per cent, they were nervous with the puck in their end and had trouble breaking out cleanly, which kept the pressure on Andersen. While Boston held Toronto without a shot on goal in the game's final eight minutes, the Leafs didn't have the same success boxing out in front of Andersen or getting in shooting lanes, which opened up opportunities for the Bruins to capitalize on.

Once again, Andersen gave the Leafs a chance to win, but in their final hour when Toronto needed a timely, heroic save, it didn't come around. Andersen made a bad read through traffic on Krug's game-tying score and couldn't react quickly enough to DeBrusk's hot shot on the game-winner, helping to drive another nail in Toronto's coffin.

Andersen finished the series with a .896 save-percentage.

Nightmare night for Gardiner

In the biggest game of the Leafs' season, nothing seemed to go right for Jake Gardiner. The defenceman finished Game 7 with the game's worst plus-minus rating at minus-5, and it felt like every play he was involved in became destined to go awry.

Gardiner was committed to the stretch pass in the regular season and was over-committed to it all night in Boston, but those have rarely worked in Toronto's favour over the course of this series. By the end of the second period, he had attempted at least eight stretch passes, only two of which connected with teammates, and by the end of the game two of his stretch passes had directly resulted in goals for the Bruins.

The worst of the bunch though came late in the third period, when the Leafs were trailing by one goal and Gardiner tossed up a stretch pass on a prayer that ended up getting turned over to Pastrnak for the goal that made it 6-4 that sealed Toronto's fate. Gardiner was in front of the Leafs' net when the puck went in, and he curled up briefly on his knees in front of Andersen, clearly lamenting how the sequence had played out. It was just one example of bad decision-making on Gardiner's part, something that plagued him over the series' first two games but that he seemed to have under control more in the previous two.

Gardiner's ability to make game-changing plays to forwards for scoring chances was a hallmark of what was statistically the best regular season of his career. But while the Bruins slowed down the pace of the game and were making safe plays with the puck, Gardiner shied away from the simple and the easy in favour of the game-breaking shot. Ultimately, it did more harm than good for the Leafs. He finished the series with two assists.

Big-time hustle

Kapanen has a knack for scoring important goals in important moments. There was the overtime winner for Finland to clinch a World Junior Championship, the double-overtime winner in Game 2 last season for the Leafs in their first-round playoff series against Washington, and on

Wednesday Kapanen added another major goal to his resume. Midway through the second period, with the game tied at two, Marchand couldn't hold the line on a Bruins' power play and Kapanen took off after the loose puck, shouldering his way past Marchand and going in alone on Rask. His countryman had turned aside two previous breakaway chances by Kapanen in this series, but this time the freshman would not be denied, waiting Rask out so he could slide the puck past his left pad and give the Leafs a 4-3 lead.

It was one part of a solid night overall by the Leafs' special teams, but with missed chances looming large given the final score. Toronto finished the game 1-for-2 on the power play, clocking in at 4-for-15 overall in the series, while Toronto's penalty kill stood tall after giving up the early power-play goal to DeBrusk in the first period. The Leafs' kill finished Game 7 at 2-for-3, and in the series 15-for-22 against the Bruins' power play.

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TSN.CA / Matthews admits there's 'another level' for him

Mark Masters

TSN Toronto reporter Mark Masters checks in daily with news and notes from Maple Leafs practices and game-day skates. The Leafs held a full skate at TD Garden on Wednesday morning. The Boston Bruins held an optional skate at Warrior Ice Arena.

Auston Matthews fired five shots on net in Game 6. He would've had an assist had Zach Hyman's goal not been overturned due to goalie interference. He was in all alone on Tuukka Rask late in the third, but couldn't convert. So, is the 20-year-old Maple Leafs centre looking for more of the same on Wednesday night or is there more to give?

"There's another level, for sure," he said. "You just want to do things to help the team win and, obviously, you want to produce on the scoresheet."

With just one goal and one assist through six games, Matthews has been quieter than expected in this series against the Boston Bruins. Certainly, Zdeno Chara and Patrice Bergeron deserve some credit for that, but Matthews is a special player and special players often rise to meet the moment.

"It's exciting," he said of his first NHL Game 7. "I mean, these are the games you kind of dream about and watch a lot of them as a kid and you get to experience it now."

While Matthews has struggled to dominate, his good pal Mitch Marner has excelled, leading the team with eight points. Bruins coach Bruce Cassidy listed off a series of priorities for his team tonight and keeping Marner off the scoresheet was the first thing he mentioned.

"Matty is a real good player. Mitch is a real good player," said Leafs head coach Mike Babcock. "The beauty of being on a team is you pick each other up. Sometimes in the National Hockey League season there's a couple of weeks at a time where you're in a lull and someone else picks you up and then they don't notice at the end of the year because the numbers add up right. In the playoffs, the same things happen. But, if you get out too soon, sometimes there's no equalization. If you keep playing a long period of time, those who get 'em, get 'em."

Matthews plans to elevate: 'There's another level for sure'



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The Bruins have done a great job on Auston Matthews in the series, limiting the Leafs' top line centre to just one goal and one assist in six games, but Matthews is a special player and he admits that he's yet to live up to his potential heading into tonight's Game 7 showdown. Mark Masters has more.

Matthews plans to elevate: 'There's another level for sure'

Coming off strong performances in Game 5 and Game 6, Auston Matthews' line is trending in the right direction heading into tonight's winner-take-all showdown in Boston, and the Leafs' star forward feels there's room to elevate his game to another level in Game 7.

Watching Game 7s as a fan growing up, what stood out to Marner?

"Watching [Patrick] Kane, how he'd come out to play and help his team," said the diminutive Leafs winger, whose skillset is often compared to the Blackhawks star. "That's the thing that's stood out to me about Game 7s."

Now, Marner gets his first crack at the ultimate deciding game.

"These are all moments you get to enjoy and that you don't want to look back on and regret," he said. "I'm enjoying every moment, having fun with it and then when the time comes I get serious ... I think if I get too serious too far away from a game then my mind gets tired a little bit."

Marner has excelled on big stages in the past. He was MVP of the 2016 Memorial Cup, for example. Nerves don't seem to bother him.

What were his plans for this afternoon?

"Go home, eat, sit on my phone, probably look at Twitter, look at video games, watch people playing Fortnite probably, to be honest. Just get my mind off hockey, not think about it at all," he said.

How about his road roommate?

"Watch a movie," said Matthews, "Watch Fortnite videos. You can hear him over there on the other side of the room so it's easy to get sucked into those."

Marner admires way Patrick Kane thrived in Game 7s

When reflecting on memorable Game 7 performers, Mitch Marner explains how he admires the way Patrick Kane always seemed to rise up to the occasion when the stakes were the highest, and describes his mindset heading into tonight's win or go home showdown in Boston.

Marner admires way Patrick Kane thrived in Game 7s

Mitch Marner said he admires the way Patrick Kane has played in Game 7s.

Boston's dynamic top line of Brad Marchand, Patrice Bergeron and David Pastrnak has been held off the scoresheet in the Bruins' three losses in the series.

In Game 6, they missed the net on several quality chances. At one point, Marchand slammed his stick on the ice after an offside call. On Tuesday, Pastrnak was asked how he can get scoring again and called the question "stupid" noting he wasn't going to change anything.

So, have the Leafs succeeded in frustrating the trio?

"Possibly," said Nazem Kadri. "I know, being a scorer, it is tough when you're not scoring. They had a great early start and they're great players. They don't need much time to open the floodgates. That's why we've got to make sure to stay on top of them."

Cassidy admits his top scorers are a bit frustrated at the moment.

"I'm not going to sit here and say they're not," Boston's coach told reporters. "They want to do more. But, to the point where it's affecting

there game? I don't think so. They're still winning pucks, generating shots. Maybe they're trying to squeeze it into a tighter hole than maybe just getting it on net. Just get it on net and force them to make saves. We'll talk about that. At the end of the day, they're good players and I think they'll be fine in that regard. Sooner or later, when you win faceoffs like Bergy did the other night and you have puck possession, I think the good players are going to finish, I really do."

Pastrnak fires back at reporter after being asked about adjustments

On Tuesday, Bruins forward David Pastrnak was asked what adjustments he planned to make after going pointless in three of the last four games and he replied that he wasn't going to change anything and added that was a stupid question.

Pastrnak fires back at reporter after being asked about adjustments

On Tuesday, Bruins forward David Pastrnak was asked what adjustments he planned to make after going pointless in three of the last four games and he replied that he wasn't going to change anything and added that was a stupid question.

During the morning skate, Leo Komarov and Andreas Johnsson split left-wing reps on a line with Tomas Plekanec and William Nylander. Both Komarov and Johnsson worked as part of the penalty kill during special-teams drills. Afterwards, Babcock refused to confirm his lineup for tonight's game. Komarov is available to return after missing four games with a lower-body injury.

Lines at Leafs morning skate:

Hyman-Matthews-Brown

Marleau-Kadri-Marner

van Riemsdyk-Bozak-Kapanen

Johnsson/Komarov-Plekanec-Nylander

Moore, Leivo, Martin

Rielly-Hainsey

Gardiner-Zaitsev

Dermott-Polak

Carrick

Andersen starts

McElhinney

Leafs Ice Chips: Babcock refuses to reveal Komarov decision

The big questions heading into tonight's winner-take-all showdown are whether Leo Komarov will return to the lineup and whether Nazem Kadri or Tomas Plekanec will centre the line between Mitch Marner and Patrick Marleau, both of which Mike Babcock refused to answer. Mark Masters has more.

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TSN.CA / Takeaway: Where can Travis Green improve as a 2nd year head coach?

Jeff Paterson

In each of the five days leading up to the 2018 National Hockey League Draft Lottery, Jeff Paterson will present a different takeaway from the Vancouver Canucks season. He will examine areas of concern that led the Canucks to a 27th place finish in the overall standings giving them a 7.5% chance of landing the first overall pick at this year's draft in Dallas.

It was understandable why, on so many nights this past season, Travis Green felt the need to scramble his line combinations. Whether because of injuries or inconsistency, the Vancouver Canucks head coach had a line-up which left him searching for an offensive spark. Outside of Brock Boeser, when the rookie was healthy, Green had few players he could rely on to score with any regularity. So it was hard to blame the first year bench boss for moving forwards around from game to game and quite often within games, too.

As the year progressed, Green found himself, as many coaches in today's game do, opting to seek chemistry in pairs. He kept Bo Horvat and Brock Boeser together for the most part, utilized Henrik and Daniel Sedin as a duo and primarily played Brandon Sutter with Markus Granlund until the Finn was injured in early February and then Darren Archibald slid into that spot.

That took care of six forwards on most nights, but it left the six others in the line-up wondering where they slotted in and how they would be used. And for some there really never was an answer. Jake Virtanen split his time between the top and bottom six. Sven Baertschi spent much of the season on the left wing with Horvat and Boeser, but also found himself shuffled into more of a defensive role at times before being a healthy scratch on February 15th in San Jose. Sam Gagner started the year on the wing, moved to the middle when injuries struck and then finished the season on the wing with the Sedins. Loui Eriksson has struggled under two coaches now to find a way to bring out the best in his game in large part because he hasn't found a consistent spot in the line-up. Even Thomas Vanek often wondered aloud about his ice time and usage during his time with the Canucks before moving on to Columbus.

With the Sedins riding off into the sunset, the Canucks are entering a period of transition. While the twins didn't play or produce as much as they once did, they still remained constants in the line-up, finished second and third in team scoring and were fixtures on the power-play. Travis Green has his work cut out for him figuring out how best to utilize the component parts left behind to help the Canucks improve after finishing 26th overall in offence with 218 goals. To make the challenge greater, Green's team finished 29th in 5-on-5 offence where the Canucks scored 138 of their goals.

A healthy Brock Boeser has shown an ability to score at an elite level and the hope has to be that he'll pick up where he left off before his season was cut short with a back injury on March 5th. The Canucks also have to find a way to inject Elias Pettersson into their line-up coming off the remarkable season he had in the Swedish Elite League.

But without the Sedins, getting anywhere close to the 53 goals the Canucks scored on the power play will be a monumental struggle. That, in turn, will put more pressure on the team to score at even-strength. And that brings the conversation back to the ways Green, as a coach, can optimize his line-up and put each of his players in the best position to succeed.

Green claims to have a keen interest in analytics and it will be fascinating to see how much he turns to the data collected in his first year on the job to discern which forward combos worked best and which ones didn't. The same goes for his defensive pairings. Will he use the numbers to make line-up decisions for next season?

Without much depth up the middle, will Green continue to lean on Brandon Sutter as much as he did as a rookie head coach or can he scale back Sutter's even-strength ice-time? As long as the coach sees Sutter as a shutdown centre it's likely his ice-time will reflect that of the opposition's top players. From there, it's a legitimate concern to wonder if the Canucks can succeed with such little production from one of their ice-time leaders. Outside of Horvat, Boeser and Sutter, it's hard to know heading into next season how so many of the Canucks forwards will be utilized.

Can Green find roles for both Gagner and Eriksson that will allow them to be more productive than they've been in their time with the Canucks? No one is expecting them to carry the team offensively but neither has come close to the type of offensive output they displayed that earned them significant free agent contracts in Vancouver. That's a project this coach has to meet head on both at evens and on the power play.

From there, the coach has to figure out where the likes of Jake Virtanen, Sven Baertschi, Markus Granlund, Brendan Leipsic, Nikolay Goldobin, Tyler Motte, Darren Archibald and a few others fit into the puzzle allowing the Canucks to ice a balanced line-up capable of producing more and playing at the pace necessary to succeed in today's NHL.

Players in the league have to be versatile enough to respond to roster volatility and find ways to produce in various situations and with a variety of linemates. But there is also something to be said for stability and chemistry and keeping lines intact when possible and putting players in positions to succeed.

Travis Green used much of this first season to experiment in his quest to find what he repeatedly called 'players he can win with.' We should have a much better view at training camp which players the coach believes in and from there it'll be interesting to see how he uses them. Another season of putting names in a blender isn't likely to produce the best outcomes for the Canucks.

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TSN.CA / Takeaway: Find a way to beat divisional opponents

Jeff Paterson

In each of the five days leading up to the 2018 National Hockey League Draft Lottery, Jeff Paterson will present a different takeaway from the Vancouver Canucks season. He will examine areas of concern that led the Canucks to a 27th place finish in the overall standings giving them a 7.5% chance of landing the first overall pick at this year's draft in Dallas.

It sounds simple, yet was remarkably difficult for the Vancouver Canucks in 2017-18.

If the Canucks want to return to the post-season sooner rather than later, they simply have no choice but to muscle their way into the win column in more divisional games than they did this season. Under the current playoff format, three post-season berths are reserved for the top three finishers in each division. The best way to ensure you gobble up more points than the teams you're competing with for those divisional spots is to win your share of head to head match-ups.

Among the many amazing accomplishments of the first-year Vegas Golden Knights was their sterling 20-6-3 record against Pacific Division foes. That included feasting on the Canucks with wins in all four meetings. No other team in the league won more than 18-games within their division this season. The Canucks? Well, they won just nine. They went 9-17-3 in divisional contests this past season – that's nine wins in 29 games against the teams they're supposedly battling for playoff spots.



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Further to that, just seven of those wins were in regulation time which means that in 22 of 29 games, divisional foes took at least a point off the Canucks.

At home, the Canucks managed just four regulation wins against Pacific opponents: two against Edmonton and one each versus Los Angeles and Anaheim. They did not beat Vegas or Calgary on home ice this season and recorded overtime wins against San Jose and Arizona. Far too often, divisional opponents walked into Rogers Arena and left with parting gifts. On the road, the Canucks were worse winning just three of 14 divisional contests as visitors.

To put the Canucks division struggles in context, Detroit was the only team in the league to win fewer games within its division. The Wings won eight times while Vancouver and Chicago won nine apiece. It's one of the main reasons all three of those teams will be clutching their lucky charms on Saturday hoping to strike it rich in the draft lottery while the playoffs go on without them.

Now, it stands to reason that a poor team is going to struggle against good teams more often than not. So the record within the division is a by-product of bigger issues facing the Canucks. But when you look around the Pacific, the division is hardly a powerhouse within the National Hockey League. In the next few seasons, an opportunity to push into the Pacific Division playoff picture shouldn't be entirely out of the question.

Vegas appears to be set up to have sustained success – perhaps not at the level it achieved in its inaugural season, but there shouldn't be any sort of precipitous drop-off any time soon given the construct of the team, the age of its key players and the benefit of multiple top draft picks to stock its ranks. San Jose has retooled reasonably well and gives the appearance of a franchise that is well-positioned as a playoff contender for the foreseeable future.

But after complete collapses in the opening round, both Anaheim and Los Angeles look like teams that have plenty of heavy lifting ahead of them and could well come back to the pack in the years ahead. Calgary and Edmonton had difficult seasons and still have challenges to round out rosters stocked with top-end talent. Although Arizona gained some traction in the second half of the season, the Coyotes seem like they are caught in a perpetual rut with no indication they will break the cycle any time soon, despite icing a line-up filled with promising young players. And it won't be long before Seattle joins the mix adding another team the Canucks will have to climb over in the push for a playoff spot.

As the balance of power shifts to other divisions, the Canucks have to look at their nearest geographic rivals as one of their fastest paths back to the post-season. Finding a way to beat those teams you play the most provides the quickest opportunity to climb the standings. All games are worth two points, but regulation wins against Pacific Division opponents are the proverbial four pointers and a springboard in the race to the playoffs.

The Canucks have to say 'enough is enough' and stand up for themselves. Getting steam-rolled by division rivals simply won't cut it any longer.

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TSN.CA / Takeaway: A case for overhauling the Canucks defence

Jeff Paterson

Already in the 2018 Stanley Cup Playoffs, 28 defencemen have scored at least one goal. It's a fair question to wonder if the Vancouver Canucks were part of the post-season picture would that total be any different?

Logic would suggest that if the Canucks were in the playoffs, they'd be a much better team and likely would have addressed one of their most-glaring weaknesses: offensive contributions from their defence.

Head coach Travis Green made it abundantly clear at his year end media availability two weeks ago that increased offence from the blue-line is one of his priorities for the Canucks next season. However, saying it is one thing. Making it happen is something altogether different. Last season, the Canucks defence scored 21 goals and added 101 assists. The goal total was down by one from the previous season, but the overall point production was up by 11.

Alex Edler led all Canucks defencemen with 34 points while he and Michael Del Zotto shared the goal-scoring lead with a modest six goals apiece. As a group, the Canucks blue-line managed just eight road goals all season, or one every 10 games. It's not enough and it hasn't been for some time now.

When you examine the defencemen on the roster and try to figure out who has more to give offensively, one name stands out above the others: Ben Hutton. Coming off a highly disappointing no goal, six assist campaign, Hutton's point totals have dropped from 25 as a rookie to 19 a year ago to six this past season. But in order to produce, Hutton has to be in the line-up and his struggles in that regard and his battle to earn the trust of the head coach are well documented.

Based on a healthy line-up, Hutton likely projects as the seventh defenceman to start next season with Edler, Del Zotto and Derrick Pouliot ahead of him on the left side and Chris Tanev, Erik Gudbranson and Troy Stecher on the right side.

But coming back with the same players and simply hoping for a notable uptick in offensive production seems like a bad gamble. The right side of the defence as constructed offers next to no offence and very little hope of any kind of spike in production.

Obviously, the Canucks would address many of their needs if they win the Rasmus Dahlin sweepstakes on Saturday. But based on past lotteries, they should probably have a solid Plan B in place. And unless they are picking second or third overall, it seems almost certain that the Canucks will come out of this year's draft with one of the many available top tier defensive prospects. However, it's unlikely any of that next group of defencemen taken after Dahlin will step into an NHL line-up in the fall.

That's where the idea of chasing Washington's John Carlson as an unrestricted free agent makes perfect sense for the Canucks. A 28-year-old right-hander who led all NHL defencemen in scoring with 15 goals and 68 points this season, including four power play goals and 32 power-play points, would seemingly fit the bill on many levels. However, there is no guarantee Carlson makes it to the open market, nor is there any indication that he would have interest in the Canucks. Carlson is going to get paid regardless where he goes so it's not as simple as throwing a ridiculous sum of money at him. The Canucks will have to pitch him on the city, the role he'd play here and the opportunity he'd have to run a power play with the likes of Brock Boeser and Elias Pettersson. And there's still a strong chance none of that would get the deal done.

So that's where the Canucks need to get creative this off-season and look at transforming their defence via the trade route. While the organization may have missed the window for maximizing the return on a Chris Tanev deal, they still have to explore that idea. There is still significant value in the oft-injured blue-liner and these playoffs have shown there are teams that could certainly use his services. But it can't stop at just moving Tanev.

Taking one piece, that only played half the games last season, out of the equation won't solve the Canucks issues on defence. While they'd be selling low on Hutton, they should explore that avenue, too, if the coach won't play him. And perhaps the team should even look to move on from Erik Gudbranson although that seems unlikely after Jim Benning traded for the big blue-liner two summers ago and then reaffirmed that commitment to him with a new three-year/\$12 million dollar extension in February.



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What the Canucks have assembled as a defensive group isn't working for them. As a team, the Canucks finished 26th in the league defensively averaging 3.16 goals against per game while yielding 32.2 shots against per game. And as a group the offensive issues are clear for all to see.

Returning the same collection of defencemen next season simply cannot be an option for a team claiming it wants to see a marked improvement in that area. More of the same will simply lead to more of the same, and it's hard to imagine anyone has an appetite for that.

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USA TODAY / Second-round matches could be the best of the NHL playoffs

Kevin Allen, USA TODAY Sports Published 11:16 p.m. ET April 25, 2018

The Boston Bruins posted a wildly entertaining 7-4 victory in Game 7 against the Toronto Maple Leafs to earn a trip to the second round.

They will face the Tampa Bay Lightning in what looks like a toss-up series.

Both teams are exceptional at home, mentally tough on the road and deep enough to believe they can win the Stanley Cup. Of course, there are questions. Can Bruins goalie Tuukka Rask step up in the important games? He wasn't at his best in Game 7. He is 6-12 lifetime in closeout postseason games.

And how about Tampa Bay goalie Andrei Vasilevskiy, who played brilliantly early in the season and then looked tired later in the season? Is he ready to be a postseason difference-maker?

The series looks as if it could be a classic playoff match-up, the kind that will require overtimes, lucky breaks and unlikely heroes before it is decided.

But the truth is all four series in the second round look like they could go either way.

Here is a look at why the second round could end up being the best round, or at least the most entertaining one, of this season's NHL playoffs:

Washington Capitals vs. Pittsburgh Penguins (starts Thursday, 7 p.m. ET, NBC Sports Network): Sidney Crosby. Alex Ovechkin. A media-fueled rivalry. Washington fans don't like Crosby and Pittsburgh fans have no use for Ovechkin. Need we say more? The Penguins start the series without injured forwards Evgeni Malkin and Carl Hagelin. The Capitals start the series with Ovechkin confident after a come-from-behind series win against the Columbus Blue Jackets. Ovechkin was strong in the series, but the Caps have a recent history of coming up short, and the Penguins are a two-time defending champion. This season, though, the Caps have been flying under the radar. If there was a time when conditions seemed perfect for the Capitals to rise to meet the challenge, it is this season. They'll have to conquer Crosby first, and he never goes down easy. Plus, the Penguins are highly educated in the art of winning important games.

Boston Bruins vs. Tampa Bay Lightning (starts Saturday, 3 p.m., NBC): The Lightning might be the higher seed, but they finished only one point ahead of Boston. The Lightning had a +60 goal-differential and the Bruins were +56. The Bruins were 3-1 against the Lightning in the regular season. Doesn't this feel like a seven-game series? The Lightning have dynamic Steven Stamkos and Nikita Kucherov, but the Bruins have the equally exciting Brad Marchand-Patrice Bergeron-David Pastrnak line.

The Lightning have Victor Hedman leading a strong defense. The Bruins have giant Zdeno Chara as the team's tower of defense. Vasilevskiy and Rask might decide what could be a tug-of-war series.

San Jose Sharks vs. Vegas Golden Knights (starts Thursday 10 p.m., NBCSN): If you love stingy goaltending, this series is for you. The Martin Jones vs. Marc-Andre Fleury goaltending matchup could keep this a low-scoring series. In the first round, Fleury gave up three goals in a four-game sweep of the Los Angeles Kings. Jones gave up four in a sweep against the Anaheim Ducks. Fleury's save percentage is .977, slightly better than Jones' .970. The Golden Knights are in their first NHL season, but opponents are already saying their arena is one of the loudest in game. The Shark Tank has long been a difficult road venue for visiting teams. Many fans are rooting for the Golden Knights like they are the Cinderella team. But how about some love for a Sharks franchise that hasn't won the Cup in its 27-year history? This series will be worth staying up late to watch.

Winnipeg Jets vs. Nashville Predators (starts Friday, 8 p.m., NBCSN): The Jets boast one of the NHL's most dangerous offenses and Nashville has the league's most talented defense. Both teams have quality goaltending, with the Predators perhaps owning a small edge because Pekka Rinne is more experienced than Connor Hellebuyck. Maybe the Predators set the tone for this series when they towed in a plane, planning to paint a Jets logo on it, for fans to smash before they attempt to pulverize the Jets. The Predators' offense is much deeper than it was a year ago when they reached the Stanley Cup Final. Despite the presence of quality goalies and proven defense, this series could feature an entertaining amount of scoring. Everyone talks about Winnipeg's dangerous collection of scorers, but Nashville's Filip Forsberg can be just as exciting.

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USA TODAY / Best way for Predators to get fans ready to face the Jets? Let them smash an airplane

Kevin Allen, USA TODAY Sports Published 5:55 p.m. ET April 25, 2018 | Updated 8:45 p.m. ET April 25, 2018

The Nashville Predators, always looking to add more layers of fun to their playoff appearances, are going to let fans smash an airplane with a hammer before the team plays the Winnipeg Jets in the second round of the playoffs this week.

It's a Nashville tradition for fans to make a \$5 charitable donation to the Predators Foundation to take a swing at a car painted in the opposing team's colors and logo before each playoff game. If the Predators win the series, the battered car is crushed down to cube size for public display.

In preparation for playing the Jets, the Predators held a Monday meeting looking for fresh ideas.

"To be honest, it was (team president) Sean Henry who said we should smash a plane -- everyone laughed," said Danny Shaklan, the team's vice president of marketing and communications.

But someone pointed out that the team had connections to an aviation company and a plane could probably be acquired. The idea of pulverizing an aircraft might fly. It will be painted with a Jets logo.

"We cut a deal -- we are a resourceful organization," Shaklan said.

Shaklan said the glass and fluids have been removed from the Beechcraft Skipper, and the Predators will "decrease the size of the mallet."



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"We've never smashed a plane before," he said. "We are going to err on the caution. We are all about safety for the fans."

Smash Car looks a little different this round.
☐#StandWithUspic.twitter.com/nJ5tJlgNc4

— p-Nashville Predators (@PredsNHL) April 25, 2018

The Predators tweeted out a photo of the plane being towed to Smashville today.

Now you are getting it. Who wouldn't pay \$5, or three swings for \$10, to destroy a jet?

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USA TODAY / From babies to grandmas, Golden Knights' NHL show wows in Vegas

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Two weeks into the NHL playoffs, fan support for the Vegas Golden Knights has reached an epic level even for a city that believes no show can ever be too big.

Shirts. Signs. Conversation. In Las Vegas, it's all about the expansion Golden Knights and their second-round meeting with the San Jose Sharks, which starts Thursday (10 p.m. ET, NBC Sports Network).

"My gosh, it's over the top," said Jay Kornegay, director of the Westgate Sports Book in Las Vegas. "No matter where you go. You see Golden Knights swag on babies and 85-year-old ladies. It has captured this community like I've never seen before and I've been here 31 years."

According to the NHL, the Golden Knights lead the league in interactions on social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter), even though the expansion team has the smallest user base.

Vegas merchandise sales (through NHL.com, NHLShop.ca, etc.) rank No. 3 in the NHL. Goalie Marc-Andre Fleury's jersey is the No. 4-selling jersey, just behind Connor McDavid, and in front of players such as Henrik Lundqvist and Alex Ovechkin.

"It is so beyond everyone's expectations," said Brian Jennings, the NHL's executive vice president of marketing. "It really has been extraordinary."

In merchandise sales, Jennings said the Golden Knights "aren't just outpunching their weight class — they are right up there with our bigger markets."

Television ratings for the Golden Knights' first-round playoff games on AT&T Sportsnet-Rocky Mountain have increased by more than 200% even from the regular season.

"They are continuing their mercurial ride through the playoffs," Jennings said.

In addition to posting the fifth-best record of 51-24-7, an NHL record for an expansion franchise, the Golden Knights have instantly become one of the showcase franchises in branding and marketing.

"All markets have to find their identity in their unique market and Vegas has done that," Jennings said. "They have captured what their brand stands for in a Vegas-like style. But also off-ice, not taking themselves all too seriously, and saying this is what hockey is in Vegas and we are proud of that."

The Golden Knights' Twitter feed is irreverent, fun, clever and authentically Vegas-like as well. In terms of the number of engagements, the Golden Knights own two of the top three, and four of the top six, Twitter posts during the 2017-18 NHL season.

"When the (Vegas) players were going off to play the (Los Angeles) Kings (in the first round), they had a parade route of fans out there waiting for them," Jennings said.

Carolina Hurricanes president Don Waddell went through an expansion process in Atlanta for the Thrashers, and he marvels at what the Golden Knights have accomplished in such a short period. A year ago, this team didn't have a roster.

"I think people thought they would stumble in the playoffs, and obviously that's not the case," Waddell said.

The Golden Knights swept the Kings in four games. "And it's been mind-boggling to see everyone jump on the train in Vegas," Waddell said.

Waddell said everyone was impressed with Vegas owner Bill Foley from the beginning, and they anticipated the franchise would be successful.

"But people are fooling themselves if they say they thought Vegas would have this much success in their first season," Waddell said.

Said former NHL player Jeremy Roenick, now an NBC analyst: "When I felt the enormous amount of energy in the building for Game 1, I chuckled to myself and remembered how so many people said Vegas couldn't support a professional sports team.

"Leave it to the game of hockey and hockey fans to prove everyone wrong. Game 1 against the Kings was one of the top three atmospheres that I've experienced at a playoff game."

Jennings said the Golden Knights connected with fans immediately.

"The way they describe themselves is the band of golden misfits," Jennings said. "Teams said these players were going to be unprotected in the expansion draft, and they all came into camp with a chip on their shoulder, saying they were going to prove something by having a remarkable season."

Jennings said "winning has been the jet fuel" that has ignited the fans' passion in Las Vegas, but the Golden Knights have done an exceptional job of sustaining the momentum.

The Vegas game plan is similar to the Nashville Predators (country music) in that the Golden Knights have married their city's identity with their hockey identity. Everything about the Golden Knights is about entertainment.

"You cannot re-create history, you cannot do what the Detroit Red Wings did, or the New York Rangers, or Boston Bruins, or Toronto, Montreal," Jennings said. "When teams try to do that, I think that's when they get off kilter. Figure out your marketplace, immerse yourself with your fans and deliver a quality product and be who you are."

Everything -- from the outside-the-arena vibe to the action inside the rink -- has a showy feel to it ... including the impressiveness of their play.

Said Jennings: "I think people can't wait to see what's going to happen next."

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