



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 4, 2018

THE ATHLETIC

Duhatschek Notebook: Summer of change for Hurricanes, Oliver Ekman-Larsson's future in Arizona

By [Eric Duhatschek](#) Jun 1, 2018

Every year, once the calendar clicks over to June, the NHL trade game heats up approaching the annual entry draft, and usually, there's a catalyst in the middle of all the talk. Last year, it was Vegas Golden Knights GM George McPhee acting as ringmaster of the circus — moving, wheedling, cajoling his way into moves to improve his team, and indirectly, keeping the hands tied of the rest of the league, as he negotiated back and forth with teams, cleverly navigating the waters.

Other years, the teams controlling the narrative are the ones flat-earthing their player landscape, dumping contracts and pressing the reset button.

Not every team arrives at the draft in a makeover frame of mind but as long as a handful do, it makes for great theatre and succeeds in shuffling the player deck enough to create new avenues of hope around the league.

All of which brings us to the leading candidate to be this year's power broker and major influencer — Don Waddell, the Carolina Hurricanes newly appointed GM. Right now, the Hurricanes feel a little like a Silicon Valley incubator, with a disrupter, Tom Dundon, at the helm. So far this year, they have undergone a major front-office remake, replacing a popular general manager, Ron Francis, and accepting the resignation of a long-time coach, Bill Peters. Waddell, who'd been president, was also given the GM's duties, and he immediately reached into his past to bring in Rick Dudley, a trusted lieutenant. The organization also plucked Rod Brind'Amour from within their ranks to become head coach. All of this happened since Dundon assumed majority ownership from Peter Karmanos and created a situation where the Hurricanes are the single most interesting franchise heading into June, because of their desire for change.

It is a point Waddell reiterated in a long catch-up chat this week. The Hurricanes have enviable assets, especially on the blueline, and look like a team prepared to shake it up. And according to Waddell, that is exactly what he's got in mind.

Is the message internally in Carolina: Don't be afraid to make changes?

"One hundred per cent," answered Waddell. "We've gone nine years without making the playoffs and we've gone the last four, five, six years with a lot of the same players. The roster hasn't changed a whole lot. So, we are in discussions over multiple different players. It's the old routine: We're not going to make a deal just for the sake of making a deal, but I think we have some pretty good assets that we can turn into other assets that can change the make-up of the team — and also, start changing the culture a little bit, too."

So far, the best off-season news for the Hurricanes came when they moved up nine places in the draft lottery, leaving them with the No. 2 pick. Carolina has had seven top-10 picks in the past 15 years, but haven't drafted second overall since 2003, when they took Eric Staal, who eventually became a franchise lynchpin. Waddell comes from a scouting background and thus knows the value of draft choices. But he also wouldn't be gun shy about moving that pick.

"What I've told teams that have asked is, 'I'm pretty comfortable that we're going to keep the pick, but I can't stop you from presenting us something that you might want us to think about — and we certainly will do that.' Everybody always wants to know, 'what are you looking for?' Well, when you're talking about trying to move a particular player, you can be more specific about what you want. What I tell people on this is: 'Tell me what you'll give me and let us decide from there if it's something that we want to look at or examine further.' To date, we've had one team that's come at us, but it wasn't even close to what we were looking for, so I just passed on it.

"The draft's exciting because we go into the draft lottery, 11th, and we talked about 20 different players for that position. Now you win the lottery and go to No. 2. We're all pretty comfortable with who's going No. 1 (Rasmus Dahlin). So, it's almost as if we've got the first pick, where somebody's got to make a decision. Obviously, we're doing our due diligence. I think there's certainly a strong opinion about who should be No. 2."

Waddell is now 59 and got his name on the Stanley Cup in 1998, as the Detroit Red Wings' assistant GM. From there, he moved to Atlanta to become the first-ever GM of the expansion Thrashers, where he worked for a dozen years. When the team was sold and relocated to Winnipeg, he didn't make the move north. Instead, since 2014, he's been president of the Hurricanes, working on front-office matters, though he is a hockey guy through and through. Like a lot of people, he's found that you have to adapt to changing times — and being an NHL GM in 2018 differs greatly from being an NHL GM in 1999.

"Probably the best example is analytics," said Waddell. "When I left Atlanta after the 2011 season, analytics was just starting to be talked about. It was in other sports a little bit more, but hockey was very new to that. Where that's gone from 2011 until today is incredible. I've said: 'Analytics plays a role in your decision-making. It's not your primary role, but it gives you some pretty good tools to work with.' We've got a very good analytics team here on the hockey side, so I'd be foolish not to use them.

"But I also think the role of the general manager has changed, too. When I was first a general manager, I spent 200 nights a year on the road scouting. Certainly, that's not



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going to be my MO these days. Running around to all the junior and college rinks like I did for all those years, I'm not sure that's the best use of my time right now. You have to pick and choose and you have to surround yourself with people that you trust. Obviously, that's one of the reasons we hired Rick Dudley back. Along with (director of amateur scouting) Tony MacDonald and our other scouts, we've got a good group here."

Waddell said part of Carolina's operating philosophy going forward is to spend less time on the road. He's finding that it's more efficient to have people break down video and watch games online, in order to develop scouting reports on players scattered across North America and beyond.

"We're hiring people to work in our office now on the hockey side – and that's all they're doing, watching games, staying on top of every team," said Waddell. "We're assigning teams to everybody on staff, and I want them to know that organization inside and out. Every night, I want to know who the coach is happy with, and who the coach is not happy with. If you have the time to do that, you can find out a lot of information."

Following Peters' resignation, Waddell interviewed a handful of other candidates but ultimately settled on Brind'Amour, who will get his first chance at being a head coach.

"Rod Brind'Amour wears the Hurricane logo on his sleeve," said Waddell. "He was a good player, a great leader, won a Cup and has been an assistant coach the last six or seven years. I've gotten to know Rod very well over the past few years. He's very passionate and also a very good person. So, if you start with the fact that he's a good hockey guy and add the second part – about being a good person – I think it was an easy decision to make."

Pulling the strings and putting the pieces together is really the best part of running the hockey side of any NHL team – and also the part that Waddell missed the most.

"You miss the competitive side," he said. "You're in the game for so long and you're a lot more emotionally attached to the wins and losses. Certainly, before I took this job, I was attached to wins and losses because it mattered on the revenue side, but it's not the same as when you're a coach or a player or general manager. We all have competitive juices; that's why we're in this business. Certainly, that gets you geared up. I always said the most fun times were preparing for the draft and then draft day and the trade deadline. Those are the fun parts of the business that you miss."

Carolina dreaming

So, what – if anything — can teams expect to pry loose from Carolina, if the Hurricanes are set on tweaking their roster this summer? No one's giving away assets, but eventually, the Hurricanes are going to have a lot of dollars devoted to defencemen – which by the way, usually returns a premium in trades. Let's start there. Currently, Carolina can boast a top-six of Justin Faulk, Noah Hanifin, Jaccob Slavin, Brett Pesce, Hayden Fleury and Trevor van Riemsdyk. As of the start of the 2018-19 season, van Riemsdyk was the oldest of the group at 26, while Faulk was 25, Slavin 23, Pesce 22, Fleury 21 and Hanifin 20. Also, they have Jake Bean, 19,

signed and projected to likely start next season in the minors. Slavin and Pesce are signed for seven and six years respectively and probably not going anywhere. Faulk has two years to go at a friendly cap number (\$4.833 million) and has been in the trade rumors the longest. Two years ago, he scored 17 goals, tied for second with Erik Karlsson and Shea Weber behind Brent Burns' 29, but this year, the total dropped to eight.

Faulk is an interesting case study because he is the team's captain and may want to stick it out in Carolina, to see if the new regime can turn it around. But on the trade market, either Faulk or Hanifin, who is a pending restricted free agent, could command the greatest interest. Carolina's overall payroll is one of the lowest in the NHL and its roster is one of the youngest. The Hurricanes started the season with only four players 30 or over, and three – Derek Ryan, Lee Stempniak and goaltender Cam Ward – are on expiring contracts and may not return. The fourth, Justin Williams, is a former teammate of Brind'Amour's and is staying, if only to provide veteran leadership. Jordan Staal, believe it or not, doesn't turn 30 until September. Staal spent a lot of last season on the team's No. 1 line, between the team's two most dangerous offensive threats, Sebastian Aho and Teuvo Teravainen. Both Aho (\$925,000 on his entry-level deal) and Teravainen (\$2.86 million) are signed through to the end of 2018-19, at which point they are restricted free agents. Presumably, neither is going anywhere. Staal has five more years remaining at \$6 million. Among the teams' top nine forwards, only Victor Rask is signed long-term – four more years at \$4 million. Rask had 31 points in 71 games and played just over 15 minutes per night.

Up front, one of the more intriguing trade possibilities might be Elias Lindholm, the fifth player chosen overall in the 2013 draft. Lindholm has played five full NHL seasons and so far, his highest point total was 45 – set two years ago in 72 games. This year, he had 44 in 81. Lindholm is a right-handed shot centre, who could potentially play right wing. But probably the player highest on any team's radar as possible trade bait among Hurricanes forwards would be Jeff Skinner, who has one year remaining on a \$5.725 million annual contract before he becomes an unrestricted free agent.

Skinner has been deployed a little bit like James van Riemsdyk in Toronto – he played 16:42 on average per night last season and has the ability to finish around the net. Two years ago, Skinner was sixth in the NHL in goal scoring with 37 – behind Sidney Crosby, Auston Matthews, Nikita Kucherov, Vladimir Tarasenko and Brad Marchand. This year, Skinner fell off to 24 goals. In May, Skinner celebrated his 26th birthday. The 2011 Calder Trophy winner already has eight seasons under his belt.

What might a team be willing to give up to get him? What might the ask be? Just about everyone knows Skinner's backstory by now – how he took figure skating growing up, which accounts for his ability to be so strong on his skates. Might he look good in Edmonton, playing with you know who? If Edmonton could pry loose a defenceman plus Skinner from Carolina, what would the cost be? Likely, it would have to start with Jesse Puljujarvi, who might have some attraction to Carolina because he is still on an entry-



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level contract (so there's cost containment there), plus he has a connection to Aho dating back to their junior days in Finland. But you couldn't get that done for just Puljujarvi. It might cost you Ryan Nugent-Hopkins, too.

Skinner has been previously linked in rumors to Los Angeles, where the Kings are trying to alter their look up front. But it is hard to imagine they could get any deal done for Skinner without giving up either Tyler Toffoli or Tanner Pearson in the exchange.

If part of the goal is to change the culture, then perhaps adding someone from L.A. helps to get that done (though Francis, the former GM, kept plugging Chicago's system for players, partly because of their championship pedigrees, and so far it hasn't paid off). But intel is vital when making trades of consequence, which leads us to the second of the NHL's Alberta based teams, the Calgary Flames, who have a mole in their midst now in Peters, who ran Carolina's bench for the last four years.

Calgary is in need of a top-two right winger, but there doesn't appear to be a good match there, unless you consider Lindholm as a possibility. In the same way Edmonton would need to surrender a fourth overall pick in Puljujarvi if they wanted to do something substantial with Carolina, the cost of doing business for Calgary would likely be Sam Bennett. He was the fourth overall pick in 2014 and started this past season as a centre, but ultimately finished up on the wing. Jake Bean's father, John, is the Flames' chief operating officer, but the odds of Carolina moving either Bean or Fleury are low, just because they are cost-controlled (though Fleury is an RFA in 2019 already).

Hanifin, a left-shot defence, would make sense in Vancouver, but the ask there would probably be for Thatcher Demko, their highly rated goaltending prospect – and that doesn't seem like a match either. For sure, it would be a bold deal on both sides, though at some point, Carolina is going to need to replace Ward, the last goalie of consequence they developed on their own.

For sure, over the past couple of years, the trades that resonated the greatest were the ones where young players exchanged teams – Tampa and Montreal swapping Jonathan Drouin for Mikhail Sergachev; Nashville and Columbus swapping Seth Jones and Ryan Johansen). Those take courage because they can rapidly turn around and bite you, if you missed the call on your prospect/young talent and they correctly evaluated theirs.

But once the offseason smoke settles in Carolina, it will be fascinating to see who stayed, who went and what the whole looks like come training camp. Me, if I were an NHL GM, I would have Waddell on speed dial.

Whither Oliver Ekman-Larsson

While Waddell's goal is to make changes in Carolina, increasing organizational stability needs to be the offseason priority in Arizona, where the Coyotes are approaching a crossroads with defenceman Oliver Ekman-Larson. Whenever Coyotes GM John Chayka has been asked about Ekman-Larsson's future his answer has always been a variation of the same stubborn theme – that he is not interested in trading him, sees Ekman-Larsson as an

important building block, and is solely focused on signing him to a contract extension the day it becomes possible, July 1.

That's a completely rational and understandable position. If Ekman-Larsson says yes to an extension, then the matter is closed. If he says no, they're obliged to start listening to offers. But what if Ekman-Larsson selects option three and wants to hedge his bets – a genuine possibility. Then what? Logically, that's the most likely outcome — Ekman-Larsson plays a waiting game and informs the organization that he doesn't want to make an immediate long-term commitment, but instead wants to see how the Coyotes fare on the ice in the 2018-19 season. It's sort of what John Tavares did with the New York Islanders this year, and it could put the Coyotes in a similar sticky situation.

Here's what we know about Arizona. Their start last year was abysmal. They'd brought in a new coach, Rick Tocchet, and it took a while for his message and his system to sink in. Arizona lost its first 11 to start the season, didn't win in regulation until mid-November and at Christmas, had an 8-25-5 record which left them last in the Western Conference and a whopping 14 points behind the 14th-place team, the Vancouver Canucks. Their season was effectively over.

But after the Christmas break, things got progressively better. Tocchet and the team seemed on the same wavelength. Antti Raanta settled in and eventually looked as if he could be a No. 1 goalie. In the final 44 games of the season, the Coyotes went 21-16-7. They closed the gap between themselves and the Canucks from 14 to three points. At Christmas, their goals for and against ratio was minus-48, which is exactly where they finished for the season. They eventually became a tough out. The million-dollar question is: Did the second-half surge occur because all the pressure was off – and once they start over again this coming October, can they carry that momentum forward? Or will they slip back?

Eventually, the numbing effect of losing year-after-year starts to wear on all players. Ekman-Larsson doesn't turn 27 until July, which puts him right in the heart of his prime years. I didn't talk to him a single time this year, but I always sensed that he liked Arizona, as a place to live away from the game. So that's one plus – lifestyle. If he's convinced the Coyotes have the answers on the ice – and ultimately, a future in the city — then maybe he can be coaxed into staying. Maybe.

But the arena issue is still percolating and meanwhile, he hasn't played a playoff game since 2012 — six consecutive years on the outside looking in. Mind you, Ekman-Larsson isn't the only high-end defensive talent with a contract set to expire in July 2019. Erik Karlsson and Drew Doughty are in that cohort as well. But Karlsson got to the Stanley Cup semi-final two years with Ottawa and Doughty has won two Stanley Cups with the Kings. Both have had recent tastes of deep playoff runs. Ekman-Larsson hasn't.

It's why a fast start for Arizona next year seems urgent. If the Coyotes can reverse that losing trend and demonstrate that they are playoff contenders and legitimately on the right track to winning, that could be the single biggest factor in Ekman-Larsson's ultimate decision. And the broader dilemma facing Arizona is that his value as a trade chip would shrink if it went the other way, and the Coyotes continued to struggle



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and he signaled an attention to test the open market. Losing Ekman-Larsson for nothing would be an unfathomable blow

for a team that finally looks as if it has some reasons for optimism.



Checkers Re-Sign Josiah Didier And Nick Schilkey To AHL Deals

Written by Nicholas Niedzielski

Published: June 01, 2018

The Checkers have brought a pair of skaters back into the fold, re-signing defenseman Josiah Didier and forward Nick Schilkey to one-way AHL contracts.

Didier was one of the biggest surprises on last season's squad, starting in the ECHL before being recalled and sticking with the Checkers. The 25-year-old blue liner appeared in 54 games for Charlotte and set career highs in

goals (4), points (9), penalty minutes (79) and plus-minus (+10).

Didier is heading into his fourth full pro season with 23 points (6g, 17a) in 154 AHL games with Hamilton, St. John's and Charlotte under his belt, as well as nine points (4g, 5a) in 17 career ECHL games with Brampton and Florida.

After signing an AHL deal last summer, Schilkey spent the entirety of his rookie campaign with the Checkers. The 24-year-old forward suited up for 48 contests and logged 12 points (5g, 7a) along the way.



June 4: Howe announces second retirement at age 52

Plus: Roy sets record for playoff appearances by goalie; Capitals advance to first Cup Final

by John Kreiser [@jkreiser7713](https://twitter.com/jkreiser7713) / NHL.com Managing Editor
12:00 AM

THIS DATE IN HISTORY: June 4

1980: At age 52, [Gordie Howe retires again, this time for good.](#)

Howe's first retirement, from the Detroit Red Wings after the 1970-71 season, lasts two years before he joins the Houston Aeros of the World Hockey Association, where he plays with sons Mark Howe and Marty Howe. All three Howes move to the New England Whalers in 1977, and Mr. Hockey returns

to the NHL (with his sons) two years later when the franchise is one of four WHA teams admitted to the League.

Howe plays all 80 regular-season games for the now-Hartford Whalers in 1979-80, finishing with 41 points (15 goals, 26 assists). He scores a goal and has an assist in Hartford's three-game loss to the Montreal Canadiens in the Preliminary Round of the Stanley Cup Playoffs.

Howe retires as the NHL's all-time leader in games played (1,767), goals (801), assists (1,049), and points (1,850). [Wayne Gretzky](#) breaks Howe's three scoring records, but his games-played mark still stands.

MORE MOMENTS

1996: [Patrick Roy](#) passes [Billy Smith](#) to become the NHL's all-time leader in games played by a goalie in the playoffs



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when he appears in No. 133 and helps the Colorado Avalanche defeat the Florida Panthers 3-1 in [Game 1 of the Stanley Cup Final](#) at McNichols Arena. Roy makes 25 saves, allowing only a first-period goal to Tom Fitzgerald, and the Avalanche score three times in a span of 3:49 in the second period.

1998: The Washington Capitals advance to the Cup Final for the first time since entering the League in 1974 when Joe Juneau scores [at 6:24 of overtime](#) for a 3-2 win against the Buffalo Sabres in Game 6 of the Eastern Conference Final at Marine Midland Arena. Sabres goaltender [Dominik Hasek](#) stops a stuff attempt by Brian Bellows, but Juneau controls the loose puck and sends it under Hasek's glove. The Capitals tie the game 2-2 on Peter Bondra's power-play goal with 5:59 remaining in the third period.

1999: Mike Keane [scores twice in 4:05 span of the second period](#) to help the Dallas Stars defeat the Avalanche 4-1 in Game 7 of the Western Conference Final at Reunion Arena. Ed Belfour makes 18 saves, allowing a third-period goal to Colorado's Joe Sakic after Dallas builds a 4-0 lead. The win puts the Stars into the Stanley Cup Final for the first time since 1991, when the franchise was the Minnesota North Stars.

2008: [Nicklas Lidstrom](#) becomes the first NHL captain born in Europe to hoist the Stanley Cup when the Detroit Red Wings defeat the Pittsburgh Penguins 3-2 in [Game 6 of the Final](#) at Mellon Arena to [win the Cup for the fourth time](#) since [1997](#). [Henrik Zetterberg](#) scores what proves to be the Cup-winning goal and wins the [Conn Smythe Trophy](#) as playoff

MVP. At age 46, Detroit defenseman [Chris Chelios](#) becomes the oldest player ever to win the Cup.

2011: [Alexandre Burrows](#) scores [11 seconds into overtime](#) to give the Vancouver Canucks a 3-2 victory against the Boston Bruins in Game 2 of the Final at Rogers Arena and a 2-0 lead in the best-of-7 series. Burrows matches the second-fastest overtime goal in Stanley Cup Playoff history, equaling J.P. Parise of the New York Islanders in 1975. Forward Mark Recchi's second-period power-play goal gives Boston a 2-1 lead and puts the 43-year-old into the record book as the oldest player to score a goal in the Final.

2014: [Justin Williams](#) scores [4:36 into overtime](#) to give the Los Angeles Kings a 3-2 win against the New York Rangers in Game 1 of the Final at Staples Center. Rangers defenseman [Dan Girardi](#) puts the puck on the stick of Kings center Mike Richards, who finds Williams alone in the slot for a shot that beats goaltender [Henrik Lundqvist](#) to the stick side. It's the eighth goal of the 2014 playoffs for Williams; they've all come in Kings victories.

2016: The San Jose Sharks win a Stanley Cup Final game for the first time in their 25-year history when rookie [Joonas Donskoi](#) scores at [12:18 of overtime](#) for a 3-2 victory against the Pittsburgh Penguins in Game 3 at SAP Center. Donskoi becomes the sixth rookie to score an overtime goal in the Final when he circles the net and beats goaltender [Matt Murray](#) over the shoulder to the short side. San Jose goaltender [Martin Jones](#) gives Donskoi the chance to be the overtime hero by making 40 saves.

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The Athletic / Alex Ovechkin doing it all as Washington takes a 2-1 series lead in the Stanley Cup Final

By Scott Burnside Jun 3, 2018 22

WASHINGTON, D.C. – What's the moment you take with you?

Is it Alex Ovechkin flying through the air as he scores his first-ever Stanley Cup Final goal on home ice to open the scoring in the first final series game played in Washington in 20 years?

Or maybe it's Ovechkin's spontaneously joyous reaction to the team's second goal of Game 3, by linemate Evgeny Kuznetsov, his head thrown back in jubilation, arms raised to the skies.

For us it's something else, something maybe smaller and less noticeable but as telling. Late in the first period of what would become a 3-1 Washington victory and a 2-1 series lead for the Caps, there was the greatest goal-scorer of his generation and a sure-fire first-ballot Hall of Famer kicking out his left leg to block a point shot by former teammate Nate Schmidt with less than two minutes to go in the frame.

We have searched in recent days to find ways to describe how Ovechkin is different than in the past, and as you widen the framing why and how this Capitals team is so different.

The answers are inexorably linked and for us it comes down to that moment, Ovechkin sprawling like he was a fourth-line working class player.

Not to invoke a sometimes overwrought comparison with Sidney Crosby but what often stands out for us about Crosby is how his teammates, not to mention scores of hockey observers, view him, and that's as a kind of glorified third-line checker. The implication is that in spite of being blessed with generational talent he does the grunt work, too.

It's that kind of dedication to the game that allowed Crosby to will his Penguins team to back-to-back Stanley Cups in the past two seasons.

A generational talent whose emotion, whose willingness to go in a straight line rather than a curve no matter the cost to life and limb acts as a kind of accelerant for the rest of his teammates.

That is the definition of greatness and it is the definition of Ovechkin's game right now.

Whether or why he couldn't be that player in the past is now moot. It's who he is right now.

It's how he's been all spring and on a night when thousands of fans were drawn to downtown Washington, regardless of whether they had tickets that would allow them into the inner sanctum of this Stanley Cup run or not, it's how he was in Game 3.

"He's very passionate as everybody knows. I thought it was sort of the right thing in a playoff game, our first victory in the final at home, that Alex would score the first goal," Washington head coach Barry Trotz said

after the Game 3 victory brought the Capitals to within two wins of the team's first-ever Stanley Cup championship.

"I thought that was a little bit of poetic justice if you will for all the tough times. I love the goal. We kept it alive, maybe four, five, six chances to keep it alive and it finally ended up in the back of the net."

Nothing has been won here of course.

But this is a series that seems three games in to have started down a path that will only end with a Stanley Cup parade in the American capital.

That's how it feels after the Capitals won two straight following a sloppy 6-4 loss in Game 1.

Feelings can change of course and Las Vegas is here for a reason.

But Washington's best players, led by their captain, have set the tone and they have earned this one-game series lead and – again with the feeling – look like a team that is quite simply not going to be denied.

That feeling begins with Ovechkin and it is apparently contagious.

"I think the last couple of periods he set the tone," Trotz said. "As a coach you want your top players to set the tone. He did. He set the tone with intensity, with physicality. Obviously he scored our first goal, but he did all the details. He blocked shots. He got pucks out. He did all the details along with what he does, he scores at a massive rate. You add all those things to his game and you've got a whole team that is going to follow that."

Can you draw a line from Ovechkin to Kuznetsov to Devante Smith-Pelly – who scored the insurance marker with just over six minutes left in the third period – to netminder Braden Holtby who was again remarkable with the exception of one flub that led to Vegas's only goal?

We can.

Kuznetsov, who missed the last two periods of Game 2 after taking a hard hit from Brayden McNabb and was considered a game-time decision for Game 3, was extraordinary. He earned a secondary assist on the Ovechkin goal that opened the scoring early in the second period. Then he ripped a wicked wrist shot past Marc-Andre Fleury on an odd-man rush about 11 minutes later.

He unleashed his trademark celebratory bird dance and the Capitals never looked back.

"I mean like when you're hurt, you play a little better always," Kuznetsov offered. "You have extra energy. Sometimes it's even better for you when you watch the hockey from upstairs a little bit and you see a few things a little bit. It's just so emotional."

Whether it's a yin and yang thing or not the two Russian stars are going to give Conn Smythe voters something to think about if the Capitals continue on their current path in terms of coming up with a playoff MVP.

Ovechkin's goal was his 14th of the spring and he's now tied for the playoff lead with Winnipeg's Mark Scheifele. Kuznetsov leads all players with 27 points in 22 games, two more than Ovechkin's 25 points.

The rest of the Capitals appear to be caught up in their draft, happily adding to the momentum created by their two most talented players.

Former NHLer Mike Rupp, who won a Stanley Cup with New Jersey and is now a national analyst, noted that even in Game 3 Kuznetsov took a



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couple of big hits early in the game and somehow managed to fight through it to deliver an important performance.

"And Ovie, I mean, has there been a more animated, passionate player ever?" Rupp asked. "He thrives in this environment. When most players try to manage their emotions he just needs to let loose."

Ovechkin gave the verbal equivalent of a shrug of the shoulders when asked about things like blocking shots and his emotional reactions not just to his own successes but those of his teammates.

"It's just automatic," he said. "You just get excited. If Holts (Holty) makes a huge save you can just see the whole bench jump and get excited."

"It's huge moments for us," he added. "You just want to give emotion to your teammates and to yourself as well."

So far mission accomplished.

Maybe something will happen in the coming days to change the path this series will take. We recall being in Vancouver in 2011 and thinking there was no way the Boston Bruins would win a single game, let alone the series, after dropping the first two games in Vancouver. The Bruins, of course, would win that series in seven games.

But with Game 4 set for Monday night in Washington there is little doubt that the Capitals have put the Cinderella Vegas Golden Knights on the ropes.

"We've been in a lot of moments in the last 10 years and I've been here, this is my fourth year, we've had a lot of moments, not as many good ones as we'd like," Trotz said. "Everybody recognizes that if you do the right things and you keep sort of pounding the rock, there's a lot of pride in our dressing room, there's a lot of pride in this D.C. area. In past failures you'd feel a lot of anxiety even before you started the playoffs.

"I think we've gotten past that as a group. We've gotten past that hopefully as a community. Hopefully we can continue on and hopefully bring something here."

The Athletic LOADED: 06.04.2018

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The Athletic / Capitals GM Brian MacLellan is not interested in vindication

By Scott Burnside Jun 3, 2018 4

Not long after the Flames acquired Brian MacLellan during the 1988-89 season, Calgary coach Terry Crisp motioned for the big winger to go over the boards during a game.

"I said, 'hey, McLean, you're up.' And he didn't move." Crisp recalled recently.

A second time.

"Hey, McLean, you're up."

Nothing.

After the third time, MacLellan looked up from the Flames bench.

"He said, my name ain't McLean," Crisp said laughing at the memory. "I said, 'whoever you are, get going.' Brian just smiled and away he went."

And go MacLellan and the Flames did.

They won the team's first and only Stanley Cup that spring.

Although he lacked the star appeal of guys like Joe Nieuwendyk, Joel Otto and Lanny McDonald, MacLellan was an effective presence for the champs.

"He was a gentle giant," Crisp recalled. "Just got the job done quietly and competently."

There is a reason to remember this story now beyond the fact that it's damn funny.

MacLellan is the GM of a Washington Capitals team that is now two wins away from a Stanley Cup.

He has steered the Capitals to this historic moment – it marks just the second time the franchise has been in the final and the first time it has won a game in the final series – in much the same manner that he played the game. Quiet, effective, under the radar.

So, how about that Stanley Cup ring? Where is it anyway?

MacLellan paused during a lengthy interview with The Athletic to consider where the memento might be.

"I think it's at home in a drawer," the native of Guelph, Ontario, said. "I don't really wear it that much."

He paused again.

"I don't know if I've ever worn it to be honest with you," the 59-year-old said.

That sounds about right.

In the pantheon of NHL GMs, a group which includes imposing Hall of Famers like Steve Yzerman, multiple Stanley Cup winners like Jim Rutherford and Stan Bowman, and iconic team-builders like David Poile, it would be hard to find a GM with a lower profile than MacLellan. When you juxtapose that against the fact his team remains one of the highest profile teams in the NHL, it has made for an interesting evolution for both MacLellan and his franchise.

The fact of the matter is that MacLellan is unlike most of his colleagues in that, when he left the game as a player, having skated in 606 regular season games and won a Stanley Cup, he didn't really envision a post-playing career in hockey.

Even before he was done playing, while he was with the Minnesota North Stars, MacLellan began taking summer courses en route to an MBA.

After his career ended with Detroit in 1992 MacLellan spent a year finishing up his studies.

"I wanted to be a stock analyst," he said.

He was intrigued by the finance end of his MBA program and ended up working at an investment consulting firm in the Minnesota area helping institutions with their 401(k) investments.

He did that for five or six years and was getting ready to take the jump into real financial stability in the industry.

He was still connected to hockey in a peripheral way, playing with North Stars alumni on Sunday nights and pick-up hockey other times, but that was it.

Then his old pal George McPhee called and asked if he ever thought about getting back in the game.

MacLellan was interested, but he'd put in all that time with the investment end of things. So he started scouting part time, working at the office during the day and then scouting games at night in Minnesota.

He saw guys he knew from playing and slowly found himself more and more involved, ultimately taking a full-time job with the Capitals in spite of the uncertainty.

He was, after all, McPhee's guy and, if McPhee someday wasn't the guy in Washington, then what would happen to MacLellan?



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Not to mention he took a pretty healthy pay cut to make the jump back into the fray.

Still, he was back in the game and that, as it turned out, was enough.

Much has been written about MacLellan's relationship with McPhee, who is now the GM of Washington's opponent in this Stanley Cup final.

Much of that discussion has focused on where things stand with the two longtime friends since MacLellan took over for McPhee when he was fired in the summer of 2014.

The more important story, though, might be what MacLellan learned from McPhee and how that has put him in good stead to find success where there was none, or at least not the most meaningful kind, in Washington.

The two grew up in the university town of Guelph, Ontario, and played together from bantam-age through mutually successful careers at Bowling Green State University.

The two drove back and forth to the Ohio campus and, in the summers, both were counselors at a local hockey camp not far from Guelph.

They were even roommates at Bowling Green.

"He was in the bottom bunk," MacLellan recalled.

"He was pretty studious. Pretty structured. Studied all the time. Used to have to force him to get him out."

When MacLellan joined the Caps organization 16 years ago, it represented a different kind of education than he was used to in pursuing his MBA and in learning the ropes as an investor. He moved from being a pro scout to director of player personnel to assistant general manager.

"Well, certainly he's paid his dues," said former player, coach and longtime NHL talent evaluator Lorne Henning.

"We used to sit beside each other all the time (at games). We used to have a lot of laughs."

Including the time Henning lost his scouting book – kind of like a scout's Holy Grail – and MacLellan found it and suggested he'd have sold it for all the secrets it contained except he couldn't read Henning's handwriting.

Henning knew MacLellan as a player, as well, having coached him in Minnesota.

"Actually, I remember Mac. He's very talented and I think one of those guys who had great hands for a big guy," Henning said.

He recalled one night trying to shake up his lineup and he moved MacLellan, a forward, back to defense, which is the position he began playing back in the day.

They were playing a formidable Philadelphia team at the time and ended up winning the game. MacLellan's willingness to accept the role was something that stayed with Henning all these years.

"He was always very thoughtful and knew the game, obviously, and studied it," Henning said.

Longtime NHLer and agent Neil Sheehy played against MacLellan for years. Playing the right side as a defenseman to MacLellan's left wing, there were the occasional whacks and hacks but never fights because, as Sheehy put it, MacLellan was always looking for an advantage but he wouldn't want Sheehy off the ice.

The year that MacLellan was studying for his MBA, he got a call from former teammate Collin Paterson, who was playing with Sheehy in Slovenia.

Late in the season, MacLellan joined the trio and finished the season there.

Sheehy admits there were times when MacLellan might have wondered what he was doing there, but they had a grand time and the two became fast friends as both returned to the Minnesota area after the season.

"He's quiet, he doesn't say a lot, but he's got a lot on his mind," Sheehy said. "He's an analyst and he analyzes."

He pointed to signing free agents Brooks Orpik and Matt Niskanen, whom Sheehy represents, to help change the culture in the Washington dressing room as part of that analytic thinking.

Along with the two players, MacLellan also brought in defensive coach Todd Reirden, who was so important in changing the defensive culture in Pittsburgh and has done the same in Washington.

MacLellan goes by the old motto, measure twice cut once, Sheehy noted.

"He understands that, as a hockey player, emotion helps you," but the same does not hold true for a manager, Sheehy said of MacLellan.

Sheehy is a former Capital so he has a special place for the franchise and what would be their first-ever Cup win. But he's got an even more emotional investment with his friend.

"I want to see Mac be successful," Sheehy said. "But because we both know it's a bottom line business, we know the job's not over."

To help lighten the mood, Sheehy will send a simple text after the Capitals win, telling MacLellan he can relax now.

Sometimes there is silence, sometimes there's a simple response of "Ha."

Over time as MacLellan's responsibilities grew within the organization, he was given a bird's eye view of the job of being an NHL GM.

McPhee included MacLellan in all aspects of the business, and MacLellan soaked it up. He watched how McPhee handled trade talks with other GMs, how McPhee managed expectations from ownership, how he dealt with agents. MacLellan sat in on coaching interviews.

"I got a good education on pretty much everything," MacLellan said.

When McPhee was fired after the Capitals missed the playoffs in the spring of 2014 – just the first time since 2007 – MacLellan interviewed for the vacant job.

MacLellan wasn't optimistic he'd get the job given that he was a low-profile guy, but no one knew the history of the team better, and no one understood the backstory to all of the personnel and coaching decisions. How things happened. Why things happened.

Lo and behold, MacLellan got the job.

One of the first things he learned was that he really didn't know much about what it was like to be an NHL GM, no matter how close he was to it beforehand.

He laughs as he recalls how he used to think that McPhee would get too emotionally caught up in the games, the day to day ups and downs of the season. MacLellan used to think, well, he just needs to get away from it for a bit, he's too close to it.

Ha.

"Then you sit in that chair and it's not too long before it's happening to you and you're going, 'oh my god, that poor guy,'" MacLellan said. "It's more intense than you can imagine or than I could have imagined sitting next to him."

The same kinds of pressures that McPhee shouldered through the Alex Ovechkin era, which began when the prolific goal scorer entered the league in 2005-06, didn't disappear when MacLellan took over; they simply took up a similar residence atop MacLellan.

The new GM made moves that looked to get the Capitals over the playoff hump. He brought in proven playoff performer Justin Williams. He



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brought in gritty, talented winger T.J. Oshie and, at the 2017 trade deadline, added top defenseman Kevin Shattenkirk.

The results were the same. Regular season triumphs followed by playoff letdowns, including gut-punching losses to Pittsburgh in the second round in 2016 and 2017.

This year saw the Capitals undergo a dramatic transformation in terms of personnel and internal dynamic.

Coach Barry Trotz was not offered a contract extension as he entered the final year of his current deal even though some of his staff did.

"I think we kind of talked earlier in the year and we were going to let the year play out because of what was happening with everybody," MacLellan said of Trotz.

Karl Alzner, Marcus Johansson, Shattenkirk, Williams, Nate Schmidt, all departed before the start of the season.

The team got younger and expectations declined, especially after a rocky start to the season.

"I think people were thinking, these guys will be lucky to make the playoffs," MacLellan said.

"We were a non-conversation basically all year."

The question became whether the guys in the room basically thought the same thing. Did they believe they had the guys they needed to compete?

After the rough start to the season, it was fair to say there was more than a little concern internally.

"I think the important thing for us was to get over what happened last year," MacLellan said, referring to a seven-game series loss to Pittsburgh in the second round, which he described as "devastating."

"I think everybody was worried."

But a funny thing happened to MacLellan's team. They reversed earlier trends of being really good through much of the regular season and then flat-lining come playoff time. This season they got better and better, ultimately winning another Metropolitan Division title before dispatching Columbus, Pittsburgh and heavily favored Tampa to ascend to the Stanley Cup final.

Unlike a year ago when he went all in on Shattenkirk, MacLellan made a quiet add of Michal Kempny to bolster the blueline at this year's trade deadline, and it allowed Trotz to reconfigure his defensive pairings.

In Game 2 of the final in Vegas, it was Kempny's delightful cross-ice pass that set up a critical goal by Lars Eller, another MacLellan add of two summers ago, which tied the game 1-1 late in the first period.

The team has met a series of dips in the road and challenges on and off the ice that in the past might have derailed the group. Instead, they have grown stronger and stronger regardless of the challenge.

"As we've evolved, we've handled those difficult situations better than we have in the past," MacLellan said.

Is there a sense of vindication at how all this has played out?

Not really.

"Vindicated? I'm not sure that's the word," MacLellan said. "I feel good about what's happened this year and how it's evolved and how everything's ended up from where we started."

Now all we need to do is figure out how it ends.

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The Athletic / 'It's their job to like me': Meet Jonny Tychonick, the 2018 NHL draft's largest personality

By Scott Wheeler Jun 3, 2018 24

BUFFALO, N.Y. — As teenagers — nervous, guarded, and armed with prepared answers — sat in front of podiums at this week's NHL combine to field questions from reporters, one player stepped down from his to stand.

His eyes bulging, he bristled and fidgeted, waving his hands and leaning in with excitement and charisma to express his overwhelming emotions.

His name is Jonny Tychonick, and when he heads to North Dakota in the fall, he plans to study marketing or psychology.

He envisions himself a salesman some day: "Selling stuff to corporations. That would be perfect for me." He couldn't work at a desk. He needs to be moving, or walking around.

This week, those corporations were NHL teams, and he was their most outgoing, comfortable suitor.

He's a talker, and unlike any of the other kids who came to Buffalo to sell themselves as a product.

He doesn't know where he got it from. His mom and dad are both "chill," he says.

But he doesn't care what anyone thinks.

"They want to know who I am, they don't want to know professional, fake Jonny. It's a business at the end of the day. You want your boss to know exactly who you are, not who you are down the road when he realizes who you actually are. It's important for them to get to know me for who I really am — and I like who I am," he said with a shrug.

"Some people hide it. They're kind of shy about it. You know, the quiet kids, I don't know if it's picked on but they get judged for being quiet. The talkative guys get called for being cocky or overconfident but if you get to know me and who I am, I'm not that at all. I just believe in myself and I trust myself."

In Buffalo, Tychonick met with 24 of the league's 31 teams head on, knowing it's an approach that may have rubbed some the wrong way.

"It's their job to like me," he said.

"I'm never reading the room. They're going to do the facial expression that they want. I'm not going in there and trying to read what they think about me. I'm just going to be the best person that I can be in that meeting."

Jonny has always been Jonny: Sure of himself. His decisions are dictated by that passion. A top prospect in the 2015 WHL Bantam Draft, he opted against playing for a Saskatoon Blades team that took him 12th overall in favour of playing with the Penticton Vees in the BCHL before committing to play for North Dakota.

Why?

"There's stuff in life that you really love, right? I went to Saskatoon's camp and I liked it. I didn't really love it. It didn't feel me. When I went to Penticton and North Dakota for a tour and spent a week there, I loved it. It felt me. It was unbelievable. I was like 'OK, this is exactly what I want to do.' It was calling my name and I know I made the right decision," Tychonick says.

He believes the college route will accelerate his growth in a way junior hockey never could have.



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"It's the development time. I'm not going to be playing against teenagers, I'm going to be playing against 21, 22, 23, 24 year-olds. Men. Fully grown men. That jump is unbelievable," he said.

"I want to play in the NHL as fast as possible. But I have to be realistic."

It's a decision he said more top prospects in Western Canada should make. In recent memory, the Penticton Vees have welcomed top flight NHL draft prospects such as the Predators' Dante Fabbro (17th overall) and the Avalanche's Tyson Jost (10th overall). He visited both of them in January — and watched *The Bachelor*, he'll have you know. The trio all made the same decisions, for the same reasons, on their own terms.

"I think (the Vees) kind of speak for themselves. They win, they develop, and who wouldn't want to go there? It's the best Jr. A place to play in Canada from top to bottom. If I could I would," Tychonick says. "(Fabbro and Jost) said the exact same thing as I'm saying right now. Because college hockey is growing, kids need to take a better look at it. It's a lot of fun, it's a different route but being from Western Canada people get caught up with the WHL. Leave those doors open and get exposed to a different part of the world, I can't wait to get down there for school."

During his visit, he watched a game between North Dakota and Denver, an experience he refers to as "absolutely insane."

"North Dakota sold me. The name, the environment, the coaching staff, the traditions, the history: unbelievable. You're treated better than some NHL teams and it's so cool. It's going to be a life-changing experience for me.

"If you can watch a game at the Ralph it changes your whole perspective on hockey. If you think people in Western Canada are passionate, you should go down to Grand Forks, North Dakota."

Troy Stecher, who took the same route from Penticton and North Dakota to the Vancouver Canucks, also visited the Vees this season to check in on Tychonick. So did Brendan Morrison, who played nearly 1,000 games in the NHL.

"But at the end of the day it was my decision, it was what I wanted to do. I'm passionate about it," Tychonick will remind you.

That same confidence exists in his game, too.

"I like to make it look like I score a lot of goals so I don't celly," he said, laughing.

"I think I'm a two-way defenceman. I love to skate the puck, I love to shoot the puck, I love to kind of control the play, either slowing it down or speeding it up. I have to be a little bit more patient, let the game kind of come to me and I think I just have to get a little bit stronger, good d-zone details, but that will come with age, maturity, strength. Right now I'm just doing a little bit extra."

He has always felt natural as a defenceman, though he jokes he's not married to it — or anything else.

"In Novice, you rotate through all the positions. I was goalie. I let in eight goals. I never put the pads on again. My dad was low key giving her one of these," he said, dropping to one knee to mimic his father's fist pump when he decided against it.

"I love scoring goals, I love being a part of goals, I love celebrating. I feel like I can contribute more playing D and not playing goalie. I never want to be a goalie. I love centre! I wouldn't mind maybe one day testing it out... but I'm not very good at draws... so that's going to be an issue. I love D! I feel like quarterbacking the play is awesome. I'm happy with the position that I picked."

He loves a lot of things.

"I love being a great teammate. I love to communicate. I love to talk. I love to yell, I think it makes me play better. I'm outgoing. Not commanding the room but helping out with positive talk. I'm yelling all the time, like 'Yeah, yeah!' or 'D-to-D!' or 'Cycle it!'," he said. "I think that's a big part of my game, is that yelling, that passionate side of me."

In 59 games in the BCHL this season, Tychonick registered 64 points. In the regular season, he finished third among defensemen in scoring and first among under-18 defensemen. That play, despite not playing in the WHL, has carried him to international tournaments with Canada at the under-17, under-18, and World Jr. A level. It could make him a late first round pick — especially after a historic playoff run, where he broke records with 17 points in 11 games.

Fred Harbinson, the Vees' general manager and head coach, credits Tychonick for sticking with him — and the program — when things didn't go according to plan in his first two seasons in the BCHL. The Vees, normally one of the younger teams in the BCHL, were hosting the Western Canada Championship and stacked up on veterans.

"It was not an easy, smooth ride for him," Harbinson said. "He's a real good story, his family's a real good story when it comes to persevering. People want instant success and for him as a 16-year-old on a team like ours, he had his ups and downs where he had to fight through different things and not the playing time he was accustomed to in Midget.

"Instead of blaming anyone else, he worked harder and got stronger and over the summer he came into training camp putting on 10 pounds of muscle and in great shape and all his test scores went through the roof and he was one of those guys who we picked as team captain out of training camp and he was an outstanding captain as a 17-year-old."

Harbinson feels like he watched Tychonick grow up to become that "very mature kid when it comes to knowing what he wants and knowing what he has to do to get there." But he knew when Tychonick arrived as a 16-year-old that he would handle those obstacles well.

"Nowadays when you're dealing with parents, advisors, here's a kid who's committed to the University of North Dakota, it would have been very easy for them in his first year to say 'well, maybe this isn't the right route for him, this isn't working.' As a parent myself, sometimes you wonder 'did we make the right decision?' The parents were outstanding. The reason we've been successful here is when we recruit players we're recruiting families. Jonathan has been brought up the right way to work for things and not to expect that. I see a lot of potential for him," Harbinson said.

"His game grew as well in a bigger role and he took advantage of it. In all areas of the game he wasn't one-dimensional, he wasn't just an offensive guy, he could shut teams down, he was great in the locker room, and he contributed offensively as well. He was a great story in the fact that it didn't just come overnight for him. He really worked at it."

Harbinson, in his 11th year as Vees coach after spending time at St. Cloud State University before that, has never seen a player — or more specifically, a person — like Tychonick.

Penticton was uniquely prepared to take him on; they draw 4,000 fans a game, and operate with a huge staff — a lot like a college or a top CHL program. They don't fly under the radar like some Jr. A programs do either. There were nights this season when all 31 NHL teams had a scout in attendance. They've graduated dozens of NHL picks and all-Americans over the last decade. Each season, nearly every player on the roster commits to play in the NCAA. In 2019, forward Massimo Rizzo is another potential high draft pick. This season, Paul Kariya returned to be added to the arena's ring of honour. Jost will send the players or coaches a text before a big game.

Jonathan won't ever forget them either.

Harbinson knew, the first time he watched him play in Midget, that he was an "elite player." Then Tychonick accelerated his schooling so that this year could be about hockey, and he wouldn't miss any morning practices or time in the gym.

"There was nights as a 16 year old where he had the demeanor, he knew what needed to be done, and he just needed to get stronger. All of a sudden from his first year to his second year where he knew how to make the play, all of a sudden now he could make it," Harbinson said.



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"The thing I really love about Johnny is he's that new age kid. Before, when you used to tell a kid to do something they would either do it or not do it. Johnny's the type of kid, he asks why, and not in a negative way or where he's trying to question you. He just wants to learn and understand why he's doing something a certain way and then he'll do it again and do it how you wanted."

Tychonick, a student of the game, loves to study video, and spent a lot of time with Harbinson watching Duncan Keith — whose records he challenged in the BCHL this season.

"Keith's really mean. That's going to be a kind of growing piece of my game. I gotta be a little more mean, like he could stab someone's eye out — like I don't know if I'm there yet," Tychonick joked. "But it's getting there. But he's an impressive player with his offensive instincts, his active stick, his skating's unbelievable. I don't know if I'm nice. I compete hard and I battle hard. But he doesn't shy away from cross checks to the face."

Some players admit to following their draft rankings. Others say they try not to. When Tychonick says he didn't pay attention to his, he means it.

"It's a distraction. The draft isn't until the end of June. If I looked at them in October I could have got too high on myself, too low. Who knows how I would have reacted? I'm playing the game I love right now. I'm passionate about the game. It's really important for me to not look ahead. It just makes it easier: less stress, less anxiety in your life. It has really helped me kind of mature and grow," he said.

The entire draft process of May and June has felt natural to Tychonick. He spent the entire week joking around with teams. While most players were hesitant about the fitness testing, namely the VO2 max bicycle test, he thought back to watching players do it on SportsCentre.

Asked to describe the experience in one word, he can't — that's not his style.

"Life-changing. Or fun. I don't know. It's life-changing. There's millions of kids that want to be here and only 104 that can so I'm coming in just as positive as I can, cup half-full all the time, like this is so much fun. You watch it on the TV as a kid and then being here right now it's just like 'Oh my God, this is so cool,'" he said.

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Sportsnet.ca / Capitals' Game 3 victory a celebration 20 years in the making

Chris Johnston | @reporterchris June 2, 2018, 11:24 PM

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Twenty years they've waited. Thirteen of them he's pushed and fought and wondered whether a night like this would ever arrive.

And, wouldn't you know it, the most iconic moment of a long-overdue return to hosting the Stanley Cup Final had nothing to do with Alex Ovechkin scoring for the Washington Capitals — even if he did that, too, naturally.

It was when teammate Evgeny Kuznetsov went post-and-in for the eventual winner that we saw the true emotional release. For a city and an organization and its beloved superstar.

"It's just automatic. You just get excited," said Ovechkin, who thrust both arms in the air and screamed from the bottom of his skate blades.

Facing the biggest game in franchise history on Saturday, the Capitals summoned their strongest performance of this Final. They transformed into the Big Red Machine. A 3-1 victory over the Vegas Golden Knights gave them a 2-1 lead in the series and left them two wins shy of a potential Stanley Cup parade around America's most famous monuments.

Ovechkin is seemingly willing this into existence — racking up eight shot attempts in the opening period of Game 3 before diving to knock a loose puck behind Marc-Andre Fleury after just 1:10 played in the second.

"I thought it was sort of the right thing in a playoff game, our first victory in the Final at home, that Alex would score the first goal," said coach Barry Trotz. "I thought that was a little bit of poetic justice, if you will, for all the tough times. I love the goal. We kept it alive, maybe four, five, six chances to keep it alive and it finally ended up in the back of the net."

Ovechkin has now scored a team-leading 14 goals this spring, tying John Druce's franchise record, and is still celebrating those scored by others with more enthusiasm than his own.

"Yeah, he was possessed out there. That's a good way to put it, I think," said teammate John Carlson. "He's playing with passion and energy and joy and he's a one-man wrecking crew. How committed he is. It's the best he's played in my opinion."

That's really saying something after the kind of career Ovechkin has already authored. But there's no doubt about how much all of this means when you see the joy exploding from him like a Fourth of July fireworks show.

This is as committed as we've seen the captain, and as committed as we've seen the Caps.

Even though Ovechkin doesn't believe his team has played its best game, this was a step forward from the two at T-Mobile Arena. They bogged down the neutral zone and took away the middle of the ice from the quick-strike Golden Knights, making them look ordinary for the first time all playoffs.

"I believe it's not easy to play against us. We don't have a lot of turnovers in the neutral zone," said Kuznetsov. "We really feel this playoff is about power play, PK, plays between the blue lines."

The Caps were also carried by goaltender Braden Holtby — again so sharp, minus the third-period giveaway that handed Tomas Nosek his third goal of the series — not to mention Kuznetsov, who shook off two days of injury speculation to score the game-winner.

He was knocked out of Wednesday's game in Vegas by a Brayden McNabb hit that seemed to injure his left shoulder. But that didn't keep Kuznetsov from breaking out his silky flying bird celebration after beating Fleury with a perfectly placed shot.

The Russian centre was coming up his off wing on a 3-on-1 rush and managed to place the puck just between the right pad and blocker of the Vegas goaltender, banking it off the right post and in. That sent Ovechkin and the sellout crowd into delirium.

"It's emotional stuff," said Kuznetsov, who never doubted he'd play despite the uncertainty portrayed publicly. "Like Michael Jordan, when he play his best game he's sore, right? Got hurt, 53 points. When you're hurt you play a little better always. You have extra energy."

Beyond the relentless Jonathan Marchessault and a motivated Alex Tuch, Vegas didn't offer much offensive pushback. Nosek scored at 3:29 of the third period after linemate Pierre-Edouard Bellemare pressure Holtby into a turnover behind his goal.

However, Devante Smith-Pelly got that one back with six minutes to play — taking advantage of a Shea Theodore gaffe — and giving a fanbase that has suffered more than most a more comfortable ride to the finish.

For an 11-year member of the organization like Nicklas Backstrom, it was a night he'll never forget because it was a night unlike any other before it.



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"No, this is the best feeling. This is where you want to be, too, at the Stanley Cup Final," said Backstrom. "Great game."

They even managed to chant "We Want The Cup!" as the seconds ticked down inside Capital One Arena.

After 43 long years, they can finally see it start coming into view.

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Sportsnet.ca / Tape To Tape NHL Podcast Special: Remembering the 1993 Montreal Canadiens

Staff report

Tape to Tape June 2, 2018, 8:35 AM

The Montreal Canadiens' 1993 Stanley Cup run was predicted by coach Jacques Demers, executed by his often-underrated players and thrilled Tape to Tape co-host Ryan Dixon — when he was a Habs-obsessed 13-year-old.

To commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Canadiens' 24th championship — the last NHL title won by any Canadian-based team — Tape to Tape, on June 2, is releasing a special hour-long podcast packed full of interviews with Habs, including Conn Smythe winner Patrick Roy, from that '93 squad and many others who either observed that team closely or faced off against it during Montreal's overtime-fuelled ride.

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.

It was a journey Demers, who took over the Canadiens bench from Pat Burns in the summer of 1992, saw coming. In his very first meeting with the club before that season, Demers told a club that had just traded for goal-scorers Vincent Damphousse and Brian Bellows that they were all going to "shock the hockey world."

"Everyone looked at each other like, 'What does he mean?'" recalls defenceman Patrice Brisebois. "Because Jacques said, 'We're going to win the Stanley Cup.' It was not only making the playoffs; it was, no, we're going to win the Stanley Cup."

That would have been music to the ears of Dixon, who — from a Montreal fandom perspective — had the misfortune of coming into the world just as the Canadiens were transitioning from decades as an unstoppable force to something much different than 'Lions in Winter.' Together with producer and sound engineer extraordinaire Amil Delic, who dug deep in the archives to find old clips that perfectly complement recent conversations, Dixon takes listeners back in time through the lens of a Grade 8 kid cheering for a team that, despite its winning reputation, had delivered only heartache to him.

"Twenty-three titles had come either before I existed or before I was old enough to really get involved," Dixon explains. "But when it came time to pursue No. 24, I lived and died with each game."

Everything is covered here, including Marty McSorley — who was infamously sent to the box for using an illegal stick in an all-time Stanley Cup Final-swinging moment — accusing the Canadiens of secretly measuring L.A. Kings blades when nobody was looking. On a lighter note, former Kings coach Barry Melrose talks about finding movie stars Kurt Russell and Goldie Hawn drinking his beer, while the Habs reveal

which preposterously cheesy '80s song blared in the dressing room before every game.

All the while, Dixon personalizes the story with anecdotes from his experience walking along a knife's edge for two months while his team pulled off 10 straight extra-time victories. It's an unthinkable number — and just one of a few things that hasn't happened again since the magical spring of 1993.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 06.04.2018

1098211 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Vegas not rattled by doubters, but looking for Golden Misfits form

Chris Johnston | @reporterchris June 3, 2018, 6:06 PM

ARLINGTON, Va. — Gerard Gallant is the kind of guy you'd love to sit down and have a beer with.

Easy-going and even-keeled, the Vegas Golden Knights coach is matter-of-fact in his dealings whether he's talking to a young defenceman in his office or with reporters from the ominous-looking podium at the Stanley Cup Final.

So it was notable Sunday when his feisty, competitive side briefly bubbled to the surface. Gallant didn't appreciate a line of questioning that veered towards the struggles of Shea Theodore — dinged with a minus on four of the last five even-strength goals scored by the Washington Capitals — and shot back with a spirited defence of his talented blue liner.

"Did Shea do something really bad? He plays the game like everybody else," said Gallant. "He made a couple mistakes. Ended up in the back of our net. A lot of guys make mistakes in a hockey game, they don't end up in the back of the net.

"Shea's a 22-year-old kid who I love, he's a great player. He's going to be a star in this league."

Point taken.

The Golden Knights only trail 2-1 in this Stanley Cup Final, but they feel like they're under fire. They haven't played anywhere near their best against Washington and are in danger of letting this magical expansion season slip away with Game 4 looming on Monday night.

Gallant is here to stem the tide. He's been chasing the Stanley Cup since he was a young boy growing up in Summerside, P.E.I., and has never had an opportunity as good as this one to win it. That's something he's reminding his players — that they are still in a great position, even with Washington coming at them like a tidal wave.

Heck, they could spend another lifetime in this sport and never find themselves in a better one.

"Just gotta know in the back of our heads it's still there," said Vegas defenceman Luca Sbisa.

"Everyone's starting to write us off," added teammate David Perron. "It's not something we're not used to. We lost the first game against Winnipeg [in the Western Conference Final], we had a lot of media thinking we'd get run over the entire series against them. We found a way to win four in a row, win in five.



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"We're in a familiar situation with a lot of doubters. It's fine with us. We have to step up and play the right way. Play the way that made us successful. It's a new day today. A new opportunity."

The first step is belief. The next is execution.

Gallant is contemplating personnel changes to spark his sagging second and third lines — with Tomas Tatar and/or Oscar Lindberg the most likely to dress in Game 4. The only goal scored by a member of the Golden Knights middle-six in this series came from James Neal, which means that Perron, Erik Haula, Ryan Carpenter, Cody Eakin and Alex Tuch are all in need of a breakthrough.

"We need more from our other players," said Gallant.

They need to morph back into the Golden Misfits and rediscover the wolfpack-like mentality that pressures opponents into turnovers. At its best, Vegas is a team that brings numbers on the forecheck and makes it tough to break the puck out against.

There hasn't been nearly enough of it against a resilient Capitals team that is riding a wave of emotion and starting to dream of hoisting the Cup.

"I think you solve that, you play more puck support," said Gallant. "You just support the puck. When you play a wide game, it's not going to work against Washington. They do a good job in the neutral zone, they work hard, and they compete hard. But when you play that support game and you're making short, little plays, you've got support coming across, you've got your D-men joining, you're going to have some opportunities."

They've had their chances. The numbers tell the tale of a close series, with Vegas controlling 53.22 per cent of the overall shot attempts at 5-on-5 and 50.39 per cent of the total scoring chances. But they've been playing from behind for the last five periods, inflating those numbers slightly with score effects.

So, while Gallant is going to defend his players, he's also going to be honest with them.

It's now or never. There is no time to wait.

"We've gotta step up our game. In the three games, we haven't been good enough," he said. "If we don't step up our game, the same result is going to happen [Monday] night. We'll see what we're made of."

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1098212 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Marlies' Travis Dermott regretful after error in judgment

Daniel Nugent-Bowman | @DNBSports June 3, 2018, 9:17 PM

TORONTO — Despite a mostly superb performance, Travis Dermott was left second-guessing himself afterwards for a decision he'd like to have back.

"I was gonna go put my hand down, but it was a little hard and I didn't wanna risk hurting anything," he said. "Looking back on it, you wished you had grabbed it instead of trying to play it off your shin pads."

The questionable judgment occurred early in the second period and led directly to a goal in what was a 2-1 victory for the Texas Stars in Game 2 of the Calder Cup Finals. The best-of-seven affair is now tied at a game apiece.

Dermott failed to intercept a long stretch pass from Stars defenceman Dillon Heatherington and the puck went through his legs and onto the

stick of Curtis McKenzie. The Stars captain beat Marlies goaltender Garret Sparks on a breakaway for his playoff-leading eighth goal.

"You've gotta read those plays and take it more defensively," Dermott said.

McKenzie's goal only tied the score. However, it completely changed the game's complexion.

The Stars took it to the Marlies from that point on, allowing just nine shots on goaltender Mike McKenna. They outshot the Marlies 24-22 overall.

As a result, the Marlies saw their 10-game post-season winning streak snapped. They fell at home for the first time since March 24 — a span of 13 contests.

The moment that proceeded McKenzie's crucial tally could be considered either unfortunate or careless, depending on how you slice it.

Marlies coach Sheldon Keefe chose the latter option — a positional error by a young but promising blueliner.

"On that particular play, we'd like to see him keep the player in front of him," Keefe said. "We've been caught on that a couple times — trying to knock down long passes rather than just staying above their guys and letting them come through us."

"That's something we want to clean up, but I don't think that's solely on Derrs."

The Stars were the better team from that point on and were rewarded with a goal on an early third-period power play.

Gavin Bayreuther got the winner at 4:31 with veteran Marlies defenceman Vincent LoVerde off for holding the stick of Stars winger Jason Dickinson.

The Marlies only mustered four shots in the third as the Stars sat back and clogged up the neutral zone. They struggled to generate speed, gain the offensive blue line or even effectively dump and chase the puck.

"We've been good in third periods all year. We weren't today," Sparks said.

"They took out our best guys from the game," Dermott said.

Dermott's blemish — and the goal that followed — altered the game, which is a shame because he was one of the more impactful players on the ice.

Ahead of the series, Keefe lauded Dermott's professionalism since his return to the Marlies after the end of the Toronto Maple Leafs season.

Dermott played 37 games in the second half of the season with the Leafs and appeared in all seven playoff contests of a first-round loss to Boston.

Keefe said the 21-year-old, second-year pro came back on a "mission of wanting to win."

Throughout Game 2 he showed not only that, but why he's expected to be a fixture on the NHL team's blue line in the fall.

Dermott made a smart, calculated pinch late in the first period, one of two key plays he made on the opening goal of the game.

After the pinch, Dermott got the puck back, moved to the centre of the ice and fired a low shot that was tipped by captain Ben Smith at 17:51.

It was Dermott's third assist and fourth point in 11 AHL playoff games. He recorded 18 points in 28 regular season AHL games this season.

"He walked the line really well there," Smith said. "It was a really quick snapper (from) an NHL talent there. It was a nice play."

Dermott started the game with regular partner Timothy Liljegren, but played more minutes with Martin Marincin and Justin Holl as Liljegren's minutes were cut back by Keefe. Dermott even saw some rare time on the power play in place of Liljegren, the 2017 first-rounder.



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"Derms had a good game today," Keefe said. "He was involved in a lot of things. He moved around well. He moved the puck well. He was involved on offence."

But Dermott's mostly positive efforts weren't enough.

It didn't help that the offence was stuck in neutral from the time the Stars scored their first goal.

The team's top line of Andreas Johnsson, Miro Aaltonen and Carl Grundstrom failed to record a point for the second consecutive game.

"It hurts. It's been a big part of why we're here and why things have gone so smoothly to this point," Keefe said. "If going to get control of the series, we need those guys to be (better) and find a way to get through and get to the net."

Losing has almost been uncharted territory for the Marlies in these playoffs.

Their last defeat came at the hands of the Utica Comets in the opening round. They dropped Games 3 and 4 of the best-of-five series, but then recovered to close out the Comets at home.

With the next three games on the road in Austin, Texas, how the Marlies respond there will go a long way towards deciding the winner of this series.

Plenty more chances to make up for mistakes – and get back in the win column after a long overdue defeat.

"It happens. We knew it wasn't going to be a perfect run by any means," Dermott said. "We're going to go and try and win the next game, right?"

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 06.04.2018

1098213 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Oshie, Niskanen ride subway to Game 3 with sea of Capitals fans

Luke Fox | @lukefoxjukebox June 3, 2018, 3:25 PM

WASHINGTON, D.C. — When a team embarks on the type of playoff adventure the Washington Capitals are currently enjoying — one that galvanizes, inspires and rocks a long-suffering fan base — the athletes are often asked if they are able to truly soak it in, how their success on the ice seeps outside the rink and spills into the streets.

Well, veterans T.J. Oshie and Matt Niskanen literally immersed themselves in the hype surrounding the first Washington Stanley Cup Final home date in 20 years.

Fearing highway traffic, the two hopped on the Metro near their neighbourhood in Virginia and rode the rails to Capital One Arena in cars jammed with shocked supporters.

"It was great. It was actually really easy for us to get down there," Oshie said Sunday. "The fans seemed very excited but were also very respectful and kind of just wished us luck along the way. The closer we got, the more fans got on, and it was cool. It was cool to see.

"I think we actually got on some TV or someone was doing some type of simulated Caps march and we happened to be walking right behind the march, so we might be in some type of pump-up video or something, but it was cool. It was fun. It was a different way. I've never gone that way before. Pretty simple."

Several photos and videos of the players popped up on social media via their adoring fan base, and Oshie and Niskanen gracefully posed for pictures en route.

Hesitant to outline their exact route, Niskanen dropped one clue. They rode either the WMATA's Silver or Orange line.

"Niski has done it a couple more times than me. That was actually my first one to the game," Oshie said.

Several blocks of downtown D.C. were barricaded off for a well-attended outdoor fan party, headlined by Sting and Shaggy, so Oshie and Niskanen opted to mix with the proletariat.

Ironically, when they reached the dressing room, teammates told them the drive downtown was one of the easiest yet.

The scene outside Capital One before, during and after the home side defeated the Vegas Golden Knights 3-1 in Game 3 was a joyful and boisterous one.

Familiar faces came out of the woodwork to rock the red: Pat Sajak, Kenan Thompson, Olaf Kolzig, Joe Gibbs, and Wonder Woman herself.

The Capitals delivered the first home victory for a Washington-based sports team in the championship round since May 20, 1979, when the NBA's Bullets bested the SuperSonics.

A foreign substance is wafting in the air here: optimism.

"There's a lot of pride in this D.C. area. In past failures, you'd feel a lot of anxiety even before you started the playoffs. I think we've gotten past that as a group. We've gotten past that, hopefully, as a community," said coach Barry Trotz, now two wins from glory.

"I think it'll galvanize all the city and all the other sports franchises in this area because there are some good ones. And I know the baseball guys are watching us."

Hockey players can be superstitious creatures. The pressing question, then, heading into Monday's Game 4: Will the boys ride the Metro again?

"I don't know. We haven't discussed that yet," smiled Oshie, glancing at transit pal. "We will see."

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 06.04.2018

1098214 Websites

TSN.CA / Vegas' top line a disappearing act in Cup Final so far

Frank Seravalli

ARLINGTON, Va. — Barry Trotz was talking about Devante Smith-Pelly's contribution to the Washington Capitals' run on Sunday morning, but if you listened closely enough, he actually addressed the Vegas Golden Knights' problem in a nutshell.

"If you lean on one line to carry you right through, you're going to get shut down," Trotz said. "It's too hard. We're now on our 22nd game or something like that, so to be hot for that long is almost impossible.

"You need different levels of commitment, different levels of production."

There is no questioning the Golden Knights' commitment level, but it's fair now to question their different levels of production.

Last round, you couldn't buy two tickets to the Jonathan Marches-Show featuring Wild Bill, Smitty and a tricked out Lamborghini.



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Suddenly, the Vegas top line that stepped into the Stanley Cup Final on fire has gone cold when it matters most. Jonathan Marchessault, Reilly Smith and William Karlsson have netted just two of the Golden Knights' nine goals scored this series. They started as the top line in the playoffs, outscoring opponents 10-4 at even-strength.

Washington's stars have simply shined brighter.

"They did their job," Vegas coach Gerard Gallant said of his top line. "They didn't score, but they did their job. They played hard, they did well. They got some opportunities. We need more from our other players."

The Golden Knights have gotten a season's worth of contributions from other players. They have game-winning goals from 10 different players these playoffs, one off the NHL record for a single postseason run.

Really, what are the Vegas odds that fourth-liner Tomas Nosek would be leading the Stanley Cup Final in goals through the first three games?

The Golden Knights' fourth line has carried their water dating back to the clincher against Winnipeg in the Western Conference final, scoring five of the team's last 11 goals. Add in the two scored by defencemen Colin Miller and Shea Theodore in this series and you can see how the scoring touch has dried up like water in the desert.

"That Karlsson line is the line that makes our team run, but we need more people stepping up and trying to score goals," Gallant said.

The Golden Knights declined to make Marchessault, Smith or Karlsson available to the media on Sunday as Vegas faces their first real adversity of the season.

"I think they're working hard, but pucks didn't go in for them," Ryan Carpenter was left to answer. "Sometimes, it's just bounces. But we can't just look to them to lead us. We've got to find ways as depth lines to produce and get some offence."

Carpenter's linemate, David Perron - who had 16 goals and 66 points in the regular season - does not have a single goal in the playoffs.

"I think for us, our line needs to be better for us to have success," Perron said. "We feel confident moving forward. Our line needs to be better and we will be."

Perron played the underdog card, even though the expansion Golden Knights actually entered the series as betting favourites. He said he sensed "everyone is starting to write us off."

"It's not something we're not used to," Perron said. "We lost the first game against Winnipeg and we had a lot of media thinking we would get run over the entire series against them. We're in a familiar situation with a lot of doubters. That's fine with us."

As Gallant said, you have to lose four games to lose the Stanley Cup.

"We're far from out of it," Gallant said.

The Golden Knights aren't backed into a corner. Not yet. But they will be if they don't rebound in Game 4 on Monday night and get that top line back on track.

"We've got to step up our game," Gallant said. "In the three games, we haven't been good enough. If we don't step up our game, the same is what's going to happen tomorrow night. We'll see what we're made of."

TSN.CA LOADED: 06.04.2018

1098215 Websites

USA TODAY / Vegas Golden Knights look to regain momentum vs. Capitals to avoid becoming a footnote

Kevin Allen, USA TODAY Sports Published 5:01 p.m. ET June 3, 2018 | Updated 1:01 a.m. ET June 4, 2018

WASHINGTON — The 1969 New York Mets would not have been the Miracle Mets if they didn't beat the Baltimore Orioles in the World Series. Ed Pinckney's 1985 Villanova team wouldn't be as revered today if Patrick Ewing's Georgetown squad had whipped the Wildcats in the NCAA tournament championship game.

Memories of magical seasons aren't as endearing if they don't result in a championship. Teams that make impressive playoff runs and fall short become footnotes.

Do you remember the 1990-91 Minnesota North Stars? Of course, you don't. They were a below-.500 team that somehow qualified for the playoffs, and goalie Jon Casey carried them all the way to the Stanley Cup Final. They were a fun story for five weeks. But they lost to the Pittsburgh Penguins in the championship series and became a footnote.

As the Vegas Golden Knights prepare for Monday's Game 4 of the Stanley Cup Final, they are desperately trying not to become a footnote.

"We just have to know in the back of our heads that (the magic) is still there," Vegas defenseman Luca Sbisa said.

Most assuredly, the Golden Knights already have a place in NHL history as the most accomplished expansion team in pro sports history. Reaching the Stanley Cup Final only adds to that success. Plus, they have forever won the hearts of Vegas fans with their record-setting season.

But if they want to be remembered like the Miracle Mets, they have to win the Stanley Cup Final. To accomplish that, the Golden Knights need to win Game 4 to tie up the best-of-seven series 2-2.

If the Vegas Golden Knights lose Game 4, they face the reality that no team has come back from a 3-1 series deficit to win a Stanley Cup Final since the 1942 Toronto Maple Leafs rallied from down 3-0.

Vegas players say the key to tying the series and regaining momentum is getting back to playing their style.

Since they debuted last October, the Golden Knights have wowed the NHL with their speed and five-man forechecking scheme. They go in hard on opposing defensemen to force turnovers.

The problem, particularly in the last game, is the Capitals have been moving the puck quickly out of their zone. When the Golden Knights did get the puck in Game 3, the Capitals were not giving up prime scoring chances.

Vegas boasts skilled players and quality leaders. But they don't have a superstar like Alex Ovechkin or Evgeny Kuznetsov who can create something out of nothing. They need their forechecking game clicking to be successful. It fuels their offense.

"We've just got to find a way to create momentum, even if we aren't putting pucks in the net," Vegas center Ryan Carpenter said. "Positive shifts. More zone time. Holding onto the pucks. It seems like we are working hard to get down low, and we don't hold onto it, or make a bad play, and the Capitals are going the other way."

This is the first time in the playoffs the Golden Knights have lost two games in a row, but they are accustomed to playing with doubters lining up around them. At the start of the season, this team was a 500-1 shot to win the Stanley Cup. Everyone kept waiting for a collapse that never happened.

"(In the Western Conference final), we lost the first game to Winnipeg and we had a lot of media thinking we would get run over, but we found a way to win four in a row," Vegas forward David Perron said. "We are in a similar situation. We are in a similar situation with a lot of doubters."



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That's fine with us. We have to step up and play the right way, the way that made us successful."

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1098216 Websites

USA TODAY / Brooks Orpik: 'Just got the wind knocked out of me' on hit by James Neal

Kevin Allen, USA TODAY Sports Published 2:57 p.m. ET June 3, 2018 | Updated 7:29 p.m. ET June 3, 2018

ARLINGTON, Va. - Social media was abuzz Saturday night about why the NHL concussion spotters didn't pull Washington Capitals defenseman Brooks Orpik from Game 3 after he went down after a heavy hit from Vegas Golden Knights forward James Neal.

Orpik had a simple explanation Sunday — a blow to the head was not his issue.

"I just got the wind knocked out of me," Orpik said. "It's not a very good feeling when you can't breathe, but that subsides pretty quickly."

Orpik, a heavy hitter, was attempting to deliver a check to Neal, and Neal did a reverse hit and slammed into his torso.

Orpik said he was more disappointed in himself than in Neal "because I played three or four years with him in Pittsburgh and know he likes to do that."

"He tried to do that to me in Vegas and I got the better of him on that one," Orpik said. "There was nothing wrong with that hit. I just took the worst of it."

It has been a tough series for Orpik: He had to be stitched up after Game 2 in Las Vegas, though he also scored the winning goal in that game.

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