



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 2, 2018

## THE NEWS & OBSERVER

### Hurricanes continue front office renovation, name senior VP of hockey operations

By Chip Alexander

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May 01, 2018 09:56 AM

Updated May 01, 2018 05:16 PM

Raleigh

The Carolina Hurricanes continued to reshape their front office Tuesday, naming Rick Dudley as senior vice president of hockey operations.

"Rick brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to our management group," Hurricanes owner Tom Dundon said in a statement. "He has been a part of building championship teams on every level of professional hockey, and will play an important role in helping us build a winner in Raleigh."

Dudley, 69, left the Montreal Canadiens organization, where he also served as senior VP of hockey operations. He said his long association with Don Waddell, the Canes' president and interim general manager, was a big factor in making what he said could be the last move of a long hockey career.

"I felt it was time for a different sort of challenge and I needed a change personally," Dudley said.

Dudley said his duties with Carolina have yet to be determined. He said he spent considerable time in recent years with the Canadiens involved in amateur scouting, but noted he does not come to Carolina with Montreal's draft list or prospect rankings.

The announcement on Dudley came one day after Dundon and the Canes terminated the contract of former general manager Ron Francis, who was reassigned to the position of president of hockey operations in March.

Dudley has been a senior executive in the NHL for 25 years, and once worked with Waddell with the Atlanta Thrashers.

Dudley said his association with Waddell first started when he hired Waddell as a player/coach in Flint, Mich., in 1985. They worked together with the San Diego Gulls of the International Hockey League. In 1992-93, with Dudley the coach and Waddell the GM, the Gulls won 62 games, one of the best seasons in pro hockey history.

Dudley has experience as an NHL general manager with four teams, helping to build the foundation for a Stanley Cup champion with the Tampa Bay Lightning as GM from 1999 to 2002. He also was head coach of the Buffalo Sabres from 1989-1991.

Dudley once coached the Carolina Thunderbirds, a minor-league team in Winston-Salem, winning three championships in four years.

"It was a ball. A lot of fun," Dudley said. "I learned so much. I enjoyed every minute in Winston-Salem. This is like going home for me."

The Canes continue their search for a GM and a head coach to replace Bill Peters, although Dundon said there is no firm timetable for getting the hires made.

"I think we'll be in pretty good shape in the next month," Dundon said.

### Hurricanes terminate Ron Francis' contract

By Chip Alexander

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April 30, 2018 03:16 PM

Updated April 30, 2018 07:56 PM

Raleigh

Carolina Hurricanes owner Tom Dundon first reassigned Ron Francis in March, taking away his duties as general manager.

On Monday, the Hurricanes terminated Francis' contract, firing him as president of hockey operations.

Just like that, Francis' long affiliation with the franchise came to an abrupt end. His jersey, No. 10, has been retired and will continue to hang in PNC Arena, but Francis, a member

of the Hockey Hall of Fame and a former Hurricanes captain, no longer is a part of the team.

Dundon, in an interview Monday night, did not want to elaborate on the decision but said he considered the parting amicable.

"I don't think anything has really changed in terms of how I feel about him," Dundon said. "He's a great guy. It's about how we're going to run the organization.

"It's about having the right fit for everybody and making sure everybody is doing it the right way. I still think he's really smart and I still value his judgment. Doing it this way ... it's about coming up with the right process internally. We've got a lot more things we're working on."

In recent weeks, Francis had been working from his Raleigh home, said to be focusing on the 2018 NHL Entry Draft. Team president Don Waddell, serving as interim GM, said



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Francis' office at the arena was being converted into a new conference room.

Francis, who has not spoken publicly since being fired as general manager, could not be reached Monday.

Francis, 55, became general manager in April 2014, when Jim Rutherford stepped down as GM. He had the firm support of Peter Karmanos, then the team's majority owner, who often praised the personnel moves Francis made and his organizational leadership during a team rebuild.

But much changed in January, when Dundon became majority owner. The Dallas billionaire, unlike Karmanos, had no experience with the operation of a professional sports team but a strong sense of how he wanted the Hurricanes franchise to operate.

After Francis was reassigned on March 7, Dundon said it was more about differing personalities than a statement on Francis' performance as GM, saying, "It was just when he and I came to the conclusion about our stylistic differences that as you work together you get to understand. I don't think we disagreed about how to improve the team. I think it's more stylistic about how we would go about getting to a similar place."

Dundon said then that he hoped Francis would stay with the team.

Francis, drafted by the Hartford Whalers, twice won Stanley Cups after his trade to the Pittsburgh Penguins. His free-agent signing by the Hurricanes in July 1998 gave the franchise — moved by Karmanos to North Carolina in 1997 and renamed the Hurricanes — added credibility.

As captain, Francis was a driving force behind the Canes reaching the Stanley Cup final in 2002, losing in five games to the Detroit Red Wings. Retiring as a player in September 2005, he had his jersey retired by the Hurricanes in January 2006 and was inducted in the Hockey Hall in 2007. Francis was back with the organization's front office at that time, first as director of player development, then assistant general manager.

In December 2008, when Peter Laviolette was fired as coach, Francis became associate head coach under coach

Paul Maurice while continuing as director of player personnel. He rejoined the front office full time in June 2011 as director of hockey operations.

"I wear a lot of hats with this team," Francis once joked.

As general manager, Francis was limited by one of the NHL's smallest budgets but had success in drafting and developing such players as forward Sebastian Aho -- a second-round pick in 2015 -- and in working a deal with the Chicago Blackhawks that brought forward Teuvo Teravainen to the Canes in 2016. He also was able to sign veteran forward Justin Williams to a two-year, free-agent contract last year, bringing back one of the stars of the Canes' 2006 Stanley Cup champions.

Some other moves backfired. Francis traded for goalie Scott Darling last year and signed him to a four-year contract, believing the former Blackhawks backup was ready to a No. 1 goalie. Darling struggled nearly all of his first season with the Canes, who missed the playoffs for a ninth straight year.

One of Francis' first decisions as GM was to fire Kirk Muller as head coach in 2014 and hire Bill Peters, then an assistant with the Detroit Red Wings with no NHL head-coaching experience.. Peters recently resigned after four seasons to take the head job with the Calgary Flames.

Francis became the first hockey player inducted into the North Carolina Sports Hall of Fame in May 2013, a testament to his role — they called him "Ronnie Franchise" — in helping the Hurricanes become a viable part of the state's sports landscape.

The Hurricanes also announced Monday that Joe Nieuwendyk has resigned his position as pro scout and adviser.

Rutherford, the Penguins' general manager, told the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette that Francis was "a terrific guy, a terrific hockey guy" and said he was surprised by the decision.

"I'm sure they'll find a good GM to go in there. They'll be hard-pressed to find a better one than him," Rutherford said.

## For agent-turned-Hurricanes assistant GM, nothing new about this team

By Luke DeCock

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

April 30, 2018 05:36 PM

Updated April 30, 2018 05:36 PM

For someone who has never worked for the team — for any NHL team, until now — Paul Krepelka's roots with the Carolina Hurricanes run deep. He drove back and forth to Greensboro with Bates Battaglia. The agency he worked for once represented more than a quarter of the roster, including the cornerstone pieces of the franchise: Eric Staal, Cam Ward, Jeff Skinner.

He has been a witness to as much of the franchise's history as anyone. And now he's a small part of it. Krepelka last

week became the first front-office hire under new owner Tom Dundon, joining as an assistant general manager to handle contract negotiations -- coming aboard before a new general manager is hired to replace [Ron Francis, who was finally cut loose](#) entirely Monday after being demoted from the GM job in March.

After selling his piece of Bobby Orr's agency in 2015 and leaving the agent business entirely, burned out in his mid-40s, Krepelka had been teaching and coaching hockey back in his hometown of Boston when he asked interim general manager Don Waddell about a job in Dundon's new-look hockey department. When he interviewed, it was the first time he was back in Raleigh since the 2011 All-Star Game. There was a time where he wasn't away for more than a few weeks at a time.



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"At one point, I think we had five or six guys on the team," Krepelka said. "Obviously, when you have that many clients on one team, you become pretty familiar with one, the area, but two, the organization and the team."

Battaglia was Krepelka's only client on the Hurricanes when Krepelka jumped to the Orr Group. Rick Curran was (and remains) the primary agent for Staal and Skinner; when Ward decided to change agents in midcareer, he picked Curran as well. Other agency clients included Glen Wesley, Cory Stillman, Frantisek Kaberle, Jay McClement, Manny Malhotra and more. When Krepelka was with the agency, Orr was primarily an executive and recruiter while Krepelka and Curran handled the day-to-day interactions with the players.

What does Battaglia remember the most about his time with Krepelka?

"That Boston accent of his," Battaglia joked. "He was there for me from the very start. As a rookie, I didn't know anything. As a veteran, I didn't know anything either, but he was the first guy to show me the ropes and get me into the right situation. That was a huge thing. I was 20 when I met him, 21 when I came here, and he was a big help in just getting me where I needed to be."

Krepelka enjoyed that part of it, spending time with people like the Staal family, attending all of the brothers' weddings (and cleaning up the mess when Eric's bachelor party was broken up by the cops). He lived the agent life, at one point making the tabloids after a blind date turned into a very public two-month relationship with model-actress Jenny McCarthy in 2011.

He did not, however, enjoy recruiting 12- and 13-year-olds – which is where hockey has gone for everyone: agents, junior teams, colleges – or dealing with increasingly pushy parents. What had once been, for him, a job built around personal relationships had become a grind-it-out business.

So he sold back his stake in the Orr Group and walked away from hockey. For good, he thought.

"I had been in it for 20 years," Krepelka said. "It kind of ran its course for me. At that point in my life I wanted a change. I sold my ownership stake in the business to Bobby and Ricky. The timing wasn't the best for me, but what's done is done. I wanted to do something else. I was frustrated with what the agent business was turning into."

Three years later, while a parade of NHL executives very publicly declared how they weren't interested in working in Dundon's decentralized front office, Krepelka quietly reached out to Waddell and met with both the interim GM and the new owner. He had thought for a while about getting into the team side of things – the negotiating of contracts won't be new to him, but the administrative side of it will be – and wasn't scared off by taking the job without knowing who his boss would be or Dundon's vision.

"He's bringing a different element and management style," Krepelka said. "Traditionalists aren't used to it in the NHL. I hit it off with him. I liked his energy, liked his passion. I had no problem with any of it."

The Hurricanes franchise isn't the only thing that's changed in the seven years between Krepelka's visits. Imagine seeing Raleigh today through his eyes. When he first started coming here, downtown was dead and Glenwood, with a mere smattering of eating and drinking options, didn't even have "South" appended to it yet. Now there are dozens of bars and restaurants, including one owned by his former client Battaglia.

Even since the All-Star Game, downtown and North Hills continue to blossom while the Hurricanes have, sadly, stagnated. Krepelka was there for Game 3 in 2002, there for the All-Star Game that seemed to cement the Triangle as the NHL's model southern market, a claim long since relinquished. He was here for the good times, an interested observer. Now he's a participant.



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## NORTH STATE JOURNAL

### Hurricanes add front office veteran Rick Dudley

**Four-time NHL GM named senior VP of hockey operations**

[May 1, 2018 Cory Lavalette Article, NHL, Sports](#)

RALEIGH — The Hurricanes' front office is starting to come into focus.

A day after the team fully [severed ties with Ron Francis](#), Carolina hired longtime NHL executive Rick Dudley as senior vice president of hockey operations.

Dudley, 69, has been general manager of four NHL teams — first in Ottawa, then with three former Southeast Division teams: Tampa Bay, Florida and Atlanta — and served in front office roles in Chicago, Toronto and Montreal, where he was assistant GM the past six years.

"Rick brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to our management group," Hurricanes owner Tom Dundon said in a press release. "He has been a part of building championship teams on every level of professional hockey,

and will play an important role in helping us build a winner in Raleigh."

Dudley also coached teams at several levels, from winning three ACHL titles in four years with the Winston-Salem-based Carolina Thunderbirds in the 1980s to coaching the Buffalo Sabres for two-plus seasons starting in 1989 and the Florida Panthers for 40 games during the 2003-04 season. He played more than 600 combined games in the NHL and WHA.

Dudley's hiring comes less than two weeks after the Hurricanes hired former agent Paul Krepelka as vice president of hockey operations, where he will primarily focus on negotiating player contracts.

The Hurricanes are still pursuing a new general manager and coach, but both positions got more attractive when Carolina [landed the second overall pick](#) in June's draft during last weekend's draft lottery.

### Hurricanes terminate Francis' contract

**Hall of Fame player and former assistant coach and GM is no longer with the team's front office**

[April 30, 2018 Cory Lavalette Article, NHL, Sports](#)

Less than eight weeks after he was stripped of his title as general manager of the Carolina Hurricanes, Ron Francis is no longer a part of the team's front office.

In a Monday press release, the Hurricanes announced Francis' contract had been terminated and he would no longer serve as president of hockey operations. Francis was given that title on March 7 when he was relieved of his GM duties. In an interview on March 14 with North State Journal,

Hurricanes owner Tom Dundon said Francis wanted to stay on in a player personnel role.

Francis, a former team captain who is enshrined in the Hockey Hall of Fame and whose No. 10 hangs in the rafters of PNC Arena, has not been seen around the team since he was kicked upstairs in March. Interim GM Don Waddell was the Hurricanes' representative when the team bucked the odds to [earn the second overall pick](#) during Saturday's draft lottery.

Joe Nieuwendyk, a former GM of the Dallas Stars and himself a Hockey Hall of Famer, also resigned as a pro scout and adviser to the team, the Hurricanes said in the release.



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## A month after demotion, Francis fired from Hurricanes' front office

Posted 3:11 p.m. Monday  
Updated 7:02 p.m. Monday

By Jodi Leese Glusco, WRAL.com director of content

Raleigh, N.C. — The Carolina Hurricanes have terminated the contract of Ron Francis, the team announced Monday afternoon. The move comes about a month after new team owner Tom Dundon [changed Francis' title](#) from executive vice president and general manager to president of hockey operations.

The move is the latest step as Dundon looks to revive the struggling franchise and inject energy into the product on and off the ice.

[Head coach Bill Peters announced his resignation](#) April 20; Francis' previous GM position remains unfilled.

Neither Dundon nor Francis was quoted in the announcement, which simply said Francis had been relieved of all duties.

Francis, 55, had been a fixture in the Hurricanes front office since he retired in September of 2005, serving as assistant coach, director of player development, vice president of hockey operations and executive vice president and general manager, but he was also a key part of the leadership group

who had been unable to get the team back to the postseason since 2009.

Before turning in his sweater for a suit, Francis played in 1,731 regular-season NHL games for Hartford/Carolina, Pittsburgh and Toronto. He tallied 1,798 points (549 goals, 1,249 assists), ranking fourth all-time on the league's points list behind Wayne Gretzky, Mark Messier and Gordie Howe at the time of his retirement.

The Hartford Whalers drafted Francis in the first round, fourth overall, in the 1981 NHL Entry Draft.

Francis played with the Whalers for 10 seasons before joining Pittsburgh at the trade deadline of the 1990-91 season. He spent seven full seasons with the Penguins before rejoining the organization that drafted him, when the relocated Carolina Hurricanes signed him as a free agent on July 13, 1998.

In 16 seasons with the Hartford/Carolina franchise, Francis played in 1,186 games, scoring 382 goals and earning 793 assists for 1,175 points - all of which are franchise records. The Hurricanes officially retired Francis' No. 10 jersey to the arena's rafters on Jan. 28, 2006, and on Nov. 12, 2007, Francis was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame.

## Two months after Band-Aid fix, Canes finally fire former GM Ron Francis

Posted 10:49 p.m. Monday  
Updated 9:29 a.m. yesterday

By Adam Gold 99.9 the Fan radio host

Hi Caniacs!

News is really coming fast and furious these days, isn't it? One day you've got a head coach and appear headed for the 11th pick in the upcoming draft, the next you win the silver medal in the draft lottery, your new owner is conducting a national searches for TWO vital positions AND the final nail is put in the hockey coffin of The Franchise.

Finally, after the public humiliation of one of the game's great gentlemen, former General Manager Ron Francis was officially terminated Monday.

In a sense, he was fired for a second time. Dizzying.

On March 7, Ron Francis was "promoted" from executive vice president/general manager to president of hockey operations. I used the quotations because we all know what happened. He was fired. However, with majority owner Tom Dundon loathe to pay Ron for the remaining year of his contract, Francis had to have a title. Come on, something to go on a business card.

As president of hockey operations, Francis had no decision-making role in player personnel. The the team hired Paul Krepelka as vice president of hockey operations, but oddly it was announced that he would report directly to the owner and not to Francis. To me, it would seem logical for the VP to answer to the P when both are in the same department. But these are the new Hurricanes. If we drew up an organizational flow chart, Francis would be in a box off to the left, untethered to any other. His only official duty since his ouster was a presentation to Cam Ward out of the view of the public prior to the end of the season.

In recent days there was even reporting that Francis had been banished from PNC Arena — or maybe he just requested permission to work from home because the trip from north Raleigh through the typically heavy city traffic was becoming a drain.

What traffic?

Maybe Francis WAS working from home, scouting players for the draft on YouTube. Maybe he was cleaning out the garage. Who knows. What we do know is that Francis was neutered by Dundon on March 7. His office was turned into an organizational man-cave for meetings and scouting



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sessions. And none of that matters because not only does the owner have the right to fire whomever he wants within the organization, you could also argue very easily that Francis was not treated unfairly — other than Dundon should have just fired him literally as opposed to figuratively.

We could sit here all day long and list the players or contracts that turned out to be Francis mistakes. But for every trade for a Scott Darling that didn't work out there's a Sebastian Aho as a second-round draft pick who did. So let's all save the time and energy judging Francis' tenure.

Francis' most egregious mistake, the one from which both he and the team would not recover, was his failure to recognize that Bill Peters had completely and totally lost the room. When Peters engineered a 15-point jump in his second year — albeit still short of a postseason spot — Francis rewarded his coach with a contract extension. A year and a half later it was obvious to virtually everyone but Ron that his team, his improved team, had flat refused to play the style that they'd

established over the past three seasons. And if this team wasn't going to listen to this head coach, what's the point?

But Ron — who was praised by the hockey purists for his hiring of Peters, a noted tactician and protege of Toronto head coach Mike Babcock — was either afraid to admit that it had stopped working or was forbidden by then owner Peter Karmanos from pulling the plug. Honestly, it doesn't matter which. The former shows a total misread of the situation that doomed his team. The latter speaks of a man without enough conviction to stand up for his belief in a group that was theoretically good enough to reach the postseason.

In the end, Francis' teams never reached the playoffs and that alone was enough to close the door on his term as General Manager. It would simply have been better for all parties had Dundon ripped off the band-aid rather than allow the wound to fester.

## Canes add executive from Montreal to front office staff

Posted 9:29 a.m. yesterday  
Updated 7:01 p.m. yesterday

The Carolina Hurricanes announced the hire Tuesday of Rick Dudley as senior vice president of hockey operations.

"Rick brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to our management group," said Tom Dundon, owner, CEO and governor of the Hurricanes. "He has been a part of building championship teams on every level of professional hockey, and will play an important role in helping us build a winner in Raleigh."

Dudley, 69, has more than 45 years of experience in professional hockey, including 25 years as a senior executive in the National Hockey League. Prior to joining the Hurricanes, the Toronto native served as senior vice president of hockey operations for the Montreal Canadiens. He's also held senior executive roles with the Toronto Maple Leafs, Atlanta Thrashers, Chicago Blackhawks, Florida Panthers, Tampa Bay Lightning and Ottawa Senators.

Dudley has served as general manager for four NHL franchises, and played a major role in helping to build championship teams in Tampa Bay, where he was general manager from 1999 to 2002, and Chicago, where he was assistant general manager from 2004 to 2009. As general manager of the Ottawa Senators in 1998-99, he helped the Senators capture their first division championship. Before starting his NHL management career, he served as a general manager in the IHL, AHL and ECHL, reaching the finals eight times and winning four league championships. He also gained experience as a coach in the ACHL, IHL, AHL and NHL, serving as head coach of the Buffalo Sabres from 1989-1991.

Dudley spent seven seasons as a player in the NHL, totaling 174 points (75g, 99a) in 309 career games with Buffalo and Winnipeg. He also appeared in 270 World Hockey Association (WHA) games with Cincinnati, twice netting 40 goals in a season.



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## Dudley Ready for New Challenge with Canes

**Dudley's rich hockey history has ties to Waddell, North Carolina**

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

May 1st, 2018

Rick Dudley's resume reads as if he were The Most Interesting Man in Hockey. If there's a job in hockey, he's probably done it. If there's a city with hockey, he's probably at least scouted in it.

And now, he's ready for his newest challenge. Dudley was named the Carolina Hurricanes' senior vice president of hockey operations on Tuesday, as he joins the team's retooled front office.

"They've done a pretty good job at assembling a group of young players who are very talented. With a few additions, they can be a pretty solid hockey team for a long time," Dudley said on a conference call. "There are things that need to be done to get it to the next level, but there are a lot of pieces there that can be worked with."

Dudley brings with him more than 45 years of experience in professional hockey, including 25 years as a senior executive in the National Hockey League. He most recently spent six years with the Montreal Canadiens, first as an assistant general manager and then as their senior vice president of hockey operations.

"I felt like it was time for a different sort of challenge," he said. "The feelings were good when I talked to the people in the organization. I felt like this was something I could enjoy."

Dudley has a history with Hurricanes President and Interim General Manager Don Waddell that dates back to the mid-1980s when Dudley tabbed Waddell as a player-assistant coach with the Flint Spirits of the International Hockey League.

"We've been friends since and worked together many times, mostly him being my boss," Dudley said.

Dudley also has a history in the state, having coached the Carolina Thunderbirds of the Atlantic Coast Hockey League to three championships in four seasons in Winston-Salem.

"I enjoyed every minute in Winston-Salem. It was a tremendous experience, and I loved the town," he said. "It

was a ball. I loved the state and everything about it. In one way, it's kind of going home for me."

Away from the rink, Dudley's interests and accomplishments are just as eclectic. As detailed in this [16-year-old profile from Michael Russo](#), Dudley, a star athlete in lacrosse, football and hockey, is a movie buff and a musician who's released records. He was a gym rat then - with Russo asserting that Dudley could bench press 500 pounds at one point - and remains one to this day.

"I still work out every day, and hopefully I'm in pretty good shape. I'm still fairly strong. I would say I could do 300 [pounds] 10 times, maybe," he said. "I haven't attempted to measure lately, but I'm in pretty good shape."

Dudley vs. Rod Brind'Amour?

"Oh, dear God. I don't want any challenge from him," Dudley laughed. "I remember how good a conditioned athlete he was."

Dudley joins the Hurricanes, who named Paul Krepelka vice president of hockey operations a couple weeks back, on the heels of the team winning the second draft lottery to jump up nine spots to the second overall pick in this year's first-round draft order.

"I think all three teams can get a dimensional player. I mean that sincerely," he said. "In this particular draft at the top, there are players who can change a franchise."

The Hurricanes are a franchise, he said, that, with a few tweaks, could take that next step very soon.

"I think there are a couple of pieces that can be improved in a couple areas," he said. "Some of the solutions - and they're not that many - may already be in the organization because, again, they've done a good job amassing some very good, young talent."

Though Dudley has never seen fit to settle in one place for an extended period, there's no doubting that he has amassed a wealth of experience over his decades doing this, that, the other and then some in hockey. Now, at 69 years old, in a somewhat familiar place surrounded by at least one familiar face, Dudley is prepared for a new challenge.

"I'm probably not that long for the game anymore, but I'd like my last stop to be a very successful one. My gut tells me this could be," he said. "I hope this is my last stop."



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

## Ron Francis, Carolina Hurricanes part ways

**Things did not seem to end well between the Hurricanes and their former general manager, and Francis' tenure with the team came to a swift end Monday.**

By [Brian LeBlanc@bdleblanc](mailto:Brian_LeBlanc@bdlblanc) Apr 30, 2018, 3:17pm EDT

Not quite two months after being reassigned to president of hockey operations, Ron Francis has been relieved of all duties within the front office.

The [Carolina Hurricanes](#) announced in a terse statement Monday that they have "terminated" Francis' contract. Through a team spokesman, team president Don Waddell and owner Tom Dundon declined comment beyond the team statement. Pro scout and team advisor Joe Nieuwendyk has also resigned his position with the Hurricanes.

Francis was recently reported to have been working from home after his office at PNC Arena was cleaned out, and Waddell told the News and Observer that Francis was

available "if needed" in a consultative role. Waddell said after the Hurricanes won the second overall pick in the 2018 [NHL Draft](#) on Saturday night that the team would be holding scouting meetings over the next couple of weeks, presumably including Francis in those meetings at the time but things certainly seem to have gone sideways in a hurry.

The release from the team is below.

### **CANES TERMINATE CONTRACT OF RON FRANCIS**

*Former general manager relieved of all duties*

The Carolina Hurricanes today announced that the team has terminated the contract of President of Hockey Operations Ron Francis. Francis served as the team's executive vice president and general manager from April 24, 2014 until March 7, 2018.

The team also announced that Joe Nieuwendyk has resigned his position as pro scout and advisor.



## Carolina terminates demoted GM Ron Francis' contract

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — The Carolina Hurricanes terminated the contract of demoted general manager and Hall of Fame player Ron Francis on Monday.

The Hurricanes announced the move in a three-sentence statement nearly two months after Francis was reassigned to another front-office position — president of hockey operations — while the team began a search for a new GM that will report directly to new owner Tom Dundon.

Francis, 55, is a four-time All-Star who won the Stanley Cup twice with Pittsburgh in the 1990s and was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame in 2007. He took over as Carolina's general manager in 2014 after being groomed for the position by former GM Jim Rutherford — who now is trying to win the Cup for a third straight year with the Penguins.

The Hurricanes, meanwhile, have not made the playoffs since 2009. Their nine-year postseason drought is one of the longest in NHL history.

Francis stockpiled draft picks during the three-plus seasons he spent rebuilding the Hurricanes, but he was criticized for

not making enough moves to help the current club and failing to orchestrate a consequential player-for-player trade during that time.

One of his biggest offseason acquisitions was a bust, with goalie Scott Darling coming in from Chicago and finishing with an NHL-worst save percentage of .888 in the first year of his four-year, \$16.6 million contract.

The Hurricanes have several key vacancies in their management roster. They're also searching for a coach after Bill Peters opted out of the final year of his contract earlier this month and subsequently was hired by the Calgary Flames.

Carolina was a winner at the draft lottery over the weekend. It holds the No. 2 overall pick in the June draft.

The Hurricanes also announced that Joe Nieuwendyk resigned as a pro scout and adviser for the team. Nieuwendyk, a Hall of Fame center who played for two decades, previously spent four years as the Dallas Stars' GM.



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## Hurricanes add veteran NHL executive Dudley to front office

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — The Carolina Hurricanes have hired veteran NHL executive Rick Dudley to a front-office position.

Owner Tom Dundon on Tuesday said Dudley will be the team's senior vice president of hockey operations.

The 69-year-old Dudley comes to Carolina after holding the same position with the Montreal Canadiens, and has been a general manager for four NHL teams.

His hiring came a day after the Hurricanes [terminated the contract of Hall of Fame player Ron Francis](#), the team's demoted general manager who had spent roughly two months as Carolina's president of hockey operations.

The Hurricanes are searching for a full-time GM and [a head coach](#) after they missed the playoffs for a ninth straight year.



## Jeremy Helvig Joins Checkers On ATO

Written by Nicholas Niedzielski

Published: April 30, 2018

With his junior season completed, the Checkers have signed goaltender Jeremy Helvig to an amateur tryout.

The 20-year-old will now join the Checkers for the remainder of the Calder Cup Playoff run.

"He's a young kid and it's good for him to come up here during the playoffs and see how we work up here and see what it's like as a professional," said assistant coach Peter Andersson.

Helvig, a fifth-round selection by Carolina in the 2016 draft, recently wrapped up his fourth OHL season with the Kingston Frontenacs, who were eliminated by the Hamilton Bulldogs in the conference finals. The Ontario native went 31-16-6 this season while ranking fifth in the OHL in wins, goals-against average and save percentage.

During his four-year OHL career, Helvig went 90-55-9 for Kingston, leading the league in shutouts in 2016-17 and goals-against average and save percentage in 2015-16.

## Know Your Playoff Opponent: Lehigh Valley Phantoms

Written by Nicholas Niedzielski

Published: May 01, 2018

After sweeping their first-round series against the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins, the Checkers are slated to face the Lehigh Valley Phantoms in the Atlantic Division Finals. To prepare for the impending series, here's quick primer on who the Checkers are going up against.

### SEASON SERIES

The Checkers and Phantoms squared off eight times during the regular season and split the series, with each side logging a 4-4-0 record overall and a 3-1-0 mark on home ice.

#### Dec. 12 - Phantoms 6 @ Checkers 3

The Checkers and Phantoms' first meeting of the regular season didn't come until December. The back-and-forth contest saw the Phantoms jump out to an early two-goal lead just three minutes in, but the Checkers roared back with a trio of strikes to regain the lead midway through the first frame. It would be all Lehigh Valley from that point, however,

as the visitors pumped in four unanswered tallies – including two on the man advantage – to double up the Checkers for a 6-3 win. Alex Nedeljkovic finished the night with 32 saves on 37 shots, while the Checkers chased starter Dustin Tokarski less than nine minutes into regulation before John Muse came in in relief to stop all 25 shots he saw.

#### Dec. 13 - Phantoms 2 @ Checkers 5

The script flipped for the following night's rematch. The Checkers racked up four unanswered tallies to start the contest, including two on the power play and a pair from the captain Patrick Brown. The Phantoms lit the lamp to end the second and start the third but that would be it for their rally effort as an Andrew Miller's late empty netter sealed the 5-2 win. Jeremy Smith made 35 saves to nab the win while former Checker Muse took the loss for Lehigh Valley.

#### Dec. 29 - Checkers 1 @ Phantoms 3

The first meeting in Pennsylvania followed the same pattern, with one team recording each of the first three goals. This time it would be the Phantoms, who carried a 3-0 lead until



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midway through the third when Andrew Miller connected with Warren Foegele to break the shutout. That would be all the Checkers could muster, however, as Smith was saddled with the loss and Alex Lyon took the victory with 28 stops.

## Dec. 30 - Checkers 5 @ Phantoms 2

The Checkers again rallied in the rematch despite falling in an early 1-0 hole. The Checkers racked up three straight goals starting late in the second to take the lead, but the Phantoms pulled back within one with under two minutes to play. Charlotte locked the home team down from there on out, however, and used a pair of empty netters from Andrew Poturalski and Patrick Brown to blow the game wide open. Nedeljkovic earned his first win against Lehigh Valley with 26 saves, while Alex Lyon's 39 stops weren't enough to avoid the loss.

## Feb. 2 - Checkers 2 @ Phantoms 3

Returning to Lehigh Valley over a month later, the Checkers locked into a tight contest with the Phantoms. The teams traded tallies until the Warren Foegele knotted the score at two early on in the third. The game appeared to be headed to overtime until Cole Bardreau netted the go-ahead marker with three to play in regulation to clinch the win for the Phantoms. Nedeljkovic stopped 23 of the 26 shots he saw during the game while John Muse denied 38 shots and picked up the win.

## Feb. 7 - Checkers 3 @ Phantoms 4

The Phantoms grabbed the first consecutive wins of the season series a few days later despite a strong push from the Checkers. Lehigh Valley scored early and often to hold a 4-1 advantage heading into the waning minutes of regulation, but a power-play strike from Aleksii Saarela gave the Checkers life and an Andrew Miller tally pulled the visitors within one with 31 seconds to play. Charlotte couldn't finish off their furious comeback, however, and dropped the 4-3 decision. Alex Nedeljkovic stopped 23 shots and took the loss, though Callum Booth made his AHL debut in relief and stopped both shots he saw in 11 minutes of play. Alex Lyon notched the W with 21 stops.

## Apr. 3 - Phantoms 1 @ Checkers 3

The final series in Charlotte kicked off with the Checkers taking care of the Phantoms late. The visitors jumped on top early and held that lead until Andrew Poturalski lit the lamp for Charlotte two minutes into the third. The Checkers' push finally yielded the go-ahead tally thanks to Marcus Kruger in the final five minutes of play, before a Mike Ferrantino empty netter sealed the deal. Smith recorded the win with 21 saves on 22 shots while Tokarski was saddled with the loss despite 36 saves.

## Apr. 4 - Phantoms 1 @ Checkers 6

The season series ended with its most lopsided final. The Checkers racked up three straight goals in the opening frame to take control and never ceded it, notching another two in the middle frame before the Phantoms were able to find the

back of the net. Andrew Poturalski iced the game with a power-play strike in the third – his second of the game – and Callum Booth picked up his first AHL win behind 30 saves, with Muse collecting the loss for Lehigh Valley.

## FIVE TO WATCH

### PHIL VARONE (74gp, 23g/47a/70pts, +9, 48 PIM)

This year's AHL MVP finished second in scoring and set a career high along the way. In his seventh pro season, the 27-year-old playmaker ranked fourth in the league with 47 helpers and put up six points (1g, 5a) in seven games against Charlotte this season. Varone recorded two assists in three games in the Phantoms' first-round playoff series but missed Game 4 due to injury.

### GREG CAREY (72gp, 31g/22a/53pts, +10, 32 PIM)

While Varone racked up the assists during the season, Carey had a knack for finding the back of the net. He led the Phantoms and tied for fourth in the league overall with 31 tallies while coming through in the clutch with a team-best six game winners. The 28-year-old enjoyed success against the Checkers during the regular season with six points (3g, 3a) in eight games, before notching four points (2g, 2a) in as many games during the Phantoms' first-round victory.

### NICOLAS AUBE-KUBEL (72gp, 18g/28a/46pts, +24, 86 PIM)

The second-year pro and junior teammate of Julien Gauthier ranked third on the Phantoms in scoring this season and led the team in penalty minutes. Aube-Kubel also tied for the most points by a Lehigh Valley player against the Checkers this season with six points (2g, 4a) in eight games, but went scoreless in the Phantoms' first-round series against Providence.

### T.J. BRENNAN (63gp, 14g/31a/45pts, +11, 75 PIM)

A three-time AHL All Star and two-time Best Defenseman, Brennan had a down year by his own lofty standards but still registered the fifth-most point by an AHL blue liner this season. The 29-year-old enters this postseason with 50 Calder Cup playoff games under his belt, including two runs to the conference finals with Toronto, and picked up three points (1g, 2a) in the Phantoms' opening-round series.

### OSKAR LINDBLOM (54gp, 16g/18a/34pts, +4, 10 PIM)

The 21-year-old Swede ranked second among team rookies in scoring this season while also appearing in 23 NHL games with the Flyers, plus four more in the Stanley Cup playoffs. Lindbolm was one of the reinforcements to join the Phantoms when Philadelphia was eliminated and registered three points (2g, 1a) in two games during Lehigh Valley's first-round series.



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## Notebook: What Went Right

Written by Nicholas Niedzielski

Published: May 01, 2018

Going up against a perennially powerful Penguins team in round one of the Calder Cup playoffs, the Checkers had their work cut out for them.

Wilkes-Barre/Scranton finished the season with a better record, ceding them home ice during the series, while also playing with the emotional thrust of trying to win a title for their retiring captain and hometown legend Tom Kostopoulos.

And yet, it was the Checkers who came out the other side. For head coach Mike Vellucci, his team advancing came down to two key aspects.

"One, we didn't push and shove after the whistle, we played between the whistles," he said. "We played hard but we played smart and that's key."

The Penguins established a hard-nosed style from the get-go but tended to unravel at times, totaling 60 penalty minutes in the three-game series compared to the Checkers' 24.

"The second thing was that we kept our composure no matter what happened," said Vellucci. "Whether we were down in games or didn't like the ref's calls or linesmen's calls, whatever, we didn't let that stuff bother us. You have to overcome those things and pick the right way to go in adversity and I thought we did that."

The Checkers didn't make things easy on themselves, surrendering the first goal in all three contests and erasing two-goal deficits in two of the games. Regardless of where they found themselves, the Checkers were able to claw their way back in an impressive fashion time and time again.

"It goes back to the fact that we didn't panic," said Vellucci. "We didn't start screaming at each other and getting down. We stayed focused and stayed into it."

While they were able to rally each time against the Penguins, the Checkers would prefer not to have to do that anymore.

"We have to have better starts," said Vellucci. "I was just talking about it with our leaders. We have to have better starts and we have to get ourselves into it, whatever it takes. Make sure that we're ready right from that first shift."

Charlotte's offense took center stage during the regular season, finishing as the most prolific in the AHL. That hasn't changed in the playoffs, as the team averaged 4.67 goals per game in the first round, the second-highest mark thus far in the postseason.

The good news for the Checkers is that they've been getting that production from all across their lineup. Deadline acquisition Greg McKegg leads the way with five points, while Haydn Fleury has reestablished himself as an offensive threat with four. The usual suspects like Valentin Zykov,

Andrew Poturalski and Aleksii Saarela have chipped in at a point-per-game pace, while depth scorers like Clark Bishop and Josiah Didier have chipped in with two goals and three points, respectively.

"We want our D to get involved with the play, we want to get one-timers, we want to get net-front traffic," said Vellucci of his team's offensive output in the first round. "It was good. Our power play dried up that series but we had some chances, their goalie made some huge saves early on. If you're not going to score on the power play you've got to score five-on-five and we did. We got the ugly goals. There were some nice ones but there were some ugly ones where we made the right plays and paid the price. That's playoff hockey. It's something we've talked about all year."

As Vellucci mentioned, the one low point of the series for Charlotte was its power play. After logging the third-best percentage during the regular season, the Checkers' power play went cold against Wilkes-Barre/Scranton. They managed just one goal on 15 man advantages across the three-game series and have been shut out in their last nine power plays.

The team knows that will have to change going forward.

"We need to win more faceoffs, we need to start with the puck more," said Vellucci of the key to sparking the power play. "We had a lot of chances, we just couldn't get it rolling. That's the way it went there but we've got to get better on our entries and make sure we win more draws."

But not even a struggling power play could slow down the rolling Checkers, who plowed through the Penguins for the franchise's first ever series sweep – a nice footnote in the record books but not anything that the coaching staff wants to rest on.

"I've never played too much into sweeping or not sweeping," said Vellucci. "We just want to win every game. We didn't want to let up at all and give them any glimmer of hope in their own building. You have to get that first one and you have to keep that mentality to kick them when they're down."

Now it's time for the Checkers to put that first-round triumph behind them and move on to taking down another division heavyweight.

"Momentum-wise, it's a new series," said Vellucci. "Same as the regular season, it's back to 0-0 and nobody has any advantage. "We're the lower seed in these playoffs, but we know what we can do, we know how we can play."

## HELVIG COMES ONBOARD

The Kingston Frontenacs were eliminated in the conference finals of the OHL playoffs earlier this week, ending the junior season for Jeremy Helvig.

The netminder isn't headed to the offseason just yet, however, as Helvig joined the Checkers Tuesday morning and will remain with the team through the rest of their Calder



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Cup playoff run.

It's a common practice for prospects to join their organization's AHL team at the conclusion of their junior season, as Helvig – selected by Carolina in the fifth round of the 2016 draft – will now get his first glimpse of the next level.

"You want to get him some experience," said Paul Schonfelder, Carolina's minor-league goaltending consultant. "Coming out of junior it's a bit of a step coming into the American League. So you bring him in here and let him soak it up and see how things are done. Get a feel for things so next year when he comes into camp he can hit the ground running."

The 20-year-old Helvig was thrown right in, manning the crease at Tuesday morning's full-team practice.

"It was pretty cool," said Helvig. "Guys have harder shots here, they're faster. It's going to be good to get some experience at the pro level here. I just want to keep learning each day, learn from the other guys."

On top of working alongside Schonfelder, Helvig will get a chance to shadow the Checkers' current goaltending duo of Alex Nedeljkovic and Jeremy Smith. Both graduates of the OHL, Nedeljkovic and Smith represent different ends of the spectrum in terms of experience – the former battled through a tough rookie year to emerge as one of the league's top netminders this season while the latter has carved out a strong career climbing from the ECHL to the NHL.

Regardless, Helvig will have plenty to draw from.

"One of the biggest things I told Jer is to watch these two guys and learn from them," said Schonfelder.

"Watch them off the ice and on the ice and their habits and how they work out. He's up here to soak everything in."

## INJURY UPDATE

The Checkers went through their first-round series at near full strength health-wise. Aside from Marcus Kruger, who was ruled out for the entire playoffs, the only question mark has been Jake Chelios. The blue liner has been out since late February with a lower-body injury and, while he has fully rejoined practice over the last few weeks, he's not quite ready to return.

"He's not really cleared but it's getting closer," said Vellucci. "It's a tough injury that he has and there's no use in having him come back too early."

Once he is fully cleared to return to game action, it will raise a tough decision for the coaching staff, as the current crop of six defensemen have been solid for the Checkers over the last few months. Still, that's a bridge they will cross when they get there.

"I'm not going to think about it until it's time that we think he's ready," said Vellucci. "When he's ready, we'll make that decision."



## Dudley hired by Hurricanes as senior vice president of hockey operations

**Spent past six seasons with Canadiens in same role; Carolina remains without GM, coach**

NHL.com [@NHL](#)

May 1st, 2018

Rick Dudley was hired as senior vice president of hockey operations for the Carolina Hurricanes on Tuesday.

Dudley, 69, was senior vice president of hockey operations for the Montreal Canadiens for the previous six seasons.

Dudley will report to Hurricanes president Don Waddell, furthering a relationship that dates to 1986, when Dudley was coach of Flint in the International Hockey League and hired Waddell as an assistant. They worked together most

recently with the Atlanta Thrashers when Waddell, then general manager, hired Dudley as assistant GM in 2009.

"I took a look at the organization, and obviously Don Waddell and I go back a long way, that's probably the biggest reason I thought about Carolina," Dudley said. "I looked at the organization and I saw some of the work that they've done. I think (director of amateur scouting) Tony MacDonald and his staff have done a nice job assembling a group of young players that are very talented and with a few additions can be a solid hockey team, for a long time. ... There's a lot of pieces there. There's things that need to be done to get it to the next level, but there's a lot of pieces there that can be worked with."

One of those pieces is the No. 2 pick in the 2018 NHL Draft, which the Hurricanes won during the NHL Draft Lottery on



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Saturday. The Buffalo Sabres have the No. 1 pick, and the Canadiens have No. 3.

Defenseman Rasmus Dahlin of Frolunda (Swedish Hockey League) is expected to be drafted No. 1. The Hurricanes' options at No. 2 could include forwards Andrei Svechnikov of Barrie (Ontario Hockey League), Brady Tkachuk (Boston University) and Filip Zadina of Halifax (Quebec Major Junior Hockey League).

"The top of this draft, I've watched a lot of this draft and there are some very strong players," Dudley said. "We're not going to give out any secrets, but you're getting a player that's going to help you a ton. ... In this particular draft there are players that can change a franchise."

The Hurricanes are without a general manager and coach. Ron Francis was removed from his position as GM on March 7, and Bill Peters left Carolina on April 20 before becoming coach of the Calgary Flames three days later.

Dudley said he enjoyed his six seasons with the Canadiens, especially working with general manager and close friend Marc Bergevin.

"I felt like it was time for a different sort of challenge," he said.

Dudley also spoke with Tom Dundon, who took over as majority owner of the Hurricanes on Jan. 11.

"Rick brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to our management group," Dundon said. "He has been a part of building championship teams on every level of professional hockey and will play an important role in helping us build a winner in Raleigh."

The Hurricanes will be the ninth NHL team Dudley has worked for since he coached the Buffalo Sabres in 1989-90. He played 309 NHL games as a forward for the Sabres and Winnipeg Jets from 1972-81.

"I'm probably not that long for the game anymore but I'd like my last stop to be a very successful one," Dudley said. "And my gut tells me, and I hope, this is my last stop."

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# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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## SportScan

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

1094534 Carolina Hurricanes

Hurricanes continue front office renovation, name senior VP of hockey operations

BY CHIP ALEXANDER

calexander@newsobserver.com

May 01, 2018 09:56 AM

RALEIGH

The Carolina Hurricanes continued to reshape their front office Tuesday, naming Rick Dudley as senior vice president of hockey operations.

"Rick brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to our management group," Hurricanes owner Tom Dundon said in a statement. "He has been a part of building championship teams on every level of professional hockey, and will play an important role in helping us build a winner in Raleigh."

Rick Dudley

Dudley, 69, left the Montreal Canadiens organization, where he also served as senior VP of hockey operations. He said his long association with Don Waddell, the Canes' president and interim general manager, was a big factor in making what he said could be the last move of a long hockey career.

"I felt it was time for a different sort of challenge and I needed a change personally," Dudley said.

Dudley said his duties with Carolina have yet to be determined. He said he spent considerable time in recent years with the Canadiens involved in amateur scouting, but noted he does not come to Carolina with Montreal's draft list or prospect rankings.

The announcement on Dudley came one day after Dundon and the Canes terminated the contract of former general manager Ron Francis, who was reassigned to the position of president of hockey operations in March.

Dudley has been a senior executive in the NHL for 25 years, and once worked with Waddell with the Atlanta Thrashers.

Dudley said his association with Waddell first started when he hired Waddell as a player/coach in Flint, Mich., in 1985. They worked together with the San Diego Gulls of the International Hockey League. In 1992-93, with Dudley the coach and Waddell the GM, the Gulls won 62 games, one of the best seasons in pro hockey history.

Dudley has experience as an NHL general manager with four teams, helping to build the foundation for a Stanley Cup champion with the Tampa Bay Lightning as GM from 1999 to 2002. He also was head coach of the Buffalo Sabres from 1989-1991.

Dudley once coached the Carolina Thunderbirds, a minor-league team in Winston-Salem, winning three championships in four years.

"It was a ball. A lot of fun." Dudley said. "I learned so much. I enjoyed every minute in Winston-Salem. This is like going home for me."

The Canes continue their search for a GM and a head coach to replace Bill Peters, although Dundon said there is no firm timetable for getting the hires made.

"I think we'll be in pretty good shape in the next month," Dundon said.

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The Athletic / Conn Smythe WATCH: David Pastrnak, Marc-André Fleury lead the way so far

By Dom Luszczyszyn May 1, 2018 4

The NHL is now in the thick of Round 2 and already some front-runners have emerged for the Conn Smythe Trophy thanks to some truly remarkable performances. It's perhaps a tad early to even think about the playoff MVP when there are still eight teams vying for the Stanley Cup, but the journey to that goal is an interesting one for the individual players. That's why it's worth documenting now to shine a light on the players doing damage and keep tabs on their progression toward the Cup.

We'll be doing just that once per round, looking at the MVP contenders from an analytical and probabilistic viewpoint. Probabilistic is the key word there. A player may be a one man show, leading the league in points during the playoffs, but that matters less if the team he's on is less likely to win the Stanley Cup. That means a team's Stanley Cup probabilities (updated daily here, along with a new Conn Smythe Watch chart) should factor into the equation.

With all that in mind, here are the current top contenders for the Conn Smythe Trophy.

1. David Pastrnak

Game Score: 17.1 (1st)

Stanley Cup Probability: 17.2% (2nd)

There's one thing that's become clear almost midway through the second round: the Bruins top line simply isn't fair. It seems like the trio is going off every game and simply can't be stopped, running amok over the elite teams of the Atlantic just for fun. Put any one of them here in this spot and it's probably a fair assessment for a line that's continuously leading their team to victory, a team that looks likely to go all the way this season.

But if we had to pick one right now, it has to be Pastrnak who is leading all postseason players in points with 18. In fact, only three other players have as many points as he has assists right now, and one of them is on his line. Only six players in the entirety of last year's playoffs had 18 or more points. The year before, Sidney Crosby won the Conn Smythe with



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just one more point (in 15 more games!) than Pastrnak already has. Might as well start pencilling him in for the trophy now.

What he's done through his team's first nine games is insane and up there with some all-time greats. Most impressive for Pastrnak though, is how he's been able to singlehandedly take over games, starting the first round with a three-point game, starting the second round with a four-point game, and throwing in a six-point effort in between for good measure.

He's been absolutely dominant so far and has showcased that he's not just a product of who he plays with, two of the league's best forwards, he's elite in his own right. Right now he's been the best of the bunch which is saying a lot considering how good Patrice Bergeron and Brad Marchand have been.

### 2. Marc-André Fleury

Game Score: 16.7 (2nd)

Stanley Cup Probability: 11.8% (6th)

When you read "one man show" in the intro paragraph, a name flashed in your mind, and I'm betting it was Fleury's. In fairness, William Karlsson and Jonathan Marchessault have been dynamite too with an elite possession rating to boot, but no one through the team's first seven games compares in value to Fleury, who has been utterly unbeatable, allowing just 10 goals in his first seven games. That's while facing over 36 shots per game and is good for a .960 save percentage. So yeah, not bad. Perhaps more incredible though is that only three of those goals were allowed at 5-on-5, stopping over 98 per cent (!) of shots thrown at him.

Fleury has been remarkable and considering his past playoff reputation, this spectacular run couldn't be happening to a better guy. With him, it's not just the amount of saves that are impressive, it's how and when he's making them. Case in point, Monday night's show-stopping overtime glove save on Logan Couture from the slot off a behind-the-net pass. That's one of the toughest situations for a goalie to face in hockey and Fleury came up huge, just as he has all season and now all playoffs, too.

Fleury has been, without a doubt, the best player in this postseason so far and the fact that he's second here despite his team being sixth most likely to win is a testament to that. I'm still not sure Vegas can pull this inaugural Stanley Cup off – it'll be interesting to see how the team fares against a much stronger Central team – but the Golden Knights are one win closer than any other team right now and if they do it'll be one of the greatest stories in sports history, one that was made entirely possible by the heroics of Fleury.

### 3. Sidney Crosby

Game Score: 15.4 (4th)

Stanley Cup Probability: 12.4% (5th)

Aside from Pastrnak, Crosby has been the most impressive skater during the playoffs so far, dominating games in ways we haven't seen in a while from him – certainly not during the regular season where he was pedestrian by his own very lofty standards. His running mate, Jake Guentzel, actually has a slightly higher Game Score (15.5), but we all know who's running the show here. Crosby is playing at a near two-point-per-game pace which is absurd to even think about and has been a 5-on-5 juggernaut. The Penguins have outscored their opponents by 10 with Crosby on the ice in eight games and while goal differential is not a great way to measure a player's contributions, it still says something about Crosby's playoff dominance. It's regression to the mean after a regular season where he struggled to do the same, and it's coming at the most important time of the season.

Crosby, owner of the last two Conn Smythes, is the runaway favourite as long as Pittsburgh wins and a third straight playoff MVP title would be enormous for his legacy. No player has ever done it. The only thing holding him back is the odds of Pittsburgh completing the three-peat, a feat not matched in over three decades. The Penguins haven't been at

their best against the Capitals yet and would be likely underdogs against whichever team comes out of the Atlantic (and Central if they manage to get that far).

### 4. Mark Scheifele

Game Score: 10.7 (12th)

Stanley Cup Probability: 17.9% (1st)

Right now, the team most likely to win it all is the Winnipeg Jets, but no one on the team has really performed at the level of some of the other postseason standouts. Scheifele is closest, but even he falls out of the top 10 by Game Score at the moment, though part of that is a lower amount of games played. The Jets are a deep team too, so their MVP candidate can very well change throughout the playoffs.

Right now it's Scheifele, who leads all players with eight goals and has done it in just seven games and on just 18 shots. He's been rather fortunate, but that's exactly what a team needs to go the distance. It's actually kind of absurd how ridiculous his goal-scoring is at the moment. His eight goals represent one-third of Winnipeg's entire production so far, which obviously leads the playoffs. He's got five more goals than the next closest Jet, Brandon Tanev, the largest lead on any team right now.

His assist totals are obviously low, but who cares when he seems to be the only one able to consistently put the puck in the net. Both those helpers were primary and his 10 primary points rank fourth behind Pastrnak, Crosby and Guentzel.

### 5. Filip Forsberg

Game Score: 10.5 (13th)

Stanley Cup Probability: 15.7% (3rd)

If it's not the Jets representing the West for the Stanley Cup, then it'll probably be the Predators. Like Winnipeg, Nashville is also a deep team without a player that has soared to the heights that some other superstars have this postseason. The Mattias Ekholm and P.K. Subban pairing is worth mentioning given how the duo has tilted the ice these playoffs so far, but for now the best Nashville has to offer has to be their unsung star, Filip Forsberg.

Forsberg rarely gets the credit he deserves as one of the game's best forwards, even after a season where he scored at a 78 point pace, but a big postseason run can get him there. So far he's delivered, taking more shots than any player not named Alex Ovechkin and scoring nine points in eight games to lead all Predators. That may not seem all that impressive, but it is worth noting that all nine of those points have been primary points. Right now he's tied with seven other players for 12th in points, but is tied for fifth in primary points with Ovechkin and Nikita Kucherov.

He's been a major catalyst on every goal he's been in on which is no surprise since he's a major catalyst of Nashville's offence. The Predators are big Stanley Cup contenders right now which means someone has to be in the Conn Smythe conversation from their team. Right now that honour belongs to Forsberg.

### Other Candidates

**Nikita Kucherov:** One of three 100-point scorers from this season torched the Devils through five games, scoring 10 points, but has been a no-show in Round 2 so far. He's the best bet from the Lightning right now, but needs to be better against Boston for the team to get through.

**Alex Ovechkin:** His seven goals puts him in a tie for second in the playoffs, he leads everyone in shots by seven with 41 and his play at 5-on-5 has been great, with Washington out-shooting opponents by 38 with him on the ice. The only reason not to like Ovechkin is his team as Washington currently has the second-lowest odds of winning a Cup.

**Martin Jones:** After a loss Monday night, San Jose's chances of winning the Cup are the lowest of any team at 4.7 per cent. Jones was sterling



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through the opening round, but has faltered a bit against Vegas, stopping just 84 per cent of shots faced. Yikes.

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The Athletic / Duhatschek: William Karlsson and the 'Golden Misfits' keep finding ways to win

By Eric Duhatschek May 1, 2018 7

SAN JOSE, Calif. – About 20 minutes after the Vegas Golden Knights' 4-3 overtime win over the San Jose Sharks, James Neal was sitting in his locker stall in the jam-packed dressing room. It was late on a Monday night, and the crowd around Neal had dissipated to just one. Most everyone else had shifted a few feet over to where his teammate William Karlsson was holding court.

Moments earlier, Karlsson had ended a wonderfully played and highly entertaining third game of their Western Conference semifinal by scoring the game-winner on a rising shot that soared past the blocker hand of Sharks' goaltender Martin Jones, and was set up on a neat feed by Neal. Now Neal and Karlsson don't usually play together – Karlsson centers Vegas's top line with Jonathan Marchessault and Reilly Smith while Neal usually flanks Erik Haula and a revolving cast on the second line.

Inquiring minds wanted to know ...

"What's he doing out there?" said Neal, with a laugh. Well, since you brought it up. "I hadn't changed. Marchy made a good play to me in the middle there and then I was just buying time for Karly to get on his horse. I mean, he's got great speed, so I was just waiting, waiting, waiting until I could lay it over there. But you've got to be able to finish it – and what a great shot. A rocket."

It turned out to be just the thing the Golden Knights needed to turn the game their way – and put them ahead 2-1 in the series, with Game 4 set for Wednesday night here in San Jose.

Here are five takeaways from what may turn out to be the swing game of the series:

1. The game within the game was contested between the respective teams' top lines, and sadly for the Sharks, for the third game in a row, they were obliged to deploy multiple different versions of theirs. It the opener, it was Joe Pavelski, between Evander Kane and Joonas Donskoi. But Kane was suspended for Game 2, so Timo Meier moved up into his spot. For Game 3, Kane returned but Donskoi was unable to play because of a lower-body injury, so Pavelski switched to the wing and Chris Tierney moved into the middle on the top line to start. Complicated – and it got even more so after the Sharks fell behind, when coach Peter DeBoer determined it was necessary to switch it around, and eventually loaded the top line with his big three – Logan Couture, Pavelski and Kane. They were a force when they were together and probably should have won it in OT, except for a magnificent glove save made by Golden Knights' goaltender Marc-André Fleury on Couture about three minutes in. Pure robbery.

"That save he made (on Couture), he's won three Stanley Cups for a reason," said Neal. "In pressure situations, going into overtime, he's the first guy that talks in the room and says, 'have fun with it and enjoy it and go out there and play.' That goes a long way when he says stuff like that."

2. Kane had an immediate impact upon his return. With the Sharks on the ropes and trailing by two, he made a shot that rivaled Karlsson's overtime winner, zipping past Fleury's glove side to draw San Jose closer. Kane finished with five shots and six hits in 23:30 of action, second-most among Sharks' forwards, behind only Pavelski. Among the three, Pavelski, Couture and Kane produced 18 shots in all. Overall, the Sharks dominated the first 27 minutes of the game, and held a 27-11 edge on the shot clock, but only a 1-0 lead when they ran into penalty problems in the middle of the second period. Of note was the fact that Vegas, guilty of taking a series of undisciplined penalties in the Game 2 loss, turned the other cheek at that critical juncture of the game – and ultimately capitalized on the ensuing power-play opportunities to flip the momentum the other way.

"We need to find a way to get the lead," said DeBoer. "We're chasing the game the whole series. Even when we have a quick start, Fleury's shutting the door and they're finding a way to hang around the game until they get it going."

3. Karlsson's ability to think the game may be the most underrated part of how he plays. On the Golden Knights' third goal, by Smith, which should have been the back breaker, Karlsson made this subtle, highly skilled play. After controlling the puck on a cycle in the Sharks' zone, Marchessault whirled and fired a shot that was going wide, until Karlsson stuck the blade of his stick out and redirected the puck right across the crease to the open Smith. Smith didn't get much on his backhand, but he didn't need to because Jones didn't have anywhere near enough time to get over to cover the far side. Said Smith: "There are times this year when I think he has eyes in the back of his head and that was just another one."

"He's highly, highly skilled in his hockey sense," added Neal. "The little plays he makes, if you watch him in our D zone, and the poise with which he handles the puck – the little bump plays he makes to guys, he sees the game really well. And he has a great scoring touch too, so he knows how to bury it. I mean, he showed you that all year. He's a special player. We're happy to have him."

4. Publicly, Karlsson is known by the nickname Wild Bill, which was hung on him during his Anaheim Ducks' days because he was the opposite of that – a quiet and sane young man, who was traded away to the Columbus Blue Jackets for James Wisniewski back in March of 2015. Internally, the Golden Knights just call him Karly, which is par for the hockey nickname course.

But Karlsson provided a little new intel Monday night – that the players refer to themselves as "the Golden Misfits." Is Karlsson the leader of the Golden Misfits? "I wish," he said. "There were some other Golden Misfits leaders. I just try to blend in."

5. A lot of people have learned a lot about Karlsson since October when he effectively took over as the team's No. 1 center when their experiment with Russian Vadim Shipachyov came to a quick end. But did Neal know much about Karlsson before they became teammates?

"Nothing," Neal said. "From talking to a few guys like (Nick) Foligno, he said he's a really good player, he just didn't get a chance. You could say that about a lot of guys here. I'm sure they'd like to have him back."

Probably not going to happen though.

The Athletic LOADED: 05.02.2018

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The Athletic / Sources: Three more names join Paul Fenton as candidates for Wild GM job



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By Michael Russo May 1, 2018 20

While Paul Fenton is still considered by many in NHL circles as the frontrunner to eventually become the third general manager in Minnesota Wild history, owner Craig Leipold appears to be conducting a wide-ranging search.

According to multiple sources, The Athletic has learned former Toronto Maple Leafs GM John Ferguson Jr. spent Tuesday in Minnesota interviewing with Leipold and team president Matt Majka. On Wednesday, former Pittsburgh Penguins assistant GM and current New Jersey Devils assistant GM Tom Fitzgerald is expected to be in the Twin Cities to meet with Leipold and Majka, sources tell The Athletic.

Last Wednesday, the Athletic reported that Fenton, the longtime Nashville Predators assistant GM, was the first candidate to be interviewed. The next day, Columbus Blue Jackets assistant GM Bill Zito was in Minnesota for an interview, The Athletic's Pierre LeBrun reported.

Other quality candidates include former Los Angeles Kings and San Jose Sharks GM Dean Lombardi, Pittsburgh Penguins assistant GM Bill Guerin and Toronto Maple Leafs assistant GM Kyle Dubas. It's unclear if the Wild have contacted Lombardi, but it's believed they planned to call the Penguins to ask permission to speak with Guerin. Guerin, however, has not yet been in town to interview, sources say.

As for Dubas, it's unclear if the Wild have shown interest, but he's a frontrunner to replace Lou Lamoriello as Toronto's GM. There is speculation by some that former Wild GM Chuck Fletcher, the son of former Maple Leafs GM Cliff Fletcher, could be in the mix there.

Lamoriello, for now, will remain in Toronto in an advisory role, but most feel he's destined for the Islanders in a similar role.

Out of respect for the process, Leipold and Majka have declined comment on the GM search.

Ferguson, 50, managed the Maple Leafs from 2003-08 and is the current executive director of player personnel for the Boston Bruins and GM of the AHL Providence Bruins.

John Ferguson

Fitzgerald, 49, played 1,097 NHL games and knows Leipold from when he was the first captain in Predators history. Fitzgerald scored the Game 7-winning goal in the 1996 Eastern Conference final for the Florida Panthers and won a Stanley Cup in 2009 as a Penguins executive.

Zito, 53, is a former agent and current GM of Team USA's world championship team.

A timeline to name Chuck Fletcher's replacement is unclear, but Leipold is to have hip surgery later this month and the Wild have scouting meetings slated for May 14. So, one could assume Leipold will want somebody in place beforehand to run those meetings and make decisions on the future of acting GM Brent Flahr and the scouting staff.

It's business as usual currently for Flahr, Fletcher's right-hand man since July 2009. In the past week, he has signed prospect Mason Shaw and re-signed minor-leaguer Sam Anas.

The Athletic has learned that Fletcher made sure to take care of his colleagues in the hockey operations department. It's now believed that last summer Fletcher extended the contracts of most people in his department through 2018-19 so, unlike him, they'd have security beyond this season. The majority of the scouting staff's contracts do end June 30.

It was a classy move by Fletcher, but Leipold could suddenly be on the hook for a lot of money if the new GM plans to overhaul hockey ops.

At this point, it still feels like Fenton's job to lose.

Fenton, 58, knows Leipold well and has been instrumental in the Predators' drafting, developing and hockey ops decisions for 18 years. As Sportsnet's Jeff Marek tweeted Tuesday, The Athletic has also been told that if Fenton is hired by the Wild, he could bring with him longtime mentor Jack Ferreira, 73, in a possible advisory role. Ferreira, the former North Stars, Sharks and Mighty Ducks of Anaheim GM, is in the final year of his contract as Rob Blake's special assistant in Los Angeles.

Out of respect for Predators GM David Poile, Leipold may be bidding time to hire Fenton until the Predators' second-round series with Winnipeg is complete. While Fletcher did leave Pittsburgh for Minnesota in the middle of the 2009 Eastern Conference final, Poile has voiced public concern about potential distractions during the playoffs.

By talking to other GM candidates, Leipold, at a minimum, can at least ascertain outside opinions regarding the makeup of the Wild.

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1094658 Websites

The Athletic / Why don't NHLers usually offer opinions on officiating or discipline?

By Seth Rorabaugh May 1, 2018 39

Following Game 2 of the Penguins' second-round series with the Capitals, Pittsburgh coach Mike Sullivan was visibly furious.

A few hours after seeing Brian Dumoulin, arguably his best defensive defenseman, leave the contest due to an unpenalized check to the head from Capitals right winger Tom Wilson, Sullivan was asked if he had an opinion on the hit.

"Yes," Sullivan said curtly with a clenched jaw.

In an ensuing query, he was asked if he would share that opinion.

"No."

Sullivan's restraint in offering any sentiment on how the on-ice officials reacted to Wilson's hit is emblematic of how most NHLers — players, coaches or general managers — usually react when asked about matters involving discipline. While NHLers often have plenty to say on the subject off the record, they will usually avoid any sort of public comment when it comes to on- or off-ice officials.

"It's not for me to say," Dumoulin said Monday when asked about the NHL's lack of discipline for Wilson. "I'm not the one making decisions like that."

"It's not for me to comment on," Jim Rutherford told The Athletic's Josh Yohe Monday, as well. "They (the NHL) have a criteria that they use based on situations like this. I think they use the criteria properly."

In contrast, the NFL, the only other of the four major North American professional sports leagues with a greater level of physical contact than the NHL, often sees players lambast officials.

After Steelers wide receiver JuJu Smith-Schuster was suspended for a violent hit in December, safety Mike Mitchell erupted in a tirade:

Later that month, Smith-Schuster termed a confusing decision by officials to nullify a would-be touchdown catch by tight end Jesse James against the Patriots as "a bitch-ass call by the refs."

Why are NHLers usually so reluctant to offer an opinion or to speak out on officiating or off-ice discipline?



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Following their morning skates Tuesday at PPG Paints Arena, five members of the Penguins and Capitals were asked that question.

Derick Brassard, Penguins center: "Players in general, when the game ends, you kind of move on from everything. It is what it is. Those are the things you can't really control in your game or what the refs are calling or what the league is deciding. You just go from there. You have to live with it. Basically, they make the decision and we just play."

Jay Beagle, Capitals center: "It's because you're not really in control. There's no point in beating your head over something you have no control over. It's kind of the same as any kind of job. If your boss is making decisions or a higher-up makes a decision, it's the same thing. You can't do anything about it. So there's no point in worrying about it. You let someone else do that job. That's what they're assigned to do. That's why there's no point in trying to rack your brain on how they make decisions and stuff."

Tom Kuhnhackl, Penguins right winger: "There's nothing to say to it. Whatever they decide on, you can't change it. There's things you can control and there's things you can't control. That's obviously one you can't. So you just got to accept whatever the decision is."

Alex Chiasson, Capitals right winger: "It's a really small margin for calls and all that. I know for myself, if you put yourself in that position with those guys with some of the calls and some of the decisions they have to make, it's not always easy. It's such a small margin now. Some of the offsides, some of the calls are like half an inch. A tiny error. They're trying to make the game just as fair for everyone. There's still a little bit of a gray area where it's hard to deal with. As for me, I have a lot of respect for those guys. They've got to make those calls in those tight moments."

Olli Maatta, Penguins defenseman: "My opinion is it's not an easy job either. They don't talk about us making mistakes. We don't talk about them making mistakes. It happens. It's just the way it is. We're all humans. They're not coming to us and tell us when we turn the puck over."

Brooks Orpik, Capitals defenseman: "Guys get really emotional during games. There's probably exchanges guys have with referees that are probably more emotionally driven and they probably regret it later on. At the end of the day, they're (officials) all human just like the rest of us and they probably make a lot less mistakes than we make. It's the same with the discipline and the suspensions. Everybody thinks they can do the job better than who is in place. I honestly don't know why anyone would want the job because no one seems happy with what they do."

Jamie Oleksiak, Penguins defenseman: "It's hard to say. Everyone is different. Personally, you don't want to get sucked into things like that too much. ... The more you dwell on it, the more it sits there."

Devante Smith-Pelly, Capitals right winger: "Maybe losing some money has something to do with it. Maybe also, the refs, I'm sure they all want to stay together and coming out and blatantly criticizing a ref might piss off another ref. In the playoffs, stuff like that is important. I think that is one of the bigger reasons."

Chad Ruhwedel, Penguins defenseman: "That's just the way it will probably stay. The league will do what they need to do and make their own decisions. There's nothing good that can come from (speaking out on) it. So they just keep quiet and let the league make their decisions."

Chandler Stephenson, Capitals center: "It's a tough thing because everybody is going to have their own opinion. If a player does something that they maybe they don't think is the right call and the ref calls it, that's not really the player's choice. It's the official. That's their job. I'm sure all the officials you talk to, if they make the right call, they're going to admit it. They're honest guys and just trying to do the best they can."

Morning skate notes

– The Penguins held an optional morning skate. Dumoulin, Carl Hagelin and Evgeni Malkin each participated. Sullivan labeled their availability as a "game-time decision."

"It was another good skate out there," Dumoulin said. "It was good to get a little contact in with (assistant coach Sergei Gonchar) at the end. Hopefully, I can go tonight, but we'll let the coach decide that."

"It was good to go out there and take a hit from (Gonchar) and to kind of go through that a little bit."

Malkin and Hagelin did not speak with the media.

While the status of all three of the players involved won't be official until the NHL releases lineups, Dumoulin and Malkin appear safe bets to play as they were off the ice fairly early. In contrast, Hagelin was on the ice significantly later along with the likes of Matt Hunwick and Casey DeSmith.

– The Capitals had a full morning skate. Their lines and pairings were:

– Capitals left winger Alex Ovechkin had a quip on any potential response from the Penguins:

"We're ready. I think we're bigger than them."

The Athletic LOADED: 05.02.2018

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The Athletic / The Brayden Point line flipped the script for Lightning in Game 2 win over Bruins

By Joe Smith May 1, 2018 9

TAMPA, Fla. — The day after their line was dominated by Boston's Patrice Bergeron-led trio, Lightning forwards Tyler Johnson, Ondrej Palat and Brayden Point held a meeting Sunday at the Ice Sports Forum.

Coach Jon Cooper had just challenged them publicly, saying they weren't hard enough to play against, then put the entire team through a training-camp style, hour-long practice. Afterward, Point, Johnson and Palat sat down together and watched film of their shifts.

It wasn't pretty. They were too loose defensively. Soft, at times. Not enough backcheck.

"No one was happy," Point said.

"We realized it was only Game 1," Johnson said. "We had to turn the page."

"We were confident we could do a better job," Palat said.

Boy, did they.

Point, two days after being an unlucky minus-5, racked up four points, including the game-sealing empty-netter in the Lightning's 4-2 victory at Amalie Arena. The series is now tied at one heading into Wednesday's Game 3 in Boston. Johnson lived up to his big-game reputation with a goal and a 63 percent clip in the faceoff circle. Palat was the line's unsung engine, with the game-winning goal.

Just like Saturday, they started the game matched up against the Bergeron line. Cooper said he never considered making a switch, even after the Bruins' top line racked up 11 points in Game 1.

"I've watched that line check the best lines in the league all year," Cooper said. "There was no reason to sit here after one (bad) game and panic and say, 'They can't do it.' We know they can do it. We had faith in them and I thought they were outstanding (Monday)."



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"Trust me. If there was any talk of pulling them off, I think those three guys would march into my room and say, 'What are you doing?'"

Of course, with the series shifting to Boston for the next two games, the Bruins will have the benefit of the last line change. So coach Bruce Cassidy can steer Bergeron, Brad Marchand and David Pastrnak away from Point's line, if he chooses.

But in a must-win Game 2, the Lightning's shutdown line delivered, and it might have saved the season. Tampa Bay dominated the first period, holding Boston without a shot for the first 14 minutes. The Lightning peppered Tuukka Rask with chances, but could only muster one goal (a Yanni Gourde power play tally midway through the period).

When Bruins rookie defenseman Charlie McAvoy tied the game late in the first, a goal set up on the rush by Marchand and Bergeron, the sold-out building went silent. Fans probably panicked. Tampa Bay went 10 minutes over the two periods without a shot on goal.

But midway through the second, Johnson gave the Lightning the lead for good. It was a fitting goal that illustrated the line's strengths.

Pastrnak carried the puck down the right side deep into the Lightning zone. Palat, having noticed on film his line hadn't back-pressured enough, hustled back to pick off a Pastrnak centering pass to a streaking Bergeron in the high slot.

"A hell of a play," Fox Sports Sun color analyst Brian Engblom said. "It could have been a two-goal swing."

Palat caromed the puck off the side boards up to the neutral zone. He admits he didn't know who the pass was exactly intended for.

"I knew somebody was behind me," Palat said, smiling. "And I was pretty gassed too, so I fired it. Lucky enough, Pointer gets it."

Point won a footrace with the Bruins' Matt Grzelcyk. Point, a second-year-pro, is one of the league's fastest skaters, barely losing to Connor McDavid in the All-Star skills competition. Point wasn't an elite skater when he was picked in the third round in 2014, but he made a tremendous turnaround in that area thanks to working with skating coach Barb Underhill.

Point was on the ice for five Bruins goals in Game 1, but was unlucky; Cooper said they didn't have him as causing a scoring chance against the entire game. Still, minus-5 stings.

After collecting Palat's clearing attempt, Point stopped on a dime, then sent a perfect pass in the slot to a streaking Johnson.

"He's a special player," Johnson said of Point. "When big games come, special players take over, and he did that."

You could say the same about Johnson. Johnson blamed himself for the Bruins' critical fourth goal in Game 1, having lost Marchand in front of the net. "He took it personally," Cooper said. "And he really elevated his game."

Johnson had a team-high five shots. He went 12-for-19 in the dot. He was flying all over the ice.

And on the go-ahead goal, Johnson flipped a rolling puck past a confused Rask. It was his 24th career playoff goal, tying him with Vincent Lecavalier for third-most in team history. Rask said he guessed Johnson would shoot blocker side. Johnson went glove.

"He went the wrong way," Johnson said. "And it went in."

Palat scored on a wicked wrist shot with six minutes to go, a goal that Tampa Bay ended up needing when Torey Krug snuck in a bad-angled shot two minutes later. Cooper was pumped to see Palat rewarded for a ton of small plays he makes behind the scenes.

"An unsung hero," Cooper said. "He had a big opportunity at the end of the second period in Game 1 and (didn't score). I know he wanted retribution and he got it. He does so many of the things that often times

don't turn up on the scoresheet. And when he does get the goal, you're fired up for him."

Speaking of fired up, look at Point's celebration on his empty-netter. Point carried the puck out of harm's way, zig-zagged around a couple Bruins through the neutral zone. Bergeron dove desperately at Point's feet, slashing at his ankles.

As Point fell to one knee, he flipped a shot from around the blueline into the empty net. He gave an emphatic fist pump and the crowd went nuts.

"Clearly, he wasn't a minus-5 (Monday)," Cooper said.

The shutdown line got its swagger back, bringing the Lightning back into the series.

"We're a confident line," Johnson said. "Last game wasn't our best game, obviously. We needed a bounce back. We needed an answer. And I thought we did that."

The Athletic LOADED: 05.02.2018

1094660 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Jets deliver another classic performance in pleasing series with Predators

Mark Spector | @sportsnetspec May 2, 2018, 1:22 AM

WINNIPEG — "Fun' is a strong word."

The eternally focused Blake Wheeler was trying to answer a question that could have come from the lips of any fan across Canada lucky enough to have checked into Winnipeg-Nashville early enough, from the array of sporting spectacles on display Tuesday evening.

"Isn't this more fun, 5-4 or 7-4 hockey, compared to traditional 2-1 playoff hockey?" Wheeler was asked.

But "fun" and being the captain of the hockey team that has captivated this Manitoba capital — and soon, if not already, an entire hockey country — might be mutually exclusive. The pressure here, it's got to be immense.

Winnipeg is a one-horse town, and Wheeler is the sheriff. He's just happy to win here, regardless of the score.

"It's better hockey," he finally allowed. "As great as a 2-1 or 3-2 win feels ... people want to see scoring chances. People want to see goals. Obviously coaches want to see less goals against, but what's the entertainment value in that?"

No matter how this Round 2 series turns out, this was a night they'll never forget here in Winnipeg. It is the first second-round NHL playoff game this city has ever seen where the opponents didn't include Wayne Gretzky and Mark Messier in their primes.

It's a Jets team you can believe in now, but one that came out nervous in the first period, with shaky goaltending from Connor Hellebuyck that we'd not seen this spring. The score was 3-0. The Nashville Predators were cool, solid.

"Paul (head coach Maurice) just came in here and told us, 'Go play hockey,'" said defenceman Jacob Trouba of the first intermission. "Don't worry about everything around (town) with what's going on with the playoffs, and coming home. Play loose, have fun.' That's what we did."



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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This was a Super Tuesday that snuck up on a Canadian couch dweller. The Jays were playing on Sportsnet, the Penguins and Capitals were going at it on another channel, and the Raptors opened against Cleveland.

As the evening wore on, Caps-Pens ramped up to an Ovechkin winner, the Raps went to overtime, and as folks wore out the buttons on the remote, the Jets came out in the second period to become the main event on a fulsome Tuesday night menu.

This is a building that I will one day bill for my hearing aids; a room full of hockey-loving Canadians who watched that show they put on down at Bridgestone Arena in Nashville, then said to Preds fans, "Hold our beer."

"I don't think you can say they have no impact on the game, that's for sure," said Trouba.

The Jets exploded for four second-period goals — three in 2:51 — and found the perfect way to protect a shaky Hellebuyck, not allowing a Nashville shot for 11:11 in the second period. By the time this game was over the Predators were unravelling with three minors in the final 8:06, including a Billy Smith-like slash by their leader, Pekka Rinne, who went way out of character after the game when his interview with the Finnish scribes was peppered with English swear words.

Rinne was rattled. The Jets bent. The Preds broke.

And the town blew up.

"I think you drink it in," said Trouba, asked if the Jets players should be enjoying the atmosphere in and outside the rink here. "It's impossible to go around here (and block it out). You drive home, every business has some sign on it about the team."

This is a guy who wanted out of town not too long ago, an American kid who wanted to go home.

Now? Listen to this:

"It's not like you get this everywhere," Trouba marvelled. "You're going to look back on this when you're old and it's going to be a pretty good memory. I think you should enjoy it."

We all watched those awful New Jersey teams in the '90s that won their Cups by trapping the game to within an inch of its life, and I covered the Los Angeles Kings of 2012. There, you'd suit up at the hotel, hop in your rental and drive to the rink, all the while absolutely sure you would be treated to a 2-1 game.

On a good night, the Kings gave you an empty-netter for 3-1.

These Jets? They'll beat you from in front, they'll beat you from behind, they'll beat you 2-1 and, or they'll smoke you 7-4.

And they're doing it all in a Canadian town that never got anything but a kick in the teeth from the hockey gods, outside a couple of Avco Cups back in their World Hockey Association days.

There is something here this spring, both on the ice and in the streets of a town that loves its club no less than anyone Montrealer, Canucks fan, or long suffering Leafs fan. This could be one wild ride, one that Wheeler isn't ready to celebrate quite yet.

"It's not our place to celebrate right now. We've got a lot of work ahead of us," Wheeler said of the Jets players. "What we're trying to do is reward our fan base who have stuck with us for seven years. I mean, this is our second playoff appearance in seven years, and I haven't seen an empty seat in the house in seven years.

"So, it's for them to celebrate. Not for us. We'll just feed off of the energy they give us. You know, shoot ... if we can get 50,000 people in the streets? How special is that?"

It's special. Maybe even more special than we thought it could be.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 05.02.2018

1094661 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Jets-Predators Notebook: Ehlers, Chiarot react to Byfuglien's punch

Mark Spector and Luke Fox

WINNIPEG — The video of Dustin Byfuglien celebrating a late Winnipeg Jets goal by punching his teammates in the face went viral after Game 2. He literally clocks Nikolaj Ehlers and Ben Chiarot.

Had Toronto seen the clip they may have sent Ehlers for concussion protocol.

"It was actually pretty hard. That's just the way Buff is," said Ehlers, who was shown the clip by teammate Patrik Laine. "He was punching everyone in the face. Next time I'll be more careful."

Actually, Ehlers did better in his only NHL scrap, back in 2016 against Colorado's Tyson Barrie. Ironically, Chiarot's last scrap was against another teammate — when he and Blake Wheeler went at it in a practice late in the season.

"Punching guys in the face? That doesn't surprise me with that guy," Chiarot said of Big Buff. "You never know what to expect from him. He's crazy, man. He does wild stuff like that all the time. That's just him. You have to be on your toes around him. You never know what he's going to do."

What is the craziest thing he has seen Byfuglien do?

Chiarot: "I can't tell you."

Speaking of Ehlers, after a 29-goal regular season, the speedy Dane is still seeking his first career playoff goal. "I'd like to think that I am saving them for later," he joked.

He and Kyle Connor, who scored 31 goals this season, represent 60 tucks in the regular season, but so far nada in the playoffs.

"I can't speak for K.C., but everyone likes scoring goals. Everyone loves winning games," Ehlers said. "What we're going through now is all about winning games, and playing for each other. If I can play a good game, not score, and we still win? So what? I'd rather have the win, than have one goal and lose. I'm OK with what's going on right now."

After a pair of 6-5 encounters during the regular season, this series broke open with a 5-4 Preds OT win in Game 2.

There was a time when coaches employed systems that guaranteed 2-1 or 3-2 hockey. But today, the style played by these two teams has caused coaches to lose control of the score, somewhat. Which is a good thing.

"I think it has, for sure," said Nashville defenceman Mattias Ekholm. "You see the young guys coming into the league, whether it's (Connor) McDavid or (Auston) Mathews or whoever. All these defencemen who, back in the day, would stand and protect their own net and use their stick a lot? They're getting out of the league.

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"You need to be able to move your boots — defend speed and not physicality every time. When you're trying to hit everyone, its tough ... when they're coming full speed at you," Ekholm said. "We have a fast



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team that wants to play a fast brand of hockey. More goals is more fun, for sure."

Could you imagine a Bryan Marchment or Scott Stevens stepping up in the neutral zone in 2018, the way those two fearsome hitters used to do in the '90s? Either they'd miss completely, or careers would end.

Nashville coach Peter Laviolette has seen the sea change. Gone are the days of Jacques Lemaire's boring trap, when forecheckers would not stray past the offensive blue line and everyone lined up in the neutral zone.

"I can tell you," Laviolette said. "We want to put the pedal down."

Who would've thought super sniper Brandon Tanev would be outscoring a plug like Patrik Laine (3-2) through seven games in the Jets' post-season?

Laine, a 44-goal man and Rocket Richard Trophy threat in the regular season, hasn't found the back of the net since Game 2 versus Minnesota, back on April 13.

"My last game, I liked it a lot. I think I was pretty good. Our whole line, we were able to create a lot of scoring chances but just couldn't finish," Laine said.

Laine was gifted a golden opportunity in Game 2, a clear break on Pekka Rinne, with whom he's played a few charity tournaments in their native Finland. He hit a post so hard, our ears hurt.

"It's frustrating because I can't hit the net. From that kind of chance, it should always be a goal. It's so close and nobody's in front of me," Laine lamented. "It takes maybe 30 seconds for me to get over it."

So you don't think about it when you're trying to fall asleep at night?

"Nah, I got more things to worry about. All the things that happen here, they stay here. I'm not taking them home with me."

Tuesday marks a showdown between the NHL's best home team and its best road squad. Including playoffs, the Jets are a remarkable 35-7-2 at Bell MTS Place, while the Predators are 27-10-7 after waking up in a hotel.

"Getting on the road is always fun as a team. You go out to dinner, there's not really any distractions. You're there for hockey. You get up and treat it as business as usual," explained Predators centre Nick Bonino. "We've got four lines that can really go and don't worry about matchups or anything. We just play and have had some good results."

The outdoor viewing party in downtown Winnipeg continues to expand. Expected attendance for Game 3's party is 20,000 — up from the 15,000 capacity that was exceeded for the Jets' series-clincher over the Wild in Round 1.

"When Patty Laine comes down and cracks that pipe from the post, we're going to get a bounce of energy that we don't get being on the road," coach Paul Maurice said.

"It is this building. The fans are loud. They're wired to the game. It's not the music, it's not the stuff that happens on the TV timeouts that wires them up; it's the game and the players. When we play that aggressive game and get chances, there's more energy and it feels different on the other team's bench. It's just a really good home building."

Connor Hellebuyck was asked how close he was to making a glove save on Kevin Fiala's Game 2 double-OT winner.

"Would you believe me if I said 99 per cent?" he said. "It was practically in my glove. It just happened to roll up and over. I guess we have to put it behind us and move on. Two home games is going to be huge for us."

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Sportsnet.ca / Alex Ovechkin's 'world-class goal' gives Capitals edge over Penguins

Kristina Rutherford | @KrRutherford May 2, 2018, 12:59 AM

PITTSBURGH — Alex Ovechkin yelled while he bounded over to the boards — running as he skated, really — and then No. 8 threw himself at the glass, to the delight of almost nobody who saw his game-winning goal live, including the Penguins fans in the front row who flipped Ovechkin the bird.

Boy oh boy, what a series we have on our hands. It's 2-1 Capitals over the two-time defending champions from Pittsburgh, and Game 3 was one for the ages.

Ovechkin's game-winner with 1:07 to go in the third saw him hit the post and then bat his own rebound in, before a celebration that went on while more than a few fans showed themselves out of PPG Paints Arena, their yellow rally towels nowhere in sight.

"World-class goal, obviously," as Washington's head coach, Barry Trotz, put it, and it really was a fitting end to a heck of a game.

Tom Wilson continued to play the role of the villain, Jake Guentzel continued to play the role of the high-scorer, Zach Aston-Reese threw one of his gloves at Wilson's face, Evgeni Malkin looked like he hadn't missed a second of action in his return after three games on the shelf, and then just when you thought this was going to overtime, Ovechkin made sure it didn't.

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Minutes later, the author of the Penguins' defeat stood there in the visitor's dressing room in his sweaty red shirt and wearing his red and grey patterned tights with a rip in the left knee, his hands on his hips.

"Obviously a huge game," Ovechkin said, straight-faced. "Huge win."

It was. And in this rematch of the second round from the last two years, you get the feeling the Capitals captain is extra-dialed in. He's been spectacular, with a playoffs-leading eight goals, but that's not all. When he talks about the series, Ovechkin is all business.

"We want to win tonight and we did," he said. "It doesn't matter what, it doesn't matter who scored. We sacrifice, we play hard and we have to do the same moving forward."

Ovechkin had come close earlier in the game, including in the opening minutes, when his tip went just wide. But when he finally struck, the Capitals had forced a turnover, and he and Nicklas Backstrom found themselves with a 2-on-1. You've got to like your odds, there.

"Yeah," Trotz said, when he saw that pairing headed down the ice, "I had a good feeling."

Backstrom hadn't looked, but he was certain which of his teammates was coming down the right wing.

"Usually he's flying there when he knows it's a 2-on-1 or a breakaway," the centreman said. "I knew it was him. He did a great job sticking with it. I think he hit the post and then hacked it in. Huge win. We'll take it."

Ovechkin was just relieved he didn't raise his arms up to celebrate the initial shot, which he thought had gone in. "I finished up the play and got lucky," he said.



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Lucky? Ok, sure.

And while Ovechkin played the hero you figured he would in a Capitals win, his linemate Wilson once again fit the bill as the game's controversy-causer. One game after the winger laid out Brian Dumoulin with a hit to the head — Dumoulin returned, and he looked great in Game 3, too — Wilson laid a monster hit on Aston-Reese.

After he got up, Aston-Reese skated to his bench and he threw a glove at Wilson's head, before he left the game with a broken jaw and a concussion.

Once the crowd discovered there was no penalty call on the play, the boos rained down, big time. Penguins coach Mike Sullivan, who called it "a high hit," was trying to hear the referee and he put a hand around his ear because he couldn't hear for all the booing that came every time Wilson's face showed up on the big screen.

The boos got extra loud when Wilson was shown on that screen, sitting on the bench and laughing, while a teammate patted him on the back.

"It's disrespectful," Penguins defenceman, Justin Schultz, said. "Guy's hurt, laying on the ice. Not too good to be laughing at something like that."

Capitals goalie Braden Holtby, who faced 22 shots in the winning effort, defended his teammate, who plays on the top line along with Ovechkin and Evgeny Kuznetsov.

Here's betting nobody in Pittsburgh would agree with that sentiment.

And while things were chippy before Wilson's hit, they hit another level, post-hit. On one play, Ovechkin cross-checked Crosby, Jamie Oleksiak hammered his stick down on Wilson a few times (Wilson smiled: he really is a sensational villain), and Patric Hornqvist and Capitals defenceman Michal Kempny gave each other face-washes.

While Pittsburgh didn't strike on the ensuing power play from that skirmish (they got one penalty, to Washington's two), they did take a 3-2 lead soon after. Jake Guentzel, who earlier in the night scored his eighth of the playoffs, absolutely undressed Dmitry Orlov, and then sent a pass over to a wide-open Crosby, who hammered a one-timer over Holtby's glove, sending this crowd into a tizzy.

It was Crosby's eighth of these playoffs, tied with Guentzel and Winnipeg's Mark Scheifele.

But only for a short time, before Matt Niskanen's point shot went in off Matt Murray's pad to tie things up, and then Ovechkin made that playoffs high-scoring race a four-way tie.

The Capitals captain would admit it was "a huge, huge goal," but then he was quick to parrot a statement he's been repeating all series long.

"It doesn't matter what happened before," Ovechkin said, which is a smart approach when you're up against the team that's burned you in the playoffs the last two years, right at this stage.

"We're only looking forward right now."

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Sportsnet.ca / Oral history of the Jets' 2nd period comeback in Game 3

Luke Fox | @lukefoxjukebox May 2, 2018, 1:56 AM

WINNIPEG — If they go on to even grander things this special spring in Winnipeg, the Jets may well look back at the second period of Game 3 versus the defending Western Conference champion Nashville Predators as the most definitive 20 minutes of their season.

This middle frame is their identity. It's why they thrill and believe and inspire.

Here is how the sniping, fighting, dancing chaos unfolded — in their own words.

A normally deafening arena gone quiet, the Jets retreat to the dressing room, having been outscored 3-0 by the best road team in hockey. Paul Maurice walked in to address the group behind closed doors.

PAUL MAURICE: "We want to make sure we play all of these games and walk away proud of our game. It's not a matter of effort with these guys. We want to be so good here, and we want to play for our fans. They want to keep it going, and I thought we were a little tight."

PAUL STASTNY: "Some of the older guys like me were kinda easing into it after that double-overtime game [Sunday]. That woke us up. I, walking talking to Scott Oake, I said, 'It doesn't feel as bad as it looks just because you know what you can do in this building. You know you can feed off the crowd.'"

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DUSTIN BYFUGLIEN: "We just came in here and talked to each other. Just said, 'Let's keep it simple and do what we've been good at all year.'"

BLAKE WHEELER: "We got our teeth kicked in a little bit in the first. ... To be honest with you, I probably said the least. We had a lot of guys step up and say the right things."

MAURICE: "There's a certain way that we want to play. I don't know if relaxed is the right word, but confident and driving is the way it needs to look, and we were tight in the first."

WHEELER: "Not one guy yelled. Not one guy panicked. Take a deep breath here."

JACOB TROUBA: "Nothing special. It was normal. Nothing different. If anything, play loose, have fun. Didn't matter if we lost by seven or we came back to win that game. Whatever happened, we didn't want to lose by playing tentative. That's not our game."

WHEELER: "It starts with our leadership from our coaches, coming in after the first period and let's just keep this simple: Win a period. Win the second period."

Two minutes and 38 seconds into the second, a Trouba point shot deflects off Stastny's extended leg, ping off the back of the net. Play proceeds, but Stastny celebrates, knowing he's got the Jets on the board.

STASTNY: "You're kinda just waiting for the buzzer to go off. I don't want to say it was a turning point, but that was big for us, especially [because] we started slow. We didn't play that well defensively, we weren't moving that well offensively with the puck. We were maybe hoping the crowd would do extra work for us."

WHEELER: "Momentum's a crazy thing, especially this time of year. The crowd got into it. We got a great bounce on Stastny's goal."

Two minutes later, Austin Watson hits Wheeler high enough with a charge that the captain's helmet pops off. Mark Scheifele immediately goes after the bruising Predator and takes a roughing penalty of his own. When Wheeler gets to his feet, he tries to pull Scheifele off Watson. The Predators would go more than 11 minutes without a shot on net.



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WHEELER: "I was mad at him at first because I thought we were getting a power play. Then he told me we didn't have a power play and I said, 'OK, great job.' You hate to see Scheif going to the box with anyone. I'd rather have him on the ice."

MAURICE: "You do have to take care of your own, that's for sure."

WHEELER: "That's what teammates do. You see someone take a liberty on one of your guys, and you step in for him. I appreciate that and when you see one of your better players step in there and get his nose dirty, I think it sends a message to everyone."

STASTNY: "I told [Scheifele] that the turning point was him taking that penalty, so instead of getting a power play we get the 4-on-4."

MAURICE: "We can skate. You win a faceoff and you control the puck 4-on-4. If they have the puck, they're just as dangerous 4-on-4 as we are. We're a pretty good 4-on-4 team because we do have a back end that can really get involved — jump in the holes, buy the forwards time."

The push to activate their defence down low results in a blistering slap shot goal by Byfuglien.

MAURICE: "There was probably a little more room because they had a 3-0 lead, so we were able to get up and activate in. I really think that was an important change for us."

WHEELER: "Buff gets a little bit of a long leash. He's so dynamic that he keeps plays alive and can make some really special things happen with the puck. He's the great equalizer. There's nobody like him. Having him on our team gives us an advantage no matter who we play. That's the type of player he is and from Game 1 of the playoffs, he has just dominated. You can't stop it."

P.K. SUBBAN: "In the playoffs, it doesn't matter what your system is, you've got to get pucks in and forecheck hard. They won the three-quarter ice game, they were just kind of turning pucks over at their blue line and turning up ice, and it's hard to play against that when you don't get pucks deep."

STASTNY: "All of sudden, three goals in three minutes. ... That was chaos."

PEKKA RINNE: "Obviously, that 4-on-4 didn't go as planned."

WHEELER: "Our crowd noise is from the crowd. It's not from speakers or music or live bands or whatever. That's people making noise and that goes right through your body."

Thanks to a nice passing sequence by Stastny and Wheeler, Trouba follows Big Buff with a goal of his own 18 seconds later, and the game is tied.

STASTNY: "We're both being aggressive, so all of the sudden, it forces them to turn it over, forces the D-man to wrap it around to [Ryan] Johansen. Trouba makes the pinch and then I just find Wheels. Wheels makes a good play and then Trouba gets open. The building was just going nuts; they were still announcing Buff's goal. After that, Wheels just got engaged. I think we just fed off that."

WHEELER: "Trouba has a great ability to jump in the play and lead a rush and make some big plays offensively. It's just one of those things where you get a team running a little bit, going from 3-0 to 3-1 to 3-2 and they start to protect a little bit."

Nashville's three-goal lead vanished, coach Peter Laviolette is asked by NBC Sports why he doesn't call a timeout. There's no point, he says. The building is too loud. No one would hear him. Maurice flips left-wingers, moving Nikolaj Ehlers to Scheifele's line and Kyle Connor with Stastny — and they own the puck.

RYAN ELLIS: "That's exactly what's going to happen when one team quits playing and the other one turns it up. ... We just stopped playing. It's clear as day, I think you could see that. You can't win hockey when you stop playing midway through the second."

STASTNY: "The two biggest things we did was putting Connor on our line and Ehlers [on Scheifele's], kind of switching them. I thought both those guys were unbelievable. ... None of those guys complained about line changes. I think we needed to shake something up."

MAURICE: "Kyle Connor just needed to relax a little bit, so as soon as that happened all of a sudden Kyle was moving, he was on the puck and creating plays. ... It frees his mind up a little bit, he relaxes a little bit and now he's a complete player."

WHEELER: "Just a little shot of adrenaline to wake up young players and playing with different guys. It just creates a little different juice going for both those guys. I thought it was a great move by Paul, because once he made that move, both those guys were flying."

With 45 seconds remaining in the period, Byfuglien strikes again, one-timing a hard, beautiful cross-ice feed from Patrik Laine. Score: 4-3 Jets.

BYFUGLIEN: "[Laine] can do it all, obviously. It's the NHL. You can't just be a shooter, you've got to be able to play."

MAURICE: "[Byfuglien] can make an impact an impact in a game in just about every single way possible. He can defend, he can play real physical, nobody wants to drop the gloves with him, and then there's an offensive side. It's a perfectly placed shot. Quick hands."

BYFUGLIEN: "I don't know where some of this stuff comes from. It was spur of the moment. I've probably danced a couple times in my day, but not lately."

TROUBA: "You guys only see him on the ice. I see him dance all the time."

WHEELER: "It's nice to see him get a little excited. It's tough to get him to smile. Obviously I'm being a little sarcastic here, but get him feeling like himself and what are you going to do?"

The Jets outshoot the Predators 16-6 in the second period, delivering four unanswered goals. They go on to win Game 3 7-4.

JOHANSEN: "We stopped moving our legs. We did a lot of things poorly, and they got better. Momentum swings in playoffs, they can be deadly."

BYFUGLIEN: "It's not easy to comeback from what we did in the first. I think everyone just knows you can't quit. Never quit. Just keep working and you never know what's going to happen."

MAURICE: "It's all about having faith in the game that you play. We like the way we played in the second. It's true to our form, our style, the confidence."

WHEELER: "There's not a lead that feels insurmountable to us."

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Sportsnet.ca / The Lou Lamoriello you do and don't know

Gord Stellick | @@GordStellick May 1, 2018, 4:47 PM

I was at a Pan Am Games track and field event in July 2015 when I got the unexpected news that Brendan Shanahan had named Lou Lamoriello as Toronto Maple Leafs general manager. It was understood that he had a three-year contract as GM and then a provision to remain with the organization afterwards.



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I applauded the surprising choice, but I wondered what Lamoriello could possibly accomplish in three years with what, at the time, was a dysfunctional Leafs organization compared to his 19 years as both coach and athletic director of the Providence College men's hockey followed by 28 years as the general manager and president of the New Jersey Devils. This was a guy who didn't sign up for the short term; he had long and illustrious careers in both.

It is interesting that even though Lamoriello's tenure has been short term compared to his long runs at Providence and the New Jersey Devils — not including his significant involvement with USA Hockey — maybe he was destined for a stint with the Maple Leafs at an early age.

His favourite number is 14, his hockey jersey number. Of course, no NHL franchise has a more significant No. 14 in their history than Dave Keon, who was voted the greatest Toronto Maple Leaf of all-time a few years ago. Add to that that none other than Johnny Bower spent a portion of his time boarding at the Lamoriello home when he played his few years with the Providence Reds of the American Hockey League.

I actually asked Lamoriello once how he ever became connected to the NHL establishment while in Providence. This was not at all the usual career path for NHL coaches, and certainly not NHL executives. Once again, there was a Maple Leafs connection. The Philadelphia Flyers had drafted a high school player named Rich Costello in the second round of the 1981 NHL Draft. After high school, Costello chose to play hockey at Providence College. Both because Lamoriello was one to not rush the process of giving a freshman or sophomore player excessive ice time ahead of a junior or senior, and because he wasn't exactly enamoured with Costello's on-ice play, the Flyers pick was seeing limited ice time.

This frustrated Philadelphia scout Walt Atanas, who began a dialogue with Lamoriello venting his concern about Costello's lack of ice time. This led to Atanas connecting Lamoriello with Flyers general manager Keith Allen, and would be the start of more of a relationship and ongoing dialogue with NHL general managers and executives for Lamoriello. Allen was impressed with Lamoriello, and understood this wasn't a guy who was going to be coerced into doing anything for his team that he didn't want to do.

Allen and the Flyers organization took Lamoriello's opinion as a sign that Costello didn't look as bright of an NHL prospect as maybe they had thought. So they traded Costello shortly after the discussions with Lamoriello ... to the Toronto Maple Leafs ... in a trade that included another Leafs all-time great in Darryl Sittler.

After two years at Providence, Costello was a part of the U.S. team that played an ambitious schedule of assorted opponents in 1983-84 leading up to the 1984 Winter Olympics. The team's two youngest players at the time were both 17 years old, and both future Maple Leafs, Eddie Olczyk and Al Iafrate.

I can remember January 1984 when the Winter Olympics about a month away. I was with the Maple Leafs for a game in Minnesota on Jan. 12. The Met Centre in Minneapolis (well, actually suburban Bloomington) was also the home base for the U.S. Olympic team, so they were there as well. It turned out that a few players had been told they hadn't cracked the game roster for the upcoming Games, but would likely be spares. One of those was Rich Costello. So now he was keen to turn professional with the Leafs, and the Leafs were keen to sign him to an NHL contract. Could this all be done in a matter of hours to have him in the Leafs lineup that night in Minnesota? A deal was struck with Costello's agent and he was inked to the NHL contract. His agent? None other than the head coach and athletic director, Lou Lamoriello. It turns out that a number of Providence hockey players would ask Lamoriello to negotiate their first NHL contracts.

Lamoriello was named general manager of the Devils in 1987. In early 1988, Gerry McNamara was fired and I was among a group that were the interim general managers for a few months. I was back in Minneapolis, of all places, to scout a game between the Quebec Nordiques and North Stars in March. As I made the short walk from the Marriott hotel across the street from the Met Center, I was soon joined by another solitary

figure as Lamoriello joined me for the short walk. We didn't know each other were in town. It was great watching the game with him and learning what he was all about. He wasn't a big talker but just gave an aura that he knew what he wanted, knew what he was doing and believed he would get there.

Afterwards we had a nightcap at the small bar area at the Marriott. It was sheer bedlam as WWF wrestlers were all checking in to the hotel for a wrestling card the next night at the Met Center. So Lamoriello and I talked for another hour as we watched wrestler after wrestler chased down by scores of vocal fans as they came through the Marriott lobby. I can remember one fan asking Ted DiBiase ("The Million Dollar Man") if he could wake up Andre the Giant as they heard he was sleeping in his hotel room. DiBiase's reply was "Nobody wakes up Andre."

Almost two months later, Lamoriello and the Devils would be involved in what would be perceived as one of the more radical moments in NHL history when they obtained a court injunction to overturn a one-game suspension levied against Devils coach Jim Schoenfeld for abuse of referee Don Koharski in a playoff game. When the officials showed up for the next game and saw that Schoenfeld was behind the bench, they refused to take to the ice. It's hard to believe the absurdity that ensued. Off-ice officials donned skates and officiated an actual NHL playoff game as NHL director of officiating John McCauley stayed in the penalty box to oversee matters. The Devils then backed off their stance and Schoenfeld missed the next game.

It's hard to believe that when thinking of Lamoriello 30 years later, one thinks of a member of the NHL establishment and someone completely in tune with doing what is right for the league as a whole on top of what is right for his team. He was a general manager who followed the collective bargaining agreement in the best interest of an organization and didn't get carried away with the white noise and other distractions outside the organization. He wasn't afraid to be a tough negotiator. Meanwhile, players loved playing for him and loved playing for the Devils. It became an organization that did the little things right in how it treated the players and especially their families.

No other executive, I believe, has had a more extensive sports executive experience. When Lamoriello was athletic director at Providence, he hired a new men's basketball coach. His name was Rick Pitino. Lamoriello would have a stint overseeing the NBA's New Jersey Nets, along with the Devils, for a period of time when he was in charge of all things out of the Meadowlands.

He especially enjoyed the period at the turn of the century when he was overseeing the Devils and Nets and was on the New York Yankees board as it was the YankeeNets organization that owned the Devils. Lamoriello speaks fondly of his relationship with George Steinbrenner. He talked of how Steinbrenner would pick him up at the Tampa Bay airport when he visited, and Steinbrenner would have his New Jersey Devils Stanley Cup ring prominently on his hand rather than any New York Yankees ring.

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During that same period, Lamoriello went to the rural area where Pat Burns had his cottage in the summer of 2002. Imagine Lamoriello chatting with Burns sporting a full beard, rock star long hair and two large Harley motorcycles outside his cottage. This conversation was what Lamoriello was all about. He told Burns he felt he was the best coach available and that he would like to hire him. But could Pat Burns not put himself ahead of the hockey team like had been the case to varying degrees in his previous stops in Montreal, Toronto and Boston. He challenged Burns to be a part of his style of an organization, and to win a Stanley Cup to go along with his Jack Adams award.

A year later, Pat Burns was hoisting what the Jack Adams Award years failed to provide him, the Stanley Cup, as head coach of the New Jersey Devils in 2003. The last of three Cups the Devils would win in a span of



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nine years. Arguably the strongest individual persona as an NHL coach had decided to invest in Lamoriello's team first concept and it had paid immediate dividends.

Who is Lou Lamoriello the person?

When Burns was inducted in to the Hockey Hall of Fame posthumously a few years later, his widow made a point of thanking Lamoriello for all he did for their family during Burns' health battles.

When Slava Fetisov was being inducted into the Hall, he spoke of how Lamoriello would constantly call him while he struggled to get his release from the Soviet Union authorities to play in the NHL. Those calls gave Fetisov optimism and a time when he was quite discouraged. Bobby Holik lamented that, even though the New York Rangers offered him no choice but to leave the New Jersey Devils for financial reasons, he greatly missed the organization he left behind. "Lou warned me that the game now would be more of a business because of the money and not the same enjoyment-wise. He was absolutely right; it was never as good as it was for me in New Jersey," Holik told me.

A friend I went to high school with played for Lamoriello at Providence. He said, "Lou was always tough on us when we played for him, but when we graduated he always took care of his boys. You could call on him after you graduated for any reason."

Hall of Famer Marcel Pronovost, who had a stint as a scout for the Devils, called Lamoriello "the smartest hockey mind he ever met" in his decades of NHL experience on and off the ice. Even Doug Gilmour said in hindsight he wished he hadn't taken a little more money to leave the Devils and join the Chicago Blackhawks.

Former NHL executive and now, once again, media personality Brian Burke had a great line when I interviewed him as a head table cast at the Conn Smythe charity dinner this past February. When asked about what he was like personally, Burke said: "I probably know Lou Lamoriello as well as anyone ... and you know how much I know about him personally? Zero," Burke emphasized, then kidded with a grin, "I honestly think he works for the CIA or something."

One thing I do find is that both Burke and Lamoriello are among the two best in my experiences of general managers who make a point of reaching out to other NHL executives and players when they might go through some kind of adversity. It's very thoughtful and always appreciated.

I happened to run into Lamoriello last summer in the Yorkville area of Toronto. While we were chatting, a group of construction workers were hard at work nearby. All of a sudden, the loud accolades came streaming down: "Hey Lou," "Love You Lou," "Go Leafs," "You're the man, Lou," "You rock, Lou."

Though not his style to seek the limelight, I did catch a smile that I think, after decades in the quiet ambience of the Meadowlands, a part of him did enjoy the "You rock, Lou!" in the heart of as passionate a hockey city exists in the world.

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Sportsnet.ca / Down Goes Brown: 2018 Old Guy Without a Cup rankings

Sean McIndoe | @DownGoesBrown May 1, 2018, 10:45 AM

With eight teams left in the NHL playoffs, it's still too early to start worrying about potential final matchups or Conn Smythe favourites. But

it's not too soon to start thinking ahead to one of the league's best annual stories: the Old Guy Without a Cup.

Rallying behind the Old Guy Without a Cup (a.k.a. the OGWAC) is one of hockey's great playoff traditions. Ray Bourque is probably the greatest OGWAC of all-time, finally capturing his first Stanley Cup at the age of 40 in what would turn out to be the last game of his career. Lanny McDonald's 1989 championship was another classic OGWAC story, as was Teemu Selanne's in 2007.

Last year it was Ron Hainsey, making his playoff debut as a 36-year-old. Like many OGWACs, Hainsey also received the honour of the first Cup handoff. There's a good chance that this year's playoffs end with a similar scene, since there are potential Old Guy stories lurking on almost every team left standing. But which one is the best?

Let's define an "old guy" as someone who's at least 35 or has been in the league for the entire salary-cap era. We're also looking for players with a chance to actually be in the lineup for that Cup handoff, so we want guys who have either played in this year's post-season or are likely to suit up soon.

That narrows our field a bit, but we've still got a decent group to choose from in this year's OGWAC crop. Here are the 10 best remaining candidates, counting down to the best possible story.

No. 10: Paul Martin and Joel Ward, San Jose Sharks

We'll call this one a tie so we can squeeze both Sharks into our top 10. Maybe that's a little cheap, but both guys deserve a spot so here we are.

Ward didn't become a full-time NHLer until he was 27, so even though he's only been in the league for a decade he's older than you probably think at 37. He's had a few second-round exits over the years, and was part of the Sharks' run to the final in 2016, so he's had a taste. And his contract is up this year, meaning there's no guarantee he gets another chance.

Meanwhile, Martin shows up on this list every year, and every year I have to double-check that he actually belongs here. Didn't he win at least one Cup with the Devils or Penguins somewhere along the way?

Nope, although he just missed a few times — he debuted in New Jersey a season after their 2003 Cup win, then arrived a year after Pittsburgh's 2009 title and left a year before they won again in 2016. To make matters worse, he had a front row seat to that last one, since it came against the Sharks.

Maybe he's due. We also can't rule out the possibility that he may be cursed.

No. 9: Scott Hartnell, Nashville Predators

Hartnell's 36 years old and has been in the league since 2000, so he certainly fits the OGWAC profile. He's also had a near-miss, coming within two wins of a Cup with the 2010 Flyers, and he's another guy whose contract is expiring after this season, so this might well be his very last shot.

All that said, two things keep Hartnell from ranking higher on our list. First, the Predators are among this year's deepest OGWAC teams, with two more strong candidates to consider. And Hartnell isn't playing much so far in this year's playoffs, appearing in just a single game so far, so there's a good chance he wouldn't even be in the lineup for a Predators' Cup win.

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No. 8: Braydon Coburn, Tampa Bay Lightning

Coburn barely sneaks onto our list by virtue of having played a few games during the 2005-06 season. But the Lightning are young enough that they don't offer us much in the way of candidates — Dan Girardi and Ryan Callahan are both older than Coburn but didn't enter the NHL until a year later, and our only other option is third-string goalie Peter Budaj.



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So we'll let Coburn represent Tampa. He's a decent choice, with 120 career playoffs games on his resumé, including two unsuccessful trips to the Cup final. He's a little young to rank much higher than this, but he's worth rooting for.

No. 7: Pekka Rinne, Predators

For whatever seasons, we've never really had a great goalie OGWAC story. The closest we've come is probably Dominik Hasek in Detroit in 2002, while Henrik Lundqvist and Roberto Luongo would make for excellent candidates if and when their teams get back into the playoffs.

But for now, Rinne will have to do. And he's not a bad pick – while he's only in his 10th full season, he's older than you'd think at 35, and he already has last year's near-miss under his belt. The Predators are well-represented on this list, and would have a tough first-handoff choice to make if they won it all. But Rinne would certainly be in the running.

No. 6: Alex Ovechkin, Washington Capitals

Yes, the grey-haired Ovechkin qualifies for our list despite being just 32 years old; he's been in the league since 2005 and is appearing in his 10th NHL post-season.

It probably feels like more than that, given how much time has been spent dissecting the Capitals' various playoff failures. (Guilty.) Ovechkin has taken more than his fair share of blame for those failures, which comes with the territory when you're the team's captain and highest-paid player. But it's not like he disappears in the post-season; among active players, his 53 playoff goals rank behind only Sidney Crosby, Evgeni Malkin and Henrik Zetterberg in the cap era. That's not bad, considering those guys have the advantage of occasionally making it past the second round.

OK, that may have been harsh, but the point remains — Ovechkin plays well in the post-season, but it's never translated into a deep run. He's either going to break through and get his Cup someday, or he'll retire as easily the greatest player to end his career without one. Those are some high stakes, and the only thing keeping Ovechkin from a higher spot on our list is that he's young enough that a sense of this-may-be-it urgency hasn't really kicked in yet. But it's not all that far off.

No. 5: Matt Hendricks, Winnipeg Jets

Hendricks is a classic old-school pick. He was a longshot to even make the NHL, and didn't earn full-time duty until he was 28. He spent most of his career with the Capitals and then the Oilers, so it goes without saying that he's never come close to a Cup. And he's the sort of heart-and-soul guy that teammates tend to love.

On a young Jets team packed with guys who figure to have plenty of chances to come, he's the oldest guy on the roster by three years, and a great candidate for a first Cup pass.

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No. 4: Deryk Engelland, Vegas Golden Knights

Much like Hendricks, the 36-year-old Engelland doesn't carry much in the way of star power, but he's the sort of veteran that teammates would love to see get a long-overdue lap with the Cup. He's yet to get that opportunity, despite spending the first five years of his career with Penguins — he made his debut the season after their 2009 Cup win, and departed in 2014 to narrowly miss their recent repeat.

To up the emotional ante, Engelland is a longtime Las Vegas native who started the season by delivering a poignant pregame speech at the home opener after tragedy struck the city. Seeing him end it by accepting the Stanley Cup from Gary Bettman would be just about perfect.

No. 3: Mike Fisher, Predators

At nearly 38 years old, Fisher has been around forever — he literally made his NHL debut in the previous century. We had him ranked high on last year's list, and he came within two wins of getting his Cup. That seemed like it would be his last chance, and he'd retire without a ring. He actually did, only to make a surprising mid-season comeback for (presumably) one last shot.

This is Fisher's 13th playoff run, and ninth trip to at least the second round. He's been to the final twice, with last year's Predators and the 2007 Senators, and his 142 career post-season games ranks eighth among active players. So he's certainly paid his dues. If the Predators can win it all, he'd be a classic first-handoff guy, and could end his career with a storybook championship.

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.

No. 2: Rick Nash, Boston Bruins

Nash isn't all that old — he'll turn 34 during the Stanley Cup final. But he's been in the league since 2002, making this his 15th season. This won't be his last chance at a championship, but at some point the clock does start ticking.

What moves Nash up our list is the narrative that's surrounded him during the second half of his career. After rarely making the playoffs in Columbus, Nash headed to New York and was part of a team that made several long runs. But his playoff numbers were usually disappointing — he entered this year with only 15 goals in 77 post-season games. That story continued in the first round, where he managed just one goal in seven games against Toronto.

Nash's lack of playoff production has always been a bit of a mystery. It's not like he disappears during the playoffs — he's led the league in post-season shots twice in his career. But the puck just doesn't seem to go in for him. Is it bad luck? A change in playing style? Is he one of those guys who wilts in the big moments?

Nobody seems to be quite sure, and Nash has reached the point in his career where we shouldn't be expecting him to dominate. With an expiring contract, he's probably a short-term fit in Boston, and you could see him entering the phase of his career where he becomes a hired gun who bounces around the league in search of that perfect fit that finally delivers a championship.

Or he could just get it this year with a very good Bruins team. He had two goals in the opener against Tampa, so maybe he's finally headed for that playoff hot streak we've never quite seen from him. If so, he might end up engraving his name on the Cup while erasing a few narratives along the way.

No. 1: Joe Thornton, Sharks

This is a bit of a tricky pick, given that we haven't seen Thornton in this year's playoffs yet. He's been out since January with a knee injury, and despite taking warmups and being described as day-to-day, he hasn't suited up yet. There's no guarantee that he's ready to play this round, and if he suffers a setback it's possible we don't see him in this year's playoffs at all.

But even with all those caveats, Thornton still takes top spot on our list, because if and when he does step on the ice he'll immediately become one of the best OGWAC stories of the last decade. He's pretty much the ideal candidate in the Bourque/Selanne/McDonald mold — he's an aging superstar and first-ballot Hall of Famer who's won everything but a Cup. He's had his near-miss, losing in the 2016 final, and at 38 he has to be getting dangerously close to the end of the road. Mix in his recent transformation into one of the league's most entertaining characters, and he'd be the sort of story that just about everyone could get behind.

The bad news is that Thornton's Sharks may be the longest shot left in this year's tournament; despite a 100-point season, they finished behind all seven other teams that are left, and their road to a championship



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looks awfully daunting right now. Nobody would blame you if you wanted to hold off on getting too invested here for another round or two, or at least until Thornton shows us he can actually play. But when it comes to ranking this year's OGWACs, Thornton is head and shoulders (and beard) above the field.

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Sportsnet.ca / Vegas' William Karlsson running out of ways to prove he's the real deal

Sonny Sachdeva | @SachdevaSonny May 1, 2018, 8:39 PM

He did it for 82 games during his club's inaugural regular season. He did it for four games during the first round of the post-season — an opening sweep side-stepping the need for any more than that quartet of wins. Now, after another night of offensive wizardry that has visions of his Blue Jackets tenure fading further from memory, William Karlsson is running out of ways to prove he's the real deal.

After Karlsson's side dominated the San Jose Sharks in the first match of the clubs' second-round series — a 7-0 shellacking that had the Golden Knights faithful thinking sweep once more — the teal-clad vets fought back for a narrow double-overtime win in Game 2. On Monday, it was Vegas' turn to reclaim the reins, as the Golden Knights got an overtime win of their own to take a 2-1 lead ahead of Wednesday's Game 4.

But it's how they earned that victory that has those still waiting for Karlsson to tumble back to reality looking silly. Watching him fly down the wing to bury the overtime winner — a point-blank, perfectly placed shot on Martin Jones — helped with that. His jaw-dropping tip-pass to Reilly Smith in the second period removed all doubt.

The expansion draft jackpot — he of 43 goals and 78 points during the regular season — chalked it up to chemistry rather than personal game-changing skill.

"It's more instinct, I'd say," Karlsson told Jesse Granger of the Las Vegas Sun after the win. "I saw Reilly in the corner of my eye and I knew he was back there, so I just kind of tried to get him the puck. We have the chemistry. We think the same. We are pretty fast, all three of us, and we aren't afraid to make mistakes."

Much has been made of Karlsson's 2017-18 emergence. The 25-year-old's goal-scoring sum this season more than doubled the 18 tallies he posted through his 183 pre-Vegas games. As impressive a one-year jump as we've ever seen in the big leagues, and one that has many expecting an eventual regression.

That's not how those who've seen him most this season see it.

"He scored 43 goals, what else do you want?" fellow Knight Jonathan Marchessault told Granger. "He shows up in the playoffs, gets big goals and he's a big-time player. There's a lot more to Karlsson than just scoring. Defensively he's awesome and I think we have a mentality as a line to play well defensively first and goals will happen. That's what happened [in Game 3]."

What happens to Karlsson's production in 2018-19 is anyone's guess. But there's no minimizing what the former Blue Jacket is doing for Vegas in the right here and now. That he hasn't slowed amid the grind of the playoffs — he's got four goals and nine points through seven post-season games so far — should be a key part of the conversation

concerning whether he can be considered a legitimate superstar, according to teammate Nate Schmidt.

"Playoff hockey is where you get your notoriety," Schmidt said to Granger. "It's where you become (known as) an elite-level player around the league, and I think he's making a name for himself. I was behind him when he scored that goal.

"He does it in practice, he does it in games, big situations like that and it's incredible to watch him do that. It's so cool to watch him play and watch him become the guy and the player that he has."

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TSN.CA / Statistically Speaking: Byfuglien, Wheeler lead Jets comeback

Scott Cullen

Byfuglien and Wheeler lead the Jets to a huge comeback win, Ovechkin is the difference for the Capitals in Game Three and more in Scott Cullen's Statistically Speaking.

Dustin Byfuglien and Blake Wheeler — The Jets defenceman and right winger both had two goals and an assist in a 7-4 Game Three win against Nashville, an impressive turnaround after falling behind 3-0 in the first period. Byfuglien has 10 points (3 G, 7 A) in eight playoff games. Wheeler had 11 shot attempts (8 SOG) in Game Three and has 10 points (3 G, 7 A) in eight playoff games.

Alex Ovechkin — Washington's superstar left winger scored the winning goal with 1:07 remaining in the third period, and added an assist, in a 4-3 Game Three win at Pittsburgh. He has 13 points (8 G, 5 A) in nine playoff games.

Nicklas Backstrom — The Capitals centre produced three assists in Game Three at Pittsburgh, giving him 12 points (3 G, 9 A) in nine playoff games.

Ryan Rust — The Penguins winger had a tough night (8 for, 14 against, 36.4 CF%, 6-9 scoring chances) and was on the ice for two goals against in a 4-3 Game Three loss to Washington.

Roman Josi and Ryan Ellis — Nashville's defence tandem was on the wrong side of the puck (10 for, 24 against, 29.4 CF%, 6-13 scoring chances) in a 7-4 Game Three loss at Winnipeg.

P.K. Subban — Nashville's star blueliner had a goal and an assist in Game Three at Winnipeg, but was on the ice for three goals against (with one for) and his third period penalty for high-sticking led to Blake Wheeler's game-winning goal on the ensuing power play.

### VITAL SIGNS

Evgeni Malkin — The Penguins centre returned to action after missing a couple of games. He recorded an assist and played more than 19 minutes in Pittsburgh's 4-3 Game Three loss against Washington.

Zach Aston-Reese — Pittsburgh's rookie winger reportedly suffered a broken jaw and a concussion after taking a high hit from Capitals winger Tom Wilson.

### SHORT SHIFTS

Penguins C Sidney Crosby and LW Jake Guentzel both had a goal and an assist in a 4-3 Game Three loss to Washington. Guentzel jumps back into the playoff scoring lead with 19 points (8 G, 11 A) in nine games,



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while Crosby has 17 points (8 G, 9 A)...Jets C Paul Stastny put up a goal and two assists in a 7-4 Game Three win against Nashville. He has nine points (3 G, 6 A) in eight games...Jets D Jacob Trouba added a goal and an assist in Game Three and C Mark Scheifele had a pair of assists. Trouba had one point in his previous eight games and Scheifele has 12 points (8 G, 4 A) in eight games...Predators LW Filip Forsberg contributed a goal and an assist, on 12 shot attempts (9 SOG), in a 7-4 Game Three loss at Winnipeg; he has 11 points (5 G, 6 A) in nine games...Predators D Mattias Ekholm and C Ryan Johansen both added a couple of assists. Ekholm has eight points (1 G, 7 A) and Johansen has nine points (4 G, 5 A) in nine games.

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TSN.CA / Jets' spine-tingling 'it' factor on display in Game 3 comeback win

Frank Seravalli

WINNIPEG — When it is over, if it ends in June with a parade down Portage, they will be talking about that second period – for generations on Canada's prairies.

Where were you when the Jets flipped the script?

The lasting image will be Dustin Byfuglien doing the Big Buff shimmy on the half-wall as the Winnipeg Whiteout exploded into ecstasy around him.

His second strike of the period turned what was once a 3-0 hole into a 4-3 lead.

"I don't know where some of this stuff comes from," Byfuglien said of his celebration, offering the rare smile.

The Jets roared back – scoring three goals in under three minutes – and rallied again in the third period to pull off a spine-tingling, 7-4 win and take a 2-1 edge in this best-of-seven Western Conference semifinal series.

What gave goosebumps to those inside Bell MTS Place on Tuesday night wasn't necessarily the comeback itself or the end result, but the unshakeable feeling that this Jets team just has an 'it' factor. They were witnessing something special brewing.

"Nobody panicked," defenceman Jacob Trouba said.

"You're down 3-0, it's not a big deal for this team," Paul Stastny said. "It's just the way we feed off the crowd, just the way we can roll line after line."

During the first intermission, there wasn't some big rah-rah speech. Jets coach Paul Maurice said he thought his team was "just a little tight, that's all."

"To be honest, I probably said the least," captain Blake Wheeler said. "We had lots of guys step up and say the right things. Not one guy yelled, not one guy panicked. It was 'Let's take a deep breath here.' The goal was let's win one period and give ourselves a chance."

It all started just a foot or two from where Byfuglien danced, where Predators forward Austin Watson charged Wheeler, sending his helmet scurrying across the ice.

Mark Scheifele flew to Wheeler's defence. He crossed the line, putting Watson in a chokehold from behind, which ultimately cost the Jets a power play.

That TSN Turning Point sparked an emotional response desperately needed by the Jets. They didn't like getting run out of Bell MTS Place, but they certainly weren't going to tolerate their leader getting run at the same time.

"We've got to take care of our own," Maurice said.

Before Wheeler was whacked by Watson, the Jets appeared dead in the water. The Whiteout was eerily quiet, after rising to ear-splitting decibels – the loudest of the playoffs so far – to kick off the first second-round game in town in 31 years.

The Whiteout incessantly mocked Mike Fisher, chanting "Mr. Underwood" in reference to his country star wife Carrie Underwood, and booed every time P.K. Subban touched the puck.

Fisher and Subban responded by opening the scoring. You could hear a pin drop when Watson made it 3-0 in the waning minutes of the first frame. Many were wondering whether Steve Mason would replace Connor Hellebuyck to start the second period after two soft goals. Watson, it turns out, did that for Maurice. No yank necessary.

"Never quit," Byfuglien said.

Wheeler fittingly netted the game-winner on the power play with just under five minutes to play in the third period, bringing the entire emotional rollercoaster full circle.

It was a comeback for the ages – one that the Jets played off as routine.

"We got kicked in the teeth a little bit in the first and our team has always responded well this year," Wheeler said. "I think we just have a ton of confidence. There's not a lead that feels insurmountable to us.

"Crazy things happen this time of year. You get a little bit of momentum going your way and the game is never over."

Byfuglien was at the centre of it all, laying bone-crunching hit after hit, while playing his best hockey since helping the Chicago Blackhawks to the Stanley Cup in 2010. His two goals were electrifying, the second one off one of the best passes you will see this season from usual goal-scorer himself Patrik Laine.

It was Byfuglien who warned his teammates before this run began to seize the moment. He admitted Tuesday night that this run does feel a little similar to 2010.

"It's not easy to come back from what we did in the first," Byfuglien said. "I think everyone just knows you can't quit. All season we've been preparing for games like this and getting in the playoffs and how to handle ourselves."

The Jets acquitted themselves just fine, landing counterpunch to every Predators punch, the green kids swinging for the fences with last year's Stanley Cup finalist.

What team doesn't bat an eye at a three-goal hole?

As Manitoba picked its collective jaw up off the floor, Winnipeg was thinking of a different question: What if? They are two words, two small words, that make the mind race.

What if Maurice pulled Hellebuyck after the first period? Hellebuyck made a critical breakaway save on Viktor Arvidsson halfway through the third period.

What if Scheifele didn't take that retaliatory penalty after Wheeler was charged? Those ensuing two minutes at four-on-four produced two Jets goals.

What if the Winnipeg Jets just rolled over after it was three-zip? They are 10 wins away, not even halfway there, but on this night, the River City couldn't help but wonder:

What if this is the team that ends Canada's Stanley Cup drought at 25 years?



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TSN.CA / Boucher says all the right things in meeting with Dorion

Ian Mendes

Pierre Dorion made it clear that if Guy Boucher was going to return as Ottawa Senators head coach next season, he would need to make some changes to his style behind the bench.

After the Senators general manager and Boucher met in Ottawa on Monday in what Dorion characterized as a "productive" and "positive" session, it appears as though Boucher is willing to be flexible with his approach. As a result, Dorion felt comfortable enough in announcing on Ottawa radio that his head coach's future was secure – at least to start next season.

"Guy and his entire staff are returning next season," Dorion announced on TSN 1200 Tuesday afternoon. "We look forward to continuing the process that we started last year and to seeing a great improvement in the upcoming season."

In town hall meetings with season ticket-holders, Dorion indicated that the plan was for the Senators to adopt a faster, younger lineup that was the start of a rebuilding process in Ottawa. Many wondered if Boucher's philosophy – which has seemed to favour veteran players – would be able to align to this new approach taken by management.

Dorion says the entire coaching staff sat together and came up with a new approach, which was presented to him on Monday.

"They came up with a game plan. And we're really happy about the direction that the coaching staff seems to want to go and it seems to align with our philosophy as a management staff," Dorion said.

The continuity behind the bench is a stark change in direction for the Ottawa Senators, who have carved out a reputation as being a team that grows impatient with head coaches. Over the past decade, the Senators have seen no fewer than seven head coaches in John Paddock, Bryan Murray, Craig Hartsburg, Cory Clouston, Paul MacLean, Dave Cameron and Boucher.

Many felt that Boucher's fate could be decided by what his own players said about him – in particular stars like Erik Karlsson, Matt Duchene and Mark Stone – during exit meetings with management at the end of the season.

But Dorion insisted last month that the hockey operations department would be the ones to make the final decision on the coaching staff – and that no one should read into the future of any player based on the decision.

The prevailing feeling in Ottawa is that Karlsson's future was not impacted in any way, shape or form by Tuesday's announcement that Boucher and his staff are returning next season.

While teams like the Montreal Canadiens and Edmonton Oilers changed out part of their support staff in the wake of a disastrous season, the Senators have opted to retain all of their assistant coaches.

But there will be some wrinkles with the group moving forward, most notably seeing Boucher take over full responsibility for the Senators' power play. Since taking over the team prior to the 2016-17 campaign, the club's power play has languished at the bottom of the league standings. In Boucher's two seasons behind the bench, the team's power

play has operated at a paltry 16.8 per cent – ranked 29th in the league over that span.

"The one thing we're really excited about Guy's taking ownership of the power play. He will be running the power play next season," explained Dorion.

The changes also include Rob Cookson joining Boucher behind the Senators bench on a nightly basis. Cookson had previously served as the club's "eye in the sky" in the press box – a role that will now be filled by Martin Raymond. Marc Crawford will stay on board as the other assistant coach on Boucher's staff, focusing on 5-on-5 schemes and other game preparation.

In his season-ending press conference last month, Dorion cast serious doubt over Boucher's future in Ottawa. Dorion said the evaluation process for the coaching staff would take several weeks and would hinge on Boucher's ability to change his approach.

In particular, Dorion seemed irked that Boucher and his staff opted to skip several practices in the early part of the 2017-18 campaign while the team was floundering at the bottom of the standings.

"We're going to practice more. 'Rest is a weapon' – if I hear that one more time, I'll go crazy," Dorion said on April 12.

After their meeting on Monday, Dorion seems satisfied that Boucher and his staff will integrate more practices into their schedule next season.

"We're a skating team and we need practice," Dorion said on Tuesday. "Speed' was Guy's mantra when he came on board, and I think we deviated from that last year. We need to skate hard in practice to play as hard and fast as possible – and they understood that."

Boucher, 46, is entering the final year of a three-year contract that he signed with the club in May of 2016. The sense around Ottawa now is that Boucher and his staff will get a 25-to-30-game audition to prove that they are willing to adapt to a younger, faster lineup and a new philosophy.

If they don't enjoy early success, there is a distinct possibility that Dorion may be forced to re-visit his situation behind the bench.

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1094670 Websites

TSN.CA / Dorion says Boucher will return next season

Staff Report

Ottawa Senators general manager Pierre Dorion told TSN Radio 1200 on Tuesday that head coach Guy Boucher and the rest of the coaching staff will return for the 2018-19 season.

The Sens struggled in 2017-18, Boucher's second season coaching in the nation's capital, posting a 28-43-11 record to finish second last in the Atlantic Division.

Boucher will coach the power play while assistant Martin Raymond will not be on the bench during games next year.

Dorion also announced that Kurt Kleinendorst, head coach of Ottawa's AHL affiliate the Belleville Senators, will not return next season

Ottawa hired the 46-year-old Boucher in May of 2016 after a coaching stint with SC Bern in the Swiss hockey league. The Senators played well



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under the fiery coach in his first year, finishing second in the Atlantic with a 44-28-10 record.

The team then made a shocking run in the playoffs with upsets of the Boston Bruins and New York Rangers in the first two rounds. The magical run came to an end when they fell to the eventual Stanley Cup champion Pittsburgh Penguins in double overtime of Game 7 in the East Final.

Boucher got his NHL coaching start with the Tampa Bay Lightning in 2010, leading the Bolts to the Eastern Conference Final in his first year. He was fired before the halfway point of the 2012-13 campaign.

Boucher is a native of Notre-Dame-du-Lac, Que.

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1094671 Websites

TSN.CA / Jets and Preds throw out the matchups with old-school coaching

Frank Seravalli

WINNIPEG — Paul Maurice described this second-round series with the Nashville Predators as a “tug of war.”

The flag started in the middle, of course, but swung in favour of both the Jets and Predators heavily at times – until Nashville was able to pull it fully over the line in Game 2.

Part of what makes this matchup so compelling, though, is the way it’s being coached.

Peter Laviolette and Maurice, two TSN Hockey panel alums, have more or less thrown out the matchup game. If they can find an advantage, sure, they’ll take it. But they aren’t chasing them.

“You either switch your identity, or you try to play to your identity and both teams are trying to play to their identity right now,” Laviolette said. “We feel like we’ve got good balance and depth on our lines. He probably feels the same way.”

Maurice and Laviolette are confident enough in their depth to repeatedly roll out their lines against each other, as if to say, “May the best team win.”

There is something so refreshing about that. It is old school. This second round really is two heavyweights standing toe-to-toe and letting ‘em fly – the Jets with arguably the best top three lines in hockey and the Predators with arguably the best top two defensive pairings in the league.

“We both have slightly different systems, but almost identical attitudes of how the game is supposed to be played,” Maurice explained. “It’s a hard-gap game. Neither team is looking to give ice ... This just truly is a tug of war here. Set your feet hard and start pulling.”

“If Ryan Johansen is against the checking line, we’re okay with that,” Laviolette said. “If the other coach wants to matchup with Ryan Johansen’s line, we’re perfectly okay with that. I think we’re comfortable either way. There’s a lot of trust in the balance of the lineup.”

That doesn’t mean the Jets and Predators are being coached on autopilot. Far from it. There is a cost to bare-all hockey like this. The challenge is in holding your talent back enough to conserve energy.

“You’ve got to run your bench,” Maurice said.

“We want to put the pedal down,” Laviolette said. “You never know when you’re going to get to overtime. That’s the one thing about the playoffs, you don’t have that crystal ball to see whether you should be sending your first line out there every other shift or how much they should be playing.”

The Jets earned home-ice advantage back with their series split in Nashville. Three of the last five games in this series will be played at Bell MTS Place, if required. Winnipeg has won 12 straight at home, where they enjoyed the best home cooking in the NHL this season. Their last home loss was to ... the Predators back on Feb. 27.

“We’ve won in Winnipeg,” Laviolette said bluntly the other day when asked about his team’s ability to win on the road.

One would think the home ice could tip the scales in the Jets’ favour in a series with so little separating the two teams.

But with neither team really looking to capitalize on any one matchup with last change, Maurice said the only advantage is in energy.

“Energy in the playoffs is critical,” Maurice said. “As this goes on, even if you get rest between series, the body doesn’t feel quite as strong. The hitting is heavy. The energy expenditure is huge. When Patty Laine comes down and cracks that pipe from the post, we’re going to get a bounce of energy that we don’t get being on the road. It is this building – the fans are loud; they’re wired to the game. It’s not the music, it’s not the stuff that happens on the TV timeouts that wires them up, it’s the game and the players. When we play that aggressive game and get chances, there’s more energy and it feels different on the other team’s bench. It’s just a really good home building.”

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TSN.CA / Off-Season Game Plan: Buffalo Sabres

Scott Cullen

The Buffalo Sabres have gone seven straight seasons without making the playoffs, and finished with the worst record in the league in 2017-18. That did come with a reward, however, as the Sabres won the draft lottery and have the first pick in 2018.

Off-Season Game Plan looks at a Sabres team that might finally be on the right track, or at least moving in that direction.

When the Sabres hired Jason Botterill to be their GM last summer, it was understandable that he might want to spend a year analyzing what kind of talent he had in the organization. After finishing in last place overall, it’s also understandable if Botterill is ready to make some changes.

Making those changes should be easier with Rasmus Dahlin coming into the fold. The top prospect in this year’s draft is a franchise defenceman, the type who can dictate the pace of the game and control play when he’s on the ice.

Now, Botterill can build a core of a team around Dahlin, Jack Eichel, and Casey Mittelstadt, with an eye towards acquiring more young talent that can grow alongside those players.

The Sabres finished with 62 points in 2017-18, 35 points out of a playoff spot, so it’s not reasonable to think that the arrival of Dahlin will entirely close that gap, but it’s time for improvement to take hold and the moves that Botterill makes this summer will be geared towards making the team a long-term contender.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 2, 2018

### HEROES

Jack Eichel – He’s still a work in progress, missing time with injuries over the past two seasons, but he’s also a 21-year-old centre who scored 64 points in 67 games on a bad team.

Sam Reinhart – The season looked like it was going to be a complete loss, as Reinhart had 13 points in the first 44 games, but he finished with 37 points in the last 38 games. Coupled with strong possession stats, Reinhart made a strong case to be part of the plan moving forward.

Jake McCabe – It probably says something about the Sabres season that a solid defensive defenceman qualifies as one of the better performances of the season, but that’s the case with McCabe, who was steady when not many Sabres blueliners could make such a claim.

### ZEROES

Robin Lehner & Chad Johnson – Both goaltenders have had better seasons than what they delivered in 2017-18. Lehner might be a little below average as a starting goaltender, but was much better in 2016-17. Johnson had been a strong backup option for three of the previous four seasons (one of which was with Buffalo), but he fizzled in a relatively significant backup role last season. The Sabres might have been competitive with one of their goaltenders struggling, but both? No chance.

Kyle Okposo – Understand that, about a year ago, Okposo was in the ICU, with very serious health concerns, so the fact that he was still an NHL player is really a massive accomplishment. At the same time, he’s been a very productive player throughout his career and last season’s 0.58 points per game counted as his lowest since 2012-13.

Zach Bogosian – Injuries have been a staple of the 27-year-old’s career – the last time he played more than 70 games was 2010-11 – but he was limited to just 18 games in 2017-18. He played okay in those games, but the Sabres need more from a player that comes with a cap hit over \$5.1-million per season.

Jack Eichel	67	25	36	64	49.2
1.9	98.9	60.5	20:09	\$10.0M	
Ryan O'Reilly	81	24	37	61	49.9
3.1	98.1	41.1	20:49	\$7.5M	
Kyle Okposo	76	15	29	44	46.4
-1.7	97.4	52.8	17:02	\$6.0M	
Jason Pominville	82	16	18	34	51.1
4.8	98.1	62.8	14:54	\$5.6M	
Evan Rodrigues	48	7	18	25	49.7
3.8	99.1	47.1	13:56	\$650K	
Johan Larsson	80	4	13	17	42.7
-6.6	94.1	32.5	14:07	\$1.475M	
Zemgus Girgensons	71	7	8	15	48.4
1.3	97.5	49.6	13:53	\$1.6M	
Matt Moulson	14	0	0	0	46.7
-1.1	87.9	53.5	10:17	\$5.0M	
Sam Reinhart	82	25	25	50	51.4
5.3	97.8	53.8	17:06	\$894K	RFA
Benoit Pouliot	74	13	6	19	46.0
-1.5	97.8	52.2	13:41	\$1.15M	UFA
Scott Wilson	69	6	8	14	46.4
-1.3	96.5	47.0	12:12	\$625K	RFA
Jordan Nolan	69	4	4	8	42.6
-6.1	97.9	45.0	9:48	\$950K	UFA
Jacob Josefson	39	2	2	4	37.4
-12.6	99.5	28.8	11:23	\$700K	UFA

Frustration has already been a theme with 21-year-old Jack Eichel, a very talented player who has 121 points in 128 games over the past two seasons. That means he’s missed 36 games due to injuries, and he’s been the franchise player for a Sabres team that has lost a lot of games.

However, it’s not unreasonable for Eichel to want more help from the supporting cast, and if he gets it, the results should get better both for the team and Eichel individually.

Ryan O’Reilly may offer some value on the trade market.

Veteran centre Ryan O’Reilly caused a stir with his interview at the end of the season, talking about how he lost his love for the game, and that might help pave the way for his departure, but don’t let the frustration after another losing season take away from O’Reilly’s contributions.

He is consistently asked to handle tough matchups and start more shifts in the defensive zone, the latter at least in part because of his face-off acumen – he’s won more than 58% of draws in three seasons with the Sabres. Even given those circumstances, O’Reilly has been a productive two-way centre, tied for 28th in the league with 295 points over the past five seasons.

But, if the Sabres are going to build a core around younger players, they could certainly free up significant cap space and add more young assets by moving O’Reilly, so long as they understand that someone else is going to have to take on the tough minutes that O’Reilly has been handling.

30-year-old right winger Kyle Okposo survived a major health scare and struggled early, with 19 points in the first 40 games of the season, but he started to come around in the second half of the year. If he’s healthy from the start next year, he should be a solid contributor in a top-six role. That might be a modest expectation given his \$6-million cap hit, but he also has just 45 even-strength points in two seasons with the Sabres.

Upon his return to Buffalo, 35-year-old Jason Pominville ended up with 34 points, his lowest points per game (0.41 ppg) of his career, but that production notwithstanding, the puck was moving the right way with him on the ice, and that isn’t something that should be taken for granted.

Twenty-four-year-old Evan Rodrigues has made steady progress since turning pro three years ago and, in a partial season, was productive enough to be considered a regular in next year’s lineup. He can move around the lineup and that flexibility can help when trying to fit pieces together.

Last season probably didn’t go as hoped for 25-year-old centre Johan Larsson, who started a bunch of his shifts in the defensive zone, but was overmatched on a consistent basis, with poor shot differentials and terrible percentages (94.1 PDO) leading to his getting outscored 52-17 during 5-on-5 play. He’s under contract for another season, so the Sabres could give Larsson a shot at redemption, hoping that improved depth in the lineup will lead to better results.

A first-round pick in 2012, Zemgus Girgensons has had three straight seasons in which he produced fewer than 20 points. He’s a solid enough checker, but contributes next to nothing offensively, so if he’s anywhere in the top nine, he’s effectively a place-holder in the lineup, waiting to be supplanted by more skilled options.

Last season started so poorly for 22-year-old Sam Reinhart, but his second half brought a dramatic turnaround. He’s not flashy, but makes good decisions with the puck and he’s a strong complementary player.

An industrious winger who played in Pittsburgh when GM Jason Botterill was there, Scott Wilson was acquired from Detroit and he was fine in a depth role.

After getting loaned to the Kings’ AHL affiliate, it would seem likely that the last year of Matt Moulson’s contract will be bought out. He didn’t really work out for the Sabres, but had some great years when playing alongside John Tavares with the Islanders. There might be a lesson there.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 2, 2018

The important part for the Sabres is the development of their prospects. Casey Mittelstadt joined the team after his freshman year at the University of Minnesota and had five points in his first six games. He's a brilliant offensive talent, and the 19-year-old should be a significant player for the Sabres next season.

There were surely higher hopes for Alex Nylander, the eighth pick in 2016, but he did make some progress down the stretch, producing 18 points in his last 23 AHL games. It would be optimistic to assume that he'd be ready to play in the NHL next season, but he could be in consideration at some point next year. 20-year-old Rasmus Asplund, a second-round pick in 2016, is expected to be a solid checking centre, but probably needs further development.

For more immediate help, the Sabres can explore the trade market, where there are countless options, but maybe they could find some veteran help in free agency. I'm not sure that's the ideal approach, but with an eye towards becoming competitive more quickly, David Perron, James Neal, Riley Nash, and Tyler Bozak are among those to consider.

Rasmus Ristolainen	73	6	35	41	47.8
	0.2	98.3	52.2	26:30	\$5.4M
Marco Scandella	82	5	17	22	47.4
	-0.4	97.9	50.1	23:19	\$4.0M
Jake McCabe	53	3	9	12	48.3
	1.5	98.2	53.1	19:30	\$1.6M
Nathan Beaulieu	59	1	8	9	47.9
	0.8	98.0	50.9	15:57	\$2.4M
Zach Bogosian	18	0	1	1	48.9
	2.9	95.5	43.2	19:09	\$5.143M
Victor Antipin	47	0	10	10	47.5
	-0.3	99.0	54.9	15:17	\$925K RFA
Casey Nelson	37	3	5	8	47.9
	0.1	95.3	49.9	18:47	\$650K UFA
Justin Falk	46	1	1	2	42.5
	-6.1	96.3	41.6	16:05	\$650K UFA
Josh Gorges	34	0	2	2	44.4
	-5.8	100.2	43.4	14:56	\$3.9M UFA

For years, the Sabres' defence has been a glaring shortcoming for the team, but there is now hope that they have a legitimate franchise defenceman on the way. Landing the first pick in the draft means that the Sabres get Rasmus Dahlin, a brilliant talent who is clearly considered the top draft prospect this year. He's 6-foot-2, a great skater and puckhandler who has already compiled a sensational highlight reel. Who knows how quickly Dahlin will be contending for Norris Trophies, but he'll make the Sabres better immediately.

Would the Sabres trade Rasmus Ristolainen, or wait another year?

Much-maligned since he was drafted eighth overall in 2013, Rasmus Ristolainen has been asked to handle the minutes of a workhorse No. 1 defenceman and the results have been less than ideal. His possession stats improved last season, and that may have been due to getting a better partner, Marco Scandella.

While there may still be high-end value on the trade market for Ristolainen, and if there is the Sabres should pay attention, it may also be worth keeping him around and, as the talent improves on the Buffalo blue line, the work might get a tad easier for Ristolainen. Further, if the Sabres do trade him, they will then have a new hole to fill on the right side of the blue line.

Getting Marco Scandella from Minnesota was a solid addition, and the 28-year-old played a career-high 23:19 per game. That's a pretty big jump – nearly five minutes per game from his previous season with the Wild – but such is the response to the Sabres getting a competent defenceman.

A sturdy defensive defenceman, Jake McCabe doesn't grab much of the spotlight, but that's okay; just providing steady defensive play makes him a valuable contributor.

The Sabres made a savvy move to acquire Nathan Beaulieu last summer, but he struggled to fit in. It would be entirely fine to bring the 25-year-old back to see if he could bounce back, but he might also be a trade candidate.

27-year-old Zach Bogosian seems to be have already been worn down by injuries and he played just 18 games last year, but he's under contract for a couple more seasons and the Sabres can at least hope that's healthy enough to fill one of their spots on the right side.

Russian puck-moving defenceman Viktor Antipin didn't have a very smooth transition to the NHL and he's a restricted free agent, so he could return, but it's already being reported that he has multiple offers waiting for him in the KHL.

A smooth skater, Brendan Guhle should be getting close to a spot in Buffalo. He showed well enough in 18 games with the Sabres last season that he could be in contention for a job next season.

22-year-old Swedish blueliner Lawrence Pilut, who was named defenceman of the year in the Swedish Hockey League, has been added to the mix. He's a smallish puck mover who had 38 points in 52 games.

There are some veterans hanging around on the fringe of the Sabres blue line. Casey Nelson is an unrestricted free agent, but Taylor Fedun and Matt Tennyson offer organizational depth.

Robin Lehner	53	14	26	9	.908
	.916	\$4.0M	RFA		
Chad Johnson	36	10	16	3	.891
	.901	\$2.5M	UFA		

After a down season, it seems unlikely that the Sabres will bring back Robin Lehner, who is a restricted free agent and would require a \$4-million qualifying offer. If the Sabres aren't sold on Lehner as a starter, that's a steep price. The 26-year-old's has had some ups and downs already in his career, but it's reasonable enough if the Sabres would like to take their goaltending in another direction.

The Sabres don't appear to be sold on Robin Lehner as their starting netminder.

Top goaltending prospect Linus Ullmark had a strong season in the AHL and should get a shot in the NHL next season. He has a .917 save percentage in 26 NHL games and the 24-year-old may be a solid backup, or maybe more.

Where do the Sabres turn for a new goaltender? The free agent market is thin, but Carter Hutton or Jonathan Bernier might be able to share time with Ullmark. On the trade market, Aaron Dell or Philipp Grubauer are backups that might warrant a chance in a starter's role. Someone like Philadelphia's Brian Elliott could offer a short-term solution.

Casey Mittelstadt	C	34	11	19	30
+4		Minnesota (Big 10)			
Alex Nylander	RW	51	8	19	27
+3		Rochester (AHL)			
Brendan Guhle	D	50	8	18	26
+1		Prince Albert (WHL)			
Rasmus Asplund	C	50	8	20	28
+4		Farjestads (SHL)			
Linus Ullmark	G	44			
.922		Rochester (AHL)			
Marcus Davidsson	C	39	9	12	21
+16		Djurgardens (SHL)			



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Lawrence Pilut +13	D	52	8	30	38
		HV71 (SHL)			
Ukko-Pekka Luukonen	G	24			
		.908	LeKi (Mestis)		
Will Borgen +9	D	36	2	13	15
		St. Cloud St. (NCHC)			
Cliff Pu Kingston	RW	65	29	55	84
		Kingston (OHL)			+19
Danny O'Regan -2	C	49	13	27	40
		Rochester (AHL)			
C.J. Smith +4	LW	57	17	27	44
		Rochester (AHL)			
Victor Olofsson +1	RW	50	27	16	43
		Frolunda (WHL)			
Nick Baptiste +3	RW	36	7	11	18
		Rochester (AHL)			
Justin Bailey +3	RW	37	10	5	15
		Rochester (AHL)			

### DRAFT

1st – Rasmus Dahlin

### FREE AGENCY

The Sabres have approximately \$55.8M committed to the 2018-2019 salary cap for 13 players.

### THEY ADDED

Jason Pominville, Benoit Pouliot, Jordan Nolan, Marco Scandella, Victor Antipin, Nathan Beaulieu, Chad Johnson

### TRADE MARKET

Ryan O'Reilly, Zemgus Girgensons, Rasmus Ristolainen, Marco Scandella, Nathan Beaulieu, Robin Lehner

Robby Fabbri*	Jack Eichel	Sam Reinhart
Conor Sheary*	Casey Mittelstadt	Kyle Okposo
Zemgus Girgensons	Evan Rodrigues	Jason Pominville
Scott Wilson	Johan Larsson	Nick Baptiste
Alex Nylander	Rasmus Asplund	Klim Kostin*
C.J. Smith	Danny O'Regan	Viktor Olofsson
Rasmus Dahlin*	Zach Bogosian	Linus Ullmark
Marco Scandella	Rasmus Ristolainen	Carter Hutton*
Jake McCabe	Lawrence Pilut*	Christopher Gibson*
Brendan Guhle	Taylor Fedun	
Will Borgen	Matt Tennyson	

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USA TODAY / Alex Ovechkin, Capitals take big step toward ending playoff heartbreak vs. Penguins

Kevin Allen, USA TODAY Sports Published 12:15 a.m. ET May 2, 2018 | Updated 1:55 a.m. ET May 2, 2018

PITTSBURGH — When Alex Ovechkin scored a go-ahead goal against the Pittsburgh Penguins with 1:07 left in regulation he let loose a primal scream that said more about the importance of the goal than words ever could.

He skated to the boards and raised his arms, maybe as much out of relief as celebration.

The tally became the game-winner in a 4-3 win that allows the Capitals to regain home-ice advantage in the best-of-seven Eastern Conference semifinal.

But the goal, coming on a two-on-one break with Nicklas Backstrom, could end up being more important. It's too early to know for sure, but this come-from-behind win has the potential to be the effort win that helps the Capitals find the push they need to escape their history of recent postseason failures.

"This was a big win – it was tough sledding out there," said Washington defenseman Matt Niskanen, who tied the game with a goal 5:06 into the third period.

This was a grimy, physical, hard-fought game. The two teams totaled 93 hits. The Capitals had to erase a 2-1 lead, and then a 3-2 lead, to claim a 2-1 lead in the series.

The Capitals have been eliminated by the Penguins in the last two seasons, and trailed 2-1 after three games in each of those series. It was evident the Capitals wanted this game badly.

Washington winger Tom Wilson became the story because one of his monstrous hits claimed another victim: Penguins player Zach Aston-Reese suffered a broken jaw that will require surgery, plus a concussion. Wilson had nine hits in the game.

"(Wilson) is a first-line player, and he plays in all situations for us," Washington coach Barry Trotz said. "He just keeps developing as a young man. He is a leader. He has grown up."

He is also the villain of the series. His hit on Aston-Reese did have an impact on the game, but it wasn't why the Capitals won.

The Capitals won because they kept coming after the Penguins. They outshot them 10-3 in the third period.

What isn't receiving enough attention is how sharply Ovechkin has performed in this postseason. The game-winner was his eighth goal and 13th point in nine playoff games. In the past, Ovechkin has been singled out for added blame in the Capitals' postseason struggles.

To beat the Penguins, the Capitals had to win in Pittsburgh and they had to win consecutive games against them. They've now accomplished that.

"This was a game that we had to work right until the end (to win)," said Washington goalie Braden Holtby. "We played really well in a lot of areas. It was a real tough game for both teams."

Several Washington players stepped up. Holtby made the stops he needed to make. Backstrom had three assists. Defenseman John Carlson played 29:17.

"We have some confidence in our group," Trotz said.

That didn't always seem to be true over the past couple of seasons.

But as important as the win was for the Capitals, they all understand that they have only taken a small step toward their final objective.

"This group has learned not to look too far ahead, not to get too comfortable," Trotz said.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 2, 2018

Maybe that's the most important lesson the Capitals learned when they were being eliminated by the Penguins the last two seasons.

USA TODAY LOADED: 05.02.2018

1094674 Websites

USA TODAY / Capitals' Tom Wilson dials up hate with hit that breaks jaw of Penguins' Zach Aston-Reese

Kevin Allen, USA TODAY Sports Published 10:01 p.m. ET May 1, 2018 | Updated 12:42 a.m. ET May 2, 2018

PITTSBURGH — Washington Capitals forward Tom Wilson continues to be the most despised man in Pittsburgh.

In Game 2 in Washington, Wilson knocked Pittsburgh defenseman Brian Dumoulin out of the game in the second period with a hit to the head. He didn't receive a penalty on the play and wasn't suspended, presumably because Dumoulin turned his head after Wilson had started the hit.

In the second period Game 3 in Pittsburgh Tuesday night, Wilson crushed Zach Aston-Reese with a shoulder-to-head hit that left the Penguins player with a broken jaw and a concussion. Again, no penalty on the play. Aston-Reese, who will need surgery, was bleeding on the ice and threw his glove toward the Washington bench.

"It's a high, high (hit), what else can I say?" Penguins coach Mike Sullivan said.

Capitals coach Barry Trotz said the hit was shoulder on shoulder.

"(Wilson) is a unique player," Trotz said after the Capitals' 4-3 win. "There are few Tom Wilsons in the league. That's why he is very effective."

The on-ice officials conferred after Tuesday night's hit.

"When we have a big hit like that, and there's a lot of stuff going on on the ice, our guys come together — because obviously both referees didn't put their arm up, so obviously they didn't think there was a penalty," Paul Devorski, the NHL's on-site supervisor, told pool reporters. "So now they bring in the linesmen, who if they think it's a major penalty, they'll tell the referees. So they all got together and they said, 'You know what, we've got a good, clean check here.'"

Later in the period, Penguins defenseman Jamie Oleksiak was penalized two minutes for cross-checking and Wilson laughed at him. Wilson received a two-minute unsportsmanlike conduct penalty.

The 220-pound Wilson is one of the NHL's edgiest players. He was suspended twice this season for preseason actions.

Coming into the game, some Pittsburgh fans were hoping the Penguins would retaliate against Wilson for the hit on Dumoulin.

But Sullivan said Tuesday morning that Penguins were only interested in playing their game.

The Wilson saga is far from over. His actions, and how the Penguins will respond, will be a subplot until this series is over.

USA TODAY LOADED: 05.02.2018

1094675 Websites

USA TODAY / Goal or no goal? What goes into NHL reviews that always stir up controversy

Kevin Allen, USA TODAY Sports Published 6:01 p.m. ET May 1, 2018 | Updated 9:08 p.m. ET May 1, 2018

In law, there's what you know and what you can prove. NHL senior vice president of hockey operations Mike Murphy said the same is true when it comes to video reviews of goals.

"One of the consistencies of our (situation) room is that we have to have video evidence that the puck is over the goal line before we can overrule a referee," Murphy told USA TODAY Sports. "It's that simple."

He said the Patric Hornqvist no-goal decision in Game 2 of the Pittsburgh Penguins-Washington Capitals series is an example of the "eight or 10 times a year" when a puck probably crossed the line, but no video can be found to prove it.

"What brings consistency to the process is that (Washington coach) Barry Trotz and (Washington general manager) Brian MacLellan know that if we (rule a goal is scored) we are going to show them a picture of that puck over the goal line," Murphy said.

Murphy said no replay showed Hornqvist's shot over the line. Because the referee had not signaled goal, Murphy said the league had no choice but to let that ruling stand.

"In this case, it was probably under Holtby's pad and it's probably over the goal line, but we could never find it or see it," Murphy said.

The NHL uses four main cameras for reviews — two on the crossbar, one in the back of the net and one overhead. The crossbar cameras offer the best views. The overhead camera is also effective, although it is from a farther distance. None of those cameras located the puck on the Hornqvist shot.

In the playoffs, at least six different people are trying to find the puck on the video.

"If we can't show video proof to the world that the puck was over the goal line, then we leave the call on the ice," Murphy said.

The NHL uses the Hawk-Eye system, the same software used in professional tennis. The difference: tennis doesn't have goalie equipment and falling bodies obstructing the camera's views.

"The Hawk-Eye program allows us to look at multiple video feeds," Murphy said. "For instance, each game has 14 feeds, four blue line, eight in-net feeds and two-live game feeds. So when we have 10 games going, we have 140 feeds coming in and Hawk-Eye gives us the ability to manipulate this video. It allows us to enhance views, to zoom in or zoom out on them."

Most goal reviews are done in less than two minutes, and Murphy said more time was taken on this play to make sure they saw television replays from the hand-held cameras.

One NBC shot showed white space between the goal line and the puck, but that shot came from the center ice "with a zoned-in camera," which can distort the perspective, Murphy said. According to Murphy, the "white" seen from that distance could be snow build-up in the crease.

"I'm sitting in a room with guys who have been in this room a long time," Murphy said. "Colin Campbell has 45 years. Kris King is 30 years. (Former referee) Bill McCreary is 40 years. We are all looking at each other and we are thinking this puck is in, but we can't find or see it, and we don't have any video to overrule the referee."

Murphy said there are "eight to 10" times a season when the group finds the puck over the line when players, fans and officials didn't see it go in.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

**NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 2, 2018**

And it works the other way, when the puck might have crossed the line but they simply can't find proof.

"It bothers us when we can't find the puck. We want to do everything possible to find it," he said. "We use every TV angle."

According to Murphy, perspective can vary greatly, depending upon the angle of viewing.

"As disturbing as that call was to Pittsburgh and as helpful as it was to Washington, they know there is a consistency to (the process)," Murphy said. "The next night out we are going to rule the exact same way."

Pittsburgh captain Sidney Crosby said he thought the puck was in, and Hornqvist, who jammed the puck toward the net, said common sense said it was in. Coach Mike Sullivan said you could deduce the puck was in the net.

But eyewitness testimony isn't the NHL standard.

In March 2017, NHL general managers asked the league not to use the word "inconclusive" in their decisions. Since then, the league has used the words "support," "confirm," or "overrule" in review decisions.

The NHL has tried cameras in goal posts, but found they didn't provide much help because goalies were always in the way.

Murphy said the NHL is researching the possibility of putting chips in pucks to help determine if it crossed the goal line.

"We'd like to be perfect, but we are not," Murphy said. "There are always a leg, or a glove, or a pad that gets in your way. But video has come a long way."

The NHL's hockey operations department put together a presentation on how camera angles can be deceptive on whether a puck is fully over the line. It used a puck slightly touching the goal line and shot it from different angles. How it looks:

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