



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • November 6, 2018



Hurricanes GameDay Notebook: Gateway arch edition

By Adam Gold

What happened in Vegas needs to stay in Vegas.

The Carolina Hurricanes played their poorest game of the year in getting shut out by Marc Andre Fleury and the Vegas Golden Nights on Saturday. The loss, the Canes' 4th in a row, sunk Carolina to 6-6-2 on the year with still two more games to go on this 4-city Western Conference tour.

The Hurricanes will take on the St. Louis Blues, another team struggling to find wins so far. St. Louis is coming off a 5-1 home loss to the Minnesota Wild, a game that featured the 400th career goal of Eric Staal. Carolina, meanwhile, has gone 2-6-1 since their 4-game winning streak came to an end, eroding all of the positive vibes coursing through the veins of the Caniac faithful.

What's gone wrong? Well, the shorter list is what's gone right.

* After opening up the season with at least a point in 12 straight games Sebastian Aho has been kept off the scoresheet his last two. Lost, however, in the euphoria of setting a franchise record to start the year, is the fact that Aho hasn't scored a goal since potting a pair in the 5-4 overtime win in Minnesota. That was nine games ago.

* Not to put all the burden on Aho, he's got a lot of company in terms of key pieces not pulling their offensive weight during the first month of the season. Jordan Staal has just a goal and assist in his last 9 games. Justin Williams has scored once in 14 games. Andrei Svechnikov has three goals on the year, but just 1 in his last 10 games. Warren Foegele is scoreless in his last 7 games while Valentin Zykov hasn't scored at all.

* Head Coach Rod Brind'Amour juggled the lines the last two games, making the switch after the disastrous first period in Arizona. It was good for Andrei Svechnikov who has looked more threatening playing on the left side of Sebastian Aho with Michael Ferland flipping over to the right.

* According to NaturalStatTrick.com, the Hurricanes are 1st in the league in 5-on-5 "Corsi For" percentage at 60.98%. That's translated into a plus-5 goal differential at regular strength. Unfortunately, in spite of being second in the league in high danger "Corsi For" at 60.27% they're under water, allowing 17 goals while scoring just 15 in spite of far more high danger chances.

* Carolina's goaltenders are 24th in the league in High Danger save percentage (79.52%) while converting just 11.9% of their own shots in those situations. That ranks 29th in the league.

* St. Louis is being paced by former Buffalo Sabres center Ryan O'Reilly (4 goals, 16 points in 12 games), Vladimir Terasenko (6 goals, 11 points, 4 power play goals) and David Perron (5 goals, 10 points).

* The five goaltenders on the rosters of the Canes and Blues all carry save percentages lower than 90%. However, against the Canes, both Jake Allen and Chad Johnson have had great success. Allen is 3-1-0 in four starts with a 2.04 GAA and a .927 SV%. Johnson, who's been with almost half the league it seems, is 7-3-1 with a 2.53 GAA/.919 SV% in his career against the Hurricanes.

* Scott Darling has played well in his career against the Blues. Scott's gone 2-1-1 in four starts with a 2.74 GAA/.911 SV%.

* St. Louis is 3rd in the NHL on the power play at 31.25%! They're middle of the pack on the kill, ranking 15th at 80%. Carolina is 29th and 28th, respectively in those two categories.

* Storm Watch, starring Alec Campbell starts at 7:30 on 99.9 the Fan with the opening draw scheduled for just after 8:00.

* Following the game the Hurricanes will travel to Chicago for a meeting with Cam Ward and the Chicago Blackhawks on Thursday as they wrap up their 4-game road swing.

* The Canes are 6th in the Metropolitan Division and 11th overall in the Eastern Conference thanks to their 4-game losing streak.



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Preview: Hurricanes at Blues

Canes continue search for first win on road trip

by Michael Smith

ST. LOUIS - The Carolina Hurricanes continue their four-game road trip on Tuesday night when they face off with the St. Louis Blues.

The Canes are still searching for their first win on this trap after dropping a 4-3 decision in overtime in Arizona and getting blanked 3-0 in Vegas.

"They needed to work hard, and they did," head coach Rod Brind'Amour said of his team's practice in Vegas on Monday. "There's certainly no reason to hang your head. No one cares about that, and that's not going to help us. Coming off a day, and I'm sure they had some fun, it was good that they came with their work hats on."

Looking to Rebound

The Hurricanes will be looking to bounce back after being shut out for the first time this season, 3-0, by the Vegas Golden Knights on Saturday.

"We simply just weren't quite all there tonight. We don't have the luxury of having a 50-60 goal scorer who can take the game over. We have to do it all by committee," Justin Williams said after the game. "We weren't all clicking tonight, and as a result, goose egg."

"Tonight was probably ... the game I didn't like the most of all of them," Brind'Amour said. "Even saying that, it was a grind game. There wasn't a lot going on for either team, but we've got to try to find ways to put the puck in the net. That's been the challenge here."

Mrazek Day-to-Day with Lower-Body Injury

Goaltender injured on Friday night in Arizona

by Michael Smith

The Carolina Hurricanes' decision to carry three goaltenders for the time being has proven to be a wise insurance policy.

Goaltender Petr Mrazek was scratched on Saturday with a lower-body injury he sustained the night prior in Arizona. Mrazek did not practice with the Canes on Monday and is considered day-to-day moving forward.

"I just talked to him, and he said he's feeling better," head coach Rod Brind'Amour said after a Monday practice at City National Arena. "I know Petr is not ready to play, but the other two guys are."

After beginning the season 4-0-1, the Hurricanes have slipped to 2-6-1 in their last nine games.

"Teams are tightening up and playing harder, better and smarter," Justin Faulk said. "You've got to bring it every night. Every team is looking to get better and improve on their game. We need to, too."

Mrazek Day-to-Day

The Hurricanes still have three goaltenders on their roster, and the team might be turning back to Curtis McElhinney in net soon. Petr Mrazek suffered a lower-body injury in Arizona on Friday and is day-to-day. He was scratched on Saturday and did not practice Monday.

"I just talked to him, and he said he's feeling better," Brind'Amour said. "I know Petr is not ready to play, but the other two guys are."

The Opposition

After losing 5-1 to the Minnesota Wild on Saturday, the Blues dropped to 2-2 on their season-long, seven-game homestand. The team sits at 4-5-3 (11 points) through the first 12 games of the season, and Ryan O'Reilly is riding a seven-game point streak.

"Regardless of who we play, if we get to our game, we'll be fine and in good shape," Brind'Amour said. "They're going to be desperate, too. They're in the same boat we are, coming off a tough one. They've got some high-end players. I don't think they're too happy with the start to their year, so we're going to have a grind, I'm sure."

The other two guys, of course, being Scott Darling, who made his second appearance in net on Saturday after returning from a lower-body injury, and Curtis McElhinney, who last started on Oct. 20 against Colorado.

"I would say he's got a pretty good chance to get a game here," Brind'Amour said of McElhinney, who is 3-1-0 with the Canes this season.

In an interview over the weekend, I asked Hurricanes President and General Manager Don Waddell about carrying three goaltenders, and he mentioned that the team has the rare luxury of being able to do so with roster flexibility.



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"If something happens, it's not easy to go find someone. We're real happy with Ned's (Alex Nedeljkovic) play down in Charlotte. He's off to a tremendous start, but right now, we need him to be playing hockey games. That's what he's doing," Waddell said. "For us to carry an extra goalie right now is fine, and I think it will sort itself out in the near future."

In case you missed it, be sure to check out the entirety of that interview, in which Waddell also provides an estimate for Victor Rask's return from injury.. Keep tabs with the latest

news on Canes injuries with our regularly-updated UNC REX Healthcare Injury Report.



How Brett Pesce Defends Asthma As Well As Opposing Forwards

Respiration is as important to a hockey player's conditioning as anything. When that doesn't work properly, what's a player to do?

By Brian LeBlanc

On the shelves behind the changing benches in the Carolina Hurricanes' locker room, you'll find plenty of hockey tape, a repair kit or two, maybe an energy drink or some concoction that looks like a mix between a mudslide and a smoothie. On Brett Pesce's shelf, though, there's another always-present object.

It's an albuterol inhaler.

The Hurricanes defenseman suffers from asthma, a condition that causes his airways to constrict. It sometimes leads to excess mucus, coughing, wheezing and shortness of breath. Albuterol helps to counteract the condition, but asthma can be difficult to manage no matter the circumstances.

And when those circumstances include a career as a professional hockey player, needing to be in top physical condition every night and requiring peak cardiovascular and respiratory shape, it requires a delicate balancing act.

Pesce, though, is used to it. He was diagnosed with asthma in elementary school, and even in midget and junior hockey, he says, he would play through asthma attacks that occurred on the ice. And as if it wasn't enough of a problem to begin with, the cold, dry air that is prevalent at every hockey rink makes it even worse.

"Not so good for my sport," he laughs.

Pesce can laugh about it now, because after 20 years of playing hockey while dealing with his condition, knowing how to manage it is second nature to him. "It's controlled. I'm on a few medications, so I just feel normal."

Although Pesce is ready if anything were to happen that would impact his breathing during a game, he attempts to minimize the risk as much as possible, including by

modifying his diet. "I don't eat cheese or dairy. I've found that it could affect your asthma, so I stay away from dairy."

Pesce is unsure of how many other NHLers also deal with asthma, although he is the only player on the Hurricanes who has the condition. And similar to other chronic conditions, the albuterol that he uses to manage his asthma needs to itself be managed, lest Pesce face league discipline for unauthorized use of a performance-enhancing drug. It's straightforward enough, but requires a player to be on top of things in the preseason to avoid a situation like Vegas' Nate Schmidt was thrust into.

For Pesce, the process is simple. "You just have to sign a paper," he explains. "You go right to the trainers, and it's a pretty simple process. But you definitely have to sign that sheet, or else you're in trouble."

Occasionally asthma gives some clues that an attack may be forthcoming. Pesce has dealt with it for long enough that he can make as few accommodations as necessary to his full-speed game, knowing that there's a line he can't cross without triggering an attack.

On some occasions, when his body tells him that it can handle more than he's giving it, he'll take advantage of the situation. "If I go a few games, and I notice I don't breathe as hard, maybe the games are a little easier, I'll try to get a little extra workout in," he says. "I get out of shape that much faster — faster than everybody else, unfortunately."

"I do have to do a little extra before coming into training camp," he acknowledges, quickly laughing while adding "so I don't die out there."

But even with all the prep work, occasionally Pesce gets caught. Once, while playing college hockey for New Hampshire, during a road game in Colorado he suffered an attack while on the ice. He says he didn't have to go into the locker room, but it required about six minutes of game time for him to recuperate and catch his breath again.

And similar to players in other sports - longtime Pittsburgh Steelers safety Ryan Clark, a carrier of a sickle cell anemia



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trait who was deactivated for road games against the Denver Broncos, comes to mind - Pesce says that the high altitude of Denver makes games against the Avalanche even more challenging.

"Absolutely. Not as much in Vegas and Arizona, but in Colorado 100%. I definitely feel like I can't catch my breath as well and it takes that much more effort to get back to normal."

Behind Enemy Lines: Previewing the Blues, Blackhawks and Red Wings

Carolina continues their road trip in the midwest before returning home.

By Andy House

St. Louis Blues

Tuesday, 8:00 p.m at Enterprise Center

The St. Louis Blues will enter action on Tuesday night under .500 at 4-5-3, but also possessing an offense that just snapped a string of five consecutive games with four goals or more in their 5-1 loss to the Minnesota Wild on Saturday night. Their newest acquisition, Ryan O'Reilly, has provided everything the Blues have wanted and more as he has produced a team-high 16 points in 12 games in his new threads. Slotted in as the second line Center, O'Reilly has provided needed scoring to the Blues lineup alongside veteran linemate David Perron and the younger Zachary Sanford.

Coupled with the dynamic first line that includes Brayden Schenn and Vladimir Tarasenko, the Blues are seeing greater depth in their scoring early this season. An undisclosed injury to Schenn could leave a decision for the Blues on what to do with O'Reilly at center. Do they leave him with his group, or move him to the first line to replace Schenn temporarily?

The biggest issue for the Blues has been keeping the puck out of their own net. Having yielded 47 goals in 12 games, the Blues have received a very disappointing performance in net from both incumbent Jake Allen as well as newcomer Chad Johnson. Combined, the two goalies have provided just a .879 save percentage and a robust 3.88 goals against average. While the Blues offense has been fine, no offense will be able to consistently overcome that kind of goaltending to consistently compete in the NHL. Moving forward, tightening up the defense and netminding will likely make the difference in the Blues hanging in or falling out of playoff contention in the very crowded Central Division.

In order for the Hurricanes to take care of business in St. Louis, they will have to re-create the offensive success that many other teams have enjoyed against the Blues. Can Carolina break the seal that seems to be placed on the net?

What to Watch For

Will Carolina make any changes to their league-worst power play unit? Many analysts have felt that an increased role for Dougie Hamilton could be in line. We shall see if Rod Brind'Amour is ready for change.

Fortunately, with Raleigh only situated a few hundred feet above sea level, that's rarely an issue here. Pesce may not be signing with the Avalanche as a free agent anytime soon, but he manages his condition as best he can, controlling his expending of energy as much as possible while always keeping in mind that his locker has that extra accessory for him to use whenever he needs it.

While it has been well publicized that the Canes lead the NHL in shots, the Blues are just 28th in the league in that category. With both teams playing in front of iffy net play, will the shot advantage help the Canes?

Chicago Blackhawks

Thursday, 8:30 p.m. at United Center

also, Monday November 12th, 7:00 p.m. at PNC Arena

While the Chicago Blackhawks are no longer the class of the NHL's Western Conference, there are still key pieces from those three Stanley Cup-winning teams that are at the forefront of their current squad. Off to a 6-6-3 start, the Hawks have received a league-leading 11 goals thus far from Patrick Kane, who is coming off a disappointing 27-goal campaign just a season ago. Combined with the continued solid play of captain Jonathan Toews and the youthful emergence of Alex DeBrincat, the Blackhawks continue to have a goal-scoring presence.

The Blackhawks have been made continually thinner across their roster as salary cap implications have continually pressed the Hawks to send off important performers. Along with the wealth of current Hurricanes that contributed to Blackhawks titles (Teuvo Teravainen, Trevor van Riemsdyk, and Scott Darling), the Hawks have lost players such as Artemi Panarin and Patrick Sharp as cap casualties along the way. If they stay healthy, the Blackhawks certainly hold out hope that their top-end talent can propel the team into contention in the Central Division, but reality would seem to dictate that there are simply too many teams who have caught up to and surpassed the Hawks for them to claw their way back into the playoffs this season.

In net, the Hawks have had to turn to long-time Hurricane Cam Ward, who is spending his first season outside of Raleigh with the Blackhawks. With two matchups in short order, perhaps the Canes will get their first-ever meeting against Ward, who spent 13 seasons in Carolina. The Blackhawks have seen Corey Crawford return from injury, and he will now presumably take on a full starters role. The Blackhawks will need Crawford to step up, along with better work from a blueline in transition, as the early results have the Hawks giving up the second-most goals on the season at 56 through 15 games.

If you are the Canes, the sweater across the ice cannot fool you as this week continues. If Carolina wants to be a legit playoff contender, teams like the Blackhawks must become wins more often than not in this highly competitive league.

What to Watch For



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Will Carolina get their first ever matchup against the former Conn-Smythe winner Cam Ward? With Petr Mrazek out, we could see a Ward vs. Darling matchup sometime in the next week.

The defensive pairings for the Blackhawks continue to have an eclectic mix of aging cogs (Duncan Keith, Brent Seabrook), journeyman D-men (Brandon Manning, Jan Rutta), and extreme youth (Henri Jokiharju). Carolina must exploit this weakness in the Hawks roster to create solid, true scoring chances, not just an abundance of shots on net.

Detroit Red Wings

Saturday, 7:00 p.m. at PNC Arena

The Detroit Red Wings are in the midst of their first true rebuild in multiple generations. While they are not devoid of talent (Dylan Larkin, Gustav Nyquist and Andreas Athanasiou to name a few), the core that carried the Wings to their most recent true glory has almost entirely moved on. With veteran netminder Jimmy Howard as one of the few remaining links to the Stanley Cup contending clubs of the past, Detroit will be moving forward looking for opportunities to improve their future and exploring trades as a true seller for the first time since the 1980's.

In terms of opportunity, the Wings should have ample chances to move pieces to playoff contenders, as their roster

is filled currently with veteran players who have extensive playoff experience. Frans Nielsen, Trevor Daley, Justin Abdelkader, Thomas Vanek, as well as longtime mainstays in Howard, and Niklas Kronwall are all over 30 and could possibly help a contender as real depth for a playoff run. The key to this season for the Wings will be maximizing the return on any and all of the possible trade pieces they possess.

After holding off the Wings in Detroit two weeks ago by a 2-1 score, the Canes will hope to again take advantage of their matchup versus what may turn out to be the worst team in the Eastern Conference. At home, these are certainly games that Carolina must be able to count on for two points to be considered a contender.

What to Watch For

As we have often discussed, the Canes lead the NHL in shots. Detroit is top-five in most shots allowed. Carolina will continue to fire the rubber, but will they be able to get enough shots past either Howard or Jonathan Bernier?

Athanasiou has exhibited some of the most breathtaking speed in the NHL. If he gets a chance to wind it up from center ice or beyond, enjoy it, and hope that Jacob Slavin is the one chasing him, because no one else will likely have a chance on defense.

THE ATHLETIC

A look at why Bill Peters' Flames allow so many high-quality shots

By Kent Wilson

Through the first 10-plus games of the Bill Peters' era in Calgary, the Flames have one very clear weakness: defence. Specifically in terms of giving up 10-bell chances, the proverbial "leaving the goalie out to dry" play. At the time of writing, the Flames were surrendering 15.6 high danger shot attempts against per sixty minutes of ice at even strength, worst in the NHL.

To put that in context, the Flames were around 10 HDCA/60 last year. Right now, they are giving up almost three times as many close-in chances as the league-leading New Jersey Devils (5.87 HCA/60).

The numbers match the eye test. Breakaways, odd-man rushes, uncontested shots from the slot – the club has made a habit out of giving up high quality looks all too frequently thus far.

That begs the question, is this an execution and talent problem, or is it systemic?

Peters in Carolina

Luckily we have a four-year data set from Peters' time in Carolina. We can compare that to the Flames performance so far, as well as the rest of the league.

Here is the data set, sorted by HDCA/60:

Carolina's results are highlighted. Included are total shot attempts, shots on net, scoring chances, and high danger

shot attempts, as defined by Natural Stat Trick. They are all translated to per sixty minutes rate stats for simplicity's sake. I have also included an HDCA/CA ratio, meaning the number of high danger shot attempts divided by total shot attempts.

There is evidence that the Hurricanes were somewhat below average, at least in terms of denying the high-danger variety shots with Peters at the helm. Over the sample in question, the league mean for HDCA/60 was 10.25 per hour, with the Hurricanes trailing that marginally at 10.43 per hour, placing them 19th overall by this measure. The club was actually above average at denying shot attempts and general scoring chances, but that also means they had one of the higher HDCA ratios at about 20 percent (league average was 18.5 percent)

What's also interesting about this data is how tight the range of HDCA/60 becomes over time. While there was almost a 10 high-danger shot attempt per hour difference between the best and worst teams in the early going this year, over the four-year period in question, that difference shrinks to less than four (3.91/60). What this indicates is that we're probably in line for some regression for both the Flames (worst so far) and Devils (best so far) over the course of the season, given that the true talent and tactical difference in the league is likely much smaller than it looks right now.

As for Peters and the Hurricanes, we can't be completely sure we are strictly measuring coaching vs roster talent when it comes to these issues. After all, both of these factors are



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obviously going to have a certain amount of influence on defensive outcomes.

We can look at this from another angle via Corsica's expected goals against (XGA/60) metric. Rather than binning the shots by position on the ice, this model collapses all the shots yielded by a team to give us a single, weighted defensive measure.

Things aren't much different via XGF, with Carolina finishing 18th overall in the league over the same four-year period (2.31 XGA/60 – ironically the Flames finished with the exact same number between 2014-15 and 2017-18). To add more context to the discussion, Calgary was rocking a 2.78 XGA/60 rate at the time of writing, good for fourth last in the league.

Though we can't be sure about the split between talent and coaching for now, the tentative conclusion we can draw is "yes, Peters' team seem to be marginally below average at restricting high-quality shots against," with an assumption that coaching plays a role. If we look at some of the best teams in the league by the HDCA/60 measure, for instance, we see some clubs at the top of the heap, despite not boasting clearly superior rosters (New Jersey Devils and Minnesota Wild come to mind).

High danger shot ratio distribution over time

To give us a better idea of how teams fair by expected goals against, I looked at the distribution of XGA/60 by coached seasons. Here's how it looks:

The vast majority of seasons landed between 2.75 XGA/60 and about 2.35 XGA/60. As noted, Peters' cumulative XGA/60 average during his time in Carolina was 2.31, so not really grossly out of line.

To add further context, we can look at how high-danger shot share (or HD ratio) according to data assembled by Cole Anderson (@CrowdScoutsprts) tends to change over the course of a single season:

(Cole uses a slightly different definition of high danger shot than Natural Stat Trick, so his average ratio is slightly different. The exact number of shots isn't as important as the team's behaviour over time in this context, however).

Some coaches are noted in the spaghetti graph for context, including Peters' various seasons in Carolina. As you can see, there are a lot of extreme ratios to start the season, but things inevitably tighten up over time. In this view, none of Peters' seasons as the Hurricanes coach looks out of line with typical league norms.

To bring this back to the Flames, we can look at individual players results in terms of HDCA/60 and XGA/60 over the last three seasons to get an idea of each player's defensive ability according to these measures:

Here are the aggregated rates in question between 2015-16 and 2017-18, ranked by HDCA/60. This dataset exempts the start to this year and includes a season of Bob Hartley hockey, plus two of Glen Gulutzan's seasons.

The players' HDCA/60 rates are pretty tight, with Sean Monahan gathering the most high-danger shots against per hour (11.65) and Mark Jankowski coming in with the fewest (9.17). Some guys are below average, some guys are above average, but there's nothing outrageously out of line with league norms.

Conclusion

Altogether:

Bill Peters' Carolina teams were marginally below average in terms of high-danger shots against and expect goals against.

His results, nevertheless, fell within a standard distribution of NHL coaches.

We often see a wide array of HDCA/60 and XGA/60 rates by team to start the year, but they tend to tighten up and regress closer to the league mean over time.

The Flames seem to have varying degrees of defensive talent on their roster, but nothing that suggests they will necessarily perform well below average all year.

While the Flames have struggled defensively to start, it's unlikely they will continue to give up 15+ high-danger shot attempts per hour moving forward. Not only would that be an unprecedented rate (the worst teams in the league are usually down around 12 per hour), neither the Flames main roster players nor their coach boast results that suggest they'll be this bad forever.

We have likely already begun to see the team starting to improve south of the red line. After giving up a baffling 28 HD shots to the New York Rangers on October 21st, the Flames have surrendered just eight in each of their last three contests.

In short, Calgary is unlikely to be well above average defensively this year given Peters' results in Carolina, but we can probably bet on them settling in around the 10-10.5 HDCA/60 range.

TODAY'S LINKS

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SportScan

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

1113903 Carolina Hurricanes

Skidding Hurricanes decide time is right to shake up the line combinations

By Sara Civian Nov 5, 2018

GLENDAL, Ariz. — The Carolina Hurricanes waited just up until the East Coast was about to call it a night. Then, of course, they Carolina Hurricanes themselves from a 0-3 deficit to a 4-3 overtime loss.

It was another comeback effort warranting a head shake, a laugh and a what-the-heck-did-I-just-watch?

Eerily reminiscent of the win against San Jose last week, the Canes headed into the second down three to the hot-start Coyotes, a team whose penalty kill has produced more goals than Carolina's power play.

The difference became head coach Rod Brind'Amour's first career tough call. But he said he was going to do it, so he did.

"For me, you only shake the lineup up when you're not getting the chances," he'd said the day before. "... At some point, just for the sake of the guys to get a different look, that's going to happen."

Outscored 3-0 and outshot 12-9, they were decidedly not getting the chances. No. 2 overall pick Andrei Svechnikov had been sheltered on the fourth line playing less than 13 minutes per game. The brunt of Brind'Amour criticism has been directed at that so far, but he's stood firm, remembering how hard it was being an 18-year-old in the NHL.

The grey area between what's good for the player and what's good for the team just had to be explored, so Brind'Amour stuck to his word and switched up the lines.

Brock McGinn-Jordan Staal-Justin Williams

Micheal Ferland-Sebastian Aho-Andrei Svechnikov

Jordan Martinook-Lucas Wallmark-Teuvo Teravainen

Warren Foegele-Nicolas Roy-Valentin Zykov

"It was time to shake it up," Brind'Amour said. "I give the guys credit for at least answering the bell after being knocked down."

It would do for a point. Two goals in 40 seconds — Svechnikov first, then Staal — sparked the third-period 3-3 comeback. Not even a 51-25 shot count could erase the first period, though, and it was a microcosm of the bigger issue at hand.

Their fourth consecutive loss, a 3-0 shutout in Vegas, would provide the real "gut check."

As fun as these come-from-behind wins can be, they aren't a path to sustainable winning.

"You look at great teams, they're going to win some games that they shouldn't," Coyotes coach Rick Tocchet said. "It's nice for us to win those type of games."

What do you make of a team that's maybe losing some games that it shouldn't?

The Canes are 3-6-1 in their last 10. Do you want the good news or the bad news first?

The Bad News

- Even if there's a method to the Hurricanes' league-leading 41.8 shots per game madness, it hasn't been working where it counts of late. Slice it however you want. I'm always game for a shot selection debate, but Carolina is 22nd in the NHL in total goals with 38 and 26th in goals per game with 2.71. Scoring tends to fizzle out league-wide after the first few weeks of the season after defenses start catching up, so that adds to the struggle.

Though Brind'Amour has insisted the team gets its fair share of Grade A chances in those 41.8 shots per game, he was less-than-pleased with shot selection in Saturday night's loss.

"We're having a tough time putting the puck in the net," he said. "... I'd always like to see more chances. I don't think we had a lot of Grade A opportunities (on the power play). We're trying to find different guys, use different units, get some traction there."

The issue against Vegas wasn't a lack of getting the puck to the net, and the Canes actually held a 12-9 edge in high danger chances. It was providing a second effort on those chances and capitalizing on rebounds. That's often what makes those chances so dangerous.

- We'll get to the personnel changes later, but the power play remains a struggle. The Canes went 0 for 6 in Arizona and 0 for 3 in Vegas. They're tied with Nashville with a league-worst 11.8 percent efficiency.

(All data from NaturalStatTrick.com)

- Williams was honest about the come-from-behind nature of his team. It's impressive how they've managed to pull it off, but it takes its toll; hence its non-sustainability. While the Canes have proved it's not impossible to win via third-period Grind and Grit, they've also proved there's gotta be an easier way.

"It's tough to play comeback every night, it really is, especially on the road in the second half of a back-to-back," he said. "We seem to be doing that the last couple of games. That takes a toll, and it's tough on you."

- Over the past five games, there have only been three goals scored by anyone not on the first line.

- Aho's Wayne Gretzky record-tying 12-game point streak has tragically come to an end.

The Good News

- I think Brind'Amour took a first big step in his young coaching career by actually shaking up the lineup and special teams when he said he would. He swapped out Faulk for Hamilton on the first power play unit Saturday. It almost resulted in a goal, but Williams gloved



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Hamilton's signature bomb past Marc-Andre Fleury so it got waved off.

It only took two periods on the first line for Svechnikov to score an impact goal.

We'll no doubt need a much larger sample size than five periods to evaluate how this is working out, but the point is Brind'Amour made the changes. And we can be sure he didn't just "make them to make them."

- Jaccob Slavin remains tremendous. For every highlight, like the assist on Svechnikov's goal above, there's about three more that don't make it onto the scoresheet because whomever he dished it to couldn't finish it off. He always seems to rise up in dire situations. He's already created seven rebounds — that was his total in 2016-17, and he's on pace to crush his 16 in 2017-18.

- The penalty kill showed significant improvement against Vegas, killing all four Knights power plays and allowing only three shots on goal.

It's something to build on.

- Per CarolinaHurricanes.com's Michael Smith, Victor Rask is slated to return to the lineup the first week of December.

The Athletic LOADED: 11.06.2018

1113980 NHL

Former Vancouver Canucks chief operating officer tabbed for same role with future Seattle NHL team

Geoff Baker

Former Vancouver Canucks chief operating officer Victor de Bonis has been hired to fill the same position for Seattle's expected National Hockey League expansion franchise.

Former Vancouver Canucks chief operating officer Victor de Bonis will serve in the same capacity for Seattle's incoming NHL franchise. A team is expected to be awarded at the league's board of governors meetings next month in Sea Island, Ga. (Jeff Vinnick / Vancouver Canucks)

Former Vancouver Canucks chief operating officer Victor de Bonis will serve in the same capacity for Seattle's incoming NHL franchise. A team is expected to be awarded at the league's board of governors meetings next month in Sea Island, Ga.

(Jeff Vinnick / Vancouver Canucks)

The Seattle Hockey Partners group, known as NHL Seattle, announced the hiring of de Bonis on Monday. At the same time, it was announced local construction magnate Ken Johnsen has been appointed Construction Executive for Oak View Group's Seattle office in its \$700 million KeyArena redevelopment as well as the building of an NHL practice facility at Northgate Mall.

The NHL is expected to announce the awarding of a 32nd franchise to the NHL Seattle group at the league's board of governors meetings next month in Sea Island, Ga.

De Bonis had spent 23 years in roles with the Canucks, their parent company and Rogers Arena in Vancouver before leaving in March of last year to pursue what he called "a new challenge in my career." He had been the team's COO since 2007 and also served as its alternate representative on the NHL's board of governors since 2010.

He and NHL Seattle president and CEO Tod Leiweke worked together with the Canucks from 1994 through 1999.

"I am excited to be coming into Seattle Hockey Partners on the ground floor and to get the chance to work with Tod again," de Bonis said in a release. "There's nothing like bringing a franchise to a new city and having a second chance to do so is an honor, including being part of the team."

Leiweke, in the same release, said, "Victor has been a key player in the Vancouver Canucks' operational success and is a longtime sports industry veteran."

In February 2014, de Bonis met in Vancouver with a traveling "trade mission" of Seattle sports business officials exploring marketing opportunities between the two cities. At the time, the NHL was keen on putting an expansion team in Seattle as soon as a deal could be reached between the city and entrepreneur Chris Hansen to build an arena in the Sodo District.

That arena never happened and it would be nearly four more years before a deal to renovate KeyArena was finalized last December and the league announced it had taken an expansion application from NHL Seattle.

But during that 2014 meeting with the Seattle delegation, de Bonis talked up the importance of having a team in the Emerald City, saying the future rivalry mattered to the Canucks and would be beneficial to their business.

"We'd be your biggest supporter," he told them. "We'll do everything we can to make sure you get a franchise there."

Seattle Times LOADED: 11.06.2018

1113981 NHL

What NHL's new sports gaming partnership means for our future Seattle franchise

Geoff Baker

Inside the NHL

Our expected new National Hockey League franchise is positioned to make money off sports gambling despite this state boasting the nation's toughest anti-gaming laws.

What gives?

Well, the NHL found a way to profit from gambling without actually doing so directly. A multiyear deal struck last week makes MGM Resorts International the league's official gaming partner. MGM receives nonexclusive rights to league and team logos and branding material and — most important — real-time puck and player-tracking data currently under development.

The data should help MGM set odds more accurately and opens up proposition betting opportunities — things like which player will average the hardest slap shot in a game, or log the most ice time — once technology is operational next season.

The deal is for an unspecified fixed amount and not a piece of MGM's sports gaming "book."

And because of that, Mark Conrad, director of the sports-business program at Fordham University and an expert on legal issues surrounding sports betting, says there's nothing preventing Seattle's team from sharing in proceeds from a straight-up deal for data and logos.



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"I don't see anything because it's not involved in gambling per se," Conrad said. "It would be like a newspaper running a betting line in a state where there's no legalized gambling, which they've done for years."

NHL Seattle officials declined to comment until after a franchise is officially awarded here next month.

Chris Stearns, a commissioner with the Washington State Gambling Commission, said he's also unaware of anything preventing Seattle's team from sharing revenue from the MGM deal. But Stearns said there could be an issue implementing the deal locally; namely, whether data being transmitted from future NHL games at KeyArena violates anti-gaming laws.

It's a Class C felony in Washington to transmit "information intended to be used for professional gambling."

"I think that's something we'd probably need to take a little bit of a closer look at," Stearns said. "If it's just like statistics on when they entered the game or when they left; penalties, shots on goal or that kind of stuff, it's probably just regular publicly available information even though it would be under a contract."

"But if it was something that was specifically used to set odds, that might be different."

That's where this gets interesting, since the hockey deal involves "previously unseen enhanced NHL proprietary game data" according to a joint NHL and MGM release.

"They're going to use it to be able to set odds and proper odds that they're going to be able to create," Wachtel said.

So, this likely won't be the last we hear on whether this deal will fly locally.

This is just the start of a broad push by sports leagues to cash in on sports gambling after a U.S. Supreme Court ruling in May struck down the 1992 Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act. The federal law had banned sports betting in all but a handful of exempted states.

Now, individual states will decide whether to allow sports gaming.

Nevada, Delaware, New Jersey, Mississippi, West Virginia and New Mexico do allow it, while Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and New York are close. Legislation to legalize it has been introduced in 19 other states, but not here — yet.

The NBA and MLB have argued, unsuccessfully, that states should collect and pay them "integrity fees" — a sort of tax — on sports gambling, since it's their games being wagered on. But since states have balked, these new partnerships are a way for leagues to get their gambling cut.

Stearns said his commission — which enforces gaming laws but can't enact or alter them — has kept abreast of the rapidly shifting sports landscape in anticipation of attempted legal changes here.

"It really is spreading fast," Stearns said. "I wouldn't be surprised if there is a bill introduced. I haven't heard anything, but it just seems like legislatures across the entire country are really considering this."

For now, the NHL's partnership won't bring a financial windfall to any one team. A July deal between the NBA and MGM was reportedly worth \$25 million over three years and gambling on professional basketball far exceeds hockey.

So, an NHL deal worth, say, half what the NBA got would see \$12.5 million split 50-50 between players and owners, then divided among 32 teams.

Seattle's team at best would get less than a six-figure annual amount. In reality, Seattle's team likely won't see any NHL revenue sharing until it begins play in October 2020 or 2021.

But it's more the long-term implications that matter.

The NHL partnership, unlike the NBA's, isn't exclusive, meaning it can pursue deals with other casinos and gaming interests. A recent Nielsen Sports study estimated the NHL's slice of sports betting could top \$200 million.

Also, the MGM contract won't preclude individual NHL teams from striking deals with gambling entities. MGM sponsors the Vegas Golden Knights, owns part of their home arena and maintains gambling kiosks inside.

The Golden Knights also recently did a sponsorship deal with William Hill, which controls more than 100 sports books in Nevada. William Hill also announced a sponsorship with the New Jersey Devils last month that includes a sports lounge where fans can bet on a company app from inside that team's arena.

Depending on how lucrative those deals become, it could create a significant advantage for teams in gambling-friendly states. And perhaps a greater push to get legislation changed elsewhere.

"I think the key is how much money will be made from those new deals," Fordham sports-business director Conrad said. "And if we see that it's a lot of revenue, there could be more of a push to allow that."

Conrad noted New Jersey's sports-betting landscape has "exceeded expectations" in just a few months since it was legalized. And if teams elsewhere start raking in gambling cash, it's only a matter of time before those situated here start pushing to level the playing field.

Seattle Times LOADED: 11.06.2018

1114022 St Louis Blues

Blues are at low point, Allen says

By Tom Timmermann St. Louis Post-Dispatch

This is Jake Allen's sixth season with the Blues, so he's seen a lot.

"Unfortunately, we're at the bottom here," he said. Monday. "Rock bottom probably basically for us in the last ... ever since I've been here. We've got to dig deep to find our way out."

For the second time this season, the Blues are trying to climb out of a big hole. They lost to Columbus 7-4 on Oct. 25 and responded with two wins. Just when it looked like they may have turned a corner came Saturday's 5-1 loss to Minnesota, a game in which they were outshot 45-16.

"We've just got to be more consistent in our game," Allen said. "We got down a couple goals there last game and we sort of just took our foot off the gas. I thought we had two great games before that, building something here, building some positivity, some fun, a great environment. And we let the wheels fall off there last game."

"Last game shouldn't be something we're proud of. Obviously it's a disappointing effort for us, especially at home. We've got to find it here. There's really no more answers, and no more questions, and no more talking."

"We have to make sure this is not a big step back," Blues coach Mike Yeo said. "That's the thing for us: We were trending, we were going in the right direction. Obviously we laid an egg there, let's not kid ourselves, that was a bad one. Now where are we after that is what I'm anxious to see. Are we still trending in the right direction or are we starting from ground zero again?"

And finding the solution, Allen said, won't be easy.



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"It's going to be a process," he said. "It really is. We put ourselves in a spot where we're really going to have to grind and find a way to get points. ... It's going to be a really complicated math problem and we've just got to find a way to study and get into it and get out of it. Honestly, it's the same answer you guys have probably been hearing, but it's the ones we really need to look ourselves in the mirror and get done."

THE SCHENN QUESTION

Center Brayden Schenn, who missed the third period against Minnesota on Saturday, didn't practice Monday. Yeo said he was too sore to take part because of an upper-body injury suffered in the game and he was a question mark for the game with Carolina.

Whether the lines in practice hold for game day is uncertain, but Yeo had rookie Robert Thomas centering Robby Fabbri and David Perron. He also said they wanted to get Ivan Barbashev back into action. If Thomas moves up, for what would be his ninth game, Barbashev could be centering the fourth line.

The Blues had set Thursday as the date for defenseman Robert Bortuzzo to be re-examined for coming off injured reserve, but Yeo said he hadn't started skating again, so his return could be a bit further off.

BLUENOTES

Allen on the shot disparity on Saturday, where he faced 45 and Devan Dubnyk of Minnesota faced 16: "My job's to stop the puck, whether I get 100 or 10. So, I didn't stop enough." ... The Blues gave up one goal or less in four of their final 10 games last season. In their first 12 games of this season, they've given up one goal or less once, in their 4-1 win at Toronto. They've given up at least three in every other game this season.

St Louis Post Dispatch LOADED: 11.06.2018

1114023 St Louis Blues

Preview: Blues vs. Hurricanes

By Jim Thomas St. Louis Post-Dispatch 5 hrs ago

blues. vs. hurricanes

When, where • 7 p.m. Tuesday, Enterprise Center

TV, radio • Fox Sports Midwest, KMOX (1120 AM)

About the Hurricanes • After missing the postseason for the ninth straight season, Carolina (6-6-2) has a new GM (Don Waddell) and a new coach (Rod Brind'Amour). Brind'Amour was a first-round draft pick by the Blues in 1988. After a 4-0-1 start, the Hurricanes have since gone 2-6-1 and are winless in their last four contests (0-3-1).

Carolina puts plenty of shots on goal, leading the league with an average of 41.8 a game. They just don't put many in the net, ranking 26th in scoring through Sunday with 2.71 goals a game. Winger Micheal Ferland, acquired in a draft weekend trade from Calgary, has a team-high seven goals; Jordan Staal has five goals. Goalie Petr Mrazek is expected to miss the game with a groin injury.

St Louis Post Dispatch LOADED: 11.06.2018

1114024 St Louis Blues

Blues look for ways to get Schwartz going

By Tom Timmermann St. Louis Post-Dispatch

The list of maladies afflicting the Blues this season is long and not very hard to assemble. (There is not a place in the modern hockey world where 3.92 goals allowed per game, which is what the Blues are at right now, is a positive sign.) But amid all that has gone wrong so far, there's one thing that is both unexpected and uncharacteristic: The quiet of Jaden Schwartz.

Schwartz has been, over the course of his years with the Blues, one of the team's most dependable players, an engine that drives the team both offensively and defensively with his relentless puck pursuit and steady two-way play. Last season, it was the unexpected departure of Schwartz that derailed the Blues' season. The team was sailing along until he took a puck off the skate in Detroit and missed 20 games. At the time, he had 14 goals and 21 assists in 30 games and was plus-23. The team's offense never recovered.

This season, Schwartz has played in all but two of the team's first 12 games — he took another puck off his skate — and something has been missing. After having assists in two of the Blues' first three games, he has one goal and one assist in the seven games since he has returned from the injury. He's minus-4 in those seven games and for the first time since his first season in the league, his Corsi percentage is below 50 (though by a hair's breadth), meaning the Blues are less likely to have possession of the puck when Schwartz is on the ice. He knows something is missing and he knows what it means.

"I haven't been playing my best," Schwartz said Monday. "There were flashes of it, certain games have been better than others, but consistently, I think my game isn't where it needs to be at. Obviously I can try to work on getting some momentum that way and helping us win games."

And with the Blues having sunk back into their early season quicksand with Saturday's 5-1 loss to Minnesota, the revival of Schwartz, who last season had seven goals (including a hat trick) and seven assists after 10 games, is essential.

"You can put your finger on a few things," Schwartz said. "I think puck touches haven't been there, not enough zone time. That's a key factor, making plays when they're there. Sometimes you're overthinking a little too much. When things aren't going in, you might be gripping it a little bit. I've been in this situation before and you go through these different phases throughout the year and hopefully I can climb out of it here."

The track record of Schwartz says he will climb out of it. Since he became an NHL regular in 2013-14, his points per game has been at least 0.67 over a season, and right now he's at 0.40. His shooting percentage is 4.8 percent, well off his career number of 13.4. The Blues just have to find a way to shake him loose.

"Obviously we need Schwartzie to be involved in the offense the way we know he's capable of," Blues coach Mike Yeo said. "I think confidence is a big part of it for Schwartzie right now. You can tell that he's pressing. You can see it in his game. He tries so hard out there. He puts so much effort into every shift that he plays that I think he's grinding mentally. It will come, I'm not worried about Schwartzie."

To try to get Schwartz on track, the Blues plan to play him alongside Ryan O'Reilly, who has been the team's best center so far this season and has a seven-game point streak, on Tuesday against Carolina. (That move was made easier by Brayden Schenn being questionable for the game with an upper body injury.) They also plan a power-play tweak that would put the puck on his stick more.



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"Let's try to surround him with players that can get him the feel and the confidence in his game that will help him produce, because effort-wise it's never a question with him," Yeo said. "O'Rei has been one of the biggest positives in his play. He's very quietly going about his business. Every day he comes to the rink, he's very prepared, mentally, he's got the right frame of mind going onto the ice. That's why he's having success. Being around that is not going to hurt him now."

If anyone is going to fight their way through it, it will be Schwartz.

"I've been through this before," he said. "When pucks aren't going in, you seem to grip it a little bit and things aren't bouncing your way. Mentally you have to stay with it and try to work on a few things and make a couple adjustments. I don't ever like to let my work ethic deviate. I like to always keep that, but I still think offensively ... there are different holes I can jump or more plays that can be made. I'm not a flashy player, so I think I have to keep it simple and be harder on the puck and be around the net. I think that's where I score most of my goals."

As for most of the Blues, the Minnesota game was a tough one for Schwartz, who had no shots on goal for the second time this season after having 14 over the previous five games, including his only goal.

"Last game there wasn't much," Yeo said, "but I'd say a couple games before that it looked like things were trending in the right direction. It wasn't going in the net for him, but he was generating a number of opportunities and usually that comes first and then, all of a sudden you break through the ice and things start flowing the right way. That's where we've got to get him to. It's hard for him, right now, to feel good about playing good, just to feel good about getting and generating scoring chances. But that's really what he's got to do."

St Louis Post Dispatch LOADED: 11.06.2018

1114025 St Louis Blues

Blues' Schenn a question mark for Tuesday's game with sore upper body

By Tom Timmermann St. Louis Post-Dispatch

Center Brayden Schenn, who didn't play in the third period of Saturday's game with Minnesota, was absent from the Blues' practice on Monday, which needless to say casts doubt on his availability for Tuesday's game with Carolina.

"He was too sore today to practice," coach Mike Yeo said. "So obviously he'll be a question mark for tomorrow."

Schenn played in the first two periods against Minnesota, but went to the dressing room early in the third without ever stepping on the ice. Yeo said it was an upper body injury that Schenn sustained in the game on Saturday.

The Blues had said that defenseman Robert Bortuzzo would be out for two weeks, which would be on Thursday, but Yeo said Bortuzzo hadn't resumed skating yet, so his return might be further down the road.

With Schenn out, the Blues have to rearrange their lines, though that seemed inevitable in the wake of Saturday's 5-1 clubbing from the Wild. Schenn has usually been paired with Jaden Schwartz, but with Schenn possibly out and Schwartz struggling since his return from a foot injury, it looks like the Blues will use Schwartz on a line centered by Ryan O'Reilly. Yeo also said the team will look to alter its power play to get Schwartz more touches.

"O'ri has been one of the biggest positives," Yeo said. "His play, going about his business, every day he's been very prepared, in the right frame of mind, having success. Having that around (Schwartz) is not going to hurt him now."

It also looks like the Blues will be getting Ivan Barbashev back in the lineup.

So here's what the lines looked like in practice on Monday, keeping in mind that Schenn was out and, if he's good to go on Tuesday, the team will no doubt try to find a way to fit him in:

Schwartz-O'Reilly-Tarassenko

Fabbri-Thomas-Perron

Sanford-Bozak-Steen

Maroon-Barbashev-Sundqvist

Defensive pairings were a bit more vague, though Carl Gunnarsson seemed to be paired with Alex Pietrangelo a lot and Vince Dunn with Colton Parayko.

"We're looking to get a good feel," Yeo said. "It's one thing to tell the players to go in and play with more confidence, go in and play more assertive. Sometimes we have to try and help them do that as well. I think the lines we had today made sense."

St Louis Post Dispatch LOADED: 11.06.2018

1114026 St Louis Blues

From goaltending to GM: Five reasons the Blues are hovering just above the NHL's basement

By Jeremy Rutherford Nov 5, 2018

It's common for NHL coaches to stick up for others in the fraternity, especially when their clubs are reeling, but after Columbus dealt the Blues a 7-4 defeat on Oct. 25, Blue Jackets coach John Tortorella went out of his way to do so.

When asked about the win being extra gratifying because the Blues were a desperate team, Tortorella said this to reporters: "That's a good team. That's a good coaching staff over there. I know there are some struggles ... That's going to be a really good hockey team before it's all said and done."

Not soon enough for many Blues fans, who wondered that night how long the coaching staff would be allowed to stick around. But the club responded with back-to-back wins over Chicago and Vegas, scoring a dozen goals in the process, and while it might not have convinced everyone that changes aren't inevitable, there were signs of traction.

On Saturday, however, in a 5-1 defeat at Enterprise Center in which the Blues managed only 16 shots on goal, it was confirmed that they're undoubtedly stuck in their tracks.

"It's disappointing because you felt like you were kind of starting to make some traction, starting to build something and then obviously a step back today," Blues coach Mike Yeo said. "We'll re-examine and figure out how we can make sure that this isn't too far of a step back."

The Blues were off Sunday, so we decided to do our own examination as to why they are hovering just above the NHL's basement with 11 points, tied for the fourth-lowest in the league. There are plenty of reasons for their 4-5-3 record, but we found five



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in particular. From the goaltending to the GM, here they are in no particular order ...

Allen must be better

Let's first agree that Jake Allen is a hot-button topic and most everyone has taken a stance on the Blues' starting goalie — either it's his fault or it's not all his fault — and aren't likely to budge. But that doesn't mean we can't take a balanced look at the situation and see how much of the blame he should bear.

Remember what some of us, including myself, were saying before the season? If not, let me remind you. Allen didn't get much offensive support last season and should benefit from a new-and-improved group of forwards. It won't help him keep the puck out of his own net, we said, but with more scoring punch on the other end of the ice, he will be less under the gun.

That has not held true. The Blues are currently fourth in the NHL in goals per game (3.5) and Allen's goals-against average (3.99) and save percentage (.879) are at all-time career lows. He ranks 39th in the league in both categories among goaltenders with at least five appearances this season.

Yes, the Blues have allowed a high frequency of rush attempts and high-danger scoring chances, but according to Naturalstattrick.com, Allen's average of 1.7 rush attempts and 10.3 high-danger chances per 60 minutes ranks 16th- and fifth-most, respectively, among goalies with five games, and yet his high-danger save percentage this season (.734) is 41st.

So Allen hasn't been helped by the team in front of him, but he has delivered at a rate less than every starting goalie and some netminders in tandem or backup roles. And overall, he has allowed three goals or more in 10 of his 11 starts this season, and four goals or more in six of his 11 appearances. It's simply not enough from a 28-year-old with 230 games in the league, the fourth-most in franchise history.

Bouwmeester's presence is costly

A common contention regarding Jay Bouwmeester is that the Blues shouldn't have gone five years with the extension he signed in 2013. But the club gave the veteran defenseman that length of term to keep the average annual value (AAV) at \$5.4 million. If the Blues had signed him for fewer years, the AAV would've been higher and a team at the salary-cap ceiling might not have been able to sign someone else.

For a few years Bouwmeester was a reliable player and quality partner for Alex Pietrangelo. Everyone understood the end of the contract might not be pretty, and after hip surgery and turning 35 years old, that's how the last year on his deal has gone, though perhaps a little uglier than expected.

Bouwmeester was on the ice for another three goals allowed in Saturday's loss to Minnesota, and his turnover on the Wild's third goal was a back-breaker. His minus-7 is his worst plus-minus rating in his last seven seasons, and it comes with him averaging the lowest ice time per game of his 17-year career (19:31).

The Blues have allowed 34 even-strength goals in 2018-19, which is tied for the second-most in the league, and Bouwmeester has been on the ice for 15 of the 34. His "Corsi for" percentage, which measures 5-on-5 shots for and against when he's on the ice, is 42.12 percent this season, which ranks 187th among all NHL defensemen who have played five games.

In addition, Bouwmeester has been on the ice for 4.61 even-strength goals against per 60 minutes, which is the eighth-worst mark in the NHL among defensemen with five games. To be fair, Pietrangelo has a 5.17 goals against per 60, which is the worst mark in the league, but could be, in part, connected to his ice time with Bouwmeester.

After being a healthy scratch in Toronto on Oct. 20, Bouwmeester was placed in the third defensive pairing for two games, but he has been back in the top unit with Pietrangelo the past three games. In more than 90 minutes together this season, Pietrangelo's "Corsi for" with Bouwmeester is 43.3 percent, which is his lowest total with any defensive partner.

Bouwmeester is still a serviceable defenseman, but must be used only for depth purposes.

Leadership questions linger

The Blues' leadership hasn't been good for a couple years, and the fact that it's still an issue after the Blues spent the summer trying to improve it by bringing in players who could support the captains is very concerning.

The club is in its third season with Pietrangelo wearing the "C" and Alexander Steen and Vladimir Tarasenko among those with an "A," and while all three are important to the team, the accountability remains absent.

It is perhaps the hardest part of covering a professional sports team, assessing what kind of leader a player is on the ice and behind closed doors, but you don't have to be in a uniform to notice that the Blues lack the killer instinct needed in the NHL, answers for anything after a loss and rarely stick up for one another.

It's true that the image of captains has changed over the years — gone are the days of Brian Sutter taking exception to everything — but it's still fair to say that the players take on the personality of their leaders. And while there's a lot of tough talk in the locker room, there's little to back it up in the form of relentless play or an attitude of "enough is enough."

Is Pietrangelo a good captain? Many around the organization say that he means well, but higher-ups have said that as a player who's not physical, he needs to deliver dominating performances, and teammates have hinted that while likable, it would behoove him to be "one of the guys" on a more regular basis. Meanwhile, there's Steen, the son of a of an NHL star and a locker-room lifer, who sees leadership differently than Pietrangelo, and then there's Tarasenko, who often beats to his own drum, which has required Steen to step in and keep him in check.

The Blues realize it may not be the right mix, but perhaps the only way to rectify it would be to trade the players and both Pietrangelo and Steen have no-trade clauses. The other way to change the culture was to bring in Brayden Schenn last season and add Ryan O'Reilly, David Perron and Tyler Bozak, who were all leaders on their previous teams, this summer. But 12 games into the season, it's difficult to see any discernible difference in the leadership.

Yeo's record trending downward

Yeo took over for Ken Hitchcock in 2017 and has coached 126 regular-season games in St. Louis. In his first 63 regular-season games, the Blues went 43-16-4 (.714 points-percentage), and in his last 63 regular-season games, they have gone 27-29-7 (.484). The club is 1-1 in two playoff series under Yeo, beating Minnesota in the first round in 2017 and then falling to Nashville; the team did not qualify last season.

In Yeo's second full season, the Blues are sitting second to last in the Western Conference standings, just above the L.A. Kings, who fired coach John Stevens on Sunday. Many fans are calling for the same to happen with Yeo, but is it the right move?

I have no problem wondering aloud if Yeo has been on the job long enough, or whether his shortcomings are solely behind the Blues' lack of success. Part of me believes that Yeo hasn't had a fair shake, and my support for that is I don't believe the problems plaguing this roster would be resolved if Alain Vigneault or whomever was behind the bench. Would Allen stop more pucks?



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Would Bouwmeester find the "Fountain of Youth?" Would Pietrangelo be a better captain?

But the trend with Yeo's points-percentage can't be ignored, and while Bouwmeester might not be able to turn back the clock, a new coach may take him off the top pair. It's mind-boggling how the Blues are almost trying to press their luck playing Bouwmeester with Pietrangelo, only to demote him when disaster strikes in-game, as they did again Saturday.

Some areas have improved under Yeo, particularly a power-play unit that has jumped to No. 3 in the NHL (31.3 percent) this season from No. 30 last year (15.4 percent). But it's those other decisions, and his inability to publicly identify what's ailing the Blues — "no, no reason, not right now, that's our job to find that out," he said after Saturday's loss — that make many wonder if he has the answers.

Yeo may have some of them, but he may not have enough time to see if they work.

Armstrong not innocent

Let's start with this: Blues general manager Doug Armstrong isn't going anywhere. He signed a four-year contract extension last December, and owner Tom Stillman has been satisfied overall with Armstrong's track record, which included six straight trips to the postseason before the streak ended last season.

But that doesn't mean Armstrong should not face the fire. After all, it was the GM who hired Yeo, picked the captain and signed the starting goalie.

Armstrong named Yeo as the Blues' coach-in-waiting in June 2016, eight months before firing Hitchcock. Perhaps Yeo, who had a regular-season record of 173-132-44 and a playoff mark of 11-17 in five seasons with Minnesota, would have been Armstrong's guy anyway. But in signing Yeo to a three-year contract to take over for Hitchcock, the Blues were out of the market when Florida fired Gerard Gallant in January 2017 and when Arizona and Dave Tippett parted ways in June 2017. Gallant was later hired by Vegas and won the Jack Adams Award last year after taking the Golden Knights to the Stanley Cup finals, and Tippett has since been tabbed to run Seattle's new expansion franchise.

(Jeremy Rutherford/The Athletic)

Furthermore, think about the two areas that have held the Blues back this season: Allen and the defense.

It was Armstrong who, with one year left in Allen's deal in 2016, signed the goalie to a four-year extension at \$4.35 million AAV, taking him through the 2020-21 season. The GM has successfully rid the club of long-term contracts with Jori Lehtera, Patrik Berglund and Vladimir Sobotka, but Allen is viewed as untradeable. Secondly, the problems on defense could be traced back to the carousel of assistant coaches. After deciding to bring Hitchcock back in 2016 and hire Yeo as his successor, Armstrong lost longtime defensive assistant Brad Shaw to Columbus, and the Blues haven't had any continuity in that position since, with three coaches (Rick Wilson, Darryl Sydor and Mike Van Ryn) in the last three years.

Armstrong was universally lauded for a great offseason, and for good reason, but so far the moves haven't materialized into team success. He could fire Yeo at any moment, but his hands would still be all over this mess.

St Louis Post Dispatch LOADED: 11.06.2018

1113904 Chicago Blackhawks

The anatomy of a players-only meeting and what...

Justin Bourne

From the outside looking in at most pro hockey teams, there are often realities that analysts and fans can recognize that players and staff just aren't willing to accept (and nor should they). The obvious one is "that team just isn't good enough, it simply doesn't have enough talent to have success this year without getting wildly lucky."

That might get acknowledged by a small group of teammates late at night after a few beers, or admitted in the coaches office, but what are the players supposed to do with that information on a daily basis? Not try? Give up? Seasons are long, and most players who make the highest level of their sport are competitive people who believe they can find a way to surprise, even while wearing the underdog status. If nothing else, there are individual futures at stake, so there's always some goal to earnestly work towards.

On Sunday night the Ottawa Senators were under 40 seconds and one half-stride from a regulation win versus...

Chicago Tribune LOADED: 11.06.2018

1113905 Chicago Blackhawks

Blackhawks, losers of five straight, might want to start playing the 'right way'

Steve Greenberg

When Corey Crawford left the lineup for good last December, the Blackhawks were a top-eight team in the Western Conference with playoff expectations. Their first games without the veteran goalie would come on a road trip to Vancouver, Edmonton and Calgary.

The Hawks lost all three of those games, the start of a monthslong test the team would fail in resounding fashion.

Fast-forward to last week, as the Hawks faced an identical swing through Western Canada. It was a new season with new possibilities. Not to mention a healthy Crawford.

"It's still an important three-game trip for us," coach Joel Quenneville said. "We're playing three teams that are all in the mix, all are improved. They're all younger, and they all have some speed in the lineup, and everybody's playing for the same two points. So let's play the right way ... [with] a real purpose."

It sounded good at the time, anyway.

The Hawks went 0-3 against the Canucks, Oilers and Flames again, blowing excellent opportunities to win two of those games in the process. Their hot start to the season is but a faded memory. On a five-game losing streak in all, the Hawks, who don't play again until Thursday against the Hurricanes at the United Center, clearly are being tested — where is that red pen? — once more.

Barely a month into a season that came with relatively modest expectations, the Hawks are up against it in at least a few ways.

Puck possession: The Hawks have been up and down in this area, with some pretty unbelievable clunkers mixed in. Take the 5-3 defeat in Calgary, in which they were outshot 41-15 and lost a 3-1 lead. It's hard to stay in front when you can't carry the puck into the attacking zone and can't dial up the intensity to fight as hard as your opponent for loose pucks.

When the going gets tough for the Hawks, they tend to let it snowball.



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"That's our job, to kind of rise above that," Jonathan Toews said before the trip. "We've talked a lot about wanting to be that team that's resilient and sticks with it in games when we're down, especially on the road, that we can find ways to win in ugly games where maybe we're not the dominant team. But it's just one of those things. It builds character, and we've got to stay with it."

Floodgates are open: The Hawks' 3.73 goals allowed per game was fifth-highest in the league. After an impressively stingy start, Crawford has allowed 14 goals in his last three outings. How much of that is about the shoddy defense being played in front of him? How much of it is Crawford being slow to adjust to the grind of a season after nearly 10 months out of action?

The Central: In arguably the deepest and best division in the NHL, the Hawks are one spot better than where they finished last season. In other words, they're in sixth place — one spot up from the bottom.

How much ground have they lost in the standings since their last victory, which came Oct. 25 against the Rangers? Entering Monday, the first-place Predators had padded their lead over the Hawks by five points. The Wild and Stars likewise had outpointed the Hawks by five, the Jets by three and the Avalanche by two. And all of those teams had played fewer than five games.

Chicago Sun Times LOADED: 11.06.2018

1113906 Chicago Blackhawks

If Blackhawks are going to get better, forwards must commit to defense

Barry Rozner

Joel Quenneville gave the Blackhawks Sunday and Monday off.

One can only assume he sent them home and asked them to think about how to keep the puck out of their own net.

And that's not on Corey Crawford, who's been terrific.

You can talk all you want about anything else that ails a hockey team -- any hockey team -- but if you don't limit quality scoring chances and give your goaltender some help, the rest of it really doesn't matter.

Gary Bettman will dream about 6-5 games until he locks out the players again, but every coach of every team will continue to focus on how to keep the puck out of their own net.

This was the way it was when the game was invented and this is how the game is today.

Don't believe for a moment that Quenneville views it any other way.

It's the one thing you have control over on the ice. How you play in your own end, notwithstanding the obvious bad breaks or bounces, is the only certainty.

Your offense will be what it's going to be. It comes and goes. Your stars have to be your stars and when they're not right on a given night, you'll struggle to score.

That's the NHL in the salary cap era.

But defense gives you a chance to win consistently and that's a 200-foot equation that involves every player on the ice.

Since it's the most recent example, let's take the Hawks' 5-3 loss in Calgary Saturday night.

The Hawks were up 3-1 late in the second period when Brandon Manning stepped into the puck carrier just over the blue line.

The Hawks still had numbers, but Travis Hamonic made a nice pass and Matt Tkachuk made an even better shot.

Maybe Henri Jokiharju was a fraction late moving over to fill for Manning, but he still got to the shooter and the Hawks had two forwards back to pick up the trailers.

Hard to find fault here, so credit the Flames. Fine. Up 3-2 going to the third.

"Tough one end of the second period," Quenneville said after the game. "We're still in good shape."

But Calgary came out on fire in the third and at one point was outshooting the Hawks 17-1. The total for the third finished at 20-4.

"We had the puck (in the Calgary end) a lot with opportunities to keep it and we weren't neat enough," Quenneville said, "and then all of a sudden it's going the other way when we had perfect possession of it."

Defense is played in all three zones and it's not just possessing it, but having numbers on the correct side of the puck if you turn it over.

You can be on wrong side of the puck in the offensive zone, the neutral zone or your own zone. Any of those mistakes can lead to scoring chances against.

Even with the Hawks being outshot badly, they were still up 3-2 with 6 minutes left when Marcus Kruger seemed to have the puck bottled up in the neutral zone along the boards.

But Andreas Martinsen was on the wrong side of Kruger and Alex Fortin, who was even with Kruger, didn't take a step back toward his own end until it was too late.

The result was a sudden 3-on-2 for Calgary and a pretty passing play that led to the tying goal.

"We gave up a play ... getting beat a little bit with the depth of our third guy," Quenneville said. "It was kind of an innocent neutral zone play. Next thing you know they get an odd-man break and they make a nice play."

A minute later, Artem Anisimov tipped a beauty past Crawford for an own goal and the Hawks were down with 5 minutes remaining.

With a minute left in the game and on the power play with a 6-on-4 advantage, the Hawks couldn't manage a decent entry and gave up an empty netter.

So as much as they weren't the better team Saturday, and had to play the whole game without Duncan Keith -- who was tossed on a questionable major 2 minutes into the contest -- they had the lead on the road with 6 minutes left and lost 5-3.

You could make a case that the last 3 goals were preventable with a bit more effort and better attention to detail, which is always tough at the end of a road trip and with three games in four nights.

Fatigue will do that to players and that's precisely when you have to rely on what you've been taught, what coaches constantly preach.

"Putting it all together is playing the right way," Quenneville said. "Good habits seem to erode at critical times. That's what we have to improve."

"We have to play right from start to finish. You have to want the puck and you have to want to be out there."

So you can argue about the depth of the defense, the lines -- especially the third and fourth lines -- the lineup changes, what the stars need to do offensively or find flaws in the roster.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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None of that matters if the forwards don't play smart defensive hockey in all three zones and help the defense and their goaltender.

That's what cost the Hawks the game Saturday night. That's why they're winless in five.

And that's what they'll be talking about at practice Tuesday morning.

Daily Herald Times LOADED: 11.06.2018

1113907 Chicago Blackhawks

Is it time for Blackhawks to call up Dylan Sikura?

By Charlie Roumeliotis November 05, 2018

The Blackhawks hit the one-month mark of the season on Sunday and find themselves outside of a playoff spot with a 6-6-3 record (15 points). They've dropped five in a row (0-4-1) after starting the season 6-2-2, and have scored only six goals in their past four games.

Despite having 46 goals on the season, which ranks sixth in the NHL, the Blackhawks' 3.07 goals-per-game average is 18th and they've gotten 59 percent of their scoring from three players: Patrick Kane (11), Alex DeBrincat (8) and Jonathan Toews (8). The depth scoring simply hasn't been there and the top line with DeBrincat and Toews has dried up a bit offensively, scoring a combined five goals in their last 10 games following a scorching start where they combined for 11 goals in their first five contests.

That said, is it time for the Blackhawks to call up top forward prospect Dylan Sikura?

Through 12 games in the American Hockey League, he leads the Rockford IceHogs with 10 points (four goals, six assists) and 44 shots on goal. He scored his second goal in his past three games on Sunday, which was a back-to-back-to-back stretch.

This is about the time where the Blackhawks felt they had seen enough from Nick Schmaltz in 2016-17, when he got sent to Rockford for a month to gain confidence and fine-tune his game. Schmaltz compiled nine points (six goals, three assists) and registered 32 shots on goal in 12 games, earning him a call-up to Chicago.

It took Vinnie Hinostroza 22 games for the Blackhawks to bring him to the big club last season, but that was in large part because of roster numbers and not having the ability to assign a player to Rockford without having to go through the waiver process.

Both Hinostroza and Schmaltz came back different players and, most importantly, they haven't been back in the AHL since.

That's what the Blackhawks are hoping to accomplish with Sikura.

The Blackhawks won't call up Sikura if he's not quite ready, even if he may be the best and quickest solution to their secondary scoring problems. They want him to stay in Rockford for as long as he needs to until he's ready to return to the NHL full-time and be confident in his game and the system.

If that's right now, you do it. If it's not, you wait patiently and continue to tinker with the lines you have now. Because once Sikura is called up, the goal is for him to stay up.

Fortunately for the Blackhawks, the answer appears to be closer to the former than the latter.

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 11.06.2018

1113908 Chicago Blackhawks

Powers: It's time for the Blackhawks to recall Dylan Sikura, load up offensively

By Scott Powers Nov 5, 2018

Opponents are going to create chances, and they're going to score some goals.

The Blackhawks' defense is what it is. None of this is a complete surprise, as my colleague Mark Lazerus recently pointed out.

The Blackhawks are already in the bottom half of the league per 60 minutes in shots against, scoring chances against, high-danger chances against and goals against in 5-on-5 play. In all situations, they're allowing 3.68 goals per 60 minutes, fifth worst in the league.

That probably isn't going to improve unless the Blackhawks make some serious moves. They have eight players in the top 50 in high-danger scoring chances against per 60 minutes in 5-on-5 play. Luke Johnson and Brandon Manning aren't on that list, but they're both among the top 15 players with the worst goals-against rate per 60 minutes in 5-on-5 play.

This is a team that wears down, too. They've had three games this season where they led by two goals and didn't win in regulation. They've allowed 21 goals in the third period, which is tied for third worst in the NHL.

Corey Crawford's return certainly makes the Blackhawks a better team, but he isn't going to be their savior if they play this way. They're giving up a lot of goals even with Crawford still among the best goalies in the league facing high-danger chances. He's 13th in the league with an 83.33 high-danger save percentage. On the other hand, he's 32nd in the league with a 90.68 save percentage in 5-on-5 play and 33rd in goals saved above average at minus-2.57.

So, what to do? The Blackhawks need to load up on offense and play to outscore teams.

Over the last 10 games, the Blackhawks have tallied 15 goals in 5-on-5 play, and five of those have come from Patrick Kane. They've averaged 1.93 goals per 60 minutes in 5-on-5 play in that span, which is 24th in the NHL.

On top of that, the power play has somehow taken a step back from last season. They're 27th in the league with a 14.0 percent success rate on the power play and 26th at 5.01 goals for per 60 minutes, and they're only that good because they've scored three of their seven goals on 5-on-3 or 6-on-4 power plays. In just 5-on-4 power play situations, they're 30th at 2.59 goals for per 60 minutes.

The first step toward improving their 5-on-5 and power play production is calling up Dylan Sikura. It's time for him to come back. He's still one of their elite prospects, and he's shown enough with the Rockford IceHogs that he can at least help the Blackhawks offensively.

Sikura hasn't lit up the AHL with points — he has four goals and six assists in 12 games — but he's been good enough and shown he can definitely create chances. He's tied for third in the league with 44 shots on net. He's had four or more shots on goal in half of his games. Plus, all four of his goals have come in 5-on-5 play too.

Sikura hasn't been a defensive liability either and may help the Blackhawks there. He's been on the ice for eight goals for and three goals against in 5-on-5 play. His 72.73 goals for percentage is second best on the IceHogs.



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Sikura could instantly help the Blackhawks' power play in two areas. For one, he has been aggressive shooting. He's a dual-threat winger, but he'll take his shots. The Blackhawks don't take enough shots on the power play as they are last in the league in shot attempts per 60 minutes. Secondly, Sikura can carry the puck, and, as The Athletic's Tyler Dellow broke down recently, entries have been an issue for the Blackhawks.

The Blackhawks may even want to consider calling up Victor Edjell and Anthony Louis, two more offensive players with the IceHogs. Edjell can be hit or miss, but he's got a big shot, can create (he set up Sikura in the above video) and probably could help the Blackhawks on the power play too. Louis has produced at every level and is tied for ninth in the AHL with six goals. He led the IceHogs with 44 points last season. They could be offensive upgrades from what the Blackhawks currently have on their roster. Once Gustav Forsling is healthy again — he has a minor groin injury — he should probably be called up too.

The Blackhawks may have to make some tough decisions on whom to sit or even send to Rockford, but they have to get more production throughout their lineup. Kane, Jonathan Toews and Alex DeBrincat have accounted for 15 of the Blackhawks' 29 goals in 5-on-5 play. No one else has more than two goals. Among the forwards, John Hayden, David Kampf and Dominik Kahun have one goal each in 5-on-5 play, and Luke Johnson, Chris Kunitz, Andreas Martinsen and Nick Schmaltz have none.

Blackhawks coach Joel Quenneville may preach playing responsible and this may be against what he believes in, but his team likely has too many defensive faults to win consistently as is and it doesn't appear correctable by coaching. This is more than a bad recent trend; it's been ongoing for the last few seasons.

The Blackhawks need to embrace what they are defensively and attempt to counter it offensively. It's probably their optimal route if they're going to have true success this season.

The Athletic LOADED: 11.06.2018

1113922 Detroit Red Wings

How soon before Detroit Red Wings prospect Filip Zadina joins team?

Helene St. James, Nov. 5, 2018

Good news on the Detroit Red Wings prospect front: Forward Filip Zadina seems to be finding his scoring touch at the AHL level.

Zadina scored twice for the Grand Rapids Griffins on Sunday night to give him three points in the last two games. Overall, he has four goals and three assists for seven points in 11 games. In the 8-4 victory over the Cleveland Monsters, Zadina scored the game-tying and the final goals, the latter coming off a two-on-one with Givani Smith that ended with Zadina skating the puck all the way to Cleveland's net.

"I was real happy to see him on the score sheet," Wings coach Jeff Blashill said Monday. "I think confidence is one of the biggest factors because of how close everyone is in success. For him to score can only help feed that confidence."

It's a good step for Zadina, who was assigned to the Griffins after struggling through his first pro training camp with the Wings. Selected sixth overall in June's draft, Zadina appealed because of his ability to score — he had 44 goals and 38 assists for 82 points in 57 games last season in the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League. Like a lot of 18-year-olds, Zadina had a hard time showing off that

skill set in his first go-around at the NHL level, because the game is so much faster.

Blashill hadn't talked to Griffins coach Ben Simon when the Wings practiced Monday, but earlier reports indicate Zadina still has much to learn about pro hockey.

"He's got a long way to go, the maturity part of the game, to make sure that when he is not scoring, that he is still a real complete player," Blashill said. "He hasn't scored tons down there and when you don't score, all of a sudden you start probably cheating a little bit for offense, similar to what happened to us through that stretch with Montreal and Boston. He has to play the right way and the points will come from playing good defense. I just think it's a maturation process and we're certainly not in any rush. As an organization, we want to do what is best for him in his development, and right now that's to let him stay down there and keep working."

So what would it take for the Wings to give Zadina a call?

"For me it would be when he is dominating the level he is at," Blashill said. "I don't think there's any reason to have a young guy come up if he's not yet dominating the level — we try hard not to do that because generally that doesn't work out. We like to use the words: look like you don't belong. If he looks like he doesn't belong, if he's that much better than everyone else on the ice, that's when he should come up."

"When is that going to be? Who knows."

The Wings at least have the option to call up Zadina this season. He was eligible to be sent to the AHL because he was on loan from his Czech team to Halifax; normally a player with junior eligibility will either have to make the NHL team, or be sent to his junior team (that's the case with Michael Rasmussen, for example).

"It's a huge advantage," Blashill said. "I think sometimes the rule that is in place can hurt some certain players at different times because either you have to force them to stay up, or they have to go down to a level maybe that they've dominated. Once you've dominated a level, lots of times it's time to move on."

"The thing I would say about any young player that goes down there is, I generally think they think it's going to be easier than it is. The American league is a very, very, very hard league. It's a bigger step from junior to the American league than it is from the American league to the NHL. So I think it is a huge advantage that he is able to play in Grand Rapids."

The Griffins as a whole are doing better, having won three of their last four games. They started the season 1-4 but then most of their defense (Filip Hronek, Joe Hicketts, Libor Sulak) was with the Wings at that time.

Detroit Free Press LOADED: 11.06.2018

1113923 Detroit Red Wings

Wings prospect Filip Zadina 'has a long way to go,' despite offensive outburst

Ted Kulfan, Nov. 5, 2018

Detroit — If you keep tabs on the Grand Rapids Griffins, you probably noticed an interesting development in Sunday's 8-4 victory over Cleveland.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Filip Zadina scored two goals in the game, igniting discussion on social media about when, or how quickly, the Red Wings' No. 6 pick overall in June's draft will arrive in the NHL.

Judging by coach Jeff Blashill's comments after Monday's practice, don't hold your breath.

"Honestly, he has a long way to go," said Blashill, which isn't surprising when you look at Zadina's body of work in the AHL.

Zadina has four goals on the season, having scored two goals in two different games — meaning he hasn't scored in the other nine.

He has seven points in 11 games (four goals, three assists), and has a team-worse minus-6 rating.

It's safe to say Zadina, 18, is learning the professional game isn't easy.

"Just the maturity part of the game, to make sure when he's not scoring that he's still a real complete player," Blashill said of what Zadina needs to work on. "He hasn't scored tons down there, so when you don't score, all of a sudden you start cheating for offense, similar to what happened through that stretch in Montreal and Boston (for the Wings).

"A young player has to realize he has to play the right way, and points will come from playing good defense.

"I just think it's a maturation process, and we're certainly in no rush as an organization. We want to do what's best for him and his development, and right now that's to stay down there and keep working."

As expected, the adjustment to pro hockey hasn't been smooth for Zadina — just as it hasn't for the vast majority of June's first-round picks who've returned to junior hockey after not sticking with their NHL teams (the Wings' other first-round pick, Joe Veleno, is playing in the Quebec junior league).

Zadina's loan from his European team to junior hockey created a loophole where he was able to be sent to the AHL.

"It's a bigger step going from junior to the American League than it is to go from the AHL to the NHL," Blashill said. "I'll say it, argue it, with anybody. Most people who've gone through that will admit that.

"On a nightly basis there's more players like you," Blashill said of a young player's entrance to the AHL. "When you're better than everyone else, which as you start to matriculate in major junior or college, or whatever level, and you're suddenly much better than the people around you and you can play less than 100 percent and maybe cheat a little bit and have success, as you get into the American League, you're not that much better than people. There's really, really good players there who might be missing one thing or another, or just a little young or guys that were in the NHL and are back, and they're real good players.

"It's similar to what you see in the NHL, where every night the teams are pretty even and players are pretty even and you have to find a way to create a little bit of space and it's hard as it can be to do it."

The Wings often have kept players in the minor leagues until they are excessively ready for the NHL — think Gustav Nyquist, Anthony Mantha and Tyler Bertuzzi. That seems to be the plan with Zadina.

There's certainly no target date for Zadina to come up, and until he shows a more compete game, that is certainly the case.

"Certainly (general manager) Ken (Holland) would make the ultimate decision, but for me personally, until he's dominating the level he's at, there's no reason for a young guy to come up when he's not dominating that level," Blashill said. "We're trying hard not to do that because generally that doesn't work out. Once you're dominating that level — we like to use the words 'look like you don't belong' — once those guys go watch him, or I go watch him, and he doesn't

look like he belongs and he's that much better than everyone else, that's when he should come up.

"When is that? Who knows. That's just the question you can't answer."

Ice chips

Frans Nielsen practiced Monday, and though Blashill said Nielsen hadn't received clearance yet, the feeling was Nielsen would return to the lineup Tuesday against Vancouver. Nielsen had missed the last three games.

Conversely, Andreas Athanasiou only skated on his own before practice, and Blashill was hoping an Athanasiou return later in the week.

...Nyquist was a linemate of Vancouver star rookie Elias Pettersson at the world championships, so he got an up-close look at the odds-on favorite for Rookie of the Year.

"Smart player, a lot of skill, he's had a great start," said Nyquist of Pettersson, who has 15 points (nine goals, six assists) in nine games this season. "He had a good resume, with the way he played in Sweden (MVP of the Swedish pro league), there are still a lot of good players over there, and if you can dominate that league ... but it's impressive what he's done here so far."

Canucks at Red Wings

Faceoff: 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Little Caesars Arena, Detroit

TV/radio: Fox Sports Detroit/97.1 FM

Outlook: The Canucks (9-6-0, 18 points) have been a mild surprise in the West, and have won three consecutive games. ... C Elias Pettersson (15 points) and RW Brock Boeser (four goals, seven assists) could form a potent offensive duo for many years.

Detroit News LOADED: 11.06.2018

1113924 Detroit Red Wings

Red Wings value Tyler Bertuzzi's 'rare combination' of grit, smarts, hands

By Ansar Khan

DETROIT - If you met Tyler Bertuzzi on the street, it wouldn't be difficult to figure out what he does for a living.

"He just looks like a hockey player, with the missing teeth and the long hair," Luke Witkowski said of his Detroit Red Wings teammate.

Bertuzzi is a bit of a throwback, in appearance and style of play. In a league that has gravitated toward speed and finesse, Bertuzzi crashes and bangs like a grinder but has the skill and hockey sense to play on a top line.

"That's what I like the most about him, he's got the rare combination of grit and smarts," Red Wings coach Jeff Blashill said. "A lot of gritty players aren't the smartest cats, and he is. You add that with a set of hands, the only thing he's missing is increased skating. If he could get his skating just a little bit better, he'd be an elite player in this league. It's something he's going to keep working on. But I think the combination of grit, smarts and hands is special."

Bertuzzi, in his first full NHL season, is off to a productive start with five goals and eight points for a team that is struggling for offense heading into Tuesday's game against the Vancouver Canucks at Little Caesars Arena (7:30 p.m., Fox Sports Detroit).



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"On a personal level, of course I'm happy with the way I've been producing offensively," Bertuzzi said. "I think if I can keep doing that and hopefully when we start winning more games, that's when everyone's stats will go up. If we keep winning and buying in as a group, the personal stats will get better."

Bertuzzi wasn't projected as a high-scorer when the Red Wings selected him in the second round, 58th overall, in 2013, after he had produced 19 goals and 39 points in 104 junior games. Then he broke out his final year at Guelph (43 goals, 98 points) and followed with three productive playoff runs for the AHL Grand Rapids Griffins (23 goals, 39 points in 42 games)

"I think there's lots of offense there because the offense in the NHL is around the net, and he's really good around the net and he's got real good poise," Blashill said. "The fact he didn't score much last year, I would say the first part of the year was just kind of feeling his way a little and he scored at the very end and I thought he could have had six more goals without blinking. So, I see that there's going to be offense there. To what level, we'll keep watching."

Bertuzzi benefited from a healthy summer of training, after being hampered by injuries the past couple of seasons.

"I could feel it in training camp and then through the start of the season," Bertuzzi said. "To be healthy all summer was a big thing in my career. It helped me kind of gain strength and get faster and bigger and kind of come into my second year ready to go."

For his style of play, it was important to add strength to his 6-foot, 190-pound frame.

"His body isn't as big or powerful as certain players that he's going to go against, so every summer he can, to push his body to closer to that of his competitors, the elite-type players that he wants to go against, the better chance of him winning those battles, not just with his head, hockey sense or compete, but also with his body," Blashill said.

Said Bertuzzi: "I've always wanted to win those 50-50 battles; I think that's what got me here, working hard and battling for the puck. That's not going to stop."

Red Wings' Jeff Blashill on Canucks rookie Elias Pettersson's strong start

Witkowski described Bertuzzi as hard to play against. That's what this team needs.

"He finishes the body, he's big on the puck, he's got the hands, he's got the shot," Witkowski said. "He's not the most flashy player, but when we need him he's there every day. He works hard in practice, he's a good teammate, a fun guy on the ice."

Blashill called Bertuzzi "The type of player you win with."

"The question is how good?" Blashill said. "Is he a real good complementary player or is he a go-to guy? We're going to keep watching and seeing. I hope he becomes a real good go-to guy."

Injury update: Andreas Athanasiou (leg) skated before practice Monday. The plan is to practice Wednesday and Thursday and hopefully be ready for Friday's game against the Rangers. ... Frans Nielsen practiced again Monday and looks ready to return Tuesday, but Blashill said that won't be determined until then.

Michigan Live LOADED: 11.06.2018

1113925 Detroit Red Wings

Big game from Filip Zadina caps successful weekend for Griffins

By Peter J. Wallner

Filip Zadina had a pair of goals Sunday as the Grand Rapids Griffins capped a successful weekend with a six-goal third period en route to an 8-4 comeback win at Cleveland.

The scoring onslaught was one away from the franchise record for most goals in a period (7 at Chicago on Nov. 27, 2010).

Domink Shine also scored twice as the Griffins, following a shootout loss Friday and win Saturday at home, have extended their point streak to four games and evened their season record to 5-5-0-1.

Zadina, the Detroit Red Wings No. 1 last season (sixth overall), who scored twice in the third - in the slot off a backhand pass from Joe Hicketts to tie the score 4-4, and the final goal when he skated in on a 2-on-1 with Givani Smith and beat the goal on the right side. He was also a team best plus-3 plus/minus.

Zadina's goals were his first since the third game of the season when he also scored twice. He is third on the team in scoring (4-3-7).

The eight goals marked the team's highest-scoring game since it tallied nine at Rockford on Feb. 5, 2016.

Grand Rapids will return to action on Thursday and Saturday as it travels north of the border to face off in a two-game series with the Manitoba Moose. Thursday's game has a start time of 8 p.m. EST, while Saturday's will begin at 7 p.m. EST.

Michigan Live LOADED: 11.06.2018

1113926 Detroit Red Wings

Down Goes Brown weekend power rankings: Will struggling teams follow the Kings and call the coach's coroner?

By Sean McIndoe Nov 5, 2018

Last year, NHL coaches made it to very end of the season before anyone was fired. This year, it took less than one month before a coach was replaced.

Hey, at least NHL GMs are getting better at something.

The first pink slip of season arrived yesterday, with the Kings firing John Stevens and replacing him on an interim basis with Willie Desjardins. The move came as a bit of a surprise; Stevens was only in his second year behind the Kings' bench, had made the playoffs last season, and was coming off of a nice win over the Blue Jackets despite his star goalie being hurt. On the other hand, the Kings are tied for dead last in the league, so nobody can claim to be completely shocked.

We'll get to what this means for the Kings in a bit – spoiler alert, they might show up in the bottom five rankings. But there's a more pressing question: Now that the firing squad has broken the seal, who's next?

We're not exactly short on candidates. When The Athletic rounded up our opening night predictions, ten coaches received votes in the "first fired" category, and Stevens wasn't among them. But Randy Carlyle was. So were Dave Hakstol and Mike Yeo, although with just a single vote each. Jeff Blashill finished second to Guy Boucher. And nobody even cast a vote for Florida's Bob Boughner. (But we did have him ranked third for Coach of the Year honors. We might need a mulligan on that one.)



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • November 6, 2018

There are plenty of names in play, although some of them are safer than others. But you wonder if seeing the Kings make a move this early turns up the heat on other struggling teams. If the Kings run off a few wins to get back into the playoff picture, it might get awfully tough to preach patience.

That's a topic of particular interest to the league's bottom-feeders. But first, let's get to the top five, which inconveniently features way more than five teams with a solid case this week. Will I be able to sort it all out? Not really, no, but read on.

Road to the Cup

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

We're into November, which in theory means the top five should be getting fairly stable. We'll have some movement each week, and maybe even the occasional team moving in or out of the list, but for the most part we should all be settling in on the same page. One big happy family, am I right?

Oh wait, I'm told I have some reader feedback, let me just crack that open ...

PUT THE ISLANDERS IN THE TOP FIVE YOU COWARD

— ASHER SMITH (@ASHER_E_SMITH) NOVEMBER 4, 2018

Huh. OK, maybe we're not all on the same page just yet.

First things first: despite last week's throat-clearing, the Carolina Hurricanes didn't make the grade after all. Three losses in three games will do that. I'm not saying I jinxed them by writing that we all needed to "[s]tart mentally preparing yourself now for a world where the Carolina Hurricanes are considered one of the very best teams in the NHL," but if they go 0-and-68 the rest of the way, I'm going to feel just a little bit responsible.

That said, there is opportunity for some new blood in this week's top five. With teams like the Jets, Sharks, Bruins and Penguins all wobbling, maybe it's time to get just a little bit crazy.

5. Calgary Flames (9-5-1, +2) – Like I said ... a little crazy.

Look, I'm not sure the Flames will be here at any other point this season. I'm far from convinced they deserve to be here now. These are the guys who got speedbagged by the Penguins just over a week ago. But they've won four straight, including some impressive outings against the Leafs and Avalanche. Their underlying numbers are good. They're basically unstoppable in the third period. They're in first place in a bad division and are tied for top spot in the league in goals scored.

Should all that be enough? In a typical year, maybe not. But with just about everyone apart from the top two teams looking decidedly iffy, it's enough to get the Flames in for now. I called them one of my most confusing team in the offseason and they're not doing much to make me feel wrong.

4. Winnipeg Jets (8-5-1, +3) – An overseas split against the Panthers is a minor disappointment, but I'm going to keep them in the top five based on Patrik Laine heating up again. They've been alternating wins and losses for six straight and we've seen these midseason trips to Europe do funny things to teams. I'm betting the Jets head in the opposite direction and finally start firing on all cylinders. But I could be wrong. Honestly, I kind of hate this week's top five, can you tell?

3. Toronto Maple Leafs (9-5-0, +9) – I headed into the weekend thinking that this would be the week the Leafs dropped out of the top five. Instead, the offense wakes up, John Tavares looks dominant and they roll over the Penguins on the road. Meanwhile, the rest of the league's supposed top tier is a mess, so the Leafs somehow end up moving up to third, their highest ranking of the season. Trust me, I'm not any happier about it than you are.

2. Tampa Bay Lightning (10-3-1, +11) – What they did to the Senators on Sunday night was borderline cruel.

1. Nashville Predators (11-3-0, +17) – That Pekka Rinne extension is interesting, no? Plenty of us kind of figured that this would be the veteran's last year in Nashville, with Juuse Saros taking over. Instead, Rinne gets a new deal on his 36th birthday.

Normally, that would seem like a bad idea. Rinne is right around the range when goalies tend to crater, and maybe past it. The extension doesn't kick in until next summer, so there's lots of time for things to go bad. But on the other hand, the deal is only for two years, and it comes with a sharp drop in cap hit from \$7-million down to a more reasonable \$5-million. Considering he's the reigning Vezina winner, it almost makes this a team-friendly deal.

There's still a risk of it going bad. But it can't really go disastrously bad, because even the very worst-case scenario where Rinne ends up as an expensive backup still leaves the Predators with a combined \$6.5-million cap hit for their two goalies, which should be manageable. Rinne reportedly gets a no-movement clause and that means expansion could complicate things in 2020. But in general, I think I'm mostly with Adam Vingan here.

Not ranked: The Edmonton Oilers and pretty much everyone else – If the Flames are in, there's a good case that the Oilers should be too. They've got a similar record, have beaten better teams and didn't get their pants pulled down by the Penguins. Oh, and there's the whole best player in the world thing. It's a fair case. For what it's worth, I had the Oilers ranked sixth.

There's also an argument for the Avalanche. Despite a recent losing streak, they're still in the top ten in points and are tied for second in goals differential. They're even with the Flames for most goals scored, and they have the league's leading scorers in both points and goals. They're even somehow the current Cup favorite over at MoneyPuck.com. That was enough to get them up to sixth in my rankings, but no further.

Then there's the team my friend above mentioned, the Islanders. They've won five straight, beating some pretty good teams along the way and have taken over top spot in the Metro. That left them holding down sixth spot in my rankings, in case you were wondering.

What about the Coyotes? Five straight wins, double-digit goals differential, the fewest goals allowed in the league, top ten in possession and a terrifying penalty kill. They were awfully close, finishing the week in sixth.

There's also the Wild, who've only dropped three games in regulation, none of those on home ice. They've got solid underlying numbers and have won seven of eight. I ended up slotting them in sixth.

Or if we're really stretching it, why not the Canucks? They're tied for third in the league in wins, including three straight against some pretty solid teams. And more importantly, they're crazy fun. Every time they play, my Twitter timeline is filled with Vancouver fans shotgunning beers, and Elias Pettersson may already be the most entertaining player in the league.

WHEN I STARTED BROADCASTING IN 2002, I HAD TO REMIND MYSELF NOT TO BE THE PRESIDENT OF THE PAVEL DATSYUK FAN CLUB EVERY TIME I DID A WINGS GAME. HE WAS MY FAVOURITE PLAYER TO WATCH. I FEEL THE SAME WAY ABOUT #CANUCKS EP IN 9 BLOODY GAMES. #MAGIC

&Mdash; RAY FERRARO (@RAYFERRAROTSN) NOVEMBER 3, 2018

So yeah, the Canucks are must-see TV right now. But top five? Now we're just getting completely ridiculous. I won't even insult your intelligence. (For the record, I had them seventh.)

The bottom five



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Five stories from around the league that aren't going so well.

I don't really have anywhere else to put this, but can we talk about what Brad Marchand did?

That's Marchand getting called for a phantom high-sticking infraction on Colton Sissons, then chasing Sissons down to mock him by falling to the ice holding his face. It's, uh, quite the performance and it earned him an unsportsmanlike penalty to go with the original minor. (He later added a misconduct on his way off the ice.)

First of all, to state the obvious: He didn't lick anyone, so this is progress.

More importantly, I'm generally all-in on anything that calls out divers and embellishers. I get why players do it – because sometimes, like on Saturday, it works. I'm not about to get up on my soap box and moralize about the ethics of faking to draw a call. But I hate seeing players do it and anything that embarrasses them after the fact is fine with me.

But on the other hand ... well, it's Brad Marchand, right? You can't appoint yourself judge and jury for Respecting The Game when Lars Ellers seems happy about scoring a goal, then roll around on the ice theatrically when you don't like a penalty call. It's kind of one or the other, right? Pick a lane, Brad.

5. St. Louis Blues (4-5-3, -5) – This feels a little like the mirror-image of the Flames pick, since I'm not sold on the Blues being here long. Doug Armstrong sure seemed like a GM who thought he was building a contender, not one who was patching holes on a last-place team. And on paper, they should be fine.

But they're not fine. They're not all that close. They're giving up a ton of goals – three or more in 11 of 12 games – and that can't all be pinned on Jake Allen. The blueline is enough of an issue that when I suggested that Jay Bouwmeester was having a terrible start, Blues fans got mad at me because Alex Pietrangolo's was worse. The offense has been better than average, but it hasn't been near enough, so what happens when the powerplay isn't cashing in at 31 percent and the teams stops shooting at 11 percent?

Add it all up, and the Blues are six points back of a wildcard and need to make up four points just to get out of last in the Central. They have games in hand, so the situation is a little better than it sounds, but only a little. And their next two are against the Hurricanes and Sharks, two teams that have been tilting the ice all year.

In unrelated news, did we mention that the only team in the West that's behind the Blues in the standings just fired their coach?

4. Florida Panthers (3-5-3, -6) – Like the Blues, I'm not entirely sold that they really deserve to be here. But the Rangers have won three straight and it feels like the right time to give them a break. And since every other team in the league is busy being in the running for the top five this week, here we are.

3. Ottawa Senators (5-6-3, -14) – The record is still respectable, although that's getting away from them too. But otherwise, all signs point to this team being quite a bit less than their win-loss says they are. Saturday's disaster in Buffalo was the early-season low point, but last night's last-minute collapse against the Lightning may have felt even worse.

A REALLY SPECIAL SUNDAY SHOUTOUT TO THE OTTAWA SENATORS, WHO HAVE DECIDED TO GIVE UP.
PIC.TWITTER.COM/XQHNOBW9P5

&Mdash; SEAN TIERNEY (@CHARTINGHOCKEY) NOVEMBER 4, 2018

2. Detroit Red Wings (4-8-2, -15) – They're still bad, but a three-game win streak bumped them out of last in the East. So we'll bump them out of last in our rankings for the first time in four weeks.

1. Los Angeles Kings (4-8-1, -17) – So what do the Kings do now? Maybe Desjardins turns them around, although his hiring seems a little odd; you don't often see teams hiring head coaches from outside the organization but still slapping the "interim" tag on them. Still, he's a reasonably good pick who got the Canucks to outperform expectations in his first year in Vancouver and for a time had the reputation as a guy who always found a way to make the playoffs.

Maybe he figures out a way to pull it off in L.A. But it's doubtful, if only because of the hole they've already dug themselves. And if the season ends up being a write-off, then what?

For most teams, you'd say "rebuild." OK ... how? The Kings are locked into a bunch of long-term contracts, with nine players signed through 2021 – seven of whom are already 31 or older right now. With the exception of Drew Doughty and Anze Kopitar, who aren't going anywhere, the rest of those deals would be next to impossible to move. There aren't any obvious rentals among the expiring deals, so it's not like the trade deadline presents any kind of great opportunity, unless you think you can turn things around by flipping Peter Budaj.

So then what? You can plow forward and hope the roster is better than they look and can slowly but surely claw its way back into contention. You can tinker around the edges. You can double down and bring in even more veterans to try to spark something, I guess. You could try to trade your way out of trouble, which was something smart GMs could do a generation ago, but we're told is impossible today.

Or you can just stay the course, keep losing, hope you nail a high draft pick or two, and figure the light at the end of the tunnel comes in three years when the cap situation starts clearing up. That might be the most realistic course. But that's a tough sell, especially in L.A.

I hope no Kings fans read this far hoping for some sort of happy ending. Because man, if there's an easy answer here, I'm not seeing it.

Not ranked: Anaheim Ducks – Look, things are rough enough in California right now. We'll give these guys until next week.

The Athletic LOADED: 11.06.2018

1113927 Detroit Red Wings

A week in the life of Joe Hicketts

Max Bultman Nov 5, 2018

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — Wearing a new — albeit familiar — logo on his chest and hat, Joe Hicketts walks away from the whiteboard and toward the locker room bench.

It's a Friday night, and Hicketts has just wrapped up a post-game media session at Van Andel Arena. His team has just lost in a shootout, and, if he wanted to quickly duck out of the room, it would be hard to blame him. Instead, he sits down.

"We've got a couple days to catch up," he says.

Earlier in the week, Hicketts had agreed to give The Athletic day-by-day insights into the life of an NHL player. At the time, it's fair to say neither of us knew how the week would play out. It started in Detroit, detoured through Columbus, and is now winding down here in Grand Rapids.

The last couple days have no doubt been a whirlwind — but we'll get to that soon.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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First, let's wind back the calendar to last Monday morning in Detroit.

Monday

It's a travel day for the Red Wings, who have a game in Columbus Tuesday night. The team will practice at Little Caesars Arena before it leaves, but before that, Hicketts needs to pack.

He gets up around 7:45 a.m., gets ready and puts on his suit (he has to wear it to rink because that's what he'll wear on the flight) and packs his bag. The items of note inside are a pair of jeans, some extra shoes, a shirt and a jacket — because who knows how the weather will be in Columbus?

Hicketts lives at a hotel for now, and one of the team's new additions, forward Jacob De La Rose, is there temporarily as well. The two trek over to the rink, eat breakfast, and get ready for practice.

Today's skate is going to be a little bit different for Hicketts, however. The Red Wings are lacking two forwards with Frans Nielsen and Andreas Athanasiou both injured, and so even though he's a defenseman, Hicketts will have to fill their spots up front for the practice.

"It was fun," he said. "Little different than (defense). Bunch more skating, but I felt good out there and I think that's all that matters."

When the team gets off the ice, Hicketts gets some lunch at the rink before heading to the airport hangar to catch a 2 p.m. flight.

Upon arrival, he gets to experience his first ever National Hockey League Players Association meeting, getting caught up on what's new with the union.

"It's a lot of information, especially for a first-time guy being there," he says. "First one with the NHLPA. A lot of information about the last lockout and how we're going to try and avoid that. I think that's everyone's interest, is to try to come to a fair deal, and players are really unified this time."

Even beyond the fact that there's a flight, there a couple differences between an NHL road trip and one in the American Hockey League, where Hicketts played most of last season. For starters, you have a roommate in the AHL. Up here, he says, the majority of guys are in their own rooms; Detroit gives the entry-level players their own as well.

That has implications beyond the hotel itself, too. Whereas in Grand Rapids you might always be going to dinner with the same group, an NHL road trip divides up differently. Everyone's on their own timetable.

Some guys want to just eat at the hotel. Others want to hit the steakhouse. Some, he says, just want to eat a rice bowl the night before a game. So you have to find not only the group that you want to hang out with, but the one that shares your vision for dinner.

Tonight, he goes out with Dennis Cholowski, Mike Green, Trevor Daley and Jimmy Howard, and he listens to stories from their careers. Green and Daley are veteran defensemen, trending toward the opposite end of their playing days as Cholowski and Hicketts, who are both technically rookies.

"You're just hearing everything like, 'Wow,'" Hicketts says. "Someday, hopefully I can be one of those guys taking younger guys to dinner [to] talk about my experiences."

After that, he knocks out a couple of episodes of his current Netflix show of choice, *Designated Survivor*, starring Kiefer Sutherland, and hits the hay.

Tuesday

It's game day. Hicketts gets to the rink for morning skate and, since he will be scratched tonight, he's one of the last players off the ice.

After starting the season in the lineup for the Red Wings, it's been a little tougher to crack the top 6 since the team's more veteran blueliners have gotten healthy. That surge of renewed health has already seen fellow young defensemen Filip Hronek and Libor Sulak head back to Grand Rapids, and, even with Danny DeKeyser still out, Hicketts will be the seventh defenseman for tonight.

When he's not on the ice, Hicketts likes watching from upstairs with goalie coach Jeff Salajko — and on this night, it's quite the game to watch. The Red Wings come out on fire, building a 3-0 lead in the first period. They look like they're going to roll the Blue Jackets, who beat them in overtime on opening night, but by the third period, Columbus comes storming back. They knot the game at three, and it's hard not to wonder if the Red Wings are going to cave in.

Instead, his dinner partner from the previous night makes a play — Cholowski carries the puck down low and then feeds it out front, where Tyler Bertuzzi bangs it home for the go-ahead goal. Detroit escapes with its second consecutive win. For a team that started 0-4-2, that's significant.

A part of Hicketts has been wondering, since he saw Hronek get sent down, if he'll be going back to the AHL soon, too. And on the plane ride home, the team breaks the news to him: he's headed to Grand Rapids.

Obviously, for any hockey player, the NHL is the dream destination. Getting that news would be tough for anyone. But Hicketts is young, and he understands his current reality.

"At the end of the day, we've gotta play," he says. "We're prospects. We're young guys. We've gotta play."

He'll get solid minutes in all situations, and ultimately, toggling between the two leagues is a fact of life as a young player. Developmental goals are a key consideration for teams.

Blashill, when seeing the media a couple days later, says of Hicketts: "My message was go be the best defenseman down there. We've got a number of young D down there. Go be the best D down there so that when it comes time to get called up, you're the guy getting called up."

The Griffins will have three games the coming weekend, so Hicketts will have a few quick chances to make that case.

Wednesday

Suddenly, this has turned into another packing and travel day for Hicketts. He has been living out of the hotel for around 50 days, he estimates, which sounds like a tougher move than your standard 11 a.m. checkout.

Asked what's it like living in a hotel for that long, he's quick with a joke.

"Valet parking gets to know me pretty well," he says.

In addition to laundry building up, the big difference is really that he's eating out all the time. As a creature of habit, he'll often eat the same thing the night before games — which in this case has meant frequent trips to Granite City Food & Brewery. Now, he'll get a change of scenery.

This isn't the first time he's going back to Grand Rapids — he made two brief appearances in Detroit last season, too, before returning to the Griffins each time — but at just 22 years old, it feels safe to assume he'll be back with the big club in good time.

He's had a relatively decorated young career — between winning gold for Canada at the World Juniors in 2015, then winning an AHL championship in Grand Rapids the next year — but naturally, at 5-foot-8, he's heard comments about being too small.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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He says he never really took that to heart, but at the same time, Hicketts also isn't sure that he fully believed he'd be in the NHL until he actually got there.

"You get to the American League, (win) the Calder Cup, it's like it's right there," he says. "First call up, it's like, 'I'm going to the NHL,' and that's when it kind of really hits you that you made it. But I think you can't really expect too much. It's such a good league, players are so good, when you get up there you take advantage of your time and you enjoy it."

For now, that will have to take an interlude.

Thursday

It's back to work today, which means Hicketts' first official practice with new Griffins coach Ben Simon running the show. Simon was an assistant on last year's team under Todd Nelson, so there's plenty of familiarity. Hicketts likes how Simon runs things.

Many of the drills are the same, so he knows what's going on, and he likes the flow of practice. The team will have games on each of its next three days, so it's important to not go for too long.

Even for someone coming from the world's best hockey league, though, there's an adjustment period to the AHL game. It's not structured the same way, and there's an obvious difference in hockey sense — not because AHL players don't have it, but rather because NHL players have already developed it to an elite level.

In some ways, that can make it tough to transition back. But there is an advantage, too.

"I think my time up there, the speed of the game, it feels like there's a lot of time down here," Hicketts said.

And then there's the locker room component. Hicketts is trying to re-assimilate into the room, but he can do more than that. As a player with NHL experience, he can be a leader here. He's even won this league's championship already.

"You have (Filip) Zadina here, he's the first round pick, gotta try to mold him to get up to the NHL," he says. "And I'm happy to help that process."

After practice, though, it's time to start looking for apartments.

"I want to settle in down here," he says. "At this point, I'm with the Griffins, so I've gotta have a mindset of being here and getting comfortable."

Friday

Another game day, which Hicketts starts with an omelette at the rink. His go-to ingredients? Spinach, onions and peppers.

There's a team meeting at 9:40 a.m., which will include a pre-scout on that night's opponent: the Iowa Wild. Then morning skate for 20-25 minutes. A gameday meal of chicken and rice. Then a nap for around 90 minutes to 2 hours.

When he wakes up, he eats oatmeal, drinks coffee, and heads off for the game.

On this night, the game itself is not terribly eventful, due in part to the fact that Hicketts, Hronek and Sulak have really bolstered the Griffins' defense. The team does give up some scoring chances, but it's hard to argue with the shot totals: Iowa posted period-long totals of 6, 6 and 7, respectively, in regulation.

Still, behind two third-period goals, the 2-2 game goes to overtime and then a shootout.

When Iowa wins, it's back to the locker room.

That's when he catches me up on the last few days, completing what was no doubt an eventful week. In some ways, though, that's the

best way to tell the story of a week in pro hockey — where routines matter, but so much else is beyond your control.

By the time we've wrapped up and Hicketts has disappeared, the Griffins are auctioning off that night's Hockey Fights Cancer warm-up jerseys to fans in the crowd. When Hicketts' jersey comes up, a bidding war breaks out.

It goes to \$600, then \$650, up to \$700 and now \$750 — it's the top jersey so far, the auctioneer calls out.

\$800. \$850.

"Do we have a \$900 bid?" the auctioneer says.

"\$850's going once, \$850's going twice, sold! ... Congratulations on your Joey Hicketts warm-up jersey."

The auctioneer sells the final three jerseys, but none gets to that number.

For all the glamour of the NHL, I'll say this much: I've never seen that kind of scene after a Red Wings game. There's a special kind of intimacy between organizations and fanbases in the AHL, and, clearly, the fans here have a soft spot (in their wallets) for Hicketts.

Over the next two days, the Griffins will win both of their games and Hicketts will be a combined plus-five on the scoresheet. The stretch will conclude with a trip to Cleveland on Sunday for the third leg of a back-to-back-to-back, and, despite an 8-4 Grand Rapids win, nothing about that sounds easy.

It's a clear reminder that Joe Hicketts has left the NHL lifestyle — at least for now.

But it's also hard to think that he won't be back at some point. And someday, when he is, maybe he'll get to tell this story to another rookie, perhaps over a nice steak dinner on the road, about just how quickly things can change.

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1114061 Websites

The Athletic / Down Goes Brown weekend power rankings: Will struggling teams follow the Kings and call the coach's coroner?

By Sean McIndoe Nov 5, 2018

Last year, NHL coaches made it to very end of the season before anyone was fired. This year, it took less than one month before a coach was replaced.

Hey, at least NHL GMs are getting better at something.

The first pink slip of season arrived yesterday, with the Kings firing John Stevens and replacing him on an interim basis with Willie Desjardins. The move came as a bit of a surprise; Stevens was only in his second year behind the Kings' bench, had made the playoffs last season, and was coming off of a nice win over the Blue Jackets despite his star goalie being hurt. On the other hand, the Kings are tied for dead last in the league, so nobody can claim to be completely shocked.

We'll get to what this means for the Kings in a bit — spoiler alert, they might show up in the bottom five rankings. But there's a more pressing question: Now that the firing squad has broken the seal, who's next?

We're not exactly short on candidates. When The Athletic rounded up our opening night predictions, ten coaches received votes in the "first fired" category, and Stevens wasn't among them. But Randy



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Carlyle was. So were Dave Hakstol and Mike Yeo, although with just a single vote each. Jeff Blashill finished second to Guy Boucher. And nobody even cast a vote for Florida's Bob Boughner. (But we did have him ranked third for Coach of the Year honors. We might need a mulligan on that one.)

There are plenty of names in play, although some of them are safer than others. But you wonder if seeing the Kings make a move this early turns up the heat on other struggling teams. If the Kings run off a few wins to get back into the playoff picture, it might get awfully tough to preach patience.

That's a topic of particular interest to the league's bottom-feeders. But first, let's get to the top five, which inconveniently features way more than five teams with a solid case this week. Will I be able to sort it all out? Not really, no, but read on.

Road to the Cup

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

We're into November, which in theory means the top five should be getting fairly stable. We'll have some movement each week, and maybe even the occasional team moving in or out of the list, but for the most part we should all be settling in on the same page. One big happy family, am I right?

Oh wait, I'm told I have some reader feedback, let me just crack that open ...

PUT THE ISLANDERS IN THE TOP FIVE YOU COWARD

— ASHER SMITH (@ASHER_E_SMITH) NOVEMBER 4, 2018

Huh. OK, maybe we're not all on the same page just yet.

First things first: despite last week's throat-clearing, the Carolina Hurricanes didn't make the grade after all. Three losses in three games will do that. I'm not saying I jinxed them by writing that we all needed to "[s]tart mentally preparing yourself now for a world where the Carolina Hurricanes are considered one of the very best teams in the NHL," but if they go 0-and-68 the rest of the way, I'm going to feel just a little bit responsible.

That said, there is opportunity for some new blood in this week's top five. With teams like the Jets, Sharks, Bruins and Penguins all wobbling, maybe it's time to get just a little bit crazy.

5. Calgary Flames (9-5-1, +2) – Like I said ... a little crazy.

Look, I'm not sure the Flames will be here at any other point this season. I'm far from convinced they deserve to be here now. These are the guys who got speedbagged by the Penguins just over a week ago. But they've won four straight, including some impressive outings against the Leafs and Avalanche. Their underlying numbers are good. They're basically unstoppable in the third period. They're in first place in a bad division and are tied for top spot in the league in goals scored.

Should all that be enough? In a typical year, maybe not. But with just about everyone apart from the top two teams looking decidedly iffy, it's enough to get the Flames in for now. I called them one of my most confusing team in the offseason and they're not doing much to make me feel wrong.

4. Winnipeg Jets (8-5-1, +3) – An overseas split against the Panthers is a minor disappointment, but I'm going to keep them in the top five based on Patrik Laine heating up again. They've been alternating wins and losses for six straight and we've seen these midseason trips to Europe do funny things to teams. I'm betting the Jets head in the opposite direction and finally start firing on all cylinders. But I could be wrong. Honestly, I kind of hate this week's top five, can you tell?

3. Toronto Maple Leafs (9-5-0, +9) – I headed into the weekend thinking that this would be the week the Leafs dropped out of the top five. Instead, the offense wakes up, John Tavares looks dominant and they roll over the Penguins on the road. Meanwhile, the rest of the league's supposed top tier is a mess, so the Leafs somehow end up moving up to third, their highest ranking of the season. Trust me, I'm not any happier about it than you are.

2. Tampa Bay Lightning (10-3-1, +11) – What they did to the Senators on Sunday night was borderline cruel.

1. Nashville Predators (11-3-0, +17) – That Pekka Rinne extension is interesting, no? Plenty of us kind of figured that this would be the veteran's last year in Nashville, with Juuse Saros taking over. Instead, Rinne gets a new deal on his 36th birthday.

Normally, that would seem like a bad idea. Rinne is right around the range when goalies tend to crater, and maybe past it. The extension doesn't kick in until next summer, so there's lots of time for things to go bad. But on the other hand, the deal is only for two years, and it comes with a sharp drop in cap hit from \$7-million down to a more reasonable \$5-million. Considering he's the reigning Vezina winner, it almost makes this a team-friendly deal.

There's still a risk of it going bad. But it can't really go disastrously bad, because even the very worst-case scenario where Rinne ends up as an expensive backup still leaves the Predators with a combined \$6.5-million cap hit for their two goalies, which should be manageable. Rinne reportedly gets a no-movement clause and that means expansion could complicate things in 2020. But in general, I think I'm mostly with Adam Vinjan here.

Not ranked: The Edmonton Oilers and pretty much everyone else – If the Flames are in, there's a good case that the Oilers should be too. They've got a similar record, have beaten better teams and didn't get their pants pulled down by the Penguins. Oh, and there's the whole best player in the world thing. It's a fair case. For what it's worth, I had the Oilers ranked sixth.

There's also an argument for the Avalanche. Despite a recent losing streak, they're still in the top ten in points and are tied for second in goals differential. They're even with the Flames for most goals scored, and they have the league's leading scorers in both points and goals. They're even somehow the current Cup favorite over at MoneyPuck.com. That was enough to get them up to sixth in my rankings, but no further.

Then there's the team my friend above mentioned, the Islanders. They've won five straight, beating some pretty good teams along the way and have taken over top spot in the Metro. That left them holding down sixth spot in my rankings, in case you were wondering.

What about the Coyotes? Five straight wins, double-digit goals differential, the fewest goals allowed in the league, top ten in possession and a terrifying penalty kill. They were awfully close, finishing the week in sixth.

There's also the Wild, who've only dropped three games in regulation, none of those on home ice. They've got solid underlying numbers and have won seven of eight. I ended up slotting them in sixth.

Or if we're really stretching it, why not the Canucks? They're tied for third in the league in wins, including three straight against some pretty solid teams. And more importantly, they're crazy fun. Every time they play, my Twitter timeline is filled with Vancouver fans shotgunning beers, and Elias Pettersson may already be the most entertaining player in the league.

So yeah, the Canucks are must-see TV right now. But top five? Now we're just getting completely ridiculous. I won't even insult your intelligence. (For the record, I had them seventh.)

The bottom five



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Five stories from around the league that aren't going so well.

I don't really have anywhere else to put this, but can we talk about what Brad Marchand did?

That's Marchand getting called for a phantom high-sticking infraction on Colton Sissons, then chasing Sissons down to mock him by falling to the ice holding his face. It's, uh, quite the performance and it earned him an unsportsmanlike penalty to go with the original minor. (He later added a misconduct on his way off the ice.)

First of all, to state the obvious: He didn't lick anyone, so this is progress.

More importantly, I'm generally all-in on anything that calls out divers and embellishers. I get why players do it – because sometimes, like on Saturday, it works. I'm not about to get up on my soap box and moralize about the ethics of faking to draw a call. But I hate seeing players do it and anything that embarrasses them after the fact is fine with me.

But on the other hand ... well, it's Brad Marchand, right? You can't appoint yourself judge and jury for Respecting The Game when Lars Ellers seems happy about scoring a goal, then roll around on the ice theatrically when you don't like a penalty call. It's kind of one or the other, right? Pick a lane, Brad.

5. St. Louis Blues (4-5-3, -5) – This feels a little like the mirror-image of the Flames pick, since I'm not sold on the Blues being here long. Doug Armstrong sure seemed like a GM who thought he was building a contender, not one who was patching holes on a last-place team. And on paper, they should be fine.

But they're not fine. They're not all that close. They're giving up a ton of goals – three or more in 11 of 12 games – and that can't all be pinned on Jake Allen. The blueline is enough of an issue that when I suggested that Jay Bouwmeester was having a terrible start, Blues fans got mad at me because Alex Pietrangolo's was worse. The offense has been better than average, but it hasn't been near enough, so what happens when the powerplay isn't cashing in at 31 percent and the teams stops shooting at 11 percent?

Add it all up, and the Blues are six points back of a wildcard and need to make up four points just to get out of last in the Central. They have games in hand, so the situation is a little better than it sounds, but only a little. And their next two are against the Hurricanes and Sharks, two teams that have been tilting the ice all year.

In unrelated news, did we mention that the only team in the West that's behind the Blues in the standings just fired their coach?

4. Florida Panthers (3-5-3, -6) – Like the Blues, I'm not entirely sold that they really deserve to be here. But the Rangers have won three straight and it feels like the right time to give them a break. And since every other team in the league is busy being in the running for the top five this week, here we are.

3. Ottawa Senators (5-6-3, -14) – The record is still respectable, although that's getting away from them too. But otherwise, all signs point to this team being quite a bit less than their win-loss says they are. Saturday's disaster in Buffalo was the early-season low point, but last night's last-minute collapse against the Lightning may have felt even worse.

A REALLY SPECIAL SUNDAY SHOUTOUT TO THE OTTAWA SENATORS, WHO HAVE DECIDED TO GIVE UP.
PIC.TWITTER.COM/XQHNOBW9P5

&Mdash; SEAN TIERNEY (@CHARTINGHOCKEY) NOVEMBER 4, 2018

2. Detroit Red Wings (4-8-2, -15) – They're still bad, but a three-game win streak bumped them out of last in the East. So we'll bump them out of last in our rankings for the first time in four weeks.

1. Los Angeles Kings (4-8-1, -17) – So what do the Kings do now? Maybe Desjardins turns them around, although his hiring seems a little odd; you don't often see teams hiring head coaches from outside the organization but still slapping the "interim" tag on them. Still, he's a reasonably good pick who got the Canucks to outperform expectations in his first year in Vancouver and for a time had the reputation as a guy who always found a way to make the playoffs.

Maybe he figures out a way to pull it off in L.A. But it's doubtful, if only because of the hole they've already dug themselves. And if the season ends up being a write-off, then what?

For most teams, you'd say "rebuild." OK ... how? The Kings are locked into a bunch of long-term contracts, with nine players signed through 2021 – seven of whom are already 31 or older right now. With the exception of Drew Doughty and Anze Kopitar, who aren't going anywhere, the rest of those deals would be next to impossible to move. There aren't any obvious rentals among the expiring deals, so it's not like the trade deadline presents any kind of great opportunity, unless you think you can turn things around by flipping Peter Budaj.

So then what? You can plow forward and hope the roster is better than they look and can slowly but surely claw its way back into contention. You can tinker around the edges. You can double down and bring in even more veterans to try to spark something, I guess. You could try to trade your way out of trouble, which was something smart GMs could do a generation ago, but we're told is impossible today.

Or you can just stay the course, keep losing, hope you nail a high draft pick or two, and figure the light at the end of the tunnel comes in three years when the cap situation starts clearing up. That might be the most realistic course. But that's a tough sell, especially in L.A.

I hope no Kings fans read this far hoping for some sort of happy ending. Because man, if there's an easy answer here, I'm not seeing it.

Not ranked: Anaheim Ducks – Look, things are rough enough in California right now. We'll give these guys until next week.

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1114062 Websites

The Athletic / Amidst the boos, Gary Bettman oversaw the NHL's 'astronomic' growth and earned a place in the Hall of Fame

By Scott Burnside Nov 5, 2018

NEW YORK – The sprawling corner office occupied by the commissioner of the NHL is a window onto not just midtown Manhattan but the man himself.

The walls are adorned by artwork with a hockey theme and other iconic hockey pictures. There are a couple of table hockey games. But what you won't see are pictures of Gary Bettman. There's no assembly of "look at me" photographs that are often a staple in the offices of titans of business.

What you will find in this space, both formally and informally, are scads of pictures of Bettman's family, pictures that speak more to a doting grandfather – he now has five grandchildren – than to an iron-fisted ruler of a league that he has governed since Feb. 1, 1993, and under whose guidance has enjoyed unprecedented success on the ice and on the financial bottom line.



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On his first weekend as the commissioner, succeeding John Ziegler, Bettman traveled to The Forum in Montreal for the All-Star Game. He then returned to an austere office that bears little resemblance to league's current upscale digs with multiple video screens showing non-stop game action and hockey related furnishings and decorations.

"My first day in the office, whenever that was, was a very different place," Bettman said as we sat in his office for the first time since it was announced he will be enshrined in the Hockey Hall of Fame as part of the class of 2018.

"The office was very sterile. Very small. Very quiet. There were hardly any people there. It was a different time. But part of what I was brought in to do was modernize our operations. So I wasn't surprised, that was just the reality."

Maybe it's the same for anyone who spends an inordinate amount of time in the public eye, having their every move dissected by the public at large, but over the course of time, it becomes difficult to separate the job from the individual doing the job.

It is certainly the case for Bettman.

But it doesn't take long to understand that when Bettman considers heading into the Hall of Fame he is forced out of his comfort zone.

"Obviously I've been part of the induction ceremonies for the last 25 years," he said. "And watching people go in over the years to me has always been an amazing experience because you're watching people who have made great contributions to the game and, much like a banner raising, there's an element of immortality to that and I've always viewed it intellectually."

But when Bettman recently attended an NHL Alumni Association gala at the Hall of Fame, it was, well, different.

"It started to become more real. ... Looking around and being shown where my plaque is going to be started to take on a more emotional, more real and more surreal experience," Bettman said.

Of all the times that Bettman has been to the historic building in downtown Toronto – and those visits number in the dozens – one stands out.

"The best time I ever had there was taking my grandson," Bettman said. "It was watching him. It wasn't about my connection, my connection to the Hall at the time, it was more about watching him relate to something that obviously is important in my life, the game, and important in his life. I mean he's been doing stuff with me since he's 2 ½ years old. He plays AAA hockey. So watching him react to the Hall was a really exciting experience, so I get a sense that watching my family react to the Hall, particularly on the night when I'm being inducted, I think will be a very emotional experience for all of us.

"If you spend a virtual lifetime in the game, it, the game, permeates all aspects of your life. If you're a player it's not just when you're at the rink. It's getting prepared for playing, it's about the lifestyle you have. Well, for me, it's no different. This is a lifestyle. And this is something that permeates my life and therefore it permeated my family."

You don't become a business that generates north of \$4.5 billion in revenue without stepping on a few toes. And the idea of Bettman as an emotional entity and not the stony corporate face of the sprawling world of the NHL might be hard to compute for some.

Yet it's fair to suggest some people's perception of Bettman is born out of a different time, different place.

Three times Bettman has attended Hall of Fame ceremonies during a work stoppage – including 2004 when the NHL season was canceled.

"I've been to induction ceremonies when we've had difficult times," Bettman acknowledged. "And I've always found that night very comforting because it represents the heart and soul of the game, and even in a difficult time it gave me a sense of perspective."

And perspective is something that often gets lost when people talk about the commissioner.

For instance, some believe Bettman simply walks into a meeting with NHL owners and tells them they're closing their doors until the players take a knee. Easy narrative to follow, but hardly the truth.

What is often unstated is that during those often fractious, soul-sucking times of labor unrest, Bettman is almost always the lightning rod. It's rarely the owners — for whom he works — not the teams, not the players; it's generally Bettman upon whom the criticism rains.

And maybe that's why, in spite of the three lockouts during his tenure, the game has returned stronger, better and with no appreciable decline in interest among the fans who make this all work. It's almost as though having most of the public anger directed at Bettman during those labor issues allowed the game to heal itself more quickly.

Has Bettman had moments of self-doubt about whether he was charting the right course for this league? Of course.

"When you write a story, I assume at some point you ask, 'am I getting it right? Am I doing the right thing? Am I breaking the right news?' If you're not self-reflective, you're living on another planet," Bettman said.

"There have been hard decisions to make but my view has always been you need to do what you think is the right thing. If you guess, if you're trying to be political ... and if you're not on the right side of politics, you're going to have some real issues. If you do what you think is right, you can sleep at night because, even if it all goes wrong, you know you gave it your best shot, and that's always how I've functioned. And I think people respect the decisions you make. Never unanimously, certainly not in a business where there are fans and fans are going to have particular interests, as will the clubs, but the fact is if people think you're doing what you think is right, hopefully they'll respect it even if they don't agree with you."

Even now it remains unfathomable that the league and its players couldn't find a way to solve their problems in 2004-05 without wasting an entire season. Likewise missing half a season in 2012 seems like such a colossal waste based on the relatively minor issues that confronted the two sides. But many observers, whether they're pro-ownership or not, believe the league doesn't get to where it is now without having taken the stands they did.

Agree with this assertion or not but few would dispute the success the league has enjoyed, especially in recent years. Revenue, at about \$400 million when Bettman took over as commissioner, was up more than ten-fold to \$4.5 billion last season with the expectation that revenue will top \$5 billion next season.

When Bettman came to office, expansion fees were \$50 million. Vegas paid 10 times that to become the NHL's 31st team in 2017-18, and Seattle is expected to pay \$650 million.

Longtime player, union executive and analyst Glenn Healy sometimes looks at the picture taken with his New York Rangers at the White House in 1995 with then-President Bill Clinton. Off to the side, far from the Stanley Cup and the President, is a young Gary Bettman.

It illustrates for Healy, a member of the 1994 Cup championship team, the strides taken by the commissioner and the league under his tenure.

Healy, now the head of the NHL Alumni Association, points to the 900 or so players who appeared in NHL games last season and how



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those players and their families have benefitted from the growth of the game under Bettman.

A one-time vocal critic of Bettman and the league, Healy said the commissioner helped propel the game to heights Healy never could have imagined when he joined the league as a player.

"The growth and development in our sport is absolutely astronomic," Healy said. "He's got the golden touch."

As for the work stoppages, Healy suggested each negotiation has to be broken down separately to understand the dynamics, as opposed to being painted with broad brushstrokes.

"Let's break down that negotiation in 2004 and you could argue that the Players' Association (strategy) was so flawed it was embarrassing," Healy said. In 2012, did anyone think the two sides weren't going to end up with a 50-50 split of revenues, Healy asked?

There are inevitably going to be disputes between the players and the owners but, Healy said, "I never once questioned where Gary's heart lay. I knew where he stood."

Longtime NHL player and executive Dale Tallon has been watching Bettman man the controls as the league's top executive since Bettman came to the NHL after a dozen years with the NBA.

Tallon has seen Bettman in action at Board of Governors meetings and GMs' meetings, directing the business of the game on all levels from expansion and relocation to rule changes.

There is a basic truth, as far as Tallon is concerned, when it comes to how Bettman has managed to keep driving the league forward for so long.

"He's the smartest guy in the room," Tallon said.

Now, there's a difference between being with someone who thinks he's the smartest guy in the room and wants you to know it, and being with someone who simply is.

Deputy commissioner Bill Daly first met Bettman as an outside legal counsel leading up to the 1994 lockout. Two years later, Daly interviewed with Bettman for a position in the league's legal department.

"I start with his intellect. There are not many people that I've met who are smarter than Gary Bettman," Daly said. "So I'll start with that, but there has to be a lot more than that to have had the level of success he's had. I think it's passion for the job. I think it's his management skills, and I include in that kind of management not only of people who work for him but people he works for. I think he's a master at relating to the Board of Governors and his owners and the other people around the league who work for the clubs. So his mastery of being able to develop those relationships has been a critical part of his success. The way he cares about people I think has been an essential element of what he's accomplished. I think all those together have provided a level of comfort with what he does every day. Comfort and confidence."

For Tallon, it's the accessibility and the openness the commissioner displays that continues to impress the long-time player and executive.

"He's helped me immensely," Tallon said. "There's no airs about him."

Tallon helped build the Chicago Blackhawks from laughingstocks to Stanley Cup contenders and now navigates a delicate path in trying to make the Florida Panthers a consistent contender. When he calls the commissioner with an issue, Tallon finds that Bettman invariably answers the phone and works to help find a resolution.

"I don't feel intimidated by asking him questions," Tallon said. "He allows everybody to speak up."

Bettman shrugs his shoulders.

"You say it like it's surprising and my view of the world is, 'yeah, of course,'" Bettman said of Tallon's comments. "My point is, yeah, that's what I think you should do. That's how I think a commissioner, at least me, needs to conduct himself. That's the culture of this organization. We're here to serve the game, our clubs, the fans, anyone associated with this game, so, again, no surprise. Of course, I'm glad he said it. Because he understands what we do."

And then there are the fans.

If we were being flip, we might suggest that it will be unusual for Bettman when he ascends the stage the night of his induction at the Hall of Fame to not be greeted by a chorus of boos as he is when he takes the stage at virtually every public league event, like the draft or in handing over the Stanley Cup.

But those moments are outliers to his everyday encounters with fans.

"I've seen it and I see it every day that I'm with him. How he interacts with people or how people interact with him," Daly said. "It's totally different in a one-on-one environment context than it is the group mentality. But I separate that because I think the booing is really not even Gary anymore. It's symbolic. It's every crowd wanting to outdo the other crowds. So it really has nothing to do about Gary, what he's done, what he hasn't done."

Daly likens it to New York Rangers fans chanting "Potvin Sucks," which they do every home game in reference to the New York Islanders' Hall of Fame defenseman Denis Potvin. How many fans there really know who Denis Potvin is?

The ironic thing, of course, is that when fans boo Bettman in Dallas, Arizona, Nashville, Calgary, Ottawa or Pittsburgh, you have to ask yourself: Would those teams exist without Bettman?

And it's not just the teams in those cities but the contributions those teams have made to those communities that are part of the legacy of the current commissioner.

"Where would we be if he hadn't made it happen?" asked Frank Brown, who joined the league in 1998 after a distinguished career as a reporter covering the game but recently retired. "Where would the league be without a Nashville? Without an Anaheim, without a Dallas, without a Columbus?"

It's not just the roots those teams have in the community but the youngsters who grew up with those teams – guys like Auston Matthews, who grew up a Coyotes fan in Phoenix – are now playing the game at the highest level.

Here's another thing. You might imagine that having been crushed in public for as long as Bettman has would make him want to stay in his comfy office or, at the very least, scurry into a suite in whichever building he happens to be visiting.

But that's not how he goes about his business. Bettman instead sits in seats and regularly engages fans on an individual basis.

"If everybody who comes up and says to me, 'I don't know why they boo you, I didn't boo you,'" Bettman said with a hearty laugh, well nobody would be booing.

"But the other point, which is more interesting, is people who come up to me, 99.9 percent of the time it's positive and a complimentary experience. If I'm hearing something it's somebody yelling from a distance who wouldn't come up and do it and that's OK. They can do what they want. But my one on one and my direct experiences with fans are overwhelmingly positive, and I'm happy to interact with fans," Bettman said.

Whether it be a downtown Columbus bar during All-Star weekend, out in London during the Premier Games in 2012, or annually at the GMs Meetings watching hockey at a local pizza place with many of the league's GMs, Bettman rarely has an awkward moment with fans.



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The only awkward moment might be when Bettman incurred the wrath of a bus boy at a restaurant when the commissioner tried to change the television channel to a West Coast game without asking permission.

Longtime NHL executive Peter Luukko, now a senior executive with the Oak View Group, which is creating a new building for the Islanders and renovating KeyArena in Seattle, said Bettman's ability to build consensus within a very diverse ownership group is one of the job's greatest challenges.

"He's herding cats," Luukko said with a laugh. "Some of the most successful people in North America owning teams. They're used to, nobody tells them no and Gary has to find a way to get them to do the right thing to make the league keep going forward, and if you look at where this league has gone, I mean the success is unprecedented. I mean in terms of the unity in the league and the growth of revenue and the competitive balance."

Bettman doesn't necessarily see it that way.

"You know I never viewed it as herding cats," Bettman said. "I kind of viewed it, it's more about having a plan, having a vision and building support for that plan and vision. The owners have always been great in that regard. Listen, will an owner or two or three occasionally disagree with something you want to do? But the answer is, over time working together, building a consensus, more than a consensus, it's general unanimity wasn't all that hard to do."

One of the early popular narratives was that Bettman wasn't a "hockey guy" and didn't understand how important the game was in Canada.

But under Bettman the league established a program to help bolster Canadian franchises that were hurt by a weak Canadian dollar and in 2011 brokered a deal to bring the NHL back to Winnipeg. Overall the ownership landscape has never been as stable as it is now.

"I think over time the media has gotten me better, understood me better than maybe they did at the beginning because I have a very direct style and I have a very direct agenda and I also bristle when the game gets criticized," Bettman said. "I don't care if I get criticized, not because I'm above criticism but because that's not what's important. What's important is the game. And so it bothers me more when the game or the players get criticized or the owners or the clubs. Because that's who our fans relate to. If they like me, they don't like me, I don't care as much as whether or not they like the game and they like the players, that's what it's all about."

As for the game itself, if you talk to those who sit in on the meetings with both the general managers and the owners, Bettman is an engaged participant when it comes to nuts and bolts discussions regarding the future of the game.

Take the video review process, which has been beset by problems since it was introduced. Bettman warned the league's general managers that it had the potential to create more (or at least as many) problems as it solved.

Bettman joins predecessors Clarence Campbell and Zeigler as NHL leaders who were inducted into the Hall of Fame while still running the league. Gil Stein, the president who immediately preceded Bettman, was also selected while president but withdrew his name for induction after an outcry over the process by which he was voted in.

In some ways, this moment will force Bettman to give pause, something he is not entirely used to.

"I mean, there's an arc to the evolution of the game and the business of the game, but that's on a continuum," Bettman said. "That's something that you live it a day at a time."

"The thing that marks time for me more than anything else is my youngest child, my daughter Brittany, who had my fifth grandchild in

January, was 4 years old when I started this. That marks time. Everything else I do is a day at a time; and yes, while her going from being 4 years old to a 30-year-old woman, is a day at a time too, you tend not to look at it quite the same. Yeah, were there points along the road that stick out? Some better than others? Of course. But this has been a journey more than anything else."

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1114063 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Report: Senators caught ripping system, coaches in Uber video - Sportsnet.ca

Sportsnet Staff November 5, 2018, 9:00 PM

The Ottawa Citizen released a video on Monday of several Ottawa Senators players criticizing their coaching staff and on-ice systems in an apparent Uber ride.

Chris Wideman, Matt Duchene, Thomas Chabot, Chris Tierney, Dylan DeMelo, and Alex Formenton (since sent to the OHL) were all in the van, though not all necessarily took part in the conversation.

"We don't even slow them up," Wideman says of Ottawa's play in the neutral zone.

"In practice, when we break out against you guys," says Duchene, a pending free agent, "We get in every time."

Assistant coach Martin Raymond was a specific target of the players' criticisms. The Senators were fifth-last in the league in power-play percentage in 2017-18, and sixth-last in penalty killing.

"Marty Raymond, the only coach in NHL history to have the worst power play and the worst PK within a calendar year," says Duchene of Raymond.

"Do you notice that when (Raymond) runs the video, if you actually do pay attention, he doesn't ever teach you anything?" asked Wideman. "He just commentates what's happening."

"Here's the other thing, too. We don't change anything, ever," says Duchene. "So why do we even have a meeting? I haven't paid attention in three weeks."

It should be noted that the players were speaking in a seemingly private capacity and had no reason to believe their comments would ever be leaked to the public. They're certainly not the first to speak ill of their bosses and they most definitely won't be the last.

Still, the Senators as an organization have been a mess for about a calendar year now, though a respectable start to this season gave fans reason for optimism surrounding the franchise.

But a 4-2-1 start has been erased by a stretch of six losses in seven games and this new leak has become just the latest source of embarrassment for a team that's seen more than its fair share of scandals in the past year; most notably the wife of former captain Erik Karlsson taking the fiancée of former winger Mike Hoffman to court in an alleged online abuse case.

Randy Lee, and assistant GM of the team, resigned in August amid charges of harassment of a shuttle bus driver in Buffalo at the NHL Draft Combine.

UPDATE: Rob Khazzam, general manager of Uber Canada has tweeted the following statement:



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Filming or recording passengers without their consent is totally unacceptable and if reported / detected we will investigate + take action to preserve our communities privacy and integrity. In this specific case, we made efforts to have the video taken down.

— Rob Khazzam (@rkhazzam) November 6, 2018

The Senators have also released a pair of statements, the first an apology from the players (save for Formenton):

"We want to apologize publicly to Marty Raymond, our teammates and coaches for our comments in Phoenix Arizona on October 29. Our private conversation was recorded without our knowledge or consent. We're passionate about our team, and focusing on growing together. We are grateful for the support of our fans and organization. This is an important learning experience, and we will do better."

The other, from head coach Guy Boucher:

"Nothing is more important to us during this rebuild than making sure our players and coaches are fully committed to our plan, our values and our system of play. We have every confidence in Marty Raymond's coaching; in the effort and determination of our team; and in the sincerity of our players' apology. We are now treating this as a team matter, and will be making no further comment to the media."

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 11.06.2018

1114064 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Max Domi's performance at centre has changed complexion of Canadiens - Sportsnet.ca

Eric Engels November 6, 2018, 1:00 AM

BROOKLYN, N.Y. — When a team comes back from a 3-1 deficit, as the Montreal Canadiens did in their 4-3 shootout win over the surging New York Islanders on Monday, it's never just about one thing.

This game was no exception to that rule.

There were the key stops Antti Niemi made — a scrambling pad save on a second-period 2-on-1 chance for Mathew Barzal, then turning aside Anthony Beauvillier on a breakaway minutes later, and the five more he came up with in the shootout —

after allowing three goals on eight shots in the first period.

There were the big blocks Jeff Petry had in the dying moments to push the game into overtime, making up for a bad decision he made on a 2-on-1 chance Valtteri Filppula finished off to give the Islanders another lead less than two minutes after Jonathan Drouin got the Canadiens back to 1-1.

There was the goal Artturi Lehkonen scored in the third period to tie things up at 3-3, his first since opening night in Toronto. There was Montreal's penalty kill, which didn't allow a shot on its first three tests and came up huge in the final 25 seconds of regulation and first 1:35 of overtime. And there was Joel Armia sealing the deal in the shootout with a laser over Thomas Greiss's glove after four of his teammates tried to deke and failed to score.

That was all equally important on this night, but it's fair to say that without Max Domi scoring points 14 and 15 of his season in this one, the Canadiens would have left Barclays Center lamenting their first consecutive losses after falling to the Tampa Bay Lightning at the Bell Centre on Saturday.

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The 23-year-old set up Drouin and also scored one of his own — a snapshot from the right faceoff circle that helped the Canadiens end a streak of 16 straight whiffs on the power play.

It's also fair to say that without Domi, who's now factored into 35 per cent of the team's 43 goals, Montreal wouldn't be keeping pace with the best teams in their division and enjoying an 8-4-2 start to the season.

You can't help but wonder if that would be the case had Canadiens coach Claude Julien left him on the wing instead of converting him to centre when training camp opened in September.

"I think we needed that," Julien said following Monday's win. "He seems to enjoy covering a lot of ice. It's just natural for him to skate the way he's skating right now and I think part of that, too, by skating as much as he is right now is giving him the confidence to do what he's doing. He's shooting pucks, he's attacking with speed, and he just seems extremely comfortable there."

"Did I know that was going to happen at the beginning of camp? Absolutely not. We're like anyone else; we try things that we think might work and if they don't work, we make a change. But so far that's worked pretty good for us."

That's an understatement.

Domi's performance at the position has almost completely changed the complexion of the team.

Drouin came to camp prepared to show that last season's trial at centre wouldn't define his career at the position. He had played in the middle in junior, played it a bit with the Tampa Bay Lightning prior to being traded to Montreal in the summer of 2017, and he felt he could do better than the 46 points and a minus-28 rating he posted in 77 games.

Julien knew it was an option to give Drouin that opportunity but he first wanted to find out whether or not Domi could handle the challenge.

He didn't get a clear answer through exhibition, with Domi landing a five-game suspension for punching an unsuspecting Aaron Ekblad against the Florida Panthers in Montreal's second pre-season game.

But when the regular season kicked off against the Maple Leafs, and Domi recorded his first two points of the season in a 3-2 overtime loss at Scotiabank Arena, there was hope he could thrive in the position.

With Phillip Danault prepared to handle all that comes with being the shutdown centre on the team, with 18-year-old Jesperi Kotkaniemi making the roster out of training camp and handling himself well on both sides of the puck from the pivot position, and with Matthew Peca and Tomas Plekanec adding depth up the middle, Domi's emergence in his role has suddenly turned one of the most questionable centre lines in hockey into one to be reckoned with.

Just don't tell him that.

When asked about his contribution to Montreal's win in Brooklyn on Monday — about his contribution throughout this first month of the season — Domi had no interest in patting himself on the back.

"Team game," he said.

"He's a great teammate," said Drouin. "He's got high energy off the ice and it's something we need on the bench and on the ice."

It's something the Canadiens hoped they'd get when they traded former 30-goal scorer Alex Galchenyuk to the Arizona Coyotes for Domi's services back on June 15. Something that was anything but



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given after Domi recorded 45 points in 82 games last season and just 38 in 59 games the season before.

"He's the right player for this city," said Drouin.

Domi's performance in Monday's game was just another piece of evidence to support that notion.

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1114065 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Takeaways: Oilers' fourth line falls apart in Washington - Sportsnet.ca

Mark Spector | November 5, 2018, 10:48 PM

Only on Monday morning was Oilers coach Todd McLellan talking about why his team had put together a tidy 8-2-1 skein. It was a new hero every night. A power-play unit one day, a fourth line the next. Perhaps a goalie stealing a game.

That's how you win in the NHL. With variety.

The problem? It is also how you lose, as McLellan would experience later that night in a 4-2 loss at Washington.

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The difference in this game? Two fourth-line goals. Maybe a save like the one Mikko Koskinen had made two days before in Detroit, or perhaps a puck that hit two Oilers players and landed right in the wrong place — on Alex Ovechkin's tape for a power-play snipe.

Maybe some production by a third line that does everything well — except for the big thing: Scoring goals.

Here are our takeaways from Washington, filed under the heading: "You don't get to win every night."

Win Some, Lose Some

The Oilers fourth line won them a hockey game in Detroit Saturday, when centre Kyle Brodziak scored twice in a 4-3 win.

But in Washington, we weren't six minutes into the game when the Oilers fourth line found themselves at minus-2 on a pair of goals by the Caps' fourth unit. It was the difference in a game that the Oilers chased from the outset, and never quite caught up to.

The role of the fourth line is pretty clear: Don't give anything up, and if you score the odd goal it's a bonus. We get it when you're on the road and the opposing coach gets his first line out against the fourth unit, and a goal goes in. Mismatches happen.

But this? This was inexcusable — two shifts, two goals against by the Caps fourth line. It's hard enough to win in Washington. Spotting the Caps two early goals makes it nearly impossible.

A weekly deep dive into the biggest hockey news in the world with hosts Elliotte Friedman and Jeff Marek. New episodes every Thursday.

Milan Down

It was a move you could see coming for a long while, and finally McLellan pulled the trigger, yarding the eternally cold Milan Lucic off

of the first power-play unit, replacing him with the red hot Alex Chiasson.

At \$6 million per — and the de facto replacement for Taylor Hall on GM Peter Chiarelli's roster — Lucic now has two goals in his past 60 games. He had two more Grade A chances on Monday, but Lucic has found a way to defy that old hockey adage that says, "As long as the chances are there I know the goals are going to come, eventually."

They don't come.

Now. Later. Seemingly ever.

After scoring in the season opener, Lucic has been a good player for Edmonton in many ways. But ... he ... never ... scores ... a ... goal.

Lucic continues to hustle and create chances, while entering the game ranked third in the NHL in hits. So he's doing things — but at \$6 million the record shows that he was, on Monday, a third-line, second-unit left-winger. For that money, let's face it: the red light has to go on more than once every 30 games or so.

Chill Out

Hey, it's not all bad.

The wins that Edmonton has under its belt allow us to look at a loss at the home of the defending Cup champs, and a split in the season series with Washington, and say, "Meh, that won't kill ya."

They were nowhere near outclassed, and with a break or two could have escaped with a point. Edmonton is 1-1 on this road trip with a game Tuesday in Tampa and Thursday against Florida. Win one of two and you come home at .500 on the trip, with a couple home games against Colorado and Montreal ahead.

Good teams don't lose two in a row, though a back-to-back that ends in Tampa will surely test that mettle.

Nothing Doing, Doing Nothing

In 10 games this season, Jesse Puljujarvi has yet to come away as a plus player. He had zero shots on net again Monday, and has a 1-0-1 stat line this season that pretty tells you how much impact he has on a nightly basis.

His centreman Ryan Strome has not produced a point yet this season, and that line's left winger is Lucic. It's a black hole in Edmonton's offence, one being supported by some unexpected offence by Chiasson (six goals) and Drake Caggiula (five goals).

This third unit will have to fire up when Chiasson and Caggiula eventually cool off. These are all offensive players. Two goals in 38 man games for this line is simply not enough.

With Ty Rattie ready to draw back into the lineup, we wouldn't be surprised if Puljujarvi watched from the press box in Tampa.

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1114066 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Harsh reality setting in for reeling Senators - Sportsnet.ca

Wayne Scanlan November 5, 2018, 2:10 PM

The Ottawa Senators could be forgiven for reflecting back on the "good old days."



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No, not the 2006-07 season, when Ottawa reached the Stanley Cup final, we're talking about the first seven games of the 2018-19 NHL season for a young and rebuilding Senators team.

It was two-plus weeks into the season and the mood around Palladium Drive could not have been lighter. The harvest sun shone and smiles radiated.

On Oct. 21, the Senators owned a 4-2-1 record, with victories over the Toronto Maple Leafs, Montreal Canadiens and Dallas Stars to their credit.

The kids were on fire with Brady Tkachuk, Thomas Chabot and Maxime Lajoie leading the team in most of the offensive categories.

Right from camp, the remaining veterans – namely Matt Duchene, Mark Stone and Mark Borowiecki — had spoken of a better culture in the dressing room, and a chip on the shoulders of players after a horrific off-season.

For the first seven games they did. For a few precious days, fans forgot about stingy payroll and the departure of Erik Karlsson and embraced a fun, exciting young club.

After the next seven games (1-4-2), a reality set in so harshly that the team held a players-only meeting following Sunday's soul-crushing 4-3 overtime loss to Tampa Bay, a game the Senators had in their grasp until the dying seconds of the third period. The Lightning net empty and Ottawa killing a penalty in a four-versus-six disadvantage, Borowiecki failed to clear the zone and two forwards (Tom Pyatt, Magnus Paajarvi) left the zone with him to pursue what looked to be an empty-net opportunity.

Instead, Tampa defenceman Ryan McDonagh stripped Borowiecki of the puck, a steal that former Senators defenceman Jason York called "all world."

Left defenceless (literally defence-less with Borowiecki up at the blue line), Senators goaltender Craig Anderson was victimized by Brayden Point on a pass from Tyler Johnson with 26 seconds remaining. Tampa needed just 14 seconds of overtime to win it on a Yanni Gourde shot, following a net drive by Point.

The Senators never recovered from that punch to the gut late in the third.

Duchene touched on that theme post-game when he told reporters, "we've been a bit of a punching bag in the third period."

It hasn't helped the cause that when the Senators do hold a third-period lead, as they did Sunday and also Thursday versus the Buffalo Sabres, they drop their up-tempo, heavy forecheck game and sit back.

The third period Sunday was arguably the Senators' most passive approach of the season, modelling a 1-4 system for much of it (with leads of 2-1 and then 3-2). In fact, the lone "forechecker" tended to approach with caution rather than energy and hustle.

Sadly, the Senators' loss ruined a night in which the club had a decent first-period bounce-back after having their lunch handed to them in a 9-2 rout in Buffalo the day before.

Some of the uglier statistics for the Senators, after 14 games:

- Goals for/against has shifted as though the ice has tilted. At 45/59, or minus-14, it's the second-worst mark in the Eastern Conference (thank you, Detroit Red Wings).

- The road record is abysmal (1-4-1). Without favourable line matchups, they are getting eaten alive by elite players. At home, the Senators are a respectable 4-2-2.

- Road power outage. Their road power play is 1-for-14, or 7.1 per cent, ranked 30th. Inexplicably, the Senators have displayed superior puck movement on their home power plays, and are third in the NHL at 36.7 per cent.

- Take 40. Ottawa gives up nearly 40 shots per game (39.1), now worst in the league, supplanting Anaheim in that category. Shots for are 28, meaning they are minus-11 in shots per game, on average. In the third period, Tampa outshot the Sens 21-4. Against Buffalo last Thursday, it was 23-8 in the third. There ought to be a mercy rule.

- Brady, Brady: the Senators are 2-4-2 since Tkachuk went down with a torn ligament in his leg in a game against Dallas Oct. 15.

Not that the loss of Tkachuk is the be-all, end-all but the rookie winger symbolized a renewed spirit and energy to this young lineup. He should provide a lift this week, assuming he is declared ready to go either Tuesday versus the visiting New Jersey Devils or Thursday against the Vegas Golden Knights at the CTC.

Amid the tailspin – losses in six of the past seven — not enough has been made of the loss of two veteran, two-way centres who could help clean up the Senators' horrendous play in their own zone. Jean-Gabriel Pageau suffered a torn Achilles during pre-season fitness testing, and Zack Smith is out with facial fractures after getting a skate in the face on Oct. 26 in Colorado.

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Unlike others around town who relentlessly question the ownership and management of this hockey club, the Senators players insist they will accept their share of the blame.

"As a group we have to take some ownership for our play and our results," Borowiecki said after the meeting. "There's been a few too many years here for us where the players haven't taken ownership."

RED FLAG: BUSES CUT

The Senators situation is grim, far beyond the wins and losses columns.

Sunday's attendance was 11,364, easily the smallest home crowd of the season. As an ominous signal to how this team is trending, OC Transpo, Ottawa's bus service provider, has announced that beginning with Tuesday's game against the Devils, the frequency of buses running out to the CTC is being reduced "based on observed ridership levels."

Too many lonely bus drivers.

It was understood a segment of the fan base has stopped driving out to Kanata for games. Clearly, they're not lining up to take transit options, either.

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1114067 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Maple Leafs' Morgan Rielly blossoming in 6th year as a pro - Sportsnet.ca

Chris Johnston November 5, 2018, 7:14 PM

TORONTO — At the outset of his sixth NHL season, I asked Morgan Rielly what would constitute a step forward for the Toronto Maple Leafs.

It didn't take long for his response.

"You would say win a championship ..." Rielly said, "but I think if you break it down from there you'd say 'win a playoff series.' Then if you



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break it down from there you'd say 'win the division' and then if you break it down from there you say 'improve your record.'"

That popped back into my mind recently because it's the kind of answer that tells you more about the person delivering it than the subject he's speaking about. Rielly's inclination was to take a big aspiration and chop it into bite-sized, granular chunks.

With apologies to the Philadelphia 76ers, he seemed to be trusting the process.

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It's a useful quote to dust off now, too, since the 24-year-old is enjoying a ridiculously productive start to 2018-19 and unwilling to walk a reporter anywhere close to a conversation about why he's performing at such a high level.

That might not be a coincidence.

"I feel fine," Rielly said Monday. "We've played well as a group and that tends to reflect kindly upon individuals. That's about it."

Seeing his name in the high-rent district on the NHL's scoring chart explains some of the extra attention, too. Rielly scored twice in Saturday's 5-0 win over Pittsburgh to move alongside Mitch Marner for the team lead with 18 points — the highest total among all NHL defencemen.

But these are still the early stages of a long season.

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Rielly's been around long enough not to look too deeply into an offensive hot streak, in part because he understands when he's playing well, points or not. But he also surely wants to see it continue.

"I think he's really taken that extra step this year," said teammate Travis Dermott. "I think just his confidence has gone through the roof. He knows what he can do day in, day out, and he seems to be doing just that. And doing it very well."

It's hard to believe now that Rielly was barely even seeing power-play minutes just two seasons ago. Mike Babcock believed it was more important for him to focus on other aspects of his game.

Today he's second in the league with nine power-play points through 14 games — a benefit of manning the left point on Toronto's lethal first unit.

You get the feeling the coach now sees Rielly as a graduate of the school of hard knocks. He's earned a long leash.

"I think Dion [Phaneuf] was really good for Mo and [Jake Gardiner]," said Babcock. "He looked after 'em, he protected 'em, and him being a real solid citizen himself helps out. But I think they've just been around and understand what it takes and now Mo's an important, important player on our team."

"But he's an important guy because of his energy and what he brings everyday and how much he cares about winning."

This is what the Leafs envisioned for Rielly the day he was drafted back in 2012. He was the former front office's top-rated prospect that year and they were thrilled when the New York Islanders called Griffin Reinhart's name after Nail Yakupov, Ryan Murray and Alex Galchenyuk were already taken.

That left Rielly for them at No. 5 — a player they believed could blossom into the kind of leader and difference-maker he's become today.

After more than 400 NHL games, he's a voice of reason inside the Leafs dressing room. Even with a 9-5-0 start and the big win over the Penguins, he was challenging teammates to find another level at Monday's practice.

"I think we're happy with the way we played against Pittsburgh, but it's important that we're able to do that every night," said Rielly. "We want to be a bit more consistent, have less ups and downs. You know those good teams that can find a way to be good every single night, that's what we've got to do."

At least he's pretty clear on what it's going to take to do that.

Rielly is the last player you have to be concerned about getting distracted from the larger task at hand. He just focused on all the incremental improvements in the meantime.

"There are many different things that you have to accomplish along the way and things you have to improve along the way just in order to get there," Rielly said in September, on the first day of training camp. "I think if you really want to break it down I'd say practice habits being better, you know, preparation improving."

"All that kind of stuff has to happen in order to reach the final goal."

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1114068 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Golden Knights' Pacioretty on Montreal: 'The media is different there' - Sportsnet.ca

Luke Fox | November 5, 2018, 3:34 PM

TORONTO — The weather? The fan recognition? The history? The style of play? The pre-game theatrics?

No.

The biggest difference Max Pacioretty says he has noticed since being traded from hockey's most storied franchise to its least is the media.

That's a telling statement from a man who gave the first decade of his pro career — the past three seasons with a C on his chest, rumours in his ear and an unshakable weight on his shoulders — to a passionate city before quickly re-upping for four more in Vegas, a town that lightens moods as quickly as it does wallets.

"The media is much different there," Pacioretty said Monday, as Canadiens fans count down to his Bell Centre return Saturday.

"Expectations are in every organization to win, but in a Canadian market, everybody knows you have to answer the questions about those expectations every day. That's the biggest difference I've seen, and it leads to a lot of positivity."

"Any market, when things are going well, it's easy to say the atmosphere is great. In tough times, that's when you really get a good test of what the atmosphere will be like, what type of people you have in the organization."

In reading that quote again, one can imagine a shelf of untold stories between the lines.

A month into their union, neither Pacioretty nor the Knights, your defending Western Conference champs, have exactly stormed the castle gates.



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Absent of star power and juiced-up shooting percentages, the Knights, so magical last fall, have looked rather ordinary at 6-7-1, slinking to the perimeter of the playoff picture.

The only team with a worse goals-per-game average than the Knights' 2.29, the L.A. Kings, fired their coach Sunday.

"We were faced with a lot of adversity early on with injuries and a bit of a tough start and with [Nate Schmidt] being out, but the atmosphere never changed. It says a lot about the culture of this team and why they had success last year," said Pacioretty.

He noted that it's not the volume of reporters but the line of questioning that's more reasonable playing a winter sport in Nevada.

"It's a bit more realistic. You don't sit up front every day and answer questions about how bad you are. It's completely different in that sense, but at the same time expectations on any team is Stanley Cup or bust," said Pacioretty.

The exiled captain hasn't been watching Montreal's victories. He has, however, taken notice of the Habs' shiny 7-4-2 record since his departure, which has raised our eyebrows, if not his.

"I don't think it's surprising," Pacioretty, 29, said. "A lot of guys have really stepped up and bounced back really well. That seems to be the case oftentimes in big markets, and then also when there's less pressure, less expectation. You saw with Vegas last year, with the expectations and how they did. It's easier to skate down the ice when you don't have that on your shoulders."

As for his relationship with GM Marc Bergevin?

"No hard feelings," Pacioretty said, but only that.

For his homecoming — a date that can't come and go soon enough — Pacioretty quipped that he might turn off his phone, for fear of fulfilling so many ticket requests that he'll max out his credit card.

"It's a distraction, as you would expect it to be, playing there for so long and being the captain. But it'll be nice to get it out of the way and hopefully I'm able to play in it and hopefully we can have some success," he said. "It'll be fun to go back. Hopefully I play."

Ah, yes. Health has been a concern for the team in white gloves. Three weeks into their second season, the Golden Knights lost their workhorse shutdown defenceman, Schmidt, to drug suspension and two-thirds of their expensive, renovated second line to injury.

Free-agent splash signing Paul Stastny (lower body) is still sidelined for weeks if not months with a lower-body injury, and Pacioretty has missed four games since taking a hard shoulder to the face from Tampa Bay defenceman Braydon Coburn early in Oct. 26's defeat at home.

"I got hit right in the nose, really. That part of it, obviously people would question it, but I think what transpired and what happened leading up to the hit was uncontrollable. It probably was just a hockey play," Pacioretty said.

"I really felt my game and the team's game was starting to come around and then — boom — I got hurt right away, second shift of the game. That's frustrating," elaborates Pacioretty, who has two goals, no assists and a minus-4 rating through 10 games.

"If you don't pick up points and you're not playing, you just feel like you've got to get back out there and help your team. But that was all out of my control."

The suspicion of a concussion has been neither confirmed nor denied by the team, and Pacioretty chuckled Monday at the fact he couldn't recall the official description of his ailment.

The star winger participated in his first intense, full-contact practice since getting rocked in the head, working the left flank on power-play reps and rushing the ice alongside Alex Tuch and Erik Haula on the second line.

As he peeled off his gear and absorbed chirps from his teammates over the gust of Canadian media attention, Pacioretty said he felt healthy but that his availability Tuesday night versus the Maple Leafs won't be confirmed until after the morning skate.

"Well, it definitely doesn't help your hockey club, but you can't use it for an excuse," Knights coach Gerard Gallant said of the three-headed injury bug. "The problem was the puck wasn't going in the net like everybody else, and when you're a key player like [Pacioretty] and you come to a new team, you want results right away — and he wasn't getting them. But he's playing fine and working hard and he's going to be a big part of our group."

"It's going to be a big night in Montreal."

Indeed.

The media might even show up.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 11.06.2018

1114069 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Harsh reality setting in for reeling Senators - Sportsnet.ca

Wayne Scanlan November 5, 2018, 2:10 PM

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It hasn't helped the cause that when the Senators do hold a third-period lead, as they did Sunday and also Thursday versus the Buffalo Sabres, they drop their up-tempo, heavy forecheck game and sit back.

The third period Sunday was arguably the Senators' most passive approach of the season, modelling a 1-4 system for much of it (with leads of 2-1 and then 3-2). In fact, the lone "forechecker" tended to approach with caution rather than energy and hustle.

Sadly, the Senators' loss ruined a night in which the club had a decent first-period bounce-back after having their lunch handed to them in a 9-2 rout in Buffalo the day before.

Some of the uglier statistics for the Senators, after 14 games:

- Goals for/against has shifted as though the ice has tilted. At 45/59, or minus-14, it's the second-worst mark in the Eastern Conference (thank you, Detroit Red Wings).
- The road record is abysmal (1-4-1). Without favourable line matchups, they are getting eaten alive by elite players. At home, the Senators are a respectable 4-2-2.
- Road power outage. Their road power play is 1-for-14, or 7.1 per cent, ranked 30th. Inexplicably, the Senators have displayed superior puck movement on their home power plays, and are third in the NHL at 36.7 per cent.
- Take 40. Ottawa gives up nearly 40 shots per game (39.1), now worst in the league, supplanting Anaheim in that category. Shots for are 28, meaning they are minus-11 in shots per game, on average. In the third period, Tampa outshot the Sens 21-4. Against Buffalo last Thursday, it was 23-8 in the third. There ought to be a mercy rule.
- Brady, Brady: the Senators are 2-4-2 since Tkachuk went down with a torn ligament in his leg in a game against Dallas Oct. 15.

Not that the loss of Tkachuk is the be-all, end-all but the rookie winger symbolized a renewed spirit and energy to this young lineup. He should provide a lift this week, assuming he is declared ready to go either Tuesday versus the visiting New Jersey Devils or Thursday against the Vegas Golden Knights at the CTC.

Amid the tailspin – losses in six of the past seven — not enough has been made of the loss of two veteran, two-way centres who could help clean up the Senators' horrendous play in their own zone. Jean-Gabriel Pageau suffered a torn Achilles during pre-season fitness testing, and Zack Smith is out with facial fractures after getting a skate in the face on Oct. 26 in Colorado.

Stream over 500 NHL games blackout-free, including the Flames, Oilers, Leafs and Canucks. Plus Hockey Night in Canada, Rogers Hometown Hockey, Scotiabank Wednesday Night Hockey and more.

Unlike others around town who relentlessly question the ownership and management of this hockey club, the Senators players insist they will accept their share of the blame.

"As a group we have to take some ownership for our play and our results," Borowiecki said after the meeting. "There's been a few too many years here for us where the players haven't taken ownership."

RED FLAG: BUSES CUT

The Senators situation is grim, far beyond the wins and losses columns.

Sunday's attendance was 11,364, easily the smallest home crowd of the season. As an ominous signal to how this team is trending, OC Transpo, Ottawa's bus service provider, has announced that beginning with Tuesday's game against the Devils, the frequency of buses running out to the CTC is being reduced "based on observed ridership levels."

Too many lonely bus drivers.

It was understood a segment of the fan base has stopped driving out to Kanata for games. Clearly, they're not lining up to take transit options, either.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 11.06.2018

1114070 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Islanders chasing surprising sixth straight win of post-Tavares era - Sportsnet.ca

Eric Engels November 5, 2018, 1:48 PM

BROOKLYN — No one could have seen this coming. Don't believe anyone who tells you they did.

The New York Islanders lost 30 of their final 45 games as they sputtered to a 22nd-place finish in the standings last season.

It was unimaginable that they'd win eight of their first 13 games with their best player, John Tavares, ditching them this summer to sign a lucrative contract with the Toronto Maple Leafs.

Josh Bailey and Anders Lee, who combined for 133 points as Tavares' linemates were supposed to shrink in his absence. Brock Nelson couldn't possibly serve as an adequate replacement. And though Mathew Barzal may have taken home Rookie-of-the-Year honours as the NHL's Calder Trophy winner this past June, it would have been too much to ask for him to be ready to fill Tavares' skates at both ends of the rink by October.

On the back end, the team which struggled mightily to defend last season, giving up a league-worst 296 goals, lost one of its best blue liners in Calvin de Haan to free agency and brought in 28-year-old Luca Sbisa on a tryout. No one was painting that as a wash.

And in net, Jaroslav Halak left for the Boston Bruins while beleaguered goaltender Robin Lehner was brought in from the Buffalo Sabres. They may have had identical numbers for their respective teams a season ago, but few would have pegged Lehner as the answer to New York's woes in goal.

It was consensus that Stanley Cup-winning coach Barry Trotz, who was signed over the summer, was going to have a hard time getting this Islanders team to defy the odds.

"The fact is they've won five games in a row, and where they're good is they're really closing the play well and they're not giving other teams much," said Montreal Canadiens coach Claude Julien on Monday morning prior to his team's first game against the Islanders.

"It's not surprising to me, either, with the way Barry coaches," Julien added. "He's always good at getting his message across and getting his players to buy in. That's why they won in Washington and that's why they're having success right now, here on the Island."

It is the same recipe that has allowed the Canadiens to surprise out of the gate, starting 7-4-2, beating A-level teams like the Bruins,



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Pittsburgh Penguins and Washington Capitals along the way, and not allowing themselves to lose consecutive games to this point.

Another similarity between the teams is that they're getting contributions from everyone.

It was after a 2-1 win over the Carolina Hurricanes last Sunday that Trotz said, "We need all 20 guys to be successful. We don't have the game-breakers some other teams have."

Bailey (three goals, 12 assists), Lee (five goals, eight assists) and Nelson (team-leading seven goals) have done their part, and Barzal has contributed a goal and 11 assists. But it doesn't end there.

Valtteri Filppula, Jordan Eberle and Casey Cizikas each have seven points and Andrew Ladd has scored six. The defence has been steady, while Lehner and Monday's starter Thomas Greiss have been otherworldly.

Greiss, who's coming off a 35-save shutout of the New Jersey Devils, is rocking a .944 save percentage and an infinitesimal 1.85 goals-against average.

No one would have guessed that a game against the Islanders would present one of the biggest tests the Canadiens could face in the early part of this season. But there's no denying it, with New York at 8-4-1 and leading the Metropolitan Division.

"Tonight's going to be a matter of us playing our game but not getting frustrated," said Julien. "At the same time, we've got to tighten up our game because we've been giving up too much on the offensive side of things.

"We're giving up too much room and too many chances."

The Canadiens will also rely on backup Antti Niemi to be up to the task after going 2-1 and posting an .898 save percentage through his first three starts.

No other changes are expected to their lineup, which lost 4-1 to the Tampa Bay Lightning on Saturday.

"No matter how well we played Saturday, we lost," said Julien. "We have to bounce back with a good win tonight."

That will be a tall task.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 11.06.2018

1114071 Websites

TSN.CA / Rielly: Leafs 'D' takes criticism a little personally - TSN.ca

Mark Masters

TSN Toronto reporter Mark Masters checks in daily with news and notes on the Maple Leafs. The Maple Leafs practised at MasterCard Centre on Monday.

After Saturday's big win in Pittsburgh, Mike Babcock was asked about the play of Morgan Rielly, who is leading all NHL defencemen with six goals and 18 points. And while the offensive explosion is impressive, the Maple Leafs coach chose to highlight a different contribution.

"There's no one who likes being a Leaf more on our team than Morgan and he provides leadership that way," Babcock told reporters. "He's got unbelievable enthusiasm every day and a zest for life and he shares that with the guys."

Did Rielly hear about the comment?

"Yeah, I did," he said with a shrug. "I think he was just in a good mood, because we won."

But Babcock reiterated the sentiment after Monday's practice.

"He comes in here every day fired up," Babcock said. "And you know people like that and you know people who aren't and who do you want to hang out with?"

So, where does this boundless energy come from?

"It's just nice coming to the rink every day," Rielly said. "It's a pretty good job and I think we should appreciate it and do our best to have a good attitude."

Asked if he's feeling more confident this season, Rielly starts shaking his head.

"I feel fine," he said. "We play well as a group and that tends to reflect kindly on individuals and that's about it."

Rielly always seems to downplay his personal accomplishments even with his teammates, who will often give him a hard time about his modesty.

"We call him, 'Big Dog,' or different nicknames," revealed Jake Gardiner, Rielly's old roommate. "He doesn't like it too much. I don't think he loves the attention that he's leading the league, but he's playing so well he deserves it."

Leafs ribbing 'Big Dog' Rielly for being so modest

Morgan Rielly currently leads the league in scoring among defencemen but he's not one to relish in that attention. The modest 24-year old is more worried about the team's success but his teammates can't help but take a few shots at Rielly's hot start to the season.

Whether Rielly wants to admit it or not, he certainly seems to have found another gear this season.

"His confidence has gone through the roof," gushed 21-year-old defenceman Travis Dermott.

Another example came on Saturday night in Pittsburgh when Rielly jumped into the rush to score the game's third goal midway through the second period.

"You have no idea how he ended up with a breakaway or half breakaway, but he saw his opportunity and went and read it perfectly," marvelled Dermott. "I don't know if I'd be jumping up at the start of the rush but, I mean, if he has confidence in himself that way then hopefully I can get that one day as well."

Rielly started the play in his own end with a quick pass to Kasper Kapanen in the neutral zone before skating hard up the ice and into the offensive zone.

"He was coming through with speed there," observed Mitch Marner. "He saw the puck was on the right side and the left side was open so he got in the hole there."

"That just shows the confidence he has," said Gardiner. "Obviously, he had the ability the whole time, but he's brought his game to a new level, I think. Every time he has the puck, I would say 98% of the time he's making the right play."

Rielly finished this particular play with a beautiful shot that went in off the post.

"He hasn't missed his chances when he's had them either so that's going to give him confidence," noted Marner.

It was John Tavares who fed Rielly on the goal and the presence of the reliable two-way centre contributed to the defenceman's read on the play.



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"Just a good play by Johnny," Rielly recalled. "I mean, you know who you're out there with and he's able to make plays and is responsible defensively so when he's the guy with the puck you feel a bit more comfortable with it, for sure."

Rielly is averaging 3.3 shots per game this season up from 2.4 a year ago.

Such a sweet sound.@mriles4 fires one off the iron and in for his fifth of the season. #LeafsForever pic.twitter.com/brPxDyQQD1

— Toronto Maple Leafs (@MapleLeafs) November 4, 2018

While Rielly is reluctant to talk about his own play, it's clear he feels a responsibility to the group as a whole. And he is well aware that much of the chatter around the team in the off-season was about whether this defence is good enough to contend.

"We all take it a little personally," Rielly admitted. "There's lots of talk about our D corps needing to improve and as players we went home and worked hard all summer and made sure in training camp we were ready to go."

Rielly on criticism of Leafs D: 'We all take it a little personally'

With a lot of offseason criticism coming down on the Maple Leafs needing to improve their defence, Morgan Rielly admits that they all took it personally and he made a conscious effort to get better over the summer.

The 24-year-old has already been an alternate captain for a couple seasons in Toronto and seems increasingly comfortable in the role. Marner notes that Rielly is often the guy organizing dinners during road trips.

"All of us that came in my first year, he took us in right away and made us feel a part of the team and he still does that," Marner said. "He still brings us in and makes us feel a part of that family. It's a special talent he's got."

"He's always happy," said Dermott of Rielly. "He's not a guy who will show up upset about practice or not wanting to be here so it's great seeing him every day with a smile on his face and ready to come to work. That's a great trait to have in a leader."

Rielly is also taking a leadership role when it comes to community initiatives. For example, he's the face (pardon the pun) of the team's November campaign.

"I think it's important," Rielly said. "When you play for this team, you get opportunities to be part of this community and do things that can help."

Rielly also confirmed he's looking to expand his role in the community moving forward. So, it's shaping up to be a big year for him in more ways than one.

"It's nice seeing that," said Marner when asked about Rielly's growing confidence. "It should be a special year for him."

It's MNovember for a reason. Please go to the link and help the @MapleLeafs and I support men's health initiatives. <https://t.co/GlnSZHOTf6>

— morgan rielly (@mriles4) November 2, 2018

In recent social media posts, Marner has been using a goat emoji – in reference to the Greatest of All-Time acronym – to refer to the 39-year-old Patrick Marleau.

"He's the GOAT," Marner explained nonchalantly after Monday's practice. "There's no question about it. He's the Tom Brady of hockey. I mean, he's an unbelievable guy. He does a lot for us in this locker room ... he's a special talent on the ice. You see how he moves out there. He still looks like he's 20. It's a lot of fun being around him and joking around with him."

Anything for the you and the ☹️! <https://t.co/WzZ2GeaePk>

— Mitchell Marner (@Marner93) November 5, 2018

After a slow start, Marleau is beginning to heat up with goals in consecutive games. Saturday's tally was Marleau's 538th moving him into a tie with Keith Tkachuk for 32nd on the all-time list.

Marleau is due to enter the top 10 on the career games played list later this season.

"Probably the most humble guy I've met," said Gardiner, "for a guy who's played almost 1,600 games."

Considering his understated nature, how is Marleau liking his new nickname?

"He doesn't like it too much," Marner admits. "But it doesn't stop us from calling him that. So, he's the GOAT."

Marner explains why 'GOAT' Marleau is the Tom Brady of hockey

Who's considered the 'GOAT' of the NHL right now? Ask Mitch Marner and he'll tell you why his teammate Patrick Marleau is the Tom Brady of hockey.

The Leafs actually outscored the Penguins talent-rich power play in Saturday's win. Zach Hyman posted the club's first shorthanded goal of the campaign late in the third period while Toronto killed off all five Pittsburgh man advantages.

"When we get our feet moving and breaking up the other team's breakout it's pretty frustrating for the power play," Marner explained. "We made it hard on them to get out of their zone and when you do that to a team it really frustrates them. It starts on the first power play against. We were ready to go for that first PK."

Marner, who's getting consistent penalty-kill minutes for the first time in his NHL career, had a couple chances to score shorthanded.

"We're not really trying to get too many offensive chances," the winger insisted. "We're just trying to get it down the ice and use our speed to our advantage. I think if we keep doing that we'll get chances off that."

Thanks to the performance in Pittsburgh, Toronto's penalty kill (82.5%) is now ranked eighth in the NHL and third in the Eastern Conference.

Leafs Ice Chips: Marner's a tough killer to catch

The Maple Leafs 5-0 win over the Penguins was one of their best all-around games of the season and they also managed to keep Pittsburgh's potent power play off the board killing all five penalties they gave up. Mark Masters has more on the new dynamic Mitch Marner is bringing to Toronto's PK.

Lines at Monday's practice:

Hyman-Tavares-Marner

Marleau-Kadri-Kapanen

Johnsson-Lindholm-Brown

Ennis-Gauthier-Leivo

Moore

Rielly-Hainsey

Gardiner-Zaitsev

Dermott-Ozhiganov

Marincin-Holl

Andersen

Sparks



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Power play units at Monday's practice:

Rielly

Tavares-Kadri-Marner

Marleau

Gardiner

Ennis-Johnsson-Leivo

Moore^

^ Likely a placeholder for Hyman who was working with PK

TSN.CA LOADED: 11.06.2018

1114072 Websites

TSN.CA / Rielly reluctant to discuss sensational start - TSN.ca

Kristen Shilton

TORONTO – Morgan Rielly is having one of the best seasons by a defenceman in the entire National Hockey League. Just don't ask him to talk about it.

But that's a tough topic to avoid with the Maple Leafs' blueliner, especially after his two-goal performance in Toronto's 5-0 shutout of Pittsburgh on Saturday has him leading all NHL defenders in goals (six) and points (18) this season. He's also tied for the Leafs' lead in points with Mitch Marner and tops the Leafs in ice time at 22:27 per game.

But Rielly, 24, has become a master of sidestepping questions about his play.

"I feel fine, I feel fine," Rielly hurriedly assessed after practice at MasterCard Centre on Monday. "We played well as a group [in Pittsburgh] and that tends to reflect kindly upon individuals and that's about it."

And yet, there's so much more to Rielly, not just in his impact on the ice this season, but in all that he means to the Maple Leafs off it.

Statistically, this is shaping up to be the best season of Rielly's career, trumping the 2017-18 season when he produced 52 points. It took him all of 14 games to match his goal total from the 76 games he played last season and he's scoring at an even higher rate all around this year, hitting the 18-point mark almost a month earlier than he did last season on Dec. 2.

Rielly even surpassed Bobby Orr's 45-year-old record for most points by a defenceman through the first five games of a season (Orr had 11, Rielly tallied 12). That Rielly grew up idolizing Orr and wears number 44 because of him is just a bonus.

And while the man himself remains reluctant to discuss his sensational start, Rielly's teammates are happy to oblige.

"We call him 'Big Dog' or different nicknames. He doesn't like it too much," said Jake Gardiner, Rielly's former defensive partner and roommate. "I don't think he loves the attention that [comes with] leading the league, but he's playing so well he deserves it."

"It's easy to see how successful he's been with the points, but I think he's just really dialed it in," added Travis Dermott. "He's taken that extra step this year. As a young guy looking up to him, it's great to see, and gives me that much more motivation to do what he's doing and push myself like he has."

Dermott referenced Rielly's first goal from Saturday's game, where he entered the rush, as a particularly impressive example of the confidence Rielly is playing with this year.

"He saw his opportunity and read it perfectly," Dermott said. "Little stuff like that where, for myself, I wouldn't be jumping up at the start of the rush but [he] has confidence in himself that way."

"He's very good at seeing the situation, knows when to jump in and when not to," added Marner. "He's been jumping in at the right time, getting himself open and not missing his chances. It should be a special year for him."

While Rielly keeps his thoughts close to the vest in public, behind closed locker room doors he's evolved into one of the Leafs' most important leaders.

"There's no one who likes being a Leaf more on our team than Rielly," head coach Mike Babcock said after Saturday's win. "...He's got unbelievable enthusiasm every day and zest for life and he shares that with the guys."

Rielly deflected Babcock's praise with a joke – "He was just in a good mood because we won," – but whether he's organizing dinners on the road or taking new players under his wing, Rielly is repeatedly referred to around the room as the Leafs' backbone.

"He's got high energy. It's always fun being around him," Marner said. "On the power play, when we're scoring or anything, usually it's us two screaming and getting loud about it. He brings us in, makes us feel a part of the family. It's that special talent he's got."

That's part of the reason Rielly has been an alternate captain for the past three seasons and why his name has been bandied about in consideration of Toronto's vacant captaincy.

But from his perspective, Rielly sees a group of players that is continuing to mature.

"We're older now; we're a little more experienced. We're all just a little more comfortable with one another," Rielly said. "The young guys, they're becoming more comfortable with the level we're playing at. Everyone gets a little tighter [on the ice] and that's certainly what's been happening here."

As for that infectious energy Rielly is purported to share, it's on display daily. When someone scores a big goal in practice, Rielly is never far away with a stick tap or even a celebratory hug.

Now into his sixth NHL season, it's that unabashed love of hockey that keeps driving him forward.

"It's just nice coming to the rink every day. It's a pretty good job," said Rielly. "We should appreciate it and have a good attitude."

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1114073 Websites

TSN.CA / Examining the Duchene deal one year later - TSN.ca

Ian Mendes

Exactly one year ago, Pierre Dorion was forced to cut his son's birthday dinner short.

On Nov. 5, 2017, the Senators general manager was putting the finishing touches on executing a massive three-way trade with the Colorado Avalanche and Nashville Predators. As a result, he had to



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excuse himself from the dinner table as the final pieces were falling into place.

"I hope I didn't ruin too many Sunday evening dinners. It was my son's birthday. I left after my bowl of wonton soup and I apologize to him," Dorion said with a wry smile in his opening statement after acquiring centre Matt Duchene.

Dorion can probably enjoy a distraction-free birthday dinner with his son this year – although the Senators general manager will still have a lot on his plate when it comes the fallout from that trade.

After landing Duchene one year ago, Dorion was confident the Senators could push themselves into the conversation of legitimate Stanley Cup contenders. But instead of moving up to the high-rent district, the Senators have watched themselves plummet to the NHL's basement in the past 12 months.

With exactly one year of hindsight, it's a natural time to re-examine the blockbuster deal. Would the Senators have just been better off hanging onto Kyle Turris and then flipping him out at the trade deadline?

It's worth remembering that the Senators had reached a significant contractual impasse with Turris, one that didn't appear to be headed to an amicable solution. That obviously started the clock ticking on his time in Ottawa and Dorion knew he couldn't let Turris walk out the door for nothing.

But instead of landing future draft picks or prospects – which are often the pieces acquired when moving a pending UFA – Dorion decided to swing for the fences by using Turris to land Duchene. It also cost him 2017 first-round pick Shane Bowers and a future first-round pick in either 2018 or 2019. It was universally seen as a steep price to pay, but Dorion was convinced Duchene was a significant upgrade on Turris.

Dorion was still in his 'win-now' mentality, firmly believing the Senators best chance to compete for a Stanley Cup would come with Erik Karlsson in his prime and playing on a very reasonable contract.

"We all know that the future is always now," Dorion stated one year ago. "We are on the right path. We're really encouraged with the direction this team is going."

The issue that most Sens fans have with this deal is that Dorion pushed all of his chips into the middle of the table, but then a few weeks later, he folded. The Senators fell into an abyss after an extended losing streak and about 12 weeks after acquiring Duchene, the organization was suddenly touting the merits of a rebuild.

On Nov. 5, 2017 they announced the acquisition of Duchene with a big, splashy press conference. By Feb. 9, 2018, they quietly announced a three-year contract extension for Dorion with a press release strongly hinting that a rebuild was on the horizon.

It was certainly as drastic of a 180-degree turn in philosophy as any professional sports team has had within a three-month window.

If the Senators had simply hung onto Turris, they likely would have been able to turn him into a first-round pick – or something close to that – around the trade deadline.

Near the 2018 deadline, seven first-round picks changed hands and a team like the Winnipeg Jets were willing to give up their first-round selection in exchange for pending-UFA centre Paul Stastny. So logic dictates there would have been a market for Turris and the Senators could have had a nice piece or two in return for him.

There's no doubt that if they were going down the path of a rebuild, hanging onto Turris would have been the "no-brainer" option.

Instead, the Senators have been put into a very awkward position of starting a rebuild without owning their 2019 first-round pick. And to

add another layer to their conundrum, they also need to decide what to do with Duchene's contract.

That could be the key to truly figuring out if the Senators can salvage this trade.

In Duchene's defence, he's delivered as advertised as a bona fide No. 1 centreman. He's produced at almost a point-per-game clip, generating 55 points in 59 games in the calendar year 2018. Those are terrific numbers and put him in directly in line with other star centres like John Tavares (51 points in 57 games in that span) and Steven Stamkos (47 points in 54 games).

The Senators have fallen off a cliff since Duchene's arrival, but it seems disingenuous to lay the blame for their demise at his feet. It feels more coincidental than anything else.

But if the Senators are truly committed to a rebuild, perhaps it makes sense to move Duchene before the deadline and acquire a sorely needed first-round draft pick in return.

At his introductory press conference last year, Duchene said he was "dying" for the opportunity to get close to the Stanley Cup. "I want to be a part of a long playoff run – that's the goal," he said at the time.

Duchene also stated flatly that he didn't want to be part of a re-build in Colorado, which is why he asked Joe Sakic for a trade. Two weeks ago, Duchene said he felt like he didn't want to simply bolt as a free agent from the Avalanche and leave them "high and dry" – which is why he asked for a trade in the first place.

The same logic would likely apply to his situation in Ottawa. If Duchene doesn't want to be part of a prolonged rebuild, he would likely have expressed that to Dorion in some way, shape or form – so that the Senators general manager would be prepared for the scenario of moving him. If Duchene didn't want to leave Sakic high and dry, why would he want to do that to Dorion?

Still, Dorion sounds optimistic that he can get a contract extension worked out with Duchene and a 90-minute meeting with his agent Pat Brisson in Toronto last month was characterized as positive. He refuses to divulge anything about the nature of the contract talks and has now started using a standard line when he is asked about Duchene's future in Ottawa.

"Hopefully, our next discussion on Matt Duchene is when we can hopefully announce a contract," Dorion has said multiple times in the past few weeks.

Re-signing Duchene would be a huge coup for Dorion and the Sens, who would obviously love to show their fan base that they still have the ability to acquire and hold on to star players. But again, is re-signing him the best strategy for a team that is undergoing a significant rebuild?

As we've seen in the past 12 months, hindsight is easy when it comes to analyzing the Duchene situation. The trickier part now for Dorion is having the foresight to get the next move right.

TSN.CA LOADED: 11.06.2018

1114074 Websites

TSN.CA / Sens appear to have turned the page on last season - TSN.ca

Ian Mendes

Guy Boucher stood at centre ice Monday at Canadian Tire Centre, barking loudly at his players.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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But the Senators head coach, who has been known to lash out at his team with stern language and tough practices, was actually yelling out the scores of a football-related game that was being staged on the ice.

"14-7!"

"28-14!"

"28-21!"

It was all part of a unique drill in which the players had to try and carry the puck through the neutral zone, past the defence and into an end zone to score a "touchdown."

"Man, that was a lot of fun," Senators forward Colin White said afterward. "I may have to take that down south to the boys next summer."

White's answer was revealing, because fun is a word that hasn't been used by anybody around the Senators for the better part of a calendar year. There is no denying that tension and drama filled the team's airspace at times last season and the players took little joy in practices during a season that saw them finish 30th overall in the standings.

Players rarely smiled on the ice or in the locker room during media availability in 2017-18 – a stark contrast from the upbeat mood that appears when the doors are open to reporters this season.

On Thursday morning before departing for Denver, goalie Craig Anderson was asked if he could elaborate on the mood inside the team's dressing room – and if the media was correctly reading the situation by suggesting the dynamics seemed to be different this season.

Anderson paused for several seconds before answering.

"My first impression to that question is yeah, everything is great. Everybody is doing stuff together," Anderson said. "I think people's personalities are starting to come out and guys are feeling more comfortable to let their personalities out. And that's huge. If you can be yourself in the room around the guys, the better off you're going to be."

Anderson pointed to the fact that the entire team attended the Justin Timberlake concert in Ottawa two weeks ago – something he had never seen in his time in Ottawa. Jason Spezza and Daniel Alfredsson would routinely organize team dinners, but never before had the whole team attended a concert at home during the season.

The Senators became a soap opera last season, with stories of dysfunction and inner turmoil constantly swirling around the organization. Even the newcomers to this year's team were well aware of the juicy storylines, but they made sure not to be swayed by the rumour mill.

"There was much written in the media about things that happened [before I came], so I have no influence or no knowledge of that," said Mikkel Boedker this week. "I come in here with a fresh mind. It's a new start for everybody."

That appears to be the case for everybody – whether they are new to the organization or a returning player from last year's calamity. A page has been turned from one of the most disastrous seasons in franchise history and the newfound chemistry inside the room appears to be a driving force in the team's early-season success. The club is 4-3-1 after eight games and is in the conversation for one of the most pleasant surprises of the season.

"We're portraying what's going on behind the scenes on the ice," Matt Duchene said last week. "We're a young group that is having a lot of fun together and we really enjoy each other. It's a lot of fun to be around the guys and we're playing for each other."

One month into the season, the Senators are actually a likeable bunch – no small feat when you consider the brand was probably at its lowest point in franchise history. And the recent five-game homestand proved that at least some Ottawa fans are back on the Senators bandwagon. Many wondered if the Canadian Tire Centre would be a building devoid of energy and atmosphere this season, but that has hardly been the case. Yes, there have been empty seats this season, but there hasn't been an empty feeling inside the arena.

There have been moments of genuine electricity and emotion at home this month – authentic moments that don't feel forced. From Jonathan Pitre's mom dropping the puck on opening night, to a touching video tribute to Ray Emery and a unique celebration for Bob Cole, the Senators have been on point with their in-game ceremonies.

And when Mark Stone fired an overtime winner past Carey Price on Saturday night, the building erupted with the kind of emotion usually reserved for big games in March and April.

"That felt like it did when I just came out of college and the playoffs were starting here," White said, alluding to his NHL debut at the end of the 2016-17 season. "To have that atmosphere and that kind of support in here is a lot fun. And hopefully we get that again soon."

As expected, the attendance has dipped – but perhaps not as greatly as originally feared. Based on announced attendance, the Senators have averaged 15,082 fans per game through six home dates – about 800 fewer than the average attendance from last season.

Many fans vowed to keep this group at arm's length, refusing to embrace the organization after an extended run of futility. But the deep freeze between the organization and its fans appears to be in the earliest stages of a thaw. The club is reaching out to engage with social media influencers, inviting them to games and trying to reconnect them with the brand.

The players have been doing their part in trying to re-establish the brand off the ice. A story featuring Ryan Dzingel and a family dealing with childhood cancer was shared thousands of times on social media. Mark Borowiecki invited the Capital City Condors – a hockey league for people with physical and mental disabilities in the Ottawa area – onto the ice after Senators practice this week. Sixteen players and the entire coaching staff stayed on the ice to spend time with the kids and help them with drills. Borowiecki sent a group text to his teammates alerting them to the Condors visit, but even he was blown away that so many players decided to stick around.

"I was getting emotional out there, how proud I am of this group," Borowiecki said when looking at all of his teammates on the ice with Condors. "We had every guy out there, every coach out there. And they weren't just going through the motions. They were interacting with the kids. It was so special to see and it speaks to the group that we've got in here."

The Senators are even giving an Ottawa Hydro hard hat to the hardest-working player after each victory – a nod to the countless hours of work done by hydro workers in the aftermath of multiple tornadoes ripping through the region last month.

There was a perpetual dark cloud that seemed to hang over the franchise, as the Senators were unable to shake a cycle of negative news stories. Each time a new story hit the airwaves in 2018, Ottawa fans were left wondering, "Is this rock bottom?"

Now, as the month of October wraps up, it feels like that dark cloud is finally lifting. The Senators won three out of five games during their homestand. And in the month of October they scored massive Saturday-night wins over their two biggest rivals – the Toronto Maple Leafs and the Montreal Canadiens.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • November 6, 2018

For most of September, Ottawa fans feared the talk of the team finishing dead last in the standings and having to surrender the first-overall pick – likely Jack Hughes – to the Colorado Avalanche. As October draws to a close, it feels like Sens fans can dream about battling for a playoff spot instead of thinking about the worst possible scenario.

“There’s always that chance to be the one Cinderella story,” Borowiecki said last week, after the club finished a practice in Gatineau in an attempt to connect with their francophone fan base. “We’ve got a good feeling in here right now and you can probably tell the energy level is really high. The mood is really good and everyone is coming together as a group.”

TSN.CA LOADED: 11.06.2018

1114075 Websites

TSN.CA / Nylander tops first TSN Trade Bait board of the season - TSN.ca

Frank Seravalli

Tick tock.

We are now inside a month to Decision Day for William Nylander and the Toronto Maple Leafs as the Dec. 1 deadline to sign or sit out the season fast approaches.

Despite the Maple Leafs telling teams that they want to keep Nylander – and Nylander saying that he wants to stay in Toronto – the probability of a trade seemingly increases every day leading up to 5 p.m. on Dec. 1 so long as the two sides remain far apart.

It’s clear the Maple Leafs are holding firm to a price for Nylander that they feel fits their budget to allow them to re-sign Auston Matthews and Mitch Marner next summer. So until pen hits paper, there will be no shortage of suitors for Nylander.

That’s why Nylander has debuted at No. 1 on the first TSN Trade Bait board of the 2018-19 season.

It was this week last year that the first significant trade of 2017-18 was consummated, with Matt Duchene, Kyle Turris and an unprotected lottery pick changing sides in a three-team blockbuster between the Ottawa, Nashville and Colorado.

That type of marquee movement isn’t likely to occur this week. No trade is imminent, it seems. But there are quite a few meaningful names that bear watching in the months leading up to the Feb. 25 trade deadline.

In the immediate future, there is Nylander. The Carolina Hurricanes are one of a number of teams who have made it explicitly clear to Toronto GM Kyle Dubas that they would present a significant offer in order to land the 22-year-old Swede. (Hint: Carolina’s Brett Pesce, at No. 8 on the list, would be an excellent fit as a 23-year-old, top-four, right-shooting defenceman with five years of affordable cost certainty.)

In the short-term, the Los Angeles Kings and New York Rangers are candidates for early shakeups. They each have three players on the board. It’s believe GM Rob Blake would like to pull the trigger on a trade to try and shake the Kings (3-7-1) out of the Western Conference basement before resorting to a coaching change. The Rangers (4-7-1) may as well hasten their rebuild and get an important look at young players by moving pending unrestricted free agent vets.

Approaching February, talk will heat up on pending UFAs, most notably Artemi Panarin, Sergei Bobrovsky and Wayne Simmonds. The Flyers seem to truly have no idea which way it will go with Simmonds – they could well sign him long-term or move him ahead of the deadline. Columbus seems content on letting this season play out with Panarin before taking another run at re-signing the Bread Man.

The situation seems far less comfortable with Bobrovsky, the two-time Vezina winner, where contract talks have gone cold. It’s believed no meaningful progress has been made. Couple that with the fact that Bobrovsky is off to one of the worst starts of his career (.882 save percentage), and that backup Joonas Korpi has made the last three starts and, well, you can see things sliding off the rails.

Here are 15 names to set the table for the season with the first TSN Trade Bait board of the year:

1. William Nylander, TOR	RW	22	0	0
0	-	-		
2. Kevin Hayes, NYR	C	26	12	2
4	\$5.18M	UFA		
3. Mats Zuccarello, NYR	RW	31	12	3
10	\$4.5M	UFA		
4. Alec Martinez, LAK	RD	31	11	1
3	\$4M	2		
5. Gustav Nyquist, DET	RW	29	12	1
9	\$4.75M	UFA		
6. Tanner Pearson, LAK	LW	26	11	0
1	\$3.75M	2		
7. Sergei Bobrovsky, CBJ	G	30	6	3.87
.872	\$7.43M	UFA		
8. Brett Pesce, CAR	RD	23	12	2
3	\$4.03M	5		
9. Tyler Myers, WPG	RD	28	12	1
2	\$5.5M	UFA		
10. Artemi Panarin, CBJ	LW	27	10	5
15	\$6M	UFA		
11. Vlad Namestnikov, NYR	LW	25	11	1
3	\$4M	1		
12. Charles Hudon, MTL	LW	24	7	2
3	\$650K	RFA		
13. Zack Kassian, EDM	RW	27	8	1
1	\$1.95M	1		
14. Kyle Clifford, LAK	LW	27	9	1
1	\$1.6M	1		
15. Wayne Simmonds, PHI	RW	30	12	6
7	\$3.98M	UFA		

TSN.CA LOADED: 11.06.2018

1114076 Websites

TSN.CA / Punchless offence continues to plague the Kings - TSN.ca

Travis Yost



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • November 6, 2018

John Stevens is out as head coach of the Los Angeles Kings.

The news dropped Sunday afternoon and, while there was no doubt Stevens was on the proverbial hot seat, the timing was certainly interesting. Stevens was just starting his second year as head coach of the Kings after leading the team to the playoffs in his inaugural season behind the bench.

An ugly start to the 2018-19 season – the Kings have just four wins in 13 games – was no doubt a primary driver of Stevens' termination. The roster is built to win now, with veterans like Anze Kopitar (31), Ilya Kovalchuk (35), Dustin Brown (34), Jeff Carter (33), Drew Doughty (28), and Jonathan Quick (32) all moving towards the twilight of their respective careers.

But you sense that the way the 2017-18 season ended also left a bad taste in the front office's mouth. It's one thing to get swept in a first-round series. But the Kings managed to score three goals against the Vegas Golden Knights in the entire series – a hapless offensive effort by any stretch of the word.

The Kings have been mired in offensive futility for some time now. Even in their heyday, the Kings rarely had the individual offensive firepower to win games. The Kings preferred to pound teams into their defensive third, combining a heavy dump-and-chase style of hockey with an aggressive forecheck.

At their best they would wear teams out along the boards and win not because they were wondrous offensively, but because they rarely played in their defensive zone and could scratch out low-scoring games with a high degree of frequency.

This has been the case historically across all offensive situations but specifically at 5-on-5. The Kings have precisely zero seasons in the modern era (2007 onwards) with a top-10 or better attack. So while this year has felt like an exercise in futility when it comes to scoring, the reality is Stevens is sort of replicating what's been done by other Kings coaches in previous years. The only difference is that the possession dominance wore off years ago, and now the Kings just tend to look punchless more often than not:

You will note that even last year's playoff team wasn't particularly strong, offensively speaking. That version of the Kings had a monstrous season from Kopitar (92 points) and company, which was just enough to lock up one of the final playoff spots in the Western Conference.

The Kings, for all intents and purposes, returned a roster from last year that had one line generating any semblance of offence. Again though, this has been a common theme for the franchise for some time. If you look at how the Kings have performed offensively with and without Kopitar on the ice, it's been disastrous for a decade.

Top lines are always going to drive incrementally more scoring than any other option. Whether it's the Sidney Crosby line in Pittsburgh, the Nikita Kucherov line in Tampa Bay, or the Alex Ovechkin line in Washington, you should expect more offence when they are on the ice. But just look at the variances here! The Kings' bottom-nine forwards have almost comically underperformed league averages, save for decent years in 2007-08 and again in 2014-15.

This year has truly taken it to another level, though. With Kopitar off of the ice, the Kings are failing to average one goal per-60 minutes of 5-on-5 hockey. They have all of seven goals with Kopitar off of the ice at evens, and the regular season is 16 per cent complete. So, despite another strong year from Kopitar (his line primarily featuring Alex Iafallo and Ilya Kovalchuk has already scored 10 goals), the rest of the Kings simply can't find the back of the net.

All of this to say: Stevens may be a terrific head coach, or a terrible one, or somewhere in between. It's hard to evaluate a coach in such a small interval, and ultimately it's the job of the front office to get that decision right. If they believe the team tactically is underperforming, they had no choice but to let Stevens go. But it's

interesting that offence is indisputably at the centre of his termination, as it was for Marc Crawford, Terry Murray, and Darryl Sutter before him. The same is true for the management teams, too.

At the end of the day, the Kings have never put the pieces together to create a formidable offence. You can relate that to salary cap issues, forward development, tactics, luck or something else. The head coach is always going to be the first pin to pull out of the grenade, and maybe this will jump-start the Kings a bit.

More heads will likely roll if it doesn't.

TSN.CA LOADED: 11.06.2018

1114077 Websites

TSN.CA / With coaching change, Kings attempt to right ship before it's too late - TSN.ca

Frank Seravalli

Rob Blake pulled the emergency brake, trying to halt the runaway train that has become the Los Angeles Kings' season.

Blake fired head coach John Stevens and assistant Don Nachbaur on Sunday after a 4-8-1 start, making Stevens the first coaching casualty of the season following a year of unprecedented job security. No NHL head coach was fired in-season last year for the first time in the expansion era.

It will be former Vancouver Canucks coach Willie Desjardins' job to get the old and slow Kings freight train back on the rails - at least for the time being.

Desjardins was hired as the Kings' new head man on an interim basis, leaving the door open for a more extensive and complete coaching search should the change not produce desired results.

Former Kings player Marco Sturm will also join the club as an assistant coach on Nov. 12, following his commitment as head coach and general manager of the German national team in the ongoing Deutschland Cup. Assistant coaches Dave Lowry and Bill Ranford were retained in Bloody Sunday's regime change.

It was a move hardly surprising given the Kings' horrendous start. Despite a win on Saturday night against Columbus, the Kings (4-8-1) were dead last in the NHL. Stevens' seat grew significantly warmer during a six-game regulation losing streak that stretched from Oct. 13-25.

"I was looking to get the compete and passion back, we need our players emotionally involved. It's difficult to win when you're not," Blake said in a conference call with reporters. "We expect Willie to bring that passion and that excitement to this team and that's why we went in this direction."

Stevens, 52, lasted just one full season and 13 games (51-39-9) since replacing two-time Stanley Cup winner Darryl Sutter. He had one more season remaining on his contract and served the Kings for seven seasons as an assistant to Sutter and Terry Murray.

Blake pointed to the Kings' top players needing to be better as a reason for the underwhelming results.

Hart Trophy finalist Anze Kopitar has been a shell of his former self so far this season with just six points in 13 games. Netminder Jonathan Quick is on the shelf indefinitely after undergoing surgery last week to repair a torn meniscus in his knee.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • November 6, 2018

"When your best players are your best players, you will have success," Blake said. "It's been an issue this season that we haven't had everyone going in the right direction, on the right page [all] along, so [that's] partly the reason for this change."

Blake did not mention the Kings' roster construction - which falls under his domain - as one of the reasons for failure, though that is clearly at the root of it all.

Los Angeles ices one of the oldest rosters in the NHL this season, at an average age of 28.7 years old - and the Kings have done little to dispel the notion that they are among the slowest teams in a league that runs on jet fuel, not coal power.

The Kings signed 35-year-old free agent Ilya Kovalchuk to a three-year, \$18.75 million deal hoping to boost an offence that was swept out of the first-round last year by the Vegas Golden Knights, despite Quick allowing just seven goals in the entire series.

Kovalchuk has four goals and 11 points in 13 games so far, but the Kings' offence is still worst in the league with 28 goals in 13 games, averaging just 2.15 per contest.

"We have really good players, we have players that can make plays; we expect them to make plays and we expect them to play with that level of compete," Blake said. "We need to get that straightened out immediately."

Desjardins, 61, is the 25th coach in Kings franchise history. The Climax, Sask. native went 109-110-27 for a .498 points percentage over three full seasons with the Canucks from 2014-17.

Last season, Desjardins was coach of Team Canada's entry in the Winter Olympics in PyeongChang. Canada took home the bronze medal