

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • October 12, 2019

THE NEWS & OBSERVER

Canes top Islanders 5-2 for franchise-record 5-0-0 start to the season

By Chip Alexander

Raleigh

The Carolina Hurricanes still don't have a blemish on their record.

The Canes, showing off their speed and quickness, topped the New York Islanders 5-2 on Friday to improve their record to 5-0-0. That's the best start to a season in franchise history and had Canes fans at full throat in the final seconds at PNC Arena.

"I thought from start to finish we were ready to play," Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "We knew it was going to be a tough game and the guys dug in. All in all it was a good effort by everybody in the group.

"I like the way guys are coming to work every day. The 5-0 is kind of irrelevant. We're trying to win the day. That's the mentality these guys have had and that we have to continue."

The Canes and Islanders last faced each other in the second round of the 2019 Stanley Cup playoffs. The Canes won twice in PNC Arena, finishing up the four-game sweep at home, and there was residual friction between the two teams.

The Canes got goals Friday from the forwards -- Teuvo Teravainen, Erik Haula and then an empty-netter by Andrei Svechnikov. They got goals from their defensemen -- Brett Pesce and Dougie Hamilton, who also made a spectacular assist on Teravainen's goal. They showed off their team speed while showing enough grittiness when the Isles turned more physical.

Canes goalie Petr Mrazek, making his third start in net, was beaten twice for power-play goals, by Brock Nelson in the first period and Johnny Boychuk early in the second. He faced just 19 shots, two in the third period, in his third win of the season.

Penalty killing has been spotty early in the season for the Canes, who have given up six power-play goals in the first five games. The Islanders' first power play lasted eight seconds before Nelson scored.

Boychuk's goal came early in the second period, after a delay-of-game call against Carolina with four seconds left in the first period that had Brind'Amour frustrated and irked.

But at even strength, the Canes were at their best. They have balance in their lines and a lot of youthful bounce and energy, a growing trend in the NHL, producing 16 "high-danger" scoring chances against Isles goalie Thomas Greiss, who had won six of his last seven games against Carolina. The D-men are given the freedom to jump into plays, resulting in the Pesce goal off a neat pass in tight quarters by Svechnikov, who has a league-best seven assists.

"Their speed gives everybody trouble," Islanders coach Barry Trotz said. "They're all about pressure and their D get up on it, and pressure, pressure, pressure. The Hamilton goal really left a mark on us."

That was a blast from the point by Hamilton with 59 seconds left in the second, pushing the Canes ahead 4-2. Hamilton, playing as well as any defenseman in the league, has three goals and four assists in the 5-0 start.

Why so good?

"I think it's his commitment, totally," Brind'Amour said. "I think he's more comfortable for sure with our system and how we want to play."

The Canes, who host the Columbus Blue Jackets on Saturday, learned this week that forward Jordan Martinook would need surgery to repair a core muscle injury, sidelining him for six to eight weeks.

Julien Gauthier, a former first-round draft pick by Carolina, was recalled from the AHL's Charlotte Checkers and made his NHL debut. Gauthier was given the traditional first-game honor of being the first player on the ice for the pregame warmups.

Gauthier, a winger on the fourth line, got 7:33 in playing time. He also picked up his first NHL penalty, for high-sticking in the third that the Canes, leading 4-2, killed off without allowing a shot.

With Martinook out, Teravainen wore an "A" as an alternate captain. And his line, with center Sebastian Aho and winger Nino Niederreiter, was flying much of the game, especially Aho. Niederreiter had two assists, his first multi-point game of the season.

Teravainen's goal, his second in as many games, was a simple tap-in made possible by the scintillating pass from Hamilton. The defenseman held on to the puck

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on the rush, causing Isles defensemen Adam Pelech and Ryan Pullock to go down attempting to block a pass or shot. But Hamilton, on one leg, curled the puck to Teravainen.

"I was shooting the whole way but you've got to pass when it's that easy," Hamilton said, smiling.

Haula continues to impress. He scored his fourth of the season with a power move from behind the goal

line, taking the puck to the net, getting off a shot, then punching the rebound past Greiss. That was the game-winner, his first with the Canes.

"We've just got to stay in the moment, not get too high or too low," Hamilton said. "It's going good for us. We can't get too high. We just have to keep focusing on day by day."

Hamilton setting records as he settles in with Hurricanes

By Luke DeCock

Raleigh

There were defensemen sliding everywhere, the New York Islanders falling at Dougie Hamilton's feet in a desperate attempt to stop him. Adam Pelech went sliding past to one side, Ryan Pullock to the other. Hamilton had one thought on his mind as he navigated the traffic on one leg.

"I was shooting the whole way," Hamilton said.

And then he slung a pass through the crease instead to a wide-open Teuvo Teravainen for a tap-in goal

"You've got to pass when it's that easy," Hamilton said.

That's how things are going for Hamilton these days. Easy. And for the Carolina Hurricanes, too. The team can do no wrong, now 5-0-0 for the first time in franchise history after Friday's 5-2 win over the Islanders. Neither can Hamilton, who scored his third goal and picked up his fourth assist, tying the franchise record shared by Mark Howe and Risto Siltanen for points by a defenseman to start the season.

There's so much going right for the Hurricanes right now. Other than a lull to start the second period and some penalty-killing issues, Friday's win was a start-to-finish dominant win over a division opponent with revenge on its mind. (It was not to be had, on the ice or in the stands: When the Islanders fans piped up, the home fans drowned them out by chanting "Sweep!")

Even amid all that, it's hard to find anyone who's going better than Hamilton. When he was on the ice Friday, the five-on-five scoring chances were 19-2 in favor of the Hurricanes. It's so far from last season, when he started slowly before playing through the middle of the season with a broken finger. This is everything that was expected of him from the moment he was drafted ninth overall in 11, everything expected of him in Boston and Calgary, everything expected of a defenseman with his physical gifts and talents.

"Opportunity is probably the biggest thing," Hamilton said. I'm just trying to make the most of it. I wanted this opportunity for a while so it's nice to have it and I'm just trying to do my best."

Hamilton now understands what the Hurricanes demand from him, with and without the puck, and it shows. Whatever adjustment was needed to Rod Brind'Amour's system is complete. There's an ease to his game that wasn't there before, the kind only time and repetition can create. In the process, he's earned the defensive trust of the coaching staff. That means more ice time in more situations, especially paired with Jaccob Slavin.

At the same time, the Hurricanes have a better idea of what Hamilton can do, what makes him tick. They're willing to let him play his way as long as he meets them halfway, which he has.

"I think it's his commitment, totally," Hurricanes coach Brind'Amour said. "I think he's more comfortable for sure with our system and how we want to play. There was a period I'm sure when he first got here when there was an adjustment to the whole think, but now he looks comfortable and he's obviously playing great."

Perhaps for the first time in his career, Hamilton is empowered and unencumbered, playing with an easy freedom that suits his ability.

"Sometimes, not all the time," Hamilton said. "When things are going good you want to keep that feeling as much as you can. It makes it easier coming here this year, knowing everyone and everyone knows me, just being comfortable compared to last year. Just feeling good right now and trying to make the most of it."

It's hard to imagine anyone making more of it than this. He's playing like the two-way defenseman the Hurricanes always wanted, and the one he always wanted to be.

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THE ATHLETIC

Observations from the Hurricanes' record start: Andrei Svechnikov finds a way; Dougie Hamilton is 'just feelin' it'

By Sara Civian

I knew the answer before I even asked the question, but sometimes that's the point.

Did Hurricanes head coach Rod Brind'Amour care that a win at PNC Arena on Friday night would, at 5-0-0, give the team its best start in Hurricanes/Whalers franchise history?

"Not really," he said after the morning skate. "No. Focusing every day is what we're trying to do. It's boring, but it's like, 'Win the day.' Then move on to the next day. Then hopefully, at the end of the year, you've got enough of those."

Now, after a 5-2 win over the Islanders, the Hurricanes have "more of those" to start a season than they ever have, and the best part, to Brind'Amour, is they are stealing wins without playing as well as he knows they can.

Three things have stood out as the Canes have opened their season undefeated:

1. Svechnikov is growing

The narratives surrounding the Andrei Svechnikov versus Alex Ovechkin playoff boxing match were as predictable as they were lazy: "Ovechkin was Svechnikov's childhood idol." "Svechnikov modeled his game after Ovechkin's." "Svechnikov will grow into a similar pure goal scorer with an edge."

You were there. You get the picture.

Those who've worked with Svechnikov probably read the headlines and cringed. Former Muskegon Lumberjacks GM John Vanbiesbrouck once told me he didn't want to drop a bomb too soon, but yeah, he could see hints of Gordie Howe in a young Svechnikov. Vanbiesbrouck was more comfortable with a comparison to Todd Bertuzzi.

"You know what? He's hard to compare to anyone because there's not a lot of guys like him," he said after Svechnikov's NHL debut. "Because sometimes he drives the net or sometimes he'll see a play. He's so multi-talented. When he drives the net — Todd Bertuzzi, one of the best net-drivers I've ever seen. He's got an acute way to make plays and find lanes and shoot in place. There's not a lot of guys like him in that way and how he can play a speed game, then a slowed-down game."

A league-leading seven assists and one empty-netter later and Vanbiesbrouck nailed it. Svechnikov has four consecutive multi-point games. Even if the opposition scouts Svechnikov to death and knows all about his net-driving prowess, he'll find a way.

OK, that sounds a little like Ovechkin.

Whatever it is, it's the reason, a Hurricanes source said in retrospect, if they'd had the No. 1 pick in the 2018 draft, they still would've picked him.

The Svechnikov-driven play that gave the Hurricanes a 2-1 lead goes in a graveyard full of missed opportunities, though, if Brett Pesce isn't in front of the net ready to bang it in.

It sure makes you wonder why Pesce was in front of the net ready to bang it in.

2. Blue-line production

Every Hurricanes defenseman, save for stay-at-home shot blocker Joel Edmundson, has at least two points through the first five games.

Dougie Hamilton has seven; his three goals and four assists tie Mark Howe and Risto Siltanen for the most through five games by a Hurricanes/Whalers defenseman.

We just went over the difference between juice and sauce. That, right there, is the sauce.

And that's when Hurricanes DJ "Mista Illz" started playing "Teach Me How to Dougie."

"It makes it easier coming here this year — knowing everyone, being comfortable compared to last year," Hamilton said. "I think I'm just feelin' it right now, getting an opportunity and making the most of it."

Hamilton has been prone to slower starts — partly due to injury, partly due to bouncing around the NHL. He's home in Raleigh, and with Justin Faulk gone, he has the nod to be that dude.

I wondered what he meant when he said he now has an opportunity he apparently didn't have before — or maybe I knew exactly what he meant but I wanted him to say it out loud.

"Playing all opportunities, I think," he said. Then he grinned. "First PP. Being out there at the end of

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games. PK. All that stuff. It's a lot of fun to play when you're contributing to the game, and I guess that's it."

What's more is his play away from the puck. He's using his size to block shots, he's wagging his finger at Aleksander Barkov, he's cup-checking those on the Hurricanes video staff (which, for the record, they find hilarious).

Again, he's got the sauce.

Jacob Slavin has four points and a pair of game-winners. Pesce, notorious for reliability in his own end and breaking the franchise plus-minus record last season, has three — including two goals.

"Our staff is giving us free rein to kinda play however we want in the offensive zone," Pesce said, "as long as we're responsible. So, kudos to them, and obviously, we're taking advantage of it."

But it seems like this freedom, which Hamilton calls "blacking out," is new for most of the guys.

Has Pesce ever had a leash so loose?

"You know what? No. I haven't," he said. "Previously, my coaches preached to me, kind of, 'pick your spots, err on the side of caution.' I feel like Roddy and our staff actually want us to err on the side of aggressiveness. That's huge for us. (When) all of our instincts kick in, we have a bunch of good D-men who can all skate well."

Bag of Jerks: Are the Hurricanes the real deal? Has the locker room vibe changed? What's the plan in net?

By Sara Civian

The undefeated Hurricanes picked up right where they left off last season in terms of entertainment value and skill, only this time they came bearing a functional power play.

Is this for real? What's been clicking? How are the new guys fitting in so well already? How does Tripp Tracy take his coffee?

Read on.

Y/N, do the Canes have the juice??? — Spencer P.

Dear Spencer P., N.

They have the sauce.

The juice is temporary. The sauce is forever.

Very much enjoy watching Hurricanes hockey; however, I didn't grow up with the game. What is one thing that the Canes have improved upon, that might be naked to my untrained eye, that I should be noticing and thus bore my uninterested friends and coworkers with? — Ryan G.

When did that trust develop?

"That was Day 1," Brind'Amour said. "For us, we have to get our D involved or we're not going to be very successful. And we have good defensemen that can make plays. It's part of our arsenal and we've gotta use it."

3. Spending pays off

The Hurricanes have essentially spent to the cap for the first time in decades, and — wouldn't you know it? — it's working out in their favor.

They acquired Erik Haula via trade but still took on a much larger salary than they would've with what they sent to Vegas in Nic Roy. He's got four goals in five games. Ryan Dzingel has two goals and two assists. Jake Gardiner? A goal and an assist, with that overtime thriller in Washington.

If the Hurricanes are going to be a Stanley Cup contender, they need to succeed when Sebastian Aho can't find the back of the net. Even with Aho getting his fruitless chances and Nino Niederreiter hanging his head on the bench — they both have played well but can't buy a goal — the Hurricanes are doing just fine.

That's what you get when you make a good investment.

I love this, Ryan! It's never too late to fall in love with the game.

Some quick hits:

The power play is sort of obvious, but still — it's the most important improvement thus far. The Hurricanes scored on the power play in each of their first three games for the first time since 1997-98. Then they did it again in the fourth game. The 33.3 percent conversion rate ties for fifth in the league (as of writing this Thursday afternoon). Their five power play goals are second only to Buffalo's eight (eight power play goals in four games?!). Key additions: Martin Necas, who has been moving the puck in what'd been a brutally stagnant system. The combination of Erik Haula's net-front presence and vision has been imperative without Justin Williams. I also have a conspiracy theory that the Canes are purposely putting Teuvo Teravainen in the circle (a popular location to score from on the power play) and having him pass instead. Key subtraction: Justin Faulk's absence has no-doubt let Dougie Hamilton assume a bigger role and he's been thriving — he's tied for third

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and Teravainen is tied for second in the league lead in power play points.

This isn't exactly a "difference," but scoring from the back end has been on fire. Every defenseman except Joel Edmundson has at least two points. It's a simple approach — adding a fourth player on the rush — but it's working at an insane rate for the Canes at the moment.

Don't let anyone tell you you're not a real fan.

I used to have a great dad joke when the Canes would go on the power play. I would turn to my kids and say, 'I have good news and I have bad news. The Canes are going on the power play. Also, the Canes are going on the power play.'

Do I need a new dad joke about the Canes and what should it be? — Peter W.

I don't want to jump the gun, here, but as documented above it might be time for a new dad joke. As a dad joke connoisseur myself I'd say:

"I have good news and I have bad news. The Canes are going into overtime again. Also, the Canes are going into overtime again."

Do you feel with roster changes that the locker room vibe has changed in any way? — Sean M.

Anyone who follows the Hurricanes knows a locker room without Williams and Faulk is inherently different. That's been a huge concern, one head coach Rod Brind'Amour speaks honestly about. After the first four games, though — three comeback, overtime wins and a 6-3 fourth — it's clear this team still has the aforementioned sauce. I'm obviously still getting to know the new guys, but based on early interactions they fit right in with the "business in the front party in the back" culture. Jordan Martinook's surgery that will sideline him for an estimated 6-8 weeks is honestly the most concerning thing for the locker room right now, but I'm sure he'll be around regardless.

Will the Canes try to extend Erik Haula? — Multiple people

Way too early to tell.

Put on your Brind'Amour hat — how would you tinker with the lines, now with Julien Gauthier called up? Just plant him on the fourth line to replace Marty? Or would you get a little more 'creative'? — Jeff W.

Rod Brind'Amour is a lot of things. "Creative" (or risky) with the lines isn't one of them. Gauthier will be on the fourth line to start, with Lucas Wallmark and Warren Foegele.

Do you think Dougie will score more or less than 15 goals this season? Also who do you think will finish as

this season's scoring leader? Still Aho? Teravainen, Haula, and Svech might threaten that. — Ryan B.

What a time to be alive with this question, Ryan. Hamilton will have more than 15 goals. Aho will fin(n)ish as the scoring leader. Remind me to revisit this at the end of the season, and definitely make fun of me if I'm wrong.

While it's nice to see the Canes have the guts to come back and win games when they're down, should we be concerned that they are still having a hard time finishing; see, hitting the posts/crossbar? — Connor T.

Leave Brock alone.

How do you see the goaltending split this season? Will Mrazek be played 50-60 games like a starter, will it be split pretty evenly, or will Rod ride the hot hand like he did last year? — Carter A.

I'll be the first to admit I was skeptical of James Reimer as an individual who could take on the load Curtis McElhinney did last season, and two good games don't completely change that, but his performance so far is blowing my expectations out of the water. I think he'll get a shot to take more of Petr Mrazek's workload than I previously anticipated, but can we back up and talk about the notion of "riding the hot hand" for a second? I feel like this prominent narrative from last season is a little off.

There is each start from last season. While Brind'Amour and Mike Bales might've given a few games to the goalie that was feeling it after a win, rarely did either goaltender get more than two starts, then you think of all the other factors that go into that decision other than riding the hot hand. This is something people talk about a lot so I didn't want to call you out, Carter A., but I did want to discuss that I think the notion that the Hurricanes rode the hot hand last season is sort of an overblown narrative shrouded in recency bias.

Anyways, here's Wonderwall ...

Odds on Justin Williams coming back in the second half? — Jeffrey C.

I don't think anyone really knows, including the man himself. I'm not counting on it, and neither are the Canes.

What's one thing Canes fans are reading too much into so far? What's one thing they're not reading enough into to so far? — David Z.

Great question, David. I think Canes fans are reading too far into every single shift Martin Necas has. The teenager is going to make mistakes in his own end. He's going to have a feeling-out process. He's also going to do his gorgeous passes and score on the

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power play. As a wise man once said, "Sometimes it just be like that."

I honestly cannot think of anything you folks don't read into. Take that as a testament to your dedication. Love you.

What is Svech doing to avoid the sophomore slump?
— Bryan H.

I heard he's trying this cool, new technique called "leading the league in assists" :).

Is this team a Stanley Cup contender or do you think they still need to add a piece or two? — DJ N.

I honestly think this team is a Cup contender if Mrazek can keep up his performance from last season. (I've been saying this well before this undefeated streak, for the record.) You can't take much stock into trends four games deep, but the fact that the Canes went 4-0-0 with only one point (a late-game empty netter, at that) from Aho is legitimately encouraging for their status as Cup contenders.

Sara, as you enter your second year in the Carolinas, any "become a local" goals you're setting for yourself?
— Nicholas K.

I definitely need to check out the state fair this year. I need to try a fried oreo before I die and I love a good food adventure. I think I did well over the summer trying the local beers — I love anything from Brueprint. Anyone have any goal ideas?

Dougie on PP1! — David Z.

More like Dougie forcing PP2 to be PP1.

Also pretty cool that there's both a Dave Z. and a David Z. Long, lost brothers?

How would you compare the approach and demeanor of RBA today compared to a year ago? — Peter W.

Great question. He is definitely more seasoned and "coach"-y, but at the same time he hasn't lost his unique realness. I remember at this time last year he seemed to be taking every single moment super seriously to set a tone that had been lacking for a decade, but now that he knows the room "gets it" he seems a little more trusting of the process, if you will.

A few weeks ago he said that as a player he would stay up at night worrying about his mistakes and as a coach he stays up at night worrying about everyone's mistakes. He's never going to stop being that guy.

"How many games til we feel like it's okay to believe the Canes are actually really good, and that it's not all a cruel illusion? — Carolyn C.

82.

Can you link us to some of your best articles from your days in Boston? — Connor T.

I remember the Boston radio guys really ripped into me for this one, but I ended up only being off by one game ...

And this one made me fall in love with hockey writing again after a tough few months living in my parents' basement.

Have you ever bought Tripp a coffee? And if so, how many creams did he take? — Zach O.

I think what we all want to know is, if Tripp doesn't take his coffee with four creamers, how does he take it? — Dave Z.

Tell us a Tripp Tracy story. — Peter W.

Y'all are killing me right now. I'm glad the fanbase appreciates Tripp as much as it does because he's one of a kind.

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Hurricanes off to franchise-best start with 5-2 win over Islanders

Carolina improved to 5-0 on the young season thanks to two-point nights from Dougie Hamilton, Andrei Svechnikov and Nino Niederreiter

Cory Lavalette

RALEIGH — Coach Barry Trotz said before Friday night's game that returning to Raleigh reminded him and his team of the unceremonious way the Carolina Hurricanes swept the Islanders out of the playoffs last season.

He likely didn't leave town feeling much better.

The Hurricanes broke a second-period tie with goals by red-hot Erik Haula and Dougie Hamilton, and Carolina cruised to a 5-2 win in front of 14,875 at PNC Arena.

"I'm not complaining about anything," a satisfied coach Rod Brind'Amour said following the team's fifth straight win to start the season. "I thought we were, start to finish, we were ready to play."

With the game tied in the second thanks to two Islanders power play goals, Carolina grabbed the lead and never looked back.

It was Haula getting his fourth goal in five games, undressing Islanders center Derrick Brassard in the corner and powering to the net, firing a shot off New York goalie Thomas Greiss (35 saves) and then banging in the rebound to make it 3-2 at 15:09 of the second.

"I thought they were pressing quite a bit there," Haula said of the Islanders. "Just grinding down low and I saw a little chance to get to the net and just got a second chance and then the puck went in. So it was good. It's nice to play with the lead and have the lead going into the third."

Then Hamilton, who assisted on Carolina's opening goal by Teuvo Teravainen, got his third goal of the season.

After Jacob Slavin made a nice keep at the left point, he fed the puck to winger Nino Niederreiter. Niederreiter dropped a pass to Hamilton, who

bombed a one-timer past Greiss to extend Carolina's lead to 4-2 with 59 seconds left in the middle frame.

"I think when things are going good, you're obviously feeling good and you want to keep that feeling as much as you can," said Hamilton, who has seven points on the season. "It makes it easier coming here this year knowing everyone and everyone knows me and just being comfortable."

Things couldn't be going better, with Carolina off to a franchise-best 5-0-0 start with a chance to push their win streak to six Saturday against visiting Columbus.

"I just like the way the guys are coming to work every day," Brind'Amour said. "The 5-0 is kind of irrelevant. It's trying to win the day, and that's the mentality these guys have had and have to continue. That's what we're trying to sell here, and they're so far buying into it."

For the second straight game, the Hurricanes got off to a fast start.

In the opening minutes of the game, Hamilton led a rush up ice and shrugged off a flailing sweep check from trailing Islanders defensemen Adam Pelech. At the last moment, slid the puck past a sliding Ryan Pulock for a tap in by Teravainen to make it 1-0 just 3:57 into the game.

"I was shooting the whole way, and then you gotta pass when it's that easy," Hamilton said.

The Islanders tied the game on their first power play, quickly converting off the faceoff when Josh Bailey found Brock Nelson on the back door for an easy goal at 8:36 of the first.

Carolina regained the lead when Andrei Svechnikov chased down a rebound in the corner and set up Brett Pesce for a shot that got past Greiss and made it 2-1 with just over five minutes left in the first.

"It was a great play by Svech, for one," Pesce said of his second goal of the young season. "I kind of saw that they were a little scrambled, their forwards, and saw Svech got the puck and ... obviously he made a great play and I found the net."

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The Isles tied the game early in the second, again converting on the power play.

With Svechnikov serving a bench minor of a bizarre delay of game call late in the first, New York defenseman Johnny Boychuk found himself alone on the right side of the ice and ripped a slap shot past Petr Mrazek (17 saves) to tie the game at 2-all. Svechnikov later added an empty-net goal for his first tally of the season.

The penalty call that led to the second goal had Brind'Amour furious with the officiating crew of Tim Peel and Pierre Lambert.

Brind'Amour contended an icing call should have been waved off because Greiss, with Carolina on the power play, had started to come out of his net to play the puck. He tried to get an explanation, but then was told just to get the same players on the ice due to an icing call. He sent out the power play unit he thought was on the ice at the time of the icing, but was whistled for the penalty for not sending out the correct players.

"I was trying to get a clarification because the goalie came out," Brind'Amour said, "and he wouldn't give it

to me. ... Frustrating, because those things can cost you the game sometimes. They score on that. So that was frustrating because it was — the goalie came out. So at least I would have liked to talk it out. There was no talking."

It was the only blemish on a night that had the Hurricanes and their fans riding high atop the NHL standings.

"Right now it's going good for us, we can't get too high," Hamilton said. "We've just got to keep working on focusing on day-by-day and move on already to tomorrow and get ready for that game."

Notes: Pesce had a career-high six shots on goal. His previous best was five, which he had four times in his career. ... Julien Gauthier made his NHL debut for the Hurricanes, playing 8:23 in place of the injured Jordan Martinook (out 6-8 weeks after core muscle surgery). He took a high-sticking penalty in the third period. ... Carolina outshot New York 15-2 in the third period. ... Teravainen has points in all five games this season. ... Svechnikov is tied for the NHL lead with seven assists and is in a seven-way tie for third in points with eight.



Preview: Blue Jackets vs. Hurricanes

Canes hope to extend franchise best start

by Michael Smith

It's official. The Carolina Hurricanes are off to their best start in franchise history, a feat accomplished with their fifth straight win, a 5-2 triumph over the New York Islanders.

The Hurricanes will now put their undefeated record on the line against another Metropolitan Division foe, the Columbus Blue Jackets.

Keeping a Level Head

The Hurricanes aren't letting their 5-0-0 start influence the way they go about their day-to-day. In this instance, the old cliché rings true: take it game-by-game and day-by-day.

"It's awesome. We just try to stay in the moment and not get too high or too low. Right now, it's going good for us," Dougie Hamilton said. "We've just got to keep working and keep focusing day-by-day."

As soon as the Canes retreated to the locker room following another Storm Surge celebration and another win, focus shifted to the next day, the next game.

"I just like the way the guys are coming to work every day," head coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "The 5-0 is kind of irrelevant. We're trying to win the day. That's the mentality these guys have had."

Dzingel vs. Former Squad

A coveted trade deadline target, Ryan Dzingel spent the last quarter of the 2018-19 campaign with the Blue Jackets, where he recorded 12 points (4g, 8a) in

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21 regular-season games and a goal in nine playoff contests.

After signing a two-year contract with the Hurricanes this summer, Dzingel now squares off with his former team for the first of four times this season.

The match-up will certainly provide a little added juice for Dzingel, who has recorded two goals and two assists in his first five games with the Canes.

The Opposition

The Blue Jackets have opened the season with a 1-3-0 record. They've been outscored 13-4 in their three defeats, including a 2-1 loss to Anaheim at home on Friday night. The Blue Jackets' sole win thus far came earlier in the week at home against Buffalo, a 4-3 overtime decision. Nick Foligno leads the team in scoring with a goal and two assists in four games.

AT THE RINK

It's White Out Night at PNC Arena, as the Canes will be outfitted in their new white road uniforms. Giveaway alert! All fans in attendance will receive a white Canes t-shirt courtesy of Lane & Associates Family Dentistry.

Saturday night's festivities begin outside the arena with a South Plaza Party at 5:00 p.m., and the forecast spells out another beautiful evening with highs hovering around 80.

Recap: Canes Top Islanders for Fifth Straight Win

Carolina off to best start in franchise history (5-0-0)

by Michael Smith

The Carolina Hurricanes are off to their best start in franchise history after earning their fifth straight victory in a 5-2 win over the New York Islanders.

Dougie Hamilton and Andrei Svechnikov each recorded a goal and an assist for the Hurricanes, who are now 5-0-0 for the first time in franchise history.

Here are five takeaways from Friday night at PNC Arena.

1. Winning the Day

Just over a week into the 2019-20 regular season, the Hurricanes sit atop the NHL standings with an untarnished 5-0-0 record. It's the best start in franchise history, but to the Canes, that milestone is just another road sign on their longer journey.

"It's awesome. We just try to stay in the moment and not get too high or too low. Right now, it's going good for us," Hamilton said. "We've just got to keep working and keep focusing day-by-day."

WORTH A CLICK

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"I just like the way the guys are coming to work every day," head coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "The 5-0 is kind of irrelevant. We're trying to win the day. That's the mentality these guys have had." October 11, 2019

The Canes secured their fifth consecutive with five goals and another speedy and dominant performance.

"I'm not complaining about anything. I thought, from start to finish, we were ready to play," Brind'Amour said. "The guys dug in. We had a couple moments on the penalty kill you'd like to have back, but all in all, it was a good effort by everybody."

2. Teach Me How to Dougie

"Teach Me How to Dougie" echoed throughout PNC Arena after the horn signaled the end of the second period, an apropos soundtrack for the game and start to the season that Dougie Hamilton has produced.

With a goal and an assist, Hamilton now has seven points (3g, 4a), ranking tied for the most points through five games by a defenseman in franchise history.

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"Feeling good right now, getting a good opportunity and just trying to make the most of it," Hamilton said.

Hamilton helped the Canes get on the board first early in the first period. Skating in on a 2-on-1 with Teuvo Teravainen, Hamilton sold the shot hard, dishing over to Teravainen through a couple of reaching sticks at the last moment for the easy tap-in. The goal extended Teravainen's season-opening point streak to five games (2g, 4a).

"I was shooting the whole way, but you've got to pass when it's that easy," Hamilton laughed.

The Hurricanes' defenseman then stretched his team's lead to two goals in the last minute of the second period with a shot that he fired home from just above the right circle. 11, 2019

"He's a good player. He's feeling it. He's confident. It's great to see," Erik Haula said. "He has that offensive mindset. He's getting good looks and supporting the rush. He's using his shot, which is one of his strengths."

3. Svech Is Ready

After he scored 20 goals in his rookie season, many wondered if Andrei Svechnikov could cross the 25-goal mark or perhaps even tickle 30 in his sophomore campaign.

He certainly still has the potential to do that, but how's seven assists in the first five games of the season? That's tied for the league lead.

Svechnikov recorded his seventh assist when he set up (noted goal-scorer?) Brett Pesce's second goal in three games, which gave the Canes a 2-1 lead in the first period. • October 11, 2019

"It was a great play by Svech. I kind of saw they were a little scrambled, their forwards. I saw Svech got the puck," said Pesce, who was roaming around down near the goal line. "He made a great play, and I found the net."

The 19-year-old Russian forward added to his team-leading point total with an empty-net goal late to seal the victory.

"He's a complete player. He's getting there. I give a lot of credit to him and his commitment and Jeff Daniels, who works with him daily," Brind'Amour said. "I still think there's another level for him to get to that he's capable of. He's been really good."

4. Haula!

Through the first five games of the season, Erik Haula is the Hurricanes leading goal scorer. His fourth was an aggressive, goal-scorer's move, as he handled the puck along the near wall before cutting to the front of the net and chipping the puck past Thomas Greiss. That goal broke a 2-2 tie in the last five minutes of the second period, and from there, the Canes rolled to victory. er 11, 2019

"I thought they were pressing quite a bit there. Just grinding down low and saw a little chance to get to the net," Haula said. "The puck went in. It's nice to play with the lead and have the lead going into the third."

When the Hurricanes acquired Haula this summer, they knew they were adding an offensive talent that had finishing ability. The 28-year-old Finn is certainly showing that early.

"I set the bar high for myself. I have high expectations," he said. "I just try to go out there, do my part and try to chip in any way I can."

"We saw this when we wanted to go get him," Brind'Amour said. "He's really digging in at both ends of the rink, which is obviously what we love. He's getting results right now and getting rewarded for his level of play. He's been great from day one."

5. Gauthier Makes NHL Debut

Typically, the starting goaltender leads his team out at warm-ups and the start of each period. It's a little different, though, when there's a player making his NHL debut.

So, to lead off warm-ups, Julien Gauthier walked out of the room, stepped onto the ice and took a lap by himself ahead of his first career game in the NHL.

Welcome to the show.

Gauthier finished the night with two shots attempts, two penalty minutes and a faceoff win in 8:23 of ice time.

"He was OK. I didn't get him out there as much as I would have liked," Brind'Amour said. "I thought he had a couple little rushes there that looked like he almost could have broken free. I think that was a good introductory NHL game for him."

Up Next

The Hurricanes are right back in action at home on Saturday against the Columbus Blue Jackets.

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Hurricanes top Islanders for fifth straight win, remain undefeated

Set franchise record for victories to open season; Svechnikov, Hamilton each has goal, assist

by Kurt Dusterberg

RALEIGH, N.C. -- The Carolina Hurricanes defeated the New York Islanders 5-2 at PNC Arena on Friday to improve to 5-0-0, the best start in franchise history.

Dougie Hamilton and Andrei Svechnikov each had a goal and an assist for Carolina, and Teuvo Teravainen scored to extend his point streak to five games.

"The [5-0-0] is kind of irrelevant," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "We're trying to win the day, and that's the mentality of these guys. We need that to continue. That's what we're trying to sell here, and so far they're buying into it."

The five wins are one more than the Hartford Whalers had to start the 1995-96 season, their next to last before the franchise relocated to Raleigh.

"Our work ethic is pretty high every day," Teravainen said. "We want to play for ourselves and play for the fans. We just want to leave everything out there."

Brock Nelson had a goal and an assist, and Johnny Boychuk scored for the Islanders (1-3-0). Thomas Greiss made 35 saves.

"Their speed gives everybody trouble," Islanders coach Barry Trotz said. "Their D gets up on it and pressure, pressure, pressure. Because of their pressure and their four lines, you've got to make quick plays, plain and simple."

Teravainen gave the Hurricanes a 1-0 lead when he tapped in Hamilton's feed past sliding defenseman Ryan Pulock on a 2-on-1 at 3:57. Teravainen has two goals and four assists during his point streak. 11, 2019

"I was shooting the whole way, but then you've got to pass when it's that easy," Hamilton said. "Good play by everyone all around."

Nelson scored eight seconds into an Islanders power play to tie the game 1-1 at 8:36. Anthony Beauvillier took a pass from Jordan Eberle and set up Nelson at the top of the crease for a tap-in.

Brett Pesce scored with a wrist shot to the short side from the bottom of the left face-off circle off a pass from Svechnikov to give the Hurricanes a 2-1 lead at 14:42.

"I saw they were kind of scrambled, their forwards," Pesce said. "I saw [Svechnikov] had the puck. Obviously, he made a great play, and I found the net." 11, 2019

Boychuk scored with a one-timer from the right point on the power play to tie it 2-2 at 1:53 of the second.

Erik Haula worked the puck out of the right corner and scored on his own rebound to give Carolina a 3-2 lead at 15:09.

"I was just grinding down low and saw a chance to get to the net," said Haula, who has scored in four of his first five games with the Hurricanes. "I got a second chance and the puck went in. It's nice to play with the lead and have it going into the third."

Hamilton made it 4-2 on a one-timer through a screen from above the right circle with 59 seconds left in the second.

Svechnikov scored into an empty net with 50 seconds remaining to make it 5-2.

Carolina goalie Petr Mrazek made 17 saves.

They said it

"I think it's important that you take away some of that middle space and time and try to keep them to the outside. There were times tonight when they got that extra guy up there, and they were able to find him." -- Islanders defenseman Ryan Pulock

"[Erik Haula] is playing really hard, and it's maybe surprising that he's the two-way player that he is. He's

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really digging in on both ends of the rink, which is what we love. He's getting results right now. He's getting rewarded for the level of play. He's been great from Day One." -- Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour

Need to know

Islanders defenseman Nick Leddy and forward Casey Cizikas each missed the game with an undisclosed injury. ... The Islanders' 19 shots were their fewest of the season. ... Hamilton's seven points (three goals, four assists) are tied for the most in franchise history through the first five games in a season (Mark Howe, 1980-81; Risto Siltanen, 1982-83 and 1984-85). ... Hurricanes forward Julien Gauthier, selected in the first round (No. 21) of the 2016 NHL Draft, played

8:23 in his NHL debut. ... Carolina defenseman Jaccob Slavin had an assist on Hamilton's goal to extend his point streak to four games (two goals, two assists). ... Hurricanes forward Nino Niederreiter had two assists and has three in the past two games after being held without a point the first three of the season.

What's next

Islanders: Host the Florida Panthers on Saturday (Nassau Coliseum; 7 p.m. ET; MSG+, FS-F, NHL.TV)

Hurricanes: Host the Columbus Blue Jackets on Saturday (7 p.m. ET; FS-CR, FS-O, NHL.TV)



Hurricanes top Isles 5-2 for best start in franchise history

By KEN TYSIAC

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Carolina's win over the New York Islanders showed the Hurricanes they have a team worthy of the best start in franchise history.

Dougie Hamilton and Andrei Svechnikov each had a goal and an assist as the Hurricanes improved to 5-0-0 for the first time with a 5-2 win over the Islanders on Friday night.

Carolina outshot the Islanders 40-19.

Teuvo Teravainen, Brett Pesce and Eric Haula also scored, and Nino Niederreiter added a pair of assists for the Hurricanes, whose previous best start was 4-0-0 in 1995-96. Peter Mrazek stopped 17 of 19 shots in goal.

After winning in overtime in their first three games, the Hurricanes outscored Florida and the Islanders 11-5 in the last two games.

"It's a good feeling," Pesce said. "Every game has that playoff feel a little bit. It's just fun."

Brock Nelson had a goal and an assist, Johnny Boychuk scored and Jordan Eberle added two assists for the Islanders, who fell to 1-3-0. New York managed just two shots on goal in the third period against Carolina's relentless pressure.

"Their speed gives everybody trouble," Islanders coach Barry Trotz said of the Hurricanes. "They're all

about pressure, and their (defense) get up on it, and pressure, pressure, pressure."

No defenseman gets into the play on offense for the Hurricanes more than Hamilton, who assisted on Teravainen's game-opening goal just under four minutes in. He has three goals and four assists on the season.

Later, Hamilton gave Carolina its first two-goal lead at 4-2, scoring on a shot from the point past Thomas Greiss in the final minute of the second period.

Haula had broken a 2-2 tie earlier in the period when he forced his way to the front of the net and lifted his own rebound past Greiss. Haula, who has four goals, is off to a fast start after being acquired in June from Las Vegas for forward Nicolas Roy and a conditional fifth-round selection in the 2021 draft.

"We're having fun with each other," Haula said. "We're going out there every night and throwing what we've got at the other team, and that's good. It's good stuff. We have a good team and we're hard to play against."

The Islanders last faced Carolina in the second round of the playoffs in May. The Hurricanes swept New York in the series. The Islanders started Vezina Trophy finalist Robin Lehner in each game of that series, despite the 6-1 record Greiss had in his most recent seven starts against the Hurricanes.

Greiss got the start Friday and finished with 35 saves on 39 shots as the crowd taunted the Islanders with

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chants of "Sweep, Sweep." Despite the identical score, Trotz said the effort was better than the Islanders gave in a 5-2 loss to Edmonton earlier in the week.

"Much better than the other game, no question," Trotz said. "I thought our compete level was much higher and more focused, and we're playing a really good hockey team right now that's on."

The Hurricanes were so effective that Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour said he couldn't find anything to complain about.

"I like the way the guys are coming to work every day," he said. "The 5-0, it's kind of irrelevant. We're trying to win the day, and that's the mentality the guys

have had, and we have to continue. That's what we're trying to sell here, and so far they're buying into it."

NOTES: Wing Anthony Beauvillier has at least one point in each of the Islanders' games this season and leads the team with three goals and five points. ... In each of Carolina's five games, Teravainen has recorded at least one point. ... Julien Gauthier, the Hurricanes' first-round pick in the 2016 draft (21st overall), made his NHL debut after being recalled from Charlotte of the American Hockey League.

UP NEXT

The Islanders: Home against Florida on Saturday.

The Hurricanes: Plays its second home game in as many nights, hosting Columbus on Saturday.



The Buzzer: Hurricanes remain unbeaten; Sabres overcome late rally vs. Panthers

By Scott Charles

Three Stars

1. Dougie Hamilton, Carolina Hurricanes. Rod Brind'Amour has allowed his defenseman to play up in the zone and not be afraid to take chances. Hamilton registered an assist on the opening goal of the Hurricanes' 5-2 win against the Islanders when he delivered a beautiful cross-ice pass to set up Teuvo Teravainen. Then, added a goal of his own when he launched a one-timer from the point. Carolina has wins in five consecutive games and are out to prove that last year was not a fluke.

2. Dallas Eakins, Anaheim Ducks coach. He waited a long time for another opportunity in the NHL and through the early going of the season, he has pressed the right buttons as Anaheim skated to a 2-1 victory against Columbus. The Ducks have started the season 4-1, including a road trip that had three games in four nights. Eakins has had his team ready to play every night and is looking to take advantage of a wide-open Pacific Division. Ryan Miller added 26 saves in his season debut, which always helps the coach look good.

3. Mike Hoffman, Florida Panthers. The sniper knotted the game against Buffalo with a sneaky wrist shot late in the third period against Buffalo. Ultimately, the Panthers fell in a shootout after Vincent Trocheck and Aleksander Barkov failed to score. Hoffman is off to a terrific start with five goals in four games and is poised to benefit greatly from Joel Quenneville taking over behind the bench. Florida is expected to create some chaos in the Atlantic Division, and Hoffman playing like this can only help.

Highlights of the Night

Hamilton had no qualms about taking the puck from his own blueline and generating an odd-man rush opportunity. Then, he led Teravainen perfectly to help the Hurricanes open the scoring on Friday.

Casey Mittelstadt went to the backhand to beat Sergei Bobrovsky in the shootout and clinch the victory for the Sabres.

Blooper of the Night

Islanders defenseman Johnny Boychuk netted his first goal of the season when he hammered a slap shot past Petr Mrazek. But the highlight came when he took off his glove and aimed it right between the

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pipes. Former teammate Robin Lehner also got a kick out of the celebration.

Factoids

Ryan Getzlaf becomes the Ducks franchise leader in games played with 989, passing Corey Perry.

Ducks have allowed one goal or fewer in four of their first five games for the first time in franchise history [Sportsnet Stats]

Hamilton's seven points through Carolina's first five games is tied for most by a defenseman in Hurricanes/Whalers franchise history [NHL PR]

The Sabres extended their season-opening point streak to five games (4-0-1), their longest such run since 2009-10. [NHL PR]

Jeff Skinner's goal tonight gives him at least a point in three straight games (3G, 1A) and eight points (5G, 3A) in five games against the Canadiens since he joined the Sabres. [Sabres PR]

Scores

Anaheim Ducks 2, Columbus Blue Jackets 1
Buffalo Sabres 3, Florida Panthers 2 (SO)
Carolina Hurricanes 5, New York Islanders 2



Carolina Hurricanes continue to surge

Dan Dobish

It was a short and sweet National Hockey League slate on Friday night, but we had a few nice fantasy producers. We also had a little franchise history being made, as a surprise team from last season's playoffs is out to prove that they were no fluke. It was a night of good hockey, too, as two of the three games were decided by one goal. Let's get started!

Carolina Hurricanes 5, New York Islanders 2

The Hurricanes have fired out to a 5-0-0 start, which is the first time in Carolina/Hartford franchise history that they have posted five straight wins to open a season. The previous best was 4-0-1 starts both in 1995-96 and 2018-19.

A big reason for the success of the Hurricanes has been the old guard, as well as shrewd offseason acquisitions. The addition of Erik Haula in a trade with the Vegas Golden Knights is making general manager Don Waddell look like a genius. Haula has scored in four of his five outings, including two scores on the power play, and Friday's marker was the game-winning tally.

Andrei Svechnikov had an empty-net goal and an assist, giving him four consecutive multi-point performances. He is one of five players tied for the NHL lead with seven helpers. Svechnikov managed just 17 assists across 82 games in 2018-19.

Dougie Hamilton posted a goal and an assist, and he was making history, too. He has his three goals and four assists, tying Mark Howe (1980-81) and Risto Siltanen (1984-85) for the most points through five games by a Carolina/Hartford rearguard.

Meanwhile, Teuvo Teravainen scored a goal and now has two goals and six points in a five-game point streak to open the season. He also played in his 205th straight game, tying last season's captain Justin Williams with the fifth-longest streak in franchise history.

Jordan Staal had a helper, giving him a goal and three assists during a four-game point streak. Jacob Slavin had an assist, too, as he has two goals and four points in a four-game point streak. Nino Niederreiter also had two assists for his 47th multi-point game in the NHL, and eighth with Carolina.

For the losing side, Brock Nelson registered a goal and an assist, both on the power play, but he took an ugly minus-3 to nullify that positive fantasy production somewhat. Johnny Boychuk was the other goal scorer for the Isles, his first point of any kind across three games.

Jordan Eberle also opened with a pair of assists, his first time on the stat sheet in four games so far.

Thomas Greiss was solid early on, but eventually he let in four goals on 39 shots. He is still a very sharp 1-1-0 with a 2.40 goals-against average and .928 save percentage across two starts and one relief appearance so far this season. Look for Semyon Varlamov to be back in the crease for Saturday's home tilt against the Florida Panthers in the second end of a back-to-back situation.

Buffalo Sabres 3, Florida Panthers 2 (SO)

Mike Hoffman scored a goal for the visiting Panthers while taking nine shots on net. He has posted five goals and seven points during his current four-game point streak. Evgenii Dadonov also lit the lamp, giving

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him a goal and an assist. That's two straight games with a marker.

Sergei Bobrovsky was a little better than last time out against the Hurricanes, but he suffered another loss. He stopped 30 of the 32 shots he faced in regulation and overtime before losing in the shootout.

Jack Eichel and Casey Mittelstadt registered goals on the shootout to send the home folks away happy.

In regulation, Johan Larsson and Marco Scandella posted goals. They're not exactly the who's who of fantasy. Zemgus Girgensons and Kyle Okposo assisted on both goals, getting themselves on track after a slow start. Girgensons hasn't scored in five games, but he does have three assists over the past four. Okposo had a goal, his lone point, back on Oct. 5 against New Jersey. This was his first multi-point game since Nov. 19, 2018 in Pittsburgh.

Blue Jackets aim to end Hurricanes' perfect start

Field Level Media

The Carolina Hurricanes haven't always played at their peak level in the first week-plus of the season.

The results, though, have been spot-on -- 5-0-0 ahead of a meeting with the Columbus Blue Jackets on Saturday night in Raleigh, N.C.

"I like the fact that we're winning not playing our best," coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "That's a good (thing). There's a lot of areas of games I like, but there's a lot that's not quite there yet, but we've been able to find wins. ...

"If you can bank some (points) when you're not playing your best, that's crucial."

Both the Hurricanes and the Blue Jackets played Friday night, with Carolina defeating the visiting New York Islanders 5-2 to set the mark for the best start in franchise history. It was a largely smooth performance for the Hurricanes, who never trailed for the second game in a row.

Columbus lost 2-1 against the visiting Anaheim Ducks, so the Blue Jackets (1-3-0) are still looking for their first win in regulation.

Even with the Hurricanes on a historic early pace, Brind'Amour isn't paying much attention to the standings.

"It's focusing every day is what we're trying to do," Brind'Amour said. "It's boring, but win the day and move on to the next day. Hopefully, by the end of the year, you have enough of those."

Heading to Carolina, the Blue Jackets have played only one previous road game, dropping a 7-2 decision on Oct. 5 at Pittsburgh.

Linus Ullmark picked up the win, stopping 41 of the 43 shots he faced. That's 81 saves in his two starts, as the Buffalo backstop is facing a lot of vulcanized rubber early on.

Anaheim Ducks 2, Columbus Blue Jackets 1

The game with the least amount of fantasy production was in C-Bus. Jakob Silfverberg netted a shorthanded goal to beat Joonas Korpisalo early in the second period. While Jean-Luc Dubois answered in short order, it was Cam Fowler putting a bow on the scoring in the second to grab his second game-winning goal of the season.

Ryan Miller allowed just one goal on 27 shots in his first action of the season. It was a tough loss for Korpisalo, who deserved a better fate, but had virtually no offensive support. He turned aside 21 of the 23 shots he faced, but it wasn't good enough.

The Blue Jackets have to become more instinctive about how they play away from the puck, according to coach John Tortorella. There are times he has five newcomers in the lineup.

"We can't afford to just wade into this," Tortorella said. "We have to step in and rectify this right away."

Tortorella said the defensemen are included to be involved in the offense, but it takes more.

"This is really about the forwards not being flat in the offensive zone," he said.

The Hurricanes are in the middle of games on back-to-back nights for the first time this season, while Columbus went through a similar set-up last weekend.

The Blue Jackets have an awkward schedule in the coming week, with three days off before playing three games in four nights.

"It is the schedule, so we just follow it," Columbus center Alexander Wennberg said. "This is how the season goes. Right now, you just have to play hockey."

Carolina right winger Julien Gauthier, a 2016 first-round draft pick, made his NHL debut Friday night. Now some of the nerves might be out of the way after he had an even rating and a two-minute penalty in 8:23 of ice time.

"We just want him to play his game," Brind'Amour said. "He's a big body (who) can skate (and) should fit in with what we try to do."

Friday night marked the Hurricanes' first regular-season game without right winger Jordan Martinook since the 2017-18 season. Martinook is out for up to

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two months after surgery Friday to address a core muscle injury.

Carolina is bound to turn to goalie James Reimer for the second of the back-to-back games. Brind'Amour has kept the goalie distribution even so far with Petr Mrazek and Reimer playing every other game.

Columbus' Joonas Korpisalo made his fourth start in five games Friday, so it's possible backup Elvis Merzlikins could be in net Saturday. Merzlikins, 25, gave up seven goals to the Penguins last week in his NHL debut.

--Field Level Media

The Hockey News

Three early-season stats that matter – and three that don't

Some surprising early-season numbers can be written off as flukes. The ones to watch are those that confirm theories established before the season started.

By Matt Larkin

We're less than halfway through October. That means any hockey-season takes consist mostly of overreactions.

That doesn't mean we can't find any useful information this early in a season, however. The best way to sort October NHL stats into the "Care" and "Don't Care" bins: find which numbers legitimately reflect predictions and/or concerns we voiced before the season started. If we worried about Team X or Y having a shaky defense and that team is getting lit up this season, the early numbers might become a trend. On the other hand, when Steven Stamkos calls out his Tampa Bay Lightning and warns that it's "going to be a long season" without tighter defense, we laugh it off. It's the friggin' Lightning. They'll be more than fine.

Let's dig into some interesting early-season stats and decide whether to care about them yet.

STATS THAT MATTER

Patrik Laine's 10 points in five games

Laine had a nightmarish season by his standard last year. By his standard. When a 20-year-old scores 30 goals and is deemed a slump-prone one-dimensional failure performing at his floor, it says a lot about that young man's ceiling. Laine is so talented that he disappoints if he isn't challenging for the Rocket Richard Trophy. That's what happens when you score 18 goals in a 12-game stretch and amass 110 regular-season goals before turning 21. People want big things from you.

Because Laine hadn't achieved anything close to consistency, his contract negotiations this past summer were complicated for both sides. In the end, Laine's camp scored a wise contract, a two-year RFA pact carrying a \$6.75-million cap hit, allowing him to

bet on himself and raise his value. If Laine plays like a \$10-million asset over the next couple seasons, that's obviously great for him, but it's also great for the Jets, as it means he's realizing his vast potential.

Here we are, just five games into the Jets' 2019-20 campaign, and Laine has rattled off 10 points, tying Connor McDavid for the NHL scoring lead. Laine is unlikely to say the least to win the Art Ross, and we've seen these types of hot streaks from him before, so we can't assume he's exorcized the inconsistency demon. But the blazing start reminds us Laine is sublimely talented, a deadly goal scorer who also possesses the hands to set up others, and he's still only 21. Sixty-two rookie skaters have suited up in the NHL so far this season, and Laine is younger than 35 of them. He has so much time left to grow up. The next step is, hopefully, for him to use that deadly shot more. Since Laine debuted in 2016-17, 414 forwards have logged at least 1,000 minutes at 5-on-5, and he ranks 108th among them in shots per 60 minutes. That's decent, but we want Laine in the elite tier. For perspective: Alex Ovechkin sits 13th over that span.

The Carolina Hurricanes' 4-0-0 record

These guys weren't some cute, cuddly story, enthralling us for one year of Storm Surges before fading back into obscurity. The Hurricanes can play. They possess arguably the NHL's deepest blueline, we're seeing signs of that leap we were expecting from sophomore sniper Andrei Svechnikov, the Canes have enjoyed some sturdy goaltending from Petr Mrazek and James Reimer early on, and coach Rod Brind'Amour's troops look generally dominant on the attack, generating the fourth-most shot attempts in the league per 60 minutes so far.

Again – it's a tiny sample size, but when it's confirming an existing notion, it's interesting. The Hurricanes were a sleeper Stanley Cup contender entering the season, and they absolutely look the part at the moment. Their victims include the Washington Capitals, Tampa Bay Lightning and retooled Florida

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Panthers, too, so it's not like Carolina is fattening up on a breezy early-season schedule.

Rasmus Dahlin's seven points in four games

My colleague Ken Campbell delved deeper into Dahlin's start earlier this week, but, goodness, it's exciting to see Dahlin going Full Phenom to start 2019-20. It shouldn't come as a massive surprise. As a rookie, he scored the second-most points ever by an 18-year-old defenseman. At 19, he's already showing signs that he can creep toward his superstar-level ceiling. The Sabres aren't pelting him with impossibly tough assignments early on, starting him in the offensive zone more than 70 percent of the time and not deploying him much against other team's best forwards, but he's only been on the ice for a single 5-on-5 goal against in four games, with the Sabres scoring four times. The shot-attempt ratios tilt heavily toward the Sabres with him on the ice so far, too.

The defensive assignments will get tougher as coach Ralph Krueger realizes how much he can trust Dahlin, who projects to be a powerhouse at both ends of the ice. That said, the current offensive output sure is exciting. He handles the puck like a forward. It's only a matter of time before he's contending for Norris Trophies, and it's exciting early on to see him looking like an all-star asset.

STATS THAT DON'T MATTER

Sergei Bobrovsky's 4.77 goals-against average and .859 save percentage

Yawn. Sure, it's not ideal to see your new \$10-million goalie pulled after one period in his third start of the season. But please, don't panic. Even the slightest bit of pre-season homework told us to expect a slow start for 'Bob.'

His careers save percentages by month...

October: .906
November: .924
December: .919
January: .910
February: .909
March: .933
April: .917

Nothing to see here. Bobrovsky always starts slowly. So does the Toronto Maple Leafs' Frederik Andersen, by the way, so Leafs fans shouldn't be worried about

him, either. The Panthers' luck will correct soon. They rank 27th in PDO so far, largely because of Bobrovsky's struggles. He'll be fine, and so will they.

The Edmonton Oilers' 4-0-0 record

I'll surely endear myself to the fan base by declaring the fast start a mirage. I'm sorry, but...just look at the numbers. Edmonton ranks 29th in Corsi at 5-on-5, out-attempted 186 to 140 by its opponents thus far. Edmonton has scored on 14.08 percent of its shots at 5-on-5, good for second in the league. Edmonton ranks sixth in PDO. Three of Edmonton's four wins have come against teams that missed the playoffs last year: Vancouver, Los Angeles and New Jersey. A big reason for the success so far is a sizzling power play, which has converted six times in four games, good for a 40-percent success rate.

It's still encouraging to see the Oilers being so efficient with their opportunities – Any 4-0 start has positive takeaways – but there is a reality check coming. The Oilers have been territorially outclassed so far – not just cumulatively but in every individual game – and it hasn't shown on the scoresheet yet. It will soon.

The Dallas Stars' 1-3-1 record

This team boasts several of the best young defensemen in the game and, after some aggressive off-season moves by GM Jim Nill, its best forward depth in years. The Stars are too good to keep losing four out of every five games, even factoring in the expected regression from goaltender Ben Bishop after his amazing 2018-19. The Stars are allowing the ninth-fewest shot attempts per 60 minutes. They are legitimately struggling to generate chances right now, but they opened the season against arguably the two best defensive teams in the NHL, a.k.a the reigning Stanley Cup finalists, the Boston Bruins and St. Louis Blues. The Stars have also faced two division champions from last season in the Washington Capitals and Calgary Flames.

Once the schedule softens up, the Stars should have an easier time getting pucks toward the other team's net, and we know the defensive side of their game isn't a problem. It's encouraging that Dallas' most recent outing was by far its best. The result was a shootout loss to the Flames, but the Stars controlled the play. They'll be OK, especially after they complete a four-game road trip that begins Monday.

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SB★NATION
CANES COUNTRY

Hurricanes Beat Islanders, Improve to 5-0 for First Time in Franchise History

Hamilton, Hurricanes make history in win over Islanders.

By Brett Finger

RALEIGH — Plenty of history was made on Friday as the Carolina Hurricanes faced the New York Islanders for the first time since their date in the second round of the 2019 Stanley Cup Playoffs.

A fun PNC Arena atmosphere enjoyed what was a convincing win for the Canes, 5-2 over the Islanders - a win that marked a 5-0-0 start to the season, which is a new Hurricanes/Whalers franchise record.

And a little more history was made a long the way for #19.

The Hurricanes came out with a lot of pace in the first period, and they grew stronger as the frame went on.

Just under four minutes into the first, Sebastian Aho tied up two Islander players at the Carolina blue line, and an aggressive Dougie Hamilton stepped up, poked the puck through Brock Nelson's legs, and sprung a two-on-one rush with Teuvo Teravainen. Hamilton carried the puck up ice, made a perfect cross-crease pass while off-balance on one leg to Teravainen, and the Finn deposited his second goal in as many games to make it 1-0.

A few minutes later, the parade to the penalty box started. Tim Peel and company called a slew of questionable penalties early on, and their first call was an interference penalty on Dougie Hamilton. It rendered the first Islander goal of the night.

A defensive breakdown led to an easy tap-in goal for Brock Nelson in front of the Carolina net to quickly suck some energy out of the building and tie the game at one goal apiece.

After some back-and-forth play through the middle portions of the first period, Carolina started to gain more control of the game again. Elongated offensive zone shifts started to string together, and another great offensive play from a blueliner led to the game's third goal.

Brett Pesce had a roaming shift in the offensive zone. A quality chance for him got blocked aside by Thomas Greiss, but Andrei Svechnikov worked hard to corral a loose puck in the corner, reload, and deliver a great pass back in front to Pesce, who wouldn't be denied again. His second goal of the season gave the Canes a 2-1 lead.

Another wave of penalties, including a delay of game penalty on Carolina that Rod Brind'Amour was not pleased about, eventually led the teams into the first intermission with the score sitting at 2-1.

That carry-over delay of game call gave the Islanders just enough power play time to strike again. Johnny Boychuk found the puck on his stick with no one on his side of the ice, and slammed a howitzer clean by Petr Mrazek and tied the game up.

The Islanders went on to have a few minutes of very dominant play. They kept pinning Carolina deep in their own zone and wore down their defense, but the Canes managed to persevere through that pressure and come out strong on the other side.

15 minutes into the second period, Eric Haula capped off a strong offensive zone shift with a power drive to the front of the Islanders goal and got the puck through Greiss to give Carolina the lead again.

The Canes kept pouring on the pressure down the stretch of the second period, and just as the final minute of the period was announced, Dougie Hamilton struck yet again to pad the lead and make it 4-2.

Nino Niederreiter carried the puck through the right wing of the offensive zone and dropped a pass to Hamilton who put every bit of his weight into a big one-timer that beat Greiss clean through a great screen in front from Teuvo Teravainen.

Hamilton's goal was his seventh point in five games this season, which tied a Hurricanes/Whalers franchise record for most point in the first five games of a season by a defenseman.

Carolina continued to dominate puck possession through the third period, doubling them on the shot

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clock and giving them next to nothing to work with offensively.

A two-minute high-sticking call on Julien Gauthier, who made his NHL debut on Friday, gave way to a dominant penalty kill from Carolina, which was a welcome development after getting scored on twice on the PK earlier in the game.

Carolina put on a master class in defending a lead late in the game, and it was topped off with an Andrei Svechnikov empty-net goal to secure the win, by a final score of 5-2.

On the scoresheet, Nino Niederreiter (two assists), Andrei Svechnikov (one goal, one assist), and Dougie Hamilton (one goal, one assist) all came away with multi-point outings. Petr Mrazek wasn't overly tasked late in the game, but he stopped 17 of the 19 shots he saw behind a stellar defensive effort from his teammates, who blocked 21 shots in total. Both of the goals he allowed were on the penalty kill - he stopped 14 of 14 at even strength.

The Hurricanes will look to remain undefeated on Saturday when they host the Columbus Blue Jackets, who got beat by the Anaheim Ducks 2-1 on Friday and have stumbled out of the gate with a 1-3-0 record.

Postgame Quotes

Dougie Hamilton

(On what the feeling is like right now for the team) It feels like last year in a way. We don't get too high or too low, just keep playing and trying to stick to our

system. Then, some goals come, and they're coming right now.

It's awesome. We're just trying to stay in the moment and not get too high or too low, like I said. Right now, it's going good for us. We have to keep working and focusing on the day-by-day and move on, already, to tomorrow and get ready for that game (against the Blue Jackets).

(On what the difference is for him this year) I don't know, I think opportunity is the biggest thing. I'm just trying to make the most of it. I've wanted this opportunity for a while, so it's nice to have it and I'm just trying to do my best.

Teuvo Teravainen

(On how the team is getting off to such a good start) We just work hard. Nothing special. We're playing simple hockey, not trying to do too much. We're playing against good teams, so we just have to be careful out there.

(On his hot start to the season) I just try to work hard - every game, every day. Sometimes when you work hard, you get results. I feel okay. I still feel like I can play better, so hopefully I can still improve.

(On what it means to have all of this early-season success) It just gives us confidence. It's still early, so we want to make sure that we come in every day, win or lose, and be ready for the next game. We have the next one tomorrow, so we have to be ready.

Carolina Hurricanes vs. New York Islanders: Lineups and Game Discussion

The Canes seek to extend their winning streak in a divisional matchup with the Isles.

By Andy House

The Carolina Hurricanes return to home ice and will look to build on their historic 4-0 start as they take on a playoff foe from last season in the New York Islanders. The Isles will be looking for a measure of revenge for last Spring's series sweep at the hands of the Canes, but they will also be looking to add some points to their season total. Last season, they were propelled by a hot start that catapulted them into playoff contention, but this season the Isles have begun with a slow 1-2 start, already six points behind Carolina in the early division standings.

Tonight will mark the NHL debut of 2016 first round pick Julien Gauthier. A difficult cut at the end of training camp, the 21-year-old winger will take the place of Jordan Martinook, who underwent successful core muscle surgery on Friday morning. (Don't worry, though; Martinook will be watching tonight!)

With the addition, the Canes are expected to enter Friday's tilt with the following lines:

Andrei Svechnikov - Jordan Staal - Brock McGinn
Nino Niederreiter - Sebastian Aho - Teuvo Teravainen
Ryan Dzingel - Erik Haula - Martin Necas
Warren Foegele - Lucas Wallmark - Julien Gauthier

Jacob Slavin - Dougie Hamilton
Joel Edmundson - Brett Pesce
Jake Gardiner - Haydn Fleury

Petr Mrazek
James Reimer

The Islanders return to Raleigh for the first time since the Canes completed the postseason sweep that eliminated them in May. Barry Trotz continues to stress the structured defensive system that led to their success a season ago, but the fast start that led them to such overall success last year has eluded them through three contests this year.

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Trotz and the Isles will look for their first divisional victory of the season with the following lineup, in what is also the first of a back-to-back for the boys from Long Island and/or Brooklyn:

Anders Lee - Mathew Barzal - Jordan Eberle
Josh Bailey - Brock Nelson - Michael Dal Colle

Anthony Beauvillier - Derick Brassard - Leo Komarov
Matt Martin - Casey Cizikas - Cal Clutterbuck

Adam Pelech - Ryan Pulock
Devon Toews - Scott Mayfield
Nick Leddy - Noah Dobson

Semyon Varlamov
Thomas Greiss

Systems Analyst: Overtime Theatrics

The Hurricanes' hot start has featured stellar play in extra time.

By Ford Hatchett

The Carolina Hurricanes sit atop the NHL standings thanks in large part to three wins beyond regulation. While NHL overtime can often be a coin flip, the Canes have executed well and earned their success. There have been three specific aspects of their overtime periods that have been most impressive.

Possession

Possession is by far the biggest asset in three on three hockey. It can be a factor right off the opening faceoff of overtime. Whichever team starts with the puck has the chance to establish their tempo and control the pace of the overtime frame. The Canes were able to win the draw and establish their game against both Tampa and Montreal.

Tampa really was never able to regain possession after losing the opening draw and Carolina, already a man up, dominated the overtime frame.

But against the Capitals, Washington won the battle for possession and was able to generate almost immediately.

That sequence ended with a Jordan Staal hooking minor giving the vaunted Caps' scorers a chance at a four on three. That leads directly into another aspect of OT hockey...

Survival

The opposition is likely going to have grade-A chances in 3-on-3 sudden death overtime. It's just the nature of the beast. Thus far, the Canes have done a

sensational job of mitigating the opponents' opportunities and surviving their offensive pushes.

Against the Caps it was all out desperation on the penalty kill. It wasn't pretty, but James Reimer and Joel Edmundson did everything they could to survive the Washington attack.

Against Montreal an excellent Andrei Svechnikov backcheck helped to mitigate what could have been a Paul Byron scoring chance. Instead of allowing a clean breakaway, Svechnikov's work means all Byron can do is attempt a redirect. Then Jaccob Slavin covers for Svechnikov and prevents a centering feed to the wide-open Max Domi.

Finishing

It goes without saying that the good work possessing the puck and solid defending would prove fruitless without the ability to capitalize on their own offensive chances generated.

In the nation's capital, a broken breakout creates a loose puck battle. Carolina wins the battle and Jake Gardiner beats his man up ice, generating a two on one before rifling a snap shot past Braden Holtby.

Against Tampa, it was another loose puck battle that creates the game winner. Andrei Svechnikov battles with Steven Stamkos and then Jordan Staal outmuscles last year's Hart Trophy winner, Nikita Kucherov to spark another two on one.

The pass is on the money and Slavin fires home the winner on a perfectly placed one-timer.

While NHL overtime can often seem like a coin flip, the Canes are practicing good habits and have largely earned the results they have been seeing.

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Hurricanes continue to dominate as they storm past Islanders

Ryan Henkel

The Carolina Hurricanes defeated the New York Islanders by a final score of 5-2 to set a new franchise record for best start to a season at 5-0-0.

The Canes scored first and last as the high-powered offense kept chugging along in a dominant performance over the Islanders (1-3-0). Outshooting the Isles 40-19, the Canes only area of falter was the lackluster start of their penalty kill. The Islanders scored on the first two power plays they had, but the Canes managed to shut them down on their next three.

"I'm not complaining about anything," said head coach Rod Brind'Amour. "I thought from start to finish we were ready to play. We knew it was going to be a tough game and the guys dug in. We had a couple of moments on the penalty kill we would probably like to have back, but overall, it was a good effort by the group."

With the win, the Canes are still one of only five undefeated teams left in the NHL for this season. With all of those teams, including Carolina, in action tomorrow Oct. 12, that number could drop.

The home team struck early, as has become per usual, when Dougie Hamilton set up Teuvo Teravainen for an easy tap-in goal just 3:57 into the game. With a poke check at the Canes' blue line, Hamilton took the puck up the ice for a 2-on-1 rush where he faked the shot and laced it straight to Teravainen's tape.

The Islanders got one right back, however, as they scored just eight seconds into their first power play. The Canes had had a major breakdown on defense and Brock Nelson was left alone right in front of Petr Mrazek to counter with a tap-in goal of his own.

Not to be stopped, Carolina's high-flying offense struck right back as Andrei Svechnikov won the puck along the boards and fed defenseman Brett Pesce who was cheating down below the circles where he squeezed the puck through Thomas Greiss.

"It was a great play by Svech," Pesce said. "For one, I kind of saw that they were a little scrambled, their

forwards, and I saw Svech get the puck and I kind of just roved around and he made a great play and I found the net."

The second period saw a myriad of penalties called each way but the majority went against the Canes. The Islanders tied the game on their second power play as Johnny Boychuck blasted a slap shot from the blue line cleanly past Mrazek with no traffic out in front.

The Hurricanes managed to kill off the rest of the penalties assessed their way and rode that momentum to another goal. This time, Erik Haula came up big as he did it all, taking the puck down low along the boards, getting separation and driving to the net where he picked up his own rebound and scored.

"We saw this when we went to go get him," Brind'Amour said on Haula's ability. "He missed all of last year, but he's playing really hard. I think maybe surprising is the two-way player he is. He's really digging in on both ends of the rink which is obviously what we love. He's getting results right now, which I think is him getting rewarded for his level of play."

A few minutes later, Hamilton hopped onto the scoresheet's goal column as he ripped a one-timer, fed to him from Nino Niederreiter, straight to the back of the net to give the Canes a two-goal lead with under a minute to go in the second period.

With his goal, Hamilton brought his season total up to three. Along with Hamilton, defenseman Jaccob Slavin has two as does Pesce, and new defenseman Jake Gardiner even has a goal. The defensemen have accounted for eight of the Hurricanes 21 total goals this season and they don't look like they will be slowing down anytime soon.

"Our staff is giving us free reign to kind of play however we want to in the other zone as long as we are responsible," Pesce said. "So kudos to them for giving us that opportunity and obviously we are taking advantage of it."

Carolina then dominated the entirety of the third period, holding the Isles to only two shots on net in the final 20 minutes. The Hurricanes rode that

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dominance to the end of the game with a little insurance by Svechnikov who deposited an uncontested empty-net goal in the closing seconds.

"I just like the way guys are coming to work every day," Brind'Amour said. "The 5-0 is kind of irrelevant because it's trying to win the day and that's the

mentality these guys have had and will need to continue. That's what we are trying to sell here and they are so far buying into it, so it's good."

The Hurricanes will remain at home to play the second half of its back to back against the Columbus Blue Jackets tomorrow, Oct. 12 at 7 p.m.



Hurricanes top Islanders 5-2, remain unbeaten

Hamilton, Svechnikov tally goal, assist each to lead Carolina to another win

Peter Koutroumpis

RALEIGH, N.C. – The Carolina Hurricanes continued to lead the NHL following a 5-2 win over the New York Islanders at PNC Arena on Friday.

With their fifth straight win of this season (5-0-0), a franchise record, the Hurricanes also posted their fifth straight victory over the Islanders, at least since last postseason's Eastern Conference second round when the Hurricanes swept the series between the two teams.

Led by a goal and an assist apiece from defenseman Dougie Hamilton and forward Andrei Svechnikov, Carolina's 40-shot performance had coach Rod Brind'Amour praising his team's effort and attitude.

"We knew it was gonna be a tough game, and the guys dug in," Brind'Amour said.

"We had a couple of moments there on the penalty kill that we'd probably like to have back, but really all-in-all, it was a good effort by everybody in the group."

Hamilton making all take notice

In posting his third multi-point game of the season, Hamilton took the strides necessary to create a turnover in the neutral zone and helped convert on a 2-on-1 with Teuvo Teravainen as the Finn opened the game's scoring at 3:57 into the opening period.

With three goals and four assists to-date, Hamilton tied Mark Howe and Risto Siltanen for the most points by a Hurricanes/Whalers defenseman through the first five games of a season.

When asked what has been the impetus for the team's winning start, Hamilton said, "It's awesome – I think we're just tryin' to stay in the moment. That's the biggest thing – not to try to get too high or too low."

Svechnikov leading by feeding

Svechnikov now leads the Hurricanes in points – sitting with his lone goal, an empty netter, and seven assists.

Most notable against the Islanders was his feed from the left corner to defenseman Brett Pesce who beat Thomas Greiss stick-side to extend the 'Canes lead to 2-0 at 14:42 mark of the first period.

"It was a great play by Svech," Pesce said in describing the play.

"I kind of saw that they were a little scrambled, their forwards. I saw Svech got the puck, he rolled it around and he made a great play, and I found the net."

Haula burying it

Eric Haula drove from the corner to Greiss' left and was denied on a shot from in close, but stayed in position at the top of the crease and tucked away his fourth goal in five games.

Haula's hard work gave Carolina the lead back at 3-2 at 15:09 of the second period after Johnny Boychuk's power play goal evened it up earlier.

"It's nice to play with the lead going into the third, so it was good," Haula said.

"I set the bar high for myself and I have high expectations. I just try to go out there and do my part and try to chip in any way I can. I've got puck-luck and hopefully it continues."

Notables: Carolina finished 0-2 on the power play, 5-17 (29.4%) overall...On the PK, the Hurricanes went 3-5, 18-24 (75%) overall...Teravainen played his 205th consecutive game, tying Justin Williams for fifth-longest iron man streak in franchise history... Starting goaltender Petr Mrazek recorded his third win of the season and currently sits with 2.57 goals against average to go with an .822 save

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percentage...Forward Julien Gauthier, recalled from Charlotte (AHL) on Wednesday, made his NHL debut.



Revisiting Isles vs. Canes 2018-19

By Matt Rothman

It is no secret that the New York Islanders struggled in the postseason against the Carolina Hurricanes in 2019, but as the two teams get ready to meet up for the first time this year, we take a look back at the four regular season matchups from last season.

For much of the past decade, the Hurricanes have given the Islanders fits. Cam Ward dominated for many years in net for Carolina. However, that was not the case last season as the goaltender signed with the Chicago Blackhawks, and the Islanders took three out of the four games before being swept in the postseason.

Oct. 4, 2018

On opening night, the Islanders went to Raleigh, North Carolina for the first game of the post-John Tavares era and came away with a 2-1 overtime win. Thomas Greiss got the start, as the German goaltender made 45 stops allowing just one goal by Jordan Staal with under two minutes to go in regulation.

Playing in his first game with his new club, Valtteri Filppula scored the opening goal of the game to give the Islanders a 1-0 lead. After Carolina tied the game, the two teams both earned a point and headed to overtime, though Michael Ferland put the Hurricanes down a man by taking a penalty with two seconds to go in regulation.

On the power play, Mat Barzal set up Josh Bailey for the game-winning goal, as the Islanders improved to 1-0 on the season for the first of six overtime wins over the course of the season.

Oct. 28, 2018

The two teams met just over three weeks later in Carolina and again the Islanders were victorious 2-1, as Greiss earned another win. This time, he allowed one goal on 39 shots, as Carolina continued to put shots on goal from anywhere in the early season.

Once again, the Islanders took a 1-0 lead, as Anders Lee scored his fourth goal of the season. That lead

wouldn't last long as Teuvo Teravainen tied the game early in the second period, but the Islanders answered with the game-deciding goal, as Bailey and Lee set up a spinning Ryan Pullock who beat Petr Mrazek.

Nov. 24, 2018

For the third straight time, Greiss stole the show, earning his third win of the regular season over the Hurricanes in a dominating 4-1 win. It was New York's second win in two nights, as Barzal scored in overtime the night before against the New Jersey Devils.

On just 19 shots, the Islanders converted four times with Filppula scoring a beauty, dangling through the Hurricanes defense for his sixth goal of the season. Shortly after, Anthony Beauvillier finished off a beautiful pass from Bailey to double the lead to 2-0.

Bailey would later get a goal for himself, and Adam Pelech scored late in the third period, despite Carolina breaking the shutout of Greiss in the final 10 minutes of regulation.

Jan. 8, 2019

Playing in their third different arena of the season, the Hurricanes were finally able to earn a win over the Islanders at the Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum.

For the fourth straight time, the Islanders scored the opening goal as Brock Nelson fired one home early in the first period. The Hurricanes would respond though with two goals later in the first and take a 2-1 lead into the third period.

Devon Toews scored the game-tying goal at 4:50 of the third period, as the two teams traded chances much of the third. Carolina would then score two goals in 1:35 to grab a two-goal in the final minutes of the third period. Nelson brought the Islanders back within one eight seconds later, but time would run out and the Carolina beat the Islanders for the first time.

They would later go on to outscore the Islanders 13-5 in the four postseason games to advance to the

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Eastern Conference semi-finals against the Boston Bruins.

Preview for Friday's Matchup

With Greiss having success in the past, look to see him start Friday night. In their last game, Varlamov was pulled after allowing four goals and will likely see the Florida Panthers on Saturday, as the Islanders honor their 1979-80 Stanley cup team.

Head coach Barry Trotz has used the same 12 forwards each of the first three games. Casey Cizikas has had a couple of maintenance days at practice, but is expected to play. If not, Ross Johnston will likely make his first appearance. On defense, Noah Dobson made his NHL debut Tuesday and picked up a point. It will be interesting to see if Johnny Boychuk returns to the lineup and which defender will sit. Nick Leddy also missed practice this week.



Checkers Fall to Bridgeport on Championship Banner Night

Written by Nicholas Niedzielski

On the night they raised their Calder Cup championship banner into the rafters, the Checkers came up just short against Bridgeport, falling to the Sound Tigers 4-2.

After the pregame festivities came to an end the Checkers jumped off to a hot start, with Eetu Luostarinen redirecting a cross-ice feed from Morgan Geekie less than 6 minutes in to put Charlotte on top. That lead wouldn't escape to the intermission, however, as Bridgeport knocked home their opening goal in the waning moments of the frame, then snatched a lead of their own thanks to a Sebastian Aho tally late in the second.

Trailing by one with 20 minutes to play, the Checkers once again came out of the locker room firing, with Gustav Forsling threading a wrister home from the point early on. That deadlock ended up being short-lived, though, as Jeff Kubiak answered just 41 seconds later to once again swing the advantage back to Bridgeport's side.

The Checkers continued to push down the stretch, launching 17 shots in the third period alone and 44 in the game overall, but couldn't solve a phenomenal Christopher Gibson. An empty netter in the final moments of the contest sealed Charlotte's fate and a 4-2 loss on home ice.

QUOTES

Coach Ryan Warsofsky on the game

I thought we worked hard. Our power play struggled just with making that next play. We've got to work a little harder away from the puck. It was a good effort but we've just got to give a little bit more.

Warsofsky on how to turn the team's high shot total into more goals

We've got to get more traffic. When you say traffic it's not just one guy. We need to have more guys at the net. If you want to score in pro hockey you've got to go to the dirty areas. We were a little on the perimeter at times and when the rebounds were there we just weren't there quick enough. That's going to be one of the things we work on.

Warsofsky on giving up the winning goal less than a minute after tying the game

That's tough. That's not what you want. You want to keep the momentum and we just didn't have a good shift. They put one in the back of the net, and that's hockey. We kept playing and kept chugging along, but we just couldn't get that next one.

Warsofsky on tomorrow's rematch

No one's happy losing and I probably take it the hardest. I know we have a bunch of competitors in that room that hate to lose, so we'll go back to the drawing board in the morning and we're going to show up tomorrow and put our work boots on. We'll be ready for puck drop, I'll tell you that.

Defenseman Roland McKeown on the pregame ceremony leading into the game

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I thought we got off to a nice start. It's really nice to see the support from the fans coming back like that full throttle and being loud like that for a ceremony that means a lot to the team, so that's really nice to see. I thought we got to our game right away.

McKeown on the team's high shot total
Obviously the shot differential was huge tonight but there weren't that many wasteful shots. There was a lot of time in the offensive zone and we were down and didn't score so we were pressing a lot and that kind of tilted the ice like we saw. We've just got to bear down on our chances and capitalize.

McKeown on the team's progress to start the season
We're coming together. I thought we were a lot better tonight than we were last weekend just structure wise and as a team. Tonight I thought we came out and dominated but the score didn't tell that story. We'll

stick with the program and trust the system we have in place here and good things will happen.

NOTES

The Checkers fell to 1-2-0 on the season ...
Luostarinen's goal was his first in North America ...
With an assist tonight, Geekie is the only Checkers skater with at least one point in all three games (1g, 2a) ... The Checkers only hit the 40-shot mark three times during their championship season. They had 44 tonight ... Geekie led the team with six shots while Luostarinen had five ... The teams went a combined 1-for-10 on the power play ... Forwards Max McCormick and Spencer Smallman missed the game due to injury ... Forward Stelio Mattheos and defensemen Cavan Fitzgerald, Derek Sheppard and Kyle Wood were the other scratches.

TODAY'S LINKS

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CAROLINA HURRICANES

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SportScan

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

1156629 Carolina Hurricanes

Hamilton setting records as he settles in with Hurricanes

BY LUKE DECOCK

OCTOBER 11, 2019 11:19 PM

There were defensemen sliding everywhere, the New York Islanders falling at Dougie Hamilton's feet in a desperate attempt to stop him. Adam Pelech went sliding past to one side, Ryan Pulock to the other. Hamilton had one thought on his mind as he navigated the traffic on one leg.

"I was shooting the whole way," Hamilton said.

And then he slung a pass through the crease instead to a wide-open Teuvo Teravainen for a tap-in goal

"You've got to pass when it's that easy," Hamilton said.

That's how things are going for Hamilton these days. Easy. And for the Carolina Hurricanes, too. The team can do no wrong, now 5-0-0 for the first time in franchise history after Friday's 5-2 win over the Islanders. Neither can Hamilton, who scored his third goal and picked up his fourth assist, tying the franchise record shared by Mark Howe and Risto Siltanen for points by a defenseman to start the season.

There's so much going right for the Hurricanes right now. Other than a lull to start the second period and some penalty-killing issues, Friday's win was a start-to-finish dominant win over a division opponent with revenge on its mind. (It was not to be had, on the ice or in the stands: When the Islanders fans piped up, the home fans drowned them out by chanting "Sweep!")

Even amid all that, it's hard to find anyone who's going better than Hamilton. When he was on the ice Friday, the five-on-five scoring chances were 19-2 in favor of the Hurricanes. It's so far from last season, when he started slowly before playing through the middle of the season with a broken finger. This is everything that was expected of him from the moment he was drafted ninth overall in 11, everything expected of him in Boston and Calgary, everything expected of a defenseman with his physical gifts and talents.

"Opportunity is probably the biggest thing," Hamilton said. I'm just trying to make the most of it. I wanted this opportunity for a while so it's nice to have it and I'm just trying to do my best."

Hamilton now understands what the Hurricanes demand from him, with and without the puck, and it shows. Whatever adjustment was needed to Rod Brind'Amour's system is complete. There's an ease to his game that wasn't there before, the kind only time and repetition can create. In the process, he's earned the defensive trust of the coaching staff. That means more ice time in more situations, especially paired with Jaccob Slavin.

At the same time, the Hurricanes have a better idea of what Hamilton can do, what makes him tick. They're willing to let him play his way as long as he meets them halfway, which he has.

"I think it's his commitment, totally," Hurricanes coach Brind'Amour said. "I think he's more comfortable for sure with our system and how we want to play. There was a period I'm sure when he first got here when there was an adjustment to the whole think, but now he looks comfortable and he's obviously playing great."

Perhaps for the first time in his career, Hamilton is empowered and unencumbered, playing with an easy freedom that suits his ability.

"Sometimes, not all the time," Hamilton said. "When things are going good you want to keep that feeling as much as you can. It makes it easier coming here this year, knowing everyone and everyone knows me, just being comfortable compared to last year. Just feeling good right now and trying to make the most of it."

It's hard to imagine anyone making more of it than this. He's playing like the two-way defenseman the Hurricanes always wanted, and the one he always wanted to be.

News Observer LOADED: 10.12.2019

1156630 Carolina Hurricanes

Canes top Islanders 5-2 for franchise-record 5-0-0 start to the season

BY CHIP ALEXANDER

OCTOBER 11, 2019 10:15 PM

The Carolina Hurricanes still don't have a blemish on their record.

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The Canes, showing off their speed and quickness, topped the New York Islanders 5-2 on Friday to improve their record to 5-0-0. That's the best start to a season in franchise history and had Canes fans at full throat in the final seconds at PNC Arena.

"I thought from start to finish we were ready to play," Canes coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "We knew it was going to be a tough game and the guys dug in. All in all it was a good effort by everybody in the group."

"I like the way guys are coming to work every day. The 5-0 is kind of irrelevant. We're trying to win the day. That's the mentality these guys have had and that we have to continue."

The Canes and Islanders last faced each other in the second round of the 2019 Stanley Cup playoffs. The Canes won twice in PNC Arena, finishing up the four-game sweep at home, and there was residual friction between the two teams.

The Canes got goals Friday from the forwards -- Teuvo Teravainen, Erik Haula and then an empty-netter by Andrei Svechnikov. They got goals from their defensemen -- Brett Pesce and Dougie Hamilton, who also made a spectacular assist on Teravainen's goal. They showed off their team speed while showing enough grittiness when the Isles turned more physical.

Canes goalie Petr Mrazek, making his third start in net, was beaten twice for power-play goals, by Brock Nelson in the first period and Johnny Boychuk early in the second. He faced just 19 shots, two in the third period, in his third win of the season.

Penalty killing has been spotty early in the season for the Canes, who have given up six power-play goals in the first five games. The Islanders' first power play lasted eight seconds before Nelson scored. Boychuk's goal came early in the second period, after a delay-of-game call against Carolina with four seconds left in the first period that had Brind'Amour frustrated and irked.

But at even strength, the Canes were at their best. They have balance in their lines and a lot of youthful bounce and energy, a growing trend in the NHL, producing 16 "high-danger" scoring chances against Isles goalie Thomas Greiss, who had won six of his last seven games against Carolina. The D-men are given the freedom to jump into plays, resulting in the Pesce goal off a neat pass in tight quarters by Svechnikov, who has a league-best seven assists.

"Their speed gives everybody trouble," Islanders coach Barry Trotz said. "They're all about pressure and their D get up on it, and pressure, pressure, pressure. The Hamilton goal really left a mark on us."

That was a blast from the point by Hamilton with 59 seconds left in the second, pushing the Canes ahead 4-2. Hamilton, playing as well as any defenseman in the league, has three goals and four assists in the 5-0 start.

Why so good?

"I think it's his commitment, totally," Brind'Amour said. "I think he's more comfortable for sure with our system and how we want to play."

The Canes, who host the Columbus Blue Jackets on Saturday, learned this week that forward Jordan Martinook would need surgery to repair a core muscle injury, sidelining him for six to eight weeks.

Julien Gauthier, a former first-round draft pick by Carolina, was recalled from the AHL's Charlotte Checkers and made his NHL debut. Gauthier was given the traditional first-game honor of being the first player on the ice for the pregame warmups.

Gauthier, a winger on the fourth line, got 7:33 in playing time. He also picked up his first NHL penalty, for high-sticking in the third that the Canes, leading 4-2, killed off without allowing a shot.

With Martinook out, Teravainen wore an "A" as an alternate captain. And his line, with center Sebastian Aho and winger Nino Niederreiter, was flying much of the game, especially Aho. Niederreiter had two assists, his first multi-point game of the season.

Teravainen's goal, his second in as many games, was a simple tap-in made possible by the scintillating pass from Hamilton. The defenseman held on to the puck on the rush, causing Isles defensemen Adam Pelech and Ryan Pulock to go down attempting to block a pass or shot. But Hamilton, on one leg, curled the puck to Teravainen.

"I was shooting the whole way but you've got to pass when it's that easy," Hamilton said, smiling.

Haula continues to impress. He scored his fourth of the season with a power move from behind the goal line, taking the puck to the net, getting off a shot, then punching the rebound past Greiss. That was the game-winner, his first with the Canes.

"We've just got to stay in the moment, not get too high or too low," Hamilton said. "It's going good for us. We can't get too high. We just have to keep focusing on day by day."

News Observer LOADED: 10.12.2019

1156631 Carolina Hurricanes

Observations from the Hurricanes' record start: Andrei Svechnikov finds a way; Dougie Hamilton is 'just feelin' it'

By Sara Civian 4h ago

I knew the answer before I even asked the question, but sometimes that's the point.

Did Hurricanes head coach Rod Brind'Amour care that a win at PNC Arena on Friday night would, at 5-0-0, give the team its best start in Hurricanes/Whalers franchise history?

"Not really," he said after the morning skate. "No. Focusing every day is what we're trying to do. It's boring, but it's like, 'Win the day.' Then move on to the next day. Then hopefully, at the end of the year, you've got enough of those."

Now, after a 5-2 win over the Islanders, the Hurricanes have "more of those" to start a season than they ever have, and

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the best part, to Brind'Amour, is they are stealing wins without playing as well as he knows they can.

Three things have stood out as the Canes have opened their season undefeated:

1. Svechnikov is growing

The narratives surrounding the Andrei Svechnikov versus Alex Ovechkin playoff boxing match were as predictable as they were lazy: "Ovechkin was Svechnikov's childhood idol." "Svechnikov modeled his game after Ovechkin's." "Svechnikov will grow into a similar pure goal scorer with an edge."

You were there. You get the picture.

Those who've worked with Svechnikov probably read the headlines and cringed. Former Muskegon Lumberjacks GM John Vanbiesbrouck once told me he didn't want to drop a bomb too soon, but yeah, he could see hints of Gordie Howe in a young Svechnikov. Vanbiesbrouck was more comfortable with a comparison to Todd Bertuzzi.

"You know what? He's hard to compare to anyone because there's not a lot of guys like him," he said after Svechnikov's NHL debut. "Because sometimes he drives the net or sometimes he'll see a play. He's so multi-talented. When he drives the net — Todd Bertuzzi, one of the best net-drivers I've ever seen. He's got an acute way to make plays and find lanes and shoot in place. There's not a lot of guys like him in that way and how he can play a speed game, then a slowed-down game."

A league-leading seven assists and one empty-netter later and Vanbiesbrouck nailed it. Svechnikov has four consecutive multi-point games. Even if the opposition scouts Svechnikov to death and knows all about his net-driving prowess, he'll find a way.

OK, that sounds a little like Ovechkin.

Whatever it is, it's the reason, a Hurricanes source said in retrospect, if they'd had the No. 1 pick in the 2018 draft, they still would've picked him.

The Svechnikov-driven play that gave the Hurricanes a 2-1 lead goes in a graveyard full of missed opportunities, though, if Brett Pesce isn't in front of the net ready to bang it in.

It sure makes you wonder why Pesce was in front of the net ready to bang it in.

2. Blue-line production

Every Hurricanes defenseman, save for stay-at-home shot blocker Joel Edmundson, has at least two points through the first five games.

Dougie Hamilton has seven; his three goals and four assists tie Mark Howe and Risto Siltanen for the most through five games by a Hurricanes/Whalers defenseman.

We just went over the difference between juice and sauce. That, right there, is the sauce.

And that's when Hurricanes DJ "Mista Illz" started playing "Teach Me How to Dougie."

"It makes it easier coming here this year — knowing everyone, being comfortable compared to last year," Hamilton said. "I think I'm just feelin' it right now, getting an opportunity and making the most of it."

Hamilton has been prone to slower starts — partly due to injury, partly due to bouncing around the NHL. He's home in Raleigh, and with Justin Faulk gone, he has the nod to be that dude.

I wondered what he meant when he said he now has an opportunity he apparently didn't have before — or maybe I knew exactly what he meant but I wanted him to say it out loud.

"Playing all opportunities, I think," he said. Then he grinned. "First PP. Being out there at the end of games. PK. All that stuff. It's a lot of fun to play when you're contributing to the game, and I guess that's it."

What's more is his play away from the puck. He's using his size to block shots, he's wagging his finger at Aleksander Barkov, he's cup-checking those on the Hurricanes video staff (which, for the record, they find hilarious).

Again, he's got the sauce.

Jacob Slavin has four points and a pair of game-winners. Pesce, notorious for reliability in his own end and breaking the franchise plus-minus record last season, has three — including two goals.

"Our staff is giving us free rein to kinda play however we want in the offensive zone," Pesce said, "as long as we're responsible. So, kudos to them, and obviously, we're taking advantage of it."

But it seems like this freedom, which Hamilton calls "blacking out," is new for most of the guys.

Has Pesce ever had a leash so loose?

"You know what? No. I haven't," he said. "Previously, my coaches preached to me, kind of, 'pick your spots, err on the side of caution.' I feel like Roddy and our staff actually want us to err on the side of aggressiveness. That's huge for us. (When) all of our instincts kick in, we have a bunch of good D-men who can all skate well."

When did that trust develop?

"That was Day 1," Brind'Amour said. "For us, we have to get our D involved or we're not going to be very successful. And we have good defensemen that can make plays. It's part of our arsenal and we've gotta use it."

3. Spending pays off

The Hurricanes have essentially spent to the cap for the first time in decades, and — wouldn't you know it? — it's working out in their favor.

They acquired Erik Haula via trade but still took on a much larger salary than they would've with what they sent to Vegas in Nic Roy. He's got four goals in five games. Ryan Dzingel has two goals and two assists. Jake Gardiner? A goal and an assist, with that overtime thriller in Washington.

If the Hurricanes are going to be a Stanley Cup contender, they need to succeed when Sebastian Aho can't find the back of the net. Even with Aho getting his fruitless chances and Nino Niederreiter hanging his head on the bench — they both have played well but can't buy a goal — the Hurricanes are doing just fine.

That's what you get when you make a good investment.

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1156641 Columbus Blue Jackets

Ducks 2, Blue Jackets 1 | A couple of mistakes prove costly in Blue Jackets' loss

Adam Jardy

Oct 11, 2019 at 10:24 PM

Seth Jones wasn't about to quibble with semantics.

Friday night at Nationwide Arena, Anaheim scored two goals in less than two minutes to take a 2-1 victory against the Blue Jackets. The first came on a short-handed chance, albeit one aided by a bounce off the linesman, and the second on an odd-man rush.

Against a team that's scored two goals or fewer in three of its first four games, it was enough.

"I think it's the big mistakes that cost you," Jones said. "You're going to make mistakes every night. It's the ones you saw, the odd-man rushes from the offensive blue line all the way down the ice. It doesn't matter what your margin of error is: If you give up those chances in a game, skilled players are going to put the puck in."

They did, and the Jackets could muster just a Pierre-Luc Dubois goal in falling to 1-3-0 to open the season with a game at Carolina looming Saturday night. Coach John Tortorella pointed to the fact that the Jackets allowed only seven scoring chances and had Jones and Oliver Bjorkstrand ring iron without finding the back of the net as reasons why the sky isn't falling.

Most troubling to him was the Jackets' response to the first goal, which came at 12:59 of the second period when Jakob Silfverberg buried a juicy rebound allowed by Joonas Korpisalo on a Rickard Rakell blast from the left point with the Jackets on the power play.

Two shifts later, the Ducks took advantage of a 3-on-2 break as Ondrej Kase cut in on the right wing and dropped the puck to trailing teammate Cam Fowler, who beat Korpisalo under his right arm at 14:56.

"We give up an odd-man rush two shifts later and they score their second goal," Tortorella said. "That team checks. They've got a couple of lines that just grind away. For the most part, I don't think we opened up. We only gave them seven scoring chances, but to open up at that time after it's 1-0 ... those are the mistakes that we have to try to rectify."

Dubois finally solved Ryan Miller at 16:16 of the second to make it a one-goal deficit. His first goal of the season came after a pass from Jones led him into the left corner of the attacking zone, where he snapped off a shot from a tight angle that somehow deflected off Miller's arm and into the back of the net.

"Three minutes later, I had the same play and I tried to pass it to (Markus Nutivaara)," Bjorkstrand said. "You've just got to read what you have. We talk about scoring goals, greasy goals like that, but whenever you have a play you've got to make that play."

Before the game, the Jackets observed a moment of silence at their first home game since the passing of local business leader John Christie, who died Sunday at the age of 69. He played a crucial role in bringing the Blue Jackets to Columbus.

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Blue Jackets goalie Elvis Merzlikins moves on from disastrous debut

Henry Palattella

Oct 11, 2019 at 8:26 PM

After Alexandre Texier scored the winning goal in overtime for the Blue Jackets against Buffalo on Monday night, it seemed as if everyone in Nationwide Arena let out a sigh of relief.

The win not only gave the Jackets their first victory of the season, but it also allowed for everyone on the roster to move past a 7-2 loss to Pittsburgh two nights before.

Well, almost everyone.

Elvis Merzlikins, the rookie goaltender who allowed those seven goals in his NHL debut, spent Monday's game against the Sabres on the bench. It has been a week since his rough showing in Pittsburgh, a long time for a performance like that to linger. While Merzlikins doesn't know when he'll get another opportunity to prove himself on the ice — welcome to the life of a backup NHL goaltender — he hasn't let his tough debut linger.

"It wasn't a good feeling, but I've moved on and tried to learn from my mistakes," Merzlikins said. "You can't think about the past. If you spend too much time dwelling on the past, you won't think about what's coming in the future."

Merzlikins' biggest problem was allowing goals on shots aimed near his glove, something that plagued him in the preseason. He said he worked on his glove positioning at practice this week.

Merzlikins got the start against the Penguins in part because it was the second game of a back-to-back. The Blue Jackets play their second back-to-back of the season this weekend when they travel to Carolina on Saturday after hosting Anaheim on Friday.

Merzlikins said he'll have a different mindset in his next game — whether it's against the Hurricanes or not.

"Whenever I play next, the score will start at zero," he said. "I'm not going to think about the negative stuff."

Anderson to IR

The Blue Jackets announced Friday that they placed Josh Anderson on injured reserve because of an upper-body injury he suffered against Pittsburgh.

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The move is retroactive to Oct. 5, meaning the earliest he can rejoin the active roster is Sunday. He didn't practice during the week and is considered day-to-day.

Markus Hannikainen was recalled from the Cleveland Monsters of the American Hockey League to fill his spot on the roster.

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1156643 Columbus Blue Jackets

Portzline: 10 observations from the Blue Jackets' 2-1 loss to the Ducks and their narrow margin for error

By Aaron Portzline Oct 11, 2019

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Ten observations after the Blue Jackets' 2-1 loss to Anaheim on Friday:

1. The Blue Jackets' margin for error is really thin

It's foolish to make too much out of one game, but a night like this illuminates just how little wiggle room the Blue Jackets might be dealing with this season.

The Blue Jackets were on the right side of the puck for most of the night, save for a two-minute span late in the second period.

A bad bounce of the puck (off a linesman) on the power play led to a shorthanded goal for a 1-0 Ducks lead at 12:59. An over-exuberant response to that goal two shifts later led to a three-on-one rush for the Ducks and a 2-0 lead.

That was enough for Anaheim.

The Blue Jackets got an out-of-nowhere goal from Pierre-Luc Dubois later in the second, but the lingering memory will be of the goals they didn't score: Oliver Bjorkstrand drawing crossbar on the power play in the first, Seth Jones getting poke-checked by Ducks backup goaltender Ryan Miller on a three-on-one shorthanded rush and Jones drawing far-post iron off a faceoff with 5:19 remaining, etc.

In previous seasons, the Blue Jackets might win this game 3-2. They could get away with Bjorkstrand and Jones almost scoring goals, but those days might be history.

Think about how thin the difference is between good and bad teams in the NHL. That's the beauty of major-league sports, right? A fastball that's 3 mph slow gets crushed. A slant pass that's a half-second late is too late.

"We didn't give (Anaheim) much," Blue Jackets coach John Tortorella said. "I think they had seven or eight chances tonight. The last game (vs. Buffalo on Monday), I think it was six or seven."

When you allow an NHL team fewer than 10 scoring chances in a game, you should win consistently.

The Blue Jackets need so much to go right this season. They need their goaltenders to settle quickly into roles that neither has filled previously. They need at least a couple of their secondary scorers to become primary scorers, and a

least a few of their young players to become secondary scorers.

If all of that happens, they could be OK. If neither of those happens, they have big problems.

2. C'mon now, hockey gods

When the margin for error is gossamer thin, the last thing you need is a bad-bounce goal on the power play.

The Blue Jackets had their third power play at 12:20 of the second when Anaheim's Ryan Getzlaf sailed the puck up and over the glass from the defensive zone.

Zach Werenski, bring the puck up the ice, attempted a pass up-ice from his own blue line, but the puck hit the skates of an NHL linesman and kicked into the neutral zone, springing Anaheim's Jakob Silfverberg and Rickard Rackell with only Werenski back.

"It's tough," Werenski said. "It's an unfortunate bounce. I'm sure the linesman doesn't want to have that play happen. It's part of the game, but I'm kind of flat-footed there."

"It's a hard play for me to read because I'm going up to get the puck and the next thing I know I'm facing our goalie, sprinting back the other way."

Werenski did what he was supposed to do, taking away Rackell's passing lane to Silfverberg. But Rackell's shot on Joonas Korpisalo was left in the crease, and Silfverberg cleaned it up.

3. Caught deep

The first period was a chess match. The second period was a food fight, just pure mayhem and a big mess. But by the later stages of the second, the game opened up offensively for both teams.

After the Ducks' shorthanded goal broke the ice, the Blue Jackets made a major push to respond. In hindsight, they might have pushed too hard.

"We made a mental mistake," Jones said. "We got caught with four guys low, pretty much, and gave up an odd-man rush."

"A couple of shifts (after going) down 1-0 ... you can't open yourself up like that. We did, and we paid the price. Ultimately, that's the mistake that cost us the game."

Werenski was the only guy back on this odd-man rush, too, but Riley Nash skated his way back into view just before Anaheim defenseman Cam Fowler scored under Korpisalo's right arm.

This is the patience that Tortorella has been preaching about since the start of training camp. The Blue Jackets need to be a team that doesn't crack under pressure.

"Those are the plays where we just can't go there and give them an odd-man rush," Tortorella said. "It was an opportunity for us to not open up. For the most part (tonight), I don't think we opened up."

"But to open up at that time ... we need to get our feet underneath us again without giving up another one. Those are the mistakes that we have to try to rectify."

4. Jones had two big chances

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The Blue Jackets had their own three-on-one shorthanded chance midway through the third period, but Jones was robbed by Miller's stick as he swept it across the goalmouth in desperation.

It would have tied the score at 2-2.

"I thought I made a pretty good move, but he got the poke out in front of me," Jones said. "I was going to the backhand."

That wasn't Jones' only chance.

Jones ripped a one-timer off a Dubois faceoff, but the puck caromed off a Ducks player in front of the net, hit the far post and shot out of harm's way.

"Luc was winning a lot of O-zone draws, so I was getting some looks there," Jones said. "There's a lot of bodies in front, but you're hoping one will get through."

"Those were both decent scoring chances. It would be nice if one would go in."

5. Finally ... a goal from a center

Dubois skated at least 100 feet with the puck, zipping through the left side of the neutral zone, skating wide of Anaheim defenseman Josh Manson and beating Miller with an odd-angle shot from just outside the goal line.

It was the first goal scored by a Blue Jackets center this season. Even with that goal, Blue Jackets centers Dubois, Alexander Wennberg, Boone Jenner and Nash have combined for 1-4-5 in four games.

6. Not quite so big anymore

One week before the season started, the Blue Jackets announced that center Brandon Dubinsky would be out indefinitely with a wrist injury.

Dubinsky isn't the impact third-line center he used to be, but he's a physical, highly competitive player, and the Blue Jackets miss him when he's gone.

Meanwhile, right winger Josh Anderson missed his second consecutive game with an upper-body injury.

Those two players — Anderson and Dubinsky — were born to play against the rough-and-tumble Ducks, and the Blue Jackets seemed to miss their size Friday.

Nobody's saying when Dubinsky might be able to return. Anderson is still listed as day-to-day.

7. Win or lose ...

The Blue Jackets kept Nationwide Arena's ice open after the game so fans could have a twirl. They do this several times throughout the season, but I've never noticed this in previous seasons.

A large crowd formed by the Blue Jackets bench, leaving just a few people skating. Blue Jackets forward Cam Atkinson came out to sign autographs before he showered, put on a suit and flew with the club to Raleigh, N.C.

That's a nice touch from No. 13.

8. Markus Hannikainen back in action

The Blue Jackets recalled right winger Markus Hannikainen from AHL Cleveland on Friday, giving them an extra forward for Saturday's game.

To create a roster spot for Hannikainen, the Blue Jackets placed Anderson on injured reserved, retroactive to Oct. 5. As a player must be on IR for seven days, Anderson can already be ruled out of Saturday's game. He can be activated anytime beginning Monday.

Hannikainen was a surprise early cut from training camp, sent to Cleveland even though he'll earn his full NHL salary (\$750,000) in the minors.

In two games with the Monsters, Hannikainen had 1-0-1 with a minus-1 rating. No word yet if Hannikainen will make his season debut with the Blue Jackets on Saturday.

9. Gird those loins, boys

The Blue Jackets are walking into a buzzsaw Saturday. Carolina is 5-0-0 after a 5-2 win over the New York Islanders on Friday, the best start in franchise history.

Here, via Chip Alexander of the Raleigh News & Observer, is Islanders coach Barry Trotz postgame: "Their speed gives everybody trouble. They're all about pressure and their D get up on it, and pressure, pressure, pressure."

The Blue Jackets have one player with more than two points so far this season: Nick Foligno (1-2-3).

The Hurricanes, who have outscored their five opponents 22-13, have 10 players with more than two points. Defenseman Dougie Hamilton might be the hottest player in the league right now with 3-4-7 and a plus-5 rating.

10. Ryan Dzingel has moved on without comment

The Blue Jackets will face a lot of games this season with an emotional attachment. The first game against the New York Rangers (and Artemi Panarin), the first game against Florida (and Sergei Bobrovsky), and even the first game against Nashville (and Matt Duchene).

But of all the marquee players who weren't traded last February and all the players who were added in the Jarmo Kekalainen trade deadline jamboree, the one who fell through the cracks is forward Ryan Dzingel.

The Blue Jackets traded forward Anthony Duclair and second-round picks in 2020 and 2021 to Ottawa for Dzingel and a 2019 seventh-round pick at the trade deadline.

Dzingel had 4-8-12 in 21 games with the Jackets late last season, then had 1-0-1 in nine postseason games. He was a healthy scratch for one playoff game.

The Blue Jackets did not attempt to re-sign him this summer before he hit free agency. He signed a two-year, \$3.375 million contract with the Hurricanes.

Dzingel, who attended Ohio State, declined to be interviewed through a Hurricanes spokesman earlier this week, saying he didn't want to discuss his time with the Blue Jackets.

Analytically speaking

The Athletic's hockey data dynamo Alison Lukan provided these insights into the Blue Jackets' loss:

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The Blue Jackets built an advantage in shot volume (50.29 percent of shot attempts) and shot quality (58.25 percent of expected goals), but they couldn't finish. Coupled with "big mistakes" — that's how Jones described the puck bounce off an official's skate and a three-on-one rush less than two minutes later — Anaheim eked out the win.

Anaheim's expected goal total was 1.59 (Columbus' was 2.15), so Joonas Korpisalo's performance of two goals against and 21 saves on 23 shots was sound.

The Ducks' first score, a shorthanded tally off a rebound, was their highest-quality chance of the night. That shot had a 34.2 percent chance of becoming a goal.

Jones was a standout for the Blue Jackets. He led the team in shot attempts (8), played a team-high 25:38 and led all skaters from both teams in game score (2.10). Imagine if that shot off the post had gone in, too.

While Tortorella scrambled three of his lines looking for offense, the top line of Gustav Nyquist-Pierre-Luc Dubois-Cam Atkinson stayed together, and for good reason. In 12:10 of play, the grouping was the best line in terms of driving shot share (80 percent). Interestingly, the line of Alexandre Texier-Alex Wennberg-Oliver Bjorkstrand had better control of shot quality and bested all Blue Jackets lines in expected goal percentage (96.34).

Data via MoneyPuck.com, Evolving-Hockey.com and NaturalStatTrick.com and reflects score- and venue-adjusted five-on-five play unless otherwise stated.

The Athletic LOADED: 10.12.2019

1156644 Columbus Blue Jackets

'I have to start from zero': After disastrous debut, Blue Jackets' Elvis Merzlikins working, waiting for next opportunity

By Aaron Portzline Oct 11, 2019

COLUMBUS, Ohio — On days when the Latvian National Team was a huge underdog in the IIHF World Championships, coach Bob Hartley would arrive early at the rink, grab a permanent marker and write a few words of encouragement for goaltender Elvis Merzlikins on the inside cuff of his blocker.

"If he turned his wrist forward a little bit, he would see the message, just one-liners, like 'Be a warrior!' or 'You're the best!' or 'Always fight back!' and stuff like this.

"Elvis is very emotional. He plays a lot on his emotions, and personally I love this. I love to see passion. It was my way to show support to him. Instead of a long speech, I would just say, 'Look at your blocker.'"

Hartley, now coaching in the KHL, was among those who watched with shock and sadness on Saturday when Merzlikins' NHL debut with the Blue Jackets unraveled after a strong first period in Pittsburgh.

With watch parties rolling in his native Latvia and anticipation building in Columbus, Merzlikins was in net for all seven of

the Penguins' goals in a 7-2 loss. It's the type of performance that could easily shake a goaltender's confidence, even a 25-year-old goaltender.

"It was a bad day off on Sunday," Merzlikins said. "I came over to the rink, worked out for a little bit, tried to free my mind. I asked (goaltending coach Manny Legace) if we could right away watch the videos (from Saturday's game), and he told me no. He wanted to wait until (Monday), so I took the rest of Sunday off.

"I started with the wrong foot, with seven goals (against). If I was making a shutout, I would be the hero here. I'm not the hero right now, but I'm going to try to keep working hard on my stuff and not losing focus, trying to battle for every puck."

Coach John Tortorella has not said when Merzlikins will play next, but the Blue Jackets have another weekend back-to-back on the docket: Friday vs. Anaheim and Saturday against Carolina in Raleigh, N.C.

On one hand, Tortorella and the Blue Jackets (1-2) need to get off to a good start to the season, and goaltender Joonas Korpisalo deserves to get consistent playing time like a true No. 1.

But the Blue Jackets can't let Merzlikins sit too long, especially after a debut like the one he endured.

The decision, the fallout

Tortorella said he decided after the Blue Jackets' 4-1 season-opening loss to Toronto last Friday to give Merzlikins the start the following night in Pittsburgh.

"(The coaches) met as a group, all of us talked," Tortorella told Blue Jackets' broadcaster Bob McEligott in his weekly "Timeout With Torts" show. "We wanted to see him.

"I thought he was overwhelmed in training camp to start with, but his last exhibition game he played very well, made some key saves, improved tremendously."

Merzlikins had a solid first period. None of his 10 saves was particularly difficult, but what stood out was his ability to come out of the net and play the puck. He looked aggressive, fluid and crisp in his decision-making.

"When a goalie is handling the puck the way he is," Tortorella said on his show, "he just seems to feel comfortable in net."

But the floor gave way in the second period. The Penguins made it 1-0 on a deflection by Patric Hornqvist at 1:46 and pushed the lead to 2-0 when Marcus Pettersson with a slapper from 30 feet just three minutes later.

As the Penguins poured it on, the Blue Jackets started to have massive breakdowns defensively. Still, Merzlikins allowed three or four goals that an NHL goaltender would normally be expected to save.

It was 5-1 after two periods, and the watch parties in Latvia started winding down.

"(After the game), I said (to Elvis), 'Was this the right move ... keeping you in there? Is that what you wanted? He told me 'I'm glad you did,' Tortorella said.

"I think he would have felt embarrassed if he was taken out of his first game, and I like the way he fought. It still wasn't pretty (in the third period), by any means, and he has a ways

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to go. But this is how he's going to improve; working through that stuff."

Tortorella requested a copy of Merzlikins' postgame interview with the media, he said, to see if he how Merzlikins handled himself. He was looking for "self-assessment," and said he could see and hear it.

"He was pretty hard on himself," Tortorella said, "and quite honestly he deserved to be."

The Blue Jackets flew home after the game, a short flight from Pittsburgh to Columbus. Merzlikins said he was still upset when he arrived at his downtown apartment, but he was greeted by two attempts to cheer him up.

"My girlfriend tried to make me smile, but she couldn't do anything about that," Merzlikins said. "My puppy, he makes you smile, but still, it hurts. It really hurt because I didn't want or expect that kind of result in my first NHL game, which I was waiting for all of my life.

"The puppy ... he feels that you feel bad. He senses that. So he's coming all the time to hug you, not trying to play, but to support you."

Rebuilding the game, the confidence

The Blue Jackets were given an off-day on Tuesday, the morning after they beat Buffalo 4-3 in overtime for their first win of the season. Still, Merzlikins met Legace at the rink for a lengthy work session.

There are some flaws in his game that must be fixed. The Athletic asked three goaltending gurus across the NHL and beyond to watch Merzlikins' performance in Pittsburgh, and they all returned different causes for concern.

No. 1: "His weight transfer isn't right." In other words, he's not moving efficiently from side-to-side or back again.

No. 2: "His glove is in a different spot every time he faces a shooter, and it's usually too low."

No. 3: "The different angles he's seeing in the smaller North American rinks. He looks confused, but he'll figure it out."

The Blue Jackets and Merzlikins might not agree with any of those assessments, but the physical fix is only part of his challenge.

"I've worked with Manny the last (three) days," Merzlikins said "The next (game I play) is going to be about myself, just seeing how I'm going to react. Because seven goals is not the game that gives you confidence to play the next one.

"I have to start from zero. I'm going to forget about that game. I'm going to start a new debut, because this is not acceptable this game that I had. It's not acceptable to myself. I don't want to accept that my debut was that bad ... really, really bad. I'm trying to focus and I'm going to wait for my next chance to prove myself."

Vancouver's Michael DiPietro allowed seven goals in his NHL debut last Feb. 11 against San Jose, but that's not a fair comparison. DiPietro was 19 years old at the time, on emergency recall from his major-junior club in the Ontario Hockey League, and sent right back soon thereafter.

The last bona fide NHL goaltender to allow seven goals in his first NHL start was Nashville's Brian Finley on Dec. 13, 2005, against Florida.

Former Blue Jackets goaltender Marc Denis allowed seven goals in his Columbus debut during the inaugural season of 2000-01, but he'd already played in parts of the previous three seasons with the Colorado Avalanche.

"I had some experiences I could draw back on with the Avs, in the American Hockey League, with Team Canada in the World Junior Championships, these kind of things," Denis said. "Elvis has had success in Switzerland and at the World Championships, for sure. I think he could draw on that and bounce back quickly.

"Until you've done it in the NHL, there are always going to be questions about it. You always have to prove yourself. But there are good veterans in that dressing room, and I'm sure the same leaders who stood up when the ship needed to be righted last season are going to be in Elvis' corner, too."

Merzlikins' next start will be a momentous occasion. If he thrives, the Blue Jackets can exhale. If he struggles, they might have major issues to confront at the most important position in the game. As Denis noted, Korpisalo won't likely play in 77 games, as Denis did in 2002-03.

Hartley said there's "no doubt in my mind" that Merzlikins is an NHL goaltender.

"If I know a player who can bounce back from this, who has the character to bounce, it's Elvis," Hartley said. "I've coached some great goalies, like Patrick Roy, and they have those tough nights, too. I know how hard he's worked to be there, how badly he wants it. He'll fight back.

"He knows what he's got to do. We know how his first game went, but that's behind him now."

These are the days when Hartley might grab a marker and deliver a message to Merzlikins, jotting on his blocker to surprise him before he takes the ice.

Hartley, who coached Colorado, Atlanta and Calgary in the NHL, was asked what his message would be to Merzlikins before his next start. His answer:

"Fight back. You always do."

The Athletic LOADED: 10.12.2019

1156658 Los Angeles Kings

Kings' opening week is a mix of patience, growth and frustration

By JACK HARRIS

OCT. 11, 2019 6:10 PM

Todd McLellan marched away from the locker room. His jacket was off. His arms swayed by his side. He set his sights straight ahead.

The new Kings coach had hit the first speed bump of his tenure, an 8-2 defeat to the Vancouver Canucks that brought his opening week in charge to a sobering close. All at once, the uncertainty of the road he and the Kings are embarking upon was exposed.

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"I think you find out something about every individual each day, and they reveal themselves in certain situations," he said. "We found something out about our group that has to be fixed, and we'll work towards fixing it."

When he took the Kings job this offseason, McLellan knew what he was getting into. He knew the Kings were at the depths of a rebuild, facing a long climb back to relevancy. He knew hard nights, disappointing nights, embarrassing nights were on the horizon.

The first two weren't so bad. In their 6-5 loss to the Edmonton Oilers, the Kings relinquished a pair of third-period leads but also tapped into a resolve that often went missing last year. Two nights later, they salvaged a strong start with a 4-3 overtime victory over the Calgary Flames.

Kings Canucks Hockey

But finally, in the finale of their season-opening three-game swing through western Canada, that first futile failure had arrived.

In Vancouver, McLellan's team had rolled over. He was left with one inconvenient, inevitable takeaway.

"It tells me," McLellan said Wednesday, stopping to talk to reporters before disappearing down an arena hallway, "that our group's got a long, long way to go."

Edmonton: An even-keel approach

The first week of McLellan's tenure started with a warning: Easy as it may be, be careful not to make snap judgments.

"We believe we've had a pretty good training camp, players have been attentive and worked hard," McLellan said last Saturday, ahead of the opener with the Oilers. "But we won't know until we play through Vancouver, really, where we're at and how many different things we need to adjust."

Though McLellan is new to the Kings, 11 previous seasons behind an NHL bench have taught him this process — the potential pitfalls that accompany new systems and a new message. He has given his players detailed directions, but also a blank canvas. He wants to see what they can create within the structure he is putting in place.

"You have to have an impact on the game," he said. "You don't have to score a goal, you don't have to set up the winning play. You might have to break something up, you might have to block a shot. But if you go empty the whole night and haven't contributed, regardless of how many minutes you play, then it begins to get us to think about making changes."

Which is why, as the third period spun out of control — a five-goal frame that saw the Kings twice take the lead only to lose to the Oilers by one — McLellan kept his demeanor in check. In their first regular-season game together, he wanted to see how his players would react.

"I don't think there was any panic," defenseman Alec Martinez said. "I think he's a pretty even-keel guy. He's been around a long time. That's not his first game situation like that."

McLellan's presence is different from his predecessors. Darryl Sutter's iron-fist approach lifted the Kings to two Stanley Cup championships, but lacked the deft touch to turn them into a dynasty. John Stevens opted for a subtler

approach, but never solidified his systematic overhaul on the ice.

In McLellan, the Kings hope they've found a happy medium.

"It's going to be somewhere in between," Martinez said. "He's obviously encouraging on the bench. Something someone is doing well, he's positive. Same thing the other way."

Calgary: Signs of growth

McLellan's voice grew sharper with each repetition Monday. In the Kings' first practice since losing at Edmonton, the coach was demanding more inside an empty Scotiabank Saddledome.

"Move it! Move it! Move it!" he shouted as players and pucks zipped around the rink, weaving through the neutral zone in a blur. "Understand the pace. ... The puck has to be faster than us."

McLellan, a coach who loves to author analogies, has often likened games to "tests." Practice days like these are the equivalent to study hall.

There is a certain vision McLellan is striving for, a direct and decisive style of play he evolved over his previous NHL coaching tenures in San Jose and Edmonton. He is implementing it with detailed instructions.

"He's very clear with what he wants us to do, where he wants us to be on the ice, structurally," forward Kyle Clifford said. "He's not afraid to voice his opinion. From what I've seen, he's been pretty fair with his assessment."

By the midway point of practice, McLellan's tone softened. He saw the execution on the ice improve.

"Much better," he declared.

It carried over to the Kings' first period against the Flames on Tuesday night. The forecheck caused four takeaways. Defensively, the Kings clamped down on a Flames team that won the Western Conference last season. In the offensive zone, they scored twice and recorded 20 shots to the Flames' three.

"That's a sign of growth," McLellan said. "We started the season by saying everybody has to grow. Whether you're 35 years old or whether you're 20 years old, you have to find a way to grow."

The Flames came back and forced overtime. Then, Drew Doughty buried a game-winning power-play goal. Afterward, McLellan sounded like a proud teacher, checking off some of the most crucial boxes to his hockey curriculum.

"We were able to put a team on its heels," he said. "Being resilient later on in the game was important. Scoring on the power play, we count on the power play to get us something and we executed something we've worked on very well."

He wrapped his first Kings win succinctly: "There were a lot of areas that we improved on tonight."

Vancouver: A harsh reality

A man of usual routine, McLellan did something different when his first drubbing with the Kings mercifully ended.

After most games, "I don't go into the room," he said. "I did go into the room in Vancouver."

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The tenor of his message was clear. Even though the Kings' external expectations are low, even though McLellan is at the start of a five-year contract with seemingly endless breathing room, even though there are countless excuses — some legitimate, others not — as to why the team might still be a long way from consistently winning, their new coach isn't willing to wait.

"When we left [for the trip], we said we would come back and have something to base an opinion on," McLellan said. "It's a tough opinion to establish, because we played some really good periods. We were Jekyll and Hyde, if you will. Outstanding 20 minutes and awful 15 minutes in Vancouver."

Prior to their collapse against the Canucks, in which Vancouver scored twice in the opening seven minutes and four times in the final period, the Kings had shown promise.

"I feel like when we stick to our game, we stick to our systems, we're a tough team," defenseman Ben Hutton said.

The challenge now will be replicating such success in the midst of a daunting rebuild. The first week of the McLellan era confirmed as much.

"All over the map," McLellan said, assessing the opening trio of games. "But that may be the stage your team is in. We'll be working hard to find some consistency."

LA Times: LOADED: 10.12.2019

1156659 Los Angeles Kings

Kings open at home with Nashville after rough Canadian trip

By ANDREW KNOLL |

PUBLISHED: October 11, 2019 at 7:19 am | UPDATED: October 11, 2019 at 7:17 PM

One night after Kings coach Todd McLellan praised his team's growth, the only thing that burgeoned was his squad's goals-against average as the Kings sustained a calamitous 8-2 defeat at the hands of the Vancouver Canucks on Wednesday.

What part of the Kings' performance irked McLellan?

"All 60 minutes," McLellan told reporters.

Now the Kings look to recover from the drubbing up north with the start of a five-game homestand. It begins with the Nashville Predators and Vegas Golden Knights this weekend. Both opponents made the playoffs last season, losing in the first round despite higher aspirations.

The Kings (1-2-0) face Nashville in their home opener at 3 p.m. Saturday at Staples Center, then confront Vegas 28 hours later.

The Predators have been contenders dating to their run to the Stanley Cup Final in 2017, and this year they signed high-profile forward Matt Duchene after trading star defenseman P.K. Subban to New Jersey. Vegas, which made the Final in 2018, returns much of its roster from last

season. Right winger Mark Stone made a tremendous impact after he came from Ottawa at the trade deadline.

The Kings have struggled against defensive pressure and high-tempo offense thus far. Coming off a wild 6-5 win over Washington on Thursday, Nashville (3-1-0) brings no shortage of it with a top line paced by Viktor Arvidsson and a five-man cycle game that gets defensemen involved in the offense. The Golden Knights seek to suffocate opponents with speed both on the forecheck and off the rush.

Avoiding giveaways and protecting the net will be paramount in both games. With a back-to-back, goalie Jonathan Quick will almost certainly start one of the two games, and will also need to perform at a higher level.

"He, as well as everybody else, has to be better," McLellan told reporters.

Wednesday's loss, which came one night after a gritty 4-3 overtime victory in Calgary, was a rough ride in terms of puck management, defense, goaltending and special teams. Turnovers proved costly. Prime chances abounded for Vancouver.

Fourteen Canucks recorded points, including four for J.T. Miller and three for Brandon Sutter. Their defensemen alone outscored the Kings, turning in three goals. For the Kings, Anze Kopitar extended his point streak to three games.

Quick was thoroughly outplayed by his opposite number, Jacob Markstrom, as Quick allowed a career-worst eight goals on 25 shots. The Kings gave up an early goal on the penalty kill and they produced an 0-for-4 night on the power play.

Perhaps the most microcosmic sequence in the game was in the second period when, trailing 4-1, they mustered a two-man advantage. Not only did they fail to score, after the power play expired they took a penalty 190 deep in the offensive zone while three exhausted Vancouver penalty killers remained on the ice.

Nashville at Kings

When: 3 p.m. Saturday

Where: Staples Center:

TV/Radio: FSW/iHeartRadio

Orange County Register: LOADED: 10.12.2019

1156660 Los Angeles Kings

Is it too early to worry about Jonathan Quick's slow start? What are the Kings' options?

By Lisa Dillman and Josh Cooper Oct 11, 2019

One goaltender in the Los Angeles Kings' system had one of those weeks to start the season, two games well worth remembering.

Two wins.

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A goals-against average of 0.96 and a .976 save percentage.

But ... it wasn't two-time Jennings Trophy winner Jonathan Quick of the Kings. Instead, it was 23-year-old Cal Petersen with a spectacular week with AHL Ontario.

Quick allowed six goals on 31 shots in the Kings' season-opening defeat at Edmonton on Saturday for an unsatisfactory .806 save percentage. Surely, it couldn't get much worse, right?

Wrong.

Quick surrendered eight goals in an 8-2 loss against the Canucks in Vancouver on Wednesday. The numbers for the 33-year-old turned from unsatisfactory to simply dreadful — a league-worst 7.17 GAA and .750 save percentage.

For perspective, the goalie with the second-worst numbers is the New Jersey Devils' MacKenzie Blackwood (6.58 GAA and .800 save percentage before Thursday's games).

Is this a long way of suggesting there is a goaltending controversy brewing a mere three games into the season?

Well, no.

It's hard to fully evaluate Quick after his two starts when the defense is still learning and adapting to Kings coach Todd McLellan's system and the team has yet to play a regular-season home game.

"Yes, it's fair. Knowing the competitor that he is, I have to give him the benefit of the doubt," said former Kings goalie Kelly Hradey, an analyst with Hockey Night in Canada and Sportsnet.

"I really truly believe — and I'm not just saying it — that he's going to find his game. He'll look back and go, 'It was a really rough start. But I'm proud of myself the way I turned it around.' He clearly has the mindset. He's always been strong mentally, so he should be able to do that."

The Kings-Canucks game was shown nationally on NBCSN, and Quick's play was front and center with the studio panel after the game. Former NHL player Jeremy Roenick — who played with the Kings (58 games in 2005-06) — noted that Quick was "not the same goaltender anymore." He referred to Quick's run of injuries the past few seasons and said Quick looked "terrible tonight," adding that the team didn't look great in front of the goaltender, either.

"Normally if Jonathan Quick was your guy, you're not leaving him in for all eight against Vancouver. So clearly, Todd McLellan wanted to give him another opportunity to kind of work his way back," NBC analyst Keith Jones said in an interview on Thursday with The Athletic. "So I believe it will come with games played, but I don't think it's going to be with the frequency we saw in Jonathan Quick's career previously."

Hradey's television duties include some home-and-away coverage of the Calgary Flames. He was in the Sportsnet booth for Tuesday's game between Los Angeles and Calgary, keeping a close eye on Kings goalie Jack Campbell, who was in goal for the Kings' 4-3 overtime victory.

"Campbell has deserved a chance for more ice time," Hradey said. "He's done it the right way. He's slugged it out forever in the minors and that in itself is admirable, that he

didn't give up, because I think most guys would have. He believed in himself.

"It was hard to judge the first two periods because he didn't have much work. ... He deserves more of a chance to get some ice time to see what he can do. He's played, what, 39 games in the NHL, not a lot. You're not going to all of a sudden say, 'Jonathan Quick is off to a slow start. We're going to give everything to Jack Campbell.' It just doesn't work that way. He's certainly earned a chance for more starts."

The hot-take social media solutions for Quick — trade or banishment to the minors — aren't immediate options for the two-time Stanley Cup champion and Conn Smythe winner. It was never going to be easy to find a trading partner with the term and money left on Quick's contract (\$5.8 million AAV, through the 2022-23 season), injury history and now a bad start to the season.

"I don't think that will come at the minor-league level," Jones said. "I don't think Jonathan Quick would be willing to do that. I believe it has to happen at the NHL level."

But the Flames and Oilers did manage to move one big contract for another this past summer with the Flames trading James Neal to Edmonton for Milan Lucic. (Note: Neal scored his seventh goal of the season on Thursday, matching his season total with the Flames in 2018-19.)

"If there's another team out there that believes they have a goalie coach that might be able to get him back to where he's performed at previously, maybe they see something that a trained eye can pick up that they think they can adjust and get him back," Jones said.

"That's still not out of the realm of possibility. In the NHL today, there are so many specialty coaches that there may be a guy out there that's confident enough that he can get Jonathan Quick back to being the elite goaltender he was in the past."

The conversation with Hradey shifted to New York Rangers goaltender Henrik Lundqvist, who, at 37, is four years older than Quick. It's tempting to draw a parallel between the Kings and Rangers, but the Rangers shifted into rebuild mode before the Kings started down that path.

"A special goaltender," Hradey said. "He (Lundqvist) is going to go away at some point, but he's fighting it incredibly hard. And I admire Lundqvist for that. He's just not sort of giving into it. He doesn't want to believe that his game is disappearing, and that's admirable."

There is no place to hide for a goalie who is waging a late-career battle on a physical and mental level. Hradey, who finished his playing career with the San Jose Sharks, fought it as long as he could.

"There's no question there's an internal battle," Hradey said. "You're fighting as hard as you possibly can to find your game again, and it just doesn't come naturally. You've got to really dig down. Practice becomes more important. You have to make sure you're ready mentally for practice."

"It takes all your mental strength to find it. You do question yourself. Everybody does. Not only goalies. You watch skaters and when their game starts to disappear, it's an internal battle."

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Again, another potential factor behind Quick's struggles is the fact the Kings are playing an up-tempo system and a style he hasn't had to deal with in his career.

"The way he thinks the game — he can adapt," Hruddy said. "It's going to take a little bit of time. Just knowing his personality and how competitive he is. ... I truly believe he is going to get it back in no time.

"I don't think we're going to have this conversation in six weeks, and if we are, I'd be really surprised."

The Athletic LOADED: 10.12.2019

1156661 Los Angeles Kings

LINEUP ADJUSTMENTS COMING; REDUCING "LONG CHANCES"; INSIDER VIDEO; QUICK

JON ROSENOCTOBER 11, 2019

News from the final skate prior to Saturday's 3:00 p.m. home opener against Nashville is below.

But first, INSIDERS.

— For all doins a transpirin' around Staples Center tomorrow, [Click here](#). For more on the game operations and a Back to the Future II reference, [go here](#).

— It was a good work day and typical post-recovery day practice with continued structural installation, special teams detail and a conditioning skate that incorporated competition and resembled some sort of stock car race, according to one observer. Not all made it through without falling.

— The vitals: Todd McLellan has settled on Saturday's goaltender but would prefer to avoid a situation in which the goalies find out about it through the #LAKingsGoalieTweetOff. "I want to talk to that goalie. I don't want him to find out or anybody to find out without me sharing it with him," he said. There will be changes to the lineup. There weren't any real line rushes, per se, but rather some drills that were very line-rushy, and the only grouping that appeared to remain intact was Anze Kopitar's line.

Even the effective Clifford-Amadio-Lewis line — a 62.8 CF% in 25 minutes, compared to the team's 45.9 CF% in the 103 minutes when all three have been on the bench — may be carved up a little bit.

"We began talking together here about a line's that played pretty well, and you hate to move pieces out of those spots," McLellan said. "There's a couple other lines that have played well. We've had one that's really struggled, and to distribute those players around, we've got to shuffle some guys, and hopefully we find something that's successful."

He also shared that "Lizotte and Toffoli, and whoever's played there has played pretty well, too," though there's a need to get "trusting games" from different players in the lineup right now. There were a number of rotations, but expect there to be changes up front and on the back end. Adrian Kempe skated at wing and Jeff Carter at center for several rotations; changes are also expected defensively.

"I think when we left [on the road trip] we said we would come back and have something to base an opinion on. It's a tough opinion to establish collectively because we've played some really good periods. We were Jekyll and Hyde, if you will. Outstanding 20 minutes and awful 15 minutes in Vancouver. Just all over the map. That might be the stage our team is in. We'll be working hard to find some consistency, and then individually, I think there are some guys that clearly sent us messages that they're willing to do things right and well. It doesn't mean they won't err. And then there are some others, they've got to pick it up quickly."

Kurtis MacDermid didn't skate and is day-to-day, per Lisa Dillman of The Athletic. He got dinged up in the feisty Calgary game but is on the verge of skating and getting involved again. "Based on the 3:00 game, we won't have a pregame skate, but he would be skating tomorrow. He felt pretty good today but won't be available for [Saturday's] game," McLellan said.

— Their vitals: I haven't caught word of any official rushes from Nashville's practice, which was held prior to their flight west. In their game against Washington on Thursday — a 6-5 win in which they scored four third period goals to come back from a 4-2 second intermission deficit — they lined up with Jarnkrok-Johansen-Arvidsson, Forsberg-Duchene-Granlund, Sissons-Bonino-Watson and Carr-Turris-Smith up front with defensive pairings of Josi-Ellis, Ekholm-Fabbro and Irwin-Weber. They're yet to play on the road and have started 3-1-0 with 19 goals, tied for the best mark in the West.

— Jonathan Quick was a topic of discussion. "He's been in the net for a lot of goals against. I'm not going to candy coat that," said McLellan, who also took into account several own goals that have affected the goalie's statistics.

This is a young defense. It's a young defense that Jack Campbell has played well behind in the past, but it's still inexperienced and short a man from last year. When McLellan was putting together lineups and different looks in May, he had Forbort in an important role, "and he's a pretty good shutdown guy." He had Paul LaDue penciled in, "and he's just getting his feet wet now because of injury." (There's no update on Forbort, who remains a ways away from skating. "Just try to rehab and get better," McLellan said.)

But the thought that there's less predictability with such a young lineup elicited an interesting response. "That's a big factor," McLellan said.

"When you can be a little predictable as far as the pair that's in front of you, you look up on a faceoff, and OK, out comes Robyn Regehr and Willie Mitchell, you get a pretty good idea of what's going to happen. Now, that doesn't let anybody off the hook because old dogs need to learn new tricks, but there is a familiarity of reading pairs and what their tendencies might be. Now you look up and you see some younger kids that you haven't played many games with, the predictability factor goes down a little bit. But that's all part of the development."

— The Kings believe better organizational infrastructure should help them avoid the nadirs experienced last season. "Dynamics are much better set up for us to nip it in the bud, so to speak," Dustin Brown said.

On the surface, Wednesday's loss felt like a redux of 2018-19 woes as the Canucks struck four times in the third period

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to win in a rout. "I mean, it's a learning process for a lot of guys with inexperience. Games like that are going to happen. I think the most important thing is how we respond today," Brown said. "We had a good practice today. That's I think the best way to go about it. Todd said it today ... you can't let that 10-minute lapse turn into longer. Just stopping it before it takes too much of your year away."

McLellan saw several "fairly consistent" areas of concern "long chances." The Kings weren't getting hammered in offensive zone time or "cycled to death," he said. They did yield goals from close range and the opposition's play around the net.

He identified two reasons why the team was surrendering the long chances. One was that they're still building detail into their forecheck and working some of the kinks out of their new systems. The other was that such chances were "coming off our tape" via turnovers.

"If they gave a fourth assist, we'd have the leading scorers in the league right now," McLellan said.

"When you go and you look at when guys are working into position, with or without the puck, we're a pretty good team when we're playing direct hockey. I don't know that we're going to be a very good east-west, cute drop-and-drag team. I think that this group is built to be more north-south and play direct. We get away from it. We tend to slow ourselves down and not work into position, and then it becomes difficult and it can snowball. We saw that in Vancouver."

"When we've been able to shoot pucks and get them back, we look like the better team. When we play off turnovers, the other team looks better, and it's as simple as that."

— Burying the lede! McLellan addressed the team after Wednesday's game. "Most days I don't go into the room [after the game]. I did go into the room in Vancouver."

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1156662 Los Angeles Kings

FINAL – COLORADO 4, ONTARIO 3 (OT) – ANDERSON, EYSSIMONT, STOTHERS

ZACH DOOLEY OCTOBER 11, 2019

A "painful lesson learned" was the sentiment after the Reign's 4-3 overtime defeat against Colorado this evening.

Ontario got goals from Martin Frk, Mikey Anderson and Mikey Eyssimont, and carried a 3-1 lead into the game's final stages, but two late goals conceded forced overtime, before a Jacob MacDonald game-winning tally in the extra session gave the Reign their first defeat of the season in stunning fashion, though they did pick up a point in the process.

There were positives to be drawn from the performance, starting with the goals scored, including the first of Anderson's professional career. With Frk's tally, the veteran forward has now found the back of the net in all three Ontario games this season and has showcased an ability to shoot the puck and put it in the back of the net. Eyssimont's

goal was also well deserved, with the second-year forward showing an improved ability from rookie camp straight through the regular season and he finally cracked the scoresheet tonight with a multi-point game.

Rasmus Kupari also showcased an ability tonight, but maybe not the one you expected. The 19-year-old forward showed that he wouldn't be pushed around, as he got into his first career AHL fight with Sheldon Dries in the third period. Kupari made a very nice skill play to cut into the slot, and took a series of whacks after his shot was saved and the whistle blew, though he needed no help in defending himself. Kupari got a few shots in in the corner, and play like that will go a long way as he continues to earn the respect of his teammates. Good on ya, Ras.

Though the late rally from the Eagles muddies his statline a bit, Cal Petersen was still stout between the pipes and finished with 34 saves on 38 shots.

The Reign have seen a two-goal, third period lead evaporate in back-to-back games, though they were able to save the extra point in Bakersfield on Saturday. Ontario was not so fortunate tonight against Colorado and the ending will leave a sour taste for the Reign, despite the slew of positives from the game. A tough test awaits tomorrow evening in Tucson, who sat idle in Ontario tonight while the Reign played.

Puck drops at 6 PM tomorrow, with a large crowd expected for Dia de los Muertos night in Ontario.

Mikey Eyssimont on how things unfolded as Colorado came back

Throughout the first and second periods, I thought we did a lot of things right, but it just felt like something was missing the entire game and in the third period, Colorado kind of exposed it. Some flukey goals, Chaz made a great block and it went right onto his stick and they were able to tie it up. We just need to clean it up, we need to stay out of the box and we need to make sure we're finishing our last 20 a little bit better.

On building off of a strong rookie camp, into the regular season

I think just having that camp and getting some recognition for it, for playing well and working hard, I think it definitely helps for any second-year guy. I'm just trying to build off of it, every game and every practice, I think it all start in practice. That's something that my habits have improved a lot, throughout my first year and especially my second year.

On if this week felt extra long in between games

It definitely feels like forever for us as well. We wish there were some more weekday games in the mix. I can't speak for everyone, but I definitely do.

On playing with more confidence this season

I think the more confidence I play with, the more my skill can show. I don't think I'm close to where I'm going to be, come the later games. I'm just trying to get better every shift.

Mike Stothers on Sheldon Rempal's game tonight

I liked his play in moments. I think he's got to distribute the puck a little bit more, he just can't keep running around in circles and hanging onto it. When he moved it, he was very, very effective, he's a great playmaker. I think we were guilty at time, not only him, but a lot of guys, of trying to be too

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fancy and hanging onto the puck and trying to deke guys out. It works out in the summer, but it doesn't work out when the league starts.

On Rasmus Kupari showing some spunk in the third period

Yeah, he's stood up for himself real well, from rookie camp right on through. He's a skilled player, but he plays with a little bit of an edge, he certainly doesn't take a backwards step to anybody. I applaud him, I think it's great.

On Mikey Eyssimont's play and if he's playing more confident this season

Yeah, Mikey's been good. He's been another guys that right from the first day of camp, he's elevated his play. HE's come back and he looks different. He looks like he's more mature, he looks like a pro athlete now, as opposed to last year, maybe he was still a little baby-faced and green around the edges. HE's been good, he's been real detailed. He's spent a lot of time working out, he worked hard in the summer to get himself in good shape and he's feeling good about himself. That's great and we hope he can continue it.

On Mikey Anderson's play and demeanor

That's because he's a competitor. This guy's played in some big games. It's a lot better feeling when you come out on the other side of it than this side, but it's a painful lesson. You look for the things you just mentioned, the reaction or the response of guys. Although it's game three, they should take it personally. Things happen, and I guess if you want to stay on a positive note, we got a point and we'll take that and we'll move on and get ready for tomorrow.

LA Kings Insider: LOADED: 10.12.2019

1156663 Los Angeles Kings

PREVIEW: ONTARIO VS. COLORADO, 10/11

ZACH DOOLEY OCTOBER 11, 2019

GAME PREVIEW ONTARIO REIGN

WHO: Ontario Reign (2-0-0-0) vs. Colorado Eagles (0-2-0-0)

WHAT: AHL REGULAR-SEASON GAME

WHEN: Friday, October 11, 2019 – 7:00 PM

WHERE: Toyota Arena – Ontario, CA

HOW TO FOLLOW: Video: AHLTV – AUDIO – Ontario Reign Radio Network – TWITTER: @ontarioreign & @reigninsider

TONIGHT'S MATCHUP: The Ontario Reign are back in action for Week 2 after a pair of victories in Week 1. The Reign host the Colorado Eagles this evening, the first in a back-to-back set that also includes the Tucson Roadrunners on home ice tomorrow evening.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR: The Reign are expected to hit the ice tonight with a similar alignment to Saturday in Bakersfield, with the exception of defenseman Chaz

Reddekopp, who is expected to make his season debut in place of the injured Daniel Brickley. This morning's skate showed Markus Phillips, Jacob Doty and Brad Morrison on late for extra work, with goaltender Matthew Villalta also on late, pointing towards a third consecutive start for Cal Petersen.

GO SEE CAL: Petersen had himself quite the weekend, as he stopped 83-of-85 shots en route to being named as the AHL's Player of the Week for the week ending October 6. Petersen posted a 2-0-0 record, a 0.96 goals against average and a .976 save percentage, along with one shutout, across the two victories. Petersen leads all AHL netminders in each of the above categories, amongst goaltenders that have played in two games this season.

SUPER MARIO: Ontario forward Mario Kempe was the overtime hero on Saturday in Bakersfield, as he found the back of the net with just 27 seconds remaining, his second tally of the evening. Through one weekend of play, Kempe leads all players in the AHL in goals (3) and is tied for the league lead in points (4). The veteran forward was also named as a Reign assistant captain last week, alongside Lance Bouma and Ryan Stanton.

FRKBALL: Reign forward Martin Frk found the back of the net on Saturday, his birthday, as he opened the scoring in Bakersfield on his team's first shot. Frk has scored in each of Ontario's opening two games, joining Kempe as Reign players with goals in both games to open the season. Frk brings a goal-scoring pedigree to Ontario, having scored 27 goals in back-to-back seasons with Grand Rapids in 2015-16 and 2016-17, his last two campaigns with 60+ games played in the AHL.

ON THE PLUS SIDE: Ontario defenseman Kale Clague was one of seven players in the AHL to post a +4 rating on Opening Weekend, as the second-year blueliner is tied for the league high through two games. Clague was +2 in each of Ontario's two victories and is joined by former Reign defenseman Vincent LoVerde. Clague tallied an assist on Saturday, the primary helper on Kempe's overtime goal.

INJURY UPDATES: The Reign will be without defenseman Sean Durzi, who will miss this weekend's action with an upper-body injury, suffered on Opening Night against San Jose. Durzi missed Ontario's win in Bakersfield on Saturday. The Reign will also miss defenseman Daniel Brickley, who is out tonight with an upper-body injury. Forward Drake Rymsha also remains sidelined with an injury suffered in preseason.

SCOUTING THE EAGLES: Ontario posted a 2-1-1 record against Colorado last season on home ice, including wins in their final two meetings to close out the year. The Eagles are led offensively, entering tonight's action, by forward Michael Joly, who scored in both Colorado games against Stockton last weekend. Colorado went 0-2-0 against the Heat on home ice, including a 4-2 loss on Saturday despite multi-point games from Calle Rosen (1-1-2) and T.J. Tynan (0-2-2).

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1156658 Los Angeles Kings

CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • October 12, 2019

Kings' opening week is a mix of patience, growth and frustration

By JACK HARRIS

OCT. 11, 2019 6:10 PM

Todd McLellan marched away from the locker room. His jacket was off. His arms swayed by his side. He set his sights straight ahead.

The new Kings coach had hit the first speed bump of his tenure, an 8-2 defeat to the Vancouver Canucks that brought his opening week in charge to a sobering close. All at once, the uncertainty of the road he and the Kings are embarking upon was exposed.

"I think you find out something about every individual each day, and they reveal themselves in certain situations," he said. "We found something out about our group that has to be fixed, and we'll work towards fixing it."

When he took the Kings job this offseason, McLellan knew what he was getting into. He knew the Kings were at the depths of a rebuild, facing a long climb back to relevancy. He knew hard nights, disappointing nights, embarrassing nights were on the horizon.

The first two weren't so bad. In their 6-5 loss to the Edmonton Oilers, the Kings relinquished a pair of third-period leads but also tapped into a resolve that often went missing last year. Two nights later, they salvaged a strong start with a 4-3 overtime victory over the Calgary Flames.

Kings Canucks Hockey

But finally, in the finale of their season-opening three-game swing through western Canada, that first futile failure had arrived.

In Vancouver, McLellan's team had rolled over. He was left with one inconvenient, inevitable takeaway.

"It tells me," McLellan said Wednesday, stopping to talk to reporters before disappearing down an arena hallway, "that our group's got a long, long way to go."

Edmonton: An even-keel approach

The first week of McLellan's tenure started with a warning: Easy as it may be, be careful not to make snap judgments.

"We believe we've had a pretty good training camp, players have been attentive and worked hard," McLellan said last Saturday, ahead of the opener with the Oilers. "But we won't know until we play through Vancouver, really, where we're at and how many different things we need to adjust."

Though McLellan is new to the Kings, 11 previous seasons behind an NHL bench have taught him this process — the potential pitfalls that accompany new systems and a new message. He has given his players detailed directions, but also a blank canvas. He wants to see what they can create within the structure he is putting in place.

"You have to have an impact on the game," he said. "You don't have to score a goal, you don't have to set up the winning play. You might have to break something up, you might have to block a shot. But if you go empty the whole

night and haven't contributed, regardless of how many minutes you play, then it begins to get us to think about making changes."

Which is why, as the third period spun out of control — a five-goal frame that saw the Kings twice take the lead only to lose to the Oilers by one — McLellan kept his demeanor in check. In their first regular-season game together, he wanted to see how his players would react.

"I don't think there was any panic," defenseman Alec Martinez said. "I think he's a pretty even-keel guy. He's been around a long time. That's not his first game situation like that."

McLellan's presence is different from his predecessors. Darryl Sutter's iron-fist approach lifted the Kings to two Stanley Cup championships, but lacked the deft touch to turn them into a dynasty. John Stevens opted for a subtler approach, but never solidified his systematic overhaul on the ice.

In McLellan, the Kings hope they've found a happy medium.

"It's going to be somewhere in between," Martinez said. "He's obviously encouraging on the bench. Something someone is doing well, he's positive. Same thing the other way."

Calgary: Signs of growth

McLellan's voice grew sharper with each repetition Monday. In the Kings' first practice since losing at Edmonton, the coach was demanding more inside an empty Scotiabank Saddledome.

"Move it! Move it! Move it!" he shouted as players and pucks zipped around the rink, weaving through the neutral zone in a blur. "Understand the pace. ... The puck has to be faster than us."

McLellan, a coach who loves to author analogies, has often likened games to "tests." Practice days like these are the equivalent to study hall.

There is a certain vision McLellan is striving for, a direct and decisive style of play he evolved over his previous NHL coaching tenures in San Jose and Edmonton. He is implementing it with detailed instructions.

"He's very clear with what he wants us to do, where he wants us to be on the ice, structurally," forward Kyle Clifford said. "He's not afraid to voice his opinion. From what I've seen, he's been pretty fair with his assessment."

By the midway point of practice, McLellan's tone softened. He saw the execution on the ice improve.

"Much better," he declared.

It carried over to the Kings' first period against the Flames on Tuesday night. The forecheck caused four takeaways. Defensively, the Kings clamped down on a Flames team that won the Western Conference last season. In the offensive zone, they scored twice and recorded 20 shots to the Flames' three.

"That's a sign of growth," McLellan said. "We started the season by saying everybody has to grow. Whether you're 35 years old or whether you're 20 years old, you have to find a way to grow."

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The Flames came back and forced overtime. Then, Drew Doughty buried a game-winning power-play goal. Afterward, McLellan sounded like a proud teacher, checking off some of the most crucial boxes to his hockey curriculum.

"We were able to put a team on its heels," he said. "Being resilient later on in the game was important. Scoring on the power play, we count on the power play to get us something and we executed something we've worked on very well."

He wrapped his first Kings win succinctly: "There were a lot of areas that we improved on tonight."

Vancouver: A harsh reality

A man of usual routine, McLellan did something different when his first drubbing with the Kings mercifully ended.

After most games, "I don't go into the room," he said. "I did go into the room in Vancouver."

The tenor of his message was clear. Even though the Kings' external expectations are low, even though McLellan is at the start of a five-year contract with seemingly endless breathing room, even though there are countless excuses — some legitimate, others not — as to why the team might still be a long way from consistently winning, their new coach isn't willing to wait.

"When we left [for the trip], we said we would come back and have something to base an opinion on," McLellan said. "It's a tough opinion to establish, because we played some really good periods. We were Jekyll and Hyde, if you will. Outstanding 20 minutes and awful 15 minutes in Vancouver."

Prior to their collapse against the Canucks, in which Vancouver scored twice in the opening seven minutes and four times in the final period, the Kings had shown promise.

"I feel like when we stick to our game, we stick to our systems, we're a tough team," defenseman Ben Hutton said.

The challenge now will be replicating such success in the midst of a daunting rebuild. The first week of the McLellan era confirmed as much.

"All over the map," McLellan said, assessing the opening trio of games. "But that may be the stage your team is in. We'll be working hard to find some consistency."

LA Times: LOADED: 10.12.2019

1156659 Los Angeles Kings

Kings open at home with Nashville after rough Canadian trip

By ANDREW KNOLL |

PUBLISHED: October 11, 2019 at 7:19 am | UPDATED: October 11, 2019 at 7:17 PM

One night after Kings coach Todd McLellan praised his team's growth, the only thing that burgeoned was his squad's' goals-against average as the Kings sustained a

calamitous 8-2 defeat at the hands of the Vancouver Canucks on Wednesday.

What part of the Kings' performance irked McLellan?

"All 60 minutes," McLellan told reporters.

Now the Kings look to recover from the drubbing up north with the start of a five-game homestand. It begins with the Nashville Predators and Vegas Golden Knights this weekend. Both opponents made the playoffs last season, losing in the first round despite higher aspirations.

The Kings (1-2-0) face Nashville in their home opener at 3 p.m. Saturday at Staples Center, then confront Vegas 28 hours later.

The Predators have been contenders dating to their run to the Stanley Cup Final in 2017, and this year they signed high-profile forward Matt Duchene after trading star defenseman P.K. Subban to New Jersey. Vegas, which made the Final in 2018, returns much of its roster from last season. Right winger Mark Stone made a tremendous impact after he came from Ottawa at the trade deadline.

The Kings have struggled against defensive pressure and high-tempo offense thus far. Coming off a wild 6-5 win over Washington on Thursday, Nashville (3-1-0) brings no shortage of it with a top line paced by Viktor Arvidsson and a five-man cycle game that gets defensemen involved in the offense. The Golden Knights seek to suffocate opponents with speed both on the forecheck and off the rush.

Avoiding giveaways and protecting the net will be paramount in both games. With a back-to-back, goalie Jonathan Quick will almost certainly start one of the two games, and will also need to perform at a higher level.

"He, as well as everybody else, has to be better," McLellan told reporters.

Wednesday's loss, which came one night after a gritty 4-3 overtime victory in Calgary, was a rough ride in terms of puck management, defense, goaltending and special teams. Turnovers proved costly. Prime chances abounded for Vancouver.

Fourteen Canucks recorded points, including four for J.T. Miller and three for Brandon Sutter. Their defensemen alone outscored the Kings, turning in three goals. For the Kings, Anze Kopitar extended his point streak to three games.

Quick was thoroughly outplayed by his opposite number, Jacob Markstrom, as Quick allowed a career-worst eight goals on 25 shots. The Kings gave up an early goal on the penalty kill and they produced an 0-for-4 night on the power play.

Perhaps the most microcosmic sequence in the game was in the second period when, trailing 4-1, they mustered a two-man advantage. Not only did they fail to score, after the power play expired they took a penalty 190 deep in the offensive zone while three exhausted Vancouver penalty killers remained on the ice.

Nashville at Kings

When: 3 p.m. Saturday

Where: Staples Center:

TV/Radio: FSW/iHeartRadio

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Orange County Register: LOADED: 10.12.2019

1156660 Los Angeles Kings

Is it too early to worry about Jonathan Quick's slow start?
What are the Kings' options?

By Lisa Dillman and Josh Cooper Oct 11, 2019

One goaltender in the Los Angeles Kings' system had one of those weeks to start the season, two games well worth remembering.

Two wins.

A goals-against average of 0.96 and a .976 save percentage.

But ... it wasn't two-time Jennings Trophy winner Jonathan Quick of the Kings. Instead, it was 23-year-old Cal Petersen with a spectacular week with AHL Ontario.

Quick allowed six goals on 31 shots in the Kings' season-opening defeat at Edmonton on Saturday for an unsatisfactory .806 save percentage. Surely, it couldn't get much worse, right?

Wrong.

Quick surrendered eight goals in an 8-2 loss against the Canucks in Vancouver on Wednesday. The numbers for the 33-year-old turned from unsatisfactory to simply dreadful — a league-worst 7.17 GAA and .750 save percentage.

For perspective, the goalie with the second-worst numbers is the New Jersey Devils' MacKenzie Blackwood (6.58 GAA and .800 save percentage before Thursday's games).

Is this a long way of suggesting there is a goaltending controversy brewing a mere three games into the season?

Well, no.

It's hard to fully evaluate Quick after his two starts when the defense is still learning and adapting to Kings coach Todd McLellan's system and the team has yet to play a regular-season home game.

"Yes, it's fair. Knowing the competitor that he is, I have to give him the benefit of the doubt," said former Kings goalie Kelly Hradey, an analyst with Hockey Night in Canada and Sportsnet.

"I really truly believe — and I'm not just saying it — that he's going to find his game. He'll look back and go, 'It was a really rough start. But I'm proud of myself the way I turned it around.' He clearly has the mindset. He's always been strong mentally, so he should be able to do that."

The Kings-Canucks game was shown nationally on NBCSN, and Quick's play was front and center with the studio panel after the game. Former NHL player Jeremy Roenick — who played with the Kings (58 games in 2005-06) — noted that Quick was "not the same goaltender anymore." He referred to Quick's run of injuries the past few seasons and said

Quick looked "terrible tonight," adding that the team didn't look great in front of the goaltender, either.

"Normally if Jonathan Quick was your guy, you're not leaving him in for all eight against Vancouver. So clearly, Todd McLellan wanted to give him another opportunity to kind of work his way back," NBC analyst Keith Jones said in an interview on Thursday with The Athletic. "So I believe it will come with games played, but I don't think it's going to be with the frequency we saw in Jonathan Quick's career previously."

Hradey's television duties include some home-and-away coverage of the Calgary Flames. He was in the Sportsnet booth for Tuesday's game between Los Angeles and Calgary, keeping a close eye on Kings goalie Jack Campbell, who was in goal for the Kings' 4-3 overtime victory.

"Campbell has deserved a chance for more ice time," Hradey said. "He's done it the right way. He's slugged it out forever in the minors and that in itself is admirable, that he didn't give up, because I think most guys would have. He believed in himself."

"It was hard to judge the first two periods because he didn't have much work. ... He deserves more of a chance to get some ice time to see what he can do. He's played, what, 39 games in the NHL, not a lot. You're not going to all of a sudden say, 'Jonathan Quick is off to a slow start. We're going to give everything to Jack Campbell.' It just doesn't work that way. He's certainly earned a chance for more starts."

The hot-take social media solutions for Quick — trade or banishment to the minors — aren't immediate options for the two-time Stanley Cup champion and Conn Smythe winner. It was never going to be easy to find a trading partner with the term and money left on Quick's contract (\$5.8 million AAV, through the 2022-23 season), injury history and now a bad start to the season.

"I don't think that will come at the minor-league level," Jones said. "I don't think Jonathan Quick would be willing to do that. I believe it has to happen at the NHL level."

But the Flames and Oilers did manage to move one big contract for another this past summer with the Flames trading James Neal to Edmonton for Milan Lucic. (Note: Neal scored his seventh goal of the season on Thursday, matching his season total with the Flames in 2018-19.)

"If there's another team out there that believes they have a goalie coach that might be able to get him back to where he's performed at previously, maybe they see something that a trained eye can pick up that they think they can adjust and get him back," Jones said.

"That's still not out of the realm of possibility. In the NHL today, there are so many specialty coaches that there may be a guy out there that's confident enough that he can get Jonathan Quick back to being the elite goaltender he was in the past."

The conversation with Hradey shifted to New York Rangers goaltender Henrik Lundqvist, who, at 37, is four years older than Quick. It's tempting to draw a parallel between the Kings and Rangers, but the Rangers shifted into rebuild mode before the Kings started down that path.

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"A special goaltender," Hrudey said. "He (Lundqvist) is going to go away at some point, but he's fighting it incredibly hard. And I admire Lundqvist for that. He's just not sort of giving into it. He doesn't want to believe that his game is disappearing, and that's admirable."

There is no place to hide for a goalie who is waging a late-career battle on a physical and mental level. Hrudey, who finished his playing career with the San Jose Sharks, fought it as long as he could.

"There's no question there's an internal battle," Hrudey said. "You're fighting as hard as you possibly can to find your game again, and it just doesn't come naturally. You've got to really dig down. Practice becomes more important. You have to make sure you're ready mentally for practice."

"It takes all your mental strength to find it. You do question yourself. Everybody does. Not only goalies. You watch skaters and when their game starts to disappear, it's an internal battle."

Again, another potential factor behind Quick's struggles is the fact the Kings are playing an up-tempo system and a style he hasn't had to deal with in his career.

"The way he thinks the game — he can adapt," Hrudey said. "It's going to take a little bit of time. Just knowing his personality and how competitive he is. ... I truly believe he is going to get it back in no time."

"I don't think we're going to have this conversation in six weeks, and if we are, I'd be really surprised."

The Athletic LOADED: 10.12.2019

1156661 Los Angeles Kings

LINEUP ADJUSTMENTS COMING; REDUCING "LONG CHANCES"; INSIDER VIDEO; QUICK

JON ROSE OCTOBER 11, 2019

News from the final skate prior to Saturday's 3:00 p.m. home opener against Nashville is below.

But first, INSIDERS.

— For all doings a transpirin' around Staples Center tomorrow, [Click here](#). For more on the game operations and a Back to the Future II reference, go [here](#).

— It was a good work day and typical post-recovery day practice with continued structural installation, special teams detail and a conditioning skate that incorporated competition and resembled some sort of stock car race, according to one observer. Not all made it through without falling.

— The vitals: Todd McLellan has settled on Saturday's goaltender but would prefer to avoid a situation in which the goalies find out about it through the #LAKingsGoalieTweetOff. "I want to talk to that goalie. I don't want him to find out or anybody to find out without me sharing it with him," he said. There will be changes to the lineup. There weren't any real line rushes, per se, but rather

some drills that were very line-rushy, and the only grouping that appeared to remain intact was Anze Kopitar's line.

Even the effective Clifford-Amadio-Lewis line — a 62.8 CF% in 25 minutes, compared to the team's 45.9 CF% in the 103 minutes when all three have been on the bench — may be carved up a little bit.

"We began talking together here about a line's that played pretty well, and you hate to move pieces out of those spots," McLellan said. "There's a couple other lines that have played well. We've had one that's really struggled, and to distribute those players around, we've got to shuffle some guys, and hopefully we find something that's successful."

He also shared that "Lizotte and Toffoli, and whoever's played there has played pretty well, too," though there's a need to get "trusting games" from different players in the lineup right now. There were a number of rotations, but expect there to be changes up front and on the back end. Adrian Kempe skated at wing and Jeff Carter at center for several rotations; changes are also expected defensively.

"I think when we left [on the road trip] we said we would come back and have something to base an opinion on. It's a tough opinion to establish collectively because we've played some really good periods. We were Jekyll and Hyde, if you will. Outstanding 20 minutes and awful 15 minutes in Vancouver. Just all over the map. That might be the stage our team is in. We'll be working hard to find some consistency, and then individually, I think there are some guys that clearly sent us messages that they're willing to do things right and well. It doesn't mean they won't err. And then there are some others, they've got to pick it up quickly."

Kurtis MacDermid didn't skate and is day-to-day, per Lisa Dillman of The Athletic. He got dinged up in the feisty Calgary game but is on the verge of skating and getting involved again. "Based on the 3:00 game, we won't have a pregame skate, but he would be skating tomorrow. He felt pretty good today but won't be available for [Saturday's] game," McLellan said.

— Their vitals: I haven't caught word of any official rushes from Nashville's practice, which was held prior to their flight west. In their game against Washington on Thursday — a 6-5 win in which they scored four third period goals to come back from a 4-2 second intermission deficit — they lined up with Jarnkrok-Johansen-Arvidsson, Forsberg-Duchene-Granlund, Sissons-Bonino-Watson and Carr-Turris-Smith up front with defensive pairings of Josi-Ellis, Ekholm-Fabbro and Irwin-Weber. They're yet to play on the road and have started 3-1-0 with 19 goals, tied for the best mark in the West.

— Jonathan Quick was a topic of discussion. "He's been in the net for a lot of goals against. I'm not going to candy coat that," said McLellan, who also took into account several own goals that have affected the goalie's statistics.

This is a young defense. It's a young defense that Jack Campbell has played well behind in the past, but it's still inexperienced and short a man from last year. When McLellan was putting together lineups and different looks in May, he had Forbort in an important role, "and he's a pretty good shutdown guy." He had Paul LaDue penciled in, "and he's just getting his feet wet now because of injury." (There's no update on Forbort, who remains a ways away from skating. "Just try to rehab and get better," McLellan said.)

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But the thought that there's less predictability with such a young lineup elicited an interesting response. "That's a big factor," McLellan said.

"When you can be a little predictable as far as the pair that's in front of you, you look up on a faceoff, and OK, out comes Robyn Regehr and Willie Mitchell, you get a pretty good idea of what's going to happen. Now, that doesn't let anybody off the hook because old dogs need to learn new tricks, but there is a familiarity of reading pairs and what their tendencies might be. Now you look up and you see some younger kids that you haven't played many games with, the predictability factor goes down a little bit. But that's all part of the development."

— The Kings believe better organizational infrastructure should help them avoid the nadirs experienced last season. "Dynamics are much better set up for us to nip it in the bud, so to speak," Dustin Brown said.

On the surface, Wednesday's loss felt like a redux of 2018-19 woes as the Canucks struck four times in the third period to win in a rout. "I mean, it's a learning process for a lot of guys with inexperience. Games like that are going to happen. I think the most important thing is how we respond today," Brown said. "We had a good practice today. That's I think the best way to go about it. Todd said it today ... you can't let that 10-minute lapse turn into longer. Just stopping it before it takes too much of your year away."

McLellan saw several "fairly consistent" areas of concern "long chances." The Kings weren't getting hammered in offensive zone time or "cycled to death," he said. They did yield goals from close range and the opposition's play around the net.

He identified two reasons why the team was surrendering the long chances. One was that they're still building detail into their forecheck and working some of the kinks out of their new systems. The other was that such chances were "coming off our tape" via turnovers.

"If they gave a fourth assist, we'd have the leading scorers in the league right now," McLellan said.

"When you go and you look at when guys are working into position, with or without the puck, we're a pretty good team when we're playing direct hockey. I don't know that we're going to be a very good east-west, cute drop-and-drag team. I think that this group is built to be more north-south and play direct. We get away from it. We tend to slow ourselves down and not work into position, and then it becomes difficult and it can snowball. We saw that in Vancouver."

"When we've been able to shoot pucks and get them back, we look like the better team. When we play off turnovers, the other team looks better, and it's as simple as that."

— Burying the lede! McLellan addressed the team after Wednesday's game. "Most days I don't go into the room [after the game]. I did go into the room in Vancouver."

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1156662 Los Angeles Kings

FINAL – COLORADO 4, ONTARIO 3 (OT) – ANDERSON, EYSSIMONT, STOTHERS

ZACH DOOLEY OCTOBER 11, 2019

A "painful lesson learned" was the sentiment after the Reign's 4-3 overtime defeat against Colorado this evening.

Ontario got goals from Martin Frk, Mikey Anderson and Mikey Eyssimont, and carried a 3-1 lead into the game's final stages, but two late goals conceded forced overtime, before a Jacob MacDonald game-winning tally in the extra session gave the Reign their first defeat of the season in stunning fashion, though they did pick up a point in the process.

There were positives to be drawn from the performance, starting with the goals scored, including the first of Anderson's professional career. With Frk's tally, the veteran forward has now found the back of the net in all three Ontario games this season and has showcased an ability to shoot the puck and put it in the back of the net. Eyssimont's goal was also well deserved, with the second-year forward showing an improved ability from rookie camp straight through the regular season and he finally cracked the scoresheet tonight with a multi-point game.

Rasmus Kupari also showcased an ability tonight, but maybe not the one you expected. The 19-year-old forward showed that he wouldn't be pushed around, as he got into his first career AHL fight with Sheldon Dries in the third period. Kupari made a very nice skill play to cut into the slot, and took a series of whacks after his shot was saved and the whistle blew, though he needed no help in defending himself. Kupari got a few shots in in the corner, and play like that will go a long way as he continues to earn the respect of his teammates. Good on ya, Ras.

Though the late rally from the Eagles muddied his statline a bit, Cal Petersen was still stout between the pipes and finished with 34 saves on 38 shots.

The Reign have seen a two-goal, third period lead evaporate in back-to-back games, though they were able to save the extra point in Bakersfield on Saturday. Ontario was not so fortunate tonight against Colorado and the ending will leave a sour taste for the Reign, despite the slew of positives from the game. A tough test awaits tomorrow evening in Tucson, who sat idle in Ontario tonight while the Reign played.

Puck drops at 6 PM tomorrow, with a large crowd expected for Dia de los Muertos night in Ontario.

Mikey Eyssimont on how things unfolded as Colorado came back

Throughout the first and second periods, I thought we did a lot of things right, but it just felt like something was missing the entire game and in the third period, Colorado kind of exposed it. Some flukey goals, Chaz made a great block and it went right onto his stick and they were able to tie it up. We just need to clean it up, we need to stay out of the box and we need to make sure we're finishing our last 20 a little bit better.

On building off of a strong rookie camp, into the regular season

I think just having that camp and getting some recognition for it, for playing well and working hard, I think it definitely helps for any second-year guy. I'm just trying to build off of it, every

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game and every practice, I think it all start in practice. That's something that my habits have improved a lot, throughout my first year and especially my second year.

On if this week felt extra long in between games

It definitely feels like forever for us as well. We wish there were some more weekday games in the mix. I can't speak for everyone, but I definitely do.

On playing with more confidence this season

I think the more confidence I play with, the more my skill can show. I don't think I'm close to where I'm going to be, come the later games. I'm just trying to get better every shift.

Mike Stothers on Sheldon Rempal's game tonight

I liked his play in moments. I think he's got to distribute the puck a little bit more, he just can't keep running around in circles and hanging onto it. When he moved it, he was very, very effective, he's a great playmaker. I think we were guilty at time, not only him, but a lot of guys, of trying to be too fancy and hanging onto the puck and trying to deke guys out. It works out in the summer, but it doesn't work out when the league starts.

On Rasmus Kupari showing some spunk in the third period

Yeah, he's stood up for himself real well, from rookie camp right on through. He's a skilled player, but he plays with a little bit of an edge, he certainly doesn't take a backwards step to anybody. I applaud him, I think it's great.

On Mikey Eyssimont's play and if he's playing more confident this season

Yeah, Mikey's been good. He's been another guys that right from the first day of camp, he's elevated his play. HE's come back and he looks different. He looks like he's more mature, he looks like a pro athlete now, as opposed to last year, maybe he was still a little baby-faced and green around the edges. HE's been good, he's been real detailed. He's spent a lot of time working out, he worked hard in the summer to get himself in good shape and he's feeling good about himself. That's great and we hope he can continue it.

On Mikey Anderson's play and demeanor

That's because he's a competitor. This guy's played in some big games. It's a lot better feeling when you come out on the other side of it than this side, but it's a painful lesson. You look for the things you just mentioned, the reaction or the response of guys. Although it's game three, they should take it personally. Things happen, and I guess if you want to stay on a positive note, we got a point and we'll take that and we'll move on and get ready for tomorrow.

LA Kings Insider: LOADED: 10.12.2019

1156663 Los Angeles Kings

PREVIEW: ONTARIO VS. COLORADO, 10/11

ZACH DOOLEY OCTOBER 11, 2019

GAME PREVIEW ONTARIO REIGN

WHO: Ontario Reign (2-0-0-0) vs. Colorado Eagles (0-2-0-0)

WHAT: AHL REGULAR-SEASON GAME

WHEN: Friday, October 11, 2019 – 7:00 PM

WHERE: Toyota Arena – Ontario, CA

HOW TO FOLLOW: Video: AHLTV – AUDIO – Ontario Reign Radio Network – TWITTER: @ontarioreign & @reigninsider

TONIGHT'S MATCHUP: The Ontario Reign are back in action for Week 2 after a pair of victories in Week 1. The Reign host the Colorado Eagles this evening, the first in a back-to-back set that also includes the Tucson Roadrunners on home ice tomorrow evening.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR: The Reign are expected to hit the ice tonight with a similar alignment to Saturday in Bakersfield, with the exception of defenseman Chaz Reddekopp, who is expected to make his season debut in place of the injured Daniel Brickley. This morning's skate showed Markus Phillips, Jacob Doty and Brad Morrison on late for extra work, with goaltender Matthew Villalta also on late, pointing towards a third consecutive start for Cal Petersen.

GO SEE CAL: Petersen had himself quite the weekend, as he stopped 83-of-85 shots en route to being named as the AHL's Player of the Week for the week ending October 6. Petersen posted a 2-0-0 record, a 0.96 goals against average and a .976 save percentage, along with one shutout, across the two victories. Petersen leads all AHL netminders in each of the above categories, amongst goaltenders that have played in two games this season.

SUPER MARIO: Ontario forward Mario Kempe was the overtime hero on Saturday in Bakersfield, as he found the back of the net with just 27 seconds remaining, his second tally of the evening. Through one weekend of play, Kempe leads all players in the AHL in goals (3) and is tied for the league lead in points (4). The veteran forward was also named as a Reign assistant captain last week, alongside Lance Bouma and Ryan Stanton.

FRKBALL: Reign forward Martin Frk found the back of the net on Saturday, his birthday, as he opened the scoring in Bakersfield on his team's first shot. Frk has scored in each of Ontario's opening two games, joining Kempe as Reign players with goals in both games to open the season. Frk brings a goal-scoring pedigree to Ontario, having scored 27 goals in back-to-back seasons with Grand Rapids in 2015-16 and 2016-17, his last two campaigns with 60+ games played in the AHL.

ON THE PLUS SIDE: Ontario defenseman Kale Clague was one of seven players in the AHL to post a +4 rating on Opening Weekend, as the second-year blueliner is tied for the league high through two games. Clague was +2 in each of Ontario's two victories and is joined by former Reign defenseman Vincent LoVerde. Clague tallied an assist on Saturday, the primary helper on Kempe's overtime goal.

INJURY UPDATES: The Reign will be without defenseman Sean Durzi, who will miss this weekend's action with an upper-body injury, suffered on Opening Night against San Jose. Durzi missed Ontario's win in Bakersfield on Saturday. The Reign will also miss defenseman Daniel Brickley, who is

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out tonight with an upper-body injury. Forward Drake Rymsha also remains sidelined with an injury suffered in preseason.

SCOUTING THE EAGLES: Ontario posted a 2-1-1 record against Colorado last season on home ice, including wins in their final two meetings to close out the year. The Eagles are led offensively, entering tonight's action, by forward Michael Joly, who scored in both Colorado games against Stockton last weekend. Colorado went 0-2-0 against the Heat on home ice, including a 4-2 loss on Saturday despite multi-point games from Calle Rosen (1-1-2) and T.J. Tynan (0-2-2).

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1156744 Websites

The Athletic / Can Petr Cech go from world-class goalkeeper to hockey goalie? NHL players weigh in

By Scott Powers Oct 11, 2019

There were a lot of reasons Petr Cech shouldn't have been playing goalie in Martin Havlat's retirement hockey game in the Czech Republic two years ago.

For one, Cech faced the defending champs of the Czech Extraliga, HC Kometa Brno. Even in an exhibition game, the competition level was high. Cech was also scheduled to play in his own pro team's season opener just a few days later. And most importantly, Cech was a celebrated professional soccer goalie — not a hockey goaltender.

Havlat initially had those concerns. Until Cech sent him video of him playing hockey.

"If I didn't see it, I'd be scared to put him in because it was basically my team playing against the champions of the Czech league, my hometown team," Havlat said. "It was still a great level. I saw the videos he was sending me on how he looks like on the ice. If I wouldn't know it's him, you couldn't tell. You couldn't recognize who was in the net. Because he's pretty tall (6-foot-5), so basically he's got to the size of an NHL goalie, like what's good now. He's a tall guy. And the way he moves and everything, he looked pretty good."

Marek Ciliak can attest to that. He was an opposing goalie in Havlat's retirement game. From Ciliak's vantage point, Cech wasn't out of place.

"He didn't look like a professional goalie, but you could tell he was practicing and knew what he was doing," Ciliak said in Slovak through an interpreter on Wednesday. "I thought his skating and ability were good. He wasn't afraid of the puck."

Cech was then playing for Arsenal in the Premier League. His life was soccer, but he also loved hockey. And when Havlat wasn't playing hockey — he played in 790 career NHL games — he was following soccer. With similar interests, being around the same age (Havlat is now 38, Cech 37) and from the Czech Republic, they eventually found each other and developed a friendship.

As both retired from their respective sports in recent years, they've kept in touch. So while most of the world was surprised Wednesday to learn Cech had signed to play goalie for the Guildford Phoenix of the National Ice Hockey League, a second-tier pro league in Great Britain, Havlat wasn't.

"I've been talking to him, he's been telling me this was going to happen, and he'd love to do this," Havlat said by phone from his home in Florida on Wednesday night. "A couple days ago, he told me this is what's going to happen, and I was happy for him. It's actually exciting. It's exciting for everyone. ... I know he loves hockey. I think he loves it more now than soccer."

Havlat has supported Cech's hockey dream, but he's kept any advice to himself.

"No, it's just the same thing as soccer," Havlat said. "He's in the net, right? Same thing for him, nothing changes. Just stop the puck or stop the ball, right? Just enjoy it, it's going to be fun."

"It's a team sport, right? I think soccer's similar to hockey. You just don't change. You just have to play the whole time. I think there's a lot similarities between soccer and hockey. Similar stuff but different too. You have to move all the time in hockey. It's a team game. That's probably the most same thing as hockey. It's all about the team. He's a goalie, so it's different. It's a team sport, but the goalie's special in both sports. Without a great goalie, you cannot basically do much. In soccer, he's been one of the best goalies ever. It's amazing he hopefully get his first hockey start soon."

That start is expected to come Sunday, in Guildford's next game.

"I think there's going to be a lot of people coming to the game too because of that," Havlat said.

Perhaps no one is more excited about Cech's new endeavor than Chicago Blackhawks forward Brendan Perlini, who was born in Guildford, a southern town about 30 miles from London, and lived there until he was 11.

Like Havlat, Perlini wasn't surprised Cech decided to give it a go professionally.

"Like it's not out of the blue," Perlini said on Thursday. "For regular people, yeah, but like my buddies who play on the team even say like, even when (Cech) was playing his last few years for Arsenal and Chelsea, he always used to go out and practice with them anyways. To me, it was no real shock because they had been telling me this for years. I think it's cool. It's cool how it blew up a bit. It's brought Guildford a bit more on the map for them. It's not their main team, but I have a real good buddy who I grew up with, Marcus Mitchell, he plays on that team. It'll be fun to hear some stories from him and stuff."

Perlini has played and watched his share of soccer, and he wasn't sure if playing goalie in soccer would be anything like being a goalie in hockey.

"I hated playing net in both," Perlini said. "I never wanted to do it in hockey, the same as footy. I'm sure it's got to be quite similar. Obviously he's Czech, one of the major sports in Czech is hockey, it can't be completely foreign to him. That's a question that's maybe better for a goalie than me."

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Blackhawks goalie Robin Lehner, who grew up playing soccer as a goalie in Sweden, shot down the idea of the position being similar in each sport.

"I was a soccer goalie when I was younger," Lehner said. "It's not transferrable."

That said, Lehner is intrigued by what Cech's doing.

"He was a big goalie for a long time," Lehner said. "He was very accomplished, great career. It's cool when different athletes take interest in each other's sports. ... I think he's just doing it for fun. As long as it's for fun, it's all good."

Would it be easier for a hockey player to become a professional soccer player? It's crossed Perlini's mind.

"It's funny you say that, because in junior me and my other good buddy Aaron Haydon, that was our thing," Perlini said. "We'll play in the NHL a long time and then when we're done we'll go play in the Premier League. I don't know. Hopefully my legs will still be around that long. Who knows? Maybe I'll have a better chance of playing on the senior tour PGA or something."

The Athletic LOADED: 10.12.2019

1156745 Websites

The Athletic / Duhatschek: Q&A with Wayne Gretzky on his NHL debut, today's style of play and Canada's Stanley Cup hopes

By Eric Duhatschek Oct 11, 2019

It was last Saturday night, about half-an-hour after the Edmonton Oilers had defeated the Los Angeles Kings 6-5 in a wildly entertaining game, when I bumped into Wayne Gretzky in the hallway at Rogers Place. Gretzky, who is the vice chair of the Oilers Entertainment Group, was there with his wife Janet and his family. "Eighties hockey, right?" said Gretzky, with a smile, and you couldn't help but nod in agreement. The Kings-Oilers contest had a distinct mid-1980s flavour, a rollercoaster back and forth game, featuring some great plays and some awkward mistakes. And it genuinely did hearken back to an era when Gretzky and the Oilers were perpetually lighting up the NHL for 400-plus goals per season. Gretzky was looking a little worse for wear on this night, though. A few days earlier, he'd had a fall that required a visit to the University of Alberta hospital for tests. I'd mentioned to Gretzky, we were running a story on the 40th anniversary of his NHL debut later in the week and did he have time to reminisce? On Thursday morning, we finally caught up.

Here's a lightly edited transcript of our conversation.

First off, how are you feeling? What happened?

It was in the morning a couple of days before the game and I was sipping coffee with Janet and my kids. I saw somebody I wanted to say hello to and I stood up and when I stood up, I just blacked out and went straight down. So, we spent the day at the U of A, so they could check everything out – from brain scan to heart. It turns out, it was probably just a case of

dehydration and they said everything was fine. But I had 20 stitches in my chin and four and five by my eye where I landed face first. It just felt like somebody had put something in my coffee. I remember thinking I just got drugged. But as it turned out, it was just one of those things – where I was light-headed and dehydrated and it added up to sort of a blackout. So, I spent that day getting tested and I was fine. I'm sore, but they say in a couple of weeks I should feel 100 percent.

Well that's good news. Yes, this whole business of getting old is something you can never quite get used to. It's funny because in the last few weeks, (new Oilers GM) Kenny Holland and I have been teasing each other about it. We are exactly 16 days apart in terms of our ages, and next month, we'll both turn 64. One of the first records I ever bought was the Beatles' Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band, which has a track called When I'm 64, which I've been humming endlessly in my head lately. And I recall, when I first heard the song, 64 seemed impossibly old. It conjured up images of old men on park benches, moving slowly, nearing the end. Of course, the reality feels nothing like that – you still feel as if you have lots of gas left in the tank. But you do occasionally get those days when you wake up creaky and you can feel every one of those years.

I hear you. I feel it too. Some days I'm just tired. But we all get older. My mother-in-law is 98 and she still gets around. She passed her drivers' license last year. It's incredible. But everybody's so different.

So today (Oct. 10) marks the 40th anniversary of your first-ever NHL game – at the Chicago Stadium, in the Oilers' inaugural season. I was wondering what you remember most about your NHL debut?

One of the big things is, my dad (Walter) was a big Stan Mikita fan; he loved everything about him, so it was ironic that my first NHL game was going to be against Stan Mikita. My dad flew in for the game of course, along with the father of the family I lived with for two years in Toronto, him and my dad flew down together. I'd love to tell you there were 16,000 screaming fans there for the game, but the reality is, there were only about 8,900 fans in the Stadium that night. But it was loud and boisterous anyway, even though it wasn't completely full. I remember being out there, seeing Tony Esposito in the warmup. It was pretty overwhelming, pretty cool. Your first game is something you always remember and I remember thinking, 'this is pretty neat.'

Were you nervous at all? When Kevin Lowe and I were speaking about this, it was his first professional game – and he found it a little intimidating. But you'd already played professionally in the WHA, and so it wasn't as if you were pulling on the Oilers sweater for the first time. On the other hand, the NHL is different than the WHA. Most people grow up dreaming of playing in the NHL – and this was the NHL.

No, you're right. For my first pro game in the WHA, I had that feeling – of being scared and nervous and excited. My first NHL game, it was more that general feeling of excitement – and euphoria – you get from Game 1 of any season. It felt more like that than any kind of stress. It was a good level of nervousness and a good level of excitement for Game 1.

When I look at the current state of the NHL today, it looks as if the league owes a lot to the style of play that you and the Oilers popularized in the early days of the franchise – a kind of free-wheeling, attacking approach to the game. In many

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ways, you were carrying forward the tradition of those great Montreal teams that were nicknamed the Flying Frenchmen, but maybe taking it even a step further. So, the NHL has come full circle today to what you were collectively trying to accomplish 40 years ago, but it must have seemed as if you were swimming against the tide there for a while.

The team that we really actually wanted to follow was the Winnipeg Jets, not of the early WHA, but the mid-WHA years, the team that had Anders Hedberg and Ulf Nilsson and Bobby Hull. That was the formula they wanted to re-create in the NHL. If you go back to June of that year (1979), each WHA team was allowed to protect two players heading into their first NHL seasons. People probably don't remember this, but we had a young defenceman at the time, Dave Langevin, who had become a really good defensive defenceman. And so, when Barry Fraser and Glen Sather were talking about who they were going to protect, it came down to two choices. Either me and Dave, which everyone assumed they would do because you have to have defence to win a championship.

The reality is, the Oilers were already thinking of being very offensive minded, so they ended up protecting Bengt Gustafsson and myself instead. So, we ended up losing Dave Langevin to the Islanders, where he went on to win four Stanley Cups. And then, to make matters worse, the league ruled that Bengt Gustafsson belonged to Washington, so we didn't even get him. But right from the get-go, the sense was we were going to be offensive, we were going to score, we were going to move the puck. We were going to emulate that team of Winnipeg in the mid-70s and we got good at it.

More importantly, once they formed the game plan, they stuck with it – which isn't always the easiest thing to do.

And there was no panic in the organization, even after we lost in the playoffs to L.A. in 1982. But we took the criticism to heart – that we were never going to win a championship, until we learned to play a little better defensively – and the next year, we did and we got all the way to the final and then of course, the rest is history after that.

In the midst of the Oilers making history, the NHL made that quirky rule change – to eliminate 4-on-4 hockey when offsetting penalties were called – because your team was so effective when it got to play on all that open ice. That was not exactly an enlightened era for the NHL. Teams were allowed to put their own individual interests ahead of the greater good of the game.

And we diligently practised 4-on-4 hockey. The ironic thing is, the one thing we didn't spend a lot of time on was the power play. Glen just felt – here's how we're going to break out and once you get in the zone, you're going to let your offensive creativity take over. So that's really what we did. But we worked hard on 4-on-4. We practised it every day for 15 or 20 minutes and we got good at it – so the league as a whole, once we got good at it, woke up one day and said, 'this isn't fair.' These guys are purposely taking penalties, so they can get to 4-on-4, which was so not true. That was one of the silliest things I ever heard.

But the rule was introduced after we beat the Flyers for the '85 Cup. I remember thinking, 'aren't we trying to sell tickets? And make it exciting?' Everybody loved 4-on-4. One of the things we love in today's game is 3-on-3 overtime. Everyone goes, 'Oh, it's exciting.' So, there was this sense of teams

thinking, 'OK, we're not all going to get to that level, so we're going to bring everybody down to this level.' So consequently, 4-on-4 was eliminated for a period of time, which was just silly.

It was a shortsighted decision for sure. I would say since the early 1990s, NHL leadership has been more progressive and more focused on the big picture. But if you talked to managers from that era, they would freely admit. Their primary concern was how things affected their own teams. There was less thought given to the league, as a collective business entity – and that ultimately, they are all in it together.

You know as well as I do that back in the days of the Original Six and then after the expansion, when the league went to 12 teams, that sometimes, in midseason, if an owner didn't like a rule, the next day that rule would be changed. Now, there's more communication between the GMs, the coaches, the league and the players – and everybody is trying to get on the same page to get the best results for the entire game, not just for each city or each team.

You won four Stanley Cups playing for the Oilers and after you'd been traded to L.A., Calgary won once, and Edmonton won again and then Montreal won in 1993 – and since then, there hasn't been a Canadian-based Stanley Cup champion. Do you see the seeds of hope that one of these teams – Toronto, Edmonton, Calgary – whomever it may be, is getting to the point where it can legitimately enter the championship conversation? It feels as if there's a greater collective optimism in Canada than there has been for a while – that sometime soon, one of these Canadian contenders is actually going to win a Stanley Cup again.

Well, listen. First and foremost, even though a team in Canada hasn't won, the game itself is bigger and better than it's ever been in Canada and that whenever a team wins a Stanley Cup, there are going to be a lot of Canadians on the team, which makes it nice. But if you see Canada as a whole now, the teams are playing much better. It's nice to see the excitement in places like Calgary, Vancouver and Winnipeg. Here in Edmonton now, with our start and of course watching Connor (McDavid) and Leon (Draisaitl) every night is exciting. The Montreal Canadiens are always going to be the Montreal Canadiens. There's a buzz about them that's so unique and so special.

If you look at a team like Toronto now, with (Auston) Matthews, (Mitch) Marner and (John) Tavares and the goaltending that they're getting, they're taking the organization to a level where they think they have a legitimate chance to win a Stanley Cup. And just as important, they're a fun team to watch every night. So, there is an excitement level now that has come to the forefront and part of it is, all these teams really believe they have the makings of a team that can win a Cup this year or next year or the year after. And Ottawa's going to be fine. They're just rebuilding. They have a lot of good young players. So, it'll be great to see one day, that in Canada, we can look at our teams and say they have a legitimate chance to win the Stanley Cup.

And I think that's what everybody would love to see.

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The Athletic / DGB Grab Bag: Player vs. player rivalries, goalpost trust issues and a Brett Hull slap shot to the groin

By Sean McIndoe Oct 11, 2019 83

Man, how much fun was that whole Drew Doughty/Matthew Tkachuk rivalry this week?

It might have been the most entertaining story of the young season. We've known for a while now that these two can't stand each other, owing to various reasons that center around Drew Doughty being a proud but emotional veteran and Matthew Tkachuk being Matthew Tkachuk. They've had their share of run-ins over the years, and pretty much every game between the Kings and Flames sees them butt heads at least a few times.

But this latest episode took things to another level. After a little bit of gentle trash talk leading into the contest, they went out and put on a great show in Calgary. Tkachuk scored a pair of goals, including a ridiculous effort to tie the game. But Doughty responded by notching the overtime winner, then mocked the Calgary crowd:

I loved it. And we need more of it.

Not necessarily more of Doughty and Tkachuk – a few meetings a year would be fun, and a playoff matchup would be amazing, but let's not outdoor-game the concept and beat it into the ground. No, we need more player rivalries around the league.

There used to be plenty – ask grandpa about Neely vs. Samuelsson, Probert vs. Domi or Brodeur vs. Avery – but these days I'm not sure I can think of all that many apart from Evander Kane and Ryan Reeves. Sidney Crosby vs. Alexander Ovechkin has faded over time, and always felt more like wishful thinking by the marketing department than a real thing either guy cared about. Jonathan Toews and David Backes lost its luster when Backes left St. Louis. Max Domi and Aaron Ekblad need another chapter or two to crack the list.

So what do we do? A little bit of bad blood makes hockey more fun, but Doughty and Tkachuk can't carry the whole load on their own.

I think I have an answer. So be it resolved that we make each team in the NHL pick a player from their active roster, and then randomly assign those names to a mandatory player vs. player rivalry.

Here's how it would work. First, you get every team to hold a vote on the question of "Who is your most annoying and/or punchable teammate?" A secret ballot, it should go without saying. Then you take all those winners, throw them into a big raffle barrel, give it a few spins and start drawing names. You could probably televise the whole thing and get better ratings than most regular season games.

Whoever you're paired up with, you have to hate that guy from now on. Why not, right? The media always gets accused of manufacturing these things anyway, so let's actually do it. Leo Komarov and Jamie Benn, you're rivals now. You too, Ryan Getzlaf and Nazem Kadri. That also goes for you, Brad Marchand and ... well, OK, Marchand

already hates everyone, so that doesn't work. The Bruins may need a substitute. We're still ironing out the kinks.

The point is, every team gets a new player vs. player rivalry. We could have Tkachuk and Doughty go around team-by-team during training camp to teach a seminar on how it's done. And the fans would be the big winners.

I can anticipate several objections to my plan, which I'll tackle here:

NHL players are boring and wouldn't go along with the idea: They're hockey players. Tell them it's tradition and they'll be on board. We somehow convinced these guys that it's vitally important that they grow beards, not step on logos and be afraid of touching the wrong trophy; we can trick them into buying this too. Failing that, just tell them it will make escrow go down and they'll do it.

What if two players who had a rivalry became teammates due to a trade?: It's adorable that you think anyone still makes trades.

There are 31 teams, so one team wouldn't have a rival: Um ... yeah, that's actually a good point. Damn you, math, you ruin everything. But we could still make this work. We could have one three-way rivalry or get an especially obnoxious player to double up. Or we could make one team pick a fight with Seattle. Or even better, let's pick one player at random and force him to start up a rivalry with somebody from a different sport. Hey Travis Konecny, you hate Joe Flacco now. Would Flacco know who he was? No, but that would just make it more fun when Konecny showed up in Denver to burst into the dressing room and talk trash.

This idea is dumb: Your face is dumb.

I think that covers any objections. Everyone on board? Cool. Let's get the voting started now and plan to have the drawing on live television next week. There's your Wednesday Night Rivalry content.

The week's three stars of comedy

The third star: Marc-Andre Fleury – Fleury out here just giving away valuable assets for free like he's a GM at an expansion draft.

The second star: Gritty – Honestly, the whole Gritty thing still being mostly funny after a full year is a bigger upset than a last place team in January winning the Cup.

The first star: The Carolina Hurricanes keep doing this – Tired: Overly choreographed postgame celebrations. Wired: Just straight-up hitting dudes in the biscuits for no reason.

This is kind of a thing in Carolina. By the way, if you enjoyed seeing these guys get hit in the groin, please be sure to stick around for this week's YouTube clip.

Trivial annoyance of the week

I want to share something I've noticed about myself over the last few seasons, because I need to know if this is just me or if it's happening to a lot of us and we're just not talking about it.

I've developed serious trust issues about any shot that rings off the post.

Specifically, I've started believing that pretty much every one of them might have secretly gone in. It's not that I'm sure, or

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even that I think it's likely. But I always think there's at least a chance that we just saw a goal and everyone on the ice missed it. It's this little tiny sense of lingering dread (if the shot came against my team) or hope (if they took the shot) or just vague confusion (if it's a game where I don't care who wins). I'm just never completely sure.

I don't know quite when this started, but I know that it didn't used to be this way. I remember watching Johan Garpenlov ring one off the crossbar in overtime against the Leafs back in 1994. It was Game 6 and the Sharks had a 3-2 series lead, so if that puck goes in, it's over. I remember nearly having a heart attack in that moment, because I instantly understood that my team had just come within a fraction of an inch of being eliminated. Every hockey fan knows that feeling – it's somehow both one of the very best and very worst you can have, all rolled into one. But at no point did I think "Maybe that went in." You heard a ping, you saw the puck bounce back out into play and you knew it was no goal.

Not anymore. These days, pucks don't ever seem to wind up in the net anymore. If a goalie gets beat on a clean shot, chances are the puck is going to ricochet right back out. If you're lucky, it will make that weird "THWOK" sound that some parts of the back of the net make. But often, it will come out with a "PING" and you'll be temporarily confused until you see everyone celebrate. Or maybe you won't be confused. Maybe it's just me.

I'm not sure what's going on. It's possible that I'm just getting old and slow, and the world bewilders and frightens me. But I don't think that's the whole answer. The modern nets, which are pulled so tight that the puck can come out even if it doesn't directly hit any iron, might be part of it. The cameras inside mean that there's more to hit. And I wonder if some of this isn't due to today's shooters being so skilled at picking the top shelf that we're seeing more pucks hit the back bar than ever before.

All I know is it's weird. And it's making me spend a good chunk of every game waiting for the Horn of Doom or an overhead replay. Someday, I hope that I'll learn to trust again. In the meantime, please tell me I'm not the only one.

Obscure former player of the week

I'm still not fully over Kasper Kapanen's brain cramp from the weekend, which saw him throw a broken stick at Jeff Petry to create an automatic penalty shot. Petry scored, and Hockey Night in Canada viewers were treated to an amazing stat: It was the first time a Canadian had scored on a penalty shot against the Leafs since Rocket Richard in 1950. Everyone else in the 69 years since had missed.

That sounded like it couldn't be right, and it turns out it's not. As historian Dave Stubbs quickly pointed out, Richard didn't score either. In fact, no Montreal Canadiens player had ever scored on a penalty shot against the Maple Leafs until Petry did it on Saturday, roughly 102 years into the rivalry.

Needless to say, that sent me down a rabbit hole of Montreal players who'd taken penalty shots against the Leafs. There are some big names on the list, including Richard and Yvan Cournoyer, and some not-so-big ones, like Chris Higgins, Tony Demers and Guillaume Latendresse. But my favorite is a guy who probably should have earned obscure player honors long ago: 1930s defenseman Jean Pusie.

Pusie was born in Montreal in 1910 and debuted with the Canadiens in 1930-31 as a 20-year-old. He played six

games in the season and three more in the playoffs, helping the Habs win their fourth Stanley Cup that spring. He played one more game the following season, but mostly did what he'd do for the rest of his hockey career: bounce around a lot of different teams. Like, really a lot. Records can be sketchy for that era, but the most common estimate is that he played for 21 different teams in just over two decades. That included the New York Rangers, who he wound up with in time for the 1933-34 season. He lasted 19 games before being traded to the Bruins for goaltender/beloved children's book character Percy Jackson. He played eight games with the Bruins, during which he scored his only NHL goal, then was traded back to the Canadiens in time for the 1935-36 season.

That ended up being his busiest NHL season, as he played 31 games. He also had that unsuccessful penalty shot against Hall of Famer George Hainsworth of the Leafs, which came in November 1935. In all, he appeared in just 65 NHL games, plus seven more in the playoffs, scored one goal and finished with five points.

That's not a bad career for a journeyman, but it doesn't do Pusie justice. While he wasn't anyone's idea of a superstar, he was apparently one of the game's craziest characters. In addition to being a hockey player, Pusie also dabbled in professional wrestling, and he brought a big chunk of that showmanship to the ice. I strongly encourage you to head over to Greatest Hockey Legends and read through his entire bio, which includes stories of him combing his hair at center ice before penalty shots, chasing opponents into the street during games and eating food that opposing fans threw at him.

Is it all true? Probably not – those stories from the old days tend to be exaggerated, if not made up entirely. But let's pretend. The NHL desperately needs some genuine personality, even if we have to go back 85 years or so to find it.

(Thanks to reader Daniel for suggesting this week's player.)

Classic YouTube clip breakdown

It's been a rough start to the season for the San Jose Sharks. They came into the year as Western Conference contenders, if not the outright favorites. But after getting swept in a home-and-home by the Knights to start the season and following that with losses to the Avs and Predators, the Sharks were off to their worst start since 1993-94. In fact, it's hard not to wonder if the Sharks' window may have already closed and this shaky start is just the first visible cracks in a foundation that's already starting to crumble.

That's kind of depressing. So today, let's look back on happier times for the San Jose Sharks. Like, uh, the time their goalie took a 100 mph slap shot in the groin.

It's March 30, 1998, and the Sharks are in St. Louis to face the Blues. It's the third game of a six-game road trip and they've already won the first two, so things are going pretty well. Hey, what's the worst that could happen?

Our clip begins with some chatter from our announcers, who make it roughly three seconds before they start complaining about a missed call because this is 1998 and the NHL has no rules. We cut to commercial, which means we learn that a) the score is 1-1 midway through the second period and b)

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I am apparently irrationally annoyed by scoreboards that show one team's nickname and the other team's city.

We also get a shot of Sharks goalie Kelly Hrudehy enjoying a sip of water. He seems happy. This is the final year of his career, so he's literally just a few weeks from retirement. If you've ever seen a cop movie, you know what's about to happen.

Back to the action, as the Blues break in with Marc Bergevin leading the rush. Yes, that Marc Bergevin. Somehow, causing this play is still only the second worst thing he ever did to a goaltender in a Blues/Sharks game.

Pierre Turgeon feeds Brett Hull, who winds up and rips into it. For all of you forwards born in the last 30 years, that move is called a "slap shot" and it used to be a thing back when anyone had any space at all in the offensive zone. Let's see how this one turns out.

Oh no.

Yes, our good friend Kelly makes the stop, but does so in a way that probably makes him wish that he hadn't. Ah well, at least he prevented a goal, so that's ... nope, the Blues immediately score on the rebound. Other than that, the play went pretty well.

"I think this catches him right above the pad. It's hits him right on the knee." Oh, maybe not on the knee. Does everyone want to say it with me? Let's all do it together. Ready? One, two ... maybe his wee-knee. Yep, that will never stop being funny. God bless you, Dale Tallon.

We get our first replay, which looks painful even though it's 1998, high-def hasn't been invented yet and you can't actually see the puck on any given play. Our broadcasters speculate that Hrudehy won't be able to continue fathering children the game, and may have to give way to recent acquisition (and obscure player alumni) Jason Muzzatti.

"My question is where was Marcus Ragnarsson on the play?" This is going to be my new go-to metaphor for guys taking a blast to the pills.

"There was a definitely a breakdown deep in the Sharks zone." Yeah, a mental and emotional one by everyone who just saw that replay, why are you guys still talking about defensive coverage?

We get an extended discussion about Hrudehy's padding, as we're still on the knee theory. But no, Hrudehy did indeed take this one in the groin, as confirmed by this article which also includes his coach making fun of his high-pitched voice because it's the late-90s and we were all terrible people.

That coach, by the way, is Darryl Sutter, and he's in the middle of a bizarre sequence in which he tries to send Muzzatto in, only to watch Hrudehy send him away, only to have the coach tell him to turn around and get back out there.

Hey Doug Wilson, if you're really not going to go out and acquire a better goaltender than Martin Jones and Aaron Dell ... I mean, maybe consider trying this is the playoffs:

Hrudehy finally heads to the bench, which gives us a chance to remember that he was still doing the blue bandana thing in 1998. Blue chevron. It fits right in with the L.A. image. (Man, where does that clip rank among all-time Don Cherry moments that haven't aged well? First or definitely first?)

We skip ahead a minute and Hrudehy is back in goal. You have to give him credit for having ba—err, guts. But his return wasn't the smartest hockey move, as he ended up giving up two more quick goals before finally calling it a night. We get a few shots of him on the bench looking like he hates the world, which all things considered strikes me as an entirely appropriate reaction.

Come on, Kelly, rub some peanut butter on it and you'll be fine.

The epilogue: The Sharks lost the game 6-1. This would be the last appearance of Muzzatti's NHL career, although he'd play in the minors and Europe for nearly another decade. Hrudehy returned to action, but only started one more game before retiring and eventually going into broadcasting.

And to this day, Brett Hull ripping a full-power one-timer directly into Kelly Hrudehy's groin remains the second most painful slap shot in Blues/Sharks history.

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Sportsnet.ca / Wayne Gretzky sees similarities between old and new Oilers star duos

Mark Spector | October 11, 2019, 7:06 PM

NEW YORK — Wayne Gretzky looks down from the stands at what is evolving at the top of the Edmonton Oilers roster, and sees what he once witnessed from ice level.

"Mark and I never looked at each other like we expected the other guy to do this, or do that," he said of he and Mark Messier. "We just knew our roles and what we brought to the hockey club, and we pushed each other to make it that much more of a contribution to the group."

"You can see that now with the two of them," Gretzky continued, turning his attention to Leon Draisaitl and Connor McDavid. "They're very unselfish with each other — they have no egos — and as important as Connor is to Leon, Leon is to Connor. A lot like Mark and I were."

What everyone in the hockey world knows is that Leon Draisaitl is one of the Edmonton Oilers' best players. What people are beginning to realize is, he is also one of the National Hockey League's best players as well.

On the 4-0 Oilers, Draisaitl is the Messier to Connor McDavid's Gretzky, the Malkin to his Crosby, the Jaromir Jagr to his Mario Lemieux. Those comparisons may seem presumptuous, because Draisaitl still awaits his 24th birthday on Oct. 27, and he has not won a thing yet at the NHL level. Nor has McDavid.

But consider, since the beginning of the 2017-18 season Draisaitl has as many goals (77) as both Patrik Laine and Auston Matthews, yet he has 40 more points than Matthews and 53 more than Laine. The only 50-goal, 100-point player in the entire NHL last season, since the beginning of 2018-19 Draisaitl is second in goals (52) behind Alex Ovechkin,

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and fourth in points (113) behind Nikita Kucherov, McDavid and Kane.

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And his level of play off the top of this season? He has been, to these eyes, the Oilers' best player — period.

"He has this ability to analyze the game in his own head," marveled his teammate Darnell Nurse, "and make those little plays that you guys can see from up in the press box that are a little bit harder to see on the ice.

"You could kind of see it when he was younger, that he the ability to make those plays? Now, each and every night he's making a jaw-dropping pass."

It is still unclear if Draisaitl is a better shooter or passer, but as he sat tied for third in league scoring with 2-6-8 heading into the weekend, any thought that last season's 105 points was somehow a fluke has disappeared right alongside the theory that Draisaitl is simply riding McDavid's coat tails.

"They play a completely different game," Gretzky said. "Nobody plays like Connor. Connor has a level of speed that is unlike anybody, maybe, in the history of the game. His game is north-south.

"Leon slows the game down — like Patrick Kane does. But it's one thing to slow the game down. It's another thing to get all the other guys around you to slow down too, like Kane does. So Leon spreads his legs apart and slows everyone down, and Connor likes to come in late, like a locomotive going full blast."

Like Gretzky, who was all finesse and skill, and Messier, whose power game was unmatched in the '80s, Draisaitl and McDavid are two opposites that attract. Draisaitl is far more effective in the faceoff circle, holding and protecting the puck throughout a shift, and likes to set up for the one-timer.

What do they have in common? Both have lost enough for their liking already in Edmonton and are embracing a new shade of leadership that is not as defined by goals and assists.

"He's working hard, and he's working hard away from the puck," said McDavid. "Trying to do the little things right. He's maturing into that two-way forward that he can really become. Big body. Good in the circle. He can be a real force on both sides of the puck."

"For me, it's been fun to watch him really dig in when it's not about the offensive part of the game," said head coach Dave Tippett. "We had a three-on-five against L.A. the other night, and (Draisaitl) was the one forward out there. He's loving that — it's a challenge for him. There is more to his game than scoring goals.

"He's like Connor. He wants to win."

It will be up to general manager Ken Holland to surround them with enough wingers to even consider doing what then-GM Glen Sather did in 1984, when he moved the 1983 First Team left wing all-star to centre. "When people started to really notice, to stand up and take note of Mark, was when Glen moved him from left wing to centre," said Gretzky.

As long as Ryan Nugent-Hopkins is in Edmonton, Draisaitl won't be required as a second-line centre, the way Sather used Messier to beat the likes of Calgary and the New York Islanders. But wherever he lines up, you can get used to seeing his name near the top of NHL scoring.

And maybe, just as Jagr, Crosby, Malkin and Kane can say today, on the side of big Stanley one day as well.

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Sportsnet.ca / Still winless in Vegas, Flames look to turn hapless fortunes around

Eric Francis | October 11, 2019, 2:51 PM

LAS VEGAS – Most people who claim to have won in Vegas are liars.

The Calgary Flames are not liars.

They'll make no such declarations, having gone 0-for-ever in Sin City. They've rolled the dice four times, coming up snake eyes every time over the last two seasons.

Clearly the odds are stacked against anyone leaving town triumphantly, but Travis Hamonic believes the reasons for the Flames' hard luck revolve around what visitors have to deal with at the rink as opposed to the strip.

"Obviously they are a good team and the atmosphere is as tough to play in as anywhere in the league," said the Flames defenceman. "It's loud. You feel them coming. You talk about the first 10 minutes in different rinks — it's as hard a first 10 minutes as you're going to have. It's up there with Nashville and Winnipeg in terms of being loud. Like Winnipeg, the rink is old-school where everybody is on top of you."

Hamonic believes the key to turning the Flames' fortunes around Saturday against the Vegas Golden Knights, one of their chief divisional rivals, is trying to embrace the atmosphere and harness the noise with an eye on silencing the joint early.

Easier said than done for a 2-1-1 Flames team that has had two horrific starts so far.

It was a jubilant Flames squad that chartered into Vegas just after midnight following their 3-2 shootout win in Dallas Thursday night.

It gives them a full day and night on the strip before their Saturday night puck drop. A general manager's nightmare.

Two years ago, Flames architect Brad Treliving did his best to shield players from the vagaries of Vegas by organizing the team's very first mom's trip. Following an evening of dining and a show, the lads headed back to their rooms while the moms lit up the down.

Johnny Gaudreau lost touch of his mother for a time, texting teammates from his room with hopes their mothers could shed light on what Jane Gaudreau was up to.

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For one night the shoe was on the other foot.

This year Treliving had no such plans, leaving the players to their own devices. In the eyes of some, it's a dangerous proposition in a sleepless city with endless temptations.

"I don't really buy into that," said Hamonic, when asked if that plays a role in the Knights' 54-23-7 home record. "We go to dinner and we go home, watch TV and get to bed. We spend a lot of time on the road, on planes and in different time zones. It sounds pretty boring, but we go for a sleep and get rest. A lot of us have kids, so when we have a chance to sleep we do."

Milan Lucic agrees the novelty of Vegas as an enticing stop has worn off.

"I think at the start it was exciting, but now it's just another road game," said Lucic, who states he was only part of one win as an Oiler in Vegas. "It doesn't matter what city you are in, if you want to find trouble you're going to find it. Sure, it's a lot easier in Vegas, but honestly it's almost easier to stay out of trouble I find because there are so many great, world-class restaurants to choose from.

"Most guys, that's what they like to do – have a good bite to eat and after that they're satisfied and go back to their room. It's kind of when you're searching for things and you're antsy, that's when you start looking for trouble."

Lucic was philosophical when asked if Vegas might have been more dangerous for players had it started a team at the beginning of his career a dozen years ago.

"I think so," the 31-year-old winger smiled. "There wasn't social media when I started. Instagram wasn't a thing and Twitter was just starting, but it wasn't really a thing. People weren't filming and taking pictures of people yet, so you could quietly get in trouble. You could get away with a lot more."

Indeed, the threat of being pictured in compromising situations keeps many in line like never before.

At least that's how it appears.

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Like Hamonic, Lucic insists the real trouble in Vegas comes when you get to the rink.

"You feel overwhelmed being in that arena, kind of like you are in Vegas with everything going on," said Lucic of the electric T-Mobile Arena located a few hundred metres off the strip. "In warmups they've got go-go dancers going along the glass, and all the music and their chants. It's like, 'holy smokes, what's going on here?'"

"This time it's going to be a Saturday night game, so that fuels it up even more."

Perhaps equally as daunting for the Flames is a date one night later in San Jose, where visitors traditionally fare almost as poorly.

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Sportsnet.ca / Coaching and protecting MacKinnon at 12: 'We had to watch out for him'

Gare Joyce | October 11, 2019, 3:14 PM

If you wander into Cole Harbour Place on a weekend morning these days, you'll see kindergarten-age boys and girls learning to skate, learning how to hold a stick, learning to love the game.

It's easy to imagine the scene when Nathan MacKinnon was on this same sheet of ice 20 years ago — playing in his first games, scoring his first goal — back when he was one of the smallest kids on the ice, skating in a kiddie league sponsored by a doughnut company.

Of course, some things have changed dramatically over the years. By the time MacKinnon was playing peewee hockey as an under-ager, the tiny community of Cole Harbour was on everyone's radar because of another local boy — Sidney Crosby, maybe you've heard of him — who'd made good. And these days, of course, MacKinnon's arguably the most dynamic and powerful player in the NHL. In his spare time he does commercials for the same doughnut outfit. Even the arena itself has received a fairly extensive renovation that shortened the hockey camp a summer ago.

Some things around the local arenas are constants, though. One of them is Charlie MacLean, a fixture on the hockey scene in Halifax — where Rogers Hometown Hockey makes a stop this weekend — since before he coached MacKinnon in bantam AAA.

Nathan MacKinnon, second from the left behind the goalies, celebrates his bantam AAA team's provincial championship

A twelve-year-old MacKinnon, second from the left behind the goalies, celebrates his team's bantam AAA provincial championship. (Courtesy of Charlie MacLean)

While Crosby's greatest minor-hockey glories came down the road with the Dartmouth Subways, MacKinnon played all of his youth hockey in the arena closest to home. While MacLean will reserve judgement, many locals will make the case that MacKinnon and his bantam AAA teammates were the best to ever play out of the arena. MacLean was behind the bench with assistants Dave Peters and Jeff Porter for that Cole Harbour team, which won both the provincial and Atlantic Canada championships.

MacKinnon didn't rack up the same hard-to-fathom goal-scoring numbers that Crosby had, but neither was he an unknown commodity coming up through the ranks.

"We knew about Nathan when he was in atom," MacLean says. "I was coaching bantam and his team would be on the ice before we practiced. He was a small kid and pretty shy, but well-mannered and clearly talented. At that point, I thought there'd be a pretty good shot that I'd be coaching him someday."

MacLean had a shorter wait than he imagined.

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"In his first year of peewee, he was 11, and he'd practise with the bantam AAAs, who were mostly 14 going on 15," MacLean says. "You could see even then how competitive he was. He wanted every drill to be just right."

In his second year of peewee, the MacKinnons applied for exceptional-player status to allow Nathan to play up with Cole Harbour's bantam team in AAA play.

"Hockey Nova Scotia did a lot of homework on it and watched him in practice," Maclean says. "They talked to his parents (Graham and Kathy). They talked to Nate. [Exceptional-player status] wasn't anything that they just handed out, but he really deserved it."

Celebrate Our Community. Celebrate Our Game.

Though turning out a superstar talent turned out to be a twice-in-a-lifetime proposition for the community, MacLean assumed he was only going to get a single shot with a prodigy and made the most of it.

"Getting to work with a player that talented, it's a real treat as a coach," MacLean says. "We had to watch out for him because he was still the smallest kid on the ice and other teams would take liberties with him and try to run him."

With MacKinnon on the ice and MacLean behind the bench, Cole Harbour beat the St. John's Hitmen in the Atlantic Canada final.

"We had a really strong team, a bunch of players who went on to play in Quebec (Major Junior Hockey) League and for university teams," MacLean said, "but Nathan was clearly the most talented kid in the lineup."

He was also the one who left home the soonest. When MacKinnon enrolled at Shattuck-St. Mary's in Minnesota, he wasn't just following the trail blazed by Crosby. That first principle of hockey development — always be looking for stiffer challenges — propelled him to leave home.

"Everyone understood that and no one begrudged Nathan (going to Shattuck-St. Mary's). He had to move on and play with better players, face better competition and, really, get more time on the ice and better coaching. We'd done as much as we could for him here."

A few years later, MacLean faced his own crossroads, and rather than move up, he chose to move back. His wife, Crystal, is a teacher at Astral Drive Junior High School — yup, Sidney Crosby's alma mater before he headed off to Shattuck — so it's not so much of a surprise that Charlie has gone from coaching to teaching on the ice.

"It was really enjoyable working with the bantams and midget teams, but I got to the point that I wanted to spend that time in the arena with my kids," says MacLean, who currently works with players as young as his four-year-old daughter, Emilia. "And it was the right time to let someone else have the chance to work with the older players."

Don't mistake MacLean's decision as any sort of fading from the scene. He's currently working with the kindergarten-aged kids alongside his old assistant Dave Peters, and plans to move up the coaching ranks every season.

"With my daughter and kids her age, it's a different type of coaching, but it's a lot of fun," says MacLean. "It's teaching the game, the basics and fundamentals, rather than doing anything with game strategies. You have to strike a balance

at any level — whether it's bantam AAA or the very youngest kids playing for the first time. You want kids to compete and have fun. Maybe with my daughter's group, it's learning to compete as well, something that you're not having to do with the older kids."

And the scouting report on his young sons?

"Rylan is six, so he's a couple of years away from thinking about playing anything like AAA, but my older son is eight, so we're a season away from when it gets more serious," he says. "My older boy is a good skater and a pretty good little player, but he's defensive-minded, so I imagine at some point as he moves up he'll go to the blue line."

And it's just coincidence that his eight-year-old's name is Nathan.

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Sportsnet.ca / Truth By Numbers: Mika Zibanejad's hot start and early-season sleepers

Andrew Berkshire October 11, 2019, 9:57 AM

The NHL season is still extremely young, but we've played enough games that it's time to bring back the weekly Truth by Numbers column.

The beginning of every season brings completely wild numbers. This actually happens in small samples throughout the season, but when we see these at the beginning of the season, there's no bigger sample size to hide it.

The craziest start to the season by anyone is the main focus this week.

With big changes all around the New York Rangers over the past two seasons as they've gone into rebuild mode, Mika Zibanejad has seen more and more responsibility heaped on him. The biggest change for him was likely the trade of Derek Stepan, which made Zibanejad the de facto No. 1 centre. And then this past summer the Rangers brought in Artemi Panarin to play alongside him.

How has Zibanejad responded? Eight points in two games while playing 20 minutes a night is a...pretty good start.

Obviously, that level of production is never going to last, and a good part of it is going to be good fortune, but usually when a player has that much success they're doing something right.

In Zibanejad's case, this holds true.

It's pretty much impossible for Zibanejad to keep up this pace, but he is absolutely crushing it so far this season. He isn't just getting lucky bounces or playing with shooters who are putting everything in the net — he's been brilliant.

Zibanejad currently leads the Rangers (by miles) in high danger chances, passes to the slot, and scoring chances created for his teammates. The craziest part of all of this is

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that so far this season, Panarin has not been the driver of the line.

Panarin is a phenomenal player, but his start hasn't been that great. He's second on the team behind Zibanejad in completed passes to the slot, but he has yet to record a scoring chance at 5-on-5, and he's been creating just 4.44 scoring chances for his teammates every 20 minutes, which pales in comparison to Zibanejad's 11.

Even more surprising: Zibanejad has been driving the bus from a transition point, with Panarin completing only 16.5 plays every 20 minutes to move the puck up the ice, while Zibanejad is completing a team-high 24.

This is just a two-game sample, though, so the differences are going to be absolutely wild and they'll even out over time. But Zibanejad has been full value.

Senior Writer Ryan Dixon and NHL Editor Rory Boylen always give it 110%, but never rely on clichés when it comes to podcasting. Instead, they use a mix of facts, fun and a varied group of hockey voices to cover Canada's most beloved game.

THE QUESTION

Like last season, every week Sportsnet contributor, YouTuber, and "That Ice Surfing Guy" Steve Dangle gets to ask a question for me to dig into the data for and attempt to answer.

Steve is keeping it simple to start the season, asking...

"Which players are early-season sleepers, the guys who are playing great that no one is really talking about?"

We're too early to draw serious conclusions, but let's dig into the data to see if any names pop up that are performing well despite little fanfare.

Raise your hand if you thought Phillip Danault was the league leader at involvement in 5-on-5 scoring chances every 20 minutes. Nobody? That's to be expected. For a long time now Danault has been an extremely solid defensive centre who doesn't drag down the offence of his linemates, but last season he really started to flex his playmaking muscles.

So far this season he's pushing things even further, with his passing and aggressive forechecking leading to involvement in a league-high 15.2 scoring chances every 20 minutes of ice time. That's definitely not going to last — he won't be outpacing the Connor McDavids and Nathan MacKinnons of the world for long — but what a start for Danault.

Kyle Turris has had the start he needed last season and is looking more like the player the Predators acquired in that three-way trade for Matt Duchene a couple years ago. I guess the secret ingredient was also getting Duchene.

Speaking of rebounds, Clayton Keller is coming off of an awful year in Arizona, and while he only has one point so far this season, the offence he's creating is stellar. He's above league average in every category here, creating offence in a myriad of ways. Don't be surprised if the points start piling up for him.

More limited in style but not in substance, Nazem Kadri has fit in really nicely with the Colorado Avalanche, getting the puck into the slot either with a great pass or shooting for a

rebound continually, and he's not been shy to drive the net himself.

Maybe the quietest name of all is Travis Konecny, who was a bit of a forgotten man among this summer's high profile restricted free agent negotiations. But now he's rewarding the Flyers' faith in him after signing that long-term contract. So far he's right there with Sean Couturier for the team lead in scoring chance involvement, and he's all about the slot. Konecny hasn't put a single shot on net from the perimeter this season — he's either getting the puck in there for someone else or firing it from slot himself.

All of these players should have more opportunity to put up points this season, and the early returns suggest they want to take advantage of it.

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

BUY OR SELL

- Remember when the Carolina Hurricanes dominated possession but couldn't generate quality scoring chances to save their lives? Well they're leading the league in shots on net from the inner slot at 5-on-5 this season with 9.95 every 20 minutes. The downside is they're also giving up the second-most from that area, so they'll need the goaltending to stay strong unless they tighten up a bit. They are 4-0-0 and highly entertaining — there might not be a more fun team to watch right now.

- Everyone knew the Columbus Blue Jackets would be in a tough situation after losing Sergei Bobrovsky and having no legitimate replacement, but so far the offence is the real problem. Three games into the season they've only managed five shots on net from the inner slot at 5-on-5, a league-low on a per-minute basis.

- Two seasons ago the Winnipeg Jets were one of the stingiest defensive teams in the league. Things started to fall apart last season, then their defence was completely gutted over the summer. So far this season no one is giving up more high danger chances than the Jets, and only the Devils are allowing more passes to the slot. Connor Hellebuyck has been getting some heat for his .913 save percentage, but this isn't on him.

- Earlier I wrote about the rising goal totals in the NHL in recent years, and how teams attack differently. One thing I noted was that forechecking was less responsible for offence than it has been. Don't tell that to Pennsylvania. The average team this season is getting just over 2.5 scoring chances per 60 minutes at 5-on-5 through forechecking, while the Flyers are getting 7.5, and the Penguins are at 7.4. No one else is even close.

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Sportsnet.ca / Oilers underdogs to lead off Saturday NHL betting slate

OddsShark Staff October 11, 2019, 8:18 PM

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The Edmonton Oilers will be looking to extend their hottest start to a season since 2008 when they open the Saturday NHL schedule against the New York Rangers as small +110 road underdogs on the NHL odds at sportsbooks monitored by OddsShark.com.

Edmonton is coming off a 4-3 shootout victory over the New Jersey Devils as a +105 wager on Thursday and can improve to 5-0-0 with a win in Saturday afternoon's game at Madison Square Garden.

The Oilers have been filling the net during their season-opening surge, averaging 4.5 goals per game. The team is also unbeaten in three road outings dating back to April, and posted a pair of one-goal victories over the Rangers last season. However, steady success has eluded Edmonton in recent visits to the Big Apple. The Oilers have been limited to just two goals in five of their past seven road dates with the Rangers, and have posted just one win in their past four contests at Madison Square Garden, according to the OddsShark NHL Database.

The Rangers return to action following a lengthy layoff set as -140 home favourites in Saturday afternoon's contest. New York has been idle since posting consecutive wins to open the season, capped by last Saturday's 4-1 victory in Ottawa as -135 chalk, and the team now looks to open its season on a 3-0-0 run for the first time since 2015.

Later on Saturday afternoon, the Senators face a massive challenge in their bid to tally their first win of the season as they host the Tampa Bay Lightning as lengthy +205 underdogs at online betting sites. The Senators have surrendered five goals per game during an 0-3-0 run to open their campaign, and have posted just one win in seven home meetings with Tampa Bay since February 2016.

The Lightning travel to Ottawa as strong -250 favourites after recording a dominating 7-3 win in Toronto on Thursday to pay out on -105 odds. With the win, Tampa Bay has now seen the OVER prevail in totals betting in each of its four outings this season, and in 14 of 17 regular-season outings since early March.

Elsewhere on the Saturday odds, the Maple Leafs look to rebound from their third straight loss as they visit the Detroit Red Wings as -190 favourites, while the Montreal Canadiens aim to snap their current two-game slide as they host the St. Louis Blues as +105 underdogs. As well, late game action has the Vancouver Canucks taking on the Philadelphia Flyers as -120 home chalk, while the Calgary Flames visit the Vegas Golden Knights as +125 underdogs.

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Sportsnet.ca / Andersen's rare off-night proves insurmountable for Maple Leafs

Chris Johnston | October 11, 2019, 12:08 AM

TORONTO — Frederik Andersen's night ended after 46 minutes. His Toronto Maple Leafs teammates weren't quite so fortunate.

They had to endure a full 60-minute beatdown from the Tampa Bay Lightning here Thursday after seeing seven shots get past Andersen before the midway point of the third period.

That resulted in a rare pull for the Leafs No. 1 goaltender — only the third time he's been replaced by a backup due to performance since March 2018. He was far from the only player in Leafs colours to have an off-night against a division rival, but took ownership for his role in the 7-3 defeat.

"When you make mistakes out there you've got to pay for it," said Andersen. "Obviously I wasn't up to speed today and, yeah, I paid for it."

It was a rough performance from start to finish.

Not only did Andersen surrender four first-period goals for just the second time in his NHL career — the other came in Game 4 of the 2017 playoffs against Washington — he was victimized by a bad bounce and his own bad decision before giving way to Michael Hutchinson.

With the Leafs trailing 5-3 and the game still in reach, he saw a Tampa dump-in hit referee Marc Joannette and end up directly on Ondrej Palat's sitck. The Lightning winger fired the puck towards the crease and saw it bank in off Kasperii Kapanen's skate.

Then, three minutes later, Andersen played a clearing attempt directly to Steven Stamkos, who promptly found Nikita Kucherov for the light's-out finish before Andersen could get back in position and set.

"Definitely could have played some of the situations differently," he said. "They're a good team down there, too, so when you do make mistakes they usually capitalize pretty often on it."

Andersen has made 196 appearances for the Leafs and that was just the second time he'd allowed as many as seven goals in a game. Tampa also put a seven spot on him Oct. 25, 2016 — which is notable for a couple reasons.

First, the Lightning have had his number.

He's 3-8-1 against them with an .882 save percentage since joining the Leafs.

October has also proven to be a consistently difficult month on the 30-year-old, which probably speaks as much to the loose hockey being played as anything else. Still, it's been an area of emphasis for the steady Dane who typically produces a season-long performance you can set your watch to — with save percentages of .917, .918, .918 and .919 the last four years.

"He's such a quality goaltender — one of the best in the world — and we just did not make it easy for him tonight against those type of shooters," said captain John Tavares. "We have to do a lot better job at defending. I think letting seven in at home is just unacceptable."

There was a clear sense of disappointment in the Leafs dressing room after dropping a third-straight game on home ice. They picked up a point in Saturday's 6-5 loss to Montreal and played well against the St. Louis Blues in a 3-2 defeat Monday that could have gone either way.

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By comparison, this one wasn't even close.

"It seemed like every loose puck was kind of theirs and they just kept coming after us wave after wave," said Auston Matthews, who scored his team-best sixth goal of the season.

"We didn't execute at a high enough level, we didn't play right, and they were better than us – they won all the 50/50s, all the loose puck battles," said head coach Mike Babcock. "We took three penalties in the first [period] and I thought that got us out of sync. It wasn't a very good night for us.

"I thought it was going to be a hell of a game and I didn't think it was."

Making matters worse was the fact the goaltender wasn't there to bail them out, as he so often is.

The Leafs are an offence-first team that asks a lot from Andersen. They are known to spring the odd leak. Against the Lightning, they gave up nine high-danger chances against, according to naturalstattrick.com — the most they've allowed in any of the five games played this season.

"We weren't really too helpful for him on a lot of those goals," said Matthews. "I mean backdoors, tap-ins, power plays. It's not necessarily all on him. We've got to be better in front of him, just be better as a five-man unit and be better on the penalty kill."

Andersen has shown that he can be better, too.

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TSN.CA / Babcock 'happy with' Leafs' defensive progress this season

Mark Masters

TSN Toronto reporter Mark Masters checks in daily with news and notes on the Maple Leafs, who practised at the Ford Performance Centre on Friday before travelling to Detroit for Saturday night's game against the Red Wings.

The Maple Leafs have allowed 15 goals in a three-game home losing streak, but Mike Babcock believes his team is making progress in their own end.

"Our defensive numbers are real good so far this season," the coach said after a brisk 30-minute workout. "We're happy with that. Last night we weren't good enough. We made some mistakes and it ended up in our net, but we gave up chances like we don't normally give up. So that's the biggest concern."

Babcock insists the meltdown against the Lightning in a 7-3 loss Thursday is not a symptom of larger defensive issues. Instead, it was simply a case of his team getting outworked, something that was addressed Friday morning.

"I thought our meeting was more important than our practice, to be honest with you," Babcock said. "The other team was hungrier and faster and better than us last night. I think that's

the No. 1 thing. You know, it's easy for you to string them (losses) together, because that's the way they go. We thought we played great against St. Louis. We didn't win. So, to me, they're night and day different. Maybe we were feeling so good about the way we played against St. Louis we forgot to play last night."

The Leafs fell 3-2 against the defending champions on Monday in a game where they held a significant advantage in possession (62.6% CoriFor) with a 34-18 edge in scoring chances, per NaturalStatTrick. There were a couple breakdowns on the game-winning goal with John Tavares pointing out he needed to do a better job on the draw and Kasperii Kapanen losing his man (Alex Pietrangelo) on the play.

That defeat was preceded by another blown lead as the Leafs went up 4-1 in the third period against Montreal on Saturday before falling 6-5 in a shootout. But that game came on the second half of a back-to-back set at the end of a three-in-four stretch to open the season.

Toronto only lost three straight games twice last season even with some well-documented defensive issues.

That said, the numbers do seem to back up Babcock's argument that early indications are positive. The Leafs are allowing 32 shots per game, which is down from 33.1 last season. Per NaturalStatTrick, they are allowing 20.6 scoring chances per game, down from 23.7 last season. And high-danger chances are down from nine to 5.6 per game.

However, bad habits can creep in quickly, which explained the sense of urgency around the team on Friday. And while Babcock doesn't see a pattern of defensive deficiencies in this skid, he does see a need for accountability following a brutal loss.

"Any time you play like you did last night, the first thing is the coach didn't do his job so we weren't ready to go," Babcock said before pausing. "No, I shouldn't say that. We were up 2-1 with eight minutes left in the first period, but we didn't stay playing, we got rattled, we didn't keep digging in, we weren't good enough. So, then it goes to your leadership group and then it goes to everybody so we're all involved."

Jake Muzzin is part of that leadership group and is the only player on the roster with a Stanley Cup ring.

"We need to be better," the defenceman said. "There's no question. Fifty-fifty pucks, defensive battles, pucks around our net, offensive pucks that we're losing battles, turning pucks over, we need a better commitment out of everyone, playing the right way and it starts with a defensive commitment ... You know, an effort like that shouldn't come from this club."

There seems to be an understanding inside the room that the team will succeed or fail this season based on how they grow as a defensive unit.

"It doesn't matter how much power you have," observed defenceman Tyson Barrie, "back end, up front, whatever, you have to be able to keep the puck out of your net if you're going to win hockey games and that's going to be the focus for us. I know we have a lot of guys who can put the puck in the back of the net and the focus for us has to be defence first."

TSN Hockey Insider Darren Dreger joined First Up with Landsberg and Colaiacovo to share his thoughts on the early

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returns on the Maple Leafs and discusses the possibility that management would consider a coaching change if the team continues to struggle with all of the expectations this season.

Barrie, who was a team-worst -4 on Thursday, and Cody Ceci are new additions to Toronto's top-four this season and both readily admit they're still getting settled. Perhaps that adjustment period is leading to some of the breakdowns?

"That's a part of it," agreed Ceci, "there's a lot of new guys on the team, all new systems so we're just trying to get a handle on things."

What's the biggest adjustment from Ottawa?

"The biggest difference is that we do have some speed on our team and we got to utilize that," he said.

"There's subtle differences," said Barrie when asked to compare Toronto's system to Colorado. "It's nothing too crazy. I think our D-zone coverage is a little different and the way that we try to get through the neutral zone is a little different, but it's still hockey and we're not reinventing the wheel or anything. It's a system where if you work hard and are detail-oriented you'll have success."

Barrie, Ceci and rookie Rasmus Sandin are newcomers on defence with new assistant coach Dave Hakstol now overseeing that group. But neither Barrie nor Ceci believe the transitional period is an excuse for how Thursday played out.

"New faces, it's going to take a little bit to get the chemistry and feel each other out a little bit," Barrie said, "but there's no excuse to get beat up on like that whether you're new faces or not, this is the National Hockey League and this is our job so it's just one you got to learn from ... They flat out outworked us in our own building and kind of embarrassed us."

"It's a bit of a wake-up call for us," said Ceci. "We just kind of learned that we can't skill our way through every single game. There's other teams that are just as skilled as us and if they work harder than us they're going to win."

What are the biggest adjustments for Barrie, Ceci in Leafs system?

Cody Ceci and Tyson Barrie are still trying to integrate themselves into the Maple Leafs's lineup and they discuss what differences, if any, they have noticed in the team's defensive structure. Ceci also explains how much he has leaned on Morgan Rielly early on.

One issue for Toronto in Thursday's loss was the penalty kill, which allowed two goals to the Lightning after allowing just two goals in the previous four games. On one of the goals, Mitch Marner lost a faceoff and moments later a Nikita Kucherov shot rocketed past Frederik Andersen.

"I still got to practice a lot more," Marner said after the game. "I can't lose that that clean, you know, it's a sh--ty way to happen, it's an unfortunate way," he said. "Just got to make sure that these next couple practices I keep practising. I want to talk to (Jason) Spezza a lot about these draws. I know he's a guy who's been relied on a lot on that right side and I can learn from him and learn some sneaky plays off faceoffs."

Sure enough, Marner stayed out late after the main practice session on Friday to work with Spezza on draws.

Spezza was in the box when Marner, a right winger, got cleaned out by Anthony Cirelli. Marner, who plays on the top penalty kill unit, is hoping to improve on faceoffs so he can potentially be trusted more in those situations down the road. Spezza is 6-3 on shorthanded face-offs this season while Nick Shore, who's expected to replace him in the line-up Saturday, is 4-3 in that situation. Frederik Gauthier is 2-6 on short-handed draws while Alexander Kerfoot and Tavares are both 0-1.

"We thought our penalty kill got stuck in mud last night," said Babcock, "got on our heels and didn't do anything. We tried to get our penalty kill going here this morning and then we addressed some other things."

Leafs Ice Chips: PK an issue as Marner works on draws

Following a humbling loss to the Lightning, the Maple Leafs addressed their penalty kill which was an issue on Thursday night. One of Tampa Bay's power play goals came after Mitch Marner lost a face-off cleanly. Mark Masters has more on Marner's personal vow to improve his draws, which began with a lesson from Jason Spezza after Friday's main practice.

Leafs lines at Friday's practice:

Forwards

Johnsson-Matthews-Nylander

Kapanen-Tavares-Marner

Mikheyev-Kerfoot-Moore

Timashov-Shore-Gauthier

Petan-Spezza-Hyman

Defencemen

Rielly-Ceci

Muzzin-Barrie

Sandin-Holl

Dermot-Marincin

Goaltenders

Andersen

Hutchinson

Power play units at Friday's practice:

Rielly

Marner - Tavares - Matthews

Johnsson

Barrie

Kerfoot - Petan - Nylander

Kapanen

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TSN.CA / Maple Leafs hold 'family discussion' after abysmal loss to Tampa Bay Lightning

Kristen Shilton

TORONTO – Before the Maple Leafs could move on from their abysmal 7-3 walloping by Tampa Bay on Thursday night, the team gathered for a meeting Friday morning that head coach Mike Babcock deemed more important than any practice to hash out what's gone wrong during a three-game winless streak.

"It's just a family discussion; it's just honest," Babcock said following the Leafs' on-ice session Friday. "The reality is we weren't good enough [against Tampa] and we showed the areas we weren't good enough. There's nowhere to hide here. In any good family, that's what it's like. You keep each other accountable and that's what we try to do."

Babcock accepted his share of the blame for a defeat that saw his team let a competitive first period devolve into a lacklustre finish. The Leafs trailed 4-3 after a wild opening 20 minutes against Tampa, and were well-positioned to bounce back in the second until their offence stalled and defensive errors piled up.

"Any time you play like we did last night, the coach didn't do his job. So we weren't ready to go," Babcock said. "We were up 2-1 with eight minutes left in the first period, but we didn't stay playing. We got rattled. We didn't keep digging in. We weren't good enough. So then [the accountability] goes to your leadership group, then it goes to everybody else, and we're all involved."

McKenzie weighs in on source of Maple Leafs' defensive problems

TSN Hockey Insider Bob McKenzie joins Andi Petrillo and Dave Feschuk to discuss what the problem is with the Leafs defensively and who shoulders more weight for the challenges they've faced so far.

While the loss to Tampa was the Leafs third in a row and second straight in regulation, Babcock appeared most frustrated that his team was trounced after playing what he called its best game of the season on Monday, narrowly falling 3-2 to the defending Stanley Cup champion St. Louis Blues.

In that outing, the Leafs dominated puck possession at 62 per cent and outchanced the Blues 34-18. Their effort against Tampa, especially through an awful third period where they registered just four scoring chances and Frederik Andersen was pulled after giving up a seventh goal on 28 shots, was tough for Babcock to swallow.

"Maybe we were feeling so good about the way we played against St. Louis we forgot to play last night," he said. "The bottom line is our defensive numbers are real good so far this season. We're happy with that. Last night we weren't good enough. We made some mistakes and it ended up in our net, but we gave up chances like we don't normally give up. So that's the biggest concern."

Adding to some of the early season struggles for Toronto has been working in new bodies on the blueline. Cody Ceci and Tyson Barrie arrived via off-season trades, from Ottawa and Colorado respectively, and were expected to turn the Leafs' top four into a more consistent, and more dangerous, group than years past.

The newcomers are still getting up to speed on the new system five games into the season, but Barrie wasn't willing to blame inexperience for what transpired against Tampa.

"I think it's pretty simple. If you know what you're doing and you work hard and do your job, we're going to be successful. Obviously, last night, I don't think we executed," Barrie said. "They outworked us in our own building and kind of embarrassed us a little bit. It shouldn't have gotten to that. We needed to come out and play a lot harder than we did right off the hop and it's disappointing we didn't."

TSN Hockey Insider Darren Dreger joined First Up with Landsberg and Colaiacovo to share his thoughts on the early returns on the Maple Leafs and discusses the possibility that management would consider a coaching change if the team continues to struggle with all of the expectations this season.

Barrie pointed out that just because Toronto boasts names like Auston Matthews, Mitch Marner, John Tavares and William Nylander among its forwards doesn't mean it can rely on offensive skill alone to win the day.

"For any good team, it's [about defensive play]," he insisted. "It doesn't matter how much power you have on the back end or up front, you have to be able to keep the puck out of your net if you want to win hockey games. I know that we've got a lot of guys who can put the puck in the back of the net, but the focus for us has got to be defence first."

With Detroit waiting in the wings on Saturday, and already off to a hot 3-1-0 start to the season, getting back in the win column won't be easy for Toronto. But if some early adversity ends up making the Leafs stronger as time goes on, it's a price they'll begrudgingly pay.

"[Last night] was a bit of a wake-up call for us," said Ceci. "We're learning we can't skill our way through every single game. There are other teams that are just as skilled as us, and if they work harder than us, they're going to win. It's good to have [issues] this early in the season so that we can address it right away and remember what it's like if we don't show up to work."

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