



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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THE NEWS & OBSERVER

Hurricanes broadcaster Mike Maniscalco taking leave to undergo medical treatment

By Luke DeCock

Carolina Hurricanes broadcaster Mike Maniscalco is dealing with a serious medical issue after falling ill on the team's West Coast road trip, the team announced Friday.

Maniscalco, who serves as the sideline reporter and pregame host on FS Carolinas broadcasts and also works for the team's website, went to the emergency room in San Jose early Wednesday morning after the team's game in Los Angeles on Tuesday night complaining of abdominal pain.

Doctors discovered a large mass in his stomach and his wife Kristen flew to California to join him on Wednesday. Maniscalco has been hospitalized at Santa Clara Valley Medical Center since then, missing the Hurricanes' games at San Jose on Wednesday and Anaheim on Friday.

"I just intend to get back to work as soon as I can and I'm truly grateful for the support that has been shown to me by the

organization and the fans," Maniscalco said in a text message to the News & Observer.

Maniscalco received medical clearance on Friday to return to Raleigh for further diagnosis, perhaps as soon as Saturday, but will continue to be absent from Hurricanes broadcasts indefinitely while he undergoes treatment.

"What stands out to me, and always has, is Mike's relationship with the players," Hurricanes analyst Tripp Tracy said. "I think that was certainly reflected in Dougie Hamilton's comments in our interview with him in the second intermission on Wednesday. We'll be thinking about him each and every night until he returns to the broadcast."

Added play-by-play announcer John Forslund: "At times like this, the power of positive thoughts directed toward Mike and his family is essential. It's essential for the fans who love Mike to rally around this. We all are. He's with us, even when he can't be. We miss him dearly."



Gold: Sloppy Canes fall, 4-2, to Ducks

By Adam Gold

There's an old saying about water finding its level. That's probably what is happening to the Carolina Hurricanes. Beaten, 4-2, by the Anaheim Ducks, ending the 3-games-in-4-nights California road swing and heading home with a 6-3-0 record on the season.

The Canes are still in first place — tied with the Penguins and Capitals — in the Metropolitan Division, with five full days off before taking on the Blue Jackets in Columbus next Thursday night. It's time that Carolina can use, time that they'll need, to figure out what has changed since the 5-0-0 start.

Before we get to the how's and why's, some perspective. Even though the Hurricanes set a franchise record with five straight wins to start the year, and they looked — at times — very much like the confident group that played into the middle of May a year ago, we always needed to pump the breaks on expectations.

They're not the early 80's Islanders for crying out loud.

Could they be the best team in the Metropolitan Division? Sure, why not. But, they're still very much a work in progress and the more we watch the more holes we see. Carolina's

goaltending is, well, I'm not really sure yet. It may end up being better than last year. But, it might not be as good either.

Petr Mrazek was pulled after Anaheim went up 4-0, a maneuver head coach Rod Brind'Amour did exactly ZERO times last season. James Reimer, who allowed four goals in San Jose on Wednesday, played very well in relief, but he wasn't really tested all that heavily once the Ducks had assumed control of the game.

The real issue is that Sebastian Aho, Nino Niederreiter and Andrei Svechnikov have combined for zero goals involving beating a goalie. Aho and Svech have three goals between them, but all are into an empty net, and Nino was set up three times tonight in the slot and failed to threaten a goal. That has to change.

Svechnikov has gotten his points, and for the most part has played well. So, it's really the lack of production from Aho that should have people at least mildly concerned. Yes, there have been moments when it looked like Sebastian was close to breaking out. But, you can tell that he's pressing to contribute offensively and as a result he's off to a slow start. Two shots on goal in more than 23 minutes of ice time is not enough for the player who should be at the front of the line when it comes to scoring.



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Carolina was sloppy, allowing a pair of first period goals to fall behind 2-0 after the first period. The first came when Brett Pesce came across the defensive zone leaving a red hot Adam Henrique alone on the left wing. He took a Rickard Rakell pass and easily beat Petr Mrazek on the short side for his 5th goal of the season. Later in the period, right after an underwhelming Carolina power play, the Canes got caught in a bad line change, were scrambling around in their own zone and Troy Terry redirected a Cam Fowler shot from the high slot and it was 2-0, Ducks.

Second period goals from Jakob Silfverberg and Carter Rowney made it 4-0 Anaheim and the rest of the night was accounting. The Rowney goal was probably the most indicative of the way the first 26 minutes went, as Carolina was in the middle of another listless power play when the Ducks gained possession in their own end. Hampus Lindholm whistled a perfect pass all the way across center ice to Rakell. His unencumbered shot was fought off by Mrazek, but the rebound was loose in the slot as Jake Gardiner and Nino Niederreiter were napping while Rowney roofed it shorthanded, chasing Mrazek just 25:56 into his night.

Yes, the Canes scored the next two goals. Haula's 7th of the year came on the power play. Then Haydn Fleury rifled a shot through a Niederreiter screen to make it 4-2 with 7:40 left in the period, it was his first goal in 96 career NHL games, so that's nice. But, that was it...

The Hurricanes were outplayed, significantly so, by the a Ducks team that is young, fast and skilled. In fact, they're everything the Hurricanes have been/should be/will become again. It's just that in a season of ebbs and flows, the Canes are in the midst of a frustrating ebb.

* Haula's 7th of the season snapped an 0-for-17 power play drought. About three minutes after, he was crunched into the

wall by Anaheim defenseman Josh Manson and left the game for good with an upper body injury. The Hurricanes, who were already playing with just 11 forwards, were down to 10. Not to mention they were without their leading goal-scorer. For the record, Manson's hit was 100% clean, from the side and to the ribs (it appeared). No penalty was called — correctly — even though Haula stayed down on the ice for a few minutes, eventually lifting himself to an "all fours" position before skating to the dressing room under his own power.

* Joel Edmundson will garner praise for his "team toughness", as he fought Manson in retaliation for the hit on Haula. But, it wasn't his best night. He finished -2 in a season-low 12:53. Granted, Joel had company in the "didn't play too well" club, so I'm not trying to single him out.

* Dougie Hamilton picked up an assist on the Haula goal and has now posted at least one point in 7 of Carolina's 9 games.

* Mrazek allowed 4 goals on 13 shots in losing for the first time in 5 starts.

* Trevor van Riemsdyk returned after missing the first 8 games to play a fairly quiet (that's a good thing for a defenseman) 11:28.

* Aho and Teravainen were mostly the players who benefitted from the decision to go with just 11 forwards. Each played more than 23 minutes and each took turns skating with Svechnikov and Jordan Staal.

* When Haula left the game, Brind'Amour juggled everything as Ryan Dzingel moved up to play with Aho and Teravainen, while Martin Necas jumped in with Staal and Svechnikov.

* Carolina's next game isn't until Thursday night in Columbus, against a Blue Jackets team handed the Canes their first loss of the year.



Recap: Canes Fall to Ducks

Fleury scores first NHL goal in 4-2 loss

by Michael Smith

ANAHEIM - The Carolina Hurricanes showed some fight - literally - but it wasn't near enough to erase a four-goal deficit in a 4-2 loss to the Anaheim Ducks on Friday.

Haydn Fleury tallied his first career NHL goal to cut the Ducks' lead to two in the second period, but the Canes couldn't get much more of a push in the third period and finished this three-game California swing with a 1-2-0 record.

Here are five takeaways from the Cali finale.

1. Not Enough

There were signs of life for the Hurricanes through parts of the second period, but otherwise, the team didn't bring the effort

level they needed in order to be competitive against the Ducks.

"We didn't do a whole lot," Jordan Staal said. "In general, there just wasn't enough from everyone, including myself. Everyone was just a bit behind. We didn't really create enough offensively and didn't defend well enough. Didn't really do anything all that great."

"There was no flow to that game," head coach Rod Brind'Amour said, raw and honest. "That was one of the worst hockey games I've been around. Just gross." After winning five straight games to begin the season, the Canes have now lost three of their last four games. Two weeks into the season, it's by no means panic time, but the team knows it needs more from everyone.

"We'll have to sit on this one for a little while, which is unfortunate, but I think the boys will hopefully learn a lesson



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from that one and this trip and how it's just not easy," Staal said. "We're showing up thinking it's going to be easy, and it's not. It's a good league, and they played well."

"We didn't generate anything. We gave them a couple easy ones, it felt like, at the start, and we just never got going," Brind'Amour said. "You want to make the other team earn it, and we didn't make it hard enough."

2. Anaheim Builds a Lead

The Hurricanes gifted the Ducks their first goal of the game in the first five minutes with a defensive breakdown, as four players got sucked over to the near side of the rink while Adam Henrique had plenty of room to skate and snipe a shot past Petr Mrazek. Then, after the Canes failed to convert on the first power play of the game, Troy Terry doubled his team's lead with a redirection of Cam Fowler's point shot.

"That was a tough one. It was kind of the whole game," Staal said. "We weren't ready to go and it showed."

In the second period, Jakob Silfverberg stuffed in his own rebound and then Carter Rowney scored a shorthanded goal to stretch the Ducks' lead to 4-0. That prompted Brind'Amour to make his first mid-game goaltending change as head coach.

"I hate doing that. It's not [Mrazek's] fault. We left him out to dry. We had a lot of guys sleeping tonight," he said. "I didn't need to see him in there getting hung out to dry like that, so that was more just a statement than anything."

Though the Canes cut the deficit in half later in the period, they couldn't spark another push in the third period.

"It just felt like a pretty vanilla game. We gave them that early one for no reason. I don't think they had four chances in the first, and they scored on two of them. We just gave it to them, I felt like, and then they played a good game," Brind'Amour said. "They just didn't give us much. When you get a lead, that's how you play. They did a nice job."

3. You Never Forget Your First

Haydn Fleury had waited a long time for this one.

In his 96th NHL game, Fleury finally found the back of the net for his first career NHL goal. And what a play it was to make it happen. Derek Grant, who was feeling pressure from Lucas Wallmark, made an ill-advised, weak backhand clear, and Fleury jumped across the blue line to keep the zone on his backhand. He settled the puck, took a step and fired a slap shot from the top of the left circle that beat Ryan Miller.

"They had been in their end for quite a while. Pesce had kept a couple pucks in, so I knew they were probably tired and needed to get off," Fleury said. "Their guy just kind of laid one out there. I stepped into it and shot one as hard as I could."

Fleury, as if he had been there before, raised two arms in the air in celebration. An elated Brett Pesce jumped into the huddle.

"He was probably more excited than I was," Fleury laughed.

The bench went wild.

"That was nice to see," he said. "Relieved. Excited. All those things. All the guys have been joking saying, 'It's coming, it's coming.' This year, I've felt from the first game I've had chances to score each night."

One to remember for Fleury, even if the end result wasn't as encouraging.

"If there was a positive, it was nice to see him get one. He's been working hard for a lot of years. He's been playing well consistently lately, and you could tell it was starting to come for him," Staal said. "We were joking with him, but at the same time, we knew it was coming. He's been playing some good hockey, and it was good to see him get one."

"It's always nice to see somebody get their first," Brind'Amour said. "I would have liked to see it be a little more memorable for him, but it's been a long time. It's nice to see him finally get it."

Nino Niederreiter grabbed the puck out of the net. That one's a keeper.

"Hopefully I get a nice frame or something," Fleury smiled.

4. Haula Scores & Gets Hurt

The good news is that Erik Haula scored his team-leading seventh goal of the season, a deflection of a Teuvo Teravainen shot that broke a power-play hex.

The bad news is that Haula was injured shortly after. Josh Manson leveled Haula with a hit behind the net, a violent collision with the end boards that left Haula down on the ice in pain. He left the game and was ruled out for the remainder with a lower-body injury.

The good news, again, is that Brind'Amour sounded optimistic about the injury.

"I don't think it will be too bad," he said. "I'm hopeful it's nothing serious. I don't know yet. We'll find out probably when we get home."

A skirmish broke out after the hit, with Joel Edmundson square in the mix. You felt like a score-settling drop of the mitts was inevitable, and it certainly was. The two tossed their gloves a few shifts later and went toe-to-toe, both getting their shots in but Edmundson coming away having gotten the better of Manson. Edmundson looked at the Canes' bench, enthusiastically clapping as he skated to the box. His team, for a brief moment, seemed to have some life.

"I can't say enough about Eddy," Staal said. "He did an unbelievable job sticking up for his team."

"That was a pretty good fight. You're not really going to see a better fight than that. The bench got going," Fleury said. "We got some life, but we couldn't get it going again in the third."

"That's a good teammate, right?" Brind'Amour said. "He sees one of his guys get, what he feels, cheap-shotted, and he stood up for him. That says a lot about him, for sure."

5. Van Riemsdyk Returns

Just 36 seconds into Trevor van Riemsdyk's first shift in Game 2 of the Second Round against the New York Islanders, Cal Clutterbuck lined up the Canes' defenseman and crunched



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him along the end boards. A few days later, van Riemsdyk underwent surgery on his left shoulder.

Nearly six months later, van Riemsdyk returned to game action with the Canes in Anaheim.

"It's been slow, but no setbacks. You're able to see the little improvements, as minor and little as they may be. It's nice to be back now and have all that behind me," he said before the game. "It's obviously great that we're off to this start. It's never as much fun when you're watching. You'd rather be in the locker room and be a part of it."

Instead of swapping van Riemsdyk for a defenseman, the Canes opted to dress seven blue-liners and 11 forwards. (And good thing, right? Fleury might have been the odd man out if the team would have rolled with the conventional 12 and six lineup.) Van Riemsdyk finished the night with a hit in 11:28 of ice time.

Up Next

A five-day gap now separates the Canes from their next game, which will take them to Columbus to square off with the Blue Jackets on Thursday.



Henrique, Miller propel Ducks past Hurricanes

Forward scores fourth goal in three games, goalie makes 22 saves to help Anaheim stay undefeated at home

by Dan Arritt

ANAHEIM -- Adam Henrique scored his fourth goal in the past three games for the Anaheim Ducks in a 4-2 win against the Carolina Hurricanes at Honda Center on Friday.

Jakob Silfverberg scored in his 500th NHL game, Carter Rowney scored shorthanded, and Troy Terry got his first goal of the season for the Ducks, who improved to 4-0-0 at home this season.

Rickard Rakell had two assists, and Ryan Miller made 22 saves in his second start of the season for Anaheim (6-2-0).

"We've got a group in there that's all really pulling in the right direction," Anaheim coach Dallas Eakins said.

Haydn Fleury scored his first NHL goal in his 96th game, and Erik Haula scored for the Hurricanes shortly before leaving following a hit from Ducks defenseman Josh Manson.

Petr Mrazek allowed four goals on 13 shots in 25:51 before he was replaced by James Reimer, who made seven saves for the Hurricanes (6-3-0).

Carolina has lost two in a row following a 6-1-0 start.

"I think the boys, hopefully, will learn a lesson from that one," Hurricanes forward Jordan Staal said. "It's not easy. We're showing up thinking that it's just going to be easy. It's not. It's a good league and they played well."

The Ducks scored the first four goals.

Henrique made it 1-0 at 4:06 of the first period. Ondrej Kase fed the puck to Rakell in the middle and he passed it to Henrique, who was wide open coming down the left side. Henrique shot from the left circle and scored on the short side.

Mrazek made a right-pad save on Manson seven seconds after the Ducks killed the first penalty of the game, but Terry scored 11 seconds later when he deflected a point shot from defenseman Cam Fowler for a 2-0 lead at 13:44.

"Rather than just walking in the room and saying, 'Hey, let's have a good start,' (we gave) them some tangible things to look for there," Eakins said. "Once again they took it to heart and we were able to get what we needed."

Silfverberg made it 3-0 at 37 seconds of the second period. Michael Del Zotto made a diagonal pass through the neutral zone that made it to Silfverberg, putting him one-on-one against Mrazek. He made the initial save but Silfverberg pushed in the rebound.

Rowney scored from a sharp angle to make it 4-0 at 5:56 and bring Reimer off the bench.

"It's not his fault," Hurricanes coach Rod Brind'Amour said of Mrazek. "We left him out to dry. We had a lot of guys sleeping tonight."

Haula scored his seventh goal of the season on a deflection while on the power play at 8:47 to cut it to 4-1, and Fleury scored on a point shot at 12:20 to make it 4-2.

"All the guys have been joking, saying 'It's coming, it's coming,'" Fleury said of his first NHL goal. "This year, I felt from the first game that I've had chances to score each night."

They said it

"There just wasn't enough from everyone, including myself. Everyone was just a bit behind. We didn't really create enough offensively and didn't feel like we did enough. We didn't really do anything all that great." -- Hurricanes forward Jordan Staal

"We know we have a strong team and we know we can play this kind of hockey with a lot of speed and a lot of puck management. Obviously it gives us confidence, but at the same time we need to stay humble." -- Ducks forward Jakob Silfverberg

Need to know

Brind'Amour replaced his goalie during a game for the first time in his two seasons in Carolina. Mrazek came into the game with a shutout streak of 98:07. ... Hurricanes defenseman Trevor van Riemsdyk played 11:28 in his season debut. He had left shoulder surgery May 2. ... Miller last faced



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the Hurricanes on Oct. 29, 2017, his first game with the Ducks. He made 34 saves and Anaheim won 4-3 in a shootout. ... The Ducks had outscored its past two opponents 9-0 before Haula's goal. ... The Ducks are 6-0-0 this season when giving up more shots. ... Rakell has six points (two goals, four assists) in a four-game point streak. ... Fowler has four points (one goal, three assists) in a four-game point streak.

What's next

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

Ducks: Host the Calgary Flames on Sunday (9 p.m. ET; SN360, PRIME, NHL.TV)



Ducks extend unbeaten home start, knock off Canes 4-2

By Greg Beacham

ANAHEIM, Calif. (AP) — When Carter Rowney's short-handed goal sailed into the Carolina net, the Anaheim Ducks had scored nine consecutive goals across two games against two of the best teams in the Eastern Conference.

A few months after the Ducks missed the playoffs, they've started superbly under a new coach preaching speed, discipline and fun.

Adam Henrique and Troy Terry scored in the first period, Ryan Miller made 22 saves and the Ducks remained unbeaten at home with a 4-2 victory over the Hurricanes on Friday night.

Rowney scored early in the second period to put the Ducks up 4-0, chasing Carolina goalie Petr Mrazek during a tremendous offensive surge by the NHL's lowest-scoring team last season. Jakob Silfverberg also scored in the second period for the Ducks, who are off to a 6-2-0 start under new coach Dallas Eakins after missing the postseason last spring for the first time since 2012.

"If we just keep working hard and rolling, we know we're going to be a tough team to play against," said revitalized forward Rickard Rakell, who had two assists. "We feel good right now. We don't fear anything. We create a lot of scoring chances now. It's a lot of fun playing this way."

The Ducks have won their first four games at Honda Center for the first time in five years. After falling behind 2-0 to Buffalo on Wednesday night, the Ducks scored five straight to beat the Sabres and then jumped to a four-goal lead on the Canes, much to the delight of a home crowd supporting a team that managed an NHL-low 196 goals last year.

"We've got a group in there that's all pulling in the same direction, and it's fun to watch," Eakins said. "(This win) gives us confidence. That's a team over there that's had a great start. They had a hell of a season last year, and for us to come in and be able to skate with them, it reinforces what we're trying to build."

Haydn Fleury scored his first NHL goal for the Hurricanes, who lost in two of their three stops on a California road swing after a 5-1-0 start to the season. Erik Haula scored the Canes' opening goal before leaving with an injury shortly afterward from a check by Anaheim's Josh Manson.

Mrazek yielded four goals on 14 shots, with Rowney's impressive short-handed score ending his night. Mrazek has

alternated starts with James Reimer all season, and he posted his 19th career shutout against the Kings on Tuesday.

"I hate doing that," Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour said of his first in-game goalie change of the season. "It's not his fault. We hung him out to dry. We had a lot of guys sleeping tonight. I didn't need to see him in there getting hung out to dry."

Haula tipped home a power-play goal midway through the second period, getting his sixth in nine games to start the season. He went to the dressing room moments later after going down hard on an apparently clean check into the boards from Manson, who wasn't penalized.

Haula has an upper-body injury, and he will be re-evaluated in Raleigh. Carolina enforcer Joel Edmundson fought Manson a few minutes later.

"That's a good teammate, right?" Brind'Amour said of Edmundson. "He sees one of his guys get, he feels, gets cheap-shotted, and he stood up for him. So it says a lot about him for sure."

Fleury scored his first goal in his 96th NHL game, walking in from the blue line for an unobstructed shot. The 23-year-old defenseman is in his third season with Carolina.

"This year, I felt from the first game that I've had chances to score each night," Fleury said. "Hit a post against Tampa, and now we are here."

Miller was strong in a scoreless third period. The 39-year-old veteran backup to John Gibson has yielded three goals in his two starts.

"There was no flow to that game," said Brind'Amour, who played 1,643 games in his two-decade NHL career. "It was one of the worst hockey games I've been around."

NOTES: Anaheim D Brendan Guhle missed his fourth straight game with a lower-body injury, but C Devin Shore returned from a two-game absence. ... Carolina dressed 11 forwards and seven defensemen, with Sebastian Aho, captain Jordan Staal and Teuvo Teräväinen logging extra minutes up front. ... Silfverberg played in his 500th NHL game.

UP NEXT

Hurricanes: A five-day break before visiting the Columbus Blue Jackets on Thursday.

Ducks: Host the Calgary Flames on Sunday.



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Carolina Hurricanes Game Recap: Canes Fall Short On Comeback Attempt

The Canes go down swinging in Anaheim, 4-2.

By Jake Lerch

After a blistering start, the Carolina Hurricanes (6-3-0, 12pts) are facing something new for this season - a losing streak.

The Anaheim Ducks (6-2-0, 12pts) bested the Canes 4-2 behind an energetic performance where they took the lead early and held onto it late.

Coming off a shutout of the Los Angeles Kings, Petr Mrazek boasted a goalless streak of over 102 minutes, which stretched back to the second period of the Islander's game on October 11th.

The streak didn't last long.

Only 4:06 into the game, an Adam Henrique wrist shot beat Mrazek to get the Ducks on the board. Three more Ducks' goals followed, and just shy of six minutes into the second period, Mrazek was pulled in favor of James Reimer.

With Mrazek gone and the Canes trailing 4-0, it looked like the drama had gone out of the game. However, events changed quickly. The man at the center of it - as he has been so often this year - was Erik Haula.

The Canes had squandered two powerplay chances before Hampus Lindholm took an interference penalty at 8:40 of the second period. On the subsequent powerplay, a

clearance attempt was held in by Dougie Hamilton who swung the puck to Teuvo Teravainen who then found Haula unmarked in front of the net for a tip-in goal, Haula's 7th of the season.

However, less than a minute later, Haula's night would be over. As he raced to retrieve a loose puck behind the Duck's net, he was checked hard by Josh Manson. Haula struggled on the ice with the look of a man who had been concussed before being led to the dressing room. The Canes announced he would not return due to an upper-body concern.

With Haula in the room, the Canes' energy picked up. Haydn Fleury held a puck in at the Duck's blue line and then got his first NHL goal on a slapper from the top of the circle.

With the Canes back within two, Joel Edmundson would tussle with Manson in his first bout as a Hurricane.

The third period saw the Ducks sit back and absorb what little offensive pressure the Canes could muster, as the Canes were reduced to ten forwards - having only dressed eleven at the outset.

The Canes now head home from the California road trip with one win and two losses. They'll have to wait almost a full week before their next game. With their leading goal-scorer potentially sidelined for it, they'll look to do something else new for this season - end a losing streak.

Systems Analyst: Activating the Defense

The Canes' offensive zone play has been aided by aggressive point men.

By Ford Hatchett

Coming into the season, pundits and fans alike expected the Hurricanes' defense corps to be among the best in the league. So far the group has lived up to the hype with solid defensive play all over the ice and offensive contributions led by Dougie Hamilton.

But the talent alone doesn't separate this group from the rest of the pack. A coaching staff and philosophy that allows them to play confidently and aggressively puts the Canes' defenders in positions to prolong offensive attacks and contribute to them themselves.

Rod Brind'Amour's system doesn't involve the defensemen so much as it frees them. Instead of drawing up specific situations in which the defensemen are expected to pinch or jump into the attack, the Hurricanes have allowed their d-men to use their judgement to contribute. There have been several instances already this year where the freedom has been evident.

Joining the Attack

The most noticeable instance of defensemen being aggressive comes when they jump into the play. It most often occurs with a defenseman carrying the puck up ice himself, or jumping into an ongoing rush on the weak, or back, side of the play.

In this clip, Jaccob Slavin jumps into the weak side of the play and although the initial pass misses, Slaving recovers the puck and finds Dougie Hamilton for the goal.

It should be noted, that Hamilton also joins the play late. While Slavin is in the corner, there are five Hurricanes below the tops of the circles. Hamilton's drive takes the man tasked with covering him out of the play, opening up tons of space for Hamilton when he curls back out to the point.

In the clip below, Hamilton carefully watches the play move up the boards and glides with it. When he sees a loose puck, thanks to a good battle from Sebastian Aho, Hamilton pounces.

The risk in this play is that if the Islanders are able to hold the line, Hamilton may be too far up ice to recover defensively. But when it works, it leads to instant offense.



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Here in four on four play, Hamilton has sprung into the offense already and remains up in the play. He finds Andrei Svechnikov for a breakaway and instead of admiring his pass, Hamilton continues up into the play and is in a position to receive a pass and score again.

Pinches

The Hurricanes offensive zone sets are also aided by aggressive pinches, especially down the walls. Although it doesn't result in a goal, the clip below perfectly illustrates how the Canes involve the pointmen on offensive zone draws. Joel Edmundson streaks down the wall and maintains Carolina possession. It allows Svechnikov to find Brock McGinn for an open look in the high slot.

While the defensemen will receive most of the praise, none of this success through aggressiveness is possible without help from the forwards. Normal systems call for defensemen to pinch only if one of their forwards is high, typically around the tops of the circles. But the Hurricanes allow their d-men to pinch whenever they see a chance. That puts a lot of pressure on the forwards to recover. In the clip above, McGinn does well to find the open space that Edmundson vacated.

In the clip below Jaccob Slavin pinches down the wall even though all three Hurricane forwards are below the dots.

Brian Gibbons immediately recognizes the pinch and does a nice job covering for Slavin. When the pinch proves fruitless, Gibbons is in a good spot to mitigate any San Jose counter attack and allow Slavin to return to his position.

Lingering

Traditionally, when defenders pinch or jump up into the play they are instructed to return to their typical position manning the blue line as soon as possible once their job is done. When the Canes' defensemen jam down the wall or join the rush, they are given the freedom to hang around and see if anything develops. Several times already in the young season it has paid dividends.

In the clip below, Brett Pesce does a fantastic job pinching down the wall to hold the zone. After his initial bid is turned aside, Pesce is not in a hurry to return to the blue line and instead stays in good position to receive the puck. Svechnikov finds him and Pesce buries.

In San Jose, Hamilton scored yet again. After holding the zone and throwing a puck towards the goal, Hamilton lingers and finds open ice. The puck works to him and he makes no mistake.

Lingering puts a particular strain on the opposition's defensive systems. When Hamilton stays low, the Sharks lose track of him, expecting him to promptly return to the blue line. It's difficult to lose track of a man as big as Hamilton, but when it happens, he makes San Jose pay.

The Hurricanes' hot start has been thanks to solid play from everyone on the roster, but it certainly been propelled by a defense corps unafraid to make a difference and a coaching staff that allows them the freedom to do it.



3 Red Flags to the Carolina Hurricanes' Hot Start

By Matt Cosman

There hasn't been much to complain about lately for the Carolina Hurricanes. They're 6-2-0, tied for second place in the NHL, and their team seems to be clicking on and off the ice. The 2019-20 season is still in its infancy, but the Hurricanes are currently on a 123-point pace. While that's probably not sustainable, they do have a team that's more than capable of finishing with over 100 points, which they haven't achieved since 2005-06 – the year they won the Stanley Cup.

Beneath the surface of their success, there have been a few red flags early that are making 'Canes fans take warning. And if these themes continue, there could be some bumps down the road.

Lack of Discipline

It drives every head coach crazy and Rod Brind'Amour is no different. The Hurricanes have taken a league-high 39 minor penalties this season, and it's been the most obvious catalyst that has stifled their momentum and frustrated their coach.

"They're calling lots of things. That's just how it is now. We've got to kill them, though. We've got to do a better job,"

Brind'Amour said following the Hurricanes' 5-2 loss Wednesday against the San Jose Sharks, in which they allowed two power play goals in the first period. "At the end of the day, you've got to kill them, and we didn't. When we get our power play, we've got to make it count, and we didn't. There's the game."

Tripping and interference are Carolina's two most common infractions, accounting for 49% of all penalties taken by the Hurricanes so far this season. The abundance of those kinds of penalties suggests the players are making lazy, careless decisions when caught out of position. Forwards Nino Niederreiter and Andrei Svechnikov are the two most guilty culprits, having earned five minor penalties each in the eight games this season.

Unfortunately for the Hurricanes, their penalty kill isn't good enough to make up for their lack of discipline. They've been able to kill off 77.8 percent of penalties, which is currently 19th in the NHL, but if that number is sustained over the course of 82 games, they're in trouble. That penalty-kill rate would have been bottom-five in the league last season.

The penalty problem is slowly being corrected, but they still have a long way to go. Through the first four games of the season, the Hurricanes took 22 minor penalties. In the four



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games since, they've chipped that number down to 17. It's still not where they want to be, but it seems to be trending in a better direction.

For the time being, this is an issue the Hurricanes can't allow to snowball out of control. They need to tone down their recklessness, harness their intensity and play smart hockey, otherwise the penalty box bench is going to stay toasty warm.

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The chances have been there – he leads the team with 28 shots – but he's been snakebitten since signing his \$42.27-million contract over the summer. We know Aho is going to come around – he's an established superstar in this league, and he's still been noticeable on the ice despite his lack of scoring. Don't push the button on Aho yet.

His linemate, Niederreiter, hasn't been able to find the net either. He's one of only three Carolina forwards to have played every game this season and still not have a goal (Warren Foegele, Brock McGinn). With three assists to his name, and the only Hurricanes regulars to have a negative plus-minus rating, Niederreiter's slow start is slightly more concerning.

After being acquired from the Minnesota Wild last January, Niederreiter caught flames, scoring 30 points in Carolina's final 36 games on a top line with Aho and Justin Williams. In the playoffs, his production dipped significantly. He only scored one goal and three assists in 15 playoff games, and the Swiss winger still hasn't been able to shake off the bad mojo.

In his six seasons with the Wild, Niederreiter averaged 0.52 points per game (PPG). When he first came to Carolina, he was producing at a 0.83 PPG rate, well above his career average. The 27-year-old has the ability to climb to that level, especially playing with Aho, but his slow start indicates he's settling back to his career average. A 50-point season should be the minimum expectation for Niederreiter this year. The good news is, he and Aho are still posting excellent possession numbers – both are sporting a Corsi rating of over 60 percent.

The big boys for the Hurricanes will turn it around, but the biggest hole up front, and the greatest cause for concern, is the spot vacated by the former captain Williams. Svechnikov and center Jordan Staal have spent much of the season

playing on the same line together, but the winger who accompanies them hasn't been working out.

Brock McGinn should not be in a top-six role. He's an excellent penalty killer, strong forechecker and a gritty presence better suited for the fourth line. But with the third line clicking so well, it leaves Brind'Amour with few options.

The Hurricanes would get much more mileage out of Svechnikov, their star second-overall pick in 2018, if they paired him with a player of similar skill. Recently, it's been rumored the Hurricanes are interested in right-wingers Josh Ho-Sang from the New York Islanders and Jesse Puljujarvi, whose rights belong to the Edmonton Oilers. Either player could be a buy-low option for the Hurricanes that can bolster their top-nine to give them three strong scoring lines.

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Even on paper, anyway. The unit comprised of Svechnikov, Teuvo Teravainen, Erik Haula, Ryan Dzingel and Dougie Hamilton has scored 14 out of the 15 total power play points (PPP) on the team. The other is a lone assist from rookie Martin Necas.

Aho's struggles have seeped into his crew as well, where he, Niederreiter, Jake Gardiner and Jordan Staal have yet to tally a PPP. Overall, Carolina's power play sits 22nd in the league at 17.8 percent.

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A shakeup on the power play could be just what Aho needs to get his offense going again, and now could be the time to mix up the groups to find a spark. Otherwise, special teams as a whole could anchor the Hurricanes as they attempt to climb the standings.



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Checkers lose to Utica 8-2

by Nicholas Niedzielski

The Checkers ran into a red-hot Utica squad Friday night and couldn't hand them their first loss of the season, dropping an 8-2 decision to the Comets.

The tone was set in the first frame when the Comets opened the scoring midway through the period, then tallied two more less than 30 seconds apart to build a 3-0 lead and chase starter Alex Nedeljkovic from the game.

The second period featured a valiant effort from Charlotte to turn the tide, but a shorthanded breakaway conversion by the league's leading goal scorer Reid Boucher extended that lead to 4-0 through 40 minutes.

Charlotte's lone offensive surge came early in the third, when Hunter Shinkaruk and Eetu Luostarinen both cleaned up rebounds less than a minute apart. Unfortunately for the visitors, the Comets responded in between those tallies, then knocked in another three before the final buzzer to bring things to a lopsided 8-2 final.

NOTES

The eight goals allowed are the most allowed by the Checkers since setting a franchise record with nine on Oct. 17, 2015 ... The Checkers were shut out on four man advantages, snapping a four-game streak of power-play goals ... The Checkers snapped their three-game streak of perfect penalty kills ... The Checkers have allowed multiple goals in a period in each of their last three games ... Shinkaruk scored his first goal as a Checker ... Luostarinen now has goals in two straight games ... Morgan Geekie snapped his four-game point streak ... Max McCormick made his Checkers debut ... Stelio Mattheos and Spencer Smallman both missed the game due to injury ... Anthony Louis, Kyle Wood, Cavan Fitzgerald and Alex Lintuniemi were healthy scratches

UP NEXT

The Checkers will have the chance to bounce back quickly as they travel to Syracuse for a 7 p.m. puck drop tomorrow night.

TODAY'S LINKS

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SportScan

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

1157595 Carolina Hurricanes

Hurricanes broadcaster Mike Maniscalco taking leave to undergo medical treatment

BY LUKE DECOCK

OCTOBER 18, 2019 04:47 PM

Carolina Hurricanes broadcaster Mike Maniscalco is dealing with a serious medical issue after falling ill on the team's West Coast road trip, the team announced Friday.

Maniscalco, who serves as the sideline reporter and pregame host on FS Carolinas broadcasts and also works for the team's website, went to the emergency room in San Jose early Wednesday morning after the team's game in Los Angeles on Tuesday night complaining of abdominal pain.

Doctors discovered a large mass in his stomach and his wife Kristen flew to California to join him on Wednesday. Maniscalco has been hospitalized at Santa Clara Valley Medical Center since then, missing the Hurricanes' games at San Jose on Wednesday and Anaheim on Friday.

"I just intend to get back to work as soon as I can and I'm truly grateful for the support that has been shown to me by the organization and the fans," Maniscalco said in a text message to the News & Observer.

Caniacs across NC are thinking about and praying for the health of our man on the ice, @mikemaniscalco. <https://t.co/7RA6S3urQG>

— Roy Cooper (@RoyCooperNC) October 18, 2019

Maniscalco received medical clearance on Friday to return to Raleigh for further diagnosis, perhaps as soon as Saturday, but will continue to be absent from Hurricanes broadcasts indefinitely while he undergoes treatment.

"What stands out to me, and always has, is Mike's relationship with the players," Hurricanes analyst Tripp Tracy said. "I think that was certainly reflected in Dougie Hamilton's comments in our interview with him in the second intermission on Wednesday. We'll be thinking about him each and every night until he returns to the broadcast."

Added play-by-play announcer John Forslund: "At times like this, the power of positive thoughts directed toward Mike and his family is essential. It's essential for the fans who love Mike to rally around this. We all are. He's with us, even when he can't be. We miss him dearly."

News Observer LOADED: 10.19.2019

1157596 Carolina Hurricanes

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BY MATT COSMAN

OCTOBER 18TH, 2019

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Lack of Discipline

It drives every head coach crazy and Rod Brind'Amour is no different. The Hurricanes have taken a league-high 39 minor penalties this season, and it's been the most obvious catalyst that has stifled their momentum and frustrated their coach.

"They're calling lots of things. That's just how it is now. We've got to kill them, though. We've got to do a better job," Brind'Amour said following the Hurricanes' 5-2 loss Wednesday against the San Jose Sharks, in which they allowed two power play goals in the first period. "At the end of the day, you've got to kill them, and we didn't. When we get our power play, we've got to make it count, and we didn't. There's the game."

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Carolina Hurricanes Nino Niederreiter

In his six seasons with the Wild, Niederreiter averaged 0.52 points per game (PPG). When he first came to Carolina, he was producing at a 0.83 PPG rate, well above his career average. The 27-year-old has the ability to climb to that level, especially playing with Aho, but his slow start indicates he's settling back to his career average. A 50-point season should be the minimum expectation for Niederreiter this year. The good news is, he and Aho are still posting excellent possession numbers – both are sporting a Corsi rating of over 60 percent.

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The Hurricanes would get much more mileage out of Svechnikov, their star second-overall pick in 2018, if they paired him with a player of similar skill. Recently, it's been rumored the Hurricanes are interested in right-wingers Josh Ho-Sang from the New York Islanders and Jesse Puljujarvi, whose rights belong to the Edmonton Oilers. Either player could be a buy-low option for the Hurricanes that can bolster their top-nine to give them three strong scoring lines.

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1157597 Carolina Hurricanes

Hurricanes' Necas Is Ready to Stay in the NHL

BY EVAN LYNCH

OCTOBER 18TH, 2019

When the Carolina Hurricanes drafted Martin Necas as their first-round pick (12th overall) in the 2017 NHL Entry Draft, the front office had expectations that he would not play with the Hurricanes soon after he was drafted, as he needed time to develop more. Scouts painted him as being an undersized forward, but he was an extremely skilled skater, so good in fact that he was ranked the fifth-best international skater. He also added great offensive instincts to his arsenal, which made for a safe lottery pick.

Junior Career

Necas was born on Jan. 15, 1999 in Nové Město na Moravě, Czech Republic. Growing up in the Czech Republic allowed for him to be enthralled into the hockey culture at a young age. He started his junior campaign in 2012 at the Quebec International Pee-Wee Hockey Tournament with a youth team from Chémutov, Czech Republic. His first full season as a junior hockey player came during the 2014-15 season, where Necas played on two junior teams, SKLH Žďár nad Sázavou and HC Kometa Brno. He ending up



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leading the Czech league in scoring with an outstanding 91 points in 34 games.

Despite an underwhelming 2015-16 season due to injuries and sickness, Necas made his professional debut with HC Kometa Brno in 2016. During the following season, Necas played in 41 games where he logged a disappointing 15 points, but he played significantly better during their playoff run that, with his help, ended in a championship for Brno. Necas scored four goals in 10 games in their playoff run, which ranked second on the team. During the NHL Entry Draft following that season, Necas was snagged by the Hurricanes in the first round at 12th overall. He later signed a three-year, entry-level contract with the Canes.

NHL Career

Necas was not expected to be on the Carolina roster immediately following his draft selection as he was predicted to return to the Czech Republic and train more for the NHL, or he was planned to play on the Charlotte Checkers, the Hurricanes AHL affiliate; however, due to a Lee Stempniak injury, the opportunity for Necas was there and he took advantage, as he ended up making the roster. Due to NHL rules, he was only allowed to play in up to nine games or else it would have counted as a year of his contract. The Hurricanes' front office was unsure if he would stay in the NHL the whole year so they decided to limit his playing time.

He was able to make his NHL debut, around two years ago to the date on Oct. 17, 2017, versus the Oilers. After remaining on the team for about a week later, he returned to Brno where he led them to back-to-back championships.

At the start of last season, Necas began the season on the Carolina roster and he scored his first career goal on Oct. 16; however, he was sent back down to the Checkers for more development.

Going into this season, Necas has had huge expectations as he was considered the top prospect in the Hurricanes farm system. So far in this young season, he has played extremely well, tallying two goals and three assists, including a goal in the season-opener shootout win. He has been one of the best rookies in the entire NHL as he is tied for second in total points among rookies at five points, one behind the leaders. He believes that he is ready to stay a Hurricane for the entire season. (from 'Hurricanes' Martin Necas ready to be full-time NHL player,' News & Observer, 09/16/2019)

"I feel pretty good on the ice," he said in an N&O interview Monday. "I feel like I'm a little stronger than last year. I feel ready but now I have to show it in the game, on the ice."

Even head coach Rod Brind'Amour has been impressed by Necas' improved play, but he still needs to prove himself even more.

"He looks like he's more mature," Brind'Amour said Monday during his camp press conference. "He's certainly more mature than he was last year on the ice. And off the ice he's physically more mature. But again, we'll see how it all comes together when he starts playing for real."

His Resiliency

After consecutive seasons of starting out on the Hurricanes roster, only to later get demoted early on in the season, he could have easily said I want to go back to the Czech Republic, yet he always remained optimistic and he understood that as long as kept working hard, his time would eventually come.

"It was tough," he said. "Some (Canes) guys are injured and sometimes you're waiting (for) the call-up and you're feeling good on

the ice but it doesn't come. But that's hockey. That's hockey in the NHL."

Despite many roster spots not going to him, he made the most out of playing for the Charlotte Checkers as he recorded 52 points in 64 games. That season was an extremely special season as the Checkers won the Calder Cup playoffs for the first time ever and Necas had a blast during their run, but he would love a full season in the red and black.

"It was a great run for us in the playoffs," he said. "We had a really good team on the ice but also off the ice, which is really important, especially in the playoffs. That was cool. I really enjoyed it. It was great to win it."

Next Up for the Canes

The Hurricanes are in the midst of a west coast road trip where they are currently 1-1, and a 6-2-0 overall record. They had a 2-0 win at the Staples Center versus the Los Angeles Kings and a 5-2 loss versus the San Jose Sharks. Carolina will face the Anaheim Ducks on Friday in their last game on the west coast and then they travel to take on the Columbus Blue Jackets on Thursday of next week. Necas looks to contribute even more in the near future and hopes to prove that he belongs in Raleigh, NC for months and years to come.

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1157598 Carolina Hurricanes

Freedom ain't free: Breaking down the high-risk, high-reward Hurricanes and the penalties that come with the goals

By Sara Civian

Oct 18, 2019

SAN JOSE, Calif. — Dougie Hamilton scored his fifth goal in eight games (just like he wanted to) as the Sharks handed the Hurricanes their second loss of the season Wednesday.

But Hamilton revels in the new trust head coach Rod Brind'Amour has given him on the penalty kill, so the goal didn't matter much to him in the context of a 5-2 loss featuring two San Jose power play tallies.

"Those are big, especially a team like that with a (power play) so lethal," he said. "We have to be smarter. We're probably leading the league in minor penalties so far, and you can't win games when you're PK-ing all the time."

He was correct — through eight games, the Hurricanes have racked up a league-leading 39 penalties (38 minors). That's 4.75 minors per game, and eight more than the next closest team.

Even the best penalty killers in the league will struggle with a 1.58 penalties per period pace. While letting a few goals in down a man is expected, it's hard to make up for it against the better teams in the league, and when it starts to lose you games, it's obviously something you want to correct.

The first rule of not letting opponents score on the power play is don't talk about opponents scoring on the power play not getting so many penalties in the first place.



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Duh.

Let's dive (pun intended) into the five Ws of the Hurricanes' early penalty woes and see what we find.

What/Why

Anaheim and Calgary are tied at No. 2 with 30 minor penalties, so it's obvious that part of the early foul trouble is a byproduct of a fast-paced, aggressive system.

(I know, the fast-paced Ducks? I promise you I'm not making this up.)

Turns out the attitude that has allowed the Hurricanes high-octane defense to flourish comes with a catch.

"I think we work hard and we're hard on pucks — I don't think they're necessarily stupid penalties," Hamilton said. "It's just we're working hard, we're getting sticks in there and stuff. I don't think it's retaliation, slashes or anything like that. When you're working hard and you're hard on pucks I think that's what happens."

"Oh, we don't retaliate, that's not how we do it," Brind'Amour agreed. "Some of those penalties in the zone we were just kind of riding them, that's gonna happen. At the end of the day, you've gotta kill them and we didn't."

They're right — of Carolina's 39 total penalties:

Tripping: 12

Interference: 7

Hooking: 4

Holding: 4

Slashing: 3

Hi-sticking: 2

Holding the stick: 2

Boarding: 2

Roughing: 2

Delay of game bench penalty that made Brind'Amour rightfully scream "What for?": 1

Most of the tripping, hooking and holding has come in the so-called dirty areas players fear for this exact reason.

When the plan succeeds, it looks like this Andrei Svechnikov sequence:

When it fails, it looks like that Svechnikov tripping penalty at the end of the first period.

Every coach in the league has a different tolerance level in the makes mistakes/makes big plays ratio. Brind'Amour has shown he's got one of the highest. That's important on a team full of young stars, but it sure makes for some high-event hockey.

It seems like every year, from preseason puck drop 'till about 20 games in, the referees pick something to hyper-fixate on in an attempt to make a point. It usually manifests in hall monitoring at the faceoff dot, but this year it seems like interference penalties are the hill to die on. The Canes have seven. Brind'Amour: "They're calling lots of things. That's just how it is now. We've got to kill them, though. We've got to do a better job."

Where/When

In chronological order, Carolina's penalty kill went ...

2-for-3 vs. Montreal in a shootout win

6-for-6 vs. Washington in an overtime win

3-for-4 vs. Tampa Bay in an overtime win

4-for-6 vs. Florida in a regulation (!) win

3-for-5 vs. the Islanders in a win

3-for-3 against Columbus in a loss

5-for-5 against the Kings in a win

2-for-4 against the Sharks in a loss

The record shows that there's some recency bias in making a big deal out of this, as the Canes were perfect on the penalty kill in a loss and allowed two in a win.

You still aren't making it easy on yourself if you allow Alex Ovechkin six opportunities to make business calls from his office, though, and the first month of the season is all about recognizing the habits that could cause trouble later.

The Evander Kane show was the first time the penalty kill really lost the Hurricanes a game all season, but the way they let a strong five-on-five game slip after the fact is a warning sign for one of Brind'Amour's biggest pet peeves: letting one isolated issue bleed into the good stuff.

Who

Nino Niederreiter: 10 PIMs

Andrei Svechnikov: 10 PIMs

Jordan Staal: 8 PIMs

Joel Edmundson: 6 PIMs

Dougie Hamilton: 6 PIMs

My instincts initially misfired in telling me that the penalties were correlated with age. Hamilton immediately shut that down when we discussed this, and I heard he's pretty smart so maybe I should start listening to him.

He and Svechnikov are the poster boys for what he was talking about in San Jose — if you're going to score five goals in eight games as a defenseman or collect four consecutive multi-point games as a teen, mistakes will be made. You'll take that.

We know who Staal is at this point. He'll figure it out.

It would be weird if Edmundson didn't make this list.

Niederreiter is the only one starting to move the needle on the panic meter for me. You get the sense that some of his penalties are the Hard On Pucks mentality, but some are a result of trying too hard to get that first goal of the season. I'd start to worry if this is still happening at the same pace after that first goal.

Bottom Line

The Canes are 6-2-0, largely thanks to the "giveth" on the other side of this "taketh away."

The amount of penalties they're piling up is just one of those early hints about what might give them trouble down the road.

It's like when you're in a new relationship and it's going great, except one thing seems a little off. Usually the thing turns into a cute quirk



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you laugh about later, but there's always a chance some bodies are buried in the backyard.

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1157620 Columbus Blue Jackets

Blackhawks 3, Blue Jackets 2, OT | Goalie Elvis Merzlikins much improved in tough loss

Brian Hedger

The Columbus Dispatch

Oct 18, 2019 at 11:29 PM

CHICAGO — The last time Elvis Merzlikins started a game, it quickly turned into a nightmare in Pittsburgh.

The Blue Jackets' ebullient rookie goalie allowed all seven goals in a 7-2 loss Oct. 5 against the Penguins, including two that hit him before going into the net, and the Jackets weren't any better in the second half of the game.

They used it as a learning lesson, but there was a sting from that game that helped power their effort Friday night at the United Center, when Merzlikins — playing just his second NHL regular-season game — got his next shot to play against the Chicago Blackhawks.

"We'll be pumped when he gets back in the lineup, just to get him a win and make him feel good about himself," captain Nick Foligno said this week. "He's been working so hard in practice and those games happen. I've seen them happen to Vezina Trophy-winning goalies before. Hopefully, it will become a distant memory and we can be a part of getting him his first one."

The Blue Jackets did their best to make it happen but came up just short in a 3-2 overtime loss — nearly coming away with a big road win by using quick sticks defensively, sacrificing their bodies to block 14 shots and putting a damper on the Blackhawks' transition game.

Merzlikins was more reliable in making 30 saves.

Drake Caggiola beat him with a high, hard wrist shot over the glove for a 1-0 lead with 4:25 left in the first period, but the Jackets' backstop didn't cave. Instead, he helped the Jackets fight off a 5-on-3 situation late in the first period and made several key stops against Blackhawks star Patrick Kane (nine shots).

Pierre-Luc Dubois and Markus Nutivaara, meanwhile, scored early in the second and third to give the Blue Jackets a 2-1 lead — Dubois scoring his third goal in four games to tie it at 1 at 5:33 of the second, and Nutivaara following up his own shot for the lead at 2:55 of the third.

Chicago tied it at 2 at 8:08 of the third on Alex DeBrincat's power-play goal, scored less than a minute after Foligno was denied by a whistle on a short-handed breakaway, but Merzlikins — and his teammates — handled that well too.

The Blackhawks pushed for a go-ahead goal late in the third, but Merzlikins denied a shot by defenseman Connor Murphy — who's from Dublin — and the Jackets then killed off another power play to keep it knotted 2-2.

Kane and Blackhawks captain Jonathan Toews got the better of him 46 seconds into OT, with Toews scoring off Kane's rebound, but overall it was a much better night for Merzlikins.

"He cares," Foligno said. "He takes a lot of pride in his abilities, and he's a guy that wears his heart on his sleeve. He's just got to learn that in his position, don't worry so much about what others think. Just do what makes you good. When he does that, he's so competitive that it just brings out the athleticism."

Olympian skates with Jackets

Kenny McCudden got a text message Friday from an elite player he has known nearly 15 years.

The Blue Jackets' skills coach was thrilled, as always, to hear from Kendall Coyne-Schofield — a longtime pupil from the Chicago suburb of Palos Heights. Coyne-Schofield, a 27-year-old Olympic gold medalist (2018 Pyeongchang Games) and avid promoter of women's hockey, just happened to be in town at the same time as the Blue Jackets.

So, she reached out to "Coach Kenny," her favorite skills coach, to say hello — and, perhaps, get on the ice with him.

"I use the analogy where they said in the old days that Michael Jordan couldn't walk past a basketball court without jumping on the court with kids or whatever, or adults, just to play 3-on-3," said McCudden, who first began working with Coyne-Schofield when she was an early teen. "Kendall can't walk past a rink. She has to get on the ice."

So, that's exactly what she wound up doing at the Jackets' optional morning skate — zipping around the ice at the United Center with four Blue Jackets skaters and both goalies.

Coyne-Schofield, who has a burgeoning career as a television analyst, returned to Chicago to help run a girls hockey clinic Friday at the United Center.

"She sends out a text (Friday) morning and says, 'Can I see you after the girls' clinic? I'm going to be at the UC,'" McCudden said.

McCudden cleared it with coach John Tortorella, who said, "Put her in there," and just like that, one of the best female hockey players in the world pulled on a dark blue practice jersey with the Blue Jackets' logo on the front — which she was allowed to keep.

Texier eager to measure up

He grew up in Grenoble, France, but rookie forward Alexandre Texier was like every other young hockey player in his early teens. He would watch NHL highlights and then try to put what he saw into his game.

Now, he's an NHL player and is making the rounds at arenas that he's only seen in video clips, including the United Center. He's enjoying the experience, but isn't awed by it.

"I think it's fun," he said. "Right now, it doesn't matter what rink it is. I just want to play. I'm just enjoying every moment here."

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1157621 Columbus Blue Jackets

For Blackhawks' Connor Murphy, ties to Blue Jackets and Columbus remain



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • October 19, 2019

Brian Hedger

The Columbus Dispatch

Oct 18, 2019 at 12:01 AM

Oct 18, 2019 at 7:19 AM

CHICAGO — The thrill has yet to vanish.

When Connor Murphy strides onto the ice Friday night at the United Center — the Windy City's famed "Madhouse on Madison Street" — the tall, rangy Blackhawks defenseman will have a little extra juice because of the team across the ice.

Murphy, the son of former NHL defenseman and former Blue Jackets assistant Gord Murphy, was raised in Dublin and still considers it a special game when he gets to play the Jackets.

"I mean, it's your hometown and I think more people notice it at home," said Murphy, who returns to central Ohio for at least part of his offseason breaks. "It's cool to still have texts coming in from friends who will see the game back there."

Also cool for Murphy is seeing the Blue Jackets logo on the team he's playing, since he literally grew up with it. This will be his 11th career game against them, and it's still a kick.

"My dad coached there for eight years, so I grew up running around the dressing room and I was all into it," said Murphy, who has played for the Arizona Coyotes and Blackhawks in his seven-year NHL career. "We didn't have the best results for seasons; I think we made the playoffs once ... but it was unique and I was really lucky to have that to grow up around."

Also unique were the bonds he formed while growing up playing hockey in central Ohio.

Murphy still keeps in contact with his former amateur coach, Ed Gingher, who heads up the Ohio AAA Blue Jackets program, and his older brother still plays in a local men's league in Columbus, along with some former AAA Blue Jackets teammates.

Murphy has developed some close friendships with fellow NHLers who grew up in Columbus, as well, including Boston Bruins center Sean Kuraly, Winnipeg Jets forward Jack Roslovic and the Sherwood brothers of New Albany — Kole (Blue Jackets) and Kiefer (Anaheim Ducks).

Murphy, Kuraly and Roslovic are established in the NHL now, trying to help their teams win a championship. The Sherwoods made their NHL debuts last season and are hoping to become regulars soon.

"It's fun because every summer it changes," Murphy said. "The first years, you come back from your NHL teams and you're saying, like, 'How about those meals and those pregame meals, huh?' Or, 'How about the plane?' Now, it's more like you're just talking about your teams and trying to win a Stanley Cup and trying to make the playoffs. It just becomes more normal. I guess, having more experience."

Kuraly had an atypical experience last season, helping the Bruins eliminate the Blue Jackets in the second round of the playoffs and scoring a goal in Boston's 4-1 victory in Game 4 at Nationwide Arena. Kuraly also became the first hockey player raised in central Ohio to play in the Stanley Cup finals.

Murphy didn't have a rooting interest, as far as teams, but he pulled hard for his longtime friend, Kuraly, whose Bruins came up just short

of winning the Cup in a seven-game series against the St. Louis Blues.

"It was surreal," Murphy said of watching Kuraly being introduced as a Bruins starter for Game 1 of that series at TD Garden. "I was nervous for him. You try to put yourself in those shoes, thinking of what that would be like to be on that stage — which is what we'd both dreamed about our whole lives watching hockey together growing up. It comes full circle."

It also comes rushing back sometimes, including when it's time to play against the Blue Jackets.

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1157622 Columbus Blue Jackets

No hard feelings for Brandon Saad over unexpected trade from the Columbus Blue Jackets

Brian Hedger

Henry Palattella

The Columbus Dispatch

Oct 18, 2019 at 5:29 AM

CHICAGO — The first trade was stunning, but Brandon Saad had an inkling it might happen.

The Blue Jackets acquired Saad on June 30, 2015, from the Chicago Blackhawks, rocking the NHL's offseason days after Saad had won the Stanley Cup a second time, but he began to foresee that one materializing as negotiations for a contract extension hit a brick wall.

Saad eventually signed a six-year contract worth an average of \$6 million a season with the Jackets after the trade, and figured he might want to get used to living in Columbus. He even bought a house in Upper Arlington.

Then came another phone call two years later, informing him he'd been traded back to the Blackhawks in a deal for Artemi Panarin.

Saad did not see that one coming.

"That was more surprising," he said Thursday at the Blackhawks' practice facility, a day before facing the Blue Jackets at the United Center. "I signed a long-term deal, you have a house there, you're feeling comfortable, we came off a good year ... and then you just get a phone call saying you're being traded."

That was June 23, 2017, the first day of the NHL draft in Chicago. Saad had put up 53 points in each of his two seasons with the Blue Jackets and helped them set a franchise record with 108 points in 2016-17 — including a franchise-record 16-game winning streak.

He struggled in the Jackets' first-round playoff loss to the Pittsburgh Penguins, though, finishing with just a goal, two assists and a minus-5 rating in the five games. It wasn't the greatest of endings to a career chapter, but Saad said he doesn't look back on his time with the team in a negative light.



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"You're always learning something as a player, whether it's good or bad," he said. "I can't say enough about it there. I had a great time there. I think I grew as a player."

Seeking a spark

Sonny Milano was the talk of the hockey world Wednesday after he went between the legs to score against the Dallas Stars, a shot that is already generating goal-of-the-year hype.

Blue Jackets coach John Tortorella is hoping it will provide Milano with something else: momentum.

"That was just off the charts," Tortorella said. "It can do nothing but help an offensive player."

Although Milano hasn't been on the ice much through the Jackets' first six games, Tortorella knows he has the skill to give the fourth line a spark.

"He's a skilled guy," Tortorella said. "Not too many players can do what he did last night."

Anderson practices

Josh Anderson practiced Thursday for the first time since being placed on injured reserve retroactive to Oct. 5 because of an undisclosed upper body injury.

"He's progressing," Tortorella said. "I don't really have any updates, but he's progressing."

Anderson has missed four games.

Columbus Dispatch LOADED: 10.19.2019

1157623 Columbus Blue Jackets

Portzline: 10 observations from the Blue Jackets' 3-2 OT loss to the Blackhawks

By Aaron Portzline

Oct 18, 2019

CHICAGO — Ten observations from the Blue Jackets' 3-2 overtime loss to Chicago on Friday:

1. Merzlikins' second "debut" goes much better

The Blue Jackets carried the play for long stretches in this game, and a strong case could be made that they deserved a better fate than a single point.

The biggest issue was their inability to finish those scoring chances, but the best story of the night was found on the other end of the ice.

After a "nightmare" debut on Oct. 5 in Pittsburgh, goaltender Elvis Merzlikins looked much sharper in his second outing, stopping 30 of 33 shots.

Maybe he'd like less of a rebound on Chicago's OT game-winner — Patrick Kane's shot ricocheted up and off Jonathan Toews' shin before going into the net.

ANOTHER ANGLE. PUCK BOUNCES UP INTO TOEWS' BODY AND THEN INTO THE NET. #CBJ
PIC.TWITTER.COM/OZR3R56KHS

— ALISON (@ALISONL) OCTOBER 19, 2019

But on the whole?

"He played great, and that's what pisses you off, too," Blue Jackets captain Nick Foligno said. "You see him play as well as he did, and to not find a way to get a win for him, to make him feel good about himself ...

"It's coming. We knew he was a great goalie and he was going to bounce back, especially in an atmosphere like tonight. He played really well. He handled some firepower."

Merzlikins made a right-pad save on Chicago's Brandon Saad (remember him?) only 46 seconds into the game and seemed to be (mostly) under control the rest of the night.

With Joonas Korpisalo making the previous four starts, Merzlikins sat and stewed about his debut for nearly two weeks before he returned to the net.

It was one of the worst NHL debuts ever for a goaltender, making Merzlikins' mental composition as big a concern as the technical mistakes he was making.

"I'm not gonna count my debut," Merzlikins said. "I'm going to count this one more than the debut. That was a nightmare. I'm going to forget that. I'm not wishing to any kid to wait so many years to get to the NHL and wait (for) that moment and that game and get seven goals scored on you."

"That's too painful. So, uh, I'm gonna count this one as my debut. I win a point ... so, it's positive, I think. I worked really (hard) with Manny on my glove position. I felt good."

2. So many chances, too few goals

This might sound familiar, but the Blue Jackets had 39 shots on goal and played really well offensively, cycling the puck, battling for loose pucks and creating plenty of scoring chances.

But this club has not been rewarded — or perhaps it doesn't have enough "finishers" to reward itself — for its hard work in the early going this season.

Alexander Wennberg, like Foligno later in the game, was denied on a breakaway. Riley Nash missed a wide-open look on Chicago goaltender Robin Lehner in the first period. Pucks slid just wide of an empty cage; others were denied by Lehner.

"I thought we controlled a lot of the play," Foligno said. "I have to find a way to score; that's what pisses me off. I have a (third-period) breakaway (and don't score), and they come down and score to make it 2-2. A lot of missed opportunities tonight."

"Scoring chances aren't good enough. You get a chance to bury those, you have to bury them. This game could have gone either way, though. Overtime, lucky bounce ... those suck being on the other end of them. I liked a lot of what we did."

Pierre-Luc Dubois and Markus Nutivaara had goals for the Blue Jackets. That's three goals in four games for Dubois and two on the season for Nutivaara.

"We played well enough to win," Dubois said. "But it's a 'results' league."

3. Turning point

With Seth Jones in the penalty box for tripping Andrew Shaw, Foligno outworked two Blackhawks to earn a short-handed breakaway at 7:29 of the third.



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Foligno's first shot was stopped by Lehner, but the puck settled between the goaltender's pads and skidded over the goal line when Foligno jabbed at it.

FOLIGNO THOUGHT HE SCORED BUT...NO.
PIC.TWITTER.COM/GOKOXAPNRW

— ALISON (@ALISONL) OCTOBER 19, 2019

NHL referee Francis Charron ruled that he blew his whistle on the play before Foligno's second effort pushed it over the line. The officials gathered near their off-ice brethren and communicated to the NHL situation room that Charron's whistle had killed the play, thus there was no review.

As one could imagine, Foligno was not happy.

"I don't know why it didn't (count)," Foligno said. "Francis was just so concerned ... dead set on it not being a goal. It's disappointing that he didn't even give it a chance to see where it developed.

"I saw it sitting between (Lehner's) legs (after) I shot it. You never know why he was so quick to blow the whistle, but I'm not going to start dissecting it. For whatever reason, they didn't give us an explanation; he just waves his arms. It's one of those nights."

Only 39 seconds later, the Blackhawks scored a power-play goal to make it 2-2.

AND THEN CHICAGO EVENS THE SCORE #CBJ
PIC.TWITTER.COM/SQPUCNZCBE

— ALISON (@ALISONL) OCTOBER 19, 2019

4. Andrew Shaw with a violent "interference" on Dubois

When the Blue Jackets last saw Andrew Shaw, he was committing on-ice violence in the name of the Montreal Canadiens. His blindside elbow to the head of then-Blue Jackets defenseman Adam McQuaid ended McQuaid's game, his season and possibly his career.

McQuaid remains on the market as an unrestricted free agent, but he's not able to play, per his agent.

Shaw is now back with the Blackhawks and still up to his old tricks. At 16:58 of the second period, he took a long path to Dubois along the wall before launching himself high into Dubois' upper chest and possibly his face.

SHAW WILL SIT FOR THIS AND #CBJ GET ANOTHER POWER PLAY OPPORTUNITY PIC.TWITTER.COM/13DSHVDPXT

— ALISON (@ALISONL) OCTOBER 19, 2019

Two head hits ... and the call both times on Shaw — last spring on McQuaid and Friday on Dubois — was just a two-minute minor for interference.

Asked if he cared to comment, Dubois smiled and said, "No. Not worth it."

Foligno held back, too. He missed the play because he was working on his skates near the bench area, so he watched the replay.

"He walks that line," Foligno said of Shaw. "He'll answer for it sometime. Not sure when."

5. Too much time to think

Merzlikins needed to play, and quickly, if only to shrink those horrible numbers next to his name. After Friday night's game, his goals-against average shrank from 7.00 to 4.99 and his save percentage climbed from .825 to .863.

Those are still some ugly digits, but he's moving in the right direction.

"I was nervous (before Friday's game)," Merzlikins said. "I was nervous a little bit. So I guess there was something wrong in Pittsburgh that I wasn't nervous. It's better to put me under pressure.

"Again, I work with (goaltending coach) Manny (Legace), and I am thankful to him. Now I want to just get back (to Columbus) and practice with him (some more)."

THEN MERZLIKINS DOES HIS PART AT THE OTHER END. #CBJ
PIC.TWITTER.COM/KBZTOL7MPK

— ALISON (@ALISONL) OCTOBER 19, 2019

Merzlikins noted how hard the Blue Jackets played in front of him. Foligno, Jenner and Wennberg each sold out to block shots, but there were several gritty performances in the defensive zone.

"The team helped me a lot," Merzlikins said. "They did huge blocked shots in front of me, where I didn't (see) the puck. I thanked them for that.

"It was better (than Pittsburgh). It was better. It wasn't seven goals. It was just three now, so the positive is here. Now, keep working hard again, and then when it's going to be the next chance again, try to go."

Here's Dubois on Merzlikins:

"He's better and better in practices; you see it. From (training) camp until now, there's a big difference in everything. He works extremely hard with Manny (Legace). To see him play well tonight, it's disappointing we didn't get a win for him. But he should be really proud of himself. He played a really good game. He gave us a chance to win. He kept us in it the entire game. It's disappointing, but he'll get another chance."

6. Forty-eight seconds

Blue Jackets coach John Tortorella put the "brief" in press briefing Friday with a postgame media scrum that lasted 48 seconds.

The transcript:

On Elvis ...

"Played better."

His club's defensive commitment in front of Merzlikins ...

"We played good there."

Did the Blue Jackets deserve a better fate?

"I don't know."

7. Bemstrom awakening?

Rookie Emil Bemstrom has yet to score a goal, but he's looking more comfortable on the ice, especially with the puck.

Bemstrom led the Blue Jackets in shots on goal (six) and shot attempts (eight). Who was second? Defenseman Markus Nuijvaara with five shots on goal.

It'll be interesting to see what the Blue Jackets do with Bemstrom when forward Josh Anderson returns from an injury. The club has called it an upper-body injury, but Fox Sports Ohio reported Friday it's a shoulder injury.

Bemstrom has played on the right side of a line with fellow rookie Alexandre Texier and center Boone Jenner, which should be considered the Blue Jackets' third line.



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Anderson will have a spot in the top nine, for sure, when he returns.

8. Wennberg ... strong on faceoffs, too?

As you've read in this space, Alexander Wennberg looks like a much different player this season with the way he's playing in traffic, carrying the puck and actually shooting.

But there's another facet that has been dramatically improved, too, and it's not getting enough attention.

Wennberg leads the Blue Jackets in faceoffs taken (90). He leads the Blue Jackets in faceoffs won (51) and is second in faceoff winning percentage (54.3).

It's a small sample size (seven games), perhaps. But Wennberg looks nothing like the player who had a 45.6 faceoff winning percentage before this season.

Wennberg won 10 out of 16 draws on Saturday, including 4 of 7 against Toews.

9. Dubois scores another powerful goal

Dubois made a powerful move at 5:33 of the second period to wrestle the puck from Chicago defenseman Connor Murphy, then shed Murphy and skated wide before beating Lehner with a wrist shot.

It was quite similar to some of the other powerful goals he's scored this season.

DUBOIS INDIVIDUAL EFFORT TIES THE GAME AT 1. PUTS THE CENTER SECOND ALL-TIME FOR #CBJ IN FASTEST TO 50 GOALS. PIC.TWITTER.COM/7Q2LSUYOTI

— ALISON (@ALISONL) OCTOBER 19, 2019

Dubois, who now leads the Blue Jackets with three goals, is one of the few players with the ability to finish right now.

"There's 82 games; spans like this always happen," Dubois said of his team's offensive struggles. "Look at Pittsburgh. They're scoring seven goals a game. But I'm sure this year they're going to have games where they should have scored seven and they're going to score only two.

"Every team goes through moments like this. It's a long season. It's a positive we're getting scoring chances. We're doing something right. We have a lot of good players in here. We're not getting scared. We're confident. We just have to keep going."

10. USA hockey star joins morning skate

Blue Jackets assistant coach Kenny McCudden had an early-morning text message from an old friend from his Chicago days.

It was Kendall Coyne Schofield, an Olympic gold medalist and five-time winner of gold at the IIHF Women's World Championship.

"It was: 'How many guys are you skating today?'" McCudden said. "That's Kendall being Kendall. That means: 'If you don't have a morning skate, can I get in there?'"

The Blue Jackets did not have a morning skate. They had an optional, with only six players taking part: forwards Josh Anderson and Markus Hannikainen, defensemen Scott Harrington and Dean Kukan, and goaltenders Joonas Korpi and Merzlikins.

"So I sent a text to Torts from the hotel: 'Just what would you think about Kendall Coyne joining us this morning? Great hands, great feet, the whole bit. Represents our country.'

"Tortorella came back, and the message was: 'Put her in there.'"

Coyne, only 5-foot-2, appeared on the bench looking a bit out of place next to a towering player such as Anderson. But when she took the ice and started skating, it was clear she was an elite player.

The skate lasted about 45 minutes.

"That was so much fun," said Coyne, who began working with McCudden has a 14-year-old. "It's crazy. So much fun.

"(McCudden) is the best skills coach in the world, but he's an even better person. This was so much fun. Any time I get to be with coach Kenny, it refuels my love for the game."

Solo video ...

Analytically speaking

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

As a team, Columbus played the way it needed to play against Chicago. The Jackets controlled five-on-five shot share (56.29 percent), scoring chances (63.22 percent) and shot quality (59.75 percent). The second period was their weakest defensively — Chicago had the edge in shot quality — but the Blue Jackets were able to keep their opponent off the scoresheet in the middle frame.

The issue, of course, was the ability to finish. Of the 62 shot attempts and 33 scoring chances Columbus had, only two got into the net.

There was perhaps no area of the Blue Jackets' game getting more focus Friday than goaltending, as Merzlikins got his second NHL start. The Latvian responded with an encouraging performance. Based on the shots he faced, Merzlikins outperformed the league-average save percentage by 1.6 percent. That is the best performance by either Blue Jackets goaltender to date this season. Anecdotally, Merzlikins also turned away 13 shot attempts (nine on target) from Kane. Kane is one of the most talented goal scorers in the NHL and, in this game, led the Blackhawks in shot quality (1.04 expected goals).

Another encouraging sign: Bemstrom led all Columbus skaters in shot attempts (8) and tied with Wennberg and Foligno for a team-leading five scoring chances. He also tilted the ice more than any other Blue Jackets skater. The visiting team had 78.95 percent of all shot attempts when Bemstrom was on the ice.

Wennberg had a strong outing. His line generated the highest shot quality of the game (87.09 percent), and he was trusted by the coaching staff to take the final faceoff in regulation and again to start overtime.

Who led in terms of game score? The top three Blue Jackets skaters were Foligno (1.76), Oliver Bjorkstrand (1.67) and Nutivaara (1.46).

— Data via MoneyPuck, Evolving-Hockey and Natural Stat Trick and reflects score and venue adjusted five-on-five play unless otherwise stated.

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1157624 Columbus Blue Jackets

Challenged to concentrate on defensive play, how are the Blue Jackets responding?



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • October 19, 2019

By Alison Lukan

Oct 18, 2019

At the beginning of this season, the charge to Blue Jackets players was to stay above the puck and limit the chances opponents would get. It was a mantra that pervaded all of preseason and training camp. Head coach John Tortorella described it not as a systems change but as a "concentration" on a part of the game in which the team was already successful.

"A lot of people think defense is hard work," Tortorella said. "It is. But it also takes a mindset of (being) willing to commit to it. That's the key. I do think ... how we had to play in the playoffs bled into the mindset of how we have to play this year."

So with a young season just underway, are the Jackets on the right track in terms of how they've been asked to play? Tortorella has said that other than the second half of the team's loss in Pittsburgh, his team has done a good job answering the defensive call, but can we see that impact?

While the sample size is still small, just five games played* going into Wednesday's match against Dallas, we can look for a small signal of what a team might be about.

So let's dig in.

In their first five games*, among all 31 NHL teams, Columbus ranked fourth in terms of limiting shot quality per game (1.75 expected goals against/60), third in cumulative shot quality (7.07 expected goals against), fifth in unblocked shot attempts against (38.88 Fenwick against/60) and eighth in scoring chances against per game.

As a result, goaltender Joonas Korpisalo faced the fifth-easiest workload in terms of shot quality against (1.5 expected goals against/60) in the league among goaltenders who had played more than one game.

Here are the shots Korpisalo has faced thus far this year.

We can see the impact of the team's defensive play not just overall, but also in a look at each opponent's track record.

As the Jackets have rolled through their first five contests, they held Carolina to their third-weakest performance in terms of shot volume and shot quality, and Toronto and Anaheim were held to the lowest number of scoring chances of any game the teams had played so far this year.

"It means we're playing well defensively," David Savard said. "(Forwards) are coming back, and obviously our goalies are doing a good job, too. If you can limit the good teams to only a few scoring chances, you give yourself a better chance to win. I think we created more than we usually give up, so it's a good sign."

So what are the elements of this style of play that are currently working for Columbus?

Checking in and zoning out

A big part of the Blue Jackets' approach this year is their forecheck. To Tortorella's point, this isn't anything life-changing; it's an evolution of what helped Columbus beat Tampa Bay in the first round of the playoffs last year.

"(On the forecheck), typically F1 and F2 take away the D so they go at the D," Cam Atkinson said. "F3 is on the strong-side boards, just anticipating if the play is going to go up the boards. If the play is going to go D to D to the other side, then (F3) goes across.

"Then F1, if they are on the strong side, they come above the net. F2 goes at (the puck carrier) so it's all about reloading and tracking."

There are some risks to this style. Ryan Stimson of The Coaches Site and Hockey Graphs points out that the workload on F3 can be significant with this setup. Also, this stretches out the forecheck and opens up passing lanes like we see in the clip above.

But the approach has served the team well more often than not so far.

In this clip, we see the zone-play concepts Atkinson described. We see the Jackets' forecheck effectively pressure Carolina into a long pass that flips possession back to the Blue Jackets for an effective transition back through the neutral zone.

Stimson highlights how this strategy, which almost resembles a 1-1-3 forecheck in the neutral zone, forces play to one side or to a long pass into the wall at the blue line just as it did in this shift.

Front and center

And with the added emphasis on play away from the puck, an obvious question might be which forwards contribute the most defensively. An informal poll of some Columbus defensemen named the team's centers primarily. This makes sense because these are the players who are usually going low in the defensive zone. But of that positional group, Riley Nash was either the first or second player mentioned every time.

This should be of no surprise, however, to people who know how Nash plays. The chart below (click to enlarge) from HockeyViz.com measures the isolated impact a player has on offensive play (top row) and defensive play (bottom row). For offense, the higher the number, the better. For defense, the lower the number, the better as you are having an impact on your opponent's offense.

Those are some strong numbers defensively, and this season is showing early as one of the center's best.

"I think it's just his positioning," Zach Werenski said. "He talks a lot. He's open, he calls for (the puck). But I think the main thing is positioning. You know he's going to be in the right spot, you don't have to look. A lot of times he'll face the puck. He won't turn his back to it so he's always an out. Just little things that might not be much to the fan watching, but to us, it makes a big difference in getting it out of our zone."

We see Nash here as an effective outlet for Werenski, who starts the breakout. Here's what Werenski notices and why it matters.

"I had the puck behind the net," Werenski said. "I turn and pass and go the other way and Nash, instead of doing a big loop, does a tight turn, goes right back up, the puck goes to Nash out the other way and we're on the attack. I think he's really good at just reading the play and staying in the right position at all times."

Fighting for the first two mentions by defensemen was Alexander Wennberg. Nash and Wennberg rank in the top five among Blue Jackets skaters in shot suppression per 60 and shot quality suppression per 60.

When it comes to Wennberg specifically, his teammates highlight his intelligence and playmaking. As Werenski said, if the puck is on Wennberg's stick, your job is to get open because he will find you.

Here we see the Swede anticipate the play and disrupt the passing lane to transition the puck toward the Blue Jackets' offensive zone.

"(Wennberg) is obviously a very smart player," Seth Jones said. "I think he's come a long way. You see him get a little more physical



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now, laying the body, and then he's holding on to pucks. I think that's what he's best at. Seeing the ice. His vision is probably one of the best on our team for sure — that helps on breakouts."

And only improving the picture is that Nash and Wennberg are not just stopping opponents, they also are contributing offensively. Nash's (0-3-3) pass started the play that led to Sonny Milano's highlight-reel goal Wednesday, while Wennberg (1-3-4) added a goal of his own and two assists Saturday in Carolina.

Other forwards as well are earning their teammates' praise for defensive play. Jones cites Pierre-Luc Dubois' "big-boy hockey" and Boone Jenner's ability to be a physical presence low in the zone.

Early on, Oliver Bjorkstrand is playing a much more aggressive game and has ranked high in suppression of shot volume, shot quality and scoring chances. Young Alexandre Texier has shown well in those measures also and has been effective with his stick checking. That topic draws a chuckle from Jones when you ask about how close Texier walks the slashing line.

"When (Texier) is on the forecheck, or guys are on him, he seems to always be on his stick, hitting the stick," Jones said. "It makes it hard when the guy's constantly on you, constantly ragging you when you have the puck."

Overall, the team's ability to adhere to their defensive structure is reaping early benefits. Now the challenge is to maintain it as they go deep into the season.

*Editor's note: Recently, an issue was identified in NHL play-by-play tracking data that affected shot based-metrics like those we use here. Counsel with Evolving-Hockey resulted in our use of this year's data in comparative means only. Because the tracking error was fixed beginning with Oct. 16 games, we did not include Wednesday's game in our sample as the scale of measure is different due to the correction. It is anticipated historical data will be updated to the corrected scale.

— Data via NaturalStatTrick.com, Corsica. Hockey and Evolving-Hockey.com. All numbers represent five-on-five performance unless otherwise stated. This post relies heavily on shot-based metrics. Here is a good primer on these numbers.

The Athletic LOADED: 10.19.2019

1157599 Chicago Blackhawks

Jonathan Toews' first goal of the season gives the Blackhawks a 3-2 overtime victory over Blue Jackets

By JIMMY GREENFIELD

CHICAGO TRIBUNE |

OCT 18, 2019 | 10:17 PM

Jonathan Toews' first goal of the season couldn't have come at a better time. And he couldn't have been in a better place.

Patrick Kane's shot was stopped by Blue Jackets goalie Elvis Merzlikins, but the puck caromed off Toews as he raced to the net to give the Blackhawks a 3-2 overtime win Friday night at the United Center.

The Hawks won their second straight to improve to 2-2-1 while the Blue Jackets dropped to 3-3-1. Robin Lehner stopped 37 shots for his first win in a Hawks uniform.

Markus Nutivaara put back a rebound of his own shot 2 minutes, 55 seconds into the third period to give the Blue Jackets a brief lead, but a power-play goal by Alex DeBrincat — his second goal of the season — midway through the period tied it 2-2.

The Hawks were badly outplayed in the first but got the lone goal of the period, a Drake Caggiula snap shot that caught the crossbar and shot down into the goal to make it 1-0. It was Caggiula's first goal of the season.

The Blue Jackets' Pierre-Luc Dubois tied it with 14:27 left in the second when he picked up a puck in the Hawks' zone and eluded a poke check by Lehner and slipped it around him for his third goal.

Chicago Tribune LOADED: 10.19.2019

1157600 Chicago Blackhawks

Blackhawks aren't getting power-play opportunities: 'It's hard to draw penalties when you don't have the puck'

By JIMMY GREENFIELD

CHICAGO TRIBUNE |

OCT 18, 2019 | 4:50 PM

The Blackhawks may have the best power play in the league. Or it could be the worst.

It's hard to say when the season is so young and the Hawks have had a terrible time even getting their power-play unit on the ice.

Only the Islanders have been worse at drawing penalties so far this season than the Hawks, who had just nine power plays in four games (2.25 per game) entering Friday night's game against the Blue Jackets at the United Center. The Avalanche were leading the league with a little over four power plays per game.

The Hawks have discussed ways to get opponents into the penalty box and think they know what they have to do.

"Play (more) with the puck," Dylan Strome said. "It's hard to draw penalties when you don't have the puck. I think the last game we did a better job of playing with the puck, it was probably our best game. I don't know the statistics exactly, but it felt like it was our best game with possession and we drew three penalties. We can even do a better job. The more they get tired, that's when penalties happen."

Blackhawks center Jonathan Toews celebrates with goaltender Corey Crawford after the Blackhawks defeated the Oilers 3-1 at the United Center on Oct. 14, 2019.

Strome was correct about the Hawks' possession numbers being strong in their 3-1 win over the Oilers. They had 50 shot attempts for and 38 shot attempts against to give them a 56.82 Corsi percentage, easily their best of the season.

But even though the Hawks had a season-high three power plays against the Oilers it was just one more than they had in each of their first three games.



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"You always like more," Hawks coach Jeremy Colliton said. "We can do our part to give ourselves those chances. We've got to get to the net. We've got to be more dynamic in the offensive zone — spend more time there. Keep moving our feet. Be hard to play against. Put pressure on the other team when they want to defend, when they're trying to defend. And then we'll get a few more."

The Hawks are a respectable 13th in the league with a 22.2 power-play conversion rate but with two goals in nine attempts, that rate can still fluctuate wildly. Last season, the Hawks scored at a 20.2 clip but had dramatic ups and downs throughout the season.

On Thursday, Dominik Kubalik was getting some work practicing a five-on-three power play with Strome sitting out. But Colliton said he has no plans to alter the first unit of Strome, Erik Gustafsson, Patrick Kane, Jonathan Toews and Alex DeBrincat that has been in place for nearly a full season.

"We think we have something that's going to work," he said. "If we felt there was a better option, then we'd move to it. I think you come up together as a staff — and the players are involved too — kind of come up with a plan that we can have sustainable success with. We're going to stick with it."

But is it sustainable? The Hawks had a terrible 3-for-37 stretch during Colliton's first few weeks as coach before turning things around once Gustafsson and Strome were added to the power play. They went 32-for-91 over 29 games to help the Hawks get back into playoff contention before going 4-for-42 over their final 18 games.

"We just haven't had a lot of opportunities," Strome said. "We're getting some good chances. In the game against San Jose, Kaner hits a (defenseman's) stick and the guy doesn't even see it. It was open net and hits the D stick. Last game, Alex had a pretty close chance, just missed high glove. We're getting our chances. Just a matter of time before they go in."

"We get four or five power plays in the game and hopefully (score) two and start to click from there. I think we're feeling pretty good in practice and lots of good meetings, so just keep it going."

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1157601 Chicago Blackhawks

Kendall Coyne Schofield highlights a showcase this weekend as women's pro hockey reaches a crossroads

By JIMMY GREENFIELD

CHICAGO TRIBUNE |

OCT 17, 2019 | 7:36 PM

Chicago never has been home to a women's professional hockey team. That's about to change, at least for one weekend.

More than 35 Olympians from around the world will compete Saturday and Sunday at Fifth Third Arena in the Women's Hockey Showcase, a four-game event developed by the recently formed Professional Women's Hockey Players' Association.

The Women's Hockey Showcase in Chicago is part of the PWHPA's Dream Gap Tour that already has taken place in Toronto and

Hudson, N.H., with future events for other North American cities in the planning process.

The PWHPA was created in the spring in response to the Canadian Women's Hockey League folding after 12 seasons. Instead of jumping to the U.S.-based National Women's Hockey League, many of the CWHL players — as well as some from the NWHL — decided to sit out the 2019-20 season and work together for the creation of one viable women's pro hockey league. The PWHPA has about 200 members.

The NWHL has five teams — located in St. Paul, Minn.; Buffalo, N.Y.; Danbury, Conn.; Monmouth Junction, N.J., and Boston — playing a 24-game schedule. The salary cap is \$150,000 per team. With the five teams listing between 19 and 23 players on their rosters, nearly all the women are working full-time jobs in order to make a living.

Olympian Kendall Coyne Schofield, who grew up in Orland Park, chose not to continue playing for the NWHL's Minnesota Whitecaps and joined the PWHPA.

"There's been no professional league to date that has showcased the best product of women's hockey," Coyne Schofield said. "And that's because of the lack of resources and infrastructure and business model in the current state of the game."

Coyne Schofield is an electrifying player who became the first woman to compete in the NHL All-Star Skills Competition last season, finishing seventh in the fastest-skater competition. She is working this season for the Sharks as a TV color analyst.

But her goal as a young girl wasn't to broadcast games. She and her brother both dreamed of playing for the Blackhawks.

"I realized that wasn't a reality," she said. "I quickly realized it also wasn't a reality that I could make a living playing this game and he could. We're trying to change that landscape."

The NHL is not involved with the NWHL or the PWHPA.

"We're supportive and we're watching," NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman told ESPN last month. "We don't want to do anything that would undermine an existing league."

Coyne Schofield has watched the WNBA grow over the last 20 years and believes it's a model that can work in hockey.

"We would love to see the NHL provide resources to the women's professional game," she said. "They have the infrastructure. They have the business model. They have the resources already put in place. I think the NHL would help tremendously and be a no-brainer in terms of a partner for a women's professional league."

On Friday at the United Center before the Hawks game, Coyne Schofield and the other women competing over the weekend will conduct a clinic for about 60 girls. The four-team tournament will begin Saturday with a pair of games followed Sunday by the consolation and championship games.

"I'm so excited for fans to see the product that's going to be on the ice," Coyne Schofield said. "There are going to be so many incredible athletes competing this weekend. For all of us to be under one roof and not in a national-team jersey is extremely exciting, because this is what we're fighting for and this is what the future should look like."

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1157602 Chicago Blackhawks



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Blackhawks recall rookie center Kirby Dach from conditioning stint after three AHL appearances

Dach registered zero points and seven shots on goal with the Rockford IceHogs.

By Ben Pope@BenPopeCST

Oct 18, 2019, 11:27pm CDT

Center Kirby Dach's conditioning stint in the American Hockey League could have lasted 14 days.

But after only six, the Blackhawks apparently had seen enough of him in the minors to call him up from Rockford after their 3-2 overtime victory Friday against the Blue Jackets and the IceHogs' 3-2 victory Friday against the Wolves.

Dach, the No. 3 overall pick in the draft in June, didn't have a sensational three-game AHL stint in terms of on-paper production, registering seven shots on goal and zero points. But he successfully was eased back into game action after a concussion suffered in the preseason and introduced to the intensity of pro hockey, which were the primary goals all along.

It will be fascinating to see how Dach, 18, slots into the Hawks' lineup moving forward, provided he sticks with the NHL roster. He can make up to nine NHL appearances before being sent back to his Canadian junior team (if the Hawks wish to slide his three-year entry-level contract forward a year), but he also could contend for a permanent role on the NHL roster.

The Hawks will hold an optional practice Saturday that should reveal more about their plans for Dach.

Chicago Sun Times LOADED: 10.19.2019

1157603 Chicago Blackhawks

Jonathan Toews breaks slump with OT goal as Blackhawks edge Blue Jackets

Toews scored his first goal of the season as the Hawks rallied to win 3-2.

By Ben Pope@BenPopeCST

Oct 18, 2019, 10:40pm CDT

In a 10-second span of overtime, captain Jonathan Toews evolved from an aging player mired in a season-opening slump to the hero of the Hawks' second victory of the season.

Toews blocked a dangerous shot in the defensive zone, sprung a two-on-one the other way, drove to the net and knocked in the rebound of a shot off his body to give the Hawks the victory.

For the first few seconds, he couldn't help but smile and laugh after getting the figurative monkey off his back. Minutes later, he was all business again.

"I wouldn't say we're super-satisfied with our play these first five games," Toews said. "There are some positives there that we can build on. Given the fact that we've strung a couple of games together here, found a way to win these [last two] games at home, it's a good sign."

The Hawks looked sluggish and sloppy throughout the first two periods, with only a goal by wing Drake Caggiula and plenty of spectacular saves by goalie Robin Lehner keeping them in the game. When they fell behind 2-1 early in the third, Toews had zero shots to his name.

But then Patrick Kane found fellow wing Alex DeBrincat for the tying power-play goal and the Hawks' penalty kill, which went four-for-four and looked as staunch as it has in years, staved off a late Blue Jackets opportunity before Toews scored his first goal of the season.

"We've just got to find that consistent level," coach Jeremy Colliton said. "The Winnipeg game and the Edmonton game, that was a good stretch. It wasn't a perfect six periods, but we did a lot of things right.

"Tonight was not like that, I don't think. But the opportunity to build on some points and a little bit of success . . . that's a good thing."

Chicago Sun Times LOADED: 10.19.2019

1157604 Chicago Blackhawks

Former AHL teammates Calvin de Haan, Jeremy Colliton enjoying reunion with Blackhawks

Calvin de Haan was a rookie and Jeremy Colliton an AHL captain when their careers crossed eight years ago. Now, they're back together in far different roles.

By Ben Pope@BenPopeCST

Oct 18, 2019, 6:55am CDT

Jeremy Colliton runs intense practices. Heavy breathing and sweat-dripping brows are common sights in the Blackhawks' locker room.

But for new Hawks defenseman Calvin de Haan, who played alongside Colliton in the AHL eight years ago, many of the strenuous parts seem oddly familiar.

"It's funny because there's a couple drills that we've done throughout training camp and practice that I've seen a few times before," de Haan said Thursday, chuckling. "I've kind of called him out on that."

The veteran blueliner finds himself in a situation few NHL players have ever experienced: being coached by a former teammate.

As a rookie in the Islanders organization in 2011-12, de Haan spent all but one game of the season with the Bridgeport Sound Tigers. And in Bridgeport, Colliton was royalty — he was the team's captain and, by the end of the year, its all-time leading scorer.

Despite occupying different positions (Colliton was a forward), de Haan's status as a recent first-round pick meant he and the future Hawks boss still frequently worked and played together. De Haan's third-ever professional point, in fact, was the primary assist on a Colliton overtime winner.



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"I was coming in right out of juniors, not knowing anything about pro hockey, moving in with a couple other 20-year-old kids," de Haan said last July, shortly after his trade from Carolina to Chicago. "Having Jeremy there was probably like the ... best captain you could have asked for for the young team."

The two men went separate directions after that season — Colliton moving to Sweden and quickly switching to coaching, de Haan emerging as a full-time NHL defenseman with now 380 career appearances — but de Haan said he was never surprised to see the speed with which Colliton was climbing the ranks.

Since their reunion in Chicago at the start of training camp, he's seen firsthand how Colliton's leadership qualities have translated to his current role.

"I've enjoyed playing for him so far," de Haan said. "I could see it when he was a captain in Bridgeport, and he hasn't changed much — he's a smart guy and he thinks outside the box, and that's the new NHL."

Their preexisting relationship has proved useful, too, despite the eight years apart.

As de Haan worked his way back from offseason shoulder surgery and a groin issue during the preseason, the Hawks' Europe trip and the first week of the regular season, Colliton and de Haan chatting on the ice after practice was a near-daily occurrence.

De Haan needed to give Colliton daily updates on his health status, and Colliton needed to familiarize de Haan with his hybrid defensive scheme, which de Haan said differs substantially from the man-on-man system he ran with the Hurricanes. Despite one misstep, the regular communication was largely effective.

"When you've played with a guy, you have a connection," Colliton said. "Maybe it's a bit quicker to be able to get to the point, because he knows me, and I can be quite direct with him. That's a nice thing."

De Haan finally made his Hawks debut last weekend and then played well alongside Erik Gustafsson on the third pairing Monday — the duo was on the ice for 12 Hawks scoring chances and only four Oilers scoring chances.

Now fully healthy, De Haan will likely slide into a larger role soon. And when he does, he knows he'll have a prime resource for any questions he needs answered.

"Jeremy's very approachable," he said. "He's easy to talk to, easy to get along with, and having that relationship before definitely helps for sure."

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1157605 Chicago Blackhawks

Toews' game-winner nets Blackhawks at OT win over Columbus

John Dietz

Updated 10/18/2019 11:45 PM

Over the course of a season, not every victory -- or every goal, for that matter -- is going to be pretty.

The Blackhawks can attest to both of those facts in spades after clawing their way past Columbus 3-2 at the United Center on Friday when Jonathan Toews scored 46 seconds into overtime.

Toews' first goal of the season came when the puck bounced off his left leg after Patrick Kane's initial shot was saved by goaltender Elvis Merzlikins.

"If that's the way I've got to score to get things going, I'll take it," Toews said after the Hawks improved to 2-2-1.

Drake Caggiula and Alex DeBrincat notched the other goals, and Robin Lehner registered his first victory with the Hawks after making 37 saves.

This game was a lesson in patience and perseverance for everyone on coach Jeremy Colliton's squad.

The Blue Jackets (3-4-0) controlled much of the first period, outshooting the Hawks 15-10. Lehner was under constant fire, but stepped up and managed to turn away numerous high-quality chances.

"It could have been 3, 4-nothing early on," Toews said. "He made some big stops -- couple 2-on-1s, a couple breakaways. He was standing tall there."

Also standing tall was the Hawks' special teams as they went 4-for-4 on the penalty kill and notched a huge power-play goal when DeBrincat banged home a Kane pass 8:08 into the third period.

Going forward, the Hawks must start creating more offensively. Too many times pucks are mishandled or flat-out stripped, and passes aren't hitting their marks. Then, when an opportunity does present itself, an extra pass is made when a shot would suffice.

That's where Caggiula deserves some credit for not forcing the puck to Toews in the first period. He instead recognized that his captain was well covered and unleashed a shot that clanked off the crossbar and into the net.

As for Toews, whose 2 points this season have come in overtime and on an assist into an empty net, he wouldn't admit to being frustrated with his slow start.

"More just pressing to create more," he said. "I've had some chances but not that many."

"So gotta be better with the puck. Keep pucks down low, just play a little heavier on it and try to get it up to our D-men on the blue line (so they) can get some shots."

It must start soon because two of the top teams in the league come to the United Center next in Washington (5-2-2) and Vegas (5-3-0).

"Sometimes it's nice to learn some lessons when you win," Colliton said. "That's probably the case tonight. We have a little momentum and hopefully we can continue that."

Dach recalled:

The Hawks recalled forward Kirby Dach from his conditioning stint in Rockford. Dach did not record any points in his three games with the IceHogs.

Daily Herald Times LOADED: 10.19.2019

1157606 Chicago Blackhawks

Blackhawks recall Kirby Dach from AHL conditioning stint



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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By Charlie Roumeliotis

October 18, 2019 11:30 PM

Six days after being assigned to the Rockford IceHogs of the American Hockey League, No. 3 overall pick Kirby Dach has been recalled by the Blackhawks, the team announced late Friday night. He is not eligible to play in the AHL full-time this season, but he was allowed to stay in Rockford for up to 14 days on a conditioning stint, according to CBA rules.

Dach, who was sidelined for the first week of training camp with a concussion, appeared in three games with the IceHogs and was held off the scoresheet in each of them. He started on the fourth line in the first game, got promoted to the third in the second and played on the first line with Matthew Highmore and Dylan Sikura on Friday night against the Chicago Wolves.

The Blackhawks are coming off a 3-2 overtime victory over Columbus to improve to 2-0-1 in their past three games, and that helps ease Dach into the equation with the team riding some positive momentum. The next game is on Sunday at 6 p.m. against the Washington Capitals, which is possibly when he'll make his NHL debut.

Where Dach fits into the four-line rotation is unclear and will be interesting to monitor. It's possible he starts on the wing, especially with the third line of David Kampf, Dominik Kubalik and Brandon Saad clicking. Before Dach was assigned to Rockford, he was taking practice reps with Jonathan Toews and alternating on the wing with Drake Caggiula and Alex DeBrincat.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 10.19.2019

1157607 Chicago Blackhawks

Blackhawks, as part of Magellan Corporation Women's Hockey Showcase, host clinic for female youth hockey players

By Rob Schaefer

October 18, 2019 10:00 PM

Four hours before the puck dropped for their Friday night matchup with the Columbus Blue Jackets, the Blackhawks — in conjunction with the six-time gold medalist Kendall Coyne Schofield and the PWHPA — hosted a night to remember for over 60 female youth hockey players at the United Center.

The proceedings were highlighted by a pregame clinic for those 60+ skaters (ages 6-16) titled the "Meet Your Sheros" Girls Clinic, which was led by a gaggle of Olympians and served as a kickoff for the Magellan Corporation Women's Hockey Showcase.

But the fun didn't end there: after the clinic concluded, youth participants also attended a private meet-and-greet with their 'Sheros' and then the Blackhawks' game later in the evening. They also received passes to the Showcase, a four-team tournament put on by the Magellan Corporation and Billie Jean King Enterprises that will be held over the weekend (and feature 35 Olympic women's hockey players!) at Fifth Third Arena. The impetus behind the

Showcase is to "celebrate women in sports and promote gender equality."

And tonight, to hear Coyne Schofield tell it, was all about the next generation:

"I think what's so important about this weekend is — you guys are talking about the 2018 Olympics and how special that was — but we're trying to create that platform every day, not every four years," she told NBC Sports Chicago.

"We're working so hard every day and, as you can see, one of the most important parts of this weekend is being on the ice with the young girls, the next generation, who [are] going to fill our skates one day and hopefully -- not hopefully. They will grow up knowing they can make a living playing this sport if they're good enough to do so."

The epic display of women's hockey set to ensue this weekend will certainly aid in that mission, as well. Look out for further developments related to the tournament — it's sure to be a thrilling and inspiring weekend, both for the present and future of the sport.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 10.19.2019

1157608 Chicago Blackhawks

Four takeaways: Blackhawks penalty kill 'excellent' in overtime win over Blue Jackets

By Charlie Roumeliotis

October 18, 2019 11:20 PM

Here are four takeaways from the Blackhawks' 3-2 overtime win over the Columbus Blue Jackets at the United Center on Friday:

1. Blackhawks stringing together points

The Blackhawks turned in their best 60-minute effort of the season on Monday and they wanted to build on that performance after a three-day layoff. The start was slow against Columbus, but the finish was strong and it ended on a Jonathan Toews overtime goal.

After starting the season with back-to-back losses in regulation, the Blackhawks have picked up five out of a possible six points in their past three games. They're starting to climb in the standings.

"That's a hard-working team," Toews said. "They've got some skill, they played well as a team and they didn't give us much room out there. It's probably not our best start, there's a lot of things that we know we can do better, but for us to hang in there and tie things up, give ourselves a chance in overtime, get the crowd into it, you've got to find ways to win those games, can't let them slip, so it's nice to get two points."

2. Penalty kill 'excellent'

The Blue Jackets came into the game with a bottom-third-ranked special teams, converting on 17.8 percent of their power plays and killing off 73.7 percent of their penalties. This was an area the Blackhawks could exploit, and they did.

The Blackhawks went 1-for-4 on the power play thanks to an Alex DeBrincat goal, but it was the penalty kill that allowed the team to be in it till the very end. The Blackhawks killed off all four penalties,



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confirmed after morning skate. It will be his second start of the season.

In his season debut against the Winnipeg Jets, Lehner stopped 30 of 33 shots for a save percentage of .909 in a 3-2 overtime loss. He gave up a 5-on-5 goal, power-play goal and overtime goal at 3-on-3. Overall, he was solid.

"Everyone wants to play all the time," Colliton said of the dynamic between Corey Crawford and Lehner. "Whether it's a goalie, forward or D, they play better when they play more. That's just the standard answer. But we've had a little bit of a lighter schedule. We're trying to make ... we want both guys going because we're coming up on a stretch where we're playing a lot of games, so we're going to need them both."

Lehner is 5-3-0 with a 1.97 goals-against average, .945 save percentage and one shutout in eight career appearances against the Blue Jackets.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 10.19.2019

1157611 Chicago Blackhawks

Blackhawks remember Dave Bolland for more than just '17 Seconds'

By Charlie Roumeliotis

October 18, 2019 12:00 PM

The Blackhawks are honoring one of their own on Friday, with Dave Bolland set to skate "One More Shift" with the organization. He will join the team on the ice during the anthem, and will be featured throughout the game commemorating his time in Chicago.

When you think of Bolland, the first thing that pops up into the minds of fans is his game-winning goal in Game 6 of the 2013 Stanley Cup Final against the Boston Bruins. Or, better known as the second goal of "17 Seconds."

But his former teammates remember him for more than that.

"He was awesome," Patrick Kane said. "He was one of those guys who played a third-line role for like his whole time here and just really did well with it. I remember the line with him, [Martin] Havlat and [Andrew] Ladd really took off in 2009 and obviously [Dustin] Byfuglien, him and [Kris] Versteeg were a good line in 2010. But just the way he played, he got underneath the other team's skin, especially their star players. Wasn't afraid to chirp, wasn't afraid to get into the mix, especially with his size and the way he was built.

"But yeah, some great moments, some big goals, a lot of big shorthanded goals, you can obviously remember his 17 seconds was unbelievable as well, that's a goal I'm sure he'll never forget. We'll never forget that celebration too, so it's awesome he's getting honored."

Bolland, who earned the nickname "The Rat," is perhaps best known for the role he played in the Blackhawks' playoff series battles with the Vancouver Canucks. His line frequently drew the defensive matchups against Daniel and Henrik Sedin, and he's the one player who really knew how to throw both twins off their game at the same time.

"I think he's kind of like Shawzy," Jonathan Toews said. "He's one of those guys that fans here in Chicago really like. Aside from scoring goals and the plays that he made over the years in the playoffs, he was one of those guys that you loved having on your team that other teams hated. He found ways to chip away at their best players and get them off their game. He was good at a lot of little things like that, so he was a big part of those winning teams."

Andrew Shaw was teammates with Bolland for only two seasons, but they won a Stanley Cup together and Bolland was one of the best and knowing his role and perfecting it.

"One of the best at his job," Shaw said. "He played that shutdown centerman. I always thought he had the shortest shifts. His shift lengths were so short just 'cause he would play so much against top guys that he'd want to be so well-rested while he was out there. ... He was skilled enough to chip in offensively as well.

"That's the type of player he was. He'd play against the top guys, he'd shut them down, he'd be that little rat himself, just try to get them off their game as well as outworking them."

Bolland spent seven of his 10 NHL seasons in Chicago, where he registered 168 points (70 goals, 98 assists) in 332 games. He was drafted by the Blackhawks in the second round (No. 32 overall) of the 2004 NHL Draft.

Friday will mark the first night honoring the 10-year anniversary of the 2010 Stanley Cup Championship, which ended a 49-year drought in franchise history. The first 10,000 fans on Friday will receive a Marian Hossa bobblehead.

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1157612 Chicago Blackhawks

Ten things we've learned about the Blackhawks after five games

By Scott Powers and Mark Lazerus

Oct 18, 2019

Ten observations through five games for the Blackhawks, who improved to 2-2-1 with a 3-2 overtime victory over the Columbus Blue Jackets on Friday night:

1. Every coach wants to see his team play a perfect 60-minute game — to show the same intensity from start to finish, to maintain consistent pressure in the offensive zone, to make smart decisions with the puck, to play a clean game.

But there's something to be said for winning ugly.

"Sometimes it's nice to learn some lessons when you win," Jeremy Colliton said after Patrick Kane's rebound bounced off Jonathan Toews and in for the overtime win Friday night.

The Blackhawks have plenty to learn from a rather harrowing victory over the Blue Jackets, and we'll get into a lot of that here. There were unnecessary penalties, a squandered five-on-three power play, little sustained zone time, unchecked forwards in Robin Lehner's goalmouth, and a seemingly endless parade of bouncing, off-target passes. These are familiar problems and will surely be points of emphasis going forward. Through two periods, the best display of skill on the ice might have come from 75-year-old Billie Jean King,



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who scored in Shoot the Puck and came inches away from doing it again.

But it's a lot easier to stomach those issues and tackle them when you escape with two points, when Lehner makes 37 saves, when Alex DeBrincat and the power play come through in the third period, when the penalty kill is 4-for-4, including a critical kill after a questionable (at best) interference call on Brent Seabrook. A high-intensity, highly entertaining third period atoned for the sleepy start.

The Blackhawks are far from a finished product. But the looming difficult stretch of games against Washington, Vegas, Philadelphia and Carolina looks a lot less daunting when you're 2-2-1 instead of 1-3-1. This seven-game homestand is a critical step in avoiding another insurmountable early-season hole while other teams with busier schedules pile up points, and a 2-0-1 stretch is a good start, even if Friday's win wasn't nearly as pretty as Monday's.

2. In his first appearance in a Blackhawks uniform last Saturday against Winnipeg, Lehner looked great. He was big, he was composed, he was in total control and he got the Blackhawks their first point of the season.

So Corey Crawford got the next start.

In that start, Crawford was even better, flirting with a shutout against the hottest team in the league and putting together a vintage 27-save performance to get the Blackhawks their first win of the season.

So Lehner got the next start.

And he was even better than last time, staving off a handful of Columbus two-on-ones and breakaways and surviving a third-period review to get his first win in Chicago.

This goaltending situation is going to be odd like that for a while.

"Everyone wants to play all the time," Colliton said. "That's what everyone says, whether it's a goalie or a forward or a D: 'Yeah, I'll play better if you just play me more.' That's just the standard answer, right? But we've had a little lighter schedule. We want both guys going because we're coming up to a stretch where we're going to play a lot of games, so we're going to need them both. I think both guys feel pretty confident in their games, and both their last performances were good. So I think we're in a good spot there."

As long as neither goalie gets ridiculously dominant or completely falls apart, it's going to be a difficult — almost random — decision most nights. Maybe Lehner's familiarity with the Blue Jackets from his time in the Metropolitan Division last season played into the decision. Maybe it was just his turn. After all, it's not as if he deserved to be sat after his last game. Just like Crawford didn't deserve to be sat after his.

At least Friday's game kicked off a stretch of seven games in 12 days, which should help keep both goalies busy.

"I felt really good," Lehner said. "The problem is the schedule has been a little bit what it is. The schedule's going to speed up for us a little bit now, to kind of get into it more."

For now, this is a good problem to have. The whole idea of signing Lehner was to ensure a No. 1-caliber goalie would be in net for every game in a season in which every point will matter. How Colliton and goaltending coach Jimmy Waite handle the duo going forward will be important, though. Right now, Crawford and Lehner are saying all the right things, and they're on board with the timeshare. But what happens the first time either one gets hot and takes the net for a few games in a row?

Colliton knows he needs both guys to keep buying in.

"Yeah, and that's partly communication, whether it's me or Jimmy, right from the beginning," he said. "We're here to win, and we need both of you, and we need both of you at a high level. I don't think many teams — I won't say any, maybe there's one — but I don't think many teams win a Stanley Cup or go really deep with one guy playing 70 games or 65 games. Doesn't seem to be the formula right now. So that's part of why we were happy to get Robin. It's going to help make our team better."

Jonathan Toews scored his first goal of the season on Friday. (Kamil Krzaczyński / USA Today)

3. Like just about any player, Jonathan Toews goes through goal droughts every season. And every time, he says the same thing: Sometimes you just need to see the puck go in, to ease the mental burden and remind you what it feels like. Even superstars need a confidence boost every now and then.

So, no, Toews wasn't complaining about how he scored his game-winner. They all look like top-shelf one-timers on the scoresheet. Asked if he was stealing Andrew Shaw's "I love shin pads" bit with that goal, Toews laughed.

"I ain't stealing anything from Shawzie," he said. "But yeah, I guess if that's the way I've got to score to get things going, so be it."

It was Toews' first goal of the season, and while he's looked particularly aggressive and effective on the penalty kill, he hasn't quite looked like himself in five-on-five play. He didn't even have a shot attempt in the first two periods against Columbus, and he had a 28 percent Corsi for the game (out-attempted 18-7). Toews has been hard on himself for his slow start, but Colliton has insisted he's liked his game so far.

"He was good again tonight," Colliton said. "For him to come through, he only had the one point, but he was involved. He was involved on (DeBrincat's) power-play goal. He doesn't get a point on it, but he carried the puck, he lugged it, he broke pressure, he got the zone and got us set up, and then it's in the back of the net. So I thought he did a lot of good things tonight."

The numbers and Toews himself might disagree, but as he always says, sometimes it just takes one puck going in to open the floodgates.

"For sure, for sure," he said. "Just being around the net and trying to get your sticks on pucks. It's definitely nice to get one any way you can."

4. Not scoring in three games doesn't sound so bad. But not scoring in two weeks sounds awful to a guy like DeBrincat, who makes his living by putting the puck in the net. The Blackhawks' loose schedule made his breakthrough Friday night feel a little bigger than it otherwise might have.

"There's a lot of off-time there," he said. "I mean, I wasn't too worried about it. I was getting chances, and it had to go in sooner or later. Just keep battling and hoping for the best."

The Blackhawks' power play is run through Patrick Kane on the half-wall, and just like with Alex Ovechkin in Washington, it's geared around Kane finding a seam and teeing up a DeBrincat one-timer in the left circle with a cross-ice pass. And for the past three games, that seam just wasn't there.

Columbus was clearly trying to take away that play, clogging things up below the dots, and the two failed to connect during a 66-second two-man advantage at the end of the first period. So when Seth Jones was hit with a tripping penalty at 6:58 of the third period, DeBrincat decided to slide back a little. With Kane and DeBrincat



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each at the top of their respective circles, rather than at the dots or below, a lane opened up between Alexander Wennberg up top and Cam Atkinson in the slot. Kane threaded the pass, DeBrincat hammered it home, and all was well with the Blackhawks' power play again.

"We've been trying that for a while now," DeBrincat said of the seam pass. "Finally worked. Finally got good wood on it, and lucky it went in."

It was just the Blackhawks' third power-play goal in five games. Considering how the power play — particularly the top unit of Kane, DeBrincat, Toews, Dylan Strome and Erik Gustafsson (though Dominik Kubalik replaced Strome during the five-on-three, something they practiced earlier in the week) — carried the Blackhawks into playoff contention last winter, they'll need more where that one came from.

"Good teams in the league have good special teams, and I think we have that," Lehner said. "We've got to keep cleaning up a few things and we're going to get better and better."

5. Andrew Shaw giveth, and Andrew Shaw taketh away.

On a night when the Blackhawks honored Dave Bolland, The Rat, they were reminded of the yin and the yang of Shaw, The Mutt. One of the things that separated Bolland from other agitators in the league was how crafty he was. He had a knack for drawing penalties — sometimes even wrapping a guy's stick around his own body while the ref wasn't looking, then screaming for a hooking call — but didn't take a bunch himself. Shaw hasn't quite mastered that yet.

Shaw was whistled for a hooking penalty in the first period, then took a long run at Pierre-Luc Dubois in the second period, earning himself an interference penalty. Those unnecessary offensive-zone penalties are what drive people nuts about Shaw, and for good reason.

But Shaw also draws his share of penalties with his tenacious, high-energy style. In his three seasons in Montreal, he was fourth among the Canadiens with 1.08 minor penalties drawn per 60 minutes. In his five seasons in Chicago, he led the Blackhawks with 1.41 minors drawn per 60, far ahead of his nearest teammate (Toews at 1.13).

"It's something I've always been pretty good at," Shaw said during training camp. "I need to stay out of the box, too, though. That's always something I'm working on."

So far, he needs more work. Through five games, he has a team-high 10 penalty minutes. Nobody else has more than four.

The Blackhawks will want to get Patrick Kane going more in five-on-five play. (Mike DiNovo / USA Today)

6. Colliton has tried to give his lines some time to breathe over the past few games, but they just don't seem like they're clicking yet.

We've already discussed Toews and DeBrincat. Drake Caggiula scored a goal on the top line on Friday, and he's shown he can be utilized anywhere in the lineup. The second line of Shaw, Strome and Kane showed some life against the Blue Jackets, but it didn't produce any goals. You see the magic that can be created with DeBrincat and Kane on the ice on a power play, and Kane hasn't had much of that in five-on-five so far this season. Kane scored a goal with Shaw and Strome in the last game, but his two other points in five-on-five play have come with other linemates.

The third line has been a staple. The fourth line has been OK. Ryan Carpenter and Zack Smith have a Corsi percentage below 40.0, but they haven't been noticeably struggling. That can be a difficult role in limited minutes.

Whether Alexander Nylander is best used on that fourth line is up for debate. He played 7:29 against the Blue Jackets and had 8:20 of ice time the game prior. Nylander's offensive talent is undeniable — he already has two goals this season — but he might still benefit from getting major minutes in Rockford and coming back better prepared for a larger role. Nylander has a team-worst 34.21 Corsi percentage in the four games in which he's played.

"It's all about performance and 'are you going to help the team win?'" Colliton said of Nylander earlier this week. "We watched the shifts together today, and I thought he was very good. Eleven shifts, he was probably good for five, great for five and he had one tough one. He helped us win. He was a big part of our win the other night. It can be a little easier for him when he's playing less to really focus on the quality when he's out there. It may not be a bad thing for him as he grows into an everyday NHLer."

Dylan Sikura could be an option if Colliton wants a more defensively reliable forward on that fourth line. Sikura is off to a strong start with the Rockford IceHogs with three goals in four games and proved last season he can be better away from the puck.

7. The Blackhawks might have had a playoff team last season if it wasn't for their penalty kill. They finished last in the league with a 72.7 percentage.

Colliton and Blackhawks general manager Stan Bowman worked to address that this offseason by signing Carpenter and trading for Olli Maatta, Calvin de Haan and Zack Smith. All four were players they thought would improve their penalty kill.

Through five games, we've seen their impact. Carpenter leads the Blackhawks in shorthanded ice time. Maatta is second among the defensemen in ice time. Smith and de Haan are chipping in as well.

Even though the Blackhawks' overall penalty-kill percentage isn't great — they're at 70.6 percent, giving up five goals on 17 chances — you can see where they're better. They've been aggressive on the forecheck and even in the offensive zone to slow down the opposing team. Since everyone has been healthy, the penalty kill has also gotten better. Over the past three games, the Blackhawks have killed off 9 of 11 power plays. They killed off all four they faced against the Blue Jackets on Friday.

"That's work ethic, so that's something we can really focus on using as momentum," Toews said of the penalty kill on Friday. "We got a big penalty kill, and we've got guys like Smitty and Carps, and going down the list, we've got some big blocks and some big hits from those guys, too. PK was one of those things that was a major issue during our game last year, so it's nice to see some early success right now."

8. The line that Colliton landed on early and has stuck with throughout the season has been Brandon Saad, David Kampf and Dominik Kubalik.

It's hard to argue with it, too. It contained Connor McDavid and the Edmonton Oilers' top line. It was dominant against the San Jose Sharks and had an 11-to-1 advantage in shots on goal before Colliton broke it up. It played about even hockey against the Blue Jackets' top line Friday.

It's helped that Saad has come out flying this season and seems like he has some extra jump to his game. Kubalik has quickly adjusted to the NHL and should only get better. Kampf's offense has been limited, as expected, but he's often been responsible for getting that line out of the defensive zone and moving the puck through the neutral zone. It's a line that complements one another and works. The Blackhawks just need their other lines to mesh as well.



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"You guys know I like that line since the festival game," Colliton said earlier this week. "They all just got real big motors, big engine. They work and compete, and they all bring a little bit different ingredient. Obviously, like, Saad is an accomplished, proven performer. He takes the puck to the net. He's a horse there. He's really hard to get the puck off. He transports it from D-zone to the offensive zone. He can make those plays. I think Kamy is a workhorse. He takes a lot of responsibility defensively and can transport the puck from one end to another. Then you got Kubi — he's got a bomb. I've been very impressed with his play away from the puck. That's been a surprise for me. So now he can play on that line because he does so many responsible things. He wins a lot of races. He's a great forechecker. So, pleased with that line."

9. The Blackhawks seemed to have settled into their defenseman pairings.

Duncan Keith and Connor Murphy: Colliton tried Keith and Gustafsson together as the top pairing again but moved away from that after a few games this season. Keith and Murphy have brought some stability to the top pairing. In 52:40 of five-on-five ice time together, the pairing has an edge in shot attempts (44-42, 51.16 Corsi) and shots on goal (22-21). It's been on the ice for zero goals for and one against and has an expected-goals percentage of 48.58. It's not a perfect top pairing, but it's been stable.

Olli Maatta and Brent Seabrook: There were some concerns about this pairing's foot speed entering the season and whether it'd spend too much time in the defensive zone. So far, that's been the case. The pairing has been on the ice for 36 shot attempts for and 66 against for a 35.29 Corsi percentage. It also has an expected goals-for percentage of 30.81. The positive for the Blackhawks is the pairing hasn't been on the ice for many goals against despite those numbers. It's been on the ice for one goal for and one goal against.

"Him and Seabs, we know what we get out of them playing that controlled game," Colliton said of the pairing this week. "We want them to continue to work on their gap, trying to kill plays earlier, so they don't have to go back for the puck, don't have to handle so much speed coming at them. But they're very good in D-zone and play a little bit of a harder game, which is good for our guys."

Calvin de Haan and Erik Gustafsson: This is the pairing that will likely generate some offense for the Blackhawks. It probably will give up some chances, too, considering that's what usually happens with Gustafsson on the ice. De Haan gives the pairing balance, though. In 35:13 of ice time together, the pairing has a 45.45 Corsi percentage (35-42), has been on the ice for three goals for and two against and has an expected goals-for percentage of 34.51.

10. One of the questions that remains for the beginning of this season is Kirby Dach's future. The Blackhawks have clearly stated they want to give him an NHL look this season, and he was recalled to the NHL after Friday's game.

Dach was a week into his conditioning assignment with the IceHogs. Friday marked his seventh day on assignment and his third game with the IceHogs. He could have remained with them for seven more days.

Dach held his own with the IceHogs through three games. There had been shifts in which you could see the high-end skill. There were others in which he was less visible. Statistics-wise, he had zero points and seven shots on goal.

It seems certain the Blackhawks will give Dach an NHL game, but what that means for his future is still unclear. Maybe he gets a look on the top line with players such as Toews and DeBrincat and they see if he can really help this team this season. Colliton could move

Caggiola back down the lineup and sit Nylander for a game. Maybe Dach just gets a brief look and is sent back to his WHL team.

We should know more in the coming days about the Blackhawks' plan with Dach. The Blackhawks have games Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday next week, so one would expect him to get in a game or two in that span.

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1157613 Chicago Blackhawks

'I think we're at the forefront': Blackhawks confident in secretive analytics department's place in NHL

By Scott Powers

Oct 18, 2019

At the mention of hockey analytics, a smile spread on Blackhawks general manager Stan Bowman's face.

We were sitting outside his suite at the United Center prior to a preseason game last month. We had already talked about many topics, including Alex DeBrincat's contract, something he would swiftly resolve just weeks later. He was engaged throughout the interview, but he seemed even more so when analytics was broached.

The specific question was about how other NHL teams appeared to be increasingly focused on analytics, and I was curious about where he felt the Blackhawks were organizationally in that department, as well as his general mindset. It's not something that's openly discussed very often.

As you'll soon read, Bowman said a lot, but also very little. That wasn't by mistake.

"Nobody's asked me about that in a while. That's interesting," Bowman said, smiling. "I think we're at the forefront. I don't know if I am. I look at what we're doing. I don't talk about what we're doing. There are some teams in the league who have essentially copied everything we've done the last 4-5 years. If we hire somebody to do something, they'll hire somebody for the exact same role.

"I think what we do analytics-wise is very in-depth. It's different and it's extremely detailed and it's very useful and it's different than what's out there to the public. I'm not trying to be difficult or coy about it, but I feel like if I explained everything we're doing ... I think it's an advantage we have over other teams, but then I lose the advantage if other teams start doing it. Now, I can't prove I'm right. I'm just telling you my feelings. I've seen what other people do. I've looked into it. We've done a lot of research on what other people are tracking and what they're studying, and I look at what we're doing and it's different. I believe it's ahead of them. But I don't like to give specifics on them because I just know what some other teams have done as far as replicating what we've done. I think it's an advantage. The less I talk about it, it'll remain an advantage. I put a lot of time into it. We don't really list out who we have working in it. We've got a big group of people working."

Asked how many people worked in their analytics department, Bowman said "several." Publicly, it's one. Under the Blackhawks' hockey operations and scouting staff listing, Andrew Contis is a



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hockey analyst/video coach. He began with the Blackhawks as a hockey operations intern in 2014 and has been in his current role for the last four-plus years.

One other known name is Richard Coleman, whom the Blackhawks have used for many years as a consultant, according to a source. He founded Coleman Analytics Inc. during the 2005-06 season. Former Blackhawks general manager Mike Smith mentioned Coleman and his company in this story in 2009. It's believed the Blackhawks are among Coleman's main clients now.

I talked to a handful of people who have worked in analytics for other NHL teams for this story. They spoke on the condition of anonymity. As I discovered, everyone is pretty tight-lipped on this topic.

One league source said, "Chicago has generally been private about who they hire and what they're doing."

Another source said, "We rarely hear anything about Chicago from an analytics perspective, even in private. I'm very surprised to hear the claim that they're in on analytics. I've never heard much to support that."

Considering what Bowman said about where he believes the Blackhawks stand in analytics compared to other teams, some members of other analytics staffs will undoubtedly roll their eyes. It's a competitive game off the ice as well as on it.

"If they're putting all those resources into analytics, they're not listening to their people," another league source said. "Yada, yada, yada, Brent Seabrook."

That sort of response comes with the territory of winning three Stanley Cups and now missing the playoffs for two consecutive seasons. There are plenty of people around the league who don't mind seeing the Blackhawks come down to earth.

The Athletic's Dom Luszczyszyn also weighed in about the Blackhawks and the analytics he follows.

"They're one of the worst xG teams, but an OK Corsi team," Luszczyszyn said. "It's a big gap. I wonder if they're better at creating dangerous chances in places that aren't normally dangerous. Is there a lot of puck movement in the offensive zone? On defense, I mean, they seem to give up the front of the net very easily, so I'm not sure what data they have to be honest."

Multiple sources backed Bowman's claim that the Blackhawks had put money, time and people into building up their analytics department.

Bowman wouldn't get into specifics as much as I asked. But he was willing to generally talk about how the Blackhawks tap into their analytics.

"It's used in scouting," Bowman said. "It's used in trades. It's used in day-to-day (decisions) with our team, coaching, deployment of players, utilization of players. It's used in all of those areas. I think we have a real deep ... Now it's not gospel, but I think it's a nice blend of both. I think we're in a great place with it."

How much do analytics factor into the Blackhawks' decisions? We'll likely never really know. (Kamil Krzaczyński / USA Today)

Bowman and Blackhawks coach Jeremy Colliton appear to be on the same page about analytics. Joel Quenneville said he was open to analytics when he was Blackhawks coach, but you weren't always sure his decisions were driven by them. Colliton isn't basing all of his decisions on analytics, but it's definitely part of the puzzle for him.

When Colliton and Bowman assessed which players to potentially add to their roster this past offseason, analytics were part of the equation. You can see why the Blackhawks believed they were addressing some needs by acquiring Calvin de Haan, Olli Maatta and Andrew Shaw, among others. Analytics supported those decisions.

"It's one area I thought we looked at," Colliton said in Prague. "I don't think it's the total picture. I don't think any one area is making all the decisions. We got a pro scouting group. They do a lot of work. They do a lot of leg work and then we're watching games. We want to make sure we're seeing the type of player who we think can help. Of course, we want to know the numbers. Do the numbers add up to what we see on the ice? Kind of put all the pieces together."

"There's a lot of numbers out there. So I think the challenge is to find out what numbers lead to winning. Probably different people have different ideas as far as what's important. There are a lot of things that are out there. Some are of value and some I think are not or are limited. We have certain things we focus on. Probably everyone has different ideas. That's what makes it fun."

Colliton wouldn't divulge anything about the Blackhawks' analytics either.

"You can track anything you want," Colliton said. "Like anything you can count, you can track. There's so many things that are out there. But there's probably no benefit in sharing what we think is important. But I think what we have isn't necessarily the best, we just think it leads to winning, so that's our focus."

Colliton was willing to dive further into what's important to him on the ice, and you can maybe take something from that. He was asked about how he cultivated his own ideas about analytics.

"You just watch games and you coach games and you're looking for indicators," Colliton said. "Who can help us win? Who's driving the success? Who's helping us have the puck? Who's creating chances? Defensively vice versa, who's not giving up anything? Ultimately, the game is what you get minus what you give up. We want to drive the play. We want to control the play. We want to create more than we give up and then we want to finish. I think we have a team that can capitalize on our chances. But it's important we want to be tight defensively. Like I said before, we don't want to be a gambling team. We're good enough. We just want to control the game. If you play 60 minutes a certain way, hopefully you win more than lose."

Bowman said the Blackhawks' use of analytics had evolved, and he thought it would continue to do so.

"It's going to be even different a year from now," Bowman said. "I think we're trying a lot of different things. I think it's one of the strengths of our organization, is the level of sophistication. It's a very progressive look at things. We pay attention to what else is out there, but we don't try to ... If there's something we like, that we aren't doing, then we'll implement, but we'll never just take it, though. We'll kind of put our own spin on it. That's just because I think we have a really good rhythm with it."

Bowman emphasized that he thought analytics were important. He didn't want that to be confused with his usual silence about the subject.

"I think it's critical," Bowman said. "I get asked to go to these conferences all the time. It's not that I don't want to go and speak at them. I did one time, like years ago, I think the first year that they had it. They've always asked me to come back, but I don't want to go there if I can't say anything. I'm not saying I'm better than



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anybody. I'm not looking for praise. There are some people who are talking about what they do. I think they're looked upon as being avant-garde. I think we're way ahead of them, but I'm not looking for credit, which is why I stay quiet about it."

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1157599 Chicago Blackhawks

Jonathan Toews' first goal of the season gives the Blackhawks a 3-2 overtime victory over Blue Jackets

By JIMMY GREENFIELD

CHICAGO TRIBUNE |

OCT 18, 2019 | 10:17 PM

Jonathan Toews' first goal of the season couldn't have come at a better time. And he couldn't have been in a better place.

Patrick Kane's shot was stopped by Blue Jackets goalie Elvis Merzlikins, but the puck caromed off Toews as he raced to the net to give the Blackhawks a 3-2 overtime win Friday night at the United Center.

The Hawks won their second straight to improve to 2-2-1 while the Blue Jackets dropped to 3-3-1. Robin Lehner stopped 37 shots for his first win in a Hawks uniform.

Markus Nutivaara put back a rebound of his own shot 2 minutes, 55 seconds into the third period to give the Blue Jackets a brief lead, but a power-play goal by Alex DeBrincat — his second goal of the season — midway through the period tied it 2-2.

The Hawks were badly outplayed in the first but got the lone goal of the period, a Drake Caggiula snap shot that caught the crossbar and shot down into the goal to make it 1-0. It was Caggiula's first goal of the season.

The Blue Jackets' Pierre-Luc Dubois tied it with 14:27 left in the second when he picked up a puck in the Hawks' zone and eluded a poke check by Lehner and slipped it around him for his third goal.

Chicago Tribune LOADED: 10.19.2019

1157600 Chicago Blackhawks

Blackhawks aren't getting power-play opportunities: 'It's hard to draw penalties when you don't have the puck'

By JIMMY GREENFIELD

CHICAGO TRIBUNE |

OCT 18, 2019 | 4:50 PM

The Blackhawks may have the best power play in the league. Or it could be the worst.

It's hard to say when the season is so young and the Hawks have had a terrible time even getting their power-play unit on the ice.

Only the Islanders have been worse at drawing penalties so far this season than the Hawks, who had just nine power plays in four games (2.25 per game) entering Friday night's game against the Blue Jackets at the United Center. The Avalanche were leading the league with a little over four power plays per game.

The Hawks have discussed ways to get opponents into the penalty box and think they know what they have to do.

"Play (more) with the puck," Dylan Strome said. "It's hard to draw penalties when you don't have the puck. I think the last game we did a better job of playing with the puck, it was probably our best game. I don't know the statistics exactly, but it felt like it was our best game with possession and we drew three penalties. We can even do a better job. The more they get tired, that's when penalties happen."

Blackhawks center Jonathan Toews celebrates with goaltender Corey Crawford after the Blackhawks defeated the Oilers 3-1 at the United Center on Oct. 14, 2019.

Strome was correct about the Hawks' possession numbers being strong in their 3-1 win over the Oilers. They had 50 shot attempts for and 38 shot attempts against to give them a 56.82 Corsi percentage, easily their best of the season.

But even though the Hawks had a season-high three power plays against the Oilers it was just one more than they had in each of their first three games.

"You always like more," Hawks coach Jeremy Colliton said. "We can do our part to give ourselves those chances. We've got to get to the net. We've got to be more dynamic in the offensive zone — spend more time there. Keep moving our feet. Be hard to play against. Put pressure on the other team when they want to defend, when they're trying to defend. And then we'll get a few more."

The Hawks are a respectable 13th in the league with a 22.2 power-play conversion rate but with two goals in nine attempts, that rate can still fluctuate wildly. Last season, the Hawks scored at a 20.2 clip but had dramatic ups and downs throughout the season.

On Thursday, Dominik Kubalik was getting some work practicing a five-on-three power play with Strome sitting out. But Colliton said he has no plans to alter the first unit of Strome, Erik Gustafsson, Patrick Kane, Jonathan Toews and Alex DeBrincat that has been in place for nearly a full season.

"We think we have something that's going to work," he said. "If we felt there was a better option, then we'd move to it. I think you come up together as a staff — and the players are involved too — kind of come up with a plan that we can have sustainable success with. We're going to stick with it."

But is it sustainable? The Hawks had a terrible 3-for-37 stretch during Colliton's first few weeks as coach before turning things around once Gustafsson and Strome were added to the power play. They went 32-for-91 over 29 games to help the Hawks get back into playoff contention before going 4-for-42 over their final 18 games.

"We just haven't had a lot of opportunities," Strome said. "We're getting some good chances. In the game against San Jose, Kaner hits a (defenseman's) stick and the guy doesn't even see it. It was open net and hits the D stick. Last game, Alex had a pretty close chance, just missed high glove. We're getting our chances. Just a matter of time before they go in."



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"We get four or five power plays in the game and hopefully (score) two and start to click from there. I think we're feeling pretty good in practice and lots of good meetings, so just keep it going."

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1157601 Chicago Blackhawks

Kendall Coyne Schofield highlights a showcase this weekend as women's pro hockey reaches a crossroads

By JIMMY GREENFIELD

CHICAGO TRIBUNE |

OCT 17, 2019 | 7:36 PM

Chicago never has been home to a women's professional hockey team. That's about to change, at least for one weekend.

More than 35 Olympians from around the world will compete Saturday and Sunday at Fifth Third Arena in the Women's Hockey Showcase, a four-game event developed by the recently formed Professional Women's Hockey Players' Association.

The Women's Hockey Showcase in Chicago is part of the PWHPA's Dream Gap Tour that already has taken place in Toronto and Hudson, N.H., with future events for other North American cities in the planning process.

The PWHPA was created in the spring in response to the Canadian Women's Hockey League folding after 12 seasons. Instead of jumping to the U.S.-based National Women's Hockey League, many of the CWHL players — as well as some from the NWHL — decided to sit out the 2019-20 season and work together for the creation of one viable women's pro hockey league. The PWHPA has about 200 members.

The NWHL has five teams — located in St. Paul, Minn.; Buffalo, N.Y.; Danbury, Conn.; Monmouth Junction, N.J., and Boston — playing a 24-game schedule. The salary cap is \$150,000 per team. With the five teams listing between 19 and 23 players on their rosters, nearly all the women are working full-time jobs in order to make a living.

Olympian Kendall Coyne Schofield, who grew up in Orland Park, chose not to continue playing for the NWHL's Minnesota Whitecaps and joined the PWHPA.

"There's been no professional league to date that has showcased the best product of women's hockey," Coyne Schofield said. "And that's because of the lack of resources and infrastructure and business model in the current state of the game."

Coyne Schofield is an electrifying player who became the first woman to compete in the NHL All-Star Skills Competition last season, finishing seventh in the fastest-skater competition. She is working this season for the Sharks as a TV color analyst.

But her goal as a young girl wasn't to broadcast games. She and her brother both dreamed of playing for the Blackhawks.

"I realized that wasn't a reality," she said. "I quickly realized it also wasn't a reality that I could make a living playing this game and he could. We're trying to change that landscape."

The NHL is not involved with the NWHL or the PWHPA.

"We're supportive and we're watching," NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman told ESPN last month. "We don't want to do anything that would undermine an existing league."

Coyne Schofield has watched the WNBA grow over the last 20 years and believes it's a model that can work in hockey.

"We would love to see the NHL provide resources to the women's professional game," she said. "They have the infrastructure. They have the business model. They have the resources already put in place. I think the NHL would help tremendously and be a no-brainer in terms of a partner for a women's professional league."

On Friday at the United Center before the Hawks game, Coyne Schofield and the other women competing over the weekend will conduct a clinic for about 60 girls. The four-team tournament will begin Saturday with a pair of games followed Sunday by the consolation and championship games.

"I'm so excited for fans to see the product that's going to be on the ice," Coyne Schofield said. "There are going to be so many incredible athletes competing this weekend. For all of us to be under one roof and not in a national-team jersey is extremely exciting, because this is what we're fighting for and this is what the future should look like."

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1157602 Chicago Blackhawks

Blackhawks recall rookie center Kirby Dach from conditioning stint after three AHL appearances

Dach registered zero points and seven shots on goal with the Rockford IceHogs.

By Ben Pope@BenPopeCST

Oct 18, 2019, 11:27pm CDT

Center Kirby Dach's conditioning stint in the American Hockey League could have lasted 14 days.

But after only six, the Blackhawks apparently had seen enough of him in the minors to call him up from Rockford after their 3-2 overtime victory Friday against the Blue Jackets and the IceHogs' 3-2 victory Friday against the Wolves.

Dach, the No. 3 overall pick in the draft in June, didn't have a sensational three-game AHL stint in terms of on-paper production, registering seven shots on goal and zero points. But he successfully was eased back into game action after a concussion suffered in the preseason and introduced to the intensity of pro hockey, which were the primary goals all along.

It will be fascinating to see how Dach, 18, slots into the Hawks' lineup moving forward, provided he sticks with the NHL roster. He can make up to nine NHL appearances before being sent back to his Canadian junior team (if the Hawks wish to slide his three-year entry-level contract forward a year), but he also could contend for a permanent role on the NHL roster.



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The Hawks will hold an optional practice Saturday that should reveal more about their plans for Dach.

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1157603 Chicago Blackhawks

Jonathan Toews breaks slump with OT goal as Blackhawks edge Blue Jackets

Toews scored his first goal of the season as the Hawks rallied to win 3-2.

By Ben Pope@BenPopeCST

Oct 18, 2019, 10:40pm CDT

In a 10-second span of overtime, captain Jonathan Toews evolved from an aging player mired in a season-opening slump to the hero of the Hawks' second victory of the season.

Toews blocked a dangerous shot in the defensive zone, sprung a two-on-one the other way, drove to the net and knocked in the rebound of a shot off his body to give the Hawks the victory.

For the first few seconds, he couldn't help but smile and laugh after getting the figurative monkey off his back. Minutes later, he was all business again.

"I wouldn't say we're super-satisfied with our play these first five games," Toews said. "There are some positives there that we can build on. Given the fact that we've strung a couple of games together here, found a way to win these [last two] games at home, it's a good sign."

The Hawks looked sluggish and sloppy throughout the first two periods, with only a goal by wing Drake Caggiula and plenty of spectacular saves by goalie Robin Lehner keeping them in the game. When they fell behind 2-1 early in the third, Toews had zero shots to his name.

But then Patrick Kane found fellow wing Alex DeBrincat for the tying power-play goal and the Hawks' penalty kill, which went four-for-four and looked as staunch as it has in years, staved off a late Blue Jackets opportunity before Toews scored his first goal of the season.

"We've just got to find that consistent level," coach Jeremy Colliton said. "The Winnipeg game and the Edmonton game, that was a good stretch. It wasn't a perfect six periods, but we did a lot of things right."

"Tonight was not like that, I don't think. But the opportunity to build on some points and a little bit of success . . . that's a good thing."

Chicago Sun Times LOADED: 10.19.2019

1157604 Chicago Blackhawks

Former AHL teammates Calvin de Haan, Jeremy Colliton enjoying reunion with Blackhawks

Calvin de Haan was a rookie and Jeremy Colliton an AHL captain when their careers crossed eight years ago. Now, they're back together in far different roles.

By Ben Pope@BenPopeCST

Oct 18, 2019, 6:55am CDT

Jeremy Colliton runs intense practices. Heavy breathing and sweat-dripping brows are common sights in the Blackhawks' locker room.

But for new Hawks defenseman Calvin de Haan, who played alongside Colliton in the AHL eight years ago, many of the strenuous parts seem oddly familiar.

"It's funny because there's a couple drills that we've done throughout training camp and practice that I've seen a few times before," de Haan said Thursday, chuckling. "I've kind of called him out on that."

The veteran blueliner finds himself in a situation few NHL players have ever experienced: being coached by a former teammate.

As a rookie in the Islanders organization in 2011-12, de Haan spent all but one game of the season with the Bridgeport Sound Tigers. And in Bridgeport, Colliton was royalty — he was the team's captain and, by the end of the year, its all-time leading scorer.

Despite occupying different positions (Colliton was a forward), de Haan's status as a recent first-round pick meant he and the future Hawks boss still frequently worked and played together. De Haan's third-ever professional point, in fact, was the primary assist on a Colliton overtime winner.

"I was coming in right out of juniors, not knowing anything about pro hockey, moving in with a couple other 20-year-old kids," de Haan said last July, shortly after his trade from Carolina to Chicago. "Having Jeremy there was probably like the . . . best captain you could have asked for for the young team."

The two men went separate directions after that season — Colliton moving to Sweden and quickly switching to coaching, de Haan emerging as a full-time NHL defenseman with now 380 career appearances — but de Haan said he was never surprised to see the speed with which Colliton was climbing the ranks.

Since their reunion in Chicago at the start of training camp, he's seen firsthand how Colliton's leadership qualities have translated to his current role.

"I've enjoyed playing for him so far," de Haan said. "I could see it when he was a captain in Bridgeport, and he hasn't changed much — he's a smart guy and he thinks outside the box, and that's the new NHL."

Their preexisting relationship has proved useful, too, despite the eight years apart.

As de Haan worked his way back from offseason shoulder surgery and a groin issue during the preseason, the Hawks' Europe trip and the first week of the regular season, Colliton and de Haan chatting on the ice after practice was a near-daily occurrence.

De Haan needed to give Colliton daily updates on his health status, and Colliton needed to familiarize de Haan with his hybrid defensive scheme, which de Haan said differs substantially from the man-on-man system he ran with the Hurricanes. Despite one misstep, the regular communication was largely effective.



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"When you've played with a guy, you have a connection," Colliton said. "Maybe it's a bit quicker to be able to get to the point, because he knows me, and I can be quite direct with him. That's a nice thing."

De Haan finally made his Hawks debut last weekend and then played well alongside Erik Gustafsson on the third pairing Monday — the duo was on the ice for 12 Hawks scoring chances and only four Oilers scoring chances.

Now fully healthy, De Haan will likely slide into a larger role soon. And when he does, he knows he'll have a prime resource for any questions he needs answered.

"Jeremy's very approachable," he said. "He's easy to talk to, easy to get along with, and having that relationship before definitely helps for sure."

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1157605 Chicago Blackhawks

Toews' game-winner nets Blackhawks at OT win over Columbus

John Dietz

Updated 10/18/2019 11:45 PM

Over the course of a season, not every victory -- or every goal, for that matter -- is going to be pretty.

The Blackhawks can attest to both of those facts in spades after clawing their way past Columbus 3-2 at the United Center on Friday when Jonathan Toews scored 46 seconds into overtime.

Toews' first goal of the season came when the puck bounced off his left leg after Patrick Kane's initial shot was saved by goaltender Elvis Merzlikins.

"If that's the way I've got to score to get things going, I'll take it," Toews said after the Hawks improved to 2-2-1.

Drake Caggiula and Alex DeBrincat notched the other goals, and Robin Lehner registered his first victory with the Hawks after making 37 saves.

This game was a lesson in patience and perseverance for everyone on coach Jeremy Colliton's squad.

The Blue Jackets (3-4-0) controlled much of the first period, outshooting the Hawks 15-10. Lehner was under constant fire, but stepped up and managed to turn away numerous high-quality chances.

"It could have been 3, 4-nothing early on," Toews said. "He made some big stops -- couple 2-on-1s, a couple breakaways. He was standing tall there."

Also standing tall was the Hawks' special teams as they went 4-for-4 on the penalty kill and notched a huge power-play goal when DeBrincat banged home a Kane pass 8:08 into the third period.

Going forward, the Hawks must start creating more offensively. Too many times pucks are mishandled or flat-out stripped, and passes aren't hitting their marks. Then, when an opportunity does present itself, an extra pass is made when a shot would suffice.

That's where Caggiula deserves some credit for not forcing the puck to Toews in the first period. He instead recognized that his captain was well covered and unleashed a shot that clanked off the crossbar and into the net.

As for Toews, whose 2 points this season have come in overtime and on an assist into an empty net, he wouldn't admit to being frustrated with his slow start.

"More just pressing to create more," he said. "I've had some chances but not that many."

"So gotta be better with the puck. Keep pucks down low, just play a little heavier on it and try to get it up to our D-men on the blue line (so they) can get some shots."

It must start soon because two of the top teams in the league come to the United Center next in Washington (5-2-2) and Vegas (5-3-0).

"Sometimes it's nice to learn some lessons when you win," Colliton said. "That's probably the case tonight. We have a little momentum and hopefully we can continue that."

Dach recalled:

The Hawks recalled forward Kirby Dach from his conditioning stint in Rockford. Dach did not record any points in his three games with the IceHogs.

Daily Herald Times LOADED: 10.19.2019

1157606 Chicago Blackhawks

Blackhawks recall Kirby Dach from AHL conditioning stint

By Charlie Roumeliotis

October 18, 2019 11:30 PM

Six days after being assigned to the Rockford IceHogs of the American Hockey League, No. 3 overall pick Kirby Dach has been recalled by the Blackhawks, the team announced late Friday night. He is not eligible to play in the AHL full-time this season, but he was allowed to stay in Rockford for up to 14 days on a conditioning stint, according to CBA rules.

Dach, who was sidelined for the first week of training camp with a concussion, appeared in three games with the IceHogs and was held off the scoresheet in each of them. He started on the fourth line in the first game, got promoted to the third in the second and played on the first line with Matthew Highmore and Dylan Sikura on Friday night against the Chicago Wolves.

The Blackhawks are coming off a 3-2 overtime victory over Columbus to improve to 2-0-1 in their past three games, and that helps ease Dach into the equation with the team riding some positive momentum. The next game is on Sunday at 6 p.m. against the Washington Capitals, which is possibly when he'll make his NHL debut.

Where Dach fits into the four-line rotation is unclear and will be interesting to monitor. It's possible he starts on the wing, especially with the third line of David Kampf, Dominik Kubalik and Brandon Saad clicking. Before Dach was assigned to Rockford, he was taking



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practice reps with Jonathan Toews and alternating on the wing with Drake Caggiula and Alex DeBrincat.

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1157607 Chicago Blackhawks

Blackhawks, as part of Magellan Corporation Women's Hockey Showcase, host clinic for female youth hockey players

By Rob Schaefer

October 18, 2019 10:00 PM

Four hours before the puck dropped for their Friday night matchup with the Columbus Blue Jackets, the Blackhawks — in conjunction with the six-time gold medalist Kendall Coyne Schofield and the PWHPA — hosted a night to remember for over 60 female youth hockey players at the United Center.

The proceedings were highlighted by a pregame clinic for those 60+ skaters (ages 6-16) titled the "Meet Your Sheros" Girls Clinic, which was led by a gaggle of Olympians and served as a kickoff for the Magellan Corporation Women's Hockey Showcase.

But the fun didn't end there: after the clinic concluded, youth participants also attended a private meet-and-greet with their 'Sheros' and then the Blackhawks' game later in the evening. They also received passes to the Showcase, a four-team tournament put on by the Magellan Corporation and Billie Jean King Enterprises that will be held over the weekend (and feature 35 Olympic women's hockey players!) at Fifth Third Arena. The impetus behind the Showcase is to "celebrate women in sports and promote gender equality."

And tonight, to hear Coyne Schofield tell it, was all about the next generation:

"I think what's so important about this weekend is — you guys are talking about the 2018 Olympics and how special that was — but we're trying to create that platform every day, not every four years," she told NBC Sports Chicago.

"We're working so hard every day and, as you can see, one of the most important parts of this weekend is being on the ice with the young girls, the next generation, who [are] going to fill our skates one day and hopefully -- not hopefully. They will grow up knowing they can make a living playing this sport if they're good enough to do so."

The epic display of women's hockey set to ensue this weekend will certainly aid in that mission, as well. Look out for further developments related to the tournament — it's sure to be a thrilling and inspiring weekend, both for the present and future of the sport.

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1157608 Chicago Blackhawks

Four takeaways: Blackhawks penalty kill 'excellent' in overtime win over Blue Jackets

By Charlie Roumeliotis

October 18, 2019 11:20 PM

Here are four takeaways from the Blackhawks' 3-2 overtime win over the Columbus Blue Jackets at the United Center on Friday:

1. Blackhawks stringing together points

The Blackhawks turned in their best 60-minute effort of the season on Monday and they wanted to build on that performance after a three-day layoff. The start was slow against Columbus, but the finish was strong and it ended on a Jonathan Toews overtime goal.

After starting the season with back-to-back losses in regulation, the Blackhawks have picked up five out of a possible six points in their past three games. They're starting to climb in the standings.

"That's a hard-working team," Toews said. "They've got some skill, they played well as a team and they didn't give us much room out there. It's probably not our best start, there's a lot of things that we know we can do better, but for us to hang in there and tie things up, give ourselves a chance in overtime, get the crowd into it, you've got to find ways to win those games, can't let them slip, so it's nice to get two points."

2. Penalty kill 'excellent'

The Blue Jackets came into the game with a bottom-third-ranked special teams, converting on 17.8 percent of their power plays and killing off 73.7 percent of their penalties. This was an area the Blackhawks could exploit, and they did.

The Blackhawks went 1-for-4 on the power play thanks to an Alex DeBrincat goal, but it was the penalty kill that allowed the team to be in it till the very end. The Blackhawks killed off all four penalties, including a crucial one late in the third period to keep the game knotted up at 2-2.

"I thought the penalty kill was excellent," coach Jeremy Colliton said. "We were really good. At any point, if they score and they had multiple chances, it really changes the game. It allowed our power play, in the end, to come through and make a difference for us. That was big, and I thought they were full value for not getting scored on, too. We didn't give up much. Just as likely to score going the other way."

3. Coming out on top in the first period

The Blackhawks were outplayed in the first period, which hasn't usually been the case this season. The Blue Jackets led in every statistically category except the one that matters the most and that's the scoreboard. It easily could've gone the other way.

But the Blackhawks survived when they weren't at their best, and Drake Caggiula opened the scoring with a beautiful shot at the 15:35 mark of the opening frame. It's the fourth straight game the Blackhawks have scored first.

"Didn't love our first period," Colliton said. "I think we were fortunate to be in the lead. I did like our response in the second. Even though they tied it up I thought we played much better in the second period. And after that, I thought we were reasonably solid. ... It wasn't perfect but it's also a positive that we found a way to win anyway."

4. Robin Lehner turns in another strong effort

The Blackhawks don't get out of the first period with the lead without Lehner, who finished with 37 saves on 39 shots for a save



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The Blackhawks are honoring one of their own on Friday, with Dave Bolland set to skate "One More Shift" with the organization. He will join the team on the ice during the anthem, and will be featured throughout the game commemorating his time in Chicago.

When you think of Bolland, the first thing that pops up into the minds of fans is his game-winning goal in Game 6 of the 2013 Stanley Cup Final against the Boston Bruins. Or, better known as the second goal of "17 Seconds."

But his former teammates remember him for more than that.

"He was awesome," Patrick Kane said. "He was one of those guys who played a third-line role for like his whole time here and just really did well with it. I remember the line with him, [Martin] Havlat and [Andrew] Ladd really took off in 2009 and obviously [Dustin] Byfuglien, him and [Kris] Versteeg were a good line in 2010. But just the way he played, he got underneath the other team's skin, especially their star players. Wasn't afraid to chirp, wasn't afraid to get into the mix, especially with his size and the way he was built.

"But yeah, some great moments, some big goals, a lot of big shorthanded goals, you can obviously remember his 17 seconds was unbelievable as well, that's a goal I'm sure he'll never forget. We'll never forget that celebration too, so it's awesome he's getting honored."

Bolland, who earned the nickname "The Rat," is perhaps best known for the role he played in the Blackhawks' playoff series battles with the Vancouver Canucks. His line frequently drew the defensive matchups against Daniel and Henrik Sedin, and he's the one player who really knew how to throw both twins off their game at the same time.

"I think he's kind of like Shawzy," Jonathan Toews said. "He's one of those guys that fans here in Chicago really like. Aside from scoring goals and the plays that he made over the years in the playoffs, he was one of those guys that you loved having on your team that other teams hated. He found ways to chip away at their best players and get them off their game. He was good at a lot of little things like that, so he was a big part of those winning teams."

Andrew Shaw was teammates with Bolland for only two seasons, but they won a Stanley Cup together and Bolland was one of the best and knowing his role and perfecting it.

"One of the best at his job," Shaw said. "He played that shutdown centerman. I always thought he had the shortest shifts. His shift lengths were so short just 'cause he would play so much against top guys that he'd want to be so well-rested while he was out there. ... He was skilled enough to chip in offensively as well.

"That's the type of player he was. He'd play against the top guys, he'd shut them down, he'd be that little rat himself, just try to get them off their game as well as outworking them."

Bolland spent seven of his 10 NHL seasons in Chicago, where he registered 168 points (70 goals, 98 assists) in 332 games. He was drafted by the Blackhawks in the second round (No. 32 overall) of the 2004 NHL Draft.

Friday will mark the first night honoring the 10-year anniversary of the 2010 Stanley Cup Championship, which ended a 49-year drought in franchise history. The first 10,000 fans on Friday will receive a Marian Hossa bobblehead.

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1157612 Chicago Blackhawks

Ten things we've learned about the Blackhawks after five games

By Scott Powers and Mark Lazerus

Oct 18, 2019

Ten observations through five games for the Blackhawks, who improved to 2-2-1 with a 3-2 overtime victory over the Columbus Blue Jackets on Friday night:

1. Every coach wants to see his team play a perfect 60-minute game — to show the same intensity from start to finish, to maintain consistent pressure in the offensive zone, to make smart decisions with the puck, to play a clean game.

But there's something to be said for winning ugly.

"Sometimes it's nice to learn some lessons when you win," Jeremy Colliton said after Patrick Kane's rebound bounced off Jonathan Toews and in for the overtime win Friday night.

The Blackhawks have plenty to learn from a rather harrowing victory over the Blue Jackets, and we'll get into a lot of that here. There were unnecessary penalties, a squandered five-on-three power play, little sustained zone time, unchecked forwards in Robin Lehner's goalmouth, and a seemingly endless parade of bouncing, off-target passes. These are familiar problems and will surely be points of emphasis going forward. Through two periods, the best display of skill on the ice might have come from 75-year-old Billie Jean King, who scored in Shoot the Puck and came inches away from doing it again.

But it's a lot easier to stomach those issues and tackle them when you escape with two points, when Lehner makes 37 saves, when Alex DeBrincat and the power play come through in the third period, when the penalty kill is 4-for-4, including a critical kill after a questionable (at best) interference call on Brent Seabrook. A high-intensity, highly entertaining third period atoned for the sleepy start.

The Blackhawks are far from a finished product. But the looming difficult stretch of games against Washington, Vegas, Philadelphia and Carolina looks a lot less daunting when you're 2-2-1 instead of 1-3-1. This seven-game homestand is a critical step in avoiding another insurmountable early-season hole while other teams with busier schedules pile up points, and a 2-0-1 stretch is a good start, even if Friday's win wasn't nearly as pretty as Monday's.

2. In his first appearance in a Blackhawks uniform last Saturday against Winnipeg, Lehner looked great. He was big, he was composed, he was in total control and he got the Blackhawks their first point of the season.

So Corey Crawford got the next start.

In that start, Crawford was even better, flirting with a shutout against the hottest team in the league and putting together a vintage 27-save performance to get the Blackhawks their first win of the season.

So Lehner got the next start.

And he was even better than last time, staving off a handful of Columbus two-on-ones and breakaways and surviving a third-period review to get his first win in Chicago.

This goaltending situation is going to be odd like that for a while.



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"Everyone wants to play all the time," Colliton said. "That's what everyone says, whether it's a goalie or a forward or a D: 'Yeah, I'll play better if you just play me more.' That's just the standard answer, right? But we've had a little lighter schedule. We want both guys going because we're coming up to a stretch where we're going to play a lot of games, so we're going to need them both. I think both guys feel pretty confident in their games, and both their last performances were good. So I think we're in a good spot there."

As long as neither goalie gets ridiculously dominant or completely falls apart, it's going to be a difficult — almost random — decision most nights. Maybe Lehner's familiarity with the Blue Jackets from his time in the Metropolitan Division last season played into the decision. Maybe it was just his turn. After all, it's not as if he deserved to be sat after his last game. Just like Crawford didn't deserve to be sat after his.

At least Friday's game kicked off a stretch of seven games in 12 days, which should help keep both goalies busy.

"I felt really good," Lehner said. "The problem is the schedule has been a little bit what it is. The schedule's going to speed up for us a little bit now, to kind of get into it more."

For now, this is a good problem to have. The whole idea of signing Lehner was to ensure a No. 1-caliber goalie would be in net for every game in a season in which every point will matter. How Colliton and goaltending coach Jimmy Waite handle the duo going forward will be important, though. Right now, Crawford and Lehner are saying all the right things, and they're on board with the timeshare. But what happens the first time either one gets hot and takes the net for a few games in a row?

Colliton knows he needs both guys to keep buying in.

"Yeah, and that's partly communication, whether it's me or Jimmy, right from the beginning," he said. "We're here to win, and we need both of you, and we need both of you at a high level. I don't think many teams — I won't say any, maybe there's one — but I don't think many teams win a Stanley Cup or go really deep with one guy playing 70 games or 65 games. Doesn't seem to be the formula right now. So that's part of why we were happy to get Robin. It's going to help make our team better."

Jonathan Toews scored his first goal of the season on Friday. (Kamil Krzaczyński / USA Today)

3. Like just about any player, Jonathan Toews goes through goal droughts every season. And every time, he says the same thing: Sometimes you just need to see the puck go in, to ease the mental burden and remind you what it feels like. Even superstars need a confidence boost every now and then.

So, no, Toews wasn't complaining about how he scored his game-winner. They all look like top-shelf one-timers on the scoresheet. Asked if he was stealing Andrew Shaw's "I love shin pads" bit with that goal, Toews laughed.

"I ain't stealing anything from Shawzie," he said. "But yeah, I guess if that's the way I've got to score to get things going, so be it."

It was Toews' first goal of the season, and while he's looked particularly aggressive and effective on the penalty kill, he hasn't quite looked like himself in five-on-five play. He didn't even have a shot attempt in the first two periods against Columbus, and he had a 28 percent Corsi for the game (out-attempted 18-7). Toews has been hard on himself for his slow start, but Colliton has insisted he's liked his game so far.

"He was good again tonight," Colliton said. "For him to come through, he only had the one point, but he was involved. He was involved on (DeBrincat's) power-play goal. He doesn't get a point on it, but he carried the puck, he lugged it, he broke pressure, he got the zone and got us set up, and then it's in the back of the net. So I thought he did a lot of good things tonight."

The numbers and Toews himself might disagree, but as he always says, sometimes it just takes one puck going in to open the floodgates.

"For sure, for sure," he said. "Just being around the net and trying to get your sticks on pucks. It's definitely nice to get one any way you can."

4. Not scoring in three games doesn't sound so bad. But not scoring in two weeks sounds awful to a guy like DeBrincat, who makes his living by putting the puck in the net. The Blackhawks' loose schedule made his breakthrough Friday night feel a little bigger than it otherwise might have.

"There's a lot of off-time there," he said. "I mean, I wasn't too worried about it. I was getting chances, and it had to go in sooner or later. Just keep battling and hoping for the best."

The Blackhawks' power play is run through Patrick Kane on the half-wall, and just like with Alex Ovechkin in Washington, it's geared around Kane finding a seam and teeing up a DeBrincat one-timer in the left circle with a cross-ice pass. And for the past three games, that seam just wasn't there.

Columbus was clearly trying to take away that play, clogging things up below the dots, and the two failed to connect during a 66-second two-man advantage at the end of the first period. So when Seth Jones was hit with a tripping penalty at 6:58 of the third period, DeBrincat decided to slide back a little. With Kane and DeBrincat each at the top of their respective circles, rather than at the dots or below, a lane opened up between Alexander Wennberg up top and Cam Atkinson in the slot. Kane threaded the pass, DeBrincat hammered it home, and all was well with the Blackhawks' power play again.

"We've been trying that for a while now," DeBrincat said of the seam pass. "Finally worked. Finally got good wood on it, and lucky it went in."

It was just the Blackhawks' third power-play goal in five games. Considering how the power play — particularly the top unit of Kane, DeBrincat, Toews, Dylan Strome and Erik Gustafsson (though Dominik Kubalik replaced Strome during the five-on-three, something they practiced earlier in the week) — carried the Blackhawks into playoff contention last winter, they'll need more where that one came from.

"Good teams in the league have good special teams, and I think we have that," Lehner said. "We've got to keep cleaning up a few things and we're going to get better and better."

5. Andrew Shaw giveth, and Andrew Shaw taketh away.

On a night when the Blackhawks honored Dave Bolland, The Rat, they were reminded of the yin and the yang of Shaw, The Mutt. One of the things that separated Bolland from other agitators in the league was how crafty he was. He had a knack for drawing penalties — sometimes even wrapping a guy's stick around his own body while the ref wasn't looking, then screaming for a hooking call — but didn't take a bunch himself. Shaw hasn't quite mastered that yet.

Shaw was whistled for a hooking penalty in the first period, then took a long run at Pierre-Luc Dubois in the second period, earning himself



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an interference penalty. Those unnecessary offensive-zone penalties are what drive people nuts about Shaw, and for good reason.

But Shaw also draws his share of penalties with his tenacious, high-energy style. In his three seasons in Montreal, he was fourth among the Canadiens with 1.08 minor penalties drawn per 60 minutes. In his five seasons in Chicago, he led the Blackhawks with 1.41 minors drawn per 60, far ahead of his nearest teammate (Toews at 1.13).

"It's something I've always been pretty good at," Shaw said during training camp. "I need to stay out of the box, too, though. That's always something I'm working on."

So far, he needs more work. Through five games, he has a team-high 10 penalty minutes. Nobody else has more than four.

The Blackhawks will want to get Patrick Kane going more in five-on-five play. (Mike DiNovo / USA Today)

6. Colliton has tried to give his lines some time to breathe over the past few games, but they just don't seem like they're clicking yet.

We've already discussed Toews and DeBrincat. Drake Caggiula scored a goal on the top line on Friday, and he's shown he can be utilized anywhere in the lineup. The second line of Shaw, Strome and Kane showed some life against the Blue Jackets, but it didn't produce any goals. You see the magic that can be created with DeBrincat and Kane on the ice on a power play, and Kane hasn't had much of that in five-on-five so far this season. Kane scored a goal with Shaw and Strome in the last game, but his two other points in five-on-five play have come with other linemates.

The third line has been a staple. The fourth line has been OK. Ryan Carpenter and Zack Smith have a Corsi percentage below 40.0, but they haven't been noticeably struggling. That can be a difficult role in limited minutes.

Whether Alexander Nylander is best used on that fourth line is up for debate. He played 7:29 against the Blue Jackets and had 8:20 of ice time the game prior. Nylander's offensive talent is undeniable — he already has two goals this season — but he might still benefit from getting major minutes in Rockford and coming back better prepared for a larger role. Nylander has a team-worst 34.21 Corsi percentage in the four games in which he's played.

"It's all about performance and 'are you going to help the team win?'" Colliton said of Nylander earlier this week. "We watched the shifts together today, and I thought he was very good. Eleven shifts, he was probably good for five, great for five and he had one tough one. He helped us win. He was a big part of our win the other night. It can be a little easier for him when he's playing less to really focus on the quality when he's out there. It may not be a bad thing for him as he grows into an everyday NHLer."

Dylan Sikura could be an option if Colliton wants a more defensively reliable forward on that fourth line. Sikura is off to a strong start with the Rockford IceHogs with three goals in four games and proved last season he can be better away from the puck.

7. The Blackhawks might have had a playoff team last season if it wasn't for their penalty kill. They finished last in the league with a 72.7 percentage.

Colliton and Blackhawks general manager Stan Bowman worked to address that this offseason by signing Carpenter and trading for Olli Maatta, Calvin de Haan and Zack Smith. All four were players they thought would improve their penalty kill.

Through five games, we've seen their impact. Carpenter leads the Blackhawks in shorthanded ice time. Maatta is second among the defensemen in ice time. Smith and de Haan are chipping in as well.

Even though the Blackhawks' overall penalty-kill percentage isn't great — they're at 70.6 percent, giving up five goals on 17 chances — you can see where they're better. They've been aggressive on the forecheck and even in the offensive zone to slow down the opposing team. Since everyone has been healthy, the penalty kill has also gotten better. Over the past three games, the Blackhawks have killed off 9 of 11 power plays. They killed off all four they faced against the Blue Jackets on Friday.

"That's work ethic, so that's something we can really focus on using as momentum," Toews said of the penalty kill on Friday. "We got a big penalty kill, and we've got guys like Smitty and Carps, and going down the list, we've got some big blocks and some big hits from those guys, too. PK was one of those things that was a major issue during our game last year, so it's nice to see some early success right now."

8. The line that Colliton landed on early and has stuck with throughout the season has been Brandon Saad, David Kampf and Dominik Kubalik.

It's hard to argue with it, too. It contained Connor McDavid and the Edmonton Oilers' top line. It was dominant against the San Jose Sharks and had an 11-to-1 advantage in shots on goal before Colliton broke it up. It played about even hockey against the Blue Jackets' top line Friday.

It's helped that Saad has come out flying this season and seems like he has some extra jump to his game. Kubalik has quickly adjusted to the NHL and should only get better. Kampf's offense has been limited, as expected, but he's often been responsible for getting that line out of the defensive zone and moving the puck through the neutral zone. It's a line that complements one another and works. The Blackhawks just need their other lines to mesh as well.

"You guys know I like that line since the festival game," Colliton said earlier this week. "They all just got real big motors, big engine. They work and compete, and they all bring a little bit different ingredient. Obviously, like, Saad is an accomplished, proven performer. He takes the puck to the net. He's a horse there. He's really hard to get the puck off. He transports it from D-zone to the offensive zone. He can make those plays. I think Kampf is a workhorse. He takes a lot of responsibility defensively and can transport the puck from one end to another. Then you got Kubi — he's got a bomb. I've been very impressed with his play away from the puck. That's been a surprise for me. So now he can play on that line because he does so many responsible things. He wins a lot of races. He's a great forechecker. So, pleased with that line."

9. The Blackhawks seemed to have settled into their defenseman pairings.

Duncan Keith and Connor Murphy: Colliton tried Keith and Gustafsson together as the top pairing again but moved away from that after a few games this season. Keith and Murphy have brought some stability to the top pairing. In 52:40 of five-on-five ice time together, the pairing has an edge in shot attempts (44-42, 51.16 Corsi) and shots on goal (22-21). It's been on the ice for zero goals for and one against and has an expected-goals percentage of 48.58. It's not a perfect top pairing, but it's been stable.

Olli Maatta and Brent Seabrook: There were some concerns about this pairing's foot speed entering the season and whether it'd spend too much time in the defensive zone. So far, that's been the case. The pairing has been on the ice for 36 shot attempts for and 66



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against for a 35.29 Corsi percentage. It also has an expected goals-for percentage of 30.81. The positive for the Blackhawks is the pairing hasn't been on the ice for many goals against despite those numbers. It's been on the ice for one goal for and one goal against.

"Him and Seabs, we know what we get out of them playing that controlled game," Colliton said of the pairing this week. "We want them to continue to work on their gap, trying to kill plays earlier, so they don't have to go back for the puck, don't have to handle so much speed coming at them. But they're very good in D-zone and play a little bit of a harder game, which is good for our guys."

Calvin de Haan and Erik Gustafsson: This is the pairing that will likely generate some offense for the Blackhawks. It probably will give up some chances, too, considering that's what usually happens with Gustafsson on the ice. De Haan gives the pairing balance, though. In 35:13 of ice time together, the pairing has a 45.45 Corsi percentage (35-42), has been on the ice for three goals for and two against and has an expected goals-for percentage of 34.51.

10. One of the questions that remains for the beginning of this season is Kirby Dach's future. The Blackhawks have clearly stated they want to give him an NHL look this season, and he was recalled to the NHL after Friday's game.

Dach was a week into his conditioning assignment with the IceHogs. Friday marked his seventh day on assignment and his third game with the IceHogs. He could have remained with them for seven more days.

Dach held his own with the IceHogs through three games. There had been shifts in which you could see the high-end skill. There were others in which he was less visible. Statistics-wise, he had zero points and seven shots on goal.

It seems certain the Blackhawks will give Dach an NHL game, but what that means for his future is still unclear. Maybe he gets a look on the top line with players such as Toews and DeBrincat and they see if he can really help this team this season. Colliton could move Caggiola back down the lineup and sit Nylander for a game. Maybe Dach just gets a brief look and is sent back to his WHL team.

We should know more in the coming days about the Blackhawks' plan with Dach. The Blackhawks have games Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday next week, so one would expect him to get in a game or two in that span.

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1157613 Chicago Blackhawks

'I think we're at the forefront': Blackhawks confident in secretive analytics department's place in NHL

By Scott Powers

Oct 18, 2019

At the mention of hockey analytics, a smile spread on Blackhawks general manager Stan Bowman's face.

We were sitting outside his suite at the United Center prior to a preseason game last month. We had already talked about many topics, including Alex DeBrincat's contract, something he would swiftly resolve just weeks later. He was engaged throughout the

interview, but he seemed even more so when analytics was broached.

The specific question was about how other NHL teams appeared to be increasingly focused on analytics, and I was curious about where he felt the Blackhawks were organizationally in that department, as well as his general mindset. It's not something that's openly discussed very often.

As you'll soon read, Bowman said a lot, but also very little. That wasn't by mistake.

"Nobody's asked me about that in a while. That's interesting," Bowman said, smiling. "I think we're at the forefront. I don't know if I am. I look at what we're doing. I don't talk about what we're doing. There are some teams in the league who have essentially copied everything we've done the last 4-5 years. If we hire somebody to do something, they'll hire somebody for the exact same role.

"I think what we do analytics-wise is very in-depth. It's different and it's extremely detailed and it's very useful and it's different than what's out there to the public. I'm not trying to be difficult or coy about it, but I feel like if I explained everything we're doing ... I think it's an advantage we have over other teams, but then I lose the advantage if other teams start doing it. Now, I can't prove I'm right. I'm just telling you my feelings. I've seen what other people do. I've looked into it. We've done a lot of research on what other people are tracking and what they're studying, and I look at what we're doing and it's different. I believe it's ahead of them. But I don't like to give specifics on them because I just know what some other teams have done as far as replicating what we've done. I think it's an advantage. The less I talk about it, it'll remain an advantage. I put a lot of time into it. We don't really list out who we have working in it. We've got a big group of people working."

Asked how many people worked in their analytics department, Bowman said "several." Publicly, it's one. Under the Blackhawks' hockey operations and scouting staff listing, Andrew Contis is a hockey analyst/video coach. He began with the Blackhawks as a hockey operations intern in 2014 and has been in his current role for the last four-plus years.

One other known name is Richard Coleman, whom the Blackhawks have used for many years as a consultant, according to a source. He founded Coleman Analytics Inc. during the 2005-06 season. Former Blackhawks general manager Mike Smith mentioned Coleman and his company in this story in 2009. It's believed the Blackhawks are among Coleman's main clients now.

I talked to a handful of people who have worked in analytics for other NHL teams for this story. They spoke on the condition of anonymity. As I discovered, everyone is pretty tight-lipped on this topic.

One league source said, "Chicago has generally been private about who they hire and what they're doing."

Another source said, "We rarely hear anything about Chicago from an analytics perspective, even in private. I'm very surprised to hear the claim that they're in on analytics. I've never heard much to support that."

Considering what Bowman said about where he believes the Blackhawks stand in analytics compared to other teams, some members of other analytics staffs will undoubtedly roll their eyes. It's a competitive game off the ice as well as on it.

"If they're putting all those resources into analytics, they're not listening to their people," another league source said. "Yada, yada, yada, Brent Seabrook."



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That sort of response comes with the territory of winning three Stanley Cups and now missing the playoffs for two consecutive seasons. There are plenty of people around the league who don't mind seeing the Blackhawks come down to earth.

The Athletic's Dom Luszczyszyn also weighed in about the Blackhawks and the analytics he follows.

"They're one of the worst xG teams, but an OK Corsi team," Luszczyszyn said. "It's a big gap. I wonder if they're better at creating dangerous chances in places that aren't normally dangerous. Is there a lot of puck movement in the offensive zone? On defense, I mean, they seem to give up the front of the net very easily, so I'm not sure what data they have to be honest."

Multiple sources backed Bowman's claim that the Blackhawks had put money, time and people into building up their analytics department.

Bowman wouldn't get into specifics as much as I asked. But he was willing to generally talk about how the Blackhawks tap into their analytics.

"It's used in scouting," Bowman said. "It's used in trades. It's used in day-to-day (decisions) with our team, coaching, deployment of players, utilization of players. It's used in all of those areas. I think we have a real deep ... Now it's not gospel, but I think it's a nice blend of both. I think we're in a great place with it."

How much do analytics factor into the Blackhawks' decisions? We'll likely never really know. (Kamil Krzaczyński / USA Today)

Bowman and Blackhawks coach Jeremy Colliton appear to be on the same page about analytics. Joel Quenneville said he was open to analytics when he was Blackhawks coach, but you weren't always sure his decisions were driven by them. Colliton isn't basing all of his decisions on analytics, but it's definitely part of the puzzle for him.

When Colliton and Bowman assessed which players to potentially add to their roster this past offseason, analytics were part of the equation. You can see why the Blackhawks believed they were addressing some needs by acquiring Calvin de Haan, Olli Maatta and Andrew Shaw, among others. Analytics supported those decisions.

"It's one area I thought we looked at," Colliton said in Prague. "I don't think it's the total picture. I don't think any one area is making all the decisions. We got a pro scouting group. They do a lot of work. They do a lot of leg work and then we're watching games. We want to make sure we're seeing the type of player who we think can help. Of course, we want to know the numbers. Do the numbers add up to what we see on the ice? Kind of put all the pieces together."

"There's a lot of numbers out there. So I think the challenge is to find out what numbers lead to winning. Probably different people have different ideas as far as what's important. There are a lot of things that are out there. Some are of value and some I think are not or are limited. We have certain things we focus on. Probably everyone has different ideas. That's what makes it fun."

Colliton wouldn't divulge anything about the Blackhawks' analytics either.

"You can track anything you want," Colliton said. "Like anything you can count, you can track. There's so many things that are out there. But there's probably no benefit in sharing what we think is important. But I think what we have isn't necessarily the best, we just think it leads to winning, so that's our focus."

Colliton was willing to dive further into what's important to him on the ice, and you can maybe take something from that. He was asked about how he cultivated his own ideas about analytics.

"You just watch games and you coach games and you're looking for indicators," Colliton said. "Who can help us win? Who's driving the success? Who's helping us have the puck? Who's creating chances? Defensively vice versa, who's not giving up anything? Ultimately, the game is what you get minus what you give up. We want to drive the play. We want to control the play. We want to create more than we give up and then we want to finish. I think we have a team that can capitalize on our chances. But it's important we want to be tight defensively. Like I said before, we don't want to be a gambling team. We're good enough. We just want to control the game. If you play 60 minutes a certain way, hopefully you win more than lose."

Bowman said the Blackhawks' use of analytics had evolved, and he thought it would continue to do so.

"It's going to be even different a year from now," Bowman said. "I think we're trying a lot of different things. I think it's one of the strengths of our organization, is the level of sophistication. It's a very progressive look at things. We pay attention to what else is out there, but we don't try to ... If there's something we like, that we aren't doing, then we'll implement, but we'll never just take it, though. We'll kind of put our own spin on it. That's just because I think we have a really good rhythm with it."

Bowman emphasized that he thought analytics were important. He didn't want that to be confused with his usual silence about the subject.

"I think it's critical," Bowman said. "I get asked to go to these conferences all the time. It's not that I don't want to go and speak at them. I did one time, like years ago, I think the first year that they had it. They've always asked me to come back, but I don't want to go there if I can't say anything. I'm not saying I'm better than anybody. I'm not looking for praise. There are some people who are talking about what they do. I think they're looked upon as being avant-garde. I think we're way ahead of them, but I'm not looking for credit, which is why I stay quiet about it."

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1157599 Chicago Blackhawks

Jonathan Toews' first goal of the season gives the Blackhawks a 3-2 overtime victory over Blue Jackets

By JIMMY GREENFIELD

CHICAGO TRIBUNE |

OCT 18, 2019 | 10:17 PM

Jonathan Toews' first goal of the season couldn't have come at a better time. And he couldn't have been in a better place.

Patrick Kane's shot was stopped by Blue Jackets goalie Elvis Merzlikins, but the puck caromed off Toews as he raced to the net to give the Blackhawks a 3-2 overtime win Friday night at the United Center.



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The Hawks won their second straight to improve to 2-2-1 while the Blue Jackets dropped to 3-3-1. Robin Lehner stopped 37 shots for his first win in a Hawks uniform.

Markus Nutivaara put back a rebound of his own shot 2 minutes, 55 seconds into the third period to give the Blue Jackets a brief lead, but a power-play goal by Alex DeBrincat — his second goal of the season — midway through the period tied it 2-2.

The Hawks were badly outplayed in the first but got the lone goal of the period, a Drake Caggiula snap shot that caught the crossbar and shot down into the goal to make it 1-0. It was Caggiula's first goal of the season.

The Blue Jackets' Pierre-Luc Dubois tied it with 14:27 left in the second when he picked up a puck in the Hawks' zone and eluded a poke check by Lehner and slipped it around him for his third goal.

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1157600 Chicago Blackhawks

Blackhawks aren't getting power-play opportunities: 'It's hard to draw penalties when you don't have the puck'

By JIMMY GREENFIELD

CHICAGO TRIBUNE |

OCT 18, 2019 | 4:50 PM

The Blackhawks may have the best power play in the league. Or it could be the worst.

It's hard to say when the season is so young and the Hawks have had a terrible time even getting their power-play unit on the ice.

Only the Islanders have been worse at drawing penalties so far this season than the Hawks, who had just nine power plays in four games (2.25 per game) entering Friday night's game against the Blue Jackets at the United Center. The Avalanche were leading the league with a little over four power plays per game.

The Hawks have discussed ways to get opponents into the penalty box and think they know what they have to do.

"Play (more) with the puck," Dylan Strome said. "It's hard to draw penalties when you don't have the puck. I think the last game we did a better job of playing with the puck, it was probably our best game. I don't know the statistics exactly, but it felt like it was our best game with possession and we drew three penalties. We can even do a better job. The more they get tired, that's when penalties happen."

Blackhawks center Jonathan Toews celebrates with goaltender Corey Crawford after the Blackhawks defeated the Oilers 3-1 at the United Center on Oct. 14, 2019.

Strome was correct about the Hawks' possession numbers being strong in their 3-1 win over the Oilers. They had 50 shot attempts for and 38 shot attempts against to give them a 56.82 Corsi percentage, easily their best of the season.

But even though the Hawks had a season-high three power plays against the Oilers it was just one more than they had in each of their first three games.

"You always like more," Hawks coach Jeremy Colliton said. "We can do our part to give ourselves those chances. We've got to get to the net. We've got to be more dynamic in the offensive zone — spend more time there. Keep moving our feet. Be hard to play against. Put pressure on the other team when they want to defend, when they're trying to defend. And then we'll get a few more."

The Hawks are a respectable 13th in the league with a 22.2 power-play conversion rate but with two goals in nine attempts, that rate can still fluctuate wildly. Last season, the Hawks scored at a 20.2 clip but had dramatic ups and downs throughout the season.

On Thursday, Dominik Kubalik was getting some work practicing a five-on-three power play with Strome sitting out. But Colliton said he has no plans to alter the first unit of Strome, Erik Gustafsson, Patrick Kane, Jonathan Toews and Alex DeBrincat that has been in place for nearly a full season.

"We think we have something that's going to work," he said. "If we felt there was a better option, then we'd move to it. I think you come up together as a staff — and the players are involved too — kind of come up with a plan that we can have sustainable success with. We're going to stick with it."

But is it sustainable? The Hawks had a terrible 3-for-37 stretch during Colliton's first few weeks as coach before turning things around once Gustafsson and Strome were added to the power play. They went 32-for-91 over 29 games to help the Hawks get back into playoff contention before going 4-for-42 over their final 18 games.

"We just haven't had a lot of opportunities," Strome said. "We're getting some good chances. In the game against San Jose, Kaner hits a (defenseman's) stick and the guy doesn't even see it. It was open net and hits the D stick. Last game, Alex had a pretty close chance, just missed high glove. We're getting our chances. Just a matter of time before they go in."

"We get four or five power plays in the game and hopefully (score) two and start to click from there. I think we're feeling pretty good in practice and lots of good meetings, so just keep it going."

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1157601 Chicago Blackhawks

Kendall Coyne Schofield highlights a showcase this weekend as women's pro hockey reaches a crossroads

By JIMMY GREENFIELD

CHICAGO TRIBUNE |

OCT 17, 2019 | 7:36 PM

Chicago never has been home to a women's professional hockey team. That's about to change, at least for one weekend.

More than 35 Olympians from around the world will compete Saturday and Sunday at Fifth Third Arena in the Women's Hockey Showcase, a four-game event developed by the recently formed Professional Women's Hockey Players' Association.

The Women's Hockey Showcase in Chicago is part of the PWHPA's Dream Gap Tour that already has taken place in Toronto and



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Hudson, N.H., with future events for other North American cities in the planning process.

The PWHPA was created in the spring in response to the Canadian Women's Hockey League folding after 12 seasons. Instead of jumping to the U.S.-based National Women's Hockey League, many of the CWHL players — as well as some from the NWHL — decided to sit out the 2019-20 season and work together for the creation of one viable women's pro hockey league. The PWHPA has about 200 members.

The NWHL has five teams — located in St. Paul, Minn.; Buffalo, N.Y.; Danbury, Conn.; Monmouth Junction, N.J., and Boston — playing a 24-game schedule. The salary cap is \$150,000 per team. With the five teams listing between 19 and 23 players on their rosters, nearly all the women are working full-time jobs in order to make a living.

Olympian Kendall Coyne Schofield, who grew up in Orland Park, chose not to continue playing for the NWHL's Minnesota Whitecaps and joined the PWHPA.

"There's been no professional league to date that has showcased the best product of women's hockey," Coyne Schofield said. "And that's because of the lack of resources and infrastructure and business model in the current state of the game."

Coyne Schofield is an electrifying player who became the first woman to compete in the NHL All-Star Skills Competition last season, finishing seventh in the fastest-skater competition. She is working this season for the Sharks as a TV color analyst.

But her goal as a young girl wasn't to broadcast games. She and her brother both dreamed of playing for the Blackhawks.

"I realized that wasn't a reality," she said. "I quickly realized it also wasn't a reality that I could make a living playing this game and he could. We're trying to change that landscape."

The NHL is not involved with the NWHL or the PWHPA.

"We're supportive and we're watching," NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman told ESPN last month. "We don't want to do anything that would undermine an existing league."

Coyne Schofield has watched the WNBA grow over the last 20 years and believes it's a model that can work in hockey.

"We would love to see the NHL provide resources to the women's professional game," she said. "They have the infrastructure. They have the business model. They have the resources already put in place. I think the NHL would help tremendously and be a no-brainer in terms of a partner for a women's professional league."

On Friday at the United Center before the Hawks game, Coyne Schofield and the other women competing over the weekend will conduct a clinic for about 60 girls. The four-team tournament will begin Saturday with a pair of games followed Sunday by the consolation and championship games.

"I'm so excited for fans to see the product that's going to be on the ice," Coyne Schofield said. "There are going to be so many incredible athletes competing this weekend. For all of us to be under one roof and not in a national-team jersey is extremely exciting, because this is what we're fighting for and this is what the future should look like."

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1157602 Chicago Blackhawks

Blackhawks recall rookie center Kirby Dach from conditioning stint after three AHL appearances

Dach registered zero points and seven shots on goal with the Rockford IceHogs.

By Ben Pope@BenPopeCST

Oct 18, 2019, 11:27pm CDT

Center Kirby Dach's conditioning stint in the American Hockey League could have lasted 14 days.

But after only six, the Blackhawks apparently had seen enough of him in the minors to call him up from Rockford after their 3-2 overtime victory Friday against the Blue Jackets and the IceHogs' 3-2 victory Friday against the Wolves.

Dach, the No. 3 overall pick in the draft in June, didn't have a sensational three-game AHL stint in terms of on-paper production, registering seven shots on goal and zero points. But he successfully was eased back into game action after a concussion suffered in the preseason and introduced to the intensity of pro hockey, which were the primary goals all along.

It will be fascinating to see how Dach, 18, slots into the Hawks' lineup moving forward, provided he sticks with the NHL roster. He can make up to nine NHL appearances before being sent back to his Canadian junior team (if the Hawks wish to slide his three-year entry-level contract forward a year), but he also could contend for a permanent role on the NHL roster.

The Hawks will hold an optional practice Saturday that should reveal more about their plans for Dach.

Chicago Sun Times LOADED: 10.19.2019

1157603 Chicago Blackhawks

Jonathan Toews breaks slump with OT goal as Blackhawks edge Blue Jackets

Toews scored his first goal of the season as the Hawks rallied to win 3-2.

By Ben Pope@BenPopeCST

Oct 18, 2019, 10:40pm CDT

In a 10-second span of overtime, captain Jonathan Toews evolved from an aging player mired in a season-opening slump to the hero of the Hawks' second victory of the season.

Toews blocked a dangerous shot in the defensive zone, sprung a two-on-one the other way, drove to the net and knocked in the rebound of a shot off his body to give the Hawks the victory.

For the first few seconds, he couldn't help but smile and laugh after getting the figurative monkey off his back. Minutes later, he was all business again.



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"I wouldn't say we're super-satisfied with our play these first five games," Toews said. "There are some positives there that we can build on. Given the fact that we've strung a couple of games together here, found a way to win these [last two] games at home, it's a good sign."

The Hawks looked sluggish and sloppy throughout the first two periods, with only a goal by wing Drake Caggiula and plenty of spectacular saves by goalie Robin Lehner keeping them in the game. When they fell behind 2-1 early in the third, Toews had zero shots to his name.

But then Patrick Kane found fellow wing Alex DeBrincat for the tying power-play goal and the Hawks' penalty kill, which went four-for-four and looked as staunch as it has in years, staved off a late Blue Jackets opportunity before Toews scored his first goal of the season.

"We've just got to find that consistent level," coach Jeremy Colliton said. "The Winnipeg game and the Edmonton game, that was a good stretch. It wasn't a perfect six periods, but we did a lot of things right."

"Tonight was not like that, I don't think. But the opportunity to build on some points and a little bit of success . . . that's a good thing."

Chicago Sun Times LOADED: 10.19.2019

1157604 Chicago Blackhawks

Former AHL teammates Calvin de Haan, Jeremy Colliton enjoying reunion with Blackhawks

Calvin de Haan was a rookie and Jeremy Colliton an AHL captain when their careers crossed eight years ago. Now, they're back together in far different roles.

By Ben Pope@BenPopeCST

Oct 18, 2019, 6:55am CDT

Jeremy Colliton runs intense practices. Heavy breathing and sweat-dripping brows are common sights in the Blackhawks' locker room.

But for new Hawks defenseman Calvin de Haan, who played alongside Colliton in the AHL eight years ago, many of the strenuous parts seem oddly familiar.

"It's funny because there's a couple drills that we've done throughout training camp and practice that I've seen a few times before," de Haan said Thursday, chuckling. "I've kind of called him out on that."

The veteran blueliner finds himself in a situation few NHL players have ever experienced: being coached by a former teammate.

As a rookie in the Islanders organization in 2011-12, de Haan spent all but one game of the season with the Bridgeport Sound Tigers. And in Bridgeport, Colliton was royalty — he was the team's captain and, by the end of the year, its all-time leading scorer.

Despite occupying different positions (Colliton was a forward), de Haan's status as a recent first-round pick meant he and the future Hawks boss still frequently worked and played together. De Haan's third-ever professional point, in fact, was the primary assist on a Colliton overtime winner.

"I was coming in right out of juniors, not knowing anything about pro hockey, moving in with a couple other 20-year-old kids," de Haan said last July, shortly after his trade from Carolina to Chicago. "Having Jeremy there was probably like the . . . best captain you could have asked for for the young team."

The two men went separate directions after that season — Colliton moving to Sweden and quickly switching to coaching, de Haan emerging as a full-time NHL defenseman with now 380 career appearances — but de Haan said he was never surprised to see the speed with which Colliton was climbing the ranks.

Since their reunion in Chicago at the start of training camp, he's seen firsthand how Colliton's leadership qualities have translated to his current role.

"I've enjoyed playing for him so far," de Haan said. "I could see it when he was a captain in Bridgeport, and he hasn't changed much — he's a smart guy and he thinks outside the box, and that's the new NHL."

Their preexisting relationship has proved useful, too, despite the eight years apart.

As de Haan worked his way back from offseason shoulder surgery and a groin issue during the preseason, the Hawks' Europe trip and the first week of the regular season, Colliton and de Haan chatting on the ice after practice was a near-daily occurrence.

De Haan needed to give Colliton daily updates on his health status, and Colliton needed to familiarize de Haan with his hybrid defensive scheme, which de Haan said differs substantially from the man-on-man system he ran with the Hurricanes. Despite one misstep, the regular communication was largely effective.

"When you've played with a guy, you have a connection," Colliton said. "Maybe it's a bit quicker to be able to get to the point, because he knows me, and I can be quite direct with him. That's a nice thing."

De Haan finally made his Hawks debut last weekend and then played well alongside Erik Gustafsson on the third pairing Monday — the duo was on the ice for 12 Hawks scoring chances and only four Oilers scoring chances.

Now fully healthy, De Haan will likely slide into a larger role soon. And when he does, he knows he'll have a prime resource for any questions he needs answered.

"Jeremy's very approachable," he said. "He's easy to talk to, easy to get along with, and having that relationship before definitely helps for sure."

Chicago Sun Times LOADED: 10.19.2019

1157605 Chicago Blackhawks

Toews' game-winner nets Blackhawks at OT win over Columbus

John Dietz

Updated 10/18/2019 11:45 PM

Over the course of a season, not every victory -- or every goal, for that matter -- is going to be pretty.



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The Blackhawks can attest to both of those facts in spades after clawing their way past Columbus 3-2 at the United Center on Friday when Jonathan Toews scored 46 seconds into overtime.

Toews' first goal of the season came when the puck bounced off his left leg after Patrick Kane's initial shot was saved by goaltender Elvis Merzlikins.

"If that's the way I've got to score to get things going, I'll take it," Toews said after the Hawks improved to 2-2-1.

Drake Caggiula and Alex DeBrincat notched the other goals, and Robin Lehner registered his first victory with the Hawks after making 37 saves.

This game was a lesson in patience and perseverance for everyone on coach Jeremy Colliton's squad.

The Blue Jackets (3-4-0) controlled much of the first period, outshooting the Hawks 15-10. Lehner was under constant fire, but stepped up and managed to turn away numerous high-quality chances.

"It could have been 3, 4-nothing early on," Toews said. "He made some big stops -- couple 2-on-1s, a couple breakaways. He was standing tall there."

Also standing tall was the Hawks' special teams as they went 4-for-4 on the penalty kill and notched a huge power-play goal when DeBrincat banged home a Kane pass 8:08 into the third period.

Going forward, the Hawks must start creating more offensively. Too many times pucks are mishandled or flat-out stripped, and passes aren't hitting their marks. Then, when an opportunity does present itself, an extra pass is made when a shot would suffice.

That's where Caggiula deserves some credit for not forcing the puck to Toews in the first period. He instead recognized that his captain was well covered and unleashed a shot that clanked off the crossbar and into the net.

As for Toews, whose 2 points this season have come in overtime and on an assist into an empty net, he wouldn't admit to being frustrated with his slow start.

"More just pressing to create more," he said. "I've had some chances but not that many."

"So gotta be better with the puck. Keep pucks down low, just play a little heavier on it and try to get it up to our D-men on the blue line (so they) can get some shots."

It must start soon because two of the top teams in the league come to the United Center next in Washington (5-2-2) and Vegas (5-3-0).

"Sometimes it's nice to learn some lessons when you win," Colliton said. "That's probably the case tonight. We have a little momentum and hopefully we can continue that."

Dach recalled:

The Hawks recalled forward Kirby Dach from his conditioning stint in Rockford. Dach did not record any points in his three games with the IceHogs.

Daily Herald Times LOADED: 10.19.2019

1157606 Chicago Blackhawks

Blackhawks recall Kirby Dach from AHL conditioning stint

By Charlie Roumeliotis

October 18, 2019 11:30 PM

Six days after being assigned to the Rockford IceHogs of the American Hockey League, No. 3 overall pick Kirby Dach has been recalled by the Blackhawks, the team announced late Friday night. He is not eligible to play in the AHL full-time this season, but he was allowed to stay in Rockford for up to 14 days on a conditioning stint, according to CBA rules.

Dach, who was sidelined for the first week of training camp with a concussion, appeared in three games with the IceHogs and was held off the scoresheet in each of them. He started on the fourth line in the first game, got promoted to the third in the second and played on the first line with Matthew Highmore and Dylan Sikura on Friday night against the Chicago Wolves.

The Blackhawks are coming off a 3-2 overtime victory over Columbus to improve to 2-0-1 in their past three games, and that helps ease Dach into the equation with the team riding some positive momentum. The next game is on Sunday at 6 p.m. against the Washington Capitals, which is possibly when he'll make his NHL debut.

Where Dach fits into the four-line rotation is unclear and will be interesting to monitor. It's possible he starts on the wing, especially with the third line of David Kampf, Dominik Kubalik and Brandon Saad clicking. Before Dach was assigned to Rockford, he was taking practice reps with Jonathan Toews and alternating on the wing with Drake Caggiula and Alex DeBrincat.

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1157607 Chicago Blackhawks

Blackhawks, as part of Magellan Corporation Women's Hockey Showcase, host clinic for female youth hockey players

By Rob Schaefer

October 18, 2019 10:00 PM

Four hours before the puck dropped for their Friday night matchup with the Columbus Blue Jackets, the Blackhawks — in conjunction with the six-time gold medalist Kendall Coyne Schofield and the PWHPA — hosted a night to remember for over 60 female youth hockey players at the United Center.

The proceedings were highlighted by a pregame clinic for those 60+ skaters (ages 6-16) titled the "Meet Your Sheros" Girls Clinic, which was led by a gaggle of Olympians and served as a kickoff for the Magellan Corporation Women's Hockey Showcase.

But the fun didn't end there: after the clinic concluded, youth participants also attended a private meet-and-greet with their 'Sheros' and then the Blackhawks' game later in the evening. They also received passes to the Showcase, a four-team tournament put on by the Magellan Corporation and Billie Jean King Enterprises that will be held over the weekend (and feature 35 Olympic women's hockey players!) at Fifth Third Arena. The impetus behind the



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Showcase is to "celebrate women in sports and promote gender equality."

And tonight, to hear Coyne Schofield tell it, was all about the next generation:

"I think what's so important about this weekend is — you guys are talking about the 2018 Olympics and how special that was — but we're trying to create that platform every day, not every four years," she told NBC Sports Chicago.

"We're working so hard every day and, as you can see, one of the most important parts of this weekend is being on the ice with the young girls, the next generation, who [are] going to fill our skates one day and hopefully -- not hopefully. They will grow up knowing they can make a living playing this sport if they're good enough to do so."

The epic display of women's hockey set to ensue this weekend will certainly aid in that mission, as well. Look out for further developments related to the tournament — it's sure to be a thrilling and inspiring weekend, both for the present and future of the sport.

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1157608 Chicago Blackhawks

Four takeaways: Blackhawks penalty kill 'excellent' in overtime win over Blue Jackets

By Charlie Roumeliotis

October 18, 2019 11:20 PM

Here are four takeaways from the Blackhawks' 3-2 overtime win over the Columbus Blue Jackets at the United Center on Friday:

1. Blackhawks stringing together points

The Blackhawks turned in their best 60-minute effort of the season on Monday and they wanted to build on that performance after a three-day layoff. The start was slow against Columbus, but the finish was strong and it ended on a Jonathan Toews overtime goal.

After starting the season with back-to-back losses in regulation, the Blackhawks have picked up five out of a possible six points in their past three games. They're starting to climb in the standings.

"That's a hard-working team," Toews said. "They've got some skill, they played well as a team and they didn't give us much room out there. It's probably not our best start, there's a lot of things that we know we can do better, but for us to hang in there and tie things up, give ourselves a chance in overtime, get the crowd into it, you've got to find ways to win those games, can't let them slip, so it's nice to get two points."

2. Penalty kill 'excellent'

The Blue Jackets came into the game with a bottom-third-ranked special teams, converting on 17.8 percent of their power plays and killing off 73.7 percent of their penalties. This was an area the Blackhawks could exploit, and they did.

The Blackhawks went 1-for-4 on the power play thanks to an Alex DeBrincat goal, but it was the penalty kill that allowed the team to be in it till the very end. The Blackhawks killed off all four penalties,

including a crucial one late in the third period to keep the game knotted up at 2-2.

"I thought the penalty kill was excellent," coach Jeremy Colliton said. "We were really good. At any point, if they score and they had multiple chances, it really changes the game. It allowed our power play, in the end, to come through and make a difference for us. That was big, and I thought they were full value for not getting scored on, too. We didn't give up much. Just as likely to score going the other way."

3. Coming out on top in the first period

The Blackhawks were outplayed in the first period, which hasn't usually been the case this season. The Blue Jackets led in every statistically category except the one that matters the most and that's the scoreboard. It easily could've gone the other way.

But the Blackhawks survived when they weren't at their best, and Drake Caggiula opened the scoring with a beautiful shot at the 15:35 mark of the opening frame. It's the fourth straight game the Blackhawks have scored first.

"Didn't love our first period," Colliton said. "I think we were fortunate to be in the lead. I did like our response in the second. Even though they tied it up I thought we played much better in the second period. And after that, I thought we were reasonably solid. ... It wasn't perfect but it's also a positive that we found a way to win anyway."

4. Robin Lehner turns in another strong effort

The Blackhawks don't get out of the first period with the lead without Lehner, who finished with 37 saves on 39 shots for a save percentage of .949. He stopped all 13 shots in the first 20 minutes, a majority of which were high quality.

The first goal to Pierre-Luc Dubois, Lehner committed to the poke-check but then got caught too far out of the net. Otherwise, he was strong between the pipes for the Blackhawks.

"I felt really good," Lehner said. "Feel like I see the puck well but the first two games I've played I've also made some mistakes and the good thing those mistakes are pretty easy to clean up. So I felt like the first goal is unacceptable but I made up for it. So just got to go and keep trying to get better."

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1157609 Chicago Blackhawks

Instant reaction: Jonathan Toews lifts Blackhawks past Blue Jackets in overtime

By Charlie Roumeliotis

October 18, 2019 10:25 PM

FINAL SCORE:

Blackhawks 3, Blue Jackets 2 (OT)

Snap judgments:

— The Blackhawks didn't play their best, but they'll take it. Jonathan Toews scored the overtime winner for his first goal of the season after the puck hit off his leg from a Patrick Kane shot.



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"I think he's kind of like Shawzy," Jonathan Toews said. "He's one of those guys that fans here in Chicago really like. Aside from scoring goals and the plays that he made over the years in the playoffs, he was one of those guys that you loved having on your team that other teams hated. He found ways to chip away at their best players and get them off their game. He was good at a lot of little things like that, so he was a big part of those winning teams."

Andrew Shaw was teammates with Bolland for only two seasons, but they won a Stanley Cup together and Bolland was one of the best and knowing his role and perfecting it.

"One of the best at his job," Shaw said. "He played that shutdown centerman. I always thought he had the shortest shifts. His shift lengths were so short just 'cause he would play so much against top guys that he'd want to be so well-rested while he was out there. ... He was skilled enough to chip in offensively as well."

"That's the type of player he was. He'd play against the top guys, he'd shut them down, he'd be that little rat himself, just try to get them off their game as well as outworking them."

Bolland spent seven of his 10 NHL seasons in Chicago, where he registered 168 points (70 goals, 98 assists) in 332 games. He was drafted by the Blackhawks in the second round (No. 32 overall) of the 2004 NHL Draft.

Friday will mark the first night honoring the 10-year anniversary of the 2010 Stanley Cup Championship, which ended a 49-year drought in franchise history. The first 10,000 fans on Friday will receive a Marian Hossa bobblehead.

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1157612 Chicago Blackhawks

Ten things we've learned about the Blackhawks after five games

By Scott Powers and Mark Lazerus

Oct 18, 2019

Ten observations through five games for the Blackhawks, who improved to 2-2-1 with a 3-2 overtime victory over the Columbus Blue Jackets on Friday night:

1. Every coach wants to see his team play a perfect 60-minute game — to show the same intensity from start to finish, to maintain consistent pressure in the offensive zone, to make smart decisions with the puck, to play a clean game.

But there's something to be said for winning ugly.

"Sometimes it's nice to learn some lessons when you win," Jeremy Colliton said after Patrick Kane's rebound bounced off Jonathan Toews and in for the overtime win Friday night.

The Blackhawks have plenty to learn from a rather harrowing victory over the Blue Jackets, and we'll get into a lot of that here. There were unnecessary penalties, a squandered five-on-three power play, little sustained zone time, unchecked forwards in Robin Lehner's goalmouth, and a seemingly endless parade of bouncing, off-target passes. These are familiar problems and will surely be points of emphasis going forward. Through two periods, the best display of skill on the ice might have come from 75-year-old Billie Jean King,

who scored in Shoot the Puck and came inches away from doing it again.

But it's a lot easier to stomach those issues and tackle them when you escape with two points, when Lehner makes 37 saves, when Alex DeBrincat and the power play come through in the third period, when the penalty kill is 4-for-4, including a critical kill after a questionable (at best) interference call on Brent Seabrook. A high-intensity, highly entertaining third period atoned for the sleepy start.

The Blackhawks are far from a finished product. But the looming difficult stretch of games against Washington, Vegas, Philadelphia and Carolina looks a lot less daunting when you're 2-2-1 instead of 1-3-1. This seven-game homestand is a critical step in avoiding another insurmountable early-season hole while other teams with busier schedules pile up points, and a 2-0-1 stretch is a good start, even if Friday's win wasn't nearly as pretty as Monday's.

2. In his first appearance in a Blackhawks uniform last Saturday against Winnipeg, Lehner looked great. He was big, he was composed, he was in total control and he got the Blackhawks their first point of the season.

So Corey Crawford got the next start.

In that start, Crawford was even better, flirting with a shutout against the hottest team in the league and putting together a vintage 27-save performance to get the Blackhawks their first win of the season.

So Lehner got the next start.

And he was even better than last time, staving off a handful of Columbus two-on-ones and breakaways and surviving a third-period review to get his first win in Chicago.

This goaltending situation is going to be odd like that for a while.

"Everyone wants to play all the time," Colliton said. "That's what everyone says, whether it's a goalie or a forward or a D: 'Yeah, I'll play better if you just play me more.' That's just the standard answer, right? But we've had a little lighter schedule. We want both guys going because we're coming up to a stretch where we're going to play a lot of games, so we're going to need them both. I think both guys feel pretty confident in their games, and both their last performances were good. So I think we're in a good spot there."

As long as neither goalie gets ridiculously dominant or completely falls apart, it's going to be a difficult — almost random — decision most nights. Maybe Lehner's familiarity with the Blue Jackets from his time in the Metropolitan Division last season played into the decision. Maybe it was just his turn. After all, it's not as if he deserved to be sat after his last game. Just like Crawford didn't deserve to be sat after his.

At least Friday's game kicked off a stretch of seven games in 12 days, which should help keep both goalies busy.

"I felt really good," Lehner said. "The problem is the schedule has been a little bit what it is. The schedule's going to speed up for us a little bit now, to kind of get into it more."

For now, this is a good problem to have. The whole idea of signing Lehner was to ensure a No. 1-caliber goalie would be in net for every game in a season in which every point will matter. How Colliton and goaltending coach Jimmy Waite handle the duo going forward will be important, though. Right now, Crawford and Lehner are saying all the right things, and they're on board with the timeshare. But what happens the first time either one gets hot and takes the net for a few games in a row?

Colliton knows he needs both guys to keep buying in.



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"Yeah, and that's partly communication, whether it's me or Jimmy, right from the beginning," he said. "We're here to win, and we need both of you, and we need both of you at a high level. I don't think many teams — I won't say any, maybe there's one — but I don't think many teams win a Stanley Cup or go really deep with one guy playing 70 games or 65 games. Doesn't seem to be the formula right now. So that's part of why we were happy to get Robin. It's going to help make our team better."

Jonathan Toews scored his first goal of the season on Friday. (Kamil Krzaczyński / USA Today)

3. Like just about any player, Jonathan Toews goes through goal droughts every season. And every time, he says the same thing: Sometimes you just need to see the puck go in, to ease the mental burden and remind you what it feels like. Even superstars need a confidence boost every now and then.

So, no, Toews wasn't complaining about how he scored his game-winner. They all look like top-shelf one-timers on the scoresheet. Asked if he was stealing Andrew Shaw's "I love shin pads" bit with that goal, Toews laughed.

"I ain't stealing anything from Shawzie," he said. "But yeah, I guess if that's the way I've got to score to get things going, so be it."

It was Toews' first goal of the season, and while he's looked particularly aggressive and effective on the penalty kill, he hasn't quite looked like himself in five-on-five play. He didn't even have a shot attempt in the first two periods against Columbus, and he had a 28 percent Corsi for the game (out-attempted 18-7). Toews has been hard on himself for his slow start, but Colliton has insisted he's liked his game so far.

"He was good again tonight," Colliton said. "For him to come through, he only had the one point, but he was involved. He was involved on (DeBrincat's) power-play goal. He doesn't get a point on it, but he carried the puck, he lugged it, he broke pressure, he got the zone and got us set up, and then it's in the back of the net. So I thought he did a lot of good things tonight."

The numbers and Toews himself might disagree, but as he always says, sometimes it just takes one puck going in to open the floodgates.

"For sure, for sure," he said. "Just being around the net and trying to get your sticks on pucks. It's definitely nice to get one any way you can."

4. Not scoring in three games doesn't sound so bad. But not scoring in two weeks sounds awful to a guy like DeBrincat, who makes his living by putting the puck in the net. The Blackhawks' loose schedule made his breakthrough Friday night feel a little bigger than it otherwise might have.

"There's a lot of off-time there," he said. "I mean, I wasn't too worried about it. I was getting chances, and it had to go in sooner or later. Just keep battling and hoping for the best."

The Blackhawks' power play is run through Patrick Kane on the half-wall, and just like with Alex Ovechkin in Washington, it's geared around Kane finding a seam and teeing up a DeBrincat one-timer in the left circle with a cross-ice pass. And for the past three games, that seam just wasn't there.

Columbus was clearly trying to take away that play, clogging things up below the dots, and the two failed to connect during a 66-second two-man advantage at the end of the first period. So when Seth Jones was hit with a tripping penalty at 6:58 of the third period, DeBrincat decided to slide back a little. With Kane and DeBrincat

each at the top of their respective circles, rather than at the dots or below, a lane opened up between Alexander Wennberg up top and Cam Atkinson in the slot. Kane threaded the pass, DeBrincat hammered it home, and all was well with the Blackhawks' power play again.

"We've been trying that for a while now," DeBrincat said of the seam pass. "Finally worked. Finally got good wood on it, and lucky it went in."

It was just the Blackhawks' third power-play goal in five games. Considering how the power play — particularly the top unit of Kane, DeBrincat, Toews, Dylan Strome and Erik Gustafsson (though Dominik Kubalik replaced Strome during the five-on-three, something they practiced earlier in the week) — carried the Blackhawks into playoff contention last winter, they'll need more where that one came from.

"Good teams in the league have good special teams, and I think we have that," Lehner said. "We've got to keep cleaning up a few things and we're going to get better and better."

5. Andrew Shaw giveth, and Andrew Shaw taketh away.

On a night when the Blackhawks honored Dave Bolland, The Rat, they were reminded of the yin and the yang of Shaw, The Mutt. One of the things that separated Bolland from other agitators in the league was how crafty he was. He had a knack for drawing penalties — sometimes even wrapping a guy's stick around his own body while the ref wasn't looking, then screaming for a hooking call — but didn't take a bunch himself. Shaw hasn't quite mastered that yet.

Shaw was whistled for a hooking penalty in the first period, then took a long run at Pierre-Luc Dubois in the second period, earning himself an interference penalty. Those unnecessary offensive-zone penalties are what drive people nuts about Shaw, and for good reason.

But Shaw also draws his share of penalties with his tenacious, high-energy style. In his three seasons in Montreal, he was fourth among the Canadiens with 1.08 minor penalties drawn per 60 minutes. In his five seasons in Chicago, he led the Blackhawks with 1.41 minors drawn per 60, far ahead of his nearest teammate (Toews at 1.13).

"It's something I've always been pretty good at," Shaw said during training camp. "I need to stay out of the box, too, though. That's always something I'm working on."

So far, he needs more work. Through five games, he has a team-high 10 penalty minutes. Nobody else has more than four.

The Blackhawks will want to get Patrick Kane going more in five-on-five play. (Mike DiNovo / USA Today)

6. Colliton has tried to give his lines some time to breathe over the past few games, but they just don't seem like they're clicking yet.

We've already discussed Toews and DeBrincat. Drake Caggiula scored a goal on the top line on Friday, and he's shown he can be utilized anywhere in the lineup. The second line of Shaw, Strome and Kane showed some life against the Blue Jackets, but it didn't produce any goals. You see the magic that can be created with DeBrincat and Kane on the ice on a power play, and Kane hasn't had much of that in five-on-five so far this season. Kane scored a goal with Shaw and Strome in the last game, but his two other points in five-on-five play have come with other linemates.

The third line has been a staple. The fourth line has been OK. Ryan Carpenter and Zack Smith have a Corsi percentage below 40.0, but they haven't been noticeably struggling. That can be a difficult role in limited minutes.



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Whether Alexander Nylander is best used on that fourth line is up for debate. He played 7:29 against the Blue Jackets and had 8:20 of ice time the game prior. Nylander's offensive talent is undeniable — he already has two goals this season — but he might still benefit from getting major minutes in Rockford and coming back better prepared for a larger role. Nylander has a team-worst 34.21 Corsi percentage in the four games in which he's played.

"It's all about performance and 'are you going to help the team win?'" Colliton said of Nylander earlier this week. "We watched the shifts together today, and I thought he was very good. Eleven shifts, he was probably good for five, great for five and he had one tough one. He helped us win. He was a big part of our win the other night. It can be a little easier for him when he's playing less to really focus on the quality when he's out there. It may not be a bad thing for him as he grows into an everyday NHLer."

Dylan Sikura could be an option if Colliton wants a more defensively reliable forward on that fourth line. Sikura is off to a strong start with the Rockford IceHogs with three goals in four games and proved last season he can be better away from the puck.

7. The Blackhawks might have had a playoff team last season if it wasn't for their penalty kill. They finished last in the league with a 72.7 percentage.

Colliton and Blackhawks general manager Stan Bowman worked to address that this offseason by signing Carpenter and trading for Olli Maatta, Calvin de Haan and Zack Smith. All four were players they thought would improve their penalty kill.

Through five games, we've seen their impact. Carpenter leads the Blackhawks in shorthanded ice time. Maatta is second among the defensemen in ice time. Smith and de Haan are chipping in as well.

Even though the Blackhawks' overall penalty-kill percentage isn't great — they're at 70.6 percent, giving up five goals on 17 chances — you can see where they're better. They've been aggressive on the forecheck and even in the offensive zone to slow down the opposing team. Since everyone has been healthy, the penalty kill has also gotten better. Over the past three games, the Blackhawks have killed off 9 of 11 power plays. They killed off all four they faced against the Blue Jackets on Friday.

"That's work ethic, so that's something we can really focus on using as momentum," Toews said of the penalty kill on Friday. "We got a big penalty kill, and we've got guys like Smitty and Carps, and going down the list, we've got some big blocks and some big hits from those guys, too. PK was one of those things that was a major issue during our game last year, so it's nice to see some early success right now."

8. The line that Colliton landed on early and has stuck with throughout the season has been Brandon Saad, David Kampf and Dominik Kubalik.

It's hard to argue with it, too. It contained Connor McDavid and the Edmonton Oilers' top line. It was dominant against the San Jose Sharks and had an 11-to-1 advantage in shots on goal before Colliton broke it up. It played about even hockey against the Blue Jackets' top line Friday.

It's helped that Saad has come out flying this season and seems like he has some extra jump to his game. Kubalik has quickly adjusted to the NHL and should only get better. Kampf's offense has been limited, as expected, but he's often been responsible for getting that line out of the defensive zone and moving the puck through the neutral zone. It's a line that complements one another and works. The Blackhawks just need their other lines to mesh as well.

"You guys know I like that line since the festival game," Colliton said earlier this week. "They all just got real big motors, big engine. They work and compete, and they all bring a little bit different ingredient. Obviously, like, Saad is an accomplished, proven performer. He takes the puck to the net. He's a horse there. He's really hard to get the puck off. He transports it from D-zone to the offensive zone. He can make those plays. I think Kamy is a workhorse. He takes a lot of responsibility defensively and can transport the puck from one end to another. Then you got Kubi — he's got a bomb. I've been very impressed with his play away from the puck. That's been a surprise for me. So now he can play on that line because he does so many responsible things. He wins a lot of races. He's a great forechecker. So, pleased with that line."

9. The Blackhawks seemed to have settled into their defenseman pairings.

Duncan Keith and Connor Murphy: Colliton tried Keith and Gustafsson together as the top pairing again but moved away from that after a few games this season. Keith and Murphy have brought some stability to the top pairing. In 52:40 of five-on-five ice time together, the pairing has an edge in shot attempts (44-42, 51.16 Corsi) and shots on goal (22-21). It's been on the ice for zero goals for and one against and has an expected-goals percentage of 48.58. It's not a perfect top pairing, but it's been stable.

Olli Maatta and Brent Seabrook: There were some concerns about this pairing's foot speed entering the season and whether it'd spend too much time in the defensive zone. So far, that's been the case. The pairing has been on the ice for 36 shot attempts for and 66 against for a 35.29 Corsi percentage. It also has an expected goals-for percentage of 30.81. The positive for the Blackhawks is the pairing hasn't been on the ice for many goals against despite those numbers. It's been on the ice for one goal for and one goal against.

"Him and Seabs, we know what we get out of them playing that controlled game," Colliton said of the pairing this week. "We want them to continue to work on their gap, trying to kill plays earlier, so they don't have to go back for the puck, don't have to handle so much speed coming at them. But they're very good in D-zone and play a little bit of a harder game, which is good for our guys."

Calvin de Haan and Erik Gustafsson: This is the pairing that will likely generate some offense for the Blackhawks. It probably will give up some chances, too, considering that's what usually happens with Gustafsson on the ice. De Haan gives the pairing balance, though. In 35:13 of ice time together, the pairing has a 45.45 Corsi percentage (35-42), has been on the ice for three goals for and two against and has an expected goals-for percentage of 34.51.

10. One of the questions that remains for the beginning of this season is Kirby Dach's future. The Blackhawks have clearly stated they want to give him an NHL look this season, and he was recalled to the NHL after Friday's game.

Dach was a week into his conditioning assignment with the IceHogs. Friday marked his seventh day on assignment and his third game with the IceHogs. He could have remained with them for seven more days.

Dach held his own with the IceHogs through three games. There had been shifts in which you could see the high-end skill. There were others in which he was less visible. Statistics-wise, he had zero points and seven shots on goal.

It seems certain the Blackhawks will give Dach an NHL game, but what that means for his future is still unclear. Maybe he gets a look on the top line with players such as Toews and DeBrincat and they see if he can really help this team this season. Colliton could move



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Caggiula back down the lineup and sit Nylander for a game. Maybe Dach just gets a brief look and is sent back to his WHL team.

We should know more in the coming days about the Blackhawks' plan with Dach. The Blackhawks have games Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday next week, so one would expect him to get in a game or two in that span.

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'I think we're at the forefront': Blackhawks confident in secretive analytics department's place in NHL

By Scott Powers

Oct 18, 2019

At the mention of hockey analytics, a smile spread on Blackhawks general manager Stan Bowman's face.

We were sitting outside his suite at the United Center prior to a preseason game last month. We had already talked about many topics, including Alex DeBrincat's contract, something he would swiftly resolve just weeks later. He was engaged throughout the interview, but he seemed even more so when analytics was broached.

The specific question was about how other NHL teams appeared to be increasingly focused on analytics, and I was curious about where he felt the Blackhawks were organizationally in that department, as well as his general mindset. It's not something that's openly discussed very often.

As you'll soon read, Bowman said a lot, but also very little. That wasn't by mistake.

"Nobody's asked me about that in a while. That's interesting," Bowman said, smiling. "I think we're at the forefront. I don't know if I am. I look at what we're doing. I don't talk about what we're doing. There are some teams in the league who have essentially copied everything we've done the last 4-5 years. If we hire somebody to do something, they'll hire somebody for the exact same role.

"I think what we do analytics-wise is very in-depth. It's different and it's extremely detailed and it's very useful and it's different than what's out there to the public. I'm not trying to be difficult or coy about it, but I feel like if I explained everything we're doing ... I think it's an advantage we have over other teams, but then I lose the advantage if other teams start doing it. Now, I can't prove I'm right. I'm just telling you my feelings. I've seen what other people do. I've looked into it. We've done a lot of research on what other people are tracking and what they're studying, and I look at what we're doing and it's different. I believe it's ahead of them. But I don't like to give specifics on them because I just know what some other teams have done as far as replicating what we've done. I think it's an advantage. The less I talk about it, it'll remain an advantage. I put a lot of time into it. We don't really list out who we have working in it. We've got a big group of people working."

Asked how many people worked in their analytics department, Bowman said "several." Publicly, it's one. Under the Blackhawks' hockey operations and scouting staff listing, Andrew Contis is a

hockey analyst/video coach. He began with the Blackhawks as a hockey operations intern in 2014 and has been in his current role for the last four-plus years.

One other known name is Richard Coleman, whom the Blackhawks have used for many years as a consultant, according to a source. He founded Coleman Analytics Inc. during the 2005-06 season. Former Blackhawks general manager Mike Smith mentioned Coleman and his company in this story in 2009. It's believed the Blackhawks are among Coleman's main clients now.

I talked to a handful of people who have worked in analytics for other NHL teams for this story. They spoke on the condition of anonymity. As I discovered, everyone is pretty tight-lipped on this topic.

One league source said, "Chicago has generally been private about who they hire and what they're doing."

Another source said, "We rarely hear anything about Chicago from an analytics perspective, even in private. I'm very surprised to hear the claim that they're in on analytics. I've never heard much to support that."

Considering what Bowman said about where he believes the Blackhawks stand in analytics compared to other teams, some members of other analytics staffs will undoubtedly roll their eyes. It's a competitive game off the ice as well as on it.

"If they're putting all those resources into analytics, they're not listening to their people," another league source said. "Yada, yada, yada, Brent Seabrook."

That sort of response comes with the territory of winning three Stanley Cups and now missing the playoffs for two consecutive seasons. There are plenty of people around the league who don't mind seeing the Blackhawks come down to earth.

The Athletic's Dom Luszczyszyn also weighed in about the Blackhawks and the analytics he follows.

"They're one of the worst xG teams, but an OK Corsi team," Luszczyszyn said. "It's a big gap. I wonder if they're better at creating dangerous chances in places that aren't normally dangerous. Is there a lot of puck movement in the offensive zone? On defense, I mean, they seem to give up the front of the net very easily, so I'm not sure what data they have to be honest."

Multiple sources backed Bowman's claim that the Blackhawks had put money, time and people into building up their analytics department.

Bowman wouldn't get into specifics as much as I asked. But he was willing to generally talk about how the Blackhawks tap into their analytics.

"It's used in scouting," Bowman said. "It's used in trades. It's used in day-to-day (decisions) with our team, coaching, deployment of players, utilization of players. It's used in all of those areas. I think we have a real deep ... Now it's not gospel, but I think it's a nice blend of both. I think we're in a great place with it."

How much do analytics factor into the Blackhawks' decisions? We'll likely never really know. (Kamil Krzaczyński / USA Today)

Bowman and Blackhawks coach Jeremy Colliton appear to be on the same page about analytics. Joel Quenneville said he was open to analytics when he was Blackhawks coach, but you weren't always sure his decisions were driven by them. Colliton isn't basing all of his decisions on analytics, but it's definitely part of the puzzle for him.



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When Colliton and Bowman assessed which players to potentially add to their roster this past offseason, analytics were part of the equation. You can see why the Blackhawks believed they were addressing some needs by acquiring Calvin de Haan, Olli Maatta and Andrew Shaw, among others. Analytics supported those decisions.

"It's one area I thought we looked at," Colliton said in Prague. "I don't think it's the total picture. I don't think any one area is making all the decisions. We got a pro scouting group. They do a lot of work. They do a lot of leg work and then we're watching games. We want to make sure we're seeing the type of player who we think can help. Of course, we want to know the numbers. Do the numbers add up to what we see on the ice? Kind of put all the pieces together."

"There's a lot of numbers out there. So I think the challenge is to find out what numbers lead to winning. Probably different people have different ideas as far as what's important. There are a lot of things that are out there. Some are of value and some I think are not or are limited. We have certain things we focus on. Probably everyone has different ideas. That's what makes it fun."

Colliton wouldn't divulge anything about the Blackhawks' analytics either.

"You can track anything you want," Colliton said. "Like anything you can count, you can track. There's so many things that are out there. But there's probably no benefit in sharing what we think is important. But I think what we have isn't necessarily the best, we just think it leads to winning, so that's our focus."

Colliton was willing to dive further into what's important to him on the ice, and you can maybe take something from that. He was asked about how he cultivated his own ideas about analytics.

"You just watch games and you coach games and you're looking for indicators," Colliton said. "Who can help us win? Who's driving the success? Who's helping us have the puck? Who's creating chances? Defensively vice versa, who's not giving up anything? Ultimately, the game is what you get minus what you give up. We want to drive the play. We want to control the play. We want to create more than we give up and then we want to finish. I think we have a team that can capitalize on our chances. But it's important we want to be tight defensively. Like I said before, we don't want to be a gambling team. We're good enough. We just want to control the game. If you play 60 minutes a certain way, hopefully you win more than lose."

Bowman said the Blackhawks' use of analytics had evolved, and he thought it would continue to do so.

"It's going to be even different a year from now," Bowman said. "I think we're trying a lot of different things. I think it's one of the strengths of our organization, is the level of sophistication. It's a very progressive look at things. We pay attention to what else is out there, but we don't try to ... If there's something we like, that we aren't doing, then we'll implement, but we'll never just take it, though. We'll kind of put our own spin on it. That's just because I think we have a really good rhythm with it."

Bowman emphasized that he thought analytics were important. He didn't want that to be confused with his usual silence about the subject.

"I think it's critical," Bowman said. "I get asked to go to these conferences all the time. It's not that I don't want to go and speak at them. I did one time, like years ago, I think the first year that they had it. They've always asked me to come back, but I don't want to go there if I can't say anything. I'm not saying I'm better than

anybody. I'm not looking for praise. There are some people who are talking about what they do. I think they're looked upon as being avant-garde. I think we're way ahead of them, but I'm not looking for credit, which is why I stay quiet about it."

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