



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 16, 2017

THE NEWS & OBSERVER

Canes Summerfest set June 26-July 1

From staff reports

The Carolina Hurricanes on Monday announced the fifth Hurricanes Summerfest will be held June 26-July 1 at PNC Arena.

The team's prospects development camp and youth hockey camps highlight Summerfest, which will end with the Summerfest Celebration on Saturday, July 1.

Most or all of the Canes' 2017 draft picks will attend the development camp as well as other previously-drafted/acquired players and select invitees. The players will go through off-ice training and educational sessions as well as on-ice sessions.

The prospects' evening on-ice sessions on June 28 and June 29, and the final on-ice session at noon on July 1, will be open to the public.

The Summerfest Celebration will feature an autograph session, equipment sale and State of the Hurricanes address. The event will feature more than 20 interactive inflatable and games, guest speakers from the Hurricanes, discounted concessions and hockey games.

Parking and admission will be free.



SB NATION
CANES COUNTRY

Free Agent Spotlight: Could Justin Williams make a return to the Carolina Hurricanes?

The Stanley Cup Champion and Game 7 specialist is on the radar for a possible return engagement.

by [Andy House](#) May 16, 2017, 9:03am EDT

For the **Carolina Hurricanes**, the only remaining on-ice link to their **Stanley Cup** winning team is netminder Cam Ward. With his status in Carolina uncertain for the coming season, perhaps the Canes will entertain the return of another Stanley Cup winner in Raleigh, as **Capitals** forward **Justin Williams** is an unrestricted free agent.

After leaving Carolina in a three-way trade that brought **Erik Cole** back to the Canes during the 2008-09 season, Williams went on to capture two more Stanley Cups in Los Angeles with the **Kings** and burnish his reputation as one of the ultimate playoff and Game 7 performers in NHL history.

Tale of the Tape

- Age: 35
 - 2016-17 season: 24 goals, 24 assists, 48 points in 80 games
 - Career (PHI, CAR, LA, WAS): 273 goals, 409 assists, 682 points in 1080 games
 - 2016-17 Advanced Stats: 53.8% Corsi, 100.9 PDO, 60% zone starts, 61.5% GF
 - 2016-17 salary: \$3,250,000
 - Contract ending: 2 years, \$6.5 million, \$3.25 million AAV, signed July 1, 2015
-

Making the Case

With a very young nucleus and a need for depth in scoring, Williams would seem to be a wonderful fit for a team with legitimate ambitions on returning to the playoffs for the first time since 2009. Williams has a history with the franchise and a familiarity that would in all probability make the organization comfortable with adding him to the group, with the additional bonus of the fan base being excited for the return of a former fan-favorite.

Williams has provided consistent 20-goal, 40-50 point seasons since leaving the Hurricanes, and would provide some of the additional scoring needed up front for Carolina. One other factor in signing Williams, or any free agent for that matter, is that signing a player rather than trading for a player will only cost the Hurricanes money, rather than divesting of the young blue-line talent in the system to augment the offense at the NHL level.

And should the Canes add Williams and make their way back to the postseason, they would have a ready-made leader as the young squad experiences the playoffs together for the first time.

On the Other Hand...

Williams is 36 years old as of the first week of the upcoming season. In a league that is progressively becoming younger and younger, the number of players in their late 30's who remain significant contributors continues to dwindle. As the



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pace of the game, and the pace of the Hurricanes themselves, quickens with the infusion of young swift skaters, will Williams be able to have the same sort of impact?

It is also fair to question whether or not the numbers Williams has put up with Stanley Cup caliber teams in Washington and Los Angeles can translate to a still building Hurricanes team that remains in the growing process. Not that you would expect 48 points from Williams, but rather can he have the same impact without the same sort of offensive centerpieces surrounding him as he had in Washington these past two seasons?

Signing older players is sometimes a form of hockey roulette. Can his skills and knowledge allow him to continue to contribute in a meaningful way, or will the clock strike midnight, either through a diminishing of skills or via injuries?

Free Agent Spotlight: T.J. Oshie would fill a need for the Hurricanes, but would not come cheap

Should the Canes swing for the fences and try to pick up the top free-agent forward on the market?

by [Brian LeBlanc@bdleblanc](mailto:Brian_LeBlanc@bdleblanc) May 15, 2017, 4:03pm EDT

The **Carolina Hurricanes** need an additional goal scorer. **T.J. Oshie** is a goal scorer, and a clutch one at that. Similar in many ways to his teammate with the **Washington Capitals**, former Hurricane Justin Williams, Oshie has finished each of his two years with Washington no worse than second in team goal scoring, no small feat on a team that includes **Alex Ovechkin**, **Marcus Johansson** and **Nicklas Backstrom** among others in its ranks.

He may be the most sought-after free agent in 2017, and will command top dollar, but is it a cost the Hurricanes should consider paying?

Tale of the Tape

- Age: 30
- 2016-17 season: 33 goals, 23 assists, 56 points in 68 games
- Career (STL, WAS): 169 goals, 248 assists, 417 points in 591 games
- 2016-17 Advanced Stats: 51.7% Corsi for, 104.1 PDO, 53.4% zone starts, 63.8% goals for
- 2016-17 Salary: \$4,500,000
- Contract ending: 5 years, \$20.875 million, \$4.175 million AAV, signed July 19, 2012 (RFA)

Making the Case

Oshie is essentially a guaranteed 50-point scorer every year. He's hit that total each of the past four years, to add to goal totals of 26 and 33 while with the Capitals. In the past four years, only two players have tallied 50 points in a season for the Hurricanes: **Jeff Skinner** three times, and **Eric Staal** twice.

On top of that, Oshie's goal totals would have placed second to Skinner each of the past two years, and would have been

The Verdict

With the large number of young players on the roster, adding a solid veteran presence with proven playoff chops is a good message to send to your entire organization. With the significant offensive overhaul expected, Williams would likely not be the only move made this off-season, so as a compliment to the one or two other additions, he would be a terrific gamble — even at age 36 — if he can be picked up for 1-2 seasons at a rate similar to or slightly less than his previous deal with Washington.

It will not be easy though, as many teams who view themselves as contenders will be vying for his services. Should this require Carolina to get closer to the \$4 million mark annually, they likely would need to shop elsewhere.

at least five ahead of anyone else on the Canes' roster. For a team that's finished 27th, 27th and 20th in Bill Peters' three years in charge, Oshie would be a godsend for the Canes' offensive attack.

Imagine a world where Oshie, Skinner and **Sebastian Aho** are the Canes' top three options on the wing. Whether the fourth slot is filled by **Teuvo Teravainen**, **Elias Lindholm**, or someone else at that point doesn't really matter. All of a sudden, the perennially offensively-challenged Canes would have some serious firepower.

On the Other Hand...

As the top free agent on the market, Oshie can essentially name his price, and other offensive black holes would likely have more money to offer. Ron Francis has shown that he will shell out the money for the right player in the right situation, going to ownership if necessary to authorize a budget-buster, but given what Oshie will command elsewhere it seems unlikely that the Canes will want to play ball at that price.

This is Oshie's big chance to cash in. He's likely to get a too-long, too-expensive contract from someone. It beggars belief that "someone" would be the Hurricanes.

Similar to the **Gabriel Landeskog** situation, Oshie might be an odd fit. The Canes need a center, not necessarily a wing, and why would Francis pay that kind of money for a square peg to plug into a round hole?

The Verdict

Oshie's offensive prowess would be a welcome addition, but he isn't a perfect match for the Hurricanes. At the asking price he'll command on the open market, he's likely to be someone else's overpaid contract headache six or seven years down the road. That won't be the Hurricanes, who should look elsewhere for scoring help.



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Free Agent Spotlight: Charlotte Checkers likely to keep a few free agents, but not all

Should they stay or should they go? A look at the Checkers' eight unrestricted free agents.

by [Justin Lape@LankyLape](mailto:JustinLape@LankyLape) May 15, 2017, 9:03am EDT

The Charlotte Checkers made a memorable charge into a playoff spot in the last two months of the season, and as is typically the case with minor-league clubs they will likely lose a good number of the players who took them to the Calder Cup playoffs in the offseason. There are eight Checkers regulars who are under contract to the **Carolina Hurricanes** and will be unrestricted free agents in the summer. Which are likely to stay and who will likely move on to greener pastures?

Likely to Return

1. **Andrew Miller** - Miller was part of the Checkers' most productive line of the season alongside linemates **Lucas Wallmark** and Valentin Zykov. Miller finished the season 3rd on the team in scoring with 41 points in 55 games. Losing him in free agency would be a big blow to an offensively starved team, and he's insurance for the Canes who signed him to a one-year deal last July and may do so again.
2. **Patrick Brown** - It's a no-brainer to retain Brown. He's the captain and leader of the team and the guy in the dressing room to turn to on a young team. He improved on last season's performance, registering 28 points (12 goals, 16 assists) compared to 25 points a year ago. Look for another two-way deal, likely with a salary guarantee similar to what Miller had last season.
3. **Philip Samuelsson** - Samuelsson was acquired from the St. John's IceCaps having recorded 5 points in 40 games in the 2016-17 season at the time of the trade. He saw a big change in his game, recording 14 points in 25 games with Charlotte. Samuelsson is a reliable 6'2" defenseman that provides size on the back end, and a capable fill-in if the Canes need to make a callup.

In The Middle

Connor Brickley - Brickley was great down the stretch for the Checkers, providing late game heroics when needed. Brickley was acquired in exchange for **Brody Sutter** on October 12 and provided solid depth in the bottom six. He adds a solid offensive punch to the bottom six and the Checkers would be thrilled to keep him.

However, he is not likely to be signed by the Hurricanes, who have too many other forwards ahead of him in the pipeline. If Brickley is willing to accept a minor-league deal, the Checkers will gladly sign him. But if another NHL team comes calling, he will likely head elsewhere.

Time to let go

1. **Danny Kristo** - With many forwards projected to be added to the Checkers lineup next season - **Warren Foegele**, **Janne Kuokkanen**, **Aleksi Saarela**, et al. - the 26-year-old Kristo is likely to be the odd man out.
2. **Michael Leighton** - Leighton got off to a hot start but fizzled out before his injury late in the season. With Tom McCollum starting, if the **Calgary Flames** elect to let him go back to Charlotte, and one of **Daniel Altshuler**, **Alex Nedeljkovic** or pending rookie **Callum Booth** able to step in as a backup, it doesn't make sense for the Checkers to retain Leighton.
3. **Dennis Robertson** - Robertson is a reliable stay at home defenseman. A tough decision will have to be made in letting Robertson go but he may be the odd man out on the back end.
4. **Brendan Woods** - With only six points (3 goals, 3 assists) in 24 games, Woods did not prove his worth enough throughout the season with an abundance of forwards coming in for next season. However, the #WoodsCelly will be missed.



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About Last Season: Ron Francis, Bill Peters, and the Coaching Staff

Ron Francis, Bill Peters, and their respective assistants were hard at work making this team better in 2016-2017, but how will the Canes Country community grade their performances?

by [Kyle Morton@k.morton9](mailto:Kyle.Morton@k.morton9) May 12, 2017, 11:00am EDT

Making the Grades

For general manager Ron Francis and the coaching staff of Bill Peters, Steve Smith, Rod Brind'Amour, and David Marcoux, last season was one in which their respective goals may not have aligned all that much.

For Francis and his staff, last season was about icing as competitive of a team as possible while still remaining mostly fixated on the future that lies ahead of this team with its young core and stable of prospects.

The coaching staff, on the other hand, had to be strictly focused on winning as many games as possible

Francis did his job well. The additions of [Teuvo Teravainen](#), [Lee Stempniak](#), and [Viktor Stalberg](#) before the season started made this year's forward group the most well-rounded it had been in years.

But when it became clear that this team's chances of making the playoffs were slim, Francis had no problem moving out veteran players for assets.

Stalberg was moved prior to the trade deadline for Ottawa's third-round pick, a far higher price than anyone really expected Stalberg to command. Francis just recently used that pick to acquire and sign goaltender [Scott Darling](#), so that's a win by any standard.

He also moved veteran defender [Ron Hainsey](#) to Pittsburgh for a second round pick, which was once again a steeper price than most experts were predicting that Hainsey would return.

As for the coaching staff, things were a bit of a mixed bag. In my mind, the best job was done by Steve Smith, who oversaw a fantastic, young, developing defensive unit and was the mastermind behind one of the league's best penalty killing units.

Peters's system once again delivered strong results at 5-on-5. The [Hurricanes](#) were an above average team by corsi for percentage and expected goals for percentage.

For Brind'Amour, the power play could have been better, but it's hard to know how much of that was on him and how much was on the lack of star personnel with which he was given to work.

Francis announced that the expiring contract of goalie coach David Marcoux would not be renewed during his end-of-season press conference that you can find below. I'm just going to venture a guess here, but that may have had something to do with the fact that the Hurricanes ranked 29th in the NHL in 5-on-5 save percentage.



Phil Kessel scores, Penguins shut out Senators in Game 2

Forward breaks 0-0 tie with 6:55 left, Marc-Andre Fleury makes 23 saves to help even series

by [Wes Crosby](#)

PITTSBURGH -- [Phil Kessel](#) needed one shot Monday.

Kessel scored on his only shot on goal with 6:55 left in the third period to help the Pittsburgh Penguins to a 1-0 win against the Ottawa Senators in Game 2 of the Eastern Conference Final at PPG Paints Arena.

After receiving a pass from [Evgeni Malkin](#), Kessel shot off [Jean-Gabriel Pageau](#), collected the puck and shot past [Craig Anderson](#)'s left pad. Kessel's goal ended his three-game scoring drought.

"We had a lot of chances," Kessel said. "Obviously, it's an emotional game. There are ups and downs. We found a way."

At one point, television cameras caught Kessel yelling on the bench. Following the game, Kessel said he couldn't remember what he said.

"To be honest, I think I yelled more than once tonight," Kessel said.

The best-of-7 series is tied 1-1 with Game 3 at Ottawa on Wednesday.

[Marc-Andre Fleury](#) made 23 saves for his second shutout in his past three starts. He has allowed two goals during that span.

Anderson made 28 saves for the Senators.

Pittsburgh outshot Ottawa 12-6 in the second period and had the first eight shots of the third.



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"They've got some really good players that turned it on, and they were hard to manage," Senators coach Guy Boucher said. "I thought we didn't manage the puck well on our breakouts at all. We gave the puck away a lot. We threw the puck away, and it created some momentum in our zone for the opponent.

"I think, when you look at the two games, we played five good periods out of six, and the third period cost us the game tonight."

The Senators' first shot of the third period came on a backhand from forward Zack Smith with 4:54 left. Their previous shot came with 3:47 remaining in the second period.

"Wait," Fleury said when asked about what he did between Senators shots. "I just tried to skate to the corners. Stretch out. ... I just tried to stay loose. I tried to talk to the guys when they came by and tried to keep my head into it. I always expected [Ottawa] to come with a push at the end, especially after the goal there."

Penguins right wing Bryan Rust and defenseman Justin Schultz each left during the first half of the first period with apparent injuries.

Rust left after absorbing a hit from Dion Phaneuf in the middle of the offensive zone at 4:58. Schultz attempted to bump Mike Hoffman off the puck behind the Penguins net and slid into the end boards at 9:30 before immediately leaving to the locker room.

The Penguins played the rest of the game with 11 forwards and five defensemen.

Pittsburgh forward Patric Hornqvist did not play because of an undisclosed injury after participating in line rushes during warmups. He missed practice Sunday and Pittsburgh's optional morning skate Monday before coach Mike Sullivan labeled him a game-time decision.

Sullivan did not provide updates on Hornqvist, Rust or Schultz following the game.

Forward Carl Hagelin, who was also a game-time decision, returned after missing the previous two games because of a lower-body injury.

Goal of the game

Kessel's goal was the latest game-winner he had ever scored in 60 career Stanley Cup Playoff games.

Save of the game

Scott Wilson nearly gave the Penguins a 1-0 lead with 37.2 seconds left in the second period when a puck slipped to him in front of the Ottawa crease. He caught it and shot on Anderson, who made the save and covered the puck before Sidney Crosby poked at it.

Highlight of the game

Crosby won a faceoff and immediately passed to Jake Guentzel drifting toward the net. All alone in front, Guentzel lifted a shot over the Senators goal and into the netting with 7:58 remaining in the second period.

Unsung performance of the game

Wilson had a game-high 10 hits, including four on one shift.

They said it

"I thought it was a pretty solid effort start to finish. We have to play a patient game. We have to make sure we take what's given out there." -- *Penguins coach Mike Sullivan*

"I thought our game was just solid. ... You don't let the fact that it's not going in change the way you play. I think we did a good job of that tonight." -- *Penguins captain Sidney Crosby*

"We couldn't really get the puck out with control. They made it tough on us." -- *Senators captain Erik Karlsson*

Need to know

Ottawa was shut out for the first time since a 3-0 loss to the Carolina Hurricanes on Feb. 24 (a stretch of 36 games). Senators forward Viktor Stalberg missed a second consecutive game because of an undisclosed injury. ... Penguins forward Conor Sheary did not take part in line rushes during pregame warmups, but played in Hornqvist's spot on the third line. After Rust left in the first period, Sheary was moved to the first line.

What's next

Game 3 of Eastern Conference Final at Canadian Tire Centre on Wednesday (8 p.m. ET; NBCSN, CBC, TVA Sports)

TODAY'S LINKS

<http://www.newsobserver.com/sports/nhl/carolina-hurricanes/article150643637.html>

<https://www.nhl.com/news/ottawa-senators-pittsburgh-penguins-game-2-recap/c-289460590>

<http://www.canescountry.com/2017/5/16/15629904/free-agent-spotlight-justin-williams-washington-capitals-los-angeles-kings-stanley-cup>

<http://www.canescountry.com/2017/5/15/15602368/free-agent-spotlight-t-j-oshe-washington-capitals-carolina-hurricanes>

<http://www.canescountry.com/2017/5/15/15629602/free-agent-spotlight-charlotte-checkers-patrick-brown-andrew-miller-michael-leighton-brendan-woods>

<http://www.canescountry.com/2017/5/12/15629588/carolina-hurricanes-ron-francis-bill-peters-performance-review>



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SportScan

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

1064485 Websites

ESPN / Penguins' Bryan Rust, Justin Schultz out vs. Senators with injuries

Craig Custance

PITTSBURGH -- The injury list continues to grow for the reigning champs in the Eastern Conference finals.

During the first period of Monday's 1-0 win over the Ottawa Senators, two more Pittsburgh Penguins went down, with forward Bryan Rust and defenseman Justin Schultz knocked out of play early in Game 2.

Neither returned for the start of the second period.

EDITOR'S PICKS

Angry Kessel gets it done for Penguins

Frustrated and animated on the bench, playoff stud Phil Kessel lit a fire under the Penguins and pushed them to a Game 2 victory over the Senators to tie the conference finals at 1.

Schultz crashed into the boards in the first period and immediately went down the tunnel for treatment. With Pittsburgh already playing without Kris Letang and Trevor Daley on defense, the loss of Schultz would be a major one for a Penguins team that has already struggled getting the puck out of its own zone.

He skated only five shifts in the first period, in 3:40 of ice time.

About five minutes into the first period, Rust was leveled on a hit from Senators defenseman Dion Phaneuf, while skating in on goalie Craig Anderson. He slowly got up and skated hunched over to the bench. He didn't return for the rest of the period, skating just 1:43.

ESPN LOADED: 05.16.2017

1064486 Websites

FOXSports.com / Senators' Dion Phaneuf absolutely crushes Bryan Rust with open-ice hit

Pete Blackburn

Vintage Dion Phaneuf came out to play in Game 2 of the Eastern Conference Final.

Phaneuf delivered a massive open-ice hit to Penguins forward Bryan Rust during the first period of Monday's game in Pittsburgh. The hit came as Rust received a pass from Sidney Crosby and attempted to turn towards the middle of the ice, but instead turned straight into Phaneuf's heavy check. Rust was shaken up as a result and missed the remainder of the first period.

It was the type of bone-rattling collision that Phaneuf was known quite well for during the prime of his career. It was a good one.

There was no penalty called on the play, which appears to be the right ruling here. Phaneuf kept his elbow tucked and didn't leave his feet until after contact was made. You can argue that there was some contact to the head but Rust is also four inches shorter than Phaneuf, had his head down and turned directly into the collision. I'm not sure there's anything more Phaneuf could have done to deliver a cleaner hit.

FOXSports.com LOADED: 05.16.2017

1064487 Websites

FOXSports.com / The 12 worst beards of the Stanley Cup Playoffs

Pete Blackburn

The conference finals of the NHL's Stanley Cup Playoffs are underway, which means that only four teams remain and there's about a month left in the season.

As the postseason heads down the home stretch, so do the remaining playoff beards that are still surviving with a deep run. This is the time of year that those things can get really impressive.

However, not every playoff beard is worthy of praise. Some people have difficulty growing facial hair (trust me, I'd know) and there are plenty of unimpressive playoff beards every year. This season is no different, so let's point and laugh at some of the worst efforts from across the league.

(Note: A team must advance past the first round for a beard to enter "playoff beard" territory. Otherwise, it's just not shaving for a couple weeks.)

Sidney Crosby

When crafting a list of bad playoff facial hair, it's customary to start with Sidney Crosby, who -- for all his talents -- still hasn't exactly mastered the beard look.

Chris Kreider

Argh, matey.

Connor McDavid

We'll cut him some slack -- he's only 20-years-old, this was his first playoff run and he's probably going to have plenty more cracks at it. Still, this was an ugly effort.

Erik Karlsson

Rick Nash

The only thing worse than a goatee is a goatee that makes you look like a chipmunk.

Zack Kassian

Okay, I know I've taken a hard stance against goatees, but that doesn't mean you should go inverse.

Karl Alzner

If the Capitals ever managed to get past the second round, Alzner's neck may just completely disappear.

Evgeni Malkin

While Evgeni Malkin often doesn't get the credit he deserves due to Crosby's star power in Pittsburgh, his playoff "beard" also escapes a lot of flak because people are too busy making fun of Sid. Checks and balances.

Alex Steen

Much like his smile, Steen's playoff beard leaves you wondering where the rest of it is.

Ryan Nugent-Hopkins

He's probably better off shaving that pathetic thing and telling all his teammates he just can't grow any facial hair.

Drake Caggia

This beard makes him look like Mac Miller, and that is not a compliment.

Henrik Lundqvist

This is actually a pretty good beard, but I can't get behind anything that hides that spectacularly handsome face any more than needed.

FOXSports.com LOADED: 05.16.2017

1064488 Websites

FOXSports.com / Ryan Johansen rips Ryan Kesler over antics: 'I don't know how you cheer for a guy like that'

Pete Blackburn



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One of Ryan Kesler's calling cards is his ability to create headaches for opponents. He's physical and he's an antagonizer and can be quite an annoyance for the guys he's matched up against. It's something he's done well this postseason.

It didn't take the Predators' Ryan Johansen very long to get sick of Kesler's antics, as the Nashville center sounded off on Kesler following Game 2 of the Western Conference Final in Anaheim on Sunday.

"I mean, it just blows my mind watching," Johansen said after the Ducks tied the series at one game apiece, via USA Today.

"I don't know what's going through his head over there. Like his family and his friends watching him play, I don't know how you cheer for a guy like that. It just doesn't make sense how he plays the game. I'm just trying to go out there and play hockey, and it sucks when you've got to pull a stick out of your groin every shift."

Johansen and Kesler butted heads — literally and figuratively — from the opening face-off on Sunday night.

Boop. pic.twitter.com/6Y8yfWYwb9

— Pete Blackburn (@PeteBlackburn) May 14, 2017

Johansen tallied a goal and an assist in Nashville's loss, but he was clearly frustrated by the way that Kesler played him all night long. It's not hard to understand when you get a look at plays like this one. Kesler has a lot of nasty in his game.

#NHLDucks' Ryan Kesler delivers a vicious elbow to the head of Ryan Johansen. These two have been going at it all game. #Preds
#NSHvsANA pic.twitter.com/65ZaGk7STM

— Grady Sas (@GradySas) May 15, 2017

As for the Ducks' center...well, he didn't seem too apologetic about anything that went down.

"I play hard, he obviously doesn't like that," Kesler said about Johansen in a postgame interview.

In fairness, Predators players weren't the only ones pulling sticks out of their groins in Game 2.

We could see things get real contentious if this series continues down the path it's on.

FOXSports.com LOADED: 05.16.2017

1064489 Websites

NBCSports.com / NBCSN presents 'Game Changers' featuring Gretzky, Lemieux, Orr, Crosby and Toews

By Mike Halford May 15, 2017, 3:01 PM EDT

This Wednesday at midnight ET, NBCSN will debut NHL Game Changers | All-Time Greats, a 30-minute roundtable discussion featuring Stanley Cup champions and NHL legends Wayne Gretzky, Bobby Orr, Mario Lemieux, Sidney Crosby and Jonathan Toews.

The show will be hosted by NHL on NBC play-by-play man Mike "Doc" Emrick.

"I thought it would take the mythological hockey gods and a handful of thunderbolts to get these five together in one room, and for me to have a seat among them," Emrick said. "I was wrong about the gods and thunderbolts. We just needed our Executive Producer, the very much alive Sam Flood.

"As we walked onto the set, I mentioned to Bobby... 'If I'd never done a Stanley Cup Final before, this would be it!' This experience is one of my all-time hockey memories. I hope it is for the viewers as well."

Filmed in Los Angeles during NHL All-Star Weekend, Gretzky, Orr, Lemieux, Crosby, and Toews discuss a wide range of topics including the current state of the sport, playing in the Olympics, winning the Stanley Cup, Connor McDavid and other up-and-coming NHL stars, what it would have been like to play against each other, and Orr's famous 1970 Stanley Cup winning goal.

The show will air following NBCSN's coverage of Game 3 of the Eastern Conference Final, as Crosby's Penguins travel to Ottawa to take on the Senators.

Future airings will occur throughout the remainder of the Stanley Cup playoffs.

NBCSports.com / LOADED: 05.16.2017

1064490 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Phil Kessel gets mad, then gets even for Penguins in Game 2

Chris Johnston May 15, 2017, 10:56 PM

PITTSBURGH — The Ottawa Senators had pushed Phil Kessel to the edge. He ranted and raved between shifts, and at one point appeared to engage in the most intense game of rock paper scissors you've ever seen.

On a night low on actual highlights, he was a one-man meme show. Twitter gold.

"He was getting pretty upset it looks like," observed Clarke MacArthur, Kessel's former teammate and good friend.

After getting mad he got even.

So did Kessel's Pittsburgh Penguins in an Eastern Conference final that has pitted patience vs. passion, with some frustration sprinkled in for good measure.

This is how it will be.

The Senators are endeavouring to squeeze the life out of every contest in the name of equalizing the gap in high-end talent. They are deploying tactics designed to lull opponents to sleep — at least when not prompting them to smash water bottles in anger.

It is a game played in the mud and it has carried them into the middle of May. They might have left PPG Paints Arena up 2-0 in the series if not for Kessel, who followed up on a shot blocked by Jean-Gabriel Pageau to score in stride with less than seven minutes to play in regulation.

"If you give him chances he's going to score," MacArthur said after Pittsburgh's 1-0 victory on Monday.

Kessel downplayed his emotional outbursts. At one point, the cameras appeared to catch him imploring linemate Evgeni Malkin to pass the puck and it was Malkin who carried it through the neutral zone — past Zach Smith and around Mark Stone — before sliding it into the middle to his winger.

"We had a lot of chances, right?" said Kessel. "Obviously it's an emotional game, there's ups and downs, and we found a way."

This is down to a war of attrition. The Penguins have played more than 200 games over the last two seasons and Ottawa is gearing up for No. 97 since October.

Pittsburgh's diminished blue-line suffered another potential blow on Monday when Justin Schultz left with an apparent right shoulder injury following a hit from Mike Hoffman. That puts them down three top puck-movers with Kris Letang already done for the season and Trevor Daley out injured as well.

They also played Game 2 without Patric Hornqvist and lost Bryan Rust in the early going, when Dion Phaneuf hammered him with an open-ice hit straight out of 2006.

This is how Ottawa wants to play, remember, by keeping well within themselves and waiting, waiting, waiting for one moment to strike. They make no apologies for channelling the spirit of the 1995 New Jersey Devils or turning the game into a "slop-fest," as one player so eloquently put it.

"I'm not watching it," said head coach Guy Boucher. "I'm coaching it."

The only problem with Game 2 is they completely abandoned any semblance of an offensive push — even with the score tied 0-0 in the third period, and even with Kessel and Malkin growing visibly upset.

At one point nearly 19 minutes passed between shots on Marc-Andre Fleury, a stretch that forced the Pittsburgh goaltender to skate into his corners during stoppages in play to keep his mind focused.

"I think we got a little bit too passive," said centre Kyle Turris. "We have to stay a little more aggressive in the offensive end. I mean defensively we played strong, but we've got to find a way to do both."



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"We kept it tight all the way till the end and we gave ourselves a chance," added captain Erik Karlsson.

That might as well be the motto of this lunch bucket crew, right along with: Why not us? Why not now?

Here in Pittsburgh they signalled their intent to stretch this series out longer than most predicted. They certainly didn't seem disappointed at the end of an evening where the Penguins dominated zone time with almost 61 per cent of shot attempts at even strength.

"We're hockey players, but we're not that dumb," said MacArthur. "We knew we weren't going to get four in a row."

The battle lines have been drawn. The Penguins are dropping like flies with injuries and Ottawa is ready to hang around and wait for an opportunity.

Pittsburgh felt like it proved something by fighting through the first wave of frustration – "We have some talented guys, but we don't have to win a game 7-6," said coach Mike Sullivan – and the Senators returned home pledging to rebuild the Kanata Wall.

"I think the structure we play with is frustrating for anybody," said Turriss. "They've got a lot of skill over there. Trying to make plays through our structure can be difficult at times.

"That's our goal, right?"

Kessel yelled and screamed and then broke the game right open.

Ottawa may be doing what it wants, but the Penguins are more than happy to see No. 81 react in that animated fashion.

"It tells me he's invested," said Sullivan. "I love that about the guy. Yeah, he's always like that. I think our players get a kick out of him, quite honestly.

"He's a vocal guy, he's an emotional guy and he's all in. He wants to win."

It's an emotional game, right?

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 05.16.2017

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Sportsnet.ca / Ron and Don: Cherry weighs in on Phaneuf's hit on Rust

Sportsnet Staff May 15, 2017, 9:53 PM

One of the big plays from the first period of Game 2 of the Eastern Conference Final between the Pittsburgh Penguins and Ottawa Senators was Dion Phaneuf's massive hit on Bryan Rust. Rust left the game but according to Don Cherry, the hit was clean.

"Way to go Dion, nice one," Cherry said.

Cherry said Phaneuf's hit reminded him of former New Jersey Devils captain Scott Stevens. Showing highlights from Stevens' career, Cherry said "he used to do that to everybody."

But Cherry also pointed out a play that Phaneuf missed a chance to slow up a Penguin, although he criticized the rules more than Phaneuf.

Late in the first period, Penguins' forward Conor Sheary chipped the puck into the corner. Sheary then chased the puck with Senators' defenceman Chris Wideman. The two collided, Wideman slid awkwardly into the boards and then had to leave the game, although he did return for the second period.

Cherry said the whole play could have been avoided if Phaneuf had used his stick to slow Sheary down on the forecheck.

"Dion, in the old days... he would have interfered," Cherry said. "If he doesn't let him go, he gets a penalty."

Cherry also had some lessons for young defencemen who want to be better prepared for defending breakaways. Cherry said defencemen should back off of the blue line when their team turns it over in the offensive zone.

Showing a clip of Bobby Ryan's overtime goal in Game 1, Cherry pointed out that Penguins defenceman Olli Maatta didn't backup quick enough when his partner Justin Schultz pressured Ryan. This allowed Ryan to skate past him and breakaway to score the winner.

Cherry pointed to Senators defenceman Marc Methot, who is Erik Karlsson's partner, as a player who knows how to defend breakaways and position himself when Karlsson plays aggressive on offence. Showing a clip from Game 2, Cherry said Methot "is always back protecting (Karlsson).

"And that's why you don't see many overtime goals against Karlsson. Because he has Methot protecting him."

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Sportsnet.ca / NHL's top 17 UFAs of 2017: Latest rumours, reports

Luke Fox May 15, 2017, 2:11 PM

As hotly anticipated as the Kevin Shattenkirk Sweepstakes are for Kevin and the Shattenkirks, 2017's NHL free agency class is shaping up to be one of the weakest in years.

Potential summer of '17 UFA bank-breakers Jamie Benn, Victor Hedman, Brent Burns and Brad Marchand all inked maximum-term extensions with their current clubs months before becoming eligible to test the market. And Dallas and Carolina smartly got the jump on the UFA goalie class by trading for and locking up Ben Bishop and Scott Darling, well in advance of summertime.

(And with big tickets like Connor McDavid, John Tavares and Carey Price also eligible to re-sign new deals on July 1, some of the "business of hockey" news will already be focused on summer 2018.)

So, who's left?

Well, the 2017 UFA class will still offer a compelling mix of top-four defencemen, a few teams' No. 1 goaltenders, plus a bunch of wingers enjoying stellar seasons.

Some of these stars will move on due to salary cap restraints, younger talent and decreased playoff hopes. Others will be retained at any cost (but, y'know, within reason) and subjected to rounds of Twitter rumours.

The Washington Capitals and San Jose Sharks, in particular, are about to face some tough choices.

Here is a look at the NHL's Top 17 unrestricted free agents of 2017, plus a list of the other household names whose next job is undetermined.

More from Sportsnet

Top 20 RFAs of 2017: Latest on big contract years

LUKE FOX

6 major priorities for rookie Sabres GM Jason Botterill

LUKE FOX

1. Kevin Shattenkirk

Age on July 1, 2017: 28

Position: Defence

2016-17 salary cap hit: \$4.25 million

Bargaining chips: U.S. Olympian. A top-four D-man on one of the league's best blue lines. Power-play beast. Good for about 50 points if healthy.

The latest: NHL teams salivate over puck-moving defencemen under the age of 30, so expect Shattenkirk to knock his next contract out of the park. Think Keith Yandle's seven-year, \$44.45-million pact signed with the Panthers last year.

General manager Brian MacLellan hasn't ruled out re-signing Shattenkirk, but the Capitals are facing serious cap issues, and Shattenkirk (a "New Yorker at heart," according to his Twitter bio) has been linked in rumours to the Rangers.

After the Capitals were eliminated in the post-season, Shattenkirk told reporters he's not ruling out re-signing with Washington but he'd like a prominent role on his next team.

"I know I'm not Shea Weber," he said, "but I've kind of done it all before."



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The Rangers shouldn't be the only team interested. The Lightning already took a run at acquiring Shattenkirk via trade. The Devils and Maple Leafs are two of several other clubs looking to upgrade their blue lines. And Vegas would surely make him a No. 1 D-man.

Kevin Shattenkirk excited about free agency, wants to talk to #Caps first but will also discuss with other teams. Intrigued by Vegas.

— Stephen Whyno (@SWhyno) May 12, 2017

2. T.J. Oshie

Age on July 1, 2017: 30

Position: Right wing

2016-17 salary cap hit: \$4.175 million

Bargaining chips: U.S. national team member. A 33-goal, 56-point scorer this season, tops among all 2017 UFAs. Exploded for 12 points in 13 playoff games this spring. Great in shootouts.

The latest: Top-six roles for Washington's right wing will open up significantly after 2016-17. Trying to retain the services of Oshie seems like the smart play here, even if that means letting a solid veteran like Justin Williams (who's six years older than Oshie) walk in free agency.

Oshie struck incredible chemistry on the Capitals' top line with Nicklas Backstrom and Alex Ovechkin. He's loved by head coach Barry Trotz, and he has a family to move if a deal to remain in D.C. cannot be worked out.

"I love it here," Oshie told reporters on locker clean-out day. "Right now, I feel like still a part of the team.... Right now, I'm a Capital, and I feel like that's where I'll be. If something changes, it changes."

"I don't like change too much." Oshie said he'd like to be back. Pending UFA.

— Isabelle Khurshudyan (@ikhurshudyan) May 12, 2017

If it wasn't for this smoking hot lady nothing would ever get done. We love you mama!! Happy Mothers Day!! pic.twitter.com/apguF5nMYC

— TJ Oshie (@TJOshie77) May 14, 2017

3. Alexander Radulov

Age on July 1, 2017: 30

Position: Right wing

2016-17 salary cap hit: \$5.75 million

Bargaining chips: A big body that provides a critical scoring punch to a Habs roster that needs it. Finished second only to captain Max Pacioretty in points, with 54. Led all Canadiens with 36 assists. Fan favourite.

The latest: A matured and well-compensated Radulov returned to North America for the first time since 2012 on a one-year, prove-it deal. He should earn a multi-year contract on or before July 1.

Radulov denied asking for an eight-year (maximum) contract extension on March 17.

A tight-lipped GM Marc Bergevin will exercise patience here, but it will be difficult to let a player who creates so much offence walk away. It's been a perfect fit for both sides, but Bergevin needs to be careful not to commit too much term.

"I would love to stay here. I like it here. I love the fans," Radulov told Sportsnet's Eric Engels.

"The people are nice, they're not mean to me. Even when we lose some games, or when I wasn't scoring for nine games before, people weren't hard on me because they see how hard I'm working and trying."

He certainly has Shea Weber's endorsement:

4. Martin Hanzal

Age on July 1, 2017: 30

Position: Centre

2016-17 salary cap hit: \$3.1 million

Bargaining chips: A big top-two pivot (six-foot-six, 226 lbs) who creates plays and provides a threat on the power play. Free agent centres with first-line experience aged 30 and under are nearly impossible to find.

The latest: The Coyotes dealt Hanzal to an all-in Minnesota Wild club at the trade deadline, but the high-priced rental was just OK with his new team down the stretch and scored only once in the playoffs. A shortage of free-agent centremen, however, will help his efforts to land a raise and a multi-year commitment.

Expect Montreal to inquire. Vegas could be a fit as well. Re-signing with cap-tight Minnesota is a long shot, with RFAs Mikael Granlund and Nino Niederreiter needing raises.

"I thought Martin did a good job for us and brought exactly what we thought he would in terms of face-offs and size and playing hard through the middle," Wild GM Chuck Fletcher said. "He was impactful and certainly made us deeper through the middle. He was a good pickup for us."

5. Karl Alzner

Age on July 1, 2017: 28

Position: Defence

2016-17 salary cap hit: \$2.8 million

Bargaining chips: Durable top-four, stay-at-home defenceman on a good team for a relatively low wage. Hasn't missed a regular-season game since becoming a full-time Capital in 2010. Excellent penalty killer. Broke NHL's longstanding sunglasses barrier.

The latest: Changes to the Capitals roster are inevitable. Washington is a, um, cap team, but a handful of regulars — Alzner included — will be looking for raises.

Evgeny Kuznetsov (RFA) should grab the biggest slice of pie, but is there room to keep the defensively responsible Alzner and the younger Dmitry Orlov (RFA again)? Oh, yeah. Now Shattenkirk is here too. Does Washington consider buying out the pricey Brooks Orpik, 36, whose lack of foot speed is becoming noticeable?

Sportsnet's Nick Kypreos reported in the winter that Alzner is asking for \$5.5 to \$6 million per season from Washington in light of the hefty Brent Burns deal. Elliott Friedman expected Canada's western clubs to take a run at Alzner this summer. The Maple Leafs are another team to keep an eye on here.

Alzner broke his right hand blocking a shot against the Leafs in Round 1 of the playoffs and won't need surgery. He said he's open to re-signing in Washington but sounds like a man prepared to move on.

"This is a pretty good window that we had here, and unfortunately it's not there anymore," Alzner told reporters in May.

6. Joe Thornton

Age on July 1, 2017: 37

Position: Centre

2016-17 salary cap hit: \$6.75 million

Bargaining chips: Slam-dunk Hall of Famer. One of the greatest passers to ever pick up a hockey stick. World Cup champion and Stanley Cup finalist. Dope beard. Our pick for the 101st greatest player of all time.

The latest: The love affair between Jumbo Joe and San Jose should continue, perhaps at the expense of fellow UFA forward Patrick Marleau. It's just too hard to imagine him elsewhere.

Even after having his captaincy stripped, the man is comfortable playing where he is, thank you. Expect a short-term, bonus-laden deal with a full no-move clause at a reasonable rate, perhaps in the \$4.5 million range. Another 50-point season and an incredible 43 assists (easily tops in this UFA class) say Thornton is still worth the big bucks, even though his goal total was alarmingly low (seven, and a few were empty-netters).

A trooper of the highest order, Thornton battled through playoff games despite needing surgery on his ACL and MCL.

No extension talks were held in-season, but upon the Sharks' elimination, Thornton said he wants to remain in San Jose and sees the Sharks as a Stanley Cup-calibre club.



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"There's no hurry [to re-sign], but yeah, I want to be back," Thornton said (watch below).

Pierre LeBrun reported in January that Thornton was looking for a three-year deal but that the Sharks would prefer to go year-to-year. Settle on two?

7. Michael Stone

Age on July 1, 2017: 27

Position: Defence

2016-17 salary cap hit: \$4 million

Bargaining chips: Right shot. Top-four minutes. Well under 30 years old. Should provide good value with his low name recognition.

The latest: Traded from lottery-bound Arizona to the Flames as a deadline rental, Stone said he liked the fit in Calgary.

Definitely a candidate for re-signing, since Calgary will be happy to have veterans Dennis Wideman (\$5.25 million cap hit) and Deryk Engelland (\$2.9 million) off the books. But there will be other suitors if Stone wishes to test the market.

"It's a great place for me and my family, and I think it's a good situation with the team," Stone told the Calgary Sun. "The guys are awesome, and it's going to be a good team. We have some young players that are going to turn into some stars in this league. It's something that you should want to be a part of."

Bizzare thing about this year's UFA D class of RHD... Michael Stone is probably going to get more money than Cody Franson.

— Stephen Burtch (@SteveBurtch) May 5, 2017

8. Sam Gagner

Age on July 1, 2017: 27

Position: Centre

2016-17 salary cap hit: \$650,000

Bargaining chips: Incredible production for low cost. Coming off first career 50-point season. Tied career high with 18 goals.

The latest: One of the best bargains in the NHL, the versatile Gagner boosted the Columbus power play and is deserving of a significant raise and a multi-year deal after signing a one-year contract for peanuts (relatively speaking) as a UFA last summer.

Upon the Jackets' playoff elimination, Gagner told The Dispatch his representatives have had preliminary talks with the club about a new deal.

"I thought it was a good fit," Gagner said. "It's a team that's on the rise, and as the year went on I felt like more and more a part of things and a big part of things. Yeah, I'd like to come back, but we'll see where things go."

The season is over too early, but I want to say thanks to all of the @BlueJacketsNHL fans for being so supportive all year! #CBJ

— Sam Gagner (@89SGagner) April 23, 2017

9. Patrick Eaves

Age on July 1, 2017: 33

Position: Right wing

2016-17 salary cap hit: \$1 million

Bargaining chips: Can play both wings and up and down the lineup. Enjoying the most productive season of his career. An out-of-nowhere 32-goal scorer.

The latest: With no contract negotiations started in Dallas, Eaves wasn't surprised to see himself traded to Anaheim at the deadline. He's fit in nicely on captain Ryan Getzlaf's wing, scoring 11 goals in his first 20 games as a Duck. Simple math will make it difficult for Bob Murray to re-sign Eaves unless he loses, say, forward Jakob Silfverberg in the expansion draft.

Some sense of "buyer beware" here, as Eaves had only reached the 30-point mark once before his 2016-17 breakout. He suffered a significant injury to his right leg in the Edmonton series that has limited his playoff action.

Chatted with Patrick Eaves. Slow going with recovery and no timeline. Holding out hope for return. Also loves Legos. We'll write about it.

— Eric Stephens (@icemancometh) May 14, 2017

10. Justin Williams

Age on July 1, 2017: 35

Position: Right wing

2016-17 salary cap hit: \$3.25 million

Bargaining chips: Mr. Game 7. A confident leader who's survived hockey's good, bad and ugly. Production rebounded in Washington with back-to-back 20-goal seasons.

The latest: The veteran Williams was a stellar fit on Washington's second line, averaging 50 points over two seasons in D.C., and he chipped in 16 points in 25 playoff games there.

Like all Capitals UFAs, Williams said he would like to return, the added: "Saying something doesn't mean it's going to happen." Changes are coming, and what contender wouldn't want to add Williams in 2017-18?

Whoa, this quote from Justin Williams: "I wanted to be celebrating with a trophy, but now my memories of this team here are disappointing."

— Katie Brown (@katiebhockey) May 12, 2017

11. Radim Vrbata

Age on July 1, 2017: 36

Position: Right wing

2016-17 salary cap hit: \$1 million

Bargaining chips: Another 20-goal campaign proves he can put the puck in the net. Excellent shootout man. Has already lowered salary expectations. Skates 17 minutes a night.

The latest: A brilliant summer pickup, Vrbata surprisingly went unmoved at the trade deadline despite reported interest from teams such as Boston, Ottawa and Florida. The only members of the 2017 UFA class to put up more points this season are Oshie and Shattenkirk.

Vrbata has spent the bulk of his career in the desert, so there's a chance he re-signs with more term and dollars. "This is where we want to be as a family. This is where I want to be as a player," Vrbata said at season's end.

Coyotes GM John Chayka said he set threshold for trading Radim Vrbata. It wasn't met. Happy to keep Vrbata. Chance to re-sign him in summer.

— Craig Morgan (@craigsmorgan) March 1, 2017

12. Patrick Marleau

Age on July 1, 2017: 37

Position: Left wing

2016-17 salary cap hit: \$6.67 million

Bargaining chips: Cagey veteran who will hit the 1,500-game mark next season. Member of the 500 Goal Club. Stays healthy and important. Scored more goals this season (27) than in previous two.

The latest: With a good chunk of San Jose's young forwards Melker Karlsson and Joonas Donskoi receiving pay bumps, it may be difficult for GM Doug Wilson to keep both Thornton and Marleau in teal.

Marleau requested a trade in the past, but has excelled at age 37. Hard to imagine him with another team; also hard to imagine another big-money commitment from San Jose. Wilson says any contract talks with Marleau and Thornton will remain private, and Marleau said he'd prefer a multi-year deal.

"I still feel like I got another, at least, five good years in me," Marleau said. "Maybe more."



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Marleau scored in each of the Sharks' final three playoff games despite playing with a broken thumb.

"I love those guys," teammate Logan Couture said of Thornton and Marleau. "They play hard. If you guys only knew what they play through. The respect level that I have for those two guys is just through the roof."

SHARKS EXIT INTERVIEW: Patrick Marleau - "Five good years in me." #sjssharks pic.twitter.com/MDxZhQGy3

— NBCS Sharks News (@NBCSSharks) April 27, 2017

13. Andrei Markov

Age on July 1, 2017: 38

Position: Defence

2016-17 salary cap hit: \$5.75 million

Bargaining chips: A top-pair defenceman since forever. Completed his 11th NHL season scoring between 30 and 64 points.

What the future holds: Yes, Markov is old. But he still ranks second among all impending UFA D-men in points (36) and time on ice (21:50). He's old but fit. We see no reason why the franchise that drafted him nearly 20 years ago wouldn't re-sign him to a one- or two-year extension to help ease the development of Montreal's young defencemen.

Markov expressed a desire to stay in Montreal "for the rest of my life" on garbage-bag day, and Bergevin said he has no plans to blow the team up. Good bet he re-signs.

14. Ryan Miller

Age on July 1, 2017: 36

Position: Goaltender

2016-17 salary cap hit: \$6 million

Bargaining chips: Consistent resume as a proven No. 1 goalie: 709 games, 358 wins, 39 shutouts. Posted a .914 save percentage behind one of the NHL's weaker blue lines this year.

The latest: The Canucks and Miller have not closed the door on an extension. Miller reportedly was not interested in a deadline move to Alberta.

If a deal in Vancouver can't be worked out, a handful of other teams — such as Philadelphia, Buffalo, Winnipeg, Calgary and Vegas — could look to add a goaltender.

"I have had a season-ending talk with Ryan. He's taking some time off. He will start thinking about his future in mid-May," Miller's agent, Mike Liut, told News 1130's Rick Dhaliwal.

Liut says he will talk with gm Jim Benning at the NHL Combine at the end of the month and go from there. #Canucks

— Rick Dhaliwal (@DhaliwalSports) May 4, 2017

Thank you @Canucks fans. Have a great summer in your beautiful city.

— Ryan Miller (@RyanMiller3039) April 13, 2017

15. Michael Del Zotto

Age on July 1, 2017: 27

Position: Defence

2016-17 salary cap hit: \$4 million

Bargaining chips: Skates 19:30 a night. Proven defencemen this young are few and far between. May still have another 40-point season in him.

The latest: Some nights Del Zotto looks like one of the best Flyers on the ice; other times he's been scratched. Consistency is an issue here, but the Ontario native will surely get some looks. He can move the puck.

Though he kept Del Zotto at the deadline, GM Ron Hextall reportedly told the defenceman that the Flyers will be moving on to give younger players more ice time. Another down year offensively (five goals, 18 points) and the fact he's been a minus player five years running could spell a pay cut.

MDZ said Hexy thanked him for his time and told him the organization is going younger on the back end. Said it was a "treat" to play here.

— Sam Carchidi (@BroadStBull) April 11, 2017

Weekend morning core. #abs #coreworkout #gym @studiolagree

A post shared by Michael Del Zotto (@mdzofficial) on May 13, 2017 at 3:28pm PDT

16. Kris Russell

Age on July 1, 2017: 30

Position: Defence

2016-17 salary cap hit: \$3.1 million

Bargaining chips: Blocks shots all day, every day. Has been a nice addition to the Oilers blue line, despite his critics. Coming off a reasonable contract after setting too-high a price at the outset of 2016's free agency. Led all Edmonton skaters in ice time 5-on-5.

The latest: Some unconfirmed reports that the Oilers have already looked at signing Russell to an extension. The second-pair, stay-at-home defenceman is still a source of heavy online debate, but there's no question he's enjoyed a nice season. He logs more than 21 minutes a night, and though he won't pile up points (13), coaches continue to trust him in the D-zone. He'll doubtlessly be looking for more money and more term than last time on the open market.

"They showed faith in me by going out and signing me there, so obviously I'd like to come back, but there's a business side to this and you never know what's going to happen," Russell told reporters.

"They have to make decisions too, the brass here. I'm an Oiler and I'm not going to look past that until I'm told otherwise or come July 1 maybe, but I want to be here."

17. Thomas Vanek

Age on July 1, 2017: 33

Position: Right wing

2016-17 salary cap hit: \$2.6 million

Bargaining chips: Nine-time 20-goal guy. Easily one of the most productive offensive players on the open market. Accustomed to changing teams. Can play both wings and boost your power play.

The latest: A strong showing on a bad Red Wings team earned Vanek a trade to Florida, only to see him score twice through 20 games as a Panther, although he did have eight assists. This has rental written all over it, as the Panthers have a good young core of forwards and are unlikely to outbid others to keep Vanek next season.

Would be surprised to see any team go long term here, but Vanek's scoring touch should earn him another shot in the league. The Red Wings didn't rule out bringing him back when he was rented to Florida.

Controversial #FlaPanthers opinion: I'd be okay with signing Vanek to a one year, \$1m/1.1m, incentive laden contract for next year.

— Javi Alonso (@Javs42) March 8, 2017

Other notable UFAs in 2017: Dmitry Kulikov, Shane Doan, Jaromir Jagr, Brian Gionta, Brian Elliott, Steve Mason, Mike Fisher, Ales Hemsky, Trevor Daley, Brian Campbell, Chris Kunitz, Jonathan Bernier, Jarome Iginla, Patrick Sharp, Ron Hainsey, Mark Streit, Cody Franson, Chad Johnson, Darcy Kuemper, Drew Stafford, Nick Bonino, Kris Versteeg, Johnny Oduya, Brenden Smith

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Sportsnet.ca / The Senators playoff run is still hard to believe, even for its fans

Tao of Stieb May 15, 2017, 2:44 PM

If the hockey world remains dubious at the Ottawa Senators' playoff success thus far, the team's own fanbase finds its own enthusiasm mixed with a sense of disbelief.

While there are the varying perspectives from within Sens fandom that you'd expect with any franchise — from the true believers to the angry curmudgeons — the broad sense is that few would have made a strong



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argument for what the Senators have achieved, and many have been left waiting for the inevitable end to the season.

Before last week, it would have been hard to identify a Senators team that had achieved this much, but who were less beloved, even among their own partisans. Listen in over the Senators Twittersphere, and you can still sense that the roster, as constructed, is filled with question marks, also-rans and underachievers.

Few receive more scorn than the second pairing on defence. With veteran Dion Phaneuf skating alongside youngster Cody Ceci for most of the minutes when Erik Karlsson isn't on the ice, it's difficult to determine which of the two are more likely to be the target of outsized social media exasperation. Even in an Eastern Conference Final game, fans vent nearly every time the duo step on the ice, and the fact that both played rather well in that game barely slows the antipathy.

And overtime hero Bobby Ryan? He may have begun to win back many of the fans who wondered how the Senators attempted to replace a franchise icon with him by trading their top young player in Jakob Silfverberg, then doubled down by giving him a large piece of their relatively small payroll over a long period of time. Oddly enough, it was only once many had almost completely written him off that he began to receive the sort of love reserved for scrappy third-liners who emerge to have big moments.

Speaking of third-liners, the Senators have more than their share. If the past glories of the team were defined by elite offensive all-stars such as Marian Hossa, Daniel Alfredsson, and Jason Spezza, this team is comprised of an awful lot of interchangeably anonymous forwards who seem as apt to sit in the press box as they are to be contributing with significant time on the ice. That's not to diminish the contributions of Tom Pyatt, Ryan Dzingel or Zack Smith, but it seems like a lot of the same sort of player with the same marginal skillset spread throughout the lineup.

It's not unfair to say that some in the fanbase might in fact have a level of concern that given the flaws in how they saw the team constructed, such a surprisingly legitimate Stanley Cup run starts to validate those moves and empower the front office in the coming years. The Senators' player personnel leadership, essentially unchanged over the past decade and currently led by general manager Pierre Dorion, has had a habit of bewildering fans with their transactions.

An uncharitable assessment of that approach would be that the team holds young players back at the start of their careers before casting them off before they have the opportunity to reach their peak. If fans have had a difficult time embracing Derick Brassard or Alex Burrows, it could be some concern over what those deals will soon mean for a team that is among the oldest in the league.

It's worth recalling that in the final weeks of the season, the Senators were tooth and nail to make the playoffs. They lost nine of 11 games over one stretch in March, before taking three of their last four games to get into the playoffs, and moreover, enjoy beneficial seeding within the tournament.

It's also a team that gave up more goals than they scored – the only such team to make the playoffs – so for whatever magic these past three weeks of playoff hockey have offered, it's still a team that will need to improve before next year.

This isn't intended to diminish the fun that has overtaken the city, and the sudden belief in this edition of the Senators. It's likely that Ottawa and the broader hockey world are beginning to appreciate a different side of players like Kyle Turris, or reveling in the growing mythology around Jean-Gabriel Pageau.

But in all honesty, you'd have few apart from the most fanatical partisans who foresaw this playoff run in this team.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 05.16.2017

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Sportsnet.ca / Bobby Ryan on the dangers of underestimating the Senators

Emily Sadler May 15, 2017, 4:07 PM

"Man, this must be a horrific place to play."

That was Bobby Ryan's first impression of Ottawa during his one-and-only game in Canada's capital as a member of the Anaheim Ducks.

A lot has changed since Ryan's Newport Beach days, of course. The 30-year-old winger has been all-in on Ottawa since he arrived via trade four years ago.

"When I was traded here a few years ago, I admit I had a pretty warped view of what I was getting myself into," Ryan wrote in a piece published on The Players' Tribune Monday. "But once I actually got here, and explored the city — really explored it — I fell in love. The architecture, the culture, and really just passion these people have for hockey and life in general has made it an amazing place to live. That's why I didn't really hesitate when I signed a long-term deal [in 2014] to stay here."

Ryan learned long ago not to underestimate Ottawa, but the rest of the hockey world is still learning that lesson even as the Senators make a deep run this post-season all the way to the final four.

Overtime hero Bobby Ryan has a message for @Senators fans: <https://t.co/rMej3VyRtt pic.twitter.com/n6ll39Rwc3>

— The Players' Tribune (@PlayersTribune) May 15, 2017

"It never clicked with me until recently how the way I had underestimated Ottawa because I was only viewing it on the surface level is not too different from the way the rest of the hockey world has kind of written us off throughout the playoffs," Ryan wrote. "Just like our team, Ottawa is only appreciated if you look a layer below the surface. When you look at this place with an open mind, you grow to realize what makes it special."

What makes the Senators special is three-fold: consistent goaltending in Craig Anderson, a regimented group of forwards taking a goaltending approach to the game, and Erik Karlsson—who Ryan calls "the best hockey player in the world" this post-season.

From 2013: Bobby Ryan opens up to @GareJoyceNHL about his lost childhood on the run from the FBI. <https://t.co/jLmJzucp0R pic.twitter.com/phG02Dz4WX>

— Sportsnet (@Sportsnet) May 14, 2017

This change among the forward group, implemented by head coach Guy Boucher in his first season at the helm, meant fewer highlight-reel goals from snipers and more gritty goals. Or, in Ryan's case, fewer goals altogether.

His 13 goals and 12 assists in 62 regular season games was his lowest career total for a full season, and invited plenty of criticism—on Twitter, in the media, and even from "honest" fans at the grocery store.

But don't call it a slump.

"Yes, I know I didn't score as many goals this season as I have in the past. Yes, I've gone stretches where, if you looked at a score sheet, you probably would have had a hard time telling I'd been on the ice at all. I get it. Sometimes, I was frustrated too," Ryan wrote. "But whenever I got down this year I just had to remind myself that this was by design."

Ryan has seen more of the spotlight during the playoffs, with five goals and six assists through 13 games so far.

Bobby Ryan becomes the first player in #Sens history to score multiple OT goals in a single postseason

— Sportsnet Stats (@SNstats) May 14, 2017

Look for that playing style to be taken up a notch Monday night in Game 2 of the Eastern Conference Final against the Pittsburgh Penguins.

Sportsnet on Twitter

LIVE TONIGHT: #StanleyCup Playoffs - @Senators vs. @penguins Game 2 - 8pm ET / 5pm PT - CBC, #RGCL, SN NOW. <https://t.co/WK1t6wnN5I>

Here's what else Ryan said in the Players' Tribune piece:

On Boucher's message to him during training camp:

"He told me that if our team was going to succeed, we needed reliable 'net guys.' For his system to work, he needed players who could do the dirty work in front of the goalie and behind the net in order to set up chances. I agreed with it, but didn't realize he was implying that he wanted me to step into that role. Once training camp began and he started putting me in those situations, it became clear that I was going to need to alter my game pretty drastically."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 16, 2017

On Craig Anderson's funny locker-room presence:

"He's the guy in the locker room who keeps everyone loose. He has this really dry sense of humor. He'll almost go down the line chirping every single guy in the room — before delivering a heaping helping on himself so nobody gets left out."

On Erik Karlsson's dominance:

"I'm not going to mince words here: This post-season, Erik Karlsson has been the best hockey player in the world. There's not another guy I'd rather have on our team. He's elevated his game to another level entirely."

On GM Pierre Dorion's No. 1 question for his players:

"Pierre had one more message for us, one that's become more and more relevant the longer we keep playing: Why not us? Why not now?"

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Sportsnet.ca / Ben Bishop: Vegas 'thinking younger' for goalie search

Newest Stars goalie Ben Bishop joins HC @ Noon to discuss why Dallas was the best fit for him, and why he was a little surprised when he got the call in L.A.

Luke Fox

When discussing the path that led him to join the Dallas Stars, Ben Bishop dropped an interesting little nugget on the Vegas Golden Knights, with whom he did not come close to signing.

"There was some talk of it," Bishop told Hockey Central at Noon Monday. "From what I heard, they were thinking younger and a different direction. They're going to be a competitive team.

"I definitely would've thought of the option if it was there."

Hockey Central At Noon

Ben Bishop: Stars a good fit for both sides

Originally aired May 15 2017

The newest member of the Dallas Stars' \$15.3-million crease, Bishop should hardly be considered an old goaltender at age 30.

He's younger than Pittsburgh's Marc-Andre Fleury, 32, who has long been rumoured as a prime candidate to start the Golden Knights' first NHL game. (It's much too early to count Fleury out of the running yet; the man's busy trying to win another Stanley Cup ring.)

Also older than Bishop are unrestricted free agents Brian Elliott, 32, and Ryan Miller, 36. Both No. 1 goaltenders could change sweaters in the summer's game of musical creases.

So, if the Golden Knights are indeed thinking younger (and, let's be honest, cheaper), which twenty-something goalie(s) could they be targeting?

There are free-agent options under 30, should Vegas GM George McPhee go that route.

Mike Condon, 27, played stellar in long-term relief for Ottawa this season but won't unseat Craig Anderson for the No. 1 spot there.

Jonathan Bernier, 28, bounced back from a brutal final season in Toronto to post a phenomenal record in Anaheim (21-7-2, .915 save percentage). He remains behind John Gibson on the Ducks' depth chart.

Steve Mason, 28, appears to be moving on from Philadelphia, but he had a winning record (26-21-3) for a poor defensive team and would likely be willing to take a slight pay cut from his \$4.1 million rate to have a chance to seize a No. 1 spot somewhere.

The more interesting, if less proven, candidates for Knighthood will be found in the expansion draft.

Washington's 25-year-old Philipp Grubauer shone under his increased backup role, posting a .926 save percentage in 24 appearances. McPhee will face a difficult decision: Take Grubauer or speedy defenceman Nate Schmidt off the Capitals?

We wonder if Caps GM Brian MacLellan pushes McPhee toward Grubauer, who wants a shot at a No. 1 role — something he'll never have playing behind Braden Holtby.

New York Rangers backup Antti Raanta, 28, is in a similar situation. He has great numbers as Henrik Lundqvist's backup (Raanta posted a .922 save percentage over 30 games), but he will never overthrow the King.

Does McPhee grab Raanta or cheap 27-goal winger Micheal Grabner instead?

Columbus Blue Jackets prospect Joonas Korpisalo, 23, and Edmonton's seldom-used Laurent Brossoit, 24, offer plenty of promise but little certainty. They are a couple of young goalies who could grow with the Knights over time.

Alternatively, McPhee could look to get creative here and use his cap and roster space to provide a landing spot for another GM's problem, orchestrating a trade in which he takes an expensive goalie off someone's hands for the price of a pick or prospect.

Potential trade steals include the Islanders' Jaroslav Halak, Detroit's Petr Mrazek of Jimmy Howard, Dallas's Antti Niemi or Kari Lehtonen, and Carolina's Cam Ward. Of that group, only Mrazek is in his 20s, however.

The options are plentiful, but Vegas's disinterest in Bishop suggests that McPhee may already have a tentative plan in place.

With so many moving parts, it should be fun to see how this all plays out.

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Sportsnet.ca / Down Goes Brown Weekend Wrap: Do Senators have '93 Canadiens magic?

Sean McIndoe

Every Monday, Sean McIndoe looks back at weekend play in the NHL and the league's biggest storylines. You can follow him on Twitter.

Faceoff: Road warriors

In the NHL playoffs, as the old saying goes, you're never truly in trouble until you lose one at home.

There's a corollary to that: If you lose two straight at home, you're probably screwed.

The Ducks were facing that fate last night, after dropping Game 1 against the Predators on Friday night. It looked like Nashville might head home with a 2-0 series lead; the Predators held a two-goal lead after just 10 minutes, and led 3-2 midway through the second. But the Ducks stormed back, helped along by an uncharacteristically shaky outing from Pekka Rinne.

The two teams will now head to Nashville tied at a game apiece, with the series resuming tomorrow night.

The Penguins will be looking to follow the Ducks' lead tonight, as they host the Senators in what feels close to a must-win game. The high-powered Pens couldn't get much going in Saturday's Game 1, trailing 1-0 for most of the night before Evgeni Malkin tied it up late to briefly wake up a largely comatose Pittsburgh crowd. That gave the Penguins an opportunity to steal a win in overtime, but instead it was Bobby Ryan who capped it off for the Senators.

Game 2 goes tonight, and a Senators win would send them back to Ottawa with a shot at a sweep. The Senators head into this one having won five of seven on the road in this year's post-season.

On to the weekend's power rankings...

Top Five

Celebrating the players, teams, storylines and themes that have had the best week.

5. The Ryan Kesler vs. Ryan Johansen rivalry: The NHL playoffs are always better with a little bad blood mixed in, and the Nashville/Anaheim series is providing plenty early on. Much of it has come courtesy Kesler and Johansen, who've spent most of the first two games matched up against each other.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 16, 2017

Things boiled over last night, with Johansen ripping on Kesler after the game. The mini-rant came after he appeared to be on the receiving end of a Kesler elbow, among other battles, and at one point included Johansen telling reporters that "I don't know how you can cheer for a player like that."

You can understand Johansen's frustration, but you have to think those sorts of comments are music to Kesler's ears. For the record, he was relatively complimentary of Johansen immediately after the game. But Kesler has been down this playoff road a few times before, and he knows how to get under someone's skin. He's apparently already there with Johansen, and there are still up to five games left to go.

4. Ben Bishop: The Dallas Stars got a jump on the off-season by locking down the first big-name UFA of the summer, signing Bishop to a six-year deal worth \$29.5 million after acquiring his rights from the Kings.

The deal represents a pay cut for Bishop, who'll average about a million dollars less per season than he did on his last contract. But the term will more than make up for that; Bishop is 30 years old and coming off an injury-plagued season, and the market hasn't been especially kind to goalies in recent years. The track record for bigger goalies aging well isn't great, so getting a six-year commitment from a team is a clear win for Bishop.

From the Stars' perspective, Bishop is a clear upgrade at a position that's been a problem for years. He didn't come cheap (and they also had to give up a fourth-round pick to acquire his rights), but at some point GM Jim Nill needed to address his goaltending issues. There's an excellent chance that the contract comes back to bite the Stars by the end, but right now Nill has a potential Cup contender in place, and going another season with the status quo wasn't an option. Let's tentatively call this one even from a Dallas perspective, at least until we see how they wriggle out from Kari Lehtonen and/or Antti Niemi's contracts.

3. That Bobby Ryan to Jean-Gabriel Pageau no-look pass play: Once might be a fluke, but twice is a pattern. They pulled it off against the Rangers last round, and on Saturday they opened the scoring by hooking up on a very similar play against Pittsburgh.

Might want to scout that one, Penguins.

2. Tools of the trade: Five of the Predators' six goals in the conference final have been scored by players that GM David Poile brought in via trades, including James Neal's overtime winner in game one. Meanwhile, Anaheim's leading playoff goal-scorer is Jakob Silfverberg, who they acquired in a trade with the Senators four years ago. The player Silfverberg was dealt for is Bobby Ryan, who had the overtime winner on Saturday. And the only Penguins' goal in that game was set up by some nice board play from Ron Hainsey, who they picked up at this year's trade deadline.

The lesson, as always: If your favourite team's GM is still trying to tell you that trading is too hard in today's NHL, he's not doing his job properly.

1. Ottawa overtime: This is starting to get a little bit of a 1993 Habs vibe, isn't it?

After Saturday's Game 1 win, the Senators have now won six overtime games in seven attempts. That's not quite within range of Montreal's infamous 10-of-11 stretch that culminated in Canada's last Stanley Cup, but it's getting there. And the Senators might be getting to a Stanley Cup final of their own if it keeps up.

There's always an element of luck involved in sudden death, but the Senators have earned their wins. They've outshot their opponents 52-31 in the seven overtimes, including three games in which they didn't allow a single shot after regulation. They've had winners from five different players, with Ryan pulling double duty, and Craig Anderson is putting up a tidy .968 save percentage in extra time.

By the way, the Senators seem to prefer working overtime on weekends – all six of their Friday, Saturday and Sunday games have gone to sudden death. Plan accordingly for Friday night's Game 4 in Ottawa, and Sunday afternoon's game five in Pittsburgh... if necessary.

Bottom Five

A look at the week's biggest underachievers.

5. Power plays: It's been a rough start for conference-final power-play units; in the weekend's three games, teams combined to go just 1-for-21.

The power-play struggles aren't new for the Ducks, who are clicking at just over 14 per cent since the start of the post-season; Sami Vatanen's goal last night was Anaheim's first with the man advantage in over two weeks, dating back to Game 2 against the Oilers.

The Senators haven't scored on the power play in six straight games of their own. And the Penguins' slumping power play may have cost them Game 1, as the Senators took four minors in the opening period but still managed to escape with a 1-0 lead.

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4. Coaching longevity: Just over three years ago, the Predators fired Barry Trotz and replaced him with Peter Laviolette. Three years doesn't seem all that long, but in this year's playoffs it's enough to make Laviolette the longest-serving coach left standing. And it's not all that close.

Laviolette's stint behind the Nashville bench make him the only remaining coach who even has two full years with his current team. Mike Sullivan was hired midway through last season, while Guy Boucher and Randy Carlyle both came aboard last off-season. We often hear about new GMs needing three-to-five years to put their plan in place, but when it comes to coaching, a new voice can apparently turn things around quickly.

Meanwhile, of the eight NHL coaches who have been behind a team's bench three years or longer, only Laviolette remains. Three others – Trotz, Alain Vigneault and Joel Quenneville – are already out, while a surprising four – Paul Maurice, Bill Peters, Jon Cooper and Dave Tippett – didn't even make it all.

3. The case of the phantom whistle: Midway through the second period of Saturday's game, the Senators put the puck into the Penguins' net after it appeared Marc-Andre Fleury had momentarily had it covered. After a brief review, the goal was waved off, with the referee explaining only that "the play had been whistled dead."

Except it hadn't. Replays were clear: The puck was in before the whistle.

The problem here isn't the dreaded "intent to blow" rule, which says that a referee just thinking about blowing the whistle is good enough. Plenty of fans hate that rule, but there are times when it can make sense. And it's not even necessarily about the Senators getting robbed, because Fleury really did seem to have the puck covered, and the Penguins might have won a goaltending interference challenge even if the goal had initially been allowed to count. Ultimately, no-goal was probably the right call, at least according to the current rules.

But part of having a replay system is explaining what's being looked at and why the call is being changed or not changed. If you're going to make the fans at home and (especially) in the building sit around and wait for a review, the least you can do is offer up some detail. The NFL has some of the most incomprehensible replay rules in sports, but at least they try to have their officials take a moment to break down what they saw.

In the NHL, we just get "the play had been whistled dead," even though we just saw a replay that made clear that it wasn't. That's not good enough. It would almost be better to go to MLB's system and just signal yes/no and be done with it – at least they don't mislead you.

The NHL's official explanation of the play above, released on their website, is that the play wasn't even reviewable in the first place (even though they still label it a "video review"). If that's the case, then say so. If we're going to spend up to five or 10 minutes standing around waiting for some of these reviews to take place, we can afford another few seconds to explain the call.

The Jeff Blair Show

Glenn Healy: No clear favourites among NHL's final four

Originally aired May 15 2017

2. John Gibson: Gibson hasn't been especially sharp in this post-season. But he hit a new low last night when he appeared to completely lose track of the puck on Nashville's second goal. The end result looked like some sort of video-game AI glitch.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 16, 2017

You know you've had a rough night when the other goalie can let in the winning goal with his face and yours is still worse.

1. The coming Senators backlash: No, it's not quite here yet, at least not in full force. But it's on the way. Give it until sometime this week.

Up until now, the Senators have been a hard team not to like. They've been an underdog, they're packed with inspiring stories, Erik Karlsson is all sorts of fun, and they have an uncanny knack for always playing close games. What's not to like?

But things change as the playoffs wear on, and a couple of factors are working against the Senators. For once, they're the last remaining Canadian team. That means we're starting to see silly calls for the entire nation to unite behind them, and that always rubs a lot of fans in the country the wrong way. Mix in a healthy dose of bitterness and old-fashioned jealousy, and a pushback from Canadian fans starts getting inevitable.

Then there's the team's defence-first style, which many fans around the league are getting a close look at for the first time. Guy Boucher's 1-3-1 doesn't always work the way he'd like – this team has played some pretty high-scoring games over this playoff run – but when it does, it can strangle the life out of a game. That's what happened for most of Saturday night, and if that was your first real look at the Senators, you might have come away dreading four more weeks of them.

Should Senators fans care about any of this? No. Will they? Probably. But either way, it's coming, if it's not here already. These days, even the best Cinderella stories seem to come with an expiration date.

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TSN.CA / Statistically Speaking: Kase pulls Ducks even

By Scott Cullen

Unheralded rookie Ondrej Kase contributes; Getzlaf piles on more points, Johansen, Vatanen and more in Scott Cullen's Statistically Speaking.

HEROES

Ondrej Kase - The rookie Ducks winger scored his first career playoff goal and had strong possession stats (19 for, 12 against, 61.3 CF%) in Anaheim's Game Two victory. It was Kase's first playoff point in his fifth career playoff game.

A seventh-round pick in 2014, 21-year-old Kase has 26 points (14 G, 12 A) in 39 AHL games over the past couple of seasons, and he had 15 points (5 G, 10 A) in 53 regular-season games for the Ducks.

Ryan Getzlaf - Anaheim's playmaking pivot put up three assists in a 5-3 Game Two win against Nashville. He had gone three games without a point, but now has 18 points (8 G, 10 A) in 13 playoff games.

ZEROES

Pekka Rinne - He was due for one of these, having stopped 95% of the shots sent his way so far in the playoffs, but the Predators goaltender did not look especially sharp in allowing four goals on 26 shots in a 5-3 Game Two loss at Anaheim. Hold off on the pitchforks, though, because Rinne still has a .942 save percentage in the playoffs.

Corey Perry - The Ducks right winger failed to generate a shot attempt in 14:25 of ice time in Game Two. He had six points (1 G, 5 A) in his previous five games.

Colin Wilson and Mike Fisher - Despite having team-best possession stats (21 for, 9 against, 70.0 CF%) the Predators forwards, along with Pontus Aberg, who was their most common linemate, were on for a pair of goals against in a 5-3 Game Two loss at Anaheim.

STANLEY CUP HALF FULL/HALF EMPTY

Ryan Johansen - Nashville's first-line centre opened the scoring and added an assist, putting up solid possession stats (13 for, 9 against, 59.1 CF%), but he was also victimized on Anaheim's second goal - with his stick out of the passing lane for just a moment, Johansen failed to prevent a pass from Rickard Rakell to Jakob Silfverberg, who was open at the back post.

Sami Vatanen - The Anaheim blueliner scored a crucial goal late in the first period, to get the Ducks back in the game, but he struggled possession-wise (6 for, 19 against, 24.0 CF%, 2-7 scoring chances).

SHORT SHIFTS

Predators RW Viktor Arvidsson contributed two assists in Game Two; he had one assist in his previous seven games...Predators RW James Neal scored a goal in Game Two, his fourth goal in the past five games...Ducks D Cam Fowler had a pair of assists in a 5-3 Game Two win over Nashville. He has seven points (1 G, 6 A) in nine playoff games...Ducks veteran C Antoine Vermette scored into the empty net to end Game Two, and he joined Vatanen and Kase as Ducks scoring their first goals in this year's playoffs.

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TSN.CA / Kessel ruins Sens' plan, ties series for Penguins

By Frank Seravalli

PITTSBURGH — Live by the sword, die by the sword.

The margin for error in the Stanley Cup playoffs is impossibly razor thin. It's even thinner when you're the Ottawa Senators, built to win on perfection, perfectly content to wait out a 1-0 win.

"It's no secret," Dion Phaneuf said. "We're comfortable in tight games."

Game 2 played out like a quintessential Guy Boucher game plan. The Senators had the Pittsburgh Penguins exactly where they wanted them - until they didn't. Heading into the third period, there were no goals on the board - for either team. Evgeni Malkin and Phil Kessel were yelling at each other on Pittsburgh's bench.

The Senators were one shot away from stealing both games on the road to start the Eastern Conference final. They seemed perfectly comfortable whichever way the blade sliced.

"That's how we played all year," Jean-Gabriel Pageau said. "We were in a good spot. You ask any team and they would say the same thing. That's the position we're comfortable to play in."

Hoping. Wishing. Praying.

If you threw out your calendar, you would've sworn it was mid-March with the Senators playing for an all-important point, rather than mid-May with a chance to take a series stranglehold home.

"Tonight, the bounce went on their side," Pageau said. "That's hockey, right?"

By the time Kessel broke the dam in the City of Bridges on a pass from Malkin - of all players - the Senators had sat back so long that they couldn't just flip the switch.

They didn't have a single shot on goal in the period when Kessel released his pent-up frustration on a put-back off a shin pad. They were sunk.

Marc-Andre Fleury shook his head when asked what he did while his teammates buzzed in the third period, the ice tilted heavily in Craig Anderson's direction.

"Wait," Fleury deadpanned, laughing, after his 10th career playoff shutout.

The Senators felt first-hand both the power and peril their style of play mandates. There is no middle ground, no grey area, in a sport full of it.

Yet, as the series shifts back to Canadian Tire Centre for Game 3 on Wednesday night, there are three different ways the Senators could feel about the first two.

The optimist would highlight that the defending Stanley Cup champion Penguins were limited to two goals in two games - and show the clip of Kessel and Malkin verbally sparring on the bench on a loop as proof that what they're doing is working.

The pessimist would say that the third period showed that the team with two Hart Trophy winners and a vaunted offensive attack is finally started to figure out and combat what the Sens were throwing at them.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 16, 2017

The realist would say we're down to a best-of-five series between two teams whose best players have yet to really impact a series yet, with a pair of goaltenders who have demonstrated they're up to the task.

"At the end of the day, we did our job here. We got one," Clarke MacArthur said. "To leave here with one, you always get greedy and want more. We're hockey players, but we're not that dumb. We knew we weren't going to get four in a row."

For the Senators, at least two wild cards remain in play which could flip this series on its head: the frustration the Penguins displayed for all to see, plus Pittsburgh's already thin lineup losing two more key pieces.

Justin Schultz, arguably the Penguins' No. 1 defenceman still standing, left Game 2 in the first period after an apparent shoulder injury on a hit from Mike Hoffman.

Pittsburgh was already without Kris Letang and Trevor Daley. Losing Schultz would leave the Pens with a defence led by Olli Maatta, Ian Cole, Ron Hainsey, Chad Ruhwedel and perhaps Mark Streit, who was a healthy scratch on Monday.

"They were down to five 'D' and we didn't take advantage of that," MacArthur said. "We put pucks where Fleury could play them and get them out of trouble. We didn't get it deep and go after it like we normally do."

The Pens also lost Bryan Rust to an apparent concussion after a thunderous, textbook hit from Dion Phaneuf. Rust was fourth on the team in scoring with five playoff goals this spring. Coach Mike Sullivan said he didn't have an injury update to offer on either Schultz or Rust post-game.

Sullivan also downplayed the interaction between Malkin and Kessel on the bench.

"It's an emotional game out there. Guys are heated," Sullivan said. "They're heated for all the right reasons, because they're invested, they want to win ... We call it a man's argument ... I have no problem with it. I think it brings juice to the bench."

The Senators created that juice, but they couldn't squeeze out one more win. Even if they established themselves as a formidable foe for the Penguins, they didn't have an answer with Game 2 on the line, the playoff guillotine falling on them this time after it mostly going the other way in the first 13 games.

"I think when you look at the two games, we played five good periods out of six," Boucher said. "They've got some good players that turned it on and they were hard to manage."

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TSN.CA / Stingy Sens aim to prolong Pens' frustration

By Frank Seravalli

PITTSBURGH — Zack Smith was searching for the right word to describe the attitude that the Ottawa Senators embody in Guy Boucher's disciplined system.

He paused.

"Stinginess," Smith said, "I guess would be a way to describe it.

It is a stinginess that the NHL hasn't seen since the New Jersey Devils of a decade gone. It can be an ugly way to play, but to the delight of fans in the Ottawa Valley, the Sens are proving its effectiveness.

Again.

The Pittsburgh Penguins knew what was coming against the Senators, yet by the end of Game 1, some of their stars were already showing visible signs of frustration from playing against the kind of staunch defensive front they haven't faced in two long playoff runs.

"We definitely noticed," defenceman Cody Ceci said of Pittsburgh's frustration. "That just means we're doing a good job. We try and take it with a grain of salt. We just kind of step back, keep playing the same way. Try not to focus on them too much, just focus on ourselves."

Most teams talk about focusing on themselves, but the Senators mean it. It's not hyperbole. Winger Bobby Ryan estimated that 80 per cent of

Ottawa's game plan revolves around their own approach, with only 20 per cent centred on their opponent.

Boucher said the Senators "didn't talk about Sidney Crosby once" before the series.

"It doesn't matter who we play against or how good they are, we know their strengths," Boucher said. "If we pay special attention to Crosby, [Evgenij] Malkin is going to give it to us. If we pay special attention to him, [Phil] Kessel's going to give it to us. They've got too many tools and players for us to start focusing on particular guys or start worrying about them every time they're on the ice. They're always on the ice."

Crosby was a non-factor on Saturday – limited mostly to the perimeter – partially because Ottawa was able to dictate the style of play. It's a methodical approach, featuring endless waves of soldiers who are all trained to execute the same way.

Boucher called it "pack mentality" defence.

"We're a very consistent team, I think, in the way we play," Smith explained. "It's no secret that the system we play in and the way we play, we don't give up a lot of chances. When we do, we have a solid goaltender right there."

Having just faced the New York Rangers in Round 2, the Senators were ready for the Penguins' speed. The Rangers are one of the faster teams in the NHL; the Penguins may think the game faster than any other team.

That left the Penguins to react with what head coach Mike Sullivan framed as hesitation. Pittsburgh has now lost four of their last six games.

"I don't think it was something that just happened [Saturday]," Sullivan said Sunday. "I think this is something that's crept into our game over the last few weeks and I think we've got to simplify our game a little bit and put more pucks at the net."

What Sullivan was preaching to his team on Sunday was patience, to "take what the game gives us." He said Ottawa's style of play is not "overly difficult" but "just a different challenge."

The Penguins did have significant possession and zone time advantages, as Sullivan said, but they weren't their typical dangerous selves outside of when they got set up on the power play in the first period. The Pens were outshot, 31-13, at even strength by Ottawa.

"It's going to be tight," Crosby said on Sunday. "They're pretty committed to keeping guys back. They're good in the neutral zone. They're a good defensive team. They play well as a unit. We've got to make sure we find ways to create down low."

Heading into Game 2 on Monday night, Boucher recognized the reality that the Sens aren't going to limit the Penguins to nothing. It's impossible he said, saying Pittsburgh is too good. They expect a punch back.

The question is whether the Penguins will try to change the approach that delivered them a Stanley Cup against an opponent they know won't back down.

This Eastern Conference final has become a battle of skill versus will.

"We believe in the way we play, and I'm sure they believe in the way they play," Crosby said. "We're not going to get into a game where we're sitting back waiting just like that ... so it's whoever's going to execute their game the best and most consistently."

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USA TODAY / Phil Kessel turns emotion into action in Pittsburgh Penguins' Game 2 win over Ottawa Senators

Kevin Allen, USA TODAY Sports Published 12:54 a.m. ET May 16, 2017

PITTSBURGH — Television cameras discovered a frustrated Phil Kessel on the bench ranting like a mad man during Game 2 of the Eastern Conference Finals.

As crazy as the scene looked to onlookers, Pittsburgh Penguins coach Mike Sullivan knew immediately that Kessel was where he needed to be.

"And Phil's an emotional guy," Sullivan said. "When he comes back to the bench, he wants a pass and if he doesn't get it, he lets a guy know. I



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have no problem with that. I don't think our team has any problem with that."

When Sullivan sees Kessel in lunatic mode, he knows he's fully invested in doing what needs to be done.

Kessel did transform emotion into action when he scored on his own rebound with 6:55 left in regulation to spark the Penguins to a 1-0 win against the Ottawa Senators. The win ties the series at 1-1 heading to Ottawa for Games 3 and 4 on Wednesday and Friday.

"When he plays with that fire, he's angry out there, and he's pretty tough to stop," Penguins center Matt Cullen said.

The Penguins, overrun by injuries, needed Kessel's offense and his game has been quiet of late. Before netting the game-winner in Game 2, Kessel had scored only once and registered only two points in his past six games.

It's not only goals the Penguins need from Kessel. They need his passion, spunk and emotional outbursts. He's their top-scoring winger, fire starter and court jester.

"I think our players get a kick out of him, quite honestly," Sullivan said.

Sullivan gives his players license to say what's on their mind during the game because he believes it raises the level of game awareness.

"Our coaching staff — we like the juice on the bench," Sullivan said. "I'd much rather have a bench that's invested in trying to win, with emotion and personality to it, than a group of guys that are flatlined."

The video of Kessel shows Kunitz laughing at Kessel's antics. After the game, Kunitz said he couldn't remember exactly what Kessel was raving about. Kessel couldn't recall either.

Rock, paper, scissors...

PHIL KESSEL LIGHTS THE LAMP!
#StanleyCuppic.twitter.com/N7XCCLWlftF

— NHL on NBC (@NHLonNBCSports) May 16, 2017

"Obviously it's an emotional game," Kessel said. "There are ups and downs. I think I yelled more than once."

Kunitz said players all "blow off steam" in different ways.

"Some guys like to talk, some guys like to yell out loud and some guys like to kick the boards," Kunitz said. "Whatever gets you back engaged is fine with us."

Kunitz said Kessel is a player who believes he's open all of the time, and that could have been the issue.

What didn't need to be said was that the Penguins needed to raise their performance level in Game 2 after losing Game 1.

Sullivan has said continually that the Penguins' strength is their resolve, their ability to dig deeper when they face adversity. That's where they were at in Game 2.

Already without injured defenseman Kris Letang and Trevor Daley, they lost Justin Schultz to injury in the first period of Game 2. They played with five defensemen most of the game. Already playing without injured forward Patric Hornqvist, they lost Bryan Rust to an injury in that same first period. Their status is still unknown.

"They've got some really good players who turned it on, and they were hard to manage," Ottawa coach Guy Boucher said.

Kessel put it a different way. "We stuck with it," he said. "Hung with it, and found a way. Pretty resilient. We've been there before."

It wasn't the first time Kessel became fully animated on the bench in this postseason. And it likely won't be the last if the Penguins get to the Stanley Cup Final.

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USA TODAY / Phil Kessel lifts Penguins to Game 2 win against Senators

Kevin Allen , USA TODAY

PITTSBURGH — Last year's playoff hero Phil Kessel scored with 6:55 left in regulation to give the Pittsburgh Penguins a 1-0 win against the Ottawa Senators to tie the best-of-seven Eastern Conference final at one game apiece.

"It was just one of those defensive battles where you didn't know what bounce is going to be the difference," Ottawa goalie Craig Anderson said.

Here's what you need to know:

The winner: Kessel, owning only two points in his past six games, scored on a drive from the slot after picking up his own rebound from a blocked shot. Evgeni Malkin drew the first assist, after finding Kessel as he crossed the blue line.

Pens owned the puck: The Senators didn't get a shot in the third period until 4:54 remained in regulation. Counting what happened in the second period, the Senators went 18:53 without a shot on goal. They only had seven shots in the third period and 23 in the game. The Penguins had 27 shots, but dominated five-on-five possession with 47 shot attempts compared to 29, according to hockeystats.ca.

"They did a pretty good in the neutral zone against us," Ottawa forward Clarke MacArthur said. "We got to have more pressure. We had it at the end of the game, but of course you will have it then."

Strong goaltending: Marc-Andre Fleury continues to be the Penguins' best player. He made a key save against Mike Hoffman in the closing minutes. He now has two two shutouts this postseason and 10 in his career.

More injuries: The Penguins, already playing without injured defenseman Kris Letang and Trevor Daley, lost defenseman Justin Schultz and winger Bryan Rust to injuries in the first period.

Schultz was their best offensive defenseman after Letang went down. He crashed hard into the back boards, and went to the dressing room with his right arm hanging down. He never returned to the game.

Minutes before, Rust was knocked out of the game by an open-ice hit by Senators defenseman Dion Phaneuf. He also didn't return.

Heavy hitting: Both teams played a physical style, but no one delivered more menacing blows than Phaneuf.

On one shift in the second period, Phaneuf posted hits against Jake Guentzel, Sidney Crosby and Conor Sheary, all members of Pittsburgh's No. 1 line. Sheary had replaced Rust on that line.

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USA TODAY / Penguins lose Justin Schultz, Bryan Rust to injuries early in Game 2

Kevin Allen , USA TODAY Sports Published 8:41 p.m. ET May 15, 2017

PITTSBURGH — The Pittsburgh Penguins, already playing without injured defensemen Kris Letang and Trevor Daley, watched defenseman Justin Schultz leave the game midway through the first period after crashing hard into the boards.

He was holding his arm still as he headed to the dressing room.

Earlier in the period, Penguins winger Bryan Rust, who plays on Sidney Crosby's line, went to the dressing room after being crushed by an open-ice hit from Ottawa defenseman Dion Phaneuf.

Phaneuf introducing himself to Rust. Boom. pic.twitter.com/nDkFyG0qsc

— Callum Fraser (@CallumFraser18) May 16, 2017

"We obviously have to adjust, hopefully we get these guys back fairly soon," Penguins coach Mike Sullivan told NBC Sports' Pierre McGuire during a between-the-bench interview. "In the meantime, we have to figure it out on the bench."

Their availability for the remainder of the game is unknown.

Schultz, who entered the game with eight points, has led the Penguins with an average of 21:10 minutes per game. Rust has five goals in the playoffs.

The Senators lead the Eastern Conference final series 1-0.



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"I like our pace," Sullivan said. "I think we are trying to play fast."

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USA TODAY / NHL playoffs 2017: Top five Conn Smythe contenders

Kevin Allen , USA TODAY Sports Published 4:06 p.m. ET May 15, 2017

With the NHL playoffs just past the midway point, it's not close to being clear which teams will reach the Stanley Cup Final. But players are emerging as top candidates to win the Conn Smythe as the MVP of the playoffs.

Here is the leader board as we work our way through the conference finals:

1. Defenseman Erik Karlsson, Ottawa Senators: His dazzling puck-moving ability is the primary reason why the Senators have surprised the hockey world by advancing to the Eastern Conference final.

He is 10th among scoring leaders with 13 points in 13 games. But his contributions go well beyond his offense.

He is averaging more than 29 minutes per game, and he's become a better defensive player under coach Guy Boucher's command. At five-on-five, he has been on the ice for 16 goals for and eight goals against, according to naturalstatstrick.com. (The Senators have scored 25 times and given up 26 goals at five-on-five altogether.) Karlsson also has the highest Corsi (56.2%) among all full-time defenseman still in the playoffs. He is second on the Senators with 27 blocked shots.

Five NHL legends to sit down for roundtable discussion

NHL playoffs: Penguins look to take more shots in Game 2 vs. Senators

2. Center Ryan Getzlaf, Anaheim Ducks: His formidable presence and leadership has helped the Ducks come from behind six times to win games in this postseason, including erasing a two-goal deficit Sunday to beat the Predators 5-3 in Game 2 of the Western Conference final.

He boasts 18 points, seven multi-point games and a +10 plus-minus. At 32, he's having the best all-around playoff run of his career.

Getzlaf is leading the Ducks in the grand tradition of Steve Yzerman or Mark Messier.

3. Goalie Marc-Andre Fleury, Pittsburgh Penguins: Pressed into service by Matt Murray's injury before Game 1, Fleury has played at a consistently high level throughout the postseason. He's been the Penguins' best player.

His .928 save percentage is higher than the .908 he posted when he was in net for the Penguins' 2009 Stanley Cup championship run.

4. Goalie Pekka Rinne, Nashville Predators: Despite coming off his worst game of the postseason, Rinne still owns the most impressive numbers among the playoff goalies.

At 34, Rinne has performed magnificently for the Predators. He boasts a 1.62 goals-against average and .942 save percentage. His save percentage is .948 in five-on-five situations.

5. Winger Bobby Ryan, Ottawa Senators: With almost half of the playoffs still left, there's time for others to improve their MVP chances. Ryan has caught everyone's attention with three game-winning goals, including two overtime winners. He's made memorable offensive plays in registering 11 points in 13 games.

Other less heralded players still in the hunt include Nashville defenseman Ryan Ellis, Ottawa two-way forward Jean-Gabriel Pageau or Pittsburgh goal-scoring leader Jake Guentzel.

And Pittsburgh's Evgeni Malkin and Sidney Crosby are always in striking distance.

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USA TODAY / Five NHL legends to sit down for roundtable discussion

Kevin Allen , USA TODAY ago

Famed broadcaster Mike Emrick admitted to "sleeplessness the night before" he sat for an NBC Sports Network roundtable interview with Sidney Crosby, Wayne Gretzky, Mario Lemieux, Bobby Orr and Jonathan Toews.

"With people of that stature you don't want to come out and lay an egg and not be ready and not have things that interest them," Emrick said.

As it turned out, the day was one of the easiest and most memorable assignments Emrick has ever had. The 30-minute program, entitled Game Changers, will be shown after Wednesday's Game 3 of the Pittsburgh vs. Ottawa Eastern Conference Final.

"There really wasn't a lot I had to do other than throw the ball out there and let them kick it around," Emrick told USA TODAY Sports.

Gretzky remembers watching the goal on television as a nine-year-old. He called it the "most famous goal that was ever scored in the National Hockey League."

Orr tells a story that every time he sees Blues goalie Glenn Hall, who gave up the goal, Hall says: "Is that the only goal you ever scored?"

"It was a lot of fun for me to just sit and listen. That was the best part. I was hoping they would enjoy each other's company, which they did," said Emrick who will miss his second consecutive game tonight because his voice has been impacted by a head cold.

Emrick said the only disappointment was running out of time before he ran out of questions. He had worked on memorable last questions and he never got to ask them.

"For example, my last question for Wayne was, I hear you won 23 cars," Emrick said. "Is that correct, and did you keep any of them?"

He wanted to ask Orr about being a bellman at a hotel when he was 12. He wasn't able to ask Orr on camera, but he asked him afterward. "He said: 'People took pity on me because I was a little kid and they wouldn't let me carry their bags,'" Emrick said.

Emrick is a lifelong Pittsburgh Pirates fan, and he wanted to ask Lemieux if planned to make another run at buying the Pirates, like he did in 2010.

But the questions Emrick did ask created entertaining television. This will rate as one Emrick's favorite assignments, he said.

Emrick walked onto the set next to Orr. "I said to him: 'If I had never done a Stanley Cup game in my life, this would be it for me. He laughed...to have all five of these guys in one room was pretty special for me.'"

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