



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 1, 2017



Canes Searching for Consistency

Team posted 4-4-2 record in October

by Michael Smith [@MSmithCanes](#) / CarolinaHurricanes.com

October 31st, 2017

Trick or treat?

For the Carolina Hurricanes, it was a little bit of both in October.

The Canes finished the month with a 4-4-2 record, earning 10 of a possible 20 points. It's right at hockey .500, a threshold they haven't crossed over in October since 2008 (5-2-2, 12 points). It's not great and it's not bad, either - it's just fine.

"Consistently inconsistent," head coach Bill Peters said. "We haven't strung together a solid 60 minutes as often as we'd like. We played 10 times, and there's probably two games out of there where you can say, from start to finish that's how we're supposed to look. We've looked like we want to look in stretches, but not consistently."

The typically grueling State Fair road trip often dominates the October schedule for the Hurricanes. This year was a bit different in that the Canes opened with two games at home before hitting the road, and the weeklong trip wasn't too demanding. A lot of miles were logged in the air, yes, but the schedule wasn't too compact. In fact, the team played just one of its 18 back-to-back sets in October.

In all, the 10-game October slate appeared pretty favorable for the Canes, who played five games at home and five games on the road. The team posted a 3-2-0 record on the road, winning three of four games in Canada, but only managed a 1-2-2 mark at home.

"We're going to need to win at home," [Jordan Staal](#) said after Sunday's 4-3 shootout loss to the Anaheim Ducks. "Just moving our legs, being aggressive and not waiting for the game to come to you. Take control of it right away. I think we've been coming out flat too often. It's not good enough."

Seven (eight if you consider the game against Tampa Bay less a week ago that was 2-1 until empty-net goals unraveled things late) of the Canes' 10 games in October were decided by just a goal. The team posted a 2-3-2 record (or 2-4-2, depending on that Tampa Bay game) in those games.

"Three (goals) is good enough if you defend properly. We're giving up too many goals and too many easy goals," Peters said. "I would love to get to four, five or six and keep your foot on the gas, but giving up three and four a night isn't a recipe for success."

"We've been in some tight games and haven't got that extra push to get us on top in those scenarios," [Justin Faulk](#) said after Sunday's game. "We're getting chances. We need to score goals."

Seven of the Canes' 10 games in October featured Western Conference opponents. Of the three intraconference games, just one was against a divisional opponent, a 2-1 overtime loss to the Columbus Blue Jackets.

"I think it's a hard schedule to put together, and that's why you see some of the things you see throughout the year," Peters said.

That balance will shift in November, with eight of the team's 13 games featuring Eastern Conference opponents and five of those eight games being divisional contests.

Points are worth the same amount each game, but the weight is magnified when a team can snag two points while preventing a divisional opponent from doing the same.

"There's a familiarity between the two teams, so that will play a factor," Peters said. "Whether it tightens up or stays loose, I don't know."

Before the Canes get to that meat of their schedule, they'll begin November with two games out west against the Colorado Avalanche and Arizona Coyotes.

"Points are huge. We need to get points, there's no question about it," Peters said. "If we go out on the road and play the right way, I like our chances."

Playing the right way is what the Hurricanes are in search of on a consistent basis. The framework is there. The execution is a work in progress with hopefully more treat than trick ahead.

"I just know it's hard to win. In order to win, there's a certain way you have to play. When you play that way, you're going to give yourself a chance," Peters said. "We have a template. When we play the way we're designed to play, we're very efficient and successful. When we deviate from that, we're very random."



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SB NATION
CANES COUNTRY

Hurricanes Prospect Corner: Returning Home and Breaking Out

Martin Necas goes back to Europe, Elynuik in the midst of a breakout season and Helvig remains among the OHL's most important players.

by [kleblanchockey@kleblanchockey](mailto:klebnanchockey@kleblanchockey) Oct 31, 2017, 3:03pm EDT

Prospect Corner is our regular look at the [Hurricanes](#) of the future, checking in with prospects in juniors, college and in Europe.

Necas returned to Brno

It was no secret that Martin Necas's stellar camp and preseason caught the Hurricanes coaches and front office a bit by surprise. By all accounts, the team was thrilled that the talented center fell to them in June, but no one expected to have to make a decision about his NHL future as early as the 2017-18 season.

Just over a week ago the 2017 first rounder was returned to his club in the Czech Republic for the season, following a two-game stint in the NHL and some nights taking in life as a professional in the press box. Ultimately, it's the best thing for Necas's development, especially if he wasn't going to get regular playing time in Carolina. By heading back to Europe, the young pivot will be able to play in all situations, refining his game in his home country. In two games back in the Czech Republic, Necas has already scored once, and during this campaign he will look to eclipse his seven goals and 15 points from a year ago.

Elynuik leading the Chiefs

Maybe more than any other prospect, I was interested to see how Hudson Elynuik's season unfolded in 2017-18 for a couple of reasons. As a physically imposing 20-year-old, this season should have been one where the 2016 third rounder could breakout offensively. Secondly, I was interested to see how the big center reacted to not having Kailer Yamamoto on his wing. Edmonton's first rounder created so much offense for Spokane over the past couple seasons that it was going to be an adjustment not having such a talented player in the lineup.

Thus far, Elynuik has passed both tests with relative ease. His 22 points lead all Spokane players, with his shots (45),

goals (10), power play points (7) and game-winning goals (4) all also tops on the team. As of late, the center has taken things to another level, recording multi-point games in five of his last six contests, totaling 13 points and is averaging over two points-per-game in that span. Since his draft season, he has increased his points-per-game rate each season, from .79 in 2015-16, to 1.14 a year ago, to 1.38 currently. That pace, if it continues would likely find Elynuik in the top-15 scorers in the Western Hockey League at season's end.

Helvig continuing winning ways

A season ago, Jeremy Helvig was one of the Ontario Hockey League's most heavily relied-upon goaltenders, starting an OHL-high 59 games for Kingston. This season appears to be no different, as the young netminder has been in between the pipes for 11 of the Fronts' first 14 games.

In his 11 starts, Helvig has won five times, and has faced nearly 30 shots per game when he has been in net. He ranks seventh in both shots per minute (.54) for goaltenders who have faced 350-plus shots this season, and goals against average (2.85) for goaltenders who have played in 10-plus games. Last season, Kingston finished last in the OHL with 179 goals scored, but still managed to make the playoffs in large part due to Helvig's strong play. If early season results are any indications, it appears that the Fronts will need a similar effort from their top goaltender if they are going to make a return trip to the postseason.

Bean will represent WHL in Canada-Russia Series

Starting next week, the annual CIBC Canada-Russia series will start in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan with the WHL facing Russia to kick off the six game, 10-day event. [Jake Bean](#) was one six WHL defensemen chosen to represent his league in the series, and was named an alternate captain. He is one of seven NHL first rounders on the roster.

Bean has had a solid start to his 2017-18 season, ranking among the top-20 scoring defensemen in the WHL with 12 points. His 11 assists tie Bean for sixth among WHL blueliners, and his 42 shots rank seventh. The offensive defenseman has failed to record a point in just three contests this season, and is currently riding a five-game point streak, and a three game multi-point streak.



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Kuokkanen Ready To Shine With Checkers

Written by Nicholas Niedzielski

Published: October 31, 2017

The next wave of offensive talent for Carolina is being developed in Charlotte, and now another highly-touted rookie is joining the mix.

Janne Kuokkanen, a second-round pick from 2016, is only a year removed from his lone season starring for the London Knights of the Ontario Hockey League, but he impressed enough over the summer to make the Hurricanes' opening night roster.

"I had a good preseason," said Kuokkanen. "I felt good in my first games."

Injuries up front opened the door for the 19-year-old to stick around for an extended period of time with Carolina, but through the team's first 10 games of the season Kuokkanen only appeared in four, serving as a healthy extra more often than not.

Given his age and experience level, the decision was made to assign the rookie to the AHL where he could properly develop his game.

"They told me that it's good for me to get some ice time and get some scoring," said Kuokkanen. "It's not good for young players to sit for lots of games in a row."

This, of course, isn't the forward's first time with the Checkers. Kuokkanen joined the team last season after his Knights were eliminated and spent the opening round of the Calder Cup playoffs with Charlotte, making his North American pro debut in Game 3.

Despite it being a short stint, Kuokkanen's time in the AHL proved to be a jumping-off point to his early success this year.

"Oh yeah it was great," said Kuokkanen. "I spent a week

here and I learned what it is to be a pro athlete. So now I'm here and it's easier to start to work."

Kuokkanen will be a rare teenager in the AHL, but has shown over the first month of the season that he's not out of his element in either zone in the pro game.

"He's a good hockey player," said Checkers assistant coach Peter Andersson. "He's got good skill."

"I can bring some offensive play," said Kuokkanen. "But I'm a smart player in the D zone too."

The Finnish-born center hops onto a Checkers team that has quickly proven to be offensively gifted from top to bottom, so the addition of the young skater only improves that.

"We have a pretty good team here," said Kuokkanen. "I played with some of these guys in Traverse City a couple of times. There's lots of skill, lots of power, lots of speed. I'm really happy to be a part of that."

It can sometimes be tough for young players who make the NHL out of camp to transition to the AHL, but that will be a key to Kuokkanen's continued growth as a pro.

"Of course he would like to still be up there," said Andersson. "But that's the way hockey is. He has to come down here and work hard and be productive. He'll be seeing a lot of ice time and he's a young player so he needs that."

Heading into what could shape up to be the Checkers' toughest road trip of the year, Kuokkanen should have no problem meshing with his new club.

"He's going to fit in good," said Andersson. "He's a good hockey player so you could fit him into whatever kind of team you have. A good player is always a good fit."

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1080939 Colorado Avalanche

Avalanche waits to prove its improvement, adrift in a stunted early NHL schedule

By NICK GROKE | ngroke@denverpost.com | The Denver Post

The Avalanche dons a small handful of colored sweaters when the team skates at its suburban training rink: black and white, blue and silver, a bit of burgundy. Not a lot of variety. Their jerseys are boring because practice is boring. There is only so much an NHL team can do when they aren't competing in games.

A player's got to play. And the Avalanche is stuck in the first of three long stretches between games over the next three weeks. The Avs play just three games in 12 days, five games in the next 17. They are bidding their time, waiting for a chance to prove they are improving.

"I don't like it, but it's what we've been given," Colorado center Matt Duchene said. "What is it, we play five games the next three weeks or something crazy? I like to get into a rhythm. This feels like the preseason right now. You just have to try to get better at practice."

At 6-5, the Avs are tied with the Winnipeg Jets for third place in the Central Division, an early indicator of progress for a team that finished with the NHL's worst record last season. But by the time Colorado plays host to the Eastern Conference's Carolina Hurricanes on Thursday at the Pepsi Center, the Avs will be the most idle team in the league.

Despite a stunted early schedule — 11 games in a month — the Avs are showing signs of improvement. Where last season they ranked at or near the bottom of the NHL by most major statistical measures, including goals scored, goals allowed, power play percentage and penalty kill, the Avs this season are trending upward.

Their 34 goals scored (17th) and 34 allowed (16th), for a team with a record one game above even, are a clear distinction of middling. That is better than the end of last season, sure. And their strength of schedule is the seventh toughest in the league. But on Nov. 1 last year, the Avs were also one game better than .500 before eventually folding.

"We're really at the same spot we were at this time last year. We know that. We're not dwelling on that, but we are wary of it," Duchene said. "We know that we haven't done anything yet. Does it feel better than last year? Well yeah. Compared to last year, it feels like we're in first place. But in the grand scheme of things, we're 6-5. It's one game above .500. We could be 5-6 just as easily. That's the way it's been this year. A consistency is something we need to find."

That consistency, Duchene said, cannot be found in a bucket of pucks at practice. The Avs can only truly grow during games. The problem, Duchene said, can come when competitive players start measuring

themselves by the number of meaningless goals they score in a training session.

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"Sometimes you can put too much stock into practice when you're not playing. That's a trap," he said. "There are some things you want to get better at, but you can also beat a dead horse. When you're practicing eight days out of 10, there's only so much you can work on this time of year without experiencing things in games. The coaches are doing a good job keeping us on our toes at practice, but I'm sure it's a challenge for them too."

Duchene's eight points, on three goals and five assists, has centered Colorado's second line, with a rotating cast of wingers beside him.

Mikko Rantanen, who started at right wing on the Avs' first line in their 6-3 victory over the Chicago Blackhawks on Saturday in Denver, leads the team with 10 points, on three goals and seven assists. If there is one player who might fear losing momentum amid the inconsistency of games and the overabundance of practice, it's Rantanen. But he will plow forward.

"Of course you'd like to play more," Rantanen said. "But we have to take care of practices, too. There's a lot to improve."

Denver Post: LOADED: 11.01.2017

1080918 Arizona Coyotes

Preview: Coyotes at Red Wings, 4 p.m., FOX Sports Arizona

FOX Sports Arizona

DETROIT — A pair of teams committed to youth movements meet for the second time of the young season Tuesday night when the Detroit Red Wings host the Arizona Coyotes.

Two years ago, the Coyotes made a commitment to youth, opting to go with younger players and even to get youthful in the front office, where John Chayka, then 26, was hired as general manager.



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On their roster, the Coyotes list a dozen players 25 or younger, including a pair of teenagers, and to say there are growing pains would be an understatement.

Arizona comes to Detroit with a 1-10-1 record. The Coyotes, who finally won via a 4-3 overtime decision over the Philadelphia Flyers on Monday, haven't qualified for postseason play since reaching the Western Conference final in 2011-12.

"We're in a rut as an organization — not (just) these (12) games, but for five or six years," Chayka told ESPN.com. "You're trying to build up pieces that are going to be game-changers. That's how you win. It's not through mediocre talent or aged-out veterans.

"We've got a few (game-changers), and we have to wait for them to evolve."

At the top of that list might be center Clayton Keller, who leads all NHL rookies in goals (eight) and points (12) but is also minus-10.

Goaltending has been another sore spot for the Coyotes. Antti Raanta, acquired from the New York Rangers to be the No. 1 netminder, is on injured reserve with a lower body injury. Louis Domingue, Raanta's backup, was assigned to the Tucson Roadrunners after clearing waivers. He was 0-6 with a 4.33 goals-against average and an .856 save percentage. Scott Wedgewood, acquired from the New Jersey Devils on the weekend, made his Coyotes debut against the Flyers and got credit for the victory.

The season is also off to a shaky start in Detroit. A 3-2 shootout win over the Florida Panthers on Saturday ended the Red Wings' six-game losing skid. After opening the season with an impressive 4-1-0 record, including a 4-2 win over the Coyotes in Arizona on Oct. 12, Detroit is 1-5-1.

Looking to find some cohesion within his club, Detroit coach Jeff Blashill indicated he planned to lock in his forward units for the next several games, assembling Dylan Larkin (age 21), Anthony Mantha (23) and Andreas Athanasiou (23) as a kid line among the Red Wings' top six forwards.

That trio combined for a goal by Athanasiou in the win at Florida.

"Certainly with the three young guys together, it gives them a chance when they're going, they can play lots," Blashill said. "But they've also got to carry the line on their own a little bit as a group.

"I think they're ready for it, I think they're ready to be difference-makers in the league."

Defenseman Danny DeKeyser, out the past nine games with a sprained ankle, won't be back in the Detroit lineup anytime soon. DeKeyser is being shut down for a week to allow his ankle to fully heal.

"As he was progressing, as we ramped up to more live battle level, and all of a sudden it started to hurt him more," Blashill said Monday. "We re-evaluated today and docs want to hold him out a week and then see where it's at right now.

"He'll stay off the ice for a week. Really, it's 10 days at least before he'd be available for a game, so 10 to 21 days is what it looks like right now."

foxsportsarizona.com LOADED: 11.01.2017

1080919 Arizona Coyotes

Slow start dooms Arizona Coyotes in Detroit against Red Wings

BY CRAIG MORGAN

DETROIT — The Coyotes were playing the last game of a five-game road trip on Tuesday in Detroit. It was the second game of a back-to-back set, they were without injured defenseman Niklas Hjalmarsson and they were coming off an emotional first win against the Philadelphia Flyers in overtime on Monday.

Those circumstances demanded two basic requirements. Forward Derek Stepan said they needed to simplify their game while they found their legs, and the Coyotes needed their goaltender to hold the fort early.

Neither need was fulfilled. Detroit outshot Arizona 18-7 in the first period and recent acquisition Scott Wedgewood couldn't deliver an encore performance in goal in a 5-3 loss to the Red Wings at Little Caesars Arena.

"We weren't ready to start," coach Rick Tocchet said. "Detroit was. They were a little quicker than us."

Gustav Nyquist scored on a knuckling wrist shot from the high slot through some traffic at 1:29 of the first period for a 1-0 lead. Luke Glendening scored on a well-placed wrist shot from the right circle that beat Wedgewood high to the blocker side at 2:37 for a 2-0 lead.

Just when the Coyotes had regained some life on a Jason Demers goal at 11:36 of the second period, Wedgewood misplayed a puck, Dylan Larkin stripped Oliver-Ekman-Larsson in front of the net and the puck eventually ended up on Anthony Mantha's stick for an easy tap-in at 13:03 for a 3-1 lead.

Coyotes defenseman Luke Schenn accidentally redirected Larkin's crossing pass past Wedgewood and into the net six minutes later and the Wings were on their way to a season sweep of the Coyotes that dropped Arizona to 1-11-1 this season and 1-4 on this now concluded five-game road trip.

"That's one that you kind of want to have early in a game and not get the guys down," Wedgewood said of the first Detroit goal. "That's something I've got to clean up."

Wedgewood settled in and made some strong saves, including a highlight-reel glove save on Glendening. Arizona got third-period goals from Nick Cousins and Clayton Keller's ninth of the season to cut the lead to 4-3 with 3:17 left in the game, but Darren Helm scored into an empty net for Detroit at 18:38.

Keller had two more points on Tuesday to extend his point-scoring streak to seven games (six goals, five assists). He leads all rookies with 15 points in 13 games, but the Coyotes are allowing a league-high 4.31 goals per game and they allowed 19 goals in the four losses on this trip.

"There is a lot of good things that we did," Stepan said of the road trip. "I'm a firm believer in staying positive. That's the way I roll. I'm a positive guy and I've got nothing but positive things to take out each night.

"We've still got to push for that 60. That's the biggest glaring hole for me. You can't have any mental lapses. You've got to be sharp for 60 minutes otherwise, as our record shows, you won't be able to win many hockey games."

Arizona Sports LOADED: 11.01.2017

1080920 Arizona Coyotes

Hjalmarsson out; Coyotes re-assign Domingue and recall Hanley

BY MATT LAYMAN | OCTOBER 31, 2017 AT 9:45 AM



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The Arizona Coyotes announced Tuesday they had re-assigned goaltender Louis Domingue to the AHL and recalled defenseman Joel Hanley.

Additionally, defenseman Niklas Hjalmarsson is out with an upper-body injury. His timetable for return is unknown, and Adam Clendening will be in the lineup on Tuesday at Detroit in Hjalmarsson's absence, according to 98.7 FM Arizona's Sports Station's Craig Morgan.

Hjalmarsson left the game Monday night as the Coyotes picked up their first win of the season.

"He got banged up pretty good," head coach Rick Tocchet told Morgan on Tuesday. "I don't know how long he'll be out. It's a big loss for us."

Meanwhile, Domingue heads to the Tucson Roadrunners after clearing waivers on Monday, which was required for him to be eligible to return to the AHL.

The Coyotes are soon expecting the return of starting goaltender Antti Raanta, who has played only three games this season due to a lower-body injury. The team also acquired netminder Scott Wedgewood on Saturday in a trade and recalled goalie Hunter Miska.

Domingue played in seven games for the Coyotes this season (four starts) and went 0-6 with an .856 save percentage.

The call-up of Hanley adds to the Coyotes' defensive depth with the loss of Hjalmarsson. Arizona is already without defenseman Jakob Chychrun this year as he underwent knee surgery to repair an offseason injury. Chychrun has resumed skating, but a timetable for his return is still uncertain.

In parts of two NHL seasons with the Montreal Canadiens, Hanley has appeared in 17 games with no goals and six assists, as well as a -3 plus-minus rating. He had no goals and four assists in seven games with the Roadrunners this year.

Arizona Sports LOADED: 11.01.2017

1080956 Florida Panthers

How unusual was the Panthers' top line's performance in Monday's 8-5 loss?

Matthew DeFranks

For those searching for optimism amid the Florida Panthers' 8-5 loss to Tampa Bay on Monday night, the bright spot is easy to find. Florida's top line of Jonathan Huberdeau, Aleksander Barkov and Evgenii Dadonov combined for 10 points as each scored a goal.

Huberdeau extended his point streak to six games with a goal and two assists. Barkov tied a career-high with four points as he had a goal and three assists. Dadonov's three points were a career-high as he tallied a goal and two assists.

"We scored a couple goals, but that doesn't matter right now," Barkov said Monday night. "We let them score eight goals. It's a team game. It doesn't matter how many goals you score if you lose. We got zero points and that's all that matters."

Juxtaposing the trio's performance with a three-goal loss can be a tough outcome to swallow for the team. Here are some facts and figures on their output:

* The Panthers never had three players combine for 10 points in a loss during their franchise history before Monday night.

* This was Huberdeau's 10th game with at least three points. It was the first loss.

* This was the second game in which Barkov and Huberdeau each tallied at least three points. The other one was Florida's 7-0 blowout over Chicago in March last season.

* The Panthers are now 10-2-1 when Barkov and Huberdeau each have multi-point games.

* This was the third time in franchise history a Panthers player had four points in a loss. The other two were Joe Nieuwendyk on April 11, 2006 in a 6-5 loss to Toronto, and Ray Whitney on Oct. 30, 2000 in a 6-5 loss to New Jersey.

* In the past three NHL seasons, there have been nine games in which a team lost despite having a four-point scorer that game. Bob Boughner was behind the bench for four of them — three times as a San Jose assistant and Monday as the Panthers head coach.

*Barkov, Huberdeau and Dadonov each have 14 points this season. Only one other Panther (Vincent Trocheck) has double-digit points.

"They're the only line going for us, really, to be honest with you," Boughner said. "They've been good. They've been consistent. They've been good and that's the problem we got to find [a solution for] is consistency from every line. I've always said we're a four-line team and we need all four lines going."

As the top line combined for 10 points, the rest of the Panthers teams totaled two goals and two assists.

"You can't win against Tampa Bay if you only got one line going and a couple guys in the back end," Boughner said. "It's a lesson learned, hopefully."

Free tickets for veterans Thursday night

Veterans and active military personnel can receive free tickets to Thursday night's game against the Blue Jackets (7:30 p.m., BB&T Center) as the Panthers celebrate Military Appreciation Night. Valid identification is required, and companions of veterans can purchase tickets for \$20 at the box office on Thursday. ...

The Panthers are also hosting a food drive Thursday night. Fans can bring non-perishable items to the JetBlue Tarmac before the game.

Sun Sentinel LOADED: 11.01.2017

1080957 Florida Panthers

The Next Day Look: Tampa Bay Lightning 8, Florida Panthers 5

Matthew DeFranks

The Florida Panthers lost to the Tampa Bay Lightning, 8-5, on Monday night at the BB&T Center in Sunrise. The eight goals allowed were a season-high for the Panthers and snapped Florida's brief two-game point streak as James Reimer suffered through his worst performance since taking over for the injured Roberto Luongo.

The Panthers are now 4-6-1 with nine points, on pace for 67 points.

Here's another look at Monday night's game.

The story

Lightning 'a hell of a lot better' than Panthers in beating Florida, scoring eight goals

Telling number

8. The obvious connection between the number eight and Monday night's game is that the Panthers gave up eight goals against Tampa Bay. But in



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the larger scope, it was the eighth time in franchise history that the Panthers allowed at least eight goals in a game, and the first time since an 8-2 loss in Winnipeg on Jan. 13, 2015. It was only the second time in franchise history the Panthers yielded eight goals at home. Among the eight games, it was the only one that was within a three-goal margin.

Under the radar quote of the game

"We're not as deep as other teams, so that's why we need everybody," Panthers coach Bob Boughner said.

The Panthers got a big night from their top line of Jonathan Huberdeau, Aleksander Barkov and Evgenii Dadonov, but got little contribution elsewhere. Huberdeau, Barkov and Dadonov combined for 10 points, marking the first time in franchise history the Panthers had three players total 10 points in a loss. Each tallied a goal as Barkov racked up three assists. The rest of the Panthers roster had two goals and two assists combined.

Assist of the game

Evgenii Dadonov repays Aleksander Barkov for a pass during the Anaheim game, whirling a no-look pass from the corner to the center of the ice for Barkov to hammer home. On Thursday against the Ducks, Dadonov was on the receiving end of a nearly identical feed from Barkov.

The pass helped Dadonov to a three-point night, and the top line trio is each now tied for the team-lead with 14 points this season.

Saves of the game

In an otherwise forgettable game for James Reimer, he made a nice early stop to prevent Tampa Bay's Brayden Point from scoring about halfway through the first period. Point got in behind Panthers defenseman Mike Matheson and tried to finish on his forehand, but was denied by Reimer's glove. Reimer only made 14 saves on 19 shots on goal before he was removed midway through the second period.

Lightning goaltender Andrei Vasilevskiy deserves a mention for his stop of Huberdeau in the third period. Barkov circled the net and fed Huberdeau in front of the net before a sprawled Vasilevskiy made the save.

Shot heat map (via Natural Stat Trick)

The Panthers didn't tally a ton of shots on Monday, registering 23 on goal and attempting just 48, with only a slight concentration in front of the Lightning net. For the Lightning, who struck twice on the power play, its map obviously widens when accounting for all situations instead of just 5-on-5 play.

Sun Sentinel LOADED: 11.01.2017

1081029 Websites

The Athletic / Bourne: A closer look at Erik Karlsson's minus-six night, with blame assigned accordingly

Justin Bourne

What Erik Karlsson accomplished Monday night has only been accomplished one other time in the past six years, and just a handful of other times in the last decade. He managed to finish with a plus/minus of dash-six in the Montreal Canadiens 8-3 blowout over the Ottawa Senators. He was actually on the ice for seven against, with one being a Habs power-play goal. Minus six!

It's so rare because:

You obviously need a team to score at least six times at even strength or short-handed, which isn't very common.

One player needs to be on the ice for all of them against, and none for.

You have to be talented enough for your coach to put you back on the ice when you're already minus five, which must be a little asking a dog near an electric fence to make a sixth attempt at running through it. That's why the list of six players in the past 10 years includes talented players such as Ryan Suter, Claude Giroux, and now the Sen's perennial Norris Trophy candidate. (Also, shoutout to Chris Butler and Doug Wilson – yes, that Doug Wilson – for being the only two guys to run up dash-sevens in the past 30 years.)

But still, that all sounds a little dramatic, I admit. Was it that bad? Plus/minus is a flawed stat, particularly with a small sample, so I couldn't help but wonder: just how bad was it for Karlsson? Is he being made to look bad here by luck, teammates or otherwise?

So I decided to dive in. Below are the six minuses that Erik Karlsson was on the ice for Monday night, with blame assigned accordingly.

Minus one

Max Pacioretty, short-handed goal at 7:20 of the 1st period. Montreal goes up 2-1.

What happened:

First, Karlsson and Chris Wideman fail to connect in the neutral zone. I'm putting that one on the latter – the pass hits his heel, and Wideman just either isn't expecting a pass, or is scared of getting hit there or something. Either way. Sloppy, but not on Karlsson.

The puck heads back to the Sens end, and Max Pacioretty cruises in on the PK forecheck. Karlsson does the right thing, and gets open in the corner for Craig Anderson who is handling the puck. The Senators goaltender doesn't make a play quick enough, gets stripped, and gets scored on.

But it's what happens as the breakdown is unfolding that perfectly encapsulates Karlsson's night. Watch Wideman, who is maybe a little farther from the incident than Karlsson, and contrast their efforts.

So is that goal on Karlsson? It is not. Could he have got there if he'd jumped on his horse? Probably not? Do I like his effort to help a teammate who just messed up and is very likely about to get scored on? Yeah no.

Verdict: Not his fault, but you'd like to see a little more urgency during a major breakdown near their empty net.

Minus two

Artturi Lehkonen, at 13:17 of the first period. Montreal goes up 3-2.

What happened:

At the start of the clip you see Karlsson doing the type of thing that makes Karlsson special. A bang-bang pass in the neutral zone, followed by a high risk pass – the type you want him trying because he's skilled enough to make it worth that risk – that he completes, earning his teammate a good shot.

The forwards don't support the puck and stay out wide, and neither of the two trailing Fs pull out soon enough as Montreal bangs the puck back up the boards. Then two things happen: one, Johnny Oduya tries to pinch and keep the puck in and misses it. And two, either Paul Byron hit one of those speed boost arrows from Mario Kart, or Alexandre Burrows footspeed is a major question mark. He gets demolished in the race back up the ice, despite the real effort.

Anyway, Karlsson plays the 2-on-1 fairly well, but Lehkonen makes a nice play to hit the trailing forward. Then, it's something not all that different from the first goal: the second he feels the play is not his direct



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problem, as he seems to after the first pass is made, he lets up. Yes, Oduya could've come back harder to take away that lane, or just not pinched. Yes, the forwards could've come back sooner, and yes, it was a great play.

But at the end of the day, Karlsson is guarding a dangerous area of the ice, not an actual player.

Verdict: He's standing beside the guy who scored. On the pie chart of which Senators deserve the most blame, he probably deserves about a third.

Minus three

Charles Hudon, 16 minutes into the first. Montreal goes up 4-2.

What happened:

What happened? The game happened, all around Karlsson.

The first 15-20 seconds of this video are just him, parked in an area of the ice he knows to be dangerous (low slot), once again not actually marking a player. You're not helping if you don't have an opponent, and as you can see, at no point does he really have one. He's just a spectator, watching the puck and watching his guys try to cover their guys.

Wideman is all right here – as the shot comes, he's still got his guy located. But when Derick Brassard loses his check (and that's no small issue here), that's when you'd think Karlsson could come in handy, since he's just standing in front of the net anyway. He's in a tough spot, but boy, you'd sure like him to jump out at Hudon harder, wouldn't you? It was almost like "Anderson's good, he'll probably stop the shot if I just don't let this guy step across the crease."

Habs back up two.

Verdict: Karlsson knows this one is showing up in the next video session, and he dreads it. It's probably the worst of the lot from a defensive standpoint.

Minus four

Alex Galchenyuk with just over two minutes to go in the second. Montreal goes up 5-3.

What happened:

As you can see below, the Habs fifth goal was, indeed, a product of Karlsson rushing up-ice. But no coach would ever limit him from jumping into the rush.

Karlsson winds it up in his own end, and shows some poise few defenders have in making an outlet pass. Most make an indirect pass of the wall there, where he just holds it, and let the forechecker move out of the passing lane. Following the pass, he jumps up into the rush and drives the net before stopping in front.

Fortunately for him, Chris DiDomenico is a smart forward and he's going to cover for him and OH COME ON CHRIS YOU CAN'T CHANGE YOU'RE THE LAST GUY BACK AND YOU JUST WATCHED YOUR TEAM THROW AWAY SOLID POSSESSION aw man.

Maybe Karlsson could come back a little harder, but this isn't his fault. If you're Ryan Dzingel – who just hopped on the ice to soak up DiDomenico's minus for him – you're expecting the kid to buy you a beer somewhere down the road.

Verdict: Karlsson gets a pass.

Minus five

Brendan Gallagher with under a minute to go in the second, puts Montreal up 6-3.

What happened:

I can assure you one thing on this goal: you're not missing anything. It is what it is. There's no big coverage mess-ups. Brendan Gallagher simply out-competed Karlsson who was passively engaged, reaching in with his stick. Then Gallagher got into Mark Stone's hands, put him on his back, and took it to the house and across the crease.

I cut the clip a few seconds before Karlsson enters the picture just to show that he had just jumped on the ice. As in, he's at the start of his shift, not like it's the end and he's exhausted. What a goal by Gallagher.

Anderson could've probably used a little better help from Cody Ceci after Stone is beat, but that's a small detail.

Verdict: In which one Montreal Canadian wears Ottawa's two best players like dinner jackets and basically ices the game. Not good.

Minus six

Tomas Plekanec converts the extra point on the touchdown to put Montreal up 7-3 with under 15 to play in the third.

What happened:

Here's the part of the game where you can understand forcing plays a bit. The Sens are down three with 25 percent of the game left to play. So he jumps into the breakout, and joins the rush.

Now, what he does with that puck is every coach's worst O-zone entry nightmare – an east-west boards-to-boards pass that leaves the passer on the wrong side of the play. Even if it works out, the player who'd be receiving the pass wouldn't be in any more of a dangerous position than the passer. But again: down three, I get guys starting to press to make something happen, even if this was ill-advised.

He finds himself stuck in deep in the O-zone along the wall, and the rest is history.

Verdict: It's a bad offensive play, but this point in the game, he can be somewhat excused for his error.

Final verdict

Here's what Karlsson said after the game:

"I've definitely had way worse games and got away with it. Today was not one of those nights and, again, that's something that you're going to have to deal with throughout the season, throughout your career."

And that's definitely a part of this. The Habs converted on a few plays – I'm thinking the Hudon goal here, in particular – where if the puck stays out of the net, people don't notice. But on Monday, the pucks didn't stay out.

He had a bad night. It's October. It happens.

It seems to me that this is what Erik Karlsson is going to be: a guy who conserves his effort in the D-zone for a couple reasons. One, it allows him to contribute more at the other end, and two, it gives him the ability to play 25-plus minutes a night, which his team needs him to do.

And if you're the Sens, you're okay with some defensive breakdowns (though less than Monday night, of course). That's the trade off you make to have one of the world's best players creating for your team at the other end. Few people can out-score their problems, but Karlsson has proven he can.

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The Athletic / Pronman: Dylan Sikura, Troy Terry top collegiate Olympic candidates

Corey Pronman

Over the weekend, I was scouting throughout New England, at three college games between Denver and Boston University, UMass Lowell and Northeastern, and Dartmouth and Harvard. Also, I watched prep players at the Beantown Fall Classic and the Beast Hockey series.

USA Hockey's Olympic and World Junior general manager Jim Johansson was in attendance for each college game, scouting potential Olympic candidates from the college ranks with Olympic scouting for every country entering its ramp-up period right now. I mentioned in last week's mailbag that Eeli Tolvanen is being scouted for Finland's team, as well as Dallas prospect Miro Heiskanen, Islanders prospect Linus Soderstrom and potential first overall pick Rasmus Dahlin.

Dylan Sikura, LW, Chicago (Northeastern): Sikura has been arguably the top player in college hockey this season playing for Northeastern. He was named to Canada's team for the Karjala Tournament, a national team event meant to be an Olympic tune-up. He's a great all-around offensive player. Sikura skates very well, has good hands, great IQ and can shoot the puck well. He leads the NCAA in average shots on goal by a wide margin. But it's his play away from the puck that elevated him to become a top player, according to Northeastern coach Jim Madigan: "His compete level has increased significantly from his freshman year to now. Defensively he's become a lot better. His first year he couldn't check his hat at the Copley Place hotel, now he's a good checker and we use him in penalty kill situations." Sikura is a favorite for the Hobey Baker, and he has emerged as a player with a strong chance to play for the red and white in February. The Blackhawks hold his rights, but he's a pending free agent, which The Athletic's Scott Powers examined.

Troy Terry, RW, Anaheim (Denver): Troy Terry was fantastic in the game against Boston University. I'm sure many people remember his great World Juniors last winter, but he's taken his game to the next level. "He's such a difference maker now and does it in so many ways," Johansson said. His skill and offensive game have continued to look better year after year, and, as a junior, he looks like a dominant scorer at this level. With great hands and vision, Terry's always been a versatile player, and he showed an ability to win battles, including a goal that was waved off when he drove the net and shoved a small defender (Chicago's Chad Krys) out of his lane. Terry has also impressed his coach Jim Montgomery with how much pressure he puts on the opposing team. "I don't know if we have a player who steals more pucks during the course of a game [than Terry]," Denver coach Montgomery said. Johansson stressed Terry's versatility as a guy who could potentially be in a scoring or checking role at the men's level this season if he made the Olympic team.

Adam Gaudette, C, Vancouver (Northeastern): I was blown away by Gaudette in the game I watched against Lowell. He showed great skill, offensive IQ and hunted down pucks. He's not an explosive skater, but his coach Madigan likes his speed game due to how much he hustles. "I know my skating can get a little choppy when I'm tired and I've worked on getting it better," said Gaudette. The Athletic's Mike Halford did a nice break down a few weeks ago on Gaudette. He would likely be a role guy at the Olympic level, and I'm not sure if he's solidified a spot yet, but he is on USA's radar.

Jordan Greenway, LW, Minnesota Wild (Boston University): I wrote about Greenway not too long ago, so I won't rehash things I've already said. My perception from an Olympic standpoint is, if Greenway goes, he'll likely be used in a grinding/net-front type of role to take advantage of his size and edge, on top of how well he moves.

On the topic of Olympians, Greenway and Terry were in a summit in Pyeongchang for USA Hockey earlier this season, creating buzz in the hockey community that they were all but locks for the final team, but USA Hockey has said they were only chosen because they were media savvy players and not to presume they earned final roster spots. Take that for what it's worth.

Beantown Fall Classic

Jack Rathbone, D, Vancouver: Rathbone was the Canucks fourth-round pick in 2017, and returned for another season of prep hockey where I watched him in a tournament this past weekend. Rathbone's skating stands out immediately, as he can explode out of his first few steps and create offense with his combination of speed and skill. His coach for the Cape Cod U18 Whalers Andrew Orpik (and yes, he's the brother of Washington's Brooks Orpik) sees a guy trying to harness his natural ability: "He's able to elude and get out of trouble with his feet, but he can get himself into trouble with his feet too. He's been so reliant on always being able to beat guys 1-on-1 that, as he gets older, he finds out that guys are better and can skate with him, and we're working on having him get rid of the puck a little bit quicker."

Rathbone is an interesting guy upside-wise, but he's not a dominant player yet in his age group, and you see there are still things he needs to work on, such as his decision making and defensive play. "His skill level is advanced, our focus with him is what he's doing without the puck on his stick," Orpik said.

Jay O'Brien, C, 2018 draft eligible: O'Brien has emerged as the top high school player in the 2018 draft. Between my viewings of him at the All-American game, the USHL Fall Classic playing for the USNTDP and now at this prep tournament, he's established himself as a clear top two-round pick in this year's draft class with top 45 range possible. He's a skilled center who can create chances, but every scout you talk to about him will first point to how hard he works to win battles and gain pucks. Often at the fall classic he would shove players off him with such ease to win a puck. "His work ethic and drive to get better is as good as anyone I've ever coached," Orpik said.

Other prospect notes:

Jack Badini, C, Anaheim (Harvard): The Ducks third-round pick from last summer is making himself a likely candidate for the U.S. junior team. He's a fantastic skater who showed in his game against Dartmouth a willingness to attack the net. He can be a solid two-way center at the World Junior level.

Henrik Borgstrom, C, Florida (Denver): Borgstrom was great, as usual, and showed his typical ridiculous skill and poise with the puck. "He does things on the ice you just don't see very often. Of the players I've coached, I call him the 6-3 version of Johnny Gaudreau," said Montgomery. Borgstrom's main criticism for years in the scouting community has been how he plays off the puck and being more assertive. Montgomery has seen progression in that area in his defense and professionalism off the ice. "When he applies himself, he can be the best defensive player on the ice," Montgomery said.

Jeremy Davies, D, New Jersey (Northeastern): Davies has been an early standout this college season, as the sophomore defender has nine points in seven games for Northeastern. "He's starting to take over games right now," said Madigan. It was easy to see where the offense came from, as he skates well and moves the puck efficiently on Northeastern's top power-play unit. He's taking tough defensive minutes now too, even if that may still be a question for him at the top level.

Patrick Harper, LW, Nashville (Boston University): Harper was very impressive in this game, showing dynamic traits on the same ice as first-round pick Dante Fabbro, who was also drafted by the Predators in 2016. You could argue Harper has closed the gap between which of the two are better.

Chad Krys, D, Chicago (Boston University): Krys has gotten a little more involved physically, and while his defense still shows significant flaws,



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I've been impressed overall by his progression in the few Boston University games I've seen this season. His skating and skill allow him to make a lot happen.

Ian Mitchell, D, Chicago (Denver): Mitchell has been very good as a freshman at Denver. Chicago's 57th-overall pick last summer, the 18-year-old is a great skater with a high skill level who has been the quarterback on the power play for the No. 1 team in the country. He's also been used in tough defensive situations, and per Montgomery, Mitchell has played over 24 minutes a night early on this season.

Martin Necas, C, Carolina: Necas excelled in his first game in the Czech Extraliga for Brno since being assigned by Carolina. He played more than 16 minutes, scored a goal and was dangerous all game. His skill and speed stand out versus pros, and once he gets bulk onto his frame, he has the potential to be an impact player. That he was the first center over the boards for the 3-on-3 overtime shows what his coach thinks of him.

Reilly Walsh, D, New Jersey (Harvard): This was my first live viewing of Walsh, and while his game against Dartmouth became a blowout quickly, I was generally impressed by his skill level. He made a lot of quality offensive plays, including a great pass to set up one of Harvard's goals. He could be a little all over the place defensively, which he'll need time to improve, but the offense in his game makes him an NHL prospect. "He has real high-end offensive instincts," said Harvard's coach Ted Donato.

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The Athletic / LeBrun: NHL coaches getting more organized, but not militant, thanks to new executive

Pierre LeBrun

The NHL Coaches' Association has very quietly gone to a whole new level over the past 12 months, a development directly related to the man they hired as executive director.

Michael Hirshfeld, a former Bay St.-type in Toronto with a legal and business background, was hired in September 2016 and has worked diligently behind the scenes ever since to better organize the 200-plus coaches in the membership.

"Michael Hirshfeld is the perfect guy for the job," legendary coach Scotty Bowman, the association's original founder, told The Athletic on Tuesday. "He's going to put it over the top, really. I would say it's never been better than it is now.

"George Kingston was very instrumental in keeping it going over the years," added Bowman, who remains on the association's Honorary Board. "It was quite a thing to start. Al Arbour, myself and Pat Quinn, I think in the late 1970s, we started it. But we never had it organized like it is now."

In fact, it wasn't officially recognized as an association until 2001 when years of effort by Bowman and others finally got it there. Kingston, for years and years, helped keep the association afloat and is credited by many coaches for his tireless efforts.

He stepped down last September and it opened the door for the association to bring in Hirshfeld, 44, whose business expertise was meant to give the group an executive-type at the helm while also modernizing its approach.

"You used the correct term there, he's modernized everything," Tampa Bay Lightning head coach Jon Cooper, who was part of the hiring

committee who chose Hirshfeld, told The Athletic. "And I believe with Michael, we needed to take a step, there was a lot of untapped potential with the group of coaches who are assembled to coach in the NHL. I think it was time for us to give back, it was time for us to grow, it was time for us to look after each other, it was time for us to unite, and he's the guy who has been able to orchestrate that.

"It's been really good for us."

Added Penguins head coach Mike Sullivan on Tuesday, the president of the NHLCA's executive committee: "George Kingston did a terrific job bringing the association to a certain point, and what Mike brings to the table at this point is a lot of business know-how and business savvy. He's done a great job as far as organizing the association, listening to the wants and needs of the coaches. He's done a lot of things to streamline things for us, the communication strategies that he's brought to the table have been terrific. He's a really sharp guy. Very engaging."

How does Hirshfeld describe what he does?

"The way I describe it is that we try to help coaches with everything that's non-hockey," Hirshfeld told The Athletic. "So if they're having challenges with their pension or health benefits or taxes or they have a green card issue, we help with that."

Same goes for investment advice, or insurance advice, or medical or legal help, you name it, and the association under Hirshfeld has stepped up its game over the past year to deal with all kinds of issues on behalf of coaches.

For instance, the association is currently working on a licensing agreement with the NHL in terms of the usage of the league's logo for coaches in promotional work or endorsement opportunities.

"With coaches having a higher profile in recent years, they get lots of things thrown at them all the time and their first instinct is to say 'No' because they're just so busy," Hirshfeld said. "I think they've gotten to the point now where they'd like someone to vet some of these (opportunities) and maybe pick one or two that make sense. So we're helping with that as well. But we're not there yet. It's taken us a year to clean some of this stuff up and we're still working with the NHL on a licensing agreement in terms of what we can or can't do as far as logos and trademarks and all that kind of stuff."

"His impact? The way I would describe it is immediate," said St. Louis Blues head coach Mike Yeo, like Cooper a member of the NHLCA executive committee. "Right from the start, it was a different feeling for us as coaches as far as the validity of our group and what he's bringing to it and the partnership that he's establishing with the league, with corporate people outside of the league. Just how organized he is as far as the information that's coming to us, you can just tell he's a go-getter. He's making stuff happen."

Hirshfeld is not Donald Fehr, the veteran head of the NHL Players' Association. Hirshfeld's hire should be not construed as the coaches getting more militant.

"We are an association, we are not a union," Hirshfeld said. "There's a big difference there. We don't want to collectively bargain salaries. Every guy wants to do their own deals, it's just that they want to be as fully informed as possible."

Hirshfeld has worked closely with NHL deputy commissioner Bill Daly on a number of issues and they've struck up a good relationship.

"Bill has been a pleasure to work with and is a keen advocate for coaches," Hirschfeld said. "We are partners with the NHL and we want to be strong partners with the NHL. This isn't a confrontational thing. We just want our guys to be better protected."

Daly, whom Bowman also credited as being very helpful in the early 2000s when the NHLCA was just getting going, said the NHL takes its relationship with the association "very seriously."



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"And I would characterize that relationship as having been (and remaining) strong and mutually beneficial for many years now, beginning early on with Scotty Bowman and continuing through George Kingston's stewardship of the organization," Daly told The Athletic via email. "But there is no doubt that Michael Hirshfeld has added additional structure and professionalism to the organization. We appreciate his approach in understanding what is important to the coaches, and in establishing priorities in terms of how to achieve improvements and change. I view him as a good leader who has taken a cooperative and constructive approach in his dealings with the League. The coaches are in good hands."

The elephant in the room, let's not kid ourselves, is coaches' salaries. While the association's main priorities revolve around the protection of health benefits and pensions, etc., it's believed Maple Leafs head coach Mike Babcock has been a strong voice internally encouraging salary disclosure among the group and aiming for better salaries as a whole.

His record-breaking salary in Toronto, eight years at \$6.25-million per season, has impacted the industry and helped coaches like Joel Quenneville, Claude Julien and Alain Vigneault, among others, reach new heights financially in their current contracts.

While Hirshfeld declined comment, I believe there's no question the association has got better at exchanging information on contracts to help other coaches in their next negotiation. I think Quenneville, for example, would have had access to Babcock's Toronto contract before he did his deal with Chicago. But it's just as important for first-year coaches and assistant coaches entering the league and having a resource in the NHLCA to ask questions and understand what they should be looking for in their respective contracts in terms of structure and health benefits, etc.

Again, I think the NHLCA's priority is to be a good partner with the NHL because of all the other issues it needs to work with the league on.

In the meantime, Hirshfeld keeps busy, meeting with visiting NHL coaches when they come to Toronto. He had dinner with John Stevens and his Kings staff last week, for example, when Los Angeles was in town.

"The reality is that there's only one time all the coaches get together on an annual basis and that's at the draft," he said. "And so, I feel like it's important for me to see guys more than just once a year."

Michael Hirshfeld is not be a household name for hockey fans, and he likes it that way, he'd rather go about his business under the radar. But he's become an important figure for the coaching fraternity.

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The Athletic / Blue Jackets' Josh Anderson on fighting Boston's Zdeno Chara: 'This is happening'

Aaron Portzline

Blue Jackets right winger Josh Anderson said he knew it was Boston behemoth Zdeno Chara who ran him into the end boards early in the second period Monday.

And, yes, Anderson knew what he was doing when he jumped to his skates and charged right at Chara to give him a chop with his stick and exchange unpleasantries.

But there was a brief moment — just as the 6-foot-4 Anderson squared up with the 6-foot-9 Chara — when his brain's ability to reason pushed through the adrenaline.

"Not until I had (the gloves) dropped," Anderson said. "Then I was like, 'This is happening.'"

The Blue Jackets blew a 3-0 lead before beating Boston 4-3 in a shootout Monday, but there are two highlights in the game that will linger for a long time.

The first was Markus Nutivaara's brilliant 60-foot pass to spring Tyler Motte for the 3-0 goal midway through the second.

The other was Anderson's decision to fight Chara, the tallest player in NHL history and one of the most feared fighters in the game in the past two decades.

"It all started in the first period when we were taking Chara out (with hits) as much as we could," Anderson said. "Myself and Dubi and Boone got him a couple of times, and he was a little frustrated there."

Dubi would be Brandon Dubinsky, who hammered Chara in the closing seconds of the first period, knocking him to the ground in the corner. Boone would be Boone Jenner, who blasted Chara one second after he got back on his skates after Dubinsky's hit.

Chara was seething as he headed off for the first intermission, and he was still enraged when the second period started.

"The beginning of the second period, he kind of hit me from behind," Anderson said. "He just gave me a push, and I went flying. He's a big boy."

"I just couldn't believe that there wasn't a call on it. I decided to stick up for myself. When I got to him, he just asked me if I wanted to fight. So I said, 'Why not?'"

Why not? There are a million reasons why you should not fight Zdeno Chara. (Start with David Koci's face.)

"The Greco-Roman wrestling stuff comes out at the end of the fight, and you realize just how strong this guy is," said Fox Sports Ohio analyst Jody Shelley, who played for the Philadelphia Flyers when he fought Chara on Dec. 17, 2011.

"When he wants it to be over, he just folds you up like a lawn chair. That's what he did to me. That's what he did to Josh, too."

Anderson tried to get in tight on Chara, to minimize the reach advantage he has against every player in the NHL. Anderson took a swat with his left hand in an attempt to get Chara's helmet loose, but couldn't quite unsnap it.

"I just went in there thinking 'Protect yourself as much as you can and just don't give up,'" Anderson said.

"I think I did a pretty good job. I got one in there. He got one on me too, at the side of the head."

The fight didn't last long, maybe 15 seconds before Chara folded Anderson to the ice in a headlock.

Anderson earned high praise in the Blue Jackets' dressing room, the most celebrated fight since Nick Foligno fought then-St. Louis Blues tough guy Ryan Reaves last season.

Foligno came up to Anderson immediately after the fight to say "good job."

"High marks," John Tortorella said. "You better get your first shot in, though. He did, I think."

After the game, Anderson said his cellphone was abuzz with text messages from friends and former teammates, saying, "Wow, what a fight!" and "Dude, what were you thinking?"

But the best conversation, he said, happened in the penalty box just after the fight. It was with Chara.



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"He said 'Sorry for hitting you on the way down, I usually don't do that. The adrenaline kicked in,'" Anderson said. "Then he said, 'Thanks for the fight.'

"That was kinda pretty cool. I just said, 'No, thank you!'"

NOTEBOOK

Defenseman Gabriel Carlsson, out since Oct. 14 with an upper-body injury, skated with the group today. No word on a timeline for his return — "day to day" — but don't expect him back Thursday in Florida.

Here's another question about Carlsson's return: Whom does he bump from the lineup? I'm not sure you can take Nutivaara out of the lineup after the way he's played. (My, my, that pass.)

Zach Werenski did not skate today, but Tortorella said it was simply a maintenance day. Good to go for Thursday in Sunrise.

Cam Atkinson (hip) did not skate today. Not a surprise. Also day to day.

Mark Letestu and his family have purchased a home in southern Delaware County. Yes, he still plays for Edmonton. But the Letestus loved the area and decided they want to make it their home after his playing days have ended. Score another one for Columbus.

The U.S. national junior team will hold training camp in Nationwide Arena from Dec. 15-19 in advance of the World Junior Championships in Buffalo, beginning later that month. It's the third time USA Hockey has deemed Columbus worthy of a training camp. Nationwide has hosted the U.S. World Cup team in 2004 and 2016.

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Sportsnet.ca / Mike Babcock dramatically reshuffles the look of his Maple Leafs

Shawn McKenzie reports from Anaheim where the question is being asked, what's wrong with the Maple Leafs?

Chris Johnston

ANAHEIM, Calif. — "Have they created their identity yet?" Randy Carlyle asked, rhetorically, of his former team.

Anyone who has watched the Toronto Maple Leafs stumble through the last two weeks could have given him the answer.

Mike Babcock certainly showed his cards by unveiling a dramatically different look for Wednesday's game against Carlyle's Anaheim Ducks. The Leafs coach shifted around three forward lines and two of three defence pairs, bringing Josh Leivo and Connor Carrick back into the lineup for Dominic Moore and Roman Polak.

"If it's not going as good, after awhile you've got to find a way to fix it," Babcock said after Tuesday's practice at the Honda Center. "So we've tried a few things and it hasn't gone as good. We need more guys going at the same time to have success."

After starting the season in a manner that suggested they were on a rocket ship to the moon, the Leafs got bogged down. They've had trouble working their way through the neutral zone and sustaining the offensive zone pressure that allowed them to overwhelm opponents.

The first real sign of trouble arrived during an Oct. 18 win over Detroit, when they got completely caved in during the first period yet still emerged with a 4-1 lead. It was smoke and mirrors. They've dropped four

of five games since, including an ugly outing in San Jose on Monday night.

That brought about changes to every line but the outstanding Zach Hyman-Auston Matthews-William Nylander trio and the effective Morgan Rielly-Ron Hainsey defence pair. Behind closed doors, it was accompanied by a renewed emphasis on making safer plays with the puck — a message that is becoming easier to sell to a run-and-gun bunch now that the losses are piling up.

"There's a ton of skill in here so obviously you want to make plays," said veteran centre Tyler Bozak. "It's hard to dump it in all the time when plays are available. Obviously, [Matthews] is going to make plays, and that's fine, but for a lot of us we've just got to get that puck in deep and work in the offensive zone. Teams are so good in the neutral zone nowadays with clogging it up and creating turnovers.

"If you keep turning it over there you're not going to win a lot of games."

The problems are rooted in the bottom two lines. Bozak, James van Riemsdyk and Mitch Marner have been unable to recreate their success from a year ago and keep getting juggled around. Leivo hasn't found a permanent place in the lineup despite playing well seemingly every time he gets in there.

In a bid to address that, here's how Babcock reconfigured his lines:

Hyman — Matthews — Nylander

Komarov — Kadri — Leivo

JVR — Marleau — Brown

Martin — Bozak — Marner

On paper, this looks much closer to an optimal forward group. Were they to replace Martin with Kasperii Kapanen, they might be all the way there.

Among the main reasons why the coach hasn't gone that route so far is he'd prefer not to use Marleau at centre and this lineup leaves him down both Moore and Eric Fehr — players relied on for the penalty kill. Babcock hinted that the specialty teams balance has played a role in Leivo only dressing once so far.

"Should he be in every day? You know, you can debate that all you want," said Babcock. "The reality is you need a certain amount of power play guys, a certain amount of penalty kill guys and enough speed in your lineup. He's coming in [on Wednesday], he's going to get a good opportunity. His opportunity is now to grab hold of it and make it as hard on me as possible and take someone's job.

"When you get a chance to get in just take someone's job."

There's seems to be an acknowledgement in this shakeup that the Leafs need to do a better job controlling the puck. They've been chasing the game lately and have seen their Corsi rating dip to ninth in the league at 51.34 per cent of even-strength shot attempts.

Carrick had success playing with Jake Gardiner last season and should help the revamped blue-line do a better job in transition. Here's how that group now looks:

Rielly — Hainsey

Gardiner — Carrick

Borgman — Zaitsev

"We just thought that gives us three solid pairs," said Babcock. "We think Borgman's really starting to come and settle in, and so we don't have to be as concerned about matchups. We can roll them out the door more. And maybe give us more balance and more puck movement."

All told, these amount to a wide-ranging set of changes for a team currently running at full health. After watching where things were trending, and then seeing the Sharks completely dominate them, the coaching staff didn't have much choice.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 1, 2017

The Leafs have come a long way as an organization in the three years since Carlyle was fired – remember Bozak was his top-line centre – but they still have plenty of ground to cover.

"I see a young talented team trying to find its way," said Carlyle. "They've got talent. Everyone looks at their lineup and what they need – what they need here, what they need there – they're a young group that's growing together."

On Wednesday, he'll get a first-hand look at the next stage of their evolution.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 11.01.2017

1081034 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / The 411 on Igor Ozhiganov, Russian defenceman connected to Leafs

Rory Boylen October 31, 2017, 2:50 PM

If you're a North American hockey fan, chances are you're not tremendously aware of Igor Ozhiganov. He first came on to the NHL radar when a report surfaced in August that Maple Leafs head coach Mike Babcock and GM Lou Lamoriello had travelled to Russia at least in part to visit with him. Instantly, Ozhiganov became one of the more intriguing non-NHL names out there, despite never being drafted into the league.

Ozhiganov is still under contract with CSKA Moscow for another season, but indications are that Toronto will sign him when his contract expires and bring him over as soon as next season, similar to how they acquired Nikita Zaitsev.

"Toronto's a team that's had some success internationally with defencemen. Zaitsev has been very good on their blue line, they've tried with Borgman and Rosen this year and there is a belief they're about to get another one for next season, his name is Igor Ozhiganov," reported Elliotte Friedman on this past weekend's Headlines segment. "He's gonna be recruited by some NHL teams, but word out of Russia is that he is most likely going to Toronto next year."

Here's a look into Ozhiganov to give you an idea of what sort of player he is.

Tape II Tape

Ryan Dixon and Rory Boylen go deep on pucks with a mix of facts and fun, leaning on a varied group of hockey voices to give their take on the country's most beloved game.

— Chris Johnston (@reporterchris) August 23, 2017

HE CAN PLAY A HEAVY GAME

At 6-foot-2, 210 pounds, Ozhiganov brings size to the blue line and a bit of an edge.

As a teenager in Russia's junior MHL (more or less Russia's equivalent to Canada's CHL), Ozhiganov had two seasons where he piled up the penalty minutes. In 2009-10 and 2010-11, he totalled 167 and 129 PIMs to finish third and eighth, respectively, in the league. This was probably a reason why he was never picked at the NHL Draft. He's reined in that part of his game somewhat, finishing with 61 penalty minutes in 50 KHL games last season and has just 10 in 19 this season, so credit to him for evolving as a player.

Still, Ozhiganov is not one to shy away from the rough stuff. Truculence, anyone?

And if you're not paying attention along the boards, Ozhiganov will make you suffer the consequences: pic.twitter.com/sZSC3C1QCW

— Jeff Veillette (@JeffVeillette) August 23, 2017

His size and strength will be immediately noticeable, but he comes with some offensive upside, too (don't be scared off by his 22-point total last season). We'll talk specifically about his shot a little later in this piece, but check out the hands on this goal.

HE'S FRIENDS WITH NIKITA KUCHEROV, WHO WANTED THE TAMPA BAY LIGHTNING TO GET HIM

In an interview with Russian outlet Sport-Express over the summer, the Lightning scorer was asked about another Russian player, 25-year-old forward Nikita Gusev. The reporter asked Kucherov if he had tried to persuade GM Steve Yzerman to acquire Gusev, who scored 71 points in 57 KHL games last season.

According to a Russian translator via SB Nation, Kucherov answered that he indeed has brought up Gusev to Yzerman. Not only that, Kucherov also talked about Ozhiganov unprompted, suggesting he had mentioned that name to Yzerman as well.

"I always say this to the Lightning; not only about Gusev, but about Igor Ozhiganov too," Kucherov said according to the translation. "It's not about our friendship. Both are great players, they could help Tampa to win a Stanley Cup. I wouldn't have recommended them if they weren't able to. By the way, I spoke to them about taking their chances in the NHL. It's an opportunity to play against the best players in the world. We have known each other since childhood, it would be great to win the Stanley Cup together."

HE COMES WITH A BIG SHOT

As Chris Johnston mentioned in his tweet above, scouts will note Ozhiganov's shot from the point. The eight goals he scored in the KHL last season won't jump off the page at you, but it was enough to finish tied for 13th in goals among defencemen.

Ozhiganov showed off his cannon at the KHL All-Star Game last season, winning the hardest shot competition. He's not quite on Shea Weber's level, but his blast was clocked at 159.47 kilometres per hour — or 99 miles per hour. Had he participated in the NHL's hardest shot last season, Ozhiganov would only have been beaten by Weber and Patrik Laine.

Ozhiganov is similar to Zaitsev in that he's a mid-20s undrafted Russian defenceman who is getting NHL attention a year before his KHL contract expires. The two even played together with CSKA Moscow two years ago, Zaitsev's last before joining the Maple Leafs. Currently 25 years old, should Ozhiganov come to the NHL next season, he'd be a year older than Zaitsev was when he signed with Toronto.

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Sportsnet.ca / Penguins, Oilers looking for more frequent doses of past magic

Gene Principe and Mark Spector talk about whether the Pittsburgh Penguins are suffering from a Stanley Cup hangover and whether the Oilers can get their swagger back plus more.

Mark Spector October 31, 2017, 7:43 PM



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 1, 2017

"I think everybody had a good summer and it's a new season. It doesn't matter what you did in the two years past. Everybody starts from zeroes and you have to go and do it again."

— Pittsburgh Penguins defenceman Olli Maatta.

EDMONTON — Two unhappy teams will greet puck drop at Rogers Place on Wednesday night, both searching for the game that put them at the top of bookmakers' Stanley Cup odds lists back in September.

One club is getting blown out every fourth game, having lost games by scores of 10-1, 7-1 and 7-1 already this season. The other loses by less lopsided scores, but more often.

One team is out of sorts with a 7-5-1 record. The other is 3-6-1, perilously close to losing its season before America carves its Thanksgiving turkey.

We all know which one is which, and who has back-to-back Stanley Cups to their credit. But it's funny how an experienced, proven Pittsburgh team can play poorly yet still collect more wins than losses, while Edmonton is facing a cruddy 3-7-1 record if it can't come up with two points on Wednesday.

"We're not playing right. We're playing like it's an easy game right now," groused centre Evgeni Malkin. "We think we can score five or six goals, but that's not right. We need to be better without the puck. Nobody's giving us easy pucks right now. We need to be stronger and in our D-zone, play right."

It was amazing to watch the Winnipeg Jets rifle five pucks past Pittsburgh goalies in the first period of their game Sunday; or when the Blackhawks scored 10 earlier this season. The Penguins looked on those occasions like they'd never played their own system before; like head coach Mike Sullivan pulled 20 guys together from an open shinny scrimmage at a local rink.

Yet, only four months ago this group of players, give or take two or three, carried the Stanley Cup around the ice at Bridgestone Arena in Nashville.

"Every year, especially in these early games, you try to create your identity. Ours, the past couple of years, has been our team speed," said defenceman Brian Dumoulin. "I think right now that our best defence is our offensive zone play with the puck and us D-men getting back to pucks and breaking out quick. On the nights we haven't had it, we've been spending a little too much time in our D-zone and that takes away from our team speed."

So, there are X's and O's that are to blame for substandard play. And there are also mental issues. As Crosby said last week in Pittsburgh, "You're not going to feel like you did in the second week of June, in October. It's just not the way it works."

You don't get to win every night. Even the toughest head coach gets it.

That's why coaches harp on about "structure," and "playing the right way." It's the same as the goal scorer who says, "As long as I keep getting the chances, I'm not going to worry. The goals will come."

But on at least three occasions this season the Penguins have abandoned their structure completely. You can bet that Sullivan does not chalk those games up to the eventuality of losing the odd game over an 82-game season.

"Yeah, I think you do treat it differently," he concurred on Tuesday.

"There are going to be nights over the course of an 82-game schedule where it doesn't go your way. But I think this early in the season, our team has had a few too many of them. We give our opponents credit; we're playing against good teams. But it's not so much what our opponents are doing to us. It's more what we're doing to ourselves."

Good players make good plays. Even the two-time Stanley Cup champs will get scored on, or give up a power-play goal on to a power play that is executing.

But the kinds of mistakes that get made over the course of three games to find oneself on the bad end of a 24-3 aggregate score?

"That's unacceptable," said the coach. "If we're going to get where we want to go, we're going to have to become a team that doesn't beat itself. Those are games where we've completely taken ourselves out of the game."

It's early, sure. Never too early, however, to become the Penguins again.

Or last year's Oilers, for that matter.

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1081036 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Mark Jankowski making case to stay with Flames after Jaromir Jagr returns

Rory Boylen

When the Calgary Flames return to action Thursday night at home to Pittsburgh, there's a chance Jaromir Jagr will be back. The 45-year-old has missed the past 10 days with a lower-body injury after getting two assists in his first five games.

Gulutzan says Jagr looked good today. Says going through a high pace practice is a good sign. No word on playing status Thursday. #Flames

— Pat Steinberg (@Fan960Steinberg) October 31, 2017

That's the good news for Flames fans. The bad news is that, if No. 68 does come back, it will likely cost Mark Jankowski his spot as the third-line centre. The 21st-overall pick of the 2012 draft, Jankowski doesn't have a point in his four NHL games this season, but has taken big steps over the past year in the AHL.

A six-foot-four, 202-pound centre, Jankowski was always somewhat of a project prospect since being picked out of the Midwest Prep Hockey League. He spent four years at Providence College after his draft day and last year was his first full season with the AHL's Stockton Heat, where he posted 56 points in 64 games.

But even after a strong showing at camp, Jankowski couldn't crack the NHL lineup and found himself back on the farm. At 23, he is in a place in his career when most players are finding their footing in the world's top league and those who don't usually start to fade. Of the 30 players chosen in the first round of his draft, Jankowski is 29th in games played with five, ahead of only Henrik Samuelsson who has fallen to the ECHL. Olli Maatta, picked one spot after Jankowski, is off to a great start in the Penguins' top four, and Michael Matheson, taken two spots after Calgary's pick, signed an eight-year deal worth \$4.75 million against the cap just a couple of weeks ago.

"I was frustrated to get sent down like any player would. You want to be up here," Jankowski told Pat Steinberg of Sportnet 960 The FAN's The Big Show. "For me, my mindset was to go down there and just dominate every shift and every game. If I went down there and sulked and said, 'Why me?' and stuff like that, I think I wouldn't have been playing as well and it would have delayed the process to get back here."

Dominate he did, with two goals in his first game of the season, and four in his first three games. Jankowski got in six AHL games before being recalled following Jagr's injury, and he scored a point in five of those. In all, he has eight points in six AHL games.

Back in the NHL, Jankowski has taken Sam Bennett's spot on the third line, moving the snake-bitten centre off to the wing where he's a better fit right now. Flames fans are mostly happy to see another first-rounder finally get his crack, but the coaching staff has sheltered Jankowski by starting him in the offensive zone on 68.2 per cent of his shifts. As you'd expect in that situation, Jankowski's line (mostly with Bennett and Kris



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Versteeg) has outshot its opponents, but the centre has won just 47.5 per cent of his draws.

Jankowski has been held pointless and since he's exempt from waivers, unlike some other struggling forwards, he's the obvious choice to head back to the AHL once Jagr is healthy.

When that time comes, it'll surely be another disappointing reality for Jankowski, but like we hear so much in sports these days, he has no choice but to trust the process.

"It's been a great experience," he said. "It's been a great process. Ever since I was drafted here in 2012 I wanted to play at the Dome in front of the 'C of Red.'

"They've been patient with me, I've been patient, and I think it's paying off now."

The past 10 days have at least been another stepping stone towards full-time NHLer status for Jankowski, but it looks like he'll have to wait a bit longer to attain it. This 23-year-old on the cusp isn't about to fade. He seems determined to force his way into the conversation for a spot on the Flames.

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1081037 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Team Canada GM: 2018 Olympic hockey could be more exciting than Sochi

Mike Johnston

The consensus opinion among hockey fans and players is that the Pyeongchang 2018 Olympic men's ice hockey tournament won't be as exciting without NHL players participating.

With powerhouse hockey nations like Canada, Sweden, the United States and others having to now look outside the NHL to build their rosters, it evens the playing field for smaller hockey nations like Latvia, Switzerland and Slovenia to name a few. All told, the 2018 tournament has the potential to be far more competitive than it has been at recent Games.

Team Canada general manager Sean Burke joined Prime Time Sports on Tuesday and spoke about the competitive balance and how it might actually benefit hockey fans.

"I think that what people forget sometimes is that hockey's entertaining when it's competitive," Burke said. "You know, the world juniors isn't the best players in the world—it's just the best young players—but yet we all get glued to the TV. It's competitive. There's great games, there's a lot of mistakes made, there's goals, there's leads that are blown, there's all kinds of things that make it entertaining."

Hockey Canada released its 26-player Karjala Cup roster this past Thursday and many names on that list will also end up representing Canada in South Korea.

Former NHLers Mason Raymond, Derek Roy, Wojtek Wolski, Simon Després,

Gilbert Brulé, Matt Frattin, Justin Peters and Ben Scrivens are perhaps the most recognizable players on the roster—a far cry from the 2014 gold medal-winning roster that featured Hart, Norris, Vezina, Selke, Art Ross and Conn Smythe Trophy winners.

Canada went unbeaten in Sochi but anyone who said it was the most entertaining hockey imaginable clearly hasn't watched a lot of hockey. In

fact, the most dominant team in the tournament only managed to score more than three goals in one game and it was when they played Austria.

"I didn't think the last Olympics was very entertaining," Burke explained. "So, I think this has the ability to be a much more entertaining Olympics. One that once people get through the talk of, 'I don't know the names of all these guys,' I think when you just sit down and watch hockey it'll be competitive, it'll be extremely intense and I think it'll be very entertaining."

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1081038 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Down Goes Brown: 10 truly frightening 2017–18 NHL starts

Sean McIndoe

It's Halloween, which means most of us will want to shut off the lights tonight and settle in with a scary movie or two. There's just something about Oct. 31 that makes you want to shudder in fear while waiting for some hapless character to get hacked to bits.

Then again, you could save yourself some time and skip the movie. If you want a good scare at this time of year, all you need to do is check out the NHL stats page, where some players are off to truly frightening starts.

So today, let's take a look at 10 of the scariest starts we're seeing around the league, and whether there's any hope of ending of their stories ending happily.

Frederik Andersen, Maple Leafs

Through 11 starts, he's sporting some ugly numbers, including an .896 save percentage and 3.46 goals against. And it's not like those stats are being thrown off by one or two bad performances. If anything, it's the opposite, as Andersen has had only five games with a save percentage over .870. And lately, Leafs fans are getting used to seeing him beaten clean on high shots, often barely moving as the puck blows by him.

For a quasi-Cup contender that doesn't seem to have much confidence in its backups, that's worrying. Last night's strong effort in San Jose was a good sign, but there hasn't been much consistency yet on the year.

If the season were a horror movie, he'd be: The big guy with the goalie mask who makes you feel really nervous every time he's on the screen.

Frederik Andersen, 2016–17

October

.876 SV%, 3.71 GAA

Rest of season

.922 SV%, 2.42 GAA

Odds of a happy ending: We've been down this road before with Andersen, who started slowly last year, too. He eventually got back on track, and was one of the league's better goalies from November on. That was a good reminder that goaltending is voodoo, and that everyone has a bad stretch or two over the course of a season. There's a good chance that's the case here, too.

And as rough as Andersen's start has been, he still has six wins, so it's not like he's sinking his team. Still, Leaf fans wouldn't mind seeing him string together a few solid starts to ease the tension.

The Jeff Blair Show



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Jeff Blair: Let's take it easy Maple Leafs fans

Originally aired October 31 2017

Kris Letang, Penguins

After missing last year's entire post-season run due to a neck injury that required surgery, Letang's return to the Penguins' lineup was supposed to provide a big boost to a team that had lost several depth pieces. He's put up eight points through 13 games, which isn't bad. But he's also a -14 on the year, ranking him dead last in the league. We all know that +/- is a flawed stat that has as much to do with circumstance as actual performance. But an extreme number can still tell you something, and in Letang's case it's not anything good.

If the season were a horror movie, he'd be: The good guy who seems to have done something to accidentally trigger an ancient curse.

Odds of a happy ending: In addition to missing a Stanley Cup run due to last year's neck injury, Letang has also had to battle through multiple concussions, groin problems, various upper- and lower-body injuries, and even a stroke. Now he's getting pummelled by a stat that's largely luck-based. Chances are his numbers even out over time, and here's hoping he can stay healthy this year. But just in case, maybe don't let him pick your lotto numbers.

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Max Pacioretty, Canadiens

We have plenty of candidates to choose from in Montreal, where not much has gone right this month. But as always, the spotlight shines brighter on the captain, and Pacioretty is off to a slow start with just four points through 12 games.

He's certainly not the only forward struggling on a team that ranks 20th in the league in goal-scoring, although a combined 13 goals against the Rangers and Senators has certainly helped boost some totals. Things might be turning around for the Habs, and Pacioretty's been fine so far. But fine doesn't always cut it in Montreal, and when Hall of Famers are calling on you to give up your captaincy, you know you're under pressure to produce.

If the season were a horror movie, he'd be: The smart kid who figures out that this situation is bad before everyone else does, but isn't sure how to escape.

Odds of a happy ending: Pacioretty might be his own worst enemy when things aren't going well. He knows what he signed on for when he took the fabled "C," and you can sense the strain he puts on himself when the team is struggling. In one recent media session, he seemed to be near tears as he referred to himself as "the worst one on the ice." It's hard not to feel for the guy and hope he turns it around.

And he probably will. Pacioretty's been one of the most consistent forwards over the years, scoring between 30 and 39 goals in every non-lockout season since 2011. He should wind up there again this year – as long as everyone in Montreal can stay calm long enough for him to get on track.

Ryan Strome, Oilers

It's been a tough month for the Strome brothers. In Arizona, Dylan lasted just two scoreless games before being sent to the AHL. But that still leaves him within striking distance of older brother Ryan, who has just three points through ten games for the Oilers after coming over in the off-season in the Jordan Eberle trade.

That move was driven by the salary cap, and nobody was expecting Strome to come in and immediately replace Eberle's production. But there was some initial optimism that he could come close, especially with

early talk that he could be slotted in next to Connor McDavid and Leon Draisaitl.

Instead, he's on the third line and not producing all that much, while the Oilers are worried about a lack of secondary scoring on the wing. There's even talk that Strome could be traded.

If the season were a horror movie, he'd be: The new kid in town. It never works out well for the new kid in town.

Odds of a happy ending: Strome is 24, which means he's young enough that you don't want to write him off but old enough that you can't be sure you haven't already seen his best. He put up 50 points in his first full NHL season, and the Oilers hoped they were getting that sort of player when they pulled the trigger on Eberle. Maybe they were, and if the team were off to a better start then they'd be happy to wait and find out. But with the way things are going in Edmonton right now, patience isn't really an option. Strome could be a guy who pays a price for that.

The Sedin Twins, Canucks

The Canucks have been a pleasant early-season surprise, posting a respectable 6-3-2 record and looking like they might belong in the Western playoff conversation. But they're doing it without all that much scoring from the Sedins, who've combined for just two goals and eight points on the year.

If the season were a horror movie, they'd be: The twins. Every good horror movie needs a set of twins.

Odds of a happy ending: In a way, the Sedins' slow start has been good news for Vancouver, since it shows the team can win without their franchise players leading the way. Whether they want to admit it or not, the Canucks are rebuilding, so having guys like Bo Horvat and Brock Boeser lead the way is important. As for the Sedins, they're not the players they once were, but they'll get on track eventually.

Pierre-Luc Dubois, Blue Jackets

Dubois arrived on the NHL scene with some controversy, when the Blue Jackets surprised many of us by taking him with the third-overall pick in last year's draft instead of consensus choice Jesse Puljujarvi. It's far too early to pass judgement on that choice, but Dubois isn't exactly out to a fast start. He was sent back to junior last season, and this year he has just one point in his first 12 NHL games. That came in his very first game, so it's been a double-digit cold streak for the rookie.

If the season were a horror movie, he'd be: The kid who you're pretty sure will be fine because he's too young to have anything really bad happen to him.

Odds of a happy ending: Strong. Dubois is 19 years old and just learning the NHL game. More importantly, the Blue Jackets are off to a decent start, so they don't need him to produce right away. John Tortorella isn't exactly a guy who's known for having a ton of patience with young players (or anyone else), but so far nobody's pushing the kid too hard. He's even had a chance to move up the lineup to replace the injured Cam Atkinson. Nothing's guaranteed when it comes to prospects, but Dubois should be fine.

Sam Bennett, Flames

Through 12 games, the former fourth-overall pick has yet to record a point. That's not great.

If the season were a horror movie, he'd be: The guy who makes friends with the ancient undead zombie.

Odds of a happy ending: Like Dubois, Bennett is young enough to deserve some benefit of the doubt. But this isn't some struggling rookie – he's 21 and has two full seasons under his belt. Ideally, you'd want to see some progress in his offensive numbers by now. Instead, they're trending downward.

Bennett's struggles are especially frustrating given the success we've seen from some of the forwards taken after him in 2014, like Nikolaj



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Ehlers, William Nylander and Dylan Larkin. Flames fans were hoping this would be the breakout year, and it isn't happening.

That doesn't mean you give up on the kid. And the Flames are working to find a fit for him, including shifting him from centre to wing. But at some point, this could turn into one of those situations where a change of scenery starts looking like the answer, and trade rumours are beginning to trickle in. Nobody should be writing Bennett off as a solid NHL player yet, but you wonder if it's going to happen in Calgary or elsewhere.

Pretty much all of the Arizona Coyotes

If you're employed by the Coyotes organization and you're not Clayton Keller, you're probably having a nightmare start to the season. They finally got their first win of the season last night in Philadelphia, but still needed overtime after blowing a two-goal lead in the final minute.

That snapped a string of 11 straight losses, which tied the legendary bad 1943-44 Rangers for the longest losing streak to start a season. In a league with this much parity, that shouldn't even be possible.

If the season were a horror movie, they'd be: All the victims who are already dead and buried before the opening credits have even run.

Odds of a happy ending: Barring some sort of historic turnaround, pretty much zero; even with last night's two points, they're already nine back of a playoff spot, and it's not even November. They'll string a few wins together, to be sure, and some of their young players will do things that create some momentary optimism. But this team wanted to be in the playoffs this year, and they didn't even make it out of the first scene.

Rick Nash, Rangers

Much like the Canadiens, we could pick from any number of Rangers – including their coach. But we'll go with Nash, the \$7.8-million cap hit winger who's managed just two goals and three points on the year so far.

If the season were a horror movie, he'd be: The guy you're pretty sure you remember seeing in this exact same role in other movies.

Odds of a happy ending: Doesn't it seem like we go through this with Nash a lot? It feels like every season or so he goes through a stretch where he doesn't score even though he seems to be otherwise playing fine. Typically, it happens in the playoffs, so maybe he's mixing it up this year. Either way, he's a streaky player – just like every scorer – and sometimes the puck just isn't going in.

In other words, expect him to get back to normal soon. Just remember that Nash is 33 years old, and his days of scoring 40 goals or 60+ points are over. "Normal" is now going to be closer to 15 or 20 goals and 40 points. That may not be worth the cap hit, but the Rangers will have to settle for it.

Brent Burns, Sharks

It's not often that you'd point to a defenceman and complain about a lack of goal-scoring. But the reigning Norris winner is coming off a 29-goal season, and he hasn't found the net yet this year through 11 games.

If the season were a horror movie, he'd be: The creature that makes you think you may have accidentally chosen a sci-fi movie instead.

Odds of a happy ending: Whenever a goal-scorer goes cold, the first thing you want to look at is their shot rate. If that's dropping, too, there may be a problem. But in Burns's case, he's averaging 4.6 shots/game, which is even better than the 3.9 he posted last year and the 4.3 he had during a 27-goal 2015-16 season. His 5v5 shot-attempts rate is also on track. That suggests that we're just seeing some bad shooting luck that should even out over time. The slump means Burns will probably fall short of his usual goal-scoring numbers this year, but not by all that much.

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Sportsnet.ca / Carey Price vs. Mike Smith: Two styles of elite puckhandling goalies

Paul Campbell

When a goalie is handling the puck, it's like a lit fuse. This is especially true for a gunslinger like Mike Smith, who can connect with an absolute bomb...

or have it blow up in his face...

There's a tendency to associate high-risk goalie puckhandlers with skill at playing the puck. If I asked you who the best puckhandling goalies are in the NHL right now, I'm betting Smith is the first who comes to mind, followed by Ben Bishop (another lover of the long bomb), and maybe Pekka Rinne (who enjoys nothing more than rimming the puck up the boards after stopping one behind his net). The big plays they make stand out in memory, and their occasional gaffes are forgiven as a small price to pay for a very useful ability.

So, if I were to ask you which of these active goalies has the most career points (goals and assists), who would you pick?

- A. Pekka Rinne
- B. Ben Bishop
- C. Carey Price
- D. Mike Smith

If you're anything like the 112 respondents to my Twitter poll, you overwhelmingly chose Smith (50 per cent), followed by Rinne (21 per cent), Bishop (21 per cent), and Price (8 per cent). In fact, you may be wondering what Price is even doing on this list.

And that's precisely what I'm here to talk about.

Surprisingly, Price leads all these goaltenders with 12 career points, followed by Smith (11), Rinne (10) and Bishop (7). These totals don't tell us anything definitive about how well these keepers handle the puck, but they do suggest the way we evaluate that skill needs some work.

Measuring success

The goaltenders listed above were chosen because they handle the puck more than any other goalie. Whereas the average goaltender played the puck 9.58 times per 20 minutes last season, Smith and Bishop played it 13.8 times, Rinne 13.5, and Price 12.9 (thanks to Andrew Berkshire for providing this SportLogIQ data, referenced here and below).

In terms of effectiveness, the average goaltender connected 79.67 per cent of the time, meaning he achieved what he attempted, whether it was a quick outlet, setting the puck for his defence, rimming it out of the zone, or hitting a streaking forward with a long bomb. Bishop (75.3 per cent), Rinne (78.7 per cent), and Smith (78.7 per cent) all fell below average in how effective they were.

Price (81.4 per cent), meanwhile, exceeded the average. There's an important stylistic difference at work here, which separates Price from the others.

Two ways of being an elite puckhandler

It's obvious that even elite goaltenders can be poor puckhandlers: Henrik Lundqvist has been an elite goaltender for more than a decade, but he's always been a liability with the puck on his stick. What's not obvious is that there's more than one way to be very good at most goaltending skills and playing the puck is no exception.



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Smith prefers the high-risk, long-range pass (or shot!), epitomizing the "bomber" style of puckhandling. Price, on the other hand, prefers quick passes that have far lower risk and shorter range, which we might call the "archer" style (a term a bowhunter like Price would no doubt appreciate).

You might intuitively expect bombers to score more points than archers because they connect on passes so much further up ice. However, because their passes are higher risk, they're less likely to be completed. Archers, on the other hand, don't set players up at the far blue line very often, but they complete more passes and give their teammates more opportunities to get the goalie an assist.

A bomber's primary skill is the strength and accuracy of his shot: Smith's goal featured above is a perfect example of a powerful, rapid launch with superb technique. Clearly not every goalie, even at the NHL level, can shoot the puck like this.

An archer relies more on his dexterity in closer quarters. Watch Price deal with this tricky situation that most goaltenders would be better off avoiding:

Seeing his defenceman under pressure and unlikely to handle the flipping puck cleanly, Price deftly taps the it down and settles it for him. Then, noticing the forechecker about to overtake him, Price makes a quick backhand pass behind the net to his other defender, giving his team a better chance at exiting the zone.

Another key to the archer's success is the ability to move the puck very quickly, including one-touching it to a defender when possible. Price demonstrates again:

This is a relatively risky play (don't try this at home, kids!), but Price makes it work because he's instantly able to move the puck to the waiting defender. Any delay on the pass or inclination to hold on to the puck for even a second would have, at best, led to Price having to fire the puck into the corner. At worst, he would have been stripped and scored on.

As is so often the case when it comes to goaltending, the splashiest plays tend to stand out, causing us to miss the subtle effectiveness of a more conservative approach. Once you know what to look for, however, you can start to see the position with far more discerning vision and pick out who really are the best puckhandling goalies.

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Sportsnet.ca / The 411 on Igor Ozhiganov, Russian defenceman connected to Leafs

Rory Boylen

If you're a North American hockey fan, chances are you're not tremendously aware of Igor Ozhiganov. He first came on to the NHL radar when a report surfaced in August that Maple Leafs head coach Mike Babcock and GM Lou Lamoriello had travelled to Russia at least in part to visit with him. Instantly, Ozhiganov became one of the more intriguing non-NHL names out there, despite never being drafted into the league.

Ozhiganov is still under contract with CSKA Moscow for another season, but indications are that Toronto will sign him when his contract expires and bring him over as soon as next season, similar to how they acquired Nikita Zaitsev.

"Toronto's a team that's had some success internationally with defencemen. Zaitsev has been very good on their blue line, they've tried with Borgman and Rosen this year and there is a belief they're about to

get another one for next season, his name is Igor Ozhiganov," reported Elliott Friedman on this past weekend's Headlines segment. "He's gonna be recruited by some NHL teams, but word out of Russia is that he is most likely going to Toronto next year."

Here's a look into Ozhiganov to give you an idea of what sort of player he is.

Tape II Tape

Ryan Dixon and Rory Boylen go deep on pucks with a mix of facts and fun, leaning on a varied group of hockey voices to give their take on the country's most beloved game.

Quick report on Igor Ozhiganov from a scout: Moves well for ~6'2/210 lbs., and has a big shot. Some questions about his hockey sense.

— Chris Johnston (@reporterchris) August 23, 2017

HE CAN PLAY A HEAVY GAME

At 6-foot-2, 210 pounds, Ozhiganov brings size to the blue line and a bit of an edge.

As a teenager in Russia's junior MHL (more or less Russia's equivalent to Canada's CHL), Ozhiganov had two seasons where he piled up the penalty minutes. In 2009-10 and 2010-11, he totalled 167 and 129 PIMs to finish third and eighth, respectively, in the league. This was probably a reason why he was never picked at the NHL Draft. He's reined in that part of his game somewhat, finishing with 61 penalty minutes in 50 KHL games last season and has just 10 in 19 this season, so credit to him for evolving as a player.

Still, Ozhiganov is not one to shy away from the rough stuff. Truculence, anyone?

And if you're not paying attention along the boards, Ozhiganov will make you suffer the consequences: pic.twitter.com/sZSC3C1QCW

— Jeff Veillette (@JeffVeillette) August 23, 2017

His size and strength will be immediately noticeable, but he comes with some offensive upside, too (don't be scared off by his 22-point total last season). We'll talk specifically about his shot a little later in this piece, but check out the hands on this goal.

HE'S FRIENDS WITH NIKITA KUCHEROV, WHO WANTED THE TAMPA BAY LIGHTNING TO GET HIM

In an interview with Russian outlet Sport-Express over the summer, the Lightning scorer was asked about another Russian player, 25-year-old forward Nikita Gusev. The reporter asked Kucherov if he had tried to persuade GM Steve Yzerman to acquire Gusev, who scored 71 points in 57 KHL games last season.

According to a Russian translator via SB Nation, Kucherov answered that he indeed has brought up Gusev to Yzerman. Not only that, Kucherov also talked about Ozhiganov unprompted, suggesting he had mentioned that name to Yzerman as well.

"I always say this to the Lightning; not only about Gusev, but about Igor Ozhiganov too," Kucherov said according to the translation. "It's not about our friendship. Both are great players, they could help Tampa to win a Stanley Cup. I wouldn't have recommended them if they weren't able to. By the way, I spoke to them about taking their chances in the NHL. It's an opportunity to play against the best players in the world. We have known each other since childhood, it would be great to win the Stanley Cup together."

HE COMES WITH A BIG SHOT

As Chris Johnston mentioned in his tweet above, scouts will note Ozhiganov's shot from the point. The eight goals he scored in the KHL last season won't jump off the page at you, but it was enough to finish tied for 13th in goals among defencemen.



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Ozhiganov showed off his cannon at the KHL All-Star Game last season, winning the hardest shot competition. He's not quite on Shea Weber's level, but his blast was clocked at 159.47 kilometres per hour — or 99 miles per hour. Had he participated in the NHL's hardest shot last season, Ozhiganov would only have been beaten by Weber and Patrik Laine.

Ozhiganov is similar to Zaitsev in that he's a mid-20s undrafted Russian defenceman who is getting NHL attention a year before his KHL contract expires. The two even played together with CSKA Moscow two years ago, Zaitsev's last before joining the Maple Leafs. Currently 25 years old, should Ozhiganov come to the NHL next season, he'd be a year older than Zaitsev was when he signed with Toronto.

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Sportsnet.ca / When you're Gordie Howe's son, you learn some things

Dr. Murray Howe, in conversation with Wayne Gretzky, on being a good hockey parent, eating family dinners — and his father's heart-breaking X-rays.

Staff

This conversation between Dr. Murray Howe and Wayne Gretzky, a close friend of Gordie Howe and the Howe family, took place in October as a precursor to the release of Howe's new book, *Nine Lessons I Learned from My Father*. This edited transcript was provided to Maclean's by Penguin Random House Canada.

Wayne Gretzky: I've said this many times: I was a huge fan of your dad's when I was growing up, and I still am. One of the things I remember most is that even though he was a hero to me, when I met him he was even more impressive than I expected. You saw him almost every day as a kid, and know him about as well as anyone in the world. What did you see that others never would?

Murray Howe: I would like to preface this first answer by saying that I am just as honoured to be fielding nine questions from you, Wayne, as I was to write *Nine Lessons I Learned from My Father*. Admittedly, I was relieved to see that you chose nine questions instead of 99.

What did I see that others never would? His children were his greatest pride and joy. I was lucky to see that from the vantage point of a little boy. Dad could scare grown men, but he was endlessly, tirelessly playful. He loved to roughhouse, and by no means did he "baby" us.

One of my most indelible memories happened after tagging along with Dad to Olympia for the Red Wings' practice. I was about five, and had the hallowed Wings ice surface all to myself while the players suited up. I was having a blast flying around the rink, the imaginary packed house cheering me on as I bobbed and weaved past invisible defencemen. Suddenly, my skates flew out from underneath me as if whacked by an invisible stick.

I heard a laugh echoing from the far end of the rink, and there was my dad, arms raised overhead in the gesture any hockey fan knows means "GOAL!" He had stepped onto the far end of the rink, still in his dress clothes, and fired a blistering wrist-shot that hit my skates mid-stride. Only Mr. Hockey could do that on the first try! I might be the only kid in history who enjoyed being knocked on his keister by his dad.

Gretzky: People think of Gordie Howe as the greatest hockey player in the world, but you and I both know him as a hockey dad, too. I remember meeting him when your brothers were in town playing the Brantford Majors, and I remember seeing him in the stands in Toronto when you

and I were playing Junior B. Both times he was sitting with the other parents, signing a few autographs, but definitely not on some kind of pedestal. Just another proud father. Do you have any stories about Gordie Howe's career as a hockey dad?

Howe: One of the best lessons Dad taught me was how to be a good hockey parent. He never pushed me to play. After each game he'd ask me, "Did you have fun?" He didn't point out my mistakes or my teammates'. Instead, he'd identify at least one thing that I did well. Then he'd buy me ice cream. In addition, both he and Mom regularly reminded us that if it wasn't fun, we should do something else; life was too short. Dad also never said a word while he was in the stands. Never shouted "Go get 'em!" or "Shoot!" He let us play our game, and allowed the coach to do his job. Once, when he and I witnessed an overly zealous parent screaming at a child on the ice, Dad turned to me and said, "You know, my dad didn't ever see me play hockey until I'd been with the Wings for many years. I played because it was fun, not because my parents wanted me to. If a parent wants to help his kid be a better hockey player, he doesn't need to coach him. All he needs to do is let him know he's proud of him."

Gretzky: I feel lucky that my whole family got to know your father over the years. Whenever I ran into him, the first thing he would ask was, "How are your mom and dad?" It meant a lot to me that someone I idolized, and who my dad idolized, treated us with so much respect. Who did your dad look up to?

Howe: Dad looked up to his own brother Vern, who played hockey for the Canadian Army team, his brother Norm, who was a talented goalie, and also the many pros who made it to the big leagues from Saskatoon. One that stood out for Dad was Ab Welsh. Ab was a neighbour who played on Saskatoon's semi-pro team. My dad would wait outside the arena hoping to carry in the skates for a player, as this was the only way for him to get into the game. He had no money for a ticket. Skates were so valuable that the players carried them separately from their hockey bag so that they wouldn't get stolen. By the way, another Saskatchewan player who let my dad carry his skates was Sid Abel!

Another hero that stood out in Dad's mind was Harry Watson, an NHLer who played for the Canadian Armed Services team during WWII (when the NHL was on hiatus). The team traveled around Canada playing exhibition games. When Dad was 14, he was asked to play on an "all-star" youth team that played against Mr. Watson's team. Dad played like a boy possessed. The young Saskatoon team gave the armed forces team a run for their money. After the game, Harry Watson skated over to my dad. "How old are you, son?" he asked. My dad told him, and Mr. Watson said, "Well, I guess we'll see you in the NHL!" Four years later Dad squared off against him at Olympia Stadium, and Harry winked at him and said, "I told you I'd see you here!" My dad cherished the moment so much that, often when he signed autographs for young hockey players, he honoured Harry Watson by signing "See you in the NHL."

Probably Dad's biggest hero and inspiration was his own mother, Katherine. She was incredibly strong physically, emotionally, and spiritually. She was unwaveringly positive, kind, generous, patient, and compassionate. The Gordie Howe we all know and love off the ice, that was a mirror image of my grandma.

Gretzky: When I was a kid my family sat down to dinner at 5:30 every night, when my dad got home from work. Things are pretty much the same in our house now. Family and friends mean everything to us, and I know it was the same with your parents. But spending time together as a family just gets harder as the world gets faster. What do you think your dad would say to families that don't sit down to eat together because they're too busy or too distracted?

Howe: He'd say, "Where's the fire?" Then he'd laugh. Then he'd help them set the table, but he wouldn't sit down until everyone else was seated. Then he'd explain to them that nothing is more important than family, and the two best opportunities each day to connect with your loved ones are over a meal, be it breakfast, lunch, or dinner, or at bedtime. He'd tell them that if you blink, someone you love might be



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gone, and you won't have that chance to say what you needed to say to them. Then he'd tell them a funny hockey story, and end his visit by cleaning up their kitchen.

Gretzky: Murray, you're a doctor. If you came across Gordie Howe's X-rays, not knowing they belonged to your dad, what conclusions would you draw about the patient?

Howe: Great question, Wayne! I've seen Dad's X-rays, CAT scans, and MRIs, and examined him extensively. He's a medical phenomenon, that's for sure. What is immediately obvious when reviewing his wrist and elbow X-rays is that this was a man who sustained unusual, high-energy trauma, such as is seen in a UFC fighter. Furthermore, the disorganized, chronically fragmented nature of the fracture deformities indicates that this person either could not feel pain, or had an incomprehensibly high pain threshold. If an X-ray like this came across my computer workstation I'd call my colleagues over to take a look, because the findings are so extreme. The fact that he played the last seven years of his professional hockey career with such injuries defies comprehension.

Gretzky: You say a couple of times in the book that part of what made your dad who he was came from growing up in the Depression. What do you think people today could learn from that generation?

Howe: Dad taught the Howe kids that people, not things, matter. That having too much isn't a good thing. That what makes you rich are your connections with others, being able to help your family, friends, and neighbours. And spend time with them. This is what life is all about. During the Depression, communities pulled together to help one another. They depended upon one another. Everyone had a purpose, and felt a sense of responsibility to each other. Everyone learned to be resourceful, and nothing was taken for granted. This sense of community, of responsibility, and gratitude, this is what we need to cultivate in future generations to improve their quality of life.

Gretzky: Murray, we played on a line together for a while in Junior B, so we both know a bit about the ways players get along on a team. You and your brothers often call your dad by his first name. Can you tell me why that is?

Howe: Wayne, I will always treasure the thrill of playing as your line-mate, and of scoring my first Junior B goal off of your perfectly executed pass! Sadly, that was also one of my last goals as well. Sometimes having the name "Howe" just isn't enough. I was lacking that other essential ingredient: talent!

In any case, to answer your question, Dad was conditioned to respond to the name "Gordie" on the ice, and not to the name "Dad." My brothers Mark and Marty both played with him in the WHA and the NHL so they called him "Gordie" on the ice. I believe it was only after Dad specifically asked them to do so. On the other hand, since I didn't play alongside him professionally, I was not invited to call him "Gordie." I tried it once when I was about 13, just to be funny, but the look he gave me made it abundantly clear that I had just overstepped my boundaries. I never did it again.

Gretzky: One thing that really comes through in the book is that your dad helped a lot of people over the years. What do you think motivated him?

Howe: I think it was gratitude, pure and simple. He was so thankful for his parents, his siblings, his friends, his neighbours, his teachers, his coaches, his teammates, and the fans, for helping him to fulfill his dream of playing pro hockey. His singular mission, perhaps, was to "pay it forward" to everyone he met.

Gretzky: It was a privilege to be at your father's funeral and to be with your family. I think what overwhelmed me most was the visitation the day before. The line went on for hours. There were people there from France and from Russia, and Canadians from coast to coast. And yet, you tell a funny story in the book about someone who didn't even know who Gordie Howe was. If you could say just one thing about your dad to someone who knew nothing about him, what would it be?

Howe: The fact that you, your wife Janet, and your father Walter were there, and you spent essentially two entire days with our family, spoke volumes, and our family will never forget your kindness, along with the kindness of so many others.

To answer your question, I would say that this is a guy who has been on the cover of Sports Illustrated I don't know how many times, dominated his sport for the better part of six decades, and is arguably one of the greatest athletes of all time. Yet, he would literally shovel your driveway, carry a stranger's groceries, or help the wait staff fold chairs after a gala. He had a reputation for not taking any guff, but he would do anything for a friend, and he considered just about everyone in the world a friend. He had an unfathomable capacity to care about other people, and I don't think there were many who met him that weren't changed by it in some way.

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TSN.CA / Frustrated Babcock shuffles Leafs deck

By Mark Masters

TSN Toronto reporter Mark Masters checks in daily with news and notes from Maple Leafs practices and game-day skates. The Maple Leafs practised on Tuesday at the Honda Center in Anaheim.

Mike Babcock has seen enough. After watching his team lose three straight in regulation and four of five overall, the Toronto Maple Leafs head coach made significant changes at Tuesday's practice. The moves included:

* Patrick Marleau practised as a centre on a line with James van Riemsdyk and Connor Brown;

* Josh Leivo, who has been a healthy scratch in all but one game this season, skated with Nazem Kadri and Leo Komarov;

* Tyler Bozak and Mitch Marner were on the fourth line with Matt Martin;

* A healthy scratch in four straight, Connor Carrick was paired with Jake Gardiner;

* Andreas Borgman skated with Nikita Zaitsev leaving Roman Polak as the odd man out on the blueline.

"Last night's game was an example of one team just staying on it, staying on it, staying on it all night long and I thought we fed their transition by turning pucks over and that made it hard for us," Babcock said. "Our goaltender did a good job and we still had an opportunity, but in the end we weren't good enough. So, when that's been a consistent theme of late, it's time for change."

What's changed about Bozak's play this season?

Only a positive plus/minus player once in his career, Tyler Bozak's defensive deficiencies are nothing new, but right now the panic level around Bozak's defence is high. What has changed and led to the worries right now? The TH panel weighs in.

Bozak is struggling to find his form and actually finished the last two games on the fourth line.

"Obviously, you never want to be the guy that doesn't get out there later in the game when your team needs a goal," Bozak said. "It definitely motivates you. It's one of those things where it happens to everyone and it was me last night. I didn't play my best."

What's missing from Bozak's game right now?



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"That's a good question," said Babcock. "This is what I'd say to you: when it doesn't go good for you, it doesn't matter how good a player you are, confidence is the first thing. It's not that Bozak's not trying, it's not that he's not putting effort in; it's just not going for him right now.

"So, he's got to find it. And I think the good thing about Bozie is when things don't go right for him, he owns it and he's not looking for anybody else. He's looking for himself to find a way out ... we need him to be an important player for us. We need him to be feeling good. We really felt last year we had a real good line with Mitch, James and him and right now it's not working for whatever reason and so we'll give them some time apart."

Bozak gets it.

"I mean, we got to change something," he said. "It hasn't been a good last few games. We got to change things up and hope for a spark."

So, what has been the issue for the once-potent JvR-Bozak-Marner trio?

"I thought we started pretty good," Bozak said. "Then pucks just sort of started going in on us so, obviously, had to change that up and just haven't been able to get back into form yet. But, we've played some really good teams that have played well."

Babcock often referred to Marner as the driving force of the line last year and the 20-year-old's dip in play has certainly been a factor in the line's early-season struggle.

"He's probably getting keyed on a little more this year," Bozak said. "Guys got to see how great of a player he is. You know what, I think he's doing fine, it's just things aren't going his way, bouncing for him and there's going to be a time this year when all the bounces go his way and he's going to put up a lot of points and we're going to win a lot more games."

Demoted to fourth line, Bozak struggling to find his game

As he struggles to find his game, Maple Leafs head coach Mike Babcock demoted Tyler Bozak to the fourth line with Matt Martin and Mitch Marner. Bozak is trying to stay positive and help Toronto snap its three-game slide.

Marleau shifts to centre with van Riemsdyk, Brown

With Bozak in a funk, Babcock has few options left when it comes to the centre spot. As a result, on Tuesday Marleau was asked to move to the middle where he had found himself at times during the last two games.

"We didn't acquire him to play in the middle, to be honest with you," Babcock said. "That wasn't our plan and it sure isn't our intent. It's just what we're doing right now."

"There's definitely a little bit of an adjustment," said Marleau, who saw some limited time at centre with San Jose last season as well. "It's just about playing within the system and playing it the right way and being in the right spots so you just got to focus on doing those things."

What's the biggest adjustment?

"Well, obviously taking more draws," Marleau noted. "And then playing down low probably a little bit more in our zone. There's quite a few different things, but we're pretty interchangeable out there. Sometimes when you're left wing, you end up playing centre down low in your own zone and then in the offensive zone you can find yourself in a couple different spots as well."

Marleau shifts to centre as Babcock shakes things up

The Leafs got off to an incredible start this season, winning seven of their first nine games. It seemed to good to be true, and it looks like it was. Toronto has lost three straight and four of five, and Mike Babcock's patience is wearing thin as the coach made some significant changes at Wednesday's practice. Mark Masters has more.

Leivo's big chance with Komarov-Kadri

One of the biggest beneficiaries from all the moves was Leivo, who has produced 11 points in his last 10 NHL games, but has still failed to lock down a spot in Babcock's lineup.

"Should he be an every-day (player)? You can debate that all you want," the coach said. "The reality is: you need a certain amount of power-play guys, certain amount of penalty-kill guys and enough speed in your lineup and he's coming in (now) and he's going to get a good opportunity. His opportunity is now to grab hold and make it as hard on me as possible and take someone's job. When you get a chance to get in, just take someone's job."

"It feels great," Leivo said. "I just got to be ready. I don't know when the chance is (coming), so I just got to make the most of it every time."

In his season debut on Saturday, Leivo started on the fourth line, but in Wednesday's game against the Ducks he'll have a more prominent role alongside some linemates he's very familiar with

"We did well last year when I played with them," Leivo said. "We produced a lot of chances and a lot of points so hopefully we can keep the chemistry going from last year. Leo's a hard-working forward, who gets in on the forecheck and Naz's is just skilled and making plays so I'm just there to bury the puck."

Leivo finally gets his big chance, practises on Kadri line

Josh Leivo has only been in the Maple Leafs' lineup once this season, but on Tuesday Mike Babcock shook up his lines and moved the 24-year-old onto Nazem Kadri and Leo Komarov's unit. Mike Babcock is looking for Leivo to make the most of this opportunity and force his way into the lineup permanently.

Carrick gets back in; paired with Gardiner

Babcock is also shuffling the deck on defence, with Carrick getting reunited with Jake Gardiner with whom he played alongside for a good chunk of last season.

"We think C's should be in the lineup on a regular basis," Babcock said. "He's been out for a bit, so we're going to give him a chance to jump back in. That gives us three solid pairs. We think Borgman's really starting to come and settle in so we don't have to be as concerned about match-ups, we can roll them out the door more and maybe give us more balance and more puck movement."

Carrick isn't planning any major adjustments after sitting out for a little more than a week.

"You know, I was pretty happy with how I was going for the most part," he said. "There were mistakes that I was making that were ending up in goals and, flat out, you can't have that. There are little details and as a player, in the role that I'm in, those have to be sharp."

Leafs admit they forgot about defence amid hot start

These changes wouldn't be necessary had the Leafs paid attention to the warning signs early in the season when the goals and wins were piling up.

"We were scoring so many goals that we just forgot about the defensive part of the game," Bozak admitted. "We just thought we could go out there and it'd be easy and we could score a bunch of goals and Freddie (Andersen) was going to stand on his head every night and make 50 saves, but you're never going to win in this league that way."

"Even when we were winning, there was kind of a 'but' after," Carrick said. "Hey, we outscored them BUT we weren't happy with our D zone. Hey, we outscored them BUT we weren't happy with the amount of blueline turnovers we had. When you're losing you're forced to face that question, you're not allowed to duck under it and hide from it – it kind of smacks you right in the face and our team's got to tighten up."

Dodgers fan Matthews relives baseball past



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Auston Matthews will be glued to the World Series on Tuesday as the Leafs enjoy a night off in California. His father, Brian, played baseball at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles where he fell in love with the Dodgers, a love he passed on to his son.

"I don't follow baseball too tightly – the Dodgers are the only team I really follow," Matthews said. "Exciting game tonight and I'll be watching."

Matthews played baseball until age 13 before deciding to focus on hockey. It's a decision that didn't surprise his father.

"He definitely saw it coming," Matthews said with a smile. "I really enjoyed playing it and I think he was kind of hoping I'd choose baseball, but I think they knew it'd be hockey all the way."

Did Matthews have a favourite ballplayer growing up?

"I loved Manny Ramirez," he said. "I always liked watching him and I liked Russell Martin as well when he was in L.A., because I was also a catcher."

Dodgers fan Matthews relives his baseball past

Thanks to his father, Auston Matthews grew up as a Dodgers fan and had to make a choice to move away from baseball and shift his focus to hockey full-time. Matthews shared many memories of going to games with his family and his love of Manny Ramirez.

Lines in Tuesday's practice:

Forwards

Hyman-Matthews-Nylander

Komarov-Kadri-Leivo

van Riemsdyk-Marleau-Brown

Martin-Bozak-Marner

Moore, Kapanen

Defencemen

Rielly-Hainsey

Gardiner-Carrick

Borgman-Zaitsev

Polak

Goaltenders

Andersen

McElhinney

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TSN.CA / Thirteen potential NHL head coaching candidates

By Frank Seravalli

With New York Rangers coach Alain Vigneault reportedly skating on thin ice, it's approaching that time of year when NHL coaches begin to bite the bullet.

Gerard Gallant was the first to get the axe last November. Unceremoniously dispatched by the Florida Panthers, he was left to wait outside the arena in Raleigh with his gear for a cab.

Ironically, Gallant's Vegas Golden Knights (8-2-0) could be the team to put the nail in Vigneault's coffin, according to a report, Tuesday night at Madison Square Garden.

Whether it's Vigneault now, or another coach later, there's never any shortage of volatility behind the bench in a given NHL season. There were five in-season coaching changes last season.

That means it's never a bad time for coaches to sharpen up the old resume.

From up-and-coming go-getters to coaches who have been around the block once or twice, here's a look at 13 potential NHL head coaching candidates (in alphabetical order):

DAN BYLSMA

Current role: NHL Network studio analyst

Age: 47

NHL record: 320-190-55 (.615)

Scoop: Few would describe Bylsma's two-season tenure in Buffalo as competitive. But what will forever make him an interesting midseason candidate is that magical 18-3-4 run in 2009 with the Penguins that ultimately resulted in a Stanley Cup parade – magic that Bylsma was unable to duplicate in Pittsburgh or Buffalo. He remains one of the NHL's winningest regular season coaches.

JACK CAPUANO

Current role: Florida Panthers associate coach

Age: 51

NHL record: 227-192-64 (.536)

Scoop: The second-longest tenured coach in Islanders history is now helping Boughner get adjusted to life behind an NHL bench in Florida. Capuano's Islanders won just one playoff round in parts of seven seasons, but he remains well-respected for his consistent, methodical, process-driven approach.

BOB HARTLEY

Current role: Free agent

Age: 57

NHL record: 463-361-110 (.554)

Scoop: Hartley's credentials can't be questioned. He's won at almost every level – Stanley Cup, Calder Cup, QMJHL, even the Swiss National A championship in 2012. But he was just a year removed from the 2015 Jack Adams Award as the NHL's coach of the year when he was fired in Calgary. At the time, GM Brad Treliving said Hartley took the Flames "as far as I feel he can take it."

SHELDON KEEFE

Current role: Toronto Marlies (AHL) head coach

Age: 37

NHL record: 0-0-0

Scoop: Keefe is widely regarded as the next "up-and-comer" coach from the AHL. He has racked up a 96-45-11 record, winning three playoff rounds in two seasons, after cutting his teeth with the OHL's Sault Ste. Marie Greyhounds. The one problem for Toronto is that Keefe will likely make an NHL impact elsewhere, with Mike Babcock not going anywhere anytime soon. Other flourishing AHL coaches without NHL experience include Rocky Thompson, Benoit Groulx and Mike Van Ryn.

JIM MONTGOMERY

Current role: Denver University (NCAA) head coach



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Age: 48

NHL record: 0-0-0

Scoop: Montgomery was a finalist for the Panthers' opening last summer that went to Bob Boughner. He withdrew his name from consideration after also speaking to the Kings, earning a sweetened contract at Denver, where his team remains ranked No. 1 after capturing the NCAA title last April. It won't be long before Montgomery's flirtation with the NHL heats up again.

KIRK MULLER

Current role: Montreal Canadiens associate coach

Age: 51

NHL record: 80-80-27 (.500)

Scoop: Muller remains the last coach to jump organizations midseason, leaving his post as the AHL Milwaukee Admirals' head coach to become the Carolina Hurricanes' bench boss in 2011-12. It doesn't happen often. Muller got only one full 82-game season with the Canes. He then spent two seasons as an assistant under Ken Hitchcock in St. Louis before rejoining the Canadiens in 2016. Muller is atop many short lists to get a second crack at an NHL head job.

TODD NELSON

Current role: Grand Rapids Griffins (AHL) head coach

Age: 48

NHL record: 17-25-9 (.422)

Scoop: Nelson guided the Griffins to their second Calder Cup title in franchise history last spring, becoming the third person to win it as a player, assistant and head coach. He was then granted permission to interview with the Coyotes, but with Red Wings coach Jeff Blashill reportedly on the hot seat this season, a promotion from AHL to NHL could potentially be in order. Nelson coached the Oilers under an interim tag in 2014-15, replacing Dallas Eakins, but he was discarded in favour of Todd McLellan when GM Peter Chiarelli arrived after that season.

ADAM OATES

Current role: Individual skills coach

Age: 55

NHL record: 65-48-17 (.565)

Scoop: Since 2015, when Oates finished off the New Jersey Devils season as co-coach with Scott Stevens, he has been acting as an individual skills coach to more than 50 NHL players – from stars like Mark Scheifele, Steven Stamkos and Ryan Suter, to the rank-and-file. His lone full season with the Capitals remains the only one over the last decade that Washington failed to make the playoffs, but would a GM be willing to take a flier on Oates if he thinks a special relationship with one of his stars could ignite the team?

DAVID QUINN

Current role: Boston University (NCAA) head coach

Age: 51

NHL record: 0-0-0

Scoop: As one of only two men to lead BU since 1973, Quinn has as comfortable and prominent a role as any coach not in the NHL. He also remains an intriguing NHL candidate, with three seasons of AHL experience and one year on the Colorado Avalanche bench as an assistant under Joe Sacco, checking all of the necessary boxes.

LINDY RUFF

Current role: New York Rangers assistant coach

Age: 57

NHL record: 736-554-203 (.561)

Scoop: After a run of 19 consecutive seasons as an NHL head coach, Ruff is running the Rangers' defence. His decision to jump back in so quickly raised eyebrows around the NHL, but the former Rangers defenceman might be an ideal interim candidate if GM Jeff Gorton decides to pull the plug on Vigneault, along with associate coach Scott Arniel.

DARRYL SUTTER

Current role: Under contract with Kings through 2017-18

Age: 59

NHL record: 634-467-184 (.565)

Scoop: Two Stanley Cups in parts of six seasons were not enough to save Sutter's job after missing the playoffs in two of the last three. Sutter was fired on April 10 when the Kings cleaned house. Their rejuvenated start (9-2-1) under John Stevens with largely the same roster probably doesn't help the noted curmudgeon's case.

MICHEL THERRIEN

Current role: Montreal Canadiens scout

Age: 53

NHL record: 406-303-105 (.563)

Scoop: Fired last February from his second tour of duty with the Habs, Therrien turned heads last month when he said he'd stick with the team in a scouting role this season. He's under contract with the Canadiens through next season (2018-19), but this hockey lifer would undoubtedly like another crack somewhere.

DAVE TIPPETT

Current role: Free agent

Age: 56

NHL record: 553-413-148 (.563)

Scoop: For the first time in 16 years, Tippett isn't behind an NHL bench. He "mutually" parted ways with the Coyotes in June after an eight-year run in the desert, which included a lump-sum buyout of his contract. Tippett is reportedly eager to get back in the game, but he's never been a midseason replacement in the NHL.

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TSN.CA / Keller a shining light for winless Coyotes

By Frank Seravalli

PHILADELPHIA - A rocketing American star, a rookie representing Arizona, is living up to his top billing after scoring goals at a prodigious rate to start the season.

Stop us if you've heard this story before.

Except, Coyotes forward Clayton Keller is off to an even better start than Auston Matthews last season.

It's a comparison made all the more impressive considering Arizona's historically horrendous start. Keller is doing it on a Coyotes team (0-10-1)



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that became the first to not register a win in their first 10 games of the season since the Atlanta Thrashers in 2002-03.

They have been dealt nine consecutive regulation losses, mostly because they can't get a stop in net since Antti Raanta went down with an injury.

How bad has it been? The Coyotes, who are 31st with an .861 team save percentage, could post back-to-back 30-save shutouts and still barely climb to 30th in the league.

Keller, the 19-year-old who was GM John Chayka's first draft pick at No. 7 overall in 2016, has been the one shining light in the desert.

With eight goals and four assists in 11 games, Keller is the clubhouse leader for the Calder Trophy through the first month of the season. There is not a Canadian-born player currently among the Top 10 in rookie scoring.

Matthews had two fewer goals through the same number of games last year.

"He's a hockey genius," Chayka said Monday. "He understands the game at a level that's two or three steps ahead of everyone else. That's his gift. His brain is processing things at a much higher speed than other players on the ice."

Part of what Keller calls his "hockey IQ" is what made him such an attractive prospect. Chayka called him a "hockey nerd," someone who watches games and you can "talk hockey at a very high level with him."

"I think I have that," Keller said. "It's something you either have or you don't. It's a big part of my start. At the end of the year last year, I got a little bit of a wake-up call with how fast [the NHL] really is. You don't know how hard it is until you're really there. I can't thank them enough for letting me come in here last year [after leaving Boston University]."

Keller was given the highest rating for hockey sense in the 2016 draft class by NHL Central Scouting.

"The puck always follows him," linemate Derek Stepan said. "But that is a skillset."

Keller, who grew up playing in St. Louis with Matthew Tkachuk and Logan Brown and was coached by their NHL-alum fathers, hasn't always been known to pile up goals at this kind of clip. In the U.S. National Development Program, as well as last season at Boston University, he was more a playmaker.

"I'm definitely a pass-first guy," Keller said. "But I also shoot the puck. I've learned that when I shoot, it opens up a lot of other options on the ice, too."

Chayka believes Keller's shot is underrated. Keller may not be able to sustain an 18.6 per cent shooting rate, but Chayka doesn't see a huge adjustment coming from that department.

"Playmakers usually fight between overpassing and finding the right time to shoot. That's not an issue with him," Chayka said. "He's not afraid. An equally adept passer and shooter is a rare occurrence. And he's got it. He can really shoot the puck, especially for being a smaller-statured guy."

Just about the only blemish on Keller's early season resume is his defensive zone play. He's an unsightly minus-10; only Oliver Ekman-Larsson's minus-12 is worse on the Coyotes. These are learning curves expected for a team that has dressed 10 players on entry-level contracts this season.

"He's really coachable. You can talk to him one-on-one," new coach Rick Tocchet said. "The thing I like about him is he has some swagger. The other night, he was having an okay game. Boom. He scores a goal. The great players, they can have a quiet game for 30 minutes – you can't play great every night – but they're still dangerous."

"It's that one play you need to win a game. He has that, a dynamic situational awareness."

It's just that, so far, Keller hasn't been able to get the Coyotes over that hump.

"It's been a really weird year," Tocchet conceded.

That hasn't bothered Keller, which has been impressive to observers like Stepan and Tocchet. He refuses to get frustrated.

"When you're 0-10-1, people give up. He's not giving up," Tocchet said. "I love that about him. It's infectious."

"He's just a kid," Stepan said. "He's just a 19-year-old kid trying to enjoy every minute. Listen, I think this group has worked hard. I see big strides. The transition hasn't been easy, but I see the light at the end of the tunnel."

Keller needs to be that light at the end of the tunnel for Arizona. The Coyotes don't know what they're getting yet from Lawson Crouse or Dylan Strome. Brendan Perlini is still finding his way. They need to hit on Keller. So far, he looks like the real deal.

"He's doing an amazing job right now," Chayka said. "I'm not surprised at all by what he's doing. We think he's a special player. Those are the guys you win with – guys that love the game and guys that play at a high level. He checks both of those boxes. The sky is the limit for him."

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TSN.CA / Staal speaks out in defence of Vigneault

TSN.ca Staff

New York Rangers head coach Alain Vigneault is reportedly on the hot seat amid his team's 3-7-2 start to the season.

However, Rangers alternated captain Marc Staal spoke out in defence of his head coach to the New York Daily News, putting the blame for the team's poor start on the players.

"It's not a coaching issue. It's everyone," the 30-year-old defenceman said. "Everyone needs to be better. We're 3-7-2. We've got to find a way to win games together, and if you're not gonna do that together, you're not gonna turn it around. So we're all on the same page in that regard of trying to turn this thing around."

The Rangers have failed to win back-to-back games this season, while both Henrik Lundqvist (.900) and Onrej Pavelec (.887) have posted save percentages of .900 or lower between the pipes.

Staal said Monday that he believes Vigneault's coaching is still getting through to the players, but the team simply hasn't been ready to start games. The Rangers were down 3-0 to the Montreal Canadiens on Saturday night less than 15 minutes into the game.

"We have the same pre-scout before every game. (Vigneault's) done it the same way since he's been here. It's not anything new to us," Staal said. "I don't think it's lost on anybody when we get on the ice. I think it's just being in the right mental frame to have that intensity and emotion right at the start of the game. The Xs and Os stuff takes care of itself."

Vigneault seemed to agree with Staal's assessment on Monday, pointing back to the team's start against the Canadiens.

"Obviously we're giving them all that information. At the end of the day, players have the responsibility to get themselves ready to compete and



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execute," Vigneault told the Daily News. "That's in any sport. Not just in this sport, but in any sport. We give them the information we feel is important, and they've got to go out and execute. And obviously in the last game, that execution and that compete-level was not nearly good enough in that first period."

Larry Brooks of the New York Post wrote Sunday there was "considerable chatter" that Tuesday's matchup with the Vegas Golden Knights could be Vigneault's last behind the Rangers' bench. Vigneault said Monday he's approaching the contest with the same mindset he brings to every game.

"Every game my staff and I prepare ourselves, prepare the team. Love the competition. That's why we're in this game," he said. "There's some good times in a season, there's some more challenging times. This is more challenging. I've been through a few of these before, and it only makes you better and it only makes the team better. We're gonna continue to work and control the areas that we can control."

Vigneault, 56, is in his fifth season as Rangers head coach and has reached the postseason in each of the previous four years.

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TSN.CA / Big names, declining ice time and trade speculation

By Travis Yost

What's the first sign that a player might be falling out of favour with his head coach? If I asked you that question, what would you suggest?

If it was me, I'd take a look at a player's usage and ice time allocation over an extended period. When a coaching staff loses faith in a player, he'll be utilized less on special teams and will start to see fewer minutes at 5-on-5.

On the latter point: When a player loses 5-on-5 ice time, there doesn't always have to be a negative takeaway. Sometimes players lose ice time because other teammates – especially younger players – accelerate their production. Sometimes it's because the coach has found a better spot for a player based on chemistry. Sometimes it can mean the player has been overused. Sometimes it can be just a temporary blip – a trend that will rebound as the season progresses.

So when a player's ice time is eroding, it's not necessarily a smoking gun. But super-talented, highly productive players simply don't see their ice time slip. That's exactly why changes in deployment can be indicative of a guy losing his spot on the depth chart – especially if that change is dramatic.

The number of big names who have seen their ice time consistently move downwards year-over-year in the past five seasons is lengthy – longer than I and perhaps many of you would have realized. For the purposes of this post I've broken it out by position. It's an interesting story on both a local and league-wide level, especially since these sorts of trends can be the precursor to big trades.

Let's start with the forwards. Here, I've taken all regular players who have seen their 5-on-5 ice-time drop in four consecutive years, as well as the average ice time expectations for a first-line forward and a third-line forward for sense of direction.

Two things jump off of the page immediately. One: the New York Islanders and Pittsburgh Penguins are well represented here, with three players seeing significant year-over-year changes in ice time. For the Islanders, John Tavares – who has seen steady deployment for years –

has played about 1.5 minutes less this season than his career average. It's hard to say if that's telling just yet, but it'll be on a lot of folks' radar because he's a marquee player on an expiring contract. Their big free agent buy in the summer of 2016, Andrew Ladd, has seen his ice time slip to about third-line duty. And Nikolai Kulemin is basically being pushed out of the picture.

Pittsburgh is also interesting. Evgeni Malkin's time has taken a Tavares-like dip in 2017-18, though this could be more energy conservation than anything else. But Phil Kessel is a different story. Kessel went from one of the league's most-utilized players to a guy who is seeing middle-six ice these days. Kessel's name has been curiously popping up in trade talks these days, though his hot start in might be cooling that off a bit.

Outside of those teams, two other names caught my eye: Rick Nash in New York and Tyler Bozak in Toronto. Nash is a fantastic scorer on an expiring contract. Bozak is a respectable scorer also on an expiring contract. (Bozak's situation may even be more dire – he's being relegated into third or fourth-line duty at this point in Toronto, usurped by younger and better talent around him.) What are the odds that one of Nash or Bozak is traded before the deadline? I'd take them, whatever they are.

Let's head over to the defensive side now.

Two of these names make sense right out of the gate. Ryan Suter was perhaps the league's most buried defender in terms of usage. At 32, I doubt Minnesota wants him carrying such a ridiculous load for much longer. He's still a clear-cut first-pairing guy, but I suspect he's thankful for the couple extra minutes he's getting on the bench this season. Dan Girardi is the other name that's obvious. A player post-buyout and on the wrong side of 30, he's being deployed pretty carefully by Tampa Bay.

The other three is where this gets fun. Keith Yandle was not Bob Boughner or Dale Tallon's guy. His ice time had been slipping for some time pre-dating Tallon, but it's hit a five-year low this season. The Panthers have gone heavy on Aaron Ekblad's ice time and have tried to balance the remaining workload between Mike Matheson, Mark Pysyk, and the aforementioned Yandle. I'd keep an eye on this one as the season progresses.

If we are looking at this from a potential trade impact perspective, no name is more interesting here than Brenden Dillon. Dillon has ceded ice-time to Brent Burns, Joakim Ryan, Justin Braun and Marc Edouard-Vlasic. Do the Sharks really want to carry a third-pairing guy signed for \$3.9 million AAV through 2019-20? I would bet not. Like the Nash/Bozak combo from before, I'd bet heavily on San Jose looking for a trade partner here.

That brings us to Shea Weber. Look, it's very hard to blame what's happened in Montreal on Weber. As someone who thought Montreal lost the Weber/P.K. Subban trade 10 times over, I think he's been excellent for the Canadiens. But the unfortunate reality is that there are an awful lot of miles on a guy who, at 32, is at his best when teams are protecting leads, not chasing them.

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