Pitlick scores 2, Stars hold on to beat Hurricanes 4-3

DALLAS — After Tyler Pitlick’s first career two-goal game helped Dallas build a four-goal lead, the Stars had to hold on to keep their winning streak going.

Jamie Benn and Tyler Seguin also scored to help Dallas beat the Carolina Hurricanes 4-3 Saturday night for its fourth straight win. Ben Bishop stopped 36 shots.

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Three Stars
1: Tyler Pitlick, Dal (2G)
2: Jeff Skinner, Car (2G)
3: Radek Faksa, Dal (2A)

Dallas coach Ken Hitchcock credited the line centered by Radek Faksa with Pitlick and Antoine Roussel. Faksa assisted on both of Pitlick’s goals.

"Faksa’s line was the best line of any line on the ice for either team," Hitchcock said. "They did everything we needed them to do. Our third line scored two goals in a game like this. That’s just outstanding."

Jeff Skinner scored twice for Carolina and Jordan Staal also had a goal to pull the Hurricanes within one with 4 1/2 minutes remaining.

"We had them dead to rights," Hitchcock said. "The first goal gave them a little bit of life, the second goal, that’s all on us. ... We played for two periods until the last (10) seconds exactly the way you have to play to beat them. The second goal gave them the life they needed. You can’t defend skating backwards."

Scott Darling finished with 22 saves for Carolina.

The Hurricanes pulled Darling for an extra skater for the final 2:49, including a 6-on-4 for two minutes after a penalty to Dallas’ Martin Hanzal, but couldn’t tie it.

"You’ve got to learn a lesson if you get in that big a hole," Hurricanes coach Bill Peters said. “You’ve got to be ready to start.”

Skinner said the coach’s message during the second intermission was simple: "Just work hard. Going into the third, obviously it’s a big hill to climb and you’re not going to make it up in one shift."

Benn opened the scoring 7:58 into the game. Alexander Radulov dropped the puck back to Benn in the slot, and he sent a wrist shot past Darling and in off the left goalpost.

Pitlick made it 2-0 with 1:53 left in the first as he flew into the goalmouth to knock in the rebound of Radek Faksa’s shot from the left point.

"I saw a puck laying there and I dove at it and hit it in," Pitlick said.

Seguin scored coming out of the penalty box, taking a led pass from Mattias Janmark and skating in a two-man rush to beat Darling at 5:24 of the second. Pitlick followed with his second goal less than 2 1/2 minutes later, redirecting Antoine Roussel’s pass from behind the net for Dallas’ largest lead this season.

"The second goal (Roussel) made a heck of a play, got the puck, put it right on my tape and I just shot it hard," Pitlick said.

Skinner scored Carolina’s first goal on his own rebound just 10 seconds before the period ended. He added another at 5:32 of the third period, tipping in a shot by Noah Hanifin.

NOTES: Commemorating 25 years in the NHL, Dallas honored retired former captain Brenden Morrow. He dropped the ceremonial first puck for Stars captain Benn and Carolina rookie Haydn Fleury. When Fleury was a boy, Morrow babysat for him in their hometown of Carlyle, Saskatchewan. ... Pitlick has 13 goals in 66 games over four seasons. ... Dallas was outshot for only the second time this season, 39-26.

UP NEXT

Hurricanes: Host Tampa Bay on Tuesday night.
Recap: Canes' Comeback Falls Just Short in Dallas

Skinner scores twice, but Canes can't overcome four-goal hole

by Michael Smith @MSmithCanes / CarolinaHurricanes.com
October 21st, 2017

DALLAS - The Carolina Hurricanes mounted a furious comeback, but they fell 4-3 to the Dallas Stars in the final game of their four-game road trip.

Jeff Skinner netted two goals and Jordan Staal's second of the season brought the Canes within a goal, but that's as close as they would come.

Here are five takeaways from the last game of this road trip.

One

The Hurricanes mounted a comeback in this one, perhaps taking advantage of a Stars club that was content with the lead they had, but the hole was simply too large to climb out of.

"I think we've got to learn the lesson that you can't dig that deep of a hole. You've got to be ready to start from the drop of the first puck," head coach Bill Peters said. "I didn't think there was an emotional engagement to the game."

The Stars took a 2-0 lead to the locker room after 20 minutes of play. Jamie Benn opened the scoring at the 7:58 mark, as he crisscrossed with Alexander Radulov on a rush and then buried a scorching snap shot. Trevor van Riemsdyk and Brett Pesce, if facing that rush again, probably want to give two very talented wingers a little less room to work with. Late in the period, Tyler Pitlick went airborne to bat in a loose puck sitting in the crease and give the Stars a two-goal advantage.

That lead was stretched to three in the second period. Following the first Canes' power play of the game that didn't score but did generate some chances, Tyler Seguin hopped out of the box and scored on the breakaway. Pitlick scored his second of game when Antoine Roussel wiped out Noah Hanifin in the corner and centered to Pitlick for the quick bang-in.

"We were second to pucks a lot in the first two periods. When you're second to pucks, if you're not heavy and strong on them, it makes for a pretty easy game for the other team," Skinner said. "We weren't tough enough to play against and weren't quick enough to pucks, so that's a tough combination. They obviously have some skilled players who can capitalize on that."

Two

Skinner remains the Hurricanes' most lethal offensive threat, and he's one of the league's hottest players right now. He scored his team-leading fourth and fifth goals of the season tonight to spark the Canes' comeback.

With just 10 seconds remaining in the second period, a quick snap off the stick of Skinner got the Canes on the board and gave them some life.

"That gave us a little bit of life and a little belief," Peters said.

Skinner scored his second straight in the third period, batting the puck out of midair at the top of the crease and tapping it in. Dallas challenged on the basis of goaltender interference, but there was none to be had.

"Skinny can score. He can change games. That's what he does best," Staal said. "Tonight was no different. He gave us a spark and got us going a bit."

Dating back to last March of last season, Skinner has scored 22 goals in his last 25 games.

"He's been dangerous for a long time now. He's a dangerous guy," Peters said. "He gets the puck in good spots and works hard in the offensive zone. He's getting rewarded for that right now."

Three

Part of what allowed the Hurricanes to work their way back into this game was simply getting back to the way they want to play hockey. The start wasn't good enough. That much was evident. Down three goals heading into the third period,
the Hurricanes wanted to rediscover what makes them successful. If they weren't coming away with points, they were at least taking away a good effort in the final 20 minutes.

"We just wanted to play the hockey we know we can play in the third, just get back to playing the way we could and take some positives. We came close, but you're not going to win games with that start," Staal said. "It was just working. Working hard but working smart, as well. We made too many mistakes early, and they maybe sat back more in the third so we had more time with the puck, started making plays and doing some better things."

"Just work for each other and work hard. Down 4-1 going into the third period, it's obviously a big hill to climb. You're not going to make it up in one shift," Skinner said. "For us, it was just getting back to winning each shift, coming out with a good start and building from there."

Four

The Hurricanes head home with four out of a possible eight points (2-2-0) on this road trip. There was some good - though a bit loose, the offensive broke out in Edmonton, and then the team played a rather complete 60 minutes in a 2-1 win in Calgary - and some bad - namely, the start to tonight's game.

But it's still early in the 2017-18 season, and there remains plenty of room for growth and improvement.

"We would have liked to get more points, obviously, but there are some positives as well. We're going to continue to build and grow," Staal said. "Execution is getting a little better, but there's still some work to be had. We still haven't played our complete game yet and really haven't skated as well as we can, especially tonight."

"There's going to be different things from each game. We've got to realize what we have to play on a consistent basis," Peters said. "We're not going to be able to give up the types of opportunities we've given up. There's still too many freebies, really, too many easy goals against. We've got to get that figured out."

Five

It's customary for the captains of both teams to participate in a ceremonial puck drop. Tonight was a little different, though.

In conjunction with the Dallas Stars' 25th Anniversary season, tonight was one of a collection of Reunion Nights, in which the team welcomed back players from its history. Brenden Morrow was tonight's featured Stars alum, and he requested defenseman Haydn Fleury represent the Canes at the ceremonial puck drop.

So, why a rookie defenseman in his sixth NHL game? As it turns out, the two are old family friends, and Morrow was Fleury's babysitter once upon a time in Carlyle, Saskatchewan.

Up Next

Time to head home. The Canes will play their first game at PNC Area in two weeks on Tuesday when they host the Tampa Bay Lightning.

Go West, and North, Young Hurricanes

October 21st, 2017
Mark Shiver

The Carolina Hurricanes band of young NHL players hit the road to escape the parking lot that would become the highways surrounding the PNC Arena. The North Carolina State Fair is in town and the Hurricanes always leave town in early October as a result.

Past Performance Thankfully Not Repeating

Heading west has not been a friendly trip for the team in recent Octobers, but this trip has been different. The Hurricanes have been winning. To put it in perspective, after five games last season, the Hurricanes had won one game and lost four. They were 1-2-2, with a whopping four points on the board. Ouch.
After five games this season, the team is 3-1-1 with seven points on the board, nearly double where they were a year ago. It’s obviously very early in the season, but their start this year is light years better than what we’ve seen recently. For this group of young, talented players, the results are encouraging.

Currently sixth place in the Metropolitan Division, the Hurricanes have played the fewest games of any team in the Eastern Conference. They will catch up over time, but their low points might be primarily a result of having played fewer games.

**Skinner Still Rolling**

Hurricanes forward, Jeff Skinner is still rolling, picking up where he left off last season. He leads the team with three goals and one assist. This puts him second on the team in points with four, behind Justin Williams who has one goal and four assists. The total seems low, and it is compared to some others who have started the season scoring more prolifically, such as Alexander Ovechkin with 10 goals or Nikita Kucherov with eight.

But, if not for Skinner lighting the lamp when he has, the Hurricanes would be looking at different results. What I am seeing is the Skinner of last season come to life; fiercely competitive and determined to get the puck in the net. It’s an attitude that Skinner has more than anyone else on the team right now, save for Williams who seems equally determined.

If you have followed along with my coverage of the ‘Canes for the past year or so, you know that Skinner has gone through a lot of mental challenges stemming from his concussions. He came back from the last one obviously tentative about going to the net. But, last season he seemed to have shaken that tentativeness and was the Skinner of old. He displayed his freakish skating skills and put the team on his back, nearly getting them to the playoffs.

Last July, I speculated who might be the next captain of the Hurricanes. In Hurricanes’ “C” Likely to be a “J” I included Skinner along with Jordan Staal and Justin Faulk as a potential choice to wear the “C.” I characterized Skinner then, and it is still accurate here in the early going of the 2017-18 season:

> While the Hurricanes did not make the playoffs, there was a clear change in attitude that, I believe, is the seed of a culture change. Losing had been part of the culture for so long, it seemed almost ingrained into the team. Under Skinner’s determined, aggressive play, the culture began to change, and expecting to win is becoming the new normal for the Hurricanes.

In short, Skinner is playing with the “it” that is so often a part of elite players. The challenge facing head coach Bill Peters is getting his other young guns to start scoring as well.

**A Cause for Concern**

The one area that is a cause for concern at this early juncture is the Canes’ overall lack of scoring. Their offense has done enough to win some games but their vaunted defense has been a large part of their success. A look at the Eastern Conference standings reveals that the Hurricanes have the lowest goals-for total with 14, only the Montreal Canadiens’ total is lower at 13.

Carolina Hurricanes forward Sebastian Aho hopes to catch fire soon. (Amy Irvin / The Hockey Writers)

Every team ahead of them in the Metropolitan Division have over 20 and the division-leading New Jersey Devils have 31. Every team in the Atlantic Division has 20 or more except the Habs. One thing is certain, the Hurricanes must score more goals if they want to enhance their chances of making the playoffs.

Sebastian Aho took a while to get going last season, and the team is hopeful he can catch fire soon and play up to his talent. Faulk has yet to light the lamp and when he gets going it will definitely help.

The Hurricanes have started better than they have in a long time. That is without question. If they can add some offensive production to the mix on a consistent basis, the team will very likely be in the running for a spot in the playoffs.
Checkers Can't Find Spark In Shutout Loss To Marlies

Written by Nicholas Niedzielski
Published: October 21, 2017

Charlotte’s prolific offense came up empty in the team’s first visit to Toronto this season as the Checkers fell to the Marlies 4-0.

The Checkers’ attack, which was averaging over four goals a game heading into tonight, only managed to fire 24 shots in the contest and failed to solve Marlies netminder Garret Sparks, who picked up his first shutout of the season.

Jeremy Smith was between the pipes for Charlotte and was formidable for much of the game, fending off unrelenting pressure from Toronto. After keeping things scoreless in the first frame, Smith surrendered a pair of tallies late in the second, finally breaking after seeing a staggering 18 shots during the period. The Marlies would tack on two more early in the final frame and that would be more than enough to seal Toronto’s fifth win of the season.

The Checkers found themselves in penalty trouble throughout the contest, handing the Marlies six man advantages overall. The visiting penalty kill stood tall, however, keeping Toronto’s power play at bay until Dymtro Timashov’s strike early on in the third. The Checkers were afforded three power plays on the night, but for the first time this season they failed to register any goals on the man advantage.

NOTES
Tonight marked the first time the Checkers have been shut out this season and the first time they were shut out on the road since Dec. 2016 … Warren Foegele’s penalty shot attempt was Charlotte’s first on the road since Feb. 2016. The Checkers haven’t scored on a penalty shot on the road since Nov. 2010 … The Checkers have allowed the first goal of the game in every contest this season … Andrew Miller and Lucas Wallmark both had their five-game scoring streaks snapped … Mike Ferrantino made his AHL debut … Brenden Kichton, Julien Gauthier and Aleks Saarela all missed the game due to injury … Tyler Gantly and Nicolas Roy served as the healthy extras.
Bishop makes 36 saves, Stars hang on to defeat Hurricanes
Pitlick scores two goals to help Dallas win fourth straight
by Sean Shapiro / NHL.com Correspondent

DALLAS -- Tyler Pitlick scored two goals to help the Dallas Stars to their fourth straight win, 4-3 against the Carolina Hurricanes at American Airlines Center on Saturday.

Ben Bishop made 36 saves for the Stars (5-3-0), who scored the first four goals of the game. Jamie Benn and Tyler Seguin each had a goal, and Radek Faksa had two assists.

Leading by one goal, Dallas killed off a Carolina power play after Martin Hanzal was called for slashing with 2:49 remaining.

"It's always tough when it happens, you'd rather not have it happen," Pitlick said. "But I think we dug deep there at the end and we got pucks out. Obviously, [Bishop] bailed us out a few times."

Jeff Skinner scored two goals for the Hurricanes (3-2-1), who lost for the first time in three games.

Benn gave Dallas a 1-0 lead at 7:58 of the first period. Alexander Radulov carried the puck into the Carolina zone and made a short drop pass to Benn, who beat goalie Scott Darling with a wrist shot.

Pitlick scored to give the Stars a 2-0 lead at 18:07 of the first. Darling made the initial save on a tipped shot by Faksa, but Pitlick crashed the net for his first goal of the season.

It was a frustrating start for Carolina.

"We were losing every single race to the puck. Execution wasn't there," center Jordan Staal said. "There were other things we could have done and had a better start if we were going to win that one."

Dallas took a 3-0 lead at 5:24 of the second period when Seguin scored his sixth goal on a breakaway after leaving the penalty box.

Pitlick scored his second goal off a pass from Antoine Roussel at 7:46 of the second to push the Stars lead to 4-0.

"The second goal, [Roussel] made a heck of a playing getting in on the forecheck, got the puck, put it right on my tape, and I just shot it and I shot it hard," Pitlick said.

Skinner cut the Dallas lead to 4-1 when he scored on his own rebound with 10 seconds left in the period. He made it 4-2 with his fifth goal at 5:32 of the third period.

"He's been doing this for a long time," Hurricanes coach Bill Peters said. "He gets the puck, he works hard, so he's getting rewarded for that right now."

Stars coach Ken Hitchcock challenged the second Skinner goal, claiming he interfered with Bishop before scoring, but it was upheld after video review.

Staal scored to make it 4-3 at 15:24 of the third, three seconds after Stars forward Remi Elie exited the penalty box after being called for delay of game.

Darling made 22 saves.

Goal of the game
The Stars penalty kill went 3-for-3 and set up Seguin's goal. Just after Seguin's slashing penalty expired, defenseman Esa Lindell cleared the puck to Mattias Janmark, whose short, one-touch pass set up Seguin for a shot past Darling's glove from the top of the left face-off circle.

Save of the game
Bishop smothered Justin Faulk's shot through traffic from the top of the right circle with 1:09 remaining with the Hurricanes on the power play and Darling pulled for a 6-on-4 advantage.

Highlight of the game
Pitlick lunged to poke the puck into the net for his first goal before getting upended by Darling.

"What I see? I saw a puck laying there and I dove at it and hit it in," Pitlick said.

They said it

"We're not a team that's going to quit. We talked about going into the third (period) and building something. We did do some good things. They sat back a little bit more in the third, so we were able to have the puck and create plays, which helped build the momentum. We're going to continue to work hard. Even with a start like that, we're going to work hard throughout the game and not quit." -- Hurricanes co-captain Jordan Staal

"I think that's the League over the last four or five years now. I think it's been like that where no lead is ever safe. It's great that we were able to hold on to that, and I think there is probably a lot of lessons from that. But it's nice to learn lessons on the fly and learn while you're winning." -- Stars defenseman Dan Hamhuis

Need to know

The Stars have killed 13 straight power plays and won four straight games for the first time since 2015-16. ... The Hurricanes went 2-2-0 on their four-game road trip.

What's next

Hurricanes: Host the Tampa Bay Lightning on Tuesday (7 p.m. ET; FS-CR, SUN, NHL.TV)

Stars: At the Colorado Avalanche on Tuesday (9 p.m. ET; ALT, FS-SW, NHL.TV)

Pitlick scores 2, Stars hold on to beat Hurricanes 4-3

by STATS 7h ago

DALLAS (AP) After Tyler Pitlick's first career two-goal game helped Dallas build a four-goal lead, the Stars had to hold on to keep their winning streak going.

Jamie Benn and Tyler Seguin also scored to help Dallas beat the Carolina Hurricanes 4-3 Saturday night for its fourth straight win. Ben Bishop stopped 36 shots.

Dallas coach Ken Hitchcock credited the line centered by Radek Faksa with Pitlick and Antoine Roussel. Faksa assisted on both of Pitlick's goals.

"Faksa's line was the best line of any line on the ice for either team," Hitchcock said. "They did everything we needed them to do. Our third line scored two goals in a game like this. That's just outstanding."

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"We had them dead to rights," Hitchcock said. "The first goal gave them a little bit of life, the second goal, that's all on us. ... We played for two periods until the last (10) seconds exactly the way you have to play to beat them. The second goal gave them the life they needed. You can't defend skating backwards."

Scott Darling finished with 22 saves for Carolina.

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"You've got to learn a lesson if you get in that big a hole," Hurricanes coach Bill Peters said. "You've got to be ready to start."

Skinner said the coach's message during the second intermission was simple: "Just work hard. Going into the third, obviously it's a big hill to climb and you're not going to make it up in one shift."

Benn opened the scoring 7:58 into the game. Alexander Radulov dropped the puck back to Benn in the slot, and he sent a wrist shot past Darling and in off the left goalpost.
Pitlick made it 2-0 with 1:53 left in the first as he flew into the goalmouth to knock in the rebound of Radek Faksa’s shot from the left point.

"I saw a puck laying there and I dove at it and hit it in," Pitlick said.

Seguin scored coming out of the penalty box, taking a led pass from Mattias Janmark and skating in a two-man rush to beat Darling at 5:24 of the second. Pitlick followed with his second goal less than 2 1/2 minutes later, redirecting Antoine Roussel’s pass from behind the net for Dallas’ largest lead this season.

“The second goal (Roussel) made a heck of a play, got the puck, put it right on my tape and I just shot it hard,” Pitlick said.

Skinner scored Carolina’s first goal on his own rebound just 10 seconds before the period ended. He added another at 5:32 of the third period, tipping in a shot by Noah Hanifin.

NOTES: Commemorating 25 years in the NHL, Dallas honored retired former captain Brenden Morrow. He dropped the ceremonial first puck for Stars captain Benn and Carolina rookie Haydn Fleury. When Fleury was a boy, Morrow babysat for him in their hometown of Carlyle, Saskatchewan. … Pitlick has 13 goals in 66 games over four seasons. …

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TODAY’S LINKS
http://www.wralsportsfan.com/pitlick-scores-2-stars-hold-on-to-beat-hurricanes-4-3/17036425/
https://thehockeywriters.com/carolina-hurricanes-better-october-road-trip/

When asked if he expects changes tonight to the lineup, Cooper said, “Hard to say. I can say that for sure. Goaltender is the same, after that we’ll have to make game-time decisions, because some guys are nicked up.”

The goaltender, of course, is Andrei Vasilevskiy, who stopped all 43 shots and pitched a shutout Thursday against the Blue Jackets. He leads the NHL in wins with six.

Like they did when they played in Tampa last week, the Penguins are on the second half of a back-to-back. The first time they had to travel from Washington D.C. This time they made the short hop from Sunrise after Friday night’s 4-3 win against the Panthers.

A win tonight by the Lightning and it matches the best start in franchise history – 7-1-1, which was set by the 2003-2004 squad.

1079499  Tampa Bay Lightning

Nicked-up Lightning vs. Penguins tonight

Roger Mooney
Saturday, October 21, 2017 11:43am

The Penguins (5-2-1) have not lost since losing a 5-4 shootout at Amalie Arena.

The Lightning (6-1-1) is playing better defensively, according to coach Jon Cooper, since allowing 43 shots that night.

But, he added, the Penguins three-game winning streak since leaving Tampa is an indication that the defending Stanley Cup champions are playing well, too.

RW Nikita Kucherov participated in the optional morning skate after missing Friday’s practice for body maintenance. D Victor Hedman skated but did so in sweats, which might be an indication he was testing something to see if he can play tonight. C Cedric Paquette, who did not play Thursday at Columbus, did not practice Friday or skate this morning.

Will tonight’s Lightning-Penguins game produce the same excitement?
Roger Mooney
Saturday, October 21, 2017 7:00am

They last met Oct. 12, and it was an entertaining night at Amalie Arena with nearly 80 shots on goal and end-to-end action that ended in a 5-4 Lightning win.

Lightning associate coach Rick Bowness was asked after Friday’s practice if he expects the pace of play tonight to be not quite as fast.

“I think both sides would, but you have two very highly talented teams, lots of skill, lots of speed. That’s a lot easier said than done,” Bowness said. “Both teams are effective on the rush. Usually when you’re effective on the rush and you go down and create a chance, if you don’t get the retrieval, you’re giving up a chance the other way. That’s how the teams are built. We want to tighten it up a little bit, but you got to let your players go, too, and when that happens, you get a game like that.”

The Lightning (6-1-1) received two goals from Slater Koekkoek, the first two of his career, and one each from Victor Hedman, Steven Stamkos and Nikita Kucherov. It was the first goal of the season for Stamkos.

Sidney Crosby and Evgeni Malkin did not score for the Penguins (4-2-1 entering Friday’s night game against the Panthers in Sunrise). That was a bit surprising given the Penguins, as a team, too.

Crosby was held without a point for only the second time in his past 17 games against the Lightning. Malkin was blanked for only the second time in his past 16 against the Bolts.

There will be a lot of fire power on the ice tonight, and while both coaching staffs would rather see a more controlled effort from their teams, that might not be possible.

“You still have to get your better players minutes and your better players are the ones going end to end,” Bowness said. “Sometimes you’re just, ‘OK, let it go. We’ll see how it all works out.’ That’s hockey. That’s the game.”

Roger Mooney,
Saturday, October 21, 2017 10:24PM

Tampa Bay Times LOADED: 10.22.2017
1079501 Tampa Bay Lightning

Lightning journal: Tighter defense fuels hot start

Roger Mooney,
Saturday, October 21, 2017 10:24PM

TAMP - See what happens when you keep the crease clean, limit the traffic in front of G Andrei Vasilevskiy and limit Grade A scoring chances?

The defense perks up, the goals against decrease and you head into Saturday’s showdown against the Penguins having picked five of a possible six points on the road and sitting one win from tying the best start in franchise history.

The improved play on defense began after the Lightning survived an end-to-end shootout against the Penguins on Oct. 12, a game in which the Lightning allowed 40 shots in a 5-4 win.

“It’s a bit eye-opening when you give up that many scoring chances against a team, so if anything, it got our attention,” RW Ryan Callahan said. "We realized we have to be better defensively. You sneak away with a few games before then when you’re not playing a powerhouse offensive team.”

The Lightning allowed only three goals in Vasilevskiy’s next three starts after that Penguins game. The lone blip was five in a shootout loss at New Jersey with backup Peter Budaj in net.

“I thought we responded well,” Callahan said. "We improved. Our road trip was a good example of that.”

The trip ended with a shutout at Columbus, where Vasilevskiy faced 43 shots.

“Even though they had a lot of shots, we limited the scoring chances, the Grade A scoring chances,” D Anton Stralman said. "And that’s what we wanted to do.”

Mr. PPG
C Steven Stamkos now holds the franchise record for power-play goals with 113. He passed Vinny Lecavalier at 14:16 of the first period in Saturday’s 7-1 win against the Penguins when he took a feed from F Vladislav Namestnikov that crossed in front of Penguins G Antti Niemi and buried it in the net. It was the third goal this season for Stamkos.

Vasilevskiy’s game-changer
It’s not often one save is the turning point in a 7-1 victory, but the Lightning credited a diving stop by Andrei Vasilevskiy with 20.4 seconds left in the first period as a game-changer against the Penguins because it was followed by Yanni Gourde’s goal that beat the horn by two-tenths of a second and made it 3-0 at the first intermission. "It's 2-0 going into the room or it's 3-0," coach Jon Cooper said. "We're in the room, our chests are out. They're in the room rattled.”

On the save, Penguins LW Carl Hagelin found himself in front of the net with the puck and Vasilevskiy out of position. But Vasilevskiy dived toward the goal post and raised his glove in the air in time to block the shot. That led to the rush that led Gourde’s goal. "They get one at the end, they get the momentum. It's 2-1 going in and it's a different game,” C Steven Stamkos said. “That's what 'Vasy' can do. That's why he's one of the best in the league.”

Quote of the day
"The pain of missing the playoff still lingers, and it should linger all year.”

Associate head coach Rick Bowness, offering one reason for the Lightning’s fast start to the season

Slap shots
• C Cedric Paquette missed his second straight game with an undisclosed injury.
• RW J.T. Brown and D Andrej Sustr were healthy scratches.

Roger Mooney
Saturday, October 21, 2017 10:13PM

Tampa Bay Times LOADED: 10.22.2017
1079502 Tampa Bay Lightning

Lightning bury Penguins (w/video)
TAMPA — Ryan Callahan spent a lot of time last season rehabilitating his injured hip alongside Steven Stamkos, who was rehabbing a knee after season-ending surgery. During those hours, Callahan noticed two things about Stamkos: his hunger and his excitement to return this season.

"I said coming into the year, a healthy, hungry Steven Stamkos is really good for us and bad for the rest of the league," Callahan said Saturday night. "I think he's showing that. He's our leader. We go by his example, and he is leading the way right now."

Stamkos, who referred to himself earlier this season as a playmaker, is every bit of that, proving it with a four-point night in the Lightning's 7-1 victory over the two-time defending Stanley Cup champion Penguins at Amalie Arena in front of an announced sellout crowd of 19,092.

Stamkos had a goal and three assists, matching his career high in points, as the Lightning improved to 7-1-1, tying the 2003-04 Cup-winning team for the best start in franchise history.

The Penguins, playing the second game of a back-to-back, are 5-3-1.

"Right from the start we played the way we want to, especially against a Pittsburgh team that has so much offense," Callahan said. "Coming into the game, we really wanted to concentrate on our (defense), and I thought we did that and we generated opportunities off of that."

The Lightning had plenty of opportunities, starting with Nikita Kucherov's power-play goal 1:36 into the game.

Kucherov, whose goal-a-game streak ended at seven when he was denied in Thursday's win at Columbus, added a goal in the second period to give him 10 this season. What's more, he and Stamkos are the first pair of teammates to begin a season with points in their first nine games since Doug Weight and Pavol Demitra of St. Louis in 2001.

Stamkos has an NHL-high 18 points. His power-play goal in the first gave the Lightning a 2-0 lead and made him the franchise career leader in power-play goals with 113, passing Vinny Lecavalier. It was only his third goal overall of the season. The pure scorer is making a difference this year setting up his linemates, Kucherov and Vladislav Namestnikov.

"He's really becoming a complete player," coach Jon Cooper said.

Stamkos, who said he's just excited to be healthy and contributing to the Lightning's fast start, said he's like to believe he's always had this part of the game in him and, despite all his time in the league, he's still developing.

"When you got a guy like 'Kuch' on your line, there's probably a lot of people yelling at me to shoot the puck more, but he's so hot, you just try to get him the puck," Stamkos said. "Obviously, when you're getting points, your confidence in your game is extremely high to make plays and (you) want to make plays."

The Lightning skated to an easy win, its second against the Penguins this month.

Six players scored, including Yanni Gourde, whose first goal of the season game with two-tenths of a second left in the first to give the Lightning a 3-0 lead. Anton Stralman scored his first of the year, and rookie Mikhail Sergachev scored his third in two games.

Stamkos assisted on both of Kucherov's goals and Sergachev's goal that made it 7-0 in the third.

Stamkos' father, Chris, used to tell his son that the points on the board aren't always indicative of how you are playing.

"But," Stamkos said, "you take them when you can get them because it's not easy in this league to get them, so I'm going to keep trying to get better every game."

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First Period—1, Tampa Bay, Kucherov 9 (Hedman, Stamkos), 1:36 (pp). 2, Tampa Bay, Stamkos 3 (Namestnikov, Kucherov), 14:16 (pp). 3, Tampa Bay, Gourde 1 (Point, Coburn), 19:59. Penalties—Crosby, PIT, (cross checking), 0:57; Crosby, PIT, Misconduct (misconduct), 1:36; Palat, TB, (boarding), 4:11; Letang, PIT, (slashing), 13:23.

Second Period—4, Tampa Bay, Point 4 (Palat, Gourde), 0:30. 5, Tampa Bay, Stralman 1 (Sergachev), 5:58. 6, Tampa Bay, Kucherov 10 (Stamkos, Killorn), 7:12. Penalties—McKegg, PIT, (hooking), 1:26; Coburn, TB, (hooking), 12:44; Kessel, PIT, (slashing), 13:27.


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Tampa Bay Times LOADED: 10.22.2017

1079503 Tampa Bay Lightning

Roger Mooney's takeaways from Saturday's Lightning-Penguins game

Roger Mooney,

Saturday, October 21, 2017 9:30PM

Man, is Nikita Kucherov fun to watch. He has a goal in all but one game this season and points in all nine. You have to watch him each time he is on the ice because he is going to do something you do not want to miss: a goal, a shot that requires a tough save, a nifty pass to set up a linemate for a goal.

The Lightning wanted to limit the touches of Penguins C Sidney Crosby, a tactic that worked in the teams' first meeting this season, when it held Crosby scoreless. It worked in the first period, but Crosby had a hand in it. He spent nearly 12 minutes in the box for a cross-checking penalty and a 10-minute misconduct.

You had to feel for Penguins backup G Antti Niemi, who made his third start of the season and second against the Lightning in the second of back-to-back games for Pittsburgh. It's hard to stay sharp with so few starts, and it showed. And so No. 1 Matt Murray could have the night off, Niemi had to endure the storm.

Tampa Bay Times LOADED: 10.22.2017

1079504 Toronto Maple Leafs

There's no escaping Toronto's prying eyes, Doug Gilmour says: Feschuk

By DAVE FESCHUK

Sat., Oct. 21, 2017

There are more than a few passages in Killer, the newly released autobiography of Maple Leafs legend Doug Gilmour, in which Gilmour's
life in Toronto during his 1990s heyday doesn’t seem as enviable as a surface-looking fan might assume.

It’s true that Gilmour rose to stardom in a time we see now as simpler — an era before camera phones and social media and perpetual internet news. But unlike a lot of his contemporaries, he’s hardly convinced he was better off for it.

“There were eyes everywhere,” writes Gilmour, describing the Toronto of his competitive prime. Maybe there were no camera phones. But there were phones. Gilmour points out that it wasn’t uncommon for a fan of the era, after happening upon a group of Maple Leafs at a preferred watering hole, to make a call “to rat us out to management.”

In the parts of six seasons Gilmour spent establishing himself as the most beloved Leaf of the post-1967 era, tattletale busy bodies weren’t the worst of his worries. Gilmour writes about death threats he received from an apparently deranged woman — threats taken seriously enough for the team to call in the police. He writes about drunken fans making a wee-hours intrusion into his Beaches front lawn to heckle him with taunts of “You guys suck! What a bunch of losers!” (And Gilmour, in that instance, refrained from alerting the authorities in favour of pelting the mouthy jerks with eggs from his roof). On it goes.

By the time Gilmour leaves Toronto in a 1997 trade to New Jersey, he pronounces himself “sick of the press and the pressure.” Social media or not, it’s clear that being the biggest star of the world’s most followed hockey team was no easy gig. And Gilmour, in a recent interview, said he doesn’t suspect it’ll be easier for the likes of Auston Matthews and Matthews’ newly ascendant teammates.

“These guys are young guys. They deserve to go out once in a while when they have a break. My advice is just be aware of your surroundings. You don’t need pictures on (Instagram),” Gilmour said, sitting in the midtown offices of his publisher. “You’ve got to be accountable and you’ve got to have fun. And make sure you have some friends outside hockey. Because those are your real friends . . . they’re a great support system, not the followers. Honestly, that’s something I’m glad I had, and glad I still have.”

If Gilmour, at age 54, is in a reflective mood, it only makes sense. Earlier years after the death of his father, Don. Gilmour said it was the death of his father, and his mom’s sad slide into illness, that prompted him to tell his story with the help of former Star sports scribe Dan Robson. And it’s a worthy endeavour, for sure; hockey hasn’t authored many underdog tales as compelling.

Growing up smaller than an NHL scout’s vision of the hockey ideal, Gilmour paints a self portrait of an under-sized young man rabidly driven to overachieve. In the book he calls his selection in the seventh round of the 1982 NHL draft “an insult” and refers to his omission from Canada’s world junior championship roster at age 19 “another kick in the nuts.”

For all that, he overcomes — winning a Stanley Cup in Calgary in 1989 and, 22 years later, ending up in the Hall of Fame — perhaps because he was conditioned to do so. He was raised as one of four kids in what he calls a “corrections family” in a penitentiary town; both Don and Dolly Gilmour, not to mention a couple of Doug’s siblings, worked in the prison system for years. Some parts of the book reveal the Gilmour parents as the crazy hockey kind. Dolly throws her shoe at the head of a referee who does her family wrong, Don is remembered as the kind of dad who would beam a child with a baseball “right in the face,” if it taught the right lesson.

“It sounds mean,” Doug writes, “but I think it made us stronger.”

In the book’s pages we find out why Gilmour still doesn’t like mashed potatoes (because Don insisted they be a nightly staple meant to add some heft to his spindly son), and why he might flinch at hot baths (because baby Dougie once needed skin grafts on a foot gruesomely scalied by an inattentive babysitter). It’s a self-portrait told in appealing enough detail. Gilmour cops to being a practical joker who pricks holes in coaches’ Styrofoam coffee cups, just as he recounts his boozy first meeting with Maple Leafs coach Pat Burns, which was had over something stronger than a double-double at a downtown strip club.

“I could barely stand up at the end,” Gilmour writes.

The book recalls another era, a time fuelled by late-night drinks and game-over intravenous drips. There are laments about various troubles, including his cash-poor days as a young NHLer in the pre-big-money era, but there’s scarce bitterness and score settling.

“I don’t do regrets,” said Gilmour in an interview.

Which is not to say he doesn’t wish some things would have been done differently. He points to his 2011 induction into the Hall of Fame, wherein he was introduced by Tie Domi, as one such instance. The two weren’t on good terms at the time, not after Gilmour, in his role as GM of the Kingston Frontenacs, selected Domi’s son, Max, in that year’s OHL draft. Tie Domi wanted Max to play in London, where Max was eventually traded by the Frontenacs.

“It screwed up my speech. I was flustered after that,” Gilmour said the other day, speaking of the presence of Domi, whom he still calls “a friend.”

“You think about it, it’s your special day. You never start playing hockey thinking you’re going into the Hall of Fame. And when then it happens, you’d think your family member, or maybe one of your best friends, would introduce you. I get there, my jaw drops.”

If he could do it again — and if he was asked for input, which Gilmour said he wasn’t — he said he might have had his father introduce him. Or he might have picked his brother-in-law, NHL alumnus Neil Belland, or longtime teammates Wendel Clark or Dave Elliott, or his longtime agent, Larry Kelly.

“Or one of my friends from outside the game,” Gilmour said, wrapping up a recent chat. “That’s my advice for the guys (on today’s Maple Leafs team). Just stay together, watch out for each other. And if you have friends outside (hockey circles), keep ’em close.”

Toronto Star LOADED: 10.22.2017

1079505 Toronto Maple Leafs

Leafs rally comes too late in loss to Senators

By KEVIN MCGRAN

Sat., Oct. 21, 2017

OTTAWA—It’s going to happen every once in a while this year: the Maple Leafs will play a team that simply plays a better game.

And on Saturday night, the better team was the Ottawa Senators.

Whether it was checking or gap control or puck possession or takeaways, the Senators had the better of their provincial rival, taking a 6-3 decision Saturday night.

“We weren’t competitive enough,” Leafs coach Mike Babcock said. “They were better than us, they deserved to win. They competed harder than we did. We turned the puck over over-and-over again. They did a good job making that happen.”

The Leafs put on a gallant effort in a six-goal third period, but still came up on short in suffering just their second loss of the season.
"They play that trap and kind of bore you to death, almost," Leafs centre Auston Matthews said. "They’re really good at what they do."

James van Riemsdyk and Matthews energized the pro-Toronto troops at the Canadian Tire Centre crowd into calls of "Go Leafs Go" with two goals midway through the third, cutting Ottawa's lead to 3-2.

A timeout call by Ottawa coach Guy Boucher, who has seen his team blow two-goal leads twice, right after Matthews cut the lead to one was rewarded when Mark Stone scored on his own rebound to beat Frederik Andersen. But William Nylander scored on a power play and all bets were off for the final few minutes of a frantic third period.

Mitch Marner just missed the tying goal at one end, before Derick Brassard scored with 3:30 to go to give Ottawa its insurance goal and Mark Stone scored into an empty net with 1:39 to play. Brassard and Stone each had two goals.

"We had a game plan but we got away from it," said assistant captain Morgan Rielly. "We got one goal off the rush, and we got a tip. A few good goals. When you wait till the third to start executing that well, oftentimes it will be too little too late."

The Senators and Leafs appear to be on track to be each other's foil this year in the Atlantic Division, with a nod to the Conference final. Are not to be taken lightly. And it appeared the Leafs had no answer to Ottawa's stifling system espoused by coach Mike Babcock.

"That team was almost in the Stanley Cup final last year," Babcock said. "All they've been hearing about is the Leafs. They showed us they're still the big boys and we're not quite ready."

The Senators, building off an impressive if surprising run to the Eastern Conference final, are not to be taken lightly. And it appeared the Leafs did not take them lightly. But Ottawa's stifling system espoused by Babcock proved more successful than the aggressive style espoused by Leafs coach Mike Babcock.

"We had good games against them last year," Babcock said beforehand. "With the exception of one, they found a way to win all the time. The next three teams we play don't give up any goals, so you've got to get your head around the fact of how you're going to play."

Auston Matthews and the Leafs' offence finally woke up in the third period, but it was too little too late. Auston Matthews and the Leafs' offence finally woke up in the third period, but it was too little too late. (FRED CHARTRAND/THE CANADIAN PRESS)

It was a Battle of Ontario game that featured two different styles of hockey. Both believe in possessing the puck, but Toronto uses aggressive checking and turns it instantly into offence.

"They're a real patient team," Babcock said. "They live off their neutral zone forecheck and breaking out quick and transition. You can't feed their transition. Whatever you want to call that, you can't do it."

The Leafs, however, did just that in the first period. The Maple Leafs were giveaway machines in a first period that flattened them to be down by just one goal.

There were needless giveaways, bouncing-puck giveaways, and the occasional good-try-gone-bad giveaway. And it happened in each of the three zones. It didn't matter what the Leafs player's idea was, the puck seemed to find its way onto the stick of Senator.

And Ottawa's tenacity was rewarded when Nate Thompson's dig at the puck under Andersen slipped into the net at 12:01. It was Ottawa's 11th shot on net to that point, compared to just three by Toronto.

While Andersen fought off Toronto's best scoring chances in the second, Ottawa's patience was rewarded with two more goals and a 3-0 lead.

Ryan Dzingel deflected an Erik Karlsson shot at 14:20, proving any shot toward the net in a low scoring game is probably a good idea. And Brassard finished a terrific passing play with Bobby Ryan and Karlsson for a 3-0 lead with 12 seconds left in the second period.

NOTES: The Leafs and Senators won't play again until Jan. 10 in Toronto. Eric Fehr, Josh Leivo and Calle Rosen were scratched from the Leafs lineup. Guy Boucher is the only person to have coached both teams from the 1992 expansion (Ottawa, Tampa Bay) . . . The Maple Leafs host Los Angeles on Monday night.

A timeout call by Ottawa coach Guy Boucher, who has seen his team blow two-goal leads twice, right after Matthews cut the lead to one was rewarded when Nate Thompson's dig at the puck under Andersen slipped into the net at 12:01. It was Ottawa's 11th shot on net to that point, compared to just three by Toronto.

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OTTAWA—The Chris DiDomenico story has a happy ending. And the ending is a lot like a new beginning.

DiDomenico, 28, dressed Saturday night for the Ottawa Senators for his fourth NHL game and it happened to be against the Maple Leafs, the team that drafted the forward more than a decade ago.

"It's been a long time coming," he said. "I got called up and have a chance to show what I can do."

DiDomenico did not attend the 2007 draft in Columbus. The Toronto native stayed home, learning by phone that his beloved Leafs has taken him in the sixth round, 164th overall. But he quickly looked like a long-shot who would make good. He had an outstanding junior season with the Saint John Sea Dogs. He made Canada's world junior team, playing for Pat Quinn on a line with John Tavares and Angelo Esposito, and won gold.

But, after being traded to Drummondville, a horrific leg injury slowed down his junior career. The Leafs traded him to Chicago. He toiled in the AHL, the ECHL, Italy and Switzerland before reuniting with Ottawa coach Guy Boucher, who had coached him in junior.

"They say everything happens for a reason," DiDomenico said. "All that's behind me now. I grew as a person. You can't take anything for granted. You never know when it's going to end. I'm just happy to have another opportunity to play the game I love."

BANNER GOES HOME: The banner that originally commemorated Wendel Clark at the Air Canada Centre was delivered Saturday to the legendary winger's hometown of Kelvington, Sask. The 18 original banners, now replaced by retired numbers, are being sent to each player's hometown as part of the Leafs celebration of their centennial. Clark joined the club in 1985 and set a Leafs rookie record for goal scoring that stood until Auston Matthews came along.

SMELLING SALT: Matt Martin explained, sort of, his pregame ritual with teammate Mitch Marner and smelling salts. It includes a stylized handshake and a bit of jumping around. "Originally it was just smelling salts," Martin said. "Then it was smelling salts twice. Then three times. Then the handshake. Then bumping back and forth. It just keeps growing. I guess. I don't know if we'll add anything else to it, but we have fun with it."

KARLSSON PRAISE: Leafs coach Mike Babcock had high praise for Ottawa blueliner Erik Karlsson. "He's a star, I've always thought he was just outstanding. When they drafted him, Tim Murray told me that he's going to be just like (Niklas) Kronwall. Obviously, he's a different player.
than Kronwall. His skating is elite, the things he can do with his feet, with his mind, with the puck are exceptional. He’s a fun player to watch. If you’re a young player, you want to be him. Now, unless you get touched by a wand by God, you’re not going to be him, but he’s a special player to watch. He’s fun for the league.”

Toronto Star LOADED: 10.22.2017

1079507 Toronto Maple Leafs

DiDomenico playing for ‘other side’ in Battle of Ontario

BY LANCE HORNBY
FIRST POSTED: SATURDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2017 01:41 PM EDT
UPDATED: SATURDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2017 01:45 PM EDT

OTTAWA - The name Chris DiDomenico would seem like ancient history to the Maple Leafs.

But on Saturday he’ll play against the team that drafted him in 2007, a Woodbridge native playing for the “other side” in the Battle of Ontario.

DiDomenico was chosen 164th overall in the last year of the John Ferguson Jr. regime, a sparse crop for the Leafs where only Matt Frattin ahead of him and Carl Gunnarsson behind him made any NHL impact.

Ferguson’s successor, Brian Burke, moved him to Chicago as part of the Kris Versteeg trade. That Versteeg is now a Leaf footnote would completely obscure DiDomenico’s career, which included a severe thigh bone break with the Drummondville juniors in 2009. That long recuperation hurt his chances after a 95-point season in Saint John of the QMJHL before the Leafs picked him.

After a brief AHL career, he found success in Italy and Switzerland where he played against future Leaf Auston Matthews, but stayed in the minds of coaches such as Zurich’s Marc Crawford, now an Ottawa assistant to Guy Boucher, who was DiDomenico’s head coach in the Q and now runs the Sens.

“It’s been a long time coming and I have to make the best of it here,” said DiDomenico, called up by Belleville a few games ago. “It’s always special in the Battle Of Ontario.”

Leafs exec Dave Poulin called him at home on 2007 draft day from Columbus.

“They say everything happens for a reason,” DiDomenico says. “That injury is behind me now and I grew as a person. You can’t take anything for granted because you never know when it’s going to end. I was just lucky to have another opportunity to play the game I love.”

Making it back to the AHL, he played three games for the parent Sens last year and getting some goals in Belleville to start this season continued to rejuvenate his confidence on smaller North American ice. It led to a call-up to play fourth line right wing.

Toronto takes a record of 6-1 into the game, trying to equal its best start in almost 25 years, the season they broke out with a record 10 wins to start the year. But head coach Mike Babcock, vexed a few times by Ottawa since taking this job, expected to get plenty of grief.

“(Ottawa) is a real patient team,” Babcock said. “They live off their neutral zone forecheck, breaking out quick and transition. So you can’t feed their transition. Whatever you want to call that, you can’t do it. In saying that, we had good games against them last year, with the exception of one (Toronto win), they found a way to win (three).

“The next three teams we play (Ottawa, Los Angeles, and Carolina) don’t give up many goals. You have to get your head around how you’re going to play. It’s no different in the playoffs when you have a series you have to adjust to what you’re playing.”

Babcock will leave Andreas Borgman in on defence after frequent rotations with fellow Swedish rookie Calle Rosen. Borgman hits and Babcock expects a rough encounter with Ottawa trying to stop a flood of Leaf fans at the Canadian Tire Centre from helping the visitors gain momentum.

“With the way (Ottawa) play, I just thought tonight it would give us (an advantage),” Babcock said of Borgman.

Frederik Andersen of the Leafs faces Craig Anderson of the Sens in goal. Babcock will keep Mitch Marner on the fourth line for now.

“We don’t want him to adapt (to limited ice time), we just want him to play hard,” Babcock said. “I wouldn’t spend a whole lot of time worrying about that if I was him and I’ve talked to him about that. Play hard and everything will work out.”

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1079508 Toronto Maple Leafs

SIMMONS: Leafs GM Lou Lamoriello sticks to his mantra

BY STEVE SIMMONS,
FIRST POSTED: SATURDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2017 12:37 PM EDT
UPDATED: SATURDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2017 12:42 PM EDT

It wasn’t necessarily the 75th birthday present Lou Lamoriello would want but privately, away from the crowd, it must feel rather special when a betting service has proclaimed his Maple Leafs as Stanley Cup favourites, some eight months before the Stanley Cup final will be played.

Lamoriello will tell you, as he has told me, that the Leafs have won nothing, have proven nothing, and are just trying to get better every day. That is his mantra. He sticks to it on birthdays and just about every other day of the year.

Knowing him, he probably hates the fact that Saturday was a significant birthday and worse that people are even aware of him turning 75.

This is Lamoriello’s third season as general manager of the Maple Leafs after basically being pushed aside in New Jersey. In that time, the Leafs have gone from last to playoffs to somewhat stunning Stanley Cup favourites. In that short period of time, Lamoriello has replaced both goalies, changed four of six defencemen, and fully retooled the coaching staff.

And like holdovers Tyler Bozak and James van Riemsdyk, his contract is up this year. He’d rather nobody mention that. He’s not going anywhere. And as the oldest general manager in the NHL, he’s not acting his age in any way. He even smiles occasionally. But only occasionally.

THIS AND THAT

After the first 88 games Wayne Gretzky played in the NHL, he had scored 52 goals. Mario Lemieux, in the same numbers of games, had 54. Auston Matthews scored his 45th goal in his 88th game. But the NHL Matthews plays in scores 2.89 goals per team, per game. The NHL Gretzky entered in 1979 scored 3.45 a game while Lemieux walked into a league in 1984 that scored 3.78 goals a game … This is how smart
Mike Babcock is: Matthews ranks 95th in the NHL in ice-time among forwards or 224th in ice-time overall. Connor McDavid, by the way, is first among forwards, playing five more minutes a night than Matthews is playing with the deeper Leafs. An old coach once told me he likes his defenceman to be like the best of referees: The less you notice them, the fewer mistakes they are making.

Ron Hainsey played 29 shifts a game for Pittsburgh in the Stanley Cup playoffs. He is playing 29 shifts a game for the Leafs. And like a good referee, he isn’t being noticed ... If he isn’t a bargain already, Nikita Zaitsev at $4.5 million a season will be very soon. And for seven years after this one in Toronto ... There is some Henry Burris in Jake Gardiner. Some Good Hank and Bad Hank. It can be the difference between winning and losing Grey Cups ... The weird part about the Leafs being favoured by Bodog to win the Stanley Cup: Who would you favour? Tampa Bay was my pre-season pick. But where are the great teams in the NHL? It’s a little like this year’s NFL. Nobody in the league looks like a Super Bowl champion.

HEAR AND THERE
Imagine what a Swedish defence would look like were NHL players at the upcoming Olympics: Erik Karlsson, Victor Hedman, Oliver Ekman-Larsson, Mattias Ekholm, Anton Strålman and probably one of Oscar Klefbom, John Klingberg or Nik Halmond ... Still angry we’re being robbed of a McDavitt-Matthews Olympics. Neither of them have actually seen a Winter Olympics without NHL players ... Detroit GM Ken Holland was part of the Canadian Olympic management team in 2014 and 2010. I asked him if this Olympic year felt strange to him. His answer: “Is this an Olympic year? I don’t even think of it that way.” ... Were this an NHL Olympic year, the Leafs would have at least five Olympians: Matthews and James van Riemsdyk for Team USA, Leo Komarov for Finland, Zaitsev for Russia; William Nylander for Sweden ... Leafs should play at home on Saturday nights. Raptors should play at home on Sundays. Having a Saturday night home Raptors game just doesn’t feel right ... TV ratings are down for the NFL in the U.S. but conversely up in Canada ... Noah Hanifin is developing slowly in Carolina. He plays just a little more than 16 minutes a game for the improving Hurricanes ... Jeremy Jacobs is going to the Hockey Hall of Fame. Can anyone explain why? ... When the does the ridiculous reality show that is Lavar Ball just shut up and go away?? ... It’s way too early to judge Phil Housley as an NHL coach but having seen this young season: Buffalo Sabres look listless this season. The worst teams I’ve seen this young season: Buffalo, Montreal, and Arizona, in no particular order ... I don’t understand why the Washington Capitals didn’t find a way to keep Nate Schmidt on their roster for the expansion draft. He’s a Top Four defenceman.

SCENE AND HEARD
Have you taken a peak at the s%

CAROLINA HURRICANES
NEWS CLIPPINGS • Oct. 22, 2017

Change, his latest book about hockey, head shots, concussions and the life of Steve Montador.

AND ANOTHER THING
How long has it been since the Yankees played the Dodgers in a World Series? Well, put it this way. Rick (Blue) Monday was in the Dodgers outfield in 1981 and making two starts for the Yankees was Tommy John, before he became best known as elbow surgery ... Kareem Hunt and Leonard Fournette happen to be rookies and the two leading rushers in the NFL. And yet, my runaway rookie of the year is Tony Romo, the freshman broadcaster for CBS. He is right there, already, with Cris Collinsworth as the best analyst in football ... Saskatchewan has this Condredge Holloway-Joe Barnes rotation thing happening with Kevin Glenn and Canadian Brandon Bridge. Glenn starts and Bridge comes nicely off the bench ... Friday Night Football had Bridge taking snaps for the Roughriders, Andrew Buckley playing quarterback for Calgary in the second half, the first time two Canadian quarterbacks have opposed each other in the CFL in 33 years ... Have had lunch with a lot of CFL commissioners over the years, from Doug Mitchell to Tom Wright to Larry Smith to Mike Lysko to Mark Cohon. Can’t say any of them impressed me as much as Randy Ambrose did when we had lunch this week. His mind is nonstop and unconventional ... Happy birthday to Lamarrelo (75), Ricky Ray (38), Brian Kilrea (83), George Bell (58), Ichiro Suzuki (44), Tara Lang (31), Butch Goring (68), Ron Tugnut (50), Danny Barnes (28) and Brian Boitano (54) ... And hey, whatever became of Chuck Knoblauch?

Duron Carter may be the most talented, most fascinating, most eccentric and most immature player in the Canadian Football League - and yet, you can’t take your eyes off him.

He changes games. He changes teams. He has become the most interesting man in the CFL, an explosion on all kinds of levels.

On Friday night, the superb receiver was moved to defensive back by creative and somewhat desperate head coach, Chris Jones. Bo Levi Mitchell, the No. 1 quarterback on the No. 1 Calgary team, thought this was funny. He thought it was funny until Carter, who had already blitzed and been active on tackles, picked off a Mitchell pass and took it for a touchdown.

And instantly Carter became something else - aethrowback. Time was, mostly on black and white television, the best CFL players, the most versatile played offence and defence. Cookie Gilchrist was a brilliant running back and linebacker. The great Jackie Parker played quarterback, running back and defensive back in Edmonton. Garney Henley was equally skilled as a receiver or a DB and Dick Thornton, the passed over Hall of Famer, was similarly talented.

Now Carter enters that group. He has scored touchdowns this season catching the ball, intercepting it, and one on special teams, running back a missed field goal. Turns out Cris Carter’s semi-crazy son is a semi-crazy throwback.

All Dusty Baker did in Washington was win his division.

That and bring some peace and calmness to the historically dysfunctional Nationals.

He managed Washington for two seasons. They won the National League East both years, winning 95 games and 97 games consecutively. In most places, that gets you a raise and a new contract. In Washington, all he got was a weak handshake and a goodbye.

With a 4-1 lead in Game 5 against the Chicago Cubs, Baker gave the ball to Max Scherzer. One of the five best pitchers in baseball. Baker didn’t blow up: Scherzer did. And yet, his Nationals still battled, and somehow lost 9-8 in the strange clinching game.

In Washington, the owners tend to disagree with the general manager, who tends to disagree with the manager and too much goes public. The next manager of the Nationals will be the 8th in 10th years. With that kind
of ownership impatience and ignorance, it’s no wonder there have been no World Series parades in Washington.

The magician, Mitch Marner, is caught in an old Harry Neale quote: “He can’t play better if he doesn’t play more, and he can’t play more if he doesn’t play better.”

That is the unfortunate dilemma for the Maple Leaf sophomore with superior vision. He lost his place on the Leafs line with Tyler Bozak and James van Riemsdyk partly because he wasn’t dazzling the way he dazzled a year ago and partly because Connor Brown earned his way off the fourth line.

Now comes the challenge for Marner: Finding his way out of Mike Babcock’s apparent doghouse. Babcock has been a slave to his lines since becoming the Leafs coach and especially since last season. He doesn’t tinker a lot with his lineup, doesn’t tamper much.

Which leaves what for Marner, who played just 14:20, 12:49 and 11:21, the last three games, the fewest minutes of his NHL career? His hockey IQ is significantly higher than those he plays with, which is a lot like having Jennifer Lopez dance with Fred Flintstone. There’s no real opening for him as long as Babcock commits to the sandpaper Leo Komarov brings on the Nazem Kadri line.

The key for the kid who scored on opening night in Winnipeg: Remaining patient and trying not to let circumstance dictate performance. He will be back in a prominent place. It just might take a while.

Toronto Sun LOADED: 10.22.2017

1079509 Toronto Maple Leafs

Methodical Senators dominate Leafs

BY LANCE HORNBY
FIRST POSTED: SATURDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2017 10:27 PM EDT
UPDATED: SUNDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2017 12:55 AM EDT

OTTAWA — Before this chapter in the Battle of Ontario ends and the final standings determined in April, the Leafs will need a ’W’ beside their No. 1 goalie in a game against the Senators.

Specifically at the Canadian Tire Centre, where the methodical Sens have caused Toronto regular-season grief the past few seasons.

Saturday’s 6-3 loss marked the fourth time in seven visits the Leafs have lost, while Frederik Andersen is 0-3-1 overall against the division rivals since arriving last October.

He wasn’t the main culprit when punchless Toronto faltered early, holding it to 1-0 after one period, with a huge pad save at two-zilch late in the second. But Erik Karlsson and Bobby Ryan sliced through Nazem Kadri’s line and the defensive tandem of Ron Hainsey and Morgan Rielly for a dagger with 12.1 seconds to play. That lessened the sting when James van Riemsdyk and Auston Matthews got Toronto on the board midway through the third.

A Nikita Zaitsev turnover led to Mark Stone’s goal, after Andersen made the initial breakaway save and a William Nylander power-play marker was answered by Derick Brassard’s second of the night. Andersen, coming off a shutout in Washington, faced 34 shots.

The Leafs tried to stay humble after oddsmakers made them Stanley Cup favourites coming off Wednesday’s win over Detroit that briefly placed them first overall. But they have reason to be reserved now, given their loose play and giveaways versus the Sens, as Ottawa moved within a point and division-leading Tampa Bay moved three up.

SEN-SATIONAL

Name an area of strength the Leafs had been exhibiting lately and Ottawa met or bettered them at it.

The intense Sens frustrated Toronto shooters, crashed the net on Nate Thompson’s opening goal and got traffic for a Ryan Dzingel tip of a Karlsson shot. The Leafs’ 30% power play never got on the ice until late in the game when Nylander struck.

The Leafs’ league-leading faceoff men won the majority in the dots, but were nailed for a violation late in the middle period that slowed momentum. Karlsson, last year’s series leader for the Sens, had two three points. Add Craig Anderson’s 29 saves and the Sens sent hundreds of Leaf fans on the highway home without the anticipated celebration. Stone’s second goal was in an empty-netter.

USE THE FOURTH

Coach Mike Babcock ended his morning presser by predicting Mitch Marner would eventually play his way off the fourth line.

“We don’t want him to adapt (to limited ice time), we just want him to play hard. I wouldn’t spend a whole lot of time worrying about if I was him and I’ve talked to him about that. Play hard and everything will work out.”

That preceded Babcock bursting up some lines with Ottawa up three, flipping Marner and Leo Komarov, restoring Marner to an offensive role on Kadri’s wing with Patrick Marleau.

ICE BORG AHEAD

Defenceman Andreas Borgman is making it hard for Babcock to take him out of the lineup.

When push came to shove — literally — the Leafs coach went back to Borgman, breaking up a rotation with fellow Swedish rookie Calle Rosen and at times, Connor Carrick. The belligerent Borgman trumps the smooth skating Rosen when things get physical.

“With the way (the Sens) play, I just thought tonight it would give us (an advantage),” Babcock said of keeping Borgman in after he played well against Detroit.

WAIT IS OVER

The name Chris DiDomenico would seem like ancient history to the Leafs.

But Saturday the right winger and Toronto native was against the team that drafted him in 2007. DiDomenico was chosen 164th overall in the last year of the John Ferguson Jr. regime, a sparse crop for the Leafs with only Matt Frattin ahead of him and Carl Gunnarsson behind him making any NHL impact.

Ferguson’s successor, Brian Burke, moved DiDomenico to Chicago as part of the Kris Versteeg trade. As Versteeg is now a Leafs footnote, it would obscure DiDomenico’s career, which included a severe thigh bone break with the Drummondville juniors in 2009. That long recuperation hurt his NHL chances after a 95-point season in Saint John of the QMJHL before the Leafs picked him.

After a brief AHL career, he found success in Italy and Switzerland where he played against future Leaf Auston Matthews, but stayed in the minds of Zurich’s Marc Crawford, now an Ottawa assistant to Guy Boucher, who was DiDomenico’s head coach in the Q and now runs the Sens.

“It’s been a long time coming and I have to make the best of it here,” said the 28-year-old DiDomenico, called up from Belleville for Saturday.

He recalls Leafs head amateur scout Dave Morrison called him at home on ‘07 draft day from Columbus, but a shot with the local team never came to be. The injury only worsened his chances to make the NHL with any team.
“They say everything happens for a reason,” DiDomenico said. “That injury is behind me now and I grew as a person. You can’t take anything for granted, because you never know when it’s going to end. I was just lucky to have another opportunity to play the game I love.”

Lance Hornby
October 22, 2017
12:00 AM EDT

OTTAWA — Before this chapter in the Battle of Ontario ends and the final standings determined in April, the Toronto Maple Leafs will need a ‘W’ beside their No. 1 goalie’s name against the Ottawa Senators.

Specifically at the Canadian Tire Centre, where the methodical Sens have caused Toronto regular-season grief the past few seasons. Saturday’s 6-3 loss marked the fourth time in seven visits the Leafs have lost, while Frederik Andersen is 0-3-1 overall against the division rivals since arriving last October.

He wasn’t the main culprit when laid-back Toronto faltered early, holding it to a 1-0 night after one period, with a huge pad save at two-zilch late in the second. It got to 3-0 on a terrible team breakdown in a late-period goal. Despite James van Riemsdyk, Auston Matthews and William Nylander scoring in the third, Ottawa sandwiched more goals before adding an empty-netter.

“They came out better than we did, outsmarted us a bit,” Andersen said. “We made a push, but they capitalized on our mistakes. We have to realize, we can’t do it with just skill. We have to play that 60-minute game.”

Nate Thompson’s opening goal set the tone, a behind-the-back save by Andersen wasted when the Sens kept crashing the net. Traffic in front was an issue and Leafs coach Mike Babcock tracked four 2-on-1s in the third period. Andersen’s save percentage took a beating on 35 shots, but having registered a shutout in his last start, he wasn’t perturbed.

“That’s all numbers, you have to watch the game. I look at the way I play. I made some pretty good saves, I felt pretty good.”

The Sens had some bad news after the game, as coach Guy Boucher revealed forward Bobby Ryan will be out a month with a broken finger suffered on a shot block.

TAKE THAT BETTORS

The Leafs tried to stay humble after oddsmakers made them Stanley Cup favourites coming off Wednesday’s win over Detroit that briefly placed Toronto first overall with a record of 6-1. But they sure have reason to be reserved now, given their loose play and giveaways versus the Sens.

“(Ottawa) was almost in the Cup final last year, they competed real hard and all they’ve been hearing is how great the Leafs are,” Babcock said. “They just showed us they’re the big boys and we aren’t quite ready. We turned the puck over and over. We had a whole bunch of guys who were really average tonight. We weren’t up to the task and that’s down to me.”

Babcock said the upcoming week, with like-minded defensive teams Los Angeles and Carolina coming in, will be a test.

“I thought this game was a great opportunity, because this is what the league gets to. If you think you’re just going to play toe drag and run-and-gun, you won’t. There’s a message we have to get better than we are.”

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Name an area of strength the Leafs had been exhibiting lately and Ottawa met or bettered them at it.

The intense Sens frustrated Toronto shooters, who fell into the trap of the trap. And after the opening goal, the Sens got traffic for a Ryan Dzingel tip of an Erik Karlsson shot, one of the captain’s three assists. The Leafs’ 30 per cent power play never got on the ice until late in the game when Nylander struck.

The Leafs’ league-leading faceoff men lagged at 45 per cent and were nailed for a violation minor late in the middle period that slowed momentum. Add Craig Anderson’s 28 saves and the Sens sent hundreds of Leafs fans on the highway home without the anticipated celebration.

“We played right into their system, they sit back and let you make a mistake,” Matthews said.

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**CAROLINA HURRICANES**

**NEWS CLIPPINGS • Oct. 22, 2017**

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He recalls Leafs head amateur scout Dave Morrison called him at home on '07 draft day from Columbus, but a shot with the local team never came to be. The injury only worsened his chances to make the NHL with any team.

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By Tom Timmermann

LAS VEGAS -- Defenseman Colton Parayko is good to go for Saturday night's game with the Vegas Golden Knights after missing most of the third period against Colorado.

Coach Mike Yeo gave Parayko a clean bill of health and said he would be in the lineup. Parayko took a puck to his left hand with about 16 1/2 minutes to go against Colorado on Thursday, and sat out the rest of the game. The Blues didn't practice on Friday but on Saturday, Parayko took part in the morning skate and will be paired with longtime partner Joel Edmundson.

Yeo wasn't concerned about the distractions of a game in Las Vegas, where the Blues have been since early Friday morning.

"I think we're all pros here," he said. "We go to lots of nice cities on the road. I really don't think that's that big of a story. We have to make sure we're prepared. No matter what it's going to be a good challenge tonight. We have to be mentally prepared, we talked about it, we took some rest yesterday, we had good meetings with video and as far as talking about their team and what we should expect, there's no reason to think we shouldn't be prepared."

Do you read BLUE?

Get our FREE e-newsletter, with the latest news, talk and features about the St. Louis Blues.

By Tom Timmermann

LAS VEGAS -- As you might expect, hockey in Las Vegas comes with a little more flash, a little more sizzle than you might find elsewhere.

There's a guy in a knight outfit who leads a drum line on a march through the plaza in front of the arena before the game, and shortly before teams take the ice for the game, there is a little sword-in-the-stone drama that unfolds at center ice, with the Golden Knights mascot pulling the sword out to get things started.

This was the backdrop as the Blues made their first trip to Las Vegas for just the fifth real game in the history of the league's newest expansion team. The game drew a healthy turnout of Blues' fans, and their cheers were noticeable within the 17,883 fans at T-Mobile Arena early on. The Blues turned the game into a thriller, outshooting Vegas 44-19 in regulation, 49-22 overall, and needed a late goal to tie it before losing in overtime 3-2 on Saturday in an unlikely showdown between teams that went into the night first (St. Louis) and third (Vegas) in points in the Western Conference.

William Karlsson got the game-winner with 23.8 seconds to go in overtime as he finished off a two-on-one after a turnover in the Blues' end by Vladimir Sobotka. That ended a rollicking overtime period in which the Blues had five shots on goal, Vegas had three and both goalies, Jake Allen for the Blues and Oscar Dansk for Vegas, had to make some tough saves. Brayden Schenn had a dazzling race through all three Vegas players that appeared to end with him being tripped, but there was no goal and no call.

"It's disappointing not to get two points," Blues coach Mike Yeo said. "We had to use guys a lot, especially when we started chasing, when we lost the lead there in the second period. We obviously used our top guys pretty heavily, but they competed hard. It's disappointing not to get two points, but we definitely have to be pleased with the effort tonight."
The Blues tied the game on a goal by Alex Pietrangelo with 5:08 to go in the third on a slapshot that was the first shot on goal seen by Dansk in his NHL debut after he came on to replace an injured Malcolm Subban. Vladimir Tarasenko won a battle for the puck and then Schenn and Jaden Schwartz got the puck to Pietrangelo for his third goal of the season.

“The idea was to get pucks on the net,” Pietrangelo said. “Great play by Schwartz to kind of freeze the guy. He’s cold, he just came in, so good pass. We were just trying to get as many looks on him as we could.”

It's been a big few days for video review for the Blues, who had an offsides challenge go their way in Colorado, though the league later said it was the wrong call. This time, it looked like the Blues had tied the game earlier in the third period off a shot by Sobotka that, logic would say, was carried into the net by goalie Malcolm Subban. Even though Subban was almost entirely inside the net, the referees didn’t call it a goal on the ice and the league video review team in Toronto could never see the puck over the line, so they ruled no goal. The league said that it “was unable to confirm if the puck completely crossed the Vegas goal line. Therefore, the referee’s call on the ice stands.”

“I don’t know,” Sobotka said. “It looks like it was in the net, but I guess they couldn’t see it, so … it is what it is.”

“I knew when it came down to calling no goal on the ice that after watching it that it wouldn’t go our way,” Yeo said. “You’re hoping that the ref sees that and makes the call that it’s a goal on the ice. You can’t see where the puck is. For me, I know the rule, you can’t just use common sense and think that it’s in the net, they have to see it, they have to know that. But again, the call on the ice is what hurt.”

Special teams were an issue for the Blues. After giving up goals on the last two penalties they had to kill against Chicago and then going one for two at Chicago, they gave up goals on two of the first three against Vegas, giving them a run of five goals allowed in seven power plays. The Blues’ power play, meanwhile, went 0 for its first four chances and while it produced plenty of scoring chances, it didn’t produce any goals.

“We've got a couple practices coming up here and obviously we have to straighten that out,” Yeo said. “Five on five, we're very pleased with our game right now. That game takes a different turn if we score on one of those power plays to grab a 2-0 lead, or obviously, if we kill those penalties. There's a couple of things that we need to certainly look at and practice and we'll get to it here.”

The Blues couldn't score on three power plays in the first period, but they got a goal from the fourth line. Oskar Sundqvist went behind the net and laced in the crease, unable to get up before the referee blew the whistle. Vegas had to bring in Dansk, a callup from Chicago on Thursday who was making his NHL debut. It took more than three minutes for the Blues to get a shot on goal, and when they did, they scored, but after that Dansk settled in and made the saves he had to.

By Tom Timmermann

LAS VEGAS • The start of the season has been a block party for the Blues, with their defensemen putting their bodies in front of the puck more than anyone in the league.

Going into Saturday's game with Vegas, the Blues led the league with 139 blocked shots. Joel Edmundson led the league with 28 blocks and Carl Gunnarsson was fourth with 22. They are third and ninth, respectively, in blocks per game.

“I think the guys on the other team just hate me and are trying to take me out of the game by shooting at me,” Gunnarsson deadpanned.

The Blues are averaging about 3½ more blocks per game than they did last season, and the players and coach Mike Yeo think it could be the result of the Blues spending more time on the penalty kill. In their first eight games last season, the Blues had to kill 18 penalties. This season, they've had to kill 34.

“Guys are committed,” Yeo said. “I think there are some areas where we can do a little bit better to prevent us from putting those numbers up as high as they are as far as not letting teams spend as much time in our zone or not letting them get as easily in our zone.”

“I don’t know if it was the PK or whatever,” Gunnarsson said, “but we're doing whatever it takes.”

Edmundson had eight blocks in the game with Chicago on Wednesday. He’s had four or more in two other games. Gunnarsson had seven against Chicago and has also had four or more twice. At his current rate, Gunnarsson, who is averaging a half a block game more than any season in his NHL career, will match his total number of blocks last season by Thanksgiving. Edmundson is blocking almost three times as many shots as in either of his previous two seasons.

“That’s part of my game that I try to embrace,” Edmundson said. “If I can stop a puck before it gets to Jake or Hutton, I’m doing my job. I love it. There's something about it.”

As for the physical toll it takes, Gunnarsson shrugged that off.

“We've got padding,” he said. “Every once in a while you get one in the wrong spot, but you're pretty much covered everywhere. It's real bad luck if you get hit in a spot where you're not covered.”

OFFSIDES REDUX

Even if it took an error by the NHL to get there, Yeo said he thought justice was served by Colorado having a game-tying goal wiped out on Thursday.

“It was offsides,” he said. “They called it back. I'm not going to get into the technicalities of it. I don't know the fine print of it but I do know the intention of the rule is not to have goals go in the net when an offsides has taken place. There was a technicality there. As far as I'm concerned, it was the right call. There's going to be times that things are missed. As good as the refs are, and we had really good ones the other night, there are going to be times when calls are missed. The purpose of the challenge is to get things right, to not have the situation where an offsides leading up to a goal is the difference in a hockey game. The other thing I'd like to throw out is if their dasher was OK, we're probably not even talking about it. That was quite the bounce.”

St Louis Post Dispatch LOADED: 10.22.2017
Yeo was referring to the play that led to Colorado’s third goal, when the puck took a bad bounce off the end boards and went past goalie Carter Hutton, giving Alexander Kerfoot an empty net to shoot at.

Edmundson was on the ice and knew it was offsides, and was so confident, he stopped playing, which helped allow Colorado to get what looked like the tying goal.

“That would have looked bad on my part, for sure,” he said about if the goal had been allowed to stand. “I saw the offsides so just kind of stopped. I guess the coaches say don’t stop till you hear the whistle. I guess I could have kept playing but I was pretty confident he was offsides.”

SAD DAY

Like many Canadians, Yeo was saddened by the death on Wednesday of Gord Downie, lead singer of the Canadian rock band The Tragically Hip.

“That was a sad day,” Yeo said. “I have a lot of memories of growing up with The Hip.”

Yeo said he had seen The Tragically Hip perform several times and that at one, his wife briefly sang with Downie and the band.

“That’s how he was,” Yeo said. “He’d be right down in the crowd. He was awesome like that.”

St Louis Post Dispatch LOADED: 10.22.2017

The Athletic / Mirtle: The Leafs need to learn to win ugly – and we saw why against Ottawa

James Mirtle
5 hours ago

This game was coming for the Maple Leafs.

They had been piling up wins — six in their first seven games (and 11 of their last 13 if you go back to preseason) — and getting accolades for being the most dominant offensive team in hockey for weeks.

Posting 4.86 goals per game — when the next closest NHL team was a goal a game below that — will make headlines.

Yes, the Leafs are a dangerous team — absolutely. But they were also getting everything to go in, with an even strength shooting percentage of 14 per cent heading into Saturday in Ottawa.

The best shooting team in the NHL, Pittsburgh, has averaged 8.45 per cent at 5-on-5 the last 10 years. The best single-season mark over 82 games has been the 2009-10 Capitals at 10.4 per cent.

In a league where goalies are stopping at least 92 per cent of shots at evens, 14 per cent is video-game level shooting. It doesn’t happen. And it covered up some of the Leafs’ warts.

Well, we saw them — big and ugly — against the Sens.

“I thought this was a great game for us — a great opportunity for us — because, to me, this is what the league gets to,” Mike Babcock said after what became a 6-3 loss. “If you think you think you’re just going to toe drag and play run-and-gun, you’re not going to. Here’s a message that we’ve got to get way better than we are.”

Yeap.

You could really see that in the first two periods in Ottawa. The Leafs were trying to finesse their way through the Sens’ neutral zone landmines. They got picked apart again and again when trying long range, low-hope passes, with the play turned back into their end repeatedly early on.

The first 20 minutes was their fourth worst period in terms of possession on the season. In fact, three of the Leafs’ four worst periods have come in their last two games. They may have tuned up Jimmy Howard against Detroit on Wednesday, but that was sharp shooting (or so-so goaltending) not great team play.

The reality with this Leafs team is they’re not, as currently constituted, a great match for ‘The System’ that Ottawa coach Guy Boucher throws at teams. They’re not ready for ‘what the league gets down to’ in the playoffs. They just make too many mistakes with the puck. They seem to lack the patience required to tackle a trap.

There’s always going to be a balance here for Babcock between letting his high-end skilled players go and in setting in place the structure with which he wants them to play. It’s never going to be an either/or question; the system isn’t the team in Toronto.

But you watch games like this where the goals don’t come as easily as they did against the Red Wings, and the holes really show.

This was one of the 10.8 per cent of shots Freddy Andersen hasn’t stopped this year.

Nikita Zaitsev had his worst game of the season, after a steady start to his year. The fourth line wasn’t very good — and Babcock basically abandoned them by shuffling Mitch Marner onto other lines late in the second and throughout the third. (Moore and Martin played three minutes combined in the final 20.)

Nylander had another great game. He was all over the puck all over the ice. And his line, generally speaking, was good, outplaying the Phaneuf-Ceci pair and keying the third period comeback with a pair of goals, at even strength and on the power play.

But Erik Karlsson finished the game at 60 per cent possession and was on the ice for four goals for and only one against. He was better than Morgan Rielly and Jake Gardiner and anyone else on the Leafs’ blue line.

We obviously knew that already — a perennial Norris candidate versus a D core The Athletic had ranked the 24th best in the league — but you can see in some games how big Toronto’s need for a high end, No. 1 defenceman is.

This was a game, however, that you couldn’t put on just one group of players. Maybe Frederik Andersen wasn’t Georges Vezina — and he now has an .892 save percentage on the season, third worst among netminders with five-plus games played — but a lot of the goals against were group efforts.

A Leafs team that has been able to get inside on teams in the o-zone and generate quality chances all year really struggled to do so.

Ottawa, meanwhile, owned the centre of the ice in the Leafs’ end.

“We just kind of played right into their whole system,” Matthews said. “They kind of play that trap and just sit back and let you make a mistake and we weren’t really getting the puck in too deep. They’re obviously pretty good at their whole system and they made us pay for it.

“They kind of just bore you to death almost. They’re really good at what they do, and you get really anxious when you have the puck. You try to get it in or go through guys, and they all collapse on you and they’re going the other way. You’ve got to give credit to them.”

“We had a whole bunch of guys who were very average here tonight,” Babcock added.

It’s tough to get too down on a team that has started 6-2-0 and that remains at 53.6 per cent possession, seventh best in the NHL. There’s
But the actual home side led wire William Nylander that gave a seemingly lost game life. Patient Zero in the kid's pox on NHL goalies minutes left to play and chances sprung at both ends. when James van Riemsdyk busted Craig Anderson's shutout bid with 14 their provincial rival. enemy's barn for 2017 hundreds of card The crowded elevator shared a good laugh, but the hundreds upon hundreds of card-carrying citizens of Leafs Nation who funnelled into the energy's barn for 2017-18's first edition of the Battle of Ontario were less jovial three hours later, watching the "road" team lose a 6-3 roker to their provincial rival. The volume and cockiness of the invading Toronto supporters screamed into the rink at Volume 11 and gradually faded to silence, only to resurface when James van Riemsdyk busted Craig Anderson’s shutout bid with 14 minutes left to play and chances sprung at both ends. Peak rowdiness hit when Auston Matthews fired five-hole on Anderson— Patient Zero in the kid's pox on NHL goalies—on a give-and-go with William Nylander that gave a seemingly lost game life. But the actual home side led wire-to-wire and deserved its victory, a triumph of effort and execution.

“Go! Leafs! Go!” chants thundered loud and often. Ottawa’s Dion Phaneuf, the most recent Leafs captain, got booed lustily during a harmless carry through the neutral zone. And several sections of the crammed arena were shaded by the same blue-to-red ratio of a Blue Jays cap. (The Sens probably could’ve peeked the tarps off some of those 1,500 unused seats and collected a little more cash for their captain’s next contract on this night.) The reigning Canadian Team to Go Furthest in the Playoffs versus the Las Vegas odds-makers’ new favourite to win it all: Yes, the Battle of Ontario is back in a meaningful way, as Ottawa and Toronto both believe they have the personnel and the system to claim an Atlantic Division crown. The Leafs, a handful in the O-zone, travelled northeast with a perfect road record. The Senators, prone to giving up leads in their own barn, operate one of the stingiest defensive units in the game. The league’s most dangerous power play versus one of the most respected penalty-killing groups.

One anthem, two opposing stylistic approaches. “Ottawa’s given us a tough time,” said Toronto coach Mike Babcock. “They’re a real patient team. They live off their neutral-zone forecheck and breaking out quick and transition. You can’t feed their transition.” Which is precisely what Toronto did out the gates, stumbling in their attempts to break into Ottawa territory with pace. Toss in some nonsensical turnovers and a two-to-one ratio in shot attempts, and the Leafs were lucky to escape the first period down by only one. “If you think you’re just gonna toe-drag and play run-and-gun, you’re not gonna,” said Babcock. “It made for a long night.” Frederik Andersen was sharp early, standing tall in the face of a Johnny Oduya wind-'er-up slapper, gloving a Mike Hoffman wrister off the rush, and then snuffing Hoffman once more, point-blank on a partial breakaway early. Mark Stone cranked one off a post after hopping on one of the Leafs’ many own-zone giveaways, and Matt Martin may have blocked a shot with each of his four limbs in a single hemmed-in shift. Ottawa’s pressure paid off in the form of new guy Nate Thompson’s first as a Senator, the reward of a fourth-line poking frenzy in Andersen’s crease. The Senators doubled their lead late in Period 2 with another touch in tight. Ryan Dzingel laid a lovely tip on an Erik Karlsson point shot. Ironically, the greasy brand of goals pumped Ottawa to a 2-0 lead were the exact type of goal Sens coach Guy Boucher had praised the Leafs for generating. Pummel the net front with pucks, no matter the angle. Jam and whack and clutter the crease with bodies. Create chaos. “Their offence is not a pretty offense. It’s a gritty one,” said Boucher, with admiration, before the game. “If you look at the top two teams in the league offensively, they don’t rely on their skills. They rely on their grit with their skill—that’s very different. The Devils and Toronto are teams that put pucks at the net constantly. “Those guys have an effective offense because they have a dirty offense. Over 80 per cent of their goals are dirty offence. They do that very well, and they’re very fast.” True, but the six clogging gears of Boucher’s ever-evolving defence system can act, as they did Saturday, as centrifugal governor, decelerating the zippiest of attacks for long, frustrating stretches. “We played right into their whole system. They play that trap. They sit back and wait for you to make a mistake,” Matthews said. “They kinda just bore you death almost. They’re really good at what they do.” “Tonight was unacceptable.”

The Athletic LOADED: 10.22.2017

1079526 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Leafs, Senators show that Battle of Ontario is meaningful again

Luke Fox @lukefojvjukebox

October 21, 2017, 10:21 PM

KANATA, Ont. — Minutes before Saturday night’s puck drop, an Ottawa Senators fan stepped into a Canadian Tire Center elevator bustling with blue sweaters, scrunchen up his nose and took a whirl. “Smells like Leafs fans in here,” the man chided. “Ah, you must smell winning, then,” quipped one of the visitors clad in Maple Leaf's garb.

The crewood elevator shared a good laugh, but the hundreds upon hundreds of card-carrying citizens of Leafs Nation who funnelled into the energy’s barn for 2017-18’s first edition of the Battle of Ontario were less jovial three hours later, watching the “road” team lose a 6-3 roker to their provincial rival.

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“Tonight was unacceptable.”
CAROLINA HURRICANES
NEWS CLIPPINGS • Oct. 22, 2017

A trailing Toronto was forced to open up further as the night went on, and odd-man rushes flowed the other way. The Leafs gave the puck away an unlucky 13 times.

Piping-hot Derick Brassard smoothly took a Bobby Ryan pass off his skate and sniped his team leading fifth of the season.

“I’m having fun right now,” said Brassard, who missed all of training camp as he rehabbed his right shoulder after off-season surgery. “I didn’t have any pre-season games. Maybe it was good to just go out there and play and not think too much.”

Stone made good on his second Grade-A chance, providing an immediate response to the Matthews goal seven seconds after a Boucher timeout, and would later add an empty-netter.

That insurance was needed when Matthews set up Nylander, who cut the Sens’ lead back to one.

Then Brassard struck again.

What colour-blind joy when every goal gets an ovation.

“The game could’ve turned to our favour in the third period, but they were better than us. They competed harder than we did,” Babcock said.

The winged angel that is Karlsson set up three of Ottawa’s strikes, and through his first three games skating on half an ankle bone, the fantasy player’s dream already has six points.

“His skating is elite. The things he can do with his feet, with his mind, with the puck are exceptional. He’s a fun player to watch,” said Babcock.

“If you’re a young player, you want to be him. Now, unless you get touched by a wand by God, you’re not going to be him.”

Karlsson is back, Stone is inspired, and Brassard couldn’t look healthier.

A three-point night for each of the star players will be tempered by the bad news that Ryan fractured his right index finger and is likely out for about a month.

Still, the Senators can smell winning, too. They just trumped the high-scoring Leafs in a nine-goal, 66-shot affair.

“That team was almost in the Stanley Cup Final last year,” said Babcock. “All they’ve been hearing about is the Leafs, how great we are, and they just showed us they’re still the big boys.

“We’re not quite ready.”

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 10.22.2017

1079527 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Hockey Canada wants to recruit CHL players for Olympic team

Sonny Sachdeva
@sonny_sachdeva
October 21, 2017, 10:33 PM

Hockey Canada is considering adding junior players to the national men’s team it will send to the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang.

Sportsnet’s Elliotte Friedman reported the development during Hockey Night in Canada’s Headlines segment on Saturday, saying the Hockey Canada brass has reached out to the CHL about adding a couple of players – likely forwards – to the Olympic team.

“Right now, they’re not getting a lot of acceptance on the idea,” Friedman said. “The junior teams don’t want to lose players – they might go to the World Juniors, they don’t want to risk losing them for the Olympics too. I think there’s a hope right now that common sense will prevail, but there’s no agreement at this point in time and they do want to sort this out pretty soon.”

The Canadian squad’s management group continues to look for options to bolster an Olympic team that won’t include the usual cast of NHL participants. The league announced earlier this year that it will not allow its players to participate in the 2018 Olympics, marking the first time since 1994 that the tournament will feature non-NHLers representing their countries.

Hockey Canada sent a prospective group to compete in two August tournaments, the Sochi Hockey Open and the Nikolai Puchkov Tournament, in an effort to pin down the list of names that will populate that eventual national team. The 45 players who appeared in those tilts, including former NHLers like Mason Raymond and Ben Scrivens, either play in Europe or remain without an NHL deal.

Friedman reported earlier this month that Hockey Canada will reach out to future Hall of Famer, and current unrestricted free agent, Jarome Iginla as well, and will invite him to play for the Canadian squad at the upcoming Karjala Cup in November.
Sportsnet.ca / Canadiens determined not to panic despite early struggles

Emily Sadler
@EmmySadler
October 21, 2017, 10:43 PM

Nothing is going right for the Montreal Canadiens so far this season, but they’re not in panic mode yet.

“No question, the vultures are circling right now,” Sportsnet’s Elliott Friedman said during Saturday’s Headlines segment on Hockey Night in Canada. “It’s the biggest story in the league and probably for no good reasons. I think the sense you get just from looking around is the Canadiens are determined not to make any panic moves.”

“As you know at this point in time, GMs they throw anvils at you instead of lifelines, however they are determined not to do anything that they deem a panic move,” Friedman said.

The Canadiens are 1-6-1 through eight games this season, which has them 30th in the league—just above the winless Arizona Coyotes. These numbers are particularly jarring when you compare them to last season’s 7-0-1 start at this time last year.

Despite a record-setting number of shots in the second frame of Friday’s 6-2 loss against the Anaheim Ducks, the Canadiens’ scoring struggles continued. They rank last in goals for (12) and have the most goals against (33).

Should general manager Marc Bergevin start packing?

“Four of Montreal’s last five GM changes were handed in-season,” Friedman said. “I don’t get the sense … that there’s any desire to remove Bergevin right now. He’s under contract until 2022.”

Sportsnet’s Nick Kypreos agreed.

“As we know, the market in Montreal is a lot different than other markets and a lot of that may be dictated by the fanbase and the media,” Kypreos said. “We do know that when they continue to lose, it gets more critiqued for Bergevin. And it’s just not the ones that are questioning [Shea] Weber for P.K. [Subban], but now you start going down the list a little bit and now all of sudden a meaningless trade at the deadline like Andreas Martinsen for Sven Andrighetto all of a sudden becomes a pretty big story when you see Andrighetto be a pretty important piece to Colorado’s start to the season.”

Andrighetto, who suited up for 27 games in Montreal last season, has three goals and six points in eight games with the Avalanche so far this year.

According to Sportsnet’s Chris Johnston, the key to turning around the season is in the crease.

“They’ve got no choice than to just block out the noise. The only concern for the Canadiens should be Carey Price and getting him where he is,” Johnston said. “They’ve paid this guy $84 million, made him the richest goaltender in the league this summer, and when you see some of these goals, a couple that got by him in the six [Friday] night, it’s uncharacteristic body language from him: looking at a teammate, Karl Alzner, when the sixth goal goes in, breaking his stick across the post.”

Price’s numbers are just as uncharacteristic as his outburst in Anaheim: a 3.95 goals against average and .881 save percentage.

“If you’re betting, he’s not going to stay at an .880 save percentage all year long,” said Johnston. “I know it’s difficult, they’re coming home from a very unsuccessful road trip.”

“It’s not about trades, it’s not about panic,” he said. “It’s about getting Carey Price back to being the best goalie in the world.”

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 10.22.2017

1079530 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Oilers figuring out defence, but goals remain elusive

Mark Spector
@sportsnetspec
October 21, 2017, 5:36 PM

PHILADELPHIA — So the Edmonton Oilers are trying to get their act together. In hockey, that always starts with cleaning up its own end, which had been a disaster zone for much of this season.

For two games now, they’ve got things back under control back there. As such, goalie Cam Talbot has looked once again like the netminder we watched last spring.

Chicken or egg? Who cares? Less pucks going in means more chances to win.

Now, the problem: how to score more than once a night while maintaining this stiff, new defensive posture.

For the second straight game the Oilers scored once in regulation, but this time they were not rewarded with a chance to score another in overtime, as they were Thursday in Chicago. This time, Wayne Simmonds took advantage of some saggy defensive zone work and capped some nice passing by zipping home the winner with 2:15 left in the third period.

The Flyers won 2-1, and Edmonton fell to 2-5-0, losers of five of their last six. Alarming, Edmonton now sits 30th in the NHL with an average of exactly two goals per game this season.

“Obviously, we have to get more than one to win. We can’t rely on (Talbot) every game,” said Ryan Strome.

“We’re cleaning up the defensive part, but now we’ve got the offensive part going,” echoed his coach, Todd McLellan. “Perhaps a couple of players (Leon Draisaitl and Drake Caggiula) will be back in our lineup, who will make us a little quicker and a little more skilled than we are right now. But if not, this group has to get it done.”

Edmonton’s only goal came on a great individual effort by Pat Maroon, who battled like a demon before gaining an angle and rifling a shot past Flyers goalie Brian Elliott. It was great work, to be sure, but not the kind of goal an NHL goalie would be proud of.

The rest of the way, Elliott saw the other 23 shots he faced and was seldom called upon to be spectacular. Edmonton also gave up just 24 shots, and at least can move on to Pittsburgh knowing their defensive structure is back intact.

“I thought we did a lot of good things today,” said stay-at-home Swede Adam Larsson. “The last three games, our game has been a lot better.
We can’t get down on ourselves. This was a tough one, but we can’t get down on ourselves.”

Honestly, the first two games of this Oilers road trip have more resembled the kind of hockey played in April and May, than what we usually see in October. Low shot counts. Hard, heavy hockey with limited scoring chances. Tight checking.

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Nothing is coming easily this fall for a team picked by many to be a Stanley Cup contender this season.

“Both tonight and (Thursday), similar style games,” said centreman Ryan Nugent-Hopkins. “It’s a dagger to get scored on with two minutes left.”

“There is no such thing as a good loss, but we played well,” he summed up. “We still need to find a way to come out with two points, yeah, but we can take some good things from that game.”

Here’s another alarming stat: for five straight games the Oilers have given up the first goal, this time a power-play marker that drops their penalty kill to 72.4 per cent, 28th-ranked in the NHL. But it’s the last goal that really stung, on a play that began as a two-on-three the Flyers simply kept alive until Simmonds found twine.

“We were a little bit relaxed, and they took advantage of two feet of ice. The games are so tight right now, wins and losses can be based on that,” McLellan said. “They made a good play. They earned it. When you compare it to some of the goals we gave up earlier in the year, at least they had to work for it.”

Now on to Pittsburgh, where this staunch defensive style will come in handy. As would a few goals, of course.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 10.22.2017

1079531 Website

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 10.22.2017 Canadiens’ flaws already exposed in brutal start to 2017-18 season

Eric Engels

October 21, 2017, 8:38 AM

Rock bottom is not a place you expect to visit in Game 8 of an 82-game season.

But the Montreal Canadiens, who came to Anaheim with a 1-5-1 record, hit it about as hard as possible in the first period of their 6-2 loss to the (injury-riddled) Ducks on Friday.

There was reason to believe their embarrassing performance in the opening frame might have been the best thing to have happened to them since Claude Julien took over as head coach for Michel Therrien in February of last season. This team was in desperate need of a wake-up call, and it had come at full volume.

The Canadiens proved they had heard it when they set a franchise record for most shots in a period (30) in the second, scoring two goals in the process to claw their way back into the game.

And then reality hit and they came completely undone by allowing three goals in 1:37 of the third period.

The reality is that this group can’t possibly be more fragile than it is right now, and rebuilding its confidence will take considerably longer than the 17½ minutes between periods.

It’s understandable. The Canadiens had traveled to Orange County riding what might be considered the ugliest six-game losing streak in their 106-year existence. They had allowed 25 goals and scored just eight over that stretch. Goaltender Carey Price, widely considered to be the best in the world by his peers, the league’s executives and any hockey fan with a pulse, had said after his last start that he couldn’t continue to allow an average of four goals per game if his team would be expected to win. Captain Max Pacioretty, who has five 30-goal seasons to his name and was stuck on one goal through the first seven games, had referred to himself as the worst player on the ice after the team lost 5-1 to the Los Angeles Kings on Wednesday.

And, yet, it was unimaginable things would get worse for either of them or their teammates. So getting outscored 3-0 in the first 14 minutes of Friday’s game, en route to being out-shot 23-7 in the opening 20 and getting dummied in every other statistical category without so much of a whimper in response, was unpredictable—especially against a Ducks team that had lost two games in a row and come into this one without stars Ryan Getzlaf, Ryan Kesler, Patrick Eaves, Sami Vatanen and Hampus Lindholm available to them.

The Ducks looked cooked when top defenceman Cam Fowler went down clutching his knee on his second shift of the game.

But they saw vulnerable opponents on the other side and all but choked the life out of them before fans in attendance had enough time to make it through their first beers.

The Canadiens may rebound. They may just be able to extract every ounce of positivity there was to take from the response they offered in the middle frame of Friday’s game, notching the first 15 shots on net and suffocating their opponents all over the ice before getting to 30 and scoring two goals.

But even if they manage to rattle off seven wins in a row—here’s betting a toonie that they won’t—they can’t convince anyone they have what it takes to contend for a championship.

Sample size be damned. Every flaw on the Canadiens has already been exposed.

The defence, which Canadiens general manager Marc Bergevin (laughably) referred to in numerous pre-season interviews as better than last season’s, appears as though it was assembled to win the 2003 Stanley Cup. It’s all guts and toughness and five pairs of legs slower than they need to be to compete in today’s high-flying game.

Victor Mete, who’s as quick as a water bug, can’t make up for that. The 19-year-old rookie, who was drafted 100th overall in 2016, has been amazing. But it’s too much to ask of him.

The offence, which had produced just 11 goals in six 2017 playoff games, was downgraded as a by-product of losing the team’s best puck-moving defenceman in Andrei Markov and by forward Alexander Radulov’s departure to Dallas as an unrestricted free agent.

And Price, who’s been uncharacteristically bad, can’t solve all of that or anything else that ails the team, even if he turns it around quickly—as expected—and plays his best.

It won’t get worse than this for the Canadiens. It can’t possibly.

But even with the $8.5 million Bergevin has available to spend on improving the roster, you really have to wonder how much better it can get.
Luke Fox
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October 21, 2017, 3:11 PM

OTTAWA – Matt Martin has always made an effort to develop routines with the teammates he turns into friends.

It’s just his goofy pre-game smelling salts ritual with pal Mitch Marner—a well-orchestrated, sinus-shocking ballet of playful shoulder bumps, alarming headshakes and secret handshakes—went viral.

“Me and Mitchy, it started one game [last season] where I was using smelling salts and I just put it under his nose. He wanted it the next game, too, and then it grew into what it is now. The handshake came after. The bumping back and forth came after that. It keeps growing. It’s part of our routine, and it’s something we enjoy,” Martin explains.

“I don’t know if it really does much, but once you start doing something, it’s hard to stop. It makes you feel like it’s game time. Time to go.”

The whole scene, God’s gift to gif-makers, is incredibly silly.

It’s also incredibly important.

“Absolutely,” says Martin, Marner’s chemically imbalanced pusher. “It’s part of that bond. It’s part of coming together as a group.

“We don’t have any distractions where guys don’t like each other off the ice. We don’t let anything come between us. Everyone’s tight. At some point or another, everyone goes to dinner with everyone else. You don’t see that often in the NHL.”

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How tight is the Marner-Martin bromance?

Well, the two wingers can be seen bickering over breakfast in 2016’s Road to the Outdoor Classics documentary because Marner watched the movie Sully without Martin after they’d agreed to see it together.

Outsiders have described the connection between a 20-year-old playmaker and a 28-year-old enforcer as father-son, husband-wife and brother-brother.

Describing Martin, Marner uses the word family.

“Now that we’re on the same line, people are seeing it more,” Marner says. “He builds a lot of character in our team, especially for us young guys. He’s a lot of fun to have in this locker room and a lot of fun on that bench. He keeps the excitement level high at all times.

“He’s a person I count as a really good friend now. Kinda like a family. He’s gotten really close with me and my family.”

Skating alongside a close friend serves as a silver lining to the cloud of Marner getting dropped to the Toronto Maple Leafs fourth line this week in favour of Connor Brown.

Though Marner enters Saturday’s Battle of Ontario slotted 10th on Toronto’s stacked top nine, Martin tells us that his buddy has handled the demotion with maturity.

“He took it well in terms of how he handles it publicly. I can imagine it’s not easy for him. He’s an elite player,” Martin says.

“He’s not down. He’s not pouting around the rink, which is an impressive thing for a kid. I’ve experienced that in the past with young guys. When things don’t go their way, they fall into their own little world and pour their way through it. He’s energetic.”

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After getting as much as 18 and a half minutes of playing time in the opening week, Marner has seen the two lightest workloads of his season since the line demotion: 12:49 at Washington and 11:21 versus Detroit.

He won’t say it, but Marner is burning for more shifts.

In Period 1, he’s buzzing off smelling salts (“It’s a waking-up tool and clears your sinuses”). In Period 3, he’s geeked off his second-interimmission Red Bull.

“I’m a pretty energetic guy. Most people know that,” Marner says.

“You just want to get out there and help your team win. If you don’t, you want to be the guy on the bench who stays positive and helps the guys out. That’s what I really learned from Marty. Some nights he doesn’t get played too much or as much as he wants. It doesn’t matter. His positivity stays the same.”

Marner’s small step down the depth chart comes in the midst of a mini three-game scoring drought. Through seven contests this month, he’s never had a night on the plus side of the ledger. (As a point of comparison, in his rookie year Marner finished with an even plus/minus and only once endured a point-less streak that reached four games.)

“Today, you got Marner on the fourth line. That’s not a fourth line, scoffs Ottawa Senators coach Guy Boucher. “Whoever plays against them is going to have a lot to deal with because of their speed. Whoever plays against them on defence matters. It’s difficult to play a slower guy against that line.”

Science tells us that hauling smelling salts won’t enhance your performance; it’s essentially snorting high-powered Windex.

Just as logic dictates that Marner won’t last long on his friend’s line. Still, there is chemistry at play as the duo gears up for Saturday night in Ottawa.

“He keeps talking about getting me a goal tonight,” Martin smiles.

“Mitchy’s an important part of this hockey team. We need him. If we reach that goal we want to reach and win a Stanley Cup, he’s going to be a huge part of it. No question.”
the Leafs first on the road this season, ended their three-game win streak and moved them to 8-2 on the season.

Right from the start the Leafs had trouble getting anything going against the Senators, who’s penchant for clogging the neutral zone has been a thorn in many an opponent’s side. After 13 minutes the Leafs were at only 25 per cent puck possession.

Not helping Toronto’s cause was their brutal handling of the puck in their own zone. The Leafs turned the disc over repeatedly and put Frederik Andersen to the test against some of Ottawa’s snipers. He was up to the task initially, making 12 of 13 saves in the first frame. The opening period has been Toronto’s best all season (they had scored 16 of their 34 goals in that period going into Saturday’s game), but after 20 minutes they trailed 1-0 and were being outshot 15-8.

The Senators are so good at forcing turnovers in the neutral zone with their active sticks that the Leafs were still struggling to ever establish zone time or the cycle game they like to play in the second period.

But after another big save by Andersen, against Bobby Ryan after he walked past James van Riemsdyk and tried to go five-hole, the Leafs finally woke up. Auston Matthews’ line came out with urgency and produced Toronto’s best shift of the night to that point. Nazem Kadri’s line followed suit with another strong shift generating good pressure in the offensive zone.

But short spurts of offensive with no goals to show for it wasn’t going to slow down the Senators’ attack. Back to chasing Ottawa in their own zone, Toronto gave up two more goals, first to Ryan Dzingel and then Derick Brassard, before the period was over to take a 3-0 deficit into the third, matching their largest hole of the season.

Battle of Ontario won via ‘Guy Boucher hockey’

TSN’s Hockey analyst Jamie McLennan stops by Sportscentre to discuss the Senators 6-3 win over the Maple Leafs.

Babcock moved to a mostly three-line rotation in the third to try and spark a goal from his group, pulling Mitch Marner up from the fourth line to play with Kadri and Patrick Marleau. The Leafs’ outshot the Senators 6-1 through the first seven minutes and Riemsdyk and Matthews both scored to bring Toronto within one.

Then the Senators went back to doing what they do as well as any team in the league - being relentless in middle ice and forcing mistakes. Mark Stone intercepted a bad pass by Nikita Zaitsev and went in alone on Andersen, pocketing his own rebound to put the Senators back up by two. Zaitsev had previously given the puck away to Stone in the slot in front of Andersen, but the goalie made the save.

William Nylander scored on the power play late in the frame to keep the Leafs’ comeback hopes alive, but Brassard and Stone both scored again in the final three minutes to ice Ottawa’s first home win of the season.

Saturday was a reminder to the Leafs of what can happen when they can’t rely solely on their offence to put opponents on their heels. While they held a 66-58 edge in shot attempts by the end, it was too little, too late once they got rolling. Their goaltending duel with the decorated Washington Capitals earlier this week aside, Toronto hasn’t been in games where their forwards have been consistently stymied for so long. Ottawa nearly let them back in the game by playing soft coverage in the third, but the Leafs earned the loss by being careless with the puck and not playing with any real urgency until well into the second period.

Andersen was Toronto’s best player on the ice in the first half of Saturday’s game, giving the Leafs a chance to battle back that they didn’t use. He was sharp in the face of the Leafs’ numerous giveaways and when Ottawa was allowed to create havoc in front of his crease Andersen stayed cool despite the breakaways. As the Senators continued to pressure the Leafs, Andersen’s second half was rockier, especially on Stone’s third period goal where Andersen’s lack of rebound control facilitated the second scoring chance. It was the third time in seven starts Andersen has given up five or more goals. Toronto allowed 35 shots on goal against Andersen on Saturday, the sixth time in those seven starts he’s seen more than 30 shots. Ottawa remains the only divisional opponent Andersen has yet to beat as a member of the Leafs after going 0-1-2 against them last season. Saturday also marked his 72nd start since the beginning of 2016-17, second most by any goalie in the league.

The Matthews line with Nylander and Hyman looked most frustrated by the Senators smothering defence early, but they were also the key to Toronto’s turnaround. Matthews was playing with the most urgency of any skater on the ice from the second period on; nearly every shift his line was out they were making an impact with good passing or a timely steal. The rest of the Leafs seemed to feed off that energy and try to match it, sparking the offensive momentum in the third period. That line finished with the Leafs’ best possession numbers, with each playing coming in at nearly 60 per cent or better.

Jake Gardiner and Zaitsev had a rough night as the Leafs’ most-used defence pair. They both ended up a team-worst minus-three and were credited with five giveaways between them. Their decision-making with the puck was poor, especially in their own end, and neither stepped up often enough to challenge the Senators’ zone entries and prevent some of their better scoring chances. Gardiner seemed particularly panicked when trying to get the puck out the defensive zone, which led to further turnovers. This is just the second time all year Gardiner has been a minus (he was minus-one in Toronto’s loss to New Jersey) and Zaitsev had been at least even in every game before Saturday.

Killing the game

Toronto’s penalty kill was a rare bright spot for them against Ottawa, going 2-for-2 on the night. After a slow start to the season where the kill was too passive, those groups continue to focus on being more aggressive and it’s paying off by not only keeping pucks out, but by being a momentum generator for the team. The Leafs not only managed a couple solid shorthanded chances but they kept the Senators to the outside in the offensive zone for the most part and only gave up one quality opportunity, which Andersen was able to save. Toronto’s penalty kill is now ranked 8th in the league (85.3 per cent), up from 17th after their first four games.

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TSN.CA / Sens’ Ryan out a month with broken finger

TSN.ca Staff

Ottawa Senators forward Bobby Ryan will be sidelined for approximately a month with a fractured right index finger, the team announced after Saturday’s win against the Toronto Maple Leafs.

The 30-year-old has a bad history with hand injuries, including missing 16 games last season with hand/finger problems.

Ryan has six assists over eight games this season, his fifth in Ottawa.

The 2005 second overall pick scored just 13 goals and added 12 assists over eight games this season, his fifth in Ottawa.

The 2005 second overall pick scored just 13 goals and added 12 assists over eight games this season, his fifth in Ottawa.

The 2005 second overall pick scored just 13 goals and added 12 assists over 62 games in 2016-17, but came up clutch during the Sens’ playoff run, netting 15 points over 19 games.

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**CAROLINA HURRICANES**

**NEWS CLIPPINGS • Oct. 22, 2017**

By Mark Masters

* During Toronto’s morning skates and practices nobody seems to have more fun than Mitch Marner. He’s always bouncing off teammates, offering a high five after nice plays and constantly wearing a smile. And that hasn’t changed despite his recent shift to the fourth line. In fact, Marner insists his mindset hasn’t changed one bit.

"Definitely not," the 20-year-old said. "Just going to be the same person I always am. Always energetic, always happy. I’ve said it before, I don’t think it matters who you play with in this lineup, everyone’s got a lot of skill."

Marner’s ice time totals the last two games (12:49 in Washington, 11:21 vs Detroit) have been the lowest of his young NHL career not counting the game he left due to injury last season in Columbus.

"You just want to get out there and help the team win," said Marner, who averaged 16:49 of ice time per game last season. "If you don’t, then just be the guy on the bench that’s staying positive and helping the guys out. That’s what I’ve learned from Marty (Matt Martin). Some nights he doesn’t get played too much or as much as he wants and it doesn’t matter, his positivity stays the same and that’s something I’ve learned from him the most."

Connor Brown has scored in consecutive games since taking Marner’s spot on a line with James van Riemsdyk and Tyler Bozak and that trio will stick together for Saturday’s game in Ottawa.

The message to Marner is simple.

"We just want him to play good and play hard," said head coach Mike Babcock. "And I wouldn’t spend a whole lot of time worried about if it was him. And I’ve talked to him about that. Play hard and everything’s going to work out just fine."

For the third straight game, Mitch Marner will play on Toronto’s fourth line on Saturday in Ottawa. The last two games, Marner has logged his lowest TOI totals in his NHL career (minus the game he left due to injury last season). The new assignment has been made easier by the fact Marner is getting a chance to play with close buddy Matt Martin.

On Saturday, Marner will remain on a line with Martin and Dominic Moore, who will replace Eric Fehr in the lineup against the Senators as the fourth-line centre rotation continues.

"It’s got to be hard," said Martin. "I mean, he’s a superstar-calibre player and things aren’t going great right now. But, he’s always positive, always happy and excited to get out there. Whatever opportunity he gets, he goes out there and tries to make the most of it. He never gets too down. I think he always comes in with a positive attitude and it’s no secret that he’s a superstar player so he’ll be fine."

Marner and Martin are very different players with, usually, very different roles. So, this rare chance to play together is one that Marner has been eager to embrace.

"Yeah, I love it," Marner said. "He’s a guy that I really got close with this past year. I think a lot of people really underestimate his skills with the puck and just what he does on the ice. As a person that gets to see him in day and day out and knows what his qualities are like, I really enjoy playing with him. He’s a person that I count as a really good friend and now even like family. He’s gotten close to me and my family."

"Forget the friend aspect of it," Martin said, "to play with an elite player like that (is fun). Every time he has the puck on his stick he’s dangerous and when he gets speed with it you never know what he’s going to do when you’re playing him on defence. We just want to give him the puck as much as possible and go to the net and put our stick down. We know he loves to pass and loves to make plays and hopefully we can contribute tonight."

The bond between Martin and Marner has led to a rather elaborate pre-game ritual featuring smelling salts, handshakes and bouncing around on the bench.

"It originally was just the smelling salts," Martin said with a smile, "and then it was like the smelling salts twice and then three times and then the handshake and then bumping back and forth so it keeps growing. I guess. I don’t know if we’ll add anything else to it, but we have fun with it and we’ll continue to do it."

Martin is a bit more aggressive when it comes to the final element of the ritual.

"Mitch doesn’t bounce too much," the 28-year-old admits. "He just kind of takes the bump and (Zach) Hyman (sitting beside Martin) doesn’t want to get involved all that often."

Maple Leafs forwards Matt Martin and Mitch Marner discuss their pre-game ritual, which involves smelling salts and bouncing off of each other.

* Babcock likes to break down the season into five-game segments. Well, after Toronto won the first two games in the season’s second segment, the coach is zeroing in even more. Toronto’s next three opponents – Ottawa (2.29 GA/G), Los Angeles (1.67 GA/G) and Carolina (2.40 GA/G) – all rank in the top four in goals against, which presents the high-scoring Leafs with a big challenge.

"The next three teams we play don’t give up any goals so you got to get your head around how you’re going to play," Babcock noted. "It’s no different to the playoffs where you have a series where you got to adjust to (who) you’re playing. We have a three-game series here with L.A., Carolina and Ottawa and they all make it hard on you."

The Leafs lost three of four games against Ottawa last season although two of those losses came after regulation.

"They’re a real patient team," Babcock said. "They live off their neutral-zone forecheck and breaking out quick and transition so you can’t feed their transition. We had good games against them last year but, with the exception of one, they found a way to win all the time."

The Maple Leafs lead the league in scoring so far this season (4.86 G/G), but the next three games will present a huge challenge. Toronto will face Ottawa (2.29 GA/G), Los Angeles (1.67 GA/G) and Carolina (2.40 GA/G) and all three teams rank in the top four in goals against.

Head coach Mike Babcock is calling on his players to take notice and make the necessary adjustments.

Erik Karlsson picked up seven points in the four games against Toronto last season. The smooth-skating Swede has long been on Babcock’s radar.

"He’s a star," Babcock said. "I’ve always thought he was just outstanding. When they drafted him, (former Senators assistant GM) Tim Murray told me he was going to be just like (Niklas) Kronwall. Obviously, he’s a different player than Kronwall. His skating is elite. The things he can do with his feet, with his mind, with the puck are exceptional. He’s a fun player to watch and if you’re a young player you want to be him. Now, unless you get touched by a wand by God, you’re not going to be him. But, he’s a special player to watch. He’s fun for the league."

The Senators say they’re in for a big test when they host the Maple Leafs tonight, and after blowing a two-goal lead against the Devils they’re focused on playing a full 60 minutes.
CAROLINA HURRICANES
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1079536  Websites

TSN.CA / Oilers’ Yamamoto looks like solid bet to stick around

By Frank Seravalli

PHILADELPHIA — Leon Draisaitl is in no rush, and frankly, neither is coach Todd McLellan.

With Draisaitl erring on the side of caution nursing his first career concussion, McLellan has the luxury of time to sort out the conundrum every NHL coach would love to entertain: Where exactly does Draisaitl fit in the Oilers' lineup now?

Rookie Kailer Yamamoto has raised that suddenly legitimate question over the last three games, making Draisaitl no longer simply a foregone conclusion to slide back into his familiar spot on hockey's top line.

Who could’ve seen that coming?

Even as recently as 10 days ago, Yamamoto seemed destined for a one-way ticket back to WHL Spokane, a nice training camp surprise who appeared overwhelmed in a two-game taste of the NHL.

The scrappy 19-year-old has arguably been Edmonton's third-best forward since, behind only Connor McDavid and Ryan Nugent-Hopkins.

Yamamoto is not just surviving with the Oilers. He is thriving. He carries a three-game point streak into Saturday’s matinee against the Flyers.

"I feel a lot different," Yamamoto said Friday. "A lot less nervous. A lot more comfortable. I’m starting to make plays that I normally would make."

The only thing missing is his first NHL goal - a glass ceiling Yamamoto now needs to break through with a high-eight in Chicago on Thursday night.

McDavid and McLellan swear he’s "close." He has three assists in five total games.

"His eight shots come from dangerous areas," McLellan said. "In my opinion, it wasn’t just [Thursday], it was games prior where he’s been very effective in and around the blue paint for a small man. So eventually, the puck is going to go in the net."

McLellan was the only one to mention Yamamoto’s 5-foot-8, 155-pound frame on Friday, because it really hasn’t been a talking point since opening night. That’s because it hasn’t been an issue.

Yamamoto has had no problem navigating around and through the NHL’s heavyweights, even as just the third player under 160 pounds in the last decade. Calgary’s Johnny Gaudreau (150) and Buffalo’s Tyler Ennis (148) were the only players lighter than Yamamoto, according to Elias Sports Bureau.

Yamamoto shrugged. It’s always been "the question" for the rail-thin teen who still wears braces.

"I’ve never really looked at my size," he said. "My whole life, I’ve been the smallest kid. I know people look at it, but it doesn’t bother me."

Four games away from his first NHL rookie crossroads, Yamamoto has put the Oilers in a position where they would be creating a hole inside their top two lines if he were to be sent back to junior to preserve the first year on his entry-level contract.

"There’s no question about that," McLellan said.

The question for the Oilers’ brass now takes on a longer view: regardless of how Yamamoto looks now, will his frame be able to physically withstand the rigours of an 82-game season? He needs to not only keep up, but remain on those top two lines to make it worth keeping him.

There are four separate seasons inside an 82-game schedule, four partitions where the action ramps up another level: before Christmas, after Christmas, down the stretch and the Stanley Cup playoffs.

Three seasons ago, Draisaitl only made it to the "second" season as a rookie. He stuck with the Oilers for 37 games before returning to Kelowna. His skating could not keep up. Sending Draisaitl back to the WHL before 40 games elapsed actually ended up saving the Oilers one fewer year of unrestricted free agency to buy in his $68 million deal.

That long of a dollar view is not top of mind for GM Peter Chiarelli now, not as long as Yamamoto is helping drive play.

Yamamoto has figured out in short order that McDavid’s right winger must not only need to keep pace and think the game at a high level, but he also needs to become the triggerman.

"Last game, I finally figured out that I needed to shoot more," Yamamoto said. "I think I was looking for Connor a little bit too much. It finally clicked. Patty [Maroon] generates a lot of space in the zone for me and him … We all do our own little things [well], but we ended up working together pretty good."

For now, Yamamoto says he isn’t sweating the nine-game rite of passage, the decision is barely a week away. He said Friday he knows the Oilers will make the decision that is "best for the team," which makes him comfortable.

That he’s even in this position - six months after checking into the NHL draft combine at 148 pounds, four months after becoming the smallest first-round pick in league history, one month after few gave him a realistic shot in training camp - makes you want to not bet against him sticking around at least a little a while longer.

"He’s been a very effective player for us," McLellan said. "And he seems to be improving every night."

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