



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 24, 2020

## THE NEWS & OBSERVER

### What we'll remember, and what we wish we could forget, about the Hurricanes' season

By Chip Alexander

There will always be much to remember about the 2019-20 NHL season, the Year of the Virus.

For the Carolina Hurricanes, it began with a festive home opener against the Montreal Canadiens. The Canes won that one at PNC Arena, then ruined the Washington Capitals' home opener with an overtime win.

Justin Williams, 38, came out of semi-retirement and scored the winning shootout goal in his first game back. Morgan Geekie, 22, made his NHL debut and scored three times in his first two games.

The spread of a novel coronavirus brought everything to a halt. Then there was hockey again. Playoff hockey, in August.

"We've got a tight-knit group and this was a first-time experience for everyone," defenseman Jaccob Slavin said Wednesday. "I think you'll remember it 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."

Good moments and not-so-good moments. Here are a few of both:

#### THE GOOD

##### HE DID WHAT?

Many in the NHL had tried it but none had pulled it off. But Andrei Svechnikov did, twice.

On Oct. 29, 2019, Svechnikov had the puck behind the Calgary Flames net at PNC Arena. He swept it up on the blade of his stick, lacrosse style, and whipped it over the right shoulder and off the mask of goalie David Rittich for a goal.

Just like that, "Michigan" begat "The Svech." It was an NHL first and Svechnikov later would do it a second time against the Winnipeg Jets. It brought back memories of Mike Legg, the former Michigan player who made the move famous in a 1996 NCAA tournament game.

Legg said his phone blew up soon after Svechnikov's goal against the Flames. "So cool, so awesome. Good for him," Legg said the next day in an interview.

And Svechnikov's response? "I just got lucky a little bit," he said after the Canes' 2-1 win.

Then, he did it again. Is that luck?

##### WHO'S THAT GUY IN NET?

Goalie James Reimer started the game but was injured. Petr Mrazek took over but was wiped off when he left the crease to play the puck. Just like that the Canes were two goalies down in the road game against Toronto.

What to do? That's why the NHL has emergency backup goalies in every arena. On Feb. 22, in Scotiabank Arena, that was David Ayres, 42, who was ready and willing to put on the gear and take the net. And became a part of NHL history.

Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour feared the worst when Ayres entered the game in the second period. When the game ended, the Canes winning 6-3, Ayres the unexpected hero, Brind'Amour soon was making an impassioned postgame talk, saying, "It's a memory I'll have forever."

NHL fans voted the Ayres game "The Greatest Moment of the NHL Season ... So Far" in June. As for the man himself, Ayres said he's "still living the dream."

#### ENDING THE CURSE

The Canes couldn't beat the New York Rangers and couldn't beat goalie Henrik Lundqvist. For the past few years that was almost a given. Until it wasn't.

The Canes lost four times to the Rangers in the regular season and Lundqvist was the winner three times. That changed, quickly, in Toronto in the qualifying round of the NHL's Return to Play format.

The Canes beat the Rangers and Lundqvist in the first game, then again in the second. The Rangers went with rookie goalie Igor Shesterkin in the third game, but it was too late and the Canes were too good. Call it a three-game sweep in a best-of-five series that was not officially deemed the "playoffs" but had that feel to it.

"It's obviously a crazy time but we're just grateful to be able to do this and try and bring some happiness and joy to our fans," Brind'Amour said. "They deserve some smiles."

#### THE NOT-SO-GOOD

##### DOUGIE GOES DOWN

Dougie Hamilton was down on the ice, in pain. Late in the second period of the Jan. 16 road game against the Columbus Blue Jackets, the defenseman fell awkwardly along the boards chasing after the puck, his left leg buckling under him.

It was a broken fibula. Surgery soon followed. It was a season-ending injury ... or so everyone thought.

The injury kept Hamilton out of the NHL All-Star festivities but the NHL's long pause during the pandemic allowed him to return and play again, to at least finish out the season on the ice with his teammates in the postseason. He had the winning goal in the Canes' only victory over the Boston Bruins in first round.

"I guess there's a silver lining in everything," he said.

##### PESCE GOES DOWN, TOO

There would be no silver lining for Brett Pesce.



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While many eyes were on Reimer and Mrazek leaving and David Ayres entering that Feb. 22 game in Toronto, BrindAmour had a lot more to fret about that night. Pesce also left the game with an injury after a seemingly innocuous play involving the Maple Leafs' John Tavares.

No one was sure at first what Pesce had done. Turns out, his right shoulder needed surgery. Turns out, it would be a season-ending injury, taking another of the Canes' top-four defensemen out of the lineup.

Had the Canes beaten the Bruins in the playoffs, in the same arena, Pesce might have had a slight chance of getting back on the ice in postseason. He'll have to wait until next season.

## TOUGH WAY TO END IT

The Canes had a 2-0 lead in Game 4 against the Bruins and were less than 13 minutes away from tying the series on

Monday. But Reimer bolted out of net to try and play the puck, lost the race to the Bruins' Jake DeBrusk, allowed a goal and it began what BrindAmour said was seven minutes in the third period when the Canes "could not stop the bleeding."

The Bruins scored four times. The Canes came unraveled. Said the Canes' Williams, "It snowballed into something we didn't want."

The 4-3 loss gave the Bruins a 3-1 series lead. They closed it out Wednesday with a 2-1 win. But when it was over, the Canes' time in the Toronto bubble at an end, they preferred to look at the positives.

"We've got some really good young players who want it and are going to grow and get even better," captain Jordan Staal said. "That's the exciting thing about the Carolina Hurricanes. The future is bright."

## To move forward, the Hurricanes may need to go against the principles that got them this far

By Luke DeCock

It's not quite destroying the village in order to save it, but to take the next step — to be able to get past teams like the Boston Bruins in the postseason — the Carolina Hurricanes are going to have to at least consider going against everything that got them this far.

They ignored the warning signs last summer. Will they pay attention now?

They have, in two-plus seasons under Tom Dundon's ownership, been far ahead of the curve in the NHL when it comes to analytics. Dundon inherited Eric Tulsky from the previous regime and has given him a strong voice, to the Hurricanes' benefit. The pursuit of skill has been all-encompassing, and it has worked. Even in the Bruins series, the Hurricanes' metrics weren't that far behind; scoring chances at even strength narrowly favored the Bruins, 119-112. (All advanced stats via the indispensable Natural Stat Trick.)

But there was obviously a huge gap despite the close scores and scoring chances, no more apparent than the Hurricanes' collapse in the third period of Game 4. And the truly pivotal moment that sent things over the edge was Charlie McAvoy's punishing hit that sent Hurricanes captain Jordan Staal to the locker room for good. Mere seconds later the Bruins made it 2-2 and never really slowed down.

When things got real, when it was time to put their bodies on the line, the Hurricanes cowered.

The Bruins have the ability to put teams to that test, as did the Washington Capitals a year ago. The Hurricanes not only lack that ability, they lack the capability to respond to it.

The Hurricanes shrugged off the Capitals by doing things their own way, by relying on Petr Mrazek and taking advantage of Washington's shabby defensive group, but there was a flashing light over that series that the Hurricanes needed to be better equipped to meet that kind of challenge. The Bruins made that clear two rounds later, and again 16 months later, pushing the envelope with the officials and leaving the Hurricanes to complain about it.

(That's part of playoff hockey, too. Two years in a row, the Hurricanes lost their cool against Boston instead of finding an answer on the ice as they did against Washington.)

The Hurricanes have exquisite skill and a modern, mobile defense that is as versatile as any in the league, especially with the sorely missed Brett Pesce back and healthy. Jaccob Slavin's all-around game covers up Dougie Hamilton's deficiencies and lets Dougie be Dougie, and Brady Skjei and Pesce promise to be a solid second pairing next season. But with Joel Edmundson likely to leave as a free agent and a third pairing of Jake Gardiner and Hadyn Fleury — as much progress as Fleury made playing with an edge, he was starting from absolute zero — there's no one who inspires any trepidation.

Contrast that with how the Bruins' defense, particularly McAvoy and Zdeno Chara and Brandon Carlo, played against the Hurricanes, defending the front of the Boston net. At even strength, the Bruins outscored the Hurricanes 9-8. One of the Hurricanes' goals came from the faceoff dots and below. All but one of the Bruins' did.

Which is a neat segue to the Hurricanes' forwards. Andrei Svechnikov did his thing until he got hurt doing it, but where were Brock McGinn and Warren Foegele and Nino Niederreiter when things got tough? Even when Foegele was successfully agitating last year, he was visibly uncomfortable in that role. Niederreiter has more skill, but if he's not scoring goals, and he's so streaky that can be true for long periods of time, he has to find another way to contribute. The Bruins have several bottom-six forwards who can.

So the question is whether the Hurricanes can find players who are analytically acceptable but better suited for playoff hockey — how many Jordan Martinooks are both out there and available? — or whether they'll have to compromise their principles in one area to address the other.

They certainly didn't do enough a year ago: Only Edmundson fit that bill. The additions of Ryan Dzingel and Gardiner and arrival of Martin Necas skewed the other direction. Same for Skjei, Sami Vatanen and Vincent Trocheck at the deadline, although Skjei set the tone for the qualifying round sweep of



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the New York Rangers with a crushing center-ice hit in the opening seconds.

The Hurricanes have another chance now. Their young skill players will only get better. Can they build some orneriness and determination around them? That's tougher to quantify than expected goals or zone entries but valuable in its own way.

In no way is this an anti-analytics polemic, given the amount of useful insight that can be gleaned from NHL play-by-play data or proprietary analysis. These may be hockey cliches, "the dirty areas" and "a heavy game," but there is a kernel of truth to them. They may not mean everything, and they mean nothing without the kind of elite skill the Hurricanes have, but they mean something.

To address those areas is not a repudiation of the project. It's a statement of how far the Hurricanes have come.

Given the state of the franchise under the stuck-in-place regime of Ron Francis and Bill Peters, not to mention the previous decade in general, building a team consistently worthy of a playoff spot is no small accomplishment. Rod Brind'Amour has personally instilled a degree of will that was previously lacking.

If this is only to be the beginning, they need to find players who can help them take the next step forward, whether that's by the numbers or not.



## Gold: Canes end came and went too fast

By Adam Gold

The season ended too quickly.

The Carolina Hurricanes returned to play with a blistering series sweep against the New York Rangers, a team they hadn't beaten at all during the regular season. Not only did they go 0-4-0 against the Rangers this year, but it seemed that they were psyched out by future Hall of Fame goaltender Henrik Lundqvist. That all changed, however, 61 seconds into the series when Jaccob Slavin sneaked in from the left point, took a pass from Teuvo Teravainen and roofed it over The King's right shoulder as the Hurricanes were, as a famous former Hurricanes broadcaster might say, "off and running".

Sebastian Aho and Andrei Svechnikov were superstar level players against New York, giving the entire league a glimpse into the near future for the two young, emerging forces in the sport. On defense, Slavin was doing his thing, Haydn Fleury was coming into his own and newcomer Brady Skjei, a former Ranger acquired at the trade deadline, was terrorizing his old teammates. In net, Petr Mrazek and James Reimer took turns looking brilliant.

Then came a week off, the unintended consequence of a 3-game sweep. Then an additional 15 hour delay when their Tuesday 8:00 pm start was postponed to the following morning at 11:00 because the Lightning and Blue Jackets thought it would be fun to play five overtimes. But, let's be honest about what happened in the series against the Bruins. It wasn't the layoff. It was not the brunch time opener. It wasn't even the goaltending, what most experts felt was the only weakness on the Hurricanes' roster.

It was the Boston Bruins.

The team that was swept in the round robin seeding tournament was NOT the team that hung up 44 wins and 100 points before the league stopped playing in March. Which sample size do you think carried more weight? When the B's fell from the top seed to number 4 and the Canadiens upset

the Penguins, that meant we were getting a rematch of last May's Eastern Conference Finals. That one ended in a 4-0 Bruins sweep. This dance lasted longer, as Boston needed a 5th game to send Carolina home, though there were similarities between the two.

The Bruins dominated the special teams battle, scoring five power play goals and another shorthanded. The Canes mustered just one marker with the man advantage and that was the Jaroslav Halak turnover in Game 3 that ended up in the glove of Nino Niederreiter which was easily deposited into an empty net. So, in reality, the Hurricanes' top ten regular season power play was shut out completely.

Last May, the Bruins were 7 for 16 in the series in extra man situations. This time, while it wasn't as bad — 5 for 19 is still stout — it was as much when the goals occurred as it was that they happened at all. The best example of this was the close out game. Carolina was easily the better team Wednesday afternoon. They took a 1-0 lead into the first intermission as they were quicker and more aggressive than the Bruins through 20 minutes. That continued into the middle period, though the Canes were struggling to find that second goal. Then came a pair of late penalties on Carolina and each time the Bruins capitalized leaving the Hurricanes trailing entering the third and swimming upstream against a team built to play with a lead.

I know Canes fans will say their team didn't do this and didn't do that and Mrazek allowing that goal to Patrice Bergeron with 3 1/2 seconds left in the 2nd was the backbreaker in the finale. The Game 4 collapse, in which the Hurricanes went from 2-0 up entering the third period only to become passive and see the lead disintegrate in a less than 7-minute span as the Bruins appeared to be skating downhill, was as much about Carolina's mistakes as it was Boston's excellence. But, the Bruins have an aura about them. They smell blood like sharks, and when they see the crack, they blow a whole in the doorway and bull their way through.



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Those moments were there for the Hurricanes to take in the series, but only in Game 2, Carolina's only win, did they seize that opportunity. With the chance to grow the 2-0 lead in Game 4, Martin Necas whiffed on a feed from Niederreiter late in the second period. Would that have made the difference? We'll never know. Of course, Boston did score four times in a 6:51 stretch, so a 3-goal lead might not have mattered had the rookie cashed in that chance, anyway. But that's where the Canes need to grow. Well, one of the areas, anyway.

The Bruins are simply a harder, more physical challenge than this current Canes squad is equipped to battle. That isn't to say Carolina can't beat the Bruins. They won Game 2 and they were good enough to win games 4 and 5. But, Boston's style — physical throughout and they keep you to the outside in the offensive zone — is the perfect counter to the Hurricanes speed game. Oh, and the B's are just as fast as the Canes, especially from the blue line where everyone in their line up save for future hall of fame stalwart Zdeno Chara is an outstanding skater. Boston is also a lot meaner than Carolina, something that will have to be addressed this offseason.

Yes, Carolina is young — still — in spite of this being their second straight trip to the post season. And, maybe they'll continue to grow into what the Bruins are currently. There was a time that the B's also struggled. Prior to last year, Boston won exactly two playoff series over the last five years. It took them some time, too. Hopefully, with a few more tweaks to the roster and some individual growth, physically and mentally, the Canes can continue progressing towards what the Bruins are today. Because if Boston isn't the standard in the East, they're pretty doggone close.

It's time for second round predictions, mostly because I know you care what I think. And, since I went 7-1 in the first round (4-4 in the Qualifying Series) I figured I'd either pat myself on the back and keep going or allow for a regression to the mean. So, here goes.

## EASTERN CONFERENCE

### 1-Flyers vs 7-Islanders

Speaking of water finding it's level, the Flyers didn't look anything like the juggernaut they did in the round robin series. Montreal was pesky and Philly's best players struggled at times. The Islanders kicked Washington's rear end up and down Scotiabank Arena and look a lot like a team in it for the long haul. Maybe that was a disinterested Capitals club, but more likely it was the Isles that took their will. New York suddenly looks like a team with some offensive weapons to go along with tons of solid, rugged players.

The Pick: Islanders in 7

### 2-Tampa Bay vs 4-Boston

Are these the two best teams in the East? Quite possibly, but if that was the case, they were going to play sometime, so why not now. Boston dominated special teams and got away with lesser goaltending in eliminating the Hurricanes in five games. A closer examination reveals that the Bruins could have scored more against the Canes and maybe they'll cash in more often with a healthier David Pastrnak, who missed three games of the opening round series. The Lightning overcame their 2019 nemesis in the Blue Jackets, winning a couple in overtime and showing a style that runs contrary to their high-flying reputation. They're not completely healthy, but they're so deep in so many areas that it might not matter. Not that any series comes down to one factor, but Jaroslav Halak and Andrei Vasilevskiy are not equals.

The Pick: Tampa Bay in 6

## WESTERN CONFERENCE

### 1-Vegas vs 7-Vancouver

The Canucks are a year ahead of schedule. They proved to be too fast for the defending champs and there is no doubt that they'll be a factor in the next few years. The Golden Knights are built to win now and they are simply a deeper team with championship pedigree.

The Pick: Vegas in 6

### 2-Colorado vs 3-Dallas

I had to rub my eyes to make sure I was seeing correctly. The Dallas Stars were pumping in goals like it was nothing. Where in the name of Neil Broten did that come from? Joe Pavelski and Corey Perry combined for 8 post season goals in 9 games after scoring just 19 during the regular season. That's one reason. Dallas didn't even get any real production from their two stars, Tyler Seguin and Jamie Benn, in advancing past the Flames. As for the Avalanche, their best players continue to be their best players and Nathan MacKinnon is one of the best on this planet. 13 points in 8 games so far will attest to that and with Nazem Kadri (team high 6 goals) they have a top two center combination that is as dangerous and varied as any in the field. Goaltending is going to be interesting to watch. Colorado has a team save percentage of .942, and while Philipp Grubauer is their starter, Pavel Francouz has been great when called upon. Looks like Anton Khudobin will be the guy for Dallas as Ben Bishop has been riding the post season struggle bus.

The Pick: Colorado in 7



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## Brownlow's Mailbag: The next commish, evaluating the Canes season and more

By Lauren Brownlow

In what has become an off-season tradition, I've started my Twitter Mailbag where I'll take your questions and do my best to answer them each week — and I'll try to continue it for as long as the sports hiatus lasts. And yes, I mean the COLLEGE sports hiatus.

So let's get to your questions!

@Bracey103

So would you guess at this point that all major D1 schools will play football?

I mean ... in some capacity? I guess? Certainly the Big Ten calling it early has at least led to some pressure being put on the powers that be to make a real, actual, tangible plan for the spring. How many people will play and what will that look like? Who knows? It will be weird to see two seasons played at two different times, but it's certainly conceivable that it could happen that way.

But you said all of Division I, right? I mean ... there are a lot of Division I teams and a lot of them are already in some pretty dire financial trouble. If they have to wait until the spring, maybe they can play then but I think the bigger question is whether or not teams planning on playing fall football actually do that beyond the Power 5. Obviously there are still questions about whether the Power 5 teams will play anyway too, but following the COVID protocols is not a cheap endeavor. There are already stories coming out indicating it will be cheaper for some Group of 5 teams to not play in the fall than it would be to play without fans in the stands, largely because they don't pull in the TV money that the other leagues do. But that's pretty insane to think about — the sheer operational costs will be so steep that it will be cheaper TO SKIP AN ENTIRE SEASON than to play with no fans.

The NCAA is trying to normalize leagues at least attempting to move to the spring, but the ACC, SEC and Big 12 are waiting for now. How long will they wait? Who knows? Did I mention we're less than a month away from a scheduled start of a college football season? It's kind of unreal to think about.

So to sum up, the answer is:

1. Not even all of the schools planning to play fall football will play fall football,
2. As many schools as can afford it will play in the spring, should the spring actually occur.

@zackirby

Did the Canes over-achieve or under-achieve this year?

I'm far from an expert on this, to be fair. Full disclosure — I've really only covered the Hurricanes steadily for a few seasons in my career, and that's back when I was at Fox Sports Carolinas. My schedule back then basically was to go every basketball and football game I could (even at Wake Forest!) and then cover the Hurricanes on nights when I didn't have another game. I remember those days in 2013 and 2014 quite well. I've never been into hockey beyond a casual level and often felt like a bit of an imposter, but I'm like that when I cover

or comment on any sport that I don't know as well as the others. All I remember about that time is that I got to a point covering them where I would wince when they went on the power play. I was reminded of that at times during the Bruins series, although nothing was THAT bad. I checked and they were 14.6% on the power play that year (2013-14) but scored 11 short-handed goals. ELEVEN! This team couldn't do much of anything offensively at 5-on-5 or with a one-man advantage, but give them one man down and watch out! I kid. Kind of. But it made no sense and every game followed a pretty similar script. So it actually made writing stories pretty easy. I got to where I could predict Kirk Muller's postgame quotes and basically have my story written before the interview.

Anyway, here's the thing — those depressing days of hockey, from Muller to Peters, aren't all that far behind us. And so to me, the verdict is that Canes just ... achieved. Wouldn't say they under-achieved or over-achieved, really. They kept the momentum going from the season before with back-to-back Playoffs, and they acquitted themselves well with the sweep of the Rangers. They really only had a few trash periods thrown in, but overall, the Canes are going in a very positive direction. And I think the Svechnikov injury took a lot out of them mentally as well, even though they tried to rally. But the Bruins were just better.

They're young, and the core will be together for awhile. There's plenty of reason for both excitement and optimism. All in all, the season was a success, but obviously you want to see them keep making progress.

@bporras1

Post-pandemic, do you think we'll value and support small businesses to a greater extent after witnessing the damage and closures they are experiencing?

I like this question! I would hope that we do, and I hate to see everything that's happening to them. I try as much as I can now to buy local, so to speak, and more so than I did before. But I valued buying local before as well when I could, and especially in other locales. I can only speak for myself but pre-pandemic, the way I took vacations had become as much about the local restaurants and breweries and shops I could pop into as it did tourist attractions. I'd have it planned in advance exactly which spots we were going to frequent, and those places became a part of my vacation experience. It had even become that way for me when I traveled around the state. I go to Wilmington pretty regularly and when I do, I try to go to at least one local brewery every time I'm there and maybe a local restaurant. (Well, now I order or pick these things up, but whatever.) To me, it has just become part of the experience. Get some food or a beverage that you can't get elsewhere. But now, yeah, I think the fact that we all know the hard times these businesses have gone through just to stay afloat will make it even more of a priority.

@Cassbox2020

Who do you think will replace #ninjaswoff?

Well, the ACC has hired not one, but TWO search firms to find their next commissioner. It's funny — people ask all the time what a dream job would be. I don't know why my answer isn't



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always work for a search firm. The cash these people rake in is kind of unreal. And I am aware that they do real work, and forge connections in and around the sport with coaches, agents, insiders and the like, vetting every candidate and trying to find the best match. There are times when a school has hired a search firm and when I hear the coach they choose I think, well, that was kind of obvious. I too could have told you to hire that candidate and also charged you hundreds of thousands of dollars. Hiring TWO search firms? That only leads me to believe that they'll select a fairly obvious candidate, or at least an obvious one to me — so I'll guess Michael Kelly. It's somewhat wishful thinking on my part, because current USF athletic director and personal consumer of my content is one of my favorite people in sports. And not just because he consumes my content. But seriously, how wild would it be to know that the commissioner of the league watches The Panic Room?! Michael, for those who don't know, went to USF after serving as the first chief operating officer for the College Football Playoff. Obviously, that endeavor went pretty well! Before his stint there, though, Kelly was the senior associate commissioner of the ACC for six years and certainly has experience with all things ACC. There are probably a few other obvious choices and some less obvious, but the league will likely want someone who can

effectively marry the history of the league and its importance to its need to be future-facing.

@skull\_chewer

Fred or Barney?

Like who would I rather be or which one do I prefer? I mean, to live a consequence-free life of Fred Flinstone, trying unsuccessful scheme after unsuccessful scheme, would be pretty sweet, right? Couple in the complete lack of self-awareness and irrational confidence and man, do I wish I knew what it was like to feel that for even just a few minutes. I'm sometimes in complete awe of people with that level of confidence. Plus, he has a friend in Barney who will do literally anything he wants and is a virtual doormat. Fred gets into trouble or does something dumb and it's just "oh, there goes that Fred again!" with some mild tsk-tsking and maybe a slightly annoyed shake of the head from Wilma. But to BE Barney? A doormat with an unruly child that destroys his entire house? At least he has Betty, who is great. But I mean if you're picking one of them to BE, it's Fred. I don't even know if I'd say I prefer Barney either, though. He very rarely pushes back on Fred and is just an enabler. To live the life of Fred Flintstone, though? Sign me up!



## Canes fail to exorcise last year's playoff demons, whirlwind season ends

By Kevin Sebastian

As the puck dropped on the 2019-2020 NHL season, expectations were placed on the Carolina Hurricanes to follow up a year where they reached the Eastern Conference Finals with an equally good, or better, second act. And for most of the season, the Canes not only proved their miracle run last year wasn't a fluke, but that they were poised for a deep run in the playoffs, like last year's squad.

When the regular season was suspended on March 12, the Canes were on a three-game winning streak on the road, and in two of the games the Canes managed to win, they did so without the help of their starting tandem in net: Petr Mrazek and James Reimer. The team seemed to be getting hot at the right time, but when the NHL decided to conclude the regular season and start the playoffs, the Canes had no recourse to improve on their good, but not great, 38-25-5 record.

With the sixth-best record in the Eastern Conference, the Hurricanes were slated to play against the upstart, 11th-seeded New York Rangers in a preliminary play-in round, led by Hart Trophy finalist Artemi Panarin. Panarin's playmaking, along with the much improved goal-scoring touch from sniper Mika Zibanejad, made the Rangers a trendy pick to upset the less flashy, less top-heavy Hurricanes. But aside from a tight 3-2 decision in Game 1 favoring the Hurricanes, the series wasn't particularly close. The Rangers would find the back of the net only twice more the rest of the series, and the Canes breezed by the Blueshirts en route to a 3-0 series sweep.

James Reimer made 37 saves on 38 shots for the Hurricanes in Game 3, and his performance summed up how well Carolina's defense and goaltending have played at times.

Once officially in the playoffs, the Canes now had to face their Eastern Conference Finals foe from last year: the Boston Bruins. While the "Perfection Line" of David Pastrnak, Brad Marchand and Patrice Bergeron made all the headlines for the Bruins, it was Boston's smothering defense that was the key to a 4-0 series sweep in the 2019 playoffs. For the Canes to find a way to win, they'd have to get the puck past Bruins netminder Tuukka Rask.

Though the series was much tighter this time around, the Canes couldn't stop the Bruins offense when they needed to and their offense stalled when they needed a goal, even with 35-year old backup goalie Jaroslav Halak between the pipes for Boston from Game 3 onwards. The result was a 4-1 series win for Boston, in which Carolina lost three games by a one-goal margin.

Though the season has ended, several players on the Hurricanes have taken significant strides toward becoming productive NHL players. 2019 Calder Cup Winner Martin Nečas was called up from the AHL and showed flashes of skill that could make him a top-six forward for the Canes. The 21-year-old native of the Czech Republic scored 16 goals and 36 points in 64 games this season, more productive than highly touted rookies from the 2019 NHL draft, such as New Jersey's



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Jack Hughes and the New York Rangers top pick Kaapo Kakko.

Of course, the player that took the biggest leap this season was 2018 second-overall pick Andrei Svechnikov. The young Russian scored 24 goals and 61 points in 68 games for the Canes, and made headlines for his pair of lacrosse-style goals (that's right, not just once, but twice).

In trying to improve on last year's improbable seasons, Carolina made a slew of new signings and a few key trades before or during the year. Coming in were Ryan Dzingel, Jake Gardiner, Joel Edmundson and James Reimer in the offseason, along with Brady Skjei, Sami Vatanen and Vincent Trocheck at the trade deadline. Gone were Justin Faulk, Lucas Wallmark, Curtis McElhenny, Michael Ferland and Calvin de Haan.

While some had the potential to make a real impact over the course of a full season, like Dzingel who chipped in with 29 points in 64 games, other additions looked puzzling at the time and have aged worse over time, namely the signing of Gardiner to a four-year contract over \$16.2 million. If the next few years of Gardiner's stay in Raleigh are anything like his first year, in which he was a minus-24 in 68 games, the Canes will be more hesitant to give long-term deals to defensemen hesitant on defending.

The big storyline that surrounded most of the season for the Canes was whether or not last year's captain and playoff talisman Justin Williams would return to the squad. The 38-year-old wanted to take a break from the game in order to spend time with family, and missed the start of the season as

a result. Finally, in the first week of 2020, Williams decided to sign with the Hurricanes on a one-year deal. Williams produced just as efficiently as in seasons past, scoring 11 points in the 20 games he played, including eight goals.

Goaltending wasn't as strong a suit for Carolina this season as it has historically been, and the departure of fan-favorite Curtis McElhinney and the impending free agency of Petr Mrazek left the Canes in the precarious position of losing what little goaltending talent they had. After signing Mrazek, the Canes traded for a stopgap in James Reimer. Not only did Reimer perform admirably in his role as 1B to Mrazek's 1A, but he often played better than his partner in net. Reimer's 2.66 goals against average and .914 save percentage were both better than Mrazek's 2.69 GAA and .905 SV%, and the question has to be asked if Reimer might be the way Carolina looks toward in the future.

Fresh off of signing Montreal's five-year, \$42.27 million offer sheet and watching Carolina match it, Sebastian Aho was set out to prove he wasn't just a budding young star, but a player who had already arrived, and would be a mainstay among the league's elite. Aho followed up his 83-point campaign with 38-goal, 68-point totals in 68 games this year. In addition to putting up impressive point totals, Aho refined his defensive game, adding his name among the best defensive forwards in the league, and may have Selke Awards in his future.

Though these aren't your grandfather's Canes of years past, perhaps this franchise is still snakebitten in some ways. After Carolina eliminated the New York Rangers in the play-in round, the Rangers won the first pick in the 2020 NHL draft and a chance to draft a potentially franchise-changing player.



## Koutroumpis – The right way has to lead to the only way for the Carolina Hurricanes

Hurricanes falling to Bruins for second straight year highlights how close, how far team must travel

By Peter Koutroumpis

RALEIGH, N.C. – Their exit from the 2020 Stanley Cup playoffs was quicker than desired, but not surprising.

A 2-1 Game 5 loss to the Boston Bruins last Wednesday sent the Carolina Hurricanes home from the NHL bubble in Toronto.

Managing only one win against the Bruins, the 4-1 series loss to the same team that denied them an opportunity to move on to the Stanley Cup Final in a 4-0 sweep in 2019, provided the message going forward.

Skate fast, play hard, capitalize on your scoring chances, and play dirtier as needed.

Show how much you really want it.

With that said, there was no lack of all the above from Carolina's play during Qualifying and Opening Round play.

All bets are off in the playoffs

The Hurricanes swept the New York Rangers in three games.

The accomplishment marked the second time in the team's history (playing in North Carolina) that it has qualified for the playoffs in consecutive seasons.

Bravo, well done, even if the players initially balked at the concept of playing extra games to jump on the road to the Cup.

Blame the global pandemic for that.

At the same time, an additional grind to play three well contested games against a solid Rangers squad may have justified that initial concern.

Sure, they had a week off to rest and recuperate to be ready for Boston, but the additional wear-and-tear was there, and even if recovered, only superficially.

That New York series wore Carolina down and a matchup against the Bruins was the least ideal of any to start a Stanley Cup run.

Looking in the mirror

Though many teams play a similar style to the Hurricanes, Boston comes the closest to resembling what head coach Rod Brind'Amour emphasizes – playing four lines, executing a



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non-stop skating, quick passing, and puck-battling group to wear other teams down at both ends.

Both squads have scoring talent in their top-six, and role players in the rest of the lineup to contribute offensively as well as defend effectively.

As a by-product of such dynamic styles, goaltenders who are physically able to play in that system, are key.

Both teams had that as all four keepers put up acceptable performances for both sides.

Results of 4-3 (L), 3-2 (W), 3-1 (L), 4-3 (L), 2-1 (L) showed that.

It was always a game of inches against the Bruins.

The Hurricanes had them on the ropes at different stages in each game, but couldn't deliver knockout punches, figuratively and literally to post wins more than once.

Instead, Boston bared its bloodied set of teeth, smiling, and then landed uppercuts and haymakers to get back into games they shouldn't have.

Playing the right way

In his postgame remarks, made following the walk along the handshake line with Boston, Brind'Amour said he was proud of his team and they had learned a lot – they played the right way.

He said he 'likes' his team, meaning the current roster, for the most part has earned his trust in playing at the pace and tempo, and style he wants them to play at.

So now, the next step he needs to take is to reveal more of the same sandpaper attitude he had following Game 1 – as the bench boss who didn't mince words in criticizing the league's officiating at a \$25,000 expense.

He went to a place that was purely an emotional one – totally understandable and allowed.

Did he lose his cool?

Yes, and that's okay – he's human.

He objected to wrongs he felt his team suffered, but it ended there.

An additional fine awaits him through next season if he publicly criticizes the league's officiating again.

So, he'll just have to go about it another way in 2020-2021.

Looking ahead

A scratch of the surface shows what Carolina can become in coming seasons.

They'll go along to get along, officiating will be what it is, but if they're pissed and no one's listening, they'll have to make sure someone does.

And Brind'Amour doesn't need to become an overwhelming, out-of-control coach to do so.

No, that would ruin the mindset and trust he's built up with the hard-working, talented, maturing, and in-control roster of players that he currently has.

He'll have to accept a few more roughing penalties, maybe even a few majors against his team.

It's just the next step he will need to encourage his team to take to contend with trying circumstances and opponents during the regular season, and particularly in Stanley Cup postseason play.

They can handle it.

Most of the roster should remain intact with only slight adjustments needed due to injury and/or salary cap issues.

The emotional and physical capital that Brind'Amour has had the players invest and develop can't be squandered.

The discussion that has to take place now is if they're all willing to double-down and really exhibit all of the emotion – positive and negative – that has to be spent to show they're worthy of winning the Stanley Cup.

Not just by doing it the right way, but by any, and all means necessary.

## TODAY'S LINKS

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# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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## SportScan

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

1191784 Carolina Hurricanes

To move forward, the Hurricanes may need to go against the principles that got them this far

LUKE DECOCK

AUGUST 21, 2020

It's not quite destroying the village in order to save it, but to take the next step — to be able to get past teams like the Boston Bruins in the postseason — the Carolina Hurricanes are going to have to at least consider going against everything that got them this far.

They ignored the warning signs last summer. Will they pay attention now?

They have, in two-plus seasons under Tom Dundon's ownership, been far ahead of the curve in the NHL when it comes to analytics. Dundon inherited Eric Tulsky from the previous regime and has given him a strong voice, to the Hurricanes' benefit. The pursuit of skill has been all-encompassing, and it has worked. Even in the Bruins series, the Hurricanes' metrics weren't that far behind; scoring chances at even strength narrowly favored the Bruins, 119-112. (All advanced stats via the indispensable Natural Stat Trick.)

But there was obviously a huge gap despite the close scores and scoring chances, no more apparent than the Hurricanes' collapse in the third period of Game 4. And the truly pivotal moment that sent things over the edge was Charlie McAvoy's punishing hit that sent Hurricanes captain Jordan Staal to the locker room for good. Mere seconds later the Bruins made it 2-2 and never really slowed down.

When things got real, when it was time to put their bodies on the line, the Hurricanes cowered.

The Bruins have the ability to put teams to that test, as did the Washington Capitals a year ago. The Hurricanes not only lack that ability, they lack the capability to respond to it.

The Hurricanes shrugged off the Capitals by doing things their own way, by relying on Petr Mrazek and taking advantage of Washington's shabby defensive group, but there was a flashing light over that series that the Hurricanes needed to be better equipped to meet that kind of challenge. The Bruins made that clear two rounds later, and again 16 months later, pushing the envelope with the officials and leaving the Hurricanes to complain about it.

(That's part of playoff hockey, too. Two years in a row, the Hurricanes lost their cool against Boston instead of finding an answer on the ice as they did against Washington.)

The Hurricanes have exquisite skill and a modern, mobile defense that is as versatile as any in the league, especially with the sorely missed Brett Pesce back and healthy. Jaccob Slavin's all-around game covers up Dougie Hamilton's deficiencies and lets Dougie be Dougie, and Brady Skjei and Pesce promise to be a solid second pairing next season. But with Joel Edmundson likely to leave as a free agent and a third pairing of

Jake Gardiner and Hadyn Fleury — as much progress as Fleury made playing with an edge, he was starting from absolute zero — there's no one who inspires any trepidation.

Contrast that with how the Bruins' defense, particularly McAvoy and Zdeno Chara and Brandon Carlo, played against the Hurricanes, defending the front of the Boston net. At even strength, the Bruins outscored the Hurricanes 9-8. One of the Hurricanes' goals came from the faceoff dots and below. All but one of the Bruins' did.

Even strength goals were 9-8 Boston but one of these things is not like the other. via @NatStatTrick <https://t.co/emyzcNJzJP> [pic.twitter.com/ADMv5AcP4e](https://pic.twitter.com/ADMv5AcP4e)

— Luke DeCock (@LukeDeCock) August 21, 2020

Which is a neat segue to the Hurricanes' forwards. Andrei Svechnikov did his thing until he got hurt doing it, but where were Brock McGinn and Warren Foegele and Nino Niederreiter when things got tough? Even when Foegele was successfully agitating last year, he was visibly uncomfortable in that role. Niederreiter has more skill, but if he's not scoring goals, and he's so streaky that can be true for long periods of time, he has to find another way to contribute. The Bruins have several bottom-six forwards who can.

So the question is whether the Hurricanes can find players who are analytically acceptable but better suited for playoff hockey — how many Jordan Martinooks are both out there and available? — or whether they'll have to compromise their principles in one area to address the other.

They certainly didn't do enough a year ago: Only Edmundson fit that bill. The additions of Ryan Dzingel and Gardiner and arrival of Martin Necas skewed the other direction. Same for Skjei, Sami Vatanen and Vincent Trocheck at the deadline, although Skjei set the tone for the qualifying round sweep of the New York Rangers with a crushing center-ice hit in the opening seconds.

The Hurricanes have another chance now. Their young skill players will only get better. Can they build some orneriness and determination around them? That's tougher to quantify than expected goals or zone entries but valuable in its own way.

5v5 shot rates for BOS - CAR series. Boston defence really took out the Canes offence (as it were). [pic.twitter.com/Kc2vAbzVeZ](https://pic.twitter.com/Kc2vAbzVeZ)

— Micah Blake McCurdy (@IneffectiveMath) August 21, 2020

In no way is this an anti-analytics polemic, given the amount of useful insight that can be gleaned from NHL play-by-play data or proprietary analysis. These may be hockey clichés, “the dirty areas” and “a heavy game,” but there is a kernel of truth to them. They may not mean everything, and they mean nothing without the kind of elite skill the Hurricanes have, but they mean something.

To address those areas is not a repudiation of the project. It's a statement of how far the Hurricanes have come.

Given the state of the franchise under the stuck-in-place regime of Ron Francis and Bill Peters, not to mention the previous decade in general, building a team consistently worthy of a playoff spot is no small accomplishment. Rod Brind'Amour has personally instilled a degree of will that was previously lacking.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 24, 2020

If this is only to be the beginning, they need to find players who can help them take the next step forward, whether that's by the numbers or not.

News Observer LOADED: 08.22.2020

1191907 Carolina Hurricanes

What we'll remember, and what we wish we could forget, about the Hurricanes' season

BY CHIP ALEXANDER

AUGUST 22, 2020

There will always be much to remember about the 2019-20 NHL season, the Year of the Virus.

For the Carolina Hurricanes, it began with a festive home opener against the Montreal Canadiens. The Canes won that one at PNC Arena, then ruined the Washington Capitals' home opener with an overtime win.

Justin Williams, 38, came out of semi-retirement and scored the winning shootout goal in his first game back. Morgan Geekie, 22, made his NHL debut and scored three times in his first two games.

The spread of a novel coronavirus brought everything to a halt. Then there was hockey again. Playoff hockey, in August.

"We've got a tight-knit group and this was a first-time experience for everyone," defenseman Jaccob Slavin said Wednesday. "I think you'll remember it 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."

Good moments and not-so-good moments. Here are a few of both:

THE GOOD

HE DID WHAT?

Many in the NHL had tried it but none had pulled it off. But Andrei Svechnikov did, twice.

On Oct. 29, 2019, Svechnikov had the puck behind the Calgary Flames net at PNC Arena. He swept it up on the blade of his stick, lacrosse style, and whipped it over the right shoulder and off the mask of goalie David Rittich for a goal.

Just like that, "Michigan" begat "The Svech." It was an NHL first and Svechnikov later would do it a second time against the Winnipeg Jets. It brought back memories of Mike Legg, the former Michigan player who made the move famous in a 1996 NCAA tournament game.

Legg said his phone blew up soon after Svechnikov's goal against the Flames. "So cool, so awesome. Good for him," Legg said the next day in an interview.

And Svechnikov's response? "I just got lucky a little bit," he said after the Canes' 2-1 win.

Then, he did it again. Is that luck?

Carolina Hurricanes forward Andrei Svechnikov became the first player in NHL history to score on a lacrosse play, doing it twice this season, and the Canes promoted it with T-shirts. Chip Alexander

WHO'S THAT GUY IN NET?

Goalie James Reimer started the game but was injured. Petr Mrazek took over but was wiped off when he left the crease to play the puck. Just

like that the Canes were two goalies down in the road game against Toronto.

What to do? That's why the NHL has emergency backup goalies in every arena. On Feb. 22, in Scotiabank Arena, that was David Ayres, 42, who was ready and willing to put on the gear and take the net. And became a part of NHL history.

Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour feared the worst when Ayres entered the game in the second period. When the game ended, the Canes winning 6-3, Ayres the unexpected hero, Brind'Amour soon was making an impassioned postgame talk, saying, "It's a memory I'll have forever."

NHL fans voted the Ayres game "The Greatest Moment of the NHL Season ... So Far" in June. As for the man himself, Ayres said he's "still living the dream."

Carolina Hurricanes right wing Andrei Svechnikov (37) watches a goal is scored past New York Rangers goaltender Henrik Lundqvist (30) as Rangers right wing Jesper Fast (17) looks on during the first period in the NHL hockey Stanley Cup playoffs in Toronto, Saturday, Aug. 1, 2020

The Canes couldn't beat the New York Rangers and couldn't beat goalie Henrik Lundqvist. For the past few years that was almost a given. Until it wasn't.

The Canes lost four times to the Rangers in the regular season and Lundqvist was the winner three times. That changed, quickly, in Toronto in the qualifying round of the NHL's Return to Play format.

The Canes beat the Rangers and Lundqvist in the first game, then again in the second. The Rangers went with rookie goalie Igor Shesterkin in the third game, but it was too late and the Canes were too good. Call it a three-game sweep in a best-of-five series that was not officially deemed the "playoffs" but had that feel to it.

"It's obviously a crazy time but we're just grateful to be able to do this and try and bring some happiness and joy to our fans," Brind'Amour said. "They deserve some smiles."

Dougie Hamilton was down on the ice, in pain. Late in the second period of the Jan. 16 road game against the Columbus Blue Jackets, the defenseman fell awkwardly along the boards chasing after the puck, his left leg buckling under him.

It was a broken fibula. Surgery soon followed. It was a season-ending injury ... or so everyone thought.

The injury kept Hamilton out of the NHL All-Star festivities but the NHL's long pause during the pandemic allowed him to return and play again, to at least finish out the season on the ice with his teammates in the postseason. He had the winning goal in the Canes' only victory over the Boston Bruins in first round.

"I guess there's a silver lining in everything," he said.

Carolina defenseman Dougie Hamilton (19) heads down the ice during the Carolina Hurricanes' on-ice workouts at PNC Arena in Raleigh, N.C., Monday, July 13, 2020

There would be no silver lining for Brett Pesce.

While many eyes were on Reimer and Mrazek leaving and David Ayres entering that Feb. 22 game in Toronto, Brind'Amour had a lot more to fret about that night. Pesce also left the game with an injury after a seemingly innocuous play involving the Maple Leafs' John Tavares.

No one was sure at first what Pesce had done. Turns out, his right shoulder needed surgery. Turns out, it would be a season-ending injury, taking another of the Canes' top-four defensemen out of the lineup.

Had the Canes beaten the Bruins in the playoffs, in the same arena, Pesce might have had a slight chance of getting back on the ice in postseason. He'll have to wait until next season.

TOUGH WAY TO END IT



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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The Canes had a 2-0 lead in Game 4 against the Bruins and were less than 13 minutes away from tying the series on Monday. But Reimer bolted out of net to try and play the puck, lost the race to the Bruins' Jake DeBrusk, allowed a goal and it began what BrindAmour said was seven minutes in the third period when the Canes "could not stop the bleeding."

The Bruins scored four times. The Canes came unraveled. Said the Canes' Williams, "It snowballed into something we didn't want."

The 4-3 loss gave the Bruins a 3-1 series lead. They closed it out Wednesday with a 2-1 win. But when it was over, the Canes' time in the Toronto bubble at an end, they preferred to look at the positives.

"We've got some really good young players who want it and are going to grow and get even better," captain Jordan Staal said. "That's the exciting thing about the Carolina Hurricanes. The future is bright."

News Observer LOADED: 08.23.2020

1192081 Websites

The Athletic / Clark: Is hockey broadcasting at a crossroads?

By Ryan S. Clark

Aug 23, 2020

For now, Mike Milbury will not be heard or seen for the remainder of NBC's coverage of the Stanley Cup playoffs. Knowing if he will return to the network as an analyst to start the 2020-21 NHL season is still a question.

Milbury's future has become a topic of discussion since Thursday when declaring there were "not even any women here to disrupt your concentration" while discussing the NHL's bubble during Game 5 of the Islanders-Capitals series. The controversial comment led to many openly voicing their frustrations with Milbury.

On Friday, the NHL issued a statement condemning Milbury for "the insensitive and insulting comment." The release said the NHL communicated this message to NBC and added that, "The comment did not reflect the NHL's values and commitment to making our game more inclusive and welcoming to all."

It is the latest incident of a hockey broadcaster who has made either xenophobic or sexist comments during the 2019-20 season. Sportsnet fired Don Cherry after the longtime analyst and "Hockey Night in Canada" mainstay made what the network said were "discriminatory" and "offensive" comments in November upon insinuating new Canadian immigrants did not wear Remembrance Day poppies because they did not respect the sacrifices made by veterans. NBC also parted with Jeremy Roenick in February after he joked on the Spittin' Chiclets podcast about having a threesome with his wife and NBC Sports anchor Kathryn Tappen, while also commenting on NBC Sports analyst Patrick Sharp's looks. Roenick has since filed suit against NBC for anti-straight discrimination.

Hockey over the last few years has worked to become more inclusive, especially when it comes to broadcasting. The Islanders have two women analysts in Jennifer Botterill and A.J. Mleczko, while the Sharks added Kendall Coyne Schofield to their broadcasts. National audiences in the United States are getting the opportunity to listen to Coyne Schofield and Mleczko on NBC, whereas Cassie Campbell-Pascall became the first woman to do color commentary on "Hockey Night in Canada" in 2006. On International Women's Day in March, both NBC and Sportsnet had separate all-female broadcasts that included Coyne-

Schofield, Mleczko and Kate Scott, along with women who directed and produced the game. Earlier this month, the Seattle Kraken hired Cincinnati Cyclones play-by-play announcer Everett Fitzhugh, which will make him the first Black team broadcaster in league history.

Seeing a stronger presence of minorities and women was one of the three improvements fans said they wanted to see as part of The Athletic's NHL TV survey in April.

And just a few weeks ago on the opening day of the NHL's return to play, Wild defenseman Matt Dumba knelt at center ice during the U.S. national anthem.

All this puts the sport at a crossroads because how do you show the strides the sport is making only to then have a broadcaster make sexist comments?

"I think there has been a convergence of a lot of things," former Devils analyst Sherry Ross said. "A primary one for me and this has popped up again and again and again. What you have is this intense focus because a lot of people are housebound and so eager for sports to come back. ... You have this magnifying glass and in addition to gender, you have the whole Black Lives Matter movement and that started bringing race to the forefront, as it should be. You are starting to look at all these different elements where hockey has fallen short.

"A comment like (Milbury's) comes up and everyone's ears perk up. The attention is a lot more focused. I think that is why it has gotten a much bigger reaction."

When Ross first started in the industry as a sportswriter in the late 1970s, as part of the first wave of women in hockey journalism – along with women like Helene Elliott and Lisa Dillman – she faced pushback from those around her.

Soon, she started seeing more women get into the industry. She eventually saw women being hired as beat writers and color analysts for broadcast. She also saw more women getting hired by teams to work in various roles.

But then there would be moments when that progress came into question.

"Every so often, there are these wildfires that pop up like the Lisa Olson incident with the New England Patriots," Ross said of the former Boston Herald reporter who in 1990 was sexually harassed while in the dressing room. "You think you move past it and it keeps rearing its ugly head again. There are so many women now in public relations jobs and in scouting and hockey analytics jobs, as well. You just think you're being judged on what you do and not what you are, but it keeps coming back to that."

Lisa Seltzer was a producer and a director in her career. She worked for the Ducks and Blackhawks, while also doing work for ESPN and NBC. In fact, Seltzer came out of retirement to direct NBC's broadcast on International Women's Day. When she started her career in the 1980s, an announcer asked her to sew on a button that fell off of his jacket at a morning skate. Seltzer said she did it to be kind but the fact nobody would ask her or any woman to do that now does represent the progress that has been made. And she thinks NBC has done a great job of promoting more women and minorities within the company.

Seltzer worked with Milbury and Roenick. Her time with the Blackhawks meant she knew Roenick when he was a teenager. She got to know Milbury whenever she worked for NBC as a freelance director. Seltzer had "nothing but nice things to say about them" in terms of her own experiences, while also stating she wished both of them had not made those comments.

"I want to say this the right way because it is important: NBC hired me when there were not a lot of women out there and they did not have to," she said. "I think NBC, from my perspective, has been female-friendly and female-tolerant. That said, you cannot control what people say. I think their response was correct."



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One of the points Seltzer raised was that incidents like the ones involving Milbury and Roenick must come with context. Milbury and Roenick were not NHL employees but employees of a rights holder. But as for the NHL itself? She thinks the league has made the effort to be more inclusive and continues to do so when trying to have more women and minorities involved.

"You have to ask yourself: Do you think sports reflects society or does society reflect sports?" Seltzer said. "Because to me, sports has opened the door for people within our society to be accepted."

Tom Jones, who covered the Wild and Lightning during his sportswriting career, is now the senior media writer for the Poynter Institute for Media Studies.

Jones said the NHL is "having a bit of a reckoning in particular" when it comes to women. He said commentators such as Cherry have had an "old school" mentality for years, while Milbury and Roenick were trying to make jokes without realizing the harm they caused. Jones added that the NHL has had a problem with how women are viewed and how that has all translated into toughness is equated to masculinity, and from it comes homophobic comments.

"Hockey has to be tough and if you are weak, you compare that to being feminine," Jones said. "Something like that has been going on for quite some time. It's good when people speak out."

Another item Jones raised was how Cherry's eventual demise was years in the making. The problem was there where those within NHL media circles who enabled Cherry's behavior that, as Jones said, was "derogatory of non-Canadians, French-Canadians and Russians" before those comments caught up to him.

Jones was thankful that those items were being recognized but added that it was a "shame" that it took so long.

Sportsnet made the decision to fire Cherry, as did NBC with Roenick. There has been no word yet on what NBC will do with Milbury. Jones said he could not predict exactly what would happen with Milbury, but he thinks that NBC should use this as a teaching moment.

"Milbury is another guy you could see this coming with for a while," Jones said. "We need to change our attitudes. Instead of firing them so the next guy does not do this, maybe we need to teach people so they know it is wrong. I think these moments are opportunities to educate people on why these comments are not OK."

Ross said there will never be a situation where everyone is in complete agreement on a particular topic. There are going to be more women involved in the sport and it is important to know those women are going to be supported. There could be young women starting out who might already feel the normal insecurities about taking the next step in their careers.

Her concern is what happens if someone makes a derogatory or insulting remark about gender? For her, that is where it must be made clear that someone who is within the minority of any job must know they are going to be supported if they speak out against what is being done to them.

"That has to be the biggest lesson that comes out of this," Ross said. "I want young women in their 20s who want to be color analysts, writers, referees or whatever they want to be, I want them to believe. I (want) them to feel that hockey is for everyone. That is what the NHL says and you better prove it."

The Athletic LOADED: 08.24.2020

1192082 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Canucks' response to Game 1 issues will determine if underdog run continues

Mark Spector

August 24, 2020

EDMONTON — The problem with being an underdog in the National Hockey League playoffs? The further you go, the harder it gets.

Welcome, Vancouver Canucks, to Round 2.

What? You just beat the Stanley Cup champs, a big, rugged experienced St. Louis Blues club?

Great. Now you get the Vegas Golden Knights, who are just as big, likely faster and surely deeper, with better goaltending and a visit to the Stanley Cup Final as recent two springs ago. There, they lost to Washington. So they're also hungrier than St. Louis was.

"They're a fast team, they're a good team," Canucks head coach Travis Green submitted after Game 1. "We just need to play better."

Accurate on all counts, certainly. The "just," however, suggests a certain simplicity in taking a bigger bite out of Game 2 than the Canucks were able to get in Game 1, a 5-0 affair that at no time appeared as if it might go the other way.

Vancouver will have to increase their commitment about ten-fold if that is to happen. Truly, the Canucks merely dipped their collective toe into the Round 2 waters Sunday night, while Vegas had 20 guys who were submerged and churning out shift after shift of superior hockey to what Vancouver brought to the table.

"I just don't think we were good enough tonight. I just don't think we got up to our standard today," admitted defenceman Alex Edler, one of only two Canucks players made available to the media postgame. "They're a good team, they're quick. We just have to play our game better. We've shown we are a good team, and have to show that in Game 2."

In a 5-0 game we are left to weigh how much of the result was Vegas dominance, and how much was due to an emotional deficit from a Canucks team that polished off St. Louis only two nights before.

Was Vegas that good? Was Vancouver that bad?

Well, most would agree that Vegas is bigger, deeper, and more playoff steeled than the Canucks. Knowing this, you knew they would play with the confidence and conviction of a steep favorite, traits that come across in a team that rolled four lines, each of which got the better of their opposite number coming over the boards for Vancouver.

The Golden Knights are an excellent forechecking club, forcing multiple failed zone exit attempts out of the opponent and then getting a change in that creates a fresh Vegas unit out against a tired opponent. Then they pin you in your own zone for another 30 seconds, before the dam predictably breaks.

"That's our game, something we've been building on," said Vegas head coach Pete DeBoer. "Hanging on to the pucks ... and trying to fatigue teams with our depth. When we're playing like that we're a tough team to play against."

The well-known stat is that the Golden Knights have never lost a game against Vancouver, going 8-0-2 in regular season encounters and now 1-0 in the playoffs. What we don't know is how the Canucks react to having been beaten so thoroughly in the first game of this series.

"We're definitely not going to just flush it and move on," Green said. "Whether we played well, or didn't, (we'll) analyze our game. We've got to be better with the puck, that would be a start."



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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"It was a different type of game tonight than any we've played so far," he admitted. "This was probably our worst game (of the playoffs) tonight."

It was, in no uncertain terms, the rockiest night of young Quinn Hughes' embryonic playoff career, finding himself on the ice for the first three of Vegas' even strength goals. Hughes was only a minus player twice in these playoffs — interestingly, in Game 1's against Minnesota and St. Louis — before bouncing back defensively in each series.

So Hughes becomes a microcosm for the macro situation the Canucks find themselves in, having arrived for Round 2 lacking in almost every department. Can he bounce back like he did in each of the Qualifying Round and Round 1?

Or, having become an obvious focal point of DeBoer's game plan, has the year-long ascension of Hughes' finally met an impediment that is too great — even for such a fine young defenceman?

That's not a prediction we're willing to make, having watched him play his way to becoming a Calder Trophy candidate.

Many made the same mistake with the Canucks as a whole, after the Blues tied their Round 1 series 2-2, predicting that the fun was over for Vancouver. That it had been a nice run, but the big boys had found their stride now, and the Canucks were about to find out what a real Cup contender looks like.

Yeah, how did that prediction work out?

Well, we're there again Canucks fans, with a Vancouver team that will have to prove it belongs in this series. Starting on Tuesday night.

Fascinating, isn't it?

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Sportsnet.ca / Dissecting the Oilers' contract situation to find defensive improvements

Mark Spector

August 23, 2020

EDMONTON — You can find plenty of improvement over the regular season for the Edmonton Oilers. It's right there in black and white.

From the 2018-19 season to the 2019-20 season, here are some of the Oilers' primary stats (NHL ranking in parenthesis; '19-20 stats prorated where necessary):

- Points: 79 (25th) to a prorated 96 (9th).
- Points percentage: .482 (25th) to .585 (12th)
- Goals for: 229 (20th) to 258 (12th)
- Goals against: 271 (25th) to 248 (12th)
- Power play: 21.2% (9th) to 29.5% (1st)
- Penalty kill: 74.8% (30th) to 84.4% (2nd)
- 5 x 5 Goals For: 146 (24th) to 166th (15th)

Basically, the regular season Oilers moved from being a bottom-third NHL team to a club that operated right at the cusp between the top and middle thirds. Nice progress for a general manager (Ken Holland) and head coach (Dave Tippett) in their first collective year in an organization.

Then the Qualifying Round arrived, and Edmonton was poor. They got crushed in Game 1, then crushed Chicago in Game 2. So the series whittled down to Games 3, where the Oilers led 3-2 with six minutes to play, and Game 4, where the score was tied 2-2 after 40 minutes.

Edmonton wound up in defeat both nights, basically losing two third periods. It's a small sample size, considering the improvement shown through 71 regular season games. But coming up small when the games are big also carries weight.

The other overarching factor with these Oilers is this stat: when it comes to goals against at 5-on-5, they were the 24th-ranked team last season, then dropped to 26th place this year. They are too easy to score on, a spike driven home by the Blackhawks, who got important goals at even strength whenever required.

What are the chances that Edmonton finishes the 2020-21 season one-two in the league in special teams? Not good. If those numbers ultimately fall — especially the PK — then their 5-on-5 play has to improve if they are to maintain their standing as a playoff team.

So, taking a sweep through the Oilers' roster, it will be important to weigh things accordingly — acknowledging improvement, but recognizing that if they can't win at 5-on-5 play, eventually they won't win at all.

## FORWARDS

Connor McDavid

Position: C

Age: 23

Contract Status: Signed for six more seasons

AAV: \$12.5 M

The Skinny: If he's not the best hockey player in the world, surely McDavid is the most valuable one, coming in 10 years younger than Sidney Crosby (respect to Nathan MacKinnon here). There is no questioning his offensive production. Only one part of his game bears inspection: 5-on-5 play, where his Corsi for is 47.93 per cent. He was on the ice for 62 even strength goals, and 58 against. His shots share was 47.64 per cent, meaning the other team got more shots on net than Edmonton did when McDavid was on the ice at even strength. He is a 48 per cent faceoff man. McDavid's values and talents can not be aptly described by mere words. But, he can also find a way to give up less while dazzling every night.

Leon Draisaitl

Position: C

Age: 25 (on Oct. 27)

Contract Status: Signed for five more seasons

AAV: \$8.5 M

The Skinny: His could be the best value contract in the NHL today; an Art Ross winner and a back-to-back 50-goal (prorated), 100-point player. All for a half-million less than Jeff Skinner. Draisaitl's metrics are almost all superior to McDavid's as listed above, and he has 50 per cent more D-zone starts than the captain. His defensive game will improve, but it is clear he is on that path while maintaining his offensive output. This is as good a one-two punch at centre as any NHL team can boast.

Ryan Nugent-Hopkins

Position: LW

Age: 27

Contract Status: Signed for one more season

AAV: \$6 M



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The Skinny: Nugent-Hopkins was on his way to the first 70-point season of his career. He has become a 25-goal, 65–70-point winger who has a bug hand in why the Oilers' power play is the NHL's best. Like all the Oilers' skill players, his Corsi is slightly in the negative at 5-on-5 (48.92 per cent), as is his shots share (48.95 per cent). Like the team in general, Nugent-Hopkins may find production will have to dip if Edmonton is ever going to rein in its goals against. He is a keeper, no question, and will get a raise next summer.

Kailer Yamamoto

Position: RW

Age: 22 (on Sept. 29)

Contract Status: Signed for one more season, then RFA

AAV: \$895,000

The Skinny: A huge surprise, emerging as a rookie who became a genuine top-six winger for Draisaitl. He wins pucks from players far bigger than him, and is the perfect mix of puck retriever and offensive ally for a world-class centreman. And his defensive numbers are solid, too.

Zack Kassian

Position: RW

Age: 29

Contract Status: Signed for four more seasons

AAV: \$3.2 M

The Skinny: Is Kassian a top-six player or a depth winger? Well, at \$3.2 million, the Oilers are paying him like he is the former, and if Holland can find the proper left-winger for McDavid, Kassian is a nice fit for two highly skilled offensive linemates. He both protects and can trade pucks with McDavid. Kassian's issue? When he's not hopping the boards every third shift as a first-liner, he needs to bring his physicality more readily in a third-line role with less minutes.

Josh Archibald

Position: RW

Age: 28 (on Oct. 6)

Contract Status: Signed for two more seasons

AAV: \$1.5 M

The Skinny: Excellent penalty killer who can move up and down the lineup. Can play a fourth-line role with a Riley Sheahan, or jump up and complement McDavid on the first line and not look out of place. Inexpensive, flexible, good speed. Nice depth player here.

Tyler Ennis

Position: LW

Age: 31 (on Oct. 6)

Contract Status: UFA

AAV: \$800,000 (last season)

The Skinny: Ennis is a useful utility winger who has enjoyed time on McDavid's left side. He is basically a placeholder until a younger version of himself can be found or developed, and can work in the bottom-six until needed higher in the lineup. Skill on reserve is always nice. It wouldn't be surprising if Holland re-signed Ennis this off-season.

James Neal

Position: LW

Age: 33 (on Sept. 3)

Contract Status: Signed for three more seasons

AAV: \$5.75 M

The Skinny: It's unlikely that Neal finishes his contract in Edmonton. The question is: does a buyout occur this off-season? Neal still has above-average hands, but at 32 his feet are failing. Still, on a quick team he can help. Is that help worth his salary? Or would it be better to reallocate those dollars in a tight cap environment?

Andreas Athanasiou

Position: LW

Age: 27 (on Aug. 6)

Contract Status: RFA

AAV: \$3 M (last season)

The Skinny: With the salary cap locked in for at least two years, there isn't a chance Athanasiou makes \$3 million with his next deal. Holland will not qualify him, but having expended two second-round picks for him at the deadline, the Oilers GM would like to keep Athanasiou around — but for closer to \$1.75 million. As an UFA (if not qualified), the player can go wherever he wants. Athanasiou is super fast, does not play well with high-end centres, and has blinders on much of the time. Although he once scored 30 goals for Detroit, he's best viewed as a valuable depth player. Until he sees himself that way, however, he may disappoint like he did in Edmonton last season.

Jujhar Khaira

Position: C/LW

Age: 27 (on Aug. 13)

Contract Status: Signed for one more season

AAV: \$1.2 M

The Skinny: For a bottom-six player, Khaira isn't good enough 5-on-5, where he was on for 15 goals for but 34 goals against this season. He's big and skates well, but if we're going to expect better defensive play out of the 90- and 100-point Oilers, Khaira's 44.75 per cent shots share is not close to good enough. He had 10 points last season and was minus-19.

Alex Chiasson

Position: RW

Age: 30 (on Oct. 1)

Contract Status: Signed for one more season

AAV: \$2.15 M

The Skinny: Chiasson is a veteran depth winger who helps on the second power-play unit and brings some much-needed winning experience from Washington. He is above 50 per cent in the important metrics, and is a guy you want among your depth group. He knows what he is and fulfills that role.

Riley Sheahan

Position: C

Age: 29 (on Dec. 7)

Contract Status: UFA

AAV: \$900,000 (last season)

The Skinny: Sheahan is a 4C, one of two along with Gaetan Haas. The Oilers are in the market for a genuine 3C, and if they land one it's hard to see Holland re-signing Sheahan. That said, Sheahan and Archibald were the first two forwards over the boards on a PK that went from 30th-place to second this season. His defensive metrics are not great, but we should note that Sheahan took less than 30 per cent of his draws in the offensive zone.



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Gaetan Haas

Position: C

Age: 28

Contract Status: Signed for one season

AAV: \$915,000

The Skinny: Holland re-signed Haas a couple of weeks ago, a player who ups the team speed, takes care of his own end, and chipped in 5-5-10 in his first North American season — a prorated 12-point season. Can he go to 8-12-20 in a second season? If he can, he is worth the modest salary he earns?

Joakim Nygard

Position: LW

Age: 27

Contract Status: Signed for one season

AAV: \$875,000

The Skinny: Another older player coming over from Europe for the first time, the speedy Nygard lost too many games to injury to make a true judgement about. He had 3-6-9 in 33 games, and was re-signed by Holland. Cheap, fast and with some promise, Nygard will have the advantage of playing in Sweden this fall prior to joining Edmonton at training camp.

Tyler Benson

Position: LW

Age: 22

Contract Status: Signed for one season

AAV: \$808,333

The Skinny: If Benson can find a half-step somewhere, he'll play. If he can't... He has the head, hands and skills of an NHL player, but his feet won't buy those assets enough time to perform at that level. Not yet, anyhow.

Ryan McLeod

Position: C

Age: 21 (on Sept. 21)

Contract Status: Signed for two seasons

AAV: \$834,617

The Skinny: McLeod has one AHL season under his belt, where he had 23 points in 56 games. He's 6-3, 200 lbs. and looks to be the perfect 3C behind two elite top-six centres down the road. He is the Oilers' best forward prospect and will almost certainly return to the AHL next season.

### DEFENCE

Oscar Klefbom

Position: LD

Age: 27

Contract Status: Signed for three more seasons

AAV: \$4.167 M

The Skinny: Behind Draisaitl, Klefbom's is Edmonton's best value contract. He is not a genuine No. 1, but performs all those duties as Edmonton's best D-man. He led the team in minutes per game (25:25; fifth in the NHL) and led the league in blocked shots while quarterbacking the NHL's best power play. Not great, but very good and very versatile. A huge bargain at that price.

Adam Larsson

Position: RD

Age: 28 Nov. 12

Contract Status: Signed for one more season

AAV: \$4.17 M

The Skinny: Larsson is a hard-rock defender — a Jake Muzzin-lite, if you will. Good on PK, struggles on zone exits. He's at his best when protecting a lead, not so much when trailing. With a farm system teeming with young D-men, Larsson could be traded to a team like Toronto that needs a defensive conscience. All those intangibles that can't be quantified? Larsson has them in spades. Good teams always have at least one, maybe two D-men like him.

Darnell Nurse

Position: LD

Age: 25

Contract Status: Signed for two more seasons

AAV: \$5.6 M

The Skinny: Five years into his NHL career, we're still not sure what Nurse is. He skates above average, has great size and is snarly, but is still prone to mistakes he should be growing out of by now. He is a 35-point D-man who gets scant time on the second PP. A big part of the leadership group in Edmonton, they'd like Nurse to become a rock on their back end who moves the puck to the forwards and runs a clean D-zone. They don't need him to be dynamic offensively.

Ethan Bear

Position: RD

Age: 23

Contract Status: RFA

AAV: \$720,000 (last season)

The Skinny: A very good player who has room to improve at just 23. No rookie D-man played more minutes in the NHL last season. He retrieves pucks and puts them on the forward's tape. He battles, will fight, and gets his shots through. He is the new-age D-man who will play in Edmonton for a long, long time.

Caleb Jones

Position: LD

Age: 23

Contract Status: Signed for two more seasons

AAV: \$850,000

The Skinny: Seth's little brother will likely get a bigger bite next season and spend the year as an every-day player. He can play the right side, has good feet, moves the puck well. It's his time — guys like Kris Russell and Matt Benning should be nervous — and he'll lead a group of youngsters who will eventually populate the Oilers' blue line.

Kris Russell

Position: LD

Age: 33

Contract Status: Signed for one more season

AAV: \$4 M

The Skinny: Russell was Edmonton's best D-man in the Qualifying Round. Of course, \$4 million is too much to pay for a third-pairing



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defenceman, but he shows younger players the sacrifices that are necessary to win. He'll have one more season in Edmonton, unless Holland can swing some kind of salary relief deal.

Matt Benning

Position: RD

Age: 26

Contract Status: RFA

AAV: \$1.9 M (last season)

The Skinny: Perpetually underappreciated by Oilers fans, Benning's only issues could be his rising salary and the fact that he slots in as a third-pairing guy. As someone who hits, defends pretty well, and is a local boy, Benning will play in the NHL for many more years. Will that be in Edmonton? Tough to say.

Evan Bouchard

Position: RD

Age: 21 (on Oct. 20)

Contract Status: Signed for two more seasons

AAV: \$895,000

The Skinny: A No. 10 overall pick in 2018, Bouchard is the future of the Oilers' blue line. A hopeful top-pairing RD, he needs to find some urgency as a pro that he did not require as a 35-minute player in junior. Once that sets in — this year? Next? — there could be an excellent player here.

Philip Broberg

Position: LD

Age: 19

Contract Status: Three-year ELC not begun yet

AAV: \$925,000

The Skinny: Broberg is the best skater on Edmonton's blue line — already. He'll start the season in Skelleftea, but showed so well at the July camp that targets for his NHL arrival may have been moved up. There is a chance that Broberg-Bouchard could be a legit No. 1 pairing one day down the road. A chance, not a lock. This kid skates like Jay Bouwmeester, is 6-3, and has better offensive instincts.

### GOALIES

Mikko Koskinen

Position: G

Age: 32

Contract Status: Signed for two more seasons

AAV: \$4.5 M

The Skinny: He'll be here for the next two years and perhaps beyond, a part of a top duo with someone else. His numbers were good last season — 2.75 GAA, .917 saves percentage — but he wasn't great against Chicago. Koskinen is enough of a goalie if the other guy is also good. He has not proven he can carry the ball.

Mike Smith

Position: G

Age: 38

Contract Status: UFA

AAV: \$2 M (last season)

The Skinny: Smith was a decent partner for Koskinen, and brought the team much-needed swagger and confidence. Those intangibles, and his superior puck-handling, could land Smith a one-year deal in Edmonton. Holland may choose someone younger if the right goalie becomes available, but would be comfortable bringing Smith back as well. Stay tuned.

Stuart Skinner

Position: G

Age: 22 (on Nov. 1)

Contract Status: Signed for one more season

AAV: \$785,000

The Skinny: A big goalie at 6-3, 203 lbs., Skinner is the organization's No. 3 who will be the AHL No. 1 this season. The path to the NHL is wide open in Edmonton. He just has to prove he is good enough.

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Sportsnet.ca / Bruins deliver strong statement in physical Game 1 win over Lightning

Chris Johnston

August 23, 2020

TORONTO — They are the deepest, the most experienced, the absolute best the Eastern Conference has to offer.

And when the opening bell sounded on this titanic Boston-Tampa series, we came to see what kind of punch the Lightning would throw after being remade in a more black-and-blue image.

Instead we were reminded of a universal hockey truth: The Bruins are exactly who we thought they were.

"There's no moral victories here, there's lessons learned," Lightning coach Jon Cooper said after Sunday's 3-2 loss to Boston.

You come at the king, you best not miss.

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Game 1 was tilted in the Bruins' favour through a series of tiny edges. Then the dagger arrived like a lightning bolt, with Patrice Bergeron lifting Ryan McDonagh's stick before the defenceman had any idea he was in serious danger.

From there, it was a quick puck touch to David Pastrnak, who put a no-look backhand saucer pass directly on Brad Marchand's tape in a shooting position with nothing but empty net to fire at.

"That goal was all him," Marchand said of Bergeron. "His forechecking there, a great read. That's why he's going to be a Hall of Famer."

The entire sequence played out inside two seconds. You might as well put it in the freaking Louvre.

"When our offensive players are doing that, we're going to be hard to stop because they can finish some plays," said Bruins coach Bruce Cassidy. "It's a second effort league."



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"Obviously, everybody saw it," added Cooper. "They make big-time plays at high rates of speed, so if you let up for a second they're going to get ya because they compete really hard and they never give up on plays. And so clearly that's what happened there.

"We have a recipe for them, but in the end you hope to just control them."

He was referring to Marchand, Bergeron and Pastrnak — the so-called "Perfection Line," which has always felt like an imperfect label because this is a sport where that ideal simply isn't attainable.

Boston's top line was anything but perfect to open this second-round series and yet they found a way to be serious difference-makers. That group played uphill for a significant stretch of the game and still had a hand in all three goals: With Marchand gaining the line and holding the puck before Charlie Coyle tipped home a Brandon Carlo point shot, and Pastrnak burying a David Krejci feed on the power play, and ultimately Marchand finishing the gorgeous sequence 1:17 into the third period that lifted the bar a little higher than Tampa's feverish comeback attempt could reach.

Still, it was a series opener that left you no reason to draw any big conclusions.

Tampa and Boston have each owned a spot in the NHL's top tier for what feels like a sporting eternity. Across the last three regular seasons, they rank Nos. 1 and 2 in wins and points.

No one has scored more goals than the Lightning during that stretch. No one has allowed fewer than the Bruins.

They could end up playing seven games in 11 nights if this best-of-seven goes the distance and that's why every decision felt like more of a long-term investment than a win-at-all-costs move for the moment.

Cooper gave his fourth line basically the same 5-on-5 ice time as his second line (7:46-7:37), which meant Patrick Maroon played nearly as much as Tyler Johnson. That trend might not continue when the puck drops Tuesday on Game 2, but after a year where the Lightning set out to toughen up the bottom end of the roster the head coach leaned on his beef.

"They have a bit of a different makeup now. They compete a lot harder, they're a lot more physical and obviously they have a ton of talent," said Marchand.

Given how much is at stake, the biggest disappointment for the Lightning was a tepid first period where they managed just 19 total shot attempts. They trailed 1-0 at the intermission, made a strong push through the middle frame and still went down 2-0 because of the special teams edge highlighted by Pastrnak's power-play goal.

Tampa eventually broke through with two late Victor Hedman replies through traffic — both glanced off Boston defender Charlie McAvoy on their way in — but that didn't salvage any additional pride.

Nearly a month into the bubble, this is where it really starts to get stressful. The winner of this series will have a path to the Stanley Cup Final and both teams are incredibly invested in the outcome.

We saw the temperature start to rise towards a boil as the Bruins and Lightning found their footing in Game 1 and were reminded that neither is head and shoulders above the other.

"You can't win with one line. You have to roll all the way through," said Marchand. "Different heroes every night, different series. That's why we were a good team last year, that's why we were dominant all season long. And why we're here tonight.

"We rely on our group. We always have that next up mentality and that continues."

It's a race to four.

And the punches are just starting to fly.

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TSN.CA / Injection of personality helps Tampa Bay Lightning talk out their issues

Mark Masters

The Boston Bruins and Tampa Bay Lightning held Zoom sessions after game-day skates on Sunday. The New York Islanders and Philadelphia Flyers held Zoom sessions after practices.

The Lightning altered the dynamic on their roster this season by bringing in veterans like Pat Maroon, Blake Coleman and Barclay Goodrow up front and Kevin Shattenkirk and Zach Bogosian on the back end. How has that changed the personality of the group?

"Well, you said the word, 'Personality,'" head coach Jon Cooper noted. "We seem to have it this year. With that group of guys we brought in we brought in a lot of personality ... when you have that life in the locker room it gets infectious on the bench and even more infectious on the ice. In years past when we might have been quiet and subdued in certain situations, we aren't that anymore so personality is a great word to use, because that's what those guys bring."

After a stunning first-round sweep by Columbus last year, Tampa focused on getting mentally tougher and finding a way to win close games. And it was Shattenkirk who stepped up with a second-intermission speech after the Lightning fell behind 3-2 against the Jackets in Game 5 of the first-round rematch. Tampa, playing without injured captain Steven Stamkos, came back to win in overtime clinching the series.

— TSN (@TSN\_Sports) August 20, 2020

"Guys, they didn't speak often, you know," Cooper said of past seasons. "I remember the coaches speaking and maybe one other person and that's it. Throughout this year more and more guys have felt not only compelled, but [as if] it was their duty to stand up and say what they felt and I think it has a big impact on the team."

According to the coach, Victor Hedman gets more vocal with each passing year while Alex Killorn has emerged as a more talkative leader this season.

"When everybody's communicating, whether it's fun or heated or it's encouragement, the more guys talk to each other it just creates a better environment because you start getting honesty, you start getting trust, so many things come out of that and we've just had more of that this year and it bodes well for us," Cooper said.

Cooper praises personality of team ahead of Bruins series

After a heartbreaking sweep at the hands of the Columbus Blue Jackets last year in the first round, the Lightning have already slain that dragon and are on to round two against the Bruins. What is different this time around? According to head coach Jon Cooper, the team has a certain "personality" thanks in part to additions like Zach Bogosian and Blake Coleman who spoke to the media today.

Cooper is celebrating his 53rd birthday in the bubble.

"I'm just happy my hair is having the courtesy to turn a little bit grey instead of completely fall out," the coach quipped.



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Cooper had no special birthday plans on Sunday other than touching base with his family back home. Getting a chance to coach Game 1 against the Boston Bruins is a pretty good gift from the hockey Gods although Cooper joked he won't have to do much considering how well the divisional rivals know each other.

"I think you could pull the coaches right out of this and let the players just go at it," he said. "This is a pretty marquee match-up for the second round. Both teams have spent a long time in this bubble and the longer you spend in you really want to see this thing out and I think you'll get a great effort from both teams."

Marchand on Tampa's evolution: 'They compete a lot harder'

The Lightning and Bruins are set to face-off in the playoffs for the second time in three years, but the dynamic is different now. "They have a bit of a different make-up," Bruins winger Brad Marchand noted. "They compete a lot harder." That was certainly evident back in March when the teams combined for 94 penalty minutes in their final regular-season showdown and more fireworks are expected over the next two weeks.

After being a healthy scratch in the final three games of the Carolina series, Boston's Nick Ritchie draws back in for Game 1 against the Lightning. The 6-foot-2, 230-pound winger will skate on the third line with Charlie Coyle and Anders Bjork.

"We expect [him to be] a little better on the walls," coach Bruce Cassidy explained, "and then getting inside. Charlie is a good puck-protection guy and if he can separate hopefully Nick can learn to find those soft spots in the O-zone."

Ritchie failed to register a shot on net in the first two games against the Hurricanes, but the style of play against the Lightning may prove to be a better fit for the Orangeville, Ont. native.

"Carolina had defencemen that like to get up the ice, you saw that with their goal totals, I think they got whatever it was four, five goals from their D-men, and so they would try to beat you up the ice after a turnover, so we needed a little more speed in the lineup to counter that, and that's where Bjork and Jack [Studnicka] got a look, [Sean] Kuraly moved up," Cassidy said. "But Tampa with bigger guys like Hedman and [Mikhail] Sergachev and Bogosian back there, certainly they'll get up the ice, not so much Bogosian, but you know [Erik] Cernak's a big guy, you might need bigger bodies in the offensive zone to get inside against that group ... They've got some bigger, heavier forwards as well that he could match up well against too, so just a better overall matchup for him."

Ritchie produced just one goal and one assist in seven regular season games after coming over to Boston in a trade with the Anaheim Ducks.

#NHLBruins practice lines:

Marchand - Bergeron - Pastrnak/Studnicka

DeBrusk - Krejci - Kase/Kuhlman

Ritchie - Coyle - Bjork

Nordstrom - Kuraly/Lindholm - Wagner

Chara - McAvoy

Krug - Carlo

Grzelczyk - Clifton

Moore - Lauzon

Halak

Vladar pic.twitter.com/BeurSaeBRe

— Boston Bruins (@NHLBruins) August 22, 2020

New York Islanders head coach Barry Trotz was asked about the firing of Todd Reirden, who was his former assistant and successor in Washington.

"It's part of what you sign up for in coaching and, you know, that's what you accept when you become a head coach in the National Hockey League so just wish him well," Trotz said.

— TSN (@TSN\_Sports) August 23, 2020

With only three assists in nine games since the season restarted, Flyers forward Travis Konecny is feeling some heat to produce.

"I'm trying to contribute in other ways and there's lots of ways to win a hockey game," he said. "It doesn't just involve points and scoring, but I'm aware I have to step up a little bit more."

Konecny led Philadelphia in scoring in the regular season with 61 points in 66 games. He's not the only offensive star to go cold in the postseason as Kevin Hayes has just one goal while Claude Giroux, Sean Couturier and James van Riemsdyk have yet to score.

"I do believe we have another level, another gear that we can get to," said coach Alain Vigneault. "Most of it has to do with our execution, our plays, and our ability to make plays with the puck. We have some real skill players, some real good players on our team. I understand going through the process, the pressure that comes with wanting to win. We were able to win that first round playing hard hockey, good hockey. Still when you analyze it, I really believe that there's another level that we can attain if our top end guys execute the way we have seen them execute throughout the year."

It won't be easy to get going against a stingy Islanders side, which held the high-powered Capitals offence to just three five-on-five goals in a five-game series. Vigneault is expecting a "greasy" series and the top seeds in the Eastern Conference need their top players to step up if they want to break through.

"I don't want to get into specific names, but there are a few guys that need to get that execution," said Vigneault, "those plays that you need to make under pressure, those plays that you need to make to get the puck out of our end quicker, those plays that you need to make through that neutral zone, and those plays in the offensive zone that a skilled player can make. Our guys did, but didn't do with the regularity and consistency that you need, especially you need at this time of the year."

Flyers forward Nicolas Aube-Kubel scored two goals in six games before getting hurt and missing the final three games in the Montreal series.

"Kube has skated the last couple of days," Vigneault said. "I can't comment on player availability and who's in or who's out. He has skated with the team the last couple of days."

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TSN.CA / Jeff Paterson: Vancouver Canucks vs. Vegas Golden Knights: Game 1 Preview

Jeff Paterson

VANCOUVER – The Vancouver Canucks and Vegas Golden Knights open their Stanley Cup Playoffs Western Conference semi-final tonight in Edmonton.

This is the first time the Canucks have advanced to the second round of the playoffs since 2011. They got here by defeating the defending Stanley Cup champion St. Louis Blues in six games. The Canucks eliminated the Blues with a 6-2 victory on Friday night. Tyler Motte scored twice while Brock Boeser, Antoine Roussel, Jay Beagle and Troy



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## NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 24, 2020

Stecher had the other goals. After not scoring in the team's first eight games since the re-start, Motte has recorded back to back two-goal games. In Game 6 against the Blues, the Canucks got 4+4=8 from 'bottom six' forwards.

Elias Pettersson had two assists on Friday and led the Canucks in scoring against St. Louis with 3+6=9. The second-year Swede has had two-point performances in back to back games and four of the last five outings. He has the team lead – and is tied for second in the league -- in post-season scoring with 4+9=13. JT Miller (5+5) and Quinn Hughes (1+9) are tied for second on the team and are both in the Top 10 of NHL playoff scorers.

Jacob Markstrom was 4-2 against the Blues posting a 2.54 GAA and a sparkling 93% save percentage. Against the Blues, Markstrom's even-strength save percentage was 94.2%. A young Markstrom made his NHL debut appearing in one game for Vegas head coach Peter DeBoer when the two were together with the Florida Panthers in the 2010-11 season. Markstrom played two periods in relief against New Jersey on January 23, 2011.

The Golden Knights return to action for the first time since eliminating Chicago in five games on Tuesday. Vegas advanced to the second round with a 4-3 victory. Max Pacioretty, Mark Stone, Alec Martinez and Alex Tuch scored the goals and Robin Lehner made 23 saves in the win. Reilly Smith led the Knights in scoring against the Blackhawks with 3+3=6 followed by Jonathan Marchessault with 0+5=5.

Smith (3+5) and Stone (4+4) share the team lead in post-season scoring followed by Shea Theodore (4+3) and Marchessault (2+5).

In six games in the Edmonton bubble, Robin Lehner is 5-1 with a 2.44 GAA and a 90.4% save percentage. The Canucks faced Lehner once this season when he was with Chicago. They beat the Blackhawks 7-5 in a wild night of hockey on January 2nd in Vancouver.

The Canucks and Knights split their regular season series when they played two games five days apart in mid-December. Vegas beat Vancouver 6-3 at T-Mobile Arena on December 15th while the Canucks posted a 5-4 overtime victory at Rogers Arena on December 19th. Chris Tanev scored the winner that night in a game that launched the Canucks on a season-high seven game win streak.

In the Golden Knights three years in the NHL, they have never lost to the Canucks in regulation time going 8-0-2. In those 10 games, they have outscored the Canucks 45-26.

Canucks forward Jay Beagle beat Vegas to win the Stanley Cup when he was a member of the Washington Capitals in 2018. Beagle's goal on Friday night was his first since February 19th.

In the post-season, the Canucks are 11 for 42 (26.2%) on the power play and have had twice as many opportunities as the Golden Knights who are 4 for 21 (19.1%). Meanwhile, on the penalty kill the Knights are 19 for 22 (86.4%) while the Canucks are 34 for 42 (81.0%). The Canucks have had the most power play chances in the playoffs and only Montreal has been short-handed more often. The Canucks led the NHL playoffs with 52 minor penalties taken so far – seven more than the Habs.

### POSSIBLE CANUCKS LINE-UP

Miller-Pettersson-Boeser

Pearson-Horvat-Eriksson

Roussel-Sutter-Virtanen

Motte-Beagle-Gaudette

Hughes-Tanev

Edler-Stecher

Fantenberg-Benn

Markstrom

### POSSIBLE GOLDEN KNIGHTS LINE-UP

Pacioretty-Karlsson-Stone

Marchessault-Stastny-Smith

Cousins-Roy-Tuch

Carrier-Stephenson-Reaves

McNabb-Schmidt

Martinez-Theodore

Holden-Whitecloud

Lehner

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USA TODAY / Vegas Golden Knights goalie Marc-Andre Fleury gets agent Allan Walsh to remove tweet criticizing coach Peter DeBoer

Mike Brehm

Agent Allan Walsh has taken down a graphic tweet that was critical of Vegas Golden Knights coach Peter DeBoer at the request of his client, Marc-Andre Fleury.

The tweet, posted the day before the Golden Knights' second-round opener against the Vancouver Canucks, showed a Photoshopped image of Fleury being impaled by a sword with the name of DeBoer on the blade. Goalie Robin Lehner, acquired at the trade deadline, has made six postseason starts to Fleury's two.

"I'm here to win with my team, to have success and that's what matters," Fleury said in a Zoom session Sunday morning. "Because of that, I asked him to take that picture down, and he did this morning."

Fleury, 35, wouldn't say if he knew that Walsh was going to post something critical about the coach.

"Allan's been my agent for a long time. I've known him since I'm 15," Fleury said. "We're always close. We always talk about hockey or other things in life."

"I think he's always a guy who protects or cares a lot about his players and he does about me also. I really appreciate his passion for the game that he has. I think it's merely a way to defend me in that situation for not playing much."

Fleury, who won three Stanley Cups with the Pittsburgh Penguins, was taken by the Golden Knights in the expansion draft and led them to the Final in the team's first season. He has two years left on his contract while Lehner is an unrestricted free agent at season's end.

Fleury said he talked with DeBoer and general manager Kelly McCrimmon on Saturday.

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# CAROLINA HURRICANES

**NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 24, 2020**

USA TODAY / Washington Capitals fire coach Todd Reirden after two first-round playoff exits

Mike Brehm

The Washington Capitals fired coach Todd Reirden Sunday after two seasons of first-round playoff exits.

Reirden was the top assistant to Barry Trotz when the Capitals won their lone Stanley Cup title in 2018. Trotz left the team in a contract dispute and later joined the New York Islanders. The Capitals promoted Reirden to his first NHL head coaching job.

While praising the work that Reirden did in his six years with the team, general manager Brian MacLellan said he noticed the team's play starting to slip since Christmas.

"Our team game wasn't as good as it had been," he said on a Zoom call. "It was going in the wrong direction. Our compete level was in and out. ... I think inconsistent play continued into the (Toronto playoff) bubble and we paid the price in the end."

In two regular seasons, Reirden had a .642 winning percentage and won two division titles, but the team wasn't able to produce playoff success.

The Capitals' Stanley Cup defense in 2019 ended in the first round when they blew a 3-2 series lead and lost to the Carolina Hurricanes in overtime in Game 7. This season, the Capitals received a bye from the qualifying round, but they lost to the Islanders in five games, though MacLellan said falling to Trotz's team didn't play a factor in the decision about Reirden.

"While I'm disappointed that we could not bring another championship to DC, I will always cherish my six years with this organization and our memorable run in 2018," Reirden said in a statement to the Associated Press. "I wish this team nothing but success in the future."

The Capitals still have a strong core with Alex Ovechkin, Nicklas Backstro, John Carlson, Tom Wilson, T.J. Oshie and Evgeny Kuznetsov.

MacLellan said there is no timetable for the new hire, and experience will be a factor.

"We need someone to come in and push the button on some good players," he said, adding, "I think one thing that happened to us in the bubble, our structure didn't seem to be there. We didn't play with any structure. ... We need someone that can come in and establish that."

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