



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 19, 2020

THE NEWS & OBSERVER

'Guys are feeling it.' Hurricanes regroup after collapse against smug, saucy Bruins.

By Chip Alexander

Through four games of the Carolina Hurricanes' playoff series with the Boston Bruins, it remains one of the most telling plays.

Canes center Jordan Staal and Bruins defenseman Charle McAvoy were battling along the boards. As they began to separate, McAvoy reached up and yanked Staal's helmet off his head, rolling it across the ice.

Staal is the Canes captain. Almost 32, he has played more than a thousand regular-season and playoff games in the NHL. He has won a Stanley Cup. He's also 6-4 and 230 pounds.

But McAvoy showed no regard or respect for any of that in Game 2, just as forward Brad Marchand showed no respect in taunting Justin Williams — then the Canes captain — in last year's Stanley Cup playoffs. McAvoy ripped off Staal's helmet and let it fly, a smug, saucy act of defiance that sums up the Bruins' hockey chutzpah.

Nor was a penalty called. It's hard to imagine, say, the Canes' Haydn Fleury pulling off Patrice Bergeron's helmet and giving it a fling and nothing being called. But McAvoy's impudence revealed the collective mindset of these Bruins, that they can play the game their way, do the things they want to do against the Canes and not be stopped.

THE CANES' THIRD PERIOD COLLAPSE

Much was said Monday after Game 4 about the Canes' third-period collapse in the stinging 4-3 loss. Williams said, "We got it handed to us," neatly summarizing everything.

It hurt that Staal left the game in the third after taking a heavy hit — from McAvoy. It hurt that two of the Canes' more physical players, forward Andrei Svechnikov and defenseman Joel Edmundson, already were out with injuries.

Staal was able to practice on Tuesday but Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said his availability for Game 5 was still to be determined after further evaluation. The Canes will need him.

Bruins coach Bruce Cassidy alluded to the fact a few days ago that the playoffs are about attrition, about the grind and the hits adding up along the way and the heavier, tougher team having the better of it. He meant his team, of course.

So it has been as the Bruins, despite losing forward David Pastrnak to a first-game injury, despite goalie Tuuka Rask leaving the bubble for personal reasons, have won three of the four games and driven the Canes to the brink in Toronto. One more loss in the series for the Canes and it's back to

Raleigh, back home and to their families, back to whatever comes next in this pandemic age.

"That's obviously a disappointing loss and nobody's proud of what we did yesterday," center Vincent Trocheck said Tuesday. "To give up a lead like that in the third period, up two (goals) in the playoffs, is unacceptable but at the end of the day it's a seven-game series and we kind of had to look ourselves in the mirror last night and think to ourselves did we do enough? Kind of put it behind us now and look to the next game."

Brind'Amour said the team tried to have "some fun" at practice and rid themselves of all the negativity, noting, "We needed to turn the page."

THE BUBBLE'S MENTAL CHALLENGES

A year ago, Williams said a point comes in every playoff series when one team has had enough, whether physically or mentally. This could be that breaking point for the Hurricanes, who were swept by the Bruins in the Eastern Conference finals last year.

Brind'Amour was asked before Game 4 about coping with the mental challenges of life in the NHL bubble in Toronto, the time off the ice, and its effects on the players and coaches.

"This to me is the biggest challenge," he said. "Everybody wants to play. We'd play in the street if we had to."

"Guys are feeling it. But it's a long road and the team that can hunker down the best and mentally channel all your positive energy to why we're here is the team that's probably going to be able to hoist the Cup when it's all done."

The Canes appear to be a team "feeling it." The Bruins appear to be a team hunkering down the best with Pastrnak out and Rask gone, the team with more positive energy. The team treating their opponent rudely on the ice.

Game 5 is Wednesday. The Canes either win or leave. It's that simple now.

"The desperation is going to have to be there from the start," Brind'Amour said.

HURRICANES VS. BRUINS

What: Game 5, Stanley Cup playoff series.

When: Wednesday, 4 p.m.

Where: Scotiabank Arena, Toronto.

Watch and listen: Fox Sports Carolinas, WCMC-99.9 The Fan, NBC Sports Network.



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Could bursting bubble change elimination dynamic, for Hurricanes and others?

By Luke DeCock

Even before the Carolina Hurricanes' Game 4 collapse, Rod Brind'Amour talked Monday about how difficult life in the NHL's coronavirus bubble in Toronto has become after three weeks away from home and family. There's already some evidence that dynamic is having an influence on the NHL playoffs.

Not only is there no boost from going home for a pivotal Game 5, 6 or 7 for teams facing elimination, there may be a certain motivational dead zone for any team that goes down 3-0 or 3-1. Without the energy of a playoff crowd, hostile or friendly, and with escape from the bubble looming, will teams be able to muster the commitment required to mount that kind of comeback?

"Everyone that's here, they feel it," Brind'Amour said. "It's a long time to be away. We've been away now three weeks and we've played three playoff games. So it's like, guys are feeling it."

Going into Tuesday's games, teams facing elimination in the Edmonton and Toronto bubbles -- not counting winner-take-all Game 5s in the qualifying round or Game 7s after that -- are 3-7 (.300).

If that doesn't sound very good, it's because it's not, albeit in a small sample. Teams in the same situation in 2019 went 7-9 (.437). Since 2017, they're 20-32 (.385) outside of the bubble. (Spare a thought for Paul Maurice's Winnipeg Jets, 0-3 in early elimination games over the past three seasons.) In all best-of-seven series historically, they're 406-555 (.422).

"That's the biggest thing that's not getting talked about enough," Brind'Amour said. "It's the thing that wasn't talked about enough when the format came out. It sounded great four months ago, to get back to playing."

That's the situation the Hurricanes are in now, down 3-1 to the Boston Bruins, although the possibility of back-to-back games on Wednesday and Thursday certainly leaves open the possibility of a quick turnaround.

When facing elimination including Game 7s, the Hurricanes are 14-13 all-time, 9-5 in North Carolina. Outside of Game 7s, they're 9-10.

"It's definitely a different situation," Brock McGinn said Tuesday. "At the end of it we have a chance to win a Stanley Cup and that needs to be our mentality."

STAAL CLEAR?

One factor in the Hurricanes' dismal third period Monday was the loss of captain Jordan Staal after a jarring, clean hit by Bruins defenseman Charlie McAvoy. Staal got up slowly and went straight to the dressing room and did not return, a turning point in the game. The Bruins scored almost immediately to make it 2-2 on their way to four straight goals and a 4-3 win.

But Staal practiced Tuesday, a good sign for a player who missed a large chunk of the 2018-19 season with a concussion that was slow to resolve, although Brind'Amour wouldn't commit to Staal being available.

"We're kind of looking at him now, reevaluating where he is, how he feels," Brind'Amour said. "It's a good sign he was able to practice."

Andrei Svechnikov and Joel Edmundson, both "unfit to play," did not practice but were the only absentees, Brind'Amour said.

Boston coach Bruce Cassidy said Bruins forward David Pastrnak could potentially return in Game 5 after nearly full participation in practice on Tuesday.

HONORING HAWERCHUK

Dale Hawerchuk, one of the great goal-scorers of his generation and Svechnikov's junior coach with the Barrie Colts of the Ontario Hockey League, died of cancer at 57 on Tuesday, his family announced. Late in Hawerchuk's career, he played on a line with Brind'Amour with the Philadelphia Flyers. Brind'Amour said Hawerchuk volunteered to move to the wing so Brind'Amour, seven years his junior, could play center.

"You play with a lot of teammates and you very rarely remember how they played," Brind'Amour said. "You remember what kind of people they were, and he was such a great person. I can't even remember the games but I remember what a great guy he was."

TAILWINDS

The Hurricanes have been outshot in five straight games. That never happened in the regular season (the high was four games, Feb. 6-14). ... The Svechnikov-Sebastian Aho-Teuvo Teravainen combo has combined for 23 points, with Aho continuing to lead the NHL with 11. He's tied with Eric Staal (2006) for the most points through seven playoff games in franchise history. The other 18 Hurricanes skaters have combined for 28 points.



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Gold: Hurricanes Game 5 preview

By Adam Gold

It's almost midnight for Carolina.

That's when the Hurricanes' carriage will turn back into a pumpkin and get shipped back to Raleigh. In order to stop time, Carolina will have to find a gear they haven't demonstrated to this point in the series. For 40 minutes Monday night, it looked like the Canes were well on their way to making a statement that they were not going to roll over, even without their young star, Andrei Svechnikov.

Unfortunately, the third period was a disaster of epic proportions. And, when it was over, the Hurricanes had to swallow the most devastating loss in club history. Oh, I've seen some bad losses. I was standing in the corner to the right of the Washington goal two and a half years ago as the Capitals scored twice in the closing minutes to beat the Hurricanes the night Tom Dundon was introduced as the team's new owner.

But, regular season devastation bears no resemblance to what occurred two nights ago in Toronto. Even though the Hurricanes weren't great, they were plenty good enough — and a bit lucky — through two periods to lead the Bruins, 2-0. And, when they killed off Boston's power play to start the third, it seemed as though they would have enough to drag this one to a 2-2 series heading to the mid-week, back-to-back games.

But, there can not be a Thursday unless Carolina wins tonight. And, they can't win tonight unless they are able to somehow erase the sting of the Bruins' 4-goal-in-6:51, 3rd period eruption. How they go about that goes against human nature. It's just not that easy to forget.

Before we make this entirely about psychology, however, let's recognize the greatness of the Bruins. This is a team built for playoff hockey. Enough high end skill — especially when David Pastrnak in "fit" to play, which it appears will be the case — to go along with plenty of speed and a determination that makes it all work. Boston is so hard to play against because they are relentless, they make very few mistakes and they are way faster than you think.

Their defense corps can all skate, well except for Zdeno Chara, but he's 6'9" and he can stand at center ice and touch each blue line without moving. They also never seem to allow you in the middle of the ice in the offensive zone. That means everything comes from outside. The only time Carolina got inside the B's defense were the 2nd and 3rd periods of Game 2.

If the Hurricanes are to stretch this series out another 24 hours, they have a lot to overcome.

The look...

Martinook-Aho-Teravainen

Dzingel-Trocheck-Williams

McGinn-Staal-Foegele

Niederreiter-Geekie-Necas

Slavin-Hamilton

Skjei-Vatanen

Gardiner-Fleury

Mrazek

Reimer

Thoughts: In the first period, Carolina's best, the Trocheck line was dominant. Ryan Dzingel was very good, Trocheck was at his pesty best and Williams was playing with that verve (shouts to Coach K) that really makes him so dynamic. But, their play waned and it was the Aho line that was their best in the second. That's not going to cut it. Everyone has to be "on" for three periods if the Hurricanes aren't planning on boarding a plane Thursday. The Hurricanes also have to manage to worm their way into the interior of Boston's defense.

Fortunately, Jordan Staal practiced fully on Tuesday, so they don't have to dip into minor league reserves and start someone like Steven Lorentz or Clark Bishop in a win-or-go-home game. Unfortunately, Joel Edmundson continues to be on the "unfit" list, and that means Carolina lacks their most physical defender. Try this on, Haydn Fleury was Carolina's best defenseman in Game 4.

Not sure what your reaction was to that, but I typed it and I'm shaking my head. If Jaccob Slavin and Dougie Hamilton don't play better than we've seen, the Canes have no chance. Petr Mrazek will surely get the start, but I'll say the same thing I've been saying all post season. It's 100% about the 18 guys in front of the goaltender.

The stakes

As the great, pointy eared philosopher Yoda said, "do or do not, there is no try." We'll see if the force is with the Canes.



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Game 5 Preview: Hurricanes vs. Bruins

Canes fighting to stay alive in the playoffs

by Michael Smith

TORONTO - The Carolina Hurricanes will attempt to stave off elimination when they face off with the Boston Bruins in Game 5 of the First Round of the 2020 Stanley Cup Playoffs.

After the teams split the first two games of the series, Boston won two straight games to push the Canes' backs up against the wall, putting their postseason lives and their time in the Toronto bubble on the line.

"We have nothing to lose right now," Brock McGinn said on Tuesday. "We just have to go out there and win one game at a time."

Revisiting Game 4

In the spirit of turning the page and starting anew, we won't spend too much time dwelling on Game 4. The Canes sure didn't - and how could they?

With goals from Justin Williams and Jordan Martinook, the Canes brought a 2-0 lead into the third period. In a stretch of 6:51, the Bruins scored four straight goals and upended the Canes' chances at leveling the series. Teuvo Teravainen potted a late goal to get his team back within a goal, but the damage was done, an uncharacteristic collapse pushing the Canes to the brink of elimination.

"Nobody is proud of what we did yesterday. To give up a lead like that in the third period, up two in the playoffs is unacceptable," Vincent Trocheck said on Tuesday. "At the end of the day, it's a seven-game series. We kind of had to look ourselves in the mirror last night and think do ourselves, 'Did we do enough?' We'll put it behind us now and go to the next game."

Moving On

So, it's time to look forward. There's no sense in dwelling on the dagger of a loss that was Game 4. What happened, happened, and now the Canes' attention turns to getting back in the win column in Game 5.

They have to do so in order to stay alive in the postseason.

"It's a new day. We have to start fresh," head coach Rod Brind'Amour said on Tuesday. "We're the team with our backs against the wall. We've got nothing to lose at this point. We want to make sure we go down giving everything we have if that's what ends up happening. I certainly want to see us play a 60-minute game. That's a great team we're playing, and we've got to make it hard for them for the whole game and see what happens."

The Canes practiced on Tuesday, less a teaching skate and more a chance to flush whatever might be lingering from the night prior.

"It was a tough night. That day is long gone now," Brind'Amour said. "We needed to turn the page and remember this is a game. You've got to have some fun with it, so we tried to do that, get a little sweat in and get ready for tomorrow."

The Canes own a 2-1 all-time record in Game 5 when trailing a playoff series 3-1.

Good News for Staal, Canes

Already down Andrei Svechnikov, the team's leading goal scorer this postseason, and Joel Edmundson, who logged top-four minutes on the back-end, the Canes looked like they might be without their captain heading into Game 5, as well.

In the third period of Game 4, Jordan Staal absorbed a heavy body check from Charlie McAvoy. Slow to his feet, Staal then immediately left the ice and went to the room, tossing his stick down the tunnel in frustration. This was the last thing you wanted to see for someone who has a history with concussions.

On Tuesday, Staal suited up for practice and was a full participant in the Canes' skate, good news for him and the team.

"We're looking at him now and evaluating where he is and how he feels," Brind'Amour said after practice. "It was a good sign that he was out there today."



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A New Day for the Canes

Brind'Amour: 'We've got to win a game. That's the focus.'

by Michael Smith

TORONTO - On Monday afternoon, a storm rolled through downtown Toronto, bringing thunder, lightning, a torrential downpour and some hail with it.

On Monday night, in the third period of Game 4, the Boston Bruins seemed to move through the Carolina Hurricanes with a similar ferociousness.

"I want to make people who support this organization proud of how we play. I think we've done that for most of the time I've been here, and today we didn't. That's the most disturbing thing for me," head coach Rod Brind'Amour said after the game. "We've got to pick the pieces up and make sure we put an effort forward that you can say, 'Hey, that's how it should look' and be proud of it. Win or lose, you've got to be proud of how you play, and that didn't happen tonight."

On Tuesday morning, the sun came out again.

"It's a new day," Brind'Amour said on Tuesday afternoon. "We have to start fresh."

So, that's what the Canes did. Instead of sitting around the Fairmont Royal York hotel all day stewing on what went wrong in that dreadful third period stretch of six minutes and 51 seconds the night prior, the Canes got back on the ice at Ford Performance Centre.

There wasn't much teaching to be done. Rather, it was an opportunity turn the page and have some fun.

"Nobody is proud of what we did yesterday. To give up a lead like that in the third period, up two in the playoffs is unacceptable," Vincent Trocheck said. "We kind of had to look ourselves in the mirror last night and think do ourselves, 'Did we do enough?' We'll put it behind us now and go to the next game."

Here's the reality of the situation: The Canes find themselves down three games to one in their best-of-seven First Round series against the Bruins and now face the unenviable task of winning three games in a row against the Presidents' Trophy winners.

They'll have to do so without Andrei Svechnikov, their leading goal scorer.

They'll have to do so, at least in the immediate future, without Joel Edmundson, who brings a sandpaper element and a championship pedigree on the blue line.

"That's a huge loss for us," Brind'Amour noted.

On Monday night, it seemed they also might have to do so without their captain Jordan Staal, a space-eater who muscled bodies around, shuts down the opposition's best and kills penalties with aplomb.

The Canes got a dose of good news on that front, though, as Staal, who left Game 4 in the third period after absorbing a

heavy body check from Charlie McAvoy, practiced with the team on Tuesday.

"We're looking at him now and evaluating where he is and how he feels," Brind'Amour said after practice. "It was a good sign that he was out there today."

The Canes picked up the pieces on Tuesday and looked ahead to Game 5, the next opportunity to go 1-0. If the Canes can manage that, they give themselves another opportunity to go 1-0 on Thursday and force a decisive Game 7.

"We've got to go win a game. That's the focus," Brind'Amour said. "You can't win three games tomorrow. We've got win one and then see what happens from there."

Anything less, and their time in the Toronto bubble comes to an unceremonious end.

Therein lies the added difficulty of the Canes' situation, too. While it's unmistakably playoff hockey, hockey in an empty rink with very little to no perceived home ice advantage is also unmistakably different. Not to mention, this tournament is being staged in a bubble, with players and staff isolated from the outside world; it's the only practical way to ensure the health and safety of everyone, but it also poses unique and challenging mental circumstances.

Just as the hockey is different, so too did it feel different being down 2-1 in a series, and trailing 3-1 seems nearly insurmountable. Why? It's only human to begin thinking about family and home.

"Time away from family is difficult, so the longer you're away from them, the harder it gets, but comfortability with being in the bubble and getting used to being here gets a little easier," Trocheck said. "At the end of the day, we're here to win a Stanley Cup. Everybody is on this team is focused toward that."

"That's the biggest thing that's probably not getting talked about enough," Brind'Amour said on Monday. "Everybody wants to play. Like I said, we'd play on the street if we had to. ... Everyone that's here, they feel it. It's a long time to be away. We've been away now three weeks, and we've played three playoff games. Guys are feeling it. It's a long road. The team that can hunker down the best and mentally channel all your positive energy to why we're here is the team that's probably going to be able to hoist the Cup when it's all done."

What's ahead is undoubtedly an uphill climb for the Canes, but they're still climbing.

"We're the team with our backs against the wall. We've got nothing to lose at this point," Brind'Amour said. "We want to make sure we go down giving everything we have if that's what ends up happening."

"They have to win four. Right now, we don't have any leeway or fallback options. We've got to go, go, go. When your backs are up against the wall, that's when you learn what you're all about," Justin Williams said after Game 4. "It ain't over yet, and we're going to give it our best."



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3 Keys: Hurricanes vs. Bruins, Game 5 of Eastern First Round

Pastrnak game-time decision for Boston, which looks to eliminate Carolina

by Wes Crosby

No. 5 Hurricanes vs. No. 4 Bruins

4 p.m. ET; NBCSN, SN, TVAS, NESN, FS-CR

Boston leads best-of-7 series, 3-1

David Pastrnak will be a game-time decision for the Boston Bruins, who can eliminate the Carolina Hurricanes from the Stanley Cup Playoffs with a win in Game 5 of the Eastern Conference First Round at Scotiabank Arena in Toronto on Wednesday.

The forward, who has missed the past three games, practiced Tuesday. As part of the NHL Return to Play Plan, a team is not permitted to disclose player injury or illness information.

"The other day, we thought he had an outside chance," Bruins coach Bruce Cassidy said. "Now I'd give it better than that. We'll have to make a decision in the morning.

"... If we feel he's 100 percent, no risk of further injury, he'll be in the lineup."

After surrendering a 2-0 third-period lead for a 4-3 loss in Game 4, the Hurricanes will try to avoid being eliminated by the Bruins for a second straight season. They were outscored 17-5 by Boston in a four-game sweep in the 2019 Eastern Conference Final.

Teams that have a 3-1 lead are 278-29 (90.6 percent) winning a best-of-7 NHL series; 173 of those series ended in Game 5 (56.4 percent).

Carolina will play its second straight game without forward Andrei Svechnikov, who was injured late in Game 3 in Toronto, the Eastern hub city.

Here are 3 keys for Game 5:

1. Carolina's response

Hurricanes forward Justin Williams said the third period of Game 4 might have been the ugliest he had ever seen Carolina play. The Hurricanes were outscored 4-1 and outshot 16-2.

Coach Rod Brind'Amour said there were a lot of reasons to explain how the Hurricanes could be so heavily outshot, and that he expects a better effort Wednesday.

"Turn the page," Brind'Amour said. "Try to really just enthuse a little joy. Have some fun."

2. Marchand staying hot

After not scoring a point in three round-robin games during the Stanley Cup Qualifiers, Bruins forward Brad Marchand has scored seven points (three goals, four assists) in this series. He's scored in three straight games, including the goal that gave Boston a 3-2 lead at 11:40 of the third period Monday.

Most of that has come without linemate Pastrnak. Anders Bjork started Game 4 at first-line right wing, Pastrnak's usual spot, before Charlie Coyle was moved there.

Swapping Coyle and Bjork is an example of Cassidy tapping into the pulse of the Bruins, Marchand said.

"I think he understands when guys are feeling it," Marchand said. "You see the guys create energy and start to feed off one another. He understands that."

3. Decisions in net

Hurricanes goalies Petr Mrazek and James Reimer have split the first four games. Mrazek started Games 1 and 3; Reimer started Games 2 and 4. Carolina has not announced a starter for Game 5.

Halak is expected to start a third straight game for Boston since Tuukka Rask opted out of the playoffs Saturday.

If the Bruins lose, it would set up an interesting scenario with Game 6 on Thursday. Either Boston would start Halak for the third time in four days, or Dan Vladar or Maxime Lagace would make his NHL postseason debut hoping to help to avoid Game 7.

Hurricanes projected lineup

Jordan Martinook -- Sebastian Aho -- Teuvo Teravainen

Ryan Dzingel -- Vincent Trocheck -- Justin Williams

Warren Foegele -- Jordan Staal -- Brock McGinn

Nino Niederreiter -- Morgan Geekie -- Martin Necas

Jacob Slavin -- Dougie Hamilton

Brady Skjei -- Sami Vatanen

Jake Gardiner -- Haydn Fleury

Petr Mrazek

James Reimer

Scratched: Trevor van Riemsdyk, Clark Bishop, Steven Lorentz, Max McCormick, Jake Bean, Roland McKeown, Anton Forsberg, Alex Nedeljkovic

Unfit to play: Andrei Svechnikov, Brett Pesce, Joel Edmundson

Bruins projected lineup



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Brad Marchand -- Patrice Bergeron -- Charlie Coyle
Jake DeBrusk -- David Krejci -- Ondrej Kase
Sean Kuraly -- Jack Studnicka -- Anders Bjork
Joakim Nordstrom -- Par Lindholm -- Chris Wagner
Zdeno Chara -- Charlie McAvoy
Torey Krug -- Brandon Carlo
Matt Grzelcyk -- Connor Clifton
Jaroslav Halak

Dan Vladar
Scratched: Trent Frederic, Zach Senyshyn, John Moore, Urho Vaakanainen, Jakub Zboril, Maxime Lagace, Jeremy Lauzon, Nick Ritchie, Karson Kuhlman
Unfit to play: David Pastrnak
Status report
Staal practiced Tuesday after leaving Game 4 when he was hit by McAvoy at 9:53 of the third period. His status for Game 5 is uncertain.



Pastrnak and the Bruins look to clinch series against Carolina

Carolina Hurricanes (38-25-5, fourth in the Metropolitan Division during the regular season) vs. Boston Bruins (44-14-12, first in the Atlantic Division during the regular season)

Toronto; Wednesday, 4 p.m. EDT

EASTERN CONFERENCE FIRST ROUND: Boston leads series 3-1

BOTTOM LINE: The Boston Bruins look to clinch the Eastern Conference first round over the Carolina Hurricanes in game five. The teams meet Wednesday for the sixth time this season. The Bruins won the previous meeting 4-3. Jake DeBrusk scored a team-high two goals for the Bruins in the victory.

The Bruins are 26-9-9 against conference opponents. Boston averages 9.7 penalty minutes per game, the sixth-most in the NHL. Brad Marchand leads the team serving 82 total minutes.

The Hurricanes are 20-17-2 in Eastern Conference play. Carolina is seventh in the league averaging 5.6 assists per game, led by Teuvo Teravainen with 0.7.

TOP PERFORMERS: David Pastrnak has 95 total points for the Bruins, 48 goals and 47 assists. Marchand has three goals and seven assists over the last 10 games for Boston.

Teravainen leads the Hurricanes with 48 total assists and has 63 points. Sebastian Aho has five goals and 10 assists over the last 10 games for Carolina.

DURING THE PLAYOFFS: Bruins: Averaging 2.4 goals, 4.3 assists, 4.0 penalties and 9.6 penalty minutes while giving up 2.7 goals per game with a .901 save percentage.

Hurricanes: Averaging 3.0 goals, 4.3 assists, 4.9 penalties and 10.4 penalty minutes while giving up 2.4 goals per game with a .928 save percentage.

INJURIES: Bruins: David Pastrnak: out (unfit to participate).

Hurricanes: Joel Edmundson: out (undisclosed), Andrei Svechnikov: out (lower body).



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SB NATION
CANES COUNTRY

Trocheck, McGinn on moving forward

The Canes' forwards spoke to the media Tuesday about trying to overcome a 3-1 series deficit.

By Andrew Schnittker

The Hurricanes have their backs against the wall, but they know what they need to do now: Come up with a much better effort than the third period of game four against the Bruins, and take it one game at a time.

Forwards Vincent Trocheck and Brock McGinn spoke to the media via Zoom Tuesday about what lies ahead.

Brock McGinn

On being able to build on controlling games: I think we just have to go out there and focus on our game right now. I think we have nothing to lose right now. We just have to go out there and win one game at a time. The way we're going to do that is just to go out there and play our style. We've got to get more pucks to the net and just create chaos around the goalie. That's how we're going to get our chances.

On playing in empty arenas and if the crowd would have made a difference: It's the playoffs right now no matter what. I think it still kind of feels like that out there on the ice. The intensity's really high. But I think you definitely miss the fans out there. PNC is a great place to play in the playoffs. It's so loud, and it just brings the energy to the team. You just have to find a way to come out and win in that third period. We've just got to go out there, try and put that one behind us and win the next one.

On being in the bubble: I think it's definitely a different situation, but at the end of it we have a chance to win the Stanley Cup here. I think that's got to be our mentality. Going into the rest of the series and going into game five here,

Rod Brind'Amour: 'Turn the page'

Carolina's head coach talked to the media via Zoom on injury updates, moving forward and Dale Hawerchuk.

By Ryan Henkel

The Carolina Hurricanes had a lot to think about following their Game 4, third period collapse.

However, head coach Rod Brind'Amour isn't one to dwell on the past. Instead, he got the team together for a practice on Tuesday to enforce a message on looking forward.

Brind'Amour spoke to the media over Zoom Tuesday afternoon.

On Jordan Staal's status: We're kind of looking at him now. Reevaluating where he is and how he feels. It's a good sign that he was out there today. We'll know more hopefully in the next hour.

we just need to buckle down, come out with the win and just build off that. So I think overall it's a little different situation, but we've just got to find a way to win here.

Vincent Trocheck

On being able to build on his line in the first two periods of game four: I think I gained a little bit of chemistry. It was nice playing with [Justin Williams] and [Ryan Dzingel] yesterday. I think we meshed a little bit together and gained a little chemistry. Moving forward, we just have to build off of that and those are two really good players. Williams is really easy to play with, he's a smart player, works hard. Dzingel's a fast player. I think the three of us work well together so it's just a matter of building off that.

On the postgame after game four: It's obviously a disappointing loss. Nobody's proud of what we did yesterday. To give up a lead like that in the third period, up two in the playoffs is unacceptable. At the end of the day, it's a seven-game series and we kind of had to look ourselves in the mirror last night, think to ourselves: 'Did we do enough?' We have to put it behind us now and look towards the next game. Right now all we're focused on is game five.

On if the bubble situation gets easier or harder: A little bit of both. Obviously time away from family is difficult, so the longer you're away from them the harder it gets. But comfortability with being in the bubble and getting used to being here, it gets a little easier. Like Brock said, at the end of the day we're here to win a Stanley Cup and everybody on this team is focused towards that. So being in the bubble doesn't really make much of a difference to us.

On the goal of Tuesday's practice: Turn the page. Try to really just ooze a little joy and have some fun. It's been a tough day and it was a tough night. That day's long gone now and we need to remember this is a game and you got to have some fun with it. Try to do that, get a little sweat and get ready for tomorrow.

On the impact of Joel Edmundson's absence: That's a huge loss for us back there. Not just the physical play, but he was getting involved in the offense and getting top-four minutes for us. Anytime you lose a top-four D, it's tough to replace. That physical element that he brings is something this time of year you need.

On Boston gaining momentum: I'm not sure how much momentum is gained or lost from one game or another. I think it's a new day. We need to start fresh. We're the team with their backs against the wall. We have nothing to lose at this point, so we want to make sure we're going down giving it



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everything we have if that's what ends up happening, but certainly I want to see us play a 60-minute game. That's a great team we're playing and we need to make it hard for them for the whole game and see what happens. The message is the same as it's always been. You try to win every game. We just know we don't have any tomorrow, so the desperation is going to have to be there for us right from the start.

On how the team seemed mentally: That was tough. They know. They know what happened. That's human nature. That's why I thought we needed to even practice. To get together and not focus too much on the past. Just get all the negativity out of there. Tomorrow you got to go win a game. That's the focus. We can't win three games tomorrow. You got to win one and see what happens from there. I thought the guys picked up their chins off the ground, worked hard and now we're ready to go for tomorrow.

On playing with Dale Hawerchuk: Fortunately, I got to play with him at the end. His last year was in Philadelphia and we played together on the same line. Playing against him, he was just a great player. I played the game with a lot of teammates and you very rarely remember how they played, so it's always about what kind of people they were. He was a great person. Can't remember any of the games, but you just remember what kind of guy he was. For me, what stands out was that I was a centerman and he was a Hall-of-Fame centerman and we got on the same line and he was like, 'I'm gonna play left wing. You play center.' Sounds like a stupid thing, but that just stands out to me and tells you what kind of guy he was. We're always thinking of him, but he was just a great person.

On any other injury concerns: No I don't think so. We were all out there today.

TODAY'S LINKS

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SportScan

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

1177846 Carolina Hurricanes

Could bursting bubble change elimination dynamic, for Hurricanes and others?

BY LUKE DECOCK AUGUST 18, 2020 03:09 PM

Even before the Carolina Hurricanes' Game 4 collapse, Rod Brind'Amour talked Monday about how difficult life in the NHL's coronavirus bubble in Toronto has become after three weeks away from home and family. There's already some evidence that dynamic is having an influence on the NHL playoffs.

Not only is there no boost from going home for a pivotal Game 5, 6 or 7 for teams facing elimination, there may be a certain motivational dead zone for any team that goes down 3-0 or 3-1. Without the energy of a playoff crowd, hostile or friendly, and with escape from the bubble

looming, will teams be able to muster the commitment required to mount that kind of comeback?

"Everyone that's here, they feel it," Brind'Amour said. "It's a long time to be away. We've been away now three weeks and we've played three playoff games. So it's like, guys are feeling it."

Going into Tuesday's games, teams facing elimination in the Edmonton and Toronto bubbles -- not counting winner-take-all Game 5s in the qualifying round or Game 7s after that -- are 3-7 (.300).

If that doesn't sound very good, it's because it's not, albeit in a small sample. Teams in the same situation in 2019 went 7-9 (.437). Since 2017, they're 20-32 (.385) outside of the bubble. (Spare a thought for Paul Maurice's Winnipeg Jets, 0-3 in early elimination games over the past three seasons.) In all best-of-seven series historically, they're 406-555 (.422).

"That's the biggest thing that's not getting talked about enough," Brind'Amour said. "It's the thing that wasn't talked about enough when the format came out. It sounded great four months ago, to get back to playing."



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That's the situation the Hurricanes are in now, down 3-1 to the Boston Bruins, although the possibility of back-to-back games on Wednesday and Thursday certainly leaves open the possibility of a quick turnaround.

When facing elimination including Game 7s, the Hurricanes are 14-13 all-time, 9-5 in North Carolina. Outside of Game 7s, they're 9-10.

"It's definitely a different situation," Brock McGinn said Tuesday. "At the end of it we have a chance to win a Stanley Cup and that needs to be our mentality."

STAAL CLEAR?

One factor in the Hurricanes' dismal third period Monday was the loss of captain Jordan Staal after a jarring, clean hit by Bruins defenseman Charlie McAvoy. Staal got up slowly and went straight to the dressing room and did not return, a turning point in the game. The Bruins scored almost immediately to make it 2-2 on their way to four straight goals and a 4-3 win.

But Staal practiced Tuesday, a good sign for a player who missed a large chunk of the 2018-19 season with a concussion that was slow to resolve, although Brind'Amour wouldn't commit to Staal being available.

"We're kind of looking at him now, reevaluating where he is, how he feels," Brind'Amour said. "It's a good sign he was able to practice."

Andrei Svechnikov and Joel Edmundson, both "unfit to play," did not practice but were the only absentees, Brind'Amour said.

Boston coach Bruce Cassidy said Bruins forward David Pastrnak could potentially return in Game 5 after nearly full participation in practice on Tuesday.

HONORING HAWERCHUK

Dale Hawerchuk, one of the great goal-scorers of his generation and Svechnikov's junior coach with the Barrie Colts of the Ontario Hockey League, died of cancer at 57 on Tuesday, his family announced. Late in Hawerchuk's career, he played on a line with Brind'Amour with the Philadelphia Flyers. Brind'Amour said Hawerchuk volunteered to move to the wing so Brind'Amour, seven years his junior, could play center.

"You play with a lot of teammates and you very rarely remember how they played," Brind'Amour said. "You remember what kind of people they were, and he was such a great person. I can't even remember the games but I remember what a great guy he was."

TAILWINDS

The Hurricanes have been outshot in five straight games. That never happened in the regular season (the high was four games, Feb. 6-14). ... The Svechnikov-Sebastian Aho-Teuvo Teravainen combo has combined for 23 points, with Aho continuing to lead the NHL with 11. He's tied with Eric Staal (2006) for the most points through seven playoff games in franchise history. The other 18 Hurricanes skaters have combined for 28 points.

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1177847 Carolina Hurricanes

'Guys are feeling it.' Hurricanes regroup after collapse against smug, saucy Bruins.

BY CHIP ALEXANDER

Through four games of the Carolina Hurricanes' playoff series with the Boston Bruins, it remains one of the most telling plays.

Canes center Jordan Staal and Bruins defenseman Charlie McAvoy were battling along the boards. As they began to separate, McAvoy reached up and yanked Staal's helmet off his head, rolling it across the ice.

Staal is the Canes captain. Almost 32, he has played more than a thousand regular-season and playoff games in the NHL. He has won a Stanley Cup. He's also 6-4 and 230 pounds.

But McAvoy showed no regard or respect for any of that in Game 2, just as forward Brad Marchand showed no respect in taunting Justin Williams — then the Canes captain — in last year's Stanley Cup playoffs. McAvoy ripped off Staal's helmet and let it fly, a smug, saucy act of defiance that sums up the Bruins' hockey chutzpah.

Nor was a penalty called. It's hard to imagine, say, the Canes' Haydn Fleury pulling off Patrice Bergeron's helmet and giving it a fling and nothing being called. But McAvoy's impudence revealed the collective mindset of these Bruins, that they can play the game their way, do the things they want to do against the Canes and not be stopped.

THE CANES' THIRD PERIOD COLLAPSE

Much was said Monday after Game 4 about the Canes' third-period collapse in the stinging 4-3 loss. Williams said, "We got it handed to us," neatly summarizing everything.

It hurt that Staal left the game in the third after taking a heavy hit — from McAvoy. It hurt that two of the Canes' more physical players, forward Andrei Svechnikov and defenseman Joel Edmundson, already were out with injuries.

Staal was able to practice on Tuesday but Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said his availability for Game 5 was still to be determined after further evaluation. The Canes will need him.

Bruins coach Bruce Cassidy alluded to the fact a few days ago that the playoffs are about attrition, about the grind and the hits adding up along the way and the heavier, tougher team having the better of it. He meant his team, of course.

Boston Bruins left wing Brad Marchand (63) checks Carolina Hurricanes center Jordan Staal (11) during first-period NHL Eastern Conference Stanley Cup playoff hockey action in Toronto, Monday, Aug. 17, 2020

So it has been as the Bruins, despite losing forward David Pastrnak to a first-game injury, despite goalie Tuuka Rask leaving the bubble for personal reasons, have won three of the four games and driven the Canes to the brink in Toronto. One more loss in the series for the Canes and it's back to Raleigh, back home and to their families, back to whatever comes next in this pandemic age.

"That's obviously a disappointing loss and nobody's proud of what we did yesterday," center Vincent Trocheck said Tuesday. "To give up a lead like that in the third period, up two (goals) in the playoffs, is unacceptable but at the end of the day it's a seven-game series and we kind of had to look ourselves in the mirror last night and think to ourselves did we do enough? Kind of put it behind us now and look to the next game."

Brind'Amour said the team tried to have "some fun" at practice and rid themselves of all the negativity, noting, "We needed to turn the page."

THE BUBBLE'S MENTAL CHALLENGES

A year ago, Williams said a point comes in every playoff series when one team has had enough, whether physically or mentally. This could be that breaking point for the Hurricanes, who were swept by the Bruins in the Eastern Conference finals last year.

Brind'Amour was asked before Game 4 about coping with the mental challenges of life in the NHL bubble in Toronto, the time off the ice, and its effects on the players and coaches.

"This to me is the biggest challenge," he said. "Everybody wants to play. We'd play in the street if we had to."



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"Guys are feeling it. But it's a long road and the team that can hunker down the best and mentally channel all your positive energy to why we're here is the team that's probably going to be able to hoist the Cup when it's all done."

The Canes appear to be a team "feeling it." The Bruins appear to be a team hunkering down the best with Pastrnak out and Rask gone, the team with more positive energy. The team treating their opponent rudely on the ice.

Game 5 is Wednesday. The Canes either win or leave. It's that simple now.

"The desperation is going to have to be there from the start," Brind'Amour said.

HURRICANES VS. BRUINS

What: Game 5, Stanley Cup playoff series.

When: Wednesday, 4 p.m.

Where: Scotiabank Arena, Toronto.

Watch and listen: Fox Sports Carolinas, WCMC-99.9 The Fan, NBC Sports Network.

News Observer LOADED: 08.19.2020

1177825 Boston Bruins

Will David Pastrnak play? His chances are 'better than they were' for Game 4

By Nicole Yang boston.com staff, Updated August 18, 2020

David Pastrnak has been "unfit to participate" for the last three games of Boston's first-round playoff series against the Carolina Hurricanes after netting a goal and an assist in Game 1.

Bruins coach Bruce Cassidy says the chances of David Pastrnak playing in Game 5 against the Carolina Hurricanes are "better than they were" for Game 4 in the best-of-seven first-round playoff series in Toronto.

"He skated today, made it through practice, and did a few battle drills," Cassidy told reporters Tuesday afternoon via a Zoom conference. "The other day, we thought he had an outside chance. Now, I'd give it better than that."

A decision won't be made until Wednesday morning, when Pastrnak will be evaluated by the Bruins' medical staff. Cassidy acknowledged Game 5's earlier start time — the puck is scheduled to drop at 4 p.m. — slightly complicates things because there is not as much time for the team to assess Pastrnak's condition.

"If we feel he's 100 percent, and [there's] no risk of further injury, he'll be in the lineup," Cassidy said.

Pastrnak has been "unfit to participate" for the last three games of Boston's first-round playoff series against the Carolina Hurricanes. In Game 1, he scored a goal and notched an assist on Patrice Bergeron's game-winner in double overtime.

Patrice Bergeron and Brad Marchand were the only Bruins who did not participate in Tuesday's practice. Cassidy said he anticipates both players will be available Wednesday.

In Pastrnak's absence, Bergeron noted the replacement winger hasn't altered his and Marchand's approach that much. Forward Anders Bjork

started alongside the two veterans in the past three games, though the position seems fluid.

"Whoever that is, we feel comfortable," Bergeron said. "It's up to us to find a way. Again, it's a cliché, but communicating is always really important, especially when it's a new guy that doesn't have the same tendencies or know the tendencies we like to do as a line."

Patrice Bergeron said that even without David Pastrnak in the lineup, the Bruins haven't altered their approach.

On the power play, Bergeron said the Bruins miss Pastrnak's "big shot" and scoring ability, but he credited David Krejci for seamlessly filling in. The Bruins have converted on 27.3 percent of their power plays over the past three games.

"We're adding a guy like David Krejci that's making amazing plays, that's always so smooth with the puck, but also so patient and playing some amazing hockey right now," Bergeron said. "He's not much of a dropback, if you will."

Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour did not have an update on center Jordan Staal, who was on the receiving end of Charlie McAvoy's pulverizing hit in the third period of Game 4. McAvoy's check proved to be a turning point in the game, as the Bruins scored on their very next shot and rallied to score two more in a five-minute span.

Staal, who did not return to the game after leaving the ice for the dressing room, skated Tuesday, but Brind'Amour said his status for Game 5 is still to be determined.

Charlie McAvoy crashes into Carolina's Jordan Staal in the third period of Monday's game.

"It's a good sign he was able to practice," Brind'Amour said.

Hurricanes defenseman Joel Edmundson and winger Andrei Svechnikov both were "unfit to participate" during practice. Edmundson has missed the past three games, while Svechnikov has missed the past two.

Leading the series, 3-1, the Bruins can advance to the next round of the playoffs with a win Wednesday night.

"Everybody knows what's at stake," Cassidy said. "It's always an honor to win a playoff series. That's our focus right now. Carolina has different plans. They want to continue to play as well. Every game's been hard-fought. We'd expect no different."

Bruce Cassidy and the Bruins can close out the series Wednesday.

Defenseman Zdeno Charo called elimination games "the hardest to win."

If the Bruins advance, they will face the winner of the series between the Washington Capitals and New York Islanders. The Islanders lead the series, 3-0, with Game 4 scheduled for Tuesday evening.

Boston Globe LOADED: 08.19.2020

1177826 Boston Bruins

Bruins missing David Pastrnak on power play in playoffs

By RICHARD THOMPSON PUBLISHED: August 18, 2020 at 6:44 p.m. | UPDATED: August 18, 2020 at 6:48 p.m.

David Pastrnak's absence from the Bruins playoff series against the Carolina Hurricanes extends beyond finishing plays on the first line with Patrice Bergeron and Brad Marchand.



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Pastrnak played 25 minutes in Game 1 of the series before suffering an undisclosed lower body and has been MIA since.

Pastrnak participated in the Bruins' skate on Tuesday and could dress for Game 5 against the Hurricanes on Wednesday afternoon (4) at Scotiabank Arena in Toronto.

Pastrnak and Washington Capitals left wing Alex Ovechkin shared the Maurice "Rocket" Richard Trophy with 48 goals apiece before the NHL closed shop on March 12 in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic.

What separated Pastrnak (48-47-95) from Ovechkin (48-19-76) was the power play, even though they play similar roles in man up situations. Pastrnak finished with a league best 20 power-play goals to 13 for Ovechkin.

Pastrnak absence from the power play has been noticeable because he brings a credible threat to score on one-time slap shots from the left circle.

Pastrnak has been replaced on the elbow by veteran playmaker and second line center David Krejci. The Bruins were 0-for-3 on the power play in Monday night's 4-3 victory despite several solid opportunities and extended ice time in the Hurricanes' zone.

"One of the guys we rely on to bring the puck in is David (Pastrnak) but Krejci is very good at that," said Bruins coach Bruce Cassidy during a Zoom conference on Tuesday afternoon.

"How are we less effective without Pasta? Maybe (with him) we are able to finish some more. One of the things he does well is scoring on the power play from that elbow but Krejci was able to get a goal from there.

"I think we've functioned well and we've put Marchand in front recently. We've found a lot of our chances are happening in front there and nobody is tougher on the puck than Marchand.

"There have been a couple of adjustments there with Pasta out and we are functioning well but not getting the end result."

The Bruins finished the shortened regular season with the NHL's second most efficient power play behind the Edmonton Oilers. The Bruins scored 57 goals on 226 power play situations for a 25.2% success rate.

But after three round robin games and four matches against the Hurricanes, the Bruins are 3-for-24 with a 12.5% success rate. Krejci and defenseman Torey Krug, who quarterbacks the unit for the right point, both missed open nets in power play situations in Game 4 against Hurricanes goalie James Reimer.

"I'm only interested in the numbers in the playoff series against Carolina and haven't concerned myself with the round robin, that's behind us," said Cassidy.

"Obviously the power play was not clicking very well there but against Carolina I think we have generated some good looks and the toughest part for us is gaining entry into the zone.

"They do a good job at the blue line so we try different things and one resulted in a goal the other night by (Charlie) Coyle. But we've had a little bit of tough luck on it."

Crossing Jordan

Hurricanes captain Jordan Staal participated in Tuesday's practice and will likely be in uniform for Game 5. Staal exited the third period of Game 4 after absorbing a crushing but legal hit from Bruins defenseman Charlie McAvoy.

Staal landed hard on the ice, appeared dazed and required several seconds to get reacquainted to his surroundings. Staal was seen slamming his stick against a wall in the runway adjacent to the Hurricanes' bench upon leaving the rink.

"We are actually kind of looking at him now and evaluating," said Hurricanes' coach Rod Brind'Amour.

More on McAvoy

McAvoy has been the Bruins most visible player in the series beyond taking down the 6-4, 220-pound, Staal during a critical moment in Game 4.

In the Bruins seven postseason games, McAvoy has averaged a team high 24:25 minutes playing on first unit alongside team captain Zdeno Chara. McAvoy has skated a team high 221 shifts followed by Chara with 178.

McAvoy has averaged 25.38 minutes in the four games against the Hurricanes that included 33:45 in the Bruins 4-3 double overtime victory in Game 1.

McAvoy records extra minutes on the Bruins first team penalty kill while skating behind Krug on the second power-play unit. He is always on the ice against the opponent's best lines.

"Charlie is getting tough assignments in this series and we are moving forward," said Cassidy. "He's more physical and he's taking more responsibility in changing the flow of the game.

"The big hit and trying to attack when we are behind, all that factors in and he's much more involved in the penalty kill than when he first got here.

"All of a sudden he's an all situation guy and the only thing he's missed is that top power-play time and we've got Torey Krug there.

"You see his numbers going up and we need his legs and his physicality and he's chipping up against 25 and 26 minutes. At this time of the year some guys are going to see a little bit more and he's that guy."

Hawerchuk passing

Both Cassidy and Brind'Amour had past associations with Hall of Fame center Dale Hawerchuk, who died Tuesday after a battle with stomach cancer. He was 57.

Hawerchuk was the first overall pick in the 1981 NHL Draft by the Winnipeg Jets. He justified the selection by winning the Calder Memorial Trophy as the league's rookie of the year.

He would play 10 seasons in Winnipeg and later did time with the Sabres, Blues and Flyers. He retired with 518 goals, 891 assists and 1,409 points, good for 18th on the all-time list.

"I was fortunate to have played with him at the end," said Brind'Amour. "In Philadelphia we played together on the same line and he was just a great person."

Boston Herald LOADED: 08.19.2020

1177827 Boston Bruins

Bruins' third-period blitz could send them on their way

Four goals in 6:51 gives B's 3-1 series lead

By STEVE CONROY

Long Stanley Cup runs are rarely, if ever, a breeze. There comes a time during the two-month slog that a team sees its own mortality and refuses to blink.

Make no mistake, the Bruins are a long way from the final round of this tournament – even longer if Jaroslav Halak continues to play like he did on Monday night. But if the B's do find themselves playing for the Cup in a new-fangled October Classic, we will all look back at Monday's Game 4



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third-period comeback as the pivotal moment that sent them on their way.

After going eight periods without a 5-on-5 goal (with the exception of Brad Marchand's empty-netter in Game 3), the B's exploded for four even-strength goals in a span of 6:51 to rip the hearts out of the Carolina Hurricanes, strutting away with a 4-3 victory and a 3-1 series lead.

Here are the key takeaways:

"If Jake DeBrusk is not getting scoring chances, it is time to worry about the streaky left wing. But DeBrusk had been getting his looks in the first three games and he finally broke through in a big way. He used his speed to chip a puck past Hadyn Fleury and then beat a diving James Reimer to score the B's first goal and completely change the game. He then was on the final leg of beautiful play with linemates David Krejci and Ondrej Kase on the forecheck, scoring what turned out to be the game-winner.

For better and worse, things can snowball for DeBrusk, and the B's hope this is a sign of things to come.

"He kind of thrives when he gets a goal, gets a bounce. He feeds off of that and gets a ton of confidence. That's when he's at his best," said Marchand. "We just knew he needed one and he's been all around it. He's been playing really well. Has had a lot of really good, prime opportunities that he normally puts in. He came up big when we need it. He did a great job tonight. He really stepped up in a big way. I love the fire even – he starts battling a lot harder and competing harder and he was more engaged in the game. A great game by him tonight. We needed him to step up and he did and came through when it mattered."

Coach Bruce Cassidy would like to see DeBrusk contribute in a number of ways, but the manner in which he pitched in on Monday was exactly what they needed.

"Obviously he's a guy that measures himself probably too much about just with his goal-scoring. He can bring other things and pound pucks and make plays and be a net-front presence on the power play," said Cassidy. "But we need some goals, let's face it, we're having a tough time, missed some open nets early on and 5-on-5 scoring had been a few games. So good for him, happy for him. Sometimes he gets streaky, so hopefully this sets him off."

DeBrusk had been held off the board in the first three games, but he was encouraged by where his game was.

"Anytime you can contribute in a win, it's huge," said DeBrusk. "Obviously, we've had some pretty good looks in the series. I just wanted to, No. 1, try to find my game and just help the team. I kind of got lucky on the first one, I'd like to say, and a great play by my linemates on the second one. We rallied to win."

"Charlie McAvoy is in the process of proving his worth as a No. 1 defenseman. He's been very, very good in this series. But his third-period check on Jordan Staal after DeBrusk's first goal could be the defining moment of the series. Staal, who'd been playing a smothering defensive game to that point, was wheeling out of the Carolina zone with his head down when McAvoy sized him up, turning his backside to the oncoming Staal and put the big centerman on his duff. Staal, who has a concussion history, was very slow to get up and, when he did, he went down the tunnel to the dressing room, hurling his stick in anger. He did not return. Coach Rod Brind'Amour did not have an update.

"I started skating backwards, tried to kind of take a proper angle there. You want to make sure all your stuff is in so you don't deliver a dirty hit. You never hope to injure someone. Just to take the puck from a man and I hope he's doing OK," said McAvoy. "All I'm thinking is to try and separate a man from the puck and try get us possession back as quick as possible so we can play offense and try and tie the game up. That was really my only thought process. The game moves so fast and I just wanted to deliver a clean check and just do my job."

Connor Clifton tied it after the next puck drop.

"While Halak was good in Game 3 after being thrust into action upon the sudden departure of Tuukka Rask, he nearly cost the B's the game with a subpar performance. He spotted the Canes a two-goal lead on two eminently stoppable shots he appeared to simply miss with his glove, the first from Justin Williams, the second from Jordan Martinook. The third goal, a backhand off the blade of Teuvo Teravainen, was not exactly a Grade-A scoring chance either.

"Yeah I think they're both pucks he typically saves, both stoppable pucks, certainly the first one," said Cassidy. "Second one the guy is coming with some speed so there may be some options that Jaro has got to be careful he doesn't come out too far and challenge, Martinook can really skate, but yeah the end of the day we kept playing. You got to play through some stuff. These guys in the room know you win as a team, you lose as a team and I'm sure they wanted to pick Jaro up and eventually the puck bounced our way so hopefully get some work in tomorrow and be a little sharper in Game 5."

"Clifton has relocated Cliff Hockey. When Clifton first came up from Providence, he played a daring, gambling style of hockey that kept his coaches smiling and shaking their heads. But while injuries forced Clifton to the sidelines this year, so did the fact that he had tempered his game, almost to the point where he was playing too safe.

But for Clifton to be effective he needs to bring a certain amount of energy, and he's brought a ton of it since entering this series in Game 3. For the second game in a row he drew a first-period penalty, he picked up a secondary helper on DeBrusk's first goal and then tied the game when he walked into a Joakim Nordstrom feed and pounded the puck over Reimer's shoulder.

"We challenged the D after the first period to be more involved offensively in terms of helping create offense and get your shot through and work in the offensive blue line well," said Cassidy. "So Cliff, he wanted to let the coaching staff and myself personally know that he can do it and they can get the job done, so I was very happy for him. I mean, he's come into the lineup, hasn't played a lot of hockey, couple points tonight, big goal for us. And that fourth line, Nordy deserves to be rewarded, they played hard, been really really good for us and nice to see them get on the score sheet as well."

Said Clifton: "Great pass by Nordy, but I was ready to shoot all the way. At intermission, Butchy was harping on getting more pucks to the net, and bodies, and we did exactly that. Great net front presence by those guys in front and fortunately it went in."

"After the first period, Cassidy broke up his first and third lines, moving Charlie Coyle to the top line right wing, dropping Anders Bjork to third line left wing and moving Sean Kuraly to center with Jack Studnicka on the right wing.

"Well, listen, we needed offense and he's a more proven scorer than Anders. Anders is playing hard, pursuing pucks, that's a big ask of him going against top line, against (Jacob) Slavin and (Doug) Hamilton, too, so we just felt that we're having trouble scoring," said Cassidy. "We feel we're defending really hard, not giving up much, but we do need some offense to give us a boost so that's why we put Charlie there. Put Kuraly back in the middle with some young legs, it puts Bjork on his left side, I've always said he seems to have a little easier time there. Obviously depends on our lineup, what's available, and then Jack on the right, gives us a young line that can really skate, pursuit pucks, and I thought it gave us energy too, so helped out all around eventually. But at the end of the day, I think it was a big goal by Jake, a big hit by Charlie McAvoy that got us going and the other guys played well where they were slotted in."

Personally, I would have preferred to see Studnicka and Bjork simply flip right wing spots to Studnicka would get a shot at playing with Patrice Bergeron and Marchand. Still do. But it's hard to argue with the results.

"Rod Brind'Amour was deeply disappointed in his team's third period. The Canes were outshot 16-2 and, for the first time in the series they had



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that deer-in-the-headlights look that they wore for much of the Eastern Conference Finals last year.

"They threw everything at us and we didn't have an answer. It was tough to watch that's for sure," said Brind'Amour. "I love this team, I love my guys. We learned a lesson today, though. I've got to take the good always with this group, and it's been mostly good for me for a year and a half, two years, with the effort and the way they play, and I got to take the bad on this one. It wasn't good. You know we just sat back and we let them take it to us, and you know that's what championship teams do, they take it to you. So we've got to learn from that, for sure, but this one is going to sting for a while."

The B's are now in the driver's seat in this series, but it behooves them not to get too comfortable. If they can finish it off in Game 5 it would bode well for longer run, especially with the goaltending situation they are in right now. It is time to put the hammer down.

Boston Herald LOADED: 08.19.2020

1177828 Boston Bruins

Chances of David Pastrnak playing in Bruins-Hurricanes Game 5 improve

By Joe Haggerty August 18, 2020

The return of David Pastrnak is inching closer as the 24-year-old Bruins right winger practiced again on Tuesday and has a better chance of playing in Wednesday's Game 5 than he did in Monday night's Game 4 win over the Carolina Hurricanes.

Pastrnak has missed each of the last three games in the first-round series against the Hurricanes with an upper body injury suffered in the final moments of Game 1, but he's skated with the team since last weekend while working back from the injury.

Meanwhile, the Bruins have won without Pastrnak, but it's impossible to say they haven't missed him after watching Anders Bjork struggle trying to fill his spot on the top line alongside Patrice Bergeron and Brad Marchand.

"Better than they were," said Cassidy, when asked about the chances of Pastrnak suiting up for Game 5. "He skated today and made it through practice doing a few battle drills. Some of that will depend on how he feels in the morning with the residual effect.

"The other day we thought he had an outside chance, but now I'd give it better than that. We'll have to make a decision in the morning. A 4 p.m. game is tough because [for an evening game] you'd be able to test it out in the morning. That will be the challenge for the medical staff. If he's 100 percent with no risk for further injury, then he'll be in the lineup."

Haggerty: No supplemental discipline coming for McAvoy

Speaking of Bergeron and Marchand, both players were missing from the practice ice on Tuesday but are expected to be in the lineup for Game 5 on Wednesday afternoon with a chance to close out Carolina while up 3-1 in the best-of-seven series.

The question really becomes whether the Bruins should play Pastrnak given his situation, or use the benefits of a few extra days of rest and recovery if they can close out the Hurricanes in five games while waiting for their next opponent. The opinion of this humble hockey writer: There's zero reason to rush Pastrnak back with the B's in complete control of the series against a lesser opponent they've beaten in seven of the last eight playoff games over the last two seasons.

The Bruins and Pastrnak would be best-served sitting him for Game 5, hopefully closing out the series and then targeting the NHL leading goal-scorer's return for the next round whether it's against the Islanders, Tampa Bay or Philadelphia.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 08.19.2020

1177829 Boston Bruins

Source: No discipline coming for Charlie McAvoy's huge hit on Jordan Staal

By Joe Haggerty August 18, 2020

As expected, there won't be any supplemental discipline coming Charlie McAvoy's way for a textbook, clean hip check thrown in Boston's Game 4 win that turned the tide in a comeback win for the Black and Gold.

The NHL Department of Player Safety deemed the hip check a perfectly clean hit, and as such it wasn't penalized on the ice and wouldn't be subject to any discipline at all, per a league source. If anything, the NHL would point at the McAvoy hit as the exact kind of intense, physical and clean play that the league is looking for during the Stanley Cup Playoffs.

With the Bruins trailing by a 2-1 score in the third period after a Jake DeBrusk score, McAvoy tracked Jordan Staal at the Carolina blue line with a punishing hip check that was delivered perfectly and separated Staal from the puck. There was a bit of a follow-through at the very end of the hit consistent with throwing a check of that nature, but the force of the collision tossed Staal to the ice and forced him to exit the game.

The Bruins went on to score four unanswered goals in less than a seven-minute span and held on for a 4-3 win over the Hurricanes, and afterward pointed at the "good, hard clean hit" as a big momentum-changer in the final period.

Bean: Halak needs to be better than this for Bruins

McAvoy described his intentions behind the hit and the video replays back up the B's defenseman leading with his hip and then finishing the check with an upward motion consistent with throwing that kind of hit.

"I started skating backwards, tried to kind of take a proper angle there. You want to make sure all your stuff is in, so you don't deliver a dirty hit," said McAvoy. "You never hope to injure someone. Just to take the puck from a man and I hope he's doing okay.

All I'm thinking is to try and separate a man from the puck and try get us possession back as quickly as possible, so we can play offense and try and tie the game up. That was really my only thought process. The game moves so fast and I just wanted to deliver a clean check and just do my job.

Shortly after delivering that devastating check, the Bruins tied up the game on a Connor Clifton goal and were well on their way to delivering a third period dagger to the Hurricanes that now has them up 3-1 in the best-of-seven series.

The good news for the Hurricanes: Jordan Staal was on the ice and practicing with the Canes on Tuesday afternoon, so it seems that he was no worse for the wear after the hellacious collision.

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1177830 Boston Bruins



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Jaroslav Halak is better than this, and he'll need to be for Bruins

By DJ Bean August 18, 2020

If you showed somebody every goal the Bruins have given up this postseason and asked which goalie seemed like their head wasn't in it, the answer would not be the guy who went home.

Instead, it would be Jaroslav Halak, who has given up arguably the three worst goals of a series that has also featured Petr Mrazek and James Reimer.

Halak is better than this. You know it, I know it, we all know it.

So the Bruins had better hope their backup-turned-starter's play through two games has been a product of temporary rust that will eventually subside. They can make a run if Halak is very good. If he's just OK, probably not. If he is what he was in Game 4? They'll be an easy out in the second round.

It can't be overstated how huge the Bruins' third period was Monday. Down 2-0, they scored four goals in a row in the third period while not allowing a shot until the 18th minute. That Hurricanes shot went in, but Boston still held on to take a 3-1 stranglehold on the series.

Haggerty: McAvoy brings the energy with massive hit on Staal

Had the Bruins not had that period, we'd be looking at a tied series and a Bruins team that — in addition to not being able to put the puck past bad goaltenders — had an issue in net.

Instead, the Bruins have three games to polish off Carolina and prepare for (probably) the Lightning. There isn't major pressure on them to rush David Pastrnak back into the lineup, but getting a strong performance from Halak sure would help everyone rest easier.

Halak was fine in Game 3, which was also just his second game since the return. Between the time off and the fact that he only allowed one goal — a terrible giveaway on his part — his actual play was hardly a story. The headline was that he filled in at the last minute and got the win.

Game 4 obviously stood out. Great goalies allow three goals all the time, but context is key for this performance.

Carolina's first two goals came from simply throwing pucks at the net glove side from the top of the circle and Halak missing them. If the circumstances were different and there were a veteran backup at the ready (it's AHL youngster Dan Vladar), a bullpen call would have warranted after Jordan Martinook's second period tally.

Haggerty's Talking Points from B's-Canes Game 4

Then the Bruins figured out how to limit the damage: They just didn't let Carolina shoot in the third. They dominated, scored and kept the puck the hell away from their own end as the Hurricanes didn't manage a single shot on Halak until they'd pulled their goalie. When that first shot at 18:33 did sneak under Halak's pad with 1:27 left, the game somehow felt like it could still slip away.

The Bruins held Carolina to just one more shot, though, and held on. Now they can look ahead to Game 5 and honestly, Halak should feel like he has a new lease on life. He can look at Monday as a case of him not having his A-game (or D+ game) as he continued to get acclimated, but taking a victory out of it nonetheless. The clunker can be behind him and he can move on having not cost the team.

The Bruins should view it that way too. Maybe that's being optimistic, but Halak's two years in Boston have shown he's far more capable than what we've seen so far in the playoffs.

The Bruins aren't a team that wins in spite of their goaltender. They've spent too much money at the position and have had too good of

netminders for that to be the case. And truthfully, despite their regular season finish, they aren't good enough to win without goaltending in the playoffs. They need Halak to be good. That can start Wednesday.

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1177831 Boston Bruins

Bruins vs. Hurricanes takeaways: Dominant 3rd period carries B's to Game 4 win

By Nick Goss August 17, 2020

The Boston Bruins are one win away from advancing to the second round of the Stanley Cup Playoffs for the third consecutive season.

The B's overcame a 2-0 third period deficit with four unanswered goals and ultimately earned a 4-3 win over the Carolina Hurricanes in Monday night's Game 4 at Scotiabank Arena in Toronto. The victory gives Boston a commanding 3-1 series lead.

Hurricanes goalie James Reimer has seen this movie before. This isn't the first time he's watched his team blow a lead against the Bruins and lose a playoff game. It happened a few times in 2013, most notably in Game 7 of the first round when Reimer and the Toronto Maple Leafs gave up a 4-1 third period lead and lost 5-4 in overtime.

The @NHLBruins erased a 2-0 deficit with four goals in a span of 6:51 in the third period to take a 3-1 series lead.

It marked the 11th time in franchise history that Boston has rallied from a multi-goal deficit in the final period of a playoff game to win. #NHLStats #StanleyCup pic.twitter.com/UinfCgbtn3

— NHL Public Relations (@PR_NHL) August 18, 2020

Here are three takeaways from Game 4.

1. B's totally dominated third period

The Bruins were so much better than the Hurricanes in the final 20 minutes that it seemed like they played with an extra skater.

Here's a look at the stats from the third period (via Natural Stat Trick).

Goals: 4-1 Bruins

Shot attempts: 27-9 Bruins

Shots on net: 16-2 Bruins

Scoring chances: 11-5 Bruins

High-danger scoring chances: 6-1 Bruins

At one point, the Bruins had a 15-0 edge in shots on net during the third period. They scored on four of those shots in a 6:51 stretch to take the lead.

Going from down 2-0 to up 4-2 on the Hurricanes in Game 4 of their 1st Round series tonight, the @NHLBruins record their 6th fastest ever occurrence of 4 goals in a playoff game (6 minutes, 51 seconds)- fastest since their franchise record 4 in 4:14 vs VAN on June 13, 2011 pic.twitter.com/DmFxVdEDVI

— StatsCentre (@StatsCentre) August 18, 2020

The Bruins have a lot more playoff experience than the Hurricanes and it showed in the third period. Boston's best players stepped up when the game was on the line and Carolina was unable to slow that momentum.

WATCH: Best highlights from Bruins' Game 4 win



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2. Jake DeBrusk breaks out of slump

DeBrusk had been knocking at the door throughout this first round series and he finally broke through in Game 4.

The 23-year-old left winger scored twice in the third period. His first tally got the Bruins on the board after a tremendous effort to win the race to the puck, evade oncoming Hurricanes goalie James Reimer and score while diving to the ice.

The speed. The goal. Wow.

The @NHLBruins have life thanks to Jake DeBrusk! 🏒 #NHLBruins | #StanleyCup pic.twitter.com/9mSideK5cD

— #StanleyCup Playoffs on NBC (@NHLonNBCSports) August 18, 2020

DeBrusk put the B's up 4-2 with a goal that finished a beautiful passing sequence including linemates David Krejci and Ondrej Kase.

The Bruins didn't just get hot... they got 🔥 H O T 🔥

Jake DeBrusk nets his 2nd of the period. #NHLBruins | #StanleyCup pic.twitter.com/UO5QMsABoT

— #StanleyCup Playoffs on NBC (@NHLonNBCSports) August 18, 2020

DeBrusk's offensive production is a very welcomed development for the Bruins. They're going to need secondary scoring from him throughout the playoffs, especially while superstar winger David Pastrnak is out of the lineup due to injury. DeBrusk had scored only two goals in his previous 20 games dating back to the regular season.

Haggerty: Talking points from Game 4

3. Jaroslav Halak must be better

Jaroslav Halak's performance in Game 3 was subpar.

He gave up two soft goals, one in the first period and another in the second period, that put Boston in a 2-0 hole. He also allowed a goal in the third period on what looked like a pass attempt from Hurricanes forward Teuvo Teravainen. Overall, Halak surrendered three goals on just 19 shots against.

"I think they're both pucks he typically saves," Bruins head coach Bruce Cassidy said of the first two goals Halak gave up. "Both stoppable pucks, certainly the first one. The second one, the guy's coming in with some speed, so maybe there's some options that Jaro's gotta be careful he doesn't come too far and challenge -- (Jordan) Martinook can really skate. At the end of the day, we kept playing. You've got to play through some stuff. These guys in the locker room know you win as a team and lose as a team. I'm sure they wanted to pick Jaro up and eventually the puck bounced our way. Hopefully we'll get some work in tomorrow and get a little sharper for Game 5."

Halak is fully capable of being a reliable goaltender in the playoffs -- we saw that in Game 3 when he played fantastic in Boston's win just hours after starting netminder Tuukka Rask announced his decision to opt out of the postseason. However, there will be games from time to time where the goaltending isn't great, and the Bruins will need to depend on their scoring depth to overcome that. Game 4 was a good example of the Bruins picking up their goaltender and winning a game they easily could have lost.

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1177832 Boston Bruins

Charlie McAvoy's massive hit keys Bruins' Game 4 win, continues dominant postseason

By Joe Haggerty August 18, 2020

There were a handful of memorable moments from Boston's third period comeback in Game 4 where the team scored four goals in less than seven minutes to erase a two-goal deficit.

But the biggest momentum-shifter wasn't a lamp-lighter at all, but instead a devastating third period hip check thrown by Charlie McAvoy that knocked Jordan Staal out of Boston's 4-3 win over the Carolina Hurricanes in Game 4 at Scotiabank Arena.

The Bruins had already halved Carolina's lead to a 2-1 score when McAvoy lined up Staal with his head down at the Canes offensive blue line, but the check energized Boston's bench with the exact kind of self-powered, momentum-shifting play that hockey players need to get them over the hump in these most unique of playoffs.

It was a massive collision between the 220-pound Staal and the 208-pound McAvoy, but it was also very clear from the start that Staal got the worst of it. There was nothing illegal about the check with a high finish to the head with a raised McAvoy elbow, so it felt much more like an iconic postseason collision than something that's going to lead to supplemental discipline.

"He's got a lot of meat over there," said a smiling Jake DeBrusk of McAvoy's punishing check as the two were side-by-side at the podium following the game. "The reaction of the bench [was huge]. It's so weird without fans, to be honest with you. Anytime there's a big play or a good scoring chance, the only way you know is by the bench reaction. Obviously, it was a big hit and it was a good moment for us. That's when we were coming hard."

Haggerty: Talking Points from Bruins' Game 4 win

Connor Clifton scored on the very next shift to tie the game and the Bruins scored two more goals in the four-goal outburst in the third period, but it was McAvoy completely blowing up Staal that really changed things for both hockey clubs.

"[The DeBrusk goal] started it for us. Now we're back in the game right and we've got a chance. And then the McAvoy hit. I think we were playing and we were going to push and we were pushing, so obviously it helps us a lot, but I think it really demoralizes the other team," said Bruins head coach Cassidy. "When one of your veteran players, a leader in your room, or really a respected player in this league, takes a good hard clean hit, like I said, it affects your group."

It affected us positively and probably [the Hurricanes] in a negative manner. They lose a guy that's a shutdown centerman and had been doing a real good job against [Patrice Bergeron's] line that game, so for us it really helped.

Staal didn't return to Game 4 after getting knocked to the ice and he appeared upset on his way to the dressing room after the play, as if the veteran center knew that he might be injured in some way by the collision. For his part, McAvoy said he felt like it was a clean hit delivered to separate the player from the puck, and that's exactly what happened while the B's defenseman was making a physical statement to the Hurricanes.

Game 4 highlights: B's rally for the 4-3 victory

"You have to be able to create your own energy on the bench. Going into that third period and obviously you're down two [goals] and the game hadn't really been in our favor. We had some chances and stuff, but we were looking to create some energy and that was kind of the message," said McAvoy. "It was the opportunity to step up and make a hit. I started skating backwards, tried to kind of take a proper angle there. You want to make sure all your stuff is in [check] so you don't deliver a dirty hit."

"You never hope to injure someone, just [trying] to take the puck from a man. I hope he's doing OK. All I'm thinking is to try and separate a man from the puck and try get us possession back as quickly as possible so



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we can play offense and try and tie the game up. That was really my only thought process. The game moves so fast and I just wanted to deliver a clean check and just do my job."

It's been a special kind of playoff for McAvoy to this point as he plays big minutes, involves himself in the offense in a more assertive way and is bringing physicality that's changing the momentum in these playoff games.

McAvoy's Game 4 hit on Staal that helped changed Boston's fortune for the better will also go down as another massive play by a youngster really coming into his own as a No. 1 defenseman.

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1177833 Boston Bruins

Bruins vs. Hurricanes Talking Points: B's furious rally caps 4-3 win in Game 4

By Joe Haggerty August 17, 2020

For the 11th time in franchise history, the Bruins rallied to win a playoff game after facing a multi-goal deficit in the third period. On Monday, that meant scoring four goals in a span of just 6:51 to grab a 4-3 victory over the Hurricanes — and a 3-1 series lead.

Here are some Talking Points after the B's Game 4 victory in Toronto.

GOLD STAR: Jake DeBrusk has been all over it with scoring chances throughout the series against the Carolina Hurricanes and he finally broke through in Boston's third period explosion against the Canes.

It all happened in the third period when DeBrusk made a great individual play to chip the puck to himself behind Haydn Fleury and then beat James Reimer to get the Bruins on the board. Then DeBrusk closed it out in the third period with another score to give the B's the additional scoring they would need to close out the game. DeBrusk finished with three shots on net, nine shot attempts and the two goals along with a plus-1 rating in 16:07 of ice time, and changes how dangerous the B's are when he can provide some secondary offense.

The whole third period comeback started with DeBrusk making a great individual play with his speed and his goal-scoring and that's why he continues to get top-6 looks through all of his ups and downs.

BLACK EYE: Once again Jaccob Slavin is supposed to be the shutdown defenseman for the Hurricanes and he was victimized by the Bruins.

Slavin finished a minus-2 in 29:09 of ice time and was caught watching the paint dry on an important breakaway goal for Brad Marchand in the third period. Marchand got behind both Carolina defenders and took a bank stretch pass off the side boards from Torey Krug to spring him, but it all started with Hurricanes defenders falling asleep and letting Marchand get behind them.

Slavin is a minus-4 in this series against the Bruins and is a minus-7 in each of the last two postseasons against a Black and Gold team that he can't shut down. It's going to be impossible for the Hurricanes to win against the Bruins if their best defenders can't stop Boston's best offensive players.

Highlights: B's rally past Hurricanes for Game 4 victory

TURNING POINT: The Bruins had already begun to gather energy with a Jake DeBrusk goal that halved Carolina's lead, but the game turned when Charlie McAvoy lined up Jordan Staal and crushed him with a clean, punishing hip check.

The hit knocked Staal out of the game and gave the B's exactly the kind of momentum they needed to leave the Hurricanes in the dust. Connor Clifton tied it up on the ensuing shift and the Bruins added two more goals in a seven-minute span to close out a 4-3 win where the B's totally dominated the final 20 minutes.

For McAvoy, it's another part of an outstanding postseason that the Bruins defenseman is putting together where he's playing huge minutes, getting involved offensively with a more assertive style and bringing some physicality into the mix as well in game-changing fashion.

HONORABLE MENTION: Connor Clifton might not be coming out of the lineup for a while. The Bruins defenseman's first multi-point playoff game of his career included a game-tying goal in the third period.

Clifton was a physical factor with three registered hits in 14:37 of ice time, two shot attempts and he was aggressive with both his entries into the offensive zone and his willingness to push the envelope for the Black and Gold. Clifton has actually been the best version of himself in this postseason for the Bruins, and it may be that Jeremy Lauzon isn't going to be getting another chance to play for a bit. Because it feels like Clifty Hockey is here to stay for now.

There were times during the regular season when Clifton wasn't much of a factor in games, but he's been noticeable just about every time that he's been out there recently.

BY THE NUMBERS: 16-2 — the shots on net disparity between the Bruins and the Hurricanes in the third period as the B's clearly decided to take things to a level that Carolina just can't get to at this point in time in their development.

QUOTE TO NOTE: "He's got a lot of meat over there." -- Jake DeBrusk on the force of the devastating Charlie McAvoy hip check on Jordan Staal.

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1177834 Boston Bruins

Space force: Ondrej Kase sparkles in enclosed and open ice

By Fluto Shinzawa Aug 18, 2020

Ondrej Kase does not mind congestion.

One reason the Bruins acquired the right wing from Anaheim is his willingness to hurtle into dangerous ice. It's not inviting territory. Bodies are thick. Sticks are heavy. Elbows are sharp. Tempers are short.

Nevertheless, the 24-year-old from Kadan, Czech Republic, likes close-quarters hockey, perhaps to a fault because of how he often places himself in harm's way. Not all European players, who grew up on the friendlier stretches of 100-foot-wide rinks, raise their hands for this style.

"He's been here long enough to know that you have to get inside to get really good scoring chances," Bruce Cassidy said. "Teams protect the middle better. They're going to give you the outside ice, then close you off in a hurry when you get down toward the hashmark, goal line, interior slot area. He has no reservations about getting there."

Part of what's made Kase an asset through Round 1, however, is that he has not forgotten his wide-ice roots. When appropriate, Kase has kept his distance.

Consider how he helped to initiate Jake DeBrusk's Game 4 winner. When Martin Necas tried to rim the puck from behind his net to strong-side winger Teuvo Teravainen, Kase was standing on the edge of the



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crease as the first forechecker. This put him in good position down low when David Krejci intercepted Necas' rim.

Krejci settled the puck on the right-side half-wall. Some players, in Kase's position, would have slammed on the brakes, lifted their sticks and called for the puck in the slot.

Had Kase done so, he would have been in better position to put a shot on goal. But it would have given Necas and Dougie Hamilton the opportunity to stretch out their sticks and disrupt Kase's shot.

So instead of stopping, Kase peeled out into the high slot in anticipation of Krejci's pass. It was a critical decision.

By doing so, Kase forced Hamilton to chase him instead of occupying the front of the net. This was Hamilton's job. Carolina plays man-to-man defense. In such cases, you could argue that zone is a better goal-prevention option.

Because Hamilton was pursuing Kase and Jacob Slavin was trying to defend Krejci, there was enough free ice in front of the Carolina net to park an 18-wheeler. DeBrusk took advantage. Kase slipped the puck there. His linemate took care of the rest.

It was Kase's second assist of the game and third of the series. The No. 2 right wing has been even more potent at putting pucks on net, even if he has yet to score.

At 5-on-5, Kase leads the team with 12 shots in Round 1. He's averaging 12.5 shots per 60 minutes of play, according to Natural Stat Trick, second-most after Jack Studnicka (13.98). It is not out of character. In 2017-18, when he set career highs in games played (66) and points (38), Kase averaged a team-leading 9.46 shots/60.

"He's getting his looks," Cassidy said before Game 4. "He just might be one of those guys that's a volume shooter to score his goals. If that's the case, he's getting his chances. So they're going to come. I like his quickness. I like his puck pursuit. He's been on pucks, second effort on pucks. This is a second-effort league."

Power play tweaks

The Bruins do not like to dump the puck to gain entry on power plays. Cassidy prefers defenseman Torey Krug to be his first carry-in look. If opponents deny Krug, Brad Marchand and David Pastrnak are speed-entry options on the flanks.

But Carolina has constructed blue-line barriers to deny clean entries. It's forced the Bruins to send pucks in behind defensemen, which is not their preference because of the possible loss of possession.

"We've tried that a couple times," Cassidy said. "Different ways to do that, whether it's indirect, hard off the boards, softly. They've done a good job clogging our outside speed lanes."

Cassidy liked how Marchand and Krejci executed effective puck placement and retrieval in Game 3. Krejci flipped the puck into the left corner. Marchand chased it down, lifting Brock McGinn's stick en route. Charlie Coyle followed up by swatting a mid-air rebound past Petr Mrazek.

When the Bruins set up in the offensive zone, DeBrusk and Coyle usually fought for the job of net-front presence on the No. 1 power-play unit.

But after the first two games, the Bruins' internal data showed they were getting a higher number of in-tight sniffs than usual. So Cassidy reworked the first unit. He made Marchand, who formerly occupied the right-side half-wall, the net-front man. Coyle moved out to the half-boards.

Marchand is not a typical down-low widebody. Coyle, for example, can blot out the sun because of his 6-foot-3, 220-pound frame. But for whatever Marchand gives up in size and shot-tipping touch, he grabs back in loose-puck tenaciousness.

"We found a lot of our chances are happening in front there," Cassidy explained. "There's no one tougher on the puck than Marsh."

Pastrnak practices

Pastrnak skated for the second straight day, according to Cassidy. The right wing may dress for Game 5 after missing the last three because of an undisclosed injury.

"The other day, we thought he had an outside chance," Cassidy said. "Now I'd give it better than that."

If Pastrnak plays, the Bruins would have to decide between Studnicka and Anders Bjork at No. 3 right wing.

The Athletic LOADED: 08.19.2020

1177963 Websites

The Athletic / What should a player do when he breaks his stick in the D-zone?

By Eric Duhatschek Aug 18, 2020

It is the last play in hockey that isn't overcoached: What should a player do when he breaks his stick in the defensive zone?

If you're a fan of the Calgary Flames, you're probably thinking it needs to be coached up more.

The Flames lost an overtime game to the Dallas Stars on Sunday night when Alexander Radulov tipped in a point shot from John Klingberg to cap a stirring comeback and square the series at two games apiece.

For anyone who missed the sequence that led to the winning goal, it was a familiar enough play – harmless most of the time, costly on this day.

Flames' defenceman T.J. Brodie had the shaft of his stick snap in half, defending a play in the defensive zone. Dillon Dube, the forward on that side of the ice, saw Brodie's dilemma and did what is usually expected under those circumstances: He handed him his own stick so Brodie could defend the area nearer the net.

It left Dube without a stick and facing a quandary – what to do next?

Continue defending, without a stick?

Or make a beeline to the bench, in order to change or get a fresh twig?

Dube did what players almost always do in that situation, he stayed on the ice, tried to fill a lane. But what happened next almost always does as well. Bedlam ensued. The remaining forwards on the ice started trying to do each other's job, with predictable results.

Klingberg, knowing Dube wasn't in a position to pokecheck him, had an opportunity to step into his shot. The slight tip, by Radulov, beat goalie Cam Talbot for the winning goal.

So, philosophically, should something different have happened there?

Could Dube have made his way to the bench, even if that would have left the Flames playing a skater short in the defensive zone for a few seconds, in order to retrieve a stick?

It's a topic that was fiercely debated afterward, likely because it's one of the few moments in the game of hockey anymore where there really isn't a definitive correct answer.

When a player breaks his stick in the defensive zone, his team is effectively a man short. But unlike actual penalty-killing – which is heavily coached and where everybody knows precisely where they should be most of the time – the presence of a player without a stick turns a choreographed play into an act of improv.



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Is there a better way?

According to former NHLer turned broadcaster Jim Fox, the answer is almost certainly yes.

Fox says he has long believed there is a solution that depends upon two variables: Long or short change. If it's the first or third period, the period of the short change, it's easier.

"If it's a short change, whoever breaks his stick, should slowly make his way to the side of the ice where the bench is," said Fox. "If he's the guy closest to the boards, you don't have to worry. It's two seconds. If he's not, if he's the forward on the far side, he checks off with teammates, so there's a plan here and he takes a quick peek and then he goes get the stick.

"On the long change, it's a little harder, but I'd do the same thing. Make your way to the side of the ice closest to the bench. There should be a code word or a heads-up that you're coming, but then you go to the bench and the other players on the ice adjust until you get back."

Fox played in the NHL between 1980 and 1990 and has worked as a television colour commentator ever since.

So, he's seen the evolution of the game, on many levels, including how much more common it is for today's players to block shots.

"How were we coached before? It's the same as what they're doing now," said Fox. "Forward gives his stick to the defenceman and you do your best.

"The other team is going to continue to attack that spot. A team has far more time and space than usual because you don't have your stick... So, they go right at you.

"And the player who ends up getting a shot through usually has pretty good momentum because he doesn't have to worry about hitting a stick. Now, he can take a step forward and lean into his shot – which normally, he couldn't do because the extra second that he needs to step forward and lean into his shot wouldn't be there if a player had his stick and could just harmlessly deflect the shot away."

That's exactly what happened with Klingberg on the winning goal. He had the good sense to know he had more time – and more open ice than usual – and took full advantage.

Fox acknowledged that for as long as he's worked in radio and on television, it isn't a topic that's come up very often.

The problem with playoff hockey, of course, is that everything gets magnified.

Every controversial play around the net results in a conversation about what is, and isn't, goalie interference.

Every close call at the blue line results in a conversation about whether the definition of offside needs to be amended.

And whenever a deciding goal is scored on a broken play, you wonder if something additional could have been done to prevent it happening.

"Teams should practice this," said Fox. "It should be a normal part of practice – far wing guy moves his way into the middle and then to the near boards – a two-step process. If you're the centre and you've broken your stick, it's a one-step process. If you're the closest guy to the bench, you just go and other players adapt. You form a box and you go into penalty-kill mode for a few seconds and four seconds later, the guy's back."

So why, in an era when coaching is so sophisticated, has nothing changed for decades? Fox played in the era of wooden sticks, where sticks rarely snapped in the middle of the shaft the way Brodie's did on the play in question. Moreover, players nowadays, tend to block far more shots than they once did.

Mostly, though, it's because there is something about a player without a stick voluntarily leaving the zone to retrieve a new one that just doesn't look right.

"There's no question: You can go to the bench, but I've seen that backfire too," said a former NHL coach. "By the time you get back, they've found a passing lane and they've put it in. So, I don't think there's a perfect answer to how you should play it.

"If you break your stick in the offensive zone, and you're pursuing the play as a back checker, you can just swing by your bench and very easily and conveniently pick up your stick and you're on your way.

"Now, when that stick breaks in the defensive zone and you can't get to the bench without putting yourself well behind the play, the advice we've always given is: Get back into the defensive zone.

"The key is, don't be overaggressive. Don't start to chase – because you don't have a stick. Try to get in shot lanes as best you can. Occupy passing lanes if you can, though, without a stick, that's not easy. But your presence can also sometimes be enough to discourage a player from using a passing lane."

Above all, coaches don't want to see a defenceman or a centre playing without a stick.

"It's almost a cardinal rule," said another coach. "The forward gives the D-man his stick. It's also a bit of a rule, if the centreman breaks his stick, the closest winger drops down and gives him his stick because you want your low three – your two D-men and your forward – to be able to handle the puck down low if they happen to get the puck and not have to kick it.

"The problem when a player breaks his stick in the defensive zone is, everybody tends to get a little antsy. With forwards nowadays, there's no reticence to block shots. It's expected. So, a player without a stick is still a shot blocker. The problem with (Fox's idea), that's a hard thing sometimes to execute under stress. When a guy breaks his stick, it does become a little bit of a fire drill. The key is, don't get antsy. Just settle down. And the guy that settles it down is the one without the stick – by not being a chaser.

"When he starts chasing, he's just wasting his time. He's giving himself up. If he's going to chase, he may as well have gone to the bench to get a stick."

Even if it looks odd to have a player voluntarily vacate the zone when the opposing team has possession of the puck, Fox believes the time away is statistically negligible. If a team can kill off five consecutive minor penalties – as Calgary did in the loss against Dallas – they should be able to survive the few seconds that they're effectively shorthanded as the player retrieves a new stick.

"You break it down into numbers, which everyone does nowadays," said Fox. "How long are you actually a man short – about seven seconds. I imagine the percentages are pretty low – that you're going to score a goal in the seven seconds when your guy goes to the bench."

According to Fox, one of the biggest changes since his playing days is the way players close in on the puck carrier far more quickly – forcing decisions to be made far more hurriedly on the ice than they once were. Facing an opponent without a stick creates a luxury of time that current players rarely get anymore and adds precious seconds to the decision-making process, which players with good hockey sense naturally exploit.

"Most of the time, when guys are just trying to get it through, they're shooting off their back foot, and leaning backwards and moving until they see an opening," said Fox. "Once they see it, they're throwing it to the net – regardless of their foot position, or how set they are to shoot. A lot of times, when the shot is coming through like that, you can even just use your glove to knock it down.

"But if you have a chance to step into the shot, it changes everything."



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Because hockey is so much heavier into analytics, Fox believes one day teams will eventually have enough data points to determine what the correct decision there should be.

"The question would be, why not try it?" said Fox. "And the answer will be, 'we've documented this 450,000 times over the last 10 years and they'll put it through a computer and it'll show that when you stay on the ice, they score more than if you went to the bench.'"

Fox laughed.

"But since no one leaves to go to the bench, you don't have any data," he said. "So, you'll have to compare it to penalty-killing numbers. That would be the next step."

"There's all kinds of ideas," said the NHL coach. "Sometimes, if it's a five-on-five situation and a stick breaks it, it might be worth the gamble to go to the bench, especially if the play is in the corner and the puck carrier is under a bit of pressure. In that situation, maybe a player should read that and make the move to the bench. There always needs to be a little bit of read-and-react, players need to be alert to as well."

"Where it's difficult to accept is when it costs you a game — and maybe, in the end, it might cost you a series."

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The Athletic / Ryan O'Reilly: How the NHL's most unique defensive centre torments his opponents

By Thomas Drance Aug 18, 2020

EDMONTON — Ryan O'Reilly's dominance is the product of small habits, clever reads and relentless work. It's his ability to think the game, to completely control play along the wall and in the middle of the ice; a correlation of forces that make O'Reilly an all-around nightmare to match up against.

O'Reilly has successfully shut down everything he's faced over four games in the St. Louis Blues' first-round series against the Vancouver Canucks, but he couldn't stop this.

His teammate Alex Pietrangolo was laying it on thick. He was singing O'Reilly praises on the heels of a dominant two-goal performance in Game 4. As Pietrangolo praised him, O'Reilly seemed to become increasingly uncomfortable. It was visible. It was a team win, after all, this wasn't about him.

"You create chances, you create turnovers, you create opportunities, you're going to score goals," Pietrangolo said of O'Reilly. "I know for me when I'm out there, at least with the whole line, especially him, you know what the game's going to be. We read off each other. Him and David Perron read off each other, they've done that for a while. I think the best part about playing with these guys is if they do make a mistake and they do turn the puck over, which happens when you have high skill like they do, the goal is to get that thing back as fast as possible: That's the definition of a two-way player. Again, it's why you win the Selke, doing everything at all ends of the ice and penalty kill too, draws and clears and blocks. As much praise as he gets and he deserves it, there's a lot of little things that I don't think people even realize that he does that go a long way in the game. That's the definition of being a high-end player and he deserves all the attention he's getting."

When Pietrangolo's comments were mercifully over and the Zoom call was about to end, O'Reilly turned to his teammate and gave him a quick, genuine, "Thanks bud!"

That Pietrangolo managed to make O'Reilly appear uncomfortable for a fleeting moment on Monday night is an accomplishment that has eluded the Canucks so far in this first-round series. O'Reilly has tormented, throttled and crushed Vancouver under a torrent of stick lifts, clever reads, face-off wins, and good body position. He's punished their mistakes with dynamic skill.

He's willed a shorthanded Blues team, the defending Stanley Cup champions, back into this series.

O'Reilly's contributions aren't exactly a secret. He's the reigning Selke and Conn Smythe winner, for crying out loud. And yet when Pietrangolo said, "there's a lot of little things that I don't think people even realize that he does that go a long way," he's dead on.

The fact is that O'Reilly's skills are subtle. He's the type of player that, even though his reputation precedes him, even his fellow NHL players don't realize just how good he is until they get a chance to play with him and watch him work every day.

So in the wake of O'Reilly's latest dominant performance, let's take Pietrangolo up on his challenge and identify some of the small things that O'Reilly does that have made him such a problem for the Canucks in this series.

The stick

O'Reilly has the best stick in the NHL and it isn't all that close.

The stick itself is unique, or at least, the blade is. O'Reilly has an absurd curve on the toe of his stick. The sort that even fellow NHLers describe as "gross."

IF YOU'RE WONDERING WHY RYAN O'REILLY IS ABLE TO HANDLE PUCKS IN BY HIS FEET AND WAS SO TIGHT ON THAT WRAP AROUND GOAL, CHECK OUT HIS CURVE...

UNLIKE ANYTHING ELSE IN THE LEAGUE
PIC.TWITTER.COM/RWQGHMHLG6

— MIKE JOHNSON (@MIKE_P_JOHNSON) JUNE 4, 2019

Even O'Reilly admits the curve on the toe of his stick blade is "dramatic."

"But I see some curves, there's some curves on my team even, that I would never think to use," O'Reilly protested, when quizzed about the curve of his blade way back in October. "My curve might look weird, but I don't really do anything off of my toe, so it doesn't really affect me. It's not that weird a curve when you take that away."

There are a few other players with curves on the toes of their stick — Evgeny Kuznetsov, J.T. Miller — but they're not nearly as pronounced as O'Reilly's.

"I use it for one-handed stuff, in little area battles, just to get the puck quickly down to my heel," O'Reilly explains. "I just had a long blade originally, and I thought I've got to roll my wrist outward to do some of the things I wanted, whereas with the curve I just have to angle my wrist. I just thought about it, and came up with it and all of a sudden, I wasn't working as hard."

It's not just the blade, it's what O'Reilly does with it. There's no one in the league that can use their stick to be quite as frustrating or disruptive. There are long stretches where it seems like no one that's within a six-foot radius of O'Reilly can make a clean play.

Take this sequence between veteran Canucks defender Alex Edler and O'Reilly during a Blues power play on Monday night as an instructive example. We've slowed down the instances where O'Reilly successfully lifts Edler's stick or otherwise completely disrupts the Canucks defender from making a play that against just about any other forward in the NHL would be straight forward for a player with Edler's size and strength.

When O'Reilly is described as a "monster," this is what people are talking about:



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Or take this sequence, where the Canucks should have a two-on-zero against Jake Allen at a crucial point in the game. O'Reilly hustles back to bust up the rush chance, successfully ties up Bo Horvat, harasses Horvat up the wall and then prevents him from making a power move with a clean, simple stick check to snuff out Vancouver's possession:

Finally, O'Reilly's elite stick work is evident on this sequence in which he knocks the puck loose along the wall, which permits Perron to win a battle against two Canucks defenders as O'Reilly slips away for the game-winning goal. I've included the full clip, though, from after O'Reilly's face-off loss, because O'Reilly does a ton of smart stuff along the way to maintain pressure on the Canucks over 200-feet of ice and back again:

The world-class backhand finish: That's just gravy.

Body position

Listed at 6-foot-1 and 216 pounds, O'Reilly is a large man and he's assertive in using his size to win battle after battle all over the ice.

While he's long enough and strong enough to disrupt a 6-foot-3 defender with various stick lifts — as we saw previously with Edler — he's also constantly low to the ice surface when he engages his opponents physically. He seemingly always has leverage, is never off balance and complements his habitual good body position with a tidy arsenal of reverse hits.

In this clip, he gets the puck down low — courtesy a reverse hit on Canucks defensive centre Brandon Sutter — and later, as the play becomes broken while the Canucks struggle to clear their zone, gets body position on Tanner Pearson to set up a quality Perron shot attempt that sails wide:

Here's another instance, again against Pearson, where O'Reilly simply gets low and backs into Pearson to give his defenceman time to retrieve the puck and prevent the Canucks from even a whispers chance of sustaining further zone time:

Hockey IQ

It's one thing to be a terror without the puck, which O'Reilly surely is.

To be a true O'Reilly-level two-way ace though, you also need to be exceptional in possession.

Early in the second period of Monday night's Blues victory over the Canucks, after Vancouver levelled the score on a Miller tip, O'Reilly personally cracked open Vancouver's structure with a brilliant bit of anticipatory forechecking work. After this shift, the Canucks were hemmed in their end for four consecutive heavy Blues shifts, before a stoppage finally provided some relief. O'Reilly then scored the game-winner off the ensuing draw.

We'll get to the rest of the clip shortly, but just note in his shortened clip how low O'Reilly is after he picks off a Chris Tanev pass. His body position completely neuters a pair of desperation Quinn Hughes stick check attempts, as O'Reilly calmly sends a 40-foot back-hand saucer pass cross-seam to permit the Blues to get set up in the offensive zone.

As the sequence unfolds, O'Reilly does almost too many clever things to count. With linemate Jaden Schwartz controlling along the half wall, Blues defenceman Marco Scandella activates down low and ends up at the net front. O'Reilly is making himself available in traffic when Scandella pinches low and heads to the net, so O'Reilly pops to the top of the circles to give his linemates a one-time option.

Scandella takes a bad angle shot and the puck rims around the wall and O'Reilly has already rotated back to the point where he makes a clever play with his feet to maintain possession before sending the puck down low as St. Louis continues to apply pressure:

There was an especially telling sequence right at the start of the game. For the opening draw, St. Louis started with a depth line, which Vancouver — taking advantage of last change — tried to jump, answering with Elias Pettersson and Vancouver's vaunted "Lotto line."

The result was some early Canucks pressure, a pair of icings and ultimately a Hughes point shot that Blues netminder Jake Allen froze on.

Free to change lines, Blues coach Craig Berube put out O'Reilly's line and the Canucks — just 26 seconds into the game — ended their first line's shift there. Pettersson, who was O'Reilly's primary matchup through three games of the series, played only a single second head-to-head against O'Reilly at even strength in the opening frame as Canucks coach Travis Green searched for a solution to Vancouver's "O'Reilly problem."

Out came Horvat, and after O'Reilly lost the draw, Horvat went to work. This is a subtle sequence and the camera angle is suboptimal, but note two things in the clip below: 1) how O'Reilly harasses Horvat as the Canucks centre makes an impressive collection of power moves and momentarily shakes the Blues defensive ace down low and 2) how when Horvat finally tries to make a pass into the slot, O'Reilly carefully angles his foot to stop the pass dead in its tracks and then plays the puck away from the net-front with his stick. It's an astonishingly clever choice:

To make these types of plays, you have to process the game like a supercomputer. With the puck, O'Reilly just makes the right play with the extraordinary consistency required to truly control the game. Without it, O'Reilly has the presence of mind to make the better play as opposed to the obvious one.

He's quite literally a two-way genius at the same level as a Patrice Bergeron.

"He's doing everything right on the ice," summarized Perron. "I'm just lucky to be on his line, to be honest, and that we have chemistry. We're connecting pretty good on the ice. He's not the fastest guy, but everything else he's got, his intelligence on the ice is incredible. He always finds the open spots, he's always positioned well, whether it's on the power play, PK, blocking shots ... whatever you need, he's doing it. Extremely impressive."

The result: Crooked numbers

In St. Louis' first-round series with the Canucks, O'Reilly has been a smothering presence.

In 62:36 of 5-on-5 ice time with O'Reilly on the ice in the series, the Blues are outshooting Vancouver 55 to 11 through four games. Those numbers don't even seem real.

According to NaturalStatTrick, the Blues have out-chanced Vancouver by a 16 to three margin in those minutes.

It's a wonder the Blues have only outscored the Canucks by a single goal with O'Reilly on the ice in the series. Although, even if the goal differential margin has yet to match the O'Reilly line's control of the flow of play, it's clear the Canucks recognize the problem.

When St. Louis had last change in Game 1 and Game 2, O'Reilly was hard matched against Pettersson. The Canucks freed Pettersson up and reduced that to a soft match in Game 3. By Game 4, the Canucks were primarily matching Horvat up with O'Reilly's line.

When a centre is drawing that many different matchups in quick succession, it suggests that a rival coach is staring at a whiteboard somewhere trying to come up with an answer. For the Canucks, there may not be one, even if their top-of-the-lineup talent is as potent as any in the NHL.

It might not just be Vancouver that's left searching for answers this summer in trying to contend with O'Reilly. This Blues team has a sputtering Jordan Binnington who has essentially been chased from the series. They're without valuable contributors like Vladimir Tarasenko, Alex Steen and Ivan Barbashev.

And yet they've won two in a row, in large part because O'Reilly has stepped up to will his team to a pair of key, season-saving victories. He's arguably being counted on more in this series against the Canucks than he was on last season's Stanley Cup-winning team.



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O'Reilly has been more than up to the task and then some. He's been St. Louis' ace, their trump card. He's been a monster.

There's seemingly nothing O'Reilly can't do. Except, perhaps, endure a lengthy compliment on a postgame Zoom teleconference.

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Sportsnet.ca / Dale Hawerchuk's quiet brilliance made Winnipeg, and Canada, a winner

Sonny Sachdeva | @sachdevasonny August 18, 2020

Morris Lukowich remembers sitting on the Winnipeg Jets' bench, seeing it unfold in an instant in front of him — a brief moment in which potential and expectation met reality.

It was 1981, and Lukowich's Jets were coming off a truly forgettable 57-loss season, a brutal showing that had them looking routinely out of place against the Wayne Gretzkys and Mike Bossys of the day.

"It was almost like we had an American Hockey League team playing in the NHL," he recalls.

Of course, the nine-win campaign had also gifted Winnipeg the player now collecting the puck and steamrolling up the ice before Lukowich's eyes — the one claimed with the No. 1 pick of that '81 draft, whose curly locks landed just atop the soon-to-be legendary name stamped on the back of his jersey: "Hawerchuk."

It was then that Lukowich got his first glimpse of what would become a powerful connection between Winnipeg and Dale Hawerchuk, who has passed away at the age of 57 after a long battle with cancer.

"I remember he came flying down the ice. The defenceman stepped up to hit him, and he somehow took the puck and flipped it up in the air — and then he spun," Lukowich says. "And then he picked up the puck on the other side. ... The defenceman got nothin'. He just kept going."

Lukowich soon learned flashes of brilliance like these were par for the course for the then-18-year-old. The accumulation of them led Hawerchuk to 45 goals and 103 points in that rookie year — the first of seven campaigns above the 40-goal plateau — and the Calder Trophy. The Jets, meanwhile, went from nine wins without him to 33 wins with him leading the charge, good for a 48-point difference in the standings that ranked as the league's best-ever single-season turnaround at the time.

"We were in a rebuilding mode, and he just — he had moves that I had not seen before," Lukowich says.

Hawerchuk tries to score on Edmonton Oilers goalie Bill Ranford during the 1990 Stanley Cup Playoffs. (Ray Giguere/CP)

Hawerchuk's skillset seemed ahead of its time — as if a prodigy of today's dynamic, creative age was dropped in the '80s. He was an elite playmaker, a dog on any loose puck that dared float into a corner with him present, and, at 18, as patient and poised with the puck as No. 99, says Lukowich. And, of course, he was an ever-deceptive goal-scorer.

"He had an incredible ability to trick goaltenders when he was getting in on breakaways," Lukowich remembers. "He would drop his shoulder a little so it would look like he was going low with the puck, and then boom — he'd put it top shelf."

It was this indomitable collection of abilities that eventually carried Hawerchuk to the sport's biggest stage, and one of hockey history's most

unforgettable moments, when he took the ice on Sept. 15, 1987, at the Canada Cup.

The clock had wound down to its final few minutes, with the score between Canada and the USSR knotted at 5–5 and the title on the line. Head coach Mike Keenan tapped Hawerchuk — still just 24 — to head over the boards to take a draw deep in Canada's zone, the fate of the tournament seemingly resting on his shoulders. Flanked by the two greatest talents the game has ever seen, Nos. 66 and 99, Hawerchuk braced for puck-drop as the 17,026 in attendance at Hamilton's Copps Coliseum held their breath.

What happened next has since become an indelible memory in the minds of Canadian hockey lovers. Hawerchuk tying up his opposing faceoff practitioner long enough for Mario Lemieux to poke the puck free and take off up ice. Lemieux dishing to Wayne Gretzky, and Hawerchuk — ever the crucial gear — tying up Vyacheslav Bykov and sending him tumbling to the ice.

The Hawerchuk hook created a pocket of space just empty enough for Lemieux to receive a pass back from Gretzky and ultimately snipe one past Sergei Mylnikov to seal Canadian glory. That Gretzky-to-Lemieux winner is royalty among Canadian hockey highlights. But buzzing around in the background, making it so, was Hawerchuk.

And no one who'd watched him closely was surprised.

"He was just an amazing talent, right off the bat," says Lukowich, "[and he] showed [it] by playing at the highest level in the Canada Cup with Team Canada, and being instrumental in one of the most famous goals around."

And it didn't take a Cold War battle of epic proportions to bring out the best in Hawerchuk, either. In fact, the Toronto native was often most motivated when pitted against his hometown team.

"He loved playing in Toronto," Lukowich says. "If he ever got in a spot where maybe he wasn't scoring or something like that, and a Toronto game was coming up, he normally racked up four or five points [there]. ... I was amazed."

Playing nine years in Winnipeg and five more in Buffalo before concluding his career with stints in St. Louis and Philadelphia, Hawerchuk was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame in 2001.

His 1,409 career points rank him 20th in all-time scoring — right below Doug Gilmour, with whom he lifted the '81 Memorial Cup as a member of the Cornwall Royals, and right above Jari Kurri, beside whom he entered the Hall.

He was, simply put, a rare talent, from that very first day in Winnipeg, and right to the end of his career.

"There are some players that when they come into the NHL, it's as if God has reached down and touched them.... Dale was one of those," Lukowich says. "His abilities to handle the puck, to be able to move laterally, to be able to stickhandle past defencemen — he had an amazingly quick shot and an amazingly quick slapshot. He just had an amazing knack for scoring.

"Some people are born with it, some people can learn it. He was born with it."

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Sportsnet.ca / Ovechkin saves Capitals from sweep in GOATee Game: 'It was belief'

Luke Fox | @lukefoxjukebox August 19, 2020



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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TORONTO – Call it the GOATee game.

Alexander Ovechkin — the greatest pure goal scorer of all the generations — showed up at the rink with a new look and his old tricks, as the Washington Capitals rose from an 0-3 series deficit and 0-2 Game 4 deficit to inject a furious dose of pushback and belief some doubted we'd ever see from the Metropolitan Division superpower.

Entering Tuesday's elimination test with just a single bubble win and reared way back on their heels at 5-on-5 play through the first 10 periods of a surprisingly lopsided series to former coach Barry Trotz's organized New York Islanders, something switched in the 2018 champs.

Sustained pressure, a gradual compounding of positive offensive-zone shifts, a crunching Radko Gudas hip check on Cal Clutterbuck, an Evgeny Kuznetsov strike...

"I could feel the push coming," Capitals coach Todd Reirden would later say.

Then Ovie went beast mode. A clapper from his circular office smacked a dialled-in Semyon Varlamov in the mask, and a second from the same spot (you know the one) tied the game.

An Ovechkin-led 2-on-1 rush in which everyone on their sofa knew there'd be no pass ended in a wicked wrister, another red lamp, and — scariest of all — a seed of belief.

"Nothing to lose, right? We started playing our game," said Ovechkin, after his second two-goal effort in three games. "It was great hockey by us.

"You never know what's going to happen."

The captain's winner and 69th playoff goal completed a 3-2 comeback and scooted him past both Gordie Howe and Sidney Crosby for sole possession of 18th spot on the all-time list.

"No one can score goals like this player. It's the other stuff that went on," Reirden said post-game. "There was the stuff that was said in the locker room. There was stuff that was said to the teammates. It was stuff that was said on the bench. It was physicality. It was belief. It was the emotion he showed after he scored the goal. Get in line, 'cause we're goin'."

Absolutely, the Islanders have been the superior squad since arriving in the bubble. And, yes, Trotz's consistent, four-line rollout has three more chances to stomp out his former employer. Math and history peg the Capitals' chances of rallying from 1-3 and stealing the series at a measly 9.4 per cent.

Yet Tuesday felt more like a ground shift than a last gasp, and the Isles may lament all the power plays (all five in this game, 18 of 19 in the series) they've left uncashed.

"Momentum is a crazy thing in this game, and you have to earn it," John Carlson said.

The Capitals' awakening began with scissors and shavers. Jakub Vrana, goal-less all post-season, arrived at Game 4 with a buzzcut. Kuznetsov chopped his down to the wood. Ovechkin and T.J. Oshie went with mean, clean goatees.

"What happens with the team stays with the team," Kuznetsov said of the group barbering.

Superstition? Bonding? Symbolism?

"You always try to adapt and do different things that you think can give you an edge physically, mentally. Try different stuff to maybe get yourself out of a funk. That's happened in every sport for years and years," Reirden explained.

"So, this was an example of some different things that went on with our team, and there's obviously many other things that go on behind closed

doors. We've got a strong leadership group. We've got a strong bond in our team and belief. And we know that if we're going to get anywhere, it's going to be together. And that was the most buy-in that we've obviously had in the playoffs."

Without rabid fans on hand to unleash their fury, the Capitals have struggled to create their own energy.

It has taken favourites like the Bruins and Blues a few games to do likewise, but they mustered that urgency absent in the round-robin games before putting themselves on the brink.

The Caps left it till the final 40 minutes, and Reirden admitted that self-generating momentum through repetitive, fierce shifts and feeding off their own teammates has proved a greater challenge in the bubble than anticipated.

For at least one night, the Capitals rediscovered their identity, their joy.

Yes, that jump resulted in 63 per cent of Game 4's even-strength shot attempts. More importantly, it resulted in two more nights at Hotel X — minimum.

"I think we just stopped thinking about those Corsi, whatever that stat is, and just trying to play fun hockey. We tried to hold on to the puck, and that's how we always played," Kuznetsov said in his second language.

"Maybe I'm not understanding the hockey, but I think that's how we're supposed to play. It's not about the thousand shots — it's about the possession. It's about wearing them down, and it's about enjoying it and having fun.

"That's maybe not the NHL typical hockey, but that's how we're supposed to play. And if we're going to play like that, we're going to have joy, we're going to have fun, and we're going to have success."

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Sportsnet.ca / Onus is on Flames to prove they're resilient, not reliving past failures

Eric Francis | @EricFrancis August 18, 2020

EDMONTON — Calgary Flames fans have seen this act before.

No, it's not a disappearing act. They deserve much more credit than that.

This is more of a tide-turning tale that has seen the Flames squander early success in a series, only to be overcome by a sizeable shift in momentum.

Despite winning Games 1 and 3 in the series against Dallas, the Flames have now been outplayed the last four games to face elimination Thursday in a series they now trail 3-2.

One year earlier, the Flames opened the playoffs with a win over Colorado, only to see the Avalanche become an unstoppable force the next four.

"It's not similar," protested Flames coach Geoff Ward following the team's 2-1 loss Tuesday when asked how it was any different.

"Last year we didn't win a round. This year we won a round. Last year we didn't have the fight this team does. We didn't battle back. Once we got behind in games (last playoffs) there was no way.

"This team is fighting to the end. It's a more relentless team, a more battle-tested, hardened team than last year's team. For me, there's no



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comparison. I know the comparison is going to be made but there's nothing that's the same as last year. Nothing. It's two totally different situations for me."

Mikael Backlund, who salvaged an admittedly poor start Tuesday with a late first-period goal to tie things 1-1, also disagreed with the narrative, despite admitting that after squandering a late lead in Game 2 last year his team was outplayed the rest of the way.

"This year we're in a close series and we've done a better job," said Backlund, whose club allowed a Jamie Benn shorthanded goal midway through the first.

"It's an even series — we're right there. Not that we didn't believe last year, but this year, even though we're down today, this group this year has more strength than we did last year.

"I think we got caught a little off guard last year too, having success in the regular season and then playing a hot eighth seed while we were off for a week. It's time for us to come back in a series and win a series while we are down."

Without question this has been a much tighter series against a more formidable opponent — a team that has perfected the art of keeping opponents to the outside.

The fight the Flames have put up has indeed been tremendously gritty, going hit-for-hit with a big, veteran bunch that has had its hands full.

The Stars have simply been the better team of late, building confidence and momentum ever since winning Game 2.

If indeed the Flames can somehow stop the momentum that has seen the Stars outshoot Calgary 165-118 the last four games, it will demonstrate last season's lessons have contributed to an improved resiliency.

We've seen plenty of character already, but the onus is on them to prove they can indeed rise to the occasion when it matters most.

On Tuesday, Ward said he saw his team open the game by exhibiting nervousness he had never before seen from his team. The possibility of leaving the rink on the brink of elimination affected their start — a bad sign.

A good sign is that they escaped the frame tied 1-1 and steadily improved in the second and third.

Still, after John Klingberg's point blast beat Cam Talbot early in the third without the aid of a screen, the Flames' offence rarely threatened. Yes, Rasmus Andersson rang one off the iron, Elias Lindholm was foiled by the knob on Anton Khudobin's stick and an Erik Gustafsson rocket was easily gloved.

But even with the goalie pulled and a late penalty call to the Stars, the Flames never threatened in the final minutes.

"Right now frustration is a waste of emotion," said Milan Lucic, whose squad played without Matthew Tkachuk for the third straight game.

"The guys feel it's time now — especially the core guys that have been here a lot of years — to show we can have success in the playoffs," added Backlund, whose goal was preceded with a sweet move to open up a rare shooting lane.

"It's a different mindset from the past."

As Ward points out, mindset will very likely be the difference in a series this competitive.

"Right now it's not about X's and O's, it's about will and it's about winning races and battles and being able to play inside — all those things," said Ward, who tried to inject energy into the top line in the second period by swapping in Tobias Rieder for Lindholm, to play alongside Sean Monahan and Johnny Gaudreau.

"We don't need anything extraordinary out of our best players. Everybody keeps coming back to our best players. We win and lose as a team. This is about 20 guys coming together and winning a hockey game. It's just not Monahan and Gaudreau, it's everybody. We've got to find ways to create opportunities around their net. We've done that at points, and at others we've been held to the outside."

Indeed, such tight defence is a Stars tradition that has done a formidable job neutralizing the Flames' top line all series long. Gaudreau and Monahan certainly appeared game for Tuesday's task, but were limited to two harmless shots apiece.

"I'm confident we're going to put a good game on the ice in Game 6 — the game demands we do," said Ward of their Thursday test.

"I don't expect anything less, based on everything our team has gone through."

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Sportsnet.ca / Golden Knights prove too big, too deep for Blackhawks to handle in Round 1

Mark Spector | @sportsnetspec August 19, 2020

EDMONTON — Alex Tuch's game-winner told the story of the Vegas Golden Knights versus the Chicago Blackhawks, a series that was never going to be much more than fly versus windshield.

Tuch — a thick, six-foot-four, 220-pound winger — went wide on undersized Blackhawks defenceman Adam Boqvist — a five-foot-10, 180-pound Swedish youngster. The Vegas forward elbowed his way around Boqvist like a guy leaning on a revolving door, stuffing a puck past the beleaguered Corey Crawford for the goal that made it 4-3 Vegas.

That score held up, ending a five-game Round 1 series in which Chicago didn't pose much trouble for Vegas. The Blackhawks were simply too small and not deep enough to handle what Vegas brought to the table.

"He's impossible to stop when he has that attack attitude that he's had the entire series," said Vegas head coach Peter DeBoer of Tuch. "He was dangerous the entire series. Every time he touched the ice he was a handful for them to contain."

It was the size difference — and depth in size and skill — that made Vegas simply too much for the Blackhawks in a series that featured three one-goal games, all won by the Golden Knights. Vegas, the first team to go through to Round 2, just came in too many waves for the Blackhawks to hold on.

"Most of the goals we got were first chance, second chance, third chance," Mark Stone said. "Relentless. Then making them come 200 feet."

Chicago had leads of 2-0 and 3-2, but could never quite shed the Golden Knights. The teams came out of the dressing room for the third period tied at 3-3, and Tuch bulled his way to the eventual winner just 1:34 into the period.

"We caught them on a change," Tuch explained after the game. "I just jumped off the bench, got my legs going and took the puck to the net. Got a lucky bounce."

Now, Vegas awaits the lowest seed to advance to the Western Conference's Final Four. And they'll do so in tedium of the bubble, where they have resided for three full weeks as of this past Sunday.



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It will be a task no coaching staff has ever had to deal with, keeping their team from going stir crazy while awaiting Round 2 to start. Usually, a coach like DeBoer would send his players home for two days of family time, so they could recharge for the next round.

Not this year.

"We're going to have to manage it. It looks like it will be probably a week," DeBoer said. "There were 24 teams here a couple of weeks ago, and we know we're in the final eight now. It's a nice problem to have, and hopefully, it will guarantee we go into the next round healthy."

An interesting stat: The Blackhawks were 89-8-5 all-time when Patrick Kane and Jonathan Toews both score a goal in the same game in the regular season; 6-0 in playoffs, entering tonight. That stat went sour in Game 5, when both Blackhawks stars beat Robin Lehner, the goalie who was dealt from Chicago to Vegas at the trade deadline.

"It's a bit weird playing your old team," Lehner admitted afterwards. "That group is a helluva group – they treated me well. I have a lot of friends on that team."

The Blackhawks will see progress in the fact they entered the expanded playoffs as a No. 12 seed and walked through the fifth-seeded Edmonton Oilers, giving 'Hawks fans a moment they have not enjoyed for a while. There is an older championship core here, joined now by a young group led by Kirby Dach, Alex Debrincat, Dominik Kubalik and an inexperienced defence that performed better than most expected here in Edmonton.

"It was definitely good for us to get back in the playoffs and play meaningful games," Toews said. "When you miss the playoffs a couple of years in a row, you're watching a lot of hockey late in the spring and you lose track of where you stand because there's no doubt it's a different level from the regular season. I think there's some benefit there for the veteran guys as well."

It's on to Round 2 for Vegas, a team that stakes its claim as a Cup contender once again.

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Sportsnet.ca / Dale Hawerchuk's most notable stats, awards, accomplishments

Mike Johnston | @MikeyJ_MMA August 18, 2020

The Toronto native was a Winnipeg Jets all-time great who also enjoyed success with the Buffalo Sabres, plus had stints with the St. Louis Blues and Philadelphia Flyers.

NHL commissioner Gary Bettman described Hawerchuk as "one of the most decorated players in our game's history."

With that in mind, here's a look back at some of Hawerchuk's most notable accomplishments throughout his incredible career.

A remarkable time in junior

Hawerchuk's two-year stint with the Cornwall Royals in the QMJHL was nothing short of spectacular. As a 16-year-old rookie during the 1979-80 season he scored 37 goals and 103 points in 72 games en route to winning the RDS Cup as the league's rookie of the year. He upped the ante that post-season, scoring 20 times and adding 25 assists in just 18 games as he helped lead his team to a championship.

He took home the Guy Lafleur Trophy as QMJHL playoff MVP before the Royals went on to win the Memorial Cup, where Hawerchuk was named

a First Team All-Star and won the George Parsons Trophy for sportsmanship.

The skilled centre took his game to new heights the following year. He won the Jean Beliveau Trophy as QMJHL scoring champion after posting a whopping 81 goals and 183 points in 72 games. The Royals repeated as QMJHL champs and Hawerchuk won the Michel Brière Memorial Trophy as QMJHL player of the year. His team also won a second consecutive Memorial Cup and he earned the Stafford Smythe Memorial Trophy as Memorial Cup MVP.

He was also named CHL player of the year, and all that led to him being the No. 1-overall selection in the 1981 NHL Draft.

Hawerchuk had an impact at the junior level later in life, too, as he transitioned to coaching with the OHL's Barrie Colts, where he helped develop a new generation of players.

An elite NHL talent

It was instantly apparent Hawerchuk was poised to be a star in the big show. As an 18-year-old with the Jets he led all NHL rookies with 45 goals and 103 points and won the Calder Memorial Trophy in 1982 as top rookie, beating out the likes of future Hall of Famers Grant Fuhr, Ron Francis and Joe Mullen. Hawerchuk was so impressive in his first NHL season he finished fifth in Hart Trophy voting behind legends Wayne Gretzky, Bryan Trottier, Mike Bossy and Peter Stastny.

Hawerchuk scored more than 100 points in six of his first seven NHL seasons and developed a reputation as a reliable iron man, missing only one game during that stretch.

Although the Calder was the only major NHL award Hawerchuk won, he finished as the Hart Trophy runner-up for the 1984-85 season. That year he posted a career-high 53 goals and 130 points but Gretzky ran away with the Hart thanks to a 208-point campaign.

Hawerchuk was traded to the Buffalo Sabres prior to the 1990-91 season and he continued producing at a high level until injuries interrupted his lockout-shortened 1994-95 season.

In fact, from the time he debuted in 1981 through to the end of the 1993-94 season, Hawerchuk's 1,032 games played were the most in the league and his 1,298 points were second-most behind Gretzky. He had 10 seasons with 90 or more points, which is tied for the fourth-most 90-point seasons ever.

Hawerchuk was the first player in NHL history to suit up for his 1,000th game before his 31st birthday.

Hawerchuk, who played in five all-star games, finished his NHL career with 518 goals (38th all-time), 891 assists (21st all-time) for 1,409 points (20th all-time) in 1,188 games and added 99 points in 97 career playoff games.

He is one of 13 first-overall picks to record more than 1,000 points — ranking third behind Mario Lemieux (1,723) and Joe Thornton (1,509) — and one of eight No. 1 picks to surpass 500 career goals.

Hawerchuk set numerous franchise records in Winnipeg, had his No. 10 jersey retired by the Jets/Coyotes in 2007 and was inducted into the franchise's Ring of Honour. Even though he only played five seasons in Buffalo he was inducted into the Sabres Hall of Fame in 2011.

A frequent member of Team Canada

Not only did Hawerchuk excel in junior and the pros, he also had an accomplished international career. He led Canada with nine points in five games at the 1981 world juniors, although that team failed to medal. Hawerchuk won bronze medals at the world hockey championships in 1982 and 1986 and then a silver in 1989, when he was one of the team captains.

Most notably, Hawerchuk was a member of the Canada Cup-winning teams in both 1987 and 1991 scoring 11 points in those tournaments.



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Hawerchuk was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame in 2001 alongside contemporaries Jari Kurri, Mike Gartner and Viacheslav Fetisov.

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Sportsnet.ca / Tributes pour in for Winnipeg Jets great Dale Hawerchuk

Shannon Coulter August 18, 2020

Hall of Famer Dale Hawerchuk has passed away after a battle with cancer at the age of 57.

The face of the Winnipeg Jets for nearly a decade after being drafted by the team No. 1 overall in the 1981 NHL Draft, Hawerchuk also suited up for the Buffalo Sabres, St. Louis Blues and Philadelphia Flyers before calling it a career after the 1996-97 season. By the time Hawerchuk hung up his skates, he had played in 1,188 career regular-season games while scoring 518 goals and recording 1,409 points.

The Jets legend had been coaching the OHL's Barrie Colts before taking a leave of absence in September 2019 to undergo chemotherapy for stomach cancer. He finished treatment in April, but the cancer resurfaced last month.

In the wake of Tuesday's news of Hawerchuk's death, the hockey world took a moment to pause during the Stanley Cup Playoffs and pay tribute on social media.

Rest In Peace Dale, was an honour to play for you.

— Rasmus Andersson (@RAndersson19) August 18, 2020

My deepest condolences Eric!

I'm glad to have had the privilege of getting to know him personally through all his giving of himself in all his charitable events! We will all together continue to carry on his legacy <https://t.co/cl4CXsxOdD>

— Ron Duguay (@RonDuguay10) August 18, 2020

Heaven received a Hall of Famer today. Dale Hawerchuk was one of the best both on & off the ice! He called me yesterday to thank me for our friendship & to say goodbye! He said he was at peace-holding back my tears I was truly honored to be a part of his final hours-RIP Dale

— Jeremy Roenick (@Jeremy_Roenick) August 18, 2020

I'm so sorry for ur loss.. Incredible player, man, and person to everyone he met. I will always cherish the days I shared with him. He treated me like I was something special when he was the special one. #RIPDucky

— Matthew Barnaby (@MattBarnaby3636) August 18, 2020

It was a pleasure and an honour to coach across from you Dale. You touched so many over the years with being the genuine good person you were. The game in the sky got a real good one today, you will be missed and your legend will live on.

My condolences to the Hawerchuk family <https://t.co/iCiFzuHFFg>

— Jay McKee (@JayMcKee74) August 18, 2020

Dale Hawerchuk was everything we look for at Hockey Canada.

His love for the game and love to compete – as a player, coach and person – was unrivalled.

We will miss him. pic.twitter.com/XIYa9WAMAT

— Hockey Canada (@HockeyCanada) August 18, 2020

Keeping Coach Hawerchuk's family in my thoughts and prayers. You're always in my heart pic.twitter.com/CAHr6GkuQo

— Andrei Svechnikov (@ASvechnikov_37) August 18, 2020

Sad day today. So many wonderful memories together that I will always cherish. Thinking of his Family with this great loss. R.I.P Ducky pic.twitter.com/bVzQUBs7pg

— Doug Gilmour (@DougGilmour93) August 18, 2020

So sad what a incredible human being I'm thankful that Ducky was my friend and I had a chance to talked with him yesterday and say goodbye this world is not same place without him, Eric you can be so proud of your dad Thoughts love and prayers for all your family RIP DALE <https://t.co/SKVHfxSFkB>

— Teemu Selanne (@TeemuSelanne) August 18, 2020

Just a reminder that it was Dale Hawerchuk who won the 1987 Canada Cup faceoff that kick-started the Gretzky-to-Lemieux game winner.

I mean, Lemieux- Hawerchuk- Gretzky on one line? The Russians never really had a chance. #RIPDale pic.twitter.com/TCpYKMUWjY

— Courtney Theriault (@cspotweet) August 18, 2020

Ugh So sorry! Your dad was a great teammate. Hall of fame player, Hall of Fame person! He will be missed! <https://t.co/14rXsfUMwO>

— Chris Therien (@ctherien6) August 18, 2020

Gone way way too soon. Really terrible news for the hockey world. RIP Dale Hawerchuk. <https://t.co/sEVEIHfEYpe>

— Tony DeAngelo (@TonyDee07) August 18, 2020

I'm so sorry for your loss. We lost our Mom to a hard fought battle and in the end we were so proud with the way she fought. Your father was one of my dad's all time favourites. May he rest easy. <https://t.co/DBKf0kZ75l>

— Zac Dalpe (@ZacDalpe22) August 18, 2020

Rest in paradise dale. My thoughts and prayers with the entire hawerchuk family, his legacy will never be forgotten

— Nazem Kadri (@43_Kadri) August 18, 2020

Sept 6, 1987 I watched my 1st live hockey game at Copps Coliseum in Hamilton (Canada Cup). Dale and Team Canada tied the Soviet Union 3-3. I was hooked on hockey after that!! Hockey world lost a good one today. #HawerchukStrong <https://t.co/S4yWb9Hv90>

— Kevin Bieksa (@kbieksa3) August 18, 2020

Eric so saddened by this news. Your Father was a wonderful person, teammate and friend. Our family sends our love and condolences to you and your family. <https://t.co/dA8CtBbgCi>

— Craig Simpson (@hnicssimmer) August 18, 2020

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Sportsnet.ca / Six thoughts on the Stanley Cup Playoffs halfway through Round 1

Justin Bourne | @jtbourne August 18, 2020



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 19, 2020

Every NHL season I keep a notebook in which I jot down not just thoughts from particular games, but also overarching thoughts about the NHL and the year as a whole. When something becomes a theme, it usually becomes an article. That means lots of stuff gets left by the wayside, too long for a tweet but not long enough for a column.

Sometimes it's fun just to pull together all those strands into a "notebook"-style post, which gives us the randomness you're going to get here today. Without further ado, let's start big picture then dial it in.

From the Stanley Cup Qualifiers to the Stanley Cup Final, livestream every game of the 2020 Stanley Cup Playoffs, blackout-free, on Sportsnet NOW.

1. The most important place to start at this point of the totally unique 2020 Stanley Cup Playoffs is kudos, congrats, and way to go to the NHL's bubble and product in general right now. I know there's intermittent discussions about how the absence of fans hurts the game's energy, and we've had the odd outlier moment (like Tuukka Rask making a widely-respected and accepted family-first choice), but by and large it's easy to forget this NHL post-season is that different from any other, particularly if you're not someone who generally went to games. For couch viewers, comparable levels of drama remain.

I imagine there were a million decisions to be made in the process of putting this on. How much crowd noise is too little or too much? How should the arenas be presented? How would the commentators call the games? But, when missteps would've been easy to make, all of it came together really well. Most importantly, the players and those inside the bubble have been protected and remain healthy after significant time inside. Whatever you think of their motivations, the league did an amazing job getting hockey back to the fans.

2. A big picture thought that's less positive: at the level the NHL has established it, parity is a scourge. I get the perks of "anybody can win any night", namely that even if your team isn't good, you may stay invested. But really, should anybody be able to win any night? Do we want the team that wins the Cup every year to unequivocally be one of the best few teams in hockey, or one of the dozen or so best that also happens to have health and bounces fall their way?

This leads to far bigger conversation about the salary cap, and the league's resistance to allow top teams to go beyond it and pay a luxury tax. That would keep teams like the Blackhawks from having to blow-up their roster when they finally get where they want to be. It would keep must-see teams together (which allows elite talent to stay with elite talent and shine as bright as it can), and the extra luxury money would benefit the league as a whole.

Upsets are great. I'm less sold that the best teams having something like a 60 per cent chance of winning their playoff series' is good for the league. (Though I should note that re-seeding rather than bracketing is a major win if the league sticks with it, as it rewards teams that succeed over the 82-game regular season).

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3. On to more on-ice hockey stuff that's caught my eye this post season...

Victor Hedman's stick has gone from good to Nick Lidstrom-like, which is the highest praise I can muster. I don't even mean it's traditionally good (in good lanes, or at poking pucks off sticks). I mean more in a hand-eye sense. It's really tough to even dump the puck past him. I can't believe how often a puck is unsettled in the air around him and in a flash it's either calmed down and in his care or smacked out of harm's way. Put him on the list of elite hand-eye guys around the game with Sidney Crosby and Joe Pavelski.

4. Mark Stone makes these little tiny decisions all over the ice that show his hockey IQ, my favourite of which happened on an incomplete pass in a loss to Chicago on Sunday.

In this short GIF the Chicago defender is gapped up tight to him. Stone doesn't have enough speed to get by, and he's on his backhand, so he's obviously just going to dump it in:

The D is totally unfazed about going outside the dots because he's got Stone dead to rights, and Stone just ... hanninggggs on to it, shows that backhand dump/chip, then curls his wrists over and pulls the puck to the middle for his teammate who very nearly corrals it in a dangerous spot in a big moment of the game. So, so, good.

5. This was the first year Anthony Cirelli got Selke Trophy buzz, and justifiably so – the eye test and the numbers line up nicely. I've been watching him closely to see if he does anything noticeably special to that end, and my takeaway is bad news for GIF culture: he's just so good at making the millions of choices per shift that centres have to make. He reads the game like a children's book.

Here's a bunch of screen shots of a totally random shift he takes where nothing happens. (I know, I really sold that as exciting.) The point I'm aiming to make here is how many decisions a centre has to make each shift, and how Cirelli is just always on the right side of them. Here's the full 45-second shift starting in the defensive end, but a quick perusal of the pics should give you the idea:

He wins/ties up the draw, and makes sure not to leave the defensive side of the opposing centre before seeing which team establishes possession:

The battle goes on, so again, he doesn't get way above the pile as it sorts out.

If you watched and remember this shift you know he got jammed up on a loose puck in the neutral zone, but he advances it forward, his team picks it up and throws it in deep. Cirelli then gets on the forecheck, and sees his teammate is F1 on the puck.

He recognizes that leaves him as F2, and so he smartly closes down on the other Columbus defender before the puck ever goes there while keeping an eye on the play.

When the Columbus D cuts back and eludes F1, Cirelli immediately abandons the forecheck and curls to get back above Columbus' centre.

Cirelli goes from being up on the forecheck to back in good defensive position with just one read. You saw how deep he committed, but now he's the forward in best defensive position. He sees Columbus's 3-on-3 rush...

And seeks to influence it by getting his stick in on the middle forward, basically saying "if you want to try the harder cross-ice pass behind me at the red line in a neutral zone situation, go for it." Even if the Blue Jackets did pull that off, he'd still be in a fine spot. He's forcing a dump.

They dump it in and Cirelli goes back with his D, looking to give them an outlet. He also shoulder-checks to take stock of where the forecheck is going to be before things get congested.

When Tampa's D reverses the puck, he abandons going to the far post as an option. He's in a safe spot to read whether it's a breakout or time to defend.

He gets in defensive position to make a read from the near post.

When the puck goes low into a 1-on-1 battle, Cirelli jumps into it to help as the centre low.

He gets to the loose puck in a spot where most players would just bang it up the wall (into what would essentially be the perfect play for Columbus). But because his head's up and he's a thinker, he knows he's best to just eat it rather than put it somewhere advantageous for Columbus.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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The puck stays in the corner, but Columbus never gets an O-zone possession out of it. Cirelli backs off the pile within a stick's length, never giving up defensive position.

As the battle gets sorted out, he recedes back to a D-first spot to take stock of what's coming next. That's home base.

Even as Tampa Bay wins the puck and lugs it up the ice, he doesn't just change. He stays on as an option until the puck goes deep.

Much ado about nothing? Absolutely. He'd say as much himself. But if you're a team with offensive-minded centres, you can appreciate that diligence given all the little opportunities they have to make little cheats, and how responsible that looks compared to many around the league. There's no situation that Tampa Bay isn't comfortable with a guy like that going over the boards.

6. So Joe Pavelski gets a hat trick in what's pretty close to a must-win situation for the Dallas stars in Game 4, including tying the game in the dying seconds. That looked familiar to me. He scored one of the nicest goals I've ever seen in college to wrest his team from the jaws of disappointment at the hands of my college team, the University of Alaska Anchorage. Guys like him are wired that way from a young age.

Very quick background is that, in 2004, I was a freshman playing in the top-six of a team that upset a waaaaay better University of Wisconsin team in a three-game playoff series. That Badgers team was loaded, and so when we drew them again in the 2004-05 playoffs – after they added Pavelski – they saw us coming. They had Brian Elliott in net, Tom Gilbert on defence, Adam Burish, Pavelski, and one of the best college players going in Robbie Earl to round it all out. I tied for our team lead in goals that year ... with 12.

Still, they narrowly got us in the series opener and we won Game 2 on the back of a 44-save goaltending performance. We inexplicably held a lead in Game 3, which was when Pavelski flipped the switch.

It wasn't fair. He could've scored a dozen times, but it finally happened on one of the cheekiest, most-skilled "Nah we're not going out like that" goals I've ever seen. Skating out of the corner with his skates below the goal line, while skating towards the back of the net, he pulled the puck across his body to his backhand just above the goal line, and tucked it up under the bar, grazing the back of our goaltender's helmet. For two periods there, as the game got real, our lesser talented team couldn't manage his top gear, and it was the difference for Wisconsin in the end, and they took the 2-1 victory.

Pavelski has played in over 1,000 NHL games, scoring at a rate of 0.77 points per game. Keep in mind, in the regular season, half the time you're playing the bottom of the league, and many point-getters feast against the bottom five or 10 teams. Pavelski has scored 0.74 points per post-season, nearly the same rate over 140-plus playoff games when the opposition is all top-half teams and his lines would've almost always been keyed on. He's a big-game player, always has been, and if Dallas is able to have a good post-season drive here, he's going to be a big part of their engine.

Dallas is a weird team. They've got experienced guys like Pavelski and Corey Perry. Should-be stars like Tyler Seguin, Jamie Benn and Alex Radulov. Superb support players in Roope Hintz, Denis Gurianov and Radek Faksa. A number of underrated defencemen in Miro Heiskanen and Esa Lindell. Great goaltending. It's not impossible to see them making another deep run, just like last year. But they don't quite have the elite top-end of some of the other great teams, so they need everyone contributing to win. When even a few of those guys are off, they can look awfully average.

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Sportsnet.ca / NHL's top 16 RFAs of 2020: Latest rumours, reports

Luke Fox | @lukefoxjokebox August 18, 2020

The restricted free agents dominated the hockey conversation in the off-season of 2019, as a loaded class of emerging stars took greater slices of their respective teams' salary pie, pushed negotiations into training camp and signed an array of short-, long- and mid-term extensions that expanded the boundaries of contractual possibilities for talented twentysomethings.

(Hey, we even saw our first signed offer sheet in more than six years.)

While several key members of the 2020 RFA class — Thomas Chabot, Nico Hischier, Clayton Keller, Alex DeBrincat and Darnell Nurse — took the secure route and re-upped early, there are plenty of sure-fire and breakout stars still eyeing big raises heading into next season.

Those expectations will need to be tempered with the flattened salary cap, and it will be fascinating to see how negotiations play out under a new economic landscape.

More bridge deals, perhaps? Yes, if we are to judge by the notable RFAs to sign contracts in a pandemic — Columbus goalies Elvis Merzlikins and Joonas Korpi, plus Bruins forward Anders Bjork.

Here is a preview of the top 16 impending RFAs of 2020 and the latest reports surrounding their future:

1. Mathew Barzal

Age: 23

Position: Centre

2019-20 salary cap hit: \$863,333

Arbitration rights: No

Bargaining chips: Franchise player. More points (60) and points per game (0.88) than any other impending RFA, despite playing a system that accentuates defence. Skates more than 20 minutes a night. Three consecutive 60-point seasons and three seasons as the Isles' top scorer. Racked up 85 points in his rookie season. Pivots faster than a politician. Out here scoring playoff OT winners.

The latest: On March 21, GM Lou Lamoriello sent a message to any GM thinking of floating an offer sheet Barzal's way. Lamoriello was asked by a fan if he'd match any competitive contract offer for his top centreman.

"It is our intention to not allow it to get to that point, but should that happen, the answer is yes," Lamoriello replied.

The slick skater raised eyebrows in September when he told Arthur Staple of The Athletic that he'd be interested in seeing an offer sheet signed by a member of 2019's loaded RFA class.

"I wouldn't mind seeing someone shake up the league a little bit. That would be fun. Maybe see an offer sheet tossed around," Barzal mused.

Barzal and the Islanders have been in no great rush to settle his next deal, which should be a juicy one.

"We want to make the playoffs, take a run at the Stanley Cup, and after that we'll figure it out," Barzal said during All-Star weekend in January.

Lamoriello will face a tricky off-season. He'd love to bring in an elite winger to finish off Barzal's passes, and he must also extend RFA defencemen Ryan Pulock and Devon Toews on the back end.

"To be honest with you guys, I don't think there's been too much communication, and not because there's anything negative or anything, it's just [Lamoriello is] getting ready for a playoff run right now, and I'm still worried about this season as well," Barzal said in April.



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"Whenever we're ready to sit down and get it done, I'd love for that to happen. At the same time, I'm not a person that's just going to rush this thing or get nervous about it or whatever. I'm just going about my day, and it'll happen when it happens."

1 minute of Masterful punch turn examples from Barzal. Full clip on my Instagram. Doing a series on the skills that make him such a dangerous player. This is his greatest asset amongst the many elite skills he possesses. pic.twitter.com/Tr6hhiubx

— Pavel Barber (@HeyBarber) March 29, 2020

2. Anthony Cirelli

Age: 23

Position: Centre

2019-20 salary cap hit: \$728,333

Arbitration rights: No

Bargaining chips: Logs significant ice time (18:28), mostly against tough opponents. Ranks top-five among all NHL forwards in penalty-killing time (2:49 per game). Earning buzz as a future Selke Trophy candidate for his two-way game. Points per game and plus/minus has increased every season. He was on pace for 50 points.

The latest: Cirelli had a front-row seat to RFA negotiations last summer, watching his good buddy, Brayden Point, wait until late September to put pen to paper. While Cirelli doesn't have Point's offensive numbers, he's improved each year in the league and has become integral to the Bolts' future.

GM Julien BriseBois declared in September that the 2020 off-season will be Tampa's most difficult cap-wise — and that was before a rising ceiling looked unlikely. That Cirelli is one of multiple Lightning RFAs in need of a raise has led to speculation that an older forward under contract, like Alex Killorn or Tyler Johnson, may need to be traded.

I asked Tampa executive Dave Andreychuk about Cirelli's future in April.

"He's come a long way. He's a big part of this team. He's going to be here for a while," Andreychuk said. "They're going to try to lock him up as best they can, because this kid is the real deal — and he's only going to get better."

3. Anthony Deangelo

Age: 24

Position: Defence

2019-20 salary cap hit: \$925,000

Arbitration rights: Yes

Bargaining chips: Breakout season in which he's put up the fourth-most goals (15) and points (53) among all NHL D-men. Right shot. Has severely chopped down his penalties taken. Excellent passer and skater with fantastic vision. Already took a one-year, prove-it deal last summer — and knocked it out of the park.

The latest: The Rangers are one of the rare squads loaded with young, talented, right-shot defencemen. DeAngelo is joined by Jacob Trouba, 26, and rookie Adam Fox, 22, in that category.

With New York winning the Alexis Lafreniere sweepstakes and shaping into a team that's ready to run back into playoff contention in 2020-21, GM Jeff Gorton is facing raises (or trades) at every position, with intriguing RFAs coming up at forward (Strome, Brendan Lemieux) and net (Alexandar Georgiev) as well.

Gorton's deadline deal of Brady Skjei to Carolina cleared the cap and roster space necessary to re-up with DeAngelo, who's earned the right to take this one to arbitration. Term will be tricky here.

Don't forget: DeAngelo pushed 2019's contract negotiation past the opening of training camp. He'll want maximum value.

The last line is my favorite! <https://t.co/ZfhcCxdlq9>

— Tony DeAngelo (@TonyDee07) March 26, 2020

4. Pierre-Luc Dubois

Age: 22

Position: Centre

2019-20 salary cap hit: \$894,166

Arbitration rights: No

Bargaining chips: Was on pace for his third-straight 20-goal season. Leads all Blue Jackets in assists (31) and points (49). Raised game in playoffs, with eight points through his first eight games. Cap space is not an issue in Columbus.

The latest: Generally, if you're lucky enough to draft and develop a 22-year-old No. 1 centreman, you pay the man when his contract comes due.

Dubois exploded for a 61-point campaign skating mostly alongside the all-world Artemi Panarin, but even in the Bread Man's absence, the big-bodied Quebecer has driven offence for an organization that needs all it can get.

"If he wants to be a difference-maker, a game-changer, one of the best players in the league, he has all the capabilities, all the tools," says winger Cam Atkinson.

Columbus GM Jarmo Kekalainen got a jump on off-season business by re-signing his two RFA goalies to team-friendly deals, but he's far from done. Negotiations with the injured Josh Anderson should be especially interesting.

Both sides were willing to talk in-season, but told a contract extension for pending #CBJ RFA Pierre-Luc Dubois will "probably" be pushed until after the season.

Unclear if it'll be a two- or three-year "bridge" or a long-term deal that stretches into Dubois' UFA years.

— Aaron Portzline (@Aportzline) February 4, 2020

5. Sam Reinhart

Age: 24

Position: Right wing

2019-20 salary cap hit: \$3.65 million

Arbitration rights: Yes

Bargaining chips: Three straight 20-goal, 50-point seasons. Second-overall pick. World junior and world championships gold medallist. The Sabres are in no position to let young offensive talent walk. Plays more than 20 minutes a night. Besties with Jack Eichel.

The latest: Reinhart delivered on his two-year bridge deal and had a shot at back-to-back 60-point campaigns until the pause. And amidst another disappointing season in Western New York, Reinhart displayed flashes of leadership.

"It's all coming down to the players at this point," Reinhart told reporters in February. "The systems and the game plans that are set out for us give us an opportunity to have success. I think it goes back to what I'm trying to preach here. Guys need to demand more out of themselves, and a lot of guys need to step the hell up."

Frustration is mounting in Buffalo. There is potential for roster upheaval, as rookie GM Kevyn Adams looks at 15 roster players headed toward restricted or unrestricted free agency.



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We'd expect Reinhart to get the biggest chunk of the pie, but decisions must be made on Victor Olofsson, Dominik Kahun, Brandon Montour, Linus Ullmark and others. Who's essential to the core?

6. Matt Murray

Age: 26

Position: Goaltender

2019-20 salary cap hit: \$3.75 million

Arbitration rights: Yes

Bargaining chips: Two Stanley Cup rings. World championships silver medalist. NHL All-Rookie Team, 2017. Career 117-53-19 record. Played in 48 playoff games by age 25.

The latest: Despite backstopping Pittsburgh to consecutive championships, Murray has not been given the monstrous, long-term deal associated with winning franchise goalies. Further, he's seen his No. 1 status in town threatened by fellow RFA Tristan Jarry.

Murray's save percentage took a dive in 2019-20 (.899, easily a career worst) yet he still battled to his fourth-straight 20-win season. This despite playing just 38 games.

Because Jarry's extension should come easier (he doesn't have arbitration rights) and because cap-strapped Pittsburgh also has an NHL-calibre goalie under contract, AHLer Casey DeSmith, there has been speculation Murray could be the odd man out.

Coach Mike Sullivan chose Murray as his guy in Pittsburgh's qualification round with Montreal, and Murray got outplayed. Change is coming.

Jim Rutherford on Matt Murray and Tristan Jarry: "It's going to be difficult to keep both. Everybody understands that given the cap."

— Pittsburgh Penguins (@penguins) August 11, 2020

7. Mikhail Sergachev

Age: 22

Position: Defence

2019-20 salary cap hit: \$894,166

Arbitration rights: No

Bargaining chips: Top-10 draft pick. Logs more than 20 minutes nightly. Putting up a career-best stat line of 10 goals, 34 points and plus-15. A top-four defenceman by 21 who hasn't neared his ceiling. Now used on the penalty kill. Fantastic skater with superior vision and instincts.

The latest: The impending raise for Sergachev — a must-keep — is a big reason why the cap-tight Lightning may have to cut into its core in order to financially satisfy its young stars.

Tampa has been patient with its horse on the back end, and when the injury bug took down veterans for spells of this season, he rose to the occasion. Fearless, the kid even dropped the gloves with Shea Weber in March.

Despite an absence of talks between Sergachev's agent, Mark Gandler, and GM BriseBois, the player is optimistic a deal will get done.

"It's a little different obviously right now, but I'm trying to leave it to my agent," Sergachev said in May. "I feel like they're going to work out something. I have a good agent."

With the salary cap flat, BriseBois will face the type of roster crunch that almost certainly necessitates a trade or two off the roster.

8. Max Domi

Age: 25

Position: Centre / Left wing

2019-20 salary cap hit: \$3.15 million

Arbitration rights: Yes

Bargaining chips: Established career highs in goals (28), assists (44), points (72) and plus/minus (+20) in 2018-19. Reliable source of offence on a roster that needs it. World junior gold medalist. Embraces the spotlight. Montreal has plenty of cap space, relatively speaking.

The latest: With Domi crushing the first season of his bridge deal, the Canadiens and the player's camp did start preliminary extension discussions in the summer of 2019.

But talks quieted amidst Domi's drop in productivity (44 points in 2019-20) — which aligns with a drop in shooting percentage. Surely, recent numbers have lessened his leverage slightly.

Domi is now eligible for arbitration, and with just one other key RFA (Victor Mete) to please, Montreal has the means to compensate him nicely.

"There have been some games where I've looked at myself and know I can do better," Domi told Sportsnet's Eric Engels in February.

"But there have also been a lot of them where I've played really well. All I want is to continue to get better and be a guy who's consistently trusted to play against top guys every night."

Domi's case is compelling. He'll get stuffed on the fourth line one playoff game, then explode for a three-point night in another. Does the organization view him as an essential top-building block? A winger? A centre?

Serious potential for a contentious negotiation here.

Max Domi got 3 points, but he could have earned even more if he attacked the middle. Right after entry here, Domi could move outside/inside to attract Ds and reach his teammates around the net. After that, he could have received a pass in the empty slot. This line has potential. pic.twitter.com/iKKlx8lwFd

— David St-Louis (@RinksideView) August 15, 2020

9. Ryan Pulock

Age: 25

Position: Defence

2019-20 salary cap hit: \$2 million

Arbitration rights: Yes

Bargaining chips: Overachieved through bridge deal. Excellent two-way game. Right shot. Slapshot makes you think better about getting in his lane. He was on pace to set career highs in goals (10) and points (35).

The latest: Deserving of more attention outside the Island than he receives, Pulock could be looking for an extension in the ballpark of Charlie McAvoy's or Zach Werenski's. A \$5 million AAV would be the upper end, for sure, but anything below \$4.5 million will feel like a bargain. His 22:24 average time on ice is more than any other pending RFA.

Pulock has underscored his value in the postseason, defending like a beast while contributing six points in the Isles' first seven games.

Lamoriello is on record saying he intends to re-sign Pulock. No brainer.

This is what happens when a Ryan Pulock slap shot hits the goalie mask near the chops. Blackwood stays in the game after taking this shot 19:28 into the 2nd. pic.twitter.com/on7XcDkSpQ

— Mike Morreale (@mikemorrealeNHL) January 8, 2020

10. MacKenzie Blackwood

Age: 23



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Position: Goaltender

2019-20 salary cap hit: \$697,500

Arbitration rights: No

Bargaining chips: Winning record on a bad team (32-24-8). One of the NHL's hottest goalies since Christmas. Silver medalist at 2019 world championships. Arguably should've been a Calder Trophy finalist.

The latest: The Devils would be wise to rebuild from the net out, and few young goalies are as exciting as Blackwood, whose excellence has helped ease the discomfort of Cory Schneider's decline.

No team has more salary cap space than New Jersey, so even with other RFAs coming up (most notably Jesper Bratt), fitting in Blackwood's raise won't be an issue. Young goalies rarely get a long-term deal straight out of their entry-level deals, however.

We'd expect a bridge contract for this potential long-term franchise starter. That's the route taken in recent summers by Jordan Binnington, Connor Hellebuyck, Andrei Vasilevskiy and the like.

Blackwood may wish to use Merzlikins' two-year, \$8-million bridge contract as a starting point.

11. Tyler Bertuzzi

Age: 25

Position: Left wing

2019-20 salary cap hit: \$1.4 million

Arbitration rights: Yes

Bargaining chips: Made first All-Star Game appearance. Back-to-back 21-goal, 47-point seasons. Skates nearly 20 minutes a night. Organization has invested seven years developing him into a first-line threat.

The latest: One of the few bright spots on a sad-sack Red Wings, Bertuzzi has over-delivered on 2018's two-year, \$2.8-million bridge pact and deserves a nice pay bump.

Of the seven(!) pending RFA forwards GM Steve Yzerman must make decisions on, Bertuzzi is the most essential. Yzerman began clearing space by trading away another pending RFA, Andreas Athanasiou, at the deadline to Edmonton.

Bertuzzi has 30-goal potential, brings grit to his game, and should be seen as a building block for a rebuild that needs as many as it can get.

So @tylerbertuzzi is getting extra creative with his workouts these days. #HockeyAtHome

(: @DetroitRedWings) pic.twitter.com/wniQvnEUdx

— NHL (@NHL) April 30, 2020

The Red Wings have a busy summer of RFA signings ahead, but no negotiations will be more important than the ones with Anthony Mantha and Tyler Bertuzzi. Looking ahead to their next deals, and the key considerations in play: <https://t.co/yLVMMrMYgO>

— Max Bultman (@m_bultman) March 27, 2020

12. Dominik Kubalik

Age: 24

Position: Left wing

2019-20 salary cap hit: \$925,000

Arbitration rights: Yes

Bargaining chips: Plenty of big-game international experience starring at the senior level with Czech men's team. 2018 Olympian. A 30-goal rookie

campaign caught many by surprise and tops all impending RFAs. Calder Trophy finalist.

The latest: Kubalik — a seventh-round gem — made a seamless transition from the Swiss league to the North American game this season, exploding for 30 goals and 46 points. Then he erupted for seven points in his first seven postseason games.

On Feb. 28, The Athletic's Scott Powers reported that discussions on Kubalik's next contract had begun with GM Stan Bowman. Despite a grand total of 68 NHL games played, Kubalik does hold arbitration rights, which will make for an interesting case.

"Maybe William Karlsson in Vegas becomes the new comp," a source told Powers. "Slightly higher AAV, but on a one-year, see-if-you-can-do-it-again deal."

Yep. We'd expect Chicago to push for a short-term extension. Kubalik fired at a 19.1 shooting percentage in the regular season, and that rate is virtually unsustainable. As they integrate more youth into their lineup, the Blackhawks also have to work out the futures of Dylan Strome, Slater Koekoek, Drake Caggiula and Matthew Highmore.

13. Jake DeBrusk

Age: 23

Position: Left wing

2019-20 salary cap hit: \$863,333

Arbitration rights: No

Bargaining chips: Was on track for his second-consecutive 20-goal season and third-straight 40-point seasons. Playoff performer. First-round pick. Plays with an edge befitting of the Bruins' identity.

The latest: DeBrusk got off to a slow start in his platform year and could finish with a career-low 35 points. The Bruins opted for bridge deals last summer with RFAs Charlie McAvoy and Brandon Carlo, and it makes a ton of sense for both sides to take that route again here.

"I feel like secondary scoring has been the question mark since I've been here, so I feel like if I can help lead in that [category] during the playoffs, then that would be great," DeBrusk told NBC Sports in late July. "The quarantine break before now has really changed my mindset on everything, and that includes [my contract]. I'm just happy to be here and happy to be here playing."

"You want to score clutch goals and come up big in timely moments. It could be a blocked shot. Everybody wants to look at stats and production, but for me it's about if I'm playing well. That's what I'm focused on with [the contract]."

As a second-line player, DeBrusk's future will take a back seat to the Bruins' most significant decision: At what price do they want to keep UFA defenceman Torey Krug in the fold?

14. Ryan Strome

Age: 27

Position: Centre / Right wing

2019-20 salary cap hit: \$3.1 million

Arbitration rights: Yes

Bargaining chips: Crushed career highs in goals (18) and points (59) and was about to register his first 20-goal, 60-point season. Logs nearly 20 minutes a night. Plus-21 on a non-playoff team. Top-five pick. Found quick chemistry alongside Artemi Panarin (but who doesn't?).

The latest: Strome is a perplexing case. The most senior guy on this list, he had mustered just one goal and one assist in 18 games with Edmonton in 2018-19 but has absolutely taken off since being traded back to New York City, proving more than capable of a top-six role.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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If you're the Rangers, how much term do you give a forward whose numbers have fluctuated so wildly over the course of a career that's toured through three franchises?

"It's definitely special to be a Ranger right now, and I'm really happy with where I'm at," Strome told Sportsnet's Gene Principe during the pause.

Rangers insider Larry Brooks of the New York Post analyzed the Strome situation in April.

"I'd expect the Blueshirts to keep Strome on a one-year deal, preferably without having to go through an unhelpful arbitration hearing," Brooks writes. "It would give management more time in which to assess Strome's value and to ruminate over the wisdom of signing him to a long-term deal. In the alternative, he would likely become a prime rental property heading into next year's deadline."

15. Tristan Jarry

Age: 25

Position: Goaltender

2019-20 salary cap hit: \$675,000

Arbitration rights: Yes

Bargaining chips: One of the greatest bargains in hockey. Posted career highs in wins (20), GAA (2.43) and save percentage (.921). Made first All-Star Game appearance in January.

The latest: Jarry outperformed fellow RFA Murray this season in a 1A/1B rotation and has made a compelling case that he should be the Penguins' undisputed starter in 2020-21.

Jim Rutherford, as always, will be up against the cap as he tries to keep the Crosby-Malkin championship window open for as long as possible. The GM had been blessed with one of the cheapest goalie tandems in 2019-20 (Murray and Jarry combined for a \$4.425 million cap hit), but both are due for significant raises. Meanwhile, AHLer Casey DeSmith is ready and eager for another NHL look, and he's getting \$1.25 million per season through 2020-21 regardless of where he plays.

Serious trade potential in Pittsburgh this off-season.

GM Jim Rutherford delayed all RFA negotiations until the off-season and now has a series of decisions to make in the face of a flat cap.

"It can just take one or two contracts that put a team in a tough spot," he said.

With the Penguins' season on the line, Coach Sullivan bailed on Murray and started Jarry, who lost despite posting a .952 save percentage in his postseason debut.

16. Anthony Mantha

Age: 25

Position: Left wing / Right wing

2019-20 salary cap hit: \$3.3 million

Arbitration rights: Yes

Bargaining chips: Puts up the same points per game (0.88) as Barzal. Plays nearly 19 minutes a night. Managed 38 points in 2019-20 despite being hampered with injuries. Consecutive 24-goal, 48-point efforts in 2017-18 and 2018-19.

The latest: When healthy, Mantha is a beastly winger and dependable contributor to Detroit's top six. The drawback here is an injury history that has prevented Mantha from playing more than 70 games in all but one of his five pro years.

"It will be complicated, I think," Mantha told The Detroit News of his upcoming negotiation with Yzerman. "But it's not in my power. My power

is to play hockey. My agent and Stevie are going to talk. Maybe they've started. I don't even know.

"It's hard to base right now. I played 40 games this year. I missed so many games, so it's hard to go for the extension before the end of the year. We'll see in the off-season.

"Hopefully it goes quick and I'll be here for a long time."

Mantha provided an update on April 29 to MLive.com.

"I talked to my agent a couple of weeks ago, and he told me nothing is moving forward yet," Mantha said. "We're trying to put our focus, and the [general managers] are focusing on trying to get hockey back before re-signing players."

More notable RFAs on deck: Anthony Duclair, Andre Burakovsky, Connor Brown, Josh Anderson, Victor Olofsson, Roope Hintz, Kevin Labanc, Jesper Bratt, Dylan Strome, Chris Tierney, Jake Virtanen, Adam Gaudette, Jared McCann, Robby Fabbri, Andrew Mangiapane, Denis Gurianov, Valeri Nichushkin, Andreas Athanasiou, Ryan Graves, Ilya Mikheyev, Vince Dunn, Ethan Bear, Devon Toews, Brandon Montour, Linus Ullmark, Alexandar Georgiev, Nolan Patrick, Erik Cernak, Travis Dermott, Victor Mete

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Sportsnet.ca / Canucks learning valuable lessons from O'Reilly's battle-tested Blues

Iain MacIntyre | @imacSportsnet August 18, 2020

EDMONTON – Eventually, the game has a way of exposing everything you don't know or haven't done. Professional hockey highlights your shortcomings, and those sobering lessons often arrive bluntly during the playoffs.

The Stanley Cup tournament is an incredible classroom, but also a school with zero tolerance. You pass or you fail, and there is little gray area between the two.

"It's the most exhilarating time but also the most exhausting," one player told Sportsnet. "It's been a big education being in the playoffs and playing with this group – how hard it is to win in this league and what it takes."

The player, last spring, was Ryan O'Reilly, who after nine years in the National Hockey League with mostly bad teams was desperate at age 28 to figure out how to win a playoff series.

O'Reilly talked about the euphoria and exhaustion he felt finally getting through the first round with the St. Louis Blues, and the daunting realization that there were still three rounds to go and winning was going to get even harder.

A month after that interview with Sportsnet, O'Reilly lifted both the Stanley Cup and the Conn Smythe Trophy. He learned. So did the Blues and their new head coach, Craig Berube.

A year later, O'Reilly is at the front of the classroom dictating lessons to the Vancouver Canucks, whose young and talented core is suddenly finding out what it didn't know as the Blues have roared back in this fascinating playoff series after losing the first two games.

O'Reilly and veteran wingers David Perron and Jaden Schwartz were dominant in Monday's 3-1 win, and have badly outplayed at even strength the Canucks' top trio of Elias Pettersson, Brock Boeser and J.T. Miller.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Pettersson is 21, Boeser, 23. Both are in their first playoffs. They've combined for six even-strength shots and one even-strength goal in four games. Miller has eight even-strength shots and one goal.

"This is a learning process for these guys, and here we are 2-2, best of three," Canucks coach Travis Green said in Tuesday's conference call. "And those guys probably haven't had their best five-on-five yet. I expect them to keep getting better as the series goes on. That's part of the challenge for young players. When you get into the playoffs for the first time, you're going to face different hurdles. These guys are taking it head on. They know it's not easy, but they're not backing off.

"I love it. I love what our team is doing; I love what we've done so far. We've talked about getting to this part of the season and how it's going to help our team. But I can tell you one thing: this is not about a learning process. We are here to win and we have full belief that we can win this series. And that's what I'm expecting."

Strong words from the coach who needs stronger play from most of his players, including his stars, if they're to overcome O'Reilly and an experienced St. Louis team that knows how to win and appears to have rediscovered its championship swagger.

O'Reilly has six points in the series and was all over Game 4, scoring twice and adding an assist. But a better measure of his dominance is that, playing more against Pettersson than anyone, he has a shots-for-percentage of 78.6 at even strength. Four out of five shots are being directed at the Canucks net when O'Reilly is on the ice five-on-five.

"I'm not sure I've been around many guys that work as hard as he does," Berube said as the teams rested for Game 5 on Wednesday. "And his hard work is to get better. There are people who work hard just to work hard, but his work is to get better. I've said it all the time: his stick is his greatest asset. . . other than his brain. He's a very intelligent player, but he does so much with his stick, stripping pucks from people, knocking them down, little plays."

O'Reilly drives the Blues, and he'd be doing so even if winger Vladimir Tarasenko didn't leave the Edmonton "bubble" on Tuesday due to ongoing shoulder problems.

"But he's not the only one," Berube added. "We have a ton of guys, veteran guys here, that are extremely hard workers and very dedicated hockey players. These guys are dedicated players, team guys and they work extremely hard."

Amid all the fury and animosity of the playoffs, O'Reilly has stayed singularly focused on his formidable two-way game by making the Canucks' best players largely disappear at even-strength while taking over the Blues' attack.

He doesn't make mistakes, doesn't take penalties, never drifts, never concedes a puck battle, never loses focus.

You want to win in the playoffs? O'Reilly is a pretty good template.

"Our guys have learned a lot already," Green said. "We've got 10 guys who have never played playoff games. I know our group, they're obviously disappointed when you lose last night and the night before, but, man, I think our group is excited to play the next game and looking forward to it.

"They understand we're in a tough series and that's the way it should be. That's playoff hockey. You're going to win some close games, you're going to lose some close games. We're down to a best-of-three against arguably one of the better teams in the league. We're standing in there toe-to-toe with them. Best of three against this team, we're excited about the chances of winning right now. I've got a lot of belief in our group and they've got a lot of belief in themselves, and they'll be ready to go."

And if the Canucks are lucky, wiser by the day.

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TSN.CA / Hard-working 'gnats' line helping Lightning turn tables on Jackets

Mark Masters

TSN Toronto reporter Mark Masters checks in daily with news and notes on the NHL playoffs. The Boston Bruins, Carolina Hurricanes, Tampa Bay Lightning and Columbus Blue Jackets all held Zoom sessions following practices on Tuesday.

Four games into their series against the Columbus Blue Jackets last year, the Lightning were done. This year, Tampa Bay is up three games to one and close to earning some revenge for that shocking upset.

"I think they've understood the defensive side of the game," observed Jackets captain Nick Foligno when asked what's changed about the Lightning.

During a marathon Game 1 that went into a fifth overtime, Lightning coach Jon Cooper kept reminding his players not to sacrifice defence for offence and they eventually waited out a stubborn Jackets side that saw leading scorer Artemi Panarin depart in free agency last summer.

"We're very cognizant in trying to limit odd-man rushes," said defenceman Ryan McDonagh. "That's been a big focus for us this series and all season."

In Game 4, the Jackets outshot the Lightning 29-22, but Cooper's crew stayed patient and held their nerve in a 2-1 win.

"When another team has us pinned down in our zone, we're doing a good job not panicking there and just buying our time and getting through that," said McDonagh, "and understanding that, yeah, teams will hold us in our zone for a bit and make some things happen, but we can slowly but surely get out of it and get our game going on the offensive side of things. It doesn't really frustrate us."

It's Tampa's turn to frustrate the opponent and a couple of new recruits are leading the way in that department. Gritty wingers Blake Coleman and Barclay Goodrow were acquired via trade from New Jersey and San Jose in February and have given the Lightning a different dimension up front.

"We play a little more of a physical game than we have in years past," noted Tyler Johnson. "We have guys that like to hit, guys that get on the body. You look at the Yanni Gourde line and those guys are always hitting out there and that's something our team has had a little bit in the past, but not as much as this year so that's definitely a difference."

Gourde's line with Coleman and Goodrow produced the two goals in Game 4. Cooper consistently sends them out to start periods and set the tone.

"They're like gnats," the coach said on Monday. "I feel like they're always just buzzing around and as you try to knock them away, they just never leave and they're pests. They put work ethic above everything else. They're selfless players and they don't have an off switch."

Cooper noticed that Coleman and Goodrow seemed to be pressing before the pause, because they badly wanted to make an impact for their new club. But now the pair are more comfortable and doing what the Lightning envisioned when they gave up a couple first-round picks to bring them in.

"This is the reason we got them," said Cooper. "We feel we're a playoff team, it all just comes down to winning in the playoffs and you go down our roster and it's hard to squeeze guys into the 'top six' but that wasn't our need. We needed to be harder to play against and harder years ago



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used to mean physical and fighting and big and strong and now, today, it means compete, speed and in-your-face hockey and we needed those type of guys. They were circled on the list and [general manager] Julien [BriseBois] and our scouting staff did a great job and we all said, "What do we need?" And that's exactly what we needed."

Podium game for the Goodrow-Gourde-Coleman line

Coach Jon Cooper: "They're like gnats. I feel like they're always just buzzing around & as you try to knock them away they just never leave. They're pests ... they don't have an off switch"
pic.twitter.com/BvnA0359jP

— Mark Masters (@markmasters) August 17, 2020

Jackets coach John Tortorella hasn't been saying much in his media sessions in the bubble and it seems reporters may be getting the message. Tortorella's briefing on Tuesday started with a question about what the Jackets can take from a solid performance in Game 4.

"It was probably one of our better games of the series," is all the veteran bench boss offered.

The moderator asked if there were any other questions. There were none and Tortorella was gone in less than a minute.

Watch Torts' (quick) presser below [1](#) #CBJ | @Levis4Floors
pic.twitter.com/H52iUNYS9w

— Columbus Blue Jackets (@BlueJacketsNHL) August 18, 2020

Jordan Staal was back on the ice Tuesday afternoon just hours after getting hit hard by Boston's Charlie McAvoy and being forced out of Game 4.

"Good sign that he was out there today," said Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour, who wasn't sure about the status of Carolina's captain for Wednesday's must-win matinee.

— Michael Smith (@MSmithCanes) August 18, 2020

The Hurricanes desperately needed some good news after a disastrous final 20 minutes on Monday, which saw them get outshot 16-2 and squander a 2-0 lead.

"That was, quite frankly, as ugly a period as I've seen us play," veteran winger Justin Williams said glumly afterwards.

Brind'Amour seemed stunned in the wake of the loss.

"The lack of pushback that we needed is something that I haven't seen out of this group," the coach said in his post-game Zoom session. "I'll take the heat for that. I mean, I needed to have my guys better prepared for that third period ... Taking over as coach, I wanted to make people that support this organization [are] proud of how we play and we've done that for most of the time I've been here and today we didn't and that's the most disturbing thing for me."

The mood around the team was sombre last night and that's why Brind'Amour opted to hold a full practice on Tuesday.

"Turn the page and try to [bring] a little joy, have some fun," he explained. "Yesterday was a tough day, obviously, so that day is long gone and we needed to turn the page and remember this is a game and try to have some fun with that."

What's the mindset now?

"We can't win three games tomorrow," Brind'Amour said. "We got to win one and then see what happens from there. The guys picked up their chin off the ground and came in today and worked hard."

Bruce Cassidy felt McAvoy's hit on Staal, which happened moments before the Bruins tied the game, demoralized the Hurricanes while sending a jolt through the Bruins bench. It also served as a reminder of how the 22-year-old is becoming a more well-rounded force.

"More physical," observed Boston's coach when asked about the defenceman's evolution. "Taking more responsibility in terms of trying to change the flow of the game ... He's much more involved now on the penalty kill, we've given him more responsibility there so now, all of the sudden, he's that all-situation guy."

McAvoy was on the ice for both Hurricanes goals in Game 4, but didn't let that get to him. The third-year pro waited for his chance to make a difference and laid the body on Staal.

"Charlie is a more mature guy," noted Cassidy. "If he has a tough shift, he's able to park it better. I think in the past it bothered him more and he wanted to make amends right away on the next shift and he's done a better job of playing a more balanced game. That's the growth I've seen in him."

Boston has been able to win two of three games with David Pastrnak out of the lineup. The injured right winger participated in Tuesday's practice as he inches toward a return. Prior to Monday's game, Cassidy described Pastrnak's chances of playing as "50-50 at best."

What are his chances of suiting up in Game 5?

"Better than they were," said Cassidy. "He skated today and made it through practice, did a few battle drills. [It] will depend on how he feels in the morning, if there's residual effect and then we'll make a decision."

Even before that crushing loss to the Bruins, Brind'Amour readily admitted bubble life wasn't easy.

"It's the thing that wasn't talked about enough when the format came out," he said in the hours before Game 4. "I mean, it sounded great just to get back playing but this, to me, was going to be the biggest challenge ... It's a long time to be away. We've been away now three weeks and we've played three playoff games, you know, so guys are feeling it. It's a long road and the team that can hunker down the best and mentally channel all your positive energy to why you're here is the team that will probably be able to hoist the Cup when it's all done."

After Monday's game, Brind'Amour acknowledged that the bubble environment makes it tougher for teams to claw back in a series with players knowing one more loss means a return home.

Even for top teams like the Lightning, who are up in their series, it's a struggle.

"It's a constant battle," said McDonagh, "but the only thing you keep telling yourself is you're not the only one on this team going through that and there is a greater goal out there that we're striving for."

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TSN.CA / Humble Dale Hawerchuk remembered as a resilient competitor

Frank Seravalli

Over the past few days, Mike Keenan composed a text message to Dale Hawerchuk with perhaps his most poignant piece of coaching over their 42-year relationship.



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"You've got one more faceoff to win," Keenan wrote of Hawerchuk's battle with cancer.

It was Keenan's way of showing his support for one of the most resilient and competitive players he has ever crossed paths with – a path that includes their shared role in one of the most memorable faceoffs in hockey history.

In the waning moments of Game 3 in the 1987 Canada Cup final between Canada and the Soviet Union, two of the greatest centres ever to play the game in Wayne Gretzky and Mario Lemieux deferred to Hawerchuk on the draw.

It's the moment that produced the odd-man rush between Nos. 66 and 99 that is forever etched on the minds of fans across Canada.

Hawerchuk's legacy will be equally long-lasting, just judging by the messages that flowed to his phone from around the hockey world in recent days and weeks.

One of the game's great superstars in the glory days of the 1980s, Hawerchuk passed away at the age of 57 on Tuesday after a year-long battle with stomach cancer, his family announced.

Remembering Hawerchuk's legendary career

Hockey Hall of Famer Dale Hawerchuk has died at the age of 57. A native of Toronto, Hawerchuk had experienced a recurrence of cancer in recent weeks. A five-time All-Star, Hawerchuk appeared in 1,188 games over 16 seasons with the Jets, Sabres, Blues and Flyers. Michael Farber has more on his legendary career in this essay.

The face of the original Winnipeg Jets franchise – and one of Canada's best junior hockey players ever – was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame in 2001.

Keenan, beginning his coaching journey with the Oshawa Legionaries of the Toronto Metro Jr. B league, first coached the kid they called Ducky as a 15-year-old in 1978-79. What stood out then, even for a player deemed to be a childhood prodigy who broke Guy Lafleur's goal-scoring record in the Quebec International Pee Wee tournament, turned out to be the hallmark of Hawerchuk's NHL career.

"He was so resilient," Keenan said. "He was the best player on our team as a 15-year-old. He thrived on the competition as a young man, and when we got into some heavy playoff battles, the other teams would really go after him. He didn't back down. He bounced right back up. You could tell then that he had what it takes to be a superstar in the NHL."

The entire country saw it over the next two years, playing for the Cornwall Royals in the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League.

Over a two-year run, Hawerchuk collected 286 points in 144 regular-season games, two Memorial Cups, CHL Player of the Year, Memorial Cup MVP and QMJHL playoff MVP.

In 1981, Hawerchuk and the Royals faced Keenan's Peterborough Petes, the defending Memorial Cup champions. The Petes allegedly threw the final game of their round-robin in order to ensure a matchup with Hawerchuk and Cornwall in the final, a perceived weaker opponent. Cornwall upended Peterborough in overtime in the final.

Keenan always denied the narrative, but he and Hawerchuk always enjoyed playful banter whenever it came up.

"I would tell him we outplayed them in the final," Keenan said. "And he would say, 'Maybe, but we've got the Cup,' and I couldn't really argue with that."

The Jets drafted the can't-miss Toronto native first overall in 1981. Hawerchuk infamously inked his contract at the corner of Portage and Main in downtown Winnipeg after GM John Ferguson had him delivered in a Brinks truck, marking a rebirth of the franchise in the NHL.

Twenty-one picks later, the Jets drafted Hawerchuk's Cornwall teammate and lifelong friend Scott Arniel with the first selection of the second

round. Arniel ended up being Hawerchuk's teammate for seven straight seasons – one in Cornwall and six with the Jets.

"He was Winnipeg's big news. There was big hype and he was a big-time player," said Arniel, now an assistant coach with the Washington Capitals. "He earned it all. He didn't just have talent, Dale had this great drive and ambition, something that I don't know if I've seen. He's one of those people that the expectation of himself was so much greater than what anyone could put on him."

Hawerchuk exceeded those lofty expectations. Hawerchuk posted 100 or more points in six of his first seven seasons in the NHL, including five straight from 1983-88.

The Jets said in a statement on Tuesday that "Dale Hawerchuk put Winnipeg and the Jets on the map the day he arrived in our city in 1981."

From his debut in 1981 until 1993-94, Hawerchuk was second league-wide in points (1,298) only to Gretzky (2,157), topping Lemieux (1,211), Paul Coffey (1,246) and Mark Messier (1,220). Hawerchuk was the Jets' captain for six seasons, then wore the 'A' in Buffalo for the following five.

"He just hated to lose," Arniel said. "It didn't matter if it was golf, baseball or hockey – he was extremely competitive."

Hawerchuk is widely considered one of the best players ever to not win a Stanley Cup. The closest he got – the only time his team ever advanced past the second round – was the 1997 Stanley Cup Final with the Philadelphia Flyers, the last games he played before retiring at the age of 34 due to a degenerative hip problem.

His Jets just never had enough to sneak past the Smythe Division stalwarts in Edmonton and Calgary.

On the international stage, Hawerchuk wrote a different story. Tasked with coaching Canada in the 1987 Canada Cup, Keenan learned his lesson from betting against Hawerchuk in the 1980 Memorial Cup.

Hawerchuk was a borderline roster player on that '87 squad with 10 other future Hockey Hall of Famers, but caught Keenan's eye with his work ethic in training camp.

Poulin on Hawerchuk: 'He was a special, special hockey player'

Dave Poulin, who had a chance to play with Dale Hawerchuk in his career, describes him as a hockey player and as a man, while Darren Dreger, who got to know Hawerchuk as a hockey dad, discusses how much he loved the sport.

"He told me: 'We didn't have you pencilled in, but the way you're playing, there's no way we can keep you out of the lineup,'" Hawerchuk recalled in a recent interview with TSN.

He ended up being one of the true difference-makers for Canada. Not only did Hawerchuk win the draw to setup the game-winning goal, but he ran interference in the neutral zone so Lemieux and Gretzky could sail toward the Soviet goal. He was also part of Canada's 1991 Canada Cup victory.

"It was a privilege coaching him again," Keenan said. "He was a really humble competitor, very coachable, and that's what allowed that team to come together – because of the traits of people like Dale. These guys all came from different teams where they were superstars, and he played a lot less than he would have in Winnipeg, but was so humble about it."

Hawerchuk's humility carried over to his post-playing career, coaching in the junior ranks. He was named head coach of the OHL's Barrie Colts in 2010, where he posted five 40-plus win campaigns over nine seasons. Hawerchuk helped develop future NHL stars such as Mark Scheifele and Andrei Svechnikov in Barrie.

Rest In Peace Dale, was an honour to play for you.

— Rasmus Andersson (@RAndersson19) August 18, 2020



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But Haverchuk called the opportunity to coach his son, Ben, in the OHL one of his greatest honours in hockey.

Haverchuk was forced to take a leave of absence from coaching last year after his cancer diagnosis. He told Arniel in a subsequent phone call: "I'm beating it. This thing isn't going to get me."

That appeared to be the case when Haverchuk triumphantly rung the Bell of Hope at a Barrie hospital on April 13 at the conclusion of his treatment.

It was then, in the middle of a pandemic, that a courageous player who gave the hockey world so many indelible moments said that these trying times were a moment of opportunity for everyone to appreciate the little things.

"When you wake up, it's refreshing," Haverchuk told the Winnipeg Sun. "I sure appreciate when I see that sun pop over the rise every morning. You start to realize that everything we've had was such a privilege. We take that privilege for granted too often. The cancer's helped me realize that a bit. But this coronavirus is also going to help, not only me, but everybody. We can't take so many things for granted anymore."

Haverchuk is survived by his wife, Crystal, and children Eric, Ben and Alexis. Funeral arrangements were pending.

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TSN.CA / Five Takeaways: Canucks lose 3-1 to St Louis

Jeff Paterson

1. The Vancouver Canucks power play let the team down on Monday night. Full stop. It hasn't happened often this season and it certainly hadn't happened to this point in this series against St. Louis. But 24 hours after lamenting the lack of calls that went their way in Sunday's 3-2 overtime loss, the Canucks felt strongly that if they could get more calls on Monday, their power play would allow them to beat the Blues. Not only did the Canucks go 0 for 7 with the man-advantage in Game 4, the team generated a paltry eight shots on goal in 12:13 of power play time. Uncharacteristically, the Canucks were static on the power play and the Blues seemed content to allow the trio of Quinn Hughes, JT Miller and Elias Pettersson to play catch with the puck on the perimeter. The Canucks registered six of their eight shots on three first period power plays and mustered just a pair of Hughes point shots in their four opportunities over the game's final 40 minutes. The Canucks power play has been such a difference maker all season and had cashed in on six of its first 11 chances in this series. And then suddenly someone pulled the plug. To make matters worse, St. Louis scored two of its three goals on the night with the man-advantage. Special teams were not very special for the Canucks in Game 4.

2. After opening the scoring in the first three games of the series, the Canucks fell behind 1-0 on Monday when – guess who? – Ryan O'Reilly gave the Blues the lead on a late first period power play. Despite that, the Canucks opening 20 minutes in Game 4 was encouraging. They spent much of the period in the St. Louis zone, they forced the issue and drew three penalties. And when JT Miller deflected an Alex Edler point shot past Jake Allen 40 seconds into the second period, it looked like the Canucks got the boost they were looking for. Unfortunately, as it turned out, that was as good as it got for the Canucks on Monday and the rest of the second period was spent in the Vancouver end. The Blues outshot the Canucks 17-5 in the period and added a couple of goals. But those numbers only tell part of the story. According to Natural Stat Trick, the Blues controlled 78% of the shot attempts and out-chanced the Canucks

10-1 at even-strength in the middle frame. There have been too many periods like that in the past couple of games where the Blues tilt the ice and it seems there is nothing the Canucks can do about it. That has to be a concern moving forward in this series.

3. In the middle of the Minnesota series, there were declarations that Brock Boeser was playing the best hockey of his NHL career. He was scoring, was involved physically and was invested in the battle against his hometown Wild. That was then and now midway through this series against St. Louis, questions are being asked about Boeser's impact against the Blues. It's true Boeser has not scored in five games (since Game 3 against Minnesota). Beyond that, though, it's his shot totals that are mildly concerning. Boeser will be the first to tell you that he's a volume shooter and that when he's at the top of his game he's got the puck on his stick and he's directing multiple shots per game at the opponent's net. Last night, Boeser had just two shot attempts – both on first period power plays. That was it. Not even a single shot attempt at even-strength. In Game 3 on Sunday, Boeser didn't attempt a shot in 60 minutes of regulation time before finally directing a couple of shots on goal in overtime. In the series, he has just four shots on goal. Boeser has seven points in eight playoff games (2+5=7), so it's impossible to suggest he hasn't been productive. But it's also true that there just hasn't been much sizzle to his game in this series. Bo Horvat, Elias Pettersson and JT Miller have combined for 10 of the Canucks' 12 goals against the Blues. So other top liners are finding ways to leave their marks on this series, but it hasn't happened – yet – for Boeser.

4. This has been a top of the line-up series. Aside from Troy Stecher's game winner in the opener, 11 of the team's 12 goals against St. Louis have come from top six forwards. For the Blues, it's the same thing. Ryan O'Reilly (3), David Perron and Jaden Schwartz (2 each) and Brayden Schenn have accounted for eight of their team's 11 goals in the series. And when you look at the Canucks goal-scoring in the post-season, top six forwards have accounted for 19 of the 24 goals scored so far. Lump in Quinn Hughes with the amount he plays, and just four of the team's goals have come from depth players. Good teams are led by their best players, but Monday was a prime example of a night when the Canucks stars were having trouble generating – particularly on the power play – and any kind of contribution from someone a little lower in the line-up would have been welcomed. In these playoffs, Stecher, Brandon Sutter, Antoine Roussel and Chris Tanev are the only depth players to find the back of the net. It's important to note that all of them have contributed to Canucks victories including Tanev plunging the dagger into the Wild in overtime in the previous round. So good things happen when the Canucks get unlikely candidates chipping in. The Canucks depth players aren't getting outscored by their counterparts on St. Louis. That's not the issue. It's just that there seems to be no expectation of any kind of offensive contributions from anyone outside of the top six and Quinn Hughes. Treading water on a given shift seems to represent success for the lower in the line-up forwards right now. In Game 4, the depth forwards on the Canucks accounted for four shots on goal and Zack MacEwen had three of them. If Travis Green continues to run with that group – especially after back to back losses --it suggests the coach is okay with the way his bottom six forwards are playing. Adam Gaudette may not be a difference maker, but he at least represents the idea of some offense a little lower in the line-up. Gaudette hasn't played since Game 1 against Minnesota. It feels like it's time to inject a motivated Gaudette into the line-up and into this series.

5. Despite consecutive losses, the Canucks are still right there with the Blues and have boiled a best of seven against the Stanley Cup champs down to a best of three. Jacob Markstrom has been strong in all four of the games in this series. Aside from Monday's power play struggles, the Canucks best players have been productive and have shown an ability to produce against the Blues. The team gets a much-needed day off on Tuesday to rest and regroup. There will be plenty of time for a post-mortem and for deep dives on roster construction and the many issues facing the hockey team in the off-season whenever it arrives. But the Canucks are still very much in this series so all of those examinations of the hockey club have to be put on hold for now. Despite struggling at even-strength for much of the series, the Canucks have lost in overtime



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and by two goals. They certainly haven't been outclassed by the champs on the scoreboard. If the Canucks can play like they did in the opening period on Monday and find a way to sustain that for more than 20 minutes, they have shown they can beat the Blues. Twice. The Canucks likely feel that they haven't shown St. Louis their best hockey over a full 60 minutes in this series. They have that chance on Wednesday night, but they'd best not squander the opportunity. The champs look like they're starting to roll now and it's up to the Canucks to find a way to halt that momentum.

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USA TODAY / Hockey Hall of Famer Dale Hawerchuk dies of cancer at 57

Mike Brehm

Dale Hawerchuk, who went from the No. 1 overall pick to a berth in the Hall of Fame, has died, his son announced Tuesday. He was 57.

Hawerchuk was diagnosed with stomach cancer in October. He completed chemotherapy in April, but his son, Eric, announced in late July that his dad's cancer had returned.

A dominant youth scorer who once scored eight goals in a game, had 81 goals in his final season of junior hockey and won two Memorial Cups, Dale Hawerchuk was taken first overall by the Winnipeg Jets in 1981.

He became the youngest player to score 100 points in a season (103), helped lead the Jets to a 48-point improvement and won the Calder Trophy as rookie of the year.

"It was such a good fit for me (playing for the Jets)," he told CBC in 2017. "I was crazy about hockey and when I got to Winnipeg, I soon realized the whole province was crazy about the game and the Jets as well."

Hawerchuk was among the top centers in the 1980s as he topped 100 points six times and 90 points two other times in his first eight seasons.

That included a career-best 53-goal, 130-point season in 1983-84 in which he finished second in Hart Trophy voting behind Wayne Gretzky.

"Dale Hawerchuk put Winnipeg and the Jets on the map the day he arrived in our city in 1981, and his love for our community and remarkable Hall of Fame career will keep it here for many generations to come," the Jets said in a statement. "Dale had a relationship with our fans unlike any other player in the history of our franchise. Whether at home or on the world stage, 'Ducky' was embraced by so many, so often because of his humility and the grace by which he always carried himself. Dale was quite simply one of the finest human beings we have ever known that also just happened to be a superstar."

He also starred internationally, helping Canada win the Canada Cup in 1987 and 1991.

Hawerchuk missed the playoffs only once during his nine seasons with the Jets, but he was traded to the Buffalo Sabres at the 1990 draft in a four-player deal that also involved a swap of first-round picks. The return included future Hall of Famer Phil Housley.

He continued to put up points and playoff appearances on a high-powered team that included Alexander Mogilny and Pat LaFontaine.

Hawerchuk signed with the St. Louis Blues as a free agent in 1995.

"Time is running out for me," he told USA TODAY at the time. "This is my 15th year, and I've never had a really good shot at the Cup. That's why I came to St. Louis."

But his season there did not pan out. Coach Mike Keenan benched him in October for his return game to Buffalo, a game that Hawerchuk's parents were attending. Brett Hull criticized the move and was stripped of his captaincy. Hawerchuk was traded later in the season to the Philadelphia Flyers, where he averaged more than a point a game and reached the second round.

Hawerchuk and the Flyers the following season advanced to the 1997 Stanley Cup Final, where they were swept by the Detroit Red Wings. During that summer, he was diagnosed with arthritis in his hip and announced his retirement.

He ranked 10th in all-time scoring at the time. He was elected to the Hall of Fame in 2001.

"Even though I didn't win a Stanley Cup, I still wouldn't change a thing," he said of his career during his induction speech. "I think to ask for more would be greedy."

Hawerchuk coached the Barrie Colts of the Ontario Hockey League from 2010 until his cancer diagnosis. Among his players there were future NHLers Aaron Ekblad, Mark Scheifele, Andrei Svechnikov and Kevin Labanc, plus his son, Ben.

"Dale was an incredible man," Labanc tweeted. "He taught me so much and helped develop me to the person I am today. I wouldn't be where I am today without him."

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USA TODAY / Colorado Avalanche star Nathan MacKinnon manhandles Arizona Coyotes' Christian Fischer during scrum

Mike Brehm

Colorado Avalanche star Nathan MacKinnon is a finalist for the Hart Trophy as league MVP, and he showed why Monday with two impressive assists in a 7-1 rout of the Arizona Coyotes.

He's also a finalist this year for the Lady Byng Trophy for gentlemanly play, and that took a back seat as he stood up for a teammate.

With the Avalanche up 6-1 in the third period, Arizona's Lawson Crouse was called for boarding Avalanche rookie of the year finalist Cale Makar, sparking a scrum.

MacKinnon got involved and grabbed the Coyotes' Christian Fischer, pulling off his helmet as he pulled him out of the scrum.

Fischer cross-checked MacKinnon, and the 6-0, 200-pound Avalanche forward basically tossed his 6-2, 214 opponent around before pushing him to the ice.

"I think Fischer cross-checked the wrong guy in the face," Avalanche teammate Matt Calvert told reporters after the game. "You saw what Nate did to him. He absolutely manhandled him."

Said MacKinnon: "I got fired up."

MacKinnon was only called for roughing, but he has 10 penalty minutes in seven postseason games after recording 12 minutes (plus 93 points) in 69 games during the regular season.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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The Avalanche lead the first-round series 3-1 and can wrap up the first-round series in Game 5 on Wednesday at the Edmonton hub.

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