



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 2, 2017

## THE NEWS & OBSERVER

### Hurricanes' Pesce sidelined with concussion

By Chip Alexander

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November 01, 2017 10:05 PM

Carolina Hurricanes defenseman Brett Pesce has suffered a concussion and will not make the Canes' two-game road trip, coach Bill Peters said Wednesday.

Pesce was hit by a puck in the shoulder and head area during practice Tuesday, when forward Joakim Nordstrom got off a shot and the puck glanced off Pesce's stick. Pesce

was down on the ice for several minutes as he was being treated by Canes trainers, and appeared dazed as he was helped off the ice.

Pesce and Jaccob Slavin have been the Canes' best shutdown defensive pairing. With Pesce out indefinitely, Peters could use Slavin with Justin Faulk as his top pairing.

Klas Dahlbeck was paired with Slavin in Wednesday's practice but Peters said some changes could be made before the road game Thursday against the Colorado Avalanche.

### Hurricanes' Aho still looking for his first goal. When will it come?

By Chip Alexander

[calexander@newsobserver.com](mailto:calexander@newsobserver.com)

November 01, 2017 11:18 AM

During a practice drill Tuesday at PNC Arena, Carolina Hurricanes forward Sebastian Aho got off three good shots from the slot in rapid succession.

Goalie Scott Darling made clean saves on the first and third shots, and the second clanged off the crossbar. Call it a 10-second microcosm of Aho's season.

In the Canes' first 10 games, Aho has had 28 shots on goal and 54 total shot attempts. Nothing has gone in the net. Off the posts, off the crossbar, blocked, off goalie pads and paddles, but not in. Not past an opposing goalie.

If that bothers Aho, it doesn't show. Not outwardly. The Finn went through a similar stretch a year ago at the beginning of his rookie season in the NHL, not scoring in the first 13 games, yet he finished with 24 goals, second only to Jeff Skinner's 37 on the Canes.

"I think I've played better and better every day, and I think the goals are coming," Aho said Tuesday. "I just need to stay positive. Just relax my game. Obviously, work hard, but still when I get the chances just relax."

Some would say it might be hard to relax when you're 10 games into a season, counted on to score and still seeking that first one. But Aho, 20, said goal-scoring is just one aspect of his game.

"I try to help this team win in other ways, too," he said. "I try to play a good two-way game and make some plays for my linemates, too."

Aho has five assists, second to Justin Williams' seven in the Canes' 4-4-2 start. In Sunday's 4-3 shootout loss to

Anaheim, he set up Jordan Staal for a tying goal in the second period, sweeping behind the Ducks' net with the puck for a wraparound, only to make a nice pass through the crease to an open Staal.

Later, with the game in overtime, Aho was at the end of a long shift of three-on-three play when he shook free on a breakaway, the game on his stick. Waiting for him was Ducks goalie Ryan Miller, the old pro.

"Actually, I felt pretty good," Aho said. "I had some energy left. There was a good chance to score. I pretty much did what I wanted to do. But ..."

But Miller made the stop on Aho's forehand shot. Miller also stopped Aho to end the shootout, sealing the Ducks' victory.

Canes assistant coach Rod Brind'Amour, who works with the forwards, said that in Aho's case, probably the less said the better.

"You don't make a big deal about it," Brind'Amour said. "He had good chances the other night. There's not much more you can do, and the worst you can do is all of a sudden starting piling on and like, 'Hey, you've got to score.'"

"It's more, 'Relax, play your game.' The effort's there."

A year ago, Aho's first two NHL goals came in the Canes' 14th game, against the Washington Capitals in a 5-1 win. His first NHL hat trick came Jan. 31 against the Philadelphia Flyers at PNC Arena – the hats thrown on the ice were collected and waiting in his locker stall after the next practice – and he had three other two-goal games.

Aho, a smaller player at 5-11 who has good core strength, led the Canes in power-play points (17) and had four game-winning goals. His 49 points were second to Skinner's 63 and fifth among NHL rookies.



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"I keep telling him to make plays," Brind'Amour said. "He's a playmaker first, and you don't want to change his game. Keep playing his game, and it will turn."

While Canes coach Bill Peters has juggled some lines this season, he has kept Aho at left wing on Staal's line opposite right winger Elias Lindholm. Drafted as a center, Peters intends to keep Aho on the wing for a second season.

"The chances are there. It's going to come," Peters said.

Aho said he has videos made of all his shifts in a game, for closer inspection. It gives him a better feel, a different look, at all that happened on the ice, offensive chances he might have missed and other areas he needs to improve.

What does he see?

"The last few games, I've had many scoring chances," Aho said. "I just need to put it in and help our team win some more. It's just a matter of time. They're going to go in."

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Carolina Hurricanes at Colorado Avalanche

When: Thursday, 9 p.m.

Where: Pepsi Center, Denver.

TV: FSCR



## Gameday: Hurricanes at Avalanche

by Michael Smith [@MSmithCanes](https://twitter.com/MSmithCanes) / [CarolinaHurricanes.com](http://CarolinaHurricanes.com)

12:00 AM

**DENVER** - November already?!

This is the gameday hub, where you can find all the latest news and information you need to know for tonight's tilt between the Carolina Hurricanes and Colorado Avalanche. Make Hurricanes.com a regular stop throughout the day, as we update this hub with notes, photos and more as puck drop draws near.

The Hurricanes will be on the ice at Pepsi Center for an 11:30 a.m. local time morning skate, so check back here for updates beginning around 1:30 p.m. Eastern.

*Last updated: 12:00 a.m.*

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### CANES OPEN NOVEMBER IN DENVER

12:00 a.m.

Following a 4-4-2 October, the Carolina Hurricanes begin the second month of the 2017-18 regular season with a two-game road trip to Colorado and Arizona.

In their first game action since Sunday, the Canes will square off with the Avalanche, who have been idle since Saturday.

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

The Avs posted a 6-5-0 record (12 points) in October, including a 4-1-0 mark at home. They beat the Stars 5-3 and the Blackhawks 6-3 in their final two home games of the month.

The Hurricanes are coming off a month in which they posted a 3-2-0 record on the road, their most recent game of which was a 6-3 defeat of the Toronto Maple Leafs. Last season, the Canes earned just one of a possible six points against the Avalanche, who finished with a league-worst 22 wins and 48 points.

"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."

The Canes head west without defenseman [Brett Pesce](#), who suffered a concussion in Tuesday's practice. [Klas Dahlbeck](#) could draw back into the lineup on Thursday.

"I am comfortable [with Dahlbeck playing his off side], but I'm also well aware that he's better on the left side," Peters said on Wednesday. "If you want to give a guy a good chance to be successful, play him on his natural side."

Perhaps uncoincidentally, the Canes recalled right-shooting defenseman Roland McKeown for extra insurance on the back-end during this trip.

The team also has forward Patrick Brown in tow after [Janne Kuokkanen](#) was assigned to Charlotte earlier this week.



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"If he gets in, you know what Brownie's all about. He's a versatile guy who plays real hard and is responsible defensively and good on the forecheck. He can play center and the wing," Peters said. "He's been real good on the wing to start the year in the American League. We're successful with Brownie because of his work ethic."

## Tweetmail No. 163: Favorites, Shifts & Futures

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

November 1st, 2017

**DENVER** - Hello and welcome to Tweetmail, now presented by [Tijuana Flats](#)! Wear your Canes gear to participating Raleigh locations on Wednesdays throughout the season and receive 50% off any entrée.

Tweetmail is a weekly feature on CarolinaHurricanes.com in which I take your Twitter questions about the Carolina Hurricanes or other assorted topics and answer them in mailbag form. Hopefully the final product is insightful to some degree, and maybe we have some fun along the way.

Let's get to it.

Who has been your favorite player to watch this season? [#tweetmail @MSmithCanes](#)

When this team is clicking, it's a fun group to watch, but the player that has been my favorite to watch is [Jeff Skinner](#).

Skinner paces the team in goals with seven this season, and I feel like he has the potential to be dangerous each and every time the puck is on his stick in the offensive zone. The way he nimbly skates around defenders, stickhandles through tight spaces and, more often than not, makes something out of seemingly nothing is so rewarding to be able to see unfold as it happens.

And it's not just in game action. He ends warm-ups by mimicking a fair catch in football when he tries to snag pucks flipped high in the air toward the net by [Jaccob Slavin](#). In practices, I don't think there's anyone who has more fun on the ice each and every day. He approaches every drill with the idea of scoring. He bangs his stick on the board and glass and cheers his teammates on when they make a nice play. He throws his hands in the air or gives emphatic fist-pumps to celebrate goals. And his antics after practice formally ends - whether it's seeking out rebounds during a defensemen shooting drill or mirroring a goaltender's moves - bring levity to the otherwise mundane proceedings.

Speaking of ...

The elephant in the room....how do you not get Skinner on for even 1 shift in OT, and then no SO

Since I'm simply writing about the decisions made versus being the one who actually makes those decisions, I can only say so much about this without purely offering speculation. What I can do is try to help shed some light on the context.

**CANESPR NOTES:** The Canes were not whistled for a penalty in their last two games, marking the first consecutive penalty-free games in franchise history. The Canes lead the league in fewest penalty minutes per game at 4:35. ... Carolina is 3-1-1 in their last five games against Colorado.

We know head coach Bill Peters didn't use Skinner and his line late in regulation because they had been on the ice for all three of Anaheim's goals.

"We had to make sure we got the point. They were minus-3 as a line at that time and had given up opportunities," Peters said after practice on Tuesday. "Eventually it's got to end, right? To me, there's no sense in letting them go minus-4."

A similar rationale might have guided strategy in overtime. Defensive liability or not, I'm of the belief that you'd like to see your team leader in goals on the ice in 3-on-3, but I don't get paid to make those decisions and nor would you want me getting paid to make those decisions. Perhaps we would have seen Skinner at some point - there were a couple of long shifts in which skaters got stuck on the ice - but that's tough to say. Even still, the Canes had two breakaways in 3-on-3 action, two golden opportunities to end the game right then and there.

As far as the shootout goes, it might have been a simple game of statistics. Yes, Skinner is the team-leader in goals and he's probably the most talented natural goal scorer the Canes have on their roster. For whatever reason, though, that doesn't always translate to results in the shootout. Skinner is 6-for-35 (17.1 percent) lifetime in the skills competition, and the three shooters that Peters put on the ice on Sunday have better career numbers: Aho was 2-for-6 (33.3 percent), Slavin was 4-for-9 (44.4 percent) and Williams was 7-for-21 (33.3 percent). With his hard-to-stop, patented backhand move, Slavin is a virtual lock for the shootout. It's then a question of who the other two shooters will be. Peters opted to go with two shooters with better career stats than Skinner, and if any of the three score, perhaps this isn't even a topic of discussion.

How do you see Kuokkanen situation going? Thought he looked really good when he played this season. Just needed to bear down sometimes.

[Janne Kuokkanen](#)'s situation is very similar to that of Martin Necas. At this point in both of their careers, the best developmental tool is for them to play games. It was clear that Necas wasn't going to see regular ice time with the Hurricanes, so they returned him to his professional team in the Czech Republic, where he is going to be a centerpiece of their roster. Kuokkanen saw a string of games early but then played in just one of the team's next seven games. He's much better served playing games, which is exactly what he'll do in Charlotte. It's clear he's got offensive skill that is going to blossom with time, and he'll be able to cultivate his



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game as a professional with the Checkers in the American Hockey League.

There's even the possibility Kuokkanen could return to the big club this season. He can still play in five more NHL games before the first year of his entry-level contract kicks in, so there is some wiggle room. Either way, the move to assign Kuokkanen to Charlotte sets up the 19-year-old in a prime position to succeed moving forward.

Can you explain why we traded away our #1 wide receiver when we're a clear playoff contender? :(

Quick football question and answer because anything goes here in #Tweetmail. (And also, #OneCarolina.) So on the Kelvin Benjamin trade, the irrational fan in me is completely befuddled and slightly unhinged that the Panthers traded away their No. 1 receiver and a former first-round pick for two draft picks. But trying to assess it rationally, I kind of get it; the team gets something for him now versus losing him for nothing in the offseason, questions remain about the health of his knee, etc. But I do wonder how it affects the psyche of a 5-3 team square in the playoff mix, not to mention how it affects an offense that is already struggling to find the endzone with regularity. We'll see!

## THE ATHLETIC

### November Fan Power Rankings: Lightning soar to top of the class

[Dom Luszczyszyn](#)

18 hours ago

October is in the books and the season is officially wacky. Vegas and New Jersey are atop the standings, while Washington and Edmonton are floundering. It's surprising and unexpected – that's hockey for you. The league is so tight that small sample results will always be just a little silly and we're seeing that unfold after the first month.

So how much have early results changed opinions from the common fan? Before the season started, we created a little matchup generator app that would rank each team based on which teams users chose more frequently compared to which team they were choosing them over. It was a big hit and we got [some very interesting results](#) to not only look back on once the season ended, but also track throughout the year as the season progresses and opinions change.

At the end of every month, we'll run the matchup generator again to see how hockey fans feel about each team, why they might feel that way, and whether there's any reason they shouldn't feel that way. They're monthly power rankings powered by you, (so don't yell at me, I didn't vote) and it'll be a fascinating experience at putting a number on the fickle yet stubborn nature of team strength perception. Fans generated around 33,000 matchups this time around, here's how each team ranks based on that.

#### 1.1.1 NHL Fan Power Rankings

##### 1. Tampa Bay Lightning (+4)

*Fan Strength: 110.5 points (+5.9)*

*Current Record: 10-2-1*

No surprise about who's on top, the Lightning are in a league of their own right now. Tampa Bay was pegged as a bounce back team and a legit Cup contender going into the season

and it's proving it so far with a tie for the league's best record. The Lightning also have their two superstars, Steven Stamkos (6-18-24) and Nikita Kucherov (13-8-21), torching the league right now sitting 1-2 in the scoring race. This team is built on star power and their top guys are rolling. My model agrees that they're now the league's best team too after some slight skepticism going into the season.

##### 2. Pittsburgh Penguins (-1)

*Fan Strength: 104.8 points (-5.7)*

*Current Record: 7-5-1*

The Penguins have not looked like themselves, but folks are still confident they're a high calibre team. When they're on, they've been fine, it's just when they're off it's been dreadful. They've already been on the wrong end of three huge blowout losses, though each one was on the end of a back-to-back. I don't doubt they'll turn it around, but it's been a less than impressive start. Of course, having the league's lowest PDO doesn't help matters, but their shot share hasn't been impressive either. No team has dropped more in my model than the Penguins, but they had a big enough cushion that they still rank in the top three, as they do here.

##### 3. Toronto Maple Leafs (+5)

*Fan Strength: 103.6 points (+5.0)*

*Current Record: 7-5-0*

Despite a three game skid (during which they've been very much outplayed), the Leafs appear to be a top three team in the minds of fans. There may be some bias there because my followers tend to skew toward the Leafs, but their first nine games were impressive enough to warrant this spot. I'm very skeptical as the team needs help on defence, but the offence has enough firepower that it may not matter. Fredrik Andersen is going through his usual October funk and should get into his groove eventually.



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## 4. St. Louis Blues (+7)

*Fan Strength: 103.0 points (+5.0)*

*Current Record: 10-2-1*

The Blues were a team I pegged as an outsider in a tough Central before the season started thanks to some weak defensive depth and a big injury to Robby Fabbri. Instead they look like front-runners and it sure seems like [they're the real deal, too](#), with some strong underlying numbers. My model hasn't figured it out yet – it's hard when most of the team is filled with mostly established players – but it will soon if they can maintain this level of play.

## 5. Los Angeles Kings (+16)

*Fan Strength: 102.7 points (+17.0)*

*Current Record: 9-2-1*

The biggest jump goes to the Kings who are suddenly exciting and back to being good again. Seriously, these guys are unrecognizable from prior versions of the Kings. Even Jonathan Quick is playing like the mythical version of his elite self and not the actual slightly above average version. Many had doubts after a terrible 2016-17, but they've squashed those completely through their first 12 games as the new coaching staff and system (plus some good ol' fashioned regression) have rejuvenated their game. My model however isn't sold just yet though. It's tough to account for a new coach and we're seeing that here, but at the same time, a lot of the team's early success seems to be because of a too good to be true penalty kill – currently sporting a .957 (!!!) save percentage – as well as some fortunate percentages at 5-on-5, despite an expected goals ratio that's actually lower than their Corsi (which is also at a very un-Kings like 51.5 percent). If they're sacrificing quantity for quality, it's not showing up there. This ranking feels like an overcorrection to having the Kings too low to begin with. Top five is probably a bit too high and it's likely they drop back down to earth a bit after a very hot start.

## 6. Columbus Blue Jackets (+3)

*Fan Strength: 102.6 points (+4.1)*

*Current Record: 8-4-0*

Just outside the top five is Columbus who are starting this season right where last (regular) season ended. The Blue Jackets are fourth in Corsi, fourth in goals, and second in expected goals at 5-on-5. A lot of people thought they might regress this season, but they're only building on their franchise best campaign. Start getting used to the words "Columbus Blue Jackets: Cup Contender" because that's what they are right now. [Never forget that The Athletic overlord, James Mirtle, had it first](#). One trouble spot though: their power play looks awful by every statistical measure, ranking dead last on offence across the board.

## 7. Nashville Predators (-5)

*Fan Strength: 101.3 points (-5.3)*

*Current Record: 5-4-2*

Starting the season without a defenceman as good as Ryan Ellis isn't easy and the team hasn't played as well as expected so far as a result of that. Now they're also without Nick Bonino, their new second line centre. It'll be tough to survive that and the Preds look like they're barely doing that through their first 11 games.

## 8. Washington Capitals (-5)

*Fan Strength: 101.1 points (-5.3)*

*Current Record: 5-6-1*

It's been a nightmare start for a team that lost the most talent during the off-season. Now they're without Matt Niskanen, arguably their best defender, and their defensive depth is hurting big time. Washington doesn't look anything like the team that won two Presidents' trophies over the past two seasons and have actually been a bottom 10 possession team. The Caps lack discipline too with a ghastly minus-18 penalty differential, tied with Anaheim for worst in the league and they also somehow have the league's second worst expected goals for rate on the power play to boot. All of that sounds very unlike Washington and if it doesn't right that ship, it'll keep sliding. They have the high-end talent to be better than they've played and the fans have acknowledged that by keeping them in the top 10, but their place among the league's elite is slipping by the game.

## 9. Dallas Stars (+3)

*Fan Strength: 98.6 points (+0.8)*

*Current Record: 7-5-0*

Sure seems like the Stars are back, only this time they have a goalie. Ben Bishop was a big gamble at his age and after last season, but he's been great so far with a .920 save percentage, though maybe some credit should go to the defensive mind of Ken Hitchcock. The Stars' record isn't very exceptional, but they've been one of the more impressive teams early in every game situation ranking 10th in expected goals percentage at 5-on-5 and second on both special teams units. Their big off-season looks like it's working.

## 10. Chicago Blackhawks (-3)

*Fan Strength: 98.1 points (-2.4)*

*Current Record: 5-5-2*

The Hawks are sort of in the same situation as the Capitals. Defensive depth has been sketchy and they haven't been getting the better of their opponents at 5-on-5. Chicago's situation there may even be more dire than Washington's as it currently has the league's worst expected goals against rate, a far cry from where it was during its dynasty days. The Hawks looked damn impressive during their first two games, but they've been a bit of a mess since. It's not enough to bump them outside the top 10 though.

## 11. Anaheim Ducks (-5)



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*Fan Strength: 96.2 points (-5.8)*

*Current Record: 6-4-1*

I'm extremely impressed that the Ducks have the record they do despite the injuries they've dealt with. That they're 6-4-1 with *that* bottom six and without their top two centres for much of the season (Ryan Getzlaf has only played six of 11) is insane. I mean, they're getting killed on the shot clock on a near nightly basis and have the league's worst penalty differential, so it's likely this won't last much longer, but when your roster is this depleted by injury, getting points is all that matters. Just win, baby. Once they get healthy this team will be scary good.

## 12. Minnesota Wild (-2)

*Fan Strength: 93.7 points (-4.6)*

*Current Record: 4-4-2*

Minnesota hasn't had a great start to the season and have been downgraded from the top 10 to the mediocre tier taking an even bigger hit on its projected point total. The Wild have been hit big by the injury bug, but have kept it together for the most part. Once everyone gets healthy they should be a lot better, but it seems pretty clear early that they're likely not going to reach the heights they did last season.

## 13. San Jose Sharks (-)

*Fan Strength: 93.6 points (-2.4)*

*Current Record: 6-5-0*

No big change in rank on the Sharks since pre-season, but they did see a drop in points as they've looked a bit worse than expected so far in the standings. They carry the league's third best possession rating though which bodes well for their future. Last year's Norris Trophy winner, Brent Burns, is somehow without a goal in his first 11 games and that drought shouldn't last much longer.

## 14. Carolina Hurricanes (+6)

*Fan Strength: 93.4 points (+5.6)*

*Current Record: 4-4-2*

This is a strange ranking improvement as the Hurricanes haven't really done anything to change minds yet, but made a big jump in the rankings anyways. In my mind, this is about where they should be so maybe it's a market correction from being too low during the pre-season, but it's still a bit odd given their mostly unremarkable start.

## 15. Winnipeg Jets (+3)

*Fan Strength: 92.8 points (+1.1)*

*Current Record: 6-3-2*

In what is probably one of the most unexplainable things to happen in 2017, the Jets are winning because of elite goaltending – we are truly in the upside down here. Despite a 6-3-2 start, many still aren't sold on the Jets though they have jumped up three spots. Don't worry, you'll all come

around eventually. Just wait until their offence gets going. (I should note that this team's play so far warrants a lot of red flags and relying on goaltending seems like an especially dangerous strategy).

## 16. Calgary Flames (-1)

*Fan Strength: 92.6 points (-1.5)*

*Current Record: 6-6-0*

I had high hopes for the Flames taking a big step this season, but they've looked mostly ordinary so far. Seems like most people agree slotting them right in the middle of the pack. They started slow last season, so maybe they'll turn it on soon, but their October wasn't exactly promising for a team on the rise. Their one big question mark going into the season doesn't seem to be a problem though as Mike Smith has posted a sterling .930 save percentage to start the season.

## 17. Edmonton Oilers (-13)

*Fan Strength: 92.5 points (-12.1)*

*Current Record: 3-6-1*

Overrated. That was the key theme from my Oilers preview and their first 10 games feel like [a bit of vindication of that](#). I'm still shocked at how many had this team as a Cup contender before the season started. No team's stock has fallen more than the Oilers has and now they're around where they probably should've been to start the season. They're an above average team with potential to be more, but they just weren't there yet, not with their depth issues and that's become very apparent to start the season. Edmonton should turn it around and still make the playoffs, but it's a pretty good lesson that simply having the league's best player is no guarantee of anything. Still, the Oilers lead the league in Corsi and expected goals (though they've also spent most of their games trailing) so perhaps it won't be long until they get back into the contender conversation, though I'm still very skeptical about the talent surrounding their stars and their ability to manufacture offence.

## 18. Boston Bruins (+1)

*Fan Strength: 90.6 points (-0.9)*

*Current Record: 4-3-3*

I think I'm the only person on "The Bruins Are Actually Good" island, a team that's solid at 5-on-5 and even better on special teams despite an uneven record. Charlie McAvoy is going to be a special player for this team and gives Boston a pretty underrated top four. Once David Krejci returns from injury, they'll have some balance up front and are still led by a trio of elite forwards. The only question is in net where Tuukka Rask just hasn't been good enough, continuing a trend that's gone on for the past few seasons.

## 19. Ottawa Senators (-2)

*Fan Strength: 89.4 points (-3.7)*



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*Current Record: 5-2-5*

A 5-2-5 start is just so extremely weird and so extremely Sens. They're picking up right where they left off last season: inexplicably getting points while hanging on for dear life at evens, only it's even worse this season as their Corsi and expected goals dropped by around three percent to last and fourth last respectively. Even when there was skepticism last season, the team was never as bad as they've been this season. When you have a talent like Erik Karlsson in the lineup anything is possible, but the Senators seems due for a fall and they're drifting very close to the bottom 10 here. No, seriously, for real this time. Trust me. Don't mind that me, and people like me, have been saying it for an entire year now.

## 20. New Jersey Devils (+7)

*Fan Strength: 89.4 points (+9.8)*

*Current Record: 8-2-0*

Oh man, I've taken a gigantic "L" on the Devils so far who are perhaps the league's biggest surprise team so far. My model had them as the league's worst team and they've looked anything but in October. Kudos to them. This team is getting outshot regularly, but not out-chanced and with the speed (!?) and skill (!?) they apparently possess, that may be something they can keep up throughout the season. Cory Schneider isn't even at the top of his game yet and that's a scary thought for a team that's 8-2-0. I, along with most other fans, are still skeptical this is a playoff team, but they're making a habit of proving everyone wrong, so why stop now.

## 21. Philadelphia Flyers (+1)

*Fan Strength: 89.2 points (+3.6)*

*Current Record: 6-5-1*

Sean Couturier has been a revelation in the early going and is two points away from having half as many as he had all of last year. In 66 games. He's been terrific and has rejuvenated Claude Giroux and Jakub Voracek after a terrible 2016-17 season, creating one of the league's best top lines. The Flyers still feel like a tweener team as their question marks in net remain, so this ranking seems spot on.

## 22. New York Islanders (+1)

*Fan Strength: 88.4 points (3.2)*

*Current Record: 7-4-1*

I'm surprised the Islanders great start hasn't garnered them more respect. They're the Rodney Dangerfield of this league at the moment. They look legit so far and I expect them to rise as the season progresses.

## 23. Vegas Golden Knights (+7)

*Fan Strength: 86.1 points (+10.4)*

*Current Record: 8-3-0*

A historic start for an expansion team has many people realizing this team wasn't as bad as advertised to start, though they still remain rightly reserved about their talent. [The Golden Knights are not as good as their current record](#) and are bound to fall soon, especially given their current goaltending situation, but they've got an above average expected goals share and have the league's fourth best penalty differential.

## 24. Florida Panthers (-)

*Fan Strength: 85.1 points (+2.0)*

*Current Record: 4-6-1*

The Panthers are a little stronger than some thought they'd be, but not enough to move up in the rankings as they remain in the exact same spot. Their top line has been lights out so far as all three of Aleksander Barkov, Jonathan Huberdeau and Evgenii Dadonov have started the season with 14 points in 11 games. With that kind of production, it's a bit surprising they have a losing record.

## 25. Montreal Canadiens (-9)

*Fan Strength: 84.2 points (-9.4)*

*Current Record: 4-7-1*

My model was bang-on compared to fans about the Oilers, but it looks like the opposite is true for the Canadiens so far. They've looked brutal to start the season, but that's to be expected when they can't buy a goal for the first three weeks and their all-world goalie looks awful on most nights. Carey Price playing as bad as he has is just another "goaltending is voodoo" data point, but we can't expect that to last. Seriously, he's sixth last in save percentage among goalies with more than four games played. That's almost unbelievable. Their recent outburst on offence over the last week suggests maybe they're not completely inept at scoring either. I think they'll turn it around, they're third in expected goals and second last in PDO, but the skepticism around this team isn't surprising at all. Still, I'm not buying they're worse than an expansion team despite opposite starts.

## 26. New York Rangers (-12)

*Fan Strength: 82.0 points (-12.4)*

*Current Record: 4-7-2*

A terrible start for the Rangers has Alain Vigneault on the hot seat and it looks like the team is in a hole that's too big to climb out of. Their forwards aren't as deep as year's past (the loss of Derek Stepan is really hurting them) and Henrik Lundqvist is a shade of his former self. The Rangers are drifting dangerously close to bottom five territory here and rightfully so.

## 27. Vancouver Canucks (+2)

*Fan Strength: 79.23 points (+3.5)*

*Current Record: 6-3-2*



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Not even a 6-3-2 start and a surprising seventh best 5-on-5 expected goals percentage can convince many people that the Canucks are any good. I figured they'd be better than most thought, but even I'm not sold they won't finish the year in the bottom five. Stranger things have happened though and they've been really solid to start the year. Whether that play continues is yet to be determined, but fans are likely right to remain skeptical.

### 28. Colorado Avalanche (+3)

*Fan Strength: 78.9 points (+4.5)*

*Current Record: 6-5-0*

Keeping up with a similar theme to some of the other bottom feeders, the Avalanche are showing they're not as bad as many thought they'd be. Their 6-5-0 record is a mirage, but so was their 48 point season. No team is *that* bad and positive regression seemed like the best bet in a new season. It won't be long until they're back under .500, but for now Avs fans should just enjoy their team not being an unmitigated disaster. Matt Duchene getting back on his game is great to see, too.

### 29. Buffalo Sabres (-4)

*Fan Strength: 77.7 points (-4.9)*

*Current Record: 3-7-2*

The Sabres were a team that should've taken a step forward this season, especially with a new coach and some upgrades on forward and defence. Instead, they've taken a step back and look even worse than last year's version. They're realizing that climbing out of the pit they bottomed out to won't be as easy as getting there in the first place. They're dead last in expected goals percentage at 41.7 percent and have the second worst Corsi in the league. For a team that isn't tanking anymore, that's not ideal.

### 30. Detroit Red Wings (-2)

*Fan Strength: 76.8 points (-)*

*Current Record: 6-6-1*

A decent start to the year for the Wings, but with even better starts by teams that were previously below them they end up dropping in the rankings despite their perception not changing at all. Hard to disagree with that sentiment either.

### 31. Arizona Coyotes (-5)

*Fan Strength: 74.2 points (-5.5)*

*Current Record: 1-11-1*

Just like Tampa Bay at the top, Arizona at the bottom is not even remotely surprising. One win in its first 13 is U-G-L-Y. I,

and many others, had the Coyotes pegged as a surprise team and they sure surprised us by being even worse than usual, despite all their upgrades. In fairness, their new starting goalie has started just three games, but still, it's been rough. I think they'll be better going forward, but even hitting 80 points feels like wishful thinking at this point.

## NHL Fan Power Rankings

RANK	CHANGE	TEAM	POINTS	CHANGE
1	+4	Tampa Bay Lightning	110.5	+5.9
2	-1	Pittsburgh Penguins	104.8	-5.7
3	+5	Toronto Maple Leafs	103.6	+5.0
4	+7	St. Louis Blues	103.0	+5.0
5	+16	Los Angeles Kings	102.7	+17.0
6	+3	Columbus Blue Jackets	102.6	+4.1
7	-5	Nashville Predators	101.3	-5.3
8	-5	Washington Capitals	101.1	-5.3
9	+3	Dallas Stars	98.6	+0.8
10	-3	Chicago Blackhawks	98.1	-2.4
11	-5	Anaheim Ducks	96.2	-5.8
12	-2	Minnesota Wild	93.7	-4.6
13	-	San Jose Sharks	93.6	-2.4
14	+6	Carolina Hurricanes	93.4	+5.6
15	+3	Winnipeg Jets	92.8	+1.1
16	-1	Calgary Flames	92.6	-1.5
17	-13	Edmonton Oilers	92.5	-12.1
18	+1	Boston Bruins	90.6	-0.9
19	-2	Ottawa Senators	89.4	-3.7
20	+7	New Jersey Devils	89.4	+9.8
21	+1	Philadelphia Flyers	89.2	+3.6
22	+1	New York Islanders	88.4	+3.2
23	+7	Vegas Golden Knights	86.1	+10.4
24	-	Florida Panthers	85.1	+2.0
25	-9	Montreal Canadiens	84.2	-9.4
26	-12	New York Rangers	82.0	-12.4
27	+2	Vancouver Canucks	79.3	+3.5
28	+3	Colorado Avalanche	78.9	+4.5
29	-4	Buffalo Sabres	77.7	-4.9
30	-2	Detroit Red Wings	76.8	-
31	-5	Arizona Coyotes	74.2	-5.5

(Photo credit: Dan Hamilton-USA TODAY Sports)



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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## Pesce will miss Hurricanes' matchup with Avalanche

**DENVER -- The NHL season is a six-month grind, and teams sometimes have tired legs when they are playing their third game in four nights.**

by [STATS](#)

5h ago • 2 min read Update 5h ago

DENVER -- The NHL season is a six-month grind, and teams sometimes have tired legs when they are playing their third game in four nights.

Then there are those pockets where clubs have extended breaks and they can rest. When the [Carolina Hurricanes](#) visit the [Colorado Avalanche](#) on Thursday, it will be a matchup of teams that fall into the latter category.

The Hurricanes (4-4-2) haven't played since a shootout loss at home to the Anaheim Ducks on Sunday, while the Avalanche (6-5-0) have been idle since Saturday, when they beat the Chicago Blackhawks. It is a quirk in the schedule to have two well-rested teams facing each other, so rust instead of fatigue might be an issue at the start.

Health is another issue for the Hurricanes. Forward Brett Pesce didn't make the two-game road trip after he sustained a concussion during practice Tuesday. He was hit in the head with a puck when it rode up his stick, and he was put in the concussion protocol.

It's a blow to the Hurricanes because Pesce has been an offensive bright spot. He likely will be replaced by Klas Dahlbeck, who has played only two games this season.

Pesce's injury came a day after the team optioned Janne Kuokkanen to the Charlotte Checkers of the AHL.

The absence of Pesce gives other players a chance to step up, including second-year forward Sebastian Aho, who is looking for his first goal of the season. As a rookie, he went the first 13 games without finding the net but then finished with 24 goals, second on the team.

He isn't worried about not getting one in the first 10 games.

"I think I've played better and better every day, and I think the goals are coming," Aho told the Charlotte Observer after practice Tuesday. "I just need to stay positive. Just relax my game. Obviously, work hard, but still when I get the chances, just relax."

The Avalanche won't have many chances to show they have improved over last year, when they finished last in the [NHL](#) with 48 points. Colorado is in the midst of a three-week stretch in which it plays three games in 12 days and five over the next 17.

A big reason for the gaps in the schedule is they will travel to Sweden next week for two games against the Ottawa Senators. After playing the Hurricanes on Thursday, the Avalanche travel to the East Coast for a couple of games before flying across the Atlantic.

"I don't like it, but it's what we've been given," center Matt Duchene told the Denver Post about the time off. "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."

Colorado defenseman Nikita Zadorov is trying to get better and back in the good graces of coach Jared Bednar. Zadorov has been a healthy scratch the last two games after Bednar was unhappy with his play.

"He's got a lot of potential and he's been scratched just based on performance," Bednar told HockeyBuzz.com. "We've liked what we've seen from some other guys a little more consistently than we've liked what we've seen from 'Z' so far this year."

With so few games on the schedule, Zadorov might be sitting for a while.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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## SB NATION CANES COUNTRY

### Carolina Hurricanes at Colorado Avalanche: Game Preview and Storm Advisory

The Hurricanes look to right the ship after two straight losses and four days off.

by [andrewahr](#) Nov 2, 2017, 8:23am EDT

**Carolina Hurricanes (4-4-2) vs. Colorado Avalanche (6-5-0)**

Thursday, November 2, 2017 - 9:00 p.m. ET  
Pepsi Center - Denver, CO  
TV: Fox Sports Carolinas  
Radio: 99.9 The Fan  
Opposition coverage: [Mile High Hockey](#)

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The [Hurricanes](#) will faceoff tonight against the [Colorado Avalanche](#) without a defensive stalwart in [Brett Pesce](#). The team will be looking to get back on the right track tonight after losing their last two games.

[The Canes called up Roland McKeown yesterday](#), who will meet the team in Denver. Klas Dahlbeck will likely take Pesce's spot in the lineup tonight, but [McKeown](#) could make his NHL debut on Saturday.

#### Vital Statistics

Category	Hurricanes	Avalanche
Record	4-4-2	6-5-0
Points	10	12
Division Rank	7 Metro	5 Central
Conference Rank	T12 EC	T9 WC
Last 10 Games	4-4-2	5-5-0
Streak	Lost 2	Won 1
Goals/Game	2.70	3.09
Goals Against/Game	2.90	3.09
Shots/Game	33.6	31.3
Shots Against/Game	30.0	31.5
Faceoff %	51.6%	44.2%
Power Play % (Rank)	17.1% (16)	16.7% (18)
Penalty Kill % (Rank)	80.0% (19)	80.4% (17)
ES Corsi For %	55.01%	47.27%
ES PDO	98.8	98.7

Category	Hurricanes	Avalanche
PIM/Game	4:35	12:00
<b>Goaltender #1</b>		
<b>Category</b>	<b>Scott Darling</b>	<b>Semyon Varlamov</b>
Record	3-3-2	4-3-0
Save %	.897	.904
GAA	2.70	3.01
<b>Goaltender #2</b>		
<b>Category</b>	<b>Cam Ward</b>	<b>Jonathan Bernier</b>
Record	1-1-0	2-2-0
Save %	.941	.904
GAA	2.54	3.01

#### Game Notes

- Carolina trails all-time with a 48-70-23-1 record against the Avalanche franchise. This includes a rough 18-44-10 record in Denver.
- The Canes and the Avs will play twice in 2017-18, tonight and again in February at PNC Arena.
- Colorado took the series last season with a 2-0-0 record.
- Before the Hurricanes beat the Avalanche in October of 2015 on Victor Rask's game winning goal, the Hurricanes hadn't won in Denver since February of 1996, a winless streak that spanned 12 games.
- [Matt Duchene](#) is still a member of the Avalanche. Just wanted to get that out there and onto the record.

#### Storm Advisory

- ESPN put out a piece in which they detailed all the trades they wanted to see traded. The Hurricanes earn a mention, but not in the way you might think. [\[ESPN\]](#)
- Legendary Raleigh sports columnist Caulton Tudor passed away yesterday. He wasn't a regular in hockey coverage, but would make appearances at



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key times, and even earned a hockey nickname from the 2002 Hurricanes while covering their playoff run. [[WRALSportsFan](#)] [[News and Observer](#)]

- Joe Giglio's obituary of Tudor includes a great anecdote between "Toot" and Chip Alexander, competitors for years who later became longtime coworkers, from the Canes' 2002 first-round series win over New Jersey. [[News and Observer](#)]
- And here's another Toot story - of which there are no shortage - from Steve Politi, the Canes' beat

writer in their first season in NC who is now a columnist at the Newark Star-Ledger.

- [Sebastian Aho](#) is still goalless on the season. When will the young talent notch his first? [[News and Observer](#)]
- "We still haven't found our game", remarks GM Ron Francis to Adam and Joe. Francis also outlines the potential for [Aho](#) or [Lindholm](#) to slide into the center position sometime soon. [[WRALSportsFan](#)]



## Roland McKeown Gets First NHL Recall

Written by Nicholas Niedzielski

Published: November 01, 2017

With a hole on their blue line and a road trip on the horizon, the Carolina Hurricanes have recalled Roland McKeown from Charlotte.

This marks the first NHL recall for McKeown, who has played in all nine of the Checkers' games this season and totaled three points (1g, 2a). The 21-year-old made Carolina's opening night roster as a rookie last season but did not appear in any games. McKeown ended up spending his rookie campaign in Charlotte, where he recorded 11 points

(1g, 10a) in 71 games.

The addition of McKeown gives Carolina seven defensemen heading into their two-game swing out west, as Brett Pesce was ruled out for the trip due to a concussion. The Checkers, who are preparing to embark on a three-week road trip starting Friday, now have seven blue liners on their roster, though some remain question marks. Trevor Carrick missed both of last weekend's games due to injury but has returned as a full participant to practice this week, while Jake Chelios has been absent from practice. Neither players' status for the weekend is known.

### TODAY'S LINKS

<http://www.newsobserver.com/sports/nhl/carolina-hurricanes/article182214971.html>

<http://www.newsobserver.com/sports/nhl/carolina-hurricanes/article182051216.html>

<https://www.nhl.com/hurricanes/news/gameday-preview-carolina-hurricanes-vs-colorado-avalanche/c-292511434>

<https://theathletic.com/143572/2017/11/01/november-fan-power-rankings-lightning-soar-to-top-of-the-class/>

<https://www.cbssports.com/nhl/news/pesce-will-miss-hurricanes-matchup-with-avalanche/>

<https://www.canescountry.com/2017/11/2/16597060/carolina-hurricanes-at-colorado-avalanche-nhl-game-preview-how-to-watch-time-game-notes-gocheckers.com/articles/transactions/roland-mckeown-gets-first-nhl-recall>



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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## SportScan

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

1081084 Colorado Avalanche

The Avalanche youth movement found a home. And dinner is decided over a Ping-Pong game.

By NICK GROKE | November 2, 2017 at 12:38 am

Alex Kerfoot is lost in a Swedish instruction manual but at least he is not astray at the Ikea store itself, which is another maze all together. He just wants a place to call home.

The Avalanche rookie forward recently found a spot to live, although not a place to call his own. Kerfoot moved in with two other Avs rookies, forwards Tyson Jost and J.T. Compher, and another barely out of his first professional season, defenseman Chris Bigras.

The future of the Avalanche, the second-youngest team in the NHL, now has a clubhouse. It's a four-bedroom house in Cherry Creek decked out in flat-packed, ready-to-assemble Scandinavian sofas. But Kerfoot is still putting it all together.

"They all got somebody to set up their furniture," the 23-year-old former standout at Harvard said. "But I moved in a day later because my girlfriend was here. So I had to set up all my stuff myself. And I'm still doing it. I don't know if that was the right decision."

They moved in two weeks ago and Kerfoot is still settling in. At least at home. On the ice, the Avs' young core is plowing forward in stride.

Kerfoot, 23, has played in each of the team's 11 games this season and quickly made a mark. He assisted Tyson Barrie's game-winning goal in the season-opening victory over the Rangers at Madison Square Garden last month. And his power-play goal against the Bruins at the Pepsi Center helped the Avs win their home-opener six days later.

Bigras, 22, found a spot on the Avs blue line, playing in nine games so far and now trying to battle back into Colorado coach Jared Bednar's regular rotation. Compher, 22, returned to the ice Wednesday after suffering a broken thumb in a game against the St. Louis Blues on Oct. 10. And Jost, 19, the Avs' first-round draft pick last year at No. 10, is rehabbing a lower-body injury.

Less than a month ago, though, the quartet didn't know if they would even be given Avs sweaters. Suddenly, and on the same day, they each received a five-day notice from Colorado's front office: Find a place to live, you're on the team now.

"We really didn't know what was going to happen, who was going to make the team," Kerfoot said. "But we had been talking together. 'If we do make the team, let's live together.' We're all here by ourselves, young kids. We can get a big place, it'll be fun. And it'll be cheaper, which is nice."

The living arrangement is light on luxury and tilted toward fun. A Ping-Pong table dominates the living room. That is where dinner is decided. A doubles game. Losers cook.

"Biggie made some pretty good Brussels sprouts last night," Kerfoot said of Bigras, his losing doubles partner. "I made a pasta with shrimp and crab. And a salad. But Biggie's Brussels sprouts were good."

"They were pan-fried in garlic butter," Bigras said. "We've done a collab effort. It's decently clean in there still. It's only been a week and a half though."

Living with teammates is an honored hockey tradition, dating to the days when players travel through juniors bunking with host families and fellow teenagers trying to break into the NHL. It is born of convenience and cost. But the benefits carry to the ice.

Jost and Compher can keep each other on track in injury rehab. Kerfoot and Jost last week visited a tailor together to buy their first suits. And they all keep track of the NHL watching highlights and breaking down the hot stove of league happenings.

Six Avs players are in their first or second seasons. More than half the team is 24 or younger. Their opening-night roster averaged an age of 25.0 — only the Columbus Blue Jackets at 24.7 are younger.

Collectively, Colorado's youth movement is finding its footing. They are reinforcing each other. Kerfoot, for example, was a late college free-agent signing in August, after he chose not to sign with the New Jersey Devils, who drafted him in the fifth round in 2012. He had no history here.

"Guys who play for the Avs are usually drafted by the Avs. They come up together. They know each other," Kerfoot said. "I showed up at camp and didn't know a single person here. So I'm still trying to get to know them. It's nice to be able to hang out with them."

The pressure of performing, really surviving, on a nightly basis in the NHL can be overwhelming for some young players. Their is little time for coddling. If their future is still emerging, it will bud between couch conversations at a Cherry Creek rental house.

"We're in the same spot in our careers, we're all young guys," Bigras said. "It's not often you have so many rookies to begin with, and then to have the quality guys that we have, it's nice to support each other. We love the game so much, it's always something we're thinking about. It's never out of our minds."

CAROLINA AT COLORADO, 7 p.m. Thursday, Alt, 950 AM

Spotlight on: Carolina's Jordan Staal

The Hurricanes, losers of two in a row, travel to Denver to start a two-game roadie through the West. Their chances this season center on the veteran center Staal, a 29-year-old who was the Pittsburgh Penguins' pick at No. 2 overall in 2006. Staal is a co-captain with Carolina in large part for his consistency. He totaled 48 points (20 goals) two seasons ago and 45 (16 goals) last season. His three goals and three assists rank third on the team's points list. But Staal is still living up to his name. As one of four professional Staal brothers, his bar was set high early on. And from the 2006 draft class (Colorado defenseman Erik Johnson was the No. 1 pick), Staal is one of just two players among the first seven picks who have not qualified for an all-star game.

Notes

Hurricanes: Defenseman Brett Pesce will miss Carolina's two-game road trip with a concussion, coach Bill Peters said Wednesday. ... At a respectable 4-4-2, the Hurricanes are nonetheless tied for last place in a stacked Metropolitan Division. ... This will be the first of a two-game series between the Eastern Conference team and the Avs. They play again Feb. 10 in Charlotte.

Avalanche: Colorado took advantage of a four-day stretch between games to get healthy. Rookie forward Tyson Jost (lower body), center Colin Wilson (hip) and forward J.T. Compher (broken thumb) returned to



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the ice Wednesday in side skating sessions. ... Colorado coach Jared Bednar said the Avs brought a power-skating coach into town to work with Jost in his rehab. ... Bednar will check with his athletic trainers Thursday to determine each player's readiness vs. Carolina. ... After Thursday, the Avs won't play at home until Nov. 16.

Denver Post: LOADED: 11.02.2017

1081051 Arizona Coyotes

Coyotes return home hoping to get season straightened out

Sarah McLellan, azcentral sports Published 7:38 p.m. MT Nov. 1, 2017

The Coyotes attracted plenty of attention for an offseason roster flip that included notable additions and subtractions, and their debut on the ice has been just as memorable.

They became only the second team in NHL history to start with 11 straight defeats and also tied the second-longest winless streak to open a season.

And their three points in October are the fewest in franchise history for the first month of a full-length season.

It was a historic stretch, albeit one worth forgetting.

And that's exactly what the Coyotes are trying to do as they return home to host the Sabres on Thursday at Gila River Arena after completing a challenging five-game, East Coast road trip.

"Just flush it away and then reboot yourself," coach Rick Tocchet said. "I think that's the key."

Arizona remains last in the NHL at 1-10-1 with a 4-3 overtime win over Philadelphia on Monday the outlier of the bunch. Even that, though, required perseverance as the Flyers scored twice in the final minute of regulation to force extra time before defenseman Alex Goligoski converted the game-winner to secure the win.

"It was big," Tocchet said. "I was really happy for a lot of the young guys because it's taxing when you lose. It's like the world on your shoulder. I think the attitude of everybody on the team really propelled that win because we never game."

But the success didn't sustain the Coyotes, who were flat the next night in Detroit – capping off their road swing with a 5-3 setback to the Red Wings on Tuesday that positioned the team at another critical juncture.

Although the first 10 games of the season were a struggle, the start of the next 10-game segment has been more encouraging.

Tocchet felt the team was in control last Saturday against the Devils, an eventual 4-3 stinger as New Jersey rallied with two goals in the third. The Coyotes were better against the Flyers but didn't battle enough against the Red Wings.

"There's gotta be mental toughness on and off the ice," Tocchet said. "That's something that we're going to always work on – that mental toughness, that fortitude of whether you're down a goal or up a goal, be consistent."

What has been a constant to start the season is the proficiency of winger Clayton Keller, who was crowned the NHL Rookie of the Month on Wednesday after leading all first-year players in goals (9) and points (15) in October.

"He's doing it in crunch time," Tocchet said. "The points he's getting are under crucial times in games. That really says a lot for me."

This debut has undoubtedly bolstered Keller's candidacy for the Calder Trophy as the NHL's top rookie and helped stabilize a legit No. 1 line that also includes winger Max Domi and Derek Stepan. But Keller's emergence hasn't completely overshadowed the team's growing pains.

"It's been a really tough start for us," Keller said. "I'm not really focused on my individual game. I'm focused on playing my game every single night and doing everything I can to contribute and help the team out as much as I can. No matter our record or wherever we are, I'm just going to go into every game the same way and do whatever I can to help this team win."

Arizona's goals-against average per game (4.31) and save percentage (.866) still rank worst in the league. The crease and blue line, however, could be in store for another makeover.

Goalie Antti Raanta, who has been sidelined since suffering a lower-body injury Oct. 12, is close to a return, Tocchet said. Either he or Scott Wedgewood, whom the team acquired in a trade last week with the Devils, will start Thursday, as the Coyotes assigned goalie Hunter Miska to the American Hockey League Wednesday. The team also recalled goalie Louis Domingue but only as a paper transaction; he's on the roster but won't rejoin the team.

"Scott's done a nice job," Tocchet said. "He's a pretty calm goalie. ... He's stopping the stuff he should stop. I think he's a good addition for us."

The Coyotes also added defenseman Dakota Mermis, while returning defenseman Joel Hanley to the Tucson Roadrunners. Defenseman Niklas Hjalmarsson is day-to-day with an upper-body injury, and Tocchet doesn't think Hjalmarsson will play the rest of this week.

"That one really hurts," Tocchet said.

As for defenseman Jakob Chychrun, he continues to recover from offseason knee surgery and has skated two-to-three times.

"He's doing a lot of reps," Tocchet said. "He looks pretty good. He looks pretty good. I don't know the timeframe, but he's definitely made some strides."

Roster turnover like this has headlined the Coyotes' start just as much as their slump and while that skid was unique, adversity isn't.

And as the team gets deeper into its schedule, how the Coyotes respond will help reveal their potential.

"By now, everybody knows what everybody expects from each other," Tocchet said. "I think the 10 games is over. Now there's no more excuses. 'Wow, it's a new system. Wow, it's new players.' Now I think you gotta start to really step up your game. I'm talking everybody – coaches, players, everybody."

Thursday's game

Sabres at Coyotes

When: 7 p.m.

Where: Gila River Arena.

TV/radio: Fox Sports Arizona/KMVP-FM (98.7).

Outlook: After returning home from a five-game, East Coast road trip that delivered the Coyotes their first win but also continued their early season struggles, the team switched up its roster Wednesday. Arizona recalled defenseman Dakota Mermis from the American Hockey League along with goalie Louis Domingue, although Domingue's recall is only a paper transaction, as he won't rejoin the team but is on the roster. The Coyotes also sent defenseman Joel Hanley and goalie Hunter Miska to the Tucson Roadrunners. Either Antti Raanta, who's been sidelined since Oct. 12 with a lower-body injury, or Scott Wedgewood will start in net against the Sabres. As for defenseman Niklas Hjalmarsson, he's day-to-day with an upper-body injury. Coach Rick Tocchet said he doesn't think Hjalmarsson will play the rest of this week. After a 3-7-2 start, the Sabres



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are at the bottom of the Eastern Conference standings with eight points. They've lost two in a row, most recently falling 3-2 to the Sharks on Saturday at home. Forwards Evander Kane, Jack Eichel and Jason Pominville each have a team-high 12 points. Kane and Pominville are also pacing the Sabres in goals with six apiece. Goalie Robin Lehner has handled most of Buffalo's games, going 2-4-1 with a 2.78 goals-against average and .911 save percentage. The Sabres went 1-1 against the Coyotes last season.

Arizona Republic LOADED: 11.02.2017

1081052 Arizona Coyotes

Arizona Coyotes rookie Clayton Keller attributes fast start to late-season call up

Richard Morin, azcentral sports Published 4:13 p.m. MT Nov. 1, 2017

The hockey world is buzzing about what Coyotes rookie Clayton Keller has accomplished this year, but it was his experience last season that paved the way for the 19-year-old.

Keller, who on Wednesday was named NHL's Rookie of the Month for October, led all first-year players with nine goals and 15 points in 13 games. For the rookie winger, who at this time last year was a freshman skating at Boston University, a cup of coffee with Arizona meant everything.

It was a bittersweet moment for Keller, who had been drafted seventh overall by the Coyotes in the 2016 draft, when he and his Terriers teammates were eliminated by Minnesota Duluth in the West Regional final of the NCAA Tournament.

With his brief college career concluded, Keller hopped on a flight from Fargo, N.D., to his hometown of St. Louis to join the Coyotes just two days later for a game against the Blues. Keller, who was 18 at the time, played just three games before season's end — but they were three of the most important games of his life.

"It was definitely huge to get that experience last year," Keller said. "I can't thank the Coyotes enough for letting me come up last year."

Now, not only is Keller a frontrunner for the Calder Trophy, the NHL's annual award given to the league's top rookie, but he was tied for sixth in points, entering Wednesday, among all players. And the teenager credits that success to getting a first-hand look at how the NHL game is played.

"You don't know how hard this game is until you play, how fast and strong guys are," said Keller, who is riding a seven-game point streak. "It was great for me to get a little taste last year. I got a taste of the speed and how the game plays out, and that's why I think I've had good success this year so far."

Keller is the first rookie in Coyotes history with nine goals in a month and is the first player dating to the Jets era of the franchise to post nine goals as a rookie in a calendar month since Teemu Selanne (20) in March 1993. That month, both Selanne and Keith Tkachuk set a rookie record with 15 points for Winnipeg — a mark now equaled by Keller.

The winger also led first-year players in shots on goal (49) and has helped anchor one of the more productive first lines in the league along with Derek Stepan, whom Keller sees as a leader on and off the ice.

"He's an awesome linemate," Keller said. "He's always in position and he trusts me with the puck, which means a lot."

That trust has paid dividends in 2017, with Keller gathering a slew of national attention. Still, he is more focused on adding wins to the Coyotes' 1-11-1 record than individual accolades.

"It's been a really tough start for us," Keller said. "I'm not really focused on the individual game but more about contributing every night. No matter what our record is just going out there every game and finding ways to help the team win."

The Coyotes return home from a five-game road trip Thursday to face the Buffalo Sabres in a battle of last-place teams. The Sabres (3-7-2) have the fewest points (eight) in the Eastern Conference.

"It wasn't a terrible road trip," Keller said. "Most nights we played really well and it was good to get that first win. There's a lot of confidence that comes from that. Just staying positive, looking forward to (Thursday's) game and hopefully there'll be a lot of energy."

With the Coyotes returning to the Valley for two games, the Coyotes will look to capitalize on the momentum Keller has provided.

"It's something I've been working for this summer, I wanted to have immediate impact this season," Keller said. "I'm trying to do that every night and be consistent. The team has been playing well and we're moving in the right direction."

Thursday's game

Sabres at Coyotes

When: 7 p.m.

Where: Gila River Arena.

TV/radio: Fox Sports Arizona/KMVP-FM (98.7).

Outlook: After returning home from a five-game, East Coast road trip that delivered the Coyotes their first win but also continued their early season struggles, the team switched up its roster Wednesday. Arizona recalled defenseman Dakota Mermis from the American Hockey League along with goalie Louis Domingue, although Domingue's recall is only a paper transaction, as he won't rejoin the team but is on the roster. The Coyotes also sent defenseman Joel Hanley and goalie Hunter Miska to the Tucson Roadrunners. Either Antti Raanta, who's been sidelined since Oct. 12 with a lower-body injury, or Scott Wedgewood will start in net against the Sabres. As for defenseman Niklas Hjalmarsson, he's day-to-day with an upper-body injury. Coach Rick Tocchet said he doesn't think Hjalmarsson will play the rest of this week. After a 3-7-2 start, the Sabres are at the bottom of the Eastern Conference standings with eight points. They've lost two in a row, most recently falling 3-2 to the Sharks on Saturday at home. Forwards Evander Kane, Jack Eichel and Jason Pominville each have a team-high 12 points. Kane and Pominville are also pacing the Sabres in goals with six apiece. Goalie Robin Lehner has handled most of Buffalo's games, going 2-4-1 with a 2.78 goals-against average and .911 save percentage. The Sabres went 1-1 against the Coyotes last season.

Arizona Republic LOADED: 11.02.2017

1081053 Arizona Coyotes

Coyotes can't complete late rally, fall to Red Wings

Associated Press Published 7:49 p.m. MT Oct. 31, 2017

Anthony Mantha scored his team-leading fifth goal and Dylan Larkin added a goal and an assist as the Detroit Red Wings beat the Arizona Coyotes 5-3 on Tuesday night.

Knowing the Coyotes (1-11-1) had played the night before in Philadelphia, where they won in overtime for their first victory of the season, the Red Wings applied the pressure early. They fired the first



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eight shots on goal and scored twice before the game was three minutes old.

Gustav Nyquist intercepted a clearing attempt by Arizona defenseman Alex Goligoski and threaded a shot through traffic that beat goalie Scott Wedgewood at 1:31 of the first period.

Detroit made it 2-0 at 2:37 when Luke Glendening snapped a high wrist shot past Wedgewood on the blocker side.

The Coyotes got on the board 11:36 into the second when Jason Demers took a feed from Clayton Keller and his point shot eluded a partially screened Jimmy Howard.

But the Red Wings didn't allow the Coyotes a chance to start feeling good. Mantha made it 3-1 at 13:03, chipping a pass from Andreas Athanasiou behind Wedgewood.

Detroit increased its advantage to 4-1 in the final minute of the second when Larkin's backhand pass deflected off the stick of Coyotes defenseman Luke Schenn and over Wedgewood's shoulder at 19:03.

The Coyotes capitalized early in the third when Nick Cousins lifted a backhand past Howard at the two-minute mark. They pulled within a goal at 16:43 when Keller's shot was redirected past Howard by Brendan Perlini.

Darren Helm scored into an empty Coyotes net at 18:34 to close out the scoring.

Arizona Republic LOADED: 11.02.2017

1081054 Arizona Coyotes

Join Derek Stepan at Coyotes Ice Breaker on Friday, Nov. 3

FOX Sports Arizona

Make plans now – an @ArizonaCoyotes Ice Breaker is Friday – come hang with @DerekStepan21 @Jody\_Jackson & @MattyCoyotesTV! #Yotes pic.twitter.com/w0xS8yCWVz

— FOX Sports Arizona (@FOXSPORTSAZ) October 30, 2017

Here's your chance to interact with Coyotes center Derek Stepan. He's the special guest for the first of this season's Coyotes Ice Breakers, which returns to the Ice Den Scottsdale on Friday, Nov. 3, at 5:30 p.m.

Fans are invited to take part in a Q&A with Stepan, Coyotes play-by-play announcer Matt McConnell and FOX Sports Arizona host Jody Jackson.

In addition to the question/answer session, there will be ticket giveaways and drink and food specials inside the 18 Degrees restaurant/lounge.

The Ice Den is located at 9375 E Bell Rd, Scottsdale, AZ 85260. The phone number is (480) 585-7465.

foxsportsarizona.com LOADED: 11.02.2017

1081055 Arizona Coyotes

Coyotes search for first home win versus Sabres (Nov 02, 2017)

Nov 1, 2017 at 5:34p ET

GLENDALE, Ariz. — Five months ago, Rick Tocchet and Phil Housley were part of organizations competing to lift the Stanley Cup.

Now, following a change of city and scenery for both former NHL players, their current goals and expectations are a bit more modest. Namely, to avoid coaching the worst teams in their respective conferences.

It's a big turnaround from last season. Tocchet was an assistant coach for the Pittsburgh Penguins team that defeated the Nashville Predators, with Housley on their staff, to win a second straight Stanley Cup.

Now, Tocchet and Housley are head coaches, and the wins and successes are fewer than they were during the 2016-17 season.

Housley's Buffalo Sabres (3-7-1) travel to the desert Thursday night to play Tocchet's Arizona Coyotes (1-11-1), who earlier this week ended their NHL record-tying 11-game losing streak to start the season. But the Coyotes still haven't won at Gila River Arena, where they are 0-5-1.

The Sabres also took a while to win, starting the season 0-4-1, but they've since gone 3-3-1 — although they haven't played since losing to the San Jose Sharks 3-2 on Saturday. Housley likes the progress his team is making, but he's not ready to say it has turned its season the right way.

"We can't look ahead. ... We have to take little steps," Housley said after practice Wednesday. "First of all, we've got to win a game (Thursday). That's the first and foremost thing, beating an Arizona team that's pretty desperate."

Tocchet can only hope that the last NHL team without a home victory is desperate.

After finally winning Monday night in Philadelphia, where the Coyotes blew a 3-0 lead but managed to rally and win 4-3 in overtime, Tocchet said his team had "too many passengers" — an expression he's used often this season — during a 5-3 loss in Detroit on Tuesday night.

With not much time to recover from a 1-4 Eastern road swing, Tocchet indeed hopes there's some desperation shown by a team that isn't getting reliable scoring or goaltending, or the kind of consistency in both ends that's needed to win in the NHL.

"You have to play the full 60 minutes," Tocchet said after his team fell behind 2-0 in the first period during the loss in Detroit. "The problem with us is if we make a mistake, it's egregious, and it's in our net. It's not a small mistake, it's a big mistake, and we've got to wipe those away."

The Coyotes would like to wipe away some of their awful goaltending. They've already used four goaltenders, mostly because projected starter Antti Raanta has played only one full game because of multiple lower-body injuries.

Raanta appears to be close to recovering, and possibly could play Thursday. But backup backup Louis Domingue's struggles — he's 0-6-0 with a 4.33 goals-against average and .856 save percentage — forced the Coyotes to trade for former New Jersey Devils backup Scott Wedgewood, who started Monday and Tuesday.

The ever-changing cast in goal has resulted in Arizona allowing 56 goals in 13 games; no other Western Conference team had allowed more than 34 through Tuesday's games.

And while right wing Clayton Keller, the NHL's rookie of the month in October with nine goals and 15 points, is producing, no other Coyotes player has more than three goals or nine points. Three Sabres players — Jason Pominville, Evander Kane and Jack Eichel, have 12 points, and Pominville and Kane have six goals each.

Arizona center Derek Stepan agrees with his coach that consistency is what's most lacking.

"I still don't think we've played a full 60-minute game," Stepan said. "We've got to keep pushing to find 60 minutes. ... That's the biggest glaring hole to me. In order to win, it's not easy to win, you've got to play 60 full minutes. You can't have any mental lapse."



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Housley said it's "in the back of my mind" that the Coyotes still haven't won at home, but, "We can't worry about where they are as a team. We've got our own battles to handle and move forward with. The game really comes down to it's all about us, and what we're going to do."

With right wing Justin Bailey's status for Thursday uncertain because of a lower body injury, Buffalo called up right wing Nicholas Baptiste from Rochester of the American Hockey League, where he had three goals and two assists. Robin Lehner, who is 2-4-1 with a 2.78 goals-against average, is the likely starter in net.

foxsportsarizona.com LOADED: 11.02.2017

1081056 Arizona Coyotes

\*Notes Notes: Antti Raanta to be activated off IR

BY CRAIG MORGAN NOVEMBER 1, 2017 AT 5:03 PM

Coyotes goalie Antti Raanta is expected to come off injured reserve on Thursday, a source told Arizona Sports. With that in mind, the Coyotes made some roster moves on Wednesday.

The team assigned goalie Hunter Miska and defenseman Joel Hanley to Tucson of the American Hockey League, while recalling goalie Louis Domingue in what was simply a paper transaction made for cap purposes.

They also recalled defenseman Dakota Mermis.

The Coyotes acquired Raanta and center Derek Stepan in a draft-day trade with the New York Rangers for defenseman Anthony DeAngelo and the No. 7 overall pick. Raanta was expected to be the No. 1 goalie, but he has only played 90 minutes and one second this season due to a pair of lower-body injuries; the current one a muscle strain.

When Raanta took the ice for practice on Friday in New Jersey, the momentum appeared to be building for a return. Some within the organization thought he might even play Saturday against the Devils, but when the Coyotes boarded a flight on Wednesday after this five-game East Coast swing, he was still out of the lineup with a muscle strain in his lower body.

The Coyotes rank last in the NHL in save percentage at .866 and last in goals against per game at 4.66.

### DUCLAIR SITS

Forward Anthony Duclair was a surprise scratch for the final two games of the road trip. Duclair has three goals and five points in 11 games this season and his underlying numbers are favorable, including the sixth-best (tied) relative Corsi rating at even strength on the team at 3.4.

Here's how Tocchet explained the decision to sit Duclair.

"Duke goes through stretches being very inconsistent sometimes," Tocchet said. "He'll look good sometimes and then he'll go through stretches."

The Coyotes talked to Duclair this offseason about generating more of his own offense by getting in on the forecheck and forcing turnovers by being hard on the puck.

"We can't wait for people. We've got to find some battlers," Tocchet said. "I really want to build a team that is real sticky; talented but sticky."

"Duke had a couple good skates. He knows that he's got to get his legs going a little bit. He has a good attitude, which I like. He had a good workday (Tuesday). We'll see when we get him back in."

### HJALMARSSON'S IMPACT

Defenseman Niklas Hjalmarsson missed Tuesday's game with an upper-body injury suffered in Monday's win in Philadelphia and is considered day-to-day. While Hjalmarsson, like most of the Coyotes, has been inconsistent this season, his absence was felt in Detroit.

"He's a 25-minute guy," Tocchet said. "He's a good defensive defenseman, blocks shots. That's a tough one and then obviously people have got to play a little more, but teams go through that. Good teams go through that when some of their good players get hurt."

In Hjalmarsson's absence, here's how the ice time broke down for the other six defensemen.

Oliver Ekman-Larsson: 24:30

Alex Goligoski: 21:52

Jason Demers: 20:43

Adam Clendening: 19:11

Luke Schenn: 18:38

Kevin Connauton: 13:49

Clendening has struggled to find a regular place on the Coyotes' blue line after signing a one-year, \$650,000 contract this summer and playing parts of three NHL seasons with six NHL clubs: Toronto, Chicago, Vancouver, Pittsburgh, Edmonton and the Rangers.

Last season, he logged 15:49 of ice time in 31 games with New York, posting a 56.7 Corsi For percentage at even strength, with 68.3 percent of his zone starts coming in the offensive zone. He had career highs in goals (2), assists (9) and points (11), but he was never able to lock down a regular role. With some maturity, the Coyotes felt he might be ready for more minutes in less protected situations.

In five games this season, Clendening has two assists and is averaging 15:56 of ice time.

### SCHEDULE MADNESS

The Coyotes return home for games against Buffalo (Thursday) and Carolina (Saturday) before hitting the road for another East Coast-Midwest swing next week through Washington, Pittsburgh and St. Louis, Nov. 6-9.

They play one game at home against Winnipeg on Nov. 11 and then hit the road again for a Canadian road trip through Winnipeg, Montreal, Ottawa and Toronto, Nov. 14-20.

They return home for two games against Los Angeles and Vegas, Nov. 24-25, hit the road again for games at Edmonton and Calgary, Nov. 28-30. They return for one home game against New Jersey on Dec. 2 and then play four more road games at Vegas, Boston, Columbus and Chicago, Dec. 3-10.

By Dec. 10, Arizona will have played 33 games, with 21 of those played on the road and 16 of them in either the Eastern or Central time zones.

Arizona Sports LOADED: 11.02.2017

1081057 Arizona Coyotes

Coyotes' Clayton Keller wins NHL Rookie of the Month

BY MATT LAYMAN | NOVEMBER 1, 2017 AT 10:21 AM



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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When the Arizona Coyotes drafted Clayton Keller with the No. 7 overall pick in the 2016 draft, the hope was that they were getting a high-ceiling, top-six forward who could contribute offensively.

So far, albeit in a small sample size, Keller has lived up to that best-case scenario.

The 19-year-old led all rookies with nine goals and 15 points over the first month of the season, winning NHL Rookie of the Month for October.

"It's cool," Keller said of the honor on Wednesday. "It's something that I've kind of been working toward this summer. I wanted to have an impact right away and like I said, just help our team as much I can every single night and contribute."

Entering Wednesday, Keller was tied with second-year Toronto center Auston Matthews for fourth in the NHL with nine goals, trailing the Lightning's Nikita Kucherov (13), Islanders' John Tavares (11) and Capitals' Alex Ovechkin (10).

That's pretty good company.

"I'm not really focused on my individual game," he said. "I'm focused on playing my game every single night and doing everything I can to help the team out as much as I can."

Still, Keller's hot start made him the first rookie in franchise history since March of 1993 to score at least nine goals during a calendar month. Teemu Selanne scored 20 for the then-Winnipeg Jets. That was also the last time a player recorded 15 points in a month for the Coyotes/Jets franchise, as Keller did in October.

It may not be coincidence that the Boston University alumnus' early success has come as he's played on a line with Max Domi and veteran center Derek Stepan. He also got a brief stint in the league last year, playing three games and scoring two points for the Coyotes.

"It was great for me to get a little bit of a taste last year," he said. "This year, I've had great line mates to play with and everyone's been real great to me, so I have to give a lot of credit to them."

From here, Keller will look to continue what is currently a seven-game point streak (the longest for a Coyotes rookie since Peter Mueller in 2008) when Arizona faces the Buffalo Sabres on Thursday night at home. That game begins at 7 p.m.

Arizona Sports LOADED: 11.02.2017

1081103 Florida Panthers

Panthers focus on defense Wednesday as Alex Petrovic eyes return to lineup

Matthew DeFranks

Sun Sentinel

The emphasis was obvious on Wednesday morning. Two days after an eight-goal barrage by the Tampa Bay Lightning on Monday night, the Florida Panthers drilled defense during practice at the IceDen in Coral Springs.

They worked on defending the puck behind the net. Defensemen took on forwards one-on-one. They battled for pucks in the corners.

"Today's concentration was 50 minutes of all-out D practice," Panthers coach Bob Boughner said.

Even after practice, the defensemen were the last ones off the ice and about 45 minutes after practice ended, rookies Ian McCoshen and

MacKenzie Weegar were still out there. They worked with Hall of Famer Chris Pronger, now a member of the Panthers' front office.

Through the first 11 games of the season, the Panthers' defense has been porous. It's allowed 3.91 goals per game, ranking 30th in the 31-team NHL. (The only team with more goals allowed per game is Arizona. The Coyotes are 1-11-1.) Their penalty kill has killed only 72.7 percent of penalties, the third-worst rate in the league.

Despite an offense that is sixth in the NHL in scoring (3.64 goals per game), the Panthers' nine points are only more than three other teams.

In re-watching Monday night's 8-5 loss to Tampa Bay, Boughner said he saw "a lot of missed assignments, we're getting spread out too much."

"Some of it's going outside the system," Boughner said. "Some of it's an individual play or a turnover that'll lead to a chance. In order for us to move forward and beat the good teams, we're going to have to make sure that we obviously limit our mistakes and we had a few adjustments in tightening things up."

Pysyk was on the ice for five of Tampa Bay's eight goals on Monday night. He enters Thursday with the worst plus-minus rating on the team at minus-7.

"Maybe one or two games I've been pretty happy with," Pysyk said. "Other than that, I definitely need to get back to playing the right way and be consistent."

One adjustment on the way is the reinsertion of Alex Petrovic into the defensive corps, with Boughner saying the 25 year old would play against the Columbus Blue Jackets on Thursday night.

Petrovic was a healthy scratch for Monday's loss and was scratched for Florida's road games in Washington and Montreal. In Saturday's game against Detroit, Petrovic did not play in the third period, with Boughner saying the next day that he had "some points he needs to clean up."

Boughner did not say which player would exit the lineup with Petrovic entering it.

"We need him," Boughner said. "He's a big, physical guy that can stop cycles in the corner and motion. That's really what we're looking at right now is to get some pucks stalled and get tight in our d-zone and not give up as much. He'll be back in there tomorrow, get another chance."

Sportsnet labeled Petrovic's situation as one to keep an eye on, with Petrovic's usage down from last year and teams around the league needing defensemen. In 49 games last season, he averaged 18:09 of ice time. This season, that's down to 13:42, plus the three scratches.

Last year, Petrovic battled injuries to play in 49 games, with 14 points and a minus-1 rating.

"Over the summer, thinking coming into this year it's going to be not a cakewalk, but just take off and pick up where I left off," Petrovic said. "That obviously wasn't the case. I just got to keep learning that you got to keep pushing the bar and keep improving on everything."

Boughner met with Petrovic to discuss the start to the season, telling him that he'd been in the same situation during his career and that once "you get back in there and get hungry to stay in there."

Petrovic has two assists and a plus-1 rating in eight games this season, but said he needed to regain some confidence lost in the diminished ice time.

"If your confidence is down, things are moving fast," Petrovic said. "It kind of looks like you're standing still out there. You're kind of frozen in time. You have to be a little more loose, get a little bit more confidence. Then I can be harder on guys, be more physical, be that stud tough d-man back there that I want to be."

It starts with a renewed emphasis during practice, Petrovic said, pretending that he's playing against a different team to better translate results to games.



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"I've never been at a low in my career, I don't think," Petrovic said. "Early in my career, kind of moving on the uphill swing."

Sun Sentinel LOADED: 11.02.2017

1081104 Florida Panthers

Preview: Blue Jackets at Panthers, 7:30 p.m., Thursday

Matthew DeFranks

Sun Sentinel

Scouting report: The Panthers near the end of their five-game home stand with their first meeting of the season with the Columbus Blue Jackets, winners of three of their past four games. Florida (4-6-1) enters Thursday night coming off an 8-5 loss to Tampa Bay on Monday night, the most goals allowed by the Panthers since Jan. 2015. The Panthers' top line of Jonathan Huberdeau, Aleksander Barkov and Evgenii Dadonov combined for 10 points on Monday, but the rest of the team only had two goals and two assists. ... The Blue Jackets (8-4-0) have rode the strong goaltending of two-time Vezina Trophy winner Sergei Bobrovsky to four wins in overtime or a shootout, including Monday's 4-3 shootout win over Boston. Artemi Panarin leads Columbus with 10 points on one goal and nine assists. The Blue Jackets do not have a player with more than five goals. ... Jared McCann (lower body) and Colton Sceviour (upper body) skated Wednesday, but have not been cleared to play for the Panthers.

Sun Sentinel LOADED: 11.02.2017

1081105 Florida Panthers

Bob Boughner on Panthers' players-only meeting: 'They got to hold each other accountable at times'

Matthew DeFranks

Sun Sentinel

Panthers coach Bob Boughner said he rarely enters the dressing room after a loss. But after Monday night's 8-5 loss to Tampa Bay, Panthers captain Derek MacKenzie asked for it anyway, assembling a players-only meeting to try to correct a 4-6-1 start to the season.

"That's what it's about," Boughner said on Wednesday morning. "I can only go in there so much, and they got to take care of business. That's their room and they got to hold each other accountable at times, as well. I think we have a good leadership group to do that."

After the meeting, defenseman Aaron Ekblad spoke to reporters about the loss, highlighting a lack of passion, a need for more reliable defense and a more competitive attitude against the league's top lines.

As for the meeting, Ekblad declined to get into specifics, saying "That's for us."

"I said enough between periods and before the game," Boughner said. "I sort of let it soak in and give it 24 hours to come back the next day and try and address what we need to address."

The loss to Tampa Bay closed out the first month of Boughner's tenure as Panthers coach, a stretch of 11 games characterized not only by impressive wins over St. Louis and Washington, but also by lackluster losses against the slumping Canadiens or the streaking Lightning.

Three of the Panthers' four wins have been by at least three goals. Three of the Panthers' six regulation losses have been by at least three goals.

"It's like we're two different teams right now," Boughner said.

Injury updates

Forward Jared McCann (lower body) and goaltender Roberto Luongo (right hand) participated in practice on Wednesday morning. Forward Colton Sceviour (upper body) wore a yellow non-contact jersey and forward Connor Brickley (upper body) did not practice.

Boughner said McCann had not been cleared to play yet and the staff would know more about both his and Sceviour's availability for Thursday's game against Columbus in the morning.

"It's how he feels tomorrow when he comes in," Boughner said. "We'll know more from the staff tomorrow. Same with Sceviour. That's a wait-and-see kind of thing." ...

With McCann back at practice, the Panthers adjusted their bottom two lines. McCann centered Chase Balisy and Nick Bjugstad on the third line. The fourth line had four skaters: Micheal Haley, MacKenzie, Denis Malgin and Owen Tippett.

Sun Sentinel LOADED: 11.02.2017

1081203 Websites

The Athletic / November Fan Power Rankings: Lightning soar to top of the class

Dom Luszczyszyn

15 hours ago

October is in the books and the season is officially wacky. Vegas and New Jersey are atop the standings, while Washington and Edmonton are floundering. It's surprising and unexpected – that's hockey for you. The league is so tight that small sample results will always be just a little silly and we're seeing that unfold after the first month.

So how much have early results changed opinions from the common fan? Before the season started, we created a little matchup generator app that would rank each team based on which teams users chose more frequently compared to which team they were choosing them over. It was a big hit and we got some very interesting results to not only look back on once the season ended, but also track throughout the year as the season progresses and opinions change.

At the end of every month, we'll run the matchup generator again to see how hockey fans feel about each team, why they might feel that way, and whether there's any reason they shouldn't feel that way. They're monthly power rankings powered by you, (so don't yell at me, I didn't vote) and it'll be a fascinating experience at putting a number on the fickle yet stubborn nature of team strength perception. Fans generated around 33,000 matchups this time around, here's how each team ranks based on that.

NHL Fan Power Rankings



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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### 1. Tampa Bay Lightning (+4)

Fan Strength: 110.5 points (+5.9)

Current Record: 10-2-1

No surprise about who's on top, the Lightning are in a league of their own right now. Tampa Bay was pegged as a bounce back team and a legit Cup contender going into the season and it's proving it so far with a tie for the league's best record. The Lightning also have their two superstars, Steven Stamkos (6-18-24) and Nikita Kucherov (13-8-21), torching the league right now sitting 1-2 in the scoring race. This team is built on star power and their top guys are rolling. My model agrees that they're now the league's best team too after some slight skepticism going into the season.

### 2. Pittsburgh Penguins (-1)

Fan Strength: 104.8 points (-5.7)

Current Record: 7-5-1

The Penguins have not looked like themselves, but folks are still confident they're a high calibre team. When they're on, they've been fine, it's just when they're off it's been dreadful. They've already been on the wrong end of three huge blowout losses, though each one was on the end of a back-to-back. I don't doubt they'll turn it around, but it's been a less than impressive start. Of course, having the league's lowest PDO doesn't help matters, but their shot share hasn't been impressive either. No team has dropped more in my model than the Penguins, but they had a big enough cushion that they still rank in the top three, as they do here.

### 3. Toronto Maple Leafs (+5)

Fan Strength: 103.6 points (+5.0)

Current Record: 7-5-0

Despite a three game skid (during which they've been very much outplayed), the Leafs appear to be a top three team in the minds of fans. There may be some bias there because my followers tend to skew toward the Leafs, but their first nine games were impressive enough to warrant this spot. I'm very skeptical as the team needs help on defence, but the offence has enough firepower that it may not matter. Fredrik Andersen is going through his usual October funk and should get into his groove eventually.

### 4. St. Louis Blues (+7)

Fan Strength: 103.0 points (+5.0)

Current Record: 10-2-1

The Blues were a team I pegged as an outsider in a tough Central before the season started thanks to some weak defensive depth and a big injury to Robby Fabbri. Instead they look like front-runners and it sure seems like they're the real deal, too, with some strong underlying numbers. My model hasn't figured it out yet – it's hard when most of the team is filled with mostly established players – but it will soon if they can maintain this level of play.

### 5. Los Angeles Kings (+16)

Fan Strength: 102.7 points (+17.0)

Current Record: 9-2-1

The biggest jump goes to the Kings who are suddenly exciting and back to being good again. Seriously, these guys are unrecognizable from prior versions of the Kings. Even Jonathan Quick is playing like the mythical version of his elite self and not the actual slightly above average version. Many had doubts after a terrible 2016-17, but they've squashed those completely through their first 12 games as the new coaching staff and system (plus some good ol' fashioned regression) have rejuvenated their game. My model however isn't sold just yet though. It's tough to account for a new coach and we're seeing that here, but at the same time, a lot of the team's early success seems to be because of a too good to be true

penalty kill – currently sporting a .957 (!!!) save percentage – as well as some fortunate percentages at 5-on-5, despite an expected goals ratio that's actually lower than their Corsi (which is also at a very un-Kings like 51.5 percent). If they're sacrificing quantity for quality, it's not showing up there. This ranking feels like an overcorrection to having the Kings too low to begin with. Top five is probably a bit too high and it's likely they drop back down to earth a bit after a very hot start.

### 6. Columbus Blue Jackets (+3)

Fan Strength: 102.6 points (+4.1)

Current Record: 8-4-0

Just outside the top five is Columbus who are starting this season right where last (regular) season ended. The Blue Jackets are fourth in Corsi, fourth in goals, and second in expected goals at 5-on-5. A lot of people thought they might regress this season, but they're only building on their franchise best campaign. Start getting used to the words "Columbus Blue Jackets: Cup Contender" because that's what they are right now. Never forget that The Athletic overlord, James Mirtle, had it first. One trouble spot though: their power play looks awful by every statistical measure, ranking dead last on offence across the board.

### 7. Nashville Predators (-5)

Fan Strength: 101.3 points (-5.3)

Current Record: 5-4-2

Starting the season without a defenceman as good as Ryan Ellis isn't easy and the team hasn't played as well as expected so far as a result of that. Now they're also without Nick Bonino, their new second line centre. It'll be tough to survive that and the Preds look like they're barely doing that through their first 11 games.

### 8. Washington Capitals (-5)

Fan Strength: 101.1 points (-5.3)

Current Record: 5-6-1

It's been a nightmare start for a team that lost the most talent during the off-season. Now they're without Matt Niskanen, arguably their best defender, and their defensive depth is hurting big time. Washington doesn't look anything like the team that won two Presidents' trophies over the past two seasons and have actually been a bottom 10 possession team. The Caps lack discipline too with a ghastly minus-18 penalty differential, tied with Anaheim for worst in the league and they also somehow have the league's second worst expected goals for rate on the power play to boot. All of that sounds very unlike Washington and if it doesn't right that ship, it'll keep sliding. They have the high-end talent to be better than they've played and the fans have acknowledged that by keeping them in the top 10, but their place among the league's elite is slipping by the game.

### 9. Dallas Stars (+3)

Fan Strength: 98.6 points (+0.8)

Current Record: 7-5-0

Sure seems like the Stars are back, only this time they have a goalie. Ben Bishop was a big gamble at his age and after last season, but he's been great so far with a .920 save percentage, though maybe some credit should go to the defensive mind of Ken Hitchcock. The Stars' record isn't very exceptional, but they've been one of the more impressive teams early in every game situation ranking 10th in expected goals percentage at 5-on-5 and second on both special teams units. Their big off-season looks like it's working.

### 10. Chicago Blackhawks (-3)

Fan Strength: 98.1 points (-2.4)

Current Record: 5-5-2



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The Hawks are sort of in the same situation as the Capitals. Defensive depth has been sketchy and they haven't been getting the better of their opponents at 5-on-5. Chicago's situation there may even be more dire than Washington's as it currently has the league's worst expected goals against rate, a far cry from where it was during its dynasty days. The Hawks looked damn impressive during their first two games, but they've been a bit of a mess since. It's not enough to bump them outside the top 10 though.

### 11. Anaheim Ducks (-5)

Fan Strength: 96.2 points (-5.8)

Current Record: 6-4-1

I'm extremely impressed that the Ducks have the record they do despite the injuries they've dealt with. That they're 6-4-1 with that bottom six and without their top two centres for much of the season (Ryan Getzlaf has only played six of 11) is insane. I mean, they're getting killed on the shot clock on a near nightly basis and have the league's worst penalty differential, so it's likely this won't last much longer, but when your roster is this depleted by injury, getting points is all that matters. Just win, baby. Once they get healthy this team will be scary good.

### 12. Minnesota Wild (-2)

Fan Strength: 93.7 points (-4.6)

Current Record: 4-4-2

Minnesota hasn't had a great start to the season and have been downgraded from the top 10 to the mediocre tier taking an even bigger hit on its projected point total. The Wild have been hit big by the injury bug, but have kept it together for the most part. Once everyone gets healthy they should be a lot better, but it seems pretty clear early that they're likely not going to reach the heights they did last season.

### 13. San Jose Sharks (-)

Fan Strength: 93.6 points (-2.4)

Current Record: 6-5-0

No big change in rank on the Sharks since pre-season, but they did see a drop in points as they've looked a bit worse than expected so far in the standings. They carry the league's third best possession rating though which bodes well for their future. Last year's Norris Trophy winner, Brent Burns, is somehow without a goal in his first 11 games and that drought shouldn't last much longer.

### 14. Carolina Hurricanes (+6)

Fan Strength: 93.4 points (+5.6)

Current Record: 4-4-2

This is a strange ranking improvement as the Hurricanes haven't really done anything to change minds yet, but made a big jump in the rankings anyways. In my mind, this is about where they should be so maybe it's a market correction from being too low during the pre-season, but it's still a bit odd given their mostly unremarkable start.

### 15. Winnipeg Jets (+3)

Fan Strength: 92.8 points (+1.1)

Current Record: 6-3-2

In what is probably one of the most unexplainable things to happen in 2017, the Jets are winning because of elite goaltending – we are truly in the upside down here. Despite a 6-3-2 start, many still aren't sold on the Jets though they have jumped up three spots. Don't worry, you'll all come around eventually. Just wait until their offence gets going. (I should note that this team's play so far warrants a lot of red flags and relying on goaltending seems like an especially dangerous strategy).

### 16. Calgary Flames (-1)

Fan Strength: 92.6 points (-1.5)

Current Record: 6-6-0

I had high hopes for the Flames taking a big step this season, but they've looked mostly ordinary so far. Seems like most people agree slotting them right in the middle of the pack. They started slow last season, so maybe they'll turn it on soon, but their October wasn't exactly promising for a team on the rise. Their one big question mark going into the season doesn't seem to be a problem though as Mike Smith has posted a sterling .930 save percentage to start the season.

### 17. Edmonton Oilers (-13)

Fan Strength: 92.5 points (-12.1)

Current Record: 3-6-1

Overrated. That was the key theme from my Oilers preview and their first 10 games feel like a bit of vindication of that. I'm still shocked at how many had this team as a Cup contender before the season started. No team's stock has fallen more than the Oilers has and now they're around where they probably should've been to start the season. They're an above average team with potential to be more, but they just weren't there yet, not with their depth issues and that's become very apparent to start the season. Edmonton should turn it around and still make the playoffs, but it's a pretty good lesson that simply having the league's best player is no guarantee of anything. Still, the Oilers lead the league in Corsi and expected goals (though they've also spent most of their games trailing) so perhaps it won't be long until they get back into the contender conversation, though I'm still very skeptical about the talent surrounding their stars and their ability to manufacture offence.

### 18. Boston Bruins (+1)

Fan Strength: 90.6 points (-0.9)

Current Record: 4-3-3

I think I'm the only person on "The Bruins Are Actually Good" island, a team that's solid at 5-on-5 and even better on special teams despite an uneven record. Charlie McAvoy is going to be a special player for this team and gives Boston a pretty underrated top four. Once David Krejci returns from injury, they'll have some balance up front and are still led by a trio of elite forwards. The only question is in net where Tuukka Rask just hasn't been good enough, continuing a trend that's gone on for the past few seasons.

### 19. Ottawa Senators (-2)

Fan Strength: 89.4 points (-3.7)

Current Record: 5-2-5

A 5-2-5 start is just so extremely weird and so extremely Sens. They're picking up right where they left off last season: inexplicably getting points while hanging on for dear life at evens, only it's even worse this season as their Corsi and expected goals dropped by around three percent to last and fourth last respectively. Even when there was skepticism last season, the team was never as bad as they've been this season. When you have a talent like Erik Karlsson in the lineup anything is possible, but the Senators seems due for a fall and they're drifting very close to the bottom 10 here. No, seriously, for real this time. Trust me. Don't mind that me, and people like me, have been saying it for an entire year now.

### 20. New Jersey Devils (+7)

Fan Strength: 89.4 points (+9.8)

Current Record: 8-2-0

Oh man, I've taken a gigantic "L" on the Devils so far who are perhaps the league's biggest surprise team so far. My model had them as the league's worst team and they've looked anything but in October. Kudos to them. This team is getting outshot regularly, but not out-chanced and with the speed (!?) and skill (!!) they apparently possess, that may be



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something they can keep up throughout the season. Cory Schneider isn't even at the top of his game yet and that's a scary thought for a team that's 8-2-0. I, along with most other fans, are still skeptical this is a playoff team, but they're making a habit of proving everyone wrong, so why stop now.

21. Philadelphia Flyers (+1)

Fan Strength: 89.2 points (+3.6)

Current Record: 6-5-1

Sean Couturier has been a revelation in the early going and is two points away from having half as many as he had all of last year. In 66 games. He's been terrific and has rejuvenated Claude Giroux and Jakub Voracek after a terrible 2016-17 season, creating one of the league's best top lines. The Flyers still feel like a tweener team as their question marks in net remain, so this ranking seems spot on.

22. New York Islanders (+1)

Fan Strength: 88.4 points (3.2)

Current Record: 7-4-1

I'm surprised the Islanders great start hasn't garnered them more respect. They're the Rodney Dangerfield of this league at the moment. They look legit so far and I expect them to rise as the season progresses.

23. Vegas Golden Knights (+7)

Fan Strength: 86.1 points (+10.4)

Current Record: 8-3-0

A historic start for an expansion team has many people realizing this team wasn't as bad as advertised to start, though they still remain rightly reserved about their talent. The Golden Knights are not as good as their current record and are bound to fall soon, especially given their current goaltending situation, but they've got an above average expected goals share and have the league's fourth best penalty differential.

24. Florida Panthers (-)

Fan Strength: 85.1 points (+2.0)

Current Record: 4-6-1

The Panthers are a little stronger than some thought they'd be, but not enough to move up in the rankings as they remain in the exact same spot. Their top line has been lights out so far as all three of Aleksander Barkov, Jonathan Huberdeau and Evgenii Dadonov have started the season with 14 points in 11 games. With that kind of production, it's a bit surprising they have a losing record.

25. Montreal Canadiens (-9)

Fan Strength: 84.2 points (-9.4)

Current Record: 4-7-1

My model was bang-on compared to fans about the Oilers, but it looks like the opposite is true for the Canadiens so far. They've looked brutal to start the season, but that's to be expected when they can't buy a goal for the first three weeks and their all-world goalie looks awful on most nights. Carey Price playing as bad as he has is just another "goaltending is voodoo" data point, but we can't expect that to last. Seriously, he's sixth last in save percentage among goalies with more than four games played. That's almost unbelievable. Their recent outburst on offence over the last week suggests maybe they're not completely inept at scoring either. I think they'll turn it around, they're third in expected goals and second last in PDO, but the skepticism around this team isn't surprising at all. Still, I'm not buying they're worse than an expansion team despite opposite starts.

26. New York Rangers (-12)

Fan Strength: 82.0 points (-12.4)

Current Record: 4-7-2

A terrible start for the Rangers has Alain Vigneault on the hot seat and it looks like the team is in a hole that's too big to climb out of. Their forwards aren't as deep as year's past (the loss of Derek Stepan is really hurting them) and Henrik Lundqvist is a shade of his former self. The Rangers are drifting dangerously close to bottom five territory here and rightfully so.

27. Vancouver Canucks (+2)

Fan Strength: 79.23 points (+3.5)

Current Record: 6-3-2

Not even a 6-3-2 start and a surprising seventh best 5-on-5 expected goals percentage can convince many people that the Canucks are any good. I figured they'd be better than most thought, but even I'm not sold they won't finish the year in the bottom five. Stranger things have happened though and they've been really solid to start the year. Whether that play continues is yet to be determined, but fans are likely right to remain skeptical.

28. Colorado Avalanche (+3)

Fan Strength: 78.9 points (+4.5)

Current Record: 6-5-0

Keeping up with a similar theme to some of the other bottom feeders, the Avalanche are showing they're not as bad as many thought they'd be. Their 6-5-0 record is a mirage, but so was their 48 point season. No team is that bad and positive regression seemed like the best bet in a new season. It won't be long until they're back under .500, but for now Avs fans should just enjoy their team not being an unmitigated disaster. Matt Duchene getting back on his game is great to see, too.

29. Buffalo Sabres (-4)

Fan Strength: 77.7 points (-4.9)

Current Record: 3-7-2

The Sabres were a team that should've taken a step forward this season, especially with a new coach and some upgrades on forward and defence. Instead, they've taken a step back and look even worse than last year's version. They're realizing that climbing out of the pit they bottomed out to won't be as easy as getting there in the first place. They're dead last in expected goals percentage at 41.7 percent and have the second worst Corsi in the league. For a team that isn't tanking anymore, that's not ideal.

30. Detroit Red Wings (-2)

Fan Strength: 76.8 points (-)

Current Record: 6-6-1

A decent start to the year for the Wings, but with even better starts by teams that were previously below them they end up dropping in the rankings despite their perception not changing at all. Hard to disagree with that sentiment either.

31. Arizona Coyotes (-5)

Fan Strength: 74.2 points (-5.5)

Current Record: 1-11-1

Just like Tampa Bay at the top, Arizona at the bottom is not even remotely surprising. One win in its first 13 is U-G-L-Y. I, and many others, had the Coyotes pegged as a surprise team and they sure surprised us by being even worse than usual, despite all their upgrades. In fairness, their new starting goalie has started just three games, but still, it's been rough. I think they'll be better going forward, but even hitting 80 points feels like wishful thinking at this point.



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The Athletic LOADED: 11.02.2017

1081204 Websites

The Athletic / Duhatschek: Like Sidney Crosby before him, Connor McDavid learning to navigate life as NHL's best player

Eric Duhatschek

17 hours ago

He is now a month into his third professional season and slowly but surely, you see the changes in the way the Edmonton Oilers' Connor McDavid carries himself. McDavid is starting to find his voice and so for example, this past summer, when he was asked again the question that really doesn't have a correct answer – who is the best player in the NHL? – he was adamant about his response. By virtue of those three Stanley Cup championships, two in the last two years, it was still Sidney Crosby of the Pittsburgh Penguins. End of discussion.

Seeing McDavid assert himself more is an expected and hopefully a positive development. Whether you agree or disagree with their choices of Halloween costumes, the NHL needs its stars to show more of their personalities. You always thought beneath that 'aw shucks' demeanor, there was more to McDavid than meets the eye. Probably in his first two years, you didn't see it much because – like Crosby before him – McDavid, who'd been in the spotlight practically since he was out of diapers, understood it was prudent to exercise caution as he made his way through the NHL the first few times. He would have thought it presumptuous as a teenager to speak out about all the issues – large and small – affecting his team, the game and the NHL universe. Over time, that will change – and is changing.

On Wednesday, for the second time in eight nights, McDavid and Crosby meet on the ice – and on some level, it's a shame their only two head-to-head regular-season meetings are happening so early.

After Wednesday night, the only way they can meet again is in the Stanley Cup final. When the Vegas bookies set the odds in September, they installed Pittsburgh and Edmonton as the two betting favourites at one juncture. But Pittsburgh has been clobbered a few times early on and so the Penguins still have a way to go until they get sorted out. Similarly, the Oilers limped through the first month of the season, their youth, their inexperience and their inability to generate offence from the bottom half of their lineup providing a reality check. Through Tuesday, McDavid and Crosby – first and second in last year's Art Ross trophy race – were among the 13 players tied for 43rd in the NHL scoring race, with 11 points apiece. McDavid can only do so much, in the same way that Crosby could only do so much in the ascent of the Penguins a decade ago.

Nobody understands the challenges the two face better than Wayne Gretzky who, a generation ago, constantly had to deal with questions about his own performance – and where it stood relative to his peers – at a time when all Gretzky wanted to do was add to his total of Stanley Cup championships.

"First of all, they handle the responsibility as well or better than any two superstars who've ever played the game," said Gretzky, in an interview with The Athletic. "Being humble and being respectful of your opponent is always part of it – and those two guys are no different than Mario Lemieux, Bobby Orr, Gordie Howe or all the guys that came before them.

"But I will tell you this. Privately, both have a lot of pride — and that's what makes them great. Other athletes, if you watch Bjorn Borg and John McEnroe and Larry Bird and Magic Johnson, the best players, the elite guys, they go to another level when they're highlighted against each

other. That's when they're having the most fun. When they're under the microscope, they don't look at it as pressure. They think, 'all right, this is where I want to be. This is what I dreamed about doing my whole life.' Both Sid and Connor ... they don't need to tell people how good they are. But when they get on the big stage and get into that competition and into the comparisons to each other when they're on the ice, they're doing everything they can to help their teams win. Their work ethic and statistics and humility speak for itself – and that's what makes them special."

Last year, the Oilers made McDavid, at 19 years and 266 days, the youngest captain in NHL history and he responded to the added responsibility by winning the scoring title by 11 points over Crosby – 100 to 89. Given the trajectory of McDavid's career, it seems well within the bounds of what's possible that he eventually creates, on an adjusted basis, the same sort of separation from the pack in the scoring race that Gretzky once managed, especially if McDavid's partnership with Leon Draisaitl becomes more permanent. In Gretzky's first decade, he produced regularly, no matter who was on his line. But when Jari Kurri showed up, things went to another level.

McDavid, according to Oilers' centre Mark Letestu, "comes across to us as a hungry, driven individual who is not going to rest on his laurels. He won the Hart Trophy and the scoring title, but he wants to win the Stanley Cup – and his attitude about winning the team prize, the Stanley Cup, over the individual prizes wears off on everybody in the dressing room. That's what we're all in it for – to win the Stanley Cup. His inner drive, there's no better choice for captain. He leads by example. He's obviously a tremendous talent. His goals are team-oriented and that helps the whole team come together."

Letestu also played with Crosby for parts of three seasons in Pittsburgh earlier in his career and sees a lot of similarities in the way the two carry themselves in the dressing room, and in their interactions with their teammates. Crosby has incrementally worked at improving parts of his game over time. Early on, he wanted to become better in the faceoff circle – and did. Last year, Crosby made scoring goals a priority. In 75 games, Crosby scored 44 goals and won his second Rocket Richard trophy (with a shooting percentage of 17.3, up from 14.5 the year before or 11.8 the year before that).

"It's probably a special character trait — to look inside and see deficiencies," explained Letestu. "Everybody tells them how great they are. Yet you see Connor talk about how he doesn't score a lot of tip-in or deflection goals, so maybe this year he's going to go to those areas and look to improve his game a little. For a guy that's got that much talent and ability, to still look at his game and find deficiencies and try to figure out ways to get better, I think that's a sign of a pretty wonderful, character-filled person."

In two years, McDavid has seen and done a lot. He's missed the playoffs, made the playoffs and won a playoff round. He's had to deal with the pressure of being the new face of the Oilers' franchise, the lynchpin of their turnaround. So far, nothing that he's faced in his first two years – other than the broken collarbone in his first year, which limited him to 45 games in his rookie season – seems to faze him. That's important now that the Oilers face the heightened expectations that comes off a 103-point season last year. Now that he's been around the league and made Edmonton his in-season home, it should be onward-and-upward from here on in.

"His confidence, on and off the ice, is starting to shine through even more," said Oilers' forward Drake Caggiula, who first crossed paths with McDavid years ago, when they attended the same Ontario private school. "He's been in the spotlight since he was about 13 years old, which is hard to do at such a young age. Now, he's just letting his true personality come through. In the locker room, he's still not that outspoken. But he's played two years in the league now and he was a captain at a young age last year. To me, he's a pretty funny guy. It's fun to see some of those funny videos he's posted on the Internet."



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Caggiula's reference is a couple of commercials McDavid did this summer – one in which he assumes a number of disguises to promote himself for the EA Sports 18 cover (his brother Cameron is also featured in that campaign). Every player has a welcome to the NHL moment – usually several of them – but for players of McDavid's vintage, who grew up in the gaming era, probably nothing says you've arrived like seeing the video equivalent of yourself playing an NHL game.

Even funnier are three bits he did with the San Jose Sharks' Brent Burns, on behalf of CCM. In much the same way as Crosby's commercials with Nathan McKinnon for Tim Hortons gives you a glimpse behind Sid's curtain, McDavid's byplay with Burns suggest there is a sneaky sense of humor hiding beneath that professional façade that you usually see in front of the cameras.

Like Caggiula, Toronto Maple Leafs prospect Travis Dermott has known McDavid since they were novice-age players. According to Dermott, McDavid has a naturally shy personality that was obvious in his first OHL season, when he played in Erie as a 15 year old, thanks to the "exceptional player" status he was granted by Hockey Canada.

"I didn't make [the team] that first year in Erie when we both got drafted, but I'd go watch and see the guys in the room and it was kind of like 'wow he's a shy guy,'" said Dermott, in a conversation with The Athletic's James Mirtle. "Once he made the team [and was there a while], he was way more comfortable. I know he doesn't like a lot of the spotlight being on him all the time. He likes doing his own thing and working hard and not having all the crazy stuff going on around him. He just loves the game. Now he's one of the top players, if not the top player, in the NHL so it's good for him he's getting comfortable — not relaxing but getting more comfortable in who he is. He can only get better from where he is."

Gretzky was a master at handling his celebrity, walking that tightrope between his public interactions with fans and trying to preserve a tiny bit of privacy when he was out on the town. As McDavid's fame grows, Dermott says it's a different experience going out in public with him nowadays.

"Obviously he gets recognized," Dermott said. "I don't know how he fully feels about it. It's tough going anywhere being the best player — or one of the top couple — in the NHL. It's cool to be the highly touted player he is and that famous guy he is pretty much everywhere he goes. But everyone wants to be a normal guy. When we're hanging out with these guys it's not like we're talking how we're professional athletes. We're just kind of regular guys – and you always want to be able to go places and be a regular person."

Now that he's played a full season with McDavid, Caggiula is used to having him as a teammate. But this summer, whenever he'd get together with friends, they all wanted to talk about McDavid.

"It's not so much you that's in awe, but your family and friends back home that ask 'what's he like?' and want the inside scoop about he's like or Leon's like," Caggiula said. "It's a pretty fun experience – and I'm just trying to enjoy the ride."

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1081205 Websites

The Athletic / LeBrun Notebook: Devils improvement the result of talent infusion and changed mindset, Blues keep winning despite injury woes

Pierre LeBrun

14 hours ago

The New Jersey Devils are one of the nice surprises of this early NHL season winning eight of their opening 10 games. I mean, did anyone see that coming?

Quite a turnaround from their last-place finish in the Eastern Conference a year ago.

The seeds of this year's rise were in fact planted in the ashes of last season's burning disappointment.

"At the end of the season, (GM) Ray (Shero), myself, a lot of the players, we weren't happy with how things went," Devils head coach John Hynes said over the phone Tuesday. "The team culture, how we wanted to play ... Last year was just unacceptable."

As Hynes put it, Shero had some "stern" meetings with players after the season but the key was how the players themselves took ownership, particularly the core of returning veterans like Corey Schneider, Travis Zajac, Taylor Hall, Andy Greene, Kyle Palmieri, John Moore, and Ben Lovejoy.

"They really were unhappy, too. They all made big commitments in the summer to their training. They took a pretty active role leadership-wise in welcoming newer players to the team, and set a culture standard we wanted on and off the ice," Hynes said. "I think that's where it really started. And then training camp, it was driven by those guys, just how hard they worked, how prepared they were."

So yes, the Devils have added exciting rookies such as Nico Hischier, Jesper Bratt and Will Butcher, plus veterans such as Marcus Johansson and Brian Boyle (who is set to return shortly), but the improvement first came because of a changed mindset throughout the team.

"That is first and foremost before you talk about the upgrade of our talent level," Hynes said. "Because if you don't have that... now everyone can see the talent, everyone says we're fast and skilled, but I think it's about having the right mindset and having players who are willing to work."

The St. Louis Blues have been perennial contenders for several years but it was natural to wonder how exactly they'd deal with seemingly crippling injuries before the puck even dropped on the new season.

Especially with five of their first six games on the road.

The Blues are out three of their top-nine forwards in Robby Fabbri (out for the year), Zach Sanford and Patrick Berglund, plus veteran top-four defenseman Jay Bouwmeester while veteran forward Alexander Steen missed the beginning of the season before returning on Oct. 18.

It would be enough to crush many a team right from the get-go. Instead, the Blues faced the adversity with flying colours, a testament to the organizational depth but also the mindset of a team that expects to win.

"Coming out of camp, I don't think any of us necessarily thought we'd be 10-2-1 after 13 games," Blues head coach Mike Yeo said Tuesday. "But there was nobody that would allow us to say, 'We've got injuries so now we can be so-so.' We still think we have a good team."

"Those are significant (injury) losses but we've got a competitive group here," Yeo added. "The biggest thing for us at the beginning of the year after getting all those injuries, our veterans just came out on fire. It sent a message to the rest of the group that (the injuries) would not be an excuse."

As The Athletic colleague Jeremy Rutherford wrote in the wake of Monday's win over Los Angeles, it's perhaps time just to acknowledge this is once again a very good Blues team.

Of those veterans Yeo was referring to, none jump out more to me than Jaden Schwartz, leading the team with 17 points (8-9) in 13 games. He's a guy that two years ago I once put on a mock Team Canada World Cup roster a year before the tournament because I felt he was ready to reach that level. He got injured that season which obviously sunk his stock. The 25 year old native of Wilcox, Sask., is on pace so far to easily eclipse the career-high 63 points he put up in 2014-15.



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"He's a hell of a player," Yeo said. "Night in and night out, when you're doing your analytics and you're breaking down scoring chances, he's there night after night. And he can do it in so many different ways. If you're playing a game that's a little bit more up and down, a bit more rush-chance heavy, he's got speed, skill and the ability to make plays off the rush. If you're playing more of a tight-checking game like say, L.A., he can get in on the forecheck, he can create turnovers and he's smart enough to recognize the difference (of style in that game). It's not like he has success in one type of game, he finds a way night after night."

Crazy to think that NHL goal-scoring leader Nikita Kucherov went in the second round, 58th overall, back in the 2011 draft.

Looking back, as one source reminded me recently, one of the reasons was that many NHL teams were scared off by the top Russian prospects at that time because of the threat the KHL posed in luring young players to stay home for bigger money.

The Lightning, at the time, had Kucherov rated as a first-round talent, but had Vladislav Namestnikov rated side-by-side so they drafted the latter 27th overall and then were thrilled to still get Kucherov a round later. Now they're linemates along with Steven Stamkos on the scariest line in hockey.

The Bolts also got Ondrej Palat 208th overall in that draft, by the way.

But as for Kucherov, it's certainly not that other NHL teams didn't see his talent. He was outstanding at the under-18 world championships that year but again, many teams backed off because they were worried he'd stay home in the KHL.

Was it a gamble by GM Steve Yzerman and his staff? Perhaps. But what a call.

This is the same team that also drafted Brayden Point 79th overall in the 2014 draft.

Success in the salary cap world is so simple: keep 'em coming through the draft. When players become too expensive to keep under the cap, you make sure the next wave is ready to plug that hole.

The Athletic LOADED: 11.02.2017

1081206 Websites

The Athletic / Mirtle: How the Maple Leafs have moved much closer to an optimal lineup, especially on defence

James Mirtle

14 hours ago

ANAHEIM — They were changes forced by desperation, after three straight losses and a sharply negative trend in terms of scoring chances and puck possession.

But these are net positive choices by Mike Babcock, as he dramatically shuffled the Maple Leafs' lineup in preparation for facing the Ducks and Kings back-to-back on Wednesday and Thursday.

Out of the lineup go Dominic Moore and Roman Polak.

Incoming are Josh Leivo and Connor Carrick.

The shuffled include Tyler Bozak moving to centre the fourth line — likely for the first time in his 525-game NHL career — and Patrick Marleau getting his spot in the middle on the third.

"It's like anything — if it's going really good, why would you do it?" Babcock said of his line blender. "If it's not going as good, after a while, you've got to find a way to fix it. 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."

Babcock went through and broke down all of the significant changes he had made to his lineup one by one prior to the Anaheim game. Let's have a look and breakdown what they might mean.

## 1. The new blue line

This might be under-discussed with three of the forward lines shifting around, but what Babcock is doing with his defence pairs could make the biggest impact given Toronto's struggles moving the puck:

All year, the Leafs have attempted to have a very sheltered, seldom-used third pair, a trio that's been made up of a ton of different combinations including Borgman, Roman Polak, Calle Rosen and Carrick.

The biggest change here puts Carrick out of the press box and back up into more of a second pair role, where he'll presumably play more than the measly 14 minutes a game he's averaging this season.

Last year, he was at 16:20 and played mostly with Gardiner. That was the Leafs third most frequently used pairing (behind Rielly-Zaitsev and Hunwick-Polak) and they posted a 54.3 per cent possession mark together. Toronto outscored the opposition 36-22 with Gardiner-Carrick on the ice at even strength, too, which made them by far the best pair in that department a year ago.

Going back to what worked last season makes a lot of sense.

So does pulling back on Zaitsev's minutes. He leads the team at 22:52 per game, in part because he kills so many penalties. But, for whatever reason, the Gardiner-Zaitsev pairing has really struggled of late in their territorial play.

What's interesting and a bit unexpected is Babcock believes Borgman can be part of the solution, despite some of his struggles with the puck in recent games. What really stands out about Borgman's results, however, is how much better they have been away from Polak.

Borgman has played a sum total of eight minutes at even strength with Zaitsev this season, so it remains to be seen how they work together. It also remains to be seen who gets the tough matchups in this configuration.

Gardiner-Carrick was always used in an offence-first role, so that could mean Borgman-Zaitsev see some tougher competition.

What Babcock says: "We think Cs (Carrick) should be in the lineup on a regular basis. He's been out for a bit. We're going to give him a chance to jump back in. We just thought that gives us three solid pairs. We think Borgman is really starting to come, settle in. 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 moving."

## 2. Freeing Josh Leivo

Leivo has played one of the Leafs' first 12 games, and he made a really solid impact against the Flyers.

In fact, he's made a solid impact in most of the recent games he has appeared in. There just haven't been many of them.

He will play on the right wing with Nazem Kadri and Leo Komarov rounding out the second line. That's a combination that's been used in the past; in fact, Leivo has played about 16 per cent of his even strength minutes in the NHL with those two.

Komarov-Kadri-Leivo was the Leafs' 11th most used line last season, and their results together were outstanding (58 per cent possession and outscored teams 6-2) in limited minutes. Again, it makes sense to go back to them to try to get that second line out of its funk.



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Babcock didn't exactly give Leivo the most overwhelming endorsement, however...

What Babcock says: "Should he be in every day? You know you can debate that all you want. 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; 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."

### 3. Demoting Tyler Bozak

In a contract year and potentially his last season as a Leaf, Bozak has for whatever reason really struggled.

He has only two even strength points this season; by comparison, Auston Matthews has 13 and Kadri has eight. And the Leafs' share of unblocked shots (FF%) at even strength when Bozak is on the ice is only 43 per cent, last on the team among players with at least five games played.

Never a great player defensively, Bozak is now providing so little offensively that it's hard to justify playing him higher than as the fourth line centre.

What Babcock says: "It doesn't matter how good of a player you are, confidence is the first thing. It's not that Bozak's not trying. It's not that he isn't putting effort in. It isn't going for him right now. So he's got to find it. I think the good thing about Bozie is when things don't go right for him, he owns it. 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 thought last year we had a good line in Mitch and James and him. Right now it's not working for whatever reason so we'll give them some time and put them apart."

### 4. Patrick Marleau, the centre

Tyler Dellow is working on a piece on this so I won't steal much of his thunder. But what's clear is that, while Marleau is playing down the middle for now, between James van Riemsdyk and Connor Brown, that's not going to be the case for the rest of the season. This is a stopgap measure.

The good news about Marleau slotting in as 3C is that he can be fairly sheltered.

What Babcock says: "It's giving us an option. We didn't acquire him to play in the middle to be honest with you. That wasn't our plan. It's sure not our intent. It's just what we're doing right now."

The Athletic LOADED: 11.02.2017

1081207 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Maple Leafs' Andersen shakes off October blues in return to Anaheim

Chris Johnston

@reporterchris

November 2, 2017, 1:02 AM

ANAHEIM, Calif. – This remains his happy place.

It's been 17 months since Freddie Andersen migrated north to join the Toronto Maple Leafs, but he still exudes a California cool. The Dane

returns here for two months of R-and-R each off-season – working on his body with trainer Scot Proshaka and easing his mind with the activities on offer in Orange County.

"You can relax, you can golf, you can live healthy," said Andersen. "You can go out to eat and still get good food. It's a good area."

It might just be where Freddie got his groove back.

There were no signs of Andersen's October blues during a 3-1 win over Anaheim in his first start at Honda Center since he played for the Ducks. They were nowhere to be found in the dispiriting loss at San Jose on Monday, either.

Even with the Leafs playing much better in front of him, Andersen needed to be sharp. He tracked the puck well through traffic, absorbing a Hampus Lindholm chance and gloving a Francois Beauchemin point blast as part of a 17-save second period.

"It feels nice," said Andersen. "It's a big win for our team though, because we need to get back on track and we did."

The Leafs had lost three straight and seen head coach Mike Babcock make widespread changes to his lineup. The move to centre didn't hurt Patrick Marleau. He scored the winner early in the third period and saw linemates James van Riemsdyk and Connor Brown connect on the opening goal.

Marleau was even on the ice when Leo Komarov hit the empty net.

The Leafs did a lot of winning during Andersen's early struggles because they outscored their problems. The goals have dried up with the power plays no longer getting handed out like Halloween candy. Toronto went an incredible 131 minutes 30 seconds without a man advantage before Antoine Vermette was called for tripping in the second period.

"We've got to find other ways to score," said van Riemsdyk, who feathered a pass between Sami Vatanen's legs to set up Brown's fourth goal of the season.

You'd never know that those two Leafs have seldom played together.

"I was actually looking to do something else the whole way – a different way to get him the puck – and then that was pretty much the only play available," van Riemsdyk explained.

The only goal Andersen gave up came when Ondrej Kase's shot deflected off teammate Andreas Borgman's skate. Jakob Silfverberg briefly appeared to tie the game 2-2 with 1:38 left in regulation, but he was deemed to have kicked the puck in.

Andersen stopped 64 of 67 shots overall in California and will cede the crease to backup Curtis McElhinney for Thursday's game in Los Angeles.

His save percentage has crept up to .901 and, more importantly, the results are starting to match the work he's put in. The No. 1 has been in some need of positive reinforcement.

"It's hard to believe that a NHL player wouldn't have confidence because you think they're that good," said Babcock. "But it's true. It's fleeting. So when you've got 'er going you feel good about yourself, you've got jump and you're loose. And when you don't have 'er going you spend all your time wearing yourself out thinking about it and trying to get it going."

"But the secret is if you work hard all the time when you've got 'er going you keep it going."

Andersen had some bounces on his side with Rickard Rackell and Beauchemin each striking iron behind him. Auston Matthews and William Nylander met the same fate behind Anaheim's John Gibson.

The Andersen-Gibson tandem helped the Ducks reach Game 7 of the 2015 Western Conference final and was only broken up because there wasn't enough net to go around. Andersen was the older and more expensive of the two, and now describes his trade to Toronto as a "win-win for both of us."



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He didn't get the start here when the Leafs visited last season because it fell on the second half of a back-to-back. The Ducks are still getting used to seeing him in blue and white.

"I know him very well," said Silfverberg, who faced Andersen in a playoff series in Sweden before playing with him here. "He's a hell of a goalie and it's tough to score on him."

That wasn't the case over a 10-game stretch to start the season where he was beaten 36 times. His first month last year was rough as well.

Babcock didn't mince words when asked if his goaltender's calm exterior helps him handle the more stressful aspects of his job: "Well, I haven't seen it in Octobers."

He quickly pointed out that the calendar had just turned to November.

Andersen was in a positive frame of mind after meeting former teammate Andrew Cogliano for sushi at Nobu in Newport Beach on Tuesday night and visiting with a few other pals here at Honda Center.

"It's always fun to see some old friends," he said.

It's even better to feel like your old self.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 11.02.2017

1081208 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Joe Thornton talks free agency, Marleau's Cup dreams with Leafs

Sonny Sachdeva

@sonny\_sachdeva

November 1, 2017, 8:27 PM

After more than a decade of pulling on a San Jose Sharks jersey, veteran pivot Joe Thornton was given the chance to choose his own destiny last summer. And it seems the former Art Ross and Hart Trophy winner nearly chose the door.

Thornton, an unrestricted free agent following the 2016-17 campaign, saw a number of suitors line up to try and draw him out of California before he eventually settled on a one-year, \$8-million deal with the Sharks.

How close did Thornton come to winding up on another squad in 2017-18? Asked by ESPN's Josh Cooper if there was a point during free agency when he felt he might be leaving the Sharks, Thornton said the thought did cross his mind.

"Yeah, I guess because I really didn't know what was going on," Thornton told Cooper in an article published Wednesday. "Obviously, I love San Jose and I feel like I'm a Shark, but you have all these other teams phoning and, 'What if?' and things [go through your head] like that. But I'm super happy to be back with the Sharks."

Marleau departed the only NHL club he's ever known and headed for Toronto. Needless to say, the loss of the five-time 30-goal-scorer wasn't easy for Thornton to stomach.

"Obviously, I loved playing with Patty and it was just like, 'Wow, Patty Marleau is going to be putting on a blue and white jersey and this is going to be strange and he's not going to be there at training camp,'" Thornton said. "It was different, but as you know and everybody knows throughout the sport, it's business."

Thornton said he understands why his former running mate made the decision to head north despite the Sharks earning a shot at the Stanley Cup just two seasons ago.

"I've never questioned it. He wanted a change in scenery and I think going to Toronto is going to be a great thing for him," Thornton said. "I think he loves it up there and loves playing under [coach Mike Babcock], and they have a great team up there. I think he's a perfect fit."

"I know he took this very seriously. If he left San Jose, he wanted to have a great shot to win the Stanley Cup. He wants to win one and I want to win one and we'll see what happens."

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 11.02.2017

1081209 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Breaking down the Leafs' Tyler Bozak: What went wrong with his line?

Andrew Berkshire

November 1, 2017, 1:22 PM

Tyler Bozak has been a bit of a polarizing player for quite some time. After riding Phil Kessel to middling success with incredibly poor possession numbers under Randy Carlyle, tons of people wrote Bozak off as a boat anchor to an elite winger. Enter Mike Babcock, exit Kessel, and Bozak surprised pretty much everyone with two very strong seasons in two very different situations.

Two years ago Bozak was a leader on a thin team and scraped together a strong 57-game season with strong possession numbers for the first time in his career. Last season he was a second- or third-line centre depending on who you ask, and managed pretty even, but overall positive possession on an extremely deep offensive team.

This season, however, he's off to a horrible start, already minus-6.72 per cent Corsi relative to his teammates, and while he's on the ice the Maple Leafs are giving up goals twice as often as they're scoring them.

He and his most common linemates from last season in Mitch Marner and James van Riemsdyk have taken a big step back in their play, while at the same time been hit by the PDO bug with an on-ice save percentage below 87 per cent.

Part of their struggles can be left at the door of Frederik Andersen, who has had a tough start to the year, but how much?

One of the issues this line has had is that unlike last year, they haven't found the right balance of responsibility while playing without the puck. Let's take a look at loose puck recoveries at 5-on-5 to illustrate this.

Compared to last season, Bozak is winning fewer loose pucks in every zone, while Marner is the same in the offensive zone, but significantly worse in the neutral zone. The struggles in getting to loose pucks from Marner and Bozak have led to van Riemsdyk recovering more loose pucks this season in the defensive and offensive zones, something he's not as good at, which forces him to play outside his comfort zone and handle the puck more often in transition.

As you might remember from my breakdown of the best left wingers in the NHL over the past three seasons, the weakest area of van Riemsdyk's game by far is his transition game, as he struggles to move the puck up the ice.



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The change in interaction between these three players is a good example of how simple changes can cascade over a short period of time and lead to bigger problems, with one or two players' struggles turning a good line into a horrible one.

A bounce back isn't as simple as Bozak and Marner needing to recover more loose pucks — remember that was only an illustration of what's gone wrong here using just a single statistic.

This season has also seen Bozak's offensive numbers crater, as he's gone from creating 5.2 scoring chances for his teammates per 20 minutes played at even strength to just 3.5, despite the fact the Leafs as a team are creating five more scoring chances per 20 minutes at even strength this season. Even Matt Martin, at 4.2, has been involved in more scoring chances than Bozak.

One of the reasons Bozak has struggled to create offence is how often the puck is dying on his stick. One thing Sportlogiq measures is a very broad success rate of every play a skater attempts to make with the puck, from a pass, to a deke, to a shot attempt. When you add up all those plays and see how many of them succeeded in their goal, you get a skater's play success rate.

Last season Bozak was incredibly efficient in the offensive zone, succeeding on a team-high 58.8 per cent of his attempted plays with the puck. This season that success rate has dropped to 47.3 per cent, along with a three-point rise in his offensive zone turnover rate.

The big culprit for Bozak's drop in success rate and his increased turnover rate on offence has been his passing. Last season he completed 62.7 per cent of his offensive zone pass attempts, while this year he's down to 54.4 per cent. These struggles all make things tougher on his teammates, and as a result we aren't seeing the same mutually beneficial relationship from last season.

The question for the Leafs is whether these issues are short-term struggles or something bigger to worry about. Bozak has puck skills that make him effective in the right situation, so I don't think it's time to panic with him yet, but reducing his playing time while he's struggling won't hurt.

Already this season there's evidence that Babcock is searching for an answer with Bozak, as he's gone from playing just 19 fewer seconds per game at even strength than Nazem Kadri, to 1:42 less per game, and that number is likely to drop further as the Leafs ride Matthews and Kadri harder, put Patrick Marleau down the middle, and move Bozak to the fourth line.

There's still something salvageable here, but for now the best course of action is probably exactly what the Leafs are already in the process of doing.

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1081210 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Penguins' dominance over Oilers continues with another victory

Mark Spector

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November 2, 2017, 12:24 AM

EDMONTON — Whatever it is that the Pittsburgh Penguins have, the Edmonton Oilers need some of it. And fast.

That edge. That advantage.

The intangible that allows the two teams to play straight up, even Steven hockey for two years now, but with the Penguins coming away with eight points to the Oilers' two loser points.

"Honest to God, I have nothing left to say," said Oilers winger Patrick Maroon, his team floundering at 3-7-1. "We just have to find ways to win hockey games right now. We are not winning them and we can sit here and talk about what we need to do, but enough is enough. We just have to find ways to win these games."

Chances? Shots on goal? Territorial advantage?

When these two clubs play there is nothing to choose between them. Until the chips are down, that is. Then the Penguins reach for what champions always seem to find.

On this night, in a game that was tied at 2-2 after 40 minutes, it became a special teams battle. No problem. Pittsburgh killed two third-period penalties, and then Evgeni Malkin scored the winner on their only power play of the frame.

He walked through the Oilers PK unit like a king through peasants, rifling a puck under Cam Talbot's mitt.

"We needed a stop, the penalty kill," said Mark Letestu of a unit that has cost the Oilers dearly this season. "We had two early (power plays) in the third and they came up with kills. Then their power play found a way to get them one."

"It's a sore spot, for sure. We've got to fix it, and fast. It's costing us hockey games," he said. "There's nobody coming the guys in this room can fix it. We've got to do it."

It was another 50 per cent night for the unit (2-for-4), which has killed just 13-of-24 penalties at home this season. Those are playoffs missing numbers.

"This one is pretty hard to swallow right now," said Ryan Nugent-Hopkins, who scored his fifth of the season. "We were right there the whole game. There wasn't much separating us. If anything I thought we outplayed them a little bit."

That could be Edmonton's anthem against Pittsburgh, a club they haven't beaten in regulation in 15 games now (12-0-3). The last two seasons have provided a boiler plate:

- In a 3-2 loss at Pittsburgh last year, Edmonton choked when then-Oiler Benoit Pouliot inadvertently fired the winner into his own net.
- In the rematch at Edmonton, the Oilers dominated the back half of the game and overtime, but couldn't convert on a winning goal. Then Phil Kessel sealed a win in a shootout.
- In Pittsburgh eight days ago, Matt Murray and Talbot put on a goaltending clinic. Again, Edmonton stared down enough chances to score four or five goals, but needed a late Connor McDavid goal to push the game into overtime at 1-1. Kessel ended that one too on a breakaway feed from Malkin.

Then there was Wednesday night, when the Penguins sashayed out of Edmonton with their fourth one-goal victory in as many games against the Oilers.

"The pattern is similar from game to game and it's something we have to break, obviously," said disappointed head coach Todd McLellan. "I thought tonight was a pretty competitive night against the Stanley Cup champs. And I thought it was even. We had some real good looks around the net again, including with 15 seconds left."

This one swung on the final minute of the second period. McDavid reached to redirect a Patrick Maroon pass but missed it. It was one he converts likely 50 per cent of the time, and would have give Edmonton a last-minute, 3-1 lead leading into the dressing room.



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Instead, the puck ended up on Sidney Crosby's stick going the other way. He settled a rolling puck on a two-on-one and made a deft pass across the slot to Conor Sheary who scored. It was the tying goal with 22 seconds left in the period — a back breaker.

"It went from a scoring chance at one end, very close to a goal on an entry, and it ended up being a 2-on-1 going back the other way," said McLellan, who still hasn't got a goal this season out of Zack Kassian, Drake Caggiula, Anton Slepyshev, while Ryan Strome and Milan Lucic have one each.

Can Edmonton win without some other people scoring, besides Nugent-Hopkins, McDavid or Leon Draisaitl?

Said the coach: "I think we're answering that question with our record."

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 11.02.2017

1081211 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Devils, Schneider stifles Canucks' best offensive efforts

Iain MacIntyre

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November 2, 2017, 1:54 AM

VANCOUVER — One week before Christmas in 1996, there was an event loosely described as an National Hockey League game in which the New Jersey Devils came to town and restricted the Vancouver Canucks to eight shots over 60 minutes.

Two of those shots were by renowned enforcer Gino Odjick and one of them went in as the Devils beat the Canucks 2-1.

Jacques Lemaire was the Devils coach, and the neutral-zone trap, just then starting to spread like the chicken pox, their religion. It would be a little excessive to say the Devils killed hockey, but they certainly helped induce it into a coma for several years. Their performance against the Canucks was as exciting as watching tile grout discolour.

After the game, when asked about the entertainment value of his cure for insomnia, Lemaire offered a wry, sly smile like the Grinch — before the Grinch was transformed by the powerful message in the Whoville Christmas Song.

"Fah who foraze! Dah who doraze."

Who among us would not be transformed hearing this?

Lemaire, alas, was not transformed and the Devils for years were regarded everywhere outside of New Jersey as pretty much a festering boil upon the game, even as they were adding Stanley Cups with stars in their lineup.

We are happy to report, 21 years later, that the Devils have changed. Incredibly, they are fast and exciting and full of youthful players who are allowed by the current coach, John Hynes, to attack and make plays with the puck even if it means surrendering shots and scoring chances to the opposition.

Wednesday, these New Jersey Devils beat the Canucks 2-0 at Rogers Arena to improve to 9-2. The score was a poor measure of the entertainment. Vancouver finished with 37 shots.

The Canucks, who have surprised teams with their own fast, cohesive play in the first month of the season, were outpaced by the Devils for two

periods before surging forward in the final 20 minutes in a failed attempt to get even a single puck past former Vancouver goalie Cory Schneider.

Drew Stafford scored into an empty net with 14 seconds remaining, doubling the lead built by Jimmy Hayes at 10:09 of the second period when the Devil ripped an unscreened slapshot from the side boards through Canucks goalie Jacob Markstrom.

Now 6-4-3, the Canucks were beaten in regulation for the first time in six games and shut out for the first time this season.

"They're very different," veteran Canuck Daniel Sedin said of the Devils. "That all depends on the players you have, too. They have a quick team now. I think they play a lot like us: a lot of pace, they get pucks deep, forecheck hard. It is a different team for sure.

"(But) I think this was more about Cory Schneider. We had some good shots. But when he's on his game, he makes it look easy. That last save on me, I thought it was a good shot — up top. But he makes it look easy and makes me look stupid. That's what good goalies do."

Schneider made point-blank saves against Sedin and Markus Granlund in the final minute. Shot attempts were 80-42 for the Canucks, who have have fired 76 pucks on target the last two games and scored once. The Dallas Stars beat Vancouver 2-1 in overtime on Monday.

That 1996-97 Canucks team was stumbling towards a precipice and the rebuilding the eventual plummet necessitated was the last full-scale reconstruction before the one now underway in Vancouver.

But that eight-shot Canucks team still had both Pavel Bure and Alex Mogilny in its lineup, and this one has nobody like that. Heck, the Canucks would have settled for a Gino Odjick on Wednesday if it meant scoring a goal and getting a point.

"I think we have enough guys here who can chip in offensively," Canucks' Sam Gagner said. "We've got guys who have put up numbers in this league and some young guys who have all the potential in the world to do so. I don't think (firepower) is a problem.

"New Jersey are a good team. You can see it in their record. But I really liked the way we played tonight. That will get you a win most nights. I know I said the same thing last game, too. We've got to find a way to break through and score some goals here."

Scoring goals was believed to be about the biggest of many problems facing the Canucks this season. But until the last two games — both among the best Vancouver has played — scoring wasn't an issue.

Grinder Derek Dorsett has stalled at six goals, halfway to his career high. And forwards Brandon Sutter, Daniel and Henrik Sedin, Granlund and Gagner have only six goals between them through 12 games.

The scoring by committee is suddenly failing the Canucks, and the power play again failed to help Wednesday when it had a chance to, blanked twice in the third period and finishing 0-for-4.

Except for the scoring part, there is a lot to like about how the Canucks are playing. They are fun to watch. Even against the New Jersey Devils.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 11.02.2017

1081212 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / 31 Thoughts: Rangers roster decisions could have huge impact on NHL

Elliott Friedman

November 1, 2017, 11:26 AM



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 2, 2017

The New York Rangers caused a huge stir Monday night when Glen Sather, Doug Risebrough, Jim Schoenfeld and Gilles Leger showed up in the Canadian capital for Montreal/Ottawa. Chances are they weren't there for the beaver tails, although I thought it was odd a pure scouting mission wouldn't include GM Jeff Gorton.

Whatever they were up to, the trip was a reminder that you could make a great argument no team could make a bigger impact on this NHL season than the Rangers. It goes back to last season's draft, when they traded Derek Stepan and Antti Raanta to Arizona for Anthony DeAngelo and the seventh-overall pick, which became Lias Andersson. Twelve selections later they snared Filip Chytil, who already has eight points in six games at AHL Hartford.

The message was clear. The Rangers are ready to re-stock. Now comes the next question: How far will they go? My sense is they are honest about who they are. They're not interested in the "dreaded middle." In addition to Andersson and Chytil, they are excited about Russian goalie Igor Shesterkin, just named to that country's Karjala Cup team. They want more. Picks and prospects, keep them coming.

New York begins the day three points out of a playoff berth. That's not insurmountable, but it's been a fight for every inch. There've been rumblings about Alain Vigneault's security. He's got two years at approximately \$4 million per season remaining on his contract, and he's going to get snapped up somewhere if they let him go.

What really intrigues, though, is their roster. I don't get the sense the Rangers are in any hurry, but they know what they have. The UFAs are obvious: Rick Nash. Michael Grabner. Nick Holden. That's the simple play, very easy to do.

But will that be it? I can't see them moving a Pavel Buchnevich, a Brady Skjei or a Mika Zibanejad. But what I do see is the Rangers testing other possibilities. Not necessarily offering certain players, but checking their value. Name one contender who wouldn't love a Ryan McDonagh or a Mats Zuccarello. (Both have one year remaining on their contracts.) Chris Kreider has two. J.T. Miller is a restricted free agent, but I could see contenders liking his versatility, since he can play everywhere up front.

I can't see them trading everybody, and it's possible none of them go. But they will look, and they have a lot of options. So, it comes down to two questions: How much self-surgery do they want to do, and when do they want to do it?

Several teams will be waiting for those answers.

## 31 THOUGHTS

1. Also sending rumour-chasers into a tizzy this week: Ottawa GM Pierre Dorion. He saw Vegas twice — Monday in Brooklyn, Tuesday in Manhattan. Probably won't be as much fanfare Wednesday, when he goes to Belleville for his AHL team's home opener.

2. One team that could be affected by New York's decisions is Edmonton. GM Peter Chiarelli went to AHL Bakersfield last weekend, where he saw Jesse Puljujarvi take 14 shots and get one assist in a pair of losses to Stockton. He's got three assists in seven games. You can argue about whether or not Puljujarvi deserves a call-up, but the Oilers need an offensive jolt. The 2016 first-rounder is the easiest, least-costly option. Remember, Leon Draisaitl wasn't exactly the King of Kern County when recalled in 2015, but he took off at the NHL level when the Oilers took a chance.

Chiarelli's got a lot of balls in the air, but you don't see a ton of trades this early in the season. Chris Johnston reported this week that Jussi Jokinen is available and Mark Spector followed with at least one club having interest in Matt Benning. There are likely other discussions going on, too.

You heard Montreal's Marc Bergevin say he told his team "the solution has to come from within." Edmonton's probably in the same spot.

3. One other thing about Puljujarvi: He might also be Chiarelli's most enticing trade chip. That's a big, big decision and, unless the Oilers are absolutely convinced it won't work for Puljujarvi in Edmonton, you've got to think the player gets another NHL shot first.

4. Don't forget that, as of today (Nov. 1), waiver priority is based on points percentage for this season. Through Oct. 31, it was the 2016-17 standings.

5. Vadim Shipachyov has told Vegas he wants his contract terminated so he can go back to Russia, and things will probably head in that direction. A couple of things have to be cleared up. If he does go back, Shipachyov must re-pay all but \$86,000 of his \$2-million signing bonus. It's expected he will do that, which has people assuming he already has a KHL job lined up.

It will be interesting to see if the Golden Knights also ask for a guarantee that he does not sign with any other NHL club if his current contract is terminated. Freed of a two-year, \$9-million obligation, it wouldn't be a stunner if someone else tried to get him with a lower number.

What went wrong? More than one executive said Shipachyov came over "too late" — at age 30 — and that he "missed his window." Other Russian players indicated he's not a workout fiend, and that may have had him behind when he arrived for camp. A younger player (or one without significant KHL options) might have gone to the AHL for awhile to get up to speed. That's not what he wants, so it will take a few days to negotiate the exit.

6. Toronto is poised to dip into the European free-agent defender market for the fourth time in three years. Two summers ago, it was Nikita Zaitsev (a hit), last summer it was Andreas Borgman and Calle Rosen (too early to judge). Next summer they are the favourites to land 25-year-old right-shot Igor Ozhiganov.

The wild thing about it is they already have 10 defencemen between their NHL and AHL rosters under contract for next year, with four more restricted free agents. But, GM Lou Lamoriello and coach Mike Babcock went to visit Ozhiganov face to face, and he was impressed. Other clubs are going to try to recruit him, but they are not optimistic.

7. It sounds like Montreal is going to make a push into European/KHL free agency, too. Not sure about specific names, but they are looking around.

8. Finally from overseas, it is possible Alexander Khokhlachev makes a return to Boston next season. This is his second season in the KHL, but he liked playing for Bruce Cassidy at AHL Providence. May happen.

9. One situation to keep an eye on: Florida and Alex Petrovic. Injuries limited him to 49 games last season, but when he dressed he played 18:09 per night. Under new coach Bob Boughner, Petrovic's usage is down. He's had three healthy scratches. The third one came Monday against Tampa Bay after Petrovic was benched for the third period of last Saturday's overtime loss to Detroit. He's also gone from 1:18 per night on the penalty kill to under 30 seconds.

These things can change, but defencemen are hard to find and other teams will be watching. Petrovic has one more year until unrestricted free agency.

10. Chris Johnston also reported Winnipeg received calls on Michael Hutchinson, making \$1.3M (\$1.15 AAV) at AHL Manitoba. Another name you might hear soon is the Hamburglar's. Andrew Hammond's final 2016-17 appearance was on Family Day at Air Canada Centre in Toronto, when the Marlies beat his Binghamton Senators 4-2. He just didn't look good — slow and laboured. One week later, the organization announced he'd miss the rest of the year with a torn labrum in his right hip.

Hammond is back, and word is he looks better. AHL Belleville's been outshot when he's started, and his .929 save percentage is behind only Thatcher Demko and Garret Sparks among those who've appeared four times. He's at \$1.35 million (both AAV and cash). Last year of his



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contract. Don't think the cost would be high and it would be nice to see him get another shot. Maybe he's got another ridiculous run in him.

11. With back-to-back wins over Florida and Arizona, Detroit ended a six-game losing streak and remains in the thick of the playoff race. I mentioned during last Saturday's show about the possibility of Dave Tippett going to Detroit if — and I stress if — the Red Wings wanted to make a change, but I believe in that possibility less now. Detroit did some due diligence on Tippett. That's not to say it was imminent, but simply collecting information. They asked enough people that it got around.

Now that Andreas Athanasiou's back, coach Jeff Blashill's got his best group and they are in the mix, having played most of their games on the road (with a big trip coming up). I like the Athanasiou-Dylan Larkin–Anthony Mantha line.

12. One coach (not affiliated with either Montreal or New York) had a suggestion for the Canadiens about Carey Price. He pointed back to last season, when the Rangers gave Antti Raanta four straight starts in December as Henrik Lundqvist struggled.

"In the media, you all wondered if Lundqvist was losing his job," he said. "But he was getting his work done in practice. Sometimes, that's what you need."

Lundqvist came back strong with a shutout when he got back in the net. The whole season was a battle for him, but he fought through and led the Rangers past Montreal in the playoffs.

"The other thing it does," he continued, "is give the team something to look forward to. They see Price or Lundqvist working in practice and feel, 'He's really going to help us when gets back to his level.'"

Al Montoya was in net as Montreal rampaged Ottawa, and the Canadiens don't play again until Thursday in Minnesota.

13. Another NHL coach on the Penguins: "They're going to be fine. Believe me, no one thinks they're on the decline."

Does GM Jim Rutherford concur?

"Yes, of course," he replied from Edmonton, where Pittsburgh practised before facing the Oilers. "We haven't got to the level of our game. When you are the champion, everybody wants to beat you. There are no easy games."

Is there anything that concerns him about what he's seen?

"It's too early to tell. If we were playing like this at the midway point, then I would have more concerns than I have right now. I was watching what the Cubs did (this past season). (Manager) Joe Maddon said he didn't push.... Until the midway point he wasn't hard on them. For us, we've won two of them. There's the World Cup, it's a lot of hockey. It's natural for what we've gone through. The hunger will be there at the most important time. We're not concerned about the President's Trophy."

14. The Pittsburgh GM pointed out that all of the team's defeats except one (last Saturday in Minnesota) were on the rear end of back-to-backs and the blowout in Winnipeg was their fourth game in sixth nights. A lot of the blame was thrown on Antti Niemi, who was waived and claimed by Florida.

"I feel bad for him," Rutherford said. "I'm not pointing the finger. We gave up some goals that you could point at the goaltender. But the same goalie made five or six saves that should have been goals."

Casey DeSmith initially came up from AHL Wilkes-Barre, but Tristan Jarry is now with the team and likely plays in Calgary on Thursday. They wanted him to get another weekend of AHL action before calling for him. Is he ready to be the full-time number two?

"Ability-wise, yes, but our preference was for him to have at least a half a season in Wilkes-Barre, get him even more games. We had to accelerate this."

15. Rutherford says the Penguins need to ease the workload on Kris Letang, but full health should aid that. As for trades, "I don't feel pressure to get anything done."

Interesting nugget: they made two previous offers to Detroit for Riley Sheahan. This one closed because Athanasiou's return brought cap pressure.

16. Finally from Rutherford: He was the only GM to vote against the two-minute penalty for an incorrect offside challenge. He supports video review, but thinks the punishment for being wrong is too harsh.

"Do we want to get it right, or not get it right? If we don't want to get it right, we should get rid of it."

He pointed to Chicago's 5-2 loss to Minnesota on Oct. 12 as an example of the severity. Chris Stewart broke a 1-1 tie with 9:28 remaining. The Blackhawks challenged, failed and gave up a Jason Zucker power-play goal 1:57 later.

"If you were to look at that, those are game changers."

What I liked about Rutherford's comments is that he offered a solution, modelled on the game-misconduct rules. Any player who accrues three game misconducts gets a one-game suspension. After that, each additional misconduct increases the next suspension by an extra game. Rutherford suggests something similar for coaches: You get three wrong, you get a penalty. (He added the caveat that if you go, say, 10 games without a wrong one, you lose a "strike" against you.)

"I don't like the two-minute rule. To me, [this option] provides a little more leniency. Close plays at critical times, you're not going to ask if you're worried about being wrong."

17. A couple of coaches were curious to see how a smart player like Sidney Crosby would adapt to the new faceoff rules. He's at 55.5 per cent, the best number of anyone who has taken more than 250 draws. The next time you watch Pittsburgh, see how he concedes the circle. "He's just letting them have the dot," one said. By doing that, other players are leaning in, going off-balance — and losing.

Crosby has a great "backhand sweep" to his eight o'clock, and I also saw a few examples where he swept the puck past the opposing centre's blade. It's another example of how the best adapt, and a reminder of why he continues to excel.

18. Crosby and Connor McDavid have their second (and final) meeting of the season Wednesday in the Alberta capital. McDavid does 99 per cent of his training with Gary Roberts, but goes to the BioSteel camp every summer. That's run by Matt Nichol, who has an interesting drill that shows McDavid's ability to process at high speeds.

Nichol has some really fast clients — including Tyler Seguin and Wayne Simmonds — who can beat McDavid at the 20-yard dash. However, where the Edmonton captain shines is when the runner has to choose between two finish lines.

In the video, notice the light on the "right finish gate" as McDavid passes the 10-yard mark. That means, at top speed, he has to process a right turn that's sprung on him. It's a great test, and he's phenomenal at it.

19. One thing that's clear about Philadelphia? Claude Giroux's move to left wing "is no longer an experiment," as coach Dave Hakstol put it last weekend. This is going to be a big part of what the Flyers do. Giroux said it was fortunate he had the pre-season to dip his toe in the water, but added one of the reasons it's worked so well is "I'm comfortable making plays on my backhand."

The other reason it's worked is that Sean Couturier embraced the offensive role. The coaching staff and front office were curious to see if the centre would be too deferential or simply along for the ride. Nope, he's out to score.

"I always believed in my offensive ability," Couturier said. "I knew I could do this."



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He's scored nine goals, the latest coming when he was put into the slot position of the Flyers' deadly 1-3-1 power play.

So, 50 this year?

"I wouldn't go that far," he laughed.

20. The conversation about Niemi and all the debate in Toronto surrounding Frederik Andersen has me trying a deep dive into how teams really evaluate their goaltenders. I think most teams are long past using goals against average and save percentage.

One thing I'd heard last week is Toronto believes Andersen should stop 85 per cent of the high-danger chances he faces. That's a window into what I understand, that several clubs are big believers in software that allows them to see how often certain shots should be saved. I first heard about it from Jay Feaster when he was in Calgary, but there's no doubt it's been fine-tuned since then. What I can't say is how exactly this is measured.

I don't think it's solely about distance. It could also allow for the type of shot — whether screened or unscreened, what happens right before it is taken, and other variables. The website Corsica allows you to access a similar calculation, and it's not flattering for Andersen. Entering last Saturday's game, it had him ranked 32nd among all goalies for stopping low-danger chances.

I can't say how that compares to what Toronto (or others) use, but it's a window. And I think it's closer to how everyone evaluates their goalies, although Mike Babcock might be more annoyed with everyone skating in front of Anderson than the goalie himself.

21. The Flyers are really protective of Andrew MacDonald, who is out at least a month after blocking a shot against Edmonton on Oct. 21. As one of them said, "People just see the number." That's \$5 million, his AAV.

In the 1980s there was an NBA player named Jon Koncak, who got a crazy free-agent deal in Atlanta. He got tagged with a derisive nickname, "Jon Contract." I remember seeing an interview with him where he basically said, "What was I supposed to do — say no?"

I thought of Koncak after my MacDonald conversations. It's obvious his teammates and the organization like and respect him because he prepares properly, never complains and doesn't let the negativity overwhelm him. When he was sent to the minors last season, I understand he spent some money on a few things that benefitted players who don't make as much.

In a cap world, if you can't move out your tough contracts, you have to make them work, and that's what Philly is trying to do. They like him next to Ivan Provorov, because they feel MacDonald's simple game makes life easier on his talented young partner. MacDonald's on his weak side, so Provorov doesn't have to be.

The Flyers have only one right-shooting defender (Radko Gudas). They started the year with MacDonald and Robert Hagg on their off-wings, but have tried a few things since MacDonald went down. Hagg went with Provorov first, an experiment that lasted one game — an ugly 6-2 loss to Anaheim, where no one was good.

In Ottawa, they moved Shayne Gostisbehere alongside Provorov. Although a lefty, Gostisbehere has said he prefers playing the right. The results were better against the Senators (a tough loss) and Toronto (a win). Then, Gostisbehere got hurt against the Maple Leafs, which made things even more difficult. Hagg and Travis Sanheim are still feeling their way. With MacDonald, they know what they have.

22. Couple more goalie notes: I wondered what Mike Smith said to Kevin Fiala after the Flames goalie stopped Fiala's shootout attempt last week in NashVegas. Apparently, it was, "Get that (bleep) out of here."

23. Forgot one item last week in our conversation with St. Louis coach Mike Yeo. The Blues hired David Alexander as their goalie coach in the off-season. Alexander has a lengthy history with Jake Allen, as both are

from New Brunswick. I assumed that was the reason for the hire, but Yeo said it wasn't the case.

"It's nice that it worked out that way," Yeo explained, "but it wasn't a priority. We wanted our new goalie coach to work with Jake and (Carter Hutton), but also with Martin Brodeur. I thought Brodeur had a positive impact on Jake last season, and I wanted that to continue. That (Alexander and Allen) worked together before is a bonus."

Yeo pointed out that Al MacInnis and Larry Robinson are also part of the St. Louis organization.

"You better be able to handle feedback here."

24. The Blues drafted Glenn Gawdin 116th overall in 2015, but elected not to sign him by last June's deadline. As an overager, he's getting some attention, off to a great start with WHL Swift Current — 30 points in his first 13 games playing with two 2017 NHL draftees, Aleksii Heponiemi (40th by Florida) and Tyler Steenbergen (128th by Arizona). One scout compared him to Reid Duke, who was signed by Vegas after Minnesota declined to keep him. Duke had a terrific overage year, which led him to the Golden Knights.

I'm curious about Gawdin, because the Blues don't miss too often.

25. No doubt many of you saw Ryan Kesler dressed as Big Bird for Anaheim's Halloween practice. The rest of the story: There was supposed to be a whole busload of costumed characters. But something got crossed up, and all the costumes didn't arrive.

Kesler needs to get back playing. He's got too much time on his hands.

26. Growing up, Brandon Montour was a huge fan of the Detroit Red Wings. His father, too. So, as you can imagine, when he got into a game against them, he was pretty excited.

"It felt weird playing against Henrik Zetterberg," he said Tuesday.

Did you say anything to him?

"I was too nervous to say anything. Well, we got into a battle and I caught him with a high stick. As we skated up ice, I told him I was sorry," he laughed.

27. You can see how comfortable Montour is getting. He says he's picking his spots better. He did admit that in their last game against Carolina, when they were down 3-2 going into the third period, he got reigned in a little.

"On an early shift, I made a rush, then another rush. I got back to the bench and (coach Trent Yawney) was looking at me. He said, 'You will have the green light in a bit, just tone it down now.'"

His story is pretty well known now — he was a good lacrosse player who went undrafted in the OHL. While playing with the Greater Ontario Junior League Caledonia Corvairs in 2012-13, he'd been discovered. NCAA Massachusetts was on to him, as was USHL Waterloo.

"It's kind of a weird story," Montour said. "(Waterloo head coach PK O'Handley) called me and asked me to come, and I asked, 'Why would you guys want me to come there? I play against you.'"

Montour didn't realize the call was from Iowa, not Ontario.

"I didn't know about (the USHL)."

Did he doubt his ability?

"No, I thought I could do it."

He sure could. Eighteen months later, he was at UMass, and on everyone's radar.

28. Montour has told the story about how a Ducks scout made eye contact with him a few picks before he was taken 55th overall in 2014, giving him the thumbs up to know his selection was coming. Did he know it would be Anaheim?



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"I'd talked to them a couple of times. There were a handful of teams that seemed interested. I thought there was a good chance Winnipeg would take me. I talked to them a lot. Toronto and Chicago, too."

I've been told Anaheim knew the other interest and wasn't risking his availability any longer. Looks like a great decision.

29. Quote of the week: One exec asked why last Friday's Vegas home game against Colorado was an early start. Informed it was a holiday called "Nevada Day," he replied: "Isn't every day a holiday in Vegas?" Can't argue with that one.

30. Potential 2018 No. 1 draft pick Rasmus Dahlin is on Sweden's roster for the Karjala Cup. At 17, he is seven years younger than the next-youngest player on the roster (Mikael Wikstrand). At the very least, it puts him on the radar for the Olympics in addition to the World Juniors. The last player I can find who went to the World Juniors and Olympics in the same year? Luca Sbisa for Switzerland in 2010.

31. How old is too old for trick-or-treating? I went when I was 18. It had been a long, long time since I'd done it, so four of us decided to give it one last try in our final year of high school. We tied branches to ourselves, and went as a forest. Most people were really good about it. One guy asked if we'd told our wives that we went bowling. Another basically closed the door in our face, saying she thought what we were doing was wrong. But the majority had a good laugh. Therefore, the last acceptable age is 18.

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1081213 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Old Canadian national hockey program could've helped for Pyeongchang

Shi Davidi

@shidavidi

November 1, 2017, 8:03 PM

TORONTO – In building an Olympic squad without NHL players for the first time since 1994, Tom Renney feels some lament that Hockey Canada no longer has the old men's national team program which centralized and groomed players for various Winter Games.

An assortment of aspiring professionals, minor-leaguers, European-based pros, guys seeking a last hurrah and the occasional star mired in a contract dispute, the squad would spend months together in preparation for international tournaments.

Renney, now president and CEO of Hockey Canada, was the head coach of the last Olympic team to have the guts of the squad made up on national team program players at the '94 Games in Lillehammer. Bolstered by the late additions of Paul Kariya, naturalized Canadian Petr Nedved and Brad Werenka, that group won a surprise silver, losing the final in a shootout to Sweden on Peter Forsberg's iconic goal.

"The national team program back in the day might have been our best development vehicle," Renney said Wednesday, after Nike unveiled the slick new jerseys Canada's hockey teams will wear for the 2018 Olympics in Pyeongchang. "We barnstormed Canada with other federations and played a series of games, we'd have a coaching clinic, we'd have kids out on the ice during the day with skills camps or whatever the case may be. We'd do all kinds of community events in order to help promote the game of hockey. So in lots of ways it was a great development tool.

"At the end of the day, it didn't procure for us the type of investment we needed financially to perpetuate the program. But it sure did a lot of great things for a lot of people and I do very much have a soft spot for that approach."

Such an approach would have come in handy for the upcoming Olympics in Pyeongchang, which the NHL declined to participate in against the wishes of its players. Willie Desjardins will coach the 2018 iteration of the national team expected to once again rely heavily on European-based professionals and eligible American Hockey League players.

Already Olympic hopefuls suited up for Canada at a pair of August tournaments, while a squad that includes former NHLers like Gilbert Brule, Mason Raymond, Rene Bourque, Wojtek Wolski and Ben Scrivens hits the ice next week for the Karjala Cup in Helsinki, Finland.

Hockey Canada has had discussions about a return to action with Jarome Iginla and Shane Doan, with the former a possibility if he decides to play in some warmup events beforehand and the latter settled into his new role in the NHL's hockey operations department.

Players in the NCAA and junior stars in the Canadian Hockey League will get looks, too, but candidates from the other talent pools are more the focal point right now.

"Our objective is to make sure we don't overlook anybody anywhere," said Renney.

Beyond the Karjala Cup, there's also the Channel One Cup in Moscow that runs Dec. 12-17 to help in team building, although the stop-and-start nature of the process is less than optimal.

Back in 1994, the men's program was a different beast, with players spending months together gearing up for the Games. It also made the final roster decisions that much more difficult and Todd Hlushko, one of Canada's bright lights in Lillehammer with five goals, remembers a "Black Sunday" in Waterloo, Ont., shortly before the Olympics during which a handful of players were cleared out to make room for a handful of late arrivals.

"It sucked. Everyone was in tears," recalled Hlushko. "We were on the ice like, 'What's going on, where is everybody?' Tom had to make some serious cuts to get these higher level guys to come in and play for Team Canada."

The moves worked, as Canada nearly ended its Olympic gold-medal drought in Lillehammer, and Renney eventually springboarded from the national team to the NHL, becoming head coach of the Vancouver Canucks in 1996-97. After his firing the next season, he rejoined Hockey Canada as vice-president, hockey operations and ended up overseeing the transition of the national men's team program into its current form, a process pushed in part by the NHL's Olympic participation.

"I was responsible for the national teams, coaching the men again and I remember a meeting we had in British Columbia where we went through all of our programs, 1-66," said Renney. "The men's national team didn't rank real high and we were ranking them for a reason. I think I had them ranked No. 12 overall in being important to us but the majority of the group suggested that its time had come. I couldn't argue that point.

"I looked at it still very much as a development opportunity, as a grassroots connection to continue to play that men's national team and participate in the world championships. But at the end of the day, the NHLers were dominant, even on our world championship teams and certainly to the point where they became that at the Olympic Games. You know what? The game's better for it."

Now, players outside the NHL get another chance to shine, and a new generation of unheralded Canadians gets the chance to capture the public's imagination the way the '94 team did.

For players like Hlushko, a 12th-round pick of the Washington Capitals in 1990 who spent two years in the minors before hooking up with the national team, the old program, "meant everything."



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"It gave me a career," he said. "It was so funny because before the Olympics I had no teams calling me. I'm the exact same player two weeks after the tournament – I had a good tournament, I had five goals in the Olympics, it was great – and then I had eight teams calling me. I'm like, what just happened? I'm the same guy from two weeks ago. But it's that platform, right? It wasn't that I was any different, it's just that you had that platform and were able to excel at that level."

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1081214 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Breaking down the Leafs' Tyler Bozak: What went wrong with his line?

Andrew Berkshire

November 1, 2017, 1:22 PM

Tyler Bozak has been a bit of a polarizing player for quite some time. After riding Phil Kessel to middling success with incredibly poor possession numbers under Randy Carlyle, tons of people wrote Bozak off as a boat anchor to an elite winger. Enter Mike Babcock, exit Kessel, and Bozak surprised pretty much everyone with two very strong seasons in two very different situations.

Two years ago Bozak was a leader on a thin team and scraped together a strong 57-game season with strong possession numbers for the first time in his career. Last season he was a second- or third-line centre depending on who you ask, and managed pretty even, but overall positive possession on an extremely deep offensive team.

This season, however, he's off to a horrible start, already minus-6.72 per cent Corsi relative to his teammates, and while he's on the ice the Maple Leafs are giving up goals twice as often as they're scoring them.

He and his most common linemates from last season in Mitch Marner and James van Riemsdyk have taken a big step back in their play, while at the same time been hit by the PDO bug with an on-ice save percentage below 87 per cent.

Part of their struggles can be left at the door of Frederik Andersen, who has had a tough start to the year, but how much?

One of the issues this line has had is that unlike last year, they haven't found the right balance of responsibility while playing without the puck. Let's take a look at loose puck recoveries at 5-on-5 to illustrate this.

Compared to last season, Bozak is winning fewer loose pucks in every zone, while Marner is the same in the offensive zone, but significantly worse in the neutral zone. The struggles in getting to loose pucks from Marner and Bozak have led to van Riemsdyk recovering more loose pucks this season in the defensive and offensive zones, something he's not as good at, which forces him to play outside his comfort zone and handle the puck more often in transition.

As you might remember from my breakdown of the best left wingers in the NHL over the past three seasons, the weakest area of van Riemsdyk's game by far is his transition game, as he struggles to move the puck up the ice.

The change in interaction between these three players is a good example of how simple changes can cascade over a short period of time and lead to bigger problems, with one or two players' struggles turning a good line into a horrible one.

A bounce back isn't as simple as Bozak and Marner needing to recover more loose pucks — remember that was only an illustration of what's gone wrong here using just a single statistic.

This season has also seen Bozak's offensive numbers crater, as he's gone from creating 5.2 scoring chances for his teammates per 20 minutes played at even strength to just 3.5, despite the fact the Leafs as a team are creating five more scoring chances per 20 minutes at even strength this season. Even Matt Martin, at 4.2, has been involved in more scoring chances than Bozak.

One of the reasons Bozak has struggled to create offence is how often the puck is dying on his stick. One thing Sportlogiq measures is a very broad success rate of every play a skater attempts to make with the puck, from a pass, to a deke, to a shot attempt. When you add up all those plays and see how many of them succeeded in their goal, you get a skater's play success rate.

Last season Bozak was incredibly efficient in the offensive zone, succeeding on a team-high 58.8 per cent of his attempted plays with the puck. This season that success rate has dropped to 47.3 per cent, along with a three-point rise in his offensive zone turnover rate.

The big culprit for Bozak's drop in success rate and his increased turnover rate on offence has been his passing. Last season he completed 62.7 per cent of his offensive zone pass attempts, while this year he's down to 54.4 per cent. These struggles all make things tougher on his teammates, and as a result we aren't seeing the same mutually beneficial relationship from last season.

The question for the Leafs is whether these issues are short-term struggles or something bigger to worry about. Bozak has puck skills that make him effective in the right situation, so I don't think it's time to panic with him yet, but reducing his playing time while he's struggling won't hurt.

Already this season there's evidence that Babcock is searching for an answer with Bozak, as he's gone from playing just 19 fewer seconds per game at even strength than Nazem Kadri, to 1:42 less per game, and that number is likely to drop further as the Leafs ride Matthews and Kadri harder, put Patrick Marleau down the middle, and move Bozak to the fourth line.

There's still something salvageable here, but for now the best course of action is probably exactly what the Leafs are already in the process of doing.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 11.02.2017

1081215 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / The importance and role of a backup goalie in the NHL

Sportsnet Staff

@Sportsnet

November 1, 2017, 9:45 PM

No young hockey player dreams about growing up to be a backup goalie on the end of an NHL bench. But not everyone can be a 60-game No. 1 either.

NHL teams need a quality netminder to serve in the No. 2 role in an era when playing 70 games at this position is risky for a number of reasons. One is obvious, that leaning so much on a player at a demanding position would wear him down or injure him by playoff time. But also, as



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the stats show, it's in a team's best interest to not play its starter on both ends of a back-to-back set, as the average save percentage drops below .900 in the second half of those situations.

It's easy to gloss over the backup goalie position, since he likely won't play much more than 20 games a season. And you may think it's an easy job since you're watching most of the time and then slipping in for spot duty, but it's not for everyone. It's a demanding position, in ways you may not realize.

"Being a backup goalie in the NHL comes with added pressure," said Corey Hirsch in a Wednesday Night Hockey feature on Sportsnet (see above). "The demands can be daunting, psychologically more than physically. They may be forced into a game at a moment's notice, with only one chance to show what they can do after sitting cold for two periods. Sometimes weeks can go by before they get another shot to play. That's why it requires tremendous mental discipline for them to stay focused and be ready for when it's time to play."

Last season, Edmonton's Cam Talbot played in 73 games to lead the league by a total of seven, and that was really pushing the envelope. Goalies will still top 70 games from time to time, but long gone are the days when someone will play 79 times, as Grant Fuhr did in 1995-96.

The backup goalie faces his own challenges, not the least of which is being in practice mode most of the time, and then jumping straight into a game where a loss (or too many of them) could cost you your job.

Vegas Golden Knights starter and longtime Penguins No. 1 Marc-Andre Fleury may not have been in danger of losing his job, but he experienced these pressures first hand, serving as the backup to Matt Murray for a period of time.

"It's not an easy job that's for sure when you practice for a week or two and then you have to jump in and have to win a game," Fleury said. "So somebody that can be consistent in that role is not easy and when you find a good one I think you have to keep him around."

Consider the Boston Bruins last season, who could have missed the playoffs when they had no reliable backup behind Tuukka Rask. Prior to February, Anton Khudobin and Zane McIntyre combined to earn just one win. Khudobin didn't get going until mid-February, after which he only lost two more times in eight appearances. That's not a lot of games, but they're important ones nonetheless.

That serves as a reminder backup goalies struggle, too, which can conflict with another important part of their duties: being an upbeat and fun player to be around.

"When it comes to the relationship with their teammates, it's important for backups to earn and maintain their respect," Hirsch said. "It means being the first goalie on the ice every day at practice and the last guy off. It also helps being a good guy in the locker room."

Added Tanner Pearson: "Backup goalies are the ones that bring a positive energy pretty much all the time. They're always in a good mood, always smiling. When guys are down, they're picking them up."

Because of the shortage of goalie jobs in the NHL and the number of players out there, you could say there is more pressure on the backup. Whereas a No. 1 has clear expectations that define his role and fit with the team and could fall into a backup job before slipping out of the league entirely, a backup has to be sharp in much less clear situations, while maintaining a positive vibe.

With their relatively cheap contracts and other options always available to a team at the AHL level or from other organizations, the backup goalie is one of the most replaceable pieces on a team. It's a job that may be the most under-appreciated in the NHL.

It may also be one of the toughest.

"The fact of the matter is they're an essential part to every hockey team," Hirsch said. "Injuries can happen any time. There's only one net, you have to set your ego aside as only one player can play.

"And in the end those two points that your backup goalie may play might be the difference between making the playoffs and not making them."

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 11.02.2017

1081216 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Steven Stamkos: 'I don't think I will feel 100 per cent ever again'

Rory Boylen

@RoryBoylen

November 1, 2017, 7:01 PM

With a 10-2-1 record out of the gate and averaging more than four goals a game the Tampa Bay Lightning, a popular pick to bounce back to contender status a season after missing the Stanley Cup Playoffs completely, are more than living up to their pre-season hype.

A big reason for that, of course, is the play from top liner Steven Stamkos and Nikita Kucherov who are first and second in NHL scoring with 24 and 21 points, respectively. Stamkos is an especially good story, considering he's coming back from a major injury on his right knee that sidelined him for all but 17 games last season.

It was the second major injury to his right leg after he broke it in 2014, which cost him a spot on the Canadian Olympic team. It took him a lot of work for him to get back to the top of his game, but even Stamkos says it's an injury he'll probably be dealing with to some degree for the rest of his career.

"There's definitely some limitations in certain movements," Stamkos said on Sportsnet 590's Prime Time Sports. "I think I'm always going to be stuck with that, this leg with the broken leg and the metal rod that's in there and now with knee surgery. I don't know if I'll ever feel 100 per cent again, but it's just getting to that new norm where you're just going out and playing and not worrying about it and trusting the work you've put in. I think that's where I'm at and for me that's a good place right now."

Stamkos said the injury changed the activities he'd usually get up to in the summer ("less golf") and the way he trained. Rather than running the track and working on agility drills, he instead did some work on trampolines, grappling and gymnastics tumbling.

And it's clearly worked. With six goals and 18 assists in 13 games, Stamkos is off to the best start of his career at age 27, back to playing centre on the Lightning's top line with Kucherov and Vladislav Namestnikov.

But you may notice something curious about his stat line. The one-time 60-goal scorer has three times as many assists as goals to this point, which is surprising considering he's only ever finished a full season with more assists than goals once: in 2010-11, Stamkos finished with 45 goals and 46 assists. But he insists it's not a result of anything different he's doing with his game.

"I haven't really changed much," Stamkos said. "I think I'm a guy who's always read the game and done whatever play I feel is the best at that time and right now with how hot Kucherov is, usually the play is to get him the puck. But I've found that in a situation, whether it's on the power play or 2-on-1, my decision is not based on really because a guy's hot, it's what's the best play in my mind at that time and I'll make it. It's just worked out that everything Kuch has been shooting has been great."



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Stamkos, of course, would have been a lock to represent Canada at the Olympics in February if NHL players were going, and it would have been the first time he had gone to the Games. He mentioned how frustrating it was for him in 2014 to work as hard as he did to get back in time, only to fall short and have to watch from home. This time would have been something special for him, although he's come to terms with the fact NHLers won't be a part of the 2018 tournament.

Instead, Stamkos will turn his focus inwards to the NHL and his Lightning, with whom he signed an eight-year, \$68-million contract in the summer of 2016, days before he would have become the most sought-after UFA of the salary cap era. He had fielded offers from Toronto and other large hockey markets, but he says in the end Tampa Bay was the place that made the most sense for him.

"There were some questions and concerns we had going forward that we had talked about and I was just comfortable being in Tampa and being part of seeing that franchise from where it started to where we are now, which is legitimate Stanley Cup contender," Stamkos said.

"I'd been so close with Tampa, reaching the finals in Game 6 that I felt that was the best chance for me to win. That's what it came down to."

And right now, that looks like a good bet with the Lightning atop the NHL led by a core of high-powered scorers, a talented group of blueliners and a young goalie who looks more than up to the task of holding the title as No. 1.

Stamkos looks like he's back at the level he was before his most recent leg injury, which spells trouble for the rest of the league, and could end up with the Lightning captain taking home some personal awards at the end of the season.

And hey, maybe even the Stanley Cup, too.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 11.02.2017

1081217 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / NHL Power Rankings: Hockey Haiku Edition

Luke Fox

@lukefoxjukebox

November 1, 2017, 10:30 AM

The Power Rankings

Take form of Japan poems

Year 4 of this trick

More from Sportsnet

Quick Shifts: Too risky for teens to follow Matthews' path

LUKE FOX

NHL Power Rankings: Trick and/or Treat Edition

LUKE FOX

1. Tampa Bay Lightning

Stammer pass to Kuch

Kuch put puck behind goalie

Bolts win game, repeat

2. St. Louis Blues

Saskatchewan son

Jaden from Planet Hockey

Yeo-da use the Schwartz

3. Los Angeles Kings

New GM, new coach

Fresh voices heard by skaters

They answer with goals

4. New Jersey Devils

Will Butcher Sweepstakes

Eleven points from blue line

The Avs could've used

5. Columbus Blue Jackets

Bread Man, setup man

Pierre-Luc Dubois sticking

Morning skates for chumps

6. New York Islanders

Chapeaus tossed on ice

A contract year or something?

Two Johnny hat tricks

7. Philadelphia Flyers

Leo saw numbers

Hit his target in back square

Poor Shayne Gostisbehere

8. Vegas Golden Knights

Fleury is concussed

Pickard's gone; Subban, Dansk hurt

Wanna play goalie?

We are Golden Knights,

Often doubted, given slight,

Still just do our thing.#HockeyHaikus

— Vegas Golden Knights (@GoldenKnights) October 25, 2017

9. Vancouver Canucks

Slowly dialing back

Travis Green taketh away

Twins' ice time decline

10. San Jose Sharks

Tears on cheeks trickle

Melancholic drips to ice

Welcome home, Patty

11. Toronto Maple Leafs

Matthews a wonder

Marleau marvels, Martin mean



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Some D would be nice

12. Dallas Stars

Bishop wants to stay

Too bad Hitchcock wants him pulled

Coach's decision

13. Anaheim Ducks

Vatanen, Lindholm,

Getzlaf, Fowler, Biekse,

Eaves... most man games lost

14. Winnipeg Jets

Blake Wheeler hatty,

Jets convert the extra point

Score touchdown on Pens

15. Minnesota Wild

We love Chris Stewart,

But when he's your best forward,

You're not playoff built

16. Ottawa Senators

Thin gloves too flimsy

Cold, hard pucks shot much too fast

At Bobby's fingers

17. Colorado Avalanche

First-round pick, a wing,

Two prospects, goalie, top D

Our price for Duchene

18. Calgary Flames

Twelve games, zero points

Where art thou, young Sam Bennett?

We picked you so high

19. Nashville Predators

Twine bulges again

Every fourth shot finds the net

Forsberg is on fire

20. Chicago Blackhawks

Three nights in Vegas

Ill prepared for Golden Knights

What happened stays there

21. Boston Bruins

Jaws dropped, disbelief

Nine-tenths of a second left!

How'd the Kings beat us?

22. Carolina Hurricanes

Playoff drought too long

Hope springs from young defence core

Tickets, team for sale

23. Pittsburgh Penguins

Meat stick tucked in bun

Am I a sandwich, or just

Kessel's pre-game snack?

24. Florida Panthers

Luongo goes down

Niemi plucked off waivers

Reimer's time to shine

25. Washington Capitals

Naked on cold street

Clothed warm by Samaritan

Alex does great deed

26. Detroit Red Wings

We held out all our

syllables for Andreas

Athanasίου

27. Montreal Canadiens

Bronx cheers, sly rumours

Cherry: Habs fans front-runners

Price will remember

28. New York Rangers

October failure

Centre, goal, defence in doubt

Can't beat Montreal

29. Edmonton Oilers

Like wind or cheetah

Usain fast, Bugatti speed

How McDavid skates

30. Buffalo Sabres

Splintered graphite snaps

Frustration born of losing

Eichel's stick in two

31. Arizona Coyotes

Ugly October

Whole team cast in disarray

November is here

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 11.02.2017

1081218 Websites



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 2, 2017

Sportsnet.ca / Joe Thornton talks free agency, Marleau's Cup dreams with Leafs

Sonny Sachdeva

@sonny\_sachdeva

November 1, 2017, 8:27 PM

After more than a decade of pulling on a San Jose Sharks jersey, veteran pivot Joe Thornton was given the chance to choose his own destiny last summer. And it seems the former Art Ross and Hart Trophy winner nearly chose the door.

Thornton, an unrestricted free agent following the 2016-17 campaign, saw a number of suitors line up to try and draw him out of California before he eventually settled on a one-year, \$8-million deal with the Sharks.

How close did Thornton come to winding up on another squad in 2017-18? Asked by ESPN's Josh Cooper if there was a point during free agency when he felt he might be leaving the Sharks, Thornton said the thought did cross his mind.

"Yeah, I guess because I really didn't know what was going on," Thornton told Cooper in an article published Wednesday. "Obviously, I love San Jose and I feel like I'm a Shark, but you have all these other teams phoning and, 'What if?' and things [go through your head] like that. But I'm super happy to be back with the Sharks."

Marleau departed the only NHL club he's ever known and headed for Toronto. Needless to say, the loss of the five-time 30-goal-scorer wasn't easy for Thornton to stomach.

"Obviously, I loved playing with Patty and it was just like, 'Wow, Patty Marleau is going to be putting on a blue and white jersey and this is going to be strange and he's not going to be there at training camp,'" Thornton said. "It was different, but as you know and everybody knows throughout the sport, it's business."

Thornton said he understands why his former running mate made the decision to head north despite the Sharks earning a shot at the Stanley Cup just two seasons ago.

"I've never questioned it. He wanted a change in scenery and I think going to Toronto is going to be a great thing for him," Thornton said. "I think he loves it up there and loves playing under [coach Mike Babcock], and they have a great team up there. I think he's a perfect fit."

"I know he took this very seriously. If he left San Jose, he wanted to have a great shot to win the Stanley Cup. He wants to win one and I want to win one and we'll see what happens."

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1081219 Websites

TSN.CA / Maple Leafs outlast Ducks to get back into win column

By Kristen Shilton

For the first time in over a week, the Maple Leafs found their way back to the win column on Wednesday night.

Ahead of facing the Anaheim Ducks at the middle mark of their annual California road trip, the Leafs were losers of three straight, and had dropped four of their last five. But they outlasted a late push by the Ducks to earn a 3-1 win at Honda Centre and improve to 8-5-0 on the season.

Toronto's game-winning goal came courtesy of Patrick Marleau in the third period, and marked the 100th game-winner of his 20-year career. Marleau is the eighth player in NHL history to hit the milestone.

Unlike many of Toronto's win this season, Wednesday wasn't a high-scoring affair where the Leafs were ultimately able to outscore their mistakes en route to victory. After a series of games where Toronto's neutral zone play was anywhere from average to awful, the Leafs cleaned up some of those issues in middle ice against the Ducks. They were committing too many turnovers again in the second period, but put together a more solid defensive game overall.

As Toronto has emphasized being better defensively, their once-astonishing goal scoring rate has dried up appreciably and contributed to their recent slide down the standings. They started the season scoring four or more goals in five of their first seven games, but have now scored three or fewer goals in their last six, posting a 2-4 record in that span.

No player was more crucial to Toronto's success in such a tight-checking game Wednesday than their netminder Frederik Andersen. The former Anaheim Duck, who spent three seasons in net for the team that drafted him 87th overall in 2012 before trading him to Toronto in June 2016, watched from the bench when the Leafs returned to Anaheim last February for the first time since the trade. But on Wednesday, he got the call to face the only other NHL club he's suited up for.

Andersen was coming off his best performance of the season in a 36-save effort at San Jose on Monday and continued his strong play into Wednesday's tilt, turning aside 28 of the Ducks' 29 shots. It's the first time Andersen has turned in back-to-back games with a save percentage over .900 since mid-October.

To try and halt his team's losing streak, Mike Babcock blended his lines and pairings more than he has all season prior to facing Anaheim. Marleau moved into the third line centre spot between James van Riemsdyk and Connor Brown, Josh Leivo got back in the lineup flanking Nazem Kadri and Leo Komarov and Tyler Bozak moved down to centre the fourth line with Mitch Marner and Matt Martin. On the backend, Connor Carrick drew back in to replace Roman Polak, bumping Nikita Zaitsev to the third pairing and sliding next to Jake Gardiner.

The changes may not have resulted in an offensive explosion, but the balance did lead to positive growth for the team as a 200-foot unit.

Also helping the Leafs cause in regaining their confidence was going up against the injury-ravished Ducks. Anaheim met the Leafs without Ryan Getzlaf, Ryan Kesler, Kevin Bieksa and Cam Fowler among others in the lineup. So decimated are the Ducks that Kalle Kossila was tapped to start the game as their top-line centre in just his fourth NHL appearance ever.

Toronto was opportunistic early and got on the board first by capitalizing on an Anaheim turnover near the offensive blue line. van Riemsdyk set up Brown with a great saucer pass cross-crease that Brown put past John Gibson for his fourth of the season. Toronto paces the league in first-period goals with 21. They are also 4-0-0 when Brown scores a goal this season.

The Leafs' lead would last only 1:15 though, when a fortuitous bounce for Anaheim tied things up. Nick Ritchie sent a blazing shot towards the net from the half boards that Ondrej Kase was able to tip; the puck then bounced off Andreas Borgman's skate and past a helpless Andersen.

That score, less than 10 minutes into the first, would be the last until early in the third period, when Marleau rushed to the front of the net and pushed a rebound from Ron Hainsey's point shot past Gibson to give the Leafs a 2-1 lead.

The Ducks thought they'd tied the game with 1:38 left in the third, but the goal was waved off due to a kicking motion on the play. Seconds later,



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Leo Komarov potted the empty net score to lift the Leafs to their first victory in nine days.

The Leafs are the first to admit they have a ways to go towards being the type of complete team they aspire towards. What they needed most at this juncture was to get winning again, and even better they won by playing fairly well in all three phases of the game. Whether Babcock decides to stick with his blended lines long-term and continuing building confidence from them remains to be seen, but by making his most aggressive lineup changes after just tinkering with a few players, the Leafs showed some response.

After being held to only three shifts in the final period of Monday's loss at San Jose, Tyler Bozak's subsequent demotion to the fourth line lit a fire under the veteran that culminated in one of his best, if not his best, game of the season. That jump was evident early in the first period as Babcock got back to rolling all four of his lines and didn't dissipate much as the game wore on. Bozak's natural chemistry with Mitch Marner was on full display in how they set each other up in the offensive zone. Playing with Bozak again seemed to settle Marner down and the sophomore took better care of the puck and made more positive plays with it on his stick than he has been lately. Having him there also seemed to give Babcock more confidence in his fourth line, which he deployed for more than 11 minutes. Bozak led the Leafs in shots on goal with five against the Ducks and finished at 56 per cent in the face-off dot.

Ron Hainsey doesn't play a flashy game and often flies under the radar for Leafs, but the importance of his steady presence on the Toronto blue line can't be understated. Skating alongside Morgan Rielly, they've developed into a solid top pairing for the Leafs, with Hainsey's vocal leadership helping Rielly makes strides in his own game. Hainsey's assists on Brown's and Marleau's goals were his eighth and ninth helpers of the season, all at even strength. That ties him for second-most five-on-five assists among NHL skaters and most among defencemen. While he's the only Leafs' regular who has yet to score a goal this season, Hainsey's active stick in the defensive zone and ability to read and react with precision when he has the puck has been huge for the Leafs early on. He also saved a goal for the Leafs on Anaheim's third power play with a crucial shot block. Hainsey finished Wednesday's game tied for a team-high plus-three with two hits and two blocks.

Toronto's penalty kill was tested early and often against the Ducks but was up to the task each time. Nikita Zaitsev took the game's first penalty just 37 seconds into the first period and the kill held Anaheim to just one shot on goal. Toronto was 3-for-3 shorthanded by early in the second frame and 4-for-4 overall. Zach Hyman and Leo Komarov were the stars of the kill as usual, and nearly connected on a great shorthanded chance to give the Leafs back a lead before the end of the first period but Gibson's poke check thwarted his efforts. Andersen was also a major factor, turning aside 11 shots on Anaheim's four man advantages. Toronto is now ranked ninth in the league (84.1 per cent) on the kill. Not allowing any power play goals helped make up for the fact the Leafs didn't get a lot going on their man advantage tries either, finishing the night 0-for-2.

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1081220 Websites

TSN.CA / Andersen looking forward to shot at Ducks

By Mark Masters

ANAHEIM - This is a big night for Frederik Andersen in a couple ways. It will be his first start back in Anaheim since the trade to Toronto. Last

year, he served as the back-up to Curtis McElhinney when the Leafs lost at the Honda Center. Andersen is still looking for his first win against his old team after dropping a 3-2 decision at the Air Canada Centre last November. And after a rocky start to the season, he's also looking to build some momentum.

"To me, that's key for him ... that's the No. 1 priority," said Leafs head coach Mike Babcock. "It's hard to believe an NHL player wouldn't have confidence, because they're that good, but it's true. It's fleeting."

"You definitely want to try and get the ball rolling," Andersen said. "It will be a little different than what I'm used to in this building. Yeah, obviously, always good to see some old friends."

"I think it's something he's looking forward to," said Ducks forward Andrew Cogliano. "Coming back and playing, he didn't get the chance last year so I think he wants to beat us. It's as simple as that."

Andersen stopped 36 of 38 shots on Monday in San Jose in what may have been his finest performance of the season. And yet his save percentage remains an ugly .896 on the year.

Now, Andersen bounced back from a disappointing October last season with an incredible November. He tends to be a bit streaky, but when he's on, he's on.

"I notice when he starts playing well it seems like his confidence gets to another level in terms of how he controls the puck and his rebounds," said Cogliano, who was Andersen's teammate from 2013-16.

Cogliano believes the soft-spoken Andersen has the necessary demeanour to ride the ups and downs in a market like Toronto. Has Babcock noticed that?

"Well, I haven't seen it in Octobers," the coach quipped, "but I've seen it after that so, I mean, we're through October, right."

"Obviously, he's got buddies on that team, he did a good job for them so it'll be special for him for sure. He has played real well in California before so it shouldn't be any different tonight."

Frederik Andersen had his best start of the season Monday in San Jose and looks to keep building momentum as he faces his former team in Anaheim tonight.

One of those buddies is Cogliano with whom Andersen became quite close with in Anaheim. The pair caught up on Tuesday night by grabbing a bite at the trendy Nobu restaurant.

"It should be interesting tonight," Cogliano said with a big grin. "I bought him dinner so hopefully good karma comes my way tonight against him. He didn't even reach for his wallet last night."

Is that true? "It was his turn so, yeah," Andersen said with a chuckle. "His treat."

Andersen shot back at his buddy when asked about Cogliano's iron man streak, which will hit 798 straight games on Wednesday.

"He took care of his body and that's something you can learn a lot from," Andersen said before breaking into a smile. "Also, maybe it's because he doesn't go in the corners too much."

Ducks' Cogliano can't believe Andersen didn't reach for wallet at dinner

Ducks forward Andrew Cogliano talks about his friendship with former teammate Frederik Andersen and jokes that the goalkeeper didn't even reach for his wallet when the two had dinner Tuesday night.

While Andersen and Cogliano were all smiles on Wednesday morning, Ducks coach Randy Carlyle wasn't in a joking mood. His injury-ravaged team was dealt another blow when captain Ryan Getzlaf was placed on the injured reserve after getting hit in the face by a puck on Sunday.

"They're still a good team," Babcock insisted. "I saw them play real well here the other night. I think they've built a real good program here. They've got big, heavy guys, they've got unbelievable mobile D, they've



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got good goaltending ... Obviously, any time you're missing Getzlaf it's a huge factor for your team. You can't be as good without a player like that. In saying that, we're not worried about that too much. We've got to get our own game going and play right."

Babcock believes Toronto's turnover-prone play has been the main culprit in the team's slide. And the Ducks will be looking to force the young Leafs into similar mistakes. Here's Carlyle's scouting report:

"They like to stretch the neutral ice out," the former Leafs coach said. "They make as many long passes as any team in the league. I would say they're similar to what Pittsburgh's done over the last little while in stretching out that neutral zone with one pass. They have their centre low, but they'll fly their wingers.

"They'll play an up-tempo style and we have to prepare to have our checking hats on versus turning the puck over and allowing them to have that rush game."

Ducks head coach Randy Carlyle talks about how the Leafs like to stretch the neutral zone and play an uptempo style and says his team will have to 'have their checking hats on' tonight.

Ron Hainsey and Patrick Marleau missed the morning skate, but will play tonight.

"I just figured anyone over 35, unless you're not playing, could have the (morning) off," Babcock said with a smile.

Other than the absence of the two veterans, the lines and pairings remained unchanged from Tuesday's practice.

The only forward line that has remained together throughout the recent skid has been Auston Matthews between Zach Hyman and William Nylander. The smooth-skating Swede helped set up Toronto's first goal on Monday, maintaining possession of the puck in the offensive zone as he wheeled around some Sharks defenders.

"He's really elusive and really shifty and good laterally so you add that with his strength, which I think is a little underrated, he's really strong, and it's hard to knock him off the puck," Hyman said. "People think he's just a skill guy and skill guys aren't strong, but him and Auston are both strong, both have strong legs and it's hard to knock them off the puck, because they're using their strength as well as their skill and that goes unnoticed sometimes."

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1081221 Websites

TSN.CA / Nicholle Anderson embraces spotlight during Hockey Fights Cancer month

By Ian Mendes

Nicholle Anderson readily admits she doesn't enjoy the spotlight as much as her husband does.

But on Saturday afternoon, she will be front and centre at Canadian Tire Centre, dropping the puck as part of the pre-game ceremonies surrounding the Ottawa Senators Hockey Fights Cancer game against the Vegas Golden Knights.

"I'm extremely nervous to do it. It's going to be emotional," Anderson told TSN.ca in a phone interview from Florida on Wednesday morning. "It will definitely be weird to be on the ice at the same time as Craig. I don't

know if I could ever prepare for it either. I'm going to tell myself to be strong, but I'm also not afraid to shed a tear."

The Sens netminder believes that the time is right for his wife to take her spot out in front.

"I think she's been one to sit back and stay out of the limelight, but when this situation came about, she's really passionate about reaching out to others and sharing her story," Craig Anderson said on Wednesday afternoon. "She's been through a lot and she deserves some credit for battling through what she went through."

Saturday's pre-game ceremony is just a small taste of what Anderson can expect during the month of November. On Wednesday morning, the league announced she'll be a Hockey Fights Cancer Ambassador this month. Anderson will file a weekly blog for the league's website and several videos will be published of visits she's made to various cancer centres in NHL cities.

"If this helps to raise awareness, then it's a good thing. And it's kind of like therapy for me," Anderson said of her special role with the NHL this month, which will also include support from both the American Cancer Society and the Canadian Cancer Society.

She says she had an idea for a small fundraiser back in July and was in contact with the league about doing something on that front. About a month ago, league officials reached out to her and asked her to take on the larger role of being a special ambassador for their month-long initiative.

"So this has gone from something very little, to something pretty big," she said.

When Anderson steps onto the red carpet on Saturday afternoon to drop the ceremonial puck, she will not be alone. She'll be sharing the stage with 10-year-old Ryan Mercer, who was diagnosed with a rare form of bone cancer last year. Anderson first met Mercer during a player's wives trip to the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario several months ago and now their paths have crossed again.

A couple of weeks ago, Anderson gave Mercer a private tour of Canadian Tire Centre with the help of the Sens Foundation. The visit included a special opportunity to interact with Craig on the ice. A video of that moment will be played on the big screen at Canadian Tire Centre before they drop the puck and it's expected generate a lot of emotion inside the building.

"Ryan hasn't been able to skate in a year, so this was something really special," she said.

A year ago, Anderson could not have dreamed of being in a position to help others like Ryan. She was officially diagnosed with nasopharyngeal carcinoma, a rare form of throat cancer, on Oct. 26, 2016. When she woke up last Thursday, she admitted she had "all the flashbacks to last year" — as it was the one-year anniversary of her original diagnosis.

"You definitely relive it," she said.

She recalls desperately trying to get a hold of Craig, who was fast asleep in a hotel room in Vancouver.

"I remember trying to get a hold of Chris Neil through Caitlyn [Neil's wife] or anybody to just go bang on his door to wake him up."

After breaking the news to Craig on the phone, Anderson vividly remembers standing in the hallway of the medical facility with her two boys.

"I remember crying, but telling myself, 'Nicholle, you can't let your boys see you cry,'" she said. "I couldn't explain to a five-year-old what cancer was, so I just had to tell him mommy was sick."

A few days after her diagnosis, the Senators held their annual Hockey Fights Cancer night on Nov. 4 against the Buffalo Sabres. Thousands of fans held up purple placards that night, indicating they were fighting for Nicholle.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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"I know that night was impactful for me, but I've kind of blocked that one out. And I don't know if I'm blocking out that night on purpose or what," she said. "But honestly, there have been so many crazy ups and downs. Sometimes it's hard to remember all the details."

The roller-coaster ride included 33 radiation treatments to her neck and five blocks of chemotherapy. After the first three blocks of the chemo treatment, Anderson started losing hearing in her left ear, so doctors had to switch her final two chemo blocks to a version more commonly used for breast cancer patients.

Anderson was officially declared cancer-free on May 25 – the same day as the Senators' Game 7 loss to the Pittsburgh Penguins.

She remembers getting the news in Florida and debating whether or not to phone Craig on the morning of the most important game of his career.

"I was thinking if I tell him I'm cancer-free, he could be on such a high that it messes with his rhythm and routine for the game. But my mom was sitting there next to me and she was like, 'You have to tell him.' So I ended up telling him and then he shared that news with the media a few days later."

In the height of her battle, Craig was granted an unconditional leave of absence from the team. He spent more than two months at Nicholle's side, putting hockey in the rearview mirror. The Senators organization was extremely supportive during the Anderson's ordeal and that's something the family hasn't forgotten.

When it came time for Craig to sign a contract extension this past summer, the way the organization treated them played a major factor in their decision to stay for two more years.

Anderson remembers sitting for a private dinner with Craig, Senators owner Eugene Melnyk, general manager Pierre Dorion, head coach Guy Boucher and Craig's agent, Justin Duberman, and feeling like everybody involved was lending their full support.

"Eugene Melnyk has been amazing and so supportive. I'm so thankful that the organization were just like human beings and understood everything. They're like family to us," she said. "When Craig and I talk about retirement, Ottawa plays a huge part. The city is great and the support has been great. We couldn't have asked for a better place."

Now that she's been declared cancer-free, the Andersons are working diligently towards creating a cancer foundation of their own, but they've run into some legal obstacles in trying to establish a charitable organization on both sides of the border.

"There's lots of paperwork and it's really difficult to set everything up. We're trying to iron everything out, but it's going to take some time," she said, adding that she's partnering up with the Sens Foundation as well in an effort to make an impact in Ottawa.

In her role with the NHL this month, various videos will show Anderson visiting cancer lodges in North America, where she interviews patients to share their stories. The videos will give a window into what the cancer lodges offer and Anderson says she's been inspired by what she's witnessed on the tour.

"That's one of my major goals now – to get one of those cancer lodges in Ottawa."

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USA TODAY / NHL power rankings 3.0: Devils' offense off to high-flying start

Kevin Allen, USA TODAY Sports Published 10:34 a.m. ET Nov. 1, 2017 | Updated 12:28 p.m. ET Nov. 1, 2017

Here are USA TODAY Sports NHL columnist Kevin Allen's power rankings through Oct. 31 games.

1. Tampa Bay Lightning (10-2-1)

So much talk about Steven Stamkos and Nikita Kucherov that no one is noticing that Braydon Point has 14 points in 13 games.

2. St. Louis Blues (10-2-1)

With 17 points in 13 games, Jaden Schwartz has been even more productive than Vladimir Tarasenko (14 points).

3. Los Angeles Kings (9-2-1)

The return of Anze Kopitar's and Dustin Brown's scoring touch makes the Kings far more dangerous offensively.

4. Vegas Golden Knights (8-3-0)

The Golden Knights have lost the same amount of goalies (three) as they have games. Marc-Andre Fleury, Malcolm Subban and Oscar Dansk are injured.

5. New Jersey Devils (8-2-0)

Most surprising performance by a team in the early going. The Devils rank third in the NHL in goals per game (3.80). Who saw that coming?

6. Columbus Blue Jackets (8-4-0)

If you are looking for a sleeper in the Eastern Conference, consider the Blue Jackets. They have the goaltending, defensive emphasis and the scoring.

7. New York Islanders (7-4-1)

With nine goals and 12 points in his last five games, John Tavares is the NHL's hottest performer.

8. Pittsburgh Penguins (7-5-1)

Everyone knows what the Penguins can do, but they just aren't doing it yet.

9. Ottawa Senators (5-2-5)

Erik Karlsson had a plus-minus of -6 against the Canadiens on Monday. Believe it or not, several noteworthy defenseman have replicated that or done worse including Paul Coffey and Scott Stevens.

10. Toronto Maple Leafs (7-5-0)

A three-game losing streak simply reminds us that this team is still a work in progress, even though we now see them as a contender.

11. Vancouver Canucks (6-3-2)

These Canucks are on a 104-point pace. Nobody forecasted this strong start.

12. Anaheim Ducks (6-4-1)

Decent start for a team that had to deal with a handful of key injuries this month.

13. Dallas Stars (7-5-0)

With the scorers they have, the Stars' offense should be better than 2.83 goals per game.

14. Philadelphia Flyers (6-5-1)

At 20, Ivan Provorov is showing signs that he could someday be a Norris Trophy winner.



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## 15. Winnipeg Jets (6-3-2)

While you are marveling at the impressive collection of skilled forwards, notice that Connor Hellebuyck has a 1.91 goals-against average and .940 save percentage.

## 16. Colorado Avalanche (6-5-0)

The Avalanche look sharper, but let's not forget they were 9-9 after 18 games last season.

## 17. San Jose Sharks (6-5-0)

Sharks rank third in Corsi percentage, according to corsica.hockey, which is considered an indicator of puck possession.

## 18. Nashville Predators (5-4-2)

With several players adapting to new responsibilities, the Predators are still trying to find their new identity.

## 19. Calgary Flames (6-6-0)

They are 30th in goal scoring. Their improved goaltending won't matter if they don't score more regularly.

## 20. Chicago Blackhawks (5-5-2)

The 'Hawks must improve on a 12.7% power play efficiency (28th) if they want to be a factor in the Central Division.

## 21. Minnesota Wild (4-4-2)

Chris Stewart's six goals in nine games has helped an offense hurt by Zach Parise's long-term loss to injury.

## 22. Boston Bruins (4-3-3)

The Bruins rank third (28.9%) on the power play and fifth (85.4%) in penalty killing.

## 23. Carolina Hurricanes (4-4-2)

Defenseman Justin Faulk leads the team with 36 shots on goal, but has only scored one goal.

## 24. Washington Capitals (5-6-1)

Alex Ovechkin netted nine goals in the first five games and then one in the last seven games.

## 25. Detroit Red Wings (6-6-1)

Jimmy Howard's .927 save percentage has helped the Red Wings get off to a better-than-expected start.

## 26. Florida Panthers (4-6-1)

Evgenii Dadonov's return from Russia has been a plus for Florida's offense.

## 27. Montreal Canadiens (4-7-1)

Even with Carey Price in the net, the Canadiens' team save percentage ranks 30th at .879.

## 28. New York Rangers (4-7-2)

It feels as if a shake-up is imminent if the team doesn't start surging. A major trade? A coaching change. Both are possible.

## 29. Edmonton Oilers (3-6-1)

This team isn't going to continue to score 2.2 goals per game. Lots of chatter in the hockey world about the Oilers looking for another scorer.

## 30. Buffalo Sabres (3-7-2)

The Sabres are giving up more than a goal per game than they are scoring. That won't work.

## 31. Arizona Coyotes (1-11-1)

Goaltender Antti Raanta's return from injury, expected this week, could, or should, turn into better results.

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