



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 16, 2018



Finland tops US, Canada shuts out Germany at hockey worlds

Posted 4:56 p.m. yesterday
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By KAREL JANICEK, Associated Press

HERNING, Denmark — Finland handed the United States its first defeat at the ice hockey world championship in a 6-2 thumping on Tuesday.

Also, defending champion Sweden rallied from a goal down to edge Russia 3-1 in a battle for top spot in Group A in Copenhagen. The Swedes won all seven preliminary round games and will next play Latvia, which earned the last quarterfinal berth by edging Denmark 1-0.

The Finns supplanted the U.S. to top Group B in Herning, and will face Switzerland in the quarterfinals on Thursday. The Swiss clinched a quarterfinal spot by beating France 5-1 to finish fourth in Group A in Copenhagen.

Canada shut out Germany 3-0 to secure third place in Group B and set up a matchup against Russia.

"We didn't leave ourselves in a great spot after the group stage but we're going to have to play them at some stage," captain Connor McDavid said.

The Americans' first defeat in seven games dropped them to second in the group and a quarterfinal against the Czech Republic, the third team in Group A.

"It's not a good feeling losing," U.S. captain Patrick Kane said. "It could be good for us to make sure we won't deal with this again and stay positive. We're a good team, we've had a good tournament to this point."

"(The Czechs) have some talents, it will be a tough game against them."

Sebastian Aho scored a couple of opening-period goals for Finland and added one more into an empty net to finish the scoring to become the championship leader with nine goals and eight assists. Kane also has 17 points with six goals and 11 assists.

"We've played really well," Aho said. "We just try not to think who we play against, focus on our own system and play our game."

Kane got a power play goal to reduce the deficit to 4-1 in the final period. Derek Ryan added another one for the U.S.

Brayden Schenn gave Canada an early goal just 20 seconds into the game. Ryan Nugent-Hopkins made it 2-0 in the second and Tyson Jost sealed it in the third.

McDavid had two assists and goaltender Darcy Kuemper made 12 saves for his shutout.

"Everyone played hard and everyone played really responsible, so a good momentum for us," Kuemper said.

Mika Zibanejad levelled for Sweden midway through the second period after Kirill Kaprizov had put Russia ahead early. Rickard Rakell then put the Swedes ahead for good and Mattias Ekholm added the third into an empty net.

Gregory Hofmann, Enzo Corvi, Ramon Untersander, Kevin Fiala Simon Moser had a goal apiece for the Swiss. France replied with one from Guillaume Leclerc.

Also, Slovakia beat already relegated Belarus 7-4 in their last game.



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THE ATHLETIC

The Full 60 Q and A: Carolina Hurricanes VP of hockey ops Paul Krepelka

[By Craig Custance](#) May 15, 2018

That picture above isn't Paul Krepelka. It's Carolina forward Sebastian Aho, the only player on the roster that new Hurricanes owner Tom Dundon has declared untouchable in trade talks. The only photos available of Krepelka are either team mugshots that don't translate well as a featured photo or paparazzi pictures with Jenny McCarthy at the beach that we're not allowed to use. [True story.](#)

So you get Aho above.

But conversations with Krepelka are way more interesting, with all due respect to the young Finnish star. Krepelka was recently hired by Dundon to work in the hockey operations department where his primary responsibility is to do contracts and interpret the CBA. Krepelka spent years working with Bobby Orr as a player agent building the Orr Hockey Group where he represented high profile clients like the Staals and Taylor Hall before walking away from that job after burning out. We got into all of that in this week's episode of The Full 60, embedded below (or listen on [Apple Podcasts](#) and [Google Play Music](#)):

But for those who would rather read the highlights, here is a portion of the conversation, edited for length:

Craig Custance: I want to know everything about how this job came about. I knew you were trying to get into management. All of a sudden you disappeared from the hockey world and then years later there was a press release (announcing this hire in Carolina).

Paul Krepelka: Lazarus, back from the dead. It came out of nowhere. When I sold my share of the agency back to Ricky (Curran) and Bobby (Orr), I took some time, I had to do some personal stuff. I had a house taken care of. I was teaching a little bit at a sports management school, Endicott College, on the North Shore in Boston and coaching a high school hockey team. I was trying to get back into management, but I wouldn't say I was doing it 100 percent. ... I was reading what was going on down here (in Carolina) with the owner and what he was looking for. I said, 'You know what? Let me give it one shot.' I knew Donnie (Waddell) from a long time ago, we always had a really good relationship when he was back in Atlanta. I just shot him an email and said, 'Hey, I know he's turning some things over down there, if I can do anything, keep me in mind.' And he called me. We started talking. He was like, ... 'Your personality and his, you might hit it off.' Donnie and I had a few more conversations, I talked to Tom, he and I had a conversation. The whole thing took, I think, five days and it was done. It was a fit. It all came together literally out of nowhere and materialized.

CC: What's your official title?

Krepelka: I think my official title is vice president of hockey operations. I don't even know what titles mean. We're doing just about everything. My primary duty is contract negotiations and CBA stuff. It's a collaborative approach

they're doing down here. So we're all involved in everything. Going forward, other than the GM title, titles don't matter down here. It might stay that way, it might change to something. If it doesn't, who cares? That's not the point.

CC: I have so many questions about that setup down there. OK. You've known Don Waddell a long time, you had a relationship. When you start talking to (Carolina owner) Tom (Dundon) for the first time — he's a complete unknown in the hockey world. Everyone is still trying to figure out what's going on.

Krepelka: Trust me. That won't be for long.

CC: Really?

Krepelka: Oh yeah, he's into it. He's passionate. He's 24/7 gung-ho. He has his views on how things are going to be done. He sticks to it. He's interesting. He's not the conventional owner. He's going to ruffle some feathers down there, which is probably a good thing. In this league, a lot of it's been the same type of people all along. So it'll be interesting how people take to him. He's been a refreshing change for me. I think he's been great. He's hands-on. He has a view of the way things should be done, how he wants things done. Hopefully, it's going to be successful.

CC: Did you fly down there or was it over the phone? What were those first conversations like?

Krepelka: They were over the phone. Then I had one meeting with him down in Dallas, flew down there to meet him. We sat down for five or six hours.

CC: Five or six hours?

Krepelka: I can talk. I met him, I flew down in the morning. It was one of those fly down and fly backs. I get there at 11 or noon and I had an 8 or 9 o'clock flight back to Boston. We spent an afternoon talking about anything under the sun — his hockey team, players, contracts, my experience, just covered a lot. It was five or six hours. Enjoyed it and flew back and came back to Boston on a Thursday and flew down to Raleigh that Sunday and met Tom and Donnie down here again and finalized things. Finalized the contract, defined what they wanted in the role and moved forward.

CC: What was his vision? What sold you? He's doing things differently and that tends to create doubt immediately.

Krepelka: I was two weeks away from taking a high school athletic directors job. I would have been happy doing it. I'm a Boston cliché. I lived in the same hometown for 50 years. My buddies are the kids I went to elementary school with. Every Boston cliché, I am. I would have taken the athletic director job in my hometown and be happy doing it. When this opportunity came about, unless it was a complete disaster, I wasn't going to say no to it. You know what I mean? The thing that sold me was, No. 1 the opportunity. Two, I knew Donnie, I liked Donnie from years past, when I met Tom, I liked what he was doing. It's a collaborative approach.



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Everyone is involved in all the decisions. No decision is going to be made until the group consults on it. Obviously, he has final say, he's the owner and should have final say if he wants to do things a certain way.

Other than Donnie and Tom at the top, the chain of command after that — everything is open for discussion. They involve all the key guys in all the issues going on with player trades and contracts and things like that. I enjoy it. It's not one guy is doing one thing and one guy is making decisions. That's not what he wants to do and, apparently, that's not how he runs his businesses. It's different than the structure in most hockey organizations ... where there's a defined role and the GM has the final say and authority. Down here, it's a collaborative approach.

CC: Have you (negotiated) any contracts yet, now that you're on the other side?

Krepelka: Yeah, I just started doing them. And I already hate agents. Trust me when I say, I'm not kidding. I've started doing them now, we have a couple entry-level deals done. We're starting to work on trying to do extensions with some of the big guys. There are only a few contracts that are up we're digging into right now. It's still relatively early for those to get done. We're starting to dig into them a little bit. It's pretty funny trying to do deals with the old agents I used to be friends with, running around the rinks with. It's an interesting dynamic.

CC: I just pulled up the [Carolina CapFriendly page](#). Noah Hanifin would be a guy that would be a big (contract negotiation).

Krepelka: He's up. (Elias) Lindholm is up. I'm looking at it now. (Trevor) van Riemsdyk. There's a couple guys we might talk to extensions to like Aho and (Teuvo) Teravainen. Those guys we might entertain with extensions. We've got some guys in Charlotte whose contracts are up that are going to push for a job here. We have to get those done as well.

CC: Have you had to deal with anyone from the old agency? Any of the Orr guys?

Krepelka: No. That'll be fun. I've already told them I'm going to grind them to death. Ricky and I haven't dug into a contract, which would be pretty funny. We'll see how that goes. It won't be contentious at all, it'll be an odd dynamic for sure. It'll be good because we trust each other. No one is going to be trying to pull one over. I think the only guy they have down here is Cam Ward. They have Stallsy. I did Jordan's deal. He's got five years left on that.

CC: You did a nice job on that.

Krepelka: Yeah, that's not a bad one. Some of those deals I did are still out there lasting — good and bad. Some of them are still on the books with the teams. That'll be interesting for me when I see some of my old guys coming to the rink from various teams.

CC: Have you talked to Jordan yet?

Krepelka: Just through texts. He's back in T-Bay. When I got the job, I sent a text to him and his dad, Henry, and was like, 'The band is getting back together boys.' They loved it.

CC: The irony is, you're working for a small market team, every dollar is crucial. Maybe more than any agent I remember talking to, that drove you crazy — when a guy would just grind you.

Krepelka: Oh yeah, totally. I'm doing it to other guys now. The good thing is I know where they're coming from. I can couch it. I'm like, 'Here, this is what we're doing. I understand what your reaction is going to be. I'm just trying to explain where we're coming from.' There's other ways to do it, if you want the dollars, we have more flexibility in giving guys more term if they're willing to do that. Accept a lower AAV. I'm aware of a dynamic it takes when you're coming to an agent with those numbers. The best way for us to do it, me to do it, is be open and honest with them. If you want to be part of something? This is the range we see you in. If you don't want to do that, I completely understand. Then we'll probably end up going year to year with you.

CC: I'm curious to see if Carolina does anything different in terms of contracts and roster construction. Do you have free reign to experiment?

Krepelka: Not free reign. We do everything together. But we're a small market team. The dollars count, the AAV matters, the cash laid out matters. Our approach will be to try and give certain guys, your core guys, term. See if term is more attractive than the top dollar. As far as roster construction, when you don't make the playoffs for nine years, you're open for business for anyone on the roster except for maybe one, two or three key people.

CC: I think we've established there's only one (unavailable) guy, right?

Krepelka: He said that. We're trying to talk him out of that a little bit. I would say there's one or two more that would be difficult to trade. He went on record with one of them (Sebastian Aho). We're open for business. We're listening to everything. The trade chatter is quiet for the most part with the Worlds going on. Pretty much after the Worlds, things start ramping up at a pretty high level in the next month or so.

CC: Your guys are lighting it up over there at the Worlds. I just got back.

Krepelka: Yeah, it doesn't help us from a contract standpoint, but yeah, but it's good for the future of the team. I was just in the office now watching Finland wax the U.S. Our boy Aho had a trick. The team has some good young talent, there are some players here. Depending on what happens with the pick, if we keep it, you're going to get a good player there. You have the young Czech kid, (Martin) Necas coming over. There's good players. We just have to change some things up. It's no secret, we've got to get harder to play against, which is such a bullshit cliché but it's true. We have to get some guys who can grind and bring a physical presence. And we have to do some things on the back end and solidify the goaltending situation. It doesn't take a genius to figure all that out. How we're going to do that? We have some ideas. We'll see. Picking up some guys that fit what we're trying to do in free agency or most of it will happen via the trade route.



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CC: I'm going to push back a little on the 'Harder to play against.' Is Vegas hard to play against? Is Tampa Bay hard to play against? Other than they're super skilled and they fly?

Krepelka: They fly around. It's such a bullshit cliché, but you need physical — I wouldn't say fighting, but you need some guys who can grind it out and do what you have to do. Vegas, I watched the game last night, is flying around. But you also have Ryan Reaves out there playing a role and calming things down.

CC: He played four minutes.

Krepelka: I'm not saying fighting. When you're saying that, you're talking about two of the better teams in the league. We're not there yet, we're not in Tampa's class yet. You need some guys — Tampa, some of those guys who fly around, they grind, they get their nose dirty. They work hard, they battle, we just need more of that throughout the whole lineup.

CC: You said, 'If you keep the pick.' Is No. 2 overall in play?

Krepelka: Everything is in play in Carolina. Carolina is open for business. Will we move it? Obviously, it's going to take a

wagon of a deal to move it. Everything is in play. I wouldn't rule it out. I'd say the chances are highly unlikely.

CC: It seems to me, for what you guys need, I look at that roster and I say, 'They need someone who can pop in 40 goals.'

Krepelka: The one kid up there other than the defensemen has potential to do that. You have another kid in (Brady) Tkachuk who brings another element to the team that you need. The likelihood I would think of moving it is unlikely, but it's not out of the question. It's not 100 percent it's not being dealt. Everything is open for business down here. If it makes sense and betters the team in the short and long term than it's something that will be considered for sure.

CC: If you want to be harder to play against, a Tkachuk always fits that mold.

Krepelka: He's going to help any team. He's the type of guy this organization needs and doesn't have. That style of player and skill and grit. The way he plays. There are some options at two. My guess is they would keep it. We're listening. We'll entertain anything.



Lightning power past Capitals in Game 3 for first win of Eastern Final

Hedman has goal, two assists for Tampa Bay, which scores twice with man-advantage

by Dan Rosen [@droseennhl](#) / NHL.com Senior Writer

12:29 AM

WASHINGTON -- [Victor Hedman](#) had a goal and two assists, and the Tampa Bay Lightning responded after back-to-back home losses by defeating the Washington Capitals 4-2 in Game 3 of the Eastern Conference Final at Capital One Arena on Tuesday.

Game 4 of the best-of-7 series is here Thursday.

"We believed all along," Lightning captain [Steven Stamkos](#) said. "We knew we weren't good enough, and credit to them, they played really good hockey the first two games. We needed to make adjustments. We did that. We worked on it. The players went out there and did what we needed to do."

Stamkos, [Nikita Kucherov](#) and [Brayden Point](#) each had a goal and an assist, and [Andrei Vasilevskiy](#) made 36 saves for the Lightning, who are 4-1 on the road in the 2018 Stanley Cup Playoffs.

Vasilevskiy allowed 10 goals on 62 shots in the first two games of the series.

"He's our best player," Lightning defenseman [Anton Stralman](#) said. "He's always there for us, and we did a good job for him tonight. When we're on, that gives him confidence. And that's how it should be."

[Brett Connolly](#) and [Evgeny Kuznetsov](#) scored, and [Braden Holtby](#) made 19 saves for the Capitals, who are 3-4 at home in the playoffs.

"We weren't playing as sharp as we normally can," Washington coach Barry Trotz said. "We weren't executing the way we normally did in the last couple of games. We were just off a little bit, and you can't be off in this game to have success. We will be better next game."

The Capitals put part of the blame for the loss on their lack of discipline. They were shorthanded five times, and the Lightning got power-play goals from Stamkos in the first period and Kucherov in the second.

Washington was 0-for-3 on the power play.



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The Lightning scored two 5-on-5 goals after scoring one in the first two games.

"We were chasing the game all along," Trotz said.

Stamkos gave the Lightning a 1-0 lead with his third power-play goal in as many games at 13:53 of the first period. His one-timer from the left face-off circle beat Holtby high into the right corner of the net.

Stamkos has five goals and four assists in a six-game point streak.

"It doesn't matter who scores, as long as we win," Stamkos said. "But obviously, it's nice to perform at this time of the year. You always want to step up."

Kucherov made it 2-0 with a one-timer to the short side from the right circle at 1:50 of the second period. He has two goals, each on the power play, and four assists in a five-game point streak.

Hedman extended the lead to 3-0 with his first goal of the playoffs at 3:37 of the second. He has an eight-game point streak (one goal, 10 assists), the longest by a defenseman in the NHL playoffs since Larry Murphy had a nine-game streak with the Pittsburgh Penguins in 1995.

"I'm put in a position to produce, and I put that pressure on myself to do it," Hedman said.

Connolly cut the Tampa Bay lead to 3-1 at 10:31 of the second, but Point scored to make it 4-1 at 16:03.

"[Point] getting that fourth one kind of popped the balloon," Lightning coach Jon Cooper said. "It's just so much better to play with the lead."

Kuznetsov scored to make it 4-2 at 16:58 of the third after Washington pulled Holtby for the extra attacker.

"Nobody said it was going to be easy," Ovechkin said. "They're not going to give us two wins in a row in our house. We just have to play more desperate and play smarter."

Goal of the game

Stamkos' goal at 13:53 of the first period.

Save of the game

Vasilevskiy stopping Ovechkin at 17:54 of the third period.

Highlight of the game

Hedman's goal at 3:37 of the second period.

They said it

"We checked. That was it. You've got to check in this league. When you have a really good team like they do across the way, if you're going to give them open ice to make their plays, that team will kill you, and they did it for two games. We had to check tonight, and it helped it go in our favor." -- *Lightning coach Jon Cooper*

"You have to have a short memory and get the rest, regroup and have fun, enjoy the game. No one expected 4-0, right? We all know it's going to be a tough series. We just have to relax a little bit and stay positive. It's still fun." -- *Capitals center Evgeny Kuznetsov*

"We know they have a great power play, and they obviously played around in the first two games and got some big goals. For us to get two (power-play) goals today and shut them down on the PK was big. We're going to need that to keep going." -- *Lightning defenseman Victor Hedman*

Need to know

Trotz coached his 54th playoff game with the Capitals to pass Bryan Murray for most in Washington history. ... Stamkos tied Martin St. Louis for most power-play goals in the playoffs (10) in Lightning history.

What's next

Game 4 of Eastern Conference Final at Capital One Arena on Thursday (8 p.m. ET; NBCSN, CBC, SN, TVAS)

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The Athletic / Home cooking, not for the Washington Capitals and many other teams this spring

By Scott Burnside May 16, 2018

WASHINGTON, D.C. – So, consider this.

The Washington Capitals lead the Eastern Conference final two games to one.

The problem is they still have home-ice advantage. And now the rallying cry for the Capitals and their long-suffering fans must be: 'we've got to find a way to win a game at home.'

Huh?

How whacked is that?

Unless the Caps can find a way to win in their own building where red-clad fans fill every seat every night, their chances of advancing to their first Stanley Cup final since 1998 is pretty much doomed.

How counterintuitive is that?

And they're not alone in the wake of a 4-2 loss Tuesday night at the Capital One Arena that followed two straight wins for Washington in Tampa at Amalie Arena.

No one, it appears, can win at home this spring.

The road team is 3-0 in the East final and 1-1 in the West final.

Last round Nashville and Winnipeg, two of the strongest home teams in the NHL whose buildings regularly fill opponents' with dread, combined to go 2-5 in home games.

Tampa and Boston combined for two home wins in five games.

Overall, home teams are 34-38 in these playoffs.

Tuesday, the Capitals squandered a chance to take a commanding 3-0 series lead because they were undisciplined and lost the special teams and goaltending battle.

In Games 1 and 2 in Tampa when Washington outscored the Atlantic Division and Eastern Conference regular season champs 10-4, they did the exact opposite.

"I don't think it's just us," veteran Washington defenseman Brooks Orpik said when we asked why it is that the Capitals, now 3-4 at home this playoff spring, have found so little success where logic suggests you should have the most success. "I think if you league-wide I think the home team is under .500. But I don't really have an explanation for it to be honest with you.

"I know when we go on the road I think maybe we feel a little bit more relaxed and when we do make mistakes maybe we don't let the groaning affect us or whatnot. I mean that being said I think we should be mentally

stronger to not let that affect us but. Yeah. I don't know. We just got to try to find a way to win the next one at home for sure."

Longtime NHL executive Laurence Gilman agreed in part telling The Athletic that he thinks that simplicity comes more easily for teams playing on the road while angst can sometimes dog the home team when things go sideways.

"I think that during the playoffs the intensity rises significantly, particularly among the fans in a building," Gilman said. "Consequently, the home team can get severely worked up, even tense. Sometimes it's easier for the road team to execute a simplistic game plan."

OK. We get it.

Maybe playing at home is like a drug. Once the high wears off the crash is profound.

As one NHL coach noted after Tampa had built themselves a 3-0 early in the second period thanks to two power-play goals and Victor Hedman's first of the post-season, there's the pressure of being at home followed by a lack of energy if things don't go right.

Former Tampa great Martin St. Louis addressed the topic on Twitter saying he liked playing on the road because he got more ice time when his coaches didn't worry about matching lines because they didn't have last change.

MY OPINION- I USE TO LOVE PLAYING ON THE ROAD BECAUSE MOST OF MY COACHES WOULDN'T WORRY ABOUT MATCHING LINES BECAUSE THEY DIDN'T HAVE THE LAST CHANGE-I ALWAYS FELT I PLAYED MORE ON THE ROAD. CHECKERS ON THE ROAD, CHESS AT HOME! I LIKE BOTH BUT CHECKERS IS MORE FUN!
@NHL [HTTPS://T.CO/SARDNBVDLP](https://t.co/SARDNBVDLP)

— MARTIN ST.LOUIS (@MSTLOUIS_26) MAY 16, 2018

Winnipeg head coach Paul Maurice, coming off a 3-1 loss at home Monday night to the Vegas Golden Knights that knotted the Western Conference final at one game apiece, admitted he had no real clue as to why it's turned out like this.

"Maybe it's the structure, I haven't done the math of the playoff format where you're getting pretty powerful teams lining up against each other early," Maurice told reporters. "No, other than the fact that the kids that come into the game now have become used to big stages, big performances, loud buildings at a younger age, maybe it doesn't faze them. That's the best I got."

Well, if it was Maurice's best effort we thank him for that.

Certainly the Lightning were the team that executed at a much higher level than they had at home and they got big nights from their big guns who had, for the most part, been silent at critical times in those first two games.

Hedman made two splendid passes and Steven Stamkos and Nikita Kucherov both pounded home one-timers on the power play.

Andrei Vasilevskiy, under siege for much of the first two games (he was replaced after 40 minutes in Game 1 with the Lightning trailing 4-0), was a rock turning aside 36 of 38 shots.



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The Capitals, conversely, weren't as sharp and they didn't finish on the scoring opportunities that came their way both early in the game when it was within reach and then later when they closed the gap to 3-1 on a Brett Connolly goal midway through the second period.

Not that it truly explains why these two teams are a combined 11-2 on the road now and a pedestrian 8-7 in their own buildings.

Tampa coach Jon Cooper insisted home-ice advantage matters only for Game 7. Everything else is a wash.

"If you're going to advance in the playoffs you're going to have to win on the road at some point. But to me it's all about, you get to play four games where you get the last change that ultimately comes down to Game 7," Cooper said. "Other than I don't think it matters where you play the games at any other time."

OK but tell that to a Nashville team that played all year for home-ice advantage throughout the playoffs and in Game 7 at home against Winnipeg spit the bit in a 5-1 loss.

Washington coach Barry Trotz said what was obvious to most observers.

"We were just off a little bit and you can't be off in this game to have success," Trotz said. "We'll be better next game. We have to be better and that was probably, that was our weakest game of the series so far."

As for reversing the confusing, if not completely illogical trend of home teams failing to rise to the occasion and rather sinking like stones, Trotz did appear to have an answer if not 'the' answer.

"Just play the way we do on the road," he said and it was hard to tell if he was kidding or not. "I mean we're invested there, we're playing with a real good focus. I didn't think we were as focused as we have been normally on the road. Just pretend that you're on the road. All the buildings are pretty much the same these days," he said.

Maybe that's why coaches have throughout the history of the NHL playoffs have occasionally sequestered their teams even when they've been at home, checking them into hotels to limit the distractions and create a road-like experience even though they were preparing for a game in their own buildings.

Maybe it's something as simple as players don't really care where they play during the playoffs because the desire to win each game is the same regardless of the locale and the gut-punch that comes with each loss is equally devastating regardless of where it's played is the same.

"I think you go in the playoffs it really doesn't matter. That's the way I look at it," Tampa defenseman Anton Stralman told The Athletic in the nearly empty Lightning locker room. "It doesn't matter which game you lose and which game you win if they're home or away I think you step on the ice in any building and you want to have the best game you can have that night. I mean history tells us that it should be harder (on the road) but why? Why should it be? It's still the same game and tonight I think we did a good job. We came out with a game plan we executed like we didn't do in the first two games and it paid off. We know we have a good team we know we're hard to beat when we play the way we want to and tonight was a good effort."

How about this, then?

Maybe it's not so much where you win or lose but how you respond to those events?

"I think so. I think so," Stralman said in agreement although maybe he was just eager to go and grab some food. "You get pushed up against the wall a little bit and you know you have to bring something more and something better. And you want to do it every night but sometimes it doesn't go that way. Tonight we were able to pull it out."

The Athletic LOADED: 05.16.2018

The Athletic / Could the legalization of sports betting lead to labor strife in the NFL, MLB and other leagues?

By Exavier Pope

Monday's Supreme Court ruling in *Murphy vs. National Collegiate Athletic Association*, which extinguished the Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act of 1992 (PASPA), paved the way for the once unthinkable: legalized gambling in all 50 states.

The ruling has raised many questions, some of them logistical — how will states regulate this new industry, for example — but the thornier issues surround (as always) how the money will get divided. The professional leagues have and will continue to demand a cut of the new revenue legalized gambling generates. And the NCAA could do the same.

Simultaneously, the players' unions for major sports leagues will also be working to ensure members get a sizeable slice of this new pie. Those negotiations have the potential to upend the labor peace in any (or all) of the major American sports leagues.

Before getting to that possibility, some background on Monday's ruling:

What was PASPA?

PASPA was not itself a direct federal ban on sports gaming. PASPA essentially prevented states from passing new laws regulating and taxing sports betting. Four states were initially made "exempt" from PASPA in that they were allowed to continue whatever measures previously passed up until a year after the law was signed into law on January 1, 1993.

Nevada was granted the right to continue to regulate its then widespread existing sports books while Delaware, Montana and Oregon were permitted oversight over much more limited sports gaming through state lotteries and sports pools.

So is betting now legal everywhere?

The repeal of PASPA does not mean sports betting is now legal in all 50 states and the United States territories. It does open the door for either Congress to pass another bill regulating sports gaming or for states individually to pass their own laws.

What is the expected economic impact of the ruling?

The American Gaming Association (AGA) states 97 percent of the estimated \$150 billion gambled on sports in the United States is bet illegally. It is highly speculative at this point to estimate how much of that \$150 billion will be converted into legal wagering revenue given only 17 states besides Nevada are currently considering introducing sports betting legislation. It is also undetermined whether sports betting income will increase overall due to new legislation post PASPA.

What are "Integrity Fees?"

Regardless of what monies are ultimately generated by legal sports wagering, professional sports leagues see an additional revenue stream. Earlier this year, Major League Baseball and the National Basketball Association lobbied politicians in Iowa and New York and gave a snapshot of what an income stream to a professional sports league would look like.

NBA Assistant General Counsel Dan Spillane submitted written testimony before the New York Senate Racing, Gaming, and Wagering Committee on January 24, 2018 outlining what many are dubbing an "integrity fee": "To compensate leagues for the risk and expense created by betting and the commercial value our product creates for betting operators, we believe it is reasonable for operators to pay each league 1% of the total amount bet on its games. This approach draws from how



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sports betting is legally regulated in some other international jurisdictions, like Australia and France.”

Paying for “integrity” sounds like a strange concept, but alas, here we are.

One percent appears to be a small number in comparison to a potential \$150 billion in revenues generated from a sports book. However, the “total amount bet” is not actual revenues. Total amount bet in casino terms is called “handle.”

According to the American Gaming Association, 95 percent of the total amount bet goes to winning bets, while 3.5-5 percent equals revenue to sportsbooks. A one-percent slice of the handle would represent 20-40 percent of the real revenue generated by sportsbooks, amounting to over a billion dollars or more to professional sports leagues. Even if sports leagues don’t get that large a slice, the potential for new revenue is immense.

How have professional athletes responded to the PASPA repeal?

The four major professional sports league unions put out a joint statement specifically addressing “privacy rights,” protecting “integrity,” and demanding a “seat at the table” in response to the Supreme Court’s ruling. An important line in the statement states: “We cannot allow those who have lobbied the hardest for sports gambling to be the only ones controlling how it would be ushered into our businesses.”

The unions are signaling they aren’t going to stand on the sidelines and let the leagues determine how gambling revenues are allocated.

Would professional sports leagues have to share “Integrity Fees” with players under a CBA?

Currently, the NBA is the only professional sports league to seemingly address splitting sports gaming revenues in its collective bargaining agreement in Article VII, Section 1(a)(1)(xxiii), including in Basketball Related Income (BRI), “all proceeds, net of Taxes, less reasonable and customary expenses...from gambling on NBA games or any aspect of NBA games.”

The NBPA could give guidance to other professional sports unions to negotiate an amendment in their existing CBA to include a similar revenue sharing provision or clarify the language of its existing clause and use it as a benchmark.

What about colleges and college athletes?

The NCAA has not itself lobbied for an “integrity fee” to states promulgating sports gaming, but politicians in West Virginia have floated the idea that a slice of sports gaming revenues could go to its big state schools, Marshall and West Virginia. That could happen elsewhere, as many Power 5 schools hold a lot of sway in statehouses.

The NCAA does not shy away from increasing its profits, but it will be interesting to see if the issues swirling around improper payments to athletes and an ongoing Department of Justice investigation into college basketball influence how the NCAA and its member schools proceed. And, taking gambling profits might only increase the calls for college athletes to be paid.

For now, revenue from gambling would not change the status quo, as athletes would not get any of that money.

Might professional athletes lobby Congress to get paid from sports betting?

In a joint union lobbying effort, sports unions can lobby Congress and individual states to take an unprecedented step of legislating fee sharing between professional sports leagues and its players.

A post-PASPA world where sports leagues and players unions are negotiating like they would an amendment to their collective bargaining agreement in public hearings are a real possibility.

It’s highly doubtful professional sports leagues are interested in players receiving income-related information before merging it with the rest of their accounting. However, getting Congress or states to include integrity fee sharing between leagues and players would give players the benefit of a third party in lieu of relative legislation guaranteeing a share of the potential windfall.

What about intellectual property rights?

Sports betting revenues do not make up the entire economic equation. Betting sites are likely going to want to use the name, image, and likeness (NIL) of an individual player for bets such as: Who will be the NBA’s regular-season MVP?

Any integrity fee could be expanded to an “integrity and rights fee” to include NIL.

The upside of using an “integrity and rights fee” for players is it alleviates the cost and expense of an individual player using self-help compliance methods, such as when NFL wide receiver Pierre Garcon sued FanDuel in 2015 and reached a private settlement.

Players unions advocating for a “seat at the table” could easily point to this case as an incentive to preclude gumming up the court system with a barrage of cases as well as give more freedom to operators to supply more games to generate tax revenue for the state implementing sports wagering legislation.

It also further incentivizes lawmakers to implement a revenue split between leagues and unions at the state level.

So how contentious could the battle over revenues get?

In practice, changing the CBA on a contestable matter such as revenue depends on the willingness of each league. If the league’s refuse to do that and the government doesn’t address the players’ share of new revenues, things could get ugly.

The NFL’s CBA expires in 2020, MLB’s in 2021, NHL’s 2022, NBA’s 2024. It is doubtful any of the players’ unions would wait until a collective bargaining agreement’s expiration to negotiate the allocation of this new revenue stream. They will lobby legislatures, fight with their leagues, or sue in court any entity that abridges their rights to their stake of future income.

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The Athletic / Martin St. Louis, 2003 Lightning team know the path to overcoming 0-2 hole against Capitals

By Joe Smith May 15, 2018

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Marty St. Louis doesn’t remember where Dave Andreychuk said it.

It could have been at practice. Or in the dressing room. Or on the plane.

But the words still ring true.

The 2003 Lightning had dug a 0-2 hole in their first-round playoffs series against the Capitals, losing both games at home. Andreychuk, then the Lightning captain, delivered a prescient point for his teammates before Game 3 in Washington.

“One game,” Andreychuk said. “It’s not about winning the series. It’s about winning one game.”

“Win one game,” Vinny Lecavalier recalled. “And it’s a whole new series.”



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That Lightning team won Game 3 — on a power play overtime goal by Lecavalier — and the pressure, and the series, completely shifted. They won four straight to advance in six.

Now the 2003 Lightning were a green group, many playing in their first postseason. As Andreychuk points out, the current Lightning team is a “whole different animal,” boasting nearly 300 playoff games combined. And these Capitals certainly look less likely to cave like some of their predecessors.

But the former group believes the current Lightning can pull it off, down 0-2 heading into Tuesday’s Game 3 of the Eastern Conference final. The key is staying in the moment, not thinking of the big-picture mountain they have to climb.

“As tough of opponents as they’ve played, it’s gone pretty smooth,” St. Louis told The Athletic. “They’ve got pushed to the ropes a little bit now. Well, you’ve got to bounce back. Now they’ve got to answer. They’ve got to find a way and they will.”

“To me, in playoffs, it’s all about brains and balls — that’s it. They’ve got it.”

The 2003 Lightning, facing a Capitals team that featured Jaromir Jagr and Peter Bondra, were shut out in Game 1, 3-0. They got thumped 6-3 in Game 2 two days later.

“I think we were overwhelmed,” Andreychuk said. “We were the No. 1 seed and had home ice advantage. After Game 2, the pressure was really off us. We had to go play one play, one shift at a time.”

“You just go out and play. You do that, you go to OT in Game 3 and win. Now the pressure is really mounting for (the Capitals) to win. It could happen here too. Win this game tonight in Washington and then you let the dragon to start getting himself out of the cage. It could be dangerous.”

Former Lightning forward Tim Taylor points out the Capitals know it first-hand, having overcome an 0-2 deficit to beat the Blue Jackets in the first round.

“Anything can happen,” Capitals defenseman Matt Niskanen said. “It can swing fast. So this isn’t over.”

After Lecavalier’s Game 3 overtime winner in 2003, the Lightning went out the next night and beat the Capitals 3-1. St. Louis scored the first two goals, Lecavalier the third.

“Sometimes one little bounce changes everything,” Lecavalier said. “It’s a matter of getting that first goal and feeling good about yourself and keep building.”

“The Lightning were, on paper, the best team in the NHL. But, of course, your best players have to be your best players.”

After the 2003 Game 4 victory in Washington, Andreychuk was on the bus waiting to leave the arena. He asked coach John Tortorella if he could buy some beers for the boys for the 45-minute ride to the airport.

Taylor said Andreychuk did that many times.

“Let us unwind a little bit,” Andreychuk said. “I ran across the street to China Town to grab beer for everyone. We were super excited to come home.”

“The tide changed. And I think Washington knew it. The better team started to come out and hopefully that happens here. You hope to get that momentum shift where Washington goes, ‘OK, they’re not as bad as we thought they were.’ They’re a lot better team. I just don’t think they’ve really shown it.”

The Lightning isn’t making any lineup changes for Tuesday, with coach Jon Cooper saying it’s not been a personnel issue, it’s been execution. They’ve got a much better feel, tactically, about what they need to do better.

“We know we’re up against it now,” Cooper said. “Don’t take it as a threat against us moving on. Let’s take this as a challenge.”

St. Louis said the Lightning look like a team that felt the effect of a long layoff, with nearly a week off between the Boston series and Washington one.

“Maybe things aren’t clicking as well,” Lecavalier said. “When we went for the run for the Stanley Cup (in 2004), we didn’t play well every game. It’s about how you bounce back. Maybe (goalie Andrei Vasilevskiy) makes 30 saves and the guys score three, four goals, play more simple and get the puck to the net. And good things happen after that.”

Lecavalier had his OT heroics in Game 3 in 2003, with St. Louis wrapping up the series with a triple-overtime winner in Game 6 to advance. But it all got sparked in Game 3.

It all starts tonight.

“Just one game,” St. Louis said.

“One game,” Taylor said. “And everything changes.”

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1096467 Websites

The Athletic / Wild GM search in last stage as Fenton, Fitzgerald return for second interviews

By Michael Russo May 15, 2018

Fenton vs. Fitzy.

Fitzy vs. Fenton.

As The Athletic reported last Wednesday, the Wild’s search for a new general manager has entered the final stages with Paul Fenton and Tom Fitzgerald looking to be the finalists to eventually become the third GM in Wild history.

According to multiple sources, Fenton, the Nashville Predators’ assistant GM, was expected to be in the Twin Cities on Tuesday for a second and likely final interview with owner Craig Leipold.

According to multiple sources, Fitzgerald, the New Jersey Devils’ assistant GM, is expected to be in the Twin Cities on Thursday for a second and likely final interview and dinner with the Wild owner.

If there’s a third finalist, it’s a well-guarded secret. A final decision could come as early as next week.

In the three weeks since Leipold cut loose nine-year GM Chuck Fletcher, sources say Leipold and team president Matt Majka have interviewed at least Fenton, Fitzgerald, Pittsburgh Penguins assistant GM Bill Guerin, Columbus Blue Jackets assistant GM Bill Zito and executives from the Boston Bruins and Anaheim Ducks, respectively, John Ferguson Jr. and Dave Nonis.

Leipold declined comment for this report, but on April 23, Leipold said he felt the Wild were good but “not good enough” after six straight playoff berths that ended prior to the conference final.

Leipold, who bought the Wild just before the team won its only division championship in 2008, said it was time for new eyes and a GM who didn’t feel a sense of “ownership” to specific players he drafted or acquired.

But he made clear he wants “tweaks.”

“This is not a rebuild. And I’ll be very direct about that when I’m interviewing a general manager,” Leipold said at the time.



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Fenton and Fitzgerald have prior histories with Leipold, the original owner of the Predators.

Fenton, 58, has been instrumental in the Predators' drafting, developing and hockey ops decisions for 18 years and has been GM David Poile's right-hand man since 2006.

Fenton, who is also the GM of the AHL Milwaukee Admirals, is considered a top talent-evaluator who has helped the Predators draft well for years. He had his hand in the Predators selecting everyone from Ryan Suter and Shea Weber in early rounds to Pekka Rinne and Patrik Hornqvist in late rounds.

He's a former hard-nosed winger from Boston University who played 411 NHL games for seven organizations.

Fitzgerald, 49, was the first captain in Predators history and a checking forward from Boston who played 1,097 NHL games for seven organizations. He's first cousins with former power forward Keith Tkachuk. Fitzgerald scored the Game 7-winning goal in the 1996 Eastern Conference final for the Florida Panthers and won a Stanley Cup in 2009 as an assistant coach and player development guy for the Pittsburgh Penguins.

Since retiring, Fitzgerald has worked in player development for both the Penguins and Devils and ultimately became Ray Shero's assistant GM in both Pittsburgh and New Jersey. He currently has a variety of roles with the Devils, including running their Binghamton AHL franchise.

Back when Fletcher was informed his contract wouldn't be renewed last month, Fenton was considered the clear-cut frontrunner. But sources say Fitzgerald, who has a charismatic personality, thoroughly impressed Leipold and Majka during a well-prepared interview two weeks ago and is suddenly neck-and-neck with Fenton.

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1096468 Websites

The Athletic / The Greatest Ever: Who should be in the discussion for the NHL's GOAT?

By Joe Posnanski

Through the years, many different characters have gone by the nickname, "The Great One." The first, at least in recent years, was probably the actor and performer Jackie Gleason. He was given the nickname by the legendary director Orson Welles; supposedly, it had more to do with Gleason's prodigious talent for drinking than his performing, but it still stuck.

Sometime in the late 1960s, Pittsburgh baseball fans began to call Roberto Clemente, "The Great One." It was more than a nickname, it was a title of royalty for a player who was so impossibly graceful and wonderful that people simply reached for the highest honorific they could find. It is a bit like the way Alaska locals called the highest mountain peak in North America, "Denali," which (by some translations) means "The High One" or "The Great One."

(The mountain peak has actually had many names, most famously "Mount McKinley" after then-candidate and future U.S. President William McKinley. The naming dispute between Alaskans and others has actually been quite intense, a political quagmire I did not mean to get into in a hockey story.)

Point is: Others have been called The Great One.

Realistically, though, Wayne Gretzky is The Great One. And every discussion about the greatest hockey player goes through him.

To begin with, it's important to say what this is and what this is not.

This is NOT an attempt to name the greatest hockey player.

This is instead the second part in our series attempting to streamline the conversation. What we're trying to do here is to figure out who are the real nominees for the best ever. First, we put up a poll, asking people to vote only for the players they believe deserve to be in the conversation for greatest ever.

We began last week with basketball and came to the conclusion that, based on the voting, there are really two viable conversations for greatest ever. You could have a simple one-on-one argument about LeBron James vs. Michael Jordan; most people tend to keep it limited to those two players. Or, if you wanted to, open it up to five by including Wilt Chamberlain, Bill Russell and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar.

Hockey is tougher because one player is so far ahead of the rest.

In our poll, 94.3 percent of the voters selected Wayne Gretzky. No other player got even 20 percent of the vote. This figures: He was nicknamed Great One and was routinely called the greatest hockey player just seven or eight years into his career, even before he left Edmonton.

It's hard to pick just one thing that captures the sheer brilliance of Gretzky's career. You can point out that he won the Hart Trophy as the league MVP in each of his first eight seasons. Before that, only one player had won even three consecutive Hart Trophies – we'll get to him in a minute.

OK, the stats. Gretzky scored the most goals (93 more than Gordie Howe). He had the most assists (an absurd 714 more than No. 2 on the list Ron Francis – you could combine Francis and Jean Beliveau and still not get to Gretzky's total). His point total is 900-plus more than Jaromir Jagr. Gretzky has more hat tricks and more short-handed goals than any player ever. He has the top two goal-scoring seasons, the top eight assist seasons and the top four point-scoring seasons.

It doesn't seem like there's anywhere to go from there.

He also won a lot – four Stanley Cups with the Oilers and dragged the Los Angeles Kings to a Stanley Cup Final. What's more, he will likely hold his records forever, or at least until the NHL fundamentally changes. With bigger goaltending pads and more active defenses, the league is just fundamentally different now. Nobody scored 50 goals in the NHL this year. Gretzky, rather famously, scored 50 goals in 39 games.

All of which leads to the idea that Gretzky is not only the greatest player ever but will also be in perpetuity because his numbers will tower over the game for decades and decades to come.

So does the conversation end with Gretzky? Maybe. But voters offered up three other nominees who might merit a place in the discussion.

Gordie Howe (19.7 percent): Howe was widely viewed as the greatest until Gretzky came along; Gretzky himself has often insisted that Howe remains the best. Howe was a very different kind of player from Gretzky; he was tough, he was relentless, he was a fighter, he was bigger than life. The story goes that his mother, Katherine, was outside chopping wood when she felt labor pains. She went inside, boiled water, climbed into bed, and delivered her sixth child, Gordie, cutting the umbilical cord herself and then waited for Albert, her husband, to get home.

Howe was forged by that sort of prairie toughness. One of his strongest childhood memories was of seeing his father knock a wise guy out in a pool hall with one punch. Howe did such things himself. The Gordie Howe hat trick is a goal, an assist and a fight. Howe himself only had two Gordie Howe hat tricks in his career, but they were so memorable that everyone named the feat after him anyway.

He won six Hart Trophies, played until he was 51, and is second all-time in goals even though he played in a very different time and never scored 50 in a season. Gretzky, like more or less every young Canadian hockey player, idolized Howe to the point where he insisted as a child on getting a Gordie Howe haircut. "He's the greatest ever," Gretzky says.



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Bobby Orr (19.6 percent): I love how much hockey fans esteem Orr, how much baseball fans esteem Sandy Koufax, how much football fans esteem Gale Sayers. There is something about those breathtaking players who retired young after injuries stole their brilliance.

It doesn't matter that Orr only played nine full seasons in the NHL (he won the Norris Trophy as league's best defenseman in eight of them). He thoroughly reshaped the game. He was, like Sayers, as much of an artist as a player. No one who saw his end-to-end rushes, the magnetic way the puck stayed on his stick, the sheer blurring speed as he weaved through opponents, the pinpoint precision on his shot as he scored goals in ways defensemen never had, could forget any of it.

Orr's genius is not missed by the numbers – he led the league in assists five times, in points twice, in plus-minus six times in seven years and his 124 in the 1970-71 season remains the highest plus-minus ever recorded in the NHL – but fans prefer to talk about the sheer aesthetics of Bobby Orr. He was the single player whose game was set to music, even when no music played.

Mario Lemieux (17.5 percent): There were those during the Gretzky era who insisted that Lemieux was the better overall player because of his great size and athleticism. This is a typical quote, coming from former Minnesota North Stars coach Pierre Pagé: "Lemieux is tougher to stop because of his size. He can bowl you over. Gretzky beats you with finesse. But this guy can beat you with finesse – and still give the one straight-arm shot."

Lemieux was incredible. He has numbers too: He led the league in goals three times, in assists three times, and in points six times. He is second all-time in goals per game, ahead of Gretzky (behind only Mike Bossy). At 6-foot-4, 230 pounds, he was a physical marvel who blended power and finesse like few others.

So, if you wanted to make it a four-player conversation ... you could legitimately do that. Sidney Crosby got some support (7 percent), as well, if you would like to put a current player in the mix.

If you want to say the whole argument is pointless because it's obviously Gretzky, well, you have a pretty good case to do that, too.

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1096469 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Hedman silences crowd in 'huge' Lightning win over Capitals

Kristina Rutherford May 16, 2018

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Almost nobody who saw Victor Hedman's first goal of these NHL playoffs live and in person cheered or applauded or waved their towel, when the towering Tampa Bay Lightning defender one-timed the puck into a near-open net in the capital on Tuesday night.

Hedman didn't seem to mind the silence, though.

The 27-year-old Swede did a bunch of cheering himself here at Capital One Arena, while the sea of fans in red looked on, silently and sadly, and then he dropped his six-foot-six frame into a low fist pump.

Finally, a goal for Hedman in this post-season. And finally, a win for the Tampa Bay Lightning in this Eastern Conference Final.

As Hedman put it, "It's huge."

Indeed. With a 4-2 road victory on Tuesday that saw Tampa Bay lead from start to finish, the perennial contenders at this stage have made it a series with the Capitals, cutting Washington's lead to 2-1.

And the constant in the first three goals Tampa scored on Tuesday was Hedman, with his long-awaited goal to make it 3-0 early in the second period coming on his 29th shot of these playoffs.

"Obviously [Nikita] Kuch[erov] made an unbelievable play on my goal, and I had an open net," Hedman says, wearing socks and sandals and a hoody and blue shorts and a backwards hat, sitting beside Kucherov on a post-game podium, set up on the hard court where the Wizards usually play basketball.

"For me it's about being effective at all ends of the ice and trying to be a difference-maker every time I step on it," Hedman says. "I've got to keep that going."

Despite the fact this was goal No. 1 for Hedman, he has been, as always, a visible and steady presence all post-season long.

"He's a perennial Norris guy," as captain Steven Stamkos points out. "We can't describe how good he is out there. We rely on him a ton—he's a horse. Most nights, if he's going well, we're going well as a team, so another big effort from him tonight. You could see we all followed suit."

It was Hedman who set up goals No. 1 and No. 2 on the power play, dishing passes to the most reliable trigger-men on this team, in Stamkos and Kucherov. Stamkos converted first, with about six minutes to go in the opening period, wiring one home from his usual spot on the off-wing—that shot you know is coming, but you still can't stop it.

And the goal was a big one, because finally it meant the Lightning earned an early lead, and because, in the early goings of Game 3, they really did not look like a team that deserved to win this one.

It wasn't until nearly seven minutes in that Tampa Bay registered its first shot, and Tyler Johnson got nailed by Tom Wilson right after he put that puck on net. But after they killed a penalty around the half-way mark of the first, the Lightning seemed to wake up.

And once Stamkos fired home that laser beam, they began to look more like the team that won more than any other in the east this regular season. When Kucherov added a second power play goal early in the second and Hedman potted that easy-looking third, you had a feeling the Lightning were going to get that first win.

"We knew we had to come in here and win hockey games," Hedman says. "I liked the way we responded tonight."

In other words, the first Eastern Conference final on Washington's home ice in 20 years didn't go exactly as planned for the Capitals, though the raising of a new banner to the rafters — it says 'All Caps' and was ridden by the team mascot, an eagle named Slapshot — went off without a hitch pre-game, and the crowd didn't give up on their "Let's go Caps!" until it was officially over.

Just as Tampa Bay had struggled to recover from deficits in the first two games of this series, the Capitals couldn't dig themselves out and play their way back into Game 3, either.

While Brett Connolly breathed life back into these Capitals and this crowd when he made it 3-1 mid-way through the second, beating Vasilevskiy blocker-side, the euphoria was short-lived.

Lightning centreman Brayden Point scored his sixth of the post-season six minutes later, firing one through traffic and legs to make it 4-1. When Evgeny Kuznetsov scored his ninth of the post-season to make it 4-2, with about three minutes to go, there were a lot of empty seats in Capital One Arena.

As Lightning head coach Jon Cooper put it, with a sigh and a grin, "It's just so much better to play with the lead."

"I know we had the lead for a brief part in Game 2 but to get the multiple goal lead, that was a big thing for us," Cooper says. "They get that 3-1 goal and the building is kind of hopping a little bit and they pushed, but our big push was Pointer getting that fourth one, kind of popped the balloon."



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Tampa Bay goalie Andrei Vasilevskiy, the Vezina nominee, had by far his best game of this series, making 36 saves. It helped that his teammates made it a heck of a lot easier on the 23-year-old Russian, limiting odd-man rushes that dominated Games No. 1 and 2. He was due for an easier night, no doubt.

"I think we always feel like we owe him," says Anton Stralman, the veteran defenceman who saw a little more than 24 minutes of ice Tuesday. "He's our best player. He's always there for us and tonight we did a good job in front of him. I think that gives him some confidence, too, that he knows we're on and that's the way it should be."

The Lightning had a different look in this one, too: Stamkos — who took a shot off the leg and left the game for a bit, but came back and sported an ice cap on his knee cap post-game — played alongside Kucherov, as per usual, but with Ondrej Palat on the left wing, a shake-up from their usual trio with J.T. Miller. The top three lines all had a slightly different look.

"We probably needed to spring a little life into our group," says Cooper. "It's been a heck of a run, but we really haven't changed our lineup at all getting to this point. You have to make adjustments at some point to give your team what you feel is the best chance to succeed. It just happened to work out tonight."

The difference in Game 3, Cooper says, was pretty simple: "We checked. That was it."

And certainly it had to be a relief that the Lightning made a few adjustments, and got the result they've been seeking. But of course, this series is just getting started, and more adjustments will be coming from both teams for Thursday's Game 4, back in the capital.

"We haven't done anything yet," Stamkos says. "The goal is to win a championship, but you can't look too far ahead. We've made it a series. That's what we came in here tonight to do."

"Very happy with the way we played from start to finish, but we can't pat ourselves on the shoulder," Hedman adds. "We've got a lot of work to do."

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1096470 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Vegas was home to experimental hockey prior to Golden Knights

Mark Spector | May 15, 2018

LAS VEGAS — "So," they ask. "Have you been down to cover any hockey in Las Vegas yet?"

Well, let me tell you a little story.

It was just over 20 years ago — March of 1998 — and the National Hockey League threw what we called their "Why Not? Weekend," using the American Hockey League and the now defunct International Hockey League as petri dishes to experiment with the rulebook.

Why? Well, it depends on whom you listened to.

It was the year before the 1999 expiration of the NHL's national TV deal with FOX TV, and Gary Bettman didn't have any big U.S. networks banging down his door for hockey. FOX owner Rupert Murdoch had decided that a three-hour broadcast window was too large. Also, the Australian-born author of the glowing FOX puck mused, sustaining American viewers through two intermissions — when they're used to just one halftime in football and basketball — was becoming a problem.

Call it Aussie Rules hockey, but the league had to listen. So Hockey Ops set up a weekend where they'd try a few things on for size.

In Rochester, players served the entire two minutes during minor penalties, whether or not a powerplay goal was scored. In Springfield, goalies weren't allowed to play the puck behind the net, while in Syracuse players were forbidden from stopping with the puck behind their goals for longer than two seconds. In Hamilton, they moved the goal lines out from the boards by two feet, shrinking the neutral zone.

But it was here in Las Vegas where Dr. Frankenstein was dispatched. Here, in a pair of games between the Las Vegas Thunder and the Detroit Vipers, they tried out four-quarter hockey.

Two 60-minute games, with a dry scrape at the 15- and 45-minute marks, and a "halftime" after 30 minutes. I'm telling' ya, I saw both games with my own eyes. It happened.

Some context:

Only two seasons before, in '96, the Winnipeg Jets had moved to Phoenix. The Quebec Nordiques had bolted for Denver in '95, so as much as these things galled Canadians, the reality was that an infusion of FOX money just might save the Edmonton Oilers and Ottawa Senators, next in line for relocation.

Most of us cringed every time we saw that fire-tailed FOX puck, a metaphor for how OUR game was being lost to a nation that couldn't even figure out where the puck was when they watched a game on TV.

Now, they were dabbling with four periods?

NHL vice president Brian Burke — yes, THAT Brian Burke — pooh-poohed our traditionalist, negative attitude towards this innovation: "With all due respect, it's just The Flat Earth Society," Burke said that weekend. "It may be a dismal failure, and if it is it will end here."

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As President of the Flat Earth Society, I had sold the trip to my bosses at the Edmonton Journal to watch this heresy play out. It was my first taste of hockey in Las Vegas, and what a scene it was.

"The Thomas and Mack Center (where UNLV plays basketball) was the only arena in town, but it had no ice plant," recalled Bob Strumm, the GM of the Thunder, over the phone on Monday. "So they blasted out one end of the seating, and installed temporary freezing pipes they called, 'the noodles.'

"It was a portable ice-making system that went in and out," Strumm said. "It worked OK, but the sound was weird when they skated on it. It was really hollow. Like back home, it sounded like when you're skating on a lake."

As the 10 skaters flowed up and down the ice, the arena echoed with a sound like a bowling ball rolling back and forth in a giant canoe. But it was real hockey played by (mostly) Canadian players — who were as offended by the process as I was.

Asked Tim Cheveldae, the Las Vegas backup goalie: "Why doesn't (then-baseball commissioner) Bud Selig come out and say, because baseball is not as popular as it used to be, they're going to make the game eight innings to get it over faster? Why don't they have a field-goal kicking contest to decide the Super Bowl?"

By now, the NHL was made paranoid by Canadian reaction to their obvious pandering to the hockey-ignorant fans in the new, mostly Southern regions Bettman was targeting. They had buried this experiment deep in the desert, in front of about 3,500 fans in the Pacific time zone and, hopefully, no Canadian media.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 16, 2018

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

This was hockey's Area 51, a far cry from what awaits us in Vegas 20 years later as we arrive for a Western Conference Final Game 3.

"This is not done for TV, and this is not done for the guy who owns the concession stand," promised Bryan Lewis, the NHL's director of officiating who was on hand. "What's to be gained? The knowledge of the pros and cons. It's that simple. There's no ulterior motive."

So, what exactly were the pros?

"The ice in the final 10 minutes of the second and fourth quarters was awful," recalled Strumm.

And the cons?

"There were too many stops," said Vegas winger Russ Romanuk, who played 102 NHL games for Winnipeg and Philadelphia. "And, we've played this way our whole life. The game has changed so much over the years, something has got to be sacred."

For the record, they did not replace the opening face off with an opening tip, and neither team deferred their decision on which end to defend in the second half. Detroit did pull off a late, fourth quarter comeback on one of the nights, however.

How did we write it?

"Just remember the dates: March 27 and 28, 1998," we concluded some 20 years ago. "Some day a young hockey fan will see a replay of our country's greatest, single third period triumph, and ask, 'Daddy, why was Paul Henderson so happy?'"

"Wasn't there still a quarter left to play?"

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Sportsnet.ca / Knights' Marchessault finding stability after rocky start to NHL career

Iain MacIntyre

LAS VEGAS – James Marchessault is four years old and since he was born his dad has worked in five cities and two hockey leagues.

No wonder Vegas Golden Knights' Jonathan Marchessault viewed the six-year contract extension he signed in January not so much as his validation as a player, but as a victory for his young family.

"It's huge – not only for me but also my wife and my kids," Marchessault, 27, told Sportsnet this week. "Just be able to have a home that I'm going to stay for a few years and have some stability in your life. It's been definitely a roller-coaster career. It's definitely for them that I've been working hard for that."

Marchessault, 27, and his wife, Alexandra, have three children. James has a two-year-old sister, Victoria, and a baby brother, William, born a month ago during the Golden Knights' first-round Stanley Cup playoff victory against the Los Angeles Kings.

The contract is also huge: \$30-million-US over the next six years, a 667 per cent annual increase over the \$750,000 Marchessault is making this year and more money than the forward could have imagined when he was scuffling in the American Hockey League and considering moving to Europe.

"The journey was definitely long," Marchessault said. "The part about being in the NHL and not playing is hard. But it's not as hard as being in the AHL and not getting called up. It's hard mentally and definitely physically also.

"Before I got my first chance in the NHL (with Tampa, two years ago), I was giving myself one more year and then I was going to Europe."

If Marchessault goes to Europe anytime soon, it will be on vacation. Possibly to decompress after winning the Stanley Cup this spring.

The five-foot-nine dynamo from Cap-Rouge, Que., scored twice Monday and was the game's best player as the Golden Knights beat the Winnipeg Jets 3-1 to even the NHL's Western Conference Final at 1-1.

Game 3 is here Wednesday.

Marchessault leads the breathtakingly improbable Knights, the expansion team that is three wins from playing for the Stanley Cup in its first season, with six goals and 15 points in 12 playoff games. This represents merely an extension of the regular season that saw Marchessault produce 27 goals and 75 points in 77 games.

Since October, he has marvellously complemented William Karlsson and Reilly Smith on the Knights' top line. The trio has combined for 12 goals and 41 points in 12 playoff games.

"I guess we think hockey the same," Karlsson said. "We want to play with the puck (and) try not to throw it away. We take chances. Sometimes we make mistakes. We're all really confident and pretty good players. Sometimes you just find that kind of chemistry with people."

Karlsson and Smith have similar personalities. They are quiet, focussed. Marchessault, on the other hand, never shuts up on the ice.

"He's always talking," Smith confirmed. "A lot of it is in French, though, so I only understand half of it."

Last season, before the Florida Panthers shockingly exposed Marchessault in the expansion draft so they could protect depth defencemen Mark Pysyk and Alex Petrovic, he scored 30 times in 75 games in his first full NHL campaign.

He has been so good this year and last that it's difficult to understand how much Marchessault struggled for his NHL opportunity.

Undrafted in the NHL and starting his professional career in 2011 on a free-agent contract with Connecticut of the AHL. Parlaying that 64-point season into a two-way contract with the Columbus Blue Jackets, whom Marchessault feels betrayed him.

The 2014 trade to the Tampa Bay Lightning, which kept him mostly in the minors but finally allowed Marchessault to showcase himself with 45 NHL games in the 2015-16 season. Then a one-way, free-agent deal with Florida and his big breakthrough last season.

"I thought I would have maybe a little break finally," Marchessault says of the unrest and uncertainty in his career. "Maybe start of this year, I will start on the top two lines (in Florida). Something."

"The most hurtful moment would be when I signed in Columbus and they told me I would make the team or be their first callup (from the AHL). You do everything right down there and you keep producing and do your job, and they still don't call you up first. Or second or third. That was one of the most frustrating things in my career."

Marchessault's game log after seven years as a professional reads: 306 AHL games, 201 NHL games.

That imbalance shows how hard he worked to be on the NHL's biggest stage now.

No wonder Marchessault walks softly and carries a big chip on his shoulder.



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"I have been always a guy who is confident in my abilities," he said. "I know that if I put the work and effort in, I will get results. And when I get results, I'm not satisfied, I want more. That's how I think.

"I'll never forget those times I put in, hard working in the AHL. Not playing, not getting a shot, I'll never forget that. Days that I wake up and I come to the rink and I'm not really feeling like practice, I tell myself: 'Well, it's not too bad.'"

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Sportsnet.ca / NHL's road to gambling revenue lengthy despite Supreme Court ruling

John Shannon

More than 15 years ago, I was part of a meeting in the NBA head office in New York City, attended by then commissioner David Stern, and his assistant Adam Silver. In that meeting, Stern stated that pro sports leagues and their clubs were "running out of runway."

In other words, the conventional ways to generate revenue – tickets, television, advertising, merchandise – were close to full capacity. The challenge was to find new ways to generate cash, without passing all or any of the cost onto the paying customer or business partners.

Certainly, the leagues have pushed into the digital world in a great way, and are now growing that part of the business, after considerable experimentation and investment. So it goes to reason that Monday's United States Supreme Court ruling on sports gambling would be a great way of extending that "runway" as well.

Not so fast.

The Big Show

Andrew Marchand discusses the impact of legalized sports gambling in the U.S

May 14 2018

Audio Player

There are plenty of hurdles to pass, before revenue flows to the leagues and teams. And even then, there is no guarantee any money will flow that way, or at least substantially. The ruling allowed for all 50 states to control sports gambling in their own jurisdictions. Therefore, there could be 50 different sets of rules as it pertains to sports gambling. That's assuming all the states will eventually legalize the activity. New York State, for example, still makes sports gambling illegal. There is also no guarantee that any sports gambling system requires the leagues to participate. The leagues, in an attempt to harness the states, will ask U.S. Congress to create a national framework in which the states' sports gambling can work, in order to avoid multiple systems throughout the U.S. In simple terms, one system of how the gambling can work, as oppose to fifty.

North American sports leagues control their intellectual property through copyrighted names, logos, video footage and proprietary data. There is little to no indication that the new sports gambling systems will require any of those elements. As we've seen in previous attempts (in Canada and in Nevada), using city names without any league affiliation is allowable, therefore no licensing is required.

Bottom line is, the states don't really need pro sports to participate in the program, in order for sports gambling to occur. It might enhance it. But it is not a necessity. Frankly, I'm not sure why the states would want to

share the revenue. Also, don't be surprised if the success of this activity relies on the prop bets; the ones that take little or no expertise, and can be initiated even after the game begins, particularly in an online environment.

The Jeff Blair Show

Sports gambling court decision means NCAA has most risk

May 15 2018

Audio Player

From a hockey perspective, we saw yesterday the league, and the players putting a stake in the ground on gambling.

For example, from the NHL:

"The Supreme Court's decision today paves the way to an entirely different landscape – one in which we have not previously operated. We will review our current practices and policies and decide whether adjustments are needed, and if so, what those adjustments will look like. It's important to emphasize that the Supreme Court's decision has no immediate impact on existing League rules relating to sports wagering, and particularly, wagering involving NHL games. So, while changes may be considered in the future, today's decision does not directly impact the operation of the League or any of our Clubs in the short term."

And from the NHLPA:

"The Supreme Court's decision today may well pave the way for increased, widespread, legalized gambling on sports throughout the United States. While this has the potential to have a positive impact upon sports, fans, and players, it is very important that players' rights are protected in any new legislative schemes, including rights of privacy and publicity. We look forward, along with the other Players' Associations, to being a vital part of that discussion."

Those words sound more like pre-CBA negotiations than they do about sports gambling. However, protecting the privacy of the athletes is important. Particularly when it comes to revealing injuries, which may or may not be required, if the leagues partner in the sports gambling business. One would have to assume that all monies (again, if any) raised from sports gambling would be considered part of hockey related revenue, which owners and players share 50/50.

So it leads you to ask question, if the leagues don't in fact get a cut of the revenue, how will the leagues and the clubs prosper?

- Through potential higher TV ratings when you are interested in watching your wager develop?
- In advertising, as gambling agencies want to buy air time to promote their business?
- In sponsorship, as the states or privatized companies (assuming the states license these companies) pay for association with pro teams? Perhaps, but don't bet on it.

Sorry, I couldn't resist.

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Sportsnet.ca / Ranking all 16 Toronto Maple Leafs GMs to come before Kyle Dubas

Sean McIndoe | May 15, 2018



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 16, 2018

The Toronto Maple Leafs made it official on Friday, naming Kyle Dubas as Lou Lamoriello's replacement as general manager. It's a major leap of faith by the team, with the fate of the 101-year-old franchise now in the hands of a GM who's just 32 years old.

We can't pass a final judgement on the Dubas era quite yet — we'll give him about one more week before we get started on that. But in the meantime, we can see how the other men to hold the job stack up with each other.

We'll be looking at all of the full-time GMs in Maple Leafs history — we won't count any interim tags, or the time that the team went without an official GM for a little over a year. That leaves us with 16 pre-Dubas GMs to work with, which seems like a good number for a ranking. Let's count them down from worst to best, starting with the least-effective Leafs' GM of all-time. As you might expect, there was some decent competition for that particular honour.

No. 16: Howie Meeker (1957)

Record: Not applicable.

Signature move: None.

There could be some debate over whether Meeker even deserves a spot on this list; after all, he didn't even make it to his first game as Maple Leafs' GM before he was "reassigned" to the PR department. But he did officially hold the role, however briefly, so we'll include him.

Meeker had had a distinguished career in Toronto, including winning the Calder in 1947 and spending a season behind the bench in 1956–57. That year hadn't gone that well, with the Maple Leafs missing the playoffs, and Meeker was bumped upstairs to the GM job once the season ended. But it didn't last, and Meeker was out of the role before opening night. News reports of the day called it a resignation, but Stafford Smythe left little doubt as to what was really going on, telling reporters that "[Meeker] didn't have the experience needed in that kind of job and we didn't have the time to let him gain that kind of experience."

The Leafs didn't formally fill the GM's role until over a year later, going with a committee approach (although Smythe was rumoured to be calling most of the shots).

No. 15: Floyd Smith (1989–1991)

Record: 61-84-5

Signature move: Trading a first-round pick for Tom Kurvers.

The Leafs finished .500 in Smith's debut season, the first time that happened since 1978–79. But his second year was a disaster, one that saw an aging Leafs team start 1-9-1 and very nearly finish dead last. They rallied to finish ahead of the Nordiques, meaning the Kurvers trade cost them Scott Niedermayer instead of Eric Lindros, and Smith was fired after two years on the job.

To give you a sense of how the Smith era played out in Toronto, here's local sportscaster Joe Tilley not mincing words.

No. 14: Hap Day (1955–1957)

Record: 45-67-28

Signature move: None stand out; the few Leafs traded during this time basically amounted to selling fringe players for cash.

There's some confusion as to whether Day ever officially held the GM's title, but everyone seems to agree that he was running the show at the end of the Conn Smythe era, so we'll include him. The team made one playoff appearance in Day's two seasons, but after missing in 1957 he was publicly criticized by the Smythe family and forced out, ending a Maple Leafs career that saw him win seven Stanley Cups as a player and coach.

No. 13: Gord Stellick (1988–1989)

Record: 28-46-6

Signature move: Trading Russ Courtnall for John Kordic, which to this day I insist was a good trade. Note: I am the only person on Earth who thinks this.

At just 30 years old when he took the job, Stellick was the youngest GM in history; he was even younger than Dubas is today (although his league-wide record has since been broken by 26-year-old John Chayka in Arizona).

Other than the Kordic trade, Stellick is best remembered for the draft where the Leafs had three first-round picks and used them all on Belleville Bulls. None of those selections worked out, but people forget that the Leafs had all those picks because Stellick was somehow able to get two firsts from the Flyers for veteran goalie Ken Wregget at the deadline.

Stellick was fired that summer, and went on to join the Rangers' front office before heading into a career in the media.

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No. 12: Dave Nonis (2013–2015)

Record: 94-97-21

Signature move: Signing David Clarkson to one of the worst contracts in league history.

Nonis was the GM for the team's first playoff appearance of the salary-cap era, although he did it with a roster largely built by Brian Burke. Then came the disastrous Game 7 meltdown against the Bruins that seemed to send Nonis and the Leafs into panic mode. They threw a massive, buyout-proof contract at Clarkson, traded for Jonathan Bernier and one year of Dave Bolland, and doubled down on fourth-line toughness even as the rest of the league was moving on from it. The team cratered, Brendan Shanahan arrived, and soon Nonis was gone.

Maybe the best thing that could be said about the Nonis era is that by guiding the team towards rock bottom, he finally paved the way for the long-awaited rebuild that's paying off today.

No. 11: John Ferguson Jr. (2003–2008)

Record: 145-110-10-30

Signature move: Trading a young Tuukka Rask for Andrew Raycroft.

Ferguson may be the most-maligned GM in Leafs history, and there's a good chance you were expecting to see him much earlier on this list. There's no denying that he made some disastrous moves; not only did he deal Rask for Raycroft, but he tried to clean up that mistake by spending multiple picks on Vesa Toskala. Mix in his decision to go old and slow coming out of the lockout and his penchant for handing out the no-trade clauses that torpedoed the 2008 deadline, and it's clear that his tenure represented a major step back for a team that was a legitimate Cup contender when he arrived.

So how does he nearly crack the top 10? A few reasons. First, he somehow has the second-best winning percentage in Leafs' history, which is incredibly depressing. And second, there's some question as to how much of the Leafs' post-lockout mess was his fault. One version of the story is that Ferguson wanted to do the sort of full-teardown rebuild project that Shanahan would start a decade later, but was denied permission by ownership. We may never know how much of that is true and how much is just sympathetic retconning of the facts, and ultimately the buck stops with the GM. But while Ferguson failed, it's possible that nobody could have done much better under the circumstances he was up against.

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No. 10: Gerry McNamara (1981–1988)



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Record: 166-302-67

Signature move: Drafting Wendel Clark first overall in 1985.

Poor Gerry McNamara. He's remembered as the GM of the worst era in Leafs' history, as the 1980s saw the team go from also-ran to outright joke. He boasts the worst record of any Leafs GM, and even the addition of the beloved Clark only came because the team finished dead last.

On the other hand, well, McNamara's boss was Harold Ballard, and vintage Sam Pollock wasn't going to win anything with Ballard looking over his shoulder. If anything, the fact that McNamara lasted almost seven seasons without strangling anyone or being forced to wear a paper bag over his head probably counts as a victory.

No. 9: Ken Dryden (1997–1999)

Record: 75-73-16

Signature move: Signing free agent Curtis Joseph after a late-night ice cream run. (No, really.)

Dryden only became GM after leading a lengthy search to fill the position that came up empty. After missing out on several candidates (with rumours saying he wanted Bob Gainey), Dryden took the job himself and held it for two years.

The Dryden era was marked by plenty of political maneuvering in the Leafs' front office, a situation that continued for years after he relinquished the title. But it also featured the reemergence of the Leafs as contenders, thanks largely to landing Joseph in what still stands as the team's best-ever free agent signing.

No. 8: Lou Lamoriello (2015–2018)

Record: 118-95-33

Signature move: Drafting Auston Matthews first overall in 2016.

It's tough to rank Lamoriello's work, as the young team he helped build is still very much a work in progress. Some of the key pieces were already in place when he arrived, and landing Matthews involved a healthy dose of lottery luck. Still, Lamoriello made some key moves, including dumping the Dion Phaneuf contract and adding Frederik Andersen. We'll slot him in the middle of the pack for now, with the understanding that his tenure could look different within a few years.

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

No. 7: Brian Burke (2008–2013)

Record: 129-135-42

Signature move: Trading for Phil Kessel in 2009.

Is this too high? It seems kind of high. Burke arrived in Toronto with all sorts of hype and bluster, then missed the playoffs every year. Given what he was brought in to do, there's really no question that he failed in Toronto.

So how does he rank in the top half of our list? Well, as we've seen so far, he's not exactly up against a Murderer's Row of competition. But more importantly, Burke excelled at one of the most important aspects of the GM's job: making trades. When it comes to pulling off deals, there's really only one other name on this list that can rival Burke's track record. In an era where other GMs were constantly mumbling about how hard it was to put a trade together, Burke was able to consistently fleece teams in deals for players like Jake Gardiner, James van Riemsdyk and Dion Phaneuf. Even the Kessel deal, often held up as Burke's greatest blunder, landed the team its leading scorer for the next half-decade or so. If that's your worst trade, you've had a pretty good run.

Most of those robberies didn't pay off, because Burke's hiring, drafting and contract negotiating never kept up with his wheeling and dealing. So yeah, he might be too high on this list. But we'll give him a few bonus

points for being among the last of his kind — a GM with the guts to actually swing for the fences when it came time to make a deal.

No. 6: Charles Querrie (1917–1927)

Record: 127-133-10, two Stanley Cups

Signature move: Signing early stars like Hap Day, Ace Bailey and Babe Dye.

Querrie's name isn't well-known among Toronto fans, and he technically wasn't ever in charge of the Maple Leafs — his time at the helm preceded the team adopting that name.

Instead, Querrie headed the Arenas and St. Pats through the league's tumultuous first decade, stabilizing the franchise and setting the stage for everything to come. Winning two Cups and seeding the team with a solid core of players for the future were nice, but Querrie's most important accomplishment came as the team's majority owner: simply keeping the team alive as the fledgling NHL struggled to find its feet.

Sportsnet's Starting Lineup

Mark Hunter could eventually be GM, just not in Toronto

May 14 2018

Audio Player

No. 5: Pat Quinn (1999–2003)

Record: 169-109-35-15

Signature move: Trading for Owen Nolan at the 2003 deadline.

Quinn held the dual role of coach and GM for four years, meaning the Leafs were very clearly his team. He used that power to build a team that was old, expensive and thoroughly unlikable.

They also won. A lot. Quinn's teams were in the running for the Stanley Cup every year, and he holds the highest winning percentage of any Maple Leafs GM. And he wasn't afraid to swing for the fences, adding players like Alexander Mogilny, Ed Belfour and Joe Nieuwendyk, while nearly landing Eric Lindros in 2001. The deal for Nolan was a classic Quinn move — it cost a fortune, and didn't ultimately result in a Cup win. But it made a good team even better, which is all Quinn ever seemed to do in Toronto.

No. 4: Jim Gregory (1969–1979)

Record: 334-324-130

Signature move: Signing Borje Salming out of Sweden in 1973.

Gregory was the first GM to have to do most of his work under Ballard, so he was starting with two strikes against him. But he still managed to have a decent amount of success, including eight playoff appearances, and found three future Hall of Famers in Darryl Sittler, Lanny McDonald and Salming. (The latter of which Gregory could scout and sign only because Ballard was in jail at the time.)

No. 3: Cliff Fletcher (1991–1997)

Record: 202-200-58

Signature move: The 10-player Doug Gilmour trade, still the largest ever pulled off in NHL history.

Fletcher's overall record isn't that impressive; he actually lost more games than he won if we count his return to the job for an interim stint in 2008. But it's hard to overstate the importance of his arrival in Toronto in 1991, and what he was able to do in the ensuing years. Fletcher took over a team that had spent a generation as an utter joke. Within a year, he'd transformed them into a contender, building what still stands as the most beloved Leafs team of the modern era.

He did it with aggressive trades, not just for Gilmour but for future Hall of Famers like Grant Fuhr, Dave Andreychuk and Mats Sundin, as well as



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by plucking Pat Burns out of Montreal. His reliance on veteran talent eventually caught up to him in Toronto, and his "draft schmaft" philosophy ultimately set the team back. But while he never delivered the Cup that seemed so close in those Gilmour-era days, he brought Leafs fans something that had seemed even more elusive: hope.

Dimitri Filipovic provides entertaining and thoughtful dialogue about the game of hockey with an analytical edge. Not as nerdy as it sounds.

No. 2: Punch Imlach (1958—1969, 1979—1981)

Record: 433-359-159, four Stanley Cups

Signature move: Signing and developing Dave Keon in 1960.

Imlach remains the last GM to build a Stanley Cup winner in Toronto, having put together the legendary "Over-the-Hill Gang" that took home the 1967 title. It was the team's fourth under Imlach's guidance (as both coach and GM), and spelled the end of the last truly great era of Maple Leafs hockey.

His return to the job in 1979 didn't result in quite the same level of success; those two seasons are best remembered for Imlach dismantling much of what Gregory had built, including dealing away Sittler and Lanny MacDonald. There's no doubt that tarnishes his legacy in the eyes of Leaf fans. But not enough to erase the glory years of the 1960s.

No. 1: Conn Smythe (1927—1955)

Record: 706-550-248, seven Stanley Cups

Signature move: Acquiring King Clancy from Ottawa, using money won in a horse race.

Apologies if you were hoping for more suspense at the top of the list, but there's really no way to make the case for anyone other than Smythe in the top spot. Smythe spent nearly three decades as not just the Leafs' GM, but as its owner and the architect of everything the franchise would become. He gave the team its name, adopted their famous blue-and-white color schemes, and built Maple Leaf Gardens.

Oh, and he won championships. Smythe guided the Leafs to seven titles, including six in the decade between 1941 and 1951. He yielded the GM's duties to Day in 1955, and eventually sold his ownership stake to his son Stafford. He was elected to the Hockey Hall of Fame in 1958, then oversaw the construction of the actual HHOF building 1961.

It's fair to say that Dubas will have a long way to go before he gets mentioned in the same breath as Smythe, let alone matches his achievements. But if you're a Maple Leafs fan looking for a good omen, consider this: Smythe's three-decade journey as the greatest GM in team history began when he took the job in 1927, when he was just 32 years old.

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1096474 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Why Alex Ovechkin is having his best goal-scoring season in nearly a decade

Andrew Berkshire May 15, 2018, 11:59 AM

The Washington Capitals are just six wins away from their first Stanley Cup in franchise history and they're in control of their conference final series. While the whole team has stepped up in a big way, it's no secret they wouldn't be in this position if it weren't for the play of the best player the team has ever had.

Alex Ovechkin has been dynamite in the playoffs. He's tied for the team lead in points with Evgeny Kuznetsov at 19 and he's scored twice as many goals this post-season (10) than he has in any other since 2009.

In fact, if you combine regular season and playoffs, Ovechkin's 59 goals this season is the third-highest mark of his career after 69 in 2008, and 67 in 2009. At 32 years old, he's arguably having his best goal-scoring year since he was 24, a truly remarkable feat.

The question then becomes how is Ovechkin doing this? At his age, his play should be dropping off a bit, and the trends in his shot rates year-to-year do support some level of decline. But let's look at the types of shots Ovechkin is getting to see if he's changed any tendencies recently.

A couple things to keep in mind when looking at scoring chance data from different years and comparing the regular season to the playoffs: scoring chances league-wide have been increasing over the past two regular seasons, but those chances usually drop in the playoffs as teams tighten up on defence.

Knowing those factors, we can draw some inferences from the data above. This season Ovechkin has increased his scoring chance numbers by a higher percentage than the league average has gone up, and his average shot distance at 5-on-5 has decreased from nearly 37 feet from the goal line in 2016-17 to just over 32 feet in this year's playoffs.

Getting closer to the goal is giving Ovechkin better looks and this is even more extreme on the power play, where he has made a concerted effort to get into his sweet spot on the inside of the left circle, rarely shooting from the perimeter anymore. In fact, during the playoffs this year, 62.5 per cent of all Ovechkin's power play shot attempts have come from that left circle inside the slot, up from 48 per cent in the regular season and 42.9 per cent last season.

More than just getting better shot locations though, it matters how those scoring chances are created, so let's look at what kinds of chances Ovechkin has put up for the Capitals.

If you ever wondered why shots are so much more dangerous on the power play than at even strength, look no further than the percentage of Ovechkin's scoring chances that are preceded by a pass. Over the past two seasons and playoffs, 38.7 per cent of his 5-on-5 scoring chances have been immediately preceded by a pass, while 91.1 per cent of his power play scoring chances came off a pass. That makes goaltenders move and opens up space for Ovechkin's generational shooting talent to make easy work of them.

Passing on the power play has also gotten better for Ovechkin. In 2016-17 only 87.9 per cent of his scoring chances on the man advantage involved passing plays, but he was up over 92 per cent this regular season and just a hair below 93 per cent in the playoffs.

At 5-on-5, the biggest change for Ovi has been an increase in attacking off the rush, which uses tools in his game that he more often employed as a younger player. This is the result of how he worked on his skating in the off-season to come back feeling younger and quicker.

If Ovechkin plays until he's 40, he only needs to average 24.5 goals per season to pass Howe's 801 goals. But he'd need to average 36 goals per year to beat Gretzky's 894. That's a big ask. If anyone could do it though...

— Andrew Berkshire (@AndrewBerkshire) May 15, 2018

Shots off the rush are more dangerous than static ones, and we all know how well Ovechkin uses opposing defencemen as screens to wire a wrist shot between their skates.

Ovechkin's goal scoring improvement has come in two ways. He's increased volume by a significant degree and is getting more shots on net and more scoring chances at 5-on-5 and on the power play. He's also increased the quality of his shots by moving closer to the net, attacking more off the rush, and getting shots off immediately after receiving passes at a much higher rate.



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How long Ovechkin can continue to be the NHL's best goal scorer is anyone's guess, but he keeps refining his skillset and working for better opportunities.

He's clearly not satisfied with just being great. He wants more, and he's inching closer to earning it for the Washington Capitals.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 05.16.2018

1096475 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Patrick Kane sets Team USA points, assists records at 2018 worlds

Mike Johnston | May 15, 2018

Patrick Kane hasn't been a regular face at the annual IIHF World Championship throughout his career. Mostly it's because he's usually on a lengthy playoff run with the Chicago Blackhawks.

This year, though, the Blackhawks failed to qualify for the post-season, so Kane decided to don the Team USA uniform and on Tuesday he broke the record for most points recorded by an American in a single tournament.

Kane registered a goal and an assist in his team's round-robin finale against Finland, bringing his tournament totals to six goals and 11 assists.

The previous record was 16 points set by Richard Roberge way back in 1962.

With a goal and an assist tonight, @88PKane has now set the U.S. record for both points (17) and assists (11) in a single IIHF Men's World Championship. #2018MWC pic.twitter.com/Zod0mVOBEy

— USA Hockey (@usahockey) May 15, 2018

Kane has only competed at the IIHF worlds once prior to this year, registering 10 points in seven games in 2008 following his NHL rookie season—the only other time his Blackhawks have missed the playoffs.

In addition to the points record, Kane also set a new high mark for assists by an American in a single tournament with 11. The previous record of 10 was set by Montreal Canadiens star Max Pacioretty in 2012, then tied the following year by Nashville Predators forward Craig Smith.

The United States ended up finishing second in Group B after a 6-2 loss to Finland on Tuesday, setting up a quarter-final matchup with a Czech Republic team that finished third in Group A.

"It's not a good feeling losing," Kane said following the loss to Finland. "It could be good for us to make sure we won't deal with this again and stay positive. We're a good team, we've had a good tournament to this point. [The Czechs] have some talents, it will be a tough game against them."

Kane is currently tied with Finland's Sebastian Aho for the tournament lead in points.

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1096476 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Golden Knights making super fan Bryce Harper nervous

Sportsnet Staff | May 15, 2018

Washington Nationals star Bryce Harper is a well-documented fan of the NHL's Vegas Golden Knights.

During the winter, the Nevada native attended plenty of games at T-Mobile Arena and with the playoffs now underway, his fandom has ratcheted up a notch, even if Harper can't watch Golden Knights games in person.

"I get more nervous watching them than anything I've ever done in my life. Even playing ball," Harper told Bob Nightingale of USA Today. "I don't get nervous watching my team or when I play at all. I really don't. But when I'm watching them, I get so nervous. I'll sit on the couch with my wife, going nuts.

"It's unreal."

The Golden Knights have been the NHL's best story in years — the expansion club dominated during the regular season and now finds itself on the brink of the Stanley Cup Final. Vegas evened its Western Conference Final matchup with the Winnipeg Jets on Monday night. The series now shifts to Sin City, with Game 3 Wednesday night at 9:00 p.m. ET.

The Nationals will be hosting the New York Yankees Wednesday evening at 7:05 p.m., so Harper might be able to make it home in time to catch some of the hockey game.

"I've fallen in love with hockey," Harper says. "It's the first team I really had a passion rooting for ... Growing up, I didn't really root for many teams. I always liked the Lakers. Liked Dallas in football. But those are all the winning teams.

"I can't get enough of them. I watch them religiously. I love hockey."

Harper's Instagram account is filled with shout outs to his favourite club. Earlier this season, he posted a picture of one of his bats with the Golden Knights logo emblazoned on the bottom of the knob. The 25-year-old also sent autographed bats with the teams logo to their locker room.

"They're a great team," he said. "There's a lot of guys on that team that have chips on their shoulders because they got let go on other teams they were playing on."

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1096477 Websites

TSN.CA / Statistically Speaking: Stars lift Lightning in must-win game

Scott Cullen

Tampa Bay's stars led the way to a crucial Game Three win at Washington; Hedman, Kucherov, Stamkos, Point and more in Scott Cullen's Statistically Speaking.

HEROES

Victor Hedman – Tampa Bay's top defenceman produced a goal and two assists on the way to a 4-2 Game Three win at Washington. After starting the playoffs by going five games without a point, Hedman now has 11 points (1 G, 10 A) during an eight-game point streak.

Nikita Kucherov – The Lightning sniper recorded a goal and an assist in Game Three, giving him 16 points (7 G, 9 A) in 13 playoff games.

Steven Stamkos – Tampa Bay's scoring centre had a goal and an assist at Washington in Game Three and has 15 points (6 G, 9 A) in 13 playoff games.



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Brayden Point – The second-year Lightning centre also had a goal and an assist at Washington; he has 14 points (6 G, 8 A) in 13 postseason games.

ZEROES

Matt Niskanen – The Capitals blueliner had a tough time at 5-on-5 (10 for, 17 against, 37.0 CF%, 5-9 scoring chances) and was on the ice for one goal for and two against. He was also on the ice, with Brooks Orpik, for two Lightning power play goals.

Braden Holtby – Washington's netminder allowed four goals on 23 shots in a 4-2 Game Three loss to Tampa Bay. It was the first time this postseason that he has surrendered four goals in a game.

STANLEY CUP HALF FULL/HALF EMPTY

Evgeny Kuznetsov – Washington's playmaking centre scored a goal and had 15 shot attempts (12 SOG) in the 4-2 Game Three loss against Tampa Bay.

SHORT SHIFTS

Capitals LW Alex Ovechkin launched 18 shot attempts (9 SOG) but couldn't find the scoresheet in Game Three...Lightning G Andrei Vasilevski stopped 36 of 38 shots in a 4-2 Game Three win at Washington, a bounce-back performance after posting a .839 save percentage in the first two games of the series.

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1096478 Websites

TSN.CA / Statistically Speaking: Marchessault makes the difference

Scott Cullen

Marchessault and Fleury lead Vegas to a crucial Game 2 victory at Winnipeg, evening the series; Smith, Laine and more in Scott Cullen's Statistically Speaking.

HEROES

Jonathan Marchessault – Vegas' star winger was a force in Game 2, scoring a pair goals on 11 shot attempts (8 SOG). He has 15 points (6 G, 9 A) in 12 playoff games and, in the playoffs, Vegas has outscored the opposition 11-2 during 5-on-5 play with Marchessault on the ice.

Marc-Andre Fleury – The Golden Knights netminder stopped 30 of 31 shots in a 3-1 Game 2 victory against Winnipeg. He has a .945 save percentage in a dozen playoff starts.

Reilly Smith – The Golden Knights winger earned two assists in a 3-1 Game 2 victory at Winnipeg. He has 14 points (1 G, 13 A) in 12 playoff games.

ZEROES

Nikolaj Ehlers – Winnipeg's speedy winger struggled (6 for, 17 against, 26.1 CF%, 1-12 scoring chances) in Game 2 against Vegas.

Dustin Byfuglien and Josh Morrissey – The Jets blueliners were both on the ice for two goals against in a 3-1 Game 2 Golden Knights victory at Winnipeg.

James Neal, Erik Haula and Alex Tuch – The Vegas trio had a hard game (6 for, 16 against, 27.3 CF%, 4-5 scoring chances) in a Game 2 victory at Winnipeg.

STANLEY CUP HALF FULL/HALF EMPTY

Patrik Laine – The Jets sniper led the team with seven shot attempts and four shots on goal, yet also had team-worst possession stats (10 for, 16 against, 38.5 CF%, 3-11 scoring chances) in a Game 2 loss to Vegas.

VITAL SIGNS

Tomas Tatar – Back in the Vegas lineup after being a healthy scratch for several games, the Golden Knights winger scored the first goal of Game 2. It was his first point in five postseason contests.

TSN.CA LOADED: 05.16.2018

1096479 Websites

TSN.CA / Off-Season Game Plan: Chicago Blackhawks

Scott Cullen

The Chicago Blackhawks missed the playoffs for the first time since 2007-08, and are looking to rebuild on the fly, as general manager Stan Bowman maintains that the core four – Jonathan Toews, Patrick Kane, Duncan Keith and Brent Seabrook – aren't going anywhere.

Off-Season Game Plan examines what the Blackhawks might be able to do this summer, as they try to improve around their long-time stars in hopes that they can return to the postseason.

Trying to build around Toews and Kane was always going to be a challenge, because they take up \$21-million under the salary cap, but that requires Bowman to be more ruthless when it comes to managing other deals.

It also means that Chicago can ill afford to have big ticket players get injured or fail to produce, and that is part of what sent the Blackhawks spiraling down last season – starting goaltender Corey Crawford got hurt, Brandon Saad struggled in his return to Chicago and their big-ticket defencemen, Duncan Keith and Brent Seabrook, struggled. It might be possible to survive a couple of those things, but all those issues coupled with their financial restrictions left Chicago looking up at the rest of the Central Division.

Can they turn it around quickly, or will another season out of the playoffs be necessary to prompt a more substantial rebuilding effort?

Corey Crawford – The veteran goaltender played only 28 games, but everything was fine before he got injured, thanks in large part to his career-best .929 save percentage.

Alex DeBrincat – It surprised exactly no one that DeBrincat could put the puck in the net, after he scored 167 goals in three seasons of junior hockey, but he still impressed, finishing third among rookies with 28 goals.

Erik Gustafsson – The 26-year-old defenceman played for the Blackhawks in 2015-2016, but spent nearly a season-and-a-half since in the AHL before getting called up and showing well in 35 games for the Blackhawks, earning a two-year contract extension.

ZEROES

Duncan Keith – Expectations play a part in whether a player gets labeled a hero or zero, and the two-time Norris Trophy winner naturally carries high expectations with him. He struggled last season, though, scoring two goals on 187 shots and finishing with negative shot differentials relative to his teammates.

Patrick Sharp – It wasn't an unreasonable decision for the Blackhawks to bring Sharp back into the fold last season, in part because he had averaged more than three shots on goal per game the year before in



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Dallas. However, Sharp saw his ice time drop to 12:53 per game, his lowest since 2003-04 and finished with uncharacteristically below average possession stats.

Brent Seabrook – The veteran blueliner played 20:12 per game last season, his lowest since his rookie season of 2005-06, and the last time he scored fewer than 26 points in a full season was 2006-07. Given the financial investment, declining production isn't a good sign.

Patrick Kane	82	27	49	76	51.6
-1.1	98.1	63.5	20:11	\$10.5M	
Alex DeBrincat	82	28	24	52	53.7
1.8	102.0	57.3	14:48	\$778K	
Nick Schmaltz	78	21	31	52	51.7
-1.6	100.8	64.3	18:14	\$925K	
Jonathan Toews	74	20	32	52	56.1
4.8	99.5	55.1	19:41	\$10.5M	
Brandon Saad	82	18	17	35	56.1
5.2	97.7	59.0	17:30	\$6.0M	
Artem Anisimov	72	20	11	31	49.4
-3.5	98.3	51.2	16:47	\$4.55M	
David Kampf	46	4	7	11	51.6
-0.4	95.6	46.8	12:48	\$925K	
Marian Hossa					
				\$5.275M	
Vinnie Hinostroza	50	7	18	25	53.8
1.7	100.1	49.9	13:49	\$718K	RFA
Anthony Duclair	56	11	12	23	50.8
2.2	9.1	53.0	13:17	\$1.2M	RFA
Patrick Sharp	70	10	11	21	50.7
-2.0	97.1	56.4	12:53	\$800K	UFA
John Hayden	47	4	9	13	47.7
-6.2	98.9	44.4	10:49	\$925K	RFA
Chris DiDomenico	24	6	4	10	46.6
0.0	97.7	50.4	11:47	\$613K	UFA
Lance Bouma	53	3	6	9	50.4
-4.1	99.0	43.9	10:39	\$1.0M	UFA
Tomas Jurco	29	1	0	1	50.0
0.2	91.4	52.3	10:38	\$800K	RFA
Andreas Martinsen	9	1	0	1	53.4
5.2	99.5	40.7	12:38	\$675K	UFA

A 76-point season would be great for most players in the league, but it was the first time since 2011-12 that Patrick Kane scored at less than a point-per-game rate. He may have missed having Artemi Panarin on his line, but still generated a lot of shots (3.48 per game), but his percentages dipped, even though shot quality didn't appear to be a significant problem.

Over the past five seasons, only Sidney Crosby has recorded more points than Patrick Kane.

When Alex DeBrincat dropped to the second round in the 2016 Draft, it was a gift for whichever team decided that a 5-foot-7 winger could still play, and the Blackhawks saw the results last season. He's a big part of what this team needs: a productive player on an entry-level contract.

2014 first-rounder Nick Schmaltz took a step forward in his second season, and he's a skilled playmaker who, as he continues to develop, should be able to keep providing Kane with sufficient opportunities to fill the net.

It's natural to see Jonathan Toews scoring 52 points, his lowest in a full season, and figure that the 30-year-old is just hitting decline after more than a decade of top-tier performance. The thing is, though, that Toews has been held under 60 points for three years running, and yet last season he was utterly dominant at 5-on-5 play; he just needed someone on his line who could finish (or, you know, he could have shot better than a career-worst 9.5%).

Blame for last season's scoring woes tends to land on Brandon Saad, who had 35 points, because he was traded, one-for-one, for Panarin, who put up 82 points in Columbus. Saad isn't a point-per-game player, but he did have three straight seasons with at least 50 points before last season and, playing alongside Toews, did have dominant possession stats. It's possible that the Blackhawks could cut their losses and look to move Saad this summer, but it would be a classic case of selling low on a player who had a career-low on-ice shooting percentage (6.7%) last season.

Even though Artem Anisimov hit the 20-goal plateau for the third consecutive season, he was surpassed on the depth chart by Schmaltz, which makes it conceivable that Chicago could deal Anisimov. He's a solid complementary centre, which should mean there is a market for him, but if the Blackhawks are going to retain any kind of cap flexibility with the big contracts that they have on the books, then it might make sense to move Anisimov.

23-year-old rookie David Kampf was fine as a fourth-line centre. He didn't contribute much offensively, and was outscored, but his shot differentials were decent and his percentages were awful (resulting in a 95.6 PDO).

Vinnie Hinostroza faded down the stretch, managing two assists in the last 15 games, but he showed some potential after getting called up from the AHL, where he had 22 points in 23 games. He's small, but speedy and created positive shot differentials when he was on the ice; now, to see if the 24-year-old can hold down a regular spot for an entire season.

Acquired in a trade with Arizona, Anthony Duclair only scored two goals in 23 games with the Blackhawks but was a solid enough contributor otherwise. He needs to be more consistent when it comes to generating shots, but he'll be in mix for Chicago, whether he get a shot alongside Toews, or if he's slotted in a second or third-line role.

John Hayden has good size and plays with the kind of edge that would fit on the third or fourth line, but he struggled in Chicago last season and was demoted to the American Hockey League.

25-year-old Tomas Jurco has been stuck on the fringe of the roster for most of his career, but he was reasonably effective after getting called up to Chicago last season. He has talent, and could provide an edge lower on the depth chart.

If there is a prospect that might be counted on to produce next season, it would have to be Dylan Sikura, who tallied 54 points in 35 games as a senior at Northeastern before recording three assists in five late-season games with the Blackhawks.

22-year-old Victor Ejdsell, acquired in the Ryan Hartman trade, got a late-season look with the Blackhawks and performed well in the AHL playoffs, so he could challenge for a job next season, too.

Duncan Keith	82	2	30	32	51.9
-0.7	97.1	59.6	23:50	\$5.538M	
Brent Seabrook	81	7	19	26	51.6
-1.1	99.8	55.6	20:12	\$6.875M	
Jan Rutta	57	6	14	20	49.9
100.5	51.1	19:15	\$2.3M	-2.7	
Erik Gustafsson	35	5	11	16	55.2
6.6	100.2	56.3	18:33	\$1.2M	
Jordan Oesterle	55	5	10	15	52.2
-0.6	97.4	55.4	20:31	\$650K	



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Connor Murphy	76	2	12	14	53.5
	1.3	98.2	49.7	16:22	\$3.85M
Gustav Forsling	41	3	10	13	48.9
	-6.9	98.9	51.7	19:09	\$873K
Cody Franson	23	1	6	7	58.4
	7.9	98.5	64.5	16:37	\$1.0M UFA
Michal Rozsival					\$650K UFA

2006-07 was the last time that Duncan Keith scored as few as two goals and 32 points in a full NHL season, but that's where the 34-year-old's production settled in 2017-18. His percentages were abysmal (career-low 97.1 PDO), but Keith's shot differentials weren't great either. It could be that Father Time is catching up to him, or maybe he'll rebound with a vintage season next year when he's 35. I know which one feels more likely.

The Blackhawks need Duncan Keith to be better than he was in 2017-2018.

There is a reliability to Brent Seabrook, who has missed 15 games in the past 12 seasons, but he's not the player he was during the Stanley Cup years either. To his credit, Seabrook recovered from disastrous possession numbers a couple of years ago and now is just a bit below average, in relative terms, compared to his teammates. That might be fine if he wasn't eating up such a significant chunk of the salary cap for "gulp" six more years.

Czech blueliner Jan Rutta was signed as a free agent and the 27-year-old had some decent moments in his first season, but his overall results were still questionable – decent offensively, not-so-great defensively. Perhaps having a steady partner, and one steadier than Gustav Forsling, will help him next season.

It feels like the Blackhawks didn't give Erik Gustafsson a shot until the season was already going downhill, but the 26-year-old performed quite well in the second half-season sample that makes up the entirety of his NHL career. However, in his 76 career games, he has 30 points and stellar shot differentials, so it's probably worth seeing what he can do in a full-time role.

Jordan Oesterle had played 25 games, total, in the previous three seasons with Edmonton before he was afforded a significant opportunity in Chicago, and performed well in 55 games. On a bargain contract, Oesterle provides good value, but the Blackhawks have enough guys that are good value propositions and not enough high-end talent on the blueline.

When the Blackhawks dealt Niklas Hjalmarsson to Arizona for Connor Murphy, the move got Chicago younger, which made sense, but only if Murphy would fill a top-four role on defence. That didn't happen, as he played more than 20 minutes just four times all season and finished with a career-low 16:22 per game. While he was moved down the depth chart (and to the left side), Murphy's results were fine. However, if Coach Q isn't going to trust him, Murphy might have more value as a trade chip for the Blackhawks.

21-year-old Gustav Forsling starred at the World Juniors for Sweden in 2015, and it looked like he could be a star, but his first two North American pro seasons have been split between the NHL and AHL, with his poor results last season prompting another demotion. He's still young, but it's hard to count on him in a significant role next season.

For a team that isn't overwhelmed with great options on the blueline, the Blackhawks moved on from Cody Franson awfully quickly, especially considering his relative shot differentials were literally the best among defencemen to play at least 200 5-on-5 minutes.

The Blackhawks have bodies on the blueline. What they could use is someone to run the power play, because that was a major shortcoming last season. Carolina's Justin Faulk, New Jersey's Damon Severson, Calgary's T.J. Brodie and Los Angeles' Alec Martinez are a few viable

options and Chicago has Nashville's first-round pick, which could certainly enhance their ability to get a deal done.

Corey Crawford	28	16	9	2	.929
	.935	\$6.0M			
Anton Forsberg	35	10	16	4	.908
	.910	\$750K			
Jean-Francois Berube		13	3	6	1
	.894	.905	\$700K		
Jeff Glass	15	3	7	3	.898 .909
	\$613K	UFA			

There was a time, not so long ago, when Corey Crawford was considered expendable, not a significant part of the Blackhawks core. After last season, that seems a laughable concept, but it does suggest that he was still somehow underrated. Since 2012-13, only Sergei Bobrovsky has a better save percentage in 200-plus games.

Chicago's season fell apart without Corey Crawford.

Crawford's injury forced the Blackhawks to turn to their backups more than they would have liked. Jeff Glass was a great story, Jean-Francois Berube made a career-high 10 starts and Scott Foster delivered on of the most amazing performances ever. Ultimately, Anton Forsberg was the best of the backup goaltender lot, but Chicago would have likely preferred that he play fewer than 35 games.

Jean-Francois Berube has started 23 games over the past three seasons, but his results don't suggest that he's necessarily ready for a backup role.

Henri Jokiharju	D	63	12	59	71
+47	Portland (WHL)				
Dylan Sikura	RW	35	22	32	54
+18	Northeastern (HE)				
Ian Mitchell	D	41	2	28	30
+17	Denver (NCHC)				
Chad Kryz	D	36	7	20	27
+8	Boston University (HE)				
Tim Soderlund	LW	43	9	5	14
+3	Skelleftea AIK (SHL)				
Artur Kayumov	LW	20	2	1	3
+5	Yaroslavl Lokomotiv (KHL)				
Lucas Carlsson	D	44	7	10	17
-9	Brynäs (SHL)				
Victor Ejdsell	C	50	20	14	34
+5	HV71 Jonkoping (SHL)				
Andrei Altybarmakyan	RW	14	0	0	0
0	St. Petersburg SKA (KHL)				
Jakub Galvas	D	42	2	11	13
+5	Olomouc (Czech)				
Carl Dahlstrom	D	64	3	25	28
+14	Rockford (AHL)				
Matthew Highmore	LW	64	24	19	43
-6	Rockford (AHL)				
Luc Snuggerud	D	40	5	12	17
-3	Rockford (AHL)				
Joni Tuulola	D	58	7	23	30
+3	Sport Vaasa (SML)				
Dominik Kahun	LW	42	12	29	41
+16	EHC Munchen (DEL)				



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DRAFT

8th – Adam Boqvist, Oliver Wahlstrom, Jesperi Kotkaniemi

27th – Filip Hallander, Jacob Olofsson, Martin Kaut, Rasmus Sandin

FREE AGENCY

The Blackhawks have approximately \$68.5M committed to the 2018-2019 salary cap for 17 players.

NEEDS

Power-play quarterback, two top-nine forwards

WHAT I SAID THE BLACKHAWKS NEEDED LAST YEAR

Two top-nine forwards, defencemen, backup goaltender, cap savings

THEY ADDED

Alex DeBrincat, Brandon Saad, Patrick Sharp, Tommy Wingels, Lance Bouma, Jan Rutta, Jordan Oesterle, Michal Kempny, Cody Franson

TRADE MARKET

Artem Anisimov, Vinnie Hinostroza, Connor Murphy, Gustav Forsling

Brandon Saad Jonathan Toews Rick Nash*

Alex DeBrincat Nick Schmaltz Patrick Kane

Anthony Duclair Vinnie Hinostroza Dylan Sikura

Victor Ejdsell Tommy Wingels* Tomas Jurco

Dominik Kahun David Kampf Josh Ho-Sang*

Matthew Highmore Tanner Kero John Hayden

Duncan Keith Damon Severson* Corey Crawford

Jordan Oesterle Brent Seabrook Anton Forsberg

Erik Gustafsson Jan Rutta Jean-Francois Berube

Gustav Forsling Adam Clendening

Joni Tuulola Carl Dahlstrom

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1096480 Websites

TSN.CA / Off-Season Game Plan: Vancouver Canucks

Scott Cullen

The Vancouver Canucks have missed the playoffs in four of the past five seasons, finishing with a sub-.500 points percentage in each of the past three seasons.

Off-Season Game Plan looks at a Canucks team that no longer has the Sedins and while it has some better days on the horizon, but it will take some time to get there.

Henrik Sedin and Daniel Sedin have been fixtures on the roster since 2000-2001, and there were elite performers in the peak years of their careers. Even with their careers winding down, and ice time diminishing, they have remained among Vancouver's more effective players, so it's not as though losing them will suddenly make the team better, but it also means that \$14-million will be coming off the salary cap, and that opens up some opportunities.

Jim Benning has been the general manager for the past four seasons, so he has to own some of these struggles, and yet the franchise gave him a contract extension, presumably sold on his ability to build what is now a quality group of prospects in the system. How Benning handles his prospects and how he spends in free agency is going to have a long-term impact on this team, so if it doesn't go right, the rebuilding plan is going to be an extended process. Such is the nature of a rebuilding team that it could still be a long process even if the Canucks make the right moves.

But, there is hope. Brock Boeser was one of the league's top rookies before getting hurt. Last year's fifth overall pick, Elias Pettersson was the MVP of the Swedish Hockey League. Goaltender Thatcher Demko had a strong season in the American Hockey League and centre Adam Gaudette won the Hobey Baker Award as the top player in U.S. College hockey, so there are reasons for the Canucks to be positive about the future, but the challenge remains to secure more high-end talent, especially on defence, as this group moves forward.

Brock Boeser – The 23rd pick in the 2015 Draft made an immediate impact in his first full season, scoring 29 goals in 62 games before suffering a back injury that ended his season prematurely. For a team without a ton of bright spots, having one of the top rookie scorers is a major positive.

Daniel Sedin – As the twins played their final NHL season, Daniel finished with another solid season, scoring 23 goals and 55 points, with positive shot differentials (52.5 CF%, +6.3 CFRel%), even though his ice time (15:16 per game) was his lowest since 2003-2004.

Derrick Pouliot – Unable to consistently crack the Penguins lineup, the 24-year-old blueliner got a better opportunity in Vancouver and performed admirably, recording 22 points and posting favourable possession numbers (50.3 CF%, +3.4 CFRel%).

ZEROES

Erik Gudbranson – Injuries have limited the 6-foot-5 defenceman to 82 games in two seasons with the Canucks, but even when healthy, he continued to struggle in terms of shot differentials. He was bailed out, to some degree, by a high on-ice save percentage (.938), but his track record, and a look at shots against, doesn't suggest that's a sustainable feature of his game.

Michael Del Zotto – While he logged more than 20 minutes per game, while playing all 82 games, it was a difficult season for the veteran defenceman. He was on the wrong side of puck possession and the quality of shots against was significant.

Markus Granlund – It's not as though the 25-year-old should have been expected to duplicate his breakthrough 19-goal 2016-2017 season, but regression came as expected. His shooting percentage dropped from 15.6% to 8.6% and Granlund finished with just eight goals and 12 points in 53 games.

Brock Boeser	62	29	26	55	48.0
	0.5	101.3	61.6	17:30	\$925K
Bo Horvat	64	22	22	44	48.8
	102.1	48.4	19:21	\$5.5M	1.4
Sam Gagner	74	10	21	31	46.7
	-1.4	96.8	51.0	15:07	\$3.15M
Brandon Sutter	61	11	15	26	43.3
	-6.6	102.0	22.7	17:19	\$4.375M
Loui Eriksson	50	10	13	23	49.1
	2.7	99.1	47.6	16:16	\$6.0M
Brendan Leipsic	58	5	17	22	48.8
	-2.5	99.8	56.1	13:08	\$650K
Derek Dorsett	20	7	2	9	44.4
	-6.6	98.4	31.0	15:17	\$2.65M



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Brendan Gaunce	37	4	2	6	46.1
-0.4	100.1	15.5	13:19	\$750K	
Sven Baertschi	53	14	15	29	46.1
-1.7	102.5	54.1	15:36	\$1.85M	RFA
Jake Virtanen	75	10	10	20	49.3
2.4	99.2	43.9	11:59	\$894K	RFA
Jussi Jokinen	60	5	12	17	51.2
-0.1	99.6	46.1	11:35	\$1.1M	UFA
Markus Granlund	53	8	4	12	46.2
-2.1	96.8	37.5	16:15	\$900K	RFA
Darren Archibald	27	4	5	9	43.1
-6.4	100.6	19.8	14:52	\$650K	UFA
Reid Boucher	20	3	2	5	51.4
2.9	90.0	42.0	11:23	\$688K	RFA
Nic Dowd	56	3	1	4	46.6
96.4	28.9	10:32	\$640K	UFA	-1.5

21-year-old right winger Brock Boeser burst onto the scene after a couple of years at the University of North Dakota, and he's scored 33 goals and 60 points in 71 NHL games. Even with a terrific release on his shot, he may have been somewhat fortunate shooting better than 16%, but he's a quality scoring winger who should be a fixture at the top of the Vancouver lineup.

Bo Horvat has steadily improved in each of his four seasons.

It's been a gradual process, but 23-year-old Bo Horvat has emerged as Vancouver's number one centre. He missed some time with an ankle injury, but still scored a career-high 22 goals. He had solid possession numbers, won 53.8% of his draws last season and is now tasked with playing big minutes on Vancouver's top line.

He seems so much older, since he's been in the league since he was 18, but 28-year-old Sam Gagner has established what he is at this point. He's not a great 5-on-5 player, with defensive shortcomings, but he's skilled enough to be effective on the power play.

Last season, Gagner was also saddled with a career-low 5.1% on-ice shooting percentage, so his offensive production was less than ideal, but that's also likely to bounce back, at least a little. He's effectively a placeholder in the lineup while the Canucks wait for more prospects to force their way into the lineup.

The Canucks seem to hold Brandon Sutter in higher esteem than his performance would justify, but Vancouver is committed to Sutter for three more years, and with a lot of young players making their way into the lineup, they should at least be able to count on Sutter for reliable work as a checking centre.

Veteran winger Loui Eriksson was an odd signing in the summer of 2016, and the results through his first two seasons with the Canucks have not been great. If the 32-year-old isn't going to be a power play and contributor and won't produce much offensively – he has 47 points in 115 games with Vancouver – then Eriksson could still be an effective checking winger. The problem with that is that he comes with a \$6-million cap hit for four more years, which seems outrageous and unnecessary for a player who isn't making a significant offensive contribution.

An undersized but feisty winger, Brendan Leipsic got a chance to play in Vegas, but was ultimately waived and landed a late-season audition with the Canucks, re-uniting with Travis Green, who had coached him in junior. Leipsic has offensive upside and has produced 25 points in 64 career games, but he's still at the stage of his career at which he's battling to secure a regular full-time spot in the lineup.

2012 first-round pick Brendan Gaunce has managed to score five goals in 114 games, but even though his offensive contributions are next to nothing, he's a reliable checking forward. Given his lack of production, he's replaceable, but offers some forward depth.

Moving to Vancouver has allowed Sven Baertschi to take on a bigger role offensively, and he's scored 49 goals in 193 games over the past three-plus seasons. He may be getting propped up a bit if he stays on the top line with Bo Horvat and Brock Boeser, but if the Canucks find other alternatives, Baertschi could provide secondary scoring.

There is a cloud that hangs over Jake Virtanen, who was drafted sixth overall in 2014, because he's not as offensively gifted as players taken after the likes of Nikolaj Ehlers and William Nylander, but the big winger played a regular role last season and was okay in a limited role. If he could generate more offensively, that would really enhance the physical edge he brings to the game.

After his breakout year in 2016-2017, Markus Granlund crashed back to earth last season, scoring four even-strength goals in 53 games. He's a restricted free agent, so the price should be right to re-sign him, but he has to be counted on for depth more than a significant role.

The primary reason for optimism around the Canucks is the emergence of 19-year-old Elias Pettersson, the fifth pick in the 2017 Draft, who put up 75 points (34 G, 41 A) in 57 (regular season plus playoff) games for Växjö in the Swedish Hockey League. He's split time between wing and centre, but the value proposition for the Canucks would be to have Pettersson fit as a premier scoring centre.

The Canucks have other prospects on the way, including Jonathan Dahlen and Adam Gaudette, but it may be optimistic to count on them being NHL-ready for the start of next season. However, the sooner that these skilled forwards can make it into the lineup, the sooner that the Canucks' outlook will be shifting upwards.

Now, the Canucks do have cap room, so they can get into the free agent market. It may not be easy to convince top free agent targets to join a team that has struggled in recent years, but they should be able to find someone to take their money. Of course, they would love to land John Tavares, but Evander Kane, James Neal, Rick Nash or Tyler Bozak may all have some appeal. Kane, a Vancouver native who turns 27 this summer, would upgrade the team's skill level.

Alexander Edler	70	6	28	34	46.2
-1.6	98.6	45.2	24:17	\$5.0M	
Michael Del Zotto	82	6	16	22	46.1
-2.6	100.1	48.4	20:48	\$3.0M	
Chris Tanev	42	2	9	11	47.6
-1.2	101.3	42.8	19:47	\$4.45M	
Alex Biega	44	1	8	9	50.5
3.4	100.1	50.4	15:01	\$825K	
Ben Hutton	61	0	6	6	49.2
2.7	98.9	51.3	18:25	\$2.8M	
Erik Gudbranson	52	2	3	5	43.7
-6.1	99.8	43.8	18:25	\$3.5M	
Derrick Pouliot	71	3	19	22	50.3
3.4	96.9	56.3	17:51	\$800K	RFA
Troy Stecher	68	1	10	11	48.3
0.9	99.7	48.4	18:49	\$925K	RFA

Veteran defenceman Alexander Edler isn't necessarily a Norris Trophy candidate, but he's also a significant part of the Canucks' blueline. He's played more than 23 minutes per game in eight straight seasons, more than 24 minutes per game in each of the past three years, and recorded 34 points last season, his best total since 2011-2012. He's also headed into the last year of his contract and would presumably have value on the trade market, if he is at all interested in waiving his no-trade clause.

Michael Del Zotto did stay healthy last season, for the first time in a while, but he wasn't particularly effective. The Canucks might very well need him to fill minutes on the blueline next year, but if they could find another club interested in his services, it would make sense to listen.



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Of-injured blueliner Chris Tanev is an effective defensive presence, when healthy.

28-year-old defenceman Chris Tanev has established a reputation as an effective shot suppressor, though he wasn't quite as effective in that regard last season, a season in which he played just 42 games. A healthy Tanev makes the Canucks better, but he's never played more than 70 games in an NHL season, and will always draw interest from contenders that think that he could tighten up their defensive play.

A 30-year-old who has played 138 career games in the NHL, Alex Biega has been reasonably effective in his reserve role over the past three seasons. He can move the puck, but isn't necessarily the most stout defender.

In his third season, Ben Hutton had his ice time cut back, as it became apparent that he wasn't a favourite of head coach Travis Green, even if his shot differentials weren't bad. Hutton is still under contract for another season, so maybe the Canucks would look to find him a new home, but they could do worse than giving Hutton another shot.

A towering physical presence, Erik Gudbranson appeals to old-school hockey types because he has the attributes that were so appealing a generation ago, but as the game gets quicker, he tends to be a liability, getting outshot significantly on a regular basis. Given that information, the Canucks still decided that it was a priority to get Gudbranson signed to a new three-year contract. It will come as a surprise if he provides a positive return on that investment.

The eighth pick in the 2012 Draft, Derrick Pouliot finally got a chance to play with the Canucks last season, and he showed some potential. He could be stronger in his own end, but does move the puck effectively.

In two seasons with the Canucks, undersized right-shot defenceman Troy Stecher has shown some promise, but also some vulnerability in the defensive zone.

Where the Canucks are lacking, it seems, is in terms of high-end blueliners. A lot of these guys are serviceable NHLers, but not so many look like top-pair calibre defencemen. Certainly the hope is for 2016 first-round pick Olli Juolevi to improve the talent on the Vancouver blueline. He had a solid season in Finland, but the fact that he was playing in Finland, and not Vancouver, was a little troubling. Nevertheless, given Vancouver's lack of elite defence prospects, they need Juolevi to keep making progress.

Additionally, there may be some quality defencemen available in the draft when Vancouver is up to pick at No. 7, and it's an area of need.

Jacob Markstrom	60	23	26	7	.912
	.924	\$3.667M			
Anders Nilsson	27	7	14	4	.901
	.913	\$2.5M			

28-year-old Jacob Markstrom got his first real shot as a starting goaltender, appearing in 60 games, last season. He has a .911 save percentage in 126 games with Vancouver, which is a little below average, but he's fine until the long-term starter arrives.

Jacob Markstrom received a new opportunity to start in Vancouver.

Anders Nilsson was signed to significant money for a backup role, presumably because Markstrom wasn't an established starter, but Nilsson struggled in Vancouver, leaving him highly-priced for what he offers.

The long-term answer in goal for the Canucks is Thatcher Demko, the 2014 second-round pick who was really good in the American Hockey League in 2017-2018. With Nilsson under contract for another year, the Canucks may be inclined to keep Demko in the AHL next year, but he's very clearly the goaltender of the future. It's just a matter of when that future becomes the present.

Elias Pettersson	C	44	24	32	56
+27	Vaxjo (SHL)				
Olli Juolevi	D	38	7	12	19
+7	TPS Turku (SML)				
Thatcher Demko	G	46			
.922	Utica (AHL)				
Jonathan Dahlen	C	44	23	21	44
+11	Timra IK (SWE)				
Adam Gaudette	C	38	30	30	60
+12	Northeastern (HE)				
Kole Lind	RW	58	39	56	+24
	Kelowna (WHL)				
Jonah Gadjovich	LW	42	25	23	48
+8	Owen Sound (OHL)				
Michael DiPietro	G	56			
.910	Windsor (OHL)				
Nikita Tryamkin	D	53	9	16	25
+12	Yekaterinburg (KHL)				
Lukas Jasek	RW	48	8	10	18
-9	Liberec (Czech)				
Ashton Sautner	D	61	3	10	13
+9	Utica (AHL)				
Guillaume Brisebois	D	68	3	15	18
-6	Acadie-Bathurst (QMJHL)				
Zack MacEwen	C	66	10	23	33
-20	Utica (AHL)				
William Lockwood	RW	16	4	7	11
+5	Michigan (Big 10)				
Evan McEneny	D	11	2	5	7
-4	Utica (AHL)				

DRAFT

7th – Oliver Wahlstrom, Adam Boqvist, Quinn Hughes, Evan Bouchard

FREE AGENCY

The Canucks have approximately \$52.0 M committed to the 2018-2019 salary cap for 16 players.

NEEDS

Two top-six forwards, two top-four defencemen

WHAT I SAID THE CANUCKS NEEDED LAST YEAR

Elite talent, two top-six forwards, one goaltender

THEY ADDED

Thomas Vanek, Sam Gagner, Michael Del Zotto, Derrick Pouliot, Anders Nilsson

TRADE MARKET

Sam Gagner, Michael Del Zotto, Ben Hutton, Chris Tanev, Anders Nilsson

Evander Kane*	Bo Horvat	Brock Boeser
Sven Baertschi	Elias Pettersson	Loui Eriksson
Brendan Leipsic	Brandon Sutter	Jake Virtanen
Brendan Gaunce	Sam Gagner	Markus Granlund
Jonathan Dahlen	Adam Gaudette	Nikolay Goldobin



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Tyler Motte Zack MacEwen Reid Boucher
 Alexander Edler Christopher Tanev Jacob Markstrom
 Michael Del Zotto Troy Stecher Anders Nilsson
 Derrick Pouliot Erik Gudbranson Thatcher Demko
 Olli Juolevi Alex Biega
 Guillaume Brisebois Ashton Sautner
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TSN.CA / Off-Season Game Plan: Detroit Red Wings

Scott Cullen

The Detroit Red Wings missed the playoffs for the second straight season and, from the looks of their roster, they have some work to do in order to turn this thing around.

Off-Season Game Plan looks at a Red Wings team that has some hard decisions to make about their long-term plan.

Considering the lack of star power on the roster right now, there is a very reasonable argument to make that Detroit should plan to tank, in order to improve their chances to acquire high-end talent around which they can rebuild.

That doesn't require dramatically sinking the team's hopes; really it's not much more than allowing nature to take its course with this roster. The Red Wings have seven picks in the first three rounds this year, and if they're in the lottery next year, then that would offer a shot at another high-end player.

While this might be a reasonable approach for a team with a new management team, looking at a five-year plan, I have my doubts that the current Red Wings management is prepared to do that.

As an aside, when I do these Off-Season Game Plans, I try to come up with a plan that seems reasonable and consistent for the current management and that means their established tendencies should be part of the consideration. Thus, even if I might think that the long-term plan for the Red Wings should be focused on a long-term rebuild, I'm skeptical that Red Wings GM Ken Holland would venture down that path.

So, if the Red Wings aren't necessarily going to strip this thing down to the studs, maybe they will accelerate their rebuilding plan by using some of their draft pick currency to acquire premier talent. This isn't a roster that just needs some tweaking, but if the Wings can acquire high-end talent that could be a cornerstone piece then that might be worth it.

Dylan Larkin – The 21-year-old centre nearly doubled his point total from the previous season, leading the Red Wings with 63 points.

Anthony Mantha – It feels like he's scratching the surface, and finished the season with one goal in his last 16 games, but the 6-foot-5 winger also had a team-leading 24 goals and had the puck moving the right way when he was on the ice.

Henrik Zetterberg – The 37-year-old played in every game, scored 56 points, had stellar possession stats and the Wings outscored the opposition with him on the ice at evens. He doesn't need to be vintage Zetterberg to still be one of Detroit's best players.

ZEROES

Trevor Daley – Last summer's free agent acquisition did get pushed into tough minutes, but he also was buried in the defensive zone, giving up quality scoring chances in the process.

Tomas Tatar – The 27-year-old winger did have his fourth straight 20-goal season but, before getting traded to Vegas, had managed a paltry 28 points in 62 games.

Luke Glendening – Detroit's checking centre faces tough usage, but he was stomped last season. As usual, he was on the wrong end of shot differentials and the Red Wings were outscored 33-16 at 5-on-5 with him on the ice.

Henrik Zetterberg	82	11	45	56	49.9
	1.6	100.9	53.0	19:30	\$6.083M
Gustav Nyquist	82	21	19	40	50.8
	2.9	100.4	53.9	17:51	\$4.75M
Justin Abdelkader	75	13	22	35	49.0
	0.2	99.2	48.8	16:33	\$4.25M
Frans Nielsen	79	16	17	33	48.6
	-0.3	100.1	43.2	15:50	\$5.25M
Darren Helm	75	13	18	31	47.1
	-2.5	100.0	42.5	15:34	\$3.85M
Luke Glendening	69	11	8	19	44.0
	-6.8	95.9	34.5	13:12	\$1.8M
Luke Witkowski	31	1	3	4	41.8
	-8.0	100.6	53.6	6:53	\$750K
Johan Franzen					\$3.955M
Dylan Larkin	82	16	47	63	50.4
	2.3	98.9	46.9	19:51	\$925K RFA
Anthony Mantha	80	24	24	48	51.7
	3.9	101.2	53.5	17:18	\$863K RFA
Andreas Athanasiou	71	16	17	33	49.0
	0.6	98.8	51.8	15:19	\$1.388M RFA
Martin Frk	68	11	14	25	50.0
	98.9	55.2	10:17	\$650K RFA	1.3
Tyler Bertuzzi	48	7	17	24	46.7
	-2.1	99.0	43.5	14:24	\$662K RFA
David Booth	28	4	1	5	40.7
	-8.8	96.2	59.3	6:58	\$700K UFA

Elder statesman Henrik Zetterberg has played every game for each of the past three seasons, but it's reportedly quite a struggle for him to go through the grind night after night. Naturally, he's not the player that he used to be, but Zetterberg is still effective, capable of playing a solid two-way game. His salary dips to \$3.35-million next season, before going down to \$1-million for each of the following two years, so the end of the line is likely near, but he could still be part of the plans for next season.

Henrik Zetterberg remains one of Detroit's top forwards.

28-year-old Gustav Nyquist recorded his fifth straight 40-point season, but his total of 40 points was his lowest in the past five years. He's a shifty winger who can put the puck in the net, a three-time 20-goal scorer, and did have his name pop up in trade rumours last season. Maybe that gets re-visited in the summer or, if Nyquist starts the year in Detroit, before the trade deadline.

Veteran winger Justin Abdelkader plays a hard-nosed game, and has tended to play a complementary role on Detroit's scoring lines. There's plenty to like about a blue-collar player like Abdelkader, but the fact that his contract has five more years (at a \$4.25-million cap hit) remaining is not one of them. He's 31 and that's already a shaky return on investment.



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Detroit's decision to sign Frans Nielsen as a free agent in the summer of 2016 was suspect – the roster wasn't that of a playoff team, and Nielsen wasn't likely to change that. He's still a sound checking centre, but his offensive production has dipped (last season's 0.42 points per game was a career-low for a full season) and he's still under contract for four more seasons, at a \$5.25-million cap hit.

The third albatross contract among Red Wings forwards belongs to Darren Helm, a 31-year-old checker who has never scored more than 33 points in a season yet still has three more years (at \$3.85-million) left on his deal.

The challenge facing the Red Wings is whether they can find a way to at least get valuable contributions because those contracts take up significant space under the salary cap and those contracts all have various types of no-trade protection.

There aren't a lot of players that are used in the manner that the Red Wings use Luke Glendening. The 29-year-old is a face-off ace (he won 58.0% last season) and starts most of his shifts in the defensive zone, but he's consistently been on the wrong end of shot differentials, by a significant margin – he has a -8.1 CFRel% for his career – and he's still under contract for three more seasons. Like Abdelkader and Helm, Glendening is a gritty home-grown checking forward who has been over-compensated, though not to the same degree.

28-year-old Luke Witkowski was a defenceman at Western Michigan University and throughout much of his time in the Tampa Bay Lightning organization. Moving to Detroit last season, he was a part-time player, but primarily played right wing in a limited role, averaging less than seven minutes of ice time per game and leading the team with six fights.

21-year-old Dylan Larkin is a building block for the Red Wings' future. The speedy forward moved to centre ice full-time in his third season and scored a career-high 63 points; his 52 even-strength points was tied for 23rd in the league. He's due for a new contract as a restricted free agent this summer.

Towering and talented winger Anthony Mantha had a career-high 24 goals and 48 points last season but, if he puts it all together, he has the ability to do more. The challenge for the Red Wings is putting him in the position to best use his rare combination of size and scoring touch.

A very skilled player, 23-year-old Andreas Athanasiou scores highlight-reel goals because he has impressive speed and skill, but his all-around game remains a work in progress. He's scored 34 goals over the past two seasons, 32 of them at even strength. It would be easy enough to see Athanasiou become a regular 20-goal scorer and that surely has some value.

24-year-old winger Martin Frk finally made the league last season and while he didn't play a lot, he did show off an impressive shot. The challenge, to this point, is getting the rest of his game up to speed because he hasn't yet been able to earn a consistent role.

A wrist injury prevented Tyler Bertuzzi from starting the season with the Red Wings, but once he joined the lineup, he did show some potential. His shot differentials were still on the wrong side of the ledger, but he did score 22 of his 24 points at even strength.

The Red Wings will have some openings for prospects. Michael Rasmussen and Evgeny Svechnikov are the top two candidates. Even if Detroit doesn't have major expectations for next season, they can dip into free agency or the trade market to add established NHL depth.

Niklas Kronwall	79	4	23	27	49.1
	0.5	98.4	63.8	18:31	\$4.75M
Trevor Daley	77	9	7	16	46.2
	-3.9	100.0	42.4	20:42	\$3.167M
Nick Jensen	81	0	15	15	51.5
	3.7	98.2	47.9	16:15	\$813K

Jonathan Ericsson	81	3	10	13	47.8
	-1.7	99.0	39.4	19:19	\$4.25M
Danny DeKeyser	65	6	6	12	49.3
	1.0	100.5	44.8	20:19	\$5.0M
Xavier Ouellet	45	0	7	7	50.8
	2.2	98.6	48.9	13:51	\$1.25M
Mike Green	66	8	25	33	47.8
	-1.3	99.3	53.0	22:05	\$6.0M UFA

Veteran defenceman Niklas Kronwall has been maligned in recent seasons, with negative relative shot differentials, but he was quietly effective in 2017-2018. He's headed for the last year of his current contract, and while his cap hit may be higher than ideal, if Kronwall could duplicate his last season, that would be okay.

A two-time Stanley Cup winner with Pittsburgh, Trevor Daley played a big role for the Red Wings last season – his average time on ice of 20:42 per game was his highest since 2014-2015 – and that's not ideal because he tends to be on the wrong side of shot counts. He will be 35 early next season and is probably better suited to a complementary role, if possible.

Nick Jensen was a quietly solid contributor last season.

Unheralded blueliner Nick Jensen, who was a fifth-round pick in 2009, played in 81 games and provided strong defensive play for the Red Wings, giving him positive shot differentials, and that shouldn't be taken for granted. He didn't reach the NHL until he was 26-years-old, but Jensen has been a solid player, and it may be time to give him more responsibility.

The Red Wings locked into Jonathan Ericsson what seems like forever ago, as he has two years left on his current six-year deal. He starts more in the defensive zone, and his shot differentials aren't great, but the quality of shots against doesn't paint a pretty picture either.

Danny DeKeyser saw his possession numbers improve last season, especially when he was paired with Jensen, a much-needed positive sign for a player who still has four years left on his contract. Given the Red Wings' investment, it would be favourable if DeKeyser could handle a top-four role without getting outshot in dramatic fashion, as he was in the previous two seasons.

24-year-old Xavier Ouellet hasn't been able to establish himself as anything more than a fringe NHLer to this point in his career. His results have been okay, though, so if the Wings aren't sold on him, another team might see some potential value.

Detroit does have some quality blueline prospects on the way. Dennis Cholowski and Filip Hronek, 2016 first and second-rounders, respectively, are at the head of the class and may be ready to challenge for spots at some point next season.

If the Red Wings want to use some of the draft picks that they have accumulated, they could get into the market for an upgrade on the blueline. In Arizona's Off-Season Game Plan, I had the Red Wings dealing for Oliver Ekman-Larsson, but any move to add a star of that calibre would run contrary to any possible tanking plans. Additionally, while the Red Wings should be able to pay Ekman-Larsson market rate on his new contract, if he's anxious to play for a contender, Detroit might have some work to do to sell him on that possibility.

Jimmy Howard	60	22	27	9	.910
	.916	\$5.292M			
Jared Coreau	7	0	5	1	.867
	.891	\$613K	UFA		

Jimmy Howard started well last season, but his numbers steadily declined throughout the year. The 34-year-old has one year left on his contract, and might as well finish it out as the Red Wings' starter, but it would make a lot of sense for the team to seek out a long-term option.

Jimmy Howard struggled last year after a strong 2016-2017 season.



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In the meantime, there will be some backup goaltenders available on the trade market at a relatively inexpensive price. Al Montoya, Anders Nilsson, Curtis McElhinney and Michal Neuvirth are among the backups that could be acquired via trade, while Jonathan Bernier, Carter Hutton, Chad Johnson and, potentially (if he doesn't receive a qualifying offer) Robin Lehner could be of interest to the Red Wings.

Michael Rasmussen +17	C	47	31	28	59
		Tri-City (WHL)			
Dennis Cholowski +29	D	69	14	52	66
		Portland (WHL)			
Evgeny Svechnikov -4	RW	57	7	16	23
		Cape Breton (QMJHL)			
Filip Hronek +24	D	67	11	28	39
		Grand Rapids (AHL)			
Gustav Lindstrom +2	D	39	6	8	14
		Almtuna (SWE)			
Joe Hicketts -10	D	67	3	9	12
		Grand Rapids (AHL)			
Vili Saarijarvi -1	D	42	0	11	11
		Grand Rapids (AHL)			
Filip Larsson .941	G	30			
		Tri-City (USHL)			
Givani Smith +1	C	46	17	13	30
		Kitchener (OHL)			
Jordan Sambrook +43	D	67	10	29	39
		Sault Ste. Marie (OHL)			
Kasper Kotkansalo +12	D	40	2	4	6
		Boston University (HE)			
Dominic Turgeon +13	C	69	14	18	32
		Grand Rapids (AHL)			
Libor Sulak +5	D	42	9	23	32
		Pelicans (SML)			
Dan Renouf +4	D	73	2	10	12
		Grand Rapids (AHL)			
Axel Holmstrom -11	LW	66	7	19	26
		Grand Rapids (AHL)			

DRAFT

6th – Evan Bouchard, Quinton Hughes, Adam Boqvist, Oliver Wahlstrom
28th – K'Andre Miller, Jacob Olofsson, Filip Hallander

FREE AGENCY

The Red Wings have approximately \$56.9M committed to the 2018-2019 salary cap for 14 players.

NEEDS

Three forwards, two top-pair defencemen, backup goaltender

WHAT I SAID THE RED WINGS NEEDED LAST YEAR

Depth forwards, two top-pair defencemen

THEY ADDED

Martin Frk, David Booth, Luke Witkowski, Trevor Daley

TRADE MARKET

Gustav Nyquist, Luke Glendening, Andreas Athanasiou, Martin Frk, Jonathan Ericsson, Xavier Ouellet

Justin Abdelkader	Dylan Larkin	Anthony Mantha
Tyler Bertuzzi	Henrik Zetterberg	Gustav Nyquist
Michael Rasmussen	Frans Nielsen	Darren Helm
Remi Elie*	Luke Glendening	Martin Frk
Evgeny Svechnikov	Nic Dowd*	Luke Witkowski
David Pope	Dominic Turgeon	Matt Puempel
Oliver Ekman-Larsson*	Trevor Daley	Jimmy Howard
Danny DeKeyser	Nick Jensen	Al Montoya*
Niklas Kronwall	Jonathan Ericsson	Matej Machovsky
Dennis Cholowski	Libor Sulak	
Joe Hicketts	Vili Saarijarvi	

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TSN.CA / Off-Season Game Plan: Arizona Coyotes

Scott Cullen

The Arizona Coyotes didn't expect to be also-rans in 2017-2018. They made deals for proven veteran performers, expecting to be more competitive than a 70-point team.

Off-Season Game Plan looks at a Coyotes team that has recorded fewer than 80 points for four straight seasons, but they've accumulated young talent along the way, but they are operating on a budget, so it's still an uphill fight.

Because of that budget, and the team's relative lack of success in recent years – missing the playoffs for six straight seasons – there may be a major move brewing with the Coyotes. Star defenceman Oliver Ekman-Larsson has one year left on his deal, and if he's not inclined to stick around, it would be incumbent on the Coyotes to explore what they could get in a trade.

The positive for Arizona is that they do have a lot of young talent playing in significant roles, so internal improvement is one avenue that should help generate better results, but if the Coyotes are going to close the gap on a playoff spot, making up more than 25 points in the standings, they likely need to be more aggressive when it comes to player acquisition.

To do this in a summer in which they might have to deal their franchise defencemen, well, let's just say that GM John Chayka probably has his hands full.

Clayton Keller – The seventh pick in the 2016 Draft stepped into the league and put up a team-leading 65 points in 82 games as a rookie.

Derek Stepan – For the fifth consecutive season, Stepan finished with a point total between 53 and 57 points and, as usual, his team had better shot differentials when he was on the ice.

Antti Raanta – Although he missed some time due to injury, the 28-year-old responded well to his chance in the starter's role, posting a .930 save percentage in 47 games.

ZEROES

Max Domi – The third-year winger scored four of his season-total nine goals in the last 13 games of the season.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 16, 2018

Alex Goligoski – The veteran blueliner had the worst relative possession numbers of his career and the Coyotes were outscored 64-40 with him on the ice in 5-on-5 situations.

Brad Richardson – He did make it back from a broken leg in the previous season, but the veteran centre managed just three goals in 76 games.

Clayton Keller	82	23	42	65	48.4	
	0.4	100.5	56.4	18:05	\$886K	
Derek Stepan	82	14	42	56	49.2	
	1.5	101.3	49.5	19:16	\$6.5M	
Christian Dvorak	78	15	22	37	48.3	
	-0.2	98.9	46.1	16:26	\$839K	
Richard Panik	72	14	21	35	55.3	
	5.6	100.9	53.7	15:12	\$2.8M	
Christian Fischer	79	15	18	33	48.2	
	0.2	99.6	44.3	13:54	\$822K	
Brendan Perlini	74	17	13	30	47.0	
	-1.4	102.7	48.9	14:31	\$863K	
Nick Cousins	71	12	7	19	49.6	
	1.2	97.6	40.0	12:52	\$1.0M	
Marcus Kruger	48	1	5	6	54.4	
	1.0	95.8	45.4	10:50	\$1.8M	
Josh Archibald	42	5	6	11	47.4	
	-1.7	100.0	46.3	11:57	\$675K	
Dave Bolland						
				\$5.5M		
Max Domi	82	9	36	45	48.0	
	100.9	55.0	16:42	\$863K	RFA	
Brad Richardson	76	3	12	15	47.9	
	-0.4	95.5	34.4	14:46	\$2.083M	UFA
Zac Rinaldo	53	5	2	7	43.2	
	-4.8	100.0	43.2	11:17	\$700K	UFA
Freddie Hamilton	16	0	1	1	48.6	
	-3.5	98.7	44.2	8:59	\$613K	RFA

A creative playmaker with star potential, Clayton Keller burst onto the scene scoring right away, went through a slump, and then finished strong on his way to a 65-point rookie season. While the Coyotes wait for other players to pick up the scoring pace, Keller is the clear offensive leader.

Clayton Keller showed game-breaking talent as a rookie.

Acquired from the Rangers to provide veteran leadership on a young team, Derek Stepan offered his typically reliable season, with strong two-way play in addition to tying Keller for the team lead with 42 assists. Stepan also finished with a career-low 14 goals while shooting just 6.7%, so there is some room for improved production, even if his point totals fell within his standard range.

22-year-old centre Christian Dvorak has shown some potential in his first two NHL seasons, and he improved his game in his second season even though his on-ice percentages dipped. Can he take his game to another level? Is there a bigger role for him?

A skilled yet inconsistent winger, Richard Panik was acquired in a trade with Chicago and was a solid contributor with 19 points in 35 games for the Coyotes. He had an off-ice incident that might be some cause for concern, but he's a capable secondary scorer.

21-year-old Christian Fischer had a solid showing as a rookie, displaying some offensive ability while still needing further development to round out his game.

Like Fischer, Brendan Perlini is a winger with good size and the 22-year-old has scored 31 goals in 131 NHL games. The questions for both Fischer and Perlini are whether they can become productive 20-25 goal-scorers, which seems possible, and when that day might arrive.

24-year-old Nick Cousins had a career-high 12 goals and 19 points last season, which should keep expectations modest but, beyond point production, he was a solid player, with positive relative possession numbers despite starting more shifts in the defensive zone.

After six-plus seasons with the Blackhawks, Marcus Kruger fell out of favour rather quickly in Carolina last year, and he's landed in Arizona, which could be a really good fit. The Coyotes, for all the young talent they have up front, desperately need some forwards that can play shutdown minutes and Kruger, who has six goals in 159 games over the past three seasons, has experience playing tough defensive minutes.

Speedy winger Josh Archibald played a career-high 42 games last season. He's on the lineup bubble, but may have found a role to play in Arizona.

Arizona has a couple of forward prospects knocking on the door as well. Dylan Strome, the third pick in 2015, has just 10 points in 28 NHL games, but he had a terrific season in the AHL in 2017-2018, scoring 53 points in 50 games. His results with the Coyotes were better than they had been previously, so maybe he's turning the corner and will be ready to contribute as a scoring centre.

A lower-body injury ended Nick Merkley's season prematurely, but the 21-year-old finished with 39 points in 38 AHL games, so he may soon be ready for his shot with the Coyotes.

Oliver Ekman-Larsson	82	14	28	42
	51.1	4.6	98.3	45.9
			23:41	\$5.5M
Alex Goligoski	78	12	23	35
	-2.9	98.0	43.9	23:17
				\$5.475M
Jason Demers	69	6	14	20
	4.5	99.0	45.7	21:08
				\$3.938M
Jakob Chychrun	50	4	10	14
	-1.6	101.3	55.4	20:15
				\$925K
Niklas Hjalmarsson	48	1	8	9
	-2.8	99.0	45.0	20:42
				\$4.1M
Kevin Connauton	73	11	10	21
	-1.1	102.6	47.5	15:11
				\$1.0M
UFA				
Luke Schenn	64	1	6	7
	-3.3	97.8	40.6	16:23
				\$1.25M
UFA				

The franchise's star defenceman for the past eight seasons, Oliver Ekman-Larsson is coming to a crossroads, as he enters the final year of his current contract. Since 2013-2014, he has scored 85 goals, tied with Brent Burns (who played one year on right wing) with the most goals among defencemen. He's also strong defensively, a bona fide No. 1 defenceman.

The issue for the Coyotes is that if they aren't going to get Ekman-Larsson signed to a long-term contract extension, then they probably have to consider dealing him this summer, because there's just no way, especially for a team not expected to be in the playoffs, to justify losing Ekman-Larsson for nothing at the end of next season. The good news is that there will be no shortage of suitors if Ekman-Larsson is available, so the Coyotes should be able to extract some value in return.

It was a rough season for veteran defenceman Alex Goligoski, even though he scored 12 goals, his most since 2010-2011. He played on both the left and right side, but the Coyotes were buried with him on the ice.

He's moved around a bit in recent seasons, but Jason Demers has settled into a role as a reliable, top-four, right-shot defenceman who can handle 20-plus minutes per game. His numbers may have been inflated



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 16, 2018

by primarily playing with Oliver Ekman-Larsson last season, but his track record goes beyond last season too.

Will Jakob Chychrun be asked to play a bigger role next season?

A knee injury left 20-year-old Jakob Chychrun on the shelf to start last season, but he played well once he returned to the lineup. He has had the luxury of not being force-fed minutes in his first two seasons, but it could be time for him to step into a more significant role in his third season, especially if Ekman-Larsson is moved.

A premier shutdown defenceman when he was with Chicago, Niklas Hjalmarsson did not fare as well in his first season with Arizona, missing significant time with injuries, and with one year left on his contract, it's possible that he could be trade bait either this summer, or before the trade deadline.

It has been rumoured that the Coyotes are in on Russian defenceman Ilya Lyubushkin, a 24-year-old right-shot defenceman who has been playing for Yaroslavl Lokomotiv in the KHL. He could add some bite to the third pair if he can make a smooth adjustment to North America.

While the Coyotes have some defence prospects in the pipeline, they could use some more time to develop, so it could make some sense to add a veteran free agent. Ian Cole, Nick Holden, Thomas Hickey, and Jack Johnson are among the veterans who might be worth considering for the right price.

Antti Raanta	47	21	17	6	.930
	.936	\$4.25M			
Darcy Kuemper	29	12	7	5	.920
	.927	\$1.85M			

Arizona took a bit of a chance on Antti Raanta as their starting goaltender, and he responded with an outstanding season, posting a .942 save percentage in 27 games after January 1. He will be 29 next season and earned a three-year contract extension.

Antti Raanta impressed in his first season as a starter.

At the trade deadline, the Coyotes picked up Darcy Kuemper from Los Angeles. The 28-year-old was in the midst of the best season of his career but, not altogether surprisingly, his numbers dipped (from a .932 save percentage in 19 games with the Kings, to a .899 save percentage in 10 games with the Coyotes) after he arrived in Arizona.

Even so, the Coyotes inked Kuemper to a two-year contract extension so, for better or worse, they have found the goaltending tandem that they will lean on going forward.

Dylan Strome	C	50	22	31	53
	+8	Tucson (AHL)			
Nick Merkley	RW	38	18	21	39
	+6	Tucson (AHL)			
Pierre-Olivier Joseph	D	63	13	33	
	46	-5	Charlottetown (QMJHL)		
Lawson Crouse	LW	56	15	17	32
	+3	Tucson (AHL)			
Kyle Capobianco	D	49	2	28	30
	+9	Tucson (AHL)			
Adin Hill	G	36			.914
		Tucson (AHL)			
Tyler Steenbergen	RW	56	47	55	102
	+52	Swift Current (WHL)			
Filip Westerlund	D	19	0	2	2
	-4	Frolunda (SHL)			
Cam Dineen	D	65	20	44	64
	-4	Sarnia (OHL)			

Michael Bunting	LW	67	23	20	43
	+21	Tucson (AHL)			
Trevor Murphy	D	59	10	25	35
	+2	Tucson (AHL)			
Kyle Wood	D	49	3	16	19
	+12	Tucson (AHL)			
Laurent Dauphin	C	50	9	20	29
	-1	Tucson (AHL)			
Ryan MacInnis	C	59	6	8	14
	+3	Tucson (AHL)			
Lane Pederson	C	63	12	14	26
	+3	Tucson (AHL)			

DRAFT

5th – Brady Tkachuk, Evan Bouchard, Quinton Hughes, Adam Boqvist

FREE AGENCY

The Coyotes have approximately \$52.1M committed to the 2018-2019 salary cap for 17 players.

NEEDS

Two top-six forwards, two defenceman

WHAT I SAID THE COYOTES NEEDED LAST YEAR

Four top-nine forwards, one top-four defenceman

THEY ADDED

Clayton Keller, Derek Stepan, Nick Cousins, Zac Rinaldo, Mario Kempe, Jason Demers, Niklas Hjalmarsson

TRADE MARKET

Richard Panik, Christian Dvorak, Dylan Strome, Oliver Ekman-Larsson, Niklas Hjalmarsson

Max Domi	Derek Stepan	Clayton Keller
Andreas Athanasiou*	Christian Dvorak	Richard Panik
Brendan Perlini	Dylan Strome	Christian Fischer
Nick Cousins	Marcus Kruger*	Josh Archibald
Lawson Crouse	Laurent Dauphin	Nick Merkley
Michael Bunting	Freddie Hamilton	Tyler Steenbergen
Jakob Chychrun	Jason Demers	Antti Raanta
Alex Goligoski	Niklas Hjalmarsson	Darcy Kuemper
Ian Cole*	Ilya Lyubushkin*	Adin Hill
Kyle Capobianco	Filip Hronek*	
Trevor Murphy	Jordan Gross	

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TSN.CA / Golden Knights' top line the gift from Panthers that keeps on giving

Frank Seravalli



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 16, 2018

LAS VEGAS - They've been called the Vegas Golden Misfits, a collection of 31 castoffs who have bonded together to write a tale Disney wouldn't believe.

No part of the Golden Knights has fit quite like Gerard Gallant's first line - the gift from the Florida Panthers that keeps on giving.

Together with former Blue Jackets product William Karlsson, Dale Tallon's miscalculation on Jonathan Marchessault as the enticement to dump Reilly Smith's \$25-million contract are three big reasons Vegas is three wins from the Stanley Cup Final in their first season.

Oh, and they're coached by Jack Adams Award finalist Gerard Gallant, the man the Panthers unceremoniously fired and left to wait outside the arena for a taxi after a road game last season.

"That's the story of our club," Marchessault said Monday night. "We are all not part of the centre of our [old] teams and everybody seized the opportunity here and that's what has made our success. We are just a bunch of hockey players that wanted to find a home and we did, and we've been awesome."

They've simply continued what they started in the regular season, when they finished one goal behind Nathan MacKinnon's line in Colorado for the most even-strength goals (47) by a trio.

Vegas' top line has outscored their competition by a 10-2 margin at even strength in the playoffs, including Marchessault's two strikes in Game 2 that won a split in Winnipeg to level the Western Conference final. That means the Knights have netted a playoff-best 83 per cent share of the goals scored when the trio is on the ice, according to Corsica Hockey.

For comparison, the Jets' first line of Mark Scheifele, Blake Wheeler and Kyle Connor hold a slight 8-6 edge (57 per cent), though they've faced significantly stiffer competition having to go through the Nashville Predators.

"I guess we think hockey the same," Karlsson explained Sunday. "We want to play with the puck [and] try not to throw it away. We take chances. Sometimes we make mistakes. We're all really confident and pretty good players. Sometimes, you just find that kind of chemistry with people."

Marchessault and Karlsson together have four game-winning playoff goals; the rest of the Golden Knights' roster has five combined.

"It's the biggest stage of hockey for us right now, so everyone is excited," Smith said. "I think every professional player loves being able to step up on a stage like this."

Tallon wasn't the only general manager to be wrong on Marchessault and Smith. They're each on their fourth NHL teams at the age of 27. Karlsson is on his third NHL club after stops in Anaheim and Columbus.

"We were all in the same situation coming to Vegas," Karlsson said. "We all wanted to prove something to ourselves and obviously to our former teams, too, that we can do some damages in this league. I think for sure that brought us together fairly quick and made us really close."

Karlsson more than quadrupled his previous career-high of nine goals when he finished with 43 after leading the league with a 23.4 shooting percentage. Marchessault nearly duplicated last year's 30-goal season in Florida with 27. Smith likely would have eclipsed his career-high of 25 if he didn't miss 15 games to injury; he ended up with 22 goals.

Marchessault was rewarded with a six-year, \$30 million extension this season. Smith is in the first season of that five-year pact signed with Florida. And Karlsson, the centre and youngest of the three at 25, is a pending restricted free agent.

"Getting drafted by Vegas [changed everything]," Karlsson said. "After that, it kind of took off. There's been times that I doubted myself if I could really do this. But then I got picked up by Vegas and I thought to myself: 'This is my big chance and it's up to me to take it.' I'm glad I took it."

Remember when Vegas owner Bill Foley was mocked when he predicted a playoff appearance within three years and a Stanley Cup within five? No one is laughing now.

With the Knights' courting home-ice advantage in this new best-of-five series, Vegas' sharpest swords are at the ready.

"It's pretty awesome to have the feeling when it's us against the world," Karlsson said. "So I can't wait for next game."

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TSN.CA / Statistically Speaking: Marchessault makes the difference

Scott Cullen

Marchessault and Fleury lead Vegas to a crucial Game 2 victory at Winnipeg, evening the series; Smith, Laine and more in Scott Cullen's Statistically Speaking.

Marc-Andre Fleury - The Golden Knights netminder stopped 30 of 31 shots in a 3-1 Game 2 victory against Winnipeg. He has a .945 save percentage in a dozen playoff starts.

Reilly Smith - The Golden Knights winger earned two assists in a 3-1 Game 2 victory at Winnipeg. He has 14 points (1 G, 13 A) in 12 playoff games.

ZEROES

Nikolaj Ehlers - Winnipeg's speedy winger struggled (6 for, 17 against, 26.1 CF%, 1-12 scoring chances) in Game 2 against Vegas.

Dustin Byfuglien and Josh Morrissey - The Jets blueliners were both on the ice for two goals against in a 3-1 Game 2 Golden Knights victory at Winnipeg.

James Neal, Erik Haula and Alex Tuch - The Vegas trio had a hard game (6 for, 16 against, 27.3 CF%, 4-5 scoring chances) in a Game 2 victory at Winnipeg.

STANLEY CUP HALF FULL/HALF EMPTY

Patrik Laine - The Jets sniper led the team with seven shot attempts and four shots on goal, yet also had team-worst possession stats (10 for, 16 against, 38.5 CF%, 3-11 scoring chances) in a Game 2 loss to Vegas.

VITAL SIGNS

Tomas Tatar - Back in the Vegas lineup after being a healthy scratch for several games, the Golden Knights winger scored the first goal of Game 2. It was his first point in five postseason contests.

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TSN.CA / Statistically Speaking: Eller leads Capitals to Game Two win

Scott Cullen



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • May 16, 2018

The Washington Capitals stunned the Tampa Bay Lightning to take a 2-0 series lead; Eller, Kuznetsov, Ovechkin and more in Scott Cullen's Statistically Speaking.

HEROES

Lars Eller – The Capitals centre scored a goal and added two helpers in a 6-2 Game Two win at Tampa Bay. He had nine points (3 G, 6 A) in the past seven games, and has taken on more responsibility in the past three games while Nicklas Backstrom has been out due to a hand injury.

Evgeny Kuznetsov – Washington's playmaking pivot also had a goal and two assists in Game Two at Tampa Bay; he has 19 points (8 G, 11 A) in 14 playoff games.

Alex Ovechkin – The Capitals superstar sniper scored once and added an assist in Game Two at Tampa Bay, giving him 19 points (10 G, 9 A) in 14 playoff games.

ZEROES

Ryan McDonagh and Anton Stralman – The Lightning blueliners struggled when they were together (8 for, 11 against, 42.1 CF%, 4-8 scoring chances) and both ended up on the ice for three goals against in a 6-2 Game Two loss to Washington.

Andrei Vasilevskiy – Tampa Bay's netminder allowed six goals on 37 shots in Game Two, leaving him with a .839 save percentage through the first two games of the series against the Capitals.

STANLEY CUP HALF FULL/HALF EMPTY

Steven Stamkos – The Lightning star centre had team-worst possession stats (6 for, 13 against, 31.6 CF%, 2-8 scoring chances) and was on the ice for two goals against in a 6-2 Game Two loss to Washington, but he also recorded a goal and an assist on the power play.

VITAL SIGNS

Nicklas Backstrom – For the third straight game, the Capitals were without their stellar two-way centre and, against the odds, Washington has won all three games.

SHORT SHIFTS

Capitals RW Tom Wilson contributed a goal and an assist in a 6-2 Game Two win at Tampa Bay and has six points (1 G, 5 A) in his past five games...Capitals D John Carlson added two assists and has 14 points (3 G, 11 A) in 14 games...Lightning C Brayden Point chipped in a goal and an assist in the 6-2 loss to Washington, giving him 12 points (5 G, 7 A) in 12 playoff games...Capitals G Braden Holtby made 33 saves on 35 shots in Game Two at Tampa Bay; he has a .926 save percentage in 14 playoff games.

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USA TODAY / Steven Stamkos' words, deeds get Lightning back into series against Capitals

Kevin Allen, USA TODAY Sports May 16, 2018

Steven Stamkos first delivered the speech and then scored the goal that pushed the Tampa Bay Lightning back into the Eastern Conference final.

With his team trailing 2-0 to the Washington Capitals in the best-of-seven series, Tampa Bay's captain said it was time for the Lightning to decide "who we really are." He then showed what kind of leader he is by scoring

a late first-period power play goal that launched the Lightning to a 4-2 road win in Game 3.

The Capitals won the first two games of the series in Tampa because their top players were better than Tampa Bay's best. On Tuesday, Tampa Bay's best players were the ones taking charge to dismiss any notion that this series will be over quickly.

Tampa Bay defenseman Victor Hedman, a Norris Trophy finalist, generated a goal and two assists. Nikita Kucherov, who had gone seven games without a goal, had a goal and assist. Brayden Point, another key offensive player, also scored.

The other important player in the Tampa Bay equation was goalie Andrei Vasilevskiy, who was leaky in surrendering 10 goals over the first two games. Because he made the NHL at a young age, it's easy to forget Vasilevskiy is 23 and is still sorting out the mental game and consistency required to be successful in the playoffs.

But let the record show that when the Lightning needed him to rise up in this series, he did exactly that. He faced a combined 21 shots by Alex Ovechkin and Evgeny Kuznetsov and stopped 20 of them.

The Lightning were even stronger against Washington goalie Braden Holtby, who hadn't given up four goals this postseason before Tuesday.

Stamkos finished with a goal and an assist, but also deserves credit for the win as Tampa Bay's leader. The Capitals had the momentum in this series. Their confidence was overflowing.

The Lightning, outscored 10-4 in Tampa, desperately needed that first goal in Game 3 and Stamkos scored it for them.

The Lightning needed a greater sense of urgency and Stamkos helped them find it.

Captains are important in the NHL. They are expected to deliver strong words and big goals. Tampa Bay coach Jon Cooper said Stamkos has grown into a strong captain.

Stamkos has scored in every game of this series and has five goals in the last six playoff games.

Washington fans were hoping the Capitals new-found swagger might allow them to be up 3-0 after Tuesday's game. They seem to have forgotten that the Lightning were the Eastern Conference's best team from October until April. They boast all of the elements necessary to win the Stanley Cup and are highly skilled. When their top players perform like they did in Game 3, they are difficult to subdue.

The Capitals, with Kuznetsov and Ovechkin, are a dangerous team, but the Lightning were the No. 1 offensive team in the regular season.

Instead of discussing a sweep, we might now be looking at a six- or seven-game series.

The Capitals have been playing without key center Nicklas Backstrom, who is listed as day-to-day with a hand injury. The best guess is that the Capitals, holding the lead in the series, are trying to give Backstrom as much time as possible to heal.

But after watching the way the Lightning came through in Game 3, wouldn't you guess that Backstrom will attempt to play in Game 4?

USA TODAY LOADED: 05.16.2018