



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 27, 2020



Despite exit, Hurricanes believe best is yet to come

Carolina was eliminated from the playoffs by Boston for the second straight year, but the team sees progress and a path to a Stanley Cup

By Cory Lavalette

As Rod Brind'Amour is fond of saying, every team enters each NHL season with one goal — to win the Stanley Cup.

So the fact that the Carolina Hurricanes, a year after reaching the Eastern Conference Final, were dispatched in five games by the same Boston Bruins team that eliminated them a year before means the season fell short of its ultimate goal.

Still, the bizarre, one-of-a-kind 2019-20 campaign was a step in the right direction for a franchise that believes it has a bright future.

"There's no question about that. ... We definitely closed the gap there," Brind'Amour said of his team's performance this year against the Bruins compared to last season's series sweep. "We certainly felt different this year than last year playing them. The results are the same at the end of the day."

The difference from last year to this year is two-fold. The team feels it upgraded its talent, specifically with late-season trades for center Vincent Trocheck and defensemen Brady Skjei, but more importantly continues to see growth from its young core.

So with five days to reflect after the Hurricanes' season ended, allowing the team's players, coaches and staff a return to somewhat normalcy with an exit from the NHL's Toronto bubble, the message was clear: Wholesale changes aren't needed for Carolina to accomplish its ultimate goal of winning the Stanley Cup.

"We think we've made big strides here," general manager Don Waddell said in the team's end-of-season press conference held remotely on Monday. "Our younger players have taken another big step this year, and you want to be careful that you don't get caught up and think you need to make a bunch of changes other than making changes where you always feel like you're helping your hockey club."

No "young players" represent the hope of the franchise more than Sebastian Aho and Andrei Svechnikov, the frequent linemates who — at 23 and 20 years old, respectively — are considered the present and future of a team that thinks it has the makings of a longtime contender.

"The talent's there with those two guys, but what I think excites me — and you've heard me say this all the time — is their will to get better," Brind'Amour said of his two young star forwards. "These guys are not satisfied with where they are individually, and certainly not team-wise. ... So when you have those two guys, our superstar players and they're young guys, that's

what makes you excited for where we're at and where we're headed."

The truth is, the Hurricanes are unlikely to make any ground-shaking changes anyway. With the NHL's salary cap remaining flat the next two seasons due to the financial losses of the coronavirus pandemic, Carolina doesn't have the space to pursue any high-priced free agents or take on more big-money deals like the Trocheck and Skjei acquisitions.

That said, there is still work that can be done around the edges.

The Hurricanes defense, admired around the league for its skill and depth, will look both different and the same whenever the 2020-21 season begins.

"We think our defense is one of the better defenses in the league, and we want to try to keep the group together as much as we can," Waddell said.

Five defensemen are signed to contracts worth more than \$4 million annually, including Brett Pesce — who missed all of the league's return recovering from shoulder surgery but Waddell said would "100%" be ready for the upcoming season.

Then there's former first-round pick Haydn Fleury, a restricted free agent whose increased physicality and willingness to become more involved offensively during "bubble" hockey had him looking more like the player the Hurricanes expected when they selected him seventh overall in 2014.

So unless Waddell can offload one of his defensemen — Jake Gardiner, with three years at an average annual salary just over \$4 million, would be the prime candidate but may be difficult to move — it's hard to see the defense looking much different.

That means the team's three unrestricted free agent blueliners — Joel Edmundson, Trevor van Riemsdyk and Sami Vatanen — are all likely to move on. Carolina does have two wild cards in prospects Jake Bean and Joey Keane, who were both standouts in the AHL last season and could vie for time.

At forward, Aho and Svechnikov, along with Teuvo Teravainen, make up a top line that should only improve and become one of the best in the league.

The addition of Trocheck gives Brind'Amour a center who can ease the defensive load on captain Jordan Staal while also providing more offense. Rookie Morgan Geekie earned Brind'Amour's trust and would appear to have the inside track on being the team's fourth-line pivot.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 27, 2020

It's at the wings where things get a little muddy — and where Carolina could use an upgrade.

Both Nino Niederreiter (11 goals) and Ryan Dzingel (8) had down seasons that hindered the Hurricanes' secondary scoring. While conventional thinking seems to be that Niederreiter could bounce back after an "unlucky season," it was Dzingel who was more snake-bit in his first year in Carolina.

Dzingel had a career shooting percentage of nearly 15% entering this year but converted on just 8.2% of his shots this season — a number that would indicate he's due for a bounce-back year or at least makes him palatable to another team looking for secondary scoring at a reasonable (\$3.375M AAV for one year) rate.

Niederreiter, meanwhile, had a dip in shooting percentage (9.6% from 12.1% entering the season) but didn't suffer as much of a slide as Dzingel.

Then there's Niederreiter's shot generation — he managed just 115 shots on goal in 67 games after having 103 in just 36 games last season after he was traded to Carolina. With two years at \$5.25 million remaining on his contract, the Hurricanes will likely need Niederreiter to relocate his game in 2020-21.

The good news is a potential star in Martin Necas, who had 16 goals and 20 assists in his first NHL season and looks the type of a player a team can build a power play unit around.

Jordan Martinook and Brock McGinn, who will both be in the final year of their contracts, should be serviceable — if a bit

expensive — fourth-line wingers, and Martinook seems unlikely to shoot just 4.5% again and should return to the 10-15 goal range after scoring just twice in the 2019-20 regular season.

With Justin Williams' return unknown, the Hurricanes will have room to add a winger, and there is a decent market for right wingers. Tyler Toffoli, Craig Smith and Jesper Fast could score 15 to 20 goals in a middle-six role.

Then there's 35-year-old Corey Perry. He isn't the 50-goal Hart Trophy winner he once was but remains one of hockey's best agitators — see his antics in Dallas' Game 2 win over Colorado — and he would bring an edge that's been missing from the Hurricanes for much of the past decade.

It's a role Carolina probably hoped Warren Foegele will have grown into over the past couple seasons, but the restricted free agent's uneven play — he was mostly invisible play in the Boston series — has raised questions about his long-term upside and future with the franchise.

The biggest question remains the goaltending, but the Hurricanes are already bogged down with three one-way deals next year — Petr Mrazek and James Reimer will both be in the final year of their deals, while Alex Nedeljkovic is set to make \$737,500 regardless of where he plays — that will cost a total of \$7,262,500 against the cap.

Unless the team can unload some cap space, it seems unlikely adding another goalie — particularly one like Robin Lehner — is in the budget.



How the Canes Fostered Family Culture Inside the Bubble

Brind'Amour: 'Family always comes first'

by Michael Smith

On the morning of Thursday, Aug. 20, after one last round of COVID-19 testing, after one last health screening and temperature check, after one last team breakfast, the fence outside the Fairmont Royal York Hotel swung open as two buses departed the downtown corridor of the Toronto bubble.

After three-and-a-half weeks, the Carolina Hurricanes' stay in the Eastern Conference hub city was over, a journey that ended a month-and-a-half too early, but there was a consolation prize waiting on the other side: returning home to family.

Family is a core tenet of the Canes' organizational culture, and "care" - working hard for the people you care about and earning the trust and respect of others - acts as one of the five pillars of what makes a Hurricane.

"Family always comes first," head coach Rod Brind'Amour said in his season-ending press conference. "That was the big

sacrifice in this ... you have to leave your families for this whole time. The players were willing to do it, and they put the effort in."

Life in the bubble presented unique challenges, toughest among them being separated from family and friends for an indefinite amount of time.

Technology, thankfully, offered a bridge between the bubble and home, as Brind'Amour and the Canes sought to integrate family into everyday life as much as possible.

On the night prior to Game 1 of the Stanley Cup Qualifiers, the Canes gathered at Real Sports, a sports bar located adjacent to Scotiabank Place (and inside the bubble), for a team dinner.

The highlight of the evening was a surprise for the team, a 20-minute compilation of video messages from the families of players, coaches and staff.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 27, 2020

Jake Gardiner's family staged a "training camp" montage set to the Alan Parsons Project's "Sirius," best known as the Chicago Bulls' intro song. Brind'Amour's family created a "Full House" spoof.

There were personal messages in Finnish, Czech, Russian and Swedish.

"My brother, it's me," Evgeny Svechnikov flashed his toothless grin. "Long time, no see."

There were laughs, there were tears and there were plenty of smiles.

"That's why we're doing this, right?" Brind'Amour wrapped up the pre-meal presentation. "Let's get it going."

A push notification hit our phones at 11:59 a.m. on Aug. 9.

"The league asked the GMs to show the teams an updated COVID compliance video ahead of the first round," it read. "All members of the traveling party need to attend this meeting, which is at 3:30 in Confederation 5/6. Thank you."

Everyone but one person knew the message was nothing more than a clever ruse.

President and General Manager Don Waddell leaned into the ploy and opened the meeting with a few remarks about health and safety inside the bubble. The "compliance video" began with the NHL shield and a shot of pucks being knocked to the ice in warmups before cutting to the NHL Network studios.

"Weekesy here," former Canes goaltender Kevin Weekes said. "Roddy, happy 50th man."

Brind'Amour tossed his head into his hands. What followed was 10 minutes of joy for the room and 10 minutes of squirming for Brind'Amour, as familiar faces from the Canes' head coach's past and present wished him a happy 50th birthday. The team then serenaded him, while a cake that read "Happy 50th Birthday, Rod!" and featured candles arranged in a 17, was brought in.

Even on his birthday, though, Brind'Amour abstained from eating any cake.

"I don't even know what to say," a flustered Brind'Amour said afterward, before quickly gathering his thoughts. "You guys can see what makes it special here is the people. That's what makes a Hurricane. It's because of you guys."

The Canes had a full week off in between the Qualifying Round and the First Round of the playoffs. In a world outside the bubble, the Canes would have spent that time in Raleigh.

Practices in Toronto helped fill the schedule, but there was still plenty of downtime, and the team was limited in what it could do. Brind'Amour again aimed to bring the usual comforts of home to the team virtually.

On multiple days during pre-practice warmups, family members connected with the team via FaceTime or pre-recorded messages of encouragement.

"I know how proud we are and pumped for you guys, and I know every single one of your families are feeling the same way," Courtney Martinook told the team. "There's lots of positive energy being sent to Toronto."

What it means to be a Hurricane is rooted in family.

Though the Canes didn't have their immediate families with them in the Toronto bubble, they thrived as a closely knit family group.

Though the Canes didn't have their family of fans cheering them on in the Toronto bubble, they still heard the noise from the Loudest Houses in the NHL.

And though the Canes fell short of their ultimate goal in the expanded postseason tournament, they traveled back home to reunite with their families after nearly a month away.

That, in many ways, is a victory.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 27, 2020



Game of Takes: Thoughts on Carolina's needs

There are a few areas the Hurricanes will need to improve upon heading into next season, but what are some of the areas many may be getting blown out of proportion?

By Ryan Henkel

With the Hurricanes eliminated from the 2020 Stanley Cup Playoffs, it's time to begin looking forward to next season, which we hope will be 2020-21, but not holding any breath on that.

There are a few areas of concern that the team will either need to address internally with players stepping up or there will need to be external changes brought in, but there are some areas which have been made to seem more pressing than they actually are.

I will put forth five areas of concern that have been discussed and my thoughts on what's a pressing concern and what shouldn't be too much of a worry.

Areas of Concern

Discipline

One of the biggest fires the Canes played with this season was the undisciplined nature of the team. The Hurricanes took the seventh most penalties in the league, were fourth highest in penalties taken per 60 and second to last in net penalties overall.

Luckily enough, the Hurricanes' penalty kill was one of the best in the league — fourth overall — operating at an 84% success rate.

And while the team has used its penalty kill to garner momentum and, hell, even score — second-overall in the league with 10 total shorthanded goals — that is not a sustainable model. In fact, it was Boston's power play that ultimately sunk the Hurricanes in the first round of the playoffs.

No matter how well you handle it, going a man down is bad. Case closed. Overall, the Canes really need to work on keeping tempers and sticks in check more moving forward and that's not just a coaching message, but a mental hurdle for Carolina to pass.

Scoring Depth

The biggest detriment to the Carolina Hurricanes however, was the over-reliance on their top line. It wasn't that they went to them too much, but rather the only option most of the time was to play them.

Only four players broke 40 points in the regular season: Sebastian Aho, Teuvo Teravainen, Andrei Svechnikov and Dougie Hamilton. Past that, only three additional players reached 30 points: Martin Necas, Jaccob Slavin and Warren Foegele. And among all of the roster, only seven players reached double-digits for goals.

Nino Niederreiter saw a steep drop off from the production he had last season and newly acquired winger Ryan Dzingel failed to live up to expectations. Captain Jordan Staal saw his lowest points-per-game season since 2008-09.

The fourth line also took a step down from last year's production highs as Brock McGinn and Jordan Martinook each saw a drop in their points per game total. Funny enough, Lucas Wallmark, before he was traded, was the Hurricanes' second-most productive center behind Aho, although Geekie seems to be an ideal fit for that position and should hopefully boost the team's potential.

There were bright spots on the depth, as Warren Foegele doubled his point total from last year while developing a strong two-way game as a reliable penalty killer and power forward and Necas proved to only get better as the regular season progressed with his skating ability and hockey sense.

In regards to Necas' potential, it's a similar situation to last year with Svechnikov where Rod Brind'Amour opted to shelter him on lower lines and with less opportunity, to really hone his 5-on-5 game and overall responsibilities. So, there is a thought that we will more than likely see more out of him next season.

There is also the hope that Vincent Trocheck can finally fill that number-two center spot that Carolina has been desperately looking for and while his uptick to the Canes' game was slow upon joining, the 2020-21 season should present a great opportunity for him to prove himself.

The bottom line is that the Hurricanes' scoring past the top line just wasn't good enough. There are a few players that will need to and should step up their games, but if the season starts slow, the team will need to find help in the middle six.

Blown out of Proportion

Physicality

The Carolina Hurricanes have been called "softer" by many and, in a way, that's true.

Last season, the Hurricanes ranked seventh in the league in hits per 60 and in 2019-20, they ranked 28th in both hits per 60 and total hits.

There were a few key factors in this.

First, of the team's top five hitters from 2018-19, three of the players are no longer with the team: Calvin de Haan, Micheal Ferland and Justin Faulk. The other two, Jordan Martinook and Dougie Hamilton, missed significant time due to injury.

Second, hitting isn't so much a part of Carolina's identity and overall game. Sure, when hits are there, the team takes them, it's part of the game, but the team isn't actively looking to hit players as a way of procuring the puck. The team is much



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 27, 2020

more adept at picking off passes and stealing pucks than they are at trying to win it after throwing the body.

Finally, things like fights are being phased out of the game. The Hurricanes were involved in six total fights for the year, one of the lowest in the league.

Many are saying after the Boston series, that the team let the Bruins walk all over them and that's simply not the case. Sure, the response to losing your captain wasn't ideal, but the game was already tilted out of control.

Furthermore, the Canes outhit the Bruins in that entire series, 191 to 171 and it didn't do too much for them. Calls were already not going their way, so would running around errantly really be wise to a team losing the special teams battle?

Obviously hitting is part of the game, but it is less so a part of the Carolina Hurricanes' game and it works out pretty well for them most of the time. Hell, look at the Rangers series, the Canes were outhit 116 to 78 and the Canes ran away with it.

Looking to add a "physical" or "big-body" player to the mix of the Hurricanes' roster is an irrational decision and one that ties up money in an irrelevant problem and with a player that provides, more than likely, little other upside.

The team cares about one another and will protect one another. When Petr Mrazek was knocked down by Joe Thornton, Jake Gardiner and Martinook were both racing to get to him. When Mrazek was bumped by Robby Fabbri, Haydn Fleury was instantly all over him.

There were many examples of the team fighting for one another and just because one hit isn't followed by one immediately after, it doesn't mean the Hurricanes are a weak or pushover team and the lack of physicality shouldn't be a worry.

Power Play Specialist

Now this one is interesting. For all intents and purposes, the Carolina Hurricanes power play, despite what you may otherwise think after the Boston series, was by all accounts... good this year.

They had the eighth best power play in the league, converting on 22.3% of chances. The Bruins, for reference, had the second best league percentage at a 25.2% success rate.

The team was good on the power play, but to be fair, at times they were not. I know I just said that the team was good at it, but the real issue was the consistency. The power play either looked like a perfectly executed plan or a floundering mess

and I'm on the fence to agree that the success of the units was more up to the players' skills rather than good plans of attack.

I'd be curious to see what a coaching specialist might be able to accomplish with the team's talent, but there really is no "need" for one. The team is good enough in terms of chemistry to make it work as we saw through the regular season.

Can be Improved

Goaltending

This is such a weird thing to think about, but for a second year in a row, the Carolina Hurricanes actually had good goaltending. What was once such a foreign concept and a prayed for bounty is actually seeing the Hurricanes onto the stage as contenders.

But now, is the team in a position to be greedy?

When was the last time the team had a true number one, game-stealing, highlight reel goaltender? I don't know if that was ever a reality for more than stretches, but there have been some great guys that have put together some great runs over the years.

But the one thing the franchise has always lacked is that difference maker in net.

Goalies are one of the trickiest things to predict and decipher when it comes to signing, trading and especially drafting. Scott Darling looked like a great choice going into the deal and not so much soon, soon after. Even when many thought Alex Nedeljkovic was going to be the franchise saver, he has proven to have not quite lived up to that expectation placed upon him.

Goaltenders are very rarely, consistently great for long stretches and it's even more rare to see one stand out with multiple franchises.

So when it comes to this year's goalie market, there are a lot of question marks.

The Hurricanes still have Mrazek and James Reimer each under contract for an additional year and that is still a good tandem that works well.

But should the team try to move one of them? Do they go for a goalie off the market? From a trade? Do they wait to see if Pyotr Kochetkov develops or maybe use the 13th overall pick to hopefully land Yaroslav Askarov?

Whatever the team decides, at least there is solace in the fact that for the time being, goaltending isn't really an area that has to be fretted over as the make or break aspect of the team.

TODAY'S LINKS

<http://nsjonline.com/article/2020/08/despise-exit-hurricanes-believe-best-is-yet-to-come/>
<https://www.nhl.com/hurricanes/news/how-can-es-fostered-family-culture-inside-toronto-bubble/c-318758084>
<https://www.canescountry.com/2020/8/26/21402190/carolina-hurricanes-needs-2020-nhl-offseason>



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 27, 2020

SportScan

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

1178389 Websites

The Athletic / Burnside: NHL botched a chance to be part of achieving racial justice

By Scott Burnside

Twenty-seven seconds.

That's how long the NHL felt was appropriate to spend in acknowledging yet another shooting of an unarmed Black man in America.

Twenty-seven seconds at the start of the Tampa Bay Lightning-Boston Bruins game Wednesday night in Toronto.

On the video scoreboard were the words "End Racism."

Twenty-seven seconds from the moment the public address announcer began the script for the NHL's moment of reflection to the end of the statement just before the national anthems were sung.

In Orlando, NBA players from the Milwaukee Bucks made history by refusing to play a playoff game, and their opponents, the Orlando Magic, agreed there should be no game. Other teams scheduled to play games Wednesday night quickly followed suit and the NBA agreed to reschedule the contests.

Then in a player meeting on Wednesday night, the Lakers and Clippers voted to boycott the rest of the NBA season, according to The Athletic's Shams Charania. Most other teams voted to continue, with LeBron James then exiting the meeting followed by players from both Los Angeles teams.

Games in the WNBA, MLB and MLS were all postponed. In baseball, three of the scheduled 16 games were postponed in protest; the game in Houston was delayed by Hurricane Laura.

Some WNBA players wore T-shirts with Jacob Blake's name spelled out on the front and seven bullet holes drawn on the back.

Players from opposing soccer teams were seen in various fields of play around the United States kneeling or joining arms together in unison.

Tennis star Naomi Osaka canceled her semifinal tennis match in Cincinnati.

The NHL committed 27 seconds to acknowledge what happened to Blake, a Black man who was shot seven times in the back in Kenosha, Wisconsin, and is paralyzed from the waist down. His shooting sparked violent protests that included the shooting deaths of two protesters. A White teenager has been arrested in those shootings.

On a night that many were calling historic as professional athletes and leagues ceased their games in protest of social injustice and police brutality, the NHL seemed small, puny and inconsequential by comparison.

"The NHL would like to take this moment to wish Jacob Blake and his family well and call out to our fans and communities to stand up for social justice and the effort to end racism," were the words read aloud by the

public address announcer in Toronto before the national anthems were sung.

No mention that Blake was a Black man shot by a White police officer.

No mention that his children were in the car when he was shot.

The NHL might as well have been sending regards to a retiring fan or scout, so empty and hollow was this moment of "reflection."

In other arenas, in other sports, the athletes, coaches, owners and ultimately league officials who postponed the games without threat of sanction against the players, there was a sense of solidarity, a sense that action – even if it was just the cancellation of some games played on a court or patch of grass – was so much more important than words and slogans and signs.

And where was the National Hockey League in this pantheon of outrage and defiance and, yes, action?

Nowhere.

Longtime NHL goaltender and analyst Kelly Hrudehy said during Sportsnet's coverage in Canada he didn't think the NHL should be playing games Wednesday night.

"I don't think we should be here," Hrudehy said. "I think that the NHL is missing out."

He was right.

Matt Dumba, who was in some ways the face of the NHL's fight against racial injustice during this summer's return to play, kneeling during the American national anthem on the first day of the qualifying round games in the Edmonton bubble, noted on the radio in Canada that the NHL was always "last to the party on these topics."

Others, including Canadian broadcaster Craig Simpson, another former NHL player, wondered why the games were being played.

The simple answer was they shouldn't have been played.

And so now every best intention trotted out by the NHL, every Black Lives Matter logo or placard, every anti-racist sign that appears on television screens from the NHL's two bubble cities this summer will remind us that this is a league more about words than deeds.

How could the NHL botch this as badly as it did?

We should be asking every single person along the way how these games were allowed to go on while the fabric of the society shared by these very NHL players and coaches and owners is under attack.

Where were NHL commissioner Gary Bettman and league executive Kim Davis, who is the face of the NHL's efforts to combat racism and promote inclusivity across the game of hockey? The only comment from the league was deputy commissioner Bill Daly telling Sportsnet's Chris Johnston: "I don't expect the league to initiate a game stoppage. Obviously, our players are free to express themselves in any manner they feel is appropriate."

Why weren't they on the phone to the teams and the owners, insisting that the NHL pause to acknowledge the moment? Why wasn't there a message from either one of them to at least give this moment the appropriate gravitas?



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 27, 2020

Where was Donald Fehr, the executive director of the NHL Players' Association? Why wasn't he canvassing his players and demanding the games be postponed so his constituents could properly share in the outrage at what was happening in Kenosha?

Where were the coaches of these players?

Jon Cooper and Bruce Cassidy are two of the smartest, most eloquent men in the game. Yet they stood in their normal positions behind the Tampa and Boston benches as though this was any other day.

Task at hand. Focus. Get that puck deep. Two-hundred-foot game.

But most troubling, where were the players in all of this?

Where were Patrice Bergeron and Brad Marchand and Zdeno Chara, the trio of future Hall of Famers who have epitomized leadership and courage and perseverance for the past decade in Boston?

Where were they in this moment that demanded such leadership, the kind of leadership that says, "You know what? We need to take a step back to acknowledge what is happening outside our bubble"?

Where was Tampa Bay's Nikita Kucherov, the reigning Hart Trophy winner? Or Victor Hedman, the heart and soul leader of this Lightning team?

The United States is their adopted home and this is their fight too, isn't it? This is their pain, too, no?

Where were the players in Edmonton who would follow them to the ice Wednesday evening?

Where was Tyler Seguin, who was heralded earlier in these playoffs as he knelt before the national anthems of a round robin game along with teammate Jason Dickinson and Vegas Golden Knights players Ryan Reaves and Robin Lehner? The Dallas-Colorado game started without any acknowledgment of what was happening in the world, with all 20 players on both sides standing, arms to their sides for the anthems.

It is critical that White players take up this charge. Ask the Black players like Dumba and Evander Kane and Akim Aliu, who began the Hockey Diversity Alliance.

Was this not a moment made for Seguin to step up and say, "Sorry, I can't be part of this tonight"?

Where was Nathan MacKinnon, a Hart Trophy finalist this season and one of the most important players in the game, in going to his teammates and saying, "Boys, we need to sit this one out, no matter the consequences"?

How about any NHL player regardless of whether or not they were supposed to suit up and play Wednesday night? Where were the voices that should have rung out en masse asking, "What are we doing here?"

On a night where history was made by athletes who refused to play their games because the reality of the world around them was too unbearable, too wrong, and too deserving of their attention and their voices, the NHL revealed itself as too timid, or worse, too uncaring to join them.

It's the kind of night that should never be forgotten by fans and sponsors, and the players, coaches and executives who allowed it to happen this way.

The Athletic LOADED: 08.27.2020

1178390 Websites

The Athletic / 20 Questions with Darren Dreger: On farming, minor hockey and Mitch Marner

By Sean Fitz-Gerald

Aug 26

Gordie Howe was tired. It was impossible to tell how many autographs he had signed before he finally reached the radio booth in the first intermission, and Darren Dreger, the play-by-play voice of the Brandon Wheat Kings, could read the strain across his face.

The junior hockey broadcaster, who grew up in rural Saskatchewan, secured Howe — the patron saint of hockey in that province — as a guest between periods. Howe made it in time for the interview, then made an offer: "I'll do colour for you, if you want: Do you mind if I stay here through the second?"

And so that night, in Medicine Hat, Alta., Dreger got to call a game with Howe offering analysis by his side. Mr. Hockey even stayed for part of the second intermission, before wading back out into a sea of adoring fans.

"That's my career highlight with Gordie Howe," Dreger said with a laugh.

That career has taken Dreger off the Prairies and dropped him into Toronto, where he has spent the last 22 years growing into his current job as an insider with TSN. The role will likely continue to evolve as Bob McKenzie eases into semi-retirement and leaves Dreger and colleagues Pierre LeBrun (who also works at The Athletic) and Frank Seravalli to divide the workload.

Dreger grew up in small towns near Saskatchewan's border with Manitoba. Both his parents grew up in the province, and he was driving heavy farm equipment before his feet could touch the pedals. Now 52, he is married with two adult children and more than a million followers on Twitter.

He took time out between text messages and TV appearances to field 20 Questions from The Athletic, talking about a \$5,000 phone bill, reaction to Mitch Marner's contract negotiations and a man named Gus.

1. Give me the tourism highlights of my trip to MacNutt, Sask.

(Dreger laughs) Well, you'd better not blink or you'll drive right through. I haven't been there in a few years. But it used to have a little grocery store. I think it's there in some small part. They amalgamated, in Saskatchewan — I don't know if they've done this in small towns throughout the Prairies — but your liquor store was built right into your grocery store. There would be a very small post office. I don't that there's a gas facility in there anymore. But most people would know MacNutt now because, right on the Saskatchewan/Manitoba border is Lake of the Prairies, and it is one of the best walleye/pickereel fishing spots in Western Canada.

2. I need your reaction to what Leafs owner Harold Ballard said in 1983, when he helped stop the St. Louis Blues from moving to your home province: "Who the hell wants to go to Saskatoon, anyway? I don't want to be taking dogsleds to get around."

(Smiles) Ah, I mean, it's offensive. Who's kidding who? As a kid growing up, we always lived with that Saskatchewan stigma, which I never understood. We were called "The Gap" by Manitobans and, to some degree, Albertans. Because Saskatchewan is the gap between Manitoba and Alberta. I was a fiery teenager. I probably fought a half-dozen times, maybe more — literally fistfights at parties — over being called a "Gapper." That's why I take offence to that comment ... I take great pride in coming from Saskatchewan, and I'm disappointed this summer, with the pandemic, that I wasn't able to get back for my annual pilgrimage.

3. How close were we to knowing you as "Darren Dreger, Saskatchewan farmer"?

(Laughs) Not that close. I grew up on a farm. This is going to sound absurd — and highly illegal, of course — but I was driving fuel trucks and



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 27, 2020

grain trucks and tractors when I was nine years old. Literally working on the land as a nine-year-old. We used to have blocks made out of wood so I could push the clutch in, and the gas pedal, and things like that. When you grow up on a small family farm, it's all hands on deck. I learned very early that farming was a lot of hard work. I didn't have the passion for it. I will say this, and I joke about it: I get twitchy every spring and every fall. And I think that has to be my Western Canadian/Saskatchewan roots — no pun intended — because you're at your busiest as a farmer in the spring and then harvesting in the fall. I find gardening, or just maintaining grass, as therapeutic.

4. From Martine Gaillard to Jay Onrait and more, the Prairies staged an invasion of Canadian sports TV in the late 1990s and early 2000s: Do you guys all have a secret handshake?

(Laughs) We don't. But man, there's been many. I'm thinking Darren Dutchyshen. Daren Millard is from Manitoba. He's from Brandon, which is about two hours away from my hometown. In terms of the success, a lot of people work hard, so I'm not going to say that we cornered the market on that because we're from Saskatchewan. The truth is — and it's way different now, obviously — back then, every small-ish city, and even bigger towns, had entry-level radio stations. You could get into the business, get into the industry, make all your mistakes, and just move up the ladder from there.

5. You have been in Toronto for 22 years: Are you now more big city than small town?

Naw. No. No. I think I lived in North York for maybe a year and change, before moving out to Ajax. We spent roughly a year there. Then we moved out to Brooklin, Ont., and we've been here since 2001. I keep pushing away. My wife, Holly, is from Langenburg (Sask.). High school sweethearts. She's the same sort of makeup. I love the city because of everything it provides and offers. But would we ever move and live on the 40th floor of a condo? No chance. Zero chance that's going to happen.

6. How does one amass a monthly cell phone bill of \$5,000?

I was at Sportsnet at the time. Kathy Power was the executive assistant for Scott Moore. We would hand in our monthly expenses. And they used to chirp me all the time: "How is your cell phone that high?" The only thing that made sense to me was, when I first came on board, Bob McKenzie is the pioneer, right? He's deserving of every accolade that he's received over time, and more recently, with semi-retirement. I remember watching Bob and going, "I don't have the contact base yet to get there, so how do I get to that next level?" ... I called everybody. I mean, I called everybody.

7. Be honest: When we see the insiders on NHL trade deadline day, are you really texting for that long, or are you sneaking in an occasional game of Tetris or something?

(Laughs) No, there wouldn't be any games played. We are texting. But you know what? A lot of it is actually answering questions from other sources and other clubs, especially. Just general hockey contacts. Especially if there's a signing, or if there was a trade that just went down. When there's a big trade, that's when you get reaction from all corners. Lots of times, people are texting you saying, "what was the condition on that trade?" They're trying to put the pieces of the puzzle together, as well as us.

8. What happens now, with Bob McKenzie stepping into his so-called soft retirement?

We continue to beg him not to go into full retirement for a number of years. Bobby's got it running through his veins. He's earned this opportunity to dive into semi-retirement. When it comes to certain things like the draft, he loves all of that, and the communication with his collection of scouts and putting the rankings together and all of that. We're all going to have to carry more. Bob is such a key figure, and not just in dispensing the information. One thing that I learned early from Bob was, "we're always going to work better as a team, this isn't an individual sport." So when we're sitting on that back desk, one of us will get a tip.

And Bob goes, "OK, we'll I'm going to text this guy, this guy — Pierre, why don't you get in touch with this guy, Dregs you keep pushing here and, Frank, get over here, we need you."

9. How might the NHL's embrace of gambling impact the role of — and the demands placed upon — an insider?

It's an interesting question. Specific to injury information, that's going to be interesting for me because there is going to be an appetite for that. If a player's health status is not only in question, but the length of the player being away needs to be as specific as you can get, there could be an appetite for that.

10. Bob McKenzie has "The Bobfather" and "Bobby Margarita" — what are your nicknames?

Dregs is obvious. Double-D. I've got to think about this. I hosted a handful of NBA games, believe it or not, on CTV years ago. It was because Rob Faulds was doing something else. I was the fill-in host. So I did some games with Doc Rivers. I did some games with Rick Berry. We did a conference call one time, and Doc Rivers is on the call. We're going through the pleasantries, "Hey Doc, how are you?" "Double-D, how ya doing?" That stuck. My buddies call me Gus. And Gus has been as long as I've been alive. My great-grandfather had curly hair. My grandfather, Archie — I was born with curly hair — and he looked at me and says, "Oh, he looks like grandpa Gus." That stuck. I go back to Langenburg, and it's probably 75 percent that don't call me Darren.

11. In 2006, a columnist with the Saskatoon StarPhoenix wrote this of watching a TSN panel: "There was even a moment when I thought — hoped? — (Tie) Domi might throttle that smug Darren Dreger."

(Laughs) Good for him. You've got to remember, I was a bit of a hybrid at Sportsnet, right? The majority of my role was hosting, and trying to keep (Nick) Kypreos and Bill Watters and that group in check. But I did develop into a quasi-insider for Sportsnet, as well. So when I jumped over to TSN in 2006 to be a full insider, I really felt like, "I've got something to prove here" ... I went in there with guns blazing, man. Tie would admit that it was a challenging time. (Laughs) Being an analyst and being able to be openly critical of your peers, of players in general — or being able to analyze on the fly — is a challenge. Not everybody can do it. And we've seen that time and time again. Tie didn't slide smoothly into that role. And the producers at TSN wanted Tie to be critical. They wanted him to say things that no other analyst was going to say on television at the time. So every time he'd say something quasi-critical, I felt like it was partly my job to either correct him or poke him a little bit to see how far he would go. I remember (TSN executive) Steve Dryden saying, "you're a little too strident." I had to run and find out what strident meant. When I got the definition of strident, I started to realize, "yeah, you've got to make your own path here and not worry what everyone else is doing."

12. How do you cope with criticism?

I've gotten better over the years, of course. Automatically, you want to say, "well, I just don't pay attention to it, and I don't read it." But that's not true. You read it to some degree. I'm not one of those guys who scrolls through his replies on Twitter. I respect everyone's opinion. Not everyone's opinion is going to mimic mine. That's the beauty of Twitter and social media, that you invite in that opinion and criticism. I've always been amused with how fans think that I'm in it for a very selfish or specific reason. Especially as an insider, I'm not an opinion-ist. I'm not an analyst. There are times when I have to play the role of an analyst if I'm on a panel. My role is to dispense information. It's always amused me that, when I report something as fact, people pile on. The whole Mitch Manner thing is ...

13. (Interrupts Dreger) That was actually question No. 13.

Yeah, of course it is. I understood the emotion of the Leafs fan because they could see how this negotiation was going, or wasn't going. And also the long-term impact. But to think that I was doing the bidding of a player or an agent or a family? I mean, initially, I was amused. Then I was



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 27, 2020

offended. And then it was kind of disbelief that it took on a life of its own. I pay attention to it, but it can't impact how you go about doing your business, otherwise you'd get consumed by it pretty quickly.

14. Which NHL fanbase tends to launch the most volleys at you?

It would be Toronto. And I think that's just pure volume. Boston is always a hot market. I haven't had to dive into the Boston pool in a long time, specific to a contract. But I mean, by volume, it would definitely be Toronto.

15. Do you have a favourite mean tweet?

I can't remember who wrote it, but it was a former player. I have it saved somewhere in my phone. What struck me about it was, he was responding to a tweet — and this was going back to the early days of Twitter, eight or 10 years ago — and he commented on something I had tweeted. He said, "Oh, we're supposed to listen to this guy, a crazy hockey dad who is a nightmare as a hockey parent." It had nothing to do with anything related to minor hockey. I remember I direct messaged the guy to say, "where is that coming from?" ... There have been some doozies. Trust me. There have been some where I've borderline called the police to say, "this is getting close to threatening both me and my family."

16. How much do you think it cost you to put your two children through minor hockey?

(Laughs, whistles) Well, it would be six figures, easily. I remember Kenny Campbell, our colleague, wrote a book on minor hockey, and I think at the time, he made a point of illustrating the extreme. And I think the extreme was \$20,000 a year. I remember talking to Kenny at a Leafs game, and I said, "Kenny, I'd be all of \$20,000, and higher than that." We went through the math. Your registration is X-thousands of dollars. But when my son got to that major atom, minor peewee phase, that was when all the skills coaches surfaced. And everybody had to get into power skating. On top of that, you had to have a skills coach. On top of that, there were specialized clinics. My son went to L.A. one year. He was on a line with Nick Robertson, of the Leafs.

17. Could Gordie Howe, who famously got his first pair of Depression-era skates out of a rucksack, have made it to the NHL today, without the money to pay for private training and development?

Yes. I can still listen to the arguments of being the best ever. And that's saying a lot, when you look at the great players — obviously Gretzky, Lemieux — and now we see what we've got in Connor McDavid, and on and on it goes ... I believe they were the best athletes at the time in the sport, no different than today. If they'd had the same opportunities then that today's player has, I think they'd be every bit as good.

18. How does that rising cost, and the resulting stakes, change the game?

I don't think there's any question it changes the game. It really, truly does. Kids and parents are watching the great players of today's game and wondering how these players got there. And aside from the god-given talent and DNA and everything else, everybody wants to believe that their child is going to be the next great Canadian hockey player. In certain cases, that is going to happen naturally and organically. But as we discussed earlier, it's a tough one, because you do definitely have the haves versus the have-nots.

19. Aside from your own cameo appearance, if you were a character on Letterkenny, which would you be?

The big guy. With the big boiler (Squirrely Dan) ... I relate to his character a little bit more than the others.

20. In what day-to-day situations am I most likely to encounter a real-life DregerFace?

For whatever reason, my (internet) service provider here isn't great. James Duthie and Darren Dreger — it isn't our fault, there's nothing we can do about the Wifi — but there have been a series of times where

we're trying to get our hits done, for SportsCentre and whatnot, and his screen will freeze or my screen will freeze, or somebody's screen will freeze. I suggested a long time ago, just for fun: Somebody needed to record those things and put a montage together of the faces of the freeze during the pandemic.

The Athletic LOADED: 08.27.2020

1178391 Websites

The Athletic / Inside the new normal for the NHL's Toronto-born players and their families

By Scott Wheeler

Aug 16

An Islanders veteran pursuing a Stanley Cup while his young family quarantines at their offseason home nearby. A top Flyers prospect waiting to make his debut at the arena where his dad worked for nearly 20 years. A new Lightning forward, acquired by trade and close to his family for the first time in his career. And a Lightning player on the bubble, in more ways than one, ready to play in the arena he couldn't afford to go to as a kid.

When playoff hockey returned to Toronto, so too did many of the NHL's Toronto-raised talent. And as they adjust to a new life inside the bubble, their families are navigating a strange new reality just outside of it.

The Athletic spoke with five Toronto-area players and their families about an August to remember — and a homecoming that doesn't necessarily feel like one.

When Josh Bailey and the New York Islanders made their way to Toronto to begin life in the bubble ahead of the Stanley Cup playoffs, his wife Megan and their three kids followed suit — sort of.

Bailey was born and raised in Bowmanville, Ont., less than an hour east of the city. Megan is from nearby Whitby and the two were married in Toronto. Each offseason, the Baileys call Hampton, a small town just north of Bowmanville, home.

This year, though, while their destinations were the same, they didn't travel together. Bailey took a chartered flight with his team and went from the airport to the Fairmont Royal York Hotel.

Megan and their children, Wyatt, Mack and Blake, flew commercial, landing in Toronto before heading to the suburbs to quarantine with her family.

In early August, when Bailey and Megan celebrated 14 years together, they did so separately.

Further east, in Stirling, Ont., Bailey's parents, Chris and Donna, waited anxiously for Megan and the kids to finish quarantining so that they could see their daughter-in-law and three grandchildren for the first time since Christmas.

During the pandemic, on March 31, the Baileys had welcomed their first daughter, Blake. So when Blake met her grandparents for the first time a couple of weeks ago, it was their first time meeting the new baby. And Bailey wasn't there to introduce the newest member of the family to his parents.

"The toughest part for (Bailey) was leaving his kids," Chris said.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 27, 2020

In recent weeks, while Bailey led the Islanders to a first-round win over the Washington Capitals, Megan and their kids bounced between the homes of both grandparents for family gatherings and viewing parties.

"There's like a ritual with the jersey. Mack will sleep in his jersey. Every day he wants to wear daddy's jerseys. And even in quarantine with (Megan's) family, they had their routine with the garage TV and all of them in their Islanders wear," Donna said. "And Wyatt is four so he's attuned to seeing his dad on TV but I would say Mack is too. They love seeing daddy play and they sing the Josh Bailey song when he scores. It's very cute. They're definitely into their daddy's career, that's for sure. And I never had girls, so I was so happy that it was a girl and that we finally have a little girl that we can dress at home. We're pretty blessed."

In a typical summer, Chris and Donna see Bailey and their grandchildren "weekly."

In a typical season, Chris travels to watch Bailey play regularly. Chris has seen his son, a veteran of 11 seasons, play in all but three NHL cities (Minnesota, Dallas and Winnipeg). Before the pandemic paused the season, he and Donna had driven from Vegas to Arizona and Colorado and he'd joined the team for their father's trip in St. Louis.

But Chris and Donna normally don't get to watch Bailey play with Megan and the kids. This summer has taken on new meaning in that way. Though Chris and Donna wish they could be at Scotiabank Arena to watch their son play, they wouldn't trade these new memories for anything.

These days, in Stirling, Bailey's the only one missing. On some game days, there are four generations present. Both Chris and Donna's parents are still alive and live within 10 minutes, including one set of great grandparents on the same Stirling street.

That support isn't lost on Bailey.

"It really didn't matter where we were going to end up doing this whole thing. We could be up at the North Pole and you'd still see them the same amount. It is what it is," Bailey said. "But you know your family and your support system, everyone's watching. You use that as motivation."

From his room at Hotel X, Morgan Frost looks out the window, his cell phone to his ear.

He's looking south. Across the street, beyond the bubble, Budweiser Stage sits empty on Toronto's waterfront.

In any other summer, he says, Budweiser Stage is a go-to for him and his friends when they're in search of a night out and live music.

Today, on a Thursday between his Flyers' games, he takes comfort in the views outside his hotel room window.

There are things he misses. The summer weekends at his cottage, three hours north of the city in Haliburton. All of the golf he typically plays in the summer.

"I'm definitely missing those days and I'm sure I'll get some time to go home when this is over but it's not really the same going to the cottage when it's not nice summer weather," he concedes.

But everywhere he looks is familiar. When he's at the Scotiabank Arena (he says it will always be the Air Canada Centre in his heart), he's at the place where his dad's voice once bellowed for more than 1,000 games.

Frost's father, Andy, was the public address announcer for the Maple Leafs for nearly two decades, taking the gig the year his son was born in 1999. He hosted the city's well-known postgame call-in show on the radio for much of that time, and was a classic rock DJ in the city for much of the rest. When fans showed up to the arena, Frost's voice, to announce the lineups, or a goal, or a penalty, was part of the routine.

"When (Morgan) was little I'd be concerned about keeping him up too late because he had to get up to go to school in the morning and after I did the game I'd have to go on and do the phone-in show which typically

would end at like 11 p.m. So Morgan might not get home until midnight," Andy said.

That didn't stop Frost though. Asked how many times he visited the arena with his dad as a kid, Frost admits he lost count.

"I'd probably have to say triple digits. I'd always be asking my dad if I could come to the rink with him and he was always pretty cool about it. They'd get me a media pass so I could sit in the press row with the writers and they'd be taking notes on the game and I'd have my own notepad, probably writing some silly stuff but just trying to copy them and fit in," Frost said, chuckling.

On Frost's arm is a tattoo with the coordinates of his hometown, Aurora, 45 minutes north of the city, where he grew up and still trains in a small local gym each summer.

"It's my favourite place," Frost says of Aurora and Toronto. "I love it here."

At their family home, Frost, who recently left the radio waves behind for retirement, laughs in his booming, baritone voice as he relives his son's childhood — and his own career. Andy made it to Florida for Frost's NHL debut in the fall. That was important to both of them. But there's a second debut they both hoped to share too.

"I still call it the ACC too," he said. "It's really unusual not being able to go to down. I'll tell you this: I haven't heard him complain. He'd love to see his friends, he'd love to see his dogs, he'd love to see his girlfriend but he knows that that's what it takes."

Though Frost has now been in Toronto for several weeks and spends his days at Scotiabank Arena, the 21-year-old forward is still waiting to make his NHL debut in Toronto. He's got 20 NHL games under his belt but he has yet to play in the rink he grew up in.

While the Flyers pursue a Stanley Cup in the bubble, he sits in the 100 section watching, waiting for his opportunity to get back into the lineup.

"It's under different circumstances but playing at (Scotiabank Arena) would be really special for me," Frost said. "I'm itching to play a game here now. I've been playing hockey for two and a half months now and I haven't played a game since March. But (sitting in the stands) is cool actually, I've really enjoyed it. I don't really get to watch many live games in person so it's definitely a different perspective. You can see plays develop before they do and it's weird too just being in the rink and being able to hear everything the players and the coaches are saying. Normally, on the ice, you can't hear anything."

He's trying to just take it all in and enjoy it. He FaceTimes with Andy and his mom, Dana, daily.

"My mom's always asking if she can sneak in and come see me quick and I'm like 'No, mom, you can't.' My dad's pretty cool about it, we don't actually talk hockey much. They let me do my own thing, almost like hockey's a side thing," Frost said.

"It has been an adjustment for sure but I've liked that it's kind of weird. The not seeing friends and family part is definitely tough when they're so close but I honestly don't think there's anywhere else I'd rather be. I feel comfortable here and I feel comfortable in that rink I've been in it so many times. There's a sense of comfortability being back in Toronto for me so it's hard for me to be too upset about that."

Frost isn't the only Flyers local in the bubble either. Scott Laughton played for the Toronto Marlboros in minor hockey, was born just outside the city, and still returns every summer to skate and train. Brian Elliott grew up just north of Frost in neighbouring Newmarket, Ont. Andy Andreoff, a fellow healthy scratch in these playoffs, played on the same junior hockey team as Laughton and played golf at the golf course Frost grew up at, though the two never met until they became AHL teammates and linemates.

He and Frost have bonded further in the bubble, over their shared roots and practice schedules these days.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 27, 2020

"It's tough being so close to home and you can't see family. There has been a lot of FaceTiming and texting. I guess we'll see how far we go," Andreoff said on a phone call.

Andreoff, a journeyman, has already had his NHL homecoming at Scotiabank Arena, which included sections of his friends, many who live downtown, and family, from nearby Pickering. He still considers himself a Leafs fan and keeps close tabs on his childhood team, despite playing for their conference rival.

"I've always gone back to Pickering for the summers and I have a place back there in the summer. It's nice to be back home. It's still close and it feels that way. It feels like you're right there," Andreoff said.

Asked if he listened to Frost's dad growing up, Andreoff answers quickly with a chuckle. Of course he did. He hopes to meet him someday too.

"He was on the radio a lot," Andreoff said.

Across town from the Frosts in Aurora, John Goodrow laughs after he picks up the phone during the second intermission of Game 5 between the Tampa Bay Lightning and the Columbus Blue Jackets.

"I was going to say, 'We may want to have the call at a better time,'" he said.

John has recently become a Lightning fan through his son Barclay Goodrow, who was traded to Tampa at the deadline from the San Jose Sharks, and he's just seen the Lightning give up three unanswered goals to surrender the lead.

Under normal circumstances, John has treated Goodrow's road visits to Toronto for games as precious. His son spent six years in San Jose so he could only see him play at Scotiabank Arena once per season.

Every summer, whenever the Sharks' playoff runs would conclude, he would call Toronto, where he was born before his parents moved to the suburbs, home (he stayed with his parents for one summer before he decided he would rent a place in the city moving forward).

August is normally the time for John to catch up with his son.

This summer, though, after Goodrow was traded to the Lightning, he elected to stay in Tampa, knowing that the NHL was likely to return and that if he came back to Canada he would have to quarantine. And now that he's finally back, it doesn't even feel like he is.

"It's almost like we're not in Toronto. We're just in a bubble in the middle of nowhere," Goodrow said. "But other than that it has been fun. It has kind of seemed like I've been a part of this team the whole season with everything that happened."

But finding family time has proven difficult. As Goodrow pursues a Stanley Cup with the Lightning, he and his dad text daily.

"It's just harder for us. We think of him so often as the little boy but he's not anymore," John said. "He says life in the bubble has been great, we see the odd clip of tennis or basketball, the weather has been great at BMO Field, and he's fortunate as well that he's unmarried — and he has a girlfriend but he has no children, no unhealthy grandparents, or anything like that. And they've got a great opportunity to win the Stanley Cup."

John recently ordered Lightning jerseys for the entire family. Instead of watching the Canadian broadcasts of the game, they've also used the NHL app to tune into the Lightning regional broadcasts.

"We're just starting to get to know those announcers," John said. "We always make sure we're somewhere and sitting down able to watch."

When the Lightning and the Blue Jackets played into a fifth overtime in the first game of their series, John was at home, avoiding making dinner and hoping for the Lightning to get the final bounce. When the game was finally over, he left it with a new admiration for his son.

"We kept waiting to have dinner. I was going to turn the barbecue on and then it was like 'we'll wait, we'll wait, we'll wait' and then it was 9:30 p.m. before I finally got outside. A game like that gives people a tremendous respect for all of the players. In Bar's case, he played 35 minutes and then you've got Seth Jones at 65. They're in just phenomenal condition. And the sixth period didn't look slower than the first three!" he said.

John concedes that the new reality for everyone feels bizarre — both inside and outside the bubble.

"The hard thing is he's 40 kilometres from here and it's as if he's in San Jose," John said. "At least we're in the same time zone. He was out west for six years so we were constantly thinking 'what time is it where he is now?'"

As a parent, John is also happy his son isn't playing his playoff games in Florida, a COVID-19 hotbed.

"If Tampa wasn't in the position they were and knowing there would likely be playoffs, he probably would have come back early on," John said. "We're just so happy that the team is out of Tampa and is here. Just to be in Toronto instead of Tampa is something that's very fortunate for us."

Thomas Verhaeghe can't remember a time when his son, Carter Verhaeghe, wasn't home in Waterdown, Ont., an hour west of Toronto, for his birthday.

This year, when Verhaeghe's 25th birthday rolled around on Aug. 14, he was preparing for the first playoff game of his young NHL career, an eventual 3-2 Lightning win over the Blue Jackets in Game 3 of their first-round series.

Growing up, Verhaeghe's favourite player was always No. 13 in blue and white, just not the blue and white of the team he now plays for.

"He was a big Leafs fan," Thomas said. "We always watched the Leafs. He always had his (Mats) Sundin jersey on."

But while the Verhaeghes briefly lived in Toronto when Carter was a kid, they could never afford to go to Leafs games growing up. Now, he gets to play in the same arena he once couldn't afford entry into.

"I've only actually been down there once because it was so expensive. Me and my mom went. I think it was against the Flyers and it was an awesome experience and the Leafs lost but it was my first NHL game so I didn't care. To be playing there now is just something special," Verhaeghe said on a Saturday evening phone call, the day before Game 1 of his Lightning's second-round series against the Boston Bruins.

Before Verhaeghe became a Lightning prospect — and later a Lightning player — he was selected in the third round of the 2013 draft by his hometown team. So visits to Toronto have always taken on special meaning. They're an opportunity to see family and to show the opposition that they made a mistake in letting him go.

At his first NHL game at Scotiabank Arena, more than 30 family and friends attended. The Lightning's final regular-season game before the shutdown was in Toronto, with family and friends watching. Now he's bouncing in and out of the lineup, in an empty building, while trying to remain positive.

"If we want to make a long run it's not going to be the same lineup every night. It's next guy up. And I get it. I've been practicing and skating pretty hard," Verhaeghe said.

After never having gone to games at Scotiabank Arena with his son growing up, Thomas has now grown accustomed to making the short trip to Toronto to watch him play.

"It's frustrating in one way that he's so close and we can't see him. And it's kind of funny watching playoffs in August too," Thomas said. "I think his spirits are pretty good. It's just like a giant road trip. It's much easier for him when he's playing but when you get scratched here and there it's harder."

Asked what a normal August looks like, Verhaeghe laughed.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 27, 2020

The Ford Performance Centre, which is typically the Leafs' practice facility and now houses all of the bubble teams for their practices and morning skates, is the rink Verhaeghe grew up practicing at. It's also the place he now skates and trains each summer with Tampa's other locals, including Anthony Cirelli, prospect Taylor Raddysh, and skating coach Barb Underhill.

"I'd actually be skating at the (Ford Performance Centre) a few times a week with some skills guys," Verhaeghe said. "Right about now, I'd probably be getting ready to go down to Tampa to have training camp in the next couple of weeks. Last season hasn't even finished and normally I'd be gearing down for the next one. It's a little bit messed up. It's kind of cool that it's in Toronto and I get to practice at the (Ford Performance Centre) though."

Though he admits it has been a little frustrating not to be able to get out of the bubble and into the city, Verhaeghe is glad that the team made a Friday afternoon trip to Glen Abbey Golf Club, the longtime home of the PGA Tour's RBC Canadian Open, between rounds. And he's thankful the Lightning are staying at Hotel X, with all of its amenities, instead of the Fairmont Royal York.

"The facilities are unbelievable. I don't think I've ever been in a hotel like this, with the tennis courts and squash courts," Verhaeghe said. "But it's weird being home but not really being home."

The Athletic LOADED: 08.27.2020

1178392 Websites

The Athletic / What it's like for the NHL's Edmonton-born players living in the Western bubble

By Daniel Nugent-Bowman

Aug 5

The fleeting moments at the bubble gates are all the time Stars defenceman Taylor Fedun gets to spend with his family these days.

Born and raised in Edmonton, Fedun usually heads to his parents' house for dinner the day before a game against the Oilers, where he's joined by his sister and brother (and his wife and their two kids).

Under normal circumstances, there's a cheering section awaiting him at the rink well before puck drop with loved ones clad in victory green-coloured sweaters and his No. 42 on their backs. They're easy to pick out in a sea of orange and blue. There is time for hugs after the final buzzer.

All that is missing right now. Brief face-to-face encounters are limited between a fence and monitored by a security guard.

"To be back in Edmonton – which unfortunately isn't a place that I get to spend too much time these days – it's equally tough to be right here and know that I have so much family and friends just a few minutes away and I'm not really able to see anyone," Fedun said.

"That's the closest we've got to seeing each other while I've been here."

Such is life for the few local players left in the Western bubble of the Stanley Cup Playoffs. They're playing close to home – only it rarely feels that way.

"It's kinda frustrating," Fedun's dad, Dwayne, said. "We can't see him, really. We get a little visit – a minute.

"It's weird that he's at home – and yet he's not."

There are no laughs around the dinner table amid a home-cooked meal. No roars or claps from the stands either. No postgame cheers.

The altered visits with his family are all they've got — and aside from trying to win games with the Stars, these are the moments the 32-year-old Fedun longs for.

Without unsupervised access to the outside world, the visits he receives from his parents and siblings provide him with either presents or reminders of home.

A Stars teammate was unhappy with the paddles available for table tennis when they arrived in the bubble. Fedun ordered a set online and his sister, Ashley, picked them up and delivered them to the team.

His parents boxed up his mechanical engineering degree from Princeton University that's been on the wall of their home in Edmonton for the last nine years. Fedun plans to take it back to the house he shares with his wife, Katie, and their four-month-old son, Bowden, in Allentown, Pa.

Fedun's father and brother, Ian, are hunters, so they've provided him with moose, deer and elk jerky. His mother, Jacqueline, brought over her famous spaghetti and meatballs before the last two games of the Stars' series against the Flames, both wins. That's become Fedun's pregame meal of choice.

"I worked out pretty well," Fedun said. "I don't think she minds."

"He loves her cooking," Dwayne said. "She'll do whatever he asks."

The only stipulation: no desserts. Fedun is afraid he'd indulge too often if his mom brought over baked good, so he's asked that she not tempt his sweet tooth.

Others don't have the same worries.

Colorado winger Tyson Jost is from St. Albert, a suburb northwest of Edmonton. He's one of two local players on the Avalanche; the other is blueliner Kevin Connauton, who made his 2020 playoff debut Monday.

Jost's mom, Laura, works downtown, which allows for easy access to the bubble gates.

In addition to providing meals every second night or so for her 22-year-old son, Laura has dropped off cakes and almond butter cookies – the latter courtesy of Jost's grandmother. The treats have been shared among Jost's Avalanche teammates, for better or worse.

"I'm gonna be 230 (pounds) when I roll out of this bubble," defenceman Ian Cole said jokingly.

Added an amused Jost: "It's been nice. A little touch of home."

In a way, Nick Holden has been missing out.

The Golden Knights defenceman found out only recently that he was permitted to spend some time with family members at the bubble gates. Holden grew up in St. Albert and his brother, Jack, still lives there. His parents, John and Lynda, and sister, Tiffany, are now in Fort Saskatchewan – just northwest of the city.

Still, because he can't share hugs, Holden figures it's not worth them making the trip downtown to chat. They resort to FaceTime calls instead.

"It's funny sitting in downtown Edmonton and my parents and sister are 25 minutes away. My brother is 20 minutes away," said Holden, 33. "That part of it is a little bit interesting."

Holden typically enjoys a similar Edmonton experience as Fedun for road games. There's usually dinner with family the night before the game and he has a large group of supporters in attendance to watch the action. He misses those times, even when they lead to some risqué incidents.

Before his first game in Edmonton in 2013, Holden, then with the Avalanche, was greeted by a bright pink sign from a cousin that read: "I bathed with Nick Holden; taught him everything he knows during tub time."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 27, 2020

"Family is family," Holden said, laughing. "As much as it's embarrassing, they're there to support you and have fun."

The players have had a little fun away from the rink. The Golden Knights and Avalanche played a round at Blackhawk Golf Club. (Holden shot 107, which was fine with him considering he rarely plays.) The Golden Knights spent an afternoon at Rec Room, a restaurant and gaming establishment, an idea put forth by the team's so-called fun committee — of which Holden is a member. And the three teams have gone to Commonwealth Stadium, home of the Edmonton CFL team, to play various games on the field.

"That was pretty fun the first time I ran out of the tunnel," said Holden, who frequented games as a child.

But not having family around has been especially difficult for the Edmonton-and-area players given that they're so close to home.

And that's to say nothing of their immediate family members.

Holden and his wife, Angela, have four children ranging from two to nine years old. She was taking care of them at their summer home in Camrose — roughly an hour southeast of Edmonton — before returning to Las Vegas last Monday.

The journey back to Vegas was meant as a pre-emptive measure, so they could possibly join Holden in Edmonton for the conference final.

Family members looking to join players for the last two rounds must self-isolate for seven days in the club's city before travelling to Edmonton, as part of the return-to-play agreement the NHL and NHLPA collectively bargained. They will require three negative COVID-19 tests during this time. Upon arrival, they must quarantine in a room separate from the player for four days and return four negative tests. Only then can they stay in the same room as the player. They must undergo daily testing.

All these provisions might be tough for a parent looking after three school-aged children and a toddler.

"My wife drove up and then she drove back," Holden said. "On the way home, she was like, 'I've been stuck with these kids in a hotel for an hour. I don't know how I'm gonna do four days.'"

Fedun is much more emphatic. That's not going to happen.

For Katie and Bowden to come to Edmonton, they'd have to make their way to Dallas first without knowing the outcome of the Stars' series against the Avalanche. Ideally, they'd already be in Texas.

"I don't think it's even fair to ask them to try and go through that," he said. "I just think for her, with a newborn, that's a pretty tall ask."

The time apart from his wife and son is wearing on Fedun.

He experienced something similar last season when he started the year with the AHL's Rochester Americans but was traded to the Stars and had to leave Katie behind because she was attending school. They spent the first year of their marriage 2,300 kilometres apart.

The longing is worse now.

"I think a lot of people have forgotten that most of us went home during the pause. We had to get back to Dallas a good three or four weeks prior to coming to the bubble," Fedun said. "It's been almost eight weeks now since I've seen my wife and little boy. That's really tough. He was only two months old when I left."

"It's almost half of his life that I've been gone for already. There are times when it's tough to think about it like that."

Fedun uses FaceTime to check in a few times a day. The two-hour time difference and varied schedules of late games and an early-to-bed sleeping infant make connecting tough.

Aside from the brief meetings at the bubble gates, it's basically been the same way he's seeing family close by.

Dwayne and Jacqueline invite people over to watch Stars games rather than head to the rink to cheer on their favourite blueliner.

"It's not quite the same," Dwayne said.

No one has to tell Fedun that.

The Oilers were his first NHL team when he signed out of Princeton in 2011. He missed the entire 2011-12 season when he broke his femur in a preseason game but eventually made his big-league debut in November 2013. Fedun never played for the Oilers in Edmonton; his only four NHL games came on the road before he signed with the Sharks the following offseason.

Coming to the Alberta capital as a visiting player is all he knows. The difference between now and the norm is stark.

"We might as well not be in Edmonton right now anyway when it comes to how we get to see or deal with my family," he said. "(Nearly) the only interaction I have with them is through the phone. That's no different than anywhere else."

The Athletic LOADED: 08.27.2020

1178393 Websites

The Athletic / Why does testing in the NHL bubbles work — and what does it mean for the future?

Dan Robson, Thomas Drance

EDMONTON and TORONTO — A teal Chevy Equinox wrapped in DynaLife Medical Lab decals pulled up in front of the entrance to the Edmonton Oilers offices at Rogers Place to meet an employee wearing a blue "Lab Rats" T-shirt and pushing a cart stacked with two green coolers labeled "Biohazard."

It was just before 4 p.m. on the eve of the first game of the NHL's official return to play after a five-month hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The dozen Western Conference teams participating in the Stanley Cup playoffs were at the JW Marriott and Sutton Place, the former hotel attached to Rogers Place by a walkway. The passage crosses 104th street in downtown Edmonton, underlined by a narrow digital banner that stretched above passing cars and flashed "Thank you to all our frontline workers."

Traffic veered around the stopped Equinox as the driver and passenger hopped out, put the green coolers into the trunk — then unloaded 20 white and brown boxes, each two feet wide, filled with COVID-19 tests that look like individually packaged extra-long Q-Tips.

After a brief delay to clear security, the tests were quickly rolled on two carts through the double glass doors of the Oilers' office, which had several signs taped to it denying entry to anyone who felt symptoms of the novel coronavirus. "Help Relaunch, Safely" one read.

Three weeks later, the NHL is in the second round of the Stanley Cup playoffs, being played entirely inside two bubbles in Edmonton and Toronto. The NHL has conducted more than 24,500 tests among the clubs' 52-person traveling parties with zero positives for COVID-19.

Of the approximate 1,500 staff members outside of the NHL teams that have been tested on a daily basis in Edmonton and Toronto, there have been three positive tests. Each of those people work inside the bubble, but reside locally and go home at the end of their shifts. By design, the



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 27, 2020

bubble staff have no contact with players or club staff. All three people who tested positive have recovered and returned to good health.

The NHL bubble is likely to pop if there is a coronavirus outbreak within it. But so far, the seal has held. The invisible barrier and procedures within are the most important element of the NHL's attempt to crown a champion this year, despite a pandemic that has killed more than 800,000 people around the world.

So far — as with other leagues that have taken the bubble approach, like the NBA — it appears that the measures enforced by the NHL's hubs are working. But it also comes with an enormous price, with testing alone costing at least \$7 million since the NHL's qualifying round began.

While the experiment gives the NHL a chance to award the Stanley Cup to whichever team wins that historic victory, it also provides a roadmap for how the league might be able to function in the near future, as COVID-19 continues to spread across the United States. There are reports that the NHL and NHLPA are in discussions about the upcoming season, with games being played in a series of bubble cities as one of the options.

If the Stanley Cup is awarded this year it will offer some hope for the complicated path ahead.

But Dr. Winne Meeuwisse, the league's chief medical officer, warns that there is still a long way to go before we can declare hockey's return a success.

"I'm cautiously optimistic," he says. "Emphasis on the cautious."

Like any business, the decision to reopen the NHL during the pandemic was largely a financial one.

The league, team owners and players are all facing enormous financial implications. Had the NHL not returned to play, the league had internally forecast the revenue shortfall for the 2019-20 season would be roughly \$1.1 billion. It's not entirely clear how much of that will be recouped by the return-to-play effort, but the league won't be made whole by the conclusion of the 2020 season — far from it. And that uncertainty is persistent beyond this season.

By some estimates, playing a season without fans in the stands next year will bring in about \$3 billion less in hockey-related revenue than expected. That's if they are able to play a season at all — and with COVID-19 still spreading through the United States, that remains a big if.

So returning to the play this year was imperative for the NHL as it tried to mitigate losses. It required an enormous effort with unparalleled collaboration between the league and the players' union. Central to that cooperation was the need to ensure safety.

Early on, after consulting with infectious disease experts and other professional sports leagues, the NHL decided that a bubble city approach was the best way to do that.

"We recognized that the only way to succeed is to control the environment as much as possible," Meeuwisse says.

That might be the only way forward beyond the Stanley Cup playoffs as well. So far, the Canadian federal government has refused to sanction professional sports leagues — with clubs based in Canada — from operating in non-bubbled competition, with the travel to and from the United States that's implied. The Toronto Blue Jays now make their home in Buffalo, N.Y., as a result, and the three Canadian MLS teams — currently playing one another in Canadian-only competition — have had to consider similar home-away-from-home measures. Arrangements are expected to be finalized next month for Toronto FC, Whitecaps FC and the Montreal Impact to play in American markets for the duration of the MLS season.

Beyond controlling the environment, the NHL's return-to-play plan always hinged on frequent testing.

During Phase 2 and Phase 3, which first involved group workouts and then a brief training camp, each team was required to arrange and pay for the COVID-19 testing of its players and staff. In Phase 3, that testing occurred every other day.

A team source told The Athletic that the cost of each test in their market was \$125. While the cost surely differed depending on each member club's locale, some back-of-the-envelope math suggests that every-other-day testing for the 51 or 52 members of each team's official traveling party would cost roughly \$20,000 per week.

The total expense of Phase 3 testing across the league was surely in excess of \$1 million, and depending on the cost of individual tests, perhaps as much as \$1.5 million.

At great expense and with great sacrifice, the NHL managed to contain any early outbreaks. While several players tested positive on reporting to their Phase 3 training facility, the last positive test for coronavirus in the NHL occurred over a month ago, in the week from July 13-17, according to the league.

When the NHL announced last month that it would return to hubs in Edmonton and Toronto, the relatively controlled infection rate in Canada had a lot to do with that decision.

The league was close to returning in Las Vegas before COVID-19 rates soared in Clark County, and in Vancouver, until public health authorities at the final hour held firm on a rigid stance in regards to how the close contacts of those who test positive would be handled. British Columbia health authorities were also skeptical of the NHL's plan to permit support staffers to enter and exit the bubble daily while remaining within the scope of the NHL's everyday Phase 4 testing protocols.

With Vancouver out of the equation, the NHL presented the options to the NHLPA, which made the final call on selecting Edmonton, after Las Vegas was deemed unsafe.

For the hub cities to be effective, the NHL would have to enforce strict testing and safety measures on up to 1,500 people inside the bubbles every day, with several hundred workers filtering in and out for various jobs, like security, bus drivers, restaurant services and ice maintenance.

Each of those workers is given a COVID-19 test every time they are in the bubble. They also must pass body temperature and symptom screening.

If there is a vulnerable point in the bubble, as British Columbia health officials noted, it's here.

An outbreak in the local community would obviously increase the chances of the virus getting inside the bubble, Meeuwisse says.

"Nobody's perfect," he says. "We've been very fortunate to choose two cities where the infection rates are quite low."

In a packed gymnasium in Southern Edmonton, under unused basketball hoops hoisted to the ceiling, health care workers wear yellow plastic robes, masks and transparent face plates — with their names drawn on the clear plastic in red sharpie, occasionally with an accent like a heart adorning a lower case "l".

The gym is packed as the health care workers facilitate the intake of a "drop-in line" of physically distanced people leading up to curtained, medical stations set up on the gym floor. The drop-in line reaches out the door and stretches into the packed parking lot.

Outside the gymnasium, in the drop-in line, a father puts a mask on each of his three children as they wait. They are one of several families waiting to get tested.

Any member of the public can get a test for COVID-19 relatively quickly, by reservation or appointment, by calling Alberta's public health office. Alberta has the capacity to test everyone, including those who are asymptomatic.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 27, 2020

With a reservation on a Sunday afternoon, it took 15 minutes in and out to get a throat swab. Negative test results were received three days later. In addition to a robo call that notifies Albertans of their result, a further follow-up from Alberta's public health office came within 24 hours.

At Women's College Hospital in Toronto, there's a half-hour line along a wall outside for those who called ahead — and about an hour wait in a different line for those who didn't. After a quick nasal swab that feels like it tickled the brain, results for a negative test were available online 12 hours later.

As of this week, Alberta has had more than 13,000 cases of COVID-19 and 234 deaths. Since mid-July, the province has tested between 7,000 to 10,000 people a day.

Ontario was harder hit, with more than 41,600 cases, and 2,800 reported deaths — but has managed to flatten its curve over the past three months. Alberta and Ontario are both testing at a rate well above the national average and neither province has a shortage of available tests.

This is the context within which the Stanley Cup playoffs sit.

When planning first began to return to play in hub cities, it was imperative to the NHL that the required testing not take away from public resources needed for vulnerable populations and health care workers, says Meeuwisse.

In Edmonton, the NHL contracted its testing to DynaLife, a private medical lab that had been used by Oilers Entertainment Group for its testing during the return-to-play training camp.

Jason Pincock, the CEO of Dynalife, says his is the only company in the province capable of facilitating the testing, outside of public health.

"We decided that public health should continue to focus on public health mandate, and we would support this mandate," Pincock says. "So it was very much a collaboration in terms of what's the best way to handle this."

In Toronto, the contract went to LifeLabs, which has been used by Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment.

How much testing would need to be done was initially thought to be tied to how many coronavirus cases were in that community. In the end, the league decided to go with widespread testing regardless of where the hubs were located — which meant that everyone involved with the bubbles would be tested every day.

Pincock says that through the qualifying round, his staff in Edmonton tested on average a little more than 1,500 people each day. In a written response to questions, LifeLabs says it has tested an average of 1,300 people in Toronto.

Dynalife hired 70 new people to help facilitate the tests inside the Edmonton bubble. Life Labs has between 80 and 120 people working daily inside the Toronto hub. Each person administering the tests wears a medical gown, face shield and mask. They are tested daily, along with everyone else.

Once Dynalife staff members take their samples (alternating between nasal and throat swabs each day) they are delivered to the courier outside — driving a teal Equinox — who then takes the tests two blocks away to the company's lab, where they are transferred directly to the testing area.

The equipment the company uses is capable of processing 96 swabs at a time, with the process taking about 3 1/2 hours from start to finish. The lab aims to get the NHL the results within 12 hours.

The league must disclose any positive cases to public health officials.

The NHL is covering the cost of testing in both hubs through the duration of the Stanley Cup playoffs. The cost per person tested each day — which includes the test itself, the collection, the transportation and the reporting — is about \$100, Pincock says. LifeLabs would not comment on its pricing model.

Testing as many as 1,500 people in a single day in each hub requires a lot of planning and flexibility.

Jamie Hacker, an associate counsel with the NHL, leads the medical team in Edmonton. Julie Grand, the NHL's deputy general counsel, leads the medical team in Toronto.

They were on the ground in both cities on July 14, implementing a medical plan that was in the works for several months.

Inside the bubble, the NHL's medical teams facilitate testing around team schedules for games, practices and days off, changing locations and times as needed.

They try not to let testing get in the way of naps, meals, meetings or morning skates, Hacker says. The schedules are communicated to a designated contact for each team.

In Edmonton, testing is done at Rogers Place in a concourse area called Ford Hall. It's connected directly to the JW Marriott, so players there only have to walk across the overpass and never have to leave the building. It's also close to the Delta hotels, which are connected by a fenced-in walkway. There is also a testing site at the Terwillegar Community Centre, where the teams practice, and at a satellite hotel, where broadcast and event staff stay.

For auxiliary staff, like drivers, security guards and hotel workers, testing at Ford Hall runs throughout the day during designated windows of time, so they are able to drop in before or after a shift to get their swab.

In Toronto, the testing schedule and locations shifted through the qualifying round based on feedback from the teams.

Initially, the testing was done at the Scotiabank Arena, Grand says. But the Toronto bubble is more disjointed than the Edmonton bubble, so players requested that testing be done in their hotels. Testing sites have opened at the Royal York Hotel and Hotel X, as well as BMO Field and the Ford Performance Centre, where teams practice.

During the qualifying round in Toronto, the schedule would change every couple of days — but for the next two rounds of the playoffs, a new master schedule for the upcoming two weeks was issued.

While testing gets most of the attention, it's really only a gatekeeper when it comes to limiting exposure to the coronavirus inside the bubble, says Meeuwisse.

It works in conjunction with mandatory temperature checks and screening for symptoms of any worker entering and leaving the hub.

The plan is to stick with daily testing through the remainder of the playoffs.

"The current strategy seems to be working, and we're probably not going to change it," Meeuwisse says.

At the start of the first round, Meeuwisse spent four days inside a hotel room in quarantine after flying from Toronto to Edmonton. As the NHL's lead medical officer, he oversees the operations in both cities — while Grand and Hacker implement the plans.

"I had to take a bit of my own medicine," he says.

When the conference finals begin, there will likely be a few NHL staff that are required to do the same after the Toronto bubble closes down and the operation moves entirely to Edmonton. People flying on a charter plane are not required to quarantine, according to the NHL's Phase 4 protocol.

At that point, with only one bubble to maintain, the NHL will be near its goal of handing out the Stanley Cup — nearly a full year after the season began.

But before or after that moment, if any positive test emerges, the league will have to snap into strict protocol to lock down the virus before it spreads.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 27, 2020

The person will be immediately taken to an isolated location and remain there until they can be tested again. If a second test returns positive, that person is required to isolate until they receive medical clearance.

The league would then do contact tracing in conjunction with local health authorities, trying to get an idea of what the source and potential spread might be, says Meeuwisse.

"I think where it's a little different from the public is that with players we respond more like you would with health care workers," he says. "So we assume people might be exposed and we monitor and mitigate and try to identify whether [there is] any spread."

Anyone that was within six feet of a person who tests positive for the virus for 15 minutes or longer, within 48 hours, is required to take another test.

But the goal remains to avoid getting to that point and constant testing can only do so much when it comes to preventing a COVID-19 spread inside one of the NHL's hubs.

Reminders to wear mask, wash your hands and maintain a physical distance are plastered everywhere in both bubbles.

"Every time we come back to that point, that prevention really is the most important thing," says Meeuwisse.

Everyone from the broadcast crew, to the equipment managers, to emergency goalies sitting in the stands are wearing masks and physically distancing inside the bubbles.

But the concern lies in the potential for complacency.

"It's not so easy to do those things routinely. It does get a little tedious," says Meeuwisse. "And so I think the biggest threat would be these people just tired of doing it and aren't as diligent with distancing, handwashing, mask use, because it's not always fun. And it's a long period of time to keep that up."

In four weeks in Toronto, Grand says she hasn't seen any drop off in compliance. Hacker says the same for Edmonton. But there are still three rounds — and a little more than a month left.

"We want to finish what we started here. We want to be able to hand out the Stanley Cup at the end of this," said Hacker. "But in order to do that, there's still a ways to go."

And beyond that, an entire season hanging in the balance.

The Athletic LOADED: 08.27.2020

1178394 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Avalanche, Stars players applaud NBA boycott, know NHL needs to do more

Mark Spector | @sportsnetspec

August, 3:40 AM

EDMONTON — They played hockey when others called their games off, and you can have your opinion on whether that was right.

But when a tumultuous night in the world of sports had concluded, the Dallas Stars and Colorado Avalanche gave us the very essence of why we watch the games in the first place. In a 6-4 thriller, the Avalanche climbed back into their series by scoring three goals in the final eight

minutes, stealing a win that turned this Western Conference Round 2 series around.

"And now we've got ourselves a series," said Colorado captain Gabriel Landeskog in a post-game press conference dominated by questions about the Black Lives Matter movement, as the NHL played games Wednesday evening while the NBA, the WNBA, MLS and some MLB teams did not.

"I think there are different ways to show your actions and what you support," reasoned Dallas' Tyler Seguin, who had taken a very public stance when these playoffs began. "Dicky (Jason Dickenson) and I did our first game (kneeling), so I fully support what the MLB and the NBA are doing. We just had the decision tonight to play the game."

Here in Edmonton, you would not have known it was a seminal day across the sports world by any scoreboard reference or tribute. A pregame report stated there would be a pregame ceremony, but minds must have been changed as they simply sang the anthems and dropped the puck, Colorado and Dallas playing a game that would accrue a growing Avalanche of criticism on social media as the night wore on.

Nazem Kadri, a charter member of the Hockey Diversity Alliance, also considered the strike.

"It crosses your mind when you see other leagues doing stuff like that. We applaud the NBA for taking (its stance)," he said.

"The signs, the hockey ops is great and everything. But eventually, words get stale. It's about action and making a difference."

As a sports league, the NHL took plenty of criticism Wednesday for forging ahead with its playoff schedule while other leagues set theirs aside. But it's a strange ask on a game day for the individual players, whose routines are set, their focus trained away from social media and on the game ahead.

Players on both sides said that their game-day schedule left them somewhat in the dark as to what was happening outside their hockey bubble, both literal and figurative.

"To be honest," Seguin said, "I woke up from a nap and I didn't really realize what the NBA was doing until I got to the rink. So, there wasn't much thought in my head throughout the day to think about not playing tonight. But like I said, I support what's going on, I support the movement and I think hockey needs, honestly, to do more. But I think we can all show our actions in different ways."

It's a confusing time for Dickenson and Seguin, a couple of Canadians who are not afraid of making a stand, but seem somewhat unsure of the best way to do it.

"Does this not playing solve things?" Dickenson asked. "No, but it brings attention to it and you know what, it happened kind of last second, like Seggy said. We woke up to it, we were already in game-mode, and it was kind of one of those things that it's hard to come together that close to game time and just change (your) mind."

"We come from all walks of life, we've got guys from all over the country. It's hard for some guys to have this hit home," he continued. "I don't want to say anybody's blind to it or ignorant, but we are a league of a lot of Canadians, a lot of Europeans, so it's hard when something doesn't hit home. You look at the MLB, you look at the NBA, they're primarily American players so it's easy to hit home for them. It's easy for them to take a stance against something."

"Seggy and I take a knee and we get backlash that we are not Americans. We shouldn't be speaking out for something like this. But we believe that we're close enough, as Canadians, that we have a right to say something and in Canada, we have seen similar things."

The Stars erased a 3-1 deficit to go ahead 4-3 with nine minutes to play. But Kadri got the winner, his seventh, and now both teams will see — at minimum — a Game 5.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 27, 2020

Or will they?

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 08.27.2020

1178395 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Canucks' Elias Pettersson feeling empowered after Golden Knights chirps

Iain MacIntyre | @imacSportsnet

August, 7:35 PM

EDMONTON – Considering they are one of the favourites to win the Stanley Cup, the Vegas Golden Knights are surrounded by a lot of noise these days – some of it actually coming from their mouths.

Before Vegas opened its quarter-final playoff series Sunday against the Vancouver Canucks, Knights goalie Marc-Andre Fleury had to explain that agent Allan Walsh acted out of love and support when he posted a graphic, photo-shopped image of his client being bloodily skewered through the back by coach Peter DeBoer's sword. Of course, Fleury, the face of the Vegas franchise, allowed the image to pollute social media for 24 hours before asking his loyal friend to remove it.

And before the Knights began their video press conference on Wednesday, veteran forward Jonathan Marchessault apologized for astoundingly crude and churlish messages he posted Tuesday on Instagram in response to some fans accusing him of embellishing a hooking penalty he drew during Vancouver's 5-2 win that evened the series at 1-1.

"I think it was childish," Marchessault said. "It was immature, not professional. I want to say I'm sorry and it won't happen again."

He was talking about Instagram, not diving.

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

And then there were the frat boys on the Vegas bench who could be heard in fan-less Rogers Place mocking several Canucks, notably emerging stars Elias "Little Squirt" Pettersson and Quinn "Waterboy" Hughes, during the Knights' 5-0 win on Sunday.

There has been chirping in hockey as long as there has been ice, but most of the time nobody except the players are much aware of it. Thank goodness there were fans in the arenas until now to drown out most of the worst things said in "gamesmanship" over the years. The NHL would have asked Ryan Kesler to leave the bubble were playoff games conducted in a vacuum a decade ago.

The insults are rarely even funny or imaginative. Little squirt? Are you kidding me? Was the annoying kid from The Polar Express in the Vegas lineup on Sunday. It's a wonder no one retorted: "Hey, knock it off."

But boys being boys, and great players being great players, Pettersson naturally responded with a titanic performance in Game 2, scoring one goal and setting up two others as the Canucks jumped the Knights at the start to even the best-of-seven series.

"We knew how it felt when they were winning, laughing and having a good time on the bench," Canucks captain Bo Horvat said after the game. "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."

Well, we'll see about that.

Chirping is emboldened by dislike and disparity, which means Pettersson is more empowered than most to dictate the volume on the Vegas bench.

His three points gave him 16 in 12 playoff games, second in the league behind only Colorado Avalanche Hart Trophy finalist Nathan MacKinnon, who had 18 points.

In 50 years, no other Canuck has scored that many points in his first 12 post-season games. Pettersson is 21 years old, learning to play playoff hockey and is expected to lead the Canucks – a burden that previous Vancouver stars like Pavel Bure, and Daniel and Henrik Sedin were not encumbered with in their first Stanley Cup tournaments.

Anyone who thinks a simple insult wouldn't fire up Pettersson hasn't paid attention to his first two years in the NHL. He has melted reporters with his glare over far less.

"You'd have to ask him, but I can imagine it did," defenceman Troy Stecher said on Wednesday's media call. "Petey is a really competitive individual. He wants to win. . . and he puts in the work during practices to improve his game. He wants to be that superstar that he already is. I'm sure that fuelled him a little bit. I think his play did the talking last night."

Pettersson still wore his game face after the game, saying little when asked about the chirping two nights earlier.

"It's emotions," he said. "I don't focus on that too much. I just want to be out there, play my best and win a hockey game for the team."

The Canucks started winning more of those after Pettersson arrived from Sweden.

"I think if you went back and talked about any young player that is now a top player in the league, they probably surprised people along the way," Canucks coach Travis Green said Wednesday. "Yeah, I think he surprises us at times but we also have a lot of confidence in him and a lot of faith in him that he wants to do well."

"He goes about it quietly, but he's a fierce competitor. He wants to win badly. It's not just for personal reasons; he understands it's more than just about. . . one individual player on a team. He does his part. I thought he responded well after Game 1. I thought our whole team did, but him in particular."

Stecher said: "He comes to the rink every day with a purpose. Those superstars, guys of his calibre, they just kind of have that look in their eye that they want to be the best and are going to do everything they can to be the best. I don't think Petey is any different than that."

Pettersson had that look in his eye on Tuesday. With any luck, somebody on the Knights called him skinny.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 08.27.2020

1178396 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Bruins, Lightning to take time to craft response to Blake shooting

Chris Johnston | @reporterchris

August, 1:27 AM

TORONTO — The Tampa Bay Lightning and Boston Bruins didn't consider following the lead of other professional sports teams by



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 27, 2020

boycotting their game on Wednesday night, according to veteran players on both sides.

Instead they went ahead with the 8:10 p.m. ET puck drop — three hours after the NBA announced it was postponing its entire slate of games in the wake of Milwaukee Bucks players choosing not to take the court to face the Orlando Magic.

The Bruins and Lightning were completing a back-to-back in their second-round Stanley Cup Playoff series and didn't become aware of the developments happening elsewhere until arriving at Scotiabank Arena, according to the players made available for Zoom interviews afterwards.

As a result, there doesn't seem to have been any serious discussion about the merits of playing.

"It was so close to our game," said Bruins captain Zdeno Chara. "After our pre-game meal we took naps and then we were on the bus so I don't think any of us were watching the TV until we got to the rink and at that point it was obviously too close to the game to start any discussions or trying to move the games to different dates."

"Just personally, with our team, we played last night, we played today, we didn't really find out that the other leagues had taken their stance until we got here tonight," said Lightning defenceman Kevin Shattenkirk. "So it was something that we found out by the time we got to the rink and something we'll have to address going forward."

The Bucks and Magic made history Wednesday afternoon when they refused to play in response to Jacob Blake's shooting by police in Kenosha, Wis., over the weekend. Blake, who is Black, was left paralyzed after taking at least seven shots in the back.

A wave of similar boycotts immediately followed.

The Milwaukee Brewers decided not to go ahead with their game against the Cincinnati Reds, one of four Major League Baseball contests that went unplayed. The WNBA called off its three scheduled games Wednesday as players stood in solidarity with their NBA brethren. And the Western & Southern Open tennis tournament announced that it would postpone play on Thursday to take "a stance against racial inequality and social injustice that once again has been thrust to the forefront in the United States."

The NHL decided to hold a moment of reflection before Wednesday's Lightning-Bruins game, but didn't do so for the Dallas Stars-Colorado Avalanche game played later in the night in Edmonton.

The Bruins had previously taken a public stance against racism with statements from Bergeron and Zdeno Chara following the murder of George Floyd by police in Minnesota. They also wore black t-shirts to the arena before their first round-robin game inside the Toronto bubble earlier this month.

"We stand against any type of racism," Bergeron said Wednesday. "My stance and our stance doesn't change."

"Definitely we support NBA players and all the leagues that showed their support," added Chara. "There's different ways to express that fight and obviously NBA players expressed their opinions by boycotting the games today. So we support it."

The teams will get an off-day in their series on Thursday and will have more time to reflect on what kind of response is needed, if any.

"I think the world's changed in just the short time that we were at the rink," said Lightning coach Jon Cooper. "I got here at 4:30. I think what's happening now at 11:15 is much different than what was happening at 4:30. I don't know all the details of what's happened in other leagues — I'm aware now — but at the time there wasn't things being discussed with our group."

"I mean we were preparing to play the Boston Bruins and when you have such a short turnaround from playing last night to today, that was really all the talk. So that was basically all that happened."

"Like I said, I think there's a lot of things we're aware of now that we weren't as aware of before the game."

The Lightning beat the Bruins 7-1 to take a 2-1 lead in the series. Game 4 is scheduled for Friday night.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 08.27.2020

1178397 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Flyers confident in ability to bounce back after tying series vs. Islanders

Luke Fox | @lukefoxjukebox

August, 6:36 PM

TORONTO – The Philadelphia Flyers are gaining themselves a reputation as the ultimate counterpunchers of 2020.

Since Jan. 7, during a run of 37 games and counting, they've lost 10 times. On each occasion, they've responded the best way possible — with a victory.

Philly doesn't have losing skids anymore. Only speed bumps.

So it was, following Monday's rather decisive Game 1 loss to the New York Islanders in their Eastern Conference semifinal, that a leadership group riddled with individual slumps expressed confidence they'd come out swinging Wednesday after taking one on the chin.

Captain Claude Giroux said they didn't plan on dropping Game 2. Redbeard compatriot Jakub Voracek said he had "no doubt" they'd knock the series.

"I got all the faith in my teammates right now," Kevin Hayes maintained.

Then the big dogs backed up their words, fast and often, jumping to a 3-0 lead in the first period, chasing starter Semyon Varlamov... and then salvaging Game 2 in overtime, by a score of 4-3, and leaving another loss all by its lonesome, surrounded by wins.

"You only get so many chances in this business. There's 23 teams not playing, and eight of us still are," reminded Flyers GM Chuck Fletcher. "Opportunities are not always there, and we have a good one right now."

Such perspective is needed when the offence dries up and the opposition's goaltender is out here breaking Billy Smith's playoff shutout records.

The Flyers have yet to locate their A-game this post-season, repeatedly noting they have another level to reach, and yet they came out of the gates flying.

Hayes snapped the first two under the 10-minute mark. Then Sean Couturier (finally) registered his first of the playoffs, a beauty that walked Nick Leddy off a one-on-one rush. Under fire for their lack of production, Giroux and Travis Konecny grabbed assists before Varlamov was pulled early for the first time in favour of Thomas Greiss.

Isles coach Barry Trotz's gambit not only helped rest Varlamov for Thursday's Game 3, but served as a wakeup call to the skaters and a reinforcement that no 3-0 lead is safe in the bubble.

A deftly-tipped Anders Lee power-play marker got New York on the board in the second period, and waves of attack descended on Carter Hart in the third.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 27, 2020

Anthony Beauvillier sniped his club-leading seventh off the rush, and Jean-Gabriel Pageau forced a fourth period on a borderline offside goal that was unsuccessfully challenged by Flyers coach Alain Vigneault.

"We know this series is going to be intense," Hart said.

Philly blueliner Philippe Myers blasted the game-winner to prevent yet another Flyers losing skid.

The sides are scheduled to return to Scotiabank Arena in under 24 hours for Game 3 of what is now a best-of-five series.

"I mean, it's nicer to play games than just sit in a hotel," said Islanders forward Leo Komarov.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 08.27.2020

1178398 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Canadiens' Claude Julien still has 'a lot to offer' after health scare

Eric Engels | @EricEngels

August, 3:19 PM

MONTREAL — It's too close to his heart.

At 60 years old — and just 14 days removed from a serious medical incident — Claude Julien announced Wednesday he'll continue coaching the Montreal Canadiens. His life was nearly arrested, his career won't be. He's not prepared to walk away from an all-consuming puzzle he's a few pieces shy of completing.

Though no one would think less of Julien for calling it a career following the stenting of a coronary artery, a procedure to allow oxygen-rich blood to flow back to his heart through a previously blocked passageway. He's a small townner who made it big; one of 41 to win the Jack Adams Award as NHL coach of the year, a two-time all-star, a World Cup and Stanley Cup champion, the owner of a 658-440-10-148 record and a winner of 68 of 125 playoff games. He'd be applauded for stepping away at this point, while he still can on his own terms.

But this isn't about what anyone else thinks. This is about a hockey lifer choosing hockey life over death. And if that seems like an extreme characterization of retirement, consider this from Julien:

"I think there's probably a bigger risk for my health if I had to step back, because when you're prevented from what you love doing, there's a mental impact on you," the coach said. "And right now I still feel energetic, I still feel like I've got a lot to offer and if that was taken away from me, there's no doubt it would have a huge impact on me."

There was more than passing concern Julien would never be able to do it again. On Aug. 12, the Blind River, Ont., native went to sleep following Montreal's 2-1 loss to the Philadelphia. He woke up hours later experiencing chest pains and, after consulting with Canadiens athletic therapist Graham Rynbend and team physician Dr. David Mulder, elected to leave for Saint Michael's Hospital.

The time it took for Julien to decide, knowing a departure from the NHL bubble would mean submitting to a mandatory quarantine period before he could rejoin the Canadiens, could have been precious to his life. To know he took it is to know what coaching means to him.

"I wouldn't say I made the decision like it was no problem," said Julien. "It was considered, but in the end I realized I had to do something. With the support of Graham and Dr. Mulder, who was on the phone, I was

encouraged to go to the hospital. So, it was a decision I made and one I'm extremely happy I made, but I'm also happy that I had people around me who really encouraged me to go. You never realize to what end it can be dangerous and never envision yourself in that situation."

And you try to avoid thinking about something you love so dearly being taken away.

Julien played professionally for 10 years and had a brief stint in the NHL with the Quebec Nordiques before arriving close to home as coach of the QMJHL's Hull Olympiques in 1996. He was an instant success, helping the team capture its only Memorial Cup in 1997, and five years later he was behind the bench of the Canadiens.

After a shockingly brief stint with the New Jersey Devils — he was unexpectedly fired by Lou Lamoriello on the eve of the 2007 playoffs — he joined the Boston Bruins.

In 2011, Julien coached Boston to its first Stanley Cup since Bobby Orr hoisted it in 1972. In 2013, he brought the team to within two games of winning its seventh. And in March 2016, with the 387th win in Boston, he passed Hall of Famer Art Ross as the winningest coach in franchise history.

Julien lost his job with the Bruins on Feb. 7, 2017 and was hired back by the Canadiens on Feb. 14. And now he forges on in the job, with two more seasons remaining on his contract.

The expandable coil of metal mesh that now supports the walls of Julien's artery is also meant to preserve the life he wants to live.

"[Coaching has] given me a lot," he said. "Obviously some happiness, because not everybody gets to do a job that they love. A lot of people do certain work because that's the only work they can do or they have the opportunity to do. They don't always get to pick and choose. I'm one of the fortunate ones that I got to — when I say pick and choose, there's no doubt I've had to earn my way there — but I'm doing something that I love doing. And every day that I get up I'm going to work, not because I have to but because I want to."

You have to truly want to do this to live with all the stress that comes with it. The manic days and sleepless nights, the ebb and flow of adrenaline over the course of a game, the never-ending analysis and preparation that goes into every moment spent on the ice — it can stop your heart.

But that's the risk Julien has always subjected himself to, the one he's happy to assume moving forward.

"There's been a lot of thought and there's been a lot of discussions behind whether I go back or not, and I just want to reassure everyone that I am feeling 100 per cent, the doctors have told me I will recover at 100 per cent, and that the risk of me going back will not be any worse than it was before it even happened," he said, also noting the support of his wife Karen and their three children.

"All I need to do is make sure that I make the adequate adjustments to deal with that kind of stress," Julien added. "I'm looking forward to getting back to it and doing what I love."

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 08.27.2020

1178399 Websites

TSN.CA / Filip Hallander hopes to bring feisty, two-way game to Toronto Maple Leafs roster 'very soon'

Mark Masters



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • August 27, 2020

Filip Hallander was playing golf when the call came.

"Still had five holes on the course and it was terrible because the only thing in my mind was about the trade," the 20-year-old forward told TSN via phone from Sweden. "My golf round got destroyed by the trade, but I'm happy."

On Tuesday, Hallander was traded by the Pittsburgh Penguins, the team that picked him 58th overall in the 2018 NHL draft, to the Toronto Maple Leafs as part of a move that saw Kasperii Kapanen heading the other way.

There was a double bogey and then a series of phone calls that prevented Hallander from playing the final few holes. His agent, mom, brother and dad all wanted a word, but it was the message from Leafs general manager Kyle Dubas that stood out.

"He said they have looked at me for a long time from when I was drafted and had an eye on me and how I developed and stuff like that," Hallander said. "And they thought I played really well and was happy to trade for me, so really happy that they see me as a potential NHL player in the future. A really good first impression, so I'm really happy."

The Leafs were confident in who Hallander was as a person based on the due diligence they did heading into the draft two years ago in Dallas where they nearly picked him in the second round. Instead, with the 52nd overall pick, they selected Owen Sound defenceman Sean Durzi, who would later be packaged to Los Angeles in the Jake Muzzin deal.

"We had really found he's got excellent character," noted Dubas. "His work ethic is excellent, very little maintenance with him and will do everything he can to improve and very well-liked by his coaches."

The Leafs have continued to be impressed by Hallander on the ice. He produced 14 points in 27 games with Lulea, the top team in the Swedish Hockey League this season, and bounced back nicely after crashing feet-first into the boards and suffering a broken leg just a couple games into the year.

"It's just the way he's played in Lulea in the SHL as a very young player, especially last year at 19 years old," said Dubas when asked what gives him confidence Hallander will make it to the NHL.

"The way that he played at the top of the lineup for a very good team and played in all situations and was very responsible at both ends of the ice. His intelligence and way he plays the game, in addition to his talent level and competitiveness, were the things that really stood out to us."

TSN director of scouting Craig Button told TSN 1050's OverDrive that Hallander likely projects to be a third-line player in the NHL.

"I would call him a decent, solid prospect," said Button, who has seen Hallander play as a left winger in Sweden. "I don't think he's a high-end offensive player, but he's competitive and he can play probably in that six-to-nine-forward range if he continues to develop along those lines. But he's competitive and he's smart and that type of player on an entry-level contract, who's a little bit older, can also help you manage your salary cap."

While he doesn't have one NHL role model right now, the 6-foot-1, 190-pound Hallander admires the way Patric Hornqvist operates as a net-front presence.

"I'm a two-way player and I like to be in the offensive zone," Hallander said. "I like to be around the net and I'm not shy to be there and take rebounds and play hard in those types of areas. I really like to be a guy you can trust all over the ice – even on the penalty kill and the power play."

The Penguins had a loan agreement with Lulea, which Dubas says the Leafs have no problem honouring. So, Hallander can come to training camp and if he makes the Leafs he'll stay, but if he doesn't then he'll continue to develop in his home country for a top-tier team.

Hallander isn't sure how close he is to making the jump to North America.

"I have only been to the development camps in Pittsburgh and it's different to be at those kinds of camps, so being at your first main camp you'll see how close you are," he said. "But I feel I had a really good summer now and feel like I can take a huge step in SHL."

Hallander knows defenceman Rasmus Sandin through the Swedish national team, but doesn't have any other relationships with Leafs players. He's hoping to meet them all soon and add his name to the list of impressive forward talent.

"It's amazing to think about it and I hope one day very soon I will be able to be on the roster," he said.

TSN.CA LOADED: 08.27.2020