



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • October 16, 2018

THE NEWS & OBSERVER

Canes' Aho named NHL third star of the week

By Chip Alexander

No slow start this season for Sebastian Aho of the Carolina Hurricanes.

Aho, who had three goals and four assists this past week, has been named the NHL's third star of the week, the league announced Monday. But it has been more than a week of production for the Finnish center, who has at least one point in the Canes' six games and 11 points total this season.

Aho matched his career high with four points Saturday in the Canes' 5-4 overtime win over the Minnesota Wild with two

goals and two assists. That extended the Carolina winning streak to four games before a 3-1 loss Sunday to Winnipeg.

Aho did not score a goal in his first 13 games as a rookie in 2016-17 and then in his first 15 games last season. He had 10 points in 18 combined October games in those two seasons.

Center Patrice Bergeron of the Boston Bruins, who had four goals and five assists, was named the NHL first star of the week. Defenseman Morgan Rielly of the Toronto Maple Leafs was the second star.



Preview: Hurricanes at Lightning

Canes wrap up road trip in Tampa

by Michael Smith

The Carolina Hurricanes wrap up a three-game road trip with a match-up against the Tampa Bay Lightning.

The tilt between two old Southeast Division foes is a chance for the Hurricanes to get back in the win column after suffering their first regulation loss of the season at the hands of the Winnipeg Jets on Sunday by a score of 3-1.

Bouncing Back

The Canes have responded in a positive manner to in-game adversity. Now, the challenge ahead of them is responding to their first regulation loss of the season.

That loss, though, was nothing to hang their heads over. The Hurricanes competed hard and went toe-to-toe with a big, strong, talented Winnipeg Jets team that was sitting and waiting for the Canes, who earned a 5-4 overtime victory the night prior in Minnesota.

"It was a hard-fought game," Jordan Staal said. "We were right there. We did a lot of great things and worked really hard. Sometimes they don't go your way. I thought we could have had a better result, but that's hockey. We'll move forward from this one."

"I didn't feel like we were overly matched. It felt like we were hanging in there with them and probably had some

opportunities to win the game," head coach Rod Brind'Amour said. "Overall I'm happy with the effort for sure."

Mrazek Sharp in Net

Despite taking the L in Winnipeg, Petr Mrazek had his best outing as a member of the Hurricanes. It wasn't just that he stopped 23 of 25 shots; it was the quality in which he faced, and the saves with which he responded.

In the second period, he denied Nikolaj Ehlers scoring bid on a 2-on-0 rush. That, coming after he pushed across the crease to body down the puck off a shot from Patrik Laine.

Mrazek was a big reason why the Canes likely should have at least earned a point in Winnipeg.

"Mraz played really, really well. Some big saves," Staal said after the game. "He was good tonight."

NHL's Third Star

Sebastian Aho earned third star of the week honors from the NHL after recording three goals and four assists in his last three games.

Aho now has points in each of his first six games and is the sixth player in franchise history to open the regular season with a six-game point streak. The 21-year-old Finnish forward leads the Hurricanes in scoring with 11 points (4g, 7a) through six games.

The Opposition



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The Lightning have played just three games in the 2018-19 regular season and bring a 2-1-0 record into this match-up.

Tampa Bay hung eight goals on Columbus in an 8-2 victory over the Blue Jackets at home on Saturday.

Sebastian Aho Named NHL's Third Star of the Week

Forward has opened the season with a six-game point streak by Canes PR

The National Hockey League today announced that Carolina Hurricanes forward Sebastian Aho has been named its "Third Star" for the week ending Oct. 14.

Aho posted seven points (3g, 4a) in three games last week, including a pair of multi-point games. The 6'0", 176-pound forward recorded a goal and an assist in Carolina's 5-3 win over Vancouver on Oct. 9, then matched a career high with four points (2g, 2a), including the overtime winner, in a 5-4 win at Minnesota on Oct. 13. Aho also tallied an assist at Winnipeg on Oct. 14.

The Rauma, Finland, native is the sixth player in franchise history to open the season with a six-game point streak (4g, 7a). Aho has earned more points in six games this season (11) than in 18 previous October games in his career (10), and had not recorded an October goal prior to this season. In 2017-18, he became the youngest player since relocation to lead the Hurricanes in scoring, finishing the season with 65 points (29g, 36a) at 20 years and 255 days old. The only players from the 2015 NHL Draft who have scored more career goals than Aho (57) are Connor McDavid (89) and Jack Eichel (76).



Carolina Hurricanes vs. Tampa Bay Lightning: Preview and Storm Advisory

The Hurricanes are back in action tonight after making that popular quick jump from...uh...Winnipeg to Tampa.

By Andrew Ahr

Carolina Hurricanes (4-1-1) at Tampa Bay Lightning (2-1-0)

The Hurricanes come off of their first regulation loss of the Rod Brind'Amour era at the hands of the Jets to take on another top team in the league on enemy turf.

Vital Statistics

Category	Hurricanes	Lightning
Record	4-1-1	2-1-0
Points	9	4
Division Rank	1 Metro	6 Atlantic
Conference Rank	2 EC	T11 EC
Last 10 Games	4-1-1	2-1-0
Streak	Lost 1	Won 1

Category	Hurricanes	Lightning
Goals/Game	3.83	3.33
Goals Against/Game	3.00	2.33
Shots/Game	42.3	31.3
Shots Against/Game	25.0	34.3
Faceoff %	49.1	48.8
Power Play % (Rank)	9.5 (T24)	26.7 (T8)
Penalty Kill % (Rank)	66.7 (28)	100.0 (1)
ES Corsi For %	61.41	56.33
ES PDO	100.2	100.0
PIM/Game	8:19	10:00
Goaltender #1		



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Category	Petr Mrazek	Andrei Vasilevskiy
Record	1-1-1	2-1-0
Save %	.870	.950
GAA	3.05	1.64

Goaltender #2

Category	Curtis McElhinney	Louis Domingue
Record	3-0-0	0-0-0
Save %	.900	.000
GAA	2.64	.000

Game Notes

Tonight's game is the first of three between the Hurricanes and Lightning this season. The teams will meet again in Tampa in January and then finally in Carolina in March.

Quick Whistles: From Calgary with Love

Carolina's blockbuster summer trade has paid dividends in October.

By Brett Finger

Carolina's quest for an 82-game season with zero regulation losses ceased on Sunday night in Winnipeg.

It was nice while it lasted, but now it's onto the next challenge.

That has been the Hurricanes' mentality through the first two weeks of the season. They're focused on what's most important: the present. They're worried about the next goal, and making sure they score it. They're worried about the next game, and making sure they win it.

This new team "culture" has led to early success for Rod Brind'Amour and his fourth-youngest roster in the NHL. If you take Justin Williams off the team, they become the youngest team in hockey.

Thankfully, Carolina's new captain isn't going anywhere.

The former 30-goal scorer for the Hurricanes en route to the franchise's first Stanley Cup (and the year after) has turned into a very different player. But while he will, maybe, hit 20 goals this season, it could be argued that what he lacks in goals he makes up for with his ability to take this group of players and lead them.

From the second Justin Williams signed what many considered to be his "riding into the sunset" contract that

The Lightning won last year's season series with a record of 2-0-1, with the Canes picking up an overtime win at PNC Arena on April 7th.

The Hurricanes' hot 4-1-1 start is tied for the second best through six games in franchise history.

The Canes lead the league in shots per game this season with 42.3. They've outshot their opponents in all but one game this season.

Jordan Staal and Dougie Hamilton lead the Canes in shots on goal with 22 each.

Storm Advisory

Former Hurricanes Elias Lindholm has gotten off to a hot scoring start in Calgary this season. [The Athletic (\$)]

The Canes stopped by Topgolf (naturally) yesterday for some friendly competition. [Hurricanes]

Kenya's only ice hockey team hasn't had another team to play — Tim Hortons wanted to fix that. [NHL]

Auston Matthews is having a historic start to the season.

In what will surely stir up some controversy, Mike Matheson was suspended two 2 games for an unnecessary finish to his check on Elias Pettersson on Saturday.

The Senators presented a special tribute to the late Ray Emery last night.

marked the end of a great NHL career, the 37-year-old hasn't stepped out of the way of criticism. He knows things need to get better here. He knows the status-quo is no longer acceptable for a team that hasn't made the postseason since 2009.

The day he stepped back in the Hurricanes' dressing room, he talked like he had been here for every brutal, painful year of disappointing hockey. Now, more than a year later, he has been put in a position to lead the way that he wants to lead.

So far, so good.

Williams and Brind'Amour are having/had illustrious playing careers that saw them play in storied hockey markets like Philadelphia, Los Angeles, St. Louis, and Washington. Yet, they both have a passion for this city and this down-on-their-luck hockey franchise. So much passion that they are willing to give everything they have in order to see it rise back to the level they know it can reach.

This team expects more out of itself. The players expect to win every night. The owner and the general manager expects them to win every night.

There's a lot of work that still has to get done, but it's a start. A really good one.

Sebastian Aho's Week to Remember

Elite NHL center Sebastian Aho has arrived.



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From the start of the preseason to now six games into the regular season, we have seen a lot of growth from the young Finn. The questions about his move to the middle have never been about his ability to win faceoffs, though it is worth noting that Aho has hovered right around 50% in the circle - not bad and not great. That'll get better as time goes on.

The main concerns have been about the additional responsibilities that the center has and whether or not the 21-year-old could handle it all.

Well, he can. Moving forward, no one is allowed to doubt the abilities of this player, because his transition to be a center has gone better than anyone could have envisioned.

The points are stellar. He's third in the NHL with 11 points. Beyond that, his defense and ability to drive play through the middle of the ice has been on full display.

Here's Brett Pesce's first-period goal against the Canucks on Tuesday:

This is an excellent example of how Aho has been playing an all-around game at center.

This whole thing starts with an icing on Carolina. Aho is out there with Teuvo Teravainen and Warren Foegele, who had just gotten on the ice for Micheal Ferland prior to the icing.

Aho wins the defensive zone faceoff and the Canes clear the zone. Aho keeps a center lane drive from blue line to blue line and goes to the net right when he gets into the offensive zone. From there, he wins a battle for the puck behind the net and circles the puck low to high, where Teravainen makes a good play to get Pesce open for the shot, which finds twine through a screen in front by Aho.

On Saturday night in Minnesota, Aho took control of the game en route to Carolina's come-from-behind victory. Mr. Pesce can thank him for this goal, as well.

This is one of those plays where you can just appreciate how special Sebastian Aho is. His skating has, perhaps, improved more than anything else in his game over the past two years. This is elite-level stuff from Aho, who burns Eric Staal at the blue line (granted, that's probably not too difficult) and delivers a perfect pass to Pesce for the deflection goal.

In overtime against the Wild, Aho made an excellent play from his own zone that led to his game-winner.

He strips the puck from Zach Parise in the Carolina end, starts the rush, and finishes it with a cold-blooded snipe to give his team the win.

I could go on all day about how great he is, but I'll stop myself for the time being.

The league took notice of his dominance and named him the NHL third-star of the week. Three goals and seven points in three games isn't too bad, I suppose.

While there will still be some growing pains, I think Tom Dundon has his first line center. And he'll have to pay him like one.

Former Flames off to Hot Start

The NHL's biggest trade of the summer saw Dougie Hamilton, Micheal Ferland, and the rights to unsigned Adam Fox go to the Hurricanes.

The general consensus on the trade: Carolina got the best player, therefore they won the trade.

That "best player" was Hamilton, but it's been Ferland who has really been that guy through the first two weeks.

I really don't know if there could be a more perfect fit alongside the two skilled Finns than Ferland. He really is as advertised: tough, gritty (not the drug-fueled Flyers mascot), and sneaky skilled.

Though, his skill really hasn't been sneaky. It's pretty clear that his 20-goal season with Calgary wasn't just a fluke. He can make all the plays that he needs to, and his touch around the net is a big difference on that line.

To date, my favorite goal from the Aho line was the tally that gave Carolina a 3-1 lead against Vancouver.

Teravainen controls the puck on the zone entry, Ferland reads him and follows up, and Teravainen gives him the drop pass. Ferland then goes to the net and follows the puck to set up the goal.

The quick one-touch pass from Ferland to Aho was a thing of beauty. That requires communication and timing, two things that line seems to already have in spades.

That trio has put together a solid 53.15% corsi rate, but they have a goal share of 83.3%. That's awesome. At nearly 70 minutes of 5-on-5 ice time, they've been on the ice for one goal against and five goals for. They might not be the three-headed corsi monster that Warren Foegele, Jordan Staal, and Justin Williams are, but they are extremely effective.

Hamilton's start in Raleigh hasn't been as boisterous as Ferland, but he has slowly started to settle into his role on the right side of the first defensive pairing.

There was concern from a lot of people (myself included) about the big right-handed blueliner's usage in the first week but, over the past three games, we have seen Hamilton's ice time grow. Against Minnesota, Jaccob Slavin (24:56) and Hamilton (23:10) were the team's most-used defensemen. The following night in Winnipeg, they saw their ice time dwindle because they were used so heavily on the first half of the back-to-back, but they were still the most-used d-pairing.

As Hamilton's role continues to grow, we'll start to see the normal stuff from him - elite offensive talent and a shot that can rival any defenseman in hockey. Thus far, he has been reliable and sound. There have been a couple of iffy defensive plays that he'd like to have back, but outside of that, there's nothing negative to really say about him right now.

Hopefully, he can continue to grow his game and get the offense we're used to seeing from him. I don't think that will be a problem, though. He's the real deal in every way.

Not-so-Special Teams

The real concern through these first six games has been the performance of the power play and penalty kill.



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Carolina's converting at a 9.5% rate on the man advantage (25th in the NHL) and are successfully killing 66.7% of their penalties (28th in the NHL). To tell the truth, they're pretty lucky that the power play is where it is, given that 50% of their power play goals came at the tail end of the New York game on the empty net.

And by 50%, I mean one of the two power play goals they have scored.

I have a lot of thoughts on the power play, and maybe I'll write something separate and more in-depth about it here soon, but there are a couple of big things that keep standing out to me.

For starters, and stop me if you've heard this before, they need to put bodies in front of the goalie at all times. Especially when you're putting a point shot on net. Justin Faulk has taken about 7,000 power play shots in these six games, and precisely zero of them have been even relatively dangerous due to the lack of traffic in front.

You always know where to find Jordan Staal on the power play - in front of the net. He can't be the only one, though. Valentin Zykov made it to the NHL because he did that. All the time. He didn't lead the AHL in scoring last year playing like Sebastian Aho. He did so by planting his large body at the top of the blue paint. I don't know if using him for 4:43 of even strength time and not using him on any of your power plays against the Wild (they went 1/9 in that game) was the best way to utilize his strengths.

Though, even beyond the power play, Zykov is in a weird spot right now.

They also have to be quicker and less painfully obvious when moving the puck. I could've predicted every single pass that was made on the power play against the Wild if I was watching the game while standing on Mount Washington looking through a pair of binoculars that I bought from Dollar General.

It's been a problem but they are 4-1-1 despite those problems thanks to their downright dominant even-strength

play. They've scored the second-most goals in the NHL with an awful power play, so it's not all terrible. The lack of practice time as of late has been a contributing factor to the special teams issues, so the next week should be of great use for them.

We Have a Goalie "Problem"

When Scott Darling got hurt, Curtis McElhinney came in and added a layer of protection. Then, after he dominated the Blue Jackets in Columbus, he started to actually turn some heads.

He was in net for the Vancouver win, where he let in three goals, but two of them were deflected off of his own defensemen, so I'll give him a break there. The Minnesota game wasn't pretty, though. Four goals on 23 shots.

Petr Mrazek got the opening night start and was fine, then he had an iffy performance against the Rangers in Carolina's 8-5 win. His real breakout game was the loss in Winnipeg.

He was outstanding. He matched everything McElhinney did in Columbus. He just didn't get the three goals that the 35-year-old got.

When Scott Darling returns, the Canes will have to make a decision on their goaltending. Do you carry three goalies and have them battle it out for a couple of weeks? I think that would be the smart decision.

If you find yourself in a situation where you have to put a guy like Phil Di Giuseppe on waivers to make the numbers work or compensate for other moves, so be it. It's more valuable to have confidence in your goalies at this point, and I'm not convinced that a team would actually put in a claim on Di Giuseppe.

The next few weeks will be big for all three of Carolina's goalies.

About Last Night: Mrazek Shows Some Magic, Aho Named Third Star of the Week

The Canes gave up plenty of dangerous scoring chances, but their current No. 1 netminder had almost every answer.

By Jake Crouse

The first regulation loss always stings. It's a little easier to swallow when you go on a five-game point streak to start the year, and it's easier still when you can come out of it saying, "Not a bad effort."

Undoubtedly a little winded from an action-packed overtime win in Minnesota, the Hurricanes came up on the short end Sunday against the Jets, 3-1. A first-period goal would have been huge to helping Carolina pull a point out of Sunday's game, but Laurent Brossoit's pads plus big saves on Sebastian Aho and Andrei Svechnikov made it quite tough for the Canes to convert a few lethal chances.

In the second and third, the Canes began to show fatigue, letting a batch of breakaways and unmanned shots through.

Instead of taking a big deficit due to shaky goaltending, though, possibly-soon-to-be backup netminder Petr Mrazek stepped up time and time again.

Without Mrazek, this game had the feeling of a 5-1 score or something of the like. He was the best defender throughout the game (sorry, Jaccob Slavin — Mrazek played more time) and came up with what may be his most awe-inducing save of the year early in the second period.

With Aho biting after a giveaway in the offensive zone and Calvin de Haan caught puck watching, Nikolaj Ehlers and Patrik Laine broke down the ice for a 2-on-0 chance. A few quick passes helped create some space between the post and Mrazek for Ehlers to score, but Mrazek flung his blocker to pad the puck down (maybe less notice — he immediately got set and for a puck no more than a couple seconds later off the rebound).



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Just moments before, he shutdown another breakaway — this time a 2-on-1 — and got back to the center of the crease to stop a shot by the lethal Laine.

The magic couldn't last all night, though. In the third period, the Jets were finally able to get one in on the power play (questionable penalty on Staal, but can we stop grabbing sticks plz?). Despite Mrazek playing up toward the puck and leaving an open net for Laine, you gotta wonder how that puck gets past a perfectly positioned Brett Pesce.

But the game-winner was sadly where the magic rubbed off. The Canes got caught in a line change, and though they sped their way down to defend, they just weren't set, and Bryan Little was able to get a clean shot off. The Mrazek Mania that had built in me during the game said it would be a glove save, but the shot was just too good.

A save line of 23-for-25 isn't going to make anyone's eyes bulge, but those who watched the game saw the Canes couldn't have had a shot at a win without him, and though we come out empty-handed, it's certainly yet another confidence builder in a strong early season.

Other notes from last night:

Of all the Canes to score in Manitoba, it sure was pretty cool to see Micheal Ferland get the goal. Ferland, born in Swan River, MB — a good five hours from Winnipeg — even got some love from the Brandon Wheat Kings, the club with which he spent six seasons from midgets to the WHL:

Valentin Zykov only got 4:43 of ice time on Saturday against the Wild. He nearly doubled that total with 9:18 on Sunday, showing some strong puck handling in his first few shifts. However, he left with nothing on the stat line outside of a block despite the freshest legs on the ice.

Is Tripp Tracy just corny or actually country?

Slavin still elite, folks

On Monday, the NHL announced that Sebastian Aho has been named the league's third star for the week ending October 14. Aho's seven points in three games last week

included a four-point night against Minnesota in which he scored the overtime game-winner, and extended his point streak to six games to open the season, the sixth player in franchise history to achieve the feat.

It's Aho's second time being honored as a league star of the week. He was the first star for the week ending February 6, 2017 during his rookie season. The most recent player to be honored prior to Aho was his linemate, Teuvo Teravainen, who was the first star of the week ending November 20, 2017.

The release from the team is below.

SEBASTIAN AHO NAMED NHL'S THIRD STAR OF THE WEEK

Forward has opened the season with a six-game point streak

The National Hockey League today announced that Carolina Hurricanes forward Sebastian Aho has been named its "Third Star" for the week ending Oct. 14.

Aho posted seven points (3g, 4a) in three games last week, including a pair of multi-point games. The 6'0", 176-pound forward recorded a goal and an assist in Carolina's 5-3 win over Vancouver on Oct. 9, then matched a career high with four points (2g, 2a), including the overtime winner, in a 5-4 win at Minnesota on Oct. 13. Aho also tallied an assist at Winnipeg on Oct. 14.

The Rauma, Finland, native is the sixth player in franchise history to open the season with a six-game point streak (4g, 7a). Aho has earned more points in six games this season (11) than in 18 previous October games in his career (10), and had not recorded an October goal prior to this season. In 2017-18, he became the youngest player since relocation to lead the Hurricanes in scoring, finishing the season with 65 points (29g, 36a) at 20 years and 255 days old. The only players from the 2015 NHL Draft who have scored more career goals than Aho (57) are Connor McDavid (89) and Jack Eichel (76).

THE ATHLETIC

Elias Lindholm fulfilling offensive potential under the spotlight in Calgary

By Scott Cruickshank

Plagued by a sore back — but still head over heels in love with the game of hockey — the boy made a difficult decision.

At the age of eight, he would reinvent himself by becoming a goalie.

Sure. Sounds like fun. Why not? Except his squad that winter was so splendid that the puck-parrying workload turned out to be ridiculously light.

Bored stiff, Elias Lindholm once again shifted his attention. He tweaked his skating posture, which alleviated those back

issues, and allowed him to rediscover the exhilaration of open ice.

Back at centre, propelled by an upright stride, there was now no doubting his direction. He thrived.

Ten years later, on behalf of the Carolina Hurricanes, Lindholm would become the youngest-ever Swede to score in the NHL. (Considering the stream of stars exported by his homeland, think about the magnitude of that accomplishment.)

And these days? Game by game, the former netminder is busily winning over the hard-marking fans of the Calgary Flames.



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Lindholm's offensive derring-do, particularly that quick release, has had local observers scrutinizing his career numbers, which reveal a personal best of 17 goals (2014-15) – a head-scratchingly low total given the gifts he possesses.

Fair to say he is a surprise in these parts.

That's understandable, according to Calle Jarnkrok.

"Maybe when you don't see him that often, you don't recognize how good he is," said the Nashville Predators forward, who happens to be Lindholm's countryman, cousin and best friend. "He's so good offensively, but he's so good defensively as well. I feel like he's been playing well, but he hasn't put up the points yet – maybe this is the year that he'll do that.

Elias Lindholm's countryman, cousin and best friend, Calle Jarnkrok of the Nashville Predators, always knew Lindholm would produce offensively. (Photo by John Russell/NHLI via Getty Images)

"I watched a lot of games when he was playing in Carolina. All these years he's had the chances to score, to put up big points, but, for some reason, it didn't really happen. So far this year, he looks really good.

"If he can keep it up, it can be a great year for him."

Lindholm's annual output – 21, 39, 39, 45, 44 points – has been more steady than spectacular. Soft-spoken but confident, the 23-year-old acknowledges that there's a side of him that has yet to blossom.

"Yeah, I think so," said Lindholm, six-foot-one, 195 pounds. "Obviously, it's a little different than Carolina – we didn't win that many games. It's kind of tough to score and we didn't score that many goals. Hopefully we can score more goals (in Calgary).

"It's been fun so far."

Lindholm got his first taste of hockey as a three-year-old in Germany, where his dad Mikael was patrolling the left wing for the Hannover Scorpions.

"I was so stubborn and I always wanted to be with my bigger brother (Oliver), who is two years older," Lindholm said, grinning. "Apparently, I cried if I wasn't on the ice with him. My mom somehow convinced the coach to get me some ice time."

That early start – even with the short-lived fixation on goalkeeping – helped to carry him to the top of the class.

Lindholm's agent remembers watching the lad, then 12, put on dazzling shows.

"He was small, tiny, tiny, lanky – but also good," Peter Wallen said. "He set up the other guys all the time. His passing abilities were exceptional. He could spin around, 360, and he knew where everybody was. He's always been like that."

At 16, he was a fourth-round pick in the KHL draft.

At 18, he was the No. 3-ranked international skater – behind Aleksander Barkov and Valeri Nichushkin – by Central

Scouting. At the 2013 NHL Draft in Newark, N.J., the Hurricanes snatched him fifth.

Three weeks later, Lindholm signed with Carolina and just months later, he was in the NHL.

Lindholm suited up as an 18-year-old for the Hurricanes in 2013. (Photo by Gregg Forwerck/NHLI via Getty Images)

If only it had been that simple, that seamless.

"The first year I was the only Swede (in Carolina's lineup)," Lindholm said. "That was tough, and I was so young. I probably wasn't ready to actually move to the U.S. and play in the NHL."

His father was familiar with the trans-Atlantic adjustment, although he'd been 24-years-old by the time he ventured into a North American barn. Skating primarily with the 1989-90 AHL New Haven Nighthawks, he also squeezed in 18 dates with Wayne Gretzky and the Los Angeles Kings.

Mikael spent 1990-91 with the IHL Phoenix Roadrunners.

"Of course, he told a lot of stories – but you don't know if they're true or not," Lindholm said, laughing. "He was good – a successful career, for sure. He took the long way, worked hard to get where he was. He's been good for my career, too. Always pushed me and helped me."

But in 2013-14, with an ocean between them, Mikael could do little to aid his son, a fresh face in hockey's finest league, lonely and living in a hotel.

(Uneasiness didn't stop the youngster from making history. Coercing a puck past Washington goalie Braden Holtby, Lindholm, at the age of 18 years and 311 days, became the answer to a Swedish trivia question. Narrowly eclipsing previous record-holder Gabriel Landeskog by 23 days.)

Midseason, Lindholm joined his national side for the world junior tourney in Malmo, and, with nine points in seven outings, paced the hosts to silver. Meanwhile, back in Raleigh, N.C., Hurricanes veteran Justin Faulk had decided that he would convince the rookie to move in with him.

"I know it was a little bit harder on him, not being in the same country," said Faulk. "That's what allowed me to realize that I needed to get this kid out of the hotel and just have him come somewhere where he can be a little bit more comfortable."

A heck of a gesture by the blueliner. (Who handled the cooking chores? "Whatever chefs were working at the restaurant that night," replied Faulk, laughing.) The following winter, Lindholm lived with Jeff Skinner.

Without question, well-meaning teammates eased the off-ice transition, but on the ice, work remained. Not that the newcomer had been glaringly deficient.

"Just a young guy," explained Faulk. "He knew how to play. He was pretty smart ... but he needed to get stronger. Obviously, he had the speed and all that stuff, but jumping up (to the NHL) and playing against bigger guys ...

"You watch him play now and maybe it was good for him to come in and not be, strength-wise, where he thought he



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should be. Because he does a pretty good job now, battling in corners, playing a more complete game.”

In other words, he found his game.

But, following the 2017-18 campaign, there was no contractual middle ground between his agent and his employers. Meaning time was up in the Tar Heel state.

A swap was inevitable. Hurricanes owner Tom Dundon told him as much, adding that the transaction would likely take place on draft weekend.

“So I was kind of prepared,” Lindholm said, “but it’s impossible to prepare enough.”

Bracing for news while back home in Gavle – a small city a couple of hours north of Stockholm – he made plans with Jarnkrok to watch the World Cup game between Sweden and Germany.

Lindholm would end up running late for the June 23 get-together. When he finally did arrive, his cousin offered him a life-changing update.

“I got a text from someone who said it was all over Twitter that he was traded,” recalled Jarnkrok. “He didn’t know about it, so I told him.”

Added Lindholm: “I’m like, ‘To where?’ And he’s like, ‘Calgary.’ And I’m like, ‘Oh, really?’ Then I started searching my name on Twitter and it popped up a lot – rumours, stuff about me going to Calgary.”

Confirming the five-player exchange was Flames general manager Brad Treliving. Then Wallen called, followed by the Hurricanes.

Not that Lindholm was in the mood for chit-chat.

“There was a lot of phone calls – I didn’t want to answer them,” he said. “I was actually with a lot of my friends (at the time, which) made it a little easier. Just having a few beers and hanging out.

“When it happened, it’s a shock, but that’s how it is in this league – anything can happen pretty much.”

The days afterward had been challenging, too.

As Wallen points out, blockbuster deals aren’t part of the overseas hockey scene. On the other hand, North Americans, even in junior, realize they can be moved at a moment’s notice.

“I think it’s weird for (someone like Lindholm),” Wallen said. “Being European, we’re not brought up with that culture. We don’t get traded. Maybe that was part of it. I don’t know. You guys are brought up with it. You see trades every day.”

Practical considerations, too, unnerved Lindholm. What was he going to do with his vehicle? What about the rental house in Raleigh, still brimming with his belongings?

“It was a lot of thinking about what to do,” he said. “Good thing the trade happened early in the summer, so I could prepare a little. It took a couple weeks, just to shut it off. Then you can handle everything, think of where to live here, the car, all that. It was a lot to process.”

While the concerns were understandable, Lindholm was eventually able to put a favourable spin on the cross-continent transfer.

“After a while, you realize what a big opportunity it is to come to a new place – a place like Calgary, where hockey is everything,” Jarnkrok said. “It was very positive for him to come to a hockey town. So, after a while, he was excited, for sure.”

From his Carolina days, Lindholm is familiar with coach Bill Peters as well as Derek Ryan and Noah Hanifin.

Beyond that? Sean Monahan, a fellow first-rounder from the 2013 draft, was no more than a passing acquaintance. Mikael Backlund, despite Swedish roots, was a complete stranger.

Slowly but surely, however, Lindholm got settled.

His clothes, shipped from Raleigh, finally arrived. He leased a furnished pad.

Meaning he is now in a good place, literally and figuratively.

“I got along (with my new teammates) very quickly ... everyone is taking care of each other,” said Lindholm. “It’s kind of nice that the season is here. Then you can only focus on hockey pretty much.”

The ice, of course, is his comfort zone and it shows.

There’s offensive production – in five games, six points, including four goals (featuring two game-winners and Saturday’s unassisted equalizer in the dying minutes).

The faceoff circle is yet another area where Lindholm is excelling during the early part of the season. (Photo by Scott Rovak/NHLI via Getty Images)

There’s faceoff success – third overall, sandwiched between aces Tyler Seguin and Ryan O’Reilly, at 65.2 per cent. (Note: The last top-25 appearance for a Calgary pivot? Ten years ago when Craig Conroy slotted 24th.)

“With all due respect – and being humble – I’m not surprised,” said Wallen. “I’m happy to see that he can get so much out of his game this early. An exceptional player with exceptional skills.”

Added Jarnkrok: “I’m real happy for him. Really happy. I’m very glad to see him doing this good. I’m pretty sure he’s going to continue playing this way in Calgary.”

But that’s the trick, isn’t it? To keep the run alive. A good week – or two – is never enough. Over six months, consistency is the aim.

“If I was being honest – and Lindy would probably tell you the same thing – there are little lulls,” Faulk said. “When he was younger, trying to learn the game and trying to get used to the long schedule, there’d maybe be a couple times where there’d be little slumps and what-not. Every player goes through that, especially young guys.

“Once he came out of it, he was able to find his game again and put up more points. As he gets older and as he progresses, he’s going to continue to do that. What did he



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have for points last year – 40 or 50 or something? There's still a tonne of room for him to go."

So far Lindholm has received – and deserved – first-line utilization. With Johnny Gaudreau and Monahan, he looks at home, which isn't easy. Right-flank auditions with No. 13 and 23 can bring out the worst in skaters who either become a forgotten piece of the unit or defer to the point of invisibility.

Not Lindholm.

"He knows he doesn't need to do anything extra to play with players of that calibre," Faulk said. "Obviously, those two are great players – everyone knows what they've done in the league – (but) I don't think he feels out of place or anything.

"I'm not saying Lindy's been around long enough to be fully established as a player, but he knows what he brings to the table. It's a good enough game, on both ends (of the rink), that he can just play. Lindy knows he doesn't need to do more to fit in with anyone."

Press expectations, though, are something else.

Daily, he's surrounded at his dressing-room stall by reporters or dragged into the Saddledome's corridor to stand in front of the corporate backdrop for scrums.

Somewhat reserved, Lindholm is getting accustomed to bright lights and herds of interrogators.

"Down in Carolina today, there were three people, four people, that don't work for the team ... in the dressing room," Faulk said. "When you're used to that and that's all you've really seen – besides maybe a couple games on the road a

year – I'm sure it's going to take him a second to get used to and know to be ready for that.

"I think he's quiet to start. He wants to get his bearings, he wants to feel comfortable before he opens up a little bit. But he's definitely got a personality on him – I've seen that. He can definitely be outgoing. That'll slowly come out as he spends more time in Calgary."

Added Wallen: "He doesn't want to be in the headlines – he wants to be that great hockey player and a good teammate."

Lindholm can expect the attention to persist – partly because of the just-cracked pact (six years at \$4.85 million per season), partly because of the new-player novelty (fresh faces draw microphones like nothing else), but mainly because of the on-ice prominence.

Certainly, the Flames' bosses – not to mention faithful followers and fantasy leaguers – harbour no disappointment.

"He's pretty darn good offensively," Faulk said of Lindholm, who's averaging nearly 21 minutes of ice time. "He's strong, he's smart, he's good on faceoffs. He can play that defensive style. He can penalty kill, block shots. He does all the little things that you'd want from a player. At the same time, with us, he was on our first power-play (unit). He's good enough, smart enough, to do all that.

"There's a reason he went fifth overall. It wasn't because he didn't have any offence, that's for sure. So I think there's room for more of that."

Pronman: Around the Farms — Which prospects are having early success?

By Corey Pronman

The season is well underway and that means your friendly neighborhood NHL prospects writer has been watching lots of hockey. Here are thoughts on a prospect in each NHL organization that I've been watching early on this season. Players are selected solely based on the fact that I've watched them lately and thought they were interesting for a positive or negative reason.

ANAHEIM: Jack Perbix, RW, Green Bay-USHL

I was at the USHL Fall Classic a few weeks ago and got to see two of Perbix's games. I wasn't a huge fan of the pick, but at those games I saw him make some plays, showing good vision to go along with decent skill and feet. He's a long-term guy, though. He's a fine, not great player at the USHL level and I could see him being a three- or four-year college player.

ARIZONA: Liam Kirk, LW, Peterborough-OHL

Kirk was a very fascinating prospect last year because he played for Great Britain in international play, making it very hard to get a read on him due to the varying levels of competition he faced, from men to junior players without even the faintest dreams of being NHL prospects. So, I watched an OHL game to see how he looked at that level. He was good. He showed skill, vision and speed but nothing

that screamed dynamic ability. He was on the Petes' second power play unit on the half-wall.

BOSTON: Jakub Lauko, LW, Rouyn-Noranda-QMJHL

Lauko had a good camp with Boston, so I circled back around to him to see how he's looked at the junior level. I thought he was good, not amazing in the one Q game of his I watched. He pushed the pace with his speed and created some offense. On the power play he's used as a trigger man as opposed to the primary driver of offense. I like him in that role, but I'd also like it if I saw a tad better decisions/vision like I did during camp.

BUFFALO: Oskari Laaksonen, D, Ilves-Liiga

I've become a big fan of Laaksonen's game, and his good start to the Liiga season has been intriguing. I watched one of his games and he didn't look amazing, but solid. He showed he could play at a pro pace, displayed good mobility and moved the puck well. He's a second power play guy for his Liiga team and still has put up pretty good numbers to start the season.

CALGARY: Dmitri Zavgorodny, RW, Rimouski-QMJHL

Zavgorodny had a good camp with Calgary and has been off to a great start in the QMJHL. He went late last season due to concerns about his physical play for his size and a lack of a great top gear. He's very skilled and smart, with a good



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shot, and one scout I talked to last week commented on his skating, saying that: "he may not be very fast, but he's very elusive."

CAROLINA: Jack Drury, C, Harvard-ECAC

I haven't watched Drury this season, given he hasn't played since the summer U20 tournament, but I did chat recently with his junior coach from last season, P.K. O'Handley. O'Handley had the following to say about Carolina's second-round pick in 2018: "He's a coach's dream. He's a utility knife. He can provide offense, he defends well. He's got that inherent ability to lead young men, and will lead men, too."

CHICAGO: Adam Boqvist, D, London-OHL

I watched one of Boqvist's games with London and thought he was good. Not amazing, but good, and the coaching staff is leaning on him in a significant manner. I saw him deployed on both power play units for London in a stretch. His skill and particularly hockey sense shine. However, he hasn't been perfect and his defensive play still needs sharpening.

COLORADO: Nikolai Kovalenko, RW, Yaroslavl-KHL

Kovalenko has been impressive this season at the KHL level where he's getting full-time duty at the men's level for the first time. His compete level and hockey sense drive his value, and he's shown he can win battles at the pro level. I'm not convinced yet if his speed is dangerous enough to push the pace, but he's got some offense in his game and I think he could be a guy who turns heads at the world juniors.

COLUMBUS: Kirill Marchenko, RW, SKA-KHL

Marchenko started off the season in Russia's junior league and it was apparent early on he was above the level. He's since been bumped up to the VHL, tier-2 pro in Russia, since the KHL may be a bit much (he's dressed in a KHL game but has barely played) but more importantly, SKA is such a stacked team he would be hard-pressed to find his way in at 18.

Against juniors, his toolkit was on display. Few 6-foot-3 forwards have his hands, and he showed the ability to play with speed, too.

He'll need time to develop, and given SKA paid money to get Marchenko, he's likely not going anywhere until they get some value out of him at the KHL level. But the early indicators remain positive and Columbus fans should monitor him closely over the next few years.

DALLAS: Ty Dellandrea, C, Flint-OHL

Scouting Dellandrea last season was tough given how bad Flint was in his draft season. I went out to watch Flint a few weeks ago, and they were still very bad. Dellandrea was one of the few players who looked like he could gain the zone with consistency with his combo of size, speed and skill. He didn't wow me, though, and he'll be hard-pressed to given how little his team will have the puck.

DETROIT: Alec Regula, D, London-OHL

Regula, a third-round pick by the Wings last summer, is an interesting athlete due to his size, at 6-foot-3, and decent mobility. My main question on him is his offensive upside. From watching a few London games this season, I've seen

Regula show a little more confidence with the puck and the occasional skilled play, but it's in flashes, and I don't think he's a natural puck mover at the pro level.

EDMONTON: Filip Berglund, D, Skelleftea-SHL

Berglund is a player who interests me and, in brief viewings of Skelleftea, is a player who looked better to me than when I watched last season. Specifically, he looks a tad quicker, to go along with his typical good puck movement. He's the QB for his SHL team's top power play unit and while he hasn't been dynamic offensively, he's been good and is taking some heavy minutes as a 21-year-old in a good league.

FLORIDA: Grigori Denisenko, LW, Yaroslavl-KHL

Denisenko, a first-round pick by Florida in June, has been up and down to start the season. That's mostly due to the fact I don't think he's 100 percent ready physically for the KHL level. On the power play he looks a little more effective, as he's usually on Lokomotiv's second unit, but he loses battles a lot and needs time to bulk up before he can be better in the second-best league in the world.

LOS ANGELES: Johan Sodergran, RW, Linkoping-SHL

Sodergran's been off to a hot start. While he's had some puck luck, he's been a top scorer for Linkoping early on. The skill level with him isn't super high, but I like his hockey sense, and he skates well for a big man and works hard. I didn't think much of him when I watched last season, but the early indicators are good (he impressed at Kings camp, too) and I see an argument he could be a bottom-six guy. After not being a summer camp invite, I think Sodergran has worked his way into the World Junior conversation for Sweden.

MINNESOTA: Damien Giroux, C, Saginaw-OHL

Giroux is off to a solid start to the season in the OHL. He recently had a 3-goal, 5-point game and has looked a little quicker from where he was last season. The question for me isn't if he's talented, he is and has great hockey sense, I'm just not sure if his speed and skill are high-end enough for his size for him to be a legit NHL player. I like the progression he's on, but it'll take some more improvement for me. He currently is heading Saginaw's second power play unit.

MONTREAL: Jesse Ylonen, RW, Pelicans-Liiga

Ylonen started off his Liiga season well, with a 2-goal game, generating a lot of shots and chances but has faded in the past week or two, being a 13th forward recently. Still when colleague Mitch Brown manually tracked Liiga data, he comes out looking favorable in terms of offense generation. Ylonen still needs to bulk up as he can lose a few too many battles, but the talent is there for sure.

NASHVILLE: Vladislav Yeryomenko, D, Calgary-WHL

Yeryomenko intrigued me last season and at the game I watched in Calgary a few weeks ago with his great hockey IQ and how well he sees the ice. He's got a high panic threshold. "He can be an extremely good puck-moving defenseman, he just needs to prioritize his game without the puck as much as he does with it and be firmer on pucks," his junior coach Steve Hamilton said. I'd also like to see a little



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more quickness from Yeryomenko for a defenseman who is barely six-foot.

NEW JERSEY: Jesper Boqvist, RW, Brynas-SHL

I've watched a few Jesper Boqvist's games to start his SHL season. He's looked good, albeit not amazing. You see the great speed he can play at, but I wish I saw a tad more creativity. When he gets space on the power play, where he plays the half-wall on Brynas' top unit, he does a little more, but he played a tad more reserved than I think he can be. That said, he's getting a big role on a SHL team to start the season.

NEW YORK RANGERS: Nils Lundkvist, D, Lulea-SHL

I've watched a game of Lundkvist in the SHL this season and he's looked fine, but unspectacular to me. That's his game, though; he's not a very flashy player and tends to get his value from being efficient with his feet and vision. He's not getting a ton of minutes, but from what I saw, he was the quarterback on Lulea's top PP unit and is getting chances to produce offense.

One other Rangers tidbit I want to add is about their top prospect Vitali Kravtsov. His KHL team Traktor, which went to the final four last season in the KHL, looked awful to start the season. Related to that, Kravtsov's KHL deal runs through the end of the season, and this KHL season will end on Feb. 22. This opens up the possibility of Kravtsov coming to North America this season, depending if he's traded to a KHL contender in the next few weeks.

NEW YORK ISLANDERS: Bode Wilde, D, Saginaw-OHL

I've generally been impressed by Wilde and scouts I've talked to have echoed that. He shows his high-end mobility and skill, impacting the transition game for Saginaw and being a dangerous player rushing the puck up the ice. There's still a bit of Wilde-ness in his game. He has a few too many turnovers and forces plays that aren't there. It's not as bad as I saw last season, though, and I think the good notably outweighs the bad given the impact he has around the puck. He'll have moments too where he launches a saucer pass that splits the D or wows the crowd with an amazing skill play. If he keeps up this play he'll be in the running for top defenseman in the OHL this season.

OTTAWA: Luke Loheit, RW, Penticton-BCHL

Loheit, a seventh-round pick in 2018, isn't exactly the most exciting prospect to discuss in the Senators' system, but I was going through some of his prep games from last season and he popped out. He's got some nice speed, decent/solid puck skills and I see an argument of there being upside in his game. Some scouts I've talked to don't love his hockey sense, and he's been off to a slow start in the BCHL this season, but I like that he's a guy who can push the pace, as seen here:

PHILADELPHIA: Olle Lycksell, C, Linkoping-SHL

I've been quite impressed by Lycksell this season. During the summer I saw a dynamic skill player but I had concern over his size and speed. He's looked quicker in the SHL games I've seen. He's been a part of Linkoping's top power play unit

and looks confident at the top level making skilled plays and creating chances. I think he'll be an important part of Sweden's World Junior team.

PITTSBURGH: Calen Addison, D, Lethbridge-WHL

Addison has typically been a big part of Lethbridge's offense from what I've watched video, but when I was there a few weeks ago, he was in his coach's doghouse, not playing on either PP unit and getting little ice time. In limited shifts I saw flashes of good mobility and vision, but he was getting a little too cute at times. His coach Brent Kisio had this to say about Addison: "He has exceptional vision. This year he's been struggling a little bit. He hasn't been very good, but we know he'll come around."

ST. LOUIS: Dominik Bokk, RW, Vaxjo-SHL

Bokk has been so-so in the SHL games I've watched. He just seems a second off in trying to make plays or wins battles. You see flashes from him of his skill and offensive intelligence but it's inconsistent. For now, he's getting third line/second power play time for Vaxjo; and given they're starved for offense, who knows if his role will change anytime soon. Every now and then he makes a play like this on this assist, so maybe he will get a bigger opportunity later in the season:

SAN JOSE: Scott Reedy, C, Minnesota-Big 10

I've seen a lot of Reedy in the past few years and I'm not sure if I see enough there for him to project to the NHL. He's big and has good hands, but when I've watched him he never shows me a ton of pace in his game or enough vision to make a ton of plays. He was touted as a U17 and I didn't mind the gamble San Jose took on him at the draft for his talent level, but I'm not sure I ever see it coming together.

TAMPA BAY: Samuel Walker, RW, Minnesota-Big 10

My first viewing of Walker was when Minnesota played the USNTDP, and I saw enough to think he's a potential NHL prospect. He's got good, if not very good, speed and has some offensive touch. I'm not convinced his skills are high-end and he lacks some finishing touch, but he's got enough scoring chance creation ability to be interesting.

TORONTO: Riley Stotts, C, Calgary-WHL

Stotts was lining up as Calgary's first-line center at the Hitmen game I attended. I saw flashes of good speed and skill from Stotts, but he didn't accomplish a whole lot. His decision making was just OK and he seemed to fade into the background at times. "He's got a good array of offensive tools. His natural ability stands out. He needs to be highly competitive, though, that's when he's a highly effective player, because there's a lot of guys with natural ability," said his coach Steve Hamilton.

VANCOUVER: Matthew Thiessen, G, Dubuque-USHL

I saw Thiessen play a few times this season, my first viewings of him. The pros of his game are he's a smart goalie with size who seems to play a rather economical, clean style of goaltending. I didn't think he made a save or two that really stood out and there were some pucks that squeezed by him I thought he should have. He did show



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impressive IQ on his reads, though, and squared up pucks well.

VEGAS: Ivan Morozov, C, St. Petersburg-VHL

Morozov, along with Marchenko (mentioned above), started the season in the Russian junior league but quickly looked too good for the level, getting bumped up to the second tier men's league. I love his hockey sense, as he makes a ton of plays. He's not super quick, but I think his skating looked average to go along with a very quick pace to his play.

WASHINGTON: Eric Florchuk, C, Saskatoon-WHL

Florchuk was one of the last picks of the draft last summer. He's off to a point per game start this season. I don't think his

upside is all that high, but he's smart and has some two-way ability to go along with pro size. "He plays with a ton of speed, but he needs to find consistency," said Saskatoon's coach Mitch Love.

WINNIPEG: Nathan Smith, C, Cedar Rapids-USHL

Smith did a little more for me when I saw him a few weeks ago than when I watched him last season. He's got good skills and vision to go along with decent/fine speed. He didn't blow me away, which is what I would want to see for a 19-year-old at the USHL level, but he was solid. He's a unique player who started playing high-level hockey late, so evaluating him is a bit tricky.



What's behind Hurricanes' early-season success?

By Scott Billeck

The Carolina Hurricanes are off to a mighty fine start, eh?

A 4-1-1 record, with their lone regulation loss coming against the Winnipeg Jets in a game they thoroughly dominated but lost on a late third-period hiccup. The Hurricanes have been a pleasant surprise in the NHL in the infancy of the 2018-19 season.

As PHT's Adam Gretz pointed out last week, the team is young, fun and worth watching.

They are all three of those things, and they're doing so in such dominant fashion thus far. Case and point: Over the past two games, Carolina has logged a whopping 100 shots on goal. They peppered Devan Dubnyk and the Minnesota Wild into submission on Saturday night, finally winning the game in overtime on sheer volume alone on their 57th shot.

On Sunday night in Winnipeg, a team playing the second game of a back-to-back put up 43 more against a team that's touted as a Stanley Cup contender. The Hurricanes enjoyed 61 percent of the possession in the game, producing 34 scoring chances, with 14 of those being of the high-danger variety.

Their loss on vs. the Jets was bad luck more than anything. Winnipeg didn't deserve to win the game. The Hurricanes didn't deserve to lose.

And while the 'L' might be a sobering reminder that life isn't always fair in the NHL, Carolina's play as a whole has put the league on watch.

The Hurricanes roll four lines that control the game's shot share. Carolina has been overwhelming teams thus far and

it's coming from everywhere. There's little drop off no matter who's on the ice.

There's a disclaimer here and that is that the season is young. These are far from concrete numbers over the course of an 82-game season, but what they do show is how well the Hurricanes are clicking together amongst their four lines and how it's having a direct effect on their results, even with the small sample size.

Are these numbers likely to regress? Yes.

But while they may fall closer to the earth going forward, they could get covered off if Carolina's goaltending improves. Petr Mrazek was sensational against the Jets, and Curtis McElhinney has allowed eight goals in three starts. That's good. But with the Hurricanes controlling so much of the offense, they're giving up just 25 shots per game. Their team save percentage is sitting at .886 through six games, which is hardly world-beating.

The return of Scott Darling at some point could help that if he's the re-invigorated man he claimed to be over the summer. And while regression will set it at some point, league-average goaltending would go a long way into mitigating its effects.

For now, the Hurricanes sit atop the NHL in possession, tied with the San Jose Sharks. They're sixth in goals-for percentage, which is simply the percentage of goals-for vs. goals-against, third in scoring chances for, second in high-danger chances for, which is shots that occur in the slot in front of the net, and first in high-danger goals for, meaning goals scored from those high-danger areas.

In layman's terms: The NHL's most exciting team is also one of its most dangerous.



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And the plan is for that to continue.

"We're going to continue to try to play like that," said forward Jordan Staal Sunday night. "It's been our aggressive style. Obviously, we're a quick team and we're trying to play that way and create turnovers. Our [defense] has been really

good with good gaps and creating a lot of shots, too, to kind of create seconds. We're going to continue to try and pepper goalies and try to get some more goals."

PHT Power Rankings: Making sense of early NHL noise

By Adam Gretz

Trying to analyze the early season results in the NHL can be a bit of a mess.

Those games and points matter — more than most people realize — but they are not always an accurate representation of what teams are. There can be a lot of noise there when a talented team gets off to a slow start because a couple of bounces went against them or their goalie had a bad week, or when a potential non-playoff team starts off on a roll. In this week's edition of the PHT Power Rankings we try to sort through the noise and separate reality from fiction.

This week we're separating the NHL's 31 teams into four different tiers:

The teams off to the strong start that are for real

The teams off to a strong start but the jury is still out them

The teams off to a slow start but are going to get better

The mystery teams that could end up going in either direction

The teams that are off to slow starts and are not likely to get much better

With that said, on to the rankings...

First Tier: Good start and they are for real

1. Boston Bruins — The Bruins got blown out in the season opener in Washington, but all they have done since is steamroll everyone else they have played. On one hand, yes, they have played four run-of-the-mill teams that are not going anywhere this season. On the other hand, that is exactly what you expect a great team to do to run-of-the-mill teams.

2. Toronto Maple Leafs — The offense is scary good, and it will only get better whenever they find a way to get William Nylander signed. Auston Matthews won't keep scoring two goals every game but he is still an elite player. Defense and goaltending is going to be a question mark come playoff time but the offense is good enough to make them a force in the regular season.

3. Carolina Hurricanes — Is this it? Is this finally the year? It could be. It might be. I think it is. Not only are the Hurricanes finally looking like the team we have been waiting for them to be, they are also an extremely fun team.

4. Nashville Predators — They laid an egg in their home opener against Calgary and became the butt of many jokes around the league for hanging a banner for pretty much everything they do, but this is still one of the most complete teams in the NHL. And they are playing like it so far.

5. Tampa Bay Lightning — They have only played three games as of Monday, but did you see what they did to a

pretty good Columbus team over the weekend? When they are clicking on all cylinders they are as good as it gets.

Second Tier: Good start, but jury is still out

6. New Jersey Devils — The Devils were one of the playoff teams from a year ago that I had my doubts about coming into this season, and while those doubts still remain it's awfully hard to argue with the early season results. Three wins in their first three games including a dominating 6-0 win over the defending champs and an impressive win over a Stanley Cup contender in San Jose.

7. Anaheim Ducks — Winning four out of six and collecting nine of a possible 12 points while playing mostly without Corey Perry, Ondrej Kase and Ryan Getzlaf is impressive. They haven't exactly looked good while doing it, and John Gibson is the one doing most of the heavy lifting to carry the team, but that's why goalies get paid, too.

8. Colorado Avalanche — Nathan MacKinnon and Mikko Rantanen are picking up where they left off a year ago and doing their thing. That thing? Carrying the offense.

9. Dallas Stars — The Tyler Seguin, Jamie Benn, Alexander Radulov trio is making things happen, both individually and as a group. All three have at least eight points through their first four games, while the Stars are outscoring teams by a 6-2 margin and controlling more than 56 percent of the shot attempts when they are on the ice together.

10. Chicago Blackhawks — What does it tell me when a team is 3-0-2 through its first five games with all five games going to overtime while also being near the bottom of the league in goals against? It tells me a lot of things have fallen in their favor early on and that the whole thing might be a giant house of cards waiting to collapse. But those points matter too, and you can't take them away.

Third Tier: Slow start, but it will not continue

11. Washington Capitals — After demolishing the Bruins on banner raising night they have lost three out of four entering playing on Monday, and at times have not looked great while doing it. But let's not panic too much. They will get it together.

12. Pittsburgh Penguins — They have had some problems defensively and with their puck management, but that has been the case with this group over the past two years. They are playmakers that play a high-risk, high-reward game. Only a handful of teams in the league can make that work. They are one of them.

13. Winnipeg Jets — They clearly have not hit their stride yet, alternating wins and losses through the first two weeks but the talent on this team is real. Be patient.



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14. Columbus Blue Jackets — Artemi Panarin is the backbone of this offense and he is off to an incredible start. He, along with Sergei Bobrovsky, are going to give them a chance to compete this season. The problem is they are at risk of losing them both for nothing after this season. Still a delicate situation for the Blue Jackets' management to handle.

15. Vegas Golden Knights — Before you start thinking about regression and that last year was a fluke, keep in mind that Marc-Andre Fleury can — and will — be a lot better than he was over the first few games of the season and that they are currently a dominant possession team. They will be better.

16. San Jose Sharks — Other than that blowout win in Philadelphia this has not been what we expected from the Sharks at the start of the season. They are clearly still trying to figure things out, but they will.

17. Minnesota Wild — They are pretty much the exact opposite of the Chicago Blackhawks so far in that they have played a lot of close, one-goal games that have gone to overtime, only instead of everything going in their favor, the bounces have worked against them.

Fourth Tier: The mystery teams

18. Montreal Canadiens — I had no expectations for this team at the start, but they haven't looked bad. Carey Price can be a difference-maker, but I don't trust the offense to be good enough to sustain this better-than-expected start.

19. Calgary Flames — If they are going to do anything this season they are going to need more from Mike Smith because other than the shutout in Nashville he has not been good this season. Johnny Gaudreau is fantastic.

20. Vancouver Canucks — Good news: They have won three of their first five. Bad news: Their best young player is sidelined with a concussion. Worse news: They had a promising start last season, too, (6-3-1 through 10 games), and still finished with one of the league's worst records. I would anticipate that is where they end up this season.

21. Buffalo Sabres — The big question with Conor Sheary was whether or not he could be a productive player away from Sidney Crosby. The early results in Buffalo are promising with his three goals in four games. If he has a bounce back year that would be a great pickup for the Sabres given how little he cost. Don't forget about Jeff Skinner, either. There is some talent here, but it feels like we've said that about Buffalo before during this perpetual rebuilding phase.

22. Philadelphia Flyers — They can look like a playoff team or a lottery team on any given night. They are the biggest mystery team in the NHL, mainly because their defense and goalie situation is a constant question mark. Early injuries to James van Riemsdyk and Nolan Patrick are not helping.

23. St. Louis Blues — They spent a ton of money and assets to upgrade the offense over the summer, and they are returning a pretty solid defense. But goaltending is really hurting them early on.

24. Los Angeles Kings — They still look like an anemic offense team that is in need of an overhaul. At times they just never seem to be a threat to score, even with players like Anze Kopitar and Ilya Kovalchuk on the roster.

25. New York Islanders — The bottom of the roster is ugly, the defense and goaltending are question marks, but Mathew Barzal has superstar potential and Anders Lee is still scoring without John Tavares next to him.

26. Florida Panthers — I wouldn't read too much into this start of this early ranking. They are winless, but it is also only three games. They are not as good as the team that was nearly unbeatable in the second half last season, and they also aren't as bad as they were at the start of the season. Having said that, we saw last year what a bad start can do to a team and if they are going to be a playoff team they need to start getting wins. Fast.

Fifth Tier: It is going to be a long season

27. Ottawa Senators — A lot of their early success is driven by a 14.6 team-wide shooting percentage through the first five games. Once that levels off and returns to normal the lack of offense combined with the abysmal defense will be a bad combination.

28. Edmonton Oilers — Connor McDavid has scored or assisted on this team's past nine goals dating back to the end of the 2017-18 season. He is literally the only thing they have right now.

29. New York Rangers — For the most part they have been competitive and in most of their games, but there just isn't enough talent here to compete at a high level.

30. Arizona Coyotes — There were a lot of reasons for optimism entering the season — and they still exist — but this is not the start anyone in Arizona wanted, having been shutout in three of their first four games.

31. Detroit Red Wings — There are not many positives here right now. They are every bit as bad as they were expected to be. Maybe even a little worse.



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Exploding offences, the bizarre Ducks and surprising Hurricanes

By Travis Yost

The National Hockey League regular season is almost two weeks old and we're already seeing some fascinating early-season storylines developing.

With a reasonably slow schedule on deck for Monday, I wanted to use this window to investigate some of the trends we are seeing around the league. Some of these may surprise you, others not so much. But all of them are interesting and will be plot points to follow as the season progresses.

Let's get started with the topic du jour around the league – the explosion of offence.

All offence, all of the time?

It's all anyone can talk about. Most everyone around the league seems to love the "new-look" NHL – the one where defence and goaltending are optional.

Through Sunday, teams are averaging 3.15 goals per game against goaltenders stopping 90.7 per cent of shots. It seems like a massive deviation from scoring norms – over the last decade or so, scoring has been stable at around 2.80 goals per game against goaltenders stopping 91.2 per cent of shots.

So yes, the first two weeks of the 2018-19 season vary wildly from other full seasons. But knowing what we know about how the regular season generally unfolds – more offence earlier in the season, more defence and more three-point games later in the season – we need to check the first two weeks of this regular season against the first two weeks of past seasons to determine if something has materially changed.

Let's focus on just the last five years. Here's how each season played out by way of league average scoring through the first two weeks versus league average scoring by season end.

The interesting piece here is that October didn't always used to look like this. In the 2014 and 2015 seasons, October scoring was virtually indiscernible from the full season. But that has changed over the last three seasons.

These are admittedly small windows and you are going to run into some legitimate sampling issues, but descriptively speaking, this is now year three of October being the wild west of offence. (Side note: If you regressed 2018's October scoring based on what we know for prior periods, you would expect to see an average of 2.90 goals per game. More than the last decade's average, but marginally under last year's big number at 2.97)

The driver behind the rate increase is the more interesting question and one that probably doesn't have a single, concrete answer. I subscribe to the theory that the drafting and developing of more skilled attackers – and development and enhancement of attacking methodology, like stronger adherence to carrying the puck into the offensive zone versus dumping it in from the neutral zone – is having an impact. Combine that with the league's general slowness at identifying skill on the blueline and you get a sizable divide between forwards and defencemen. The result is higher scoring.

Another theory: The depth at the forward position is much better than it ever has been. More teams are rolling out third and fourth lines with quality shooters and playmakers. A decade ago, you had an enforcer in almost every lineup. That's just not the case anymore.

But that's an article for another day. October scoring is through the roof and I expect we'll see similar results to the 2017-18 season. That means an inevitable draw-down in scoring as the season progresses, but not enough to dissuade the 2018-19 season from being one of the bigger offensive seasons in recent history.

Anaheim's bizarre start

The Anaheim Ducks opened up the season 4-1-1 and in a Pacific Division that's looking stunningly mediocre, that's a big development.

But these are still Randy Carlyle's Anaheim Ducks and you know what that means – absolutely ludicrous and unfavourable shot disadvantages that will set this team back considerably in future weeks.

Their loss to the Stars on Saturday night was one for the ages. Anaheim opened up a 3-0 lead in Dallas with goals from Jakob Silfverberg, Kiefer Sherwood and Adam Henrique. Any team carrying a three-goal lead on the road is going to be susceptible to some sizable score effect impacts – most teams with this type of lead tend to play more conservative in all areas of the ice and try to safely ease their way to victory.

But Anaheim took it to another level. The Ducks were outshot 30 to 4 in the second period of that game. Attempts were 46 to 11 in favour of Dallas. And, not surprisingly, the Ducks ended up dusting that three-goal lead and losing the game in regulation.

The only thing more insane than being outshot by that type of margin is the fact that it's not the first time that it's happened to the Ducks this year.

Anaheim has dealt with a swath of injuries (Ryan Getzlaf has a groin injury, Corey Perry is on LTIR and Ryan Kesler just



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returned from a hip issue) to key players and that's undoubtedly had an impact on their results. But they also haven't exactly played a murderer's row of a schedule here. The schedule alone would fail to explain how nearly half of the periods Anaheim has played this season have ended up with them being outshot by double digits.

This is a bad hockey team with a really, really strong goaltender. That matters, but you can't imagine John Gibson will be able to bail this team out all season long. Even a goalie of Gibson's calibre can't stop 94.4 per cent of shots over a full season, or anything close to it.

Carolina, possession monsters

The biggest surprise of the 2018-19 season has been the Carolina Hurricanes. Carolina has been a team on the brink for quite some time and it's possible we are witnessing their inevitable breakthrough.

I've often joked in this space that the Hurricanes would be the league's best team if you removed the nets from the ice. Since the 2014-15 season (graphed below), the Hurricanes are actually third in the league in Corsi%. They have precisely zero playoff appearances to show for it.

Why is that the case? Carolina has historically been a team loaded with poor shooting talent and even worse goaltending. So the shot differentials merely kept them out of the cellar in most years. They never had the requisite talent at either end of the ice to really turn that possession time and those shot advantages into goals, which is a huge problem.

The 2018-19 Hurricanes are different, at least so far. Rod Brind'Amour's team is getting 63 per cent of the shots through the first six games, which leads San Jose by decimal points. But this year it's translating to both goals and wins. At the skater level, nearly every Hurricane is above 50 per cent in Corsi%, which means the Hurricanes are seeing more shots for than against with that player on the ice. The same is generally true for Goal%, which is a big reason why the Hurricanes are 4-1-1 to start the season:

Maybe it's luck. Maybe it's the coaching staff. Maybe it's downright mysticism. Whatever the case is, the Hurricanes look terrifying. We knew this day would come. Now, the Metropolitan Division has to deal with it.

Pacific Division man (dis)advantages

The good news for Vegas and Los Angeles is that no one in the Pacific Division looks particularly strong right now. The bad news is that would include both of these teams.

The Knights started the year on a tough East-Coast road trip and have, like Anaheim, been dealing with key roster losses with Paul Stastny, Alex Tuch, and Nate Schmidt all out of commission. I'm not sure the Kings have any good excuse, though Dustin Brown's loss clearly has thrown their top six into a bit of a funk.

Either way, we're talking about two teams that have a combined zero goals on the power play this year. And make no mistake, the results (0-for-16 for Vegas; 0-for-18 for Los Angeles) are a pretty fair end product of what we are seeing. The one commonality is that both teams are struggling mightily to transition the puck through the neutral zone.

Vegas prefer to enter the zone with control, but they don't appear to have the puck carriers in the right spaces to accomplish it. Opposing blueliners are harassing the Vegas carriers at the line, stripping the puck, and counterattacking the other way. What ends up happening on most of Vegas' power-play shifts to start the year is an awful lot of time lost just trying to gain back the offensive zone. It's hard to generate a lot of attack when that happens. (They are averaging 91 total shots and 18 "dangerous shots" per 60 minutes this season. League average last year: 100 total shots and 25 dangerous shots per-60 minutes. It's bad.)

Where Vegas' issues appear to be related to structure and style, Los Angeles is a different animal. I think it starts with Ilya Kovalchuk, who is probably one of five best shooters in the history of hockey. In early parts of the season, Kovalchuk was being used as a screener. And then, not at all. (He was temporarily moved off of the first power-play unit at one point, if you can believe it.) That seems counter-intuitive when you remember that Kovalchuk made his career being the one-time shooting option from the circle.

Kovalchuk's weird usage isn't the only reason why the L.A. power play is struggling but it's probably near the top of the list. The Kings were offensively starved last year and adding Kovalchuk was a way to bring some much-needed shooting talent to 5-on-5 and the power play.

Los Angeles needs to find a way to make this work.



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Bergeron, Rielly, Aho named NHL's 3 stars of the week

Boston Bruins centre Patrice Bergeron, Toronto Maple Leafs defenceman Morgan Rielly and Carolina Hurricanes right-wing Sebastian Aho have been named the NHL's three stars of the week.

Bergeron led the NHL with nine points (four goals, five assists) as the Bruins won all three of their games last week to extend their winning streak to four contests. His week included his first career hat trick in a 6-3 triumph over the Ottawa Senators on Oct. 8.

Rielly posted a league-leading six assists and added a goal, as the Maple Leafs also extended their winning streak to four games with a 3-0-0 week. Rielly has a career-high four assists in a 7-4 victory against the Dallas Stars on Tuesday.

Aho extended his season-opening point streak to six games, with three goals and four assists over three contests, as the Hurricanes picked up a pair of wins.



Lightning aim to build on offensive effort when they host 'Canes

After finding their offensive game, the Tampa Bay Lightning want to make sure their defensive game is on point when they host the Carolina Hurricanes on Tuesday.

After scoring twice in the opening two games of the season, Tampa Bay erupted for eight goals against Columbus the last time out, getting points from 13 different players and goals from seven different scorers. Tampa Bay scored half those goals with the man advantage after going 0-for-8 to start the season.

It was the type of result the Lightning needed after fielding days' worth of questions about a slow start and lack of production.

"Everyone wants to score a goal and we all want to contribute offensively and I think it was good for everybody to have a game like this," Tampa Bay forward Yann Gourde said. "I think our power play was much better. We directed pucks at the net and we created rebounds, and that's how we scored goals and that what we have to do more of."

The Lightning defense has been up to the task to this point, allowing just five goals (not counting empty net goals) through three games and is a perfect 13-for-13 on the penalty kill. Goaltender Andrei Vasilevskiy has been a big part of that success with a 1.64 goals-against average and .950 save percentage to start the season.

It's a point of emphasis for head coach Jon Cooper.

"Whether you get one or you get eight, goals win the game," Cooper said after Saturday's victory. "The part I liked about it is we just gave up two, and usually when that happens you're in good shape."

The defense will be tested by the Hurricanes, one of the surprises to start that the season with four wins in six games.

Carolina has scored five or more goals three times on the young season and have fired no fewer than 33 shots on goal. In the past two games, the Hurricanes have combined for 100 shots on goal.

The offense is led by Sebastian Aho, who is the seventh player in Carolina franchise history to start the season with points in six consecutive games and was named the third star of the week by the NHL.

The Hurricanes went in to Winnipeg on Sunday and matched the Jets, a Stanley Cup favorite entering the season, for most of the game before falling after a late goal against.

"Everyone says (Winnipeg's) a team that's up for the Stanley Cup. They've proven it," new Carolina head coach Rod Brind'Amour told NHL.com. "They were one of the best teams in the league (last season). I didn't feel like we were (outmatched). It felt like we were hanging in there with them and probably had some opportunities to win the game. Overall, I'm happy with the effort for sure."



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Weekly Report: October 15, 2018

Written by Nicholas Niedzielski

The Checkers kept things rolling during another road weekend, improving to a perfect 4-0-0 on the season.

Week in Review

Team Statistics

Overall record

4-0-0

Home record

0-0-0

Road record

4-0-0

Last week's record

2-0-0

Last 10 games

4-0-0

Division Standings

1st

Conference Standings

1st

League Standings

2nd

Checkers 4, Utica 3

The Checkers fell into a hole early on in their first trip to Utica this season, but a shorthanded strike from Saku Maenalanen and breakaway snipe from Dennis Robertson evened the score by the first intermission. Morgan Geekie pushed the visitors ahead in the middle frame with his second goal in as many games, but the red-hot Reid Boucher tied the game once again early in the third. The contest appeared to be destined for overtime until Robertson found the back of the net with less than two minutes to play, lifting the Checkers to a 4-3 victory. Full recap

Checkers 4, Syracuse 1

After winning a tight battle the night before, the Checkers took care of business in Syracuse to wrap up the four-game road swing. Julien Gauthier opened the scoring early on in regulation before Charlotte's special teams took over. The

Checkers tacked on a pair of power-play tallies and a shorthanded goal to break the game wide open. The Crunch finally found the back of the net in third but it was too little too late, as Alex Nedeljkovic's 34 saves were more than enough to secure a 4-1 victory, the netminder's fourth of the year. Full recap

Three Stars Of The Week

3rd Star

Alex Nedeljkovic

2-0-0, 56 saves

2nd Star

Saku Maenalanen

1g, 2a

1st Star

Clark Bishop

1g, 2a

Notables

MORE WINS FOR NED

Alex Nedeljkovic took his spot between the pipes for both contests over the weekend, marking the first time in franchise history has started each of the first four games of a season. After leading the lead in wins a season ago, Nedeljkovic is picking up where he left off by logging a perfect 4-0-0 record to take his spot at the top of the AHL leaderboard. The third-year pro has also helped push Charlotte to a tie for the third-fewest goals against per game in the league.

Dating back to last season, Nedeljkovic has earned at least a point in each of his last nine appearances and 12 of his last 13.

POTTING POINTS

Andrew Poturalski has carried a big load of the offense to start this season, racking up seven points (2g, 5a) through the first four games. The third-year pro is the only Checker to record at least one point in each of the team's four games thus far, tying him for the second-longest active streak in the AHL.

HOT START

With another sweep over the weekend the Checkers moved to 4-0-0 this season, marking the best start in the franchise's



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nine AHL campaigns. Charlotte is one of four teams that have yet to lose a game this season, joining Chicago, Iowa and Tucson – though the latter two teams have played one fewer game.

OFFENSIVE FIREWORKS

Charlotte's power play hasn't seen much drop off from a year ago, with the Checkers converting at a league-best 40 percent clip and notching multiple power-play goals in three of their four games.

The top unit has been especially lethal for the Checkers early on this season. Andrew Poturalski has led the way with four points (1g, 3a) on the man advantage while Nicolas Roy (2g, 1a), Janne Kuokkanen (2g, 1a) and Trevor Carrick (0g, 3a) all pulling their weight as well.

Ranks

Andrew Poturalski is tied for fifth in the league in points (7), tied for third in assists (5) and power-play assists (3) and tied for fourth in power-play points (4)

Nicolas Roy is tied for 8th in the AHL in points (6), tied for 2nd in goals (4) and power-play goals (2) and tied for the league lead in shorthanded goals (1) and game-winning goals (2)

Clark Bishop leads the league in shorthanded assists (2) and is tied for the league lead in shorthanded points (2)

Saku Maenalanen and Patrick Brown are tied for the league lead in shorthanded goals (1)

Alex Nedeljkovic leads the league in wins (4) and minutes played (239:20) and ranks second in saves (112)

Trevor Carrick is tied for sixth among league defensemen in scoring (4), tied for third in assists (4), tied for second in power-play assists (3) and tied for third in power-play points (3)

INJURIES

Josiah Didier missed 4 games starting 10/5

Spencer Smallman missed 1 game starting 10/13

Transactions

Incoming

(LW) Nick Schilkey - Recalled from Florida (ECHL)

Outgoing

None

By the Numbers

CATEGORY	RECORD	AHL RANK	LAST WEEK
Power play	40.0%	1st	2nd
Penalty kill	89.5%	t-10th	t-12th

Goals per game	4.50	t-3rd	6th
Shots per game	33.75	4th	t-6th
Goals allowed per game	2.00	t-3rd	t-7th
Shots allowed per game	30.00	t-15th	19th
Penalty minutes per game	12.50	t-10th	t-24th

LEADERS

CATEGORY	LEADER(S)
Points	Andrew Poturalski (7), Nicolas Roy (6), Janne Kuokkanen (5)
Goals	Nicolas Roy (4), Janne Kuokkanen (3), Three tied (2)
Assists	Andrew Poturalski (5), Trevor Carrick (4), Spencer Smallman (3)
Power play goals	Nicolas Roy, Janne Kuokkanen (2), Andrew Poturalski, Clark Bishop (1)
Shorthanded goals	Nicolas Roy, Saku Maenalanen, Patrick Brown (1)
Game-winning goals	Nicolas Roy (2)
Shots on goal	Nicolas Roy (18), Julien Gauthier (14), Three tied (10)
Penalty minutes	Clark Bishop, Roland McKeown (8), Three tied (6)
Plus/minus	Michal Cajkovsky, Roland McKeown (+5), Nicolas Roy (+4)
Wins	Alex Nedeljkovic (4)
Goals-against average	Alex Nedeljkovic (2.01)
Save percentage	Alex Nedeljkovic (.933)



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TODAY'S LINKS

- <https://www.newsobserver.com/sports/article220047245.html>
- <https://www.nhl.com/hurricanes/news/gameday-preview-carolina-hurricanes-tampa-bay-lightning/c-300982164>
- <https://www.nhl.com/hurricanes/news/sebastian-aho-named-nhl-third-star-of-the-week/c-300957986>
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- <https://www.tsn.ca/exploding-offences-the-bizarre-ducks-and-surprising-hurricanes-1.1192034>
- <https://www.sportsnet.ca/hockey/nhl/bergeron-rielly-aho-named-nhls-3-stars-week/>
- <https://sports.yahoo.com/lightning-aim-build-offensive-effort-host-canes-045828027-nhl.html>
- <http://gocheckers.com/articles/features/weekly-report-october-15-2018>

SportScan

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

1110176 Carolina Hurricanes

Canes' Aho named NHL third star of the week

BY CHIP ALEXANDER

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October 15, 2018 03:33 PM

No slow start this season for Sebastian Aho of the Carolina Hurricanes.

Aho, who had three goals and four assists this past week, has been named the NHL's third star of the week, the league announced Monday. But it has been more than a week of production for the Finnish center, who has at least one point in the Canes' six games and 11 points total this season.

Aho matched his career high with four points Saturday in the Canes' 5-4 overtime win over the Minnesota Wild with two goals and two assists. That extended the Carolina winning streak to four games before a 3-1 loss Sunday to Winnipeg.

Aho did not score a goal in his first 13 games as a rookie in 2016-17 and then in his first 15 games last season. He had 10 points in 18 combined October games in those two seasons.

Center Patrice Bergeron of the Boston Bruins, who had four goals and five assists, was named the NHL first star of the week. Defenseman Morgan Rielly of the Toronto Maple Leafs was the second star.

News Observer LOADED: 10.16.2018

1110259 NHL

Reviving 'Metropolitans' name for NHL could work, but might want to skip that 1917 Stanley Cup banner

Geoff Baker

Inside the NHL

A local sports fan asked me about the Seattle Metropolitans and whether other hockey teams had ever folded after winning the Stanley Cup.

Actually, it happened frequently with late-1800s and early 1900s winners, but the Cup competition itself was more structured and professionalized by the time the Metropolitans claimed their 1917 title. The National Hockey League's subsequent formation and commandeering of the Cup by 1927 as its de facto championship trophy made it increasingly less likely winners would later disband.

In fact, only two Cup winners since — the 1927 Ottawa Senators and 1935 Montreal Maroons — have ceased operations.

Every winner the past 83 years is still around, which raises an interesting issue pertaining to our city. Namely, the delicate matter of hoisting championship banners for long-defunct teams that have their name used years later by an entirely different franchise.

If our expected NHL expansion team revives the Metropolitans name, should it hang a banner celebrating the previous 1917 title? Likewise, should any new SuperSonics franchise hang the 1979 NBA championship banner won by the prior one?

Legally, a court settlement paved the way to eventually reuse the Sonics name, colors and old banners if a new NBA team comes here. My question is more of a moral one: How do fans feel about an



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entirely new franchise celebrating something it had nothing to do with?

For every history buff arguing the blood, sweat and passions behind championships should not be forgotten just because a business plan failed, you'll have another demanding a statute of limitations be put on teams misappropriating somebody else's past success for cheap prestige.

Take the Senators, for instance.

Six decades after that Cup-winning franchise relocated to St. Louis in 1934, folding soon after, the "Senators" name was revived by an NHL expansion team in Ottawa for the 1992-93 season. That newer team hasn't won a Stanley Cup, losing to Anaheim in a lone 2007 finals appearance.

Yet, the rafters at the team's Canadian Tire Centre home arena are teeming with Stanley Cup banners — all commemorating the long-ago-disbanded Senators franchise that never even played there. There's a banner celebrating the 1927 win and 10 others for Cups prior, put up by the newer franchise's ownership and giving off an aura typically found in arenas of "Original Six" legacy teams.

Many fans were pleased to see the newer team bridging a gap with the city's hockey past. But some were put off by the Senators hanging banners over the ice the way championship teams do. A franchise that hadn't won anything was suddenly flying as many Cup banners as the storied Detroit Red Wings.

Additionally, the banners had the newer Senators logo and color scheme instead of the look of the prior franchise. And all had "Senators" on them even though some early Cup wins came when the team was officially the Ottawa Hockey Club and known colloquially as the "Silver Seven."

It sure seemed to some like the newer Senators were tackily appropriating somebody else's championships. The team in 2017 quietly redid some of the earlier Cup year banner designs to more accurately depict the prior franchise's look.

Some teams avoid even going there at all.

The Vancouver Millionaires won a lone Stanley Cup in 1915 before folding in 1926, but the current Canucks squad founded in 1970 eschewed the name and largely ignored the former team until 2010. That's when it bought rights to Millionaires logos, jerseys and trademarks and designed a throwback uniform honoring them, though you won't find a 1915 championship banner hanging at Rogers Arena.

In my Montreal hometown, all 24 Stanley Cup banners at the Bell Centre were won by the same Canadiens franchise that's played continuously since 1910. No Maroons banners from 1935, or a prior title in 1926, even though both teams once shared the fabled Montreal Forum and even briefly had the same ownership.

Instead, two replica Maroons banners hang at the nearby Westmount Arena along with those of other defunct Cup-winning teams from Montreal.

It's funny, though, because the Forum was actually built exclusively for the Maroons, with the Canadiens only joining them two years later after a fire gutted their arena. And yet, only Canadiens banners hung at the Forum for decades before the team moved out in 1996, the titles won there by the original Maroons tenants apparently forgotten.

So, banners for a long-dead Senators franchise displayed prominently at an arena they never played at by a current team with zero connection to them is a departure from the norm.

Sure, both "Senators" incarnations share a name. But whether that makes it less awkward to fly somebody else's Cup banners isn't so clear-cut.

Interestingly, this debate likely won't apply to all to any incoming NBA squad here. There'd be riots if that team named itself anything but "Sonic" and refused to hoist the 1979 title banner.

Why the difference? Probably because the aforementioned "statute of limitations" on their past success hasn't run out yet.

Most Sonic fans are still alive. They vividly remember the prior franchise and feel a deep connection because its relocation to Oklahoma City happened only a decade ago.

Conversely, any living Metropolitan fans have likely had their 100th birthday. Local hockey supporters have no profound connection to a team that could easily be honored in some arena corridor or side museum without complaint.

It's nice that a Senators dynasty once voted the greatest Canadian hockey squad of the 20th century's first half gets featured so prominently in Ottawa. But there is a whiff of desperation it gives off, unlikely to subside until the middling current Senators get their act together and add a 12th Stanley Cup banner that isn't borrowed off somebody else.

As for our city, the Metropolitan, like the Maroons and Millionaires, weren't a dynasty.

And my guess is, when the puck drops at KeyArena, the only thing hanging over the ice will be empty space the new franchise hopes to fill on its own merit.

Seattle Times LOADED: 10.16.2018

1110287 Tampa Bay Lightning

Lightning's owes its penalty-kill success to the art of blocking shots

By Nick Kelly Published: October 15, 2018

BRANDON — Defenseman Anton Stralman single-handedly preserved the tie when he stepped in front of the shot.

Goaltender Andrei Vasilevskiy had stopped the previous handful of pucks that Columbus fired at him during its first power play, but he was not in position to make one more. Only Stralman stood between the puck and a goal that would have tied the game at 1 early in the first. Because Stralman stopped the puck while on the penalty kill, the Lightning was able to take a 2-0 lead instead moments later when Cedric Paquette scored.

And the Lightning rolled from there.

Blocking shots is an integral part of any penalty kill as Stralman showed Saturday. That blocked shot is among many that have helped the Lightning hold the top penalty kill in the NHL after playing three games. Tampa Bay has killed all 13 penalties it has faced.

There's much more to blocking shots than just getting in the way of the puck, though. It requires strategic positioning, courage and fearlessness as players put their bodies in the way of sizzling pucks.

Players aren't afraid to get in the way despite the pain that is likely to ensue.

"I think having a goal scored against you hurts more," defenseman Braydon Coburn said.

The eight goals are tied for second-most in a game in franchise history. #TBLightning #GoBolts @TBLightning @TB_Times @_NickKelly #BlueJackets <https://t.co/zs56ip3Bnr>

— TampaBayTimesSports (@TBTimes_Sports) October 14, 2018

Being willing to get in between the net and the puck is the first step and decision a player has to make. Defenseman Ryan McDonagh,



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who finished 16th in the NHL last season with 163 shots blocked, said that knowing the importance of blocking shots fuels that willingness.

To center Anthony Cirelli, there's no decision to be made. It's not optional.

"I am getting trusted out there to try and kill a penalty," Cirelli said. "I just have the mindset to do whatever it takes to kill it off."

Even if that means using un-padded areas to block pucks.

"It might get you in the back of the leg or the side of the foot," Cirelli said. "That kind of stings a little bit. Anywhere really. It's a pretty hard puck."

But there are ways to lessen the pain. Positioning can help. McDonagh said you have to read the play and recognize what type of shot the player is about to attempt. Determining whether the player is looking for a one-timer or he's on his forehand looking to receive a pass first helps determine your angle and how to position yourself.

Now, that was fun. #TBLightning #GoBolts @tblightning #BlueJackets @_nickkelly @tb_times @tbtimes_sports <https://t.co/PzdaFz8ABm>

— Frank Pastor (@FrankPastor66) October 14, 2018

"When you are really set up in the right position, it's more of one knee down and taking it off your pants kind of thing," McDonagh said.

While players worry about getting in the way of the puck, they often have to focus on what is behind them, too. Defensemen try and take away one half of the net while Vasilevskiy takes away the other half. It's what Stralman did when he blocked the shot against the Blue Jackets.

It takes time, however, to find a good balance of positioning so that they are not in Vasilevskiy's way or in his line of sight as they camp out near or in the crease.

"Early on here it's a lot of asking Vasy, 'Did you see that one? Was my angle on?' " McDonagh said. "You keep working on things like that throughout games."

It's not always perfect, especially early in the season. But blocking shots does not require perfection. All that matters is that you find a way to get between the puck and the net.

As long as you get in the way, the how doesn't matter in the end.

"Guys understand the significance and they see that those players are laying it on the line to win the game," Coburn said. "I think it's kind of a collective ... you've got to look at yourself and say, 'Am I doing the same thing?' It brings teams together."

Tampa Bay Times LOADED: 10.16.2018

1110288 Tampa Bay Lightning

Down Goes Brown weekend power rankings: Attempting to find a signal in all the noise

By Sean McIndoe Oct 15, 2018

Last week's theme was "it's way too early." This week's could be something along the lines of "it's still early, but maybe not as early as you think."

We're still less than two weeks into a six-month season, and everyone's still got 75+ games left to play. There's lots of time left, and yes, some of the entries in this week's rankings will look silly at some point down the line.

But as a wise man once said, it gets late awfully early around here. And history tells us that by this point in the schedule, some truths about how the season will play out are starting to reveal themselves. It's just a question of finding a signal in all of the noise.

Take last year as an example. When we all woke up on October 15, 2017, a look at the standings would have revealed two winless teams: the Sabres and the Coyotes. Both were young teams that had been hoping to make a push into the playoff conversation. Six months later, the Sabres had finished dead last while the Coyotes were 29th. Only five games into a very young season, it turns out that both teams had already shown us what they'd be when they grew up.

They weren't the only ones. The Canadiens, fresh off a first-place finish in the Atlantic, had stumbled out to a slow start. So had the Rangers, coming off a 102-point season, as well as the 103-point Oilers. All three teams missed the playoffs by a mile. Meanwhile, teams like Colorado, New Jersey and Vegas were all off to strong starts that turned out to be a preview of what was to come.

By this time last year, we'd already learned some important things. Of course, we were also being misled by more than a few teams. The Blackhawks were leading the Central, while the Flames were the top team in the Pacific. And the only two teams without a regulation loss were the Kings, who turned out to be just OK, and the Senators, who were about a month away from driving off a cliff.

So what can we read into today's standings?

Well, maybe not a tonne. There really aren't any teams that are off to completely dominant or disastrous starts, and we've got a real traffic jam in the middle – 19 out of 31 teams are sitting at either two or three wins on the season. That's going to make it tough to draw any firm conclusions, let alone put together a power rankings. But we're all about staring down adversity around here, so let's give it a shot.

Road to the Cup

The five teams that look like they're headed towards a summer of keg stands and fountain pool parties.

It was a good weekend for Canadian teams, who went a combined 7-0, including six wins on Saturday. Somewhat amazingly, that appears to be only the second time that's ever happened. I think we can all agree that weekends like that are way better than winning a Stanley Cup every quarter-century or so.

5. Boston Bruins (4-1-0, +9) – It's hard to know what to make of the Bruins this year. It's not easy to be sporting a +9 goals differential a week after losing your opener 7-0, but here we are. They've done it by following that opening night disaster with four blowout wins, but it's hard not to notice that all four of those wins came against teams that weren't very good last year, while that one big loss came against the defending Cup champs.

So are the Bruins a good team, or just one that kicks sand on the weaklings but gets exposed when they try to pick on someone their own size? We may not find out anytime soon, as they head out on a four-game Canadian road swing that sees them play four more teams that missed the playoffs last year.

4. Toronto Maple Leafs (5-1-0, +7) – Saturday's showdown with the Capitals didn't turn into the shootout we were all hoping for but Mike Babcock will probably be just fine with a 4-2 win. Auston Matthews scored and had multiple points yet again, but the bigger story might be Frederik Andersen's best game of the young season and a rare example of the Leafs' holding down a third-period lead without wetting themselves.



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The win capped off a sweep of a four-game road trip and was the Leafs' first of the season against a team that made the playoffs last year. They'll get two more of those matchups this week when they host the Kings and Penguins, before the Blues arrive to close out the homestand on Saturday. And after that, it's on to a home-and-home with the Jets that should be all sorts of fun.

Hey, speaking of those guys...

3. Winnipeg Jets (3-2-0, even) – They haven't necessarily looked great, even in last night's win over the Hurricanes, but we'll give them another week before we bump them out of the top three. This week should be a productive one, since it serves up the Oilers, Canucks and Coyotes. Those are the sort of teams that a legitimate Cup contender racks up points against. The Jets should do just that.

2. Tampa Bay Lightning (2-1-0, +3) – I thought the Blue Jackets would be pretty good this year. I still do. So seeing the Lightning flex on them in an 8-2 win was a reminder of why Tampa still deserves Eastern Conference favorite status.

By the way, we're back to the same problem we had for much of last year: three teams from the same division in our top five. If we're trying to predict a Cup winner, it doesn't make much sense to have one team on our list that by definition, can't make it past the first round. It's a real problem, and we'll handle it the same way we did last year – by pretty much ignoring it until March and the playoff picture starts coming into focus.

1. Nashville Predators (4-1-0, +5) – A big win in an early season showdown with the Jets and a workmanlike victory against the overmatched Islanders is enough to keep them in the top spot in the power rankings for the second week in a row.

[Watches as the Predators raise a "Top spot in the DGB power rankings two weeks in a row" banner.]

Not ranked: Carolina Hurricanes or New Jersey Devils – As we explained last week, in the early going these rankings will be heavily weighted towards preseason consensus, meaning it will take more than a few good games for a team to go from presumed also-ran status to the top five. Other power rankings focus more on what's happening right now, which is a perfectly valid way to do things. But we're looking ahead here, which means the shifts happen more slowly.

So no, you're not going to see a team like the Hurricanes or Devils show up in the rankings quite yet. But man, they may not be far off.

The Devils are the league's only perfect team, albeit through just three games thanks to that early-season Europe trip. They've beaten up on the defending champion Capitals, and yesterday beat a legitimate contender in the Sharks. And Kyle Palmieri has two goals in each of the wins, making him an early season front-runner to win the Auston Matthews Trophy for most goals scored by somebody who isn't named Auston Matthews. (I'm assuming this award will be unveiled over the next few days.)

If anything, the Hurricanes have been even scarier. They've been speedbagging teams on the way to a 4-1-1 record and top spot in the Metro. Saturday's win over the Wild was about as lopsided as an overtime game can be. Then they headed for Winnipeg the very next night, faced a rested Jets team, and very nearly beat them too, while once again dominating the shot clock.

I mean... yikes:

IT DIDN'T END THE WAY THEY WOULD'VE LIKED BUT THE CAROLINA HURRICANES JUST MANAGED A COOL 100 SHOTS ON GOAL COMBINED IN A ROAD BACK TO BACK AGAINST TWO TEAMS THAT MADE THE PLAYOFFS LAST SEASON

— DIMITRI FILIPOVIC (@DIMFILIPOVIC) OCTOBER 15, 2018

Again, we're putting a lot of stock into last year's results and the preseason expectations, and we're still talking about a wildcard team

and one that missed the playoffs entirely. We're trying not to overreact here. But the conservative approach only lasts for so long, so if you're a Devils or Hurricanes fan wondering when your team will get some respect, the answer is: maybe soon.

1110184 Colorado Avalanche

Colorado Avalanche needs to rediscover killer instinct at Rangers after sluggish OT loss

By RYAN BOULDING | Special to The Denver Post

October 15, 2018 at 2:13 PM

A four-game road trip throughout the Eastern Conference Metropolitan Division begins for the Colorado Avalanche on Tuesday when it plays at the New York Rangers on Tuesday.

For the Avs (3-1-1), Tuesday's contest is a chance to rebound from a tough overtime loss to the visiting Calgary Flames on Saturday, one in which a lack of killer instinct in the second and third periods cost the home club.

"We should be as happy as can be getting a point out of that," head coach Jared Bednar told the media after the defeat.

For the struggling Rangers (1-4-0), the match offers an opportunity to stack up against one of the top teams in the west while continuing to improve. The objective will be to stymie Colorado's top line while also limiting bad decisions that have proven costly this season.

The Avs are 20-13-1 all-time versus New York, including 11-6-1 on the road.

Semyon Varlamov will get the start in net for Colorado.

What to watch for when the Avs play the Rangers:

MacKinnon is fire on ice. Colorado's top line has had an explosive start to the season and shows no sign of slowing. Nathan MacKinnon has seven points (six goals, one assist) in his first five games, tying Mats Sundin for the franchise's longest goal streak to start a season, and his linemate Mikko Rantanen leads the club with eight points (one goal, seven helpers).

New Av. The Avalanche bolstered its forward depth Monday when it acquired Austrian forward Marko Dano from the Winnipeg Jets via waivers. Dano had been reassigned to the Manitoba Moose, Winnipeg's AHL affiliate, on Sunday to make room for Nic Petan. Selected by the Columbus Blue Jackets in the first round (27th overall) at the 2013 NHL Entry Draft, Dano has accumulated 45 points (19 goals, 26 assists) in 130 career games with the Blue Jackets, Chicago Blackhawks and Jets. Dano brings experience to Colorado's fourth line and could slot in for either Vladislav Kamenev or Sheldon Dries, who was recalled from the Colorado Eagles on Sunday.

Wearing a different sweater. Rangers forward Pavel Buchnevich could find himself in the press box at Madison Square Garden for Tuesday's matchup. If that happens, former Avalanche forward Cody McLeod could slot in for the Russian native on the fourth line. McLeod was traded by the Avalanche to the Nashville Predators in January 2017. The Rangers acquired the 34-year old forward via a waivers claim in January 2018.

Coaching connections. First-time NHL head coach David Quinn, who spent the last five years running the bench for the Boston University Terriers, is finally getting a chance to coach against his former organization at the top tier of the sport. Quinn previously spent one season as an assistant coach for the Avs (2012-13) after serving as



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head coach of the AHL's Lake Erie Monsters, Colorado's affiliate at the time, from 2009-2012.

Quinn isn't the only one facing a reunion with the Avalanche. David Oliver, Colorado's former director of player development, will also be on the bench for New York on Tuesday. Oliver spent 11 years with Colorado before joining the Rangers in July.

Denver Post: LOADED: 10.16.2018

1110185 Colorado Avalanche

Avalanche claims Marko Dano on waivers from the Winnipeg Jets

By MATT L. STEPHENS | mstephens@denverpost.com | The Denver Post

October 15, 2018 at 10:51 am

The Colorado Avalanche signed former first-round draft pick Marko Dano off waivers from the Winnipeg Jets on Monday.

Dano, a 23-year-old forward, had three points last season (two goals) and has 45 points (19 goals) in his career, playing in 130 games. The Austrian-born player hasn't seen the ice this year and was waived to make room for Nic Petan.

Dano was the 27th overall pick in the 2013 draft by the Columbus Blue Jackets and played briefly for the Chicago Blackhawks. He can play center and right wing.

The Avalanche begin a four-game road swing Tuesday at the New York Rangers.

Denver Post: LOADED: 10.16.2018

1110186 Colorado Avalanche

Assessing what Marko Dano's addition means for the Avalanche

By Ryan Clark

Oct 15, 2018

With the Avalanche claiming winger Marko Dano off waivers Monday, there is now a discussion about how he fits in and where things stand with the team's bottom-six forwards.

Dano, who has yet to play this season, could be considered a low-risk move for a club that's trying to inject some offensive production throughout its lower lines. The Athletic's Allan Mitchell wrote about how Dano, despite his limited playing time, has performed better than expected during his NHL career in 5-on-5 situations.

One of the items that has plagued the 23-year-old is finding a team that will provide him both a consistent amount of ice time and the games needed to find his footing. Dano has never played more than 38 games in a season and the most minutes he's had in a season came in his first full year with the Jets.

A first-round pick by Columbus in 2013, he scored 21 points in 35 games with the Blue Jackets during the 2014-15 season. Dano's success was due in part to receiving the necessary ice time — averaging 13 minutes, 15 seconds per game.

From there, it has become a bit more difficult for him to find a place within a team's setup. He had two points in 13 games while averaging 9:41 with the Blackhawks until he was traded to the Jets later in the 2015-16 season. Dano received a career-high 13:50 while coming away with eight points in 21 games. Dano had 11 points in 38 games while averaging less than 11 minutes the next season.

His final season in Winnipeg resulted in him scoring three points over 23 games while picking up a little more than seven minutes of ice time per contest.

The Jets' decision to move on from Dano was hardly a surprise considering the amount of skilled options they had throughout their third and fourth lines.

Dano, who is 5-foot-11, 212 pounds, is not a big, physical skater but he will use his body. He has surpassed 64 hits three times in his career while also showing he can do well on the forecheck. Plus, he's proven capable of getting his stick on the puck and retrieving possession.

His arrival comes with the Avalanche trying to configure their bottom-six options.

So far, the situation with the team's top six has gone well. Mikko Rantanen leads Colorado in scoring with eight points. Alexander Kerfoot, who has moved from center to left wing, is tied for third on the team with five points. Colin Wilson, who scored six goals in 56 games last year, already has three goals through five games. Captain Gabriel Landeskog also has three points.

From there, this is where Avalanche coach Jared Bednar coach has some decisions to make.

Gabriel Bourque and Matt Nieto each have a point through five games. Matt Calvert has not registered a point but his 10 shots are the seventh-most on the Avalanche's roster. Although Bednar would like to see more offense from the three, their value and most important contributions come on the penalty kill.

Bourque is 11th in time on the kill with 1,114 seconds, per morehockeystats.com, which tracks a number of metrics including short-handed play. Nieto is 12th at 1,100 seconds while Calvert is 22nd. Nieto and Carl Soderberg, who is 14th in PK time, comprise the first unit while Bourque and Calvert have formed a strong partnership on the accompanying line. Defending the power play is a source of identity for Bednar's teams and it has showed this season.

Colorado is stopping opponents at a rate of 95.7 percent and that's the second-best rate in the league behind Tampa Bay, which has yet to allow a power-play goal.

Evaluating what to do with those three also comes as Bednar is determining a plan for Sven Andrighetto, Sheldon Dries and Vladislav Kamenev.

Bednar said Sunday that Andrighetto, who began the year on injured reserve with a lower-body injury, will remain in Denver for a few days before joining the team on the latter portion of their East Coast trip. Once healthy, it's expected Andrighetto could be used to help spur production on the wing.

Dries and Kamenev are in a different situation. It's expected Dries, who was called up Sunday ahead of the team's trip, will be used on a fill-in basis. Kamenev, a former second-rounder who came over in the Matt Duchene trade, is still trying to find his footing. Bednar said he wants to take an extended look at Kamenev, who is averaging less than eight minutes in two games.



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Now that Dano has arrived, the objective for Bednar and his staff is to determine where he fits within the Avalanche's setup.

The Athletic LOADED: 10.16.2018

1110187 Colorado Avalanche

Cheer, cheer for Notre Dame? The Avs certainly will this season

By Ryan Clark

Oct 15, 2018

Notre Dame is in the running for a national championship this season because coach Jeff Jackson and his staff worked to find the best talent available. It just so happens three Avalanche prospects fall into that category.

Cam Morrison was the first to join, and in his two seasons he has played a role in the Fighting Irish reaching consecutive Frozen Fours. Now that Nate Clurman and Nick Leivermann are on board, Notre Dame is hoping it has the personnel needed to return to a third consecutive Frozen Four in search of winning the school's first national championship.

"That may be a first," Jackson said of having three players who are also draft picks from the same NHL team. "We've had some teams that have drafted a number of our players like Chicago and Pittsburgh and they've had two at a time but I don't think we've ever had three."

How did this unexpected Avalanche-Fighting Irish relationship develop?

Morrison was the first piece off the board. The 6-foot-3, 220-pound forward committed to Notre Dame in 2015. He was drafted in 2016 by Colorado in the second round ahead of his freshman year. In two seasons, he has scored 47 points in 80 games and was named to the Big Ten all-tournament team as a sophomore.

Clurman was next. He verbally committed in March 2016 and then the Boulder native was drafted by the Avalanche in the sixth round. The 6-2, 212-pound defenseman played at Culver Military Academy Prep and played last season in the USHL with the Des Moines Buccaneers, Sioux City Musketeers and Tri-City Storm.

Leivermann, who is also a defenseman, pledged to the school in July 2017 after getting drafted by the Avalanche in the seventh round. Leivermann starred at Minnesota high school power Eden Prairie for three seasons before spending last season with the Penticton Vees in the BCHL. At 5-11, 179 pounds, the puck-moving blueliner recorded 37 points in 43 games before he arrived on campus.

One of the benefits the trio took advantage of was using the Avalanche's last two development camps to develop a friendship.

Morrison said Clurman and Leivermann came to South Bend, Ind., inquisitive about finding the best way to manage a challenging class schedule in addition to the demands of playing college hockey.

"I feel like it's pretty cool to show them the ropes," Morrison said. "I know when I was a freshman, there were a few guys who did that for me. I think it is important that our program carries that on and makes them feel welcomed on the team. It's about getting them comfortable and making sure they are not nervous or falling behind in school."

"I think that's very important and I am taking pride in that role right now."

Both Clurman and Leivermann have shown the work ethic that meets the standard Jackson and the Fighting Irish are seeking, Morrison said.

They've also shown early they're committed to building a foundation with their teammates. Morrison said there's a number of on-campus events the team will use to develop camaraderie — from watching a Notre Dame football game to a hockey game on TV.

Notre Dame entered the season ranked second in the nation by USCHO.com. The Fighting Irish return 18 players from a team that lost 2-1 in the national championship game to Minnesota Duluth. They opened the season Friday with a 6-6 tie against Mercyhurst and 3-0 win over No. 4 Providence on Saturday.

Morrison scored a goal against Mercyhurst while Clurman featured in both games. Leivermann was dressed for the first game.

Clurman, Leivermann and Morrison are among eight players who were drafted by NHL clubs. That does not include goaltender Cale Morris, a Larkspur native who was the Big Ten goaltender and player of the year. Morris is expected to be one of the top college free agents at season's end.

"One of our main responsibilities is to develop players for the next level," Jackson said. "I want to make sure (Notre Dame and an NHL organization) looks at a player the same way. That relationship helps in a lot of ways with their development guys, assistant GM and director of player personnel."

"A lot of them are communicative with what they see. In many cases, we are similar."

Jackson, who led Lake Superior State to national titles in 1992 and 1994, took over the program in 2005. He transformed a school that won five games the year before he arrived and has turned Notre Dame into a development destination.

Avalanche defenseman Ian Cole was the first player Jackson developed upon his arrival. Cole, a first-round pick by the Blues, played three seasons with the Fighting Irish before embarking on a professional career.

Under Jackson's watch, Notre Dame has played a role in developing a number of players. There's been first-round talents such as Kyle Palmieri. But there's also been the lower-round recruits like the Bruins' Anders Bjork, the Blackhawks' Vinnie Hinostroza, the Islanders' Anders Lee and the Penguins' Bryan Rust who've also reached the NHL.

"We're just as proud as developing guys as Bryan Rust, who is a solid NHL player, and other guys like Anders Lee, who was a sixth-rounder," Jackson said. "We spend a lot of time with our players on development."

Every NHL organization has its method of choosing players and the Avalanche have valued college players.

Cole, J.T. Compher, Sheldon Dries, Tyson Jost, Alexander Kerfoot, Matt Nieto and Colin Wilson went the NCAA route while some of the team's top prospects are currently in college.

Defenseman Cale Makar, the team's first-round pick in 2017, is a sophomore at Massachusetts. Center Shane Bowers, who came over in the Matt Duchene trade, is a sophomore at Boston University.

Jackson shared what he told the Avalanche about Clurman, Leivermann and Morrison.

He said Clurman impressed him early in training camp and they spent more time working on fundamental skills with him. Clurman's



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large frame, he explained, should further develop over time and he should be able to use it as an asset against opponents.

"On the ice, he hasn't looked out of place as a freshman. His puck skills are pretty good," Jackson said. "I think he does see the ice and has the ability to make a good outlet pass. He has some offensive instincts to his game. He's going to have to work on the defensive side of the puck and be a little bit grittier at his size. I really like his potential."

The first thing he highlighted about Leivermann was his offensive ability. He said Leivermann "thinks attack mode" and spoke about how that's a rare quality in players. Jackson noted that his biggest deficiency would be to get stronger and add more muscle.

Jackson also expects to see Leivermann be able to handle one-on-one battles in the corner and in front of the net.

"He's good coming out of his zone and can be a one-man breakout at times," Jackson said. "It will be a bigger adjustment when it comes to the speed of the game and physicality of the game but I see him being really good for us."

As for Morrison, they've had discussions about him stepping into more of a leadership role throughout the year.

Jackson said Morrison is "a great kid with great character and great work ethic." But Jackson has talked with Colorado about Morrison being more assertive on and off the ice.

"He's scored some huge goals for us at the end of last year. He can definitely elevate his game when the game is on the line," Jackson said. "Part of the thing that attracted us was he had a proficiency for scoring goals. Very much like Anders Lee in New York. He had that kind of ability because he was in and around the net."

"Cam is always around the crease area and he's just not had the goal-scoring success here yet and we're hoping this is the year. We need him to be a breakout guy."

The Athletic LOADED: 10.16.2018

1110188 Colorado Avalanche

Coach Speak: 18 holes with Jared Bednar

By MHS Staff

October 15, 2018

Altitude Television's Lauren Gardner spent an afternoon with Jared Bednar at Fossil Trace Golf Club. Here's the conversation in Bednar's words.

The following article is from the October issue of Mile High Sports Magazine. Subscribe here!

I like the beach. Our family likes the beach. The beach is fun. My son Kruz and I started trying to surf a few years ago. It's not bad, we enjoy it — and now my daughter Savega is doing it too. So the three of us will head out some mornings when it's nice and quiet and get wet for a little bit. South Carolina's not known for great surf, but you know, some days you get some nice waves and we're not that far — couple blocks from the ocean — so we can just rip down there, and if it's not very good, we'll come home.

I got an opportunity to get up to Humboldt a couple times (after the tragedy). The first time I got invited, they had the Country Thunder

Humboldt Bronco tribute concert. That was really good; it was [St. Louis Blues' broadcaster] Kelly Chase's group with Country Thunder put that on, [Toronto Maple Leafs' assistant director of player development] Hayley Wickenheiser was involved. They brought in a bunch of NHL alumni, current and former players, coaches. We had the opportunity to meet with the families at a banquet the night before the concert and talk with them and some billet families, and try to help them as best we could — and let them know that the league and NHL alumni and NHLPA were there that were all in support of them.

The next day, we went to the concert and sat with the families and first-responders. That was a real nice night. I started talking with Kelly Chase, who does a lot of work like that, and Hayley Wickenheiser, and I wanted to try to do something, Humboldt being my hometown. We decided on setting up a golf tournament and trying to help the Broncos out and raise some money. One of the key things we wanted to do was make it a memorial golf tournament. We had pictures of the players and coaches and staff that they had lost on every hole and we had sponsors. We had great support from our sponsors; most of them were local from Humboldt or just nearby Saskatchewan. They all played in it. We had some family members play. It filled up so quickly we felt bad we had to turn a bunch of people away.

It was a huge success. I think the families had a good time and there were some emotional moments during the day, but we raised a lot of money for the Broncos. Hopefully, we can help get them back on track.

[Heading into last season], we refined a couple things and studied how the season went my first year, some of our strengths and weaknesses. But we had such a different group coming in, I think it ended up being nine new players and 12 guys leaving — that type of turnaround is not normal in the NHL — and that obviously led to a little bit of a sped-up process for us to get back into the playoffs.

A lot of the credit — or all the credit — really goes to the players and their buy-in.

We were a close-knit group last year. The young guys coming in, I think our veteran guys and our leaders really enjoyed that injection of youth, the way they got along off the ice carried over onto the ice and good chemistry.

Hopefully, we can continue to grow. We have pretty much the same group coming back, just adding a few players here this year with Ian Cole, Matt Calvert, and Philipp Grubauer. The rest of our team is very similar.

There were a lot of positives to the season, starting with our star players having career years and Nathan MacKinnon having an MVP-worthy season. Everyone kind of followed his lead, and with the injection of youth, it's an exciting time to be part of the organization, for sure.

There's no question [there's a] big difference between when I first came two years ago to now. One of the most impressive things to me is the depth of the organization now. For a coaching staff, the options that you have become greater and the depth leads to overall success, more sustainable success.

We just got back from Vegas rookie camp and we've got some talented guys there. And that's what you need. The Eagles, and bringing them a little bit closer to home, will be nice, too. We can keep a closer watch on [our young players].

This is a team that's kind of hitting the upswing... it's the hard work that we had from our players. It was reflected in our record and being able to win some big games down the stretch and get [into the playoffs]. I felt like there was games in that Nashville series where we played our best hockey. We're able to win a couple playoff games, and just shows you how close it is.



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It's a contending team.

As long as we come back with that same hunger again, I think there's still more room for our team to grow as we sort of mature as individuals and then also as a team. We have a high ceiling; we just have to keep working to try to get there.

Game No. 82 (stands out), for sure. To me, the game has to be played with passion and emotion, and certainly you have to control it, but in that game at home — we were a confident team at home all year, our record at home certainly showed that — and that our guys enjoyed playing in front of our fans. It was the emotion when we scored; you see [Sam] Girard's goal from the point and his celebration. He's a really reserved, young guy, and he goes crazy after he scores.

The picture that stands out in my head is the guys dog-piling on top of 'Landy' [Gabriel Landeskog], 'Mac' jumping up and Mikko [Rantanen] jumping on the big pile there after we scored the empty-netter. It's good seeing our guys feel good about themselves and getting a chance to play in the playoffs after what I considered to be a really, really strong season from our guys.

It was fun building our fan base back after the year before. I know that they would have been as frustrated as we were.

There are worries as a coach, like being a parent; you worry that guys will come back and that they'd be complacent or feel like we've arrived. But I've already talked to a number of our guys who are already in skating, and our leadership group, it seems like we're hungry for more — like that was a taste of it last year, and now we want to continue to build off that. It has to be a conscious decision everyday by our players that this is the way we're going to do things. Our goal now? How do we go from being a 95-point team that just got in [on] the last day to being a 100-point team — and a team that can win some rounds in the playoffs — and give ourselves a good chance?

If you're not playing well, then you're going to lose some ice time — and other players will step up and take it. That's where we're getting to now. It's exciting for a coach, and should be exciting for the players, too. Players want to be at their best every night, and some motivation and a little bit of uneasiness in where they stand on our team — and continually trying to prove themselves — I think is a good thing.

[Goaltending] is just another one of those depth situations. You have Varly [Semyon Varlamov], who we feel really good about the way he played for us last year coming off that injury. And unfortunately, he had that tough break at the end of the season where he gets collided with and blows his MCL and has to miss the little bit at the end of the season and the playoffs, right? So that's why the depth is important; you have to have top goaltending every night. I don't even think average goaltending gets it done anymore. They've got to be elite guys, and we feel like we have two guys that can be that. Certainly, there will be times where we ride the hot goalie a little bit, but you know, injuries are a part of the game, and the depth that [general manager] Joe [Sakic] and his staff have created within our organization can only help us. If someone gets hurt, someone else has to be ready to step in and help you win. And that's, for sure, what we feel like we have in those two guys in net.

You've got to be ready to go day one — day one of training camp — so you're firing on all cylinders when opening night comes.

I've got a lot of faith in our guys after what they did last year.

milehighsports.com LOADED: 10.16.2018

1110189 Colorado Avalanche

After weekend sweep, Eagles adjust roster

Jerry Martin

October 14, 2018

Colorado Eagles forward Sheldon Dries was recalled Sunday to the Colorado Avalanche, the Eagles' NHL affiliate, according to a news release from the Eagles.

The Eagles also announced Sunday defenseman Turner Ottenbreit was recalled to the Eagles from the team's ECHL affiliate, the Utah Grizzlies.

This season, Dries has appeared in two games with the Eagles and three with the Avalanche. He was reassigned to the Eagles on Friday.

Ottenbreit has suited up in two contests with Utah to begin the year after being reassigned there by the Eagles on Thursday.

The roster moves come for the Eagles after a two-game weekend road sweep of the San Antonio Rampage. The Eagles won 2-1 Friday — the team's first win in the AHL — and 3-1 Saturday, moving their record to 2-1-1 on the season.

The Eagles return to action when they host the Ontario Reign at 7 p.m. Friday at the Budweiser Events Center in Loveland.

Greeley Tribune LOADED: 10.16.2018

1110190 Colorado Avalanche

Avalanche claims Marko Dano from JetsAJ Haefele

Staff Report

The Colorado Avalanche were at it again this morning as they plucked forward Marko Dano off the waiver wire, finally bringing their roster up to the 23-player limit. Dano was previously with the Winnipeg Jets but has appeared in just 23 games since the start of the 2017-18 season.

The 23-year-old Slovakian forward was a first-round draft pick (27th overall) of the Columbus Blue Jackets back in 2013. He was involved in multiple high-profile trades (Brandon Saad to Columbus, Andrew Ladd to Chicago) as a top prospect but never really found his way into a team's lineup on a consistent basis.

Given the depth of the forward corps in Winnipeg, Dano was a man on the outside looking in and will get a fresh start in Denver on a team still searching for quality answers in their bottom six.

The Avalanche have started off with a respectable 3-1-1 start but are still just a bit too top heavy and are looking for players who can help contribute in their bottom six. While J.T. Compher and Matt Calvert have formed a strong and productive two-thirds of a line, the third player has shifted between Sheldon Dries and Vladislav Kamenev and neither player has accomplished much in limited ice time.

The other issue at hand for Colorado is the reliance on similarly limited forwards Matt Nieto and Gabriel Bourque. While Nieto is once again paired with Carl Soderberg after a successful run last year, the results to begin this season are far from what the coaching staff was hoping to get from this group. They have been crushed defensively



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and while Soderberg has been able to produce offense, most of it has come away from those two as they are both low-ceiling offensive players.

Nieto enjoyed a 15-goal season last year but was unlikely to repeat that total for a number of reasons (shooting percentage regression and empty-net goals being primary factors). Bourque has spent the last couple of years as an AHL-NHL "tweener" and has not been given a consistent role until the end of last year when the Avalanche didn't really have better options. So far this season it appears ahead coach Jared Bednar has been much more comfortable with Bourque but there's no way he isn't seeing what the rest of us are in that line being grossly overmatched.

The lines were switched up a bit at practice yesterday so it's clear the coaches are looking to try a new approach and that's where Dano can come in and contribute. He's a strong skater and at 6'0", 210 pounds he's a thickly-built bull in a china shop when he cruises through the neutral zone. He's a defensively responsible player who does a good job of taking care of his own zone but he's never been able to find himself on the right side of consistent offense. He has played both center and wing in his time in the NHL so the Avalanche will have flexibility with where he plays.

Dano has produced 45 points (19g, 26a) in 130 NHL games played and the bulk of those points came in a 35-game stint in 2014-15 when he scored 21 points. To further show he's never been a consistent opportunity in the NHL, he's never played more than 38 games in a single season and he was a healthy scratch for 59 (!) games last season.

To show some of the impacts Dano has had on the ice in his career, here's a heat map of shots from the great Micah Blake McCurdy.

Dano is just weeks into a one-year, one-way contract he signed with the Jets over the summer. He's making \$800K this year and will be a restricted free agent next summer. He has two years of RFA status remaining and will be arbitration eligible. He is the 48th contract on the books (50 is the max) and should he stay with the Avalanche for the duration of the season will be the 25th player whose contract ends next summer.

The Dano claim continues a theme for the Avalanche as they now have used waivers to claim five members of the organization (Patrik Nemeth, Mark Barberio, Matt Nieto, Mark Alt) in the past three years.

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1110198 Detroit Red Wings

Detroit Red Wings make a mockery of themselves in 7-3 loss to Montreal

Helene St. James, Oct. 16, 2018

MONTREAL — The Detroit Red Wings made a mockery of themselves.

Fresh off a humiliation in Boston, they self-destructed in the second period Monday at Bell Centre en route to a 7-3 loss to the Canadiens. Six games in, the Wings remain in search of their first victory — and the next stop is at Tampa Bay.

The Wings (0-4-2) have lost six games to open a season for the first time in their 92-season history.

Monday's outing looked worse in light of Saturday's 8-2 shellacking in Boston. None of the veterans came through with a big shift. The young defense was exposed. They played shorthanded five times.

By the time Andreas Athanasiou scored his second goal of the night, in the third period, the Habs had taken a five-goal lead. Three minutes after Athanasiou's goal, Thomas Vanek converted on a power play, but the Canadiens scored again with 1:49 to go, leaving the Wings to explain another farce of a performance.

Analysis: What Red Wings' Michael Rasmussen's benching means for future

Two goal posts and trailing

The start of the game began promisingly, as Dylan Larkin's line with Anthony Mantha and Darren Helm delivered an excellent shift, keeping the puck in Montreal's zone for a good minute. Athanasiou created a good scoring chance, breaking in and firing a shot that goalie Antti Niemi turned away, and then grabbing the rebound only to hit a goal post.

But rookie defenseman Filip Hronek's attempt to contain Jonathan Drouin on a breakaway ended with Hronek slashing Drouin's stick, leading to a penalty shot. Drouin cut a side swath to the net before popping the puck behind Jimmy Howard. Athanasiou finally made good on a chance to make it 2-1, scoring 25 seconds after Thomas Plekanec.

The big blemish came at the end of the period. The Wings went on a power play at 17:36 when ex-Wing Tomas Tatar slashed Dylan Larkin. Martin Frk set up in the left circle and blasted a puck that clanked off the right goal post. The dinger came when Phillip Danault scored with 8.7 seconds to go in the first period.

Falling apart

Red Wings goaltender Jimmy Howard is scored on by Montreal Canadiens' Tomas Tatar, second from left, during the first period.

Any chance of a rally was dead by five minutes into the second period, as was Howard's night. The Wings fell behind 4-1 at 3:52 when Brendan Gallagher took advantage of Mantha leaving him uncovered. It became 5-1 when Charles Hudon scored at 4:35, at which point Howard (five goals on 20 shots) was replaced by Jonathan Bernier. The Wings further took themselves out of contention by taking penalties, playing shorthanded three straight times. Drouin converted one of them into a 6-1 lead.

Tatar tears it up

Tatar, who was coming off a three-point game, had three points in the first two periods against his old team — he scored to make it 3-1, then set up Gallagher and Drouin's power-play goal. Good for Tatar, who has rebounded after the way things turned out in Vegas. The Golden Knights traded for Tatar at last season's deadline, but he never found a footing with the team and was a healthy scratch for part of the playoff run. The trade worked out nicely for the Wings, who got a first-round pick in 2018, a second-round pick in 2019 and a third-round pick in 2021. The Wings used the 2018 pick on Joe Veleno. Veleno has five goals and six assists in eight games so far for Drummondville in the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League.

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1110199 Detroit Red Wings

What Detroit Red Wings' Michael Rasmussen's benching means for future

Helene St. James, Oct. 15, 2018



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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MONTREAL — The decision to scratch Michael Rasmussen was painted as a learning opportunity for the rookie.

Rasmussen was not on the Detroit Red Wings' lineup sheet for their Monday game against the Canadiens at Bell Centre, getting the hook even as a handful of veteran forwards have had rough starts to the season. Coach Jeff Blashill pointed to Rasmussen's performances against Boston and Toronto as the reason.

"He's had a tough last couple games, so we are going to give him a chance to take a little breather, watch from up top," Blashill said Monday. "See what he can learn from watching and then get back at it on Wednesday and fight his way back into a good spot. With all our young players, we are extremely cognizant of what's best for their long-term development."

Rasmussen, 19, was disappointed.

"I want to play, help the team," he said. "Different parts of the game are tough, but I think I am doing a lot of positive things in a lot of areas. I trust Blash and I trust the coaches to make good decisions for me so I am just going to go up there and learn."

With Martin Frk getting the nod to make his season debut, a forward had to come out. Rasmussen, who even at 6-foot-6 is going through an adjustment period as he learns to play against men, hasn't distinguished himself — he has one assist in five games, during which he averaged 12:34 minutes per game, 2:05 of that coming on power plays.

But there are veterans who have had noticeably bad starts, such as Justin Abdelkader (no points, minus-5 in five games) and Thomas Vanek (no points, minus-6).

Asked if there wasn't another forward more deserving of getting the hook, Blashill reiterated he sees it as an opportunity for Rasmussen to benefit.

"If he's out for two weeks, that's a real question," Blashill said. "A huge part of development is putting him in position to succeed. Sometimes taking a break, whether it's a break to learn new habits or a break to get a breather a little bit — when it starts to go the wrong way as a player, sometimes you need some help and I am giving him what I think is some help."

Red Wings forward Michael Rasmussen gets tangled up with Penguins goaltender Casey DeSmith during the second period of the Wings' 3-2 preseason win over the Penguins on Sunday, Sept. 23, 2018, in Pittsburgh.

"The thing that he has to learn is to make sure that he's skating the second he gets that puck, otherwise people are on top of him too quick and that's something we've talked about. It's something he would have gotten away with at the junior level that he's not getting away with now and just to learn that space. We need big men in the o-zone to hold onto the puck and he is a guy who can do it, he just has to learn how to knock people off as they're checking him and find ways to hold onto the puck a little bit more."

Rookie defenseman Dennis Cholowski just spent two games watching from the press box as he recovered from an upper-body injury, and said it was helpful to see the game from that angle.

"Getting to watch the defensemen on both teams, seeing what they do, seeing what their tendencies are — watching the older guys and trying to learn from them, it is of good value to be up there for a few games," Cholowski said.

Bruins center Noel Acciari tries to score as Red Wings goaltender Jonathan Bernier makes a save during the second period of the Wings' 8-2 loss on Saturday, Oct. 13, 2018, in Boston. Mary Schwalm, AP

Maybe Rasmussen will benefit from sitting out a game, even two. But ultimately he needs to play, and play regularly.

The Wings don't have the option to send Rasmussen to Grand Rapids because he has a year left of junior eligibility, so he either has to be with them or his junior team (Filip Zadina was an exception because he was a European player on loan to his Canadian junior club, making him AHL eligible).

It will be interesting to see if Rasmussen returns to the lineup as soon as next game (Thursday at Tampa Bay). If he plays more than nine games with the Wings, it burns a year of his entry-level contract, even if he ends up being returned to his junior team.

Part of the reason the Wings had Rasmussen earmarked for their squad during the offseason was how he dominated last season in juniors: 28 points the last 25 regular-season games for Tri-City, then 33 points in 14 playoff games.

Blashill was asked if he still sees Rasmussen as NHL ready this season.

"I think Ras is going to be a real good NHL player," Blashill said. "I have tons of belief in him. I'm hoping he's an even better player next time he plays and he keeps taking steps in the right direction. I think he's going to be a real good NHL player. How quick? We'll see."

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1110200 Detroit Red Wings

Detroit Red Wings may bench rookie Michael Rasmussen. Why that matters

Helene St. James, Oct. 15, 2018

MONTREAL — What's next for Detroit Red Wings prospect Michael Rasmussen? What's best for him?

With Martin Frk making his season debut Monday at Montreal, another forward will have to sit. Coach Jeff Blashill declined to confirm who, but based on Sunday's practice, it looks like it's Rasmussen.

Rasmussen, 19, is one of six rookies on the Wings, and he has struggled to stand out as the whole team has had a rough start. But among the forwards, it is Justin Abdelkader who stands out most for his start - no points and minus-5 in five games. Rasmussen had one assist in five games, even as his average ice time of 12:34 per game includes 2:05 minutes on power plays, tied for third-highest on the team among those who have played five games.

If Rasmussen is a healthy scratch, the decision will bring to the forefront a discussion about what's best long term for Rasmussen, who the Wings drafted at ninth overall in 2017. Unlike 2018 first-round pick Filip Zadina, Rasmussen cannot be sent to Grand Rapids. Rasmussen has a year left of junior eligibility, so he either has to be with the Wings, or with his junior team, the Tri-City Americans in the Western Hockey League.

If the Wings return Rasmussen to juniors before he has played 10 games, it does not affect his entry-level contract. If they send him back after he has played 10 games, it burns the first year of the contract.

The bigger question, though, is what is best for Rasmussen's development? Would it benefit him to go back to juniors? After a January return from wrist surgery last season, Rasmussen produced 15 goals among 28 points in the last 25 regular-season games for Tri-City — and then went on a tear in the playoffs, producing 14 goals and 17 assists in 14 games. He had multi-point performances in 10 games, and only went without a point in one game.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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It's a situation that warrants monitoring on a game-by-game basis.

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1110201 Detroit Red Wings

Game thread: Red Wings lose to Canadiens, 7-3

Helene St. James, Oct. 15, 2018

Detroit Red Wings (0-3-2, 2 points) at Montreal Canadiens (2-1-1, 5 points)

When: 7:30 p.m. tonight.

Where: Bell Centre, Montreal, Quebec.

TV: Fox Sports Detroit.

Radio: 97.1 FM (Red Wings radio affiliates).

Game notes

Sizing up the Canadiens: The Canadiens are exceeding expectations to start the season, beating Pittsburgh twice in a week and pushing Toronto to overtime in the season opener. Former Wings forward Tomas Tatar had a big night Saturday, scoring twice and earning an assist. He has four points on the season, part of a three-way tie for the team lead. Former Wings defenseman Xavier Ouellet has found a foothold in the lineup, bumping veteran Karl Alzner. Rookie Jesperi Kotkaniemi, the third overall pick in June's draft, has one assist.

Winged wheel WATCH: Martin Frk will make his season debut as the Wings seek offense (they've averaged 2.20 goals per game, tied for 25th entering Sunday). Rookie defenseman Dennis Cholowski is expected to return after missing a game because of injury. The 20-year-old is poised and good at getting his shot through from the blueline.

The Challenge: The Wings have demonstrated they can play well (like at Los Angeles) and they better show some of that work ethic from the start after the way things went at Boston. Hold onto the puck, get it on net, and don't give it away like candy at Halloween. The Wings are low on confidence and the only way to get a boost is to work hard and look competitive.

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1110202 Detroit Red Wings

Detroit Red Wings' difficulties continue as they lose ugly to Montreal Canadeins

STAFF

Montreal — As bad as Saturday's loss in Boston was, this was — incredibly — just as bad.

The Red Wings are looking for their first victory and they're not going to get it playing like this.

Monday, it was an ugly 7-3 loss in Montreal, as the Red Wings fell to six consecutive winless games (0-4-2).

If you thought Saturday's 8-2 loss in Boston was difficult to stomach, all you had to was wait another 48 hours.

There were few more positives Monday. The Wings did outplay Montreal for the beginning of the first period and most of the third when the game was out of reach.

But the rest of it, the Wings played ghastly hockey.

"We just have to have some pride," forward Gustav Nyquist said. "This is not what we want, travel around and lose with these numbers. It's embarrassing."

When the Canadiens (3-1-1) began rolling, the Wings had no answer. Bad defense began getting worse, players were trying to do too much, and Montreal scored easy goals.

"We have to show some pride, enough is enough," defenseman Niklas Kronwall said. "We have to go to work. We don't even give ourselves a chance right now. We're hanging our goalies out to dry."

"We're not working hard enough to create our own chances."

Suddenly, it might be time to think about this.

It's getting to feel like this record is becoming relevant so ... the NHL record for losses to begin a season is 11, by the New York Rangers (1943-44) and Arizona (2017-18).

The way the Wings are playing, that's doable.

The Wings began Monday's game well, pressured Montreal, controlled the puck and did most of the things coach Jeff Blashill has been preaching.

Then, Filip Hronek slashed Jonathan Drouin to prevent a scoring opportunity, Drouin was awarded a penalty shot and scored at 7 minutes, 13 seconds of the first period, and the rout slowly was on.

"We stayed with it," Blashill said. "(Then we) gave away easy goals, and what's happening is, you're trying to score and you end up not doing it the right way and it ends up in your net. The second period was a similar deal to Boston where we just came up hoping and cheating for offense instead of doing it the right way."

The Wings' aren't scoring many goals, but it's with the defensive end that Blashill isn't happy.

"We've talked so much about offense at the beginning of the year, but we have to figure out how to defend better," Blashill said. "We have to make sure we do a better job of making people go through us to get to the net."

"We have a tendency when things go the wrong way, we stop playing the right way and start hoping for offense. We have to stop it now."

Andreas Athanasiou had his first two goals of the season and Thomas Vanek (power play) had his first.

Other than that, just a poor night.

Here are some other observations:

•For all the optimism early on about the young Wings' defense, the rest of the league is catching up to them. But also, the losing might be having an effect, with everyone attempting to do more at the first signs of trouble.

The defensemen aren't getting much help from their teammates up front.

"In Boston we made it hard on the (defense), tonight our defense made some tough reads," Blashill said. "We're going to have to get that fixed. All you can do is go to work and try to get better at it."

•Don't blame the goaltenders Jimmy Howard and Jonathan Bernier for these last two losses.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Opposing teams are getting easy scoring chances. There's nothing Howard or Bernier can do.

"We don't even give ourselves a chance," Kronwall said. "We're hanging our goalies to dry, back door tap-ins left and right. It's tough to win hockey games like that."

•Former Red Wings Tomas Tatar and Xavier Ouellet have found a home in Montreal.

Ouellet is from here, so you can imagine the excitement for a kid from Montreal to put on the Canadiens sweater.

After a meteoric start to his pro career — remember he jumped right into the playoffs in 2014 — Ouellet slowly fell out of favor and was clearly passed by Nick Jensen on the depth chart — and had no chance with all the young defensemen coming into the NHL.

By all indications, Ouellet has played well in the early going and looked good Monday against his former team.

Tatar, for whom the Wings amazingly got a 1st-, 2nd-, and 3rd round pick from Vegas at the trade deadline last spring, never adjusted to the Golden Knights — whose coaching staff never warmed to Tatar, either, making him a frequent healthy scratch during the playoffs.

Tatar was part of the package that Vegas sent to Montreal for Max Pacioretty (Michigan) before this season and now has three goals and four assists in five games.

Detroit News LOADED: 10.16.2018

1110203 Detroit Red Wings

Rookie Michael Rasmussen is the odd man out as Blashill shakes up lineup

Staff

Montreal — Coach Jeff Blashill shuffled his lineup going into Monday's game against Canadiens and the odd man out is rookie forward Michael Rasmussen.

The question moving forward, now, is whether Rasmussen can rise above this one-game benching and get back into the lineup.

Martin Frk made his season debut as Rasmussen, who like many other Wings' forwards have struggled to begin the season, took a seat in the press box.

"We looked at the last number of games, and Raz is a real good player and he's going to be a good player, but as a young player, sometimes it's good to take a breather," Blashill said. "He's had a tough last couple of games and we'll give him a chance to take a little breather and watch from up top.

"We'll see what he can learn from watching and get back at it Wednesday (for practice) and fight his way back into a good spot."

Rasmussen has a point, an assist, in five games with five shots on net and is an even plus-minus, while averaging 12 minutes, 33 seconds of ice time.

Not great, but not worst on the roster, either.

Rasmussen was disappointed by the decision but understood.

"For sure I'm disappointed, I want to play and help the team," Rasmussen said. "I'll keep working and just watch the game tonight and just kind of learn."

For Rasmussen, 19, the issue is what's best for his long-term development.

If Rasmussen plays more than 10 games, it counts as the first year of his entry-level pro contract. If the Wings return Rasmussen to his Tri-City (WHL) junior team before the 10-game mark, it doesn't affect his contract.

Blashill said he talked with general manager Ken Holland Sunday. Blashill was only thinking about Monday, and the short-term, but also said Rasmussen's long-term development is the most important aspect.

"Right now we're talking about tonight and that's it," Blashill said. "A lot of times with any player, but especially young players, they're best served rather than letting it spiral the wrong way — it's been a two tough games — rather than spiral the wrong way, let's nip it in the bud right now and get a breather and get right back at it.

"The way the rules are set up, it's either the NHL or juniors and that's unfortunate for a lot of guys. Raz is going to be a real good NHL player, I have tons of belief in him. I'm hoping that he moves from this and is an even better player. He keeps taking steps in the right direction.

"He's going to be a real good NHL player, how quick, we'll see, so we'll keep monitoring."

The Wings certainly will not sit Rasmussen for extended periods of time.

"One hundred percent, again, we're talking about one game tonight and we'll see what tomorrow brings," Blashill said. "But with all of our young players, we're extremely cognizant of what is best for their long-term development.

"Without a doubt, we'll continue to monitor that."

The speed and quickness of the last two games, losses to Toronto and Boston, seemed to set Rasmussen back.

"Out West (losses in Los Angeles and Anaheim) it wasn't quite as quick, it was more of a big man's game and he excelled," Blashill said. "The last two have been quick, and he has to learn to make sure he's skating the second he has the puck, or people are on top of him quick."

Rasmussen admitted the speed of the NHL has been eye-opening.

"The overall speed and limited space, it's obviously a tight game," Rasmussen said. "Different parts of the game are tough. I'm doing a lot of positive things in a lot of areas and some negative stuff, as well. That kind of stuff, I will clean up and learn from.

"I trust Blash and the coaches to make good decisions for me, so I'll go up there (press box) and learn."

When asked about the potential of returning to junior, Rasmussen sternly replied he hadn't thought about that possibility.

"I'm not really thinking about it," Rasmussen said. "I'm playing for the Red Wings right now."

Ice chips

Defenseman Dennis Cholowski (upper body) returned to the lineup, replacing Danny DeKeyser (hand). Cholowski missed the last two games.

DeKeyser will be examined Tuesday to get a better determination of how long he'll be out.

... Former Wings forward Tomas Tatar and defenseman Xavier Ouellet are both with Montreal, and each player has played well in the early going. Ouellet, a native of Montreal, was passed on the depth chart by numerous young Wings defensemen.



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"We had a number of young defensemen that were coming in and we knew wanted to get a look at," Blashill said. "I never doubted whether Xavier was an NHL player. He's an NHL player and he's doing a good job here."

Detroit News LOADED: 10.16.2018

1110204 Detroit Red Wings

Khari Willis of Michigan State Spartans wins Big Ten defensive award

Published 11:13 a.m. ET Oct. 15, 2018

Michigan State put together one of its best overall defensive efforts of the season Saturday in a 21-17 victory over Penn State, and it resulted in a first-time honor for safety Khari Willis.

The senior captain was named Big Ten Defensive Player of the Week on Monday, the first one of his career.

Willis had a season-high nine tackles, including seven solo stops, while forcing a fumble on Penn State quarterback Trace McSorley in the first quarter. Willis also had a pass break-up. The Spartans held Penn State to season lows in points (17) and first downs (14).

Willis is the first Michigan State player to earn top defensive honors since linebacker Joe Bachie on Oct. 23, 2017.

No. 24 Michigan State (4-2, 2-1 Big Ten) hosts No. 6 Michigan (6-1, 4-0) at noon on Saturday.

Other Big Ten winners:

Co-offense: Iowa QB Nate Stanley, who threw six touchdown passes in the win over Indiana, tying for second most in Hawkeyes history. He finished 21 of 33 passing for 320 yards.

Co-offense: Northwestern WR Flynn Nagel, who had 12 receptions for 220 yards in a win over Nebraska. It is the most receiving yards by a Northwestern player since 1980.

Special teams: Northwestern K Drew Luckenbaugh, who kicked the winning field goal in overtime against Nebraska, a 37-yarder.

Freshman: Minnesota RB Mohamed Ibrahim, who rushed for 157 yards and two touchdowns in a loss to Ohio State.

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1110205 Detroit Red Wings

Red Wings whipped again, winless skid at six

By The Associated Press

MONTREAL -- Jonathan Drouin scored twice, Tomas Plekanec had a goal in his 1,000th game, and the Montreal Canadiens beat the Detroit Red Wings 7-3 Monday night.

Tomas Tatar, Brendan Gallagher, Charles Hudon and Paul Byron also scored for the Canadiens. With Carey Price still out with the flu, backup goalie Antti Niemi stopped 25 shots for his second consecutive victory.

Andreas Athanasiou had two goals and Thomas Vanek also scored for the rebuilding Wings, who are winless through six games (0-4-2) for their worst start in franchise history. Jimmy Howard gave up five goals on 20 shots before being replaced by Jonathan Bernier in the second period. Bernier finished with 13 saves.

The Red Wings, who were coming off an 8-2 loss to Boston, have now allowed an NHL-worst 29 goals over six games.

Montreal has won six straight against Detroit dating back to March 2017.

After Drouin opened the scoring for Montreal on a penalty shot at 7:13 of the first, Plekanec made it 2-0 by shooting a puck on goal that Filip Hronek deflected past his own goalie at 16:56.

Athanasiou got one back for Detroit 28 seconds later before Tatar restored the two-goal lead by batting a puck in mid-air past Howard in the waning seconds of the first.

Gallagher got his third of the season at 3:52 of the second on a nice pass from Tatar. Hudon made it 5-1 less than a minute later.

Drouin, on the power play, scored his second of the game with just over 4 minutes remaining in the period as he shovelled a loose puck past a sprawled-out Bernier.

Athanasiou pulled the Red Wings to 6-2 at 7:30 and Vanek caught Niemi looking the wrong way on a wraparound at 10:11 for his first point of the season.

Byron added Montreal's seventh goal of the game with 1:49 remaining.

NOTES: Plekanec became the 324th player in NHL history, and the 13th active, to reach the 1,000-game plateau. The crowd gave him a standing ovation in the first period. The Czech native is the 12th Canadiens player to reach the milestone. ... Like Price, Andrew Shaw was sidelined with the flu.

Michigan Live LOADED: 10.16.2018

1110331 Websites

The Athletic / Sibling rivalry takes center ice, as Jack Hughes shows why he'll likely be No. 1 in NHL Draft

By Craig Custance

Oct 15, 2018

ANN ARBOR, Mich. — The blood — that's what stands out in her memory. Ellen Hughes' son Jack was in the basement of their New Hampshire home, and a line of red ran right down the middle of his head.

"I thought his skull and head was cracked in two," she said, now able to laugh about it.

It wasn't. But the injury, suffered during a basement hockey game between brothers Jack and Quinn Hughes, was serious enough that it required stitches, the result of a check into the boards.

Asked how old Jack was when it happened, Ellen calculates it much in the same way many families inside the hockey world calculate dates, places and times — by the location of where they lived in that moment.

This happened in Manchester, New Hampshire, while Jim Hughes was coaching in the AHL. It was right before Jim took a job with the Marlies, necessitating a move to Toronto. So that gives us a range.

"They must have been 5 and 3," Ellen said, doing the quick math.



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Thankfully, the injuries didn't happen often but the intense competition between brothers certainly did. Recently, those competitions between Jack and Quinn have been contained to basements, road hockey, outdoor rinks and mini sticks.

On Friday night, USA Hockey's National Team Development Program — one that features Jack Hughes, the expected No. 1 overall pick in the 2019 draft — took its U18 team to Ann Arbor. Michigan's best player is his older brother, Quinn Hughes, the No. 7 overall pick in 2018 by the Vancouver Canucks.

Before the game, Quinn gave his parents the heads up to keep a close eye on the opening faceoff. The first time these two brothers played head-to-head featured them squaring off at center ice, with Michigan coach Mel Pearson sending out his best defenseman to take the draw and create an incredible moment for the family.

"That's Mel for you," Jim Hughes said, standing and watching the game from the highest possible spot above one of the goals. "It's a memory, it's a journey and it's a great setting."

It was. As the proud father of three boys, his youngest Luke sitting just a few feet away, was talking about the moment, the Michigan pep band was playing. The crowd was into it — this was an exhibition game, but how often does the next franchise center drop into town? And how often is he competing for the first time against his brother, one of the most dynamic young defenseman prospects in the game?

The Yost Ice Arena fans often broke out into chants of "We Want Jack!"— although it's hard to say whether they wanted him to attend Michigan or if these were displaced Red Wings fans hoping for some lottery luck in the spring. Either way it made for a fun atmosphere.

"It's a different and a new experience for Ellen and I, and obviously for the boys," Jim Hughes said. "We want Quinn to have success. We're hoping Jack and his teammates have success. It's different emotions."

Said Ellen during the second intermission: "What I don't like is when they're on the ice together. I'm great when Jack is out there, I can root for Jack. When Quinn is out there, I can root for Quinn. But they've been a ton out there together. You want Jack to be creative offensively but I don't want him to score with Quinn on the ice. It's a double-edged sword."

For those who came specifically to get an early glimpse at the player who is the inspiration behind the #LoseForHughes movement, the 17-year-old Jack Hughes didn't disappoint. By the end of the first period, he had a goal and an assist. By the end of the game, he had three points and led his team to a convincing 6-3 win over the Wolverines.

"It kind of felt like a scrimmage in the summer," Jack said. "I've never really played against him in an actual organized game. ... It was obviously sick."

After the handshake line, Quinn skated over to Jack for a quick word as they both were getting ready to leave the ice.

Great game. I'm proud of you. Go get it tomorrow.

"He's such a supportive brother," Jack said.

Tomorrow meant another game against a team filled with players much older than himself and his USNTDP teammates; this one will be against Minnesota less than 24 hours later. This is a special group of U18 players at the U.S. development program; last season was a historic one for these players and they have already beaten two college hockey powers in Notre Dame and Michigan.

Depending on how this season goes, there could be as many as 10 first-round picks playing on this team. Jack Hughes should go No. 1 overall. It has a rare goalie prospect in Spencer Knight, who is going to make a run at being a first-round pick during an era in which

teams would much rather let someone else take that risk in goal during the draft.

And while these kids did end up losing a game to Minnesota on Saturday, this weekend was a great example as to why Jack Hughes chose this path. The grind and the competition along with trying to accomplish something great with his teammates combine for a great source of motivation.

"I think a lot of people, they don't understand how difficult the U18 schedule is," Jim Hughes said. "They have no idea that when we go into Notre Dame, it's a full team of (2001-born players) playing against 96s, 97s and 98s. ... Ferris State had 24 year olds. It's a challenge."

"Jack is playing against men and men that are keying on him," USNTDP coach John Wroblewski said.

It was part of the appeal. Jack could have accelerated academically to join his brother Quinn in Ann Arbor. According to Pat Brisson, who is Jack's adviser and colleague with Jim Hughes at CAA, there was also an offer to follow the Auston Matthews path in Europe.

"He had some real good options," Jim Hughes said of Jack. "He loves his coach. He loves his teammates, he loves the ownership of the group. He loves the practices. The weight training and the practices on a weekly basis is fantastic. When you look at the full developmental program of what they're doing with these kids, we thought, 'It's not broken, why do we need to change this?'"

And after a bit of a slow start, this was the weekend that Jack really started to assert himself as the top of his draft class. He added another point against Minnesota to go with his big game against the Wolverines and suddenly his point total is growing.

He has two goals and nine assists through eight games so far and showed the kind of skill and competitive drive that moved him up the draft lists.

"You think Quinn is a great skater and then you see Jack and it's 'Holy shit,'" said one NHL scout who took in Friday's game. "He's so dynamic and he competes — that's the fun part."

"His engine throughout the weekend was the best I've ever seen it," said Wroblewski. "It was amazing to watch."

When he didn't pile up goals right away, there were already rumblings about his slow start from observers. Everybody involved in the process knows that Jack's season is going to be nitpicked to death. That's what happens in a draft year for the guy expected to go No. 1 overall. At this point, it's almost a rite of passage.

But for now, they're enjoying it. This is a hockey family that has been through it before. They raised high-profile hockey-playing boys in the Toronto area and with that comes scrutiny for the top players in each age range.

"I feel like that's how his life has been," said Ellen Hughes, who was inducted into the University of New Hampshire Athletics Hall of Fame in four categories, including hockey. "He has such internal fuel. He's so self-driven. My job as a mom is to say, 'Enjoy it. Have fun.'"

On Friday night, he definitely did. He got the best of his big brother for one night, most likely the first of many showdowns between these two once they hit the NHL.

"I tried to stay away from him. He'd probably have the puck on his stick, next thing I knew," Jack said, smiling. "The whole thing was funny. When I'd look across the ice, I'd see him laughing and I'd give a laugh, too."



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1110332 Websites

The Athletic / Down Goes Brown weekend power rankings:
Attempting to find a signal in all the noise

By Sean McIndoe

Oct 15, 2018

Last week's theme was "it's way too early." This week's could be something along the lines of "it's still early, but maybe not as early as you think."

We're still less than two weeks into a six-month season, and everyone's still got 75+ games left to play. There's lots of time left, and yes, some of the entries in this week's rankings will look silly at some point down the line.

But as a wise man once said, it gets late awfully early around here. And history tells us that by this point in the schedule, some truths about how the season will play out are starting to reveal themselves. It's just a question of finding a signal in all of the noise.

Take last year as an example. When we all woke up on October 15, 2017, a look at the standings would have revealed two winless teams: the Sabres and the Coyotes. Both were young teams that had been hoping to make a push into the playoff conversation. Six months later, the Sabres had finished dead last while the Coyotes were 29th. Only five games into a very young season, it turns out that both teams had already shown us what they'd be when they grew up.

They weren't the only ones. The Canadiens, fresh off a first-place finish in the Atlantic, had stumbled out to a slow start. So had the Rangers, coming off a 102-point season, as well as the 103-point Oilers. All three teams missed the playoffs by a mile. Meanwhile, teams like Colorado, New Jersey and Vegas were all off to strong starts that turned out to be a preview of what was to come.

By this time last year, we'd already learned some important things. Of course, we were also being misled by more than a few teams. The Blackhawks were leading the Central, while the Flames were the top team in the Pacific. And the only two teams without a regulation loss were the Kings, who turned out to be just OK, and the Senators, who were about a month away from driving off a cliff.

So what can we read into today's standings?

Well, maybe not a tonne. There really aren't any teams that are off to completely dominant or disastrous starts, and we've got a real traffic jam in the middle – 19 out of 31 teams are sitting at either two or three wins on the season. That's going to make it tough to draw any firm conclusions, let alone put together a power rankings. But we're all about staring down adversity around here, so let's give it a shot.

The five teams that look like they're headed towards a summer of keg stands and fountain pool parties.

It was a good weekend for Canadian teams, who went a combined 7-0, including six wins on Saturday. Somewhat amazingly, that appears to be only the second time that's ever happened. I think we can all agree that weekends like that are way better than winning a Stanley Cup every quarter-century or so.

5. Boston Bruins (4-1-0, +9) – It's hard to know what to make of the Bruins this year. It's not easy to be sporting a +9 goals differential a week after losing your opener 7-0, but here we are. They've done it by following that opening night disaster with four blowout wins, but it's hard not to notice that all four of those wins came against teams that weren't very good last year, while that one big loss came against the defending Cup champs.

So are the Bruins a good team, or just one that kicks sand on the weaklings but gets exposed when they try to pick on someone their own size? We may not find out anytime soon, as they head out on a four-game Canadian road swing that sees them play four more teams that missed the playoffs last year.

4. Toronto Maple Leafs (5-1-0, +7) – Saturday's showdown with the Capitals didn't turn into the shootout we were all hoping for but Mike Babcock will probably be just fine with a 4-2 win. Auston Matthews scored and had multiple points yet again, but the bigger story might be Frederik Andersen's best game of the young season and a rare example of the Leafs' holding down a third-period lead without wetting themselves.

The win capped off a sweep of a four-game road trip and was the Leafs' first of the season against a team that made the playoffs last year. They'll get two more of those matchups this week when they host the Kings and Penguins, before the Blues arrive to close out the homestand on Saturday. And after that, it's on to a home-and-home with the Jets that should be all sorts of fun.

Hey, speaking of those guys...

3. Winnipeg Jets (3-2-0, even) – They haven't necessarily looked great, even in last night's win over the Hurricanes, but we'll give them another week before we bump them out of the top three. This week should be a productive one, since it serves up the Oilers, Canucks and Coyotes. Those are the sort of teams that a legitimate Cup contender racks up points against. The Jets should do just that.

2. Tampa Bay Lightning (2-1-0, +3) – I thought the Blue Jackets would be pretty good this year. I still do. So seeing the Lightning flex on them in an 8-2 win was a reminder of why Tampa still deserves Eastern Conference favorite status.

By the way, we're back to the same problem we had for much of last year: three teams from the same division in our top five. If we're trying to predict a Cup winner, it doesn't make much sense to have one team on our list that by definition, can't make it past the first round. It's a real problem, and we'll handle it the same way we did last year – by pretty much ignoring it until March and the playoff picture starts coming into focus.

1. Nashville Predators (4-1-0, +5) – A big win in an early season showdown with the Jets and a workmanlike victory against the overmatched Islanders is enough to keep them in the top spot in the power rankings for the second week in a row.

Not ranked: Carolina Hurricanes or New Jersey Devils – As we explained last week, in the early going these rankings will be heavily weighted towards preseason consensus, meaning it will take more than a few good games for a team to go from presumed also-ran status to the top five. Other power rankings focus more on what's happening right now, which is a perfectly valid way to do things. But we're looking ahead here, which means the shifts happen more slowly.

So no, you're not going to see a team like the Hurricanes or Devils show up in the rankings quite yet. But man, they may not be far off.

The Devils are the league's only perfect team, albeit through just three games thanks to that early-season Europe trip. They've beaten up on the defending champion Capitals, and yesterday beat a legitimate contender in the Sharks. And Kyle Palmieri has two goals in each of the wins, making him an early season front-runner to win the Auston Matthews Trophy for most goals scored by somebody who isn't named Auston Matthews. (I'm assuming this award will be unveiled over the next few days.)

If anything, the Hurricanes have been even scarier. They've been speedbagging teams on the way to a 4-1-1 record and top spot in the Metro. Saturday's win over the Wild was about as lopsided as an overtime game can be. Then they headed for Winnipeg the very next



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night, faced a rested Jets team, and very nearly beat them too, while once again dominating the shot clock.

I mean... yikes:

Again, we're putting a lot of stock into last year's results and the preseason expectations, and we're still talking about a wildcard team and one that missed the playoffs entirely. We're trying not to overreact here. But the conservative approach only lasts for so long, so if you're a Devils or Hurricanes fan wondering when your team will get some respect, the answer is: maybe soon.

The bottom five

The five teams that look like they're headed towards hoping the ping-pong balls deliver Jack Hughes.

Hey NHL, you know that thing you did on Friday where there weren't any games at all? Let's not do that again any time soon, OK? Some of us have families we're trying to avoid.

5. Vancouver Canucks (3-2-0, +2) – They won on Saturday. Nobody cared.

Instead, all the talk was about Elias Pettersson leaving the game after a choke slam from Panthers' defenceman Mike Matheson. He left the game and didn't return. For now, that's about all we know, although he was apparently feeling "a little bit better" yesterday.

But in the aftermath of the game, the bigger conversation was over the Canucks' reaction to the sight of their talented rookie being taken out ... or lack thereof. Somewhat surprisingly, given all the recent talk in Vancouver about the importance of comradery and the sanctity of The Code, nobody on the Canucks did much of anything in response.

Well, that's not quite true. They did win the game, which we're supposed to say is the important thing. It was their third win in five, a decent start for a team almost everyone was picking to bring up the rear in the West. So far, they look like a team that might be able to surprise a few people. But they'll need a healthy Pettersson to do it, which brings us back to their collective Saturday night shrug.

For their part, Vancouver fans noticed – check out the livid replies to the official team account's attempt at a positive post-win tweet. Jason Botchford has a good roundup of the aftermath in his post-game column.

As for payback, well... next time, apparently.

4. Ottawa Senators (2-2-1, -1) – Five points in five games isn't great, but it's more than what most were expecting from the Senators heading into the season. They've already earned a win over one of our top-five teams, having beaten Toronto last week, and they rolled over the Kings on home ice on Saturday.

But even more important than the wins and losses, the kids are leading the way, with guys like Thomas Chabot and Brady Tkachuk looking like the sort of players who could someday replace the start power that's already left or may be on the way out. The team isn't great, and may not even be good, but so far the Sens have been worth watching.

3. Arizona Coyotes (1-3-0, -6) – They scored this week! Granted, it was only twice, and they were back to being shut out on Saturday against the Sabres, of all teams. But still, progress is progress, so we'll drop them out of the top spot.

2. New York Rangers (1-4-0, -6) – They showed some signs of life with Thursday's OT win over the Sharks, but any momentum vanished quickly with Saturday's loss to the Oilers. Henrik Lundqvist looked good and he's now sporting a .938 save percentage on the season, which makes you wonder what happens if or when he comes back to earth.

Meanwhile, Kevin Shattenkirk was back in the lineup after sitting out against San Jose, but he didn't do much. The Rangers' oddly specific prediction might just be in play.

1. Detroit Red Wings (0-3-2, -11) – Not an especially tough choice this week.

The Red Wings are the only team in the league with a double-digit negative goals differential, and they're the only team left without a win except for Florida, who've only played three games. The Wings have played five, and managed to earn a loser point in two of them. But they're trending in the wrong direction and Saturday's 8-2 blowout at the hands of the Bruins was ugly from start-to-finish.

That's not good. Except it might be good, because the Red Wings are one of those teams that doesn't seem to want to try a full rebuild even though they sure seem like they could use one. Falling out of the playoff hunt by November could nudge Ken Holland even further towards fixing his gaze on the future. Some short term pain might go a long way to making things easier on Holland next year and beyond. (Or, you know, Steve Yzerman.)

Not ranked: Vegas Golden Knights – I guess the league isn't rigged for them anymore.

The Knights have started off 2-4-0, which is hardly a disaster, especially in the Pacific. But the record might flatter them, as they've really only had one game – the shootout win over the Wild – where they looked much like last year's feel-good story. Saturday against the Flyers felt like an early must-win, and they did, but only because Marc-Andre Fleury stole it for them. These guys just aren't clicking yet.

Some of that can be chalked up to who they're missing, as Nate Schmidt's suspension and Paul Stastny's injury have had an impact. And some of it may just be slumps; we know Max Pacioretty will be better than one goal in six games, and we think William Karlsson should start scoring soon (although that may not be a sure thing). Fleury hasn't been great in the losses, so maybe he's back on track. They should be OK.

They may not be much more than OK, although doubting the Golden Knights hasn't exactly been a great strategy over the last year or so. But either way, last year's Western champs have earned some benefit of the doubt, and they'll get it here. But not forever, because it's already getting late early.

The Athletic LOADED: 10.16.2018

1110333 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Maple Leafs' Auston Matthews taking quantum leap with record start

Chris Johnston | @reporterchris

October 16, 2018, 12:48 AM

TORONTO – The way last season ended did not sit well with Auston Matthews.

There was the seven-game series loss to Boston in the opening round, but also an uncharacteristic dry spell in the spring. For the first time as an NHLer – perhaps the first time in his life – Matthews saw his play come under intense question and scrutiny. He had a terse exchange or two in front of the cameras.



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In the big picture, it was no big deal. All of it was perfectly understandable in the context of professional sports. But for Matthews it was a reminder that there was still room for growth; still steps to be taken in his pursuit of becoming the best in the game.

It has only been a month since Matthews returned to work with the Toronto Maple Leafs and instead it looks he's taken a quantum leap. The team's best player has gotten significantly better.

"Just the most in control. Just completely in control," said goaltender Garret Sparks, when asked what stands out about his teammate.

Matthews has at least two points in all seven games the Leafs have played, becoming the fifth player to accomplish that feat after Mario Lemieux, Wayne Gretzky, Mike Bossy and Kevin Stevens.

Following a two-assist performance in Monday's 4-1 victory over the Los Angeles Kings, he led the NHL in both goals and points. Matthews is the first NHLer to amass 16 points in seven games to open a season since the dawning of the Salary Cap Era in 2005, and only Lemieux, Gretzky, Stevens, Joe Sakic, Pat LaFontaine and Sergei Makarov have produced at least that many that quickly in the last 30 years.

But more than just numbers we are seeing a young man ascend to another plane. He's acknowledged feeling more comfortable being himself when asked about the recent fashion shoots in GQ and Sharp Magazine. Part of that is learning not to care about what others think.

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Those that get much closer to him than the media see this in him, too.

After scoring 40 goals as a rookie and being on pace for 45 in an injury-interrupted second season, Matthews looks even better in these early days of Year 3 despite not having played one minute with usual linemate William Nylander because of a contract dispute.

"It's not one specific area," said teammate Kasper Kapanen. "I think he's just raised his level in everything really. He's defending well and he's taking care of the puck, but at the same time I feel like his shot's even harder and he's making those plays that kind of blow your mind.

"He's really dangerous right now."

Those two have been dynamic since getting united Oct. 10 in Chicago. Kapanen had 18 points in his first 57 NHL games and now has eight in the five games since he started playing with Matthews and Patrick Marleau.

Matthews is drawing tough assignments and producing at 5-on-5. He's the most dangerous trigger-man on one of the top power plays in hockey.

"Well, what I liked about Auston tonight is he played head-to-head with [Anze] Kopitar and he was really good. We're blessed to have a guy that can play with and without it and that size and, now, his skating the way it is," said Leafs coach Mike Babcock. "He's a real player. He's just growing, he's just a kid and he's going to get better. He's dangerous when he's on the ice and that line is a good line right now."

It's been telling how often Matthews has mentioned in recent interviews that he's just a kid. He's probably had to remind himself a little bit after the single-minded push he made to become a No. 1 overall draft pick.

This has been the best stretch of his career by far and he can't place a finger on precisely why everything has come together so nicely out of the chute.

"I don't know. I'm just trying to play hockey, have fun and get those opportunities and try to cash in on them," said Matthews. "We've been fortunate they've been going in, we've been able to jell as a line and continue to get better. Obviously the most important thing is we're winning games so we just want that to continue."

Everything is moving in the right direction.

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1110334 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Canadiens' Tomas Tatar opening eyes with hot start

Eric Engels

October 15, 2018, 11:55 PM

MONTREAL — In this what-have-you-done-for-me-lately world, it was easy for Montreal Canadiens fans to overlook what their team acquired in Tomas Tatar when general manager Marc Bergevin traded former captain Max Pacioretty to the Vegas Golden Knights on Sept. 10.

The focus was on 19-year-old centre Nick Suzuki back then and rightly so, with Bergevin referring to the 13th overall pick at the 2017 NHL Draft as the key piece to the deal that included Tatar and a 2019 second-round pick coming back to Montreal. An A-level prospect, who's at worst a year away from starting what promises to be a bright NHL career, was a must to obtain in trading away a perennial 30-goal scorer in Pacioretty.

Gaining another draft pick, for a team that's intrinsically focused more on its future than it is on its present, was also essential.

But all eyes are on Tatar now. He scored a goal and notched two assists in a 7-3 win over the Detroit Red Wings on Monday, bringing his season total to seven points through five games with the Canadiens, and he has quickly proven to Montreal fans that his 20 regular-season games and eight in the playoffs with the Golden Knights last year were an anomaly in what's been an otherwise solid NHL career.

Call that icing on the cake.

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Of course we're not suggesting the 27-year-old Slovak is going to maintain his torrid pace — if he did, he'd shatter his previous career-high of 56 points with Detroit in 2014-15 — but he's bringing more to the table than anyone around these parts anticipated when this trade was made.

People should have known better.

"I knew a lot [about] him," said Montreal's Jonathan Drouin, who had two goals, including the opener on a penalty shot, in the win. "I watch a lot of hockey. He has the skill, he owns the puck, good shooter. I think his biggest thing is that he's so heavy on the puck that he can hold onto it for a while.

"I think you look at his goals, he goes to the front of the net. It's not pretty, it's not something you're going to see on every highlight reel, but it helps our team."

So does Tatar's attitude.



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Linemate Phil Danault said Tatar's smile fills the room and his boisterous laugh gets everyone rolling.

"He's got heart," Danault added.

"He's a competitor," said coach Claude Julien after Monday's win, which gave the Canadiens a 3-1-1 record on the season. "He comes into practice, I think he's enjoying the game, I think he comes with the compete level, I think he's enthusiastic about being here and it's spreading around to everybody else. It's contagious. His teammates really like him, he's got a great personality.

"It's just a fact that guys who enjoy playing hockey and come every day loving their job go out there every night and perform that way, and that's what he's been doing."

It's hard to ignore, even when the focus is on another Tomas who plays for the Canadiens.

Yes, it was Tomas Plekanec who was named the first star of this game after serendipity saw him bank a puck off Detroit defenceman Filip Hronek for an improbable goal in his 1000th NHL game. A well-deserved honour for a player Julien later remarked had appeared as though he had drank from the fountain of youth before the game had started.

But it was Tatar who made things happen on Monday against the team that drafted him nine years ago, just as he has consistently done through Montreal's first five games.

He scored the goal that gave the Canadiens a 3-1 lead with just nine seconds remaining in the first period, and he helped them blow things wide open in the second by assisting on two of the next three goals.

Sufficed to say Tatar looks nothing like the guy who put up only six points after the Golden Knights traded a first, second and third-round pick for at last year's deadline; nothing like the guy who was scratched for all but eight games of Vegas's 20-game run to the 2018 Stanley Cup Final. You know, the guy Canadiens fans thought they were getting when the Golden Knights were even willing to retain \$1.5 million of the \$15.9 million in salary he's owed until his contract expires in 2021.

"When you talk about the key to the deal, you traded away a guy who scored 30-plus goals for many years here," said Julien. "You get a Tatar who can come in right away and give you 20-25 goals. It's what he's been basically doing [throughout his career] so I think he was a pretty big part of the deal as well."

You wouldn't know it from the scuttlebutt around town when Tatar arrived.

"I would be pretending if I said I didn't hear it," he said. "But you know, you always hear negative people more than positive ones."

Given what Tatar has done of late, that's likely to change.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 10.16.2018

1110335 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Canucks' Travis Green reiterates need for calmness in wake of Pettersson hit

Iain MacIntyre | @imacsportsnet

October 15, 2018, 5:45 PM

PITTSBURGH – You know that an issue has exploded beyond any one game or practice when a coach opens a press conference not with an answer but a statement, as Vancouver Canucks' boss Travis Green did Monday.

Aware of the uprising of rage among many fans back home over the Canucks' lack of a physical response to the injuring Saturday of teenage star Elias Pettersson, the coach spoke uninterrupted and unscripted for four minutes after practice ended in Pittsburgh.

He said that Pettersson, who suffered a concussion when body-slammed by Florida Panthers defenceman Mike Matheson, is feeling better each day but has no timeline for a return to the ice.

Green also confirmed that important checking centre Jay Beagle, a centrepiece on the Canucks' penalty-kill that has allowed only three goals on 25 disadvantages, is out six weeks with a broken forearm after blocking Mike Hoffman's shot late in the third period.

And then Green said the Canucks' reaction to what occurred in the third period on Saturday probably would have been different had players actually seen Matheson take down Pettersson. But the coach reiterated the need for composure and praised his team's focus at the end of the 3-2 victory.

"I know with Canuck fans . . . (their) reaction after the hit," Green said. "I will say that I didn't know what happened. None of the players on the ice knew, none of the players on the bench knew what happened. I still was trying to get it on my iPad to see what happened (when) we score the next shift to take the lead and our team wins a hockey game. And plays to win down the stretch.

"I do understand Canuck fans wondering (about the response to Matheson's hit). I've been in the league a long time and I understand that part of the game extremely well. When I played, it was a lot different. I have said – and I stand by that – I want our team to be hard to play against. I do. By hard to play against, that means many things. That means playing fast. That means making good puck decisions, winning puck battles. For me, hard to play against is a burning desire to win. It comes from your group. And I want our group to stick up for each other and stick together. That's what winning cultures have, and I want that in our group.

"I'm as mad as many fans about this with what happened. But I do stick by what happened the other night."

It is important to understand that the fury in Canuck Nation far exceeds the anger in the Canuck dressing room. Make no mistake: players are upset about the hit, believe it was dangerous and unnecessary of Matheson to topple Pettersson and slam the 172-pound 19-year-old to the ice after a strong takeout on the end boards.

But there is no rage in the dressing room about the response to Matheson (or lack of it) by players who understand time and place and scale. And there is certainly no doubt among them that they have each other's back.

Matheson logged five shifts after injuring Pettersson. Bo Horvat scored the winning goal for the Canucks on one of them, and the Panther's other four shifts totalled 3:45. Matheson did not play in the final two-and-a-half minutes as the Canucks finished their best game of the season.

"From the reactions, some people might have liked it better if I went out and fought him instead of going out there and scoring the game-winner," Horvat said. "It's just the way it goes.

"We want to stick together, we want to play hard as a team. It's tough, again, when you don't see the hit . . . and how dirty and how bad it was until after the game. It's tough to do something in that moment. And especially when we're up 3-2 and trying to hold on to the lead and win a hockey game."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • October 16, 2018

Winger Antoine Roussel, signed July 1 to a four-year, \$12-million-U.S. free-agent contract to provide leadership and protection, said players were asking each other on the bench if they knew what had happened to Pettersson.

He said there would have been some kind of response had Canuck players seen the body-slam. But he said no one would sacrifice winning a game to seek revenge.

"Retribution, it probably lasts for a week or so," Roussel said. "But missing the playoffs lasts for a whole summer if you lose games like that because you are stupid. You've got to be really careful about what happens. I've missed playoffs by two points, four points, because of stuff like that. It's a 3-2 game. It's not really the time to go out there and just go crazy.

"If you think your teammates are not there for you, you don't play team sports. You play tennis, you play ping pong, golf. But as soon as you play team sports, you believe the guys are going to have your back 99 per cent of the time. But when nobody sees it, nobody sees it. Everybody is looking for somebody to blame, but sometimes there's nobody to blame."

Asked if there will be a response when the Panthers visit Vancouver on Jan. 13, Roussel said: "Probably. We'll have a talk (with Matheson), for sure. Everybody can contribute. It doesn't have to be a fist."

Green said: "(Players) didn't have an emotional vision in their head about what happened. Plus, you're playing to win the hockey game still. This is not the time to just start chasing people around the rink and jumping on top of people. That doesn't happen anymore in this league. That's why the league has these good young players that are fast and exciting to watch.

"We get a big goal and I'm telling our team keep our composure, let's win the hockey game. That's coaching. The days of tapping guys on the shoulder have long been gone, and rightfully so."

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 10.16.2018

1110336 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Maple Leafs' Kapanen proving he belongs in top-six role

Luke Fox | @lukefoxjukebox

October 16, 2018, 12:24 AM

TORONTO – As the young, freewheeling Toronto Maple Leafs core cleared out their lockers in the spring of 2017, disappointed yet encouraged by the first of many trips to the post-season since winning the Auston Matthews lottery, we shared a few minutes with a quiet Kasper Kapanen — the only tangible asset remaining from those scorched-earth, multi-player trades of Dion Phaneuf and Phil Kessel.

Kapanen, a late-March AHL call-up that spring, had impressed as a fourth-line energy guy in that six-game, nail-biting series against the Washington Capitals. He scored twice in Game 2, including the double-OT winner.

As he packed his bags, we asked him if he could envision cracking the Leafs' top six the following fall.

"Looking at the guys in this room, the talent we have, top six, I don't think I belong there, to be honest," Kapanen said.

The comment was harsh and humble and rare coming from the mouth of a professional athlete. These guys run on confidence, often manifested by word before deed.

But the speedy winger was correct.

Kapanen didn't even make the Leafs lineup out of camp in 2017-18, partly because he could slide back to the farm system without a waiver hassle. And he'd need to wait 18 months for a real top-six shot and his next two-goal NHL game.

That would be Monday night, when Kapanen opened and closed the scoring in Toronto's 4-1 victory over the visiting Los Angeles Kings.

Filling in for a close friend, the unsigned William Nylander, on the Leafs' top line centred by Auston Matthews and flanked on the left side by Patrick Marleau, Kapanen banked one off goalie Jack Campbell 46 seconds after puck drop from behind the net.

"I practise that every day. It's a tough bounce. I don't know the last time I've ever given one of those up," lamented Campbell, who got scorched again late, when Kapanen worked a give-and-go with Matthews and tucked one backhand shelf.

"Man, they kinda have it all, to be honest. They're quick. They transition the puck really well and they're creative. You think they're going to shoot, then they slide it back side or something. They're a pretty talented group."

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That line features two probable Hall of Famers — yeah, we said it — and one perseverant placeholder.

As recently as a month ago, Kapanen was concerned about even making the cut, let alone the Matthews trio.

"The top two lines are pretty much set. After that, I don't know what's going to happen," he said in September. "I really need to prove to everybody that I belong on the team."

Kapanen needed 57 regular-season NHL contests to put up 10 points. Since replacing Tyler Ennis on the Matthews line five games ago (all wins), the 22-year-old already has four multi-point efforts. This one came against a difficult head-to-head matchup against the Anze Kopitar line and a steady dose of Norris Trophy winner Drew Doughty.

"It's not just Auston," said Kapanen, visibly emotional at the instant success of his promotion, "but it's also Patty.

"Playing with those two, it's amazing. It feels easy, and it's just clicking right now. I'm just enjoying it right now and trying to get better day by day. I know we have a couple of notches still left."

Kapanen's eight points in five games as Matthews' wingman are more than Nylander has been able to rack up in any such stretch over two seasons.

"Every game we've kind of been able to just develop more and more chemistry and found each other," Matthews said. "It's been fun playing with him."

If Nylander signs before Thursday, we're not saying he won't get his old spot back.

We are saying that one of Nylander or Kapanen could add some offensive juice to Nazem Kadri's third line. We're seven games deep, and the 30-goal centre is still looking for his first of the season.

"You've got to be ready for your opportunity in life when it comes along," said coach Mike Babcock. "His three years previous and the work he has put in, how much stronger he's gotten, more poised, he's taking advantage of it, you've got to give him credit.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • October 16, 2018

"He's scoring at an unbelievable rate, but he's physical and he's fast and he's tenacious. That line has been good, and they were playing against good players tonight."

Babcock has challenged Kapanen to play more like Zach Hyman, the coach's posterboy for grinding puck retrieval.

"Kappy's a great player and he's got elite speed and great hands, so if he goes and does that stuff as well — and he's shown he can do it — then he's going to be a force to be reckoned with," Hyman says.

"Kappy's a great player, and he's putting it all together. I've been playing with him for a while now, with the Marlies too, and to see his game grow has been exciting."

Thing is, Kapanen has hands to match his tenacity, and his greatest asset — speed — is fast becoming the most desirable trait in a league hammering its foot on the pedal.

"The obvious thing is the fact he's the fastest person on Earth," goalie Garret Sparks noted.

And, on this night, maybe the happiest too.

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1110337 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Maple Leafs' Kapanen proving he belongs in top-six role

Luke Fox | @lukefoxjukebox

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CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • October 16, 2018

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Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 10.16.2018

1110338 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Flames' Bennett reaping benefits of his well-rounded game

Eric Francis | @EricFrancis

October 15, 2018, 7:03 PM

Sam Bennett had to wonder if it was the beginning of the end of his time in Calgary.

So he asked.

Beginning a contract year with a new coaching staff and plenty of competition at his position, his opening night assignment amounted to a tad shy of nine minutes.

Three nights later it was down to 7:01 as a resident of the fourth line.

"Those were the lowest ice times I've ever had in my life," said Bennett of an early-October assignment unbecoming of a fourth overall pick four years earlier.

"It was definitely a tough experience and I knew it wouldn't stay like that — it was just a matter of battling through and waiting for my chance."

Still, as optimistic as Bennett has always been, he questioned whether it was a sign of things to come.

"I wasn't sure at first, but I went and talked to them about it to see and I think I'm happy the way it's gone now for me."

Fast-forward a week and Bennett is riding high as one of the game stars in the Flames' dramatic 3-2 overtime win Saturday in Colorado.

Capping off a three-game roadie in which Bennett emerged as one of the Flames best players, the left winger displayed exactly why management has wasted very little time debating a possible trade.

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Early in the second period of a game the Flames trailed 2-0 less than three minutes in, Bennett laid a big hit on J.T. Compher that fueled a momentum swing the Flames rode for the final 40 minutes.

Minutes later the 22-year-old scored his, well, first official goal of the campaign.

"He scored his third one — the first one that actually counted," laughed coach Bill Peters, alluding to the two disallowed goals the hard-luck left winger had whistled back this season.

"Good to see him back on the board. He did a good job driving the middle and Backs (Mikael Backlund) made a good play shooting for a rebound."

Driving the middle and laying out opponents has never been something Bennett has been short on.

Points are another story.

However, what has kept Bennett around despite declining goal totals the last two seasons (13 to 11) is his ability to play different roles.

That ability has not been lost on the new coach, who has steadily increased Bennett's ice time the last three games from 13 to 15 minutes, including a game in St. Louis where Bennett's dandy drive to the net set up James Neal's first of the year to open the scoring.

"He's been good — he's been physical on the forecheck," said Peters.

"His attention to detail and system play has been really good and his effort has been obviously good from Day 1.

Good to see guys that are doing it right, working hard and getting rewarded."

His reward Saturday from the second period onward was a second-line gig alongside James Neal and Backlund, with whom Bennett played his rookie season when he scored a career-high 18 goals.

It's hard to say where he'll line up next, as a maintenance day for Sean Monahan and Backlund Monday had the lines in a blender — something Peters said he'd rather not do moving forward.

"Every year is a big year to determine your future — it's not like you can take a year off no matter how long your contract is," said Bennett, a soon-to-be restricted free agent, wrapping a two-year deal worth \$1.95 annually.

"But this is a very big one to prove my worth."

It's anyone's guess what his worth will be contract-wise, as plenty will be determined by his play and point production this year.

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Flames fans have long been frustrated the kid who scored 137 points in 79 games his last two seasons in Kingston has yet to eclipse the 36-point mark as a pro.

Breakouts often feel imminent.

In hindsight, there's little doubt he would have benefitted from the ice time and confidence boost the AHL could have provided him years earlier. That's no longer an option as such a move would prompt him to be snapped up instantly on waivers.

It has been well documented plenty of teams around the league would love to sink their teeth into a 6-foot-1, 195-pound lad with upside and versatility like Bennett.

Though fans groan over his questionable penalties or his struggles to produce offensively, they are reminded of the eight goals in five games he scored midway through his rookie season, not to mention his inspired play during his two playoff campaigns.

His upside is sky high.

"He's getting goals waved off and things aren't happening and that can really affect a guy, but he really dug deep and was finally rewarded," said captain Mark Giordano.

"He's got it all man. You see the skill and the ability but he's a gritty guy and he's tough — he's undercover tough in this league, to be honest.

"He gets into the forecheck and then in practice too you feel him one-on-one he's a heavy guy."



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • October 16, 2018

"We forget sometimes how young he is because he's played so much in his career but he's coming into it here and it looks like he's going to take that next step this year."

Many have felt that way before, yet Bennett is working on maintaining an even-keel.

"The line generated a lot of chances and I feel good right now," said Bennett, whose confidence has waned through back-to-back 26-point seasons.

"I think when I get involved in the game early, whether it's playing physical or driving the net, that's when I'm feeling my best and playing with the most confidence.

"(The 3-2 OT win in Colorado) is massive. We all knew how big that game was, to come back and to never quit. We definitely didn't have the start we wanted but I think in the second and third we really outplayed them and really got back to our game."

A game Bennett has been hoping – and threatening – to tap into more often.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 10.16.2018

1110339 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Maurice, Jets cautious to avoid regression like past contenders

Mark Spector | @sportsnetspec

October 15, 2018, 5:29 PM

WINNIPEG — At the Jets home rink here in Winnipeg, they capture the sound of pucks on sticks and carving blades down at ice level, and pipe the audio through the giant speakers atop the scoreboard. In a world where teams usually assault their fans' senses with ads and obnoxious "in-game hosts," it's an innovative touch that makes every seat feel that much closer to the action.

They may have done this throughout the playoffs last spring, but honestly, it would be impossible to know. The building then, like the city surrounding it, was so electric, so brimming with energy and anticipation, that any sound as subtle as a Patrik Laine skate blade, or Mark Scheifele accepting a Blake Wheeler pass, was lost in the cacophony of what us Canadians love to call "playoff hockey."

With the Edmonton Oilers in town on a Tuesday night in October however, Nikolaj Ehlers won't have to get to the rink early because they have closed off the downtown streets. The place won't be packed for warmups, and Hockey Night in Canada won't be on hand with Mayor Scott Oake presiding over his people here in the Manitoba capital.

It's Game 6 of the season. Not Game 6 of a playoff series.

"It's different for sure. Everything is different," Ehlers admits. "The city is different, the games are different."

Of course, we've seen these struggles before.

We have watched teams have break-out seasons, with multiple career years by players that had never been anywhere near a Conference Final before. Then they arrive the next season and play the way the Jets did against Carolina on Sunday night — loose defensively, mostly (but not fully) committed to a game plan, and generally lacking in emotion.

Calgary, three years ago. Edmonton last season. Ottawa.

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Head coach Paul Maurice had a front row seat when his Carolina Hurricanes went to the 2002 Stanley Cup Final against Detroit, then finished dead last in the entire NHL the following year. He knows.

"I've been through it and I watched it," he said Monday, his team sitting at 3-2 after some larceny by backup goalie Laurent Brossoit allowed Winnipeg to abscond with two points from Carolina the night before. "We paid close attention to Edmonton and Ottawa last year, and are very aware — especially with a young group — of how we handle our play.

"We lost five 30 year olds that moved on from our team," Maurice points out. "We got quite a bit younger than we were last year and understood that when we come back, the expectations (have changed) completely around us."

When you are the Jets this season, or the Oilers last, they pick you to win Stanley Cups. Or they make up categories like, "Canada's Best Team" and hang that around your necks as well.

As a team you pretend that you barely notice. But the problem is, every one of your opponents does. It becomes fuel for them, and if it begins to slip away — if you never reclaim your game the way the Oilers did not last season — it becomes a yoke you carry around the league until, mercifully, the playoffs begin and you get to go home.

"The way the fans and media were taking, you know, about a Stanley Cup this year," began useful Jets centreman Bryan Little. "We've got to get there first. You can't win a Cup if you're watching the playoffs from home."

So the process has begun here in Winnipeg.

No, you don't play May hockey in October. Nobody does. But you begin with a firm idea of what the end result is supposed to look like, and you try to re-lay the foundation so that, by, say, Christmas, you're back to playing that level of hockey. To being that contender again.

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But in these early days, you need to manufacture the emotions. They don't come for free, the way they did last spring with street parties, car flags on Portage Ave., and springtime patios of priming fans.

"It's an every-day thing," Little said. "You go from playing in the Conference Final, these really big games, and starting all over again. Game 1, Game 2... It's a long time before you're playing those big games again."

"The challenge is," began Maurice, "everybody came back, and they were all (going to score) 50. Well, it's five games in and a bunch of guys aren't on that track. So there is a tension that's built into that."

He tells the story of coaching in Carolina, where they made it to a Conference Final in '09 and then missed the playoffs entirely the next season. After a successful playoff run, his players would buck Maurice's defensive wishes, "until mid-November. And then (team captain) Ronnie Francis used to come into my office and say, 'We give. We're not that good offensively. We'll play defence now.'"

There is little continuation after a year like the one they enjoyed here in Winnipeg last season. Really, the most valuable lesson is that it took 82 games to build the product that was so potent last spring.

So, the recipe they have. Now, it's about coming up with the ingredients.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • October 16, 2018

"We're never meeting the expectations bar here, because the game that we do that, it will be 'How come you didn't play like that in all of these other games?'" Maurice said. "I'm not getting into that fight. We're going to take our game, live it a day at a time and get better every day."

There are a lot of days. Turn up the sound effects.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 10.16.2018

1110340 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Jason Spezza calmer than ever as Game No. 1,000 approaches

Wayne Scanlan

October 15, 2018, 10:35 PM

For part of the time Jason Spezza was a member of the Ottawa Senators, he lived in a grand, sparkling stone house that the locals referred to simply as "The Castle."

Everyone knew where Spezza and his young wife, Jennifer Snell, resided. It was in all the papers. People would drive from miles around to see his west end house, snap a picture and hope to catch a glimpse of a high-profile player destined to become Ottawa's captain, however briefly.

Children from the neighbouring public school would ring Spezza's doorbell after school and ask him to come out and play. Jason was the Pied Piper.

Into this milieu came a 22-year-old Senators prospect from Medicine Hat named Zack Smith. In his first full season in Ottawa (2010-11, 55 games played), Smith lived with the Spezzas, learned from Jason, and reflecting today, can't believe the couple took him in while the Spezzas were first-time parents of a daughter who wasn't even a year old. (The Spezzas now have four daughters).

"Today, I think, why did he even do that?" Smith says, as his Senators prepared to meet Spezza and the Dallas Stars at the Canadian Tire Centre Monday.

Smith and his wife, Brittany, have a new daughter themselves, Rae Siena, just two months old. Smith tries to imagine bringing a 19 or 20-year-old Sens rookie into his home right now, but can't fathom it – despite the fact his daughter is already sleeping through the night.

As oblivious as a young hockey player can be, Smith lived what he called an "independent" life at Spezza's. Yet he learned from his then 27-year-old teammate and mentor about living like a pro. One night in Florida, Smith was a healthy scratch. In his own words, he was "pouting, feeling sorry for myself," and figured Spezza would pump him up.

Afterward, Spezza came in and said to Smith, "did you watch the game?"

Yeah, Smith said. He'd watched it from the dressing room, on TV. This was the point where Smith expected Spezza to say, "it's OK, you'll get back in there."

Instead, Spezza said bluntly, "you've got to watch from the press box. You see the whole game up there."

Lesson learned. A night out of uniform is not a night off.

"He was in his dad role," Smith says, marvelling at Spezza's timeless love of hockey. Spezza is one of those players who watches games in his spare time, knows the stats leaders. Others, like Smith, see home as a refuge away from hockey.

Now they're both veteran NHL centres on their respective teams, each with something to prove.

Spezza, 35, and six games away from milestone game No. 1,000, is trying to reinvent himself under a new head coach, Jim Montgomery, after experiencing a crisis of confidence while in the dog house of defensive guru Ken Hitchcock last season.

Smith, 30, was put on waivers during the Senators' pre-season, but has rebounded to play a big role for coach Guy Boucher's young club.

As an opponent, Smith continues to learn from his old housemate, especially in the faceoff dot.

"It still frustrates the hell out of me taking faceoffs against him," Smith says. "You can't move his stick. He also weighs, like, 235 pounds." (Spezza is listed at 6-3, 215).

"I hated even taking faceoffs against him in practice," Smith says, "he's just like a bull on a stick. Your wrists are sore after taking a few against him."

Smith jokes that he wasn't quite able to learn the Spezza deep toe drag, or the end-to-end rush, through several players. Oddly enough, that signature Spezza style, sweeping and fluid, with risky back passes, won him enemies and friends in hockey, but is back in vogue under his new coach.

"With Monty coming in, I'm in a role I'm more accustomed to," says Spezza, traded to Dallas from Ottawa on July 1, 2014. "I had a really motivated summer and I feel it's given me a bit of life."

Under Hitchcock, Spezza's 13:00 time on ice was the lowest of his career since he played 12:40 on average as a raw 19-year-old rookie in 33 games for Ottawa in 2002-03. His 26 points in 2017-18 were also a career worst, except for partial seasons in 2002-03 and 2012-13.

In the summer of 2018, Ottawa's second-overall draft pick of 2001 felt he was at a "crossroads."

"You either step up the next year, or you get pushed away," he says. In Toronto, Spezza punished himself on the ice with high performance trainer Andy O'Brien (Sidney Crosby's trainer) and longtime stickhandling guru Jari Byrski.

"I'm still out there stickhandling with the 15-year-olds," Spezza laughs. "I think I skated more this summer than ever. Because I didn't play much last year, I had a bad year, I felt I had to put the time in on the ice."

Montgomery recalls his early dealings with Spezza, who seemed overly concerned about pleasing his new coaches, sweating details away from the puck. Montgomery's words were music to his ears.

"I told him, to just play his game," Montgomery says. "And a big smile came on his face. You can see him start to assert himself offensively, and his confidence growing. He has that swagger that everybody saw every game in Ottawa."

Playing on a line with Russians Alexander Radulov and Valeri Nichushkin, Spezza was wheeling against his former team. On a first-period power play, No. 90 took a pass from Radulov and quickly slipped it through to defenceman John Klingberg, who buried a wrist shot for the Stars' first goal. The Senators battled back, though, and prevailed 4-1 on goals by rookies Max Lajoie and Brady Tkachuk and veterans Mikkel Boedker and Smith (empty net).

Once anxious about these return trips, Spezza hasn't looked this relaxed in years. Ottawa – where he was often a whipping boy for



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disgruntled fans, and was captain just one season (2013-14, as the Canadian between the era of Swedish captains Alfredsson and Karlsson) – conjures mostly good things now. As he approaches game No. 1,000, he is hearing from more and more ex-teammates.

Still, he prefers to look forward. With 892 points, he'd love to play long enough to record 1,000. An unrestricted free agent next summer, Spezza isn't worried about the size of his next contract.

"I'm not playing the game for money at this point," Spezza says. "I just want to be a real contributor to the Dallas Stars. We're playing a style of hockey that really suits our club ... I just want to contribute and have a role. That's my biggest focus."

One Ottawa writer asked Smith about the possible scenario of Spezza returning next summer to the Senators as a free agent. It seems like a long shot. Fantasy league stuff. But Smith sees the merit.

"He would be awesome, especially with the young guys here," Smith says. "He's a great leader, and I bet a lot of young guys in our room grew up idolizing a guy like him, the way I idolized Jarome Iginla."

RAZOR TRIBUTE – Fittingly, the Senators waited for Spezza and the Stars to arrive to air a video tribute to former Senators goaltender Ray Emery, who once lived with Spezza in Binghamton. Emery, who was in goal during the Senators' Stanley Cup run in 2007, died in a drowning accident in July. Watching from the Stars bench, Spezza showed emotion during the video, and buried his head afterwards as teammates consoled him.

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Sportsnet.ca / Linden reflects on Canucks tenure, fallout from Pettersson incident

Iain MacIntyre | @imacSportsnet

October 15, 2018, 10:55 AM

Three months after his shock departure from the Vancouver Canucks due to a clash with ownership, former president Trevor Linden said Monday he's proud that he left the National Hockey League team better than he found it.

In his first public comments since his abrupt exit in July caused uncertainty about the Canucks' rebuild and questions about owner Francesco Aquilini's involvement, Linden told Sportsnet 650 radio in Vancouver that he was grateful to represent the team but is looking forward to the future.

"I'm not going to get into the nuts and bolts of my relationship with the Aquilini family," Linden said. "I will say this, I loved being part of the team. I loved representing the Vancouver Canucks as president. I wish them well. There's lots of things I miss about being part of it, and there's some things I don't miss. At the end of the day, I've got lots to look forward to in the next journey of my life.

"I think I left (the team) in a better place than I found it. At the end of the day, I recognized exactly the spot we were coming into this thing and the whole continuum of how teams are built ... and how they need to get to where they need to be."

Linden, whose 20-minute radio appearance included a promotion for his expanding fitness business, hinted that it was not just one event or issue that caused his fracture with the Aquilinis.

The Canucks announced on July 25 that the team and its president had "amicably" agreed to part ways, but it was obvious that there had been a bitter ideological clash between Linden and Francesco Aquilini, who tweeted that day: "A rebuild is a long, slow, gradual process. Everybody needs to be united behind the same vision and pulling in the same direction."

Aquilini, who appeared on Sportsnet 650 last Thursday, wished Linden well but refused to provide any reasons for the breakup, which he compared to a marriage ending.

"Sometimes you look forward and you can kind of see the writing the wall," Linden said Monday. "I think there was a bit of that. It always works out for the best at the end, and I think this was a situation that did."

Earlier, he said: "I told my wife many years ago that I'd never go into politics because that would be too intense. I think being president of the Canucks might be worse. There's more scrutiny in being president, manager, coach of the Vancouver Canucks than there is in any political forum.

Everything you do is scrutinized left, right and centre, right? That's one of the things I definitely won't miss."

Linden cited young Canucks Brock Boeser and Elias Pettersson, as well as prospects like Adam Gaudette, Kole Lind, and Jonathan Dahlen as proof that the hockey team is moving in the right direction.

Pettersson, of course, suffered a head injury Saturday against the Florida Panthers when he was thrown to the ice by Panther Michael Matheson. The NHL is conducting a phone hearing with Matheson over the incident and the defenceman may be suspended.

The Canucks' lack of a physical response against Matheson in the final 15 minutes of the third period sparked outrage on the West Coast and ignited debate about retribution and whether winning a hockey game, which Vancouver did, 3-2, should be a priority above avenging the loss of an emerging star.

"The days of the enforcer are gone," Linden said. "I don't even think that works any more. It worked in the 80s, when games meant less, and the early 90s. But now, guys are paid too well and need to do their jobs. They're not going to answer the bell or fight or whatever. It's a changing dynamic.

"As a player, your instinct is to think about winning. The opportunity (to go after Matheson) may not present itself in the last 10 minutes of a game. Guys want to win. Many may not have seen what happened. There's a time and place and obviously at that juncture of the game, guys are focused on winning."

Told that Cliff Ronning, Linden's Canucks teammate in the 1990s, tweeted things would have been different had Gino Odjick been on the Vancouver bench, Linden said: "That was 25 years ago."

The Canucks are expected to update Pettersson's condition when they practice Monday afternoon in Pittsburgh. They play the Penguins on Tuesday.

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Sportsnet.ca / Leafs' Kadri on Eller: 'You've got to give teams respect that have earned it'

Chris Johnston | @reporterchris

October 15, 2018, 2:06 PM



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TORONTO — Nazem Kadri calls it “bulletin-board material.”

It wasn't too long after Saturday's 4-2 victory in Washington before he saw Lars Eller's thoughts on the Toronto Maple Leafs land in his social media feed with a bang.

Eller said Toronto's stars were a drop-off from Sidney Crosby and Evgeni Malkin, which is hardly an insult. But of the Leafs, he added: “It's not that special, to be honest. It's a good team, like a lot of others. They'll probably be a playoff team, I would think.”

That's the part that caught Kadri's attention.

“I don't know how he can be serious with that comment, but I understand they're coming off hanging a banner,” Kadri said Monday, before the Leafs hosted the Los Angeles Kings at Scotiabank Arena. “But, you know, you've got to give teams respect that have earned it, and I certainly think we've earned that.”

Much has been said and written about the 5-1-0 Leafs already this season. Full disclosure: A good portion of it has come from me and my colleagues at Sportsnet.

If this team is guilty of anything it's probably over-saturation and that's not a problem of their own making. But it's not going to change, either.

The Kings arrived in Toronto carrying a healthy respect for an opponent that has outscored them 8-0 on the power play this season and 22-11 overall. Perhaps it helps that they aren't subjected to the same level of Leafs-related noise while playing on the other side of the continent.

“I believe that the credit's well-deserved,” said Dion Phaneuf, the former captain here. “They're 5-1, they're playing really good hockey. This is a big media market and there's a lot of attention on this team. I've experienced it, I've lived it, but to see them having success, I think it's well-deserved.”

Drew Doughty, who gently flirted with the idea of coming to Toronto before signing an \$88-million, eight-year extension over the summer, agrees.

“I obviously grew up watching the Leafs so I secretly want them to kind of succeed, too,” he said.

Doughty doesn't pay much attention to social media or sports highlight shows. Most of the hype he's heard about them is coming from childhood buddies in London, Ont., who believe big things are on the horizon.

“But they're in my ear at the start of every season. Ever since I was five years old it's the same stuff at the beginning of the year,” said Doughty. “This time I definitely think the Leafs are for real.”

It certainly looks that way with how seamlessly free-agent catch John Tavares has fit in, and how otherworldly Auston Matthews has looked while scoring nine goals in six games. Morgan Rielly and Mitch Marner are off to career-best starts, as well.

The Leafs are forcing rival coaches to make difficult matchup decisions in games — “Hope and pray,” said Jim Montgomery of the Dallas Stars, when asked last week how to slow Toronto's offence — and they're seeing opponents asked often about them during media sessions.

“Up front, at the centre position, they're very deep. Everyone knows that,” said Stars centre Tyler Seguin, another local product. “You guys make sure that everyone knows that.”

Here's guessing Eller was reacting to that more than anything else. The former Montreal Canadiens centre is plenty familiar with how stories can take on a life of their own in a Canadian city. He's also four months removed from scoring the Stanley Cup-clinching goal for

the Capitals and surely knows that the only notable thing the Leafs have won since he entered the league is the draft lottery.

On some level, Kadri seems to grasp that as well.

“It's frustration because everyone keeps talking about how good we are,” he said. “From our perspective, we believe we're a good team, but we still have to earn that respect to be a contender and to be one of the best teams year in and year out. That's something we're working on. I think we've established a pretty good start.”

“I think it's certainly you guys for the most part just pounding the Maple Leafs in [Eller's] ear. I think he got a little bit upset about it. Obviously, a sensitive subject.”

One that will be raised again when the Capitals visit Toronto on Jan. 23. By then, we should have a clearer understanding of just how good they are.

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Sportsnet.ca / Leafs, Matthews' bold approach could redefine business landscape of NHL

Jeff Blair | @SNJeffBlair

October 15, 2018, 9:27 AM

It was an off-hand comment made by Auston Matthews, probably not inclined to help push William Nylander into the corner. But it did. And when the Toronto Maple Leafs centre suggested he was not at all bothered by the notion of an in-season negotiation of a new contract, there was a subtle shift in the focus of the chattering classes around the NHL.

It's almost as if Matthews' willingness to walk and chew gum at the same time — I've never understood the reluctance for mature discussion of contracts in-season — has put his deal at the forefront of the Leafs' plans. It helps, of course, that he and the team have had a blazing start without Nylander, who, if not necessarily becoming surplus to requirements, seems something less than irreplaceable at this point (although my guess is Nazem Kadri wouldn't mind Kasperii Kapanen as a linemate.)

Matthews' start has been a delight on several levels. First, it's answered a couple of questions the way we all hoped they'd be answered: Is he upset about not being named captain? Nose out of joint with the love shown to John Tavares? Upset with head coach Mike Babcock after some of those unnerving stories at the end of last season? Seems not. Second, his start, and that of Morgan Rielly, has led to a kind of re-awakening of Leafs history, because one of the fallouts of no Stanley Cups since 1967 has been a cheapening of the memory of that which came before it.

Seriously, it's been nice to get acquainted with Sweeney Schriner instead of it always being Sittler or Clark or Gilmour or Sundin.

Each week, Jeff Blair and Stephen Brunt tackle the most impactful stories in the world of sports and their intersection with popular culture. Come for the sports; stay for the storytelling and cigars.

The NHL Network's Brian Lawton told The Jeff Blair Show this past week that he believed the Leafs would need to go shorter term with two of the three players in order to keep them in place — to, in the words of the former player, general manager and agent, “kick the can down the road” in hopes of a more lenient salary cap or even a



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structured buy-out of Patrick Marleau's deal, which has another year and \$6.25 million remaining. We are hearing more and more of this from pundits around the league, with the corollary being that the Leafs need to be seriously contemplating moving on from Nylander.

Colleague Elliotte Friedman got us all talking when he suggested on Hockey Night In Canada Saturday that the Leafs might settle on a five-year deal this season instead of the requisite eight-year deal, which would allow Matthews to go back into the market. It would be a bold move that might redefine the business landscape of the game in much the same way that Tavares' bold move to cut ties with the Islanders may signal the end of players' traditional fear of leaving the nest.

Strange, isn't it, that the younger the game gets, the more mature some of the approaches on the part of players? The future in the NHL may belong to the bold, be they players or teams.

THE ENDGAME

Cool hearing Astros Game 2 starter Gerrit Cole talk about the impact of the club's use of analytics and video on his progression as a starter. Echoes of Justin Verlander from last season.

"The key principle was using a lot of the data and information they have to discern what is your strength and what your best stuff looks like, analytically," Cole said, adding it becomes a matter of matching up that data with video of the actual pitch. "It's not like they were reinventing the wheel — they were just showing me what I did well and then allowed me to attack. And the environment I'm in, in terms of having other guys who have bought into that kind of thing and made those adjustments successfully, has made the transition easier."

Think about this: in the past two years, the Astros have had buy-in from Verlander, who was a 34-year-old Cy Young and MVP Award winner and six-time All-Star when the team acquired him late in 2017, and Cole, one of the game's blazing pitchers, who was a first-overall pick, had already been an All-Star, and won 59 games doing it another way when he was traded from the Pirates. There are teams around Major League Baseball who will also tell you that the Red Sox have an army of analytics guys working in the clubhouse in-game to pass on information on things such as the opposing catchers signs.

This what the Blue Jays are up against, and why rolling your eyes at analytics in any sport without understanding their application is foolish.

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TSN.CA / Sparks answers surprise call, leads Maple Leafs past Kings

Kristen Shilton

TORONTO – When Garret Sparks was announced as the Maple Leafs' starting goaltender for Monday night's game against the Los Angeles Kings, the move was as much an initial shock to Sparks as anyone else. He was prepared to back-up Frederik Andersen as usual, until a knee injury forced Andersen out of commission and put Sparks between the pipes in Toronto's 4-1 victory over the Kings, the team's fifth straight win.

"I wasn't anticipating playing tonight when I went to bed last night," Sparks said on the heels of his 33-save performance. "But that's the nature of this position, having to be ready to perform when called upon. I found out I was playing [this morning] and planned accordingly."

Both Andersen and Sparks took part in the team's morning skate on Monday, with Sparks in the starters' net. But afterwards Mike Babcock was curiously evasive about why he was deviating from the Leafs' usual goaltending rotation, and giving Sparks a start when Andersen didn't appear to be hurt and it wasn't the second night of a back-to-back situation.

Babcock said Monday night the Leafs were aware of the injury in the morning, but waited to see if it was anything worth worrying about before making a roster move. But Monday afternoon that news of Andersen's injury emerged, and the Leafs recalled goaltender Eamon McAdam from the ECHL's Newfoundland Growlers on an emergency basis to back up Sparks.

Being thrust into the starter's job may have taken Sparks by surprise, but it was a welcome opportunity to build upon his first start of the season last Sunday in Chicago. A native of Elmhurst, Illinois, Sparks was overwhelmed by the emotion of playing in front of his hometown crowd, barely escaping with the 7-6 overtime win that produced a middling .806 save percentage for the 25-year-old.

With Andersen expected to be able to return for Toronto's game against Pittsburgh on Thursday, the American Hockey League reigning goaltender of the year made the most of his second start by staying composed and executing with confidence.

"It's just nice to get back to trusting where you are in the net and knowing nothing changes from the AHL to the NHL, you have to play your position soundly, you just have to play your position sharper and better and quicker," said Sparks. "It was nice to get some shots and see some pucks and fight through traffic and make saves and control play."

Babcock was more succinct in assessing the difference between Sparks' starts – "the puck hit him [tonight]" – while conceding, "[i]t was a good night for Sparky, he played much better which was good."

Even on Ilya Kovalchuk's second-period goal, the Kings' only score, Sparks was in good position, but the puck trickled by him. He shook it out in a hurry to stay focused on his ultimate goal, continuing to earn the trust of his teammates in this first full season as a back-up. A game like Monday's goes a long way in showing his true capabilities.

"He was big for us tonight," said Auston Matthews. "We played a good team over there with their structure, they'll hang onto it...and he made some big saves to keep us in the game and keep our lead. You know they're going to get chances, that's just the way it's going to go, and he came up big."

One such chance came early in the second period, when Kings' centre Tyler Toffoli had a superb point-blank chance on Sparks from the slot that the netminder turned aside, and the Leafs transitioned into a goal for Mitch Marner at the opposite end.

That gave the Leafs a 3-1 lead over the Kings and effectively swung momentum in Toronto's favour. With a multi-goal cushion, Sparks only got better as the game wore on and he shut the door on L.A.'s remaining chances.

"It was kind of interesting, you kind of forget the feeling over the course of the summer," Sparks said of watching the sequence play out. "You kind of forget what it's like to want to answer the bell and make the big save, and then immediately see your team go down the ice and score. The bigger the lead I have, the more comfortable I feel like playing my game and controlling play."

Takeaways



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Men on fire

Between lines centered by Matthews and John Tavares, the Leafs haven't exactly identified a clear-cut top unit, but Matthews' group with Patrick Marleau and Kasperii Kapanen is making a strong case for the mantle. Ever since Kapanen took over William Nylander's vacated post next to Matthews three games into the season, there hasn't been a stronger duo up front for Toronto and that continued against L.A. Kapanen had a two-goal night for Toronto, getting his team on the board first with a bank shot off Jack Campbell's back on the game's first shift, and then pocketed another in the third period with a backhand strike off a saucer pass from Matthews. Having temporarily escaped Toronto's fourth line, Kapanen (who Sparks calls "the fastest man on Earth") is reveling in the increased ice time and visibility. In his last five games, Kapanen has produced eight points (four goals, four assists) and on Monday recorded 16:48 in ice time, his fourth straight game with more than 16 minutes TOI.

And while Kapanen was busy scoring the goals, Matthews was tallying assists. Monday was the first time this season Matthews hasn't lit the lamp, but his point streak extended to seven games with a pair of assists on Kapanen's goals. The contest marked Matthews' seventh straight multi-point game, making him the fifth player in NHL history to accomplish that feat to start a campaign (Mario Lemieux, Kevin Stevens, Wayne Gretzky and Mike Bossy were the others). All this on a night where Matthews' line lost the possession battle (at 34 per cent) against Anze Kopitar's group but outdueled them in points on the scoresheet.

High on Hyman

Since shaking off the effects of a hip pointer injury suffered in preseason, Zach Hyman has rapidly emerged as one of the Leafs' most consistent players. Through games one and two of the regular season, when Hyman was still rebounding, Toronto's forecheck was mostly non-existent and their five-on-five play suffered as a result. But once Hyman found his legs and began driving the Leafs' in that area again, the whole team seems to have gotten better by the game. Monday was an especially strong night for Hyman, starting with how he set up Marner's second-period goal. Carrying the puck into L.A.'s zone, Hyman stayed on his feet as Drew Doughty and Dion Phaneuf converged to slow him down, leaving Tavares free to pick up the puck and flip it to Marner for the easy tap-in. Marner immediately pointed to Hyman for being the perfect decoy and free up the Leafs' stars to capitalize. Hyman has elevated the penalty kill in recent games as well, bringing his aggressive pace to limit chances for the Kings' power play and battling along the boards to free up loose pucks. He finished the game with one assist and a plus-one rating in 16:41 TOI.

Second period speed bump?

In three of their last four games, including Monday, the Leafs have seen a serious dip in possession during the second period. Against Los Angeles, the Leafs were chasing the Kings around the defensive zone for almost the entire second half of the middle frame, posting 42 per cent possession and 17 scoring chances against while ceding just one goal to Kovalchuk. If not for Sparks' strong showing, the Leafs' defensive struggles and inability to clear the zone could have turned the tide in L.A.'s favour fast. Babcock noted after the game how Toronto is still trying to figure out itself and each team they face, and a dip in the middle frame is an example of an area where the Leafs can add consistency.

Down day for Doughty

Going into Monday's game, Kings' defenceman Drew Doughty courted headlines talking about how after years of hype surrounding the Leafs, they finally looked like the "real deal." And that showed through in how Toronto played the Kings' top blue liner. Before the game's halfway mark, Doughty had been victimized twice by the Leafs' two top lines, putting him on the ice for his first two goals-against of the season when Kapanen and Marner scored. On both

plays, Doughty was overly aggressive and lost his stick, leaving him mostly helpless to stop Toronto's attack. In the case of Marner's goal, Doughty overplayed Hyman to give Marner the eventual tap-in. He was also involved on Kapanen's second goal, unsuccessfully sprawling out to try and stop Matthews' pass before slamming his stick against the boards at the bench in frustration afterwards. Being able to perform against on the NHL's top defenders is an obvious boost for the Leafs' young stars, who had beaten the Kings only one other time since the 2016-17 season began (1-2-1 record).

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TSN.CA / Matheson suspended two games for controversial body slam

Frank Seravalli

Mike Matheson may have a future in the Octagon, but the Department of Player Safety said Monday there is no room for body slamming in today's NHL.

The Florida Panthers' defenceman was suspended for two games by the NHL for slamming promising Vancouver Canucks rookie Elias Pettersson to the ice on Saturday night.

Pettersson, 19, sustained a concussion on the play. There is no timetable for his return to the lineup, Canucks coach Travis Green said Monday. Pettersson opened his NHL career with five goals and three assists - including at least one point in each appearance - in his first five NHL games.

"Am I mad at the play? Extremely mad," Green told reporters on Monday. "I'm really upset, I still am. We lost a bright young player to an injury that I don't think was necessary."

The Department of Player Safety concurred, citing Matheson for interference and unsportsmanlike conduct violations. This is Matheson's first career suspension; as such the 24-year-old blueliner will forfeit \$52,419.36 in salary. There was no penalty called on the play.

The sequence began with Pettersson undressing Matheson with deft puck maneuvering and ended with Pettersson being driven into the ice after an otherwise clean check along the boards.

"Well after the puck has gone, and after his hitting motion has stopped, Matheson intentionally slammed Pettersson directly to the ice intentionally and dangerously," the NHL's explanation video said.

The NHL also acknowledged that Matheson's stick was wedged between Pettersson's legs, which made it easier to leverage Pettersson backward in a can-opener style wrestling move.

"This is not a hockey play," the NHL's video explained.

With his visor all fogged up, a wobbly Pettersson needed help getting back on his skates and was quickly guided to Vancouver's locker room. The NHL did not specifically discuss intent in the video, but clearly hinted toward it with how he tracked Pettersson after an embarrassing play.

That is what bothered the Canucks.

"[Pettersson] made him look silly and he took his frustrations out on him," Canucks centre Bo Horvat told reporters. "The initial hit, it was



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fine. But the fact he had to body slam him, basically choke-slam him to the ground, there's no need for that."

The NHL's ruling was polarizing nonetheless, with old-time hockey minds cut from a more traditional cloth saying that Matheson was simply finishing a hard check.

"It was unfortunate he couldn't come back and play," Panthers coach Bob Boughner said. "Matheson is a pretty clean hockey player and I don't think there was any intent there. He was just finishing his check and they got tangled up and he went down."

Others said that Matheson cannot be blamed for the way Pettersson hit the ice because at 170 pounds, he would become airborne easier than a typical NHLer with the same force. Would the same result have occurred with the same hit on Horvat?

Either way, Matheson's suspension serves as vindication for Vancouver.

But that won't bring Pettersson, not just the early Calder Trophy leader but also one of the most exciting players league-wide this young season, back to the lineup any quicker.

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TSN.CA / Doughty: Despite D issues, Leafs are 'definitely for real'

Mark Masters

TSN Toronto reporter Mark Masters checks in daily with news and notes on the Maple Leafs. The Leafs and Los Angeles Kings skated at Scotiabank Arena ahead of Monday's game.

When the Los Angeles Kings visited Toronto last year around this time, Drew Doughty generated headlines by saying the Maple Leafs weren't a legitimate contender yet because their defence wasn't good enough.

A year later, questions about Toronto's blueline remain, but the team's offence is producing at an incredible rate. Has Doughty changed his view of his hometown team?

"You got to have good defence to win championships," the perennial Norris Trophy contender said, "but, I guess, when you're scoring seven goals and whatever they are, 50 per cent on the power play or something ridiculous, you can win games that way, too."

The London, Ont., native has been hearing from his buddies constantly about how good this version of the Leafs is. It's a familiar refrain, but finally the bluster has some backup.

"They're in my ear at the start of every season, ever since I was five-years-old, it's the same stuff at the beginning of the year," Doughty said with his trademark toothy grin, "but this time I definitely think the Leafs are for real."

Doughty played for Mike Babcock at the Olympics and believes the Toronto bench boss will have his team playing better defensively very soon.

"I know Babs' system. He puts a lot of emphasis on defence and they have a lot of young guys so they're going to learn how to play defence, but it takes a little bit longer to learn how to play defence," he said.

Doughty: 'This time I definitely think the Leafs are for real'

When the Kings visited Toronto last year, Drew Doughty generated headlines by saying the Leafs weren't a legitimate contender because their defence wasn't good enough yet. One year later, questions about the Leafs' blueline remain, but the offence is producing at historic levels, so has Doughty changed his view of his hometown team? Mark Masters has more.

The high-powered Leafs are 5-1-0 on the season, but are allowing 3.67 goals per game (23rd in the NHL). They are trending in the right direction when it comes to shots against, though, allowing 30.2 per game (11th in the NHL) down from 33.9 last season (28th).

"We've got a lot of room to get better," said defenceman Morgan Rielly, the NHL's second star of the week. "Moving forward, if we want to win for a long time we have to keep the puck out of our net. It's a group effort."

On the first day of training camp, Babcock listed improving overall team defence as a key area of focus.

Toronto allowed just two goals in Saturday's win against the Washington Capitals, but relied on some big saves from Frederik Andersen.

"In the game against Washington, both teams had high-end chances," Babcock said after Monday's skate. "We had 12, they had nine – that's way too many. We normally give up about six high-end (chances), we're not even talking about mid or low ones. They got lots of those when ... they had extended zone time, big, heavy bodies rolling around. We weren't able to stop the cycle. We're going to have to stop the cycle tonight. The best way to stop the cycle is to play in the O-zone and have the puck and not worry about that. That doesn't always happen."

So, how can the Leafs improve defensively? Is there a silver bullet like breakouts or more physicality?

"A lot of it is structure," said Rielly. "We know what our structure is, it's about executing and a lot of it is just about commitment to defence. It's more of a mental thing, I think ... it's just about mentally being sharp and making it tough for the opponent to get to the neutral zone and break out quicker and just limit the time in our zone and we're able to do that. It's about really committing to it and doing it right in, right out."

Previously, Doughty said the Kings were able to reach a championship level, because they cared just as much about preventing a goal as scoring one.

"I think that's something that organically happens throughout the season," said Auston Matthews. "The team buys in more and more and that's an important thing with this group. We have a lot of guys here who are willing to buy in."

The game has changed a bit since the Kings won titles in 2012 and 2014. The last three Stanley Cup winners – Pittsburgh twice and Washington – have been more known for their offensive capabilities than defensive stinginess.

"Stylistically, you still believe in a lot of the same things," insisted Kings coach John Stevens, an assistant on the Cup-winning clubs. "There's players here who've had a lot of success, Doughty is a great example, Anze Kopitar is a great example, where being a great checker, defender is really important to them. We still feel if you check better, you have the puck more and can attack the other way."

But Stevens also noted defences are getting more mobile. And that's where the Leafs may be in good shape.

"We're in contention, for sure," said centre Nazem Kadri. "We have forwards that play the right way, that are able to help out (defensively) and I don't think our D gets enough credit for being able to break the puck out and get it in the forwards' hands. I mean, even the last few winners of the Stanley Cup, their defence hasn't



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had four or five or six absolute studs back there. It's a collective group and everyone's got to work together."

After taking step vs. Caps, Leafs know there is room for defensive improvements

The Maple Leafs made some defensive improvements on Saturday as they held the defending champions to two goals, but they know that there is still lots of room to improve their defensive structure.

Doughty and the Kings defence will have their hands full with Matthews tonight. The Maple Leafs centre has 10 goals in six games to start the season. It's one of the hottest starts in NHL history.

That's a reason why Doughty says he never "seriously" considered signing with his hometown team. He opted to bypass free agency altogether by signing an extension with the Kings in the summer.

Although Doughty admits, "I enjoyed hearing all those questions about me coming here, it was kind of fun."

Doughty says he thought about playing in Toronto, but never seriously considered signing with the Maple Leafs even with Nazem Kadri's campaigning during the off-season.

But hearing the same questions every day when you play in the centre of the hockey universe isn't easy. And for a passionate guy like Doughty it may have proven a big challenge.

"As you grow older you start caring more and more and more about your team and about how you play and mentally I start getting frustrated now as I've got older," the 28-year-old explained. "I used to go home and if I made a few mistakes in the game I was like, 'Whatever, tomorrow's a new day.' Now, it's a little different, you go home and you're literally sour for the whole night and can't sleep after a game. So, mentally I wish I was as strong as I was when I was younger."

Veteran defenceman Dion Phaneuf, acquired from the Ottawa Senators by the Kings last season, has helped Doughty manage his emotions better.

"I get frustrated sometimes and I'll take it out on either the refs or take it out on myself or my stick or whatever it may be," Doughty said. "He's kind of taught me that when I'm showing frustration in myself that affects the whole team and as a leader on this team I can't be doing that. I've been working on that for years and working on it and sometimes I'll just go psycho, but he's really helped me with that. He's just a good person, good friend and good teammate."

Doughty couldn't say enough good things about the former Leafs captain, who was often a polarizing figure in Toronto.

"I love the guy. He's awesome. He's a great fit for our team, great player. Plays so hard and stands up for his teammates all the time. Always stands up for his teammates and we're really happy to have him. And, you know, the Leafs could probably use him now, having a veteran guy like that back on the back end, but we're happy to have him and he's going to help us."

Doughty 'loves' Phaneuf and notes 'Leafs could probably use him now'

Drew Doughty explains the impact that Dion Phaneuf has made on himself and the Kings and says the Maple Leafs would benefit from having the veteran defenceman in their lineup now.

Garret Sparks will get the start for Toronto tonight as Andersen is listed as day-to-day with a knee injury. It will be the first chance for Sparks to play since allowing six goals in an overtime win in Chicago on Oct. 7. He will be backed up by Eamon McAdam of the ECHL's Newfoundland Growlers who was recalled by the Leafs on Monday on an emergency basis.

Jack Campbell starts for the Kings.

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TSN.CA / Sparks starts vs. Kings; Andersen day-to-day

Kristen Shilton

TORONTO – Maple Leafs' backup goaltender Garret Sparks will see his second start of the season Monday night against the Los Angeles Kings, but head coach Mike Babcock didn't immediately explain why he's breaking with his usual goaltending routine in the midst of a four-game win streak.

For the last two seasons, Babcock has only tapped his second goaltender when starter Frederik Andersen was hurt or the team had back-to-back games. Andersen participated fully in morning skate, but it was revealed Monday afternoon that Andersen is day-to-day with a knee injury. The team recalled goaltender Eamon McAdam from the ECHL's Newfoundland Growlers on an emergency basis to serve as the backup.

"Sparks is going tonight," was all Babcock would say on Monday morning, cutting off a follow-up question with, "Sparky is starting tonight."

Babcock had been non-committal throughout the preseason about adjusting his rotation, saying he didn't want to be pigeon-holed if one goalie emerged as giving him a better chance to win.

That didn't appear to be a factor now, though, with Andersen coming off his best start of the season in a 25-save performance to lead Toronto past the Washington Capitals 4-2 on Saturday.

While Sparks spent morning skate in the Leafs' starters net, he and Andersen broke with convention by exiting the ice together when the backup normally stays out for extra conditioning.

Sparks didn't address the issue afterwards, and when Andersen was asked about his status versus L.A. he sidestepped the question and said Babcock would fill in the blanks.

But his coach didn't. Pressed further on whether he had trouble evaluating Sparks' only start of the season, a wild 7-6 overtime win in Chicago last Sunday where Sparks registered a meager .806 save percentage, Babcock said only, "The great thing about it is you get evaluated every day in life [and] pro hockey."

A 2011 seventh-round draft choice by Toronto, Sparks beat out Curtis McElhinney and Calvin Pickard in training camp for the Leafs' backup job, his first opportunity to make the team to start a season. Both veterans were subsequently picked up off waivers, McElhinney by the Carolina Hurricanes and Pickard by the Philadelphia Flyers, severely depleting the Leafs' once-impressive goaltending depth.

At the time, Toronto's decision to part with McElhinney raised a few eyebrows, not only because he was the NHL top backup goalie in 2017-18 (11-5-1 record, .934 save percentage) but because of how well he played in Babcock's rotation, the hallmark of which has been limited reps for the second netminder.

Since 2016-17, Andersen has registered a heavy workload of 66 starts per campaign, both of which included missing time with injuries. Yet Babcock always made it clear that riding his starter to that degree was simply a preference, not reflective of how highly he thought of McElhinney. As if to underscore that point, the journeyman is off to a strong start in Carolina, posting a 3-0-0 record with .900 save percentage.



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"They did unbelievable in getting Mac," Babcock said of the Hurricanes on Oct. 2, the day McElhinney was claimed. "Great person, great family, good pro, does it right every day, good goaltender. Quality man."

Sparks is still trying to reach that same level, on and off the ice. Babcock made it clear after training camp Sparks didn't win the job based on his preseason performance, but rather the 25-year-old earned his spot based on five years in the organization and last season's run as the American Hockey League's top goalie (31-9-1 record, .936 save percentage).

In the two years that elapsed between Sparks' 17-game NHL audition in 2015-16 and his opportunity now, the Elmhurst, Ill., native has made a conscious effort to become a more mature and dedicated version of himself, a commitment his teammates recognize.

"He's been in the organization for a little while and I always thought he was a talented goaltender with exceptional athleticism," Nazem Kadri said. "He's able to make great saves at timely times. He's a big guy, which is what goalies evolve into in today's NHL. I think he's going to be a great player."

Now it's up to Sparks to show it. With fewer emotions at play Monday than there against his hometown Blackhawks last week, Sparks will see his first routine start and be able to settle in without added distractions.

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TSN.CA / Exploding offences, the bizarre Ducks and surprising Hurricanes

Travis Yost

The National Hockey League regular season is almost two weeks old and we're already seeing some fascinating early-season storylines developing.

With a reasonably slow schedule on deck for Monday, I wanted to use this window to investigate some of the trends we are seeing around the league. Some of these may surprise you, others not so much. But all of them are interesting and will be plot points to follow as the season progresses.

Let's get started with the topic du jour around the league – the explosion of offence.

All offence, all of the time?

It's all anyone can talk about. Most everyone around the league seems to love the "new-look" NHL – the one where defence and goaltending are optional.

Through Sunday, teams are averaging 3.15 goals per game against goaltenders stopping 90.7 per cent of shots. It seems like a massive deviation from scoring norms – over the last decade or so, scoring has been stable at around 2.80 goals per game against goaltenders stopping 91.2 per cent of shots.

So yes, the first two weeks of the 2018-19 season vary wildly from other full seasons. But knowing what we know about how the regular season generally unfolds – more offence earlier in the season, more defence and more three-point games later in the season – we need to check the first two weeks of this regular season against the first

two weeks of past seasons to determine if something has materially changed.

Let's focus on just the last five years. Here's how each season played out by way of league average scoring through the first two weeks versus league average scoring by season end.

The interesting piece here is that October didn't always used to look like this. In the 2014 and 2015 seasons, October scoring was virtually indiscernible from the full season. But that has changed over the last three seasons.

These are admittedly small windows and you are going to run into some legitimate sampling issues, but descriptively speaking, this is now year three of October being the wild west of offence. (Side note: If you regressed 2018's October scoring based on what we know for prior periods, you would expect to see an average of 2.90 goals per game. More than the last decade's average, but marginally under last year's big number at 2.97)

The driver behind the rate increase is the more interesting question and one that probably doesn't have a single, concrete answer. I subscribe to the theory that the drafting and developing of more skilled attackers – and development and enhancement of attacking methodology, like stronger adherence to carrying the puck into the offensive zone versus dumping it in from the neutral zone – is having an impact. Combine that with the league's general slowness at identifying skill on the blueline and you get a sizable divide between forwards and defencemen. The result is higher scoring.

Another theory: The depth at the forward position is much better than it ever has been. More teams are rolling out third and fourth lines with quality shooters and playmakers. A decade ago, you had an enforcer in almost every lineup. That's just not the case anymore.

But that's an article for another day. October scoring is through the roof and I expect we'll see similar results to the 2017-18 season. That means an inevitable draw-down in scoring as the season progresses, but not enough to dissuade the 2018-19 season from being one of the bigger offensive seasons in recent history.

The Anaheim Ducks opened up the season 4-1-1 and in a Pacific Division that's looking stunningly mediocre, that's a big development.

But these are still Randy Carlyle's Anaheim Ducks and you know what that means – absolutely ludicrous and unfavourable shot disadvantages that will set this team back considerably in future weeks.

Their loss to the Stars on Saturday night was one for the ages. Anaheim opened up a 3-0 lead in Dallas with goals from Jakob Silfverberg, Kiefer Sherwood and Adam Henrique. Any team carrying a three-goal lead on the road is going to be susceptible to some sizable score effect impacts – most teams with this type of lead tend to play more conservative in all areas of the ice and try to safely ease their way to victory.

But Anaheim took it to another level. The Ducks were outshot 30 to 4 in the second period of that game. Attempts were 46 to 11 in favour of Dallas. And, not surprisingly, the Ducks ended up dusting that three-goal lead and losing the game in regulation.

The only thing more insane than being outshot by that type of margin is the fact that it's not the first time that it's happened to the Ducks this year.

Anaheim has dealt with a swath of injuries (Ryan Getzlaf has a groin injury, Corey Perry is on LTIR and Ryan Kesler just returned from a hip issue) to key players and that's undoubtedly had an impact on their results. But they also haven't exactly played a murderer's row of a schedule here. The schedule alone would fail to explain how nearly half of the periods Anaheim has played this season have ended up with them being outshot by double digits.



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This is a bad hockey team with a really, really strong goaltender. That matters, but you can't imagine John Gibson will be able to bail this team out all season long. Even a goalie of Gibson's calibre can't stop 94.4 per cent of shots over a full season, or anything close to it.

The biggest surprise of the 2018-19 season has been the Carolina Hurricanes. Carolina has been a team on the brink for quite some time and it's possible we are witnessing their inevitable breakthrough.

I've often joked in this space that the Hurricanes would be the league's best team if you removed the nets from the ice. Since the 2014-15 season (graphed below), the Hurricanes are actually third in the league in Corsi%. They have precisely zero playoff appearances to show for it.

Why is that the case? Carolina has historically been a team loaded with poor shooting talent and even worse goaltending. So the shot differentials merely kept them out of the cellar in most years. They never had the requisite talent at either end of the ice to really turn that possession time and those shot advantages into goals, which is a huge problem.

The 2018-19 Hurricanes are different, at least so far. Rod Brind'Amour's team is getting 63 per cent of the shots through the first six games, which leads San Jose by decimal points. But this year it's translating to both goals and wins. At the skater level, nearly every Hurricane is above 50 per cent in Corsi%, which means the Hurricanes are seeing more shots for than against with that player on the ice. The same is generally true for Goal%, which is a big reason why the Hurricanes are 4-1-1 to start the season:

Maybe it's luck. Maybe it's the coaching staff. Maybe it's downright mysticism. Whatever the case is, the Hurricanes look terrifying. We knew this day would come. Now, the Metropolitan Division has to deal with it.

The good news for Vegas and Los Angeles is that no one in the Pacific Division looks particularly strong right now. The bad news is that would include both of these teams.

The Knights started the year on a tough East-Coast road trip and have, like Anaheim, been dealing with key roster losses with Paul Stastny, Alex Tuch, and Nate Schmidt all out of commission. I'm not sure the Kings have any good excuse, though Dustin Brown's loss clearly has thrown their top six into a bit of a funk.

Either way, we're talking about two teams that have a combined zero goals on the power play this year. And make no mistake, the results (0-for-16 for Vegas; 0-for-18 for Los Angeles) are a pretty fair end product of what we are seeing. The one commonality is that both teams are struggling mightily to transition the puck through the neutral zone.

Vegas prefer to enter the zone with control, but they don't appear to have the puck carriers in the right spaces to accomplish it. Opposing blueliners are harassing the Vegas carriers at the line, stripping the puck, and counterattacking the other way. What ends up happening on most of Vegas' power-play shifts to start the year is an awful lot of time lost just trying to gain back the offensive zone. It's hard to generate a lot of attack when that happens. (They are averaging 91 total shots and 18 "dangerous shots" per 60 minutes this season. League average last year: 100 total shots and 25 dangerous shots per-60 minutes. It's bad.)

Where Vegas' issues appear to be related to structure and style, Los Angeles is a different animal. I think it starts with Ilya Kovalchuk, who is probably one of five best shooters in the history of hockey. In early parts of the season, Kovalchuk was being used as a screener. And then, not at all. (He was temporarily moved off of the first power-play unit at one point, if you can believe it.) That seems counter-intuitive when you remember that Kovalchuk made his career being the one-time shooting option from the circle – this shooting map from years ago kind of emphasizes that point:

Kovalchuk's weird usage isn't the only reason why the L.A. power play is struggling but it's probably near the top of the list. The Kings were offensively starved last year and adding Kovalchuk was a way to bring some much-needed shooting talent to 5-on-5 and the power play.

Los Angeles needs to find a way to make this work.

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TSN.CA / Ice Chips: Niemi starts for Habs, Shaw out

Staff Report

Montreal Canadiens

Antti Niemi was in the starter's net at practice once again and will make his second straight start tonight against the Detroit Red Wings. Regular starter Carey Price missed Saturday's win over the Pittsburgh Penguins due to the flu. Andrew Shaw missed practice on Monday due to the flu and won't play on Monday either.

Head coach Claude Julien said Niemi was going to get the start regardless of Price's health.

Tomas Plekanec will play in his 1,000th career game tonight against the Wings. Nicolas Deslauriers (facial fracture) skated with the club, wearing a full cage, and is expected to be back within the next week or two. - John Lu, TSN

Forward Mark Stone was absent from practice on Monday, but head coach Guy Boucher said he will play when the Senators host the Dallas Stars tonight.

"No problem" Boucher said. "Just to give him a break. He had a little nagging thing."

Doughty 'loves' Phaneuf and notes 'Leafs could probably use him now'

Drew Doughty explains the impact that Dion Phaneuf has made on himself and the Kings and says the Maple Leafs would benefit from having the veteran defenceman in their lineup now.

Backup goalie Garret Sparks was in the starter's net at Maple Leafs practice on Monday and will get his second start of the season when Toronto hosts the Los Angeles Kings later Monday, head coach Mike Babcock announced.

The 25-year-old allowed six goals in a 7-6 victory over the Chicago Blackhawks earlier this month.

The team placed forward Nic Petan on the active roster. The 23-year-old had two goals over 15 games last season with the Jets.

Calgary Flames

Flames forward Sean Monahan did not practice on Friday after blocking a shot in the second period of Saturday's win over the Colorado Avalanche. Mikael Backlund left practice early with general soreness, but Bill Peters doesn't believe there was anything to be concerned about. - Jermain Franklin, TSN

Vancouver Canucks



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The club called up 22-year-old centre Adam Gaudette from the Utica Comets of the American Hockey League. The 22-year-old has five games of NHL experience with the Canucks, all spent last season.

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USA TODAY / Sidney Crosby playing with a team from Kenya? Now you've seen it all in hockey

Kevin Allen, USA TODAY

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Pittsburgh Penguins star Sidney Crosby was as touched participating in the Tim Horton's-sponsored video about a Kenya hockey team as viewers are watching it.

"To see how much they loved the game was pretty cool," Crosby said.

The three-minute video, entitled "The Away Game," tells a heartwarming tale of players from the African country coming together to form the nation's first ice hockey team. Because the team had no one to play against, Tim Horton's brought the Kenyans to Canada to play games. In the video, Crosby and Colorado

Avalanche star Nathan MacKinnon play with them against a Canadian team.

"They enjoy so many little things, that as hockey players, you take for granted," Crosby said.

It's a feel-good story.

More than 229,000 people have already watched the video.

When Crosby and MacKinnon enter the dressing room, a Kenyan player walks up and rubs Crosby's face and asked if he was really Sidney Crosby. Another Kenyan sheds tears, seeing the NHL players.

"They don't have boards at the rink they play at, and they travel pretty far to play there," Crosby said.

One of the Kenyan players said when he's playing ice hockey, it feels like "the whole world stops."

On social media, people have called the video inspiring and awesome. One person said it gave him the shivers. Several people said: "I'm not crying, you're crying."

Crosby said he was impressed by how passionate the Kenyans were about the game, and how closely they followed the sport.

"They are big fans," he said.

He said he was struck by how widespread the game's reach has become.

Said Crosby: "That's the last place I would have envisioned a hockey at and guys playing there."

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