



CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • November 13, 2019

THE NEWS & OBSERVER

'Divisive' announcer who called Canes 'a bunch of jerks' is fired after another rant

By Simone Jasper

The outspoken hockey announcer who called the Carolina Hurricanes "a bunch of jerks" is out of a job.

Don Cherry was fired from Sportsnet after going on a "divisive" rant about immigrants, the Canadian media company announced Monday on Twitter.

It wasn't his first brush with controversy.

Earlier this year, he called the Canes "a bunch of jerks" for celebrating their wins, The News & Observer previously reported.

Fans of the professional hockey team have since embraced the phrase, which has even appeared on T-shirts.

And when the Canes were seeking a name for a beer earlier this year, suggestions from social media users included "Bunch of Jerks Ale" and "Don Cherry's Tears."

Cherry lost his job the same day Raleigh's NHL team won against the Ottawa Senators — and some Twitter users pointed out the irony.

"Don Cherry gets canned," one person posted. "Canes blast Canadian team. I find it hard to believe this is a coincidence."

Others made light of the situation.

"Heartwarming: Carolina Hurricanes Vow To Hold Storm Surge Funeral For Don Cherry's Career," another person tweeted.

Cherry met his fate after appearing on "Hockey Night in Canada" on Saturday, ESPN and other news outlets report.

On air, he accused the country's immigrants of not following the tradition of wearing poppies, a symbol that recognizes those who died in war, USA Today reports.

"I know what I said and I meant it," Cherry told the Toronto Sun after backlash erupted. "Everybody in Canada should wear a poppy to honour our fallen soldiers."

In response to the announcer not backing down, one person wrote: "maybe Don Cherry was the real jerk all along."

THE ATHLETIC

Hurricanes vibe check: How sustainable are the highs, how worrisome are the lows?

By Sara Civian

Before the Hurricanes snapped their four-game losing streak in an 8-2 blowout against the Senators on Monday night, before Joel Edmundson's first three points as a Hurricane all came at once and he graced the locker room with "Any Man of Mine" by Shania Twain, I'd asked Rod Brind'Amour what his team's biggest problem was.

"There's a couple," Brind'Amour said Monday morning.

"When you don't score, it puts a lot of stress on everything. Every mistake you make gets magnified because then they become the crucial point of the game, versus if you're scoring a couple here or there you're not talking about maybe some of these other mistakes. Right now we have to have the mindset to go in and we might have to win 1-0. If we continue to get scoring opportunities the puck will go in. I'm not too worried about that. But it's the giving up chances, the really easy chances — we gotta get a little harder on the other team."

It wasn't quite time to panic, as there'd been stretches of hope recently, but losses in seven of the previous 10 games

isn't a report card you hang on the fridge, and Brind'Amour called the latest "very disturbing."

Captain Jordan Staal called its first period "a joke."

So the Canes yanked us from their best start in franchise history to two goals allowed in four seconds at Ottawa real quick. They've won games they should've lost and lost games they should've won. This is just how it goes in hockey sometimes, but the dramatic pendulum swinging has every opinion feeling like a simultaneous over- and under-reaction.

All we know is there were definitely problems before Monday's win, and those problems will still exist tomorrow.

Eight goals and one win later, and there's a collective relief sigh — Dougie Hamilton called a random game in November a "must-win" for a reason. At the same time, the problems plaguing the Canes haven't magically disappeared — the question becomes which ones are long term, and which positive trends are sustainable?



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The quality and quantity of chances for

True to their multi-year reputation, the Hurricanes are second only to Toronto with 480 shots this season (and one less game played) at even strength. While they're (only?) 10th in actual goals with 36 at five-on-five and No. 8 with 44 goals at even strength, they're first in expected goals (37.39) and high danger chances (177).

The eye test concurs, and all of this is why:

1. Brind'Amour said he isn't worried that the goals will come.
2. Eight goals came when the Hurricanes stuck to their game and were also awarded a few lucky bounces Monday.

Should you worry? Nah

The quality and quantity of chances against

Brind'Amour and Jacob Slavin have both expressed concern about the quality of chances allowed through this stretch — Brind'Amour touched on it above, Slavin after the loss to the Rangers.

"We need to get those things out of our game, we turn pucks over at the blue line, I think that's been the story the last couple of games," Slavin said. "That's when other teams are getting up chances and that's when we're giving up goals."

That's expected from a blue line full of high-event hockey — to a certain extent. This brand of error has been too prevalent with these Hurricanes lately, even with Brind'Amour's excellent point that mistakes are magnified when the team can't score.

This is potentially elucidated in the fact that the Hurricanes have only given up 396 shots (sixth-best in the NHL) and 325 (ninth-best) scoring chances at even strength, they have given up the fourth-most high danger goals in the league at 26. Logic tells us this means that when they do give up chances, they're generally giving up the hardest ones for goalies to save.

(Then the goalies aren't saving them, but still.)

It's what Brind'Amour means when he says other teams are capitalizing on the Hurricanes taking that one extra breath sometimes. It's not a habit the Canes can afford to get into.

Panic meter:

Goaltending

Petr Mrazek through 12 games played: 8-3-1, 2.51 GAA, .907 save percentage. Recent losses against the Rangers and the Flyers were rough in the sense that they weren't his fault, but he didn't keep the Canes in the game, either.

James Reimer through seven games played (six started): 2-4-0, 3.10 GAA, .901 save percentage. Two goals allowed in four seconds against one of the worst teams in the league wasn't necessarily his fault, but isn't instilling any confidence.

Overall, the tandem is below the coveted league average with a .899 save percentage. #It'sTooEarly to declare anyone out of a job — and neither has played himself out of a job — but a few more questionable games from Reimer

and the Hurricanes might give another goalie in the pipeline a look.

Panic meter:

'Your best players have to be your best players'

Several of the Hurricanes players had slow starts this season, which was fine until it wasn't. Some have figured it out while some are still struggling.

Sebastian Aho played with guts and scored two goals the 8-2 win Monday — a welcome reminder that October just isn't his thing. After a slow start, he's climbed up to No. 4 on the team in scoring and a tie for first in goals with 8-5—13 in 18 games played.

"He was around the puck," Brind'Amour said. "He was a little more conscious of the full game, and I think everyone was."

Does Aho think that's the most confident game he's played so far this season?

"Sure, if you wanna ... I don't know," he humbly laughed.

He'll be fine.

Will Nino Niederreiter? We all knew regression from his redemption tour last season was expected, but through 18 games:

Two goals, five assists (four of them secondary), 14 PIMs, one goal and one secondary assist on the power play.

The positive is he's under-performing: He has 4.6 expected goals and 26 high danger chances overall. That's still not "your best players being your best players." The Canes can live with it in light of Aho's awakening, but they'd obviously like him to start turning that "under-performing" into just "performing."

Meanwhile Dougie Hamilton and Andrei Svechnikov are tearing it up in every sense and "the new guys" have picked up slack when Aho and Niederreiter have struggled to score.

Panic meter:

Erik Haula's injury status

The unknown severity of Erik Haula's injury is the most worrisome problem on this list right now.

Carolina's early-season leading scorer (now tied with Dougie Hamilton and Aho with eight goals despite missing the past four games) was thought to be day-to-day at first.

"He's day-to-day. He's got some lingering effects. It's his knee that's bothering him, so we're just kind of precautionary, really, making sure he feels good before we get him back out there," Brind'Amour said after he missed his first game Nov. 5. "Nothing structural, which is good ... I'm telling you (what I know) so you'll stop asking."

That was concerning enough as it is, considering his initial knee injury limited him to 15 games with Vegas last season, but at least it was precautionary.

While it still might be precautionary, the most recent update in Ottawa on Saturday was bleaker.



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"He's not with us, so no update. He's still suffering from the knee injury that he suffered. I can't tell you anything other than that, he's not with us and he's definitely not day-to-day either."

You never want to speculate too much on injuries, but going from "day-to-day" to "definitely not day-to-day" with what appears to be a re-aggravation of a serious injury doesn't seem like good news. Haula's net-front presence and 11 points in 14 games haven't been easily replaceable either, especially with Niederreiter slumping and the Canes dropping the first three games in Haula's absence.

Panic meter:

Coaching/leadership/morale

It was fitting that Brind'Amour's 100th game as Hurricanes head coach was an 8-2 win following an ugly loss, because he's still that coach Jordan Martinook said he would run through hot coals for — and that still matters.

He's always going to have that patience with players that sometimes looks like stubbornness from the outside, but those votes of confidence are part of the reason his players tend to step up in must-perform situations.

I was impressed by how well the juggling of the line combinations worked Monday.

They went from:

Niederreiter-Staal-Teravainen
Svechnikov-Aho-Foegele
Dzingel-Wallmark-Necas
McGinn-Luostarinen-Gibbons

To:

Dzingel-Staal-Foegele
Svechnikov-Aho-Teravainen
Niederreiter-Wallmark-Necas
McGinn-Luostarinen-Gibbons

And it worked.

His actual decisions, his handling of the youngsters and the way the team responds to the rare times he's disappointed are all excellent.

I know you came to this section because you miss Justin Williams, though. Any team is better with his leadership, but I think some of you are forgetting last December. Every team goes through slumps, and not even Williams could've prevented last December. It was his response to it that turned things around (among other factors), so in my opinion, we really have no way to judge Jordan Staal's leadership until the season is over — but I will say that the Hurricanes players have extreme respect for him.

Panic meter:

Overall, there have been a few "disturbing" losses and moments in the Hurricanes' first 18 games of the season, but a quick 8-2 win and a vibe check show they're probably going to be OK. And so will you.

The jury's still out on this dude.

Seriously, the oral history of the stolen ice cream cone at the Hurricanes game

By Sara Civian

They say great moments are born from great opportunity, and even then Canes fan Joe Campen never thought he'd walk away from the Hurricanes' game Monday with a stolen ice cream cone and his first 15 minutes of internet fame.

Unless — as some Twitter cynics are whining — this video was staged. Posted by Twitter user @bairington44, it already has that has 2.3 million views, 10,800 retweets and 38,000 likes in less than 24 hours.

Noted Ice Cream Thief Weston Davis maintains that he was just messing with his longtime friend (guys being dudes) and he did not think it would turn into this.

"Love to make people laugh," Davis said.

Does it really matter even if it was planned? It was a much-needed laugh in a particularly tense hockey world Monday night.

"I was just looking at my friend's phone 'cause he was showing me a video and this guy took my ice cream haha," Campen detailed the crime of the century to The Athletic. "I didn't get to lick it yet, I had just got it so at least it was clean."

The victim said he realized what was happening as he felt the weight of his (vanilla, for the record) ice cream cone leave his hands, but he didn't know where to look when it hit him that someone was actually stealing his ice cream on live television.

"Joe and I are good friends," said Davis, who was just called "this guy" by his good friend. "He was standing there behind the camera and I just thought I'd mess with him hoping maybe the camera would get a shot of it."

While it's mildly concerning that Davis clearly didn't care if Campen had licked it yet — and that he was going to return it after he licked it as if nothing had happened — this is a judgment-free zone. Besides, our Robin Hoodie eventually did the right thing.

"I was friendly about it because I saw him walk off and get me a new one, and we both laughed because it was on TV," Campen said. "Me and the thief are on good terms and buddies. Actually a really nice guy!"

They have been buddies since eighth grade when Campen moved to Davis' school and they both played hockey.

Nothing to bond two hockey-loving Caniacs together like an 8-2 win and joint appearances on ESPN and the Hurricanes' new-and-improved video board.

Except for maybe more ice cream, as promised to Campen by Hurricanes VP of Marketing and Brand Strategy Mike Forman.

"I've never been so famous," he said. "I'm surprised it's blown up as much as it did. (But) I'm happy it all blew up like this. ... After that four-game losing streak, we needed it."



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The people really did need this buddy-cop movie deleted scene more than any of us could have imagined.

"I just try to be happy," Campen said with a laughing emoji. "I bet Don Cherry would've called me a jerk."

The two are actually planning something for "next time," whenever that is, and Campen warns y'all to stay tuned.

"Canes fans are the best."



Gold: Canes got more than just a win on Monday

By Adam Gold

Maybe it's just the way I'm wired, but Monday night's 8-2 laughter over the Ottawa Senators didn't make me feel like the Carolina Hurricanes turned a corner. It didn't give me warm fuzzies about a team figuring it out. The 6-goal romp didn't signify that the ship had been righted.

Monday's win, as much as it was needed, just made me more confused about Saturday night's loss.

I mean, I'm honestly not sure how great the Hurricanes were last night. Not that the Canes didn't play well, they absolutely did. And, taken in the context of some of their recent performances, it was demonstrably improved. But, the fact is that the Senators are terrible. And, the only way a team as good as Carolina purports to be should lose is if they're asleep at the switch.

That's obviously what took place on Saturday night in Canada's capital.

Before people lose their collective lunch and accuse me of downplaying such a lopsided win, let me ask you this question. When the New England Patriots rout the New York Jets, how do we react?

(Yawn)

While the Canes aren't to the NHL what the Pats are to pro football, no one goes gaga over those outcomes. We put them in perspective and look for things that we liked about the way they went about the game. And, for the sake of this conversation, it is there where we'll focus.

Sebastian Aho played, in my estimation, his best game of the year. Sure, he scored two goals, giving him eight on the season, tying him with Erik Haula and Dougie Hamilton for the team lead. But, in the grand scheme of things, this has little to do with why I feel this was the best we've seen of the \$8.454 man this season.

There are three examples of why this was his best performance to date.

First period, away from the puck, Aho was engaged with second year forward Brady Tkachuk. Son of former NHL star Keith and young brother of Matthew, Brady is an agitating, talented, winger who played with an edge. Rather than avoid the situation and skate to the freedom of open ice, Aho gave as much as he received. While nothing came of the

interaction, it set the tone for the evening. (Note: If I were better at my job I'd provide video proof of this. Alas...you'll just have to take me at my word.)

Second period, shorthanded. Aho tracks down into the slot to nullify a scoring chance with a stick on stick play. In the clip, you can hear Canes analyst Tripp Tracy refer to the fact that Ottawa wanted a slashing penalty called. To me, it was a good play and Aho didn't chop down, though Sebastian did tell me after the game that there are times when he would have been sent off.

Well, shift happens. He didn't, then he follows it with the steal at the blue line and the rest is all about the Finnish. Get it?

The last Aho episode is something you can't see on television because it's so far away from the puck. But, on the Dougie Hamilton goal that closed out the second period 3-goal outburst, Aho covered for Hamilton who was jumping up into the play. By circling back into Dougie's vacated spot on the ice, Carolina would not have been caught in an odd-man situation had Hamilton's wrist not found the back of the net.

Sebastian Aho is going to score his goals, that will never be a problem given good health. But, when Rod Brind'Amour talks about needing to be able to play him against the other team's top players, ala a Patrice Bergeron, he's going to have to consistently embrace the defensive side of the puck and understand that the goals will always come if he plays the game the right way.

Monday night, Carolina's supposed best player looked the part. And, way more than the final score, that was the best thing about the rout.

* Joel Edmundson finally got on the scoresheet. In his 18th game with the Carolina Hurricanes, Edmundson finally registered his first point, a primary assist on Sebastian Aho's second goal of the night. His drive from the left point was sticked away by Craig Anderson and the carom high off the glass behind the net floated out in front of the net. From there, Aho batted the puck home — baseball style — for a 6-1 lead. After that, it was like the flood gates opened. A nifty little pass to Ryan Dzingel to make it 7-2 followed by an absolute bomb from above the right circle for his first goal of the year and a 3-point night.

Good for him. He's so far and away Carolina's best option to pair with Pesce I don't understand why Jake Gardiner was bumped up.



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* Carolina set the tone for the game on the very first shift. Jordan Staal, Dzingel and Warren Foegele hemmed Ottawa in their own end. Pesce came on and held the puck in the offensive zone which led to a Dzingel pass to Foegele for a goal 44 seconds into the night. It's probably one that Anders Nilsson would want back — even though it did deflect off the skate of Chris Tierney — but, them's the breaks. You get rewarded for the effort sometimes.

* Haydn Fleury played 95 NHL regular season games (and another nine in the post season) without scoring a goal. He's got two in his last four games. Monday night's was pure accident. His intended crossing pass to Andrei Svechnikov on the back door of the goal was deflected off a stick and fluttered over Nilsson for a 4-0 lead.

With that said, Fleury, in spite of limited ice time, is playing pretty well of late and deserves to stay in the line up. Don't be surprised if Brind'Amour gives Gardiner a night off in the near future and reunites Fleury with his buddy Trevor van Rimesdyk, who was a healthy extra against the Senators.

* Carolina heads off on a 3-game road trip starting Thursday in Buffalo. The Sabres have dropped four straight after a 9-2-2 start including both games in Stockholm, Sweden as part of the league's Global Series. The Sabres have only scored five goals in that stretch, but have a lot of firepower, with the likes of Jack Eichel, Jeff Skinner and defenseman Rasmus Dahlin. After that, Carolina heads to Minnesota and Chicago before returning to PNC Arena to host the Flyers a week from Thursday.



Svechnikov Shows Maturity, Confidence in First 100 Games

Foegele: "He's got all the tools to be a big superstar"

By Michael Smith

Well after Rod Brind'Amour had blown the final whistle of practice at Raleigh Center Ice, Andrei Svechnikov loaded up a white pail of pucks and hauled it off the ice.

This scene isn't unique to Tuesday afternoon, either. Svechnikov is routinely one of the last players to leave the ice after Hurricanes practice, no matter how intense a skate it was.

"I can just get better. I can shoot, work on my things," he said. "If I spend more time on the ice, I get more confident, I think."

It in times like these - when most of the team has left the ice and just a few stragglers are left behind - that Svechnikov reaches into his bag of tricks to try to perfect a move like he scored against Calgary in late October.

You've probably watched it a few hundred times. The goal will live on highlight reels for years to come, and Svechnikov's name will forever be attached to the first of its kind scored in the National Hockey League.

"He was trying to show Nechy and I how to do it," Warren Foegle laughed. "I was like, 'How are you doing it this way?' I understand how to do it the other way. I guess it's The Svechnikov. It takes a lot of confidence and courage to do that. I guess it just shows if you practice at one thing as many times as you can, you can be as good as you can with that skill. He showed it in a game, and it was pretty unreal."

It's not uncommon to see Svechnikov hanging around the rink in the late hours following a game, either. More than 90 minutes after the final horn sounded in the Canes' 4-2 loss to

the New York Rangers on Thursday, I spotted Svechnikov shooting pucks into a goal outside of the team's locker room on the south side of PNC Arena.

"It was late. I don't even know. Usually the lights go out in the dressing room when we're still in there," Dougie Hamilton said. "It's fun being in there, more fun when we're winning and playing well."

"It's just getting more confident and getting my shot better," Svechnikov said. "When I play bad, I know I have to do something, and that helps me a lot."

It's this commitment to his craft, this drive to perpetually hone his already elite skillset that distinguishes the 19-year-old forward from his peers and drives his teammates (and friends) to try to emulate his work ethic, which is strikingly similar to that of his head coach.

"He's competitive always," Svechnikov said of Brind'Amour. "I want to go on the ice and be competitive each game."

"He's done it a bunch, staying here. We'll come on off days to the rink a little later in the day. He just wants to get better. That's what you want in a teammate," Foegele said. "He's making himself better, and that makes you feel you need to put in the work, as well."

It doesn't hurt, too, that Svechnikov is a genuinely fun person to interact with, a vivacious personality that isn't hindered by whatever cultural or language barriers that might exist.

"You can ask anyone in this room. He's an easy-going guy, and he just wants to have fun and get better," Foegele said. "It's fun to hang out with him."

"Just a really good person who wants to get better. For me, he was a friend right away, someone I could try to help, as



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well," Hamilton said. "I would like to think I have helped him. I try as much as I can, whether he's just watching what I do or whatever, I try to help him with different words and numbers - the 30s and 40s are a little tough for him. It's been good, and I can learn from him, as well. I've taken a lot from him. He's just got a really good outlook on everything. It's fun to be around him."

It's no mystery why Svechnikov was a second-overall draft pick some 17 months ago, the Canes seeing a remarkable, NHL-ready talent practically fall into their laps.

"It's a good day for us," Brind'Amour smiled that June night in Dallas.

It's no surprise, too, to see how Svechnikov has matured and evolved in the pressure-cooked environment of his first 100 games in the NHL.

"I think he's comfortable now playing in this league. I think in his first year, especially the first 45-50 games, he was still figuring it out a little. You're not sure what you can get away with or how you fit in the whole league," Brind'Amour said. "Now, he's very comfortable playing against anybody."

Even in the summer of 2018, the Canes' head coach made note of the way the young Russian carried himself as a projected top pick in the whirlwind of hype leading up to the draft.

"He's a young kid, but he's composed, mature, he looks you in the eye. Every interaction I've had with him has been real positive," Brind'Amour said in June 2018. "I think he's going to be a great player. You don't want to put too much pressure on him. He's a young kid, but I think this is a guy who is going to have a great career."

A great career that is only just beginning, only scratching the surface of what's to come. Through 100 games, Svechnikov has totaled 55 points (27g, 28a), fourth-most through 100

games in team (since relocation) history, and he's well on pace to eclipse his rookie season point total, having accumulated nearly half of his jersey number equivalent in points in not even a quarter of his sophomore season.

In the Canes' 8-2 rout of the Ottawa Senators on Monday night, which marked Svechnikov's 100th game in the NHL, he recorded a pair of assists for his eighth multi-point game of the season, already surpassing his seven multi-point efforts from 2018-19. Tied with four others in the NHL, Svechnikov trails only John Carlson (10), Leon Draisaitl (10) and David Pastrnak (9) in multi-point games this season.

Pretty elite company for a teenager.

But, this is the teenager who was called "a complete player" and projected to be "an impact player for your franchise for a lot of years" ahead of the 2018 NHL Draft. This is the teenager who was the first to score a lacrosse-style goal in a real-life NHL game. This is the teenager who is more often than not the last player off the ice after practice or the last to pull out of the north arena lot on a game night.

This is Andrei Svechnikov, brother, and he is among hockey's young elite.

"You can just see how confident he is with the puck and how much he wants to make a difference out there. He's got all the tools to be a big superstar, you know?" Foegele said.

"He's so good with the puck, he works hard, he has so much skill and his shot is unreal."

"He looks so comfortable out there. It's only going to get better for him," Hamilton said. "He's got all the tools, and he works so hard. He's going to keep working hard. There's so much potential. He's just going to keep getting better and better."



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NHL Power Rankings: Capitals leapfrog Bruins while Blues break into top five

What if every NHL team's goal song had to be from a local musician?

By Pete Blackburn

What if NHL teams could only use goal songs produced by musicians from their city or state? It might not be a question you've thought about before, but it's one that we're exploring in this week's edition of our power rankings.

If all of the league's 31 teams had to pick a celebratory song from a local artist, what songs might we hear across the leagues? Some teams might be able to keep their goal song. Others would get to steal another team's tune. And some would have to get REALLY creative. (Looking at you, Tampa and certain Canadian markets).

So for this particular installment of our power rankings, we're abandoning the typical recap blurbs for each team in favor of a musical selection that could work as a local goal song for every team across the league. Let's get to it.

Biggest Movers

4 Coyotes

7 Ducks

Rk	Teams	Chg	Rcdr
1	Capitals	"Let Me Clear My Throat" - DJ Kool	1 13-2
2	Bruins	"More Than A Feeling" - Boston	1 11-3
3	Islanders	"Uptown Girl" - Billy Joel	1 12-3
4	Blues	"E.I." - Nelly	3 12-3
5	Oilers	"Drunk On A Bike" - SNFU	2 12-6
6	Hurricanes	"Raise Up" - Petey Pablo	1 10-7
7	Avalanche	"Gloria" - The Lumineers (Hey, it worked for the Blues.)	3 11-5
8	Coyotes	"Poison" - Alice Cooper	4 11-6
9	Penguins	"Knock Knock" - Mac Miller	4 10-6
10	Predators	"Heat Wave" - Diarrhea Planet	4 9-6
11	Panthers	"Take It To Da House" - Trick Daddy	3 9-4

Rk	Teams	Chg	Rcdr
12	Canucks	"Summer of 69" - Bryan Adams	4 10-6
13	Golden Knights	"All These Things That I've Done" - The Killers	2 9-7
14	Lightning	"Bang Bang" - David Sanborn	4 8-5
15	Sabres	"Give It To Me Baby" - Rick James	6 9-6
16	Canadiens	"Everything Now" - Arcade Fire	-- 10-5
17	Maple Leafs	"Morbid Stuff" - PUP	-- 9-6
18	Flames	"Closer" - Tegan and Sara	1 10-7
19	Flyers	"The Twist" - Chubby Checker	2 10-5
20	Jets	"Let It Ride" - Bachman-Turner Overdrive	-- 10-8
21	Stars	"Love Struck Baby" - Stevie Ray Vaughan	1 8-8
22	Ducks	"Hella Good" - No Doubt	7 9-8
23	Rangers	"New York Groove" - KISS	2 8-6
24	Blackhawks	"Surrender" - Cheap Trick	1 6-7
25	Sharks	"Seek & Destroy" - Metallica	4 8-10
26	Devils	"Howl" - Gaslight Anthem	2 5-7
27	Wild	"Let's Go Crazy" - Prince	-- 6-11
28	Blue Jackets	"Ohio" - The Black Keys (From Akron... but whatever.)	2 6-8
29	Kings	"California Love" - Tupac	1 6-11
30	Red Wings	"Icky Thump" - The White Stripes	1 7-12
31	Senators	"The Depression Dance" - Jim Bryson	1 6-10



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Hurricanes fan steals entire ice cream cone from another fan during live broadcast

The suspect is still at large

By Shanna McCarriston

On Monday, the Carolina Hurricanes defeated the Ottawa Senators 8-2 at PNC Arena, but the top highlight came from a different kind of ice. During part of the broadcast taking place in the halls of the arena, people noticed that something funny was going on in the background, where fans were gathering. A closer look shows, it was a fan taking an ice cream cone, yes an ice cream cone, from another rather distracted fan.

As both fans were wearing Canes gear, the motive does not seem rivalry based, but seems to be an act of pure hunger.

This is the ultimate crime.

The fan who pulled off the ice cream heist seemed to notice the ice cream cone holder was distracted and looking at his friend's phone. In a swift movement, the ice cream was in someone else's hands and the original desert purchaser was left only with the paper remains of the cone holder.

After the ice cream thief took a bite, it seemed they were willing and wanting to return it, but it was just too risky. Also, returning it would be gross. For the record, if you're gonna steal my ice cream and take a bite yourself, at that point just keep it, I don't want it back.

Fearing they would be caught, the second Hurricanes fan just hid the ice cream, ducked and carried on, leaving the fan confused, and probably hungry.

The victim may have been wondering what happened to his desert for the rest of the night, questioning where it went, but now that the video has gone viral he can at least have a better understanding. The man, who on Twitter goes by @CampenJoe, has already changed his profile picture to a screenshot of the incident and his bio is now, "can I have my ice cream back?"

He might just become the official face of the Hurricane's ice cream brand.

While many are saying this looked staged, and in the slow motion replay it does seem unlikely that his hand would move, it is still a great prank.



SB NATION
CANES COUNTRY

About Last Night: Righting the Ship

From Sebastian Aho and Warren Foegele, to Haydn Fleury and Joel Edmundson, a complete effort from the entire team put a halt to the Canes' four game losing streak.

By Cody Hagan

After playing some of their worst hockey since 2018, the Carolina Hurricanes finally put an end to their four game losing streak by blowing out the Ottawa Senators last night. Star players like Sebastian Aho had a great night and guys just trying to maintain a roster spot like Haydn Fleury and Eetu Luostarinen contributed as well. Up down the Hurricanes lineup, the guys came to play, and the 8-2 final score reflected just that.

The Good - Beware of Aho

There is no denying that the face of the Hurricanes has had a rough start to the year. Sebastian Aho struggled to get going but it was okay because everyone else was picking up their game and the Canes kept winning. The young Finnish forward who signed a massive extension over the off season needed to get back to being his team's superstar, and he's started to do just that.

Last night was his second multi-goal outing of November, and he now has 10 points in his past 7 games. His first goal

against the Senators was all work ethic, as he forced a turnover shorthanded and skated all the way down ice on a breakaway. After a quick move, Aho buried the puck past Anders Nilsson.

For as good as that goal was, his second one may have been even better because of his hockey IQ and awareness of where the puck was at. After the puck was deflected in to the air, Aho had to patiently wait until he could legally bat it in to the net. Being able to make contact with a puck in mid-air takes skill, but having the patience and wherewithal to wait until it was a legal move is what makes Aho such a special player.

Andrei Svechnikov has been playing great since opening night and now that Aho is heating up, the Hurricanes have two legitimate scorers that can wreak havoc on any night.

The Great - Depth Scoring

A team doesn't score eight goals without having some impressive contributions all around the lineup. While Aho and Martin Necas both scored, those guys are expected to do that. Last night was about the depth guys who stole the show. Joel Edmundson, Ryan Dzingel, and Warren Foegele



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all had multi-point nights last night while Luostarinen and Fleury both scored one point as well.

Foegele started the mayhem with a goal just 44 seconds in to the game and Edmundson ended the scoring with just 2:13 left in the third. Foegele's goal was a little skill and a lot of luck, but for a team desperate for a win to turn things around, they will take all the luck they can get.

The feel-good story of the night was Fleury's goal. After scoring his first ever goal in the NHL back in October, Fleury found himself as the odd man out when Trevor van Riemsdyk came back from injury. Since then Fleury has played sparingly when the team has decided to play seven defensemen and eleven forwards. But he hasn't had a chance to play a normal third pairing game since he scored his goal despite playing the best he ever has at this level.

After multiple meltdowns defensively over the last four games, Rod Brind'Amour decided to insert Fleury back in to the lineup and Fleury responded with his best game ever as a Hurricane. His goal, much like Foegele's was sheer luck, but he earned it. Rookie Luostarinen, who has been very good since being called up, passed the puck to Fleury who was entering the offensive zone. Fleury then tried to pass the puck over to Svechnikov but a lucky bounce off a Ottawa defender gave Fleury his second career goal.

Fleury and Luostarinen have both earned a spot in the lineup for now and if that means keeping a veteran out of the lineup, so be it.

Ryan Dzingel showed extreme toughness against his former team on Saturday night as he dropped the gloves with Vladislav Namestnikov but the team didn't get the results. Last night, Dzingel's new team came out on top and he had a large part in getting to Canes to the win. A fortunate recipient of being in the right place at the right time, Dzingel's

goal may have been the easiest of the night. It all started with Dzingel Dzingling his way in to the offensive zone and some hard work by Foegele and Edmundson set his tap in goal.

The last guy on this list was the best one of the night earning the first star honors. Joel Edmundson was traded to Carolina right before the season started and despite questions surrounding his game, he's been dependable every single night. While he is not known for his offensive game, he proved last night he has it in him even if it's buried deep down. Notching his first ever point and goal as a Hurricane, Edmundson tallied three points total and finished a plus-three.

Known as a stay-at-home defenseman, Edmundson has provided the Hurricanes with security on the back end and on the penalty kill that Justin Faulk had not done in years. His added toughness makes him difficult to play against and is reminiscent of former Hurricane Tim Gleason. Coach Brind'Amour shuffled the defensive pairing putting Edmundson with Brett Pesce last night and it paid off just as the Fleury move paid off.

Moral of the Story

From top to bottom, all of the guys on the team, no matter their role, were important last night and the Hurricanes looked like the team we all know they can be. Now they have to take all the good things they displayed last night and repeat them against Buffalo on Thursday.

This stretch of 13 straight games against teams that missed the playoffs last year got off to a horrendous start but they still have plenty of time to make good. If they play like they did last night on a consistent basis, it should be no problem racking up points against some of their upcoming opponents.

Farm Report: Checkers split, Swamp Rabbits fall, Luostarinen reassigned

The Hurricanes pair of minor league teams combine to go 1-3 over the past week.

By Justin Lape

Checkers Roundup

The Charlotte Checkers continue to struggle to find consistency to their game as they split their weekend season series with the Springfield Thunderbirds. Charlotte has gone 2-2-2 over their last six games.

In their first game of the weekend, Alex Nedeljkovic earned his first win of the season with 20 saves on 21 shots. Both teams struggled greatly with the man advantage as the Thunderbirds were 0-for-7 on the power play and Charlotte went 0-for-5. Steven Lorentz got the scoring started midway through the first period with his third goal of the season but Springfield responded just 29 seconds later. The game remained tight until Colin Markison struck for his first goal of the season, which ended as the deciding goal in the 2-1 win.

Game two of the weekend didn't go as planned for Charlotte as they dropped a 4-3 decision in overtime to Springfield. The Thunderbirds came out firing with a pair of goals in the

first period. Charlotte responded with three of their own, with Max McCormick and Roland McKeown scoring their first goals of the season and Julien Gauthier potting his fifth. Charlotte maintained the lead until Brady Keeper scored with less than a minute remaining in the third period. Daniel Audette played hero for the Thunderbirds with the game-winning goal in overtime. Anton Forsberg made 25 saves on 29 shots.

On Wednesday, the Checkers announced that they have signed forward Casey Bailey to a professional tryout deal. The 28-year-old forward, who has 11 points (8g, 3a) in nine ECHL games with South Carolina this season, has produced 117 points (50, 67a) over 206 career AHL games for Toronto, Binghamton and Bridgeport, the team said in a statement.

Swamp Rabbits Roundup

The Swamp Rabbits' week didn't go as planned, either. Greenville dropped both games of their weekend against the first-place South Carolina Stingrays, losing 4-0 in their first game. The offense couldn't find any answer for goalie Parker Milner who stopped all 23 shots he faced from Greenville.



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Greenville's play improved but fell in the shootout in the second game of the week. Stingrays forward Andrew Cherniwchan scored the lone goal in the shootout. Mason Baptiste scored his first goal as a member of the Swamp Rabbits.

Luostarinen Reassigned

The Carolina Hurricanes on Wednesday reassigned forward Eetu Luostarinen to the Checkers, following the Canes' practice earlier in the day. Luostarinen was recalled to cover for the injured Erik Haula, and earned his first NHL point with an assist in last night's win over the Senators. Coach Rod Brind'Amour said that Luostarinen may return later in the week, depending on the health of a few players who he described as "day-to-day". The release from the team is below.

CANES REASSIGN LUOSTARINEN TO CHARLOTTE
Forward has recorded one assist in three NHL games

Don Waddell, President and General Manager of the National Hockey League's Carolina Hurricanes, today announced that the team has reassigned forward Eetu Luostarinen to the Charlotte Checkers of the American Hockey League (AHL).

Luostarinen, 21, posted one assist in three NHL games after being recalled on Nov. 6. He made his NHL debut against the New York Rangers on Nov. 7 and registered his first career NHL point with an assist against the Ottawa Senators on Nov. 11. Luostarinen has also tallied seven points (5g, 2a) in 10 AHL games with the Checkers this season. The 6'3", 186-pound forward played the last three seasons for KalPa (Finland), recording 63 points (24g, 39a) in 141 career Liiga games. He represented Finland at the 2019 IIHF World Championship, appearing in four games and winning gold. The Siilinjarvi, Finland, native was drafted by the Hurricanes in the second round, 42nd overall, of the 2017 NHL Draft.



Carolina Assigns Eetu Luostarinen To Charlotte

By Nicholas Niedzielski

After his first stint in the NHL, Eetu Luostarinen is headed back to Charlotte.

The 21-year-old forward made his NHL debut on Nov. 7 and logged three games with the Hurricanes, recording his first NHL point with an assist in Monday night's win over Ottawa.

Luostarinen now rejoins the Checkers, where he has seven points in 10 games and tied for the team lead and tied for third among all AHL rookies with five goals.

Additionally, the Checkers have signed Casey Bailey to a professional tryout.

The 28-year-old forward has racked up 117 points (50g, 67a) over 206 career AHL games with Toronto, Binghamton and

Bridgeport, including tying for the team goals lead and earning an All Star nod in Binghamton in 2016-17 alongside Max McCormick and ranking second on Bridgeport in scoring in 2017-18.

Bailey, who has appeared in 13 career NHL games with the Maple Leafs and Senators, spent last season with Bratislava in the KHL. This season, the Alaska native is lighting up the ECHL with eight goals and 11 points through nine games with the South Carolina Stingrays.

Prior to turning pro Bailey spent three seasons at Penn State, where he recorded 80 points (45g, 35a) in 96 games and earned a spot on the conference First All-Star Team in 2014-15.



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Shaya's 10 Thoughts: Nov. 12, 2019

By Nicholas Niedzielski

During the season, Checkers broadcaster Jason Shaya checks in each week with his 10 Thoughts - a series of observations about the team and the hockey world in general.

1. Canes GM Don Waddell attended the Checkers game on Saturday night. He had a good look at several players that had solid performances including Julien Gauthier who scored a big third period goal and was skating hard all night. It's easy to tell when you talk to Waddell why he's so respected in this business.
2. Last night Canes broadcaster John Forslund said it was Haydn Fleury's best game as an NHL player. He was right. Haydn was playing with confidence and took advantage of the opportunity given to him.
3. Two weeks ago I bumped into Cleveland Monsters' center Zac Dalpe and he said to me his favorite coach in pro hockey was Jeff Daniels. Zac isn't the only player to say that to me over the years. JD is among the most respected and decent men I've met working in this sport. His impact on players is still felt to this day.
4. For over 1,000 games Iowa Wild broadcaster Joe O'Donnell has been calling games in the minors. Last week, he got to call his first NHL games for the Minnesota Wild radio broadcast while the team was on a California road trip. Joe is a fantastic broadcaster and a great dad to his three boys. He deserves the opportunity and lots of us in the AHL are truly happy for him.
5. The Junior Checkers team may be a relatively new AAA program, but the team is off to an incredible start and they're highly competitive against very established teams they've faced around the country. Derek Wilkinson, who plays a key role running the team, is very proud of the players and coaches this season.
6. Even though Clark Bishop only has one point this season, his hard work isn't going unnoticed. If he plays with the kind of tenacity that vaulted him to the NHL last year, it will only be a matter of time before they come calling again. His continued work on the penalty kill is the primary reason Charlotte is so good when shorthanded.
7. One of the most underrated players in the NHL is Lucas Wallmark. He consistently wins over 50% of his faceoffs, creates numerous scoring chances for his linemates and never sacrifices on the defensive side of the puck. Every team would love a center like Wallmark.
8. After two grueling practices on Tuesday and Wednesday last week, head coach Ryan Warsofsky told his team they worked harder in practice than any of the previous games. It wasn't an attempt to malign anyone. His point was that if they don't work hard, they won't win many games. By practicing with high intensity, you play harder when it matters. I think that was evident last weekend taking 3 of 4 points.
9. This Checkers team doesn't have the depth or skill to outscore mistakes, which shifts the focus to the play away from the puck and in the defensive zone. If those aspects are overlooked, the inevitable corollary is losing.
10. Former Checkers forward Tomas Jurco was waived by Edmonton last week. A lot of us here were very surprised. Jurco did have surgery early in the season which might have derailed his start. The fact is, Tomas is a solid player with not only high-end skill but a real desire to compete each and every night. He's a quality teammate and was pivotal in the development of Martin Necas and the championship. I'm guessing he ends up back in the NHL soon enough. He's definitely missed here.

The team heads out on a 10-day road trip starting in Hershey this Friday. Join us for all the action on AHLTV, ESPN 730 stream and the Checkers app.



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Here's the story behind the Carolina Hurricanes fan who stole an entire ice cream cone at a game: 'It was all in good humor'

By Sammi Silber

As the Carolina Hurricanes executed an impressive 8-2 victory over the Ottawa Senators on Monday, one fan in particular embodied a power move and a mood at the same time.

During a FOX Sports broadcast, a fan noticed that something . . . strange was going on in the background.

As the anchors discussed the game, the camera zooms back to reveal a Hurricanes fan, Joe Campen, looking at his friend's phone, holding an ice cream cone. One second later, it was gone.

"Honestly, I don't even know what I was thinking, I turned the opposite way of where my ice cream was," Campen told Sporting News. "I was just confused and when I saw Weston [Davis] with it, I found it hilarious."

Davis, Campen's friend since middle school, had come up from behind, sliding the ice cream out of his hand in what is in the conversation for the heist of the year. Then, he took a bite before sneaking off in the stealthiest way possible.

And to be honest, the cone did look good — it's vanilla, so of course it was — so the motive was surely clear. And to speak the truth, the thought of taking someone's ice cream has crossed our minds more than once. . . right?

Here's how it all went down:

After the fact, Davis ended up buying Campen a new ice cream cone, and the next time Campen's at PNC Arena, the Canes will buy him one, too.

In the end, it was all shenanigans between the two and made for a story that went viral.

"I saw after he walked away with it, but I was still confused at first," Campen said. "It was all in good humor, though."

TODAY'S LINKS

<https://www.newsobserver.com/news/state/north-carolina/article237274534.html>
<https://theathletic.com/1369683/2019/11/12/hurricanes-vibe-check-how-sustainable-are-the-highs-how-worrisome-are-the-lows/>
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SportScan

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

1161137

Carolina Hurricanes

'Divisive' announcer who called Canes 'a bunch of jerks' is fired after another rant

BY SIMONE JASPER NOVEMBER 12, 2019 12:18 PM

The outspoken hockey announcer who called the Carolina Hurricanes "a bunch of jerks" is out of a job.

Don Cherry was fired from Sportsnet after going on a "divisive" rant about immigrants, the Canadian media company announced Monday on Twitter.

It wasn't his first brush with controversy.

Earlier this year, he called the Canes "a bunch of jerks" for celebrating their wins. The News & Observer previously reported.

Fans of the professional hockey team have since embraced the phrase, which has even appeared on T-shirts.

We're a bunch of jerks and we have the shirts to prove it.

Available later this week at The Eye. pic.twitter.com/TEefqETEau

— Carolina Hurricanes (@Canes) February 17, 2019

And when the Canes were seeking a name for a beer earlier this year, suggestions from social media users included "Bunch of Jerks Ale" and "Don Cherry's Tears."

Cherry lost his job the same day Raleigh's NHL team won against the Ottawa Senators — and some Twitter users pointed out the irony.

"Don Cherry gets canned," one person posted. "Canes blast Canadian team. I find it hard to believe this is a coincidence."

Others made light of the situation.

"Heartwarming: Carolina Hurricanes Vow To Hold Storm Surge Funeral For Don Cherry's Career," another person tweeted.

Heartwarming: Carolina Hurricanes Vow To Hold Storm Surge Funeral For Don Cherry's Career

— Acting the Fulemin (@ATFulemin) November 11, 2019

Cherry met his fate after appearing on "Hockey Night in Canada" on Saturday, ESPN and other news outlets report.

On air, he accused the country's immigrants of not following the tradition of wearing poppies, a symbol that recognizes those who died in war, USA Today reports.

"I know what I said and I meant it," Cherry told the Toronto Sun after backlash erupted. "Everybody in Canada should wear a poppy to honour our fallen soldiers."

In response to the announcer not backing down, one person wrote: "maybe Don Cherry was the real jerk all along."

News Observer LOADED: 11.13.2019

1161138

Carolina Hurricanes

Seriously, the oral history of the stolen ice cream cone at the Hurricanes game

By Sara Civian Nov 12, 2019

They say great moments are born from great opportunity, and even then Canes fan Joe Campen never thought he'd walk away from the Hurricanes' game Monday with a stolen ice cream cone and his first 15 minutes of internet fame.

SO I'M JUST WATCHING THE @CANES GAME AND...
PIC.TWITTER.COM/ZIXTV8M5YK

— BRIANNA AIRINGTON (@BAIRINGTON44) NOVEMBER 12, 2019

Unless — as some Twitter cynics are whining — this video was staged. Posted by Twitter user @bairington44, it already has that has 2.3 million views, 10,800 retweets and 38,000 likes in less than 24 hours.

Noted Ice Cream Thief Weston Davis maintains that he was just messing with his longtime friend (guys being dudes) and he did not think it would turn into this.

"Love to make people laugh," Davis said.

Does it really matter even if it was planned? It was a much-needed laugh in a particularly tense hockey world Monday night.

"I was just looking at my friend's phone 'cause he was showing me a video and this guy took my ice cream haha," Campen detailed the crime of the century to The Athletic. "I didn't get to lick it yet, I had just got it so at least it was clean."

The victim said he realized what was happening as he felt the weight of his (vanilla, for the record) ice cream cone leave his hands, but he didn't know where to look when it hit him that someone was actually stealing his ice cream on live television.

"Joe and I are good friends," said Davis, who was just called "this guy" by his good friend. "He was standing there behind the camera and I just thought I'd mess with him hoping maybe the camera would get a shot of it."

While it's mildly concerning that Davis clearly didn't care if Campen had licked it yet — and that he was going to return it after he licked it as if nothing had happened — this is a judgment-free zone. Besides, our Robin Hoodie eventually did the right thing.

"I was friendly about it because I saw him walk off and get me a new one, and we both laughed because it was on TV," Campen said. "Me and the thief are on good terms and buddies. Actually a really nice guy!"

They have been buddies since eighth grade when Campen moved to Davis' school and they both played hockey.

Nothing to bond two hockey-loving Caniacs together like an 8-2 win and joint appearances on ESPN and the Hurricanes' new-and-improved video board.



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Except for maybe more ice cream, as promised to Campen by Hurricanes VP of Marketing and Brand Strategy Mike Forman.

NEXT GAME YOU'RE AT, ICE CREAM CONE IS ON US.

— MIKE FORMAN (@MFORMAN5) NOVEMBER 12, 2019

"I've never been so famous," he said. "I'm surprised it's blown up as much as it did. (But) I'm happy it all blew up like this. ... After that four-game losing streak, we needed it."

The people really did need this buddy-cop movie deleted scene more than any of us could have imagined.

THANKS FOR MAKING US AWARE OF THIS! WE SHOWED IT ON THE VIDEO BOARDS DURING THE GAME!

— CAROLINA HURRICANES (@CANES) NOVEMBER 12, 2019

PIC.TWITTER.COM/WSEURL4W9V

— CONFUSED YET AROUSED BEARS FAN (@PAULSANTORINI) NOVEMBER 12, 2019

I WATCHED THAT VIDEO 15 TIMES AND LAUGHED OUT LOUD EVERY TIME. MY FAVORITE PART IS THAT YOU JUST KEEP SMILING.

— JENNIFER (@JSFREEH) NOVEMBER 12, 2019

"I just try to be happy," Campen said with a laughing emoji. "I bet Don Cherry would've called me a jerk."

The two are actually planning something for "next time," whenever that is, and Campen warns y'all to stay tuned.

"Canes fans are the best."

The Athletic LOADED: 11.13.2019

1161139 Carolina Hurricanes

Hurricanes vibe check: How sustainable are the highs, how worrisome are the lows?

By Sara Civian Nov 12, 2019

Before the Hurricanes snapped their four-game losing streak in an 8-2 blowout against the Senators on Monday night, before Joel Edmundson's first three points as a Hurricane all came at once and he graced the locker room with "Any Man of Mine" by Shania Twain, I'd asked Rod Brind'Amour what his team's biggest problem was.

"There's a couple," Brind'Amour said Monday morning. "When you don't score, it puts a lot of stress on everything. Every mistake you make gets magnified because then they become the crucial point of the game, versus if you're scoring a couple here or there you're not talking about maybe some of these other mistakes. Right now we have to have the mindset to go in and we might have to win 1-0. If we continue to get scoring opportunities the puck will go in. I'm not too worried about that. But it's the giving up chances, the really easy chances — we gotta get a little harder on the other team."

It wasn't quite time to panic, as there'd been stretches of hope recently, but losses in seven of the previous 10 games isn't a report card you hang on the fridge, and Brind'Amour called the latest "very disturbing."

Captain Jordan Staal called its first period "a joke."

So the Canes yanked us from their best start in franchise history to two goals allowed in four seconds at Ottawa real quick. They've won games they should've lost and lost games they should've won. This is just how it

goes in hockey sometimes, but the dramatic pendulum swinging has every opinion feeling like a simultaneous over- and under-reaction.

All we know is there were definitely problems before Monday's win, and those problems will still exist tomorrow.

Eight goals and one win later, and there's a collective relief sigh — Dougie Hamilton called a random game in November a "must-win" for a reason. At the same time, the problems plaguing the Canes haven't magically disappeared — the question becomes which ones are long term, and which positive trends are sustainable?

The quality and quantity of chances for

True to their multi-year reputation, the Hurricanes are second only to Toronto with 480 shots this season (and one less game played) at even strength. While they're (only?) 10th in actual goals with 36 at five-on-five and No. 8 with 44 goals at even strength, they're first in expected goals (37.39) and high danger chances (177).

The eye test concurs, and all of this is why:

Brind'Amour said he isn't worried that the goals will come.

Eight goals came when the Hurricanes stuck to their game and were also awarded a few lucky bounces Monday.

Should you worry? Nah

The quality and quantity of chances against

Brind'Amour and Jaccob Slavin have both expressed concern about the quality of chances allowed through this stretch — Brind'Amour touched on it above, Slavin after the loss to the Rangers.

"We need to get those things out of our game, we turn pucks over at the blue line, I think that's been the story the last couple of games," Slavin said. "That's when other teams are getting up chances and that's when we're giving up goals."

That's expected from a blue line full of high-event hockey — to a certain extent. This brand of error has been too prevalent with these Hurricanes lately, even with Brind'Amour's excellent point that mistakes are magnified when the team can't score.

This is potentially elucidated in the fact that the Hurricanes have only given up 396 shots (sixth-best in the NHL) and 325 (ninth-best) scoring chances at even strength, they have given up the fourth-most high danger goals in the league at 26. Logic tells us this means that when they do give up chances, they're generally giving up the hardest ones for goalies to save.

(Then the goalies aren't saving them, but still.)

It's what Brind'Amour means when he says other teams are capitalizing on the Hurricanes taking that one extra breath sometimes. It's not a habit the Canes can afford to get into.

Panic meter: □□□

Goaltending

Petr Mrazek through 12 games played: 8-3-1, 2.51 GAA, .907 save percentage. Recent losses against the Rangers and the Flyers were rough in the sense that they weren't his fault, but he didn't keep the Canes in the game, either.

James Reimer through seven games played (six started): 2-4-0, 3.10 GAA, .901 save percentage. Two goals allowed in four seconds against one of the worst teams in the league wasn't necessarily his fault, but isn't instilling any confidence.

Overall, the tandem is below the coveted league average with a .899 save percentage. #It'sTooEarly to declare anyone out of a job — and neither has played himself out of a job — but a few more questionable games from Reimer and the Hurricanes might give another goalie in the pipeline a look.



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Panic meter: □□

'Your best players have to be your best players'

Several of the Hurricanes players had slow starts this season, which was fine until it wasn't. Some have figured it out while some are still struggling.

Sebastian Aho played with guts and scored two goals the 8-2 win Monday — a welcome reminder that October just isn't his thing. After a slow start, he's climbed up to No. 4 on the team in scoring and a tie for first in goals with 8-5—13 in 18 games played.

"He was around the puck," Brind'Amour said. "He was a little more conscious of the full game, and I think everyone was."

Does Aho think that's the most confident game he's played so far this season?

"Sure, if you wanna ... I don't know," he humbly laughed.

He'll be fine.

Will Nino Niederreiter? We all knew regression from his redemption tour last season was expected, but through 18 games:

Two goals, five assists (four of them secondary), 14 PIMs, one goal and one secondary assist on the power play.

The positive is he's under-performing: He has 4.6 expected goals and 26 high danger chances overall. That's still not "your best players being your best players." The Canes can live with it in light of Aho's awakening, but they'd obviously like him to start turning that "under-performing" into just "performing."

Meanwhile Dougie Hamilton and Andrei Svechnikov are tearing it up in every sense and "the new guys" have picked up slack when Aho and Niederreiter have struggled to score.

Panic meter: □

Erik Haula's injury status

The unknown severity of Erik Haula's injury is the most worrisome problem on this list right now.

Carolina's early-season leading scorer (now tied with Dougie Hamilton and Aho with eight goals despite missing the past four games) was thought to be day-to-day at first.

"He's day-to-day. He's got some lingering effects. It's his knee that's bothering him, so we're just kind of precautionary, really, making sure he feels good before we get him back out there," Brind'Amour said after he missed his first game Nov. 5. "Nothing structural, which is good ... I'm telling you (what I know) so you'll stop asking."

That was concerning enough as it is, considering his initial knee injury limited him to 15 games with Vegas last season, but at least it was precautionary.

While it still might be precautionary, the most recent update in Ottawa on Saturday was bleaker.

"He's not with us, so no update. He's still suffering from the knee injury that he suffered. I can't tell you anything other than that, he's not with us and he's definitely not day-to-day either."

You never want to speculate too much on injuries, but going from "day-to-day" to "definitely not day-to-day" with what appears to be a re-aggravation of a serious injury doesn't seem like good news. Haula's net-front presence and 11 points in 14 games haven't been easily replaceable either, especially with Niederreiter slumping and the Canes dropping the first three games in Haula's absence.

Panic meter: □□□□

Coaching/leadership/morale

It was fitting that Brind'Amour's 100th game as Hurricanes head coach was an 8-2 win following an ugly loss, because he's still that coach Jordan Martinook said he would run through hot coals for — and that still matters.

He's always going to have that patience with players that sometimes looks like stubbornness from the outside, but those votes of confidence are part of the reason his players tend to step up in must-perform situations.

I was impressed by how well the juggling of the line combinations worked Monday.

They went from:

Niederreiter-Staal-Teravainen

Svechnikov-Aho-Foegele

Dzingel-Wallmark-Necas

McGinn-Luostarinen-Gibbons

To:

Dzingel-Staal-Foegele

Svechnikov-Aho-Teravainen

Niederreiter-Wallmark-Necas

McGinn-Luostarinen-Gibbons

And it worked.

His actual decisions, his handling of the youngsters and the way the team responds to the rare times he's disappointed are all excellent.

I know you came to this section because you miss Justin Williams, though. Any team is better with his leadership, but I think some of you are forgetting last December. Every team goes through slumps, and not even Williams could've prevented last December. It was his response to it that turned things around (among other factors), so in my opinion, we really have no way to judge Jordan Staal's leadership until the season is over — but I will say that the Hurricanes players have extreme respect for him.

Panic meter: □

Overall, there have been a few "disturbing" losses and moments in the Hurricanes' first 18 games of the season, but a quick 8-2 win and a vibe check show they're probably going to be OK. And so will you.

The jury's still out on this dude.

The Athletic LOADED: 11.13.2019

1161130 Buffalo Sabres

Sabres enter dangerous part of schedule in return from Global Series

By Mike Harrington Published Tue, Nov 12, 2019|Updated Tue, Nov 12, 2019

The Buffalo Sabres are entering a dangerous part of the schedule.

The Sabres were off again Tuesday, their third consecutive day away from the ice after completing their two-game series in Stockholm against Tampa Bay. They return to practice Wednesday morning in KeyBank



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Center, then open a stretch of three games in four nights when they host Carolina here Thursday.

That starts a run of 10 games in 17 days for the Sabres. They entered Tuesday in fifth in the Atlantic Division, 10th in the Eastern Conference and 19th overall in the NHL standings. It's a precipitous slide for a team that opened the season 8-1-1 and was first overall as recently as Oct. 29.

The NHL introduced the two-game November Global Series in 2017 after a six-year hiatus from games in Europe that were strictly season openers, including the Sabres' 2011 trip to Finland and Germany.

Teams that make the big trip have to be careful their seasons don't rival the collapse Ottawa endured two years ago. None of the previous four teams to play in the Global Series has won a playoff round, which has to be especially sobering to the Lightning. Here's a look at how the previous visitors to Scandinavia have fared:

Ottawa (2017-18): The Senators started the season strong, with points in 10 of the first 11 games. A pair of 4-3 wins over Colorado in Stockholm left them 8-3-5 on Nov. 11. It was the high point of their season.

They returned home from Sweden, and the offense disappeared – even though they had acquired Matt Duchene from the Avs just before leaving for Sweden.

The Sens went 0-6-1 the rest of November and scored only nine goals in the seven games. A 6-5 win in Brooklyn over the New York Islanders snapped that streak, but it was followed by five more losses, including a 3-2 defeat to the Sabres in KeyBank Center on Dec. 13.

The Sens won just one of their first 13 after the trip and never won three games in a row until March. They finished the season out of the playoffs at 28-43-11. Post-Sweden record: 20-40-6.

Colorado (2017-18): The Avs went 9-9-2 in the 20 games after the Sweden trip – but then ripped off a 10-game winning streak from Dec. 29 to Jan. 22. They never won more than three in a row or lost more than three the rest of the way and finished 43-30-9 before losing in the first round of the playoffs to Nashville in six games. Post-Sweden record: 35-23-8.

Florida (2018-19): The Panthers split two games with Winnipeg in Helsinki and left Finland at 3-5-3. After six days off, they won their first four games stateside. But they didn't win three in a row again until January and had losing streaks of four, six and seven games. They finished out of the playoffs at 36-32-14. Post-Finland record: 33-27-11.

Winnipeg (2018-19): The Jets left Finland 8-5-1 and won their first three on this side of the ocean. Winnipeg didn't drop three straight until February but then lost eight of 10. The Jets finished 47-30-5 and were six-game losers to St. Louis in the first round after making the West final the year before. Post-Finland record: 39-25-4.

Buffalo News LOADED: 11.13.2019

1161131 Buffalo Sabres

Blackhawks' Alex Nylander ready for opportunity he never got in Buffalo

By Lance Lysowski Published Tue, Nov 12, 2019|Updated Tue, Nov 12, 2019

PITTSBURGH — Alex Nylander sat at his stall in the PPG Paints Arena visitors' dressing room following a morning skate in which he lined up alongside three-time Stanley Cup winner and Chicago Blackhawks captain Jonathan Toews.

Nylander untied his skates and smirked while listening to Patrick Kane, whose long list of accolades includes three Cup victories and a Hart Trophy, joke about defenseman Olli Maatta, who won back-to-back

Stanley Cups with the Penguins, addressing a group of Pittsburgh reporters.

Nylander then pulled a Blackhawks cap onto his head and beamed when describing the opportunity he never received with the Buffalo Sabres.

"I think it was time for me," Nylander, a 21-year-old winger, said Saturday morning when asked if he needed a change of scenery. "It was really good to be traded here. I'm really happy about it. They obviously gave me a chance at the start. I had a really good training camp last year, and it was obviously not fun that I got sent down. It's nice to get a chance here, not just get sent down and come up later. I know I can play in this league, and I'm ready for it."

However, like many young players, Nylander is still learning to be consistent offensively and defensively during his first legitimate opportunity in the National Hockey League. His speed and skill are up to par, but defensive struggles persist. Similar issues limited Nylander to only 19 games over three seasons with the Sabres before being traded for defenseman Henri Jokiharju in July.

Nylander, who was selected eighth overall in in the 2016 draft, didn't make much of an impact without the puck during his three seasons with the Rochester Americans. Despite possessing tantalizing talent, he tended to disappear because he wasn't a consistent threat to force turnovers on the forecheck. Nylander would show improvement one game, only to struggle the next.

Nylander has been better in Chicago, though. Before a 3-2 shootout loss in Pittsburgh on Saturday, Blackhawks coach Jeremy Colliton said Nylander's progress over the first month of the season was "very, very good for a young player."

"I think he's been really good," Colliton said. "Certainly since the first couple games of the year, from then until now, he's improved and it's exciting for our team to see his development in a really short time. He's come through with some big plays offensively, but I'm comfortable with him on the ice defensively."

Less than 12 hours later, Colliton benched Nylander with the score tied in the third period. He did not play the final 9:03 of regulation or the five-minute overtime after being partly responsible for Chicago's blowing a two-goal lead. He was replaced by veteran Andrew Shaw on the Blackhawks' top line.

Nylander made a weak attempt to backcheck on an odd-man rush that led to the Penguins' first goal and was on the ice when Pittsburgh winger Bryan Rust was left alone on the doorstep to score the tying goal. Nylander was returned to the top line Sunday for Chicago's 5-4 win against Toronto, though he did not register a shot on goal and was credited with one giveaway in 12:50.

Similar lapses led to Nylander's being a healthy scratch Oct. 12, despite having started the season on a line with Toews and Kane. Following two difficult performances, Colliton used a thorough one-on-one video session to show Nylander situations in which he needed to be better defensively. Colliton, who is in his first full season as the Blackhawks' coach, also wanted to show Nylander a few positive moments from games.

Nylander responded with his finest stretch of play in the NHL.

"I'm just trying to learn from the veterans here, get feedback from the coaches and get better off the puck," Nylander said. "I want to improve my game every day, offensively and defensively. It's been great dialogue, good feedback coming from [Colliton]. He showed me parts of my game I can do differently and parts that I've done well. That's been really helpful this year. ... I want to be a top player on this team and use my skills to help us win each game."

Nylander has two goals among seven points with a minus-2 rating while averaging 12:39 of ice time through 16 games. In addition to a prominent role at even strength, he has skated with the Blackhawks' second power-



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play unit. Nylander scored in their season-opening loss against Philadelphia, a goal that displayed his remarkable shot.

Nylander's finest moment of the season thus far came in his first game following the healthy scratch. He forced a turnover near the opposing blue line by poke-checking the puck off Edmonton Oilers center Connor McDavid's stick, darted into the offensive zone to retrieve the loose puck and scored on a shot from below the right faceoff dot on Oct. 14.

Nylander has 10 takeaways, one less than Kane for the team lead and nine more than he had in 12 games with Buffalo late last season. He began to make progress defensively under coach Chris Taylor in Rochester last season, resulting in a career-high 12 goals among 31 points in 49 games.

Nylander missed time with an upper-body injury but scored in each of his final four games with the Americans to earn a promotion to Buffalo. He scored in back-to-back games with the Sabres, only to have his ice time tail off and suffer a lower-body injury that abruptly ended his season. He played 19 games for the Sabres over three seasons.

Nylander then became the latest Murray draft pick to be dealt by Sabres General Manager Jason Botterill.

"When you get drafted by a GM and there's a new GM in town, it's what happens," said former Sabres goalie Robin Lehner, now a teammate of Nylander's in Chicago. "That's what happened in Buffalo. Every single player that was brought in by Tim was pushed out, which I understand. Need a clean slate for the new GM. He's ultimately responsible for what the product on the ice, so you kind of have to do that.

"Botterill wanted to bring in his guys and he shipped out everyone else. That's what happens, and I think Alex's style of hockey fits the NHL way better than the AHL. Obviously he's growing and maturing as well, but he's been great for us so far. I think he's been very unlucky up here as well because I think he should have four or five more goals than he has. That will come. He's a very, very good player."

Sabres-Bruins-Nylander-Scull

Lehner, who is also in his first season with the Blackhawks, knew how difficult life can be as a young player in the NHL. Living in a hotel can be lonely, and there are few distractions from the mental grind of an 82-game season. So, Lehner and his wife invited Nylander to live with them and their two children.

Lehner, 28, has given Nylander advice following games and tries to help with the inevitable overthinking that can consume a young player during his first year in the NHL. The latter has been an issue for Nylander before.

He scored 10 goals as a rookie in Rochester in 2016-17 and seemed like a logical choice to make the Sabres' roster in training camp the following season. However, a groin injury suffered during the Prospects Challenge kept Nylander out of Rochester's lineup until November, and he did not feel 100 percent the rest of the season.

The Sabres sent Dennis Miller, head of rehab and development, to Sweden to work with Nylander in summer 2018. The result was what Nylander described as the best offseason training of his career, and he had a strong training camp last fall. However, the Sabres opted to send Nylander to Rochester and kept Tage Thompson, whom Botterill acquired from St. Louis in the Ryan O'Reilly trade.

Injuries slowed Nylander last season, too.

"It was kind of different for me," Nylander said. "I had never been injured in my life really before until I had my groin injury in my second year. It wasn't what I expected it to be when I came back. It was obviously harder than I thought, so that wasn't a fun year. Then I had these other unfortunate injuries I couldn't do anything about. I was out a couple weeks here and there. I'm trying to stay healthy this year and I learned a lot from those injuries – what you need to do [to prepare] and always stay positive."

Nylander's trade again raised the question whether the Sabres mishandled his development when they had him turn pro following his draft year, rather than returning him to the Ontario Hockey League's Mississauga Steelheads.

Nylander has never spoken negatively or expressed regret about that decision. He said he wouldn't change anything he could control about his time in Buffalo. However, there were times during his three seasons he felt he was ready to help the Sabres. A full-time NHL role never came, though.

His focus now is taking advantage of the opportunity he has.

"There wasn't much I could control," Nylander said of his time in Buffalo. "Obviously, I felt ready sometimes and that I could have played up there, but they decided to keep me down there. I just learned from all that stuff and it's been really good coming into this organization. It's been unbelievable."

Pilut returns to Amerks

Defenseman Lawrence Pilut, who practiced with the Sabres during their trip to Stockholm, was assigned to Rochester on Monday. Pilut has one goal among six points in eight games with the Amerks. He missed training camp and the start of the season while working his way back from shoulder surgery.

Additionally, Rochester recalled winger Pascal Aquin from Cincinnati. Aquin, 22, had 27 goals last season with the Cyclones.

Buffalo News LOADED: 11.13.2019

1161132 Buffalo Sabres

'It's just nice to go see a friend': Why Marco Scandella is willing to cross the Atlantic for a specific tattoo artist

By John Vogl Nov 12, 2019

STOCKHOLM — Oscar Akermo is a star in the tattoo world, a young creator whose art could be in a museum rather than on a celebrity's arm.

That's how Marco Scandella learned of him. After five years of thinking about getting his own ink, the Sabres defenseman was ready for his first piece in 2016. Scandella looked at the Instagram page for Bang Bang NYC, whose clientele includes Miley Cyrus, Rihanna, LeBron James and Justin Bieber.

Akermo's portfolio spoke to him.

"It's the shop and he was the prodigy," Scandella said. "I looked at his work and was like, 'Oh my god. Who is this young kid? I've got to get tattooed by this guy.'"

The decision has turned into so much more. It's become a bond, a story of fighting for the universe in Sweden, driving sports cars in Montreal and people finding themselves through the buzz of a fine-point needle.

The friendship is special because Scandella wanted more than just ink. He wanted his body art to tell a story.

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SOME PERSONAL REFERENCES FOR MY NEW FRIEND
@SCANDEEZY6 THANKS FOR THE PATIENCE AND TRUST MARCO!
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#TATTOO#BLACKNGREY#LOVE#NEWYORK#BANGBANGTATTOOS

A POST SHARED BY OSCAR AKERMO (@OSCARAKERMO) ON JAN 31, 2017 AT 12:08PM PST



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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"Just putting something on and saying, 'That's symbolic' is not enough for me," Scandella said. "I need more. I need more out of it."

So does the 24-year-old Akermo, a thin Swede with short hair and dark brown eyes who spoke quietly and thoughtfully over coffee in a Stockholm hotel.

"My approach to tattoos has always been very intimate for many reasons," he said. "It's a tattoo. Somebody's going to live with this for the rest of their lives. People think that you walk into a tattoo parlor, you choose what you want on the wall, you sit there and you get it. It's not like that. Most tattoo artists today, they use a different approach than that. It's more."

"Once you're sitting with a tattoo artist for eight hours a day over three days, I feel like you get to know the person," said Scandella, who had his first session with Akermo in New York in 2016. "Instead of putting music on, which I thought was going to happen – I was just going to put music on and he was going to tattoo me – I felt like we became friends. We were talking about life."

The next year, Akermo flew to Scandella's home in Montreal for another session. Akermo brought his younger brother and they hung out with Scandella and his brother, driving the defenseman's sports cars between ink sessions.

"That particular trip really strengthened our friendship," Akermo said. "I don't connect with all my clients on a personal level. Marco and his brother, they were so kind, and we were a bunch of pals, really."

Akermo returned to Montreal in 2018. This summer, Scandella flew to Stockholm. He had absolutely no idea what would be on his body when he returned home.

"It's a huge trust relationship," Akermo said. "First I need to be a little briefed of the direction they want to go. Maybe they have some keywords, 'I want a horse or I'd like to make a tattoo with this included somehow, show my house where I grew up, me and my grandfather always used to do this, can we somehow incorporate this?'"

"My tattoos are articulate in a way. They're not for everybody and most of the time they're very elaborate. My clients see them and say, 'I want that,' but I could never come up with that. They come up with keywords and a story and, 'Just take this and do what you do with it.'"

Certainly, not everyone can do what Akermo does.

Akermo grew up in an artistic family on the western coast of Sweden in the small town of Uddevalla. His father was an artist. So was his grandfather, who died before Akermo was born.

"Mom and dad had a lot of sentimental value for my grandfather's work, so they would never throw it away and I'm not sure if it was good enough to be bought or accepted as gifts, so we ended up with all the art that he left behind," Akermo said. "The whole house was just like a storage space for art, so I always drew. I was very fascinated with da Vinci from an early age, like his anatomical stuff. The skulls and stuff that he did was amazing to me at like 7 or 8 years old."

He was also intrigued by body modification. He pierced his ears at age 5. The rock 'n' roller and self-admitted teenage rebel tattooed himself at 13. That coincided with the explosion of YouTube.

"I went into YouTube and tried to get knowledge of how to build a tattoo machine," Akermo said. "I actually managed to build two machines and tattooed myself. I came to school and showed my friends, 'Look, I've got a tattoo.' It wasn't soon after that I became a tattooer."

His parents discovered his designs at a funeral dinner for Akermo's other grandfather. Since it was not the place for an angry discussion, they talked about it later. Under calm conditions, his parents recognized his love and talent.

"So for my 16th birthday, I actually wished to have a proper tattoo machine from my parents," Akermo said. "They fulfilled that wish. They

bought me a tattoo machine for my 16th birthday on one condition: That I wouldn't work on myself.

"It was obviously the first thing I did, but I think they knew that, too. But from there I had proper gear so I started taking clients. Now I was the tattooer of the school. That was the first year of high school, so that was the perfect market for me."

He was into sailor tattoos, anchors, hearts and folk art. At age 17, after being awarded an apprenticeship under Pedro Leon, Akermo dropped out of school and expanded his art with his mentor.

"I was doing the traditional stuff – the hearts and the ladies and pinups – but he did people's kids and dogs and realistic stuff," Akermo said. "I was amazed, so then I started to do that."

He began to specialize in black and gray realism. When he started gaining fame at age 19, the work was all about him.

"My agenda was self-centered," Akermo said. "I wanted to do what I wanted to do, and the people were only my canvas. So it could lead towards I didn't really care as much what they wanted. I wanted to realize my own ambitions."

"But today, with time, I've found that the one most beautiful thing about what I do is to be able to meet somebody halfway, make them very happy, make a piece that they could never themselves have realized and also for me to make a piece that I'm happy with. So it's a mutual thing now."

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[SYMBOLS FOR MARCO](#)

[A POST SHARED BY OSCAR AKERMO \(@OSCARAKERMO\) ON NOV 6, 2019 AT 10:30AM PST](#)

The friendship with Scandella helped Akermo change his outlook.

"To make a piece of art that means a lot to somebody, that's the reward, even if it's a piece that doesn't go in my portfolio," Akermo said. "Because I'm very particular about that. Like if I post a skull on my Instagram, 10 minutes later I'm going to have hundreds of posts about skulls, so I have to be very particular where I steer my social media ship. That can be very discouraging sometimes when I knew from the beginning how this is not going to be a portfolio tattoo."

"I've found energy and strength that that doesn't matter, man. It's what's happening right here, right now that is the beauty, and who you can meet, what relations you can establish with people that goes far beyond the tattoo, like with Marco. That's the beautiful thing. That's what really means a lot to me."

Scandella's tattoos clearly mean a lot to him, though he declined to elaborate on most because of their personal nature. He said the newest one on his arm, done during his recent trip to Stockholm over the summer, symbolizes a good and bad brain angling for control of the universe.

"If you put into hours how many hours I've been tattooed, I'd say it's close to the 50 mark," Scandella said. "More than that, it's just nice to go see a friend."

The Athletic LOADED: 11.13.2019

1161133 Buffalo Sabres

Is there a fix for the Sabres' recent scoring woes?

By Joe Yerdon Nov 12, 2019



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Given the past few years, an inability to routinely score goals is nothing new for the Sabres. The start of the season seemed to indicate a change in that pattern, but a recent slide in which they've lost five of the past six games has certainly rekindled some unpleasant memories.

The Sabres have scored 49 goals through 17 games, which puts them in the middle of the pack in the NHL at 18th. When you consider last year's Sabres were at about 2.7 goals per game, the current rate of 2.9 goals per game is still below average. Last season's top scoring team, the Tampa Bay Lightning, averaged about 3.9 goals per game and the 2019-20 Washington Capitals are on a similar trajectory at about 4.1.

Of the 49 goals scored, 38 of them came during the 8-1-1 start to the season. Scoring 3.8 goals per game makes winning games easier to do. But scoring 11 goals in seven games (1.6 per game) — not so much.

They're not scoring goals — what gives?

As we pointed out before the sweep by the Lightning in Sweden, the power play has been a letdown of late. That didn't change over the weekend. Power play success comes in spurts. Buffalo's will rebound at some point because the players involved are too good not to succeed.

The 5-on-5 scoring, on the other hand, is more concerning. The first 17 games have shown a trend as to why. Courtesy of Micah Blake McCurdy's HockeyViz.com, the Sabres' unblocked shot rates at 5-on-5 illustrate where the offense is doing the most (and least) work:

That the vast amount of shots are coming from the left circle and from the right point is a fascinating dichotomy. That there's a little patch in front of the net for opportunity would indicate an area for rebounds and tips. That there's not more red close to the net is a problem.

The right point is mainly due to Rasmus Ristolainen and Colin Miller, neither of whom is afraid to shoot the puck. It would be ideal if shots were getting through for opportunities in front, be it on a tip or a rebound. But there hasn't been enough net traffic to make things happen. The easy thing to do is to say luck isn't on Buffalo's side there, but a lot of luck can be created. Getting bodies to the net helps make that happen and can also lend assistance to snipers to pick holes to shoot at.

Then who is creating at the net?

Looking through the shot maps of each player through HockeyViz shows a lot of the usual suspects are good at getting chances around the goal. One line that has done it consistently so far this season: Jack Eichel, Sam Reinhart and Victor Olofsson.

The other line that's been good around the goal mouth: Zemgus Girgensons, Johan Larsson and Kyle Okposo, with Okposo himself doing extremely well. The obvious downside here is that line doesn't have a natural scorer on it. They're good at generating shots and opportunities, but the finish isn't there.

Things get a bit odd with the other two lines. Marcus Johansson's line with Jeff Skinner and Vladimir Sobotka has had a lot of whacks immediately around the net, but with almost no presence in the slot and a lot of action around the right circle and half wall. This speaks to how both Johansson and Skinner are able to create offense and how good Skinner is at getting to the net.

The trio of Casey Mittelstadt, Conor Sheary and Jimmy Vesey has produced 37 unblocked shot attempts at 5-on-5. It's a bit frustrating they haven't shot more often because when they've done so it's been in mostly the right areas. Ice time and injuries (to Vesey and now Sobotka) have factored into this, but it would be nice to see them gain the trust to earn more ice time because they could make for a decent line with patience. But patience is thinner when results aren't there.

The results could get worse. Using expected goals (xG), which factors in shot locations as well as rebounds and rush chances for unblocked shots, the numbers aren't kind for the Sabres. Their expected goals-for per 60 minutes (xGF60) is 2.14 (via Evolving-Hockey.com) — 28th in the NHL. Considering their goals-for per 60 is 2.35, a regression could be coming if there isn't an adjustment to their attack.

(Courtesy of Shayna Goldman)

How does this get fixed?

It sounds so simple, but going to the net more and shooting the puck more often would do a world of good. Tons of aimless shots with no traffic in front make for easy saves for the goalie. Just drive the net a little more.

A trade to add a forward would do a lot to help, but the Sabres' current area of strength (defense) has been weakened temporarily by assorted injuries. Whether teams are looking for Marco Scandella, Rasmus Ristolainen or Zach Bogosian when he's back on the ice, making a swap to bring in a NHL forward of similar salary is doable. And teams are watching the Sabres with these players in mind, but we know trades don't happen easily or without a deadline or a pressing need.

The offense is in need now.

The Athletic LOADED: 11.13.2019

1161185 Minnesota Wild

Wild whiffs on chance to bring momentum home after road loss to Kings

By Sarah McLellan

NOVEMBER 13, 2019 — 1:58AM

LOS ANGELES – Wild coach Bruce Boudreau was focused on returning to the Twin Cities with a souvenir from the four-game, 10-day road trip that his team didn't have at the outset.

Momentum.

"I was so counting on winning [Tuesday]," Boudreau said.

But the Wild will travel Wednesday in a similar up-and-down state that it was in when it began this trek more than a week ago because instead of coming home 3-1, it dropped to 2-2 after a 3-1 loss to the Kings at Staples Center.

The opportunity to snag three out of four games was there, though, especially against a Kings squad that has struggled just as much as the Wild.

After falling behind early in the first period, the Wild had three power plays to overcome a one-goal deficit but whiffed on each of them.

Not only that, but the chances were some of the worst stretches by the team – opportunities that did close to nothing for the team's mojo.

"The thing about the power play, no matter what happens, you've got to do two things," Boudreau said. "You've got to execute, and you've got to outwork the opposition. And I didn't think we did either. And when you don't do that, you certainly don't get success."

The Wild had 28 shots on goal and another 30 attempts that were blocked or missed the net, typically enough chances to squeeze out more than one goal.

But where the team didn't generate any looks was when it pulled goalie Devan Dubnyk to gain an extra attacker with less than two minutes to go in the third period, another missed opportunity that included a three defensemen setup for the Wild.

Los Angeles would go on to score into an empty net.

"We wanted [Brad] Hunt to go out there," Boudreau said. "We did. I should've called a timeout, and I didn't because we were fresh going out there and they weren't. Hindsight is 20/20, but I should've called a timeout and gotten everybody straight on the same page."



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The first two goals by the Kings came off faceoff wins in the offensive zone, breakdowns that stood out to Boudreau.

"I can't remember the last time we've had faceoff goals against us for making the wrong decision off of a faceoff," he said. "The guys get back to the point and shoot it and score, and sometimes it's a great shot. But that was just basic stuff that we've done all year and for the last few years, and we didn't do it today and it cost us two goals."

Kings captain Anze Kopitar scored the first one, shooting in a loose puck that Dubnyk appeared to have covered but didn't ultimately have control of completely.

"It could trickle behind me and I could just sit there and do nothing and then they whack it in," Dubnyk said. "It was just one of those feeler plays where it didn't feel like I got a ton of it, so I just wanted to try to lay back."

Star Tribune LOADED: 11.13.2019

1161186 Minnesota Wild

Kopitar, Walker lead Kings to 3-1 win over Wild

By JOE REEDY Associated Press

NOVEMBER 13, 2019 — 1:40AM

LOS ANGELES — Anytime the Los Angeles Kings can get an early goal from Anze Kopitar and pair it with key saves from Jonathan Quick, it is usually going to result in a win.

That happened Tuesday night as Kopitar extended his point streak to four games and Quick made 27 saves in a 3-1 victory over the Minnesota Wild.

Kopitar and Sean Walker each had a goal and an assist, and Jeff Carter also scored for the Kings, who snapped a three-game losing streak.

"It was a good night for us. We started off fairly well and we were able to play with the lead," coach Todd McLellan said. "Quick was there for us and our penalty kill was outstanding."

Matt Dumba scored Minnesota's lone goal and Devan Dubnyk stopped 32 shots as the Wild finished a 2-2 road trip.

Kopitar lauded the Kings' defense and the play of Quick, who got his third win of the season. Quick surpassed 15,000 career saves, becoming the fifth U.S.-born goaltender to reach that milestone.

"Jonny has been like that for the past few games. It was more us in front of him; we were giving up grade-A chances and backdoor tap-ins," said Kopitar, who has five points (two goals, three assists) in the past four games.

The Wild were hoping to take advantage of the Kings' struggles killing penalties but couldn't. Los Angeles allowed two power-play goals in Montreal on Saturday night and was 30th in the NHL in penalty killing, but killed off all three Wild power-play opportunities.

"You've got to do two things on a power play: You've got to execute, and you've got to work the opposition," Wild coach Bruce Boudreau said. "And I didn't think we did either. And when you don't do that, you certainly don't get the success and you don't get any shots."

Los Angeles took a 2-0 lead with goals off rebounds. Kopitar opened the scoring 70 seconds in when Dubnyk was unable to secure Walker's slap shot from near the blue line with his pads. Kopitar corralled the loose puck and knocked it in.

The Kings extended their lead to two midway through the second period when Carter knocked the puck into an open net after Ben Hutton's shot in traffic changed direction when it hit Michael Amadio's stick. It was Carter's fifth goal of the season and his first point in five games.

Minnesota got on the board at 15:40 of the second when Dumba scored for the second straight game. The defenseman got control of the puck at the blue line, side-stepped Carter and had his wrist shot from the right faceoff circle go in with a deflection off the far post.

Walker made it 3-1 on an empty-net goal with 47 seconds remaining in the third. It was the first multi-point game of Walker's career.

"We've just got to be a little more dialed in, a little sharper," Dumba said. "Pay attention to those details and hopefully we get a little bit better luck here. It puts a damper on the road trip, for sure."

Star Tribune LOADED: 11.13.2019

1161187 Minnesota Wild

Wild-Los Angeles game recap

NOVEMBER 13, 2019 — 12:38AM

STAR TRIBUNE'S THREE STARS

1. Jonathan Quick, Kings: Goaltender made 27 saves.
2. Jeff Carter, Kings: Wound up with game-winning goal.
3. Matt Dumba, Wild: Scored the Wild's only goal.

BY THE NUMBERS

0 Goals by the Wild during three power plays.

2 Wins out of four games on this now-completed road trip through California and Arizona.

SARAH MCLELLAN

Star Tribune LOADED: 11.13.2019

1161188 Minnesota Wild

Road rally falls short in Wild's 3-1 loss to Los Angeles

By Sarah McLellan Star Tribune

NOVEMBER 13, 2019 — 1:00AM

LOS ANGELES — Instead of traveling in geographical order by playing the two Southern California teams in succession, stops in Anaheim and Los Angeles bookended the Wild's four-game, 10-day road trip.

And while the team logged extra air miles with an itinerary like that, the upside was that its final matchup was against one of the few clubs in the NHL below it in the standings — a glorious opportunity to wrap the trek a resounding success at 3-1.

But the Wild couldn't take advantage of the schedule nor its opponent, sagging for a 3-1 letdown to the Kings on Tuesday in front of 16,099 at Staples Center to finish 2-2 and sit 6-11-1 overall and 3-10 on the road.



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College hockey, high school action and the NHL: We dig into every corner of the state of hockey's sport on our Puck Drop page. Tap here to get there.

"It puts a damper on it, for sure," defenseman Matt Dumba said of the outcome's effect on the trip. "... You got a four-hour trip home tomorrow on a plane. Turns out it's going to be pretty quiet tomorrow."

In staying on brand, the Wild fell behind by two goals.

Although the team overcome that deficit at the outset to shrug off the Ducks 4-2 on Nov. 5 and climbed out of that hole twice last Saturday to rally 4-3 over the Coyotes, it couldn't stage one more comeback against the Kings.

The Wild's other loss on this road swing was a 6-5 setback to the Sharks on Nov. 7, a close result after the team gave up four goals in the first period.

"It's a bad formula for success," coach Bruce Boudreau said. "There's no doubt."

Kings captain Anze Kopitar continued the trend of the opposition striking first against the Wild when he put back a puck 1 minute, 10 seconds after the opening faceoff that goalie Devan Dubnyk failed to cover completely.

A pair of power plays later in the period gave the Wild a chance to pull even, but the chances actually seemed to hurt the team's already disjointed rhythm instead of helping it. The Wild managed just one shot on the two looks and was blanked again early in the second to go 0-for-3. Los Angeles went 0-for-2.

Near the midway point of the second, at 10:56, the Kings doubled their lead.

After winning an offensive-zone faceoff, winger Jeff Carter charged to the net where he put back the rebound from a Michael Amadio shot to make it 2-0.

As if on cue, the Wild responded soon after – recapturing the resiliency that's fueled its triumphs on this tour of the Pacific Division.

With 4:20 to go in the middle frame, the team trimmed its deficit in half on a shot by Dumba.

The goal was Dumba's second in as many games, after he contributed to the comeback Saturday in Arizona. This was Dumba's first goal streak since he scored three in a row Nov. 13-17, 2018.

In the third, the Wild kept applying pressure – cycling the puck in the Kings' zone and maintaining possession with the aid of its defensemen jumping up into the play.

But the Wild couldn't find that next goal like it had in its previous games.

Give credit to Los Angeles goalie Jonathan Quick, who was at his best in the third. He totaled 27 saves on the night and had nine in the final 20 minutes. One of his best came against winger Mats Zuccarello from the slot, a puck that appeared to clip Quick in the mask before sailing over the net.

"We still believed we could come back obviously, but just didn't happen for us," winger Luke Kunin said.

Dubnyk had 32 stops for the Wild.

The Kings tacked on an empty-net goal from defenseman Sean Walker with 47 seconds to go.

"When we get looks, we gotta capitalize," Dumba said. "We gotta execute. I know I had one at the start of the third. I put that in the net, it's a different game. I think we all gotta hold ourselves a little more accountable in that sense and capitalizing and bearing down."

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1161189

Minnesota Wild

Russian Kirill Kaprizov hoping to join Wild next season

By Sarah McLellan Star Tribune

NOVEMBER 13, 2019 — 12:37AM

LOS ANGELES – Prized prospect Kirill Kaprizov could debut in the NHL with the Wild as soon as next season. General Manager Bill Guerin has learned that's what the 22-year-old wants from talking to his agent.

Guerin isn't worried about Kaprizov making an impact when that happens. He isn't expecting the forward to swoop in as a savior for the Wild.

"That's a lot of pressure to put on a player," Guerin said. "That's why you see some guys at the [trade] deadline, they go to wherever they're going and they struggle. They put so much pressure on themselves, and I just want him to be able to come in and just have a lot of support."

Guerin will be in Russia from Dec. 1-3 to visit with Kaprizov, a trip in which he plans to catch one of Kaprizov's games with CSKA Moscow in the Kontinental Hockey League and have dinner with the 2015 fifth-round draft pick.

Through 23 games this season, Kaprizov has 13 goals and 25 points, but Guerin recognizes transitioning to the NHL will be quite a change for the winger — a process the Wild wants to help ease.

"He's going to be coming into a new culture, new league," Guerin explained. "Everything's going to be new, and there's going to be an adjustment period. There are a lot of different pieces to the puzzle that we need, and he's one of them. But I don't want it all put on him to where we throw him out on the ice and everything's fixed. That's too much on one person."

Greg Pateryn, who's missed the entire season after undergoing core muscle surgery Oct. 1, is expected to practice with the Wild when the team returns home.

"He's doing well," Guerin said. "He's progressing."

Once Pateryn is ready to play, the Wild anticipates keeping eight defensemen on the roster, but it's unclear if Pateryn will immediately step into the lineup.

"We're going to have to see how that goes," coach Bruce Boudreau said. "I don't want to make any statements on whether he's jumping right in or whether he's going to have to fight his way in. When he's healthy and we see him at practice, then we'll know what we have."

Since Pateryn has been sidelined, Carson Soucy has taken the bulk of the minutes next to Brad Hunt on the Wild's third pairing.

"He's playing great," Guerin said of Soucy. "There's a lot there. He's an everyday player."

Nick Seeler, who was a regular with the Wild last season, has played just four games and was a healthy scratch Tuesday against the Kings after he was a late addition to Saturday's lineup when winger Luke Kunin was sidelined with food poisoning.

Seeler took just two shifts against the Coyotes, playing 1 minute, 15 seconds.

"Always feel for guys like that," Guerin said. "It's awful that we have to do that because he works as hard as everybody. He competes like crazy, and you want everybody to be able to play. So you do feel for a guy like that, but we also have to do what we have to do. His attitude has been



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unbelievable. He gets it. He's a team guy. Guys that do that are just real good pros."

Road regulars

The Wild completed its four-game road trip Tuesday, a tour that tied for its longest of the season.

It'll have another four-game trek to close out the regular season March 29-April 4.

"I think a couple guys got apartments," Boudreau said. "We play 20 of our first 30 on the road. If we can stay in the hunt at that point in time, I think the middle part of the season will be really good."

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1161190 Minnesota Wild

Wild vying for winning record on road trip in finale vs. Kings

By Sarah McLellan

NOVEMBER 12, 2019 — 10:42AM

LOS ANGELES – None of the Wild's previous road trips have finished with a winning record, but the team has a chance at that Tuesday when it closes out a four-game, Western Conference swing through the Pacific Division at Staples Center against the Kings.

So far, the team is 2-1 on the trip.

"We certainly would like to do it," coach Bruce Boudreau said. "I think it's our turn."

The formula for success so far has been rally mode.

In its first victory, the Wild overcame a two-goal hole to shrug off the Ducks 4-2. Most recently, the team twice erased a two-goal deficit to take down the Coyotes 4-3 on Saturday.

"They're not quitters," Boudreau said. "... Sometimes it gets away from us, as it did in the Dallas game and maybe the first game in Nashville. But it's a group that's going to fight to the end, which is great."

Winger Luke Kunin is ready to return after missing Saturday's game with food poisoning, but the Wild won't get winger Marcus Foligno back in the lineup. He remains out with a lower-body injury.

This trip so far has been winger Kevin Fiala's most productive stretch of the season.

He has four points over the past three games, a span in which he's scored twice. Against Arizona, Fiala had a goal and an assist.

"I still think there's a lot more in that body of work that can be done," Boudreau said. "But so far he's doing OK."

About the Kings:

Los Angeles hasn't improved much since it suffered a 5-1 loss to the Wild on Oct.26. In six ensuing games, the Kings have won just once – a 4-3 overtime decision vs. the Blackhawks on Nov.2. This will be the Kings' first home game since a three-game Eastern Canada road trip in which the team went 0-2-1. Three of the Kings' last four games have been decided by one goal. Their 35.6 shots per game average is the most in the NHL.

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1161191

Minnesota Wild

Wild wrap up West Coast road trip with loss to last place Kings

By DANE MIZUTANI | dmizutani@pioneerpress.com | Pioneer Press

PUBLISHED: November 13, 2019 at 12:05 am | UPDATED: November 13, 2019 at 12:51 am

LOS ANGELES — It's been so long since the Wild have been home that coach Bruce Boudreau has literally lost track of time.

"I don't know how many days we've been here," Boudreau joked earlier this week, teeing himself up for the punchline. "I think a couple of guys got apartments."

It's been 10 days away from home, to be exact, and even though the Wild would've loved to go 100 percent on the West Coast road trip, they will return to the Twin Cities with 4 of 8 points under the belt.

That much was determined Tuesday night at Staples Center, as the Wild suffered a 3-1 loss to the Los Angeles Kings, who entered the night with the worst record in the NHL.

"To me I was so counting on winning tonight," Boudreau said. "That's all I was thinking about and having that momentum going home."

That obviously won't be the case.

That loss capped the longest road trip of the season, which started a week ago with a comeback win over the Anaheim Ducks, followed by a brain fart against the San Jose Sharks and then a comeback win over the Arizona Coyotes.

The loss to the Kings ends a brutal stretch in which the Wild played 13 of their opening 18 games on the road. Not that much of reprieve is on the way. Not yet at least.

"We play 20 of 30 games on the road," Boudreau said. "If we can stay in the hunt at that point in time, I think the middle part of the season will be really good for us."

As for the actual game, it started off on the wrong note, as Devan Dubnyk allowed a soft goal 70 seconds into the game. He fell over while trying to cover up an initial shot from the point and Kings captain Anze Kopitar cleaned up the mess with relative ease to make it 1-0.

While it looked like that might be the start of a rough night for Dubnyk, give him credit for bouncing back in a hurry. He made a few big saves in the first period to keep the Wild within striking distance.

But an unfortunate bounce in front of Dubnyk midway through the second period made it 2-0 as Kings winger Jeff Carter netted a tap-in goal after a puck fell right on his stick.

"You don't see that too often," Dubnyk lamented. "It was almost like he toe-dragged it out of the air. All I can do is watch him pretty much. He was on the other side of the net. It stinks."

That continued an alarming trend for the Wild that spanned the entire West Coast road trip.

In every game, the Wild fell behind 2-0 before they really started to compete. And in every game, the Wild battled back to make things interesting down the stretch.

That happened yet again as Matt Dumba cut the deficit to 2-1 late in the second period, dancing on a defender at the blue line before uncorking a wrist shot that snuck into the back of the net.



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"We can't spot them those goals," Dumba said. "I don't know. We have to be a little more dialed in, a little sharper, and just pay attention to those details."

That provided the Wild with some life heading into the third period, and even though they pushed hard for the game-tying goal, they ultimately ran out of gas down the stretch.

"It puts a damper on (the road trip), for sure," Dumba said. "We have a four-hour trip home tomorrow on a plane. It's going to be pretty quiet."

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1161192 Minnesota Wild

Wild GM Bill Guerin to meet with top prospect Kirill Kaprizov in Moscow

By DANE MIZUTANI | dmizutani@pioneerpress.com | Pioneer Press

PUBLISHED: November 12, 2019 at 1:57 pm | UPDATED: November 12, 2019 at 10:20 PM

LOS ANGELES — Much of rookie general manager Bill Guerin's tenure with the Wild is going to be defined by his ability to get top prospect Kirill Kaprizov to the Twin Cities.

No matter how bad things have gotten for the Wild the past couple of seasons, Kaprizov has offered a glimmer of hope from 5,000 miles away.

A fifth-round draft pick in 2015, the 22-year-old Russian sniper has been more of unicorn than anything else. While he's developed into one of the best players in his homeland's Kontinental Hockey League — he currently is second in the league with 13 goals — many have wondered whether he is ever going to come to American to play in the NHL.

Which is a big reason Guerin is flying to Moscow at the end of the month. Guerin plans to have dinner with Kaprizov and his agent, Dan Milstein, and watch the young prospect play a game in person. Guerin said his expectation is for Kaprizov to debut for the Wild next season.

"He really wants to come over here next season," the Wild GM said. "I have no concerns about him playing and having success."

But Guerin wants to manage expectation, both outward and inward.

Because the Wild haven't had a game-breaker since Marian Gaborik left a decade ago, there already have been lofty expectations placed on Kaprizov as the future of the franchise. It's hard not to get excited about him after watching highlights of him in action. He is worth the price of admission whenever he takes the ice.

"There's going to be an adjustment period," Guerin said. "There are a lot of different pieces to the puzzle that we need, and he's one of them. But I don't want it all put on him to where we throw him out on the ice and everything's fixed. That's too much on one person."

That's something Guerin wants to stress to Kaprizov, too.

"That's a lot of pressure to put on a player," Guerin said. "That's why we see some guys at the (trade) deadline, they go to wherever they're going and they struggle. They put so much pressure on themselves. I just want him to be able to come in and just have a lot of support."

Greg Pateryn hasn't played this season as he recovers from sports hernia surgery, but it looks as if he could be practicing as soon as this week.

"He's doing well," Guerin said. "He's progressing."

His potential return to the lineup will force the Wild to make some decisions on the blue line. It's hard to take Brad Hunt and Carson Soucy out of the lineup right now, and Nick Seeler still offers value as someone who can play in a pinch.

That means the Wild likely will carry a couple of extra defensemen for awhile.

"That's the plan right now," Guerin said. "At least for right now."

Marcus Foligno went down with a lower-body injury last week, and he could miss more time than originally expected.

After being classified as day to day, Guerin noted it could be a little longer than that.

Week to week?

"It's probably a little closer to that," Guerin said. "Which really (stinks) because he's having a great season."

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1161193 Minnesota Wild

Kevin Fiala is facing his fears after fractured femur, building confidence and speed for the Wild

By Michael Russo

Nov 13, 2019

LOS ANGELES — It was the seventh game of the season, the Wild were in Montreal, and in a scoreless first period, Kevin Fiala was first into the boards in his own zone.

With Nick Cousins skating in on the forecheck, Fiala didn't want to take a hit, so he slammed on the brakes and reached with one hand to poke at the puck. Cousins intercepted the puck and set up Victor Mete for an easy goal from the slot.

Fiala, who has had a propensity for turnovers since arriving in Minnesota last season, was highly criticized for bailing on the play.

But the reality is it's hard to blame Fiala for not wanting to put himself into harm's way after a devastating injury he sustained during the Nashville Predators' run to the Stanley Cup Final in April 2017.

Skating with the puck down the left side of the ice, Fiala was checked into the boards hard by St. Louis Blues defenseman Robert Bortuzzo and fractured the femur in his left leg. In a similar scene to what once happened in San Jose to former Wild defenseman Kurtis Foster, Fiala was in agony and ultimately removed from the ice on a stretcher and rushed to a local hospital.

For Foster, a broken femur changed the course of his career and Fiala, too, worried his career was threatened.

"It was scary. I couldn't move," said Fiala, who underwent surgery to have a rod put in his leg. "It was a long recovery and sometimes there were days in the recovery that I felt like, 'Am I coming back or not?' It was kind of up and down. One day felt good, the other day not good. And then at one point at five months, it was all gone and all 100 percent."

The Wild's four-game, 10-day road trip came to an end Tuesday night with a 3-1 loss to the Los Angeles Kings, but if there was source of optimism during the Wild's 2-2 trip, it's that Fiala is starting to show flashes of the type of player former general manager Paul Fenton hoped he was acquiring in last February's trade for Mikael Granlund.



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Fiala's four-game point streak did come to an end, but he worked his butt off during a hard-fought game by the Wild against the Kings. His streak consisted of three goals and two assists starting with his first goal of the season Nov. 2 at home against the Blues.

Fiala, a healthy scratch twice this season, started to feel more like himself the game before in St. Louis, then scored in the rematch. His play has gotten better and better since.

"This sport is just confidence in my eyes, or a lot," Fiala said. "Right now my confidence is high. So just going to keep it going. It's a long season."

Fiala, who scored 23 goals two seasons ago before combining for 13 between the Wild and Predators last season, turned 23 this summer. That's way, way, way too early to be giving up on any player, let alone one with the speed and skill Fiala possesses.

Fenton was hoping Fiala could have a breakout season with an elevated role in Minnesota.

It's hard to live up to, but the pressure on Fiala was instantly increased when Fenton called him "electric" and said he had "the ability to be a game-breaker."

"He's got an electric stick. His vision is unique," Fenton said in February. "He's got this ability to find people in really close quarters. You better be aware that it's coming."

Fiala heard all of those accolades. So, when he struggled off the hop with the Wild and kept giving away pucks last season, the pressure continued to pile up and he started to feel uncomfortable in his surroundings.

He missed much of training camp due to a work visa delay and had a slow start to the season. Fiala says he has gone back to basics and tried to play more simply. He's trying to go more into high-traffic areas, which is not easy for somebody who sustained such a serious injury only two years ago.

"There's not a lot of pretty goals in this league," Fiala said. "The faster you understand it, the better. I was one of the players I still sometimes don't want to go to the dirty areas and stuff. But that's what I told myself. After the injury, I've gotta do those stuff because the game's changed. Everybody's getting better, faster. There are a lot more dirty goals than nice goals."

But sometimes, there still is a mental block during those times he's along the boards and is about to get clobbered. In a lot of ways, that's probably the reason he doesn't take care of the puck as much as everybody would like.

"It was a tough start mentally, for sure, (after the broken femur)," Fiala said.

The one thing he did not lose from the injury is his speed. North-south, there are few players faster on the Wild.

"The speed, we went to the finals, so I did rehab and then had a long summer, so I didn't work so much on my speed. But I didn't lose it," he said. "That was my concern for sure. But no, I didn't lose it."

Now the hope is he can start to realize some of the expectations created for him, and we are undoubtedly starting to see better all-around play from him.

"I think there's a couple reasons why he's playing better," said coach Bruce Boudreau, who has held a couple of very honest heart-to-hearts with Fiala. "Whatever they are, I'm just grateful for them and I want him to continue going. I still think there's a lot more in that body of work that can be done. But so far he's doing OK."

We also saw pretty solid play from the Wild for the most part Tuesday night, but in the end, a fourth consecutive game in which they fell into a 2-0 hole was too much of a chore to climb back from.

The Wild had a boatload of chances at even-strength, but they could never get that tying goal after Matt Dumba cut the deficit in half in the first period.

Now, the Wild, who played 13 of their first 18 games on the road (3-10), return to Minnesota for a brief two-game homestand tied with the Kings for the fewest points in the NHL (13).

"That was a pretty hard-fought game by us for the end of a long road trip," goalie Devan Dubnyk said. "That doesn't help. It doesn't make anyone feel better with where we are right now. If that's a game in the middle of a normal season, you can take something and build off of it, but it's a little tougher to do with where we are."

It took 70 seconds for the Wild to have to chase the game. Sean Walker took a point shot and Dubnyk felt the puck didn't hit him hard enough, so he toppled over thinking the puck was sitting behind him and he needed to freeze it. When he tumbled, the puck popped out just as defenseman Ryan Suter was stopping. Dubnyk said the puck hit Suter and ricocheted through his five-hole and in, although the off-ice officials decided Anze Kopitar actually buried the rebound.

From there, the Wild had so many chances against Jonathan Quick, who entered the game with a 2-8 record with a 4.26 goals-against average and .866 save percentage. Quick, who made 27 saves, executed a couple robberies on Luke Kunin, Mikko Koivu, Brad Hunt, Zach Parise and Mats Zuccarello, plus the Wild missed the net 14 times and had another 16 shots blocked.

When the Wild couldn't score on an early barrage in the third, it seemed like their legs got heavy and chances were few and far between the rest of the game.

"When we get looks, we gotta capitalize," Dumba said. "We gotta execute. I know I had one at the start of the third. I put that in the net, it's a different game. I think we all gotta hold ourselves a little more accountable in that sense and capitalizing and bearing down."

It sure doesn't help the Wild are chasing every game.

They rallied for wins after two-goal deficits in Anaheim and Arizona and nearly rallied from a four-goal deficit in San Jose, but as Boudreau said, "It's a bad formula for success. There's no doubt. Sometimes you get lucky. Sometimes you come back. But overall if you're playing from behind you're not going to win."

It also didn't help that the Wild's power play was just atrocious. On three power plays, they totaled one shot against what was the NHL's worst home penalty kill and 30th-ranked PK overall.

"The thing about the power play, no matter what happens, you've got to do two things, you've got to execute and you've got to outwork the opposition," Boudreau said. "And I didn't think we did either."

So, when you're in the position the Wild are in, it's certainly hard to take the positives from a 2-2 road trip when it could have been 3-1 with a little more execution.

This after three days in LA where Boudreau quipped that "a couple guys got apartments."

"It puts a damper on it for sure," Dumba said. "You want to go home. You got a four-hour trip home (Wednesday) on a plane. Turns out it's going to be pretty quiet. Yeah, it sucks."

Warning: Don't disrespect Eric Staal

It was reported after Saturday's game in Arizona one thing that incited the Wild during their comeback from a pair of two-goal deficits was former teammate Darcy Kuemper talking trash once the Coyotes went ahead 2-0.

Some players found it funny. Others like captain Mikko Koivu did not.



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Koivu, who lit into the Wild's former goalie after scoring a power-play goal against him, indicated after the Wild's 4-3 win that Kuemper crossed the line and was disrespectful.

Koivu wouldn't expand, but according to several around the team, the thing that incited a lot of Wild players the most was Kuemper apparently spent much of the first half of the game chirping at, of all people, very accomplished 35-year-old veteran Eric Staal.

This is a guy who has played the second-most games in the NHL since 2003-04 (1,192), scored the fourth-most goals (423), scored the eighth-most power-play goals (128), recorded the fifth-most points (988) and taken the second-most shots (3,776).

"I don't know if he was just into it and that was his thing, so there was some back and forth," Staal confirmed after Monday's practice. "That's fine. It's not the only time that's happened."

This time though, Kuemper caved and gave up more goals (four) than he had in a start since March 11.

"It got the juices going, but that's kind of his personality. He likes that," Staal said of Kuemper. "Maybe he thought that was getting him going, but sometimes karma can pay you back. Luckily it did for us that game and hopefully it continues (in Thursday's rematch at home against Arizona)."

The Athletic LOADED: 11.13.2019

1161140 Chicago Blackhawks

How having an open mind and making a couple of tweaks might have saved the Blackhawks season: 'We're headed in the right direction'

By JIMMY GREENFIELD CHICAGO TRIBUNE | NOV 12, 2019 | 5:15 PM

A little over a month after Jeremy Colliton took over as Blackhawks coach last season, the chaos that had enveloped the team during the coaching change was still showing itself on the ice with one of their worst stretches in over a decade.

The Hawks were 4-13-3 in the first 20 games of Colliton's tenure, which included an effort to install a new defensive zone scheme that was hard to grasp and seemed to stifle offensive opportunities.

Overall, the Hawks were 10-19-6 when Colliton and the coaching staff made an important adjustment. They allowed the weak-side forward — the weak side refers to whichever side the puck is not on — to anticipate offensive transition and move higher in the zone while playing defense.

That adjustment, along with a revitalized power play, turned the Hawks season around. They played at a 100-point pace from mid-December on, going 26-15-6 and making a serious push for a playoff spot.

But it was too late. The 2½ months of mediocrity caused the Hawks to miss the postseason for a second straight season.

They're not about to let the season get away from them again.

Blackhawks captain Jonathan Toews celebrates a goal with teammate Patrick Kane against the Maple Leafs on Nov. 10, 2019.

Colliton's intention was never to stay with last season's system. He felt it wasn't conducive to playoff success, which requires a much more defensive-oriented approach. With a stronger defense, more depth among the bottom six forwards and superior goaltending, when training camp arrived he switched from last season's approach that worked so well to one he felt would be better defensively and still able to produce goals.

That didn't happen. The Hawks scored only 33 goals in their first 14 games and — despite getting great goaltending from Robin Lehner and sometimes Corey Crawford — were porous defensively while getting off to a 4-7-3 start.

Instead of waiting until mid-December, Colliton and the coaching staff already have returned to the adjustment from last season that led to Patrick Kane, Jonathan Toews and Alex DeBrincat having career years and resulted in the Hawks being in a playoff spot for a brief period before faltering over the last month.

The changes have had an immediate impact. The Hawks have scored 12 goals in their last three games while compiling a 2-0-1 record, easily their best stretch of the season. Each of the games has come against teams well above .500, and with nine of their next 11 against contending teams it was now or probably never.

"I think the adjustment (was) we pushed our wingers higher in mid-December (last season) and I think that helped," Colliton said. "And then January it was a little bit more about matchups, I would say. But how we're playing in our own end (now) is very similar to mid-December on."

Kane said the coaches listened to what the players were sharing about having a hard time finding rhythm offensively, but the changes were ultimately made by a proactive coaching staff.

"They had good communication with us as far as kind of what we're seeing and talk through some things," Kane said. "But I think a lot of us probably stressed that it was a different game. There wasn't as much flow to it and for whatever reason that was, and then they made a change and all of a sudden it seems like we have more options coming out of our end. We have more motion, more speed coming out of our end, which is always a good thing."

If the Hawks can pick up points at the same pace over the final 65 games of this season that they did last season after instituting their changes, they'll finish with 96 points, which matches the pace of the current wild-card leaders in the Western Conference.

But last season the Hawks had to scratch and claw back with goalies who had an .898 save percentage over the course of the season. This season, Lehner and Crawford have combined for a .918 save percentage. If the Hawks offense can get back close to last season's level and the goaltending remains outstanding, there's plenty of time to get back into the playoff picture.

"It's very nice to have that goaltending, no question," Colliton said. "They've played very well. But going back to last year in the second half five-on-five defensively (we were) pretty good. The penalty kill was the issue in the end. The penalty kill has been better, we've got to continue to improve five-on-five defensively and we'll score enough goals."

The penalty kill had allowed just two goals in 26 opportunities before giving up a pair of goals in Sunday's 5-4 win over the Maple Leafs. So there's less of a concern there than there is for the defense to start limiting shots on a regular basis.

The 57 shots the Leafs had against them was just the 10th time in the last 10 years that any NHL team had put up that many shots on goal. But they had only four high-danger scoring chances, 10 of their shots came on power plays and the Leafs — a very good offensive team — were in desperation mode throughout the third period trying to tie the game.

Still, the defense needs to be better. On Tuesday, Connor Murphy participated in his first full practice since suffering a groin injury last month and is traveling with the Hawks on their road trip. He will be eligible to come off long-term injured reserve Saturday when they play the Predators.

If Murphy's return helps tighten up a defense that has allowed an NHL-worst 36.8 per game and the offense kicks into high gear, the Hawks can be just as entertaining as they were in the second half of last season. Or longer.



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"We made a couple tweaks here and there and all of a sudden it just gives us a little more motion," Kane said. "A little more speed and more options coming out of our end, which I think helps move us up the ice a little bit faster."

"I wouldn't necessarily say it's opening it up, but we have to be better defensively. We can't give up as many shots as we did last game or as many chances, but a lot of those came from the outside. I think overall we're headed in the right direction, so try to continue on."

Chicago Tribune LOADED: 11.13.2019

1161141 Chicago Blackhawks

Blackhawks pushing weak-side winger higher to jump-start counterattacks

Coach Jeremy Colliton expanded on the specific changes the Hawks have made to increase their offensive output lately.

By Ben Pope Nov 12, 2019, 5:13pm CST

After the Blackhawks' embarrassingly futile loss last week to the Sharks, coach Jeremy Colliton made a season-altering decision: He'd switch back to the more offense-friendly system he let the Hawks use during their 2018-19 spring surge.

That switch has led to the team earning five of six points since.

After the Hawks' 5-4 victory Sunday against the Maple Leafs, which showed off both their increased offensive aggressiveness and looser defensive structure, Colliton went public with the decision. And after practice Tuesday, he described the changes in greater depth.

In the defensive zone, the Hawks have pushed their winger on the weak side — the side opposite from where the puck is — higher toward the point, so he has more space and a head start for a counterattacking outlet pass if they force a turnover.

That has switched them from "four low" to "three low," meaning there's less defensive coverage in the slot but two forwards above the puck to make defensive-zone exits and offensive-zone entries easier.

"Before, we had four low a lot of times to try and overload in certain situations," Colliton said. "The problem is, when you win the puck back, a lot of times you're very close together, and it's harder to make clean plays. It's harder to exit with space."

"There's been a lot of talk about how we have been dumping too many pucks in. Well, we're not trying to dump the puck in. But when you're attacking and you don't have numbers, you don't have space in behind, you have to."

The idea is that this new system will give the Hawks more numbers and more space to execute offensive-zone carry-ins. So far, that idea has proved to be correct.

Of course, it has proved to be correct in games against the Canucks and Leafs, two run-and-gun, speed-based teams. It will be more difficult to execute in the next two games against the Golden Knights and Predators, when the Hawks will operate without the advantage of the last change on home ice — which can create more favorable matchups — and against two defensively stout opponents.

Still, even the best defense often can't stop Patrick Kane on his "A" game, and he's definitely on his "A" game right now.

"It was a different game [before the switch]," Kane said. "There wasn't as much flow to it, for whatever reason that was. We've tweaked a few things here and there, and all of a sudden it gives us more motion, more

speed and more options coming out of our end, which helps move us up the ice a little bit faster."

The Hawks' strong goaltending so far — Robin Lehner and Corey Crawford have combined for a .918 save percentage, the sixth-best in the NHL — gives Colliton more confidence to cut down on defensive support from the forwards.

"We were trying to be tighter in our own end," Colliton said. "So you push a weak-side forward down, you have that extra safety in the slot. And I think that area had been better. But now when you push him up, the guys that are down low have to do a better job."

When Colliton made a similar switch last season, the Hawks played some terrifying hockey but, in general, made up ground in the standings. The coaching staff hopes deciding to do so again will be equally effective with fewer side effects.

"We kind of felt it was time," Colliton said. "I think we can still hold on to those defensive gains we've made and score more goals."

Chicago Sun Times LOADED: 11.13.2019

1161142 Chicago Blackhawks

Golden Knights take on the Blackhawks on 3-game losing streak

By Associated Press

Chicago Blackhawks (6-7-4, sixth in the Central Division) vs. Vegas Golden Knights (9-7-3, fifth in the Pacific Division)

Paradise, Nevada; Wednesday, 10 p.m. EST

BOTTOM LINE: Vegas will try to end its three-game skid when the Golden Knights take on Chicago.

The Golden Knights are 6-3-1 in Western Conference games. Vegas averages 10.5 penalty minutes per game, the fourth-most in the NHL. Brayden McNabb leads the team serving 24 total minutes.

The Blackhawks are 4-3-3 in conference play. Chicago has converted on 14.5% of power-play opportunities, scoring eight power-play goals.

In their last meeting on Oct. 22, Vegas won 2-1.

TOP PERFORMERS: Mark Stone has recorded 18 total points while scoring eight goals and collecting 10 assists for the Golden Knights. William Karlsson has recorded five assists over the last 10 games for Vegas.

Patrick Kane has recorded 20 total points while scoring eight goals and totaling 12 assists for the Blackhawks. Brandon Saad has scored four goals over the last 10 games for Chicago.

LAST 10 GAMES: Blackhawks: 4-4-2, averaging 2.6 goals, 4.7 assists, 3.8 penalties and 7.6 penalty minutes while giving up 2.9 goals per game with a .925 save percentage.

Golden Knights: 3-4-3, averaging 2.3 goals, 3.2 assists, 4.2 penalties and 8.5 penalty minutes while giving up 3.4 goals per game with a .891 save percentage.

Golden Knights Injuries: Alex Tuch: day to day (upper body).

Blackhawks Injuries: None listed.

Daily Herald Times LOADED: 11.13.2019



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1161143 Chicago Blackhawks

Blackhawks still haven't hit the jackpot against Vegas

John Dietz

Seven attempts. Seven failures.

Those are the cold, hard facts when it comes to how the Blackhawks have fared against the Vegas Golden Knights since the expansion team entered the league in 2017-18.

It's a pretty incredible fact when you consider the Hawks' long, rich history.

On the other hand, Vegas was never a typical expansion team. The Golden Knights -- stacked with talented players who were finally put in positions to thrive -- stunned the sports world and reached the Stanley Cup Final in their first season.

They impressed again last season and were barely eliminated by San Jose in the first round.

This season, however, coach Gerard Gallant's squad is scuffling along a bit, having lost seven of its last 10 games.

So no better time than Wednesday for the Hawks to get off the schneid and hand Vegas a loss when the teams meet at T-Mobile Arena.

Asked if the Hawks' dismal record against the Golden Knights has ever been a topic of conversation, captain Jonathan Toews said: "It is now. And it will be tomorrow. We've had 'em in pretty good spots and we've found ways to blow the games."

The first of those bad beats came in January when the Hawks squandered a 3-1 lead by allowing goals to Ryan Carpenter and Paul Stastny. Then on Oct. 22, the Hawks were clinging to a 1-0 lead, but yielded a Nick Holden goal with just 93 seconds remaining. They'd go on to lose in a shootout.

"For some reason they have our number," said Carpenter, who signed a three-year deal with the Hawks in the off-season. "It'd be nice to do it in Vegas, be nice to win there.

"It's a loud building and they play hard there and fast. Once they get the crowd behind them they're a hard team to play."

Said Patrick Kane: "It's probably one of the best places to play in the league now. A lot of excitement going into that building. It's almost like you're playing a hockey game in the middle of a Vegas show."

Vegas was almost impossible to beat at home in its first season, going 29-10-2 for an amazing .731 points percentage. In 2018-19, Gallant's team was 24-12-5 at T-Mobile for a more-than-respectable .646 points percentage.

This season, the Golden Knights are just 4-3-2 (.556).

That first year, it wasn't unheard of for teams to suffer from the Vegas Flu after getting a bit too carried away in Sin City.

"I mean I think it's fun to stay on the strip," Toews said. "It's always exciting to go there. Obviously if you spend a few too many days it could turn into a vacation pretty quick. You could rationalize hanging out in a casino a little bit too long.

"But we're all business. We know what we've got to do."

Kane agreed, and also noted that Joel Quenneville would often treat the players to a couple of days in Vegas during the now-defunct Circus Trip.

So while Kane and Toews may still try their luck a bit at the tables, more than anything they'd just like to see the Hawks hit the jackpot on the ice.

"I think we're all professionals to the point where we're there to play a hockey game, we're there to do our job and hopefully get a win," Kane said.

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1161144 Chicago Blackhawks

If Murphy continues to look good in practice, he could play against Nashville Saturday

John Dietz

Defenseman Connor Murphy practiced at Fifth Third Arena Tuesday and might play when the Blackhawks are at Nashville Saturday.

Murphy has missed nine games with a groin injury that landed him on long-term injured reserve. He won't play at Vegas Wednesday but is eligible to come off LTIR for the Predators game.

"He looks good out there and good to have him practicing with the team and on the trip," coach Jeremy Colliton said. "We'll assess it once he's eligible to come off and make a decision."

One thing Murphy will have to get used to is adjusting to how the Hawks are playing. The team has made a schematic change -- pushing a weakside forward higher in the defensive zone coverage -- in an effort to open things up to be able to push into the offensive zone with more pace.

"It should be pretty simple," Murphy said. "I've been watching all the games and sitting in the meetings. It makes it a little more clear and you're able to go through that process with the guys."

Once Murphy comes off LTIR, the Hawks could send Adam Boqvist to Rockford, they could carry eight defensemen for a while or they may decide to place Slater Koekkoek on waivers.

What's up, Dach: Kirby Dach scored the second goal of his NHL career in the Hawks' 5-4 win over Toronto Sunday, and he also was on the ice for just 7 minutes and 43 seconds. Originally paired with Dylan Strome and Patrick Kane, Dach has been demoted to a third- and fourth-line role for most of his last seven games.

He has 2 goals and 2 assists in 11 games and averaging 10:48 of ice time, and 9:23 in the last five contests.

"I liked him last game," said coach Jeremy Colliton, who added that Dach's ice time suffered against the Sharks due to the fact the Hawks took 3 third-period penalties. "Very good response after (being a healthy scratch).

"And again, it wasn't to indicate we didn't like his performance. It was just hoping he was going to come back fresh, and if you compare this last game to the one he played before, it was better. And that's what we're looking for."

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1161145 Chicago Blackhawks

Jeremy Colliton explains schematic change and why Blackhawks made it

By Charlie Roumeliotis November 12, 2019 2:43 PM



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The Blackhawks made a schematic change after their four-game road trip and they've seen the benefits of it immediately. They're 2-0-1 in their past three games and have scored 12 goals over that stretch.

We broke down on Monday what changes were made systematically and how it has freed up the offense, but head coach Jeremy Colliton elaborated on it Tuesday and explained the reasoning behind the decision.

"All it is, our weak side forward, we pushed him up higher in defensive zone coverage," Colliton said. "Before, we had four low a lot of times, to try and overload in certain situations. That's good, it gets you out of D-zone, but the problem is when you win the puck back, a lot of times you're very close together and it's harder to make clean plays, it's harder to exit with space to make plays. So we were having trouble entering the zone.

"There's been a lot of talk about how we have been dumping too many pucks in. Well, we're not trying to dump the puck in, but when you're attacking and you don't have numbers, you don't have space in behind, you have to, you're forced too. I think we're doing a much better job of getting from D-zone clean, because we have a forward a little bit higher, there's a little more space, it happens quicker. And then I think we've done a good job with the low three [of] someone jumping by and then we can create a little bit more space off the rush and we don't have to chip it in. We can enter clean, make some plays and I think the guys are doing very well."

Patrick Kane, who has erupted for seven points (four goals, three assists) in the past three games since the change, sees the change opening up more opportunities for the Blackhawks on offense.

"I think a lot of us probably stressed that there wasn't as much flow to it, for whatever reason that was," Kane said. "They made a change and all of a sudden it seems like we have more options coming out of our end, we have more motion, more speed coming out of our end, which is always a good thing."

The Blackhawks' dump-in rate, as Colliton noted, has been much higher this season and it's noteworthy because they generated a lot of their offense off the rush last season from mid-December and on. But what we didn't know was the exact reason why the Blackhawks altered the way they entered the offensive zone.

Aside from the obvious answer of cutting down on neutral zone turnovers and limiting the amount of odd-man rushes against, Colliton notes the Blackhawks were forced to dump it in more because they weren't entering the zone with numbers. The defensive scheme didn't really allow them to.

But with the recent fundamental change, the Blackhawks have more options to exit their own zone cleanly, pick up speed through the neutral zone and do what they do best: by carrying the puck in and having more freedom to create offense. It's something the coaching staff and players discussed with each other, and the consensus is it will maximize the talent of this group.

"We kind of felt it was time," Colliton said. "I mean, we're always talking with them for sure and guys, they want to score more. They want to produce, guys want to make plays. And so we're just trying to find the balance. We want to continue to work on being good defensively, but we've got to score more than them. I think we can still hold onto those defensive gains we've made and score more goals."

Comcast SportsNet.com LOADED: 11.13.2019

1161146

Chicago Blackhawks

How Blackhawks goalie Collin Delia turned his leather-working hobby into a business

By Scott Powers Nov 12, 2019

An early fall drizzle didn't deter patrons at the Renegade Craft Fair in Chicago's Wicker Park neighborhood.

It only made the Portiere Leather Company booth all the more inviting.

Collin Delia and Ava Lammers, co-owners of the company and a couple, put up a canopy and inserted some furniture in hopes of creating an inviting, homey atmosphere.

Some of the people who enter the space recognize Delia from his other line of work: Chicago Blackhawks goaltender. (Portiere means goalie in Italian.) Pictures of former Blackhawks goalies, including Tony Esposito and Ed Belfour, are on display. There's also a framed Chicago Tribune story about Delia's loves for hockey and leather working.

Passersby peruse the wallets, tote bags and duffel bags, all personally crafted by Delia and Lammers.

As happy as Delia is to talk hockey, what really pushes he and Lammers through the two long days of being on their feet, assembling and disassembling the space and even the rain is engaging in conversation after conversation about their shared passion.

Whatever they sold that weekend was nice — Blackhawks defenseman Duncan Keith dropped in and bought a wallet — but it wasn't their priority. This was more about introducing themselves to the craft community. By having a tent at the fair, interacting with people and showcasing their products, the couple were realizing their dream of running their own leather goods business.

Because less than a year-and-a-half ago, Portiere Leather Company didn't exist.

"I don't think either of us would be doing this explicitly right now if we hadn't met or taken the chance on each other," Delia said.

Days after the fair, Delia and Lammers sit side by side in their company's showroom on the fifth floor of Lacuna Lofts, a building full of artist-rented spaces in the Pilsen neighborhood.

"The craft show was weird, to be in the same space, but hardly interact," said the 22-year-old Lammers. "I stepped back and watched him interact with people. I have such an appreciation for him. I got to really see how he is in that element without me interacting in that. I can appreciate him for his education and how he communicates with people. He has such a gift for explaining things. That's true, it is a gift."

"If I'm passionate about something, I do," said the 25-year-old Delia. "Normally, I'm introverted."

Delia's other passion, hockey, was about to take over his life again. He had just begun training camp with the Blackhawks. In the coming weeks, he would be assigned to the Rockford IceHogs, the Blackhawks' AHL affiliate, but he and Lammers had planned for that. Their goal in the offseason was to get the company off the ground and then grow it at their own speed.

That may take time, but everything else has come together quickly. The pair first met in 2018 and they now have a place together in Fulton Market.

It all started in June 2018, when Delia and his step-mom were shopping for a gift for his father at Lululemon in Pasadena, Calif. Lammers was the store manager.

She offered to help Delia, who "somewhat standoffishly" rebuffed her. When he was ready to check out, he told Lammers he was part of the Sweat Collective, Lululemon's discount program for athletes. But because Delia said he was buying a gift for his dad, Lammers said he couldn't use the discount.



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"It's like one of those 'Seinfeld' moments that, you know, social interaction," Delia said. "I just was kind of taken back really. I was like, 'Oh, really?' She said, 'Yeah, I'm so sorry. This is the total.' I was like, 'I honestly don't ever do this, but do you mind if I just talked to the manager?' She was like, 'Oh, I am the manager.' And, yeah, ha."

"I had always wanted to do that, and he was my first opportunity," Lammers said of their "meet-cute" moment. "I was able to say, I am the manager."

When they were paying, Delia's step-mom took out her wallet, which he'd made for her. Lammers asked about it, and Delia mentioned he worked with leather and was trying to start a business. Lammers said she worked with leather, too, and Delia's step-mom suggested they exchange information. He wrote his email on some receipt paper.

"I was slightly disappointed at first," Lammers said. "Oh, an email, that's ..."

"That's archaic," Delia finished.

"That's archaic and kind of disappointing," Lammers said.

Lammers said she ended up giving Delia the discount because she saw it was his birthday in his profile. They kept in contact, and that email exchange brought them here.

Delia and Lammers discovered they both grew up around people who worked with their hands. Both their fathers did some woodworking and carpentry, and Delia's grandfather was a stonemason.

They had only gotten into leather making shortly before meeting, but they were both quite serious about it. This wasn't just a hobby.

Collin Delia shows some of their leather supply in their showroom in Pilsen. (Scott Powers / The Athletic)

"I remember when I first started out, I was just tooling around with some leather, and I remember one day I made a wallet and I came into the locker room in Rockford," Delia said. "It's a pretty open environment, and I'm like, 'I'm making wallets now.' Everyone looked at me, kind of gave me a weird look and keep doing what they're doing. They didn't care."

Former Blackhawks teammate John Hayden couldn't ignore Delia's leather working. They shared a hotel room in downtown Chicago during training camp last season, and Delia brought his tools with him.

"Our room was a makeshift leather workshop," said Hayden, who now plays for the New Jersey Devils. "Stuff everywhere. And it was only loud when the hammer came out. Surprisingly, no noise complaints."

"It was awesome. It was cool to hear about a player's passions outside of hockey. 'Deals' found a niche passion that evolved into something bigger than a hobby. He's curious and well read, so it was great spending time with him and learning about his leather craft and discussing other things throughout camp."

Delia hand-stitched his first duffel bag during that training camp, and it's his most-prized leather possession to date. Lammers' favorite self-made item is an early canvas duffel bag they came up with together.

Aside from that, they keep little of what they create. Delia and Lammers chose to work with leather because they found they enjoy the process, from the planning to the hours spent crafting each item, but they also believe it's an industry they can make an impact in. They recognize the demand for fine leather goods, and they want to fill it in a way they don't believe many businesses do.

"I think it's mostly the education that people receive regarding the leather industry, the leather itself and their appreciation for the craft and not just leather working, but also leather tanning," Lammers said. "And so when someone's receiving a product from us, you know it's not the same as going into a department store and being like, oh, that's cute, I'll buy it. That's it. That's the end of the road. And then you have it and it's cute. But I think for us, we're so passionate about the people who are tanning the leather and the people who are caring for it and the people who are in

the industry who really want the best in it, are really putting themselves out there and spending hours just perfecting leather tanning and leather crafting."

The retail industry is the enemy in some ways.

"But a lot of it too, it's like a rebellion to the retail industry and to these big corporations, so to speak," Delia said. "Because this is the type of consumer I am, I will compare products, research them, look up exactly where they're made, how they're made, where are they getting the materials from. If I'm going to spend money on something, I want to have some solace in knowing it is actually as it is advertised."

"So for me, I sort of thought if I was buying something that was expensive, an heirloom piece, a piece that somebody would want you know to keep, hand down to somebody, I would want to use the absolute best materials, I would want to use exceptional craftsmanship and I would want the company to be completely transparent in what they're doing. That's what we seek to embody."

And don't get Delia started on the name-brand leather bags and purses that populate a city like Chicago.

"I'm not exactly sure how a lot of these big designer brands do it, but you see these specific bags that a lot of people carry with checkered patterns in different colors and this pebble grain texture and that's really just a pretty big dye press stamping over the leather," he said. "A lot of times those companies that are marketing their bags up and selling them for a thousand dollars, they use top-grain leather. Then you get to the highest association of good leather, it's called full-grain. Everything that we use is full-grain leather."

So what is full-grain leather?

"Pretty much the full grain is the outer layer of the hide that has all the intrinsic strength in it," he said. "It shows the most imperfections, but it's the most natural. That's where all the character is. We don't ever use anything other than that. If they're going to be paying as much as they do, we think they deserve the best. And it's our obligation and we feel as a company to educate people on that."

Collin Delia and Ava Lammers in their workroom in Pilsen. (Scott Powers / The Athletic)

Delia and Lammers know their goods aren't inexpensive. A simple wallet costs \$175. Their shouldered tote bag sells for \$575. But they're not making a ton of profit given the materials they use and the time they spend making their products.

"Even when we tell people exactly what our profits are — it's 50 percent and labor is \$20 an hour — people are actually very uncomfortable, and I think it's because they've never heard somebody who they're buying the product from explain to them exactly how much they're making off of it," Lammers said. "And I think even just last weekend at the craft show, seeing these people, while we're very openly saying, this is how much we pay ourselves, their body kind of tenses up and then they start to relax after a while and they become very appreciative. And that's so worth it for me because you can tell them, yeah, that duffel bag is \$1,400, but it also costs \$1,000 in materials, and people are like, I get it now, you know. I get that's why it's so expensive or whatever."

"We probably could sell it for more. But we want them to be as accessible to as many people as possible. Sure, our stuff is going to be expensive regardless, but we need to pay rent and we need to pay for the materials and things like that. But it's fine quality leather goods and handmade stuff, it shouldn't only be for the one percent or the elite. I would want as many people as possible to be able to have access to something that's kind of changing the dynamic of the leather industry."

Delia and Lammers put a lot of thought into their pricing and the construction of their goods. When they were designing their shoulder tote bag, Lammers focused on getting the strap length right. The bottom of their bags remain flat for carrying heavy items. There's an inside pocket



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to the bag for quick access, and they double stitch areas to ensure longevity. They guarantee their goods for life.

"It really takes a lot of trust in the other person," Lammers said. "For me, I know what a woman wants for the most part. He knows what a man wants to wear. I don't know what it's like to be sitting on your wallet all the time. I can't really speak to that, but I have to really trust that he does. I think really to have that trust in each other has made the process smoother."

Delia pulls out his tools to demonstrate how they work. He places a piece of hide onto a table and cuts through it easily with a skife knife.

"It cuts that piece like butter," he said.

He points out the imperfections of the hide, how they trace onto the leather. He explains how to burnish and how the edges become softened. He mentions how they're looking to add more tools and machines to make the process even easier. He takes out more knives, an edge groover, a tool to punch holes.

"The first hour of my day is cleaning up after Collin," Lammers said with a laugh. "We're very different. He uses every tool. They're all out in the kitchen as well. I use this and I put it away. I'm a liability with sharp object. I do spend quite a lot of my time picking up after him."

Delia grabs a box and removes the stamp they use for the company's logo. It's two crossed goalie sticks and the initial P.

Both Delia and Lammers hail from California, though Lammers grew up not caring about the sport.

"But we did have some family friends who were from Canada and they were big hockey fans and I was kind of introduced to hockey a little bit," she said. "And I always said the Blackhawks were my favorite team because they had the cutest players, so it's kind of ironic. But I mean, I'm from California, so we don't really care about hockey too much. But I just thought the Blackhawks were the cutest. Fun, little circle of life."

She understands that hockey means everything to Delia. So even if the logo isn't exactly her cup of tea, she's behind it.

"I think it's a little corny, but I also appreciate him," Lammers said. "I think ultimately because of the feedback we've gotten, we kind of want to offer a choice of the logo on women's bags. Some women who are hockey fans love it. We want to reach everyone."

The Blackhawks signed Collin Delia as a college free agent in 2017. He signed a three-year extension prior to the 2019-20 season. (Isaiah J. Downing/USA Today)

There are a lot of similarities between hockey and leather working for Delia. Both are obsessions for him. Both are also nearly impossible to perfect. No goalie stops 100 percent of the shots he faces over time. Leather working is a long and difficult undertaking as well.

"I'm the type of person, like whatever it is, hockey, leather work, anything that I'm passionate about, I want to know everything about it, and I will stay up and I'll do it," Delia said. "You know sometimes you forget to eat. Because you're so engaged in what you're doing, you get into like this existential headspace, you know. Time just flies by. It never seems like you have enough of it. The same with hockey and you really zone in during a practice or a game, especially as a goalie, the time just melts away."

In an indirect way, the Blackhawks helped Delia get the business up and running. Delia joined the Blackhawks' Super Bowl squares pool last season and came away with \$6,250. It went right into the business.

"It's all the guys' money that helped us start this," Delia said.

"It takes a village," Lammers said.

The hockey season presents some challenges for them. Delia has less time to put into the business. It's not ideal for him to be in Rockford, but they're making it work. Lammers handles the day-to-day operations in

Chicago, and they recently added an apprentice. Delia tries to get back whenever he can.

With the holiday season approaching, they are adding a few items to their inventory. They teased a leather belt on their Instagram account and are preparing for holiday shoppers. Eventually, Delia and Lammers hope to expand the business in various directions. Delia would like to get into hand-built furniture. He built a couch that sits in the showroom. Lammers would like to pursue more fashion. They see it becoming more of a lifestyle company.

For now, they're taking it a day at a time. Blackhawks goalie Corey Crawford has an order in for a duffel bag, but there's no definitive arrival date. It's just how it is right now, especially during the hockey season.

"Obviously hockey is a very large part of my life and I've been doing it for 20-something years, but eventually it ends," Delia said. "And it's so important that as athletes, we have something to do. Because life doesn't stop for anybody, you really need to understand that as a person. Because it is in the end a game and it's a form of entertainment for people and also for ourselves, truly if we're being honest. It's nice to have something such as this to kind of remind you you're still a human. There's a human aspect to this."

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The Athletic / Sidney Crosby mulls surgery for sports hernia that has bothered him all season

By Rob Rossi

Nov 12, 2019

NEW YORK — Sidney Crosby is evaluating all treatment options for a sports hernia, multiple NHL and Penguins sources confirmed to The Athletic.

Crosby aggravated the sports hernia Saturday night at PPG Paints Arena, but sources say the Penguins captain has been dealing with the injury since training camp. He opted against surgery when the Penguins lost multiple forwards, including Evgeni Malkin, to various injuries early in October.

Crosby is now weighing the opinions of medical personnel whether he should undergo surgery, which would typically require a 4-6 week recovery, the sources said.

Another option for Crosby would be a steroid injection and physical therapy, which could possibly allow him to delay surgery until the offseason, the sources said. The potential issue with that option, though, is that Crosby could again aggravate the sports hernia and ultimately need in-season surgery at a later date.

Crosby met with a specialist in Philadelphia then traveled to meet the Penguins before their 3-2 overtime loss Tuesday to the New York Rangers at Madison Square Garden. The Penguins plan to update Crosby's status once he makes a decision regarding the surgery, the sources said.

The team would prefer any surgery be sooner rather than later so that Crosby could return for at least the second half of the regular season, and likely before Christmas. He has been told that sports hernia surgery would likely sideline him only a month, the sources said.

Crosby's situation worsened Saturday night when his left skate blade stuck into the ice after the leg knocked against the left leg of Chicago's Erik Gustafsson. Crosby wobbled backward awkwardly and also later had a shot from Gustafsson hit his right skate boot.



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There is no injury to Crosby's right foot, the sources said.

Crosby had not missed a game prior to sitting out against the Rangers. He had gone without a point in five of six games, including against Chicago on Saturday night, after scoring four goals and recording 10 assists in the Penguins' first 11 games.

During that run, the Penguins played eight consecutive games without Malkin and wingers Bryan Rust and Alex Galchenyuk and forward Nick Bjugstad. Also, forward Jared McCann missed two games in that stretch.

Ultimately, Malkin missed 11 games with a leg injury. In those games, Crosby averaged 21:04 of total ice time. He averaged 21:21 during a stretch of seven games in 12 days from Oct. 12-23.

Malkin did not return until a home game Nov. 2 against Edmonton. Winger Patric Hornqvist was injured in that game and remains out with a lower-body injury.

The Penguins were at 67 man-games lost to injury after their loss to the Rangers.

That total is somewhat misleading because it does not measure the value of the players the Penguins have been without.

They faced the Rangers without Crosby, their captain, leading scorer and an MVP finalist last season; Hornqvist, their most physical forward, best net-front winger and one of five players with at least five goals this season; and Kris Letang, their top-pairing anchor, leading scorer among defensemen and overall leader in total ice time.

Letang is not with the club on this road trip, which continues with a couple of practices in Newark before a game against the New Jersey Devils on Friday night. He is out with a lower-body injury.

Hornqvist also is out with a lower-body injury, though he is on injured reserve and is out "longer term," coach Mike Sullivan has said.

Comparing their current run of injuries what they faced in October would not serve much purpose. But it is notable that these Penguins have played only two full periods with the roster composed the way coaches had anticipated before the preseason finale.

It was in that finale that Rust went down with a hand injury. One week later, Malkin and Bjugstad had been injured in the second regular-season game.

Though all of it, Crosby was skating with an injury that is not uncommon for NHL players. In fact, defenseman Zach Trotman has twice required surgery to repair a sports hernia — most recently in training camp.

Toward the end of his recovery, Trotman described the injury as "really annoying" because it caused discomfort when sitting or rising from a seated position. He said recovery from the out-patient procedure tests a player's patience because "you feel like you're ready to push it, but you're really not."

There likely would be good news if Crosby requires surgery.

"Once you're back on the ice, you don't really think about it anymore," Trotman said in September about the sports hernia. "You're kind of thinking about it all the time when dealing with it, so that's a big load off your mind."

Going a month without Crosby would force all Penguins forwards to do heavier lifting. They'll look to Malkin, who has either scored or assisted on five of their past seven goals — including one from defenseman Justin Schultz against the Rangers.

McCann also scored in the loss. His goal came on the power play, which had been mired in an 0-for-28 funk. The Penguins had gone 11 games without a power-play goal before McCann's capped their rally from a 2-0 deficit against New York.

Were it not for stout early play by goalie Matt Murray, the Penguins probably would have been down by more than 2-0 at the end of the

opening period. He faced seven shots in the first six minutes, including a point-blank attempt from Rangers winger Artemi Panarin.

In the first 10 minutes, the Penguins were out-attempted by the Rangers, 15-3.

From that point on, the Penguins attempted 25 more shots than the Rangers.

Only two shots were attempted by Galchenyuk, who passed on at least twice that many. He is without a goal on the season and played only 12:29 against the Rangers — 2:27 below his season average.

Acquired during the offseason in the trade that sent winger Phil Kessel to Arizona, Galchenyuk appeared to be settling in well before his lower-body injury midway through training camp. Upon finally returning to the lineup Oct. 29, he played well despite not scoring.

Not so much against the Rangers.

"I think he's just got to be more focused playing the game the right way," Sullivan said. "Competing on pucks, winning puck battles, being strong on the wall — all the details of the game. For me, if a goal scorer struggles, just based off my experience, part of it is taking the focus off scoring and just trying to focus on what you can control."

There is only so much any hockey player or team can control.

Though, occasionally a hockey team gets a hockey player like Crosby, who has needed surgery for nearly a couple months and only now might get around to having it.

And while he put off fixing a sports hernia, all Crosby did was darn near carry the Penguins on his back.

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The Athletic / LeBrun Notebook: Wayne Gretzky considering Spengler Cup coaching opportunity

By Pierre LeBrun

Nov 12, 2019

It was just over 10 years ago, in September 2009, that Wayne Gretzky stepped down as head coach of the Coyotes.

It feels like a long time ago already but The Great One coached four years with the Coyotes from 2005-2009, dealing with ownership instability while dipping his toes in one facet of the game he hadn't tried his hand at yet.

Could he be back behind a bench soon?

Perhaps.

Sean Burke has approached him about coaching Canada's entry in the Spengler Cup, Dec. 26-31 in Davos, Switzerland.

Burke, Canada's GM for the 2018 men's Olympic team, is Canada's GM for the Spengler Cup squad.

"It was a nice surprise when Sean called," Gretzky told me Tuesday. "I thanked him. I was excited about it. Team Canada is pretty special. I think the Spengler Cup is the oldest tournament that we know of. It's a pretty nice honour. I told him I needed some time (to sort things out). The only problem for me is that it's over Christmastime. It's a tough decision to make."



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"So, we're talking about it and debating it," added Gretzky. "But it's a great honour that he reached out."

It's not clear yet if Gretzky can swing it, there are family plans at hand (he's a grandfather as many know) during the holidays of course, plus other commitments, but he is certainly looking into what it would take to make it happen.

Gretzky means it when he says it's a huge honour. Playing for Team Canada was always as good as it gets for Gretzky, from leading the 1978 world junior tournament in scoring at the age of 16, to all those memorable Canada Cup moments, to the excitement of being part of the first NHL Olympics in 1998 at Nagano (even if No. 99 was left on the bench during Canada's semifinal shootout loss); and in retirement, of course, Gretzky was the architect of two Canadian Olympic squads in 2002 (gold) and 2006 (QF exit) plus the 2004 World Cup of Hockey entry (won the tournament) also rank up there for him in his illustrious career.

Coaching Canada, which would be a first, is an idea that I think is quite appealing to Gretzky. The Spengler Cup has a long, storied history. Everyone who has been there as a player, coach or fan raves about the tournament (I've never been, it's on my bucket list).

Imagine being one of those European-based Canadian players selected to the Spengler Cup roster and finding out Gretzky was your head coach for the event? You'd be pretty jazzed, I think.

Will Gretzky be able to swing it schedule-wise? Not sure. We should know before too long, though.

Gretzky went 143-161-24 as Coyotes coach. I think it tells you something about him that he was willing to give it a try when his legacy in the game was already enshrined for life. There was no need to ever put it on the line again. But he took a risk and tried his hand at a very demanding role.

His players had to adjust to the greatest player ever being behind the bench.

"When you're around him, even from his first day behind the bench, his passion for the game and his competitive spirit was so obvious," TSN hockey analyst Mike Johnson, who put up 54 points (16-38) under Gretzky in Phoenix in 2005-06, said Tuesday.

"I wasn't sure what his demeanour would be like but I was impressed how invested he was in the game, how he cared about it like we cared about it," added Johnson. "He was all-in. I wasn't sure how that would be since he had accomplished everything else in the game."

Talking to the coach was also unique. I mean, it's Wayne Gretzky, after all.

"I thought he was quite good talking and connecting to players," Johnson said. "It was almost harder as a player because it's Wayne Gretzky, you have to get over who you're talking to. But he was comfortable talking to you. And he was comfortable talking about things that weren't great in your game, too. He would let you know, either way. Which I thought was a good thing."

Again, we're talking the Spengler Cup, not a return to the NHL. But I think it would be fun to see Gretzky coach Canada.

No official word yet out of Buffalo on the status of injured forward Vladimir Sobotka but what I'm hearing is that it's likely on the longish-term side for his absence.

Which will only accentuate the Sabres' search for a top-nine forward.

As we've reported before, eventually if/when Buffalo gets a totally healthy blueline corps, that will be a position of strength it can trade from.

Marco Scandella should be back within a week while Zach Bogosian will need a bit more time, I think, before appearing in a game. Once he's back practising, which should be soon, he'll need to work up to speed.

But at some point, the Sabres will trade for a forward, that much is almost certain.

Barzal/Dubois status

Negotiations have not officially begun yet with this year's top two second-contract RFAs, Mathew Barzal and Pierre-Luc Dubois.

I do believe there have been casual conversations between the Islanders and Barzal's camp but no sense yet that the real stuff is set to begin. It may be that Isles GM Lou Lamoriello decides to wait until after the season to get things rolling on that front, which he's done in the past with other young players, so that it's not a distraction for Barzal. Or at least wait until later in the season.

Which, well, if you're Barzal and his agent J.P. Barry of CAA Sports, is quite fine. The sense I get is that Barry would be ready to go anywhere, anytime, once Lamoriello gives the signal, but at the end of the day, the more numbers Barzal puts up, the stronger the negotiation case it will be. So really why hurry into this one if you're the agent unless the player himself wants it over with.

Meanwhile, still no official talks, either, between the Blue Jackets and Dubois' camp, led by Pat Brisson of CAA. For the record, Brisson, Dubois and Jackets GM Jarmo Kekalainen have all indicated to me a willingness to start anytime. Nobody is trying to wait this out. So it's just a question of deciding when is a good time. I would surmise we'll hear some news, one way or another, sometime in the New Year that talks have at least begun.

Habs goaltending

It is only seven games and he's only 20 so let me be the first to say, we all need to consider the sample size before projecting crazy things. These are early days ...

But Cayden Primeau's .943 save percentage so far with AHL Laval does at least make you think. Charlie Lindgren has a .897 save percentage in eight games, although he's been better of late.

Still, how long before it doesn't become clear that not only is Primeau the best goalie in the AHL for the Habs but arguably the second-best goalie in the entire organization?

All of which brings me to this very much theoretical scenario: Should Carey Price ever go down with a long-term injury this season, which nobody wants to see, does Montreal turn to Keith Kinkaid for the majority of the workload or do they turn to Primeau if he keeps up his stellar play in Laval?

Think about the 2014 playoffs when Price was injured. It was No. 3 man Dustin Tokarski that actually got the call to start in net over No. 2 man Peter Budaj at the time. Which raised eyebrows. But Tokarski fared well in that Eastern Conference final with the Rangers.

My point is that if the Habs just needed a goalie for one or two games, I think Lindgren gets the call-up to back up Kinkaid, who would start.

But I wonder if the Habs ever need longer usage in goal, if it's not Primeau in that situation that jumps over everyone not named Price.

Food for thought ...

By the way, my good pal Arpon Basu pointed this out to me, not to take anything away from Primeau, but there are crazy high save percentages so far in the AHL. Garret Sparks of the Chicago Wolves (Vegas) leads the AHL with a .953 save percentage in eight games, 20-year-old Russian Ivan Prosvetov (Coyotes fourth-round pick in 2018) is next at .944 and then Primeau at .943.

In all, as of Tuesday morning, there were 13 goalies in the AHL at .930 or better who had played four or more games. By comparison, just six NHL goalies (with four or more games under their belt) were at .930 or higher as of Tuesday morning.

Things that make you go hm.



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The Athletic / What's next for Coach's Corner and Hockey Night in Canada?

By Scott Burnside

Nov 12, 2019

In the wake of Don Cherry's dismissal from the iconic "Hockey Night in Canada" broadcast and, specifically, the Coach's Corner segment he oversaw for 30-plus years comes the question: who is next?

And it is a wholly fair and important question given the manner in which the vacancy was created.

But maybe the better question and the question that serves the game better is not who, but what next for "Hockey Night in Canada" and the game itself?

If anything is certain after the reprehensible comments by Cherry on last Saturday's segment about immigrants that led to a public firestorm of criticism – the Canadian Broadcasting Standards Council was so overwhelmed with calls about Cherry's comments that their system broke – Cherry's dismissal stands as a great opportunity, and with that a great responsibility.

This isn't just about the flagship hockey show in Canada, a show that for decades was a meeting place for an entire nation sharing its passion for the game, but in many ways it is the flagship show for the game itself – a show that would be imitated and repurposed on many networks in many cities.

You didn't have to be Canadian or to grow up with the game to understand what that theme music (which is now the property of rival sports network TSN) meant as it welcomed fans to Saturday night hockey. And you didn't need to be a hockey insider as you settled in for the discussion on the second intermission Satellite Hot Stove with familiar hockey faces like John Davidson, Al Strachan, Scott Morrison, my current colleagues Eric Duhatschek and Pierre LeBrun and so on, although you might have felt a little more on the inside when the segment was completed.

When it was at its best, "Hockey Night in Canada" was appointment television, telling the stories of the game, and informing us of the trends and nuances of the game. Regardless of whether Montreal was whipping Toronto or vice-versa on any particular Saturday, you stuck around for the duration because the information shared and the theater that was produced between periods mattered as much as the game.

That was the magic of the show when it worked, and many people from myriad backgrounds and ways of life have described how that show became a touchstone for feeling included in the greater hockey community.

It was the show's first intermission and its centerpiece Coach's Corner segment that was the prize that drew millions of viewers each week and made oodles of money for decades for first the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and then Sportsnet. It would be so in spite of the fact it became a bully pulpit for a man that no one had the courage to reign in until he finally crossed a line so egregious his handlers at Sportsnet had no choice but to fire him.

It was a moment that came years too late given his repeated attacks on people that didn't fit his narrow view of what a good Canadian might have been.

So, now what?

A source familiar with the broadcast said that as of Monday there wasn't a firm plan on what to do when the show airs on Saturday.

The popular second-intermission Saturday Headlines segment with top hockey journalists Chris Johnston and Elliott Friedman could be moved to the first intermission, but that still doesn't answer the question of ultimately what replaces "Coach's Corner."

The easiest thing to do is simply fill one larger than life personality with another personality to whom hockey fans will gravitate.

There are some but not many who fit that bill.

The obvious choice and one that on some levels appears as though it would be seamless would be to move Brian Burke into the chair, although it's not a given according to those familiar with the workings of the national broadcaster.

Few know the game from as many perspectives as longtime hockey executive Burke. He built a Stanley Cup winner in Anaheim before becoming the GM of the Toronto Maple Leafs and then president of the Calgary Flames. So in spite of the fact he is an American, Burke knows and understands the Canadian market as well as anyone.

Personality-wise Burke has the chutzpah to pull off this kind of segment with his unique blend of edge and wit. It might not be fair to ask him to be the man to slide into Cherry's burnt out chair, but Burke could do the job without a doubt.

Regardless of whether it's Burke or someone else, the issue of who should host the segment needs to be addressed.

I thought longtime Coach's Corner host Ron MacLean provided a heartfelt apology for his shameful part in Cherry's final segment where he offered no pushback for the commentary, simply giving a lamentable thumbs up to end the segment. But his time has come, too, and I would argue the need for a fresh face as a host is critical regardless of who fills Cherry's chair.

Whoever steps in as host, if the segment is to maintain its current format, has to be someone with some journalistic/broadcast chops who can trade jabs or barbs with Burke and call him if he goes off the rails.

If not Burke, who else could command the same attention and respect?

Glenn Healy is as sharp a mind as there is in hockey and few are as quick on their feet. Healy was a regular contributor to panels, providing in-game analysis for years and working for Hockey Night in Canada at one time, but is now the head of the NHL's Alumni Association.

Kevin Weekes does great work with the NHL Network. A veteran Canadian journalist with a lifelong passion for hockey, Christie Blatchford would bring a fresh perspective to the seat. And Anson Carter has grown quickly into a must-listen on NBC's national broadcasts in the U.S. TSN's Dave Poulin is sharp as a tack and has a great hockey pedigree. Craig Button, too.

It might seem heretical but what about TSN stars like Bob McKenzie or Darren Dreger, although both are known more for their inside knowledge of the game than pontificating. There's also the immensely popular Ray Ferraro who could ably fill the role.

It's hard to imagine TSN ever letting any of these top assets go, but if you're Sportsnet, this is your one chance to swing at the fences in restoring the tattered image of this segment.

But to imagine this kind of future for the hole that was Coach's Corner is to take just a small step away from that mindset. And is a small step enough?

Maybe it requires a step away from who to what?

Sportsnet has done a nice job of telling a broad range of hockey stories on its "Hometown Hockey" series on Sunday nights. But that reaches a quarter of the audience that "Hockey Night in Canada" reaches on a normal Saturday night.



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Where else should the most compelling of hockey stories – whether it's the tragedy of a bus crash in Humboldt, Saskatchewan, or the generosity of superstars like Sidney Crosby or the opening up of mental health issues in the sport – be told but on "Hockey Night in Canada?"

It's certainly cheaper not to tell those stories. It's cheaper to put two people in front of a camera and have them talk. But maybe the national broadcast partner of the NHL in Canada should be held to a higher standard.

Multiple sources familiar with the Canadian hockey broadcast world said that, even before the Cherry incident, NHL commissioner Gary Bettman was less than pleased with Sportsnet in terms of the product being presented on a weekly basis as it relates to the NHL brand and that displeasure was made well-known to broadcast executives during the events surrounding the recent Heritage Classic outdoor game in Regina, Saskatchewan.

Sportsnet cut costs in recent months by cutting high profile personalities, including Nick Kypreos, Scott Morrison, John Shannon and radio personality Bob McCown.

So, just as the firing of Cherry was a defining moment for the national broadcaster in Canada where hockey is never just a game, what happens next is no less defining for the broadcaster.

Multiple sources familiar with the hockey broadcast culture in Canada described Coach's Corner in recent years as being very stale and believe this is the perfect opportunity to re-examine the entire structure of the broadcast and to examine it's very raison d'être.

And that means thinking beyond replacing one body with another and focusing on what has always propelled the game forward: the stories of the people in it.

Maybe it's a rotating chair with a group of hockey minds from different places on the hockey spectrum taking their turns in the great chair from week to week.

Maybe it's a rotating group that reflects the changing demographics of fans and the game itself with top hockey women and people from different ethnic backgrounds taking the stage to talk about critical hockey issues in the news.

What about a group of scouts talking about top draft picks one week or the art of scouting?

Maybe it's NHL executives breaking down what goes into making a trade leading up to the trade deadline.

Maybe it's about spending money to produce features that address important hockey issues like mental health and the concussion issue.

Maybe it's a look at technology and how it impacts the game, whether it's in terms of player preparation, diet, equipment or the way the game is broadcast or interpreted.

This is the perfect vehicle to not just tell important hockey stories but to have intelligent debate buttress those stories.

Maybe it's something that is limited only by the imagination of why we care so much for the game.

And maybe, in the end, whatever it looks like will serve the game and all of us so much better.

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The Athletic / Goyette on Wickenheiser: The player, the person, the competitor and now the Hall of Famer

By Eric Duhatschek

Nov 12, 2019

Hayley Wickenheiser and Danielle Goyette came up together in the Canadian women's national team program, Wickenheiser as a precocious teenager from Shaunavon, Sask., Goyette, as a 28-year-old late bloomer from Saint-Nazaire, Que. The two shared a small-town background, but in the beginning, because Goyette was a unilingual Francophone, and Wickenheiser a unilingual Anglophone, they didn't have a lot of deep conversations.

What they did have in common was the universal language of hockey.

They were teammates when women's hockey was first included as a Winter Olympic sport in 1998 where Canada won a silver medal. Four years later, in Salt Lake City, they won gold together – and then repeated that feat again in 2006.

When Goyette eventually retired and went into coaching, she recruited Wickenheiser to play for her at the University of Calgary, where Wickenheiser went on to earn an undergraduate degree in kinesiology. A U of C Dinosaurs team that was coming off a 7-15 record when Wickenheiser first joined, won a national championship two years later. Goyette was Canada's flag bearer for the opening ceremony in Turin and Wickenheiser was given the same honor eight years later in Sochi.

In retirement, Wickenheiser now attends medical school at the University of Calgary, runs the largest female amateur hockey tournament in the world (Wickfest, now in its 10th year), and is currently on staff as the Toronto Maple Leafs' assistant director of player development.

In 2017, Goyette became the fifth woman elected to the Hall of Fame and on Monday, Wickenheiser will become the seventh.

Here are Goyette's thoughts about Wickenheiser, the player, the person, the competitor and now the Hall of Famer (as told to The Athletic's Eric Duhatschek).

On their first meeting:

The first time I met Hayley was in Lake Placid, N.Y., at a training camp for the 1994 world championships. At that time, I wasn't speaking English, so I remember her as a player, but didn't know her very well as a person because we had no way to communicate. On the ice, I remember her wearing this white cage, but what you really noticed was her slap shot. Not many women could shoot the puck the way she did back then. I would say for many, many years she had the best slap shot in women's hockey.

At the 1994 world championship, they had Wick playing with Angela James and I was pretty impressed to see a girl, at the age of 14 or 15, playing with the top player on the team. I was like, "Wow."

Even then, she already knew where she was going. It didn't matter what was in her way, she would've gone right through it. She was just was so fearless. I really believe that's why she made such a mark on the game. She was a power forward – and would go in the corner, bang people, and come out with the puck. She wasn't the sort of the player that would sit in front of the net, waiting for somebody to get them the puck. She played like a guy – and she wouldn't mind me saying that about her. She was the only player that I could really talk to like guys do. We're females, so we have a more sensitive side to our personalities and after she moved on, in women's hockey, you had to be careful how you talk to your teammates. With her, you didn't have to.

We'd have conversations on the bench with the 'F' word in there. At one point, I said to her, "Hey, are you going to pass me the fucking puck?" Or I'd say, "If I wanted to be a figure skater, I would've gone into figure skating. I would like to touch the puck at least one time here."

And she's like, "Fuck you."



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It was great. I think they put us together on a line because we were both so competitive. And I think that's the difference with her. What happened on the ice was on the ice – and you left it there. When we were off the ice, it's off the ice.

We started playing together around 1999, 2000. They put us together and they saw the chemistry we had. I'm a playmaker, she was a shooter, and that's how it worked. But, again, we were so competitive that we played together for maybe three weeks out of a month and then they had to split us apart because we became so angry at each other. And then we came back together and we had fun again. But I always said, Wick extended my hockey career for many years — more years than I thought I could play — because of the competitiveness. She would try to do something, I tried to do it better. We pushed each other. It wasn't always easy to play with Wick because she's really direct. Sometimes she's thinking one way, you're thinking another way, but for me, it allowed us to become better as a pair.

On the Olympics:

In '98, we dominated women's hockey and we were the favourites to win at the Olympics and didn't. I think we learned a lesson that time. It doesn't matter how good you are or how much talent you have on your team, you have to play as a team. For me, the Olympics in '98 were difficult because my dad had just passed away and I didn't have a lot of contact with the girls. But I was at practices. I had a good tournament and I played with Wick a couple shifts, but you know what? In the end, silver, for me, was a disappointment. When you go home, people would say, "Oh my God, a silver medal." But deep down we knew that we needed to work harder and be better as a team to get the gold medal.

It's funny how it turned around. In 2002, they – the U.S. – were the favourites and we came back and won – and Wick after the game, was so emotional. From that moment on, I think we really set the standard for women's hockey in Canada. "This is what we want, and we'll do anything in our power to get it."

On Wickenheiser playing professionally in a European men's league:

When we trained together as players, Hayley always trained with the guys. She'd be there, working out with Martin Gelinas, who was playing for the Calgary Flames at the time – and she was always pushing to go to the next level. It's not an easy thing because a lot of people would say things like, "Who do you think you are?" But that's not the way she was thinking. She thought, "I need to be better and these guys are going to push me to be better." And I admired that. She pushed the boundaries in women's hockey, even though a lot of people were not happy about that at the time.

When she went to Finland, to play in the men's league, I'll tell you, some of the girls did not like it. But at the end of the day, as an athlete, you know you can get better and you want to get better, and some people take different routes and that's the way she decided to go. Not a lot of people would put their bodies through what she did. That was a body-contact league. I know it's less physical in Europe because of the size of the rink, but you just need to get hit once in a big way and you remember that hit but she was not afraid to put herself in there. You know Wick, but a lot of people don't. She does everything in her life that way. She's always trying to go to the next level – and learn from the best. When you want to be the best, you have to learn from the best. In terms of the training, yes, women's hockey is there now, but at the time, the way she was training, I don't think women's hockey was at that level and that's why she had to go look somewhere else to play.

On coaching Wickenheiser:

I'd started coaching at the University of Calgary in 2007. After they won the gold medal in 2010, I started talking to her just to ask: "Hey, what now? What are you going to do? Would you think of coming to Calgary?" She was like, "I don't know. I don't know about that level of hockey."

So I told her, "Listen, at the end of the day, you need to do what you need to do for yourself, but I can promise, if you come to play for us, I will

treat you the way you have to be treated. I will push you. There will be no special privileges. I won't let you get away with anything," – because I wanted her to keep improving. That's the fun part about Wick. The way we see the game was pretty similar. If I didn't have the respect of Hayley as a player first and then as a coach, I don't think she would have come.

But the fact that she came here to play for us made a big difference in the game in Canada West – and a big difference in the lives of my players. In the beginning, some of the players were afraid of how competitive she was because she never took a loss easy. But now talking to some of the girls, they say, "This is the best thing that happened to us, playing with Wick," – because you're never satisfied with the way you play. You always want to get better – and we did. Two years later, we won the national championship and then we lost in the final in 2013. She changed the program, for sure. She made a big difference on the ice, but I think she made the biggest difference off the ice.

(In 2013-14), she was training full-time with the national team, but she was practicing and training with us too and going to school ... and in school she had like a 4.0 average. There'd be players on the team complaining, "I'm too tired. I'm too busy." And I'd say, "You know what? Wick has a son. She's a mom. She's training full-time with the national team. She's travelling. She's playing with us. And she's going to school."

And that year, we had, I think 12 or 13 players who made all-Canadian on the team. That's the impact she had. And you know what else? Attending university is about making sure you have the right tools to succeed in life. Hayley brought that to the team off the ice. I would say, six to eight players right now would tell you, they're successful at their jobs because of their experience with Wick off the ice.

On Wickfest:

In Quebec, we have the Quebec Pee-Wee tournament, but I think Wickfest is even bigger now because the Quebec Pee-Wee tournament is just for one age group, and Wickfest has four or five and the teams now come from all over the world. It's an amazing event and again, it just shows you her impact on women's hockey. It started out pretty small. Now she's here at WinSport, but they have to go play at different rinks because she doesn't have enough rinks anymore.

But this is how big it is and the impact it has on the city. Just the volunteers she needs to run it is amazing. And again, she's not going to stop there. She's got girls coming over from India. She wanted them to have that life experience. That's how she lives her life. Everything she got is because of hockey. Now she's trying to give back.

On the Hall of Fame induction:

We talked about it when they started to elect women's players into the Hockey Hall of Fame while she was still playing, and Wick said to me, "Oh, you're the next one." I'm like, "No." And you really don't believe it because it's Hockey Hall of Fame. It's something you look up to. It's something you see on TV, and it's for the players that you watched on TV. So, for me, it was like, "No, it cannot happen," but for Wick, I knew it just a question of time.

From the first day they elected a woman, I knew Hayley was a shoo-in. If she had retired earlier, she would've maybe been in before anybody else. All the players that are in already, it's all people she respects a lot. It's going to be an honour for her because Wick always had a lot of respect for the history of the game, even in the men's game. She always connected with the older guys and wanted to know their stories, what they did, how they started. Because behind every hockey player, there's a special story, a unique story. How do you make it to the NHL? How did you stay that long?

I told her, "It's a pretty special weekend and you better enjoy it because it goes really fast. It's going to be gone in a second." I know her family's going to be there and her friends and people the really close to her. She could probably bring 200 or 300 people.

Now I see little boys playing on the street and they wear a Team Canada jersey with the name Hayley Wickenheiser on it. When you think about



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women's hockey, you think about Hayley and Cassie Campbell. Cassie Campbell, her name is still out there being the caller on television with the Calgary Flames. She made her name for herself. But Hayley? Hayley is somebody that, day in and day out, was the best player in women's hockey for a long, long, long time. This is really well-deserved.

The Athletic LOADED: 11.13.2019

1161298 Websites

The Athletic / Could a fall trade improve the fortunes of your NHL team in 2019-20?

By Jonathan Willis

Nov 12, 2019

For a long time, NHL general managers have had to build their teams in the summer. That's when free agents are available, when cap space is most plentiful (and limits most flexible) and the point at which it's easiest to find trading partners. All of that is still true, but recent seasons have been marked by an unexpected development: teams are now more willing to make trades early in the year.

There have been more trades in the early months of the last two seasons than there were the previous four combined, and that wheel-and-deal trend appears to be continuing in 2019-20. The mere fact that trades are being made isn't the only question worth answering; the non-trivial concerns of what kinds of players are available and the cost of those players matter too.

Yet the relative boom of the trade market is encouraging in one sense: it suggests GMs have gained a level of comfort with the trade-killing salary cap. Making deals is more complex now than it has ever been, but clubs are making use of the tools at their disposal and are better positioning themselves for flexibility than they have in the past. One example, most players near the bottom of NHL rosters are on league-minimum contracts, making it easier to swap them due to the cap numbers being equal.

Even so, last year saw some relatively complex deals with significant players moving, sometimes in both directions.

The classic change-of-scenery trade

Blackhawks acquire: Dylan Strome, Brendan Perlini

Coyotes acquire: Nick Schmaltz

Last fall's biggest trade saw three players who had previously been regarded as important building blocks change teams.

Schmaltz, who scored 21 times and had 52 points for Chicago the year before, had fallen out of favor with the Blackhawks, first being moved over to the wing and then being scratched altogether. Furthermore, it happened in the same season that the team had to decide on a contract extension. Rather than commit, they flipped him for a pair of similarly-aged players from Arizona.

Strome, the 2015 3rd overall pick, had been dominant in the AHL in his first full pro season but was struggling to adapt to the majors. The fear was that he simply lacked the speed to make the grade at the NHL level. Perlini, who went with him, had 14- and 17-goal seasons on his resume but was struggling to score with the Coyotes.

The outcomes help illustrate why teams make these trades. Schmaltz scored in his second game for the Coyotes and his first back at his natural center position. The scoring continued, and despite his season

being cut short by injury, Schmaltz is back to the same form to start the 2019-20 season. Arizona got him on a very reasonable seven-year extension, a backloaded pact that carries a \$5.85-million cap hit but the team only pays an average of \$3-million annually for the first two years and \$5.5-million annually in years three and four. It's a good deal for a budget team.

Chicago took the most risk in the deal because it gave up the most established talent, but appears to have been amply compensated in terms of reward. Strome scored immediately, recording 51 points in 58 games following the trade. He's currently in the final season of his entry-level deal, with the Blackhawks undoubtedly far more confident in extending him than they were Schmaltz.

Perlini scored some goals for Chicago but didn't pan out in the same way, ultimately requesting a trade. The Blackhawks obliged, sending him to Detroit for defensive prospect Alec Regula, a third-round pick in 2018 who is scoring a point-per-game in the OHL, so even that setback ultimately cost them little.

Ducks acquire: Daniel Sprong

Penguins acquire: Marcus Pettersson

There's a book to be written about how Sprong went from making the Pens as an 18-year-old to going unclaimed on waivers at 22. It has a little bit of everything, and probably started with Pittsburgh getting too infatuated too quickly with a shiny new rookie. Whatever the specifics, it's remarkable given his start that it took a trade to Anaheim for Sprong to get a real run in a skill role.

In some ways, it went OK. Sprong scored 14 goals in 47 games after the trade. His line with Adam Henrique at center was just over 50 percent by expected goal share in a tough season for the Ducks, a respectable total. He was also effective as a second unit power play threat.

It wasn't enough. The Ducks waived Sprong out of training camp, and with no takers, he's now in the minors, where he's fallen to third among San Diego scorers but also has the worst plus/minus on the team, which is an unlikely outcome for an NHL-caliber talent. In some ways, it's a continuation of last season, where the expected goals total was solid but the actual goals for and against were ugly.

Meanwhile Pettersson, unremarkable in a sheltered role for the Ducks, found his legs in expanded usage for Pittsburgh. After playing just 14 minutes per game in Anaheim that number climbed to 18 in Pittsburgh and has crept up to 19 this season. He's played with a revolving door of partners; mostly Jack Johnson but also Justin Schultz and Erik Gudbranson, with results that have been at least solid and at times extremely good (there are no points for correctly guessing which partner has been most challenging).

Both teams probably got more out of the player they received in the trade than they were likely to from the one they gave up, but once again Jim Rutherford shows in this deal that he has a knack for these little early season moves. This trade came just a season after the GM previously got useful players Riley Sheahan and Jamie Oleksiak for not very much.

Veteran-for-veteran deals

Penguins acquire: Tanner Pearson

Kings acquire: Carl Hagelin

This was a weird one, maybe the strangest trade in the NHL last fall in terms of outcomes. Not only have both players since departed their acquiring teams, but both players were actually traded later in the same season. Rutherford added to his long habit of making fall trades by trading the return he received in a deal the previous fall.

At first blush, the Kings seemed to come off worse in this deal, because there was no uptick in Hagelin's performance post-trade. He's a fast, two-way veteran who seems to have lost his offensive touch, having scored just four times in 46 combined regular season and playoff games since the trade. L.A. did, however, manage to flip Hagelin at the deadline for



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third- and sixth-round picks, which isn't a bad outcome for a rebuilding club.

Pearson did score a bit for the Pens, tallying nine goals in 44 games, but was then flipped to Vancouver at the deadline for Gudbranson, who provided shockingly good play down the stretch. The short term win for Pittsburgh ultimately ended poorly, though: a crowded blue line this fall resulted in Gudbranson being dealt to the Ducks for Andreas Martinsen and a 2021 seventh-rounder.

Oilers acquire: Ryan Spooner

Rangers acquire: Ryan Strome

When one player is his team's leading scorer at center and the other is bouncing around between European leagues looking for his first goal less than a calendar year after a trade, it's a sign that one side got worked. In this case, as in others, it was Peter Chiarelli on the losing end of the deal.

From the Oilers perspective, dealing Strome was an easy decision. He wasn't scoring much on a line with Milan Lucic and Jesse Puljujarvi, and with the club on the verge of firing its coach, there was a desire internally to make a trade first. Spooner was attractive because the hope was that he'd generate some secondary scoring for a roster in dire need of it.

As Tyler Dellow noted at the time, it wasn't a deal with a great chance of success, and whatever hope there was that it would work for Edmonton basically vanished when the team replaced Todd McLellan with Ken Hitchcock, who quickly sidelined Spooner. Spooner was eventually traded again, for Sam Gagner, in the old swap of one contract liability for another.

Strome, in contrast, emerged as a player for the Rangers. He scored right away, finishing the year with 18 goals over 63 games in New York. More than that, he added elements that Spooner never could: a greater comfort level at center, a right shot and penalty-killing ability. Basically, he became the perfect third-line center, filling a niche for the Rangers and leaving a vacant slot in Edmonton which has yet to be filled.

His early-season point-per-game performance carries some caveats, including shooting percentage (he's scoring on more than one in five shots he's taken as a Ranger, going back to 2018-19) and on-ice shooting percentage (his five-man unit is converting an insane one shot in six). Injuries have opened the door for him to climb higher up the depth chart than he's really capable of playing over the long term.

Nevertheless, New York got a real NHL player and the Oilers got an expensive bubble guy, and that's a pretty big swing.

Something for nothing

Stars acquire: Taylor Fedun

Sabres acquire: Conditional 2020 seventh-round pick

As far as value goes, few deals last fall match the Stars adding a regular defenceman for a bag of pucks. If Fedun didn't play at least 25 games with Dallas, the Sabres would get nothing; if he did, they would receive only a seventh-round pick a year and a half down the road. In the grand scheme of things, that's a pretty good return for a 30-year-old minor-leaguer, but there's no question which of the two teams here benefitted most.

The Dallas blue line was crushed by injury last season, with Fedun one of a whopping 14 defencemen used over the course of the year. Most of them came and went. Fedun came, carved out a spot, and has continued to play this season. He's not climbing uphill to school both ways, but he is delivering quality minutes in a third-pair role, regardless of whether the reader's preferred metric is Corsi, goals or expected goals.

It was a team effort that got the Stars to within one game of beating eventual Stanley Cup champion St. Louis in the second round last year, and more than any of their other defensive fill-ins, Fedun deserves credit for playing capably. More than one franchise has had an entire season

flushed by a string of defensive injuries, and without Fedun and others like him, the 2018-19 Stars would have joined the club.

Canucks acquire: Josh Leivo

Maple Leafs acquire: Michael Carcone

Toronto was in a bit of a bind with Leivo, an accomplished minor-leaguer who had turned into a 25-year-old bubble piece. He wasn't going to get a chance in their lineup, and he was taking up a roster spot, so rather than waive him and lose him for nothing the Maple Leafs flipped him for a competent minor-leaguer. It's understandable logic if one starts from the premise that coaches aren't allocating ice time based on demands from the front office.

Vancouver, with a threadbare lineup, immediately gave Leivo the chance he had been waiting years for in Toronto, a chance that people like The Athletic's Ian Tulloch argued he deserved. In his first game with the Canucks, Leivo played 16:53, which was more than he played in 67 of 68 games under Mike Babcock. He scored a goal, which was the start of a trend.

Since the move to B.C., Leivo has been a quality middle-six point-producer for the Canucks, particularly when his numbers are considered on a per-hour basis. His on-ice metrics, from Corsi to expected goals to actual goals, all either lead the team or come close. Vancouver managed to turn a minor-league depth piece into an inexpensive middle-six winger in-season, and that's a hard thing to do.

Oilers acquire: Chris Wideman

Senators acquire: Conditional 2020 sixth-round pick

In the other two trades we've looked at from the fall, it was the team getting the player for the marginal asset that came off better. That isn't always the case, though. Sometimes, if a team moves quickly, it can turn a player who is no longer of NHL-caliber into a useful future asset.

This was what Ottawa managed with Wideman. Once an underrated contributor to some decent Senators teams, Wideman just wasn't the same after suffering a hamstring injury and undergoing surgery for it in the fall of 2017. He came back the following season but was clearly struggling, albeit in the chaos of a disastrous season for Ottawa.

The Oilers, desperate to add a puck-moving element, took a chance. It lasted just five games. Then Wideman was thrown into another fix-the-defense deal, helping to balance out the incoming contract of Alex Petrovic. Ottawa ended up richer to the tune of a sixth-round pick, doing to the Oilers what Edmonton had done to the Blues in the preseason with Jakub Jerabek. In fact, the pick which changed hands was the very same one.

As mentioned at the outset, one key takeaway from this exercise is the mere fact that teams are more willing to make deals than they ever have been before under a capped system. General managers have options, even if the options aren't always good and even if inactivity is sometimes the wiser course.

Already this fall we've seen attempted variants of the something-for-nothing deal, with the trade of Gudbranson to Anaheim and Louis Domingue to New Jersey. Change of scenery deals are popular too, especially in Detroit, where the Red Wings acquired Perlini for a prospect and then Robby Fabbri for Jacob de la Rose. We might even include the Ian McCoshen-for-Aleksis Saarela swap in the same category.

Ottawa's addition of Vladislav Namestnikov must be regarded as the early front-runner to be this season's big fall trade win. The fourth-round pick the Rangers got in exchange is a real asset, but Namestnikov is playing major minutes and playing them well in Canada's capital. Whether the pending free agent remains in Ottawa long-term is very much in question, but at worst he's already increased his stock from where it was as a member of the Rangers.

More deals will be made, and if there's a single overarching lesson to be taken from last season it is one of opportunity. Leivo, Fedun and Strome



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were all either not getting opportunities or getting bad ones with their current clubs; that changed in their new homes with fantastic results. This is also why change-of-scenery deals remain so popular: looking at the Sprong/Pettersson deal or that big Arizona-Chicago swap, in both cases the acquiring teams had plans to use their new players more, and more favorably than they were being used in their previous homes.

It's probably obvious advice for GMs, but its good advice all the same: figure out where the opportunities exist on your roster, then go find players who might be able to fill them if only they're given a chance. A lot of trade winners last fall had success with just that formula.

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1161299 Websites

The Athletic / Craig Ludwig's letter to Sergei Zubov: Every forward hoped the puck was on Zubie's stick

By Sean Shapiro

Nov 12, 2019

Stanley Cup winner Sergei Zubov will be inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame on Monday. Playing 12 seasons in Dallas, he is the franchise's all-time leader among defensemen in games, goals, assists, points, power-play goals, game-winning goals and time on ice. Playing alongside him was Craig Ludwig.

Here are Craig Ludwig's words on his teammate Sergei Zubov.

Zubie,

You should take a smoke break during your speech.

Seriously, how great would that be? Two minutes into your speech, stop and light up a dart in front of the crowd.

It would be the classic of all times.

It's hard not to think about how you smoked like a fucking chimney. After the game I remember you getting out of your gear so quickly. It was like you had a zipper on the front, and you were smoking in the shower. You would always say you didn't. But we all saw the smoke, smelt it and saw the ashtray that was in there.

You should have played in the 60s where you could have smoked three packs a day. And with what you did for my career, I'd be buying you a pack every day if we were still teammates.

I had the luxury of playing with some great defensemen in my career. Larry Robinson and Chris Chelios and you. It's no wonder I got to play for such a long time.

All great players, but each one was totally different, and the first thing that comes to mind is just how much skill you brought to the game.

The ice that you had in your veins as a defenseman on the offensive blue line scared the living shit out of me all the time. Because I'd be turning around going the other way expecting a turnover, and the next thing you know, I'm making a big lap back because you've done something incredible at the offensive blue line.

Your patience with the puck. To be able to hold on and hold on and find a spot or find an opening. When you talk to guys like Mo (Mike Modano) and Hully (Brett Hull), I'm sure you are the best defenseman they ever played with because you had an uncanny way of finding a hole or finding a seam that nobody saw. We would say, "if you are going in that direction, keep going because Zubie is going to find the hole."

I remember we kind of had to talk Hitch (Ken Hitchcock) down sometimes because you would make certain plays through the neutral zone and Hitch was a straight-line kind of coach where you don't turn pucks over there.

But he didn't give you shit.

He let you be Zubie, and that was my responsibility — to go to Hitch and say, "Listen, there is a reason Rick Wilson has me playing with Zubie. Because of the 10 plays that he makes, eight of them are going to connect and send somebody in on a 2-on-1 one or a breakaway or whatever. And the two that don't, it's my job and the goaltender to take care of that 2-on-1."

It was also amazing how you would play east-west. Your feet wouldn't move, but you seemed to pick up speed all the time.

I don't get it.

I don't know the physics of it and I don't understand it.

There are guys that pick up speed, like Paul Coffey, but Coffey was a guy that much like Connor McDavid picked up speed going north-south. Zubie, you would pick up speed going east-west, and you just slowed the game down to your pace and your speed and allowed other players to find a hole.

Of all those great defensemen I played with, you created more holes and space than anyone. I'd bet if you asked Guy Lafleur or Steve Shutt they would look at those three, and all are great players, but I imagined they'd say "give me that Zubov guy because all he does is put the puck on your stick when you are within five feet of the net."

Can you imagine the stats you would have had if they kept all the analytics and numbers they keep today? Your exiting the zone. Your created offense and shot share, or whatever they call it. Can you imagine those numbers? They'd be great.

There's only a certain percentage of players that played in the late 90s that could step in and play today. Mike Modano could do it because he could skate. We could name a few more, but Zubie, you are in a small group.

Just think about the points you would have had if you played with some of these forwards that are as skilled now and that work on those skills, or better yet, are actually allowed to do things that create goals.

And the thing about those point totals is you didn't have to play with us. We were such a defensive-minded team. You probably drooled thinking about a lot of the players that had the freedom and skill to do what they do now.

I'm sure at times it was really frustrating for you. Because you deserved to play with players that had the same understanding and IQ.

Thank God Mario Lemieux got pissed at you and got you traded out of Pittsburgh.

I don't think it ever got talked about how strong you were on the puck in your own end. You'd go into the corner with somebody and it wasn't like it was any different than one of us bigger defensemen going into the corner — nobody could get away from you, and for the most part, you came away with the puck.

Typically you put a real defensive-minded guy with someone like Zubie to balance things out. They really didn't need to do that with you. You were as good defensively as you were offensively, but you never got the accolades.

This honor is way overdue. Just like your jersey is way overdue in the fucking American Airlines (Center), for god's sake.

We would often say, "Can you believe they haven't put Zubov in the Hall of Fame? This is fucking ridiculous."



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It got frustrating when you would listen over the years where people would talk on these sports shows and say, "here is who's going to get nominated," and you never heard Zubie's name. It was like, wait a minute? Really?

It's funny. Larry Robinson is in the Hall of Fame. Zubov is in the Hall of Fame. Guy Carboneau is in the Hall of Fame. Chelios is in the Hall of Fame. What do they all have in common?

They were roommates of mine.

And when you and I were roommates, what's that show called, The Odd Couple? It was like that but it didn't last long. You probably said, "What did I do to deserve this?"

I remember we were in New York and you left in the middle of the night. The morning I got on the bus and asked what happened. You said, "Oh, you never come in, you come in late, you make noise."

I call bullshit. You were dead asleep each time.

I could call up six teammates and five of them would meet us at the bar, and you would be the one that didn't. And I give you credit for that, that was you and you knew what you had to do to make sure we won.

We didn't have a lot in common, but it seemed like you were always interested in what we did the night before when we got to practice or the game the next day. You'd just be listening and smiling and shake your head and laugh and then probably go, "these guys got a fucking problem."

I remember in the playoffs, it's when you are eating Sudafeds like they are Tic Tacs, and you are gassed and all this kind of shit. But Zubie didn't need anything, he was a machine. I'd start trying to run around the first couple of shifts and I couldn't even tell you my name with all the shit we were doing, and you'd come back and say, "You have to calm down. Calm down. Where are you going?"

And you know what, I think the reason you were the perfect partner for me is I never had to worry about getting the puck back. You'd rather throw it back to Belfour than give it to me. It was great.

The first thing you think before you get the puck when you play with a guy like that is, "Where is Zubie?" And whether he's 10 feet or two feet away, you give it to him. Because analytically, we know the play is going to come out of the zone a lot easier on your stick than mine. Mine is going to come off the glass, yours is going to be a saucer pass up the middle or across the ice right on somebody's tape.

I know for a fact that every forward thought that when we were on the ice as a pair. They were hoping the puck was on Zubov's stick and not mine.

As I said before, this is an honor that should have come a long time ago. It's well deserved and I'm glad we don't have to wait any longer.

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1161300 Websites

The Athletic / Q&A with Hayley Wickenheiser on becoming a doctor, working with the Leafs and her Hall of Fame speech

By Eric Duhatschek

Nov 12, 2019

Of all the things that Hayley Wickenheiser does well – hockey, softball, study, parent, volunteer – probably the thing she is most adept at is

juggling. Not in the traditional opening-act-for-the-magic-show way, but in her ability to keep all of the balls in her busy life up in the air.

Take November for example. Over two long weekends in the middle of the month, her annual international hockey festival – officially known as the Canadian Tire Wickenheiser World Female Hockey Festival – gets underway in Calgary. WickFest is in its 10th year and Wickenheiser calls it her "pet project." She started it in Burnaby following the 2010 Winter Olympics, moved it to Calgary four years ago and is now running the event in both Calgary and Surrey, B.C. with plans to expand to Halifax and Toronto next year.

Over 30,000 players have passed through the program over nine years, including players from India, Mexico, the Czech Republic, Finland, China and all across Canada and the United States. Wickenheiser is also attending medical school full-time, but occasionally commuting from Calgary to Toronto to work as the Toronto Maple Leafs' assistant director of player development. On Nov. 18, she will become the seventh woman inducted in the Hockey Hall of Fame.

(Dave Holland/Courtesy Wickfest)

On the day we get together, Wickenheiser's scheduled is predictably jammed. She'll be leaving from lunch to head over the University of Calgary for a baby delivery class. The day before, she assisted in a C-section – and her time in medical school is as good a place as any to start a conversation about her current life.

Effectively, you are simultaneously pursuing two separate career fronts at the moment: One as a doctor, the other as a hockey executive. How do they differ? Or do you see some common threads in both?

Shockingly, they're both very similar – except that there are far greater consequences if you make a mistake in one than the other. In the delivery room, there are some failsafe things to make sure that as a medical student, you're not doing something you're not capable of doing. But sometimes things happen, and you get thrown in the mix and you've got to figure it out on the fly. As a medical student, you're basically reading from a book and you're studying and that's great. But when you talk about, for example, the delivery of a placenta after a birth, if you've never actually seen that, it's not what you think it is. Or what an actual C-section surgery delivery looks like. You can read about it but when you're there and it's actually happening, it's amazingly mind-blowing. The human body does amazing things. So, you do need a foundation in studies, but I find the on-the-job training in medicine is far greater for learning – whereas, in hockey, I feel like the work has already been done. I've earned my Ph.D. in the game. But you're always layering on new things as you go along.

You started medical school at the University of Calgary in July of 2018 and were actually sitting for an exam 11 months later when the Hockey Hall of Fame called to notify you that you'd been elected in your first year of eligibility – which means you couldn't take the call from the chairman. How far along are you, in terms of completing your studies?

I'm in my second year of three in a three-year program, so I'm about halfway through. I'll be starting something called clerkship in January, which is where now you're only in the hospital, working in all the different specialties and taking just the one academic course, a half-day a week. So, I have about a month left of lectures and that's it, which is nice. I'll do my clerkship mostly in Toronto from January until June all over the GTA, so that'll make it easier to do work with the Leafs, and then one final part in Calgary just to finish up. In a clerkship, you're learning the ropes in the different specialties as kind of the low man on the totem pole. You're like a rookie on the different units and they rotate you through, for four to six weeks at a time, in each different specialty.

Time management has always been one of your strong suits, but med school is challenging and you've got more than just that on your plate. How do you keep all the balls in the air simultaneously? Do you not fear that at some point, they're all going to come crashing down?



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It's not bad. I feel like I've got a pretty good handle on things. It's a great system because when we don't have mandatory things at school, there are three- to four-day chunks where I can get on a plane and go work with the Leafs in Toronto. When I'm with the Leafs, I'm on the rink from say eight in the morning until about one or so and then I do medicine over the remainder of the day and I podcast the lectures that I missed. So, it's a pretty good routine.

I actually think one keeps me sane for the other because I'm the kind of person that if I'm just doing one thing, I'm easily bored. I like to be busy. There are times when it's busier than others, but the way I deal with it is just to take one thing at a time. I don't get too far ahead of myself. I just get organized for today and get through today and keep going. But I am a good time manager. I don't waste much time. I have no minutes to waste. But I truly enjoy what I'm doing, so it's good.

Has each of these two paths been what you thought they'd be? Because sometimes, you can anticipate what a job or a course of study might be like and the reality is something completely different.

I would say medicine's been what I thought it would be. There are parts I enjoy and parts I despise. I cannot sit in a lecture theatre for eight hours a day. I won't do it. I think it's actually counterproductive. I think it is actually anti-medicine. So, I'll go to some lectures and podcast the rest. I choose to work out and balance my life with other things. So, there are ways around it. But that's the part of my life that I haven't enjoyed. I don't think anybody does. But it's a rite of passage.

As for the hockey, I would say the one thing I realized is I'm not a scout. I don't love watching game after game after game and running from rink to rink. What I've been doing for the Leafs is the role I enjoy. I get to go on the ice with the players. I go to some games. I watch a lot of video. I liaise with them, to try and help them get better. That's the thing in the game at this part of my life, I would actually be good at – helping a team get better. I enjoy that. If I was going to from game to game, scouting, that's not for me at all. So, it has turned out pretty much the way I thought. And both in medicine and with the Leafs, they've been amazing in terms of helping me with my schedule. Medicine has less flexibility. There are things you absolutely have to do. Hockey's a little different.

But one is good professional development for the other. I really see things in medicine every day that I know from my experience in hockey, I think, 'oh, that could be so improved.' Or you think, 'that person has never worked in a team before.' Similarly, I see things in medicine that I think could help a hockey team: The humanity and the empathy and the understanding of life experiences that sometimes we're brutal about in sport; that we think, 'oh, that makes somebody weak.' Even the communication skills you learn in medicine – of how to speak to patients, or breaking bad news – all of those things have really helped me in hockey as a coach or a development person. As a player, I didn't like to talk much. I just let my actions do the speaking. So that's actually been a good personal development for me.

Years ago, I really appreciated it when my thoracic surgeon outlined the risks of an upcoming operation in a clear and plain manner. There was no sugar coating. I appreciated that. As an adult, you want to know precisely where you stand.

The thing I'm learning in medicine and in hockey is just what you said: it does a disservice to the patient – and the player – if you're not honest. So, when I speak with players, I'm honest. I'll say it as it is. I think I've always been like that. I have told players: I think you're playing terribly right now, but I also know what it'll look like when you're playing well, so let's focus on the good and not dwell on the bad. I take the same approach with medicine. Sometimes, you have to tell them, yes, this is bad. But here's what we can do. And sometimes, you can't do anything – and then that's the hard part.

That must be the hardest part. In hockey, you think you can go there and win every game. In medicine, presumably, you have to learn and accept that you can't always save the world.

I come from an environment where the message is 'suck it up' or 'get over yourself.' True empathy is putting yourself in someone else's shoes and it's hard to do. I've broken down with families in the emergency room. I've cried twice with families that have had bad outcomes and it just happened. The doctor I was working with, she said, 'just be yourself, whatever that looks like.' But I got emotional and I've seen that with others too. I think you do a disservice to yourself if you don't show emotion, but you obviously can't be upset every single time either. I think that's why people use brutal humor sometimes – to help you stuff it before you go home. I'm still figuring all that out. I've gotten emotional and I've gotten angry inside too – when you see people do things to themselves that they shouldn't, and it's hard to understand why. That's just being human.

Speaking specifically about ways that attitudes can change in professional sport, a primary area of interest for you and me is mental health. I've been writing about concussions long before the NHL first started doing baseline testing – and in the past two decades, people and players are just better educated about the danger of head trauma than ever before. Now, though, I think the focus needs to include not just the physical health of the brain, but also mental health as well. Is there a way that you can help people cope with their issues, because if you can, then not only is it better for them, it could in turn help to maximize performance?

You could examine team culture because that's where it starts. I know for a fact that it helps if a player is in an environment where they feel safe and have resources they can turn to. I know, for example, the Leafs have a wellness consultant and they just hired a psychiatrist. And these people are not just in an office. They are around the periphery of the team. They're not lurking, but they're there. So, if you can create a culture where it's OK, whether you're doing well or you're not well, just to check in with someone to talk about how you're doing. But I don't think – for the most part – that culture exists in hockey. There's got to be a buy-in from the top down. That's where it has to start. But I do think this generation of players is more apt to go and get help when they need it.

In an industry that demands performance regularly and consistently, I'm sure lots of players worry too much. I know I do.

You'd be that player that lies in bed at night, ruminating why he didn't score on that play in the last game – and now he can't sleep. I wasn't like that a lot, but I had moments like that in my career – where I would have anxiety about the pressure to always win. I had really good support around me, but a lot of players are lonely and isolated, so it's tough to navigate that on your own, when you're 20 years old and you have \$10 million in the bank.

Didn't Grant Fuhr have it right? He'd always say: 'You can't worry about the last goal that went in, so just concentrate on the next one.' Sometimes, distilling the matter down to a single, simple cogent thought is probably the right answer – rather than thinking it through so thoroughly that, once you've examined every last tiny possibility, you've tied yourself up in mental knots.

I think it's totally detrimental as a hockey player. You absolutely cannot think. You have to just react. You have to train so that when you step on the ice, you just react. Patrick Kane, Johnny Gaudreau – all these great players. They're not thinking. They're playing. And that's the difference. If you're thinking, you're slow.

I also see this in medicine. I'm in a code and I have to think through all the ABCs – oxygen, one-milligram of epi – the things I would do. I see the emergency doc I'm working with and she's got it all out in two minutes – and I'm still thinking about the first step. And if you're too slow, that patient might die. So, it's the same thing – and it's why, in medicine, you do all those practice hours, so that you're eventually just drawing on your instincts. To be great, you have to rely on your instincts.

Tell me about your most interesting emergency room experience to date.

I'd already shadowed my friend, who is an emergency room doctor, for a few hundred hours prior to starting med school, but on my first day in the



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ER, five minutes in, a code came in – an unknown male, who had a suspected overdose. She turned to me and said, 'gown, glove and mask' and you're now doing CPR. So, for 200 hours, I had watched all this stuff happen and now, on my first day as a med student, I had to do it in real life. That was my crash course into med school. And the patient didn't make it – he actually passed away – and that was a very profound moment.

That was Day 1. I was pretty moved because he was around the same age as my son, so it was a tough first day. I was glad to have had the experience with her because I had spent so much time watching codes – seeing things go right and seeing things go wrong – but in that moment, I drew on everything I knew from hockey. I realized it after. I panicked at first. I thought, 'I'm not qualified, what am I doing here?' But I was just doing CPR, which is a very simple thing. But then I said to myself, 'get yourself together. You have a role. Just do your job – and my job was to perform CPR in two-minute intervals, for 40 minutes. Everyone else did their jobs. I have no idea what happened around me because I was so hyper-focused on what I had to do.

I think everything I learned in hockey helped me in that moment, to handle the pressure, in a team scenario. After that was done, we debriefed. There were police and the firefighters who brought him in and the doctors and nurses standing in a circle, talking about what went wrong and what didn't. And that was my first day as a med student.

OK, that's a pretty harrowing story. In some ways, I'm not surprised though. I always tell people, the first time I ever interviewed you, you were 16 years old – and you were the most composed 16-year-old I'd ever seen. Even then, you seemed to have a lot of old-school traditional thoughts about team and the future.

(laughs): I was sitting with Garth Malarchuk last year and I reacted to a play and that's what he said to me: 'You're so old-school' – and I said: 'No I'm not.'

I would guess he meant it as a complete compliment. I firmly believe you can hold old-school values and still be receptive to changes in the game. But if you can't keep up, you're left behind. Even in today's game, you have players coming into the game with traditional values and then you have others with a greater sense of entitlement. It's not 'what I can do for the game?' but 'what can the game do for me?' For some, the gratitude gene seems missing.

I felt the same way towards the end of my career with the national team. Players like Danielle Goyette and that first generation I played with, it was like, 'what can I do to help?' There was so much gratefulness. We were just so damn happy to have a team and a place to play. Then it became, 'well, who's going to carry my bag?' The answer is: 'You. Pick it up yourself!'

What do you think about what's going on in women's hockey right now after the CWHL folded? This seems very much like a transitional year for the sport – but I think it's the path forward you outlined the last time we spoke about this subject 18 months ago.

I think the players did the right thing. I've been saying that for years. I'm glad it finally happened. It's absolutely what had to happen. I think there's some momentum now. It's moving in the right direction. I'm hopeful that the NHL will want to engage and we can move this thing into a professional league. I think the best players in the world are now in this ... what do you want to call what they're doing?

Can you call it a barnstorming tour perhaps? What I like about it, is they've turned it into an event. Wherever you happen to live in North America, at some point this season, you may get a chance – just once – to see the best women in the world play. And so, if you have an interest in the sport, you better get out to see them that night. It reminds me of a rock band on tour. Fleetwood Mac comes to your town once – and if you want to see them, you know in advance when they're here; what it'll cost; and then you make plans accordingly. Maybe that's part of the model going forward.

Oh, I think you're right. Four teams in one place over two days and you can watch four games if you want – and then they move on to the next place. It's what Billie Jean King and the WTA did in the beginning – the same model – and they are working with Billie Jean King now on this so I imagine that's why this is the direction it's going. I just worry that not enough of Canada gets to see the best players and I hope this doesn't become just an American thing. Maybe that's where the money and the TV comes from, but Canadians still want to fight hard to have a big say in what happens next. But I think they've done their thing now and it's great for the game. It's not a game, it's an event – and it's what happens around the event. That gives it its best chance. So ... hope for the best.

Just one question on your Hall of Fame honor. I know you called it the Holy Grail when your induction was first announced. When you do get to a point where you are actually being inducted into the Hall of Fame, that's a great time to reflect on everything that happened along the journey. But I've always believed, no matter who you are – Wayne Gretzky, Bobby Orr, Gordie Howe – when you're a kid, lacing up the skates for the first time, nobody dreams about the Hall of Fame. Maybe you dream about playing major junior, or college, or professionally or in the Olympics as you climb the ladder, but you don't dream about the Hall of Fame. Who can dream that big at the very start of the process?

That's what I said in my interviews. I've never thought about it once. Honestly, you don't grow up thinking about the Hall of Fame. But it's a great honor, and I've got my speech in my head; I just have to get it on paper. I will wing it – with cards. I'm not a reader. I do enough speaking – I know what I'm going to say. I'm always better when I wait and procrastinate and then put everything on paper at the last minute.

The Athletic LOADED: 11.13.2019

1161301 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Oilers fail to match Sharks' desperation, miss shot to pull away in Pacific

Mark Spector | @sportsnetspec

November 13, 2019, 1:48 AM

The beauty of jumping out to such a fast start was that the Edmonton Oilers, with a couple of well-placed victories over the San Jose Sharks, could bury them almost for good in the Pacific Division.

Alas, there's a reason they'd want to put the Sharks as far in the rearview mirror as possible. It is because the Sharks own the Oilers — they gave up just one point to Edmonton in five games last season — and that continued Tuesday with their 6-3 pasting as they met for the first time during the 2019-20 season.

It was the first time all season the Oilers gave up three goals in the first period, and the first time they've been beaten up like this, trailing by scores of 4-0 and 5-1. Edmonton gave up six goals only once before this season, a year in which they've reined in their goals against considerably.

So this was an aberration. In the end, the Oilers split a two-game road trip, after having handled the Anaheim Ducks in a similar fashion, winning 6-2 on Sunday.

Sometimes you get the bear, sometimes the bear gets you. The Oilers end their first 20-game segment at 12-7-2, good for 26 points and first place in the Pacific.

You don't like the way the first-quarter finishes, but 12-7-2? Any team in hockey would take a first-quarter record like that.



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Hey, there's not much to take away from a game like this, other than the old standard: you win some, you lose some.

Did the Oilers lose some focus having their mothers along on the moms trip? That would sound very much like an excuse.

"We weren't ready," Leon Draisaitl told reporters in San Jose after the game. "They start really strong here at home ... and we weren't ready.

"We just got outplayed today, We were sloppy."

More likely, the Oilers couldn't match San Jose's hunger and desperation. If the Sharks lost to Edmonton in regulation, they would have been 13 points behind them in the Pacific, with a meeting back at the Shark Tank next Tuesday. San Jose is already in desperate times at 8-10-1. They needed this game, where Edmonton only wanted it — or so goes the theory.

"I saw a team that was desperate and trying to get back in the race," Oilers head coach Dave Tippett said to reporters in San Jose.

"And a team that was content with where they're at. The desperate team usually wins that game."

Alas, Mike Smith didn't have a prayer on any of the first three goals, and we're not blaming him for No. 4, 5 or 6 either. This was a team loss of a 20-man proportion, with lots of close-in deflections and open looks for the Sharks. We're sure even Mikko Koskinen had a lousy game on the bench.

"We got outcompeted by a desperate team. It wasn't a good effort by our team, right through," Tippett said. "It shows the immaturity of the group. We're trying to become a really good team and we're not there yet."

Leon Lights

The points keep coming for the NHL's leading scorer Draisaitl, who had a goal and an assist. He now has 15 goals and 21 assists for 36 points in the season's opening 20 games, 10 of those coming on the power play.

Draisaitl has 11 multi-point game, tops in the NHL this season, and is running a 10-game points streak. He was the only player in the NHL who had 50 goals and 100 points last season — he had 105 — and through 20 games he's on pace for 62 goals and 148 points.

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1161302 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Canucks earn emotional victory with teammate Markstrom on their minds

Iain MacIntyre | @imacSportsnet

November 13, 2019, 2:15 AM

VANCOUVER — It is impossible to look at the Vancouver Canucks these days and see only the players and not the people.

After the team ended a four-game losing streak on Tuesday, Elias Pettersson stood at one end of the dressing room smiling, talking about his parents and grandparents and the 12 people who travelled from Sweden for his 21st birthday and a visit to Vancouver.

With a potentially spectacular career ahead of him, Pettersson, no longer a boy but still not full grown, rewarded his family by scoring twice in a 5-3 victory against the Nashville Predators.

At the opposite side of the room, Canuck goalie Thatcher Demko quietly talked to reporters while wearing a grey-and-pink Hockey Fights Cancer

ballcap. He said it was for Jacob Markstrom, the friend and teammate who lost his father, Anders, to cancer at age 59 on the weekend and then put what was left of his heart into the Canucks' 2-1 loss Sunday to the New Jersey Devils.

"It's for a lot of people," Demko explained of his hat. "But it hits home a little bit harder with the team and what Marky is going through right now. The team played really hard for him on Sunday. That was an important game for our locker room and we were all disappointed a little more than normal not getting a win.

"Tonight, we wanted to prove to him we'd play hard again for him. He might not have been playing, but guys were thinking about him and playing for him.

"I think everyone in here is rooting for him. He's a guy the team rallies around and respects a lot. He's been there for me when I've been down. Obviously, I've never been through something like he's going through right now. I'm just there for him if he needs me."

Markstrom has not spoken to the media about his loss, or about the five-day leave he took from the Canucks in October to visit his father in Sweden during the final stages of his dad's cancer. The Canucks not only agreed to the trip but encouraged it, knowing that Markstrom could be too late if he waited for the short Christmas break to go home.

Despite the emotions of the last six weeks, Markstrom still managed to start 12 games for the Canucks, posting a .918 save percentage.

"It's incredible," Demko said. "I think it gets lost. People just look at the numbers, and his numbers are really good. And they don't think about what he's been going through. It's been tough to see, and it kind of makes you step back and realize how lucky you are. I still have both of my parents and I couldn't even fathom one of them passing. It's really hard."

There is no life and death in hockey games, just among players who are people like the rest of us.

Pettersson's goals against the Predators — a power-play goal conjured out of nothing, and the game-winner on a rebound at 11:41 of the third period — came after a four-game spell in which he had managed only one assist.

The Canucks went 0-3-1 in those games and played well enough to earn more than the single point they got out of them. Ironically, they probably received more than they deserved from the Predators, who outshot the Canucks 37-26 and outplayed them in the second period as badly as any team has this season.

When ambushed with the question, Pettersson couldn't think of the best birthday gift he ever received, but said he likes playing on his birthday.

"Ever since I got up to, like, high school hockey, I've always been away (from home)," he said. "Yeah, it's special. I've been playing the last four years, I think, on my birthday. But it is the first win in a while on my birthday.

"It's nice to get some goals. I think the last couple of games we haven't created that much. We stuck with it and worked hard and it was nice to get some bounces."

The only Canuck happier than Pettersson was winger Tanner Pearson, who shattered a 14-game scoring famine with the first and last Vancouver goals, the latter one 180 feet into an empty net to clinch it after Filip Forsberg's post-and-in power-play one-timer had brought the Predators within a goal with 5:34 remaining.

"I was about to punch the glass," he said of his second-period goal celebration after embarrassing Ryan Ellis at the Nashville blue line and blowing a shot past goalie Pekka Rinne. "But I thought I'd break my hand, so I didn't. It was definitely good to get that one.

"It's been a long time since the last one, so it was nice to get one and get the win, too, after losing a couple in a row."



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There was one other very human moment for the Canucks: five minutes into the game, veteran centre Brandon Sutter attempted a two-second shift after returning to the bench from the dressing room, smashed his stick against the boards and left for good to the dressing room.

He appeared to suffer a groin injury while skating in on a forecheck the previous shift. The 30-year-old's season last year ended with major abdominal surgery — his second in four years as a Canuck. Vancouver coach Travis Green offered no injury report after Tuesday's game.

Sutter's replacement, second-year pro Adam Gaudette, scored.

Sportsnet.ca LOADED: 11.13.2019

1161303 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Canadiens' grind-it-out win vs. Blue Jackets a sign of growth

Eric Engels | @EricEngels

November 12, 2019, 11:54 PM

MONTREAL — The Montreal Canadiens came into Tuesday's game against the Columbus Blue Jackets with the same exact 9-5-3 record through 17 games as they had established through 17 games last season, but they came out of it having shown an important sign of progress.

For most of the game, the Blue Jackets employed a plan that was tailor-made to slow the Canadiens down. They executed it to perfection, and it became that much easier to do with a one-goal lead Eric Robinson gave them in the 17th minute of the first period.

The Blue Jackets came hard and fast on the forecheck. When they lost control of the puck, they plugged up the space between the dots in the offensive zone and faded back through the neutral zone to eliminate Montreal's ability to breakout quickly and control the play.

The Blue Jackets played the exact type of game the Buffalo Sabres did in two early-season wins over the Canadiens in 2018, and they nearly skated away with a win on this night.

It's the game Canadiens coach Claude Julien was expecting from his counterpart John Tortorella.

"I know it's the game plan for a lot of teams who play against us is to not give us space in our game because we skate pretty well," he said.

If the coach was smiling afterwards, it was because his team didn't succumb to those tactics. They didn't allow frustration to get the better of them like they have in the past. They didn't step outside their own plan when their struggles through two periods had them entering the third still down 1-0.

And when the Canadiens fell behind 2-1 with 1:53 remaining, they didn't bury their heads. Julien pulled Carey Price from his net, and they stormed down the ice at 6-on-5, inevitably getting a goal from Tomas Tatar to tie the game with 41 seconds left. Montreal won 3-2 in a shootout.

They won because Price kept them in the game with 14 saves in the first and 29 more from the second period through to the end of the fourth; they won because they put together a heroic penalty kill in overtime; they won because Jonathan Drouin scored a jaw-dropping, forehand-backhand, five-hole deke for a goal in the shootout and Price stopped all three Columbus players he faced.

But what's most important is: They won.

Good teams win in all different ways. Julien said before the game that his team would have to grind it out against the Blue Jackets to beat them, and we know that grinding it out isn't the recipe they typically cook with.

And it's not the first time this season the Canadiens have been taken out of their comfort zone and still skated away victorious. Out of 10 wins they've recorded, two came against the reigning Stanley Cup champion St. Louis Blues, who use their size and their weight to great effect in order to slow down most teams they play.

The Canadiens also beat the Minnesota Wild and the Los Angeles Kings, who are two of the weaker teams in the league. But they're also teams that do everything they can to disrupt the flow of the game.

"Good teams find a way to win against everyone," said Canadiens centre Max Domi.

"Not every NHL team is going to bring the same every night. Every team has their strengths and other teams have different weaknesses, and we have to make sure we're elevating our game and executing our game plan first. But you have to understand and react to what they're bringing to the table as well."

It helps to have Price do his thing.

It also helps to have a few game-breakers on your side, and the Canadiens have more of them this year than they did one year ago.

Sure, Price has been in place for a long time, and he was as good as he's ever been on this night.

And it was old, reliable Brendan Gallagher scoring on a muffin of a shot to extend his team-lead to eight goals and tie the game 1-1 in the fourth minute of the third period.

But the Canadiens didn't have Nick Suzuki skating with them last season. The 20-year-old had a considerable influence on the outcome of Tuesday's game.

It was Suzuki who faded to the half-boards and bought himself time by playing give and go with Phillip Danault before snapping a seeing-eye pass to Tatar for the game-tying goal.

"The seam opened up from there," Suzuki said.

"They did a pretty good job of cutting out all of my other options, but (Tatar) did a great job of finding a good seam."

Jeff Marek and Elliotte Friedman talk to a lot of people around the hockey world, and then they tell listeners all about what they've heard and what they think about it.

Yeah. True. But not too many players skating with the Canadiens a season ago would have exercised the same poise the kid who led the Ontario Hockey League playoffs in scoring did on this play.

We've seen Drouin score some gorgeous goals since coming over in the 2017 trade that sent Mikhail Sergachev to the Tampa Bay Lightning. But it takes a whole other level of confidence to pull the move he did on Elvis Merzlikins in the shootout.

It takes the confidence Drouin had built up through 17 games — scoring seven goals and 15 points and just showing a determination we haven't seen from him since he was skating with the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League's Halifax Mooseheads.

"That's ridiculous," said Domi of the goal. "There are very, very few guys in the entire world that can do that."

But the Canadiens have Drouin, and they have a team that's growing and becoming more versatile.

It may look a lot like last season (when they finished with 96 points and missed the playoffs), but the subtle differences we see now could get them to where they want to be come April.



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1161304 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Hyman's return, Marner's injury represent current Maple Leafs flux

Ryan Dixon | @dixononsports

November 12, 2019, 1:51 PM

TORONTO — It's one in, one out for the Toronto Maple Leafs' second line.

Last season, the trio of John Tavares between Mitch Marner and Zach Hyman was a staple the Leafs counted on to be steady and productive every single day. This year, the tattered unit represents the larger state of at least mild flux the Leafs find themselves in.

Given that, it seems somehow fitting that on the day the team officially welcomed Hyman back from off-season knee surgery, Marner stood with a walking boot on his right foot and talked about missing the next chunk of the schedule with what he confirmed is a high-ankle sprain sustained during Saturday's overtime loss to the Philadelphia Flyers.

"It would obviously be nice to come back and be able to play with him again and reunite," Hyman said of Marner. "But just for me, it's good to be back and he'll be back soon, and I guess I'll be up to game speed by then."

That last point was said with a wink and the Leafs could use a little levity these days. While the club still occupies second place in the tough Atlantic Division, Toronto has dropped two in a row, including its first game without Marner against the Chicago Blackhawks on Sunday night. While Marner is hopeful he'll be out of the walking boot soon, the four-week recovery timeline being offered is acknowledged as a best-case scenario for an injury that can often sideline players for closer to two months.

Then again, Marner thought things might be even more grave off the hop. The right winger injured himself on a fluke play during the opening faceoff of the second period and when he initially buckled, he thought he'd really done some damage.

"When I fell, right away I felt something funny," Marner said. "At that time I was ready to look back and see my ankle twisted the wrong way."

"I think I was ready for something worse than it actually was."

After feeling OK upon getting to the bench, Marner decided to try another shift before realizing something was askew. Now, with Hyman set to come back on Wednesday night on the road against the New York Islanders and Tavares having played just four contests since being sidelined for close to three weeks with a broken finger, coach Mike Babcock is once again forced to shuffle the deck. At Tuesday's practice, Hyman skated on left wing with Tavares and right winger Kasper Kapanen.

"That line — well, it hasn't been a line this year," Babcock said of the trio he relied on for so much last year. "We've got to find a way for those guys [whoever is on the line] to all be productive. We're 20 games in, we're still searching."

While it wouldn't be fair to expect any injured player — especially one recovering from a torn anterior cruciate ligament — to pick right up where he left off, Hyman is certainly a strong candidate to quickly remind the world of his attributes. He took all the time he needed and more coming back, making sure he was "over ready" before finally lacing his skates up for real.

When a finesse guy misses training camp and the first quarter of the year, you expect the hands and timing to be absent for a stretch. Hyman's calling card, though, has always been a high-powered engine that should be revving in the red right now in anticipation of finally being able to lay some rubber. Still, Babcock is exercising patience with one of his favourite charges.

"He just works, right? Works like a dog," said Babcock. "Can he get on the forecheck and get us the puck back like he always does? I don't know the answer to that for sure. Can he be on that right-hand [face-off] circle on the penalty kill? I don't know that either. So I'm going to wait just like you and we're going to figure it out."

Chances are it won't be long until we see No. 11 making life difficult on opponents again. And for a club that's veered off the path here and there this season, having Hyman's forceful, straight-ahead approach back could help set the compass right.

"He's a great guy for what he brings on the ice, but also that tone and standard he sets within our locker room," Tavares said.

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1161305 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Flames facing goalie conundrum thanks to David Rittich's stellar start

Eric Francis | @EricFrancis

November 12, 2019, 3:20 PM

Punctuating Matthew Tkachuk's overtime heroics late last week was a half-rink dash by David Rittich that ended with an emotional embrace at centre ice.

"That was maybe a little over my speed limit, that sprint," chuckled the exuberant Flames netminder, who nearly tackled Tkachuk in celebration.

"I was pretty pumped."

Pumped is a good way to describe how the organization is feeling about Rittich's start to the season.

Unsure how he'd handle being the alpha dog in a duo for the first time as an NHLer, the undrafted 27-year-old has responded in spectacular fashion. Leading the league in starts (16), ice time (961 minutes), saves (468) and wins (9), Rittich has already answered plenty of questions the doubters had about his abilities to shoulder the load.

Flames defenceman Rasmus Andersson, who played alongside Rittich in the AHL as well, said he isn't the least bit surprised.

"I never worried about him one bit," he said of the man who signed a two-year extension in the summer for \$2.75 million annually.

"When I saw he signed his deal I knew it was kind of a steal."

He's since stolen several wins, the hearts of Calgary's fan base and the respect of his coaches.

However, this wasn't the plan.

The Flames now find themselves on the horns of a goaltending dilemma because of his early-season success. Internally, team brass have been struggling with balancing load management and riding the hot hand.

As captain Mark Giordano points out, it has been hard not to continue playing Rittich as often as they have, as he has done his part to give his team a chance to win every game he's played.



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While it's a nice problem to have, the organization does indeed see it as a quandary. They want to ensure Rittich isn't burned out early, as they'll certainly need him down the stretch when he's faded the last two years.

In this city, it's all about building for playoff success.

They also want to ensure Cam Talbot can get more starts in an effort to get into the flow of the season. He's 1-3 so far, but will be counted on for a significant win count if the 10-7-3 Flames are to make the playoffs again.

They club entered the season hoping split duties between the two would see Rittich play no more than 50 or 55 games. Rittich has started 16 of the Flames 20 games so far, putting him on pace for 65 games.

"I don't think we expected him to play this much," admitted Flames goalie coach Jordan Sigalet.

"We're glad he's played as well as he has. But at the same time you want to keep both guys going and get Talbs in a rhythm – it was 13 days between his two Washington games.

"You don't want to worry about (Rittich) getting tired now – you're worried about late in the season. We definitely have got to manage it a little better."

Last week, for example, the coaches intended to start Talbot either against New Jersey on Thursday or Saturday against the defending Stanley Cup champions. But given how well Rittich played in a 4-3 OT win Tuesday against Arizona, they elected to stay with the hot hand for both.

"He's stubborn because you talk to him and he says he feels great and he wants to be in the net all the time," said Sigalet, who admits it has been hard to justify taking him out all season, other than for back-to-back games.

"Smitty (Mike Smith) was like that too. They're competitive guys who want to be in there, but you have to think long term, not just short term."

They've worked hard to try managing his rest on off-days and are also keenly aware of how much better his conditioning is by virtue of his amped-up summer training regimen. His now-famous reduction in the number of Coca-Colas he consumes weekly has also paid off.

Ask Rittich and he sees no problem with the arrangement and is oblivious to the coaches' conundrum.

"That's what I wanted in the summer," said the Czech netminder of his intense workload.

"That's why I work hard. I glad I'm able. I got the coach believe in me and the players believe in me too so that's good. I'm pretty happy but I know I can be better."

Sure, his .914 save percentage and 2.74 goals-against average aren't quite all-star material. But given the wild inconsistencies of the team in front of him that have marked the first quarter of the season, there's no denying he's the team's MVP so far.

"I'm just looking for W's – that's most important for me," said Rittich when asked about his stats. "It's team sport, right? Who cares about your numbers and whatever goals against?"

Jeff Marek and Elliotte Friedman talk to a lot of people around the hockey world, and then they tell listeners all about what they've heard and what they think about it.

His competitiveness is not only a big part of his success, but it is what has helped make Big Save Dave so popular with teammates and fans.

Often seen kissing helpful goalposts and joking with teammates during stoppages, he's also lashed out a few opponents he feels have taken liberties.

"If he's going to slash me, I'm going to give him one quick one," he said of a recent shove. "I'm just trying protect myself a little bit."

He and Sigalet have spent plenty of time over the last three years discussing the importance of keeping emotions in check.

"He's controlled that emotion a lot more and I think that's made a big difference too," said Sigalet. "You don't want to take that away from him. You want to manage it a little bit. He's competitive and you like that. The last couple years he'd get a little too high after wins and too low after losses. He's found ways to put games behind him, and it's all part of him maturing."

No one has a problem with his post-game celebrations, no matter what speed he performs them at.

"It's great to see that – he's a guy who loves to win and hates to lose," said Sigalet, whose club will undoubtedly start Rittich Wednesday and they're in a stretch with just one game in six days.

"Those are the guys you win with."

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1161306 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Analyzing how Maple Leafs can cope with the loss of Mitch Marner

Andrew Berkshire

When John Tavares broke his finger we looked at who within the organization could replace Tavares' unique contributions to his line in the most similar fashion. Unfortunately for the Leafs, just as Tavares comes back to the lineup, his line is being shaken up once again by an injury to Mitch Marner that will keep him out at least four weeks.

For a team struggling to get its skates under their centre mass, their bad luck with injuries early is going to be a serious challenge to overcome.

Marner started the season pretty slow at even strength, but was his usual powerhouse self on the power play. As of late, though, he had begun to start playing the kind of hockey that is expected of him when the game was 5-on-5. Since Marner occupies a unique spot of influence on the Maple Leafs' power play, when we look at how to replace him on a line we have to go beyond even strength and look at who fits best in his spot on the top power play unit as well.

We have to consider it all.

So let's start where we usually would and look at Marner's even strength work and what he brings compared to the wingers who could jump into his spot over the next month.

The most important thing Marner does is move the puck. He does so dynamically and often, and after a slow start to his playmaking at even strength, he's now leading the team in slot passes and East-West passes, and is third in passes off the rush.

To put it succinctly, there's simply no way the Maple Leafs can internally replace the incredible level of playmaking Marner provides. Looking at the field of candidates behind him, each player has their strengths in other areas of the game, but none of them move the puck at a level that can soften the blow of Marner's loss.

The combination of Tavares' early-season struggles and the Leafs' depth at centre made his loss look a bit more palatable despite the fact that in my opinion Tavares is the better player between him and Marner. But Marner's talents are a bit tougher to replace at the moment.

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That this has happened just as Marner was turning a corner is a doubly difficult blow for the Leafs. Trevor Moore is actually a strong candidate to replace Marner's ability to gain the offensive zone and he is the best of the three candidates across the board when it comes to moving the puck in all three zones. But I wonder if the fact Marner is out for a while (a minimum of four weeks) might force a different sort of solution.

In an ideal world one of the many decent-to-good wingers the Maple Leafs have could slide into that line and be fine enough to float things until Marner returns from injury. But the creativity he brings is what's going to be missed most and none of these players will replace that. So if no one on the roster can step up, is this an opportunity for Jeremy Bracco?

Bracco hasn't blown the doors off offensively in the AHL so far this season, sitting fourth on the Marlies in scoring, but of the Leafs' potential replacements for Marner, Bracco might be the most creative and skilled playmaker available. Something to think about for sure.

On the power play, there's a higher quality list of players to pull from, so let's look at what Marner brings there compared to those who could slide into his spot.

There's no need to beat around the bush here with the power play stuff. The only reasonable replacement for Marner on the power play is William Nylander. While Nylander is more versatile at 5-on-5 than Marner, he doesn't hit the heights of creativity and offence-driving plays. Still, Nylander is significantly better than anyone else available, and not as far behind Marner as many believe.

Interestingly, after years of the Leafs' power play running through Marner, Auston Matthews has had the puck on his stick as often as Marner has this year. With that in mind, it may be that losing Marner from the power play isn't as deeply felt as it will be at even strength, which is a change from past seasons.

Nylander's chemistry with Matthews might go a long way towards making up for the drop in playmaking he provides compared to Marner. And considering that the Leafs' power play is only ranked 18th in the league, forcing the players and coaching staff to get creative and rely less on Marner might be a good thing in the long run.

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1161307 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Why Senators should consider sending Erik Brannstrom to AHL

Wayne Scanlan

November 12, 2019, 11:58 AM

In the throes of a rebuild, the Ottawa Senators have no shortage of issues.

As was painfully illustrated in Monday's 8-2 thrashing in Carolina, the Senators still give up too many shots and scoring chances, and their power play barely registers on the meter. Clicking along at 6.6 per cent, dead last in the NHL, the Senators might want to consider declining the man advantage, since they are more competitive at even strength.

Almost beyond comprehension, the Senators have as many shorthanded goals (four) as they do power play goals (four). And that is off 61 power play opportunities.

With so many fish to fry as a group, individual struggles can fly under the radar.

For example, rookie defenceman Erik Brannstrom seems to be surviving rather than thriving in his first NHL season. Three years ago, Brannstrom was captain of his SuperElit J20 team, named the league's top defenceman, and produced more than a point per game before jumping up to play with the men of the Swedish Hockey League. He was captain of Sweden's world junior team in 2018-19, a WJC all-star and led the tournament in goals by a defenceman with four.

It is at least time to ask the question: would Brannstrom be better served by a stint in the American Hockey League, where he could not only play more, but be on the ice in all situations, including penalty killing and first-unit power play, to help him regain his confidence and scoring touch?

After 16 games played, Brannstrom has one assist and played 13 minutes, 41 seconds per game, on average. For comparison, Thomas Chabot is playing nearly twice as much, at 26:07 per game. Even Ottawa's No. 6 defenceman, Mark Borowiecki, is at 16:04 per game.

But perhaps the most telling statistic for a player expected to provide offence once he finds his way? Brannstrom has 13 shots on goal in 16 games, including just one shot in his past eight games.

While everyone had a tough night in Raleigh Monday, Brannstrom was certainly no exception — a minus-three with zero shots — with the misfortune of tipping a Carolina shot past Anders Nilsson into the Ottawa goal.

Brannstrom's ice time game logs tell a story by themselves. Against San Jose Oct. 27: 7:59 TOI. Nov. 2, Boston: 14:15; Nov. 4, NYR: 15:41. Nov. 7, LA: 9:51. Nov. 9, Carolina: 15:55 and then 14:22 against Carolina in the second of the back-to-back.

Brannstrom was a healthy scratch for the Nov. 5 game against the New York Islanders, a 4-1 loss.

Depending on the situation — are the Senators ahead or behind? Protecting a tight lead? Killing penalties? — the rookie's ice time gets impacted as head coach D.J. Smith tries to protect him.

Even with the extra man, Brannstrom sees limited power play duty. In the Rangers game, Chabot saw 7:48 of power play time, Brannstrom 2:12. Against the Sharks, Chabot was 4:09 on the power play and Brannstrom 1:32.

On Monday, Brannstrom had 1:36 of PP, Chabot 3:59.

Brannstrom could be getting that kind of power play exposure in Belleville and growing from it.

Brannstrom said after being made a healthy scratch, "it was good for me to watch the game," as he viewed things differently.

It could be even better for him to return to the AHL, play 20-plus minutes and try to exert his will on a game. Cody Goloubef has been the extra defenceman on Ottawa's roster all season and filled in for Brannstrom against the Islanders.

For a raw rookie who started the season as a teenager, Brannstrom has somewhat survived. He is defending better than some might have expected for a small — five-foot-10, 179-pound, offensively gifted defenceman. He uses his quick feet to angle out forwards on the wall, and boxes out pretty well out front. Occasionally, he takes a beating coming out of his own zone, along the boards. He's been on the ice for four more goals against than goals scored.

But Brannstrom has a lot more upside than just being OK.

In the big picture, Brannstrom is expected to be a franchise cornerstone and this first-round draft choice (selected 15th overall by the Las Vegas Golden Knights in 2017) was considered the most significant acquisition by the Senators in all their trade deadline deals, which saw them part with Matt Duchene, Ryan Dzingel and Mark Stone.



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Dorion was so excited getting Brannstrom in the Stone deal he called it his "proudest day as a general manager." (At season's end, Dorion walked back those comments somewhat, saying he meant no disrespect to a fan favourite like Stone, but added: "Erik Brannstrom, we think, is going to be a future star in the NHL.")

Getting there is the tricky part, especially for a young defenceman in the NHL, where losing confidence can be fatal.

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At barely 20 years of age – he had his birthday Sept. 2 – Brannstrom is two weeks older than Brady Tkachuk, a man-child who plays as though he is 20 going on 30.

Tkachuk is six-foot-four, 212 pounds and a physical force at the wing position. Tkachuk stepped into the NHL at 19, was groomed by Stone, and has never really looked out of place.

The formula for Tkachuk is relatively simple. Power up and down the wing, drive to the net, hit everyone in sight and produce points on Ottawa's top line. In his second NHL season Tkachuk has been a force and is starting to roll offensively, tied for second in team scoring with 11 points.

In contrast, for a young defenceman like Brannstrom, the responsibilities are endless.

"When he's a finished product, you want to see him as an active guy that can break pucks out, that can also defend and can do some things on the power play," Smith told reporters in Boston last week.

"That's the finished product. The hardest part is to learn the defensive side of the game and learn to move pucks and stay away from big mistakes. For a young guy, especially for a defenceman, that happens a lot, but he's way ahead of the curve."

Occasionally, the subject of sending Brannstrom down gets discussed. To this point, Smith has always said he likes the idea of Brannstrom learning alongside a longtime NHL veteran like Ron Hainsey, who has been partnered with Brannstrom all season.

There's no harm in reuniting them again — after a stint in Belleville to help the kid develop.

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1161308 Websites

TSN.CA / Five Takeaways: Canucks vs Predators

Jeff Paterson

TAKEAWAYS

1) The Vancouver Canucks needed Tuesday's win. They needed it to snap their four game (0-3-1) losing streak and they needed it for their psyche, too. You can only tell yourself you're playing well and doing the right things so many times if you continue to come up a goal short. And at 1-1 after 40 minutes, Tuesday's game with Nashville looked and felt like so many other games the Canucks have been involved in of late -- and you know how those ended. Tuesday's game could easily have gone either way over the final frame, but to their credit the Canucks made sure it swung in their favour with a four-goal outburst that allowed the team to taste victory for the first time since a 5-2 win in San Jose on November 2nd. The impressive third period was aided by a pair of power play goals

and came after the Predators had tilted the ice in the second period outshooting the Canucks 19-7. It seemed the Preds had momentum after 40 minutes and it was left to be seen if they could carry it over into the third. Fed up with losing, the Canucks rose to the challenge and did what they had to do to grind out the win outshooting the Preds 11-10 in the final period and outscoring them 4-2.

2) Adam Gaudette had his best game of the season scoring a third period power play goal and drawing an assist on Tanner Pearson's first of two goals on the night. With Jay Beagle out and Brandon Sutter leaving the game after just three shifts, Gaudette was one of three natural centres left in the Canucks line-up. In 12:15 of ice, Gaudette managed to leave his mark on the hockey game. After hitting the post from the slot in a scoreless first period, he sprung Pearson on the left side on a power play rush early in the second finding his way onto the scoresheet with a primary assist. Gaudette then put the Canucks in front for good when he pounced on a rebound on a third period power play tucking the puck past Pekka Rinne at 10:59 to break a 2-2 tie. It was Gaudette's first multi-point game of the season and left him with 2+4=6 in the nine NHL games he's played so far this season. It also moves him into a share of the team lead for scoring in November with five points (tied with Elias Pettersson, Brock Boeser and JT Miller) despite playing one less game and logging considerably less ice time than the others. It's clear Gaudette is one of the best 12 forwards in the Canucks system and should be in the line-up every night even when injured players find their way back into uniform.

3) Even through the offensive struggles of the past week, the Canucks power play has remained productive. And then Tuesday it went off. The Canucks were a perfect three for three with the man-advantage scoring on three of their four power play shots against the Predators. It was the third time this season the Canucks have scored three or more power play goals in a game. They struck for three against Detroit on October 15th, scored four in Los Angeles on October 30th and on Tuesday feasted on the Preds penalty killing. Even in losses in Chicago and against New Jersey recently, the power play had produced. Add it all up and the Canucks have scored an NHL-leading 19 power play goals in 19 games. They won't remain on a power play goal per game pace over the balance of the season, but they certainly appear to be on their way to speeding past the 43 power play goals they produced a year ago. And the biggest thing about Tuesday's output was the fact the second unit struck for two of the three markers. It's great to have a top unit that can win hockey games. It's even better to have options as the Canucks did against the Preds.

4) With no Beagle and Sutter to lean on late in a tight game, Travis Green had no choice but to turn to some of his younger players to see if they could protect the lead. The coach rode Bo Horvat for 11:48 of the third period including a 2:12 shift that ended when Tanner Pearson sealed the victory into the empty net. Horvat played a career-high 27:06 on the night. His previous career-high was 25:46 in a shootout loss in Colorado late last season. That game included overtime. Horvat's previous high for a three period game was 25:32 against Dallas last season. When Filip Forsberg scored to cut the Canucks lead to 4-3 with 5:34 remaining, Horvat basically played the rest of the game. Incredibly, he logged 4:10 of the final 4:52. He had a 1:02 shift and then spend five seconds on the bench. He went back out for a 56 second shift followed by 36 seconds of rest. Then came his epic 2:12 shift with the Preds buzzing with the extra attacker which lasted until the Canucks scored with seven seconds remaining in the game. It wasn't just Horvat, however. Tanner Pearson played 8:19 of the third period, Elias Pettersson saw 7:16, Brock Boeser logged 7:02, JT Miller skated 6:50 of the final frame and even Jake Virtanen was used for 5:28 of the third. It was a terrific test for players not always tasked with protecting leads and they found a way to get the job done.

5) Elias Pettersson got what he wanted for his birthday. Not only did he score a pair of goals -- including the game winner -- his team found a way to snap out of its funk. Pettersson hadn't played poorly during the slump, but like his team he was having trouble generating offense. In the previous four games, he hadn't scored and had just one assist on a JT



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Miller goal in Chicago last Thursday. In Sunday's 2-1 loss to New Jersey, Pettersson fanned on a glorious scoring chance in the second period and looked skyward in disbelief as he failed to convert. He knew the difference that one goal could have meant to the outcome for his hockey club. Celebrating his 21st birthday on Tuesday with his parents and grandparents in attendance, Pettersson delivered in a big way breaking a 1-1 tie with a brilliant solo effort on a third period power play and then converted a loose puck off the side of the crease for the eventual game winner that put the Canucks up 4-2. He's just too talented to be kept down for long, so it seemed like a matter of time before he cashed in. The last time he has scored, he has scored twice (he also had a pair in San Jose 10 days ago). With eight on the season through 19 games, Pettersson now has a share of the team goal-scoring lead with Brock Boeser and JT Miller. All three of them are on a 35-goal pace. The Canucks would take that in a heartbeat.

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1161309 Websites

TSN.CA / Mitch Marner feels lucky ankle injury wasn't worse

Kristen Shilton

9-11 minutes

TSN Toronto reporter Kristen Shilton checks in daily with news and notes on the Maple Leafs. The team practised at Ford Performance Centre on Tuesday.

Mitch Marner knew something was off the second after he tripped over Carsen Twarynski's stick to start the second period of Saturday's game against Philadelphia.

"When I fell, I felt a snap in my ankle. I was kind of expecting when I looked back for my ankle to kind of be facing the wrong direction," Marner said after the Maple Leafs' practice on Tuesday. "When I noticed that it wasn't, I didn't really know what the feeling was. I didn't know what the result could have been, so I kind of had my mind open to anything."

Marner suffered a high-ankle sprain in the fall, which will sideline him a minimum of four weeks. Marner, who has 18 points (four goals, 14 assists) in 18 games this season, spoke to the media for the first time about the incident on Tuesday, while sporting a walking boot on his right leg.

The winger revealed that he was still optimistic nothing was seriously wrong after he had taken the fall and pushed himself across the ice to Toronto's bench. That's why he went back out for another shift with the Leafs' second power-play unit before ultimately being sent to the dressing room.

"It felt good on the bench, and then I went out for that power play and tried to keep that puck in [the zone], I kind of fell again on it and it just didn't feel right," he said. "I went into the room, got it taped up and did a bunch of mobility things I felt pretty good with."

Marner came back onto the ice during a TV timeout to test the ankle, but the Leafs' medical staff wasn't confident he should continue to play.

"I was trying it, and it felt pretty good, but a couple turns just felt awkward and that's what trainers are there for," he said. "I think they realized that I was in an uncomfortable situation. They called it, that I should probably just take the rest of the night off and see what happens tomorrow."

An MRI on Sunday revealed the sprain, a disappointing diagnosis for Marner but one he's determined to take positives from.

"Looking back at the video, seeing the photos, it could have been a lot worse than what actually happened," Marner said. "You always have to look at the bright side and now it's something where I can get in that gym, get stronger and try to make my shot better when I get back."

Marner said he hopes to have the walking boot off by Friday so he can get the leg moving again and improve his mobility. In the meantime, Toronto is preparing to soldier on without a major contributor. Marner is averaging the second-most minutes among Toronto's forwards this season (19:40), with significant time on both the power play (3:14) and penalty kill (2:53).

Kasperii Kapanen took Marner's spot with John Tavares and Zach Hyman at Tuesday's practice, but the Leafs also recalled Nic Petan from the Toronto Marlies, giving them options. William Nylander was once again in Marner's spot on Toronto's top power-play unit.

"Other people get an opportunity," said head coach Mike Babcock. "We got to figure it out as a coaching staff and [so do they] as players, and figure out who plays with whom and to help the group be the best they can be. We'll take a look and try to get the group to be set up the best way it can to have success."

"It's part of the game," added Tavares. "It's unfortunate and obviously we want [Mitch] back as soon as possible. The circumstances are what they are, and that's why you need depth and we certainly have that. It's a great opportunity for many guys to take advantage of this and certainly as a team to come together and play well and get the results we need."

Just as the Leafs are losing one key player to injury, they're getting another one back in Hyman.

The winger is finally ready to make his season debut against New York on Wednesday after seven months spent rehabbing from a torn ACL suffered in Toronto's first-round Stanley Cup playoff series against Boston last April.

"It's exciting," Hyman said. "Felt good today. I'm excited to go."

Hyman had been a regular participant in practice for weeks before receiving medical clearance to return, but was determined not to rush for a too-early comeback.

"I was just making sure I was ready," he said. "You never know with an injury like this because it's a long process. So just to make sure that I was over ready almost, where you're eager and hungry to go and get your clearance and are managing the soreness and whatnot that comes with an injury like that."

Hyman said he'd like to be playing with both a healthy Marner and Tavares, who only just returned from a finger injury himself last week, but joked now he'll definitely "be back up to game speed" by the time Marner recuperates.

After such a long layoff, Hyman understands finding his form won't happen overnight.

"I've learned to just do what I do best and not worry about other things and just play my game, play simple," he said. "Hopefully I'll just pick up where I left off on that front and I have a good mindset about what I need to do out there. I'm not going to go trying to do too much or anything like that, just going to play my game like I've played since I got here."

Babcock isn't saddling Hyman with any expectations going into his debut, knowing there are questions that can't be answered until he's back in the thick of game action.

"He just works right, works like a dog," Babcock said. "Now, can he get on the forecheck and get us the puck back like he always does? I don't know the answer for that for sure. How will he be on that right-hand faceoff circle on the penalty kill? I don't know that either. So I'm going to watch and we're going to figure it out."

Kasimir Kaskisuo has been longing for a shot at the Leafs' backup goalie job, and it appears his time has finally come.



CAROLINA HURRICANES

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The Leafs' recalled Kaskisuo from the Marlies' on Tuesday morning, one day after waiving backup Michael Hutchinson.

The decision to move on from Hutchinson came after the journeyman backstopped Toronto in a 5-4 loss to the Chicago Blackhawks on Sunday, putting his record at 0-4-1 to start the season with an .879 save percentage and a 4.44 goals-against average.

Toronto had seen enough after that, and opted to give Kaskisuo a look behind starter Frederik Andersen. But the Leafs also know they didn't do nearly enough to help Hutchinson, who cleared waivers on Wednesday, be successful.

"Absolutely [we didn't]," said Tavares. "I think we have to own that and feel that. We didn't play very well and didn't give him much of an opportunity to get some good results and feel better about himself. He made many key saves, gave us a chance to win many of the games that he played in and we just didn't reward him. We should feel that for sure."

All of Hutchinson's starts came on the second night of back-to-backs for the Leafs, a tough assignment that ultimately didn't pan out for him or the team.

"We weren't doing a very good job," said Babcock. "Hutch is a good man and a good person and tried hard and we didn't play good enough."

Babcock said Kaskisuo will play the second half of those back-to-backs for the time being, the next one coming Saturday in Pittsburgh. That would mark Kaskisuo's NHL debut, something he's waited for since signing with the Leafs as a college free agent in 2016 and spending the last four seasons in the AHL.

"It's pretty crazy," Kaskisuo said. "[Monday] was a pretty happy day for myself and my family. It was crazy but I'm really, really excited."

Kaskisuo said he hasn't spoken much with Babcock about expectations, but feels his AHL tenure and the difficulties he's endured there have set him up well for what's next.

"All those little bumps on the road prepare you and make you mentally stronger, so I feel like that's one of my strengths so far," he said. "I've been through a lot and been thrown everywhere, so just try to harness that and use that to my advantage."

In the wake of Monday's news that Don Cherry had been fired from Hockey Night in Canada after calling immigrants "you people" during a rant on the air Saturday night, some Leafs commented on the way Cherry's career had come to an abrupt end.

"I think it's disappointing on many fronts," Tavares said. "Certainly the comments, and the way his tenure ended. He's meant a lot to the game and provided a lot. It's obviously disappointing what happened and the result. I think everyone would wish something like this never happened and didn't come to this set of circumstances."

"Growing up here, he always meant a lot to hockey and I think everyone grew up watching him in Toronto and Canada in general," Marner said. "But hockey is meant to bring people together. The comments were a little far."

"You've got to be mindful of how great the game is and what the game is all about and in bringing people together," Babcock added. "There's no question about that. It's got to be tough for him and his family. In saying all that, there are certain things that are just right."

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USA TODAY / Don Cherry tells Tucker Carlson on Fox News he was fired for using the words, 'You people'

Mike Brehm

USA TODAY

"Hockey Night in Canada" analyst Don Cherry said he believes he was fired Monday because of two words he used during his Coach's Corner segment.

"It's the two words, 'You people' — and you know people are very sensitive like that — that got me," he said Tuesday night during an appearance on Tucker Carlson's show on Fox News.

The popular, outspoken former coach drew criticism for complaining Saturday night that people in Toronto were being disrespectful by not wearing poppies to honor Canada's fallen military heroes leading up to Remembrance Day. His words were viewed as a criticism of immigrants.

"You people ... love our way of life, love our milk and honey," Cherry said during the segment. "At least you could pay a couple of bucks for poppies or something like that. These guys paid for your way of life that you enjoy in Canada."

Sportsnet said Monday that Cherry's remarks were divisive and "it has been decided that it is the right time for him to immediately step down."

Cherry, who has made other remarks through the years that sparked controversy, argued that all of the good stories he did on the show were ignored by his bosses.

"I suppose if I had to do it over again, I would have said 'everybody,'" he said. " 'You people' are the people they listened to. The silent majority, as you know, are always silent.

"The police are with me. The forces are with me. Everybody is with me, and the firefighters and the whole deal. But it doesn't make any sense and I was brought in and I was told I was fired after 38 years. I stand by what I said and I still mean it."

Carlson, who often complains about political correctness, said the people who criticized the remarks weren't sensitive but were fascists.

"All I was saying in Toronto, wear your poppies," Cherry said. "These soldiers died for our way of life. ... They died so we can have our way of life and please wear a poppy in their honor."

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USA TODAY / Pro Russian hockey team tweets it wants fired Don Cherry as TV analyst to 'talk whatever he thinks'

Chris Bumbaca

USA TODAY

Don Cherry's broadcasting days at Canada's Sportsnet are over, but that hasn't stopped a team in another hemisphere from tweeting their efforts to scoop him up.

HC Dynamo Moscow of the Kontinental Hockey League tweeted Tuesday that it wants the former "Hockey Night In Canada" analyst, who was fired for xenophobic comments made on air over the weekend, to serve as a commentator for its television broadcasts.

"Hey, Don Cherry @CoachsCornerDC," the tweet from the official team account said. "We heard that you were fired. It's not good! Come to Russia, we need an analyst for Dynamo TV who could talk whatever he

thinks. We love old soldiers. And we will make a nice suit! We hope you agree."

During Saturday's Coaches Corner segment, Cherry, 85, accused immigrants of not respecting Canada's tradition of wearing poppies to honor military veterans. He was fired Monday after his latest in a long line of cringe-worthy statements.

"You people ... love our way of life, love our milk and honey," Cherry said. "At least you could pay a couple of bucks for poppies or something like that. These guys paid for your way of life that you enjoy in Canada."

The tweet appears tailored for the English-speaking audience, as every other tweet from the account this past month has been in Russian. HC Dynamo Moscow also pointed out Cherry's inclination for flamboyant dress by saying "we will make a nice suit!"

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