



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 20, 2020

THE NEWS & OBSERVER

Hurricanes' postseason comes to an end as Bruins take 2-1 win to clinch series

By Chip Alexander

Years from now, someone likely will ask Rod Brind'Amour about playing and coaching in the NHL and pose the question, "What was it like in 2020?"

There will be much to pack into an answer. A global pandemic. A months-long pause in the season. A postseason played in a bubble, in a hub city. No fans in the stands.

There will also be another trip to the Stanley Cup playoffs to discuss. But unprecedented. Qualifying rounds. Personally challenging, with families left behind. Games played with a playoff intensity but almost in a vacuum.

For the Canes, the playoffs ended Wednesday. It ended with a 2-1 loss to the Boston Bruins, in the best-of-seven series in Toronto's Scotiabank Arena decided in five games.

On Monday, after the Canes collapsed in the third period of Game 4 in losing 4-3, a somber Brind'Amour noted, "I want to make the people who support this organization proud of how we play."

This time, the effort and the will was there. Not the goals, not enough bounces. But the effort, the want-to.

"We responded. We walk out of here with our heads high," Brind'Amour said. "I'm really proud of this team.

"We want to win. We're sad we're not still playing. But there's more to it. We want to be that organization that continually is talked about as having a chance to win, and for our community to be proud of their team and how they play and how they represent."

The Bruins again did to the Canes what they did a year ago in sweeping them in the Eastern Conference finals: make them pay for their penalties. Boston scored twice in the second period Wednesday on power plays, David Krejci banging a rebound past Petr Mrazek and then Patrice Bergeron providing the dagger.

With the final seconds of the period ticking away, Bergeron grabbed the puck below the goal line extended, wheeled and and whipped a quick, tight angle shot toward the net. The puck glanced off Mrazek's left skate. The clock showed 2.5 seconds.

It was Bergeron who won Game 1 with his goal off the rush in the second overtime. It would be his goal Wednesday that

clinched the series as the Bruins, who led the NHL with 100 points in the regular season, moved on.

It then was clamp-down time again for the Bruins. In Game 4, Boston held the Canes without a shot for the first 18 minutes of the third period in their surging comeback win. On Wednesday, Carolina managed five shots in the third.

"A lot of things added up to this series loss," Canes captain Jordan Staal said. "That's a good team and they know how to win games."

Haydn Fleury's goal in the first period, on a shot from the right circle, gave the Canes a 1-0 lead after one. But that was the only one goalie Jaroslav Halak and the Bruins allowed as they killed off three penalties, blocked 17 shots and kept the Canes from jamming in a shot in some intense scums around the Boston net.

"It's that process of knowing and learning how to win," Brind'Amour said. "I think they were a little more patient with their game."

As the game came to a close Wednesday, one had to wonder if Justin Williams has played his last NHL game, his last game with the Hurricanes. The winger has made the Canes relevant again, helped make them a playoff team, but at 38 must decide if the time, inevitably, has come to retire.

"He's such a good person and ambassador for the game," Brind'Amour said.

And about that question again — about 2020. The coronavirus has disrupted and claimed lives, making pro sports a nice diversion but only that, a diversion. The Canes will leave Toronto and the bubble for more months of reflection and uncertainty.

"The reality of it is we're playing a game and we're real fortunate doing it," Brind'Amour said. "We're still able to play and try to provide some joy for people. I don't think we ever took it for granted, and that's something we try to preach, but at times we maybe do. Going through all this, you just realize how fortunate we are to do this job.

"Then the broader spectrum of it all, we're going home right now to see our families and we couldn't be happier to do that. I think everybody in the world realizes that and appreciates your family a lot more, going through all this."



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In what may have been his final game, Justin Williams was on the ice at the end

By Luke DeCock

Justin Williams was on the ice during the final, frantic seconds as the Carolina Hurricanes desperately scrambled for a goal to tie the score and extend their season. Those may be the final moments of a long and distinguished career for a player who became known as Mr. Game 7 but is going home after Game 5 of this series.

Williams was not among the two players made available to the media from the NHL's Toronto bubble, but he clearly agonized over whether to keep playing a year ago, relinquishing the captaincy and semi-retiring until he returned to action in January. It's hard to imagine the 38-year-old wanting to go through that again, although the compressed offseason — the NHL hopes to start the 2020-21 season in December — may impact his decision.

But it's more likely Wednesday's 2-1 loss marked the end of a career that spanned 19 seasons, 20 years, 1,264 regular-season games, 162 playoff games — two full seasons' worth! — and three Stanley Cups, including his first in 2006 with the Hurricanes on a team captained by Rod Brind'Amour.

"That's tough. It's tough," now-Hurricanes coach Brind'Amour said. "He's such a good person and ambassador for the game. If you ask me what it meant for me to have him being here, it meant everything — to have that leader, that friend to go to. I was new at this and everything I asked, he made sure the team did. He made my job really easy. I'm not sure what his plans are. You have to ask him. But I can't say enough good things about Justin Williams."

Williams had eight goals and three assists in his 20-game abbreviated season, productive enough for a player who jumped into the fray at midseason. He had one goal in seven playoff games.

STAAL GOOD

After much speculation, Jordan Staal and David Pastrnak were both in the lineup for Game 5. Petr Mrazek got the start in net for the Hurricanes.

Hurricanes captain Staal left Monday night's loss after a hard hit by Bruins defenseman Charlie McAvoy, and his departure with the Hurricanes leading 2-1 was a key factor in their eventual 4-3 loss. Bruins winger Pastrnak, who tied for the NHL lead with 48 goals in the regular season, apparently injured himself celebrating the Bruins' Game 1 game-winner and missed the next three games.

"Feeling much better," Bruins coach Bruce Cassidy said Wednesday morning

Pastrnak went back onto his usual line with Patrice Bergeron and Brad Marchand and assisted on both Boston goals.

EARLY EXITS

The Hurricanes were one of four teams facing elimination with a loss on Wednesday, which was as much of a concern for the Bruins as it was for the Hurricanes.

"They want to come back and want to win the series so they've got to do that one game at a time," Cassidy said. "I imagine they'll be laser-focused today. Typically in these situations you've got to play your best game. I think the Islanders learned that last night."

The Washington Capitals on Tuesday were only the fourth team in the bubble to win a game when facing elimination, beating the New York Islanders 3-2. The Hurricanes' loss Wednesday made their collective record 4-10 — a .286 winning percentage, down from .422 historically.

TAILWINDS

Andrei Svechnikov and Joel Edmundson both remained out for the Hurricanes. ... Jaccob Slavin finished the series a team-worst minus-4 against the Bruins. ... With his assist Wednesday, Sebastian Aho moved into a tie with Matt Cullen for eighth in franchise history in playoff scoring with 24 postseason points. ... The Hurricanes went 4-for-29 (13.8 percent) on the power play in the postseason. They converted at a 22.3 percent clip in the regular season.



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Hurricanes' season comes to an end when they let the Bruins off the hook, again

By Luke DeCock

The lasting image from the final game of the Carolina Hurricanes' season shouldn't be the goal Patrice Bergeron scored on Petr Mrazek in the final seconds of the second period — banking the puck off Mrazek's far skate from behind the net — but a chance Jordan Staal had earlier in the period.

It was a minor miracle Staal was playing at all, having been knocked out of Game 4 with a sturdy, legal hit by Boston Bruins defenseman Charlie McAvoy that was the fulcrum of the Hurricanes' collapse. They still had a one-goal lead then when their captain had to leave the game. The Bruins scored the second of their four straight goals almost immediately afterward.

That was not-so-ancient history Wednesday, with the Hurricanes facing elimination in Game 5. Staal was playing and so were the Hurricanes, dominating play, at least at even strength. Whatever had gone into the third-period capitulation on Monday wasn't evident at the start of Game 5. But when Staal had as good a chance as any the Hurricanes had, wide open, cutting into the slot with the puck, he fired it straight into Jaroslav Halak's belly.

When the Bruins had chances like that shortly afterward, they finished. The Hurricanes, throughout a series they lost 4-1, too often let them off the hook.

The Hurricanes had a chance to be up two or three goals Wednesday instead of the one-goal lead they took into the second period. But with only Sebastian Aho's line generating any production throughout the playoffs, a pair of power play goals ended up enough for the Bruins to end the Hurricanes' season with a 2-1 win.

The second of them was an absolute soul-destroyer, the clock in single digits when Bergeron saw Mrazek off his post and fired the puck off Mrazek's far skate from below the goal line, somehow going five-hole from behind the net in a feat of hockey impossibility.

Errors like that are unforgivable in the playoffs, just like the squandered power plays and bad penalties and all of the Hurricanes' other self-inflicted wounds.

All five games were within a goal in the final minute. That's how close the Hurricanes came. And yet the gap between them and the Bruins was obviously much larger than that.

"We got beat in a few different little areas," Staal said. "Special teams, obviously. A couple other things that kind of killed us. They found ways to win games."

For such a young team, even one with its best days still ahead of it, this still had an end-of-an-era feel to it. Justin Williams, surely, will not be coming back for any or all of next season, although past practice indicates it would be premature to count him out quite yet. And it's fair to ask if Staal, the old warhorse, is starting to slow down at 31. There will still be a place for him — and there are still three more years left on his contract — but he may not be able to play the same heavy minutes going forward.

So there are changes ahead, even among the younger players. The Hurricanes have exquisite top-end skill in Sebastian Aho and Andrei Svechnikov and as mobile and versatile a defensive corps as there is in the NHL, but there are clearly missing pieces, holes the Bruins so easily exposed. It's tough to analytically quantify being hard to play against, but the Bruins have a ton of depth forwards and defensemen who fit that description.

The Hurricanes, at this point, do not. Jaccob Slavin and Brett Pesce can infuriate the opposition with their defensive acumen, but they don't inspire fear. Then there's Jordan Martinook and Joel Edmundson — the latter an impending free agent who may not be signed, sorely missed after getting injured in Game 1 — and that's about it.

They're now built to make the playoffs, and they did that this year, to their credit. For a franchise that hadn't been to the playoffs in consecutive years in almost two decades, that's no small accomplishment.

But the Bruins have twice now shown them what it takes to win in the postseason, winning eight of nine postseason games spread over 16 months. The question is whether the Hurricanes are paying attention, in the front office and on the bench alike.

"The maturity of our group from this year to last year, we made a huge step," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "We closed the gap with the elite teams. We're closing in. As long as we learn what it takes to win, which I think we are, and we have this series, I think it's going to help this group moving forward."

But when the Hurricanes had their chances to extend the series Wednesday — and even before that — they made it easy on the Bruins. The Bruins would never.



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THE ATHLETIC

Carolina Hurricanes, welcome to your era of expectation

By Sara Civian

The 2018-19 Carolina Hurricanes were a once-in-a-fandom catharsis of a hockey team.

Magic like that — the birth of the Storm Surge, the shooting percentage finally making sense, the immediate success under franchise legend Rod Brind'Amour, the "Bunch of Jerks," the deep Cinderella run, the list goes on — doesn't last forever. You're lucky to experience even a few of those things in the duration of a hockey season.

There was a freedom in the certainty that it wouldn't last, and you could enjoy it for what it was.

Nothing like standing at the crossroads of success and expectation.

The first day of that season, Brind'Amour kept stressing the concept of "relevancy." The Hurricanes hadn't made back-to-back playoff appearances since 2002. As the captain of the Hurricanes' sole Stanley Cup team — and as a person who fell in love with the area so much he never left — Brind'Amour had a deep understanding that shortcuts wouldn't lead to sustainable success for hockey in Carolina.

His vision was more of a calculated, slow burn. You saw that in the patience of keeping an obvious star such as Andrei Svechnikov off the power play in his rookie season to get his stick penalties under control. You could argue it was when he didn't hastily assign Sebastian Aho or Jaccob Slavin the captaincy when Justin Williams took his pause. This is just who he is as a person, but it's also in the relationship he's built with owner Tom Dundon and the trust he has in his coaching staff.

Two facets of the Hurricanes' 2020 first-round exit are particularly hard to swallow:

- They looked so dominant against the Rangers in the play-in sweep.
- They were a first-round exit after making a deep run last season.

I know you don't want to hear it, but progress isn't linear in the National Hockey League. And when the Bruins are a yardstick of sustainable excellence in the NHL — which they are — you rate yourself by how you performed against them rather than by how far you advanced in a playoff format you happened to vote against.

"I mean, they know how to win, they've been there, but also they had to learn some tough lessons, too, along the way," Brind'Amour said of the Bruins, who beat the Hurricanes 2-1 in Game 5 on Wednesday. "That core group, they had some tough times early when they were together, and I think that's made them the team that they are. And I think that's what we're doing here. I really believe that time will tell. But you know, we'll see."

In that respect, yes, the Canes are different.

The same goes for the coach playing a long game. I've already seen all the tweets from Leafs fans about how the Canes are being coddled as the most recent victims of the Bruins, but I've learned something in the two seasons I've spent covering a small-market team: You're lucky if you don't have to worry about your beloved hockey team simply continuing to exist.

The Canes making back-to-back playoff appearances for the first time in 18 years means something you can't even understand.

"That's what I take the most pride in — that's what we've talked about," Brind'Amour said. "We want to win, I mean we're sad in that we're not still playing — that's why we do this — but there's more to it. You know we want to be that organization that is continually talked about to have a chance to win and for our community to be proud of their team, how they play and how they represent. It means more than it has in the past, I think, and I feel like our guys buy that and show it by the way they play."

The "more" tends to go silently understood in Canesland and mocked elsewhere, but I'll say it: Back-to-back playoff appearances means the NHL will continue to exist in Raleigh, N.C.

Dave Ayres aside, though, the 2019-20 Hurricanes did not embody a catharsis. The carefree vibe turned into tangible expectation, the Canes made their biggest trade deadline splash in recent memory, and they took their losses harder.

This is called the next step.

"First, I would like to express how good the Carolina Hurricanes are — they are such a good hockey club," Bruins captain Zdeno Chara said. "Well-coached. They have obviously a very dangerous lineup. It was not easy to beat them. They are a very dangerous team. Just want to congratulate them on going to the playoffs and playing really hard. They're very well-coached, and they work extremely hard."

Carolina Hurricanes, welcome to the beginning of your Cup window.

It won't be as fun as that Bunch of Jerks season until it's more fun than you've ever imagined — unless you were around in 2006.

A rapid-fire account of what went wrong

- If you ask captain Jordan Stall (which I did), it's "the little things": "I'm not sure that there's any one piece, I think there's a lot of little things we could have done better. I thought we got away from our game a few times — give them credit, they did a good job of not letting us get to our game, special teams always could be better. My line in general, I don't think we created enough offense. There were a lot of things that added up to that series lost."



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- Opinions on officiating and \$25,000 fines aside, Staal is right — special teams always could be better. The Hurricanes didn't make the most of their power-play chances, going 0 for 3 in an elimination game, while the Bruins went 2 for 4. The Canes went 2 for 15 on the power play in the series, and one of those was a gift to Nino Niederreiter from Jaroslav Halak.
- As much as I've gone to bat for Haydn Fleury, he should not be leading the goals-for-while-on-ice stat for the Canes (five) and tied for the series lead in goals (2) with Teuvo Teravainen. Sebastian Aho led the team with seven high-danger chances, had four assists and was third on the team with 0.96 expected goals, and you could tell. But you expected him to be a tangible difference-maker after that monster play-in series.
- Obviously, losing Andrei Svechnikov to injury was a dagger for the Canes, but it was similar to the Bruins not having leading goal scorer and Rocket Richard winner David Pastrnak for most of the series. Losing key players to injury and still coming through is one of the "tough lessons" Brind'Amour has referenced. The Bruins didn't miss a beat despite not having Tuukka Rask.
- According to Natural Stat Trick, the Bruins won the faceoff game at a 55.10 percent advantage and also won the "crucial moment faceoff game." Blame it on Patrice Bergeron.
- The Bruins also beat the Canes at their own game — shooting as much as possible and suppressing as many shots as possible, resulting in a 57.81 percent overall shot advantage and a 62-45 edge in high-danger chances.
- We'll address the mixed bag of goaltending in the coming days.
- The Bruins won, but the Canes played better than they did last season.

Hockey's 40 under 40: The important people who are shaping the game's future

By Craig Custance

There's good news if you're a fan of seeing younger, fresh voices getting opportunities in hockey. This 40-under-40 list was much easier to populate than the last version we did. In fact, the hard part was cutting it down. Hockey still has a long way to go in terms of diversifying the voices making decisions and opening up real opportunities in the NHL, but there's been some progress.

Before we get to the list, let's lay out a few of the ground rules and the thought processes that shaped it:

Hockey media members and any contributors to The Athletic are ineligible. That includes television coverage. The hope here is to highlight some of the up-and-coming executives, coaches, scouts, agents and others in the hockey world that will help shape the game in the next generation. I'd rather not get in fights with colleagues in the process. For similar reasons, no current players are eligible either, with one notable exception at the top of the list.

Please don't sweat the order. Lists are definitely more fun when there is an order and not just a bunch of names. But this isn't a list of most important or more powerful or most impressive. It's a glimpse into the future not an attempt to rank Darryl Metcalf's impact compared to Dani Rylan.

And, like last time, if you're not on the list, you're not allowed to complain. Sorry, those are the rules. Even if some of you broke the rule last time and you know who you are. We will, however, accept comments below from your burner account.

All right, let's dive in:

1. Blake Bolden, Los Angeles Kings growth and inclusion specialist and pro scout: Bolden, an All-American at Boston College, a competitor for Team USA and the first Black player in the NWHL was hired as a scout in January by the Los Angeles Kings and quickly grew her role with the Kings to include a leadership position in growth and inclusion with the Kings. She's a rising star in the NHL world and has already

emerged as one of hockey's most important voices. During a recent phone conversation she shared insight into her path to prominence:

In interviews, you've shared that growing up you didn't see a lot of people who looked like you in hockey but that it didn't get in the way because you loved the game. But you've also said there were times you felt very lonely in the world of hockey. How did you balance that?

"I genuinely don't understand at my age how I balanced it. I just know that sometimes things were a little bit uncomfortable. I was a young kid with a single mom and we were always moving around in all these different environments. Once we found this stability in hockey, that was my grasp to hold on to something that would be stagnant the rest of my life and my career. That was my anchor. Once I found hockey and fell in love with it, I was just like 'Wow, this is nice. I get to go to practice, get to meet new people, I get to push myself in ways I didn't know was possible.'

"Sometimes things were said to me that were inappropriate or disrespectful, but I genuinely didn't let that bother me because I was a kid. I didn't really truly understand the gravity of it until I got older and was like, wow, that was kind of messed up. I don't really know how I dealt with that. I just kept my head down and took it as a challenge.

"I was never an emotionally outward kid where I would be crying or be angry. I just wanted to be the best. I think my competitive level showed through all that adversity. Yet, I realized once I got older, 'Hey, what's going on?' I'm genuinely the only person of color in this sport and then when I was younger, I would get people saying, 'Well, you're black. Why do you play hockey?' And me being like, 'I don't know.' I didn't know it was something that was different, I just did it. I was a kid, I was 6 or 7 and I did it because it was fun. The challenge was fun. It was a bit of both. I grew as the challenges came and I just rose to that and didn't want to give up and here I am now."



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When did your job as a scout evolve to incorporate inclusion specialist?

"My first scouting game was Jan. 3, 2020, and I remember Luc Robitaille and (Kings COO) Kelly Cheeseman literally like weeks into my hiring, were like, 'Since you're here and you have this role in women's hockey and in the hockey world, what do you think about diversifying hockey within our hockey community in Los Angeles?'

"I remember Kelly saying, 'Listen, we're in Los Angeles, we're in one of the most diverse places in the world. We want the next time we raise the Stanley Cup to depict that diversity within our fanbase and the youth playing the sport. Because you're so passionate and you have been this person throughout your career, what do you think about figuring out a way to integrate your passions with what we're trying to accomplish?'

"It kind of evolved from there, and recently I've gotten the title two months ago we had launched our LA Kings diversity and inclusion initiative. That's been successful. We have plans in the future working with the executive leadership to just bring equality to our sport and access and education and availability and awareness. It's been great. In light of everything going on in the world, it seemed something that was a little serendipitous to my arrival in that position."

You've said that only good things happen when you push outside your comfort zone. When did that philosophy hit home?

"There have been so many times in my life where I've been uncomfortable in women's hockey. Financially being uncomfortable is something we always have to deal with. The first time is when I took a leap and I quit my full-time job and I decided to move overseas to Switzerland, not knowing the language, not having any friends, taking that leap and saying, 'Hey, I'm going to see what happens.'

"I've evolved a lot as an adult. Being in that position where I was scared, alone and didn't know what to do. I think in those instances and adversity you can grow and understand yourself more. ... I started (Blake Bolden Athletics) because I got cut from the Olympic team and I was devastated and I was depressed for years. I realized that women in the sport, people in the sport usually just focus on the physical aspect, how much power and skill and agility you have. But what's going on in the mind, I felt like was really important ... I had no idea what I was doing, but I knew I was passionate about it.

"When you just take a chance and say, 'Hey, this is important, I should do this, I don't really know the outcome. Good things will come if you have good intentions behind it.'"

You're doing a lot of things. Where do you see yourself ending up?

"I feel like I've lived my life in a way that's just pedal to the metal, going and experiencing what's ahead of me. Right now, scouting is a priority and I'm learning as much as I can. I'm evolving as someone weaning out of her playing career and more into a life career. I think I'm lucky in that aspect.

"A lot of people just stop playing and it's, 'What's next?' And have no idea what they're going to do. I have an opportunity to make a change in the sport by being a diversity and

inclusion ambassador for hockey. That's something I really want to see. I want to see Los Angeles especially be more diverse in its fanbase and its children playing in the grassroots level. I want that to trickle and spread throughout the entire nation. I want other NHL clubs to have a growth and inclusion specialist. I want that to be shown in every single club. We'll see what happens for me in the future. This is a great position to be in and I think you'll see me a lot more in the hockey space."

2. Jeremy Colliton, Chicago Blackhawks coach: This was really the year that you saw Colliton's vision and impact take shape. Blackhawks GM Stan Bowman took a real gamble and put his reputation on the line when he fired a future Hall of Famer to promote a virtual unknown. Now, the Blackhawks are seeing the payoff.

Bowman on the growth Colliton has shown in Year 2: "Last year, everything was new. He's going into a new rink. He'd played some in the NHL but not a lot. Everything was new. It's just like a young player. The biggest thing is where do you go? Every city is different. You're trying to play against the best players in the world and coach against the best coaches.

"Now, he's past that hurdle. I think that's the biggest thing. He's always been a great communicator. That was the one thing that was attractive to me when I got to know him, how he could connect to the players on a personal level and give them feedback. That's the one thing the players want, to know where they stand. Even if it's not always the message they like to hear, at least they get the information, they understand what it is that the coach isn't happy about and then gives them ways to improve it and gives them a chance to redeem themselves. Even if guys were in and out of the lineup, he doesn't just bury a guy for two, three weeks in a row. He wants to get them back and give them a chance."

3. Kyle Dubas, Toronto Maple Leafs GM: Dubas has been a regular on this list and continues to be one of hockey's smart, young minds even if the pressure is being turned up in Toronto. His imprint on the organization is clearly starting to take shape.

Dubas on cultivating talent on the ice and in the front office: "I really value our more veteran people and the wisdom that they bring. I also think we want to be a place that really, obviously, we're developing players, but I would like us to be a place that develops people as well. We're just looking for who can do the job the best. Regardless of gender or age or anything of that nature, we're just trying to find the best people we can go into those spots. I don't feel one way or another whether someone is too young or too old or anything like that. I just think we try to build a place where people want to come to work because they feel they'll be given responsibility and be able to improve."

4. Alexandra Mandrycky, Seattle Kraken hockey strategy and research: Mandrycky has received a lot of attention as one of the first hires in the Seattle Kraken's history, with Ryan Clark capturing her value well in his story about her in April.

And there's a bit of irony there. Because what impresses Seattle GM Ron Francis most about Mandrycky is that nothing she does is about self-promotion or self-preservation. It's about making intelligent, smart decisions that benefit the franchise. That's it.



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"It's easy to see she's intelligent," Francis said. "She's passionate about what she's doing and hard working. There's no ego involved with her. ... In any discussions we have, there's give and take. She doesn't do something because she's looking to get credit for it. She does it because she feels it's the right thing for the organization. That's just her."

5. Chris Snow, Calgary Flames assistant GM: When he was diagnosed with ALS, it would have been perfectly understandable if Snow eased out of the hockey world to quietly take on this battle. He's done the opposite. His responsibilities with the Flames haven't diminished and he might be making a bigger impact outside the sport than anyone else in hockey. Through tactics like the #TrickShot4Snowy and his willingness to share his story, he's raised thousands of dollars and priceless awareness for ALS.

Snow on what he learned from mentor Doug Risebrough: "He realized how you win and it's actually quite simple. You filter everything through a very limited set of values. I remember him saying to me one day, 'You win when you have the right person in every single role. That doesn't necessarily mean the absolute most talented. But you have the right person in terms of personality and selflessness in every single role. ... My wife loves to tell a story, when my son was a year old, maybe two, and we went for a hike with Doug called Stanley Glacier, which is just beyond the Alberta into BC past Banff. It was a terrible day. It was September but it was sleeting and we just kept going and going to the point that my son was asleep in a carrier on my wife's back and we were on all fours going over slippery rocks. Finally, we got there and see the glacier. We walk one hour back toward the car. At the one hour back mark, there was a sign in the rock that says, trail ends here. My wife says, 'Doug! Doug! It says, trail ends here.' He doesn't even break stride. He just says, Kels, the trail ends where you decide it ends. That's Doug."

6. Sheldon Keefe, Maple Leafs coach: The qualification-round disappointment aside, this was a breakthrough year for Keefe, who appeared to be the right fit for the Maple Leafs after taking over for Mike Babcock. The Athletic's Jonas Siegel watched his impact on the Maple Leafs closely so let's turn it over to Jonas for his thoughts: "Two elements really stick out about Keefe's first season coaching the Leafs: flexibility and creativity. Whereas Mike Babcock could be rigid in his approach, Keefe was willing to try anything and everything, from Auston Matthews and Mitch Marner playing long stretches together to Morgan Rielly teaming up with Tyson Barrie. Keefe was constantly experimenting with things that hadn't been tried before in Toronto, like the Matthews-Marner combo and even an interesting "All-Star Game" line featuring those two stars alongside captain John Tavares. He also injected the Leafs' attack with a fresh look, one that prized puck possession and movement. No team scored more goals after he took over in November."

7. Stephanie Jackson, USA Hockey director of diversity and inclusion: Jackson joined USA Hockey in 2019 from Nike and spent her first year getting a feel for how the organization works and identifying areas that need improvement while building her network in the hockey community to help make it happen. USA Hockey has been criticized as an old boys' club in the past so her influence is crucial to the growth of the organization.

"USA Hockey is a very old organization and I think with the NHL, we're all trying to make strides that are more inclusive and diverse and she's the perfect person for the job," said Bolden, who Jackson reached out to for input immediately after taking the job. "I think at times it can be very difficult because there are a lot of people who are stuck in their ways and don't necessarily understand. It's an uphill battle for her. She has support with players and executive committees and people within the NHL that are rooting for her. There are people in USA Hockey who want this change to happen, it just takes a little bit of time. She's doing great and I think USA Hockey, personally, from my experience needs her. We need D&I in USA Hockey. For sure."

8. Judd Moldaver, senior vice president Wasserman Hockey: In October, Moldaver negotiated an eight-year, \$72.472 million contract for Roman Josi in a deal with the Nashville Predators. Earlier in 2019, he got Auston Matthews a five-year, \$58 million deal that included more than \$50 million in signing bonuses. Recently, he added goalie Carter Hart to his client list as his influence and reputation as a power player in the game continued to grow.

We asked Moldaver to provide three pieces of advice he'd give young people trying to make their way in an industry like player representation:

1. You define your value: "Don't let anybody tell you what your value is. If you're passionate about something, if you're determined to do something in life, set your mind on it and and fight through everything. There are going to be easy days and hard days."
2. Treat everybody as you want to be treated: "You're not going to please everybody in life but one of the best compliments I got in my life was a couple years ago and I heard from people I hadn't heard from in 20 years and they said, 'You're the same guy you were 20 years ago.' That made me happy. I'm the same person. Maybe more refined, more wise. But I think it's because I treat people the way I want to be treated."
3. Worry only about what you can control: "Every negotiation is different. Every player is an individual and their families are each in their own unique situations. The teams are in different states with different management styles. There are different variables that make each negotiation different. You have a goal with your client when you're negotiating and you work closely with them. Focus on that. Don't worry about all the other things that are not in your control."

9. Emilie Castonguay, Momentum Hockey: Castonguay represents Alexis Lafreniere, the expected No. 1 overall pick and, like her high-profile client, is a rising star in the hockey world. The Athletic's Scott Burnside profiled Castonguay's path through a male-dominated profession and Lafreniere summed up her impact well in that piece: "Honestly, she can do anything," Lafreniere said. "I've got a lot of trust in her and the group of agents I have. It's important because for me it's a big year, but I have to surround myself with good people and I think that's what they are."



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10. Meghan Chayka, co-founder of the analytics firm Stathletes: Chayka has been a pioneer in the world of hockey analytics and hasn't slowed down sharing her knowledge and expertise even as the world shut down, instead just shifting her jammed speaking schedule from high-profile conferences to Zoom.

Chayka on what's next in her career: "I really like what I'm doing now in terms of, I get to lead teams, I get to hire who I want. I love tech. I love working with engineers. I like dabbling in marketing. I have a finance degree as well. I can do a lot on the start-up side ... everyone is like, 'The first woman GM,' and it's like beyond a title, to be in that role you have to be very passionate and very prepared to have success in my opinion. I just think people miss the journey when they make those kind of goals, too. I have a lot of students come to me and say I'm going to be the next GM at 25, 26 whatever. I think you sort of wish away the stages of your life that are really formative. To me, that's a tip to students but also myself. To really enjoy where you're at and learn from it and develop as a person."

11. John Wroblewski, Ontario Reign head coach: Wroblewski's stature in the game started to take off with his guidance of the loaded U.S. NTDP group that featured Jack Hughes, Cole Caufield and Alex Turcotte. His ability to both develop these high-end players and bring out their best games didn't go unnoticed, with the Los Angeles Kings hiring him this week as the head coach of the Ontario Reign, their prospect-laden AHL team. This was a coveted job in hockey coaching circles and a big opportunity for the 39-year-old Wisconsin native.

12. Lindsay Artkin, president of the NHL Coaches' Association: The NHLCA has transformed in recent years by expanding its reach and impact through conferences and mentorship programs, and Artkin has been a big reason for the expansion. One of the consistent messages the group has received from its NHL coaches is that they want to give back to the next generation through education. Artkin has done the heavy lifting to make it happen.

"We've been given the mandate to build out those programs. That's where she's really taken the lead," said NHLCA executive director Michael Hirshfeld.

During the NHL's pause, Artkin launched a webinar series that was viewed by 3,000 coaches from all over the world including Malaysia, Indonesia and Australia. She also launched a women's coaches program that connects women with NHL coaches and is in the process of launching a similar program for people of color. "That's been her legacy and she's built the program," Hirshfeld said.

13. David Carle, University of Denver head coach: When he was hired in 2018 to replace Jim Montgomery, he was the youngest head coach in NCAA D1 and the program didn't miss a beat. He had a record of 45-21-11 to start his head coaching career and is working hard to maintain a powerhouse program during a challenging time, as detailed in this story from Ryan Clark.

"What makes David Carle a good coach is his ability as a young coach to relate to his players and know what we are going through on a daily basis," said Tyson McLellan, a senior forward from last season's DU team. "(Former DU coach) Jim

Montgomery had so much success at the college level, he has continued the winning culture at Denver."

In a text, Montgomery echoed that thought in describing what makes Carle so unique: "(It's) his ability to communicate effectively and concisely with people from any generation and his emotional intelligence."

14. Patrick Burke, NHL's senior director of player safety: Burke, 37, has worked his way up the ladder in the NHL's office to an influential position that goes well beyond monitoring games for player safety incidents. He presents at NHL and Board of Governors meetings. He plans big events, like the NHL's All-Star skills competition and worked closely with Susan Cohig to include women's hockey under that spotlight. "He's a smart guy," said an Eastern Conference executive. "He's definitely put in his time and is doing it the right way. The way he handles himself gets him a lot of respect from a lot of people."

15. Anya Packer, director of NWHLPA: Packer has been a champion for women's hockey, particularly as the landscape has shifted over the last few years amid labor disputes and players fighting for more equity and exposure. The 28-year-old former NWHL player has helped lead the charge in making big changes for her constituency, including a 50-50 revenue split in the last contract negotiation that saw players receive a 30 percent increase in salary in the first year of the deal. Packer, who next month is expecting her first child with wife Madison, also a pro hockey player, is integrally involved in sponsorship deals with NWHL commissioner Dani Rylan and in coordinating the response to the COVID pandemic with union leaders in other professional sports leagues. She also serves as a senior account executive at Gartner, an IT research firm, and as a board member for The IX, a Title IX newsletter about women's sports.

16. Rod Braceful, assistant director of player personnel U.S. NTDP: His influence and responsibility for shaping and developing the rosters for USA Hockey's development program have grown, but the coolest thing he's done this year was building an all-minority team with NextGen AAA Foundation. The team was coached by Mike Grier and Bryce Salvador and it went out and won the Beantown Summer Classic. Here are three thoughts from Rod on that experience:

On the challenges of assembling the team: "It was tough. Depending on where you're at in the country there are different things going on. Players preparing to get ready for the season, some kids going to move away and play junior hockey. That landscape played a real factor in the challenge."

On how the group performed: "Once the puck drops, it's hockey. We had competitive teams we played against. The team we played in the championship, they were a great team. For me, once the tournaments started, I was like, 'OK, now it's hockey.' Like anything else, everyone is really competitive."

On what made this team extra meaningful: "This is the piece that people don't understand. There are times where you feel like you have to do certain things or walk on eggshells so that you're not doing anything that someone is going to question or take offense to. At any realm, when you're with people you're like, you don't feel that pressure. There was no pressure because of that."



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17. Wes Clark, Toronto Maple Leafs assistant director of player personnel: His title probably undersells his influence in the Maple Leafs organization. He has the ear of GM Kyle Dubas and a July story (accurately headlined 'He's that silent assassin') by The Athletic's Joshua Kloke really captures his philosophy and impact on the organization.

"He's going to be that right-hand guy that successful organizations need to have," Florida Panthers director of amateur scouting Jason Bukala told Kloke. "In that market, (Dubas) needs guys like that."

18. Florence Schelling, SC Bern GM: In April, she was named the general manager of one of the top men's professional franchises in Switzerland, a move she signaled her successful transition from elite Olympic goaltender to an executive the hockey world will be hearing from for the foreseeable future.

An analytical thinker and goal-setter, she shared how a near-death experience while skiing completely changed her life perspective: "I had my surgery and after surgery they told me that it's going to take six months to recover and I was like, 'All right. Six months. To me, that was a lifetime but very quickly I realized that it wasn't. ... Once I came home, my brain was going nuts. My thoughts were going left, right, up, down. It was insane. I had sleepless nights because I was thinking so much. All the things I was thinking was past-oriented. Everything that happened to me in the past, that I pretty much didn't take the time to process all the things I did in my life. Conversations I had 10 years ago popped up in my mind. Maybe I should have said this, instead of what I said. I re-lived Sochi. I re-lived World Championships. I re-lived my college years and all of that. It was hard. It was really hard. At one point, I guess I was done with the past and all my thoughts (became) future-oriented. And for the first time in my life, I really just had the time to think about, what is it that I really want in my life? What is it that I need in my life. What is it that I don't need anymore? What is it that I don't want to do anymore? That's when I started realizing how much of a blessing this was. I really think I was able to turn my life around."

19. Spencer Carbery, Hershey Bears coach: Because the Capitals are a Stanley Cup contender very much trying to max out their remaining contending window, he hasn't been stacked with talent in Hershey, but he's maximized the rosters he's had since becoming the head coach at the age of 36 in 2018. When he was hired in the AHL, only Jeremy Colliton was younger among coaches in the league and he's since graduated. "Spencer is an excellent teaching coach with great patience that knows exactly how to get his point across to all ages of players," texted Hershey Bears vice president of hockey operations Bryan Helmer. "He is a hard worker that spends hours and hours at the rink just to make sure he is doing everything he can to make his players better. He helps get them prepared to perform at their best."

Matt Moulson, who scored 22 goals for the Bears this season, agreed with that assessment: "Carbs is a coach who works tirelessly at his craft. Whether that is watching video, getting input from coaches or hearing what his players have to say. He doesn't have an ego, which allows him to gather information from different sources and implement them as he sees fit. He only wants the best of his players as athletes and people. Don't get me wrong, he brings an incredible amount

of intensity to practice and game day. When you know someone is pouring everything they've got physically and emotionally into something it's an incredible place to play."

20. Dani Rylan, NWHL founder and commissioner: She can be a polarizing figure in the women's hockey world, but there's no doubting her brilliance and business savvy. She has heavy hitters financially supporting the league that she founded, including Texas Rangers co-owner Neil Leibman and the former co-owner of the New Jersey Devils, Michael Gilfillan. In the last year, the NWHL salary cap increased and Rylan helped bring in an important media rights deal with Twitch. While there still isn't a consensus among players, part of the issue may stem from early growing pains surrounding the league that have since been resolved.

"A lot has changed and a lot has grown for the better," NWHL veteran Kaleigh Fratkin told The Athletic's Hailey Salvian.

21. Sam Ventura, Penguins director of hockey research: It's difficult to truly understand how much influence an analyst has inside an organization, so rating one higher than another in a list like this is a bit of a fool's errand, something to keep in mind as we go on a bit of an analytics run here. But Ventura, 32, has been one of the most respected people in hockey analytics since founding war-on-ice with Andrew C. Thomas and Mandrycky. "I like him a lot," said one NHL executive. "He's a quiet guy but a really respected guy. He's been there awhile and has won a couple of Cups."

22. Namita Nandakumar, Seattle Kraken senior quantitative analyst: Nandakumar had a great job in the NFL working for the Eagles so it was going to take a special opportunity to get her to move and she's getting just that in Seattle. Like others in the organization, she was attracted to getting the once-in-a-lifetime chance to build something from the ground up and the Kraken are the beneficiaries. "Having that success with the Eagles and to get somebody of that stature and ability was exciting for us," Seattle GM Ron Francis said. "She really can do a lot of different things and she's got her hands in a lot of different areas of what we're doing."

23. Darryl Metcalf, Maple Leafs special assistant to the GM: Metcalf, the founder of ExtraSkater.com, is another person whose influence has grown since joining the Maple Leafs. In 2018, he was promoted to special assistant to the GM, which added a management role to go with his work in the organization's research and development department. When asked which executive from his team was the most likely to become an NHL GM, Dubas started with praise for veteran executives like Laurence Gilman and Brandon Pridham. But he was also quick to mention Metcalf. "Darryl Metcalf in time has great opportunity and potential," Dubas said. "Having Darryl's skillset is going to be really, really important."

24. Matt Cane, New Jersey Devils hockey analytics director: Teams are definitely secretive when it comes to their analytics team so when former teammate Tyler Dellow raved about Cane, it was noteworthy. As you may or may not know, Dellow throws around praise like manhole covers. "Matt is someone I'd wanted to work with for a long time and one of the things that really excited me about working in New Jersey was the opportunity to work with him," said Dellow, the Devils' vice president of analytics. "He's got a rare combination of



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technical ability and judgment as to the best approach to use for a particular task. He's also skeptical of his conclusions and always looking for ways in which they might be improved, which is a great habit for anyone working in analytics."

25. Margaret Cunniff, Carolina Hurricanes data scientist: There aren't a lot of former neuroscientists in NHL front offices, but when the Hurricanes hired Cunniff in January, they added to whatever that total is. When player tracking data finally hits the NHL, the hire of Cunniff positions the Hurricanes to fully take advantage. "Hockey statistics right now are very event-based — goals, shots, very concrete things. A lot of what happens in hockey happens between those events," Cunniff told *The Athletic's* Sara Civan in February. "You don't want to just know there's a shot — how did that shot get set up, who contributed? Hopefully tracking data helps with that. My end is answering: How do we use all that information in a smart and creative way?"

26. Doug Wilson Jr., Sharks director of scouting: As San Jose gets younger, his role in the organization becomes even more crucial. At one point this season, the Sharks' AHL team had the lowest average age in the league. And they've had to try and stock it without the benefit of many first-round picks in recent years. Assuming they keep the three picks they have in the first two rounds this year, this becomes a key offseason for the 34-year-old Wilson Jr.

27. Ryan Miller, Blues director of hockey operations: There's a group of executives in various NHL front offices that came up through Kurt Overhardt's agency that have now worked their way into prominent roles and Miller, 36, is one of them. He's become an invaluable member of the reigning champs' front office, where he does everything from analytics to arbitration briefs to salary cap calculations. "He's basically doing the job of three people," said one NHL source. "He does all of Doug (Armstrong's) dirty work."

28. Zac Urback, Columbus Blue Jackets hockey analyst: The Blue Jackets hired him because of his draft research and modeling. One of his strengths is communication, which isn't always the case with people in the analytics department. He works closely with scouts and does a lot of pregame prep work for the Columbus coaching staff. He's become even more integral to the front office with the recent promotion of Josh Flynn, who should also be on this list, to assistant GM.

29. Noelle Needham, Maple Leafs amateur scout: Not only does Needham scout for the Maple Leafs, she's the coach of the Sioux Falls Power, a 16U boys team. Rod Braceful, who is constantly evaluating emerging talent for the U.S. NTDP, has seen Needham's direct impact on the players in that program. "She has done an incredible job. She doesn't get enough credit," Braceful said. "She's coaching kids going off to play in the USHL and college commitments. And she's doing it at a high level."

30. Chris Morehouse, New York Rangers director of North American scouting: When John Davidson left the Columbus Blue Jackets, he brought Morehouse, 33, with him and for good reason. He's viewed as an executive strong at managing a staff and also open to new ideas. "He's a good evaluator and he's good at putting everything together," said one NHL team executive.

31. Brett Peterson, vice president Wasserman Hockey: Peterson, 38, spent over a decade at Acme World Sports and joined Wasserman when Acme was acquired by Wasserman. Peterson, who played at Boston College, has a reputation as having a strong eye for talent. "He develops strong bonds with his clients and their families," said fellow Wasserman agent Judd Moldaver. "His experience as a player and years as an advisor equip him with tremendous insight."

32. Michael Peterson, Tampa Bay Lightning director of hockey analytics: His work isn't necessarily well known in the analytics community in part because he's been with an NHL team for over a decade and they've been protective of his exposure. But we do know he does statistical analysis and contract valuation for one of the most successful franchises in hockey. He's been highly valued by three general managers, Brian Lawton, Steve Yzerman and Julien BriseBois. And if the Lightning can get under the cap next season, he might be their MVP.

33. Blake Geoffrion, Columbus Blue Jackets pro scout: He has the pedigree that comes from a hockey family and playing the game at the highest level but has also rounded out that experience in the NHL as a scout and outside the NHL when he worked Korn Ferry, a management consulting firm. "He's done a little bit of everything," said an NHL source.

34. Liz Knox, PWHPA founding board member: The former goalie for the Canadian women's national team has emerged as an important voice in the Professional Women's Hockey Player's Association while also working as an ambassador for women's hockey. On top of that work, she's a contractor and a volunteer firefighter for the town of Whitchurch-Stouffville.

35. Dani Chu, Seattle Kraken quantitative analyst: Not only did Chu have his choice of jobs after getting his masters of science in statistics from Simon Fraser University in December, he had his choice of leagues with previously recognized work with the NBA and NFL, among others. "Fortunately for us, we were able to convince him to join our team," Seattle GM Ron Francis said. Francis was one of Chu's father's favorite players so he tried to use that to his advantage. "I tried to lean heavily into him taking his dad's advice," Francis joked.

36. Duante Abercrombie, Stevenson University assistant coach: He came up through Washington's famed Fort Dupont Ice Hockey Club and is a protégé of Neal Henderson, the first black inductee to the U.S. Hockey Hall of Fame. "He does a good job. He studies the game. He lives, sleeps and eats hockey," Braceful said. "He's going to coach at a high level. He gets it."

37. Gabriella Switaj, Anaheim Ducks analyst and amateur scout: The former Boston College goalie was the first female Brendan Burke intern at USA Hockey and the first female amateur scout in the salary cap era for the Ducks. "She has a great hockey and analytical mind, which is critical in today's game," Ducks GM Bob Murray said. "Some people have what I call the 'hockey brain' and she's one of them. We are lucky to have her."

38. Kiana Scott, Erie Otters scout: Scott became the first female scout in the Ontario Hockey League when she joined the Otters staff in March. When she was hired, GM Dave Brown noted her relentless work habit and eye for talent.



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While hockey has mostly been on hold since the hire, Brown said the organization is eager to see her in action. “We are looking forward to her future contributions,” Brown said via text.

39. Jeremy Rogalski, Boston Bruins director of analytics: His strength is translating advanced analytics and turning them into actionable insights for the entire Bruins hockey operations department. “Our analytics department has grown. The footprint has tripled,” Bruins GM Don Sweeney said. “Jeremy Rogalski deserves credit for that.”

40. Nathan de Lara, Vegas hockey ops intern: He’s 18 years old. He’s an intern. There are people much more accomplished in hockey who have a better case for this spot. But de Lara blew judges away during the Columbus analytics conference in February as the data contest winner. His combination of original work in the analytics field along with communicating it in a very digestible way made it stand out. “You have to put him on the list,” said one source familiar with his work. The kid is a future star.



Hurricanes lose 2-1, eliminated by Bruins in Game 5

For the second straight year, Boston eliminated Carolina from the postseason

By Cory Lavalette

In the end, the Hurricanes exited the Stanley Cup Playoffs the same way they did last season, at the hands of the powerhouse Boston Bruins. With Wednesday’s 2-1 loss in Game 5 in Toronto, it was in a 4-1 series rather than a dominating 4-0 sweep.

The Hurricanes clearly haven’t entered the upper echelon of the league where the Bruins resides, but they’re also not the light-years away they were before Rod Brind’Amour took over as coach at the start of last season.

“We’ve closed the gap here from the elite teams,” Brind’Amour said in the final game of a bizarre season that ended for his team in the third week of August. “I think we’re closing, closing in, and as long as we learn what it takes to win — which I think we are, and we have this series — I think it’s gonna help this group move forward. And again, just really proud of this team.”

What mystified the Hurricanes last season again flummoxed them in this series, with Boston getting timely power play goals while Carolina struggled to control the pace to its liking throughout the five games.

Such it was in Game 5, with Boston’s power play erasing Carolina’s 1-0 lead in a 4:36 span late in the second period.

First, David Krejci put a loose puck past Petr Mrazek (25 saves) to tie the game at 15:20. Then with just four seconds left in the middle frame, Patrice Bergeron shot from below the goal line and rattled the puck in off an unaware Mrazek give Boston the 2-1 lead heading into the final period.

The go-ahead goal — like the first goal James Reimer allowed in Game 4 that opened the floodgates for the Bruins’ third-period comeback and win — proved to be the backbreaker.

The Hurricanes, desperate to extend the game and the series, managed just six shots on Jaroslav Halak (23 saves) — in that role thanks to Tuukka Rask’s stunning departure from the Toronto bubble prior to Game 3 — in the final period, never truly challenging the backup-turned-starter.

“I’m not sure that there’s any one piece,” captain Jordan Staal said of Carolina’s struggles against the Bruins. “I think there’s a lot of little things that we’ve could’ve done better. I thought we got away from our game a few times. Give them credit — they did a good job of not letting us get to our game.”

The Hurricanes didn’t start the game looking like a team that, despite the demoralizing Game 4 collapse, had given up on the series, and they got on the board first to take an early lead.

Defenseman Haydn Fleury — who has played the best hockey of his career since entering the Toronto bubble — got the puck at the right point and picked the far corner on Halak to give the Hurricanes a 1-0 lead at 9:35 of the first period.

It was the only goal the Hurricanes could muster, and there was no elimination game magic from Justin Williams, perhaps playing his final NHL game in a second tour of duty with Carolina.

“He meant everything just to have that leader, but that friend to go to,” Brind’Amour said of his linemate from the Hurricanes’ 2006 Stanley Cup-winning team. “You know, I was new at this, and everything I asked he made sure the team did and made my job really easy.

“And so, I’m not sure what his plans are, you’d have to ask him, but I can’t say enough good things about Justin.”

If the 38-year-old, who is a free agent, doesn’t re-sign or chooses to retire, Brind’Amour is surely hopeful the lessons he taught — as well as the ones learned in two series losses to the Bruins — will move his young team to the next level in seasons ahead.

“They know how to win and they’ve been there, but they also had to learn some tough lessons too along the way,” Brind’Amour said of the Bruins. “That core group they had, they had some tough times in early when they were together. And I think that’s made them the team that they are. And I think that’s what we’re doing here, and I really believe that.

“Time will tell, but we’ll see.”



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Game 5 Recap: Canes Eliminated by Bruins

Canes' season ends with First Round defeat in Toronto

by Michael Smith

TORONTO - The Carolina Hurricanes were eliminated from the 2020 Stanley Cup Playoffs in a 2-1 loss to the Boston Bruins in Game 5 of the First Round.

Haydn Fleury got the Canes on the board first, but two power-play goals from the Bruins late in the second period were the difference.

Here are five takeaways from Game 5.

1. The End

The journey of the 2019-20 Carolina Hurricanes has come to an end.

It ended in a way - in Toronto, one of two neutral-site bubble locations that staged a 24-team postseason tournament in August - that no one could have imagined back when the journey first began in October.

It ended in a way that was, in some sense, familiar to last season - at the hands of the Bruins - yet, in other senses, very unfamiliar to last season. And that's the most encouraging part of the this entire journey.

"The maturity of our group from last year to this year, we've taken a huge step. We've closed the gap from the elite teams. I think we're closing in," head coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "As long as we learn what it takes to win, which I think we are and we have this series, I think it's going to help this group moving forward. Again, I'm just really proud of this team."

When the Canes were swept by the Bruins in the 2019 Eastern Conference Final, the end was just the beginning.

This end, even if it happened in the First Round, builds on that, more lessons learned to make this Canes group wiser and hungrier heading into the 2020-21 season.

"[The Bruins] know how to win, and they've been there. They had to learn some tough lessons, too, along the way," Brind'Amour said. "I think that's made them the team they are. I think that's what we're doing here. I really believe that."

2. The Game

Game 5 was hard-fought down to the final buzzer, and for a good stretch, it seemed as if the Canes, with their backs against the wall, might force a Game 6.

"I think we played at a level to beat them. I'm really proud of this team. They do it right. We responded, which is the best thing. We walk out of here, I think, with our heads high," Brind'Amour said. "The effort we put out there, especially

tonight, I thought we were the better team. They got a couple funny bounces, and we couldn't get a break on the bounces."

For the third time in the series, the Canes opened the scoring. A couple of drop passes, first Jordan Martinook and then Sebastian Aho, set up Haydn Fleury with the puck along the near wall. Fleury skated to the top of the right circle and snapped a quick shot that beat Jaroslav Halak to the far side, off the post and in.

With the primary assist, Aho boosted his team-leading postseason point total to 12 points (3g, 9a) in eight games.

The Canes had two power play opportunities in the first 25 minutes of the game and were unable to convert on either to stretch their lead.

It was only a matter of time before Boston, who had the second-best power play in the regular season, was going to get a crack on the man advantage.

They got their first power-play opportunity with just over six minutes left to play in the second period, and they converted to tie the game when David Krejci banged in a rolling puck out in front.

With less than a minutes left in regulation, the Bruins got their second power play of the game - and in both cases, there was a legitimate argument to be made about missed calls at one end (Jordan Martinook had his stick broken in half, and Sebastian Aho was hauled down) leading to calls against, as fair as they were, at the other end.

In any case, through the course of the game, penalties will need to be killed, and the Canes didn't make it out of the period before Boston converted again.

With just 3.5 seconds left in the second period, Patrice Bergeron slipped a puck through Petr Mrazek from a tough angle to give the Bruins their first lead of the game, and that's where the score held.

"Their power play is one of the best in the league," Jaccob Slavin said. "I think for the most part as a kill we did a pretty good job this series. I think both their goals tonight were kind of power-play goals, but sometimes that's how the power play gets it done."

3. The Series

Unlike the sweep of a year ago, this series was much more competitive than the 4-1 result might suggest.

The Canes dropped Game 1 in double overtime. They were about 13 minutes away from evening the series in Game 3 before an uncharacteristic collapse. They battled in an elimination game down to the very last buzzer.

The series script could have just as easily been flipped.



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"It was a tight series. I thought there was maybe one game we weren't at our best, but it's always going to be a tight against a good team like that," Jordan Staal said. "There are a lot of little things we could have done better. We got away from our game a few times. Give them credit. They did a good job of not letting us get to our game. ... There were a lot of things that added up to that series loss."

"It's that process knowing and learning how to win," Brind'Amour said. "I think they were a little more patient with their game. When we got frazzled a little at times and got off our game, they just stayed with it. They hunkered down and blocked a lot of shots. They did what they do to be successful. We, at times, tried to do too much and got away from our game."

Tough lessons learned that will only make the Canes better when they return to the postseason once again.

"I thought we were pretty close," Staal said. "It's always those little things. ... We had some spurts and looked like the team that could win the series at times."

4. Bubble Hockey

When COVID-19 plunged the world into a global health crisis, the hockey season and sports at large seemed trivial, at best. No one wanted to see seasons suddenly end, but there was something bigger, something more important on which to focus our collective efforts.

Months later, with the tireless work and planning of the NHL and NHLPA, bubble hockey was born in Toronto and Edmonton. Everyone involved with this one-of-a-kind postseason tournament was venturing into uncharted waters, learning as they went.

Once the puck dropped, though, everything else seemed to fade. Hockey was hockey, and playoff hockey was playoff hockey, even if the circumstances were wildly different.

This is an experience that will be talked about for years to come, and you can't help but wonder how differently it would have played out pre-pandemic.

But the simple fact that it happened - and it has happened with the utmost concern for the safety and well-being of everyone - is something to be remembered and appreciated.

Game 5 Projected Lineup: Hurricanes vs. Bruins

Canes need a win to remain alive in the playoffs

by Michael Smith

TORONTO - The Carolina Hurricanes need a win against the Boston Bruins in Game 5 to remain alive in the First Round of the Stanley Cup Playoffs.

The Canes still should have the services of Jordan Staal, who left Game 4 in the third period but practiced with the team on Tuesday.

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

Here is the projected lineup for the Hurricanes.

"The reality of it is we're playing a game and real fortunate to be doing it. I think that came to the forefront when it got taken away. ... For sure going through all this, you realize how fortunate we are that we get to do this job," Brind'Amour said. "We're going home right now to see our families, and we couldn't be happier to do that. I think everyone in the world realizes that and appreciates your family even more going through all this."

"[I'll remember] just the group of guys we have here. We're a tight-knit group," Slavin said. "This was obviously a first experience for everybody, so I think we'll just remember it all as a whole."

5. The Future

For the first time since 2001 and 2002, the Canes qualified for the playoffs in consecutive seasons.

In the shortened 2019-20 regular season, they were the ninth best team in the NHL and were pushing to climb even higher at the time of the pause. They ranked in the top 10 in both special teams categories. They're bursting at the seams with young talent that has only improved year to year. They have dedicated leadership in the locker room and behind the bench.

This team? This team is special, and though this part of the journey has come to an end, the story is only beginning.

"We want to win. We're saddened that we're not still playing. That's why we do this, but there's more to it," Brind'Amour said. "We want to be that organization that is continually talked about to have a chance to win and for our community to be proud of their team and how they play and how they represent. It means more. ... I feel like our guys buy that and show that by the way they play."

"We've got some really good young players who want it and are going to grow and be even better," Staal said. "That's the exciting thing about the Carolina Hurricanes: the future is bright. There are lots of guys who bring it every night. That's what you want to see, and when you've got the talent to boot, it makes for some fun hockey."

Forwards

Martinook-Aho-Teravainen
Dzingel-Trocheck-Williams
Foegele-Staal-McGinn
Niederreiter-Geekie-Necas

Defensemen

Slavin-Hamilton
Skjei-Vatanen
Gardiner-Fleury

Goalies

Mrazek
Reimer



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Scratches: Bean, Bishop, Forsberg, Lorentz, McCormick, McKeown, Nedeljkovic, van Riemsdyk

Unfit to play: Edmundson, Pesce, Svechnikov

Note: Lineup subject to change prior to opening faceoff.



Bruins defeat Hurricanes in Game 5, win Eastern First Round series

Rally with two power-play goals, Pastrnak has two assists in return

by Wes Crosby

David Pastrnak had two assists in his return to the lineup, and the Boston Bruins defeated the Carolina Hurricanes 2-1 in Game 5 to win their Eastern Conference First Round series at Scotiabank Arena in Toronto on Wednesday.

Pastrnak was unfit to play the previous three games. As part of the NHL Return to Play Plan, a team is not permitted to disclose player injury or illness information.

"Obviously, felt a bit better every shift," Pastrnak said. "It was good to be back with the guys. Obviously, anytime you're watching the game from the stands, it's tough. So really happy I was back and important win, and great series."

David Krejci and Patrice Bergeron each had a goal and an assist, and Jaroslav Halak made 23 saves for the Bruins, the No. 4 seed in the East. Their opponent in the Eastern Conference Second Round has not been determined.

Petr Mrazek made 25 saves, and Haydn Fleury scored for Carolina, the No. 5 seed, which has lost eight of its past nine games in the Stanley Cup Playoffs to Boston. The Hurricanes were outscored 17-5 in a four-game sweep by the Bruins in the 2019 Eastern Conference Final.

"I think we played at a level to beat them," Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "I'm really proud of this team. They do it right. We responded, which is the best thing. We walk out of here, I think, with our heads high with the effort we put out there, especially tonight. I thought we were the better team."

Four of five games in this series were decided by one goal. The Bruins won 3-1 in Game 3 with Brad Marchand scoring an empty-net goal with 31 seconds remaining.

Boston won the series after losing its three round-robin games in the Stanley Cup Qualifiers in Toronto, the hub city for the East. It won the Presidents' Trophy this season with the best record in the NHL (44-14-12; .714 points percentage).

"They know what's at stake," Bruins coach Bruce Cassidy said. "I think they've been around long enough to know that when you get a chance to close out a team, you have to take advantage of it. ... For us last year, it took us seven games [to defeat the Toronto Maple Leafs in the first round]. People might forget.

"The first round, teams are hungry. They're relatively healthy. Carolina came in here feeling really good about their game after they swept the [New York Rangers in the Qualifiers]. So you've got to be careful."

Krejci, who had eight points (three goals, five assists) in the series, tied the game 1-1 with a power-play goal at 15:20 of the second period. Bergeron's shot deflected off Pastrnak near the crease, and Krejci got the loose puck for a wrist shot, extending his point streak to six games.

"We obviously wanted to finish it off today," Krejci said. "Those are the hardest ones to get. We knew we didn't want to come back here tomorrow and play back to back. So we had a great response after the first period. Power play was big. ... We'll take the win and are happy we don't have to come back here tomorrow."

Bergeron gave Boston a 2-1 lead on the power play with four seconds remaining in the period when he shot off Mrazek's left skate from below the goal line.

The Bruins were 2-for-4 on the power play after scoring on three of 15 chances in the first four games. They had the second-ranked power play in the NHL this season (25.2 percent) behind the Edmonton Oilers (29.5).

"Obviously, their power play is one of the best in the League," Carolina defenseman Jacob Slavin said. "They've got a lot of set plays that they run. They're good at those plays. So I think, for the most part as a kill, we did a pretty good job this series. I think both their goals tonight are kind of fluky power-play goals."

Fleury put the Hurricanes ahead 1-0 at 9:35 of the first period when his shot went in off the left post.

Carolina led in four of the five games. It had a 2-0 lead in the third period of Game 4 before Boston scored four goals in a span of 6:51 for a 4-3 win Monday.

"It was a tight series," said Hurricanes forward Jordan Staal, who had two shots and six hits in 15:48 after leaving Game 4 when he took a hit from Bruins defenseman Charlie McAvoy at 9:53 of the third period. "I thought there was maybe one game we weren't at our best. It's always going to be tight against a good team like that. They keep it tight, and I think we got beat in a few little areas. ... They found ways to win games."

NHL.com staff writer Amalie Benjamin contributed to this report



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Hurricanes inspired by Bruins following series loss in East First Round

Hope to emulate Boston after elimination in Game 5, feel they're 'closing in' on elite teams

by Amalie Benjamin

The Carolina Hurricanes believe they can see their future.

In their minds, it doesn't look all that different than the present of the Boston Bruins, the team they lined up across from for the past week.

At least that's the hope.

"They know how to win, they've been there," Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour said of Boston. "But also they had to learn some tough lessons, too, along the way, that core group. They had some tough times early when they were together, and I think that's made them the team that they are.

"And I think that's what we're doing here. I really believe that."

The Bruins eliminated the Hurricanes on Wednesday with a 2-1 win in Game 5 of their best-of-7 Eastern Conference First Round series at Scotiabank Arena in Toronto, the hub city for the East.

It was a tight series, with the teams either tied or separated by one goal in the final minute in all five games. Far tighter than when these teams faced each other last season in the Eastern Conference Final, when the Bruins swept the Hurricanes in four games by a combined score of 17-5.

"I think we played at a level to beat them," Brind'Amour said after the Hurricanes, the No. 5 seed in the East, lost to the No. 4 seed. "I'm really proud of this team. They do it right and we responded, which was the best thing. We walk out of here, I think, with our heads high with the effort we put out there, especially tonight."

It's a far cry from the message Brind'Amour imparted after Game 4, when the Hurricanes gave up four third-period goals to lose 4-3. That game, he said, was "disturbing."

But overall, it was an improvement for the Hurricanes, who are starting to imagine a future when they become the cream of the Eastern Conference crop, they become a team that makes

the postseason year after year after year, and their core -- Sebastian Aho, Andrei Svechnikov, Jaccob Slavin and Dougie Hamilton -- becomes like that of their opponent, like Patrice Bergeron and Brad Marchand, Zdeno Chara and David Krejci.

"We couldn't get a break on the bounces, but I thought the maturity of our group from last year to this year, we've taken a huge step," Brind'Amour said. "We closed the gap here, I think, from the elite teams. I think we're closing in.

"As long as we learn what it takes to win, which I think we are and we have this series, I think it's going to help this group moving forward. Just really proud of this team."

There were little areas, little moments, when it was obvious which team was more experienced, had years of games in the Stanley Cup Playoffs, had made it to the Stanley Cup Final.

"They did it better, more consistently, throughout that series than us," Hurricanes forward Jordan Staal said. "We had some spurts. We looked like a team that could win this series at times, but over the five games, they were more consistent at it."

Therein lies the difference. The difference that experience makes. The difference that comes from having been there already. The Bruins have been to the Stanley Cup Final three times since 2011, including last season, when they lost Game 7 to the St. Louis Blues. Before last season, the Hurricanes hadn't made the playoffs since 2009.

There is a gulf there. But it's narrowing.

And suddenly Brind'Amour is seeing exactly what he hoped to see when he took job as Carolina coach two years ago: a relevant team.

"That's a good team," Staal said of the Bruins. "They've got players that know how to win games. As a group, we're going to learn from this. We've got some really good young players that want it and that are going to grow and going to be even better.

"That's the exciting thing about the Carolina Hurricanes: The future is bright."



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Bergeron, Bruins beat Hurricanes 2-1 to advance in playoffs

TORONTO (AP) — The Boston Bruins look as if they've moved past their shaky postseason start.

Patrice Bergeron broke a tie with 3.5 seconds left in the second period, David Pastrnak returned with two assists and the Bruins beat the Carolina Hurricanes 2-1 on Wednesday to win the first-round playoff series in five games.

David Krejci also scored one of two power-play goals in the second period for the Bruins, who trailed 1-0 entering the final 5 minutes before the second intermission. It marked their second comeback in three days, the first when they rallied from a 2-0 deficit with a dominating third-period performance to win Monday's Game 4.

"You've got to find ways to win, I guess that's probably the best way to put it," Bruins coach Bruce Cassidy said. "We found ways to win, probably different ways each game: different people in the lineup, different goaltenders playing. So that was the best part of this first round. I think our lineup now will get a little more solidified as we go."

The Bruins entered the postseason as the Presidents' Trophy winner with a league-best 100 regular-season points, only to go 0-3 in the round-robin series to determine the top four seeds in the Eastern Conference playoffs. There was also the surprise news that goaltender Tuukka Rask was opting out of the playoff run to be with his family shortly before Game 3.

Now Boston, which lost in a seven-game Stanley Cup final to St. Louis last season, are advancing after winning the last three games since Rask's departure.

"They did what they do to be successful," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "And sometimes we tried to do too much. We got off of our game."

The Bruins trailed 1-0 entering the final 5 minutes of the second period before scoring twice on the power play, first from David Krejci with 4:40 left after Bergeron drew a penalty on a breakaway chance.

Then came Bergeron's score as the teams appeared headed to the second intermission tied at 1. He tracked down a loose rebound from Pastrnak that hit the boards, then quickly sent the puck back toward the net from the left side.

The puck slipped under a standing Petr Mrazek, bounced off his left skate and straight into the net for the 2-1 lead.

"I saw that ... he was standing up, so I was trying to catch him, throw it at his feet and see what happens," Bergeron said. "I knew there wasn't that much time left in the period. I said, 'Why not try it,' just because it was kind of a desperate play with a couple of seconds left. I knew we couldn't really set it up and have another shot."

Bergeron and Krejci also had an assist each for the Bruins, while Pastrnak's return to the lineup also provided a boost. After scoring 48 regular-season goals, he hadn't played since the fourth-seeded Bruins won Game 1 in double overtime and was a gametime decision for this one.

The fifth-seeded Hurricanes were trying to regroup from fading against the Bruins in the third period of Game 4, which Brind'Amour had called "tough to watch." They responded by taking a first-period lead on Haydn Fleury's goal, but they didn't score again as the Bruins gradually climbed past them.

Mrazek had 25 saves for the Hurricanes, including a pair of stops on 1-on-1 chances for Pastrnak. The Hurricanes swept the New York Rangers in the best-of-5 qualifying series to start their time in Toronto, but ultimately lost to the Bruins in the playoffs for the second straight season.

"They did it better, more consistently through that series than us," Hurricanes captain Jordan Staal said. "We looked like a team that could win the series at times."

NOTES: Jaroslav Halak had 23 saves for Boston, which swept Carolina in the Eastern Conference finals last season. ... Carolina played without 20-year-old winger Andrei Svechnikov for the second straight game. He went down late in Game 3 after his leg twisted awkwardly beneath him late in the third period after tussling with Zdeno Chara for position. ... Staal played after being knocked from Game 4 on a jarring third-period hit from Charlie McAvoy. ... The Hurricanes were without D Joel Edmundson for the fourth straight game. ... Sebastian Aho and Jordan Martinook assisted on Fleury's goal for Carolina.



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Keys to the offseason for eliminated NHL teams, including draft, free-agency game plans

By Emily Kaplan and Greg Wyshynski

Carolina Hurricanes: Stay the course!

What went wrong

The Hurricanes were looking like a wagon in their qualification-round sweep over the New York Rangers, a team against whom they'd struggled recently. The first-line duo of Sebastian Aho and Andrei Svechnikov looked unstoppable (combining for 13 points in three games), the defense was among the deepest in the tournament (it played without Dougie Hamilton and Brett Pesce and still functioned well) and the goaltending tandem of Petr Mrazek and James Reimer held up (despite being a question mark heading into the postseason).

The Canes looked poised for a slugfest with the Boston Bruins in the first round. If not for one brief lapse in identity in the span of 6:51 in Game 4 to erase a three-goal deficit -- Boston scored four times in the third period -- it probably would have been. "I wanted to make people that support this organization proud of how we play," coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "I think we've done that for most of the time that I've been here. [In Game 4] we didn't. That's the most disturbing thing for me."

It also didn't help that Svechnikov was injured in the playoffs for the second straight year, this time after an awkward tangle with Zdeno Chara. The Canes remain a young, possession-controlling team that's trending upward. And if not for one dud of a third period, they had a legitimate chance to go all the way.

Keys to the offseason

Some free agents stay, some go. The Hurricanes enter the offseason with \$9.15 million in projected cap space, according to Cap Friendly. We know the Hurricanes have an excess of capable defensemen, bolstered by trade deadline acquisitions of Sami Vatanen and Brady Skjei. Joel Edmundson, Vatanen and Trevor van Riemsdyk all become UFAs this offseason. With Brett Pesce expected to return healthy next season, it's

reasonable that one or two of the UFA defensemen will not return. On offense, Warren Foegele is a restricted free agent and likely gets a new deal. The wild card is Justin Williams, who is unrestricted. If he wants to return, the Canes will make it work. But at age 38, and after a season where he waited out a few months before joining the team, it will be interesting to see what he decides.

Stick with the tandem in net. While Petr Mrazek and James Reimer might not be the most exciting goaltending duo, they proved in these playoffs that they are more than capable, especially since they have a strong blue line in front of them. The Canes, a team with a reputation for being budget-conscious, of course could benefit from dipping into the free-agent pool for a player like Robin Lehner or Braden Holtby. But with Mrazek and Reimer both under contract through next season -- for the budget-conscious rate of a combined \$6.525 million -- it's hard to imagine this team going in a different direction.

Start thinking about that Svechnikov extension. The No. 2 pick of the 2018 draft has been everything that's advertised, and maybe a little more, in a breakout sophomore campaign. The 20-year-old is still on his entry-level contract through next season, then is due for a huge pay raise. Carolina lucked out when Montreal gave Sebastian Aho an offer sheet last summer, because it set his price (\$8.454 million per season) which is going to age well. That's the highest cap hit on the roster, by far; Jordan Staal is next at \$6 million. If Svechnikov continues at his pace, he'll be due for something in the Aho neighborhood, and the Canes need to prepare accordingly, especially with the cap staying flat.

Realistic expectations for 2020-21

Considering that there won't be much turnover, the Canes should be a playoff team, though the window will be open for a while. Carolina's roster is filled with team-friendly contracts, and stars just about to reach their prime; Aho is only 23 and on the books through 2023-24. Watch out, Metropolitan Division!



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About Last Series: Bubble burst

The Carolina Hurricanes' season came to an end Wednesday afternoon, as the Canes fell four games to one in their first-round series with the Boston Bruins.

By Alec Sawyer

A truly unusual season came to an end for the Carolina Hurricanes Wednesday afternoon in Toronto, as the Canes fell to the Boston Bruins 2-1 to drop their first-round series 4-1.

After the regular season was paused due to COVID-19, the Canes swept the New York Rangers in the specially formatted qualifying round to make the Stanley Cup Playoffs for the second year in a row.

The Canes met the regular season's best team in the Bruins, and Carolina was outmatched in a fairly lopsided series that featured one strong game for the Hurricanes.

The Canes needed more from their stars

Carolina's leading trio of Sebastian Aho, Teuvo Teravainen and Andrei Svechnikov combined for 77 goals during the 2019-20 regular season, good for 35 percent of all of the Canes' goals. In this five-game series against the Bruins, Aho, Teravainen and Svechnikov combined for three goals, with the regular-season leader, Aho, scoring none.

Aho did have four assists, but the Canes really needed more from their top three players if they wanted to have a chance against the Bruins. The one game where Aho, Svechnikov and Teravainen all had at least a point was game two, the one game the Hurricanes won.

So often for the Canes over the past few years Aho has stepped up and scored big goals, but he was quiet all series on the goal-scoring front. Aho scored the Canes' first goal of last year's Eastern Conference Finals against Boston, tallying on the power play just over three minutes into the game. In the eight games the Canes have played against the Bruins in the playoffs since, Aho is scoreless.

Teravainen was able to find the net twice this series, but he also only picked up one assist, which he led the Canes in during the regular season. Svechnikov missed the final two games of this year's series after getting injured in game three, but he was held off the scoresheet in both game one and three.

Apart from the Canes' lone win, Carolina got its goals this series from the not-so-usual suspects. If Aho could have stepped up and scored a few, this series could have been very, very different.

The good news for the Canes on this front, is that Aho, Teravainen and Svechnikov average out to just 22.67-years old. The three of them have plenty of playoff games ahead of them, and playing a team as good as this Boston squad two

years in a row will be a big learning step for all of them, particularly Aho and Svechnikov (Teravainen does have a Stanley Cup already, after all).

The emergence of one Haydn Fleury

In the 132 games that Canes' defenseman Haydn Fleury has played in his regular season career, he has four goals. Coming into 2019-20, he had none. In the Hurricanes' five-game series loss to the Boston Bruins, Fleury scored twice, highlighting a strong all-around series for Carolina's young blue liner.

If there was a bright spot in the Hurricanes' quick departure from the 2020 Stanley Cup Playoffs, it was the play of Fleury, who has struggled to consistently get himself into Carolina's lineup during his career. He played in 45 of the Canes' 68 regular season games this year, splitting time with Trevor van Riemsdyk for Carolina's last defenseman slot.

After a great showing in this series to build on what he's already done for the Canes, Fleury really shouldn't be fighting for playing time for Rod Brind'Amour moving forward (assuming the Canes re-sign Fleury, who is a restricted free agent).

It wasn't just the goal scoring that stood out for Fleury in this series, as the 2014 first-round pick was engaged and stellar on the defensive end of the ice as well. Fleury laid some big hits early in the series, setting the tone for a great five-game stretch for him personally.

The goals were also a great bright spot though, as Fleury bookended the series with a game-tying, third-period goal in game one and Carolina's lone tally in the final game.

I'm not sure many people would have predicted Fleury to be the Canes' best player heading into this series, but he very well might have been Carolina's best on the ice from start to finish against Boston.

Boston had the best record for a reason

After the Hurricanes' dominating three-game sweep of the Rangers and the Bruins' struggles in the seeding round-robin, it was easy for Carolina fans to have pretty lofty expectations heading into this series.

The Canes came in with momentum and a chance to win, something that made the sting of how the series went that much worse. With the regular season so far removed it was easy to forget just how good this Bruins team is, but Boston gave everyone a reminder of that in this series.

Even without leading goal scorer David Pastrnak for the middle games and Vezina Trophy finalist Tuukka Rask for the back half of the series, the Bruins came out and showed why they were so good in the regular season.



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David Krejci led a dangerous second line that is only a second line because Boston may have the best top line in the Eastern Conference, and the Bruins' defensive corps showed why Boston gave up the fewest goals in the league by a wide margin this year.

Boston's power play was firing on all cylinders throughout the series, and Jaroslav Halak came in for Rask and played fairly well to keep things strong between the pipes.

The Canes didn't lose to a bad team. In fact, the Canes lost a series that they absolutely should have lost on paper. Carolina won game two, but was simply outmatched by the Bruins the rest of the way. And that's OK.

The Hurricanes have a young corps that has just continued to get better over the last few years. On the other hand, the Bruins have an experienced and veteran corps that has been playing together for well over half a decade now.

What Boston is now is something the Canes can strive to be in the coming years, and the experiences of this series and the last are definitely something that the likes of Aho and Svechnikov can learn from and build off of.

The Canes made the Eastern Conference Finals last year, but were unfortunate in the way these playoffs worked themselves out to have Carolina face probably the best team in the Eastern Conference in the first round. The sting of a playoff loss will always be there for the team and the fans, but the future is brighter than ever for the Carolina Hurricanes.

Staal, Slavin on season's end and looking towards the future

Captain Jordan Staal and defenseman Jaccob Slavin spoke to the media via Zoom following the Game 5 and series loss to the Boston Bruins.

By Ryan Henkel

The Carolina Hurricanes lost Game 5, 2-1, to end their season at the hands of the Boston Bruins.

The Canes' sole goal came from a Haydn Fleury snipe, but two power play goals by the B's lifted them past Carolina.

Captain Jordan Staal and defenseman Jaccob Slavin spoke to the media over Zoom following the loss.

Jordan Staal

On what to take away from playing five, close games: It was a tight series. I thought there was maybe one game where we weren't at our best, but it's always gonna be tight against a good team like that. They keep it tight and I think we got beat in a few little areas. In special teams obviously, that and a few other areas killed us. They found ways to win games.

On the biggest missing piece: I'm not sure it was one piece. I think there were a lot of little things we could have done better. I thought we got away from our game a few times. Give them credit, they did a good job of not letting us get to our game, but special teams can always be better. My line in general, I don't think we created enough offense. We needed to put the puck into the net for some depth scoring. There were a lot of things that added up to that series loss.

On measuring up to a perennial Stanley Cup contender: It's a good team and they got players that know how to win games. As a group I think we're gonna learn from this. We've got some really good young players that want it and are gonna grow and get even better. That's the exciting thing about the Carolina

Hurricanes. The future is bright. There's a lot of guys that bring it every night and that's what you want to see when you've got the talent to boot. It makes for some fun hockey.

On what the team needs to do to clear the bar: If you look at that series, I thought we were pretty close. You hear it from everyone, it's those little things. All those little things got to add up. Special teams has got to be better, depth scoring has got to be better. Goaltending has got to be better and the D-corp has got to be moving the puck. All those little things put you over that edge and give you that little extra inch. They did it better and more consistently through that series than us. We had some spurts that looked like the team we wanted to be and a team that could win the series at times, but over the five games, they were more consistent at that.

Jaccob Slavin

On what the team will take away from this season: Just the group of guys that we have here. We got a tight-knit group and this was a first-time experience for everyone. I think you'll just remember it all as a whole. I don't think it will ever happen again where you take a four month pause and then come back into playoff hockey. There's definitely good things to take from this season.

On the difference maker in special teams: If you look at their power play, it's one of the best in the league. They've got a lot of set plays they run and they're good at those plays. I think for the most part, as a kill, we did a pretty good job in this series. I think both of their goals tonight were fluky power play goals, but sometimes that's how a power play gets it done. But on the penalty kill side of things, I think theirs is very solid. We had a hard time getting it in the zone and that's the most important thing. To get it in the zone and set up. Once we did, I thought we had some good chances, but they had a solid kill.



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Rod Brind'Amour: 'I'm proud of this team.'

The Hurricanes' head coach spoke to the media via Zoom following the team's series-ending loss to Boston.

By Andrew Schnittker

It wasn't meant to be. The Hurricanes bowed out to Boston in five games to end this season, but they made steps forward, and Rod Brind'Amour is proud of his group.

Here's a full breakdown of everything the Canes' head coach had to say after the season-ending loss:

On playing at a level to beat Boston: I think we played at a level to beat them. I feel like I'm really proud of this team. They do it right. We responded, which is the best thing. We walk out of here with our head high in terms of the effort, especially tonight. I thought we were the better team. They got a couple funny bounces and we couldn't get a break on the bounces. But I thought the maturity of our group from last year to this year, we took a huge step. We've closed the gap here from the elite teams. I think we're closing in. As long as we learn what it takes to win, which I think we are and we have this series, I think it's going to help this group moving forward. Again, I'm just really proud of this team.

On what made Boston the better team: I think it's that process of knowing and learning how to win. I think they were a little more patient with their game. I think when we got frazzled at times and got off our game, and they just stayed with it, they hunkered down, they blocked a lot of shots. We did what we did to be successful, and we at times tried to do too much. We got away from our game. That's part of it, but I feel like we're missing a lot of players tonight that could really help us. I just think if they're in the lineup, we're heading in the right direction. Again, our leaders are great, great players, but they're also good people in there. The will to win is in here.

On what Justin Williams has meant: He's such a good person, ambassador for the game. For me, you ask me what he meant

for me being here, he meant everything, just to have that leader but that friend to go to. I was new at this. Everything I asked, he made sure the team did, and made my job really easy. I'm not sure what his plans are, you have to ask him, but I can't say enough good things about Justin Williams.

On making this a relevant franchise: That's what I take the most pride in. That's what we talked about. We want to win. We're saddened that we're not still playing, that's why we do this, but there's more to it. We want to be that organization that's continually talked about to have a chance to win and for our community to be proud of the team and how they play, how they represent. It means more than it has in the past, I think. I feel like our guys buy that and show it by the way they play.

On what he'll remember about coaching in 2020: That's a deep question. The reality of it is we're playing a game and we're really fortunate to be doing it. I think that came to the forefront when it got taken away. And now we still were able to play and try to provide some joy to people. But I don't think we ever took it for granted. I think that's something you try to preach. I think that's something that, at times, you do, and now for sure, going through all this, you just realize how fortunate we are that we get to do this job. I think on the broader spectrum of it all, we're going home right now to see our families. We couldn't be happier to do that. I think everybody in the world realizes that and appreciates their family a lot more going through all this.

On if these runs are pushing the Canes towards being a team like the Bruins: Totally. That's my point. When we first lined up against them, they know how to win, they've been there. But they had to learn some tough lessons too along the way, that core group. They had some tough times early when they were together. I think that's what made them the team that they are. I think that's what we're doing here. I really believe that. Time will tell, but we'll see.

Canes lose special teams battle, game five, bow out in first round

The Hurricanes' 2019-20 season is over after a game five loss to the Boston Bruins.

By Andrew Schnittker

Much like game four, the Canes started game five of their first-round series against the Boston Bruins well. Much like game four, they didn't finish well, which is why their season is over following a 2-1 loss.

Haydn Fleury scored the Canes' lone goal, and Petr Mrazek made 25 saves. A couple of untimely second period penalties and power play goals surrendered and a lackluster third period were the difference in this one. Carolina finished the game 0 for 3 on the power play, while the Bruins were 2 for 4.

Following a bit of a feeling out process to start, Haydn Fleury gave the Canes the lead with his second goal of the series, creeping in from the point and sniping a shot through a Jordan Martinook screen to make it 1-0 Canes.

The Bruins nearly tied the game a few minutes later, but Mrazek waited him out and made a sharp stop to keep his side in front.

The Canes looked dangerous throughout the opening period, and took a 1-0 lead to the intermission after easily their best first 20 minutes of the series.

A pair of Boston power plays in the last six minutes of the second period came back to haunt Carolina.

Patrice Bergeron had a golden chance with a breakaway following a missed slash in the Boston zone with about six minutes left in the second, but Sebastian Aho hooked him to prevent a goal. Boston took advantage on the ensuing power play, as a loose puck bounced to David Krejci and he knocked it home to tie it at one.

Martinook was whistled for boarding with 49 seconds left in the second, again after a missed call in Boston's end. That one also proved very costly, as Bergeron banked one in off Mrazek's skate on a goal Carolina's starter will want back with three seconds left in the period to make it a 2-1 game.



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Warren Foegele went to the sin bin for holding less than a minute into the third period, but the Canes killed it to stay in the game. Carolina got a power play of its own shortly after as old

friend Joakim Nordstrom went off for a hold, but came up empty for the third time in the game.

With Boston again up a man with about 12 minutes left, Krejci fired off the crossbar with an open net to keep it at a 2-1 game, and the Canes killed that one as well.

The Canes weren't able to generate anything in the way of a dangerous chance the entire final period, and only mustered six shots on goal. Brind'Amour pulled Mrazek for an extra skater with two minutes left, but the Canes couldn't find the equalizer, and the season faded away.

Stay tuned to Canes Country in the coming days and weeks for post-mortem series content, as well as looks ahead to this offseason and next regular season.

TODAY'S LINKS

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SportScan

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

1178010 Carolina Hurricanes

Hurricanes' season comes to an end when they let the Bruins off the hook, again

BY LUKE DECOCK

The lasting image from the final game of the Carolina Hurricanes' season shouldn't be the goal Patrice Bergeron scored on Petr Mrazek in the final seconds of the second period — banking the puck off Mrazek's far skate from behind the net — but a chance Jordan Staal had earlier in the period.

It was a minor miracle Staal was playing at all, having been knocked out of Game 4 with a sturdy, legal hit by Boston Bruins defenseman Charlie McAvoy that was the fulcrum of the Hurricanes' collapse. They still had a

one-goal lead then when their captain had to leave the game. The Bruins scored the second of their four straight goals almost immediately afterward.

That was not-so-ancient history Wednesday, with the Hurricanes facing elimination in Game 5. Staal was playing and so were the Hurricanes, dominating play, at least at even strength. Whatever had gone into the third-period capitulation on Monday wasn't evident at the start of Game 5. But when Staal had as good a chance as any the Hurricanes had, wide open, cutting into the slot with the puck, he fired it straight into Jaroslav Halak's belly.

When the Bruins had chances like that shortly afterward, they finished. The Hurricanes, throughout a series they lost 4-1, too often let them off the hook.

The Hurricanes had a chance to be up two or three goals Wednesday instead of the one-goal lead they took into the second period. But with only Sebastian Aho's line generating any production throughout the playoffs, a pair of power play goals ended up enough for the Bruins to end the Hurricanes' season with a 2-1 win.



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The second of them was an absolute soul-destroyer, the clock in single digits when Bergeron saw Mrazek off his post and fired the puck off Mrazek's far skate from below the goal line, somehow going five-hole from behind the net in a feat of hockey impossibility.

Errors like that are unforgivable in the playoffs, just like the squandered power plays and bad penalties and all of the Hurricanes' other self-inflicted wounds.

All five games were within a goal in the final minute. That's how close the Hurricanes came. And yet the gap between them and the Bruins was obviously much larger than that.

"We got beat in a few different little areas," Staal said. "Special teams, obviously. A couple other things that kind of killed us. They found ways to win games."

For such a young team, even one with its best days still ahead of it, this still had an end-of-an-era feel to it. Justin Williams, surely, will not be coming back for any or all of next season, although past practice indicates it would be premature to count him out quite yet. And it's fair to ask if Staal, the old warhorse, is starting to slow down at 31. There will still be a place for him — and there are still three more years left on his contract — but he may not be able to play the same heavy minutes going forward.

So there are changes ahead, even among the younger players. The Hurricanes have exquisite top-end skill in Sebastian Aho and Andrei Svechnikov and as mobile and versatile a defensive corps as there is in the NHL, but there are clearly missing pieces, holes the Bruins so easily exposed. It's tough to analytically quantify being hard to play against, but the Bruins have a ton of depth forwards and defensemen who fit that description.

The Hurricanes, at this point, do not. Jaccob Slavin and Brett Pesce can infuriate the opposition with their defensive acumen, but they don't inspire fear. Then there's Jordan Martinook and Joel Edmundson — the latter an impending free agent who may not be signed, sorely missed after getting injured in Game 1 — and that's about it.

They're now built to make the playoffs, and they did that this year, to their credit. For a franchise that hadn't been to the playoffs in consecutive years in almost two decades, that's no small accomplishment.

But the Bruins have twice now shown them what it takes to win in the postseason, winning eight of nine postseason games spread over 16 months. The question is whether the Hurricanes are paying attention, in the front office and on the bench alike.

"The maturity of our group from this year to last year, we made a huge step," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "We closed the gap with the elite teams. We're closing in. As long as we learn what it takes to win, which I think we are, and we have this series, I think it's going to help this group moving forward."

But when the Hurricanes had their chances to extend the series Wednesday — and even before that — they made it easy on the Bruins. The Bruins would never.

News Observer LOADED: 08.20.2020

1178011 Carolina Hurricanes

Hurricanes' postseason comes to an end as Bruins take 2-1 win to clinch series

BY CHIP ALEXANDER

Years from now, someone likely will ask Rod Brind'Amour about playing and coaching in the NHL and pose the question, "What was it like in 2020?"

There will be much to pack into an answer. A global pandemic. A months-long pause in the season. A postseason played in a bubble, in a hub city. No fans in the stands.

There will also be another trip to the Stanley Cup playoffs to discuss. But unprecedented. Qualifying rounds. Personally challenging, with families left behind. Games played with a playoff intensity but almost in a vacuum.

For the Canes, the playoffs ended Wednesday. It ended with a 2-1 loss to the Boston Bruins, in the best-of-seven series in Toronto's Scotiabank Arena decided in five games.

On Monday, after the Canes collapsed in the third period of Game 4 in losing 4-3, a somber Brind'Amour noted, "I want to make the people who support this organization proud of how we play."

This time, the effort and the will was there. Not the goals, not enough bounces. But the effort, the want-to.

"We responded. We walk out of here with our heads high," Brind'Amour said. "I'm really proud of this team."

"We want to win. We're sad we're not still playing. But there's more to it. We want to be that organization that continually is talked about as having a chance to win, and for our community to be proud of their team and how they play and how they represent."

The Bruins again did to the Canes what they did a year ago in sweeping them in the Eastern Conference finals: make them pay for their penalties. Boston scored twice in the second period Wednesday on power plays, David Krejci banging a rebound past Petr Mrazek and then Patrice Bergeron providing the dagger.

Carolina Hurricanes left wing Jordan Martinook (48) gets hit to the ice against Boston Bruins defenceman Brandon Carlo (25) as Bruins right wing Chris Wagner (14) looks up ice during the first period of an NHL Eastern Conference Stanley Cup playoff hockey game in Toronto, Ontario, on Wednesday, Aug. 19, 2020

With the final seconds of the period ticking away, Bergeron grabbed the puck below the goal line extended, wheeled and whipped a quick, tight angle shot toward the net. The puck glanced off Mrazek's left skate. The clock showed 2.5 seconds.

It was Bergeron who won Game 1 with his goal off the rush in the second overtime. It would be his goal Wednesday that clinched the series as the Bruins, who led the NHL with 100 points in the regular season, moved on.

It then was clamp-down time again for the Bruins. In Game 4, Boston held the Canes without a shot for the first 18 minutes of the third period in their surging comeback win. On Wednesday, Carolina managed five shots in the third.

"A lot of things added up to this series loss," Canes captain Jordan Staal said. "That's a good team and they know how to win games."

Haydn Fleury's goal in the first period, on a shot from the right circle, gave the Canes a 1-0 lead after one. But that was the only one goalie Jaroslav Halak and the Bruins allowed as they killed off three penalties, blocked 17 shots and kept the Canes from jamming in a shot in some intense scums around the Boston net.

"It's that process of knowing and learning how to win," Brind'Amour said. "I think they were a little more patient with their game."

As the game came to a close Wednesday, one had to wonder if Justin Williams has played his last NHL game, his last game with the Hurricanes. The winger has made the Canes relevant again, helped make them a playoff team, but at 38 must decide if the time, inevitably, has come to retire.



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"He's such a good person and ambassador for the game," Brind'Amour said.

And about that question again — about 2020. The coronavirus has disrupted and claimed lives, making pro sports a nice diversion but only that, a diversion. The Canes will leave Toronto and the bubble for more months of reflection and uncertainty.

"The reality of it is we're playing a game and we're real fortunate doing it," Brind'Amour said. "We're still able to play and try to provide some joy for people. I don't think we ever took it for granted, and that's something we try to preach, but at times we maybe do. Going through all this, you just realize how fortunate we are to do this job.

"Then the broader spectrum of it all, we're going home right now to see our families and we couldn't be happier to do that. I think everybody in the world realizes that and appreciates your family a lot more, going through all this."

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1178012 Carolina Hurricanes

In what may have been his final game, Justin Williams was on the ice at the end

BY LUKE DECOCK

Boston Bruins captain Zdeno Chara, center, shakes hands with Carolina Hurricanes captain Jordan Staal, left, after the Bruins eliminated the Hurricanes in an NHL Eastern Conference Stanley Cup playoff hockey game in Toronto, Ontario, on Wednesday, Aug. 19, 2020

Boston Bruins captain Zdeno Chara, center, shakes hands with Carolina Hurricanes captain Jordan Staal, left, after the Bruins eliminated the Hurricanes in an NHL Eastern Conference Stanley Cup playoff hockey game in Toronto, Ontario, on Wednesday, Aug. 19, 2020

Justin Williams was on the ice during the final, frantic seconds as the Carolina Hurricanes desperately scrambled for a goal to tie the score and extend their season. Those may be the final moments of a long and distinguished career for a player who became known as Mr. Game 7 but is going home after Game 5 of this series.

Williams was not among the two players made available to the media from the NHL's Toronto bubble, but he clearly agonized over whether to keep playing a year ago, relinquishing the captaincy and semi-retiring until he returned to action in January. It's hard to imagine the 38-year-old wanting to go through that again, although the compressed offseason — the NHL hopes to start the 2020-21 season in December — may impact his decision.

But it's more likely Wednesday's 2-1 loss marked the end of a career that spanned 19 seasons, 20 years, 1,264 regular-season games, 162 playoff games — two full seasons' worth! — and three Stanley Cups, including his first in 2006 with the Hurricanes on a team captained by Rod Brind'Amour.

"That's tough. It's tough," now-Hurricanes coach Brind'Amour said. "He's such a good person and ambassador for the game. If you ask me what it meant for me to have him being here, it meant everything — to have that leader, that friend to go to. I was new at this and everything I asked, he made sure the team did. He made my job really easy. I'm not sure what his plans are. You have to ask him. But I can't say enough good things about Justin Williams."

Williams had eight goals and three assists in his 20-game abbreviated season, productive enough for a player who jumped into the fray at midseason. He had one goal in seven playoff games.

STAAL GOOD

After much speculation, Jordan Staal and David Pastrnak were both in the lineup for Game 5. Petr Mrazek got the start in net for the Hurricanes.

Hurricanes captain Staal left Monday night's loss after a hard hit by Bruins defenseman Charlie McAvoy, and his departure with the Hurricanes leading 2-1 was a key factor in their eventual 4-3 loss. Bruins winger Pastrnak, who tied for the NHL lead with 48 goals in the regular season, apparently injured himself celebrating the Bruins' Game 1 game-winner and missed the next three games.

"Feeling much better," Bruins coach Bruce Cassidy said Wednesday morning

Pastrnak went back onto his usual line with Patrice Bergeron and Brad Marchand and assisted on both Boston goals.

EARLY EXITS

The Hurricanes were one of four teams facing elimination with a loss on Wednesday, which was as much of a concern for the Bruins as it was for the Hurricanes.

"They want to come back and want to win the series so they've got to do that one game at a time," Cassidy said. "I imagine they'll be laser-focused today. Typically in these situations you've got to play your best game. I think the Islanders learned that last night."

The Washington Capitals on Tuesday were only the fourth team in the bubble to win a game when facing elimination, beating the New York Islanders 3-2. The Hurricanes' loss Wednesday made their collective record 4-10 — a .286 winning percentage, down from .422 historically.

TAILWINDS

Andrei Svechnikov and Joel Edmundson both remained out for the Hurricanes. ... Jaccob Slavin finished the series a team-worst minus-4 against the Bruins. ... With his assist Wednesday, Sebastian Aho moved into a tie with Matt Cullen for eighth in franchise history in playoff scoring with 24 postseason points. ... The Hurricanes went 4-for-29 (13.8 percent) on the power play in the postseason. They converted at a 22.3 percent clip in the regular season.

News Observer LOADED: 08.20.2020

1178013 Carolina Hurricanes

How to watch Carolina Hurricanes vs Boston Bruins, Game 5 on Wednesday

BY CHIP ALEXANDER

CAROLINA HURRICANES VS BOSTON BRUINS

What: Game 5, Stanley Cup playoff series.

When: Wednesday, 4 p.m.

Where: Scotiabank Arena, Toronto.

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

LOOK FOR: The game could be decided on the Canes' "desperation level," a term all hockey coaches like to use. If the players have grown tired of life in the bubble in Toronto or too frustrated against the Bruins, it



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could show in the Canes' play and the series could end. Or having played so "un-Canes-like" in the third period Monday in a stinging 4-3 loss, they could rebound, put together a strong 60-minute game and stay around longer.

QUESTIONS: Are the Bruins, who have a 3-1 series lead, just too good for the Canes? They were a year ago and the Bruins have proven their lackluster play in the preliminary round-round in Toronto was just a warmup for the real thing. Forward David Pastrnak, out since Games 1 with an injury, could return to the lineup Wednesday but the Bruins have proven they can win without their 48-goal scorer. Why rush him back?

OF NOTE: Justin Williams' goal against the Bruins on Monday was his first point of the postseason. It also made the forward the third oldest player in franchise history -- at 38 years, 318 days -- to score a playoff goal. The two older players: Gordie Howe (52 in 1980) and Ron Francis (39 in 2002).

QUOTABLE: "We have nothing to lose right now. We just have to go out and win one game at a time and the way we're going to do that is go out there and play our style. We've got to get more pucks to the net and create chaos around the goalie." -- Canes forward Brock McGinn.

UP NEXT: If the Canes win, Game 6 will be Thursday at a time to be determined. If the Bruins win, the series is over and the Canes leave the bubble. It's that simple now.

News Observer LOADED: 08.20.2020

1178014 Carolina Hurricanes

Carolina Hurricanes, welcome to your era of expectation

By Sara Civian Aug 19, 2020

The 2018-19 Carolina Hurricanes were a once-in-a-fandom catharsis of a hockey team.

Magic like that — the birth of the Storm Surge, the shooting percentage finally making sense, the immediate success under franchise legend Rod Brind'Amour, the "Bunch of Jerks," the deep Cinderella run, the list goes on — doesn't last forever. You're lucky to experience even a few of those things in the duration of a hockey season.

There was a freedom in the certainty that it wouldn't last, and you could enjoy it for what it was.

Nothing like standing at the crossroads of success and expectation.

The first day of that season, Brind'Amour kept stressing the concept of "relevancy." The Hurricanes hadn't made back-to-back playoff appearances since 2002. As the captain of the Hurricanes' sole Stanley Cup team — and as a person who fell in love with the area so much he never left — Brind'Amour had a deep understanding that shortcuts wouldn't lead to sustainable success for hockey in Carolina.

His vision was more of a calculated, slow burn. You saw that in the patience of keeping an obvious star such as Andrei Svechnikov off the power play in his rookie season to get his stick penalties under control. You could argue it was when he didn't hastily assign Sebastian Aho or Jaccob Slavin the captaincy when Justin Williams took his pause. This is just who he is as a person, but it's also in the relationship he's built with owner Tom Dundon and the trust he has in his coaching staff.

Two facets of the Hurricanes' 2020 first-round exit are particularly hard to swallow:

They looked so dominant against the Rangers in the play-in sweep.

They were a first-round exit after making a deep run last season.

I know you don't want to hear it, but progress isn't linear in the National Hockey League. And when the Bruins are a yardstick of sustainable excellence in the NHL — which they are — you rate yourself by how you performed against them rather than by how far you advanced in a playoff format you happened to vote against.

"I mean, they know how to win, they've been there, but also they had to learn some tough lessons, too, along the way," Brind'Amour said of the Bruins, who beat the Hurricanes 2-1 in Game 5 on Wednesday. "That core group, they had some tough times early when they were together, and I think that's made them the team that they are. And I think that's what we're doing here. I really believe that time will tell. But you know, we'll see."

In that respect, yes, the Canes are different.

The same goes for the coach playing a long game. I've already seen all the tweets from Leafs fans about how the Canes are being coddled as the most recent victims of the Bruins, but I've learned something in the two seasons I've spent covering a small-market team: You're lucky if you don't have to worry about your beloved hockey team simply continuing to exist.

The Canes making back-to-back playoff appearances for the first time in 18 years means something you can't even understand.

"That's what I take the most pride in — that's what we've talked about," Brind'Amour said. "We want to win, I mean we're sad in that we're not still playing — that's why we do this — but there's more to it. You know we want to be that organization that is continually talked about to have a chance to win and for our community to be proud of their team, how they play and how they represent. It means more than it has in the past, I think, and I feel like our guys buy that and show it by the way they play."

The "more" tends to go silently understood in Canesland and mocked elsewhere, but I'll say it: Back-to-back playoff appearances means the NHL will continue to exist in Raleigh, N.C.

Dave Ayres aside, though, the 2019-20 Hurricanes did not embody a catharsis. The carefree vibe turned into tangible expectation, the Canes made their biggest trade deadline splash in recent memory, and they took their losses harder.

This is called the next step.

"First, I would like to express how good the Carolina Hurricanes are — they are such a good hockey club," Bruins captain Zdeno Chara said. "Well-coached. They have obviously a very dangerous lineup. It was not easy to beat them. They are a very dangerous team. Just want to congratulate them on going to the playoffs and playing really hard. They're very well-coached, and they work extremely hard."

Carolina Hurricanes, welcome to the beginning of your Cup window.

It won't be as fun as that Bunch of Jerks season until it's more fun than you've ever imagined — unless you were around in 2006.

A rapid-fire account of what went wrong

If you ask captain Jordan Staal (which I did), it's "the little things": "I'm not sure that there's any one piece, I think there's a lot of little things we could have done better. I thought we got away from our game a few times — give them credit, they did a good job of not letting us get to our game, special teams always could be better. My line in general, I don't think we created enough offense. There were a lot of things that added up to that series lost."

Opinions on officiating and \$25,000 fines aside, Staal is right — special teams always could be better. The Hurricanes didn't make the most of their power-play chances, going 0 for 3 in an elimination game, while the Bruins went 2 for 4. The Canes went 2 for 15 on the power play in the series, and one of those was a gift to Nino Niederreiter from Jaroslav Halak.



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As much as I've gone to bat for Haydn Fleury, he should not be leading the goals-for-while-on-ice stat for the Canes (five) and tied for the series lead in goals (2) with Teuvo Teravainen. Sebastian Aho led the team with seven high-danger chances, had four assists and was third on the team with 0.96 expected goals, and you could tell. But you expected him to be a tangible difference-maker after that monster play-in series.

Obviously, losing Andrei Svechnikov to injury was a dagger for the Canes, but it was similar to the Bruins not having leading goal scorer and Rocket Richard winner David Pastrnak for most of the series. Losing key players to injury and still coming through is one of the "tough lessons" Brind'Amour has referenced. The Bruins didn't miss a beat despite not having Tukka Rask.

According to Natural Stat Trick, the Bruins won the faceoff game at a 55.10 percent advantage and also won the "crucial moment faceoff game." Blame it on Patrice Bergeron.

The Bruins also beat the Canes at their own game — shooting as much as possible and suppressing as many shots as possible, resulting in a 57.81 percent overall shot advantage and a 62-45 edge in high-danger chances.

We'll address the mixed bag of goaltending in the coming days.

The Bruins won, but the Canes played better than they did last season.

The Athletic LOADED: 08.20.2020

1178124 Websites

The Athletic / Hockey's 40 under 40: The important people who are shaping the game's future

Craig Custance Aug 19, 2020

There's good news if you're a fan of seeing younger, fresh voices getting opportunities in hockey. This 40-under-40 list was much easier to populate than the last version we did. In fact, the hard part was cutting it down. Hockey still has a long way to go to in terms of diversifying the voices making decisions and opening up real opportunities in the NHL, but there's been some progress.

Before we get to the list, let's lay out a few of the ground rules and the thought processes that shaped it:

Hockey media members and any contributors to The Athletic are ineligible. That includes television coverage. The hope here is to highlight some of the up-and-coming executives, coaches, scouts, agents and others in the hockey world that will help shape the game in the next generation. I'd rather not get in fights with colleagues in the process. For similar reasons, no current players are eligible either, with one notable exception at the top of the list.

Please don't sweat the order. Lists are definitely more fun when there is an order and not just a bunch of names. But this isn't a list of most important or more powerful or most impressive. It's a glimpse into the future not an attempt to rank Darryl Metcalf's impact compared to Dani Rylan.

And, like last time, if you're not on the list, you're not allowed to complain. Sorry, those are the rules. Even if some of you broke the rule last time and you know who you are. We will, however, accept comments below from your burner account.

All right, let's dive in:

1. Blake Bolden, Los Angeles Kings growth and inclusion specialist and pro scout: Bolden, an All-American at Boston College, a competitor for

Team USA and the first Black player in the NWHL was hired as a scout in January by the Los Angeles Kings and quickly grew her role with the Kings to include a leadership position in growth and inclusion with the Kings. She's a rising star in the NHL world and has already emerged as one of hockey's most important voices. During a recent phone conversation she shared insight into her path to prominence:

In interviews, you've shared that growing up you didn't see a lot of people who looked like you in hockey but that it didn't get in the way because you loved the game. But you've also said there were times you felt very lonely in the world of hockey. How did you balance that?

"I genuinely don't understand at my age how I balanced it. I just know that sometimes things were a little bit uncomfortable. I was a young kid with a single mom and we were always moving around in all these different environments. Once we found this stability in hockey, that was my grasp to hold on to something that would be stagnant the rest of my life and my career. That was my anchor. Once I found hockey and fell in love with it, I was just like 'Wow, this is nice. I get to go to practice, get to meet new people, I get to push myself in ways I didn't know was possible.'

"Sometimes things were said to me that were inappropriate or disrespectful, but I genuinely didn't let that bother me because I was a kid. I didn't really truly understand the gravity of it until I got older and was like, wow, that was kind of messed up. I don't really know how I dealt with that. I just kept my head down and took it as a challenge.

"I was never an emotionally outward kid where I would be crying or be angry. I just wanted to be the best. I think my competitive level showed through all that adversity. Yet, I realized once I got older, 'Hey, what's going on?' I'm genuinely the only person of color in this sport and then when I was younger, I would get people saying, 'Well, you're black. Why do you play hockey?' And me being like, 'I don't know.' I didn't know it was something that was different, I just did it. I was a kid, I was 6 or 7 and I did it because it was fun. The challenge was fun. It was a bit of both. I grew as the challenges came and I just rose to that and didn't want to give up and here I am now."

When did your job as a scout evolve to incorporate inclusion specialist?

"My first scouting game was Jan. 3, 2020

, and I remember Luc Robitaille and (Kings COO) Kelly Cheeseman literally like weeks into my hiring, were like, 'Since you're here and you have this role in women's hockey and in the hockey world, what do you think about diversifying hockey within our hockey community in Los Angeles?'

"I remember Kelly saying, 'Listen, we're in Los Angeles, we're in one of the most diverse places in the world. We want the next time we raise the Stanley Cup to depict that diversity within our fanbase and the youth playing the sport. Because you're so passionate and you have been this person throughout your career, what do you think about figuring out a way to integrate your passions with what we're trying to accomplish?'

"It kind of evolved from there, and recently I've gotten the title two months ago we had launched our LA Kings diversity and inclusion initiative. That's been successful. We have plans in the future working with the executive leadership to just bring equality to our sport and access and education and availability and awareness. It's been great. In light of everything going on in the world, it seemed something that was a little serendipitous to my arrival in that position."

You've said that only good things happen when you push outside your comfort zone. When did that philosophy hit home?

"There have been so many times in my life where I've been uncomfortable in women's hockey. Financially being uncomfortable is something we always have to deal with. The first time is when I took a leap and I quit my full-time job and I decided to move overseas to Switzerland, not knowing the language, not having any friends, taking that leap and saying, 'Hey, I'm going to see what happens.'



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"I've evolved a lot as an adult. Being in that position where I was scared, alone and didn't know what to do. I think in those instances and adversity you can grow and understand yourself more. ... I started (Blake Bolden Athletics) because I got cut from the Olympic team and I was devastated and I was depressed for years. I realized that women in the sport, people in the sport usually just focus on the physical aspect, how much power and skill and agility you have. But what's going on in the mind, I felt like was really important ... I had no idea what I was doing, but I knew I was passionate about it.

"When you just take a chance and say, 'Hey, this is important, I should do this, I don't really know the outcome. Good things will come if you have good intentions behind it."

You're doing a lot of things. Where do you see yourself ending up?

"I feel like I've lived my life in a way that's just pedal to the metal, going and experiencing what's ahead of me. Right now, scouting is a priority and I'm learning as much as I can. I'm evolving as someone weaning out of her playing career and more into a life career. I think I'm lucky in that aspect.

"A lot of people just stop playing and it's, 'What's next?' And have no idea what they're going to do. I have an opportunity to make a change in the sport by being a diversity and inclusion ambassador for hockey. That's something I really want to see. I want to see Los Angeles especially be more diverse in its fanbase and its children playing in the grassroots level. I want that to trickle and spread throughout the entire nation. I want other NHL clubs to have a growth and inclusion specialist. I want that to be shown in every single club. We'll see what happens for me in the future. This is a great position to be in and I think you'll see me a lot more in the hockey space."

Jeremy Colliton delivers his message. (Kamil Krzaczyński / USA Today)

2. Jeremy Colliton, Chicago Blackhawks coach: This was really the year that you saw Colliton's vision and impact take shape. Blackhawks GM Stan Bowman took a real gamble and put his reputation on the line when he fired a future Hall of Famer to promote a virtual unknown. Now, the Blackhawks are seeing the payoff.

Bowman on the growth Colliton has shown in Year 2: "Last year, everything was new. He's going into a new rink. He'd played some in the NHL but not a lot. Everything was new. It's just like a young player. The biggest thing is where do you go? Every city is different. You're trying to play against the best players in the world and coach against the best coaches.

"Now, he's past that hurdle. I think that's the biggest thing. He's always been a great communicator. That was the one thing that was attractive to me when I got to know him, how he could connect to the players on a personal level and give them feedback. That's the one thing the players want, to know where they stand. Even if it's not always the message they like to hear, at least they get the information, they understand what it is that the coach isn't happy about and then gives them ways to improve it and gives them a chance to redeem themselves. Even if guys were in and out of the lineup, he doesn't just bury a guy for two, three weeks in a row. He wants to get them back and give them a chance."

3. Kyle Dubas, Toronto Maple Leafs GM: Dubas has been a regular on this list and continues to be one of hockey's smart, young minds even if the pressure is being turned up in Toronto. His imprint on the organization is clearly starting to take shape.

Dubas on cultivating talent on the ice and in the front office: "I really value our more veteran people and the wisdom that they bring. I also think we want to be a place that really, obviously, we're developing players, but I would like us to be a place that develops people as well. We're just looking for who can do the job best. Regardless of gender or age or anything of that nature, we're just trying to find the best people we can to go into those spots. I don't feel one way or another whether someone is too young or too old or anything like that. I just think we try to build a

place where people want to come to work because they feel they'll be given responsibility and be able to improve."

4. Alexandra Mandrycky, Seattle Kraken hockey strategy and research: Mandrycky has received a lot of attention as one of the first hires in the Seattle Kraken's history, with Ryan Clark capturing her value well in his story about her in April.

And there's a bit of irony there. Because what impresses Seattle GM Ron Francis most about Mandrycky is that nothing she does is about self-promotion or self-preservation. It's about making intelligent, smart decisions that benefit the franchise. That's it.

"It's easy to see she's intelligent," Francis said. "She's passionate about what she's doing and hard working. There's no ego involved with her. ... In any discussions we have, there's give and take. She doesn't do something because she's looking to get credit for it. She does it because she feels it's the right thing for the organization. That's just her."

5. Chris Snow, Calgary Flames assistant GM: When he was diagnosed with ALS, it would have been perfectly understandable if Snow eased out of the hockey world to quietly take on this battle. He's done the opposite. His responsibilities with the Flames haven't diminished and he might be making a bigger impact outside the sport than anyone else in hockey. Through tactics like the #TrickShot4Snowy and his willingness to share his story, he's raised thousands of dollars and priceless awareness for ALS.

Snow on what he learned from mentor Doug Risebrough: "He realized how you win and it's actually quite simple. You filter everything through a very limited set of values. I remember him saying to me one day, 'You win when you have the right person in every single role. That doesn't necessarily mean the absolute most talented. But you have the right person in terms of personality and selflessness in every single role. ... My wife loves to tell a story, when my son was a year old, maybe two, and we went for a hike with Doug called Stanley Glacier, which is just beyond the Alberta into BC past Banff. It was a terrible day. It was September but it was sleeting and we just kept going and going to the point that my son was asleep in a carrier on my wife's back and we were on all fours going over slippery rocks. Finally, we got there and see the glacier. We walk one hour back toward the car. At the one hour back mark, there was a sign in the rock that says, trail ends here. My wife says, 'Doug! Doug! It says, trail ends here.' He doesn't even break stride. He just says, Kels, the trail ends where you decide it ends. That's Doug."

6. Sheldon Keefe, Maple Leafs coach: The qualification-round disappointment aside, this was a breakthrough year for Keefe, who appeared to be the right fit for the Maple Leafs after taking over for Mike Babcock. The Athletic's Jonas Siegel watched his impact on the Maple Leafs closely so let's turn it over to Jonas for his thoughts: "Two elements really stick out about Keefe's first season coaching the Leafs: flexibility and creativity. Whereas Mike Babcock could be rigid in his approach, Keefe was willing to try anything and everything, from Auston Matthews and Mitch Marner playing long stretches together to Morgan Rielly teaming up with Tyson Barrie. Keefe was constantly experimenting with things that hadn't been tried before in Toronto, like the Matthews-Marner combo and even an interesting "All-Star Game" line featuring those two stars alongside captain John Tavares. He also injected the Leafs' attack with a fresh look, one that prized puck possession and movement. No team scored more goals after he took over in November."

7. Stephanie Jackson, USA Hockey director of diversity and inclusion: Jackson joined USA Hockey in 2019 from Nike and spent her first year getting a feel for how the organization works and identifying areas that need improvement while building her network in the hockey community to help make it happen. USA Hockey has been criticized as an old boys' club in the past so her influence is crucial to the growth of the organization.

"USA Hockey is a very old organization and I think with the NHL, we're all trying to make strides that are more inclusive and diverse and she's the perfect person for the job," said Bolden, who Jackson reached out to for input immediately after taking the job. "I think at times it can be very



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difficult because there are a lot of people who are stuck in their ways and don't necessarily understand. It's an uphill battle for her. She has support with players and executive committees and people within the NHL that are rooting for her. There are people in USA Hockey who want this change to happen, it just takes a little bit of time. She's doing great and I think USA Hockey, personally, from my experience needs her. We need D&I in USA Hockey. For sure."

8. Judd Moldaver, senior vice president Wasserman Hockey: In October, Moldaver negotiated an eight-year, \$72.472 million contract for Roman Josi in a deal with the Nashville Predators. Earlier in 2019, he got Auston Matthews a five-year, \$58 million deal that included more than \$50 million in signing bonuses. Recently, he added goalie Carter Hart to his client list as his influence and reputation as a power player in the game continued to grow.

We asked Moldaver to provide three pieces of advice he'd give young people trying to make their way in an industry like player representation:

You define your value: "Don't let anybody tell you what your value is. If you're passionate about something, if you're determined to do something in life, set your mind on it and and fight through everything. There are going to be easy days and hard days."

Treat everybody as you want to be treated: "You're not going to please everybody in life but one of the best compliments I got in my life was a couple years ago and I heard from people I hadn't heard from in 20 years and they said, 'You're the same guy you were 20 years ago.' That made me happy. I'm the same person. Maybe more refined, more wise. But I think it's because I treat people the way I want to be treated."

Worry only about what you can control: "Every negotiation is different. Every player is an individual and their families are each in their own unique situations. The teams are in different states with different management styles. There are different variables that make each negotiation different. You have a goal with your client when you're negotiating and you work closely with them. Focus on that. Don't worry about all the other things that are not in your control."

(Courtesy Emilie Castonguay)

9. Emilie Castonguay, Momentum Hockey: Castonguay represents Alexis Lafreniere, the expected No. 1 overall pick and, like her high-profile client, is a rising star in the hockey world. The Athletic's Scott Burnside profiled Castonguay's path through a male-dominated profession and Lafreniere summed up her impact well in that piece: "Honestly, she can do anything," Lafreniere said. "I've got a lot of trust in her and the group of agents I have. It's important because for me it's a big year, but I have to surround myself with good people and I think that's what they are."

10. Meghan Chayka, co-founder of the analytics firm Stathletes: Chayka has been a pioneer in the world of hockey analytics and hasn't slowed down sharing her knowledge and expertise even as the world shut down, instead just shifting her jammed speaking schedule from high-profile conferences to Zoom.

Chayka on what's next in her career: "I really like what I'm doing now in terms of, I get to lead teams, I get to hire who I want. I love tech. I love working with engineers. I like dabbling in marketing. I have a finance degree as well. I can do a lot on the start-up side ... everyone is like, 'The first woman GM,' and it's like beyond a title, to be in that role you have to be very passionate and very prepared to have success in my opinion. I just think people miss the journey when they make those kind of goals, too. I have a lot of students come to me and say I'm going to be the next GM at 25, 26 whatever. I think you sort of wish away the stages of your life that are really formative. To me, that's a tip to students but also myself. To really enjoy where you're at and learn from it and develop as a person."

11. John Wroblewski, Ontario Reign head coach: Wroblewski's stature in the game started to take off with his guidance of the loaded U.S. NTDP group that featured Jack Hughes, Cole Caufield and Alex Turcotte. His ability to both develop these high-end players and bring out their best

games didn't go unnoticed, with the Los Angeles Kings hiring him this week as the head coach of the Ontario Reign, their prospect-laden AHL team. This was a coveted job in hockey coaching circles and a big opportunity for the 39-year-old Wisconsin native.

12. Lindsay Artkin, president of the NHL Coaches' Association: The NHLCA has transformed in recent years by expanding its reach and impact through conferences and mentorship programs, and Artkin has been a big reason for the expansion. One of the consistent messages the group has received from its NHL coaches is that they want to give back to the next generation through education. Artkin has done the heavy lifting to make it happen.

"We've been given the mandate to build out those programs. That's where she's really taken the lead," said NHLCA executive director Michael Hirshfeld.

During the NHL's pause, Artkin launched a webinar series that was viewed by 3,000 coaches from all over the world including Malaysia, Indonesia and Australia. She also launched a women's coaches program that connects women with NHL coaches and is in the process of launching a similar program for people of color. "That's been her legacy and she's built the program," Hirshfeld said.

The NHLCA's Lindsay Artkin has expanded the organization's educational reach while creating programs aimed at growing diversity in the coaching profession. (Courtesy of the NHLCA)

13. David Carle, University of Denver head coach: When he was hired in 2018 to replace Jim Montgomery, he was the youngest head coach in NCAA D1 and the program didn't miss a beat. He had a record of 45-21-11 to start his head coaching career and is working hard to maintain a powerhouse program during a challenging time, as detailed in this story from Ryan Clark.

"What makes David Carle a good coach is his ability as a young coach to relate to his players and know what we are going through on a daily basis," said Tyson McLellan, a senior forward from last season's DU team. "(Former DU coach) Jim Montgomery had so much success at the college level, he has continued the winning culture at Denver."

In a text, Montgomery echoed that thought in describing what makes Carle so unique: "(It's) his ability to communicate effectively and concisely with people from any generation and his emotional intelligence."

14. Patrick Burke, NHL's senior director of player safety: Burke, 37, has worked his way up the ladder in the NHL's office to an influential position that goes well beyond monitoring games for player safety incidents. He presents at NHL and Board of Governors meetings. He plans big events, like the NHL's All-Star skills competition and worked closely with Susan Cohig to include women's hockey under that spotlight. "He's a smart guy," said an Eastern Conference executive. "He's definitely put in his time and is doing it the right way. The way he handles himself gets him a lot of respect from a lot of people."

15. Anya Packer, director of NWHPLA: Packer has been a champion for women's hockey, particularly as the landscape has shifted over the last few years amid labor disputes and players fighting for more equity and exposure. The 28-year-old former NWHL player has helped lead the charge in making big changes for her constituency, including a 50-50 revenue split in the last contract negotiation that saw players receive a 30 percent increase in salary in the first year of the deal. Packer, who next month is expecting her first child with wife Madison, also a pro hockey player, is integrally involved in sponsorship deals with NHWL commissioner Dani Rylan and in coordinating the response to the COVID pandemic with union leaders in other professional sports leagues. She also serves as a senior account executive at Gartner, an IT research firm, and as a board member for The IX, a Title IX newsletter about women's sports.

16. Rod Braceful, assistant director of player personnel U.S. NTDP: His influence and responsibility for shaping and developing the rosters for



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USA Hockey's development program have grown, but the coolest thing he's done this year was building an all-minority team with NextGen AAA Foundation. The team was coached by Mike Grier and Bryce Salvador and it went out and won the Beantown Summer Classic. Here are three thoughts from Rod on that experience:

On the challenges of assembling the team: "It was tough. Depending on where you're at in the country there are different things going on. Players preparing to get ready for the season, some kids going to move away and play junior hockey. That landscape played a real factor in the challenge."

On how the group performed: "Once the puck drops, it's hockey. We had competitive teams we played against. The team we played in the championship, they were a great team. For me, once the tournaments started, I was like, 'OK, now it's hockey.' Like anything else, everyone is really competitive."

On what made this team extra meaningful: "This is the piece that people don't understand. There are times where you feel like you have to do certain things or walk on eggshells so that you're not doing anything that someone is going to question or take offense to. At any realm, when you're with people you're like, you don't feel that pressure. There was no pressure because of that."

17. Wes Clark, Toronto Maple Leafs assistant director of player personnel: His title probably undersells his influence in the Maple Leafs organization. He has the ear of GM Kyle Dubas and a July story (accurately headlined 'He's that silent assassin') by The Athletic's Joshua Kloke really captures his philosophy and impact on the organization.

"He's going to be that right-hand guy that successful organizations need to have," Florida Panthers director of amateur scouting Jason Bukala told Kloke. "In that market, (Dubas) needs guys like that."

18. Florence Schelling, SC Bern GM: In April, she was named the general manager of one of the top men's professional franchises in Switzerland, a move she signaled her successful transition from elite Olympic goaltender to an executive the hockey world will be hearing from for the foreseeable future.

An analytical thinker and goal-setter, she shared how a near-death experience while skiing completely changed her life perspective: "I had my surgery and after surgery they told me that it's going to take six months to recover and I was like, 'All right. Six months. To me, that was a lifetime but very quickly I realized that it wasn't. ... Once I came home, my brain was going nuts. My thoughts were going left, right, up, down. It was insane. I had sleepless nights because I was thinking so much. All the things I was thinking was past-oriented. Everything that happened to me in the past, that I pretty much didn't take the time to process all the things I did in my life. Conversations I had 10 years ago popped up in my mind. Maybe I should have said this, instead of what I said. I re-lived Sochi. I re-lived World Championships. I re-lived my college years and all of that. It was hard. It was really hard. At one point, I guess I was done with the past and all my thoughts (became) future-oriented. And for the first time in my life, I really just had the time to think about, what is it that I really want in my life? What is it that I need in my life. What is it that I don't need anymore? What is it that I don't want to do anymore? That's when I started realizing how much of a blessing this was. I really think I was able to turn my life around."

19. Spencer Carbery, Hershey Bears coach: Because the Capitals are a Stanley Cup contender very much trying to max out their remaining contending window, he hasn't been stacked with talent in Hershey, but he's maximized the rosters he's had since becoming the head coach at the age of 36 in 2018. When he was hired in the AHL, only Jeremy Colliton was younger among coaches in the league and he's since graduated. "Spencer is an excellent teaching coach with great patience that knows exactly how to get his point across to all ages of players," texted Hershey Bears vice president of hockey operations Bryan Helmer. "He is a hard worker that spends hours and hours at the rink just to make sure he is doing everything he can to make his players better. He helps get them prepared to perform at their best."

Matt Moulson, who scored 22 goals for the Bears this season, agreed with that assessment: "Carbs is a coach who works tirelessly at his craft. Whether that is watching video, getting input from coaches or hearing what his players have to say. He doesn't have an ego, which allows him to gather information from different sources and implement them as he sees fit. He only wants the best of his players as athletes and people. Don't get me wrong, he brings an incredible amount of intensity to practice and game day. When you know someone is pouring everything they've got physically and emotionally into something it's an incredible place to play."

20. Dani Rylan, NWHL founder and commissioner: She can be a polarizing figure in the women's hockey world, but there's no doubting her brilliance and business savvy. She has heavy hitters financially supporting the league that she founded, including Texas Rangers co-owner Neil Leibman and the former co-owner of the New Jersey Devils, Michael Giffillan. In the last year, the NWHL salary cap increased and Rylan helped bring in an important media rights deal with Twitch. While there still isn't a consensus among players, part of the issue may stem from early growing pains surrounding the league that have since been resolved.

"A lot has changed and a lot has grown for the better," NWHL veteran Kaleigh Fratkin told The Athletic's Hailey Salvian.

21. Sam Ventura, Penguins director of hockey research: It's difficult to truly understand how much influence an analyst has inside an organization, so rating one higher than another in a list like this is a bit of a fool's errand, something to keep in mind as we go on a bit of an analytics run here. But Ventura, 32, has been one of the most respected people in hockey analytics since founding war-on-ice with Andrew C. Thomas and Mandrycky. "I like him a lot," said one NHL executive. "He's a quiet guy but a really respected guy. He's been there awhile and has won a couple of Cups."

22. Namita Nandakumar, Seattle Kraken senior quantitative analyst: Nandakumar had a great job in the NFL working for the Eagles so it was going to take a special opportunity to get her to move and she's getting just that in Seattle. Like others in the organization, she was attracted to getting the once-in-a-lifetime chance to build something from the ground up and the Kraken are the beneficiaries. "Having that success with the Eagles and to get somebody of that stature and ability was exciting for us," Seattle GM Ron Francis said. "She really can do a lot of different things and she's got her hands in a lot of different areas of what we're doing."

23. Darryl Metcalf, Maple Leafs special assistant to the GM: Metcalf, the founder of ExtraSkater.com, is another person whose influence has grown since joining the Maple Leafs. In 2018, he was promoted to special assistant to the GM, which added a management role to go with his work in the organization's research and development department. When asked which executive from his team was the most likely to become an NHL GM, Dubas started with praise for veteran executives like Laurence Gilman and Brandon Pridham. But he was also quick to mention Metcalf. "Darryl Metcalf in time has great opportunity and potential," Dubas said. "Having Darryl's skillset is going to be really, really important."

24. Matt Cane, New Jersey Devils hockey analytics director: Teams are definitely secretive when it comes to their analytics team so when former teammate Tyler Dellow raved about Cane, it was noteworthy. As you may or may not know, Dellow throws around praise like manhole covers. "Matt is someone I'd wanted to work with for a long time and one of the things that really excited me about working in New Jersey was the opportunity to work with him," said Dellow, the Devils' vice president of analytics. "He's got a rare combination of technical ability and judgment as to the best approach to use for a particular task. He's also skeptical of his conclusions and always looking for ways in which they might be improved, which is a great habit for anyone working in analytics."

25. Margaret Cunniff, Carolina Hurricanes data scientist: There aren't a lot of former neuroscientists in NHL front offices, but when the Hurricanes



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hired Cunniff in January, they added to whatever that total is. When player tracking data finally hits the NHL, the hire of Cunniff positions the Hurricanes to fully take advantage. "Hockey statistics right now are very event-based — goals, shots, very concrete things. A lot of what happens in hockey happens between those events," Cunniff told The Athletic's Sara Civian in February. "You don't want to just know there's a shot — how did that shot get set up, who contributed? Hopefully tracking data helps with that. My end is answering: How do we use all that information in a smart and creative way?"

26. Doug Wilson Jr., Sharks director of scouting: As San Jose gets younger, his role in the organization becomes even more crucial. At one point this season, the Sharks' AHL team had the lowest average age in the league. And they've had to try and stock it without the benefit of many first-round picks in recent years. Assuming they keep the three picks they have in the first two rounds this year, this becomes a key offseason for the 34-year-old Wilson Jr.

27. Ryan Miller, Blues director of hockey operations: There's a group of executives in various NHL front offices that came up through Kurt Overhardt's agency that have now worked their way into prominent roles and Miller, 36, is one of them. He's become an invaluable member of the reigning champs' front office, where he does everything from analytics to arbitration briefs to salary cap calculations. "He's basically doing the job of three people," said one NHL source. "He does all of Doug (Armstrong's) dirty work."

28. Zac Urback, Columbus Blue Jackets hockey analyst: The Blue Jackets hired him because of his draft research and modeling. One of his strengths is communication, which isn't always the case with people in the analytics department. He works closely with scouts and does a lot of pregame prep work for the Columbus coaching staff. He's become even more integral to the front office with the recent promotion of Josh Flynn, who should also be on this list, to assistant GM.

29. Noelle Needham, Maple Leafs amateur scout: Not only does Needham scout for the Maple Leafs, she's the coach of the Sioux Falls Power, a 16U boys team. Rod Braceful, who is constantly evaluating emerging talent for the U.S. NTDP, has seen Needham's direct impact on the players in that program. "She has done an incredible job. She doesn't get enough credit," Braceful said. "She's coaching kids going off to play in the USHL and college commitments. And she's doing it at a high level."

30. Chris Morehouse, New York Rangers director of North American scouting: When John Davidson left the Columbus Blue Jackets, he brought Morehouse, 33, with him and for good reason. He's viewed as an executive strong at managing a staff and also open to new ideas. "He's a good evaluator and he's good at putting everything together," said one NHL team executive.

Agent Brett Peterson (No. 31 on the list), Mike Grier, Rod Braceful (No. 16) and Bryce Salvador helped assemble and guide an all-minority hockey team to a recent championship at the Beantown Summer Classic. (Courtesy of Rod Braceful)

31. Brett Peterson, vice president Wasserman Hockey: Peterson, 38, spent over a decade at Acme World Sports and joined Wasserman when Acme was acquired by Wasserman. Peterson, who played at Boston College, has a reputation as having a strong eye for talent. "He develops strong bonds with his clients and their families," said fellow Wasserman agent Judd Moldaver. "His experience as a player and years as an advisor equip him with tremendous insight."

32. Michael Peterson, Tampa Bay Lightning director of hockey analytics: His work isn't necessarily well known in the analytics community in part because he's been with an NHL team for over a decade and they've been protective of his exposure. But we do know he does statistical analysis and contract valuation for one of the most successful franchises in hockey. He's been highly valued by three general managers, Brian Lawton, Steve Yzerman and Julien BriseBois. And if the Lightning can get under the cap next season, he might be their MVP.

33. Blake Geoffrion, Columbus Blue Jackets pro scout: He has the pedigree that comes from a hockey family and playing the game at the highest level but has also rounded out that experience in the NHL as a scout and outside the NHL when he worked Korn Ferry, a management consulting firm. "He's done a little bit of everything," said an NHL source.

34. Liz Knox, PWHPA founding board member: The former goalie for the Canadian women's national team has emerged as an important voice in the Professional Women's Hockey Player's Association while also working as an ambassador for women's hockey. On top of that work, she's a contractor and a volunteer firefighter for the town of Whitchurch-Stouffville.

35. Dani Chu, Seattle Kraken quantitative analyst: Not only did Chu have his choice of jobs after getting his masters of science in statistics from Simon Fraser University in December, he had his choice of leagues with previously recognized work with the NBA and NFL, among others. "Fortunately for us, we were able to convince him to join our team," Seattle GM Ron Francis said. Francis was one of Chu's father's favorite players so he tried to use that to his advantage. "I tried to lean heavily into him taking his dad's advice," Francis joked.

36. Duante Abercrombie, Stevenson University assistant coach: He came up through Washington's famed Fort Dupont Ice Hockey Club and is a protégé of Neal Henderson, the first black inductee to the U.S. Hockey Hall of Fame. "He does a good job. He studies the game. He lives, sleeps and eats hockey," Braceful said. "He's going to coach at a high level. He gets it."

37. Gabriella Switaj, Anaheim Ducks analyst and amateur scout: The former Boston College goalie was the first female Brendan Burke intern at USA Hockey and the first female amateur scout in the salary cap era for the Ducks. "She has a great hockey and analytical mind, which is critical in today's game," Ducks GM Bob Murray said. "Some people have what I call the 'hockey brain' and she's one of them. We are lucky to have her."

38. Kiana Scott, Erie Otters scout: Scott became the first female scout in the Ontario Hockey League when she joined the Otters staff in March. When she was hired, GM Dave Brown noted her relentless work habit and eye for talent. While hockey has mostly been on hold since the hire, Brown said the organization is eager to see her in action. "We are looking forward to her future contributions," Brown said via text.

39. Jeremy Rogalski, Boston Bruins director of analytics: His strength is translating advanced analytics and turning them into actionable insights for the entire Bruins hockey operations department. "Our analytics department has grown. The footprint has tripled," Bruins GM Don Sweeney said. "Jeremy Rogalski deserves credit for that."

40. Nathan de Lara, Vegas hockey ops intern: He's 18 years old. He's an intern. There are people much more accomplished in hockey who have a better case for this spot. But de Lara blew judges away during the Columbus analytics conference in February as the data contest winner. His combination of original work in the analytics field along with communicating it in a very digestible way made it stand out. "You have to put him on the list," said one source familiar with his work. The kid is a future star.

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The Athletic / Down Goes Brown: Ranking the 25 most painful first-round losses of the cap era

By Sean McIndoe Aug 19, 2020



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 20, 2020

We're deep into what's officially the first round of the 2020 playoffs, and you know what that means: It's time to bring on the sadness.

Well, sure, there's happiness too, if your team wins. I'm told that's pretty fun, and as a Leafs fan, I guess I'll just have to take your word for it. But only one team is going to ride that happiness all the way to a championship. Everyone else gets to be sad. And every year, those first-round losers get to reserve the first eight spots at the sadness table.

Of course, not all first-round losses are created equal. Sometimes, your team isn't expected to win, they don't come all that close, nothing especially memorable happens, and the whole thing is over quickly. Maybe you're just happy to have been there at all. You lose, life moves on, and that's it.

But sometimes, a first-round loss leaves a mark. Those are the ones that we remember. So today, let's count down a ranking of the 25 saddest first-round exits of the cap era.

One important ground rule: We're allowing a dose of hindsight to come into play here. Sometimes, the initial sting of a first-round loss fades when you see how the rest of the postseason plays out, or after a few years of history have piled up. Often, it goes the other way, and it just keeps getting worse. We'll take that into account here.

(And yes, it goes without saying that all the times that your favorite team lost were clearly the worst and most painful losses ever. If they're not all listed here, that's a mistake by the editors, because I had them on my list. I'm with you, your team's pain is special and unique.)

We'll start at 25 and work our way down, twisting the knife as we go. Remember, these are first-round losses from the cap era. Let's get ready to be sad.

25. Flames vs. Ducks, 2006

Here's a weird stat: Heading into the 2006 playoffs, the Flames hadn't lost a playoff round against a team in their conference in 10 years. That wasn't as impressive as it sounded, since they'd missed the playoffs altogether in seven of those years and a lockout had eaten up another. But the other year was 2004, when they'd gone all the way to Game 7 of the Final before losing to the Lightning in controversial fashion.

Two years later, with a new salary cap system in place, it was time to pick up where they'd left off. Instead, they ran into Ilya Bryzgalov and managed just one goal in the final two games while blowing a 3-2 series lead. We didn't know it at the time, but they wouldn't win another round until 2015.

24. Blackhawks vs. Canucks, 2011

I can't rank this one all that high, since the Hawks had one Cup in the bank and two more on the way, and the Canucks were the favorites. Still, sometimes pain is all about the missed opportunity, and we were so close to an all-time collapse. The Hawks' came within Game 7 overtime of coming all the way back from down 3-0 — and in the process, inflicting the sort of psychological damage on a rival that they may never recover from. And to make matters worse, look who gets to overtime winner.

23. Red Wings vs. Lightning, 2015

The 2014-15 Red Wings remain the franchise's last 100-point team, but went into their series against the Lightning as underdogs. They gave them all they could handle, taking the series lead three times only to have the Lightning respond with a win each time. That included a controversial Game 6 loss on home ice that saw Niklas Kronwall hammer Nikita Kucherov with a monster hit. He didn't receive a penalty on the play, but the league took the ultra-rare step of suspending a star for a Game 7. Needless to say, Red Wings fans were not happy.

The deciding game was a tight one, and the Wings held a big edge in shots, but couldn't beat Ben Bishop in a 2-0 loss that would end up being the last for Mike Babcock in Detroit. The fact that they haven't won a round since, and don't look like they will anytime soon, only adds to the pain.

22. Penguins vs. Flyers, 2012

It's never fun to lose to a rival. It's significantly less fun when you give up 20 goals in the first three games. The Penguins did fight back, literally at times, including a wild 10-3 win in Game 4, and a 3-2 win in Game 5 had us thinking comeback. But the Flyers nipped that in the bud with a 5-1 win to ice one of the craziest series any of us can remember.

21. Canadiens vs. Hurricanes, 2006

Most fans might remember this series as the one that birthed the legend of Cam Ward, and started the Hurricanes down the path to the franchise's first Stanley Cup. Montreal fans might tell you it was the Saku Koivu series, one that saw the Habs take a 2-0 series lead before their beloved captain was high-sticked in the eye by Justin Williams in Game 3.

Montreal blew a late lead and lost that game in overtime, went on to lose the series in six, then watched the Hurricanes win it all while Williams became a hero. Lingering bitterness over a playoff high-sticking incident? Not sure I can relate, but we'll allow it.

20. Thrashers vs. Rangers, 2007

The bad news is that the Thrashers lost. The worse news is that they lost in four straight games. The even worse news is that it was the most successful playoff run in franchise history. The worst news of all is that it stayed that way, and always will.

Other than that, went great.

19. Stars vs. Canucks, 2007

The team with the hot goalie is supposed to win. But somehow, the 107-point Stars managed to lose a series in which their goalie had three shutouts. That would be Marty Turco, and his shutout total doesn't even count the three straight overtime periods he held the Canucks off the board in Game 1 before Henrik Sedin's quadruple overtime winner.

The series saw the Stars rally from down 3-1 to force a Game 7, which they led after one period. But the Canucks tied it up, took the lead midway through the third, and then added a pair of empty-netters to seal the deal. Turco finished the round with a .952 save percentage, a 1.30 goals-against average and somehow, four losses.

18. Sharks vs. Ducks, 2009

Even by 2009, the Sharks were starting to develop a reputation as an underperforming playoff team. They were coming up on nearly a decade of finishing with around 100 points and heading into the postseason as contenders, only to bow out earlier than expected. They'd only made the conference finals once, and that was back in 2004.

But at least they always won a series first; they hadn't gone out in the first round since 2001. So after the best season in franchise history, a 117-point campaign that saw them win the Presidents' Trophy, we all figured they'd roll over the Ducks. Nope. They lost the series in six, including a pair of shutouts by Jonas Hiller. At the time, it was painful. In hindsight, it was a sign of things to come.

17. Penguins vs. Lightning, 2011

Injuries are part of hockey, and by the time the playoffs roll around everyone is at least a little hurt, so pointing to a guy who was missing from the lineup only takes you so far. But when that guy is Sidney Crosby, and you end up facing the team that put him on the shelf, you can be forgiven for wondering what might have been — especially if you blow a 3-1 series lead, and drop the Game 7 finale on home ice by a 1-0 final.

16. Panthers vs. Devils, 2012

15. Capitals vs. Hurricanes, 2019

14. Avalanche vs. Wild, 2014

13. Bruins vs. Capitals, 2012



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The cap era has seen nine Game 7 overtimes in the first round, and all of them have to make our list. There's something uniquely excruciating about the experience of watching your team in a full-on "next goal wins" situation. It's horrible. And that's if you win. Lose, and you pretty much never forget.

We'll get to more of those Game 7 overtimes separately, but let's group a few together, since there's only so many different ways I can write "and then the goal went in and all their fans died inside." Each of these had its own unique angle, though. The Panthers lost back-to-back overtime games to end the series, blowing their best chance at their first playoff series win since 1996. The Capitals' loss last year ended their Cup defense before it really got a chance to start. The Avalanche had a chance to avenge their Game 7 overtime stunner to the Wild in 2003, and instead lost again. And the Bruins somehow lost a Game 7 heartbreaker to the Capitals, which most of us assumed wasn't even possible.

12. Blackhawks vs. Blues, 2016

You can't win them all, and even Hawks fans spoiled by three Cups in six years knew that their team could still lose when it mattered. But to the Blues? After fighting back from down 3-1, including a dramatic Game 5 overtime win? After rallying from down 2-0 in Game 7, only to lose on a third-period winner by a former Hawk? Followed by an agonizing double-post that we all thought went in, including the players on the ice?

Ah well. We'll get 'em next year. Except they didn't; the Hawks haven't won a best-of-seven since.

11. Blue Jackets vs. Capitals, 2018

They had them. Seeking the first playoff series win in the history of the franchise, the Blue Jackets had the Capitals on the ropes and were one punch away from scoring the knockout. Up 2-0 in the series after a pair of road wins and heading to overtime in Game 3 on home ice, Columbus was one goal away from all but wrapping up the upset. For the Caps, it felt like the whole franchise was hanging in the balance. For the Blue Jackets, the next goal would be the greatest moment in team history.

And then...

It's not even a good goal. Just a weird bounce, that ended up turning the series. The Blue Jackets wouldn't win again, then had to watch the Capitals go on to win the Stanley Cup.

10. Capitals vs. Flyers, 2008

You knew the Capitals would show up multiple times on this list. This one came in their first postseason appearance of the Alexander Ovechkin era, as they snuck into the playoffs with 94 points and had home-ice by virtue of winning the Southeast Division. The series felt like a coin flip, but after dropping the opener the Flyers won three straight to take a 3-1 lead. The Caps fought back on home ice in Game 5, then went into Philadelphia to earn a tough win in Game 6 and force a seventh game.

Wait, thought hockey fans everywhere: The Capitals are coming back from down 3-1? They're supposed to be the team that blow those leads. Maybe this really is a new era, and everything has changed!

It had not changed. The Caps lost Game 7 at home on an overtime winner by Joffrey Lupul. And Washington fans settled in for another decade of postseason misery.

9. Lightning vs. Blue Jackets, 2019

Almost all of the series on our list were long ones, including more than a few seven-game marathons. It's actually kind of hard to get swept in an especially painful way. If you lose in seven, man, you could have been just one bounce away from a win. But if you get swept, the other team was just better. That's not fun, but how much can it really hurt?

Ask the Lightning, who racked up arguably the best regular season in cap era history, then couldn't win so much as a single game against the underdog Blue Jackets. Bonus points for the details, including an injury to their best defenseman, a suspension to their (typically pacifist) MVP, and

a blown 3-0 lead in the opener. Then they spent the whole summer hearing about how they just didn't know how to win the big one.

Does this one slide down the list if the Lightning can finish off the Blue Jackets in their shot at redemption this year? Maybe, but only a slot or two, because this was awful.

8. Red Wings vs. Oilers, 2006

Nobody really knew what to expect heading into the 2006 postseason, the first under the new rules of the cap era. Well, except for one thing: The Red Wings would roll over the Oilers.

After all, they'd just run off one of the most impressive regular seasons in modern NHL history, with 58 wins and 124 points to run away with the Presidents' Trophy. The 95-point Oilers would make for a nice warmup, but that was about it.

Or so we thought. Six games later, the Oilers had pulled off the upset. While this wouldn't spell the end of the Wings as Cup contenders, it did mark the end of an era, as Steve Yzerman retired after the series.

7. Canadiens vs. Bruins, 2011

One year after going on a miracle run to the conference finals as an eight-seed, the Canadiens almost pulled off the upset encore against the Bruins. They won the first two games on the road, then dropped three straight, including two in overtime.

A nail-biting Game 6 win sent the series back to Boston for a deciding game, and P.K. Subban's tying goal with two minutes left in regulation set the stage for the Habs to pull off a monumental upset that would have decimated their most-hated rival. Nathan Horton had other ideas.

Losing the series: gut-wrenching. Watching the Bruins go on to win their first Cup in nearly four decades, knowing you were one goal away from preventing it: so much worse.

6. Ducks vs. Predators, 2016

Sometimes it's not the "what," but the "how." As in, "how can we possibly lose yet another Game 7 on home ice?" The Ducks found a way, for the fourth straight season. After dropping the first two games, Anaheim had fought back to take a 3-2 series lead. But as always, the Ducks started firing blanks with the series on the line, scoring just twice the rest of the way while losing the sixth and seventh games. That wasn't all they were firing; this time, the Game 7 loss cost Bruce Boudreau his job.

5. Maple Leafs vs. Bruins, 2013

You thought this might be higher, right? Maybe it should be. It's certainly one of the most famous first-round losses of the cap era, or maybe any era. Over seven years later, the Leafs can't go up 4-1 in a game without Twitter crashing under the weight of a million identical jokes. If we're doing a list of the worst game seven gut punches, this one ranks a lot higher than this.

But here's the thing: This Leafs team was bad. The Bruins were really good, and rolled through the rest of the East with ease before nearly winning their second Cup in two years. The Leafs were supposed to lose this series. And in hindsight, thank the hockey gods that they did, because while the front office reacted with one of the dumbest offseasons in history, that was what finally led to Brendan Shanahan coming in and hitting reset on the whole operation.

Don't get me wrong, this was still a brutal way to lose a series that was in the bag. But I'm not sure a loss can crack the top three when your fans should probably be glad it happened. Top five, though? Yeah, that's about right.

4. Devils vs. Hurricanes, 2009

The Devils went into the series a moderate favorite, but the series quickly settled in as a back-and-forth battle. New Jersey took the opener, the teams split a pair of overtime games, and the Hurricanes tied the series



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in Game 4 on the strength of a literal last-second winner. After each team held serve with a home-ice shutout, we went to a seventh game.

Do-or-die games are always stressful, but the Devils were a veteran team designed to win them. They had Martin Brodeur, after all, not to mention a roster full of Cup winners like Patrik Elias, Jamie Langenbrunner and Brendan Shanahan. And sure enough, they took a 3-2 lead in the second, and we all settled in to watch them take it home.

And then, this happened:

The run to the Final in 2012 takes a bit of the sting off this one, since it means this collapse wasn't our last highlight of Brodeur in New Jersey. But only a bit, and you could make a strong case that this still stands as the worst loss in Devils history.

3. Golden Knights vs. Sharks, 2019

Confession time: I'd been pretty pumped for Game 7 between the Sharks and Golden Knights, which figured to put a worthy exclamation point on what had been a pretty great series. But when Vegas scored early in the third to make it 3-0, I figured that was it. So I went to bed. And then in the morning, I woke up, looked at my phone, and wondered why there were about 600 new tweets instead of the few dozen I was expecting. That's when I realized I may have missed something.

Yeah, I'd say I might have.

It's still an awful call, and watching the Sharks put four power-play goals past Marc-Andre Fleury to take the lead was stunning. The hockey gods could have called it a night right there, and this would be a sure thing for the top five. But no, they gave it an extra twist: That dramatic tying goal with seconds left, only to have the Sharks still win it in overtime. Knights fans had already suffered enough. Breaking out the dreaded Zelepukin? That feels like overkill.

2. Capitals vs. Canadiens, 2010

Hockey history is filled with stories of great teams running into hot goals. So when you're still the first example fans think of, even a decade later, you know it was bad.

And it was bad. Very, very bad. The 2009-10 Capitals were a 121-point juggernaut facing a Montreal team that finished 33 points behind them. It was a mismatch that brought back memories of the lopsided first-round matchups of the 1980s, and after a surprise win by the underdogs in the opener, the Caps responded by pouring in 17 goals in the next three games to all but wrap up the series.

Enter Jaroslav Halak. Caps fans know the rest.

They'd manage just three goals on 134 shots over the last three games, losing all three in one of the great upsets ever. And to make matters even worse, Halak's hot streak ultimately led to a change in front office philosophy that probably set the franchise back years.

1. Sharks vs. Kings, 2014

There's really no other option.

I could give you the whole backstory, how the Sharks had cemented their reputation as playoff losers who always choked in the big moments while the Kings had recently won a Cup. I could tell you about how we all thought they'd finally slayed the dragon after they went up 3-0 on the strength of two home blowouts and then a road overtime win that clearly spelled the end of the series. I could tell you how many teams have ever lost after being up 3-0. I could tell you how they didn't just lose four straight, but got smoked by a combined score of 18 to 5. I could tell you how the Kings viciously twisted the knife afterward, highlighted by Drew Doughty's "you could see it in their eyes" quote.

Or, I could just show you this legendary GIF.

That's playoff heartbreak, right there. I don't know if it gets any worse than that, but if it does, I really hope I'm not around to see it.

So there's my ranking. Do you want to make the case for a game I didn't include? Want to move one up or down the list? Want to ask me why I didn't include a game that wasn't from the first round, or from the cap era, or both, or that's from a completely different sport because nobody ever reads the intro on these things? Meet me in the comment section and let's all be sad together.

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The Athletic / Slap shots, wrists and deflections: Who are the best finishers in hockey?

By Dom Luszczyszyn Aug 19, 2020

Scoring goals is hard work. In hockey, you miss 91 percent of the shots you take and even the best of the best only convert on one-in-five of their chances. It's why the league's most captivating players are often the ones that make scoring goals look easy, like they're out for Sunday morning shinny rather than playing in the majors.

A goal is the single most exciting moment in a hockey game and we wanted to highlight some of the players who do it best in a variety of ways. That's made easy with the help of Micah McCurdy, site-runner for Hockey Viz and the king of hockey visualizations in general. His colourful data swirls are omnipresent on hockey Twitter and late last week he delivered what may be his finest work: an offensive zone graphic that shows a player's finishing ability by location, broken up by shot type.

○○○ NEW HOCKEYVIZ ●●●

"FINISHING" CHARTS FOR SHOOTERS AND "SAVING" CHARTS FOR GOALIES.

SEE WHICH PARTS OF THE ICE ARE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES, BROKEN OUT BY SHOT TYPE.
PIC.TWITTER.COM/YVWUOLHEO3

— MICAH BLAKE MCCURDY (@INEFFECTIVEMATH) AUGUST 14, 2020

The charts are available for all players going back to 2007-08 to all Hockey Viz subscribers at the \$5 per month level, via the site's Patreon.

The chart is broken up into four quadrants and compares how many goals each player scored with each shot type to how many you'd expect based on where the shot was taken, plus a few other features like whether the shot was a "rush" or "rebound" shot. It's a simple, yet illustrative concept – one that can highlight a player's shooting strengths in a very elegant way.

So who are the NHL's best finishers? That depends on what shot they're taking.

Wrist/Snap shot

The Gold Standard: Nikita Kucherov

Goals: 128 / Expected: 88.9

Before getting to the best of the past season in each section, I figured it would be prudent to look over which players have been the best over the past five seasons to add further contextual validity to the data.

For wrist/snap shots – the most oft-used tool in a player's arsenal – it's the deadly accurate Nikita Kucherov leading the way, besting Patrik Laine by two goals over expected. Over the past five seasons, Kucherov is third in goals with 183 with 70 percent of those coming from his wrist shot. While the two players ahead of him, Alex Ovechkin and Patrick



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Kane, actually have more wrist-shot goals, they do so thanks to heavy volume, scoring nearly 140, but doing so on around 120 expected goals. Kucherov doesn't shoot as often as those two, but when he does he makes it count with pinpoint precision.

The best of 2019-20: Artemi Panarin

Russia has a history of producing scoring wingers, guys who can snipe from range. At the moment, Artemi Panarin might be the best Russian player in hockey, but "sniper" might not be the first word that comes to mind. Panarin is a playmaker first and foremost usually having twice as many assists as he has goals, but he's still been good for around 30 goals. This year though he set a career-high with 32 which would've been a 38-goal pace over a full season. Goalies have to start respecting his shot more because when he wants to he can rip it from range.

Panarin elevating his goal-scoring made his entire game more dangerous and his weapon of choice was the wrist/snap shot where he scored 27 of his 32 goals. But going through his reel this season made it clear there weren't many other goals like the one he scored against Edmonton – not like other sharpshooters anyways.

A look at his shot chart tells a similar story as Panarin's proficiency mostly comes below the dots and that's when it's important to remember the NHL's data limitations. While other shot types are clear as day wrist/snap shots are generally a catch-all for any shot that doesn't neatly fit in other categories. That means a long-range rip will be placed in the same bucket as a greasy shot that was shovelled in (not that necessarily applies to Panarin). The other issue is pre-shot movement and that's perhaps the bigger issue with labelling Panarin as an elite finisher. By our current definition he certainly qualifies, but a look through his goals shows the Rangers' system in action with a massive emphasis on getting the goalie moving laterally. A lot of Panarin's goals come after a pass that crosses the royal road giving Panarin a much better chance than what public expected goals models suggest. He deserves credit for burying them, but the degree above expected may be overstated.

His goal on Feb. 13, is a pretty perfect example as the puck crosses the centre of the ice twice before getting to Panarin who makes no mistake with a great wrister.

That's a great shot, no question, but according to the xG Explorer at Hockey Viz (another great tool worth your time), a shot from the left dot has around a four-to-five percent chance of turning into a goal. With the amount of net Panarin had to shoot at, his attempt is probably a fair bit likelier.

That doesn't mean the model or shot charts are worthless, it just means some proper context is warranted in certain situations – especially in a catch-all category like wrist/snap shots. Panarin had a lot of goals that came off pretty passing plays (often ones he started) this season that make him a slightly less impressive finisher than shown here, but it still takes incredible talent to finish those plays as often as he does. We've all bemoaned the stone hands grinder who whiffed on a perfect chance. Panarin doesn't, he knows how to put the puck in the net. He's money, and that showed this season. His 11.4 goals above expected from wrist/snap shots were a top-five mark over the last five seasons. Even if you factor in pre-shot movement, that's still incredibly impressive.

Slap shot

The Gold Standard: Shea Weber

Goals: 53

Expected: 26.6

This should surprise no one considering how often he's won the hardest shot at the NHL All-Star Game. Shea Weber has an absolute howitzer from the point and he isn't afraid to use his hard, heavy shot to terrify every player standing between him and the goalie. For most defencemen, a shot from 60-feet out is generally ill-advised due to its low probability of converting, but that's not the case with Weber who turns it into an asset thanks to his shot's rare combination of power and

accuracy. Over the last five years he's doubled up on what's expected of him and has scored on 8.3 percent of his unblocked attempts, an absurd attempt given the range he's firing the shots from. Steven Stamkos, Alex Ovechkin and Mike Hoffman are up there too for slap-shot goals, but the distance Weber converts from makes his efforts more impressive.

The best of 2019-20: David Pastrnak

David Pastrnak's shot is ridiculous and though he wasn't far off the top among best wrist/snap shot finishers, it wasn't even close among slap shots. Pastrnak was at the top by a mile, doubling the goals above expected of the next best player – which was surprisingly David Perron. Over the last five years it's second to only Ovechkin's 2018-19 season.

Pastrnak led all NHLers this year with 15 slap shot goals besting Ovechkin by three, but what makes his efforts even more impressive is the degree of difficulty as he only took 97 unblocked attempts and was only expected to score six. That's about as many expected goals as Shea Weber this year who scored five fewer goals off his slap shot.

While a lot is made about Ovechkin's power-play prowess, it's safe to say at this point that the torch has been passed to Pastrnak who has finished second and first in goals-per-60 over the last two seasons, finishing with the third and seventh-best seasons since 2007-08. At 4.6 goals-per-60, no player – not even Ovechkin – has had a more dominant two-year run on the power play than Pastrnak. He has scored nearly a goal more than Auston Matthews, the next best player and almost two more than Ovechkin in that time frame.

The reason is Pastrnak's one-timer from a familiar spot at the left circle. To be honest, it might as well be his spot now and he's made teams pay with a hard, heavy, and most importantly accurate slap shot that few goalies have any business saving. It took all of five seconds for the Bruins to make the Canadiens pay here.

There are a lot of goals from this year that look just like that as Pastrnak has made the entire left side of the ice his domain. No one in the league can match Pastrnak's one-timer right now, but sometimes he doesn't need help from another Bruin deftly putting a puck right in his wheelhouse. See that red area on the right side of the ice? On a couple of occasions, Pastrnak was able to waltz into the zone and beat a goalie clean with a clapper off the rush. Again, it's Carey Price who gets victimized.

You don't see too many goals like that these days, a pure slap shot after taking a few strides in from the blue line that goes cross-body to the long side. Goalies are too good and those are usually easy saves. Not when Pastrnak is taking them though.

Backhand

The Gold Standard: Brad Marchand

Goals: 34

Expected: 16.9

Believe it or not, the answer isn't Crosby – not over the last five seasons anyways. There's lore surrounding Crosby's backhand, from his curve to his highlight reel markers, but over the time frame Brad Marchand has actually scored seven more backhand goals than Crosby and has done so on fewer expected goals. A lot of that damage came between 2015 and 2018 where 26 percent of his goals were backhanders.

Now, there's a reason Crosby has the reputation he does and that's because of the range his backhand has. We've all seen the highlight reels and while Marchand has fewer of those goals on his reel, he has a lengthy mixtape of in-tight dangles that end with a backhand-shelf finish. He's one of the league's very best at lifting the puck in very close quarters and finding the roof of the net – something even the best goal scorers sometimes struggle with. It's an art-form that Marchand has mastered. There's not a lot of room on this one.

The Best of 2019-20: Anthony Beauvillier



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Surprised to see Anthony Beauvillier here? So was Sergei Bobrovsky a couple of weeks ago when a sneaky backhand beat him from the goal line. Granted, most goalies should stop that shot, but the key to the backhand is the element of surprise and Beauvillier can get great velocity on his backhanders combined with elite placement to shock goalies.

Beauvillier is far from a household name and only scored 18 goals this past season, but nearly half of those were credited as backhands. He tied Blake Coleman for the league lead with eight this season meaning a full 44 percent of his goals this season were on the backhand. That's impressive, even more so by the fact he was only expected to score 2.8 goals. That's a combination of great finishing and luck that puts him ahead of Coleman who was expected to notch 3.7. His finishing prowess on the backhand was the third-best of any season over the last five years, sandwiched between Marchand's three best seasons mentioned above.

For backhanders, it's almost always about the great finish in tight and that's evident from the shot chart. Beauvillier had a few of those this year, none prettier than the one he notched against the Red Wings on Dec. 2.

It's every player's dream to get sprung from the penalty box for a breakaway and here Beauvillier makes no mistake going backhand-shelf, a classic breakaway staple that isn't easy to pull off against an NHL netminder – getting that quick and explosive lift on the backhand in tight is tough. Beauvillier makes it look easy though and doesn't even need to sell the initial shot that hard because his backhand is that good.

Beauvillier had a few of those goals this season, but what might sell you on his backhand is his goal on Feb. 4, against the Stars. Some quick puck movement allows Beauvillier to find a gap in coverage to streak in, but with a Stars defender's stick in the lane his only option is to continue backhand against a big Ben Bishop who has the high short side covered – a sweet spot for lefties on the backhand. Beauvillier opts to take a cross-body shot with his backhand to the opposite corner instead and finds twine.

To even think about pulling that off on a moment's notice, scoring on the only option presented to you – the hardest one Bishop could have given him – takes a special kind of skill. That is an extremely difficult shot to execute, one that needs the right timing, instinct and backhand ability to finish, plus a quick release. Beauvillier showed it all off in a split second.

Deflection/Tip-in

The Gold Standard: Gabriel Landeskog

Goals: 30

Expected: 16.9

There was another name you probably expected to see here: Joe Pavelski, the king of deflections. Two things are working against him here: his past season with Dallas where he struggled to replicate his San Jose success, and the sheer volume of deflection attempts he's had. Once a player earns a reputation it becomes more of a focal point of a team's strategy and that allows more opportunity for that player to build upon it. If it continues to work, why stop? Pavelski leads all players in tip-in goals with 40, but he also leads in tip-in attempts by an insane margin with 362. That's led to 34.6 expected goals, meaning Pavelski hasn't scored that many more goals than you'd expect given his volume.

Gabriel Landeskog has been a lot more efficient, scoring only 10 fewer goals on nearly 20 fewer expected goals. A Landeskog deflection is almost twice as likely to go in compared to an average one and it doesn't seem like he has much of a reputation for his proficiency there – mostly because he doesn't do it very often. In 2018-19 he upped his frequency though, especially being the net-front presence on a strong Colorado power play. He was especially efficient in the role, scoring over one-third of his goals off deflections. That season was rated as the best over the last five years. Landeskog does an excellent job of getting in between the shooter and the goalie and has a great touch, plus some absurd hand-eye coordination to finish the job. It doesn't seem to matter if the defender knocks him down either.

The best of 2019-20: Auston Matthews

Auston Matthews is one of the game's premier goal scorers. Everyone knows about his deceptive wrist that fools goalies with great regularity and most are aware he upped his game this season by developing a pretty lethal one-timer, but he's got one more tool in the box: some deft deflection ability. Only one other player, Sebastian Aho with 11, scored on more tip-ins than Matthews' eight this year, but Matthews had 54 percent fewer expected goals from tips.

Matthews probably isn't the first name that comes to mind when it comes to deflections, but he has a strong eye for the puck, a goal-scoring instinct that knows no bounds and command over his stick like few others. His hand-eye coordination is absurd and he also has a big body that allows him to lock into position in front of the net – two key elements to becoming a tip-in wizard. He's not posted up in front of the net as often as others because he has other deadly weapons at his disposal that make him more dangerous elsewhere, but when he finds himself in tight he can make magic happen.

In looking at his reel from this season, two goals spring to mind that show his high-level skill at redirecting pucks. On Nov. 15, against Boston, Jake Muzzin launches a quick one-timer that looks to be headed for the corner that Matthews somehow manages to get his stick on just under the crossbar to completely alter its trajectory. Few hockey players would even think to redirect that, let alone have the skill to knock it down through the five-hole.

Where it lands is probably more luck than anything, but the act of contorting the stick to have it land in that direction is the key skill that makes Matthews so good at tipping pucks in the net.

A couple of weeks before that he had another impressive redirection against Washington, establishing strong body position to the shooter and then calling for the tip before the shot. Tyson Barrie put it exactly where Matthews wanted it and then redirected it through his own legs into the top corner.

No goalie is stopping that and it's what makes Matthews one of the league's best goal scorers – he can beat you any way he wants.

Video via Shayna Goldman

Data via Hockey Viz

The Athletic LOADED: 08.20.2020

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Sportsnet.ca / Canucks' Game 5 rally a pivotal step in team's promising ascent

Iain MacIntyre

EDMONTON — If the Vancouver Canucks go on to win this mesmerizing series and eventually become as good as their young stars promise to be, at least we will know when the new team arrived.

It was Wednesday in the second period of Game 5 against the Stanley Cup champion St. Louis Blues, who appeared to have seized both the game and the playoff series only to have the precocious Canucks take it back from them.

Getting badly outplayed and outshot and trailing 3-1 — and not more only because Vancouver goalie Jacob Markstrom was sensational — the Canucks surged and scored three times in 6 ½ minutes, and then defended their lead over the final period to win 4-3.



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They have a 3-2 series lead during their first playoff adventure since 2015 and on Friday can eliminate the best team in the National Hockey League last season.

But they may have to do so without paramount defenceman Alex Edler, who did not finish Wednesday's game after suffering a frightening skate cut to the right side of his face late in the second period, one shift after speedy checker Tyler Motte scored the go-ahead goal on the night of his life.

Without Edler and top-four defenceman Tyler Myers, injured in Game 2, the Canucks held the Blues to nine third-period shots and Markstrom saved them all.

A game like this goes in the memory bank, instantly becomes a reference point for the Canucks, something to fall back on the next time they're down by two goals and getting battered. Yes, they can — even against the Stanley Cup champs.

"Honestly, I think it was close to getting out of hand," Canuck winger J.T. Miller, who helped drive the comeback, said of the mid-game deficit. "They were getting some bounces. We started to turn pucks over. It felt like they were tilting the ice. I feel like that save Marky made off the ref kind of was the turning point. The game could have been 4-1 right there."

Markstrom desperately lunged to take a goal away from Jacob de la Rose early in the second period after a St. Louis shoot-in hit a linesmen, stranded Markstrom and left most of the Vancouver net open. The Canuck also made point-blank saves on David Perron and Robert Thomas.

"We just needed to tighten up the chin strap a little, play our game, a little more energy on the bench," Miller continued. "When you see one go in, it gives you a little life. And then I felt like we just took over the second period and played really well."

The Canucks haven't played many playoff games since losing the Stanley Cup Final in 2011, and their qualifying-round win two weeks ago against the Minnesota Wild was Vancouver's first series victory in nine years.

But if Wednesday's second period wasn't their most exciting in the playoffs since 2011, then at least it was the most astonishing.

Canucks winger Jake Virtanen, who wasn't even in the lineup when the playoffs began, created space for one goal and scored another during the surge. He drew both St. Louis defenders to him before dishing behind the net to Miller, who took advantage of his uncluttered path by taking the puck hard to the net and hacking and whacking at it until it got under St. Louis goalie Jake Allen to cut the deficit to 3-2 at 11:54.

At the end of two shifts of sustained pressure — defenceman Quinn Hughes overlapped both on a two-minute shift — Virtanen then caught Allen cheating away from his post and banked the puck in to tie at 16:08 while using Miller as a decoy.

Motte, whose terrific shorthanded goal had opened scoring the first period, then gave the Canucks a lead that was unthinkable 10 minutes earlier. He knocked a bouncing puck away from Robert Thomas in the neutral zone, outskated St. Louis defenceman Vince Dunn and zipped a forehand far-post on Allen to make it 4-3 at 18:17.

Canuck ebullience dulled, however, when Edler was cut by the skate of Blues winger Jordan Kyrou.

The NHL's medical team rushed down from the stands to treat Edler, who did not reappear, which left depth defencemen Jordie Benn and Oscar Fantenberg playing key minutes in the third period.

"It was a great win," Markstrom said. "We've got to feel good about this for a couple of hours here, and then get ready for Game 6."

The goalie finished with 36 saves and was saved by the bell, as time had just expired when the Blues scrummed the puck across the goal-line at the end of regulation.

"My mindset kind of stays the same: to keep the puck out of the net," Markstrom said. "Obviously, when you're down 3-1, it's not ideal. And having let three goals in, that's nothing I would like to do. For us to come back after that in the second period was huge, and our third period was probably one of the best periods we played with the lead for a long time that I can remember. That just showed a lot of character."

And even more promise for a team still learning to win.

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Sportsnet.ca / Flames missing Matthew Tkachuk more than ever ahead of critical Game 6

Eric Francis

EDMONTON – This is the type of moment Matthew Tkachuk lives for.

It's the type of game that begs for his skill set.

It is now, with the Calgary Flames on the brink of elimination, that Tkachuk is needed most.

Whether it be with a goal, a pass, a big hit, some stick work, a facewash or simply his mouth, the NHL's top agitator has the ability to use his sixth sense for when and how to turn his team's fortunes around.

His departure from the series, following a Jamie Sandwich (hit simultaneously by Jamie Benn and Jamie Oleksiak in Game 2), coincides with the Dallas Stars taking over with a stifling defence that has been almost impenetrable at 5-on-5.

The Stars have carried all the momentum ever since.

Without someone like him helping to sustain offensive pressure, the Flames' best hope to score appears to be on the power play, which he not only dominates down low on, but helps create as the man who has drawn more penalties in the NHL than anyone else the past four years.

His net-front presence and ability to redirect shots are also sorely missed on a team that has been kept to the perimeter the entire series, unable to mount many serious threats offensively.

He could help change that.

Tkachuk revels in cycling down low, working the wall and creating offence from those places — something the team hasn't been able to do with any success of late.

His ability to distract, impede and infuriate goalies could be key to disrupting Anton Khudobin, who hasn't been nearly as busy as Cam Talbot.

Geoff Ward reiterated Wednesday that Tkachuk's status remains day-to-day. Assistant coach Ryan Huska suggested earlier this week that Tkachuk is "getting closer."

Ward refused to answer whether Tkachuk has skated at all since the injury, which could be anything from a groin to a concussion.

The odds are strong he won't be back in time for Game 6 (or 7 if necessary), which would be a shame given all he can provide.

Unlike the Flames' previous series, when talk out of Winnipeg revolved incessantly around the crushing absence of Mark Scheifele and Patrik Laine, no one seems to contemplate how different things in this tight series might be with the Flames' leading scorer in the lineup.



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Tkachuk's importance to Calgary has never been more evident than now, when this close series could be swayed by his spark, emotional leadership and offensive prowess.

Livestream the Flames in the Stanley Cup Qualifiers, plus every game of the 2020 Stanley Cup Playoffs on Sportsnet NOW.

Tkachuk, Mikael Backlund and Andrew Mangiapane were the team's best line the last two months of the season — but without the 22-year-old assistant captain, the line has been quiet up front.

Tobias Rieder filled in admirably on that line Tuesday, bringing energy, emotion and defensive responsibility. Backund scored the Flames' only goal — an unassisted finish preceded by an elite fake to open up a shooting lane.

But it's not the same.

"You don't replace a Matthew Tkachuk," coach Geoff Ward said. "You have to do it by committee."

This committee just can't find a way to solve the defensive wall the Stars have perfected over the past 20 years.

Tkachuk specializes in disrupting such structure.

Although unlikely, imagine the impact it could have on the team to have Tkachuk stride out for warmup, to be part of the team's biggest game in his NHL career?

It's the type of kickstart the Flames could use as they try to stave off another off-season of questions and even the series, 3-3.

"He's so skilled offensively — he's in their face and all over their defencemen," said Sam Bennett, the closest thing to Tkachuk the Flames have in these playoffs.

"He's an important player — if we get him back it would be huge, a big boost. If not, other guys have to step up and perform."

Easier said than done.

AROUND THE GLASS: Two Flames players suited up with heavy hearts Tuesday following the death of Dale Hawerchuk — Andrew Mangiapane and Rasmus Andersson. Both were coached by Hawerchuk with the Barrie Colts. "Dale is a great man," said Mangiapane, a sixth-round pick. "I don't know where I'd be without him. Very sad news today. I owe my whole career to him and the Barrie organization." Andersson fondly recalled Hawerchuk inviting him to his house to welcome him to Canada as a teen. "Dale was a fantastic human being. Such a great person. Obviously, he was a really good coach too. I really feel for the families — it's awful news." ... Just wondering when Blake Comeau is going to get the bill for smashing a hole in the glass with his stick earlier in the series to delay the game. Surely he should have to pay for his destructive rage ... Funny moment after the national anthem before Game 5 when Flames owner Al Markin screamed out, "Go Flames Go" in the otherwise quiet, empty Rogers Place. Markin, who flies in for every game, wanted to show his support and just couldn't help himself ... This is the first playoff series to feature a short-handed goal in four straight games since the Canucks and Blues' first round series in 1995, when they scored shorties in five straight games.

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Sportsnet.ca / Canadiens' Gallagher finds redemption with narrative-shifting performance

Eric Engels

TORONTO — Hockey's been tough for Brendan Gallagher in these Stanley Cup Playoffs, but he put his baseball skills to work to help keep the Montreal Canadiens alive in their series against the Philadelphia Flyers.

At the 11:30 mark of the second period of Game 5, Gallagher parked himself in front of Carter Hart while his team was on the power play. Nick Suzuki walked out of the corner with the puck, sent an aerial pass across the crease, and Gallagher batted it in for what proved to be an essential goal in this must-win game for the Canadiens.

It was his first goal in eight games, his first in 16 playoff games dating back to 2015, and it came on his playoff-leading 37th shot. Gallagher celebrated it like he might never score another one, peeling off to the corner of the offensive zone and letting out a war cry.

What a narrative-shifting moment it was — not only in this game, but in this series.

Starting with the game, the goal came just under 10 minutes after Montreal's leading goal scorer in these playoffs, Jesperi Kotkaniemi, was assessed a major penalty and ejected for boarding Travis Sanheim. With the Canadiens down a man for five minutes, the Flyers got two goals from Jakub Voracek in a span of 4:02 of the second period, wresting away much of the momentum and a 1-0 lead Montreal was clinging to.

Joel Armia, who scored the first goal of the game shorthanded to break a 132-minute Canadiens drought in this series, replied with one that beat Hart from a bad angle. And Gallagher came through at the 11:30 mark of frame to give Montreal a 3-2 lead.

The heart-and-soul player for the Canadiens was at the centre of controversy following consecutive losses that saw him short-shifted and left him beyond frustrated. With his team trailing by two goals in each game, Gallagher was stapled to the bench for long stints in each third period.

"I guess if the coach feels other guys are going to do the job better than you, that's his job," Gallagher said after Tuesday's Game 4 loss. "It doesn't mean I sit there and accept it, but my job's to play. So when I'm put on the ice, just try and help out."

Canadiens interim head coach Kirk Muller was asked prior to Game 5 if he'd lean on Gallagher and give him an adequate shot to redeem himself.

"Gally is one of our best character guys on this team," Muller said. "He plays hard, he cares. They're the type of guys you want on your hockey team and in the organization. It was a tough night for him and we got to win hockey games, so I got to make those decisions. But I guarantee he'll be ready to go tonight and that he's going to be a good hockey player. I got full confidence of him as a player and that's what I'm expecting from him because he's such a character guy."

After one period, Gallagher had two shots on net and was Montreal's most-used forward, despite the fact that he spent two minutes in the penalty box for high-sticking. By game's end, he skated 23 shifts, played 18:02 and with one swing of his stick changed the complexion of this series.

"That's the Gally we love, and that's what he can bring to the team," said Muller afterwards. "He brought the guys into the fight tonight. He's a competitor, he plays hard and he works for every goal he gets and I thought he had an exceptional game tonight."

Gallagher wasn't alone.

Suzuki scored the winning goal at 10:59 of the third period, just 32 seconds after Joel Farabee tied the game for Philadelphia with their third power-play goal of the game. The rookie centreman put in another impressive performance, especially in Kotkaniemi's absence.



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Jonathan Drouin, who was also benched for much of the third period in Game 4, responded with two assists in just under 16-and-a-half minutes of ice-time.

"I thought he had a really good game tonight," said Muller. "And he did because he played with passion. He was involved, he was on the puck, he had the puck, and those type of players — that's what they need; they need to be involved and feeling good with it. So if Drou participates the way he did here tonight in the game, much more involved, I think he's going to get good results. Because of what he did in his commitment tonight he was a good hockey player and he was a big part of that win tonight."

The rest of Montreal's leaders were full value. Carey Price was brilliant — particularly in the first period, with a breakaway save on Kevin Hayes in the 14th minute — and came up with 26 saves. Shea Weber, Montreal's 35-year-old captain, played a game-high 25:34 and finished plus-1. And Phillip Danault and Paul Byron played essential roles in locking this game down, with Danault scoring an empty-net goal to make it 5-3 with 17 seconds remaining.

But the night belonged to Gallagher. The plucky assistant captain of the Canadiens came into the game frustrated — and nursing a lower-body, despite telling reporters, "I'm fine," following Tuesday's game. He started Wednesday's contest with Montreal's first shot on net before barreling over Ivan Provorov and challenging him to a fight. Gallagher was getting treatment on his leg during television timeouts, and causing a ruckus on the ice coming out of them.

He drew a power play with just over five minutes remaining and the Canadiens clinging to a one-goal lead, and he was unavailable to speak with reporters after the game because he was getting dental work done following a crosscheck he took from Matt Niskanen that left him bleeding from his mouth and missing a tooth.

"He's got one of the biggest hearts of any guy I've ever played with," said Price, who's been in the NHL since 2007 and alongside Gallagher with the Canadiens since 2013. "We know what we get from him: we get 100-per-cent compete and he came up with a big one for us tonight."

Suzuki told Sportsnet that just prior to Wednesday's game, Muller had challenged Gallagher, Danault and Tomas Tatar to set the tone, and they clearly did with a dominant first shift and a resilient effort that followed.

The Canadiens, who came into this series as the 24th-ranked team, battled through the ebbs and flows of this game and refused to relent when momentum swung the top-seeded Flyers' way.

"This group is made up of some great character guys, great leaders, and they could've come in here tonight and said, 'We're the underdogs, we can go home and people will probably say it was pretty successful,' but they're not complacent, they're not happy," said Muller.

"They want to keep playing, and they proved that. You put a game plan together but if they don't play without heart and desire and enthusiasm, they don't get a win, and that shows the group that we have here. They don't want this to end, they want to keep playing and they love playing for each other and it's a fun group right now to be a part of."

Without Gallagher's contribution to this season-saving win, it's a group that would likely be on their way out of the bubble and headed back to Montreal. But he took a swing and finally hit, and this series will have a Game 6 come Friday.

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Sportsnet.ca / Battle-tested Bruins prove they're comfortable being uncomfortable

Luke Fox

TORONTO — The moment when a playoff series gets decided only arrives at the end if we're lucky.

The Toronto Maple Leafs lost to the Columbus Blue Jackets when they coughed up a 3-0 lead in Game 3 like Nazem Kadri's cat does a hairball.

The Blue Jackets' fate, in turn, felt all but sealed when they grinded and gritted their way through eight periods and two all-time records — Joonas Korpisalo for saves made and Seth Jones for minutes played — only to have their blue collars wrung by a Brayden Point blast in the game's seventh hour and eighth period.

The NHL is a hard league rife with parity, despite what the Arizona Coyotes might show you. Post-season wins are precious and not to be mishandled.

So, it wasn't Game 5's 2-1 loss to the Boston Bruins — a legit Stanley Cup contender gradually rounding into form — that did the Carolina Hurricanes in.

No, the nail was driven much earlier. Elimination Wednesday was merely the denouement.

If it wasn't top goal-getter Andrei Svechnikov tangling with an immortal Zdeno Chara and buckling over his own ankle late in Game 3, then it was Game 4's see-it-to-believe-it defensive collapse, in which Carolina squandered a 2-0 third-period lead that, by all rights, should've helped them climb back into this thing.

Instead, that loss broke them like a wild horse.

They weren't taking three straight against the Presidents' Trophy champs, regardless of Tuukka Rask's status. And you don't win series in which you lose three games to the other side's backup goalie or three games in which you held a lead and failed to hang on.

Now, that's not to say coach Rod Brind'Amour is wrong when — swimming in the post-handshakes disappointment to the same establishment that booted his squad last year — he says the Hurricanes will depart the bubble with heads held high. Or that his was the better team Wednesday. Carolina did generate 61 per cent of shot attempts at even strength and suffered from some frantic crease scrambles that might have concluded with a red lamp on a luckier evening.

But Boston is comfortable being uncomfortable, and the evidence is mounting.

Suddenly tagged with the No. 4 seed despite being the only NHL team with 100 regular-season points? No. 1 goalie leaves abruptly mid-series for family reasons? Rocket Richard winner misses three contests due to injury? No problem.

The Bruins are led by a captain who has 190 post-season games on his resumé. They don't panic down a goal or two, and they roll out the most well-oiled power play in the sport.

They find a way because they've been around long enough to learn the ways to find.

David Krejci — arguably the most underrated 2C in the conference and the club's leading playoff scorer (nine points in eight games) — was one of two Bruins crowding Petr Mrazek's crease when he pounced on a rebound and tied Game 4.

A savvy Patrice Bergeron slipped the backbreaking winner from behind the goal line, off Mrazek's skate, with 3.5 seconds left in Period 2.

"I looked. I saw he was standing up, and I was just trying to throw it on his feet," Bergeron explained. "We got lucky on that one, and I'll take it."

The recipe is simple to write but difficult to execute: Win the special-teams battle. Build a roster deep enough to survive the inevitability of post-season injuries. Make one more timely save than the other guy. In



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case of emergency, remain calm. And when your opponent gives you an inch, stomp 'em out.

"They know what's at stake," said Bruins coach Bruce Cassidy, watching his leadership group drag the rest to another series victory.

"They've been around long enough to know that when you get a chance to close out a team, you have to take advantage of it. Not that by any means this was our best game."

Bingo. There's the thing. To win 16 and pop the corks, you'll have to steal a few with Plan B.

"They were little more patient with their game," Brind'Amour conceded. "When we got frazzled a little at times and got off our game, they just stayed with it. They hunkered down, they blocked a lot of shots, they did what they do to be successful. And we, at times, tried to do too much and we got away from our game."

Remember: Carolina entered this round on a high, sweeping the Rangers, securing victories from both goalies, and wielding the confidence of a deadly first line and a newly healthy No. 1 defenceman.

Boston, conversely, has been slower to find its rhythm. The defending Eastern Conference representatives got dealt adversity early and often, yet still knotted up their first-round foes in a tidy five games.

What should be frightening to their next draw (most likely Tampa Bay) is that the Bruins have another level to reach.

"You sort of keep the trains running on time, so to speak, and do your job," Cassidy said. "Our guys have really grasped that culture we've created here."

"We know that opposing teams are going to throw everything at us and try to stay in the series. We've been there before in both situations, and we know that those are the toughest and you need to make sure you take care of business and not let this drag."

"That's all the really matters. You find a way."

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Sportsnet.ca / Kadri's growth gives Avalanche a mature, sandpaper sniper for Cup run

Mark Spector August 19, 2020

EDMONTON — He has always been a high event player, Nazem Kadri. On the ice, on the town, or sometimes when it counted the most, up in the press box.

Whether that meant getting suspended in each of his last two playoff appearances as a Toronto Maple Leaf, or sitting near the top of National Hockey League in playoff scoring as he does today, Kadri and the term "under the radar" go together like peanut butter and pickles.

Today, as the Colorado Avalanche settle into the bubble awaiting their Round 2 opponent, Kadri can say he has won an NHL playoff series. Finally.

"The smile says it all," he said after notching two goals in a 7-1 banishment of the Arizona Coyotes, a team that found itself falling further and further away from the slick, well-rounded Avalanche as the series went on.

Kadri scored the first and third goals in the deciding game — he has 6-5-11 in eight post-season games — for a team that has watched him

transform into so many different things since his arrival by trade on July 1, 2019.

In Denver he is a powerplay specialist, where he has scored five of his six playoff goals. He is a veteran leader, a discipline issue in Toronto now viewed as a rock in the Rockies.

Back in Leafs land he is one thing and one thing only: GM Kyle Dubas' biggest mistake.

"I talked to Naz when he first came to us, about his history in Toronto. Some of the penalties, his reputation," began Colorado head coach Jared Bednar. "He stated right away that he had made some mistakes there, that he was past that, over it, and it wouldn't be a problem."

Bednar was ready to accept some maturation from Kadri. He was hoping for it.

What he didn't want was some sanitized version of the player GM Joe Sakic has so shrewdly traded for. He didn't want Nazem Kadri Lite.

"I said, 'Hey, listen: I want you to play your game, be physical, toe the line and be highly competitive. I just don't want you in the box all the time,'" Bednar said. "He assured me it wouldn't be an issue, and it hasn't been."

A year spent as a prominent player in Toronto is like seven years in Anaheim, Florida, or Dallas. It's hockey's version of dog years, even in Denver where the Avs fight with a myriad of pro and college teams to get above the fold, yesterday's version of being high on the home page.

"Just reflecting on the time I spent in Toronto, looking back, you want to learn from your mistakes," Kadri said. "Just trying to mature as a person, as a player, as a teammate. I think I'm more valuable on the ice than I am in the penalty box or the press box."

"Just trying to stay calm out there, and composed. I think that staying in games would do that."

He is more than aware of the stories he has authored, whether it was cross-checking Jake DeBrusk in the head, or flying through the air in a decapitation mission against Tommy Wingels. His track record with the NHL's Department of Player Safety is longer than a Bo Bichette blast, his ill-conceived trade a Toronto pub conversation that lasts more rounds than Chuck Wepner.

This summer, as a Leafs team that lacked grit and scoring bows out once again, Bednar sees a sandpaper sniper near the top of the playoff scoring race. A road map for an Avalanche team that could never find that emotional line that Kadri has crossed so often.

"Guys see him as a bit of an elder statesman, a guy who's been around a little more than the bulk of our team," Bednar said. "Some of the decisions he made in Toronto, it's just a maturity thing. He's been through that, and it's not going to be tougher for him (here). It will be easier for him in Denver."

"He's a real focused player right now. He wants to prove he can get it done at this time of year. He was a difference-maker for us in this series."

Of course, Kadri was supposed to be that guy years ago. Specifically, in March of 2015, when he happened to be in Calgary on the day Brendan Shanahan made Kadri face the media after the Leafs President had extended a team-imposed suspension from one game to three.

No one said why, only that he'd missed a Sunday practice after a Saturday night loss. There had to be more. There was always more with Kadri.

"Of course I'm embarrassed about it," Kadri said that day, a very public shaming at the young age of 24. "It's a lesson learned, and that's how I'm going to approach it. I am a little bit humiliated, but ... it's something you can look to as far as making yourself a better person. It's a lesson that couldn't be more clear."

"I put the blame on myself."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 20, 2020

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

You want growth?

Today he helps to raise money for the recent tragedy in Beirut, a sign that maybe — at last — Nazem Kadri has grown up.

"I'm proud of my Lebanese heritage, of my roots," he said. "You hate to see so many people injured, homeless, and scrambling for medical supplies. For me, being in the position I am ... I'm just trying to help those people as much as I can.

"They're in need right now."

Finally, Nazem Kadri is here to help. To be part of the solution.

And aren't the Colorado Avalanche the lucky ones?

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 08.20.2020

1178132 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Oilers need to be patient while dealing with goaltending this off-season

Mark Spector | August 19, 2020

EDMONTON — The Edmonton Oilers could go into next season with the same goalie tandem of Mike Smith and Mikko Koskinen. Kind of the way your mechanic says you could ride an old timing chain for another six months, but you're going to have to buck up eventually.

The aging part would be the 38-year-old Smith, who is an unrestricted free agent. He is a big goalie with a lot of miles on him, but was comfortable in Edmonton and gave the Oilers a big dose of swagger that served them well.

The part you replaced recently would be Koskinen, the recipient of Peter Chiarelli's ridiculously large contract who (to his credit) actually resembled a \$4.5 million goalie for much of last season. He will be part of the Oilers tandem in 2020-21 — no doubt.

The question is, does general manager Ken Holland court Smith, or should he look elsewhere for someone to share the crease with the Three Metres of Koskinen?

The answer: Holland isn't sure yet.

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"We're pretty much at the end of April in a normal season," the Oilers general manager said. "It's that time where, if you're not in the playoffs, you're down watching your American League team. When you're going over to the U-18s, or the (Men's) World Championships."

Translation: He only has so many assets to spend on making his team better, and so much cap space to expend. You never spend that while everyone else is still playing the first playoff round.

It's about patience, so when the call comes from a team that can perhaps scratch more than one itch — maybe a winger AND a goalie — you haven't already made your move.

Holland finds himself in a unique spot. Two goalies, both in their 30s, that posted a .906 saves percentage last season — 14th best in the NHL — does not scream for immediate replacement. That part could wait a year

if a suitable replacement for Smith isn't found, and Smith is OK with coming back.

But, Pittsburgh has a pair of restricted free agents in Tristan Jarry, 25, and Matt Murray, 26. Either one would pare six years of the average age of Edmonton's netminders, and settle the position while the organization awaits the arrival of an Olivier Rodrigue (who turns pro in 2020-21) or Stuart Skinner, who will be the No. 1 on the Oilers AHL farm team next season.

Remember, although overpaid Koskinen gives you a stable half of a 50/50 tandem. His numbers last season — 38 games, .917 saves percentage, 2.75 goals against — give Holland half of a decent duo. The question is, does he bring back Smith at something less than the \$2 million, a bonus-laden deal he had last year? Or do you hit the market?

There, Robin Lehner is the only bonafide UFA starter who is less than 30 years old. From there, it's a series of backups who would leave Koskinen to carry the ball, not names that give you confidence they could evenly split the load.

Is 30-year-old Braden Holtby likely to leave Washington? Maybe, but Holland doesn't have the cap space to replace a \$2 million Smith with Holtby, who had a cap hit of \$6.1 million this season.

Jacob Markstrom? There is absolutely no chance Vancouver GM Jim Benning lets him get away.

Jeff Marek and Elliotte Friedman talk to a lot of people around the hockey world, and then they tell listeners all about what they've heard and what they think about it.

Holland's best bet is to identify the next Cam Talbot, a 30-ish goalie who has the game but needs a fresh start. We don't see that player among UFA goalies, where only two netminders had more wins than Smith's 19 this past season.

Then there are teams like Pittsburgh and St. Louis, that will have to leave a goalie unprotected in the expansion draft a year from now. Penguins GM Jim Rutherford seems bent on some turnover in Pittsburgh, and either of those guys could be long-term adds for Edmonton.

In St. Louis, the Blues have a pair of goalies both making about \$4.4 million — both UFAs after the 2020-21 season — and a big problem in finding the money to sign UFA captain Alex Pietrangelo. Along with the pending expansion draft, it seems inevitable GM Doug Armstrong will look at his goaltending depth chart to help free up those dollars.

Even then, however, Holland is like most NHL managers in that any deal has to be money-in-money-out.

It's complicated, with a flat cap that could last for several more years.

The best way to improve a position is the oldest way. Through the draft.

Unfortunately, with goalies, the wait is just too long.

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Sportsnet.ca / Analyzing the best individual offensive performances of the playoffs

Andrew Berkshire

It's still early days in the 2020 Stanley Cup Playoffs, with still another three rounds ahead of us.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 20, 2020

Including the round robin games and the qualifying round, we have a bit more to work with this season when trying to figure out who have been the best players so far in the playoffs. Looking strictly at offensive performance, we can contrast each players' individual expected goal output at 5-on-5 with the frequency of plays they make that create scoring opportunities for their team.

The margins are set at the average for each metric, which is skewed a little low because defencemen are included in this breakdown just in case someone ended up putting up incredible numbers in the short term.

Most of the players in the lower left portion of the chart are defencemen who, by the nature of their role, get less opportunity to create offence than forwards do. No defenceman has been a big enough outlier to end up out of the pack, though Miro Heiskanen and Victor Hedman are smack dab in the middle of the chart.

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The players who have truly stood out as offensive weapons early in the playoffs fall into three categories:

- The playmakers like Patrice Bergeron and Brad Marchand, who aren't putting a ton of quality shots on the board themselves, but are creating an incredible amount of offence for their teammates. The fact that Bergeron and Marchand have been able to push the Bruins to a 3-1 series lead over the Hurricanes with their finisher in David Pastrnak missing games and playing hurt should scare every single team in the league. That line isn't going away.
- The shooters like Anders Lee, Brock Nelson, and unlabeled ones on the chart such as Jean-Gabriel Pageau, and Anthony Beauvillier. It's a little strange that so many of the top shooters are Islanders, but outside of their No. 1 centre they do play a very straightforward, North-South game that prioritizes simple plays to minimize defensive risk. So those players are getting shots but not making many plays. It's worked so far.
- Part of the reason it's worked is because Mathew Barzal fits into the last category: players who do it all. Alongside Nathan MacKinnon, Brayden Point, and Jonathan Marchessault, Barzal has been incredible from a shooting and passing perspective in these playoffs.

Despite all four of those players putting up similarly incredible offensive numbers, the way each of them accomplishes that task is very different.

Nathan MacKinnon doesn't go to the net front much, but he owns the high slot and attacks more off the rush than any player in the league. He's also completing more slot passes than the rest of his peer group, and connects on tons of East-West passes.

When you're dealing with MacKinnon he's going to come at you fast, and he's going to move the puck across the middle either with his skating or playmaking. It makes him an extremely difficult player to shut down, especially when you factor in his underrated physicality.

It's surprising how little MacKinnon gets in on the cycle from a shooting perspective, but it's just his style of play to attack quickly instead of capitalize on extended offensive zone possessions. One interesting tidbit about MacKinnon is that despite his exceptional numbers off the rush, he doesn't pass off the rush too often. He hasn't missed a single attempted pass off the rush this post-season, but he likes to keep the puck himself.

I always find it interesting when a player as great as MacKinnon seemingly has different tendencies depending on the style of attack their team is engaging in. Off the rush, he's not giving the puck up because he wants that shot. Off the cycle, he becomes an elite level puck distributor.

Brayden Point, meanwhile, is almost the opposite. He prefers to be the shooter off the cycle more than any of his peers, and sets up shop right in front of the net to grab juicy rebounds and get prime scoring chances as often as possible.

Off the rush, Point passes nearly as often as he shoots, and because of his positioning in the cycle, he has fewer opportunities to make plays to and through the slot. That doesn't mean Point isn't a great playmaker, but the role he plays doesn't lend itself to making as many high-end passes.

Then there's Jonathan Marchessault, who is good at pretty much everything. He gets to the front of the net, he gets tons of shots from the slot, he attacks off the rush, and he gets the puck to the slot for his teammates with regularity.

Like MacKinnon, Marchessault doesn't pass off the rush very often, but unlike MacKinnon, he doesn't make long passes through the middle very often. Marchessault is all about volume and high percentage plays. If he's not confident he can make it through the middle he's not going to attempt it.

Mat Barzal shoots less often than his peers here, and despite his skill in gaining the offensive zone with control, he doesn't get an abundance of rush chances himself. Barzal's shooting numbers aren't bad at all, these other three are just exceptional and Barzal prefers to dish.

More than the rest, Barzal likes to gain the zone and find a teammate to get a scoring chance, and he also leads the group in those long East-West passes through the slot to find one-timer opportunities.

The way Barzal dictates play at 5-on-5 is almost similar to how most playmakers operate on power plays, which tells you how much influence his skating and playmaking has on opposing defences. He puts opponents on their heels and never really lets off the gas.

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Sportsnet.ca / Dale Hawerchuk was 'one of us' and will always be beloved by Winnipeg

Ken Wiebe | August 19, 2020

WINNIPEG — Dale Hawerchuk is gone way too young. That cannot be argued after the 57-year-old succumbed to stomach cancer on Tuesday.

When it comes to the matter of the legacy the Winnipeg Jets legend had forged, that was cemented a long, long time ago.

A Hall of Famer on the ice, Hawerchuk was an even better person — and that's saying something.

The tributes poured in on Tuesday, with former teammates, players he coached and others whose lives he touched sharing plenty of heartfelt thoughts about their time together.

Within those numerous words was a common thread. A genuine love and appreciation was evident, as Hawerchuk cared an awful lot about those he came into contact with.

Those feelings were mutual and the bonds were lasting ones, right until the very end.

Hawerchuk showed incredible courage in fighting this deadly disease and in recent days he took the time to make a number of phone calls to say goodbye to many of his dearest friends. Those chats wouldn't have been easy for either party, though the impact they'll have is another testament to Hawerchuk and his character.

Hawerchuk was chosen first-overall by the Jets in 1981, a young phenom who blossomed into one of the best players of his era during a 16-year career.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 20, 2020

No, the playoff success for the Jets during his tenure didn't rival that of Wayne Gretzky or Mario Lemieux, but Hawerchuk was appreciated by his contemporaries as much as his teammates.

During a Zoom call on Tuesday, Jets governor Mark Chipman revealed the organization was planning to immortalize Hawerchuk's career with a statue.

"Since we started the Jets Hall of Fame, we had anticipated doing a public display of the inductees, and we had some time ago decided we would anchor that off of one statue," said Chipman, who shared the news with Hawerchuk last week on a call that also included Jets assistant GM Craig Heisinger.

"And we had it clear in our mind that that honour belonged to Dale. I don't have a timeline on exactly when that will occur, because everything is so much on hold and up in the air with this world we're living in right now. But I'm really pleased we were able to share that with Dale and that we'll be able to memorialize his incredible career and the impact he had on this community in a significant way."

An emotional Chipman tried to put into words what it was like being a Winnipegger watching Hawerchuk in those early years in the NHL.

"Like many, I was fortunate to see Dale come into the league and we were all very much in awe of the fact the Winnipeg Jets had joined the NHL," said Chipman. "It was Dale's arrival that really cemented the future of the franchise and we all have recollections of that first year, that Calder Trophy year — and then everything that would follow."

"He was truly a superstar as a hockey player, but why he was so loved here was not only that, but the fact he made this his home and became one of us. Everybody shared that sense of pride in Dale as a player. Those who got to know him would all say that as great of a player as he was, he was a finer human being. He was as advertised, that humble kid who came in here and did his talking with his game and never lost that humility, notwithstanding a Hall of Fame career."

Hawerchuk's Jets Hall of Fame banner was moved to True North Square on Tuesday night and a steady stream of fans took the time to stop by to pay their respects.

Many of those individuals were wearing Hawerchuk jerseys or T-shirts with his trademark No. 10 on the back. Some of them wept openly or shared a stashed-away memory of a day gone by with a friend.

Numerous pictures were taken in front of the banner and a video montage on the screen in the background caused many in attendance to take a nostalgic stroll down memory lane.

There was Hawerchuk signing his first contract with the late John Ferguson at his introductory press conference at Portage and Main.

There were classic photos of Hawerchuk from his time with the Cornwall Royals, All-Star shots of him representing the Campbell Conference, some memorable moments from his time suiting up with Team Canada and other photos from his nine seasons with the Jets.

There were also shots of him participating in the 2016 Heritage Classic, scoring a goal in the alumni-game victory over the Edmonton Oilers in a scene that was not exactly reminiscent of those 1980s dynasty years.

About the only thing missing on this night was an impromptu street hockey game like the one that broke out at Portage and Main on the night news broke of the Jets returning via relocation from Atlanta back in late May of 2011.

Hawerchuk always exuded his pride for the place he called home, even after he was traded to the Buffalo Sabres.

When the NHL returned to Winnipeg, Hawerchuk helped bridge the gap between Jets 1.0 and Jets 2.0. He was a frequent visitor to the downtown arena in Winnipeg and when he was shown on the video board, fans rose to their feet and let out a boisterous roar.

Hawerchuk was quick to embrace being part of the Jets' alumni, while also serving as a valuable resource for current players.

"It was comforting to know he was in our corner and that he shared our enthusiasm for bringing the game back to Winnipeg," said Chipman. "He knew how regarded he was and I think he really cherished that and never took it for granted. Right to the end, he was just continuing to do the things that he always did to make people feel good."

Current Jets captain Blake Wheeler weighed in with his thoughts about Hawerchuk on social media.

"My thoughts are with the Hawerchuk's," Wheeler shared on Twitter. "Dale is the greatest Jet to ever play in this city. I will forever cherish the advice he has given me over the years."

Hawerchuk's impact on Jets centre Mark Scheifele is well-documented and the former Barrie Colts star reiterated one of the greatest lessons he learned from his head coach during a season-ending Zoom call last week.

"Dale Hawerchuk told me this my first year with him, he said, 'Watching the NHL is an education. It's a school class on its own. You can learn from the best players in the world every single day,'" said Scheifele. "I've taken that to heart ever since he told me that and now that's maybe 12 years ago. I'm thankful for that lesson."

Hawerchuk taught many players valuable lessons about the game he loved and about life in general. That's another critical part of his legacy.

Hawerchuk also provided numerous not-so-subtle reminders about everything that is good about the place those of us call home here in Manitoba.

He's one of the greatest athletes to play in this community and it's hard to imagine there being a bigger ambassador for the province.

Hawerchuk is one of us, and his contributions both on and off the ice won't ever be forgotten.

"Dale was a humble guy. He was a regular guy. What you saw was what he was," said Chipman. "Winnipeg is — I think we pride ourselves in the fact that there's not a lot of pretense in this community. We are who we are and we don't try to be something we're not and we're proud of that. And that was Dale as well."

"He was just who he was. He told me many, many times how proud he was to be a Manitoban — that he considered himself to be a Manitoban. And it's one thing to say that, it's another thing to actually have been one. He lived here."

"This was his home for a long stretch and long after he left, he stayed really connected and I think that just resonated with people here. So you had this bonafide superstar whose persona just kind of fit with what we are about here in this city and province."

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TSN.CA / Alex Ovechkin sets tone for Washington Capitals rally with new look, offensive spark

Mark Masters

TSN Toronto reporter Mark Masters checks in daily with news and notes on the NHL playoffs. The New York Islanders and Washington Capitals held Zoom sessions after optional skates on Wednesday. The Tampa



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 20, 2020

Bay Lightning and Columbus Blue Jackets held Zoom sessions after their Game 5.

At some point between the end of Game 3 and the start of Game 4, Alex Ovechkin shaved off part of his playoff beard to create a playoff goatee. Then he helped the Washington Capitals trim the deficit in their series against the New York Islanders with two goals, including the game winner, on Tuesday night.

"Playing with him, something I never really got to see before is how much he can take over a game and how big of an effect he can have on just dominating a game," said defenceman Nick Jensen, who is in his second season with the Capitals, "and we got a glimpse of that last night and we're going to need that coming forward here."

"O had a great game," observed big winger Tom Wilson, "and that's what leaders do and what superstars do, they step up when need be."

Having dropped the first three games to New York, it would've been easy for Washington to mentally checkout and prepare to leave the bubble. But Ovechkin wouldn't let them go down without a fight.

It started in the group chat on Monday. Ovechkin spread the word about his new look.

"O started it and ride together, die together," T.J. Oshie told NBC Sports Washington.

So, Evgeny Kuznetsov, Oshie, Ilya Kovalchuk and Radko Gudas joined Ovechkin in the goatee gang. Kuznetsov and Jakub Vrana even shaved their heads.

From @markhmasters: Goateed Alex Ovechkin refuses to let Caps go down without a fight - <https://t.co/MzekwUcte#TSNHockey> pic.twitter.com/Y36WwNNCQx

— TSN Hockey (@TSNHockey) August 19, 2020

The Islanders jumped out to an early 2-0 lead on Tuesday night, but Ovechkin was a man on a mission.

"He's still got the great release," said Islanders coach Barry Trotz, who spent four seasons behind Washington's bench culminating with a Stanley Cup win in 2018. "He's a better playmaker and passer than he gets credit for. I think he's refined his game, has a lot more detail in it than when he was younger and he loves the big moments. Last night his team needed someone to lead it and he did [it] and all those elements were in play. He got two goals, he was physical, blocked a couple shots and that's how you win."

Ovechkin is now up to 69 career playoff goals, moving past Sidney Crosby and Gordie Howe into 18th spot on the all-time list. And he has dragged his team into a series that appeared destined to end early.

"His leadership overall has grown immensely," noted Capitals coach Todd Reirden. "I can't even define all the ways that it's grown ... That's dealing with everything from becoming a father to taking on the role of being the leader in the room and fighting against adversity and ultimately putting that Cup over his head. He's hungry to do it again."

Ovechkin played a big part in Washington's win, but Kuznetsov credited a team-wide mindset change.

"We just stopped thinking about Corsi [shot attempts], whatever that stat is, and just trying to play fun hockey," Kuznetsov said in his post-game Zoom session. "We tried to hold on to the puck and that's how we always played. 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 and that's how we enjoy the game. If we enjoy the game like that we're going to have the success. If we're not enjoying the game we're not going to have success."

The Capitals camped out in the Islanders end for most of the final 40 minutes on Tuesday night. Despite all the zone time, Washington only held a 29-26 edge in shots.

"We stopped shooting the puck and started holding the puck," said Kuznetsov, who scored Washington's first goal. "We started enjoying the hockey again and that's what gives us the success. I believe it's very hard to defend when guys wear you down for 40 seconds, 50 seconds. Yeah, maybe we don't shoot a lot of pucks, but we give respect to our linemates and we share the puck and 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."

Per Natural Stat Trick, Game 4 was actually the first time the Capitals won the Corsi battle in the series as they controlled 64 per cent of five-on-five shot attempts.

The Capitals did not hold a practice on Wednesday, but Nicklas Backstrom (concussion protocol) skated alongside the extra players. Reirden said the centre, who hasn't played since absorbing a big hit by Anders Lee in Game 1, will be a game-time decision on Thursday.

Cal Clutterbuck left Game 4 after taking a low hit from Gudas. The Islanders also did not practice on Wednesday, but Trotz said he spoke to Clutterbuck and believes the gritty winger will be good to go for Game 5.

Lightning head coach Jon Cooper fist pumped after making his way through the handshake line on Wednesday afternoon. How much pent-up emotion was he feeling waiting for that moment?

"More than you'll know," Cooper said following Tampa's 5-4 overtime win against Columbus, which clinched their first round series.

Last season, the Blue Jackets swept the Lightning, coming off a record-tying 62-win season, from the playoffs in the first round.

"We had 422 days to think about it, but who's counting," Cooper said with a smile.

The Jackets weren't guaranteed to make the playoffs at the time of the season pause back in March. And even if they did, the Lightning appeared to be locked into second place in the Atlantic Division and likely to face the Toronto Maple Leafs or Florida Panthers in the first round. But the new format in the wake of the pandemic created this chance for a rematch and redemption.

"It's funny how the hockey Gods work," Cooper said. "It's easy to sit up here and say you wanted them now, but it was good to get them and good to get this result. We want to advance regardless of who we're playing, it just turns out you get a second chance and oftentimes you don't get that second chance and it's what you do with it."

Columbus isn't the same team with Artemi Panarin and Matt Duchene among those who departed via free agency, but they still made the Lightning work. All four Tampa wins came by one goal, including a quintuple overtime marathon in the series opener.

"In years past we weren't as comfortable in those close games," said Tyler Johnson. "We've done a good job focusing on that and the guys stuck together."

"A lot of learning went into last year and we had to grow as a team," said Cooper. "We didn't necessarily need to tweak how we play the game. I don't know if it was as much on structure as it was between the ears and all of us collectively, from the coaching staff on down, had to be harder."

— TSN (@TSN_Sports) August 19, 2020

Tampa's mental strength was certainly tested in Game 5. The Bolts jumped out to a 2-0 lead before watching the Jackets take over and surge in front with four unanswered tallies.

"What we learned was dealing with those ups and downs," said centre Brayden Point who, just like in Game 1, scored the overtime winner. "We kept an even keel on the bench for the most part. In the second period, we started to get away from our game and they took it to us. After that fourth goal, we settled down and got back to playing our system and our game."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 20, 2020

The Lightning mindset changed this season, but so did the personnel. The talented core has been surrounded with gritty veterans, including winger Blake Coleman who scored on Wednesday, his first goal since the February trade from New Jersey. Another fresh face, defenceman Kevin Shattenkirk, also scored a key goal to spark the third period comeback.

Shattenkirk's biggest contribution may have come in the dressing room during the second intermission after the Lightning were outshot 24-8 in the middle stanza and trailed 3-2.

"We were pretty frustrated but, you know what, I have to give Shatty a lot of credit," Johnson said. "We needed someone to step up and say something and he did and kind of got the guys rallying, kind of got us to reset and then he went out and got a big goal for us, too."

The Jackets had five power plays in the opening 40 minutes while the Lightning didn't get a sniff on the man advantage.

"It was more setting the right attitude going forward," Shattenkirk said of his pep talk. "The way we approached the third period is we were trying to get back to our game for the rest of the series. We were a little bit frustrated in the second and I think we were able to come out with a little bit of calm and resilience in the third."

Even after the Jackets scored a goal, which was unsuccessfully challenged by Cooper leading to yet another Columbus power play, the Lightning, playing without injured captain Steven Stamkos, stayed the course.

"No one really cracked on the bench," said Shattenkirk. "Everyone still had confidence we could pull it off so it was a matter of just believing in our game plan, because we had seen it work earlier in the series."

"There's a reason some of these guys were brought in," Cooper said when asked about Shattenkirk. "He's invaluable when it comes to being inside the room."

John Tortorella didn't have much to say in his post-game Zoom session, cutting things off after the second question.

"You know what, guys, I'm not going to get into the touchy feely stuff or the moral victories," the Jackets coach said when asked what he learned about the group in the bubble and throughout the process. "You guys be safe."

John Tortorella walked out on his post-game press conference after two questions. MORE @ <https://t.co/mcGpXm188i>
pic.twitter.com/Tq4bBmfjX1

— BarDown (@BarDown) August 19, 2020

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TSN.CA / Vegas Golden Knights making case as best expansion franchise in pro sports history

Frank Seravalli

Bill Foley's proclamation seemed preposterous at the time, as gold confetti and fireworks exploded into the neon-drenched sky off the Vegas Strip on the night the Knights became Golden in 2016.

"Playoffs in three years, Stanley Cup within six," the NHL's newest owner said.

Not so much now, huh?

His Vegas Golden Knights became the first team through to the second round of the Stanley Cup playoffs on Tuesday night after making quick work of a Chicago Blackhawks squad that picked apart Connor McDavid, Leon Draisaitl and the Edmonton Oilers in the play-in round.

Vegas has lost just once (7-1-0) since joining the Edmonton bubble, now cruising along at an 18-3-0 clip that dates back to before the pandemic pause.

The West's No. 1 seed isn't the feel-good group of Golden Misfits that came together for a magical run before falling to the Washington Capitals in the 2018 Stanley Cup Final.

They skate like a juggernaut now, and are three rounds away from making good on Foley's claim.

"They have a lot of different elements to their team," Chicago coach Jeremy Colliton said after Tuesday night's season-ending loss. "They have some offensive guys who are dangerous whenever they're on the ice. But I think for the most part, they play a tremendous two-way game and that's really hard to play against."

"Then they have their depth guys that are able to tilt the ice and hold you down in your defensive zone and out-change you."

"They are a physical team; they make you pay a price to make plays and they just come at you over and over again. I think their discipline within their team game is outstanding. They make you earn what you're going to get."

The first question posed after Foley called for a Stanley Cup within six years before even picking a player was: "Have you seen what the other NHL expansion franchises have done?"

Now, perhaps the more appropriate question is: Are the Golden Knights the best expansion franchise in pro sports history?

It's one worth pondering, even if Vegas doesn't turn Lord Stanley's silver chalice Golden this season.

Numerous franchises have enjoyed success in short order. The Arizona Diamondbacks won the World Series in 2001, in their fourth season of existence. It took the Philadelphia Flyers just seven seasons to hoist the Stanley Cup, becoming the first team outside the Original Six to win it in 1973-74. The New York Islanders and New York Mets each needed eight seasons to win their first titles as expansion franchises.

But none of those teams accomplished the same immediate and consistent results, right from the beginning.

The Golden Knights have now qualified for the Stanley Cup playoffs in each of their first three seasons.

To put that in perspective: From San Jose in 1991-92 to Columbus and Minnesota in 2000-01, the previous nine NHL expansion franchises combined to qualify for the playoffs just three times total in their first three seasons (three out of 27 seasons).

Yes, critics will claim that the Golden Knights had the most lenient expansion draft requirements to use as their advantage. That is true, but the argument could be made it still wasn't enough to warrant the \$500 million price tag – more than five times more than any entrance fee that any of those other nine teams paid.

Then-GM George McPhee pressed all the pressure points in the drafting process. From Shea Theodore to Alex Tuch, the Golden Knights were built on the back of busted decisions by many of McPhee's counterparts.

Even through the unfair lens of hindsight, the deals are worth revisiting. The Panthers traded Reilly Smith to ensure that the Golden Knights took Jonathan Marchessault. The Penguins gave up a second-round pick so the Knights could grab their franchise goalie in Marc-Andre Fleury. The Blue Jackets dealt their first-round pick and a second-round pick, along with William Karlsson, in part to dump David Clarkson's contract. The Jets gave up their first-rounder to protect Toby Enstrom and others.



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Most of the moves since then have been equally impressive.

When teams began to sniff around assistant GM Kelly McCrimmon, McPhee elevated himself to president of hockey operations and passed the post on to McCrimmon to keep the band together.

In the past two years, the Golden Knights have acquired a franchise cornerstone in Mark Stone, a defenceman with Cup pedigree in Alec Martinez, and goalie Robin Lehner - who has spelled Fleury and picked up five of Vegas' seven postseason wins this summer. It might be fair to knock trading Nick Suzuki and Tomas Tatar for Max Pacioretty, except Pacioretty led the team in scoring this season.

The Golden Knights are one of the destination places to play in the NHL; they are entrenched and immensely popular in the local community; they enjoy one of the best practice facilities in the league and treat their players well; and they recently purchased and moved an AHL team to town (the Henderson Silver Knights) to better their development process.

Just about the only complaint one could make of this model franchise is that they've already run into a salary cap squeeze in Year 3 after starting with a blank slate.

Two problems with that: the Golden Knights have legitimized the crunch because they've proven to be a true Stanley Cup contender, spending to fulfill Foley's proclamation. And two, almost all of their roster is locked up for next season, giving them another kick at the Cup, too.

That's a scary thought for the rest of the NHL. Godspeed to Ron Francis and the Seattle Kraken, who now have the toughest act in pro sports to follow.

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TSN.CA / Canucks and St Louis play a pivotal game five, with the series tied 2-2

Jeff Paterson

VANCOUVER – What started as a Best of Seven series has been reduced to a Best of Three as the Vancouver Canucks and St. Louis Blues meet in Game 5 of their Stanley Cup Playoff match-up tonight in Edmonton. The Blues have won back to back games after the Canucks jumped out to a 2-0 series lead.

Special teams told the story of the Blues 3-1 victory in Game 4 on Monday night. St. Louis went two for five on the power play while the Canucks went scoreless in seven opportunities with the man-advantage. Ryan O'Reilly had a pair of goals and set up Alex Pietrangelo. O'Reilly has now had a hand in the last five goals St. Louis has scored in this series.

JT Miller scored the lone Vancouver goal on Monday deflecting a point shot past Jake Allen early in the second period to tie the game 1-1. Miller has scored in back to back games and has three of the last eight goals the Canucks have scored in this series. He and Elias Pettersson share the team lead with 3+2=5 in four games against the Blues. Bo Horvat leads all scorers in the series with four goals after back to back two-goal games in the first two games.

O'Reilly and David Perron are tied for the Blues scoring lead in the series. O'Reilly has 3+3=6 while Perron has 2+4=6. Pietrangelo leads all blueliners in series scoring with 1+4=5.

Through the first four games of this series, the Canucks have outscored St. Louis 12-11 overall while the Blues hold a 6-5 edge at even-strength. The Canucks are 6 for 18 (33%) with the man-advantage while the Blues

are 4 for 16 (25%) on the power play. Bo Horvat also opened the Game 2 scoring while short-handed.

Brock Boeser scored in back to back games (Games 2 and 3) against Minnesota, but has gone five straight games without a goal. Of the 24 goals the Canucks have scored in the post-season, 19 have been come off the sticks of the team's top six forwards (Horvat 6, Miller & Pettersson 4, Tanner Pearson 3 & Boeser 2).

The Canucks are expected to be without defenseman Tyler Myers for a third straight game. He suffered a shoulder injury early in the third period of Game 2 of this series.

Jacob Markstrom was busy on back to back nights facing 37 shots on Monday after being peppered with 49 shots on Sunday. In the post-season, Markstrom is 5-3 with a 2.47 GAA and a 92.7% save percentage.

St. Louis switched to veteran Jake Allen in goal for Game 3. He is 2-0 with a 1.33 GAA and a 95.3% in the past two games.

The Blues announced yesterday that winger Vladimir Tarasenko has left the club and been sent back to St. Louis to be re-examined by team doctors. The Russian sniper missed most of the regular season after shoulder surgery in October. He appeared in the first two games of this series but did not record a point.

Ivan Barbashev, who played in the Blues round robin opener on August 2nd before leaving the bubble to return to St. Louis for the birth of his daughter, has met quarantine requirements and is a possibility to make his series debut tonight.

On last year's run to the Stanley Cup title, the Blues were forced to play at least six games in all four series. In Games 5-7, the club was an impressive 8-2.

POSSIBLE CANUCKS LINE-UP

Miller-Pettersson-Boeser

Pearson-Horvat-Eriksson

Roussel-Sutter-Virtanen

Motte-Beagle-MacEwen

Hughes-Tanev

Eidler-Stecher

Fantenberg-Benn

Markstrom

POSSIBLE BLUES LINE-UP

Schwartz-O'Reilly-Perron

Kyrou-Schenn-Bozak

Sanford-Thomas-Blais

Sundqvist-Barbashev-MacEachern

Gunnarsson-Pietrangelo

Scandella-Parayko

Dunn-Faulk

Allen

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USA TODAY / Vancouver Canucks defenseman Alex Edler leaves game after face is cut by skate

Mike Brehm

Vancouver Canucks defenseman Alex Edler had to leave the ice for repairs Wednesday night after his second fluke injury in two seasons.

The Canucks were leading the St. Louis Blues 4-3 with less than two minutes left in the second period of Game 5 after rallying from a 3-1 deficit. Edler checked Jordan Kyrrou, and the Blues forward fell to the ice, his skate coming up and appearing to catch Edler in the ear.

The defenseman grabbed his face, which was bleeding, and immediately headed to the dressing room. He was not back on the ice for the third period, but the Canucks held on for a 4-3 win that pushed the defending champions to the brink of elimination in the first-round series.

"We actually thought (Edler) was coming back," coach Travis Green told reporters. "And man, those guys hung tough. We didn't give up a lot in the third. Resilient effort tonight all the way around."

Last season, Edler suffered a concussion and facial cuts when his stick got caught in the skate of Philadelphia Flyers forward Jakub Voracek, causing him to spin around and fall face first on the ice. He had to be taken off on a stretcher.

Accidental skate cuts have been an issue during the 2019-20 season with the New York Islanders' Cal Clutterbuck and Casey Cizikas, Toronto Maple Leafs' Ilya Mikheyev and Los Angeles Kings' Alec Martinez requiring surgery. Islanders defenseman Johnny Boychuk needed 90 stitches after his eyelid was cut by a skate.

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USA TODAY / Tampa Bay Lightning make most of second chance, eliminate Columbus Blue Jackets

Mike Brehm

The Tampa Bay Lightning's shocking sweep at the hands of the Columbus Blue Jackets stung enough that coach Jon Cooper remembered how long ago it was.

"We had 422 days to think about it, but who's counting?" he told reporters.

The Lightning, second-guessed last season for their quick exit after a record-tying 62 wins, landed the Blue Jackets again as a first-round opponent, and this time, they advanced, winning Game 5 in overtime Wednesday.

"We got a second chance, and often times, you don't get that second chance, and it's what you do with it," Cooper said.

The Blue Jackets were a different team, losing Sergei Bobrovsky, Artemi Panarin and Matt Duchene to free agency. But they were tenacious as usual, and got strong play from Pierre-Luc Dubois and goalie Joonas Korpisalo.

But the Lightning also changed, adding gritty players Pat Maroon and Barclay Goodrow and strengthening their depth with Blake Coleman, Kevin Shattenkirk and Zach Bogosian.

Though Tampa Bay won in five games, it still was a challenge, including a five-overtime game won by the Lightning in Game 1. On Wednesday, the Lightning fell behind 4-2 in the third period after once leading 2-0 but rallied to tie and won on a Brayden Point goal.

Point had two overtime goals in the series and seven points overall, after getting just one point in the series last season. Nikita Kucherov, who was limited to two assists last year and was suspended one game, also had seven points. Plus, the Lightning had Victor Hedman for the full series after he missed two games last season.

"You give the players a framework, but in the end, we left it to them, and they rose to the occasion," Cooper said. "I couldn't be more proud of them."

After going through the handshake line, Cooper pumped his fist in celebration.

"If you saw that, you'll pretty much know how I felt," he said.

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USA TODAY / 'If he could do it, I can do it': How the NHL's first Black team announcer inspires the next generation

Lorenzo Reyes

Corrections and clarifications: A previous version of the story misidentified Matt Dumba's ethnicity.

Trey Matthews thought there was no way he could be the only one.

He was right, but only barely.

A student at Adrian College, which is about 70 miles southwest of Detroit, Matthews wanted to do play-by-play and joined the school's TV station last fall. He was assigned to hockey, a sport he had little knowledge about.

His first broadcast, in his words: "absolute disaster." So much so that complaints to the station eventually led to a reassignment. Matthews, determined to stick with hockey, asked to cover another of the school's seven teams. He was eventually assigned the Bulldog ACHA Division 1 women's squad on a trial basis.

He immersed himself in the sport. He bought a hockey video game and played it until he could recite the rules. With each broadcast, he progressed. Yet, as a Black person calling hockey games, he still felt alone and unseen, isolated in a field nearly universally white.

Matthews' father told him to do some research, to see if there was anyone else like him out there.

Matthews found Everett Fitzhugh.

At the time, Fitzhugh was the play-by-play announcer for the Cincinnati Cyclones of the ECHL, a mid-level professional hockey league. He was the first Black announcer at any level of pro hockey.

Matthews tagged Fitzhugh in a Twitter message. They later exchanged emails. Fitzhugh asked Matthews to send him tape of some of the games he has called and offered feedback.

'DREAM COME TRUE': Everett Fitzhugh, hired by Seattle Kraken, will be NHL's first Black play-by-play announcer

RELEASE THE KRAKEN! Seattle, NHL's 32nd team, unveils name and logo



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And then in August 2020, Fitzhugh was named announcer of the NHL's newest expansion team, the Seattle Kraken, making him the first Black announcer of an NHL franchise.

"Without him, I'm not in this position that I'm in," Matthews told USA TODAY Sports. "That someone who's also from Detroit, someone who's also Black, someone who's also told me that he had a similar road to the one I'm on – it just means it's possible for me to make it. If he could do it, I can do it."

Though Fitzhugh, 31, won't call a game for another year – the Kraken will drop the puck for the 2021-22 season – the significance of his hiring isn't lost on him.

"To hear that other people are chasing their dreams and trying to become hockey media members, writers, broadcasters – even fans – that is something so special because I was that Black kid growing up in Detroit who didn't have those influences," Fitzhugh told USA TODAY Sports.

The Kraken have embraced diversity in building their organization. Vice president of human resources April West told USA TODAY Sports that as of last week, the arena company and hockey operations team were 43% female (including 31% in positions of vice president or above) and 27% people of color, just shy of goals set last year of 45% and 25%, respectively. Last September, the Kraken made Cammi Granato, a former U.S. women's hockey star, the first female pro scout in NHL history.

"It's hard for young people or really anyone to envision themselves doing something or being part of a profession, a sport, or anything, if they don't see themselves represented in the room," Kraken vice president of community engagement and philanthropy Mari Horita told USA TODAY Sports. "If you really want to include everyone, it can't just be by words on a piece of paper, it has to be in actions and example."

Though details are still being finalized, the Kraken are planning on hosting speaking engagements and community events intended to showcase Fitzhugh as a prominent face of the communications arm of the franchise.

Fitzhugh's presence is groundbreaking, especially in the NHL, which is a league with 95% white players and no coaches or general managers of color. Kim Davis was hired in 2017 as the NHL's executive vice president for social impact, growth initiatives and legislative affairs.

Davis said the NHL recently started a program for players of color who are interested in coaching, providing educational resources on how they can transition in their post-playing careers. The league also invited minority coaches in June to a development summit, in partnership with the NHL Coaches Association, to help groom and prepare them for future opportunities.

"Representation and connection counts," Davis told USA TODAY Sports. "Billie Jean (King) often says: 'If you see it, you can be it.' I think this is a prime example of that. For sure, young and old alike will not only enjoy Everett's commentating, but also see themselves as part of the sport and the future of the sport."

The league has also attempted to be more inclusive with a "#WeSkateFor" campaign that has included "Black Lives." Seven current and former players also developed the Hockey Diversity Alliance on their own with a goal to "eradicate racism and intolerance in hockey." One of its executive committee members, Matt Dumba, a defenseman on the Minnesota Wild, became the first player to kneel for the national anthem.

"I see my job to be as accessible, to be as approachable, as willing and able to do anything for the organization," Fitzhugh said. "For me, it's doing the job well. Being visible is the most important thing. Because I've always said, 'I don't want to be the best Black broadcaster. I want to be the best broadcaster, period.'"

Before joining the Kraken, Fitzhugh, who has invested more than 10 years into developing his career, spent five seasons with the Cyclones and maintained two jobs at once: director of media relations and

broadcasting and the team's spokesperson. Fitzhugh broke into the industry – much like Matthews has – as a student radio color analyst for Bowling Green's hockey team.

"It's not fair," Fitzhugh said. "My mom always told me that sometimes being Black in America means you have to be twice as good to be considered average. It's something I know a lot of minorities face. I've just always believed in letting my work and letting my passion and letting my love for what I do speak for itself."

When Fitzhugh makes his first call with the Kraken, it won't be his first in the NHL. Washington Capitals radio play-by-play announcer John Walton has made it a habit to invite up-and-comers to do preseason games to bolster young talent and extend an opportunity to people who typically haven't had them.

Reds broadcaster suspended for using homophobic slur

Another Manning appears destined for football greatness

NFL bans cheerleaders, mascots from field in 2020

2020 All-USA high school football preseason team

Podcast: Mark Richt discusses college football's dilemma

After Washington won its Stanley Cup in 2018, Walton called Fitzhugh, whom he had heard on Cyclones broadcasts. Fitzhugh accepted. And the audio from that call was included in Fitzhugh's presentation to the Kraken in their hiring process.

"This blows the race barrier away," Walton told USA TODAY Sports. "Anybody who is the first at something sets the tone for the rest who come after. For Everett, it won't be any different. But there is no more glass ceiling for anyone to break through in Seattle. This is just all they'll know, which is great. He changes everything."

Matthews is now a rising junior. In January, he was named the play-by-play voice of Adrian College's ACHA women's D-I team. Matthews said he has watched Fitzhugh's calls and will closely follow his path to see if he can pick up any traits, any nuances. Anything to make his own broadcast stronger.

"I see a lot of similarities between us and stuff I can use to polish my game," Matthews said. "He was told once that his voice doesn't match his face and I was one time told my voice didn't match my face because of the way I look. You're saying that I have to stereotypically 'talk Black' because I'm from Detroit?"

"If you're letting other people say you need to change who you are, then you need to walk away. Judge me for what I say, not for how I say it. He has been a great role model in helping me see that."

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