



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 26, 2020



'The Svech' Lacrosse-Style Goal Appears in NHL 21

Trailer reveals Svechnikov's signature move

by Michael Smith

If it's in the game, it's in the game.

Andrei Svechnikov made history when he scored the first lacrosse-style goal in National Hockey League history on Oct. 29. Just 49 days later, he did it again.

And now that it's in the game - Filip Forsberg scored his own variant, and Svechnikov even attempted it in overtime of Game 1 against Boston just a few weeks ago - it's in the game NHL 21.

The official trailer for the latest iteration of EA Sports' wildly popular NHL series dropped on Monday, and at the 1:04 mark, following a couple of other signature moves, including Nikita

Kucherov's "no shot" breakaway deke and Matthew Tkachuk's between-the-legs goal, Svechnikov's history-making move is replicated in all of its stunning glory.

The Svech likely won't be an easy move to pull off. After all, it didn't happen in a real-life NHL game until 2019.

This marks the second straight year that the Carolina Hurricanes have influenced the EA NHL series. The Storm Surge was featured in NHL 20 after the Canes' signature postgame celebration captured the hearts and minds (and ire, in some cases) of the hockey world. Now, you too can score The Svech in NHL 21, which will be released for Xbox One and PS4 on Oct. 16.

What's next for NHL 22?

TODAY'S LINKS

<https://www.nhl.com/hurricanes/news/the-svech-lacrosse-style-goal-appears-nhl-21/c-318737588>

SportScan

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

1178255 Websites

The Athletic / Is the idea of cheering for 'Canada's Team' in the NHL playoffs idiotic?

By James Mirtle and Sean McIndoe Aug 25, 2020

Like many great stories here at The Athletic, this all started with a Twitter argument.

One of us has a soft spot for the annual conversation over whether or not the last remaining NHL team from Canada — in this case, the Vancouver Canucks — should be deemed "Canada's Team" and gain the resulting bandwagon fans.

The other person, however, thinks this is really dumb.

When we put the question to a poll on social media, meanwhile, the audience was split, nearly 50-50.

ARE THE #CANUCKS NOW CANADA'S TEAM? 

— JAMES MIRTLE (@MIRTLE) AUGUST 22, 2020

To settle this polarizing, important debate once and for all, we bring you this.

Mirtle: So, Sean, the second round has started and again in this country we're down to one last hope in the playoffs, the Vancouver Canucks. Not a lot of confusion over who people should be cheering for, given there's only one choice for Canada's Team. Go Canucks! Hope they can end the 27-year drought.

McIndoe: James.

Mirtle: It's been so long! Remember Montreal back in 1993? I was on a Grade 7 graduation field trip to Big Bar Ranch during that series. Ride a horse during the day, watch Kelly Hradey let in some goals at night. That's ... a long time ago. So we need the Cup to come home, no? Give millennials something to get excited about?



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OK, so I'm going a bit overboard. But there's this great resistance to the idea of "Canada's Team" among hockey fans in general that I think is a little unfair. It's more something for casual fans to rally behind, the idea that there's a city from this country still involved in the tournament.

It's not like Canadian teams are in the finals all the time like in the '80s — I think some fans just want something to care about once their team is eliminated. (Usually very early.)

McIndoe: Anyone who's been reading me over the years knows where I'm going to go on this, but let's be clear: Unless it's an Olympics or world juniors, there's no such thing as "Canada's Team."

Yes, there's a drought. We all know about it. And we all want to see it end. But here's the thing — we only want to see our team be the one to end it. That team (and city and fan base) will be the one to get all the bragging rights. Why should I want the Canucks and their fans to have all that fun?

Mirtle: Because the percentage of hockey fans that have that deep a level of animosity for teams on the other side of the country is pretty small? I mean, when your team (the Leafs) goes out early, do you just spite watch the rest of the tournament? There's no joy left? Who do you root for?

I can see not wanting to get behind, say, the Senators, but Vancouver? That's not a direct rival! And you've been there on vacation with your family without using a passport and, hey, good for them. You'd rather see Dallas win again than a team in Canada? That feels ... weird.

McIndoe: First of all, never underestimate the animosity that hockey fans are capable of. We're a very bitter and jaded bunch. We want our team to win, sure, but we also know that in a 31-team league, the odds of that are slim. So we want as many other fans as possible to be as sad as we are. Yeah, my team lost, but so did yours, so we all get to be miserable together.

It's possible I'm projecting here. But I don't think I'm alone.

Let me turn this around on you. I'm a Leafs fan. If my team were making a run, do you think Vancouver fans would be lining up to cheer them on?

Mirtle: Hell no. I think there are some exceptions to the designation. Maybe we need some ground rules here. I don't expect Calgary to cheer for Edmonton or, like I said, Toronto fans to cheer for Ottawa.

Or anyone in western Canada to cheer for Toronto to do anything, ever. (Other than trading their first-round pick and finishing in the league basement.)

But if Winnipeg is going deep here, you don't think most of the country is going to rally behind them? The Little Team That Could™ finally ends the drought, kind of thing? Wasn't there that effect with Calgary in 2004, Edmonton in 2006, Ottawa in 2007? Some of the diehards may hate this idea, but it's a very real phenomenon, with people piling on the bandwagon. The ratings tick up when there's a rooting interest like that. That's what Canada's Team is.

And I'm down with it, aside from the most obvious exceptions.

McIndoe: Those teams were right in the sweet spot for timing. It had been long enough that drought was officially "A Thing," but not so long that it was starting to feel huge. I think it gets to be a tougher sell the longer we go, at least for the diehard fans, because it's going to be such a huge deal when it finally happens.

Mirtle: As a Leafs fan, you should be far more used to other fans having nice things you don't have.

Maybe what we need is Canada's Team Plausibility Rankings. As in, what percentage of the country would get behind a Cup run for all seven teams ... The Leafs are probably pretty high just because of how many fans they have scattered all over, but they'd also have a lot of people rooting against them. That said, I'm thinking, what, 90 percent of hockey fans in Canada would want the Jets to pull it off?

McIndoe: I'll agree that there are definitely some teams that work better than others. Years ago, I made the case that the Jets could be the one team that would unite the nation. That was back when they were first emerging as real contenders, and it was a likable enough team. More importantly, Jets fans lost their franchise for 15 years, so they'd paid their dues. Nobody was going to resent Winnipeg if they were the ones who snapped the streak. I think there's still a case to be made that they could do it.

Others, not so much. The Leafs and Habs are non-starters. Alberta won't cheer for each other, obviously. The Senators wouldn't work for Toronto or Montreal, but maybe out west they'd consider it. Vancouver's got some history with more than a few teams, so they're a tougher sell.

And to be clear: This year's Canucks are a hugely likable team. They're fast, fun, lots of offence, some personality. Everybody hated the 2011 team by the end of their run, and for good reason, but this year's team isn't that. So could you get some fans around the country to get on the bandwagon? A few, yeah. But not in overwhelming numbers. We're not wired that way.

Mirtle: I think you're going to have to explain briefly why people didn't like the 2011 Canucks, so we don't get firebombed at headquarters. (Which is in San Francisco, by the way. Say hi to Adam!)

McIndoe: Because we had functioning eyeballs?

Look, that team had three of my all-time favourite players in the Sedins and Roberto Luongo. But they also had Alex Burrows and Ryan Kesler and Maxim Lapierre and Raffi Torres. They dove. They whined. They bit people! They were practically designed in a lab to be a team everyone who wasn't already a Canucks fan would hate.

And they were really good, partly because they had all of that edge to them. But there's a reason that most hockey fans watched them in the final and went "Yeah, I think I'm going to root for Brad Marchand."

Mirtle: And to be fair, everyone seemed to love the plucky '94 Canucks and wanted them to win up against the big, bad Rangers. At least that's my recollection as someone watching from B.C. That was the year I jumped on that bandwagon, and all it took was them hiring Mike Keenan, signing Mark Messier, trading Trevor Linden ... wait a lot happened to make me abandon that team as a fan.

But the point is, those kinds of runs can change fandom. They can create new fans. Isn't that part of what the NHL playoffs should be about? Maybe it's more complicated than "You just cheer for whatever Canadian team is left." But there's an element of that, where if it's not a direct rival or a team of biters, they're a natural choice?

McIndoe: New fans, absolutely. And that's who you're going to get with the whole "Let's all get behind Canada's Team" approach. People in the country who typically don't care about hockey, or who are so casual that they're really not tied to any one team, they'll get on board. My mother will watch.

I'm not an NBA fan, and I enjoyed the hell out of the Raptors run last year. And let's be honest, there are way more people in this country who aren't NHL fans than you might think. If they want to get swept up in a run by the Canucks (or whoever) and that can start them down the road to falling in love with the sport, that's awesome. I've got no issue with that at all.

But the fans who are already diehards of one of the other teams? Good luck. We're a more stubborn bunch than you give us credit for.

Mirtle: Yeah I guess I was thinking of my family, where only my Dad is a big fan (Canucks) and everyone else casually kind of jumps on board with various "good stories" every year. I think we need to keep in mind that not everyone in this country lives in an NHL market — I didn't grow up with a team in my backyard so it felt like you were more of a free agent.

You could cheer for Pittsburgh one year and then the underdog Oilers the next. (The people who only chose contenders every year were a pet



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peeve. Somehow there were an awful lot of Avs fans in Western Canada in the late '90s ...)

Being a fan is a lot more fluid than it's sometimes made out to be. Although, hey, that's no slight to the folks that dedicate a lifetime to one team — that takes some fortitude. I admire that. It's just not ... the only way. I know I couldn't do it.

Let me ask you this — if you look at the final eight teams left, who do you want to see win the most? The least? And where does Vancouver fit in?

McIndoe: I did my bandwagon rankings a few weeks ago, and of the teams that are still left I had the Canucks second, trailing only the Avalanche. Like I said, they're a really likable team, and underdog runs are usually cool. If anyone out there is going to get behind them, I certainly won't try to talk you out of it.

But if you do, do it because they're a fun team and their long-suffering fans deserve it. Don't feel like you're under any sort of patriotic duty. You're not. There is no Canada's Team, there are just likable teams that happens to be from Canada.

Mirtle: But if you'll cheer for some skeet shooter from Barkerville, B.C., in the Olympics, why not the local NHL team? Why!? Love thy neighbour, DGB.

McIndoe: Because I don't already have a favourite skeet shooter that I'm loyal to, and that other guy winning doesn't mean I'm going to have to put up with some miserable fan base talking trash to me for the rest of my life. Or maybe it will. I don't really follow skeet shooting.

Mirtle: You probably should. They do a really good job of determining who's on Canada's Team, with the big red maple leaf outfits and everything.

McIndoe: One last point for Canucks fans out there — and it's important. I know you might be mad at me right now, but here's the thing: You shouldn't want me on your bandwagon. I'm a Leafs fan. Have been my whole life. Do you really want me grudgingly showing up at your party? My heart wouldn't be in it. Or maybe it would, and I'd try to elbow my way to the front of the line, only to disappear as soon as the going got rough.

Screw that. This is your run. You've been waiting 50 years for a Cup. You've got the scars to prove it. If this is the year, you don't have to share it with anybody. You shouldn't want to share it with anybody. You didn't need fans like me pretending to cheer you on for the first few rounds — you don't need it now. Go lock the doors on the bandwagon and hang a sign that says "Real fans only." Then enjoy the ride.

Mirtle: Sounds good. But I think I'll be getting out my Canucks car flag and doing donuts in your driveway when they win.

The Athletic LOADED: 08.26.2020

1178256 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Markstrom brings Canucks back into the fight with clutch Game 2 effort

Iain MacIntyre | August 26, 2020, 2:26 AM

EDMONTON — It helps in a fight when your goalie is your toughest player.

After the Canucks' humiliating series-opener against the Vegas Golden Knights, who dominated their opponents on the ice and ridiculed them at the benches, Jacob Markstrom's mental toughness was evident again on Tuesday when he made 38 saves in Vancouver's 5-2 win.

And that total was actually exceeded by the saves made by teammates, who blocked 40 shots as the Canucks got up off the canvas to even the best-of-seven playoff series.

Last round, when Vancouver blew its 2-0 series lead against the St. Louis Blues, Canucks coach Travis Green said he loved how his team was standing toe-to-toe against the Stanley Cup champions. The Canucks were in the fight.

But they never got off the ropes in Sunday's 5-0 loss to Vegas. On Tuesday, the Canucks got into the fight, boosted by the return from injury of winger Tyler Toffoli, who scored on his first shift and finished with three points.

His production was matched by linemate Elias Pettersson, who scored a key goal late in the second period after being chirped as a "little squirt" by the Vegas bench on Sunday.

But the Canucks were still outshot 40-27 on Tuesday, including 22-7 in the second period, when Markstrom dug in and brilliantly kept his team ahead.

"We talked to our group," Green said after the game. "Call it motivation, call it whatever you want, we had to play better today. We had to have a response. I was confident we'd get a response from our group tonight. We've always had it in the past when we haven't played as well as we should. It doesn't mean you're going to win, but I liked that we responded with a better game and evened the series."

"I thought we responded really well," Canucks captain Bo Horvat said. "I was proud of the way the guys did. We knew we had to be better. Obviously, they're a great hockey team and we knew that. We knew we had to come out strong today and we did, and we showed we can play with them. And Marky stood on his head, which obviously was a plus for us as well."

Horvat was aware of what was being yelled from the Knights' bench on Sunday. Without fans in Rogers Place, it's not hard to hear if you can listen through the white noise of the F-bombs.

"We knew how it felt when they were winning, laughing and having a good time on the bench," Horvat said. "We keep that in the back of our mind for sure. We wanted to come out strong tonight and have a statement, and I thought we did that. Obviously, it was a lot quieter over there. We're going to try to keep it that way."

It could have gotten loud in the second period again, but Markstrom stopped 21 of 22 shots in a frame when the shot attempts were 40-9 for the Knights. Incredibly, the Canucks started and ended the period with a two-goal lead.

"It's huge to keep it a 1-1 period and just build from that, from what we started in the first," Markstrom said. "Everybody believes in what we did today."

"As a team, we needed to play better than we did in Game 1. Today we did that and it's obviously huge to get Toff back, and he scores right away. That's big for our group and our confidence."

Yes, Toffoli.

Out since the Canucks' first game of the qualifying round on Aug. 2 due to an ankle sprain, Toffoli scored just 1:29 into the game, sweeping the leftovers from Pettersson's wrap-around — the Canuck had zoomed past defenceman Shea Theodore — into an open net.

Seven seconds into their first power play, the Canucks made it 2-0 at 10:59 when Toffoli threaded a pass out into the low slot between three Knights and onto the stick of Horvat, who chipped it past goalie Robin Lehner.

Toffoli's return restored the Canucks' top six, although Green changed the lines from what they had been at the end of the regular season. Toffoli skated with Pettersson and Tanner Pearson, while J.T. Miller moved alongside Horvat and opposite Brock Boeser.



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"Getting the OK from everybody, I got all excited," Toffoli said of returning to the Stanley Cup tournament. "I felt like I was coming back to my first playoff series. It was fun to get back in the lineup and get a big win and tie the series up."

After the 2-0 lead came the rest of the game.

With the Golden Knights surging, Alex Tuch cut the deficit in half at 6:34 of the second period after Theodore perfectly lobbed the puck high and out and into the path of streaking teammate Nicolas Roy, who had a step on Hughes.

Then Markstrom made a pile of difficult stops before Pettersson, out of nowhere from an offensive-zone faceoff when he was left uncovered above the crease, took a pass from Alex Edler and badly fooled Lehner with a deke at 18:35.

The Knights may still have been trying to process how they could dominate the second period, yet trail 3-1, when Horvat scored again just 18 seconds into the third, converting Boeser's pass after Edler's keep-in at the blue line caught both Vegas defencemen cheating up ice and left a two-on-zero in front of Lehner.

Pearson, into an empty net, and Max Pacioretty exchanged late goals.

In the previous round, the Canucks reduced the Blues' series to a best-of-three.

Now, their series against the Knights is a best-of-five. Trying to win that is slightly less daunting than staring at a best-of-seven. Understandably, not many would pick the Canucks to win either.

Far better Tuesday than Sunday, the Canucks still could have lost by two or three goals were it not for Markstrom. And even Vancouver's best may not be good enough to take down Vegas. But at least the Canucks are back in the fight, and demonstrated Tuesday they can deliver some scoring punches even if they can't stand toe-to-toe with the Golden Knights.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 08.26.2020

1178257 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Prospect of interest: New Maple Leafs forward Filip Hallander

Mike Johnston | August 25, 2020, 8:11 PM

The Toronto Maple Leafs and Pittsburgh Penguins pulled off a six-player trade on Tuesday. The centrepiece of the deal was winger Kasper Kapanen, originally drafted by Pittsburgh but traded to Toronto as part of the Phil Kessel deal in 2015.

Kapanen was sent to the Penguins along with forward Pontus Aberg and defenceman Jesper Lindgren. Coming back the other way was the 15th-overall pick in the 2020 NHL Draft, depth forward Evan Rodrigues, AHL defenceman David Warsofsky and a Swedish prospect named Filip Hallander.

Outside of the first-rounder and the additional cap space, the most notable asset Toronto acquired was Hallander.

With that in mind, here's a bit more on the young forward.

Team: Lulea HF (SHL)

Position: Centre

Shoots: Left

Hometown: Sundsvall, Sweden

Age: 20 (born June 29, 2000)

Height: 6-foot-1

Weight: 190 pounds

Hallander was a late second-round pick in 2018, when Pittsburgh selected him 58th overall, and was widely considered a top-three prospect in the Penguins' pipeline.

He signed an entry-level contract in Pittsburgh in 2018 but never suited up for the team that season, so his first year slid to 2019-20. He has two years remaining on his rookie deal before he is slated to become a restricted free agent in 2022.

Has spent his entire playing career in Sweden

Hallander spent his junior career with in the Timrå system where at times he was a teammate of 2019 Calder Memorial Trophy winner Elias Pettersson — despite being two years younger than the Vancouver Canucks star.

He made the jump to the SHL in 2018-19, where he finished the season with 21 points in 45 games. He had an impressive — albeit brief — playoff run with five goals and eight points in seven games.

Hallander joined a new team in 2019-20 after transferring to Luleå in the SHL. He missed several months after fracturing his leg during a game early in the season and finished the year with 14 points in 27 games.

He routinely represents his country at international tournaments, having won gold at the 2016 World U17 Hockey Challenge and bronze at the Hlinka Gretzky Cup in 2017. He was on Sweden's 2019 world junior squad but the aforementioned leg injury kept him off the 2020 team.

Hallander signed a two-year contract with Luleå, so Maple Leafs fans shouldn't be surprised if he stays in Sweden for the 2020-21 season.

A power forward in the making

Hallander was excited to be drafted by Pittsburgh two years ago partly because he said he models his game after Penguins forward Patric Hornqvist. Hallander told NHL.com in 2018 that while many of his compatriots love watching Erik Karlsson and Nicklas Backstrom, he thought Hornqvist was underrated.

"He's just a solid, two-way player," Pittsburgh's director of amateur scouting Patrik Allvin said of Hallander at the time. "He has those character traits like Patric Hornqvist. He goes to the hard areas and produces."

Growing up, his favourite player was Peter Forsberg because he was both skilled and physical. So you can see there's a trend there.

Hallander at times has also drawn comparisons to Swedish forward Alex Steen, with whom Maple Leafs fans are rather familiar.

Maple Leafs had interest in 2018

Toronto was among the teams Hallander sat down with during the 2018 NHL Scouting Combine. In fact, they were his first interview.

The Maple Leafs took blueliner Rasmus Sandin with the 29th overall pick that year and followed that up by taking another defenceman, Sean Durzi, in the second round at No. 52 — just six spots ahead of Hallander.

The Penguins traded the 64th and 146th picks to the Colorado Avalanche in order to move up and select Hallander.

It remains far too early to judge the 2018 draft class, since only two players taken outside of the first round have made their NHL debuts.

Comes from a hockey family



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Hallander's father, Patrik, played professionally in Sweden from the early 1980s to the early 1990s, including several seasons with Timrå, where he was teammates with future NHL star Fredrik Modin.

Later in life, Patrik got into coaching as an assistant bench boss on Timrå's U16 team. He helped coach his son's team during the 2015-16 campaign and stayed with the U16 club for a couple additional seasons after his son had moved on.

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Sportsnet.ca / Kapanen trade sets Maple Leafs up for more moves this off-season

Luke Fox | August 25, 2020

TORONTO – The Pittsburgh Penguins land the best player, yet the Toronto Maple Leafs may well have won the trade.

The hockey world knew Kyle Dubas would be trading from his middle-class forwards, and Kasper Kapanen brings a youthful injection of speed that could benefit the Penguins' mission to contend again as soon as possible.

From the Maple Leafs' perspective, the key to this ice-breaking transaction between two underachieving franchises with high expectations is twofold: a first-round pick, and the freedom to dive into further trades and explore an unprecedented free agency landscape.

This is Dubas's move to make a move. The shed before the add.

"Certainly, I don't think this is going to be it for us as we go along," Dubas said Tuesday evening. "We wanted this (cap) flexibility so that we could be flexible inside the marketplace for either free agents or for trades."

How the executive, now taking direct heat for the first time in his tenure, uses that pick and that cap space to build around his core will be even more intriguing.

In Kapanen, the Leafs deal from a source of depth and the Penguins reacquire the 2014 first-rounder they let go as the prime prospect in the Phil Kessel blockbuster of 2015 — and Jim Rutherford's first draftee as Pittsburgh GM.

Next to Toronto, no organization knows the player as well, and Kapanen will be given a chance to thrive next to an elite centre under a sturdy leadership group.

"Kasper is a good, young player that brings speed to our lineup and plays the way we want to play," Rutherford said. "We know him as a player and feel he can improve our top six."

Kapanen said he was "super excited" to learn of the trade from Dubas on Tuesday morning and has already considered the honour of joining the wing of Sidney Crosby or Evgeni Malkin.

"Just means that I've gotta hit the gym soon and start working hard for next year. I want to be great, and I want to come into camp ready to go and show everybody that I'm not messing around," Kapanen said on a conference call.

"A lot of friends on that team, too, so it makes it a whole lot easier than going to a new team and a new city that I'm not familiar with."

It was a once in a lifetime opportunity to play for the Leafs. I will forever be grateful for the experience and for my teammates. That being said I could not be more excited and ready to be a Penguin again. I can't... <https://t.co/Uk9ixTiAWL>

— Kasper Kapanen (@kasperikapanen1) August 25, 2020

The speedy 24-year-old struggled to find his niche or score a playoff goal under new coach Sheldon Keefe. He registered just two assists in the qualification round versus Columbus and the Blue Jackets' third line so overmatched Toronto's that Dubas is wasting little time to rejig the mix.

During pandemic roster-planning, cost certainty is more critical than ever.

Kapanen's contract carries two more seasons at a \$3.2-million cap hit, but the good news for Rutherford is that Toronto already paid a disproportionate amount of his salary by front-loading his three-year extension last summer.

That pact was inked after Kapanen's breakout 20-goal, 44-point campaign in which he also proved to be a useful penalty killer. Kapanen credited the Leafs development team Tuesday for molding him into a better two-way player.

But little momentum and goodwill from 2018-19 transferred to 2019-20.

"Bit of a sophomore slump. Puck wasn't going in for me," Kapanen said. "Overall, my game was very iffy. Something I wasn't too happy with. I thought I tried to get it back for the playoffs. Me and, I feel, our team could've done a lot better."

"So, it's kind of a bad way to end things with the team, but I'm very grateful for the opportunity they gave me for these past five years."

Kapanen, a natural right-winger, struggled when injuries forced him to skate the left flank and he failed his opportunity to seize a top-six role. Aggravating the situation was his public wrist-slapping and one-game, team-issued suspension for what Kapanen described as an isolated incident of sleeping in and missing practice.

"I think we're a pretty forgiving place when things happen," Keefe said of the benching at the time. "Things happen all the time. When there's a pattern of things that haven't corrected themselves, then you have to do something a little bit outside of what you normally would do."

Although Kapanen did enjoy an uptick in impact later in the season, finishing with 13 goals and 36 points in 69 games, he was ultimately deemed an expendable asset in Dubas's quest to crawl back into a well-regarded draft, upgrade a thin blue line and shift some payroll to an under-equipped back end.

Under a flattened \$81.5-million cap ceiling, Dubas has given his organization an extra \$3.2 million in wiggle room and regained a valuable 2020 first-round pick (15th overall) to manoeuvre through a hectic off-season. (Remember, Dubas traded away his original 2020 first-rounder, now 13th overall, to the Carolina Hurricanes in order to rid the club of Patrick Marleau's contract.)

"We're open to certainly to keeping the pick, but I think the spot that we're at with our team right now, we're also open probably to moving it if the right deal came along for someone that could that could help us now," Dubas said.

"There's players at every position — forward, defence and goalie — that are that are of interest to us at that spot."

To complete the deal, the Leafs also waved goodbye to journeyman winger Pontus Aberg and 23-year-old right-shot defence prospect Jesper Lindgren. The 2015 fourth-rounder is still on the come-up, posting nine points and a plus-five rating as a rookie for an underwhelming Toronto Marlies squad in 2019-20.

While the cap space and first-round pick — Dubas's starting point in the shopping of Kapanen — are the major wins here, the additional pieces moving from Pittsburgh to Toronto are intriguing.

Forward Evan Rodrigues, 27, is an impending restricted free agent with arbitration rights and would need to be qualified at a \$2-million salary. With Dubas trying to clear space, that feels doubtful.



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"Depth is something we really have to be careful about," Dubas said. "That's why it was important for us to have Rodrigues in the deal as well and begin to have a conversation with his representatives about the opportunity that may be here for him."

Centre Filip Hallander is a 20-year-old prospect being groomed in his native Sweden and a talent the Leafs have been keeping tabs on well before Pittsburgh scooped him in the second round of 2018.

And defenceman David Warsofsky, 30, is a stay-at-home depth type who hasn't played in the NHL since he appeared in 16 games for the 2017-18 Colorado Avalanche.

Dubas is entertaining all options open at this point. The GM is not ruling out further off-season trades from the roster, and he'll also consider letting some of his newfound cap space accrue during the season in order to be a more aggressive player at the 2021 deadline.

One thing to be sure: Though the removal of Kapanen weakens Toronto's roster today, the trade is merely Step 1 in Dubas's reload.

"What this exercise shows us is that our players have good value around the league," Dubas said, "and we could accrue solid assets in return for them should we elect to do so."

He's just getting warm.

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Sportsnet.ca / Lightning survive stressful Game 2 to even series with Bruins

Chris Johnston | August 25, 2020

TORONTO — The Tampa Bay Lightning were dining on the worst food the Stanley Cup bubble has to offer.

A broken stick leading to a goal against. A razor-thin offside review bringing back the equalizer. Debated penalty calls, a blown lead inside the final four minutes and the very real possibility of falling 2-0 down to the Boston Bruins in this highly charged best-of-seven.

"Sometimes you're just dealt a sandwich that doesn't taste very good, if you know what I mean," said Lightning coach Jon Cooper, who came to enjoy the post-game spread a little better after seeing his team stick with it long enough to get an overtime winner from Ondrej Palat.

"If you have mental weakness at all, you're probably sitting there and saying 'poor us.' That's just not been this group. That's just not how they operate anytime there is a mishap, they just turn the page. It was needed tonight, I'll tell you that. They needed to be rewarded for the work they were doing and, in the end, they were."

The Lightning's 4-3 win increased the odds the rest of us will be treated to a series befitting these two Eastern Conference powerhouses, who are now tied 1-1 with less than 24 hours to prepare for Game 3 on Wednesday.

The combination of that schedule, the opponent and the string of events seemingly going against them came with some mental duress for the Lightning. You could see it in their exuberance after Palat swooped toward the net and found a rebound to freeze the clock in overtime, jumping into the arms of big Pat Maroon.

Sean Kuraly uncharacteristically failed on a chance to clear the puck from the Bruins' zone before the winning goal, causing coach Bruce Cassidy to lament the small mistakes that carry big consequences.

"It started with the decision to rim the puck when there wasn't a lot of pressure," said Cassidy. "It'd be a nice time to put out a fire and make a clean play."

When the Lightning have carved out successful stretches in this series, it's usually been fuelled by a fast forecheck and defencemen jumping into the attack. They've made a point of throwing as many pucks as possible at Jaroslav Halak and built a sizeable edge in the 5-on-5 shot attempts as a result.

The Bruins have owned an edge on speciality teams — Brad Marchand scored a power-play goal in Game 2, while the penalty kill was perfect — and gotten some big-time shifts from their prime performers at evens.

Marchand was a determined puck hound on his second goal, helping the keep play alive a couple times. After being knocked to the ice, he got up in time to bat home the 3-3 equalizer at 16:02 of the third period.

There's not a lot to choose between here, which is why some of the bounces and swings in momentum feel so pronounced. The Lightning prioritized a better start than they had in Game 1 and delivered ... until Zach Bogosian's stick exploded while he leaned into a shot, giving Boston a dangerous rush the other way and eventually a Nick Ritchie goal.

"It's just an unfortunate bounce. Those plays happen, sticks break all the time," said Bogosian. "I just happened to be the last guy back."

The Lightning kept applying the pressure and appeared to tie it on a Barclay Goodrow tip two minutes later — at least until a lengthy offside review showed Brayden Point failing to clear the zone before the entry while skating back slowly for a line change.

Blake Coleman got one that counted at 12:42 with arguably the prettiest goal of these playoffs. He dove to meet a pass from Bogosian after the big defenceman danced through Torey Krug and Brandon Carlo with a move that shocked everyone in the building.

"I saw Bogo picking up some speed and he just kind of had that look in his eye like he was about to do something," said Coleman. "He made a heck of a play. That's really all on him."

These Bruins are a patient bunch, though, and re-established their advantage with a Marchand tap-in from David Pastrnak during the power play. Then Nikita Kucherov answered 56 seconds later after Point held the puck for an eternity and found Kevin Shattenkirk for an unobstructed point shot he tipped.

Back and forth it went, with the high-end players on both teams stacking up quality shifts. It was intense.

"The emotions that everybody is riding on their couch, trust me, we're riding on the bench as well," said Cooper.

Playoffs inside the bubble are still contested on the ice, but a healthy portion of the battle is being waged in the minds of the participants. The players have been living behind black fencing for a month now and are sprinting through a gauntlet of games.

Marchand said "it's that fear of losing, I guess, that kind of drains you mentally."

The stakes are increasing with each passing day.

"We have a common goal, and I think the team that sort of sticks with it long enough or the longest will have a really good chance to win," said Cassidy. "Obviously, you need talent to win in the playoffs, but this is a different environment so it's between the ears a little bit where it's different from other years."

So different that after playing 65 minutes of momentum-swinging hockey the Lightning and Bruins will immediately turn back around and do it again.

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Sportsnet.ca / Despite misstep vs. Stars, Geoff Ward helped save Flames' season

Eric Francis | August 25, 2020

CALGARY – Geoff Ward helped save the Calgary Flames' season, and positioned the team well to try prolonging it.

In between, he empowered players like Milan Lucic, Sam Bennett and Dillon Dube to rise to a playoff prominence that had third-liners leading the way.

He successfully implemented a new style of play just for the playoffs that preached physicality and defence, above all.

It helped the team get over a small playoff hump against the Winnipeg Jets and positioned them to be within 12 seconds of going up 3-1 on an impressive veteran club in the Dallas Stars.

Yes, the team fell short and Ward made a questionable goaltending move that served to fuel his team's historic Game 6 meltdown.

But to understand just how far Ward brought this bunch requires going back to late November when the Flames were threatening to sewer their season.

The team was in the midst of going eight games without a regulation win when the racist and abusive allegations against coach Bill Peters surfaced, prompting GM Brad Treliving to promote Ward from assistant coach to the team's interim saviour.

"It was a good team that, in my opinion, had lost its way," explained Treliving at his season-ending availability.

"There was a belief in this group. More than anything (the coaching staff) brought stability. There wasn't a lot of change tactically. I felt our team played a little freer."

Introducing an open-door policy in which players were encouraged to provide Ward feedback and thoughts on everything from lines to scheduling, the team immediately won an unfathomable seven games in a row.

As the Peters controversy swirled, the players dug in and played for a staff that Treliving praised from top to bottom Monday.

"Geoff was an experienced guy and I felt he was the right guy to take ahold of it," said Treliving.

"I think Geoff and the staff did a really good job. With all the chaos going on, getting stabilized was priority No. 1."

He not only stabilized them, but he also helped them flourish to a 24-15-3 record, a clip that was eighth-best in the league and would have put the Flames at 101 points over a full season.

His team went from 30th in league scoring to tenth, thanks in part to a power play that went from 22nd to be the league's third-most productive, landing them a playoff spot few could have predicted when he took over a team that was five games below .500.

When Mikael Backlund felt his experiment on the wing had run its course, he was comfortable telling the coach as much, prompting an ensuing scoring binge as a centre that had him top five in league scoring before the pandemic pause.

When camp resumed, he went to work on implementing the gritty, buttoned-up playoff style the team quickly grew comfortable with.

No one embraced the new approach better than Lucic, Bennett and Dube, who had been built up by Ward to believe they could play leadership roles despite residing on the third line.

"The empowerment really helped with the players – it made them feel like they were a part of it, which is important," said Ward of a refreshing new approach he could take because of his familiarity with the group.

"We were able to have really effective meetings about performance and where we needed to go with things. It led to an increased amount of leadership within our leadership core and guys not in that core."

It led to success, which Ward feels the team can continue building toward if he's brought back.

Predictably, Treliving wouldn't comment on Ward's future as head coach Monday, even though he said before the pause he'd seen enough from the 58-year-old to make his decision.

Ward refused to try pleading his case, but said he'd also consider returning next season as an assistant.

Some continue to insist the team should deviate from its history of spending very little money on coaches by hiring the likes of a Bruce Boudreau, Mike Babcock, Gerard Gallant or Peter Laviolette.

For a GM who has already gone through four coaches, it would be a tough sell to ask ownership to spend upwards of \$3 million a year on a bench boss in the economic situation the province and league are in.

Unnecessary and certainly not guaranteed to motivate players any further.

Ward was successful in that vein, and while he may not have the cachet those others may have, he has the respect and ear of this team.

He earned it.

Sure, hindsight proves Ward erred by pulling playoff MVP Cam Talbot early in the second period of a rapidly deteriorating 3-3 game that ultimately ended the team's playoff.

He reiterated Monday he would do it again, explaining the plan was to "regroup" Talbot on the bench for a few minutes before returning him to the game. When Talbot disappeared down the tunnel for 10 minutes to calm down, David Rittich was in over his head and the game was soon out of reach.

In an effort to "protect" his goalie, he suggested post-game Talbot had an equipment issue.

Not so. Lesson learned.

"I thought he did a great job stepping in," said Bennett of Ward.

"He's a great leader and a great motivator. He's a really positive guy. He does a really good job of interacting with the guys and connecting with them on a personal level."

Lucic agreed, praising Ward for rejuvenating him after contemplating retirement in November.

"I felt like I contributed, and I didn't feel that way for a long time," said Lucic, who spent many years working with Ward in Boston.

"I was contributing with my play, I was contributing with the person that I am, as a teammate, as a friend, as a leader and as a player. That was one of the things that made me feel good about myself again and I credit the coaching staff and my teammates for that."

Time for the team to reward Ward accordingly.

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NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 26, 2020

TSN.CA / Kyle Dubas: Toronto Maple Leafs likely to make more deals to improve team, clear cap space

Kristen Shilton

TORONTO — Kyle Dubas made his first major move of the off-season on Tuesday, and it's unlikely to be his last.

In fact, the Maple Leafs' general manager said trading Kasperii Kapanen, Jesper Lindgren and Pontus Aberg to the Pittsburgh Penguins for a first-round draft choice in 2020 (15th overall), forwards Evan Rodrigues and Filip Hallander and defenceman David Warsofsky was just a first step towards trying to make the Leafs a more competitive club.

"I don't think this is going to be it for us as we go along, and I think that we need to gain greater [salary cap] flexibility than what we have," Dubas told reporters on a Zoom call Tuesday afternoon. "We've got our own business to take care of with [Travis] Dermott and [Ilya] Mikheyev as restricted free agents, and this will give us some space beyond them to address all the other needs that we feel we have. Without the flexibility or the space to do so freely we would be really restricted in what we can do and this opens it up a little bit for us."

LeBrun: Leafs were aggressors in Kapanen trade, shopped him to numerous teams

The Leafs sent speedy winger Kasperii Kapanen to the Penguins for a package that included a first-round pick and prospect Filip Hållander. As TSN Hockey analyst Pierre LeBrun explains, Pittsburgh isn't the only team Kyle Dubas contacted about a potential deal. Craig Button also weighs in on the trade and who Toronto might be eyeing with the newly acquired pick.

Kapanen had two years remaining on his three-year pact, with an AAV of \$3.2 million, and every penny counts for Toronto since the NHL is keeping a flat cap of \$81.5 million for the 2020-21 season. CapFriendly now has the Leafs with nearly \$8 million of projected space for next year, and Dubas is actively assessing how best to use that in Toronto's favour.

"Anywhere where we can improve our roster over where it was is how we want to use the cap space," he said. "I think you could use it in the off-season, or you could let it accrue during the year and then let the team get into it and see what the needs are and use it then. We wanted this flexibility so that we could be flexible inside the marketplace for either free agents or for trades and so we'll keep an open mind about that and also keep an open mind to the fact that it would be great for us next year during the season [to be able to] add once we got into the year."

Dubas noted that the Leafs haven't been able to add a top-end player mid-season since acquiring Jake Muzzin from the Los Angeles Kings in January 2019, and Toronto needs more incoming personnel who can have an impact right away.

Dubas discusses Leafs' cap flexibility, open to moving newly acquired first-round pick

Toronto's GM Kyle Dubas discusses the cap flexibility the Maple Leafs have gained after trading Kasperii Kapanen and how he will be looking to spend that money on improving the team. Dubas also shares that he's open to moving the newly acquired first-round pick he acquired in the deal.

And if doing that requires moving their newly acquired first-round pick, then so be it.

"I would say that we're open to keeping the pick, but I think with the spot that we're at with our team right now we're also open probably to moving it if the right deal came along for someone that could help us now," Dubas said. "We'll go through as though we're going to be selecting there

at 15 and there's players at every position for forward, defence and goalie that are of interest to us at that spot."

Stockpiling players for the future isn't exactly Toronto's top priority, though. Earlier this month, the Leafs failed yet again to advance in the playoffs, losing their play-in round series against the Columbus Blue Jackets before the NHL's postseason tournament even really started.

Dubas has taken considerable heat since for the Leafs' perpetual underachieving, something he can't even fault his detractors for.

"When we don't reach our expectations or potential, I think that the blame deserves to come directly to me," he said. "The criticism I would say is deserved. We didn't reach expectations and that falls on me. I accept that and that's fair and that's fine."

Kapanen haul boils down to how Maple Leafs use assets

The guys on OverDrive react to the Kasperii Kapanen trade, and agree that grading the trade will have to wait as they need to see how they use the cap space and who they select at No. 15 in the upcoming draft.

What Dubas can do now is construct a roster that takes Toronto to the next level. But between a stagnant salary cap and the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic, that's easier said than done. Evaluating players and prospects has never been more challenging, especially when everything from the format of next season to where games will be played to what a schedule will look like is very much up in the air. On top of that, the possibility of playing without fans in attendance will severely limit cash flow for some teams and could curtail spending.

"I think assessing the free agent market is really difficult right now because it's so different than anything else that we face," Dubas explained. "With the cap where it is, and different cash restrictions on all teams in the league, what you're able to do [is changing]. I can look at the list [of free agents] right now and there are certainly a number of players that have been very good for a long time. That's obviously a positive but knowing what the market is going to bear out for them in terms of opportunity and contracts I think is really difficult right now."

That's one reason why the Leafs were so pleased with their return from Pittsburgh. While Rodrigues is a pending restricted free agent, Toronto likes what depth the 27-year-old winger could potentially provide. A native of Toronto, Rodrigues has appeared in 199 NHL contests to date - mostly with the Buffalo Sabres - and produced 72 points (27 goals, 45 assists).

At this stage, Dubas sees more depth as a strong course of action for Toronto.

"That's why it was important for us to have Rodrigues in the deal as well, and we'll begin to have a conversation with his representatives about the opportunity that may be here for him," Dubas said. "Without knowing what the schedule and what the season is really going to look like [next year], and if the games are in a compressed format, or there's lots of travel still, I would worry about leaving [head coach] Sheldon [Keefe] and the team in a bad spot if we depleted [our] depth throughout."

Hallander may not be an option for the Leafs immediately next season, but acquiring him was something of a years-long process for Toronto. The 20-year-old centre was high on the Leafs' draft board in 2018, but they selected Sean Durzi (since traded to the Los Angeles Kings) in the hopes Hallander would fall to them later in the second round.

Is Kapanen the first domino to fall as Leafs look to clear up cap space?

The Maple Leafs have traded Kasperii Kapanen, Jesper Lindgren and Pontus Aberg to the Penguins in exchange for a 2020 first-round pick, Evan Rodrigues, Filip Hallander and David Warsofsky. Hockey Insider Darren Dreger joins Leafs Lunch to discuss the move and what else Toronto could be working on.

Ironically, Pittsburgh selected Hallander with the pick directly after Toronto's, at 58th overall. He has yet to play a professional game in North America after spending the last two seasons in the Swedish



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Hockey League, but Dubas is as high on Hallander's potential now as when the Leafs first scouted him.

"We had done a lot of work on him leading up to the draft, and the things we like about him as a player is that he's extremely intelligent, very competitive and has shown very well playing in the Swedish Elite League on a very good team program on their top line," Dubas said. "So we're excited for him, we think he'll certainly add to our depth in our prospect pool up front and we're really excited."

As the final teams finish out their Stanley Cup postseason runs this year, and the entire league gets into off-season mode, Dubas predicts more conversations and potential moves could start being made. While conversations with representatives for Dermott and Mikheyev will also heat up in the coming weeks, Dubas' goal in Tuesday's trade was to give Toronto the best possible chance to better itself.

"This show us that our players do have good value around the league and we could accrue solid assets in return for them, should we elect to do so," Dubas said. "So right now we feel good about where we're at, but we'll have a better idea of what more we may need to do as we gather more information, as the season comes to a close and [other teams] have to give their evaluation of where they need to proceed to get ready for next season as well."

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TSN.CA / Canucks trail Vegas 1-0 in their second-round series, after a 5-0 loss on Sunday

Jeff Paterson

VANCOUVER – After getting swamped 5-0 in Sunday's series opener, the Vancouver Canucks need to find a way to bounce back tonight as they get set for Game 2 of their NHL Western Conference semi-final against Vegas in Edmonton.

The Golden Knights had 11 players find the scoresheet and Robin Lehner stopped all 26 shots he faced. Reilly Smith, Mark Stone and Alex Tuch all scored second period goals and also added an assist on the night while Shea Theodore chipped in with a pair of helpers. Jonathan Marchessault opened the scoring and Max Pacioretty added the final goal of the game. Vegas held a 39-26 edge in shots as they chased Jacob Markstrom from the Vancouver net at 5-0 midway through the third period. Thatcher Demko made his first Stanley Cup Playoff appearance in relief.

While Demko finished Sunday's game, Markstrom will return to the net tonight. He has started all 11 of the team's playoff games.

The Canucks top players were held in check on Sunday. Elias Pettersson, Brock Boeser and Quinn Hughes were all held without a shot on goal while JT Miller managed one and Bo Horvat was limited to a pair of third period shots. Defensemen accounted for 10 of the team's 26 shots on the night led by Alex Edler with five.

The Canucks have dropped back to back games only once in their 11 games in the Edmonton bubble. They fell in Game 3 and again in Game 4 in the previous round against St. Louis. The team is 7-4 in their return to play and has bounced back from two of their previous three losses with a victory.

Rugged winger Zack MacEwen took part in the warm-up on Sunday, but did not dress for Vancouver. He is a possibility to draw into the line-up tonight. He has not dressed since Game 4 against St. Louis.

For Vegas, Max Pacioretty scored on one of his game-high eight shots (and 13 attempts) in Game 1. With his goal, Mark Stone now has the Knights team lead in playoff goals with five and has a share of the team lead in scoring with 5+5=10 while Reilly Smith has 4+6=10.

Sunday's game was physical with the Golden Knights outpacing the Canucks 54-45. Ryan Reaves registered 11 hits while linemate William Carrier had nine. For the Canucks, Antoine Roussel and Oscar Fantenberg each delivered seven hits.

By keeping the Canucks at bay in Game 1, Knights netminder Robin Lehner posted his first career playoff shutout. In this post-season, Lehner is now 7-1 with a 2.10 GAA and a 91.8% save percentage.

In an interesting twist to this series, Vegas head coach Pete DeBoer was twice on the wrong end of decisive Golden Knights playoff victories while he was behind the San Jose bench. On both occasions, his Sharks responded with victories. In 2018, Vegas pummeled San Jose 7-0 in the opener of their first round series only to see the Sharks bounce back to take Game 2. Last season, Vegas crushed San Jose 5-0 in Game 4 to take a commanding 3-1 series lead. Again, the Sharks responded with a win and then added two more to take the series in seven games. Now, DeBoer is hoping his Knights can avoid falling into that trap again in this year's playoffs.

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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TSN.CA / Seravalli: Sizing up the field for an unprecedented NHL Free Agent Frenzy

Frank Seravalli

The countdown to Free Agent Frenzy is on.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Well, it would be if the exact date for the Frenzy was set, but that's one item the NHL and NHL Players' Association have not worked out just yet.

Their agreement calls for free agency to follow hockey's traditional season-ending order of Stanley Cup Final and then Entry Draft. With the draft penciled in for Oct. 9-10, it's probably prudent to ballpark a mid-October Free Agent Frenzy.

That's a seven-week sprint from now. Teams will be facing new financial realities – with both a frozen salary cap at \$81.5 million and possible budgetary restrictions in place from a season with lost revenue and an uncertain future ahead.

With that, let's take a detailed dive on the Top 10 pending free agents, to see whose fortunes may have risen or fallen during a most unusual pause and playoff:

1. ALEX PIETRANGELO

Team: St. Louis Blues

Position: Right Defence

Age: 30

Stats: 16 goals, 36 assists, 52 points in 70 games

2019-20 Cap Hit: \$6.5 million

Scoop: When asked about the emotion of potentially playing his last game wearing the Blue Note, Pietrangelo said, "It's not a fun situation to be in, especially when you've been somewhere your whole career." It may not be fun, but Pietrangelo is perhaps the only free agent whose next contract is unlikely to be impacted by the COVID-19 squeeze. He's too valuable, checks every box on every team's list as an all-situations, right-shooting blueliner coming off a strong year, with a career-best 16 goals and captaining the Blues to the last Stanley Cup with fans in the stands. The Blues and Pietrangelo's camp have not been close on a new deal, but there seems to be real doubt as to whether he actually makes it to market. The Blues would need to move bodies to make a new deal work.

2. TAYLOR HALL

Team: Arizona Coyotes

Position: Left Wing

Age: 28

Stats: 16 goals, 36 assists, 52 points in 65 games

2019-20 Cap Hit: \$6 million

Scoop: Unlike Pietrangelo, Hall is almost a sure bet to make it to market – short of the Arizona Coyotes backing a Brinks truck up to his house. Even then, he's waited this long, shouldered the risk through this season, and now sits seven weeks away from calling his own shot for the first time in his career. Hall had a decent showing in a nine-game playoff with the Desert Dogs, collecting two goals and four assists for six points. But he certainly wasn't playing at his Hart Trophy level from three seasons ago. This 24-team format provided just Hall's second taste of the postseason in 10 years. A chance to win will be at the top of his priority list, which has many wondering whether he'd be willing to bet on himself the way Marian Hossa did in 2008. Would he sign a one-year deal where he could both chase a Stanley Cup and hope to cash in with a bigger deal in a year from now, when hockey and its financial future may be clearer?

3. TOREY KRUG

Team: Boston Bruins

Position: Left Defence

Age: 29

Stats: 9 goals, 40 assists, 49 points in 61 games

2019-20 Cap Hit: \$5.25 million

Scoop: Krug makes it a three-headed monster of instant impact players potentially available this fall. A model of consistency, you can pencil him in at 50 points and 20 minutes per night. Krug makes artistic outlet passes, his head always on a swivel, and we've seen him run over opponents – even without a helmet. Krug seemed to be in line for one of those seven-year, \$50 million deals (\$7.5 million a year?) before the pandemic hit. It remains to be seen whether that cap number gets chiselled slightly in the new NHL world. That might not be an issue if, say, the Detroit native's hometown Red Wings come calling with their pile of pizza dough and oodles of cap space this summer.

4. JACOB MARKSTROM

Team: Vancouver Canucks

Position: Goaltender

Age: 30

Stats: 43 starts, .918 save percentage, 23-16-4 record

2019-20 Cap Hit: \$3.67 million

Scoop: It's possible no one has done more in the playoffs for their financial future than Markstrom. After a career year and 142-day pause, he picked up right where he left off as the Canucks' MVP. He has seen the most rubber in the postseason and ranks fourth in save percentage (.922) among goaltenders still standing, proof this wasn't just one strong regular season. But two things hold him back from a higher ranking on the list: 1) the sheer number of goaltenders available on both the free agent and trade markets and 2) his value to Vancouver. Even if it means rejigging the roster, it's difficult to envision Markstrom playing anywhere else. He might not have to go very far if he does become available, with both the Flames and Oilers in the market for a top-end netminder. That would be reason enough alone for the Canucks to lock him up.

5. ROBIN LEHNER

Team: Vegas Golden Knights

Position: Goaltender

Age: 29

Stats: 34 starts, .920 save percentage, 19-10-5 record

2019-20 Cap Hit: \$5 million

Scoop: It's the Autumn of the Netminder and Lehner could be the face of it if he makes it to market. There's doubt about that now, thanks to both his play in Vegas and the sword-in-the-back imagery posted by Marc-Andre Fleury's agent, Allan Walsh, over the weekend that signalled discontent in the desert for Flower. The argument could be made that Lehner has been the NHL's best goaltender over the past three seasons. He's certainly been the most consistent, which says a lot given the finicky nature of the net. Lehner is an astounding 9-1-0 with the Golden Knights, including 6-1 in the playoffs. By all accounts, he's managed his open battle with sobriety well, and he's proven to be an incredibly popular teammate – just watch the handshake line against the Blackhawks and the mark he made in a half-season in Chicago.

6. MIKE HOFFMAN

Team: Florida Panthers

Position: Right Wing

Age: 30

Stats: 29 goals, 30 assists, 59 points in 69 games

2019-20 Cap Hit: \$5.19 million

Scoop: All he does is score. In a league where such a premium is placed on goals, few have shot out the lights better than Hoffman. Among players who have taken 400 shots over the past two seasons, only 14



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have a higher shooting percentage than Hoffman's 13.9 per cent, and it's a list of the who's who of NHL snipers, the highest-paid players in the league. His 65 goals are also 16th most over the past two campaigns, more than Jack Eichel, Brad Marchand, Patrik Laine and Alex DeBrincat. Hoffman may not be the sexiest name available, but he shoots and scores, the four most important words in the game.

7. EVGENII DADONOV

Team: Florida Panthers

Position: Right Wing

Age: 31

Stats: 25 goals, 22 assists, 47 points in 69 games

2019-20 Cap Hit: \$4 million

Scoop: The Panthers are the only NHL team Dadonov has ever known, which is the reason why he's not a more household name. His quiet postseason didn't help, but Dadonov has been as consistent as anyone on the wing since returning from Russia three seasons ago. He was on pace for a career-best 30 goals before the pause, after his 28 in each of the two prior seasons. Among right wingers, Dadonov ranks sixth in goals (81) and 11th in points (182) over the past three campaigns, which will make him an under-the-radar signing to watch.

8. TYLER TOFFOLI

Team: Vancouver Canucks

Position: Right Wing

Age: 27

Stats: 24 goals, 20 assists, 44 points in 68 games

2019-20 Cap Hit: \$4.6 million

Scoop: It's been a tough go for Toffoli in Vancouver. First, the pandemic hit after he posted 10 points in his first 10 games after arriving from Los Angeles as a rental. Then he suffered a foot injury in Game 1 of the Canucks' adventure in the Edmonton bubble. Tuesday night would make it 11 straight games out of the lineup, robbing him of an ability to make an impact as a solid playoff contributor in a spot where the Canucks were relying on him. As a 21-year-old, Toffoli scored 14 points in 26 games to help the Kings win the Stanley Cup in 2014. Toffoli does appear to be getting closer to returning, but the Canucks may be on the clock against Vegas.

9. ERIK HAULA

Team: Florida Panthers

Position: Centre

Age: 29

Stats: 12 goals, 12 assists, 24 points in 48 games

2019-20 Cap Hit: \$2.75 million

Scoop: Haula makes the cut because he is the top pivot available in an unusual free agent class that is starved for centres. Injuries have been an issue for the 'Haula Famer,' who has appeared in just 63 games over the past two seasons. He may not command a top dollar, but there will be no shortage of interest from contenders on a prove-it-type contract now that he's healthy. Remember, it was only two seasons ago that he racked up 29 goals and 55 points in 76 games as an original Golden Knight, and Haula still hit 0.50 points per game this season while in and out of the lineup. The next best centres available: Craig Smith, Carl Soderberg, Derick Brassard and Derek Grant.

10. TYSON BARRIE

Team: Toronto Maple Leafs

Position: Right Defence

Age: 28

Stats: 5 goals, 34 assists, 39 points in 70 games

2019-20 Cap Hit: \$5.5 million

Scoop: The spotlight burns bright in Toronto, and what we learned about Barrie, who wasn't a fit with the Leafs from Day 1 under Mike Babcock, is that he is a fine accessory but not a blueline anchor. Barrie is a power-play specialist, a quarterback who can collect 50 to 60 points when used properly, but will be exposed defensively when asked to do more. He may not see an adjustment down from his \$5.5 million salary this season, but he arrived in Toronto with much bigger expectations for his contract year. On a one-year deal, imagine what the already lethal Edmonton Oilers' power play would look like with Barrie instead of Oscar Klefbom? It might be one of the best of all time.

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USA TODAY / Blue Jackets coach John Tortorella fined for walking out of post-game news conference after two questions

Scott Gleeson

Columbus Blue Jackets coach John Tortorella was fined \$25,000 by the NHL for his conduct during media availability after Game 5 of their first-round series, the league announced Tuesday.

After the Blue Jackets were ousted by the Tampa Bay Lightning 5-4 on Aug. 19, a frustrated Tortorella sat for two questions at the postgame news conference, which was conducted over Zoom, then abruptly left.

A reporter asked Tortorella how he felt about his players' experience in the league's quarantine bubble in Toronto.

Tortorella responded: "You know what, guys? I'm not going to get into the touchy-feely stuff and the moral victories and all that. You guys be safe."

He then got up and left.

The NHL said the fine is the collection of a conditional fine assessed Jan. 1.

Tortorella has been fined \$162,000 during his NHL coaching career, which has spanned nearly 20 years, according to The Athletic's Aaron Portzline.

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