



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • June 4, 2019



Checkers Win Game 2 to Even Calder Cup Finals

Checkers bounce back to score 5-3 win at home

by Michael Smith

CHARLOTTE - Just moments after an inauspicious bounce spelled an overtime loss for the Charlotte Checkers in Game 1 of the Calder Cup Finals, they vowed that Game 2 would be different.

It wasn't as much a guarantee of victory as it was a guarantee of response. After all, the Checkers had not lost consecutive games since Feb. 9-10.

Consider the response delivered. The Checkers bounced back with a 5-3 win in Sunday's Game 2. Tomas Jurco's goal late in the second period was the difference-maker, and Dustin Tokarski improved to an unblemished 11-0-0 with the Checkers, while allowing just 13 total goals in that stretch.

"I think we were a little harder to play against. We worked really hard," Jurco said. "Today, it went our way, and we're happy."

"[Game 1] wasn't a bad game, so I wasn't worried about a repeat. We played well. We just didn't get a break," head coach Mike Vellucci said. "Our guys are focused. They want to be here."

If Game 1 was about learning from mistakes in the finer details of a Finals series, Game 2 was about applying those lessons in search of a different result to even up the best-of-seven slate before it shifts to Chicago for three games.

The two games followed somewhat similar scripts, especially through the first 40 minutes. The Checkers scored early - Nick Schilkey took a silky pass from Zach Nastasiuk and buried his breakaway shot for the shorthanded tally - and the Wolves answered back just 57 seconds later.

The Checkers built a 3-1 advantage in the second period with two goals in 14 seconds, the first from Nicolas Roy, a net-front redirection of Haydn Fleury's shot from the point, and then from Stelio Mattheos, who weaved his way around a stick-less defender to beat Oscar Dansk with a shot from in between the circles.

Unfortunately for the Checkers, that 3-1 advantage was nullified in the second period just as it was the night prior, as Gage Quinney netted a pair of goals.

But, fortunately for the Checkers, that's as far as history would repeat itself.

"It took us a couple of shifts, but we were right back at it," Jurco said. "We did a really good job to stay in the game. That was the key."

It was Jurco who scored the go-ahead goal with 67 seconds left in the second period, as he slipped a one-time feed from Martin Necas just through Dansk and over the goal line.

"He found me open, and luckily it went in," said Jurco, who, as the goal was signaled, threw his hands up in celebration before being mobbed by Necas and his teammates. "It was a relief. I've had many chances the last couple of games and I couldn't score, so that one felt really good."

The Checkers clamped down and limited the Wolves to just four shots on goal in the third period. Andrew Poturalski banged the puck into an empty net in the final minute to seal the Game 2 victory for the Checkers, who improved to an astounding 47-0-0 when leading after two periods this season.

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"It was big to get a lead, and then we were able to hold it. I thought we really tightened it up in the third," Vellucci said. "We played much more disciplined defensively."

Lessons learned. Response delivered. Now, it's on to Chicago for the next three games of the Calder Cup Finals on June 5, 6 and 8, respectively.

"It's a best-of-five now. We're going on the road, but we've done well on the road this postseason," Mattheos said. "We hope to get the next one."

If necessary, Charlotte will host Game 6 on Thursday, June 13, and Game 7 on Friday, June 14. Bojangles' Coliseum was packed with 17,023 total fans for Games 1 and 2, two of the three biggest crowds in the building's history.

"I couldn't be more proud of Charlotte and our fans. They really came to support. They were loud. It was awesome," Vellucci said. "I'm very proud to be able to coach a team in Charlotte."



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About Last Season: Brock McGinn Performance Review and Grade

After scoring one of the most exciting goals in franchise history, McGinn will look to continue to develop his offense.

By Andy House

Brock McGinn: 2018-2019 By The Numbers

- Age: 25
- NHL Seasons: 4
- Games Played: 82
- Scoring: 10 goals, 16 assists, 26 points
- Ice Time: 14:19 all situations, 11:50 ES, 0:16 PP, 2:13 PK
- 5 on 5 Stats: 51.0% CF, 50.0% GF
- Contract: Restricted Free Agent

Making the Grade

Before we go even one step further into the evaluation of Brock McGinn in his fourth season with the Carolina Hurricanes, let us begin with perhaps the most famous play that he will make as a Hurricane — or perhaps in his entire career. McGinn's double-overtime tip-in, as well as his heroic clearing of a near-winner late in the third period, in Game 7 of the Canes first-round series with the Washington Capitals has emblazoned his place within Canes history forever, and likely has earned himself a bit of a soft spot from many Canes fans for years to come.

Moments such as that are images that stick with a player and a fanbase for decades to come. Perhaps McGinn will provide more plays of that nature in his career, but no matter what, he will certainly be remembered in Raleigh for that thrilling night in D.C.

In regards to McGinn's third full season as a Hurricane, it was a year that began to show the type of player that McGinn can be in the NHL. While his scoring dropped slightly (10 goals vs. 16 the season before, four fewer total points), his overall consistency improved as he became a dependable third-line player with real value on the penalty kill. While +/- is not a particularly revealing stat at times, it certainly reflected well on McGinn in 2018-19 as he posted a positive number (plus-10) for the first time in his career. Playing alongside the lines of Jordan Martinook and Lucas Wallmark for much of the season, McGinn added to a formidable defensive group that at many points of the season was the Canes most physical line.

McGinn came into the season attempting to establish himself as a bedrock member of the Canes lineup as he entered Restricted Free Agency this coming offseason. The year got off to a bit of a slow start as McGinn didn't post a point in the

first nine contests, while being on the ice for four goals against. About that time, the Canes began to settle McGinn into his familiar surroundings with his typical linemates, and things began to click better for the group, if not for the Canes as a whole.

Although McGinn was certainly an energy-driving player for the Canes, his discipline was noteworthy, as he logged only 20 penalty minutes over the entire 82 game season. For a team that thrived practically at all times during five-on-five action, McGinn provided just the kind of hard-nosed play that the Canes asked of him.

What may stand out as a bit of a surprise is the typical zone start for McGinn on the season. While McGinn is certainly a part of what you would call a physical and defensive line, his average zone start was basically split 50/50 between offensive and defensive zone starts, which might signal that McGinn's group has yet to draw enough of the tougher assignments as a group.

But when you compare his starts to Jordan Staal, who typically helms the ace defensive line for the Canes, you see that his zone start numbers are similar. This is as good an illustration as any as to the puck possession dominance that the Canes exhibited most of the season. McGinn and a host of others are positive possession players who, if called upon, could carry more of a defensive burden if needed. With even top-line players such as Sebastian Aho fully capable of excelling in a defensive role, the question could become whether or not the Canes look to sacrifice some of their team-wide depth of defensive talent for a bit more offensive punch. If so, McGinn could be a player who other teams have interest in as the Canes look to improve other aspects of their team.

If McGinn is looking for an offensive career to model himself after, he can look no further than teammate Micheal Ferland who slowly grew into his offensive game (mostly alongside high-end offensive talent in Calgary) and became a consistent 40-point scorer. That level of production appears to be available for the 25-year-old McGinn, if he is allowed to continue to expand his ice time and is paired with teammates who continue to grow as well (Wallmark and Warren Foegele come immediately to mind). That additional 15-20 points per season will be the difference between McGinn being a solid bottom-six winger who can play on the PK and a player that can be slotted throughout the lineup and dispatched in nearly any situation. If the Canes can work out a deal with the RFA, it will be interesting to see how his career continues to evolve in Raleigh.

While McGinn is a RFA, his time in Raleigh has likely not come to an end. Expect the Canes to work out a deal with the young forward that will see him on the ice as a part of the third line again in October. Hopefully we will also be treated to a return from Thor as well!



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

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The Athletic / How prospects prepare for the NHL Draft Combine and what it's like to take the dreaded VO2 Max test

By Sunaya Sapurji Jun 3, 2019

Over the years I've covered a number of NHL Draft Combines to the point where I no longer remember my first one. I'm sure it was epic.

Before moving to Buffalo, the combine was held at the International Centre in Toronto, including the final one in 2014. The thing I remember most was the wall-to-wall carpeting in the ballroom — packed with scouts and media — where the fitness testing was taking place.

There were no windows so it was stagnant and hot as hell — especially with all the camera lights. The air was thick with the stench of sweat and vomit. And there were ample amounts of both. In contrast, since moving to Buffalo, the combines have taken place at the Harborcenter and it's a much better setup, to be sure. All the fitness testing happens on the floor of the arena. Scouts and team representatives sit in the lower bowl and the media take the upper concourse area.

The one constant between combines over the years has been the big, white puke buckets. Sometimes they put them behind a curtain, and sometimes they sit quietly next to the bikes used for the Wingate test and the dreaded VO2 Max test. This year there were buckets in the "recovery tent" next to chairs where players sat at the end of testing (usually ending with the VO2). After they have recovered enough the prospects eventually make their way to the upper concourse to meet with the media.

This is the private recovery area where players sit after fitness testing. (Sunaya Sapurji/The Athletic)

For me at least, that bucket has always signified the amount of work — or not — players put into preparing for the combine, regardless of whether they're used — or not. As hockey players become bigger, faster and stronger the way they train for the combine has changed, too.

And while the combine has never been used as an indicator of great hockey talent, no one wants to be mocked like Sam Bennett was after failing to complete a single pull-up in 2014.

POOR @NIKOLAJEHLERS24 WAS SO DEAD AFTER TESTING HE HAD TO SIT FOR OUR INTERVIEW. IT WAS ALL GOOD UNTIL HE JOKED ABOUT PUKING IN MY PURSE.

— SUNAYA SAPURJI (@SUNAYAS) MAY 31, 2014

Back in 2010, I interviewed Danny Biega — aka The Harvard Hulk — for a story about his combine prep. That year Biega finished in the top 10 of at least 17 of the NHL's 31 tests. He crushed the competition in most of the upper body events, which included grip strength in both hands, bench press, push/pull strength and a power test using a four-kilogram ball.

He was in the gym three hours a day, five days a week, using some unconventional methods (at the time at least) to get ready — like wrapping chains on his back when doing sets of push-ups.

I asked if he meant the kind of chain you'd use to lock up a bike.

"No, like big yacht anchoring chains," he said.

In the spirit of Danny Biega, The Athletic sent the most unfit reporter they could to talk to a few relatively jacked NHL prospects to find out their workout routines, the process and how they approached the VO2.

THE WHITE PUKE BUCKET IS IN FULL EFFECT BEHIND THE BIKE AT THE WINGATE TEST. PIC.TWITTER.COM/C323ST9AC4

— SUNAYA SAPURJI (@SUNAYAS) JUNE 6, 2015

Before we start though, here's Kitchener Rangers defenceman Michael Vukojevic — ranked No. 55 among North American skaters — explaining how the VO2 test works.

"Every minute they increase the resistance on the bike and you have to stay constant with your pedal speed as the resistance goes up," Vukojevic said. "It gets harder every minute. I did about 14 and a half minutes — it was a long bike and extremely hard. You can't take a second off. At some points your legs don't even want to move, they just want to give up.

"I think it's all mental and psychological at that point. That's what got me through the final minutes was just pushing myself mentally and realizing that 'Hey, my legs aren't that tired and I'm not as tired as I



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think I am.' There's a lot of mental toughness involved in that test because it's all about when you're going to give up."

John Beecher, C, USNTDP U18 – 6'3, 210 pounds

I had never really done (VO2 test) so I was a little curious about it. I really pushed myself and I got 15 (minutes) and I jumped off and I almost couldn't walk. I got escorted to the (recovery area) and I was happy with my score. I came in a little early to see what it all about and I saw a couple guys getting carried away, so my heart sank a little.

And I did not need the bucket!

Thomas Harley, D, Mississauga Steelheads – 6'3, 188 pounds

The only thing crazy I did was probably flipping tires around — like big tractor tires. We did tractor tires, they're probably 300 or 400-pounds, but everyone does that. They're pretty heavy. That's a full-body, explosiveness thing because you can't spend too much time flipping it. You've kinda just got to get and rip it up.

Michael Vukojevic, D, Kitchener Rangers – 6'3, 207 pounds

I spent about two hours a day, four days a week for three weeks to help me prepare. It wasn't anything crazy like chopping trees. I would wear a weighted vest (with 25 pounds) for pull-ups, do max reps with that and then take it off and do max reps again.

I feel I did well on the VO2 talking to the other guys. I'm not much of a puker so it was good. I was obviously tired, you get extremely light-headed and dizzy and your legs get really loose and weak. You don't have a lot of feeling in them. It's pretty grueling.

Peyton Krebs, C, Winnipeg Ice – 5'11, 180 pounds

I only took the weekends off, other than that I was in the gym every day. It was maybe an hour a day, tops. I did a few of the combine tests just to make sure I wasn't coming in blind. I didn't do anything special — I ran up some hills the odd day. I did weighted pull-ups — I didn't use a vest it was more like a belt — by the end, I was using a plate extra which is 45-pounds more.

Ethan Phillips, C, Sioux Falls Stampede (USHL) – 5'9, 148 pounds

My season just finished two weeks ago (when Sioux Falls won the Clark Cup) and then I had to spend a few days in Sioux Falls because we had some stuff to do with fans and parades. So I wasn't doing much there. I got home for 12 hours and got a workout in and then I had to go back to Connecticut, for graduation. I was there for three days. Then I got here and got a couple of workouts in here. It's been non-stop for me, so I didn't get much time to prepare.

I think I did well, especially considering the amount of rest I was able to get or the amount of preparation I was able to put in.

I was a little nervous — especially for the VO2 — just considering I didn't have much time to prepare. I was really nervous going in, I think my heart rate was at 90 or something and it started to level out, but I got through it.

Philip Broberg, D, AIK-Sweden2 – 6'3, 200 pounds

It's usually every day, sometimes six days a week, two hours a day, but I haven't specifically trained for the events here it's more for next season. I want to make sure I'm ready for next season and able to make the next step to the NHL. I'm training different areas depending on what day it is and how I'm feeling. I'm training a lot of lower body right now.

I've done some crazy training in my life. I remember when I was in (my hometown of) Örebro we would run four minutes all out, then

rest for one minute and we probably did 12 or 15 of those — but we did it in dirt so your feet would sink down. It was mud. So shoes would fall off and you'd be running barefoot. The coach would be screaming at you, 'Don't stop! Don't Stop!' I think it's helped my mentality to always work hard and make me better.

Samuel Bolduc, D, Blainville-Boisbriand Armada – 6'4, 210 pounds

We were eliminated from the playoffs for about two months now, but I took two weeks off to rest myself after the season. After that, I was in the gym four days a week with my trainer and we were doing stuff that was very specific to the combine. I'd use a weighted vest with 35 pounds for things like pull-ups. I like to be in the gym, even during the season. It's not that I have to be there, it's that I want to be there.

Cameron Rowe, G, USNTDP U18 – 6'2, 203 pounds

For us at NTDP it's a little different because we got back from worlds at the end of April and we took exactly one week off and then we were back in the weight room three to four days a week. There was no testing involved — like none of the testing we did out here — it was just regular offseason workouts. We just had a new change in our strength and development coach so it was more him trying to figure out what we had to do. It was plyometric stuff, different weight days, full body and a bunch of scientific terms I don't know.

I thought we would simulate the testing, but (our strength coach) was like, 'No man, just keep doing your thing and as long as you're in shape, you're going to kill it.' I feel like that really relaxed us also because we didn't have to stress about it. For us at least it was all about getting stronger and getting better as a hockey player and that will translate into the testing out here.

The Wingate and the VO2 Max, that's one people circle on the calendar a little bit but I think if you just go out there — I mean honestly doing it once wasn't that terrible. You get light-headed and kind of dizzy some times and everyone reacts to it differently. I think hearing the stories makes it a bit tougher than it is. I mean the Wingate was 30 seconds and I had to sit down after that and relax again. I'm not nearly as scared now if someone asked me to do it again, than I was before — not really scared, but there was a lot of that nervous energy.

The Athletic LOADED: 06.04.2019

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The Athletic / 'Lots of haters out there' — How NHLers and prospects are taught to handle social media

By Lisa Dillman Jun 3, 2019

It was in early January, less than three weeks before the Kings traded defenseman Jake Muzzin to the Toronto Maple Leafs, when I mentioned to Muzzin that former NHL coach Dave King was a big fan of his abilities on the blue line.

Muzzin was genuinely flattered. From there, we started talking about the nature of the hockey business, and how to handle both the compliments and the criticism. Occasionally, you'll hear something nice. But ...

"Lots of haters out there, too," Muzzin said.



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Muzzin's point – about the negativity populating the world of social media – became a prominent talking point just after the World Junior Hockey Championships in Canada when a Twitter tsunami hit Ducks prospect Max Comtois.

A torrent of hate rained down on Comtois after the Team Canada captain failed to convert a penalty shot in overtime of Canada's 2-1 quarterfinal loss to Finland in Vancouver. Eventually, others weighed in on the other side of the debate – and rushed to Comtois' defense, noting that he was a talented and committed young man trying to represent his country.

"When that happened, I felt terrible for him," said player agent Pat Brisson of Creative Artists Agency. "I had a few of my players who wanted to reach out to him directly, and tell him to stay positive and not to worry about this. He got a lot of sympathy from the hockey community, that's for sure."

Athletic colleague Eric Stephens wrote about the controversy in January and recently caught up with Comtois and discovered a 20-year-old who looks like a walking affirmation of resilience. Comtois may have come through stronger but dealing with cyberbullying is a tall order, no matter the age, occupation or the degree of fame.

"It's nuts," Muzzin said. "They've almost got to have social media mentors to help them make it through these days. These kids can get murdered out there if they got caught up in reading too much."

Why not? If you can have specialists to address skating, stick handling, nutrition, fitness and sleep, a social media mentor makes complete sense for the mental health and well-being of a hockey player.

Last week, hockey's Generation Next went through the paces at the NHL Scouting Combine in Buffalo, where a hundred-plus draft eligible prospects spent the week interviewing with teams. In addition to seeing how the players performed in fitness testing, teams spent time getting to know the prospects as people, hoping to get a greater insight into how they might handle all the pressures associated with an NHL career in the modern, your-move-under-scrutiny world.

Beyond Muzzin and Brisson, The Athletic also spoke with Los Angeles-based player agent Allan Walsh of Octagon Hockey; Toronto-based player agent Joe Resnick; communications firm Game On Nation president and founder Steve Shenbaum; and former NHL, Olympic and world junior coach Willie Desjardins, who will return to coaching juniors next year in Medicine Hat. Here's what they had to say:

The Agents

Walsh: "I do everything I can to keep players off social media and explain to them that social media is nothing more than a tool for you to brand yourself. You're branding yourself. It's all that you're doing."

"Do not read your mentions. You have an ability now to delete that function, not even look at your mentions. If Max Comtois wasn't looking or reading what people were saying about him, he would be better off. What is he even doing reading that stuff? You're not going to change the fact that a percentage of the population, five to seven to 10 (percent) are haters."

"They will only get on there and post mean or racist comments. When you think of the person behind the keyboard or the smart phone, it's nobody you should ever care about. So why are you even reading it? That's what I preach to players."

Resnick: "I try to tell the guys be careful what you read. You can get so entangled reading this stuff. The problem is there's so much out

there and it's instantaneous and if a player has a bad game, it's amplified 500 times because they see it on Twitter."

"We tell our guys when they speak to social media experts, practice Twitter moderation – because you can get overwhelmed. You know when you have a bad game. It's your primary sources – the coaching staff and the development guys with your own teams that you have to listen to."

"If you listen to social media every day, it'll make you crazy."

Brisson: "As the world evolves, you've got to look at the bigger picture. I always believe we have to stay connected to the youth and what's coming up because it's the future and therefore we have to adapt."

"Instagram and Snapchat didn't exist 10 years ago. Now there's not a minute that goes by where there isn't something. Even I'm connected to it pretty quick. I don't even know what's coming next. Maybe in six months to a year from now there's going to be something new."

Even the agents find themselves in the crossfire. While some use social media merely to monitor and track news and opinions, Walsh is an engaged and active Twitter participant with 40,000-plus followers. He regularly blocks people. Brisson became a lightning rod after client John Tavares left the New York Islanders for the Maple Leafs last summer.

Brisson: "With the Tavares move from New York to Toronto, in the 24 hours that followed the announcement, there were people saying Brisson did a great job taking him to Toronto and others were thinking I did a terrible job taking him out of New York."

"Some people were going hard, 'I'd never want to play, be represented by Pat Brisson. The New York Islanders, look at what he did to our organization.' Other people said 'Geez, bringing Tavares to Toronto. We trust what this guy does.'"

"You have to take it all with a grain of salt. Twenty years ago, this didn't exist. People didn't have a voice the same way. Look at our president."

"That's the world we live in and that's the world in which this young generation is raised. We are very sensitive how they cope with this and how they post and how they read their own stuff."

Walsh: "I'm on a plane and I'm like, 'OK, I need to block 20 people.' I go to the top of the mentions."

"It's actually happened several times where I've gotten an email. 'Dear Mr. Walsh: My friend John was blocked by you seven years ago. He's really sorry and he promises he will never ever ... could you please unblock him?'"

Sometimes, drastic measures are required. More than one agent has advised a client to pull the plug on social media.

Walsh: "I had one player in particular – a first-round pick – playing in the American League. It was his first year in the American League and the hate, the vitriol from people in his NHL city was, 'You're a bust. You're a dog. I hope you die.'"

"It started getting into his head. I'm like, 'OK, I've heard enough. I've been watching it. I want you to take all your social media and delete it right off your phone. You're done.' No Twitter, no Instagram, no Snapchat. Nothing."

"Every once and awhile we'll be talking and he'll mention how happy he is not having this around in his life anymore."

The Player



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There were rumors about a possible Muzzin trade out of Los Angeles but he was still weeks away from becoming a Maple Leaf and an increased focal point of attention when this interview took place.

Muzzin: "You can get caught up in a lot of BS, I'll say, on social media. What people say – you can read something bad every day. If you got caught up in it, it would ruin you. There's no point in reading that shit."

"When I was a little bit younger, I thought it was important. Then I quickly realized it wasn't."

"Coming up in Manch (Manchester) and being a prospect, there's a lot more talk about how you're doing. You're under a microscope, so you've got to be strong, because it can mess with your confidence and your well-being. Half the people talking, they don't know what they're talking about anyway. They're just saying shit."

The Coach

Desjardins was the Kings' interim coach this past season and is now heading back to Medicine Hat to coach in the WHL. A lot has changed since Desjardins last inhabited that world. He spoke to The Athletic when he was still coaching the Kings.

Desjardins: "We didn't have a strict social media policy (at the 2010 World Junior tournament). Everybody has been different what they've done – with the guys having their phones and when they should be on media. They're talked to beforehand because you know you can't get on it because there's too much stuff coming in."

"The bad thing is what comes after. It's not fair to anybody. The way you play, you play. It's not that those guys didn't go out and try the best they could."

"It's different if they don't try. That's different. They tried, as every team does. People forget it's really close now. It's not like you're way better. There's lots of good teams that can win. It's hard for fans to realize that sometimes. A lot of times, you're held to old expectations and sometimes your team changes and it's not quite the same team."

"And the fans still have that same expectation and that's hard."

"The old group wasn't on (social media) all the time. They avoided it just because they didn't go on it all the time. This group — that's the way they communicate a lot of times, so you have to take the good with the bad. Because you will get some bad when you do that – and you have to be aware of that."

"But the key for players is confidence. If you want to go on after a bad day, your confidence isn't going to go up after you hear everything that is being said. So you do have to become smart – and there is room for mentorship in that area."

The Communicator

Shenbaum, a former actor, has more than two decades of experience in the communications business. His wide range of clients have included the Dallas Cowboys, the New York Yankees, NASCAR, the Cleveland Cavaliers, and members of U.S. Women's National Soccer team. Specific to hockey, he has worked with CAA clients and has appeared at its summer camp in Los Angeles.

Shenbaum: "My advice is, turn off your tech at least a half hour before you take the ice. You can't say to someone: 'Never read any of that.' But be aware of the state of mind that you are in when you are consuming some feedback that is going to be derogatory and personal."

"It transcends the hockey player. Before you go into a business meeting, before you go on a date, before you take the ice, is it productive to scour through the comments section a half hour before?"

"It's about creating boundaries that are quantifiable. To me, we call it the 30 for 30 rule. It's not just the documentary on ESPN. The 30 for 30 rule is don't check it for 30 minutes before you enter the high-performance environment and try not to check it 30 minutes after you exit the high-performance environment."

"The reasons being that heartbeat and emotions are already high before you enter, why would you want to consume anything that is going to activate your heartbeat or blood pressure any higher?"

"We're spending way too much time talking about the perils of social media. We need to provide boundaries and good to-dos – very tangible and quantifiable."

"To say to a young man or woman, 'Don't take that personally.' That is not productive whatsoever – and not fair. We are human beings who do not want to be reviled and consume information about us that is so toxic."

"I don't think anyone in their right mind is going to say 'I can handle it.' People handle it at different levels. Some people have thicker skins than others. How about going to that athlete and saying, 'I think it's a good idea in the next 48 hours to take a break?'"

There was something of a Eureka moment early in Shenbaum's communications career with his client, tennis star and 14-time Grand Slam singles champion Pete Sampras, when they were preparing for an appearance on Jay Leno's TV show.

Shenbaum: "I could tell he was anxious. I said, 'Why are you so anxious?' He (Sampras) said, 'I have to go on Leno.' I said, 'Why do you have to?'"

"It just sort of hit him. 'Why I am putting myself through this?' On the social media side, you've got to ask the athlete, 'Is this the platform you want to be involved in?'"

"I know some athletes that say, 'It's not my cup of tea.' I say, 'Great, don't do it. Do you have the contract you want? Do you have exposure you want? Do you want to do any commercials? Do you want to go on the talk-show circuit?'"

"If the answer is, 'no,' then don't do it. They sit there and look at me. 'I didn't think that was an option.'"

The Athletic LOADED: 06.04.2019

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The Athletic / Pronman: Why Matthew Boldy could be a top-line forward in the NHL

By Corey Pronman Jun 3, 2019

Most of the top rated players on my draft list were highly touted for years and years. One exception to that was Matthew Boldy who only started to show promise as a true top prospect during his 16-year-old season.

Here is a deep dive into a player on a steep development trajectory.



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Puck Skills

Boldy is one of the purest skilled players in this draft class, distinguishing himself with the types of plays he makes with the puck.

He has the ability to make defenders miss with regularity. This play is an example of that, even though he gets too cute at the end with the pass attempt.

This play is one of the most impressive that Boldy made all season. He recovers a bouncing puck and then, when it's in mid-air, swats it into the net.

Mitch Brown provided slo-mo video of the play so you can see it happen.

Boldy made quite a few nifty, in-tight plays in his NTDP days. His ability to score around the net with skill will lead to goals at the pro level.

He's so creative with the puck and, for a 6-foot-2 forward, his coordination is ridiculous. Look here at how he changes direction with his body and the puck to confuse the defender.

And he has a knack to try the spectacular with the puck as he attempts a lacrosse play while catching the puck off his own rebound on the move:

In drafting Boldy, a team will be selecting an incredibly skilled and creative large forward who will be able to dazzle.

Hockey Sense

There was a time in this draft cycle where Boldy looked like the smartest player in the draft. I ultimately ended up tabbing his teammate Trevor Zegras with that title, but Boldy is not far behind.

He is one of the best passers in the draft, with the ability to make no-look passes with one touch on a teammate's tape.

He has the ability to see lanes develop and hit pucks through seams with the best of them. Here are two examples from the IIHF U18s of incredible passes that stretched the offensive zone. The first one, in particular, takes such great timing given the number of bodies the puck is going by.

He has the ability to make highly creative plays, such as this pass from behind the net.

Or this goal where Boldy shows his hockey sense and skill to bank the puck off the goalie and score from a terrible angle.

This play doesn't connect, but the way Boldy improvises to spin the puck onto his backhand to avoid the defender's stick is the imagination of a player with elite smarts.

Skating and Size

In talking to scouts about where Boldy was two years ago, they thought he was on the bubble to even make the USNTDP because he was a small winger who wasn't a great skater. Now he is large and his skating improved.

"When we first recruited him, we weren't sure if the feet were going to catch up to the brain and the hands, and we didn't know if the frame was going to grow," USNTDP U18 coach John Wroblewski said. "His father is 6-2/6-3, but when we first started watching Boldy, he was 5-10, 145 (pounds), so we weren't sure if it was going to come together."

"Boldy grew from 5-11 to 6-2 and a quarter. He added over 30 pounds and over 20 pounds of lean muscle since he came to the

program," added the NTDP's senior director of operations Scott Monaghan.

Typically with growth spurts like that, it tends to shine a spotlight on mediocre skating rather than help as the player adds weight to their frame. In Boldy's case, though, it's gone the other way.

"His skating has only improved since getting to the program," said Wroblewski.

Boldy agreed: "The growth spurt hasn't affected my skating in terms of being awkward or anything like that. I think I've improved my skating a good amount. It's something I've focused on a lot the last few summers."

Here are some examples of his skating in use. It's not blazing quickness and there are times that his stride still breaks down, but he's got more than enough speed and agility to get by pro defenders.

Compete Level

When Boldy is competing, he's a force because of his size and skill level. That compete level wasn't always consistent, but there were some times it looked very good.

This play here was one of the very best from Boldy's NTDP days. It exemplifies so much of what he can do. First, there is the fantastic effort on the backcheck. After missing the puck on the first attempt, he never gives up. The second thing is the ridiculous fly-swat style pokecheck that knocks the puck loose. Boldy's ability to knock that puck loose and then make a touch to get it going with him toward the opponent's net is another example of his elite skill. Third would be the snipe to lead to the goal.

You've seen all the skill so far and this is another example of it, but this goal doesn't happen without Boldy refusing to give up on the play.

This isn't the only goal he's scored on a hard backcheck. This one versus North Dakota also stands out in terms of how dangerous he can be on back pursuit.

There were stretches around the middle of the winter where Boldy's play was inconsistent, but when Boldy is playing like this, he's a true impact player.

Production

Boldy's production doesn't blow you away. He scored a lot and put up points. He was second on his stacked team in goals. In terms of points per game, he was fifth on the NTDP. One important piece of context is the usage.

When the NTDP was fully healthy with Alex Turcotte and Jack Hughes in the lineup, Boldy's opportunity took a dip. The first power play unit was Hughes, Turcotte, Cole Caufield, Trevor Zegras and Cam York for a healthy portion of the season.

One could look at that and argue, "Wow, Boldy did really well for not getting the prime power play minutes." The alternative argument being, "Well, why didn't he get the prime minutes." Ultimately I think it's more the former than the latter, but both arguments are reasonable.

Hockey World's Impressions

An NHL scout said: "Goal scorer, great offensive stick. He's dangerous down low. I don't see a ton off the rush in the NHL, but I think he'll be around the net a lot and he'll score a lot."



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An NHL scout said: "Boldy has stupid skill, stupid vision. If you can get over his mediocre skating, he's got the components to be a stud."

Boston College coach Jerry York said: "He has terrific hockey sense. With the puck he can see the whole field. He can curl, turn and hit an open guy. He has great stick skills. He has an uncanny ability to hold onto the puck. He could be a dynamic player."

USNTDP U18 coach John Wroblewski said: "He grew from 5-10 to 6-2. His development trajectory has been steep. He can be a power forward. He has excellent hands and vision. He can finish, he can run a power play, he can be a net-front guy. The puck is attached to him."

Boldy said: "I tried to play the right way. I try to play fast, strong, hard. Even a skilled player has to be a hard player."

Projection

Boldy was one of the most fascinating prospects to watch all season. There were significant highs in his season, through the month of October I thought he outplayed Hughes in nearly every game. There were times, like at the 5 Nations Tournament, where he didn't play so well, but he ended the season on a high note at the IIHF U18s.

Ultimately, through his ups and downs, the growth spurt and his time at the NTDP, you have a 6-foot-2 forward with incredible hands and vision, who can score goals and whose skating has improved to an average pro level. In terms of pure talent, he's top five in the class. I've talked to scouts who think Turcotte, Caufield or Zegras is the second best prospect on the NTDP, and I've also heard from scouts who think Boldy fits that title.

Boldy does have warts in his profile, but I still feel confident projecting him as a potential top-line forward in the NHL.

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1146122 Websites

The Athletic / Down Goes Brown: A brief history of players going oh-for-the-postseason

By Sean McIndoe Jun 3, 2019

This post is going to be completely pointless.

Wait, that didn't come out right. I don't mean that this post won't have any reason to exist. I mean, who would write something like that? (Realizes everyone is staring at him.) OK, yes, I may have had a few of those in my day. But this isn't necessarily one of them.

No, I mean that this is going to be pointless in the other way – as in, it will have zero points. Today, we're going to try to assemble an all-time roster of playoff performers who didn't record a single point in a given postseason.

That's not an easy thing to do, especially if you're a decent player. Even if your team goes out early, you'd think that you'd get in on at least one goal along the way. But as we'll see, there are some surprisingly big names on the list. And a few other players have some interesting stories to tell.

Nobody from this year's postseason made the cut, although a few almost did. Sidney Crosby didn't get a point until his team's final game. Neither did Nikita Kucherov. Of course, their runs ended early. But some lasted longer, like Carl Gunnarsson. He made it all the way to Game 2 of the final before finally recording a point. He actually had two that night. I can't remember if any of them turned out to important.

The point is ... well, sometimes there is no point. And that's OK. Don't worry, Viktor Arvidsson and Nikolaj Ehlers. Fear not, Nikita Zadorov, Micheal Haley, Trevor van Riemsdyk or Frederik Gauthier. You may have been pointless, but as you're about to see, you're in decent company.

First line

C Phil Esposito (1964 and 1967)

We'll start off with a Hall-of-Famer who qualifies for our list in two seasons, one of which helped change NHL history. Esposito's playoff debut came in 1964 when he was a 22-year-old rookie. He was only a bit player with the Hawks back then and had only managed three goals in part-time duty during the regular season, so his pointless performance in four games during a semifinal loss to the Red Wings wasn't especially newsworthy.

But three years later, Esposito was coming off a 61-point season that left him tied for seventh in the league scoring race. With a lineup that also featured Bobby Hull and Stan Mikita in their primes, the Hawks ran away with top spot in the NHL, racking up 94 points over the 70-game schedule while outscoring the next best offensive team by 52 goals. They went into the playoffs as heavy favorites, before being stunned by the Maple Leafs in six games. Esposito was held off the board again, cementing a reputation as a player who couldn't be counted on when it mattered.

Convinced they needed a change in direction, the Hawks traded him to the Bruins in an offseason deal that stands as one of the most important trades in NHL history. Esposito developed into one of the greatest goal-scorers the league had ever seen, helping the Bruins win two Cups. And it may have never happened if he'd just managed a point or two in that 1967 playoff loss.

RW Mike Gartner (1989) and LW Bryan Trottier (1988)

We'll give Esposito a pair of Hall-of-Famers on his wings, even if we have to ask Trottier to play out of position to do it. Gartner never won a Cup and occasionally fought a reputation as a guy who was a better regular season star than a playoff performer, as evidenced by the 1994 Rangers shipping him out at the deadline. He did have some decent postseasons, including four where he hit double-digit points. But his lone spring as a North Star saw him go pointless after a massive deadline deal and he'd be gone less than a year later.

As for Trottier, he won six Cups, led the postseason scoring race twice, won a Conn Smythe and ranks among the highest scoring playoff players ever. But he was blanked in a first-round loss in 1988 despite an 82-point regular season, finishing behind high-scoring Islander teammates like Gerald Diduck and Ken Leiter.

Second line

C Joe Thornton (2004)

We anchored our first line with a Hall-of-Famer who was dealt to the Bruins in part because of a pointless playoff. Here's the other side of that coin.

By 2004, Thornton had just finished his seventh regular season and was a year removed from a 100-point season that saw him finish fourth in Hart voting in 2003. His numbers had dipped, but the Bruins



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finished with 104 points and entered the playoffs as the East's second seed. That earned them a matchup with their arch-rivals from Montreal and the Habs pulled off the upset in seven hard-fought games.

Thornton didn't manage a point in the series, which made him an easy target for anyone looking for a scapegoat. Never mind that he was playing through torn rib cartilage; by the end of the series, he'd managed just 18 points in 35 career playoff games for the Bruins. He wouldn't get to play another, as he was off to the Sharks early in the following season.

RW Lanny McDonald (1975) and LW Reggie Leach (1981)

For Thornton's wingers, we'll go back to a couple of 70s stars who remind us how flimsy the "clutch" narrative can be.

McDonald was held off the board in his very first postseason, dressing for every game of the Leafs' two-round trip as a 22-year-old rookie. He finished without a point in seven games, proving he wasn't a big-game type of player; two years later, he had 17 points in nine games and a year after that he scored a Game 7 overtime winner. I don't know, apparently he just learned what it took around 1976.

Then there's Leach, who's rightfully remembered as one of the great playoff performers ever. His legendary 1976 run saw him establish a record for goals in a single postseason with 19, a mark that still hasn't been beaten. He was rewarded with the Conn Smythe despite his team losing the final, the only non-goalie to ever manage that feat. But in his final playoff appearance five years later, he followed up a 70-point regular season by being held off the board entirely over two rounds. I guess he forgot how to be clutch.

Third line

C Cooney Weiland (1939), RW Gordie Howe (1947) and LW Ted Kennedy (1952)

We'll use our third line to get some old-school representation on this team. You won't find any names from back in the day on the list of most games without a playoff point because there were only two rounds back then, but stars were still expected to produce. So let's squeeze a trio of Hall of Famers from the NHL's first half-century onto our roster.

Weiland led the league in playoff scoring twice earlier in his career, but went pointless in his last three seasons, including over 12 games during the Bruins run to a Cup win in 1939. Howe's lone pointless playoff (not counting a single game in 1950) was his very first in 1947, when he'd just turned 19. And Teeder Kennedy's goose egg in 1952, after finishing second in team scoring, no doubt had Leaf fans flocking to Twitter to demand he be traded for someone who knew what it took to win.

Fourth line

C Kevyn Adams (2006) and RW Craig Adams (2006)

Here's a weird glitch in the matrix: The all-time record for the most games played in a single postseason without recording a point is shared by two guys from the same team who played on the same line and even had the same name.

That would be Craig and Kevyn Adams – no relation – who both appeared in all 25 games during the Carolina Hurricanes' run to the 2006 Cup without managing to get on the scoresheet, leaving them one point behind goaltender Cam Ward on the team's scoring list. They're the only two skaters to ever play 25 games without a point in the same playoff season.

Neither guy was exactly known for his scoring. Kevyn had almost pulled off the pointless feat in 2002 but recorded a single point in Carolina's run to the final – a first-round goal that made it 5-0 in the clinching game against Montreal. As for Craig, he'd win another Cup in 2009 with the Penguins, but racked up five points in that run. He even had a multi-point playoff game against, who else, the Hurricanes.

LW Craig Berube (1989, among others)

It's not surprising that we have plenty of candidates to fill a fourth-line tough guy spot, including Tim Hunter, John Kordic, Dave Semenko and Dave Brown. But let's go with Berube's 16-game drought for the 1989 Flyers, since he can fill the role while also doubling as the team's coach.

Late cuts: Other Hall-of-Famers we could slip onto the team include Bobby Clarke (1971), Adam Oates (2001), Michel Goulet (1983), Mark Recchi (2002), Frank Mahovlich (1970), Johnny Bucyk (1977) and a pair of George Armstrong seasons that came 17 years apart, in 1952 and 1969.

More recently, Brenden Morrow went 24 games without a point for the 2015 Lightning and Mike Richards had a forgettable 12-game run with the Capitals a year later. And as an embittered Leaf fan, I still haven't forgiven deadline pickup Benoit Hogue for going pointless in seven games in 1995, or Jonas Hoglund for his ten-game goose egg in 2001.

And finally, tough guy Jay Miller warrants a mention for going pointless in 12 games for the 1988 Bruins but somehow managing to rack up 124 penalty minutes in those appearances. For context, those PIMs would have ranked third in the entire NHL in the 2018-19 season.

First pairing

Chris Chelios (2008, but also 2003, 2006 and 2009)

As you might expect, there's no shortage of defensive defensemen available to stock our blue line, and a few guys who fit that description will show up below.

But then there's the case of Chelios, who nearly joined the 1,000-point club over the course of almost three decades in the league. He was still hitting the 40-point mark into his 40s and had 14 playoff points for the 2002 Red Wings. But after that, he managed four pointless seasons, including 2003, 2006 and 2009.

The longest drought came in 2008 when a 46-year-old Chelios lasted three rounds and 14 games with the Cup-bound Wings before being scratched through the final. Those 14 games still stand as the pointless record for a Hall-of-Fame skater.

Nicklas Lidstrom (2012)

File this one under "it can happen to anybody." Granted, Lidstrom was 41 at the time, but he was also just a year removed from winning his seventh Norris. Somewhat amazingly, his pointless performance in the Wings' first-round exit against the Predators was the only time he was held off the scoresheet in 20 playoff seasons.

Second pairing

Kimmo Timonen (2015)

Timonen was the heart-warming OGWAC story back in 2015, winning his first Cup in his sixteenth and final NHL season. Did it matter that the 454-point career scorer was held pointless in 18 games over the course of that Hawks' run? Yeah, I'm sure he's really broken up about it.



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Oh hey, speaking of Cup winners ...

Chris Phillips (2007)

Let's get at least one guy under the age of 40 into our top four. The longtime Senator is the only player on this list who scored the Cup-winning goal in the same postseason that he went pointless. That doesn't sound like it should be possible, until you remember how that 2007 final went for Ottawa.

That own goal was the punctuation mark on a spring that saw Phillips become one of just nine defensemen in NHL history to go 20 games or more in the same postseason without a point. He only managed 15 points in 114 career playoff games, although one of them was pretty memorable.

Third pairing

Allen Pedersen (1987 – 1991) and Bob McGill (1986 – 1992)

We'll close out our blue line with a pairing made up of the two players with the most career playoff games by defensemen without a point in NHL history. Between them, Pederson and McGill combine for 12 postseasons, 113 playoff games, 27 series, two trips to the final (both by Pederson, with the 1988 and 1990 Bruins) and absolutely zero career playoff points.

Of course, both guys were stay-at-home defensemen, so failing to score wasn't exactly new to them. That's especially true for Pedersen, who at one point set an NHL record by going 273 straight regular season and playoff games without a goal.

By the way, McGill and Pederson both finished their careers with the 1993-94 Whalers, although they never played together; Pederson appeared in his final game on Nov. 1, two days before McGill was picked up on waivers and took his spot in the lineup. In what was probably best for all involved, that Whalers team failed to make the playoffs.

Late cuts: Grab Bag readers will remember the story of Joe DiPenta, the only player to record back-to-back pointless postseasons of at least 16 games. Roman Polak holds the record for most pointless games by a defenseman in one postseason with 24 for the Sharks in 2016, topping Dave Manson's 2000 total by one. Hall-of-Fame candidates include Scott Stevens (2002), Rod Langway (a few times, including the 1979 Habs Cup run), and Viacheslav Fetisov (1991). And if we need help behind the bench, Al Arbour was held pointless more times (eight) than not (five) over the course of his career.

Goaltenders

Wait, goaltenders? On an all-pointless team? That doesn't seem necessary since goaltenders rarely record points. Picking the best of those that went a whole postseason without a point doesn't really narrow our choices down. This team doesn't seem to need goalies.

And it doesn't. So let's switch it up. For our two goaltending spots, we'll go with two guys who did the most scoring.

Martin Brodeur (2012) and Grant Fuhr (1984 + 1985)

Brodeur gets the start by virtue of the only four-point postseason by a goalie in NHL history, racking up four assists as the Devils made a surprise run to the Cup final in 2012. Meanwhile, Fuhr is the only goalie to record three playoff points twice in his career, pulling it off in 1984 and 1985. He wasn't even known an especially good puck-handler, but when every save is going to be cleared by a Hall-of-Famer up to another Hall-of-Famer, you're going to get the occasional assist and Fuhr racked up a record 14 over the course of his playoff career.

Between them, Fuhr and Brodeur combined for 27 career playoff points, including one goal. If we need an emergency backup we'll go with Ron Hextall, who also scored a playoff goal (but somehow only had four career playoff points). He takes the third spot over Patrick Roy's 11 career points and active leader Pekka Rinne, who has six.

Hey, look at that – I guess this post wasn't completely pointless after all.

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1146123 Websites

The Athletic / Q&A: How NHL draft prospect Ryan Suzuki navigated the most important hockey season of his life

By Arpon Basu Jun 3, 2019

A prospect's draft year can be a complicated roller coaster ride. Expectations must be met, evaluation is constant and a 17-year-old kid has to digest all that pressure while continuing to perform at an optimal level on a consistent basis in an environment rife with outside noise.

It's not easy. Not too many prospects understand that as well as Barrie Colts centre Ryan Suzuki.

The younger brother of Montreal Canadiens prospect Nick, Suzuki was the top pick in the 2017 OHL Draft and began his draft season in the top-10 of many preliminary rankings for the 2019 NHL Draft. But with the Colts having a difficult season, Suzuki's stock began to dip in some circles.

Our draft experts at The Athletic, Corey Pronman and Scott Wheeler, dropped him to varying degrees in their respective rankings. Pronman had Suzuki ranked 14th in his midseason ranking and 15th in his final ranking. Wheeler had him at No. 8 in his preliminary ranking and No. 16 on his final list.

NHL Central Scouting dropped him from No. 10 on their midterm list of North American skaters to No. 18 on their final list. He was 12th on Bob McKenzie's midterm ranking and dropped out of the top-16 on his April list. Craig Button dropped him from 23 to 28 on his TSN list.

You get the idea.

How does a prospect handle this? Suzuki explained that and much more on his draft season in a sit down with The Athletic at the NHL combine last week.

How did you feel this season went for you?

I thought the start of the year, even in the summer at the Hlinka Gretzky Cup, I thought I had a good tournament there. That kind of helped me get into the season a little bit quicker and I kind of kept the momentum from the season into the start of the season. I think I had a really good start to the season. Our team was doing pretty well, we were a .500 team, but I think at the trade deadline we took a different turn and we started getting younger and doing a rebuild. We traded a couple of our top players, our older guys. It was tough to see the team go in a different direction, but at the same time it's a business and you've got to build for the future. I know in a couple of years we'll be a top team again. But around the trade deadline, it was tough a bit; I didn't play as well as I could have. I think there



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was a lot of things going on, but once everything kind of settled down with the trades and stuff, I think I ended the season really well.

A change like that is difficult to handle any season, but is it more difficult to handle amid all the inherent pressure of your draft season?

It was tough. There was already a little bit of stress about my draft year coming into the year. Then kind of taking a different direction and going for a rebuild was definitely tough, but at the same time it gave me a chance to be an assistant captain, get more chances on power plays, penalty kills, stuff like that. So there's upside to it for sure. Again, being named assistant captain was big for me, it was an honour to be selected for that, it gave me a responsibility to kind of take over the team and lead more.

So given the context of your season, there's a public aspect to your life right now that is kind of out of your control – draft rankings, mock drafts, media coverage in general – how did you manage this added layer to your season?

Yeah, being the top pick in the OHL draft, that year was definitely magnified and this year was even bigger. People were looking even closer at me. It's definitely a lot of pressure, but I like the pressure. I feel like big players, they like having that pressure on them, it kind of helps them perform and gets them excited for the games and stuff. I was lucky to have someone like Nick who's gone through it, he was like a test dummy for me and I follow right behind him. For me, it was pretty special to have somebody like that.

I know you gave it to Nick a little bit after you were taken first overall in the OHL draft and he was, uhh, not. Do you guys have a little side bet on who will get picked higher in the NHL draft?

I think we're both just excited to have the opportunity to play for an NHL team. I know he'll be happy for me wherever I go and whenever I get picked, whether it's higher or lower. I think he'll just be proud. I mean, if I do end up going a little bit higher than him maybe I'll rub it in his face a bit, but I don't think we're too worried about the number and just where and who I'm going to be playing for.

Do you pay much attention to how you're trending on the various draft lists that are out there? When you see your name sliding, do you notice? Does it elicit a reaction in you in any way?

Honestly, it doesn't affect me that much. I will see some lists, but it's usually because social media is so big now I'll see it just scrolling through. But it doesn't affect me too much as a player or a person, really. I guess it's rewarding to see that you've worked hard and people can see that and respect that. But at the end of the day, it's just a number from some media source that's just predicting like everyone else. None of those lists matter until the one that comes out on draft day.

Do you look forward to proving the people who are doubting you wrong?

You can take people saying bad things about you two ways; you can get sour about it or you can just get better from it. Like, you can take it and say to yourself that this guy doesn't think I'm good at this, I'll show him how good I am.

Well, there are three ways because you could also just not care about it.

Yeah, that's usually the way I go, actually. Me and my brother are pretty similar that way, we'll take stuff from people and it doesn't really bother us too much. They can chirp us all game and it's not really going to take us off our game.

Man, your brother takes a ton of abuse without reacting at all.

That's why he was most sportsmanlike.

Are you similar to your brother to that extent?

I think so. It takes a lot to get me to retaliate. But I think I'm a little more aggressive than Nick, like if there's a scrum I'll get in the scrum. Nick kind of stays away from that. But we're similar in that I don't go out there looking for trouble or anything. I think we're both kind of easy going with that.

What was it like for you to watch Nick's playoff run with Guelph?

Yeah, it was pretty cool. I got to go up and watch him in Guelph and that was pretty crazy. I was in Sweden when they were playing London, so I didn't get to watch much of that series. But I was following it in Sweden and saw they were down 3-0 and I figured, oh well, I guess he's coming home early. So that was pretty crazy to follow from there.

What were the U-18 worlds in Sweden like for you, having that opportunity to measure up against the best of your peer group?

For me, it wasn't the best because I sprained my ankle there, so I was out of four games and wasn't playing at 100 percent. It was kind of tough because that was a big tournament for me, especially coming off a losing season, just having that tournament to show scouts what I can do. It was a little heartbreaking, just not being able to play at 100 percent and show what I can do. But other than that, every time I play for Canada it's a special experience. You never know when it's going to be the last time you get to put on that jersey, so you take it all in. You get to play with and against the top guys in the world and that's always fun.

You can kind of see where you are at and compare and see where you sit in the world. You watch guys you're competing with, so for me other centres, for that extra spot in the draft or something. Just kind of seeing where you are at.

I have to ask, but the possibility of being drafted by Montreal and playing with your brother one day, what do you think when that possibility is brought up?

It would be exciting. I've never had a chance to play with Nick, just against him. I've always wanted to play with him, even in my OHL career I always thought it would be cool to play with him but we never got a chance. We've been on the ice together and we click really well. I think it would be pretty special to go to the same NHL club.

Who would move to the wing if you were playing on the same line?

Maybe we could take turns? No, I think I'd take centre. Nick's a good winger, he's played wing a lot of his OHL career, so it would be him.

Does this week at the combine make this whole thing feel a little more real? How do you anticipate the next few weeks leading up to the draft going for you?

I was just thinking about it, how at the start of the year I thought I had a lot of time. Everyone was telling me this year flies by because you're so busy and stuff and I was just like, no, it's just the start of the season. But now we're here and I was just thinking in my hotel room, like, holy crap, the draft is only 20 days away. It's pretty crazy, this year's flying by. It's been exciting and eventful for sure. I'm excited to just get down to Vancouver and hopefully hear my name called.

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The Athletic / Explaining the unexplainable behind Alex Turcotte, the 2019 NHL draft's 'somehow under the radar' top prospect

By Scott Wheeler Jun 3, 2019

BUFFALO — Like everyone who knows Alex Turcotte, national development program associate coach Dan Hinote tries to put a finger on exactly what makes the top 2019 NHL Draft prospect so special and can't come up with the formula.

"Where to begin? He's just such an awesome kid. He's very respectful but not guarded behind it. Like some kids are respectful to all adults and aren't willing to kind of cultivate that relationship because of that. He's not that way. He's respectful but also is part of the family," Hinote said on a recent phone call.

"I don't know if that makes any sense but he's very unique in that regard where just because he and I have a close relationship or he and the other coaches, he doesn't overstep because of that relationship. It's like he has figured out what you usually don't figure out until you're an adult as far as what line to cross."

Hinote, who just wrapped up his first season behind the USA Hockey bench after four as a Columbus Blue Jackets assistant and a Stanley Cup as a player with the 2001 Colorado Avalanche, has never met anyone quite like Turcotte.

"If you were to ask each of his teammates who their top three friends on the team are, he probably gets 80 percent of those votes. Now, on the flip side of that if you asked them to name three guys they don't want to go against in practice he would definitely be on that list as well," he tried to explain.

"It's a switch that he's able to turn on and off. You can't teach something like that. You can't teach someone to hate losing enough to where they'll run their teammates over in practice. You wish everybody would have that but not everybody does. He doesn't alienate himself from his teammates that way because he's such a good guy off the ice it allows him to play like that."

Everyone has an anecdote or a story about Turcotte that isn't dissimilar.

Owen Lindmark, who played minor hockey with Turcotte as part of the Chicago Steel, followed him to the national program and will follow him again next fall to the University of Wisconsin. After playing on a team with projected first overall pick Jack Hughes, he says Turcotte is still the player he'd choose to take with him to any team.

"Every time he comes to the rink you know exactly what you're going to get out of him. If you take the puck away from him in practice, I wouldn't be surprised if you feel a little slash on the wrist and it might piss you off but if you look back at it you have to admire him," Lindmark said.

A year and a half ago, when a different under-18 coaching staff was considering which under-17 standout (from a team of standouts) to call up a level, head coach Seth Appert says they settled on Turcotte as the second option to Hughes — and over mega-talents like Cole Caufield or Trevor Zegras — because his skills were the game-applicable kind for a team that wanted to win a world championship.

Turcotte was the "winner" of the bunch whose skills they felt translated to the hardest parts in big games.

"He's got skills mixed with tenacity. And those guys never go away and they're always there when you need them. That's the beauty of Alex. He's awesome, awesome, awesome," Appert said.

"I say this to our guys all the time: 'You all work hard, you're on the national team, you're in the top percent of all hockey players in our country because of your work ethic.' But within that, there are ranges of work ethic and Alex is in the top of that group again. This is already a group of high-achieving young men and then he's in the top five percent of that group."

Appert's associate coach, Nick Fohr, who only coached Turcotte for a handful of months a season ago, made a habit this season to stop and chat with Turcotte every time he ran into him around the program. He doesn't know why, but he always felt compelled to. That's just Turcotte, he'll say, like everyone else does.

When Turcotte graduated from the program after May's under-18 world championships, Fohr immediately thought of him as the one player he'd miss seeing around. Turcotte's the kid who has time for everyone.

You wouldn't know that he's the son of former NHLer Alfie Turcotte, teammates and coaches alike insist.

"It's how unassuming he is, how hard he works. Alex is just a different level than a lot of guys. Sometimes the high-end guys get looked at as floating through shifts sometimes and resting a little bit. Alex doesn't play that way," Fohr said.

"He's got a smile on his face every day and he just walks around as a down-to-earth kid. It's 'Yes coach, thanks coach, I appreciate it.' He's just the nicest kid. He's a lot of fun to be around because he's just so humble and there's no ego at all. He's the complete opposite of what you would potentially think with that name."

Conditioning coach and team mentor Kirk Culik, who just retired after two decades working alongside USA Hockey on everything from kickboxing training to meditation and visualization skills, pegs Turcotte as a kid who "just bought in" to all of his teachings. That's something that doesn't always happen with national program players during what is a "huge maturity leap" as all-star players attempt (sometimes unsuccessfully) to integrate into the whole, Culik said. He and Turcotte got along immediately.

"His mental strengths have grown exponentially. He really grabbed everything he could. We know he has physical skills but the inner strength and the positive attributes he exhibits like work ethic, it's just tremendous. Even among really good players, you'll still notice it," he said.

"There's guys who play hockey and some are really good but there's guys who it's in their bones that they're hockey players. You know that term where guys will say 'Oh, he's a hockey player.' That's Alex."

All of those things, the ones people can't quite put a finger on, prepared Turcotte for the worst.

And the worst came last fall when, after briefly beginning his draft year, a hip injury sidelined the then-17-year-old center until after the Christmas break. And it came again heading into the under-18 world championships he'd worked his entire young career for when he was diagnosed with mononucleosis shortly before the tournament.

To the surprise of no one, he handled both situations better than could be reasonably expected of a kid in his position.

"He was very disappointed, as we all were, and then he put it somewhere deep down and didn't think about it and basically picked



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the date and said "That's the date I'm going to beat and I'm going to come back flying and then I'm going to kill it," Hinote said.

"If you're going to pick a guy that you know is going to come back from an injury flying, you'd rather it be him."

Under-18 team head coach John Wroblewski said the injury hit Turcotte harder than most because "he burns so bad" and had set himself up for a "stellar draft year." Ultimately, though Turcotte "mastered the challenge," Wroblewski said.

"It was setback after setback and he just stayed with it, he stayed positive and it goes along with the maturity he has as a young man," Wroblewski said. "Off the ice he gets it and it bodes so well for the different hurdles he's going to face as a professional down the road."

Through it all, Turcotte emerged to post 62 points in 37 games for a 1.68 points per game rate (second only to Hughes), making him a projected top-five pick. And he did it while playing on what Fohr, who also coached the historic 1997 age group that included Auston Matthews, Noah Hanifin, Zach Werenski and Charlie McAvoy, among many others, calls potentially the strongest age group in the history of the program.

"I was incredibly impressed with how he handled the time he missed. I don't think there's many guys on that team that could have had the adversity that he had in an NHL draft year and handled it the way he did and be able to come back into the lineup and be as great as he was," Appert said.

"It says a lot about him."

Due to a combination of his injury, his style of play, the record-setting seasons of teammates like Hughes and Cole Caufield, and the sheer depth of talent within the team (it's the first national team to have every one of its players ranked by central scouting), many within USA Hockey felt Turcotte didn't get the attention he deserved this season.

"His motor is running the entire shift and he plays extremely hard, plus he's extremely talented. So that's a pretty high-end player, that works that hard," Fohr said.

"Because of that work perspective when you watch him play and you see how hard he works, people lose that perspective of just how talented he is. Does that make sense? He's somehow under the radar because he's a hard worker. When people start talking about that team, you always hear about Cole and Jack. Alex is a huge cog to that group of kids and is a heck of a player in his own right."

Somewhere along the way, the conversation around Turcotte's effort, or the two-way nature of his game, superseded discussion of just how talented he was. The latter has always been recognized, but it's never the first thing outsiders talk about when they discuss Turcotte.

"As much as a guy that's projected as a top-five pick can get forgotten or lost, he did," Hinote said.

"If circumstances were different, you'd hear his name a lot more than you did this year just based on how talented we were and everything that has gone on. You look at the numbers after he came back, they were off the charts. He played first fiddle in any other circumstance other than the one that he was in, which is crazy."

Wroblewski, who calls Turcotte a tremendous young man who is ahead of his years, says the snarl Turcotte plays with is so noticeable that people fall into the trap of describing him as a "200-foot guy, whereas I would describe him as an explosive, elite offensive player.

"It eats at this guy if it doesn't go his way – and that's a compliment, he doesn't get down on himself, he just wants to win at whatever he does," Wroblewski said.

"People overlook him. A lot of times they talk about his speed, or his drive, or his willingness to play a 200-foot game, which he has but I think an extremely understated part of his game is his playmaking ability. There's not a guy on the team who doesn't want to play with Alex."

His ceiling, they all agree, is higher than most think it is.

"Even though he's going to be a top pick, I don't think people realize, even now, in my opinion, how much potential he has," Culik added.

In his first game back from injury against Michigan State, Wroblewski remembers Turcotte as the best player on the ice.

"I couldn't believe it. He didn't miss a beat," he said. "It was truly amazing to watch, how he could take that amount of time off and then come back and absolutely dominate. I can't say enough about his performance in the second half."

Because a player like Zegras was so effective running the power play from the half wall, Wroblewski also felt bad when he placed Turcotte in the slot on the man-advantage, knowing he'll likely play Zegras' spot at the NHL level.

But every step of the way, Turcotte excelled, becoming the team's best net-front option.

"His computer is brilliant. His ability to field saucer passes and make plays in tight is truly astounding," Wroblewski said.

(Rena Laverty / USA Hockey)

Lindmark isn't his only teammate to recognize all of these things either.

"His engine, his motor, the way he plays, how skilled he is and how hard he plays at the same time. I like to compare him to (Nathan) Mackinnon a little bit. The way that Turcs plays with his skill and hardness at the same time, that's unbelievable. Anybody you ask will say how competitive a kid he is," Hughes said.

As Hinote presumed, they all share a special admiration for Turcotte.

"He's a warrior. The way he battled this year and what he had to overcome, he's fearless. Guys took after him. He's a real leader. He's a good guy to compete with because he's not going to let off the gas. If we keep looking up to him I think we're all going to be pretty good," defenceman Dom Fensore said.

By the time the NHL's 2019 scouting combine arrived in Buffalo at the end of May, Turcotte was determined to show every team, including his hometown Blackhawks who happened to hold the third overall pick, that his talent matched the work ethic they'd already heard about.

He wanted them to know he was competitive, and that practices or just-for-fun basketball games at the program got heated when he's involved.

"Honestly, I don't really know (where that intensity comes from). It's just how I'm made. I'm just really competitive and internally driven. I just want to be the best. That's what motivates me. And I know that my teammates kind of get annoyed with me sometimes in practice but I think they appreciate it because it pushes them," Turcotte said.

He wanted them to know the lessons his dad has passed on to him after a 15-year career. He wanted them to know that he'd still posted nine points in seven games at worlds after recovering from



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mononucleosis. He wanted to show them he was strong at all of the fitness testing (which he did). He wanted them to know what he'd learned from his injury and that he was now 100 percent.

"I've never been through an injury like that ever in my life and missed that much time so it definitely taught me how to be mentally tough and stay positive during tough times. It made me appreciate the game of hockey after being away from it and I think that helped me have a great year," he said.

But he also wanted them to know there was more to him than that.

"I didn't really have anyone to hold my hand," Turcotte said. "I think offensively I can make my teammates better and I view myself as a really high-end playmaker. And then I think I'm also really responsible in my own end on the defensive side of the puck."

Turcotte's fine if people pigeonhole him as a two-way player too. In the NHL, he wants to be somewhere between Jonathan Toews and Brad Marchand, and says he does a good job keeping his intensity in check to avoid crossing the line.

"I don't think that's a bad thing," he said of people paying too much attention to his competitiveness.

"It's good to have all those tools and keep people guessing and maybe if they kind of forget about that (playmaking ability that I have) it's OK..."

The Athletic LOADED: 06.04.2019

1146125 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / O'Reilly's unique stick delivers Blues Game 4 win to even Stanley Cup Final

Chris Johnston June 3, 2019, 11:05 PM

ST. LOUIS, Mo. — It was no coincidence that top draft prospect Jack Hughes sought out Ryan O'Reilly's stick during his all-access tour of the Stanley Cup Final.

There is not another one like it in the NHL. The left-shot Warrior with a hooked toe stands as a testament to the detail the St. Louis Blues centre brings to his craft, and played a central role in his team's heavy counter-punch in Monday's 4-2 victory over the Boston Bruins.

With St. Louis essentially playing for its season in a game contested at 140 beats per minute, O'Reilly was the heart-stopper. He opened the scoring at 43 seconds, struck again for the winner with less than 10 minutes to play and delivered all kinds of useful high-protein shifts in between during a thriller at Enterprise Center.

"We were relentless tonight, I thought," said Blues coach Craig Berube. "We didn't stop for 60 minutes."

They were on the Bruins side of the ice more often than not when the line of O'Reilly, Zach Sanford and David Perron was thrown over the boards. That trio had some success together earlier this season and were cobbled back together on a hunch from Berube after Sanford played well enough in Game 3 to keep a spot in the lineup when Oskar Sundqvist returned from suspension.

With due respect to the wingers, O'Reilly is the engine of that second line. He is a details guy; strong on coverages, solid in the faceoff dot (although an uncharacteristic 41-43 so far in this series) and adept at finding seams in the offensive end.

He produced a career-best 77 points this season and earned a Selke Trophy nomination alongside four-time winner Patrice Bergeron of the Bruins and Mark Stone of the Vegas Golden Knights.

The 28-year-old has essentially been your prototypical playoff horse without much playoff experience during a 10-year career. Twenty-three of the 36 post-season games he's ever appeared in have come this spring.

There are going to be at least two more now that the Blues have tied this series 2-2.

"Every night he plays hard," said teammate Pat Maroon. "If he doesn't score he does the little things that a lot of people don't see. Good sticks, good faceoffs, back pressure. He does the little things that makes him an unbelievable hockey player."

His stick is a thing of legend.

When Hughes stopped by the Blues locker-room along with four other top draft prospects on Monday morning, he went directly for the No. 90 rack. First he sized up the unusual toe hook curve, then he leaned on a shaft that has virtually no flex.

The O'Reilly model is more of a curiosity than something to be copied. They're not going to be mass produced any time soon.

"I don't think anybody wants to try that," said Blues defenceman Vince Dunn. "That's just one of a kind and I don't know how he uses it or how he even flexes it down. It must be the stiffest stick I've seen."

"I saw the prospects here this morning, they were really excited to check out that stick of his. I think that's what makes him such a special player — he uses that to his advantage and he's very strong on it and he makes very high-end plays."

The only reason O'Reilly has it is because he's a rink rat. He started with a Jeremy Roenick model stick, known for its long curve, and went from there. The 28-year-old is notorious for his practice habits and willingness to experiment, and had Warrior pattern the blade he now uses because he believes it helps him keep better control of the puck.

"I don't know how I got the idea. I was just messing around," O'Reilly told the '31 Thoughts' podcast earlier this season. "It's pretty cool, they send you like a plastic blade and then with the heat gun for five seconds [you] heat it up and then you can move it any way you want. And then it settles."

"And then you send it in and then they make the stick of that. A lot of guys think I just jam it in the door and then it was like 'OK, here you go.'"

No one was laughing after it helped him score his first two goals of the Stanley Cup Final.

O'Reilly typically has to take shots from the heel because of his unique curve, but managed to beat Tuukka Rask with the puck resting on his toe during the wraparound that opened the scoring in Game 4. Then, with the game tied 2-2, he broke towards the slot while defenceman Alex Pietrangolo took a shot and saw it hit Rask's blocker and land in a prime shooting area.

He swept it home in one smooth motion.



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"Great shot," said O'Reilly. "Good bounce."

The kind of bounce that is earned over a career of doing things the right way.

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Sportsnet.ca / Zdeno Chara returns to bench despite nasty injury: 'He can barely talk'

Luke Fox | June 4, 2019, 1:32 AM

ST. LOUIS – This is why the champagne is so sweet.

Because the pain is so excruciating.

Zdeno Chara — the tallest, oldest, kindest and arguably toughest hockey player standing — raced off the Enterprise Center ice three minutes into the second period, a trail of his own blood spattered behind him.

An accidental crime scene in a 2-2 series that has already seen its share and has at least 120 minutes of potential carnage to come.

As Chara defended the rush in a tight, visceral fourth chapter of this beautifully ugly Stanley Cup Final, St. Louis Blues centre Brayden Schenn snapped a puck that clicked off the longest stick in the league and smashed into the Boston Bruins' defenceman's face, opening a gash and, they fear, causing structural damage.

So, when the big man finally did return to the bench for the third period, he remained there. Sitting. Watching. Supporting in the only manner he was medically cleared to do.

Chara had been outfitted with the badges of the wounded: fresh stitches, a full visor and a decisive "done for the night" declaration by the trainers. Then he asked if he could at least sit with the guys. They lost 4-2.

"His mouth has some blood, and I don't know what else is going on in there, but he can barely talk, and he's out there supporting us," explained fellow defenceman Brandon Carlo.

"Just his leadership is on another level."

This is the same captain who wasn't healthy enough to participate in the Eastern Conference final clincher in Carolina but had insisted on throwing on a shoulder pads and sweater so he could at least participate in the handshake line.

It's all about respect.

Sound on for this remarkable moment in the handshake line between Zdeno Chara and Rod Brind'Amour. #StanleyCup pic.twitter.com/qWP6ABk9sJ

— #StanleyCup on NBC (@NHLonNBCSports) May 17, 2019

This is the same captain who recruited some guy named Tom Brady to narrate the Bruins' championship hype video ahead of Game 1.

The same captain who recently delivered an impassioned and oft-shared monologue about how he's not a fan of the term "rookie," how he wants everyone with a stall in the Boston room to be treated as an equal.

"That must be a new thing. He called me a rookie then," cracked Brad Marchand before the series shifted to St. Louis. "Just kidding."

Marchand tried to explain a man he's now known since 2009, when he was also not a rookie.

"He's always a guy who treats everyone with respect. He was brought up very well. If you ever talk to him off the ice, he's extremely well mannered, very respectful to everybody. He treats everyone the same way," Marchand said.

"Sometimes you expect guys with that big of a presence and how famous he is to be a little arrogant, but that's not him at all. He's extremely humble and very thankful for everything he has, and he's worked extremely hard for it.

"He's an incredible leader in that sense. He makes it very easy to learn from and feel welcome and feel part of the group. I think it's why our young guys are comfortable being the loudest guys in the room. We need that. It's energy we feed off, and it makes things exciting in the group. He does a great job setting the example."

Chara's latest battle wounds, which will be further evaluated as the Final seesaws back to Boston, are also an example of just how taxing this tournament can be.

The night one critical combatant, St. Louis's Vince Dunn, returns from a significant mouth injury, another leaves with one. (Dunn, splendid in his Cup debut, took a stick to his wired-up mouth during his second shift: "Nothing's going right for my face right now.")

In each Bruins loss, they lost a key defenceman early and were forced to juggle five defenders, giving the play-the-body Blues a distinct advantage.

"It sucks. It's not easy. Tough night for [Chara]," said goalie Tuukka Rask, not surprised to see Chara back on the bench.

"It's not easy when there's five guys and they have to play against a heavy forechecking team. It puts a lot of pressure on them. Our guys have done a tremendous job handling that. I just hope it doesn't happen every game."

Matt Grzelcyk was rammed face-first into the glass in Game 2 and was so damaged, it wasn't worth flying him to St. Louis.

Coach Bruce Cassidy is unsure if either Chara or Grzelcyk will dress in Thursday's Game 5. Journeyman Steven Kampfer, 30, could be next man up.

"So, we gotta make the adjustments," the coach said, noting the Blues' loss of Robert Thomas in what is rapidly morphing into a classic, old-school war of attrition.

Expecting the chatter over the two off-days to circle around defensive depth, Cassidy interestingly challenged the men up front, who lost the possession tussle decisively at even strength, generating just 38 per cent of the Game 4's shot attempts.

"Personally, I think our forwards have to do a way better job with our D out. The onus has to go on them. They have to pull their weight in terms of puck supported and helping out the D, finishing some plays," Cassidy charged. "We had some lines tonight with very few shots attempts.

"They're going to have to pull their weight, especially if these guys are out. That's just the way it is. That's the hand we're dealt."

Chara is the Bruins' heartbeat. Can they win it for him? Can they win it without him?



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"He wants to battle and be with the guys. He wasn't gonna miss that opportunity. He doesn't get back on the ice, but he's a warrior. If there's any chance for him to be back, he'll be back," David Backes promised.

"Whoever our next guy up is will have to fill that role admirably—and they're big feet to fill."

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1146127 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Stanley Cup Game 4 Notebook: Dunn's face can set off metal detectors

Luke Fox | June 3, 2019, 3:38 PM

ST. LOUIS — Even though his face could set off a metal detector, Vince Dunn will play Game 4 — and it's kind of a big deal.

The 22-year-old, puck-moving defenceman has been languishing on the sidelines since a Brenden Dillon shot smashed his mouth in Game 3 of the Western Conference Final, and his absence from a blue line thin on offensive drivers has been a sore point.

Especially when one considers the offensive contribution from the Bruins' defenders, who have been breaking the puck out much quicker than their opponents.

"Yeah, he moves the puck as good as anybody on our team from our own end out transition-wise, and Dunn has the ability of doing high-end things in the offensive zone sometimes. Not all the time, but there's just times where he can do things that wow you a little bit and make a great play or score a goal from nothing," coach Craig Berube said.

"It's going to be intense for him right away, but he'll get into it and he'll make good plays with the puck like he always does. I expect the same Vince Dunn you've seen."

Well, not quite.

Dunn said the wiring in his repaired face makes it feel like he's constantly wearing a mouthguard. He figures he'd have no issue triggering a metal detector.

"Spending the night in the hospital, it's very uncomfortable and very scary. It was nice to have the guys visit me in the room after the game, even though we had that tough loss in overtime [to San Jose]," Dunn said. "I started to see improvements after a week, finally the last few days I've been feeling like myself.

"There's a lot of things going on in my mouth right now. It's not the easiest to be eating things. But other than that, I can't really complain. I'm here in the finals. It's very special to me. It's very special to all of us.

"You kind of take things for granted when you're younger, but now you really take it in. You don't really believe it until you're here. It's very special to be in this position that I'm in at such a young age. I just want to make the best of it. I want to be the player that I was all season."

Dunn enters as a critical X-factor. The Blues' chances might depend on his ability to wow.

Pastrnak aims some friendly fire at media

When I asked about teammate Torey Krug's ability to perform on the big stage in light of the undersized defenceman's four-point performance in Game 3, David Pastrnak turned to NBC Sports Boston's Joe Haggerty, smiled, and said, "I don't know. Hags, you have answer maybe?"

The quip was a reference to a Haggerty tweet in late March, in which Haggerty posed the question: "Are the Bruins better without Torey Krug in their lineup?"

Brad Marchand fired back directly to the reporter on Twitter at the time.

"You think Torey's trying to prove me wrong or something?" Haggerty asked in Monday's scrum.

"I dunno," Pastrnak smiled again. "You still think we are better without him?"

What a beauty.

Cassidy won't sweat refs... 'until they stink'

Frustrated by the Bruins' torching his club for four power-play goals in Saturday's 7-2 rout, Berube made a little noise Sunday when he complained about the officiating in this series.

Bruins coach Bruce Cassidy was asked for his thoughts on the series' officiating.

"If we have a beef, we'll bring it up, generally with the supervisor," Cassidy said. "I didn't have too many beefs the other night. Apparently they did, so they voiced theirs.

"We're not going to concern ourselves with the officials until they stink and they go against us, right? I thought, we killed, what, five penalties? They killed four, and one was their own call, they challenged the [third goal], so, really, they only had three infractions against them. I don't think they favoured us in any way, to be honest."

Berube juggles forwards, again

Impressed by energy guy Zach Sanford's debut in Game 3, Berube promoted the fourth-liner all the way up to second-line centre Ryan O'Reilly's wing, dropping Sammy Blais to Tyler Bozak's third line.

Robby Fabbri comes out of the Blues' lineup to make way for the sorely needed Oskar Sundqvist, the edgy fourth-line centre who was forced to sit out Game 3 and watch the penalty kill fall to pieces in his absence.

"It was a night that took forever," Sundqvist said of the frustration watching from the press box.

Patrick Maroon says Sundqvist's return is massive.

"He brings a different element. He plays a two-way game. He can check the best line, he can score, he can just be a good forward off the rush. Obviously, we missed him on the PK," Maroon said.

Top prospects get a kick out of O'Reilly stick

As per Cup Final tradition, the league flew in a handful of the top prospects from the NHL Combine to take in the game here in St. Louis.

Jack Hughes, Bowen Byram, Alex Turcotte, Dylan Cozens and Kirby Dach are in the house. Thrilled to meet stars from both teams, the kids got a kick out of Selke finalist O'Reilly's rather unique stick curve, which sharply hooks at the toe.



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"That's something I've never seen," Dach marveled. "That's something you do with a mini stick, where you heat it over the oven and give curve it right at the toe. Kinda neat to see that and pick his brain. He just said it works."

Back in juniors, O'Reilly took note of the aggressive hook on Alex Ovechkin's curve.

"I feel like, for myself, backhand is so important on face-offs. Look at that, and there's barely any. It's just a big hook. I remember being obviously impressed with how he plays it," explained O'Reilly, who told Hughes it was the secret to stealing faceoffs. Not that the No. 1 prospect needs much help.

"I think what he's using now, he's in pretty good shape."

All eyes on Binnington

After being mercy pulled for the first time in his NHL career (55 games played) in Game 3's rout, Calder finalist Jordan Binnington is attempting to rally with a win for the seventh time this post-season.

Binnington owns a sparkling record of 12-2-0 after a loss of any kind and is 6-2 in that scenario during the playoffs (1.84 GAA, .935 SV%).

The ice-veined kid that Blues superfan Jon Hamm referred to as "Robocop" didn't watch a second of video from Saturday's debacle.

"Same old story, right? Just prepare the same way. As a goalie, things are going to happen, it's not always going to be perfect, and you've got to regroup, pick yourself back up and move on to the next game," Binnington said.

"I don't think it was overly emotional. Obviously, you don't like losing, but no matter the score, I hate losing, so it's the same feeling. I want to get back in that win column."

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1146128 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Mooseheads' Raphael Lavoie one of NHL Draft's 'best prospects'

Ryan McKenna | June 3, 2019, 11:35 AM

HALIFAX – Eric Veilleux has seen some good hockey players over his coaching career, but maybe none as good as Raphael Lavoie.

"He's probably one of the best players I had a chance to coach," the Halifax Mooseheads bench boss says. "Best prospect anyways for sure."

Lavoie is an 18-year-old right winger eligible for this year's NHL Draft, which begins on June 21 in Vancouver.

Gifted with great size – six-foot-four and 198 pounds – Lavoie also has intriguing hands and skill. It has made him an interesting target for teams at the draft.

He was ranked 13th by NHL Central Scouting at the midterm rankings for North American skaters, but slipped to 20th in the final edition. Sportsnet's Sam Cosentino had Lavoie slated at 20th overall in his May rankings.

The rankings are hard to escape, Lavoie says.

"Well, quite frankly, when they get posted, I look at them for sure," he says from the Memorial Cup. "People talk to me about it. But I try not to focus on it. Playing my game is a lot more important for me."

Lavoie helped the host Mooseheads reach the Canadian major junior championship game where Halifax lost to the Rouyn-Noranda Huskies. He had two highlight-reel goals in the tournament – including one in the final – and an assist along with 17 shots on goal over four games.

His physical play was prevalent throughout the tournament as he used his big frame to create a good cycle in the corner and set up scoring opportunities for his teammates.

He says he's at his best when he has the puck and is creating offensive chances.

"I think I'm pretty good when I'm doing that."

Lavoie was streaky during his draft year and finished the regular season with 32 goals and 41 assists in 62 games.

But when it came to the playoffs, the right-handed shot picked up his game.

He finished atop the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League with 20 playoff goals and was second in league scoring with 32 points. Lavoie recorded three-straight two-goal games against Moncton in the second round and added a hat trick in one game against Drummondville in Round 3.

Veilleux says Lavoie has become a more well-rounded player over the past year — his second full season in the QMJHL.

"He's added, I think, some pretty good prime to his game throughout the season to make him, obviously, a more complete player, which is probably what teams were wondering if he could play that way and he's developed as a very solid, complete player," Veilleux says.

Lavoie is yet another product of Chambly, Que., which has developed some solid talent over the past few years.

He's friends with goaltender Zachary Bouthillier, who was drafted in the seventh round of the 2018 NHL Draft by the Toronto Maple Leafs while brothers Pierre-Olivier (Arizona) and Mathieu Joseph (Tampa Bay) also hail from the city 25 kilometres southeast of Montreal.

Lavoie is also the latest top prospect to come out of the Mooseheads organization. Halifax has produced top NHL talent such as Nathan MacKinnon, Jonathan Drouin, Nikolaj Ehlers and Timo Meier to name a few.

Antoine Morand, who captained this year's Mooseheads team and is an Anaheim Ducks prospect, was one of the players Lavoie relied on this season for advice.

"They have experienced it before me so it's good," Lavoie says. "They let me know what they know."

Linemate Samuel Asselin says his job during the season was to help relieve some of the pressure Lavoie faced with jokes and light-hearted conversation.

On the ice, Asselin says Lavoie's long reach and lethal stick lifts make him tough to play against.

"I think he really, really improved his game during the playoff run and since then he's just so good for us," Asselin says.

Lavoie played for Canada at the 2018 world under-18 championships and scored five goals in five games.



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Veilleux says the forward has the ability to play on the top two lines of an NHL team one day, but adds there's room to improve and add size.

Lavoie's goal is to continue to grow and get better.

"Whenever I get stronger and bigger I'll be better in every aspect of my game," he says. "I'll skate faster, I can shoot harder, I can hit harder, I can be more strong and be a better player overall."

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1146129 Websites

TSN.CA / O'Reilly leads Blues to Stanley Cup Final series-tying win over Bruin

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Frank Seravalli

ST. LOUIS — On the night the West was won, Brett Hull said there were four reasons why the Blues booked their first ticket to the Stanley Cup Final in 49 years.

Binnington. Berube. Belief.

And the fourth, according to the Golden Brett, was Ryan O'Reilly.

"Ryan O'Reilly came in and has been the consummate professional from Day 1," Hull said. "He taught Vladimir Tarasenko and every single player in that room how to play the right way."

Remember when there was somehow some notion with his playoff-starved resume that you can't win with O'Reilly? Yeah, the Sabres don't either.

Last April, O'Reilly was torched in Buffalo when he accused the Sabres of "being OK with losing." He spoke from the heart and admitted he "lost" his "love of the game multiple times throughout last season."

Turns out, it's definitely tougher to win without him. No one wanted it more on Monday.

O'Reilly was a one-man army, a relentless wrecking-ball who was both freak of nature and force of nature, as he saved the St. Louis Blues' season.

O'Reilly scored 43 seconds into Game 4, netted the game-winner in a Stanley Cup Final series-pivoting period, and nearly willed a third behind Tuukka Rask on a shorthanded breakaway. It's a best-of-three now for Lord Stanley as O'Reilly helped knot the series at two games apiece with a rousing, 4-2 win at Enterprise Centre.

Gloria? More like Glorious.

"I thought he had a hell of a game tonight," coach Craig Berube said. "It's not even just the goals, it's his approach the game. He was moving really well, he was strong on the puck, he was a factor in every facet of the game — power play, penalty kill, everything."

It was a deliciously entertaining Game 4. There were juicy rebounds. There was a three-minute shift in which the Blues hemmed Connor Clifton and Charlie McAvoy in the Bruins' zone with an all-out assault. Brad Marchand was even up to more Brad Marchand things, as he tapped Jordan Binnington's pads on his way by during a stoppage, causing the rookie netminder to tumble to the ice.

Everything was happening.

Bruins captain Zdeno Chara took a puck in the face in the second period and returned to the bench with a full facial shield, but did not take a shift in the final frame.

Bruins sources indicated to TSN that Chara may have broken his jaw when Brayden Schenn's shot rode up his stick, but coach Bruce Cassidy would say only that Chara was "advised not to return." His status for Game 5 on Thursday night in Boston is unclear; the Bruins could be without both Chara and Matt Grzelcyk on the backend.

"Very uncomfortable. Probably some dental work in the near future," Cassidy said. "He wanted to come out on the bench and be with his teammates, that's why he was out there."

If there was any question as to how the Blues would respond to a five-goal drubbing in Game 3, O'Reilly answered it early — and often.

"Sometimes it's a battle of will," Cassidy said of O'Reilly. "Sometimes you tip your hat to a good player."

Last summer's trade may be one that Sabres GM Jason Botterill never lives down. O'Reilly was blunt and honest, but maybe he was exactly what Buffalo needed. Instead, the Sabres shipped him to St. Louis in exchange for Patrik Berglund, Vladimir Sobotka, Tage Thompson and first and second-round picks.

Blues GM Doug Armstrong said O'Reilly's comments "gave me zero pause." Ditto that he had only appeared in 13 playoff contests previously with Colorado, never won a round, and couldn't help the Sabres to the playoffs.

"He was speaking from the heart. He was frustrated. He wanted more from himself," Armstrong said at the Cup Final's Media Day. "When I talked to him on the phone, I could tell he was in the right frame of mind. I didn't have to bring it up."

In fact, Armstrong thought back to interviews at the 2009 NHL Draft Combine — when O'Reilly went in the second round, 33rd overall to Colorado — but he was a topic of conversation.

"We would say to players, who is the hardest guy to play against? His name kept coming up," Armstrong said. "We should have drafted him."

He came in this year and Berube said O'Reilly was "our best and most consistent player all year." O'Reilly hit career-highs with goals (28) and points (77) and was probably the only player worth his salt in a tough first three months of the season.

"He has rubbed off on our team in a lot of ways with his work ethic," Berube said.

O'Reilly's habits are legendary. His teammates say there is nothing he does halfway.

"First one on the ice, last one off the ice," Pat Maroon said.

"Then we all go to the Ryan O'Reilly Hockey School after practice," Brayden Schenn said. "He's got a lot of drills, whether it's hand-eye or shooting. There's a whole group of guys that work with him. He's done it his whole career."

So there was O'Reilly in Game 4, swatting an Alex Pietrangelo rebound into the net before the puck even touched the ice. It was probably a shot he practised thousands of times.

"That stuff pays off," Berube said.



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O'Reilly just shrugged, saying it was "kind of a great bounce," pushing it aside with all of the narratives about one the NHL's great gamers.

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TSN.CA / Boston Bruins D Zdeno Chara's status up in the air for Game 5

3-4 minutes

Will Chara play in Game 5?

Boston Bruins veteran defenceman Zdeno Chara was "advised not to return" to Game 4 of the Stanley Cup Final after taking a puck to the face and his status for Thursday's Game 5 is up in the air, head coach Bruce Cassidy announced Monday after his team's 4-2 loss to the St. Louis Blues.

Chara returned to the bench in the third period sporting a full cage after taking a shot to the mouth from Blues centre Brayden Schenn early in the second period.

Cassidy was told by the Bruins' medical staff that Chara was "done for the night," but wanted to be with his teammates. Cassidy added that they might have to look towards Steven Kampfer if Chara is unable to play in Game 5.

Cassidy said he was told by #NHLBruins medical staff that Chara was "done for the night."

— Frank Seravalli (@frank_seravalli) June 4, 2019

Chara, 42, recorded an assist over eight minutes of action in Game 4 and has one goal and three assists over 19 games this postseason.

Kampfer, 30, scored three goals and added three assists over 35 regular season with Boston this season and has one goal in two playoff games this spring.

The best-of-seven-series is tied at two games apiece with Game 5 slated for Thursday back in Boston.

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TSN.CA / Schwartz carrying sister Mandi's memory with him in Cup final run

Frank Seravalli

ST. LOUIS - What would Mandi think?

That's what went through Jaden Schwartz's mind as he prepared to skate onto the ice in this Stanley Cup final, wearing her number 17, with her initials stamped on his stick.

It's been eight years since Jaden lost his sister, Mandi, to leukemia at the age of 23, but there is never a moment she isn't with him.

"This was her dream growing up," Jaden said. "This was our family's dream. And I'm living it. I know she's watching up there somewhere and she's excited.

"This is all for her."

The Schwartz family can't help but feel Mandi's fingerprints on this magical St. Louis Blues run. Like the Blues, who were in 31st place on Jan. 3, Jaden has turned around the worst season of his NHL career to lead St. Louis in goals (12) and points (18) this postseason.

"I see a lot of Mandi here now," said Jaden's father, Rick. "Every time I see a shift, I think, what would she think of him scoring in the Stanley Cup?"

Jaden, 26, became the first player in more than a decade to net two hat tricks in a single Stanley Cup playoff this spring. He is on the short list of Blues candidates for the Conn Smythe Trophy, but has been held to two assists in the first three games of the final. He'll be counted on to help knot this best-of-seven series in Game 4 on Monday night.

But Jaden might not even have been the best hockey player in the Schwartz household.

The oldest of the three siblings, Mandi represented Saskatchewan at the Canada Winter Games.

That title could have belonged to Mandi.

That's saying something, because Jaden's older brother, Rylan, is also a pro player. Rylan made it to Team Canada's U-18 camp with the likes of Steven Stamkos, Alex Pietrangelo and Michael Del Zotto. He signed with the San Jose Sharks out of Colorado College and is still playing in Germany's top pro league.

"She was better than all of us growing up," said Blues forward Brayden Schenn, who has played with or against Jaden and Rylan since he was 10.

Mandi was the trailblazer. The oldest of the three siblings, Mandi represented Saskatchewan at the Canada Winter Games. She was the reason the Schwartzs moved to Wilcox, Sask., to play at the famed Athol Murray College of Notre Dame in the early 2000s, at a time opportunities for women's hockey players weren't teeming. Yale University plucked Mandi from the Hounds.

"She looked up to the boys, but I know it was the other way around," Rick said.

Mandi was nearly halfway through her junior season at Yale when Rick and Carol Schwartz got the call. Rick will never forget the date she was diagnosed with acute myeloid leukemia – Dec. 9, 2008 – because it's his birthday.

She dug in and fought, because that's what Mandi did.

Yale University plucked Mandi from the famed Athol Murray College of Notre Dame.

"She was a very good player, her work ethic was honestly to die for," Rick said. "She didn't ever want to let somebody have that puck. She was a nice kid, but you put the skates on her and it's like something switched on."

But Mandi could not find a suitable match for a potentially life-saving bone marrow transplant. The entire Schwartz family got tested. Through it all, her smile never diminished.



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"Mandi didn't have a lot of time," Rick said. "It's a one-in-130 million shot and there are only usually 33 million people on the registry. It's like trying to find a needle in the haystack."

They tried every avenue, including a cord blood stem cell transplant. But her cancer returned in Dec. 2010, while Jaden was playing for Team Canada at the 2011 World Junior Championship in Buffalo.

Mandi died on April 3, 2011 in Regina. She never got to graduate from Yale, or see Jaden make his NHL debut with the Blues later that season. She was just 23.

"She was robbed of so many things, which is hard to reconcile as a parent," said Rick, his eyes welling in a Boston hotel lobby last week.

Rick says he sees that same "hurt" in Jaden and Rylan "all the time." It never goes away.

"Every day," Jaden says. "It's hard on you at times. It's sad at times, but you want to try and cherish the moments and memories you have with her. It's tough to put into words. We miss her every day. She was everything to us."

What keeps the Schwartzs going is what Mandi meant to everyone else.

Mandi's No. 17 jersey still hangs in her stall at Yale, where a scholarship was funded in her name.

Mandi's No. 17 jersey still hangs in her stall at Yale, where a scholarship was funded in her name. Jaden switched from No. 9 to No. 17 shortly after Vladimir Sobotka left the Blues in 2014.

That year, the entire Blues team diverted from a New York road trip and took a bus to Yale for annual White Out for Mandi game. It remains one of the largest attended women's hockey games in the history of Ingalls Rink.

Known as the "glue guy" who is "[bleeping] hilarious," Schenn said Jaden doesn't open up much about Mandi in the dressing room. But the Blues have his back.

"You just do what you can to help him through the tough days," said Schenn.

So far, more than \$300,000 has been raised for cancer equipment and other charities in Saskatoon through the annual Run for Mandi event.

Mandi lives on in the lives she's touched.

Both Yale and the Blues have held Be the Match drives in which fans swab their cheek and register for the international bone marrow registry. It takes five seconds.

"More than 7,500 people have been swabbed because of Mandi," Rick said. "Those swabs have directly saved 59 lives. That is incredible."

Hockey remains the best diversion for Rick, who is a program coordinator at the Saskatchewan Safety Council, and Carol, who works for the Saskatchewan Ministry of Justice.

"For me, it's really difficult to think about Mandi a lot of the time," Rick said. "The boys keep me going. Watching hockey, I think, 'Man, we're lucky to have this.'"

But like a lot of Blues fans, Rick and Carol weren't counting on a playoff run. They don't like to be home around the anniversary of Mandi's passing every April, so they booked a trip to Hawaii this year, banking the Blues wouldn't make it.

Rick and Carol watched the Blues take on the Winnipeg Jets in Game 1 from an airport bar.

"I told Jaden, 'You went from last place to the playoffs, anything can happen,'" Rick said.

More than \$300,000 has been raised for cancer equipment and other charities in Saskatoon through the annual 'Run for Mandi.'

Jaden knocked out the Jets with a hat trick in the clinching Game 6. He scored four more goals against both the Stars and Sharks. His 12 goals are the most in one playoffs by a Blues player since Brett Hull bagged 13 in 1990.

Mandi has been there the entire time. How else to explain Jaden's explosion, from a six per cent shooting season to 19.3 per cent in the playoffs?

Or that the Blues are facing Boston, of all teams, where the Schwartzs found so much love and support right down the road from Yale?

The stars seem to be aligning, allowing the Schwartzs to dream about what might still be instead of wonder about what might have been.

"What a scene that would be if Jaden gets to hold up the Cup," Rick said. "I would love to see his reaction, knowing that Mandi is there with him. That would be priceless."

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1146132 Websites

TSN.CA / Kessel can offer tremendous value in the right situation

Travis Yost

The player currently sitting atop TSN's Trade Bait board? That's Pittsburgh Penguins winger Phil Kessel.

Kessel is a fascinating trade target. There are effectively three reasons why Kessel finds himself on the block this off-season. The first issue: Pittsburgh needs to clear some money to extend the window of contention during the Sidney Crosby/ Evgeni Malkin era. Right now, the Penguins have nearly \$69 million committed on a base of just 14 rostered players and 24 standard player contracts, which is problematic. The second issue: reported friction with other Pittsburgh personnel, including head coach Mike Sullivan and even linemate Malkin. The third issue: despite the impressive scoring totals this year, there are surely concerns over forecasted performance through the duration of his contract.

It's important to remember that we have been here before. Kessel was all but run out of town in Toronto in the summer of 2015 after shouldering a ton of the blame for the organization's failures, which never seemed appropriate or accurate. But that was also Kessel in his prime. Kessel just finished up his age 31 season, and there are at least signs on the periphery that suggest wear and tear creeping into his game. Among other items:

1. A spike in assist rates (and more specifically, secondary assist rates) has driven his lofty scoring totals in the last two seasons. That has helped offset some of the goal scoring issues he has been having, which are notably down at 5-on-5.



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2. Relatedly, most of Kessel's impact – and this shouldn't be discounted in any way – this year came by way of the power play. His 2.7 goals per-60 minutes this season were a 10-year high and his 8.1 points per 60 minutes was decimal points from being a career high.

3. Kessel's shooting numbers are down. And that's perhaps the most concerning component of all. Consider the below table, which shows Kessel's shot volume looks like year-over-year. There is a noticeable downward trend here that should be of concern:

Kessel has never been regarded as a defensive stalwart, but that's hardly mattered. Kessel's offence has been so electric and productive for so long that he and his teams have routinely generated favourable shot and goal differentials with him on the ice. That's the power of being such a high-end playmaker and sniper.

But if we are starting to see signs that Kessel isn't as dangerous as he once was, his \$6.8-million cap hit for the next three years becomes a harder pill to swallow, particularly for a team that's going to be desperate for cap space. In the same breath, it's hard to look at Kessel's scoring rates for the year and think he's anything close to done. He was productive for a good portion of the season and most teams would kill to have him inside of their top six.

One of the issues that I do think impacted Kessel quite a bit – perhaps more now at age 31 than ever before – was Pittsburgh's top-heavy lineup. If you start looking at how Kessel performed with different teammates, you see that his production was strong at an individual and team level when paired with playmakers like Malkin and Carl Hagelin (and, to a lesser extent due to limited ice time together, Crosby). When Kessel was flexed into third-line duty or shouldered primary playmaking and goal-scoring responsibilities on weaker second lines, his performance tanked.

The below table shows Kessel's common teammates over the 2018-19 season. With each player we see how Kessel generated shot and goal volume, and off to the side we can also see how the duo managed to drive goal differentials for their respective teams when paired together:

Dropping from a player like Malkin to the likes of Tanner Pearson, Zach Aston-Reese, and Derick Brassard is a massive change. Combined with his electric power-play scoring over the last couple of years, I think it is fair to conclude that we have hit the stage where Kessel can no longer drive a line – and certainly not a weaker line – on his own. (It goes without saying that Pittsburgh's blueline is also a mess, which doesn't help things here either.)

Should this deter possible trade suitors from inquiring on Kessel? That depends. There are teams around the league with heaps of playmaking talent down the middle of the lineup, but in desperate need of a shot creator and goal scorer on the wings. If those teams also have some cap space to play with, a player like Kessel can have tremendous value – the type of value that allows you to comfortably absorb his \$6.8-million cap hit.

Kessel has exhibited a tremendous ability to generate dangerous offence his entire career, and still shows it in spots at the age of 31. The key now is finding ways to complement his skill set and mitigate his liabilities.

The team that does that might be able to acquire a very impactful forward at a discount this summer.

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1146133 Websites

USA TODAY / St. Louis Blues take Game 4 to tie up Stanley Cup Final with Boston Bruins

Kevin Allen, USA TODAY Published 10:57 p.m. ET June 3, 2019 | Updated 1:14 a.m. ET June 4, 2019

ST. LOUIS — Forward Pat Maroon didn't figure in the scoring in the first home Stanley Cup Final win in St. Louis Blues history. But he had the best understanding of how it was accomplished.

"Our team is not an east-west team," Maroon said. "I think we did a good job of just playing north-south hockey. We're a big, heavy team and when we get pucks low we grind it down low and get second and third opportunities."

The Blues set a tone with Ryan O'Reilly's goal 43 seconds into the game and then rode a strong forecheck and effort to a 4-2 win against the Boston Bruins that ties the best-of-seven Final 2-2 heading into Thursday's Game 5 in Boston.

"(O'Reilly) is a good player," said Boston coach Bruce Cassidy. "Competes hard, has a lot of pride, finishes plays around the net... Sometimes you tip your hat to a good player."

A heavy, relentless Blues' forecheck played a significant role in the game's outcome.

At one point in the second period, the Blues put on a forechecking clinic that had their fans roaring every time a Blues player laid a hit on a Bruins player.

St. Louis Blues center Ryan O'Reilly celebrates after scoring in the third period.

It was an impressive showing, particularly by a team that lost Game 3 by a 7-2 count.

"(After) a tough loss like that, I think a lot of teams start throwing each other around the bus, blaming other people," Blues forward Zach Sanford said. "With this group, it's all just boosting each other and having each other's back. That showed tonight."

More: Boston Bruins captain Zdeno Chara bloodied after taking puck to mouth in Game 4

More: Who's on the Mount Rushmore as the all-time best for the Boston Bruins and St. Louis Blues?

More: St. Louis Blues inspired by young girl fighting rare, life-threatening illness

In Game 3, the Bruins' top players (led by Patrice Bergeron and Torey Krug) carried the Bruins to victory. In Game 4, it was the Blues' top players stepping up.

O'Reilly scored twice, including the game-winner in the third period.

2nd of the game for Ryan O'Reilly!
#StanleyCupp.twitter.com/wCvoZbeeYW

— NHL GIFs (@NHLGIFs) June 4, 2019

"He's been our best player all year and he got rewarded tonight," Maroon said.

Vladimir Tarasenko scored his third goal of the series and his 33rd playoff goal since the start of the 2014 postseason. Only Alex



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Ovechkin (34) has scored more postseason goals than Tarasenko in that period.

"When he plays like a beast, and goes in and out, he gets rewarded," Maroon said. "Our top lines are playing good hockey right now"

Defenseman Alex Pietrangelo had a strong game with two assists.

The St. Louis players were better than the Bruins' top players in Game 4.

.@tara9191 puts the @StLouisBlues back in the lead!
#StanleyCuppic.twitter.com/NZUNFdYvWT

— NHL GIFs (@NHLGIFs) June 4, 2019

"From the get-go, (the Blues) were winning loose pucks, winning their battles," said Boston center Charlie Coyle. "They came hungry and we need to do a better job. When we have those good starts, we do the right things, we outwork them and we support each other well. That's when we give ourselves a great shot and we seem to kind of snowball after that. We didn't have it as much as they did tonight."

The net result of the Blues win is that we are back where we started in this series. Before the Stanley Cup Final, it seemed like a toss-up series. After four games, it still is.

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USA TODAY / Boston Bruins captain Zdeno Chara bloodied, leaves Game 4 early after taking puck to mouth

Kevin Allen, USA TODAY Published 9:50 p.m. ET June 3, 2019 | Updated 1:17 a.m. ET June 4, 2019

ST. LOUIS — Boston Bruins captain Zdeno Chara's status for Game 5 of the Stanley Cup Final is unknown after he was struck in the face by a shot in the second period of Game 4.

Blues center Brayden Schenn fired from a short distance away early in the second period, and the puck struck Chara's stick and deflected upward to his face. He was bleeding when he left the ice.

"(He) was very uncomfortable and was advised not to return," Bruins coach Bruce Cassidy said. "(But) he wanted to be on the bench for his teammates."

Chara sat on the bench in the third period, but never played another second in Game 4.

"Had some stitches, probably some dental work in the near future," Cassidy said.

Cassidy added that Chara would be re-evaluated in Boston before a decision is made about playing in Thursday's game. If Chara can't play, Steven Kampfer is a possible replacement.

The Bruins were trailing 2-1 when Chara left, but they did tie the game before losing 4-2.

"He (didn't) get back on the ice, but he's a warrior," Bruins forward David Backes said. "If there is any chance for him to be back, he will be back. If not, it'll be next man up."

Ouch, Chara takes a puck to the mouth and he's off to the locker room #NHLBruinspic.twitter.com/JmfiBYXuFu

— Shayna (@hayyishayyy) June 4, 2019

Ouch. 😬

Zdeno Chara headed straight to the dressing room after taking a puck to the mouth. #StanleyCuppic.twitter.com/q0zZWErwq3

— Sportsnet (@Sportsnet) June 4, 2019

Zdeno Chara is leaking blood after taking a puck up high pic.twitter.com/GbtxVKHNjU

— Marina Molnar (@mkmolnar) June 4, 2019

FISHBOWL CHARA pic.twitter.com/mbmy9OTVsb

— Pete Blackburn (@PeteBlackburn) June 4, 2019

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1146135 Websites

USA TODAY / Stanley Cup Final: Who's on the Mount Rushmore as the all-time best for the Boston Bruins and St. Louis Blues?

Kevin Allen, USA TODAY Published 7:50 a.m. ET June 3, 2019 | Updated 1:05 p.m. ET June 3, 2019

The 2019 Stanley Cup Final between the Boston Bruins and St. Louis Blues is a rematch of the 1970 Final, which Boston swept.

In the NHL since 1924, the Bruins have won the Stanley Cup five times. Current Bruins Zdeno Chara, Patrice Bergeron, Brad Marchand, David Krejci and Tuukka Rask were on the 2011 championship team. The Blues entered the NHL during the 1967-68 season and have never won a Stanley Cup. They reached the Final their first three seasons (1968-70) in the 12-team NHL, but this is their first trip since then.

Here's a look at who USA TODAY Sports would put on the all-time Mount Rushmores for each franchise.

These are the best players to ever suit up for the Boston Bruins and the St. Louis Blues.

BRUINS' MOUNT RUSHMORE

Bobby Orr (1966-76): Considered to be the greatest defenseman in NHL history. His puck-moving ability revolutionized the game and the position. Wearing No. 4, Orr won eight consecutive Norris trophies as the league's top defenseman, three Hart trophies as MVP and two Art Ross trophies as leading scorer. He helped the Bruins win two Stanley Cups and holds the NHL record of 139 points by a defenseman. A Hall of Famer.

Eddie Shore (1926-40): Selected as the Hart Trophy winner in 1933, 1935, 1936 and 1938, Shore was voted as one of the NHL's Top 100 Greatest players in 2017. He helped the Bruins win Stanley Cups in 1929 and 1939. The Bruins have retired his No. 2. A Hall of Famer.

Ray Bourque (1979-00): A five-time Norris Trophy winner, Bourque scored 10 or more goals in all 22 seasons he played defense for the Bruins. He scored a career-best 31 in 1983-84. With 1,579 points, he



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is the highest-scoring defenseman in NHL history. His No. 77 is retired by both the Bruins and Colorado Avalanche. A Hall of Famer.

Phil Esposito (1967-76): When "Espo" registered 126 points for the Bruins in 1968-69, he became the first NHL player to break the 100-point barrier. He led the NHL in goals for six consecutive seasons from 1970-75. His best season came in 1970-71, when he netted 76 goals and 155 points. He scored 42 or more goals eight times and helped the Bruins win two Stanley Cups. A Hall of Famer.

Who we hated leaving off: Milt Schmidt (1936-42 and 1945-55) won two Cups for the Bruins as a player and two as general manager. Power forward Cam Neely (1986-96) was a three-time 50-plus goal scorer. Both are Hall of Famers.

BLUES' MOUNT RUSHMORE

Brett Hull (1987-98): Holds the Blues record of 527 goals, scored over 11 seasons. He scored a career-best 86 goals in 1990-91, when he won the Hart Trophy. That's the third-highest scoring total in league history. He also scored 72 goals in 1989-90 and 70 in 1991-92. A Hall of Famer.

Bernie Federko (1976-90): The franchise's all-time leader in games (927) and points (1,073). He was the first NHL player to register 50 or more assists for 10 consecutive seasons. Goal Magazine once called Federko the most "overlooked" talent. During one stretch of his career, he registered 90 or more points in seven out of eight seasons. He is now a television analyst for Blues games. A Hall of Famer.

Al MacInnis (1994-04): Owning one of the league's hardest slap shots, MacInnis won a Norris Trophy while playing for the Blues in 1999. The Blues retired his No. 2 and put a bronze statue of him in front of the arena. Works for the Blues organization. A Hall of Famer.

Brian Sutter (1976-88): Sutter ranks No. 3 on the franchise's scoring list with 303 goals and ranks first with 1,786 penalty minutes. Sutter, who spent his entire career with St. Louis, was a tough, high-scoring winger who could score 30 or more goals and rack up 200 or more penalty minutes. His best season might have been 1982-83, when he had 46 goals and 254 penalty minutes. He scored 32 or more goals six times. The Blues retired his No. 11. He's also a former Blues coach.

Who we hated leaving off: Hall of Fame defenseman Chris Pronger won the Hart Trophy and Norris Trophy while playing for the Blues.

USA TODAY LOADED: 06.04.2019

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USA TODAY / St. Louis Blues inspired by young girl fighting rare, life-threatening illness

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Most of Missouri seems to be behind the St. Louis Blues as they head into tonight's Game 4 of the Stanley Cup Final against the Boston Bruins (8 p.m., ET, NBC).

But one young fan, Laila Anderson, 11, seems to have significantly inspired the Blues, who trail 2-1 in the best-of-seven championship series.

"She's battling her battle and we're battling ours," St. Louis defenseman Colton Parayko said recently. "We're just trying to help each other through things. We're going to continue to help each other out. Lot of cool things have been around our team this year. That's just one great story. The guys continue to boost her."

Anderson suffers from Hemophagocytic lymphohistiocytosis, or HLH, a rare life-threatening immune disease resulting in the body making too many immune cells.

She has said the Blues have been her inspiration in battling her disease, and Blues players have said she is an inspiration to them.

Blues defenseman Colton Parayko (second from right) and his teammates have been inspired by 11-year-old fan Laila Anderson, who suffers from a rare, life-threatening immune disease.

"She's special for our group," Parayko said. "She's been here for a long time. Ever since I've been here, she's always been here, coming out of the tunnel every time, giving high fives to our whole team. It's not just me. It's all these guys in there that have touched her a lot and helped her along her journey. She's obviously helped us in a lot of ways and we're trying to give back."

While being treated for her illness during the playoffs, Anderson was not allowed out of house except to go to the hospital. But before Game 3 of the Western Conference final, doctors cleared her to go to that game, and her reaction, captured on video, went viral.

Saturday, before the first Stanley Cup Final game in St. Louis in 49 years, Anderson was given the mic to pump up the crowd and the Blues. She was also interviewed on NBC.

Parayko is among the Blues who have been touched by Anderson's spirit. He keeps in contact with her regularly.

He says she has changed him.

"Lots," Parayko said. "I think mainly (it's) life outside of hockey, that there's so much more in life than hockey. If you come to the rink every single day, we do practice, we do video, we play games, we talk about hockey. We go home. It's just hockey, hockey, hockey. I mean this is serious stuff. These people are kids and they're fighting for their lives. It affects their family, everybody in the hospital. It just puts things into perspective.

"We're on such a high when we get to the rink. Hockey is an escape for us. We get the opportunity to come to the rink and we don't have to think about things, we're just playing hockey. We get to enjoy ourselves. There's a lot more to life than fun."

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