



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 19, 2017

## NORTH STATE JOURNAL

### Aho's late goal lifts Hurricanes past Sabres

#### Darling stellar in earning win

[November 18, 2017 The Sports Xchange Article, NHL, Sports](#)

Hurricanes right wing Sebastian Aho celebrates his goal during the third period against the Sabres at KeyBank Center. Carolina beats Buffalo 3-1. (Timothy T. Ludwig / USA TODAY Sports)

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Sebastian Aho scored the go-ahead goal with 4:45 remaining to lead the Carolina Hurricanes to a 3-1 victory over the Buffalo Sabres on Saturday.

After a mistake by Sabres defenseman Justin Falk, who mishandled a bouncing puck, Aho grabbed the puck and raced toward the Buffalo net. Aho beat Chad Johnson with a wrist shot for his third goal of the season.

Justin Williams and Joakim Nordstrom (empty-netter) also scored for the Hurricanes (8-6-4). Scott Darling made 24 saves.

Evander Kane scored for Buffalo (5-11-4). Johnson stopped 30.

Williams opened the scoring with 5:14 remaining in the second. With a 2-on-1 opportunity, Williams — just out of the penalty box — faked a pass to his right before pausing and scoring on a wrist shot to the glove side. It was his third goal of the season.

Kane evened the score with 7:33 remaining. After receiving a pass from Ryan O'Reilly inside the right circle, Kane's low shot went between Darling's legs for Kane's 11th goal of the season.

Kane appeared to give Buffalo a 2-1 lead 10 seconds later but had a goal overturned after officials deemed he kicked the puck into the net. Kane was going hard to the net and kicked the puck after Darling initially made a pad save.

Nordstrom added an empty-net goal with 40.9 seconds remaining.

The Sabres got off to an extremely slow start on their home ice. Buffalo didn't record its first shot on goal until there was 2:36 remaining in the first period.

Darling was terrific throughout. The goaltender's best moment came on an exceptional save on Kyle Okposo with one minute remaining in the first. The Carolina goaltender dove to his left at the top of the crease for a sprawling stop.

Darling also came up big with a slick breakaway save on Johan Larsson with five minutes remaining in the second.

One of Buffalo's better chances came midway through the third period from point-blank range by Jack Eichel, but Eichel didn't get all of the puck and Darling was able to make the save.

NOTES: LW Matt Moulson and D Casey Nelson were scratched for the Sabres. ... D Zach Bogosian (lower body) and D Rasmus Ristolainen (upper body) remain on injured reserve for Buffalo. ... D Klas Dahlbeck, RW Josh Jooris and RW Lee Stempniak were scratched for the Hurricanes. ... Stempniak, a Buffalo native, is on injured reserve and has not played this season. ... This was the first of three meetings this season. Their next meeting is Dec. 15 in Buffalo. ... This was the 199th meeting.



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## Aho scores late to lift Hurricanes over Sabres

Posted 11:00 p.m. yesterday  
Updated 11:01 p.m. yesterday

By JONAH BRONSTEIN, Associated Press

BUFFALO, N.Y. — Sebastian Aho made his 100th NHL game was one to remember.

Aho scored with 4:45 remaining to lift the Carolina Hurricanes over the Buffalo Sabres 3-1 on Saturday night.

Final 1 2 3 Tot

[Carolina](#) 0 1 2 3

[Buffalo](#) 0 0 1 1

[Preview](#) | [Box](#) | [Gameview](#) | [Recap](#)

Three Stars

- 1: [Sebastian Aho](#), Car (1G)
- 2: [Scott Darling](#), Car (24 Saves)
- 3: [Justin Williams](#), Car (1G)

### STATS

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After going scoreless through the first 15 games, Aho has a goal in three straight.

"I think I'm playing the same way," Aho said. "It's just, you get the first one, it's easier to get. So I think that's just the key."

Justin Williams scored in the second period and Joakim Nordstrom added an empty-netter. Scott Darling had 24 saves for the Hurricanes, who are 4-1-1 since losing four in a row.

"This is a good step and now we need to start getting something rolling positive in our direction," Williams said.

Evander Kane scored for the Sabres, who have lost five straight. Chad Johnson stopped 30 shots.

"The bottom line is they took advantage of our mistakes and we didn't take advantage of theirs," Sabres coach Phil Housley said. "It is testing my patience."

Aho scored on a breakaway after Buffalo's Justin Falk lost the puck near his own blue line. Aho's wrist shot from the right slot went over Johnson's glove.

"Good finish," Carolina coach Bill Peters said. "A few weeks ago, that doesn't go in for him, and now it does."

Williams gave Carolina a 1-0 lead with 5:14 left in the second. On an odd-man rush with Marcus Kruger, Williams stopped in the left slot, faked a pass and beat Johnson with a low wrist shot.

"I've been passing up a lot of opportunities lately and I almost blew that one, too," Williams said. "Thankfully I was able to make the play."

Nordstrom scored with 41 seconds remaining.

Kane got his 11th of the season to tie it with 7:33 remaining in the third. Ryan O'Reilly stole a pass from Haydn Fleury and fed Kane in the left slot.

Kane appeared to score again 10 seconds later off a rebound, but officials determined via replay that he kicked the puck into the net.

"I didn't agree with it," Kane said. "I was pretty self-conscious of not making a kicking motion and kicking the puck into the net."

The Sabres didn't have a shot on goal for the first 17:21 of the game. Jordan Nolan shot wide of the net on a breakaway in the opening minutes.

Darling made his best save of the night on a Sabres' power play late in the first period when he dropped his stick and dove across the crease to catch Kyle Okposo's backhand.

"I just shut my eyes and dove over there, so I was just happy it hit me," Darling said. "It's just pure desperation. Lost it, dive, hope for the best."

NOTES: Carolina played without F Josh Jooris (soreness) but had Kruger in the lineup after he missed Thursday's loss to the Islanders due to illness. ... Hurricanes LW Phillip Di Giuseppe was in the lineup for a second straight game after being called up from the minors. ... Buffalo activated F Evan Rodrigues on Friday and assigned him to AHL Rochester. Rodrigues had been out since Sept. 22 with a hand injury.

UP NEXT

Hurricanes: Host the New York Islanders on Saturday.

Sabres: Host Columbus on Monday night.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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## Gameday: Islanders vs. Hurricanes

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

2:00 AM

Who do you fight for?

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

In the latter half of a back-to-back with travel and an early-evening 5 p.m. puck drop, the Hurricanes will not hold a morning skate. We'll be chatting with head coach Bill Peters mid-afternoon and passing along any and all gameday updates prior.

*Last updated: 2:00 a.m.*

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### CANES FACE ISLANDERS AGAIN TO OPEN FOUR-GAME HOMESTAND

2:00 a.m.

The Carolina Hurricanes will open a four-game homestand against a familiar opponent, the New York Islanders.

The Hurricanes and Islanders just met on Thursday in Brooklyn, a slow-starting match that quickly turned into the back-and-forth contest we've been accustomed of seeing between these two teams as of late. The Hurricanes trailed 3-1 after the first period, led 4-3 after two and ultimately dropped a 6-4 decision.

"I don't think we were overly thrilled with our game in Long Island," head coach Bill Peters said. "Now we have to get home, get a little bit of rest and come back and play the right way against that team. They've got a good team."

"I like playing games, yeah. 5:00 is a little earlier than our normal times, but I'm excited to try to get some revenge on them," [Justin Williams](#) said. "The Metro is really, really jammed. We need to start getting ourselves on the other side of the line, pushing forward and seeing if we can get better. This is a good step, and now we need to get something positive rolling in our direction."

Both teams were in action on Saturday night. The Islanders fended off a push by the Tampa Bay Lightning to leave Florida with two points in a 5-3 win. In Buffalo, the Hurricanes again saw a one-goal lead disappear in the third

period, but this time they were able to regroup and score a late goal to claim a 3-1 victory.

Williams broke a scoreless tie in the second period on Saturday night in Buffalo, but Evander Kane tied the game a few minutes past the midway point of the third. With less than five minutes left in to play in regulation, [Sebastian Aho](#) turned a fortuitous bounce into the game-winning goal, his third tally in as many games.

"He's made plays. He's one of our playmakers," Williams said. "It's good to see him going. I think the good thing was when he was going through that slump, he wasn't hanging his head or dropping his shoulders. He was still trying to be the guy, and that's big, especially from a young player."

[Joakim Nordstrom](#) added an empty-net tally in the final minute to seal the victory, and [Scott Darling](#) bounced back with a 24-save win, his effort highlighted by a desperation diving stop on Kyle Okposo in the first period.

"I just shut my eyes and dove over there," Darling said. "I was happy it hit me."

The Hurricanes' homestand also will include visits from the New York Rangers, Toronto Maple Leafs and Nashville Predators during Thanksgiving week.

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### CLICKS AND CLIPPINGS

#### Articles

- [Recap: Aho Scores Late to Lift Canes Over Sabres](#)
- [Aho Playing With Newfound Confidence Heading Into 100th Game](#)

#### Videos

- [Highlights: CAR 3, BUF 1](#)

#### Gameday Links

- [Buy Tickets](#)
- [Hockey Fights Cancer Night](#)
- [First Goal Contest presented by Kayem](#)

Recap: Aho Scores Late to Lift Canes Over Sabres



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## Aho's third goal in as many games is the difference maker in 3-1 win

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

November 18th, 2017

**BUFFALO, N.Y.** - [Sebastian Aho](#) scored his third goal in as many games in the final five minutes of tonight's contest to lift the Carolina Hurricanes over the Buffalo Sabres, 3-1.

[Justin Williams](#) tallied the Hurricanes' first goal, [Joakim Nordstrom](#) found the empty net in the final minute and [Scott Darling](#) made 24 saves in the victory.

Here are five takeaways from this Saturday night in Buffalo.

### One

On Thursday night in Brooklyn, the Hurricanes entered the third period with a one-goal lead. That dissipated, and the Canes left empty-handed.

Tonight, the Canes had another one-goal lead heading into the final 20 minutes. It disappeared, as well.

"You try to learn from those things, not say, 'I hope that doesn't happen again.' You need to make sure it doesn't happen again," Williams said. "We let them back into it because we refuse to push forward."

But, the Hurricanes did find a way to bear down and find the game-winning goal late.

"Somebody made a big play for us," Williams said. "We tried to back our way into a win, and that doesn't work," Williams said.

"You know they're going to come with a push," head coach Bill Peters said. "It was good. It was a good response by our guys. They came with a push and we answered."

### Two

That answer came from a 20-year-old forward playing in his 100th career NHL game.

Justin Falk misplayed the puck at his own blue line, and Aho burst in with speed. He corralled the puck, skated in alone, dangled and slid the puck past Chad Johnson to give the Canes the late lead.

"It was a lucky bounce to get the breakthrough," Aho said. "I just made my move, and I'm glad it went in."

After not scoring in his first 15 games, Aho now has three goals in his last three games.

"Good finish by Seabass," Peters said. "Two weeks ago that doesn't go in for him, and now it does."

But there's not much different in Aho's play - the puck is just going in now.

"He's made plays. He's one of our playmakers," Williams said. "It's good to see him going. I think the good thing was when he was going through that slump, he wasn't hanging

his head or dropping his shoulders. He was still trying to be the guy, and that's big, especially from a young player."

"I'm playing the same way," Aho said. "You just get the first one and it gets easier."

"He's playing the exact same way," Peters said. "He's probably shooting it a little bit more, getting it off his stick quicker."

### Three

A scoreless tie in the second period was broken by the incredibly patient play of Williams.

[Marcus Kruger](#) smartly laid the puck off the boards into the neutral zone, where Williams exited the box with speed, gathered the puck and rushed down the ice with [Derek Ryan](#) on a 2-on-1 break. Williams waited and looked pass before drawing it back to his stick, putting on the brakes, backpedaling a smidge and burying a quick shot.

"I almost blew that one, but I'm happy to get one to help the team," Williams said with a smile. "The pass wasn't there anymore. I knew I had a little bit of time because both units had been out there for a long time."

### Four

Darling bounced back from a rough outing in Brooklyn with a stellar showing tonight in Buffalo. The big man made 24 saves in net, including a highlight reel stop on Kyle Okposo in the first period and some solid stops in the third.

"When you don't have a good game, you want to just get back in the net, keep playing, show that it just happens sometimes but you're not going to make a habit of it," Darling said. "It's nice to get a big two points."

Darling didn't have much to do in the first period, at least until the last 120 seconds or so. The Canes held the Sabres without a shot on goal until the 17:24 mark of the period, a mostly harmless 40-foot wrister off the stick of Evander Kane - though Darling did say that "the shot counter was questionable."

The Sabres would get their first power play of the game shortly after that, and then just about everything happened for Darling. A Kane shot went wide of the net, but the puck sat on the netting, creating the optical illusion that it had gone in. The red light was turned on, the fans celebrated, the goal horn blared and we might as well have been a few bars into "Let Me Clear My Throat" before everyone - including a number of players - realized that play was still alive.

A battle in the near corner ensued before the puck was worked up to Ryan O'Reilly at the point. He dished a quick pass over to Jack Eichel, who one-touched to Okposo in the slot. Darling dove across the top of the crease to make one of his best stops of the season to preserve the scoreless game.



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"I just shut my eyes and dove over there," Darling said. "I was happy it hit me."

Darling made two sharp saves on Kane in the third period and turned away a point-blank chance off the stick of Eichel, who was left all alone in the slot.

"Just a big man that takes up a lot of net," Williams said. "He was dynamic for us tonight. We don't win without him."

"Darls has been real good," Peters said. "He was big. He was real good when they came in the third."

## Five

So, what now? The Hurricanes are in the midst of a crucial stretch that includes three of four games against divisional opponents.

"The Metro is really, really jammed. We need to start getting ourselves on the other side of the line, pushing forward and **Aho Playing With Newfound Confidence Heading Into 100th Game**

seeing if we can get better," Williams said. "This is a good step, and now we need to get something positive rolling in our direction."

The Canes get another shot at the Islanders on Sunday evening.

"I like playing games, yeah," Williams said with a smile. "5:00 is a little earlier than our normal times, but I'm excited to try to get some revenge on them."

## Up Next

The Hurricanes head home now to host the New York Islanders in a 5 p.m. match-up on Sunday.

"I don't think we were overly thrilled with our game in Long Island," Peters said. "Now we have to get home, get a little bit of rest and come back and play the right way against that team. They've got a good team."

## 20-year-old Finnish forward has two goals, five points in last two games

by Michael Smith [@MSmithCanes](#) / CarolinaHurricanes.com  
November 18th, 2017

**BUFFALO, N.Y.** - In the underbelly of KeyBank Center, a lowered basketball hoop sat no more than two feet off the ground near where [Sebastian Aho](#) and [Teuvo Teravainen](#) were kicking around a soccer ball. So, they made a new game out of it - kick it into the hoop.

Easy enough for Aho, who is playing with a newfound swagger after scoring two goals in his last two games to hatch the goose egg that incubated in his goals column for the first 15 games of the season.

"You always get a boost for your confidence when you score your first one," Aho said. "I just try to play the same way."

It wasn't as if Aho didn't have his chances prior to getting off the schneid against Dallas on Monday. He had good looks, and it was just a matter of time before the first one found twine.

"He was [putting pressure on himself]. You don't want to say he is, but he definitely was. Then you see him today, and he's shooting it into the net like crazy. That's all it takes is that first one," head coach Bill Peters said after practice on Tuesday. "He's been playing well and getting quality chances, and that's always a bigger indicator. ... Hopefully it's a sign of good things to come."

And while the goals might not have been there, it wasn't as if Aho had been invisible on the scoresheet. The Finnish forward racked up eight assists in the first 15 games, including a pair of helpers on opening night. He now is tied for the team lead in assists with 11.

"I still made some plays. Scoring goals is not only my game," he said. "I try to be a versatile player and try to make some plays."

Now Aho is making plays on a line that has been the Hurricanes' most dangerous, with [Jordan Staal](#) and [Teuvo Teravainen](#) alongside him.

"It's been a lot of fun playing with Turbo and Jordo," he said. "They've been really good."

"Both very talented players. Both of them have great hands and great vision. I'm just trying to make some room for them and go to the net hard," Staal said after Monday's win over Dallas. "They do a lot with the puck, and I've kind of got the easy part. It's been fun playing with those two guys. Hopefully we continue to contribute for this team."

Having played in all 82 of the Canes' games in his rookie season and all 17 in the 2017-18 campaign, Aho is set to play in his 100th career game on Saturday night in Buffalo.

"It came really quick for me," he said. "It feels pretty good to play my 100th game in the NHL."

Looking back on his first 99, Aho said the biggest lesson he's learned thus far is understanding what's required on a day-to-day, game-to-game basis.

"The main key is how you prepare yourself. There are many games in the league, so you have to be ready for every night," he said. "I played over 100 games in Finland, so I was getting used to it before I came here. I talked with older NHL players from my town - Jussi Jokinen and those guys - who helped mentally prepare myself."

Now after shedding the proverbial monkey off his back, Aho's mental preparation is just a bit simpler.

"I knew it was coming, and I'm glad it happened," he said.



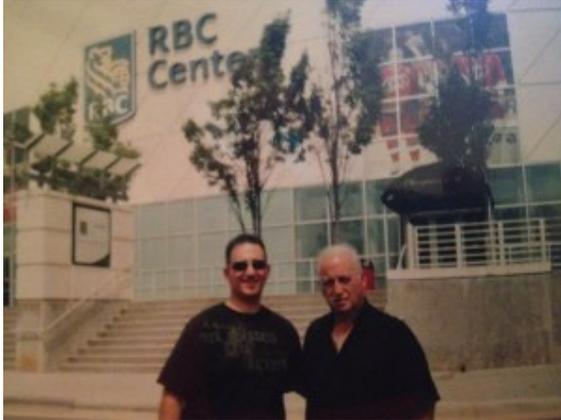
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## TriangleSportsNetwork

### Losing the best hockey fan I know

Peter Koutroumpis, Triangle Sports Network via HHOF



Peter Koutroumpis, Triangle Sports Network

By Peter Koutroumpis

[editor@trianglesportsnet.com](mailto:editor@trianglesportsnet.com)

RALEIGH, N.C. – I knew it was coming, but not exactly when.

Cancer does that – it doesn't let you know when it will take a loved one from you, even when the inevitable is pending.

This is a personal story – mine – about how I recently lost the man who introduced me to the sport of hockey to this disease, as cursed as it is.

John Koutroumpis, in my opinion, was hockey's biggest and best fan, but on Oct. 12<sup>th</sup>, 2017, cancer finally ended his daily pursuit and review of hockey news and happenings.

Before that date, my weekly conversations with him always entailed going over my recent coverage of the Carolina Hurricanes, then reviewing the trials and tribulations of his beloved Boston Bruins before wrapping up talking about the local side, the Toronto Maple Leafs.

I can't have those conversations with him anymore – at least not over the phone.

I vividly remember when I first stepped onto the ice at the Aurora Community Centre back in 1976.

It was the beginning of house league play, during an introductory stick-and-puck style ice time session that assessed all the five and six-year-olds playing that year.

The volunteer coaches, other kids' dads, didn't have to take long to assess the skills of the stocky Greek kid who stepped onto the ice.

They just needed to look at him in the bright yellow helmet and cage with red/blue/white gloves and wearing blue jeans

as he landed on his ass to realize he needed a chair to lean on.

That's how and when I finally learned to skate.

My father proudly watched it happen while sitting in the stands.

He was born and raised in Piraeus, Greece in 1941, an active youngster and teen who swam a lot and played soccer with his friends while following his favorite pro team, AEK Athens.

AEK wore black and gold, and that's how he eventually became a fan of the Bruins after emigrating to Canada at 19 years old and learning about this incredible sport.

He never learned to skate; though he tried.

Instead, he provided the opportunity for his son to do so, even if he started later than most kids did.

He owned a restaurant in the hockey town that Aurora was, right by the arena, and knew many people in town whose kids played.

There was no trouble in scrounging up some of the basic equipment needed – the used old-school skates (exposed blades) from Vic's Shoe Repair Shop, the hand-me-down helmet, cage and gloves from his waitress Maggie – taken from her son Ron's outgrown equipment supply – and the new jock and 'Playmaker' wood hockey stick from Canadian Tire.

For many parents, buying a whole equipment package and not knowing whether your child would like the sport provided some trepidation.

After that first day, after only 15-20 minutes pushing around that chair, I was skating freely on my own and ready to go.

Dad made a trip to the Aurora Minor Hockey used equipment sale and back to Canadian Tire and set me on my way to a youth/minor hockey playing career that progressed from house league squads to rep/travel teams that eventually culminated in celebrating a minor midget All-Ontario championship.

A junior, nor college hockey career was not in my plans.

Though I could have tried and toiled to do so, my focus was on my academics and a career in sports which I eventually followed through on.

All due to my dad introducing me to hockey.

It was an education in and of itself that afforded me the opportunity to learn discipline and commitment at a young age.

I was up at 5 a.m. with half my equipment on and ready to hit the ice in sub-zero temped rinks following a ride in the middle



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of Canadian winter in our Oldsmobile Cutlass with the AM radio playing the latest 70s hits while we talked.

Time in the car was the most precious father-son interaction we kept for years – from short 15-minute in-town trips to longer hours-plus jaunts to other towns and tournaments – in blinding snow and less treacherous weather elements.

Playing hockey over the years allowed me to visit dozens of small Ontario towns – Schomberg, Keswick, Thornton, Creemore, Beaverton, Brighton, Emo, Blind River, Fort Frances to name a few – as well as bigger ones – Brampton, Mississauga, Belleville, Hamilton, Niagara Falls, Parry Sound, Sudbury, Oshawa, Kingston and more.

An invaluable series of lessons in geography, sociology, and culture.

Traveling those distances with my dad taught me about the fabric of being Canadian and playing the national sport (the winter one), and created lasting memories I possess and hang onto in his now permanent absence.

As happy as I am to recall them, they're now accompanied with tears – both sad and joyful ones.

I learned a lot from hockey thanks to my dad, and I apply that knowledge to what I see in today's young and veteran NHL players who I'm privileged to cover.

Many come from towns and rinks I played in – a connection that others may not have – which allows me to ask different questions and have deep-rooted conversations about.

It surprises the rookies and impresses the older guys when I can talk about something closer to their upbringing than the typical hockey-speak interviews of the day.

Those 'inside scoop' encounters were speaking points with my dad on a weekly basis for the past seven years, including the last 18 months during which treatment of prostate cancer was also a part of those talks.

My dad was a conduit of hockey knowledge, a space he continually filled reading newspapers, hockey magazines and record books.

He could recall all NHL trades, transactions, and happenings with photographic-memory precision, and made sure to cut out all pictures, articles and stats about my games that we could look back on and talk about 40 years later.

I developed the same desire to learn about hockey history and appreciate it as Dad did.

We hadn't gone to the Hockey Hall of Fame nor a Leafs game in decades – an annual set of trips we would make a goal of taking during my youth hockey days, before college and living in the U.S. changed that routine.

Feeling nostalgic and finding the opportunity to do so, we did both when I visited my parents two years ago – a trip to the Hall before the Leafs faced off against the Tampa Bay Lightning.

It was a great day, and one that took place six months before Dad got the news in 2016.

After his diagnosis – Stage-2 with some metastatic tumor development in bones in his lower back – the radiation treatment, hormone therapy, and oral chemotherapy helped this energetic 75-year-old maintain a positive mindset to keep living life with cancer the way he always did – with passion.

Our weekly hockey talks and catching up on life took place as they always did.

That continued until this past September when his energy level greatly diminished and necessitated a trip to the hospital and three days of testing to verify the worst possible news.

The cancer had spread to his liver and to the point that his doctor and oncologist said that further treatment would not help.

It was only a matter of time, and palliative/hospice care was recommended.

My parents didn't ask how long.

Dad was adamant in not spending his days in a hospital.

Fortunately, he was able to receive treatment at home with my mother taking care of many of his needs along with help from nurses checking in every few days, and the doctor coming every other week.

The [NHL](#) preseason schedule began and I covered the [Hurricanes-Lightning game a week earlier](#), but I missed the final preseason match-up against the Caps.

I drove the 16-hour leg from Holly Springs, North Carolina through Virginia, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New York to cross the border via the Peace Bridge from Buffalo to Fort Erie, and on to my parents' house in Barrie.

I got there at midnight and just wanted to embrace my dad and tell him how much I loved him.

I did just that, and for the next week, I spent time with both my parents, watching them live the 'new normal'.

Being who my dad was, he was still as vibrant as he could be in his condition.

Lots of soccer and hockey games played on the TV when he was awake, and our hockey sports talks continued while I was there.

All things considered, it was as good a week, spending time with both my parents, helping them in whatever way I could during such a trying period of our lives.

We talked about the more serious issues ahead, and the damned inevitable happening.

That's how my family works – confronting the issues, but understanding and feeling the emotion of it all each in our own way.

I never saw my dad cry, though I'm sure he did.

He showed strength that my mother and I knew was his way in trying to make our individual tearful moments less painful.



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It provided some solace as I eventually hugged him to return to North Carolina, wondering how long it would be before I would see him again.

The last time I talked to him followed [Carolina's season-opening win over the Minnesota Wild](#) on Oct. 7.

Our last hockey talk took place that Sunday.

Dad sounded lively talking about the highlights he watched on SportsNet with my tidbits of what happened behind the scenes adding to the conversation.

Though I made a short call a few days later, there wasn't much new to talk about and we figured we'd catch up the following weekend.

We didn't.

Another 16-plus hour drive North ensued.

All the thoughts of my father and I driving in the car to hockey practices, games, and tournaments in dozens of rinks all flooded back through my mind while taking care of funeral arrangements with my mother and brother.

My last interaction with Dad was by his casket as I kissed him, told him I loved him, and how much I appreciated everything he ever did for me and our family, and that we'd be okay.

I lay a picture beside him of the two of us standing outside RBC (now PNC) Arena, taken when my parents visited Raleigh seven years ago.

Our relationship with hockey will carry on, regardless of the weekly phone conversations that cancer took away from us.

While the Hurricanes and Islanders face off in their 'Hockey Fights Cancer' game on Sunday, I'm back in Barrie for Dad's 40-day memorial.

We'll connect and I'll be sure to reflect on a hockey moment or two with him.

Cancer may have taken his body, but not his soul, nor the passion for hockey that we both shared together.

Rest in peace Dad, and know that the fight against cancer will continue in your name with the hope that others will be able to carry on their love of hockey together as we did.



## Hurricanes look to exact revenge from Islanders

**Even with a game in between, it figures that the Carolina Hurricanes haven't forgotten what happened the last time they played the New York Islanders.**

by [STATS](#)

5h ago • 2 min read Update 5h ago

Even with a game in between, it figures that the [Carolina Hurricanes](#) haven't forgotten what happened the last time they played the [New York Islanders](#).

There's a chance for payback when the teams meet Sunday at PNC Arena in Raleigh, N.C.

"There's an expectation to win and when you don't meet that expectation, no one is happy," Hurricanes center Jeff Skinner said.

In Thursday night's clash, the Islanders used a three-goal third period for a 6-4 home victory against the Hurricanes.

Both teams played Saturday night. The Islanders won 5-3 at Tampa Bay, pushing their winning streak to three games. Carolina won 3-1 at Buffalo, securing points in six of its last seven games -- the exception being the matchup with the Islanders (11-6-2).

So now there's a rematch that's probably somewhat fresh in the minds of members of both teams.

"We ended chasing the game for too long early," Carolina coach Bill Peters said. "That probably hurt us in the long run."

The stirring comeback from the Islanders gave them a blueprint on how they should be playing.

"We were getting pucks in deep," New York defenseman Johnny Boychuk said. "In the third (period), we did the right things and we worked hard and we got the results we wanted."

Islanders defenseman Nick Leddy said the last matchup with Carolina was an example of how the Islanders should be performing.

"We see how we can play when we play the right way and how we can be successful," Leddy said. "We've got to play that way. I think we want to play better defensively. Playing good defense will lead to offense for our team. The better 'D' we play, the offense will come."

Sunday's game opens a four-game homestand for the Hurricanes (8-6-4), who hold a four-game home points streak at 2-0-2.

"Just play faster and execute," Skinner said. "We all know we're best when we're playing with speed."

The Hurricanes are 0-1-1 in the back end of games on back-to-back days this season.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Carolina left winger Teuvo Teravainen is slated to play in his 200th game with the Hurricanes. He had a hat trick in Monday's home victory against Dallas.

Boychuk said it's time for the Islanders to get on a run, particularly now that they've identified a winning formula.

"We have to gain ground," he said, referring to the standings. "... We've been playing some pretty good hockey, but we have to clean up the turnovers. Once we do that, we'll get the right results."

Consistency has been an issue with both teams.

"We've just got to get better at being consistent for 60 minutes," Islanders forward Mat Barzal said.

The Islanders might have some roster shuffling to sort out with the quick turnaround after right winger Cal Clutterbuck was scratched Saturday night because of illness.

Islanders coach Doug Weight is a former Carolina player.

"We're a confident team on the road," Weight said.

Fathers of Islanders players and others are on this weekend road trip.



## Checkers' Losing Skid Continues In Bridgeport

Written by Nicholas Niedzielski

Published: November 18, 2017

The Checkers' longest road trip of the season came to an end Saturday night with a tough 5-2 loss to the Bridgeport Sound Tigers.

After suffering a shutout the night before in Springfield, the Checkers fell into another hole against the Sound Tigers, surrendering a pair of goals 80 seconds apart in the first 10 minutes of the opening frame.

[Score Sheet](#)

Charlotte's previously prolific offense finally broke through later in the period when Aleksii Saarela sniped a shot on the power play to cut the Bridgeport advantage in half heading into the first intermission.

The second period belonged solely to the Sound Tigers, who found the back of the net in both the first and last minutes of the frame to blow the game wide open through 40 minutes of play. The Checkers were able to pull back within two thanks to Valentin Zykov's 10th goal of the season in the latter moments of the third, but they could not spark a rally, and an empty net tally sealed the 5-2 victory for the Sound Tigers.

### NOTES

The Checkers have now lost four games in a row, their longest such skid of the season ... Charlotte's longest road trip of the season ends with the team going 4-4-0 ... Valentin Zykov's goal was his 10th of the season, tying him for second in the AHL ... Charlotte's 16 shots on goal are the team's fewest this season'... Lucas Wallmark, Jake Chelios and Dennis Robertson all missed the game due to injury ... Mike Ferrantino and Nick Schilkey served as healthy extras



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 19, 2017



## Aho, Hurricanes hand Sabres fifth straight loss

### Forward scores winner late in third period

by Joe Yerdon / NHL.com Correspondent

November 18th, 2017

**BUFFALO** -- [Sebastian Aho](#) scored at 15:15 of the third period to help the Carolina Hurricanes to a 3-1 win against the Buffalo Sabres at KeyBank Center on Saturday.

Aho, playing his 100th NHL game, gave the Hurricanes a 2-1 lead. He picked up a loose puck after a pass from [Teuvo Teravainen](#) skipped over the stick of Sabres defenseman [Justin Falk](#), skated in against [Chad Johnson](#) and beat him with a wrist shot for his third goal of the season.

"I think [Aho] is really coming right now," Hurricanes coach Bill Peters said. "The confidence that he has to play with and hang on to pucks is important and that's a good line for us right now."

After not scoring in his first 15 games, Aho has had a goal in three straight.

"I think I'm playing the same way, it's just you get the first one, it's easier to get, so I think that's just the key," Aho said.

[Joakim Nordstrom](#) scored an empty-net goal at 19:19 of the third that made it 3-1.

[Scott Darling](#) made 24 saves for the Hurricanes (8-6-4), who have won four of their past six games. The Sabres (5-11-4) have lost five straight.

"It is testing my patience," said Sabres coach Phil Housley, whose team lost 3-1 at the Detroit Red Wings on Friday. "I thought the last game in Detroit was really the end of my wick as far as remaining patient and making some adjustments and addressing that. I thought tonight they get the break to get the second goal, we had opportunities to score and get it 2-1 and that's the difference in the hockey game. I still feel that we're all not on the same page and we're going to continue to work on that."

[Justin Williams](#) gave the Hurricanes a 1-0 lead at 14:46 of the second period. He exited the penalty box and received a pass from [Marcus Kruger](#), then skated deep into the Sabres zone before pulling up and taking a wrist shot from the left face-off circle that beat Johnson for his third goal.

"I've been passing up a lot of opportunities lately and I almost blew that one too," Williams said. "I'm happy to get one to help the team."

[Evander Kane](#) made it 1-1 at 12:27 of the third period when he skated in against Darling and beat him through the five-hole with a wrist shot for his 11th goal.

Kane nearly put Buffalo ahead 10 seconds later, but his goal was overturned on video review after it was determined he kicked the puck past Darling.

"I didn't agree with it," Kane said. "You go hard to the net. I ... was pretty self-conscious of not making a kicking motion and kicking the puck in the net."

Johnson made 30 saves.

### Highlight of the game

Darling's save against [Kyle Okposo](#) at 18:58 of the first period.

### They said it

"We played a great game tonight. The hockey gods shocking us a little bit with that bounce and got [Aho] the breakaway, but he made a great play and that's how close these games are going to be all year. It's nice to be on the right side of it."  
-- Hurricanes goalie Scott Darling

"I thought we got better as the game wore on and when you look at the game, it's a 1-1 game late in the third period. We battled back into the game but we make a mistake and it ends up in our net. I think the bottom line is they took advantage of our mistakes and we didn't take advantage of theirs." -- Sabres coach Phil Housley

### Need to know

Teravainen has seven points (three goals, four assists) in the past three games. ... The Sabres have scored two or fewer goals in eight of their past 11 games (3-6-2). ... Buffalo's first shot on goal came with 2:36 left in the first period.

### What's next

**Hurricanes:** Host the New York Islanders on Sunday (5 p.m. ET; FS-CR, MSG+, NHL.TV)

**Sabres:** Host the Columbus Blue Jackets on Monday (7 p.m. ET; SN1, SNE, SNP, MSG-B, FS-O, NHL.TV)



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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## American coach on mission to help grow women's hockey in China

**After 22 seasons at Brown University, Murphy takes on new challenge overseas**

by Amalie Benjamin [@AmalieBenjamin](#) / NHL.com Staff Writer

12:00 AM

**PROVIDENCE, R.I.** -- Digit Murphy motions to follow her, down the stairs, around the corner, past a row of portraits. Her own -- face a little younger, hair a little longer -- hangs in the center. Three to the left; three to the right. She points at the pictures.

"See," Murphy says. "Only woman on the wall. That's what I did for women's sports."

She is not done pointing. Her black loafers whisk her past the paintings and up into the stands in the building that she called home for 22 seasons, where she raised her six kids, and so many more that were not, technically, hers.

She points to the banners that line the ceiling at Meehan Auditorium, the hockey rink on the campus of Brown University.

"That's what I did," she says again.

This building, this team, is her past, though, as she returns in mid-October for a clash between her old life and a life she could not exactly have imagined when she stalked the halls and the rink of Brown, energy and passion always on display.

She had made her career pushing women forward in sports, creating opportunities. She was the longtime coach at Brown, where she went 318-244-57 and her teams played for the national championship three times, winning five Ivy League titles. She left Brown in 2011 and went on to coach the Boston Blades of the Canadian Women's Hockey League, taking the regular-season title and Clarkson Cup in 2012-13.

In her new job, she has gone far afield, leaving her kids behind, her country behind, burnishing her legacy on the next frontier in hockey, in women's sports.

It is, she reflects, what she has always done. Just, now, in Chinese.

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There is a problem. Murphy chatters into a cell phone, doing her best to fix an issue that it's not clear she can solve. The wrong credit card has been charged. Everyone in China is sleeping. It is unknown if her team -- the Kunlun Red Star, one of two new China-based franchises in the CWHL -- will have the buses it needs.

She apologizes. "It's crazy right now," she says.

This is life, sometimes, for Murphy and the Red Star. She is the coach and general manager, and oversees a group of four other teams, including the Vanke Rays of the CWHL. This is life in an emerging sport in an emerging market. Things do not always go as planned. There are growing pains and learning curves.

But the payoff? That's the allure.

The point of all this is simple: To grow women's hockey in China, the great untapped market, and to create more opportunities for more women's hockey players, in multiple countries. The point of all this is not so simple: To drive toward the 2022 Beijing Olympics, to put China in position to possibly medal in women's hockey.

"It can happen," Murphy insists. "It totally can happen. Think about it: No one thought it could happen (when the United States men won gold) in 1980, no one ever would have thought. If there's a hot goalie and there's a magical moment and all the stars and moon align, of course it can happen.

"If you think it can't happen it won't. But if you think it can happen, there's a possibility and potential and it will."

That's part of why the Red Star were created, along with the other teams under the same umbrella: the Kunlun Red Star men's team, which plays in the Kontinental Hockey League; and the Vanke Rays, who, like the women's Red Star team, play as an expansion team in the CWHL, despite being based halfway around the world from their opposition.

That will necessitate weeks-long road trips for the Red Star and Rays to the United States and Canada, and four-game road trips for the rest of the teams to China during the season, a difficult task given that the CWHL is not the only job for most of its athletes.

The teams are a mix of international players like American forward Kelli Stack and Finnish goaltender Noora Raty; North American players of Chinese descent; and Chinese nationals like Zhixin Liu, a promising defenseman who had quit the game before Murphy and her staff convinced her to return. As Murphy said, "Now she's a star."

To get her there hasn't been easy. None of this is easy. Easy is not what Murphy goes for.

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Murphy laughs when she's asked the million-dollar question: Why?

"Why did I do this?" she says. "No. 1, anytime China wants to get in a market, I'm listening. That's No. 1. No. 2, to be able to leave another legacy and to do it globally is very interesting to me and rewarding and to be able to fulfill my passion of creating women's opportunities, that's why I did it."

That was what lured her to Shenzhen, China, a city located just north of Hong Kong, where both iterations of the Red Star are based, with the men's team led by Stanley Cup-winning coach Mike Keenan. There were resources and there was passion and they were both being flung into the space of women's athletics. That will always make Murphy perk up and listen.

She had been approached by Scott MacPherson, a longtime friend and longtime hockey executive who works with the KHL. When Murphy was at Brown, they had spent many a night over coffee at Vanda Ravioli in Providence,



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contemplating what was and what could be in women's hockey.

"Digit was a natural," MacPherson said. "I had already interviewed her for the job 10 years before. I knew her competitive instincts, I knew her experience level, her knowledge of the game and her work ethic. So for me there was no other person interviewed, there was no other choice."

"She truly is the right person to lead the charge."

She was the one he wanted when the opportunity came up, to be the coach of the Red Star and the general managers of five teams within its orbit. She was the right person for the right job, even if the match raised some eyebrows.

"When my mom told me she was going to China, I laughed," Meaghan Murphy said.

But she knew that, generally, when her mother says she's going to do something, she does it, whether it was helping to start the United Women's Lacrosse League, or going to China to coach and manage.

This, after all, is what she believes she's built for, this kind of scenario, even if it means leaving behind her close-knit family for long stretches, weeks and months on the other side of the world, six or seven times already this year.

This is a new experiment in China, yes. But this is something that Murphy has done before, stepping into the forefront and pushing forward.

"I've already been there," said Murphy, 55. "I was there when I came to Brown. I was there in 1972 when Title IX said girls could play. So for me it's just more of the same. It's what I was put on the planet to do. ... I guess I have to keep doing this until there's no more [new] frontiers, that's all I can say."

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The job has not only been to coach, of course. It has been to work through the logistics of setting up teams in a sport that effectively didn't exist in China until recent years. There is little infrastructure for such a move and, as Murphy said, that has made it chaotic at times. It has taught her plenty.

"I think one of the things with Digit in the last six months, she's learned a lot about herself," MacPherson said. "She's learned a lot about patience, diplomacy. These are all things that I think weren't part of her toolbox last February (when she took the job), and they're all things that -- she's obviously a survivor, she's obviously very intelligent -- she's learned very quickly what she needs to do to be successful not just with our hockey team, but with growing hockey in a market that nobody knows the sport."

The basic premise is that the Red Star and Rays will help create a scenario in which China will not just have the automatic bid to the 2022 Olympics in Beijing in women's hockey. The idea is that China will legitimately compete, that it will have a chance to be among the best of the best, even though the country stands at No. 18 in the IIHF women's world rankings, between Kazakhstan and Italy.

That is what they're all hoping for, all dreaming on.

"I've played for an Olympic medal twice and, in a way, this means more to me than playing on that stage," said Stack,

the American in China. "Having an impact for another program and another country to help build theirs is more meaningful than any award or silver, gold, bronze medal for myself and for Team USA. If I can help their country place or come in the top four in Beijing 2022, then for the rest of my life that's all I'll talk about."

Eventually the North American Chinese players and the Chinese nationals will become the Chinese Olympic team, will take the skills they have learned playing in the CWHL and translate them onto the greater stage. They will -- so the hope goes -- have learned from players like Stack and Raty, who are sport ambassadors as well as players, a dual role that allows them to be paid more than the average CWHL player.

As Murphy explained it, "It's like having 10 extra coaches on each team with the idea that the talent level will go up faster. ... This is like coaching on steroids because you're really trying to up the game quicker."

Which is important, because they're starting from scratch.

"We're educating: how to eat, how to eat the right foods, how to sleep, how to hydrate, all this stuff we take for granted," said Murphy, who knows a bit of Chinese but is using demonstrations, video and interpreters to aid in her coaching. "How to train, how to weightlift, they don't know how to do that. So it's really, really cool. It's so rewarding to be part of this initiative."

It's why the Chinese business behind the teams, also named Kunlun Red Star, has been able to attract the names it has, from Keenan to Hockey Hall of Famer Phil Esposito to former NHL forward Bobby Carpenter to, yes, Murphy. (Esposito and Carpenter are on the Red Star international advisory board.)

"These are legends," MacPherson said. "What they're going to do is we're going to try and create a Wayne Gretzky, a Phil Esposito, a Mike Keenan, a Digit Murphy, so at some point they're Chinese."

That will be how success is measured, whether they can -- at some point -- hand this whole grand experiment back to the Chinese, put it in their hands, and watch it seamlessly succeed.

"If anyone's going to do it," said Rob Morgan, coach of the Vanke Rays, "it's going to be Digit."

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The tears start falling early on, not long before the players take the ice for warmups: Brown and Kunlun. Old and new. Then and now. Murphy seems resigned to the tears. She figured this would happen, even as she fought against it. She's back in her place, at Brown, looking back on a part of her life that has ended.

"It's the kids," she says. "It's not even my players -- it's my kids."

She pauses, eyes spilling over.

"I promised I wasn't going to do this," she says. "You got me. I'm Italian, I can't help it. But, no, it's just something that it's very cool, and these are tears of joy."



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There is vindication in the evening, as her new team shuts out her old team in a resounding victory that matters, even though it's only an exhibition. She is not the same person she was at Brown, not the same coach. Where once, as Meaghan Murphy points out, she would skate her players "until they puked," there is now a softer approach, a more open-minded style that fits with the different population that she now coaches.

It might not work every night, in every situation, but it has worked tonight. She has beaten back her past and celebrated with her future.

She ends the night surrounded by her team, both the one on the ice and the one in the rest of her life, her partner, her kids, her people. She will be in the United States for another month and then it's off to China, back to the place that she is trying to embrace, trying to teach, trying to bring to the highest heights --- five years to a medal.

It is unbelievable, even as she makes you believe in the possibility.

"When you say, 'Why?' I always say, 'Why not?'" Murphy said. "Like, why not do this?"

It's why she was hired. It's why she just might pull this off.

### TODAY'S LINKS

- <http://nsonline.com/article/2017/11/ahos-late-goal-lifts-hurricanes-past-sabres/>
- <http://www.wralsportsfan.com/aho-scores-late-to-lift-hurricanes-over-sabres/17126358/>
- <https://www.nhl.com/hurricanes/news/gameday-preview-new-york-islanders-vs-carolina-hurricanes/c-293147264>
- <https://www.nhl.com/hurricanes/news/recap-aho-scores-late-lifts-hurricanes-over-sabres/c-293134746>
- <https://www.nhl.com/hurricanes/news/aho-playing-with-newfound-confidence-heading-into-100th-nhl-game/c-293116846>
- <http://trianglesportsnet.com/carolina-hockey-network/losing-best-hockey-fan-know/>
- <https://www.cbssports.com/nhl/news/hurricanes-look-to-exact-revenge-from-islanders/>
- <http://gocheckers.com/game-recaps/checkers-losing-skid-continues-in-bridgeport>
- <https://www.nhl.com/news/digit-murphy-takes-on-new-challenge-in-china/c-292806198>

# SportScan

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

1084060 New York Islanders

Anders Lee scores twice as Islanders hold on to beat Lightning

Staff Report

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Saturday, November 18, 2017, 11:36 PM

TAMPA, Fla. — Anders Lee scored twice and the New York Islanders held on after nearly blowing a four-goal lead, beating the Tampa Bay Lightning 5-3 Saturday night.

John Tavares had a goal and two assists, and Andrew Ladd and Brock Nelson also scored for the Islanders (11-6-2), who ended Tampa Bay's five-game winning streak and handed the Lightning (15-3-2) just their third regulation loss. Josh Bailey had three assists and Thomas Griess stopped 36 shots to improve to 4-0-1 in his last five starts.

Yanni Gourde had two goals and Ondrej Palat had the other for the Lightning. Andrei Vasilevskiy had 27 saves.

Lee scored during a two-goal first and added a power-play goal at 1:05 of the third as the Islanders went ahead 4-0.

After Gourde and Palat scored 13 seconds apart to cut their deficit in half at 3:26 of the final period, Gourde pulled the Lightning to 4-3 with 3:36 left.

Tavares sealed the Islanders' win with an empty-netter with 22 seconds to go.

New York Daily News LOADED: 11.19.2017

1084061 New York Islanders

Islanders hang on to avoid a would-be brutal loss



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 19, 2017

Staff Report

By Associated Press November 18, 2017 | 10:19pm | Updated

TAMPA, Fla. — Islanders coach Doug Weight had a simple message after a big lead was slipping away: Stay calm.

Anders Lee scored twice and the Islanders held on after nearly blowing a four-goal lead, beating the Lightning 5-3 Saturday night.

"He was just telling us what we needed to hear," Islanders right wing Josh Bailey said of Weight's message on the bench midway through the third. "He was just getting his point across. We just needed to calm down a little bit, realize we're in a good position. We've still got the lead in the third period on the road against the top team in the league."

John Tavares had a goal and two assists, and Andrew Ladd and Brock Nelson also scored for the Islanders (11-6-2), who ended Tampa Bay's five-game winning streak and handed the Lightning their third regulation loss (15-3-2). Bailey had three assists and Thomas Griess stopped 36 shots to improve to 4-0-1 in his last five starts.

"They executed exactly how we wanted to play," Weight said.

Yanni Gourde had two goals and Ondrej Palat had the other for the Lightning. Andrei Vasilevskiy had 27 saves. Lee scored during a two-goal first and added a power-play goal at 1:05 of the third as the Islanders went ahead 4-0.

After Gourde and Palat scored 13 seconds apart to cut their deficit in half at 3:26 of the final period, Gourde pulled the Lightning to 4-3 with 3:36 left.

Tavares sealed the Isles' third straight win with an empty-netter.

Islanders right wing Cal Clutterbuck (illness) didn't play. ... Tavares has 19 assists and 29 points in 27 games against the Lightning. ... Tampa Bay entered outscoring opponents 54-28 during the first two periods.

New York Post LOADED: 11.19.2017

1084062 New York Islanders

Steven Stamkos has been in John Tavares' shoes when it comes to a contract

Staff Report

Updated November 18, 2017 5:23 PM

TAMPA — Steven Stamkos and John Tavares go way back — so far back that Stamkos' dad once coached the two future No. 1 picks in Toronto youth hockey and ordered his son to take a different number when the two kids both wanted No. 19, which is how Stamkos started wearing No. 91.

Stamkos knows Tavares well enough to know that the Islanders captain is hardly bothered by playing out the final season of his contract, as Stamkos did during the 2015-16 season.

"You can see by the numbers he has that his focus is there," Stamkos told Newsday on Saturday. "I know what kind of person Johnny is so I never had any worries about that."

Stamkos' contract season offered some guidance for Tavares on what to do and what not to do. Of the latter, Stamkos' accidental favoring of a

tweet suggesting he sign with the Leafs during that fraught season is probably best avoided.

Stamkos entertained other offers during the contact window prior to July 1, 2016, but ultimately signed an eight-year deal worth an average of \$8.5 million per season that June 29 to stay in Tampa. He entered Saturday's game with Tavares' Islanders leading the NHL with 35 points.

"If I had to do it all over again, would I? That's a good question," Stamkos said. "But you get to a point in your career where you've earned the right to make that choice and that's where I was and that's where John is now."

Tavares went five games without a point earlier this season, which prompted plenty more chatter about the contract situation. Now that he is tied for second in the league with 13 goals the talk has quieted down, but nothing has changed for him.

"Before the season there's plenty of questions and talk about it, but I always knew once the season started there would be a lot more to focus on," Tavares said. "To worry about that stuff isn't fair to the organization or the guys in this room."

Stamkos admitted his own thoughts drifted from time to time when the subject came up two seasons ago.

"When you're being asked about it every day, sure, it's going to be in the back of your mind sometimes," he said. "But you remind yourself what you need to focus on, what you're trying to accomplish with your team."

Stamkos' Lightning got to the Eastern Conference final that season, mostly without him after he suffered a blood clot late in the regular season.

Jason Chimera is the only regular Islanders forward still without a goal and the 38-year-old, who scored 20 each of the last two seasons, definitely isn't putting any spin on how that looks.

"It's a little embarrassing for me," he said. "You see that zero next to your name and it's embarrassing. I've gotten some more chances the last few games, so hopefully one gets in there somehow and it starts to snowball."

Chimera is the new fourth-line left wing with Nikolay Kulemin (shoulder surgery) likely done for the season, so perhaps playing alongside Casey Cizikas and Cal Clutterbuck will invigorate Chimera. He had been on the amorphous third line, which routinely gets the fewest five-on-five minutes and doesn't have much of a role — it's been a hindrance for Anthony Beauvillier as well to find a comfort zone playing there.

Doug Weight said Chimera's best game of the season was on Thursday, his first with Cizikas and Clutterbuck.

"I don't see those guys as fourth-liners," Chimera said. "They have a really defined role and it fits with my style of play so hopefully it will work."

GRANDPAS' TRIP!

Among the fathers, cousins, fathers-in-law and mentors along on this weekend's road trip are two grandfathers: Mark Connelly, Anders Lee's grandfather, came along for the whirlwind weekend along with a pretty famous grandfather: Bill Christian, Brock Nelson's grandfather and a gold-medal winning hockey player from the 1960 U.S. Olympic team.

Bill's son, Dave, was on the 1980 Miracle on Ice team and is Nelson's uncle.

Newsday LOADED: LOADED: 11.19.2017

1084063 New York Islanders



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

## NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 19, 2017

Islanders deny Lightning comeback for third straight win

By Arthur Staple

arthur.staple@newsday.com @StapeNewsday

Updated November 19, 2017 12:16 AM

TAMPA, Fla. — For the second Saturday in a row, the Islanders went on the road to face one of the top two teams in the league and came away with a win.

If there's a statement to be made after their 5-3 win over the league-leading Lightning, it's this: 19 games in, the Islanders can beat anyone.

"It could be a game that takes your team to new levels, as long as you learn from it, grow with confidence from it," coach Doug Weight said after his team's third straight win. "I think every game is a test, really. But we go into St. Louis, where they were on a 9-0-1 run [and win 5-2], then we come here with a team that's real ly ripping through the league and we play a really solid game."

It was a truly stellar performance by the Islanders, at least for the first 42 minutes. Anders Lee's second goal of the night from his office, right in front of the opposing net, on the power play gave the Isles a 4-0 lead at 1:05 of the third period.

Tampa Bay had its chances and looked at times every bit the team that had started this season 15-2-2, but the Islanders were a step ahead for most of the first two periods. They stepped into passing lanes and made the Lightning turn and retrieve and defend rather than get moving up the ice with their amazing speed and skill.

"We certainly knew that any mistake you make and they've got two guys behind you, so we were aggressive," said Andrew Ladd, who whipped John Tavares' pass behind Andrei Vasilevskiy 51 seconds in to get things going.

With Cal Clutterbuck sidelined by a stomach bug, Weight shuffled his forward lines to spread out some of his more positionally responsible players. Ladd, Casey Cizikas and Josh Ho-Sang got a lot of time against the Vlad Namestnikov-Steven Stamkos-Nikita Kucherov line and that trio, which entered the game with 88 points, was shut out for only the second time this season.

"It's a challenge to face a line going that well," Ladd said. "All five guys on the ice with them have to be aware of what they're doing, trying to sneak into open space. We did well. We got the big saves when we needed them, too."

Thomas Greiss made 36 saves, but Tampa Bay struck twice on a couple of breakdowns in a 13-second span to cut the Isles' lead to 4-2 at 3:26 of the third. Weight called timeout and forcefully explained to his players what they needed to be doing.

"He was just telling us what we needed to hear," said Josh Bailey, who had his third three-assist game of the season. "Everybody was calm. He was just trying to get his point across."

"We've had a hell of a game, we've done good things, now we just need to settle down," Weight recalled of what he said, noting that assistant coach Kelly Buchberger convinced him to call the timeout. "Don't get flat-footed, don't start slapping at pucks. And we had three, four shifts after that to help us get back on track."

Yanni Gourde scored with 3:36 to go to make it even a tighter squeeze, but the Islanders were strong once the Lightning pulled its goaltender. Bailey picked off Stamkos' pass and Cizikas fed Tavares for the clinching empty-netter, part of a three-point night for the captain.

With a 5 p.m. start in Raleigh coming Sunday, there was little time to savor this one. But the Isles have beaten the Lightning and Blues on the road in the last seven days, and that is worth something.

"We just know what type of game we need to play to beat these teams," Lee said. "When we struggle, we know why we're struggling and what we need to do to fix it. There's a different feeling in the room between periods in these games."

Newsday LOADED: LOADED: 11.19.2017

1084064 New York Islanders

Cal Clutterbuck ill, so Doug Weight juggles Islanders' lines

By Arthur Staple

arthur.staple@newsday.com @StapeNewsday

Updated November 18, 2017 8:39 PM

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TAMPA — Cal Clutterbuck fell ill on Saturday morning and missed the game here against the Lightning, with Alan Quine subbing in and Doug Weight shuffling his forward lines.

Without Clutterbuck to anchor the line with Casey Cizikas and Jason Chimera — a line Weight would surely have used often against the Lightning's dangerous group — Weight shook up all but his top line, keeping John Tavares between Anders Lee and Josh Bailey.

Quine took the left-wing spot alongside Mathew Barzal and Jordan Eberle, Cizikas was between Andrew Ladd and Josh Ho-Sang and Anthony Beauvillier started the game centering Brock Nelson and Chimera.

Being on the road, Weight felt he had no choice to spread out his more defensively capable forwards since the home Lightning had the last line change to try and get the matchups it wanted against the Isles.

"Everybody has to be ready," Weight said before the game. "You obviously have some opportunities to get a matchup here and there, but everyone has to be prepared."

Clutterbuck, who turned 30 on Saturday, had a shorthanded goal and added an assist in Thursday's win over the Hurricanes.

Saturday was Dan Girardi's 55th career game against the Islanders but his first not wearing a Rangers uniform.

"It's definitely a different feeling this morning, treating it like another game," said Girardi, who had his Rangers contract bought out in June and signed a two-year, \$6-million deal with the Lightning. "In New York, it was a big deal every time we played them. I certainly know a lot about them."

Girardi added that he misses the rivalry and how easy it was to get pumped up to play the Isles.

"No matter how you felt, back-to-back, whatever, you were always up for that game," he said. "It was always fun. In the Coliseum and then it was still pretty intense in Barclays. It was great to be part of that for 11 years."

COOPER STILL LIKES LEE

Lightning coach Jon Cooper coached Anders Lee in Green Bay of the USHL in 2009-10, the season after the Isles selected Lee 152nd overall. Cooper is still impressed by the young man who turned down a chance to



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play college football to play hockey at Notre Dame and is now the Isles' top left wing.

"He's so hard to move from in front of the net . . . A guy from the Lightning (Dave Andreychuk) just went in the HOF doing what Anders does," Cooper said. "Also if you play pickup football, Anders is a pretty good QB."

Newsday LOADED: LOADED: 11.19.2017

1084065 New York Rangers

Rangers can't keep wasting Henrik Lundqvist's royal efforts

BY JUSTIN TASCH

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

Updated: Sunday, November 19, 2017, 2:02 AM

Though no longer in the dire straits in which they found themselves entering Halloween, the Rangers (9-9-2) can't afford to waste gems by Henrik Lundqvist like they did Friday night in a 2-0 loss to the Blue Jackets, even with a goalie the caliber of Sergei Bobrovsky on the other side.

Points are at a premium in a Metropolitan Division that is tight from top to bottom and an Eastern Conference featuring a large group of teams without a ton of separation staring up at Tampa Bay.

Lundqvist has a .928 save percentage in his last four games. He had a 40-save regular-season game Friday for the 22nd time in his NHL career.

"I felt really good. It was a game I had to compete a lot," Lundqvist said after Friday's loss. "There was a lot of back and forth, especially in the second, a lot of odd-man rushes. I thought I was aggressive when I had to be aggressive."

In his last seven games Lundqvist has a .920 save percentage with a 2.66 goals against average, a number highly impacted by the three goals allowed over a span of 4:07 early in the third period of Wednesday's loss in Chicago in which his teammates were complicit.

In losing both games on the Chicago-Columbus road trip, the Rangers, who host the Senators on Sunday, dropped the special-teams battle they'd been on the right side of four times during their six-game win streak, drawing even on that front in the other two games of the streak.

In his last seven games, Henrik Lundqvist has a .920 save percentage with a 2.66 goals against average.

They had killed off 18 of 19 power plays heading into Wednesday's game against the Blackhawks but allowed one power-play goal in each of their two losses, finishing 6-for-8 on the kill in the pair of matches.

And their sizzling power play hit an expected regression, going 0-for-6 during the trip, although they didn't help themselves with poor entries and possession.

**SWITCHING IT UP:** Alain Vigneault tried "shuffling the deck" in Friday's third period, mixing up the top-three lines he had used since Oct. 31 against Vegas. Rick Nash took Pavel Buchnevich's spot on a line with Mika Zibanejad and Chris Kreider, while Jimmy Vesey shifted to play with Kevin Hayes and Mats Zuccarello and Buchnevich was moved to Vesey's spot with David Desharnais and J.T. Miller.

Desharnais saw just two shifts totaling 1:21 in the third period, sitting the final 9:40. Miller got shifts at center with Michael Grabner and Jesper

Fast in the third as Boo Nieves was limited to one 59-second shift in the third. Vesey, Desharnais and Miller all had 5-on-5 shot-attempts percentages of 23 percent or lower through two periods.

Buchnevich, whose 16 points are third-most on the Rangers, played four shifts for 3:32 in the third. Brady Skjei and Kevin Shattenkirk played 10:47 and 10:01 respectively in the third as the Rangers chased an equalizer.

New York Daily News LOADED: 11.19.2017

1084066 New York Rangers

Rangers are skidding and know they must improve in two areas

By Zach Braziller November 18, 2017 | 10:30PM

COLUMBUS, Ohio — As the old adage goes, you're never as good as when you're on a winning streak and never as bad as when you're on a losing streak. But that poor stretch to begin the season has cut down on the Rangers' margin for error.

They have to make sure this mini-skid doesn't mushroom into anything more, and they will get the chance to do so at home, where five of their next six games will be played.

"We haven't had a good start, so every game right now is important," Mats Zuccarello said, with a deep sigh, following Friday night's 2-0 loss to the Blue Jackets in Columbus. "[We need] every win."

There wasn't panic or concern in the Nationwide Arena visitors' locker room after the defeat. There was the understanding, though, from the Rangers that they need to be better to avoid taking a step back to their early-season struggles. Particularly in a few areas — most notably the power play and the forecheck — that contributed significantly to the Rangers' second straight setback.

Special teams doomed the Blueshirts (9-9-2, 20 points) Friday night. They whiffed on three chances a man up and allowed a goal on the power play when Kevin Hayes failed to clear the puck, which Rangers coach Alain Vigneault described as a "bad mistake." It turned a one-goal deficit to two with 12:46 remaining in the third period, and the way Blue Jackets goaltender Sergei Bobrovsky was performing, effectively ended the game.

The power play, a Rangers strength thus far, has now gone 0-for-6 in the past two games, though it remains one of the best in the league, third in the sport with 17 tallies in 72 opportunities. It was, however, impotent on Friday, producing just two shots on goal in the three opportunities.

"Our power play didn't execute," Vigneault said. "We'll get back to work and get back at it."

The lack of an effective forecheck was glaring, too, allowing Columbus to control play, its defensemen to join the attack without facing much pressure themselves. It showed in the Rangers' feeble attack that while it produced 36 shots, there were very few strong scoring chances. Vigneault juggled the lines in the third period, but it didn't have much of an effect.

"It's a game when the other team makes a mistake, you've got to make them pay for it, and when you don't score any goals, you didn't make them pay," Vigneault said.

The defense didn't help matters, either, struggling to get the puck out of the Rangers' end, not to mention some missed assignments. There was too much time in the Blueshirts' zone by the Blue Jackets, and that was



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coming off Wednesday's poor finish in Chicago, when the Blackhawks scored five times in the third period of a 6-3 victory.

"Certainly, I think we've got to play a little bit quicker, getting the puck out quicker, anticipating our next play, and that will help us not get stuck in our own end," captain Ryan McDonagh said.

Before the loss in Columbus, Vigneault said he felt his team had turned a corner, pointing to the previous 10 games, seven of them victories. He singled out special teams and his blue-liners as the difference. But now there are two consecutive setbacks, and slippage in those areas.

New York Post LOADED: 11.19.2017

1084067 New York Rangers

Rangers are a .500 team looking for so much more

By Steve Zipay

Updated November 18, 2017 9:03 PM

With a 9-9-2 record and 20 points after 20 games, the first quarter of the Rangers season has been bumpy, infuriatingly inconsistent and disappointing. The repeated emphasis during the pre-season was that a good start was essential. Didn't happen, going 1-5-2 out of the gate.

The game-after-game eyeball test reveals an underachieving team that has had a favorable schedule and no serious injuries, but has yet to fire on all cylinders except for a six-game winning streak that created positive vibes before two straight losses on the road last week. Statistically, they are currently an under-.500 team: They are scoring 3.15 goals per game, but allowing 3.30; producing just over 32 shots on goal per game, surrendering just over 32 against.

Somehow, the Blueshirts, who have shown some resiliency, are within a couple points of a wild-card berth, and five from a playoff spot in the Metropolitan Division, but players and fans understand that a push in the next quarter of the season will be critical. "Every game is important when we haven't had a great start," Mats Zuccarello said after Friday's 2-0 loss in Columbus.

## GOALTENDING:

Henrik Lundqvist has been a workhorse, starting 17 of the 20 games, a pace that would have him start between 60 and 70 games, which would be the most starts he's had since the 2010-11 season. Lundqvist, 35, will be in the nets again against Ottawa Sunday and although he says he's healthy and motivated, the wear and tear could take a toll. To be sure, he's lowered his goals-against-average to 2.98 and raised his save percentage to .908 and will have some time off when the Rangers play back-to-backs, with the next slated for Dec. 8th and 9th. With his recent improvements, Lundqvist earns a B for the quarter.

Ondrej Pavelec, who has made just three starts and two relief appearances, (1-3-0, 3.68, .886) gets an incomplete. Both have to perform at a higher level if the Rangers are to contend for a playoff spot in the Eastern Conference.

## FORWARDS

The depth at center since the summer trade of Derek Stepan to Arizona, which helped clear cap space to sign Kevin Shattenkirk, remains an issue that may eventually force a trade. Mika Zibanejad has stepped up as the No. 1 center with a team-leading 19 points, but Kevin Hayes (one goal in the last 11 games) needs to produce more than eight points so far as a second pivot. Free agent David Desharnais has not been the

answer on the third line and although rookie Boo Nieves has brought speed and size and won his share of faceoffs in his recent spot on the fourth trio, you have to wonder if and when general manager Jeff Gorton will decide to pull the trigger on a trade to enhance the middle. Pavel Buchnevich is blossoming, but Mats Zuccarello (also just one goal in the last 11) needs to shoot more, Chris Kreider continues to be streaky, J.T. Miller is providing more assists than goals and Rick Nash is fourth in goals. That's an overall C.

## DEFENSE

Early on, lapses and sloppy play early in games and late in periods surely cost the Rangers a handful of points, because they've had to climb out of holes to try to salvage a point for a tie after 60 minutes. Ryan McDonagh competes every night, as does Brady Skjei, and the return of Brendan Smith to the starting on Friday after being a healthy scratch for six straight games bodes well. Offense-minded Kevin Shattenkirk can certainly move the puck, and Marc Staal, while no longer in his prime, can be a reliable stay-at-home defender. Nick Holden, who seems out of place on the first pair, and Steven Kampfer have filled in admirably, as the blueline has tightened in the last few weeks. But moving the puck up ice quickly to avoid forechecks remains a priority. Another C.

## SPECIAL TEAMS

No complaints about the power-play units, especially the main quintet, which Shattenkirk has ably quarterbacked. Now in the top four in the NHL despite the 0-for-6 skid on the road trip, when coach Alain Vigneault said "we didn't execute". The penalty-kill has risen steadily to No. 13 in the league, compared to last season, when the Rangers finished 19th shorthanded. Getting into the top 10 couldn't hurt. B.

## COACHING/FRONT OFFICE

In his fifth season here, a proactive Alain Vigneault shuffled the deck for the first ten games, trying to find some chemistry with new defense pairs and no Jesper Fast, rehabbing from surgery for the first five games. Did the front office count too much on center Lias Andersson, the No. 7 overall draft pick, and defenseman Anthony DeAngelo to earn spots and contribute? Probably. Adam Cracknell, claimed off waivers, is now in Hartford. C.

## QUICK HITS

n With a new practice facility now open for the Blackhawks, Thursday was probably the last Rangers "dress and drive" practice at Johnny's Ice House West, a rink with a bar called "The Stanley Club" about a mile from the United Center where local squads skate. The Rangers arrived by bus in full gear, and rode back to United Center to shower and change afterward. Among the old-school motivational black-and-white signs on the walls: "Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference" and "When you lose, say little; when you win, say less."

n Ty Ronning has scored in nine straight games and has 22 goals in 22 games for the WHL's Vancouver Giants. The 5-9 right wing, a seventh round pick in 2016, also has 11 assists.

n Up next: The Senators, who eliminated the Rangers in the second round of the playoffs last spring, face the Blueshirts today at 7. Ottawa, which hosted the Coyotes on Saturday afternoon, came into the Arizona game with an 8-4-5 record. The Rangers are 7-4-2 at home.

## HOCKEY METRICS

Corsi For Percentage (CF%) is a 5-on-5 metric that shows the percentage of shot attempts (on goal, misses and blocks) created by a team versus the total shot attempts when a player is on the ice. So if a player is on for six shot attempts in a game and the opponent has four, his CF% is 60. Anything over 50 is considered solid. As a team, the Rangers rank 22nd in the NHL at 48.18.

Newsday LOADED: LOADED: 11.19.2017



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1084096 Toronto Maple Leafs

Leafs' Josh Leivo happy to play the role of good soldier

KEVIN MCGRAN

Sat., Nov. 18, 2017

MONTREAL—Josh Leivo has shown his commitment to the Maple Leafs, accepting his role as a frequent healthy scratch who keeps a positive attitude while continuing to work hard.

And now he feels the team is committed to him, having rewarded him with a one-year, \$925,000 contract extension that kicks in July 1 when the 24-year-old would have become a restricted free agent.

"It feels great," Leivo said. "I get to focus now and just play. I have the security for next year. It's a matter of me going out and doing what I do.

"We've got a great team. We're rolling. I have to stay patient, stay positive in the room, helping guys. It's a fun room right now."

It's a raise from the \$612,500 he is earning this season. Leivo, a third-round pick in the 2011 draft, has been on the Leafs' roster full time since last season and seems happy to be a Leaf and all that goes with it.

"The atmosphere, the fans, the city is great," said Leivo, who was born in Innisfil and raised in Richmond Hill. "It's really close to home. It's an awesome feeling. I'm just happy to have another year."

Leivo is one of hockey's good soldiers, players that coaches love to have around for the commitment they make to the team. Leivo has played 46 games with the Leafs over five seasons, with nine goals and 10 assists.

"I can't get too emotional (about not playing)," Leivo said. "Just have to keep working hard. I think every game I've gone in, I've done my bit.

Players unhappy with their lot on the fringe of rosters tend to exude negative energy and don't last long, certainly under head coach Mike Babcock. Defencemen Frankie Corrado and centre Peter Holland found themselves in similar limited role positions, let their frustrations be known, then were moved to other organizations. Holland is with the Laval Rocket in the American Hockey League. Corrado has played three games with the Penguins this season.

"(Leivo is) a player we like, so why wouldn't we (sign him)," Babcock said. "I don't think it's gone as good for him this year as it did last year. He's got to get to work. When he gets his next opportunity, he's got to take someone's job."

Leivo said the most excited person regarding the extension was his father, Kari. "I didn't tell him right away, and he found out, and he was screaming," Leivo said. "Same as when I got drafted. All smiles, ear to ear."

Toronto Star LOADED: 11.19.2017

1084097 Toronto Maple Leafs

Auston Matthews looks likely to return to Leafs lineup for tilt with Canadiens

KEVIN MCGRAN

MONTREAL—All signs point to Auston Matthews' return to the Maple Leafs lineup tonight against the Montreal Canadiens.

Matthews has missed four games with an undisclosed upper body injury, but has worked out for six days in a row, including this morning's optional skate. He did not talk to the media but he left the Bell Centre with the rest of the regulars while players expected to be scratched continued to work out, a normal routine the morning of the game and a signal as to who is in and who is out of the lineup.

While Mike Babcock did not confirm Matthews' participation, the coach himself sounded optimistic when asked if the star centre would play.

"Game-time decision, like it always is, but it looks like it's heading that way," said Babcock.

The Leafs have won five in a row, the last four without Matthews.

Meanwhile the Canadiens are 4-2-1 without their star goalie, Carey Price.

"For us, we've had a lot of depth, and different guys being able to chip in offensively," said Leafs winger James van Riemsdyk. "But when a big part of your team goes down, guys take it as a challenge to keep doing the things the right way and keep having success.

"Matthews is a big part of our team, we're excited to get him back as soon as we can."

Frederik Andersen will be in net for Toronto while Charlie Lindgren will make his seventh consecutive start in goal for Montreal.

Toronto Star LOADED: 11.19.2017

1084098 Toronto Maple Leafs

Marnier helps Matthews make most of his return to Leafs

Young stars hook up in second half of Montreal whitewash.

KEVIN MCGRAN

Sat., Nov. 18, 2017

MONTREAL—The talk of the day was the return of Auston Matthews to the Maple Leafs lineup.

It was much to the chagrin of Montreal Canadiens fans. Matthews scored twice in the Maple Leafs 6-0 win over the Canadiens that had fans in blue and white singing "Ole Ole Ole" at the Bell Centre on Saturday night.

"It feels good to be back," Matthews said. "It didn't feel too hot out there the first two periods. But it's all part of coming back and not playing for four games. Definitely room for improvement.

"Obviously, if you come into this building, it's not going to be easy. Big win. A lot of guys stepped up. Our goalie was unbelievable again."

It was a bit of magical line juggling by head coach Mike Babcock that truly sparked the Leafs to their second win in a row over Montreal after a run of 14 straight losses.

Every new line — and a defenceman — got into the scoring and a sizeable portion of Leaf Nation finally got to see Matthews and Mitch Marnier play meaningful minutes together, with Marnier assisting on both of Matthews' goals.

"It went well," said Matthews. "We have so many skilled guys who can make plays. Mitch and I have a pretty good relationship off the ice. Martin



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as well. It kind of gives you a bit of a spark to play with your buddies that you don't get to play with a lot.

"That kind of goes for all four lines."

James van Riemsdyk, Nazem Kadri, Connor Brown and Ron Hainsey also scored for Toronto, which has now won six games in a row. Frederik Andersen earned his second shutout in a row.

"Freddie was good early, we weren't competitive early, they won more battles and races, then I thought we settled in and scored some timely goals," Babcock said.

If there was a sense of normalcy with Matthews back in the lineup, it didn't last long. The Leafs were outplayed by the Canadiens through the first half of the game, and Babcock stirred up his lines after a disappointing power play.

"The game wasn't going very good," said Babcock. "I had to do something different than what was going on."

It worked right away, with Hainsey getting his first goal as a Leaf, with an assist from Dominic Moore, now on the left wing with Tyler Bozak and van Riemsdyk. It was a knuckleball from the point at 12:07 that eluded goalie Charlie Lindgren.

Kadri's new line was next out and Kadri scored just 37 seconds after Hainsey for a 2-0 lead. It was Kadri's 10th goal of the year.

Brown, playing with Marleau and William Nylander, scored 25 seconds into the third period, and the Babcock line blender appeared to have done the job.

What had Leaf watchers buzzing was the pairing of Marnier and Matthews. More intriguing, perhaps, was that Matt Martin was on the left wing, promoted from the fourth line. Babcock likes a grinder with his skilled duos. But the Canadiens were the more physical team, and it appeared Babcock wanted some muscle to protect his star, just returning from an undisclosed upper-body injury, widely assumed to be his back.

Matthews said whatever was ailing seemed "solid" after the game so there was no recurrence.

Babcock said Matthews wasn't at his best.

"He's not himself yet, but he can still shoot the puck," Babcock said. "The details of the game will come back, just like his legs, as he gets comfortable. It was good for him to come back and get a couple (of goals). He's a high-end player, it will take him a few games."

The game had a physical edge to it, with a near war brewing between Kadri and Shea Weber. Each levelled big hits on the other, with things finally boiling over in the third period. After Kadri hit Weber, with Weber's head snapping back as a result, Jordie Benn grabbed Kadri until Weber could get to his feet and fight Kadri himself.

Toronto Star LOADED: 11.19.2017

1084099 Toronto Maple Leafs

Leafs add to winning streak with blowout against Canadiens

Lance Hornby

November 18, 2017 11:53 PM EST

MONTREAL – Mike Babcock thought he needed to spice up his lines if a six-game winning streak was to continue.

While Auston Matthews came back and Frederik Andersen recorded his second straight shutout, it was the Maple Leafs coach who got everyone's attention on the bench, deciding it was too quiet in the midst of getting outshot in a scoreless game by the moribund Montreal Canadiens. So he tossed his main forward groups into the mixer. A whiff of a spoiler by the Habs quickly turned into a delicious 6-0 Toronto victory at the rocking Bell Centre.

Zach Hyman and William Nylander were pulled off Matthews's line, and without going into all the permutations with other units, the addition of Matt Martin and Mitch Marner on Matthews' wings created the nicest two goals on Saturday.

"We weren't as competitive as they were, they won more battles and more races," Babcock explained of his changes.

Matthews scored twice in his first start after missing four with a suspected back issue, first with a play begun by a between the legs back pass from fourth liner Martin, clearly enjoying his rare opportunity with the skill group. Marner assisted on that and on a dandy snap by Matthews that closed the scoring.

But it all was triggered with a rare Ron Hainsey goal, his first as a Leaf, just after Babcock tore up his regular troikas. Those assists went to Tyler Bozak and Dominic Moore. Less than a minute later Nazem Kadri, with help from Patrick Marleau and Connor Brown, burned Charlie Lindgren high.

The beat went on in the third period, with a goal each by Brown and van Riemsdyk and then two by Matthews, the first sending Carey Price's replacement to the showers after a promising start.

Andersen, with 33 saves on top of 42 Thursday against the Devils, recorded consecutive shutouts for his second time as a Leaf.

"I've been more aggressive on the puck," Andersen said. "We've talked about it a little bit lately, trying to challenge the shooter more. We've taken big steps since that (1-3) Western road trip."

The last time Toronto won six straight was Dec. 6-16, 2014, just before coach Randy Carlyle's fall from grace behind the bench.

Matthews last played Nov. 6 against the Vegas Golden Knights, stayed off skates a few days and then gradually ramped up activities. While never confirming speculation of his exact problem, he did say there was much improvement the past few days. He was made to see the danger of aggravating it with continued wear and tear, while during his absence, the Leafs didn't lose, allowed just five goals, but up to Thursday had permitted 35 or more shots a game.

Matthews' output Saturday gave him six goals and an assist in six games versus the Habs. He'll play his 100th NHL match Monday night at the ACC against his hometown team, the Arizona Coyotes.

"I didn't feel too hot in the first two periods, but it's all part of coming back," the team's leading scorer said. "There is room for improvement."

"The line changes went well. We have so many skilled guys that can make plays. Me and Mitch have a pretty good relationship off the ice, Marty as well. That gives you a nice spark with a couple of buddies you don't get to play with a lot. That goes for all four lines. The two plays (Martin) made on our goals are really under-rated."

Many have waited for the creative Matthews and Marner to be let loose again on the same line, though Martin was certainly a wildcard on the left side. Babcock said the scrambled lines were a one-night experiment.

"The game wasn't going very good and it wasn't who I put him with, we had to do something different than was going on. Putting Marleau, Hyman and Brown together gave me another good line."

As the Canadiens digested Hainsey's goal, Kadri got behind their defence to gather a nice bank pass from Marleau and go upstairs. When the Habs couldn't hit the net on two cracks close in on their next shift it was au revoir.



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After staying in their room to regroup before coming out for the third period, the Habs were promptly hemmed in, with Brown winning a draw and getting to the net to roof a rebound. The large Leafs contingent in the stands went to celebration mode, taunting the home crowd with their own victory songs. TV cameras caught coach Claude Julien with a faraway gaze and stone-faced general manager Marc Bergevin in his suite.

Max Pacioretty did get the Leafs riled by ramming Kadri head first into the boards, Kadri retaliating with a borderline head shot before Weber and Jordie Benn jumped him. Paul Byron then fought newbie Leaf pugilist Nikita Zaitsev.

"We hadn't given them a lot of chances, but Mike wanted to change some things up," said Marnier. "When everyone's line got juggled in the second period, everyone got regenerated."

Not a bad recipe card to keep handy.

Toronto Sun LOADED: 11.19.2017

1084100 Toronto Maple Leafs

SIMMONS: Does Leivo signing mean the end for JVR as a Leaf?

Steve Simmons

November 18, 2017 5:44 PM EST

The Josh Leivo contract extension appears to mean James van Riemsdyk is likely playing his last season with the Maple Leafs.

And if that's not entirely certain, then at the least this a terrific and relatively inexpensive insurance policy for general manager Lou Lamoriello, who has yet to be extended himself beyond this season.

Either way, it seems the Leafs win. They win paying rather cheaply buying Leivo out of apparent coming free agency. They win buying a player who can fill JVR's 14 minutes a game. They win getting a middle-of-the-roster player for less than \$1 million a year at a time when they're going to need salary cap space.

Leivo is no van Riemsdyk, but he can be a less expensive, less productive version of him. He is big, with good hands, some power-play skills and offensive creativity. He has upside, the question is: How much?

What's interesting here is that Leivo was willing to take a sure thing in a one-year deal rather than gamble on himself in free agency — which means he likes playing for Lamoriello and coach Mike Babcock, even though he rarely gets utilized.

The money he'll make next season represents a greater than 50% raise from this season of inactivity but Leivo provides the Leafs with what they require just as Nikita Soshnikov becomes the likely replacement for pending free agent Leo Komarov. They have someone to move in for JVR, someone to move in for Komarov but right now no one to take the place of centre Tyler Bozak, also a free agent.

THIS AND THAT

A quarter of the NHL season gone, here are my early award favourites: Hart: A tie between Steven Stamkos and linemate Nikita Kucherov in Tampa. Anze Kopitar with the early third-place vote; Norris: Alex Pietrangelo of St. Louis, followed closely by Erik Karlsson, who has only played 12 games; Vezina: Sergei Bobrovsky, again, with the surprising Connor Hellebuyck and Andrei Vasilevskiy behind him; Calder: Arizona's Clayton Keller all alone, with Matt Barzal, Charlie McAvoy and Will Butcher not really challenging ... One day they will go to the Hockey Hall of Fame: Sidney Crosby, Evgeni Malkin, Duncan Keith, Jonathan Toews, Patrick Kane, Alex Ovechkin, Henrik Lundqvist, Carey Price, Henrik

Zetterberg, Patrice Bergeron, Shea Weber, Jonathan Quick, Drew Doughty, Joe Thornton, John Tavares, Jaromir Jagr, both Sedins, and Ryan Getzlaf. And I'm not including anyone who hasn't yet played 500 NHL games ... Missing from the Hall, either as builder or broadcaster: Don Cherry ... An NHL GM on Auston Matthews and Connor McDavid: "If you ask the question, which player would you want to build your team around for the next 10 years, there are only two players to consider. And to be honest, I don't know which one I'd pick." Six months ago, that would have sounded crazy ... Leafs went 4-0 and allowed only five goals against in the games without Matthews. And they didn't play great defensive hockey while doing so. The goaltenders, Frederik Andersen and Curtis McElhinney (in one start) were the difference makers, stopping 148-of-153 shots in the wins. That's a short-term .967 save percentage.

HEAR AND THERE

Anything less than 15 games for the lumberjack Radko Gudas is ridiculous ... Won't be the least bit surprised if Tony LaCava eventually leaves his place with the Blue Jays to join close friend, Alex Anthopoulos, in Atlanta ... Odd juxtaposition of the Anthopoulos hiring by the Braves. When he was hired, troubled president John Hart resigned his position. When Hart ran the Cleveland Indians years ago, he promoted his assistant GM and succeed him. The guy's name: Mark Shapiro ... Houston makes sense for the NHL, but not as an expansion team, as a place to relocate the Coyotes, Panthers or Hurricanes ... Roger Goodell is asking for \$49 million a year to stay as commissioner of the NFL, which sounds nuts, unless you consider this: Goodell is in charge of 32 different billion-dollar businesses, 33 if you include his front office. What's a CEO make with a major company? Multiply that by 33 and Goodell is actually coming up light. The crazy part of his negotiations: He's asking for his health care to be paid. And I'm thinking, if someone wants to pay me \$49 million a year, I'd be happy to pay for my own healthcare ... The best way to tell you know nothing about hockey: Use possession stats to define a defenceman ... The CFL in Halifax is a great idea. Not sure having former Arizona Coyotes people involved is a great idea ... What a year for NBA kids: You can't stop watching Ben Simmons, Joel Embiid, Giannis Antetokounmpo, Kristaps Porzingis.

SCENE AND HEARD

This is impossible to make up, but it is oh so current Blue Jays. When Sportsnet's Hazel Mae asked club president Shapiro where he was when he first heard the news of Roy Halladay's passing, Shapiro actually said this: "I don't remember." ... For the record, I have a lousy memory and can tell you where I was when I first heard of Thurman Munson's passing in 1979. And I hated the Yankees in those days ... And more from the warm, lovable Jays. GM Ross Atkins explaining his approach to off-season free agency and the trade market: "We don't have a hard-line philosophy on executing free-agent deals or trades in a certain way other than being systematic and having a process. Ultimately that can manifest itself in different ways." Thoughtful translations of that mumbo jumbo will be happily accepted by e-mail ... My new hero: Brandy Halladay, Roy's widow. Her performance at the memorial service on Tuesday had me crying and laughing and crying some more. And more than that, it had me thinking ... Joey Votto lost the National League MVP vote by two points, making it the closest vote since Joe DiMaggio beat out Ted Williams in the American League 70 years ago ... Votto will certainly be a top contender for the Lou Marsh Trophy, for Canada's athlete of the year. His favourites alongside him: Sidney Crosby, McDavid, Denis Shapovalov and Brooke Henderson ... Sarnia's Rob Thomson is among the many who have interviewed for the managing job of the Yankees. How cool would it be to have a Canadian managing baseball's most famous team?

AND ANOTHER THING

Those two Saturday nights in Atlanta can never be forgotten. Donovan Bailey one night. Bailey and friends the following Saturday. Breathtaking Canadian athletic moments. And now Bailey, deservedly, with his own step on the Canadian Walk of Fame ... Little-known fact: Argos assistant coach Steve Walsh, the former big-time college quarterback, is uncle to



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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New York Rangers' star defenceman Ryan McDonagh ... From the department of first-year coaches: Travis Green has made a huge impact with the Vancouver Canucks. Phil Housley has barely pushed the needle with the Buffalo Sabres ... The trade the Blackhawks would like to have back: Niklas Hjalmarsson to Arizona for Connor Murphy and Laurent Dauphin. Murphy has been a bust thus far in Chicago. Hjalmarsson was one of Joel Quenneville's most dependable players with the Hawks ... You watch how the New York Knicks really got to the Cleveland Cavaliers and you wonder — why didn't the Raptors ever antagonize the Cavs in the playoffs? ... Cory Joseph, who never seemed like much a three-point shooter with the Raptors, is hitting a stunning 50% of his threes in the early going in Indianapolis ... I was wrong on Gerard Gallant. I thought Vegas needed a celebrity, media-friendly coach for its expansion team. Gallant, along with Green and New Jersey's John Hynes are early season coach of the year favourites ... Born this date: Miss Elizabeth. And a happy birthday to Dennis Hull (73), Dave Raimy (77), Warren Moon (61), Rocket Ismail (48), Dmitry Yushkevich (46), Patrick Kane (29), Darren Flutie (51), Michael Saunders (31) and Mike Wilbon (59) ... And, hey whatever became of Reggie Lemelin?

## MARNER NEEDS TO SHOOOOOOOT

Heading into Saturday night in Montreal, the enigmatic Mitch Marner had 11 assists for the Maple Leafs. That's one more than Sidney Crosby. The same number as Mark Scheifele. One fewer than Patrick Kane. And two behind Connor McDavid.

That's heady company for a player who has been bounced around the Leafs lineup, trying to find his game and in his place in the first quarter of his second NHL season.

It's in the area of goal-scoring where you can wonder a little about Marner. He has just two goals, but that shouldn't matter all that much as he's creating offence for others. But he can score and he's capable of more in that area.

What he isn't doing, for whatever reason, is shooting. He's not going to shoot a lot the way Auston Matthews or William Nylander do, but he needs to shoot more than he currently does.

Marner ranks 164th among forwards in the NHL in shots on goal, 260th in shooting percentage. It's no wonder he only has two goals. Last year, his shooting percentage was 10.8%, and he was 89th in shots, 153rd in shooting percentage.

Marner doesn't need to shoot a lot to be effective, but he does need to shoot a lot more.

## RAPTORS KIDS ARE ALL RIGHT

In all the talk about changing the way they play, very little was said about the influx of youth and depth on the Toronto Raptors and how it would influence the growth of this team.

Maybe Masai Ujiri and Bobby Webster knew something and they just kept it to themselves.

The revelation of this young Raptors season, with the fourth-best record in the NBA, is how the youthful, athletic, defensively aware players have made a difference and how the barely advertised draft picks of recent years have shone to date.

First-round pick OG Anunoby wasn't expected to be starting, defending, and hitting three-point shots this soon after being drafted last June. The 2016 picks, Jakob Poeltl and Pascal Siakam, combine to play 34 minutes a game and score almost 15 points a night, while playing defence. And point guard Fred VanVleet, undrafted in 2016, has a Damon Stoudamire-type explosion to his game: He seems fearless going to the rim.

All this would be even better had Delon Wright, first pick from 2015, not re-injured his shoulder. Three straight drafts the Raptors have added quality and depth and in Anunoby, Poeltl, Siakam and Wright, significant defensive strength. That's management doing what management does best.

## ATTENDANCE NOT THE QUESTION THIS TIME

All season long the Argos had great weather and lousy attendance.

Sunday could well be the opposite — with cold, windy, maybe wet conditions at BMO Field for the first decent-sized football crowd since the Argos moved outdoors in 2016.

But this necessarily isn't about weather or tailgating or bands playing before the game or anything but a chance to get to the Grey Cup.

The Argos all but disappeared last season, were dysfunctional for three months after the season ended before hiring Jim Popp as general manager and Marc Trestman as head coach, need a win to get to next Sunday's championship game in Ottawa. The fact they're even in the game is somewhat miraculous, considering they started so far behind the rest of the league. The fact there's going to be a crowd in the 20,000 range is hope that maybe this can translate into something for the future.

There has never been a clear understanding of what it will take to keep football fans engaged in Toronto. The Argos have won championships before — lots of them — most didn't add up to anything the year after. They need a win here to find out if this is just a Saskatchewan-sized blip or it's something to build around.

The football operations people have done their job, shorthanded as they might have been. It's time now to find out if this is a one day surprise or if this can grow into something bigger.

Toronto Sun LOADED: 11.19.2017

1084101 Toronto Maple Leafs

Leivo feels relief at new deal, Matthews a game-time decision tonight

Lance Hornby

November 18, 2017 11:23 PM EST

Sitting out last night's game, his 16th as a healthy scratch, was a little easier for Josh Leivo to take.

Late Friday, the Leafs gave the uber-patient right winger a one-year contract extension at \$925,000 US. He still sees a future, six years after being drafted by the Brian Burke regime, knowing he still has to get past a few players for regular work. Yet the Leafs rewarded his diligence, keeping him in mind as a possible replacement with contract decisions likely changing the roster into 2018-19.

"I've had a couple of coaches and a new general manager, so to stick with it feels great," Leivo said. "I can just focus on this year now and have security for next year. Now it's a matter of going out and doing what I do."

That's being a physical player, in addition to scoring from close range (nine goals in 46 games since 2013-14) and helping out Toronto's second power play unit. The new deal came with a pep talk from current GM Lou Lamoriello.

"He just said stick with it, he's proud of me and to continue to work hard. He said it's well earned. I can't get too emotional (about sitting). I think every game I've got in I've done okay. I've enjoyed everything here, the atmosphere, the fans and the city's great. Being from Richmond Hill and Innisfil, it's close to home."

Not signing would have given Leivo a shot at free agency next season, but he decided nearly two more full years in the Leaf house was the best way to establish himself. The Leafs protected him from the Vegas expansion draft and other brushes with the waiver wire.



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"We just think he's a player we like, so why wouldn't we (keep him)?," head coach Mike Babcock said. "I don't think it has gone as good for him this year as last year. When he gets his next opportunity, he has to take someone's job."

## JVR's FRENCH CONNECTION

James van Riemsdyk usually has good games against the Habs, which might have been his hometown team had his family tree not grown in a new direction.

His father Frans was born in Montreal after the war when the van Riemsdyks had left Holland.

"He lived here about six months," said James. "His dad worked for the Bank of Montreal. It's a cool thing to have that tie."

When new banking posts in New York City opened up, the family moved to Middleton, N.J., where James and his two hockey playing brothers were born).

"My Dad was a Canadian citizen, but when he became a U.S. citizen in the late 1980s they made him give that up."

## KEON AT CENTRE

There have been many great regular season and playoff memories in Montreal for Dave Keon, who represented the Leafs in the opening face-off with old Habs' rival Yvan Cournoyer.

In five straight springs during the 1960s, Keon's teams met Montreal in the playoffs, winning three, which included the 1967 final when Toronto won its last title. Keon, named the greatest Leafs player in franchise history last year, was a Quebec native from Rouyn-Noranda, a bilingual mining town more than 400 miles north of Montreal.

When he came to St. Michael's College in Toronto in the 1950s, he was used to hearing his name pronounced with a bit of a French accent as 'key-hone', but said that the school staff Anglicized it to 'key-on' which stuck. In 2015, the genealogy web site Ancestry.ca said its research indicated Keon and Babcock were distant cousins going back to an early settler in New France.

## TRUMP THE SLUMP

Babcock says he does not get hung up when his players have lengthy goal slumps such as Auston Matthews last year followed by William Nylander and Mitch Marner this season.

"It's a really good league, teams are trying to get you and some nights it doesn't go. If you're a scorer, you get thinking about it and the more you think about it, the less your feet move, you're only working in your mind. Denis Potvin used to say 'you do your thinking in the afternoon, you play at night'. Sounds like a good idea to me."

Toronto Sun LOADED: 11.19.2017

1084102 Toronto Maple Leafs

Why the Leafs should give Matthews and Marner a chance to play together

Jonas Siegel

MONTREAL — Auston Matthews and Mitch Marner were waiting a while for this opportunity.

You could feel it in the excitement of the two youngest Leafs after they not only got to play together for the first time all season on Saturday in Montreal but connect on a couple goals in their team's sixth straight win.

"Obviously me and Mitchy have a pretty good relationship off the ice — Marty as well," Matthews said of himself, Marner, and Matt Martin, the third member of a trio Mike Babcock concocted in the second period of a 6-0 win. "Kind of gives you a nice spark when you play with a couple of your buddies that you don't really get to play with a lot."

Babcock threw cold water on their excitement pretty quickly. He said he planned to revert back to the line combinations he started with against the Canadiens when the Leafs hosted Matthews' hometown Coyotes on Monday night.

But maybe the Leafs coach should give it a chance.

Matthews and Marner, for one, seem eager to pursue the connection. Both said they were curious about what it would be like to play with the other having barely done it so far in their young NHL careers. The two were on the ice together for just under 71 5-on-5 minutes last year and just over 11 minutes this year before Saturday night.

Both have also played consistently on separate power-play units.

"Yeah, of course," Matthews said, when asked if he was intrigued to play with Marner. "We got a little bit of time together last year and never really — we made some plays and had a lot of fun, but I don't think we ever really scored a goal so it's nice to get out there with him and obviously create some offence and put some in the net."

The pair are close. The kind of pals who drove to the rink together all of last season (though not this season with Matthews moving places). The kind who play video games and wear matching throwback suits — complete with fedoras. The kind who famously sang along to Bon Jovi's "Livin' On A Prayer" on the bench at about this time last year. The kind who finish pre-game warmups by passing pucks back and forth to one another before exiting the ice in near-unison.

"We're very close with each other," Marner said. "It's exciting when you get out there and get to play with those guys."

The connection might just work, too.

Marner hadn't registered a single assist on Matthews' first 50 goals in the NHL before setting up two (No. 51 and 52) against the Habs. He delivered a bullet backhand pass to set up the first one and added another when the American ripped his 12th of the season past backup Antti Niemi.

"I think when we first got together the chemistry wasn't really all there," said Marner, born four months before Matthews in 1997. "But I think in the third period we kind of turned it around and got back to what we wanted to do and got the puck towards the net."

Though they've ripped off their longest win streak since Dec. 2014, it's not as if the Leafs have been beating down the doors of the opposition, especially when it comes to the offence. They weren't quite struggling with 15 goals in the previous five games (three on the power play), but they weren't really electrifying either — especially without Matthews, who was playing his first game since Nov. 6 on Saturday.

"I think what our guys are finding is last year a lot of our games were way looser than this year. The opposition plays way tighter against us; there's less room and so it's harder for you," Babcock said of the offensive grind prior to the game against the Habs.

What also had become evident before Matthews sat out four straight with a mysterious upper-body issue was a diminished connection between himself and William Nylander. Babcock actually broke up the duo in a Nov. 4 loss to St. Louis only to reunite them again two nights later.

Nylander had zero goals and only three assists in his previous eight games with Matthews (Oct. 23 — Nov. 6) and while the 20-year-old, who's up to 21 points in 17 games, was still producing, he did so almost in spite of Nylander, who finally broke an 11-game goal drought on Thursday.



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It's also worthwhile for the Leafs to see what kind of chemistry exists between Matthews and Marner if only to answer lineup questions — both now and later.

Marner has only ever played with one centre consistently in Toronto and that's Tyler Bozak, who might well be gone after this season. Since it's unlikely that the Leafs other 20-year-old teams up with Nazem Kadri in a matchup role, Babcock might as well see what's there with him and Matthews. The Leafs coach leaves himself only one centre otherwise (Bozak) for Marner to play with.

Then there's the potential future in which Nylander slides over to centre and plays without Matthews — something that gets easier in theory if another winger finds chemistry with the team's No. 1 centre.

Constructing a lineup with Matthews and Marner together is a little dicey, but if Babcock is willing to separate Leo Komarov from Kadri (a pairing he's used almost without exception in recent years for defensive purposes) then something like this might work:

Zach Hyman – Auston Matthews – Mitch Marner

Patrick Marleau – Nazem Kadri – William Nylander

James van Riemsdyk – Tyler Bozak – Connor Brown

Matt Martin – Dominic Moore – Leo Komarov

Both Matthews and Marner are hoping their coach gives it a shot.

"Obviously it'd be nice to stay with him," Marner said. "We'll see what happens though."

\*Advanced stats courtesy of Natural Stat Trick

The Athletic LOADED: 11.19.2017

1084125 Websites

The Athletic / Duhatschek Notebook: On the Avalanche's uncanny turnaround, Capitals woes, and NHL's previous flirtation with Houston

By Eric Duhatschek Nov 17, 2017

In September, if you'd circled Game No. 285 on the NHL's 2017-18 schedule, you probably would have figured it for a gross mismatch. After all, it featured the team with the best record in the NHL last season, a 118-point juggernaut that won 55 regular-season games and captured its second consecutive President's Trophy as the league's overall champions. The opposition was coming off a miserable 48-point season and though there are various ways beyond points in the standings to measure overall ineptitude, last year's Colorado Avalanche may have taken the prize for the worst team ever in the NHL's salary-cap era.

The gap between the Avs and the first-place Washington Capitals was 70 points. Seventy! The Vancouver Canucks didn't get 70 points last year, while both the New Jersey Devils and the Arizona Coyotes managed to get to exactly 70.

And by the way, the prediction of a mismatch would have been correct — except it went the other way. The reborn Avalanche rolled so decisively over the visiting Capitals that the game wasn't close at the end. As time wound down in Colorado's 6-2 victory, all that was left for the local Avs broadcast team to determine was who, among a collection of players that turned in virtuoso performances, to select as the three stars. They ended up selecting everybody from the top line — captain Gabriel Landeskog, who earned the first hat trick of his NHL career; Nathan MacKinnon, who produced the first five-point night of his career; and Mikko Rantanen, riding shotgun on the line, who managed four assists, also a career high.

How is this possible? Amid all the fuss over the unexpected surge of New Jersey and the persistent resilience of the expansion Vegas Golden Knights, the true, out-of-the blue, didn't-see-it coming success story of the first six weeks of the season is unfolding in Denver, where the Avalanche are already almost halfway to last year's point total and demonstrating once again that anything is possible in the salary-cap era, even a lightning-fast about face.

It's been an uncanny turnaround, and what's made it even more remarkable is that until 10 days ago, the Avalanche were playing pretty well, even though they had an unhappy camper, Matt Duchene, in the line-up, patiently awaiting a trade. Duchene ultimately got his wish and while Colorado landed three prospects and three draft choices in the exchange, there was certainly no one of Duchene's pedigree to lend an immediate hand.

Except...

Samuel Girard, the defence prospect that came over from the Nashville Predators, drew in on the No. 1 defence pair alongside Erik Johnson and is playing great. In Nashville, Girard was playing just under 17 minutes per night. In three games with Colorado, he is up over 22 minutes. At 19, Girard is still eligible to be returned to junior, and that may have been how it turned out, had he stayed with the Predators, who will welcome minute-munching defenceman Ryan Ellis back to the lineup around Christmas. But the way Girard has fit in so seamlessly suggests that he'll play two games for Colorado this weekend, which will put him up to 11 games, and then stick around the rest of the season. Girard was the player GM Joe Sakic diligently targeted when the three-way negotiations began among the Avs, Ottawa and Nashville and the early returns suggest he will be a keeper.

The centre-ice prospect in the deal, Vladislav Kamenev, made his NHL debut against the Capitals, but lasted only 4:06 before a hit from Washington defenceman Brooks Orpik broke his arm and put him out of the lineup indefinitely.

But mostly the twin engines of the Avs' turnaround are Landeskog and MacKinnon, both of whom had frustrating sub-par seasons a year ago when the Avs were in turmoil and everything that could go wrong did.

MacKinnon is a fascinating study in how development can sometimes be an uneven process. The first overall pick of the 2013 entry draft — and forever linked to Sidney Crosby because they hail from the same home town and make great commercials for Tim Horton's — MacKinnon made an immediate impact in his rookie season, scoring 63 points in 82 games, which earned him the Calder Trophy. Moreover, Colorado was unexpectedly good that year under coach Patrick Roy, qualified for the playoffs, and had a memorable seven-game opening-round playoff series, in which MacKinnon scored 10 points. After Colorado lost out that year Paul Stastny left as a free agent, and Jarome Iginla signed on, largely because he saw them as his best last chance to win a Stanley Cup championship.

Sadly, Colorado could never recapture the chemistry of that 2014 run. Roy abruptly resigned just before the beginning of last season, Sakic scrambled to hire Jared Bednar as the team's coach, and things were out of sync from the start to the finish. Sakic could have done the easy thing and discarded Bednar this season, but he stuck with him, on the grounds that Bednar deserved a fair chance to get the team back on track. It helps immeasurably that goaltender Semyon Varlamov, who was limited to 24 games last season because of injury, is back healthy and providing the sort of stability in goal that any young team needs. It helps too that Johnson is playing upwards of 27 minutes per night as their top shutdown defenceman.

Johnson, like MacKinnon, is a former No. 1 overall draft choice, who was also limited by injury last year to 46 games. Without their steady influences, on and off the ice, the Avalanche lost their way. This year, it's a different story — and though the outcome has yet to be written, and a playoff spot in the competitive Central Division is probably still a longshot, it is amazing how quickly a team's fortunes can shift, one year to the next.



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## More Avs

Last summer, a great deal of attention was paid to the fact that Will Butcher, the reigning Hobey Baker award winner as the U.S. college player of the year, chose not to sign with the Avs, the team that drafted him, and instead, joined the Devils as a free agent. Far less attention was paid to the fact that Alexander Kerfoot chose not to sign with the Devils, the team that drafted him, and instead, picked the Avalanche. Kerfoot's reasoning was that there were greater opportunities in Colorado and Duchene's departure has further opened the door.

Kerfoot is currently playing as the team's No. 2 centre and has 13 points in 17 games, not that far off the rookie leader, the Arizona Coyotes' Clayton Keller, who has 18 points in 21 games. Kerfoot's seven goals are tied for second in rookie scoring, though that gaudy 35 per cent shooting percentage is unlikely sustainable. But his readiness to play presumably convinced Sakic that he could take Duchene off the roster, without adding a replacement in the deal. Tyson Jost, who is the team's No. 1 prospect, is back healthy again, but was sent to the team's AHL affiliate in San Antonio on a conditioning stint.

Part of Colorado's early-season competence can be traced to improved special teams' play. Last year, the Avs were last in the league on the power play and 29th in penalty killing and had a net PP/PK deficit of minus-34. This year, they're breaking even. Overall, Colorado is currently a plus-three in totals goals for and against. Last season, they were a stunning minus-112.

The Capitals represent the flip side of that coin, a team that hit the 20-game mark at 10-9-1, not a complete disaster, but nothing like the way they've played in each of the past two seasons, when they went practically wire-to-wire atop the league. It was reasonable to expect the Caps might come back to the pack, given they lost Marcus Johansson and Justin Williams, two top-nine forwards, plus defencemen Karl Alzner and Kevin Shattenkirk, off last year's roster. A larger role was also forecast for Andre Burakovsky, who averaged 13:15 of ice time last year, but he's been hurt. Matt Niskanen was second only to John Carlsson in ice time last year and he's just back playing after missing 13 games to injury. It's forced coach Barry Trotz to play Carlsson constantly – his 27:07 is just two seconds per game behind Rasmus Ristolainen, the NHL leader in time on ice.

But the net effect of all that roster churning is a team that's limping along at a shade over .500 and looking vulnerable. Trotz benched rookie Jakob Vrana against the Avalanche, noting that he was "in participation, not involvement mode."

I like that assessment because it neatly sums up why some players become difference makers and others are perpetually around the periphery of a lineup. Washington had six players at 50 points or more on last year's team and Williams produced 48. The secondary scoring hasn't been there this year. They are also looking for their first win from Philipp Grubauer, who was a serviceable back-up to Braden Holtby last year, winning 13 times in 24 appearances and actually posting GAA and SP numbers a shade better than the perennial Vezina Trophy candidate. But this year, Grubauer's numbers are positively ugly – a 3.86 GAA and an .876 SP. Some of that is a function of team. Some of it is on Grubauer. The one sliver of positivity in all their struggles is that sometimes, early-season challenges build character. The regular-season path has been so smooth for Washington the past two years that when adversity hit in the playoffs, they didn't have a response. Assuming they get it going over the final three quarters of the season, maybe that toughens them up mentally. Championship windows open and close quickly. The challenge for the Capitals is to prove they haven't missed theirs.

## GM of the year

The St. Louis Blues' Doug Armstrong is the early-season front runner for general manager of the year, for his neat bit of horse trading. Knowing he wasn't going to be able to sign Shattenkirk to an extension once he hit free agency, Armstrong swapped him to the Capitals in a deal that mostly netted him Washington's first-round pick in the 2017 entry draft. Then Armstrong flipped that pick to the Philadelphia Flyers for Brayden

Schenn, who is centering the Blues' No. 1 line between Jaden Schwartz and Vladimir Tarasenko. Schenn is tied for fourth in the NHL's overall scoring race and poised to shatter his career best of 59 points established two seasons ago.

To top it off, Armstrong then extracted a first-round pick from the Pittsburgh Penguins for Ryan Reaves, who averaged eight minutes per night of playing time for the first 419 games of his NHL career, and selected Russian prospect Klim Kostin with the pick. Kostin had been projected as a possible top-10 draft choice, but sank like a stone in the draft. If the Blues are right on him, it will mean Armstrong completed two out-and-out thefts in a matter of months this past spring, something that's getting harder and harder to do with every passing NHL season. GMs are just too smart — usually.

## And finally

As someone who covered the NHL's first flirtation with Houston some two decades ago, it's intriguing to watch the new tango that's recently gotten underway between the league and the Texas city. The Athletic's Katie Strang provided a detailed report on Houston's viability as a hockey market this week, pondering both the pros and the cons.

For those who don't remember, Houston was the projected destination for the Edmonton Oilers back in 1998, during the height of the Canadian currency crisis. Two Canadian teams, the Winnipeg Jets and the Quebec Nordiques, had left for the U.S. and two others, the Oilers and the Calgary Flames, were on life support. Commissioner Gary Bettman, working with the then board chairman, Flames' part owner Harley Hotchkiss, convinced the league to subsidize the Canadian teams when the dollar was hovering around 62 cents. But they were bleeding red ink — to the point where Oilers' owner Peter Pocklington had put the team up for sale and Les Alexander, the owner of the NBA Rockets, had put in a bid.

At the 11th hour, a local Edmonton investors' group cobbled together by businessman Cal Nichols came up with the cash and saved the day. Soon after, Alexander's interest in the NHL waned. Last July, Alexander put the Rockets up for sale and in mid-September, they were scooped up for \$2.2 billion by Tilman Fertitta, a restaurant and casino operator. Alexander originally paid \$85 million for the team in 1993. Fertitta made his interest in acquiring an NHL franchise known soon after he bought the team, and early on, has figured out how to play by Bettman's rules.

First, express an earnest interest and a cautious optimism about bringing the NHL to your city but then quickly add that you're willing to bide your time. That approach worked for Winnipeg and it probably will work for Houston, too. There are always three factors involved in the NHL's decision to go forward in a new market: It needs a state-of-the-art building, a deep-pockets' owner and the new team has to contribute strategically to the league's growth plans. Gone are the days when expansion was just a money grab, designed to help owners operating in the red meet their daily expenses.

Bettman has convinced NHL owners that even at the going expansion rate — of \$500 million, which is what Vegas paid to get in — any new partner means the overall revenue pie gets sliced ever thinner, the minute you add a team to the lodge. Houston is a coveted television market; it gives the league another team in the Central time zone; it has a long standing minor-league history; and it would become a natural rival to the Dallas Stars. All good. Presumably, if Fertitta had bought the Rockets two years earlier, he would have had enough time to put in an expansion application — and likely would have landed a team at the same time Vegas did. Now, he'll need to wait. Relocating one of the NHL's basket case franchises to Houston probably makes the most sense. It may not happen imminently. But it will almost certainly happen in time.

The Athletic LOADED: 11.19.2017



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The Athletic / Why do the Blue Jackets get so few power plays? Plus, a number that might surprise you

By Aaron Portzline 10 hours ago

Every NHL team thinks they deserve more power plays. Every NHL fan base is sure they get shorted by NHL officials. And don't even ask about the replay booth in Toronto!

The Blue Jackets, on the surface, can make a pretty good argument about deserving more power plays. Since the start of last season, no NHL team has had fewer power plays than Columbus (268, or 2.63 per game).

Somebody has to have the fewest, sure. But the Blue Jackets' hard-skating style has earned them a reputation for being one of the tougher teams to play in the NHL.

Last season, when the Jackets won 50 games and had 108 points, they had 211 power plays, the fewest in a full NHL season since the Atlanta Flames (195) in 1977-78.

That's 40 years ago.

"I wish I could really sound intelligent and say (why)," John Tortorella said. "But I don't know why."

Asked whether it surprised him, given the Blue Jackets' style of play, Tortorella got a tortured look on his face.

"I will say this ... well, no I won't say that," he said, catching himself. "I don't want to open up that can of worms."

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There are a few prevailing theories, none of which is provable and some of which are absurd:

— The Blue Jackets are still trying to gain respect as a franchise, especially when they play storied opponents like Detroit, New York, Toronto, Montreal.

— NHL officials don't care for Tortorella

— "I don't know if they hate me and Dubi, if maybe we've yelled at too many refs through the years?" captain Nick Foligno said.

— In the early days of the franchise, the NHL got frequent calls from Columbus complaining about officials. It did them no favors. But that's faded over the last decade, and the current hockey operations staff rarely complains.

— The Jackets had the lead so much last season — remember the 16-game winning streak? — and NHL officials are less likely to give power plays to teams who have the lead.

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"I don't really know what the reason is," Foligno said. "You don't want to turn into a team that starts diving and does things like that (to draw penalties), but it's frustrating, especially where we are with our power play. It'd be nice to get a couple more opportunities to practice.

"If we were a perimeter team ... but we're always in front of the net, down low cycling. I have a hard time believing teams are frustrated. We watch. We see it. We laugh."

Here's a statistic from the other direction, though, one that shoots a hole in any "the refs are against Columbus" conspiracy theories and only opens up more questions.

Only one NHL team has been short-handed fewer times than Columbus since the start of last season. The Blue Jackets have been down a skater 274 times in those 102 games (2.69 per game). Carolina has been short-handed 240 times in that span, but has played three fewer games this season.

In other words, the Blue Jackets are on both the power play and penalty kill an unusually low number of times. Over a span of more than 100 games, they've been short-handed only six more times than they've been on the power play.

And at their current pace, the Blue Jackets will have 234 power plays, which still puts them in the lower third of the league. But that's 23 more power plays than last season.

Now if they could get their power play going.

Notebook

— To Foligno's point ... since the start of last season, the Blue Jackets have been whistled 26 times for holding. Their opponents have been called for holding 50 times. Thanks to the Elias Sports Bureau for this number.

— Bobrovsky's 36-save shutout of the New York Rangers on Friday was his 150th win and 21st shutout for the Blue Jackets. Those already are franchise records, but he did set another franchise career mark during the win. Bobrovsky now owns the franchise career mark for minutes played (15,314:12), passing Marc Denis (15,258:43).

— The Blue Jackets are 12-7-1 through the first two games. That puts them one point behind last year's pace through 20 games, even though their goals-for and goals-against were much better last season (64-46) than this season (57-50).

— After Friday's 2-0 win, the Jackets sent F Sonny Milano, D Gabriel Carlsson and G Joonas Korpišalo to minor-league Cleveland, which plays Milwaukee tonight at the Q. Jarmo Kekalainen said it was "likely" they would all be recalled Sunday in advance of Monday's game in Buffalo. Korpišalo is certain to be recalled, and the guess here is he'll start against the Sabres.

— When the Blue Jackets sent Korpišalo down, they recalled Matiss Kivlenieks from Cleveland. That's a promotion, sure, but there's an NHL rule that teams must have two goaltenders on their roster.

The Athletic LOADED: 11.19.2017

1084127 Websites

Sportsnet.ca / Maple Leafs put up electric performance in Auston Matthews' return

Luke Fox

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November 18, 2017, 10:25 PM

MONTREAL – Electric.

Mitch Marner and Dave Keon pulled out the same adjective to describe a Saturday-night hockey game pitting the Montreal Canadiens versus the Toronto Maple Leafs.

As the NHL strides toward its 100th birthday, some things don't change with time.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 19, 2017

Regardless if you were wearing blue or red during the Leafs' 6-0 beatdown of the Habs, you were screaming as two rivals continued to trend in opposite trajectories.

With a collection of living legends on hand – Keon and Yvon Cournoyer graced the Leafs and Habs benches, respectively, during warm-ups – and the return of Auston Matthews to the visitors' lineup after a 12-day, four-game absence, a step into the Bell Centre would give any hockey fan a jolt.

But it would be a second-period line juggle that made Leafs fans salivate and gave Marner and Matthews spark.

"He has a very special group of skills that he uses very well," Keon said of Matthews. "He can shoot the puck, he can skate. He's 6-foot-3, so he's a big guy and can't be pushed around. All those things make him a great player."

A six-pack of Hockey Hall of Famers representing each of the league's original franchises – Cournoyer, Keon, Ray Bourque, Rod Gilbert, Frank Mahovlich, and Denis Savard – joined forces for a ceremonial puck drop.

In a fun bit of crowd-pleasing theatre, Mahovlich and Savard removed their Red Wings and Blackhawks sweaters, respectively, to reveal bleu, blanc et rouge gear.

Unfortunately for the locals, a cranky bunch left cheering a 27th-place team currently stripped of its franchise netminder, that's about as fun as things got.

Having adopted a tighter-checking style and getting blessed with brilliant goaltending during Matthews' absence, the Leafs predicted boring play. So did Montreal captain Pacioretty.

"That's our style anyway, a boring road game," Pacioretty said prior to a home game. "That's how we want to have success."

Out of the gate, Montreal controlled the run of play, winning battles, sustaining zone time, and outshooting Toronto 16-7 in the first period. Yet the Habs failed to solve Frederik Andersen, who's been zoned-in for a week and now has consecutive blank sheets to show for it.

"Two shutouts in a row," defenceman Ron Hainsey said. "You're not gonna get much better than that."

Hainsey, who began his NHL career as a Canadien in 2002, cracked a tight contest loose midway through the second period with a one-timed blast off a smart Tyler Bozak pass. His first as a Leaf.

Tasting blood, chants of "Go! Leafs! Go!" from the travelling Nation thundered on the ensuing face-off.

And on that very next shift, 37 seconds later, Nazem Kadri streaked down the left flank and whipped a puck over Charlie Lindgren's short-side shoulder and under the bar for his 10th of the year, tying him with Matthews for the team high – but only temporarily.

Then the Leafs did two things formerly uncharacteristic: They put the screws on their lead, and they partnered Matthews and Marner.

Connor Brown smoothly roofed a rebound early in the third period, and James van Riemsdyk slammed one home in the slot.

The MMM... Bop Line of Matt Martin, Matthews and Marner was constructed mid-game, perhaps to give the sore centreman a little extra protection, and it clicked like a trip to the chiropractor.

Matthews finally chased Lindgren by converting a backhanded Marner feed, resulting off an aggressive Martin forecheck.

"[Martin] created that entire chance. He drilled down the wall, created a turnover from their D-man, made a pass to me," said Marner, clearly juiced by his chance to create goals with Matthews, his former carpool mate and video-game nemesis. The two can be seen passing the puck back and forth during every warm-up and are always last to leave the ice.

"It'd be nice to stay with him, but we'll see what happens."

Matthews then welcomed Antti Niemi with a quick-release snipe – his second straight two-goal show in this building.

"Hell of a shot on that second one," said Martin between bites of a well-earned post-game hot dog. "When you're in a fourth-line situation, you can't be making behind-the-back passes and turning pucks over.... I want to get them the puck, and once they get it, they're gonna do some creative stuff with it."

Turns out, the Maple Leafs can even win with Matthews on the ice.

"I didn't feel too hot out there the first two periods, but it's all part of coming back," Matthews said. "Me and Mitchy have a good relationship off the ice. Me and Marty as well. It gives you a nice spark when you play with a couple buddies you don't get to play with a lot."

Pacioretty got away with a questionable hit on Nazem Kadri, and Kadri, seething, mixed it up with Shea Weber, but this doused the game in hate too late.

Paul Byron picked a fight with Nikita Zaitsev. "I didn't expect it, especially when it's 5-0," said Zaitsev of his first pro scrap. "It's not my thing. It's not my job."

Brendan Gallagher grabbed a fist full of Connor Carrick, but Toronto did not rattle; it rolled.

And Montreal did not score. That's not a problem Lindgren, Niemi or even Carey Price can fix.

Anglophone choruses of "Olé, Olé, Olé!" rang ironically as swaths of the home-team fans beat traffic.

What coach Mike Babcock noticed during his troops' test without Matthews was their learning how to play stingier in their own zone, to cut down on the quantity of quality chances presented to the opposition. To limit risk.

"This is how you're going to have to play in the end, so you may as well play like that. That's where it's going," Babcock said.

"When you're a team and you're not very good, you don't get as many of those [tight] games because the opposition isn't quite as prepared for you or worried about you. The better you get, the more nights you get that are real hockey. There's a lot of real hockey right now."

As for Toronto's take on the 3M Line, don't bet on an encore of the Marner-Matthews Show.

"We'll be back the way we started for next game," said Babcock. "I just had to do something different than what was going on. When I put [Patrick] Marleau and Brown and [Zach] Hyman together, it gave me another real good line to go with the Kadri line to take over the game a little bit."

Toronto has now won five real hockey games in a row, and with last-place Arizona Coyotes coming to town Monday, a sixth is a tangible possibility.

Matthews' health and hands are back, and the timing of his 100th career NHL game is impeccable.

"Pretty cool if that's my 100th game, especially against the hometown team," Matthews said. "Should be a fun one."

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Sportsnet.ca / Mentally tougher Canucks aren't interested in 'moral victories'



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

NEWS CLIPPINGS • Nov. 19, 2017

Iain MacIntyre

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November 19, 2017, 2:08 AM

VANCOUVER — It was a single point and a moral victory, and maybe last year that would have been enough for the Vancouver Canucks.

But having shown in the first quarter of this National Hockey League season that they are a better team than they were last year – and better than anyone expected – the Canucks viewed Saturday's 4-3 overtime loss to the St. Louis Blues as a point squandered, rather than a point gained.

They needed both points. Coming off a dismal 5-2 loss Thursday to the Vegas Golden Knights and staring at a daunting six-game eastern road trip the next 12 days that begins with back-to-back games against the Philadelphia Flyers and Pittsburgh Penguins, the Canucks were desperate against the Blues.

But that desperation wasn't enough against the best team in the Western Conference as the Blues rallied from a two-goal deficit and won on Brayden Schenn's goal at 2:41 of overtime.

The Canucks are 9-8-3 at the quarter pole, tied for the final wild-card playoff spot in the Western Conference. Sixty-two games from now, they're expected to be farther down the standings, but the Canucks keep surprising us, and they believe they're right where they deserve to be early in the playoff race.

"I wouldn't say a moral victory was acceptable last year either," winger Derek Dorsett said. "I don't think moral victories are ever acceptable in the NHL. Obviously, it's a good sign that when we need a win we can rally together and play a good game, but the National Hockey League is all about consistency and we've got to be more consistent. We've got to find this mentality consistently."

This "mentality" was the intensity and drive, lacking against Vegas, that the Canucks displayed against the Blues.

After bottom-three finishes the last two seasons, the Canucks surprised initially with their competitiveness and quicker play under new coach Travis Green. They surprised opponents, too, going 6-3-1 in their first 10 games.

Other teams are ready for the Canucks now. And Vancouver went only 3-5-2 in its last 10 games. But the surprising part now is the Canucks' resiliency and ability to elevate and compete against the NHL's best teams when it appears they're sinking.

On Tuesday, after two losses in California by an aggregate score of 9-1 and facing a potential road-trip disaster, the Canucks overcame an early two-goal deficit and beat the Pacific Division-leading Los Angeles Kings 3-2.

Then Saturday, after their worst game of the season against Vegas, the Canucks regrouped and competed against the Blues, who at 15-5-1 and with a goal differential of plus-15 are the best team west of the Tampa Bay Lightning.

The losses that preceded the Los Angeles and St. Louis games looked like the start of market corrections for a team that may have played above itself in October, but the Canucks were able to muster energy and intensity and take three of four points against formidable opponents who had seemed likely to further expose any false economy to Vancouver's start.

Whatever the Canucks are – whatever they turn out to be – they are not "weak" in any sense like they were the second half of last season. They compete. And while that may seem like a modest achievement that, in

itself, doesn't get anyone into the playoffs, it is an upgrade for the Canucks and indicative of the culture being repaired in Vancouver.

We'll know that the Canucks are back when they can close out games like Saturday's and play consistently at this level without requiring desperate circumstances to inspire them.

"We've always found ways to bounce back," Canucks forward Sven Baertschi said. "I thought the Vegas game was one of those games we just weren't there mentally. We understood that pretty quick and we wanted to make sure we showed up tonight. Everybody showed up and competed really hard tonight."

After Markus Granlund scored shorthanded and, five-and-a-half minutes later, Baertschi scored on the power play, the Canucks had the Blues down 3-1 with 29 minutes to go.

But two defensive-zone turnovers and missed coverage in the slot allowed Vladimir Sabotka to score for the Blues at 13:10 of the second period and Joel Edmundson, again unchecked in the high slot, tied it 3-3 4:46 into the third.

Yes, there were controversial officiating decisions that went against the Canucks.

The Blues' opening goal by Colton Parayko came after an obvious too-many-men line change for St. Louis, which had 10 players on the ice and forwards joining a rush 30 feet from the bench before their teammates had left the playing surface.

Later, an apparent goal by Thomas Vanek on a delayed penalty was waved off on a whistle that infuriated Green, who doesn't usually yell at referees.

But officiating decisions generally even out over time and good teams, once up 3-1, shouldn't be losing games under any circumstances.

Canucks rookie Brock Boeser, stickhandling away from both Parayko and Schenn, offset Parayko's first-period goal. The first three St. Louis goals were unguarded, unscreened bullets that blew past Vancouver goalie Anders Nilsson from distance, and Schenn's winner knuckled into the net after Canucks defenceman Derrick Pouliot was turned the wrong way.

"We're not happy with a point," Erik Gudbranson said. "We've got to find a way to close out a game like that."

Exactly. It shows how the Canucks are growing.

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Sportsnet.ca / Takeaways: McDavid's turnovers cost Oilers again

Mark Spector

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November 18, 2017, 6:03 PM

The Edmonton Oilers can swap their line combinations around, as they did against Dallas on Saturday, but they are still a draft lottery team, now four games under .500 after a 6-3 loss to the Stars.

Next up? The West's best team awaits in St. Louis, a rematch from a 4-1 Blues win just a few days before.

Gulp...



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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This was one of those days when the Oilers best players were far less than that, as Connor McDavid managed to be a minus player while counting three points, Leon Draisaitl was not sparked in any way by being moved to another line, and goalie Cam Talbot was below average in goal.

It's pretty simple: when something new buries your team every night, it means that not enough players are bringing a consistent game to the rink often enough. In this matinee it was the defensive game that lacked, as Dallas racked up six on an Oilers team that held a 3-2 lead early in the second period.

- Remember when Taylor Hall used to score a couple of points for the Oil, take a ton of chances, then leave the rink an even or minus player after another loss?

McDavid is clearly a far superior player, but the numbers don't lie: minus-2 against St. Louis Thursday, and minus-2 again Saturday, despite a goal and two assists. Your best player simply has to be better than that, and McDavid's line — with Pat Maroon and Drake Caggiula — was on the ice for three even strength goals by Dallas, with McDavid also on for a fourth.

Somehow, too many turnovers have mixed into McDavid's game, resulting in odd-man rushes the other way after high-risk zone entry attempts go bad. In his own zone, the puck is getting behind his goalie too often, even if the reasons are ever-changing.

Part of being a superstar is playing as well without the puck, and being smarter with it than McDavid has been this season. Your best player has to be just that — at both ends of the rink — to have success. And the Oilers aren't having much of that this season.

- How about nine minor penalties as a culprit? And speaking of your best players, how about Draisaitl taking three of those minors?

On a day where McDavid could have used some help, Draisaitl had nothing, salting slashing, high-sticking and hooking minors into his afternoon's work.

Then with a chance to tie up a 4-3 game on the powerplay, Draisaitl ripped a shot right at the middle of the net from about six feet out, and Ben Bishop made the save. Or more aptly, the puck hit him.

We know it's hard to do, and that those chances happen fast. We get that. But the Draisaitls of the world get paid to put that puck far closer to a goalpost than he did on that occasion, and the next two goals would instead go Dallas' way.

- Some love for defenceman Adam Larsson, who led everyone with 27:47 of ice time and led all defencemen with three hits. All of this after being felled by what appears to be Alex Radulov's stick between the legs in the first period.

Larsson's game has settled after a rugged start to the season, a good sign for Edmonton. (Hey, we're searching here).

What the Oilers need is to adopt Larsson's straight-ahead, competitive mindset for a few games. Rather than passing off shots, making pretty plays that just aren't working, and trying to finesse their way through the season, the Oilers need to buckle down and play a much more firm game.

Too much dippy-doodle, and not enough straight-ahead-Fred.

If you think that game is good for the Oilers, take a look at the standings in the morning.

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Sportsnet.ca / Monahan's hat trick gives Flames the kind of bounce-back they needed

Tim Panaccio

November 18, 2017, 6:31 PM

PHILADELPHIA – Some things never quite make sense in hockey.

Take Sean Monahan.

A determined young man, who in just four-plus seasons has staked his claim to owning the blue paint, had 115 goals to his résumé yet had never scored three times in a single game.

Until Saturday afternoon, that is.

"My comment to him tonight was, 'you've scored an awful lot of goals for not having a hat trick,'" said Calgary Flames coach Glen Gulutzan.

In yet another seat-of-your-pants flyby, the Flames overcame an early two-goal deficit and stunned the Philadelphia Flyers, 5-4 in overtime Saturday at Wells Fargo Center mostly because of Monahan's second-period, power-play hat trick.

Power-play hat trick? Don't see that very often.

This was the kind of bounce-back the Flames were seeking after sitting on an 8-2 thrashing in Detroit Wednesday, made all the more humiliating because they also got pummelled in a series of fights that resulted in Matthew Tkachuk's suspension.

The Flames have already shown they're again legit in the Pacific Division, but as the quarter-pole passes, some aspects still need tightened.

Monahan and sidekick South Jersey winger Johnny Gaudreau continue to demonstrate the kind of chemistry that makes this such a fun club to watch — as so many Western Conference clubs are these days.

The puck literally follows Gaudreau, like the breakaway pass straight up centre ice he took from Monahan for a goal which drew a chorus of boos from his hometown fans. Johnny Hockey drives this club, no doubt.

And Monahan knows where to go every time on the ice. With his soft hands he made good use of two Gaudreau rebounds, putting them past Flyers goalie Brian Elliott to make it a 4-4 game in that wild, turnaround second period that more of less typifies the kind of hockey Calgary plays.

"He has a great shot, makes my job pretty easy," Gaudreau said. "Just plant him in the slot and he has a world-class shot. I'm always giving him a hard time. He hasn't had a hat trick and he has a 100-some goals. He got his first one tonight. I'm really happy for him."

Monahan soft-peddled his feat.

"It's cool," he said. "Johnny found me a couple times there and I mean, he's from here, he's got a lot of people here, so I'm gonna put the puck in the net for him. It's nice, that hat trick means a lot to me."

There's an axiom in hockey that states when you get tagged pretty good one game, your next outing should see some fire and brimstone.

That wasn't the case for the Flames, however, as the Flyers had far more energy in the opening period, scoring three times, making it 13 goals yielded by Calgary over its previous five periods.

The good news is the Flames showed resiliency as the game moved on. Even better, their beleaguered penalty kill — dead last in the NHL — actually gave them a much-needed lift with a huge kill over the final 2:01 of regulation.

That one kill energized Calgary as Michael Frolik kept the Flames unbeaten in OT (5-0). Maybe it carries over into the second quarter of the



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NHL season as it's the one area the Flames need to improve. It starts with Mark Giordano and Travis Hamonic being more aggressive on pucks, which happened on that last kill.

More surprising is that goalie Mike Smith, who is essentially babysitting the crease until either Jon Gillies or Tyler Parsons prove ready to inherit it, moves the puck out well in traffic and yet his PK units can't clear it.

Calgary had similar problems early last season when its PK ranked last yet finished 12th. So there's still lots of games left for the Flames to correct things. They gave up one power play goal Saturday.

"It has to improve," Gulutzan said emphatically. "We've got to make an improvement there for sure. That kill will help our group. Two minutes left on the clock, you need a big kill and you've been struggling all season, that goes a long way."

Another takeaway from this one was the play of rookie centre Mark Jankowski. It's no coincidence Gulutzan chooses to play ageless wonder Jaromir Jagr with him.

The pairing of Jagr with Jankowski is reminiscent of No. 68's time in Philly when he was paired with then-rookie Sean Couturier. Couturier learned from Jagr, which is exactly what Gulutzan is hoping will transpire with the 23-year-old Jankowski.

Jankowski didn't have an official shot on net but he generated some chances for his line and plays a heavy game.

"We haven't seen our best hockey," Gaudreau said. "Detroit was a little eye opening for us. ... Been playing some good hockey, but as a team, we have another level we can go to which is exciting. I hope it started tonight."

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Sportsnet.ca / Should Austin Watson be suspended for his hit on Dominic Toninato?

Steven Loung

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November 18, 2017, 9:51 PM

If anything for Dominic Toninato, it was a memorable NHL debut.

The Colorado Avalanche rookie suited up for his first-ever NHL game Saturday night and was promptly taken out of the game after just 4:01 of ice time.

Midway through the first period of Saturday's Avalanche-Nashville Predators contest Toninato was driven into the boards by Predators forward Austin Watson. After the hit, Toninato was seen grabbing his head, writhing on the ice in pain. He would eventually exit the game mostly under his own power.

Watson was assessed a five-minute major penalty and a game misconduct on the play.

It's a tough break for Toninato and the on-ice discipline was swift and firm. Still, do you think Watson deserves greater enforcement from the NHL's Department of Player Safety?

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Sportsnet.ca / Why Josh Leivo re-signed with the Maple Leafs

Luke Fox

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November 18, 2017, 1:00 PM

MONTREAL — When Kari Leivo learned of his son's one-year, \$925,000 contract extension Friday afternoon through the media, he called Josh right away.

"He was screaming. Same thing as when I got drafted," said Josh Leivo Saturday morning at Bell Centre. "All smile—ear to ear."

Leivo looked a lot like the way he describes his dad — happy, relieved, excited — following another one of his prolonged morning game-day skates, the routine of the healthy scratch.

Keep positive. Put in the work. Patiently wait for your chance, then seize with verve when it finally arrives.

Josh Leivo's wallet is thickening at a time when his HockeyDB page is thinning.

He squeezed into a mere 13 games for the Leafs (and five for the AHL Marlies) in 2016-17, but posted an impressive 10 points. Enough to earn him expansion-draft protection from GM Lou Lamoriello and sporadic "Free Leivo!" protests from Leafs Nation diehards.

This season the extra winger's mission of cracking the dang lineup only got tougher with the summer addition of future Hall of Famer Patrick Marleau and the contractual call-up of Nikita Soshnikov.

Even with minor injuries to forwards Matt Martin, James van Riemsdyk and Auston Matthews, Leivo has just five games played, notching one assist. Coach Mike Babcock played him a two-season ice-time low of 9:35 in his most recent appearance, Saturday's 4-1 win in Boston.

"I don't think it's gone as good for him this year as it did last year. He's gotta get to work," Babcock said. "When he gets his next opportunity, you gotta take someone's job."

Leivo says his raise came together quickly.

"We were just talking, and they just wanted me to have the security so I could play a game and not have to worry about the next year," Leivo explained. "It feels great. I get to focus now on just playing."

The message from Lamoriello was a simple one: Stick with it.

"He's proud of me, how I work hard," Leivo said. "He said, 'It's well earned.'"

From management's perspective, signing Leivo means they won't lose him as a Group VI unrestricted free agent, which would've been the case had he remained unsigned and not played 39 games this season. The extra year of control (and RFA status on July 1, 2019) also increases Leivo's worth on the trade market, should Toronto elect to move him at some point.

From the player's point of view, he just got guaranteed money and a job for 2018-19. That's something fellow Leafs forwards Leo Komarov, Tyler Bozak, Dominic Moore, William Nylander, van Riemsdyk and Soshnikov don't have, yet.



# CAROLINA HURRICANES

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Frankly, the chances of Leivo — who can slide onto the second power-play unit — getting regular run next season in Toronto are better, especially if van Riemsdyk and/or Komarov chase dollars elsewhere.

"He's a player that we like," Babcock said. "So if you like a guy, why wouldn't you [re-sign him]?"

Who knows what a 25-year-old with less than 50 NHL games experience and fewer than 10 goals would fetch on the open market? Leivo says he wasn't tempted to find out.

"I like the security better," Leivo said. The GTA native clearly doesn't just want to be an NHLer but a Toronto Maple Leaf. (Throw Connor Brown in that same boat.)

Leivo says he loves "everything" about belonging to this club.

"The atmosphere, the fans, the city's great. Being from Richmond Hill and Innisfil, it's really close to home, so it's an awesome feeling, and I'm happy to have another year," he said. "It's kind of a fun room right now."

Mitch Marner says Leivo is a fun-loving guy who jokes around in the dressing room. Van Riemsdyk has been impressed by the kid's attitude through a series of benchings.

"I'm sure for him there's those frustrations from being in and out of the lineup and wanting to be playing more, but he's handled that very well," van Riemsdyk said.

That means never venting those frustrations publicly, a sure ticket out of town.

That also means bag skates and weight-room sessions to improve his stride and strength.

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

Taking cues from Marlies forward Rich Clune, another guy who must work hard to remain a pro, Leivo was a gym rat this summer. During testing at camp, only Clune could dead-lift more than the six-foot-two, 210-pound Leivo.

"I can't get too emotional," Leivo said. "I just have to keep working hard. I think every game I've gotten into, I've done OK."

Kari Leivo has a HockeyDB page, too. It's one line long and includes one gaudy number: 493 penalty minutes in 42 games with the OJHL's Richmond Hill Dynes in 1985-86.

"It's a good stat for him," Leivo smiled. "He used to be a fighter back in the day. I think I got the skill side out of him. I don't think he wanted me doing that stuff, but I think I can hold my own."

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Sportsnet.ca / Why Kevin Bieksa will never stop talking about Rick Rypien

Dan Robson

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November 18, 2017, 10:30 AM

Kevin Bieksa tells the story of a fight.

It was just one of many in the veteran defenceman's long career — and this one was way back in the minors, when he was with the AHL's Manitoba Moose. But Bieksa can see it clearly.

He squared off with one guy while right behind him his teammate and friend Rick Rypien battled another. They were surrounded like Batman and Robin facing off against the Joker's thugs — pow! Bam! Boom! And they both won. They laughed about it in the dressing room afterwards — the oddity of standing back to back, fighting together like superheroes.

Bieksa loves that story. He's told it many times and he'll tell it many more. Just like he loves to tell the story about being called up to the Vancouver Canucks from the Moose for the first time on the same day Rypien. It was 2005 and they were both still kids. There so much unknown possibility ahead of them. Bieksa was first to suit up for their new team, but took a while to get on the board. Rypien scored his first goal on his first shot of his first shift.

"He outdid me for sure," Bieksa laughs.

The Anaheim Ducks defenceman has been talking about Rypien since he died by suicide in 2011 at just 27 years old. Bieksa won't stop talking about him; he refuses to.

"It's been six years now," he says. "Rick's story is one that I don't want to go away."

And so Bieksa tells the story of a snowstorm. After a Canucks game in Edmonton during the 2008–09 season, the team travelled on without him so he could drive through the night to find his friend. Rypien had taken a leave of absence from the Canucks. He had confided in Bieksa about his struggle with depression at training camp that year. Rypien hadn't been diagnosed then — he just knew he was fighting something that was difficult to explain.

"He said he wasn't feeling right and that he wasn't coming back," Bieksa recalls.

And then no one could get a hold of him. Bieksa was worried. He drove with Craig Heisinger, then the general manager of the Manitoba Moose and another confidant of Rypien's, through an Albertan snowstorm for more than five hours to Rypien's hometown in Crownest Pass. They found their friend, and convinced him to return to Vancouver and move in with Bieksa's young family.

Bieksa tells the story of a closed door. Rypien barricaded himself in his room in the Bieksas' condo and the only way they could get him to eat was by sending in their two-year-old son, Cole, who carried in the food on a tray. Rypien loved Cole. The door always opened for him.

"We used my son quite a bit, actually," Bieksa says. "Rypien was awesome with kids. Towards the end of his life he started wanting to help kids as much as possible. He was kind of coming to terms with the fact that he had an illness and he was trying to fight it."

Bieksa tells stories that make him smile. About how Rypien was there for so many big moments in his life — like when Cole was born — and how Katie Bieksa had told Rypien she was pregnant with their second child, Reese, before Kevin even knew. He tells the story of Rypien signing a contract with the Winnipeg Jets in 2011 and how he spoke regularly with his friend through that off-season, and hoped that everything was turning around for him. Rypien had been diagnosed with depression and was getting the help he needed.

And he tells stories that still make him cry. The phone rang after he'd tucked his kids in that August night. It was Heisinger. Rypien was dead. He'd taken his own life. Bieksa sat in his office alone, waiting for Katie to come downstairs to tell her that the worst had come true.

"It's a little bit of a blur... We just sat around talking about it, crying for hours," Bieksa says. "You start to think about what you could have done to prevent this. Did we do everything? What more could we have done?"

In the years since, Bieksa has kept talking about his friend and his disease, because it was something that he rarely discussed before. He's



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worked with Rypien's family on initiatives to promote awareness of and decrease stigma around mental illness. He worked with mindcheck.ca — an initiative to help youth and young adults in B.C. connect with mental-health resources. He's working on new initiatives in California to do the same while he plays with the Ducks. In the tough world of pro hockey, he's speaking out to make sure others know that there is no shame in getting help. Programs like the NHL's Hockey Talks are helping with that.

"Up until five years ago I had never heard anything about mental illness in my career," Biekša says. "Everything I ever heard was 'Be mentally tough' — coaches would say it means sucking it up and playing through injury and not complaining and doing whatever it takes to perform. So certainly I'm hoping it's better now, but we have along way to go."

Last year, Biekša says, mental health was discussed with Ducks players during an education seminar for the first time.

"It took some time," he says. "But it's finally been brought up."

It's been six years since Rypien died, but Biekša keeps talking about his friend and the fight. They're side by side still. In his heart, now, and in his voice — Rypien's story lives on.

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Sportsnet.ca / Flames Thoughts: An important bounce back win vs. Flyers

Derek Wills

@Fan960Wills

November 18, 2017, 8:22 PM

Derek Wills is the Calgary Flames radio play-by-play announcer on Sportsnet 960 The FAN. He shares his views about the Flames' latest game.

After falling behind by scores of 1-0, 3-1 and 4-3, the Flames battled back to beat the Flyers 5-4 in overtime in a back-and-forth battle at Wells Fargo Center in Philadelphia on Saturday afternoon.

Here are five takeaways from the game.

## 1. BOUNCE BACK

After a lopsided 8-2 loss to the Red Wings at Little Caesars Arena in Detroit in the opener of a six-game road trip on Wednesday night, the Flames bounced back with a much more inspired performance at Wells Fargo Center in Philadelphia in the second game of their season-long trip on Saturday.

While the Flames were far from perfect, they fought back and found a way to win what was a highly-entertaining game.

## 2. FIRST-CAREER HAT TRICK FOR MONAHAN

Sean Monahan, the sixth overall pick in the 2013 NHL Draft, has scored 37 more goals than any other player from that draft class... so it's hard to believe that the Flames forward scored his first-career hat trick in Saturday's game.

With his team trailing 3-1 and 4-3, Monahan scored not one, not two but three power play goals in the second period, with the first two tying the game at three and the third one squaring the score at four. With 118 goals and 237 points in 337 games, not only does Monahan have more

goals and points than any player from the 2013 Draft, he also has more goals and points than any player selected in the 2012 Draft.

## 3. JOHNNY BE GREAT

I hate to sound like a broken record (especially since I love vinyl), but Johnny Gaudreau has taken his game to another level this season — offensively and defensively.

Playing 20 minutes from his parents' home in Carney's Point, New Jersey, Gaudreau was once again the Flames' best player on Saturday, when he stretched his career-long goal streak to five games and his point streak to a career-long nine games with one goal and two assists against the team he grew up cheering for.

As good as Johnny Hockey was offensively, the play that he made defensively on the bigger and stronger Wayne Simmonds in overtime shouldn't be overlooked. While I haven't yet seen the league's top two point producers (Lightning forwards Steven Stamkos and Nikita Kucherov) play in person this season, I can't imagine any NHL forward is playing at a higher level than Gaudreau is right now.

## 4. FEELING SPECIAL

I hate to be so blunt, but the truth is the Flames power play, and to an even greater extent, the penalty kill, have killed them in the 2017-2018 season. In Wednesday's 8-2 loss to the Red Wings, the Flames scored one powerplay goal but surrendered four of them, in addition to one shorthanded goal.

On Saturday, the Flyers power play went one-for-three, but with the score tied at four, the Flames killed-off the penalty that Matt Stajan took with just 2:01 left in the third period to preserve a point and give themselves a chance to get two in overtime. On the power play, the Flames scored a season-high three goals, going three-for-five with the man advantage.

Special teams will win and lose teams a lot of games and the Flames' struggling power play and penalty kill has cost them some games this season, but on Saturday, it was one of the reasons why they won.

## 5. TRAVELLING IN STYLE

In my opinion, one of the turning points in the Flames' 2016-2017 season was a train ride from Montreal to Ottawa.

Following his team's fourth straight loss, head coach Glen Gulutzan publicly blasted his team following a 5-1 loss to the Canadiens on Jan. 24. After the game, instead of flying from Montreal to Ottawa, the team took the train. It was a great idea — a throw back to the way Original Six teams used to travel.

The problem was the Flames were playing some of their worst hockey of the season and their bench boss had run out of patience. Gulutzan was so upset with his players that following the game he told Flames Director of Team Operations, Sean O'Brien, to have the (adult) beverage cart removed from the players' train. Shortly after departing Ottawa, Gulutzan walked onto the players' car and asked them if they wanted to have a couple of beers.

The players loved that idea but Gulutzan had one request, the players had to put down their phones, take off their headphones and talk. And they did. In fact, not only did the players talk, they seemed to figure things out and find a way to turn their season around.

With that said, the train ride from Montreal to Ottawa following that loss to the Canadiens felt a lot different than the one from Philadelphia to Washington after a win over the Flyers. Not only were the players feeling good — they were looking good, all dressed in a 1950's theme.

As someone who has done team services at the AHL-level, I can tell you it is usually a thankless job. When everything goes according to plan, thanks in large part to all of the work that you've put in, nobody says a word. But, when something (anything!) goes wrong, even when it has nothing to do with you, look out!



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So a tip of the fedora to O'Brien, who does a great job behind the scenes making the coaches and players (and broadcasters) lives easier, allowing them to focus on being at their best when the puck drops. Thanks, OB.

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TSN.CA / Leafs continue to roll as Matthews returns

By Kristen Shilton

Columnist image

The Toronto Maple Leafs got Auston Matthews back in the lineup on Saturday night in Montreal and carried right on with their winning ways, topping the Canadiens 6-0 for their sixth straight win. It was the second time in as many games Toronto has blanked an opponent, and the first time they've shutout Montreal since Feb. 9, 2013. The victory also marked the longest winning streak of Mike Babcock's three-year tenure with the club; Toronto last posted a six-game win streak in Dec. 2014. The Leafs now move to 14-7-0 on the season.

Toronto scored first in 14 of their first 20 games leading into Saturday night, and had a 10-4-0 record when they got on the board first. After a goalless first frame, it was a former first-round draft pick of the Canadiens - Ron Hainsey - who tallied the game's opening marker in the second. The score marked Hainsey's first as a Leaf in 42 regular season games, dating back to Feb. 4, 2017. Just 37 seconds later, Nazem Kadri scored his 10th of the season and extended Toronto's lead to 2-0. When the Leafs are leading after the end of the season period, they're a perfect 7-0-0 on the season. From there, the Leafs opened the floodgates, finishing the night with goals from five different skaters. Connor Brown needed just 25 seconds of time in third period to pot his eighth goal of the season. Brown averages less playing time per game than Toronto's top-six forwards, but is now tied for third on the team in goals and went 4-for-7 in the face-off dot on Saturday. Auston Matthews added two goals in the third period and James van Riemsdyk tallied another to help put the Canadiens away.

The Leafs barely missed a beat while Matthews was out with an upper-body injury, posting a 4-0-0 record and showing off a much improved defensive game. So as soon as he was cleared to get back in, Matthews wasted little time making his presence felt again. About midway through the second period, Babcock blended his lines despite Toronto already leading 2-0 and Matthews ended up between Mitch Marner and Matt Martin. The change sparked strong results from the trio, culminating in two goals for Matthews. Martin and Marner both assisted on his first goal and Marner tallied the helper on his second as well. Saturday was Matthews' eighth career two-goal game and extended his team-lead in points to 21. While usually among Toronto's best possession players, Matthews finished in the middle of the pack at 44 per cent - while Marner finished at 39 per cent - but they made good use of the offensive zone time they carved out. Babcock had said previously he didn't want to keep Matthews and Marner on the same line because he believed they could both drive their own lines, but seeing the success they were able to generate it seems like a duo to pursue further.

Since Andersen decided to make some changes to his game after a narrow victory over the Vegas Golden Knights on Nov. 6, the netminder has found another level of his game. On Saturday, he recorded his second straight shutout (while also adding an assist) and he's now gone more than 130 minutes since last giving up a goal to the Boston Bruins' David Pastrnak on Nov. 10. He recorded consecutive shutouts just once last season, from Jan. 23-25, and it's the third time in his career that

Andersen has recorded a shutout and an assist. The Canadiens didn't make it easy on Andersen to keep them off the scoresheet; he faced a barrage of shots early in the game as the Leafs struggled to get even one shot on goal until over six minutes into the game. But regardless of how acrobatic the stop had to be, Andersen was up to the task, and his strategy of being more aggressive on the puck continues to pay off. Once Toronto found its groove offensively, Andersen's workload lessened - he faced 26 shots over the first two periods and just seven in the third - but the Leafs have said they take confidence from Andersen early in games when he's performing well and that was on display again. Andersen finished with 33 saves, the fourth straight game he's faced more than 30 shots on goal.

Power's off

Toronto may be on a hot streak offensively, but they're leaving points on the table where their power play is concerned. That unit once again had a poor outing, going 0-for-3 with five shots on goal against Montreal's penalty kill that's ranked 28th in the league. The Leafs have now gone two straight games without a man advantage goal and they're 4-for-31 (12.9 per cent) over these last 12 games. Seeing Babcock's willingness to adjust his forward lines even when the Leafs were winning, it may also be time for him to shake up these units and try to find chemistry in new combinations. Their early-season success scoring eight power play goals in four games has them still sitting in the top-six in the league in overall power play percentage (22.7 per cent) but there haven't been consistent signs of life from that group in some time.

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TSN.CA / Matthews nets two in return as Leafs rout Habs for 6th straight win

Staff Report

The Canadian Press

MONTREAL — It took Auston Matthews only two periods to get into his groove.

The Maple Leafs star centre, who returned after missing four games with an upper-body injury, scored twice in the third period as Toronto routed the rival Montreal Canadiens 6-0 behind a second straight shutout from goaltender Frederik Andersen on Saturday night.

Matthews' first goal, when he was left alone in front to take a pass from Mitch Marner and score, chased starting goalie Charlie Lindgren at 8:59 of the third frame.

His second of the game, a rocket wrist shot to the top corner from the left circle on a rush, gave backup goalie Antti Niemi no chance.

"It feels good to be back," said Matthews. "I didn't feel too hot out there the first two periods but I think it's all part of coming back and not playing in four games.

"There's obviously room for improvement, but coming into this building, it's not going to be easy. A big win tonight for sure. Our goalie was unbelievable again."

The Canadiens controlled most of the play in the opening 20 minutes, outshooting Toronto 16-6, but couldn't beat Andersen, who was coming off a 42-save shutout in a 1-0 win over New Jersey.



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Goals 37 seconds apart by Ron Hainsey and Nazem Kadri in the second period and tallies in the third by James van Riemsdyk and Connor Brown put the game away for Toronto (14-7-0). Matthews' late goals were icing on the cake as the Leafs stretched their winning streak to six games.

Montreal (8-11-2) is winless in its last three games. After playing 10 of their first 15 games on the road, the Canadiens hoped to catch up on home ice but ended their six-game homestand at 2-3-1.

Lindgren allowed five goals (on 27 shots) for a second game in a row and was replaced by Niemi, who conceded a goal on four shots in his first action since he was claimed off waivers this week.

"We had a good performance in the first half but we collapsed in the second period," said Montreal coach Claude Julien. "The scoreline says it all."

Toronto coach Mike Babcock juggled his lines after the first period and it worked. That included putting Matthews and Marnier together (along with Matt Martin), a combination that has not always been effective. Marnier assisted on both Matthews goals.

"It went well," said Matthews. "We've got so many good players on our team, so many skilled guys that can make plays.

"Obviously me and Mitch have a good relationship off the ice, Marty as well, so it kind of gives you a nice spark when you play with a couple of buddies that you don't get to play with a lot. I think that goes for all four lines. We got a bit of time together last year. I guess we made some plays and had a lot of fun but I don't think we even scored a goal, so it's nice to get out there with him and create some offence and put some in the net."

Andersen had just made a smart glove save on Brendan Gallagher from the slot when the Leafs opened the scoring at 12:07. Hainsey got his first of the season with a shot from the point that Lindgren lost behind van Riemsdyk's screen.

Kadri scored on Toronto's next shot, a wrister from a bad angle that went in off Lindgren's shoulder at 12:44, to extend his points streak to six games.

Brown scored 25 seconds into the third when he lifted the rebound of Nikita Zaitsev's point shot over Lindgren from the doorstep. A Tyler Bozak pass went off Karl Alzner to van Riemsdyk, who flipped in his 10th of the season from close range at 8:11.

Only 48 seconds later, Matthews was alone in front to score his 11th of the season, then his 12th at 15:27.

The first-overall draft pick of 2016 has a milestone game at home on Monday night when his hometown team, the Arizona Coyotes, visit the Air Canada Centre. It will be Matthews' 100th NHL game.

"It'll be pretty cool," he said.

The Leafs, who had not beaten Montreal in two years, have posted two wins in a row against the Habs for the first time since 2013. Toronto won 4-3 in overtime against Montreal on Oct. 14.

To mark the NHL's upcoming 100th anniversary, six Hall of Famers took part in the ceremonial faceoff — Dave Keon, Yvon Cournoyer, Rod Gilbert, Frank Mahovlich, Ray Bourque and Denis Savard. Mahovlich and Savard went out in a Red Wings and Blackhawks jersey respectively, but took them off to reveal Canadiens sweaters underneath. Both ended their careers in Montreal.

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TSN.CA / Matthews seems in line for return against Habs

By Mark Masters

SPORTSCENTRE Reporter

TSN Toronto reporter Mark Masters checks in daily with news and notes from Maple Leafs practices and game-day skates. The Maple Leafs had an optional skate at the Bell Centre on Saturday morning.

Will Auston Matthews (upper-body) return to the Leafs lineup tonight against the Canadiens?

"Game-time decision," said head coach Mike Babcock. "We'll see how everything is, but it looks like it's heading that way."

Matthews, sidelined since Nov. 6, was one of three forwards who took part in Toronto's optional skate at the Bell Centre on Saturday morning. It was his sixth straight day on the ice. Matthews skated for about 20 minutes and left the rink with the rest of the projected lineup. Meanwhile, Nikita Soshnikov and Josh Leivo were put through a conditioning skate, which indicates they are expected to be scratches.

When Matthews returns, what sort of spark will that provide to the rest of the team?

"Well, we're going pretty good," Babcock said. "We've played better defensively ... we haven't been as good offensively, haven't been as heavy in the offensive zone. Obviously, he's a real good player and can play against anyone and gives you another line that can dominate."

Leafs Ice Chips: Will Matthews play tonight?

After missing four games with an undisclosed upper-body injury, Auston Matthews appears poised to return on Saturday night in Montreal. The centre skated for the sixth straight days and left the Bell Centre early along with the rest of the projected lineup. If Toronto's leading scorer returns, head coach Mike Babcock was asked how that'll spark his team.

Matthews has a game-breaking ability that few others possess. He showed that off in Montreal last month scoring two highlight-reel goals, including the overtime winner. Now, Toronto has won all four games without its leading scorer, but isn't generating as many scoring changes as Babcock would like.

"I think what our guys are finding is last year a lot of our games were looser than this year," Babcock explained. "The opposition plays way tighter against us. There's less room so it's harder for you. You're not getting as much rush stuff or odd-man rushes. You have to do more on the cycle and on the fore-check and on the grind so it's a harder game."

"It's obviously more playoff hockey, which we got a taste of last year," said Mitch Marnier. "I'm sure the fans don't enjoy it as much but, like (Babcock) said, we got to start enjoying it a little bit more and when we get opportunities put them in the net."

Habs Ice Chips: Tighter defensive game the focus against Leafs

Coming off a frustrating loss two days ago against the Coyotes, the Habs have addressed certain elements regarding structure and the expectation is that they will play a much tighter defensive game against the high-flying Leafs. John Lu has more.

Toronto's 1-0 win on Thursday against New Jersey featured few Grade A chances and Saturday's game in Montreal is expected to be more of the same, especially since the Canadiens are focused on tightening up after allowing five goals in a loss to the league-worst Coyotes on Thursday. Max Pacioretty was asked if the Habs will be looking to play a "boring road game" tonight.

"That's our style anyway, a boring road game," Montreal's captain said with a smile. "That's how we want to have success. This team has such good firepower and so many offensive weapons, we want to make life



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hard on them. If you want to call it a boring road game, that's sometimes what's needed to win hockey games, especially against a team like this."

"I guarantee you they're going to be going here tonight," Babcock said. "It's us and it's Saturday night and they need the win. Also, I think they're 7-4-1 in their last group of games here so they've been playing well. We expect, just like last time, for there to be no space and for it to be a grind."

Last year, the Leafs were coming off a last-place season and were able to catch some teams off guard. Not anymore. And in the long run Babcock believes that will be helpful.

"This is how you're going to have to play in the end so you might as well play like that. That's where it's going. Now, when you're not very good you don't get as many of those games, because the opposition isn't quite as prepared for you or worried about you. The better you get the more nights you get that are real hockey so there's a lot of real hockey right now."

Leafs, Habs looking to out-bore each other tonight

Toronto's 1-0 win over the New Jersey Devils on Thursday night wasn't exactly a crowd-pleasing affair, but it's exactly the type of game head coach Mike Babcock said his players need to start enjoying. And they better be ready for another tight-checking encounter on Saturday night because, according to captain Max Pacioretty, that's exactly what Montreal's planning for.

Despite the lack of space, James van Riemsdyk and Marner have been heating up a bit. JvR has five points in the last five games while Marner has seven points in the last six games.

"It was one of those things where our line wasn't getting bounces, per se, earlier in the year," van Riemsdyk explained. "It's funny, you get a couple bounces and our line starts feeling good and getting some of that swagger and that mojo back a little bit and hopefully we continue to roll."

The trio of van Riemsdyk, Tyler Bozak and Marner played together last season, but the group was broken up after a sluggish start this year. The line was reunited after Matthews got hurt.

What has Marner done differently since then?

"Nothing," he said. "Nothing at all. I mean, still played the same game and just went out and had fun."

But Babcock has seen a change in Marner's game.

"He's just playing harder and as a group they're playing harder," the coach noted, "and they got their game going and they're feeling good about themselves. You know, (William) Nylander just went 11 games without a goal and Matthews did it last year (with a 13-game drought). It's a real good league. Teams are trying against you and some nights it doesn't go. If you're a scorer you get thinking about it and the more you think about it the less your feet move. You think you're working, but you're only working in your mind. I heard someone say the other day, Denis Potvin used to always say, 'You do your thinking in the afternoon and your playing at night,' and that sounds like a good idea to me."

How did JvR-Bozak-Marner line get its swagger back?

After a slow start to the season, James van Riemsdyk, Tyler Bozak and Mitch Marner were split up and Bozak and Marner actually spent some

time on the fourth line. But now the line is starting to heat up again. Marner has seven points in the last six games and JvR has five points in the last five games. What sparked the turnaround?

Josh Leivo met with the media one day after signing a one-year contract extension with the Leafs worth \$925,000. He could've become an unrestricted free agent if he didn't play 34 more games this season. Was he at all tempted by that possibility?

"No, I like the security better," the 24-year-old said. "They just wanted me to have the security so I could play a game and not worry about the next year."

There isn't a hint of frustration from Leivo despite his current situation. He's only played in 18 of Toronto's last 108 games and on Thursday Soshnikov replaced him in the lineup further pushing him down the depth chart.

"I can't get too emotional or anything," he said. "I just got to keep working hard and keep doing what I do and I think every game I've gotten in I've done OK."

Getting positive feedback from general manager Lou Lamoriello helps.

"He's just saying, 'Stick with it.' He's proud of me and how I work hard and he said, 'It's well-earned,' so just got to stick with it," Leivo noted. "We got a great team right now and we're rolling so staying patient with it and just staying positive in the room and helping the guys. It's kind of a fun room right now and we hope to keep that going."

The feedback hasn't been quite as positive from Babcock.

"I don't think it's gone as good for him this year as it did last year," the coach said. "He's got to get to work. When he gets his next opportunity, you got to take someone's job."

Leivo has one point in five games this season. He had 10 in 13 games last season.

Despite the lack of ice time, Leivo is living the dream by being part of his childhood team. His father was actually "screaming" in excitement on the phone when he got the news of the extension. So, what does the Innisfil, Ont. native enjoy most about being a Leaf?

"Everything," Leivo said. "The atmosphere. The fans. The city's great. It's close to home so it's an awesome feeling and I'm just happy to have another year."

Perennial scratch Leivo chooses security over free agency

Despite playing in just 18 of Toronto's 102 games over the last two seasons, Josh Leivo decided to sign a one-year extension with the club. If he didn't sign then it was likely he would become a Group 6 unrestricted free agent in the summer. The Richmond Hill, Ont. native loves being part of his hometown team and appreciates the positive feedback from the management team.

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